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Ovoos on late Qing dynasty Mongol banner maps (late 19th-early 20th centuries)

Isabelle Charleux

Abstract

The maps of the banners of Inner and Outer Mongolia, drawn on the Qing government's order in the 19th and early 20th century, contain a great number of names and drawings of ovoos (stone or earth heaps, sometimes with a central pole, a tuft, flagpoles or arrows, or tree trunks arranged in conical shape). Many of them distinguish two types of ovoos: cult ovoos and boundary-marker ovoos; in addition, many mountains are called "ovoo". This paper raises questions about the naming of ovoos, their representation by mimetic drawings or abstract symbols, the type and hierarchy of ovoos, and the accuracy of their location. By focusing on examples of maps preserved in the Staatsbibliothek, Berlin, this paper aims at understanding the role of ovoos in the representation of a territory.

Résumé

Les ovoo sur les cartes de bannières mongoles de la fin des Qing (fin XIXe-début XXe siècles)

Les cartes des bannières de Mongolie-Intérieure et Extérieure, dessinées sur ordre du gouvernement central des Qing au xixe et début du xxe siècle, contiennent un grand nombre de noms et de dessins représentant des ovoo (cairns de pierre ou monticules de terre avec un poteau central, des branchages, des drapeaux ou des flèches, ou troncs d'arbres disposés en forme de cône). Nombre de ces cartes distinguent deux types d'ovoo : les ovoo cultuels et les ovoo marqueurs de frontière ; de plus, nombre de montagnes sont nommées « ovoo ». Cet article soulève des questions sur la dénomination des ovoo, leur représentation par des dessins mimétiques ou des symboles abstraits, le type et la hiérarchie des ovoo et la précision de leur localisation. En se concentrant sur quelques exemples de cartes conservées dans la Staatsbibliothek de Berlin, cet article vise à comprendre le rôle des ovoo dans la représentation d'un territoire.

Mots-clé

Outer Mongolia, Inner Mongolia, ovoo, border, mountain, geography, map, banner, cartography

Mongolie-Extérieure, Mongolie-Intérieure, ovoo, frontière, montagne, géographie, carte, bannière, cartographie

Introduction

The maps of the banners¹ of Inner and Outer Mongolia² drawn to be sent to the central Qing (1644-1911) administration – more precisely, the Lifanyuan 理藩院 (Board of Government of the Outer Regions) – in the late Qing period contain a great number of names and drawings of *ovoos* (Cl. Mo. *oboγa*³), and certain mountains are also called “ovoo”: more than a fifth⁴ of the toponyms have “ovoo” (written *oboγa* or more phonetically *oboo* or *obo*) in their name. What do these banner maps tell us about *ovoos*?

The maps under discussion are the 182 maps in the collection of the Berlin State Library (Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung)⁵. Thanks to their online availability in a high definition, it is possible to study them and read most of their texts (in Mongolian and/or Chinese, and Manchu for some of them)⁶.

This paper examines the naming of *ovoos*, their representation by various symbols, and their location on late 19th and early 20th century maps of the banners of Inner and Outer Mongolia⁷. It first introduces

1 Cl. Mo. *qosiyun-u nutuy-un jiruy* (map of the territory of a banner); Ch. *yoututu* 游牧圖 (map/image of pastures).

2 The Mongol banners (*qosiyu*) were geographical divisions organized by the Qing, ruled by a hereditary prince (*jasay*) enfeoffed to the Manchu dynasty. As expressed by Kamimura (2005, p. 13), “The Emperor had the right of ownership, the ruling *jasay* had the right of possession, and the herdsmen had the right of use” of land. The Qing administration of its frontier regions adopted a system of indirect rule based on the co-optation of local elites. The banner princes kept a political and judicial authority (supervision of the census, collection of taxes, adjudication of the lower crimes, and regulation of trade). For notions of rights over land, “ownership”, and allocation of pastures inside banners: Sneath 2001.

3 Mongolian words are transcribed from Classical Uyghur Mongolian, except for place names of the Republic of Mongolia that are transcribed from Cyrillic Mongolian. The only exception here is Cyr. Mo. *ovoo*, to be consistent with the other articles of this special issue. I here use “ovoo” to designate artificial structures (stone or earth heaps, sometimes with a central pole, a tuft, flagpoles or long arrows, or tree trunks arranged in conical shape), and I specify when a mountain is called “ovoo”.

4 About 22% of the toponyms M. Haltod listed from the 182 maps of the Berlin collection are names of *ovoo* structures or of mountains called “ovoo” (estimations from Haltod 1966).

5 They were collected by Walther Heissig and Hermann Consten and were previously preserved in the Westdeutsche Bibliothek, Marburg. They cover most of the Mongol Qing territories except for Sayin noyan qan ayimay (only 5 maps) and the banners that were under direct administration of Beijing (the Tümed of Kökeqota [Hohhot], the Čaqar banners and imperial pastures, the banners of Kölön Buir). See Heissig 1944, Heissig's introduction to Haltod 1966 and Kollmar-Paulenz 2006 for a presentation of Mongol banner maps. They are available at: <https://themen.crossasia.org/mongolische-karten/>. I would like to thank the Oriental Department of the Preussischer Kulturbesitz for granting me the permission to reproduce the maps of their collection and supply me with better quality images than the ones available online.

6 About a thousand banner maps are preserved in Japan, Mongolia, China and Europe. The dates and styles of the majority of the 44 maps of the Tenri Central Library in Japan are close to that of the Berlin collection (Wuyunbilige 2014).

7 There were forty-nine Mongol autonomous banners (*qosiyu*) in Inner Mongolia grouped into six “leagues” (*čiyulyan*), to which were added two banners of Western Mongols (Alašan and Ejin yool), two Tümed banners,

the corpus of banner maps, their conventions and texts, and the regional groups that can be identified in the Berlin collection. In the late Qing period, two main types of *ovoos* structures were usually distinguished: “boundary-marking *ovoos*” that punctuated the boundaries with the neighboring banners and the border of the northern Qing frontier, and *ovoos* on mountain tops that I choose to call “cult *ovoos*”; in addition, many mountains are called “*ovoo*”. Do all banner maps make a clear distinction between these two types of *ovoos*, and which kinds of symbols are used to differentiate them? The following section focuses on the boundary-marking *ovoos*. In the late 19th century, the Qing government was primarily preoccupied by the precise localization of the banners’ boundaries. But were boundary-marking *ovoos* systematically named and located on banner maps, and were their location on maps precise enough to fix the boundaries between banners? Besides, boundary-marking *ovoos* were generally viewed as simple “border devices” used by the Qing government to delimit the territories of Inner (southern) and Outer Mongolia (Kollmar-Paulenz 2006, p. 368). I will ask whether they may also have had a religious function, and whether cult *ovoos* located on a banner’s boundary may also have served as boundary-marking *ovoos*. This would confirm Caroline Humphrey’s concept on “edge-based centrality” – a sacred mountain marking the border and at the same time linking different communities – in Buryatia (2016).

The third part aims at understanding the place of mountain cult *ovoos* in the representations of a territory. The banner maps were produced by the banner’s central administration on the Lifanyuan’s order, but the list of requirements did not mention cult *ovoos*. Why did mapmakers choose to depict and name cult *ovoos*? Does the drawing of cult *ovoos* on maps mark the main sacred mountains of a banner? Is a hierarchy of cult *ovoos* made visible on banner maps, and are “banner *ovoos*” depicted in proximity to the seat of the banner administration? Are there fewer or no *ovoos* in the Inner Mongol banners where agriculture was intensively practiced?

In the last part, I will question the permanence of main cult *ovoos* marking sacred mountains by comparing two maps of Inner Mongol banners with modern maps drawn a century later. Through discussing the depiction of *ovoos*, the present paper hopes to contribute to the debate on whether banner maps depict an ideal situation or a concrete geography.

eight banners and four imperial pastures (*sürüg*) of the Čaqar, and the imperial pastures of the Dariyangya. The New and Old Baryu in Kōlōn Buir and the Dayur in Butha were settled under a Manchu eight banners system. In the late Qing period, Outer Mongolia consisted of the four Qalqa *ayimays* (administrative divisions) subdivided into eighty-six banners and fourteen monastic territories ruled by a reincarnated lama. After the Qing conquest of Zungharia and the Kukunor area, the Western Mongol territories were reshaped as the Qobdo frontier, the Köbsgöl frontier, the Tangnu (Tannu) Uriyangqai, the Toryuud and Uriyangqai banners of Xinjiang, and the twenty-nine Qošuud banners of Kukunor. The term “Outer Mongolia” then included the four Qalqa *ayimays* along with Qobdo, Köbsgöl and Tangnu Uriyangqai.

The Mongol banner maps: emic documents made on imperial order

In the Qing period, by imperial decree, every Mongol banner prince (*jasay*) was required to submit a map of the banner he ruled, accompanied by a written report⁸ that precisely indicated its boundaries. The great majority of them represent a single banner, but a few maps portray a group of banners, an *ayimay* (the largest Qalqa administrative division), a series of relay-stations (*örtege*, Ch. *tai* 台) connected by a road, or border-posts (*qarayul*, *ger qarayul*, Ch. *kalun* 卡倫, < Ma. *karun*) and *ovoos* along a buffer zone of the Qing-Russian border⁹. These maps are therefore political documents produced by the province for the centralized government, and thus allowed symbolical possession and military control of a territory: as expressed by David Harvey, “command over space is a fundamental and all-pervasive source of social power” (1989, p. 226). They were not public and have not been printed.

Except for a few maps produced before the 19th century¹⁰, the first banner maps were made between 1803 and 1805. The great majority of them date from the late 19th and early 20th centuries¹¹, a period of great transformations and economic crisis, when Mongol lands were no longer considered as grazing pastures and a buffer region between the Qing and Russian empires, but as an area to develop and exploit. Industrial mining was legalized, ruling princes sold or mortgaged land to Chinese agriculturalists for profit, “and the banner system was failing to address the economic and political challenges of the 19th century” (High & Schlesinger 2010, pp. 293-294). Following the Boxer Uprising, the Qing undertook a series of reforms known as the “New Policy” (Xinzheng 新政, 1901-1911) that aimed at transforming the Qing empire into a modern nation-state. The New Policy fundamentally changed the status of Mongol lands since it officially opened Inner Mongolia to Chinese colonization in order to finance its modernizing programs as well as to stabilize the frontier (*yimin shibian* 移民實

8 These written reports are called in Mongolian “*nutuḡa čese*” (report on a territory), “*ögöled čese*” (report– *čese* < Manchu, itself derived from Chinese *cezi* 册子, document), or “*nutuḡa ḡiruḡa ögölel*” (article and map of a territory). It seems that it was only at the beginning of the 19th century that the Lifanyuan required that the report shall be systematically illustrated by a map; the texts were therefore partially transferred on the maps. These reports are handwritten texts comprising between four and twenty sheets. Pratte (2021: 122) translates *čese* as “legend” as they are essential records that explained how to read the map.

9 Before the Mongolian People's Republic, there was no complete map of North (Outer) Mongolia.

10 See Heissig (1944, pp. 125-130) and Pratte (2021) for early Qing maps and orders to draw maps.

11 Dated maps of the Berlin corpus were drawn between 1889 and 1920; among them, seventy-five are dated 1907, and twenty-six are dated 1910. Fifty-five have no date. Although I here focus on the late Qing period, I include in my corpus a few maps dated 1919 and 1920. During the Autonomous Boyda qayan period in Mongolia (1912-1921) banner maps continued to be produced on the same model as the Qing's banner maps. Of course, new maps were created for the new administrative units established after 1911 (Kamimura 2005, pp. 15, 17; Futaki 2005, pp. 28, 31). The maps of Alašan (cat. 672, 1919), of the Torḡuud of Xinjiang (cat. 674, 1919 and cat. 675, 1920), and of Altai Uriyangqai (cat. 676, 1920) are similar to the maps of the Qing corpus. “Cat. xxx” here refers to the numbering of the Berlin maps, which were previously catalogued as “Hs. Or. xxx” (see Heissig & Sagaster's catalogue 1961, pp. 335-446).

邊) and consolidate Qing control¹². Inner and Outer Mongolia's place in the empire had changed: they were no longer protected territories untainted by foreign influences. The Inner Mongol territory was transformed by Chinese immigration, agriculture, and the formation of villages, increased exploitation of natural resources, and ethnic tensions between Mongols and Chinese¹³. The Qing authorities requested information on the following topics: agriculture, forestry, grazing, wildlife, leather, wool, railways, minerals, fishing, salt, army, schools, border-posts, relay-stations and trade (Kamimura 2005, pp. 14-15).

In order to nationalize the Mongol land, the state organized cadastral surveys to draw new maps:

The primary tasks of the Administration were surveying and accepting (*kanshou* 勘收) the lands, and measuring and releasing them for sale (*zhangfang* 丈放). Upon receiving the stamped documents from the *jasagh*'s office declaring the lands for cultivation, the Administration would dispatch functionaries to measure and evaluate the lands on site. The standard unit of measurement was *gong* 弓, with 1 *gong* equivalent to 1.667 meter, and 240 square *gong* equivalent to 1 *mu* (667 square meters) [note on the variation of the *mu*]. The survey was typically undertaken by three or four measurers using a 40-*gong*-long hemp rope and two marking flags. Upon completion of measuring one locality, its location, four boundaries, and area were to be reported to the Administration along with a sketched map. (Wang 2019: 289-290)

The new maps delimited clear borders between the Qing and Russian empires, between Mongol pasturelands and agricultural fields, and located roads, relay-stations and exploitable resources such as mines and forests; they were therefore indispensable tools of the New Policy.

Map-making and conventions

The banner maps were drawn in the banner's administrative center (Ch. *yamen* 衙門, Cl. Mo. *yamun*) and painted with pigments. Interestingly, the banner administrations apparently did not receive any training in mapmaking, triangulation or geometry, or help of skilled mapmakers: the mapmakers were inexperienced local Mongols, which guaranteed local perspective (Pratte 2021, chapter 4). When finished, the banner prince(s) (*jasay[s]*) added his (their) seals. The maps were then copied so a double was kept in the *yamen* (and perhaps a second copy in the seat of the league), serving as a model for later maps. Then, the maps along with the reports (*čese*) were sent to the Lifanyuan in Beijing, where all the inscriptions were translated or transcribed into Chinese (written directly on the map or on small papers pasted near or upon the Mongolian inscriptions, preventing the reader from reading the

12 Wang (2021) studies the nationalization of pasturelands, the creation of new administrative districts and the legalization of Han migrants' presence in Inner Mongolia and more specifically in Ordos.

13 The increasing pressure of Chinese immigration was the main cause of the numerous Mongol uprisings against aggressive Chinese colonization from 1891 to 1930. These uprisings took place in most of the Inner Mongol leagues (Heissig 1972). Mongol rebels obstructed land surveys, plundered Chinese local governments, killed officials, which provoked military campaigns in response, especially in eastern Inner Mongolia after the 1891 Jindandao rebellion (Lan 1999, pp. 49-50). This ultimately led Outer Mongolia to declare independence.

original content). Some maps were entirely copied and translated into Chinese (Heissig & Sagaster 1961, pp. 337-342)¹⁴. The preserved maps show the different steps in their production, from the initial unpainted drawing to the Chinese copies. Most of them have been preserved without their accompanying report.

The late 19th and early 20th century banner maps had to follow specific rules¹⁵. They were based on mathematical measurements and topographic surveys, with a fixed scale, and were supposed to 1) indicate the boundaries by *ovoos*; 2) indicate the four cardinal points and be north-oriented; 3) use the following measurement units: *yaĵar* (= Ch. *li* 里), *qubi* and *alda*¹⁶; 4) use a grid of vertical and horizontal lines facilitating the measure of distances and surfaces¹⁷; 5) and (to some extent) use standardized conventions (Kamimura 2005, p. 16; Futaki 2005, p. 29; Chagdarsurung 1975). But these rules were not always respected, and many of the maps, as we will see, neither even use a grid nor depict boundary-marking *ovoos*.

The banner maps adopt conventions similar to that of Chinese maps of the same period¹⁸, using varying scales, but also have many distinctive features such as multiple viewpoints¹⁹. The maps usually combine pictorial elements and abstract symbols²⁰. Buildings and mountains are seen from the front or in axonometric perspective²¹ while lakes and streams are seen from above (i.e. projected orthogonally). The size of the political, administrative and religious centers of some *ovoos* or of a mountain or spring as shown on a map may be proportional to its importance in the life of the inhabitants and not to its real size, enlargements also making it possible to show a greater level of detail. Banner maps allow us to locate a great number of monasteries, but some important objects

14 Toponyms were usually transcribed into Chinese while the other texts were translated. Some maps were also translated into Manchu.

15 Regulations for drawing banner maps were promulgated in 1805, 1864, and 1890 (Futaki 2005, p. 28; Kamimura 2005, p. 16 and fig. 1; Pratte 2021). The 1890 rules aimed at producing an atlas of the Qing state, hence they were the same rules for all the provinces of the empire: a banner was considered to be the equivalent to a *sheng* 省 (Chinese province). This article focuses on maps drawn after 1890 (all the maps in the Berlin collection but one were drawn after 1890). On banner maps anterior to the 1890 regulations, see Pratte (2021), who details the different purposes of the three successive mapping policies: military information in 1802, fixing of boundaries and borders to document the strategic and geopolitically sensitive frontiers in 1864, and obtaining information on natural resources in 1890 in addition to producing maps for the Qing atlas.

16 1 *yaĵar*=360 *alda*, 576 m, 1 *qubi*=0,1 *yaĵar*, 1 *alda*=160 cm.

17 The grid made it easier to copy the map.

18 Chinese maps were influenced by the European cartography introduced by the Jesuits in China in the 17th century, but the “mathematization of space” would not be generalized until the late 19th century (Cams 2017).

¹⁹ Pratte (2021) speaks of “shifting worm’s eye view”: a view from the ground on the center of the map and multiple perspectives.

20 A few of them are very abstract, devoid of drawings, and accompanied by captions (see cat. 780, dated 1907).

21 A three-dimensional object is represented by a drawing having all axes drawn to exact scale: all lines remain parallel instead of receding to a common vanishing point.

have not been represented while others may seem negligible according to our point of view²². Because of the conveyed emic conceptions of space, the pictorial elements, the practice of variable scale, variable perspective, and use of multiple viewpoints, some authors, following Harvey (1980), prefer using the term “picture-maps”²³. However, Mongol banner maps can be contrasted with much more pictorial maps, such as paintings of the pilgrimage destinations of Tibet and China, that use representations of living beings (men, camel caravans, wild animals), and apparitions of buddhas in clouds (Charleux 2015, pp. 170-177).

Pratte (2021) argues that pictographic maps focusing on the landscape without showing clear boundaries represent an emic viewpoint and an earlier stage of map making. In the Berlin collection of maps, regional differences are many, and show that the majority of banners obviously resisted state attempts of standardization and ignored the new instructions of 1864 and 1890²⁴. We can identify about eleven more or less homogeneous regional groups:

- 1) Ejin γool and the Old Torγuud of Xinjiang/Ili (cat. 673-674);
- 2) Qobdo and Uriyangqai (cat. 677-687), and two maps of Xinjiang (cat. 675-676);
- 3) Qalqa ḡasaytu qan and Sayin noyan qan ayimays (cat. 688-706);
- 4) Qalqa Tūsiyetū qan ayimay (cat. 707-729);
- 5) Qalqa Sečen qan ayimay (cat. 733-779);

and, in Inner Mongolia, the leagues of

- 6) ḡirim (cat. 781-790),
- 7) ḡosoto (cat. 791-796),
- 8) ḡoo-uda (cat. 797-806),
- 9) Sili-yin γool (cat. 807-828),
- 10) Ulayančab and the Alašan banner (cat. 829-832, 672), and
- 11) Ordos (Yeke ḡuu League, cat. 833-853).

From west to east²⁵ in Outer Mongolia we notice a trend from the non or partial respect of the above-mentioned rules (no grid [cat. 672-685] and very few or no boundary-marking *ovoos* depicted in Qobdo

22 For similar remarks about Chinese maps of the end of the empire: Smith 1998, p. 60; Hearn 2011, p. 96.

23 On maps as “pictures”, see and Kollmar-Paulenz 2006, pp. 357-358.

24 Pratte (2021) highlights the profound transformation of maps of Sečen qan ayimay after the promulgation of the 1805, 1864, and 1890 regulations: pre-1864 maps showed a local perspective with multiple viewpoints and a pictographic depiction of landscape. After 1864-1865, maps of Sečen qan ayimay's banners adopted a single bird's eye perspective; the focus was no more on the landscape but on the boundary-*ovoos* that had to correspond to their actual location. Banners were represented with straight lines on their contour, a grid, a scale, color codes (all boundary *ovoos* had to be marked in red), red labels to indicate each boundary-marking *ovoo* that were numbered and named, following the 24-direction or the sexagenary cycle system. Geographical features shrank in relation to boundary markers and became more abstract. After 1891, maps tended to become abstract and disembedded territorial representations. However, this evolution which is clear for banner maps of Sečen qan ayimay that complied to new Qing standards, is not observed for other leagues and *ayimays*. The Berlin collection shows that various pictographic traditions focusing on the landscape without showing clear boundaries continued to be followed after 1890, especially in Inner Mongolia, revealing the failure of the process of homogeneization.

25 The Berlin catalogue numbers the maps of the northern Mongol lands from west (Qobdo Uriyangqai) to east (Qalqa Sečen qan ayimay).

and Uriyangqai) to a stricter respect, with the use of a grid and numbered *ovoos* that are equally distributed all along the boundaries (on maps of the Sečen qan ayimay) (Appendix). The maps of the banners of Qobdo Uriyangqai, ʃasaytu qan, Sayin noyan qan and Tüsiyetü qan pay particular attention to their boundaries; often, the interior of the map only indicates a few landscape features and the location of the banner prince's or reincarnated lama's encampment (fig. 1a, b). The maps of the banners of Sečen qan ayimay include more drawings of natural landscapes and buildings, and numbered boundary-marking *ovoos*. The maps of Inner Mongol banners, although they were supposed to follow the same regulations as the maps of Outer Mongolia, rarely use the grid (except for eight maps of banners of Sili-yin yool²⁶), pay much less importance to the delimitation of their boundaries (many have few or no boundary-marking *ovoos*), and are more pictorial. They show an overabundance of details, human presence being marked by the depiction of walled cities, villages, settlements, roads, monasteries, Chinese temples and churches, shrines to Chinggis Khan, stupas (Skt. *stūpas*), bridges, tombs, wells, *ovoos* and so on, especially in the banners of ʃirim, ʃosoto and ʃoo-uda which were more densely populated and relatively more urbanized than the western leagues. Maps of the banners of ʃosoto and ʃoo-uda are painted in Chinese landscape style (fig. 1c). These eleven regional "families" obviously result of a great work of coordination between the different banner princes and the chief of the *ayimay* or league (*čiyulyan*): the latter played an important role in standardizing the maps of the different banners of their *ayimay* or *čiyulyan*²⁷.

The texts of the banner maps usually give the title of the map, the date, title and rank of the banner prince or reincarnated lama, the cardinal points, a description of the banner, as well as descriptions of boundaries with the adjacent banners, and a number of toponyms. Texts are written vertically, or radiating from the center outside of the boundary line, or following different directions, necessitating that a viewer rotate the map to be able to see and read, or circle around it. Most of the scholars who worked on these maps were interested in toponyms: 13 785 Mongolian place names on the "German" maps were listed²⁸. In average, there are seventy-five toponyms (not counting the additional texts) per map, and maps with one hundred to two hundred place names are not uncommon.

The way in which banner maps (and reports) list names of mountains, rivers, springs and *ovoos*, along with precise descriptions of a banner's boundaries, could be compared to Mongol literary genres that glorify the homeland (*nutuy*), such as songs, oral prayers, and fumigation ritual (*sang*) texts dedicated

26 Cat. 807, 809, 810, 812, 813, 814, 820, 822.

27 Pratte (2021, p. 334) highlights for Sečen qan ayimay the work of the league heads as intermediate between Beijing and Mongol banner princes: they cross-examined the banner maps of neighboring banners to check the consistencies by comparing their boundary segments and *ovoos*. The task of mapping involved the coordinated action of a number of local officials.

28 Haltod (1966) listed 13 644 Mongol place names in the first volume of *Mongolische Ortsnamen* (there are many mistakes in transcriptions; and he did not record the Chinese place names). In the third volume, Sh. Rasidondug added 141 names to Haltod's list (Heissig 1981, pp. 199-202). Ravdan published a glossary and a study of toponyms of maps preserved in Mongolia (2004a, b). Futaki & Kamimura (2005) listed 1 700 toponyms and captions on sixteen maps preserved in the Tokyo University of Foreign Studies, Japan. On the toponyms, see also several articles in the volume edited by Futaki *et al.* 2012.

to spirit-masters of the land. Some fumigation texts (in Tibetan language, less frequently in Mongolian) mention hundreds of names of sacred places²⁹.

