

Two Mongol Texts Concerning Obo-Worship

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Perhaps by reason of its size and the prominence of its situation upon high ground the *obo* (*oboγa*), or stone-heap or cairn, has attracted much attention on the part of travellers in Mongolia. Different opinions have been expressed as to the significance of this characteristic feature of the Mongol landscape, and as to the origin and nature of *obo*-worship. So for example, T. Gotō, basing his opinions upon the fact that the word *oboγa* is hardly found in literature prior to the *Hua-i-i-yü*, and that even in that book it is not given any religious significance, suggests that its emergence as a cult-object dates from an age after the spread of lamaism during the Ming dynasty¹. A more commonly-held opinion is well expressed by W. A. Unkrig, who maintains that *obo*-worship represents a primitive stage of religion, a belief in the spirits of Nature. There is, he says, a whole series of spirits who live in trees, mountains or waters, who rule the mountains or race past in the wind. These spirits are responsible for all those calamities and disasters such as sickness and cattle-pest which the phenomena of nature bring with them, and it is to escape as far as possible from these disasters that people erect *obos*. Lamaism, says Unkrig, made the extirpation of the cult-objects of shamanism, such as *ongyon*-idols, one of its tasks as a missionary religion, but could not overcome the old custom of *obo*-worship². Much earlier, at the end of the eighteenth century, P. S. Pallas had noted, and described in his account of the Mongols, how not only the Mongols proper, but also the Tibetans and the heathen, or non-Buddhist, shamanist Tungus peoples, the heathen Buriats and others, possessed *obos*. For the Buriats, he says, the *obos* served as dwelling-places for the gods, in which they could maintain themselves in the vicinity of their worshippers and their herds, and protect them³. It is not the purpose of the present paper to try to disentangle what is 'Buddhist' and what is 'Shamanist' in the cult of the *obo*, or to decide even whether this would be a realistic aim, but rather to give some account of the significance of *obo*-worship as it is expounded in two lamaist text dating from the second half of the eighteenth century. The texts concerned are a manual on the construction of *obos*, entitled *Oboγa bosqaqu yosun-u jerge*, and a ritual for *obo*-worship, entitled *Oboγa takiqu jang üile ung-*

¹ T. Gotō: The *oboγa* Worship in the Mongols. *Minzokugaku Kenkyū*, Vol. 20, Nos. 1—2, pp. 47—71. See English summary.

² Notes by W. A. Unkrig to W. Filchner, *Kumbum Dschamba Ling*, Leipzig, 1933. See p. 531.

³ P. S. Pallas, *Sammlungen Historischer Nachrichten über die Mongolischen Völkerschaften, Zweyter Theil*, St. Petersburg, 1801. See p. 215.

silya-yin jerge tungyalay čayan sil. Both are contained in the fourth volume of the collected works of Mergen Diyanči Lama of the Urad⁴. These texts were utilised by Dorji Banzarov in his classic work on Mongol shamanism⁵, and Banzarov's work itself has been extensively made use of, both in the matter of *obo*-worship and with reference to other characteristics of Mongol religion, in the tenth volume of P. Wilhelm Schmidt's great *summa*, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*⁶. It is hoped in this paper to give a fuller account of the two texts, and also to present them with a rather different emphasis from that of Banzarov. Banzarov's thesis was that the ceremonies enjoined by Mergen Diyanči Lama formed a clear contrast to previous ceremonies accompanied by bloody sacrifices, which he ascribes to the shamans, and also that the lama-author, in his capacity as a Buddhist priest, was reluctantly yielding, against his better judgement, to a popular demand when he drew up his set of ceremonies for *obo*-worship. Although Mergen Diyanči Lama does in fact criticise the slaughter of beasts as so-called offerings, his attitude towards *obo*-worship is, as I hope to show, not nearly so censorious as Banzarov interpreted it. The *obo*-ceremonial and its underlying ideas are paralleled in other texts of the collection, and if indeed *obo*-worship does belong to a non-Buddhist stage of religion in Mongolia, the lama-author appears to have successfully integrated it into the general system of worship which he propounds for his clergy.

As Heissig justly remarks, the collected works of Mergen Diyanči Lama, and especially the tracts in the fourth volume, show how lamaism was, at the time concerned, systematically engaged in satisfying the demand put forward by the Mongol nobility for prayers in the tradition of the old animistic religious ideas, by the creation of prayers which took over the popular pantheon into the lamaist pantheon, and popular religious characteristics into lamaist ritual⁷. An example of this tendency is given by one of the texts in the first volume of the collection, a ritual for rain-making entitled *Qura oroγulqu jada-yin ubadis*⁸. Rain magic, *jada*, which is widely-known in Central Asia, certainly dates in Mongolia from pre-Buddhist times, and is testified in the earliest Mongol literature, the

⁴ *Včir dhara mergen diyanči blama-yin gegen-ü 'bum jarliy*. (Printed in Peking 1780—1783). See Nos. 17 and 16 respectively of the fourth volume. A full analysis of the contents of the four volumes of this collection, which is to be found in the British Museum, London, is given in W. Heissig, *Die Pekingener Lamaistischen Blockdrucke in Mongolischer Sprache*, Wiesbaden 1954, *Göttinger Asiatische Forschungen* 2, under item no. 162, pp. 151 foll. For the author, Mergen Diyanči Lama, see Heissig, op. cit. pp. 127—130.

⁵ *Chernaya Vera ili Shamanstvo u Mongolov*, Kazan 1846; vol. 3 of *Uchenie Zapiski Kazanskogo Universiteta*. Second edition St. Petersburg 1891. Reprinted as part of Dorji Banzarov, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, Akademiya Nauk, Moscow, 1955.

⁶ P. W. Schmidt, *Der Ursprung der Gottesidee*, X, Münster i. W., 1952. For *obo*-worship see pp. 67—69.

⁷ Op. cit. p. 151.

⁸ Fols. 256—259; item no. 64. The correct title of this volume is given by Heissig, op. cit. p. 151. The cover-title *Life of Padma Sambhava* is erroneous.

*Secret History of the Mongols*⁹. The same volume contains a short invocation entitled *Qatun γoul-un sang tümen öljei qutuγ-tu kemegdekü orusiba*¹⁰ which shows how the Yellow River, a geographical neighbour, together with the mountain *Muna Qan*, of the monastery of *Mergen Süme*, home of the *Mergen Diyanči Lama*, had become established as a member of the Mongol lamaist pantheon. Not only locally was this so, but as far afield as the *Öljei Badarayšan Süme* of the *Khorchin*, to the efforts of whose *Da Lama, Süsüg-tü Čorji Lubsang Sebten*, the printed edition of the collected works of *Mergen Diyanči Lama* is due¹¹. This prayer is addressed to the lords of the Yellow River and beseeches them to sweep away all disasters and evils, to cause virtue and glory to multiply, to amass the goods desired by the worshippers, to banish malevolent enemies, and in particular to bring to fruition, safely, speedily and without delay the affair about which the prayer is specifically offered¹². This short prayer is of some interest as it summarises in a few lines the type of demand made in more detail in other rituals upon the various local deities, and brings into relief the very practical nature of the worship of these local deities, who are called upon, in exchange for worship and offerings, to effect certain tangible results. As well as the Yellow River, the mountain *Muna Qan* is adopted into the pantheon. A text in the fourth volume of the works of *Mergen Diyanči Lama* associates *Muna Qan* with the Tibetan mountain deities *Gnyan chen tanglha* and *Rma chen spom ra* as a Protector of the Faith bound by an oath (*Tangγariγ-tu nom-un qayan*)¹³. Two other texts are also devoted, wholly or in part, to the cult of *Muna Qan*¹⁴. This association with other deities seems to indicate an intention to validate the worship of the sacred mountain *Muna Qan*, which is to the Mongols very reminiscent of the *Činggis Qan* legend¹⁵, as a protector of the Buddhist faith, by linking it with Tibetan mountain deities already recognised as such. The nature of the demands made upon local deities, as we shall later find it expressed in the *obo*-ritual, is well summarised too in a ritual for offering sacrificial cakes to local deities in general¹⁶. Offerings of cakes are made to the gods and dragons, the *albin*-, *teyireng*- and *bhuti*-

⁹ Paragraph 143.

