

REMINISCENCES OF OLD MONGOLIAN MONKS
INTERVIEWS ABOUT MONGOLIA'S BUDDHIST MONASTERIES IN
THE EARLY 20TH CENTURY

CONDUCTED BY KRISZTINA TELEKI

BUDAPEST MONOGRAPHS IN EAST ASIAN STUDIES

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INSTITUTE OF EAST ASIAN STUDIES, EÖTVÖS LORÁND UNIVERSITY
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*In memory of Mongolian monks living in the first decades
of the 20th century.*

*With deep gratitude to the monks who
shared their memories with us and
to their disciples and family members
who assisted in the interviews.*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
PRELIMINARIES	10
INTERVIEWS	27
<i>ULAANBAATAR</i>	29
Shagdar Bagaajav Urga	31
Puntsagdulam	
Luvsandanзан Urga	51
Nyam Dashtseren Urga	57
Darjaa Gonchig Dundgovi province, Mengetiin Khiid & Urga.....	67
Samdag Gonchig Zavkhan province, Tegshiin Khüree & Urga	79
Mijid Lkhamсүren Төв province, Daachingiin Jas, Tsagaan Tolgoin Jas & Urga	113
<i>CENTRAL MONGOLIA</i>	129
Tsend Tserenpuntsag Төв province, Bayanbaraatiin Khiid, Manzshir Khiid & Urga	131
Gongor Khengereg Төв province, Bambar Erdene Lamiin Khiid	147
Төмөр Davaakhüü Selenge province, Amarbayasgalant Khiid	149
Jamts Jamsran Төв province, Зүүн Khüree.....	153
Khand Bazar Dundgovi province, Beliin Jas, Naran Khögtstiin Zodiin Khural	157
Uush Choijamts Dundgovi province, Ganjuuriin Jas	163
Sosor Dagva Dundgovi province, Mökhiin Khiid, Delgeriin Choir & Urga	171

CONTENTS

Doorov Dashdavaa	Dundgovi province, Taliin Khiid	187
Banzar Shiiravnamjil	Dundgovi province, Baruun Choiriin Khiid .	193
Tseyenkhüü Dashdorj	Dundgovi province, Khutagt Lamiin Khiid..	197
<i>KHANGAI REGION</i>		209
Biziyaa Dashzeveg	Khövsgöl province, Bügsiin Khüree.....	211
Jantsan Dovdon	Övörkhangaï province, Baruun Khüree	219
Nyam Osor	Övörkhangaï province, Baruun Khüree	233
Sodnomjamts Norjmaa	Övörkhangaï province, Yesön Züiliin Khüree	241
Mönkhnyam Menddavaa	Övörkhangaï province, Sain Noyonii Khüree	247
Regden Perenleijamts	Arkhangai province, Luu Güniï Khüree	253
Shijir Tügj	Arkhangai province, Ööld Beisiin Khüree ..	265
Sengee Tüdev	Arkhangai province, Zayaiin Khüree	273
<i>WESTERN MONGOLIA</i>		315
Dulam Dashrentsen	Zavkhan province, Yaruugiin Khüree	317
Choijal Renchinsüren	Zavkhan province, Duutiin Khüree	325
Gombo Galsan	Govi-Altai province, Usan Züiliin Khüree ..	333
Shüljin Sodnomtseren	Khovd province, Delgerekhiin Khiid	345
Tsegmid Luvsan	Khovd province, Shar Süm & Urga	361
Lochin Ishjamts	Khovd province, Ööldiin Khüree	367
<i>EASTERN MONGOLIA</i>		371
Lünden Gendenjamts	Khentii province, Buyantiin Khiid, Galshariin Khiid	373
Choirov Dondov	Sükhbaatar province, Dalai Vangiin Khüree..	379

CONTENTS

<i>INNER MONGOLIA</i>	387
Jantsan Sharav Shiliin Gol province, Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Gegeenii Khiid	389
Garjid Divaasambuu Shiliin Gol province, Khuuchid Khambiin Khiid, Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Gegeenii Khiid & Sükhbaatar province (Khuuchid) Khambiin Süm	393
BIBLIOGRAPHY	401
GLOSSARY	403

INTRODUCTION

The Mongols believe that Buddhism spread to the Mongolian lands in three waves. The teachings of Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), founder of the Tibetan Gelugpa tradition or “Yellow Stream” spread throughout the Mongolian areas during the last of these conversions in the 16–17th centuries. Up until the beginning of the 20th century, several monasteries, temples, and small assemblies came into existence as settlements among the nomadizing yurts, functioning as educational and cultural centers. In almost every family there was one boy who would become a monk. However, due to soviet ideologies, all of the approximately 1,000 monastic sites in Mongolia were demolished during the 1930s era of persecution. High-ranking monks were executed (17,000 monks according to national memory), younger monks were disrobed and enrolled in the army or in school, resulting in the total cessation of Buddhist practices. An exception was Gandantegchenlin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, which reopened in 1944 and functioned as the only Buddhist monastery until the democratic changes in 1990 when freedom of religious practices returned again. Old ex monks became monks once more and actively participated in the revival of the old Buddhist tradition: they rebuilt temples, started to hold services, and educated a new generation of monks.

Although archival sources,¹ old photographs,² travellers’ descriptions, and oral narratives³ about a few ruined monasteries have survived, the history, monastic life, and ceremonial system of the majority of the old monasteries are unknown today. Therefore, the oral narratives of old monks who lived in

¹ National Archives of Mongolia, Document Collection of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Institute of History, Archives of the General Intelligence Agency.

² Archives for Cinema, Photography and Sound Recording, Photo Collection of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

³ Damdinsüren, Ts. (ed.), *Övgön Jambaliin yaria*. Ulaanbaatar 1959; Bawden, C. R. (ed.), *Tales of an Old Lama*. Translated with notes by Bawden, C. R. The Institute of Buddhist Studies [Buddhica Britannica Series Continua VIII] Tring, U.K. 1997; Lkham, P. – Yeröolt, J., *Mongoliin burkhanii shashnii aman tüükh*. Ulaanbaatar 2010; Yeröolt, J., *Mongoliin burkhanii shashnii aman tüükh* II. Ulaanbaatar 2012; Yeröolt, J., *Mongoliin burkhanii shashnii aman tüükh* III. Ulaanbaatar 2014; [www.mongoliantemples.org](http://amantuuh.socanth.cam.ac.uk/); <http://amantuuh.socanth.cam.ac.uk/>.

monastic communities until 1937 have historical significance. Such monks were alive in large numbers in 1989–1990 when Buddhism was revived in Mongolia, but as time has passed their numbers have grown small.

Research Methods

This book contains 47 interviews conducted with 34 Mongolian men born between 1900 and 1930, and who were Buddhist monks prior to 1937.

We started to record interviews with these old Mongolian monks in cooperation with my Hungarian colleague, Tibetologist and Mongolist Zsuzsa Majer in spring 2006, and continued them within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in 2007⁴ and during the *Monaco–Mongolian Joint Archaeological Expedition* in 2009. The original 80 interviews, which involved 40 monks from 40 monasteries, are under publication in the Mongolian language.⁵

Separate to this cooperative work, I also conducted interviews myself. These are under publication in Mongolian,⁶ and the present volume contains their English translation, arranged by Mongolian regions starting at the capital city and the central area to the west, then turning to the east and ending in Inner Mongolia. (These regions are simply geographical divisions; Buddhist practices and monastic activities cannot be distinguished by regions.)

Regarding these interviews, I re-interviewed some monks who had previously been interviewed in order to ask for more details, and also met other monks to reveal the history of other old monasteries. After returning from fieldwork in the countryside for the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in 2007, I conducted five interviews in Ulaanbaatar, seven interviews in September 2009, and 24 interviews in 2010, doing so in three phases: 1. when following the footprints of the Russian scholar, A. M. Pozdneev, who researched monasteries thorough Mongolia from 1892–1893

⁴ www.mongoliantemples.org; Tsedendamba, Kh. – Lkhagva, L. – Soninbayar, Sh. – Luvsanbaldan, E. – Otgonbaatar, R. – Amgalan, N., *Mongoliin süm khiidiin tүүkhөн товчоон*. Ulaanbaatar 2009; Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., On the Current Condition of 190 Old and Present-Day Monastic Sites in the Mongolian Countryside. *Zentralasiatische Studien* 39 (2010), pp. 93–140.

⁵ Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., *Öndör nаstаn lаm nаriin yаriа. XX зуunii ekhen üyеiin khüree khiidүүdiin talaar avsan yarianuud I (2006–2009)*. Ulaanbaatar 2021.

⁶ Teleki, K., *Öndör nаstаn lаm nаriin yаriа. XX зуunii ekhen üyеiin khüree khiidүүdiin talaar avsan yarianuud II (2007–2017)*. Ulaanbaatar 2021.

(project supported by the Stein-Arnold Exploration Fund of the British Academy, SA100018), 2. re-interviewing some monks in detail about the old Mongolian monastic capital city, Urga, 3. assisting the survey of Claire A. Whitaker, exchange student with Students of International Training Program from Saint Michael's College, Vermont, USA, who conducted research on *Mongolian Buddhism during Socialism* (two interviews are included here in parts: S. Gonchig, Sh. Tüjg). I recorded another 9 interviews in 2011, one in 2012, and one in 2017.

Many of the old monks living in Ulaanbaatar belonged once to Urga (known and referred to as Ikh Khüree, Da Khüree or Bogdiin Khüree, the central monastery or monastic capital city of Mongolia. Also, a considerable number of old (ex) monks from all provinces have followed their children and moved to the capital city or provincial centers, especially those from Central Mongolia. A summary of the majority of the interviews on Urga,⁷ Övörkhangai,⁸ Dundgovi, and Töv provinces is available on the website of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in English, and the parts or summary of some interviews mostly recorded in 2010 are mentioned in a publication,⁹ whilst the content of the interviews regarding Zayaiin Khüree in Arkhangai province has been published in English.¹⁰

⁷ Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., *Monasteries and Temples of Bogdiin khüree, Ikh khüree, or Urga, the Capital City of Mongolia in the First Part of the Twentieth Century*. Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries Project, 2006 <http://www.mongoliantemples.org/index.php/en/2014-07-01-06-34-46/2014-07-01-06-44-08/old-monastries>; Teleki, K., *Monasteries and Temples of Bogdiin Khüree*. Institute of History. Mongolian Academy of Sciences, Ulaanbaatar 2012; Teleki, K., *Introduction to the Study of Urga's Heritage*. Institute of History and Archaeology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences – International Association for Mongol Studies, Ulaanbaatar 2015.

⁸ Teleki, K., *Sain noyon xan kolostorvárosa. Távol-keleti Tanulmányok*, Budapest 2017, 2016/1, pp. 131–162.

⁹ Teleki, K., *On the Route of A. M. Pozdneev: Documentation of the Monasteries visited by the Russian Scholar in the Current Area of Mongolia in 1892–1893*. Eötvös Loránd University, Department of Mongolian and Inner Asian Studies, Budapest 2021 (under publication).

¹⁰ Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., *History of Zaya Gegeenii Khüree, the Monastery of the Khalkha Zaya Pandita*. Ulaanbaatar 2013; Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., *Reminiscences of S. Tüdev, Monk of Zayayn Khüree*. In: Charleux, Isabelle (ed.): *Zaya Gegeenii Khüree: History, Architecture and Restoration of a Monastery in Mongolia*. Bulletin du Musée d'Anthropologie Préhistorique de Monaco, 5. Monaco 2016, pp. 99–106.

Informants¹¹

The majority of the informants were born in the 1910s and 1920s, and received ordination at the age of 5–7. They lived in monasteries until the era of persecution, when most of them disrobed and joined the army (by force). During the religious revival of the 1990s, they became monks again and actively participated in the revival of the Buddhist tradition. Interviewees were over 80 years old at the time of the interviews. They willingly shared their memories of the monasteries where they spent their childhood, and provided many details, including amongst others the name of the monastery, its location based on the old and current territorial division systems, the names, numbers and building material of its temples and monastic schools, the handbook used in the monastic philosophy school, *stūpas*, prayer wheels, mountains with veneration, nearby rivers and springs, the protector deity and the main objects of worship of the monastery, the number of monks, the famous reincarnations and other ranking monks of the monastery, monastic ranks, practitioners of *Chō* tantric practices (*zod*, Tib. *gcod*) wandering in that area, the Maitreya procession, the *Tsam* (Tib. ‘*cham*) masked dance¹² and other annual feast days, details on lay populations and Chinese people’s activities living nearby, the closure of the monastery, names of monks who participated in the revival and those who were still alive at the time of the interviews. Questions related to the events of the persecution were omitted in the fear of causing difficult memories, although some monks recounted such stories.

In the present book, additional interviews have been included about Uрга and the monasteries of Deren district, Dundgovi province and these also offer opportunities for comparisons. Moreover, two Inner Mongolian monks, G. Divaasambuу *tsorj* and J. Sharav told stories about their monasteries in China. In addition to describing their parent monasteries, some monks mentioned other nearby monasteries or assemblies.

Finding old (ex) monks in Ulaanbaatar who had not become affiliated to a monastery was difficult at the time of the survey: while some simply did

¹¹ Cf. <http://www.mongoliantemples.org/index.php/en/2014-07-01-06-34-46/2014-07-01-06-44-08/interviews-with-old-monks-06-07>.

¹² Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., *A Cam tánc hagyományának felélesztése Mongóliában. Reviving the Cam Dance Tradition in Mongolia*. Hagymányos Mongol Műveltség II. Traditional Mongolian Culture II. Budapest 2014.

not become monks again, others were unable to join monasteries or participate in ceremonies due to their age or health conditions.

Originally, all interviews were recorded with a voice recorder and a few with a video camera. Interviews with 20 monks who we had interviewed with Zsuzsa Majer and interviews with another 14 monks are included in this volume. At the time of the publication in 2020, only three of them were still living. The following is the list of the 34 informants (specifying their monastic affiliation at the time of the survey, names, dates of the interviews, names and location of their old monasteries):

Gandantegchenlin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar

- G. Divaasambu *tsorj* (2009): Khuuchid Khambiin Khiid, Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Gegeenii Khiid (Inner Mongolia, Shiliin Gol province); (Khuuchid) Khambiin Süm (Sükhbaatar province, Erdenetsagaan district)
- S. Gonchig, disciplinarian of *Dashchoimbel datsan* (2009, 2010, 2011): Tegshiin Khüree Norovligvaalin or Khorol Tsoorjiin Khüree (Zavkhan province, Tsetsen-Uul district); Urga: *Shüteenii aimag, Daschoimbel datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)
- Ts. Luvsan, monk of *Dashchoimbel datsan* (2010): Shar Süm (Khovd province, Khovd city); Urga: *Shüteenii aimag, Dashchoimbel datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)
- L. Ishjamts, chanting master of *Dashchoimbel datsan* (2010): Ööldiin Datsan / Khüree Gandanpuntsaglin (Khovd province, Erdenebüren district)
- M. Menddavaa, monk of Gandantegchenlin Temple (2009): Sain Noyonii Khüree (Övörkhangaï province, Uyanga district)
- Sh. Bagaajav, monk of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* (2011): Urga: *Düin-khor aimag, Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)

Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar

- N. Dashtseren (also *shunlaiv* of Puntsoglin Monastery) (2007, 2011): Urga: *Choinkhorlin aimag, Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*; Jagar Molomiin Khural (Ulaanbaatar)
- Ts. Dashdorj *darkhan chovombo* (2010): Khutagt Lamiin Khiid (Dundgovi province, Saikhan-Ovoo district)
- Ch. Renchinsüren (2010): (Nayan) Duutiin Khüree (Zavkhan province, Tsagaan Khaïrkhan district)
- P. Luvsandan (2009): Urga: *Erkhem toinii aimag, Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)

- M. Lkhamsüren (2009, 2011, 2011): Daachingiin Jas (Töv province, Lün district); Urga: *Zoogoin aimag, Dashchoimbel datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)
- Lamrim Datsan, Ulaanbaatar
- D. Gochig (2009): Mengetiin Khiid (Dundgovi province, Luus district); Urga: *Süngiin aimag, Dashchoimbel datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)
 - Sh. Tügj (2010, 2010): *Ööld beisiin khüree* (Arkhangai province, Ölziit district)
- Dambadarjaa Monastery, Ulaanbaatar
- D. Dashrentsen abbot (2010): Yaruugiin Khüree (Zavkhan province, Aldarkhaan district)
 - G. Galsan (2010): Usan Züiliin Khüree (Govi-Altai province, Tonkhil district)
- Manba Datsan, Ulaanbaatar
- S. Dagva *gergen* (2010, 2011): Mökhiin Khiid (Dundgovi province, Saintsagaan district); Delgeriin Choir (Dundgovi province, Delger-tsogt district); Urga: *Toisamlin aimag, Dashchoimbel datsan* (Ulaanbaatar)
- Gandanshaddüvlin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar
- U. Choijamts abbot (2009): Ganjuuriin Jas (Dundgovi province, Saintsagaan district)
- Namdoldechenlin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar
- Kh. Banzar (2007): Naran Khögtst and Beliin Jas (Dundgovi province, Deren district); Delgeriin Choir (Dundgovi province, Delger-tsogt district)
- Ulaanbaatar without affiliation
- J. Jamsran (2010): Kherlengiin Züün Khüree (Töv province, Möngön-morit district)
 - S. Norjmaa (2007): Baruun Khural or Yargaitiin Süm (Övörkhangaï province, Ölziit district), Yesön Züiliin Khüree (Övörkhangaï province, Yesönzüil district)
 - Sh. Sodnomtseren (2010, 2011): Sustain Khüree or Delgerekhiin Khüree (Khovd province, Darvi district)
 - G. Khengereg (2010): Bambar Erdene Lamiin Khiid (Töv province, Sergelen district)
- Dashchoinkhorlin Monastery, Töv province, Zuunmod city
- Ts. Terenpuntsag abbot (2007, 2010, 2011): Bayanbaraatiin Khural (Töv province, Bayan-Önjüül district); Urga: *Anduu nariin aimag, Gungaachoilin datsan* (Ulaanbaatar); Manzshir Khiid (Töv province, Sergelen district)

- B. Shiiravnamjil (2007): Borjigin Janjnii Baruun Choir or Baruun Choiriin Khiid (Dundgovi province, Gurvansaikhan district)
- Baruun Khüree Monastery, Övörkhangai province, Kharkhorin district
- J. Dovdon (2010): Baruun Khüree Rivogejigandanshaddüvlin (Övörkhangai province, Kharkhorin district)
 - N. Osor (2010): Baruun Khüree Rivogejigandanshaddüvlin (Övörkhangai province, Kharkhorin district)
- Arkhangai province, Erdenebulgan district, Tsetserleg city
- S. Tüdev (2010, 2010, 2011, 2012): Zayaiin Khüree (Arkhangai province, Tsetserleg city)
- Taravchembuulin Monastery, Arkhangai province, Battsengel district
- R. Perenleijamts (2010): Luu Günii Khüree (Arkhangai province, Battsengel district)
- Gundgavarlin Monastery (Khentii province, Chinggis city)
- L. Gendenjamts (2010): Khardaliin Ganjuur Khiid and Gandanshadavdarjaalin Khiid (Khentii province, Galshar district)
- Dundgovi province, Mandalgovi city
- D. Dashdavaa (2010): Taliin Khiid (Dundgovi province, Ölziit district)
- Amarbayasgalant Monastery, Selenge province, Baruunbüren district
- T. Davaakhüü (2010): Amarbayasgalant Khiid (Selenge province, Baruunbüren district)
- Sükhbaatar province, Mönkhkhgaan district
- Ch. Dondov (2010): Dalai Vangiin Dashchoinkhorlin Khüree (Sükhbaatar province, Mönkhkhgaan district)
- Erdenemandal Puntsogchoinkhorlin Monastery, Sükhbaatar province, Baruun-Urt city
- J. Sharav (2010): Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Geegenii Khiid (Inner Mongolia, Shiliin Gol province)
- Möröngiin Khüree Gandandarjailin Monastery, Khentii province, Mörön city
- B. Dashzeveg (2017): Bügsiin Khüree (Khövsgöl province, Tömörbulag district)

Transcription

Some voice recording are unfortunately of a poor quality, and thus their transcribed forms might contain mistakes. The correct spelling of Tibetan words in Mongolian is still evolving and some have their own local specialties, so I have followed the transcription in use at the time of the survey (e.g. *düitsen*) or preserved the form as pronounced by the monks (e.g. *tsog-*

chin–chogchin, tsam–cham, zod–jod, manz–manj, nünnei–nügnée, etc.). A glossary of the main foreign terms is attached to the volume.¹³ The voice recordings are not planned to be published in the near future due to their poor quality.

Acknowledgement

I am grateful to all monks who shared their memories with me as well as their disciples and relatives who assisted with the interviews.

My special thanks goes to Claire A. Whitaker, exchange student with Students of International Training Program from Saint Michael's College, Vermont, USA who kindly permitted the inclusion of two interviews that we recorded together.

I am grateful to Academician S. Chuluun, Director of the Institute of History and Ethnology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences for the possibility of publication of the original Mongolian volume. Also to G. Byambaragchaa, N. Maralma, and M. Enkhbaatar who typed up the interviews in Mongolian, as well as to Ven. M. Iderkhangai and Ven. D. Lkhagvasüren who typed up the interviews having the worst sound quality, and to N. Uugantsetseg and O. Shiiravjamts who also assisted in these tasks. I am thankful to Ven. M. Iderkhangai, Ven. D. Lkhagvasüren, and Ven. M. Nandinbaatar who spent many days with me relistening again and again to those parts of the Mongolian interviews which contained uncertainties. Last but not least I need to mention Tamás Kiss, who accompanied me when recording three interviews in Ulaanbaatar in 2010. My greatest thanks go to Kingsley John Smith and Richard Byrd who proofread parts of the book.

I drew a number of sketches to illustrate the arrangement of temple buildings in monasteries based on the oral communication of the informants and took the majority of the photographs, all of which are included in the book. Some photographs were taken by Zsuzsa Majer and me during earlier research, so my thank goes to Zsuzsa Majer who kindly permitted the use of these photographs. The photographs taken by us within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project, and the ones preserved in the Archives for Cinema, Photography and Sound Recording or published in books are all mentioned with references. I express my gratitude to Susan C. Byrne for her kind permission to use the photographs of the

¹³ <http://www.mongoliantemples.org/index.php/en/2013-12-24-12-39-35>.

Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries project and her constant inspiration to survey Buddhist monasteries.

I am grateful to Professor Ágnes Birtalan, Head of the Department of Mongolian and Inner Asian Studies and the Research Centre for Mongolian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, Hungary for her continual support and useful advice as well as to Professor Imre Hamar, Director of the Institute of East Asian Studies, Eötvös Loránd University, who supported the publication of the present book. I am also grateful to Csaba Fahidi who edited the photographs.

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I preserve the original voice and video records and they are also stored in the Institute of History and Ethnology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences.

PRELIMINARIES

Historical Background

The Mongols have traditionally lived in harmony with nature and environment. Their nomadic lifestyle requires living in a yurt and moving in almost every season to follow the pasture and herd their livestock (horse, cattle / yak, sheep, goat and camel). As the main source of food for the Mongols is dairy products and meat, weather conditions, such as drought and harsh winter conditions, influence the well-being of the livestock and cause serious concerns for these people.

Buddhist monasteries became the (finally) settled centers among this nomadic, yurt based society. During the Manchu overlordship (1691–1911), four Khalkha provinces (*aimag*) came into existence (Tüsheit Khan Province, Sain Noyon Khan Province, Zasagt Khan Province, Setsen Khan Province), with a banner (*khoshuu*) of their leading *khans* as well as other banners that were divided into even smaller territorial divisions (*sum*). This system underwent partial change in 1921, and then completely changed around 1931, when the forerunner of the current province (*aimag*) system came into existence. Currently, Mongolia includes 21 provinces (*aimag*) divided into districts (*sum*). During the Manchu period the Manchu emperors gave titles (*gün, van, beis, beil*) to aristocrats who led the banners, and a Manchu governor (*amban* or *janjin*) resided in Urga, Uliastai, Khovd and Kyakhta / Altanbulag, all of which served as administrative centres in the area of Outer Mongolia. A relay station road system connected these centres and caravans delivered goods. Brick tea was used in payment during the Manchu period, but also coins and the exchange of goods existed.

The Manchu emperors supported the spread of Buddhism and had good relations with the Dalai Lamas and the Panchen Lamas of Tibet. Therefore, the teachings of the Gelug or Yellow Stream spread throughout Mongolia. Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar (1635–1723) had a significant role in the propagation of these teachings, and his reincarnation lineage became known as the lineage of the *Bogd Javzandamba khutagts*. Other saints and reincarnations (*khutagt khuvilgaan*) were also recognized to direct Buddhist monastic life in Mongolia including the 13 saints with seals (*tamgatai khutagt*), the seven saints acknowledged by the *Bogd Javzandamba khutagt*, and many other local reincarnations. Their monasteries had distinctive markings which were renowned in the given banner and province. Most of them possessed sub-

ordinated lands, people (*shavi nar*) and livestock. The *Bogds*' subordinated lands, people and monasteries were called *ikh shavi* ('great disciples').

The monasteries of saints and reincarnations were the most prominent ones. However, essentially, various types of monasteries existed in Mongolia beginning with yurt assemblies (*ger dugan*) and individual temples (*dugan, süm, jas*) and growing in size to small temple complexes (*süm*), isolated monasteries (*khiid*) and even monastic villages or towns (*khüree*). Naturally, the number of monks varied in these differently-sized assemblies. All monasteries faced to the south and the temple buildings were situated in the centre. Only a few monasteries were walled or fenced, but a circumambulation road (*goroo, gorlom*, Tib. *skor lam*) encircled the monasteries, marking their boundary and on which devotees could make prostrations without entering the monastic area. About 1,100 monastic sites existed in 1937 with monks numbering in the hundreds of thousands.

The most extensive *khüree* was Urga (known also as Ikh Khüree, Da Khüree, Bogdiin Khüree), the monastic town of the *Bogd Javzandamba khutagts*, which was founded originally in 1639 as the residence (*örgöö*) of Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar, the first *Bogd Javzandamba khutagt*. Its first assembly hall was built in 1651, and after moving 28 times, Urga established itself in the present Ulaanbaatar basin in 1855. It became the capital city of Mongolia in 1912 (Niislel Khüree) during the theocratic reign (1911–1921) of the Eighth *Bogd Javzandamba khutagt* (1869–1924), also known as the Bogd Khaan. The city was renamed Ulaanbaatar in 1924. Four mountains surround the capital, which had two main monastic parts until 1938: *Gandan* and the Eastern monastic district, *Züün khüree*. They were comprised of many temples and a total of 10 *datsans* (Tib. *grwa tshang*), the majority of which were monastic schools, whilst the others were temples which had a privileged status in the city. The monk population lived in 30 districts (*aimag*) surrounding the temples of *Gandan* and *Züün khüree*. Each *aimags* had a temple building in *Züün khüree*, constructed in a round or square shape. Three such temples have survived destruction and are located inside and outside the walls of the Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery, which has been operating as a revival of *Züün khüree* since 1990. *Gandan* was a place of education having three monastic philosophy schools, as well as a Gradual Path and a Yoga monastic school, whilst in *Züün khüree* the Kālacakra, the tantric, and the medical monastic schools stood in the centre, close to the Yellow Palace of the *Bogd Javzandamba khutagt*, the assembly hall called *Battsagaan* or 'Enormous white', which was originally designed by Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar, the Maitreya Temple and others. Seven *tsorjs* (Tib. *chos rje*) governed the religious issues of Urga: the head abbot (*khamba nomon khan*), the

vice abbot (*ded khamba*) and another five *tsorjs*. The *Bogd Javzandamba khutagts*' other palaces sat on the bank of the River Tuul. A lay population lived in the lay population districts (*khoro*), and a Chinese merchant town (*Maimaachen*, Chin. *Maimai cheng*, and a Russian Consulate also existed. Due to socialist influences, construction of the new Ulaanbaatar started in the 1920s, and the old districts with the temples were finally demolished around 1938. Only a handful of temple buildings have survived including a part of *Gandan*, *Züün khüree*, the Choijin Lama Temple Museum, the Bogd Khaan Palace Museum, the Tārā Temple of the Chinese merchant town, and Dambadarjaa Monastery in the north. Gandan Monastery was reopened in 1944: N. Erdenepil *gavj* became its abbot (1887–1960), and T. Gombodoo (1886–1965) its disciplinarian. Gandan functioned as the only monastery until the democratic changes in 1990, at which point many other monasteries reopened or were newly founded. Regarding the old rural monasteries, only a couple of them have remained in a partial state and were used mostly as buildings of Cooperatives during socialism. Nonetheless, even here in the countryside, the faded beliefs of Mongolian Buddhism were revived after the democratic changes, especially in provincial centers. However, nowadays the new monasteries mostly function in one temple building with a community of about 30 monks.

Conclusion of the Interviews¹⁴

When starting to conduct interviews in the spring of 2006, we estimated that about 250 old monks, born in the 1900s–1920s, were still alive nationwide. These monks were between the ages of 10–30 years old when they were living in monasteries up until the 1930s. Fortunately, a piece of their memories has been preserved thanks to the *Oral History of 20th Century*

¹⁴ The conclusion of the interviews is the same as the results of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project. Cf. www.mongoliantemples.org; Majer, Zs. – Teleki, K., On the Current Condition of 190 Old and Present-Day Monastic Sites in the Mongolian Countryside. *Zentralasiatische Studien* 39, Bonn 2011, pp. 93–140.; Teleki, K., Building on Ruins, Memories and Persistence: Revival and Survival of Buddhism in the Countryside. *Silk Road* 7, Seattle 2009, pp. 64–73.

Mongolia project,¹⁵ the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries*¹⁶ project and our interviews.

The old monks we met were in considerably good health and with clear minds. Their relatives helped if they were hard of hearing or did not understand our questions. Small inconsistencies can be observed between the year of their birth according to the Gregorian calendar and the sexagenarian circle. Additionally, sometimes they mention dates according to the old calendar used in Mongolia which started with the enthronement of the Bogd Khaan (1911), and sometimes according to the Gregorian calendar. Thus, for instance the '25th year' more often refers to 1935 than to 1925.

Generally, these monks started to learn Tibetan prayers at 5–7 years of age, and then became monks in the community of a monastery. Sometimes they joined another monastery for further studies and even travelled to Urga, the central monastery of Mongolia.

Ceremonies and services¹⁷ in monasteries were based on Tibetan texts and belong to the Vajrayāna tradition. All monasteries had an assembly hall with daily chanting (*Tsogchin*, Tib. *tshogs chen*). Also standing in sizeable monasteries were other temples dedicated to the Dharma protectors (called *Sakhiusnii dugan*): Tārā, the Saviouress, Bhaiṣajyaguru, the Medicine Buddha; Maitreya, the future Buddha; Avalokiteśvara, the Bodhisattva of Compassion; Amitābha, the Buddha of Longevity or to the *Kanjur*, etc.

Monastic schools (*datsan*, Tib. *grwa tshang*) belonged to the more extensive monasteries and monastic villages. The most usual one was the monastic philosophy school (*choir datsan*, Tib. *chos grwa grwa tshang*), where exams could be taken regularly for *geshe* (*domiin damjaa*, Tib. *ston mo 'i dam bca ')* and *gavj* (*gavjiin damjaa*, Tib. *dka' bcu'i dam bca ')* Buddhist philosophy degrees. Different handbooks (*igchaa*, Tib. *yig cha*) were in use in philosophy schools. Other monastic schools, such as epistemological (*Tsanid*, Tib. *mtshan nyid*), medical (*Manba / Mamba*, Tib. *sman pa grwa tshang*), astrological (*Zurkhai datsan*, Tib. *rtsis pa grwa tshang*), Gradual Path (*Lamrim datsan*, Tib. *lam rim grwa tshang*) and tantric monastic schools (*Jüd datsan*, Tib. *rgyud grwa tshang*), also existed in bigger monasteries. Exams could be taken in them to obtain degrees, for example the degree of the tantric monas-

¹⁵ <https://www.socanth.cam.ac.uk/directory/research-clusters/citizenship-political-life/oral-history-mongolia>.

¹⁶ www.mongoliantemples.org.

¹⁷ On ceremonies in general see Majer, Zs., *A Comparative Study of the Ceremonial Practice in Present-day Mongolian Monasteries*. Eötvös Loránd University, Budapest 2008 (PhD thesis).

tic schools (*agramba* or *agrimba*, Tib. *sngags rims pa*), the medical monastic schools (*maaramba*, Tib. *sman rams pa*), and the astrological monastic schools (*zeerembe*, Tib. *rtsis rims pa*), although these were quite rare.

The monasteries were led by a head monk, usually bearing the title of abbot (*khamba*, Tib. *mkhan po*), *tsorj* (Tib. *chos rje*), *shireet* ('throne holder'), or *lovon* (Tib. *slob dpon*). In monastic philosophy schools the head monk was called *shunlaiv* (Tib. *gzhung lugs pa / gzhung las pa*). Other important ranks in the assembly were those of the disciplinarians (*gesgüi*, Tib. *dge bskyos*) and the chanting masters (*unzad / umzad*, Tib. *dbu mdzad*). In addition, assistants fulfilled duties. The offering master (*chombon / chovombo*, Tib. *mchod dpon*) together with the offering assistants (*takhilch*), were responsible for the preparation and proper arrangement of the offerings on the altars. Assistant chanters (*golch*, 'central ones'), disciplinarians' assistants (*geyeg*, Tib. *dge g.yog*), shrine-keepers (*duganch*, < Tib. 'du khang), and tea preparers (*manzch*, < Tib. *mang ja*) belonged to the assemblies, too. At least one doctor (*otoch / emch*) and an astrologer monk (*zurkhaich*) lived in all larger monasteries, and a limited number of monasteries even had an oracle (*choijin*, Tib. *chos skyong*) who, in a trance, interpreted the pronouncements of the Dharma protectors.

Administrators (*zaisan, daamal, demch*) lived only in sizeable monasteries, while the smaller assemblies had maybe a *nyarav* book-keeper (Tib. *gnyer pa*) to administer the property of the monastery, donated mostly by devotees. Financial offices which oversaw the donations made to the monastery (*jas*, Tib. *spyi sa / spyi gsog*) could be found in every temple in the bigger monastic sites, but in small monasteries or individual temples there were just a few or only one. Usually a single financial office was called the main financial office (*ikh jas*). Monasteries had livestock which were herded on remote pastures. The monasteries of saints and reincarnations as well as other large monasteries had an office or 'Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs' (*shanzodviin yaam*, Tib. *phyag mdzod pa*, Chin. *ya men*), also known as *Shaviin yaam* (Ministry responsible for the subordinated lands and people), which handled administration, finance, and jurisdiction.

Regarding ceremonies and services, a circumambulation with the future Buddha, Maitreya's statue on a cart, with a green horse head (*Maidar ergek*) was performed annually in almost every monastery, sometimes together with the volumes of the *Kanjur*, the holy volumes of Buddha's teaching. *Tsam* (Tib. 'cham(s)) dance, mostly *Jakhar tsam* (Tib. *lcags mkhar gyi 'chams*), was performed mostly in the larger monasteries, but could differ in scale and their timing; *Tsam* took place in some monasteries on the day after the Maitreya circumambulation, whereas others had a *Tsam* during

the Maitreya procession, performed at its four stops around the monastery. S. Dagva monk gave an account of the Milarepa *Tsam* which was a performance with narration. Some monasteries even had a kind of *Tsam* in winter inside the temple buildings. Another sacred dance featured the Kālacakra monastic schools (*Düinkhor datsan*, Tib. *dus 'khor grwa tshang*) and was related to ceremonies called 'Earth dance, religious dance' (*Sagar chogar*, Tib. *sa gar, chos gar*).

Khailen (Tib. *khas len*) summer retreat or oath-taking period was held in almost every monastery for 45 days to strengthen the vows of monks and to atone for transgressions. *Sojin* (Tib. *so sbyong*) confession and meditational fasting (*Nügnee / Nünnai*, Tib. *smyung gnas*) were also held in almost every monastery. The volumes of the *Kanjur* (*Ganjuur*, Tib. *bka' 'gyur*) and other sacred books were circumambulated (*Ganjuur ergekh*), too, sometimes only inside or around the temple building by devotees, but usually also on camels or carts. In this case, the circumambulation could take place around the given monastery or monastic village for a day, and in some cases around the area of the whole banner for a month. Almost all monasteries possessed sets of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur* (Tib. *bstan 'gyur*), especially its Tibetan version, and the *Kanjur* ceremony was held in several monasteries. In large monasteries it seems that many ceremonies of the Lunar New Year took place, such as: *Khuuchin nomiin khural* ('Chanting with old melodies'); *Sorzalakh* (Tib. *zor 'phen*, the ritual burning of the pyramidal sacrificial cake and structure); *Tsederlkham* (Tib. *tshes gtor lha mo*, the yearly ceremonial cake offering to Śrīdevī) at Lunar New Year Eve; the *Choimbrel jonaa* (Tib. *chos 'phrul bco lnga*, ceremonies commemorating Buddha's defeat of the six masters, the holders of heretical doctrines by mysterious methods including miracles) for 15 days and the annual great days of the Buddha and Tsongkhapa were celebrated, too.

Stūpas stood in or near to many of the monastic sites, sometimes in a row (like the eight *stūpas* of Buddha) in the north, sometimes at the four sides of the complex. Occasionally only one large *stūpa* stood in the vicinity, whilst in other monasteries small *stūpas* were scattered in the area around the monastic complex. Monasteries without *stūpas* existed, too. Various types of prayer wheels also belonged to many monasteries. Books were printed with wooden blocks in a few monasteries, but a separate printing house (*barkhan*, Tib. *par khang* or *sümbüm*, Tib. *gsung 'bum*, 'collected works') would only operate in some big monasteries. The monks venerated the *ovoo* cairns of local mountains to pacify their lords and spirits (*lus savdag*, Tib. *klu sa bdag*) and to ask for their support. Monks venerated the local spirits

of hills and mountains at the *ovoos* (heap of cairn made of stones, twigs, or mud).

Regarding burial customs, the Mongols placed their deceased on a remote site and in open air to be the prey of animals. Its aim was to feed the sentient beings as a last deed. Only high ranking monks were placed into *stūpas* or mummified (*güden*, Tib. *sku rten*).

Monks could take different vows: first lay Buddhist vows (*genen*, Tib. *dge bsnyen*, Skr. *upāsaka*); then taking ordination and pre-novice vows (*barmaravjin / barmaravjün*, Tib. *bar ma rab byung*); novice vows (*getsel*, Tib. *dge tshul*, Skr. *śrāmaṇera*); and full ordination (*gelen*, Tib. *dge slong*, Skr. *bhikṣu* with 253 precepts).

A disciple is forbidden to utter his master's (Tib. *bla ma*, Skr. *guru*) name. Certain honorary terms are used for venerable monks including *lamtan*, *lambugai*, *guai*, and *bandgai*. According to the monastic rules, monks were forbidden to form any relationships with women. Those monks who had wives could not live in the monastery. They were chased away from the monastic parts of Urga, yet in the countryside such monks could still visit the ceremonies while living in the countryside with their families. The lay population did not reside in the monastic area. However, around bigger monasteries poor families and beggars lived nearby, mainly around the monastic villages. Believers often visited the monasteries for pilgrimage and worship, or to see their sons, brothers or other monk relatives. The monasteries were sustained by their donations: dairy products, livestock, brick tea, silk, juniper, flour, wheat, etc.

Temple buildings were usually constructed with materials available from the given area: mud in the Gobi desert, wood in the steppe zone. The Chinese operated brick-burning kilns (*baayuu*) in the vicinity of larger monasteries, so several temples were built with bluish grey bricks (*khökh tuipuu*). The Chinese community also operated shops or stores, but the informants could provide little information about them as many Chinese left Mongolia around 1921.

Each banner had a central monastery, which was the biggest in the area and which other monasteries were subordinated to. Connections existed between monasteries situated close to each other or in the area of the same banner: monks visited each other's monastery especially during great events such as the *Tsam* dance or the Maitreya procession, or arrived for periodic (specialized) studies.

Tibetan monks living in Mongolian monasteries were uncommon and where they did only as separate individuals, not in groups. Several Mongolian monks visited Tibet and came back after finishing their studies. Itinerant

monks (*badarchin*, Skr. *patra*) wandered over extensive areas in pilgrimage, living on alms. The Gelug Stream was dominant in Mongolia, which represented the Yellow (Hat) Religion (*Shariin shashin*). Tantric *Chö* (Tib. *gcod*) or *Lüijin* (Tib. *lus sbyin*) practices that belonged to the Red Tradition (*Ulaan-nii yos*) also spread countywide: *zoch* (< Tib. *gcod*) tantric masters wandered the countryside to meditate and engage in their practices (*jarz*, Tib. *brgya rtsa*) using bone trumpets (*ganlin*, Tib. *rkang gling*), hand-bells, and hand-drums (*damar*, Skr. *damaru*). Different *Chö* lineages existed: *Noyon khutagtiin jüd*, *Khüükhen khutagtiin jüd*, *Jagar Molomiin jüd* and others.

Buddhist nunneries were non-existent, despite the fact that female practitioners belonged to *Chö* assemblies, where they performed their rituals mostly together with male practitioners. Although these tantric practices were in contradiction to the Yellow Stream, and *Chö* temples belonged to monasteries in a very small number of cases, nonetheless *Chö* practitioners could even be monks with full ordination, and also bearing different titles (*tsorj*, *agramba*, etc.)

Due to the different affiliations of the interviewees, we can obtain insights into the everyday life of different types of monasteries in the 1930s, starting with small assemblies and temple complexes (e.g. Daachingin Jas, Bayanbaraatiin Khiid, Ganjuuriin Jas, Taliin Khiid, Mengetiin Khiid, Buyaantiin Khiid) through monasteries supported by the Manchu court (Shar Süm, Amarbayasgalant, Duutiin Khüree), main monasteries of aristocrats (e.g. Sain Noyonii Khüree, Dalai Wangiin Khüree, Luu Güinii Khüree, Ööld Beisiin Khüree) and reincarnations (e.g. Zayaiin Khüree, Bambar Erdene Lamiin Khiid, Khutagt Lamiin Khiid), until the monasteries related to the *Bogds* (e.g. Yesön Züiliin Khüree, Baruun Khüree, Züün Khüree, Amarbayasgalant Khiid, Urga / Bogdiin Khüree). We also have information about some *Chö* assemblies of the Gobi (e.g. Naran Khögtstiin Zodiin Khural), and a monastery near the caravan route (Taliin Khiid).

The majority of the informants belonged to the Khalkha ethnic group, but other ethnic groups also exist (Ööld, etc.). As the interviewees were young when living in the monasteries, they could not provide precise data on the history, collectivization, and destruction of their monasteries, but mentioned the closure and the arrest of the ranking monks, and the dissolution of the monastic community. Some of them also referred to political figures of the 20th century including D. Sükhbaatar (1893–1923), D. Losol (1885–1940), D. Dogsom (1884–1941), G. Demid (1900–1937), P. Genden (1892/1895–1937), A. Amar (1886–1941), Kh. Choibalsan (1895–1952), and Yu. Tsedenbal (1916–1991).

As many monks were unable to pay the tax levied from practicing monks in the 1930s, the majority of the informants were disrobed and enrolled in the army in 1937 for 5–10 years. Children were sent to primary schools. Some monks left for the countryside, married, and lived as herders, while others moved to Ulaanbaatar and found a job or became a white-collar worker. These disciples of Buddha Śākyamuni did not forget the Buddhist prayers, but recited them, and sometimes even held services in secret during socialism.

From 1990 the old monks started to gather again in private yurts or rooms of state buildings in a very active and enthusiastic way. Old Tibetan texts, sacred sculptures and images, and ceremonial accessories that they had hidden saw the light of day once more. With the support of devotees who provided catering and alms, the old monks started to hold ceremonies again for the benefit of all sentient beings and to educate a new generation of young monks.¹⁸ Funding for the reconstruction of a temple building was obtained in various ways. Old monks either reconstructed a temple in their own ruined monastery or joined together with all the old monks from different, nearby monasteries to establish a single new temple in the province or district center. In the case of some old sites of worship (e.g. Erdene Zuu, Baruun Khüree, Sain Noyon Khanii Khüree), which had had the larger populations, it was not rare for 40 old monks to participate in the re-openings, whilst in isolated places sometimes only one or two monks tried to revive the faded belief. The old monks became the high-ranking monks of the new assemblies, fulfilling such duties as abbot, *tsorj*, *lovon*, disciplinarian, chanting master, and offering preparer. Thanks to their great efforts, new disciples took up the Buddhist faith, and are now the abbots and other leading monks of current day monasteries and are around the age of 40–50. May these disciples of Buddha Śākyamuni transmit their knowledge to the younger generation and uphold and develop Mongolian Buddhism!

¹⁸ The informants also refer to currently renowned monks who made great efforts in the revival and revitalization of Mongolian Buddhism: D. Choijamts (born 1951), the abbot of Gandantegchenlin Monastery, Ch. Dambajav (born 1946), the abbot of Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery, Sh. Soninbayar (born 1952), senior researcher of Erdem Soyoliin Khüreeleen, the research institute of Gandantegchenlin Monastery, and G. Pürevbat (born 1965) monk artist.



Urga painted by Jügger in 1913. Painting exhibited in the Bogd Khaan Palace Museum, Ulaanbaatar

PRELIMINARIES



Gandan part of Urga from the north-west. Archives for Cinema, Photography and Sound Recording, Ulaanbaatar



Survived temple buildings of the *Züün khüree* part of Urga. Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar, 2010

CONCLUSION OF THE INTERVIEWS



Remnants of Khutagt Lamiin Khiid and Bari Lamiin Khiid in Saikhan-Ovoo district, Dundgovi province in the Gobi, 2007 within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project.



Amarbayasgalant Khiid from the north-west situated in Baruunbüren district, Selenge province, Central Mongolia, 2010



A survived temple building of Baruun Khüree in Kharkhorin district, Övörkhangaï province in the Khangai region, 2010



Old photograph of Zayaiin Khüree situated in Erdenebulgan district, Arkhangai province in the Khangai region. Archives for Cinema, Photography and Sound Recording, Ulaanbaatar

CONCLUSION OF THE INTERVIEWS



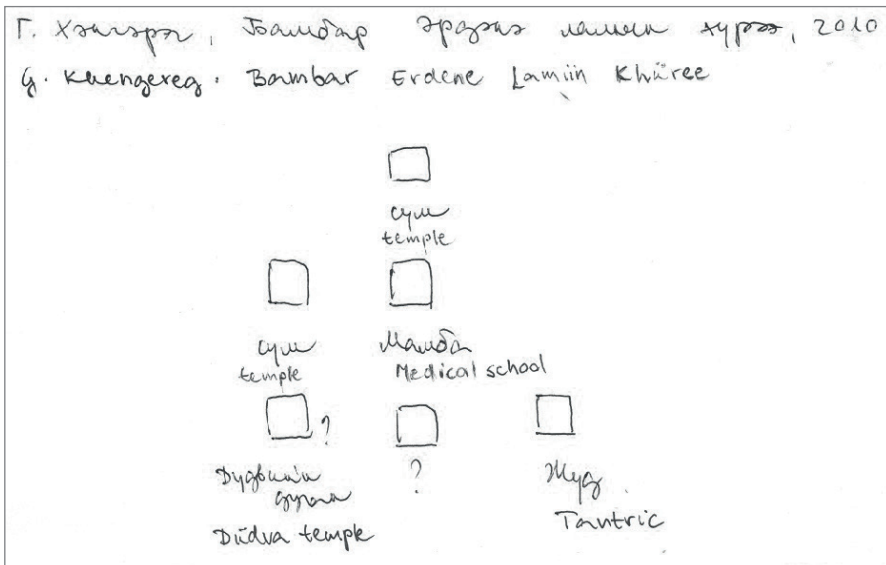
Remained temple buildings of Zayaiin Khüree in Erdenebulgan district, Arkhangai province
in the Khangai region, 2011



Ruins of Nayan Duutiin Khüree in Tsagaankhairkhan district, Zavkhan province,
Western Mongolia, 2010



Remnants of Shar Süm from the north, near Khovd city, Khovd province, Western Mongolia, 2010

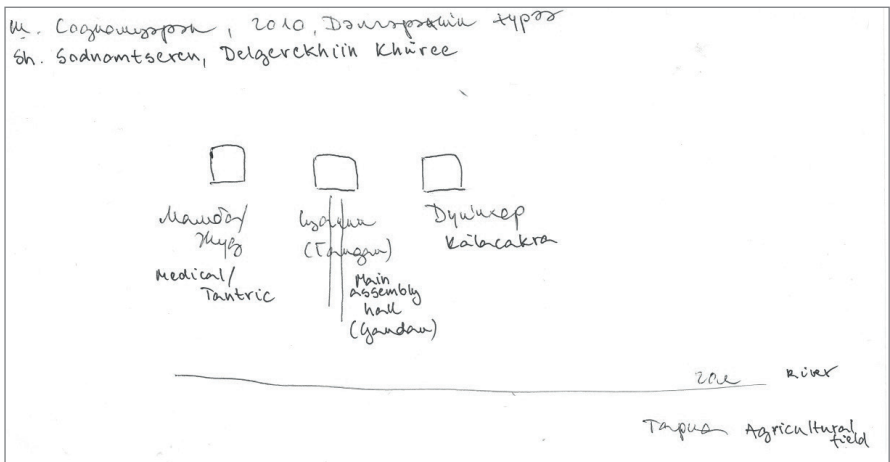


Sketch of the arrangement of certain temple buildings in Bambar Erdene Lamiin Khiid, Sergelen district, Töv province, based on the oral communication of G. Khengereg monk, 2010

CONCLUSION OF THE INTERVIEWS

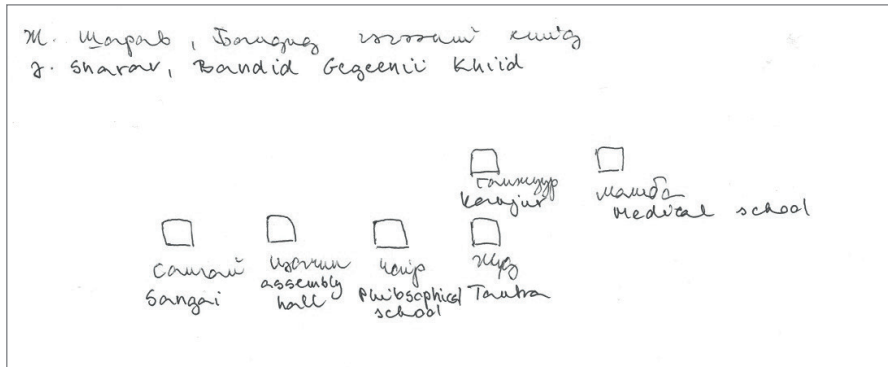


Sketch of the arrangement of certain temple buildings in Lu(u) Günüi Khüree, Battsengel district, Arkhangai province based on the oral communication of R. Perenleijamts monk, 2010

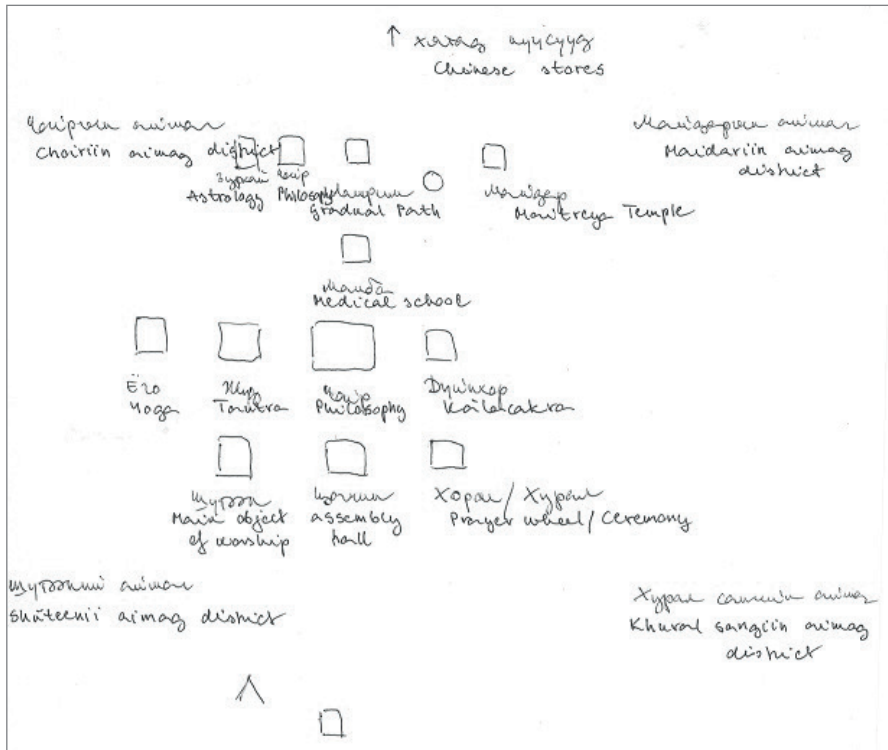


Sketch of the arrangement of certain temple buildings in Delgerekhiin Khüree, Darvi district, Khovd province based on the oral communication of Sh. Sodnomtseren monk, 2010

PRELIMINARIES



Sketch of the arrangement of certain temple buildings in Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Gegeenii Khiid, Shiliin Gol province, Inner Mongolia, China based on the oral communication of J. Sharav monk, 2010



Sketch of the arrangement of certain temple buildings of Dalai Vangiin Khüree Dashchoinkhorlin, Mönkhkhaan district, Sükhbaatar province, drawn in the presence of Ch. Dondog, 2010

INTERVIEWS

ULAANBAATAR

Shagdar Bagaajav
(1917–2012?)



Sh. Bagaajav monk, 2011

Shagdar Bagaajav was born in 1917. He arrived from Sergelen district, Töv province to Urga in 1929 and lived in *Düinkhor aimag* monastic district of *Züün khüree* until 1937. He also studied Buddhist philosophy at the *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* monastic school in *Gandan*. As a shrine keeper of the assembly hall, he assisted the famous disciplinarian, T. Gombodoo. Shagdar Bagaajav became a monk again in 1992 at Gandantegchenlin Monastery and participated in the revival of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*'s tradition. He was at present at the celebration of the 100th anniversary of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*'s foundation in 2011.

His account is special in the sense that he could express his memories spontaneously, i.e. without the need of the interviewer's questions. An interesting part of his account reflects on the way novices were enrolled into the army in 1937. He provided valuable information about the disciplinarian, T. Gombodoo, and Ravdan *gayj*. He also shared his memories about the revival of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* in the 1990s.

The interview was recorded in the informant's home in Ulaanbaatar on 1 March, 2011 by voice recorder and video camera with the assistance of his daughter.

- When and where were you born? How did you arrive in Urga?
- My mother wanted me to become a monk, so we came together to Urga from the current Sergelen district of Töv province in 1929. Urga was the main Buddhist monastic town with 10 *datsans* and 30 districts called *aimag* where the monk population lived. I became a monk of *Düinkhor aimag* and started to participate in ceremonies there. I was 12 years old when we arrived in Urga. I settled down in *Düinkhor aimag* and started to participate in ceremonies and study Buddhist sciences. Well, when did it happen? I was 14 years old at that time. How was it in the 1990s? Anyway, I started to study in *Idgaa datsan* at the age of 14. (Informant's daughter: He started to study at *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* in 1931 at the age of 14.)
- Did you live in *Düinkhor aimag*?
- Yes, I came from the countryside in 1929 and settled down in *Düinkhor aimag* in Urga.
- Did you live in *Düinkhor aimag* in *Züün khüree* or at *Gandan*?
- In *Züün khüree*.
- Can you describe your *Düinkhor aimag* situated in *Züün khüree*?
- Regarding *Züün khüree*, the Eighth *Bogd Javzandamba*'s residence called Shar Süm or Yellow Palace was situated there. The monks of the thirty districts of the [*Züün*] *khüree* held their ceremonies in the assembly hall on a daily basis. Children of the 30 districts of the *khüree* gathered there to perform the daily chanting called *Tsogchin* or *Ikh Tsogchin khural* as they had already learnt its prayers by heart. The disciplinarian, Gombodoo was responsible for it. In other words, he administered and governed the monks of the thirty districts. He was a monk holding the *gavj* philosophy degree. He lived in *Dandarlin aimag*, so he was known as Gombodoo of *Dandarlin aimag*. Furthermore, a brass Maitreya statue stood [in the Maitreya Temple] near the assembly hall in the height of 80 [50] cubits. A non-stop assembly functioned near the Eighth *Bogd* [in *Dechingalav* Temple]. Its monks performed the *Danshig* offering for the *Bogd*'s longevity and also the *maṇḍala* offering every day. Fifty monks used to gather there. Fifty monks sat there with great knowledge of Buddhist texts. They held ceremonies every day in the *Bogd*'s Yellow Palace. Should I describe its operation in detail?

Apart from this assembly of the *Bogd*, there was an organization or temple called *Ikh jas* or great financial office which provided all the necessities of the *Bogd* and his assembly. Moreover, the tantric monastic school called *Jüid datsan*, the medical monastic school called *Manba datsan* and other monastic schools and temples sat in *Züün khüree*.

The monks performed the [annual] masked dance ritual called the great *Tsam* or *Ikh tsam* in the 7th month after one month preparation and training in the yurt temple of the main financial office called *Ikh jas*. This *Ikh tsam* performed in the seventh month was a kind of dance of Buddhist deities including the White Old Man, the Ten Protectors of the Buddhist teaching, and other characters. The Ten Protectors of the Buddhist teaching, the White Tārā (?), the lords of mountains, the White Old Man, the Blue Old Man, Khashin Khan with his many children, and the guardians of the four mountains surrounding Urga all participated in the *Tsam* dance. If you are interested in more details, the four mountains include Dünjingarav [at Bogd Khan Uul] situated in the south, the lord of which is the White Old Man. The northern one is Chingeltei Khairkhan Mountain, the lord of which is the broad-faced, cheerful Khashin Khan followed by many children. The Blue Old Man is the lord of Songino Khairkhan in the West and Bayanzürkh Uul is in the east. The Eighth *Bogd Javzandamba khutagt* summoned a prophesy: ‘All suffering beings starting from human beings who were born within these four mountains would be delighted. Even vagrant dogs. It is such a blessed and blissful place.’ The four mountains around Urga and hills meandering and situated among them were drawn under protection following this prophesy. The [*Khamba*] *Nomun khan* became responsible for monks, the circumambulation road called *gortig* and the four mountains. In other words, he was responsible for the circumambulation around Urga. I met him personally. The head abbot of the assembly hall mentioned above was the *Yonzon khamba*. He came from Tibet as the master of ceremonies of the Eighth *Bogd*. The *Yonzon khamba* became the abbot of whole Urga. His deputy was the vice abbot Damdin. Damdin’s servant was a young monk taking his master’s mantle-like vestment. We were coeval. This *Nomun khan* (or *tsorj*, Tib. *chos rje*) was responsible for the mountains surrounding the city.

On the other hand, *Gandan* was situated on this hill. Only monks lived there. Lay people, men or women were not allowed even to enter. They did not mix. Only monks lived at *Gandan*: novices and their masters. Only monks. On this hill, only monks lived in the streets at *Gandan*. The other part, *Züün khüree* was intermediate. It had an agricultural field in

the north, and the Green Lake in the east. *Züün khüree* was situated inside the eastern elm and its southern border was near the present National Police Agency. There were nine streets with Chinese stores in that place near the avenue. No Mongols lived there, only Chinese. South of it, in the south of the *khüree* was the market. The lay quarters with the lay population sat in the south. Americans lived, worked and traded in the east, in the American quarter called the Hill of the Americans. That is the hill over the bridge of the River Züün Selbe. Going further [to the east] stood the Hill of the Consulate. A foreign [Russian] delegate lived at the consulate. Nowadays, that site is the Soldiers' Club in the east. What was it later? Such a place. It was a smaller place, a small part than the Chinese settlement and *Gandan*. Apart from the three monastic philosophy schools were also small monastic schools at *Gandan*. *Züün khüree* consisted of 30 districts with daily chanting and ceremonies. Apart from gathering there at ceremonies, the monks studied the Buddhist philosophy. This was the custom. They could take the *geshe* exam called *domiin damjaa* after ten years of study in monastic schools. Children learnt for ten years, and also memorized the texts of the Ten Protectors, and philosophy in one of the three monastic philosophy schools. It meant learning Buddhist theory and discussion, debate. I myself studied in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* monastic school. A fully-ordained monk, the *jorvon* was the teacher of the class. He was responsible for *Idgaa*. The monks performing the debate sat in a row on the monk benches called *javdan*, which had a beautifully sewed thick felt mattress with woollen cloth trimming. Monks stood up from their benches, and were told to put on their *orkhimj* scarves, so they coiled up their *orkhimj* scarves on their legs or in another way. Then, they started the religious debate with the following sentence, '*Khadag yanaa yenbii chavartal chaviichir*' claiming that there are five colours. If everyone agreed they said, '*Yod*' [Yes, sufficient in Tibetan], if it was mistaken, they said, '*Med*' [No, insufficient in Tibetan]. This was the way of disputation. Candidates were frustrated by their poor performance, flushing red. Monks crowded together. This all happened in my monastic philosophy school. The disciplinarian of *Idgaa datsan* was Lozovai from *Erkhem aimag*. Another disciplinarian was Demberel. We had two disciplinarians. Radnaa was the *shunlaiv* of *Idgaa datsan*. We had two chanting masters: Dagva, the main chanting master and Choijil, the vice chanting master. This was the structure of *Idgaa datsan* where I participated in ceremonies. I would like to add a note about *Nomch mergen khamba* Gombojav. The abbot Gombojav. Religion was ceased in 1937. They built a gate there. Gombojav *guai* was 35 years old when

he took the *gayjiin damjaa* exam of Buddhist philosophy before building that gate. He became a *gavj* at the age of 35.

- Gombojav or Gombodoo?
- Gombojav. He was the abbot of Gandan Monastery. He became famous worldwide as *Nomch mergen* [‘leaned sage’] Gombojav. World famous by this name: *Nomch mergen* Gombojav. Politician-leader, Yu. Tsedenbal and Gombojav, the abbot of Gandan Monastery travelled to the USA to participate in the congress of the United Nations as the representatives of Mongolia. They were decorated with an honour of high standing. Both of them. The newspapers wrote about it. They got the Nobel Prize. This is the story of the abbot, *Nomch mergen* Gombojav.
- Can you describe the temple buildings of the Yellow Palace in *Züün khüree*?
- The Yellow Palace was the *Bogd*’s residence. That was a place of ceremonies, and had a fence wall similar to Gandan. The southern gate had two snow lion stones. The *Bogd* and his attendants, saints and reincarnations used to gather there. Also people fulfilling different official duties. Gatekeepers, deputies, servants, attendants, saints and reincarnations and others used to gather there. According to legend, once the *Bogd* laughed very much when sitting there. He almost fell down from laughing. The command of the *Bogd* was called *lünden* or ‘prophesy’. The Khalkhas had seven saints. These saints and reincarnations gathered together. Reincarnations have the genuine ability of knowing their past, present, and future incarnations. People who know their past, present, and future rebirths are called reincarnations. It is not something that someone reveals about himself. (Laughing.) So there were seven saints. The *Bogd* was always laughing very loudly. People did not use to ask irrelevantly why he was laughing. However, there was once a great master who at that time had good connections with the *Bogd*. He asked him, ‘Why are you laughing so much?’ The *Bogd* replied, ‘There was a heavy rain in the countryside. They collected dry droppings of cattle for fuel and also sold dairy products. It was raining. The droppings became wet and did not flame up. Such a difficult situation! The lady collecting dung prayed, ‘Oh my *Bogd*, my *Bogd*, please bestow fuel for me.’ However, the droppings were wet. *Argal* is dry droppings of cattle for fuel. Suddenly, she noticed a place with blue and grey coloured, dry droppings. I mean that she prayed to the *Bogd* for fuel and finally found dry droppings indeed. She collected them saying ‘Thank you, my *Bogd*’ and filled her basket. The basket was too small for all the dung so she put them in heaps. The basket was a round shaped basket made of willow sticks. She put all the

dung inside, and wanted to raise the basket to her back. She was alone in the countryside. Nobody nearby. She could not carry it alone. ‘Oh my *Bogd*, what should I do now? I cannot raise it.’ So, the *Bogd* brought forth some grass and bush to help her to raise it. She could stand up and prayed, ‘Oh *Bogd*, *Bogd*.’ To sum it up, the *Bogd* did not reply to her in words, but magically provided everything she wanted. His smooth reply was a happy titter.

Five of the seven saints lived in the area of the current Zavkhan province: *Jalkhanz gegeen*, *Yegüzer khutagt* [he lived in Setsen Khan province], *Yalgasan*, *Narovanchin*, and other saints. One of the seven saints lived in Töv province, in the foreground of Bogd Uul Mountain in Zuunmod city: *Manzshir khutagt* lived there in Manzshir Monastery. There was a palace and also temple buildings. The monks used to perform the *Tsam* dance there in the 8th month, after the *Ikh tsam* of Urga. One of the seven saints lived in Dornogovi province: *Dogshin noyon khutagt*, the poet Danzanravjaa. [He did not belong to the seven Khalkha saints.] So, there were these seven saints.

I was a small child, about 14 when sitting at ceremonies and running among the benches of educated monks. There were many old and wise monks, doctors of philosophy and tantric studies, many bald, fat, elderly monks. I was running among them as child to pour tea into their cups and to serve them. Apart from learning and participating in ceremonies, I had this duty. They were talking among each other whilst drinking their tea. They were saying, ‘Waste has dropped into religion. An incident will happen soon and it will be obvious.’ Actually, it ended in the destruction. They predicted that event. They claimed that religion could not be totally annihilated and would be revived once more. I was walking next to them when they talked like this. Some of them used to talk about certain things.

Stalin was the ruler of the Soviet Union. He was known as the only powerful general in the world. He gave duties to Choibalsan before 1937 and later also to Tsedenbal, ‘You have 700 monasteries and 100,000 monks. You do not execute work useful for public welfare.’ They held ceremonies saying that this is a Buddhist labour. Mongolia was a colony of the Manchus and the Chinese for 220 years until 1921. 220 years of Manchu overlordship. Finally it became a colony. Carnage, massacre. It was a dictatorship when people were handled lower than insects and the streets were in upheaval. Sükhbaatar came from the countryside and settled down in Amgalanbaatar with his parents in a small yurt. They ate the scrapings of others to survive, going to the food market and accompanying people who had bought meat and food for money. Sükhbaatar’s

family lived in that way. He did very difficult work as a teenager. Like a small child trying to push forward a vehicle. That man [D. Sükhbaatar] who experienced and hated bitter persecution and suffering decided to find independence and freedom. Why do Mongolians have to suffer so much before they fight? Falling to a status lower than animals, vermin and insects, this overdoing of such actions made Mongolia a colony. He decided to struggle for liberty and to establish [an independent] Mongolia. He started to recruit people who had a strong will. He founded a group in secret. The struggle of this group against colonizers started in 1919.

- Were there tantric practitioners and tantric assemblies in Urga?
- Yes, there were. [Story continues.] Choibalsan also founded a secret group in the 1920s to struggle against the Manchu colonizers. In 1920 or in 1919, I do not remember, these two acted with good will separately in order to be released from being a Manchu colony. These two met and united in 1920, and brought one group into existence. Fighting in 1921 led Choibalsan and Sükhbaatar 400 soldier partisans against the 10,000 soldiers of the colonizers. They defeated this great army, and held their first assembly in the present-day Altanbulag in Selenge province, in the northern centre of Mongolia, and founded the central committee and the first parliament there. They marched at Da Khüree [Urga] to liberate it. World War I started in 1914, and the armies of Western Europe, America and Germany fought against labourers, farmers led by Lenin for the right of wanting for better life-circumstances. The entire Mongolian public lived under repression and wanted to have liberty. Lenin and Stalin led the proletariats. Under the leadership of Germany, 14 countries in Western Europe participated in the war and won it. They united 14 nations or even 16 nations and established the Soviet Union.

I have to explain to you the reason for the annihilation of religion. As I have mentioned above Stalin ordered the destruction of the Mongols' enemies: the 700 monasteries and their 100,000 monks. With this instruction in 1927 [1937] religion was ceased and destroyed. By Stalin's order. Stalin claimed as follows, 'Before 1921 when we were under the suppression of the Manchus and the Chinese, aristocrats, wealthy people were involved in a plot. When the revolution was won in 1921, these nobles, the foreign oppressors were forced to work, too. This included noblemen who governed the administrative system in banners and other territorial divisions before. A few Chinese traders cooperated with them in old times, conspiring in commerce. Their rights were limited after the revolution in 1921. They became powerless. Similarly, numerous monks

and the 700 monasteries were destroyed. If we do not execute them it will mean that the revolution, which was won in 1921 with our state support, will not allow us to develop.' Choibalsan and Tsedenbal replied to him, 'I, Choibalsan won't follow this order in my life.' 'Let's have a convention. Come here quickly from Ulaanbaatar.' Tsedenbal had a rest near the Black Sea, and then Stalin ordered him to go to the city to meet him. 'He will make up for vacation. Go! Choibalsan will draw up a convention between countries.' It is said to have happened like this. All of the officials including the head of the state, the first secretariat of the Central Committee, the head of the Ministers' Committee, the president, and the prime minister, all these state officials were captured and poisoned in Russia. Then, there was nothing else to do. What happened after this? The mobile army managed to execute 100,000 monks. They executed all saints and reincarnations, and the noblemen that were still living. 'Now, the principal of the state should rise. The Lord.' It is like the head of a family. The leaders of Mongolia were executed or taken to Russia to be executed. For instance, Prime Minister Genden, Amar and many other politicians including the first seven revolutionists, Losol, Dogsom, all these statesmen were sentenced and executed. It was a very painful era. The state remained without state leadership. They destroyed everything. Mongolia did not have a lord. First, Tsedenbal and Choibalsan were ordered to Russia for a discussion. 'Do it fast!' There were 16 states. 16 states of Asia and Europe. The Soviet Union included the poor after winning World War I, 'It is a place which found independence, now you should unite with us to be the 17th state.' Then, religion was annihilated on Stalin's order. G. Pürevbat, a monk artist, gave an interview on the television. 'We should avoid foreign influence. We cannot follow the words and deeds of foreigners. This is the teaching of the old generation, *'Do not follow empty words, do not eat unprepared food.'* The teaching says to taste only well prepared food and listen to only good advice. Several innocent monks and lay peoples, noblemen, state leaders, novices were sentenced and executed because Stalin of Russia gave improper orders. The staff of the Ministry of the Interior did not sleep at night, but executed 100,000 innocent monks. You could notice that a car was coming at night. Cars were rare at that time in Mongolia. When I was a child I used to hear the arrival of cars from time to time. The executive workers of the Ministry of the Interior used to go out at night. They wore green caps. I used to go on the avenue of *Züün khüree* and climb Gandan Hill when I was coming and going between *Züün khüree* and *Gandan* to participate in ceremonies. Nowadays, that part is a hump. North of the

current monastery of Bakula *rinpoche*. Passing that I climbed Gandan Hill. Monks' courtyards were there with a tall railed fence with a wooden ridge on top to protect from rain. When I was going in the morning, families living in the street were afraid. There were many households living in courtyards. In this way, I participated in the ceremonies at *Gandan* every day and returned to *Züün khüree* in the afternoon or evening. Next morning I went again to *Gandan* to my *Idгаа datsan*. I was 14 years old. I noticed the following on the way: when I had returned home the day before, people living there were normal and peaceful, but when I went to the school next morning, all of these gates were stamped, sealed, waxed. The lords of households were seized at night and had been accused of being revolutionaries who supported the Japanese. The Japanese held a commission. In other words, dangers came from the East in 1937. Subjugation. The *Yonzon khamba* head abbot and Damdin vice abbot, Prime Minister Genden, and Demid, commander of the army, these four people were imprisoned and sentenced in 1937. People talked about that the state remained without governance, and whether it would be governed by a new government.

What could I do? I followed Gombodoo *guai*'s advice. After the passing away of the *Bogd* [in 1924] monks were generally governed by the disciplinarian of the assembly hall, Gombodoo *guai* who knew the Mongolian script well. He was said to have worked at the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs before. Religion and politics were unified at that time [during the Bogd Khaan's reign, from 1911–1921]. Gombodoo *guai* himself used to tell us that he had been a clerk at the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs from the age of 14. He worked there. I myself assisted him in the assembly hall in *Züün khüree*. My duty was to assist him, to be around him and help him. We had a good relationship. Gombodoo *guai* disrobed in 1937, so he was not sentenced. He possessed the register of all monks. It had a covering. Then, he sent us to the army. We went there wearing our monk robes and monastic scarves. He bestowed us to the army in June 1937. I was processed in the city. 'These five people will be enrolled in the Special Unit.' I went there climbing the mountains in the north. We were told to prepare 100 m³ of wood for winter in a month. We fulfilled this task in 13 days, and then walked back on foot. The railway between Russia and Mongolia was being built at that time, so people dug the ground, piled it up and delivered it by car to the hills, and the sites were leveled. It was a place to which many yurts moved in summer to sell dairy products. Brownish, poor yurts. There were five of us. One morning a man told us that he was going to the city, Urga. We

could not find the road for cars. ‘Are you going?’ ‘Yes, we are going.’ Five of us went to the city in the north after climbing Tolgoit. A friend of mine said, when we started our trip, ‘If you enter into white, large yurts, they won’t welcome you and won’t give food. There might be an old couple living in a small, brown yurt. They might kindly receive you, give drink and prepare food. Keep it in mind.’ He knew that there would be a small, brown yurt in the vicinity of two white, large yurts. We found it and stayed there for the night. An old couple lived in that old yurt. The lady prepared firewood and made a fire, and the old man was also at home. We five of us sat down in the western part of the yurt. We greeted them and explained the situation, ‘We are monks enrolled in the army. We had to join the army wearing our monk robes and *orkhimj* scarves. Then, we worked for that foundation to prepare wood. We climbed a hill together to prepare the wood.’ Then, as we were going home to Urga, the old lady made tea and meal for us. We ate, drank, and felt comfortable. We also drank kumis and had a rest sitting there for a while. The old man said to us before our departure, ‘The political and religious leaders, the head abbot, the vice abbot, and Prime Minister Genden were sentenced.’ It was in 1921 [1937]. I remember it well. It was said that the Japanese would invade soon. Everything remained without an owner, the state and also religion and people were captured and imprisoned. ‘So, dear children, staying in the mountains brings fortune.’ What could we do in such a situation? We agreed with the old man. Four of us returned home and slept at home. I was with my mother in *Züün khüree*. I said to my mother, ‘We slept in a yurt during the trip. An old man told us that Mongolia will be the colony of Japan and Korea. From the east an army is coming to govern us. He advised us to stay in the mountains.’ ‘Oh, my son, stop this unnecessary talk. You will spend your entire life in prison. Be quiet, be quiet.’ So, we found ourselves in a delicate situation. The situation at that time was like that. I can talk to you about religion and Buddhism in this way. What else would you like to know?

- Can you please talk about the *Bogd*’s Green Palace and White Palace situated on the bank of the River Tuul?
- I understand your question. There were two palaces of the *Bogd* on the bank of the River Tuul. One of them was called the Green Palace near the river, which is nowadays a museum [Bogd Khaan Palace Museum]. It was the *Bogd*’s summer residence. He made excursions there, going to the river to enjoy its sound. Enjoying the sound and sight of waves is good for health. That is why the Green Palace was founded. He lived there in summer with his spouse, the Tsagaan Dari. The complex has

survived: it is a museum now. A bit west of it, south of Maanit Uul, on the bank of the River Tuul stood the White Palace. The *Bogd* lived in the White Palace in wintertime. He walked and rested here when he wanted to take a break from work. Both the White Palace and the Green Palace stood on the bank of the river. In the south.

- Have you heard about his other palace called Khaistai Lavran?
- Yes, yes. That was fenced-off and had a *khais* fence. Therefore, its name became *khaistai*. There was nothing else on the bank of the river apart from the two palaces I have just mentioned.
- Were there large *stūpas* in Urga?
- North of Gandan Monastery is a high antenna. South of the antenna stood a large *stūpa* called *Jarankhashar suvarga*. *Stūpas* and also prayer wheels surrounded the streets of *Züün khüree* and *Gandan*. For instance, the *stūpa* complex called the eight *stūpas* of Buddha Śākyamuni stood there, as well as other *stūpas* and several prayer wheels.
- Also in *Züün khüree*?
- Both in *Züün khüree* and at *Gandan*. Inside of *Gandan*'s entrance (?).
- Can you describe the monastery in the north called Dambadarjaa Khiid?
- Dambadarjaa? Dambadarjaa Khiid was situated north of Urga. The head of the monastery, its *da lam*, was Janchiv monk with *gavj* philosophy degree, coming from the same monastic district as me: *Düinkhor aimag*. Sometimes I assisted Janchiv *guai* at ceremonies, preparing his sitting pillow and mattress. I helped him to put on his mantle-like vestment and sit at his table. I used to take his meal and other important items to his yurt after ceremonies, and cared for him. It happened in *Züün khüree*. *Züün khüree*'s *Düinkhor aimag* consisted of four streets. All districts had courtyards where monks lived and there were streets between them. Two, three or four streets. In all directions. For example, *Düinkhor* Street was in this direction. Moreover, another monastery also sat in the northern direction, on the slope of a hill.
- Do you mean Dashchoinkhorlin Khiid?
- Exactly. Dashchoinkhorlin Khiid belonged under the supervision of our *Düinkhor aimag*. It means that the monks of our district had the duty to study there, to build buildings there, etc. Its head abbot, the *da lam* was my master, Jamiyansharav monk with *gavj* philosophy degree who resided in *Düinkhor aimag* in *Züün khüree*. I also assisted him - accompanying him to ceremonies or to home, preparing his seat, helping him to put on his mantle-like vestment and scarf. These monasteries were all destroyed during the era of persecution. Dambadarjaa has been revived and reopened, but Dashchoinkhorlin was not rebuilt. If you view that site

from afar you can see the traces of the ruined monastery. It is visible on the western slopes. Private weekend houses cover that area now.

- Have you heard about Shaddüvlin Khiid?
- If you go to the north, there is a place called Shaddüvlin valley. It is an area with weekend houses. The name of that place is in connection with Shaddüvlin, which had a small, square temple building. A very small temple. Yurts of the monks surrounded it, who participated in ceremonies there. A few monks, a bit more than ten. Very few monks. They were called *dayaanch* or hermits as they meditated there. They wore yellow *orkhimj* scarves. Generally, monks wear red *orkhimj* scarves. The monks of the tantric monastic school had brown *orkhimj* scarves. Monks having *gavj* philosophy degrees belonged to the *Jüü datsan* tantric school, and they had taken an exam of Buddhist philosophy at [one of] the three monastic philosophy schools [at *Gandan*]. *Gavj* means an intellectual. There are codes called *gorim* of how to obtain degrees. Another exam, the tantric exam could have been taken in the tantric monastic school in *Züün khüree*. Monks who obtained a degree there became professors. It was systematic. They, the monks of the tantric monastic school, had brown *orkhimj*. The monks of the philosophy school had red *orkhimj*. The monks who lived in Shaddüvlin had yellow *orkhimj*. Those hermits read special sacred texts, meditated a lot, and had a small wooden temple building. Their small, brown yurts surrounded the temple. A hermit of Shaddüvlin called Lombo lived in the same courtyard as me. Lombo *guai* were coming and going to the ceremony at his monastery, so he was always busy, and would always rest in our courtyard. He was an old monk. I also went to Shaddüvlin to visit him.
- Do you know the origin of the Jigjid (Skr. Yamāntaka) weekend house district?
- Jigjid? Well. Its story might be as follows. There is a place called Shargamorit [‘With pale horse’]. People offered a pale horse to the *Bogd* as an assurance prayer. Later, there were five pale horses given by five people. The *Bogd* nominated a person to care for the horses in a pasture abundant in grass and water. He found a reliable person who herded the horses in that valley on good pasture. Therefore, its name became Shargamorit valley. Jigjid should have a similar story.
- Can you describe an average day of the monks living in your district? How many monks lived in a yurt?
- I lived in *Düinkhor aimag* in *Züün khüree* with my mother. Monks of *Gandan* and *Züün khüree* lived in yurts. There were districts for monks. Lay people could not enter these districts. Later, I lived at *Gandan*. In winter,

my mother came to bring me food. She brought the meat of a cattle leg to regale her son and his company with it, also dairy products such as dried curds, cheese, and others. She was not allowed to enter and give me the food. I had to go to meet her at the end of the street. The monk who lived with us, for instance an older male relative or master used to call the given novice whose relative had arrived. That older relative or master said to the given novice to go to a given building. There were some meat dumplings in that building. 'Make a fire quickly. Prepare a kettle of tea quickly. Bring your mother here and bring it here.' The yurts had a very small hearth. A very small caldron. I prepared firewood. Short ones were sawed with nine or ten bigger pieces of wood around. Nine slices, ten slices. Firewood was cut and sum. Orderly arranged in rows next to the hearth. Some wood was slit and lit with a match and put into the hearth. A small caldron is easy. Monks used to eat their lunch at noon. They used to drink tea in the morning. They did not cook anything else. Everyone drank two cups of tea or only one cup of tea. Nothing has remained from it. Monks prepared three cups of tea in the morning. The older relative or master drank two cups of tea. I drank one cup of tea. We ate some dairy products such as dried curds with the tea, and then we went to the temple. We went to the ceremony quickly. The ceremony ended before noon. We quickly prepared food at noon. A kind of dish-warmer was ready there. We did not prepare much food. There were only two of us, so we prepared three or five pieces of dumpling and also a little meat. We did not eat much. Times and portions were kept. It had a reason. It is good for health. Again, the ceremony ended in the evening. Certainly, we went to ceremonies in the afternoon, too. When returning home in the evening we drank a cup of tea. We ate food only during daytime. We put some curds or other dairy products in tea to give it more taste, and as it was winter we warmed up with the tea next to the fire, we covered the smoke-hole, lit a candle and memorized Tibetan texts. We learnt until night, until 1 or 2 o'clock. We woke up early in the morning and went to the ceremony again. This is how we lived.

- When did you become a monk again?
- The monastery closed in 1937 when I was 18. Gombodoo *guai* ... Well the ceremony started at that time. Children from the 30 districts used to gather at the assembly hall, which was located where the Pioneer Palace was situated later. Can you imagine how we studied there? The young novices of the 30 districts gathered together in the assembly hall, a large temple building. It stood where the Pioneer Palace is situated now [Mongolian Art Centre for Children's Creativity]. Do you know that place?

The assembly hall stood exactly on that site. It was demolished and the Pioneer Palace was built. Once the assembly hall stood on that very site. Then, we were sent to the army in June 1937. Mandatory military service age lasts from 18–25. Another age, 25–45 is for labourers. Monks being older than 45 were arrested and accused of being ‘revolutionaries.’ The monks were grouped into these three groups. Disciplinary Gombodoo was responsible for religious questions. He paid attention to our fate as we were his direct disciples: we gave him his food every day. Gombodoo *guai* had two faces. He was an *agrimba* tantric master. Philosophy *gavj* and *agrimba* tantric master. Disciplinary Gombodoo was a ‘wicked’ man. If he looked at us he showed an angry face and always swore at us. However, he showed another face to political parties: an incapable fellow. He was a man like a needle with two heads. Therefore, he was not arrested. He remained alone. All the other monks had another fate: many monks were arrested, others were enrolled to the army, and the monks at the age of 25–45 became labourers. They disrobed, married, and had families. They comprised the middle class. The ‘young class’ joined the army, whereas the oldest monks were arrested and executed being accused of being revolutionaries by the Ministry of the Interior. There was a handicraft cooperative called *Modnii 2* [‘Wooden 2’]. A workshop. In the handicraft cooperative of *Modnii 2* stood a yurt with five walls and brand new white covering. It stood behind the Ministry of the Interior. At that time the Ministry of the Interior had just been built. Sometimes 20 or 30 yurts were seen on its northern courtyard. People who were captured at night in the *khüree* and the *Gandan* part were put there. I was a child at that time. The sentinel did not let me go in, but I used to run around, and sneak into the courtyard with people working in the ministry. I saw many yurts there. I saw them by myself. Strings covered the smoke-hole covers of the yurt, and the strings went around even the doors to make sure that they were closed. At night they ordered soldiers to bring the people to the city and put them all into the yurts before deciding their cases. People were brought there, and the next morning some well-paid shooter shot them to fulfill the sentence. They were said to be spies. A hole as large as a building was there. People were taken there by vans. First, they imprisoned *Manzshir khutagt* and also others who were condemned to execution. All of them were taken there. They were made to stand around the big hole, and shot from behind, so that they fell into the hole. *Manzshir khutagt* said before falling, ‘*Kheg.*’ Behind his execution there was also politics. They might have thought about his reincarnation. Finally, *Manzshir khutagt* was executed in 1938

[1937]. They had butchered everyone by that year. Only one famous monk of my *Düinkhor aimag* managed to survive. His house might still stand at Gandan. I am not sure if it still exists as I have not visited that site in recent years. It was the only monk courtyard that has survived. The dwelling of Ravdan *gavj*. Hare-lipped. Ravdan *guai* had two disciples: Luvsan and Dash. They worried about the faith of their master. A summer building stood there. The yurt was taken down in summer, and put away in that building. It had a cellar with a wooden board with a space beneath. There was a gate. Below the floor were a space and a bed on the floor. The two disciples hid their master under the floor to save him from being arrested. These two monks belonged to my *Idгаа datsan* as well as Radnaa *gavj*. Everything came to an end in 1938. It was over. Then, the two disciples informed their master. ‘Telling the truth we were frightened, but hid him and he stayed alive. However, what can we do now that everything has gone?’ He sent his disciples out at peacetime. A representative, a captain, arrived from the Ministry of the Interior to sentence Ravdan *guai*. Captain Tserendash. He visited them and looked around, but did not observe the hidden master. After he had left, the danger was over. I mean it was impossible for him to appear immediately. It was impossible to give him food immediately. Finally, Ravdan *guai* was released, perhaps they proclaimed amnesty to him as he did not participate in the cases. Later, Ravdan *guai* founded this temple. [He initiated the revival of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*.]. One day he said that the summertime ceremony of the Protectors of the Buddhist teaching would be held in *Idгаа datsan*. Food and other necessities were heaped in his courtyard, and some monks gathered there. That *gavj* lived his life, participated in ceremonies and finally passed away. Ravdan *guai*.

