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# Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape (Mongolia)

## No 1440

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### Official name as proposed by the State Party

Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape

### Location

Mungunmorit Soum (District) in Tuv Aimag (Province)  
Umnudelger Soum (District) in Khentii Aimag (Province)

### Brief description

The nominated Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, and its surrounding landscape, lies in the central part of the Khentii mountains chain that forms the watershed between the Arctic and Pacific Oceans in the north-east of Mongolia. This is where the vast Central Asian steppe meets the coniferous forests of the Siberian taiga.

Burkhan Khaldun is associated with the worship of sacred mountains, rivers and *ovoo*-s (shamanic rock cairns), in which ceremonies have been shaped by a fusion of ancient shamanic and Buddhist practices.

Since the 1990s, after sixty years of repression, official support has been given for the revival of traditional practices of mountain worship.

Burkhan Khaldun is also associated with Chinggis Khan, as his reputed burial site and more widely with his establishment of the Mongol Empire in 1206. It is one of four sacred mountains he designated during his lifetime, Khaldun as part of the official status he gave to mountain worship. Burkhan Khaldun is considered to be the cradle of Mongolian nationhood.

### Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (July 2013), paragraph 47, it is also a *cultural landscape*.

## 1 Basic data

### Included in the Tentative List

Burkhan Khaldun, as part of a serial site for Mongolia Sacred Mountains: Bogd Khan, Burkhan Khaldun, and Olgontenger, was included in the Tentative List in 1996.

### International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

### Date received by the World Heritage Centre

27 January 2014

### Background

This is a new nomination.

### Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and several independent experts.

Comments about the evaluation of this property were received from IUCN in December 2014. ICOMOS carefully examined this information to arrive at its final decision and its March 2015 recommendation; IUCN also revised the presentation of its comments in accordance with the version included in this ICOMOS report.

### Technical Evaluation Mission

A joint ICOMOS/IUCN technical evaluation mission visited the property from 26 August to 5 September 2014.

### Additional information received by ICOMOS

On 7 October 2014, ICOMOS requested the State Party to provide further information on comparative analysis, boundaries, bibliography and reconstruction work. The State Party responded on 4 November 2014 and the supplementary information provided has been reflected in this text.

A letter was sent to the State Party on 22 December 2014 raising ICOMOS Panel concerns over the proposed boundary of the property and the lack of clarity as to how all the nominated areas related to the main sacred mountain.

A skype meeting between ICOMOS and the State Party was subsequently held on 9 January 2015 and an additional letter was sent on 26 January 2015.

The State Party provided additional information on 18 February 2015 which has been taken into account in this evaluation. The main change proposed in this information was from a serial nomination of three sites (Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, the Sacred Mount Binder and the Baldan Bereeven Buddhist Monastery), to the nomination of a single site, the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2015

## 2 The property

### Description

The permanently snow-capped mountains of the Khan Khentii mountain range overlook the vast Eurasian steppe lands. Water running off the mountains feed significant rivers flowing both to the north and south. High up the mountains are forests and lower down mountain steppe, while in the valley below are open grasslands dissected by rivers feeding swampy meadows.

This is a remote landscape with high aesthetic qualities, high bio-diversity, and little modern development.

### Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain

The sacred mountain Burkhan Khaldun is closely associated with Chinggis Khan, with his birthplace, his possible grave, with his establishment of the Mongol empire, and with his formalization of mountain worship.

At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Chinggis Khan formally established worship of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, along with other sacred mountains in his empire (see History).

For many centuries it has been one of the most important sacred natural objects for all Mongol peoples. However, in the intervening centuries, traditions of mountain worship declined as Buddhism was adopted in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and there appears to have been a lack of continuity of traditions and associations.

Since the 1990s, the revival of mountain worship has been encouraged and old shamanist rituals are being revived and integrated with Buddhist rituals. State sponsored celebrations now take place at the mountain each summer.

Notwithstanding these strong associations, there is some debate amongst scholars on the precise location of the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain.

Evidence from ancient texts, especially *the Sacred History of the Mongols* 1241 (see history), make it clear that the Great Burkhan Khaldun is located in the Khentii Mountain range and near the head of three rivers – the Onon, Kherlen and Tuul. *The Compendium of Chronicles* (1307-1311) suggests that the name might apply to the whole mountain range rather than one mountain. Many scholars and archaeologists have tried to locate Chinggis Khan's burial place but so far without success.

The Great Burkhan Khaldun mountain is the one peak within the mountain range that has three stone *ovoo*-s (or cairns) and a defined pilgrimage route to these and its summit, which it is suggested differentiates this peak from two others that have been considered (although neither of these are mentioned in the *Secret History*). Furthermore there is a suggestion that the remains of a

stone building near the middle *ovoo* could be the remains of a temple built by Chinggis Khan's great grandson (although evidence for this has so far not been substantiated by archaeological investigations).

The Burkhan Khaldun Mountain was named as Khentii Khan (The King of the Khentii Mountain range) for political and religious reasons between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Great Burkhan Mountain has thus come to be known as the mountain celebrated as sacred by Chinggis Khan and where he might be buried. It is clear that further evidence for this burial or other clearer evidence might in the future be found, but meanwhile the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain is acknowledged as the most likely peak for these associations.

The Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain has few structures other than three major stone *ovoo*-s or cairns that have become the focus of worship. These are placed alongside paths connected to a pilgrimage route. The cairns were apparently destroyed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but have now been re-constructed with timber posts on top. The pilgrimage path starts some 20km from the mountain by a bridge over the Kherlen River at the Threshold Pass where there is also a major *ovoo*. Pilgrims ride on horseback from there to the large Beliin *ovoo* made of tree trunks and adorned with blue silk prayer scarves and from thence to the main *ovoo* of heaven at the summit of the mountain.

### Natural Landscape

The mountain landscape includes such natural features as the sources of the Onon and Kherlen rivers, mountains, lakes, rivers, hot springs, and areas which are home to rare and endangered animals and plants.

Most of the mountain is within an area protected for its natural diversity which has been negatively impacted in other parts of the Eurasian steppe. IUCN notes that: "*the property contain notable natural values, which appear significant at national, and possibly regional, levels.*"

The sacredness of the mountain is strongly associated with its sense of isolation, and its perceived 'pristine' nature. Although this nature might not be related to how the landscape looked in Chinggis Khan's time, it is now an essential part of its sacred associations.

The Sacred Onon Springs with hot, mineralized water are used by local people in winter time as a sort of sanatorium. Over some of them are small wooden structures.

### Shamanism

Mongols believe that most of the elevated land in the great Mongolian steppes has spiritual significance and that this has persisted since ancient times. From archaeological and documentary evidence, it is suggested that worship at these mountains could have

begun before or at least during the period of the Hunnu Empire (from 209 BCE until 93AD).

Linking current practices to what existed two thousand years ago is however problematic. The Mongol peoples migrated into the area of the Khentii Mountains only around the 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century and, until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, lived alongside many other groups such as Turkic people. Further, the Mongolian steppe has come within the purview of many empires since the fall of the Hunnu Empire and all of them had their social and cultural structures including the organisation of pastoralists and religious practices. Furthermore it appears that mountain worship was widespread.

The nomination stresses that what makes Mongolian Shamanism important is the fact that the protection of pristine and unblemished nature is fundamental to its integrity and authenticity. It suggests that the nature described as experienced by Chinggis Khan in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (see History) still persists today.

#### **History and development**

The name "Mongol" is apparently mentioned in Chinese sources from 4<sup>th</sup> century AD as Shi Wei Mong-gu. Later Chinese sources also confirm that during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), a nomadic people known as the Meng-gu lived in the forests and grasslands to the northeast of Dalai Nuur on the borders of present-day Manchuria.

In the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century it is believed that peoples known as the Mongols migrated south and first settled in the area to the north of Burkhan Khaldun. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Mongols around the Burkhan Khaldun were still small in number, one of many peoples jockeying for power in what is now northern Mongolia.

Between 1188 and 1206, Chinggis Khan successfully unified several groups of peoples inhabiting the Mongolian steppes, such as Turks, Tungus and the various Mongol peoples, including the Borjigin Mongols to which he belonged, and formed what became known as the Mongol people or Mongolian nation. Chinggis Khan was proclaimed the Great Khan and began building the Mongol Empire, the largest that the world has seen. His capital, in the Orkhon Valley in central Mongolia, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004.

Evidence suggests that mountain worship existed in the Khentii Mountains long before the arrival of Mongolian peoples, probably since before or at least during the Hunnu period. The Hunnu (or Xiongnu) empire, which was a confederation of nomadic peoples, dominated much of the Asian steppe (in what is now Siberia, Mongolia, Southern Mongolia, Gansu and Xinjiang) from 209 BCE until 93AD). Their realm could have included the region of Burkhan Khaldun.

After the Hunnu, successive Empires of the Asian steppe included the Sianbe, Jujan, Turkic Empire, Uighur, Kyrgyz, and Xidan States all of whom were underpinned by their own form of nomadic pastoralism and religious practices which have left an imprint on the Mongolian steppe landscape in the form of petroglyphs, burials, deer stones, etc. some of which are in the nominated area.

Details of Chinggis Khan's Empire are recorded in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, written for the Mongol Royal family by an anonymous author sometime after the death of Chinggis Khan and completed in 1241. This book details how Chinggis Khan first declared the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain as sacred in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and how it was worshipped constantly thereafter during the time of his Empire. Chinggis Khan also declared as sacred Otgontenger of the Khangai Range, the five peaks of Tavan Bogd at the western edge of the Altai Mountain Range, and Bogd Khan of the Khentii Mountain Range.

Chinggis Khan is reputedly buried near a river on the lower slope of the mountain but in a location that was deliberately hidden.

The significance of Shamanism in Mongolia began to decline in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, as an organized campaign was undertaken by the ruling Princes to convert Mongolians to Buddhism associated with the Tibet Gelugpa (or Yellow Hat) Sect.

Around three hundred years later, there was a resurgence of interest in mountain worship and a law called "Khalkh Joram," approved in 1709, proclaimed Khentii Khan (Burkhan Khaldun Mountain) and Bogd Khan (near Ulan Batur) as "Mountain reserves" sacred places to be glorified and honoured for the purposes of worship.

By this time Mongolia had submitted to the Qing Dynasty. Later in the Qing dynasty in 1778, as a result of King Yundendorj's efforts, Bogd Khan, Khan Khentii (Burkhan Khaldun Mountain) and Otgontenger Mountains were also officially declared as mountain reserves, and the decision taken to worship them.

Since 1990 with the renewal of older Mongolian practices, these national traditions and customs of nature worship and protection in Mongolia, and the laws associated with "Khalkh Joram", have been revived and these traditions and customs are now incorporated into State policy.

On 16 May 1995, the first President of Mongolia issued a new Decree "*Supporting initiatives to revive the tradition of worshipping Bogd Khan Khairkhan, Burkhan Khaldun (Khan Khentii), and Otgontenger Mountains*". The Decree pronounces the State's support for initiatives to revive Mountain worship as described in the original Mongolian Legal Document and as "set out according to the official Decree". Since 1995, Otgontenger, Burkhan

Khaldun, and Bogd Khan Khairkhan Mountains have been worshipped as State sacred Mountains.

### 3 Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity

#### Comparative analysis

ICOMOS notes that the initial comparative analysis only offered comparisons with properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List. Supplementary information provided by the State Party in November 2014 added comparisons from Tentative List sites.

The main inscribed comparators are two mountains inscribed under natural criteria: Mt. Kenya, Kenya, and Kilimanjaro, Tanzania); seven mountains inscribed as mixed sites: Mt. Athos, Greece, Tongariro, New Zealand, Machu Picchu, Peru, Tai Shan, China, Mt. Emei, China, Mt. Wuyi, China and Huang Shan, China; and two mountains inscribed under cultural criteria alone: Sacred Kii Mountain Range, Japan and Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain, Kyrgyzstan. The analysis also mentions Mount Fuji, Japan, for its elements of sacredness.

The analysis tends to point out similarities rather than differences between Tai Shan, China, Mt Athos, Greece, and Sacred Fujiyama, Japan, and the nominated property, as all reflect persistent and unique traditions of worshipping sacred mountains over the past several hundred years, whether associated with Confucianism, Shintoism, or Christianity, and also represent the national identity of those nations within which they are located.

Sulaiman-Too is seen as the only mountain that is part of the Eurasian steppe lands.

The Tentative list sites considered are The Hua Shan Scenic Area, China, Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans, Palestine, and The Four Sacred Mountains as an Extension of Mt. Taishan, China. The nominated property is seen to share similar characteristics with these three but also differences related to nomadic rather than settled agriculture and to different religions.

The analysis also compares Burkhan Khaldun with other sacred mountains in Mongolia especially Bogd Khan, and Olgontenger. The conclusion is that Burkhan Khaldun is the cradle of Mongolian nationhood and the historical spiritual homeland of the Mongol people; Burkhan Khaldun is a national symbol and the totem mountain of Mongolia, while the other two are not. It is also the birthplace of the Mongol Empire and has close associations with Chinggis Khan, the founder of the Mongol nation and Empire. Finally also mentioned is the close association with *The Secret History of the Mongols*, recognized as a unique cultural heritage by UNESCO in 1990.

ICOMOS considers that a case has been made that Burkhan Khaldun, as a sacred mountain associated with

the Empire of Chinggis Khan might be considered for the World Heritage List.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis has justified consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

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#### Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

The Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, is seen to:

- Reflect deeply rooted traditions of the worship of sacred mountains and sacred sites;
- Reflect associations with Chinggis Khan and in particular his birthplace, his unification of the Mongol tribes and his burial place;
- Represent the idea of Mongolian nationhood;
- Have been at the centre of events that profoundly changed Asia and Europe between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries as the cradle of the Mongolian Empire.

ICOMOS considers that the significance of the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain has been established, as has its association with Chinggis Khan, and his support and adoption of mountain worship throughout his empire based on long standing shamanic traditions associated with nomadic peoples.

What has not been established is a continuity of mountain worship first from ancient times to those of Chinggis Khan and then from his time to the present day. The early designation of mount Khan Khentii in the Qing period (early 18<sup>th</sup> century) suggests that it was an existing sacred site, and may have been for a number of centuries. It is quite plausible that its identity as a sacred mountain dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier. It is also just possible that there was some continuity in (private) ritual practices since that time. However the specific (very simple) ritual mentioned in the *Secret History of the Mongols* is not mentioned in later periods, and the specific *ovoo* ceremonies and pilgrimages are not mentioned in the *Secret History* or other 13<sup>th</sup> century texts. It is possible that the practice dates from the Buddhist era. But continuity has so far not been proved.

Also difficult is the association of the nominated property and in particular Burkhan Khaldun with the idea of the Mongolian nation or the birthplace of the Mongolian people. Whereas the extraordinary influence that Chinggis Khan exerted on Eurasia and further afield can readily be seen to have more than national importance, the association with the Mongolian nation is necessarily an importance that relates to national boundaries and cannot be seen as outstanding in wider terms.

## Integrity and authenticity

### Integrity

The nominated site has adequate attributes within its boundaries to reflect what has been nominated.

### Authenticity

All the natural and cultural attributes of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain display their value. Various parts of the mountain are vulnerable to an increase in tourism which could profoundly change its sense of isolation if not well managed.

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ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

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### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property offers exceptional evidence of and testimony to vital cultural traditions of mountain and nature worship thousands of years old.