¹⁰ Fol. 225; item no. 63.

¹¹ Heissig, op. cit. p. 150

¹² The text of the invocation is short enough to be quoted in full: *Hri-i: tümen öljei qutuγ-tu: oron жүг-үн tengri: qatun γoul-un ejed-tür: takin maytan mörgümü: qarsi gem-yi arilya: buyan čoy-i arbidqa: küsel ed-i qurayul: ös-tü dayin-i čüllege: ilan-γyui-a bidan-u: ene kereg üiles-i sayad ügei türgen-e: amur kilbar бүтүгүл.*

¹³ *Tangγariγ-tu nom-un qayan gñin čin tanglha: ramčün sbumra: muna qan delekei-yin ejed-e baling ergükü yosun.* Fols. 187—189; item no. 11.

¹⁴ *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig takil sedkigseger čindamani kemekü orusiba.* Fols. 242—254; item no. 19: and *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan terigüten usun-u ejed-ün sang takil erdeni erke-tü-yin qayan.* Fols. 255—257; item no. 20.

¹⁵ *Muna Qan* was closely associated with the burial procession of *Činggis Qan*. See *Altan Tobči* (C. R. Bawden, *The Mongol Chronicle Altan Tobči*, Wiesbaden 1955, GAF 5, sections 38 and 46—49) and *Erdeni-yin Tobči* (I. J. Schmidt, *Die Geschichte der Ostmongolen*, St. Petersburg, 1829, pp. 99 and 107.)

¹⁶ *Oron-u ejen tengri-dür baling ergükü yosun kemekü orusiba.* Vol. 1, fol. 250; item no. 60.

demons of the localities of *Cambudib* in general and the place concerned in particular, with the intention that these local deities should enjoy them and in return not do anything inimical with respect to any actions whatsoever of the worshippers, that they should be agreeable companions to them and protect them, and at all times bring down the blessings of the Buddhist faith upon them¹⁷. Similar demands are made upon particular deities, such as, for example, the lords of *Muna Qan*. In the ritual *Tangyariy-tu nom-un qayan*, *Muna Qan* and its companions are summoned to carry out the work for which the prayers are offered. Offerings filling the sky and cakes filling the earth are offered, and the mountain, having enjoyed these, is called upon to eradicate evil principles and to bring to fruition what is acceptable¹⁸. In the ritual *Tegüs çoy-tu muna qan terigüten* the lords of *Muna Qan* and its companions, the lords of the magically empowered Yellow River, and the gods and dragons of the White Region are summoned to take their place upon the carpets prepared for their pleasure. There offerings of many kinds are made, and the deities are worshipped as 'great tutelary geniuses' and are summoned to avert evil influences from their adherents, to protect them constantly whether at home or in the steppe, and, forwarding their interests without neglect, to be their tutelary geniuses¹⁹. It will be seen below how the obo-ritual fits

¹⁷ *Tabun küsel erdem tegülder: rasiyan-u dalai baling-i: yerü cambudiib-un oron ba: ilangyui-a ene oron-a: ürgüljide aysan tengri: luus ba albin teyireng: bhuti-nar: bügüde-de Jorin ergümü: Joçoylaçu man-u üile ba: üiledbüri yambar büküi-dur: kerkin kiling ülü üiledün: Jokilduqui nöbür boluqad: ibegejü sakın soyorq-a: qamuç çay-tur amuçulang-tu: burqan nom ba borsang quvaray: masi çuqaç yurban erdeni-yin: öljei qutuç orusidaqui: kemen oron-u ejen tengri-dür baling ergükü yosun-i . . .*

¹⁸ Fol. 2v. *Takil oyтарыи дүгегед: baling delekei-yi dügürgen: muna qayan nököd selte-yi: bayasqaqu-yin tula ergümü: sayitur Joçoylaçu bidan-u: qarsi siltayan-i arilyan: Jokilduqui siltayan-i ber: sedkilçilen sayitur bütüge.*

¹⁹ Fol. 2r. *Tegüs çoy-tu muna qayan nököd-lüge selte ba: ridi-yin erke tegüsügen qatun çoul-un ejed ba: busu basa çayan jüg-ten tengri luus-i Jalamui: taçalaqui debisker-tür bayasqui-bar sayuytun . . . /2v/ . . . yeke süde nököd selte bügüde-yi maytamui: qarsi Jedker künügel-i qariyulun soyorq-a: Jokilduqui jiryalang-inemegülün soyor-ha-a: činadus-un omoyzil-i erkesil-dür quriya: qourlayçin-i belge temdeg üjügüljü keseg: tan-dur takin dulduyiduysan bida nököd selte-yi: kegere ba sayurin-dur ürgüljide tedküged: sanaysan-i sedkilçilen bütügekü üiles-i: alyasaqu ügekü-e süde /3r/ bolun soyorq-a.*

An interesting example of practical protection afforded by a river is given in *Erdeni-yin Tobçi* (I. J. Schmidt, op. cit. p. 188) though it is obscured in Schmidt's German translation. The Mongol text is a song of triumph celebrating a defeat of *Dayan Qayan*, who was put to flight, and whose horse fell at the passage of a river, causing him to fall and lie with his helmet stuck in the mud. The text extols the river, and runs:

Jüg-iyer endele Jegülen irebei Jegün tümed: Jöb buruçu qoyar-i sigübei: tengri ejen Jöbsiyen soyorqaju unayabai: türgen qatun Jüg büri-de sandayulbai: altan yeke ger-e: kemen . . . Schmidt translated this passage: "Instead of staying in their place, they came over here, the three *Jegün Tümen*. They wanted to decide upon right and wrong, but the *Tegri*-lord has made his award, has brought him (the *Qayan*) low, and scattered in all directions his wives and family. Let that be a great golden mirror for them."

The text should in fact be punctuated differently, as a four-lined alliterative stanza, in the following pattern: *Jüg-iyer . . . Jöb . . . Jöbsiyen . . . Jüg . . .*

I would propose the following translation:

"They lost their way, and came here raving, the three *Jegün Tümen*: Heaven the Lord has decided over right and wrong: The Queen *Türgen* has deigned to approve

into this general pattern of offerings to, and concrete demands upon, the local deities.

In the liturgy composed by Mergen Diyanči Lama the function of the *obo* is to serve as a dwelling-place for the local deities wherein they may dwell and be worshipped; and precise directions are given as to the sort of site which is to be chosen for the *obo*, the plan and dimensions (symbolising the Buddhist cosmos) to which it is to be constructed, and the ornamentation which is to be applied to it. It is apparent that the lama-author was faced with demands for a practical manual for the construction of *obos* and for a ritual for worship at them, and found himself in some embarrassment at being unable to acquire any old text of reliable authority and intelligibility upon which to base himself. He more than once apologises to scholarly circles for composing a canon with no authoritative foundation, but excuses himself by saying that he must act, as the demands of potential worshippers cannot be refused. Banzarov somewhat misinterpreted these statements. Mergen Diyanči Lama says: "I shall likewise (i. e. as well as describing its construction) speak of the procedure for performing prayer and offerings (at the *obo*). Now there has been a great deal of chatter in our land about the erection and worship of *obos*, and so on, and it is rumoured that there was an ancient rite, but so much apart, this ancient rite was never widely diffused in our country, and no original text of it has been seen, nor have books of regulations been composed by learned scholars in our own quarter. Though there was an ancient Mongol text from olden days, it would be difficult for its practical application and reading to be understood, and I myself asked about it, but was unable to hear about it, and since the specialists are without knowledge of it, I wrote this sourceless text. The fact that it escaped my attention will, on becoming known, be a matter of endless shame to myself and of disgust to scholars, but it is impossible to refuse those who have said that they wish to have worship made to *obos*, etc. etc."²⁰

(our cause) and has overthrown them: She has scattered in all directions their great golden house (?)."