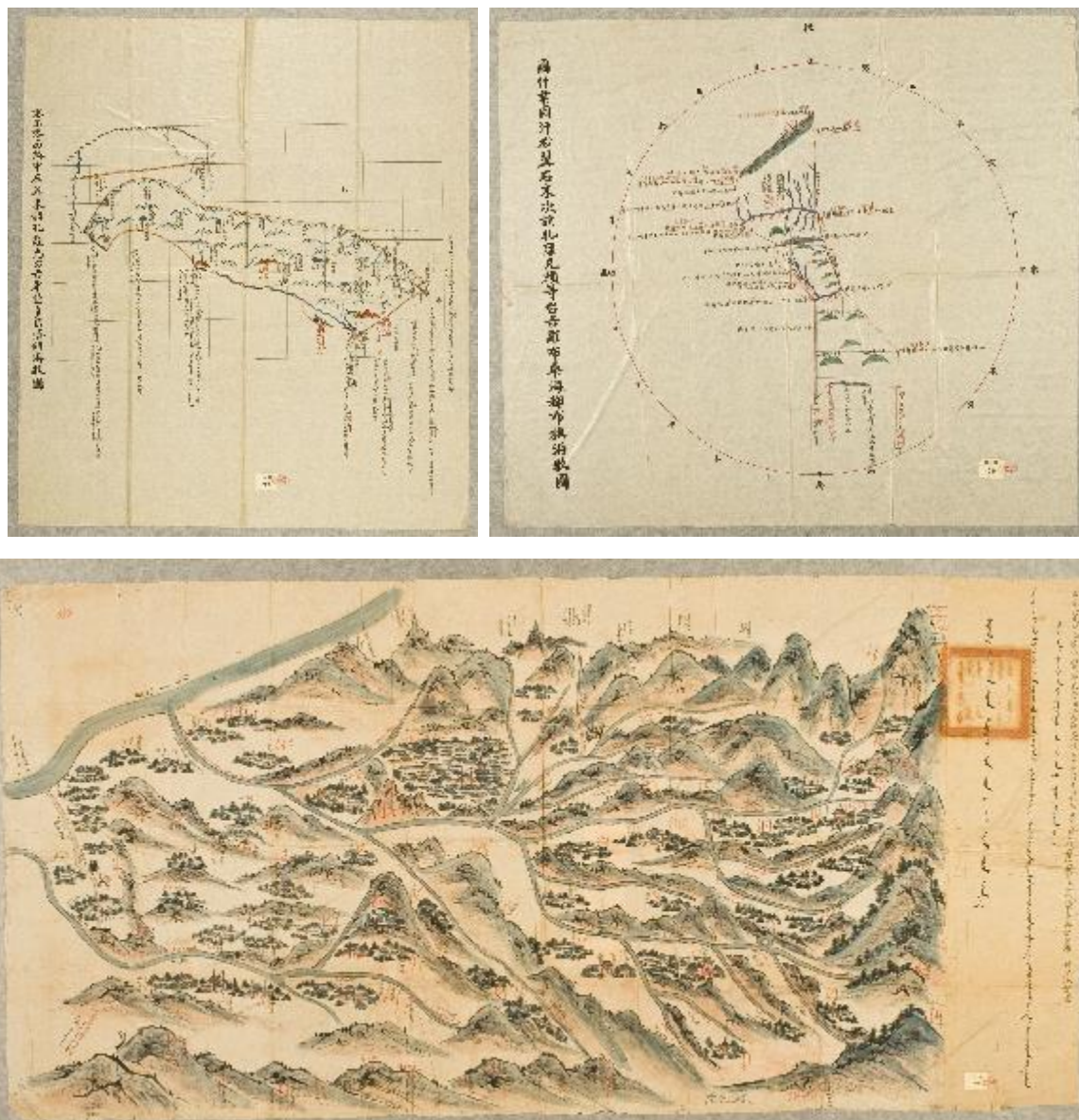


Figure 1. Three examples of banner maps

a. cat. 693 (Hs. Or. 251), map of Čedengdorġi Banner, Ĵasaytu qan, Outer Mongolia (no date); **b.** cat. 728 (Hs. Or. 248), map of Lubsangqayidub Banner, Tüsiyetü qan, Outer Mongolia, 1907; **c.** cat. 800 (Hs. Or. 62), map of Ongniyud Right Banner, Ĵoo-uda, Inner Mongolia, 1907

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29 In fumigation texts, the Mongol landscape is equated with mountains of Tibet and ancient India. See for instance a *sang* text for *ovoo* worship by Bičiyeči čorġi Ayrıngdorġi studied by Bawden (1970), who tried to identify the names of the local topographical features where master-spirits of the land were worshiped, and a ritual text of the Matad qan Mountain in eastern Mongolia dedicated to sixty-one sacred places analyzed by Tatár (1976).

Preliminary remarks on the depiction of ovoos on banner maps

On banner maps, *ovoos* are named only (written in Cl. Mo. *oboγa*, *oboo*, or *obo*³⁰), named and represented, or represented but not named. In Chinese transcription, *oboγa* is written *ebo* 鄂博, more rarely *ebo* 鄂伯 (cat. 673) – today transcribed *aobao* 敖包 –, and in maps of Ordos, it is sometimes translated into Chinese *fengdui* 封堆³¹ or *dui* 堆.

According to the conventions used in studies of cartography,

Symbols may be classified along a continuum, with pictorial (also referred to as mimetic or replicative) symbols at one end of the continuum and abstract (or geometric) symbols at the other (Robinson *et al.* 1995, p. 479). Pictorial symbols closely resemble the real-world features that they represent (e.g., an icon of a tent to represent a campground), and are often self-explanatory in the absence of a map legend. In contrast, abstract symbols bear little resemblance to the feature that they represent (e.g., a circle to represent a city). Whether the symbol is pictorial or abstract, the goal of all symbols is the same: for map users to decode the symbol successfully into the real-world feature, process, or event that it represents. (Kostelnick *et al.* 2008)

The illustrations of this article show many different ways of representing *ovoos*, from more pictorial to more abstract symbols, even on the same banner map. We may ask in some cases whether depictions of *ovoos* are “naturalistic drawings” that represent the real shape of specific *ovoos* instead of a generic, conventional drawing of *ovoo* (fig. 2a) – but this can only be confirmed when we have old photographs or documentation of their appearance. It is usually safer to speak of “replicative or mimetic symbols” when drawings resembling real-life objects are repeated identically throughout the same map. Replicative or mimetic symbols are usually drawn in a simplified, schematic manner: a cone, a mound (fig. 11b), a hemispheric shape, a triangle of piled stones (fig. 22b) or a square, which can be topped with a pole (sometimes ending with a finial), with one or several flags (fig. 2e, f), and/or with a tuft (fig. 2c, d). Drawings of big tufts, arrows or flags are also placed directly on mountain summits without a rock pile. These drawings seem to reflect the great variety of *ovoos*: in the Mongol countryside, they are usually made of piled stones forming a cone, often with a central pole; they could also have a round or square base built of stones, and tufts or a bush, one or several poles, a pole with a finial (fig. 3c), long arrows (fig. 3a), and/or flags (fig. 3d), as shown on early 20th century photographs and paintings. Others were simple earth mounds (figs 3b, 7a). On maps of the same banner, mountains can be crowned by different types of *ovoos*, for instance a mound topped with a tuft and pole, and a simple cairn (cat. 814, Qayučid Right Banner).

30 Many phonetic spellings and “misspellings” of toponyms appear in banner maps, such as *baying* for *bayan*, *öljütü* for *öljeitü*, *kisig* for *kesig*, *nuur* for *naγur*, genitive forms that do not respect the rules and so on.

31 *Dui* means “pile, heap”. *Fengdui* is the official term according to imperial edicts of the Daoguang era (1820-1850) (Constant 2010, p. 76). Cat. 851 (Qanggin Banner) uses *fengdui* and cat. 852 (same banner), *ebo*; both are dated 1909.

Some *ovoos* were made of wood; on banner maps in most cases wooden *ovoos* are distinguished by their name only (Modon oboya)³² but depicted not differently from stone cairns (fig. 4a). The vertical tufts on mountain tops of cat. 818 (fig. 4b), and the branch-like triangular Altan neretü oboya which is bigger than the nearby monastery (Bandida blama-yin süme) on cat. 847 might be wooden *ovoos* (fig. 4c).

At the other extremity of the continuum, abstract, geometrical signs include dots, round marks (fig. 5d), ovoid or almond-like shapes (figs 8, 12, 31b), orange triangles topped with a circle, pointed triangles (fig. 21a), rectangles (for boundary-marking *ovoos* only, fig. 6)³³, and so on. Discrete triangles (fig. 18), dots, or one or two dashes crowning mountains (fig. 5b, c) and pointed summits evoking a pole³⁴, as well as, perhaps, big boulders (figs 5a, 21b, 27a) may indicate *ovoos* or the main peak of a mountain. As we will see, the depiction of boundary-marking *ovoos* is often more abstract, while cult *ovoos* are depicted in more pictorial forms.

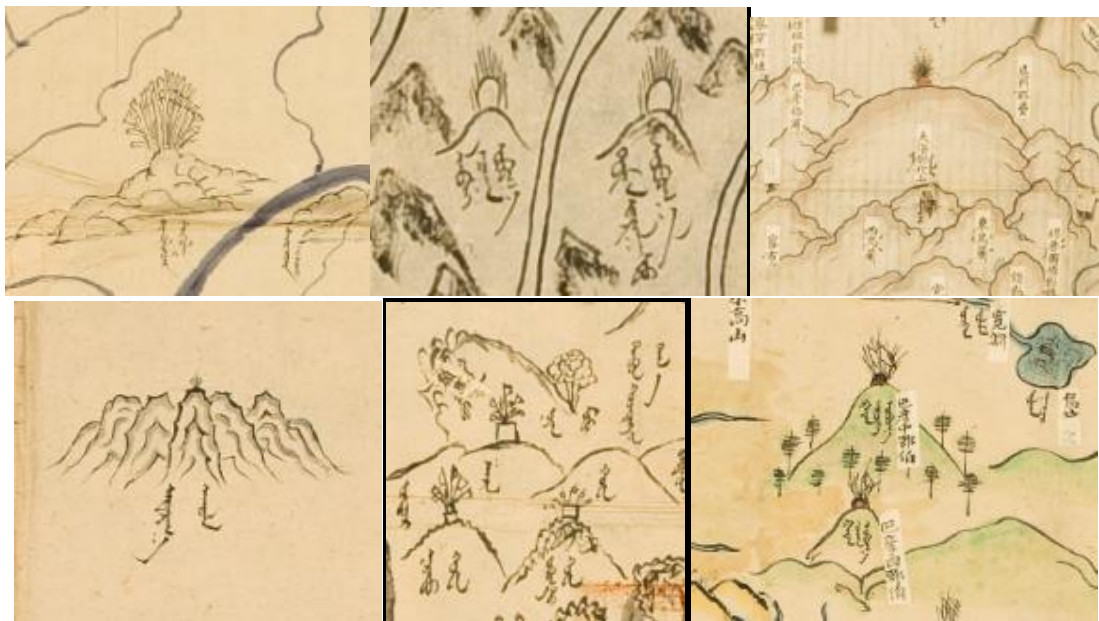


Figure 2. Example of cult *ovoos*

a. cat. 674 (Hs. Or. 49), map of the Old Torjuud, Xinjiang, 1919, detail; **b.** cat. 834 (Hs. Or. 16), map of Dalad Banner, Ordos, 1910, detail; **c.** cat. 805 (Hs. Or. 60), map of Aru qorč'in Banner, Ĵoo-uda, 1908, detail; **d.** cat. 818 (Hs. Or. 54), map of Abayanar Right Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail; **e.** cat. 806 (Hs. Or. 106), map of Ĵarud Left and Right Banners, Ĵoo-uda, 1919 (after a map dated 1907), detail, rotated 90 degrees clockwise; **f.** cat. 802 (Hs. Or. 24), map of Kesigten Banner, Ĵoo-uda, 1908, detail

32 Haltod (1966, p. 110) reads on the Berlin maps many occurrences of *ovoos* called Modon oboya/obo, Modon oboyatuyin oboya ("Mountain of the wooden *ovoos*"), Sara-yin modon oboya, etc. designating either cairns or mountains.

33 As we will see, rectangles might actually represent steles; then they would not be abstract symbols.

34 On cat. 773, almost all the mountains have a pointed summit, which is not the case of cat. 764 of the same banner.

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Figure 3. Various shapes of ovoos in Mongolia

a. Ovoo of Blama-yin küriye (Buyan čuylaraɣuluyči süme), Üjümüčin Right Banner (now in Üjümüčin Left Banner), before the Cultural Revolution (Anonymous author 1959: fig. 77); **b.** ovoo mostly made of stones and branches, in the Qorčin region, 1930s. Photo: Paul Lieberentz, 1927 (SMVK & Sven Hedin Foundation); **c.** ovoos of Bandida gegen süme, now in Sili-yin qota/Xilinhot, before the Cultural Revolution (Anonymous author 1959: fig. 78); **d.** ovoo, detail of the painting by B. Sharav (1869-1938), "Daily events" (also known as "One day in Mongolia"), 1911 or 1912, mineral pigments on cotton, 136x169 cm

© Zanabazar Fine Art Museum, Ulaanbaatar



Figure 4. “Wooden ovoo”

a. map of cat. 816 (Hs. Or. 52), Abaya and left Abayanar Banners, 1901, detail: Modon oboya; **b.** cat. 818 (Hs. Or. 54), map of Abayanar Right banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail: Lhari ayula; **c.** cat. 847 (Hs. Or. 14), map of Üüsin Banner, Ordos, 1910, detail

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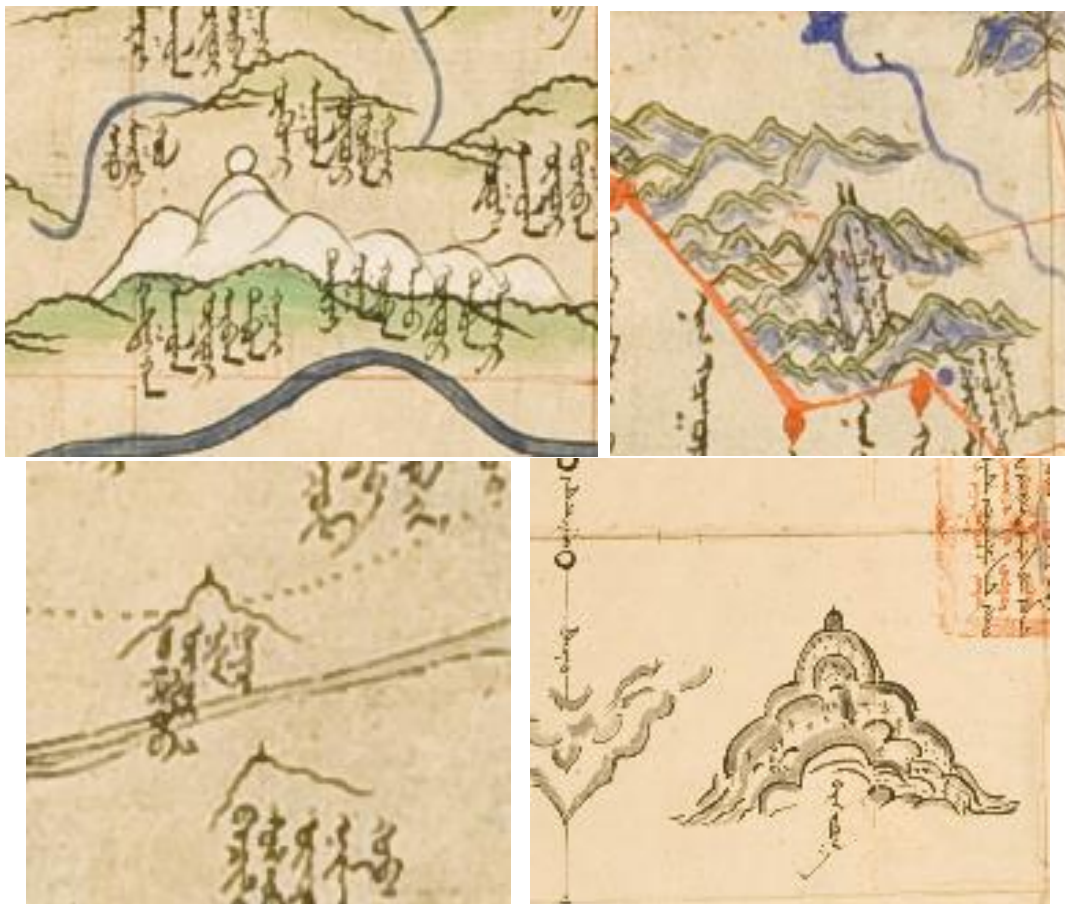


Figure 5. Mountains topped by big boulders, dots or dashes

a. cat. 735 (Hs. Or. 153), map of the banner of Navangsikür, Sečen qan, 1910, detail: the great Kengtei qan (with an inscription specifying its height); **b.** cat. 750 (Hs. Or. 158), map of the banner of Lhamu, Sečen qan (no date), detail; **c.** cat. 763 (Hs. Or. 151), map of the banner of Sangvang čerindorji, Sečen qan, 1907, detail; **d.** cat. 826 (Hs. Or. 133), map of Sünid Right Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail: mountain ovoo (right) and mountain marking a boundary (left)

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Many mountains (with or without a drawing of *ovoo* on their summit) are also called “*ovoo*”³⁵: about 11% of the toponyms having *ovoo* in their names are mountains (estimations from Haltod 1966) (fig. 23b). One of the most worshiped mountains of present-day Mongolia is the Altan oboya of the Dariganya³⁶. Therefore, *ovoo* could be synonymous with a “mountain” and more particularly, a “sacred mountain”. A large number of *ovoos* are depicted and/or named on mountain and hills’ summits; when their name ends with “*oboja*” it can be either the name of the mountain or the name of the *ovoo*, or both.

A minority of *ovoos* (both boundary-marking *ovoos* and cult *ovoos*) are named *ovoos* of mountain-passes³⁷, rivers³⁸, lakes³⁹, springs and wells⁴⁰, or “water” *ovoos*⁴¹. These are depicted on a mountain top or on a pass (fig. 6) or near a water body⁴².

35 Here are some examples: Qoyitu sengkir-yin oboo (cat. 677 and cat. 678) in Qobdo Uriyangqai, Boro yučin oboya, Batusyur oboya, and Buyantu oboya (cat. 711) in Tüsiyetü qan; oboya ayula (cat. 734), Čayan oboya (cat. 757-760), Bayang [Bayan] oboya (cat. 761, cat. 762), Bayangčayan [Bayančayan] oboya, Delger oboya, Öljeitü oboya, Takilyatu oboya, Tojol oboya, Čayan oboya (cat. 767-768); Čayan oboya, Delger oboya, Urtu-yin čayan oboya (cat. 769-770) in Sečen qan; Bayan jirüke oboya, Bayan čayan oboya (cat. 802) in Joo-uda; Čayan oboya (cat. 814), Qara oboya (cat. 818, cat. 819) in Sili-yin yool, etc. On a map of Jarud Banner (Joo-uda), ten of the mountains with a drawing of *ovoo* on their summit have a name ending with “*oboja*” (cat. 806); on maps of the Üjümüčin Right Banner (Sili-yin yool), eleven mountains are called “*oboja*” (cat. 810-811) and on maps of the Sünid Left Banner (Sili-yin yool), nine mountains are called “*oboja*” (cat. 823-824).

36 Cyr. Mo. Altan ovoo, in present-day Sühbaatar Province (see Jessica Madison Piskatá’s article in this issue). Tamirjavyn (2017) argues that the Dariganya call “*ovoo*” a) supernatural entities, b) sacred mountains, and c) altars (cairns).

37 Ongyočatu-yin eki kösiye-yin dabayan-u oboya (cat. 726), Atayan-yin dabayan[-u] oboya (cat. 721, cat. 722).

38 Onon yool-un oboya (cat. 722), Fool oboya (cat. 713), Fool-un kebtege-yin oboya (cat. 716, cat. 725).

39 Čayan nuur-yin oboya (cat. 719, cat. 835).

40 Qudduy-un oboya, Bulay-yin [-un] oboya (cat. 777-cat. 779), Ayuyitu bulay-un oboya (cat. 751-cat. 752), Bayangbulay [Bayanbulay]-un oboya (cat. 715, cat. 757-cat. 758), Aman-u qudduy-un/yin oboya (cat. 733, cat. 746, cat. 748)

41 Aman-u usun-u oboya (cat. 708), Aru uytayal-yin usun-u oboya (cat. 716).

42 *Ovoos* depicted near rivers: cat. 675, cat. 798, cat. 803, cat. 805. On cat. 778 (fig. 20), boundary-marking *ovoos* are all located on mountain tops except for a few ones (numbered 5th, 8th, 12th, 17th, 23th, 28th) which are situated directly on the boundary line. Some of their names indicate that they are *ovoos* of springs (*bulay*) or wells (*qudduy*). The second *ovoo*, although being named *dabaya-u oboya* (mountain-pass *ovoo*), is depicted on a peak.



Figure 6. Boundary-ovoos on a mountain pass: cat. 675 (Hs. Or. 124), map of the banner of the New Toryuud, Xinjiang, 1920, detail: “Γalčan (or Γalʿjan) dabaya”, rotated 180 degrees

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Boundaries, borders and boundary-marking ovoos

The main reason for the central government to commission maps after 1864 was to document boundaries between neighboring banners. The Qing had tried to implement the banner system with delimitation of boundaries immediately after the incorporation of Inner Mongols (in 1636) and Qalqa (in 1691) into the empire. According to Qing regulations,

Pastures near mountains and rivers should use these mountains and rivers as boundaries. If there are no mountains or rivers, set up *ebos* [ovoos] as boundary markers. (Yuntao (comp.), Qianlong's *Da Qing huidian* 大清會典, 619: fol. 735b)⁴³

Mongols were forbidden to trespass their banner's boundaries and incurred severe penalties if they were caught outside of their banner without a permit. All who were found to have crossed a boundary were interrogated by banner authorities and brought back to their banner for further punishment⁴⁴. Yet, Anne-Sophie Pratte (2021) argues that it is only after the promulgation of new regulations of 1864 that the Qing administration succeeded to draw clear boundary lines between banners⁴⁵. Before that date, although several edicts had ordered the construction and annual inspection of boundary-marking ovoos (Constant 2010, p. 76), the banners' boundaries were not precisely marked and the interdiction of crossing them was probably on paper only, except when ovoos were especially built to mark the

43 凡游牧近山河者以山河為界無山河者設鄂博為界。

44 Fines were in livestock with rates according to social rank (Bello 2015, p. 120).

45 Constant (2010, p. 75, note 66) quotes a memoir addressed to the Grand Council (Junjichu 軍機處) dated 1862 – two years before the new regulations – about the difficulty of controlling illegal crossings due to the non-existence of a clear delimitation of the border between Mongolia and Russia. The Russian emissary proposed to draw new maps on which the borders would be materialized by red dots.

borders after the resolution of a conflict⁴⁶. The oldest maps depict very few or no boundary-ovoos. For instance, the 1780 map of Sečen qan ayimay (National Library of Mongolia, Pratte 2021, chapter 2) and a map of Gombojab Banner in Sečen qan ayimay dated between 1793 and 1805 (Futaki & Kamimura 2005, map M012) do not show boundary-marking ovoos⁴⁷.

After 1864, boundary-marking ovoos were more systematically built, which impacted land-use and migrations in the Qalqa banners (Pratte 2021). Their location was marked on banner maps together with precise descriptions of the boundaries, and distances to places of the neighboring banners. The banner officials were required to check annually that the ovoos were in place and rebuild them⁴⁸, and to check that their location corresponded to their location on the banner maps. Ovoos could collapse (especially when built in other materials than stones) or be purposefully destroyed during territorial conflicts and rebuilt at another place⁴⁹. It was sometimes necessary to appoint an official to guard them (Van Hecken 1960, p. 301). The location and names of the boundary-marking ovoos then became the most important elements for the knowledge of banner boundaries.

Boundary-marking ovoos were called “temdeg/temdegtü oboya” (marker-ovoos)⁵⁰, or “nutuy-un jïqayin oboya” (ovoos [marking] a territory's boundary). According to Davaa-Ochir, they “consisted with three ovoos. Two lateral ovoos are called *khyazgaariin oboo* [Cl. Mo. *kijayar-un oboya*] (frontier oboos) marking the boundaries of two territories, while the central ovoos is called *khaich oboo* [Cl. Mo. *qayiči oboya*] (junction oboos)”⁵¹. They usually were stone cairns but could occasionally also be made of wood,

46 From historical documents preserved in the National Archives of Mongolia, Cholmongerel studied conflicts about Qalqa banners' boundaries from the Qianlong period (1736-1796) to the 19th century. He showed that conflicts during the reign of Qianlong resulted in the order that boundaries of the pasture land should be defined and a map should be made and submitted (Chomongguriru 2014, p. 87 – I thank A. S. Pratte for having sent me this article). About two conflicts between Inner Mongol banners in 1831 and 1832, see Constant 2010, p. 78.