On the issue of whether the cultural traditions and particularly nature worship can be seen to be thousands of years old, as set out above, there are issue with the idea of continuity of traditions. There is evidence that mountains in the Khentii range and elsewhere in Mongolia were considered sacred in ancient times – before Mongol people moved into the area and that these practices were adopted by the incomers and reinforced formally by Chinggis Khan. It is less clear that there has been a continuity since that time but there could have been.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

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Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property has associations with the birthplace of Chinggis Khan, Mongolian nationhood and the founding of the Mongol Empire. For all these reasons, it is seen to demonstrate its vital historical significance within Asian and world history.

The associations of Burkhan Khaldun with Chinggis Khan, and thus with the power of his Empire, are documented in terms of the evidence in the *Secret History of the Mongols* that refers to his relationship with the mountain and his formal State support for mountain

worship, associated with his unification of the Mongol peoples.

It would appear to be more difficult to justify how this mountain is associated, other than in a tangential way, with the creation of the Mongolian Empire or with the Mongolian nation.

ICOMOS thus considers that the criterion could be justified on the grounds that the mountain reflects the formalisation of mountain worship by Chinggis Khan at the time of the Mongolian Empire, a key factor in his success in unifying the Mongol peoples.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

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Criterion (v): *be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that within parts of the property is evidence of pastoral land management of grasslands, with herdsman moving their mixed flocks in seasonal patterns of transhumance, a way of life that has become vulnerable with the development of modern technology, a globalized economy and irreversible environmental changes. This pastoralism is well preserved around the area of the nominated property precisely because of the sacred nature of much of the land and its relative isolation from population centres and development.

ICOMOS considers that no clear evidence has been put forward for suggesting that the pastoralism practiced in this area is particularly or unusually distinctive. Movement practices vary from region to region and from era to era. It is possible that some features of pastoralism in this region have greater continuity with historical practices than other remote parts of rural Mongolia.

Furthermore, this type of pastoralism, involving seasonal movement, is also often linked in social and economic terms to sedentary agriculture and settlements as part of a much wider network. It is thus also difficult to see this small area being a coherent and self-contained entity.

Furthermore, the process of settling appears to have begun in the area with permanent houses being built for herder's families.

A more fundamental problem is that it appears that pastoralism is only allowed outside the Khan Khentii protected area – and that this protected area will be extended to cover the whole property (see Protection).

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

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Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property is directly and tangibly associated with *The Secret History of the Mongols*, an historical and literary epic of outstanding universal significance.

ICOMOS considers that *The Secret History of the Mongols* has been recognised as being a literary epic of world importance in its entry in the Memory of the World Register. This text covers many aspects of Mongolian culture but certainly refers to Burkhan Khaldun and its links with Chinggis Khan, in particular to a simple ceremony held on the mountain and its formal recognition, with other sacred mountains, by Chinggis Khan.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

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ICOMOS considers that the criteria (iv) and (vi) and Outstanding Universal Value have been justified.

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#### **Description of the attributes**

The whole of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, its sacred ooo-s, pilgrimage path, sacred springs, and its varied nature are all attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value. To these could be added archaeological sites on its slopes and the long views of the mountain.

#### **4 Factors affecting the property**

At present the main factors affecting the property are mainly connected with environmental pressures related to wind, fire, floods, drought, extremes of temperature, solar radiation, etc. Development pressures and human impact are very slight but it is possible to see signs of potential growth.

ICOMOS notes that little remedial action is being taken, or can be taken, against wind, fire, floods, and drought even though they can disturb the ecological balance of the landscape.

Control of erosion caused by precipitation, changes of temperature, solar radiation, and wind is foreseen in future activities of the Management Plan for conservation and protection of the nominated property.

In those parts of the nominated property outside the Khan Khentii Special Protected Area and with no legal protection (see below), mining could be a threat.

The remoteness of the property, and the lack of facilities means that tourist pressure is very low at present. However the number of pilgrims and visitors to the property is growing, particularly pilgrims who come to

state supported ceremonies. And the nomination dossier comments on what is seen as the dramatic increase in the number of travellers in tourist camps and the increase in the number of foreign visitors.

At present adverse human impact on the landscape is slight and mainly connected to the use of informal roads across grasslands. ICOMOS considers that there is a need to monitor and control the roads network. Special places for parking and recreation should also be organized. All of these issues have been considered and addressed in the Management Plan.

Growth in the number of livestock in general and in goats in particular could become a threat to the environment in the future by causing desertification of the grassland from overgrazing. ICOMOS considers that this matter is to be addressed through management programs and regulating policies, although it is in part related to the growth in numbers of people living in the area.

There is also the issue of grazing animals impacting adversely on archeological sites. Adequate protection measures would need to be based on adequate documentation and this matter has also been recognized in the Management Plan.

IUCN states that: *“Concerns identified from IUCN’s consideration of the nomination include potential risks from tourism (low intensity at the moment, so low risk if well managed), mining (which would be addressed only provided extant mining regulations are enacted)...”*

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ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are a combination of unplanned tourism, unplanned vehicular access, overgrazing and mining in unprotected areas.

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#### **5 Protection, conservation and management**

##### **Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone**

The current boundary is unrelated to contours and natural features, being delineated by straight lines. ICOMOS considers that further consideration should be given to amending the boundaries to reflect recognisable features. The same situation pertains to the delineation of the buffer zone.

The logic of the area enclosed by the buffer zone is also not clear as it almost touches the property boundary in several places. A clearer rationale needs to be provided for the delineation of the buffer zone.

There also appear to be some discrepancies between the boundaries shown on the various maps provided with the nomination dossier.

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ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone need to be re-drawn to reflect recognisable natural features; and that the rationale for the scope of the buffer zone needs to be clearly defined.

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### **Ownership**

All land in Mongolia is at present in the State ownership.

### **Protection**

Not all of the property is legally protected at present: although the majority of the Great *Burkhan Khaldun Mountain* is situated on the territory of the Khan Kentii Special Protected Area (KK SPA), a small area to the north-west and a much larger area to the south lie outside this protected zone.

Even though the KK SPA offers legal protection, it should be noted that this is for natural and environmental protection rather than cultural heritage protection.

The buffer zone is included within the buffer zone of the KK SPA. Currently the property buffer zone has no protection for cultural attributes nor does it have any regulatory procedures related to land-use or new construction.

There are plans to include the whole property and its buffer zone in the territory of the KK SPA in 2015.

Since 1990 and the renewal of older Mongolian practices related to sacred mountains, national traditions and customs of nature protection in Mongolia and the laws associated with “Khalkh Juram” have been revived and are now incorporated into State policy.

On 16 May 1995, the first President of Mongolia issued a new Decree “*Supporting initiatives to revive the tradition of worshipping Bogd Khan Khairkhan, Burkhan Khaldun (Khan Khentii), and Otgontenger Mountains*”. The Decree pronounced the State’s support for initiatives to revive Mountain worship as described in the original Mongolian Legal Document and as “set out according to the official Decree”.

These traditions have been updated to reflect present day circumstances and since 1995, Otgontenger, Burkhan Khaldun, and Bogdkhan Khairkhan Mountains have been worshipped as State sacred Mountains.

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place for the cultural aspects of the landscape is not yet adequate and needs to be strengthened; and that specific protection for the buffer zone needs to be defined.

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### **Conservation**

On the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, all the *ovoos*-s and places associated with sacred rituals are maintained by pilgrims. There appears to be no active management of paths to combat erosion.

There are however controls in place for motor transport but the measures should be strengthened to better organize car parking and recreation zones for visitors.

The Decree of the President on “Regulation of ceremony of worshipping and offering of state sacred mountains and *ovoos*” provides legal tools for visitor organization during the large state worshipping ceremonies.

Any activity on Burkhan Khaldun Mountain itself, other than worshipping rituals, is traditionally forbidden. The KK SPA reserve staff do however undertake fire-fighting, forest protection, forest clearing and renovation, and address illegal hunting and wood cutting.

Little active conservation is undertaken on archaeological sites.

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ICOMOS considers that conservation activities are basic and more preventative and active measures need to be taken based on a wide assessment of need and priorities.

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### **Management**

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

At the national level, management of the site is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Green, and of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

ICOMOS notes that at a local level although the nomination dossier states that an Administration for the Protection of the World Heritage Property responsible for both natural and cultural protection and conservation of the property is to be established, no timescale has been provided for its establishment.

Traditional protection is supported through the long standing tradition of worshipping nature and sacred places. For example, it is forbidden to disturb earth, waters, trees and all plants, animals and birds in sacred places, or hunt or cut wood for trading.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

A draft Management Plan was submitted as part of the nomination dossier. This will run from 2015-2025 and covers both cultural and natural heritage. It includes both long-term (2015-2025), and medium-term (2015-2020) plans.

The version of the Management Plan submitted was an initial version which has not yet been approved or implemented. The text is somewhat tentative in nature. It is stated that it is intended to establish a new Management Administration for the protection and management of the property as a whole and to complete and implement the integrated management plan. Before

completion and adoption, ICOMOS considers that more work is needed to augment the Plan to allow it to provide an appropriate framework for management of the property.

ICOMOS notes that it is not clear when this new system will be put into effect. Furthermore the necessary funding has still to be put in place from stakeholder organisations. However it is acknowledged that this is unlikely to be adequate and further support will be needed from aid and international donor organizations.

Meanwhile it appears that the property is not under active management for its cultural attributes nor is work guided by specific strategies and policies.

Although a management plan exists for the Khan Khentii protected area and this is implemented by the Administration of Khan Khentii Special Protected Area, it is restricted to conservation of the natural environment.

Local authorities at the levels of *aimak*-s, *soum*-s and *bag*-s have responsibility for providing local protection. Although *soum* administrations have people responsible for environmental protection, there appears not to be any formal arrangement for cultural heritage work.

Overall the current management regime does not yet offer effective management of the nominated area or its buffer zone in terms of protecting its cultural attributes.

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ICOMOS considers that the current management structure is inadequate; there is a need to establish the proposed new Management Administration and to augment, complete and implement the draft Management Plan as soon as possible.

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## 6 Monitoring

ICOMOS understands that at present archaeological reconnaissance of the property's territory is still under development. The records of sacred and archaeological sites are therefore not yet complete or adequate as a basis for monitoring.

In general there is a lack of research on archaeology, ethnography, local folklore and oral traditions, as well as geology, botany and zoology. Some documentation exists in the form of schematic inventorial records (that identify generic groups of sites rather than individual sites) but there are no detailed maps which could give better understanding of the property and its evolution through the history. This lack is acknowledged in the national programmes and in the Management Plan.

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ICOMOS considers that an adequate database to underpin monitoring needs to be established.

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## 7 Conclusions

The sacred mountain of Burkhan Khaldun and its associations with Chinggis Khan are the main focus of this nomination dossier. The precise location of the mountain that is reputedly the burial place of Chinggis Khan and which he established as a centre of mountain worship, is still a matter of some conjecture amongst scholars, but there is no doubt that it lies with the Khan Khentii mountain range. The evidence put forward for Burkhan Khaldun in relation to the pilgrimage paths, *ovoo*-s and links to early texts in the nomination dossier, although not conclusive proof, show that on the basis of present knowledge the mountain has the best claim. As further evidence might only emerge in the longer term, ICOMOS considers that the location of the sacred mountain as now embraced should be accepted.

However the boundary of the mountain need to be more satisfactorily defined in relation to natural features and the inconsistencies between various maps resolved.

The links between the sacredness of the mountain and its pristine nature are strong. The traditions of mountain worship instigated by Chinggis Khan reflected a fusion of shamanism, rooted in the ancient tradition of nature worshiping practices of nomadic peoples, and Buddhism introduced from Tibet.

Although the idea in the nomination dossier that nature as experienced by Chinggis Khan and as described in the *Secret History of the Mongols* still persists today, is difficult to justify, what is important is the sacred association of nature that has been largely unexploited by people. Maintaining that link in the face of increased tourism, will be crucial.

Currently the protection and management of the property is not yet adequate to meet these challenges. The whole property needs legal protection, the protection offered by the buffer zone needs to be clearly defined, and active management of the cultural attributes needs to be put in place on the basis of an approved management plan, based on an augmented version of the current draft plan.

## 8 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape, Mongolia be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

- Put in place legal protection for the nominated area that covers cultural as well as natural attributes;
- Clearly define the protection offered by the buffer zone;

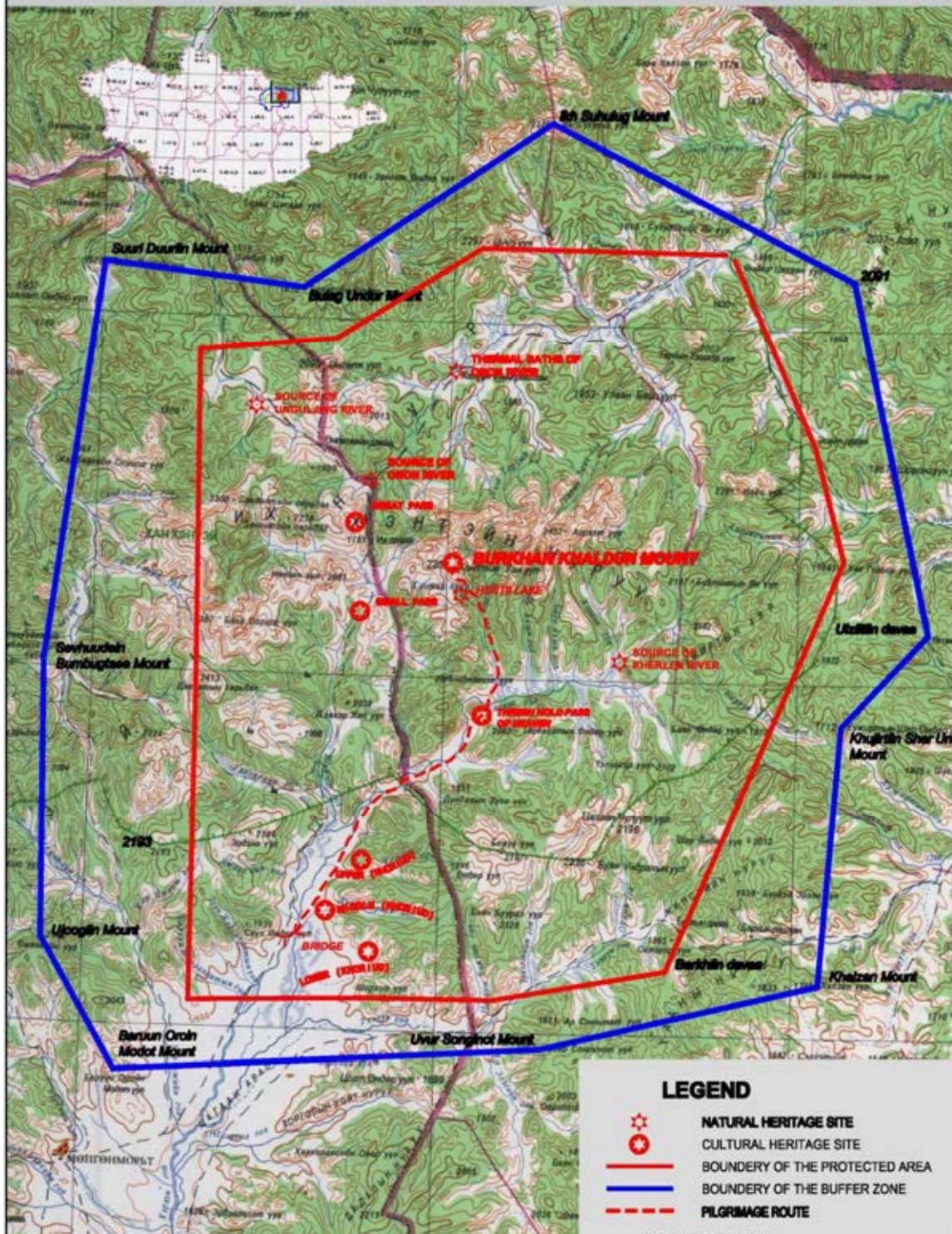


- Re-define the boundaries of the property and the buffer zone to relate them to physical attributes;
- Confirm that no mining or extractive industry will be permitted within the nominated property;
- Put in place an overall management structure with resources to implement an augmented and approved management plan;
- Draw up and implement a conservation programme, covering preventative and active measures, based on a wide assessment of need and priorities.