In the text of *Sayang Sečen* there is not a satisfactory antecedent for the phrase *türgen qatun* though a few lines earlier it is said that the *Qayan* "went in by the pass of the *Onggon* and was about to camp by the side of *Türgen*." (*Ongyon-u sübe-ber oroyad: türgen-ü jaqa-bar bayun бүкүй-е*). However, the text of *Altan Tobči* (section 107), recounting this episode with rather different detail, definitely locates it by a ford of the river *Türgen* (*türgen-i youl-un olom degere*). It seems then that the phrase *türgen qatun* is probably a respectful or propitiatory form of reference to the river which has protected its adherents from danger.

²⁰ *Oboya takiqı Jang üile*, fol. 1:

Eyin kü öçig takil üiledkü-yin Jerge-yi ügülesügei: edüge man-u ene yaJar-tur oboya bosqaqu: takiqı terigüten yekede yangsiysan bui abasu-bar: qayučin-u yosun bülüge: kemeldükü-e-ece öbere: tegün-ü yosun ene yaJar-a yekede delgeregsen ügei-yin tula: yambar uı sudur-i inu ese üjged: man-u öber-ün jüg-ün silıyadaı merged-ün jokıyaysan qauli sudur-i ber ese üjebei: erten-ü nigen qayučin mongyol sudur bui abasu-bar tegün-ü yar-un abulıya ungsilıya terigüten medegdekü-e berke ba: bi öber-ıyen asayaju sonusuysan ber ügei-yin tula: uqayatan medeküi ügei büge-tele: uı ügei eyimü sudur üiledküi /2r/ inu: sonusqui-bar önggeregsen inu ilede бүкүй-ber öber-ıyen eçigüri-tü: ülü baran: merged-e jıgsigdekü oron mön bügesü ber: oboya takiıulsuyai kemegçid boluysan-dur: qariıulji ülü bolun . . .

Banzarov took the last sentence to mean: "Although it is not only scandalous to compose such books — for their time is already past — but also repulsive to scholars, yet it is not possible to oppose those who wish to erect an *obo*"²¹. In fact the lama-author is not excusing himself for composing a book about a shameful subject, but for undertaking the composition without sufficient scriptural backing. He stresses the same in his manual for the construction of an *obo*, where he insists at the beginning that he has not read the original manuals, and at the end begs forgiveness should he have been guilty of uttering baseless falsehoods by writing a book from his own imagination and without sufficient traditional authority behind it²². The possibility that these protestations in fact cloak the suppression of older texts inimical to a Buddhist interpretation of *obo*-worship can of course be neither excluded nor proved.

The *obo* is generally constructed upon high ground, but Pallas points out that the choice of site falls not so much upon especially important or high ground but upon hills which are peculiar for their positioning or configuration²³. On this subject Mergen Diyanči Lama says: "Now further, in the erection of an *obo*, much is said about the erection of a royal *obo* upon the summit of a high mountain, but in the ordinary run of events, since *obos* in this land of ours are made as a shrine and receptacle in which will dwell the gods and dragons and eight classes of the lords of land and water, who are a protection, enclosure, aid and tutelary genius for ourselves²⁴, and the fact is that one will offer prayers and offer-

²¹ Banzarov, *Sobranie Sochinenii*, p. 68 and W. Schmidt, op. cit. p. 68.

²² *Oboya bosqaqu yosun*, fol. 2r: *yar-tur abqui tegüs uy-tu bičig-yi ese üjebei*; and fol. 6v: *oyun ügei min-u öber-ün jasaday-iyar: uy ügei eyimü bičig egüdügßen inu: orum ügei qudal kelegsен metü gem-tü bolbasu: qoçorli ügei merged-e naman-čilamui ja arılqan soyorqa: kemekü bolai*.

More direct evidence of the acceptability of the *obo* as a lamaist cult-object is afforded by a passage in the inventory of the temple at Mergen Süme. Here it is recorded that a certain *Tusalayči tayiji Serab* and others, having heard an exhortation to erect *obos* for the greater glory of the clergy, piously erected an *obo* and presented it to the clergy at Mergen Süme. (See *Mergen süme-yin gçang gang-un dgarçay*, Heissig, no. 162, volume 1, item 14, folio 89v: *tegün-ü uridqan-a yeke esrun-u esi üjügülügsen inu: quvaray-un çoy jali badaraqı-yin tula oboya bosqa kemegsen-i tusalayči tayiji serab-tan sonusuqad: süsüg-ıyer oboya egüdü quvaray-tur ergübei*).

²³ Op. cit. p. 215. The shape of land-configuration plays a part in the divination of the Mongols. In particular the suitability of pasture grounds and of ground for burial places is determined by their shape. For details see two mss. of the Royal Library, Copenhagen: *Ayula ba nutuy-un sinji-ün bičig*, K. 42, and *Ene anu yajar-un sinji bolai*, K. 17. As far as my notes tell me, the siting of *obos* is not referred to in either of these manuscripts.

²⁴ *Oboya bosqaqu yosun*, fol. 1: *öber-tür ibegen qasıyan ömög sülde boluyçı tengri luus naiman ayımaç yajar usun-u efed-ün orusıqu sitügen ba orodal bolıaju . . .* For the term *sülde* in this context cf. the ritual for *Muna Qan*, *Tegüs çoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öçig takıl*, fols. 3v-5v, where in a long litany of prayers addressed to *Muna Qan* the mountain is besought, at the end of each item of the litany, to be a tutelary genius, aid and friend to all, *yogacaris*, masters and disciples. (*Yogacari baısi sabı bidan-dur: jokilduqui sülde kiged ömög sadun boltuçai*). A second series of prayers on fols. 8r—8v has the refrain: "Supremely glorious great *Muna Qan*, be our inseparable protective genius." (*Tegüs çoy-tu yeke muna qan: salul ügei sülde boluytun*).

ings to them, then, as to the question of what terrain may be appropriate, one should erect them, praying for blessings and good portents, upon majestic, elevated ground, rich in mountains, water, trees and grass, and such as to make the whole mass of the people fall to their knees when assembled". As to whether a single *obo* should be erected, or a group of *obos*, perhaps one hundred and eight of them, Mergen Diyanči Lama is uncertain, confessing that he has not been able to read the original practical manuals concerned; the correct shape and form are likewise uncertain. While wise 'specialists', (with which word I translate *uqayatan*), may be able to carry out the work with the necessary good intentions and skill, there will be others, more negligent and stupid, who will let themselves be seduced by vain imitations, and will erect the *obos* carelessly, only to get the reputation of having erected an *obo* and worshipped it when the customary worship of the black shamans and shamanesses is performed. It is possible that these people might perform deeds useless to themselves and others, and so the lama recommends the practice of constructing thirteen *obos* on the same pattern, since it says in an old text that the *obo* is full of majesty like Mount *Sümber*, the King of Mountains; therefore one should construct the thirteen *obos* like Mount *Sümber*, the four great continents and the eight small continents²⁵.