- When did you become a monk again?
- Again? I arrived in the Ape month in 1992 at the invitation of Jambaldorj *javron* teacher as the Dalai Lama and the abbot Choijamts initiated me to collect the former monks of *Idгаа datsan* in order to revive its tradition. They said that it was time to revive the temple and also asked me to become a monk again. All old monks living in Ulaanbaatar were requested to join the monk community. Actually, I used to visit the monastery [Namdoldechenlin Monastery] in Bayankhoshuu at that time. I decided to become a monk again and participate in the revival of *Idгаа datsan*. On the advice of the Dalai Lama, the abbot D. Choijamts asked me to participate in the revival of *Idгаа datsan*. There were quite a lot of monks. Old monks were asked to gather. My story is as follows. I took monastic vow from disciplinarian Gombodoo when I was 18. Then, after

joining the army I committed sinful deeds. I joined the army, participated in the war and battles. It was difficult to keep the monastic vows there, so I gave them up. I forgot the prayers. I could not chant them. Therefore, I said that I could not be a monk again. They asked me what I was talking about. They said that it was not a problem that I could not recite the texts. They offered me to sit and recite *mantras* instead. They told me that as I was a shrine-keeper before, so I had to be a shrine-keeper in the revived temple. They told me to be a monk again without feeling guilty. First, my daughter who I live with told me that Jambaldorj *guai* communicated such a request. Preparing a monk robe is also not easy in the case of a low salary. I am on a pension. I worked for 40 years, and then I retired. I mentioned it to them. They understood the situation and told me not to worry about it. My daughter sewed my monk robe. I said to my acquaintances that I would become a monk again. Everyone gave donations, so finally everything was completed. I mean my Buddhist implements. So, I became a monk again in the first month of summer in 1992. I wanted to participate in the revival of *Idgaa datsan*, so I visited Gandan and met Ragchaa *guai*, Naidan, and Jambaldorj. Me and Myagmar joined them and met the abbot Choijamts. We talked about having a building. Thus, the biggest room of the Buddhist College at Gandan was granted for that purpose. The room of finance on the first floor. We gathered there. We realized that Buddhist statues and sacred texts would be necessary, as well as pillows and seats for the monks. We were grateful to have that room. We did not have anything at the very beginning. We did not know if Gandan would support us or not, and if so, how. They gave us old, shabby pillows and rugs. As for the statues, they gave us a clay statuette with its paint missing. We got three such statues. So we had that small clay statue, and started to hold gatherings. Sed *jorvon* of *Idgaa datsan* arrived in Ulaanbaatar from Uvs province. His son was an engineer. He told his son that the tradition of *Idgaa datsan* would be revived, and wooden benches, seats were required. We did not have seats or benches. He told his son to give us some wood planks. Myagmar, me and some others went to his construction site in Zuun Ail and took these wooden materials from there by car. We asked a skillful man to construct the benches, but we did not have money to give him a wage. Usually, people support such initiatives with donations. Shükhert monk of Gandan's economic office provided brown felt for us. We also found some meters of drilling cloths to apply to the felt. Faithful women and children who came to worship also helped us. Some of them had wanted their sons to become monks. Four or five people. We said to them, 'Bring

pin and thread. Prepare sitting rugs for monks, wooden benches from this bad felt coloured with drilling cloth.’ ‘All right.’ ‘Bring your sons to be monks.’ ‘All right.’ So, about 20 children became monks in this way. About 20 children were enrolled. We made them sit on the monk benches and they started to memorize Tibetan texts. However, we did not have any Buddhist statues on the altar. Regarding the three Buddhist statues, there was a sculptor, Jambaa of *Düinkhor aimag*. He was a monk before. A sculptor. He visited us one day and asked, ‘Are you reviving your monastic school?’ ‘Yes, we have these three statues, but the paint peeled off.’ ‘Give them to me, I will renovate them.’ It was such a wonderful offer! He painted them, repaired them with clay and other materials, so we would have three Buddhist statues. Then, Gonchig, the disciplinarian of *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school donated a wooden altar as large as this fridge with the statues of Tsongkhapa, the White Tārā and the Green Tārā which we placed in the north of the room. We placed the Buddhist statues on it. This is how we restarted the operation of *Idgaa datsan* in that room.

Then, we realized that there was no teacher who could teach the young novices. Well, we started to teach them what we knew, general knowledge about Buddhism, practice and custom. Then, we requested a teacher from the abbot Chojamts. He sent a young teacher, Lodon-sharav. He was scrappy. He was not a proper teacher. What could we do? We asked our monk and former monk acquaintances to teach. There were three ex monks, Ragchaa *guai*, Naidan *guai*, and Tserendemchig. Finally, Tserendemchig started to teach. There was a group of about 20 children. Some of them were sent to study in India. Amraa, Tserenjamts and others, about five children. These children were sent to school for four years in the groups of four or five. We realized that we had to rebuild the old temple building. However, we did not have funds for it. Gandan could not support the construction and none of us had the ability to collect money from devotees. However, people expressed their wish to give donations. Many people wanted to finance courses to rejoice. Khatanbaatar told that he could also support a part. The old Dorj with a *maaramba* medical degree said, ‘I will also give a donation.’ So, we decided to reconstruct the old temple building. First, we had to draw a building plan. ‘What would it look like?’ ‘What had been there before?’ We wanted to rebuild the temple on its old site. We held a ceremony on one day and because of that ceremony we were able to lay a foundation for the temple. Then, we told each other, ‘Anyway, one day we will complete it.’ But, it was quite obvious that it would not happen soon.

Anyway, we laid the foundation. Ragchaa *guai*, Jambaldorj, Naidan and others also joined the ceremonies. Also Divaasambuu, the *tsorj* monk of Gandan, and Peljee. These two monks knew ceremonies and ritual texts very well being the monks of Gandan. They also participated in the first ceremonies saying that ‘Our old monasteries also followed the *Ser igchaa* philosophical manual. We are monks following the *Ser igchaa*. Your *Idгаа datsan* also followed the *Ser igchaa*. Therefore, we want to join you and participate in ceremonies.’ Thus, we laid the foundation of the monastic school. Ragchaa *guai* told me, ‘Hey, come!’ All of us went there, recited texts and participated in the smoke-offering ritual held in the building of the future temple. We took a piece of soil from that place, placed there a brick tea, *khadag* silken scarves and stones. We wanted to raise a pole, but the metal had jagged edges. Ragchaa *guai* said to me, ‘Come here. Knock in that metal here. Insert it next to this base, the brick-tea.’ There was a sentinel household at Gandan. I took an axe from there, and inserted the pole as foundation of the temple. It seemed that the pole did not enter the ground, so I tried to beat it. Actually, I was the man who spiked the spike when we laid the basis of the new temple.

First, I participated in ceremonies there for seven years. After the establishment of that monastic school they started the ceremonies, participated in Gandan’s ceremonies with permission, so I joined them. My daughter’s family decided to move to Darkhan in 1998. Accommodation is cheap there and air is better. They wanted to relocate me, this old man staying in the city for a long time, so we moved to Darkhan. Before moving, well, a man was here called Altangerel. Altangerel, Tserendemchig and me remained here. Naidan *guai*, Jambaldorj, Mitüg *guai*, Ragchaa *guai* have passed away. So, Tserendemchig monk was the head of the monastic school, the *shunlaiv*, and I encouraged my acquaintance, Altangerel to become a monk. He could not pass the exam at Gandan. I suggested to Tserendemchig to let him participate in ceremonies. Altangerel came from Zavkhan province; he was a monk of the *khüree* [Yaruugiin Khüree] of Zavkhan province. He could recite by reading the texts, not by heart. I requested to enroll him to our monastic school. They permitted it and Altangerel became a monk there. Later, about two years after the foundation. When I moved to Darkhan, these two old monks remained, Tserendemchig and Altangerel, and some children learning philosophy in our monastic school. I returned here from Darkhan in 2007. I spent eight years there. When I arrived back I saw that the temple building had been constructed! I did not know about it at all as I lived in Darkhan. Altangerel was my friend, and I supposed that he would give a

small donation to the monastery. I have not heard about the reconstruction process at all. So, they have a nice temple building now. I came to see it in 2010. It is beautiful! More spacious than the previous building, and as beautiful as or even more beautiful than our old monastic school. I asked about its fundraising. They told me that a *rinpoche* living in the USA financed it. Now, I am living in Ulaanbaatar again. They asked me to participate in the celebration of the 100-year anniversary of the first foundation of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*. I came and participated in the celebration. 100 years have passed since the first foundation of our temple, and it was necessary to write the history of the foundation, and the history of the revival of the temple. This centenary refers to 1910, when the sight of the *Bogd Javzandamba*, who united religion and politics, was injured. He almost lost his sight. Doctors and other experts examined his eyes and fearfully diagnosed blindness. They encouraged us to organize the *Khailen* oath-taking period with the participation of 10,000 monks, to take refuge, and also announced the construction of this tall Avalokiteśvara statue. His sight improved and blindness disappeared. This is the story of the tall Avalokiteśvara statue and temple. It was built in 1910. 100 years passed since then as it is 2010 now. 10,000 monks held the *Khailen* oath-taking period, and a new philosophy school, *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* was constructed to house the *Khailen* ceremony. The other two monastic philosophy schools, *Dashchoimbel* and *Gungaachoinlin* are older than *Idgaachoinzinlin*.

- (Informant's daughter: Wasn't your male relative also a monk?)
- Yes, the son of my mother's older sister, Dorjpalam was a disciplinarian in *Düinkhor aimag*. When I first came to Urga I lived with him. Later, when the lay population was allowed to live in the *khüree*, to beg, I lived with my mother. Dorjpalam belonged to the tantric monastic school. He was a very active monk. He had to work for a living after disrobing, and finally he died. Actually, his religious education has never disappeared: he was a man who helped people and chanted sacred texts to their benefit in his entire life.

Puntsagdulam Luvsandanzan (1921–2012)



P. Luvsandanzan monk. Photo taken by Alicja Mazurek, 2006

Puntsagdulam Luvsandanzan was born in 1921. He lived in *Erkhem toinii aimag* in Urga from the age of 5, and studied in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*. He disrobed and went to school at the age of 11. He became a monk again in 1990 in Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, having the surviving temple building of *Erkhem toinii aimag* and *Vangain aimag*. Luvsandanzan monk held ceremonies also in Dambadarjaa Monastery, near his dwelling. His grandson is a monk there, too.

We interviewed Luvsandanzan monk twice about Urga with Zsuzsa Majer (2006, 2009). Other interviews are available at www.mongoliantemples.org and www.amantuuh.socanth.cam.ac.uk. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder on 18 September, 2009 in the old temple building of *Erkhem toinii aimag*, current Temple of Dharma Protectors in Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery.

- I found an interesting document in the archives. According to it, the monks of *Erkhem toinii aimag* used to hold *Jasaa Pagma* ceremony on the 10th and 28th days of each month.
- *Jasaa*? Well, it was like that in old times. We held it on the 10th and 25th in this temple. (Private talk.)
- Did the monks of your district use to hold the *Tümed khangal* ceremony in honour of the Dharma protectors?
- *Tümed* was held at *Gandan*. I do not remember much, but it was mainly held behind the Avalokiteśvara Temple.
- Have you heard about the sand *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī tutelary deity prepared here?
- Did you say *Chogo* ceremony? *Nyamba* meditation?
- Did the monks prepare the sand *maṇḍala* of Vajravārāhī?
- Yes, yes. You are right. Its name was *jankhar*. It had a separate building (?). That temple was renovated [rebuilt?]. This is the Buddha Temple of the monastery [Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery].
- Do you remember if the great day or commemoration ceremony of Urga's head abbot, *Yonzon khamba* was performed?
- The *Yonzon khamba*? He was my master. His dwelling was situated behind the National University of Mongolia. Only a warehouse remained in that courtyard, nothing else. Everything was confiscated. His younger brother was called 'Tseren, the Tibetan.' *Yonzon khamba* was executed far, west of Songino Khaikhan Mountain. I do not know if Tseren, the Tibetan is still living or not. He was deported and exiled to the Black Sea. If he is still living he should be more than 90, about 100 years old. Tseren, the Tibetan used to visit my father, Tseveenjalba who was an old smith. They played knucklebone games. I remember it well. I was a small child.
- Was Kālacakra ceremony held in *Erkhem toinii aimag*?
- I do not know. I cannot reply to such questions. I was a child at that time.
- Do you remember the name of the streets in Züün khüree and *Gandan*?

- Streets? They had names, for instance *Vangain gudamj*, *Erkhemiiin aimgiin gudamj*, *Ekh daginagiin gudamj*, *Darkhan emchiin gudamj*. Generally, a district consisted of about three streets.
- Can you define the *shashnii zakhirgaa* religious governance?
- The religious governance was situated in the westernmost end of the western street. If you are interested in the reason of its name, it administered all monks and all monasteries at that time Gombodoo, a monk of Gandan who was a disciplinarian led it. When religious practices were banned, there was a key. All statues and religious implements were counted and registered. Well, religious implements were not counted, but confiscated. It was locked, and only a key remained. Finally, the implements were confiscated, locked, and the key was taken away. The monks brought the key saying, ‘Well, we have given the key.’ Gombodoo *guai* said, ‘We gave the key one day, but they will give it back one day! He was a book-keeper, good at mathematics. He took the key and reopened Gandan in the 1950s perhaps in 1954 as far as I remember [1944]. Well, the *shashnii zakhirgaa* religious governance controlled monks by not letting them to wander purposelessly, giving no offence at ceremonies and to regulations.
- Could you talk about the monks’ handicraft cooperatives called *artyeli*?
- The 6th handicraft cooperative of monks was situated in the south-east, well, no, south-west of this Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery, south of that flat building in the west. If you are asking the reason of such manufactures, old monks, the ones who were not captured gathered there and started to work in such factories. The 6th *artyeli* handicraft cooperative of monks stood exactly here.
- What kind of products did they produce?
- The monks’ cooperative prepared tents and also metal implements. Also tailors worked there. A monk of this monastery knows more about it, but he has not come to the ceremony today. I do not know when he will come next. His name is Dashdorj. He knows more about it than me. I even do not remember its leader. My father, Tseveenjalba was a smith. He crafted items from copper, brass, and silver. I do not know with whom he worked together. Well, Dashdorj monk has not come today.
- Was it a monk cooperative? Were there also cooperatives for herding the livestock in the countryside?
- Not at that time. The rural ones came into existence later.
- What did it mean if a monk ‘*chölöölsön*’ [‘exempted’] in the 1930s? Did he disrobe?

- [Informant did not understand the question.] These manufactures or cooperatives of monks meant that these old monks who had not been imprisoned but were old-fashioned, united and formed a cooperative. My mother, Puntsagdulam was a seamstress. She worked there, too. My father was a smith. I got some tools. I was 11 years old at that time.
- Did you go to school?
- Yes, I did.
- Did you learn Cyrillic letters or written Mongolian script?
- I began to learn the written Mongolian script.
- When was Cyrillic alphabet introduced to Mongolia?
- I do not know. Maybe in the 1940s.
- What kind of teachers worked in that school? Monks or lay people?
- Only lay people worked as teachers. There were no monks at that time at all. How could they be teachers then? Am I right? Before, children had home teachers, monks. It means that these children visited their monk teachers' home. They learnt at the teacher's home. Nowadays, such a teaching system does not exist anymore. Our monastery has a college now.
- What happened to the Tibetan monks in the 1930s?
- Tibetan monks returned to their homeland. Those who remained in Mongolia were captured. I have mentioned the *Yonzon khamba* master to you. His brother was Tseren, the Tibetan. Many Tibetans lived here. *Yonzon khamba* was a wealthy man. They captured him. His younger brother was also captured and deported to the Black Sea. If he is still living he should be about 100 years old. I have heard that he got married near the Black Sea.
- What happened to the small Red Stream assemblies situated in the lay population quarter?
- There were no foreign temples there.
- Were the last Maitreya procession and the *Tsam* dance held in 1937?
- In 1937. Generally, everything was ceased in 1936.
- Did 'informer' monks belong to the district temples?
- Are you asking who knew or who informed about the destruction of the Mongolian religious centre? It was said that the *Yonzon bagsh* and the vice abbot conspired with the Japanese, and wanted to subordinate Mongolia to Japan. I do not claim that it is true. Buddhist items were confiscated with this argument. I have no idea about the reality of this statement. I was a boy at that time. As far as I can imagine a Japanese delegate visited Mongolia and met the *Yonzon bagsh* and asked him to subordinate Mongolia to Japan. It was the main apropos for the confiscation of all Buddhist items. I do not know when, but such a Japanese spy met the *Yonzon bagsh*.

The *Yonzon bagsh* said 'It is possible. I will stand surety for you.' I do not know. Tremendous pretence. Perhaps someone who wanted to become rich and famous charged that the *Yonzon bagsh*, a man with prosperity, wanted to sell Mongolia to the Japanese. He reported it to the Ministry of Security Service, and it was a good excuse for them to execute the *Yonzon khamba*. Children at the age of 11–12 were accused as spies, and eminent monks were said to be wealthy men. The houses and properties of all the monks including learned monks and monks without any knowledge were all confiscated. This is what I have heard from others. Actually, I myself also saw it. You asked me about inner informants, did you not? Do you mean informant monks who named others to be arrested? Some such monks lived here. However, we did not know exactly why certain monks were captured. I was just a boy. I did not have anything in my mind except of eating, drinking, and going to the toilet. I heard more about these past events only later, in my adulthood.

- Can you determine the difference between monks with '*devsger*' mattress and normal monks who lived in the districts? What does the term '*devsgerten*' monk mean?
- [Informant misunderstood the question.] There were skillful monks. Let's suppose that I am reading a sacred text. Someone told me that this monk can be a *mergen* ('wiseman') as he is talented. It was like that. Therefore, many monks could be *mergen* in a district. Monks used to prepare their meals by themselves. They shared monastic tea and meals.
- Did female devotees use to come to your district, *Erkhem toinii aimag*?
- Families did not live in *Erkhemiin aimag*. Do you mean if women used to visit *Erkhemiin aimag*? In the latter years: yes. My father lived with my mother in the latter years. Our home had been at this site for many years. What happened to religion at the end? There were two steps: temples were closed but Buddhist items were not confiscated but left in the closed temples for the first three years. Then, ceremonies restarted for three years, but finally everything was confiscated.
- What did the temple buildings look like?
- [*Erkhem toinii aimag*'s] temple has remained in its original form. It is an old temple, perhaps my grandfather was born at that time. This other temple has been recently built [Gandanchoinchorlin Temple].
- Were there any *ovoos* venerated by monks?
- Certainly. Of course. The *ovoo* venerated by our *aimag* was situated in this direction. I know it by and large. The *ovoo* was venerated. Children participated in horseracing. I was one of them: I participated in the horseraces in barefoot. What can I tell you about it? It happened

during the *ovoo* veneration. We did not get golden and silver medals, but candies and cakes. We raced for candies and cakes. When we reached the goal, well, can you see those two small temples in front of these two big temples? North of them was the kitchen. North of these two temple buildings sat the abbot, the *tsorj*, the changing masters and the other ranking monks. Children were sat there, too. We got large bowl of kumis. The ranking monks japed that we, children could not drink kumis. The kumis had such a large bowl that did not fit into our lap. We could drink some gulps, and then we got candies, cookies, monastic food and left happily. Monks told us to drink only a bit as we were not used to it.

- Did the monks of different monastic districts venerate different *ovoos*?
- Yes, different *ovoos*.
- Near Uрга? In Bayanzürkh or Songino Khaikhan Mountain?
- The *ovoos* of the districts were situated afar. However, the districts also had *ovoos* in the end of the streets.
- Further from the waste dump, isn't it?
- Well, settlement's waste was there. The waste dump was near the current Parliament. Streets were here. Waste dumps were not inside the *khüree* but outside. The waste dump I know was situated south of the Parliament. Here was the waste dump and there was the bridge in the south. There were not much household wastes and plastic bottles in the city. It is a new phenomenon. The 30 districts surrounded the centre of the *khüree*. The assembly hall stood in the centre, north-west from here. Behind it stood the Maitreya Temple, the medical monastic school, the tantric monastic school and many other temples.
- Where were the *stūpas* of *Ziüin khüree*?
- Prayer wheels surrounded the *khüree* inside the waste dump. I was a child so I could not circle the whole area of *Ziüin khüree*.
- Was this the *goroo* circumambulation road?
- Yes, a *goroo* circumambulation road existed. Women, children the lay population were not allowed to enter inside of the *goroo*. People could enter here to prostrate to their masters only on the 14th of the Lunar New Year. In autumn, the food of these masters arrived from the countryside, as the parents of the disciples took it. The masters were also called out. The masters followed their disciples and received kumis and other food and drink coming from the countryside.
- Was the *Tsam* dance performed in front of the Yellow Palace?
- South of the Yellow Palace. As far as I remember it took place south-west from here. As I was a child I played and memorized sacred texts, but I did not realize anything else.

Nyam Dashtseren (1921–2012)



N. Dashtseren monk. Photo taken by Alicja Mazurek, 2006

Nyam Dashtseren was born in 1921. He lived in *Choinkhorlin aimag* of Urga from the age of 5 until 1938. He studied philosophy in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*, where he took the *dom* exam and became a *geshe* in 1937, at the age of 17. He participated in ceremonies in Jagar Molom's tantric assembly as well. He became a monk again in the 1990s joining Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. Later, he became the *shunlaiv* master of Puntsaglin Monastery of the Red Stream in Ulaanbaatar.

We interviewed Dashtseren monk with Zsuzsa Majer twice (2006, 2009), and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. Two additional interviews follow here recorded in 2007 and 2011.

Interview 1

Interview about Urga in general recorded with voice recorder on 28 August, 2007 in Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery. The recording quality is poor.

- Urga, the main monastery of the Mongols had 10 *datsans* and 30 *aimags*. This is now Ulaanbaatar. It was the main monastic town in Mongolia with its 10 *datsans* and 30 *aimags*. It was the biggest monastery of Mongolia including *Gandan*, 10 *datsans* and 30 *aimags*. Many *aimags* and monasteries existed also outside. Mongolia had about 120 [700] monasteries and 700,000 monks. The administrative structure differed from the current one.
- Can you describe how *Gandan* looked like in the 1920s, 1930s?
- 6 *datsans* stood in the centre of *Gandan*: three monastic philosophy schools and three smaller schools. The three large, philosophy schools were called *Dashchoimbel*, *Gungaachoinlin*, and *Idgaachoinzinlin*. These three are all revived now. These are Buddhist universities. About 20,000 monks studied in these monastic schools. These were also schools for children. *Gavj* exam was able to be taken there, and philosophy degrees were obtained. *Züün khüree* was the place of ceremonies. *Züün khüree* was situated here, and *Gandan* there.
- Did *Züün khüree* have 30 districts?
- Yes, 30 districts. Also 10 small assemblies existed.
- Do you refer to the medical monastic school, the tantric monastic school and the others?
- No, no. Those comprised the ten *datsans*. There were small assemblies in the lay population quarters: the *Chö* Assembly, the *Vajracchedikā* Assembly, the *Tārā* Assembly, etc.
- Were the *Chö* tantric assemblies situated in the lay population quarter?
- *Chö* assemblies were situated in the lay population quarter.
- Did Chinese people live in Urga?
- Yes, Chinese, Russians and also Americans.
- Did they operate large stores?
- Yes.

- Please list some other monasteries.
- Three monasteries: Dambadarjaa, Shaddüvlin and Dashchoinkhorlin were located in the north of Urga. (Private talk.)
- Did you study in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*?
- Yes, I did.
- Which deity was the main protector of that temple?
- We studied from the handbook of Ser Jetsunpa. *Dashchoimbel datsan*’s manual was actually Günchin Lama’s handbook, and *Gungaachoilin*’s was Vanchin lama’s. These three monastic philosophy schools were real schools, universities.
- Can you describe the *Bogd*’s Yellow Palace?
- The Yellow Palace stood here, and the Green Palace stood on the bank of the River Tuul. He had a White Palace, too. The *Bogd* had four palaces: the current Bogd Khaan Palace Museum was the Green Palace. West of it stood the White Palace. Here stood the [Yellow] Palace of *Züün khüree*, and the Gandan Palace existed as well. The *Bogd* himself lived in the Green Palace, and the White Palace stood next to that.
- Can you specify the *Chö* assemblies that operated in the lay population quarter?
- Two *Chö* assemblies operated there: Tantangiin Khural and Ish Molomiin Khural [Ish Molom is the personal name of Jagar Molom]. Moreover, the Tibetan Assembly, the Vajracchedikā Assembly, the Tārā Assembly, and the assembly of Dagva *Chö* master, a total of ten or more temples stood there. Also the Buryads’ assembly called Buryadiin Khural.
- Did you use banknotes or coins for paying at that time?
- At first, real silver coins were in use with and Bumaga [warrant] only later. I do not know these means of payment very well. Coins were said to be in use in trade. The Mongolian government introduced *tögrög*. Similarly to the Chinese coin called *yuan*, Mongolian coin was the *tögrög*. Our connection with the Chinese was close, so we used Chinese money and silver. Brick tea was also in use in trade. Pieces of a large brick tea were used as means of payment.
- Were there any markets in the lay population quarter?
- Many marketplaces existed.
- Did people sell sheep and goat there?
- Yes, countless. Sheep, goat, wood, firewood, milk, kumis, dairy products. Marketplaces existed. Some of the districts in *Züün khüree* had round shaped temples, whilst others had rectangular temples. Small yurts stood outside. The temple where ceremonies were held was a large one, and the other buildings were small. They were a kitchen, the workplace of

- the book-keeper worked there, and the ranking monks used to sit in small yurts. [Showing the remained buildings of *Erkhem toinii aimag*, current Temple of Dharma Protectors in Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery.]
- Did kiosks exist in *Züün khüree*?
 - Yes, but not at *Gandan*. Monks' stuff was sold at a shop called *Örgöl* ['donation']. If a monk died, his home furnishings and robes were offered to *Gandan*. It was called *örgöl*. Apart from this shop, other kiosks or markets did not exist here.
 - Where did the abbot of Urga live?
 - Near the school.
 - Do you mean the National University of Mongolia?
 - Yes. Urga had only one abbot. Nowadays, all monasteries have an abbot. There is an abbot at *Gandan*, and another one here [in *Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery*]. The three philosophy schools had also 'abbots'. The 30 districts had 30 'Lamas'. Every small assembly had Lamas, too. The heads of the temples were nominated for given periods.
 - Did Buryad monks live in Urga?
 - Several Buryad monks lived here. However, we could not distinguish them. They did not have their own temples. They were counted as Mongolian monks. A part of them participated in the ceremonies in the lay population quarters, whilst others became philosophy *gavjs*. We did not distinguish Buryad monks.
 - What about fully ordained monks? Were there many such monks?
 - Of course. Fully ordained monks did not have wives and children. They were good monks who did not drink alcohol.
 - Did the monks perform the *Tsam* dance in Urga?
 - Yes, once a year. Also at *Dashchoinkhorlin Khiid*. Nothing has remained from that monastery. The city had these two different *Tsam* performances. Moreover, *Manzshir Khiid* in *Töv* province also had a *Tsam*, and actually all rural monasteries, for instance *Erdene Zuu*, *Baruun Khüree*, and others.
 - Did aristocrats live in Urga? Nobles and princes?
 - They lived in the lay population quarter, separately from the monk population. Officials, *khans*, nobles, princes with *beil*, *beis*, *gün*, *taij* and other ranks. All of them had different names and ranks.
 - Did Urga have an oracle?
 - Not an official one. Only the *Bogd's* brother. He did not have a monastery, but lived at home. Male and female shamans, oracles, etc.
 - Did monks use to hold the *Nügnei* fasting ritual?

- Yes, they held it for three or four days. They did not eat meat during that period of time. They did not sleep for a night. They recited five or six *mantras*.
- Please say some words about the *Jarz* practice of *Chö* practitioners.
- They practiced it in the remote countryside. They slept at a certain place at night, next day at another place, then, again another place. They went to 108 brooks. They contemplated and recited a certain number of texts.
- Did itinerant monks come and go?
- Yes, yes. They were what refugees are nowadays.
- What kind of *Kanjur* sets were available in Urga?
- I do not know. Every monastery possessed the *Kanjur*.
- Did the practice of burning the *Sor* exist at that time?
- It was burnt during the *Tsam* dance. On the 29th day of every (?) lunar month.

Interview 2

Interview about Urga recorded with voice recorder on 5 October, 2011 in Dashtseren monk's home. Erdenee monk of Puntsaglin Monastery and Dashtseren monk's granddaughter assisted the interview.

- Can you identify the buildings of this old photograph? Are these the districts of *Züün khüree*? (Private talk.) Is it the Maitreya Temple?
- Yes, it is the Maitreya Temple.
- When was it demolished?
- In 1937 and 1938. Demolition began in 1937.
- What has happened to the wooden parts of the demolished buildings? Were new constructions built from them or were they burnt?
- Factories were built. They delivered the wooden parts to the handicraft cooperative called *Modnii 2*, and built new buildings. Buddhist statues were sent abroad. Also to Russia. They made guns and bullets from them.
- Can you recognize this temple? Is it *Dünjingarav* situated once at the peak of Bogd Uul Mountain?
- Yes, it faced south. There was a hot water spring nearby called *Taviin Khaluun Us* or hot water of the public. The Russian hill, the Hill of the Consulate was also part of the city.
- Does this photograph depict the Maitreya Temple?
- Yes, it is the Maitreya Temple.

- Was the statue of Maitreya a standing one or a sitting one?
- This is the photograph of Maitreya, the sitting Maitreya. The size of that statue reached 80 cubits. The Avalokiteśvara Temple housed a standing statue, and the Maitreya Temple a sitting statue.
- Did the Russians take these away? These do not exist now, do they?
- No, no, these statues do not exist anymore. None of them.
- Where was the giant statue of Tsongkhapa?
- It stood in Tibet. No, it does not exist anymore.
- You mentioned once that you had lived in *Choinkhorlin aimag* as a child and studied in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*. Do you remember the objects of worship venerated in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*?
- There were numerous holy statues. Countless.
- Did a large statue of Tsongkhapa stand there?
- No. The largest statues in Urga were those of Avalokiteśvara and Maitreya. 80 cubits.
- Have you ever seen the statue of Geser hero in Urga?
- No, I have not seen that.
- Did any Mongolian monks belong to the Geser Temple?
- No, only Chinese monks, not Mongolian monks. Actually, two Geser temples existed. One in Amgalan, and another one here [near Gandan].
- Do you remember the colour of Chinese monks' robes?
- Well, what can I say? It was nothing special.
- Did printing houses exist in Urga?
- Yes.
- In *Züün khüree* or at *Gandan*?
- There were many such places. Every monastic school had such printing houses. The 30 *aimags* and the 10 *datsans*. There were a total of 40 or 50 temples.
- How should we imagine the procedure of burning the *Sor* offering? What is depicted on this picture?
- Monks recited sacred texts for seven days, and then they burnt the *Sor*.
- Was it different from the *Tsam* performance?
- It is different. This is a kind of remedy. It belongs to *Gürem* remedies. It is also possible to burn the *Sor* in a household as a remedy. Remedies, such as *Dügjüü*, and *Oroin yerööl* were held, ceremonies lasted for six or seven days.
- When was the *Sor* offering burnt? At the Lunar New Year?
- No, there is no relation. They burnt the *Sor* on the 29th day of each lunar months. Monks used to burn the *Sor* offering if a remedy was required.

Timing does not matter. Nowadays, *Dügjüü* offering is often performed in monasteries.

- Have you seen this photograph of the circumambulation road around Urga?
- Yes, there were several such things. Prayer wheels surrounded the monastery. This is a prayer wheel.
- Is it the statue of Tsongkhapa?
- Yes, it is.
- Let's see this photograph. Is he the Choijin Lama or the *Yonzon khamba*?
- The Choijin Lama oracle was in trance. This is the Choijin Lama. That is there. [Choijin Lama Temple Museum.] The Choijin Lama was the *Bogd*'s younger brother.
- Were the masterpieces crafted by Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar available in Urga?
- The *Öndör gegeeniikh* was at Amarbayasgalant. That was the monastery of Öndör Gegeen.
- Were his masterpieces venerated also in Urga?
- Yes, also here. They were available everywhere, but the centre was Amarbayasgalant.
- Where was Kālacakra's three dimensional *maṇḍala* situated?
- Kālacakra was in Galav. Dechingalav. Dechingalav Temple stood next to the *Bogd* [Yellow Palace].
- Where was the *loilon*, Kālacakra's three-dimensional *maṇḍala*?
- *Loilon*, the three-dimensional *maṇḍala* depicts a palace. It represents a palace or a monastery. You can see this wooden and metal construction on exhibit in the Fine Arts Museum.
- Where was it exactly in former times? In *Düinkhor aimag*?
- It was in *Düinkhor aimag*.
- Were the sets of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur* available in all monastic schools? Or were they preserved at one place?
- Everywhere. In the *khüree*, in the library. The real, large one written in Mongolian is preserved now in the Central Library [National Library of Mongolia]. Have you seen it? It is still preserved there.
- What types of buildings were situated around *Züün khüree* before the demolition?
- 30 *aimags*, 10 *datsans*. Three temples stood at *Gandan*. Actually, not three but six temples: three large monastic schools and three small monastic schools. Regarding monastic philosophy schools: the western one, the eastern one and the northern one. Next of the northern one stood Maitreya [Avalokiteśvara]. Next to the western one stood the Gradual

Path called *Lamrim*, next to the eastern one stood *Badmayogo*, called *Yogo* for short. Only six monastic schools stood at *Gandan*, and the others in *Züün khüree*. Urga had 30 *aimags* and 10 *datsans*. Also the *Bogd's* palace. The lay population did not live at *Gandan* at all. Women were not allowed to enter there; *Gandan* had guards on all four sides.

- Were these policemen lay people or monks?
- Lay people. For instance, if the family of a monk arrived from the countryside, the given monk's mother was not allowed to enter *Gandan*. The *goroo* or *gorlom* was the circumambulation road around the monastery. Monks were called out if someone wanted to meet them. *Gandan* kept very strict rules and restrictions.
- Did such policemen secure also *Züün khüree*?
- No, only *Gandan*. It was not relevant in *Züün khüree*. Even monks with wives could live in *Züün khüree*. There were also *chavgangs*, old ladies with vows. However, women were not allowed to enter *Gandan*. If a monk of *Gandan* was invited somewhere, an official permission was required. The policemen also used to supervise the lay population quarter as monks were not allowed to sleep there. If it happened they were chased out from the monastery.
- Where was the Parliament situated?
- The Parliament was the current building of the Mongolian State University of Education. At the site of the present-day parliament, a green theatre stood: a wooden construction which burnt down. The present-day Mongolian State University of Education housed the parliament. It had two floors.
- Where was the building of the Ministry of the Interior?
- North of the present National Bank, next to the National Museum. There is a building even now.
- Can you specify the location of the National Police Agency?
- It did not have its own building.
- The Ministry of Livestock Husbandry?
- There is a small bookshop, a square building near the National Library, behind the Drama Theatre. The Ministry of Agronomy operated there. It was small.
- Please describe the circumambulation road of the *Kanjur* and the *Maitreya* processions.
- The *Maitreya* procession circled *Züün khüree*. *Gandan* is irrelevant. You should keep in mind that *Gandan* and *Züün khüree* were two different sites. *Gandan* was the place of education where Buddhist texts were thoroughly studied.

- Have you heard about a temple called *Solgiin dugan*? *Solgo*?
- Pardon?
- Can you define the temples situated once in the north of the assembly hall?
- The assembly hall called *Battsagaan* was located in *Züün khüree*. It was made of canvas and not of wood. A canvas on wooden lattice. Wooden pillars with canvas covering. Monks had to recite texts by heart because it was dark inside. They could not see the books. It was very cold inside. No heat, no fire.
- What about light?
- There was no light. No light. Darkness.
- Were there candles, butter lamps or lanterns?
- Yes, candles and butter lamps.
- Lantern?
- No lantern. Only Mongolian lamps. For instance, people put a fuse in oil and prepared butter-lamps in the countryside.
- Do you remember the monthly ceremonies of the assembly hall?
- Daily chanting.
- What happened on the 8th and 25th of the months?
- Nothing. Only the daily chanting was held there every single day, but nothing special. Sometimes monks held the ceremony of the Ten Protectors, but not in the assembly hall, but in their *aimag* temples.
- Did the head abbot and the vice abbot of Urga use to participate in ceremonies in the assembly hall?
- Certainly, they participated in ceremonies in the assembly hall. The *Yonzon khamba* was the *Bogd*'s master. He was a Tibetan monk. All of them were executed.
- Which objects of worship did you venerate in the assembly hall? For instance, the Ten Protectors?
- There were two large statues.
- Please list the objects of worship of *Düinkhor aimag*.
- Kālacakra.
- A scroll or a statue?
- It was a yellow and black colour image. Such images exist even now. There were various idols. Metal, clay, painted, turquoise. Various types.
- Have you seen paintings depicting Urga?
- Yes, I saw. It is on exhibit in the Fine Arts Museum. (Private talk.)
- Where were such paintings displayed in old times?
- Maybe in *Züün khüree*. These were not available at *Gandan*. (Private talk.)

ULAANBAATAR

- Did only Tibetan people live in the district of the Tibetans?
- No, Mongols lived there. Tibetans were irrelevant. They returned home.
- What did the Tibetans do here? Did they trade?
- They held ceremonies, also traded, they did different things. Livestock, wood, stone, and other articles. Have you visited Mount Wutai?
- No.
- It is not so far. Near. Wutaishan and Kumbum Monastery.

Darjaa Gonchig (1916–2010)



D. Gonchig monk, 2009

The Kharchin man, Darjaa Gonchig was born in 1915 in the year of the Rabbit. He lived in Mengetiin Khiid in Luus district, Dundgovi province and then in *Shüteenii aimag* district in Urga from the age of 18 to 24. He participated in the ceremonies of *Süngiin aimag* in *Züün khüree* and studied philosophy in *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school at *Gandan*. Mengetiin Khiid was a small monastery in the Gobi on the Kharchin *örtöö* relay station road.

We recorded interviews with Gonchig monk with Zsuzsa Majer in 2007 and 2009, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded on 25 September, 2009 with voice recorder and video camera in Gonchig monk's daughter's restaurant, which she opened in memory of her mother, who was a cook. She gave a phone call to me on 10 September, the Commemoration Day of Persecutions after listening to the interview we had recorded with her father in the summer, and invited me for a more detailed talk. She and her son assisted the interview with interesting questions and comments.

- You mentioned once that you came from Mengetiin Khiid to Urga. How old were you at that time?
- I was 18.
- Why did you come from Mengetiin Khiid to Urga?
- In order to study sacred texts.
- How did you arrive here from Mengetiin Khiid? Who did you travel with?
- With my older relative, Arslan.
- With what transport?
- With camel caravan.
- For how many days did you travel?
- For seven days.
- Was it in winter, in summer or in autumn?
- In autumn.
- What did you eat and drink during the trip?
- We drank tea and had a breakfast in the morning. Then, we packed the camels and travelled. We stopped for night near water, drank tea and had dinner.
- What did you eat?
- Cookies and meat.
- Meat?
- Yes.
- (Informant's daughter: Didn't it spoil?)
- No. It was the end of autumn.
- How many of you came with that caravan?
- Six of us.
- Did you wear monk robes or lay robes?
- I wore my monk robe.
- (Daughter: Did you have get homesick here? Did you think about going back to your family?)
- I did not have such thoughts. I had left my home.
- Which way did you arrive in Urga?
- Near Menget was a caravan route at that time. Thus, I came with the caravan.
- From which direction did you enter Urga?
- We came from the south-west.
- How did you like Urga at first sight? Did you like it?
- I liked it.
- Where did you settle down in Urga? In which district?

- The place where I lived first was west of the assembly. We used to go to the temple on foot. We turned to the north, and it was situated in the southernmost part.
- (Daughter: In Orkhon Street?)
- Yes.
- What was the name of that area at that time?
- *Shüteenii aimag*. I lived in an enclosure situated at *Shüteen Avenue*.
- (Daughter: Wasn't it *Biziyaagiin aimag*?)
- No, it was called *Shüteenii aimag*.
- How many monks lived in *Shüteenii aimag*?
- It had 1,000 monks. It was the most densely populated district.
- Do you remember the shape of *Shüteenii aimag*'s temple building? Was it round as a yurt or a rectangular building?
- A large yurt. A large yurt-shaped temple.
- Were there prayer wheels or *stūpas* south of the temple?
- There were.
- What was there exactly? Prayer wheels or a *stūpa*?
- Both *stūpa* and prayer wheel. Both of them. There is the main road today, the Peace Avenue. That avenue was similar to that one but that was without trees. Only ground and dust.
- Which deity was the main protector, the main object of worship of *Shüteenii aimag*?
- Mahākāla was its main protector. However, I participated in the ceremonies of another district. I lived in *Shüteenii aimag*, but my official district where I gathered at ceremonies was *Süngiin aimag*. Śrīdevī was its main protector deity. My main activity was to study at *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school, which had about 3,000 monks. Mahākāla was its main protector. *Dashchoimbel datsan* exists even nowadays. Two [three] large monastic philosophy schools stood at *Gandan: Dashchoimbel*, the Western Monastic School [called *Gungaachoinlin*], and *Idgaachoinzinlin*. The district where I participated in ceremonies was called *Süngiin aimag*. Its main protector was Dharmarāja. *Süngiin aimag* was famous for its learned monks. It was called *Süngiin aimgiin gadaruu* (?). Urga had 30 districts. I lived in *Shüteenii aimag* in the residence of Ayuurzana. I participated in the ceremonies of *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school. *Aimags* were the districts of monks, and monks were divided up there. People coming from my region lived in *Süngiin aimag* and *Anduu nariin aimag*. I belonged to *Süngiin aimag*. My relative, Ayuurzana, also belonged to *Süngiin aimag*, so we participated in ceremonies there.

Süngiin aimag's protector deity was Dharmarāja. It had a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* called *loilon* and a beautiful temple building.

- What was the longer name of *Süngiin aimag*?
- Its protector was Dharmarāja. It seems that monks who came from Dornogovi province used to participate in ceremonies there.
- What was the longer name of the *aimag*? *Sün*? Did it have another name?
- *Süng*. It did not have other names.
- What does it mean?
- Well, it is related to religion. That district had many famous *geshes*, masters of Buddhism. Several monks with *gavj* philosophy degrees also lived in my district, which counted about 300 monks. The *Gandan* part also consisted of 30 districts.
- Do you remember the name of the head monk of your *Süngiin aimag*?
- Well. I will tell you the name of the great Lama of *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school instead. He was Vandan *shunlaiv*. He was the main teacher called *gergan* of *Dashchoimbel datsan*. Thinking back, it means that he was the highest ranking monk in *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
- Do you remember the names of the famous monks of *Süngiin aimag*? Chanting master, disciplinarian or others?
- There is no sense. Vandan *shunlaiv* was the highest ranking monk. He made the monks rise during exams. He was the one who called the monks after each other to stand up before debate. His name was Vandan *shunlaiv*.
- Do you remember other monks?
- He registered the monks. It is similar to that if someone takes a final exam in the 10th class. The monastic schools were like ten-year schools in present times.
- When could the monks take the *gavj* exam at *Dashchoimbel datsan*?
- One was held at the Lunar New Year. One in summer, one in autumn. In other words, there are four seasons. Exams were taken in the four seasons. Once a season. It means that there were four exams in a year. *Gavj* philosophy degree was given four times a year.
- How many monks could take the *gavj* exam?
- There were about 3,000 monks. First, monks with *gavj* degree stood up. Then, the monks with *gaaramba* degree. Then, the 9 *gosoo*. *Gosoo* means one class. The nine classes were: *Khadag*, *Shidev*, *Jumbrai*, *Yuljin*, *Dondon*, *Og*, *Gom*, *Gavdamba*, and *Dom*. Then, *geshe* exam was taken, after ten years of study. These nine classes start every year. If someone finishes the 10th class, he becomes a *gaaramba*. After *gaaramba*, a *gavj*

request could be submitted, and the monks prepare for taking the *gavj* exam. It is like someone graduating from the university.

- What was the reason of *daj ergekh*, circling the arrow?
- *Daj ergekh*? Imagine that someone has finished the 10th class. *Daj ergekh* was the name of the ceremony held at that time. After sitting on the exam, the *daj ergekh* took place. That Buddha had an arrow. That arrow was held and passed in the rows of monks. Regarding exams and receiving the title, I have to mention *Lyankh* in the 10th class. Also *Lhavav dom* and *Jüsh dom*. Also *Lamrim* was the greatest. There were three small *doms*. *Dom* feast was held like that. Almost *gavj*. These are different degrees of those who are masters in Buddhist philosophy.
- Did the monks of the Western monastic school [*Gungaachoinlin*] and *Dashchoimbel datsan* hold debates with each other?
- Yes, they used to hold religious dispute. *Tasganii ovoo* is situated in the north [of Gandan]. Actually, there are two *ovoos*. Monks went to those two *ovoos* and held the debate. It was a kind of feast, the feast of monks. They held religious debates to examine their knowledge.
- Did it last for a day?
- It took three days. Three days.
- Where did the monks spend the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- *Khailen*? Everyone held it in their temples.
- What types of *maṇḍala* was the *loilon* three-dimensional *maṇḍala*?
- Extremely beautiful! Sacred texts refer to the *jankhar* two-dimensional *maṇḍala*. *Maṇḍalas* can be three-dimensional, but also two-dimensional sand *maṇḍalas* or paintings exist. *Süngiin aimag* had a three-dimensional *maṇḍala* called *loilon*. It was made of brass and had wooden parts painted in gold. It was beautiful! Wonderful! That *maṇḍala* was placed in the centre of the four large temples such like here (?). Previously, it was exhibited in the old State Department Store [current Fine Arts Zanabazar Museum]. I do not know if it is still there.
- Who were called ‘informant monks’ in the 1930s?
- [Previous story continues.] Philosophical texts were debated at *damjaa* exams. Vandan *shunlaiv* named the participants.
- Could you define the operation of the ‘religious administration’?
- [Previous story continues.] It became obvious from the exam those who acquired Buddhist philosophy the best, whose knowledge was insufficient, and who did not study at all. Thinking back, *gavjiin damjaa* was a kind of exam. An *agrimba* or a *lkhaaramba*, the most excellent masters of philosophy were similar to present PhDs or professors.
- Have you heard about the registration of monks? Listing of the monks?

- There was a list which contained the names of the monks who were permitted to take the *geshe* exam. A successful exam was required to enter the next level. Monks were divided as follows: being ready for taking the *gavj* exam, the *lkhaaramba* or the *agrimba* exams.
- Have you heard about the term ‘*ev tovkhan*’?
- I have not heard this term.
- Were there differences of monks with ‘mattress’ and simple monks?
- Regarding ceremonies they did not differ. Monks with *gavj* degree used to sit in the upper part [near the altar in the north], followed by monks based on their status. Monks sat in accordance with their status from the top to bottom [from north to south] based on their knowledge and ranks.
- Were there any ceremonies in which only monks with *gavj* degree could participate?
- No. *Gavj*, *gevsh*, and *lkhaaramba* monks were separated at the exams, but it was not prescribed who could participate in it and who could not.
- Did Tibetan monks belong to *Dashchoimbel datsan*?
- Almost never. There were masters who studied in Tibet and then returned home.
- Did a monk with *gachin* title live in Urga?
- *Gachin*? I do not know.
- Have you heard about brick burning kilns?
- No. [The informant continues the previous story.] Monks had different types. Comparing with the present: doctor, chanter. The ones belonging to the tantric monastic schools. Doctors graduated from the medical monastic school. There were monks who studied medical texts. Others studied Buddhist science, technology. Monks were with different interest. They specialized for different fields. As different schools nowadays. Veterinarian, doctor, scholar, astrologer. Everyone followed his own interest.
- Did *Danshig naadam* festival take place in Urga?
- I have not seen that. The official *Arvan zasgiin naadam* and the *Danshig naadam* for the *Bogd*’s longevity were organized. They were held in the present area of horse-racing: Khüi Mandal. The 75 banners and the four Khalkha provinces participated in it at that time.
- Did the monks venerate *ovoos*?
- Yes, they did.
- Which *ovoo*?
- The four large Khalkha provinces had different banners: Zasagt Khan Province, Setsen Khan Province, Tüsheet Khan Province, and Sain Noyon Khan Province. Provinces consisted of banners called *khoshuu*.

- For instance *Tüsheets kharii khoshuu*, *Vangiin khoshuu*, *Lamiin geegen*'s and others, a total of 75 banners. Such as provinces nowadays.
- For instance, did the monks of Urga venerate the *ovoo* of Chingeltei Mountain?
 - Yes.
 - Can you please tell us of more examples?
 - For instance, Sartuul people used to venerate Otgontenger. People of Setsen Khan Province venerated Khentii Mountain. Tüsheets Khan used to venerate Delgerkhaan, etc.
 - Which *ovoos* did the monks living in Urga venerate?
 - Monks left from Urga to their own birthplace and region, and venerated the local *ovoo* there.
 - Now I see. Do you remember the names of famous tantric practitioners?
 - I do not know. As I was not interested in it, I did not know.
 - In which year did the arrest of monks start?
 - It started at the end of 1936, and finished almost in 1937. 1937, 1938, 1939. By 1940 the arrest of monks might have been finished. They were captured from 1936 to 1940. Finally, the monasteries closed.
 - Who arrested the monks? The soldiers of the Ministry of the Interior? Do you remember these events?
 - I do not have information on that. Some people were captured who were said to agitate others. Actually, these people caused confusion among people about religion. Officially. (Informant's daughter: Like spies.) (Private talk.) There were the seven *tsorj* of Urga. The highest ranking monk of them was the *Yonzon khamba*, the head abbot who was Tibetan. *Shüteenii*, *Dandarlin* and others, these seven *tsorj* monks governed everything [religious issues in Urga].
 - (Informant's daughter: Why don't you tell us the story of your master's arrest?)
 - Maybe it happened in December 1937. We lived in the same courtyard. My master was absent. My older relative had just arrived from Altanbulag with his caravan. He unloaded the wood in the courtyard, and went to sleep. Suddenly someone pounded on the door. Two unknown men entered the gate. They asked for his identity and went in. My master had also arrived, and the two men took him away.
 - (Daughter: Did he leave covering his head with his *orkhimj* scarf?)
 - Oh yes. They asked him to show his identity card, and examined that they came from the Ministry of the Interior to sentence him. They said, 'Now that we have captured you, put on your robe.'
 - (Daughter: How did your master behave? Did he cry?)

- No, he did not cry.
- (Daughter: Did he know that he would be captured?)
- He was captured in that very year when he was to take the *gavj* exam of Buddhist philosophy.
- (Daughter: How old was he?)
- About 50 or 60.
- (Daughter: What happened to you after your master left?)
- The caravan from Altanbulag still stood in our courtyard. Wood was unloaded, and I returned home with that caravan.
- (Daughter: Did not you shout on them not to take your master?)
- No, no.
- (Daughter: Why?)
- They called him, showed an official document and took him away.
- (Daughter: Was it in the morning or at night?)
- In the morning.
- (Daughter: What happened to him?)
- Who knows? They took him away, perhaps to the *Battsagaan* [*Bat gün*, ‘enormous deep’ was the name of the prison]. According to our present knowledge, there were such places [of execution] such as Khambiin Ovoo. He might have been taken there and shot. Skeletons of shot monks were excavated there. Wait, who was the Minister of the Interiors at that time?
- Did you pay tax in the 1930s?
- Once I went to my master and I told him that I wanted to disrobe. And I disrobed.
- (Daughter: Did you have to pay tax because you were a monk?)
- If you disrobed you did not have to pay tax. If you remained a monk you had to pay tax.
- (Daughter: You paid tax, didn’t you?)
- I paid. It was about 40 *tögrögs*. It was called ‘monk tax.’
- Did you pay it when you were a monk?
- Yes.
- (Daughter: What did a sheep cost at that time?)
- A sheep cost about 4, 5 or 6 *tögrögs*.
- How old were you at that time?
- I went home to the countryside at the age of 22 or 23.
- Did you pay tax before that time?
- I had to pay when I reached 18. I was of military age, so I had to pay tax.
- Because you were a monk.

- Yes, I was a monk and I did not join the army. Monks did not have to pay tax up to 18.
- Were you familiar with the Mongolian script? When did you learn the Mongolian script?
- In the 1940s.
- Where did you learn the Mongolian script?
- I learnt it by myself and picked it up here and there. On my own. I did not join study groups and other formations.
- (Daughter: When were you enrolled to the Officers' School? My father joined the army and it turned out that he was very talented. He served in Ömnögovi province. Then, he came to study in the Officers' School in Ulaanbaatar. He learnt Cyrillic first in the Officers' School and also Chemistry, Geography, and other subjects. He has a certification. He studied in the first or second class of people who graduated from that school. He studied there for three years. Father, did you study for three or four years in the Officers' School?)
- For three years. From 1943 to 1946.
- (Daughter: It was the period of the war. The first officers were trained there. After finishing the school my father joined the army on the border in Sükhbaatar province, and a new chapter of his life began. When I was learning in the 7th class of primary school we learnt Chemistry. My father knew it very well. I supposed that my father did not know such things. He knew H₂O for water, and many other details. Though my father did not work as an officer, he was decorated with the medal of Excellent Frontier Guards.)
- Did you hear about handicraft cooperatives that had opened in Urga?
- (Daughter: My father had an older brother. He was a monk his entire life, but finally disrobed. However, he did not lose his faith. He hid Buddhist objects of worship in his bookcase. He covered them with books. His bookcase burnt. Several people hid sacred objects in various ways. He passed away in the 1990s. Father, why don't you tell us the story of round Myataw?)
- No, I won't tell you now.
- (Daughter: Please tell us the story of Sovd *gavj*.)
- I was very young at that time.
- (Daughter: There is a monk at Gandan Monastery coming from our region, from Dundgovi province. Father, what is the name of that young monk? The director of the Buddhist College?)
- Soninbayar.

- (Daughter: Soninbayar monk is writing a book about the monks of Dundgovi. He identified this round Myatav: he was a learned monk of Gandan Monastery coming from *Govi Tüshee gүн*'s banner situated in Tüsheets Khan province (present-day Dundgovi province). It turned out that this round Myatav was my fathers' master's master.
- He was the master of my master.
- (Daughter: Soninbayar monk mentioned round Myatav in his book. That man was my father's master's master. We inherited his snuff-box and robes. That robe has an interesting story. I am the only daughter of my father. Somehow I took that *deel* gown. I used to wear it at home when cooking and doing housework. Once, I examined that robe. It was sewed by hand, and not with sewing machine. It looks similar to the monk robes worn by monks in the past. I was worrying about what robe was that. My father said that it was the robe of his master's master. It was inherited by my father's master, then my father. Monks used to hold *dom* exam. This *deel* was worn at three such *dom* exams. My father also inherited a snuff-box and other articles. I consider them unique. Soninbayar monk can say more about them.) Soninbayar monk knows it very well. (Daughter: Elderly men and women in the countryside highly value these objects. We aim to find a solution to get them known, to immortalize them. That's why I invited you to give you the possibility to ask your questions. If this information is useful for your work it delights us. It is interesting even if it is useless.) (Private talk.)
- Do you remember the first newspapers?
- *Namiin үнен* [The Truth of the Party]. *Khödölmör* [Labour]. Where I was in the army there was a journal called *Ekh oron* [Homeland]. *Ulaan od* [Red Star] was the journal of the Ministry of Defense.
- Have you heard about the *Lam nariin setgүүл* [Journal of the Lamas]?
- No, I did not use to read that.
- Only some volumes were published in 1936 and 1937. Have you heard about Erdenepil and Gombodoo monks?
- Erdenepil was the head of the religious administration before. Gombodoo was the disciplinarian of the assembly hall. The main disciplinarian. He was also a book-keeper.
- How many people worked in the religious administration?
- I do not know. I did not visit that place. I went several times to the countryside, so I do not know that data.
- Where was the office of the religious administration? At *Gandan* or in *Züün khüree*?
- In *Züün khüree*.

- Do you know how certain temples could survive the destruction?
- One of the surviving buildings functioned as the training school of the circus [present-day Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery]. That is the reason for its survival. The residence of the *Bogd* was the Green Palace at the river. That is why it has remained [current Bogd Khaan Palace Museum.]. The *Bogd* used to come to *Gandan* that is why that has survived. The Avalokiteśvara statue and temple were built because the *Bogd*'s sight deteriorated. That is why it has remained.
- A pillar of the Western monastic school, *Gungaachoilin* has survived at *Gandan*. Do you know its story?
- It is said that a tank arrived to destroy the remaining pillar of the western monastic school, but it could not. Therefore, it has remained and survived.
- Do you know how the temple buildings of *Vangain aimag* and *Erkhem toinii aimag* in *Züün khüree* have survived?
- One or more districts were used for official purposes. They used the temple buildings.
- (Daughter: My father took the *geshe* exam of Buddhist philosophy in his old age. At the age of 90. He took the *geshe* exam when it became possible again.)
- At Gandan Monastery?
- (Daughter: Yes. A lot of monks took the *geshe* exam when it became possible again. They had doubts about taking it saying that they were only observers. Finally, they performed the clapping hand gesture of debates. This is called *dom tavikh*. Have you met Günchin monk? Did he give information to you? He says that he played the drum when he joined a temple in Urga. Then, when joining the army, he was also a musician. It means that he played the drum for his whole life. My father did not forget the recitation of sacred texts. My grandfather taught it to him, and then he went to the countryside. His master told him to memorize the texts. Certainly, children do not usually memorize the prescribed texts, so his master came on the next day to check if he had memorized it or not. My father pretended to sleep spreading his monk robe over his head. His brother told him to burn the lamp with a wide wick. He followed this instruction. He memorized the text during the whole night with that light, thus next day he could repeat the text.) (Private talk.)
- (Daughter: Do you remember how Mengetiin Khiid was demolished?)
- I know that the Buddhist statues were burnt. The public visited monastic sites, took bricks and demolished the temples as these were considered to be rubbish. They took away the bricks placing them into boxes for tea,

candles and cigarettes. People were told ‘Bring your camels and pack them with bricks.’ The demolition happened when I was in the army, so I do not know the details about it.

- (Daughter: It is said that children played with snuff-boxes that they found. Several objects turned up at that site when I was a child. The wind blew away the pages of sacred texts. Actually, the Mongols themselves demolished the monasteries. Russians did not participate in such physical labour.) (Private talk.)
- Did you receive compensation in the 1990s?
- (Daughter: No.) Perhaps only the relatives of executed people received compensation. (Daughter: Yes, people received compensation. We did not get it and did not ask for it.) (Private talk.) People also differ in the Gobi. We are Kharchin people.
- Kharchin?
- (Daughter: As far as I know we originated in the Kharchins, also responsible for the Kharchin relay stations in Dundgovi province. Kharchin people are the most hardworking, calculating people in the province.) (Private talk.) (Daughter: An older male relative of my father shepherded 200 sheep here, and sold for 7 *lans*. My father was a merchant. He sold them for 9 *lans*. My father’s relative delivered soda from Dundgovi to Altanbulag in the north, and brought tea, drilling coat, and other goods from Altanbulag. He was a man leading camel caravans between Altanbulag and the Gobi. When my father’s master was arrested, this relative was arriving with his camel caravan. My father remained without master, so he joined him and left Urga. Dad, what happened to the yurt, sacred texts and holy images of your master?)
- Who knows?
- Did you manage to preserve old sacred texts?
- (Daughter: He left everything there. However, some belongings of my father and his master are preserved by individuals.) (Private talk.)

Samdag Gonchig (1909–2015)



S. Gonchig monk, 2009

Samdag Gonchig was born in 1909. He was a monk from the age of 6 to 17 in Tegshiin Khüree Norovligvaalin also known as Khorol Tsorjiin Khüree situated in Tsetsen-Uul district in Zavkhan province. He arrived in Urga and settled down in *Shüteenii aimag* at Gandan Hill, and started to learn philosophy in *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school. He disrobed and turned a monk again in the 1940s when Gandantegchenlin Monastery reopened. It means that he was a monk almost for his entire life living in a yurt southwest of the southern entrance of Gandantegchenlin Monastery. Later, he became the main disciplinarian of the revived *Dashchoimbel datsan* and educated several disciples.

Tegshiin Khüree had about 700 monks, ten temples and a wooden *stūpa*. Monks could take *gavj* philosophy and *agrimba* tantric exams, and held the Maitreya procession as well as the *Chogar* offering dance in the Kālacakra Temple.

Zsuzsa Majer and I conducted two interviews with Gonchig monk in 2006 and 2007, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. I recorded other interviews in 2009 and 2011, and also one in 2010 in cooperation with Claire A. Whitaker.

Gonchig monk provided valuable information not only about Tegshiin Khüree and the nearby Galuutain Khüree, but he also shared information about Urga, and monks' life at Gandan during socialism. He had a very sharp mind and many rare books.

Interview 1

Interview about Tegshiin Khüree and Urga recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 13 September, 2009 in Gonchig monk's yurt with the assistance of his granddaughter.

- Please tell me when and where you were born.
- I was born in 1909 in Zavkhan province. My birthplace is in Tsetsen-Uul district.
- When did you take ordination?
- I joined Tegshiin Khüree at the age of 8.
- How many monks lived in the monastery?
- Quite a lot. A famous *gegeen* majesty lived there, the reincarnation of Khorol *tsorj*.
- Approximately how many monks belonged to the monastery?
- About 700.
- How many temples comprised the monastery?
- About ten temples. The assembly hall, the Maitreya Temple, the monastic philosophy school, the tantric monastic school, the Temple of the Oath-Taking Period, the Kālacakra Temple, the Temple of the Thousand Buddhas. The Tantric Temple itself was the tantric school. Also the two temples of the Lama [the reincarnation of Khorol *tsorj*]. The temple of his majesty, a Tibetan temple with a Chinese roof.
- Where was the Lama's temple situated?
- South of the monastery. It was a separate place on the slope. He was a reincarnation. He was reborn. His reincarnation lives in Alagsha these days.
- Which number is the present incarnation in that lineage?

- I do not know. The one I knew was the third incarnation. So, the current one might be the fourth one. I do not know. My life is almost over, so I do not remember.
- When was Tegshiin Khüree founded?
- I do not know.
- (Granddaughter: It existed in full size when you were a child, didn't it?)
- Yes. Perhaps the first Lama founded it.
- Was *Tsam* dance performed there?
- No, only the offering *Tsam* dance of Kālacakra. Kālacakra, Śambhala.
- Was it called *Sagar chogar* which means ground dance and offering dance?
- Do you refer to the name of the *Tsam*?
- Yes. What was the name of that *Tsam*?
- It was called *Chogar*. It was large scale. Called *Sagar chogar*.
- How many monks could participate in it?
- 4, 4, 16. Well, less than ten. I myself also participated in that ceremony. So, the number of monks was like that.
- $4 \times 4 = 16$.
- 16×4 , 32. Its double.
- (Double?)
- The smallest one was performed outside. At least 30 people. Many, many.
- When was it performed?
- On the 4th of the last month of summer. On the great feast day of Buddha Śākyamuni. The celebration of the event when Buddha turned the wheel of Dharma or preached the Dharma at first.
- Was Maitreya procession held there?
- No, Maitreya's statue was circled only inside. Only inside. Without *Tsam*. It was very simple.
- When was it performed?
- On the 15th of the middle month of autumn. In September. Or was it in the first month of autumn? It took place during the *Khailen* oath-taking period. I do not remember.
- Was the *Kanjur* also circled there?
- Only Maitreya. However, there was another, large monastery in the vicinity. All festivals took place there including the Maitreya procession with *Tsam*. It took place on the 15th day of the middle month of autumn. Many ceremonies were held on the 15th of the Lunar New Year. Also Maitreya procession and *Tsam*. Well, what type of *Tsam* was it? All the Dharma protectors participated in that, also the 21 Tārās or black hat dancers. Many, many characters. The celebration of the *Kanjur* also took

place. The *Kanjur*, which was welcomed ceremonially, was taken from my monastery to that bigger monastery. The volumes were packed on camels.

- What was the name of that bigger monastery?
- I do not know. It was called Galuutain Khüree. It was a large monastery. I do not know its exact name. The name of my own monastery was Norovlin, Norovligvaalin.
- Were there monks who performed tantric practices?
- There were, but I did not know them.
- How many such practitioners lived there? Only one or more?
- I do not know. Few monks. Chanting master Owoo used to perform the body-offering. Also Bor Tolgoi Sandag monk. Such practice did not exist inside the monastery. There were only a few people who used to perform the body-offering ritual.
- Was the monastery fenced-off?
- No. Not fenced-off. Some temples of the monastery had enclosures. The biggest temples had fences.
- What were the temple buildings made of?
- Wood. Only wooden temples stood there.
- Were there *stūpas* as well?
- Of course. The eight *stūpas* of the Buddha stood at the edge of the monastery grounds.
- In the north?
- In the west. North-west.
- Were prayer wheels there, too?
- Prayer wheels surrounded the Temple of the Oath-Taking Period. There were many large prayer wheels, too. Around the monastery.
- Was there a circumambulation road around the monastery?
- Yes, people used to circle the monastery.
- Did sheds contain the prayer wheels?
- No, they looked like these prayer wheels at Gandan. All were the same. No walls. Only a roof. Some of them also had walls.
- From where did the monks take drinking water?
- From a well.
- Please clarify its location.
- Inside the area of the monastery, in the area called *Baruun khüree* or the western monastic quarter, there was a well with a depth of 27 fathoms. A very deep well. Monks hoisted drinking water from there.
- Where did the monks deposit household waste?

- In two directions: west and east. There was not much waste, only a little. The waste dump was situated on the edge of the monastery, far from the well. Far, around the monastery.
- Where did the monks live?
- In yurts in courtyards. They put up their yurts in enclosures. They lived in that way.
- Where did these enclosures stand? Around the temples?
- No. Monks' dwellings were situated in enclosures. All of them lived in courtyards. There were streets. It was not so crisscrossed as nowadays. (Granddaughter: They lived in their own enclosures.)
- How many monks lived there?
- About 700. The other, sizeable monastery [Galuutain Khüree] was said to have about 2,000 monks.
- Did the lay population also live there? (Granddaughter: Did families live in that area? In the monastery?)
- No.
- (Granddaughter: Only monks?)
- Yes.
- The lay population did not live there at all, did they? (Granddaughter: Weren't there any households?)
- No. Lay people could not live in the monastery. I arrived here [Urga] at the age of 17. To the *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school. When I have arrived at *Dashchoimbel datsan* it had about 7,000 monks. About 6,000 gathered there every day to hold ceremonies.
- Where did you settle in Urga? In which of the 30 districts?
- In *Shüteen aimag*, *Shüteenii aimag*.
- Here at *Gandan* or in *Züün khüree*?
- Here, at *Gandan*. I lived here originally. *Shüteenii aimag* was situated exactly here in the south. Then, *Dondovlin*, *Jidar*, *Toislon*, *Setsen toinii*, *Anduu nar*, *Dandarlin*, *Maya*, *Jas*. Continuing from the north it ended in the south with *Örlüüdiin aimag*. The last one was that.
- How many such districts belonged to *Gandan*?
- *Gandan* had 30 such districts. Similarly to *Züün khüree*. They had the same names. The first one, starting in the south, was *Shüteenii aimag* and also in *Züün khüree*. At *Gandan*, it started similarly from the south-west with the district of *Manzshir lamtan*. *Manzshir lamtan* was a great holiness living in *Shüteenii aimag*.
- How many streets did *Shüteenii aimag* have?
- Maybe four or five.
- Did the streets have individual names?

- No, these were without names. Monks lived there. Monks knew them themselves. If they had to talk about the street in the north, *Shüteenii* and *Dondovlin* were one street, *Toislin* was one street, etc. district by district. Monks lived in their own districts. Some districts had many monks. 1,000 monks lived in my district, *Shüteenii aimag*. *Sangai aimag* also had 1,000 monks as well as *Zoogoi aimag*. *Anduu nariin aimag* also had a lot of monks as well as *Setsen toinii aimag*.
- Did monks live alone in their yurts?
- Yes, they lived alone. Or two or three monks lived in a yurt. Some masters lived with their disciples. Others lived alone. Well, monks living alone were rare. Generally, two monks lived in a yurt.
- Did monks have relationships with women? Did they marry?
- They did not. It was forbidden. Taboo.
- Did it happen in the *khoroо* lay population quarters?
- Yes, it could happen in the *khoroо*. But it does not matter. There were no restrictions. Monastic rules were not relevant to the population of the *khoroо*.
- Did women use to visit *Gandan*?
- No, they just came to venerate. Accompanied by a policeman. A strict and severe police force operated there. Women followed them, prostrated and then they escorted them out. They could meet their monk relatives at the prayer wheels [surrounding the monastic area]. They had a meal there with the food that these relatives brought from the countryside. The food remained with the monks. Some people were not allowed to enter *Gandan*. Finally, it all became senseless.
- What was the main object of worship in *Shüteenii aimag*?
- I have recorded this information. [He looks for a book.] It contains the names of the objects of worship of not only *Shüteenii aimag*, but also the 10 *datsans*. The 10 *datsans*, *Shüteenii aimag*, all the 30 *aimags* with their objects of worship and protectors. This is an accurate clear record. [He found the book.] Did you ask about the main deity of worship of *Shüteenii aimag*? It was *Zügüü Namnan*. *Zügüü Namnan*, *Vaiśravaṇa*, and *Nechung*. These three protectors. Then, *Dondovlin aimag*'s deities were the Black *Cakrasaṃvara*, the Four-Faced *Mahākāla* and *Dharmarāja*. The next one was *Jadariin aimag*.
- Can I take a photo of this book?
- Sure, but you cannot throw these photographs away later.
- Did you yourself write it?
- Yes. I know them, I know all of them well.

- Do you remember the names of monks living in *Shüteenii aimag*? Disciplinarians and others?
- How can I tell you the name of all those monks? The names of so many, hundreds of monks?
- Then please provide only the names of the high ranking monks.
- I know them by and large. First of all, *Manzshir lamtan*. There were many monks with *gavj* philosophy degree. I do not know them. My master was a *gavj*, too, but I cannot talk about him. Well, *Yadamjav*. *Yadamaa* from the same family, *Tuvaanjav gavj*, *Darisüren gavj*, *Sonom gavj*, *Khaidavjunai gavj*, *Shagdar gavj*, and many others. Also *Tserendorj gavj*, etc. *Sanjsüren guai*. Also another master of mine. Two *Dorlig* of the *gavj* exam. *Zümbe gavj*, *Süren gavj*. There were many others who I did not know.
- Where did the monks spend the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- In the northern monastic philosophy school called *Idгаа*. The big *Idgaachoinzinlin*.
- Inside *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* or next to it?
- In *Idgaachoinzinlin*. In the north. Do you know my temple [*Dashchoimbel datsan*]? The current, newly built one is that temple, *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*, behind mine. Monks used to hold that ceremony there. It was called the oath-taking period of 10,000 monks. The monks did not fit in the space between the three monastic schools. It was such a large scale event! It took place there.
- Did the monks living in *Züün khüree* hold the oath-taking period in *Züün khüree* or did they also join the ceremony at *Gandan*?
- All did it here [at *Gandan*].
- Who was the most prominent monk of *Gandan* at that time? What title did he bear?
- The most prominent monk of *Gandan* was the abbot of the *khüree*: the *Yonzon khamba*. The abbot was the highest rank.
- Who was the *shunlaiv* master of *Dashchoimbel datsan*?
- Well, there was another high ranking monk, the *ded khamba* or vice abbot. Well, *Vandan guai* was the *shunlaiv* at that time. *Vandan shunlaiv, gavj* of *Süngiin aimag*. I am talking about extinct things. He was arrested and never came back.
- When did the arrest of monks start?
- Wait, when did it start exactly? At the very beginning. The most eminent monks were doomed in the case of the *Yonzon khamba* and others on 22 September in the 27th year. They were said to be executed on 10 September.

- In the 27th year? In 1937?
- In the 27th year. They were arrested in the 27th year in Mongolia. Nowadays, we refer to that year as 37. I do not know why the date has changed to 37.
- Were the monastic schools demolished in 1937 or 1938?
- In 1938. They were demolished in 1938 and 1939.
- Were the enclosures of *Shüteenii aimag* similar to the present ones that are situated south of Gandan?
- At *Gandan*? They differed from the current ones. Timber. It was built of timber, and its top was split. Pole fence. It differed from current ones. Courtyards always with a railed fence. With beam on pivot. The Chinese courtyards were different, too.
- Did the enclosures have a number?
- No, it is a new practice. These were called ‘the enclosure of this or that *guai*’ at that time. The yard of that lama *guai*, or that *lambuguai*.
- What was situated west of *Gandan*?
- Nothing. There was nothing. It was said to be the old site of the *khüree*.
- Can you repeat it?
- That site was said to be the old site of *Züün khüree*. *Züün khüree* was situated once in that western part, and finally settled in the east. People used to talk of it like this.
- I have heard that the *Damnuurchin* area was situated in the east of *Gandan*. Can you confirm this statement?
- *Damnuurchin* was a Chinese part, east of *Gandan*. Also beyond *Züün khüree*. These parts were called eastern or *Züün Damnuurchin* and western or *Baruun Damnuurchin*. There were Chinese people who carried goods on a pole and sold them.
- Have you heard about the district of the Tibetans?
- District of the Tibetans? I do not know. I just know the Chojjin Lama’s residence. Khaidav *choijin* oracle was the *Bogd*’s older or younger brother.
- Was there a large *stūpa* in the north of *Gandan*?
- Yes, *Jarankhashariin suvarga*. It was demolished later.
- Exactly when?
- I do not know.
- When was the Avalokiteśvara statue taken away from Gandan?
- Maybe in the 28th year. The 28th year according to the old Mongolian calendar. It was changed to 1938.
- What happened to the confiscated Buddhist statues?

- Russia. (Granddaughter: He means that all of them were taken to Russia.) There were many sizeable Buddhist statues. All of them were taken away. This is what old monks told me. I did not see the procedure itself. Generally, all of them were taken to Russia.
- Do you know anything about Gombodoo and Erdenepil monks?
- I do not know. Gombodoo *guai* was a disciplinarian. The other was a *gavj* at *Gandan*. Called later as *Erdene khamba* abbot.
- Where did you work after disrobing? Did you pay tax? Did you join the army? Or did you stay here and were you a monk for your entire life?
- I went to Gandan and did manual work: porter, etc. Apart from this I did not do anything else. Also I worked with a man with a raft on the River Tuul.
- Did you pay tax in the 1930s?
- I paid military tax. (Laughing.) I did not join the army, so I had to pay tax.
- How many *tögrögs* did you pay?
- Well, 450, sometimes 10 or 20 *tögrögs*. Finally, I paid about 480, or 50. I do not remember. You record everything what I am saying. I hope you won't inform on me at the end. (Laughing.)
- No, no.
- I am afraid after that strange period.
- (Granddaughter: This girl is doing research in the archives. She studies old documents there. She claims that she saw a register of taxation. About the approximate amount of tax paid by monks. She would like to confirm this information.)
- Oh I do not know that. Monks who were poor might have paid less tax. Finally, they joined the army. Monks who did not join the army, but did not pay the tax were punished.
- Which deity was venerated in Tegshiin Khüree?
- *Dashchoimbel datsan* was its parent monastic school where Mahākāla was venerated. In the other, Śrīdevī was venerated.
- Did monks perform the *Nügnei* fasting ritual?
- Yes, they held the *Nügnei* fasting ritual.
- When?
- In spring. Well, when was it in spring? *Garav choijid* lasted for 16 days. I was a child at that time. I just sat there. I might tell you a lie. (Laughing.) A child's life is a different thing. (Laughing.)
- When was Tegshiin Khüree demolished?
- In the same time when all other monasteries were destroyed. All of them were the same.

- Was the reincarnation of Khorol *tsorj* captured?
- No, he was abroad at that time. He studied in Lhasa and took the *lkhaaramba* exam of Buddhist philosophy there. He was a famous monk, a saint. He left before the purges to study in Lhasa.
- Did he go to Inner Mongolia?
- No, to Tibet. To Lhasa. When I was 9 years old we sent him money to support his application to the *lkhaaramba* exam. We sent money and goods on 30 camels. Our family sent it. He took the *lkhaaramba* exam and stayed there. When he wanted to come back he arrived at the south of Baldan Zasag near the lake Bumbiin Nuur in Ömnögovi province. There, he said ‘I won’t go home. I will not continue my trip. I will return back.’ Actually, he wanted to come home, but he said, ‘There are people in our monastery wearing a kind of uniform. I will not go there.’ So he returned back to Lhasa. His monastery is still there. In Alagsha. A large, old monastery.
- In Alagsha? Is it situated in Tibet?
- In Alagsha. That is a Mongolian site.
- Does that area belong now to China?
- Yes.
- Can you tell me if Tegshiin Khüree has been rebuilt? Are there active temples now?
- No, there are no temples. I built some *stūpas* there. (Granddaughter: Eight *stūpas*.) Now, I am planning to rebuild the temple of that Lama. I have stopped due to lack of money. I hope I will manage it. (His granddaughter shows a photograph, ‘My grandfather erected these *stūpas*. Also this prayer wheel. Also an incense burner. At the old site of Tegshiin Khüree.’) We have laid the foundation of a temple.
- Very beautiful!
- This is Tegshiin Khüree.
- Did the monastery have another name? Is Tegsh a place name?
- Its name is *Norovlin*. The old name. *Norovligvaalin* was the name people used to refer to it. (Granddaughter: There is a hill called Setsen Uul. Sandy in the south. Here is Tegshiin Khüree.)
- Was the name of the hill Tegsh?
- Its name is Batsuuri.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks venerate?
- Monks did not really venerate hills. They did not go often to venerate the *ovoos*. However, there are places of veneration. Some monks used to venerate hills in the countryside. Behind the *stūpa* is a hill of veneration. A mountain. Two or three places were venerated there. On the top of

the hill. Monks performed the *Tügiin damjaa* exam on the top of that hill as well as the exam of the monastic school. This is what I could do: I placed an incense vessel there, a *Dünchüür maani* prayer wheel, built the eight *stūpas*, and also a *stūpa* next to the temple. [Description based on a picture.]

- It is wonderful! You achieved a lot. I have asked all my questions. Thank you for the interview. Can you tell me if there are other elderly monks at Gandan apart from you?
- We are only two of us. The other monk's name is Luvsan.
- Oh yes. He is from Khovd province.
- I am the only remaining living monk of Tegshiin Khüree. Two of us remained from *Dashchoimbel datsan*. A *stūpa* has been built at the site of mass execution. Have you seen that?
- Do you mean the *stūpa* at Khambiin Ovoo? I have heard about it but have never seen it.
- Our weekend house is near that site. Don't you want to see it? My house is in the vicinity. Near the *stūpa*. It is a nice *stūpa*. There is only one *stūpa*. The saints, reincarnations, abbot, *tsorj* monks, monks with *gayj* degree, and all other high ranking monks were slaughtered at that site.
- Did another such place of execution exist at Shar Khad?
- Yes, also there.

Interview 2

Interview recorded on 9 November, 2010 in Gonchig monk's yurt with the assistance of his granddaughter. The questions of Claire A. Whitaker regarding Buddhism during the period of socialism were also asked.

- (Claire: Did you recite sacred texts after being disrobed? Have you ever given up the recitation of Buddhist texts?)
- No, I have never given it up.
- What was your job after disrobing?
- I did not really work. Actually, I have never moved from here. I spent almost all my life here.
- Did you become a monk again in the 1940s?
- Yes, I did. I participated in the ceremonies of the reopened monastery.

- (Claire: How many monks were here at Gandan at that time [during socialism]? How many devotees used to come for ceremonies? In which language did the monks chant?)
- Devotees were similar. There were few monks. About ten. Finally, many monks held ceremonies again with many devotees. Texts were recited in Tibetan as usual.
- Who was the abbot at that time?
- His name was Erdenepil.
- Was the abbot Erdenepil a monk from Urga?
- He was a *gavj* in my *Dashchoimbel datsan*. He was an eminent and famous monk.
- How did the monks reopen Gandan Monastery? Were the old objects of worship brought back?
- Gandantegchenlin Temple has partially remained, and the other part was renovated. The Russian army lived in it after its operation had ceased.
- Was the disciplinarian called Gombodoo?
- Yes, Gombodoo *guai*. Also Erdenepil *guai* and about another ten monks. One of them was my master. He was a very eminent monk. His name was Luvsan.
- Have you seen the Journal of the Lamas published in the 1930s by Erdenepil *guai*?
- Oh yes. Such a journal existed. I have seen it. It was written in Tibetan. Written in Tibetan letters.
- Did you like to read that newspaper?
- No, I didn't.
- What was it about?
- Monks knew it well. They knew that a disaster would happen after the publication of such a journal. And it came true.
- [Sanjaa monk, the disciplinarian of *Dashchoimbel datsan* of Gandantegchenlin Monastery entered the yurt. This part includes the conversation of Sanjaa monk and Gonchig monk. (Questions of Sanjaa monk: Did *Sraidorj nomun khan* belong to our *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school in former times, following *Günchin igchaa* manual book?
- *Sraidorj nomun khan* was the escort of *Jasiin khamba lam*. *Jasiin khamba lam* was an eminent and famous monk. The other was a great saint. Accompanying *Jasiin khamba lam* was a great challenge.
- Was he the previous reincarnation of *Jasiin khamba lam*? Or was he the escort of *Jasiin khamba lam*?
- Yes, he lived with *Jasiin khamba lam*. He was a small child sworn in the school of Sükhbaatar. He was one of the first pupils there. Choibalsan

- said that he was not adequate, so sent him away. He also kicked out one of the monks who studied in my class. So, that monk did not join the school. Later, he went to the accountant school to study. Finally, he became the accountant of the electric transport. Wait, when did he pass away? He was more than 40 years old. (Granddaughter: He died in the 1950s.) No, in the 1960s, almost in the 1970s. I participated in the ceremony of his relics. His relics were kept in until the recent years.
- Was he the 7th incarnation of that lineage? The current one is the 8th one, isn't he?
 - He is a great saint. He was a very good man. Finally, he disrobed and wore a strange clothing. A young boy called *Sraidorj nomun khan* has been acknowledged recently. (Disciplinarian Sanjaa has left. We continue the questions about socialism.)
 - Was it difficult to be a monk in the 1940s?
 - Of course, it was difficult. It was not possible without good sense.
 - Who permitted someone to take ordination?
 - The abbot. The religious administration was an official institute.
 - Were the ceremonies such as performing a *maṇḍala* the same as before 1937? Was the daily chanting the same?
 - We held the ceremonies in 1940s such as nowadays.
 - (Claire: How was the relationship of Gandan and the government?)
 - Good.
 - (Claire: Did the party members use to visit Gandan to prostrate?)
 - No, no. They did not prostrate at all. They monitored the devotees.
 - Did devotees ask monks to recite sacred texts?
 - Yes, some of them asked us to recite sacred texts to solve problems. Some of them not. Devotees differ.
 - Was Maitreya procession held during socialism?
 - No, it has been recently revived. Have you seen the photographs of the old Maitreya vehicle?
 - Yes. It was huge.
 - No doubt.
 - Did monks hold the *Khuuchin khural* ceremony before the Lunar New Year? Did they burn the *Sor* offering?
 - No.
 - Did monks celebrate the feast days of the Buddha and the commemoration day of Tsongkhapa called the 25th of Butter Lamps?
 - Yes, monks held ceremonies themselves.
 - (Claire: Did the monks of Gandan use to go to the countryside to recite sacred texts?)

- No.
- Did people come to Gandan from the rural areas to have sacred texts recited to them?
- Yes, but not many.
- Were the monk robes, the *ovoodoi* and *shashir* hats similar to the old, traditional ones?
- Yes, we used old robes.
- Did the monks go to venerate *ovoos*?
- No. This tradition has just been revived.
- Did they hold religious debates?
- No.
- (Claire: Which year did people start to come again to prostrate at Gandan?)
- They came only occasionally. People did not sit down in the temple building.
- (Claire: Have you heard about objects of worship that were hidden and preserved secretly by the monks? Could they hide them at home?)
- It was very rare. Only a handful of such objects could survive.
- You have showed to me a list of the objects of worship of Urga's 30 districts. Did you write it yourself?
- Yes. I knew them, so I wrote it down.
- Certain researchers claim that 32 districts existed in Urga.
- No. Only 30.
- (Claire: Could monks go in streets wearing their monk robes during socialism?)
- No, they did not wander in the streets.
- Was it like that from the 1940s to the 1990s?
- It became better and better step by step before 1990. Then, everything became free again.
- Were there political restrictions for monks? (Granddaughter: Were there taboos for monks?)
- Actually, people who were lazy in work and study and people who were close to the party were not allowed to be monks at Gandan Monastery.
- Did they oppress you during socialism?
- Yes. Many such things happened. They did not know how they oppressed us the most. It happened in the background and not directly.
- Did you do any other work?
- No, I did not. I was simply a monk.
- (Claire: Did you celebrate the Lunar New Year in the same way as before 1937?)

- It differed a bit.
- Did monks greet each other at the Lunar New Year?
- Yes, they did. But only with a reason. Monks greeted each other.
- Did the relatives also greet each other?
- Relatives greeted each other. Finally, the public prevailed and greeted each other at the *Malchidiin tsagaan sar*, the Lunar New Year of herders.
- Similarly to the practice of former times and great saints, did the monks also perform longevity ceremonies for Choibalsan?
- No. Performing longevity ceremonies was forbidden. Only the ablution ritual and the *maṇḍala* offering were permitted to be performed in general.
- Did people use *khadag* silken scarves during socialism?
- Yes, there were old *khadags* in use.
- Were there occasions to present a *khadag* to a monk?
- Devotees gave *khadag* scarves only to the monks.
- Was the assembly hall of Gandan a stable before 1944?
- It was the equerry of the Russian army. Russians lived in the current Vajradhara Temple. Actually, Russians lived in all three temples. [The surviving old temples of Gandan.]
- How did *Didinpovran* function at that time?
- Nothing was inside. It was empty.
- Did the Avalokiteśvara Temple house the archives?
- It was not an archive, but abandoned. Finally, the books of Gandan were stored there. The northern monastic school was situated near it. This *Idгаа datsan* was a large temple at the current site of the Kālacakra Temple. Russian women lived and gave birth there. It was not demolished at that time. Well, now it seems that I am talking about useless things.
- (Claire: How many temples were active during socialism?)
- Only Gandan. All the other monasteries were annihilated before. *Züiin khüree* was situated once in the east. That was the seat of governance. About 70 temples stood there once, but at least 30, 40, or 50 temples. The Vajradhara Temple, the *Bogd's* Yellow Palace, the assembly hall which was a big temple called *Battsagaan*. Various temples stood there. The large temple called Öndör Maidar [‘Tall Maitreya’]. Many temples. The 30 temples of the 30 districts. Also the tantric school, the astrological school, the medical school, the Maitreya Temple, and many other temples. An old film recording should be preserved in your country [USA]. It should still exist. A documentary that shows the complete state of the *khüree* at the time. They recorded all ceremonies, the *Sor* and the *Jakhar* offerings. They photographed all the monks. I was very young at that

time. A child. They recorded the ceremonies, the *nyamba* meditation and the ritual implements asking the monks to hold services. They documented it. (Private talk.) The temple where I myself studied was called *Dashchoimbel datsan* with about 6,000 or 7,000 monks. Only two of them are still alive. One of them is me. The other one is an old man. How could current people know about it? Everyone died. Everything was destroyed. Everything disappeared. No one remembers them. The great saints, *rinpoches*, abbots, and *tsorjs*, all passed away.

- (Claire: Did Tibetan masters arrive after the 1990s?)
- Not many.
- (Granddaughter: Only Mongols themselves?)
- Naturally.
- (Claire: Were your masters also the monks of Gandan Monastery?)
- Yes.
- (Claire: Did people visit you during socialism asking for an advice about how to be Buddhist?)
- No. They were afraid. It was impossible even to bear a rosary. They were afraid.
- (Claire: Were there spies in the monastery?)
- I do not know.
- (Claire: Did policemen or soldiers come to check monks at ceremonies?)
- No, they did not.
- Were the ‘religious representatives’ monks or lay people?
- Lay people. Laity. Nominated officials.
- Did they prescribe for the monks what to do?
- Yes, they did.
- Did they give advice?
- Sure.
- When did the institute of ‘religious representatives’ start?
- At the beginning of socialism.
- (Claire: How were the *datsan* monastic schools before the 1990s?)
- (Granddaughter: Only the temples of Gandan have remained. The monastic schools are rebuilt temples.) I belonged to Dashchoilin Monastery at that time and came here only later.
- Did devotees bring their children to take ordination?
- Yes. Some of them gave their sons to be monks. Others were visiting the monastery over and over again, and brought their sons only later. Now, the number of monks is not bad.
- How could the monks in the countryside maintain the Buddhist tradition? Did people living in the countryside pray?