ICOMOS would be ready and willing to offer advice on these aspects in the framework of the Upstream Processes.



# I. BUFFER ZONE OF THE PROPERTY: GREAT BURKHAN KHALDUN MOUNTAIN AND ITS SURROUNDING SACRED LANDSCAPE



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property



Great Burkhan Khaldun Mount



Main Ovoo of Heaven on the top of the Mountain



Shamanism and sacred site



Inside decoration of the Main Temple

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# Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape (Mongolia)

## No 1440

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### Official name as proposed by the State Party

Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape

### Location

Mungunmorit Soum (District) in Tuv Aimag (Province)  
Umnudelger Soum (District) in Khentii Aimag (Province)

### Brief description

The nominated Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, and its surrounding landscape, lies in the central part of the Khentii mountains chain that forms the watershed between the Arctic and Pacific Oceans in the north-east of Mongolia. This is where the vast Central Asian steppe meets the coniferous forests of the Siberian taiga.

Burkhan Khaldun is associated with the worship of sacred mountains, rivers and *ovoo*-s (shamanic rock cairns), in which ceremonies have been shaped by a fusion of ancient shamanic and Buddhist practices.

Since the 1990s, after sixty years of repression, official support has been given for the revival of traditional practices of mountain worship.

Burkhan Khaldun is also associated with Chinggis Khan, as his reputed burial site and more widely with his establishment of the Mongol Empire in 1206. It is one of four sacred mountains he designated during his lifetime, Khaldun as part of the official status he gave to mountain worship. Burkhan Khaldun is considered to be the cradle of Mongolian nationhood.

### Category of property

In terms of categories of cultural property set out in Article I of the 1972 World Heritage Convention, this is a *site*.

In terms of the *Operational Guidelines for the Implementation of the World Heritage Convention* (July 2013), paragraph 47, it is also a *cultural landscape*.

## 1 Basic data

### Included in the Tentative List

Burkhan Khaldun, as part of a serial site for Mongolia Sacred Mountains: Bogd Khan, Burkhan Khaldun, and Olgontenger, was included in the Tentative List in 1996.

### International Assistance from the World Heritage Fund for preparing the Nomination

None

### Date received by the World Heritage Centre

27 January 2014

### Background

This is a new nomination.

### Consultations

ICOMOS consulted its International Scientific Committee on Cultural Landscapes and several independent experts.

Comments about the evaluation of this property were received from IUCN in December 2014. ICOMOS carefully examined this information to arrive at its final decision and its March 2015 recommendation; IUCN also revised the presentation of its comments in accordance with the version included in this ICOMOS report.

### Technical Evaluation Mission

A joint ICOMOS/IUCN technical evaluation mission visited the property from 26 August to 5 September 2014.

### Additional information received by ICOMOS

On 7 October 2014, ICOMOS requested the State Party to provide further information on comparative analysis, boundaries, bibliography and reconstruction work. The State Party responded on 4 November 2014 and the supplementary information provided has been reflected in this text.

A letter was sent to the State Party on 22 December 2014 raising ICOMOS Panel concerns over the proposed boundary of the property and the lack of clarity as to how all the nominated areas related to the main sacred mountain.

A skype meeting between ICOMOS and the State Party was subsequently held on 9 January 2015 and an additional letter was sent on 26 January 2015.

The State Party provided additional information on 18 February 2015 which has been taken into account in this evaluation. The main change proposed in this information was from a serial nomination of three sites (Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, the Sacred Mount Binder and the Baldan Bereeven Buddhist Monastery), to the nomination of a single site, the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain.

### Date of ICOMOS approval of this report

12 March 2015

## 2 The property

### Description

The permanently snow-capped mountains of the Khan Khentii mountain range overlook the vast Eurasian steppe lands. Water running off the mountains feed significant rivers flowing both to the north and south. High up the mountains are forests and lower down mountain steppe, while in the valley below are open grasslands dissected by rivers feeding swampy meadows.

This is a remote landscape with high aesthetic qualities, high bio-diversity, and little modern development.

### Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain

The sacred mountain Burkhan Khaldun is closely associated with Chinggis Khan, with his birthplace, his possible grave, with his establishment of the Mongol empire, and with his formalization of mountain worship.

At the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century Chinggis Khan formally established worship of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, along with other sacred mountains in his empire (see History).

For many centuries it has been one of the most important sacred natural objects for all Mongol peoples. However, in the intervening centuries, traditions of mountain worship declined as Buddhism was adopted in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century and there appears to have been a lack of continuity of traditions and associations.

Since the 1990s, the revival of mountain worship has been encouraged and old shamanist rituals are being revived and integrated with Buddhist rituals. State sponsored celebrations now take place at the mountain each summer.

Notwithstanding these strong associations, there is some debate amongst scholars on the precise location of the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain.

Evidence from ancient texts, especially *the Sacred History of the Mongols* 1241 (see history), make it clear that the Great Burkhan Khaldun is located in the Khentii Mountain range and near the head of three rivers – the Onon, Kherlen and Tuul. *The Compendium of Chronicles* (1307-1311) suggests that the name might apply to the whole mountain range rather than one mountain. Many scholars and archaeologists have tried to locate Chinggis Khan's burial place but so far without success.

The Great Burkhan Khaldun mountain is the one peak within the mountain range that has three stone *ovoo*-s (or cairns) and a defined pilgrimage route to these and its summit, which it is suggested differentiates this peak from two others that have been considered (although neither of these are mentioned in the *Secret History*). Furthermore there is a suggestion that the remains of a

stone building near the middle *ovoo* could be the remains of a temple built by Chinggis Khan's great grandson (although evidence for this has so far not been substantiated by archaeological investigations).

The Burkhan Khaldun Mountain was named as Khentii Khan (The King of the Khentii Mountain range) for political and religious reasons between the 18<sup>th</sup> and the early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

The Great Burkhan Mountain has thus come to be known as the mountain celebrated as sacred by Chinggis Khan and where he might be buried. It is clear that further evidence for this burial or other clearer evidence might in the future be found, but meanwhile the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain is acknowledged as the most likely peak for these associations.

The Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain has few structures other than three major stone *ovoo*-s or cairns that have become the focus of worship. These are placed alongside paths connected to a pilgrimage route. The cairns were apparently destroyed in the 17<sup>th</sup> century but have now been re-constructed with timber posts on top. The pilgrimage path starts some 20km from the mountain by a bridge over the Kherlen River at the Threshold Pass where there is also a major *ovoo*. Pilgrims ride on horseback from there to the large Beliin *ovoo* made of tree trunks and adorned with blue silk prayer scarves and from thence to the main *ovoo* of heaven at the summit of the mountain.

### Natural Landscape

The mountain landscape includes such natural features as the sources of the Onon and Kherlen rivers, mountains, lakes, rivers, hot springs, and areas which are home to rare and endangered animals and plants.

Most of the mountain is within an area protected for its natural diversity which has been negatively impacted in other parts of the Eurasian steppe. IUCN notes that: "*the property contain notable natural values, which appear significant at national, and possibly regional, levels.*"

The sacredness of the mountain is strongly associated with its sense of isolation, and its perceived 'pristine' nature. Although this nature might not be related to how the landscape looked in Chinggis Khan's time, it is now an essential part of its sacred associations.

The Sacred Onon Springs with hot, mineralized water are used by local people in winter time as a sort of sanatorium. Over some of them are small wooden structures.

### Shamanism

Mongols believe that most of the elevated land in the great Mongolian steppes has spiritual significance and that this has persisted since ancient times. From archaeological and documentary evidence, it is suggested that worship at these mountains could have

begun before or at least during the period of the Hunnu Empire (from 209 BCE until 93AD).

Linking current practices to what existed two thousand years ago is however problematic. The Mongol peoples migrated into the area of the Khentii Mountains only around the 8<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> century and, until the 12<sup>th</sup> century, lived alongside many other groups such as Turkic people. Further, the Mongolian steppe has come within the purview of many empires since the fall of the Hunnu Empire and all of them had their social and cultural structures including the organisation of pastoralists and religious practices. Furthermore it appears that mountain worship was widespread.

The nomination stresses that what makes Mongolian Shamanism important is the fact that the protection of pristine and unblemished nature is fundamental to its integrity and authenticity. It suggests that the nature described as experienced by Chinggis Khan in the *Secret History of the Mongols* (see History) still persists today.

#### **History and development**

The name "Mongol" is apparently mentioned in Chinese sources from 4<sup>th</sup> century AD as Shi Wei Mong-gu. Later Chinese sources also confirm that during the Tang Dynasty (618-907 AD), a nomadic people known as the Meng-gu lived in the forests and grasslands to the northeast of Dalai Nuur on the borders of present-day Manchuria.

In the later part of the 8<sup>th</sup> century it is believed that peoples known as the Mongols migrated south and first settled in the area to the north of Burkhan Khaldun. By the 11<sup>th</sup> century the Mongols around the Burkhan Khaldun were still small in number, one of many peoples jockeying for power in what is now northern Mongolia.

Between 1188 and 1206, Chinggis Khan successfully unified several groups of peoples inhabiting the Mongolian steppes, such as Turks, Tungus and the various Mongol peoples, including the Borjigin Mongols to which he belonged, and formed what became known as the Mongol people or Mongolian nation. Chinggis Khan was proclaimed the Great Khan and began building the Mongol Empire, the largest that the world has seen. His capital, in the Orkhon Valley in central Mongolia, was inscribed on the World Heritage List in 2004.

Evidence suggests that mountain worship existed in the Khentii Mountains long before the arrival of Mongolian peoples, probably since before or at least during the Hunnu period. The Hunnu (or Xiongnu) empire, which was a confederation of nomadic peoples, dominated much of the Asian steppe (in what is now Siberia, Mongolia, Southern Mongolia, Gansu and Xinjiang) from 209 BCE until 93AD). Their realm could have included the region of Burkhan Khaldun.

After the Hunnu, successive Empires of the Asian steppe included the Sianbe, Jujan, Turkic Empire, Uighur, Kyrgyz, and Xidan States all of whom were underpinned by their own form of nomadic pastoralism and religious practices which have left an imprint on the Mongolian steppe landscape in the form of petroglyphs, burials, deer stones, etc. some of which are in the nominated area.

Details of Chinggis Khan's Empire are recorded in *The Secret History of the Mongols*, written for the Mongol Royal family by an anonymous author sometime after the death of Chinggis Khan and completed in 1241. This book details how Chinggis Khan first declared the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain as sacred in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, and how it was worshipped constantly thereafter during the time of his Empire. Chinggis Khan also declared as sacred Otgontenger of the Khangai Range, the five peaks of Tavan Bogd at the western edge of the Altai Mountain Range, and Bogd Khan of the Khentii Mountain Range.

Chinggis Khan is reputedly buried near a river on the lower slope of the mountain but in a location that was deliberately hidden.

The significance of Shamanism in Mongolia began to decline in the late 15<sup>th</sup> century, as an organized campaign was undertaken by the ruling Princes to convert Mongolians to Buddhism associated with the Tibet Gelugpa (or Yellow Hat) Sect.

Around three hundred years later, there was a resurgence of interest in mountain worship and a law called "Khalkh Juram," approved in 1709, proclaimed Khentii Khan (Burkhan Khaldun Mountain) and Bogd Khan (near Ulan Batur) as "Mountain reserves" sacred places to be glorified and honoured for the purposes of worship.

By this time Mongolia had submitted to the Qing Dynasty. Later in the Qing dynasty in 1778, as a result of King Yundendorj's efforts, Bogd Khan, Khan Khentii (Burkhan Khaldun Mountain) and Otgontenger Mountains were also officially declared as mountain reserves, and the decision taken to worship them.

Since 1990 with the renewal of older Mongolian practices, these national traditions and customs of nature worship and protection in Mongolia, and the laws associated with "Khalkh Juram", have been revived and these traditions and customs are now incorporated into State policy.

On 16 May 1995, the first President of Mongolia issued a new Decree "*Supporting initiatives to revive the tradition of worshipping Bogd Khan Khairkhan, Burkhan Khaldun (Khan Khentii), and Otgontenger Mountains*". The Decree pronounces the State's support for initiatives to revive Mountain worship as described in the original Mongolian Legal Document and as "set out according to the official Decree". Since 1995, Otgontenger, Burkhan



Khaldun, and Bogd Khan Khairkhan Mountains have been worshipped as State sacred Mountains.

### 3 Outstanding Universal Value, integrity and authenticity

#### Comparative analysis

ICOMOS notes that the initial comparative analysis only offered comparisons with properties already inscribed on the World Heritage List. Supplementary information provided by the State Party in November 2014 added comparisons from Tentative List sites.

The main inscribed comparators are two mountains inscribed under natural criteria: Mt. Kenya, Kenya, and Kilimanjaro, Tanzania); seven mountains inscribed as mixed sites: Mt. Athos, Greece, Tongariro, New Zealand, Machu Picchu, Peru, Tai Shan, China, Mt. Emei, China, Mt. Wuyi, China and Huang Shan, China; and two mountains inscribed under cultural criteria alone: Sacred Kii Mountain Range, Japan and Sulaiman-Too Sacred Mountain, Kyrgyzstan. The analysis also mentions Mount Fuji, Japan, for its elements of sacredness.

The analysis tends to point out similarities rather than differences between Tai Shan, China, Mt Athos, Greece, and Sacred Fujiyama, Japan, and the nominated property, as all reflect persistent and unique traditions of worshipping sacred mountains over the past several hundred years, whether associated with Confucianism, Shintoism, or Christianity, and also represent the national identity of those nations within which they are located.

Sulaiman-Too is seen as the only mountain that is part of the Eurasian steppe lands.

The Tentative list sites considered are The Hua Shan Scenic Area, China, Mount Gerizim and the Samaritans, Palestine, and The Four Sacred Mountains as an Extension of Mt. Taishan, China. The nominated property is seen to share similar characteristics with these three but also differences related to nomadic rather than settled agriculture and to different religions.

The analysis also compares Burkhan Khaldun with other sacred mountains in Mongolia especially Bogd Khan, and Otgontenger. The conclusion is that Burkhan Khaldun is the cradle of Mongolian nationhood and the historical spiritual homeland of the Mongol people; Burkhan Khaldun is a national symbol and the totem mountain of Mongolia, while the other two are not. It is also the birthplace of the Mongol Empire and has close associations with Chinggis Khan, the founder of the Mongol nation and Empire. Finally also mentioned is the close association with *The Secret History of the Mongols*, recognized as a unique cultural heritage by UNESCO in 1990.