The dimensions of the *obo* are given in great detail. After the performance of preliminary rites, the rituals of the earth (*γaǰar-un ǰang üile*), the pacification of the lords of the earth (*γaǰar-un ejen ?maǰauraki-yin*²⁶ *yosun*), the installation of vases of incense (*qomqa-tu sang oroǰulqu yosun*) and so on, a circle of radius eight cubits (*toqai*) should be drawn out. On this base comes the lowest course of the *obo*, of a thickness of three and a half cubits. On top of this is drawn another circle, of a radius two cubits less, and on this base comes the next course, two cubits thick. The next two courses are planned similarly, one cubit being subtracted from the radius each time, while the thickness of each course is two cubits. The overall measurements of the *obo* of four courses are four fathoms (*alda*) from side to side at the bottom and two fathoms from side to side at the top. The height through the centre is two fathoms. From a good fertile tree a piece of wood of the dimensions of a man should be prepared to act as a central support. It is to be installed as the supreme part of the shrine, after the *dhāraṇīs* of the lamas, tutelary gods (*yidam*), Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, and in particular the *dhāraṇī* of Śaḡyamuni Buddha have been written upon it. Any 'wheels' relating to particular works (*aliba üile-yin tusqayi-tu kürdü*) should be installed now. The exterior of the *obo* is to be wrapped in yellow robes, and armour, helmets, knives, clothes, ornaments and such like objects, all sorts of food and fruit, and vessels of use are to be installed, and in between them cloth, jewels, seeds and medicaments should be placed, and then the body of the *obo* should be erected

²⁵ *Oboǰa bosqaqu yosun*, fols. 1—2v.

²⁶ The reading is very uncertain.

solidly out of stone, and so on, according to the measurements previously given²⁷.

The east of the *obo* is called white tiger or alternatively crystal: the south blue dragon or lapis lazuli; the west magpie or ruby; and the north black frog or gold. These cardinal points are to be built with stones of the appropriate colours, though it will suffice to introduce jewels of the four sorts into the corners and carry out the construction with stones of any colour. Stone is used in the construction as a sign of longevity, stone being the embodiment (lit. essence, *mōn činar*) of strength (*batu*), but should it be necessary to erect an *obo* in a place where there are no stones, it will suffice if the *obo* is packed with chalk, baked earth and so on. On the top of the erection so built trees of various sorts should be planted as a receptacle or dwelling-place (*orodal*) for the *Kalpavrikṣa* tree, the tree which acts according to one's wishes. These trees are: the juniper, father of trees; the reed, the mother; the tamarisk, the son; the rooted birch (*ündüsü-tei qusu*), the uncle: the willow, the daughter. These trees are a sign of the diffusion of felicity. In the midst of them, on the summit, is to be stuck a great *garudi* bird, variegated or white, ornamented on the top of the head with a wishing-jewel (*cindamani*); at its two sides should be the sun and moon, and on the outside twenty-one little birds facing inwards. These are all to be surrounded and adorned with bows and arrows, spears with streamers, swords, battle-axes, harpoons and such like cutting-weapons, wheel and *cindamani*, mirror and pendants. Being a sign of the flaming of glory all this should be gay and pretty. Further, *mani*-prayer-flags and images (*šaza*, cf. Tib. *ts'a-tś'a*) cut with syllables should be inserted²⁸.

Around the upper course of the *obo* are to be placed the following objects: in the east a small bird (*biljuqai*), dragon and black eagle (*tas*); in the south a tiger, falcon (*qarčaqai*) and female yak (*qayinuγ*); in the west an eagle, male yak (*sarluy*) and elephant: in the north a lion, pied bird (*alaγ sibaγun*) and egg. In the four secondary points are to be placed a stag, monkey, bat and white crane. Around the second course are placed in the east a wheel with the figure *čoy-tu jiruqai*; in the south a victory token (*ilayuyśan čimeg*) with a lotus: in the west a vase with an umbrella; in the north a fish with a conch-shell. In between the cardinal and secondary points are placed the signs of the eight trigrams. Around the third course are placed in order the twelve years, starting with the monkey and the cock in the east, and in the twelve intervals between them the seven jewels and the five sensuous qualities. Around the bottom course are put amulets and talismans for averting the evils which come from birthmarks and so forth (*mengge-yin γai qariγulquteri-güten buu darulγa-yin ayimaγ*), the forms of birds and of carnivorous

²⁷ *Oboγa bosqaqu yosun*, fols. 2v—3v.

²⁸ Fols. 3v—4v.

beasts and such like living creatures, and sacrificial cakes. The *obo* is to be surrounded with all these objects²⁹.

At the four cardinal points of the great *obo* are four sentry *obos* in the manner of the great continents, and at the sides of each of the four there is a pair of companion *obos*, like the companion continents, making twelve in all. These are all to have different *dhāraṇīs* written on their central pieces of wood. To the east, on the central one, is written the *Bilig baramid* (*Prajñāpāramitā*) *dhāraṇī*, to the right the *Mañjuśrī dhāraṇī*, to the left the *Bisman tegri dhāraṇī*. To the south, on the central one, the *Čayan sikür-tei dhāraṇī*, to the right *Mari*, to the left the *Brana savri* (*Paṇa śavari*) *dhāraṇī*. To the west, on the central one, the *Ayusi dhāraṇī*, to the right the *Bacara dhāraṇī*, and to the left the *Dara eke dhāraṇī*. To the north, on the central one, the *Bidarana dhāraṇī*, to the right the *Arsalan dayu-tu dhāraṇī*, and to the left the *Vajrapāṇidhāraṇī*. The twelve *obos* are to be enveloped in yellow robes and the necessary objects are to be installed. Each is to have the proper stones at the different cardinal points. The four *obos* at the cardinal points are to be built in a globular form out of stones laid above a circular plan of radius three cubits. Their width at the lower level is to be six cubits from side to side and the height is to be four cubits. The eight companion *obos* are to be a little smaller. This is an account of the planning of the size of the *obos*, and of their number, form and shape, but as circumstances may vary one is not to be circumscribed, saying: "The plan of an *obo* is so broad and so high, and the manner of building it is exactly thus". Trees and *garudis* are to be placed upon them, and weapons and images and so on. *Ki-mori* flags of the four colours white, black, green and red should be flown at the four secondary points of the *obos*. Mergen Diyanči Lama concludes his account by referring to his other text for the ceremonies of *obo*-worship, and by saying that advantages will accrue from devotion to the place as long as one has erected the *obo* with virtuous intentions and built it with the skill of knowledge, not spoiling it through falsity and greed. As mentioned above, he excuses himself for possibly being guilty of uttering falsehoods through composing a text without sufficient authority, basing himself upon his own imagination³⁰.

Obo-ceremonies have been witnessed and described by more than one traveller, notably by O. Lattimore³¹ and A. L. Pollard-Urquhart³², both of whom saw the ceremonies in West Sūnit in the nineteen-thirties, while Gotō, in his article already cited, refers to Japanese accounts. The long and complicated series of ceremonies given by Mergen Diyanči Lama in his second text on *obo*-worship itself has three basic elements. These are, in his own analysis: firstly to assemble the 'congregation'

²⁹ Fols. 4v—5r.

³⁰ Fols. 5r—6v.

³¹ O. Lattimore, *Mongol Journeys*, New-York-London, 1941.

³² *An Obo-festival of Western Sūnit*. Journal of the Royal Central Asian Society, vol. 24 (1937), pp. 454—467.