47 The “Kotwicz IV” map of the Tüsiyetü qan ayimay dated 1805, studied by Inoue (2012, pp. 221-226) has a few mounds called “ovoos” on the red lines marking the boundaries between banners and the southern border of the ayimay with Inner Mongolia. A map of Doloyan nayur studied by Heissig (1944, pl. XII) based on a map dated 1742 has eight ovoos on its boundaries; since they are depicted the same way as the many cult ovoos inside the map, it is not clear if all of them are boundary-markers.

48 Heissig 1944, pp. 130-131; Constant 2010, pp. 76, 79.

49 See Chomongguriru 2014, pp. 102-103. Van Hecken (1960) recounts a century of territorial conflicts (1827-1937) between the Otoy and Üösin Banners of Ordos and the attempts of mediation by the Scheut Catholic missionaries of Boro balyasu, but does not mention maps. During this conflict starting with Üösin invading the south-east part of Otoy, the ten boundary-marking ovoos of the 120 km-long boundary were “moved” (destroyed and rebuilt) several times. Serruys (1977, pp. 492-493) mentions Mongol herders organized in “circles” (*duyuilang*) altering or destroying ovoos landmarks, and rebuilding them at new places to move a boundary with other banners or with the land given out to the Chinese.

50 This term is found in the Qianlong period: Heissig 1944, p. 130. Also: *kijayar neyilegsen yaĵar-tu bayiyuluysan temdegtü oboya* (marker-ovoos built on a bordering place), *qayičin oboya* (junction ovoos), *kili oboya* (border ovoos).

51 Davaa-Ochir 2008, pp. 52-53, quoting Sühbat & Luvsan Darjaa 2004. According to B. Tseden-Ish: “Any dispute arising between Halhs and Bargas was discussed and settled by meeting of representatives of two sides. Each two Halh neighboring posts set up “hiach” [typo] or “scissors” ovoos in the midway to their respective ovoos, where they could meet and communicate with each other and exchange information” (Tseden-Ish 2003, p. 23). Gerelbadrah (2006, p. 40) writes that according to sources, the boundary-marking ovoos consisted of series of

of small stones, sand or earth (fig. 7a, b)⁵². Their name was inscribed on a stele⁵³ or on the central wooden pole of the stone *ovoo* (fig. 7c). A photo of a boundary-marking *ovoo* shows a high stone or earth mound with no poles or arrows; it is not called “*ovoo*” but “*düise*” (Mongolized transcription of *duizi* 堆子, “pile, heap”) (Van Hecken 1960, p. 277) (fig. 7a). The boundary could also be marked by an inscription of a stone stele or a wooden post (*payija-yin oboya*) with or without an *ovoo*⁵⁴ (fig. 7b, c).



three *owoos*: the scissors *owoos* (*haichiin owoo* [*qayičin-u oboya*]) of the Mongol-Russian border, and the border-marking *owoos* of the two countries. A knotty piece of wood was pulled by a line of horses to mark a precise line between the *owoos*. I thank the second anonymous reviewer for these two references. It was at the *ovoo* between border-posts that patrolling soldiers from one border-post exchanged information with patrols from the other border-post; “(t)his was called *khaich yavakh*, scissor-walking, a metaphor implying that the soldiers were cutting the borderline like scissors, making a radical partition” (Bulag 2012, p. 41).

52 These had to be periodically rebuilt because they collapsed easily (Heissig 1944, p. 130).

53 Chagdarsurung (1975, p. 365) translates an inscription on a “boundary stake” (Cl. Mo. *qosiyun nutuy-un degesü* (“rope/measure of a banner’s territory”) “on a rock”).

54 The *Iledkel šastir* mentions the erection of marker pole/wooden post (*temdeg modon*) to mark the boundaries of the new Alašan Banner in 1686 (quoted by Heissig 1944, p. 128). In his travelogue written between 1899 to 1902, Gombojab Tsybikov (1992, p. 29) describes a 1.50 m-high granite stele marking the southern border of Alašan; it was inscribed in Chinese with the date 1849 and the names of the people who were present at its erection, and in Mongolian, “boundary of the territory of the Prince of the First Rank of Alašan”, and “Stone stele of the Red Ravine”.

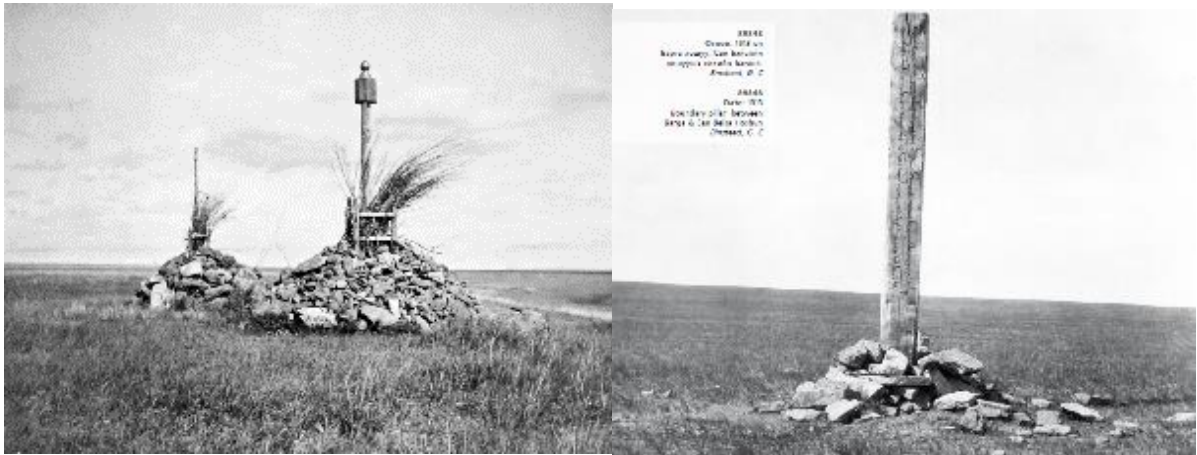


Figure 7. Boundary-marking ovoos

a. “After the erection of the Nayiraltu-yin oroi boundary-marker: the delegates of Batu qayalya, Otoγ, Üüşin and the Catholic mission, with a detachment of Mongol cavalry, near the boundary-marker, on September 26th, 1935 (Photo VH 1935, in Van Hecken 1960, Photo 8, on the left side of page 305). By courtesy of the Monumenta Serica Institute); b. “Two Obos marking hoshun boundary near S.W. corner of Lake Durru”, 1913 (photo by Lieut. G. C. Binstead, n°89862, reproduced in Chuluun & Byrne 2019, p. 251); c. “Boundary-pillar between Barga and San Beisa Hoshun”, 1913 (photo by Lieut. G. C. Binstead, n°89848, reproduced in Chuluun & Byrne 2019, p. 242)

Maps drawn to solve conflicts

A main task of the banner administration was to adjudicate lawsuits caused by land disputes deriving from ambiguous banner boundaries⁵⁵. Frédéric Constant argued that the banner maps were not just documents destined for the central government. Maps could serve or were sometimes made to solve a conflict on a banner's boundaries, and “the drawing of the maps became a priority for the authorities of the central administration only when precise knowledge of boundaries was a public policy issue”, for instance when the Yellow River forming a boundary changed its course (Constant 2010, p. 78)⁵⁶. When a conflict was reported to the central administration, the latter first checked if maps were produced earlier and preserved in the archives of the Lifanyuan (Constant 2010, p. 79)⁵⁷. The banner maps were then a proof of the state of the boundary at a given moment. In other cases, the dispute was solved by the drawing of a map (or maps) and the laying of boundary-marking *ovoos*. For instance, to solve a conflict between the Tümed and Dalad Banners, the central administration asked each party

55 In addition to conflicts between banner princes, land conflicts with Chinese farmers multiplied in 19th century Inner Mongolia and were often mediated by Christian missionaries in Ordos. Wang (2019, 2021) studies conflicts that developed when the Qing administration land surveys only took into account net arable land, “leaving out rivers, canals, roads, tamarisk bushes, sandy and saline areas as nonproductive ‘wasteland’”, while local Mongols “regarded all lands as part of a continuous topographical landscape” (Wang 2019, p. 290).

56 Bello (2015, chapter 3) studies cases of boundary modifications and reallocation of pastures following ecological change.

57 The legislation of the Qing state progressively evolved from a right based on the person to a right based on territoriality (Constant 2010, p. 79).

to draw a map and then checked the correspondences of the toponyms of the two maps (Constant 2010, p. 78)⁵⁸. The banner princes then affixed their seals upon the texts specifying the boundaries of the banner, signifying that they had validated this essential information of the map. Maps can include annotations indicating the existence of boundary conflicts (Kamimura 2005, p. 5, M004). Some reports also evoke conflicts about the boundaries with adjacent banners⁵⁹.

For Charles Bawden (1979, pp. 580-581), the maps were not precise enough to allow the resolution of major boundary conflicts. Quoting a document that indicates pasture allocations, he concludes that “in itself the map and survey system would seem to have been insufficiently developed to cover all disputes which may arise”: the map actually represented an ideal, formal situation. Conversely, Constant argues that the map (and the report accompanying it) was one of the evidences used to settle disputes. The officials undertook “an investigation close to the criminal investigation” to check the adequacy of boundaries to their layout on the map and determine the membership of the populations concerned, but in the end, they usually had to acknowledge an existing situation⁶⁰. The banner maps were therefore the result of a process of negotiation between the central authority, the reigning local prince, the chief of the league, and the Mongol herders.

Did boundary-ovoos also have a religious function?

Boundary-ovoos also served as assembly points for local authorities to discuss political and administrative issues. Did they also have a religious function, or were they only administrative devices? According to A. S. Pratte,

the memorials do not mention any kind of ceremony that would be held for the creation of the ovoos. This suggests that boundary ovoos did not have any religious or ritual signification and had a purely administrative function in the Qing. This point is reinforced by the use of the phrase *temdeg ovoo* (marker-ovoo) to designate the administrative ovoos. (Pratte 2019)

But Van Hecken (1960, p. 192) mentions a ceremony of inauguration of a boundary-marking *ovoo* consisting in tasting white [dairy] drink/food (*čayan idege*) to seal the agreement on a boundary line. According to Davaa-Ochir,

58 In 1739, a meeting that gathered an imperial emissary, the head of the confederation and the banner princes of the seven banners of Ordos aimed at delimiting the boundaries of the banners after a dispute; a map was drawn and each of the seven banner princes affixed his seal to signify his approval. The map was then sent to the Lifanyuan in Beijing (Mostaert & Cleaves 1956, pp. 85-86 et fig. 1). A map kept in the National Archives of Mongolia was drawn under the supervision of the chief of the Sečen qan ayimaγ in order to fix boundaries and boundary-marking *ovoos*, and represents only the boundaries between two banners (X.460, D.1, XH.24) (I thank A. S. Pratte for having sent me a photo of this map).

59 In one report, some sections of a boundary have not been clarified at the time the document was issued (Futaki 2005, p. 31).

60 “The rights conferred by a map could be called into question by a *de facto* situation. [...] The rights on a territory, though recognized by a map bearing the seal of the court of the *jasay*, were *de facto* legitimate only when they were accepted by the people living in that territory” (Constant 2010, p. 80).

The officials from the adjoining banners collaborately worshiped their boundary-*oboos*. Monks from the main monastery of a banner in pre-revolutionary Mongolia used to make a tour along the border of the banner with Kanjur, the collections of 108 volumes of the Buddha Sakyamuni's teachings, in order to convey the blessing of the Buddha's teachings to the supernatural and natural inhabitants of their territory. *Oboos* were erected on the hills and mountains along the Kanjur Circumambulation route. Today this ceremony is held by local monks in many places along the present borders of the district (*sum*). (Davaa-Ochir 2008, pp. 52-53, quoting Sühbat & Luvsan Darjaa 2004)

The territory of the banners was therefore circumambulated and sanctified by these processions, which typically were undertaken in case of epidemics. Hence, the boundaries of the banners acquired a concrete status, delimiting a recognized entity in people's mind. Anthropologist B. Lindskog (2016) recently observed in Mongolia (Arhangai Province) that the circumambulation of the boundary of the homeland (*nutuy*) marked the end of the *ovoo* offering: a truck loaded with sutras drove around the homeland to purify it against natural catastrophes such as devastating weather phenomena (*jud*). In Qing times, a sentence for criminals consisted in circumambulating the territory of the banner with irons. The boundary-marking *ovoos* "closed" the territory, with the function of encompassing, containing (fortune) and protecting the homeland (*nutuy*) against evil influences⁶¹; they formed a symbolic belt like the stupas, stone images and prayer-wheels on the circumambulation path that circled monasteries⁶². Hence, individually these boundary-marking *ovoos* may not have a religious function, but collectively they delimited a homogeneous territory that was recognized as such by people who inhabited it. The centralized administration of the banner with the banner's office (*yamen*), prince's residence, banner monastery⁶³ and banner *ovoo*, as well as boundaries marked by *ovoos* fostered a sentiment of common belonging to one's banner as one's homeland (*nutuy*). As Johan Elverskog argued in his book *Our Great Qing*, in the late-19th century, the Mongol banners defined by the Qing became sources of local identity, and this "banner localization" supplanted the pan-Mongol identity based on the imperial heritage (2006, p. 127). Although such sentiment of common belonging was non-existent in some banners, as Samuel Bass argues (this volume), this does not appear on banner maps, that show an ideal situation from the viewpoint of the banner administration.

61 The word *nutuy*, "homeland", designated both a family's seasonal pasturelands and the banner to which she belonged (Davaa-Ochir 2008, p. 50).

62 During the Mayidari/Maitreya festival in Mongolia, the procession of the Maitreya statue around the monastery's precinct has the function of protecting and purifying the monastery and renewing the pact with the territorial deities and the Buddhization of the land.

63 The banner monastery (*qosiyun-u küriye*) was the main and biggest monastery of the banner and had jurisdiction over the other monasteries and temples of the banner.

Boundary-marking ovoos and mountain-pass ovoos

We have little information on boundary-marking *ovoos*, which have theoretically disappeared with the administrative reorganization and the suppression of banners in 20th century-Mongolia⁶⁴. In mountainous territories, were they built on mountain summits (or slopes) or on mountain-passes? Both locations are depicted on banner maps, where boundary-marking *ovoos* are often called “peak *ovoo*” (*oroï-yin oboya*) or “mountain-pass *ovoo*” (*dabaya-yin oboya*). On the one hand, it would be logical to build them on elevated spots visible from afar; on the other hand, if erected at mountain-passes, they were immediately visible for those who crossed the boundary. It is possible that some *ovoos* which nowadays are located on mountain-passes, at the entrance of a valley and on roads and tracks (*dabayān-u oboya* and *jam-un oboya*) were former boundary-marking *ovoos*. When the herders seasonally move from one pasture to another, they usually circumambulate mountain-pass *ovoos* that delimit their seasonal pastures and mark the entrance to a different territory, and deposit offerings on them. This ritual is an act of declaring to the local deities that they are coming to a new pasture and asking protection for their family and livestock (Davaa-Ochir 2008, pp. 53-54). Because of climate and altitude, mountain-passes are dangerous to cross in winter⁶⁵; it is also believed that they are places of circulation of angry souls and ghosts of people who died of violent death⁶⁶. Like stupas, *ovoos* are built on these dangerous spots of mandatory passages to calm down angry spirits⁶⁷. Mountain-pass *ovoos* thus mark places at the edge of different geographic and symbolic worlds. Their localisation pattern is also related to a discourse of regulating access to pastures and other land rights. It is therefore logical that the Qing chose this object to delimit banners’ boundaries.

To sum up, the meaning of boundary-marking *ovoos* was, at least theoretically, fundamentally different from that of cult *ovoos*, but also had the religious function of protecting the territory of the banner and served as meeting points of the tangible and supernatural realms. Do banner maps always make a clear distinction between the two types of *ovoos*?

64 Banners were maintained in several parts of Inner Mongolia that were not turned into municipalities (*shi* 市) and districts (*xian* 县).

65 *Dabaya*, “mountain-pass”, also means “difficulty, obstacle”. When crossing mountain-passes, Tibetans use to cry “the gods are victorious!” As explained by Davaa-Ochir (2008, pp. 53-54), “a pass represents a geographic change, and *ovoo* rituals on the pass symbolise a passage or transfer from one state to another. A pass is the highest point along the travel route, where ‘the ascending joins the descending’ and a passage stands for the change of the season and the migrations of nomads, according to the seasonal changes”.

66 Quoting Dorémieux (2002), Hamayon (2020) contrasts “public” *ovoos* of mountain-passes, boundaries and other dangerous, liminal places, and “private” *ovoos* belonging to a pastoral community, located on mountain tops. The first are dedicated to roaming souls, especially souls of deceased who had a cruel death; every passer-by should make circumambulations and individual offerings. As for the second, they are dedicated to local deities (and, in Buryatia, ancestors), and are worshiped collectively. They often are of a difficult access and legitimize territorial rights on winter pastures. This clear dichotomy might function for Buryatia but the categorization of *ovoos* is not so clear in Mongolia.

67 On *ovoos* built to suppress bad influences, notably at the “mouth” of rivers and valley, on narrow mountain-passes (*kötöl*) or on “incomplete lands” (*keltegei yaĵar*): Humphrey 2001, p. 66. A narrow mountain-pass *ovoo* (*kötöl-ün oboya*) “is meant to suppress ‘bad influences’ coming up and down the defile” (*ibid.*).

Boundary-marking ovoos on banner maps

Boundary-marking *ovoos* are represented by very different kinds of symbols, but their name is always written near the symbol or attached to it by a dotted line. They sometimes have long descriptive names indicating elements of the boundary or explaining their location on a mountain, such as “summit *obo* located on the north side of a mountain”⁶⁸. In addition, precise indications are written near the boundary line such as the names of the adjacent banners, “bordered by the territory of” (*nutuy-luya jīqa neyilümüi*), and the directions and distances to places of the neighboring banners. The accompanying report (*čese*) also details the names of the boundary-marking *ovoos* and other elements of the boundaries, and the distances and directions separating each of the *ovoos*⁶⁹. Of course, the same boundary-marking *ovoos* are supposed to be depicted on the map of a banner and of those of its neighboring banners, which is confirmed by the comparison between maps of the same year⁷⁰.

Boundary-marking *ovoos* not only marked the boundaries between banners' territories but also the boundaries of the pastures of the relay-stations inside banners, as well as imperial hunting grounds and other “reserved” or “prohibited areas”⁷¹. Border-posts and *ovoos* delimited buffer zones to guard the external border of the empire with Russia, as well as some specific pastures. Let us examine how these different types of *ovoos* are represented on maps.

Ovoos delimiting a banner's boundaries with neighboring banners in Outer Mongolia

The main concern of the maps of Outer Mongolia is the clear delimitation of boundaries, to the point that some maps are reduced to a boundary line with symbols and names of *ovoos*, and are almost empty inside (see for example cat. 727)⁷². On many banner maps, mountain ranges, lakes and rivers form parts of the boundaries; these natural landmarks can be connected by a black dotted line or a continuous red or black line. Some maps do not show any boundary line but have isolated landmarks.

68 Alay ayula-yin qoyitu degere oboya (cat. 709); Barayun emüneki tala-du jīqa-yin oboya (cat. 732); Asayatu ayula-yin oroi-yin oboya (cat. 735).

69 Chagdarsurung (1975, pp. 31-59) translated and published a report (*čese*); Soninbayar transcribed a list of one hundred and twenty *ovoos* with distances between them (2012, pp. 77-81), and Futaki (2005) presents twenty-eight Qalqa boundary reports from the 1920s, which in addition to the list of boundary-*ovoos* also give information on pastures, banner history, and geographical features.

70 This is very clear on maps of the banners of Sečen qan, for instance the same names of boundary-*ovoos* but with a different numbering are found on the eastern boundary of cat. 734 and the western boundary of cat. 736 (both dated 1907). In Ordos, one can also compare cat. 851 or 852 (Qanggin Banner, see also Heissig 1944, p. 138 and pl. XIII), and cat. 840 (Vang Banner, see also Heissig 1944, p. 149 and pl. XIV).

71 In Qing Inner and Outer Mongolia, adjacent to – or included in – Mongol princely (*jasay*) and monastic banners, there were different kinds of land ownership such as imperial hunting grounds and pastures, Eight Banner pastures and relay station lands, as well as soldiers' livelihood plots. For Pratte (2021, p. 301), “contrarily to what the state would have hoped, the pastures at the postal stations were not strictly separated from banner land or the ecclesiastical estate”.

72 The 1890 mapping instructions required that the scale of maps was so small that it was necessary to remove most topographic elements (Pratte 2021, chapter 5).

The most remarkable maps with boundary-marking *ovoos* are those of the banners of two of the four Qalqa *ayimays*, Tüsiyetü qan and Sečen qan, on which almost all the boundary-markers are *ovoos* (from twelve to one hundred and twenty)⁷³. The great map of Sečen qan *ayimay* (cat. 733) has about three hundred boundary-marking *ovoos*. On the banner maps of this *ayimay*, the *ovoos* are all numbered, starting from the bottom or from the left, in the clockwise direction (or sun direction, *nara jöb*, like the way of circumambulation of temples and stupas), as are border-posts (on their maps, the Chinese number the border points in the other direction) (fig. 8)⁷⁴. On the maps of the banners of Tüsiyetü qan *ayimay*, *ovoos* are not numbered⁷⁵, but on six out of twenty-three maps, the banner is surrounded by a circle indicating the twenty-four directions⁷⁶ (the directions were all identified by the names of the twelve animals of the zodiac to locate *ovoos* in relation to one another; the number and directions of the boundary-marking *ovoos* rarely correspond to that of the circle) (fig. 1b). On twelve other maps, there is no circle but the texts are radiating from the center, as if there was one. Maps of the same banner drawn at different dates usually have the same *ovoos* at the same location, but later maps can add new boundary-marking *ovoos*⁷⁷.

Boundary-marking *ovoos* are depicted as small abstract symbols on the boundary line: small dashes or black or red dots, red circles, small rectangles, or small triangles with their name written near the symbol⁷⁸. On several maps of the banners of Sečen qan *ayimay*, their depictions are more pictorial: as small circles on top of a triangular shape symbolizing a mountain or as green mounds with a black outline resembling the mountains inside the banner as shown in fig. 9. Another of the abstract symbol for boundary-marking *ovoos* resembles a red flame or an almond-like shape located on the bordering mountains (fig. 20).

73 Sometimes with intermediary annotations; for instance, another symbol on the boundary is a Y-shaped mark, which is accompanied by a description of natural features and place-names forming the boundary (cat. 725). Boundary landmarks other than *ovoos* are called “temdeg” “mark, sign, symbol” on cat. 775.

74 According to the 1864 regulations, this system following the sexagenary cycle was supposed to replace the 24-directions system; in some cases, it forced mapmakers to place the southern direction on top of the map (Pratte 2021, chapter 4).

75 With the exception of a map of the banner of Namsarai (Tüsiyetü qan, cat. 729), and a map of the banner of Jönön Jäsaytu in Tüsiyetü qan (National Archives of Mongolia, X.460, D.1, XH.65) which also number their *ovoos*.

76 On the astrological system of twenty-four or forty-eight directions combined with eight colors, of both Indo-Tibetan and Chinese origin, and the compass rose (*qubiyari*), see Gonchigdorz 1970, pp. 56-61; Chagdarsurung 1975, pp. 347-350; Shagdarsüren 2003, pp. 15-28; Kamimura 2005, p. 18; Kollmar-Paulenz 2006, pp. 369-371.

77 Cat. 722 dated 1907, in Chinese only, has twenty-five *ovoos* but on cat. 723 of the same banner [no date], two *ovoos* were added.

78 On older maps of the Sečen qan *ayimay* (dated between 1843 and 1860) preserved in the National Archives of Mongolia, boundary-marking *ovoos* are depicted as two small pointed red triangles or a pile of three round stones, and a few cult *ovoos* are represented atop mountains inside the banner (X.460, D.1, XH.10; XH.14; XH.5; XH.12; XH.16, photos communicated by A. S. Pratte).



Figure 8. Boundary-ovoos numbered in the clockwise direction according to the sexagenary system, from the first to the twenty-sixth. Cat. 750 (Hs. Or. 158), map of the banner of Lhamu, Sečen qan (no date), detail: numbered ovoos depicted as red flames on the boundary line

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On the maps of banners of *Ĵasaytu qan ayimay*, *Sayin noyan qan ayimay*, *Qobdo* and *Uriyangqai*, as well as two maps of banners of Xinjiang, only a few boundary-marking *ovoos* are named and depicted, and large portions of the dotted lined boundary have no *ovoos*⁷⁹. The boundary-marking *ovoos* of the maps of the banners of *Ĵasaytu qan* and *Sayin noyan qan ayimays'* banners are located only on the borders with other *ayimays* or with the *Qobdo* frontier; often there are only two or three *ovoos* up to as much as thirteen⁸⁰. An explanation of the small number of *ovoos* may be the mountainous character of these western regions, with several mountain ranges (the *Altai*, the *Qangyai*), which may have made boundary-*ovoos* less necessary than in the open steppe and semi-desert regions of the *Sečen qan ayimay*. These boundary-marking *ovoos* are depicted as two elongated rectangles of different sizes,

79 For instance, a map of the three banners of the *New Torġuud* (cat. 675) has seven boundary-marking *ovoos* marking its circumference, and two *ovoos* delimiting boundaries between the three banners.