- No, they did not pray at all or prayed only in secret. (Granddaughter: Actually, they prayed in secret. That is how people's faith has remained.)
- Did monks hold ceremonies in the countryside in secret?
- No, no. Some people held ceremonies in secret, but they were captured.
- (Claire: Have you heard about monks who left for the countryside at the time of persecution, who were sentenced, but managed to get free in a miraculous way?)
- No.
- (Claire: Did people venerate the *ovoos* during socialism?)
- No, that tradition was interrupted.
- (Claire: Are you happy? Are you happy that Buddhism is spreading again in Mongolia?)
- Yes, it is great! It is a nice feeling. The [9th] *Bogd* has visited us; the [14th] Dalai Lama has visited us. Many *rinpoches* and saints are here.
- (Claire: Do you believe that monks can fly?)
- Of course they can fly. If they can complete their own task, meditation, they can fly. If not, they will die and be reborn, but in an advanced rebirth. Many monks cannot fly. They have failed so they have to live like this. Did you visit our temple yesterday? (Granddaughter: The 8th reincarnation of *Sraidorj nomun khan* was acknowledged here at Gandantegchenlin Monastery. A boy at the age of 16 called Davaasüren.) A teenager.
- (Claire: How did they know that he was a reincarnation?)
- Certainly they know it. The *Bogd* can recognize it. The Dalai Lama can recognize it. He himself also knows that he was born here.
- How old were you when you arrived in Urga?
- I was 17.
- Who did you come with?
- With two men. On camels. (Granddaughter: He arrived from Tsetsen-Uul district of Zavkhan province.) From Tegshiin Khüree, Norovligvaalin monastery. We travelled for 29 days.
- How did you arrive?
- On camels. Straight ahead via the northern part of Arkhangai province, the southern part of Khövsgöl province. On a direct and straight way from Zavkhan.
- Did you follow the *örtöö* relay station road?
- We arrived on another way.
- Did you settle in the *khüree* after your arrival?
- I settled at *Gandan* and started to study at *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
- How many districts did *Gandan* have at that time?

- It is senseless to distinguish the districts of *Gandan* and *Züün khüree*. They both had the same 30 districts. *Züün khüree* had 30 districts and the district temples were situated there. Also monks arrived at *Gandan* from there to the districts with the same name. They studied at *Gandan* and participated in the ceremonies of the temple of their given district in *Züün khüree*.
- Did you register after arriving here?
- I came with a white paper, with a document.
- To whom did you give it?
- To the Ministry of Religion.
- Did your family members often come to *Gandan* to meet you?
- My family members did not live here. Only monks. Brother, uncle.
- Did they come from the countryside?
- They came from the countryside.
- From where did monks take drinking water?
- There was a well here. Also in *Züün khüree*.
- How many *stūpas* stood behind *Gandan*? Were there *stūpas* on the circumambulation road?
- Yes, there were. The complex of the eight *stūpas* of the Buddha, and many other *stūpas*.
- What happened if a monk passed away? Where were the corpses placed?
- In the vicinity of the slope of *Dalan Davkhar* (?). Placed on the surface, at a place where nobody lived. Corpses soon disappeared.
- In what position were they laid? Were men and women laid in the same position?
- The same. They were laid on their right sides, putting the arm like this and doubling up the leg.
- Did toilets exist at that time?
- On some sites yes, others no.
- Where was the waste dump?
- Litter did not exist. Litter like today did not exist. Ash and bones were put in metal buckets and taken to a small place in the west. A moderate amount. Cleaning it away every week. All the monks of *Gandan* participated in cleaning.
- How many stray dogs lived on streets?
- There were dogs. More than now.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks of *Dashchoimbel datsan* venerate? Did the *datsan* have different *ovoos*?
- They used to venerate *Chandmaani Ovoo*, south of *Bogd Khan Uul* Mountain.

- Where were the *ovoos* of *Gungaachoilin* and *Idgaachoinzinlin datsans*?
- The monks of *Gungaachoilin datsan* venerated *Dünjingarav*, and the monks of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* venerated Chingeltei. It does not matter.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks of *Shüteenii aimag* venerate?
- They venerated Chandmaani.
- Annually?
- Yes.
- Was there a similar festival as *Naadam* today?
- I have heard about the *Doloon khoshuu danshig* with wrestling, but I have never seen it. Later, also the *Arvan zasag* existed. *Arvan zasag* was the *Naadam* of soldiers.
- Can you specify what kinds of foreigners lived here in large numbers before socialism?
- Chinese. There were also Russians, Americans, maybe British and German people.
- Do you know if Hungarians lived here?
- I do not know. I was too young.
- Apart from the tea and meals of the monks, did monks cook for themselves buying meat and flour for instance? (Granddaughter: Did monks have money? How did they get their tea and meals?)
- There were donors called *jandag*. Tea and meals were prepared in our *Dashchoimbel datsan* monastic school.
- Was brick tea used as currency? Or Chinese and Russian coins and paper money?
- Mongolian *tögrög*.
- Were there any Chinese brick burning kilns? If so, where?
- There was. (Private talk.)
- Where was it situated?
- I do not know. The Chinese kiln was close. Close. Near the current stadium. Also in the direction of Nalaikh. I do not know precisely. Chinese bricks were produced there.
- Can you list the surviving objects of worship of Urga available at Gandan Monastery?
- Vajradhara, Mahāpratisāra, Maitreya, Öndör Gegeen, Tsongkhapa, etc.
- Is this Maitreya statue the same that stood once in the old Maitreya Temple?
- No, no. That temple housed a giant statue of Maitreya. That was a two-storey building with the sitting statue of Maitreya. Maitreya at a height of 80 cubits.

- Which temple housed the largest statue of the *Bogd lam*, Tsongkhapa?
- Sorry? The *Bogd Javzandamba*'s artworks? [The informant misunderstood the question.] I do not know. A part of them are in the temple complex of Choijin Lama. The museum at the river [Bogd Khaan Palace Museum] also included statues which were confiscated in the 1930s. I do not know as I have never gone to these sites to list what they have.
- Did a printing house of holy texts exist here?
- Certainly.
- Monastic school by monastic school?
- There was a large building, a printing house in the north. Also the *Ikhiin datsan* in *Züün khüree*. Printing houses stood at some places, but I do not know their exact number. Monks carved blocks and printed sacred books there.
- Have you heard about the Yellow Book of the assembly hall?
- No, I have not.
- How was the temperature of the temples in winter? Was there cold?
- It does not matter. It was cold, cold. No fire.
- Where was the platform calling the monks for ceremonies situated at Gandan?
- One stood north of Gandan. In the north, behind the high temple [of Avalokiteśvara]. The three monastic philosophy schools had only one signal of the *büree* horn. The temples in *Züün khüree* had their own horns. All districts. However, the three monastic philosophy schools had only one.
- Was also a gong in use at that platform or only a conch shell?
- A conch shell.
- Did they blow it only once?
- Yes. It was an alarm. A gong was also beaten. At the time of ceremonies they beat *kharanga* gong once at sunrise, and once in the afternoon as the signal for going to the temple.
- Did Tibetan, Buryad and Kalmyk monks live at *Gandan*?
- Only a few Tibetans and a few Kalmyks. Only one or two from Kalmykia. As far as I remember. However, many Buryad monks lived there.
- Do you remember the names of famous reincarnations?
- Yes, I know them. *Manzshir lamtan* resided in a monastery in the south [Zuunmod, Töv province]. He belonged to our *Shüteenii aimag*, so he also had a residence there. He was arrested. After coming out of the prison he stayed in our district in his building. He was arrested there and taken away.
- I have heard that he was the first monk that was sentenced.

- Yes, the *Yonzon khamba*, the vice abbot, about ten eminent monks. All of them were exceptional monks, saints and reincarnations.
- Was the *Yonzon khamba* a Tibetan monk?
- He was Tibetan.
- Were the other monks all Mongolians?
- Mongolian.
- Did *Manzshir khutagt* show any miraculous deeds?
- I do not know. We did not know about it.
- Was he interested in women?
- Who? *Manzshir*? No. Not at all. Nothing to mention. This interest in women has started recently.
- Was he a tall man?
- He was not tall. Normal.
- Did reincarnations wear distinguished robes?
- No, they did not have special robes. Well, it differed a bit from the robes of usual monks. They wore good quality robes.
- Did they wear *ovoodoi* and *shashir* hats?
- Yes, they did.
- Did other monks prostrate in front of saints and reincarnations when they glimpsed at them in the street?
- No. Only if they were in the temple. It does not matter. Not in queues in a crowd as devotees act these days.
- How long did *Manzshir khutagt* stay in *Shüteenii aimag*?
- He came sometimes. Sometimes he participated in the ceremonies of *Dashchoimbel datsan* at *Gandan*.
- Did the monks celebrate his birthday? Perform longevity ceremony or other rituals?
- No, no. Such a tradition did not exist.
- Who did *Manzshir khutagt* live with?
- He had disciples in his monastery. Also his brothers. Monks lived alone in a building or residence. With their disciples. Saints and reincarnations were very eminent.
- Did other saints and reincarnations live in *Shüteenii aimag*?
- Certainly. Many of them belonged to *Dashchoimbel datsan*. I do not know their relevance in *Shüteenii aimag*.
- I would like to ask you about other reincarnation lineages. Have you heard about *Zaya geegen*?
- No. He rode horses in the countryside and drank kumis. I know this about him.
- About *Jalkhanz khutagt*?

- *Jalkhanz khutagt?* I do not know. I do not know him well. He lived in the countryside. *Güjir khamba* was an official of the *Bogd*.
- Can you provide information about *Khüükhen khutagt?*
- I do not know.
- *Bereeven nomun khan?*
- I do not know.
- Please tell us the story of *Sraidorj nomun khan*.
- I do not know much about him. He was the assistant of the vice abbot. The vice abbot was a prominent monk in Urga. A saint. So, he was his assistant. Later, he was sent to school. Finally he worked at the electric transport situated in the direction of *Züün khüree*. He was an accountant there until his death. When did he pass away? Maybe in 1969.
- Did he wear a distinguished, nice dress?
- No. Everyday cloth. It was kept secret that he was a reincarnation after the revolution. Only certain people knew it about him.
- Do you know any information about *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam?*
- I do not know much about *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam*.
- About *Dilov khutagt?*
- *Dilov khutagt* lived in Shilüüstei district in Zavkhan province. He was from that region. *Narovanchin gegeen*, *Bigeriin lamtan* and he lived in the same monastery.
- Have you heard about *Yalgasan gegeen?*
- I do not know about *Yalguusan*.
- Did he live in Ider district of Zavkhan province?
- Yes, he and *Khamba gegeen* lived there, but I do not know more details. *Khorol tsorj gegeen* was a famous saint in Zavkhan province, in my Tsetsen-Uul district. He was born as the child of *Luu janjin gün*. His reincarnation left to the south, to Alagsha. He is my Lama. A great saint. With *lkhaaramba* philosophy degree.
- Did a *gürten* reside in Urga?
- Yes, but I do not have more data. People used to mention the *gürten*. They said that *gürtens* were not on the side of monks.
- Did monks meditate a lot?
- They meditated. It is called *nyamba*. Many monks did it for some months, even for three years. It can take 7 days, 14 days, a month, and even three years. It is called *ninchin*.
- Did the monks practice it at home or on rocks and cliffs?
- At home. They did not go far. There were monks who went to remote places. Several *lün* and *van* initiations existed.
- Can you talk about the *shanzodva*, the minister of ecclesiastic affairs?

- I do not know much about him. His name was Badamdorj. He was a monk.
- Have you heard the name of Baldanchoimbel?
- I have heard, but I do not know anything about him.
- Was Geser worshipped in Urga?
- Not really. Geser Temple was built not long ago [A Chinese temple near Gandan built in the 1920s]. *Jasiin khamba lam* consecrated it, whose name was Damdin. He consecrated it with 100,000 Avalokiteśvara. I have heard about it. As a child I used to go to venerate them several times. I do not know what was in my mind. Actually, they gave some steamed bread to people who prostrated there. Maybe that was the reason why I often visited it. I went there to eat.
- Do you remember artist monks who painted Buddhist images?
- There were many such painters.
- How did the monks study the Mongolian writing?
- Certainly, they learnt it.
- Did they study Tibetan writing?
- Yes, they studied. Actually, Marzan Sharav was a famous painter. There were many painters.
- Did monks carry the volumes of the *Kanjur*?
- Yes, they did. Monks also circumambulated them. They prostrated and circumambulated them. Or they could also venerate toward *Gandan*. I do not know how they took them. Once I venerated it when I was a child.
- Were the relics of the three *Bogds*, having been preserved at Gandan, shown to the public?
- Yes, people came to venerate. Other such relics were kept in Dambadarjaa and in Amarbayasgalant monasteries.
- Did the army of the Mongols or the Russians destroy the monasteries in 1937, 1938?
- It does not matter. Perhaps both.
- How did they destroy them?
- I don't know. They might have burnt them.
- How long did it take place?
- Regarding the large number of monasteries it could not have happened in one day. Some monasteries were demolished by monks [through pressure].
- Have you heard about 'resistant' rural monasteries?
- Telling the truth, there were not any 'resistant' monasteries. The word 'resistant' was used by harmful people. Resistant monasteries did

- not exist. They were just accused of being ‘resistant’ lama, ‘resistant’ monastery.
- Did monks become party members?
 - No.
 - Have you heard about an assembly that was held on Fridays called *Baasangiin khural*?
 - Yes, I have heard this expression. I do not know it precisely. That was not a respectable thing. They made political agitation. I mean it was not a religious event or ceremony. People made political agitation in all places where a crowd gathered. It was held every Friday.
 - (Granddaughter: How many eminent monks lived in Urga?)
 - What strange question is this? There were numerous such monks.
 - Did Erdenepil abbot have the *gavj* degree?
 - Sure. He was a *gavj* graduated from my *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
 - How many volumes of the Journal of the Lamas have been published?
 - I do not know. I had one volume, but it has been lost. I do not know where it is. Pil [Erdenepil] *guai* and others published it. A few men. Shadav and others.
 - Have you heard about Bayasgalan, Tsookhor Jadamba, and representative Lamjav?
 - No, I do not know them. Well, Lamjav? There was a man called Lamjav. He went to prison, but was released before almost dying there. He was a man like that. I do not know the others.
 - Eldev-Ochir?
 - He was born in Zavkhan province. A man from *Tüshee güinii khoshuu*.
 - (Granddaughter: What do you think about Choibalsan?)
 - I do not think anything about him. I commiserate him. He caused harm to people. Destruction.
 - Were there any Red Stream assemblies in *Züün khüree*?
 - I have never heard about that.
 - Have you heard about the assembly of astrologer Zandraa?
 - Zandraa’s assembly? It was not situated in the *khüree*, but in the lay population quarter. There was such an assembly in the vicinity of the current First 10-year school. I do not know what they did there.
 - Have you heard about the assembly of Dörvöd Lama?
 - There was an abbot called Dörvöd *khamba lam*, but not an assembly. These monks lived in my district.
 - Have you heard about the tantra of Ee Lama?
 - Ee Lama, Ee Lama. Tantra of Ee Lama ... I do not remember.
 - It might have been a Red Stream assembly.

- Yes, maybe. Tantra was not widespread. Not widespread, but secret.
- (Granddaughter: I misunderstood her previous question. What do you think about the abbot Erdenepil?)
- What should I think about him?
- Was he a learned monk?
- He was a learned *gavj*. Finally, he became the abbot [of Gandan].
- Can you confirm that the monk represented on this image is Erdenepil *gavj*?
- It is not him. This is my master, the *Ikh gevsh* of *Dashchoimbel datsan*, a very learned monk with hundreds of disciples. He holds Lokeśvara's statue in this photograph.
- Was it the unique object of worship of Dambadarjaa Monastery?
- Yes.

Interview 3

Interview recorded on 24 September, 2011 in Gonchig monk's yurt with voice recorder. Ch. Gansükh, research fellow of the National Library of Mongolia assisted the interview with interesting questions.

- Could you list the masterpieces crafted by Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar that were available in Uрга?
- An individual temple contained the Tārā statues. I do not know the others.
- Let's look at some archival photographs together. Was there a bell of the majesty at *Gandan*?
- Yes, in the entrance gate of *Gandan*.
- When was it used?
- In the evening. The bell of the majesty. It was used in the evening, and also beaten during the *Khailen* oath-taking period, in the morning. Monks have restarted incense offerings. You know, it was forbidden [during socialism].
- A *loilon* three-dimensional *maṇḍala* belonged to *Züün khüree*. Where was it exactly? In which district and temple?
- It belonged to *Düinkhor aimag*.
- Was it displayed in the district temple?
- In the district temple.
- Where else were such *maṇḍalas* available?
- In *Dechingalaviin süm*.
- What was the name of the temple situated next to *Dechingalaviin süm*?

- Tārā Temple. *Dechingalaviin süm* was also known as *Düinkhor datsan* or Kālacakra monastic school. *Dechingalav* ('Era of Great Bliss') was the name of *Düinkhor datsan*. Fifty monks held ceremonies there. The *Bogd* himself was one of them, one of the fifty monks. Thus, there were fifty monks. Not more.
- Which deity was the main object of worship in this *Dechingalaviin süm*?
- Kālacakra.
- Was also Śrīdevī venerated there?
- Certainly. I was very young at that time, so I do not know much about it. I remember only in brief. Have you also asked others? There might be people who know about it, even outside of *Gandan*. Or not? Actually, nobody is alive who was gathered at the Kālacakra Temple.
- Was there a temple called *Rigsümgombiin süm* dedicated to the three bodhisattvas [Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī, Vajrapāṇi]?
- I do not know if there was *Rigsümgombiin süm* or not.
- You yourself lived in *Shüteenii aimag*, didn't you?
- Exactly. I am a man of *Shüteenii aimag*.
- You said that *Shüteenii aimag*'s protector was Mahākāla.
- Yes.
- Was it a painting or a statue?
- A statue.
- A gilt one?
- Certainly, it was a gilt statue. There was also a painting.
- What other images of the protectors of the Buddhist teaching were venerated in *Shüteenii aimag*?
- Śrīdevī in the centre. I do not know who else. A deity called *Zügüü Namanan*. Also Vaiśravaṇa, Nechung. I cannot recall the others.
- Were statues the main objects of worship of the 30 district temples?
- Statues and paintings. I have mentioned before the ones of *Shüteenii aimag*. In *Dondovlin aimag*: Cakrasaṃvara, Black Cakrasaṃvara. The Four-faced Mahākāla. Dharmarāja. In *Jadariiin aimag*: Hevajra, and *Gombogür*. In *Toisamlin aimag*: Guhyasamāja and Śrīdevī. *Düinkhor aimag*'s protectors were Kālacakra and Mahākāla. The protectors of *Set-sen toinii aimag* were *Sandui Jamdor* and *Begtse*. In *Anduu nar* were Jina Sāgara, Avalokiteśvara and Śrīdevī. In *Kanjur* and *Tanjur* (?) were Mahāmāyā and *Jagon Jamsran*.
- Are these holy objects preserved now at Gandantegchenlin Monastery or in museums? Have they survived?
- No, all of them disappeared. All of them were annihilated.
- Was a large statue of Tsongkhapa venerated in Urga?

- Yes, yes.
- Where was it? Was it in *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*?
- Yes.
- I have a photograph of a statue. Is it that or not?
- Maybe. It was a large statue.
- Please look at this other photograph. Its location is unknown. Also this one. It seems to be Avtai Sain Khan's yurt-palace. Monks are coming out.
- I do not know. Oh, this is the Maitreya Temple. *Khüree Maidar*. It might be the start of the Maitreya procession. The chanting master or disciplinarian is going first.
- Where was the circumambulation road of the Maitreya procession? In this way?
- Yes. Monks performed ablution ritual and *maṇḍala* offering at the stops and went further. All monks of the three monastic philosophy schools circled *Züün khüree*.
- The procession did not approach *Gandan*, did it?
- No, it had a different way. Monks performed ablution ritual and *maṇḍala* offering at this stop.
- How did Maitreya's cart move? It must have been very large.
- Monks moved it. It was large indeed. A cart with four wheels. They placed Maitreya's statue on it wrapped into offering scarves. Monks followed it with religious flags in hand. The Bogd Khaan Palace Museum preserves a painting of the Maitreya procession.
- Were the ceremonial canopies of the 30 districts taken there?
- Certainly. 30 *aimags*, 10 *datsans*. All of them had carts. (Private talk.)
- Was the *Kanjur* venerated together with Maitreya during this circumambulation?
- No. Separately.
- Did that also circle the *khüree*?
- Yes.
- Here is another photograph. It represents the printing house.
- Yes, this is the printing house.
- Where was it?
- It is claimed that it was situated in *Züün khüree*. I have the printing blocks of Geser (?). There was the printing house of Geser (?). I have that. It is a big volume of Geser. It should be that.
- Another photograph shows Geser, the hero.
- Geser? I do not know about it.
- Is it the Maitreya Temple?
- Yes.

- Are these the *jas* financial offices?
- Yes.
- How many monks belonged to the Maitreya Temple?
- A few. Not too many.
- Was it a sitting or a standing representation of Maitreya?
- A sitting Maitreya.
- What other deities were venerated there?
- Many. The temple was full.
- Amitāyus?
- Of course.
- Here is another photograph. It represents *Dünjingaraviin süm*, the temple of the Nāga King.
- Indeed, such a temple stood in the south. It might be that. It was called *Dünjingaraviin süm*. Finally, it was demolished and taken away. Later than the others. There was also a solitary tree.
- Is this photograph representing Urga?
- I have no idea.
- These are two district temples.
- Which two districts?
- Perhaps *Toisamlin*. Were there many such square temples?
- There were, there were. However, *Shüteenii aimag* differed.
- Was that a yurt shaped temple?
- Yes. In its vicinity it had such a rectangular temple.
- Did they have such small sheds?
- I do not know which temple it is. A temple with metal roof existed called *Bürenkhee* (?). But it may not be that. I do not know.
- This is the Maitreya Temple. It had large cauldrons. Was there a temple called *Solgiin dugan* situated behind the assembly hall?
- The name of the assembly hall was *Battsagaan*. It had cotton covering. Spacious.
- What was behind the assembly hall?
- [Informant is thinking.]
- The cauldrons of the monks are visible on this photograph. Where was the kitchen of the monks?
- There was such a place within an enclosure. It was called a kitchen. Many large pots and cauldrons. It is a later photograph.
- This photograph shows one of the entrances of the Yellow Palace. You can see Gandan in the far distance. Also temples. A pointed stick fence. It might be the tantric monastic school. Also a *stūpa*.
- I do not know. The tantric school had 500 monks.

- Is this the image of the *Yonzon khamba*, the head abbot of Urga?
- Yes.
- Are these two men the same? One of them might be the Choijin Lama oracle.
- No.
- This photograph has an inscription saying that this is the Choijin Lama and his mother. Can you recognize this monk?
- None of those eminent monks survived.
- I see. Did nuns or tantric practitioners live in the *khüree*?
- I do not know. Perhaps. Perhaps in the Buryad district. They performed *Chö* and body-offering rituals. There were tantric assemblies. Things like that.
- The *Jarankhashar suvarga* stood north of Gandan, near the TV tower.
- *Stūpa* at the TV tower. Yes, indeed.
- Were ceremonies held there?
- No, only three or four monks held ceremonies there. Monks climbed a staircase or ladder at the cupola, and held a ceremony. It stood next to the children's hospital.
- This might be the Maitreya Temple. The other one is the Yellow Palace. This is a small- sized photograph.
- I do not know. That should be there.
- Was the temple of *Shüteenii aimag* situated near the current site of the Museum of Natural History?
- Exactly. All districts had a temple. There were about 70 temples.
- Were the ceremonial canopies of the 30 districts seen at the Maitreya procession?
- Certainly. All the 30 *aimags* and the 10 *datsans* delivered their ceremonial canopies. They all appeared in order. It was marvelous! Its painting is available in the Bogd Khaan Palace Museum.
- Was the *Tsam* dance performed on the next day of the Maitreya procession or at another time?
- Separately. Not on that day. There was not time for that. *Tsam* was held separately. Once in summer, on the 4th of the last month of summer, as far as I remember. It was called *Khüree tsam*. *Sagar* was performed, too. Also there were three main rituals held in the *khüree* in winter called *Khuuchnii khural*. Another, the *Tümed*, took place in autumn. All monasteries held ceremonies at that time and also offered the *Sor* offering. Individually.
- Did the monks hold the *Sagar* and *Chogar* monastic ceremonies and dance in the Kālacakra Temple?

- They came out from the palace. There was a palace near the *Battsagaan* assembly hall named after Vajrapāṇi. *Tsam* dancers came out from there.
- Which deity was the main protector deity of the assembly hall?
- Śrīdevī. I recorded it. [Pointing to a book.]
- Was it a statue?
- Yes, a statue. [Looking at the book.] Begtse was the main protector of *Baruun örgöö*. Mahākāla and Simhāvakra of *Dashchoimbel datsan*. Śrīdevī and *Dorjshüg* in *Gungaachoinlin*. Dharmarāja and Vaiśravaṇa in *Idgaachoinzinlin*. Śrīdevī in the assembly hall. Cakrasaṃvara in *Baruun örgöö*.
- (Question of Ch. Gansükh, research fellow of the National Library of Mongolia: Some sets of the *Kanjur* are preserved in our library. The *Urga Kanjur* was printed here. Do you know which temples preserved these *Kanjur* sets?)
- I do not know. Your *Kanjurs* might have arrived from different sites. The *Kanjur* written with the paint of the nine jewels were venerated at our monastic school [*Dashchoimbel*]. That is our *Kanjur*. We wanted to receive it back from the library, and people in charge agreed to it before. However, nothing has happened.
- (Ch. Gansükh: When was that *Kanjur* written?)
- It came from Tibet. It was given as a gift to the Second *Bogd* or some other *Bogds*. That *Kanjur* has a history.
- (Ch. Gansükh: We also possess the set of the golden *Kanjur*. It comprises 102 volumes. Another set of the *Kanjur* was written in silver. The original places of these versions are unknown. That is why I am asking these questions.)
- That knowledge might have faded. We did not ask the people who knew it. You do not know it. From 1927, from September 1927 [1937] all eminent monks were captured and executed. I remember it very well. My masters were also arrested. They were brothers. On 22 September, 1927 the sentence was pronounced in the *Bömbögör nogoon* ('Round Green One', name of the Parliament). Such a repression. It spread in all directions. They were kept there, and finally were executed.
- (Ch. Gansükh: We have various sets of the *Kanjur* in the library. One of them is the *Urga Kanjur*.)
- Do you have the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*?
- (Ch. Gansükh: Golden *Vajracchedikā* and *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. Also some sets of the golden *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Verses*. Their history is unknown.)

- You have to research their history in publications. The giant statue of Maitreya stood there, but was destroyed. I rebuilt a temple at the site of my old rural monastery as well as the statue of Maitreya and his two disciples. Not large, about three meters. Some giant statues are said to have been rebuilt. Some of them are still incomplete. If you go to Zavkhan province, please visit my monastery, Tegshiin Khüree in Tsetsen-Uul district. I reconstructed some temples there. I completed the eight *stūpas* of Buddha Śākyamuni.
- Do you have any sacred texts that have remained from Urga?
- From Urga? I had some, but they have disappeared during the years. Some such texts were burnt. Others disappeared. Many of them were burnt, others disappeared. Many of them should be in the library.
- (Ch. Gansükh: Our library contains many sacred texts written in Tibetan.)
- Is the book of Zava Damdin there?
- (Ch. Gansükh: Yes, many texts written by him.)
- Do you have the sets of the *Khor Choinjün*, the History of Mongolian Buddhism?
- (Ch. Gansükh: Yes, different sets. Handwritten and xylograph.)
- Zava Damdin was born in Dundgovi province. He belonged to the Western monastic school [*Gungaachöilin datsan*]. (Private talk.)
- Which famous saints and reincarnations lived in the *khüree*?
- I do not know. I know only the *Bogd*. Also the *Yonzon khamba*, the head abbot. Also the vice abbot from *Jasiin aimag*. Choinzindorj of *Khuvilgaanii aimag*. There were numerous monks, saints, and reincarnations. How could we count them? Zava Damdin *guai*, *angi* Shagdar, and others lived in *Süngiin aimag*. All of them belonged to Da Khüree [Urga]. They studied sacred texts.
- Did monks hold debates at *Tasganii ovoo*?
- No.
- Did they take their books there?
- No, no. No such tradition existed.
- Did they venerate *Tasganii ovoo*?
- Yes, they venerated it. *Tasganii ovoo* was a place of veneration.
- Did shamans live in Urga?
- I do not know. I do not know such things. Almost not. I have the name of the most devout monks of my *khüree*, my *Dashchoimbel datsan*. They [the Party] first clamped the operation of *Dashchoimbel datsan*. It had the most devout monks. [Showing a book.]
- (Ch. Gansükh: This is some very significant information.)
- Yes, indeed. I have all of these. I preserved them.

- Were there any *dayaanch* hermits in Urga who meditated?
- Yes. They lived separately. Some monks lived there. In Shaddüvlin. 16 monks lived there. It was a sophisticated site.
- Did those monks live there until 1937?
- No. They disappeared in 1927 or 1922. These [the Party] took over everything, and murdered people. I know that they killed people. You might hear such stories. I know what happened. I lived at that time and I know what happened. I myself was afraid [during socialism], so I just referred to some cases.
- Were Urga's temple buildings demolished all together or did it take longer?
- Fast. They disappeared in a year. All the 800 monasteries.
- Did the army of the Ministry of the Interior or ordinary people demolish them?
- I do not know that.
- Were the building materials of Urga's temples used to build other, new constructions?
- I do not know. All the monasteries were destroyed. The materials were used to build other buildings. Do you often go to the countryside?
- Last year I visited Ider, Aldarkhaan and Uliastai in Zavkhan province.
- Aldarkhaan and Uliastai? Everything was destroyed in Zavkhan. Now it is nice again. (Private talk.)
- Did the monks hold the *Kanjur* circumambulation and the Maitreya procession in Urga?
- Yes, all of them. Nothing was missing in Urga.
- Where did the *Khailen* oath-taking period take place?
- At *Gandan*. *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* was situated in the north housing the *Khailen* of 10,000 fully-ordained monks. I know a little information about it. Monks were sitting everywhere, until the north of Gandan Monastery. Nowhere in this *Jambudvīpa* world is there another place, apart from Mongolia, where the *Khailen* retreat of 10,000 fully-ordained monks took place two or three times on such a large scale. There are no other places in the world with the oath-taking period of 10,000 monks. There was a Buddhist image surrounded by 8,000 great lamas. We spent the oath-taking period of the 10,000 monks there. It turned out from the talk of old monks that it happened in this way for more years. Our Mongolia had a prominent role in that. Also in wrestling, with 6,000 wrestlers. It is a rarity worldwide. You do not know. You see it, but do not understand its deep meaning. This is the truth. My Mongolia is not a high and disadvantaged country. Starvation, suffering are typical for other countries,

but not for us. We have only small earthquakes. The world turns strange. There are earthquakes, war, and flood. People do not handle each other well. All of these are the source of danger. Very dangerous things. In Mongolia, such problems do not exist on a large scale.

- Did Chinese monks hold ceremonies in the Geser Temple?
- No, no. Mongolian monks. A handful of monks. There were large Buddhist images in the Geser Temple. It is a relatively new construction. Have you heard about *Jasiin khamba lam*, vice abbot Damdin? He consecrated it. I do not know more details but anyway, I was there. It is said that the old Jamsran lama consecrated it. That was a sophisticated site. Finally, it was closed and demolished. I do not know. I have just heard about it.
- Were there any *datsan* in the Chinese merchant town, Maimaachen in the 1930s?
- Yes, *Sandlin datsan* [*Dashsamdanlin*] was situated there. It also disappeared with all the others. Another temple, *Narkhajidiin sūm* sat near Zaisan Tolgoi on the bank of the river. I remember it well. It was called *Narkhajid*, dedicated to Vajrayoginī. It stood on the bank of the River Tuul. *Khajidiin chogo* ceremony was held there on the 25th of the last month in autumn. Several musicians arrived there from Amgalan and played their instruments. The sky turned red. Old people defined it as Red Light. Well, the temple did not survive. There is a new Buddha statue on that place. It is well set. A new statue was built there near Zaisan Tolgoi.

Mijid Lkhamsüren (1914–2015)



M. Lkhamsüren monk, 2009

Mijid Lkhamsüren was born in 1914, in the year of the Rabbit. He belonged to Tsagaan Tolgoi Jas and other small assemblies in Lün district, Töv province in his childhood. Then, he arrived in Urga, settled in *Zoogoi aimag* and started to learn philosophy in *Dashchoimbel datsan*. He became a monk again in Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery after the democratic changes.

We interviewed him with Zsuzsa Majer in 2007 and 2009, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. The interviews below contain information about Urga and were based on archival sources and photographs.

Interview 1

Interview recorded about *Zoogoi aimag* of Urga with voice recorder on 25 September, 2009 in Lkhamsüren monk's flat and assisted by his grandson.

- Can you describe the *Dergediin sakhius* and the *Tsogt sakhius* ceremonies held in honour of the Dharma protectors?
- I do not know them.

- Have you heard about the *Danshig khangal* ceremony?
- Yes, there was something like that. But it was *Ganshag*. *Ganshag*.
- Do you know if *Zoogoi aimag* had an *Arvanii jas* financial office?
- Perhaps. I do not know. [Reading archival materials.]
- Have you heard about a ceremony held by only fully ordained monks?
- Fully ordained monks used to hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period for 45 days.
- Were *Jasaa* ceremonies held in the district temples?
- In the temples of the *aimags*, and also in the *datsans*. (Private talk.)
- Do you know what *Jinbiidorj* means?
- It might be the name of a Buddhist deity. All of these represent the Buddha's teaching. It could be one of the texts of the Ten Protectors. (Private talk.)
- What about the ceremony of Vaiśravaṇa and the White Mahākāla?
- The ceremony of the White Mahākāla and Vaiśravaṇa is held on the 8th of the lunar month. It is a nice ceremony with proper food and beverage.
- Have you heard about the *Tümed sakhius* ceremony?
- Yes, the monks used to perform that in autumn.
- What kind of ceremony was it?
- The ceremony of the Dharma protectors. It was the ceremony of the Ten Protectors.
- Why was it called *Tümed*?
- It lasted for 6 days. Well, *Tümed* is not so important. It refers to the fact that this ceremony was dedicated to thousands of people. On the 21st day. *Tümed sakhius*. (Looking at the archival materials.) It was held on the 21st. In autumn, in the first month of autumn. Also on the 20th of the same month. (Private talk.)
- Please describe the *Danshig khangal* ceremony.
- Monks used to perform the *Danshig khangal* in the middle month of winter, after the start of the 'Cold 9.' Numerous monks participated in that ceremony from all 30 districts of the *khüree*.
- Did people organize the *Naadam* festival?
- *Naadam* took place in summer. Nowadays, it is called the national great *Naadam* festival of Mongolia. Afore, its name was *Doloon khoshuu naadam*. Another one was called *Danshig naadam* which was the *Bogd's Naadam* festival. *Doloon khoshuu danshig naadam*. It was held in the north, an enterprise or partisan station in Khüi Doloon Tolgoi [Khüi Doloon Khudag]. The monks organized the *Danshig* in the city, at the Yellow Palace. (Looking at old photographs.)
- Did *Zoogoi aimag* have a sand *maṇḍala*?

- It was the Medicine Buddha's sand *maṇḍala*. Also Uṣṇīṣavijayā's, oh no, Kālacakra's sand *maṇḍala*. Monks prepared it from sand. Finally, they cleared the sand away, and offered it at the river.
- Who prepared the sand *maṇḍala*? Offering masters, offering preparers?
- All the offering preparers. Children assisted them. Young monks prepared the *jankhar* sand *maṇḍala* called *dültsen*. They recited the given sacred texts for 6 or 7 days. Even for 10 days.
- Did *Zoogoi aimag* house a *loilon* three-dimensional *maṇḍala*?
- *Loilon*? *Loilon* existed. *Jankhar*, *loilon*. The *maṇḍalas* of the Medicine Buddha, Kālacakra, and others. Also several types of *stūpas*.
- Did each district have a *loilon*?
- Maybe not, only few districts. At present a beautiful *loilon* can be seen at Gandan. A Kālacakra *maṇḍala*. It is beautiful! The Kālacakra Temple houses it in the north, next to the Avalokiteśvara Temple at Gandan.
- Did brick-burning kilns operate in Uрга?
- Yes, the Chinese ran their operation, not the Mongols. In former times. Wait, where was it exactly? Chinese produced blue bricks. They had a very good quality. These blue bricks were also used for healing. Originally, the Chinese prepared it, not the Mongols. The Mongols did not do such labour. Agriculture, brick production, etc.
- Please talk about the *Sor* offering.
- The monks used to organize the *Tsam* on the 9th of the middle month of winter (?). Also once in summer. They performed the *Sor* offering during the *Tsam* dance.
- Where was the site of the *Sor* hutch?
- The *Sor* hutch? The *Sor* hutch was made of wood. Fire was made inside; the *Sor* was thrown inside, and burnt. Monks performed it to the prescribed direction, nowhere else. In the vicinity of the monastery or temple.
- Generally, did the monks wrestle?
- They wrestled. Onzod was a famous, national fighter. He was my friend. We were almost coevals. I asked him once about the origin of box. He said, 'Oh, bullshit, it is originating from the practice of young novices' fighting.' He claimed that. Young novices fought a lot.
- Can you confirm if the three temples called *Ganjuur*, *Gürem* and *Solgo* stood behind the assembly hall? What kind of temples stood behind the assembly hall?
- The tantric monastic school stood near the assembly hall. Also the medical monastic school and the astrologic monastic school. These sat in

Züün khüree. Urga had a total of 10 *datsans*. Theory, Buddhist philosophy schools.

- Do you remember the *Chö* practitioners?
- I do not know much about the monks of that time. I do not remember much. I do not know the details.
- How did you arrive in Urga?
- I was 13 years old. We lived in a yurt in Lün district, about 100 kms from Urga. My mother took me here in winter, packing food and beverage. I was a 13 year-old child. I settled in the *khüree*. We came on an ox cart.
- Did the monks use to venerate *ovoos* in Urga?
- Yes, they venerated Khan Uul in the south, which is sanctity of the world. It took the 2nd or 3rd place. They greatly venerated that mountain.
- Do you remember the first newspaper and journal?
- The Newspaper of the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party was an artificial paper. They issued it in the year of the revolution, in 1921. The Soviet Union improved us. (Private talk.)
- Can you provide information about the handicraft and other cooperatives where monks worked?
- Monks' labour, well. Monks did not work in former times. They lived in Urga and studied the sacred texts. Actually, Mongolian people did not know labour before. They started to work only after the revolution. For instance, we do not have a factory for felt processing. We make the wool wet and use the strength of horses to produce felt, the covering of a yurt. This is a primitive way, tough tight work. The Chinese wondered at how the Mongols broke the ice and hung it from the saddle. They praised the great art of the Mongols as their felt was made with water.
- A personal question. Which sacred texts do you recite these days?
- *Dharmasaṃgīti sūtra* and *Vajracchedikā sūtra*. This is the *Dharmasaṃgīti sūtra*.
- Did you chant these texts in your childhood?
- I recite them now. (Private talk.)
- Does the current daily chanting in monasteries differ from the old way?
- It is the same. No difference. We chant these sacred texts in the same way as Buddha preached them. He was born in the north of India. Pakistan and Afghanistan belonged once to India. From there arrived Buddhism to Tibet, and through Tibet to Mongolia.

Interview 2

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 25 February, 2011 in Lkhamtsüren monk's flat assisted by his daughter.

- Let's talk about the 30 districts of Urga. Did 30 districts belong to *Züün khüree*, and also 30 to *Gandan*?
- 30 *aimags* existed in *Züün khüree*. Generally, Urga or Da Khüree had 30 *aimags* and 10 *datsans*. The 30 *aimags* had their own names.
- Did monks live at *Gandan*?
- Monks' courtyards at *Gandan* had similar names to the 30 districts in *Züün khüree*: *Shüteenii aimag*, *Dondovlingiin aimag*, *Jadariin aimag*, etc.
- Have you heard about the silken ceremonial canopies of the 30 districts?
- Are you interested in the names of the 30 *aimags*? *Shüteenii aimag* was situated in the southernmost part followed by *Dondovlin*, *Jadar*, *Toislon*, *Düinkhor*, *Tsetsen toin*, *Anduu nar*. All the 30 *aimags* had different names.
- Do you remember the Maitreya procession?
- Yes, Maitreya's statue was circumambulated. Moreover, a large temple was dedicated to Maitreya.
- What kind of objects of worship stood there? Was the giant statue of Maitreya a standing representation?
- Maitreya is a Buddha in the middle. At *Gandan*. He rides a horse with green head. This is how the statue was circumambulated.
- Did the procession circumambulate the Yellow Palace first, then *Züün khüree*?
- It circled only *Züün khüree*. The area of the 30 *aimags*. It stopped at its four sides: at the southern, western, northern and eastern entrances.
- Did this procession take place in summer or autumn?
- In summer. Not in winter.
- What about the *Tsam*?
- Regarding *Tsam*, there is an inner *Tsam* and an outer *Tsam*. The great *Tsam* took place in summer called *Ikh tsam* or *Khüree tsam*. The small-scale inner *Tsam* took place in winter, before the Lunar New Year followed by the burning of the *Sor* offering.
- Where did the monks hold the inner *Tsam*? In the assembly hall?
- Inside the temple. It was impossible to perform it outside in wintertime.
- It did not take place in all district temples, did it?
- Only at the main site. Not in the districts.

- Please identify the place of the burning of the *Sor* offering. Was it near the temple?
- The *Chambon*, the master of the *Tsam* dance participated in the offering of the *Sor* after the inner *Tsam*. The *Sor* offering means the burning of *balin* offering cakes. Do you understand it?
- Was it offered near the temple?
- Near, nearby.
- Did the monks use to hold a ceremony to honour the Dharma protectors? The Ten Protectors of the Buddhist doctrine? A ceremony called *Ikh sakhius*?
- The Ten Protectors appeared in the *Tsam*. The *Tsam* ceremonies are relevant to the Ten Protectors of Buddhism.
- Did children with strange head coverings perform a dance, too?
- Yes, children also performed a *Tsam*. Youngsters.
- Did the districts of the *Züün Damnuurchin* and *Baruun Damnuurchin* exist even in the 1930s?
- Chinese inhabited those areas. These became street names. Many Chinese stores were located there. Generally, Mongolia was China's subject.
- Did the Russians also operate stores?
- The Russians? We established friendship with Russia in 1916. The USSR.
- Have you heard about the Hill of the Russian Consulate?
- Yes, it was in this direction. The Hill of the Consulate and the Hill of the Americans. What did you ask from Dashtseren monk?
- I asked him about *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan* and Dambadarjaa Khiid.
- He knew it well, didn't he?
- Yes. What kind of other assemblies existed at that time? What was the *Modnii 2*?
- *Modnii 2*? These were factories.
- Which *khoro* district was located near the current Lion Bridge?
- Well, I do not know about these past things. There were four Khalkha *khans* and the fifth one was the *Shavi*, the subordinated area of the *Bogd*.
- Have you heard the name of Bayankhötöl Uul, a mountain situated east of Ulaanbaatar?
- That is Bayanzürkh. In the east.
- Do you know the location of Dalan Davkhar Uul?
- Dalan Davkhar Uul? That is near the districts 3 and 4.
- Which *ovoo* did Urga's monks venerate?

- Certain mountains have national veneration. Sites with national veneration. State, politics. Bogd Khan Uul, Khentii Khan Uul, Otgontenger Uul, Dariganga were venerated in former times.
- Did the monks venerate the nearby Chingeltei and Bayanzürkh mountains, too?
- Sure. Bayanzürkh, also Chingeltei in the north, Songino Khaikhan in the west. (Private talk.)
- Did male and female shamans live in Urga?
- There were shamans. Few in number.
- Are the *Sor* offering and the fire offering called *galiin takhilga* one and the same rite? Please specify the reason of the fire offering.
- Fire offering is held on the day when fire descends.
- Did Urga have a Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs? *Shanzodviin yaam* or *Shaviin yaam*?
- Monks established the *Shanzav yaam*. It closed after the revolution [of 1921].
- Were any *baayuu* kilns available in Urga where Chinese brick was produced?
- Not in Urga, but far from here. Somewhere near the current brick factory. (Private talk.)
- How did you have light in the temple buildings without electricity?
- Light? (Laughing.) We used candles, Chinese candles. We made lamp-ions. We lit a large butter lamp with much oil. There was no electricity and light at that time. (Private talk.)
- Do you know the reason of the names of the weekend house districts? Sanzai, Jigjid?
- Well, weekend houses existed in small number. Their number has increased. (Private talk.)
- Do you remember a giant image of the *Bogd lam*, Tsongkhapa?
- [Informant misunderstood the question.] The *Bogd*? Urga has been the residence of the *Bogds* who were of Tibetan origin.
- Can you provide information about famous saints and reincarnations?
- Well, Mongolia had many saints.
- Did *Zoogoi aimag* have a saint?
- Yes, of course. He lived in the countryside. These saints lived in the countryside, and also in the city.
- How did you use to celebrate the Lunar New Year?
- Have you witnessed the celebration of the Mongolian Lunar New Year? We celebrated it in the same way in former times in the city and also in the countryside.

- Did you hold the *Tsederlkham* ceremony at the New Year Eve in honour of Śrīdevī?
- Yes. We held the rituals correspondent to the Lunar New Year.
- Have you heard about the *Baasangiin khural* gatherings on Fridays?
- [Informant did not understand the question.] There was only one *khüree*. Not one for young monks and one for old monks. The sacred texts were one and the same.
- Do you know anything about the abbot Erdenepil and the disciplinarian Gombodoo?
- Yes. Gombodoo was a disciplinarian before 1937. A disciplinarian of the assembly hall. A group existed at that time called the ‘Eight of the assembly hall’ including the four chanting masters and the four disciplinarians of the assembly hall. Their common name was the ‘Eight of the assembly hall’.
- Do you know Erdenepil who became the abbot of the reopened Gandan Monastery in 1944?
- Can you repeat his name? Gandan had several abbots one after another.
- Did nuns live in Urga?
- Only female *Chö* practitioners, but not nuns.
- Are *khandmaas* and female *Chö* practitioners the same?
- To be precise, female *Chö* practitioners and nuns differ. Do you know the meaning of *Chö* practice? They play big *dāmaru* drums in a special way.
- Did female practitioners have their own temple or assembly?
- Narkhajidiin Süm stood near Zaisan. They used to gather there and hold Vajrayoginī ceremony on the 25th day of the lunar month.
- Can you tell me if prayer flags existed in your childhood? Did people place them outside of their homes?
- Yes, these were in use and placed outside in the prescribed direction of the given person’s fortune. These were flying in the wind on the top of yurts and buildings.
- What kind of sacred texts do you read these days?
- Do you know *Sitātapatrā*, *Sünchin denai*, and the Three Remedies? And what do you yourself read? (Laughing.)

Interview 3

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 24 September, 2011 in Lkham-süren monk's home. Ch. Gansükh, research fellow of the National Library of Mongolia assisted the interview.

- The name of the most eminent monk was Dashnyam. Monks escaped when the opposition to the Leftist started. When they reached the top of the hill Dashnyam *guai* said, 'I am going back'. Others said to him, 'Don't return. They will kill you'. He replied, 'If they kill me I will be dead. How can a monk leave the Buddhas in such a situation?' Then, he returned and was killed. Baljinnyam *guai* always told me, 'My uncle was such a stubborn man'. My family lived in his household.
- Have you seen this painting of Urga? Jügder monk painted it in 1913. Where is your *Zoogoi aimag* on this painting? Is it in this part?
- It was here, among the 30 districts of Urga: *Shüteenii, Dondovlin, Jadar, Toislon, Dününhor, Setsen toinii, Anduu nariin, Dandarlin, Mayaa, Jas, Nomch, Sangai*. *Sangai* was on the top, in the north. Also, *Zoogoi, Dugar, Khamba, Choinkhorlin, Biziyaa, Noyonii, Darkhan, Erkhem, Ekh dagina, Vangain, Khuvilgaanii, Barga, Dandlin, Bandid, Sün, Örlüüd, Lam nariin*. These 30 *aimags*.
- You lived in *Zoogoi aimag*, didn't you? Did it have a round temple?
- Well, it had 1,000 monks. The *Bogd* [Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar] founded this district.
- Which deity did you venerate there?
- We venerated Mahākāla.
- Did *Zoogoi aimag* have a *loilon* three-dimensional *maṇḍala*?
- [Informant misunderstood the question.] Our district had a yurt shaped temple. Have you seen the yurt shaped temples of Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery? The *aimags* had exactly such temple buildings. A few had square shaped wooden temples. In the area of *Dününhor, Setsen toin*. With poles. In spring we had to facilitate it, and in autumn to winterize it, which was a difficult job. My *aimag* temple had a felt covering on the top. Most temples had metal roofs, but monks did not like them. (Looking at old photographs.)
- Please provide the name of the head monk of *Zoogoi aimag*. Who were the famous monks of *Zoogoi aimag*?
- *Zoogoi aimag* had eight chanting masters. One of them was the chanting master of the assembly hall: Gendendamba. He was the *Tsogchin Erdene unzad*. Another might have been Galsandamba *guai*, who also belonged

to *Zoogoi aimag*. Ranking monks did not use as many sitting pillows as at present. Only elderly or ranked monks could wear special robes. It was the custom. Nowadays, even children can wear *khiaztai deel* ['deel with edging']. I also belonged to the eight chanting masters of *Zoogoi aimag* in former times. I was the smallest chanting master, the youngest one. I was almost 20 years old at that time, had a beautiful voice and could chant melodiously. (Private talk.) The *Bogd* himself founded certain *ai-mags*. *Sangai*, and also *Zoogoi* which was responsible for his meals and catering.

- Do you know the *Ikhiin zuu*? An artwork of Zanabazar?
- The *Ikhiin zuu*? Well, the Jobo statue could be seen in Kharkhorin, in Övörkhangai. In Erdene Zuu monastery. Urga did not have a Jobo. Erdene Zuu monastery is a historical site. The land of Avtai Sain Khan. His yurt palace stood there once. Also his relics. He is the paternal uncle of TüsHEET Khan Gombodorj. Avtai Sain Khan introduced Buddhism to Mongolia. He was Zanabazar's grandfather. A great hero. He kept the Tibetans under his power. He brought a monk from Tibet as well as a Buddhist idol. Actually, Öndör Gegeen was also of Tibetan origin in a sense: a Tibetan holy man reincarnated and born from the womb of TüsHEET Khan Gombodorj's wife.
- Were the artworks of Zanabazar available in Urga? For instance, the 21 Tārās?
- Certainly. Tārā Temple, Kālacakra Temple, the assembly hall. All these sat once in the current site of the Mongolian Art Centre for Children's Creativity. Children performed the daily chanting. Also the four chanting masters, and the four disciplinarians of the assembly hall. The four chief monks began the daily chanting with children in the morning. It was very cold there in winter. We did not have wristbands. We heated with coal. No heaters at that time. We were green, and were not ordered to do this or that, we just studied the texts of the daily chanting.
- Did women live in the *khüree*?
- No way. Women did not live there. They lived only in the *khoroos* lay population quarters. Many such districts existed: *TüsHEET khanii khoroos*, *Amban khoroos*, *Setsen khanii khoroos*, *Sain noyon khanii khoroos*, *Zasagt khanii khoroos*, all the *khans* had a residence in Urga. However, the size of the population was restricted. Few in number. I had to settle in the *TüsHEET khanii khoroos* when I arrived first from the countryside. If I had settled for example in *Zasagt khanii khoroos* instead, they would have caught it when I registered. They asked, 'Which *khoroos* do you belong to?' and answering '*TüsHEET khan*', they sent me to the proper *khoroos*.

- Actually, Mongolia did not have many inhabitants. About 700,000 people lived in Mongolia before the revolution. This is the story, my dear.
- Do you remember the location of the Tibetan quarter?
 - I have no idea. It could have been in the lay population quarter. Monks could not stay there. Gandan Monastery had four sentinels on its four sides. Women could not enter *Gandan*. Women could enter there only on the 14th and 15th of the Lunar New Year with their husbands and children to prostrate. It was free to enter on that day. Otherwise, a sentinel sat there. If you ask what he supervised: he prevented the young monks from going out with women. There were strict rules and regulations.
 - Is it true that policemen resided around Gandan? Policemen of the 15?
 - At *Gandan*? I have just told you. There were policemen. A policeman on all the four sides.
 - Were they monks?
 - No. Lay people.
 - What did they prevent?
 - Young monks used to go to the lay population quarters to meet girls. Monastic rules forbade it. There were courtyards of the 30 *aimags* at *Gandan*. The *datsans* stood in the centre. The three *Bogds*' relics were also there. The high Avalokiteśvara was built only later. Dambadarjaa was the first monastery in the Khalkha area. The River Selbe flowing from the north unites with the River Tuul in the south. This is the River Tuul, this is the River Selbe. [Showing them on a map.] Züün Selbe flows east of Dambadarjaa, and Baruun Selbe on its western side. The River Dund Gol is in the south. Do you know the folksong *Vegetable at the Dund Gol*? 'Vegetable growing near Dund Gol is like being cultivated; Miss Duljmaa was born but she is like an image.' This is the most beautiful Mongolian song. [Looking at old photographs of the Maitreya Temple, the monks' open-air kitchen, Geser hero, the printing house, *Baruun örgöö*, etc.] *Baruun örgöö* was a special place. The *Sor* offering was taken out from there. *Baruun örgöö* contained previous *khans*' saddles, bows, arrows, and swords. A *khan* with a sizeable body.
 - Was an image of Tsongkhapa was accessible in Uрга?
 - Certainly.
 - This is a pointed stick fence called *shörgön khashaa*. [Looking at a picture.]
 - Oh yes. District temples looked like that. Later, they were with metal roofs. Monks did not like that metal roofs, though those were massive. White canvas was used as covering, and long timbers on the top to

support them. To avoid it blowing away in wind. We eased it in spring, which was a hard work. We were just children.

- Rectangular temple buildings existed there too, didn't they?
- Yes, also rectangular temples.
- Could you preserve any old statuette or image?
- What items could have survived? They burnt everything. Buried, annihilated. Valuable items existed in large number. For instance a sword. According to legend, several monsters, butchers, and other malevolent people arrived in Tibet in the period of Avtai Khan. He went and killed them with a sword. A sword that cut the head of 10,000 people. Finally, the sword did not have a job anymore, nothing to cut. They located and annihilated them. The Buryads stole the sword and left. Perhaps it was used in the Great Patriotic War. The sword was cut up into small pieces and melded together. It became the basis or plate of the *Sor*. The *Sor* offering was placed on it and suppressed all bad forces and obstacles. That silver sword cut off several heads. Öndör Gegeen's reincarnations passed it down till the last *Bogd*. It was taken from India. Travelling to Tibet was difficult in that period. People rode horses. The *Bogd* was a child. A horseman came and went on a rig. That hero went to the end of the charge, turning his head away. They asked who he was, but the servants of the *Bogd* did not know him. He was a robust man. 'He will come to kill us at night. It is a monster. What should we do?' There was an extremely nimble young monk. Very quick. 'He has a special sword. We should take his sword.' They put up a tent on a hill path, sent the other people down the valley, and were waiting. 'We are only two of us. Let's arrange the bed to show two sleeping men. I will attack this hero with my bow and arrow, and you will have to take his sword quickly.' So, he prepared his bow and arrow on the two wrappers of the tent and they waited. A man entered the tent at night and started to stab the bed with his sword. When he turned around, he was shot by an arrow, and his head rolled off. The young novice quickly took the sword. He looked for a vulnerable part in the chest and thrust the sword there. That sword remained and was said to be used in the war for the motherland. Old people used to talk about it. (Private talk about fire-offering.)

Avtai Sain Khan showed his abilities even in old age. He was not an ordinary man, but a hero. Arrows could not reach him. Not his heart, neither other parts of his body. Heroes. This is what people talked. Buddhism did not spread to Mongolia in ancient times, in the period of Chinggis Khan. Perhaps only shamanism. Men and women who reached the age of 80 or 90 had to die. Their grandsons killed them by giving

them splinterings of the shin-bone, and the old men choked (on them). Once Avtai Khan found a *vajra* near Erdene Zuu. A man and his son lived there. The father was old. He had reached the age of sticking. They told others that he had already died. However, he was still living in the mountains. His son used to take meals to him. Avtai Khan found an object, but nobody could identify it. I read this story in Öndör Gegeen's biography. The boy took food to his father, who realized his son's sorrow. 'What has happened, my son?' 'I cannot visit you anymore. It will be difficult for you to survive without food. The *khan* found a strange object. No one can identify it. I have to visit him tomorrow to see that object. He will definitely kill me.' 'What does it look like?' The son described the object. 'Well, tell him that it is a religious implement. It refers to that the *khan* will meet Buddhism soon. If he asks who said it to you, tell the truth if there is no other choice. He can kill me if he wants. My heyday has passed.' The son visited the *khan*. He drank and ate in the court. They asked him, 'What is it?' The son replied, 'This is a *vajra*. Buddhism will spread to Mongolia.' They said, 'You are right. You could identify it. Who said it to you?' 'I know it by myself.' 'Really? You have to name the person who told it to you.' 'It was my father.' 'Well, elderly people seem to be useful. We have to prohibit the murder of old people.' This is the story of how the murder of old people was ceased. Then, the *khan* gave orders for his big drum beaten, invited his big clans, ordered the small drum beaten, invited his small clans, took his bow and arrows and went to Tibet with his troops to bring Buddhism to Mongolia. In the area of the snowy Himalaya is the Buddha Pass, and here there was a mountain with a fearful local spirit. Livestock going there always shied, and the king wanted to shoot the local spirits. When the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama were informed about this devil, they hid under their thrones. 'We are unable to defeat him. We will send the 33 dogs'. They let off the dogs, but Avtai Khan said, 'I will take a monk and a statue from you.' 'We will give them to you. Choose what you want. We have no right to prescribe to you what to take.' He offered a white, a yellow and a black silken scarf to the Dalai Lama. The Dalai Lama took them and thought, 'The black scarf means the clearing away of the ten black sins. [Three sins of the body: killing, theft, lust; four sins of speaking: lying, censorious speech, rude speech, gossip; three sins of the mind: greed, animosity, false theories]. The white scarf refers to the spreading of the ten white merits [Three virtues of the body: avoiding killing, theft and lust; four virtues of speaking: telling the truth, not speaking censoriously, soft spoken, not gossiping; three virtuous of the mind: contentment, compassion, right

views.]. The yellow scarf means the spreading of Buddhism.’ The Dalai Lama invited the previous incarnation of Öndör Gegeen, whose soul was already very old at that time. These three monks, namely the Dalai Lama, the Panchen Lama, and the *Bogd* lived in the same period of time. ‘Now, it is your turn. Choose someone.’ Avtai Khan came with a naked sword, and pointed to the breasts of the three monks. He reached the old monk who remained unshaken. Avtai Khan said, ‘He is a brave man. I will take him. Now, give me a statue.’ ‘Choose it for yourself.’ Avtai pointed to the chests of the statues with his sword one by one. Gombogur throbbed. ‘It is living. I will take this.’ ‘So, you too, old monk will go with him.’ He replied, ‘I am too old. I cannot go.’ The old monk determined the month and the day when he himself would be reborn in Avtai Khan’s family. ‘Build a temple, a monastery.’ Erdene Zuu is similar to Lhasa and has several *stūpas*. It is said to be built by Chinese and Turkic people. ‘I will consecrate that monastery.’ Time passed and he did not arrive. Avtai Khan wanted to go to destroy Tibet, but suddenly a storm arose and the wind brought large barley pieces which consecrated the monastery. Avtai Khan remained in Mongolia after this consecration, and Zanabazar was born. You can read this story in Öndör Gegeen’s biography.

It is said that the Buryads took that sword to Russia at the time of the war for the homeland, and made bullets from it. The old, copper statue of Avalokiteśvara was also demolished and bullets were made of it. Russia improved Mongolia. Lice lived even in our wounds. I belong to that generation. We did not have underwear and skirts. We wore our fur coats with lice. We wore our fur coats at daytime, and turned them out at night to sleep on them. I do not lie. This is the truth. We were like that. The Russians developed Mongolia. That was a great empire. They were severe in work, but anyway. All the old and young people living in district centers smelled. Ulcered people smell, having a strong, unpleasant odor. Once, a young Russian lady arrived at the district centre. The same age as me. Also a young man. Perhaps her husband or interpreter, who was a Buryad man. They gave vaccine to people and also a white vaccine. People came from the countryside on horseback. After getting the vaccine, well, there was a red yurt called the yurt of art. People japed us, ‘Guys, you are vaccinated with the red vaccine, now you can go to dance to the red yurt.’ They arrived not only in that area, but everywhere in Mongolia. (Saying to Ch. Gansükh: Your mother and father might also have met them. You are the next generation.) The parents of this generation were all vaccinated and healed. They cured people and livestock diseases at first time. They built the Biokombinat to heal the

livestock. Various livestock diseases of goats, cattle, sheep, horses, and camels exist. All had its own names, but it is impossible to heal all. China infected Mongolian people and livestock at that time. Chinese are very terrible in poisoning. Then, the Russians arrived to heal people and the livestock. Experts. There are many bad Mongolian people. They chased away the Russians without giving a cup of tea. So, this is the story. For instance, Kazakh or Hungarian people built this building where I live. They laughed a lot while painting and fixing it. I know many such stories. Rinchen *guai* gained his PhD in Hungary.

- Do you know stories about saints and reincarnations?
- How can I recount to you about all saints and reincarnations that lived in Mongolia? I can list some of the most eminent monks. *Yonzon khamba* was a Tibetan monk. The *Bogd* himself, also the *Bogd's* brother, the *Chojin* oracle. *Manzshir lamtan*. *Jalkhanz gegeen* from Zavkhan or Khövsgöl, and many other famous saints and reincarnations lived in Mongolia. All of them had magical powers, great abilities. Another saint was *Altai (?) mergen bandid* of Galshar. They wanted to capture him, the old man who could not even get up from his bed. It wasn't even worth wasting a bullet on him. They were went to capture him, but he was absent. They asked others about his whereabouts. They said that he left on horseback, galloping to the south, to Inner Mongolia. He met a local man on the way who joined him. The monk drew a circle and told the local man, 'You cannot depart from this circle'. Then, the monk left on horseback. Finally, the man left the circle, and the persecutors caught him, but not the monk. Such stories about saints and reincarnations are widely known. Luvsan *khuvilgaan*, *Mergen bandid* of Baraat, and many other saints lived in Mongolia. Mongolia is a country with many customs. I am an adopted child. My father and mother died at the age of about 30. They gave their two children to other people. Sick people were not able to be pregnant at that time. So, many people adopted children. (Private talk.)
- Was this part called Amgalan?
- Amgalanbaatar. The Chinese established it. Two Geser temples stood in Urga: one in Amgalanbaatar, and another one near Gandan. One of them has remained. It was a beautiful complex. What is it? (Looking at an old painting.)
- This is the *Bogd's* White Palace. This is his summer residence, the *Serüün lavran*.
- *Serüün lavran*? I have heard that the current incarnation of the *Bogd* became a Mongolian citizen. He is the 9th incarnation.

- Do you know if a prison was situated here?
- Yes, here, in the vicinity of the metal factory, the wooden factory.
- This is a bridge. (Looking at the old painting.)
- Exactly. It was called the Red Bridge of his Holiness. The *Bogd* was accompanied there. Many Chinese people lived in this part. There were narrow streets among the Chinese stores. These are courtyards here named after the districts. *Dechingalay*, the Maitreya Temple, the tantric monastic school, the medical monastic school, the astrologic monastic school, the assembly hall called *Battsagaan*. Once, a Chahar man arrived to see the *Battsagaan*. He liked it very much. His hometown had a large yurt palace the size of one Chinese cord (3.3 m). When he returned home, local people asked him about Uрга. ‘I saw a beautiful, wonderful temple called *Battsagaan*.’ Local people asked him to compare it with their large yurt palace. ‘Our yurt palace is like a black hole in comparison.’ They beat that man for his words.
- Here you can see Dashchoinkhorlin and Shaddüvlin monasteries. (Looking at the old painting together.)
- What is this?
- This is the *Bogd*’s White Palace.
- It is said that a white *stūpa* stood there. People circled it several times.
- It is Tsetsee Gүн peak on the top of Bogd Uul.
- Well, it is very interesting. This is Chingeltei Mountain.
- Which mountains and *ovoos* did the monks of *Zoogoi aimag* venerate?
- They venerated Bogd Uul. Otgontenger Khaikhan in Zavkhan province, Khentii Khan Uul in Khentii province, and also Dariganga.
- Can you provide information about the *jinsreg* fire-offering? Did the monks perform it in each district?
- No, not in every district. If such a ritual was necessary it could be performed anywhere. With a reason.

CENTRAL MONGOLIA

Tsend Tserenpuntsag (1914–2012)



Ts. Tserenpuntsag monk, 2010

The Kharchin man, Tsend Tserenpuntsag was born in 1914, in the year of the Tiger. He joined Bayanbaraatiin Khural in Bayan-Önjүүл district, Төв province at the age of 8. Later, he moved to Urga and lived in *Anduu nariin aimag* and studied philosophy in *Gungaachoinlin datsan*. Presumably, he also belonged to Manzshiriin Khiid. He became a monk again in 1990, and the abbot of Dashchoinkhorlin Monastery, revival of Manzshiriin Khiid in Zuunmod, Төв province.

We interviewed Tserenpuntsag monk three times with Zsuzsa Majer (2006, 2007, 2009), and documented the ruins of his old monastery in Bayanbaraat and other nearby monasteries within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in 2007. The following interviews provide details on certain assemblies of Töv province, and on the monastic life of Urga. Tserenpuntsag monk has never hidden his feelings on socialism and its sympathizers, which caused a serious interval in Mongolian Buddhism.

Interview 1

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 3 September, 2007 in Tserenpuntsag monk's home in Zuunmod with the assistance of his daughter. The recording has poor sound quality.

- Several assemblies existed once in Bayan-Önjүүл district: Bayanbaraat, Dalai Eejiin Jas, Güyengiin Jas, Ijiriin Jas, Beliin Jas, and Tsakhiurtiin Jas. Can you see how many *jas* existed only in one such district or sub-province? There were 237 noblemen in the world [in Mongolia]. All of them had a large monastic complex, large prayer wheels (?), and astrologers. Then, revolution began and all of them were annihilated. Then, democracy began, but it has just started. They annihilated all the implements of monastic life after the revolution.
- Did you join Bayanbaraatiin Khural as a child?
- Sure.
- How many temples did it have?
- It had about 200 monks. I also participated in the *Khailen* oath-taking period at the age of 15. I studied medical books about the liver, lung, and heart at the age of 27. The revolutionaries burnt those books and seized my master. I am 96 years old now.
- Who was the head of Bayanbaraatiin Khural?
- The Lama was Dondog (?) Erdene monk.
- How many temples did the monastery have?
- It consisted of only two or three temples, but there were quite a lot of monks. I disrobed at the age of 27.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks venerate?
- Baraatiin Uul. It started to rain when they venerated that mountain.
- Is there a new *stūpa* at the old site of the monastery?
- There is only a new *stūpa* now. Nothing else.

- Did people erect it at the former site of the assembly hall?
- Yes.
- When was the *stūpa* built?
- About four or five years ago. (Informant's daughter's talk.)
- Did the monks of Bayanbaraatiin Khural live in yurts or buildings?
- In yurts.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- Begtse.
- Did you hold ceremonies on a daily basis?
- Every day.
- Did the monks hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Yes, they held.
- Did Maitreya procession take place in the monastery?
- Yes, in springs or in summers.
- Was the *Kanjur* circumambulation held as well?
- Yes, it was. Monks gave blessings.
- Was it a *Kanjur* written with black ink?
- There were two sets: one with black ink and another one written in vermillion. There were two sets: the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur*.
- Can you talk about the high ranking monks of the monastery? Was there an abbot?
- Yes.
- Disciplinarian?
- Two disciplinarians.
- Chanting master?
- Six chanting masters.
- Were there any monks who performed the *Chö* practice?
- Monks did not perform the *Chö* practice.
- Were there monks who took the *gavj* exam of Buddhist philosophy?
- That place was called Urga, which had monastic philosophy schools. Also Choir in Dundgovi province. Monks could take the *gavj* exam only in the area of Borjigin.
- Did your monastery have an astrologer monk?
- There was. If there is a monastery, there is an astrologer, too.
- Doctors?
- No, but there were *maaramba* monks with medical degree.
- Were there *stūpas*?
- A few. Not many. Behind the monastery in the north.
- Did the monks perform the *Tsam* dance?
- No, that was held only in the monastery which had philosophy schools.

- Were there any *choijin* oracles?
- *Chojins* belonged only to large monasteries. Oracles did not live in small assemblies.
- Can you list the monthly ceremonies?
- Several monks gathered to hold ceremonies on the 15th, 29th, and 8th day of the lunar months.
- How did you celebrate the 25th of Butter Lamps, the commemoration day of Tsongkhapa?
- All families and monasteries lit butter lamps.
- Did a lay population live around the site of Bayanbaraatiin Khural?
- Only a few people.
- Did women live in the monastery?
- No, no, they did not.
- Please talk about the nearby Ijirgiin Jas. Was it an assembly with permanent ceremonies?
- It had permanent ceremonies.
- How many monks lived there?
- About 100.
- How many temples did the monastery have?
- Two temples, three temples.
- Were they wooden buildings?
- Wooden temples.
- Was there an assembly hall?
- An assembly hall.
- Were there yurt temples?
- Some places had a few yurt temple, but not many.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- Mahākāla.
- Can you provide the name of the abbot of that monastery?
- The abbot of Ijirgiin Jas was Mör fully-ordained monk.
- Were there many fully-ordained monks?
- Several.
- Please talk about the nearby Güyengiin Jas.
- It also had about 100 monks and three temples.
- Who was the abbot there?
- A blind monk. He was my master, so I cannot utter his name. He was very old. He was a very capable monk, who could make unconscious people conscious by reciting a certain sacred text.
- Please talk about Dalai Eejin Jas.

- Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar founded it. Its [head] Lama was called Tüntee (?). He was an educated monk. The monastery was destroyed and the monks were executed in the 27th year [1937].
- Did the fully ordained monks use to hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- For 45 days.
- Were Bayanbaraat and Bayan-Önjүүл two separate districts at that time?
- Of course. There was a temple in Bayanbaraat. A wooden temple. Its monks lived in yurts. It operated until the 27th year.
- Have you heard about a place called Shine Us?
- Shine Us? There was a spring at Shine Us that cured liver and lung diseases. The spring dried out and the monastery was demolished. It is not there anymore.
- Did it belong to the area of Bayanbaraat district?
- No, it belonged to the area of the aristocrat called *Daichin beis*.
- How many monks lived there?
- About 100. *Khadnii lam* [‘Lama of the Rocks’] was the abbot. The main activity of monks was curing with that holy water. Water good for heart, water for eyes. It had a well.
- Did it belong to the current area of Önjүүл?
- Yes, that was the banner called *Daichin beisiin khoshuu*. It had small assemblies. The monks of Urga had yurts and wooden buildings, too.
- Have you heard about Olkhiin Jas on the bank of the River Tuul?
- I have not heard about it. There were many *jas* assemblies. Khorin Jas, Guchin Jas, Tavin Jas. *Daichin beisiin khoshuu* had several such assemblies belonging to different households.
- Do you know anything about Övör Gandan Khiid?
- Övör Gandan was a *jas* assembly, too. It had 50 or 60 monks and many livestock. It sat on the northern bank of the River Khalzangiin Gol. Its oldest monks were the abbots in turn.
- Have you heard about Tsakhiriin Jas? Did it differ from Tsakhiurt?
- It is north of Tsakhir Uul. The head of Tsakhiriin Jas was Erdene lama, a young monk. A reincarnation with a doctor and an astrologer.

Interview 2

Interview recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 3 May, 2010 in Tserenpuntsag monk’s home in Zuunmod.

- I have an image. There are two deers on the two sides. Deers like lying on the hillside. A man with a knife goes to kill the sleeping deers. However, the deers observed that man who thought that he could kill them even if they were not sleeping. Deers are similar to wild animals. Monks' psychology is similar to them.
- Can you explain how the monks use to venerate the *ovoos*?
- They venerated *ovoos*. *Ovoos* cannot be damaged. They symbolize the world. They are named after the *ovoo* or Buddhist deities. The revolutionaries destroyed all of them, none of them remained intact. All of them were ruined. If there is an *ovoo* everything is manageable. If there is an *ovoo*, there is a Buddha. All of them were destroyed.
- Did Urga's monks use to venerate only one *ovoo* or more *ovoos*?
- 30 districts existed in Urga. The monks of the districts venerated their own, local *ovoos* in the countryside. Monks recite sacred texts during the *ovoo* veneration to make rain. Sunrise brings peace into people's heart. The livestock will remain in the vicinity by the power of the recited texts. People's hearts are full of harmony. They venerate the ground where the Nāga King lives. Nowadays, the *nāgas* do not live there anymore. *Ovoo* veneration resulted in rain: grass grew and sentient beings lived in harmony. This is the reason of the *ovoo* veneration. The Nāga King supports the ground. There are not *nāgas* anymore in this revolutionary area.
- Please describe the *Tsam* dance performance of Urga.
- Certainly, Urga had a *Tsam*. It was a kind of opera or play. The performance is based on Buddhist sacred texts. From one hand, Buddhism is spreading again. In former times, when Choibalsan governed the state, Buddhism was annihilated. They claimed that Buddhas were evil. Monks were fined. They forced the monks to disrobe. Now, there are monks again. Thank to the Democratic Party. Two parties exist: the Democratic Party and the Revolutionary Party. The Revolutionary Party is problematic. Revolution means that everything is scarce and people are unfriendly with each other. However, people's minds became harmonious after the Democratic Party's victory. There is only one error. They sell our own land to foreigners. These are incorrect steps. Where will the Mongols live if they sell the country? They decide this question mistakenly. Previously, aristocrats governed very well. One nobleman governed hundreds of people. Politicians decided to dig a well or not. People did not die. Previously it was like that. This is the past. Afterwards, the revolution started. Now, after the democratic changes it is nice again.
- Have you heard about the *shashnii zakhirгаа* religious governance?

- Of course. The reincarnated *Bogd* was the head of that governance. He was an intellect coming from Tibet and India. India is called *Jagar* (Tib. *rgya gar*) in Tibetan. Tibet is the place of Enlightenment. It has a separate name. Now, we are following the Tibetan system. Indian and Tibetan, the Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama.
- Have you heard about Erdenepil and Gombodoo monks?
- The man called Erdenepil. Finally, the revolution destroyed Buddhism. Erdenepil lived at that time. He was a Buryad man. The Panchen Lama and the Dalai Lama are the lords of religion.
- Do you know also Gombodoo?
- The man called Gombodoo was good at mathematics, in the use of the abacus. He was the head of ceremonial rules. Erdenepil was a Buryad man who did not know the Buddhist teaching and texts well.
- Have you heard about the Journal of the Lamas?
- Such journals are publications dedicated to different age groups. One-year old, two-year old, ten-year old children. Dedicated to different age groups.
- In which script were these journals written?
- In the old Mongolian script. *Tangad* [here Tibetan] is different. There are Mongolian texts. There are Tibetan texts as well. Written in Tibetan. Sacred texts from Tibet and India. In their own languages. Tibetan is Tibetan, Indian is Indian [Sanskrit].
- What was the Journal of the Lamas about?
- Generally, journals were dedicated to different age groups. It had volumes. Books were written. If someone did not reach the age, he could not read the given book. Later, it became possible if someone became older. It is like the alphabet for children.
- Did you belong to *Gungaachoinlin datsan*?
- Sure, study of philosophy is another thing. It is the key which opens the mind. A man who studies Buddhist philosophy is like that. Three monastic philosophy schools existed in Uрга: *Gungaachoinlin*, *Dashchoimbel*, and *Idgaachoinzinlin*. Choibalsan demolished all temples and made the monks disrobe. The revival could happen only after the democratic changes.
- How did they demolish the temples?
- For example, in case of a wooden temple with metal roof they used the wood as firewood, and the metal roof was clinched to be the roof of a yurt or a building.
- Do you know how the single pillar of *Gungaachoinlin datsan* has survived?

- They nominated a man to demolish the remaining pillar of *Gungaachoilin*. While sawing it, water bubbled up from the base of the wooden pillar and he stopped. The man gave up saying that the pillar was crying. This is how that single pillar has remained until today. The man said that the pillar was crying so he gave this task up. He painted it and left the pillar. It is situated south-west of my present, rebuilt temple. That pillar has an interesting story. That wood was delivered by two carts pulled by two oxen from Altanbulag, from Tujiin Nars. The wood of Urga. Buddhism spread intensively at that time. Mongolia had four *khans* in that period of time: Tüsheet Khan, Zasagt Khan, Avtai Sain Khan, etc. Their head was the Manchu emperor, the emperor of China who built Amarbayasgalant Khiid for 10,000 *lan* of silver. Mongolia and Urga were called Northern Beijing for the initiation of the Manchu emperor who wanted to become a monk and liberate from China Urga was called Northern Beijing. The *Bogd* was sentenced, sent to prison and killed [in 1924]. General Xu Shuzheng wanted to modify the governance. Therefore, the *Bogd* pronounced the lighting of 10,000 butter lamps in the north-west of Songino Mountain. 10,000 butter lamps were lighted to give illumination. Then, monks and temples were annihilated by the people's revolution. By Choibalsan's Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party. They executed people in the north-western part of Bogd Uul, at Songino. So, Urga was named as Northern Beijing. They planned to capture the *Bogd* and kill him in fire. They sentenced and shut him in a building. They placed timbers on the four sides and put chopped trees beneath and set it alight. When the *Bogd* was closed there, the roof turned to bloody red. *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam* was there when they burnt the *Bogd* and said, 'This man differs from average monks. He won't die whatever you do.' Finally, he came out alive. Such a story is known. Bogd Uul of Urga is a *khan*. Two soldiers are situated on his two knees. Songino and Bayanzürkh were thought as two armies, thus it is a king. Manchu and Chinese experts made an excursion in the north and identified Chingeltei Uul as a laying elephant. The revolutionaries destroyed the site called Zaanii Khoshuu ['Elephant snout'] and thus killed the elephant when building a road. It is said that it resulted in drought and serious winter conditions. Sambuu was a talented leader. When the idea of a road crossing Bogd Uul arose, he resisted and prohibited it. When people wanted to build a road through Bogd Uul, his prophesy said that people should leave the mountain, otherwise accidents would happen. The mountains grant Mongolia's food and drink, so people should love the mountain. Therefore, a road was not built via Bogd Uul. It is the story. People who knew history

well told me. My master told it to me. I have heard it with my own ears, and saw it with my own eyes. Several bears, deers, wild horses, donkeys and other animals lived in Bogd Uul. They are not there anymore. They slaughtered all animals. These animals are said to have moved to Khentii Mountain. It was a mountain abundant in deers and other wild animals such as the deer with horn. Bogd Dünjingarav was worshipped and venerated. The worshipped area is now for sale. People lost their qualities, and sell the land to foreigners. They sell our own land. Officials are merciless. I am now over 90. I was born in the year of the Tiger. Contentious. Chinese experts examined Chingeltei Uul and Bogd Uul when we had good relations with the Chinese. They specified that Bogd Uul is a nobleman, and Bayanzürkh and Songino are his sentinels. I myself saw that script. They also stated that Chingeltei Uul is an elephant. The Chinese experts founded the Geser Temple at the trunk of the elephant. It was a long trunk. The trunk of the elephant damaged as they trampled that place. Certainly, the elephant died as they damaged the land with cars. The mountain in the north, Chingeltei Uul lies as an elephant. According to rumours, they killed that being when they damaged the land. Monks disagreed with that deed. The revolutionaries damaged the proboscis of the elephant. Drought, famine, heavy snowfall and diseases spread because they damaged the land. I was a monk in *Gungaachoilin datsan*. They damaged the ground without any sense. In former times, land was not damaged. Foreigners came to study the hills, the Buddhas, and also influenced noblemen. The noblemen happily answered their questions. Tasganii Ovoo is situated in the north. You might hear that several monks used to gather there. Proboscis, pass. Though the monks did not like foreigners, they dug the land following their advice. Therefore, drought and severe weather started.

Interview 3

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 27 February, 2011 in Tserenpuntsag monk's home in Zuunmod with the assistance of Tserendorj Nemekhbayar.

- Were there any *örtöö* relay station roads going from Urga to the south? Relay station road or caravan route?
- Did you say relay station? I am a man from the banner of Kharchin *Tüsheets van*. I am a Kharchin man. (Private talk.)

- I would like to specify a few things regarding Urga. Is it possible?
- Sure. Four Khalkha provinces existed, and the fifth one was the *Shavi* at that time.
- Were there 30 districts in *Züün khüree* and at *Gandan*?
- Yes, there were 30 districts.
- Were these 30 districts at *Züün khüree* or at *Gandan*?
- Yes, 30 districts. *Züün khüree* and *Gandan* were two different sites. Monks who studied and discussed philosophy lived at *Gandan*. There were distinguished texts, they had distinguished intelligence. Monks of *Züün khüree* lived in yurts. Only monks lived at *Gandan*. *Züün khüree* and *Gandan* had a difference. Monks lived with their parents in *Züün khüree*. At *Gandan*, only those monks lived who studied the sacred texts. It was called *Gandantegchenlin*.
- Were the monks at *Gandan* grouped into districts similarly to *Züün khüree*?
- They belonged to 30 districts: *Düinkhor*, *Setsen khanii* [*Setsen toinii*], *Amduu nar*, *Jas*, *Nomch*, *Sangai*. These were the names of the district. *Setsen khan* refers to Khentii. The monastery of *Lamiin gegeen* stood once in Bayankhongor.
- Did *Gandan* have a *Shüteenii aimag*, too?
- There were 30 districts: *Shüteenii*, *Dondovlin*, *Jadar*, *Toislon*, *Düinkhor*, *Tsetsen khanii* [*Tsetsen toinii*], and others in an order. All of them had their own names. *Ekh dagina aimag* refers to the *Bogd*'s marriage to the wife of another man and the district of that lady became known as *Ekh daginii aimag*.
- So, *Gandan* also had a *Shüteenii aimag*, didn't it?
- *Shüteenii aimag* was the first of the districts: *Shüteenii*, *Dondovlin*, *Jadar*, *Toislon*, *Düinkhor*, *Setsen khanii* [*Setsen toinii*] *aimag* were situated in the east. They started from the east to the west: *Shüteenii*, *Dondovlin*, *Jadar*, *Toislon*, *Düinkhor*, *Tsetsen khanii*. All districts had their own names and about 100 monks. It was the system of the 30 districts. *Düinkhor*, *Setsen khanii*, *Amduu*. *Amduu* refers to Tibet. *Bod gaddu* means Tibetan (Tib. *bod skad du*), and *Jagar gaddu* means Indian [Sanskrit] (Tib. *rgya gar skad du*). Have you heard about *Dogshin noyon khutagt*, the saint of the Gobi? *Danzanravjaa* is a banner-bearer.
- Can you talk about the ceremonial canopies of the 30 districts?
- Ceremonial canopies? They had a wooden stick and various colours. It resembled, simulated an airplane. It is a toy. Its colour and motifs changed in the wind. It had a long wooden stick as large as the pole of a yurt. It was wooden like that. Having religious syllables, motifs and

symbols. Have you heard about Danzanravjaa? He was an exceptional intellectual. It is his anniversary. He will be reborn soon. The *Dogshin noyon khutagt* of the Gobi.

- Were these ceremonial canopies used at the Maitreya procession?
- Certainly. Maitreya's statue was placed on a cart with four wheels at the Maitreya procession. Monks recited *sūtras* and that artificial horse neighed. It was an artificial horse made of paper-mâché, but sounded like a living horse. In the story of the Paper Bird. That is a high level teaching. The man called Marshal Choibalsan who wielded political power damaged Mongolian traditional culture. No one is alive now to tell the truth. In one word he destroyed the culture. That man changed Mongolian traditions, annihilated everything that was good before, made prosperous things rare, made convenient things inconvenient. It was him: Marshal Choibalsan.
- Did female monks live in Urga?
- The Khalkhas, the Mongols. There were monks. Men who had wives were called 'black men' [lay, ordinary people]. There were many monks, thousands of monks!
- Were there *khandmaa* female practitioners, too?
- Yes, there were. *Khandmaa*, White Tārā, Green Tārā. There were women with these names. All of them knew the Tibetan scriptures.
- Where did they live?
- They lived with monks. Their dwellings were separated. In *Züün khüree* and at *Gandan*. They had yurts, kitchen, everything. In *Züün khüree*. Also *Gandan*. (Private talk about Chinggis Khan.)
- Had the *khandmaas* long hair?
- They had their own places. Buildings did not exist at that time. They lived in yurts. They had their meals separately. *Khandmaas*. *Khandmaa* means a female 'monk'. They had long hair. I am almost 100 years old. This white hair was preserved as a unique sanctity. I was 90 when white hair appeared on the upper part of my neck. It is said that the masters preserved white hair and called it topknot. I am one of the oldest people in this area. I joined Manzshir Khiid at the age of 17 or 18. Now, I am almost 100 years old.
- Did *khandmaas* perform body-offering rituals?
- Certainly. They had big *damaru* drums. They recited the texts of the *Eight-footed Eulogy of the Celestial Deities*. They held the handle of their *damaru* drums and drank kumis from large bowls. The *damarus* were made of human skulls. They glued two skulls to make a *damaru*. Nowadays, you cannot see such things.

- Where was the *ovoo* veneration of Urga?
- The *ovoo* veneration is in connection with the Nāga King. Nice food and fruits were placed at large mountains to venerate the lord of the given area. They wore new, nice *deel* gowns and played the *ḍāmaru*, rang bells, and recited sacred texts.
- Which *ovoo* was venerated in Urga?
- If there is an *ovoo* people venerate it. All *ovoos* have a name. *Ovoo* is a sacred cairn which cannot be destroyed. If there are pebbles at a place, people pile them. Now, this tradition does not exist anymore. Mountains are damaged. The *ovoos* of mountains used to be venerated. Its grass could not be damaged apart from grazing. It is impossible to move rocks. *Dogshin noyon khutagt* was a remarkable person. *Nāga* is the lord of ground. Now, *nāgas* do not live here. They were killed. Living *nāgas* have not remained. When injuring the land all these worms died, and the underworld depletes. This is what happened. A dragon is a living being. He lives inside of a hill with his whole body. When they dug up the ground, they killed him. This is the way that he died. The mountain situated north of Ulaanbaatar was alive. They destroyed its being when digging the ground. Our leader, Marshal Choibalsan following false doctrines like King Langdarma (799?–841) of Tibet followed the ideology of a country of another continent, saying that Buddhism is non-existent. It was defeated, weakened. They destroyed all that was excellent and pleasant. They have been destroying hills and rocks for many years. Our governors, Tsedenbal, Marshal Choibalsan, commander Choibalsan were all fools. They changed the whole country, directed people's mind towards a wrong direction, and even changed our clothing. They were such people. Now, we can express our thoughts freely. They committed awful things indeed.
- Have you heard about a brick burning kiln? A place where Chinese brick was produced?
- Oh yes. Brick. Delicate mud is clotted and dried out, and finally a building is built. A brick factory stood here.
- Was it situated near Urga?
- Mud was knead and dried out. They burnt it and built monasteries, temples, yurt and building constructions. It was cheerful. The revolution and Choibalsan changed everything, also the economics. Only the five types of livestock remained the same.
- Where did you see the brick preparation procedure?
- Here is a brick factory. Mud was knead and burnt, and brick was made. It can be a building or a yurt.