ICOMOS considers that a case has been made that Burkhan Khaldun, as a sacred mountain associated with

the Empire of Chinggis Khan might be considered for the World Heritage List.

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ICOMOS considers that the comparative analysis has justified consideration of this property for the World Heritage List.

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#### Justification of Outstanding Universal Value

The nominated property is considered by the State Party to be of Outstanding Universal Value as a cultural property for the following reasons:

The Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, is seen to:

- Reflect deeply rooted traditions of the worship of sacred mountains and sacred sites;
- Reflect associations with Chinggis Khan and in particular his birthplace, his unification of the Mongol tribes and his burial place;
- Represent the idea of Mongolian nationhood;
- Have been at the centre of events that profoundly changed Asia and Europe between the 12<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries as the cradle of the Mongolian Empire.

ICOMOS considers that the significance of the Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain has been established, as has its association with Chinggis Khan, and his support and adoption of mountain worship throughout his empire based on long standing shamanic traditions associated with nomadic peoples.

What has not been established is a continuity of mountain worship first from ancient times to those of Chinggis Khan and then from his time to the present day. The early designation of mount Khan Khentii in the Qing period (early 18<sup>th</sup> century) suggests that it was an existing sacred site, and may have been for a number of centuries. It is quite plausible that its identity as a sacred mountain dates from the 13<sup>th</sup> century or even earlier. It is also just possible that there was some continuity in (private) ritual practices since that time. However the specific (very simple) ritual mentioned in the *Secret History of the Mongols* is not mentioned in later periods, and the specific *ovoo* ceremonies and pilgrimages are not mentioned in the *Secret History* or other 13<sup>th</sup> century texts. It is possible that the practice dates from the Buddhist era. But continuity has so far not been proved.

Also difficult is the association of the nominated property and in particular Burkhan Khaldun with the idea of the Mongolian nation or the birthplace of the Mongolian people. Whereas the extraordinary influence that Chinggis Khan exerted on Eurasia and further afield can readily be seen to have more than national importance, the association with the Mongolian nation is necessarily an importance that relates to national boundaries and cannot be seen as outstanding in wider terms.

## Integrity and authenticity

### Integrity

The nominated site has adequate attributes within its boundaries to reflect what has been nominated.

### Authenticity

All the natural and cultural attributes of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain display their value. Various parts of the mountain are vulnerable to an increase in tourism which could profoundly change its sense of isolation if not well managed.

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ICOMOS considers that the conditions of integrity and authenticity have been met.

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### Criteria under which inscription is proposed

The property is nominated on the basis of cultural criteria (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi).

Criterion (iii): *bear a unique or at least exceptional testimony to a cultural tradition or to a civilisation which is living or which has disappeared;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property offers exceptional evidence of and testimony to vital cultural traditions of mountain and nature worship thousands of years old.

On the issue of whether the cultural traditions and particularly nature worship can be seen to be thousands of years old, as set out above, there are issue with the idea of continuity of traditions. There is evidence that mountains in the Khentii range and elsewhere in Mongolia were considered sacred in ancient times – before Mongol people moved into the area and that these practices were adopted by the incomers and reinforced formally by Chinggis Khan. It is less clear that there has been a continuity since that time but there could have been.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

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Criterion (iv): *be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property has associations with the birthplace of Chinggis Khan, Mongolian nationhood and the founding of the Mongol Empire. For all these reasons, it is seen to demonstrate its vital historical significance within Asian and world history.

The associations of Burkhan Khaldun with Chinggis Khan, and thus with the power of his Empire, are documented in terms of the evidence in the *Secret History of the Mongols* that refers to his relationship with the mountain and his formal State support for mountain

worship, associated with his unification of the Mongol peoples.

It would appear to be more difficult to justify how this mountain is associated, other than in a tangential way, with the creation of the Mongolian Empire or with the Mongolian nation.

ICOMOS thus considers that the criterion could be justified on the grounds that the mountain reflects the formalisation of mountain worship by Chinggis Khan at the time of the Mongolian Empire, a key factor in his success in unifying the Mongol peoples.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

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Criterion (v): *be an outstanding example of a traditional human settlement, land-use, or sea-use which is representative of a culture (or cultures), or human interaction with the environment especially when it has become vulnerable under the impact of irreversible change;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that within parts of the property is evidence of pastoral land management of grasslands, with herdsman moving their mixed flocks in seasonal patterns of transhumance, a way of life that has become vulnerable with the development of modern technology, a globalized economy and irreversible environmental changes. This pastoralism is well preserved around the area of the nominated property precisely because of the sacred nature of much of the land and its relative isolation from population centres and development.

ICOMOS considers that no clear evidence has been put forward for suggesting that the pastoralism practiced in this area is particularly or unusually distinctive. Movement practices vary from region to region and from era to era. It is possible that some features of pastoralism in this region have greater continuity with historical practices than other remote parts of rural Mongolia.

Furthermore, this type of pastoralism, involving seasonal movement, is also often linked in social and economic terms to sedentary agriculture and settlements as part of a much wider network. It is thus also difficult to see this small area being a coherent and self-contained entity.

Furthermore, the process of settling appears to have begun in the area with permanent houses being built for herder's families.

A more fundamental problem is that it appears that pastoralism is only allowed outside the Khan Khentii protected area – and that this protected area will be extended to cover the whole property (see Protection).

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has not been justified.

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Criterion (vi): *be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance;*

This criterion is justified by the State Party on the grounds that the property is directly and tangibly associated with *The Secret History of the Mongols*, an historical and literary epic of outstanding universal significance.

ICOMOS considers that *The Secret History of the Mongols* has been recognised as being a literary epic of world importance in its entry in the Memory of the World Register. This text covers many aspects of Mongolian culture but certainly refers to Burkhan Khaldun and its links with Chinggis Khan, in particular to a simple ceremony held on the mountain and its formal recognition, with other sacred mountains, by Chinggis Khan.

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ICOMOS considers that this criterion has been justified.

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ICOMOS considers that the criteria (iv) and (vi) and Outstanding Universal Value have been justified.

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#### **Description of the attributes**

The whole of the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, its sacred ooo-s, pilgrimage path, sacred springs, and its varied nature are all attributes of its Outstanding Universal Value. To these could be added archaeological sites on its slopes and the long views of the mountain.

#### **4 Factors affecting the property**

At present the main factors affecting the property are mainly connected with environmental pressures related to wind, fire, floods, drought, extremes of temperature, solar radiation, etc. Development pressures and human impact are very slight but it is possible to see signs of potential growth.

ICOMOS notes that little remedial action is being taken, or can be taken, against wind, fire, floods, and drought even though they can disturb the ecological balance of the landscape.

Control of erosion caused by precipitation, changes of temperature, solar radiation, and wind is foreseen in future activities of the Management Plan for conservation and protection of the nominated property.

In those parts of the nominated property outside the Khan Khentii Special Protected Area and with no legal protection (see below), mining could be a threat.

The remoteness of the property, and the lack of facilities means that tourist pressure is very low at present. However the number of pilgrims and visitors to the property is growing, particularly pilgrims who come to

state supported ceremonies. And the nomination dossier comments on what is seen as the dramatic increase in the number of travellers in tourist camps and the increase in the number of foreign visitors.

At present adverse human impact on the landscape is slight and mainly connected to the use of informal roads across grasslands. ICOMOS considers that there is a need to monitor and control the roads network. Special places for parking and recreation should also be organized. All of these issues have been considered and addressed in the Management Plan.

Growth in the number of livestock in general and in goats in particular could become a threat to the environment in the future by causing desertification of the grassland from overgrazing. ICOMOS considers that this matter is to be addressed through management programs and regulating policies, although it is in part related to the growth in numbers of people living in the area.

There is also the issue of grazing animals impacting adversely on archeological sites. Adequate protection measures would need to be based on adequate documentation and this matter has also been recognized in the Management Plan.

IUCN states that: *“Concerns identified from IUCN’s consideration of the nomination include potential risks from tourism (low intensity at the moment, so low risk if well managed), mining (which would be addressed only provided extant mining regulations are enacted)...”*

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ICOMOS considers that the main threats to the property are a combination of unplanned tourism, unplanned vehicular access, overgrazing and mining in unprotected areas.

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#### **5 Protection, conservation and management**

##### **Boundaries of the nominated property and buffer zone**

The current boundary is unrelated to contours and natural features, being delineated by straight lines. ICOMOS considers that further consideration should be given to amending the boundaries to reflect recognisable features. The same situation pertains to the delineation of the buffer zone.

The logic of the area enclosed by the buffer zone is also not clear as it almost touches the property boundary in several places. A clearer rationale needs to be provided for the delineation of the buffer zone.

There also appear to be some discrepancies between the boundaries shown on the various maps provided with the nomination dossier.

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ICOMOS considers that the boundaries of the nominated property and of its buffer zone need to be re-drawn to reflect recognisable natural features; and that the rationale for the scope of the buffer zone needs to be clearly defined.

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### **Ownership**

All land in Mongolia is at present in the State ownership.

### **Protection**

Not all of the property is legally protected at present: although the majority of the Great *Burkhan Khaldun Mountain* is situated on the territory of the Khan Kentii Special Protected Area (KK SPA), a small area to the north-west and a much larger area to the south lie outside this protected zone.

Even though the KK SPA offers legal protection, it should be noted that this is for natural and environmental protection rather than cultural heritage protection.

The buffer zone is included within the buffer zone of the KK SPA. Currently the property buffer zone has no protection for cultural attributes nor does it have any regulatory procedures related to land-use or new construction.

There are plans to include the whole property and its buffer zone in the territory of the KK SPA in 2015.

Since 1990 and the renewal of older Mongolian practices related to sacred mountains, national traditions and customs of nature protection in Mongolia and the laws associated with “Khalkh Juram” have been revived and are now incorporated into State policy.

On 16 May 1995, the first President of Mongolia issued a new Decree “*Supporting initiatives to revive the tradition of worshipping Bogd Khan Khairkhan, Burkhan Khaldun (Khan Khentii), and Otgontenger Mountains*”. The Decree pronounced the State’s support for initiatives to revive Mountain worship as described in the original Mongolian Legal Document and as “set out according to the official Decree”.

These traditions have been updated to reflect present day circumstances and since 1995, Otgontenger, Burkhan Khaldun, and Bogdkhan Khairkhan Mountains have been worshipped as State sacred Mountains.

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ICOMOS considers that the legal protection in place for the cultural aspects of the landscape is not yet adequate and needs to be strengthened; and that specific protection for the buffer zone needs to be defined.

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### **Conservation**

On the Burkhan Khaldun Mountain, all the *ovoos* and places associated with sacred rituals are maintained by pilgrims. There appears to be no active management of paths to combat erosion.

There are however controls in place for motor transport but the measures should be strengthened to better organize car parking and recreation zones for visitors.

The Decree of the President on “Regulation of ceremony of worshipping and offering of state sacred mountains and *ovoos*” provides legal tools for visitor organization during the large state worshipping ceremonies.

Any activity on Burkhan Khaldun Mountain itself, other than worshipping rituals, is traditionally forbidden. The KK SPA reserve staff do however undertake fire-fighting, forest protection, forest clearing and renovation, and address illegal hunting and wood cutting.

Little active conservation is undertaken on archaeological sites.

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ICOMOS considers that conservation activities are basic and more preventative and active measures need to be taken based on a wide assessment of need and priorities.

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### **Management**

Management structures and processes, including traditional management processes

At the national level, management of the site is under the responsibility of the Ministry of Nature, Environment and Green, and of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism.

ICOMOS notes that at a local level although the nomination dossier states that an Administration for the Protection of the World Heritage Property responsible for both natural and cultural protection and conservation of the property is to be established, no timescale has been provided for its establishment.

Traditional protection is supported through the long standing tradition of worshipping nature and sacred places. For example, it is forbidden to disturb earth, waters, trees and all plants, animals and birds in sacred places, or hunt or cut wood for trading.

Policy framework: management plans and arrangements, including visitor management and presentation

A draft Management Plan was submitted as part of the nomination dossier. This will run from 2015-2025 and covers both cultural and natural heritage. It includes both long-term (2015-2025), and medium-term (2015-2020) plans.

The version of the Management Plan submitted was an initial version which has not yet been approved or implemented. The text is somewhat tentative in nature. It is stated that it is intended to establish a new Management Administration for the protection and management of the property as a whole and to complete and implement the integrated management plan. Before

completion and adoption, ICOMOS considers that more work is needed to augment the Plan to allow it to provide an appropriate framework for management of the property.

ICOMOS notes that it is not clear when this new system will be put into effect. Furthermore the necessary funding has still to be put in place from stakeholder organisations. However it is acknowledged that this is unlikely to be adequate and further support will be needed from aid and international donor organizations.

Meanwhile it appears that the property is not under active management for its cultural attributes nor is work guided by specific strategies and policies.

Although a management plan exists for the Khan Khentii protected area and this is implemented by the Administration of Khan Khentii Special Protected Area, it is restricted to conservation of the natural environment.

Local authorities at the levels of *aimak*-s, *soum*-s and *bag*-s have responsibility for providing local protection. Although *soum* administrations have people responsible for environmental protection, there appears not to be any formal arrangement for cultural heritage work.

Overall the current management regime does not yet offer effective management of the nominated area or its buffer zone in terms of protecting its cultural attributes.

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ICOMOS considers that the current management structure is inadequate; there is a need to establish the proposed new Management Administration and to augment, complete and implement the draft Management Plan as soon as possible.

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## 6 Monitoring

ICOMOS understands that at present archaeological reconnaissance of the property's territory is still under development. The records of sacred and archaeological sites are therefore not yet complete or adequate as a basis for monitoring.

In general there is a lack of research on archaeology, ethnography, local folklore and oral traditions, as well as geology, botany and zoology. Some documentation exists in the form of schematic inventorial records (that identify generic groups of sites rather than individual sites) but there are no detailed maps which could give better understanding of the property and its evolution through the history. This lack is acknowledged in the national programmes and in the Management Plan.

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ICOMOS considers that an adequate database to underpin monitoring needs to be established.

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## 7 Conclusions

The sacred mountain of Burkhan Khaldun and its associations with Chinggis Khan are the main focus of this nomination dossier. The precise location of the mountain that is reputedly the burial place of Chinggis Khan and which he established as a centre of mountain worship, is still a matter of some conjecture amongst scholars, but there is no doubt that it lies with the Khan Khentii mountain range. The evidence put forward for Burkhan Khaldun in relation to the pilgrimage paths, *ovoo*-s and links to early texts in the nomination dossier, although not conclusive proof, show that on the basis of present knowledge the mountain has the best claim. As further evidence might only emerge in the longer term, ICOMOS considers that the location of the sacred mountain as now embraced should be accepted.

However the boundary of the mountain need to be more satisfactorily defined in relation to natural features and the inconsistencies between various maps resolved.

The links between the sacredness of the mountain and its pristine nature are strong. The traditions of mountain worship instigated by Chinggis Khan reflected a fusion of shamanism, rooted in the ancient tradition of nature worshiping practices of nomadic peoples, and Buddhism introduced from Tibet.

Although the idea in the nomination dossier that nature as experienced by Chinggis Khan and as described in the *Secret History of the Mongols* still persists today, is difficult to justify, what is important is the sacred association of nature that has been largely unexploited by people. Maintaining that link in the face of increased tourism, will be crucial.

Currently the protection and management of the property is not yet adequate to meet these challenges. The whole property needs legal protection, the protection offered by the buffer zone needs to be clearly defined, and active management of the cultural attributes needs to be put in place on the basis of an approved management plan, based on an augmented version of the current draft plan.