80 One map has no boundary-marking *ovoos*. When many papers with toponyms written in Chinese are pasted on the map, it is not easy to count the number of *ovoos*.

drawn directly on the boundary line or on a mountain or a pass⁸¹ (figs 6, 10). These two rectangles possibly represent two steles (fig. 7c)⁸².



Figure 9. Cat. 770 (Hs. Or. 143), map of the banner of Dūdten, Sečen qan, 1910, detail: numbered boundary-ovoos

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81 Two maps depict some *ovoos* as a round mound topped by two rectangles with two adjacent round summits, other *ovoos* of the same maps being depicted as two rectangles on high peaks (cat. 679, cat. 680, fig. 10b). A new symbol for boundary markers on a map of the first year of the People's Republic of Mongolia is a pole crowned by a round (map of Bayatur ʒasay Banner, Sayin noyan qan ayimay, 1921, National Archives of Mongolia, X.460, D.2, XH.313). I thank A. S. Pratte for having sent me a photo of this map.

82 On an old drawing of the town of Kiakhta facing Maimaicheng studied by Dear (2019), two stele-like vertical rectangles are drawn between the two towns.

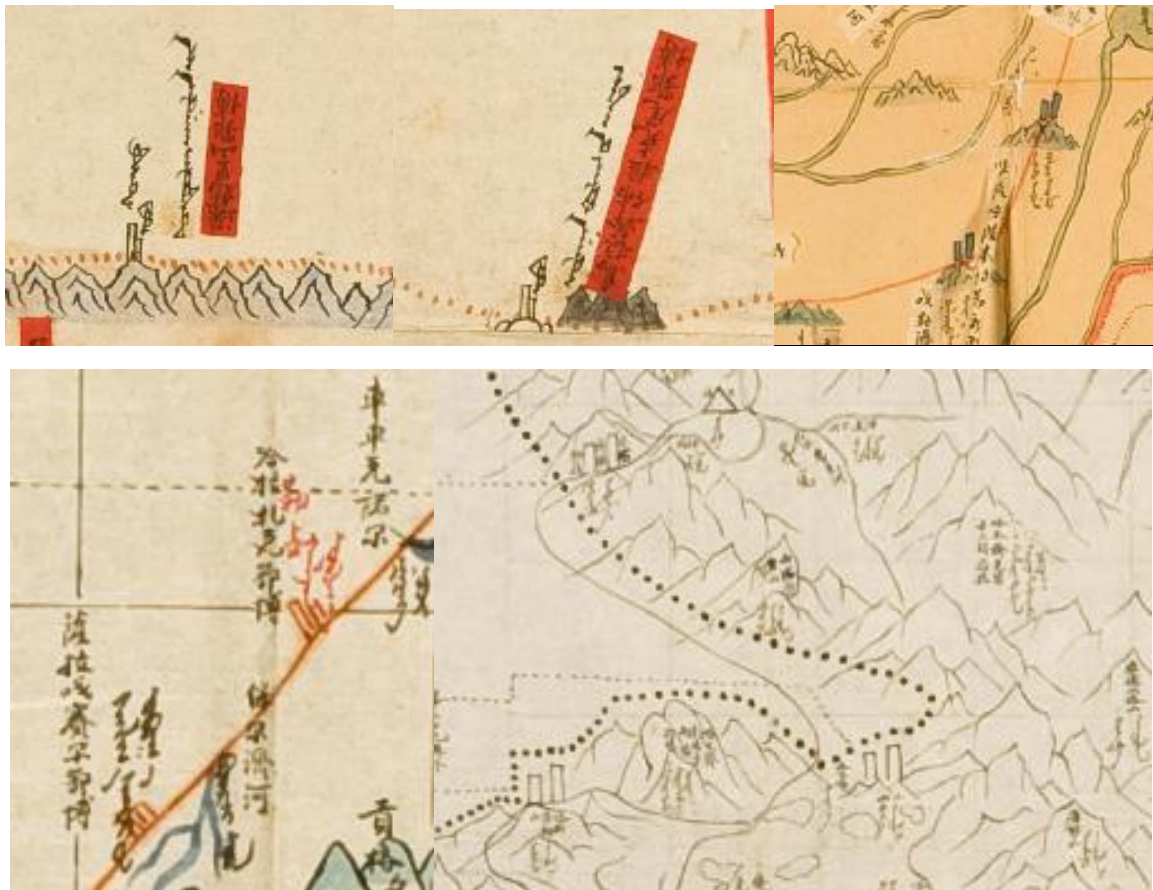


Figure 10. Boundary-ovoos depicted as two rectangles of the north-western frontier

a. cat. 679 (Hs. Or. 45), map of Mingyad, Qobdo Uriyangqai, 1907, detail; **b.** same map as Fig. 10a, detail (rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise); **c.** cat. 676 (Hs. Or. 123), map of the Left and Right banners of Altai Uriyangqai (Xinjiang), 1920, detail; **d.** cat. 689 (Hs. Or. 232), map of the banner of Manibajār, Jasaytu qan (no date), detail; **e.** cat. 685 (Hs. Or. 117), map of Tangnu, Qobdo Uriyangqai (no date), detail

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Ovoos delimiting a banner's boundaries with neighboring banners in Inner Mongolia

On maps of Inner Mongol banners, the banner often occupies the whole rectangular frame or the greatest part of it, as if the territory had a rectangular shape, and often, no boundary-marking ovoos nor lines are represented (fig. 1c). Mountain ranges, lakes and rivers, the Great Wall and palisades form parts of the boundaries. Maps of the banners of eastern Inner Mongolia have many place names marking their boundaries but few of them are names of ovoos. A map of Aru qorčīn Banner (cat. 805) has two drawings of brown mounds with tufts named “oboḡa” (fig. 11a) on its north-east, north and east boundaries which are similar to the drawings of cult ovoos with tufts inside the

banner⁸³, as well as eight small brown mounds without a tuft, also named “oboya”, on points of the boundary (fig. 11b)⁸⁴. These depictions of tuft-less mounds might be abstract symbols of boundary-markers, or rather drawings of big earth mounds like the boundary-marking *ovoo* on a photograph of south Ordos (fig. 7a). Besides, trees also seem to function as boundary-markers on fig. 11b.



Figure 11. cat. 805 (Hs. Or. 60), map of Aru qorčin Banner, Joo-uda, 1908

a. detail: upper right corner, brown mound with tuft called *oboya*; **b.** detail: lower right corner, brown mound called *oboya* near trees forming parts of the boundary

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Most of the other maps of Inner Mongol banners make no visual distinction between boundary-marking and cult *ovoos*, and use various degrees of abstraction. Naturalist drawings and mimetic symbols are common (figs 12b, 13b)⁸⁵. Big boulders on mountain summits may represent *ovoos* or

83 The eastern *ovoo* marking the boundary with Aru qorčin and Jarud Banners is guarded by a border-post (*qarayul*). Another *ovoo* of the eastern boundary is indicated by a Chinese inscription without a drawing.

84 Four of them are called in Chinese “northern *ovoos*” (Ch. Beifang ebo 北方鄂博) on the north-west boundary; four others are located near the southern river. In addition, six red dots on mountains on the south-west boundary might symbolize boundary-marking *ovoos*, even though they are not called “*oboya*”.

85 Fig. 12b shows each of the twelve boundary-marking *ovoos* as a mound topped with a flag located on a mountain, all connected by a dotted line (no other *ovoos* are depicted). Seven of the ten maps of Joo-uda have one, two to seven *ovoos* that are named and/or depicted with naturalistic drawings on bordering mountains or near bordering rivers, but it is not clear whether they are boundary-marking *ovoos* or cult *ovoos* (fig. 33). Cat. 840 (Vang Banner) has five boundary-marking *ovoos* depicted as cairns with a small tuft; fourteen other cairns without a tuft punctuate the boundary and are not called “*ovoos*” but “hill” (*toloyai*), “hill, low mountain” (*tegeg*) or “peak” (*oroi*) (see also cat. 841 of the same banner) (fig. 13b).

main mountain peaks (fig. 12c)⁸⁶. Sometimes there are only names of *ovoos* and no drawing⁸⁷. Maps of the banners of Ĵirim have no drawing or name of boundary-marking *ovoos*, but eight red circles or “flames” crowning mountains on cat. 782 and cat. 783 could symbolize boundary-marking *ovoos* (fig. 12a)⁸⁸.



Figure 12. Boundary-ovoos linked by a boundary line in Inner Mongolia

a. cat. 782 (Hs. Or. 58), map of Ĵalayid Banner, Ĵirim, 1907, detail; **b.** cat. 832 (Hs. Or. 35), map of the three banners of Urad, Ulayańĉab (no date), detail; **c.** cat. 826 (Hs. Or. 133), map of Sünid Right Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail

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86 On cat. 831 (Mayu mingyan), mountains are also topped by boulders but the four cardinal directions are marked by more naturalistic depictions of *ovoos* topped by a multicolored tuft.

87 On maps of the banners of Sili-yin yool and Ulayańĉab, there are many landmarks but few of them are *ovoos* (one to five *ovoos* on bordering mountains).

88 One mountain is called Pai-yin oboya; the others have names of mountains and cliffs (*ayula*, *qada*).

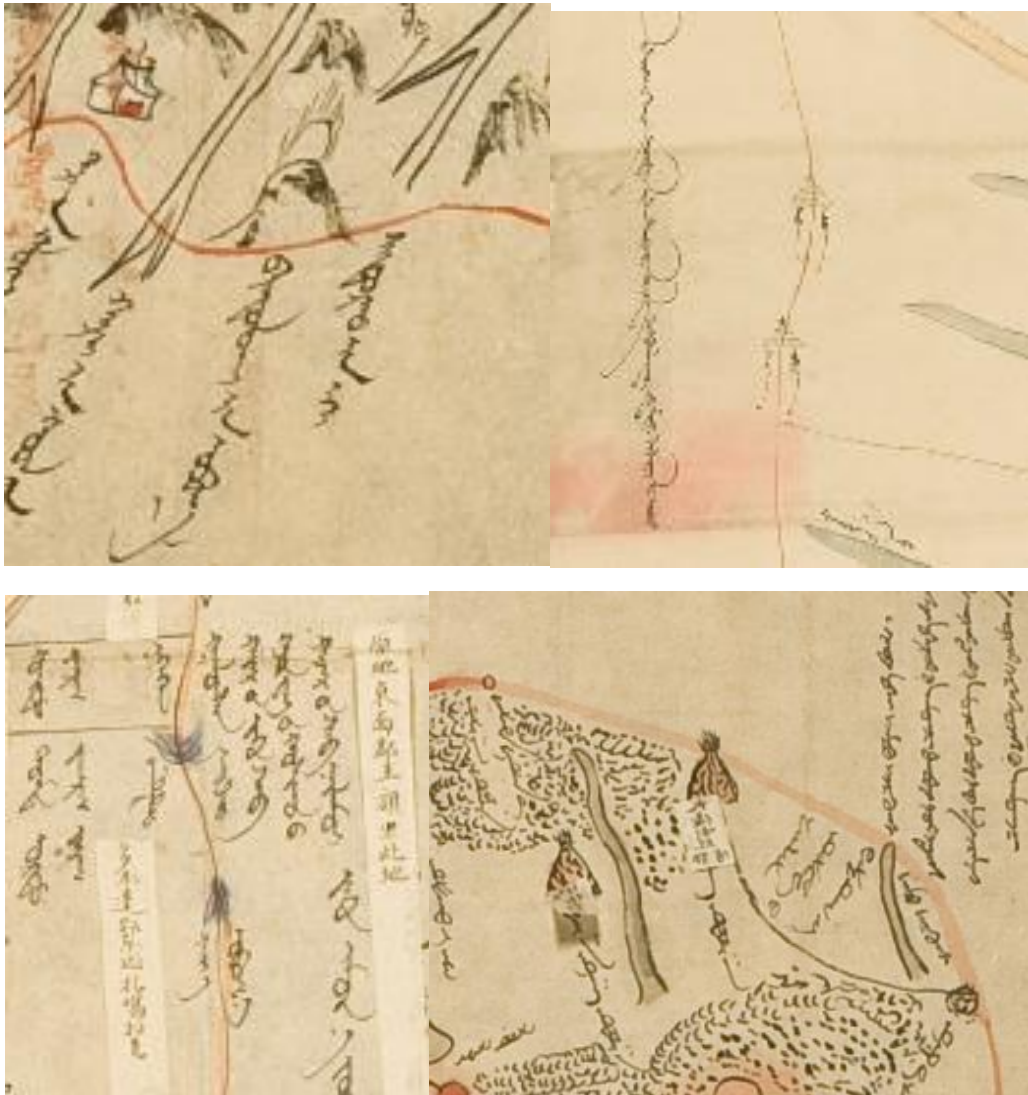


Figure 13. Boundary-ovoos of Ordos linked by a boundary line (their symbol is the same as that of cult ovoos)

a. cat. 834 (Hs. Or. 16), map of Dalad Banner, 1910, detail; **b.** cat. 840 (Hs. Or. 692), map of Vang Banner, 1909, detail; **c.** cat. 844 (Hs. Or. 125), map of Jasay Banner, 1910, detail; **d.** cat. 841 (Hs. Or. 15), map of Vang Banner, 1911, detail

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A map of Ejin yool (cat. 673) has two *ovoos* depicted as small tufts atop mountains on its border with Sayin noyan qan ayimay; between them are two mounds topped by two rectangles (possibly steles)⁸⁹, named Ulayan čongyi(?) and Barlarqai čongyi(?)⁹⁰ (fig. 14a).



Figure 14. Cat. 673 (Hs. Or. 50), map of Ejin yool Banner (no date), details

a. two *ovoos* on mountain summits and two *čongyi*(?) on the border with the Sayin noyan qan ayimay, and a cult *ovoo* (upside down): Boro oboya, on the lake's shore; **b.** three boundary-*ovoos* on mountain summits near the border with Alašan, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise

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Ovoos and border-posts of the northern frontier

The system of border guard-posts (*qarayul*)⁹¹ was established following the Treaty of Kiakhta with Russia, to control the Qing-Russian frontier. On maps of the northern frontier of the empire, border-posts are usually marked by an abstract symbol – a cross – with their name written next to it (figs 15b,

89 Tsenden-Ish ([1997] 2003, pp. 303-309) provides reproductions of images showing examples of various border points from different historical periods. Some of them include artificial, cubical mounts topped with steles. I thank the second anonymous reviewer for this reference.

90 On the map, *čongyi*(?) is translated in Chinese by *tan* 潭, “pool, depression”. The second anonymous reviewer suggests that *čongyi* may be a variant of *čongigiyal*, which gives in modern Cyr. Mo. *tsunhial* dangerous pool, or *tsonhiol*, deep, clear water of a river according to Süld-Erdene (2013).

91 By 1765, a total of 73 frontier border-posts had been set up along the Qalqa-Russian border. Each border-post was manned by 30 to 40 soldiers from the Manchu garrisons who “patrolled along the border every day to the *oboo* between *karuns*”, they were also inspected once a month by Manchu garrison generals who reported to the Lifanyuan, and occasionally, by officials from the Lifanyuan (Bulag 2012, pp. 40-41). Some of them included a temple. About the administration and organization of the border-posts: Baoyinchaoketu 2005, pp. 151-153; Constant 2010, p. 75; Chuluun 2014, p. 124; Dear 2019; Wang 2021.

16)⁹². Some maps focus on the frontier buffer zone guarded by border-posts between the Qing and Russian empires⁹³. The general map of the ǰasaytu qan ayimay (cat. 688) shows the buffer zone between the Qing and Tangnu Uriyangqai, with seven crosses indicating border-posts linked by a dotted line (fig. 16)⁹⁴. Four other crosses indicate border-posts on its southern part, and fifty-two-rectangle signs symbolize boundary-marking *ovoos* on its other borders.

Devon Dear (2019) writes that there were no *ovoos* at border-posts but border-posts alternating with *ovoos* along the border⁹⁵. This is obvious on the south border of cat. 685 (four banners of Tangnu) with Qobdo-Dörbed Left and Right Banners, where eighteen crosses written “qarayul” (border-post) alternate with twenty-seven single-rectangle symbols (possibly representing a stele) called “ovoo”; this line of border-posts and *ovoos* (along with two relay-stations) crosses the southern part of the banner (fig. 15b). Its northern border with Russia is marked with thirteen two-rectangle *ovoos*; its eastern border with the Darqad monastic estate (Šabi)⁹⁶ of the ǰebčündamba qutuytu has neither *ovoo* nor border-post⁹⁷. On a map of the banner of Čedengdorǰi (ǰasaytu qan, cat. 693), two crosses symbolize two border-posts that delimit a buffer zone with the Köbşgöl frontier (fig. 1a, top left of the map).

Another abstract symbol can represent both boundary-marking *ovoos* and border-posts: two rectangles of different sizes (maps of Qobdo and Uriyangqai, and two maps of Xinjiang)⁹⁸. Cat. 687

92 On maps of the Sečen qan ayimay of the first half of the 19th century, the line of border-posts is doubled by a line of *ovoos* (A. S. Pratte, personal communication).

93 A map reproduced by Chuluun (2014, pp. 116-117) represents the buffer zone between Tüsiyetü qan ayimay and Russia. The territories of Tangnu Uriyangqai and the Köbşgöl frontier were located outside the buffer zone of border-posts (cf. Chuluun 2014, pp. 116-117).

94 This map represents nineteen princely (*ǰasay*) banners and three monastic banners; the southern banners of the *ayimay* in the Gobi desert are not represented. According to the second anonymous reviewer of this article, “Zh. Gerelbadrah calls this area ‘ger haruulyn nutag’ [territory of border-posts] on the map of his 2016 book. It is marked as a narrow stretch of land spanning along the northern border of the three ayimays from the Qobdo frontier to Sine Baryu and separating them from the Köbşgöl frontier and Uriyangqai. This stretch of land is marked by *qarayuls* in rather even distances (their frequency increasing towards the east), all of them named. Starting from the west these are marked as: [in Cyr. Mo.] Bayanbulag, Hachig, Zaigul, Shavar, Agar, Tsagaan bulan, Beltes bulan, which matches those on cat. 688” (Bayangbulay [Bayanbulay], Qačın (or Qačiy), ǰayıyul, Sabar, Ayar, Čayangbulung [Čayanbulung] and Beltes or Biltas, Bildas).

95 For S. Chuluun, *ovoos* were also built at border-posts (2014, p. 117).

96 *Šabis* were lay families of serfs who belong to the estate of a reincarnated lama (*qutuytu*) “with a seal”. The ǰebčündamba qutuytu had the largesy estate, known as the Yeke Šabi.

97 See another map of Tuva: Chuluun 2014, p. 103.

98 A map of the Dörbed left and right banners of Qobdo (cat. 683) has six two-rectangle white symbols called “obo” on the boundaries with other banners of Qobdo and ǰasaytu qan, four or five white two-rectangles called “qarayul” on its northern border with Tangnu Uriyangqai, seven crosses named “qarayul” on a parallel northern border with Tangnu Uriyangqai (delimiting a buffer zone: these may be the border-posts of Tangnu), and four blue two-rectangle named “qarayul” outside of its western border with the Russia (see also the uncolored map cat. 684). Texts explain that in 1869 the border with Russia north of the Galutu Lake was moved to the south, and the former border-posts are painted blue. The general map of Sayin noyan qan (cat. 702) has thirty-six boundary-

(Uriyangqai of Köbsgöl Lake) has thirteen two-rectangle boundary-marking *ovoos* circling its borders (including the border with Russia)⁹⁹ and nine two-rectangle border-posts on two lines that cross the banner (fig. 15a). A banner map of Altai Uriyangqai (cat. 676, dated 1920) highlights new and older borders with Russia following two territorial transfers with Russia in 1869 and 1883 which are explained in the Mongolian and Chinese inscriptions. The new borders are marked by a red line (western border, 1869) and a red dotted line (1883 northern border); the twelve active border-posts and *ovoos* are marked by two-rectangle symbols painted in white¹⁰⁰, while the eleven former border-posts of the older borders are painted in blue (Heissig & Sagaster 1961, p. 348) (fig. 10c).



Figure 15. *Qarayuls* and *ovoos*

a. cat. 687 (Hs. Or. 29), map of Köbsgöl nayur Uriyangqai, Qobdo Uriyangqai (no date), detail: *ovoos* (two rectangles on mountain tops) and *qarayuls* (a cross and two rectangles linked by a red line); **b.** cat. 685 (Hs. Or. 117), map of Tangnu, Qobdo Uriyangqai (no date), detail: border-posts (crosses) alternating with *ovoos* (rectangles) along the southern border on the banner

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marking *ovoos* (depicted as two rectangles) on its circumference, except in its south-western part where five border-posts (depicted as crosses) form what seems to be a buffer zone (border with *Ĵasaytu qan*).

99 On the border with Russia the inscriptions read: “Oros man-u Uriyangqai ene(?) *jiqa kiĵayar neyilegsen gür[...?] dabaya-u [dabayan-u] oboĵa*” (“*ovoo* of the *Gür[...?]* pass delimiting the border bewteen our Uriyangqai and Russia”); “*Tadayadu Oros ulus. man-u Uriyangqai ĵiqa kiĵayar Nüngtü neyilegsen dabaya-u [dabayan-u] oboĵa*” (“*ovoo* of the pass delimiting *Nüngtü*, the border between Outer Russia and our Uriyangqai”), and so on.

100 Five are called “*qarayul*”, six have no name and one is called “*obo*”.



Figure 16. Cat. 688 (Hs. Or. 162): map of the Jāsaytu qan ayimay, 1908, detail showing the buffer zone with Tangnu Uriyangqai, with crosses indicating border-posts

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Ovoos marking boundaries of special territories inside banners

Ovoos also demarcated special territories inside banners. First, they marked the boundaries of the territory of the relay-stations (*örtege*). Relay-stations were especially numerous on the road linking Qobdo to Uliyasutai and Yeke küriye/Urga; trade caravans followed the same roads.¹⁰¹ Two maps of the Berlin collection represent a line of relay-stations inside banners; *ovoos* mark their boundaries (cat. 731: from Yeke küriye¹⁰² to Kiakhta, cat. 732: part of the route to Kalgan); each relay-station has eight to twelve *ovoos* around its territory¹⁰³. But the scale of maps depicting banners and groups of banners was too small to depict the territory of relay-stations¹⁰⁴, that were usually symbolized by

101 Relay-stations were located about 30 km from each other. Travelling on post roads was easy and fast as the travellers got fresh horses at the relay-station, and could spend the night there. The Urga-Kalgan-Beijing post road connected with the Uliyasutai-Kalgan post road at the station of Sayir Usu (in present-day Dundgov' Province, Ölzit District, Mongolia).

102 Yeke küriye, known to the Russians as Urga, Cl. Mo. < Örgöge, 'residence' [of the pontiff]), was the monastery-palace of the Jēbčündamba qutuγtu. It became modern Ulaanbaatar.

103 Relay-stations were manned by conscripts and their family; thirty-five were operated by the Qaračin and twenty by the Qalqa. Some of them had a temple. On their organization, maintenance, and station duties: Pozdneyev [1971 & 1977] 2006, pp. 12, 124, 181, 258, 280. According to Pozdneyev, the stations of the Kalgan-Uliyasutai post road moved south every year for the winter to a distance of about 40 km.

104 This is not the case of a map of Vang Banner in Ordos (cat. 841): the territory of a relay-station is delimited by a line inside the banner but no *ovoos* are depicted.

triangular signs connected by a dotted line (similar to that of the banner's boundaries) on maps of Qobdo-Uriyangqai and the Qalqa *ayimays*¹⁰⁵.