- How did you make light in absence of electricity afore?
- There was no light in the modern sense. Only from the sky. Lightning is the vein of the earth. When raining, an arrow lands from the sky to the earth. I learnt it from sacred books when I was a child. Monks studied about how to handle and change them.
- Please list the saints and reincarnations that lived at that time.
- They landed at a given time. From the clouds in the sky (heaven) where they resided. They landed on the earth at the proper time. Reincarnations, saints, all self-born. Very virtuous people. This monastery is the revival of the monastery of *Manzshir khutagt*. He grew up and showed his abilities. His father and mother were immaculate and virtuous, so could give birth to such a holy man. People used to speak like this. A wise person can be born; a virtuous person can be born. He recited sacred texts to express his knowledge. Many such people were born. Reborn again and again.
- Have you heard about *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam*?
- Yes, I have heard this name: *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam. Dari ekh lam*. There are two areas: Züün Kharaa and Baruun Kharaa. The River Tuul. The River Khöndlön. Near that water he lived: the *Dari ekh lam*. He was born as a human being, and recited the texts of Tārā, and merged into her body. He was such a gifted man! That text gives a healthy child for the pregnant when giving birth. There are many Tārās: the 21 Tārās, the 108 Tārās.
- Have you heard about *Khüükhen khutagt*?
- Yes, I know his story well. *Khüükhen khutagt* looked like a lady. He knew the Buddhist texts very well. The man called Choibalsan arrested him, tested his knowledge and finally executed him. (Private talk.) That man called Marshal Choibalsan took the reincarnation of *Khüükhen khutagt*, a beautiful 16 year-old teenager from Setsen Khan province and shot him.
- Have you heard about *Bambar Erdene khuvilgaan*?
- *Bambar Erdene* was a very learned monk. His five fingers were not unbending. The Stone-fingered Ācārya master is a historical figure. Several outstanding monks lived in Mongolia. That man, Choibalsan, King Langdarma executed all of them.
- Please talk about *Dilov khutagt* and *Zayaiin gegeen*.
- There was a monk called *Zayaiin gegeen*. They could not decide whether to kill him or not, but finally they killed him. If you ask for its reason, his mother wore golden bracelets on her two arms, and golden rings on her fingers. They made bullets from the golden bracelets and rings of

- his mother, and killed *Zaya khutagt* with that golden bullet. He lived in Arkhangai province. Finally, they executed him. This is what people say.
- Have you heard about Erdenepil monk?
 - The monk called Erdenepil. He appeared at the time when they were killing the monks. You ask about Erdenepil, don't you? He was a monk. Their activity was not known to the whole public, but Erdenepil, Shadav, Luvsanzundui, and Nyambuu's names appeared in the journal that they published. They founded an editorial office and published a book which was not about the benefits of Buddhism. That was Erdenepil.
 - Was it the Journal of the Lamas?
 - Although they wore monk robes, they did not know Buddhism well. All of them were shot. Luvsanzundui, Nyambuu.
 - Have you heard about the *Baasangiin khural*?
 - *Baasangiin khural*? That was an agitation to annihilate Buddhism. People arrived on Fridays and held that gathering. To start the collectivization of the properties of noblemen, wealthy people. If that wealthy man comes to the temples. The government said that it was good to have Luvsanzundui and Nyambuu. However, the revolution buzzed them off too.
 - Where was the *Baasangiin khural* held?
 - It was a meeting in order to stop religious practices. They held these meetings on Fridays. On Saturdays. It was held at the current Dörvön Zam road junction. They talked about the disannulment of wealthy people and monks. Regarding *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam*, well Züün Kharaa, Baruun Kharaa existed. *Dari ekh lam* was a great captured
 - Where was the exact site of the *Baasangiin khural*?
 - That meeting on Friday was against the maintenance of nobles, nice and traditional things. People could criticize others, propose questions there.
 - Did the monks hold that meetings?
 - No, monks used to recite only sacred texts and hold ceremonies. Apart from that, they did not participate in such events, did not say to do this and that with this and that person. Monks only recited Buddhist texts.
 - So it means that the *Baasangiin khural* was not a religious congregation.
 - No, it was a meeting to annihilate religion! Lay people organized and participated in it. Such as nowadays.
 - Where did they hold that meeting?
 - *Baasan garigiin khural* was a propaganda saying that something was not necessary, useless, to start this, to stop that. They gathered at the Dörvön Zam road junction. They criticized and wanted to cancel Buddhism, feu-

dalism. Poor people participated in it at all times. Proletariat dictatorship means that many poor people from different sites united and merged.

- Please talk now about *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam*.
- *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam* was Tārā's emanation. There are two sites: Züün Kharaa and Baruun Kharaa. It is said that the troops of the Chinese Kuomintang rolled up many bullets of guns to occupy Mongolia. When the arrows were raining *Kharaagiin Dari ekh lam* sat and raised his arms and caught the arrows in his armpit. He recited the text of Tārā. With *lün* initiation.
- Was an image of Tsongkhapa available in Uрга?
- Yes. A temple was built with that reason to secretly guard it. *Güden*. These old relics were all annihilated due to the revolution.
- In *Züün khüree*?
- *Züün khüree* was a part where monks could live with their parents. However, *Gandan* was a quarter of educated monks, a round structure. Our dwelling had also many children. Its most precious temple was dedicated to the Vajradhara *Bogd* and had more temple buildings. It was also the theme of songs. The Vajradhara *Bogd* was able to emit mist to the mountain. Someone going there saw that this monk was sitting among the clouds. He did not have a dwelling, but sat on a snow-wreath. Even its image was available. The Buddhas are said to live in sky, in heaven in a marvelous place, not in an ordinary dwelling. I think that Mongolia follows the path of Chinggis Khan.
- Please bless us!
- Certainly, I will bless you. I will teach a *dhāraṇī* to you. *Om Baranza dargaa ha hum. Om benza sattva hum*. This is Vajrasattva's *dhāraṇī*. It prevents quarrels among people, pacifies anger, and brings harmony. People can live and manage things only in harmony. This sacred text comforts angry people, brings calmness, and peace. My master used to ask Guhyasamāja, Kālacakra, and Cakrasaṃvara. He was exceptional. I cannot communicate with the Buddhas. Will you return now to Ulaanbaatar?
- Yes, we will. Goodbye!
- I reached 100 years of age. Now, take a blessing from me and return home.

Gongor Khengereg (1920–?)



G. Khengereg monk, 2010

Gongor Khengereg was born in 1920, in the year of the Hen. He became a monk at Bambar Erdene Lamiin Khiid in Sergelen district, Töv province at the age of 7. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 11 April, 2010 in his flat. His son assisted the interview for a while. A more detailed interview recorded by Mongolian researchers is available at www.mongoliantemples.org.

- I was a monk at Bambar Erdenii Khüree. I disrobed at the age of 16 or 17 in the 1930s when the operation of monasteries ceased.
- When were you born?
- (Informant's son: He was born in 1920.)
- In the Year of the Hen?
- (Informant's son: Yes.)
- How old were you when you became a monk?
- (Informant's son: He joined Bambar Erdenii Khüree at the age of 7.)
- Was Bambar Erdenii Khüree a monastery of a reincarnation? Did it have a subordinated area?
- (Informant's son: *Bambar Erdene* was one of the seven Khalkha saints.)

- How many monks lived in the monastery?
- About 100.
- Do you remember its temples?
- There were about four or five temples.
- What kind of temples? Tantra, philosophy or others?
- There was an assembly hall, a Tantric Temple, the *Dūdva* Temple (?), and the Medical Temple.
- Was the monastery fenced off?
- No, it was not.
- Were the temples wooden or brick constructions?
- All of them were wooden temples. Some of them had clay parts. Have you seen the temples at Gandan? They are similar.
- Were they rectangular or yurt temples?
- Have you seen the temple next to my apartment? [He points at the nearby temple near Naran Tuul market.] They were temple buildings similar to it.
- Were there any *stūpas* near the monastery?
- There were *stūpas*.
- On which side of the monastery?
- Oh, they were next to that, oh what was that? There were two or three *stūpas* north of the temple. There were quite a lot of *Suvarga sūm*.
- Can you draw the sketch of the temple buildings' arrangement? Where were the other temples located, if the assembly hall was situated here in the centre?
- The assembly hall stood in this part. In this part stood the Tantric Temple. The Medical Temple was in the north. There was also the *Dūdva* Temple (?). Temples called *sūm* were situated in the north and in the south. There was a *sūm* in the north. Both in the north and in the south. It is called *sūm*. There were many *stūpas* and prayer wheels.
- Where was the waste dump?
- Far away. People lived in yurts in *Züün khüree* and *Baruun khüree* monastic quarters. They put up their yurts next to them. Household waste was deposited very far, about 10 km distance from the monastic site.
- Did *Baruun khüree* and *Züün khüree* look like this? [Showing a drawing.]
- Well, this is Ulaanbaatar. In the countryside, *Züün khüree* and *Baruun khüree* were not named like that, but anyway, they existed. Families lived there. We called them the people of *Baruun khüree* and *Züün khüree*.
- Where was the well for the drinking water of monks?
- There were two wells in the north-east. One in the east, and another one in the north-east.

Tömör Davaakhüü (1912–2012)



T. Davaakhüü monk, 2010

Tömör Davaakhüü monk was born in 1912, in the year of the Cow. He joined Amarbayasgalant Khiid in Baruunbüren district, Selenge province at the age of 8. He became a monk of the same monastery again in 1990. Amarbayasgalant was built by the Manchu court in honour of Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar from 1727–1736. Its central part remained intact during socialism and functions again as a monastery.

The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and the assistance of the informant's daughter after the day of the *Tsam* dance, on 8 September, 2010 in Davaakhüü monk's home south of the monastery.

- When were you born?
- In 1912.
- In which year?
- In the year of the Cow.
- When did you take ordination?
- At the age 8.
- Did you join Amarbayasgalant Khiid?

- Yes, here. I belonged to this monastery.
- When did you disrobe?
- I was a monk here until the fights, maybe in the 1940s. I was around 20 when I left for the countryside.
- In which monastic district did you live?
- I lived in *Shüteen(ii) aimag*.
- Where did you participate in ceremonies?
- In the assembly hall. There were about ten temples with ceremonies.
- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- He was the ‘fat’ abbot. Ordinarily we did not call him by his name. There were several abbots. Daram abbot, the ‘fat’ abbot whose name was Damba (?). Abbots were nominated for three years. Three or four years. The chanting master was Danjin *unzad*. Sodnom *khurts* was the disciplinary master. Jürmed *soivon* was responsible for the Öndör Gegeen Temple, and the real *lamdakh lam*, who was responsible for the yurt palace of Öndör Gegeen was Jürmed monk. He worked in the countryside for 53 years after 1940.
- Did the monastery have famous *maaramba* doctors?
- Of course. Monks who graduate from Tantric [Medical] monastic schools became *maaramba* doctors.
- Was it possible to take the *gavj* and *dom* exams of Buddhist philosophy here?
- It was possible to take three kinds of exam in this monastery: *dom* or *geshe* exam, *gavj* exam and *agrimba* tantric exam.
- How many monks lived in the monastery?
- About 2,000.
- Were there Tibetan monks as well?
- There were not any foreign monks, only local monks.
- What about saints and reincarnations?
- Yes, of course. All the abbots were reincarnations. The disciplinary master and the others were all reincarnations. There were many reincarnations.
- Did you organize the Kanjur procession and the Maitreya procession?
- Kanjur ceremony took place on the 10th, and Maitreya procession on the 15th. From 16 to 29 the preparation for the *Tsam* dance took place, and on 29th the *Tsam* itself [on the 29th day of the last month of summer]. Have you seen the *Tsam* yesterday?
- Did monks use to hold the [Gongoriin] *Bumba* ceremony?
- Yes, they used to hold the *Bumba* ceremony.
- Were there any tantric practitioners who performed the body-offering ritual?

- Several monks lived outside of the monastery who used to perform the body-offering ritual. Near cemeteries. They did not come to the monastery. They were other types of people.
- Where was the burial site?
- Todoliin Khushuu (?). Also Zayaaiin Khötöl. Two or three such sites exist.
- Did Chinese traders live near the monastery?
- Several Chinese stores ran operations here, mainly on the other bank of the river. On the avenue with their buildings and houses. Their shops sat here.
- Were any *stūpas* here?
- Certainly. The current *stūpas* existed in former times, too. However, there were not any large *stūpas* similar to this current one, but only smaller *stūpas*. Eight *stūpas* stood in a row with a larger one in the centre in the west, at Gesgüi Uul cliff. It was called the *stūpas* of Buddha and the *stūpa* of Öndör Gegeen. If you go in this way you can see the Vajrapāṇi rock. There is a *stūpa*, too.
- What is the name of the nearby spring?
- (Informant's daughter: Naranbulagiin Rashaan.)
- Which temple building was the newest one?
- The northern Palace and the northern Nine White Buildings were built last. The main assembly hall and the monastic districts are all old. *Shüteen aimag* and the others, a total of six districts were built in former times, as well as the ten *datsans*. We had ten *datsans*.
- Were the monastic schools constructed of wood?
- Yes, all of them were wooden temples.
- When were they burnt or closed?
- They were shut down more times. They were closed during the battles, after the Kuomintang battle, and finally were reopened in 1990.
- Who was the first abbot at the revival?
- The abbot was *Damar* (Skr. *ḍamaru*) Dagva.
- Did the monastery have livestock and *jas* financial offices in the 1930s?
- The monastery possessed livestock. The livestock of the Öndör Gegeen Temple, the livestock of the Zuu Temple. *Ikh jas* also existed, and the livestock of the administrative unit called 'Monks' tea and meals'. The two largest financial offices were the *Ikh jas* and *Öndör gegeenii jas*. The livestock was herded at those two declivities.
- Did lay population live near the monastery?
- Yes.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks use to venerate?

CENTRAL MONGOLIA

- Maningiin Ovoo (?) was situated north of our monastery, in Ikh Büren district, and another *ovoo* stood at the source of Burgaldai (?). Monks used to venerate these two *ovoos*.
- Annually?
- Yes, once a year.
- Were the monks captured during the closure of the monastery?
- They arrested monks in 1937 the first time. The monastery remained without monks and thus was closed. They confiscated and took away all golden and silver items.
- What did you do after leaving the monastery?
- I herded the livestock in the countryside. I worked in a brigade.
- Were you enrolled to the army?
- (Informant's daughter: No.)
- Did you become a monk again in 1990?
- (Informant's daughter: Yes.)

Jamts Jamsran
(1923–)



J. Jamsran *guai*. Photo from his photo album, 2020

Jamts Jamsran was born in 1923, in the year of the Pig. He lived in Kherlengiin Züün Khüree in Möngönmorit district, Töv province from the age of 8 to 10. Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar founded this monastery, and its other name was Khögshin Khüree. After disrobing Jamsran *guai* joined the primary school. Later, he became a military man and the author of several books about methods for healing liver disease. The following interview about his childhood memories was recorded in his home in Ulaanbaatar on 30 August, 2010.

- Where were you born? In which year?
- I was born in 1923. I am 88 years old. I was born in the year of the Pig.

- When did you take ordination?
- At the age of 8. I joined Khögshin Khüree. Its name was Khögshin Khüree or Kherlengiin Khüree or Züün Khüree. If it is really true that the First *Bogd* founded this monastery, it is incredible. (Private talk.)
- Which mountain is located behind Züün Khüree?
- Togos Uul. Khüree Devseg terrace. It was a large monastic town. I participated in ceremonies in the *Yogo Zurkhai* or yogic-astrologic monastic school. I was famed as the ‘the child who artistically beats the drum,’ although I was only 8 years old. Have you heard about the Maitreya procession? I was going with the cart of Maitreya reciting ‘*Choigüü yambii povron nai, Joiji srünma khorchaagii*’ (etc). The old, ranking monks praised me very much saying ‘How wonderfully he beats the drum.’ I went to the primary school in Khentii when religion had perished. I had three younger brothers. All of them were monks. All of them died. Our family had a serious liver illness. Only I could survive. I started governmental work after finishing the school. I studied in Russia and in Kazakhstan. (Private talk.) I worked in the army. I love the River Kherlen. I was a commandant in the western border. (Private talk.) My nickname was the wild colonel of Mt. Burkhan Khaldun. My second nickname was *Güideg Khar* (‘Expanding Black’). My third name was *Uuliin Savdag*, the Local Guardian of the Mountain. We studied medicine from master Sereeter in the monastery. He recounted to us the most serious illness: Hommeorhage. All the other diseases can be cured. Once, my oldest brother asked the master, ‘What can we do with it, master?’ He replied, ‘The King of the Mountains can save you.’ That is the bear. The permission of the bear is necessary for curing. I have not forgotten what he said 80 years ago, and I use the blood and bile of bears for healing. (Private talk about a bear that magically saved his life. Also about blood pressure, energy, Burkhan Khaldun, the River Kherlen, and himself.)
- Do you remember the temple buildings of the monastery?
- I remember the assembly hall. Also *Yogo Zurkhain datsan*. I was a small child, and I do not remember other temples by now. It had everything being a large monastery.
- Do you remember the number of monks?
- I do not know. More than a thousand. It was a monastery that could not fit its own terrain. Had many *datsans* and temples.
- Were there also *stūpas*?
- *Stūpas* surrounded the monastery.
- When did the monks hold the annual Maitreya procession?

- I do not know. Summer, autumn. [He is citing a book.] ‘The First *Bogd* founded Nomiin Khüree called Züün Khüree at the age of 77, in the year of the Yellow Cow in 1709.’ It must be true. The monastic town had three names. As he founded it in his old age, it became called Khögshin [‘Old’]. It was called Kherlengiin Züün Khüree in my childhood.
- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- I do not know. I remember only my master, Sereeter monk.
- How many monks lived in a yurt?
- Different. Two of them, three of them. They could also live alone. The disciples lived in additional, small yurts.
- Did the temples stand in the centre of the monastic town? Where did the monks live?
- Monks’ yurts were put up in courtyards. The monastic town consisted of several temples. The assembly hall and others were all large, round temples.
- Were the temples round or square?
- Both round and rectangular temples existed.
- Did Chinese trade flourish?
- No, Chinese people hardly entered the monastery.
- Did the monks venerate *ovoos*?
- They venerated Togos Uul behind the monastery.
- From where did the monks take water?
- From the River Kherlen. It flowed in the west and in the east. It has dried out by now.
- For how long did you live in that monastery? From the age of 8?
- Till 10. Then, religion was ceased and I went to school.
- Was Sereeter monk your medical teacher?
- Sereeter monk was my first acquaintance who was familiar with medicine. He had great reputation in that region. However, those who still remember him are small in number. (Private talk.) I had an announcement on television in Baganuur requesting the former monks of Züün Khüree to contact me. I initiated the building of a *stūpa* and a monument at the site of Züün Khüree. (Private talk.)

Khand Banzar (1914–2008)



Kh. Banzar monk, 2011

Khand Banzar was born in 1914 in the year of the Rabbit. He joined Beliin Jas in Deren district, Dundgovi province as a child, and also spent a month in the nearby Delgeriin Choir monastery founded by the eminent monk scholar, Zava Damdin (1867–1937). From the age of 13 he began to learn the texts of the *Chö* practice, and as a consequence he left these monasteries, and performed the *jarz* practice in the countryside wandering between abandoned sites. He joined the *Chö* assembly at Naran Khögtst in Deren district.

In order to revive the tantric practice introduced by the famous *Chö* master, Jagar Molom (19th century) he founded Namdoldechenlin Monastery in Bayankhoshuu, Ulaanbaatar in 1989. He became the head of the assembly,

and educated several disciples, who then founded other tantric assemblies in Ulaanbaatar.

We documented the remnants of old monasteries in Deren district within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in 2007. Afterwards, he was recorded in this interview with a voice recorder on 1 September, 2007 in a building of Namdoldechenlin Monastery. Unfortunately, the recording is of a poor quality. A young monk of the monastery joined the interview towards the end, assisting with it and contributing interesting questions and comments.

Banzar monk narrated the biography of the famous tantric master, Jagar Molom and provided valuable information about the tantric assemblies and famous *Chö* masters of the 1920–1930s in Deren and Delgertsogt districts, Dundgovi province.

- Can you describe the tantric assembly at Naran Khögtst?
- I joined a monastery at the age of 13 and started to study Buddhism. I began at the age of 10, and after learning and living in the monastery, I started to study the *Chö* practice of Khand *ḍākinī* at the age of 15.
- Did you live at Naran Khögtst?
- Yes, I did. I performed the *chumig jarz* practice for three years travelling with a light rucksack in deserted hills, open air burial sites and other unusual sites. Then, I practiced the meditation of Khand for three years, reciting her texts. It was a total of six years. I also did a year meditation of *Yumchin shirchirviin nyamba*, meditation of the five *ḍākinīs* called *Khanddina* for a year, and I made the ‘seven at wilderness’ four times and the ‘seven at home’ five times.
- Did you hold ceremonies at Naran Khögtst in a building?
- Building and yurt. My master lived in the northern slope of Khögshin Us. He participated in many assemblies.
- How many tantric practitioners did the community at Naran Khögtst comprise of?
- Well, 11 or 12.
- Were there female practitioners as well?
- There were three women. My master spent many years in Kumbum and Labrang monasteries. After he settled down in Mongolia many people became his followers, tantric practitioners. He initiated and introduced the rules to several *Chö* assemblies.
- Did they perform *Chö* on a daily basis?
- Jagar Molom monk was born in Delgertsogt district, in the neighbourhood of Deren district. He meditated a lot and met Khand *ḍākinī* personally. Once

he was wandering in a wood in India and bumped into a beehive. The bees attacked him. He beat them with his two walking sticks, but finally he fell down in a faint. When becoming conscious again, a girl stood above him. The bees had disappeared. She said, 'It is not time to die. You came here to meet me and the bees almost caught you. I will take you only at the age of 77. Now return home and establish an assembly.' Ulaanbaatar was called Bogdiin Khüree [Urga] at that time. He founded an assembly there and passed away exactly at the age of 77. To prevent the total cessation of that assembly, I met the Prime Minister and asked for permission for its operation. Khand *ḍākinī* personally initiated this assembly and I wanted to maintain its tradition. So, I founded this monastery [Namdoldechenlin Monastery] nine years ago which has been operating ever since.

- Do you remember which *ovoo* was venerated by the Naran Khögtst assembly?
- They venerated Deren Mountain. They venerated Narangiin Ovoo. Constantly. Several monks gathered at Naran. Later, their number decreased. Finally, arrests started, and the number of monks decreased. However, it develops well here now: we have many tantric practitioners again.
- Did you hold tantric rituals at Zaraagiin Zülegt as well?
- Oh yes, many times. A monk lived there who followed the tradition and rules of *Khüükhen khutagt*. His name was Ishdoo and had an assembly of about ten people. Actually, different traditions of tantric practices existed. Mine was the lineage of Jagar Molom. The lineage of Zaraagiin Zülegt assembly or Ishdoo's lineage followed *Khüükhen khutagt*'s tradition.
- Did female practitioners belong to the assembly at Zaraagiin Zülegt?
- Yes, a few. There were four female practitioners.
- Do you remember the names of any male or female practitioners?
- Zundui tantric practitioner. He followed the texts of Khand, and his assembly venerated Khandam. Khand, which belongs to the Nyingma tradition. In other words it is the Red Stream tradition. Yellow Stream is the Gelug tradition. These two are different.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks of Zaraagiin Zülegt venerate?
- I do not know. It was a distance away.
- Where did they hold their rituals? In a building or in a yurt?
- In yurts. There were two big yurts.
- Where was the nearby well or water?
- In the north-west, in the valley, next to the assembly. The water of Zaraagiin Zülegt had a good quality as well as the water of Khögtst.
- Where were the yurts of monks? Near the well?
- There were two big yurts. North-west.

- Please clarify the location of the well of Naran Khögtst?
- There was a rocky site in the south and the *ovoos*. Two wells were located on the slope. Both had pure water. My master's yurts stood on the northern slope. (Private talk.)
- When did the operation of these assemblies cease?
- Practitioners disappeared after the Lama [Ishdoo] of Zaraagiin Zülegt passed away. I have been keeping the tradition of Jagar Molom until now.
- When were you born?
- I am 94 years old. I was born in 1914 in the year of the Rabbit.
- Have you ever visited the nearby Jadamba Khiid and Tegshiin Jas in Deren district?
- These monasteries belonged to the Yellow Stream. I visited both. They were close to the district centre, in the east.
- Which was the biggest monastery in Deren district?
- Tegshiin Jas.
- Was *Tsam* dance performed there?
- No. Nowadays, Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery organizes the *Tsam*. In former times, Erdene Zuu and later also Urga had a *Tsam*.
- Did you visit monasteries in the nearby Adaatsag and Delgertsogt districts in Dundgovi province?
- I wandered a lot. Always in unusual places. Desolate sites, desert shore I wandered in numerous strange sites. Open air burial sites.
- Have you ever been to Emtiin Khural in Delgertsogt district?
- Delgertsogt followed the Yellow Stream. However, an old tantric practitioner lived there, too. He died not a long time ago [in the 1930s]. I held a tantric ritual at Delgertsogt only once.
- Have you heard about the assembly of Morchin Dorj at Baga Gazriin Chuluu?
- Delgeriin Choir was located there. Ikh Jas which was a hamlet was situated at the slope of Baga Gazriin Chuluu, south-east of the district centre. That was an extensive monastery with several rural monks. Delgeriin Choir also had a large number of monks. Monks were captured for their opposition thus their number decreased.
- Do you remember the name of the monastery located at Baga Gazriin Chuluu?
- A big cave was there. A rocky building. Ishtëmör meditated there for some years. He became a sage. He meditated there for many years. (Private talk.)
- Was Zaraagiin Zülegt an assembly with everyday rituals?

- Naran Khögtst had everyday rituals. Zaraagiin Zülegt ran a temporary operation: rituals were held there only from time to time.
- Did a lay population live there as well?
- Yes, there were many yurts of households. Deren and Delger(tsogt) had many households. Ikh Gazriin Chuluu belongs to Bayantsagaan district. Many people lived there.
- Have you heard about Dalai Eejiin Khural in Bayantsagaan district?
- I have not heard about it.
- Were there many itinerant monks coming and going at that time?
- Yes, many such monks wandered in that area. Even at my birthplace there were many itinerant monks.
- (Comment of the young monk: They were not itinerant monks, but *jarz* practitioners, weren't they? Practicing *jarz* and meditating.)
- Yes.
- (Young monk: *Jarz* lasts for 133 days, doesn't it, my master?)
- Yes. (Young monk: 108 days at brooks, springs and caves, in addition seven in a yurt, seven at the wilderness, the middle seven, and the last seven. It is a total of 133 days.)
- Did you also live in Urga?
- No. I joined a monastery in Deren district as a child, and became a tantric practitioner at the age of 13. I took my *dāmaru* drum, and disappeared [going alone to the wilderness to conduct tantric practices].
- (Young monk: Master, in which monastery did you live before joining the tantric assembly?)
- Beliin Jas near Deren district centre. I also lived at [Delgeriin] Choir for a month. Then, I became a tantric practitioner and disappeared from these sites.
- Please provide details about the famous monks of Beliin Jas.
- There were several monks with *gavj* degree.
- Was there a monk called Doyod at Beliin Jas?
- Doyod monk belonged to Naran Khögtst. There was a reincarnation called Dondog between Naran and Bayanbaraat. Tuvaan Jadamba was a high-ranking monk, too. He bore the *lovon* rank. Abbot Doyod was arrested and there was never any further news about him.
- How many tantric practitioners lived near your birthplace?
- There was one at Naran Khögtst. An old man wanted to open another one at Choir, but suddenly he passed away.
- What was his name?
- His name was *Dorjsengiin mergen lam*. He was a monk at Ölgiin Khiid monastery. He was a very learned monk, a wise man.

- Which monastery did he belong to?
- He was a *zoch* tantric practitioner, and he belonged to Naran Khögtst. Tuvaan Jadamba was also famous. An *agrimba* tantric master. Chültem *gavj* was a very educated old monk with several disciples. He had a small monastery with a few monks: some old men from the countryside and a couple of children. Zündüi *guai* belonged to Tegshiin Jas. He was an immense man. The Ministry of the Interior arrived and tried to arrest him three times. They wanted to arrest Zündüi *guai*. When they tried to capture him, he was very stinky and smelly, so they could not approach him. He was carried away twice to Deren district centre, and once to Delgertsogt, but he stunk so bad that they said to him, ‘Stay here with your stinky flesh.’ They were not able to capture him. He was a wise man, very learned. At my birthplace, Deren district, the most famous *Chö* practitioner monk was this Jüchbadmiin (?) Zündüi *guai*. *Dorjsengiin mergen lam* and Doyod lama were also outstanding men, very learned and skilled. Chültem *gavj*, *Dorjsengiin mergen*, and Zündüi monk were coevals.
- When did Jagar Molom himself live?
- He was born in Delgertsogt, and lived in Tibet and India for 21 years. After becoming a tantric practitioner, he wanted to meet Khandam personally, and vagabondized in a wood in India. At the roots of a thick tree was a beehive. It seemed to be a lamb or a goat from afar, so he thought that there was a yurt in the vicinity. He approached it and the bees almost killed him. Bees are real torturers. He fell in a faint. When he regained consciousness, he caught sight of a girl wearing a green dress. ‘You wanted to meet me before your time. The bees attacked you, so I came. Now, we have met. Go home. I will come to take you at the age of 77. I will give you something which you can take to your homeland.’ Then, she disappeared. So, this itinerant monk, having only two sticks and a rucksack arrived in Shar Khöv and caught sight of Urga. He caught sight of Urga and laying his back against his rucksack he dozed a bit. Suddenly something fell into his lap. He was scared. It was a *ganlin* bone trumpet. Khand had bestowed him a *ganlin* bone trumpet. The Eighth *Bogd* took it from Jagar Molom. It was in his order. Jagar Molom founded his assembly and passed away exactly at the age of 77. I met the Prime Minister in 1989 to express my wish of re-establishing the assembly of Khand. Finally, I founded this assembly. Now I am 94 years old. I am almost at the end of my life.

Uush Choijamts (1923/24–?)



U. Choijamts monk, 2009

Uush Choijamts was a monk from the age of 8 to 14 in Ganjuuriin Jas in Saintsagaan district, Dundgovi province. He became a monk again in Dashgepellin Monastery in Dundgovi province centre, and later the abbot of Gandanshaddüvlin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar.

We interviewed him with Zsuzsa Majer in 2007 and also documented the ruins of his old monastery within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project. Another interview is accessible at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 18 September, 2009 at Choijamts monk's home with the assistance of his daughter.

- I took ordination at the age of 5. I was born in 1923, and took monastic vows at the age of 5. I was a small child. I resided at my master's place in Ganjuuriin Jas until the age of 13. Persecution happened in 1937, when I was 13. Our masters were seized, and we became disrobed children. This is what happened.
- How many monks lived in the monastery?
- About 300. 300 or 400 monks lived there at the time of its full operation.
- When was it founded?
- I do not know the history of the monastery. Anyway, it was older than me.
- Was the monastery fenced off?
- It was open, unfenced. However, there were fenced-off areas inside.
- What was the exact name of that site?
- Ganjuur.
- Was there any river or well?
- No river, only a well.
- How many temples did the monastery have?
- Three or four. I have mentioned it to you before. There were four temples.
- Please list them.
- *Züün khüree*, *Gol jas* which was the main financial office, Medicine Buddha Temple and Maitreya Temple. Another, the fifth one was called Protector or *Sakhius*. The monastery had these five temples.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- Mahākāla. Mahākāla's and Śrīdevī's images were the main objects of worship.
- Did the monks use to hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Yes, for 45 days.
- In the assembly hall?
- Exactly.
- Did you organize the Maitreya procession, too?
- Yes, we did.
- In which month?
- Maybe in autumn or summer, on the 15th of the middle month. It could be on the 15th of the middle month of summer. It could be also on the 15th of the middle month of autumn. The season depended on summer conditions. In other words, it depended on the abundance of dairy products that were the monks' main meal.
- Did you hold the Maitreya procession around the monastery or around the banner?

- Around the monastery. The monks had a rest and a tea in the south, north, west, and east.
- Did you circumambulate the set of the *Kanjur* as well?
- Yes, we did.
- Together with the Maitreya procession?
- Hmm, together. At the time of the veneration of the holy object of worship.
- Were the volumes of the *Kanjur* carried round? The volumes of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur*?
- Certainly, we had the volumes.
- Did you circle the temple with the volumes?
- Well, the volumes of the *Kanjur* in 108 volumes and the *Tanjur* were available.
- Was it a *Kanjur* printed in black ink or vermillion?
- Vermillion. The *Tanjur* was with black ink. The *Kanjur* was printed in vermillion. That was so large that a person could not carry more than three volumes. It was about 60 or 70 cm long and 30 cm wide. Huge!
- Did the monks use to perform the *Tsam* dance in the monastery?
- No, only the Maitreya procession.
- Did the monks hold *Ninnai* fasting rituals?
- Monks used to hold fasting rituals.
- When?
- In spring.
- For how long?
- 7 or 14 days. Prayers were recited during the *Nügnei* fasting.
- Did they hold ceremonies on feast days, on great days, too? On Buddha's feast days?
- Definitely, there was a feast day within that 14 days.
- Did the monks use to venerate *ovoos*?
- Sure.
- Which *ovoos*?
- Amarjargalan. The reincarnating monk was buried at the slope of the *ovoo*. Wait, I will try to recall the year of his burial. Well, I do not remember. He was commemorated last year, or the year before, and a new *stūpa* was erected at his burial site, on the hillside of the *ovoo*.
- Is the new *stūpa* in the northern direction of the monastery?
- (Informant's daughter: He says that the reincarnating monk was buried at the hillside of that venerated *ovoo*. People built a new *stūpa* at his burial site last year or a year before.)
- Was there a complex of 13 *ovoos*?

- Certainly, there are 13 *ovoos*! Three *ovoos* in each direction, which means 12 in number, and also an additional one in the centre, the 13th one.
- Who was the head of the monastery? The abbot?
- Well. It is difficult for me to share the name of my master with you. The reincarnating monk himself was the head of the monastery.
- Were there monks with *gavj* degree?
- There were, there were.
- Do you remember the names of these monks?
- Many monks with *gavj* degree lived there. I can provide the names of some of them who were not my masters: Togmid *gavj*, Balin *guai gavj*. My master was Luvsan-Ish *guai*. There were several monks with *gavj* degree. Also Tsanlin *gavj guai*.
- Did Tibetan monks live in the monastery?
- There were not any Tibetans. Only Khalkha monks.
- *Chö* practitioners?
- Well, a few. Only about three or four monks performed the body-offering ritual.
- Do you remember their names?
- Shaarii, Dorj, Osor. I do not remember the others, though there were many *Chö* practitioners.
- Were there *khandmaa* female practitioners as well? Were there nuns?
- Nuns did not live at Ganjuur. However, there were many *khandmaas* in a *datsan* near Ganjuur. Many, many female practitioners called *genmaa* (?), *khandmaa*.
- In which direction was this other monastery?
- In the north, at a place called Mökh. Its name was Mökhiin Jas. Mostly women lived there. Many, many women had *genmaa* (?) obligation. It followed the tantric tradition. They held large *dāmaru* drums.
- Were there any *stūpas* at Ganjuuriin Jas?
- There were many *stūpas*.
- In a row?
- A complex of the nine *stūpas* stood directly behind the monastery.
- Also large prayer wheels?
- There were about two or three large prayer wheels as tall as men. At the gate of the temple, in a separate temple building. A kind of building housed the prayer wheel.
- Were the temples made of wood or brick?
- There were wooden and brick temples. They demolished and destroyed all of them in the era of persecution.
- Did people run the operation of brick burning kilns?

- One kiln. A Chinese man built a kiln and produced bricks for temple construction.
- Was it located south of the monastery?
- Yes, in the south.
- Were there also Chinese stores? Chinese traders?
- It is said that a Chinese trader and a Chinese store had been there a long time ago. However, that was not there anymore when I joined the monastery. I heard that such Chinese traders had lived there.
- Did a lay population live around the monastery?
- Of course. Numerous poor people lived there.
- Where did the monks live? Around the monastery?
- Monks' lived near their temples in yurts or buildings. It was like a settlement.
- What did the temples look like?
- Different monks led different *datsans* and temples. Monks' accommodations stood in all directions in accordance with the local spirits of the ground.
- Did the monastery have only one financial office? How many financial offices did it have?
- It had only one *jas*. Another nearby *jas* was Mökh. One *jas* consisted of some *datsans*.
- Where did people herd the livestock of Ganjuuriin Jas?
- (Daughter: Around the monastery. People living around the monastery herded the livestock of the monastery. It was almost like a small settlement. The *jas* monastery.) It was like a village in a sense. A monastic village.
- When was the monastery destroyed?
- In 1937. (Daughter: Demolition started in 1937.) It ended in 1938.
- What did you do after disrobing? Were you enrolled in the army?
- I was still a child at that time. Not at the age when one could be enrolled. I joined the army only in 1944 at the time of the war for the homeland. I spent five or six years there.
- When did you become a monk again?
- At the time of the democratic changes in 1990.
- In Ulaanbaatar?
- No, in Dundgovi province, at the site of my previous *datsan*.
- Were monks captured in the 1930s?
- Certainly. The very first in October, or November, December there was investigations, and based on that register, monks were chased and captured. They arrested mostly the monks who used to perform *gürem* reme-

dies and cure people. They seized also the monks in charge of temples. As there were five temples, it meant many monks. In other words, they captured the whole governance of the monastery.

- Have you ever visited the nearby Mökhiin Jas?
- I often visited it. *Tsam* was performed there. I myself participated in the *Tsam* dance, too.
- Was it bigger than Ganjuuriin Jas?
- It was bigger than my monastery. The monastery itself might have been more sizeable, but not its population.
- Did these two monasteries have the same abbot?
- Do you mean the abbots of Mökh and Ganjuur? Different. Two different reincarnating monks.
- There is a cave at Mökh.
- Exactly. Near the chain of the red rocks in the north.
- Can you provide details about it? Was it a geographical formation or a cave temple?
- A man lived there who knew a special recitation. He sat there to receive the power and essence of that sacred text. However, thefts, wild people lived there for a while on other occasions. (Daughter: My father met Zava Damdin personally. He was my father's master.)
- A monk, Dagva who lived in Mökhiin Jas is still alive. He is a monk in Manba Datsan Monastery.
- Dagva was in Dambadarjaa Monastery. Oh, no, not Dambadarjaa, but Manba Datsan indeed. Yes. He is still alive. He was asking people about me. We cannot meet these days. He is more than 90. His uncle was the *Shireet lam* of Mökh Datsan. Dagva's uncle. His tutor. He was such an exceptional man! The *Shireet lam* of Mökh.
- Were there monks with wives at that time?
- There were married monks. We were children, so did not really understand worldly things. However, only a few monks were married. There were not any monks in the temples themselves having a wife.
- Thank you for your answers.
- Thank you. You and your colleague met and interviewed me before, didn't you?
- We interviewed you last year, but we did not have proper equipment.
- Didn't you? Yes, you made only notes. That *datsan* temple where we met still operates. (Daughter: That *datsan* called *Shaddiiv* is situated in the south of Gandan Monastery. My father goes there for ceremonies.)

- (To informant's daughter: We visited the site, Ganjuuriin Jas where your father was a monk in his childhood. We found some *tshatsha* votive plaques there. *Tshatshas* of *stūpas*.)
- (Informant's daughter to his father: They visited the monastery where you lived as child and found some *tshatshas* at the site used to put in *stūpas*.)
- Well, that is something like waste.
- There were also metal objects of everyday use. Pots, scissors, and other objects.
- Even large bronze caldrons buried in ground. There should be many fragments of items. North of the yurts of families, where cauldrons were turned upside down, we played with dogs.

Sosor Dagva
(1916–2014)



S. Dagva monk, 2010

Sosor Dagva became a monk at the age of five in Mökhiin Khiid situated in Saintsagaan district, Dundgovi province. His young uncle, reincarnation *Khari kholiin khalzan shireet lam* (1910–1934) led the monastery. Following his uncle Dagva monk moved to Delgeriin Choir in Delgertsogt district, Dundgovi province at the age of 12 and later to Urga. They settled in *Toisamlin aimag* district. Dagva monk began to study philosophy in *Dashchoimbel datsan* at *Gandan* and became a *geshe* in 1934. He took the *gavj* exam in 2007 at Gandantegchenlin Monastery.

At the time of the interview, he was the *gergen* teacher of Manba Datsan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. We interviewed him three times with Zsuzsa Majer (2006, 2007, and 2009) and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. We documented the ruins of his old monastery in 2007 within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project.

It seems that Mökhiin Khiid was an old Kagyüpa monastery in the Gobi having Milarepa *Tsam* with narration and a nearby *Chö* assembly with female tantric practitioners.

Interview 1

Interview recorded on 7 July, 2010 in Dagva monk's weekend house in Belkh, north of Ulaanbaatar with voice recorder and video camera with the assistance of his son.

- Last year I asked my questions about Mökhiin Khiid and Delgeriin Choir monasteries. Could you please provide more details about the *Tsam* performance?
- About Mökhiin Khiid? Mökhiin Khiid was founded in the 1680s, and developed rapidly in the 18th century. In other words, it was an old monastery which had *Tsam* dance and also Maitreya procession. *Tsam* was performed on the 29th of the last month of summer together with the *Sor* offering dedicated to Dharmarāja. Local people and monks from nearby monasteries used to arrive at the monastery to prostrate. During the *Tsam*, first the *Chambon*, the head of the *Tsam* dance performed his dance in the temple building. Then, the ‘outside *Tsam*’ started.
- Please talk about the other *Tsam* called *Myal bogdiin tsam* or Milarepa *Tsam*.
- The Milarepa *Tsam* took place on the second day of the *Tsam* festival. I mean on the first day, the great *Tsam* called *Ikh tsam* was held and the *Sor* offering was burnt, namely the *Sor* of Dharmarāja, and the next day began the Milarepa *Tsam*. Regarding its story, Marpa, Milarepa's master was staying at home. Milarepa visited him and prostrated to him. Apart from Mila, two old, brownish faced hunters, Gombo and Dorj participated in the performance.
- How many participants acted in this *Tsam*?

- Few monks. Only Mila. Mila appeared behind (?), but Khashin Khan and his eight sons also appeared as well as the White Old Man and the two Skeletons. No one else. In other words, they presented a story.
- Did they perform a dance or have a conversation?
- They talked a lot! I do not remember what they talked about.
- What type of clothes did Mila wear?
- He did not have clothes. He looked like a naked man. Almost naked. Originally Mila was a man without clothes, when he reached buddhahood. He was very thin. He played a very thin character maybe to make us think about its meaning. He was withered and thin. Unfortunately, I do not remember more details as I was very young at that time.
- Did he look like an old man or a normal man?
- Normal. A monk under the age of 60.
- You mentioned that the *Tsam* of the Dharma protectors took place on the first day, and the Milarepa *Tsam* on next day.
- Yes, the next day. The *Tsam* of the ten protectors of the Buddhist teaching took place on the first day, on the 29th day of the month. It means that the Milarepa *Tsam* was held on the 30th, which was the last day of that lunar month.
- Was the Milarepa *Tsam* a performance with music? With flute or other musical instruments?
- Not at all. Certainly, there were horn and flute, but these were not used during the play.
- How old were you when you arrived in Urga?
- It was around 1922.
- How old were you?
- I was about 12 when I first came here. I became a monk at the age of 5.
- With what type of transport did you come to Urga?
- On camel cart.
- How many of you came altogether?
- The master of my uncle, who was a reincarnation, and his attendants. They cared for him.
- In which district of Urga did you settle down?
- In *Toisamlin aimag*.
- Did you live with your uncle?
- Certainly. With the master. (Informant's son: He lived with his uncle who was young and their master. This September will be the 100th anniversary of the birthday of that famous reincarnation. We are going to his birthplace to organize horse-racing and wrestling for the centenary.)
- Did your uncle participate in the ceremonies in *Toisamlin aimag*?

- Certainly.
- Do you remember *Toisamlin aimag*'s ceremonies?
- The permanent ceremony was called *Jasaa*. It was held on a daily basis. Daily chanting. This was permanent. Held every day.
- Which deity was the main protector, the main object of worship in that district?
- [Informant seems to be talking not about Urga but Mökhiin Khiid.] Dharmarāja, Śrīdevī, and Mahākāla. The group of these three is called *Gonchoilkhasūm*. Dharmarāja was the main object of worship there. Therefore, his *Tsam* was performed and his *Sor* offering was burnt. He was the main protector. Monks held the *Khailen* oath-taking period, too.
- From where did the monks take drinking water?
- From a deep well with pure water. It works even now, having very cold water. It is situated in the foreground of the mountain, far from the monastery. Monks used that cold water.
- I have some questions about Urga. Do you remember the shape of the temple building of *Toisamlin aimag*? Was it a yurt temple?
- It was a Tibetan style temple. Quite similar to Manba Datsan where I participate in ceremonies these days.
- From where did the monks of *Toisamlin aimag* take water?
- From a well. Local people used that well. [Perhaps the informant still talks about Mökhiin Khiid.]
- Where were the ashes thrown?
- There was a precipice in the south-west. Household waste was put mainly there. [Referring perhaps to Mökhiin Khiid.]
- Were the corpses of people left in in the open air?
- Yes, on the surface.
- Far? Where were they placed?
- At a place called Khökh Nüd. There are two Khökh Nüds situated south of Mökh. Corpses were placed between them on a nice slope to the south-west.
- Which mountain did the monks use to venerate?
- Mökh. It is the holy, rocky mountain behind the monastery with veneration. With many *ovoos*. Several offering scarves in front.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks of *Toisamlin aimag* in Urga use to venerate?
- The mountain which I have just told you. They venerated that mountain. (Informant's son: Monks used to venerate the *ovoo* situated in their birth-place.) Mökh is the name of the mountain. The monastery was named after that mountain.
- Were there brick kilns near the monastery?

- Yes, there was a kiln.
- Where was it exactly?
- In the south-west. There was a deep precipice going from the south-west to the north. They produced bricks there: *tuipuu* blue bricks used for temple construction.
- Did the Chinese or the Mongols produce those bricks?
- The Chinese.
- Were there traders as well?
- Of course there were. There was a Chinese store and other stores as well about 10–20 kms from the monastery, behind the mountain.
- What type of articles did they sell?
- Products for herders.
- What articles did the Chinese take from the Mongols?
- Chinese sold sewing machines, candies, cakes, flour, and corn.
- How did the Mongols pay?
- (Son: With skins. Animal skin and fur. They exchanged goods.)
- Were there agricultural fields in the vicinity of the monastery? Vegetables, wheat, corn?
- It did not exist either in that region or in that banner. Agriculture is scarce in Mongolia. Maybe they planted and ate vegetables for their own use.
- What kind of games did young novices use to play?
- They played mainly knucklebone games.
- (Son: Did they play football with shuttlecock?)
- That was our main activity! (Laughing.)
- Did the monks use to wrestle?
- They wrestled. They played trapping marmots. Also raced.
- Were there any hunter monks?
- No means. (Son: There were not.) There were not any monks who killed animals at that time.
- (Son: Why did hunters participate in the Milarepa *Tsam*?)
- It does not matter. Mila himself was originally a hunter. Gombo and Dorj, the two people who traded with Mila, imitated Mila, who attained enlightenment. Pretending to be someone who will be a Buddha.
- Did the monks have consorts?
- The eminent monks did not have wives. Fully ordained monks did not marry. The majority of the monks had full ordination at that time. Monks had taken full ordination from the age of 20, and mainly before becoming old. (Son: Lower-ranking monks might have had wives.) There is Gandan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. [At that time] there were not any monks who had a wife! If someone wanted to marry, he was chased from

that assembly. He was not allowed to enter Gandan anymore, even to prostrate. Only on the commemoration day of Tsongkhapa, the 25th of Butter Lamps could he enter. Devotees also arrived at Gandan in spring for the *Choimbrel jonaa* ceremony. Women could not enter there at all. The Tibetan monk [*Yonzon khamba*, the head abbot of Urga] came to the monastery and chased out the ones who wanted to marry.

- Were there any *loilon* three-dimensional *maṇḍalas* in Urga?
- Yes, the *loilons* of Kālacakra and the Medicine Buddha. These looked like small monasteries: surrounding the centre with various offerings. It was an object of worship with gates. The *loilon* had a gate in the eastern side. A yellow thing was visible inside.
- Were the platforms for calling the monks for ceremonies different in all districts?
- I cannot state that. They had four legs and a ladder. All of them were similar. However, ours in the countryside differed as the temple had stairs on the top. For instance, monasteries have such a platform in the courtyard. However, in our old monastery this was on the top of the temple.
- Were the monks called for ceremonies by the voice of the conch shell horn or in another way?
- By conch shell horn. Also beating the gong. Beating the *gandi mod*. In other words, we used them as a signal.
- How did the monks heat the temple buildings in winter? Did they make a fire?
- They burnt dry droppings of cattle and also firewood.
- Have you heard about Erdenepil and Gombodoo monks?
- I know them.
- What were their positions and responsibilities?
- Gombodoo was the middle disciplinarian of the assembly hall. Erdene-pil was the *Bogd's shadar* attendant. They have disrobed and recently passed away. Gombodoo passed away while still a disciplinarian. He was the minister of the Ministry of Religion. Erdenepil was the abbot here, and then he died. He revived this monastery [Gandan].
- Have you heard about the Journal of the Lamas published in 1936 and 1937?
- No, I do not know anything about it. I have not heard about it at all.
- Did saints and reincarnations live in Urga?
- Many of them. Immeasurable.
- Did they ride horses?
- Of course.

- What kind of robes did they wear? Did they wear different robes from ordinary monks?
- They wore monk robes. Like this robe of mine. They used to wear monk robes. Monks do not have the right to wear other robes than monk robe. Nowadays, monks wear ordinary robes after returning home from ceremonies. That was absolutely rare in former times. Monks were going everywhere in monk robes.
- Did they have any distinctive signs? Did they have a different hat?
- *Ovoodoi* hat indicates differences. It shows the rank of a certain person [in the assembly]. Hats are different. It can indicate minorities. The *ovoodoi* of minorities was also different. Mainly the *ovoodoi* hats were different. They had a conical top. The hats of old and young people also differed. High ranking monks wore different hats to ordinary monks.
- How did the monks meditate?
- At home. At the time of real meditation, the *tsamtig* was placed on the gate of the building to forbid people to enter. For a short period. For a week, a year, or three years. Depending on what they meditated on.
- Do you remember when the 30 districts of Urga were demolished?
- In 1937. There were 10 *datsans* and 30 *aimags*. 6 monastic schools standing in *Gandan* and 4 in *Züün khüree*.
- What happened to the temples after demolition?
- Three of the monastic schools are at Gandan even now. At Gandan-tegchenlin Monastery. Nothing else is left. The Avalokiteśvara Temple has survived. The temple building has survived, but the original, giant Avalokiteśvara statue has not. Nothing else has remained.
- Who destroyed the temples? The Russian army or the Mongolian army?
- I do not know. Perhaps not the Russians. However, the items were delivered to Russia. The head of that giant statue is in the museum of Saint Petersburg. (Son: The head of the Avalokiteśvara statue was taken to Russia in the same manner as other statues. They delivered them by train.)
- Can you explain what *daj ergüilekh* means in philosophy schools?
- *Daj*? There are monks who attained the *gavj* degree or took the *domiin damjaa* exam to become *geshes*. About three or four monks perform the offering of the great or *ikh* and small or *baga daj* during the exam called *domiin damjaa*. They hold a big arrow and stand in the temple burning incense sticks and juniper, wearing *lagai* and *namjir* monastic clothes. It is still a living tradition.
- What did ‘religious authority’ mean in former times?

- The Ministry of Religion. It is not important. There was nothing to govern. It was to document the rules and order. It was a place in connection with politics.
- Is it true that the surviving Buddhist statues of the demolished temples of Urga were transferred to the Choijin Lama Museum?
- I do not know. I do not know.
- Have you heard about the *Baasangiin khural* or ‘Friday gatherings’?
- I have not.
- Were there any newspapers or journals dedicated to the monks in the 1930s?
- There were no such things.
- Was there any hospital where monks were treated?
- Such a particular hospital did not exist. Some monks treated the *Bogd*, the head abbot and the *tsorj*.
- Can you specify the location of Mökhiin Khiid according to the old administrative system?
- It belonged to the banner called *Daichin beisiin khoshuu*.
- Did the banner have a *Naadam* festival?
- Certainly.
- Was Delgeriin Choir itself the main monastery of that banner?
- Yes. Oh no, it was not Delgeriin Choir. There is a rebuilt monastery at the site of the old Delgeriin Choir. The main monastery of the banner was situated south-east of Delgeriin Choir, in the area of the current Delger-tsogt district. That was the governance possessing the seal.
- Was it called *Ikh jas*, which means the main financial office?
- It was called governance, *Tamgiin gazar*, the ‘Place of the Seal.’ The administration of the banner was called *Tamgiin gazar*.
- Can you describe how wedding ceremonies happened in former times?
- Do you mean the wedding ceremony in a family? Only lay people did that.
- Did they invite monks for those events?
- Well, it is possible to perform an incense offering ritual for a wedding. Also, *Dallaga* ritual for prosperity and well-being. But nothing else.
- Did people invite monks for the first hair cutting ceremonies of children? Also, did they use prayer flags in former times?
- They displayed prayer flags out of yurts and also on *ovoos*.
- Did the monks prepare the *ganlin* bone trumpet from human bones? How did they make it?
- Only specialists could prepare bone trumpets. People who had expertise in meditation. In other words, Red Stream and Yellow Stream have small

differences. A special meditation called *jarz* takes from 49 to 108 days. Practitioners visit open air burial sites during that period. They determine the age of the bones there and the quality of the deceased person. *Ganlin* bone trumpet should be made from the thigh bone of a 16–18 year old girl. If all the circumstances are fulfilled, they take the bone. I mean that these practitioners do not take all the bones. It is said to be like this. You can read about it in different publications.

- Did monks use astrology in former times?
- Certainly. Even an astrologic monastic school existed in *Züün khüree*. One of the monastic schools of *Züün khüree* focused on astrology.
- What kind of items were used for fortune-telling?
- Dice, rosary, book, knucklebone, and various other things. It also depended on the given ethnic groups.
- How did fortune-telling happen with sacred books?
- Monks opened a book and pointed to a certain line without looking at it beforehand. The fortune-telling depended on that sentence. There is also a special book for that. If a problem had occurred the monks told them to do this or that. Such fortune-telling books were scarce. (Son: The Mongols made decisions also after a bird's voice heard from outside. Private talk.) I have a *gavj* degree. Here is my certificate. From sciences, I have a PhD in Chemistry. From religion, I am a Buddhist philosopher with the highest, *gavj* degree. (Informant's family members: He graduated from *Dashchoimbel datsan*. The exam was organized by Gandantegchenlin Monastery. He gained his *gavj* degree together with the vice abbot Nan-zaddorj in autumn, 2009.)

Interview 2

Interview recorded on 24 September, 2011 in Dagva monk's home in Belkh, with voice recorder and with the assistance of his daughter in order to specify details on Urga's holy objects of worship.

- Can you specify the main object of worship at your *Toisamlin aimag* district?
- It is not *Toislan*, but *Toislon* [*Toisamlin*]. Its main protector was Śrīdevī.
- Was it a statue or a painting?
- A statue.
- Were there any other protectors in the temple?

- Generally, the temple had the Ten Protectors of the Buddhist teaching. The main protector was Śrīdevī. *Gonchoilkhāsūm* including Śrīdevī, Mahākāla and Dharmarāja should be together as a rule.
- Did *Toisamlin aimag* possess the set of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur* or other rare sacred books?
- Certainly. The sets of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur* were available. Urga had 30 *aimags* and 10 *datsans*. Districts without *Kanjur* almost did not exist.
- Where were the Buddhist statues crafted by Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar?
- Mainly in Amarbayasgalant Khiid, in the area of Bulgan province. Nowadays, it is the area of Orkhon province [Selenge province]. Meanwhile, the palace on the bank of the River [Tuul] also included such items, being the *Bogd's* palace. It is called the temple on the bank of the river [now Bogd Khaan Palace Museum]. These statues were crafted at the time of Zanabazar. They were preserved at that site, and are still preserved there. Zanabazar was a very gifted artist. He carved a cake pattern from wood or sandalwood. It has been preserved and is used to prepare the cakes of the 15 days of *Choimbrel jonaa*, the ceremony of Buddha's Miracle Showing, but not used from the 16th day of the Lunar New Year. This tradition still exists. That wooden pattern became an object of worship.
- Do you know the location of the 21 Tārā statues?
- In the palace at the river. They are there.
- Please describe the Maitreya procession. Did the monks carry the ceremonial canopies of the 30 districts during the procession? Where were the stops of the procession?
- The Maitreya procession circled the area of *Züün khüree*. Mostly the young monks of the 30 districts of *Züün khüree* carried the ornaments.
- What did these ceremonial canopies look like?
- Mostly white ceremonial canopies. White and also yellow.
- Did the monks perform the *maṇḍala* offering at the stops of the procession?
- Certainly. I myself also perform *maṇḍala* offerings. *Dari ekhiin mandal shivaa* means the offering of four *maṇḍalas* to Tārā.
- Can you describe Maitreya's vehicle?
- It was pulled with a rope and had large wheels. The cart itself was ornamental. It was a large vehicle with wheels. Monks pulled it.
- Was the *Kanjur* circumambulation also held in Urga?
- The volumes of the *Kanjur* were circumambulated. But not all the volumes. A circumambulation mostly with a small number of volumes. In the first year, ten volumes. Then, another ten volumes. Finally, 100 volumes. Not all of them were carried round at the same time. Devotees

could privately circumambulate the volumes of the Kanjur carrying them on their backs or in their hands. It could have been the *Kanjur* or the *Tanjur*.

- Apart from the Maitreya procession, did you hold other great festivals? For instance, *Danshig naadam*?
- Yes. It was the state *Naadam* festival. Lay people and even monks wrestled, trained horses and participated in archery. Mainly people with ranks participated in that.
- How many *Tsam* dances were held?
- The *Khüree tsam* was held in Urga. However, other monasteries had other *Tsam* dances, for instance Dambadarjaa Khiid [perhaps Dashchoinkhorlin Khiid]. That took place in another time than the *Khüree tsam*. (Spouse: *Khüree tsam*, also *Sümiin tsam*.)
- Were there other types of ‘dances’ called *Sagar chogar* held in Urga?
- Yes, yes. The offering dance of Urga.
- Can you specify the temples situated in the Yellow Palace’s courtyard?
- *Dechingalav*. Several temples stood there mostly out of the palace itself. *Dechingalaviin süm* was situated inside the fence, and other temples outside of the gates of the palace in the north and other directions.
- What kind of permanent ceremonies took place in the main hall?
- Daily chanting. Also, *Düñchüür maaniin büteel*.
- Did they hold the *Sakhius* ceremony in honour of the protectors of the Buddhist teaching?
- Well, we can say no. *Khuuchin nom* ceremony took place from the 23 to the 29 of the last month of winter. Oh, what was its exact name? *Dan-shigiin khangal*. All districts celebrated it.
- Please specify the location of the *Khailen* oath-taking period.
- *Züün khüree*. Perhaps in the assembly hall. Or maybe in another place. I have no idea.
- Do you know if a temple called *Solgiin dugan* belonged to *Züün khüree*?
- I do not know.
- Where was the monks’ kitchen?
- Kitchens were situated separately, district by district, monastic school by monastic school. In all districts.
- Where did the monks who practiced the *Chö* ritual live? Inside or outside of the *khüree*?
- Mostly in the *khüree*, but also outside. Mainly also on the bank of the river. Some of them lived in *Züün khüree*. There were *Chö* temples of the Tibetans, too. At many places. There were many *Chö* temples. Scattered mainly outside of the *khüree*.

- How about male or female shamans?
- There were shamans, but separately, individually. It is a different faith. Not Buddhist religion. Buddhism differs from Shamanism.
- Can you explain the difference between *badarchin* and *düldüichin* itinerant monks?
- Well, there is a difference, but a small difference. Both are disciples of the Buddha and study Buddhist texts. They appear in large number when Buddhism weakens. There are only a few in common times.
- What about the meditating *dayaanch* hermits?
- There were *dayaanch* monks, too.
- Did they live inside or outside of the *khüree*?
- Outside of the *khüree*. Also inside. Both. There was a small monastery for hermits called Shaddüvlin. Its ruins are still visible in the eastern valley of Chingeltei Mountain.
- Did Mongolian or Chinese monks belong to the Geser Temple?
- Only Chinese.
- What happened to the wooden material and bricks when the temples were demolished in 1937 and 1938? Were they used for new constructions? What has happened to them?
- I do not know. They spoilt. There are some surviving buildings. The Avalokiteśvara Temple and others. Few such building has remained. For instance, the White Palace at the river [Tuul] and the Choijin Lama Temple Complex. Some such temples have remained intact. Though a handful of monasteries remained intact, generally all temples were destroyed both in Ulaanbaatar and in the countryside.
- Please specify the location of the three-dimensional *maṇḍalas* venerated in the *khüree*.
- It is called *loilin* [or *loilon*]. These were available in many places.
- Which district temple was the most sizeable one?
- In *Züün khüree*, the westernmost part of *Züün khüree* stood the temple of *Shüteenii aimag*. It was the largest *aimag* temple.
- Which monastic school was the largest one?
- *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
- Was there a separate temple called Kanjur Temple?
- Well, almost no. Some such temples existed in the countryside. They even had their own treasuries. Also in the city. However, such individual temples were rare.
- Have you ever seen paintings representing Urga?

- Yes, I have seen. It was displayed in the assembly hall. Also in the three monastic schools which focused on Buddhist philosophy. In some monastic districts, too.
- Were these paintings?
- Yes, paintings.
- Have you heard about the painting of Urga painted by Jügder?
- I have heard about the painter Jügder, but I do not know where he lived and what he painted. I have heard only his name.
- Did any famous saints or reincarnations live in your *Toisamlin aimag*?
- Certainly.
- Did they come from Dundgovi province?
- Mainly. Do you mean the monks of *Toisamlin aimag*? Yes. In *Toisamlin aimag* many famous monks lived who were born in Dundgovi province. For example, Tovuu Shar, the main disciplinarian of the assembly hall. Puntsagdash *gavj*, the main disciplinarian of *Dashchoimbel datsan*. Dagdan *agrimba*, the *lovon* master of the tantric monastic school and the *shunlaiv* of *Gungaachoinlin datsan*. All of them were born in Dundgovi province. All of them lived in *Toisamlin aimag*, and had many disciples.
- Did Zava Damdin belong to that district, too?
- I knew him. His reincarnation has been recognized. The ruins of Delgeriin Choir have remained. He was my master. All the above-mentioned people were my masters. Masters of my uncle who was a reincarnation.
- Did Zava Damdin belong to *Toisamlin aimag*?
- Certainly. He gained his *gavj* degree in *Gungaachoinlin datsan*.
- Did he have his own residence in a courtyard?
- He lived in a yurt. *Toislin aimag* was like that. Monastic districts existed in *Züün khüree* and also at *Gandan*. However, the monks being good in philosophy lived mostly at *Gandan*.
- Once you mentioned that the Milarepa *Tsam* used to be performed at Mökhiin Khiid.
- Exactly. It was called *Myaliin tsam*. Myal [Mila] was not the name of a monk living in the monastery, but *Myaliin tsam* was a performance.
- How many participants did it have?
- Mila himself, two hunters called Gombo and Dorj, the White Old Man, two skeletons, two Indian *Ācārya* masters, and the others who I do not know.
- Did the ten protectors of the Buddhist teaching participate in the dance?
- Certainly they participated in the *Khüree tsam*. Not all the ten, but almost all of them.
- Please specify the appearance of Mila. What kind of clothes did he wear?

- He did not have any clothes. He did not have any property. He had lived the life of a hunter or butcher his whole life until he met Marpa monk. Mila claimed that he wanted to achieve buddhahood. Marpa told him that he could not become a Buddha, but Mila replied that he could. Mila took a vow, became a monk, and sat on cliffs and in caves for six years eating only nettle, drinking only karst water. Then, he attained enlightenment and buddhahood. He is the only person who attained enlightenment in this way. He was shining like the Sun!
- Were there other types of *Tsam* dances, too?
- No.
- You have mentioned that you erected a new *stūpa* at Mökh.
- I built a *stūpa* in the province centre. In the monastery at the province centre. *Khari kholiin khalzan shireet lam*, in other words, *Khari khol of Dogshin noyon khutagt*. The temple of that monk became a monastic site with funding. I built it by myself.
- (Informant's relative: How many prayer wheels did you build there?)
- About 100 prayer wheels and also a large prayer wheel which contains the volumes of the *Kanjur*. It contains the *dhāraṇīs* of several deities. I built such a prayer wheel. The monastery operates well. Commemoration ceremony called *Daichod* was held there on the 1st day of this year.
- Have you heard about the Golden Annals written by Zava Damdin?
- I have seen it.
- Did Zava Damdin write it alone or together with other monks?
- He wrote it alone. Almost alone. Alone indeed. Alone.
- Last year you gave me some small books as gift. Have you published any new books?
- I have written the story of my uncle, who was a reincarnation. Also my autobiography. Nothing else. They asked me to write them, but have not been published yet.
- Do you have any sacred texts or images that have remained from Uрга?
- This is an old text. I donated it to the monastery in Dundgovi district. I lost many books in a flood. I wanted to give 6,000 books to the National University of Mongolia, but I lost them in a flood. Books written in Russian, Mongolian, Tibetan, Manchu, and other languages.
- Which district did Mökhiin Khiid belong to?
- It is 25 kms west of the province centre. North-west. In Saintsagaan district.
- Was another monastery called Ganjuuriin Jas in the vicinity?
- Very close. Within 5 km distance. Naran and also Ganjuur. Both were round shaped. These four monasteries were close to each other.

- How many temples did Narangiin Jas have?
- Well, about four or five. I do not remember their number.
- How many monks lived there?
- About 100 or 150, if all of the monks gathered together. Normally, there were about 20 or 30 monks. It sat east of Mökh, at a distance of about 4 or 5 km.
- I had visited these ruins, but could not find anyone who knew their stories.
- Yes, nobody who is alive today can tell their stories.

Doorov Dashdavaa
(1926–?)



D. Dashdavaa *guai*, 2010

Doorov Dashdavaa was born in 1926. He started to participate in the ceremonies of Taliin Khiid or Taliin Jas in Ölzii district, Dundgovi province at the age of 7 or 8. It was a small monastery near the Kharchin *örtöö* relay station road. We documented the ruins of Taliin Jas and other nearby monasteries in 2007 within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project. I revisited the area on 5 November 2010, and recorded the following interview with voice recorder in Dashdavaa monk's home in Mandalgovi city, Dundgovi province to collect information about his old monastery, the relay station road, and Sairiin Us, which was a small Chinese settlement, the junction of caravan routes connecting Russia and China.

- Which monastery did you join as a child?
- I was a child at that time. Very young.

- How old were you?
- Maybe 7 or 8 years old.
- In which monastery did you live?
- Taliin Khiid.
- How many monks lived there?
- Maybe 30 or 40.
- How many temples were there?
- It was in the year of 28 or 29.
- Who led the monastery? The abbot?
- A monk called *Toin lam*.
- How many temples did the monastery have?
- Two temples.
- Did they stand next to each other?
- (Yes.)
- Where did the monks live?
- Local monks, the monks of that given region lived there.
- Can you recall the names of the two temples? Maybe assembly hall?
- *Bagatsuuliin süm* [‘Children’s temple’] and *Ikh süm* [‘Great temple’].
- Was there a *stūpa*?
- Yes.
- Where?
- Behind the monastery.
- Did the monastery have a Maitreya procession?
- No.
- Were the volumes of the *Kanjur* circumambulated?
- Yes. (Laughing.)
- I have visited that site and saw the ruins. There was a well, wasn’t there?
From where did you take water?
- From the south. There were five wells.
- Did that area belong to the Kharchin *örtöö* relay station system?
- Yes.
- Did that *örtöö* road cross Tal?
- Yes.
- In which direction was the station itself?
- It crossed the monastery.
- Have you heard about Sairiin Us? Its location?
- That was one of the five wells.
- Please provide the names of the other wells.
- Dund Us, Geser Us, Gündsamba, Nariin Sairiin Us.

- The fifth one was Taliin Us, wasn't it? Where was Geseriin Us located? We have visited the ruins of the nearby monastery, Khötöliin Khiid. There was a well. What was its name?
- Yes, there is Buyant Ovoo.
- Well, we saw Buyant Ovoo. Was it the part of the relay station system?
- Yes, that monastery belonged to the Kharchin *örtöö* road.
- Was Sairiin Us located in that area?
- Sairiin Us was Taliin Us.
- Do you mean that these two are different names for the same well?
- Lün is in the south.
- Was Sairiin Us at Tal?
- Yes.
- Are Taliin Us and Sairiin Us one and the same well?
- The same. These five wells existed.
- Was Geseriin Us situated in the south?
- Yes.
- Was Dund Us in the south?
- There were two Dund Us.
- Have you heard about Modon Us?
- Modon is located in this direction.
- In the north, isn't it? Where was Gündsamba Us?
- That was one of the five wells at Tal. One of them was called Gündsamba.
- How many of these wells exist nowadays?
- They gave out.
- What did Sairiin Us look like before? Were there yurts in its vicinity?
- That was water that even livestock could not drink.
- With yurts around?
- Without.
- Was there a temple called Geser Temple?
- Yes. Merchants and traders of the Chinese [Manchu] *amban* governor lived there.
- Did Mongols also live there?
- Chinese lived there.
- Did caravans use to go there?
- Yes.
- What types of goods did they carry?
- Flour, grain, drilling cloth, tea, salt, various goods, various useful things.
- Was tea available there?
- Certainly.
- How long did this relay station road operate?

- Well, about the 1910s. It started (?) in about the 1920s in Mongolia.
- What was the main object of worship or main protector deity at Taliin Khiid?
- I do not know. I do not know the name of that deity.
- Did the temples house many images and statues?
- Yes. I was a child, and I do not remember the name of the main deity.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks use to venerate?
- Bogd Ovoo. Shar Takhilgat was the name of another *ovoo*. Bayan was another *ovoo* of veneration.
- Have you heard about a well called *Baishintiin shand*?
- That was located in this direction of Khötöl.
- Did it differ from the caravan route?
- That was on the caravan route.
- Do you know a mountain called Shanaga Uul?
- Shar Uul.
- Also Serven Uul?
- Jirmiin Uul was near our monastery. Jirmiin Uul. Ulaan Jirem.
- Have you heard about a place called Nemekh? (Private talk.)
- Nemekh was located in this direction of Tal.
- South of Tal?
- North-east.
- Were there any *stūpas* at Sairiin Us?
- No.
- Was a Geser Temple there?
- The *stūpa* was next to the monastery. These waters are the waters of the monastery.
- Did any tantric practitioners live at Taliin Khiid who used to perform the body-offering ritual?
- Yes, there were.
- Do you remember the names of these monks?
- Lodongaa. Damdin fully ordained monk. Nobody else. There were not any others.
- What about doctors or astrologers?
- Damdingombo was a healer using Tibetan medical treatments. He was a doctor monk, a *maaramba*.
- Were there astrologer monks in the monastery?
- No.
- What was the name of the disciplinarian?
- Junai. Also Sovd *gayj*.
- Were there chanting masters as well?

- Yes, of course! There is no monastery without chanting masters. Byamba was a chanting master. Also Danjin.
- Was there a monk with *tsorj* title?
- No.
- *Lovon*?
- No.
- When was the monastery closed?
- Monks were captured, taken away and slaughtered in the 28th year [1938], and the operation of the monastery was ceased. The monastery perished.
- Were the monks captured together at one time or over several times?
- They captured and slaughtered the monks in a year. In a spring. They deported many monks to the province centre and slaughtered them. Very few have survived.
- What happened to you after the closure of the monastery? Did you leave to the countryside? Did you join the army?
- I joined the army later.
- How long were you there?
- In Ulaanbaatar.
- Do you know an old monk whose name is Tüdev?
- Where is he?
- He lives in Luus district, Dundgovi province.
- Not Tüvden? There is an old man called Tüvden. We are of the same age, from the same region.
- I met him three years ago.
- Is he there? Tüvden?
- He lives in Luus district. Have you ever visited Khötöliin Khiid?
- Of course. Later, Buyant Ovoo district was founded there. It became a district centre.
- How many monks belonged to that monastery?
- Khötöl had several monks.
- Was it founded by Zava Damdin?
- Zava Damdin? Zava Damdin founded a monastery near here.
- Do you refer to Choir monastery?
- Yes, he founded Delgeriin Choir in the north. It is active now.
- Have you heard about *Süüj örtöö*?
- *Süüj*? That was a station of the Kharchin *örtöö* system.
- How did a relay station look like in general? Were there yurts and horses?
- Also buildings, clay buildings. There were not many things.
- Two big monasteries were situated in the southern part of Ölziit district: Bilüüt and Dalai. Have you heard about these monasteries?

- That is Bilüü, Bilüü, but there were not any monasteries. However, in Ölziit district [centre] there was a monastery called Tsagaan Khadiin Khiid. Its ruins have remained.
- Where was the waste dump of your monastery, Taliin Khiid?
- In the south-east. (Laughing.) Funny question.
- Did the monks buy articles from Chinese traders?
- Of course they did.
- How did they pay for the articles?
- The monastery received tax. Money. [Maybe from Chinese caravans.]
- Which banner did Taliin Khiid belong to? *Daichin beisiin khoshuu*?
- Well, it could have been *So zasgiin khoshuu*.
- Are the relay station road and the caravan road the same or are they different?
- They used to go without problems on the Kharchin *örtöö* road, the relay station system. Caravan routes with camels run from the city [Urga] or Altanbulag [Kyakhta]. They took skin and raw material of the livestock to Wutaishan or Altanbulag and in turn, goods of prime necessity from there on camels.
- The road went further to the west, to Menget, Shuvuut, Luus, and other stations in Dundgovi province.
- Luus?
- Yes, the Kharchin *örtöö* went to Luus. That is the place where Tüvden monk lives now.
- Thank you very much for the interview. What is your name?
- Dashdavaa.
- When were you born?
- In 1926.
- What is your surname?
- Doorov.

Banzar Shiiravnamjil
(1919/21–2007/8/9)



B. Shiiravnamjil monk, 2007

Banzar Shiiravnamjil was born in 1919 or in 1921. He joined Baruun Choir of Borjigon janjin in Tsagaandelger district, Dundovi province at the age of 6 and stayed there until 1937. He became a monk of Dashchoinkhorlin Monastery in Zuunmod, Töv province after the democratic changes.

We interviewed him with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006 or 2007, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. We documented the ruins of his old monastery within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in summer, 2007 as well as other small

assemblies in Tsagaandelger district. The following interview was recorded on 3 September 2007 with voice recorder in Shiiravnamjil monk's home in Zuunmod. The quality of the recording is poor.

- Can you provide the names of small *otog* tribe assemblies situated once in the vicinity of your monastery, Baruun Choir? For instance, was Dari Ekhiin Jas an assembly with temporary operation?
- Well, it worked only in summer. *Chointsam* was a kind of holiday for 45 days at Baruun Choir. Seven banners [tribes] belonged to it. One of them was Dari Ekhiin Jas. All these assemblies operated only in summer. We visited them during that 45-day holiday session.
- Please list the other assemblies.
- Their common name was *Asar doloön otog* ['Seven great tribes'] which refers to the seven great assemblies: Tulga Jas, Züün Cheejin, Baruun Cheejin, Uut Jas, Ukhaatai, Mujiin Jas, and Lovon Jas, which belonged to the Lovon *otog*. These seven assemblies existed.
- Where was Lovon Jas located?
- Uut Jas was situated on the slope of Kharaat Uul. Züün Cheejin and Baruun Cheejin were situated on the slope of Tsagaan Uul. I don't remember the exact location of either Ukhaatai Jas or Muj Jas. Tulga Jas stood on the slope of Bayan Öndör Uul. Lovon Jas operated behind the Lake Ikh Tsegeen. Sanjidiin Ovoo was venerated there. Dari Ekh stood near the current railway. I do not remember the name of the geographical site, but it was west of the railway.
- Did these *jas* assemblies have only one temple building?
- Monks used to hold ceremonies there for a one year old lamb and goat, for a sheep. 70–80 or even 100 monks held the ceremonies at these assemblies. All of them belonged to Baruun Choir, which was a sizeable monastery of Buddhist philosophy with about 1,000 monks.
- Were there any monks with permanent residence? Offering-preparer, sentinel or others?
- Monks did not reside there permanently. They held the summer ceremony for about seven days, closed the temple building, and left.
- Did these assemblies have only one temple building?
- Each of them had only one, small temple building. A yurt temple with ten walls and four pillars were put up for the summer ceremony. Monks held the ceremony in that large yurt temple. Afterwards, it was taken down and put into the storage. All these assemblies had their own livestock and horses. Kumis and dairy products were offered to monks during the ceremony.

- Did devotees coming from the nearby areas join these ceremonies?
- Certainly. They gave offerings. They financed the ceremonies for one of two days as volunteers, donors.
- Were these yurts with ten walls taken down and taken away after the ritual?
- They were taken down, placed into the storage building, and closed. A monk called *jasiin nyarav* or storekeeper had the key and others. It was his responsibility. He used to open the gates of the courtyard and the building.
- Have you visited these assemblies?
- From time to time. I participated in the ceremonies at Uut Jas, Tulga Jas, Dari Ekh Jas, and Lovon Jas. These four.
- Tsegeenii Nuur is the name of two lakes, isn't it?
- There are two Tsegeen Nuur lakes: the larger Ikh Tsegeen and the smaller Baga Tsegeen.
- Was Lovongiin Jas the only assembly near those lakes?
- Lovongiin Jas stood on the bank of the Lake Tsegeen Nuur.
- Do you know if any monastery existed once in the current Tsagaandelger district centre?
- No. Monasteries did not exist in Tsagaandelger district centre. 70 years have passed since the monasteries' destruction. A small temple was built at Tsagaandelger district centre, near the site of the old Choir after the democratic changes. Ishchoibalsan built a *stūpa* at the old site of Choir. I mean a *stūpa* has been erected at the site of our ruined Baruun Choir.
- Did the monks of Züün Choir used to visit Baruun Choir?
- Züün Choir and Baruun Choir sat about 30–40 kms from each other. There were two *ovoos* at Bogd Uul near Züün Choir. Baruun Choir sat in the plain without mountains and waters at a site called Öndör Vangiin Shiree. Shivee Uul stood in its northern direction and Ikh Zalaa Uul in the west. We venerated both. A statue of a hero, a small temple stood at the *ovoo* of the west, east. Its name was Lavtain Ovoo. *Om mani padme hūm. Om mani padme hūm.*
- Was the *Bogd's* yellow enclosure situated behind Baruun Choir?
- Oh yes. A wooden enclosure painted in yellow.
- Were the *stūpas* situated north of the gate?
- The temples had *ganjir* top ornaments, and *jantsan* victory flags ornamented the roof. Old temples were all similar.

Tseyenkhüü Dashdorj (1908–2015)



Ts. Dashdorj monk, 2010

Tseyenkhüü Dashdorj was born in 1908. He lived in Khutagt Lamiin Khiid in Saikhan-Ovoo district, Dundgovi province from the age of 5 to 30. He had the duty of *takhilch* offering preparer and also participated in the *Tsam* dance four times.

Soon after disrobing he moved to Ulaanbaatar and worked in a handicraft cooperative as a tailor. He joined Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar in 1990 and became a monk again, and later he became the *cho-vombo* offering master of the monastery, and had a great role in the revival of the *Tsam*, advising and preparing its masks and costumes.

We interviewed Dashdorj monk with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006, 2007, and 2009, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. I recorded the following interview with voice recorder and video camera on 2 July, 2010 in Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery. It includes details on Dashdorj monk's childhood. His grandson assisted the interview, asking interesting questions.

- When did you arrive in Ulaanbaatar?
- In autumn, 1942.
- How did you arrive? Did you arrive alone? (Grandson: Grandpa, did you come together with my Grandmother?)
- (Grandson's reply: Anyway, he started to work in Ulaanbaatar on 2 January, 1943.) I came by camel cart.
- Where did you live in Ulaanbaatar? Did you live on the bank of the River Selbe?
- Maybe near the Lion Bridge. I do not remember.
- What type of work did you start in January, 1943?
- I started to work as a tailor in an army factory.
- Where was that factory?
- I do not know. I do not know. (Grandson: It was near Ulaan Khvaran.)
- What kind of people worked in manufacture for the army? Soldiers or monks?
- No, no. Mainly women worked there. Partisan Baljinnyam administered the handicraft, who was a military man. First, I worked as a tailor, and later as a master. I was 37 years old in 1944.
- Where were the handicraft cooperatives of monks?
- There was a handicraft cooperative in the countryside, in Saikhan-Ovoo district, and also another one in Delgerkhantai [in Dundgovi province].
- Did many people work there who had been monks before the monastery demolition?
- They did.
- What types of handicraft cooperatives existed? Timber, clothing, food?
- I worked as a carpenter in the handicraft cooperative in Delgerkhantai before coming to Ulaanbaatar.
- What types of other cooperatives exist?
- Tailor, carpenter, such like that.
- Did you participate in the ceremonies of the other monastery, Bari Lamiin Khiid in former times?
- Yes, I did. Bari Lamiin Khiid and Khutagt Lamiin Khiid were situated on the two banks of the River Ongi. Bari Lamiin Khiid in the north, and Khutagt Lamiin Khiid in the south.
- In which monastery did you live until 1939?
- I lived in Khutagt Lamiin Khiid.
- How many monks did Bari Lamiin Khiid have?
- I do not know. About 200.
- Who destroyed the monastery? People of the Ministry of the Interior?
- The Ministry of the Interior? This is something I do not know.

- Were all the monks of Bari Lamiin Khiid captured at the time of persecution in 1939?
- They arrested the ranking monks. Us, young monks were chased away when the monastery was closed and sealed. I was 30 years old at that time.
- Was it the same in the case of Bari Lamiin Khiid? Were the adult monks captured?
- It was the same. At the very beginning lived a famous monk, *Yonzon bagsh* in Bari Lamiin Khiid. He was the tutor of *Bari lam*, therefore his title was *yonzon*. *Khutagt lam* Luvsandorj lived in the nearby, southern monastery. He was captured before the mass persecution. After spending a year in Ömnögovi [Dalan zadgad] he returned back to our monastery for further recitation of sacred texts. At that time, the monks of the monastery used to welcome and accompany great lamas with *ikh büree* horn and make them sit on the throne. However, *Khutagt lam* arrived back at the monastery without any pomp.
- Who seized the monks?
- I do not know. How can I know it? People of the Ministry of the Interior.
- Mongolian or Russian people?
- As far as I heard they were Mongolian people. I did not see that.
- People of the Ministry of the Interior? An army?
- Oh yes. That was said.
- Did they capture the monks of Khutagt Lamiin Khiid in the same way? With an army?
- Who knows? They arrested just a few monks.
- What happened in 1939? Monks were captured, others were forced to disrobe, and the monastery was sealed. What else has happened?
- I was 30 years old and lived in Saikhan-Ovoo district.
- Did you join the carpenter cooperative?
- It was not called a handicraft cooperative. It was not so big. It was just a small warehouse. They said that they needed carpenters, thus Jamsran and me, being of the same age, and another man were enrolled as carpenters. Jamsran went early in the morning. A clever elderly man, Badamdavaa was there, too. He always stood with hands behind his back saying how we could solve this and that. I do not remember if we completed that building, but we were transferred to Delgerkhangai. Badamdavaa, who later died, had two older brothers and one of them found me a job in Delgerkhangai. I worked in Delgerkhangai for a while, and then came to Ulaanbaatar.
- Did they close your monastery, Khutagt Lamiin Khiid in 1939?

- It seems so. I was 30 years old when it closed. The monastery was closed, and a document was stuck to the gate of the temple saying ‘Go away, split.’ They chased out us from the monastery. They captured and deported the high-ranking monks. Maybe it happened in 1939. I was exactly 30 years old.
- (Informant’s grandson: Grandpa, if you were 30, it means that it happened in 1937. Were all mighty tantric practitioners also captured?)
- All of them were captured. All mighty monks. They captured mighty monks and chased out the young monks. The abbot was a young monk at that time. I mean that the reincarnated *Khutagt lam* was the same age as me. He was captured and sentenced once, and he said that he would not return the monastery. He lived an isolated life in the countryside reading sacred texts. He spent a summer there and then he arrived in the city.
- Where did they deport the monks? To Ulaanbaatar?
- I do not know.
- To Ömnögovî?
- To Ömnögovî.
- Did they take the monks by trucks?
- It is said so. Yes. Though I did not see it myself. Ochir *unzad*, the chanting master of Bari Lamiin Khiid who had beautiful voice was my coeval. He had a hanging belly. Once I was looking for him and it turned out that he had been deported by that truck.
- Do you know a man called *makhan sakhalt* [‘with bloody beard’] Yondon?
- *Makhan sakhalt* Yondon or Yünden? I knew the man who was called *makhan sakhalt*. He was also almost as old as me.
- Was he a monk or a soldier?
- He was a monk, but he did not know the Buddhist teachings at all.
- (Grandson: He did not know the Buddhist teachings, but participated in ceremonies, didn’t he?)
- Definitely. He came only occasionally. His name was Yünden. Peljeegiin *makhan sakhalt* Yünden, and *muu* [‘bad’] Davaa were such people.
- From that region?
- Exactly.
- (Grandson: What has happened to these two monks after 1937?)
- Who knows? I stayed in the monastery for a while, but then moved to Saikhan-Ovoo district centre. I do not know the further story and happenings at the monastery.
- (Grandson: Did that man participate in the persecution of monks?)

- I have heard that he participated in that thing, but I do not know exactly what happened.
- (Grandson: Did these two people name and expose the important monks? As spies?)
- It seems so. I have forgotten exactly what they did.
- (Grandson: They could not keep quiet, could they?)
- They could not keep quiet.
- Please talk about the main protector deity of Khutagt Lamiin Khiid.
- There were two protectors: the western one and eastern one. The western one was *Yansan yadam*, and the eastern one was Begtse. The Zuu Temple had two floors.
- Did monks hold the *Kanjur* circumambulation at the time of the *Tsam* dance?
- Our monastery had a *Tsam*.
- Did they have a *Kanjur* circumambulation, too?
- Yes.
- When did you join this Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar?
- Not a long time ago. Dashchoilin Monastery opened its gates in 1990. Perhaps in summer. I joined the monastery in autumn, at the age of 83. I had a wish to be a monk again, but I had to give up my party membership first, as I was a party member. It seemed quite ungrateful to meet the head of the party nest. I came here and talked to the abbot Dambajav in the autumn. He asked questions about my old monastery and my duties there, and advised to me to come back again after three days. He said ‘Arrange the case of your party membership and come back’. I gave my party resignation to Tsoodol, the head of the party nest, and came here.
- (Grandson: You gave your party resignation to the party leader, and joined this monastery.)
- Exactly.
- (Grandson: Did you come back again three days after the first meeting?)
- Yes, I did. During that short period I bought red cotton in the State Department Store, and put it on as an *orkhimj* scarf. (Laughing.)
- (Grandson: Which monk robe did you wear when you joined the monastery?)
- My monk robe. I still have that robe. That is a *deel* gown lined with cotton pad. I made that prepared at first, and I love that very much.
- (Grandson: Is it with partial edge?)
- Yes, it is a monk robe.