(*čiyulıyan*) and pray to the three jewels; secondly, to construct a shrine for the guardians of the White Region; and lastly, to perform ablutions to the Three Jewels and to make a feast for the 'congregation'³³. This congregation does not signify any gathering of people to witness the ceremony, but the assembled deities, tutelary gods, protectors of the faith and so on, to whom the offerings and worship are presented. This point must be stressed as Banzarov, perhaps misled by the fact that after the *obo*-ceremonies feasting and games do take place (though these secular activities are not touched upon in Mergen Diyanči Lama's ritual texts), rather distorts the Mongol text at one point so as to make the lama-author appear to criticise those who offer bloody sacrifices, which serve really only for feasting and glutting the people, under the name of offerings (*takil*)³⁴. In fact the text should be punctuated so as to separate entirely the phrase concerning the preparation of the feast for the congregation, which is expressly enjoined, from the following criticism of the savage, impure and sinful offerings of those who, falling into error, slaughter beasts under the name of offerings³⁵.

Banzarov says that the consecration of the *obo* and the ceremonies performed on that occasion are carried out with all the accompaniments of Buddhist worship. So many prayers are specified, and so many offerings are to be made, he says, that it would be difficult to describe them all³⁶. This difficulty is indeed apparent, but happily insight is possibly best to be gained into the significance of the *obo*-ceremonies and their place in the worship of the Mongols by an examination of certain of the prayers and explanations offered by Mergen Diyanči Lama, rather than by the complete enumeration of the ceremonies themselves. In addition I have not felt myself competent to consider the general significance of customary ritual acts, in the way, for instance, that Professor F. D. Lessing has done in his article *Miscellaneous Lamaist Notes I*³⁷, and I have limited myself to an account of those elements of the ritual which characterise *obo*-worship, apparently linking it with the cult of the local deities in general. The main theme of the service is the invitation of the gods and dragons who are the lords of the neighbourhood to take up their dwelling in the *obo*, which has been erected as a shrine for them, and, thus localised for their worshippers, to bestow benefits upon them and avert evils from them, in exchange for worship and offerings. The ceremonies and prayers by which these benefits and acts of protection are secured inevitably bear similarities both of substance and wording to those offered

³³ *Oboya takiqu jang üile*, fol. 2r.

³⁴ Banzarov, op. cit. p. 68. Cf. W. Schmidt, op. cit. p. 68.

³⁵ *Oboya takiqu jang üile*, fols. 3v—4r. The text at the point concerned runs: . . . *nidün-ü üjegdel ali olan ba: čiyulıyan-u/qurim-nuyud-i ber beledgdeküi* (sic) *ügülerün öber-iyen endekü-yin tula Joriyad takil kemen nereyidčü: üčüken ču qour ügei: quča unayan buqa uqana (?) alayad . . . jebügün burtay kilinče-tü teyimü takil-iyar yağun kikü . . .*

³⁶ loc. cit.

³⁷ *Central Asiatic Journal*, Vol. II, No. 1, pp. 62—66.

in other rituals concerning local deities, for example those to *Muna Quan*. Confession of sins, which plays a prominent part in these latter³⁸, does not however appear to take place in the *obo* ceremonies.

The *obo*-service begins with the preparation of the shrines (*sitügen*) and the different offerings and sacrificial cakes. First the site is to be cleaned and swept and a white carpet spread upon it to keep down the earth and dust. Then the altar (*sirege*) is covered, and upon the cover are reverently placed the image of the lord Buddha and other shrines, together with canopy and ornaments. In front of the altar are set out the offerings of food and drink, consisting of fruits and five round white cakes made by mixing the 'three white' and 'three sweet' objects of good odour with the purest fine white flour, all with ornaments. In front of this are set out the two waters and other necessities, and finally the five incenses. Further offerings include the eight glorious emblems, the seven royal jewels and the five sensuous qualities. In front of the officiant (*bütügleči*) are to be set out, on an altar, the thunderbolt and bell, the inner offerings, seeds for scattering, and behind these, the self-sprung offerings and sacrificial cakes of different sorts, including those intended for the lords of the earth. Further preparations are to be made by means of an altar for the ablutions, vases, mirrors, garments, mandalas, drums and cymbals, conches, oboes, incense, cakes for the *todqar*-demons, black resin (*qara gügü*), white saffron (*čayan qači*) and further sacrificial cakes. Offerings to be set out in front of the *obo* include armour, helmets, bows and arrows, spears and swords, and such like weapons, beasts for ransoming³⁹, arrows with white silk-tissues and mirrors, banners, and so on. Further, such objects as a sun and moon, foods consisting of fruits and butter, buttered breads, millet soup and cheese; drinks such as milk, curdled milk (*taraγ*), tea and spirits: the gold libation; the two waters; the five necessities; and other requisites

³⁸ *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig takil*, fols. 6r-6v. The confession to *Muna Qan* and request for purification includes not only such sins as the killing and destruction of snakes, frogs, wild beasts, fish, herbivorous and carnivorous animals, but also the cutting down of 'wild' (*doysin*) trees, digging up of the wild ground, pulling out of stones, destroying of turf, troubling of springs and waters and spreading of filth and impurities. (*Doysin modun oyталуsаn doysin ʔaʔar erügsen: čilayun-i qobqoluysan jögelbüri ebdegsen: bulay usun qudqulaysan bujar burtay tosqaysan: gem-i namančilamu bi küličekü jokis-tu: moyai kiged menekei ba görügesün jiyasun: ariya-tan terigüten amitan-i alaysan: deledügsen terigüten kedüi бүкү gem-üd-i: tegüs čoy-tu muna qan- dur namančilan öčimü*).

³⁹ *cir tir talbiqui mal*. The meaning of the phrase *cir tir* (?tar = Tib. *t'ar-ba*, to become free) is not clear to me; but from a later passage in the ritual where cattle are mentioned as being devoted to the *obo* (fol. 12r. *ene mal-i tan-dur jorin seterlegsen inu ber*. Cf. Mostaert, *Dictionnaire Ordos*, p. 577b, *seterle-*, "consacrer (un animal) à une divinité"; *setertei*, "consacré à la divinité"; à l'*obo*"), I suppose the meaning of "ransomed (as a devoted animal)". Pollard-Urquhart, op. cit. p. 462, mentions the custom of blessing animals in this way at the *obo*-ceremonies. He says: "After the ceremonies came the blessing of the animals, not for the purpose of sacrifice, but the reverse; for these fortunate animals, after being blessed and branded, were to be returned to their herds, never to be used or killed". The aspersion of animals is one of the ritual acts performed at the end of the present ceremonies. (*Oboya takiqu Jang üile*, fol. 18r.)