## 8 Recommendations

### Recommendations with respect to inscription

ICOMOS recommends that the nomination of Great Burkhan Khaldun Mountain and its surrounding sacred landscape, Mongolia be **referred back** to the State Party in order to allow it to:

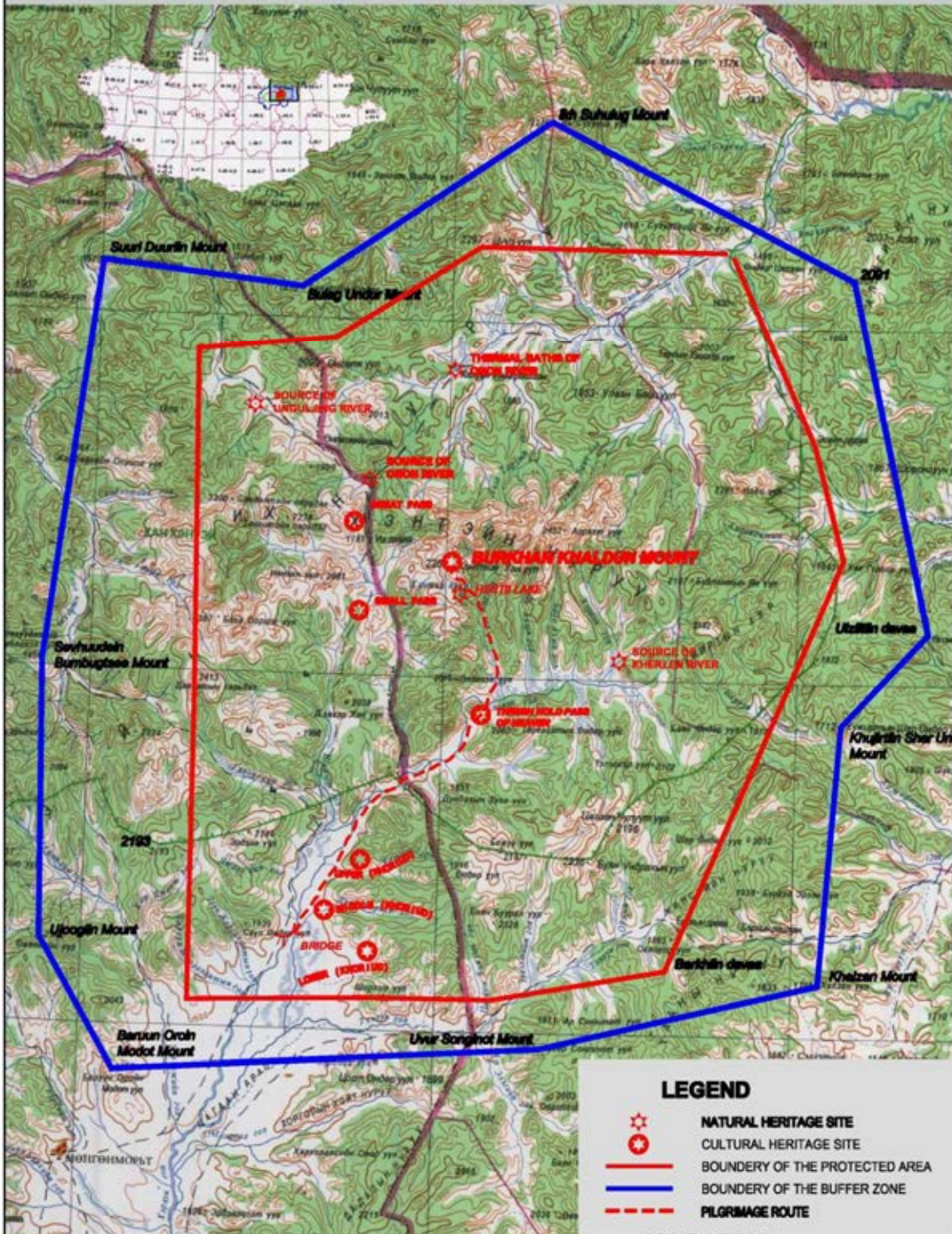
- Put in place legal protection for the nominated area that covers cultural as well as natural attributes;
- Clearly define the protection offered by the buffer zone;

- Re-define the boundaries of the property and the buffer zone to relate them to physical attributes;
- Confirm that no mining or extractive industry will be permitted within the nominated property;
- Put in place an overall management structure with resources to implement an augmented and approved management plan;
- Draw up and implement a conservation programme, covering preventative and active measures, based on a wide assessment of need and priorities.

ICOMOS would be ready and willing to offer advice on these aspects in the framework of the Upstream Processes.



# I. BUFFER ZONE OF THE PROPERTY: GREAT BURKHAN KHALDUN MOUNTAIN AND ITS SURROUNDING SACRED LANDSCAPE



Revised map showing the boundaries of the nominated property





Great Burkhan Khaldun Mount



Main Ovoo of Heaven on the top of the Mountain



Shamanism and sacred site



Inside decoration of the Main Temple

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## Grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun et son paysage sacré environnant (Mongolie) No 1440

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### Nom officiel du bien tel que proposé par l'État partie

Grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun et son paysage sacré environnant

### Lieu

Sum (district) de Mungunmorit de l'aimag (province) de Tuv

Sum (district) d'Umnudelger de l'aimag (province) de Khentii

### Brève description

La grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun et son paysage environnant sont situés dans la partie centrale de la chaîne des monts Khentii qui départage les bassins hydrographiques des océans Arctique et Pacifique dans le nord-est de la Mongolie. C'est là que les grandes steppes d'Asie centrale cèdent la place aux forêts de conifères de la taïga sibérienne.

Le Burkhan Khaldun est associé avec le culte des montagnes, des rivières et des ovoos sacrés (cairns de pierre chamaniques), dont les cérémonies ont été façonnées par la fusion de pratiques chamaniques et bouddhistes anciennes.

Depuis les années 1990, après soixante ans de répression, un soutien officiel a été apporté au renouveau des pratiques traditionnelles de culte des montagnes.

Le Burkhan Khaldun est aussi associé à Gengis Khan, étant réputé être le lieu de sa sépulture et plus largement lié à sa fondation de l'Empire mongol, en 1206. Le Burkhan Khaldun est l'une des quatre montagnes sacrées désignées par Gengis Khan de son vivant dans le cadre du statut officiel qu'il donna au culte des montagnes. Le Burkhan Khaldun est aussi considéré comme le berceau de la nation mongole.

### Catégorie de bien

En termes de catégories de biens culturels, telles qu'elles sont définies à l'article premier de la Convention du patrimoine mondial de 1972, il s'agit d'un *site*.

Aux termes des *Orientations devant guider la mise en œuvre de la Convention du patrimoine mondial* (juillet 2013), paragraphe 47, il s'agit également d'un *paysage culturel*.

## 1 Identification

### Inclus dans la liste indicative

Le Burkhan Khaldun, en tant que site en série des montagnes sacrées de Mongolie – Bogd Khan, Burkhan Khaldun, et Otgontenger –, a été inclus dans la liste indicative en 1996.

### Assistance internationale au titre du Fonds du patrimoine mondial pour la préparation de la proposition d'inscription

Aucune

### Date de réception par le Centre du patrimoine mondial

27 janvier 2014

### Antécédents

Il s'agit d'une nouvelle proposition d'inscription.

### Consultations

L'ICOMOS a consulté son Comité scientifique international sur les paysages culturels et plusieurs experts indépendants.

Des commentaires de l'UICN au sujet de l'évaluation de ce bien ont été reçus en décembre 2014. L'ICOMOS a soigneusement examiné ces informations pour parvenir à sa décision finale et à sa recommandation de mars 2015 ; l'UICN a également révisé la présentation de ses commentaires, conformément à la version incluse dans ce rapport de l'ICOMOS.

### Mission d'évaluation technique

Une mission d'évaluation technique conjointe de l'ICOMOS et de l'UICN s'est rendue sur le bien du 26 août au 5 septembre 2014.

### Information complémentaire reçue par l'ICOMOS

Le 7 octobre 2014, l'ICOMOS a demandé à l'État partie de fournir de plus amples informations sur l'analyse comparative, les délimitations, la bibliographie et les travaux de reconstruction. L'État partie a répondu le 4 novembre 2014, et les informations supplémentaires fournies sont reflétées dans ce texte.

Une lettre a été envoyée à l'État partie le 22 décembre 2014, faisant part des préoccupations de la Commission pour le patrimoine mondial de l'ICOMOS sur la délimitation du bien proposée et le manque de clarté concernant la manière dont les zones proposées pour inscription étaient liées à la principale montagne sacrée.

Une réunion Skype entre l'ICOMOS et l'État partie a ensuite été tenue le 9 janvier 2015 et une lettre supplémentaire a été envoyée le 26 janvier 2015.

L'État partie a fourni des informations complémentaires le 18 février 2015, qui ont été prises en compte dans cette évaluation. Le principal changement proposé est de passer d'une proposition d'inscription en série de trois sites (grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun, la montagne sacrée de Binder et le monastère bouddhiste de Baldan

Bereeven), à une proposition d'inscription d'un seul site, la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun.

#### **Date d'approbation de l'évaluation par l'ICOMOS**

12 mars 2015

## **2 Le bien**

### **Description**

Les neiges éternelles de la chaîne de montagnes de Khan Khentii dominent le vaste territoire des steppes eurasiennes. L'eau provenant des montagnes donne naissance à des rivières importantes qui s'écoulent au nord et au sud. On trouve des forêts au sommet des montagnes et, plus bas, une steppe de montagne, tandis que dans la vallée, en contrebas, les rivières qui traversent les prés donnent naissance à des prairies humides.

Il s'agit d'un paysage reculé qui présente de grandes qualités esthétiques, une biodiversité importante et peu de développement moderne.

La grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun

La montagne sacrée Burkhan Khaldun est étroitement associée à Gengis Khan, à son lieu de naissance, à celui de sa sépulture présumée, à sa fondation de l'Empire mongol et à sa formalisation du culte des montagnes.

À la fin du XIIe siècle, Gengis Khan établit formellement le culte de la montagne Burkhan Khaldun et d'autres montagnes sacrées de son empire (voir Histoire).

Cette montagne fut pendant des siècles l'un des objets naturels sacrés les plus importants pour tous les peuples mongols. Néanmoins, pendant les siècles suivants, les traditions de culte des montagnes ont décliné tandis que le bouddhisme était adopté à la fin du XVe siècle, ce qui semble être à l'origine d'un manque de continuité dans les traditions et les associations.

Depuis les années 1990, le renouveau du culte des montagnes a été encouragé et les rituels chamaniques anciens sont repris et intégrés dans des rituels bouddhistes. L'État a parrainé des célébrations qui à présent se déroulent chaque été sur la montagne.

Malgré ces fortes associations, il y a un débat entre les spécialistes sur la localisation exacte de la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun.

Les textes anciens, et spécialement l'*Histoire secrète des Mongols*, 1241 (voir Histoire) donnent des éléments d'information clairs quant au fait que le Burkhan Khaldun est situé dans la chaîne des monts Khentii et près de la source de trois rivières – Onon, Kherlen et Tuul. L'*Histoire universelle* (1307-1311) suggère que le nom pourrait s'appliquer à l'ensemble de la chaîne montagneuse plutôt qu'à une seule montagne. De nombreux chercheurs et archéologues ont essayé de

localiser le lieu de sépulture de Gengis Khan, sans succès à ce jour.

On accède aux trois ovoos de pierres (ou cairns) situés au sommet de la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun par un chemin de pèlerinage, ce qui différencie ce sommet des deux autres sommets envisagés (bien qu'aucun d'eux ne soit mentionné dans l'*Histoire secrète*). Par ailleurs, on laisse entendre que les vestiges d'un édifice de pierres situés près de l'ovoo central pourraient être ceux d'un temple érigé par l'arrière-petit-fils de Gengis Khan (même si aucune preuve de cela n'a été à ce jour confirmée par des études archéologiques).

La grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun prit le nom de Khentii Khan (le roi de la chaîne des monts Khentii), pour des raisons politiques et religieuses, entre le XVIIIe siècle et le début du XXe siècle.

La grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun est ainsi connue pour avoir été vénérée et sacrée par Gengis Khan. Ce serait aussi le lieu de son inhumation. Il est clair que d'autres éléments de fait pourraient confirmer cette inhumation à l'avenir, cependant la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun est reconnue comme étant le sommet le plus vraisemblable pour ces associations.

Mis à part les trois ovoos de pierre (cairns) importants qui sont devenus des centres de culte, la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun présente peu de structures. Ces ovoos sont disposés le long de sentiers reliés à une route de pèlerinage. Les cairns ont apparemment été détruits au XVIIe siècle mais ont été reconstruits avec des poteaux en bois à leur sommet. Le chemin de pèlerinage commence à environ 20 km de la montagne par un pont traversant la Kherlen au col du Seuil, où l'on trouve également un ovoo important. Les pèlerins cheminaient à cheval de cet endroit au grand ovoo de Beliin, fait de troncs d'arbres et orné d'écharpes de prière en soie bleue et de là, jusqu'à l'ovoo principal du paradis, au sommet de la montagne.

### **Paysage naturel**

Le paysage montagneux comprend les éléments naturels suivants : les sources des rivières Onon et Kherlen, des montagnes sacrées, des lacs, des rivières, les sources chaudes sacrées d'Onon, et des zones contenant une faune et une flore rares et menacées.

La majeure partie de la montagne est située au sein d'une zone protégée pour sa diversité naturelle, diversité qui a été affectée dans d'autres parties de la steppe eurasienne. L'UICN note que « *le bien comprend des valeurs naturelles notables qui sont importantes au niveau national, voire régional* ».

Le caractère sacré de la montagne est fortement associé à la notion d'isolement et à sa nature « pure ». Même si cette nature est vraisemblablement différente de la nature contemporaine de Gengis Khan, elle

constitue actuellement une partie essentielle des associations sacrées.

Les eaux chaudes et minéralisées des sources sacrées d'Onon sont utilisées en hiver par la population locale comme une sorte de sanatorium. De petites structures en bois ont été construites sur certaines sources.

#### Chamanisme

Les Mongols pensent que la plupart des terres situées en altitude dans les grandes steppes de Mongolie ont une signification spirituelle qui a perduré depuis des temps reculés. D'après les données archéologiques et documentaires, on peut penser que le culte qui avait cours dans ces montagnes pourrait avoir commencé avant ou au moins pendant la période de l'Empire hunnu (de 209 av. J.-C. à 93 apr. J.-C.).

Le fait de lier les pratiques actuelles à ce qui existait il y a deux mille ans pose néanmoins problème. Les peuples mongols ne migrèrent dans la zone des monts Khentii qu'aux VIIIe-XIe siècles et, jusqu'au XIIe siècle, vivaient aux côtés de nombreux autres groupes comme les peuples turques. De plus, la steppe mongole a dépendu de nombreux empires depuis la chute de l'Empire hunnu, et tous avaient leurs propres structures sociales et culturelles, y compris l'organisation des pratiques pastorales et religieuses. En outre, il apparaît que le culte des montagnes était répandu.

La proposition d'inscription souligne que ce qui rend le chamanisme mongol important est le fait que la protection d'une nature vierge et immaculée est fondamentale pour son intégrité et son authenticité. Elle suggère que la nature décrite comme étant celle qu'a connue Gengis Khan dans l'*Histoire secrète des Mongols* (voir Histoire) perdure encore aujourd'hui.