- (Grandson: Did you wear that robe when you joined Dashchoilin Monastery?)
- Yes, that is my first monk robe. When I was told to come back in three days, my wife sewed a toneless *deel* gown for me. (Grandson: My grandmother cut her hair. i.e. became a Buddhist ‘nun’.) I asked my daughter to sew a new one, and I joined the ceremonies in September, in autumn.
- (Grandson: Were you 83 years old at that time?)
- Yes. First, I arrived at the ceremony of the Ten Protectors. That ceremony requires different offering cakes and offerings, but these were all missing here. They had only one offering. Previously, I was an offering preparer at Khutagtiin Khiid. Therefore, I knew offerings and sacrificial cakes very well. I knew what have to be offered to the Ten Protectors. I taught that to these monks. Wait, who was that monk? He was the offering preparer here at that time. He gave me his *orkhimj* scarf when leaving. I still have that scarf.
- How many monks were here when you joined the monastery?
- A few monks. More than ten. Maybe twenty. Only one or two of them are still living.
- Were there many old monks?
- About twenty.
- Do you mean that all the monks were old here?
- Yes. Their majority have closed their eyes by now. Only a couple of old monks remained.
- Please tell us now the story how you became a monk at the age of 6.
- Well. There was a temple and a *stūpa* on the bank of the River Ongi at a site called Tsagaan Suvarga (‘White *stūpa*’). According to legend, it was the monastery of the banner in former times. At the time of that banner, the name of the monastery was given. I was 6, when I was sent there to be a monk’s disciple. He taught me the Tibetan alphabet.
- (Grandson: Grandpa, did you go to the family of Tsagaan Khöngsögt (‘with white eyebrows’) at the age of 6?)
- I was there serving my master, Orgoi monk. I prepared his meal. And what has happened? He disappeared one day. There was a woman preparing tea and milk. One day, a man arrived with a camel packed with two boxes. He talked to my master and showed the boxes to him. My master was a doctor. He bound up his eye, watched, examined, smelled, and pulled up. He prepared food in the evening: a heap of *buuz* dumpings. It was very tasty. We went to sleep. In the morning Bor and the other woke up.
- (Grandson: Bor was the person who cooked?)

- Yes, she disappeared for some days, and then arrived back.
- (Was she infected with Hepatitis when she arrived?)
- Exactly. My master went to the hospital worrying about infecting a baby. They met, gestured, talked for a day. In the next evening someone took me away from there. It happened in wintertime: there was snow in the homestead. The camel drank from the well of Tüin on the Northern Plateau. They had many camels. When I arrived for ice to water the camels, I was told that my master flew away. I was looking around where he was flying. There is an *ovoo* in the north called Mandal. I was looking around searching for him: if he was flying at Mandal, or is he sat on the line post as a bird. My master closed his eyes forever. He passed away.
- (Grandson: Was he infected by Bor who worked there?)
- Yes. I do not know where she went and became ill. That winter was without snow. We had just arrived in Tsakhiagiin Us. Before the Lunar New Year.
- (Grandson: Did you return home to your family?)
- I returned home of course. I played with my younger brother. We moved to a new place called Tsakhia. My mother combed her hair and went to greet his monk brother for the Lunar New Year. She spent one day there. She requested him to teach Tibetan Buddhist texts for me, but he refused it saying that he could not teach me if I stayed with my family. My brother was five years older than me, so he left with the monk.
- (Grandson: Who was this monk? Was he your relative? Your uncle?)
- He was my mother's older brother. My uncle.
- (Grandson: Was he an educated monk?)
- Yes, my mother had nine siblings. He was one of the oldest brothers.
- (Grandson: Was he the oldest brother?)
- Maybe the second oldest one. Then, I was sent to Tsagaan Khömsögt's family. They said that I had learnt sacred texts for long, but I had to learn how to herd the livestock, too. When I was decided to be given to Tsagaan Khömsögt's family, they sewed a robe for me, and I was sent there with a man who was our neighbour. We left in the morning. That man took me on his horse. I took the Tibetan alphabet and the *Going for Refuge* prayer with me. We arrived at a bright white yurt from the north-east, which had many cattle, camels, and sheep.
- (Grandson: Was the family of Tsagaan Khömsögt your relative?)
- No, they were not my relatives.
- (Grandson: Was he an educated monk?)
- He was the son of an educated monk. A son who was born and lived in the countryside.

- A herder?
- Yes. He was of the same age as Davaa. They said that I had studied many sacred texts, so I had to study herding as well. When I entered their yurt it was crowded with adults. There were no children at all. They talked, drank tea, coming in, going out. When I went out sheep always ran away. There were no children in that family. Camels, cows were all wild there.
- (Grandson: Were there not children born in that family?)
- Exactly. That family did not see any children. They had two or three dogs. They made me give something to the dogs to train them. I was 6, no 7 years old.
- (Grandson: Were you 6 years old?)
- I became seven after the Lunar New Year. I lost my master at the age of 6, and was given to that family at the age of 7.
- (Grandson: For how many years did you study sacred texts in that family?)
- I was there until 14. It does not mean that I studied Tibetan sacred texts. I was coming and going. I spent there some days, and then I was chased again. I became a worker, a herder. I herded sheep, calf and colt. I herded sheep in summer. When mares were milking, I handled foals, I rode race horses. I was surrounded by adults. There was a younger brother of my master. He was an educated monk wearing monk robes. He was not problematic. Additionally, two or three girls lived there. One of them was younger. The other two girls always gave tasks and ordered me about. If I think back to them, they did not have any sense for children. My mother worried a lot about my fate: being their servant.
- (Grandson: When living with that family until 14, did you also visited Khutagt Lamiin Khiid to participate in ceremonies there?)
- Yes, I participated in ceremonies there.
- (Grandson: Did you live there?)
- I was coming and going.
- (Grandson: Did you go there only occasionally?)
- Yes, I did not reside there permanently.
- Did you go there for bigger festivals?
- Yes, at the time of the *Yerööl* ceremony of the Lunar New Year.
- Did you join the ceremonies on the 29th and on the 15th of the lunar months?
- I could not sit there on the 29th as I did not know the text of the Ten Protectors. I participated in the *Yerööl* ceremony for ten days at the New Year. In the first month of summer, *Tsagaan yerööl* ceremony was held there for ten days. The Kuomintang army arrived when I was 14.

- (Grandson: Did the Kuomintang army damage Khutagt Lamiin Khiid?)
- At first, they did not damage much. They came and went. Later, they damaged it very much.
- Was Bari Lamiin Khiid also damaged?
- Bari Lamiin Khiid consisted of 15 temples. One of them was destroyed, but the others remained intact. Khutagt Lamiin Khiid had 15 temples, too. Five of them were burnt down.
- (Grandson: Do you mean that a temple of Bari Lamiin Khiid was burnt down, but the other 14 remained intact after the arrival of the Kuomintang troops?)
- Yes, indeed.
- (Grandson: Also five temples of the monastery, Khutagt Lamiin Khiid were burnt down, weren't they?)
- Exactly. The small assembly hall, the great assembly hall, the medical monastic school, the Maitreya Temple and the Kālacakra Temple.
- You mentioned that Khutagt Lamiin Khiid had two objects of worship.
- There were many objects of worship, but two protectors: the eastern protector and the western protector. The western one was *Yansan yadam*. Monks were not allowed to enter there without initiation. They closed the windows and pulled down a curtain in the temple when monks with initiation held ceremonies there.
- (Grandson: Do you mean that they held the ceremony in darkness?)
- No. There was lamp light. I mean that monks having no empowerment were not allowed to see the protector. When I was more than 20 years old, we, four or five monks received initiation to hold the ceremony of *Yansan yadam*.
- Were these main objects of worship painted scrolls or statues?
- Gilt statues.
- (Grandson: Were they gilt sculptures?)
- The Jobo Buddha was a gilt statue. The western protector, *Yansan yadam* was coloured. Both the western protector and the eastern protector were taken outside (?).
- (Grandson: Is it true that the Kuomintang army stole some statues?)
- Yes.
- (Grandson: Grandpa, these were statues, weren't they?)
- Most probably statues. There were statues. I did not see them until my initiation in my 20s. It [*Yansan yadam*] was wrapped with covers.
- Was it? Was it completely covered?
- Yes. It was old. Wait, who was that monk? He used to lash his protector at a place called Maikhan Khüren.

- (Grandson: The protector? How did it happen?)
- I do not know. He was one of the reincarnations of *Khutagt lam*. It is a legend.
- Did artisan monks belong to the monastery? Did artists live in Khutagt Lamiin Khiid?
- There were artists. An old monk, Dashdorj was a painter. He painted deities and also made papier-mâché. Another artist, Luvsannyam lived in Bari Lamiin Khiid. Once, he visited our monastery and they painted together. Luvsannyam's nickname was 'the one with yellow tongue.' The other said 'Shar [Yellow], come here and drive a sheep. I am old and cannot survive without eating my soup.' So they slaughtered a sheep.
- Luvsannyam?
- Yes. Well, Dashdorj *guai* was captured later.
- Apart from painting did they make crafts as well?
- They crafted sculptures and painted images. Buddhist paintings and sculptures made by Dashdorj *guai* were venerated in the monastery.
- (Grandson: He was a talented artist, wasn't he?)
- He was a craftsman. One of his eyes was horned.
- (Grandson: Was he with white eyes?)
- He was white, and had large breasts.
- (Grandson: Was he a fat man?)
- Yes. People with such fat breasts were scarce at that time.
- Did the monks write or copy Tibetan texts in your Khutagt Lamiin Khiid?
- There were monks who wrote sacred texts. Who knows the number of monks who copied such texts?
- How did they write these texts?
- Well, they wrote on paper.
- (Grandson: Did they write down the memorized texts?)
- They looked at their sacred texts and wrote them down. They copied them. Finally, I also used to write.
- Were there any open air burial sites in the vicinity of the monastery?
- Maybe. Well, I cannot recall its name at this moment.
- Did it belong to Khutagt Lamiin Khiid or Bari Lamiin Khiid?
- Yes, yes.
- Was it close?
- There was such a place north-east of the monastery.
- Were only monks buried there or also lay people?
- A place called Tsagaan Tolgoi Khonkhor was located in the north, north of Saikhan-Ovoo. Corpses were placed there.
- Were corpses placed on the surface?

- Yes, on the surface. Corpses were not put into coffins in former times.
- (Grandson: Always on the surface?)
- Yes, open air.
- Only monks were placed in the burial site near Khutagt Lamiin Khiid?
- Perhaps yes.
- Were lay people placed there, too?
- I do not know. Tsagaan Tolgoin Khonkhor was a windy open hollow.
- (Grandson: A big hollow?)
- Yes.
- (Grandson: All the dead of Saikhan-Ovoo district were placed there?)
- I think so.
- What was the main object of worship of Bari Lamiin Khiid?
- Its western protector was Mahākāla and its eastern protector was Śrīdevī. These two belong to the group of the Ten Protectors.
- Was there a *stūpa* which radiated light at night?
- There was a *stūpa* called *Gerel tsagaan suvarga* [‘Lighting White *Stūpa*’].
- Only one *stūpa* or more *stūpas*?
- Perhaps one.
- Where was it located?
- Wait a bit. The *Gerel tsagaan suvarga* was a composition of about ten *stūpas*. It belonged to the northern monastery [Bari Lamiin Khiid]. One of them was called *Gerel tsagaan suvarga*. Five *stūpas* stood in the northern edge of the southern monastery [Khutagt Lamiin Khiid]. If we went out to the bridge of the River Yeröö, there was a hollow *stūpa*. Next to it was the *stūpa* called *Gerel tsagaan suvarga*.
- Did it bind sunlight?
- Who knows? It was said to reflect light at night. (Grandson: It was a phosphorescent place.) *Gerel tsagaan suvarga*.
- Did the monks print books in these two monasteries or did they write by hand?
- There were printing blocks. The blocks of 16 or 18 volumes written by *Bari lam* were available in the northern monastery.
- Were these blocks used for making copies?
- No, no. The collected works of *Bari lam* consisted of more than ten volumes. Their blocks were preserved there. Large wooden blocks. Two people called ‘ten’ [maybe printer] printed books. The southern monastery had only one block set: the *Vajracchedikā*. The northern monastery had a building full of wooden blocks.
- Did you take drinking water from the River Ongi?

CENTRAL MONGOLIA

- We took water from the River Ongi.
- Were there also wells?
- There was the southern *Sangai* well, which was not iced up in winter. Also, the northern *Sangai*, and the *Gurupūja* well were situated in the area of the monastery. In the northern monastery, Bari Lamiin Khiid. It was not iced up in winter. It was fenced-off with *khais* fence.
- Was it deep?
- It was deep. I do not remember. It was possible to take water from there in winter, too.
- Where was the brick-burning kiln?
- In both of them.
- Were there two kilns?
- Yes. Chinese worked there. They prepared bricks and others. Mongolian people did not work there.
- Did the two monasteries have temples made of brick?
- Yes.
- Did the Chinese build them of bricks?
- Yes.
- Were the roof decorations and roof tiles also made by the Chinese?
- Yes, various Chinese terms were used in the production of burnt and un-burnt bricks.

KHANGAI REGION

Biziyaa Dashzeveg
(1929–)



B. Dashzeveg monk, 2017

Biziyaa Dashzeveg was born in 1929, in the year of the Snake. He joined Bügsiin Khüree in Tömörbulag district, Khövsgöl province at the age of 7, but lived there only one year, as the monastery closed. His older brother was a monk there, too. Dashzeveg monk participated in the revival of Bügsiin Khüree in 1990 turning a monk again.

Bügsiin Khüree had 17 temples and about 700 monks. It was famous for its wooden prints. We interviewed Dashzeveg monk with Zsuzsa Majer in 2007 at Gandantegchenlin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, and visited the ruins of his old monastery in 2009.

I recorded the following interview with voice recorder on 16 June, 2017 at Möröngiin Khüree Gandandarjailin Monastery in Mörön city, Khövsgöl province, during the enthronement ceremony of *Darva bandid* Danzan-choijilodoi, the famous reincarnation of Khövsgöl province.

- I started to learn Tibetan sacred texts at the age of 7 at Bügsiin Khüree in Tömörbulag district. I was a child. In 1936. I lived there only for a year as the monastery closed in 1937.
- How many monks did the monastery have?
- About 700 monks and 17 temples.
- Can you recall the names of the temples?
- I remember some of them starting with the assembly hall, the medical monastic school, the Kālacakra monastic school, the monastic philosophy school, and the Temple of the Dharma Protectors.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- Dharmarāja.
- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- We had many abbots. I remember their faces, but I cannot recall their names. There were many abbots. The last one's name was Chogloonamjil.
- Were there monks having *gavj* degree?
- Yes, many.
- Was it possible to take the *gavj* exam in the monastery?
- Yes, *gavj* exams were held.
- What about the *agrimba* tantric degree?
- Also *agramba* tantric degree as well as *maaramba* medical degree. It is said to be a large monastery. One of its specialties was that block prints were made there. Monks carved blocks and printed books with them.
- Tibetan sacred texts?
- Yes.
- Did the monks hold the *Tsam* dance and the Maitreya procession annually?
- Certainly, yes.
- Did you learn the Tibetan alphabet first?
- I was taught. I learnt, but I was a child and then I left to the countryside. I herded the livestock. Generally, I experienced three different periods

in my life: feudalism, socialism and recently capitalism. Tibetan sacred texts were ceased, and a new system started with socialism.

- Did Gotov monk also belong to Bügsiin Khüree?
- Yes, he was my cousin.
- He wrote a book about the monastery, didn't he?
- Yes, he did.
- Apart from you, were there any other monks in your family?
- Yes, my brother.
- How old was he?
- Gooyoo *bagsh* [Gotov] was born in the year of the Dragon. My brother, Sengee was born in the year of the Dog, and I was born in the year of the Snake.
- Has Bügsiin Khüree been revived?
- Yes, it was rebuilt.
- Did you participate in the revival?
- I went there. Almost I was the one who revived its tradition. Photographs to aid the rebuilding of the monastery have not remained, and we could rebuild only the assembly hall. That was the main temple where we learnt Tibetan texts. I rebuilt that temple as I am actually a carpenter. Finally, it became abandoned, so I am trying to find a monk now and send him there, which is not easy. I have to run around.
- How many old monks of Bügsiin Khüree were alive at the time of the revival?
- Do you mean in 1990 when the monastery was rebuilt? 17 monks gathered together in 1990 to restart ceremonies.
- Who was the abbot at that time?
- Damba became the abbot.
- Were there a disciplinarian and a chanting master as well?
- Yes, of course.
- Do you remember the names of the monks who lived in the monastery in the 1930s?
- I remember their faces, but not their names. I knew all the monks.
- Did you learn in the assembly hall?
- Yes, yes. First, I learnt the *Going for Refuge* prayer.
- Did any tantric practitioners live in the vicinity of the monastery?
- Yes, they did.
- Inside or outside of the monastery?
- Outside. In another place.
- Did they follow another religion than the Yellow Stream?

- They followed the Yellow Stream. Body-offering belongs to the Yellow Stream. *Chö* texts existed. Only Shamanism differs from this religion.
- Where did the monks carve the printing blocks you mentioned? In a separate building?
- The blocks? Wooden blocks were used for printing.
- From where did the monks get the wood for it?
- They took it from the hills and dried it out. Pine. They carved flat, wooden blocks.
- Did they use black ink for printing?
- Yes, they could use any type of ink. They printed various books. The *Golden Light Sūtra*, the *Collection of Tantric Texts*, the *Prajñāpāramitā in Eight Thousand Verses*, all of them. They also printed short texts. All these sacred texts were accessible there. They also wrote with gold powder. Gilt.
- Did the monks themselves use these printed books or did devotees buy them?
- Monks read them. They did.
- Did your monastery have connections with other monasteries? For instance, Möröngiin Khüree and others?
- Bügsiin Khüree had connections with Möröngiin Khüree.
- Did the monastery have Tibetan monks? Or Mongolian monks who had visited Tibet?
- There were monks who visited Tibet, but not any Tibetan monks. Many monks visited Tibet.
- Did you take your drinking water from the nearby river, Bügsiin Gol?
- Yes, we took water from Bügsiin Gol. Have you been there?
- I saw the ruins of the monastery in 2009.
- Have you seen the new temple building there? There should have been a temple at that time as I reconstructed the assembly hall. Actually, monks did not have many possibilities. One of my older brothers was a monk. He stayed there. After he passed away, nobody remained there. I am planning to send a monk to reside there. I am talking about it with the community of this monastery. [Möröngiin Khüree Gandandarjailin Monastery.]
- Could you talk about your entering the monastery at the very beginning? Did you like that large monastery at first sight?
- I was a child. My father took me to the monastery and found a master for me.
- Did you live together with your master?
- Yes, I did.

- Did you learn the Tibetan alphabet and memorize sacred texts?
- Yes, yes.
- Did any famous astrologer monk live in the monastery?
- Yes, of course. *Kheltgii* Töögöö was an astrologer who also practiced *Chö*. He was a famous monk. *Kheltgii* Tömör. *Kheltgii* ('crooked') was his nickname.
- You became a monk again in 1990, didn't you?
- I did. We rebuilt a temple: 17 monks gathered there. Then, I came to Möröngiin Khüree as I moved to Mörön for a year. Then, my child moved to Ulaanbaatar, and I became a monk at Gandan Monastery for 7 or 8 years. I was retired in 1990 and built that temple. I was an attendant before, a book-keeper. Also a director. I had various jobs. (Private talk.)
- Isn't it wonderful that Buddhism has been revived in Mongolia, and reincarnations are acknowledged at the present time?
- Certainly, it is marvelous! I am a monk with full ordination.
- Did you remember if Bügsiin Khüree was fenced off or not?
- It was without fence.
- Was there a circumambulation road around the monastery?
- Yes, there was a circumambulation road. There were four districts. Similar to the current sections.
- What kind of districts?
- *Övör baruun* (South-western), *Övör züün* (South-eastern), *Ar baruun* (North-western) and *Ar züün* (North-eastern). The north-western means that it was higher than the monastery, and the south-eastern was lower than the monastery. There were four such sections.
- In which district did you live?
- In the South-western district.
- Did these districts have temples or did all the monks gather in the assembly hall?
- Certainly, there were district temples. Also, a large place called *jas*.
- Did all the temples have *jas* financial offices?
- Not every temple. The whole monastery had only one large *jas*.
- What was the temple buildings made of?
- All of them were wooden temples.
- None of them were built of brick?
- No.
- Were there temples with more floors?
- No, there weren't. The assembly hall had two floors. The rebuilt temple has the same structure. We designed it with another monk based on our memories.

- Do you remember the handbook of the philosophy school? *Günchin igchaa* or *Vanchin igchaa*?
- Well. Anyway, there was a handbook.
- Do you remember the main protector of that monastic school? Was it Mahākāla, *Yansan yadam* or another?
- Mahākāla.
- Did the monks perform the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- No, monks did not hold *Khailen* in that monastery. [Maybe in that last year.]
- How was the operation of the monastery ceased? Did you stay there until its closure?
- I remained there until closure. Monks were captured, and children were taken by their parents. The monastery was demolished and a warehouse was built in Tömörbulag.
- What has happened to the holy objects of worship?
- I do not know. Only one of them was not taken away, so that has remained. Sacred books were thrown away. Laying on the ground in disorder.
- Were the sacred books and printing blocks burnt there?
- Yes, burnt to dust.
- Were the famous monks deported?
- Oh, all of them were captured.
- Did any monks return home later?
- Yes, some of them. Dambaa spent ten years in prison and came back. A few men came back. Ishbuyan, Sovd *guai*. They came back after ten years of prison.
- Did they live in Ulaanbaatar or in the countryside?
- They lived in the countryside. All of them have passed away by now.
- Are there any other monks who are alive?
- No, I am the only one.
- Did saints and reincarnations live in your monastery?
- Saints and reincarnations? Well, reincarnations yes. Jamsran *tsorj*. Perenlei *da lam*. Jamsran was the master of the *gegeen*, whose current incarnation is studying in India. I mean that he was the master of *Jalkhanz khutagt*. Jamsran was the master of *Jalkhanz khutagt* Damdin-bazar (1874–1923). *Jalkhanz khutagt*'s monastery was situated close to Bürenkhaan, but nothing has remained from that.
- Were there any *stūpas* at your monastery?
- Yes, there was.
- Large *stūpas*?

- No, there were not many *stūpas*. There was only one *stūpa* in the centre, and another on the northern slope. I rebuilt one of them. It still stands there.
- Were there also large prayer wheels?
- Certainly, there were.
- Do you remember if Chinese traders used to visit the monastery?
- Many of them. Many Chinese stores stood in the southern part of the monastery. It was like districts nowadays. Many stores. Moreover, the district of the poor lay population was situated on that side. Poor people lived there, followed the moving monastery, and accumulated merits. Chinese stores stood in the south of the monastery.
- What did they sell?
- Various things. Goods, cakes. All the Chinese and poor people moved away when the monastery was demolished. How could the lay population stay there without the monastery? They dispersed to all directions. (Private talk.)
- Did mendicant monks use to visit the monastery?
- No, they did not.
- What kind of sacred books do you read these days?
- I recite such texts of course. Especially *Ārya Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*. Also, the White and the Green Tārās. *Ārya Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti* is the first text I read. Also, *Gurupūja*.
- Do you often come to Möron for feasts and ceremonies?
- I often come. (Private talk.) I am the disciple of Jhado *rinpoche* and His Holiness, the Dalai Lama. I took full ordination.
- When did you take full ordination?
- In 1996. I took full ordination in front of Jhado *rinpoche* and the Dalai Lama. Jhado *rinpoche* is my master of sacred texts. The Dalai Lama is my abbot master. One of them is said to be the abbot master, and the other one is the *lovon* master.
- Which deity is your main tutelary deity or protector?
- Buddha Śākyamuni. My abbot master gave me when I took full ordination.
- Where did you receive full ordination? At the time of the visit of His Holiness in Mongolia, or did you go to India?
- I went also to India, but I got full ordination in Mongolia. I went to India for pilgrimage. Certainly, I visited Bodhgayā. I also visited Buddha Śākyamuni's birthplace in Nepal. I considered the sacred texts that I had learnt as child useless at the time of the political changes [socialism] and I did not recite them. When I looked at them again in 1990, I remembered

them. I could recall them. (Private talk.) Without being senile, I remembered *Lamaadan*, the short prayer to Mañjughośa. The mind broadens with the recitation of these texts. That is such an excellent text! I recite *Ārya Mañjuśrīnāmasaṃgīti*.

- (Comment of Ven. Tsogt who also participated in the talk: You can express your personal feelings as well.)
- Well, what can I say? Buddhist teaching is in people's heart. A person consists of three components: body, speech and mind. People can develop their minds. Everything has a reason. Nothing exists without a reason. People have to find the reason. Success comes if someone lives with loving kindness. Everyone is living by heart and mind, these two. Thoughts should be systematized, and people should live sincerely. I knew the Buddhist teachings properly, but I cannot express them well anymore.

Jantsan Dovdon (1913–2013/14)



J. Dovdon monk and his sisters, 2010

Jantsan Dovdon was born in 1913, in the year of the Rabbit. He lived in Shankhiin Baruun Khüree, Kharkhorin district, Övörkhangaï province from the age of 8. He became a monk there again after the revival.

Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar founded Baruun Khüree Rivogejigandanshad-düvlin in 1647. We documented its ruins within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project. The palace of the *Noyon lam*, the reincarnated saint of the monastery has survived and functions again as a monastery. I recorded the following interview with voice recorder on 14 April, 2010 in Dovdon monk's yurt assisted by a young monk of the monastery. Dovdon monk's memories include interesting details on the relationship of Baruun Khüree and the nearby Erdene Zuu.

- How many districts and monastic schools belonged to Baruun Khüree?
- It had four *aimags* and seven *datsans*. The seven *datsans* included the philosophy school, the medical monastic school, the astrologic monastic

school, the Kālacakra monastic school, and the tantric monastic school. Additionally, the Maitreya Temple and the Amitābha Temple were also called ‘conciliatory *datsans*’. The monastery had these seven *datsans*. There was also a big yellow courtyard of the ‘Rear Buddha.’ Reputedly, it contained precious objects of worship. There was also a yellow, fenced-off courtyard of the ‘Front Buddha’, and also a place of severe *Gürem* remedies and services. The *Ikhiin dugan* great hall called *Battsagaan* had a white temple building with canvas. It was the assembly hall of the monks of all districts.

- Do you remember the names of the four districts?
- *Darjaalin*, *Puntsagdarjaalin* was one of them. Also *Toislin*, *Dashlin*, *Shaddüvlin*. These four.
- How many monks belonged to the monastery?
- 1,500, but monks changed from time to time. There was a rotation. Certain monks went to the countryside in summer. Meanwhile, there were new children sent to the monastery to experience monasticism. Generally, the monastery had about 1,500 monks.
- (Young monk: Do you mean that the number did not increase or decrease? Was it always 1,500?)
- Exactly. It did not decrease, and did not really increase. Well, old monks passed away, and some young monks left to the countryside and stayed there. Some young monks went to the countryside and disappeared. They were replaced by the children of the four districts. This is what the other monks told me.
- When did you join the monastery?
- I wanted to join the monastery at the age of 8. Exactly at that time the *Kanjur* ceremony started. My father brought me to the monastery to participate in the *Kanjur* ceremony lasting for some days. Afterwards, I returned home to the countryside and planned to move to the monastery in autumn. However, the winter was harsh in that year of the Pig, and I could not go to the monastery, but stayed at home. I spent the winter and the spring at home, and moved to the monastery only the following year. That was the year of the Mouse. This is how I joined the monastery. First, I had participated in a ceremony there in the year of the Pig and returned home, and could not go back in that year because of the severe weather in winter. I arrived only in the year of the Mouse to settle down in the monastery.
- When were you born?
- I was born in the year of the Rabbit. It should be 1913. The next year will be the year of the Rabbit again.

- When did you disrobe? When was the monastery destroyed and when were the monks forced to disrobe?
- It was in 1924 or 1925 [perhaps 1934 or 1935]. A representative arrived from Arkhangai. The monastery had a large yurt palace called *Tsanidiin san* ('treasury of epistemological studies'). We were gathered there and were told to disrobe following the political propaganda. Chinbat came there, a person who propagated political propaganda and talked briefly about disrobing. He was an officer in Arkhangai. He talked and talked and finally said 'People, who want to disrobe. Put your hands up now'. Mostly teenagers. I did not put up my hand.
- (Young monk: How many of you did not put up your hands? How many monks?)
- I do not know the others, but I myself did not put up my hand. There were also other monks who did not. Erkhbish and others. Ten monks joined the monk army and they were loaded up. It means that they did not put up their hands. I am sure about myself, but I do not remember the others. Therefore, I had to join the monk army. They took me. In my monk robe, my monk *deel*.
- Do you remember when you entered the army?
- Maybe in 1927. I do not remember. As far as I remember it happened in 1927 [1937]. They enrolled several monks to the army. We were enrolled wearing our monk robes, spent some days in Arkhangai and some days in Ulaanbaatar. Then, we went to Bayantümen in Dornod province. We bathed and had to change our clothes in Ulaanbaatar. We had to take off and throw away our monk robes, wear a soldier's uniform and go to Dornod. The army had nine monks in Dornod from our monastery. Similar to me, they hadn't wanted to disrobe previously. From our monastery.
- (Young monk: The whole army consisted of purely monks, did it not?)
- Exactly. Jaal Dendev and others from our monastery. Purely monk army from *Gandan* and the *khüree*, purely a monk army from *Züün khüree*, and the ones who had not put up their hands to express their wish of disrobing after hearing the propaganda were enrolled to the army, too. However, it was terminated after a year. We thought that it would last for three years. If you are interested in the reason of its termination, I can explain it to you. We heard later that an incident happened. Some members of the monk army became thieves, spoiled weapons, and caused distrust. We also heard that Choibalsan had claimed that purely monk armies wouldn't last for long, as maybe it was impossible to give guns to them. He gave an order and immediately suspended them. This was how the army of monks finished. I was not hard-working, but I had great

reputation for being a good cook. That became my job. This was the work I could do. There had been some nuisances. That might have been the reason.

- What was the function of these three temples in Baruun Khüree that survived the demolition?
- The assembly hall stood in the centre, the Gradual Path Temple in the west, and the Temple of the Five Kings in the east. I did not participate in ceremonies here as I lived in *Dood khüree* in the south. Therefore, I do not know much about this remaining part in the north. I visited this part only for the *Tsoglom* religious debate and other occasions. I did not live here, but visited it from time to time. The monks of this upper part Well, there were four districts: *Dashlin*, *Toislin*, etc. Monks used to hold ceremonies in their own *aimag* temples. However, this upper part had no districts. Only the *Lamtan bagsh* [*Noyon lam* Luvsantseveenravdan, 1866–1938] master used to pray here, who had many disciples and lay followers.
- Did also famous tantric practitioners live near here that performed body-offering rituals?
- Well, these two traditions are incompatible. Yellow and Red Streams are incompatible. Monks did not perform body-offering and other such rites in Baruun Khüree. However, a tantric practitioner appeared at the end. He was a monk of Baruun Khüree, but went eastward and became a tantric practitioner. He, *Toivon* Yadamsüren, performed the *dom* and then left. He lived in our district, but left for the east and became a *Chö* practitioner. He said that becoming a tantric practitioner is beneficial. *Zoch* refers to *Chö* practitioners who recite *Chö* texts. He said that improving *Chö* had become immensely important. I knew this *Toivon* Yadamsüren *guai* from my childhood. He visited us many times, and was in good company with my older monk relative. He disappeared after completing the *dom*. He went to the east, and became a tantric practitioner. He visited us later.
- (Young monk: Please tell us more about your master.)
- My master was the vice Lama of *Shaddüvlin*. He was my relative. Not exactly my master, but my older relative. He was the vice Lama of *Shaddüvlin aimag*. Moreover, he was the classmate of the *Lamtan* as they studied in the same class called *zindaa*. The class of the *Lamtan bagsh* included more than 60 monks. Reputedly, there were 40 *gevsh* and 4 *tevsh*. The 40 *gevsh* were all educated and clever, but the other 4 did not study at all. It is an interesting fact. They did not keep it a secret. It was the class of the *Lamtan*, where my older relative studied. So, he

became the *orongiin lam*, the leader of lower ranking monks. My older relative became a vice Lama. This master visited us for the Lunar New Year. We were sitting in a row as in the army. We laughed a lot, ate and drank, and finally he departed. He was such a man. The last *orongiin lam*, whose name was Lamaadorj. Then, finished. The religion of our Baruun Khüree. I remember it well.

- Which district and monastic school did you belong to?
- I lived in *Shaddüvlin aimag*. Baruun Khüree had four districts: *Darjaalin*, *Toislin*, *Dashlin*, and *Shaddüvlin*. I lived in *Shaddüvlin aimag*. Meanwhile, I studied in the philosophy school. I wanted to learn and distinguish phenomena. I was not an eminent student, so I do not remember much by now. I am planning to study philosophy from the young monks of the current monastery. (Laughing.) I was not a good disciple. Anyway, I tried to study it. At least it brought merits for me.
- (Young monk: Did you complete the *domd moridokh* riding?)
- I could not perform the *domd moridokh*. I have completed the *gavdamba dom* and planned the *domd moridokh* for next year. However, the monastery closed, and people who took the *gavdamba dom* could not finish the whole procedure of the exam of Buddhist philosophy. How could we wait for such a long time? We held the ceremonies on the 18th, 19th, 20th. Always on festival days. Anyway, we could not complete it as our Baruun Khüree monastery closed and monks spread out. Well, it is history. History is grand.
- Could you talk about the Maitreya procession?
- The Maitreya procession took place annually on the 21st of the Lunar New Year. The *orongiin zurkhaich* astrologers determined the dates of the Maitreya procession of Erdene Zuu and Baruun Khüree. Sometimes, it took place first at [Erdene] Zuu than at Baruun Khüree, and sometimes first at Baruun Khüree, and then at Zuu. The *Yerööl* ceremony started at the Lunar New Year and lasted for 15 days. We organize this festival even nowadays. After this ceremonial period, the preparation started for the Maitreya procession, which took place after the 20th day of the New Year. The Maitreya procession of Zuu and Baruun Khüree happened in turn: sometimes it took place first at Zuu, sometimes at Baruun Khüree. The astrologers determined the sequence. The *orongiin zurkhaich* astrologer, an influential person knew which monastery needed the Maitreya procession beforehand. He was an omniscient man. He examined the features of the place. He was the only person who knew and understood those signs. Astrologers have special knowledge. If the Maitreya procession took place first at Erdene Zuu, it meant that the weather would

be cold. If Baruun Khüree organized it first, weather became warm. Monks claimed that its reason was that the Maitreya statue of Erdene Zuu was a sandal wood statue, which had a cool quality. I do not know the quality of our Maitreya statue in Baruun Khüree. The Temple of the Rear Buddha housed that precious object of worship that was placed at the altar of the assembly hall three days before the procession.

- (Young monk: Can you confirm that goats were milked before the Maitreya procession?)
- I am afraid not. Well, a goat was usually milked. All Buddhas are living. All are alive. (Laughing.)
- Did *Kanjur* circumambulation take place in the monastery?
- *Kanjur* was also circumambulated. In autumn. In the middle month of autumn, quite late in autumn. Monks held the *Kanjur* ritual during the summer *dom* feast. *Dom* was held first, followed by the *Kanjur*. The *domd moridokh* riding took place on the 3rd day of the 10th month and *Kanjur* was circumambulated on the 4th. Monks held the *Kanjur* ceremony at all the seven holy sites related to the *Bogd*. It was held first at our monastery, Baruun Khüree, which was the ‘old monastery’ of the *Öndör Bogd*, Zanabazar. *Kanjur* ceremony lasted for seven days there, and then it started in the next monastery. That could have been *Züün khüree*, *Gandan* or *Amarbayasgalant*, as all of them held the *Kanjur* ceremony.
- (Young monk: Please list these seven holy sites.)
- Well, Baruun Khüree. *Gandan* and *Züün khüree* might have not counted the same. *Tövkhö*n, *Amarbayasgalant*, *Puntsagdarjaalin* which was a part of the city (?). *Kherlengiin Züün Khüree*.
- (Young monk: Also *Dambadarjaa*?)
- *Dambadarjaa*? Yes, these seven sites. *Dambadarjaa* was a cradle of high-level education and numerous monks. It had a few monks, and some ceremonies. All were recorded as the *Bogd*’s holy sites.
- (Young monk: How did you count the months in former times?)
- The New Year was the 6th or 7th month. The 8th month was the first month of summer, the 9th month was the middle month of summer, and the 10th was the last month of summer. We numbered them in this way.
- How did you circumambulate the *Kanjur*?
- Not by hand, but we burdened camels with them. The first camel carried the *Kanjur*, and more camels followed it as a caravan. We packed the set of the *Kanjur* on the first camel. We started the circumambulation by going in the north-western direction, and crossed the pass, *Elstiin Davaa*. We stood there to hold a ceremony and performed ablution ritual and *maṇḍala* offering to the local spirit of that site. Then, we passed

the northern pass, crossed the River Orkhon, and entered Erdene Zuu. In certain years we spent the night there, but in other years we did not. Sometimes we could sleep there if we had acquaintances there. In other years we did not sleep there, but left the monastery to the east and slept in a household near the River Nariin Gol. Local inhabitants prepared well and looked forward to the *Kanjur* circumambulation. They offered their worthiest things, and venerated the *Kanjur*. Usually we went by a camel caravan, but later by car. We entered into the living place of the family and stopped there. People used to gather there from all directions to venerate the *Kanjur*. It was not prescribed to visit that family. If they told us that we had to visit that family, we performed a smoke-offering ritual there, had a meal and some drinks. We did not wander there just to enter the yurts. An alms bowl was given around to collect oil for butter lamps. In other words, we collected oil for the butter lamps from herders. Two monks collected it with a horse cart, fluting a conch shell horn. They fluted the conch shell horn in front of each household. Thus, people knew that the *Kanjur* had arrived, and added a spoon of clotted cream to the bowl. We passed several households, so gained a lot of clotted cream. It was melted in the monastery. Butter lamps were made from that oil.

- Did the monks perform the *Tsam* dance?
- Certainly. The Maitreya procession of Baruun Khüree was a great festival. Erdene Zuu and Baruun Khüree did it in turn, with *Tsam* dance at the end. It was called *Baruun khüree Maidar* and *Zuugiin Maidar*. We called this *Maidariin tsam*: the *Tsam* dance of the Maitreya procession.
- Did the monks burn the *Sor* offering at that time?
- No, not at the time of the Maitreya procession. *Sor* was burnt after the *Ikh khural*, Benediction or *Dash* on the 29th, but not during the Maitreya procession. We held the three *Yaam* [‘Melody’] ceremonies, and burnt the *Sor* on the 29th before the Lunar New Year.
- When did the monks hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- In the middle month of summer. Monks departed for the *dom* on the 3rd of the middle month of summer, and next day, on the 4th the *Kanjur* ceremony started, the *Khailen* started.
- For how many days did you hold the *Kanjur* ceremony?
- Approximately seven days. It started with a soft reading followed by an intensive ceremony for five days, and ended on the 7th day with a gentle ceremony again.
- For how many days lasted the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- *Khailen* lasted maybe for 49 days [45]. I do not remember exactly. It was very long.

- In which temple did the monks hold the *Khailen*?
- In the philosophy school.
- Do you remember the number of participants?
- It was not prescribed. Fully ordained monks gathered there. Many of them arrived from the countryside. The monks who did not join it stayed in the countryside or left to the capital.
- (Young monk: Did only Baruun Khüree's monks participate in it? Did monks arrive from other places?)
- There were definitely fully ordained, elderly monks who came from the countryside. They came only to participate in the *Khailen*. Monks of other monasteries did not really come, neither from the seven holy sites of the *Bogd*. The seven holy sites of the *Bogd* meant large monasteries. However, the monks of small assemblies could join these monasteries for the *Khailen*. For instance, fully ordained monks of the small assemblies in the Gobi or western Mongolia did come.
- Did the monks use to hold *Nügnee* fasting rituals?
- Certainly we used to hold fasting rituals! *Nügnee sakhikh* is a particularly sacred duty: a fasting ritual dedicated to Avalokiteśvara. First, we held *dagam*. It means that we gathered together early in the morning on the first day and performed a *Chogo* ceremony. Then, we ate our monastic meal, went home to take our bedding and clothing to sleep in the monastery. After waking up next morning, we held the *Sojin* rite to purify their transgressions and began the *Nünnei*. The *Nünnei* of Avalokiteśvara consists of four *Chogo* ceremonies. We held ceremonies, had our meals, and slept there on the first day. Next morning, we woke up and it was the day of silence. We were in silence. It is called the 'clearing away of the sound.' We communicated with gestures. For instance, we said 'Khöo, *Oṃ maṇi padme hūṃ*' to indicate that we should continue the chanting. We went out to the toilet, then chanted, and performed the *Chogo* ceremony. We did not eat on that day, we kept the meditation session, and kept fasting. On that day there is no food and drink, nothing at all. Then, after waiting, we held the *Chogo* again reciting the *Jigden gombo* and worshipping the Buddha. *Jigden gombola chagtsallo* [Informant recites a text.] We also venerated the Buddhas. This took a day. To sum it up, the first day was the day of the offering of cakes, and monks could eat and drink their monastic food and tea. The second day was without speaking. The third day was called *tun tailakh*, finishing the meditation session. Then, monks could eat and drink tea again. The shrine keeper came in and prostrated three times, and monks took a seat. The shrine-keeper came in and prostrated three times asking '21 Tārās,

Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva, and all my monks, have you sat well?’ We welcomed the shrine keeper saying that ‘We sat well.’ (Laughing.) It was like this.

- Did the monks use to venerate *ovoos*?
- Several such veneration happened. All monasteries venerated *ovoos*. Erdene Zuu and Baruun Khüree used to venerate the Khangai Range in turn. Once my monastery, then, in the next year: Zuu.
- (Young monk: Did the monks of our monastery use to venerate other *ovoos*, too?)
- Monks used to venerate Ulaan Oovoolj. Patron *Bayan* [‘Rich’] Sonsanag sponsored it. He ordered the veneration of that geographical site. Several *ovoo* veneration took place. Monks venerated Jargalant and Ulaan Khalzan. Monks also used to venerate them by themselves. A lot of people venerated Jargalant. Monks of our *Shaddiiv aimag* district used to venerate Ulaan Khalzan. Both *Toislin* and my *Shaddiiv* districts. I belonged to *Darjaalin* district. We used to venerate that.
- Were there toilets at that time?
- No, monks just went outside. Well, Erdene Zuu had a wall fence. The monks living in the north went out of the northern gate, and the monks living in the west went out in the western gate to have a toilet. Regarding Baruun Khüree, we went out from the temple, over the *khais* fence.
- (Young monk: Where did you deposit household waste and ash?)
- We often cleaned the temple and burnt the monastery’s waste under the platform from which the monks were called to gather at the ceremonies. There was a waste dump where household waste was burnt. We burnt the waste under that platform after cleaning the temple. That elevation had a reason. Drum was beaten there; the assembly hall’s horn was blown there, when Baruun Khüree moved (?) to the west. Baruun Khüree was an extreme place. Time was indicated with the horn of the assembly hall, and the drum of the *Gürem*. Beating the drum of the *Gürem* indicated time. Also, the horn of the assembly hall. Baruun Khüree was told to give signals with a horn.
- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- He was my master. He was the head of the monastery and called *Lamtan bagsh*. This *Lamtan bagsh* master of mine was the most famous monk at the monastery. He was the head. The *orongiin lam* could be anyone. One of my uncles was the vice Lama of the *ded lam*, Lama *tsorj guai*. There were many ranking monks. However, the highest-ranking monk was the *Lamtan bagsh*, who was a reincarnation. Reincarnations remember their

previous births, and even their forthcoming births. They should be such men!

- Did a lay population, traders and Chinese live around the monastery?
- Not so many. Inside Baruun Khüree not at all. There was not enough water. Behind Ulaan Khalzan, north of the northern pass, in the background of Jargalant, was a brook called Saikhan Bulag. In this part of the river. Many people lived there called *khoroochuul* ['People of the *khoroo*']. Foreigners were not allowed to go there, poor them. Deprived people considered Baruun Khüree to be a wonderful place and settled down there. Saikhan Bulag brook flowed in this side of the river. They lived there. I do not know much about Chinese traders. They lived in the south-west. Finally, the troops of the Kuomintang pushed in and rifled it. Then, the Chinese disappeared. Chinese stores stood in the north, near the northern side of the River Ölzii. These were called *püüs* stores, Chinese stores. They sold various articles.
- Please describe a typical day for you.
- I was a child, so I lived with old monks. I used to wake up early in the morning, make the fire in the yurt, and made tea. I offered the finest of the tea first to the Buddhas. My dear, old master woke up. I poured tea into his cup and gave it to him. We drank our tea, and waited for the signal of the assembly hall's horn. The first signal of the horn was not important, neither the second one. However, we took to the temple at the third signal. There is not much to tell about the daily chanting. Only a few monks held that ceremony: some children who had not known the text of the daily chanting by heart or who had just completed its study. The number of participants also depended on the number of children sent from the four districts. Many children lived in the four districts: *Dashlin*, *Shaddüvlin*, *Darjaalin*, and *Toisamlin*. Children jangled and talked unnecessary. The two chanting masters of the assembly hall led the recitation of the sacred texts.
- (Young monk: Did the monks of the monastic schools use to sit in the assembly hall for the daily chanting?)
- No, they gathered in their own monastic schools. Monks who were required participated in the ceremony. The *khüree*'s chanting master decided this question. For example, he determined if someone had to hold the *Gürem* remedy, the *Dagaash* (?), or Amitāyus, or go to the assembly hall. Other monks did not gather there. High ranking monks did not participate in the daily chanting at all. Only two chanting masters and a few children. The two chanting masters did not pay much attention

(?). The vice chanting master and Tsagaan (?) were the two chanting masters.

- How many disciplinarians did the monastery have?
- Four disciplinarians belonged to the assembly hall. The *aimag* districts also had disciplinarians who were independent from the assembly hall. All districts had a disciplinarian: *Darjaalin*'s disciplinarian, *Shaddüv*'s disciplinarian, *Toislon*'s disciplinarian, and others. The assembly hall had four disciplinarians: the main disciplinarian, the small disciplinarian, and others, a total of four disciplinarians. The disciplinarians of the districts were independent from the assembly hall's ones.
- (Young monk: Approximately how many disciplinarians belonged to Baruun Khüree?)
- Baruun Khüree had several disciplinarians. The four disciplinarians of the assembly hall. The four disciplinarians of the four districts. Also, the disciplinarians of the monastic schools: one in the monastic philosophy school, one in the Amitābha Temple, one in the Astrological Temple, etc. All *datsans* had a disciplinarian. Tantra, Kālacakra, Amitābha, Maitreya. There were four *aimags* and seven *datsans*.
- What kind of sizeable Buddhist statues did the monastery have?
- All statues were large.
- Did the monastery possess a special object of worship?
- What can I say about it? My Baruun Khüree monastery worshipped Mahākāla. Buddha Śākyamuni and Tsongkhapa were the main images. The most sacred image was that of Mahākāla. It was the holiest object of worship at Baruun Khüree because of historical reasons. This idol was a severe protective deity and exists even today. It is said that the young monks of Baruun Khüree used to participate in the *Sor* offering ceremony of the monastery of a neighbouring banner, Dalai Güinii Khüree. That was a site abundant in kumis. Monks drank much kumis when going to the *Sor* ceremony of Dalai Güinii Khüree, and became drunk. A monk of Baruun Khüree rode a horse. When he arrived at Dalai Güinii Khüree, he tethered his horse to the *khais* fence. A fight started from this incident. They boxed the ears of that monk. A fight started and two men scuffled. I do not know who won, but the fight continued. The monks of Baruun Khüree were poorly bred. They agreed to go to Dalai Güinii Khüree to fight. They went upstream near the River Khögshin, and put up a yurt near the monastery. 'No, what is this lonely yurt?' They entered the yurt. A man poured kumis in a large vessel, and made them sit in the honorary place to drink. The monks of my Baruun Khüree liked kumis very much. They agreed to taste it and continue their trip. They drank kumis, sated,

became satisfied and drank, so finally they decided to return to Baruun Khüree. That man in the yurt was *Bandid lamtan*, the reincarnating saint of Dalai Güinii Khüree. He knew that the monks of Baruun Khüree wanted to fight, but also knew that they liked kumis very much. Thus, he offered kumis to them to blunt their senses.

- Did Baruun Khüree have *stūpas*?
- Certainly. The monastery had the *Dood khüree* part. Baruun Khüree was situated in a low hollow. The waste dump of the four districts is still visible there. Three *stūpas* stood north of the monastery: a large one called the Golden *Stūpa*, and two or three smaller *stūpas* next to it. A *Demidnyamba stūpa* is said to have been there, too. The monks who studied Buddhist texts used to go and circle it. They recited Tārā's text and circled the *stūpa*. Also, monks of the philosophical classes used to go there to circle at the *domd moridokh* riding.
- Did the monks hold the ceremony of the Dharma protectors?
- Certainly. The *Arvan khangal* and the 9 *Dashaa* (?) comprised the great feast days. It was held in winter, on the 29th day.
- Also in summertime?
- We did not hold it in the assembly hall on the 29th, but was part of the *Gürem* remedy.
- What kind of ceremonies did you hold in Baruun Khüree on the monthly feast days? Did the monks recite the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* on the 15th of each month?
- I do not remember. The monks of the philosophical classes used to hold great feast days on the 8th and 15th days of the month. I cannot recall the name of that ceremony. The philosophical classes organized those ceremonies.
- I have heard that Baruun Khüree preserved the black flag of Chinggis Khan. Can you confirm this statement?
- It is true. Finally, it was taken to Russia. Originally, the temple of the 'Rear Buddha' housed it, which was the only wooden yurt palace in the monastery. It was called the yurt palace of the flag, *Tugiin örgöö*. The flag was said to be preserved there. Russians took it when the monastery was closed, and it disappeared later. The black flag of Chinggis Khan.
- Some artefacts have remained intact after the closure of the monastery. Who could have saved these holy objects?
- Well, not everyone. A monk called Luvsandorj Natsag. Also *Togoruu* Tserendorj, Tserenpil, chanting master Gombodorj. Also another person. Wait, what was his name? There were seven people. Seven people could save a few items. My dears! They used to hold ceremonies in secret.

I remember an episode very well. The members of a class used to gather in a yurt, recite texts and hold rituals. Therefore, the daily chanting has never been interrupted in Baruun Khüree. Although the assembly hall was closed, Gombodorj, the chanting master of *Toislin aimag* recited the sacred texts even afterwards. Finally, he became old and tired. Then, Natsag monk took over this duty. Finally, many monks recited the sacred text again. It means that the tradition has never been broken.

Nyam Osor
(1921–2016)



N. Osor monk, 2010

Nyam Osor was born in 1921, in the year of the Dog. He joined Baruun Khüree Rivogejigandanshaddüvlin in Kharkhorin district, Övörkhangai province at the age of 8 or 9 and disrobed at the age of 16. He became a monk again in Shankhiin Baruun Khüree after the democratic changes.

The following interview was recorded with voice recorder on 14 April 2010 in Osor monk's yurt near the monastery with the assistance of a young monk. His memories illustrate Mongolian society in the early 20th century.

- When were you born?
- In 1921.
- In which year?
- In the year of the Dog.
- Were you a monk before 1937? When did you take ordination?
- I was very young, about 8 or 9 years old when I joined Baruun Khüree.
- In which district did you live?
- *Shaddüvlin aimag*.
- Did you learn in monastic schools?
- I did not belong to any monastic schools.
- Did you participate only in the ceremonies of the assembly hall?
- I learnt the texts of the daily chanting and the *Yerööl*. Then, the monastery closed.
- How did you spend a day?
- We gathered at 9am. There were not prescribed activities after the ceremonies. We could go to bed early or late at night.
- How many times a day did you have drink and meal in the monastery?
- It depended on the given ceremony. We drank tea every day during the daily chanting in the assembly hall.
- What types of seasonal ceremonies did you hold in the assembly hall?
- The same as nowadays. Constant. On the 30th of the lunar month *Mandal shivaa*, the Fourfold *maṇḍala* offering to Tārā. On the 8th *Manaliin donchid*, the Thousand-fold offering to the Medicine Buddha, on the 15th the *Guhyasamāja Tantra*. These three were permanent monthly ceremonies.
- Did the monks perform the *Tsam* dance?
- They performed the *Tsam*. At present, we do not organize it.
- How many monks participated in it?
- *Tsam* had only a few participants in Baruun Khüree. It was performed together with the Maitreya procession. The Yellow Old Man, the White Old Man, the Deer at the eastern gate, and the Skeletons definitely participated in it. I do not remember everything as I was too young.
- Did black hat dancers dance in a circle?
- I do not remember them. I was young.
- Did the monastery possess livestock?
- Oh yes, a large number of livestock. It was called *Sangiin mal*, 'the livestock of the treasury' and consisted of plenty of livestock. *Sangiin mal* was only one of them; all the tantric and other monastic schools had their own livestock, and all districts, *Sangai*, *Shaddüv* also possessed livestock. Plenty of herds and flocks belonged to the *Sangiin mal*: cattle, sheep, goats, horses, as well as many yaks. I do not know the exact

location of the pasture, presumably the Khangai Range. As I was a child, I might mislead you.

- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- Well, I do not know that.
- Was he a reincarnation?
- He was definitely a reincarnation. Reincarnations know their previous and later rebirths. The previous incarnation of this incarnation was the reincarnation of a king. Then, he was reborn at our monastery. He did not act against others at all. He was a king in China, and was reborn at our monastery. That monk was unapproachable. He remembered all his previous lives. He was incomparable to us.
- Did itinerant monks often visit the monastery?
- Yes, itinerant monks wandered here. They wandered among the yurts in the countryside. I do not know its reason.
- Did they have a rucksack?
- Only small things. I have no idea. Itinerant monks walked using two sticks. Households did not pay much attention to them.
- Were there tantric practitioners as well?
- Of course. They lived in the countryside. They performed body-offering. People who gave up their yurts and households lived in the countryside.
- Were there *khandmaa* female practitioners as well?
- I do not know. Maybe not at all.
- Did Tibetan monks visit your monastery?
- Yes, always high-ranking monks. I do not remember too much as I was a child.
- Were there any cemeteries near here?
- No. There were no cemeteries. Corpses were put out in isolated places. At a place called Yas Khonkhor ['Bone Hollow'], behind this ash. Corpses were left there. I have no idea about their transportation. Perhaps oxen carts were used to take them from the monastery to that site.
- Did devotees and lay population also live in the monastery?
- We can say no. They lived outside of the monastery. They did not live inside the *goroo* circumambulation road that surrounded the monastery.
- Were there large prayer wheels in the monastic area?
- Yes, yes. There were four prayer wheels on the four sides. At the circumambulation road of the Maitreya procession. These were large prayer wheels. (Private talk.) Many families lived there. The monastery had eight *datsans*, but only the northern or upper temple complex has remained from them.
- How could these three temple buildings survive?

- Oh, the government ordered the temples' destruction. One of them was destroyed much later. They called it conversion. 1,000 *tögrög* had to be paid to modify it. 1,000 *tögrög* was worth a lot! *Bor Dendev guai* told me this story. A minister or representative arrived here and said that it had to be changed. However, the one on the edge remained intact.
- (Young monk: Do you mean that you had to pay tax to prevent its destruction?)
- Oh, how can I know it? I think not. Tax had to be paid at the very beginning. Later, it might have been cancelled. They confiscated and destroyed the temples of *Dood khüree* one by one. These were mainly wooden constructions. Maybe the *Shariliin dugan* relics' temple was made of brick, Chinese blue bricks.
- Did the surviving temple buildings remain empty until 1990? What were their function?
- Empty. One of them functioned as storage for various items. A warehouse. The middle one was empty and open. People talked that the 'Mares are tethered in the Enormous White', and the nearest one was for making raw materials. They operated with these reasons.
- Was it a cooperative?
- There were cooperatives and trade. Our warehouse was a store. A large yurt was put up here as an office of the cooperative. The monastery had a monastic school for epistemological studies. It was destroyed, and a cooperative, a trade house, an office was built on its foundations. Later, the office was demolished and a yurt temple was built.
- How did you renovate these buildings in 1990 to function as temples again?
- They have renovated the nearest ones recently. Actually, renovation did not take place at all. Only the central one has been renovated recently. (Young monk: The eastern and western temples remained without renovation. The central temple building was revived in 2000. Its floor and roof were missing.)
- When did you leave the monastery? Did you join the army or become a herder? What happened to you?
- Oh, I joined the army and spent there a year. Generally, I was a herder.
- (Young monk: Did you go to the border at Dornod province? Where did you serve as a soldier?)
- In Ulaanbaatar. At the military repair yard. (Young monk: He repaired vehicles.)
- When did you go to Ulaanbaatar?

- In 1942. I was released in 1946. I worked there for four years. I repaired the motors of cars. I was a worthy man. They did not appreciate me. There were no repairmen. They did not know anything. Drivers came from the countryside without any knowledge of repair. It is said that they had to circle a pillar at Gandan by car, and were enrolled. They did not know anything about mechanics. There were few cars at that time. Very few.
- What happened to the monks of the monastery?
- I do not know. I left the monastery before its closure and lived in the countryside. I do not know anything about it being pulled down. People talked about taking this and that from there. I have heard such stories. They arrested several monks and murdered the majority.
- Did the surviving monks hold ceremonies in secret during socialism?
- Well, they held ceremonies on a small scale. Monasteries did not exist at that time. Former monks used to hold rituals in a yurt. Young monks initiated a handicraft cooperative here. It was founded on the northern hill of *Dood khüree* and young ex monks started to work there. They did many types of work there. For example, they produced equipment for camels, also products for selling in the countryside.
- Did trade exist before 1937?
- No, there was no trade at all. Only after I returned from the army.
- What type of currency was in use?
- Well, it changed many times. Banknotes. Also round, old *tögrög*, a very nice one. We used *tögrög* as currency.
- Is it true that monks used to wrestle?
- I do not know, but I think so. Oh, there were small *Naadam* festivals. The *Naadam* at the *ovoo*. Some monks wrestled when venerating Ulaan Khalzan as far as I remember. I did not spend a long period of time in the monastery. I used to spend the summer in the countryside, and I lived in the monastery only in winter. What could so many monks do there? They wrestled at the *ovoo* veneration's *Naadam* festival. Monks were good at games, they could wrestle. They themselves wrestled.
- Were the temple buildings made of brick or wood?
- The buildings of *Dood khüree* were mainly wooden constructions. Here [upper part] brick dominated. *Battsagaan*, the assembly hall of Baruun Khüree and other temples were comprised of large wooden constructions. I have heard that people demolished them and took the planks away. My father was an ordinary man, but did not take any planks. Others said, 'Let's take them away', but my father said, 'I won't take away any pieces of a temple building'. He was right.

- Where did they produce bricks?
- Well, brick ‘factories’ operated there. I mean the Chinese had a *baqyuu*, where they prepared blue bricks. It operated in the southern slope, behind the pass.
- Have you visited other monasteries?
- No, no. I went once to [Erdene] Zuu. It was a crowded place. Had many inhabitants, households. It had (a) narrow street on which maybe oxen carts travelled. From the south. The monastery had four gates. One could enter in the south with a horse and go out in the north. *Tsam* took place in front of the assembly hall, which sat where the yurt of Khishigt sits at present. It was called the assembly hall. Zuu had a great *Tsam* called *Ikh tsam*, also known as *Zuugiin tsam*. A small-scale dance, the offering dance called *Takhiliin tsam* was also performed. I do not remember details. The *Zuugiin sor* was a marvelous event! Countless people gathered for the *Tsam* performance. Zuu was the real site of *Tsam* dances. Only a few characters acted in my Baruun Khüree.
- Is the *stūpa* fence surrounding Erdene Zuu the old wall or a rebuilt wall?
- It is the old wall, which has been repaired. Some parts were added, but generally it is the same, old wall. The *stūpa* and others were scrappy, so later were repaired or added to. All in all, it is the same wall.
- The remaining three Zuu temples of Erdene Zuu monastery function as museum halls. Did they also function as warehouses during socialism?
- They house Buddhist statues. Actually, I guess that it was an empty warehouse. I do not know much about Zuu. Actually, I do not know much about anything. The only thing I remember is that I arrived at the courtyard of an unknown monk and I wanted to return home to the countryside. I did not have other thoughts. I was homesick. I was 8 or 9 years old.
- How old were you when you disrobed?
- Well, I was 14, 15 or 16 years old. They did not ask us if we were monks or lay people when they registered us in the army. I was a country boy. I have heard that the monks of this monastery were forced to disrobe. I did not participate in it. However, men had to join the army at the age of 18. It was not important if someone had been a monk before or not. The monastery was destroyed. I did not know much about the temples. I did not enter there. Once I entered the epistemological monastic school. There were other schools as well: medical, astrologic, and tantric.
- Did Shamanism also spread in former times?
- I think shamans did not live here. It seems that there weren’t any shamans. Shamans lived near the Lake Khövsgöl. However, in former times

there lived a shaman, who obsessed people. A monk of our monastery defeated him. He went there and defeated the shaman. It happened in former times. People used to cite it. A monk went to suppress the most famous shaman who had a sacred bull. He crushed it and annihilated the shaman's curses. He could not defeat the monk. Finally, the monk pacified him saying 'Call all your disciples.' There was a big drum. Finally, the monk pacified the shamans.

- Have you heard about the Ministry of Ecclesiastic Affairs?
- I do not know if it existed here. I have heard about the Ministry of Ecclesiastic Affairs that existed in Urga. Here only administration
- Did people have rosaries?
- Certainly. In large number. The most eminent monk here was our *Lam* called Luvsantseveenravdan: the head of Baruun Khüree. You have to study his biography.
- What happened to the bones of deceased people? Did the monks make *damaru* or other musical instruments from human bones?
- Oh, I do not know that. Certainly *damaru* and others were made. Smiths made them.
- Were they made of human bones?
- Yes, *ganlin* bone trumpets were made from the thigh-bones of 18 year old deceased girls. Such bone is scarce, very difficult to find. Tantric practitioners found and used them. They recited their sacred texts there and departed on horses. It was not easy work at all.
- Did the monks use to ride horses or go on foot?
- They rode horses. Vehicles were rare. Lay people in the *khüree* and people in the countryside rode oxen. They saddled oxen and rode them. So, they rode horses. Other means of transport were rare. High-ranking people used sedan chair, carriage or horse carts. Shaded carts. Mongolia was under-developed at that time. If they went far, servants accompanied them and carried many things.
- How did the yurts look? Were dairy products and meals similar to the current ones?
- There is not much to tell about it. Odd things. Regarding the fire, monks of the *khüree* burnt various things. In the middle of the yurt was the hearth. They placed the hearth on bricks. The old monks of the *khüree* did that. I heated the stove of an old monk who I lived with for some months. It is difficult to explain it. Ash was placed under the stove. The yurt was full of dust. Smoke looked like nice paint. Well, rain was a big issue. What can I say about such a dwelling? We cannot compare it with the palaces of kings. When I returned home from the army in 1946 or

1947, I wished to dismantle the poles of the yurt, and clean the smoke hole and others. It was a miserably work. Cleaning the stomach with a large knife. It is impossible to compare current circumstances with the old ones. Cars were not in use. The livestock were skittish, horses ran away. Camels did not live in the vicinity. Camels were rare in my living place. Thus, the livestock skittish because of a camel or a car, ran away and disappeared. Dondog *guai* was tethering his horse when a car arrived. He could not tether his horse, and even lost his long rope for tying livestock and used for keeping grazing around during this procedure. It was nowhere in the morning. It was impossible to say whether it had been lost. Finally, the man responsible for lassos found it and brought it back. This is skittishness.

- Which banner did this area belong to?
- It was Tüsheet Khan Province. Its banners included large areas. For instance, the banner of the *Dalai gūn*, the [*Ilden*] *beil* and others. All had they own areas in Tüsheet Khan Province. Banners had large extension. Such as districts today. [*Ilden*] *beiliin khoshuu* banner and its monastery stood in the west, near Khujirt Gol. It had a narrow piece of land by the river, Tsenkheriin Gol in the north, south of Tsagaan Süm. My birthplace belonged to *Tüsheet khan*'s area.
- Did nobles and aristocrats use to travel via the monastery?
- Oh, I do not know that. Only famous saints and other high-ranking monks travelled here.

Sodnomjamts Norjmaa
(1919–2008/9)



S. Norjmaa monk, 2007

Sodnomjamts Norjmaa was born in 1919, in the year of the Sheep. He joined Rivogejigandansaddüvlin Khiid in Ölziit district (Yargaitiin Süm, Gandanlegshiddashchoilin) at the age of 5, and Yesön Züiliin Khüree in Yesönzüil district at the age of 8, where he lived until the age of 20. These monasteries stood once in the area of the current Övörkhangaï province. Norjmaa *guai* became a monk again in 1990, and participated in the revival of his old monastery in 1991, in the year of the Rabbit. Though he lived in Ulaanbaatar, he used to visit the revived monastery annually.

We documented the ruins of these monasteries within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project in summer, 2007. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder on 4 September, 2007 in Norjmaa monk's home in Ulaanbaatar. The recording is of extremely poor quality.

- When were you born?
- In 1919.
- In which year?
- In the year of the Sheep.
- What is your surname?
- Sodnomjamts.
- When did you take ordination?
- When I was 5.
- Which monastery did you belong to?
- First, I became a monk at Rivogej Gandanshaddüvlin (!) monastery in the present area of Ölziit district. I joined Yesön Züiliin Khiid at the age of 8, and I lived there until the age of 20. I joined the army when I was 20. I was not a monk anymore. However, I became a monk again some time ago.
- How many monks lived in your monastery in Ölziit district?
- Two monasteries stood there close to each other, at about a distance of 1 km. The western one, called Baruun Süm, had 100 monks and the eastern one, called Züün Süm, had 1,000 monks.
- Is it the same as Yargaitiin Süm?
- Yes, Yargaitiin Süm. The monastery at Yesönzüil was called *Dashgungaadejidlin*. The Baruun Süm had 100 registered monks. The northern one [Züün Süm] had about 1,000 registered monks.
- Who led the monastery?
- The head bore the *lovon* title. He was a reincarnation. He was the Baruun Süm's reincarnation, the *khuvilgaan lam*. He was my relative. The head in Yesönzüil's monastery was Dendev *lovon*. After him, Khad became the *lovon*. Then, Choi *lovon*. There were about three or four *lovons*.
- How many temples stood there?
- Baruun Süm had four temples. Züün Süm had only one temple.
- Was that single temple a wooden or a clay construction?
- The temples were made of clay, stone, and brick.
- Can you specify the four temples that belonged to the monastery at Yesönzüil?

- In Yesönzüil stood the assembly hall, the Maitreya Temple, the *Örgöön dugan* yurt palace temple, and the Tārā Temple. These four.
- Were there *stūpas*?
- Yes, in the east. That temple had a large *stūpa*, which was fenced-off and had a *jas* financial office at the gate.
- Is it what we call ‘the old *stūpa* of Zanabazar’?
- Yes, that was consecrated by Zanabazar.
- Were there eight *stūpas* situated to its north?
- Yes, eight *stūpas*. They exist even now. They were rebuilt last year or a year before. Eight *stūpas*. They were destroyed and
- Was that a place of worship or a temple with ceremonies?
- Both.
- Were ceremonies held there on a daily basis?
- No, not every day. It had only six monks: the *lovon*, a disciplinarian, a chanting master, a tea maker, a caretaker, and an accountant. They performed the daily chanting.
- What kind of ceremonies did the monks hold in Baruun Süm?
- Daily chanting. *Khangal* was held in winter and also in summer. It means that the monks performed the Ten Protectors’ ceremony both in summer and in winter. It was called *Jasaa khural*. Also *Naidan chogo*, *Jamgan chogo*, *Lamiin chogo*, *Dörvön chogo* (?), *Dar’ ekhiin tsangirlakh* (?) Also the daily chanting
- Did the monks hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Certainly.
- Did Maitreya procession take place in the monastery?
- We organized the Maitreya procession. The latest a small *Tsam* and Maitreya When the revolution started that Maitreya with a large vehicle surrounded by many people on both sides
- When did it happen?
- In 1938. Then, the monastery was burnt down.
- Was *Kanjur* circumambulation held as well?
- Yes, indeed.
- Was it a *Kanjur* written in black ink? What type of *Kanjur* did you have?
- *Kanjur* written in black ink.
- Which deity protected the monastery?
- Begtse. The northern monastery, Yargaitiin Süm had Mahākāla.
- Were there *stūpas* in the Baruun Süm?
- There was a *stūpa* there. Actually, there were three *stūpas*.
- At present, there is a new *stūpa*.

- The old temple building was spacious, but the new one is very small. We could not reconstruct the old temple.
- Did *Chö* practitioner monks live there who performed body-offering rituals?
- No. A *Chö* temple called *Gandan*..... stood at the old *stūpa* The abbot of that monastery was also performing the body-offering.
- Did only monks live in the monastery? Was there a lay population, too?
- Only monks.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks venerate?
- Monks venerated a small *ovoo* north of the eight *stūpas*. The monks of Yargait venerated Baruun Khairkhan.
- Did the monastery have livestock?
- The monastery had tremendous livestock, herded in the countryside. All of them were confiscated and
- Zanabazar's birthplace is on the right bank of the river. Did the monastery move to the western hillside?
- the birthplace of Zanabazar
- Were there monks with *gavj* degree?
- My master, Choi *lovon* had *gavj* degree.
- Were there any fully ordained monks?
- Apart from the *Khailen* oath-taking period clay Buddhist statue three years in the *Khailen* oath-taking period. 37 monks held it in a certain year, 26 monks in another year, and then 17 monks participated in it. These fully ordained monks used to come from the countryside. They did not live permanently in the monastery, but came from the countryside only for the *Khailen* period.
- Where did the monks live in the monastery?
- Always in yurts in fenced-off courtyards. The monks who came from the countryside for the *Khailen* oath-taking period always lived in the monastery.
- Did the monks of Yargaitiin Süm also hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Of course, there is no difference. They also held the *Khailen*.
- One of the temples of the Baruun Süm in Yargait has been rebuilt. Please specify the location of the other three temple buildings. Can you draw a sketch of their locations?
- On the western site were four temples. Today, only one temple stands there. There is also a wall fence. of a size of 12 m. on the four sides There is a gate The current temple was built on the foundation of the assembly hall, which was a spacious

temple building. on its two sides stood the Maitreya Temple and the Temple of the One-thousand Buddhas of the Good Eon. In front of it. If we try to draw the sketch of the arrangement of the temples of the Baruun Khiid in Yesönzüil, this is the fence. Inside of the fence stood the *Khailen* (?) Temple here, and the Maitreya Temple there. This one was the assembly hall, and this was the Maitreya Temple. A large yurt called *örgöö* stood in front of the Tārā Temple.

- Where is the current temple on this drawing?
-
- Was the old *stūpa* called *Övgön suvarga* on its western side?
- On the east
- When did the operation of the monastery cease?
- It operated until 1938. All of them were destroyed. The army came in 1937 and destroyed it.
- Were you able to preserve any old Buddhist objects of worship?
- We could not. Nothing has remained. Everything was burnt. People Begtse, the main protector of the monastery. It is now in Ulaanbaatar. I do not know. All statues were burnt. Only that one is preserved in Ulaanbaatar.
- How many monks participated in the revival?
- There were four old men in 1989: Dambaa *guai*, Rinchen *guai*, Baldan *guai*, and Tserenjav *guai*. All of them have passed away by now.
- Did you restart services on a daily basis?
- Monks held ceremonies in summer. *Sakhius* ceremony was held in winter.
- Manaljav monk revived Yargaitiin Süm in 1991. Who else?
- Manaljav *guai*, me and Tserendorj *guai*.

Mönkhnyam Menddavaa (1920–?)



M. Menddavaa monk, 2009

Mönkhnyam Menddavaa was born in 1920, in the year of the Hen. He joined Sain Noyon Khanii Khüree also known as Uyangiin Khüree in Uyanga district, Övörkhangaï province when he was 6 years old. It was the monastery of one of the four Khalkha *khans*, the *Sain noyon khan* and had a Tibetan *Gachin* master in permanent residence.

Menddavaa *guai* became a monk again in 1991. He was the disciplinarian in Lamrim Datsan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. We interviewed him with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006 and 2007, and documented the ruins of his old monastery in 2007 within the framework of the *Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries* project. At that time he was the monk of the assembly hall of Gandantegchenlin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. Another interview is avail-

able at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 18 September, 2009 in Menddavaa monk's home in Ulaanbaatar.

- When did you take ordination?
- I was 5 when I joined Uyangiin Khüree.
- Did it have other names?
- Sain Noyon Khanii Khüree. Sain Khanii Khüree.
- How many monks belonged to the monastery?
- About 3,000 or 4,000 monks. I do not remember exactly.
- What types of monastic schools did it have?
- An Epistemological Temple. The assembly hall called *Ikh dugan* or *Tsogchin dugan*, the Temple of Buddhist Philosophy, the Medicine Buddha Temple, the Kālacakra Temple, and the Tantric Temple. Moreover, each *sum* territorial units had a temple: *Janchivlin dugan*, *Jimbilen dugan*, *Baruun dugan*, *Züün dugan*, *Dandarlingiin dugan*, *Nanslangiin dugan*.
- Where were the *stūpas*?
- On the four sides of the monastery. Four large *stūpas* stood there: the western *stūpa*, the eastern *stūpa*, the northern *stūpa*, and the southern *stūpa*. These included more *stūpas*. For instance, the northern *stūpa* consisted of five or six *stūpas*. The western *stūpa* consisted of three *stūpas*. Monks and devotees used to venerate these *stūpas* by circling them. (Private talk.)
- Where did the *Tsam* take place?
- Regarding the *Tsam*, two dances were held in the monastery: one in summer and one in winter. Concerning the winter one, monks held the *Yerööl* ceremony in winter for several days. Its other name is *Molom*. Monks recited sacred texts. It ended on the 15th of the Lunar New Year. The 15th day of the lunar month has a beautiful, white full moon. Several butter lamps were lit. The artisans, who used to create various items prepared different offering cakes from flour and oil: offering cakes in the image of a vehicle, and a horseman. Monk artists crafted various such cakes. Devotees arrived to venerate the offering cakes that night. The *Tsam* performance took place on the next day with the participation of about 100 *Tsam* dancers. Devotees arrived from the countryside to watch this Maitreya *Tsam* on the 15th day, and then returned home. So, the winter *Tsam* was held during the *Molom yerööl* festival. In summertime another ceremony, the *Büteel* took place where monks recited *maṇi* prayers continuously. They recited Avalokiteśvara's sacred texts. Avalokiteśvara's calling was recited. Non-stop for seven days. Mares grazed around the

monastery and kumis was abundant in summer. Kumis was abundant at the *Büteel* ceremony in big vessels. Behind the main hall was a pitcher as large as this room full of kumis. Large bowls. This cup is nothing compared to them. Monks drank kumis in this quantity.

- Did the monks organize the Maitreya procession?
- Maitreya procession took place on the next day. The Maitreya procession took place in summer, after the *Büteel* ceremony. First, the *Büteel* ceremony, and then the Maitreya procession. The Maitreya procession was a remarkable event. You can see Maitreya's image on this wall, next to Buddha Śākyamuni. [He shows it on his home altar.] We pray for the coming of Buddha Maitreya. He will come in the future. Buddha Śākyamuni lived in our world more than 2,000 years ago. Now, we hold the procession of Buddha Maitreya. It is also held annually at Gandan Monastery, but at least in Uyanga district. I do not know what exactly happens in other monasteries these days.
- Did *Kanjur* circumambulation take place there, too?
- Well, yes. The volumes of the *Kanjur* were permanently circumambulated. There were 108 large volumes of veneration. Have you seen the *Kanjur* at Gandan Monastery? People take the volumes in their arms. Faithful devotees made prostrations during the *Kanjur* circumambulation and the Maitreya procession, sometimes even kneeling down. People with the *Kanjur* went in front.
- Did Tibetan monks live in the monastery?
- Yes, my *Gachin* master. It is an old story. He ensured the well-being of the *Sain noyon khan* and the whole monastery by reciting sacred texts.
- Were the assembly hall and the Main Temple one and the same building or two different temples?
- It was called Main Temple (*Gol süm*). The large western temple, the central temple, and the Serfs were situated there. All of them built large temples and held ceremonies.
- What about the monks who performed body-offering rites? Tantric practitioners?
- I have heard that they practiced it in the countryside. It was not possible to hold body-offering rites in the monastery. Well, it was not forbidden. It is normal. If someone dies, his soul is not leaving, thus cannot fully die. The corpse of such a person does not disappear, but remains. Old burial differed from present-day customs. Cemeteries did not exist in the western sense. Corpses were not placed in coffins under the ground, but were put on surface at a determined site. The day and time of placing them out were determined. Everything happened according to the sacred texts,

even the determination of the proper time and day. This was the custom. People used to hold these body-offering rituals for the rapid departure of the soul. *Chö* means cutting.

- Which direction was this place situated?
- Do you mean the cemetery? We had a special place afar called the Place of Relics for the high ranking monks. Monks were placed there. However, ordinary monks like us were placed to a site called Shiveenii Övör, in the south. The deceased were put out there in a primitive way: the corpse was taken sometimes on a cart, a goat cart. It happened accordingly.
- Where was the waste dump of the monastery?
- Are you asking about household waste? On the edge of the monastery. We placed household waste at the edge of the monastery, never inside. We collected waste in a large container and mostly the young monks carried it to the waste dump.
- Did brick burning kilns operate in the vicinity of the monastery?
- Yes, sure. In the south. People produced bricks there.
- Did Chinese or Mongolian people work there?
- Chinese. Finally, Mongols also worked there. The majority of people did not work. The brick was of a very good quality. The old, earthen building was replaced with red brick. Actually, not red brick, but grey. Blue. These bricks have remained even today thanks to their good quality.
- Did traders live there? Chinese merchants with stores?
- A lot. Many Chinese stores ran operations.
- Were they situated near the River Ongi?
- No. Shiveenii Övör is south of the monastery. Chinese lived there. Many stores operated there: Khishigt's store, Dashdondog's store, and others. These were all Chinese stores. Large courtyards with tall fences, it was easy to enter. Goods arrived there from the south. Shiveenii Övör is in the south. The Chinese men who traded with the monks and rural people lived in these courtyards. Let's imagine that you want the trade with me. You bring sheep skin, fox fur, or wolf skin. You can place everything that you have brought in my courtyard and I can exchange them for articles, without malice, without defrauding. In autumn, the people from the countryside brought what they had, and a caravan with several camels took those goods away on 20–30 packed camels. The caravan took away all the traded goods including furs and various other things. A huge amount of different things. They left for Janchuu. Maybe not to Beijing, but Janchuu, Jindi, Bugat, which were smaller cities than Beijing. Also Khökhkhot and Ugaat. The caravan left with people who led the caravan for a month. The Chinese greeted the caravan when they reached their

remote destination, and unloaded the cargo in a courtyard. They watered and fed the camels who had a rest. Then, people packed the camels again with every necessity, including silk, tussah silk, cotton, drilling coat, boots, combs for women, coral, mirrors, saddle cloth for men, whips and other necessities of horsemen. The caravan brought these commodities back to Mongolia. When the caravan arrived back to the local store, traders gave receipts and sold the goods to the local public. They gave what they had to [purchase order]. Trade happened in this way.

- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- Certainly, there was an abbot.
- What was his name?
- They were my masters. My master was the highest ranking monk of the monastery. I preserve his photograph. He was a reincarnation: the Tibetan *Gachin* master. Can you see that black and white photograph above the photo of that child? (He shows a photograph at his home altar.) Colour photographs did not exist at that time. It is him! He was the head of the monastery. The heads were educated, learned, and skilled monks. Stalin broke up everything. He destroyed everything. He slaughtered monks and other inhabitants.
- When did it happen?
- In 36 or 37. The situation was awfully difficult and restricted. We had to follow the Russians. We could not have anyone else. We could not trade with anybody other than the Russians. We could not make contracts with any other countries other than Russia. We did not have independence. We sent our goods in only that direction, all raw materials. The livestock on foot. It was like that. What I told you is history.

Regden Perenleijamts (1922–2011)



R. Perenleijamts monk, 2010

Regden Perenleijamts was born in 1922, in the year of the Dog. He took ordination at the age of 8 in Lu(u) Güinii Khüree Tarvachenbuulin in Battsengel district, Arkhangai province. He disrobed in the 1930s, but turned a monk again after the democratic changes.

The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 6 August, 2010 in Perenleijamts monk's yurt in the centre of Battsengel district. Tserensugar, librarian of Tsetserleg city assisted the interview, and the informant's spouse and son were also present.

- What is your name?
- My name is Regden Perenleijamts.
- When were you born? In which year?
- I was born in 1922, in the year of the Dog.
- How old were you when taking ordination?
- I participated in ceremonies first at the age of 8.
- In which monastery did you live?
- Luu Güinii Khüree. The monastery called Luu Güinii Tarvachenbuulin.
- Can you provide some details on the monastery? When was it founded?
- I do not know it exactly. It was an old monastery, about 300 years old.
- How many monks did it have?
- About 600.
- Was *Lu(u) gūin* a lay person?
- He was a lay person, the head of the banner called *Luu gūinii khoshuu* in Sain Noyon Khan Province.
- Who was the head of the monastery?
- The *shunlaiv lam*. I cannot recall his name.
- How many temples comprised the monastery?
- Eight.
- What kind of temples?
- First of all, the philosophy school. The assembly hall called *Chogchin*, the medical monastic school, the Vairocana Temple, the tantric temple called *Agva*, the temple of the Holy Object of Worship, the Temple of the Tutelary Deity, and a new temple.
- A complete temple building has remained intact. Which temple was it?
- It is the tantric temple called *Agva*.
- Also a damaged temple stands in the east.
- That was the Temple of the Tutelary Deity.
- It seems that south of these two buildings, next to the school, there stood another temple once. Which temple was it?
- The assembly hall. The pavilion of the assembly hall have survived. The assembly hall stood behind it. It was the pavilion of the assembly hall.
- Where was the monastic philosophy school?
- It stood next to the Temple of the Tutelary Deity. A part of the Temple of the Tutelary Deity has survived. The monastic philosophy school stood next to it.
- What about the medical monastic school?
- Its foundation has remained. That was east of the assembly hall.
- Where was the Vairocana Temple?
- South of the *Agva* Temple.

- Please determine the location of the Holy Object of Worship?
- That was situated north of the new temple.
- Did all of them look like the remaining temple building, built in Tibetan style?
- No. The other temples did not have levels. They were single-storey buildings.
- Were there any wooden constructions?
- Yes, the Vairocana Temple was made of wood.
- Were all the other temples built of Chinese bricks?
- Yes. Their walls were made of Chinese bricks.
- Did a brick burning kiln operate in the vicinity?
- There were not any brick burning kilns.
- Was the monastery fenced-off?
- No, it was open.
- Did a *goroo* circumambulation road surround the monastery?
- Some temples had *goroo* circumambulation paths. For instance, the monastic philosophy school and the assembly hall had such paths.
- Were there *stūpas*?
- *Stūpas*? Certainly. (Laughing.) You can see a *stūpa* on the east side of the active temple. It was built on the foundation of an old *stūpa*.
- Were there *stūpas* also in the hillside?
- There was a *stūpa* in the northern hillside. It is rebuilt.
- Did the monks perform the *Tsam* dance?
- Yes, they performed the *Tsam*.
- When?
- In summer. There is a Buddha called Maitreya. *Tsam* dance was performed when the Maitreya procession took place around the monastery. *Tsam* dance circled together with the Maitreya procession in the middle month of summer.
- How many figures appeared in the *Tsam*?
- A lot! The Ten Protectors with masks and boots. The Black-hat dancers wearing round, golden hats surrounded them in a circle. Maybe 40. The Yellow Old Man. You can see a similar Old Man sometimes on the television. Its image might be available, too. An Old Man. He had two attendants: dancers with heads like skulls. The two *Ācārya* masters performed another dance wearing black and white masks. Khashin Khan was an elderly man with many children. There were also two lions, which had large masks and two people got into its costume.
- Did the Deer and the Bull perform movements, too?

- Oh yes. There were dancers called the Deer and the Bull. Also, about 20 or 30 children called butterflies performed a dance. They wore special masks.
- Was the *Sor* offering burnt?
- It was burnt in summer. The monks prepared the sand *maṇḍala* from various powders after circling the *Agva* Temple seven times. They recited sacred texts, and finally offered the sand *maṇḍala* at the brook or river accompanied by many people.
- Was it like a *maṇḍala*?
- Yes, they prepared a *maṇḍala*, and then...
- Please specify the butterfly dance. Was it performed during the *Tsam* dance?
- Yes, at the same time.
- What is the reason of its name ‘butterfly’?
- I do not know. It was called butterfly. Several flags adorned their heads, on the masks.
- Did the monks hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Monks used to hold the *Khailen*. For a month.
- Did they hold it in the assembly hall?
- It took place in the monastic philosophy school. They held the *Khailen* for a month, and then left to the countryside for a couple of days. They went to the countryside after the long period of the *Khailen*.
- Did monks use to hold the *Nügnee* fasting ritual?
- They held the *Nügnee*.
- Please specify the ceremonies that took place at the Lunar New Year.
- Oh yes, monks held the New Year ceremony in the assembly hall. The monastic philosophy school was a temple with provisional ceremonies, debates, exams, taking the *gavj* and other exams, having religious discussions. The assembly hall was the place purely for recitations.
- Do you remember the handbook used in the monastic philosophy school? Was it the *Günchin igchaa*, the *Vanchin igchaa* or another?
- Maybe the *Günchin igchaa*. It was about philosophy. [*Ser igchaa*.]
- Which deity was the main protector of that temple?
- *Yadam*, the tutelary deity. A separate room housed this special object of worship.
- Was it *Yansan yadam*?
- *Yansan yadam*. Also *Hayagrīva yadam*. There were two tutelary deities.
- Which deity was the main protector deity of the monastery itself?

- Vajrapāṇi. Generally, Vajrapāṇi was the main protector. There were several sculptures. The statues of the Ten Protectors and others. Antique statues.
- Could monks take the *maaramba* medical exam in the monastery?
- Yes, *agramba* tantric exam and *maaramba* medical exam existed.
- What was the main object of worship in the Temple of the Holy Object of Worship?
- Vajrapāṇi. He stood in the centre, but all the other protectors and deities were available there as well.
- Did the monastery have saints and reincarnations?
- That monk had passed away before I joined the monastery. Monks used to talk about this master and that reincarnation, but he was not alive when I joined the community.
- Did the monks use to venerate *ovoos*?
- They venerated Lūngiin Ovoo in the north and Khairkhan in the south. Also Öndör Ovoo in the north.
- Did the monks take water from the River Tamir? From where did they take water?
- From the River Tamir.
- Where was the household waste deposited?
- There were small heaps in the *khüree*. Waste dumps sat on all four sides of the *khüree* and monks could deposit household waste only there. There was not as much waste as today. Only dust and bones. There were few articles, so little household waste. Ash, dust and such other. There was no household waste in the current sense.
- Where did the monks come from? Did they come from the area of that given banner?
- From here and there. Another *khüree* called Ariin Khüree was located in the north. Sometimes monks came from there to join our ceremonies. Another *khüree* called Züün Khüree sat at Ulaan Chuluu. Sometimes monks visited our monastery, even coming from there.
- Were there any monks who came from Tibet?
- I do not know. We did not know about it.
- Did all the temples have a financial office?
- Yes, all temples had a financial office.
- With livestock?
- With livestock. Livestock was always separated.
- Where did the monks live? Were there *aimag* districts for monks?