A second kind of special territory inside banners is the imperial hunting ground. Imperial hunting grounds belong to the category of forbidden territories (*qoriy*, *čayaǰalaysan* or *čayaǰilaysan yaǰar*)¹⁰⁶. *Čayaǰalaysan* or *čayaǰilaysan yaǰar*, more specifically, designates a “territory of unique imperial importance, such as the imperial hunting grounds and the lands rich with sable on the border with Russia”; they were patrolled by imperial guards (High & Schlesinger 2010, p. 7). Henry Serruys translates an excerpt from the *Lifanyuan zeli* 理藩院則例 (Tuojin and Yue Xi, comp., code published in 1817, cited in the 1895 edition, 10.43a):

Boundary marks [*fengdui*, i.e. *ovoos*] to be set up (around) reserved pasture lands: every Mongol Banner shall dig (holes) and erect landmarks [*fengdui*] on the boundaries of reserved pasture lands and draw up a book stamped with the (Banner) seal to be kept in the files. The (Banner) *ǰasay* concerned shall inspect them personally once a year and add his final observations (on the book) and forward it to the (Li-Fan) Yiüan. (Serruys 1974, p. 83)¹⁰⁷

On a map of Üjümüčin Left Banner (cat. 807) in Sili-yin yool league (Inner Mongolia), the eastern part of the banner has the shape of a large forested mountain named “Soyolǰi uula [ayula]”, topped with a small mound-like symbol evoking an *ovoo*. This triangular shaped territory actually does not belong to the banner: it is an imperial hunting ground which is delimited by twelve red circles containing the word *obo* connected by a red line on its two “slopes”, and eight other red circles containing the word *qarayul*, border-post (fig. 17a). It is as if the whole territory was the mountain (see also fig. 17b, a later map of the same banner).

During the Zunghar (ǰegün yar) conflict (1687-1757), around 1689, the Lifanyuan ordered to erect border-posts to allocate new pastures to Qalqa refugees in the Urad banners (Ulayančab, Inner Mongolia) (Bello 2015, p. 129). In the process of negotiation between Mongol herders, Han cultivators and the Qing government, border-posts were also erected to delimit land north of the Great Wall

105 On older maps, relay-stations are symbolized by rectangles (see map M002 dated 1892, kept in Japan, Kamimura 2005, p. 3). On the maps of the banners of Sečen qan and of Inner Mongolia, relay-stations are named but have no specific symbols (cat. 782), or are represented as a simple house symbol (cat. 785, cat. 787), and are not connected to each other.

106 *Qoriy* designates territories where it was forbidden to hunt, cut trees, graze herds, cultivate the land and even penetrate. These areas included grounds of monasteries and princely residences, sacred mountains, gold mines, cemeteries, and imperial reservations.

107 The original text writes: 蒙古各旗封禁牧場,各於界址處挖立封堆,造具印冊存案。該札薩克每歲親查一次,加結報院。如有私開侵占者,照例治罪。

which was rented or allocated to Chinese migrants in Ordos (Otoy, Üüsin, ĴasaĴ, Vang, Jungyar banners)¹⁰⁸. Agricultural lands are visible on a few banner maps but are not demarcated with *ovoos*¹⁰⁹.

To sum up, there are two different visual modes of representing boundary-marking *ovoos*, either as an abstract symbol such as a red mark, flame, or rectangles, which, as will be shown, clearly differentiate them from cult *ovoos*, or as a pictorial mimetic symbol which often does not differ from the depiction of cult *ovoos*. Their exact locations and their names, along with additional information such as distances between them, appear as one of the most important pieces of information on banner maps.



108 Wang (2019, 2021) studies the Chinese colonization of Ordos: a first boundary was set up by the Lifanyuan to separate grazing from farming in south Ordos after the banner prince of Otoy Banner had petitioned the Lifanyuan in 1719, at 15 km north of the Great Wall, marked by mounds of soil or wooden signs. “As the migrants continued to advance northward, in 1743, a new border was delineated 25 km north of the Great Wall, which was known as ‘50-li Boundary’”. It was marked by *ovoos* (*paijie* 牌界, or *paizha* 牌柵) “at an interval of 1.5 to 2.5 km in between, beyond which line no cultivation was permitted [...]. In the end, what was intended as a buffer zone was to become a pioneer belt and indeed, a launching board for Han migrants” (Wang 2019, p. 135).

109 Enclosed areas opened to Chinese cultivation (identified by an inscription) are visible on maps of Vang Banner in Ordos (cat. 839 and 840, both dated 1909) (see Heissig 1944, pp. 148-149).



Figure 17. *Ovoos* (depicted as red circles on the two “slopes”) and *qarayuls* (depicted as red circles along the bottom line) delimiting an imperial hunting ground

a. cat. 807 (Hs. Or. 55), map of Üjümüčin Left Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise; **b.** cat. 809 (Hs. Or. 86), map of Üjümüčin Left Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1907, detail, rotated 90 degrees counter-clockwise

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Cult *ovoos*

The banner maps also depict and name a number of *ovoos* on mountain summits inside the banners. *Ovoos* to worship water spirits (*luus-un takilya-tai oboya*) near rivers (*yool-un oboya*) and springs (*rasiyan-u oboya*, *bulay-un oboya*)¹¹⁰, near lone or oddly shaped trees, special rocks and so on, are much less often depicted than mountain *ovoos*. We may assume that the mountain *ovoos* were cult *ovoos* serving as altars or seats (*sayudal*) to worship master-spirits of the land: all over Mongolia in the modern period, communities were generally based around a sacred mountain dominating the valleys, and propitiated local deities with seasonal sacrifices at an *ovoo* erected on its summit or highest slopes. The ritual aimed at obtaining the favors of the ambivalent local deities – primarily, rain for pastures and fertility for flocks and herds –, and at asking them not to cause calamities. These territorial cults were central to the life and social and political organization of Mongol communities. However, it is not clear whether all these *ovoos* were actually worshiped, or if some of them just functioned as specific landmarks rather than religiously important monuments.

Mountain cult *ovoos* are depicted with many different symbols upon mountains; they are often mimetic drawings that can be reduced to a cone or a tuft¹¹¹; they can also be abstract symbols marking a mountain, such as dots, dashes, or poles, but the symbols of two rectangles or abstract symbols without a mountain are never used for cult *ovoos* (figs 2, 3, 5).

110 They are worshiped by people from the same area using the same water source (Davaa-Ochir 2008, p. 51).

111 Two maps of the Qorčin Bingtū vang Banner have a curious *ovoo* (cat. 789: pagoda-like stack of rocks and cat. 790: mound with a hummock and a kind of square window); it is the only *ovoo* of the banner.

Banner *ovoos* (the main, officially worshiped *ovoos* of a banner) and many other *ovoos* often consisted of thirteen *ovoos* with twelve cairns forming a cross according to the four cardinal points with the bigger *ovoos* in the middle, or twelve cairns in a line with a bigger one in the middle¹¹². But they were not depicted or named as such: banner maps only depict one (sometimes three) *ovoos* per mountain (see also fig. 30 that depicts the many *ovoos* of Bandida gegen süme [fig. 3c] as one *ovoos*).

Mountains and cult *ovoos*

Mountains (*ovoos*) are important elements of banner maps¹¹³. While on the same map, the majority of mountains seem to be depicted with the same conventional, mimetic drawing (sometimes with variations in height and color)¹¹⁴, some are depicted according to their real shape, sometimes with distinctive features¹¹⁵. Map painters were influenced by Buddhist painting and treatises of geomancy in the depiction of landscape (Pratte 2021: 267-276). A curious mountain of the Qaračın Left Banner has a human face (Ĵosoto, cat. 794)¹¹⁶.

The mountains of a few maps of Sečen qan are distinguished by their size, the pointed or flat shape of their summit (cat. 740, cat. 741, cat. 753) and the presence or absence of snow (cat. 761, cat. 762). In the middle of two maps of the banner of Navangsikür (cat. 734 and cat. 735) is a remarkable white (snowy?) mountain topped with a circle resembling a boulder marking its top, while other mountains are green: it is the great Kengtei qan ayula¹¹⁷, the highest mountain of the banner (fig. 5a). Outstanding mountains are often surmounted by one or more *ovoos*, and are depicted as higher than the others; they are usually qualified by the terms *boyda*, “holy, sacred”, and *qayiraqan*, “sacred, merciful,

112 Such as the thirteen *ovoos* of the Altai and the thirteen *ovoos* of the Toryuud in western Mongolia, the thirteen *ovoos* of the Qatigin in eastern Mongolia, and the thirteen *ovoos* of the Darqad in northern Mongolia (Davaa-Ochir 2008, p. 62; Gerasimova 1981). Humphrey (2001, p. 62) describes a banner *ovoos* of the Urad in Inner Mongolia with thirteen cairns in a line, “Threaded among the stones of the main cairn is a long rope of strips of ox-skin, which symbolizes the belt holding together the scattered people of Urad”.

113 As mentioned above, in many cases “*ovoos*” can designate “mountain”.

114 In some cases, it is difficult to know if the alternately rounded or pointed shape of mountains is decorative (cat. 725 and cat. 726, Tüsiyetü qan) or if it is supposed to reflect the actual shape or type of a mountain. Red-brown and blue colors, with snow-capped peaks on some of them, are alternatively used for marking mountains on cat. 677.

115 According to Qing regulations, all the mountains must be represented from the south (as in Chinese cartography). But Kamimura showed that some are seen from another direction to emphasize their particular shape (2005, p. 19 and fig. 3).

116 As expressed by Caroline Humphrey: “for Buryats like other Mongolic people have an acute awareness of the inherent capacity for meaning of mountains, cliffs, rivers, or prominent rocks or trees – their shapes, orientation, reflection of sunlight, and likeness to human or animal images (2016, p. 108, see also Humphrey 1995, pp. 144-145; Humphrey & Onon 1996, pp. 86-88).

117 Cyr. Mo. Hentii han Mountain in present-day Hentii Province, Mongolia.

beloved”¹¹⁸. Flat-topped mountains were particularly venerated in Mongolia because they represented the perfect altar; they were called “sirege”, “throne, altar” or “dösi”, “anvil”¹¹⁹ (fig. 18).

The great majority of banner maps of the Tüsiyetü qan and Sečen qan indicate a number in the measurement units *yaĵar* and *qubi* following a mountain's name and the word for “high” (*öndör*). These figures obviously do not indicate mountain's elevation above sea level because they are usually too big if we consider that 1 *yaĵar* is equivalent to 576 m (figs 18b, 22b). For instance, Mount Kengtei qan is 2 800 m above sea level, but the maps cat. 734 and cat. 735 write “Kengtei qan ayula öndör 15 *yaĵars*”: the “height” of Mount (Hentii) is “15 *yaĵars*” (i.e. around 8 640 m) (fig. 5a). I suggest that these numbers give the approximate distance that needs to be covered for one to actually reach the peak. On maps having a great number of *ovoos*, it appears that these inscriptions usually mark the highest mountains (in Mongolia, height does often determine which peaks are considered “more” holy). For instance, on cat. 767 and cat. 768, all the mountains for which the “height” is specified are crowned by a red tuft, the highest one, Bayanmöngke ayula, being 4 *yaĵar* “high”; five of the twelve other mountains with an *ovoo* are 3 *yaĵar* “high” (fig. 19). On cat. 761 and cat. 762 (banner of Gombosurun), the highest mountains are marked by a tuft or a yellow dot. Often, *ovoos* therefore seem to mark the highest mountains of a banner.

Number of cult *ovoos* in banner maps

According to the region, the number of cult *ovoos* that are depicted varies significantly from one map to the other. The maps of western Mongolia, Ĵasaytu qan and Sayin noyan qan do not depict *ovoos* inside banners, but many mountains are called “oboĵa” (cat. 711 for instance). Conversely, mountain *ovoos* are especially numerous on the maps of Sečen qan ayimay: a fourth to half of their mountain summits are topped with an *ovoo*. On cat. 768 (banner of Dorĵijab; see also cat. 767), nineteen mountains have an *ovoo* on their top, that is, almost all the mountains (fig. 19)¹²⁰. Cult *ovoos* are also particularly numerous in Ĵoo-uda, Sili-yin ĵool and Ordos leagues¹²¹. Maps that also have a large number of monasteries superimpose the two sacred geographies, the number and size of *ovoos* and

118 Although sacred mountains were usually called “qayiraqan” because it was forbidden to pronounce their names, no such taboo apparently existed for writing them.

119 For instance, a mountain of Qayučid Left Banner with a flat top is called “Dösi ayula”, “anvil mountain” (cat. 812). They are sometimes called “anvil” because it is said that Chinggis Khan or another great giant hero used it as an anvil to forge supernatural weapons: the mountain used to be peaked, but because of the smiting of the sword it became flat (Birtalan 2005, p. 303).

120 Three of these mountains are called “ovoo”: Čayan oboĵa, Delger oboĵa and Tuĵul oboĵa.

121 Cat. 806 (Ĵarud Right and Left Banners) and cat. 805 (Aru qorčin) have respectively eighteen and eleven *ovoos* that are both depicted and named (fig. 32). On cat. 816 (Abaya Left and Abayanar Left Banners), out of about seventy mountains or mountain ranges, twenty-one have an *ovoo* depicted on their summit. On cat. 829 (Dörben keüked) and cat. 830 (Qalqa, Ulayančab) respectively ten and twelve mountains inside the banner are topped by an oval-shaped *ovoo*: in both cases, it is the large majority of depicted mountains. On maps of banners of Ordos, each banner has one to nine *ovoos* on mountain summits; there is such a profusion of place names and drawings that it is sometimes difficult to count *ovoos*. On cat. 846 and cat. 847 (Üüsin Banner, Ordos), most of the blue mountains are topped with an *ovoo* (the other mountains are of a yellow brown color) (fig. 23).

monasteries being comparable¹²² (fig. 32b). Different maps of the same banner can show very different numbers of cult ovoos¹²³.

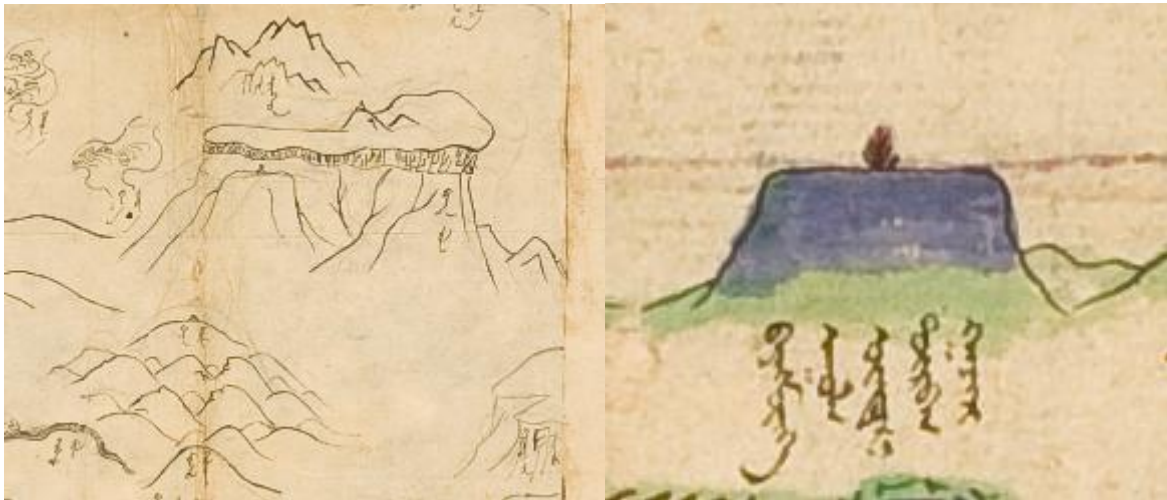


Figure 18. Flat-topped mountains with an ovoos

a. cat. 820 (Hs. Or. 130), map of Abaya Right Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail: “Boγda ula [ayula]”; **b.** cat. 768 (Hs. Or. 141), map of the banner of Dorjjab, Sečen qan, 1910, detail: “Bayanmōngke ayula, 4 yajār high”

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Half of the maps of banners of Ĵirim League, where many Qorčĭn Mongols practiced agriculture, depict relatively naturalistic ovoos: Mongol farmers probably continued to worship their ovoos. Vreeland (1962, p. 180) wrote about the difficulty of moving ovoos when Mongols of the Čaqar banners were pushed to the north by Chinese farmers: “family ovoos could be moved, but it was a costly business, and people preferred to make long trips into Chinese territory to visit their ovoos rather than to move the ovoos into Mongol territory”. Banner maps of Ĵosoto (Inner Mongolia) have very few or no cult ovoos, perhaps because in this league where Chinese immigrants were numerous, parts of the land were used for Chinese farming (of course the absence of representation of ovoos does not mean there were not ovoos in a banner).

122 Three maps of Otoy Banner (Ordos: cat. 848, cat. 849 and cat. 850) show four cult ovoos, six monasteries and a stupa: the twin ovoos named Qoyar erketü oboya are in the center of the map. Cat. 335, cat. 336 and cat. 837 (Ĵüngyar Banner) depict fourteen cult ovoos and sixteen monasteries. Cat. 847 shows eight cult ovoos and seventeen monasteries.

123 While cat. 803 (Bayarin Right and Left Banners, 1907) depicts eleven ovoos, cat. 804 drawn a year later shows the same mountains, monasteries, pagoda, trees and bridge but only one ovoos. A map of Üĵümüčĭn Left Banner (cat. 809, 1907) shows about eighteen mountains with a tuft on top, but two other maps of the same banner show fewer ovoos (cat. 807, 1901, cat. 808, no date). While cat. 818 (Abayanar Right Banner, Sili-yin yool) depicts nine ovoos on mountain summits (out of a total of twenty-one mountains inside the banner, and twelve mountains on the boundaries), cat. 819 of the same banner depicts only three. This is not explained by the date or the language of the map.

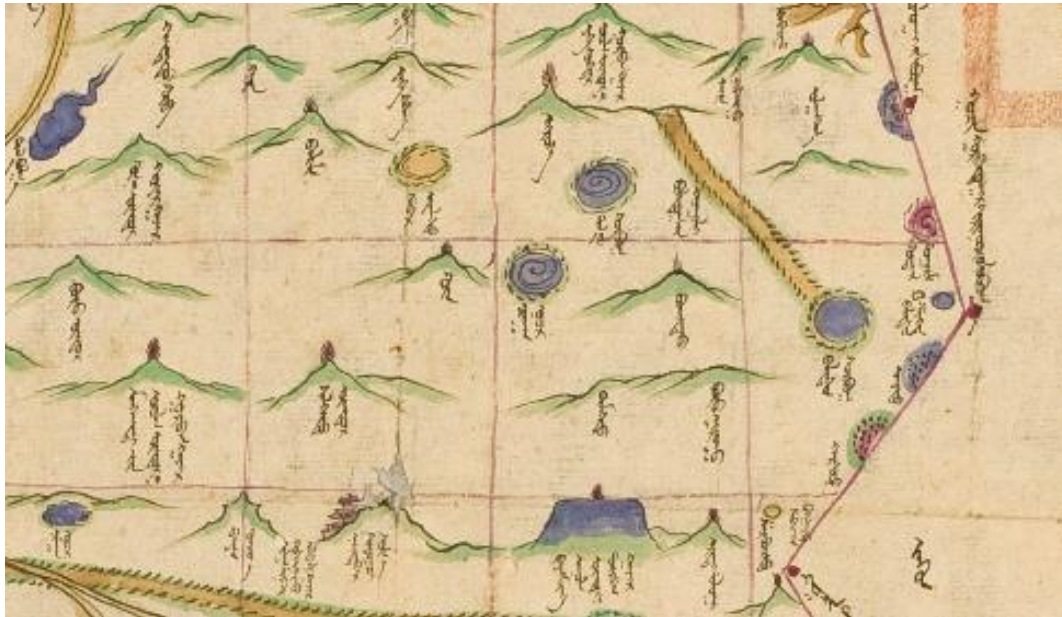


Figure 19. Cat. 768 (Hs. Or. 141), map of the banner of Gadan, Sečen qan, 1910, detail

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Cult ovoos located on a banner's boundaries

On most of the maps of Inner Mongol banners, the same symbol is used for both boundary marking and cult ovoos¹²⁴, hence it is not always clear whether ovoos marked along a border are boundary-marking ovoos, cult ovoos, or both. Conversely, maps of the banners of Sečen qan ayimay make a distinction between boundary-marking ovoos and cult ovoos, either by using a different symbol or by a detail marking a difference. For instance, on cat. 773 (banner of Sangsarayidorji), the boundary-marking ovoos are depicted as small mountains or mounds topped with a red dash symbol while mountains inside the banner are crowned by a black dash or a triangle. On a map of the Čeringnima Banner in Sečen qan (cat. 778), a red almond crowned by a kind of tuft suggesting an ovoos is depicted on Qan ayula, the highest mountain inside the banner¹²⁵ (fig. 20b). Along the boundary, boundary-marking ovoos numbered from one to thirty are depicted as red flames¹²⁶. Another ovoos depicted as a red circle topped by a tuft crowns a bigger mountain located right on the border with Kōlön Buir League. This mountain, Soyolji ayula, is clearly distinct from boundary-marking ovoos; its ovoos has no number, it certainly is a cult ovoos (fig. 20a). On its left slope are two uncolored almonds – the left one being the first numbered boundary-marking ovoos –, and on its right slope, a red flame is the thirtieth boundary-

124 An exception is the depiction of ovoos and border-posts (*qarayul*) as red circles that delimit an imperial hunting ground on three maps of Üjümüčin Left Banner (cat. 807, cat. 808 and cat. 809, see above).

125 On cat. 779 (same banner, in Chinese only, no date), the distinction between boundary-marking ovoos and tufted ovoos is less clear; perhaps the Chinese who copied the map did not understand this distinction. On cat. 777 (dated 1907) and 779, two ovoos without number are added on the south boundary (they do not appear on cat. 778 dated 1910).

126 The mountains and cliffs of these maps are represented by a mimetic symbol: a central blue mountain flanked by two lower red mountains.

marking *ovoo*. Therefore, this mountain had its own cult *ovoo* but also marks the border with Kōlōn Buir: it is the starting point of the numbering of border-markers (fig. 20a)¹²⁷. The big tuft differentiates cult *ovoo*s from boundary-marking *ovoo*s.

On cat. 686 (Darqad monastic estate [*šabi*] of the Ĵebčündamba qutuγtu in Qobdo Uriyangqai), boundary-marking *ovoo*s are symbolized by yellow pointed triangles¹²⁸. On the north-west boundary, an outstanding blue mountain called in Chinese “Alagahada” has a yellow pointed triangle on its top, which is identified as the “twelfth Alagahada ebo”: it belongs to boundary-marking *ovoo*s but also seems to be a sacred mountain (fig. 21a).

On two maps of Ĵaqačīn Banner (Qobdo, cat. 677 and cat. 678), a mountain called “Qoyitu sengkir-yin oboo” topped with a big boulder is located just outside the north-west boundary: it may be a cult *ovoo* used as a major landmark (fig. 21b). A mark suggesting an *ovoo* (big red dot, high pole) crowns a liminal mountain of two maps of Qorčīn Ĵasaytu qan and Tūsiyetū qan Banners in Ĵirim League (cat. 785, cat. 787). All these cases might be examples of a cult *ovoo* located on a high mountain that is also used as a boundary-marking *ovoo*, recalling the *ovoo*s built on outstanding mountains at the edges of Buryat pasturelands (*nutuγ*) described by Caroline Humphrey (2016) in Buryatia.

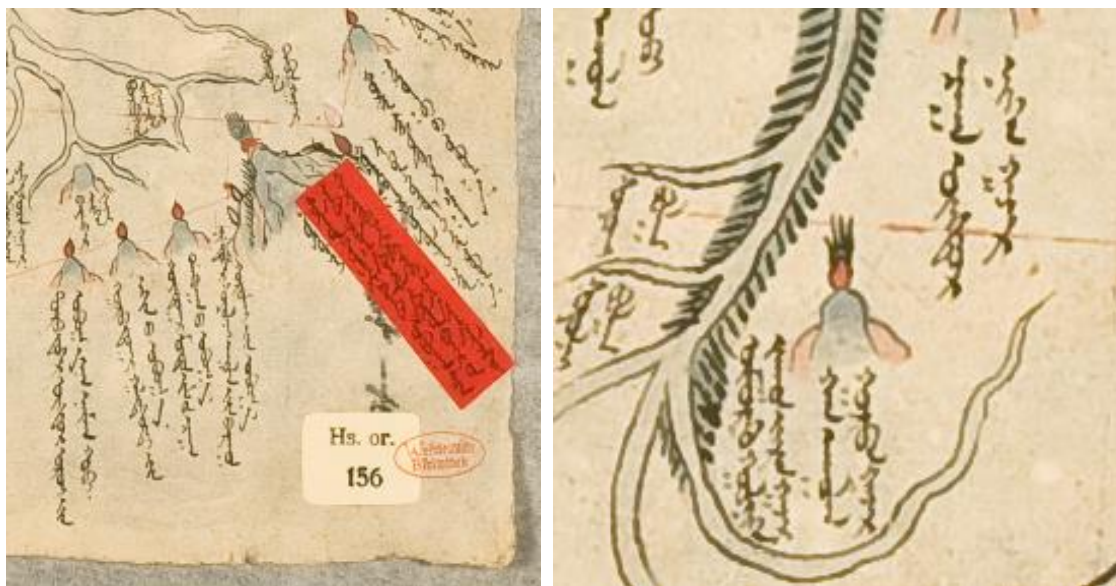


Figure 20. Cat. 778 (Hs. Or. 156), map of the banner of Čeringnima, Sečen qan, 1910, details

a. Mount Soyolĵi ayula surrounded by boundary-*ovoo*s on the border with Kōlōn Buir League; **b.** “Mount Qan ayula, 3 *yajar* high”

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127 See also cat. 777 and cat. 779.