such as umbrellas and flags are all to be got ready, together with the feast for the congregation. Mergen Diyanči Lama admonishes to carefulness in the preparation of the *obo* offerings and cakes. The virtues of the offerings can, he says, be destroyed in a moment, like hail falling on the crops, if one commits the sin of killing a living being, and so the offerings are to be carefully prepared according to his directions. The pure offerings he recommends will serve for a virtuous and glorious offering, in contrast to a cruel and sinful one consisting in the slaughter of innocent beasts and the use of their flesh, which is called an offering only in error⁴⁰. Later in the ritual the significance of many of these offerings is explained. The martial objects, armour, weapons and so on, do not seem to be peculiar to the *obo*-ritual but to belong to the cult of local deities in general; as will be seen from the later explanations they are significant as signs of protection from evil. Similar offerings are made to the lords of *Muna Qan*, at the beginning of whose ritual offerings including cutting-weapons, arms, riding horses and herds and flocks are listed. Later the list is expanded to include armour, helmets, swords, spears, bows and arrows, saddled horses and other riding beast, as well many of the other sacrificial objects met with in the *obo*-ritual⁴¹. Evidently associated with the cult of local deities is a ritual for the tutelary geniuses⁴². As was shown above, the local deities were considered by Mergen Diyanči Lama to be, inter alia, the tutelary geniuses of their adherents, while in the ritual. *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan delgerenggüi öčig* there are, as has been shown (note 24 above) two long series of invocations in which *Muna Qan* is besought in various ways to be the tutelary genius of the worshippers. In this ritual for the tutelary geniuses, then, we find similar offerings listed. The tutelary geniuses themselves are visualised as nine brothers, emitting light and rainbows from their bodies. They wear golden armour and helmets, and ride upon powerful horses. In their right hands they carry swords and whips, in their left hands spears with streamers attached and nooses. They wear bows and arrows with quivers and bow cases, with ornaments of silk-tissue of all sorts. Above them fly falcons; their shoulders are decorated with lion and tiger (?skins); fierce black bears precede them and dogs and *šaralya* (?) follow them. In this warlike guise they are conjured to appear through the power of their pious feelings and their oaths, together with the gods and dragons and eight classes of *bhuti*-demon. To them are made offerings of many kinds, offered up in the course of a litany, every item of which ends with a prayer beseeching them to enjoy the offering and then establish themselves firmly in the shrine and cause the desires and affairs of their worshippers to be accomplished⁴³. Amongst the offerings listed are to be found flowers, incense, lamps, scents, food, music; the seven jewels, eight glorious emblems; milk, kumis, sour milk,

⁴⁰ *Oboya takiqu Jang üile*, fols. 2v—4r.

⁴¹ *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig takil*, fols. 1—2r. and 12v.

⁴² *Sülde tengri-yin degjigülkü yosun tusa Jiryalang-un gegen-i delgeregülün*. Volume 4, fols. 190—197; item no. 12.

⁴³ *Sülde tengri*, fols. 3r—3v.

spirits; the 'three white' and 'three sweet' foods, fruit, seeds, flour, butter and cakes; splendid palaces, fields and gardens; flags and ornaments; skins of carnivorous beasts; the lion and tiger and bear, the *šaralya* and other dogs; the four sorts of domestic animal; robes, ornaments and rosaries and so on. Besides these items, many of which have been met with already in the *obo* ceremonies, the list of offerings includes the martial items, cutting weapons and arms, stout armour and helmets, fine riding horses⁴⁴. A similar litany with an even more extended list of offerings including the martial items occurs also in the *Muna Qan* ritual⁴⁵. The purpose of enumerating these objects here is to show the similarity of those offered at the *obo*-ceremonies with those specified for other ceremonies. I have felt it worth-while to emphasize this connection since on the one hand Banzarov does not do so, while on the other hand the presence of weapons and such like has been attested for the *obo*-ritual for example in West Sünit by the observers already quoted⁴⁶, and it appears necessary to point out the wider sphere of use of objects of this sort. To what extent the various rituals were in actual performance associated I have no evidence, but they may all have formed part of the summer religious services performed in the neighbourhood of *Muna Qan* by the monks of *Mergen Süme* and mentioned by Przhevalski⁴⁷.

The preparations having been made, there follows the meditation upon a tutelary Buddha. At this point it appears as if *Mergen Diyanči* Lama may have had some older text at his disposal, though it is not clear if a text specifically concerned with *obo*-worship is concerned, for he says that it is immaterial which tutelary Buddha is called upon, but as it was thought to be the wrathful *Vajrapāṇi* (*ketter včarbani*) in the old text, he will recount the invitation of *Vajrapāṇi* and the offering of sacrificial cakes to him⁴⁸. After the salutation to *Vajrapāṇi*, the blessing of sacrificial cakes, and so on, there follows the invitation to the 'congregation' to instal themselves upon the carpets provided for their pleasure⁴⁹. The congregation consists of the lamas of (high) extraction (*iḡayur ündüsün lama*), tutelary gods, Buddhas, Bodhisattvas, heroes (*baγatur*) and *dākinīs*, and protectors of the faith. A similar list in the ritual *Tengri luus-i takiqu čindamani erike* includes also the name of Btsong-k'a-pa⁵⁰. Then follows, accompanied by various acts of worship (the offering of incense, blowing of conches, deposition of sacrificial cakes) the invitation of the gods and dragons into the *obo* and other shrines which have been specially prepared for this occasion. At this invitation there is recited the following prayer, which

⁴⁴ *Sülde tengri*, fols. 3v—4v.

⁴⁵ *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig takil*, fols. 3v—5v.

⁴⁶ Cf. Pollard-Urquhart, op. cit. p. 461: "The most interesting thing about this *obo* was a figure placed in front, which was made up of various kinds of armour and weapons ancient and modern".

⁴⁷ N. Prejevalsky, *Mongolia*, translated by E. Delmar Morgan, London, 1876, Vol. I, p. 167.

⁴⁸ *Oboγa takiqu jang üile*, fols. 4r—4v.

⁴⁹ *Oboγa takiqu jang üile*, fol. 7v.

⁵⁰ Fol. 3v.

seems to serve to associate the local protective deities concerned with those of all localities in the Buddhist cosmos, imagined and real:

"*Kii*: In the manner in which in former times the master of the school, Padma Sambhava, offered prayers and offerings to the gods and dragons, so do we today, having erected a shrine for all the gods and dragons, offer prayers and offerings to them.

Kii: If the lords in the three chiliocosms, the twelve steadfast goddesses of the earth, the gods and dragons, gods of the place and lords of the earth of *Čoytu včir saγurin* (*Śri Vajrāsana*) which is at the navel of Cambudib; of *Wu T'ai Shan* in the east, the illustrious place of Mañjuśrī; of *Potala* in the south, the place of the Bodhisattva Qongsim; of *U rgyen* in the west, the illustrious place of the *dākinīs*; of *Shambala* in the north, the place of the Secret Dhāraṇī; of *Qačir sibayun čoyčalaγsan* (*Gridrakūtha*) and the rest of India; of *Bkra śis lhun po*, *Lhaldan* (sic) and *Bsam-yas* and the rest of Tibet; of *Kökönor* and the rest of the lands in *Oirad*; of *Songgin-tu* ('Onion-place') and the rest of Upper and Lower *Amdo*; of Peking and the other places in China; of such and such places and the rest of the places of Mongolia; and especially of the environs of this place which is concerned — if these together with the supreme great ones who delight in the White Region will assemble, we will, having built an *obo* for those who are the associates and companions, aid and friends of ourselves and all our comrades, offer prayers and worship to them. Hearing us with pity, deign to come hither"⁵¹.

Both the general and particular classification of local deities, which occurs here, and the description of them as 'friends' of the worshippers are to be found elsewhere, if in an abbreviated form. Thus in the ritual *Tangyariγ-tu nom-un qaγan* etc. the lords of the earth of *Cambudib* in general, and in particular the gods and dragons and eight classes of *bhuti*-demon of the place specifically concerned are begged to accept the offerings of food and drink which have been made and in return not to be inimical to the matters undertaken by the worshippers, to allay evils, and to be companionable⁵². Each item of the earlier of the two litanies mentioned from the *Muna Qan* ritual in note 24 above ends with a prayer to the mountain to be a "tutelary genius, aid and friend to us, *yogacarīs*, masters and disciples".

There follows immediately in the ritual of *Mergen Diyanči Lama* a set of prayers to be said during the offering of the sacrifices of food, drink and spirits given by the patrons. These prayers do much to define and elucidate the role of the *obo* as a cult-object. The thirteen *obos*, like the king of mountains, Mount *Sumber*, and the four continents and eight small continents, is a shrine by which all are protected, and longevity is confirmed. The prayer continues:

⁵¹ *Oboγa takiqu jaγg üile*, fols. 9r—10r.