- Monks lived in courtyards surrounding the centre with the temples. They lived in their own yurts and buildings in plank courtyards around the temples.
- Did large prayer wheels exist?
- Four sizeable prayer wheels stood on the four sides of the *khüree*. These were large. Had a roof like pavilions. They were almost as large as a small yurt.
- Were there any printing houses where monks printed books?
- I do not know about carvings. There were blocks, wooden blocks. These blocks have remained and are available in the temple building.
- Which was the newest temple building here?
- I might not have mentioned to you the one situated behind the active, new temple building. It was a *datsan* called *Gendenpeljee*. That was the newest temple. I remember its construction. I know how it was built.
- When was it built?
- When I was about 10 years old. A carpenter, Shonkhor *mujaan* directed the construction work.
- Did *Kanjur* circumambulation take place in the monastery?
- *Kanjur* was circumambulated. A large wooden yurt building called *Ganjuuriin örgöö* or the Yurt Palace of the *Kanjur* stood next to the monastic philosophy school. Monks performed the *Kanjur* ceremony and circumambulated its volumes in that yurt.
- Was this set of the *Kanjur* written in red or black?
- With black ink.
- In Mongolian or in Tibetan?
- In Tibetan.
- Apart from the *Kanjur*, was the set of the *Tanjur* also available?
- Yes, both of them.
- You have mentioned the *gavj* exam of philosophy. Did the monks take it annually?
- Monks could take the *gavj* exam once a year. It was possible to gain the *gavj* degree once a year.
- Have you heard about tantric practitioner monks?
- Yes, they practiced in the countryside near brooks to be *Chö* masters.
- Do you remember their names?
- No, I do not remember.
- Were there female practitioners as well?
- They were not. They were not known.
- Where was the platform calling the monks to gather for the ceremonies?
- Such a high platform stood next to the assembly hall.

- How did the monks spend their days?
- They studied and read the sacred books constantly. Many novices went to their masters to learn together. They studied Buddhist philosophy. Ceremonies were uninterrupted: the ceremony in the monastic philosophy school was constantly held. The chanting in the assembly hall was limited. The *Choimbrel* ceremony started in the assembly hall on the 1st day of the Lunar New Year and lasted for 16 days. The ceremony in the Temple of Philosophy was continual.
- What kind of ceremonies did the medical monastic school have?
- Monks held ceremonies there related to medical sciences.
- Which temple did you belong to?
- I participated in the ceremonies of the assembly hall and the Temple of Philosophy.
- How many classes did it have?
- 7, 8, or 9 classes.
- Where was the burial site of the monastery?
- Corpses were placed behind a ridge north of the centre.
- Did Chinese people live near the monastery? Can you talk about the Chinese stores?
- Yes, there were. There was a Chinese store located below, and two stores above. They came from China to trade here.
- When did the monastery close?
- At the time of the anti-revolutionaries, maybe in 1932. They arrested the monks and demolished the monastic sites after the revolution. Buddhist statues were buried and hidden; even the brass statues were taken away. I do not remember more as I was young, about 15 or 16 years old.
- Do you know anyone who was captured and later returned?
- Yes, there were some such monks. Young monks or children. But just a few.
- Were the monks arrested once or over more times?
- Maybe two times. They arrested the high-ranking monks in the beginning, and then their ‘partners’, rich herders living in the countryside with deep beliefs in the Buddha. It means two times.
- Who sentenced the monks?
- I have forgotten.
- Did they come from the Ministry of the Interior?
- Yes, they came from the Ministry of the Interior.
- What types of ceremonies took place in the three surviving temples?
- A great ceremony called *Doo* (?) used to take place in the large, square temple building. Next to the closest remained temple was the Temple

of Philosophy with ceremonies on a daily basis. In the large temple, the ceremony in honour of the Ten Protectors used to be held. The Temple of Philosophy provided the place for debates, relevant ceremonies, *gavj* and other exams, monks' standing up to debate in pairs, and other such events.

- Did these temple building form parts of a cooperative in 1940?
- I joined the army in 1940.
- How many years did you spend there?
- Five years, mainly in Ulaanbaatar.
- What kind of work did you do after discharge?
- I worked in the district centre. I was a superior, the vice governor of the district.
- Was the monastic tradition revived in 1990? How many monks of Lu(u) Güinii Khüree were alive at that time?
- We revived the monastic tradition in 1990. About 14 or 15 monks. All of them were old. I was almost the youngest one.
- In which temple did you hold the first ceremony in 1990?
- In the remaining pavilion. We restarted services there.
- What was its function before 1990?
- The museum of the school.
- What was the function of the remaining large temple building?
- Handicraft cooperative. Wood factory.
- Is there any object of worship that remained from the old Lu(u) Güinii Khüree?
- Yes, there are. Do you mean statues? There are.
- Are they venerated in the new, active temple?
- Yes. However, large statues have not remained at all. Large statues, brass statues were all taken away. None of them survived. Only small statues have remained.
- Old sacred texts should exist, too.
- Yes, there are old books.
- Is there any other old monk apart from you?
- No, I am the last one. No one else is alive.
- I met Dorjjantsan monk in Ulaanbaatar four years ago.
- Did you? We studied in the same philosophy class. We were classmates. He became a *gavj*, and I became a doctor.
- Do you know the reason of the name of the monastery: Tarvachenbuulin?
- I do not know. I have no idea. It might refer to merits.
- Did the monks of Zayaiin Khüree use to visit your monastery?

- Do you mean at that time? They used to come and participate in ceremonies here. It was said that the order of recited texts, the system of rites were similar to Zayaiin Khüree. The curricula of the monastic philosophy school, the medical monastic school and all the other schools were the same as in Zayaiin Khüree.
- Was *Luu gūn* himself also arrested?
- He died before that era.
- What is the reason of his name: *Luu gūn*?
- I do not know.
- You have mentioned the name of another monastery: Ariin Khüree. How many monks did it have?
- I have heard that it had about 100 monks.
- Is it the same site as Gūj Lamiin Khüree?
- Yes, that was Gūj Lamiin Khüree itself.
- Have you visited that monastery?
- No, I did not visit it when it was active. I visited only its ruins.
- Was it a small monastery?
- Small.
- How many temples did it have?
- I do not know as I have never visited it. I was a child.
- You also mentioned Zūn Khüree. Is it Zūn Bagiin Khüree?
- Yes, it is Zūn Bagiin Khüree.
- How many monks did it have?
- I have no idea. About 100. It was located 30 km from our monastery.
- How many temple buildings were there?
- I do not know.
- Have you heard about Orombiin Khiid?
- The monastery of *Orombo gegegen*? No, no.
- Did you participate in the revival of Zayaiin Khüree in 1990?
- I was there. All of us went there to participate in the opening ceremony. Every old monk participated in the first ceremony. Then, we came home and started our ceremonies here.
- Who was the abbot, the chanting master and the disciplinarian of the revived temple here?
- Well. (Informant's son: Choidar *guai* was the head.)
- Is the new temple active with daily chanting? Or is there only an offering preparer?
- (Informant's son: There is only one monk, Mashbat. There might be another monk, Otgonbaatar. [Ts. Otgonbayar.]
- Do you remember the famous monks of the monastery in your childhood?

- There were many famous monks with *gavj* degree and *tsorj* rank.
- What kind of ceremonies did you restart here in 1990? Daily chanting? Ceremonies in honour of the Dharma protectors?
- Daily chanting and ceremonies in honour of the Dharma protectors. We could revive only the daily chanting. We were not able to revive the tradition of the Temple of Philosophy.
- Did you restart the Maitreya procession?
- No, no, we could not restart that. We did not have equipment. We did not have anything.
- This area belonged once to *Lu(u) gūinii khoshuu* in Sain Noyon Khan Province, did it not?
- Exactly.
- Did Gūj Lamiin Khüree belong to *Tüshee gūniin khoshuu*?
- I have heard about Tüshee Gūnii Khüree, but I do not know its location.
- Please specify your exact place of residence inside the monastery.
- I lived in an enclosure situated in the south-western side of the square temple.
- Did you live alone or with your relatives?
- My older relative was a monk. I lived with him.
- Where were you born in Battsengel district?
- I was born in a place called Khönög.
- Do you remember foreigners other than Chinese? Russians or others?
- There were no other foreigners. Only a few Chinese people traded here.
- Were there Russians as well?
- No, there were not.
- What currency did you use? Banknotes or silver coins?
- There was currency, but scarce. Chinese bought wool and such things. Money was rare.
- Did people use to organize the *Naadam* festival?
- We held the *Naadam* festival. After the *ovoo* veneration we used to have a *Naadam*.
- Did monks wrestle?
- Some monks wrestled. Very few.
- What kind of games did novice children use to play?
- Actually, there was no time for playing. We were always learning. We read only the sacred texts.
- (Interpreter: Did the monks use to play shuttlecock?)
- Ceremonies were ceased and the monks disrobed. Afterwards, we played with shuttlecock, being bored. I also played that game.
- Did you chant sacred texts in secret after disrobing?

- Certainly. To oneself. However, monks did not hold ceremonies together. Ceremonies were not performed at all. (Private talk.) I am 89 years old now.
- Do you remember if yurts looked like they do today?
- Similar, but instead of a modern hearth, a three-legged hearth was in use.
- Did the monks use to ride horses?
- Of course, they rode horses when they went to the countryside. Cars did not exist.
- Were there any relay stations in this area?
- Perhaps not.

Shijir Tügj
(1923–2014/15)



Sh. Tügj monk, 2010

The Ööld man, Shijir Tügj was born in 1923. He joined Ööld Beisiin Khüree monastery in Ölzii district, Arkhangai province at the age of 10. He became a monk again in 2002 and was affiliated to Lamrim Datsan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar.

We interviewed Tügj monk with Zsuzsa Majer in 2009. Moreover, we interviewed him with Claire A. Whitaker twice in 2010 and asked for details about his old monastery as well as Buddhism during socialism.

Interview 1

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 3 November, 2010 in Lamrim Datsan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. Claire A. Whitaker's particular questions about the practice of Buddhism during socialism are included below with her kind permission.

- When were you born? In which year?
- Me? In 1923, in the year of the Mouse.
- In Arkhangai province?
- Yes, I was born in Ölziit district, Arkhangai province. Have you heard about Ööld Beisiin Khüree? (Private talk.) Luu Günii Khüree was situated in Battsengel district. Ööld Beisiin Khüree stood east of it.
- I will ask my own questions later. First, I would like to introduce you to this student. She came from the USA and conducts research on Buddhism during socialism. She speaks in English, but not in Mongolian. I will translate her questions for you. She would like to ask you some questions about socialism.
- All right.
- What is your surname?
- Shijir.
- When did you take ordination at Ööld Beisiin Khüree?
- I lived there for four years, from the age of 11 to 14.
- What kind of work did you do after disrobing? Did you join the army?
- Yes, I was a soldier for five years.
- What did you do after discharge?
- I worked for the railway.
- Now, I will translate her questions.
- (Certain questions and answers about socialism, which are not relevant here.) The Ministry of the Interior knew the names of Gandan's monks. Let's imagine that someone asked the monks to hold a service. The Ministry of the Interior became informed about who asked for the ceremony. In other words, the Ministry of the Interior knew everyone who visited Gandan to ask for religious service.
- (Claire: Did you yourself want to join the army or were you enrolled?)

- I was enrolled. According to the law, everyone had to fulfill compulsory military service at the age of 20.
- (Claire: Did the chanting of sacred texts become free again after 1990?)
- It became possible to meet other old ex monks, to recite sacred texts and talk about Buddhism. We could come to Gandan on feast days.
- When did you become a monk again?
- In 2002. (Questions and answers about socialism, which are not relevant here.)
- (Claire: What did your parents teach you about Buddhism?)
- My parents? There were many monks in my mother's family. Elderly people used to teach the young generation how to be good people. From one hand, they always told parables to illustrate how to love sentient beings. My parents loved and sympathized with the livestock very much. For example, if we ride a horse, its leg might become sore. From the other hand, my parents taught me to honour others. If you honour others, they will honour you. To curse, praise or insult others is senseless. So, they taught us to love, help, and honour others. First, they will also honour you. Second, they said to me, 'You are a man. You will visit many sites in your life. Help the exhausted, suffering, sorrowful people. It will have a result. They might return your benefit even in your next life.' That is the reason for compassion and loving kindness, to help other beings. For instance, the area where I grew up was abundant in water. The livestock weakened for spring. Some of them got stuck in the sludge on the bank of the river. We removed them. This kind of help of other beings bears fruit in this life and the next life. This is the karmic law. Therefore, we made efforts for democracy; also worked hard for a better life endeavoring even with the tormenting of our bodies. It will have a result. This body is a container only for this life. It means that someone who suffered a lot will be happy at the end. My parents used to tell me, 'Don't care about your body. Go and work hard! Have a worthy life!' I worked at the railway for 60 years without sparing my body. I worked hard without sparing my body following the advice of my parents and other relatives. I was decorated at the railway as the 'Hero of Work'. However, it happened during socialism. (Private talk.) If you visit my home I will show you some sacred items. I will invite you to see them. I don't regret anything. I have about ten or twenty sacred books.
- (Claire: How could you preserve them during socialism? Where did you hide them?)
- Some people took sacred items and hid them in rocks and caves. Many books vanished as they were burnt. My mother hid them in her box.

It was absolutely impossible for strangers to look into these personal items. The Buddhas and other objects of worship could not be displayed. (Private talk.)

- (Claire: Have you heard about people who held services in secret? Former monks or devotees?)
- Yes. Some women could hide sacred books and other items. They placed these items into their personal boxes. These boxes called ‘the box at the leg’ were at the end of their beds.
- Box at the leg?
- Yes. It contains women’s stockings, boots, trousers, and other personal belongings. Women keep it at the end of their beds. According to Mongolian customs, outsiders cannot even touch it. Therefore, women used to hide sacred items in their boxes as nobody could check their contents. (Private talk. The informant said that he had not heard about monks holding ceremonies in caves during socialism, but had heard about people who gave advice to devotees in secret.)
- Which deity do you worship? What kind of sacred books do you recite?
- Buddha Śākyamuni, the Green Tārā, the White Tārā, the Medicine Buddha, and *Goviin Ikhaa*. I recite the *Guhyasamāja Tantra* and the *Golden Light Sūtra* every day. Also the *Prayer of Good Actions*, the short version of the *Prajñāpāramitā*, and other texts. Well, I do not know the number of the monks of the 800 monasteries existed once who were slaughtered. Not everyone who was captured was executed. Some of them had to work on constructions. My master, who taught the sacred texts to me, was not executed. My dear master! He participated in the construction work of the First 10-year school. He spent ten years in prison, and then he returned home. (Private talk.)
- (Claire: Was it difficult to rebuild temples and find masters in the 1990s?)
- It happened powerfully. Mentioning my own experience, if you have visited Arkhangai, you might have seen the golden Jobo. We made the golden Jobo Buddha statue called *Altan Zuu* and offered it to Ölziit district in cooperation with my brother-in-law. Devotees venerate it annually on the 15th day of the Lunar New Year. They can see it and prostrate to it within the framework of the celebration of the New Year. There is also a small *Naadam* festival with horseracing and wrestling.
- In Ölziit district?
- In Ölziit district centre. I made that statue together with a man called Chimedbazar. With his son, Myaldar. Three of us.
- (Claire: Do you mean that you constructed a new golden Jobo statue?)

- Exactly. My old monastery had a golden Jobo statue. Two Jobo statues: a large one and a small one. Both of them have been lost. Someone stole them from the temple building. They have never turned up to this day.
- (Claire: Tibetan monks are very eminent. Some can fly, others can show magic. Do you believe in that?)
- Certainly, I believe. I will tell you a story to convince you to believe in their magical power. The *Gachin*, a Tibetan master lived in my monastery. A man wanted to test this master's abilities, so took a pebble from water, and another one from the top of the hill. He could not find a proper place of living. 'master, where can I settle down?' The countryside has several ravines and improper places. He said to the master, 'I have brought three pebbles from three different sites'. There was a pebble taken from water, one from the top of the hill, and one from a hole. The Tibetan master examined the stones one by one. He said about the one taken from the top of the hill, 'If your household fits this place, move there.' Regarding the stone taken from a hole he said, 'Your household won't fit inside this place. If so, move there.' 'This one was taken from the river. It is clear that it is an improper place of living.' That man wanted to test the Tibetan master, so he had brought the three pebbles. How can someone who listened and saw such things not believe in Tibetan masters? (Private talk.) When I was young, the nobleman of our area had two wives. It was impossible for ordinary people. (Private talk.)
- What did devotees use to offer?
- If they venerated a given Buddha, they prepared the prescribed meals and beverage. These differed. (Private talk.)

Interview 2

Tügj monk invited Claire A. Whitaker and me to visit his home. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder in his flat on 17 November, 2010.

- Were there *örtöö* relay stations near your monastery?
- It might happen in the following way. Let's imagine that I have five or ten horses. If I have ten horses, I can assign two horses to fulfill the *örtöö* service. For a month.
- For a month?
- From Ölziit to Battsengel, from Battsengel to Bayan-Ulaan, etc. Or to the north, to Khaikhhan. To Ögii in the south. If someone had to travel, they

asked me. If a man was requested from the district centre to accompany him, he went. Phones were not in use at that time. If someone was looking for someone, other people were sent to inform him. From Battengel to the south to *Tamiriin ulaan khoshuu*. From *Tamiriin ulaan khoshuu* to Ögii. Then, from Ögii to Gurvanbulag. It was possible to travel even to Ulaanbaatar via the horse relay stations.

- Was *Orombo geegen* a Tibetan or a Mongolian monk?
- Tibetan.
- Which was his monastery?
- Deed Khüree. As I told you before, Deed Khüree was called Orombiin Khüree. He was a Tibetan monk. Even my own monastery had a Tibetan monk with *Gachin* title.
- *Gachin*?
- *Orombiin geegen*'s monastery had a few monks. Only ruins have remained there. Have you seen it when going to Ögii? It is north of [Lake] Ögii. Foundations of buildings are visible there.
- Both Deed Khüree and Dood Khüree did exist once?
- Exactly.
- In which language did *Orombiin geegen* speak? Did he speak Mongolian?
- Yes, he spoke Mongolian.
- What is the meaning of '*orombo*'?
- It is a Tibetan word, which might mean 'rank'.
- Did he come from Lhasa or from Kumbum Monastery? What kind of person was he?
- I do not know.
- Are there any other monks from your old monastery apart from you?
- Nobody. (Private talk.)
- Was your old monastery situated on the bank of the River Orkhon?
- Yes, on the bank of the River Orkhon.
- You mentioned once that there were many monks in your mother's family.
- There were.
- Did they live in Orombiin Khüree?
- Yes. (Private talk about nomadic lifestyle.)
- How did you wake up in the morning at the monastery? By sunrise or from the sound of a conch shell horn?
- Oh yes. We gathered at the temple from the conch shell horn's voice. I mentioned it to you before. Conch shell. We gathered at the temples for its voice.
- Were the monks' robes the same as nowadays? Red, yellow?

- Well, the tantric monastic school was different. Monks gathered in the tantric monastic school for the voice of the *kharanga* gong. A gong was beaten. Do you know what that is?
- Yes, I know.
- *Kharanga* gong. Made of metal, the size of a *tsan* cymbal. I talked to you about the golden Jobo. Women who suffered from pain before giving birth sent others to make an offering to the Jobo Buddha.
- To the Jobo Buddha?
- Yes. They arrived at the monastery and went directly to the *Zuugiin jas* financial office. There was a gong called the *khengereg* drum of the Jobo. It was beaten quickly many times. Thus, all the monks knew what had happened: a person was suffering. So, they began to recite the text for the benefit of the beings of the six realms of existence [gods, demi-gods, humans, animals, hungry ghosts, beings of hells] who had been our mothers in our previous lives. The relatives of women giving birth used to go there by turns to honour the Jobo.
- Well. Did the monastery have livestock?
- Certainly, it had.
- Were they in the vicinity?
- Well, my monastery stood near the River Orkhon on a hill, about a 10 km distance.
- Did the daily chanting differ from the current one?
- Do you mean monks' recitation?
- I mean the sacred texts being recited on a daily basis.
- Almost the same. The texts in my old monastery were almost the same as we recite here in this present monastery.
- What happened to the monks in 1938?
- Cooperatives opened in the 28th year. Livestock of herders, the livestock of nobles, wealthy people, princes and officials were confiscated, and a cooperative came into existence. It took a year. They did not allow former monks to turn monks again. They captured many monks and dissolved the monasteries. Finally, the government developed the New Turn Policy, and dissolved the cooperatives, and allowed people to live as monks again, to practice and spread the Buddhist religion again. However, monks had to pay tax, about 300 *tögrögs*. Very high tax. They levied tax on monks who were of the age of compulsory military service. If you did not pay it on time, you had to disrobe. Such pressure. They oppressed and restricted us. The New Turn Policy was valid until the 37th year. I lived in the district centre for a while. Then, in the 37th year all monks with *gavj* degree were accused of being anti-revolutionaries,

organizing a revolution against the party. People talked about the start of the war of *Śambhala* in cooperation with the Panchen Lama and monks' roles in that war. According to Buddhist scriptures, everyone who has *gavj* or higher degrees has to participate in that war. It was apropos of the seizure of monks having *gavj* degree. I have not read written sources about it. People talked like this. So, this is the story.

- Was Chinese brick tea in use as means of payment?
- Well, Chinese brick tea, Chinese goods were not available after the 24th or 25th year. Only Russian products. Cooperatives existed. Wholesale trading. They took goods to Mongolia for wholesale trading. There were two types of trade: large-scale and small-scale. Special red tobacco, glass.
- Did you learn the Mongolian script?
- I learnt written Mongolian in the army. I learnt written Mongolian at home from a man who was ordered to teach the Mongolian script.
- Was he a Mongolian man?
- He was Mongolian. (Private talk.)
- Did people venerate the *ovoos* during socialism?
- *Ovoos* were destroyed!
- Did you celebrate the Lunar New Year according to the old tradition during socialism?
- No. They prohibited its celebration even in Ulaanbaatar. It was annihilated.
- Was the tradition revived in 1990?
- The public criticized this resolution, and rural people restarted it. It was called Herders' Lunar New Year. Only nomads celebrated it, but not the citizens of Ulaanbaatar. In other words, the celebration of the Lunar New Year was prohibited, then herders restarted it in the countryside, and finally it became free countrywide in 1990.
- Did monks have wives afore?
- In former times a 'married monk' meant a man who had been a monk, took a wife, left the monastery, and then lived in the countryside. (Private talk.)

Sengee Tüdev (1912–2014)



S. Tüdev guai and S. Jünsh guai, 2011

Sengee Tüdev was born in 1912, in the year of the Cow. He was a monk at Zayaiin Khüree Gandangejeelin in Tsetserleg city, Arkhangai province from the age of 8 to 18. This monastery of the Khalkha Zaya Paṇḍita was famous countrywide. It consisted of two parts, *Deed khüree* and *Dood khüree*, had 8 *datsans* and 26 temples, and two reincarnation lineages: the *Zaya gegeens* and *Sanduin khuvilgaan*.

We interviewed Tüdev guai twice with Zsuzsa Majer when researching the history of Zayaiin Khüree within the framework of the Joint Expedition of the Institute of Archaeology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences and the Museum of Prehistoric Anthropology, Monaco in 2009. The following interviews were recorded with voice recorder in 2010, 2011 and 2012 sometimes in the company of the famous painter S. Jünsh (born 1934), who also researched the history of Zayaiin Khüree. The following interviews are the

most detailed ones in the present monograph as they include specific questions regarding the old monastic sites.

Interview 1

Interview recorded within the framework of the joint expedition with voice recorder on 2 August, 2010 at Tüdev *guai*'s home with his daughter's assistance.

- I would like to ask some questions about Zaya Gegeenii Khüree.
- Go ahead.
- How old were you when you disrobed?
- I was 18. (Informant's daughter: He is 98 years old now.)
- Were you a monk from your childhood until 18?
- (Informant's daughter: From 18 to 98. But he was not a monk permanently. Do you ask what he did before the age of 18? He was herding the livestock in the countryside.) Afterwards, I joined the army.
- Which district of the monastery did you live? Where did you live?
- In this part.
- In the east or in the west?
- In the monastery, in the middle.
- In *Deed khüree*?
- Yes, I lived in *Deed khüree*.
- In which *aimag*?
- I lived in Arkhangai, in the monastery of Erdene Zaya Paṇḍita.
- Which temple did you belong to?
- Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*.
- Which side of the palace was Cakrasaṃvara *datsan* located?
- There is a ruined temple building [the assembly hall]. Cakrasaṃvara *datsan* stood to its west.
- Did Cakrasaṃvara *datsan* stand behind the monastic philosophy school?
- West of the monastic philosophy school.
- Which was the main deity of worship in Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*?
- A deity called *Shalsh*, the four-faced Mahākāla.
- How many monks did you have in Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*?
- About 50.
- (Daughter: About 50 can mean 55.)
- Yes, it could have been like that.
- Did Tibetan monks live in Zayaiin Khüree? Monks coming from Tibet?

- Yes. From Tibet?
- Did Tibetan people or Tibetan monks live in Zayaiin Khüree?
- Yes, they did.
- Do you remember their names?
- I remember a man but I cannot recall his name.
- Which temple did he belong to?
- To the monastic philosophy school. No, to the assembly hall.
- How many Tibetans were here? Only one?
- Two Tibetans.
- Do you mean two Tibetan monks?
- Yes, one of them was called Lodoi, the Tibetan.
- Was *Sanduin khuvilgaan* a Tibetan or a Mongolian monk?
- A Mongolian monk.
- Did the monastery have a printing house?
- Yes. Also a scribe worked there. Actually, many people worked there.
(Daughter: They were writing and printing.)
- Did it operate in a separate building?
- Yes, it had a separate building.
- Where was it situated within the monastery?
- In the north-east.
- Could the monks take the *gavj* exam in the monastery?
- Yes.
- Also the *dom* exam?
- Also the *dom* exam.
- Which handbook did the monks use in the monastic philosophy school?
- It had a handbook. It had everything.
- Do you remember the handbook?
- I do not remember.
- Do you remember the main object of worship of the monastic philosophy school?
- I remember it, but I do not remember its name.
- Were the Buddhist idols themselves statuettes or painted scrolls?
- It was a large object of worship.
- Do you mean that brass statues were available there?
- Yes, there was a large brass statue as tall as a man.
- Where was the platform from which the monks were called to ceremonies?
- Near the assembly hall.
- Was the assembly hall fenced off?
- Yes, exactly.
- Did it have a wooden enclosure?

- Yes.
- Did it have a *shörgön khashaa* fence?
- Exactly.
- Did the monastery have a marketplace?
- Market? No, no markets.
- Did a circumambulation road surround the monastery?
- It was possible to walk around the monastery, but the mountain, Bulgan Uul was in the background. The monks used to circumnavigate Bulgan Uul on the 15th of each months on the circumambulation road around Bulgan Uul.
- Do you mean that they walked around the monastery and also Bulgan Uul?
- Yes, they did it carrying the volumes of the *Kanjur*.
- On the 15th of each month?
- Exactly.
- Could women enter the monastery?
- It was forbidden for them.
- (Daughter: Did they prostrate from outside?)
- Yes, they went around.
- Did they prostrate whilst going around the monastery?
- Yes, they did.
- Did women arrive for the Maitreya procession?
- Yes, they came. A big crowd. There is the carriage of Maitreya. With a long rope attached to the carriage.
- (Daughter: Women?)
- Men and women. Everybody. Children also walked with it. People from the countryside arrived on horses and assembled here before the Maitreya procession. The procession circled the *khüree*. People received blessing.
- Where did the monks use to deposit household waste?
- Three waste dumps existed in the *khüree*.
- Where were they?
- There were three such places in the east. One of them was near Dolgor's current house, and another one west of the brook, Jamganii Bulag.
- Do you mean that the waste of the monastery was deposited on the western side of the brook?
- At the site where later on the electric power station was built. (Daughter: If we go to the north, there are some trees. The waste dump was near that place. On the eastern side of the school.) The place of administration was located behind Mönkhöo's residence. The waste dump of Cakrasaṃvara *datsan* was there. Other waste dumps did not exist. (Daughter: It was

near the school. The Fifth 36.) Dumps were called the waste dump of the Guhyasamāja Temple, the waste dump of the Cakrasaṃvara Temple. There should be some bones and other waste there even now.

- Did toilets exist at that time?
- Toilets did not exist at all. We used our courtyards, or went to the junkyard. We went to the waste dumps. Separate toilets did not exist at that time.
- Let's talk about shops and stores. Did stores operate here? Chinese stores?
- There were.
- Were they separated from the monastic part?
- They were separated, for instance *Yamaanii püüs*, *Arzgaabatiin püüs*, *Büdüün khooloin püüs*.
- (Daughter: That is three. Any other?)
- Four stores stood here. Four or five. I have forgotten.
- Were there agricultural fields in the vicinity?
- No.
- What could you buy in the stores?
- Chinese biscuits, silk, crepe. Also saddle cloths and other equipment for horsemen. Equipment related to livestock. Unnecessary articles were not sold here.
- Did the Chinese buy wool and fur from the Mongols?
- Yes, they did. Mongols gave wool, mushroom.
- Did you use money in trade?
- Money was limited. It was physical money.
- Did a *Chojin* oracle live in the monastery? Giving a prophesy while in a trance?
- Certainly.
- Which monastery did he belong to?
- The oracle gave prophesies south of the current museum. (Daughter: South of the current monastery.)
- Do you remember his name?
- I do not know.
- Which deity's words did he interpret?
- I do not know. I have forgotten it.
- Did he give prophesies annually or on more occasions a year?
- On prescribed days and months. There were days called the 'days of the oracle's trance'. (Daughter: On feast days.)
- Was a Geser Temple located here?
- Yes, a Geser Temple stood here.

- Please clarify its exact location.
- Well, it was near the Second 10-year school.
- Did Chinese or Mongolian people use to visit the Geser Temple?
- Only the Chinese. It was for monthly ceremonies.
- Did Chinese monks hold the ceremonies?
- Yes, Chinese monks. They marked horses as sacred beings by tying something on their neck.
- What was the main object of worship in the Geser Temple?
- I do not know. There were many statues. I do not remember.
- Was one like a large hero?
- Heroes. There were many heroes.
- (Daughter: Do you remember these heroes' names?)
- I do not know.
- Were there also other Chinese temples?
- No, there were not.
- Was there any *stūpa* on the right bank of the River Tamir?
- Yes, there was one near Mönkhöö's residence.
- Really? Just on the opposite side of the river?
- Yes, in former times.
- What type of *stūpa* was it?
- I do not know. That existed before my time.
- Did the monastery have a *Shaviin yaam* office?
- Yes, yes.
- Where was it exactly?
- There is the current monastery, which was the temple of [Sanduin] *Khuvilgaan lam*. The *Shaviin yaam* stood on its other side, at the place where the Gurvantamir School is. The *Shavi yaam* was a place of intelligence.
- Did monks or lay people work there?
- Both.
- When was its operation ceased?
- It was destroyed together with the monastery, finished by 1937, 1938. The *Shavi yaam* was a great place.
- Do you remember the name of its head, the *shanzav*?
- Yes, there was a *shanzav*. A *shanzav*. The *shanzav* of the *Bogd*, the *shanzav* of Zayaiin Khüree. These people administered the Ministry of Subordinated Areas and People (*Shavi yaam*). This is like the judge in the Ministry of Justice. There was a *shanzav* indeed.
- Where was the kitchen of the monastery? Where did the monks prepare tea and meals?

- There were eight large temples. All of them had a kitchen where monks' tea and meals were prepared. All the eight temples had their own livestock. Four of five kinds of livestock. North of the current monastery was a general kitchen called *manjnii gazar*, which was marvelous and very clean. Tea preparers worked there. All monks received a cake called *shaviraanii boov*. Monks were called with flute to have a breakfast and lunch, and got it at 12 o'clock. They ate the cakes. They were long, oval cakes called *shaviraanii boov*.
- Can you repeat its name?
- *Shaviraa boov*, *shaviraanii boov*. We got *shaviraanii boov* cake for lunch.
- Did you also eat in the evenings?
- We had tea in the evening and ate what we received from devotees' offerings. Alms. These was distributed to monks. (Informant's relative: In other words, the goods offered by devotees were distributed to the monks for dinner.)
- Where was the statue of Maitreya of the procession kept?
- In the assembly hall.
- A standing or a sitting representation?
- It was a standing Maitreya. You study Buddhism in detail.
- Please define the shape of the Galdan Zuu Temple.
- It was a square temple.
- What size?
- About 30, or smaller, about 30 meters. It was a rectangular temple. Galdan Zuu was situated behind the assembly hall.
- What did that temple include?
- It housed a real Jobo statue. A tall statue of Jobo Buddha. About 70–80 Russian units of measurement.
- Have you heard about the *mörgöliin dörvöljin*, the rectangle of veneration?
- Well, *mörgöliin dörvöljin*. It was a tree or a wooden pillar.
- Wooden?
- It was venerated.
- Wasn't it a clay statue?
- Certainly there were numerous clay statues. This monastery had everything! It was Erdene ['Precious'] Zaya Paṇḍita's monastery. He was famous among the Khalkhas as he, Erdene Zaya Paṇḍita Luvsanprinlei, took sacred books on 80 carts.
- When did the monks hold the ceremony of the Dharma protectors?
- The ceremony of the Dharma protectors took place mainly on the 15th of the first month of summer. Also on the 3rd of the month.

- Did the monks perform the *Tsam* at that time?
- *Tsam* was performed. Do you mean if it was performed at the time of the ceremony of the Dharma protectors? *Tsam* was not performed at that time. *Tsam* dance took place at the time of the Maitreya procession. Maitreya procession was held on the 15th of the first month of summer. Another part of the monastery called *Dood khüree* had the Maitreya procession on the 15th of the middle month of autumn.
- Was the *Tsam* performed in *Dood khüree*, too?
- Yes, it was. Or no, it wasn't.
- Was *Danshig naadam* held?
- Yes.
- In summertime?
- The *Danshig naadam* united more provinces. For instance, they organized it in Zavkhan or in Bayankhongor.
- Do you mean that several provinces held only one *Naadam* festival in one of the provinces?
- Exactly. However, Zavkhan province belonged to Zasagt Khan province. Bayankhongor belonged to the *Nomun khan*. These provinces organized a *Naadam* together. Wrestlers of our region joined that *Naadams*, too. People used to go there. To the *Danshig naadam*.
- Did the monks wrestle?
- Only lately. Monks did not wrestle in former times. Lately, a monk called gloomy Dendev who belonged to Gandan wrestled. Only gloomy Dendev. Most of the monks did not wrestle.
- Which *Zaya gegeens*' relics were preserved in the *Güden*?
- In the *Güden*? Luvsanprinlei *geegen*'s relics. Actually, it housed the relics of three *Zaya gegeens*, but I do not remember their names.
- Did it house the relics of the last [6th] *Zaya geegen*?
- His relics were not there. He perished as he was captured in the case of the Eastern anti-revolutionaries deviation.
- What does the name of Maanit Uul Hill refer to?
- The monastery had eight large temples. The monks recited *mani* prayers numerous times in the eight temples. They were placed into a box and buried in the ground. Therefore, its name became *maanit* ['with *mani* prayers'].
- (Informant's daughter: Under the ground?)
- Yes, in a vessel.
- (Daughter: Where was it buried?)
- I do not know.
- (Daughter: On the southern slope?)

- No, it should have been in the north.
- (Daughter: Maybe at the site where a script is visible.)
- Perhaps not there.
- Do you mean that it was put in a vessel and hidden under the ground?
- *Dünchüür maani.*
- Please tell me the story of the tantric practitioner, Byamba.
- I knew him.
- Did he have a temple building?
- He did not have a temple. He could always be found behind a cliff. Behind a rock cliff. He performed the body-offering ritual. Local spirits and *nāgas* gathered at such places. Another tantric practitioner who performed the body-offering ritual lived in this part, near the Tuberculosis hospital. His name was Luvsandalai *gelen* as he was a fully-ordained monk.
- Luvsandalai?
- Exactly.
- At Donoi?
- Yes, in the temple at Donoi. (Daughter: A man called Luvsandalai used to perform the body-offering ritual there.)
- Did *Deed khüree* have *stūpas*?
- *Stūpas*? Of course. Many *stūpas* and temples. The medical monastic school stood there.
- Wasn't the medical monastic school situated in *Dood khüree*?
- Yes, there were many buildings. It was the training place, the *Shüingiin gazar* of the *gegeen*, called *Shiin*. The name of the *gegeen*'s training place was *Shiin*.
- Were there an astrologic temple as well?
- Yes, there was.
- Here in *Deed khüree*?
- Yes, here.
- Not in *Dood khüree*?
- No.
- Did the monastery have a Padmasambhava Temple?
- Of course.
- Was it in *Deed khüree*?
- Yes.
- What was its name?
- I do not know, I do not know.
- Were there many such temples?
- Two temples. Guru Padmasambhava's Temple.

- Was there a Tārā Temple, too?
- Yes, there was.
- Where was it?
- Around the assembly hall. I do not remember its exact location. 50 or 60 years have passed since then, so I have forgotten many details. Was there a Yamāntaka Temple?
- There was.
- And a temple called *Ölzii süm*?
- There was.
- A temple called *Shiveelin*?
- That was *Tseveelin*.
- A temple with a very strange name: *Shirvizda*?
- What did you say? I am not sure.
- A library?
- Certainly.
- Where was it?
- The library was situated in the western, or no, on the eastern side of the assembly hall. (Private talk.) The monastery was very beautiful and had many things. It was destroyed during the period of persecution. They captured and killed monks and demolished all the temples, all the eight large temples. Eight large temples including the assembly hall. All of them were demolished. Monks hid their sacred books in the mountain when they were being captured. The books decomposed, as nylon sacks do nowadays. They hounded Tibetan books. People could not take a step, even the relatives of monks were captured. It was an extremely difficult situation. There were princes and nobles. The property of all aristocrats were secularized and transferred. I was about 30 years old and I felt sorry for them. It was blatant. Tibetan books with cloth covers and small Buddhist images with frames covered the whole mountain. The cloth covers of sacred texts frayed in two or three years. Pages flew and scattered away on streets, filled the brooks. Pages and cloth covers of Tibetan sacred books. Without respite. Monks, aristocrats, and the attendants of the Ministry of Ecclesial Affairs were all sentenced. Accused of being anti-revolutionaries. They could not do anything. They were captured. All their family members, older and younger brothers were accused of being anti-revolutionaries. Their cases were decided en masse, and they did not have right to say anything. They were told, ‘Sit down, anti-revolutionaries.’ It happened like this for a while, but later, it changed especially after the democratic changes. Now I am old, but that was indeed a very difficult period.

- Did you join the army or herd livestock?
- I was in the monastery until the age of 18 or 19. When the monks were captured and taken away, I left for the countryside, and then I was enrolled. I went with the army to Khalkhiin Gol on the eastern border, and also fought in the war of Xinjiang for three years. (Daughter: He is a veteran.) I spent six years in the army. Later, a cooperative was founded and the livestock was collectivized. Then, some sly people took ten and ten livestock, and others remained poor without any livestock. I saw many things in my life. I barely know Tibetan sacred texts, but my knowledge is shallow. I know it only in general.

Interview 2

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 4 August, 2010 at Tüdev *guai*'s home with the assistance of his daughter.

- Have you heard about an assembly at Artsat? Was there a small monastery at Artsat Hill crossing the pass, Tsagaan Davaa?
- I do not know it well. There was a monastery of *Tsagaan lam*.
- How many monks lived there?
- Three monks.
- How many temple buildings stood there?
- Only two temples.
- Was it a fenced-off monastery?
- No.
- Was there any other monastery there apart from *Tsagaan lam*'s monastery?
- There was not. The Tsagaan Davaa pass got its name after *Tsagaan lam*'s monastery.
- It sounds interesting.
- Finally, he disappeared. People did not know where he moved.
- Where is Artsat Uul?
- Artsat Uul is situated here, in the east.
- Is there another Artsat Uul behind the Tsagaan Davaa pass?
- There is. In this way, there is the Tamir temple. There was a temple building, too. In the north. And also Artsat Uul.
- On this side?
- Yes, on this side. South of the river.
- Right after passing the pass?
- A bit to the south. Not in the west, but in the east.

- Was *Tsagaan lam* a monk of Zayaiin Khüree?
- He lived here before the foundation of Zayaiin Khüree.
- Was his monastery made of wood or brick?
- That was a wooden temple. People used brick only in a later period.
- Was the *Tamgiin gazar* governance office of *Zaya gegeen* and the *Shaviin yaam* the same place or two different offices?
- The same place.
- Between *Deed khüree* and *Dood khüree* is a brook, Naran Bulag. Have you heard about a brook called Bogdiin Bulag?
- Yes, there was a brook from where the monks took water for the *gegeen*'s use.
- Where was it exactly?
- North-east from Naran Bulag. It was called Gegeenii Bulag. They took water for the *gegeen* from that brook and used it for his tea.
- Were there any temple buildings?
- No, only large rocks. Mongolian script is visible on the rock there.
- What is written on that rock?
- I do not know. The names of three people.
- Is it north-east from Naran Bulag?
- Yes, in the north-east. There is a massive rock with such a script on its surface. The *gegeen* used to take water from there.
- Gakhain Bulag and Naran Bulag were also there?
- Yes.
- Gakhain Bulag is on this side, isn't it?
- Gakhain Bulag? Gakhain Bulag, what is that? Donoin Bulag.
- Are these two different names for the same brook?
- Donoin Bulag is called Gakhain Bulag nowadays. Previously, it was called Donoin Bulag. There were three temples called Donoin Süm.
- Did monks reside there?
- Yes, of course. Monks who performed body-offering. I mentioned Luvsandalai to you some days ago, who performed such rites.
- Were there also two *khandmaa* female practitioners?
- I have heard that there is carved writing on that mountain, in the foreground of Bayanzürkh Uul. Two Tārās: the Green Tārā and the White Tārā. Jünsh knows it well and can show them to you if you want.
- I have heard that many *stūpas* stood between *Deed khüree* and *Dood khüree*. Can you confirm it?
- It is true.
- Where were these *stūpas*?
- Near Naran Bulag.

- (Daughter: Naran Bulag was an important brook at that time.)
- Definitely.
- You said that you had disrobed at the age of 18. When did you first become a monk?
- I was 8 years old. I left the monastery at the age of 18, which means that I spent only eight years in the monastery.
- The current temple's name is *Buyan delgeriülekh* ('Spreading Virtues'). Was it the general name of Zaya Gegeenii Khüree?
- No. That given temple had a different name before. It was named as *Buyan delgeriülekh* later. It had a different name before [*Sanduin khuvil-gaanii süm*].
- Did the assembly hall have a Tibetan name?
- Its Tibetan name was assembly hall: *Tsogchin dugan*.
- Did it have a name as well?
- Maybe, but I do not know.
- Did famous singers live in Zaya Gegeenii Khüree?
- Certainly.
- Famous scribes?
- A famous scribe was Janchüv. Amgaabazar was a famous singer. Amgaabazar, and also a monk of the monastery, Baatar. He was the singer of Zayaiin Khüree.
- Can you specify the oldest and the newest temples of the monastery?
- The assembly hall was built at first. Later, eight large temples came into existence.
- Was the *Bulganii süm* and Galdan Zuu separate temples or different names of the same temple?
- Different. There was a Zuu in the north and also in the south. There were two Zuu temples. Behind the ruined assembly hall was a Zuu Temple. Its foundations are visible. There was a Zuu Temple. The other Zuu Temple was situated on the hillside. The assembly hall was destroyed, but there was a Zuu Temple behind it.
- Where was the monastic philosophy school?
- The monastic philosophy school stood behind the assembly hall.
- To its north?
- Yes.
- Which temple was located on the east side of the temple of philosophy?
- Guhyasamāja *datsan*.
- What was east of the Guhyasamāja *datsan*?
- Also *Jii datsan*. Vairocana *datsan*. I do not remember the others.

- Did the monks hold ceremonies on a daily basis in each of the eight temples?
- Yes.
- How many monks lived in the monastery?
- About 1,000. The monastery had ceremonies every day and night. There were monks who held rituals at night. Ceremonies were constant. All ceremonies aimed to release sentient beings that got cold and wheezed from illness, suffering, also to prevent drought, and the drying up of the brooks.
- Did the monks hold this non-stop ceremony in the assembly hall?
- There was a famous astrologer, Vanganjav. At the start of the Lunar New Year, he calculated there would be drought, famine in winter, illness and suffering, livestock diseases. Based on astrologer Vanganjav's prophesy, all the monks held services in the assembly hall reading the prescribed texts.
- Did they hold them non-stop?
- Sure.
- (Daughter: Did the monks who hold the ceremony in daytime leave, when the monks arrived to hold the ceremony at night?)
- Yes, they did leave. They chanted the sacred texts in turn. My Erdene Zaya Paṇḍita studied eighty carts of holy texts.
- What kind of ceremonies did the monks hold at the Lunar New Year?
- The New Year ceremonies.
- (Daughter: Were these connected to the New Year?)
- They were connected to the New Year.
- How did you hold the *Tsederlkham* ceremony and the New Year ceremonies?
- The New Year ceremonies started on the first day of the New Year and ended on the 15th.
- I have another question. Did the monks drink alcohol?
- It was absolutely forbidden. Not only spirit, but also kumis. Sluggish.
- Could they drink kumis?
- Only a few monk drank kumis. The young monks could not drink, only the old monks.
- What did the Geser Temple look like? What colour and style?
- I do not remember its colour. It was a square, grey temple.
- Did it differ from the Mongolian temples?
- Almost the same with minor differences.
- Did the Chinese operate a Chinese brick burning kiln in the vicinity?
- Yes, that was in the west, near the Second 10-year school.

- Did all the Chinese people live there?
- Yes, they did.
- Have you heard about *Norovlin*? Was it another name of *Dood khüree*?
- I do not know. I do not know when that was renamed like that.
- (Daughter: Was *Norovlin* the name of a mountain?)
- I do not know. I have no idea.
- Did *Dood khüree* have only one name: *Dood khüree*?
- No. *Manba*, the medical monastic school. You might have been right saying *Norovlin*. It could have been its Tibetan name.
- Did the Mongols use to take tax or loans from the Chinese?
- No.
- Was a handicraft or other cooperative founded in Arkhangai province in a later period to employ the ex monks?
- [Informant did not understand the question.] Yes, there was. There were different workers including stove-settlers, tea-porters. All the eight temples had their own livestock in the countryside. People did different work.
- Were the herders Mongolians?
- Sure, Mongolians. Nowadays, people are mixed: Russians, Mongolians. Only the Mongols lived here in former times.
- Did the monks meditate in the mountains?
- Certainly. No doubt.
- In which mountains?
- Asgat Khairkhan.
- (Daughter: Do you mean Asgat Khairkhan situated in the south?)
- Yes, people used to meditate there. *Khurдан* [‘quick’] Khar as well as my fully-ordained monk uncle, and others.
- Thank you very much for answering my questions.
- They were very experienced in meditation. They meditated for 16 or 20 years. They meditated for 10 years eating meat, and then another 10 years without meat. Due to their meditation, other people’s suffering, harms, and obstacles disappeared. That place had really good grass. Nowadays, people cut the trees and dig the ground. Woods disappear from mountains. The woods of this mountain are now stumps. They were cut down. Disappeared. Mountains remain without woods. Brooks and springs overflow. Many brooks, about 4,000 or 5,000 have dried up. Also the large lakes, such as Shorvog Ulaan Nuur in Övörkhongai province, a large lake formed from the River Ongi. It dried up three or four years ago. Mongolia has changed a lot. Nothing has remained. For instance, antelope was as many in the steppe as soil. None of them have remained.

Deers lived in the mountains. Many deers lived in the eastern and western valleys of Mt. Bulgan. None of them are left. They disappeared several years ago. Wild pigs lived in large numbers here in the rocky mountains. None of them have remained. They have not been seen in the last ten or twenty years. A brook flowed west of *Dood khüree*. An area was dug at the source of that brook to have a lake with a surface as smooth as ice. Deers arrived from the mountains to drink water there, near *Dood khüree*. Nothing has remained. Nor the lake, neither the dike nor the deers. Deers live in mountains. Hordes of deers numbering 40 or 50, 20 or 30 used to cross here. Now, they are not seen. Have you climbed that mountain? There are berries. Berries were abundant. However, now you can find only one or two in the woods. One could fill a container of 40 litres in an hour. Now, you cannot find anything there. To Ulaanbaatar, or further to Khan Khentii Uul, the number of trees decrease. Valleys with trees ceased. Trees were cut. In former times, only a limited quantity of stumps were seen. Now, limitless. Even the trees disappeared. *Mani* prayers were recited if tethering, reining or staking, spiking. Nowadays, prayers are not recited anymore, but the part of the mountain which were excavated, look like hell. Do you agree?

- Were herbs abundant in this area?
- About 400 types of herbs, Tibetan herbs were available here. They are not available anymore. People like me who know the environment well feel sorry about these changes. It is regrettable. There is nothing to say about it. Antelopes, Mongolian antelopes, and antelopes with tails lived here. Wild goat, deer, antelope. Now there is nothing. Mountain sheep, wild sheep. They are not here anymore.
- One can see them in stuffed form only in museums.
- Indeed, perhaps in museums. Not in nature and the living environment. When I was a child if someone climbed these mountains, they could see stags, wild pigs, and deers. They are not here anymore. People clawed up the ground and built high buildings which did not exist before. People could build only wooden constructions in former times if the *Shavi yaam* or the Customs Bureau permitted it. Monks could build one or two wooden temples with such permission. If the office did not permit it, they could not cut down trees. Mongolia has changed a lot in a bad direction. There is nothing to mention about it. If you do not participate in things, just live in peace, you can have a breath. No one remained to love and protect nature. (Private talk.) Do you know Jünsh?
- Yes, I know him.

- Visit him. He knows many things. He recorded what I told him. They butchered about 1,000 monks of the monastery. They all died. (Private talk.) What happened here is a massacre. And, we, I was about 18, 19 at that time, wandered a lot, visited many families. These happened about 60 or 70 years ago. I have forgotten many things. I have forgotten the chronologic order. Therefore, I might have misinformed you by chance. It might need corrections. I told you some things at the beginning, others at the end. My stories are not similar to books which have a proper chronologic order. I might have missed the chronologic order, precise data and location. I might have misled you by chance. Anyway, I know that these things existed and have happened.

Interview 3

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 16 September, 2011 at Tüdev *guai*'s home with the assistance of his daughter. Painter, researcher S. Jünsh also asked and answered questions which made the interview lively, although his information is mainly secondary in nature.

- I would like to ask some questions about Zaya Gegeenii Khüree. You mentioned that a white *stūpa* stood once on the left bank of the River Urd Tamir. Where was it exactly? Was it on the left bank of the river? South of the bridge near Sangiin Tolgoi?
- I have heard that such a *stūpa* stood there once. In former times, before I was born. In the vicinity of that current yurts. (Informant's daughter: He says that some families live on the other side of the river. South of the river. A *stūpa* stood there once.) (Jünsh: There is a *bunkhan* of a *stūpa*, its base. That might be that.) Yes, exactly. There were some scattered pieces of tiles. (Jünsh: Chinese used to produce roof tiles. The household living there found pieces of tiles on the western side, or precisely on the eastern side. They belong to the foundation of a *stūpa* which stood at the foot of the hill.)
- Last time you said that behind the pass, Tsagaan Davaa, there stood a monastery called Artsatiin Khural, known also as Tsagaan Lamiin Khural.
- (Jünsh: North of Tsagaan Davaa the monastic town of *Tsagaan lam* was situated.) Well, the Tsagaan Khüree stood in the area where the *Rinjün maani* inscription can be made out on the rock. On a flat place. (Jünsh: Oh, that is the Gants Modnii Rashaan, Khoyor Modnii Rashaan. There

is a brook north of the Tsagaan Davaa pass. *Rinjün maani* was situated on this side.) Exactly. *Rinjün maani* is situated on that flat place. Some people built enclosures in the vicinity.

- Were there any monasteries near Artsatiin Ovoo?
- Artsatiin Ovoo is situated to the north of the vocational high school. (Jünsh: Artsat Uul is north of the vocational high school, isn't it? That is the *ovoo* at Artsat Uul. There is an *ovoo* on the top of Artsat Uul, north of the vocational high school. The *ovoo* is not there anymore.) The Tārās are there. That mountain is situated north of the Tārās. Oh, no, that is Bayanzürkh. Well, then it is behind Bayanzürkh, or south, south-east. (Jünsh: Artsat Uul is in the east.)
- Did any monastery stand behind Tsagaan Davaa? If we cross the pass? North of the pass?
- If we pass Tsagaan Davaa, we arrive at a rocky site. In the south. A *stūpa* stood there. No, a small monastery was there. A monastery.
- How many monks did it have?
- Only five or six. (Jünsh: Precisely, there was a temple without a courtyard and other buildings with five or six monks. It was only an assembly and not a real monastery.) Exactly. Not a monastery, but an assembly. That place is wrathful. Thus, monks had to hold rituals there.
- What kind of monks lived there?
- I do not know.
- Did they belong to Zaya Gegeenii Khüree or not?
- They belonged to Khan-Öndör district in the north. The area of *Said van*.
- I see.
- You promised to me that you would show me a book about Luvsan-perenlei *gegeen*. Did you find that book? (The informant asks it from Jünsh *guai*.)
- Did Tibetan monks live in Zayaiin Khüree? Monks who came from Tibet?
- (Jünsh: Tibetans were said to live here. They came from Amdo, Tibet.) Are you talking about Zayaiin Khüree? Tibetans lived here. Three Tibetans. One of them was called Lodoi, the Tibetan. I remember Lodoi, but I do not remember the names of the other two.
- Did they have *gavj* degrees? What did they do here?
- These three Tibetans were like ambassadors nowadays.
- Interesting. Was *Sanduin khuvilgaan* a Mongolian reincarnation?
- Yes, he was Mongolian. He had an average body.
- Did he have a beard?
- No.

- How old was he at that time?
- About 50.
- Did he live in the building of the current monastery?
- In this monastery. The monastery was in the north. They decided to build a temple to *Sanduin khuvilgaan* and this building was built at that time. In that temple, he had his own rooms, and also held ceremonies and rites there.
- Did Zayaiin Khüree have a printing house?
- Yes. There was also a clerk.
- Was he a monk or a lay person?
- He was a monk. This task means he accumulated merits.
- Do you remember the main objects of worship of the monastery?
- The main object of worship here was Tsongkhapa. Also Śrīdevī, Vajrapāṇi, and many other Dharma protectors. The monks of the eight *datsans* venerated eight different deities.
- Were these holy images sculptures or painted scrolls?
- (Jünsh: Various idols. Mostly sculptures, but also scrolls.)
- Were these main objects of worship sculptures or paintings?
- All of them were brass statues.
- Can you define the *Mörgöliin dörvöljin*?
- It was a wooden plain stage on which people made prostrations. It still exists. (Jünsh: It is situated south of the *stūpa*.) It has eroded. It became holed by the imprints of two knees and two elbows in former times.
- Can you confirm that the volumes of the *Kanjur* were circumambulated on the 15th of each lunar months around Bulgan Uul?
- Monks used to circle round Bulgan Uul having a lord spirit. (Jünsh: They started from the western armpit or valley of Bulgan Uul, appeared at the crest of the mountain ridge, and ascended in the eastern valley.) Yes, but the volumes of the *Kanjur* were very sizeable. A person could carry only two or three volumes and perform the circumambulation with them. Jünsh, you were not born at that time. (Jünsh: No, I was born in 1934. I have faded memories about the last Maitreya procession. When did it happen?)
- Well, when was it held last time? (Jünsh: In 1937 or 1938.) You were born exactly in the era of persecution. (Jünsh: I was born in 1934.)
- When did the last Maitreya procession take place?
- Do you mean the date of the last circumambulation? 1933.
- (Jünsh: It is impossible. I was born in 1934, and I remember that the axle of the cart broke during the procession which I saw.) Yes, yes, you are right. It happened during the last procession. In 1933 or 1934.

- Can you describe the procession itself? Did it stop in front of the assembly hall? Where were its stops? Please define its route.
- There is a small elevation there. (Jünsh: In front of the current museum.) There was a fence called *shörgön khashaa*. Coming out from behind of that fence you could see the vehicle of Maitreya. A person giving blessings sat on the cart with the statue of Maitreya.
- Did the monks perform the *maṇḍala* offering?
- They offered a *maṇḍala* and performed other rites after bringing out Maitreya's statue from the temple.
- (Jünsh: Did the monks bring out Maitreya's statue from that fenced-off courtyard?)
- They brought it out to the south from that courtyard. Then, the procession circled the monastery clockwise.
- (Jünsh: They circled only the monastery, did they not?)
- Yes.
- (Jünsh: North or south of Baast Gol?)
- South, south. Then, the procession turned to the north.
- Can you describe Maitreya's vehicle? Was it a camel cart?
- (Jünsh: No, it was a wooden vehicle with four wheels, and a seat. Wasn't it?) Yes. Have you seen Chinggis' vehicle? Maitreya's vehicle was like that. (Jünsh: People moved it.) Oh yes, it had really long tether of rope, kinked in the two points, to loop with a wire. People fought for the chance of pulling the cart with straps. We circled that *stūpa* but the whole crowd did not fit. We circled the *khüree*, but the whole crowd could not fit.
- Did the monks use to hold the Maitreya procession in *Dood khüree*, too?
- Yes, it was called the 'Old Maitreya'.
- Did the monks of *Deed khüree* participate in the Maitreya procession at *Dood khüree*?
- Certainly. Both were parts of Zayaiin Khüree.
- Was a *Naadam* festival or wrestling held at that time?
- No wrestling. (Jünsh: Generally, *Tsam* and Maitreya procession are like a dance performance or a masked opera.) Some participants at the Maitreya procession wore painted masks. All of them had their own meaning and responsibilities.
- Did the monks perform the *Tsam* inside of the *shörgön khashaa* fence?
- (Jünsh: They performed inside of the *shörgön khashaa* courtyard, in front of the current museum.) A heap is there. A fenced-off courtyard stood there. Large round timbers were sharpened. It surrounded an area (Jünsh: The fence was similar to the Bogd Khaan Palace Museum's fence.)
- Have you heard about the Gegeenii Bulag or Bogdiin Bulag in that area?

- Yes, north of the vocational school was a brook called the brook of *Zayaiin gegeen*'s catering. (Jünsh: Behind the vocational school.) It was called Zoogiin Bulag. It is the same as Naran Bulag.
- Were there any temples in the vicinity? Between *Deed khüree* and *Dood khüree*?
- No, no temples.
- And *stūpas*?
- There were 4 or 5 *stūpas*.
- Exactly where?
- They start on the foreland on this eastern side, near the Eastern and Western Naran. These two Naran have *stūpas* in all valleys. (Jünsh: Naran refers to Naran Bulag in the east.)
- (Jünsh: I also have a question. Elderly people told me that eight *stūpas* stood in a row north of Zayaiin Khüree, on the slope of Bulgan Uul. Can you confirm this statement?)
- Eight *stūpas* stood north of the *khüree*. Eight *stūpas* stood there. It is true. (Jünsh: Now only their ruins are visible. Heaps of earth.)
- (Jünsh: They are not featured on these old photographs. Only their remains might be visible. They could have been built later, after the foundation of the monastery. At the time of the Fifth *Zaya gegeen*.) All monks were captured in 1937 and 1938. The wind blew sacred texts over Bulgan Uul, and the monks were captured and taken away to the east. The cover cloths of sacred texts became frayed, the pages of sacred texts slipped away, and filled the whole marsh. There was not a single place uncovered with Tibetan pages. (Jünsh: Regarding revolution, the great revolution burnt Buddhist images throughout the country. They enticed the cattle, lit fires at night, depraved people and said that this is the revolution, change, reform.) Moreover, they captured everyone who had a rosary, everyone who offered a butter lamp. They captured everyone who venerated the Buddhist deities. (Jünsh: Persecution was horrible.)
- Were these people the Russians?
- (Jünsh: She asks if Russians lived here. Some Russians resided here. One or two. Also a couple of Tibetans. But mainly Chinese lived here.) Yes, indeed, there were many Chinese people. (Jünsh: Chinese stores and a Chinese district, Chinese traders, several Chinese people. All of them had Mongolian wives. Chinese men had Mongolian wives. Chinese women did not live here at all.)
- Is it true that the Chinese married Mongolian girls?
- (Jünsh: It is true. All Chinese men married Mongolians. I have never seen a Chinese wife. That many Chinese men always had Mongolian

girls.) The majority of the Chinese had Mongolian wives. Mongolian. There is not any province in Mongolia where mixed Asian children were not born. My province has several mixed Asian people. (Jünsh: Even among my relatives there were Chinese people's wives. I know it well as it also happened in my family. Finally, they allowed me to enter there. I saw the leg of a Chinese lady only once in my life. She was a curiosity, being a Chinese girl. Her feet were bound and wizened in her childhood in China. So, she could not walk. I saw such a Chinese girl once. She held a strange fan. I followed to look at her. Here, Buyant's store, Tsookhor, Khaisandai, Eveest, Menget. Many Chinese store managers lived here. The store of Sambuu, Samdan. Some courtyards of these stores still exist. Chinese lived in houses. You can make its photograph.)

- Did married monks live here?
- There were married monks, but the majority of the monks did not have a wife. (Jünsh: It depended on their ranks. For instance, monks with *gayj* degree and *maaramba* medical degree did not have wives. They took vows. Only the monks, who did not take vows could marry. Some of them were called 'monks', but they lived in the countryside or in the capital city with their consorts. Finally, they were grouped as monks only by name, but laborers or married herders.) Marriage depended on vows including full ordination, etc.
- Did the monks use to perform the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Certainly. Very seriously. They performed the *Khailen*. They also held the *Nügnee* fasting. This monastery had an astrologic monastic school. The Temple of Astrology. (Jünsh: *Jaarai datsan*.) Based on astrology they could predict if there would be drought, human and animal disease. If there is no rain, livestock disease increases.
- (Jünsh: Let's turn our attention to the *stūpas*. Where was that *stūpa* complex? Near the *Ranjiin maani* rock?
- The *stūpa*? *Stūpas* were located north of the monastery. Nowhere else. They were only at the Khanangiin Enger.
- (Jünsh: Were there any *stūpas* in the eastern and western valleys of the monastery?)
- Oh, there was a *stūpa* built on the day of the *nāgas*' departure. There are some large, red stones. There was a brook with a *stūpa* at its source.
- (Jünsh: Is it true that the Tsagaan Davaa pass was called Tsagaan Lamiin Davaa before?)
- Yes. Tsagaan Lamiin Khüree was a monastery that was founded a long time ago, before I was born. It was an old monastery. It existed before the building of Zaya Paṇḍita's monastery. (Jünsh: I have read a story

about *Sanduin khuvilgaan* in a book. Dalai *maaramba* ornamented its temple interior when *Dalai choinkhor van* built that temple. Choidog was a famous smith who created ornaments. Can you confirm it?)

- I do not know. I do not know such details.
- Did artisans live in Zayaia Khüree?
- (Jünsh: Many artisans lived here.)
- What did they produce? *Tsam* masks?
- (Jünsh: *Tsam* masks. Mongolian artisans also built and decorated temples. Always Mongolian artists crafted paintings and ornaments. Several talented craftsmen.)
- Were the palace and dwelling of *Zaya gegeen* built by the Chinese or the Mongols?
- (Jünsh: Do you mean the *Lavran* palace? The Mongols built it in 1802.)
- Not in 1902?
- (Jünsh: No, in 1802. During the period of the Fifth *Zaya gegeen*. Well, no, the Fourth *Zaya gegeen* had it built. The two *semchin* palaces. The *lavran* palace is older. He had to build his own palace.)
- Did *Chö* practitioners have tents?
- (Jünsh: There were monks who performed the body-offering. They were called *Lüjinch*. They had the same dwellings as ordinary people: buildings and yurts. The Choijin Temple stood in *Dood khüree*. It was the oracle's temple. Byamba was the last such oracle. You have his photograph, don't you? He was the last oracle. The so called *choijin buudag* ['descending of the Dharma protectors'] trance aims to pacify the local spirits living in the ground and water.)
- Where did the tantric practitioner Byamba live?
- He had a yurt. He lived in a yurt. But he moved to another place.
- Did he use tents when he had a trance?
- He did not perform it in tents. (Jünsh: There was a specific place where he performed his trance. On the street, further from the temples in open air.) Yes, indeed. (Jünsh: There were two Oracle Temples. Also oracles used to perform trance in these two temples.)
- Did oracles and *Chö* practitioners belong to different traditions?
- (Jünsh: No difference.)
- *Chö* practitioners and the ones who practice body-offering rituals are the same. However, they differ from the oracles, don't they?
- (Jünsh: Oracles have connections with *Chö* and body-offering rituals. *Chö* and body-offering practices were performed after the oracle fell into a trance.) Exactly.
- As far as I understand tantric practitioner Byamba was not an oracle.

- (Jünsh: He was an oracle! He was the last oracle here.)
- Can we ask Tüdev monk to confirm it?
- (Jünsh: It is out of question. Was Byamba *choijin* the last oracle here?)
- Yes. No doubt.
- I see.
- (Jünsh: He held a bell and a *damaru* and performed a kind of dance. Like rock and pop nowadays.)
- He also had a strange hat, didn't he?
- (Jünsh: He had a strange hat and also other implements. Oracles have the following history. The teachings of the Red Stream arrived in Mongolia. It is a mixture of Shamanism and the Red Stream. The oracle represents both. It is like this. *Dood khüree* had Red Stream features, and had also an Oracle Temple. *Deed khüree* belonged to the Yellow Stream: pure Buddhism. These two divisions existed. This girl gave me a copy of a photo of *Dood khüree* from a Russian book. I have not seen any photographs of *Dood khüree* before.)
- A Russian traveller, A. M. Pozdneev took that photograph in 1892. Unfortunately it is of poor quality.
- (Jünsh: Russian travellers took it. It shows a two-storey temple building. It is a favourable palace.) In beneath? *Dood khüree* was indeed a handsome monastery. (Jünsh: It had a very modern rail fence.) The last stones of *Dood khüree* were delivered here. You can see them at Lamsüren's monastery. Have you seen them? Are they still there?
- I have seen them at Lamsüren *guai*'s monastery. Where were they situated at *Dood khüree*?
- (Jünsh: These are the stones of temples' foundations.) Yes. These large stones were the foundations of temples. (Jünsh: Carved lions decorate them. These were foundations, and pillars were placed on them. Later, when the temples were demolished there, people used the material to build a committee barrack. The stones were delivered there. The rectangular ones were also taken as headstones, and Lamsüren took the base stones. The grave stones are with *mantras* and even people's names are written on them. I know it well. These are from the area of the old *Dood khüree*, which is now a Vocational School.)
- Is there a place called Khuurai in Bayanzürkh? In this direction?
- That is the current site of the waste dump. (Jünsh: Corpses were placed at Khuurai. It is east of the Vocational School. The waste dump is there now. In old times, corpses were placed at Khuurai.) Exactly.
- What happened with the deceased of *Deed khüree*?

- (Jünsh: They were placed at Khanangiin Enger. This part in the west is called Khanangiin Khonkhor hollow. I know that site very well. Also Khuurai.) There is a stone at Khanangiin Enger, isn't there? I told its story to you before. (Jünsh: Yes, there is a religious stone, a skeleton rock; these two are called mother rock and monk rock. You also talked to me about a book with a covering, *vajra*, the Maanit, where the *Dünchüür maani* was buried, and others. I wrote about them in my book in detail.) Yes, the monastery had an astrologer monk. About 1,000 monks came to these temples and gathered in the assembly hall, which is demolished now. The astrologer recited sacred texts for people who suffered from epidemics and illness. Also against abundant livestock disease, against the drying up of brooks and springs. He recited sacred texts to reduce these concerns.
- You mentioned certain monks who meditated for a long period of time, for many years.
- Yes, they meditated in that way. It is not in question. Such monks lived in this monastery, whilst others went to isolated places, hills and caves and did not drink and eat for ten or twenty years.
- (Jünsh: Actually, the monks did not use to eat meat at all. Their monastic meal called *tsav* is made of rice, isn't it? They ate rice. Their tea is called *manz*. They used to drink tea and eat rice. There was also a round cake of *gavj* monks called *shaviraanii boov*. They did not eat meat.) The reason is that meat is connected to butchering animals which is a non-virtuous deed. It is not a merit but a sin. Thus, they did not eat meat. (Jünsh: They did not slaughter animals. They ate rice and dairy products and drank kumis. These are not harmful.) They drank much kumis. Also milk. They used to eat dairy products. They did not eat meat.
- (Informant's daughter: Did they use brown [barley] flour?)
- (Jünsh: They ate brown flour. They made offering cakes from it.) They ate barley flour. (Jünsh: It was as follows. Many boys lived in the countryside. Their parents used to ask each other 'Will they eat the rice (*tsav*) of the monastic meal, or embrace a glued head.' The rice of monks refers to taking ordination, whereas the glue refers to living as a herdsman in the countryside. Women used glue to form their hair, so embracing a glued head meant that the boy would marry and live a lay life. This tradition existed even in my childhood.) *Tsavuu* means glue.
- (Jünsh: Was *Sanduin khuvilgaan* reincarnation born into an aristocrat family?)
- People used to say so. I do not know.

- (Daughter: Is there any continuation of the *Sanduin khuvilgaan* lineage? What about his lineage? Was he a reincarnation?)
- It was said that such a continuation existed. In the area of Bayan Uul.
- Have you heard about monks who performed miracles? For instance, do you know any story about the tantric master Byamba?
- (Jünsh: Reincarnations were miraculous monks. For example, an oracle wrapped his body with a giant snake. What was the name of that oracle?) Do you mean Luvsandalai? (Jünsh: Luvsandalai oracle. He fell into a trance. That was a long, giant snake. That should be true. He wrapped its many meters long body around himself.) It was about seven meters.
- Please tell me more details of this story.
- I have mentioned it to you, Jünsh. I saw its silhouette in the 1900s. (Jünsh: It frayed.) It shed its skin. I recited a sacred text. It shed its skin. (Jünsh: And finally snaked along.) Such animals lived here. (Jünsh: It confirms that giant snakes lived in Arkhangai province in former times. It also could have been a snake taken from one of the hot places of South Asia. People maybe fed it. Like snakes in circus. A snake which was a circus attraction. Was it a snake like that?) I do not think so. It was not like that. (Jünsh: The mountain, Tsogt Uul is situated here. A long giant snake is said to live in Tsogt Uul.) Yes, in the northern direction. (Jünsh: You said that you saw it.) Did I tell you that I had seen it myself? (Jünsh: At the *Naadam* festival in 1937.) I saw its silhouette on 11 July. Oracles were people who turned to trance. They had close connections with the *nāgas*. They knew and befriended all such beings living in the region. Those types of people fell into a trance. Nowadays, all these new shamans are false. It is a play. People who perform body-offerings should know the 33,000 water, 33,000 hills and waters, 33,000 waters. They know all these 33,000 waters. They know the lords of these 33,000 waters and hills. They know all of them. The lord of the given hill is the *savdag*. For instance, Bulgan Uul has a *savdag*. There should be one such lord. Luvsandalai became their friend, like mother and brother. (Jünsh: Moreover, behind Bulgan Uul, it is said that this part has a male lord, and the eastern part has a female guardian.) Yes. (Jünsh: Tsogt Uul has a male lord.) Which mountain? Tsogt Uul? Tsogt Uul is even wilder than Bulgan Uul. (Jünsh: It is said to have a male lord. Khanan has a female lord. These are male and female lords. *Nāgas* and lords. *Nāgas*' circulation is all around. The lords and guards of the ground exist with the following reason if we explain them from a scientific point of view. Two mountains run bio energy between each other. Circulation requires opposites.) Yes, indeed. (Jünsh: Obedience of *nāgas*.) In other words, it

is electricity from lightning. (Jünsh: It is very soft lightning electricity.) Imagine that clouds appear in the sky. All beings living in heaven meet these clouds. They emit fog and mist to the ground. These lakes, rivers, hills, and their inhabitants meet the smoke and mist. (Jünsh: For instance, there is a lonely tree here, the Gants Mod. Lonely trees have a circulation with each other. They generate energy. In the western valley of Bulgan Uul there are the Gants Modnii Rashaan, two trees, and the lords which circumambulate Zaya Gegeenii Khüree. The two trees circulate to each other. Local people venerated them, and built an *ovoo* in the south of Tsogt Uul. People hung out silken scarves to express their deep faith in local spirits. It has close connections with science though it was considered as superstition in former times.) This monastery of Zaya Paṇḍita Luvanprinlei is also called the Precious Monastery of Zaya Paṇḍita and it consists of the eight auspicious symbols and the nine jewels. The nine jewels include gold with lion stones. Milk mares. Sangiin Tolgoi is the superior of milking mares, the upper pole, the Altan Ovoo is the lower pole, and the River Tamir is the long rope for tying colts. (Jünsh: There is a hill called Sair, *Süngiin khojuul* or medicine bag. All of these are very accurate things.) Very accurate. (Jünsh: I described it in my book in detail.)

- Did you tell old stories to Jünsh *guai*?
- I have told him almost every single event. He made notes. (Jünsh: I recorded them in my notebook, and some things were added or included, for instance the story of that snake.)
- Have you heard that the monks of the monastery used to venerate 13 mountains?
- (Jünsh: Veneration? 13 mountains existed here with veneration.)
- The monks of the current monastery told me that 13 *ovoos* existed in the vicinity.
- (Jünsh: It must be true. Sangiin Tolgoi, Sairiin Ovoo, Bulgan Uuliin Ovoo, Maanit Uul and many others.)
- The monks could list ten *ovoos*.
- (Jünsh: Well, even Bor Tolgoi was known as Dartsag Tolgoi. Sair was also a place of veneration.) In the direction of that deep ravine where livestock use to climb, on the other side of the hospital. Near the deep ravine. Monks venerated there the *ovoo* of the Four-Faced Mahākāla, the main protector of Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*. (Jünsh: Even in that ravine there was an *ovoo*. From Bulgan to that ravine. Several *ovoos* existed. Also children's *ovoo*.) Manjchingiin Ovoo was in the western valley near the well. Children who carried tea to the monks used to gather there.

- What did they do?
- (Jünsh: Tea.) No, they played topknot football.
- Isn't it Bor Tolgoi?
- (Jünsh: No.)
- Where was it exactly?
- Jünsh wrote an overview of it. If you want to write about the monastery in detail much information about the history of the monastery does not fit into a book. I am old, and I have forgotten many details. (Jünsh: Bor Tolgoi which is behind of this house was called Khuyagiin Bor Tolgoi before. It is said that even a prison belonged to Zayaiin Khüree.) A prison operated in the foreground of Khuyagiin Bor Tolgoi. (Jünsh: Prison armour was there, thus it was named Khuyagiin Bor Tolgoi. Later, its name became Dartsag Tolgoi as children placed *dartsag* flags there and played there. There was also a small *ovoo*.) The prison looked like a yurt but was dug into the ground. There was a hole as large as the smoke hole of a yurt. Round and deep. A cup of milk tea, and imprisoned people were put into the prison with a ladder, and then the ladder was taken away. People could not get out and stayed under the ground. It is said that such a prison existed here before. Sentinels lived there, thus its name became Khuyagiin Bor Tolgoi. This small hill. There was such a hole at the foot of the hill. (Jünsh: Later, the word *khuyag* disappeared from its name and remained simply Bor Tolgoi.)
- What was situated behind the brook, Jamganii Bulag? Is there another brook?
- (Jünsh: Jamganii Bulag has a long history. It was Jamgan *noyon*'s holy spring. It was a holy spring. At the time of monks.)
- Jamgan is not the place where the Thirteenth Dalai Lama 'watched the horses' [went for a leak]?
- (Jünsh: No.) Wait, in which year and month did it happen? It was the year of the Sheep when Jamgan *bogd* [the Thirteenth Dalai Lama] visited this site. He thought that it would be fine to have a brook here, thus he struck the ground, and a brook broke out. It became known as Jamganii Bulag.
- Was he a Tibetan man?
- (Jünsh: Tibetan. This story must be true. The other is a legend. According to legends, Jamgan *noyon* was a nobleman at Zayaiin Khüree. He had stomach problems. The *maaramba* doctor could not cure him. A mendicant monk came from Tibet. He passed Zayaiin Khüree. The mendicant monk told him to drink from that holy spring, which is now called Jamgan. That man, Jamgan, had drunk that water for three years. He used to put up a yurt near the spring and lived there in summer. He

drank the water in summer and winter. Three year passed and finally he recovered. This water cures stomach problems. As Jamgan *noyon* recovered, the spring became known as Jamgan Noyonii Rashaan, the spring of Jamgan noble. Later, the name *noyon* disappeared, and is now simply called Jamganii Bulag.) Jamganii Bulag was deeper than my storehouse. It had golden fish. There is not much water in it, but still there are fish. (Jünsh: The water comes from the north, from Toom, and Jamganii Us unites with it. The water is good for a hangover. Drunken people, having hangovers, used to visit the spring when I worked in the Museum of the Environment there. They took the water in bottles. It is cold and detoxicates.) (Private talk.) (Jünsh: Byamba *choijin* was the last oracle here, wasn't he? I included his photograph in my book.)

- Let's see his photograph. What is the name of this tent? *Chö* practitioners often had such white tents.
- (Jünsh: It is a kind of pavilion. This lump is Bulgan Uul. This is a kind of pavilion. What is it? Is it a palace where oracles fall into a trance?) Yes, maybe. (Jünsh: This is a palace, in which he fell into a trance.)

Interview 4

Interview recorded with voice recorder on 13 September, 2012 at Tüdev *guai*'s home with the assistance of his daughter. S. Jünsh also asked and answered questions.

- I am the person who has asked you about Zaya Gegeenii Khüree. I have some old, archival photographs. This is the rectangular place of worship. Do you remember it?
- Yes, there was a rectangular place of worship called *mörgöliin dörvöljin*.
- What was it exactly? Where was it?
- It stood on the eastern side of the assembly hall.
- Do you remember its colour?
- It was spotted. Yellowish.
- With a kind of statue on its top?
- Statue? That was a place where real *stūpas* were prepared, it was like something out of a nature painting.
- That might be something else. This photograph shows a different item. There is a human figure on its top. His crown might consist of skulls.
- It was like a place for studying nature and the environment.
- Was it for science?

- No. Wait, what was it exactly?
- This is made of stone and looks like a man. Like a kneeling man. Tsogt Uul is visible in the background.
- Yes, it is on the top of a rectangular platform.
- Was there a statue of a man on the top of that rectangular platform?
- Is that a statue?
- For what purpose?
- I cannot say anything about it.
- Did it have a special name?
- No. I can tell you about what I know, but I do not want to tell you anything that I do not know.
- Were there any *ovoo* in the vicinity of this rectangular platform?
- Certainly. They stood in the north.
- This is another photograph. Is it the veneration temple of Bulgan Uul? In the centre? It seems that it stood behind the assembly hall. A temple with a square roof.
- That was the temple of philosophy.
- Were there any small temples behind that temple?
- Yes, the Zuu Temple.
- Was it the same as Galdan Zuu?
- No. It was another Zuu Temple. Jobo is a form of Buddha. The monastic philosophy school was situated behind the assembly hall, and the real Zuu Temple behind the monastic philosophy school.
- Did its holy object represent Jobo Buddha?
- Exactly. *Khadag Sonomdorj guai* was responsible for it.
- (Jünsh: There was a small *ovoo* behind the monastic philosophy school and the Zuu Temple, wasn't there?)
- Yes.
- What is this small thing on the western side of the *ovoo*? It looks like a foundation. Two small elevations.
- That is again something else. There were *stūpas* there.
- Next to the *stūpa* is also a small thing. Was there a *stūpa* next to the *ovoo*?
- A *stūpa*. Jünsh knows *Khadag Sonomdorj guai*. (Jünsh: I know him.)
- What was situated on the western and eastern sides of the monastic philosophy school?
- The *Jas* stood on the western side. Oh, no, the Cakrasaṃvara Temple was situated there. The Cakrasaṃvara Temple stood west of the monastic philosophy school.
- What about the eastern side?

- There was a temple, but I do not remember it well. An astrologic monastic school.
- Where was the *Jaarai datsan* situated?
- *Jaarai datsan* might have been situated north of the assembly hall. No, that was the monastic philosophy school.
- Were the monastic philosophy school and the *Jaarai* two different temples?
- Different ones.
- Please specify the location of the *Güshig datsan*?
- Isn't *Güshig datsan* the current museum? (Jünsh: No, the museum consists of the palace and the two *semchin* palaces.)
- What about *Agva datsan* and the tantric monastic school called *Jüid datsan*?
- *Agva* was located east of the assembly hall. *Agva* stood in the east. It should have been in the east. North-east.
- It is an old photograph. Are these the two temples of Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*?
- Yes.
- Please identify the location of the platform from which monks were called to gather at ceremonies.
- The platform was in the assembly hall. (Jünsh: It should have been to the south-east of the assembly hall.) Oh yes. Do you know the *Tsam* dance? Horns were played there at the time of the *Tsam* performance. There were two *semchin* residential palaces.
- (Jünsh: There was a tall ladder which led to the horns.)
- A tall ladder? I do not know. I am confused.
- How many *aimags* and *datsans* belonged to *Deed khüree*?
- How many *aimags*? 7 *datsans* stood in *Deed khüree*. [There were no *aimags*.]
- What were their names?
- Philosophy, *Agva*, Vairocana, Cakrasaṃvara, *Güshig*. How many did I list?
- Five. Also *Jaarai datsan*?
- Yes, *Jaarai datsan*.
- Guhyasamāja?
- Also Guhyasamāja.
- Was it a *datsan* or something else?
- Guhyasamāja *datsan*, Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*, Vairocana *datsan*.
- Was there a separate astrological monastic school as well?
- An astrological monastic school.

- (Jünsh: The astrological monastic school and *Jaarai datsan* were not the same?)
- No, different temples.
- Did the medical monastic school belong to *Dood khüree*?
- Sure, to *Dood khüree*.
- Where was the *Vairocana datsan*?
- On the eastern side.
- Did *Tārā Temple* exist here as well?
- *Tārā Temple*? Of course. I do not remember its exact location, but it was in the eastern part. Temples called *sūm* were situated in the east. East of the assembly hall.
- Is the *Guhyasamāja datsan* the current monastery?
- No, it isn't.
- (Jünsh: This is the residence of *Sanduin khuvilgaan*.) A monastery of a lama.
- Were the temple of *Sanduin khuvilgaan* and the *Guhyasamāja* or *Sandui datsan* two different temples?
- (Jünsh: They were different temples.)
- Where was the *Guhyasamāja datsan* located?
- *Guhyasamāja datsan* stood east of the assembly hall.
- Not in the west? The palace itself was situated east of the assembly hall.
- You are right. I cannot tell you precisely the location of these temples. Only hypothesis. I do not remember their exact location now.
- How many monks did the *datsans* have?
- Each had about 100 monks. The monastery had about 1,000 monks. All of them were persecuted. They never returned.
- Did the *jas* operate in yurts or wooden buildings?
- There were separate *jas* financial offices.
- Did they run their operation in yurts?
- They had their own buildings.
- How many *jas* did the monastery have?
- Well, how many temples were here? 8 or 7? All the seven had a *jas* financial office. Individually. *Cakrasaṃvara datsan*, *Gūshig datsan*, *Jii datsan*, *Jaarai datsan*, all of them.
- Were *Jii datsan* and *Jaarai datsan* different names of the same temple?
- These two were different temples. Two temples.
- Please specify the meanings of *Jii* and *Jaarai*. What was the difference between them?
- They were responsible for other things. Temples were responsible for nature, astrology, water, rain, drought, etc. They were responsible for

astrology, weather forecasting. (Jünsh: Meteorology station.) All temples had their own responsibilities and rules. I can explain it only in basic terms but not in detail. (Jünsh: Monks having different occupations belonged to specific temples.) Exactly. For instance, a temple was responsible for wells, another for rivers, and another for nature and environment.

- Did the monastery have a Kālacakra Temple?
- There was a Kālacakra Temple. What I am telling to you is in general. Hypothetical. I do not know it in detail.
- Is it true that the Guhyasamāja *datsan* was the oldest temple building?
- I do not know. Guhyasamāja *datsan*, *Jaarai*, *Güshig*. There were temples like these, but I have forgotten many things.
- Were Guhyasamāja *datsan* and the tantric monastic school the same or different temples?
- Different temples.
- *Agva* was also another temple.
- Yes, all of them were individual temples. The medical monastic school stood in *Dood khüree*.
- Were *Sagar* and *Chogar* dance held in the Kālacakra *datsan*?
- In *Güshig datsan*?
- *Düinkhor*.
- Well, all of them had their own dances.
- Do you remember the name of the dances?
- I can give an account of the *Tsam* dance. Among the masks, there was a bull, a horse, a jocular old man who is also known in Ulaanbaatar.
- Did the monks of the Kālacakra Temple perform a separate dance called *Sagar chogar*? A different dance than the *Tsam*?
- Many, there were more than ten dances. [Tsam characters.]
- Different from the ones you have mentioned previously?
- Many, many. In different *datsans*. (Jünsh: Certainly, the Deer and the Bull appeared at the Maitreya procession.) Yes. (Also the two skeletons.) Yes, there were two skeletons. (Jünsh: Four dogs.) Four wrathful deities called *Dogshid*. All of them represented other phenomena. (Jünsh: Śrīdevī also participated in the dance.) Certainly, Śrīdevī participated. (Jünsh: Also a jocular old man, the Blue Old man, the Yellow Old man.) Yes. His name was Bat-Amgalan. [Maybe Enkh Amgalan Khan.] (Jünsh: Also children performed the butterfly dance. There would have been 100 butterflies, but children did not register. It is said that only ten or twenty children danced as butterflies.) Yes. Herders live in the countryside. Animal and human figures performed their own dances. The skeleton represents the ancient lords of the region, and also demons. It was a large monastery

with various types of dances. [Characters.] There were not any dances missing. For example, the two skeletons demonstrate people who died, two demons. (Jünsh: There were also *Shanag* black-hat dancers.) Do you have its photograph?

- (Jünsh: Tsongkhapa’s image is depicted on Bulgan Uul. Was it fenced off once?)
- No, there was no fence.
- Where was the veneration temple of Bulgan Uul?
- (Jünsh: Imagine it like this. The *ovoo* of Bulgan Uul stood north of the Galdan Zuu Temple. There is an *ovoo* even now. It is venerated from time to time.)
- Did such an *ovoo* exist before?
- (Jünsh: Yes.) It was the biggest monastery in the area. (Jünsh: It was said to be the largest monastery in this region. Other large monasteries included *Dalai Choinkhor van*’s Tariatiiin Khüree and Möröngiin Khüree in Öndör-Ulaan district. My Zayaiin Khüree was sizeable. Others, such as Luu Güinii Khüree and Ööld Beisiin Khüree were smaller.) It is true. My monastery was the monastery of Luvsanprinlei *gegeen*.
- (Jünsh: Two *stūpas* stood in front of the assembly hall.)
- Well, there were two or four.
- Old photos taken in the 1920s depict two *stūpas*. In front of the assembly hall, west of the two *semchins*, west of the current museum, west of the fence was a two-storey *stūpa* looking like a small temple.
- Are they not the two Mahārājas? What was inside of this temple?
- I do not know if these have remained in the museum. There were two figures holding snakes. They sat there. The same [*Mahārājas*, Guardians of the Four Directions] as in the Choijin Lama Temple Museum in Ulaanbaatar.
- Weren’t there prayer wheels in that temple?
- (Jünsh: There might have not been prayer wheels. It seems that *Mahārājas* sat there. Some people say that this Mahārāja Temple was dedicated to Luvsanperenlei *gegeen*.) I do not think that it is true. It was built much later. I do not know. Have you seen the two *Mahārājas* in Ulaanbaatar? They were originally here. Have you seen the two ruins in front of the assembly hall? These are the ruins of them. The Mahārāja Temple.
- (Jünsh: Do you mean that two *stūpas* stood in front of the assembly hall?)
- There should be two ruined temples in front of the assembly hall.
- Do you mean inside the fenced off area?
- Exactly. (Jünsh: Well, there are some things inside.) That was the *Mahārāja*.