128 Cat. 686 belongs to the family of banner maps of Sečen qan ayimay (use of a grid, numbered *ovoo*s and indication of distances between the *ovoo*s).

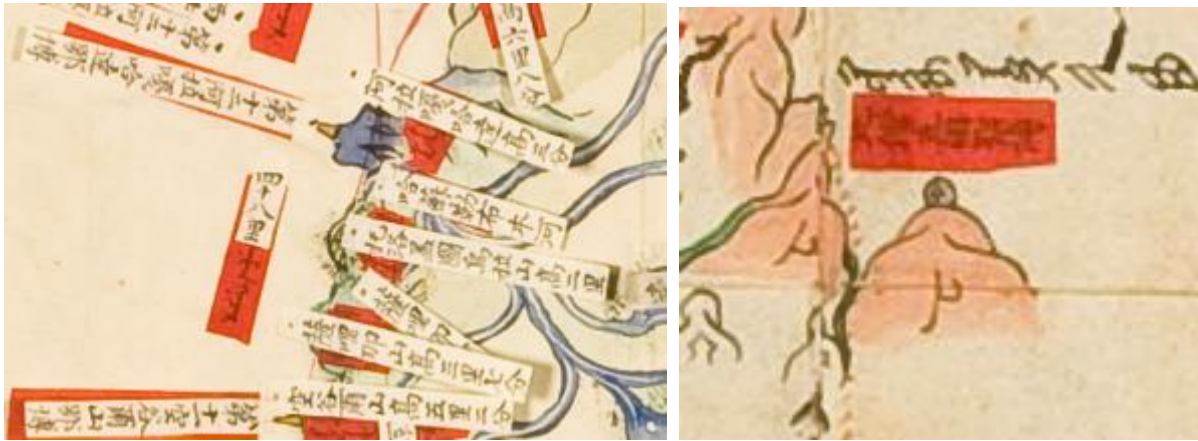


Figure 21

a. cat. 686 (Hs. Or. 39), map of Darqad monastic estate (*šabi*) of the Ĵebčündamba qutuytu, Qobdo Uriyangqai, 1907, detail: the name of the *ovoo* (“twelfth Alagahada ebo”) is written from right to left; the name of the mountain (“Alagahada, 3 *fen* high”), from left to right; b. cat. 677 (Hs. Or. 47), map of Ĵaqačin Banner, Qobdo Uriyangqai, 1907, detail: Qoyitu sengkir-yin *ovoo*

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The banner's main sacred mountain and banner *ovoo*

Mountain-cult *ovoos* can be classified according to their territorial and communal importance, from private *ovoos* of family groups and small communities (such as *ovoos* of patrilineal clans [*otoy oboy-un oboya*] in Buryatia) located on their winter pastures, near the tombs of their ancestors, to *ovoos* worshiped by larger communities, such as banner *ovoos* in Qing Mongolia, *ovoos* of monasteries, Qan (“king”) *ovoos* in Buryatia¹²⁹, and official *ovoos* of the sacred mountains of the Qalqa that received a state official cult¹³⁰.

In the Qing period, every banner had a main sacred mountain (*qosiyun-u takilya-tai ayula*) with an *ovoo* called “banner *ovoo*” (*qosiyun-u oboya*) on one of its highest peaks: the banner was an autonomous entity fixed on a particular territory with its own sacred landscape (*nutuy*). This *ovoo* represented the banner as a whole. The ruling prince (*ĵasaγ*) presided over the banner *ovoo* ritual that gathered the banner's central administration and its subunits¹³¹. This ritual was an important occasion

129 In Buryatia, after having worshiped their private *ovoo*, the men of all the related lineages would join together and go to the highest mountain of the vicinity, called “Qan”, for a common sacrifice. Being so high, the highest mountains are difficult to access, and they are located on the edges, bordering the territories of different communities (Humphrey 2016).

130 An official Qing “state” cult to the four mountains circling Yeke küriye (Urga) started in the late 18th century; it was extended to other great mountains and rivers (such as the Orqon), which were honored as kings and granted titles and ranks, levies, allowances, and herds. This state cult continued in the Boyda qayan period.

131 The banner's subunits also worshiped their specific *ovoo*. Banner and banner' subunits' *ovoos* are comparable to present-day *ovoos* of districts (*sumu*, which is more or less equivalent to a banner in Qing period Qalqa Mongolia) and sub-districts (*baγ*) levels.

for the reaffirmation of his political power¹³². It was generally held in conjunction with a banner assembly at which important affairs were resolved (Bulag 2010, p. 175). The monks of the “banner monastery” officiated during the *ovoo* ritual, which was generally followed by a festival (*naγadum*, “three manly games”) to entertain the local deities. The banner *ovoo* was built and repaired by members of the banner as part of their *corvée* civil obligations (Vreeland 1962, p. 180). It was called “the spirit-*ovoo* of the banner” (*qosiyun-u sülde oboγa*) (Davaa-Ochir 2008, p. 15):

For example, the Shinechuudiin *Ovoo* at the Avzaga Khaikhan Mountain was the main *oboo* of Bishrelt Gün Banner of Tusheet Khan Aimag [...]. The main *oboo* worshipped by the inhabitants of a whole banner was considered the spirit of the banner and the main shrine of the people. The main *oboos* in the banner were therefore called *altan oboo* [*altan oboγa*] (‘golden *oboo*’) or *suld oboo* [*sülde oboγa*] (‘spirit *oboo*’). (Davaa-Ochir 2008, p. 50)¹³³

On the banner maps of the Berlin collection, Haltod (1966) recorded only three occurrences of *ovoos* called “banner *ovoo*”¹³⁴, and eight occurrences of “Altan obo/*oboyā*”¹³⁵.

Some maps have one prominent mountain, topped with an *ovoo*: we can assume that it is the banner’s sacred mountain with the banner *ovoo*; sometimes it is the only mountain-cum-*ovoo* shown on a map. On a map of the Old Toryud of Xinjiang (cat. 674) which has a disproportionately big *ovoo*, we may ask why this particular mountain has been chosen while other mountains are more imposing (fig. 2a). On other maps, the highest mountain with the biggest *ovoo* stands among many others mountains-cum-*ovoos*. In some cases, what seems to be the most prominent mountain-cum-*ovoo* is located in the center of the banner: the mountain named Öljeitu ayula crowned by a piled rock *ovoo*, south of the banner prince’s residence on cat. 759 and cat. 760 (fig. 22); the highest, blue mountain with a big *ovoo* of cat. 847 (Üüsin) (fig. 23) and the Jibqulangtu čayan *oboyā* of cat. 837 (Jüngyar, in the middle of the map) (fig. 24). On a map of Ejin yool (cat. 673), there is an *ovoo* on an outstanding vertical central mountain, Bayan jirüke (fig. 26), and a second one, Boro *oboyā* north of Lake Sub *naγur*¹³⁶ (fig. 14a). Cat. 810 and cat. 811 (Üjümüčin Right Banner) have a big mountain (Öljitü [Öljeitü] *uru oboγa*) crowned by an *ovoo* depicted as a mound topped with a tuft and pole, located near the center of the map, just north of the banner prince’s encampment, while other mountains called “*ovoo*” (“*oboyā*” or “*oboyatu*”) are topped with a big boulder (fig. 25a). Evans and Humphrey write that the site of the banner *oboo* “was presumably chosen for being central in the Banner’s territory” (2003, p. 203). The main sacred mountain and its *ovoo* may also be depicted near the center on the map to construct a more auspicious narrative.

132 Vreeland 1962, p. 127 (Čaqar Taibas/Taipusi pastures); Evans & Humphrey 2003, p. 201 (Urad, Ulaγančab); Davaa-Ochir 2008, p. 15 (Qalqa Mongolia); Bulag 2010, p. 175 (Darqan beyile Banner, Ulaγančab).

133 On the ritual at the three banner *ovoos* on the three summits of the Muna mountain range, by the rulers of the three Urad Banners: Humphrey & Ujeed 2013, pp. 76, 195-196, 322-323.

134 Qosiyun *oboyā* near the banner monastery (cat. 807), Qosiu-yin *oboyā* (cat. 757, cat. 758); Qosiu obo (cat. 851, cat. 852, cat. 853).

135 In Ordos: cat. 842-845, cat. 847, 851-cat. 853.

136 Boro *oboyā*, Grey/Brown *ovoo* might be the name of the mountain, which is brown colored, thus producing a more isomorphic symbol for the mountain.

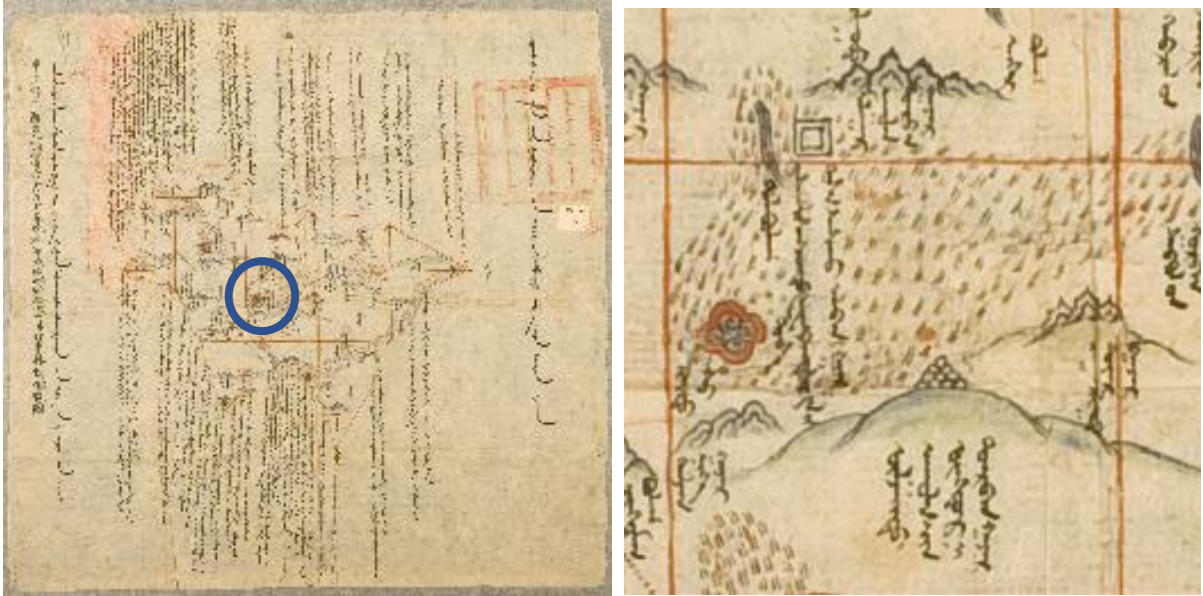


Figure 22

a. cat. 759 (Hs. Or. 12), map of the banner of Lubsangčoyidubayvvangpeljeyidasičerin, Sečen qan, 1907; **b.** detail of the same map: Öljeitü ayula, 4 yajar high (with an ovoid of piled stones); above, the double square indicates the residence of the banner prince (jasay)

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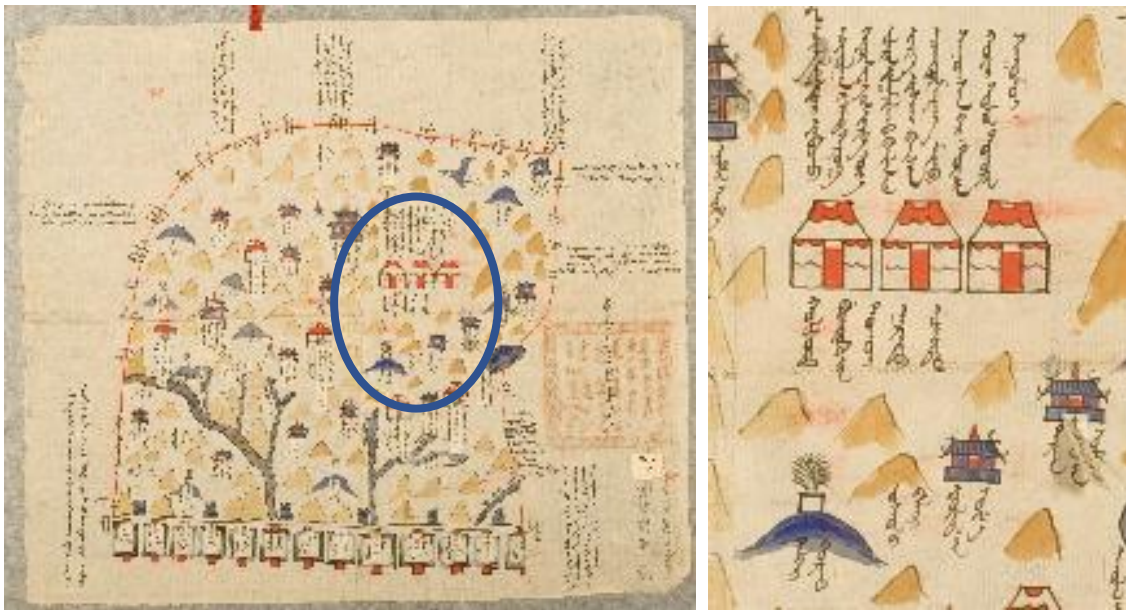


Figure 23

a. cat. 847 (Hs. Or. 14), map of Üüsin Banner, Ordos, 1910; **b.** detail of the same map: Delger quraqu (Mount Delger) crowned by an ovoid (bottom) and the three tents of the banner prince's encampment

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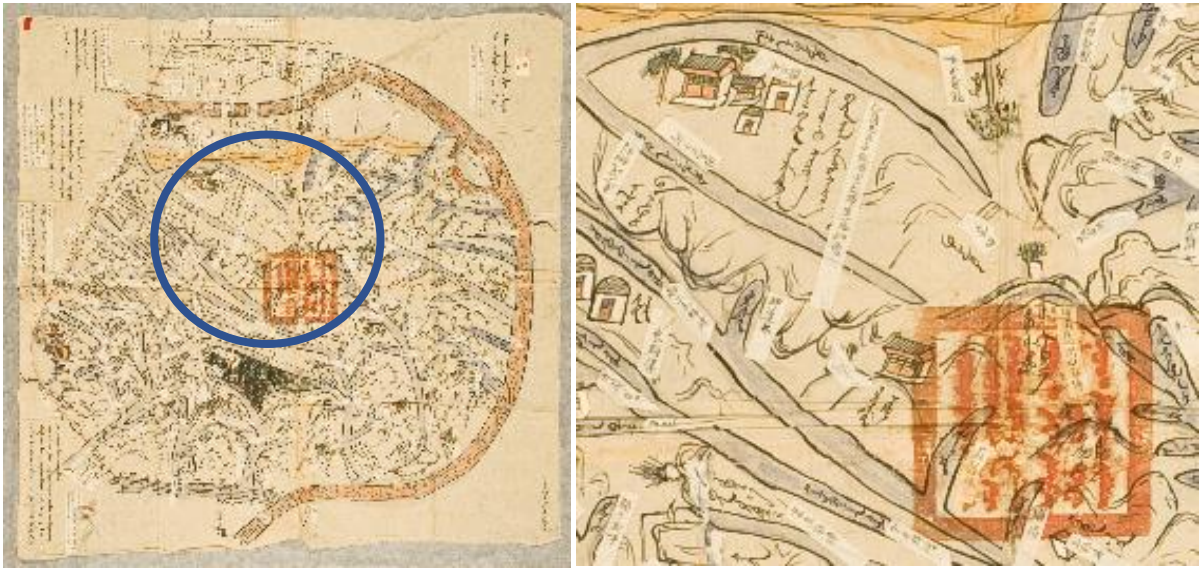


Figure 24

a. cat. 837 (Hs. Or. 18), map of Jüngyar Banner, Ordos, s. d.; **b.** detail of the same map: Jibqulangtu čayan oboya (just above the seal) and residence of the banner prince with trees (top left)

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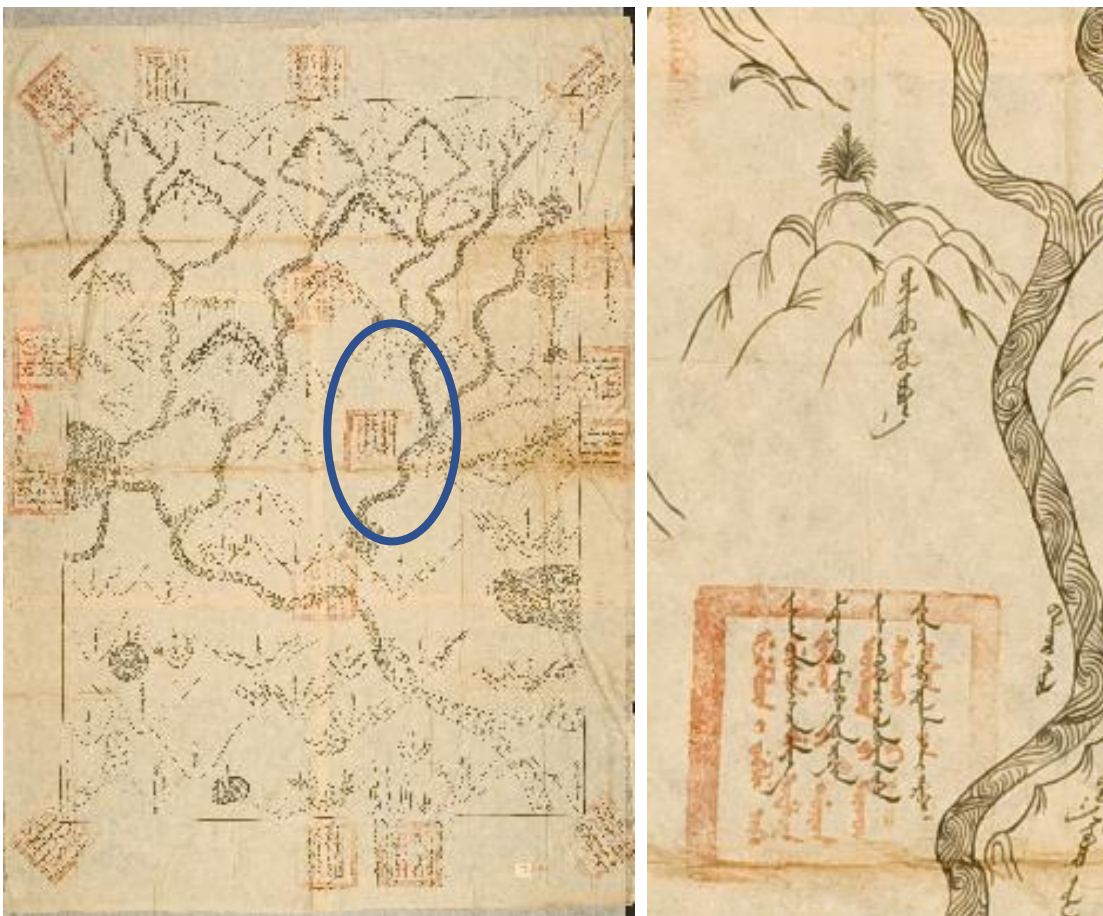


Figure 25

a. cat. 810 (Hs. Or. 135), map of Üjümüčin Right Banner, Sili-yin ʧool, 1890; **b.** detail of the same map: Öljitü uru oboya (top) and inscription identifying the banner prince's encampment (bottom, written in black ink under/inside the seal)

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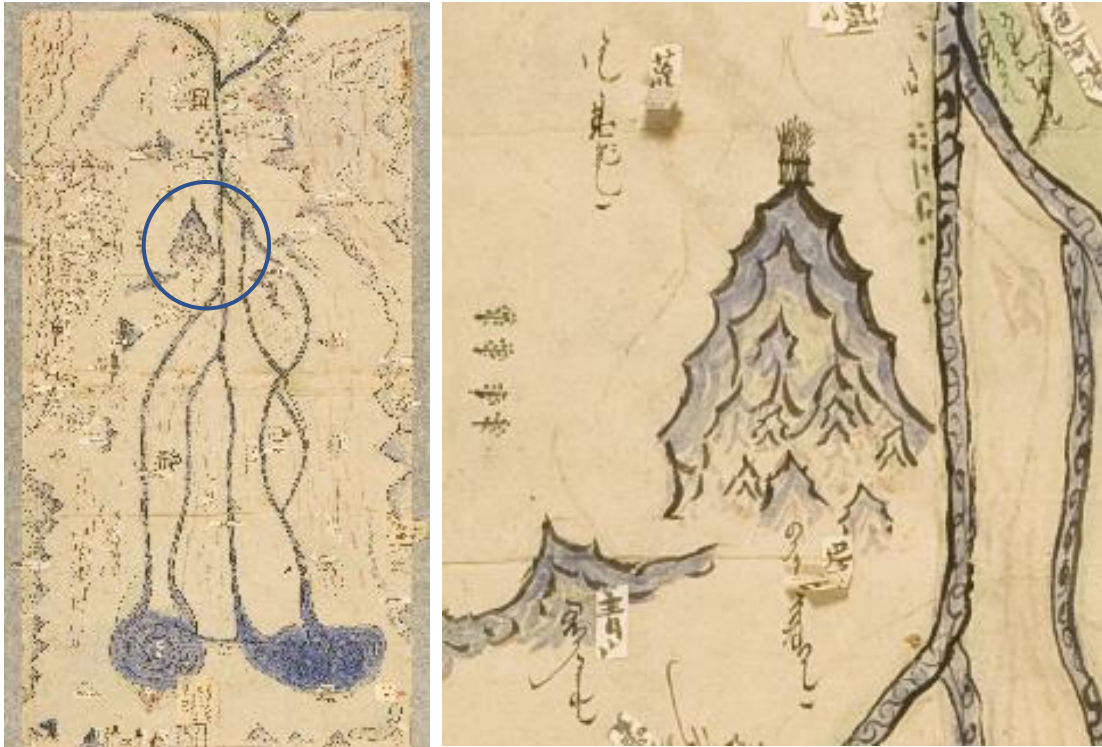


Figure 26

a. cat. 673 (Hs. Or. 50), map of Ejin ʧool Banner (no date); **b.** detail of the same map: Mount Bayan jirüke

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On several banner maps, prominent mountains located near the center of the banner are crowned by a big round boulder that may designate the main sacred peak or the main *ovoo* of the banner (or both). For instance, a map of the banner of Navangsikür, Sečen qan (cat. 735) with the Kengtei qan Mountain (fig. 5a); a map of Tümed Banner in ʧosoto (cat. 793¹³⁷); a map of Ongniyud Left Banner (cat. 801: Bayan oboo¹³⁸) and a map of Čoqor Qalqa Banner in ʧoo-uda (cat. 797: Dalu-yin ayula); a map of Sünid Right Banner (cat. 826 and cat. 828: Bayan oboya; nearby is an inscription indicating the settlement [*nutuyal*] of the banner prince [*ʧasay vang*]) (fig. 27).

137 In the lower left part of the map there is another mountain with a smaller boulder on its peak, behind a monastery, Gayiqamsiy (?) süme/Huibao(?)si 會保寺.

138 The same map has an *ovoo* depicted in a more naturalistic way.

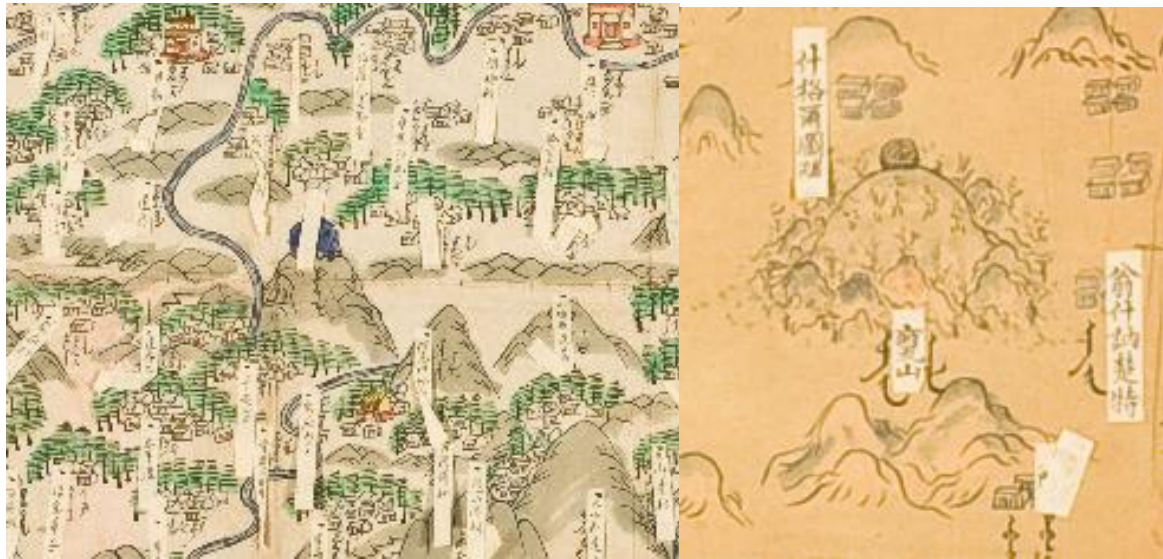


Figure 27

a. cat. 797 (Hs. Or. 25), map of Čoqor Qalqa Banner, Joo-uda, 1907, detail: mountain topped with a blue boulder (bottom) and residence of the banner prince (top); b. cat. 793 (Hs. Or. 23), map of Tümed Banner, Josoto, 1907, detail

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One of the most important element of banner maps is the palace or encampment and banner administration (*yamen*) of the banner prince, or, for monastic banners, of the reincarnated lama.¹³⁹ It is not clear which seasonal location of the encampment is depicted when the residence was mobile. On banner maps, the prince's palace or encampment is often located in or near the center of the map, not far from the banner's monastery, symbolizing the union of politics and religion (*qoyar yosu*, "two laws" or "two systems"). Kollmar-Paulenz (2006, pp. 371-372) partially attributes the map's centrality of administrative and religious establishments to Chinese cultural influence onto Mongol cartography. Although some banners may have had a centrally located banner prince's seat or monastery, in other cases, the political seat may have been moved to the map's center for auspicious reasons.