#### Histoire et développement

Le nom « Mongol » est apparemment mentionné dans des sources chinoises du IVe siècle apr. J.-C. sous la forme Shi Wei Mong-gu. Des sources chinoises postérieures confirment également que, pendant la dynastie Tang (618-907 apr. J.-C.), une peuplade nomade connue sous le nom de Meng-gu vivait dans les forêts et les prairies au nord-est du Dalai Nuur, aux frontières de la Mandchourie actuelle.

On pense qu'à la fin du VIIIe siècle les peuples connus sous le nom de Mongols ont migré vers le sud et se sont d'abord implantés dans la zone située au nord du Burkhan Khaldun. Au XIe siècle, les Mongols basés autour du Burkhan Khaldun étaient encore peu nombreux, luttant pour prendre le pouvoir comme les nombreuses autres populations basées dans ce qui est actuellement la Mongolie septentrionale.

Entre 1188 et 1206, Gengis Khan parvint à unir plusieurs groupes occupant les steppes mongoliennes – Turcs, Toungouses et les diverses peuplades mongoles, dont le clan Bordjigin, auquel il appartenait – et forma ce qui

devint reconnu comme le peuple mongol ou la nation mongole. Gengis Khan fut proclamé Grand Khan et entama la construction de l'Empire mongol, le plus vaste empire que le monde ait jamais connu. Sa capitale, située dans la vallée de l'Orkhon, en Mongolie centrale, fut inscrite sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial en 2004.

Les données disponibles laissent penser que le culte des montagnes existait dans les monts Khentii bien avant l'arrivée des peuples mongols, probablement avant ou au moins pendant la période Hunnu. L'empire des Hunnu (ou Xiongnu), qui était une confédération de peuples nomades, domina une grande partie de la steppe asiatique (Sibérie, Mongolie, Mongolie méridionale, Gansu et Xinjiang actuels) entre 209 av. J.-C. et 93 apr. J.-C. Leur royaume pourrait avoir inclus la région du Burkhan Khaldun.

Après les Hunnu, les empires de la steppe asiatique se succèdent – Sianbe, Jujian, Empire turcique, États ouïghour, kirghiz et xidan –, qui s'appuyaient tous sur leur propre variante de pastoralisme nomade et leurs pratiques religieuses, laissant une empreinte dans le paysage de la steppe mongole sous la forme de pétroglyphes, sépultures, pierres à cerf, etc., dont certains sont situés dans la zone proposée pour inscription.

Les informations sur l'empire de Gengis Khan sont consignées dans l'*Histoire secrète des Mongols*, écrite pour la famille royale mongole par un auteur anonyme quelque temps après la mort de Gengis Khan et terminée en 1241. Ce livre décrit comment Gengis Khan déclara sacrée la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun au XIIIe siècle, et comment celle-ci fit par la suite l'objet d'un culte constant pendant la période impériale. Gengis Khan déclara également sacrés l'Otgontenger, de la chaîne des monts Khangai, les cinq sommets de Tavan Bogd, à la limite occidentale de la chaîne des monts Altaï, et le Bogd Khan de la chaîne des monts Khentii.

Gengis Khan aurait été inhumé près d'une rivière, sur le versant inférieur de la montagne, mais à un endroit qui fut délibérément tenu secret.

L'importance du chamanisme en Mongolie commença à décliner à la fin du XVIe siècle, alors qu'une campagne organisée fut entreprise par les princes au pouvoir pour convertir les Mongols au bouddhisme lié à la secte tibétaine Gelugpa (ou des Bonnets Jaunes).

Environ trois siècles plus tard, l'intérêt pour le culte des montagnes resurgit et la loi « Khalkh Juram », adoptée en 1709, proclama le Khentii Khan (montagne Burkhan Khaldun) et le Bogd Khan (à proximité d'Oulan-Bator) « réserves montagneuses » sacrées devant être glorifiées et honorées dans le cadre d'un culte.

À cette époque, la Mongolie était soumise à la dynastie Qing. Plus tard au cours de cette dynastie, en 1778, suite aux efforts en ce sens du roi Yundendorj, le Bogd Khan, le Khentii Khan (montagne Burkhan Khaldun) et

les montagnes Otgontenger furent également officiellement déclarés réserves montagneuses, et la décision fut prise de les vénérer.

Depuis 1990, avec le renouveau des pratiques mongoles anciennes, ces traditions nationales et coutumes de culte et de protection de la nature en Mongolie, ainsi que les lois liées au « Khalkh Juram », ont été rétablies. Ces traditions et coutumes sont maintenant intégrées dans la politique d'État.

Le 16 mai 1995, le premier président de la Mongolie publia un nouveau décret « *Soutenir les initiatives visant à rétablir la tradition du culte des montagnes Bogd Khan Khaikhan, Burkhan Khaldun (Khan Khentii) et Otgontenger* ». Le décret prononce le soutien de l'État en faveur d'initiatives visant à rétablir le culte des montagnes tel que décrit dans le document mongol réglementaire originel et tel qu'« énoncé par le décret officiel ». Depuis 1995, les montagnes Otgontenger, Burkhan Khaldun et Bogdkhan Khaikhan sont vénérées en tant que montagnes sacrées d'État.

### 3 Justification de l'inscription, intégrité et authenticité

#### Analyse comparative

L'ICOMOS note que l'analyse comparative initiale ne présentait que des comparaisons avec des biens déjà inscrits sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial. Les informations supplémentaires données par l'État partie en novembre 2014 ajoutaient des comparaisons avec des sites des listes indicatives.

Les principaux biens inscrits comparés sont deux montagnes inscrites pour leurs critères naturels : le mont Kenya, au Kenya, et le Kilimandjaro, en Tanzanie ; sept montagnes inscrites en tant que sites mixtes : le mont Athos, en Grèce, le Tongariro, en Nouvelle-Zélande, le Machu Picchu, au Pérou, le mont Taishan, le mont Emei, le mont Wuyi et le mont Huangshan, en Chine ; et deux montagnes inscrites pour leurs seuls critères culturels : les sites sacrés et chemins de pèlerinage dans les monts Kii, au Japon, et la montagne sacrée de Sulaiman-Too, au Kirghizistan. L'analyse mentionne également le mont Fuji, au Japon, pour ses éléments à caractère sacré.

L'analyse tend plus à mettre en évidence les similarités que les différences entre le mont Taishan, en Chine, le mont Athos, en Grèce, le Fuji-Yama sacré, au Japon, et le bien proposé pour inscription, car tous reflètent des traditions uniques et persistantes de culte des montagnes sacrées au cours des siècles passés, qu'elles soient liées au confucianisme, au shintoïsme ou au christianisme, et représentent également l'identité nationale des pays où ils sont situés.

Le Sulaiman-Too est considéré comme la seule montagne située dans les steppes eurasiennes.

Les sites des listes indicatives étudiés sont le paysage panoramique du mont Hua, en Chine, le mont Garizim des Samaritains, en Palestine, et les quatre montagnes sacrées, extension du mont Taishan, en Chine. Le bien proposé pour inscription est censé partager des caractéristiques similaires avec ces trois sites, mais aussi présenter des différences liées à une agriculture plutôt nomade que sédentaire et aux religions qui ne sont pas les mêmes.

L'analyse compare également le Burkhan Khaldun avec d'autres montagnes sacrées de Mongolie, spécialement le Bogd Khan et l'Otgontenger. La conclusion est que le Burkhan Khaldun est le berceau de la nation mongole et la terre spirituelle historique du peuple mongol ; le Burkhan Khaldun est un symbole national et la montagne totémique de la Mongolie, contrairement aux deux autres. C'est aussi le lieu de naissance de l'Empire mongol et il est étroitement associé à Gengis Khan, le fondateur de la nation mongole et de l'Empire mongol. Enfin, mention est également faite de l'association étroite avec l'*Histoire secrète des Mongols*, ouvrage reconnu par l'UNESCO comme un patrimoine culturel unique en 1990.

L'ICOMOS considère que la démonstration a été faite que le Burkhan Khaldun, en tant que montagne sacrée associée avec l'empire de Gengis Khan, pourrait justifier d'envisager son inscription sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

L'ICOMOS considère que l'analyse comparative justifie d'envisager l'inscription de ce bien sur la Liste du patrimoine mondial.

#### Justification de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle

Le bien proposé pour inscription est considéré par l'État partie comme ayant une valeur universelle exceptionnelle en tant que bien culturel pour les raisons suivantes :

La grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun est réputée :

- témoigner de traditions profondément enracinées de culte des montagnes et des sites sacrés ;
- refléter des associations avec Gengis Khan et en particulier avec son lieu de naissance, son unification des tribus mongoles et son lieu de sépulture ;
- représenter l'idée de nation mongole ;
- avoir été au centre d'événements qui changèrent profondément l'Asie et l'Europe entre le XIIe et le XIVe siècle en tant que berceau de l'Empire mongol.

L'ICOMOS considère que l'importance de la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun a été établie, ainsi que son association avec Gengis Khan, et avec son adoption et son patronage du culte des montagnes à travers son

empire sur la base des traditions chamaniques anciennes associées aux peuples nomades.

En revanche, la continuité du culte des montagnes des temps anciens à l'époque de Gengis Khan puis de cette dernière à l'époque actuelle n'a pas été établie. La première mention du mont Khan Khentii lors de la période Qing (début du XVIIIe siècle) laisse à penser qu'il s'agissait d'un site sacré existant, et ce peut-être depuis plusieurs siècles. Il est tout à fait plausible que cette identité de montagne sacrée remonte au XIIIe siècle, voire avant. Il est aussi tout simplement possible qu'il y ait eu une certaine continuité de ces pratiques rituelles (privées) depuis cette époque. Néanmoins, le rituel spécifique (très simple) mentionné dans *l'Histoire secrète* n'est pas évoqué durant des périodes ultérieures, et les cérémonies et pèlerinages attachés aux ovoos ne sont pas mentionnés dans *l'Histoire secrète* ou dans les textes du XIIIe siècle. Il est possible que la pratique date de l'ère bouddhiste. Mais la continuité n'a pas été prouvée jusqu'à présent.

De même, l'association du bien proposé pour inscription, en particulier le Burkhan Khaldun, avec l'idée de nation mongole ou avec le lieu de naissance du peuple mongol est problématique. Alors que l'influence extraordinaire que Gengis Khan exerça sur l'Eurasie et bien au-delà peut aisément être considérée comme revêtant une importance qui dépasse le cadre national, l'association avec la nation mongole est nécessairement une dimension liée aux frontières nationales et ne peut être considérée comme exceptionnelle de manière plus générale.

### **Intégrité et authenticité**

#### **Intégrité**

Les attributs situés au sein des délimitations du site proposé pour inscription sont appropriés pour témoigner de ce qui a été proposé pour inscription.

#### **Authenticité**

La valeur de tous les attributs naturels et culturels de la montagne est bien visible. Diverses parties de la montagne sont vulnérables à une augmentation de la fréquentation touristique qui, si elle n'était pas correctement gérée, pourrait profondément affecter la sensation d'isolement.

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L'ICOMOS considère que les conditions d'intégrité et d'authenticité sont remplies.

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### **Critères selon lesquels l'inscription est proposée**

Le bien est proposé pour inscription sur la base des critères culturels (iii), (iv), (v) et (vi).

Critère (iii) : *apporter un témoignage unique ou du moins exceptionnel sur une tradition culturelle ou une civilisation vivante ou disparue ;*

Ce critère est justifié par l'État partie au motif que le bien présente des éléments exceptionnels qui témoignent de traditions culturelles essentielles et multimillénaires de culte des montagnes et de la nature.

S'agissant de déterminer si les traditions culturelles, et particulièrement le culte de la nature, sont multimillénaires, comme indiqué ci-avant, l'idée de continuité des traditions pose problème. On dispose d'éléments montrant que les montagnes de la chaîne des monts Khentii et d'autres lieux en Mongolie étaient considérées comme sacrées dans les temps anciens – avant que le peuple mongol ne se déplace dans la zone et que ces pratiques soient adoptées par les arrivants et formellement renforcées par Gengis Khan. Quant à savoir si une continuité de ces traditions a existé depuis, c'est moins clair mais possible.

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L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère n'a pas été justifié.

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Critère (iv) : *offrir un exemple éminent d'un type de construction ou d'ensemble architectural ou technologique ou de paysage illustrant une période ou des périodes significative(s) de l'histoire humaine ;*

Ce critère est justifié par l'État partie au motif que le bien est associé avec le lieu de naissance de Gengis Khan, la nation mongole et la fondation de l'Empire mongol. Pour toutes ces raisons, le bien est considéré comme témoignant de son importance historique essentielle dans l'histoire asiatique et mondiale.

Les associations du Burkhan Khaldun avec Gengis Khan, et par conséquent avec la puissance de son Empire, sont documentées dans *l'Histoire secrète des Mongols*, qui évoque son rapport avec la montagne et son soutien d'État formel en faveur du culte des montagnes, associés avec l'unification des peuples mongols.

Il semble plus difficile de justifier comment cette montagne pourrait être associée, autrement que de manière indirecte, avec la création de l'Empire mongol ou avec la nation mongole.

L'ICOMOS considère donc que le critère pourrait être justifié au motif que la montagne témoigne de la formalisation du culte des montagnes par Gengis Khan sous l'Empire mongol, facteur important de sa réussite s'agissant de l'unification des peuples mongols.

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L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère a été justifié.

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Critère (v) : *être un exemple éminent d'établissement humain traditionnel, de l'utilisation traditionnelle du territoire ou de la mer, qui soit représentatif d'une culture (ou de cultures), ou de l'interaction humaine avec l'environnement, spécialement quand celui-ci est devenu vulnérable sous l'impact d'une mutation irréversible ;*

Ce critère est justifié par l'État partie au motif que la gestion des terres pastorales est manifeste au sein de

parties du bien, les bergers déplaçant leurs troupeaux mixtes selon des schémas saisonniers de transhumance, et que ce mode de vie est devenu vulnérable avec le développement des technologies modernes, une économie mondialisée et des changements environnementaux irréversibles. Ce pastoralisme est bien préservé autour de la zone du bien proposé pour inscription, précisément en raison de la nature sacrée d'une grande partie des terres et de leur isolement relatif par rapport aux centres de population et de développement.

L'ICOMOS considère qu'aucun élément factuel clair n'a été mis en avant qui laisserait entendre que le pastoralisme pratiqué dans cette zone serait particulièrement ou inhabituellement remarquable. Les pratiques de transhumance varient selon les régions et les périodes. Il est possible que certaines caractéristiques du pastoralisme de cette région soient davantage dans la continuité des pratiques historiques que dans d'autres parties reculées de la Mongolie rurale.

De plus, ce type de pastoralisme implique une transhumance saisonnière et est aussi souvent lié, en termes socio-économiques, à une agriculture et à des établissements sédentaires faisant partie d'un réseau bien plus large. Il est par conséquent aussi difficile de considérer cette petite zone comme une entité cohérente et autonome.

En outre, le processus de sédentarisation semble avoir commencé dans la zone avec la construction de maisons permanentes pour les familles des bergers.

Un problème plus fondamental se pose : il apparaît que le pastoralisme est uniquement autorisé en dehors de la zone protégée de Khan Khentii – et que cette zone protégée sera étendue pour couvrir le bien dans son ensemble (voir Protection).