- (Jünsh: Oh, then we misunderstood you. I will show it to you inside the ruins of the assembly hall. So, it was a temple with that reason. In the very south.)
- A small temple is visible on this other photograph in front of the assembly hall. It might have been a temple that housed a prayer wheel. It is a small, two-storey temple building in front of the assembly hall.
- That was built later. That must be a new photograph.
- It was taken in the 1920s.
- Really?
- Yes. Were there four stone lions here?
- Certainly, not only four but about ten.
- Where were they located?
- They sat on the two sides of the assembly hall, and the gates of all monastic schools had lions in pair.
- Were these lions made of stone?
- Stone lions, not sculptures. (Jünsh: Sculptures did not exist in former times). These were carved stones.
- (Jünsh: It is also said that eight *stūpas* stood once behind Zayaiin Khüree in the north. Is it true?)
- Yes, people said that there were eight *stūpas*. I do not know. As far as I remember there were eight *stūpas*.
- Do you remember the names of the famous monks of the monastery? Who was the abbot at that time?
- There were eight *datsans*, and all of them had their heads.
- Who were the chanting masters and disciplinarians?
- A famous chanting master of the assembly hall was Nürzed from Bayan-Uul, and also the relative of Demchig. Wait, I will try to recall his name.
- Were ceremonies held at Galdan Zuu?
- (Jünsh: Galdan Zuu did not belong to Zayaiin Khüree.) It was affiliated to Said Vangiin Khüree. (Jünsh: A few monks came twice a year from Said Vangiin Khüree to perform rites for summoning prosperity by reciting the *Golden Light Sūtra*. Afterwards, they left. Residential monks did not belong to Galdan Zuu. There was a well on the western side. Only a guardian belonged to it and a few irregular ceremonies were held.) Did you ask about the Northern Zuu Temple called Galdan Zuu? It was like that indeed. It belonged to Said Vangiin Khüree. That was a beautiful temple. Unquestionably.
- (Daughter: There is a photograph about Bandar's uncle who used to perform the body-offering rituals. He and his wife are visible in this photograph.) What was the name of his wife?

- Tsesren. (Daughter: Another person is also visible on this photograph. Maybe his disciple. There is also a *jodgor* tent, a desk, and deers in front.) It is the body-offering. His name was Byamba. You can see him on Bandraa's photograph. (Daughter: Bandraa said that Byamba was his mother's younger brother). Fully-ordained monk Byamba seems to have been the brother of Bandraa's mother. He did not have a beard. He prophesied with a rosary. (Private talk.) (Further talk about the photo.)
- What was the reason of the *jodgor* tent? Did they sleep there? What was it used for?
- (Jünsh: It was a mobile dwelling.)
- There is a valley called Donoi. Was it named after a person?
- That is a place name. Three large temple buildings stood at Donoi called Donoin Süm.
- Were there only monks who performed body-offering rituals?
- Yes, all monks performed body-offering there.
- Is Donoi a Mongolian word or a Tibetan word?
- It is a Mongolian word. Countless snakes lived in that mountain. Worms. Donoin Süm had three large temple buildings. It was used for body-offering rituals. It differed from this monastery: that place protected this monastery.
- Did monks venerate Suvarga Khairkhan Mountain at that time?
- Monks used to venerate that.
- Annually?
- Yes, every year. About 10 or 20 people.
- Did local people venerate it?
- Yes, local inhabitants. However, *Zaya gegeen* also venerated that mountain. He was said to venerate Suvarga Khairkhan. The skulls of many executed monks came to light at Tasganii Ovoo in Ulaanbaatar. About 200 of them are the heads of this monastery's monks. [He might refer to the mass grave at Khambiin Ovoo in Ulaanbaatar.]
- When did they arrest and deport monks from here?
- (Jünsh: The execution of monks began in 1937.) They were trampled until 1940. Livestock and people live in the countryside. All these creatures appeared in the *Tsam* dance. You might know wolves. There was a temple which was responsible for wolves. A temple protected the livestock and another one the waters. (Jünsh: Everything had a guardian. It is said that Bulgan Uul was called Chonotiin Khöndii, the Valley of the Wolves before the foundation of the monastery.) Yes, it might be true. (Jünsh: Several wolves and dogs lived here, at the site called the Valley of the Wolves.) Additionally, wild pigs inhabited the mountains. The

monastery has a marvelous history. Jünsh has recorded all these details from me. (Jünsh: There is even a national song about this Valley of the Wolves:

“My dappled horse parades.

He crosses the Valley of the Wolves.

If your feelings are still truthful

I will ride to you with the morning star.”)

You cited this song perfectly.

- (Jünsh: Tsongkhapa’s image is not ancient. It is visible on the cliffs of the hillside at Bulgan Uul.)
- Yes, that is not an old image. It was said to be painted in the period of the Manchu emperor. It was exceptionally beautiful. Springs, livestock and horsemen inhabited this area. Now, livestock is almost unseen. There are many cars instead. Thousands of antelopes ran to the Gobi. When I was in Khentii Province I travelled toward the Gobi.
- (Jünsh: Near *Dood khüree* is a brook from which deers used to drink water.) I saw it myself. (Jünsh: Giant snakes lived in the valley of Bulgan Uul.) This is true. Did I tell you what happened to me in 1937?
- (Jünsh: You told me that story. Also Yadamsüren mentioned it.) Countless wild pigs lived in these mountains. They sheltered among the rocks.
- Where is the place called Emeel Tsokhio?
- Emeel Tsokhio? (Jünsh: Two cliffs form a saddle. Those two cliffs have a hollow in the north. The bodies of the deceased ones are placed in the southern hollow. That belonged to Bayan-Ulaan district.) (Private talk about Andrei.)
- Do you know when the Thirteenth Dalai Lama arrived at Zaya Gegeenii Khüree?
- (Jünsh: The Thirteenth Dalai Lama just passed the monastery.) Yes, it is said like this. The Dalai Lama passed the monastery in the year of the Sheep in the 1900s. (Jünsh: He met Jambatseren *gegeen*, who was acknowledged at that time.) Yes, people used to talk about that. All nobles and reincarnations venerated the Dalai Lama. (Jünsh: Everyone rejoiced when the Dalai Lama arrived in Mongolia and recognized saints and reincarnations.) (Private talk.)
- Do you remember the fence of the *Lavran* palace? Its colour?
- It had various colours. It was similar to the current wall. It had the same colour. Yellowish.
- Where did the monks use to hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- The monks used to go to Urga, to Ulaanbaatar for a large scale *Khailen* oath-taking period. Several monks gathered at Urga from their own, rural

monasteries. On other occasions, *Khailen* was held in province centers. It was like that.

- Was the *gandi mod* used at the *Khailen* ceremony?
- I do not know.
- Did the monks hold *Nügne* fasting rituals?
- The monks of Zayaiin Khüree held that for 45 or 50 days. They gave up eating in that period.
- (Jünsh: Were their meals withdrawn?)
- Meals were withdrawn. They ate only vegetarian food during that period. Many such monks lived in this mountain. Countless! They accumulated merits. It is said that the foundations of such sites have remained in Tariatiin Khüree in the north: traces in caves and foundations of such temples.
- Can you describe a day of a monk?
- Ceremonies were uninterrupted here for day and night. There were monks who participated in daily ceremonies and others at night. Monks with evening repast were separated. They gathered for the voice of the conch shell horn and a large drum [gong]. They played the gong or the conch shell. They did several things. The monastery operated non-stop. Monks who were late and thus interrupted the ceremony had to make three prostrations. (Jünsh: They were punished: beaten with the *beree* stick.) Exactly.
- (Jünsh: Did the chanting master of the assembly hall lead the chanting?)
- Yes. Rinchen..... Wait, what was the name of the uncle of Nürzed Demchig? Well, I do not remember his name.
- (Jünsh: Were you yourself a monk?)
- Yes. I was a monk for 15 years in this monastery. Then, I was enrolled in the army. They started to arrest and take away the monks, so I returned home to the countryside. Then, I joined the army.
- (Jünsh: Which temple of the monastery did you belong to?)
- Cakrasaṃvara *datsan*.
- What kinds of objects of worship were available there?
- Śrīdevī. She is the protector even nowadays.
- (Jünsh: Was Śrīdevī the main protector of Zayaiin Khüree?)
- Yes. When the high ranking monks were captured, the young monks left to the countryside. Later, I joined the army.
- Where did you live in the area of the monastery?
- My yurt sat at the site of the current yurt temple [Ölzii Badruulagch Monastery.] In that area.
- How many monks lived in a yurt?

- At most two. (Jünsh: Monks did not have wives and children. They had some disciples in their families. These disciples served the older monks. Mostly one or two monks lived in a yurt. Disciples prepared tea and meal for their masters. The monastery also provided meals. Monks did not prepare meals for themselves, did they?) You are right. All monasteries and temples had kitchens, where monks' meals were prepared.
- Did the monks eat cakes and cookies?
- (Jünsh: Their main course was the *shaviraanii boov*. The *boov* cake called the 'round of the *gavj* monks', isn't it?) Yes, there were not any other cookies. (Jünsh: Monks ate rice called *tsav*. Not much meat. Monks used to go to the countryside for the Lunar New Year. The Lunar New Year was not celebrated in such a large scale as today.) No. (Jünsh: Such a large scale New Year was not held in the city. This fashion, junketing, eating dumplings did not exist.) Slaughtering animals was absolutely forbidden. It was a very serious rule. (Jünsh: Marriage was also prohibited. Women were forbidden to enter the *khüree*.) Exactly. Slaughtering the livestock was prohibited. It was not like nowadays. It was forbidden. (Jünsh: Monks ate only dried meat. The monks who did not eat meat.) They ate only melted butter. (Jünsh: Melted butter, kumis, and dairy products.) Yes. They ate and drank milk, kumis, dairy products gained from the livestock. Nothing else. The monks who lived in mountains, caves, and among the cliffs always prayed for the health and well-being of sentient beings. Firewood was prepared. Some of it was prepared, and slit, and with a small coal of larch it was lit. Wood was not prepared unnecessarily. Trees were not cut down in the area of Mongolia in general. Logging began in recent times. Levelled. This is the end of woods. There is an electric saw. Afore, trees were cut only on prescribed days determined by sacred books. Sacred texts were recited even in the case of staking horses, at the time of tethering horses. There is a special sacred text of pegging horses. In spite of this, nowadays soil is turned up. (Jünsh: Moreover, holes were filled in after the piles had been taken away. It was forbidden to drop unnecessary things in water. Old traditions, sacred texts and rules were strict.) Marvelous old traditions.
- (Jünsh: *Choir* is another name for philosophy, isn't it?)
- Yes. The *choiriin nom* means philosophy. The place of philosophical studies was north of the current monastery. If someone took dust from the floor of that temple and scattered it on a place which the wolves used to visit, the wolves ran away. It was such a delicate place! (Private talk.) Everything has become misconducted now. People even do not know each other. If a child falls, people do not say, 'Oh poor thing!' but shove

forward. There are people living in yurts in the countryside. They used to take the sacrum, wools of their sheep, stroke it with a stick to make felt, and put up their yurts themselves. If a family was moving, it offered tea in a kettle and a meal on a plate, and moved away only later. I was born in 1912. I know this man, Jünsh for many years. Everything is clearly written in his book. (Private talk.) Donoin Süm was situated east of this brow. That place protected the monastery and the planet by pacifying the local spirits. As Jünsh has mentioned before families brought their boys to become monks. From generation to generation. (Private talk.) The monks of this monastery did not commit any faults, did not commit any misdeeds. How can you explain such a misdeed that the monks who had never committed any faults were executed? (Private talk.)

(Jünsh: They took the monks of this province with cars at night to the ravine on the other side of the Vocational School. A car came at night and took ten people. They took the monks to the ravine and shot them. At Khuurai. Afore, that was a place where corpses were placed out. People were executed exactly there. Have you heard about the doctor monk, Davaasambuu *maaramba*? He was my grandmother's younger brother and told me the following story. Anyway, they sentenced Davaasambuu *maaramba*, and about another ten monks. About five or six of them returned later. Davaasambuu and *Öndör* ('Tall') Tsemee hid their Buddhist implements in the mountains. They were captured and moved to a clay building full of monks of different banners. They were dirty and stunk because of urine and the other. In the morning, they pronounced the name and banner of about ten people who then were taken away. The majority of the people of those groups of tens were executed. Only a few monks could leave that place in safety and return home. They said farewell to the others, who remained there. Davaasambuu's name was pronounced together with the names of the other ten people. They asked two small questions threatening him with death. Davaasambuu *maaramba* had gone to the city and became the doctor of the Red Army. So, he possessed Choibalsan's certification. (Private talk, Jünsh's talk continues as follows.) They said to Davaasambuu, 'You have a certification from Choibalsan saying that you did not act against the state. Go! You helped the government and healed the partisan army. You are innocent.' Davaasambuu says that they had to walk from the car. They had to go to the waste dump, the ravine north of the Vocational School, which was *Dood khüree* at that time. Many birds and dogs gathered there. People's carriages laid everywhere. This is the way that Davaasambuu escaped from that dirt. He reached the place called Tsagaan Us and entered a yurt.

He told them the story of his arrest. He drank a tea in that yurt as he knew the family. He was not sent home on foot, but a child took him home on horseback. It was north of Erdenesumber, no, Lüngiin Ovoo. The child took him home and people cried. The monk was welcomed with great rejoicing. Many items were collected from there. His boxes were locked and taken away including barley and rice, a telescope, a kind of gun. They did not give them back. He himself told me this story.)

WESTERN MONGOLIA

Dulam Dashrentsen (1909–2015)



D. Dashrentsen monk, 2010

Dulam Dashrentsen was born in 1909, in the year of the Dog. He lived in Yaruugiin Khüree Dashpuntsaglin in Aldarkhaan district, Zavkhan province from the age of 6 to 30, until 1937. After the revival, he became a monk of Dambadarjailin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, and became its abbot.

We interviewed Dashrentsen monk in his home in Ulaanbaatar with Zsuzsa Majer in 2007 and 2009, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded in his home on 18 November, 2010 with voice recorder and the assistance of his spouse. It was conducted after I had documented the ruins of Yaruugiin Khüree in order to confirm the location of certain temples based on a publication about the monastery.

- Could you specify the number of monks and temples that belonged to your old monastery? Almost nothing has remained from it.
- Has nothing remained?

- (Informant's spouse: Partially it has remained, hasn't it? A temple building was renovated there.)
- The whole monastery was demolished and bestowed to Aldarkhaan. Nothing has remained. (Spouse: What can we say? The monks rebuilt a temple, so something has remained at that site.)
- Yaruugiin Khüree and Övgön Khüree were two different names of the same monastery? Was Yaruugiin Khüree also called Övgön Khüree?
- Yes.
- (Private talk. Looking for the sketch of the monastery in Mr. Baljinnyam's book about Yaruugiin Khüree.) This is the assembly hall. Can you confirm if these temples and their names are correct?
- (Spouse: Is it the assembly hall?)
- Well.
- (Spouse: There are one, two, three temple buildings here. These two are small. Maitreya Temple. You should know that.)
- I remember well. There were 15 temples.
- (Spouse: It does not show 15. Fewer than 15.)
- It should be 15. There were many temples.
- (Spouse: The names of the temples are provided here. This is a sketch of the monastery, of all the temple buildings. One of them was called *Dechindarjaalin*.)
- The monastery was called *Dashpuntsaglin* and had 15 temples.
- (Spouse: Well, it does not matter. The assembly hall, *Dashpuntsaglin*, *Ikh datsan*. The fourth one is *Güdengiin khural*. The fifth one is the medical monastic school. The sixth one is Maitreya. The seventh one is Kālacakra, the eighth one is Tantra, and the eleventh one is *Günjidlin*.)
- Is the medical monastic school indicated there?
- (Spouse: Yes, *Manba* is here. I have mentioned it before.)
- Where are these temples indicated?
- (Spouse: I am reading them one by one: *Güshig*, *Güden*, *Güdengiin dugan*.)
- Well, *Güdengiin dugan*.
- (Spouse: *Güdengiin dugan*. 10th *Gachinlin*, 11th *Güjidlin*, 12th *Shaddüvlin Züün khüree*, 13th *Norovlin*, 14th *Peljeelin*, *Baruun shaddüvlin*, 16th *Dordüv*, 17th *Sambidan*, 18th *Günjidlin*. *Günjidlin* is written twice.)
- Please repeat it from the very beginning.
- (Spouse: *Günjidlin*. 18th *Yangii*, 20th *Jarankhashariin suvarga*, 21st *Dünchüür maaniin khürd*, 22nd main gate of the monastery, entrance, 23rd *Gachilangiin datsan*'s well. 24th *Günjidlengiin*, 12, 13 *Shaddüvlin*, *Norovlin*, 14, 15, 16 *Peljeelin*, *Dordüv*, *Günjidlen datsan*, *jasiin dugan*.)

- Well, some of the temples are missing from this list. For instance, *Chojjidlin* and *Tsandillin*.
- Where was the *Jarankhashar suvarga*, south of the gate? Inside the monastery wall or outside? (Spouse: This girl has visited the site of the ruined monastery and compared the ruins with this sketch. She asks where the *Jarankhashar suvarga* stood.)
- It stood in the south-western corner of the monastery wall. Outside of the monastery.
- Outside?
- *Jarankhashar suvarga* was situated in the western corner of the wall.
- What type of temple was situated north of the assembly hall?
- There was nothing. The *Güden* stood next to the assembly hall. West of it.
- Was it fenced off?
- (Spouse: It was fenced off. There was a double fence.) There was a brick fence inside with five temples. The south-western one was the tantra, north of that the medical monastic school, on that is north-eastern side the Maitreya, on the south-eastern side the Kālacakra, and in the north was the assembly hall. West of the assembly hall stood the *Güden*. There was a division between these two. Monks were called from there, from a high platform for calling the monks. (Spouse: A platform from where monks were called to gather at the ceremonies.)
- Where was the platform itself?
- There was a large temple building of the monastic philosophy school called *Dashpuntsaglin*. The platform stood in front of it. There was a clay fence with two sections inside. It was an extensive, fenced-off area. All these buildings were demolished and the materials were delivered to Uliastai.
- Please clarify the location of the monastic philosophy school? Was it outside of that courtyard?
- South of the assembly hall. The name of the monastic philosophy school was *Dashpuntsaglin*. It stood in the south.
- Was there a small temple south of the monastic philosophy school?
- There were no other temples. There was a large temple [the monastic philosophy school] where 600 monks could be seated.
- Was there a *yampai* protective wall in front of the monastery?
- Yes, there was.
- Exactly where?
- South of the monastery wall. Outside.
- Were there prayer wheels on both sides of the protective wall?

- Four prayer wheels stood in the south. Regarding the picture of the prayer wheel, have you seen that image?
- There is a ruined temple next to the assembly hall.
- Is there?
- (Spouse: This is the sketch of the monastery. A rock with a drawn image of a *stūpa* stood near that *stūpa*. That image still exists.)
- Yes, inside the wall, north of the tantric school stood a *stūpa* called *Jan-chivchodden*. Actually, there were two *stūpas*. Only two *stūpas*. Other *stūpas* did not exist. The foundation of this monastery has an interesting story. No one remembers this story; young people do not know it. It was a military barrack before the Manchu period, before the Manchu *amban* governor. Its clay wall has remained. The clay wall is so high that a horse-cart can come in. A moat surrounded it. It was at the base of the monastery. This construction is older than the beginning of the Manchu period. Later, *Yalgasan gegeen* was born in Khovd province. He lived there practicing Buddhism. He sent a letter to the *Öndör* ('tall') *Dalai van* in the Manchu period asking for permission to move to the Khangai region. He permitted it and in the size of 80 fathoms (about 152 m) ten monks of *Yalgasan gegeen* started to construct the monastery. *Yalgasan gegeen* was a particular man. He lived in Khovd. Once, a poor family having only five goats lived in Khovd. The old man served other families. The old lady shepherded the five goats. Once, she found a child in the straw. She was walking in the grass and noticed a naked boy there. She took the baby home. He grew and grew. When he turned 13 or 14, many people gathered and panicked one day. If you ask what happened, the child himself wanted to cook with goat milk. They took the milk and mixed it with water. The child shouted, 'Mum, Mum, I can separate these two.' Well, how can anyone separate these two? They placed the two buckets on the ground. Suddenly, one of them had only water inside, and the other one only milk. Therefore, he became called *Yalgasan* ('the one who did separation'). The *Dalai van* met *Yalgasan gegeen*, and this is how the monastery was first founded. His other peculiarity was that he did not have a navel. Actually, everyone has a navel who's born from a mother. That boy did not have one. His relics were placed into a *stūpa*. Once I entered the *Güden* relic temple with my uncle and the offering-master, who had the key of the temple and who used to offer grain there. Mice ate the grain. The *stūpa* was damaged. The *stūpa* was damaged and its interior exposed to sight. There was a naked man inside. We checked: he did not have a navel indeed. If someone was born from a mother, it would not be possible. He was an eternal being who does not

die. He lives forever. I am talking about *Yalgasan gegeen*. This incarnation, who built the monastery first, died. What happened after his passing away? He had asked for a place in the Khangai region from the *Dalai van* to move there, but he refused his request. *Yalgasan* said, 'All right. Then, I will pee on your lap and take that land.' When the reincarnation of *Yalgasan* was recognized, it turned out that he was born to the family of the *Dalai van*, the *Dalai choinkhor van*. Two monasteries were situated near Uliastai: the monastery of *Yalgasan gegeen* and *Khamba gegeen*. What I have recounted here above was the true story of the foundation of Yaruugiin Khüree.

- This *Güden* relic temple is the one that you have mentioned?
- (Spouse: What was the name of the *Güden* of Yaruugiin Khüree?) Its name was simply *Güden* (Tib. *sku rten*). *Gü* means body. *Den*, well, if we are looking for its real name *-maa* it might have been secret. *Güden* means 'his own body' in Tibetan. *Den* refers to old beliefs, prayers, to peak prayers. *Güden* is like that. I spent my life in this monastery and its temples from the age of 6 to 30. When I turned 30, the great majority of the monks were executed, and the holy sculptures were seized and taken away. I remember certain things. Well, what can we do? This is the past. History is like that. First, it was a military barrack built before the Manchu period having large and tall walls. It was not built by the Mongols or the Chinese, but was a very ancient barrack. The monastery had 5 or 6 temples. Blue bricks necessarily. It was such a monastic site.
- Was the monastery also called *Kholdokhiig togtooch*?
- [Informant did not understand the question.] The *Güden* did not have an own name. It was simply called *Güden*. The two men who administered the monastery and who were executed: Tsültem *agrimba* and Gombo *tsorj*. Tsültem was the abbot. He was captured. Gombo was his successor. Amazing people! These two were deported by car at the very beginning and were shot. Gombo *tsorj* spent nine days in prison without drinking and died. Finally, they took his body, dug a hole, placed him near the hole, and shot the dead body in the hole. This is his true story! It was secret at that time, but it is not secret anymore. He was not the only person executed on that large mountain near Uliastai called Bayan-Ulaan. That is the site where they slaughtered the monks of 80 large banner monasteries. Uliastai is a place like that. No one remembers it by now. I am the last person, 100 years old. Yaruugiin Khüree had what we call 'real monks'. At present, monks have wives and children. They are not similar to the monks of former times. Those monks did not pursue

- their own interest, did not take into consideration their own life. Only Buddha's task. There is no self or own.
- Please give an account of the caravan routes or relay stations going from Yaruugiin Khüree to Uliastai?
 - Certainly, these two are of a distance of 25 km. People living in Uliastai requested the monks of our monastery for services. Women could not enter the monastery at all. Women were forbidden to sleep there. They could only stay far from the monks, about 10 kms, in the enclosures of the poor lay population. The monastery's monks recited only sacred texts. It was a real, isolated monastery.
 - Some ruins are visible south of the wall. Did people live there?
 - No. No one lived around the monastery. There was a hollow or ditch, a moat behind the wall. It can still be made out recruited, can't it? The only thing that might be scattered there are the two large waste dumps: one in the west and one in the east. We deposited the monastery's waste there. Nothing else. The monastery was a distinct place. Families did not live around it at all.
 - Please provide the name of the mountain situated in the north of the monastery?
 - I do not know. An overlapping, large mountain was called Rashaant. Rashaantiin Uul. Shilüüstei. I do not know the name of that high mountain. Their names were not said aloud in former times. I do not know the name of that mountain.
 - Where was the river, Yaruugiin Gol?
 - In the east. Bogdiin Gol flows in the south. The monastery was on the edge of Uliastai Gol and Bogdiin Gol.
 - What about the river, Zagastain Gol?
 - Zagastai flowed from the east to the west. No relevance.
 - Did you often visit Uliastai?
 - I went and it was exhausting. I went on foot, bought cakes there and ate them.
 - It was a long distance, wasn't it?
 - During daytime we had to wait and prepare the meals for our masters until the sun reached the place in front of the Buddhist deities in the south. When the sun reached the top, we could have a walk. It was possible to quickly run between these two places: run to Uliastai, buy a cake, eat it and return. Like cars nowadays. Today, the road is about 25 km long, but the way we went is little more than 10 kms. We crossed rivers and went a shorter way. It was not forbidden to go to Uliastai.
 - How many Chinese people lived in Uliastai?

- I do not know their number. Actually, Uliastai functioned as the main administrative centre of the Chinese. The *amban* governor, the *janjin* commander lived there. Their deputies lived in Ulaanbaatar and in Khovd. The largest city was Uliastai indeed. You can find tremendous written sources about it.
- Were there wells in the monastic area, inside the fence?
- Yes, there were four wells inside the monastery wall. First of all, *Norovlingiin khudag* was situated in the south-west. Second, *Gachilangiin khudag*. Two wells in the north. *Norovlin* was situated in the south-east, *Peljeelingiin khudag* in the south-west. *Tsogchin jasiin khudag* in the centre, as well as *Jüdiin khudag*, which was the well of the tantric temple and *Manbiin khudag*, the well of the medical monastic school. There were a total of seven wells. We took drinking water from these wells. I remember them very well. (Laughing.) When the water of the well turned into wet ice in winter, a man would descend inside.
- Can you list the districts of the monastery?
- *Peljeelin* was situated in the south-west, *Tsandillin* in the north-west, no, it is not true. *Baruun shaddüvlin*. And on its north was *Tsandillin* itself. North of that was *Peljeelin*. *Gatsalin* sat in the north-east, and *Züün shaddüvlin* in its south. Also *Chojilin* and finally *Norovlin*. These eight *aimags* existed there.
- What did the *yampai* protective wall look like?
- It looked like as a real wall. Have you seen the *yampai* walls in Ulaanbaatar?
- Yes, I have seen them.
- It was a low wall. Similar to them.
- Was it with dragon decorations?
- Tall. It was built of brick and stirred. 4 m high and 20 m long. Large prayer wheels stood in shelters to the south of the wall. Someone asked me to draw them. (A devotee came in and asked the informant to recite a text.)
- (Spouse: When did you arrive in Ulaanbaatar after disrobing?)
- In 1939.
- Was Dambadarjailin Monastery here at that time?
- Of course. I disrobed and came to Ulaanbaatar. I worked in the biggest party school. I was an economic director there for 20 years. Then, I revived Dambadarjaa Monastery.
- How many old monks participated in the revival of Dambadarjailin Monastery in 1990?
- (Spouse: Three monks. Baatar and Ochirjav joined and performed an incense-offering.) Many elderly monks. About 60 year old monks.

Choijal Renchinsüren (1912–2014)



Ch. Renchinsüren monk, 2010

Choijal Renchinsüren was born in 1912. He lived in Nayan Duutiin Khüree in Tsagaankhairkhan district, Zavkhan province from the age of 7 until 1937. He became a chanting master there in the latter years. He became a monk again at Züün Khüree Dashchoilin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar in 1990.

We interviewed Renchinsüren monk with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006, 2007, and 2009, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and video camera on 7 July, 2010 in Renchinsüren monk's weekend house in Jigjid, north of

Ulaanbaatar. His son assisted the interview, which focused on the famous monasteries, saints and reincarnations of Zavkhan province.

- Last year I asked questions about your old monastery, Nayan Duutiin Khüree. Now, I would like to collect data about the most extensive monasteries that existed once in Zavkhan province. I will also ask some questions about *Ari gegeen*, who arrived at Duutiin Khüree from Tibet. How old were you when you joined Duutiin Khüree?
- (Informant's son: He was a monk there from the age of 7 to 25. Duutiin Khüree was a large monastery with about 1,000 monks. It had a monastic philosophy school. My father disrobed at the age of 25.)
- When were you born?
- (Son: He was born in 1911.)
- Can you list the biggest monasteries of Zavkhan province?
- Apart from Duutiin Khüree, Yaruugiin Khüree sat there.
- How many monks did it have?
- About 200 or 300. Not more. It had few monks. Zavkhan had about 2,000 monks.
- Is *Dashpuntsaglin* another name of Yaruugiin Khüree?
- Perhaps. I do not know.
- Did saints and reincarnations live there?
- Yaruugiin Khüree did not have reincarnations. Many wise monks gathered there from different sites. The monastery itself was originally a military barrack. There were not saints and reincarnations, but it had been a barrack in former times.
- What types of other monasteries existed in Zavkhan province? Monasteries of the Sartuuls?
- The monastery of the Sartuuls was called Khüiten Galuutain Khüree or Sartuuliin Khüree. It was far in the north. Its name was Khüiten Galuutain Khüree.
- How many monks lived there?
- I do not know. There are many Sartuul people, so there might have been numerous monks. Khüiten Galuutain Khüree had the most monks in the province. Another monastery was called Tegshiin Khüree, which was a Sartuul monastery, too. (Son: These stood once in the area of the Sartuul banner.)
- Did famous saints and reincarnations live there?
- There was a reincarnation called *Achit lam*. Also *Bilegt lam*. These two reincarnations were about 20 years old as far as I know. I do not know their previous incarnations. Only *Bilegt lam* and *Achit lam*.

- Was the name of *Achit lam* maybe Vandan?
- I do not know.
- Did Tegshiin Khüree also have a reincarnation?
- These two who I have mentioned lived in Khüiten Galuutain Khüree. I do not know if any reincarnating monk lived in Tegshiin Khüree.
- Have you heard about *Khorol tsorj*?
- I do not know him. I do not know the monks very well.
- Have you heard about Yalguusan Khutagtiin Khüree?
- *Yalgasan* was the name of a *khüree* in Ider district. I have heard about it, but do not know details. *Jalkhanz khutagt*'s monastery, *Yalgasan khutagt*'s monastery and *Khamba gegeen*'s monastery were located close to each other. I have heard their names, but do not know more about them.
- Have you heard about Argalantiin Khüree?
- Where was it?
- In Tüdevtei district.
- I do not know that.
- About Shumuultain Khüree?
- Shumuultain Khüree was situated above Mörön.
- Its other name was Buyanbayasgalantiin Khüree.
- Well, I do not know that. It was very far from my Duutiin Khüree.
- Nömrögiin Khüree?
- I do not know. I do not know these northern monasteries.
- Baishintiin Khüree?
- There was a monastery with this name, but all of these were situated in the north.
- Agitiin Khüree?
- Oh, I know Agitiin Khüree well as it stood close to my monastery, Duutiin Khüree. It had about 200 monks. South of it was another monastery, Gendenpiliin Khüree situated at the spring of the river, Buyantiin Gol. In the south of Vajrapāṇi's mountain [Otgontenger], the sacred Vajrapāṇi. Another monastery was Taij Nariin Khüree.
- Can you show them on the map?
- My district is called Tsagaankhairkhan. Duutiin Khüree stood there. Agitiin Khüree was close to it. The River Buyant is in Otgon district with Gendenpiliin Khüree and Taij Nariin Khüree. On the bank of the River Buyant. Near Otgontenger.
- Were these monasteries of Otgon district sizeable ones?
- These were small. With a few monks. All belonged to the same *bag* administrative subdivision.

- Duutiin Khüree was the largest one of them, wasn't it?
- The monks gathered at the biggest *khüree* of the banner: Duutiin Khüree. (Son: Duutiin Khüree is close to Tsagaankhairkhan district centre, about 45 km.) More precisely, it is in the northern part of Tsagaankhairkhan district. (Private talk.)
- Did *Achit lam* belong to Duutiin Khüree?
- No, I have not heard about that monk.
- There were not any saints or reincarnations with that name?
- There weren't. We invited *Naro(vanchin) khutagt* and *Dilov khutagt* to our monastery.
- What about *Ari gegeen*?
- *Ari gegeen* was Tibetan. He was the abbot of our monastery, Duutiin Khüree. He was the abbot and was a Tibetan monk. *Ari gegeen* and *Tsani gegeen* used to visit our monastery, spend some days there and return to Tibet. *Ari gegeen* was a Tibetan monk. After the passing away of *Ari gegeen*, *Tsagaan gegeen*, and *Tsani gegeen* became the abbots. They were *Dilov gegeen*'s masters.
- Did the monks perform the *Tsam*?
- *Tsam* dance demonstrates Buddhist deities. For example, *Goshuu* (?), butterfly, the White Old Man, the Dharmapālas, and the protector of the monastery, Vajrapāṇi. Well, Vajrapāṇi did not perform movements; he just came out and sat down. Buddha Śākyamuni and others were not depicted in the *Tsam*. They do not participate in such dances. The real Buddhas.
- Did the monks burn the *Sor* offering in Duutiin Khüree? How did it happen?
- *Sor* was burnt twice a year. On the 29th of the last month of summer, and the 29th of the last month of winter. Twice a year. The *tsorj* monks of the monastery performed it in turn. The *tsorj* monks of those many monastic schools performed it in turn.
- Did the monks hold the *Yerööl* ceremony at the Lunar New Year?
- The Buddha's *Choimbrel* was held at the New Year. This expresses how the Buddhist religion began. The *Choimbrel jonaa* ceremony lasts for 15 days. Buddha Śākyamuni initiated it.
- Did the monks greet each other for the New Year?
- They greeted each other on the 1st day of the New Year. In this way. (Showing it with his arms.) They did not shake hands. They greeted each others in the Mongolian way putting one's arms under the others'. Old people from up, young people from down. It has rules.
- How old were you when you joined the monastery?

- I was 7 years old.
- Do you remember it? Did you offer a ceremonial scarf to your master or how did you take ordination?
- (Son: My father is *Dilov khutagt*'s disciple. At present, my father is the only monk, who was the disciple of *Dilov khutagt*. He is the only living disciple of *Dilov khutagt*. Private talk.)
- Where did the monks take water from?
- (Son: It was a large monastery. The River Shireegiin Gol flows there. Monks took water from that river. The monastery stood on the bank of the river. Duutiin Khüree.) (Private talk. Some questions were answered by the informant's son.)
- Where were monks' corpses laid out?
- Near Tsakhariin Am. Few corpses. They quickly disappeared. Were not seen anymore. Corpses were put on surface. The population was smaller than today. People went here and there, and died. Some monks died in the monastery and others in the countryside. Ranking monks also passed away. After passing away they were left in their yurts for a week, and then were carried away. Each of their disciples gave one silken scarf, venerating the deceased, and until finally a knot of silken scarves remained. Someone took it away. I do not know who. It disappeared. The financial offices developed over the years. *Stūpas* were erected in honour of the highest ranking monks.
- Were there brick burning kilns in the vicinity?
- Two temples of our monastery were built of Chinese brick. A deep kiln sat there in which bluish, greenish brick were produced. As hard as a stone. Two such kilns operated there.
- Did the Chinese or the Mongols produce these bricks?
- Mainly the Chinese. Also the Mongols themselves, but mostly the Chinese. They dug a deep hole. We did not know how it was heated. The products, the blue bricks were as hard as stones.
- Did monks who performed tantric practices live nearby?
- It was rare. It does not mean that there were none at all. It was rare.
- Did nuns or female practitioners live in Duutiin Khüree?
- No. Female tantric practitioners did not live in the western provinces. A very few male practitioners, one or two could belong to a monastery, which means that this practice was scarce.
- What about shamans?
- I do not know. I do not know much about Shamanism.
- What currency did you use? Chinese coins, Mongolian *tögrögs* or paper money?

- What did you ask? Smiths? Money was distributed to nobles and monks. A solid, thin, yellow brick tea called ‘hairless of donation’ was used in the *khüree*. There was also a square item called ‘dark-brown silk.’ It used to be sold. Silken scarves were sold. Monks used that ‘hairless of donation’ and the ‘dark-brown silk’ as currency. Also, money (silver) was used when buying something from each other. Tibetans always used money (silver). Before this money, we used brick tea. Other things were not sold.
- When was the monastery closed?
- Certainly in 1938.
- Every monastery in Zavkhan province was closed in the same time?
- Generally, all monasteries were closed in 1938 in the western provinces. In the year of the Tiger.
- Were the monks enrolled to the army or did they leave for the countryside?
- (Private talk.) No one else is alive from Duutiin Khüree apart from me.
- Did the monastery have *stūpas*?
- Only two or three.
- Where were these located?
- On the brink of the *khüree*. There was a *stūpa* and horses could be led below. A hollow. Two or three *stūpas* stood in the north, behind the monastery. No more *stūpas*.
- Were there large prayer wheels as well?
- Many large prayer wheels. Several *Düñchüür maani* prayer wheels.
- Which temple was built of brick?
- One of the three Temples of the Philosophy was definitely a brick temple. The private temple of *Ari gegeen*, and the Akṣobhya *datsan* were also a brick building. *Ari gegeen* was a Tibetan monk. The other temples were all wooden constructions. That place is abundant in trees. However, wood were not misused. People love and honour trees very much. They do not cut them without a reason.
- Which manual did the monks use in the monastic philosophy school?
- Jamyang Zhepa’s manual [*Günchin igchaa*].
- Did *Ari gegeen* have a *gavj* degree?
- He was a very high-ranking monk. Very old. I do not remember his position in Tibet. He would be as old as me now.
- Did he have full ordination?
- Of course, he was a fully ordained monk.
- Did he arrive from Lhasa or from Kumbum Monastery?
- Well, he came from Labrang Monastery. Tibet. Maybe he came from there. *Ari gegeen* and *Tsani gegeen*. *Tsani gegeen* was so old that two

attendants helped him to walk. They all travelled on camel carts between the monasteries. Cars did not exist.

- Did they go to Tibet on horse? Or with a caravan?
- (Son: Horse and camel. My father has just told you that they went on horse and camels.)
- Were the saddles of horses similar to the current ones in general?
- They were similar. Well, the pommels became higher. The pommels were lower in former times. Everything else is similar. The saddle for horseracing also differed. That is something like this. It did not have a saddle cloth and had small stirrups. Without a saddle cloth.
- Did Buryad or Inner Mongolian monks live in your monastery? Or only Khalkhas?
- Such monks did not live in my Duutiin Khüree. There were no cross Asians. (Private talk.) Shilüüstei was a large monastery. The monastery of *Narov* and *Dilov* also sat in our banner. It was situated in the south, on the bank of the River Buyant. (Private talk.)
- (Question from the informant's son: Did your father recite sacred texts before 1990?)
- (Informant's son: He did. My father recited the sacred texts at home in secret.)
- Have any objects of worship remained from Duutiin Khüree?
- I do not know. Those people should know. (Son: He refers to the people of the Ministry of the Interior). It was impossible to hide and save something. They came once, locked the monastery, and took the key. Finally, we, the monks spread out into the countryside. The monastery disappeared in the three months of the summer.

Gombo Galsan (1916–2011)



G. Galsan monk, 2010

Gombo Galsan was born in 1916 in the year of the Snake. He joined Ušan Züiliin Khüree also known as Tonkhiliin Khüree in Tonkhil district, Govi-Altai province at the age of 13 and lived there until 1935. He turned a monk again in 1990 at Lamrim Datsan Monastery in Ulaanbaatar, and began to participate in the ceremonies of Dambadarjailin Monastery, situated close to his place of abode in 2000.

The following interview was recorded on 7 July, 2010 with voice recorder and video camera on the terrace of Dambadarjailin Monastery with the pur-

pose of clarifying which were the most famous monasteries of Govi-Altai province. Previously, we interviewed Galsan monk with my colleague, Zsuzsa Majer in 2006, 2007, and 2009, and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org.

- Your monastery, Züiliin Khüree was situated in Govi-Altai province, wasn't it? (Showing it on a map.)
- Exactly.
- Were Züiliin Khüree and Jalchin Beisiin Khüree two different names of the same monastery? What was the other name of Usan Züiliin Khüree?
- Its name was simply Usan Züiliin Khüree.
- Did it have other names?
- Well, other names...
- Was it a different monastery than Daichin Vangiin Khüree?
- Yes. It belonged to *Jalchin beisiin khoshuu*. Züiliin Khüree of *Jalchin beisiin khoshuu* banner. The aristocrat of the banner governed it. It was a large *khüree* with 1,000 monks and 13 temples including the assembly hall, the epistemological temple, the monastic philosophy school, the medical monastic school, the temple of *Nügnei* fasting rituals, the temple of the Lama, and others. It had all together 13 temples and 13 financial offices.
- Who led the monastery?
- The abbot was *Mergen khamba lam*. Also *Bor jorvon*. One of them was the abbot, and the other one was the *tsorj*. These two monks.
- Could you repeat their names?
- *Mergen khamba lam* and *Bor jorvon*. One of them was the abbot, and the other one was the *tsorj*. These two monks directed the monastery. There were two disciplinarians: *Damdindorj* and *Dalaidorj*, and about 1,000 monk disciples.
- Did you hold the Maitreya procession?
- Certainly. The Maitreya procession started on the 13th of the first month of summer.
- Did you perform the *Tsam* dance as well?
- Yes, *Tsam* was performed.
- Was it the *Tsam* of the ten Dharma protectors?
- Exactly. The ten Dharma protectors participated in it.
- Was *Milarepa Tsam* also performed there?
- Well, the Ten Protectors appeared in the *Tsam*. Who else?
- Were there other sizeable monasteries in that province? For instance, *Narovanchin khutagt's* monastery?

- Naturally. Narovanchingiin Khüree was situated there.
- How many monks belonged to that monastery?
- About 800 monks. It was an isolated, *khiid* monastery.
- What about the monastery of *Dilov khutagt*? [Sic! *Narovanchin* and *Dilov khutagts* lived in the same monastery.]
- That was the monastery of *Dilov khutagt*.
- Were they two different monks?
- They were two different monks.
- How many monks belonged to *Dilov khutagt*'s monastery?
- He had about 900 disciples.
- Did they belong to the Yellow or to the Red Stream?
- Yellow Stream, Yellow Stream.
- Were there other famous monasteries situated in that province? *Khamba Gegeenii Khüree* monastery in the Altai?
- Yes, *Khamba gegeen*. *Narovanchingiin Khüree*, *Khambiin Khüree* were situated there.
- Who was the abbot of *Khambiin Khüree* at that time?
- Do you mean the abbot of *Khambiin Khüree*?
- Yes.
- His name was *Damba zaisan* [officer]. There were three heads: *Damba zaisan*, *Dorj* and *Derem Lama*.
- Have you heard about *Ariin Khüree*?
- *Ariin Khüree* was situated in *Arkhangai* province. Its other name was *Zayaiin Khüree*. *Arkhangain Khüree*.
- Have you heard about *Biger Nomun Khanii Khüree*?
- *Bigeriin Khüree* was situated in *Biger* district in *Govi-Altai* province.
- Did it belong to the Yellow Stream, too?
- It followed the Yellow Stream. Red Stream monasteries did not exist at all. Mostly Yellow Stream.
- Was *Biger nomun khan* acknowledged with a seal?
- What do you mean?
- Was he a saint or reincarnation acknowledged by the *Bogd*? Did he receive a seal decoration from the *Bogd*?
- Maybe.
- How many monks belonged to his monastery?
- About 780.
- Were there other sizeable monasteries in *Govi-Altai* province?
- Can you repeat your question?
- Do you know the assembly called *Khüiten Khural*? In the south of *Züil-iin Khüree*?

- Yes, yes.
- How many monks lived there?
- About 500 monks.
- How far was it from Züiliin Khüree?
- About 700 (?).
- Can you describe the characteristics of monastic life at that time? For instance, were the yurts similar to the current yurts or different?
- They were different. Temples were always made of wood. Some of them were made of clay, but the majority of wood. Electricity did not exist. We used butter-lamps for light. Also lanterns.
- What did you use for heating in winter?
- We used wood and saxaul.
- Wood and saxaul?
- Saxaul. Also manure, cow dung, sagebrush, and wormwood. Trees are rare in that area. A type of tree called saxaul grows in the south, in the Gobi desert. We collected that in the Gobi.
- Who prepared the new yurts? Carpenters?
- Yes, yes. There were small temples, small affiliations, and several small assemblies. Some of them operated in yurts, others in buildings. Different types of buildings. Not all of them operated in buildings. A few functioned in yurts. The economic units and treasuries operated in yurts. The economic units were called *jas* and treasuries called *san*. These were the economic or financial offices of the monastery: possessing horses and other livestock, cows and camels, all the five types of the livestock. Monks' meals and beverage originated from the livestock.
- Were there cemeteries or were people's corpses put on the surface?
- We put them on ground. Burial itself is a new practice in Mongolia introduced only recently. In former times corpses were not buried but put on the surface.
- Were the corpses taken there by carts?
- They were put on carts or on camels. They were delivered in that way. Imagine two camels with two baskets on them and with a wooden stretcher on these. The dead were put on the wooden stretcher and taken to the open air burial site.
- Did the monks performing the body-offering ritual hold rites there? Were there *Chö* practitioners?
- Certainly, there were.
- Did they hold rites at funerals?
- What did you ask? There were *Chö* practitioners. People who performed the body-offering. What did these people who perform the body-offer-

ing do all the time? In summertime they used to visit the sites where corpses had just been put out. They approached the corpses and recited ritual texts over them. They held hand-bells and *damaru* drums in their hands. Actually, they received the power of the sacred texts through these implements. *Chö* practitioners performed the body-offering ritual which assists the deceased ones to gain a good rebirth, to avoid illness and suffering. *Chö* practitioners believe in that practice.

- Were there female *Chö* practitioners, too?
- Female practitioners were very few in number in the area where I come from.
- Were the *Chö* practitioners married?
- *Chö* practitioners were not married. Do you mean having a wife and children?
- Exactly.
- They did not have. Generally, there were almost not any monks who had wives and children at that time.
- Did lay people use to invite monks for weddings?
- At weddings? Monks did not use to go to weddings. They just performed a smoke-offering ritual and determined the proper day of the wedding. Monks determined the day when such clothes could be worn. This was what monks did for weddings.
- What happened when putting up a new yurt?
- New yurts were put up. Mares were milked. The sacred texts of *Ārya maṅgalakūṭa nāma mahāyāna sūtra* and *Ārya bara yang gyang rta* were recited when putting up a new yurt. Monks recited these texts if someone put up a new yurt.
- Did monks participate in the haircutting ceremony of children?
- Boys' hair is cut for the first time at the age of 3, 5 or 7. Girls' hair can be cut at the age of 2, 3 or 6. Hair can be cut at these three ages. However, monks determined the exact date, the proper month and day of the first haircutting based on sacred texts.
- Did the monks greet each other at the Lunar New Year? Similarly to present?
- At the Lunar New Year? It was similar. Monks venerated and greeted their masters at the New Year, especially the abbot and the *tsorj* of the monastery. They venerated the abbot and the *tsorj* monk.
- The abbot and the *tsorj*?
- Yes, the abbot and the *tsorj*. Monks who were good at recitation of sacred texts could become abbots. Abbots directed religious issues. From the aspect of religion. Another two monks called disciplinarians organized

and managed everyday issues including the presence and absence of monks. They registered monks' 'working hours', and gave their salaries accordingly. Salaries were role-bound.

- Were there also monks familiar with the Mongolian script or did they know only Tibetan?
- There were, there were.
- I mean monks who could read the Mongolian script.
- Sure! There were monks who knew the Mongolian script, and monks who knew the Tibetan script. Monks knew various scripts. Generally, monks went to study in India. After studying there for four or five years they returned home bearing different ranks such as *agrimba* degree in tantric studies, *doorombo* degree in philosophy, or *maaramba* degree in medical studies. *Maaramba* is a person who knows pulse diagnosis. Monks used to take the *maaramba* medical exam, the *gavj* and the *dom* exams of Buddhist philosophy. The term *damjaa barikh* means that the monks who studied the sacred scriptures had to take an exam before entering the next level. It was a monastic exam.
- Did the monks use to hold the *Nügnei* fasting ritual?
- They held the *Nügnei*. It is usually held for three or seven days. Monks who took this vow did not meet people, did not speak, and did not contact others during that given period. They only recited the sacred texts. *Nügnei sakhikh* means that you do not speak. They stayed in a separate building in the monastery, from where they could not go home, but slept inside and practiced the *Nügnei*. This is the *Nügnei* practice. People also could not enter that place to meet the monks. Monks stayed there from three to seven days keeping the rules of fasting, and returned home after that period. They could not go anywhere during the *Nügnei*. They stayed in the prescribed place, ate and drank there. This is the *Nügnei* practice.
- What type of *Nügnei* was it? Was it dedicated to Avalokiteśvara?
- Actually, *Nügnei* is connected to Avalokiteśvara. Maitreya and Avalokiteśvara. Monks venerated the protectors and recited the sacred texts of these deities.
- Did the monks hold the *Sojin* confession practice, too? At the time of the oath-taking period?
- *Sojin*, well. The oath-taking period is a different thing: that is the *Khailen* lasting for 45 days. Only monks with full-ordination participated in it. Only those monks. Nowadays, *Khailen* lasts for 45 days. Women were not allowed to enter the area of the monastery during that period but stayed outside of the circumambulation road called *gortig*. The *Khailen* period had such strict rules.

- Jalchin *beis* was the ruler of the banner, wasn't he?
- Yes, he was.
- Did he organize the *Naadam* festival in the banner?
- Organizing the *Naadam* festival of the banner is a different thing. The *Naadam* festival of the banner belongs to secular administration which differs from religious administration. There was religious governance and also political governance. These two governances existed in parallel.
- Was there a monastery in Jargalant district called Ariin Khüree or Gandandarjaalin?
- I have heard about Ariin Khüree. That was situated in Govi-Altai province, and was a small *khüree* with monks. With few temple and few monk. Ariin Khüree was located on the slope of Govi-Altai Mountain. It was a small monastery that belonged to the area of Govi-Altai. There is a province called Govi-Altai. Yesönbulag is situated in that province. It existed once, but only its foundations have remained. Nothing else has remained there.
- What was the official name of Usan Züiliin Khüree? What does the expression 'Usan Züil' refer to?
- My monastery's name was Usan Züiliin Khüree. There are five snowy peaks called Altai Tavan Bogd. The *khüree* was named after the river in the east. The name of Altai Tavan Bogd was Tsast Bogd. The monastery's name was Usan Züil.
- When was that monastery closed?
- When all the monasteries were closed at first: in the 25th year.
- Is this date in accordance with the Mongolian calendar?
- Yes, 1925 [1935]. Then, in 25, 26, 27, 28 monks were captured as 'anti-revolutionaries' and religion ceased. Renowned monks were all captured. Some monks got married, had children and religion was gone. A kind of revolution took place in the 1990s called democratic changes, and Buddhism and Shamanism revived. It started in 1991. Well, religion was ceased in all provinces and annihilated at that time [1937].
- When did you become a monk again?
- First, when I was 7. I had two older relatives in our monastery in Tonkhil district: Yadambat and Perenlei. I lived with these two monks from the age of 6. I lived in that monastery until the age of 20.
- Was the *Tsam* dance performed in that monastery?
- I did not participate in that. *Tsam* is a special matter having its own texts, training school and temple. Who are those Buddhist deities? What are their roles? What is the meaning of wrathful deities? Dharmarāja, Śrīdevī, Mahākāla, and other deities' masks appeared there. Monks put

on these masks, and moved according to prescribed instructions. Therefore, not everyone could participate in it. Only the monks who learnt in the preparation school and studied the texts could participate. They studied the texts, the music, etc.

- Did a lay population live in the vicinity of the monastery?
- Certainly. The lay population was a different thing. The River Züiliin Gol was situated in the west of Tonkhiliin Khüree. The lay population lived on the eastern bank of that wide river and also Chinese stores stood there. Monks' yurts were located to the west of the river around the monastery. Religion was a different thing. Monks and the lay population did not have much connection. It was impossible because of the internal rules of the monastery. Monks did not have children and wives. Monastic regulations were like that. Nowadays, it does not matter, many monks have children. Those others were real monks. Actually, two types of monks exist: monks who have wives and children and monks with full ordination who took vows. If my name was Damdin, I got another name when I took a vow. Afterwards, a monk had to live according to those rules.
- How did monks spend a day? They woke up early in the morning. What happened then?
- Monks woke up in the morning and started the ceremony at 8 o'clock. Monks usually stayed at home in their yurts. They got food called *tsav* in the monastery. The monastery provided it. Salary was called *zed*. It could be money, which was rare at that time, so mostly goods, silken scarves and others, always valuable articles. These were distributed to the monks based on their ranks: high ranking monks took more such wages, and lower ranking monks less. High ranking monks got more wages, having more responsible work. Others got less wages. This was the way of monastic life. In winter, all monks returned home to the remote countryside to help with the work of their families. These monks brought food from the countryside, so monks could also eat in the monastery during winter. Firewood, saxaul, cow dung were all collected and provided by the fathers, mothers, and brothers of the monks. Their families supplied the monastery. Monks did not go out here and there. They stayed inside the monastery following the monastic regulation.
- Did monks also hold ceremonies in the afternoon?
- Yes, they did. After the morning ceremony finished. Another ceremony started in the evening, which lasted until 8 or 9pm. There were also special days. Monks used to hold the ceremony in the morning, or from lunchtime, and when it was finished there were no other ceremonies.

Or it started in the morning, had a daytime break, and then continued in the evening. Monasteries had various regulations.

- How many monks lived together in a yurt? Were there any monks living alone?
- Certainly. Monks lived mainly alone or two of them lived in a yurt. Also there were children, young disciples who learnt from them. They prepared their masters' meals. It was the rule.
- Were there printing houses to print sacred texts?
- Yes, yes.
- Were Tibetan texts printed there?
- [Informant did not understand the question.] Yes, yes. Sometimes disappeared. Various.
- Did the monks print sacred texts in Züiliin Khüree?
- There were. It was a large monastery. Do you understand it?
- What about the monastery of *Narovanchin* and *Dilov khutagt*?
- Yes. These were all situated once on the border of Govi-Altai province. These were the local monasteries of *Jalchin beisiin khoshuu* in Khantaishir province. Bigeriin Khiid and all the others. Small monasteries stood at many sites at that time. The biggest and most famous ones were Ariin Khüree, Züiliin Khüree and Narovanchingiin Khiid. Several monks lived in these three monasteries.
- Was Nuur Mogoin Khiid also a famous monastery?
- Nuur Mogoi was situated north of Züiliin Khüree. At present, it belongs to Darvi district. The place called Nuur Mogoi.
- How many monks lived in Nuur Mogoin Khiid?
- A mountain was called Bayan Uul. The monastery didn't have many monks. To be precise, Nuur Mogoi had a few monks. I do not know their number.
- Did these monasteries close in the 26th and 27th years [1936, 1937]?
- All of them were closed. Revolution started, and all of them closed. Religious practices became limited, and then, the monasteries closed in 1925 [1935]. From the years of 27 and 28, monks were accused of being counter-revolutionary, and the old, eminent monks who were efficacious were all taken away. Some of them were imprisoned, and the others were executed. Young monks went home to live as herders while having a breather from this political storm. Finally they took wives and had children. Religion totally disappeared.
- Were the high ranking monks taken away and executed? Did they go to the capital city?

- Every monk with higher rank was taken away. Darvi district belonged to Zavkhan province. Monks were delivered there and their lives almost always ended there.
- Do you mean in Uliastai?
- Yes. About 800 monks were taken away only from our monastery, Züiliin Khüree. Only 20 or 30 of them have returned. All of them were taken away. Considering only my own family, my two brothers, two uncles from my mother's side, a total of 13 men were taken away and died.
- Did the soldiers of the Ministry of the Interior take them away?
- Yes, people of the Ministry of the Interior. First, the show trial of the *Yonzon khamba*, the head abbot of Urga started. It was called the show trial of the *Yonzon khamba* who was accused of being counter-revolutionary. They also sentenced and executed lay people. Not only monks, but lay people, too.
- Really?
- Everyone who had properties was accused in that show trial.
- Hmm. Was *Kanjur* circumambulation held in Züiliin Khüree?
- Yes, of course.
- Around the monastery or surrounding the whole banner?
- The *Kanjur* was circumambulated around the monastery.
- Was it a *Kanjur* written in vermilion? What type of *Kanjur* was it?
- The *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur* consist of several volumes. People carried these volumes and circled the temple. The sets of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur* are accessible even nowadays. People carried these volumes and circled the temple. This was the way of circumambulation. *Kanjur* circumambulation took place in the first month of summer. In autumn, the *Khailen* oath-taking period was held, starting [finishing] in the middle month of autumn. It lasted for 45 days.
- Were the ceremonies of the White Mahākāla and Vaiśravaṇa held there, too?
- Yes, they were. Vaiśravaṇa, Dharmarāja, Mahākāla, Śrīdevī and other deities comprise the group of the ten Dharma protectors. For instance, the White Mahākāla and Śrīdevī.
- Was the fire offering called *galiin takhilga* held as well?
- Of course. (Laughing.)
- What is it good for?
- Fire offering means to perform an offering in honour of the fire. The Mongols have the following belief about fire. There is a three-year old child. Fire is like us, human beings. It is a three-year old child. We do not throw unnecessary things into the fire. Fire offering is performed by

offering sternum, kidney of the livestock. The fire has a God. A child at the age of 3. The fire offering increases prosperity, ensures well-being, and brings good fortune to the family. People die without fire. That is the reason for the cult of fire. Fire is the basis of life. It is the fire of humankind, and also a kitchen. Fire is the most important element in the nomadic culture of the Mongols. Throwing inappropriate things into the fire is extremely wrong. This is the case. There are also other interesting customs. All these monasteries belonged to my area. [Looking at the map.]

- Do you remember the name of *Narovanchin khutagt*?
- His name was *Narovanchin*. He was called *Narovanchin*.
- And *Dilov khutagt*?
- He was called *Dilov khutagt*.
- What happened to him? Did he leave to Inner Mongolia? To America?
- Yes, he did both.
- What happened to *Narovanchin khutagt*?
- *Narovanchin*... Actually there were many small monasteries. This one marked with red was a big monastery. These affiliations did not have fasting and other rituals [showing monasteries on the map]. They even did not possess the sets of the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur*. This is the monastery of *Narovanchin*. Here is Ariin Khüree. This is Tögrög district. This is Tsogt district. This is Bugat.
- Did shamans live in that area?
- Shamans? Hardly. Shamans were rare in that area. There were few. Also rainmakers.

Shüljin Sodnomtseren (1916–?)



Sh. Sodnomtseren monk, 2010

Shüljin Sodnomtseren was born in 1916, in the year of the Snake. He became a monk at the age of 9 in Delgerekhiin Khüree *Rigembellin* in Darvi district, Khovd province. He became a monk again after 1990 and joined Dambadarjailin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar. The following interviews include data about Delgerekhiin Khüree and the tradition of the Lunar New Year celebration.

Interview 1

This interview about Delgerekhiin Khüree was recorded with voice recorder on 12 May, 2010 in Sodnomtseren monk's home in Ulaanbaatar.

- Take some candies!
- Which province of Mongolia are you from?

- I am from Khovd province, Darvi district.
- Which banner did it belong to before?
- *Sutai uuliin khoshuu* in Zavkhan province. When the administrative system changed this area was transferred to Khovd, and became known as Darvi district of Khovd province. Darvi was the banner's name.
- How many brothers and sisters do you have?
- We are six of us. Four boys and two girls.
- Were you a monk in your childhood?
- I moved to the monastery with this old monk when I was 9. I became his disciple and served him in Delgerekhiin Khiid in Darvi. He taught me the sacred texts. This is his photograph. He was my master. I studied Tibetan sacred texts until the age of 18.
- How many monks lived in Delgerekhiin Khiid?
- The monastery had 270 monks. I do not know it exactly, but there could have been 270 monks.
- Was the head an abbot?
- The head of the monastery was a reincarnation, Chanarav *khuvilgaan*. This is his photograph. Do you know what reincarnation means? He is a duplicated person.
- Which number was he in his reincarnation lineage?
- He was the second reincarnation.
- Can you provide details on the history of the monastery? About its foundation?
- I became a disciple of this monk at the age of 9, and joined that beautiful monastery. The monastery was annihilated in 1937, when I was 18. They destroyed the monastery; Lenin and Stalin seizure, Choibalsan seizure. The whole monastery disappeared. My master disappeared, too: he was captured and imprisoned. They enrolled me in the army at the age of 18. They forced me to apply and join. There were no any monks anymore. No monks, no monasteries. They captured my father, too, who was a *tüshmed* official. They captured him, being a statesman. His wife and six children have remained without livestock and property. They collectivized everything. We became destitute.
- So you had to join the army?
- Yes, I joined the army at the age of 22. I herded the livestock with my mother, brothers and sisters after disrobing in 1937, and I joined the army at the age of 22. I enrolled and came to Ulaanbaatar.
- Did you spend five years in the army?
- I came to Ulaanbaatar with the army in 1938. I fought at the River Khalkha in 1939 and became a radio operator in the army commander's

headquarters. I came back to Ulaanbaatar and returned to army unit after that the war finished in 1940. I became an officer in winter, 1940. An officer. Then, I worked in the Ministry of the Interior. It was a complicated place. I became the director of the radio of the army of the Ministry of the Interior. Then, I worked as the director of communications in the 31st brigade of Kherlen and also participated in the war of liberation in 1945. I worked in Inner Mongolia for two months, and then I returned to army unit. The war of liberation ended. I was an officer for 15 years. Then, the liminary legion of the Ministry of the Interior ceased in 1951. It was transferred to governmental policy and prevention. I mean we disbanded. The whole league ceased. Then, I worked as director of a motor depot, as director of the resort of the cabinet council at Nükht, as head of department in the Commission of Peace Friendship, and was retired in 1979. Democratic changes took place in 1990. Dambadarjaa was a large monastery, but nothing had remained from it. I received an invitation to the ceremony of its reopening at the time of the democratic changes. They invited me to participate in the revival. 12 old monks who knew the Tibetan script assembled to revive Dambadarjaa monastery based on this invitation. The work of monks restarted in this way. We knew the sacred texts a bit as we had been monks before. All of us gave back our party memberships saying, 'We do not need it anymore. We will study sacred texts. We will work for Buddhism.' So, I turned a monk again in 1989. After becoming a monk again I always looked for the path of religion. I always recite texts. I spent some time in Dambadarjaa Monastery, and then I joined Gandan Monastery. I took full ordination. That is a really strict ordination. I took that ordination and joined Gandantegchenlin, where I grew old. My abilities decreased. I cannot go to the monastery anymore, so I sit here at home reading the sacred texts. Monks with outstanding knowledge have all died. I understand the meaning of these texts only a bit. There are numerous Buddhist texts, but I did not have a chance to study them.

- Can you describe your old monastery situated in Khovd province?
- There is a place in Darvi district in Khovd province called Delger. There was a monastery called Rigembel Khiid. It had about 270 monks and tree beautiful temple buildings. Other structures included the lamas' enclosures and dwellings.
- Were these three temple buildings made of wood?
- Yes, wooden temples.
- Did they have floors?
- No, simple temples.

- Was the monastery fenced off?
- It did not have a wall.
- No fence?
- No, it was open. Plain.
- Please specify the three temples. Was there an assembly hall?
- The assembly hall was very beautiful. The others were the Kālacakra Temple and the Temple of Tantric and Medical Studies. There were only three temples. The Chinese built them.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- Dharmarāja was the main protector, and the main object of worship. Dharmarāja. Then, monks were captured and disappeared; almost all of them were slaughtered. Some younger, poor monks founded a small workshop there. Others left to the countryside to be herders. To work with the livestock.
- Was *Tsam* dance performed in your monastery?
- Yes, *Tsam* was performed at the gate of the Kālacakra Temple called Dūinkhoriin Sūm. The monks performed it once a year in a square in the south.
- When was it? In summer?
- In summer. It was performed in warm weather.
- Was also *Dūinkhoriin sagar chogar* held? Another dance. Monks in beautiful robes wearing diadems?
- [He did not understand the question.] Yes, yes. A ceremony was held called *Dechinpovran*. Devotees could not enter. People could not enter. They worshipped from outside, making circumambulation. It was such a distinguished ceremony.
- How many masked figures appeared in the *Tsam* dance? Dharmarāja, Begtse?
- [He did not understand the question.] The monks held the monthly ceremony of the Dharma protectors in the assembly hall in honour of the Ten Protectors including Yamāntaka, Mahākāla, Vajrapāṇi, Yama, Śrīdevī, Vaiśravaṇa, Begtse, Brahma [and the White Mahākāla], all these, more than ten deities. The ceremony's name was *Khangal*. All of these deities are called *Khangal*. The *Khangal* ceremony held in summer was very nice. Monks played horns, flutes, bone trumpets, cymbals, drums, bells, and *ḍamarus*. They performed many rites. I myself also participated in it.
- Did the monks use to perform the *Sor* offering?
- [He did not understand the question.] *Choir* temple for philosophy existed.
- Did the monks organize the Maitreya procession?

- Yes, yes. Maitreya procession took place in spring. The Maitreya procession circled the monastery. *Sor* was burnt. *Sor* offering means the burning of the *Sor* offering in a big fire.
- When was it burnt? In winter or in summer?
- Before the Lunar New Year. A monk performed it who had meditated a lot. He threw the *Sor* into the fire. He meditated before it. He did not meet or talk to people, but recited sacred texts and contemplated. Only a person who meditated could perform the burning of the *Sor*.
- Did the monastery possess a set of the *Kanjur*?
- Certainly, we had a set of the *Kanjur*. 108 beautiful volumes. We possessed both the *Kanjur* and the *Tanjur*. The *Kanjur* consisted of 108 volumes and the *Tanjur* about 220 volumes. I do not remember precisely.
- Was it written in vermillion or black?
- It was written with black ink. A *Kanjur* written in black. As far as I remember we did not have the Golden *Kanjur*, but I am not sure about it. Anyway, we had the *Kanjur* written in black ink. Extremely large volumes! Bigger than sacred books nowadays. A man could carry only two such volumes.
- Did people circumambulate the volumes of the *Kanjur*?
- Certainly.
- Did they carry the volumes on their back?
- It was carried and also embraced, and taken.
- Was also a vehicle used?
- Yes, there was a vehicle on which the *Kanjur* was circumambulated.
- Did the monks hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Yes, it took place at the end of summer, beginning of autumn. It lasted for about 50 days. Fully ordained monks gathered together. Fully-ordained monks and pre-novices, oh no, only fully-ordained monks and monks with novice vows. Not every monk could participate in it. It took 50 days.
- Did the monks gather for it in the assembly hall?
- They held the *Khailen* only in the assembly hall. That is the teaching of Buddha Śākyamuni. Buddha Śākyamuni and Lord Tsongkhapa. Buddha Śākyamuni laid the basis of the Buddhist doctrine and Lord Tsongkhapa spread it. Both of them were extraordinary and exceptional monks. Inimitable.
- Did the monks use to hold the *Nügnee* fasting ritual?
- Yes, they did. Our monastery had fasting rituals. Also devotees used to hold it at home. In summer and autumn. Mainly in autumn. The *Nügnee*

fasting means that they took a vow that they would not eat and drink for 24 hours. Especially, they did not eat meat during that period.

- Did the monastery possess livestock?
- No. Wait, do you mean animals? The monastery had several herds and flocks. It had about 10,000 sheep. 10,000! The Kālacakra Temple had such a flock of sheep. It was very wealthy. The monastery possessed all five types of livestock in large numbers. The financial offices of the assembly hall and others possessed also a large number of livestock, but less than the Kālacakra. Tremendous livestock. The lay population herded them. The monastery was wealthy and rich due to the livestock. Exceptionally rich. A group of monks counted the livestock annually with abacus, accounts, and official papers. They counted the monastery's livestock.
- The new born livestock?
- Out of the question. They rode a horse and visited the households to count the livestock.
- How many financial offices did the monastery have?
- The financial office of the assembly hall, the financial office of the Kālacakra Temple. Also the one of the Tantric-Medical Temple. I mean that the financial office of the Tantric Temple. Well, generally the Tantra and the Medicine had only one unit. It means that it had four financial offices.
- Were prayer wheels and *stūpas* situated in the monastery?
- Maybe prayer wheels, and also *stūpa(s)*. It was like that. The financial offices were very wealthy.
- Apart from the reincarnating monk, did *tsorj*, disciplinarians and chanting masters belong to the monastery?
- Certainly. Many, many. The highest ranking monk was the Reincarnation. You can see him in his brown robe. [Showing a photograph.] He was such a beautiful monk. Regarding other ranking monks, there was the *tsorj lam*, the *da lam*. Also the disciplinarian and the *lovon* master. Also monks with tantric, *gavj*, and medical doctor degrees. They were experts in their own fields. The monastery had several monks with *gavj* and *agrimba* degrees. *Gavj* means a degree in the philosophy temple, *agrimba* in the tantric temple, *maaramba* in the medical temple. The monastery had eminent monks with several disciples. These monks did not have wives and children. None of the monks had wives. Monks with wives were released in rural monasteries. Nowadays, there are not any monks without wife. Every monk has a wife. This is the case. (Laughing.)

- Were there also monks who performed the *Chö* practice and the body-offering ritual?
- Oh, certainly. The monks performed body-offering and *Chö* in the Tantric Temple. There would have been monks who performed the *Chö* practices. Penden *agrimba*, an intelligent and brilliant monk performed *Chö*. He had performed *Chö* for a sick person who recovered the next day. Especially Pelden *agrimba* was a very talented *Chö* master. He belonged to the Tantric Temple and was very eminent and capable. A suffering man who could not leave his bed asked him to perform the *Chö* ritual, and next morning he arose, drank something and started to recover. His name was Pelden and his title was *agrimba*. Such a prominent man. Everyone recovered who had asked Pelden *agrimba* to perform the *Chö* ritual. I saw it by myself. Very capable. That monk talked about the existence and non-existence of the afterbirth spirit of people. The spirit acquires the soul, disintegrates the skin, so blood is lost. Pelden *agrimba* was a very respectable man. The others were not as renowned as him. He had a white beard, and was an attractive, white monk. He was the very first monk to be captured. Arrested and executed. He was a very pleasant man. I have great faith in him. He was admirable.
- Did nuns or female practitioners live there, too?
- It was rare in that region. *Khandmaas* belonged to the Red Stream, and were few in number. However, Sarvabuddha *dākinī* was venerated there. Sarvabuddha *dākinī* is the head of *dākinīs*, *khandmaas*. The monks venerated Sarvabuddha *dākinī* in the monastery. However, they did not hold the Sarvabuddha *dākinī* ceremony.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks use to venerate?
- The *ovoos* had different nice names. There were *ovoos* with annual veneration. Monks venerated these *ovoos* to make rain.
- Which *ovoos* did they venerate?
- There was a nice *ovoo* called Kholboogiin Ovoo. A mountain called Noyonii Khüree also had an *ovoo*. Dashinchil. Also Khishigtiin Ovoo. These *ovoos* existed there.
- Where did you take your drinking water from?
- There was a river in the south at Delger. Its water was pure. Very cold and pure. We drank that water. Wells did not exist.
- Where did you deposit household waste?
- There was a waste dump in the east, far from the monastery. Waste was deposited there. It was called waste dump.
- Did you use toilets?

- There were no toilets in the current sense. That was bad and primitive. We went towards the waste dump to ‘go to the bathroom’. It was the case. No toilets. It was so bad.
- What about cemeteries?
- There were cemeteries. Several sites. Corpses were not buried, but put on the ground.
- Was white linen used in cemeteries?
- Well, corpses were wrapped in such papers a bit, and put on the ground. The right hand was put to the top, and the left hand to the bottom. Corpses were laid on their right sides on the ground facing to the west.
- Were they laid like that?
- Yes. Famous, eminent monks were cremated. Burnt. These two types of burial customs existed.
- Did lay population live in the vicinity of the monastery?
- Lay people, being extremely poor and unable to move, lived around the monastery. They settled there and had only some livestock. Such families lived around the monastery. Poor people. Other people nomadized in the countryside following the rich pasture and living at pleasant sites.
- Did also traders live near the monastery?
- Yes, there was a wool store house. Also the ‘New Trade’. Various articles. Different shops opened in enclosures and buildings on the edge of the monastery after the political changes. They sold various articles to the monks.
- Were these traders Mongolian or Chinese people?
- There was a Buryad man. His nickname was Water Buryad. The Mongols also traded. Actually the Buryads are Mongols, too. Buryads, Khalkhas are all Mongols. Mongol is a general name including several ethnic groups: Zakhchin, Dörvöd, Ööld, Uriankhai, Torguud, Khalkha, and Buryad. Several ethnic groups.
- Which ethnic group do you belong to?
- I am a Khalkha man. The majority of the Mongols are Khalkhas. The second biggest group is the Dörvöd. Galdan (1644–1697) himself was an Ööld man. Other minorities are smaller in number. Khalkhas comprise the majority and have vast land. The term Mongol covers all these ethnic groups.
- What happened to the monks captured in 1937? Were they imprisoned?
- They were delivered to precipices, holes and shot. They were made to stand on the edge, and were shot down into the hole.
- In Khovd city?

- At a place in Khovd called Els Tolgoi. That is a sandy area with many hollows. They took the monks there and slaughtered them.
- Did they capture the monks of your monastery in groups? At night? How did it happen?
- They captured several monks on given days. They sentenced and deported only two or three monks on other days. The cases differed.
- Who captured the monks? The soldiers of the Ministry of the Interior?
- People of the Ministry of the Interior were scarce. Young men who joined the Revolutionaries' Party were given this task as union members. They were sent to arrest the monks. (Private talk.)
- Were the monks able to hide any objects of worship from the old monasteries?
- Only a few items have remained here and there. For instance at Gandan Monastery. Some holy objects were not taken away, but only a few have remained. Just a few.
- Could the monks revive that monastery in 1990?
- Something has started in the recent years. It is being revived. The government did not give money for the revival. People, devotees of the region collected money. That was a great period of time. Now, there is a temple, ceremonies, and objects of worship. People's donation. Not only money but other things they had.
- Are there any other old monks of the monastery?
- Old monks are few in number in general. Now, only eight old monks live in Ulaanbaatar. All of them are as old as me, at the age of 90 or 100. Only eight such monks. (Private talk about Luvsan monk from Khovd province.)
- For instance, Ishjamts monk?
- Yes, Ishjamts. He knows sacred texts very well. Another monk is Chimed-ravdan. Also Renchinsüren. He lives near here. Also Ochirdanzan. Just a few such monks are still alive.
- You said that 12 old monks revived Dambadarjaa Monastery.
- Oh yes, 12 old monks revived the tradition at Dambadarjaa at the beginning. Only a few of them are still living. Dashrentsen monk is alive. Almost all the others have passed away. Is Luvsan living? (Private talk.) Luvsan was a very talented master in sewing. He could sew robes, and repair Buddhist implements. Monks were like this. Now only some of them are alive. None of the famous monks of the old times are living. Time has passed. They would have to be more than 100 years old by now, which is impossible. None of those famous monks, the old monks have remained by now. Old monks who are now around 90 were children

at that time, teenagers. Luvsan, Ishjamts, all of them. Comparing the current school system, they learnt in the 8th or 9th classes. Some such teenagers are alive. However, nobody is alive by now who had great knowledge and experience in Buddhism, *gavj* or other titles, high ranks. A monk called Khaidav has just passed away. He was a *gavj*. He died. That is life.

- Thank you for the interview.
- With pleasure. Such old monks have all passed away. Ishjamts has remained. The others passed away. Khandsüren is also alive.
- You mentioned that your father was a *tüshmel* official.
- He was a *meeren*. *Meeren* was his rank.
- Was it something like the nobles of the banner?
- It differed from the nobles. *Meeren* is lower than nobles. Nobles belong to the aristocrats. My father's father was a *zakhiragch* executive. It is higher than my father's rank. My grandfather's father also had that duty. And finally my father. Generation by generation. My father was the last such officer. My older brother became a teacher. He has passed away. All people who knew history and biographies have died.
- Publications on this topic are also rare.
- Books were burnt in 1938 and 1939. Sacred books were thrown away. The monastery was burnt. Nothing has been left. Though nice things also happened. It is difficult to annihilate everything.
- If I would like to draw the sketch of your monastery where should I mark the site of the Tantric Temple? Which side of the assembly hall?
- The assembly hall was quite similar to Gandan's temples. There is a road going south of Gandan Monastery. My monastery was like that. Like Gandan.
- Where was the assembly hall?
- In the north. The monks' courtyards and lay people's courtyards stood in front.
- To the left and the right?
- Yes, there was a wide road going to the centre from the south. It faced the temple.
- On which side of the assembly hall was the Kālacakra Temple?
- Temples stood in a row, next to each other, all facing the south. The assembly hall stood in the centre with a wide road in front. The others did not have a road in front but faced enclosures.
- What were these two?
- The Kālacakra Temple stood in the east, the assembly hall in the centre, and the Medical-Tantric in the westernmost part. Medical and Tantric

studies shared a temple building. The temple buildings of Kālacakra and the Medical-Tantric Temple were painted in red. Red or orange. The assembly hall in the centre had a yellow colour. It was an extremely beautiful, yellow temple building. I remember the Chinese who built that. Many Chinese people cooperated in the construction. It became such a handsome temple! I remember that a Chinese man fell and died. I remember as I was a child in the monastery at that time.

- Can you say more about the nearby river?
- The river flows in the south. It flows from the west to the east. An agricultural field was located in the south, near Delger.
- Agriculture?
- *Delgeriin taria* was watered by the water of the river.
- Where were the *stūpas*?
- A few *stūpas* belonged to the monastery. Few *stūpas*. Here [Urga] stood more *stūpas*, but in my region only a few.
- What about incense vessels and prayer wheels?
- There was an incense vessel.
- Did the *goroo* circumambulation road circle the monastery?
- A circumambulation road surrounded the monastery. Monks used to cook during the daytime. They ate lunch around 1, 2 or 3pm, and then circled around. They went on foot on the *goroo* around the *khüree*.
- Was there a platform calling the monks for ceremonies?
- Clocks did not exist. There was no clock. Now, I do not remember how we could keep time so well.
- When and how did you get up in the morning?
- A conch shell horn was sounded in the morning. A gong was beaten. We woke up with that call, to the sound of the conch shell horn. Gong means beating iron. Such as a bell nowadays. The sound of the gong meant that we had to go to the temples to start ceremonies. It was organized in this way, but I do not know its deeper meaning.
- Please talk about catering. Did you eat meat or dairy products? Was it similar to current meals? Meat, dried curd, milk, kumis?
- Well, lay people, devotees always brought dried curd, food, drink, and meat to the monks. Herders lived from the livestock, and we also lived from the livestock. We survived for the sake of the livestock. We had milk, dairy products, meat, and also a small amount of corn. We made flour from corn, and made cake, pastry, and soup with pasta. We ground wheat by hand. A bit of an under-developed technique.
- Did you use currency?

- Yes, Mongolia is a small country. Once it was the colony of Russia, and also of China. Therefore, we used Chinese or Russian paper money. Mongolian paper money did not exist. The Russians were better than the Chinese. (Private talk.) You might know the Russians, too. Hungary, Poland, Bulgaria were all the colonies of the Soviet Union. My country was an internal colony.

Interview 2

The following interview about the celebration of the Lunar New Year was recorded with voice recorder on 18 January, 2011 in Sodnomtseren monk's home.

- You described your monastery in detail last time. Please specify how you celebrated the Lunar New Year in the monastery.
- The celebration of the Mongolian Lunar New Year differed during different periods of time in Mongolian history. It was different before and after socialism.
- Please explain both.
- All right. Mongolia was an independent country for a while with old traditions before socialism. People honoured and greeted the New Year, the *Tsagaan sar* as an auspicious, great day. People did not spend much money, and did not drink much alcohol. We celebrated the New Year with modesty and happiness.
- Did you hold special ceremonies in the monastery? *Tsederlkham* ceremony or others?
- We held various ceremonies at that time. Nowadays, the religious centers have the *Yerööl* ceremony, which brings favourable rebirth. Monks held this ceremony for 15 days from the 1st to the 15th days of the New Year, the first lunar month. We held this ceremony in former times. It was called the *Yerööliin sar*, the 'Month of Benedictions'. We held the *deed mörgönö* at sunrise on the 1st day of the New Year. *Deed mörgönö* meant a veneration of the Buddhas and Gods. People woke up early in the morning, and prepared the finest meal, tea, milk, a table, and went to the hill to the *ovoo* near their dwelling place to prostrate to the Buddhas and Gods. They offered these meals to the Sky and the Buddhas and Gods and requested health, happiness, peace, and well-being. This was the way of offerings to gods. This was the tradition before socialism.

It changed after socialism and also after the democratic changes. (Private talk.)

- Did you hold *Tsederlkham* ceremony afore?
- We held *Tsederlkham* ceremony.
- On New Year Eve?
- Ceremonies lasted for three days and nights.
- Starting at the New Year Eve?
- They started before the New Year Eve. The ceremony of the New Year Eve is different. We held *Tsederlkham* ceremony for three days. But this tradition was interrupted during socialism. Annihilated.
- How did people celebrate the New Year in the countryside?
- Everyone celebrated it. All families and households. However, they did not spend excessive amounts of money on that. People prepared a nice meal and milk tea, and visited the elderly family members to greet them. They went to venerate the Sky at dawn, and then, visited their elderly family members to greet them. People ate delicious meals and drank milk tea. They honoured meat, lamb. They made lamb into fermented mare's milk. But not a whole lamb. They cooked only some parts. They ate that. Also soup. They drank some Mongolian spirit.
- Did the monks greet each other after the *Tsederlkham* ceremony?
- During the *Tsederlkham* ceremony held at night, the monks invited Śrīdevī for a night. When the sun rose the monks held the *Tsederlkham* ceremony in the morning by greeting Śrīdevī at the temple gate.
- Afterwards, did the monks give silken scarves to each other?
- They did not really give silken scarves. They greeted each other by exchanging hands. They greeted their masters with silken scarves. The old monks.
- Did you make large sacrificial cake offerings to Śrīdevī?
- We replaced the old sacrificial cakes with new ones. Great artisan monks prepared them for two or three days. They removed the old ones, and replaced them with new ones. (Private talk.)
- You said that you held the *Yerööl* ceremony every day for 15 days, didn't you?
- We did not hold the ceremony on the first day. Everyone celebrated the New Year at home. *Yerööl* ceremony began on the morning of the 2nd day. Monks performed the daily chanting, then had a rest at home, and gathered again to hold the real ceremony: the *Yerööl*.
- Did devotees visit the monastery on the first day of the New Year?
- Tremendous people. Faithful men and women. Everyone prostrated there.
- What kind of donations did they give?

- They gave everything that they could. Milk, money, everything they wished to give.
- Was the *Sor* offering burnt before the New Year?
- Yes, it was called the *Sor* of the 29th.
- How was it burnt?
- It was very nice. All bad things of the old year were abolished to have only good things in the New Year. Meditation lasted for 30 days before burning the *Sor* in fire. Nowadays, this contemplation tradition does not exist. Then, the burning of the *Sor* took place. It was impossible to meet or talk to people during meditation, or receive food from a nonparticipating person. A personal attendant gave food. Only one monk meditated, who then threw the *Sor* into the fire.
- Did the monks' robes differ from the current ones?
- They were similar. The First *Bogd*, Öndör Gegeen initiated the style of monks' robe. There were no sleeveless ones such as today. However, it does not matter. These clothes are also nice.
- Did the monks participate in the *ovoo* veneration at the New Year?
- They did not venerate the *ovoos* at that time. The *deer mörgölt* is connected to *ovoos*. It is close to *ovoo* veneration. Well, this is the same.
- What ethnic groups did the monks of the monastery belong to? Were there only Khalkha monks?
- Many ethnic groups exist. Uvs and Bayan-Ölgii provinces have many ethnic groups. Khalkhas live mainly in the Altai, Töv, and Khentii provinces. Several ethnic groups exist. I cannot determine their number. Buryad, and also many in Inner Mongolia.
- Which ethnic groups were at present in Delgerekhiin Khiid?
- Only Khalkhas.
- Were there relay stations or caravan routes in the vicinity?
- There were Chinese stores. Nothing else. No such things belonged to the monastery. They belonged to the administrative or political system.
- Nearby springs, rocks, caves or waters?
- Oh yes, there is a beautiful river near Delgerekhiin Khiid with transparent pure water. We used to take water from that river.
- Did other monasteries exist in that region?
- Not in the vicinity. Only far, at 100 or 200 km distance. It was a banner. There was one monastery in a banner, no more.
- Do you refer to *Sutai uuliin khoshuu*?
- It was *Sutai uuliin khoshuu*, and had only one monastery.
- If someone takes ordination does he have a new name?
- If someone gets full ordination, he definitely gets a new name.

- And in the case of the novice vow?
- [Informant did not understand the question.] Names were given from Tibetan books.
- What other holidays did the monks hold apart from the New Year?
- There was a state holiday, but it was not held in provinces, only at one place.
- Were there any monks in your monastery who came from Tibet?
- Yes, some. Mongolian monks always recited in Tibetan.
- Did the monastery have a printing house?
- There were no prints. Monks copied them by hand.
- Did the monks reside permanently in the monastery, or did they go to the countryside in summer?
- Monks knew the dates of great ceremonies. They knew which ceremony was held in which month, and arrived for those occasions. Then, they went back to the countryside. Then, they came again.
- Were there monks with permanent residence in the monastery?
- Some of them resided there permanently. It did not matter. It depended on the given person's life circumstances.
- Were there any astrologer monks?
- Yes, of course! Of course.
- You mentioned that a small workshop was founded after the closure of the monastery.
- Yes, after the destruction of the monastery. When socialism started, high-ranking monks were captured and executed. A small factory was established for the surviving young monks.
- What was the main profile of that factory? What did they produce?
- Chairs, tables, furniture, wooden utensils.
- Can you talk about the *Tsam* of the monastery?
- The monks organized the *Tsam* annually at the time of the Kālacakra ceremony. It was marvelous. There were many masks, all of them different.
- Did people invite the monks if a new yurt was put up in the countryside?
- They invited the monks to recite sacred texts.
- How and when?
- The astrologer determined the auspicious day. He knew proper and improper days and determined the date accordingly.
- How did the first hair cutting of children happen?
- Boys' hair was cut at the age of three, and girls' hair at the age of four. It might be like that.
- Was a monk also requested if someone married?
- It was possible.

Tsegmid Luvsan (1914–2012?)



Ts. Luvsan monk, 2010

Tsegmid Luvsan was born in 1914. He lived in Shar Süm in Khovd city, Khovd province from the age of 8 until 1931. He moved to Ulaanbaatar in 1931 and settled in *Shüteenii aimag* district of Urga where he lived until 1937 or 1938. He became a monk again in 1989 in Gandantegchenlin Monastery, Ulaanbaatar.

The Manchu emperor initiated the building of Shar Süm in Khovd, which had eight yellow temple buildings inside a wall fence. We interviewed Luvsan monk about his old monastery with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006 and 2009, and other interviews are available at www.mongoliantemples.org and www.amantuuh.socanth.cam.ac.uk. I visited the ruins of Shar Süm in 2010, and recorded the following interview with voice recorder on 18 November, 2010 in Luvsan monk's home assisted by his granddaughter.