In some cases, when we can identify the main sacred mountain, the residence of the banner prince is located in its proximity (figs 22- 25, 27a). It can also be backed by a smaller mountain (geomantical rules prescribe that palaces and temples should be built at the foot or on the southern slope of a mountain). On a map of Jarud (cat. 806, Joo-uda), three buildings of the residence of the Imperial prince of the second rank (*jasay törö-yin giyün vang*) stand at the foot of a mountain with a big *ovoo*, Erdeni čoyca ayula (fig. 28a). On cat. 814 (Qayučid Right Banner), the name of the palace of the banner prince (not depicted) is written at the foot of a great mountain with an *ovoo*, in the center-right part

139 A few Chinese-style palaces were preserved in both Mongolia and Inner Mongolia. For a description of a banner's administrative office: Pozdneyev [1971 & 1977] 2006, pp. 10-11.

of the map (fig. 28b). On cat. 830 (Qalqa Banner, Ulayančab) a mountain topped with an oval-shaped *ovoo* towers above the inscription indicating the banner prince's palace and temple¹⁴⁰.

More sources are needed to document how the location of a banner *ovoo* and a main sacred mountain were chosen, and if spatial proximity to the banner *ovoo* was one of the criteria for choosing the location of the banner prince's palace or encampment. The communal worship of a major sacred mountain was primarily related to issues of land worship and physical features of a mountain, and the choice of a banner *ovoo* was certainly linked to the degree of "sacredness" of a given mountain (regardless of its location), but we cannot exclude that in some cases, the administrative divisions did influence the status of certain sacred mountains and the designation of "the" banner *ovoo*, preferably near the center of the banner. An example is given by Tamirjavyn (2017): when the imperial pastures of Dariganya were established in 1696, their leaders built the administrative center in Yeke bulay Valley and chose to worship the highest peak in the vicinity area, Dasilüng Mountain (Cyr. Mo. Dashlün), as the main sacred mountain. They ordered to erect a great altar complex consisting of thirteen big stone *ovoos* on Dasilüng Mountain. The local herders had to carry stones over a distance of 10 km and opposed to the construction; they lodged a complaint to the governor of Kalgan and eventually won, obtaining that their "traditional" sacred mountain, Dari oboya, be worshiped as the main sacred mountain of the Dariganya pastures. Caroline Humphrey also writes that the banner *ovoo* "could be moved from place to place to accommodate to the political situation" (2019, p. 181).



Figure 28

a. cat. 806 (Hs. Or. 106), map of Jarud Left and Right Banners, Joo-uda, 1919 (drawn after a map dated 1907) (rotated 90 degrees clockwise), detail: residence of the *jasay törö-yin giyün vang* at the foot of Mount Erdeni *čoyca ayula*; **b.** cat. 814 (Hs. Or. 128), map of Qayučid Right Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1901, detail: seal and text indicating the location of the residence of the banner prince at the foot of a great mountain

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140 See also a map in the banner of Qurča vang in Sečen qan ayimay dated 1913, with the residence of the banner prince in the center, and below it, a mountain with *ovoo* named "Altan oboo", National Archives of Mongolia, X.460, D.2, XH.3).

Ovoos of monasteries

Before building a monastery, lamas travelled over the mountains and through the valleys to find the ideal place according to geomantic prescriptions and pragmatic considerations (near a river, with southern exposure, sheltered from the northern winds, etc.). A typical auspicious location was the southern slope of a mountain or hill (Charleux 2006, pp.155-159). The monastery then erected an *ovoo* to worship the *genii loci* of the mountain or hill. Monasteries' *ovoos* are depicted on many maps (figs 29-30). On cat. 816 and cat. 817 (Abaya Left and Abayanar Left Banners), the Sayin-i erkilegči süme (Ch. Chongshansi 崇善寺), i.e. the great Bandida gegen süme/Beizimiao 貝子廟 is backed by the Erdeni oboya (fig. 30; see fig. 3c), and the Soyol-i badarayuluyči süme, by the Delger oboya¹⁴¹. On cat. 720 (banner of Pungčuyčering, Tüsiyetü qan ayımay), a red marked spot crowns Qan ayula, i.e. Mount Boyda qan¹⁴², south of Ĵibjündamba (Ĵebčündamba) qutuıtu's Yeke küriye/Urga (fig. 31). This red spot probably is the Čeče güng Peak¹⁴³ with the Čeče güng-ün qural, a small temple dedicated to the worship of mountain gods and Chinggisid ancestors¹⁴⁴ (Teleki 2011, pp. 258-261)¹⁴⁵.

141 On cat. 816, the mountains-cum-*ovoo* are depicted but the monasteries are just named.

142 Cyr. Mo. Bogd han Mountain, south of Ulaanbaatar.

143 Cyr. Mo. Tsetse gün.

144 Boyda qan was the most important of the four mountains protecting Yeke küriye. On the map, south of the great massif of Boyda qan is the Buyan ĵalbarayči süme, a monastery which was located on one of its slopes. The Čeče güng-ün qural was a separate establishment, independent from this monastery visible on the map on its south.

145 Other examples include, in Qalqa Mongolia: cat. 775 and 776 (Dorĵipalmu, Sečen qan: three monasteries backed by a mountain-cum-*ovoo* in the center of the banner), cat. 737 (Tungyalay, Sečen qan). In Ĵoo-uda, cat. 802 (Kesigten Banner: Qotala belgetü süme, fig. 33); cat. 803 (Baĵarin Left and Right Banners: Bayasqulang amuyulang süme and Qotala belgetü süme dominated by a high peak with three *ovoos*); cat. 805 (Aru qorčin: Ĵigergentei oboya of the Sayin-i erdeni bolĵayči süme and an *ovoo* on the Boyda ayula behind the Bayasqulang čiyulyuči süme); cat. 806 (Ĵarud: two *ovoos* on the mountain range [Moıai-tu qada] "behind" Örosiyel-i badarayuluyči süme); in Sili-yin ĵool: cat. 821 (Abaya Right Banner: Sangdu oboya "behind" Kisig-i degdelegči süme), cat. 807 (Üĵümüčin Left Banner: Bükü örosiyeltü süme).



Figure 29. Monasteries backed a mountain or hill with ovoo

a. cat. 775 (Hs. Or. 13), map of the banner of Dorjipalmu, Sečen qan, 1907, detail; **b.** cat. 768 (Hs. Or. 141), map of the banner of Dorjijab, Sečen qan, 1910, detail; **c.** cat. 737 (Hs. Or. 90), map of the banner of Tungyalay, Sečen qan, 1910, detail; **d.** cat. 821 (Hs. Or. 116), map of Abayanar Right Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1907, detail

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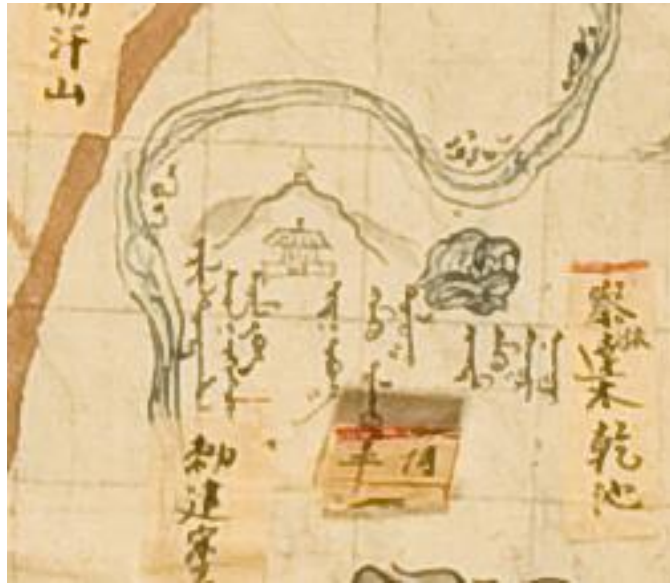


Figure 30. cat. 817 (Hs. Or. 53), map of Abayanar Left Banner, Sili-yin yool, 1907, detail: Erdeni oboya and Sayin-i erkilegči sūme or Chongshansi (=Bandida gegen sūme/Beizimiao)

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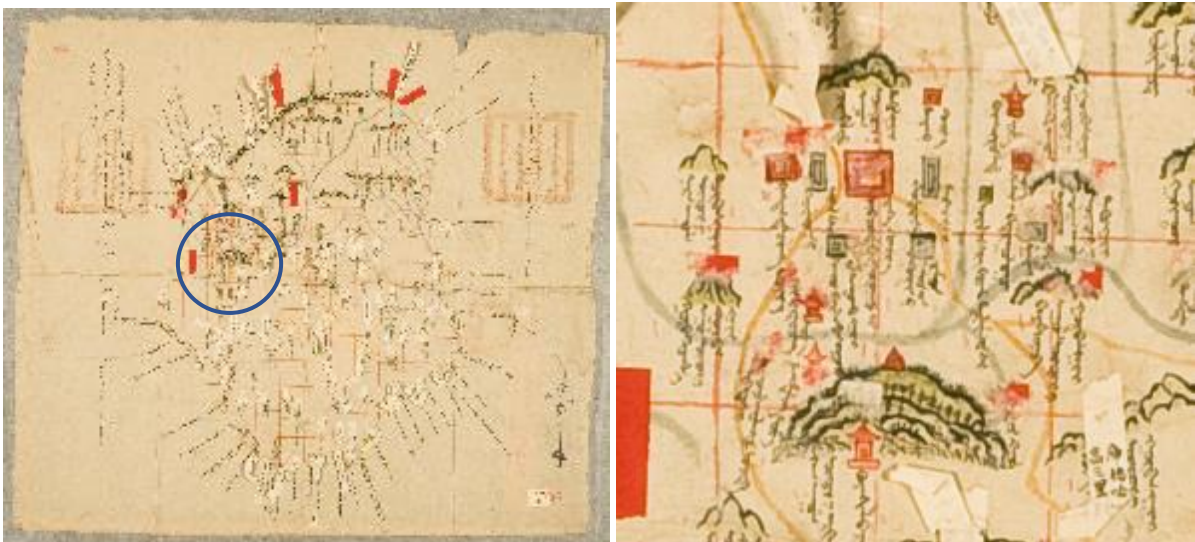


Figure 31

a. cat. 720 (Hs. Or. 80), map of the banner of Pungčuyčering, Tüsiyetü qan, 1907; **b.** detail of the same map: Ĵibjündamba (Ĵebčündamba) qutuytu's Yeke küriye/Urga (central red square), and Qan ayula (Mount Boyda qan, bottom)

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Ovoos on historical and modern maps of Inner Mongolia

When comparing old banner maps with modern maps, it appears that the great majority of place names have changed, as well as many landmarks, especially in Inner Mongolia because of 20th century Chinese immigration: many new settlements, villages and cities with Chinese names were built, the courses of rivers have been diverted because of irrigation, lakes and rivers have dried, even mountain summits have sometimes been levelled by mineral exploitation¹⁴⁶. Yet, we still observe a great number of names ending with “ovoo” on modern maps, even in Inner Mongolia where many toponyms were sinicized or recently invented.

Besides, like ancient Chinese maps, banner maps tend to depict hills and small mountains as high peaks. The two lakes and rivers of the banner of the Torγuud of Ejin γool are major recognizable landmarks, but I could not identify the great Bayan jirūke Mountain and other place names of the banner map cat. 673 (fig. 26). Bayan jirūke is probably one of the many examples of minor elevations depicted as a high peak. Similarly, the central peak of Jüngγar Banner, Jibqulangtu čayan obo, the thirteen other cult ovoos, five boundary-marking ovoos and sixteen monasteries depicted on cat. 335, cat. 336, and cat. 837 (fig. 24a) have left no trace on modern maps except for the only preserved monastery (the banner monastery), Satrubdarjaying juu, popularly known as Jüngγar juu (Ch. Zhungeerzhao 準格爾召).

Because modern local gazetteers sometimes precisely locate destroyed monasteries, for some banners they appear to be the most reliable landmarks¹⁴⁷. I could locate on modern maps seventeen of the twenty-three monasteries that are named on a map of Aru qorčin Banner¹⁴⁸ (cat. 805) which also shows eleven ovoos inside the banner and ten boundary-marking ovoos (fig. 32). The banner stretches along a roughly south-east/north-west axis with most of the ovoos on cat. 805 concentrated in the north-western mountainous area (the highest peak on modern maps is Batai oboya, 1 540 m above sea level). But except for Sira öndör (which is represented north of its present location) and Boyda ayula, the names of mountains and ovoos given by the 1908 banner map are not found on modern maps. Yet having precisely located Ganjuur süme and Gabču(?)-yin süme, I could approximately locate the Yeke qayiraqan/Da Hai-le-qin Mountain and the other mountains-cum-ovoos north of the banner. The present-day most worshiped ovoo is that of Mount Guyustai ayula, also called Qan ayula, a National Park and main tourist area. Another main ovoo worshiped in the banner, is the Qabutu Qasar¹⁴⁹ oboya on Boyda ayula, just north of Kundu Village (Ch. Kundu 坤都鎮), the small city founded on the ruins of

146 The present-day seats of the banners usually preserve archives, local gazetteers and, often, a small local museum that keep ancient maps and place names.

147 In the two examples below, the great majority of the monasteries has been destroyed.

148 Ch. Alukeerqin Banner 阿魯科爾沁旗, Chifeng Municipality 赤峰市.

149 Joči, alias Qabutu Qasar, Chinggis Khan's elder brother, is the ancestor of the Qorčin aristocracy.

the Bayasqulang čiyulyučı süme and the banner prince's palace (now in Xin Baolige gacha 新包力格嘎查). This was probably the banner *ovoo*: cat. 805 depicts it just behind the monastery, in the center of the map (fig. 32)¹⁵⁰.

A second example is a map of Kesigten Banner¹⁵¹ (cat. 802, Ǯoo-uda league), with three *ovoos* in its center (Bayan jirüke oboya, Bayan čayan oboya, and the *ovoo* of a monastery), and one on each of its south and north boundaries (on Sayıqan ayula and on Qongyor oboya). The highest peak (Kesigten ayulan-u nutuylaysan(?) Kirbis qada) of the historical map, located "behind" the prince's palace (now Birayu qota, Ch. Jinpeng 金棚 City), has no *ovoo* (fig. 33: this peak may not be a steep massif but a minor mountain¹⁵²). Again, except for the main monasteries that are precisely located in local gazettes, most of the landmarks have changed. The Qongyor oboya of the banner map may be identified with Mount Qongyu-yin dabaya, the highest summit of the banner, that culminates at 2 029 m¹⁵³. The present-day banner *ovoo*, known as Bayan oboya (Ch. Furaoshan 富饶山)¹⁵⁴, is located at 1 498 m above sea level on a plateau (Fongyor steppe 贡格尔草原) surrounded by forests.

150 The *ovoo* was rebuilt in 2003 and every year, a day of the sixth month of the lunar calendar is chosen for the *ovoo* sacrifice. Both *ovoos* are in the official list of seventy-two *ovoos* of the People's Republic of China: Anonymous 2017.

151 Ch. Kesheketeng Banner 克什克腾旗, Chifeng Municipality.

152 The official Chinese name of the Bayasqulang amuyulang süme, now located in the banner center (Jinpeng), is Qingningsi 慶寧寺 (the banner map writes "Qing'ansi" 慶安寺; Chinese characters 安 and 寧 are synonymous). It was popularly called Qosiyun küriye (banner monastery). According to Kashiwabara & Hamada (1919 vol. *xia*, p. 700), there were about fifty *ovoos* on the mountain behind the monastery.

153 The banner is now well-known for its "Global Geopark", a protected area covering some exceptional geological features (ancient volcanoes, "Granite forest", Quaternary glacial remnant, Grand Canyon).

154 It is worshiped on the thirteenth day of the fifth Chinese lunar month (Lonely Planet 2018, p. 216).

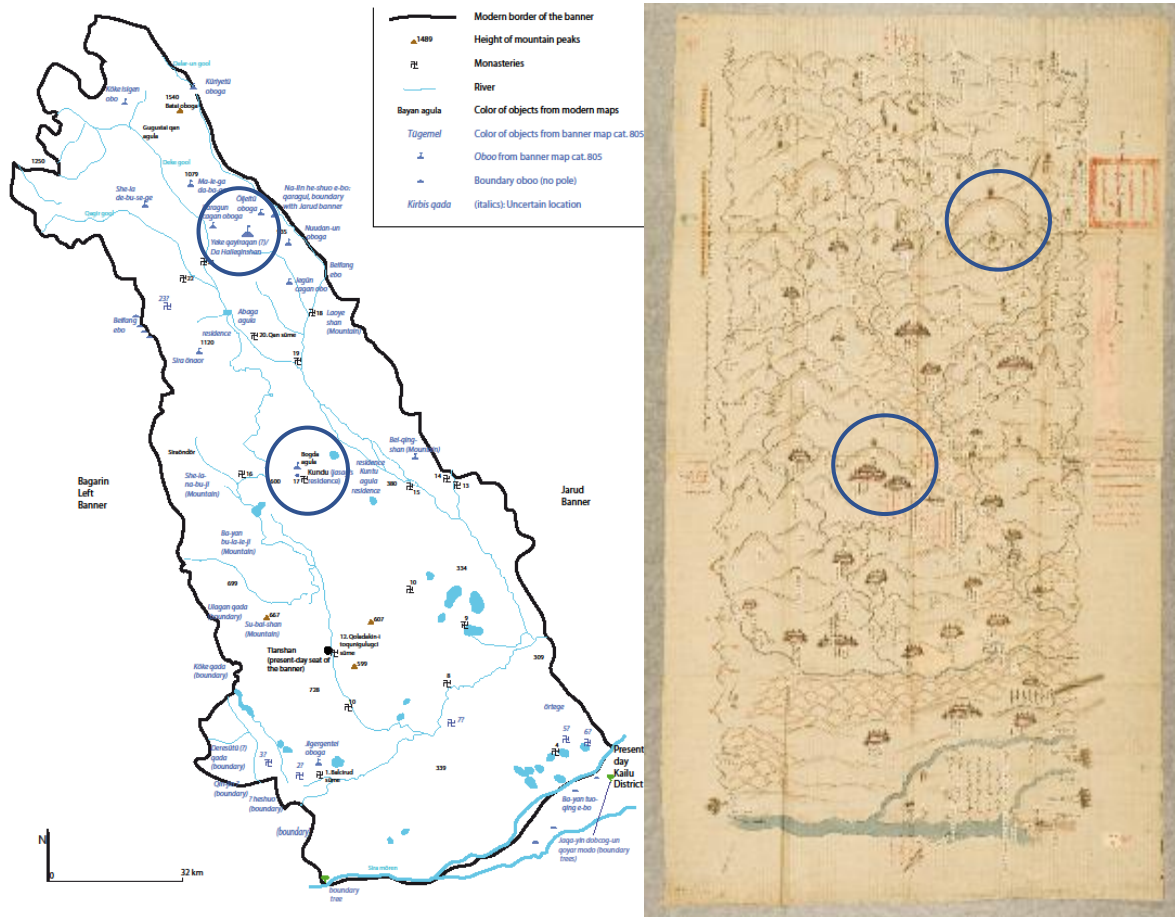


Figure 32

a. Map of Aru qorčin Banner, Joo-uda. The monasteries are located according to Zhongguo renmin zhengzhi xieshang huiyi (ed.) 1987, pp. 225-235; **b.** cat. 805 (Hs. Or. 60), map of Aru qorčin Banner, 1908. Inside the circles: banner prince's residence (modern Kundu) and banner monastery backed by Boyda ayula, and Yeke qayiraqan Mountain. The circles show the correspondences between the two maps.

1. Sayin-i erdeni bolıyayçı sūme/Baoshansi 寶善寺 (Balčirud sūme/Balaqirudemiao)
2. Rasidečinling/Lashendajili(?)kemiao;
3. Boro qosiu sūme/Boluo hushuomiao;
4. Soyol-i erkilegči sūme/Chonghuasi 崇化寺;
5. Kesig-i badaragulugči sūme/Guang'ensi 廣恩寺;
6. Engke tököm-ün sūme/Pingyingsi 平盈寺;
7. Illegible, =? Pushansi 普善寺;
8. Qabirya sūme/Habilegamiao, Hufasi 護法寺;
9. Jıgasutai sūme/Jihasutaimiao, Xingfasi 興法寺;
10. Tögüriq tala-yin sūme/Tuo(?)guliketamiao, Qijiusi 奇救寺;
11. Buyan-i delgeregölügči sūme/Fuxingsi 福興寺;
12. Qoladakin-i toquniyuluyçı sūme, Čabuyan sūme/Chengdasi 成達寺;
13. Uridu tabun toloyai sūme/Qian tabentuoluogaimiao, Pujiusi 普救寺;
14. Qoyitu tabun toloyai sūme/ Hou tabentuoluogaimiao, Fushousi 福壽寺;
15. Egüride öljeitü sūme/Changshousi 長壽寺;
16. Amuyulang tedgügči sūme/Longansi 隆安寺;
17. Bayasqulang çiyuluyçı sūme, Noyan sūme/Jiqingsi 集慶寺;
18. Rasigempi sūme/Lashengenpimiao, Guang'ensi 廣恩寺, Guangyousi 廣佑寺;
19. Rasise sūme/Lashensi;
20. Jarliy-iyar Kesig-i situgči sūme, Qan sūme/ Cheng'ensi 誠恩寺, Hanmiao 罕廟;
21. Ganjur sūme/Ganzhuermiao, Xinghuasi 興化寺;
22. Gabçu(?)yin sūme/Gabuchumiao, Xingfusi 興福寺;
23. Mingyan ayusi-yin sūme/Qianfosi 千佛寺

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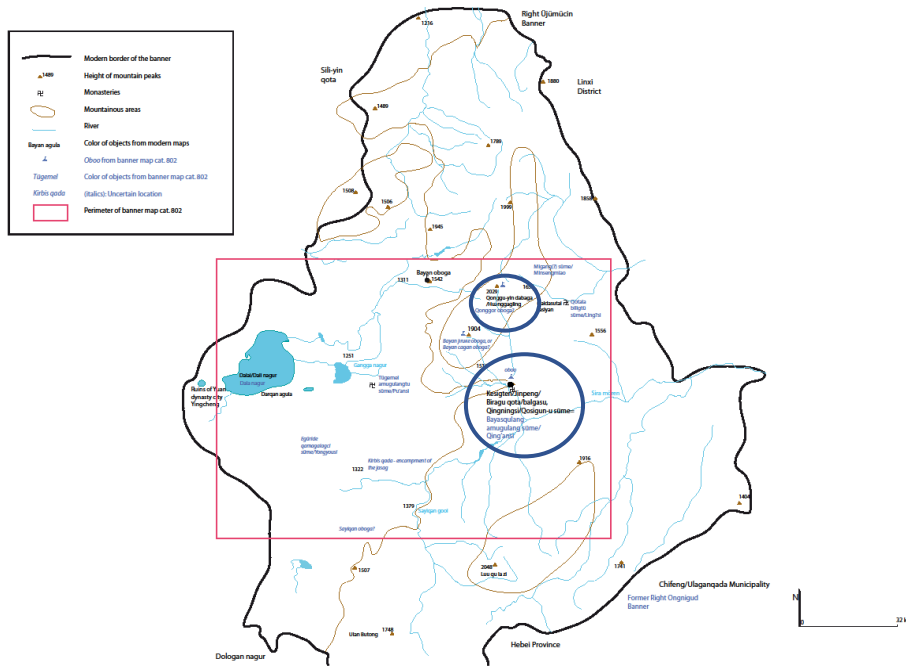


Figure 33

a. Modern map of Kesigten Banner, Chifeng Municipality; **b.** cat. 802 (Hs. Or. 24), map of Kesigten Banner, Joo-uda, 1908. Inside the circles, Jinpeng (Birayu qota)/Kirbis qada, and Qongyu-yin dabaya/Qongyor oboya. The space of the banner map only covers part of the old banner, which had a more vertical shape and extended to the south and north. The circles show the correspondences between the two maps.