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L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère n'a pas été justifié.

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Critère (vi) : *être directement ou matériellement associé à des événements ou des traditions vivantes, des idées, des croyances ou des œuvres artistiques et littéraires ayant une signification universelle exceptionnelle ;*

Ce critère est justifié par l'État partie au motif que le bien est associé de manière directe et matérielle à l'*Histoire secrète des Mongols*, récit épique historique et littéraire à l'importance universelle exceptionnelle.

L'ICOMOS considère que l'*Histoire secrète des Mongols* a été reconnue comme étant une œuvre littéraire épique d'importance mondiale qui fait partie du Registre de la mémoire du monde. Ce texte aborde de nombreux aspects de la culture mongole mais fait référence de manière incontestable au Burkhan Khaldun et à ses liens avec Gengis Khan, et particulièrement à une cérémonie simple qui s'est tenue au sommet de la montagne et à sa reconnaissance formelle, parmi d'autres montagnes sacrées, par Gengis Khan.

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L'ICOMOS considère que ce critère a été justifié.

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L'ICOMOS considère que les critères (iv) et (vi) et la valeur universelle exceptionnelle ont été justifiés.

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#### **Description des attributs de la valeur universelle exceptionnelle**

L'ensemble de la montagne Burkhan Khaldun, ses oboos sacrés, chemin de pèlerinage, sources sacrées et sa nature variée sont tous des attributs de sa valeur universelle exceptionnelle. On pourrait y ajouter les sites archéologiques présents sur ses pentes et le panorama de la montagne.

#### **4 Facteurs affectant le bien**

Actuellement, les principaux facteurs affectant le bien sont majoritairement liés à des contraintes environnementales – vents, incendies, inondations, sécheresse, températures extrêmes, rayonnement solaire, etc. Les pressions dues au développement et l'impact humain sont très légers mais il est possible de voir des signes de croissance potentielle.

L'ICOMOS note que peu de mesures correctives sont prises, ou peuvent être prises, contre les vents, les incendies, les inondations et la sécheresse alors que ces phénomènes peuvent bouleverser l'équilibre écologique du paysage.

La maîtrise de l'érosion causée par les précipitations, les changements de température, le rayonnement solaire et les vents est prévue parmi les futures activités du plan de gestion pour la conservation et la protection du bien proposé pour inscription.

Dans les parties du bien proposé pour inscription situées en dehors de la zone spéciale protégée de Khan Khentii et qui ne disposent pas d'une protection légale (voir ci-après), l'activité minière pourrait être une menace.

L'isolement du bien et l'absence d'équipements font que la pression touristique est actuellement très faible. Néanmoins, le nombre de pèlerins et de visiteurs du bien croît, particulièrement celui des pèlerins assistant aux cérémonies soutenues par l'État. En outre, le dossier de proposition d'inscription note ce qui est considéré comme une augmentation spectaculaire du nombre de voyageurs dans les campings touristiques et l'augmentation du nombre de visiteurs étrangers.

Actuellement, l'impact humain négatif sur le paysage est faible et principalement lié à l'utilisation de routes informelles dans les prairies. L'ICOMOS considère qu'il est nécessaire de suivre et de maîtriser le réseau routier. Des aires spéciales de stationnement et de détente devraient aussi être aménagées. Toutes ces questions ont été étudiées et traitées dans le plan de gestion.



La croissance du nombre de têtes de bétail en général et du nombre de caprins en particulier pourrait devenir à l'avenir une menace pour l'environnement en raison de la désertification des prairies engendrée par le surpâturage. L'ICOMOS considère que ce point doit être traité au moyen de programmes de gestion et de dispositions réglementaires, bien que ce phénomène soit lié en partie à la croissance de la population vivant dans la zone.

On notera également le problème des animaux de pâturage qui dégradent les sites archéologiques. Des mesures de protection appropriées devraient s'appuyer sur une documentation satisfaisante et ce point a aussi été reconnu dans le plan de gestion.

L'UICN indique ceci : « *Les sujets de préoccupation identifiés après étude de la proposition d'inscription par l'UICN comprennent les risques potentiels liés au tourisme (intensité faible actuellement, donc risque faible s'il est bien géré), l'exploitation minière (qui ne sera maîtrisée qu'à condition que la réglementation minière existante se traduise dans les faits)...* »

L'ICOMOS considère que les principales menaces pesant sur le bien sont un mélange de tourisme non planifié, d'accès des véhicules non maîtrisé, de surpâturage et d'exploitation minière dans des zones non protégées.

## 5 Protection, conservation et gestion

### Délimitations du bien proposé pour inscription et de la zone tampon

La délimitation actuelle ne suit pas les contours et éléments naturels, étant matérialisée par des lignes droites. L'ICOMOS considère qu'une réflexion approfondie devrait être engagée pour modifier ces délimitations et ainsi prendre en compte des éléments reconnaissables. La même situation prévaut pour la définition de la zone tampon.

Le périmètre de la zone tampon n'est pas non plus expliqué clairement dans la mesure où il jouxte la délimitation du bien en plusieurs endroits. La logique de délimitation de la zone tampon doit être mieux justifiée.

Des décalages entre les délimitations apparaissent également sur les diverses cartes communiquées avec le dossier de proposition d'inscription.

L'ICOMOS considère que les délimitations du bien proposé pour inscription et de sa zone tampon doivent être redessinées pour mettre en évidence les éléments naturels reconnaissables ; et que la logique du champ de la zone tampon doit être clairement définie.

### Droit de propriété

Toutes les terres en Mongolie sont actuellement propriété de l'État.

### Protection

Le bien n'est pas intégralement protégé actuellement par la réglementation : bien que la majeure partie de la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun soit située sur le territoire de la zone spéciale de protection de Khan Kentii (KK SPA), une petite zone située au nord-ouest et une beaucoup plus grande au sud sont situées à l'extérieur de cette zone protégée.

Même si la KK SPA offre une protection légale, on notera que cette protection concerne plus la nature et l'environnement que la protection du patrimoine culturel.

La zone tampon fait partie de la zone tampon de la KK SPA. Actuellement, les attributs culturels de la zone tampon du bien ne sont pas protégés et aucune réglementation n'est applicable s'agissant de l'occupation des sols ou de nouvelles constructions.

Il est prévu d'inclure l'ensemble du bien et de sa zone tampon dans le territoire de la KK SPA en 2015.

Depuis 1990 et le renouveau de pratiques mongoles anciennes liées aux montagnes sacrées, les traditions et coutumes nationales de protection de la nature en Mongolie et les lois associées au « Khalkh Juram » ont été relancées et sont maintenant intégrées dans la politique d'État.

Le 16 mai 1995, le premier président de la Mongolie a publié un nouveau décret « *Soutenir les initiatives visant à rétablir la tradition du culte des montagnes Bogd Khan Khaikhan, Burkhan Khaldun (Khan Khentii) et Otgontenger* ». Le décret a prononcé le soutien de l'État en faveur d'initiatives visant à rétablir le culte des montagnes tel que décrit dans le document mongol réglementaire originel et tel qu'« énoncé par le décret officiel ».

Ces traditions ont été adaptées pour refléter les conditions actuelles et, depuis 1995, les montagnes Otgontenger, Burkhan Khaldun et Bogdkhan sont vénérées en tant que montagnes sacrées d'État.

L'ICOMOS considère que la protection légale en place pour les aspects culturels du paysage n'est pas encore appropriée et doit être renforcée ; et qu'une protection spécifique pour la zone tampon doit être définie.

### Conservation

Sur la montagne Burkhan Khaldun, les ovoos et lieux associés aux rituels sacrés sont entretenus par les pèlerins. Il ne semble pas y avoir de gestion des sentiers mise en place pour combattre l'érosion.

Des contrôles du transport motorisé sont néanmoins en place, mais ces mesures devraient être renforcées pour mieux aménager le stationnement des voitures et les aires de détente pour les visiteurs.

Le décret du président sur la « réglementation des cérémonies de culte et d'offrandes liées aux montagnes

sacrées d'État et aux ovoos » fournit les instruments légaux qui permettent l'organisation des visites pendant les grandes cérémonies culturelles d'État.

Toute activité autre que les rituels culturels est traditionnellement interdite sur la montagne Burkhan Khaldun elle-même. Le personnel de la réserve KK SPA assure néanmoins la lutte anti-incendie, la protection et l'entretien forestiers et la rénovation, et lutte contre la chasse et les coupes de bois illégales.

Les activités de conservation menées sur les sites archéologiques sont rares.

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L'ICOMOS considère que les activités de conservation sont rudimentaires et que des mesures plus préventives et affirmées doivent être prises en s'appuyant sur une évaluation plus large des besoins et des priorités.

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## Gestion

Structures et processus de gestion, y compris les processus de gestion traditionnels

Au niveau national, la gestion du site est placée sous la responsabilité du ministère de la Nature, de l'Environnement et du Développement vert, et du ministère de la Culture, des Sports et du Tourisme.

L'ICOMOS note qu'au niveau local, même si le dossier de proposition d'inscription indique qu'une administration pour la protection du bien du patrimoine mondial responsable de la protection et de la conservation naturelle et culturelle du bien doit être mise en place, aucune échéance n'a été communiquée à cet égard.

La protection traditionnelle est assurée grâce à la longue tradition de culte de la nature et des sites sacrés. Il est par exemple interdit de perturber la terre, les eaux, les arbres et toutes les plantes, les animaux et les oiseaux présents dans les sites sacrés, ou de chasser et de couper du bois à des fins commerciales.

Cadre de référence : plans et mesures de gestion, y compris la gestion des visiteurs et la présentation

Un avant-projet de plan de gestion a été soumis dans le dossier de proposition d'inscription. Il couvrira la période 2015-2025 et vise le patrimoine culturel et naturel. Il comprend un plan à long terme (2015-2025) et un plan à moyen terme (2015-2020).

La version du plan de gestion soumise était une version initiale qui n'avait pas encore été approuvée ou mise en œuvre. La nature du texte est plus ou moins provisoire. Il est indiqué que l'intention est d'établir une nouvelle administration gestionnaire pour la protection et la gestion du bien dans son ensemble et de finaliser et mettre en œuvre le plan de gestion intégré. Avant finalisation et adoption, l'ICOMOS considère qu'un travail supplémentaire doit être entrepris pour étoffer le

plan, qui pourra ainsi offrir un cadre approprié pour la gestion du bien.

L'ICOMOS note que la date à laquelle ce nouveau système prendra effet est incertaine. De plus, le financement nécessaire reste à mettre en place par les organisations des parties prenantes. Néanmoins, il est reconnu que cela sera probablement insuffisant et qu'un soutien supplémentaire des organisations donatrices et caritatives internationales sera nécessaire.

Il apparaît dans le même temps que les attributs culturels du bien ne sont pas gérés activement et que les missions ne sont pas définies par des politiques et des stratégies spécifiques.

Bien qu'un plan de gestion existe pour la zone protégée de Khan Khentii, mis en œuvre par l'administration de la zone protégée spéciale de Khan Khentii, ce plan se limite à la conservation de l'environnement naturel.

Les autorités locales au niveau des aimags, des sums et des bags sont responsables de la protection locale. Bien que l'administration des sums compte en son sein des personnes responsables de la protection de l'environnement, il semble qu'aucune disposition formelle n'existe s'agissant des missions relatives au patrimoine culturel.

Globalement, le régime de gestion actuel n'offre pas encore une gestion efficace de la zone proposée pour inscription ou de sa zone tampon en matière de protection de ses attributs culturels.

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L'ICOMOS considère que la structure de gestion actuelle est inappropriée ; il est nécessaire d'établir la nouvelle administration de gestion proposée et d'étoffer, finaliser et mettre en œuvre l'avant-projet de plan de gestion dès que possible.

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## 6 Suivi

L'ICOMOS comprend qu'à l'heure actuelle la reconnaissance archéologique du territoire du bien est toujours en cours. Les données concernant les sites sacrés et archéologiques sont par conséquent incomplètes ou inappropriées pour servir de base au suivi.

On constate en général un manque de recherches en archéologie, ethnographie, sur le folklore local et les traditions orales, ainsi qu'en géologie, botanique et zoologie. Une documentation existe sous la forme d'un recensement schématique (qui identifie des groupes génériques de sites plutôt que des sites individuels), mais il n'y a pas de cartes détaillées qui pourraient apporter une meilleure compréhension du bien et de son évolution à travers l'histoire. Ce manque est reconnu dans les programmes nationaux et dans le plan de gestion.

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L'ICOMOS considère qu'une base de données appropriée doit être établie pour étayer le suivi.

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## 7 Conclusions

La montagne sacrée de Burkhan Khaldun et ses associations avec Gengis Khan constituent l'élément central de ce dossier de proposition d'inscription. La localisation précise de la montagne censée être le lieu de sépulture de Gengis Khan, et que ce dernier a établie comme centre du culte des montagnes, fait toujours l'objet de conjectures parmi les chercheurs, mais il ne fait aucun doute que cette montagne est située au sein de la chaîne des monts du Khan Khentii. Les éléments mis en avant dans le dossier de proposition d'inscription en faveur du Burkhan Khaldun, qui ont partie liée avec les chemins de pèlerinage, les ovoos et les références de textes anciens, bien que n'étant pas des preuves concluantes, montrent que dans l'état actuel des connaissances la montagne est le lieu le plus probable. Dans la mesure où d'autres éléments pourraient n'émerger qu'à long terme, l'ICOMOS considère que la localisation actuelle de la montagne sacrée devrait être acceptée.

Toutefois, les délimitations de la montagne devraient être établies de manière plus satisfaisante par rapport aux éléments naturels, et les incohérences entre diverses cartes devraient être résolues.

Les liens entre le caractère sacré de la montagne et sa nature vierge sont forts. La tradition du culte des montagnes initiée par Gengis Khan reflétait une fusion du chamanisme, enraciné dans l'ancienne tradition de pratique d'un culte de la nature des populations nomades, et du bouddhisme originaire du Tibet.

L'idée du dossier de proposition d'inscription selon laquelle la nature que connut Gengis Khan et qui est décrite dans *l'Histoire secrète des Mongols* subsiste encore aujourd'hui est difficile à justifier ; ce qui est important est l'association sacrée de la nature, en grande partie inexploitée par les habitants. Maintenir ce lien face à la croissance du tourisme sera crucial.

Actuellement, la protection et la gestion du bien ne sont pas encore appropriées pour répondre à ces défis. Le bien dans son ensemble nécessite une protection légale, la protection offerte par la zone tampon doit être clairement définie, et une gestion active des attributs culturels doit être mise en place sur la base d'un plan de gestion approuvé, fondé sur une version étoffée de l'avant-projet actuel.