- Shar Süm stood in the foreground of the hill situated in the north. It was on the hillside of the hillock.
- What is the name of the river there?
- Buyant Gol. The monastery stood on the northern bank or the River Buyant.

- What kind of temples composed the monastery?
- Several temple buildings stood there. The northernmost one was the two-storied Zuu Temple. The assembly hall stood south of it. South of it the Temple of the Four Mahārājas. South of it was the Golden Khangai Temple. A crossroad was in the south-east. The protector deity's temple called *Züün sakhius*. The *Choiraa* stood in its north. In the west, in the south-west stood the *Baruun sakhius*. The Cakrasaṃvara Temple was located in its north. These eight temples comprised the monastery. These were called the eight yellow temples.
- It is exactly eight. What is the reason of the monastery's name: Shar Süm or Yellow Monastery?
- I do not know. It was painted in yellow. Its name became Shar Süm at the very beginning. It was built in the Manchu period, 200 or 300 years ago. The Manchu emperor built it and sponsored this settlement. It was built at the cost of the Manchu emperor.
- Were there any *stūpas*?
- Yes.
- Where did they stand?
- In the south. Three *stūpas* stood there. The middle one was large, about 5 or 6 m. The other two on its two sides were about 4 m.
- There is a tree with silken scarves. What was its purpose?
- Where is it?
- South-east of the ruins of the monastery.
- Oh yes. There was a tree. There were two trees called *chorig mod* (?).
- Was the monastery with the eight temples fenced-off?
- It was fenced-off.
- Did another enclosure stand west of this enclosure?
- The enclosure of monks' dwellings was situated west of the monastery. Also in the east.
- Also another one in the north?
- No, not in the north. A small, white temple stood in the north, on the hillside of the rocky hill, Khar Tolgoi. A white temple called the Temple of the Three Bodhisattvas.
- Were there *maṇi* stones on the hillside?
- There were, there were. Two large statues stood on the hillside of that northern temple. They contained steles: the history of the monastery carved on stones in Mongolian, Chinese and Tibetan. These were as large as gates.
- Did people live behind the hollow? Any settlements, enclosures or yurts?

- Where? There was nothing. There was nothing else apart from the monks' enclosures. The Chinese Khovd city was situated in the south, south of Buyant Gol, on the area of the present-day Khovd city.
- Did the Manchu administrated city, Sangiin Khot, have schools for children?
- Yes, in the end. Maybe also before. In the end.
- What kind of temples did Sangiin Khot have?
- Do you mean inside the wall? The Geser Temple. Geser is a Chinese deity. Also the Tārā Temple. These two small temples stood in Sangiin Khot.
- Were there any Muslim mosques?
- Not at all.
- Have you heard about a spring or well called *Tsagaan övgönii rashaan*?
- (Informant misunderstood the question.) A reincarnation? No. No one was referred to there as the White Old Man. Obviously, reincarnations lived there: the latest ones were *Narovanchin*, *Dilov*, and *Jalkhanz khutagt*. They governed the monastery in turn.
- Where did they live?
- These monks came from the southern banners and led Shar Süm for three years in turn. The *Gegeeniikh* ('that of the reincarnation') was located in the northern banner, but it was demolished at the end.
- Did these reincarnations live in Shar Süm?
- I have just told you. Each of them lived there for 3 years. The last one was *Jalkhanz khutagt* who spent 20 or 30 years there.
- Did Kazakh people live in Khovd?
- Chinese? Kazakhs? No. Kazakhs did not live there, but lots of Chinese. Hundreds of Chinese people.
- Was there a Chinese military as well?
- No. According to people's account, a Chinese army arrived only in 1921, in the 1920s.
- (Informant's daughter: Did you fight against the Chinese? In 1945?)
- I do not know what happened there in 1945. Other people said that an army of 10,000 Chinese arrived in 1921.
- (Informant's daughter: Haven't you heard about the Chinese attack? Khalkhiin Gol, 1945?)
- No, there were no Chinese.
- Were *Sangiin khot* and *Maimaachen* the same place or two different places?
- The same. The Chinese settlement had a wall fence called *Sangiin kherem* ['Fence of the Treasury', Manchu administration]. The traders had their own city [*Maimaachen*].

- Did the *Maimaachen* have a monastery?
- No, no. Only the Geser Temple stood inside the *Naimaachen*. It had Chinese monks.
- Have you heard about a temple called Usnii Süm ('Temple at the Water')?
- There was nothing like that.
- Another, Erleg Khaanii Süm?
- Erleg Khaanii Süm? The Geser Temple of the Chinese was the Erleg Khaanii Süm itself.
- Were there any Chinese cemeteries?
- Oh, I do not know. Perhaps in the south. If a Chinese person died his corpse was placed near the ravine. In what [coffin] were delivered to Beijing, China. Corpses were placed into coffins. The open air burial site might have sat south of the province centre, at the north peak of Ulaan Hill (?).
- What happened to the corpses of the deceased monks of Shar Süm? Were their bodies put on ground?
- We read the *Yerööl maani* prayer. We recited sacred texts on that occasion.
- Where did you place the deceased?
- We placed them in the north.
- Behind Shar Süm?
- There was a place north of Shar Süm where rabbits were born. There was an open air burial site. It is a cemetery even nowadays.
- How did you come from Khovd to Urga? Where did you live in Urga?
- I came on camel.
- For how many days?
- The trip lasted for 34 or 35 days.
- Did you travel on the southern road?
- I travelled on the northern road. Motorways did not exist at that time. Only caravans (?). (Informant's daughter: He told me once that he came with a man.)
- In which district of Urga did you settle?
- Here? In *Shüteenii aimag*.
- In *Züün khüree* or at *Gandan*?
- At *Gandan*.
- Which temple did you hold ceremonies in?
- In *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
- In which year did you arrive in Urga?
- In 1931.
- How long did you live in *Shüteenii aimag*?
- Until 1937 or 1938. Then, it was closed. Destroyed.
- Which reincarnations lived in *Shüteenii aimag*?

- Well, I do not know.
- Have you heard about *Manzshir khutagt*?
- *Manzshir* lived near Bogd Khan Uul Mountain in Töv province. He belonged to *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
- How many monks lived in a yurt?
- One or two.
- Did *Dashchoimbel datsan*'s monks use to hold special ceremonies lasting for a month?
- Ceremonies were held there until 1938. Everything ceased and was annihilated in 1938.
- What type of ceremonies did *Dashchoimbel datsan*'s monks hold?
- It was a monastic philosophy school.
- Could monks take the *gavj* exam there?
- Sure. *Geshe* and *gavj* exams. *Dashchoimbel datsan* had approximately 3,000 or 3,500 monks.
- Did *Erdenepil khamba* belong to *Dashchoimbel datsan*?
- Yes, he did.
- Have you heard about the Journal of the Lamas published in 1936?
- A journal? It could have been published. Several journals existed.
- (Informant's daughter: How many Mongolians and Tibetans lived here?)
- About 60 or 70 Tibetans. I do not know. They have almost left Urga by that time. The Tibetans who were living in Urga were all deported and executed.
- Have you heard about an assembly called *Baasangiin khural*?
- *Baasan* what?
- Friday gatherings.
- Friday? I do not know about it.
- What did you do in 1938? Did you join the army or start to work?
- I was just a monk. I did not have a job, but was a monk who participated in ceremonies.
- Did you not disrobe at all?
- At that time, no. Then, I disrobed immediately. I disrobed in 1940, when the temples were closed and destroyed. They arrested and executed the monks, and destroyed the temples.
- Do you know if Shar Süm in Khovd has been revived?
- (Daughter: The monastery was revived this year. I have a recording of it. My grandfather received an invitation. He had a large Buddha sculpture. He sent it to the revived monastery. They placed it at the altar. My grandfather received it from India, and sent it to the revived monastery. My brother has recently visited the monastery and given a donation.)

- Are there any other monks who lived once in Shar Süm?
- No, none of my mates live.
- (Daughter: What about Ishjamts *guai*?)
- Ishjamts *guai* lived in another monastery. He lived in a different banner. He is an Ööld man from Erdenebüren district.
- Were other Ööld monks there as well? Also Dörvöd, Myangad, and other Oirads?
- Do you mean monks? Yes, various nations.
- Why did you move to *Shüteenii aimag*? Did you choose that district by yourself?
- Me? Monks coming from my region had to settle down in *Shüteenii aimag*.
- From where did the monks of *Shüteenii aimag* take water? From wells?
- From the River Tuul. Later, also from a well. People sold water, too. We could buy it. The Chinese used to sell water. Finally, a well was dug in 1938 or 1939.
- Was *Gandan* destroyed in a day or more days?
- It took many days, many days. They started to arrest monks in 1937 and finished this in 1939. They destroyed the temples. Temples were demolished and destroyed until 1939.
- What has happened to your *Shüteenii aimag*? Could it survive?
- No, no. It was also destroyed in 1938. Nothing has survived.
- Were all the 30 districts destroyed?
- All of them were destroyed in three years: 1937, 1938, and 1939.
- What happened to the sacred objects of worship of the 30 districts? Were they annihilated?
- You are right. All the 30 *aimags* and the 10 *datsans* were destroyed.
- When did you become a monk again?
- In 1989.
- Did you join *Dashchoimbel datsan* again?
- I did. I participated in the revival of *Dashchoimbel datsan*.
- How did you revive its tradition?
- The monks who belonged once to *Dashchoimbel datsan* initiated its revival. Elderly monks. At the time when *Gandan* reopened. *Gandan* permitted it in 1990.
- How many old monks gathered together?
- Several old monks. I do not know their number.
- (Daughter: Maybe 100?)
- Maybe about 30 or 40. (Daughter: About 36 monks who studied in the class of my grandfather. About 5, 6 monks are still alive.)

Lochin Ishjamts (1915–2015)



L. Ishjamts monk and his disciple, 2010

The Ööld man, Lochin Ishjamts was born in 1915. He lived in Ööldiin Khüree Gandanpuntsaglin in Erdenebüren district, Khovd province from the age of 5 to 23. He joined Gandantegchenlin Monastery in Ulaanbaatar in 1976 and later became the chanting master of *Dashchoimbel datsan*.

We interviewed Ishjamts monk with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006 and 2009. Another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded on 2 July, 2010 in Ishjamts monk's room at

Gandantegchenlin Monastery's dormitory with voice recorder and video camera. Though his son assisted the interview, Ishjamts monk was a bit angry with the interview.

- Two monasteries existed near our Gandanpuntsaglin. One of them had about 500 monks, and the other about 200 or 300 monks. Both were destroyed after 1937. I am still living.
- Was Süren *gavj agrimba* the head of the monastery?
- No, there was not anyone by the name of Süren.
- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- My master, Dambiidonme *khuvilgaan*. Now I am 96 years old. I do not remember anything.
- Were there other saints and reincarnations as well? For instance, Arshi *khuvilgaan*?
- There were no such reincarnations at all. I do not know it at all.
- Was the *Tsam* performed in that monastery?
- Yes, yes.
- Was it the *Jakhar tsam*?
- Not *Jakhar tsam*, but only *Tsam*.
- Did the monks hold the Maitreya procession, too?
- Yes.
- Was it held together with the *Tsam*?
- Together with the *Tsam*.
- Was the *Kanjur* also circumambulated?
- It was.
- Did the *Kanjur* procession circle only the monastery or the whole banner?
- The monastery.
- Was the monastery fenced-off?
- It had a fence.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- There were Ten Protectors. The main one includes the five idols, the five protective deities.
- (Informant's son: The monastery and the monastic school were two different sites. Please specify their names.)
- These were different sites about 70 kms from each other. One of them was Gandanpuntsaglin, the other was Shar Süm. Gandanpuntsaglin Khiid had about 500 monks.
- Where was it situated?
- In the foreground of Tsambagarav Uul. Shar Süm was located in Khovd, in the province centre.

- Did a Geser Temple belong to Shar Süm?
- Several nice temples stood there.
- What types of monastic schools belonged to Gandanpuntsaglin Khiid?
- Five *datsans*: the assembly hall, also tantric, philosophical, *Agva*, and *Dashgempil* (?).
- Did it have a medical monastic school, too?
- No.
- Were there any *stūpas*?
- Yes, there were.
- On which side of the monastery?
- Four *stūpas* stood on the four sides of the monastery.
- Were there female practitioners or people who held the *Chö* tantric rituals?
- No, no.
- Did they live in another place?
- Such people did not live in that region. *Chö* practitioners did not live in that area at all.
- Where was this monastery located according to the old administrative system?
- I do not know. I cannot say anything to you about it. It was Ööld, *Dambii ööldiin khoshuu*.
- Did Chinese traders live in the vicinity?
- There were Chinese people. A few Chinese. I do not know exactly what they sold. Textile, twill, and others.
- Did you live in that monastery from the age of 7 to 24?
- Exactly. I lived there for 17 years.
- Did you learn Tibetan there?
- I learnt Tibetan texts there. I do not know the Mongolian texts.
- Were the temples made of wood or brick?
- Various types existed.
- How did you celebrate the Lunar New Year?
- We held our ceremonies.
- Can you mention other famous festivals?
- No, there were no such festivals. Wrestling and horseracing. The *Naadam* festival of the banner took place in summer.
- In the centre of Khovd?
- No, at our monastery.
- Did monks wrestle?
- Yes, they did. All monks wrestled.
- Did they wear Mongolian wrestling clothes: *zodog* and *shuudag*?

WESTERN MONGOLIA

- Yes, yes.
- What kind of toys did novices play?
- Well, few. Children played with knucklebones.
- How did you spend a day?
- We woke up in the morning and started the ceremony.

EASTERN MONGOLIA

Lünden Gendenjamts (1917–2013)



L. Gendenjamts monk, 2010

Lünden Gendenjamts was born in 1917. He joined Buyantiin Khiid also known as Khardaliin Ganjuur Khiid in Galshar district at the age of 7, and Gandanshadavdarjaalin Khiid in Galshar district in Khentii province at the age of 11 or 12. He took the *geshe* exam of Buddhist philosophy in 1935. He disrobed then, but became a monk again in the revived Gundgavarlin Monastery in Chinggis [Öndörkhaan] city, the centre of Khentii province.

The following interview was recorded in his home in Öndörkhaan city on 20 August, 2010 with a voice recorder.

- When did you take ordination?
- At the age of 7.
- In which monastery?
- I started to learn the Tibetan alphabet at the age of 7. Then, I moved from one place to another: from Buyant district to Galshar district at the age of 11 or 12. It means that I joined Gandanshadavdarjaalin Khiid in Galshar district to study sacred texts. I became a disciple of Baatarjamba *gavj*, and started to study philosophical texts from him. I took the *dom* exam and became a *geshe* in 1935.
- Please tell me more about the temples and the monk population of Gandanshadavdarjaalin Khiid. How many monks did it have?
- About 500 or 1,000 monks comprised the community. The monastery had a monastic philosophy school, an astrological monastic school, a medical monastic school and a tantric monastic school.
- Was the monastery fenced-off?
- The monastery had *aimags*: north-western district, eastern district, south-western district, etc.
- Were there four such districts?
- Four districts. The temples were all fenced-off.
- Were the temples made of wood or brick?
- Wooden temples.
- Which deity was the main protector of the monastery?
- The 75 Mahākālas. Mahākāla was the main protector. We honoured his image as the main object of worship.
- Please describe the monastic philosophy school.
- Well.
- How many classes did it have?
- Thinking back, there would have been 7 or 8 classes: *Khadag*, *Shidiiv*, *Jumbrai*, *Yul*, *Yuljin*, *Dondünjü*, and *Gaaramba*. 5, 6 or 7.
- Was *Tsam* dance performed in that monastery?
- No dances. Anyway, we can use the word ‘dance’ for the veneration of the Dharma protectors.
- Did the monks organize the Maitreya procession there?
- Yes, of course. We had a Maitreya image, so we could organize the procession. Dance was not performed at that time. When speaking about plays or performances we can mention the *Tsam*. The monastery had a *Tsam*.

- What about the *Kanjur* circumambulation?
- *Kanjur* circumambulation was held. *Kanjur* was a large-scale event. We circumambulated Maitreya on a vehicle with four large wheels.
- Did monks hold the rituals of the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- Certainly. Of course. Fully-ordained monks and novices participated in the *Khailen*.
- Where were the *stūpas*?
- Both monasteries had *stūpas*. Both Buyant and Galshar.
- Were there tantric practitioners as well?
- Yes, of course. There were many such practitioners. Red and white, male and female.
- Did Chinese live in that region?
- No. No Chinese.
- Traders?
- In the past, certain monks had nicknames as *Khüree gelen* [‘fully ordained monk from Urga’], *Beijin gelen* [‘fully ordained monk from Beijing’]. *Beijin gelen* might have run commerce. Chinese trade also flourished. In both monasteries. Galshar even had a store.
- Which *ovoo* did the monks venerate?
- Galshar Mountain. Khan Uul, Ikh, Baga Agt.
- Please mention nearby rivers and springs. (Private talk.)
- Certainly there was water. In Buyant, Sümen (?) three brooks, the three brooks of Baga Agt, Agtiin Züün Bulag, in Baga Agt also Gashuunii Bulag.
- Which banner did these monasteries belong to?
- The area of *Khardal janjin beisiin khoshuu*.
- Have you heard about the Khardaliin Ganjuuriin Khural?
- The *Kanjur* was available in Buyant. A complete set. *Kanjur*, *Tanjur*, *Tsam* and others. Buyant possessed the *Kanjur*. Have you recorded Buyant Bulag before? Among waters? Buyant Bulag was a nice brook. Flies flew there in winter. It was very cold in summer. The area of Galshar was united. At present these areas belong to Galshar district. (Showing it on a map.)
- Was the monastery situated in the district centre?
- Yes, in the centre. (Private talk.)
- Did the monastery possess livestock?
- I do not know. Thinking back to Galshar it seems that Buyant did not possess livestock. But perhaps it did. One could make a living from livestock. The livestock was the main source of living. Therefore, monaster-

ies had to have livestock. Buyant brook has many tributaries. They unite in the brook.

- Are the monasteries in Buyant and Galshar revived?
- [The abbot] Ishdoo revived Galshar. He passed away. I assisted him with the revival. Ishdoo and me revived it. However, you should not mention my name. When we revived the tradition of Buyant, we built a new temple, but later it became abandoned. However, it turned out very nice again last year or the year before. All religious implements are available there, everything is brand new. Beautiful! Old implements have not remained. That is the revival of Buyant. Gong, cymbal, horn, flute, everything is available. (Private talk.) Buyant had about 500 monks. Fully ordained monks used to hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period. It was a wonderful site.
- Were there any reincarnation?
- Perhaps. Galshar was an exceptional place. Buyant had a saint. Buyant had monks with full ordination: *Dagdan gelen*, *Beijin gelen*, *Khüree gelen* and many other fully-ordained monks. They participated in the *Khailen* ceremony. That was wonderful! There was only one temple: an assembly hall. Also the Kanjur Temple, which operated in a large yurt. Monks held the ceremonies in that large yurt in summer. We held *Büteel* and other events there. The history of Buyant is well studied. That was a small monastery.
- Did the monastery preserve a set of the *Kanjur* written with black ink? Or was it written in vermillion? Black or red?
- Black. I do not know if it was written in black ink. The monastery possessed a set of the *Kanjur* written in vermillion. I do not know if also a set in black was available or not. The volumes were divided into two parts: *Dülvaa* or Vinaya and others. We might have also had a *Kanjur* written in black ink. These were placed on both sides of the altar. The Kanjur Temple had a set of the *Kanjur* written in vermillion. *Dülvaa* was on the right side and the other volumes on the left. Large volumes written in red. Actually, black ink has a reason. Vermillion has another reason. Both could have been available there.
- Is there anything that remained from that monastery? (Private talk.)
- Now you study Buyant very well. No one has studied it as far as I know. I myself remember it well. Galshar monastery was a famous monastery, and had reincarnations such as Luvsanbaldan. A woman, Tserendov (?) wrote a booklet about Buyant. (Private talk.) I am from Buyant, 94, 95 years old. (Private talk.) A man, Yondon, lived in Buyant, who is 90 years old. He belonged to the same assembly. Increasing in ranks, the monks

went from Buyant to Galshar. (Private talk.) The history of religion is very interesting. About 60 Recently I have received a Certification of *Lovon* from Gandantegchenlin Monastery. I am still acting with the compassion of Avalokiteśvara. (Private talk.) Dambarintsen lives in Buyant. The River Buyant is a wonderful place. I visited Burkhan Khaldun three times in three years. Tantra is a kind of biological study. The medical monastic school is in connection with health and physical well-being. The main scope of the monastic philosophy school is Buddhist philosophy. (Private talk.)

Choirov Dondov
(1928–2018)



Ch. Dondov *guai*, 2010

Choirov Dondov was born in 1928, in the year of the Snake. He lived in Dalai Vangiin Khüree *Dashchoinkhorlin* in Mönkhkhaan district, Sükhbaatar province from the age of 5 to 7. He joined a primary school after disrobing. He revived the tradition of Dashchoinkhorlin Monastery, building a new temple in the centre of Mönkhkhaan district in 2010. He has remained a lay person.

Dashchoinkhorlin Khüree was the main monastery in *Dalai vangiin kho-shuu* of Setsen Khan Province. It had 1,000 monks.

The following interview was recorded in Dondov *guai*'s yurt in Mönkh-khaan district centre with voice recorder on 18 August, 2010. His account includes information about *Dashchoinkhorlin* and other monasteries of the banner based on what he had heard from his father, who was a monk of the monastery from the age of 13 to 52, and the shrine-keeper of its Geser Temple for 25 years.

- What was the name of the biggest monastic town situated in this region?
- *Dalai van*'s Dashchoinkhorlin Khüree.
- How many monks did it have?
- About 1,000.
- With what type of temples?
- There were many small affiliations. Dashchoinkhorlin, also Kālacakra, medical monastic school, monastic philosophy school, and others. First of all, the main temple was called *Gol süm* ('main temple'), the monastic philosophy school. Second, Kālacakra. Tantric monastic school, medical monastic school, Gradual Path school, the assembly hall called *Tsogchin*, and also *Shüteen* that housed the holy object of worship.
- What kind of image was the main object of worship?
- Buddha Śākyamuni.
- Was the monastery fenced-off? Did it have a wall?
- No fence. It was plain. 500x500 m.
- Were there *stūpas*?
- *Stūpas* stood on the four sides: in the west, north, east and south. Also prayer wheels: four large prayer wheels. A *stūpa* and a large prayer wheel stood on the four sides.
- Was *Tsam* performed here?
- Yes. A large scale *Tsam* festival and Maitreya procession took place.
- Did the *Kanjur* circumambulation take place as well?
- *Kanjur* was circumambulated. The monastery had two sets: a golden *Kanjur* and a *Kanjur* written in vermillion. Also *Tanjur*. The *Kanjur* consisted of 108 volumes and the *Tanjur* of 225 volumes.
- Did the monks use to hold the *Khailen* oath-taking period?
- They used to hold the *Khailen* once a year. 1,000 fully-ordained monks.
- Who was the abbot of the monastery?
- *Tsanid bagsh* Luvsangombo.
- Was he a reincarnation?

- No, he was an ordinary monk. *Damba tsorj*, *Chültem da lam*, *Lodon lovon*, also many chanting masters and disciplinarians. The names of the temples were *datsans*. There were 14 *datsans*. The main one was the philosophy or epistemological monastic school.
- Where did the monks live? Did they live in districts?
- In the four *aimags*.
- Can you list them?
- *Shüteenii aimag* in the south-west, then *Choiriin aimag*, *Maidariin aimag*, and *Khural sangiin aimag*.
- Were you yourself a monk?
- Yes, I was a monk from the age of 5 to 7. I was a small child and participated in the ceremonies of the assembly hall. My father was a monk who worshipped Geser. Geser's image was preserved at our place. My father, Choirov was the offering-preparer in the Geser Temple. My name is Choirov Dondov. My father worked as the offering-preparer of Geser Temple for 25 years. He participated in the ceremonies of the Kālacakra Temple, too. For 25 years. He was a monk in that monastery from the age of 13 to 52. He was not deported, and not concerned with those cases in 1937. The reason is that he had never had an important position. He could survive because he was an ordinary monk. He died in 1969 at the age of 83. He was talented at blowing the *bishgüür* flute. He was a musician, the best flutist in the banner.
- What did the temple buildings look like? Were they built in Tibetan style?
- In Mongolian style. Only one of them was built in Tibetan style: the philosophy school, which stood in the south. The monastic philosophy school was a Tibetan style temple. It burnt down once. After reconstruction it looked like the temples at Gandan. It was a large temple building: 16x16 m.
- Where was the temple buildings located?
- (Informant draws a sketch.) Here was the monastic philosophy school, the assembly hall, the Kālacakra, Tantra, medical monastic school and the temple of the Gradual Path. The four districts had their own temples: *Shüteenii aimag*, *Choiriin khiid*, and the Maitreya temple. *Dugan* and *süm* have the same meaning: temple. The Geser Temple stood in the south-west.
- Did Mongolian monks belong to the Geser Temple?
- Mongolian. Monks did not hold ceremonies there, but offerings were made there every morning and evening. There was an offering-preparer.

He was my father. He always recited sacred text there. The building housed the sacred object of Geser, the hero riding a horse.

- Where was the ruler, *Dalai van*'s yurt palace?
- *Dalai van*'s yurt palace stood on the slope of this north-eastern hillock called Banzar Hillock. There was my school, the primary school of Mönkhkhaan district. We built this new monastery here in the 2000s. Everything which stood here before was destroyed. For instance, the ruler's palace.
- Did Chinese people live in the vicinity? Chinese stores?
- Chinese lived there. North-east of the monastery, about 5 or 10 km distance stood the store of *Beijin naimaa* ['Beijing trade'] and further the *Dolnuur naimaa* ['Dolnuur trade']. They softened leather, produced timber and metal tools. Many smiths lived there. This region had several monasteries: my main monastery [Dashchoinkhorlin]. Khuvilgaanii Khiid was located in the southern hill devoted to a reincarnation. His Lamiin Lkhakhan ['Chapel of the Lama'] was situated in the south-west. Another monastery, the Baruun Ganjuur ['Western *Kanjur*'] also possessed the *Kanjur*. These several affiliations all had sacred sculptures and objects of worship. There was also a yurt temple on this side, which housed a sacred object of worship. It was hidden from people: secret. Would you like to know which deity it housed? Begtse. The sacred object of worship of my banner represented Begtse. Devotees used to circle his temple. People couldn't enter or hold ceremonies there. Only the offering preparer could enter. The sacred object of worship was a small massive, golden statue adorn with the nine jewels. It is kept in a very secret place at Gandan Monastery at present.
- Were there any Chinese brick burning kilns nearby?
- Not in the vicinity. There was a brick burning kiln near the Dolnuur store. They built their buildings with blue bricks they produced themselves. All of them were built from that brick. It was a large store with many shops. Finally, everyone returned to Beijing.
- Where was the waste dump?
- East of the monastery. South-west of the monastery is a hillock: Tsatsat Ovoo. Also one in the north. These two *ovoos* are called Tsatsat Ovoo as *tsats* conical shaped terracotta figures were placed on their tops. People used to bow there.
- Where was the burial site for monks?
- In the west, at a place called Tsagaan Öndör. It is also used for that purpose. It is very far. Corpses were off-loaded there and dogs ate them.
- Did any monks practice tantric rituals such as body-offering?

- Body-offering existed. Red Stream. An astrologic monastic school stood at our monastery. The Red Stream spread out of the road of circumambulation. The astrologic monastic school stood here. Also, Yoga separately.
- Were there female tantric practitioners, too?
- No.
- How many monks used to perform the body-offering?
- Not so many. Two or three. Some old practitioners lived in the countryside. So, a total of four or five people. No one else. They did not have a centre, a monastery. Such ceremonies were held in the Yoga temple. Body-offering was performed in the countryside. Practitioners sat next to dead bodies and performed their rituals.
- Were there wooden temples?
- All of them were wooden temples.
- Have you heard about a monastery called Öndör Maidariin Khiid?
- Öndör Maidariin Khiid was situated at the site of the present Bayanterem district centre, 35 kms from here. That was also a small monastery affiliated to this central one. Khooloin Khudgiin Shüteen [‘Object of Worship at Khooloin Brook’] was situated near here [south-east]. It was like that: Lamiin Lkhakhan in the south, Baruun Ganjuur here, Lovon Lamiin Shüteen here [‘Object of Worship of the *Lovon* Lama’], and later it moved to Khooloin Khudag. These two are the same. North-east, that area belongs now to Tümentsogt district. Here were the small temple of Baruun Guut [‘Western Ravine’], also Züün Guut [‘Eastern Ravine’]. Khamjlagiin Khiid [‘Monastery of the Servantry’] and Laansiin Ganjuur [‘Lancha *Kanjur*’] were situated south of Bayan-Ovoo. These small monasteries were all affiliated to our main monastery.
- How many monks belonged to Öndör Maidariin Khiid?
- About 100. Each of them had 100 monks. 100 in Baruun Ganjuur, 100 in Lamiin Lkhakhan, and 40 or 50 in this small one.
- Did Öndör Maidariin Khiid house the giant image of Maitreya?
- There was a Maitreya statue of 9 cubits. That small monastery was named after the statue. The largest monastery stood in the centre of Bayanterem district.
- When did they destroy these monasteries?
- In 1937, in the era of persecution. They destroyed all monasteries, took and shot the monks.
- Did a Mongolian army come from the Ministry of the Interior to execute this or Russians?
- Russians did not come here. Mongols came from the Ministry of the Interior. From Russia, from the north, many Russian instructors worked

in the Ministry of the Interior. The monasteries were destroyed on their instructions. Therefore, 400-14,000 monks were suppressed, shot and killed. The monks sentenced for ten years could return. These monks built the 1st 10-year school in Ulaanbaatar decorated by the portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. They laboured for ten years. They came back after being released from prison.

- Were you a monk until the age of 9?
- No, from 5 to 7. Children at the age of 7 were not allowed to be monks, but had to go to school. I was 9 when I went to school.
- When were you born?
- In 1928. I am 82 years old. I was born in the year of the Snake.
- Do you remember the monks who were sentenced, and came back later?
- Yes, there were many of them. Many monks who were sentenced for ten years returned. Not the high ranking abbots, *tsorjs*, chanting masters, but only the poor monks came back. High-ranking monks were all shot.
- Were they deported to Baruun-Urt or to Öndörkhaan?
- To Öndörkhaan.
- Later, did the monks hold ceremonies in secret?
- In 1942 [1944]. The first ceremony was held in Gandan at that time, but here only some years ago. I put up a yurt in 2000 and monks restarted services. Now, they have a monastery. First, ten children took ordination. This is my achievement. To recover Dashchoinkhorlin Khüree, the new monastery's name is Dashchoinkhorlin Khiid. This is what I have completed.
- Have the old objects of worship remained?
- Not here. They burnt all books and objects of worship at that time. They collected them at the wall of a large stone building and burnt them for ten days. Everything was annihilated.
- Did the monastery have a *Tamgiin gazar* governmental office?
- There was not in the monastery, but the *Tamgiin gazar* of administration was situated here. It was the *Dalai van's Tamgiin gazar* with a noble and *jasaa* temporary service.
- Did the temples have their own *jas* financial offices?
- There were several financial offices. Very rich. All the four districts had a *jas*. Herders in the countryside, poor people got salary for herding the *jasiin mal*, the livestock of the financial offices. It was a very rich *jas* with much livestock.
- Was there a platform calling the monks for ceremonies?
- A tall platform called *dungiin shat* ('platform of the conch shell horn'). The new platform is short. The old one was about 7–8 m, high as electric

pylons. Monks climbed up from the two sides. Two monks sounded large [*dun*] *büree* conch shell horns.

- Did the monks live alone in yurts?
- Monks put up yurts. Behind the yurt was a building. There were many buildings and yurts. One monk lived in a yurt, but there were monks with many disciples as well.
- Did the monks print books?
- The monastery had printing blocks. Monks printed with them. They printed mostly prayer flags for devotees.
- Shamans did not live in the vicinity, did they?
- There were male shamans. There were people who performed their rituals outside of the monastery. Just a few men, a couple of men.
- Was there a *Chojin* oracle as well?
- No.
- Reincarnations?
- Yes. In Lamiin Lkhakhan lived the reincarnation of *Nomun khan*. The 20-year old *Nomun khan* of Lamiin Khüree was captured. Also a *lkhaaramba* lived here in former times. Doctor, PhD. His name was Chültem, and went to India and Tibet and became a *lkhaaramba*. We called him *Lkhaaramba bagsh* without pronouncing his name. He died before the persecution. He was not captured. Another reincarnation also lived here. He used to wear ordinary robes. In other words, we had two reincarnations. They had the same names: Luvsan-Yondon. The first Luvsan-Yondon was *Dojoogiin khuvilgaan* in the north. The other Luvsan-Yondon was a reincarnation in Tömör Uurgat. This man was an older male relative of my mother. He was captured. Both these reincarnations were captured when I was 9 years old, in 1937.
- What kind of work did you do then?
- First I was a pupil in the primary school. I learnt for four years there from 1939–1943. Then, I studied in the secondary school in Öndörkhaan, in the 5th and 6th classes. I became 18 in 1946, and went to the Pedagogical School in Ulaanbaatar. I became a teacher and taught for 41 years. 20 years in a primary school. Then, I taught History and Geography. I retired in 1990.
- Can you repeat the names of the nearby geographical sites and the monasteries?
- Lamiin Lkhakhan. Tsagaan Nomun Khanii Khüree [‘Monastic Town of the White Lord of Religion’]. Erdene Uul in the north. I have forgotten to mention to you the object of worship at Erdene Uul. Züün (?) Ganjuur Khamjlaga [‘*Kanjur* Servantry’]. Baruun Guut, Züün Guut, Khamjlaga,

Laansiin Ganjuur at the hillside of Bayan-Ovoo. All of these were situated in the north-east, in the current area of Tümentsogt. Boongiin Khiid sat in the east. Öndör Maidar was at Bayanterem. Tsagaan Chuluutiin Khiid ['Monastery at the White Rocks'] was situated south-east of Bayanterem. *Dalai vangiin khoshuu* banner was a large area, and all of these monasteries belonged to this area. Uulbayan, Mönkhkhaan, Bayanterem in the south, in the north-east Bayan-Ovoo of Khentii province, Batnorov, Norovlin. It reached the River Onon in the north. The name of the banner was *Sholoi Setsen khan's Dalai vangiin khoshuu*. Budjav was his youngest, 11th son, who inherited this banner from his father.

INNER MONGOLIA

Jantsan Sharav (1928–2015)

Jantsan Sharav joined Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Gegeenii Khiid in Shiliin Gol province, Inner Mongolia at the age of 7. He moved to Mongolia in 1945 and became a monk again around 1990 and started to train novices in 1992 in Erdenemandal Puntsogchoinkhorlin Monastery in Baruun-Urt city, Sükhbaatar province. We interviewed him with voice recorder in the monastery on 16 August, 2010 with O. Enkhbayar, monk of *Idgaachoinzinlin datsan*, Gandantegchenlin Monastery.

- I was a monk in Bandid Gegeenii Khiid in Shiliin Gol, Inner Mongolia. I began to learn the Tibetan alphabet and sacred texts at the age of 7, and started to participate in ceremonies at the age of 9 or 10. Before preparing for the *geshe* exam, I had to move here to Mongolia due to the war in 1945. I disrobed and lived in Bayandelger district as a herder. I founded a monastery in Bayandelger with *Bagt lam* Damba in 1990. We will celebrate its 20th anniversary soon. Are you interested in how I arrived at this monastery? They requested me to teach sacred texts here in 1992, so I moved here. I have several talented disciples, and I still live here. I live on people's alms. I have never been interested in money.
- How many monks did your old monastery, Bandid Gegeenii Khiid have in Inner Mongolia?
- About 1,000.
- When was it founded?
- I do not know its date of foundation, but it still exists. It is an old monastery. It might have been built in the Yüan period [1280–1368]. Monks from different areas gathered there: Dariganga, Shiliin Gol, Baruun Avga, Züün Avga, Baruun and Züün Khuuchid, and Sönid. Also from Mongolia. It was a large and beautiful monastery. Only the philosophy school had 1,000 disciples. The assembly hall, the *Sangain datsan* and all the other temples had their own names, but I do not know the number of their monks.
- *Bandid gegeen* was a reincarnation, was he not?
- Well, yes, he was a reincarnation of a monk who came from Lhasa.
- Can you list the temples of the monastery?
- Assembly hall, *Sangain datsan*, monastic philosophy school, medical monastic school, tantric monastic school, *Ganjuur datsan*. The monastery had these six monastic schools. If a monk wished to be a doctor, he

joined the medical monastic school. If a monk was interested in meditation, for instance the visualization of Mahākāla, he joined the *Jüdvä datsan* tantric school. Regarding the philosophy school, monks studied the texts written by eminent Mongolian and Tibetan monks. *Sangain datsan*'s profile was the veneration of the Dharma protectors. Mahāyāna teachings were always pronounced in the *Ganjuur datsan*. Actually, all temples had their own responses. Monks' training and studies were tested many times. They could join the philosophy school if they had an interest in study. Lazy monks joined other temples. The philosophy temple was a site that required a sharp mind. The medical monastic school was as hospitals are nowadays. Later, schools came into existence. I am now 83 years old. I was a monk also in my childhood. I share my knowledge with my disciples.

- Do you remember the manual of the philosophy school?
- *Khadag, Düichen, Jümbrei, Dagrig, Dondünjü, Tünsel, Gavjid* were the names of classes. The *Ser igchaa* manual was in use.
- Which deity was the main protector of the philosophy school?
- *Yansan yadam*.
- Was the *Tsam* performed there?
- Yes, it was.
- When? How many monks participated in it?
- I was a child, but I remember the two Ācārya masters, the 21 Tārās, and Dharmarāja. *Jarga* (?) also participated, which might refer to the Red Protector. If you want to understand the meaning of the *Tsam*: it is aimed at the personification of the Dharma protectors.
- Did the monks use to burn the *Sor* and *Jakhar* during the *Tsam*?
- They performed it in spring and autumn. They burnt the *Sor* during the Autumn Ceremony to remove obstacles. It happened in the last month of autumn. In spring, in February the monk who was responsible for the protector of the assembly hall made a prophesy with dice to see which *datsan* would be in charge of that action. For instance, the *Sangain datsan*. The monks who gave the prophesy would have been very capable of absorbing the power of Buddhist deities. Monks used to meditate a lot. There was a *datsan* for *Chö* practitioners. So, it means that a total of seven temples stood there.
- Did male and female practitioners belong to the *Chö datsan*?
- Yes, yes. Its brief explanation is as follows: Tārā is Buddha Śākyamuni's mother. Therefore, we have to honour women with great respect. Sacred scripts describe how difficult it is for a son to show gratitude to his lov-

- ing mother. A son who prepares tea for his mother three times from the squeezed out juice of the grass can return his mother's loving kindness.
- What did female practitioners look like? What was their hair and clothing like?
 - Tantric practitioners had a special robe. They did not wear such mixed clothes as nowadays.
 - Did they have hair?
 - They had hair. Tails had great honour at that time. Hair was cut first at the age of 2 or 3, but later grew without cutting. It was prohibited to touch women's tails. They were plaited. The worst omen was if someone cut off her hair. If someone took her bolt and unbolted her hair it meant mourning. Because of it, it was considered bad. From the other hand there are also samples of history in books. My Mongolia is a bit obscurantist. People should eat food without meat and have untied hair. It will be like that soon. Later, but I do not know when. Vegetarian food will disappear. Untied hair became normal. I think it is true. I read it in books. I am not a very learned man. I studied Buddhist sacred texts only in my childhood.
 - Which temple did you belong to?
 - I participated in the ceremonies of the assembly hall in the morning and in the philosophy school during daytime. I belonged to the philosophy school.
 - Can you determine the arrangement of the temple buildings?
 - Yes, I remember them well. *Sangain datsan* was located in the western-most part, in the north-west. The assembly hall stood in the eastern side of *Sangain datsan*. The monastic philosophy school was situated east of the assembly hall, followed by the tantric monastic school. North of the tantric monastic school stood the *Kanjur datsan*. Also the medical monastic school. The medical monastic school was located east of the *Kanjur datsan*. The *Chö* assembly stood not inside, but outside of the monastery. It was out of the *goroo* circumambulation road. Women could not enter or stay inside the *goroo* after sundown. It was checked every day at 10pm.
 - Was the monastery fenced-off?
 - Every monastery [maybe temple] was fenced-off. Every monastery had a sentry of the watchman. There was a large gong with a man who chased out dogs. (Laughing.)
 - Did all the temples have their own financial office?
 - Certainly, all of them had their own. Own kitchen, own financial offices.

- Were there *stūpas* as well? Were there as many *stūpas* as this monastery has?
- Just a few *stūpas*. There were *stūpas* on the *goroo* circumambulation road. Large *stūpas*. However, *stūpas* were not large in number. Perhaps *Sangain dugan* and the assembly hall had a *stūpa*. A *stūpa* stood north of the circumambulation road. The Maitreya procession used to stop there for offerings.

Garjid Divaasambuu (1928–2015)



G. Divaasambuu *tsorj*, 2009

Garjid Divaasambuu was born in 1928. He joined Khambiin Süm in *Baruun Khuuchid khoshuu*, in Shiliin Gol province, Inner Mongolia at the age of 8. He moved to Ariyaa Janlün Bandid Gegeenii Khüree in *Züün beisiin khoshuu* at the age of 14 to study Buddhist philosophy. Later, he escaped to Mongolia in 1945 with some other monks of the *Khuuchid khoshuu* banner and started to hold ceremonies in a yurt assembly in Erdenetsagaan district, Sükhbaatar province. The monks of this assembly were enrolled in Gandantegchenlin Monastery in 1960, so Divaasambuu monk himself became a monk of *Gandan*, and later the *tsorj* monk of the monastery. He had several disciples and wrote many books including a publication on the history of Gandantegchenlin Monastery.

We interviewed Divaasambu *tsorj* with Zsuzsa Majer in 2006 and another interview is available at www.mongoliantemples.org. The following interview was recorded with voice recorder and video camera in Divaasambu *tsorj*'s home near Gandantegchenlin Monastery on 13 September, 2009.

- Inner Mongolia consists of many provinces. Do you know them? Shiliin Gol, Ulaan Tsav, and others. I am a man from Shiliin Gol province, which consists of ten banners. If we start to list them from the west: Western Sönöd and Eastern Sönöd are the first ones. Then, Ikh Avga, Baga Avga. The Ikh Avga refers to Avga Davaagiinkhan, and the Baga Avga to Avga Zasgiinkhan. These two had their names for reasons. Then, the two Avkhas: its two banners are called Baruun Beiliinkh and Züün Beiliinkh. Do you know Bandid Gegeenii Khiid? There was a big *ail* ['household', here monastery] called *Ariyaa Janlün bandid gegeen*. He was a polymath, the author of many volumes. His name was Luvsandambijantsan. He belonged to the Beis banner of Avkha, there is Shiliin Gol, the Inner Mongolian Shiliin Gol. North-east of it are two banners: Western Khuuchid and Eastern Khuuchid. East of them are the Western and Eastern Üjümchin. These ten banners existed in Inner Mongolia.

As I am from Shiliin Gol, I will talk to you only about that, even though I know every province well. I was born in the Western or *Baruun khuuchid khoshuu* of Shiliin Gol. The history of the Western Khuuchids traces back to the 1550s, the period of the minor *khans*. There were the great *khans* and the minor *khans* in Mongolian history. 15 great *khans*. The western area of Mongolia and also Zasagt Khan Province had a *khan* called Güden Khan during the period of the minor *khans*. He was born, governed during the 1550s at the time of the minor *khans*. Regarding his family, the queen, Mandukhai Tsetsen Khatan (c. 1449–1510) had two sons. One of Törbold's ten children was Bodi Alag. One of his four children was Güden Khan. Güden Khan had four younger brothers. His eldest son was Tümen Zasag Khan. His brothers were Zügtel (?) Daichin, Mogoi Mergen and Erdenedalai. Zügtel (?) Daichin became the first aristocrat of my banner, *Baruun khuuchid khoshuu*. It means that the area was subordinated to him. The son of Zügtel (?) Daichin was Tanai Erdene, and Tanai Erdene's son was Jatad Zaan Dörvön (?). Some sources refer to him as Kitad, whereas other sources write Jitad. His oldest son was Garamtseveen. Our Khuuchid people lived originally in the area of the Lake Khövsgöl and the Khangai range, and moved to the south to Inner Mongolia during the period of Garamtseveen. It happened before the war of Galdan Boshigt (1644–1697), perhaps in the period of Ligdan Khan

(r. 1603–1634) and Tsogt Taij (1581–1637). They moved to the south in the period of Ligdan Khan (1588–1634), and settled down in Inner Mongolia and became called Western Khuuchids. It happened during the reigning period of the prince, Garamtseveen *taij*. Garamtseveen had a brother. More precisely, one of them was Erdenebold. Erdenebold was one of Jatad Zaan Dörvön's (?) two sons. One of them was Erdenebold whose subordinates were the Züün Khuuchids, and the other one was Garamtseveen, the leader of the Baruun Khuuchids. He was not a *zasag* governor at that time. The Manchu emperor requested these two leaders during Galdan Bogshigt's war to protect the border as Galdan's army was approaching from the north. The Manchu emperor ordered these two leaders to protect the border and they acted accordingly: they did not let in Galdan's army. As they backstopped this Ööld army, both of them were decorated with the titles of *van*, *zasag van* in the 1680s. This is the history of the foundation of my banner, *Baruun khuuchid khoshuu*. Since that time forward many *zasag vans* governed it. I wrote a book about the history of the Baruun Khuuchids. I clarified everything in that book.

- Could you tell some tales about the Karma Kagyüpa Stream and the current Karmapa monastery?
- The story began during the reigning period of Möngke Khaan (r. 1251–1259). He nomadised in the area of the River Ider. Möngke was the son of Tolui (1191–1232), who was Chinggis Khan's son. Möngke and Khubilai (1215–1294) were brothers. The Mongols did not know Buddhism at that period of time. The Second Karma Pakshi (1204–1283) was invited from Tibet. Mongolia was close to Tibet; both belong to Inner Asia. Tibet was close. You cross the Altai Range and its southern part is Tibet itself. Anyway, Möngke Khaan became a Karmapa follower when he was nomadizing at the River Ider. This was the first propagation of Buddhism in Mongolia.
- Let's turn our attention to your life and career. When were you born?
- I was born in 1927. In the first year of the 16th sexagenary cycle, in the year of the Red Rabbit. The 16th cycle started in 1927 with the year of the Red Rabbit. The 17th cycle started in 1988.
- When did you take ordination?
- I was born in the western or *Baruun khuuchid khoshuu* of Shiliin Gol at a place called Jint Makh. My father told me that he wished me to be a monk, so he took me to a monastery where I started to learn the alphabet at the age of 6.
- Which monastery did you join?

- I started to learn Tibetan texts from a man called *Baga shavron* [‘vice attendant’]. I joined ceremonies at the age of 8. The monastery’s name was Khuuchid Khambiin Süm. About 300 monks belonged to that Khambiin Süm at that time. I took ordination there, and have been a monk without interruption ever since. Why without interruption? At the time of the war of liberation in 1945, the border [between Inner and Outer Mongolia] opened. The border was closed in my Khuuchid land. Therefore, we moved here [to Mongolia]. Three assemblies moved here in autumn, 1945. Buddhism spread again in Mongolia at that time. Gandan reopened in 1944 and religion started to spread again, and I moved to Gandan Monastery. The period of that terrible disaster passed, and religion started to spread again in 1944 at Gandan. If it had not been so, I also would have been stopped from being a monk in that period of time. I would have had to disrobe and join the army. If not, I could have gone to the prison. This is what could have happened.
- Did you say that Khambiin Khiid in the Khuuchid area had about 300 monks?
- Yes, it had about 300 monks. There were Gelugpa monks and Karmapa monks. I wrote a book about the revival of religion starting from the reopening of Gandan in 1944. I clarified everything in that book. Read it carefully!
- Did any monks who performed body-offering rituals live in your old monastery?
- There were such monks, there were such monks.
- Could you list the temples of the monastery?
- Those monks were called Junai, also an old man, Sodnom who performed the body-offering, but not any young monks. There were such monks in former times.
- Did the monks hold *Tsam* in that monastery?
- *Tsam* was not performed, but Maitreya procession took place. There is no monastery without Maitreya procession. The old Khambiin Süm had a medical monastic school and an astrologic monastic school. I joined the medical monastic school and the astrologic monastic school and started to study medical texts at the age of 11. At the age of 14, in winter I moved further to Shiliin Gol, to join the monastic philosophy school of Bandid Gegeenii Khiid. By the way, I gave the text of *Beenamnan* of *Bandid gegeen*’s collected works to Kara György [George Kara] as a gift. It contains several pictures and scripts. It is part of the collected works of *Bandid gegeen*. The second incarnation of *Bandid gegeen*, Luvsandam-

bijaltsan was a great scholar, and composed eight volumes. I met Kara György in 1954 [maybe later] in the countryside.

- How many monks lived in Bandid Gegeenii Khiid?
- There were 1,700 monks when I joined it.
- Do you remember the manual of the monastic philosophy school?
- I left Inner Mongolia when I studied in the class of *Dondünjü*, and arrived when I started the class of the *Prajñāpāramitā*. When the war started in 1945, every monastery and *stūpa*, everything was destroyed and desolated [in China]. Therefore, I came to Mongolia. There was bombing: Russians, in 1945 in the war of liberation in Japan, they destroyed all of our southern monasteries. Russians bombed, and the ceremonies, the recitation of Buddhist texts were broken.
- Did Chinese people live there as well?
- There were many Chinese people, but only stores and traders and not an army. Not even a Japanese army. There were some intelligence services of the Japanese.
- Did *Dilov khutagt* leave Mongolia in that direction?
- *Dilov khutagt* spent some time in Baruun Sönöd, and then left. There were many monks who escaped and moved away from the revolution. Several such deserters arrived from Govi-Altai, Zavkhan, Ömnögov and other provinces. They moved to the south. That was the period of deportation and execution, so many people escaped to the southern areas, being afraid of arrest. Monks were arrested in Mongolia. *Dilov khutagt* in Gurvansaikhan district in Ömnögov province, and *Ochirdar lamtan* founded a monastery in Baruun Sönöd with the support of a nobleman, Demchigjav *noyon*. This monastery had about 300 monks who came from Mongolia. He founded two monasteries at Saikhan Tal for the monks who had moved from Mongolia to Inner Mongolia. Saikhan Tal was the centre of the Baruun Sönöds.
- Did you come directly to Gandan when you moved from Inner Mongolia to Outer Mongolia?
- No, no, no. About 150 monks moved to Mongolia from my Khuuchid area. There was a district in Sükhbaatar province called Zotol district. It is now Erdenetsagaan on the border [of Mongolia and China or Outer and Inner Mongolia]. We settled down there, put up many yurts and started to hold ceremonies. The Communist party seized the rural monasteries in the 1960s from fear that religion was spreading again in the countryside. A total of six monasteries ran operations in the countryside at that time: one in Khovd, two in Dornogovi, two in Dornod, and ours in Sükhbaatar. All of these six assemblies merged in Gandan with all their implements.

They seized us and our belongings saying that holding ceremonies here and there is against the party ideology, against the party propaganda which propagates anti-religious view. You can read about these six old assemblies, their monks and belongings in my book.

- Did you take the religious implements of your rural assembly here?
- Certainly, we took here everything! We arrived at Gandan with many cars in 1960, when I was 33 years old. Although those rural monasteries had several monks, Gandan enrolled only four monks of each rural assembly. Four monks from Khovd, four from Dornogovi. The two monasteries of Dornogovi belonged to the monastery of *Dilov khutagt*. They arrived in Mongolia in 1945, and their majority lived in Ikhkhét in Dornogovi, and also in Khar Airag. Both of them united here at Gandan. 11 monks came from Khovd, and 11 monks from the eastern assembly of Dornogovi. Four monks of all the other assemblies could come. The latest arrival to Gandan was the 10 monks from Khar Airag, Dornogovi province in 1963. All religious implements of these assemblies were brought here to Gandan. Then, Gandan remained the only functioning monastery. Just a few monks of these six assemblies live. Perhaps I am the only one. I described this story in my book. If I have not written it down, the next generation would not know. I mentioned all these happenings starting with the state law which was laid down in 1924, and modified in 1940. If you ask what they changed in the Constitution: in the 89th paragraph they claim that if someone reached the age of 18 in the Mongolian People's Republic, they had the right to practice religion or spread anti-religious views (?). This was valid until 1992, when they omitted it from the new Constitution. This is what the Communist party did.
- Were there any religious representatives at that time?
- There were. I clearly write about it in my book. Starting in 1933, a religious representative(s) was nominated as subject of the Cabinet Council. Religious representative, the Ministry of Religious Affairs, finally it became an Office. First there was only a representative, finally it became an Office with many attendants.
- A Karma Kagyüpa assembly opened some years ago in the 11th district in Ulaanbaatar. Does it still operate?
- Our Karmapa Monastery? Taivansaikhan monk is my son. He built a monastery building behind the Moscow Restaurant. It has a few monks, incoercible. Some of them left to the USA, others to Poland and to Hungary. It is too bad. (Private talk.)
- Is the *Khailen* oath-taking period taking place at Gandan Monastery these days similar to the *Khailen* of afore?

- Absolutely the same. All monasteries which I have ever belonged had the *Khailen* period.
- Did the monks recite texts in the Mongolian language or in Tibetan?
- In Tibetan. Mongolian chanting did not exist. Well, only a very few place existed with Mongolian chanting. *Neij nomun khan* called *Mergen tevnin* (?) founded a place in Ikh Baarin of the Kharchin area with Mongolian chanting. Güüsh *tsorj* in Khökhkhot translated sacred texts into Mongolian, and thus it was a place again with Mongolian recitation. Dörvöd Shar Mörön is a place in Khökhkhot with Mongolian recitation. Its division came into existence in a district in Dundgovi province, where a small assembly was said to be held with Mongolian chanting. Texts were recited in Mongolian from 1947 after Gandantegchenlin Monastery restarted its operation in 1944. The monks recited short texts, like *Going for Refuge*, the *Hundred Gods of Tuṣita*, the *Confession of Downfalls*, *Ablution*, and smoke-offerings in Mongolian until the 1970s. You can read about its reason in my publication. At first, seven monks restarted the rituals here in 1944 in order to found a monastery. They wrote a petition saying that they would recite the sacred texts in Tibetan at first, but later in Mongolian. They initiated the chanting in Mongolian in small steps up until the 1970s, but they stopped it after that. If you are interested in its reason, several old ex monks joined Gandan Monastery after the political situation changed in the 1990s, who could not read the old Mongolian script. So the Mongolian system was given up.
- Did monks read these texts in Cyrillic or in Mongolian in 1944?
- In written Mongolian. All documents and texts at Gandan were written in the old Mongolian script until the 1970s. The Cyrillic script began to spread maybe in 1973 or 1974. All documents sent from Gandan to the ministries, perhaps to the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Foreign Trade were written in the old script. Young attendants worked there who were fluent in Russian, but could not read the Mongolian script, so they asked us to read it out for them.
- When were the current abbots, D. Choijamts and Ch. Dambajav abbots nominated?
- Both of them graduated from the Religious College founded in 1970. First, 20 people graduated from there. Perhaps they were two of them. One of them directs *Gandan* and the other directs *Züün khüree* now. Their generation does not know the Mongolian script. They did not use it at all. Only our older generation knew it well. People over 80. Others do not know.

INNER MONGOLIA

- Were many old monks here at Gandan when religious practices became free again in 1990?
- Seven people wrote a petition. This is how Gandan could reopen. Their names are known. Then, old monks started to write petitions to join Gandan. There were no young monks at Gandan during socialism. Well, after 1960, we were the youngest ones: four or five ‘young’ monks. I was around 30 at that time, as I came in 1960, when I was 33. Now, I am 83. Read my book thoughtfully and you will find all the data. Do you understand? I wrote down everything: why religion was interrupted, why it was revived, how it was revived, and several other significant things.

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GLOSSARY

1. Glossary of Buddhist Terms		
Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
agramba / agrimba	sngags rams pa	Doctor of tantric or Vajrayāna studies, name of a degree obtained in tantric monastic schools. Also a learned scholar holding this degree.
Agva datsan / Avga datsan / Akhu datsan	sngags pa grwa tshang	Tantric monastic school, monastic school specialized in tantric studies.
Arvan khangal / Sakhius	bstan bsrung	The group of the ten wrathful deities protects the Buddhist doctrine in Mongolian Buddhism (Skr. Dharmapāla). Also the name of the ceremony performed in honour of them.
badarchin		Itinerant monk going on pilgrimage on foot with a rucksack. The expression originated from Sanskrit patra or 'alms bowl', as these monks lived on alms.
bagsh		Teacher, master, guru.
balin / dorom	gtor ma	Sacrificial offering cake. The term is derived from the Sanskrit word bali.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
barkhan	par khang	Printing house.
barmaravjin / barmaravjun	bar ma rab byung	Pre-novice vow of a monk, intermediate renunciate.
Battsagaan		‘Enormous white’, name of the main assembly hall designed originally by Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar.
beree		Stick used by disciplinarians.
bishgüür		Flute, musical instrument used at ceremonies.
Bogd Javzandamba khutagt	rje btsun dam pa	The title of the main reincarnation lineage and its members in Mongolia. For instance, Öndör Gegeen Zanabazar (1635–1723) and the Bogd Khaan (1869–1924) belonged to this lineage.
Bogd lam		An epithet of Je Tsongkhapa (1357–1419), founder of the Tibetan Geluk Stream.
bumba = khumkh	bum pa	A vase containing sacred water, used at ceremonies. Also a part (treasure-vase) of a stūpa.
bunkhan	bum khang	Burial place, a stūpa, a mausoleum.
büree		Horn, trumpet, musical instrument used at ceremonies.
Chambon	‘chams dpon	A black hat dancer, the leader of the Tsam dance.
chavgants		Nun. An old lady who took Buddhist vows.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Chogar = Takhiliin büjig	mchod gar	‘Offering dance’, a kind of religious costumed meditative dance performed in Kālacakra monastic schools (Dünkhor datsan).
chogo / choga	cho ga	Ritual, ceremony, way of performance, collective name for certain kinds of bigger ceremonies.
choijin	chos skyong	Dharmapāla, ‘protector of the Teaching’. Oracle, interpreter.
Choimbrel jonaa = Yerööl = Molom	chos ‘phrul bco lnga, smon lam (chen mo)	‘Fifteen miracles’. Ceremonies held in the first 15 days of the Lunar New Year, commemorating Buddha’s defeat of the six masters, the holders of heretical doctrines, by mysterious methods including miracles. Also called Ikḥ yerööl.
choir (datsan) / choiraa	chos grwa (grwa tshang)	Philosophical monastic school.
chovombo	mchod pa po	The monk who is responsible for the preparation of offering cakes in a monastery.
da lam		‘Great lama’, attendant of the minister of ecclesiastical affairs. An administrative rank.
daamal (lam)		Manager, responsible monk, an administrative rank.
dagam		Preparation before initiation and empowerment to the practice of a given deity.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
daichod	‘das mchod	Commemoration ceremony.
daj ergekh / ergüilekh	mda' bskor	‘Turning an arrow’, a practice during the philosophical exam.
Dallaga	g yang ‘gugs	Ritual for prosperity.
damar		Small two-headed drum, a musical instrument. Skr. damaru.
damjaa (barikh)	dam bea’ (‘phul)	Taking an ‘exam’ to obtain a high rank (PhD) in any field of Buddhist studies (philosophy, tantric, medical and astrologic studies).
damnuurchin / damnuurgachin		‘Porter who carries the water pot on a pole’, a word used for merchants as they carried their goods with them. Became a name for two Chinese merchant districts in Urga: Baruun damnuurchin and Züün damnuurchin.
Danjuur	bstan ‘gyur	Tanjur, ‘Translated treatises’. The collection of commentaries on the words of the Buddha (Kanjur) in 225 volumes.
danshig	brtan bzhugs	Ceremony of longevity dedicated to the Bogd or other high dignitary.
Dari ekhiin mandal shivaa	sgrol ma'i maṇḍala bzhi ba	Name of a ceremony dedicated to Tārā, called ‘The Four Maṇḍalas of Tārā’.
dartsag	dar lcog	Prayer flag. Displayed to generate merit and increase one’s life strength.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
datzan	grwa tshang	Monastic school or temple with privileged position.
dayaanch		Contemplative monk, the term being derived from Sanskrit dhyāna (‘meditation’).
ded lam		Vice lama.
deg	sgrigs	Rules, arrangement.
demch		Assistant.
dom	ston mo	Religious feast.
domiin damjaa	ston mo’i dam bca’	Name of an exam in philosophy schools, which can be taken after finishing the courses of Pramāṇa and Prajñāpāramitā.
donchid	stong mchod	Thousandfold-offering.
doorombo	rdo rams pa	Degree in philosophy which can be obtained at Labrang monastery, North Tibet.
Dorjshüg	rdo rje shugs ldan	‘Vajra Power(full)’, name of a protector deity, the cult of which is prohibited by the Dalai Lama.
dugan	‘du khang	Shrine, temple.
duganch	‘du khang pa	Shrine keeper, shrine supervisor.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
dügiüü / Chojjoo dügiüü	drug bcu	A special sacrificial cake offering dedicated to Yama.
Düinkhor	dus 'khor	Kālacakra, 'Wheel of time', name of a deity and a tantric system.
düitsen / düichen	dus chen	'Great day, festival day'. The special monthly and yearly ceremonies, held monthly on the 8th, 15th and 30th days of the lunar month. The yearly düitsens are the biggest Buddhist festivals.
düldüichin		Itinerant monk, mendicant monk holding a special stick with small bells.
Dülvaa / Vinai	'dul ba	Vinaya, the regulatory framework for the monastic community of Buddhism based on the canonical texts called Vinaya Pitaka. The teachings of the Buddha about discipline.
dun büree	dung	Conch shell horn, a musical instrument.
Erlig nomun khaan = Chojjil / Chojjoo / Chojjil = Damjin Chojjil / Damjin Chojjoo	(dam can) chos rgyal / gshin rje	Dharmarāja, the King of Religion, epithet of Yama, the Lord of Death, one of the ten Dharma protectors. Also name of a Chinese deity, the lord of death.
ev tovkhan	thob khang?	Regulation of the monks who arrived in Urga from the countryside including their resident permission and joining to ceremonies.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
gaaramba	bka' rams pa	Title of a monk who has passed the highest exam in a philosophy college. Before gavj degree.
gachin / khachin / khanchin	mkhan chen	'Great scholar', great abbot, a high rank or title. Usually a Tibetan monk appointed by the Panchen Lama.
galiin takhilga		Fire offering, offering to fire or hearth.
gandi mod		A kind of wooden musical instrument connected to the oath-taking period.
ganjir		Golden top ornament of a temple. Derived from Sanskrit.
Ganjuur	bka' 'gyur	Kanjur. The canon of the words and teachings of the Buddha in 108 volumes. Also name of a ceremony during which extracts or selected passages are recited from every part of the 108 volumes of the Kanjur.
Ganjuur ergekh	bka' 'gyur ...	'Circumambulation of the Kanjur'. A ceremonial event when volumes of holy texts are circumambulated around the temple, the monastery, an area or a whole province, on a vehicle, camels or by people on foot.
ganlin	rkang gling	Bone trumpet, a musical instrument, often used by Tantric practitioners.
gavdamba	skabs dang po	Level before geshe exam.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
gavj	dka'bcu	'Ten hardships', academic degree in philosophy.
gegeen		Saint, brightness.
gelen	dge slong	Skr. bhikṣu, fully ordained monk with 253 precepts.
genen	dge bsnyen	Skr. upāsaka, a Buddhist layman with 5 precepts.
genmaa	dge bsnyen ma ?	Epithet of a female lama, perhaps the same as genenmaa, female lay devotee.
ger dugan		Yurt temple, yurt shaped temple.
gergen	dge rgan	'Old master', title in an assembly.
Gesar	ge sar	1. Gesar, King of Ling (1038–1124), epic hero in Tibetan and Mongolian folk literature. Also title of the epic poem on him. 2. a Taoist God of War and a Chinese Buddhist protector deity, Guan di or Guan yu. In Mongolia the two figures are fused.
gesgüi (gevkhöi)	dge bskyos	Disciplinarian or proctor.
getsel	dge tshul	Novice monk, Skr. śrāmaṇera.
geвш	dge bshes	'Virtuous friend', academic degree in philosophy.
geyeg	dge g yog	Assistant(s) of the disciplinarian.
gol jas		Main financial office.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Gonchoilkhasüm	mgon chos lha gsum	The summary name for three of the ten Dharma protectors: Gombo (Mahākāla), Choijoo (Yama) and Baldanlkham (Śrīdevī).
Gongor / Tsagaan Makhgal	mgon dkar	White Protector, Wish-fulfilling Jewel White Mahākāla, one of the ten Dharma protectors.
gorim	go rim	‘Sequence, order’, meaning the set of the texts.
goroo / gorlom	skor lam	‘Circumambulation, circumambulate’, also the road or path around a monastery / temple for circumambulation.
gortig	skor thig	Compass, circle.
gosoo	sgo sa	Class, grade of monks.
Goviin lkhaa	‘go ba’i lha	Patron or guardian deity. The group of five such deities exist.
güden	sku rten	Stūpa with the relics of a saint or reincarnation.
Günchin igchaa	kun mkhyen yig cha	Monastic philosophy handbook or manual written by a Tibetan polymath, Jamyang Zhepa (1648–1721). It is used in Gomang monastic school of Drepung monastery in Tibet.
gürem	sku rim	Healing ceremony, religious service, a protective ritual for the sake of long life, prosperity etc.
igchaa	yig cha	Handbook for philosophy, written by different eminent Tibetan scholars.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
ikh büree		Also known as ükher büree. A long musical instrument used at ceremonies.
Ikh jas		Great financial office.
Ikh khural		'Great ceremony', an important ceremony with many participants.
Ikh sakhius		'Great sakhius', main protector of a monastery.
ikh shavi		'Great shavi', areas and people who were subordinated directly to the Bogd himself and his ecclesiastical estate.
Ikh tsam		'Great Tsam' in which the Dharma protectors and other characters appear.
Jadamba	brgyad stong pa	Prajñāpāramitā in 8,000 verses.
Jadar / Jidar	k ye('i) rdo rje / kye rdor	Hevajra, main tutelary deity worshipped mainly by the Sakya stream.
Jagar Molom	rgya gar smon lam	A Mongolian monk who studied and practiced in India and Tibet in the 1800s. He founded the first Chö assembly in Urga, after returning from Tibet and India where he went on foot and spent twenty years. The tantric lineage introduced by him to Mongolia is called Jagarmolomiin jüd or Lavran jüd.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Jakhar	lcags mkhar	‘Metal palace’ of Yama, the Lord of Death. Also name of a ceremony. It is also prepared and ritually burnt during the Tsam masked dance.
Jamsran / Ulaan sakhius / Begz	lcam sring	‘Sisters’, ‘brother and sister’. Another name of Begtse or the Red Protector, one of the ten Dharma protectors.
Janchivchodden	byang chub mchod rten	Stūpa of Enlightenment. One of the eight stūpas connected to the Buddha (Tib. mchod rten cha brgyad).
jandag	sbyin bdag	Donor, sponsor, patron, alms-giver.
jankhar / mandal	dkyil 'khor	Maṇḍala. A symbolic representation of a deity's abode with its surrounding environment. Coloured sand / powder maṇḍala. A maṇḍala offering is symbolically the offering of the entire universe.
jantsan	rgyal mtshan	Victory banner, a Buddhist symbol which decorates temple roofs. It is one of the eight auspicious symbols.
Jarankhashar	bya rung kha shor	Boudhnath Stūpa, a special type of stūpas with painted eyes in its middle part, designed after the Boudhnath Stūpa of Nepal in the Kathmandu Valley.
jarz	brgya rtse	Practice of Chö tantric practitioners near springs, cemeteries and other unusual places.
jas	spyi gsog	Financial, administrative unit, public accumulation that belonged to temples.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
jasaa		A monk or a group of two or four monks who perform the reading of texts requested by individuals. Also the readings performed by them. Also means temporary service.
jasiin mal		Livestock of the monastic financial office.
jav		Monastic treasury, administrative unit, smaller than jas.
javdan	‘jab gdan	Low bench for monks in the temples, which are usually painted red with rugs draped over them.
Jigjid / Yamandag	‘jigs byed	Bhairava, the Terrifying, epithet of Yamāntaka, one of the three main Yellow Stream tantras / deities, one of the ten Dharma protectors.
jinsreg	sbyin sgreg	Fire-offering, the ritual burning of different types of food and other precious offerings.
jodgor		Mobile tent. A Tibetan word.
jorvon	skyor dpon	Leader of a monastic class (rehearsal teacher).
jüd	rgyud	Tantra, lineage, the tantric or Vajrayāna teachings.
Jüsh dom	sku bzhi (?) ston mo	Name of a ceremony connected to the dates of philosophy exams.
khadag	kha btags	Sacred silken scarf.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
khadag, shidüv / shidev, jumbrai / jümbri, yuljin / juljii, dondonju, ok, gom, gavadamba, dom, uma sarva, uma ninva, jod, garamba ok, garamba gom	kha dog, gzhi sgrub, rgyu 'bras, yul can, don bdun chu, (gzhung) 'og ma, (gzhung) gong ma, skabs pa dang po, sdom, dbu ma gsar pa, dbu ma rnying pa, mdzod, bka' rams pa 'og ma, bka' rams gong ma	Classes in philosophical studies.
khailen / yar khailen / khailan	khas len	'Oath-taking', the annual summer retreat period of monks, in which gelen and getsel monks take part, and which lasts for 45 days from the 15th of the last month of summer. During this period they confirm their vows, confess their possible mistakes and amend their negative actions.
khais		A type of fence.
Khajid	mkha' spyod, mkha' la spyod pa	'Sky traveler', dākinī. Sometimes stands for Narkhajid. Also means celestial pure lands.
khamba	mkhan po	Abbot, head of a monastery.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
khamba nomon khan / khamba nomun khan		Head abbot of Urga. The first monk holding this rank was nominated by Zanabazar. There were 21 head abbots up to 1937.
Khanddina	mkha' 'gro sde lnga	The five classes of dākinīs or the five dākinī aspects: Vajra dākinī, Ratna dākinī, Padma dākinī, Karma dākinī and Buddha dākinī.
khandmaa	mkha' 'gro ma	‘Dākinī, feminine sky-goer’. Also used for female practitioners (not ordained nuns) with long hair. Female practitioners of the Chö practice.
kharanga	khar mnga	Gong, which was beaten at the start of the ceremony.
Khashin Khan	hwa shang rgyal po	Figure of a donor and protector of the Buddhist doctrine who appears in the Tsam masked dance. He represents the Manchu emperor, Kangxi (17 th century), who supported the dissemination of the Gelug tradition of Tibetan Buddhism in Mongolia.
khiid		Monastery, originally in an isolated site without lay population living around. Its monk population could reach 40–2,000.
Khor choinjün	hor chos byung	History of Mongolian Buddhism.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
khüree		A type of monastery: monastic village or town with temple buildings in the centre surrounded by the dwellings of the monk population in a square shape. Lay population lived in the vicinity in many cases. Its population could reach some thousands.
Khüree Mairdar		Maitreya procession in Urga.
Khüree Tsam		Tsam masked dance performance in Urga.
khutagt		'Saint, majesty, dignified', a class of high Buddhist incarnate monks in Mongolia.
khüüchin nom / Khuuchin khural / khuuchin nomiin khural		'The old ceremonies'. Name of the three day Sakhius ceremony dedicated to the wrathful deities before the Lunar New Year (27–29th of the last month of winter).
khuvilgaan	sprul sku	'Emanation', reincarnation, incarnate lama.
lagai	bla gos	'Upper robe', a yellow coloured upper robe, a big shawl worn only by ordained monks.
lam		Monk, lama.
lamdakh lam		A monk leading a ceremony.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Lamrim	lam rim	‘Gradual path’ system introduced by Tsongkhapa, and the title of his main work. It illustrates a gradual path to enlightenment.
lan		Weight measure unit, Chinese uncia, 1 lan = 37.3 g.
lavran	bla brang	1. palace, residence, 2. Labrang, a famous Gelugpa monastery in Northern Tibet, Amdo.
Ikhaaramba	lha rams pa	The highest philosophical degree that could only be granted in Lhasa, once a year during the Lunar New Year.
lkhakhan	lha khang	Temple, chapel, shrine room, sanctuary.
Lkhavaviin dom	lha las babs pa’i ston mo	‘Festival of (Buddha’s) descent from the god realms’, name of a ceremony connected to philosophical exam dates.
loilon	blos bslangs	Relief maṇḍala for meditation.
lovon	slob dpon	1. ‘master’, rank in the assembly 2. Lovon Badamjunai, Padmasambhava (7th century).
lūjiin / lūjiin (tavikh)	lus sbyin (lus kyis mchod sbyin)	Tantric body offering ritual, typical for the Red Stream tradition, Chö.
lūn	lung	Scriptural transmission. The transmission of authorization to study a scripture by listening to it being read aloud.
lünden	lung ston	Issued command, prophesy, prediction.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
lus	klu	Nāga. Serpent like spirits or beings living in waters and hills.
Maaniin бүтээл = Büteeł	ma ni sgrub	A ceremony dedicated to Avalokiteśvara, reciting his magical formula many times.
maaramba	sman rams pa	‘Physician’, professor in medical science, academic rank which can be obtained in a medical monastic school.
Maidar ergekh	byams ‘khor	A procession called Maitreya circumambulation, when the statue of the future Buddha is mounted on a vehicle with green horse head and circumambulated around the monastery or town. Its main aim is to pray for the future Buddha’s arrival.
Maimaachen / Maimaichen / Maimaa khot / Naimaa khot		Maimai cheng in Chinese, commercial settlement with Chinese merchants and their stores (püüs). Also name of the Chinese town section in a city.
Manal / Manla	sman bla	‘Supreme Healer’, the Medicine Buddha, Bhaiṣajyaguru, represented by blue colour. He is worshipped in the hope of healthy and long life.
Manaliin donchid	sman bla’i stong mchod	‘Thousandfold offering to the Medicine Buddha’. Ceremony in honour of the Medicine Buddha, held usually on the 8th of the lunar month. It includes a thousandfold offering and thousandfold circumambulation of his palace or maṇḍala placed in the middle of the temple.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Manba / Mamba datsan / Emch nariin datsan	sman pa grwa tshang	Medical monastic school. Apart from medical studies, its main aim is to cure people by means of traditional medicine and to recite texts for a healthy and long life.
mandal örgökh	dkyil 'khor ('bul)	Maṇḍala, a symbolic representation of a deity's abode. A maṇḍala offering symbolizes the offering of the entire universe.
manz / manj	mang ja	Tea for the assembly or assembled monks during a ceremony, literally 'tea for the masses', or 'much tea, great quantity of tea'.
Manzshir	'jam dpal / 'jam (dpal) dbyangs	'Gentle one' or 'Gentle voiced one', Mañjuśrī, the Bodhisattva of Wisdom.
meeren / meiren		Rank in the Manchu period. A kind of officer.
Myal bogd	mi la ras pa	'Cotton-clad Mila,' Milarepa (1040–1123). Marpa's disciple. One of the most famous yogis and poets in Tibetan religious history, member of the Kagyü lineage.
Myaliin tsam = Myal bogdiin tsam	mi la ras pa'i 'chams	A narrative performance about Milarepa's life story.
Naidan chogo	gnas brtan cho ga	Ceremony held on the 30th of the lunar month in honour of the sthaviras ('elder'), Buddha's main disciples, the sixteen sthaviras or arhats who vowed to preserve the Dharma until the arrival of Buddha Maitreya.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
namjir	snam sbyar	A loose mantle for monks made with 32 patches, worn only by fully ordained monks.
nanchid	nang mchod	Inner offering, a sort of nectar. Also the small skull cup placed in front of the lama during ceremony.
Narkhajid / Naro khajid	na ro mkha' spyod	Sarvabuddhaḍākinī, emanation of Vajrayoginī. A red coloured ḍākinī worshipped especially in Red Stream temples on the 25th (or 10th and 25th) of the lunar month.
ninchin	snying chen	Meditation.
nügnée / nünnei (sakhikh)	smyung gnas	Fasting ritual, fast, fasting practice or retreat.
nyamba / nyanba	bsnyen pa	‘Approach, come near, recitation, familiarization, propitiate a deity’, practice of approaching the tutelary deity reciting his mantra, which is the first phase of tantric practices. A type of meditation in tantric practice.
nyarav	gnyer pa	Book-keeper, treasurer, storekeeper, caretaker, one of the duties in monasteries.
örgöl		Donation, offering.
orkhimj		Red coloured scarf worn over the left shoulder of monks.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Oroin yerööl	smon lam	‘Supreme prayer’. A ceremony performed with the aim of promoting better rebirth for the deceased, and also gathering virtues.
ovoo		Sacred scairn built of wood, mud or stones on passes or near waters.
ovoodoi		A yellowish coloured pointed ceremonial cap worn only by ranked monks in the assembly, with a black brim and a ribbon at the back showing rank by its colours.
püüs		Store, shop, mostly Chinese stores. Originated from Chinese.
Ranjün maani	rang byung ma ñi	Spontaneously arisen mantra.
Rigsümgombo	rigs gsum mgon po	Lords of the Three Families, the trinity of bodhisattvas: Avalokiteśvara, Mañjuśrī and Vajrapāṇi.
sagar	sa gar	‘Earth-dance’, a kind of religious dance in honour of the local spirits held in Kālacakra monastic schools.
sakhius / khangal / dogshid / gaans / ganshag / ganshig / güider	bstan bsrung	Wrathful deity, protector spirit. The group of the ten wrathful deities which protect the Dharma is specially worshipped in Mongolian Buddhism. It is also the name of the ceremony devoted to them.
san	bsangs	Smoke-offering, incense offering, purification ritual.
Sandui	gsang ‘dus	Guhyasamāja, tutelary deity.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Sandui Jamdor	gsang 'dus 'jam rdor	Guhyasamāja Mañjuśrī.
savdag	sa bdag	Spirit, owner of the land.
semchin	gzims khang	Dwelling, palace, dormitory.
Ser igchaa	se rva'i yig cha	Scholastic handbook or manual, written by a Tibetan polymath, Jetsun Chökyi Gyaltsen (1469–1546) of Sera Je monastic college.
shadar		'Near, close, near one', a close attendant.
Shalsh	zhal bzhi	Four-faced Mahākāla, one of the ten Dharma protectors.
shanag	zhwa nag	Messengers of the Lord of Death, black hat dancers of the Tsam ritual.
shanzav / shanzodva	phyag mdzod pa	Administrator of ecclesiastical property, treasurer.
Shanzodviin yaam / Shanzaviin yaam / Shavi(in) yaam		Ministry of Ecclesiastical Estate directing the affairs of the subordinated shavi nar and monastic areas.
Shariliin dugan		Temple of relics. It housed the stūpa of a saint or reincarnation.
sharjin	shar byung	'Rose, appeared', name of the everyday reading in monastic schools.
shashir	zhwa ser	Yellow hat worn by monks at ceremonies.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
shavi nar		‘Disciples’, bondsmen of a monastery, people subordinated to a particular monastery’s ecclesiastical estate.
shavron	zhabs drung	‘At the feet of, in the presence of’, servant or attendant of a great lama.
shireet lam	khri pa bla ma	‘Throne-holder’, head monk, abbot of the assembly hall.
shörgön khashaa		Wooden hedge, a short cross-hedge surrounding a grassed space in front of a monastery, aimed at protecting it from bad spirits.
shün	gzhung	Preparation course.
shunlaiv	gzhung lugs pa / gzhung las pa	Head of a monastic philosophy school.
soivon	gsol dpon	A household official, steward.
sojin	so sbyong	Confession of sins, ceremonies performed in order to purify the precepts / vows.
sor	zor	Pyramid shape wooden construction with a sacrificial cake.
sor zalakh	zor ‘phen	The ceremony of the burning of the Sor aims to remove all bad effects and relieve from natural disasters such as droughts, harsh winter, or contagious diseases and other negative phenomena.
süm		Temple building.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
sümbüm	gsung 'bum	1. 'complete or collected works' of an eminent monk 2. Sometimes mean a printing house (barkhan).
Süncchin denai	gzungs chen sde lnga	'Five Great dhāraṇīs'. A collection of five dhāraṇīs. It saves from bad fate or bad rebirths.
takhilch	mchod pa po	Offering preparer, one of the duties in assemblies.
tamgatai khutagt		Reincarnation acknowledged with seal (to govern a shavi area).
Tamgiin gazar		'Place of seal', governmental office, administrative office of an area.
Tantan = Tantonjalbaa	thang stong (rgyal po)	Tangtong Gyalpo, a Tibetan siddha (1361–1485) considered to be one of the 'seven miracles' of Tibet. Legend tells that he was born in the 15th century from the womb of his mother as a 60-year old man with white beard. He was born in Tsang, Tibet at the time of Tsongkhapa. He visited India, China and many provinces of Tibet and became known for establishing the Tibetan opera called lha mo. He founded numerous monasteries, among them a famous monastery in Lcags po ri, the Medical College Hill, a sacred mountain in Lhasa. He also composed numerous works on medicine.
Tarvachinbuu / Taravchembuu / Taravchamba	thar pa chen po	'Great Liberation', title of a text.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
Tsagaan Dari ekh	sgrol dkar	The White Tārā, Sitaṭārā.
Tsagaan övgön	rgan po dkar po, lha chen tshe ring	The White Old Man, a deity depicted as an old man with long white hair and beard, carrying a dragon-headed stick. Also appears in the Tsam masked dance.
tsam	‘cham(s)	Tantric ritual and masked dance performed by monks in monasteries.
tsamtig	‘chams tig	This symbol indicates and protects the room in which monks meditate before the Tsam.
tsanid	mtshan nyid	‘Characteristic’, epistemology, philosophy.
tsats	tsha tsha	Votive plaque.
tsav	tsha ba	‘Heat / hot’, ‘warm drink / food’, dishes or food of the monks.
Tsederlkham	tshe(s) gtor lha mo	‘Yearly ceremonial cake offering to Śrīdevī’, name of a ceremony, during which a yearly offering is performed to Śrīdevī at Lunar New Year Eve.
tsogchin / chogchin	tsogs chen	1. ‘the great assembly’, everyday ceremony, daily chanting, 2. Tsogchin dugan, the main assembly hall.
tsoglom	tsogs langs	‘Rising up in the assembly’ (by two monks or pairs of monks), with the debate itself being called nom khayaltsakh.

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
tsorj	chos rje	'Lord of religion', one of the highest ranks in an assembly and in Urga.
tügiin damjaa		Exam in philosophy held in summer after a completed year.
tuipuu		Brick produced mostly by the Chinese.
tun	thun	Practice session, meditation session, meditation period.
tun (tailakh)	thun ...	(End of) meditation or practice session.
umzad / unzad	dbu mdzad	Chanting master, rank in the assembly. During the ceremonies the chanting masters has the critical role in leading the recitation of texts.
van	dbang	Empowerment. A ritual in Vajrayāna Buddhism which initiates a disciple into the practice of a particular tantric deity. Skr. abhiṣeka.
Vanchin igchaa	blo gsal gling gi yig cha	Philosophical handbook or manual used in certain monastic schools, written by a Tibetan polymath, Vanchin Sodnomdagva (Tib. pan chen bsod nams grags pa, 1478–1554), which were originally used in Losaling monastic school of Drepung monastery in Tibet.
yaam	dbyangs	'Melody, tune' of chanting, recitation.
yadam	yi dam	Tutelary deity, meditation deity.
yampai		Protective wall, the wall in front of a monastery's main gate, which protects it from harmful spirits (Chinese yang pai).

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
yanchaan		Old currency.
yandar	g yab dar	‘Silk used to signal / to beckon’, silk fan, a five coloured silk with a knot at its end.
Yarchei chenbo	dbyar chos chen po	Philosophy exam session held in summer.
yembüü		Silver ignot weighing about 50 lan.
yonzon	yongs ‘dzin	Tutor, master of an eminent monk or reincarnation.
Yonzon khamba	yongs ‘dzin mkhan po	Title of the Bogd’s tutor, always appointed and sent by the Dalai Lama. Luvtsankhaimchog (1837–1937) was the last of the Yonzon khambas, and since 1920 the main abbot (Khamba nomon khan) of whole Urga until his execution in 1937. The previous Yonzon was Baldanchaimbel, who had been the Tibetan teacher of the Eighth Bogd. He also bore the title Khamba nomon khan from 1865–1899.
yum	yum	1. consort, mother, śakti in Sanskrit. 2. Prajñāpāramita sūtra.
zed	‘gyed	Donation, alms, money offered to monks in a community (the original Tibetan word also means ‘distribution’).
zeerembe	rtsis rims pa	Professor of astronomy and astrology, academic rank which can be obtained in an astrologic monastic school.
zindaa	‘dzin grwa	Class, grade (in a monastic school).

Mongolian	Tibetan	English explanation
zoch	gcod ...	A monk (either a man or a woman) practicing the tantric ritual of cutting the ego-clinging called Chö.
zod / jod	gcod	Chö, 'Cutting'. A tantric ceremony. It is a system of practices based on the Prajñāpāramitā and set down by the Indian siddha Phadampa Sangye and his consort, a Tibetan female teacher Machig Labdrön (1055–1149) for the purpose of cutting through the four Mārās and ego-clinging.
Zügüü Namnan	gtsug dgu ? nam snang	An epithet of Vairocana.
Zuliin 25		'The 25th day of the butter-lamps', commemoration of the death of Tsongkhapa, on the 25th of the first month of winter, which includes the burning of thousands of butter-lamps.
Zurkhai(n) datsan	rtsis pa grwa tshang	Astrological monastic school where students specialize in astrology. Its main role is to tell fortunes, using astrology to warn or inform of specific days and months and their possible harmful and / or helpful impacts.
Zuu	jo bo	Lord, Buddha, standing representation of the Buddha as a 35-year old man.

2. Glossary of Other Terms		
Mongolian	Origin	English explanation
aimag		Territorial unit, county or province of a country. Also the residential district of monks in a monastery.
amban	Man. amban	Manchu governor.
arteli		Communal handicraft co-operative where former monks worked from the 1930s. The term is derived from a Russian word.
Arvan zasgiin naadam		Naadam festival of the Ten divisions.
baayuu		Brick burning kiln operated by the Chinese. The term is derived from a Chinese word.
bag		Division within a district or sub-province.
beil / beel	Man. beile	Noble rank in the Manchu period.
beis	Man. beise	Noble rank in the Manchu period.
darkhan		Smith, an obliged person, a honorific title.
deel		Robe, gown of the Mongols.
Doloon khoshuu danshig naadam		Naadam festival of the Seven banners.
guai		Sir, Madame.
gün		A noble title in the Manchu period, administrative rank.

2. Glossary of Other Terms		
janjin	Man. jiyanggiyūn / jiyangjiyūn	Commander in the Manchu period.
khan		Lord, king.
khoro		District, micro-district, areal division.
khoshuu		Banner.
khudag		Well.
mujaan		Carpenter. A Chinese word.
Naadam		Traditional Mongolian festival (sport games).
örtöö		Relay station, post station. Relay stations were situated about 30 km distance from each other.
otog		Tribe.
Sangiin khot		Manchu fort.
sangiin mal		Livestock of the treasury.
sum		District, territorial division.
taria(lan)		Corps, agricultural field.
tüshmed		Official, advisor.
van		Rank in the Manchu period.
zaisan		Religious official.