© a. Isabelle Charleux, from “Öbör Mongyol-un öbertegen ĵasaqu oron-u yaĵar-un ĵiruy-un emkidkel” (comp.) 2007, pp. 192-193 and Anonymous author 1989, pp. 29-30; b. STAATSBIBLIOTHEK ZU BERLIN – Preussischer Kulturbesitz, Orientabteilung

Conclusion

Maps are cultural productions that construct an image of the visible world which favors specific interests, and “culturalize the natural through processes of denomination and identification, of categorization and inclusion” (Smith 1998, p. 57). As for Chinese maps, the attention paid to the high accuracy of representation on Mongol maps is remarkable, yet it contrasts with the tendency to deform the spatial distribution of objects in order to construct a more auspicious visual narrative: they mix concrete and idealized geographies. The banner maps sometimes depict places that one thinks they are or would like them to be – for instance, a hill can be depicted as a high mountain, landscape features can be arranged to correct a “geomantic defect” (such as the absence of watercourse or a mountain to the south)¹⁵⁵, and the banner prince’s residence and the main sacred mountain and banner *ovoo* can be relocated in the center¹⁵⁶.

These maps were part of the Qing project: they were made on Qing order and were supposed to follow precise conventions. Although the map-makers were Mongol officials, their maps belong to the Chinese cartographic tradition (using variable perspective, importance of the text, relative size of objects according to their importance, drawings of buildings and landscape elements). Nevertheless, these maps can be considered as emic documents and reflect a Mongol worldview, with the adoption of multiple viewpoints and a circular composition necessitating rotational viewership for some of them, hierarchization of space, abundance and distinction of specific natural elements and notably, mountains, *ovoos* as well as decorative details. They show how the banner princes themselves represented their own banner and resisted cartographic standardization. As expressed by Kollmar-Paulenz (2006, p. 38), “The Mongols, besides bending to Qing administrative prescriptions, used cartography as a visual means to confirm their own concepts of space which were dependent on their traditional world-view”. As argues Pratte (2021), local cartographic aesthetics was never completely erased, even of more abstract maps.

This paper tried to shed new light on details of the various modes of the *ovoos*’ presence in Mongolian cartographic representations of space.¹⁵⁷ *Ovoos* were ancient human marking tools in the open steppe, which the Qing appropriated to mark the border with Russia and internal boundaries inside Mongolia. The maps inform us on how the borders were conceptualized, and it was precisely one of their main functions. But why depict cult *ovoos* on banner maps if this information was not specifically asked by the Lifanyuan? The indication of the most sacred mountains of a banner (such as Kengtei qan) may have been obvious information for map-makers. Cult *ovoos* were territorial indicators for the supernatural realm considered no less important than the physical one. The local administrations’ worship of mountain deities at banner *ovoos* was a major religious and political ritual. Main *ovoos* were probably also used as landmarks (including rivers’, wells’ and springs’ *ovoos*). Still today, some *ovoos*

155 On geomantic defects: Charleux 2006, pp.155-159. The same is observed for Chinese maps (Yee 1994, p. 154 and fig. 6.25).

156 We can also assume that in some cases, ruling princes have tried to depreciate their territory so not to attract the attention of the central government (on valuable natural resources for instance).

157 More research needs to be done. Hopefully maps from the collections of Mongolia will be digitalized in the future and we will be able to work on bigger corpuses.

are major landmarks, markers visible from afar, and useful for orientation, such as the Binder ovoos in Hentii Province (Mongolia).

The number, symbols and types of *ovoos* per banner vary a lot. Boundary-marking *ovoos* are often depicted as abstract, geometric symbols such as one or two rectangles, a dot, a circle, or a kind of red flame. Conversely, cult *ovoos* are generally depicted as mimetic drawings. When boundary-marking *ovoos* are depicted as mimetic drawings, the most common symbol is a triangular mound resembling a small mountain, without a central pole or tufts, while cult *ovoos* are depicted as triangular mounds with a tuft, a pole, and/or flags: this may reflect the real structures of these *ovoos* (fig. 7a). Yet the two categories of boundary-marking *ovoos* and cult *ovoos* were sometimes indistinguishable on maps of the Inner Mongol banners. Besides, some cult *ovoos* on frontier mountains were used as boundary markers.

The fact that boundary-marking *ovoos* are not always represented on banner maps of Inner Mongolia does not mean that they were absent from the landscape itself. It is possible that *ovoos* were built to mark the boundaries but they are not depicted and their place names do not include the term *oboysa*; they were rather called by the name of a mountain or a particular landmark. It is also possible that the territories of some Inner Mongol banners were more stable over a long period than those in Outer Mongol banners, and also had more coherent geographical boundaries. In Sili-yin yool for instance, the banners had elongated shapes allowing access to the southern Chinese markets of the Great Wall. The number of banners in Inner Mongolia was fixed to forty-nine in the early Qing period and did not change, so the Inner Mongol groups were relatively stable on their territory since the beginning of the Qing period, while in Outer Mongolia, land was redistributed to the Qalqa after the Zunghar wars, the Oirad were relocated west of them, and a new *ayimay* was created (Sayin noyan qan, in 1725). This does not mean that there were less boundary conflicts in Inner Mongolia (see the above-mentioned conflict in the Ordos)¹⁵⁸.

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158 The Inner Mongol banners do not include the Čaqar and Kōlōn Buir, which saw important forced migrations of populations in the Qing period.

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Table 1 : Number and depiction of boundary-marking ovoos and cult ovoos in the different leagues and banners on the maps of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin

Alašan and Ejin yool Toryuud (cat 672, 673): 2 maps, 2 banners depicted/total of 2 banners	
General characteristics	No grid, no line delimitating their boundaries
Boundary-ovoos	cat. 673: 2 boundary-ovoos?; cat. 672: no ovoos
Cult ovoos	cat. 673: 7 ovoos (tufted square on mountain); cat. 672: no ovoos
Xinjiang (cat. 674-676): 3 maps, 3 banners depicted/total of 3 banners	
General characteristics	No grid cat. 674: no boundary line; cat. 675 and cat. 676: boundary=dotted line
Boundary-ovoos	Cat. 675: 7 boundary-ovoos (2 rectangles of different sizes)+2 boundary-ovoos (inner boundary); cat. 676: 11 blue two-rectangle <i>qarayul</i> and 12 white ones (of which 5 are called <i>qarayul</i> , 6 have no name and one is called <i>obo</i>) No boundary-ovoos: cat. 674
Cult ovoos	Cat. 674: 11 ovoos (tufts); cat. 675: no ovoos
Outer Mongolia	
Qobdo and Uriyangqai (cat. 677-687): 11 maps; 7 banners depicted/total of 7 banners	
General characteristics	No grid (except for cat. 686 and cat. 687); boundary or portions of the boundary drawn as a dotted line.
Exception	Cat. 686: use of the grid, the boundary is a continuous red line, and boundary-ovoos are numbered
Depiction of boundary-ovoos	two elongated triangles of different sizes on the boundary line (cat. 678) or on a mountain (or pass), upon or near the boundary line (cat. 679, cat. 680, cat. 685, cat. 687); cat. 686: small yellow peaked triangle
Number of boundary-ovoos	Cat. 679, cat. 680: 4 ovoos; cat. 677 and cat. 678: 8 ovoos, cat. 683 and cat. 684: 6 ovoos; cat. 685: 12 ovoos, cat. 687: 13 ovoos, cat. 686: 24 ovoos (numbered), cat. 685: 40 ovoos. Cat. 681 and cat. 682 have no boundary-ovoos.
Border posts (<i>qarayul</i>)	two elongated triangles of different sizes on the boundary line. Cat. 683 and cat. 684: 9 <i>qarayuls</i> , cat. 685: 18 <i>qarayuls</i> , cat. 687: 9 <i>qarayuls</i>
Roads with <i>örteges</i>	Cat. 675, cat. 681 and cat. 682: 3 <i>örtege</i> triangles; cat. 677 and 678 have 6; cat. 685 has 13; also cat. 679, cat. 680, cat. 683, cat. 684.
Cult ovoos	Cult ovoos are not depicted.
Qalqa Ĵasaytu qan (cat. 688-701) and Qalqa Sayin noyan qan (cat. 702-706): 20 maps, 17 banners depicted/total of 55 banners	
Cat. 688 General map of the Ĵasaytu qan ayimay: 44 ovoos on the boundary+11 inside the <i>ayimay</i>	

General characteristics	use of the grid, banners delimited by a continuous red or black line, boundary- <i>ovoos</i> only on the boundaries with other <i>ayimays</i>
Depiction of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	two elongated triangles of different sizes
Number of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	- cat. 701: 1 <i>ovoo</i> ; cat. 694 and cat. 690: 2 <i>ovoos</i> (parts of the boundary of cat. 690 are delimited by 3 <i>örtege</i> triangles); cat. 695, cat. 696: 3 <i>ovoos</i> (plus one boundary- <i>ovoo</i> with no symbol on cat. 696); cat. 691: 4 two-rectangle <i>ovoos</i> plus one one-rectangle <i>ovoo</i> on the western part of the boundary); cat. 703: 7 <i>ovoos</i> ; cat. 689: 6 <i>ovoos</i> ; cat. 705: 9 <i>ovoos</i> on the eastern and southern boundary; cat. 704: 13 <i>ovoos</i> on the eastern boundary - cat. 692: no boundary- <i>ovoo</i> because no boundary with another <i>ayimay</i>
Location of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	- <i>Ovoos</i> on the boundary between <i>Ĵasaytu qan</i> and the Qobdo frontier: cat. 689: 2 <i>ovoos</i> ; cat. 691: 5 <i>ovoos</i> - <i>Ovoos</i> on the boundary between <i>Ĵasayqu qan</i> and <i>Sayin noyan qan</i> : cat. 690, cat. 693, cat. 694, cat. 695, cat. 696, cat. 699) - <i>Ovoos</i> on the boundary between <i>Sayin noyan qan</i> and <i>Tüsiyetü qan</i> (cat. 704: 13 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 705: 9 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 706: 2 <i>ovoos</i>) or with the Gobi (cat. 701) - <i>Ovoos</i> on the boundary with the Gobi: cat. 701
Roads with <i>örteges</i>	Cat. 688: 25 <i>örteges</i> on 4 roads; cat. 690: 3 <i>örtege</i> triangles delimitating the boundary and 5 others on a road crossing the banner. Other <i>örteges</i> : cat. 690, cat. 696, cat. 697.
Cult <i>ovoos</i>	Cult <i>ovoos</i> are not depicted but a few mountains are called <i>obova</i>
Tüsiyetü qan ayimay (cat. 707-729): 23 maps, 20 banners depicted/total of 20 banners	
General characteristics	Use of the grid, banners delimited by a continuous red or black line. <i>Ovoos</i> mark the boundaries with the adjacent banners, and almost all the boundary-markers are <i>ovoos</i> . They are not numbered. On 6 maps the banner is surrounded by a circle indicating the 24 directions (cat. 717, cat. 721, cat. 724, cat. 727, cat. 728, cat. 729). Most of the maps give the height of mountains
Depiction of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	- small dashes or small black or red dots: cat. 709, cat. 712, cat. 716, cat. 722 - larger red dots: cat. 715, cat. 726 - small empty red circles: cat. 721, cat. 729, cat. 733 - small rectangles: cat. 710, cat. 725, cat. 727, cat. 728 - small triangles: cat. 711
Number of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 719: 12 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 717 and cat. 718: 18 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 721: 21(?) <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 728: 24 <i>ovoos</i> ; cat. 722 and cat. 727: 25 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 723: 27(?) <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 710: 28 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 711: 34 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 714: 36 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 707: 39 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 724: about 40 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 725 and cat. 729: 43 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 729: 43 or 44 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 715: 46 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 720: 48 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 716: 89 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 726: 97 <i>ovoos</i>
Cult <i>ovoos</i>	Cult <i>ovoos</i> are not depicted but occasionally named (cat. 708) and a few mountains are called <i>ovoo</i>
Sečen qan ayimay (cat. 733-779): 47 maps, 23 banners depicted/total of 23 banners Cat. 733: the general map of the <i>ayimay</i> has about 300 <i>ovoos</i>	
General characteristics	Use of the grid (except for cat. 766 and cat. 770), banners delimited by a continuous red or black line. <i>Ovoos</i> mark the boundaries with the adjacent banners and almost all the boundary-markers are <i>ovoos</i> . Boundary- <i>ovoos</i> are all numbered (except for cat. 771 and 772). Most of the maps give the height of mountains

Depiction of boundary-ovoos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - small black or red dots or dashes: cat. 744, cat. 751, cat. 771, cat. 772, cat. 774, cat. 775 - larger red dots: cat. 715, cat. 726, cat. 743, cat. 746 - small red empty circles: cat. 733, cat. 736, cat. 747, cat. 748, cat. 761, cat. 808 - large empty red circles: cat. 734, cat. 735, cat. 768 - small triangles: cat. 686, cat. 741 - small mounds with a red dash: cat. 773 - small circle on a triangle symbolizing a mountain: cat. 776 - small green mountains/mounds: cat. 769, cat. 770 - red flame or almond: cat. 749, cat. 750 - central blue mountain flanked by two lower red mountains, crowned by a red peak of flame: cat. 778, cat. 779
Number of boundary-ovoos	<p>cat. 744 and cat. 745: 18 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 771 and cat. 772: 22 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 686: 24 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 749 and cat. 750: 26 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 734, cat. 735, cat. 763, cat. 764, cat. 769 and cat. 770: 28 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 765 and cat. 766: 29 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 774, cat. 775 and cat. 778: 30 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 777 and cat. 778: 30 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 747 and cat. 748: 32 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 753 and cat. 754: 35 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 738 and cat. 739: 39 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 751, cat. 752, cat. 767 and cat. 768: 40 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 742 and cat. 743: 44 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 773 and 774: 56 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 746: 60 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 759, cat. 760: 63 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 736 and cat. 737: 64 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 757: 65 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 758), at. 761 and cat. 762: 69 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 740 and cat. 741: 73 <i>ovoos</i>, cat. 755 and cat. 756: 120 <i>ovoos</i>.</p>
Cult <i>ovoos</i>	<p>Cat. 736 and cat. 737: <i>ovoos</i> on 6 out of about a hundred mountains; cat. 738: <i>ovoos</i> on 6 out of about 30; cat. 742: <i>ovoos</i> on 9 out of 24 mountains; cat. 761 and cat. 762: <i>ovoos</i> on about 10 out of 23 mountains; cat. 765 and cat. 766: <i>ovoos</i> on 7 out of 25 mountains (on the highest mountains); cat. 768 and cat. 767: 19 mountains have <i>ovoos</i></p>
Depiction of cult <i>ovoos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - red dots or tuft - ovoid or almond-like shapes: cat. 761, cat. 762 - square or hemispheric shape with a tuft on a mountain summit: cat. 742, cat. 743, cat. 743, cat. 765, cat. 766, cat. 777, cat. 778 and cat. 779 - piled rocks: cat. 759, cat. 760: in the center of the map - small triangles or dots on a mountain top (cat. 749) - 2 dashes mountain top and pointed summits (cat. 763, cat. 765, cat. 769) - central blue mountain flanked by two lower red mountains, crowned by a red peak of flame: cat. 778, cat. 779
<i>Ovoo</i> on a peak behind a monastery	<p>cat. 737, cat. 767, cat. 768 (mountain topped by a tuft), cat. 773, cat 775 and cat. 776</p>
Inner Mongolia	
Ĵirim (cat 781-790), 10 maps, 5 banners depicted/total of 7 banners	
General characteristics	<p>Most maps do not use the grid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - boundary indicated by mountains connected by a red line: cat. 782 and cat. 783, cat. 787; by a black line: cat. 788, - by isolated landmarks forming the boundary: cat. 784, cat. 785 and cat. 786. - boundaries=rectangular frame of the map with black line: cat. 789 and cat. 790 - palisade with gates: cat. 788, cat. 789 and cat. 790
Boundary-ovoos	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cat. 782 and cat. 783 (8 red marks: <i>ovoos</i>? on mountains not called <i>ovoo</i> except for one: Pai-yin oboya)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cat. 784 and cat. 785 (one big mountain topped by an <i>ovoo</i> or a big boulder on the northern boundary), cat. 787 (mountain topped by a red dot: Qongyor oboya), cat. 788 (3 boundary mountains crowned by a big tuft, not named <i>ovoo</i>) - No boundary-<i>ovoo</i> named or depicted: cat. 789 and cat. 790
Number of cult <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 784: 2 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 785 and cat. 786: 1 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 789 and cat. 790: 1 <i>ovoo</i> Big boulder (<i>ovoo</i> ?): 2 on cat. 784, cat. 785, cat. 786
Depiction of cult <i>ovoos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - mound with a pole: cat. 784, cat. 785 and cat. 786 - <i>ovoo</i> of piled rocks: cat. 789 (Qara buqa-yin oboya, near a <i>stūpa</i>) - mound with a hummock and a kind of square window: cat. 790 - small dot or pole on a mountain: cat. 788
Ĵosoto (cat. 791-796): 6 maps, 6 banners depicted/total of 7 banners	
General characteristics	<p>No grid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Natural boundaries: cat. 784, cat. 785 and cat. 786, cat. 793, cat. 795 - black line surrounding the banner: cat. 791 (no boundary landmark) - rectangular frame of the map: cat. 794 - palisade with gates: cat. 793, cat. 794
Boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	No boundary- <i>ovoo</i> named or depicted
Cult <i>ovoos</i>	No cult <i>ovoos</i> . Cat. 793 has a big boulder on 2 mountains: Ung-yin ayula, almost in the center of the map, another one on the mountain behind the Huixiangsi.
Ĵoo-uda (cat. 797-806): 10 maps, 12 banners depicted/total of 12 banners	
General characteristics	<p>No grid.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - natural boundaries: cat. 798, cat. 800, cat. 805, cat. 806 - boundary=rectangular frame of the map: cat. 797, cat. 799 (with a black line), cat. 802, cat. 803, cat. 805, cat. 806 - black line surrounding the banner: cat. 801 (no landmark)
Boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - cat. 799: names of 2 <i>ovoos</i> on the south-east boundary (no drawing); cat. 806: 2 <i>ovoos</i> on the western boundary; cat. 798: name of 1 <i>ovoo</i> written near the Looqa yool/Liaohe River; cat. 800: 4 <i>ovoos</i> depicted on high mountains on the northern boundary (not named <i>ovoo</i>); cat. 802: 2 drawings of <i>ovoos</i> on Sayiqan ayula (bottom) and on Qongyor oboya (top); cat. 803: high flat mountains with 3 <i>ovoos</i> on the western boundary and a mountain with <i>ovoo</i> on its northern boundary, and 3 big <i>ovoos</i> on the shore of the Sira mören River - cat. 805 (Aruqorčin): 1 <i>ovoo</i> (name and drawn) on the north-east boundary with Ĵarud; 6 red dots on mountains in the south-west (not called <i>ovoo</i>); small triangular brown mounds without a tuft on points of the boundary (4 of them are called "northern <i>ovoos</i>" (Ch. Beifang ebo) on the north-west boundary) - No boundary-<i>ovoo</i> named or depicted: cat. 797, cat. 798, cat. 801
Number of cult <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 799: 1 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 801: 1 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 802: 5 <i>ovoos</i> (including <i>ovoos</i> on the boundary), cat. 803: 11 <i>ovoos</i> (including 2 high flat mountains with 3 <i>ovoos</i> each, one of them on a boundary; cat. 804 of the same banner shows the same mountains, monasteries, pagoda, trees and bridge but no <i>ovoo</i>), cat. 805: 16 <i>ovoos</i> (some of them are not on mountain summits but near the river), cat. 806 has about 18 <i>ovoos</i> (some other <i>ovoos</i> are not depicted, only named)
Depiction of cult <i>ovoos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hemispheric or square shape with tufts and flags on mountain summits: cat. 802, cat. 803, cat. 805, cat. 806 - as a small house topped with flags: cat. 801
Sili-yin yool (cat. 807-828): 22 maps, 10 banners depicted/total of 10 banners	

General characteristics	9 maps use the grid; for most of them, the boundary is the rectangular frame of the map. The boundary can be materialized by a black continuous line (cat. 807, cat. 809, cat. 818, cat. 820, cat. 821, cat. 823, cat. 824, cat. 826) or formed by isolated mountains (cat. 811, cat. 812, cat. 813, cat. 817, cat. 825, cat. 827, cat. 828). Cat. 822 (dated 1889) is in the style of Sečen qan ayimay
Boundary-ovoos	Drawings of <i>ovoos</i> : cat. 807, cat. 808 and cat. 809 (12 red circles+1 mountain named <i>ovoo</i>), cat. 810: 5 <i>ovoos</i> (big boulder), cat. 811: 1 <i>ovoo</i> (big boulder), cat. 814: 1 <i>ovoo</i> (square with pole topped by a finial), cat. 815: 2 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 816 and cat. 817: 2 <i>ovoos</i> (square with a pole, same as cult <i>ovoos</i>), cat. 818: 1 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 826, cat. 827 and cat. 828 (mountains called <i>qada</i> , <i>mangqa</i> (long sandy hill), <i>oboγa</i> , <i>toloyai</i> , with 1 to 3 rounds or kinds of boulders on their summits. Many mountains named <i>obova</i> . No boundary- <i>ovoo</i> : cat. 812, cat. 813, cat. 820 and cat. 821
Number of cult <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 807: 5 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 809: 18 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 810: 3 mountains with <i>ovoo</i> ; cat. 811: 2 <i>ovoos</i> ; cat. 812: 1 <i>ovoo</i> ; cat. 814: 6 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 815: 7 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 816: 18 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 817: around 13 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 818: 8 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 820: 10 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 821: 9 <i>ovoos</i> ; cat. 826, cat. 827 and cat. 828: 1 <i>ovoo</i> No <i>ovoo</i> : cat. 813, cat. 823, cat. 824, cat. 825
Depiction of cult <i>ovoos</i>	- tuft on mountain: cat. 807 - vertical tuft (wooden <i>ovoo</i>): cat. 818 - square with pole: cat. 816 - mound with tuft and flags on a mountain: cat. 810 - square with pole and a finial: cat. 811, cat. 814 - simple cairn: cat. 814 - big boulder: cat. 810, cat. 811, cat. 826, cat. 828 - small dash on a mountain: cat. 807 - round mark: cat. 807 - square topped by 2 rectangles: cat. 812 - triangular mound: cat. 820, cat. 821 - small dots on mountains: cat. 815
Ulayancab (cat. 829-832): 4 maps, 6 banners depicted/total of 6 banners	
General characteristics	No grid, banners delimited by mountains, connected or not by a continuous or spotted line
Number of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 829, cat. 830, cat. 831: 4 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 832: 12 boundary- <i>ovoos</i>
Number of cult <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 829: 10 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 830: 12 <i>ovoos</i>
Depiction of cult and boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	- boulder-like <i>ovoo</i> on mountains: cat. 829, cat. 830 - round or oval shape on mountain tops (<i>ovoos</i> ?): cat. 831 - mound topped by a flag on a mountain: cat. 832
Ordos (cat. 833-853): 20 maps, 7 banners depicted/total of 7 banners	
General characteristics	No grid, banners delimited by a red continuous line
Number of boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	Cat. 834 and cat. 835: 2 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 840: 4 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 841: 5 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 842: 3 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 843 and cat. 844: 5 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 845: 1 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 851: 18 names of "fengdui" (2 are depicted), cat. 836 and cat. 837: 3 <i>ovoos</i>

Mountains called <i>oboja</i> or <i>oboyatu</i>	Cat. 838: one mountain called Qara oboja on the western boundary, cat. 134, cat. 135: Qan oboja
Depiction of cult and boundary- <i>ovoos</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ovoid mound with hair-like dashes on mountains: cat. 834, cat. 852 - mountain with a tuft: cat. 838 - blue tufts on mountains with or without a flag (cat. 836 - square with a tuft on mountain summits: cat. 837, cat. 845, cat. 847, cat. 849, cat. 850 - triangular piles of stones (with or without a small tuft): cat. 837, cat. 840 - orange triangle topped by a circle: cat. 842 - circle or almond-shape: cat. 842, cat. 843 - pointed triangle: cat. 842 - pointed almond shape on a mountain: cat. 844 - double yellow mound with a pole: cat. 835 - branch-like triangular shape: cat. 847
Number of cult <i>ovoos</i>	cat. 834, cat. 843: 2 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 851: 3 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 842, cat. 848, cat. 849 and cat. 850: 4 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 835, cat. 836, cat. 840 and cat. 841: 5 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 844 and cat. 845: 6 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 837: 7 <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 835 and cat. 836: 6 or 7 <i>ovoo</i> , cat. 847 has 8 ritual <i>ovoos</i> , cat. 846: 9 <i>ovoos</i>