## 8 Recommandations

### Recommandations concernant l'inscription

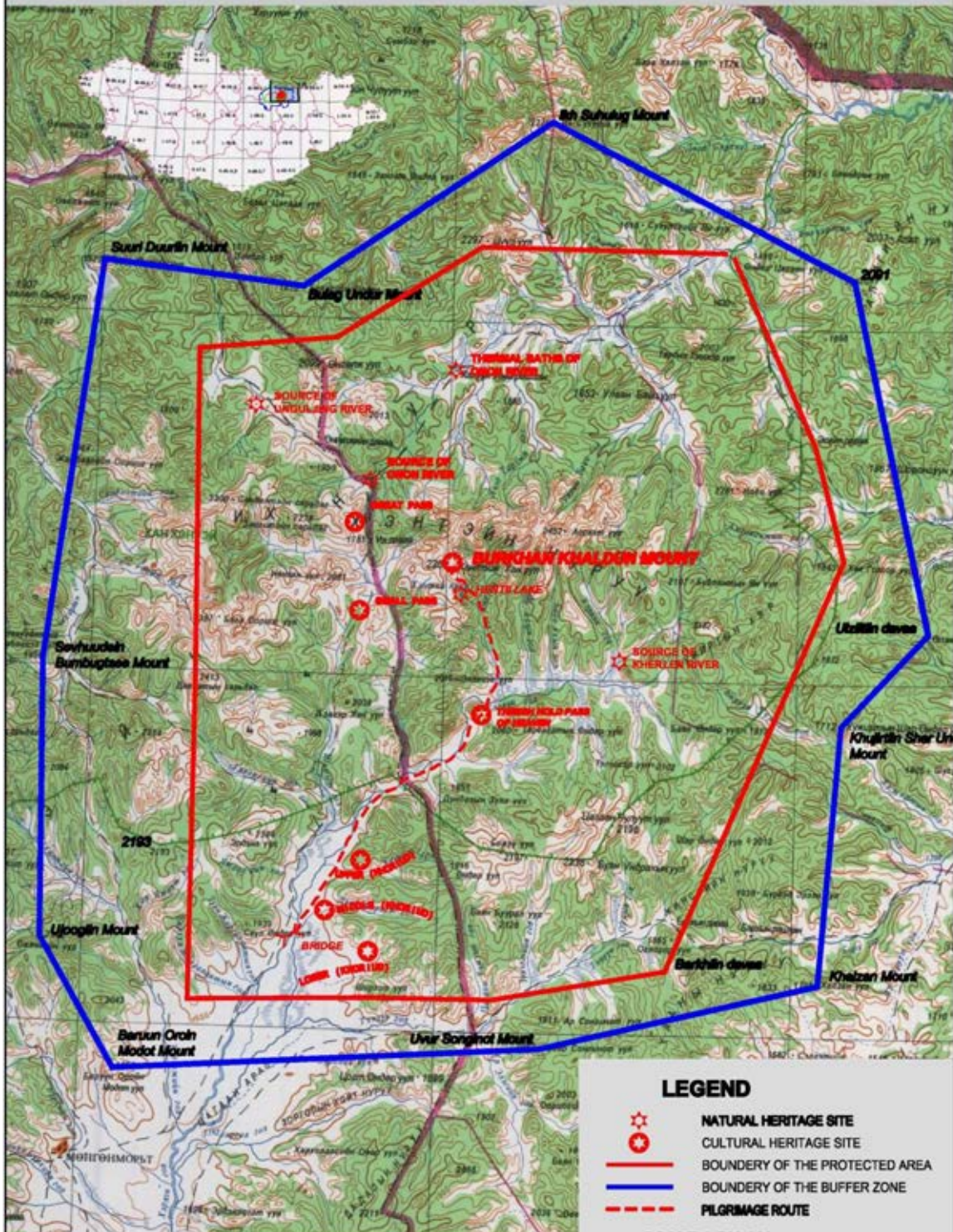
L'ICOMOS recommande que la proposition d'inscription de la grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun et son paysage sacré environnant, Mongolie, soit **renvoyée** à l'État partie afin de lui permettre de :

- mettre en place une protection légale pour la zone proposée pour inscription qui couvre aussi bien les attributs culturels que naturels ;
- définir clairement la protection offerte par la zone tampon ;
- redéfinir les délimitations du bien et de la zone tampon pour les relier aux attributs physiques ;
- confirmer qu'aucune exploitation minière ou industrie extractive ne sera autorisée au sein du bien proposé pour inscription ;
- mettre en place une structure de gestion globale avec des ressources pour mettre en œuvre un plan de gestion étoffé et approuvé ;
- élaborer et mettre en œuvre un programme de conservation comprenant des mesures préventives et actives, sur la base d'une large évaluation des besoins et des priorités.

L'ICOMOS serait prêt et disposé à offrir ses conseils sur ces aspects dans le cadre des processus en amont.



# I. BUFFER ZONE OF THE PROPERTY: GREAT BURKHAN KHALDUN MOUNTAIN AND ITS SURROUNDING SACRED LANDSCAPE



Plan révisé indiquant les délimitations du bien proposé pour inscription



La grande montagne Burkhan Khaldun



« Ovoo du ciel » au sommet de la montagne sacrée



Chamanisme et site sacré



Décor d'intérieur du Temple Principal

## WORLD HERITAGE NOMINATION – IUCN COMMENTS TO ICOMOS

### GREAT BURKHAN KHALDUN MOUNTAIN AND ITS SURROUNDING SACRED LANDSCAPE (MONGOLIA)

IUCN considered this cultural landscape nomination based on 2 desk reviews, and also joined the ICOMOS field evaluation mission in view of the significance of the natural values noted in the nomination document.

The below comments are made on the original submitted nomination, and do not take into account any revisions that may be discussed between the State Party and ICOMOS, noting that in this case IUCN understands that there may be changes proposed to the boundaries of the property following the advice of ICOMOS.

The property is nominated under criteria (iii), (iv), (v) and (vi). IUCN notes that ICOMOS will assess the global significance of that interaction in relation to the cultural criteria under which the property is nominated.

The nomination (subject to any amendments that may be made after the ICOMOS First Panel Meeting) proposes a serial site of three components, each with a buffer zone. The total size of the nominated area is 504,833 ha and the buffer zones (which are all contiguous) total 450,384 ha.

The IUCN field evaluator confirms significant natural values are present in all three components, and that these are all related to cultural use. The extent and nature of those natural values is different in each component, but each component does contain notable natural values, which appear significant at national, and possibly regional, levels. The cultural use appears to be sustainable.

The IUCN field evaluator also indicates that there are evident sacred natural sites in all components that appear to be authentic. The mission expert did not note any significant community or rights concerns.

Concerns identified from IUCN's consideration of the nomination include potential risks from tourism (low intensity at the moment, so low risk if well managed), mining (which would be addressed only provided extant mining regulations are enacted), and the involvement and impacts of the nomination relative to local people and nomadic peoples, including the explicit need to define and monitor intended outcomes for local communities.

IUCN questions the suggested configuration in relation to the boundaries of Khan Kentee Strict Protected Area (KKSPA), and other protected areas. Based on an analysis of the dossier, IUCN notes that:

- a) The largest component of the nominated property and its buffer zone are partly inside KKSPA, but partly only included in its buffer zone;

- b) The Bereeven Monastery and its buffer zone appear to be inside only the buffer zone of KKSPA. Part of this component is covered by the Khangal Nuur category III Protected Area, according to the IUCN/UNEP-WCMC World Database on Protected Areas (WDPA), this protection is not mentioned in the nomination;

- c) Sacred Binder Mountain is not protected according to the nomination (the nomination suggests it may in future be included in the buffer zone of KKSPA), though according to the WDPA it is partly covered by a category III Protected Area (Binderya Khan Mountain).

Thus the boundaries proposed appear to not be logically defined, adding complexity to management within the existing protected areas.

It is stated that there is additional protective legislation in addition to the SPA but the details are not provided in the dossier. Thus protection as set out in the nomination does not appear to be in place.

Management in areas outside of KKSPA is not documented for one component (Binder Mountain). In the parts of the site covered by the buffer zone of KKSPA the management plan extracts listed in Annex V of the nomination appear to be (a) very short and not specific, (b) not indicating significant protection and conservation measures and (c) encouraging of economic uses without any clear identification of limits to such activities. Management therefore also appears to be inadequate in most of the nominated area.

#### Recommendations to ICOMOS

IUCN recommends that ICOMOS consider the following issues with the State Party:

- a) Boundaries: ICOMOS should request SP to ensure the adequate alignment of the application of the various legislative provisions on the property in its World Heritage context, to ensure that all areas that might be inscribed are adequately protected.
- b) Management: There is a need to ensure that adequate management is present throughout all of the area of property that might be inscribed. Some areas at present do not appear to be within any effective management regime.



- c) Mining: Potential threats from mining, which are not prevented in most of the property outside of the area in KKSPA. ICOMOS should confirm that no mining or extractive industry will be permitted within the nominated property.
- d) Tourism: Potential threats from tourism, which is encouraged without indicated limits in much of the nominated areas, according to the management plan excerpts for the KKSPA buffer zone. ICOMOS should confirm that current and proposed tourism activities will not impact negatively on sacred sites, natural values or the livelihoods of local people and nomadic people. ICOMOS should be satisfied that planning and capacity is in place and will be sustained to

develop tourism in a way that is appropriate to both the conservation of the property, and the impacts (positive and negative) on local people and nomadic people.

- e) Definition of outcomes and monitoring of impact for local people and nomadic people: IUCN recommends that ICOMOS should seek information regarding the impacts of the nomination relative to local people and nomadic peoples, including the explicit need to define and monitor intended outcomes for local communities.

IUCN would be willing to participate with ICOMOS in further discussions with the State Party on the nomination.

## CANDIDATURE AU PATRIMOINE MONDIAL – COMMENTAIRES DE L’UICN À L’ICOMOS

### PAYSAGE SACRÉ DE LA GRANDE MONTAGNE BURKHAN KHALDUN ET SES ENVIRONS (MONGOLIE)

L’UICN a examiné cette proposition de paysage culturel sur la base de deux études théoriques et a rejoint l’ICOMOS lors d’une mission d’évaluation sur place compte tenu de l’importance des valeurs naturelles mentionnées dans le dossier de la proposition.

Les commentaires qui suivent concernent la proposition soumise à l’origine et ne tiennent pas compte de révisions qui pourraient être discutées entre l’État partie et l’ICOMOS, sachant que, dans ce cas, il pourrait y avoir des changements proposés aux limites du bien, selon l’avis de l’ICOMOS.

Le bien est proposé au titre des critères (iii), (iv), (v) et (vi). L’UICN note que l’ICOMOS évaluera l’importance mondiale de cette interaction en fonction des critères culturels au titre desquels le bien est proposé.

La proposition (sous réserve de tout amendement qui pourrait être apporté après la première réunion des experts de l’ICOMOS) concerne un bien en série composé de trois éléments ayant chacun sa zone tampon. Le bien proposé a une superficie totale de 504 833 ha et les zones tampons (qui sont toutes contiguës) couvrent 450 384 ha.

L’évaluateur de l’UICN sur le terrain confirme que des valeurs naturelles importantes sont présentes dans les trois éléments et sont liées à l’utilisation culturelle. L’étendue et la nature de ces valeurs naturelles sont différentes dans chaque élément mais chacun contient des valeurs naturelles remarquables qui semblent importantes aux niveaux national et peut-être régional. L’utilisation culturelle semble être durable.

L’évaluateur de l’UICN sur le terrain indique également que, dans tous les éléments, il y a des sites naturels sacrés évidents qui semblent être authentiques. L’expert de la mission n’a pas noté d’importantes préoccupations communautaires ou relatives aux droits.

À l’issue de l’examen de la proposition, l’UICN soulève quelques préoccupations, notamment les risques potentiels du tourisme (faible intensité pour le moment de sorte que le faible risque est bien géré) et des mines (qui seraient traités uniquement si les règlements miniers existants entrent en vigueur), et les impacts du bien proposé relatifs à la population locale et aux peuples nomades ainsi que leur participation, y compris la nécessité explicite de définir et de surveiller les résultats attendus pour les communautés locales.

L’UICN s’interroge sur la configuration suggérée des limites de l’Aire protégée intégrale Khan Kentee (APIKK) et d’autres aires protégées. D’après l’analyse du dossier, l’UICN fait observer les points suivants :

- a) Le plus grand élément du bien proposé et sa zone tampon sont partiellement situés à l’intérieur de l’APIKK mais partiellement seulement inclus dans sa zone tampon.
- b) Le Monastère de Bereeven et sa zone tampon semblent être à l’intérieur uniquement de la zone tampon de l’APIKK. Une partie de cet élément est couvert par l’Aire protégée de catégorie III de Khangal Nuur selon la Base de données sur les aires protégées UICN/PNUE-WCMC (WDPA) ; cette protection n’est pas mentionnée dans la proposition.
- c) La Montagne sacrée de Binder n’est pas protégée selon la proposition (la proposition suggère qu’elle pourrait, à l’avenir, être incluse dans la zone tampon de l’APIKK) alors que, selon la WDPA, elle est partiellement couverte par une Aire protégée de catégorie III (Montagne Binderya Khan).

En conséquence, les limites proposées ne semblent pas être logiquement définies, ce qui ajoute de la complexité à la gestion à l’intérieur des aires protégées existantes.

Le dossier indique qu’il existe une législation de protection additionnelle à celle de l’APIKK mais n’en donne pas les détails. Ainsi, la protection telle qu’elle est décrite dans le dossier de la proposition ne semble pas être effective.

La gestion, dans les régions qui se trouvent à l’extérieur de l’APIKK, n’est pas documentée pour l’un des éléments (la montagne de Binder). Dans les parties du site couvertes par la zone tampon de l’APIKK, les extraits du plan de gestion figurant dans l’Annexe V du dossier de la proposition semblent être a) très brefs et imprécis, b) ne pas indiquer de protection importante et de mesures de conservation et c) encourager les utilisations économiques sans identifier clairement les limites de ces activités. Il s’ensuit que la gestion semble aussi être inadéquate dans la majeure partie du bien proposé.

## Recommandations à l'ICOMOS

L'UICN recommande que l'ICOMOS examine les points suivants avec l'État partie :

- a) Limites : L'ICOMOS devrait demander à l'État partie de garantir l'application harmonisée adéquate des diverses dispositions législatives concernant le bien dans le contexte du patrimoine mondial pour faire en sorte que toutes les régions pouvant être inscrites soient correctement protégées.
- b) Gestion : Il est nécessaire de mettre en place une gestion adéquate dans l'ensemble du bien qui pourrait être inscrit. Certaines zones ne semblent pas, actuellement, bénéficier d'un quelconque régime de gestion efficace.
- c) Exploitation minière : Les menaces potentielles de l'exploitation minière qui ne font l'objet d'aucune mesure de prévention dans la majeure partie du bien à l'exception de la zone de l'APIKK. L'ICOMOS devrait confirmer qu'aucune industrie minière ou extractive n'aura d'autorisation d'exploitation à l'intérieur du bien proposé.
- d) Tourisme : Menaces potentielles du tourisme qui est encouragé, sans limites indiquées, dans la majeure partie du bien proposé, selon les extraits du plan de gestion de la zone tampon de l'APIKK.

L'ICOMOS devrait confirmer que les activités touristiques actuelles et proposées n'auront pas d'impacts négatifs sur les sites sacrés, les valeurs naturelles ou les moyens d'existence des populations locales et des peuples nomades. L'ICOMOS devrait s'assurer que la planification et la capacité sont en place et seront maintenues afin que le tourisme se développe de manière appropriée aussi bien du point de vue de la conservation du bien que des impacts (positifs et négatifs) sur les populations locales et les peuples nomades.

- e) Définition des résultats et du suivi des impacts pour les populations locales et les peuples nomades : L'UICN recommande que l'ICOMOS s'informe sur les impacts de la proposition pour les populations locales et les peuples nomades, y compris sur la nécessité explicite de définir et surveiller les résultats prévus pour les communautés locales.

L'UICN serait prête à participer, avec l'ICOMOS, à d'autres discussions avec l'État partie concernant la proposition.