⁵² Fol. 2v. The wording is similar to that given from another ritual in note 17.

"For that reason we make offerings to the shrine. Strengthen the shrine by which are pacified the evil *Jedker*-demons.

Strengthen the shrine by which is diffused the virtue of (long) life.

Strengthen the shrine by which (things) accumulate quickly.

Strengthen the shrine by which are banished the workers of evil.

Strengthen the shrine by which the feet of the lamas are made firm.

Strengthen the shrine by which the faith is propagated.

Strengthen the shrine by which the clergy regale themselves.

Strengthen the shrine by which all peoples come to live in peace.

Strengthen the shrine by which life is made long.

Strengthen the shrine by which seed and power are multiplied tenfold.

Strengthen the shrine by which fame and name are noised abroad.

Strengthen the shrine by which flocks and herds are increased.

And having strengthened it eradicate the eighty thousand hindrances;

eradicate the three hundred and sixty forms of *ada*-demon; eradicate

the four hundred and four sorts of disease, eradicate the eighty-four

sinister portents; bring all our undertakings to a successful conclusion:

befriend us and protect us always"⁵³.

These prayers are followed immediately by another set which offer an interpretation of the various offerings which are made to the shrine:

"The one who soars in the sky, with a diadem of the glorious *cinda-mani* jewel and perfected with wings of wisdom and method is the shrine whereby strength is increased. For this reason we make offerings to the shrine

The twenty-one birds of splendid colour and hue and harmonious song, and most delightful, are the shrine whereby everything is collected into (?your) power. For this reason, etc.⁵⁴.

The armour and helmet of diamond which, though all sorts of weapon are aimed at them, conquer in the battle where one is hit and dies, are the shrine whereby the life of living creatures is protected. For this reason, etc.

The great bow and arrow, essence of wisdom and method, which aim at the heart of the poisonous enemies the *todqar*-demons, are the shrine whereby sinister evils are repressed. For this reason, etc.

The various sharp spears, ornamented with ornaments of all kinds of silk-tissue and with flags, are the shrine whereby doers of evil are banished, and the shrine of . . .⁵⁵ firm intention and absence of obstacle. For this reason, etc.

The hard and sharp cutting-weapons of all sorts which, as occasion serves, reduce to dust the inimical *todqar*-demons, are the shrine whereby majesty (*sülde*) and glory are revived. For this reason, etc.

⁵³ *Oboya takiqu jang üile*, fols. 10r—11r.

⁵⁴ The abbreviation is mine. Elsewhere in these rituals repetitive passages are abbreviated in the Mongol text, as for example in *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig takil*, fols. 3v foll., where a long invocation to Muna Qan occurs in its frequent repetitions as *Tegüs čoy-tu terigüten uridaki adali*.

⁵⁵ Reading uncertain here.

The various trees, juniper, reed, tamarisk, birch and willow, are the shrine whereby all perfect felicity is multiplied. For this reason, etc.

The various ornaments of silk-tissue are the shrine whereby ?understanding⁵⁶ is multiplied. The jewels are the shrine whereby want is eradicated. The various seeds are the shrine whereby joy is produced. For this reason, etc.

The various medicines are the shrine whereby epidemics⁵⁷ fail to occur. The various fruits are the shrine whereby suffering is eradicated. The various vessels are the shrine whereby all goods are brought to perfection. For this reason, etc.

These beasts which have been consecrated to you are the shrine whereby every birth shall be enriched and long-lived stock and posterity be firmly established. For this reason, etc.

The decoration by white silk-tissue and mirrors of these very straight arrows, feathered with vulture-feathers, is the shrine whereby long life and felicity are distilled. For this reason, etc.

The blessed *dhāranīs* and the syllables on the *mani*-prayer-flags and also the blessed images are the shrine of the Body of the Doctrine (*nom-un beye, dharmakaya*) which perfects the Buddha-intelligence. For this reason, etc.⁵⁸.

This recitation completed, the offerings, cakes, food and drink, and incense, etc., are all offered up, presumably to the local deities, with a prayer that they will be constant companions and protectors, and offerings of incense are made to the lords of the *obo*, with a prayer that they will sweep away filth and impurities⁵⁹.

Subsequently there is recited the 'Praise of the Obo' (*Oboyan-u maytayal*). The text of this runs:

"We adore the gods and dragons, the protectors and tutelary geniuses who accomplish perfectly our desires when we offer prayers and offerings, in the manner of the cindamani which accomplishes what is desired. Through the strength of this our obeisance, worship and praise do you constantly be companions and friends to us all, sacrificers and those on whose behalf sacrifice is made, at home or in the steppe or wherever we may be⁶⁰. Allay illness and the hindrances of *ada-* and *jedker*-demons: spread the splendour of (long) life and the joy of felicity; bring all in the three worlds into your power; banish all the tormenting, inimical *todqar*-demons; banish all plague and epidemic illnesses, and ills of day, month and year; avert

⁵⁶ The block is badly cut here; possibly *bodi* is intended, but this is most uncertain.

⁵⁷ The Mongol text has *taqul tamsiy* for which Kowalewski gives the equivalents 'cough, cold in the head'. This hardly seems a general enough concept for the context, and I suggest the second meaning given by Kowalewski for *taqul* alone: 'plague, contagious sickness, epidemic'.

⁵⁸ *Oboya takiqū jāng üile*, fols. 11r—12v.

⁵⁹ *Oboya takiqū jāng üile*, fol. 13r.

⁶⁰ *Bida būrin takiyūči ba takiydayūči-nuyud ber: ger-ten kiged kegere ba qamiya ber bolbaču*. Cf. a similar phrase in the ritual *Tegūs čoy-tu muna qan terigūten*, quoted in note 19.

evils of the type of wolves attacking the flocks, thieves and brigands stirring abroad, hail, drought or cattle-pest occurring; and effect the consequences that rain and water should occur at the times when they are needed; that crops and seeds should flourish, and living beings multiply their joy and devote themselves to the very white virtues" ⁶¹.

This ode of praise is said to be based upon an old Mongol text ⁶², but since that part of it from the words 'banish all plague' to 'white virtues' of the translation occurs almost word for word also in the *Muna Qan* ritual ⁶³, it cannot be taken as an indication that the text which Mergen Diyanči Lama had at his disposal was actually an *obo*-ritual, and the same reservation must probably be made at other points where he refers to such old Mongol texts. It is however, a further indication of the common purpose and liturgical connection of the *obo*-rituals and other rituals and prayers concerning the local deities.

Following this prayer banners and flags are to be flown, oboes and conches played and flowers scattered and then another prayer is recited, beginning as follows ⁶⁴:

"We cause to blaze the countenances of the gods and dragons and other protectors and tutelary geniuses who have entered as rulers into the *obos*, which are similar to Mount *Sumber* and the continents. Protecting us like the shadow with the body (i. e. inseparably), be zealous in being our friends and companions".

The rest of the prayer, a plea that the spirits should look after one by day, guard one by night, escort one when departing and go to meet one when arriving, be zealous in guiding and supporting the worshippers and continue to be friends and companions, is found also, word for word, in the *Muna Qan* ritual and the ritual for the *Sülde Tengri*, as well as here in the *obo*-ritual ⁶⁵.

There follow the *dalaŷa* ceremony of prayer for good fortune and then the ceremony of ablution (*ugiyal*). Finally, after further offerings have been made, including the scattering of flowers by mounted men trotting round the *obos* clockwise at a not too great distance, together with another prayer to the gods and dragons and other guardians who are guests

⁶¹ *Oboŷa takiqu Jang üile*, fols. 14v—15r.

⁶² Ditto, fol. 14v: *qaŷučin mongŷol sudur-ača boluŷsan oboŷan-u maytaŷal kemeküi-i üiledküi-e*.

⁶³ *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig*, fol. 7v. The text of the *obo*-ritual follows; variations in the *Muna qan* text do not affect the meaning and are omitted: *Kijig ŷamsiy ebečin ba qonoŷ sara jil-ün ŷai: mal-dur čino dobtalaqui ba degerme qulaŷai: ŷarqu ba möndör salkin ŷang Jud bolqui ekilen: küñügel-ün siltaŷan-i činaŷsi-da qariŷul: qura usun keregleküi čay-tur-iyan oroju: tariŷa ba üre sime delgereged amitan amur jirŷal arbiŷaju masi čaŷan buyan-a: kičiyekü-yin nöküčel-i öbesüben bütäge*.

⁶⁴ *Oboŷa takiqu Jang üile*, fols. 15r—15v.

⁶⁵ *Tegüs čoy-tu muna qan-u delgerenggüi öčig takil*, fols. 7v—8r. *Sülde tengri*, fol. 7r. The text of the *obo*-ritual (fol. 15v) runs: *Edür büri ŷurban čay-tur: ŷarquban (?qaraqu-ban) kičiyे: söni büri ŷurban čay-tur jisekü-ben kičiyе: činaŷsi-ban odqui čay-tur üdeküi-ben kičiyе: inaŷsi-ban ireküi-dür uŷtaqui-ban kičiyе: jiluŷadun tüsiküi-yi üiledküi-ben kičiyе: ürgüljide qani nöküŷ bolqui-yuŷan-a kičiyе*.

at the banquet (*sakiyulsun jočid*) to protect the *obo* and to be constant companions, the benefits to be expected from erecting *obos* and worshipping at them are enumerated. These include, as is to be expected, the extermination of the *jedker*-demons concerned with life and with pasture land, the blossoming of sons and grandchildren, multiplication of flocks and herds and possessions, eradication of sinister evil portents, relief from all misfortunes; relief from the three hundred and sixty *ada*-demons, from the four hundred and four diseases, and from the eighty thousand *todqar*-demons which are met with suddenly, likewise the accession of good fortune, and protection on the part of the powerful great local deities who have been rendered happy, and, what is not absolutely clear, "finding the original *obo* of one's ? final rebirth" ⁶⁶.

This account of the main prayers and explanations in the *obo*-ritual as expounded by Mergen Diyanči Lama is not meant as a complete analysis of the ritual, which from the point of view of its complexity and of the number of other rituals involved, which are often referred to merely by short quotations, is beyond my present abilities and intentions. I have tried to extract those items which serve to give some insight into the significance of the *obo*-ritual as a whole, as distinct from the intrinsic significance of the individual acts of worship enclosed in the ritual. I hope to have shown that the *obo*-ceremonial is closely linked with the worship of the local deities of natural features, mountains and rivers and so on, by indicating from time to time that common features occur in the various rituals concerning these deities and in the *obo*-ritual. It seems significant that the worship of *Muna Qan* is associated with that of Tibetan mountain deities; and from this I would like to surmise that the intention of Mergen Diyanči Lama was perhaps not so much, as Banzarov proposed, to suppress shamanistic elements of worship by incorporating them, suitably altered, into Buddhist ritual, as to strengthen the position of Buddhism in Mongolia by associating indigenous cult-elements with similar phenomena already established in Tibetan lamaism. Such a view must not be pressed too far, without discovering in more detail the general religious climate in which these rituals were composed. Nor is it at all clear how to distinguish between 'lamaist' and 'shamanist' elements. It is however clear what significance the *obo* had for Mergen Diyanči Lama, as was brought out in quotation by Banzarov ⁶⁷. It was to be erected as a shrine for the local gods and dragons, who are characterised as a protection, enclosure, aid and tutelary genius of the inhabitants of the place, wherein they can dwell and be worshipped and exercise their beneficent functions. Similar functions are ascribed specifically to the lords of *Muna Qan* and of the Yellow River. To the former in particular are addressed, as we have seen, two series of invocations, the latter one cast in the in-

⁶⁶ *Oboya takiqu jang üile*, fols. 19r—19v. The text of the last eight words of the translation appears to be: *ečüs-ün töröl-ün yeke ijaγur-un oboya-i oluyu*, but the cutting of the word *ečüs* is rather doubtful.

⁶⁷ loc. cit.

teresting form of a group of similes⁶⁸, beseeching the mountain to be the tutelary genius of its worshippers. The *obo*-ceremonies of Mergen Diyanči Lama are to be considered primarily as belonging to the complex of rituals devoted to the local deities which make up a considerable part of the fourth volume of his collected works. Banzarov draws a contrast between the *obo*-ritual as it was under Mergen Diyanči Lama's new dispensation, emphasizing that fact that former, shamanist ceremonies were marked by bloody sacrifices. However, the ritual of Mergen Diyanči Lama makes only one passing reference to shamans, and that in a context unconnected with bloody sacrifices, which he criticises as an erroneous practice without identifying those who perform them. It is interesting to note the observation of Pollard-Urquhart, à propos the ceremonies in West Sünit: "In front of the *obo* were placed the carcasses of the sheep that had been killed for the offering"⁶⁹. It is most improbable that these ceremonies were to be classed as shamanistic. Gotō also quotes instances of bloody offerings being made. While Mergen Diyanči Lama's protest against the slaughter of innocent beasts for so-called offerings certainly stands, it occupies a small place in this two texts, which are apparently well integrated in the larger framework of his rituals concerning local deities, and is apparently not connected by him with shamanism. As was remarked above, it is very hard to distinguish between 'shamanist' and 'lamaist' elements in Mongol religion, but it appears that *obo*-worship, as described in the two texts at our disposal, falls within the general scope of lamaist Buddhism.

⁶⁸ These similes, as well as a similar set in the ritual *Sülde tengri*, fol. 6r., seem to me similar in type to the visual comparisons discussed in connection with the oldest type of Mongol literature by W. Heissig in his article *Zum sprachlichen Ausdruck der altmongolischen Spruchdichtung*, OE 2/2, 1955, pp. 206—209. The text runs: *Masi kürkiregči yeke luu: egülen-e yambar yosuñar: tegüs čoy-tu yeke muna qan: salul ügei sülde boluytun: oyтарыи-да nisekü garudi: jigür-lüge yambar yosuñar: tegüs etc. görüged-ün qayan arsalan: času-tu-da yambar yosuñar: tegüs etc. doysin küčün tegüs bars ber: yeke oi-dur yambar yosuñar: tegüs etc. eneregči eke ečige: köbegün-e yambar yosuñar: tegüs etc. geyigülügči naran saran-a: gerel tegüsügen yosuñar etc. sedkigseger čindamani-dur: kereg tegüsügen yosuñar etc.*

"Like the loudly roaring dragon in the clouds, do you, supremely glorious great Muna qan, etc..

Like the *garudi* with its wings soaring in the firmament . . .

Like the lion, king of beasts, in the snowy places . . .

Like the tiger, with all its wild strength, in the great forest . . .

Like mother and father, having pity on the child . . .

Like the abundance of light in the illuminators, the sun and moon . . .

Like the abundance of goods in the wishing-jewel *Cindamani* . . .

The text of the *Sülde tengri* ritual is slightly different in detail but contains the same items. A similar simile is to be found in the *obo*-ritual, *Oboya takiqu Jang üile*, fol. 15v., where the idea of inseparability is expressed by the image of the body and the shadow: *beye-lüge següder-ün yosuñar ibegeged*, "protecting in the manner of the shadow with the body".

⁶⁹ Op. cit. p. 461.