

How My Parents Used to Live

By the end of the nineteenth century, the Manchu empire¹ feared establishing relations with those countries which had entered their era of capitalist imperialism and were dividing up and dominating the free markets of the world. Though the Manchus tried to isolate themselves, they were forced to relinquish that position. In 1897-8 China was partially divided up and various peripheral areas were occupied by capitalists from England, Germany, Russia and France. War broke out between China and Japan in 1894-1895.

The foreign aggressors penetrating China even managed to have an influence on closed-off frontier regions of the Manchu empire such as Mongolia. For example, Chinese traders in Mongolia became the agents of foreign capitalists engaging in large-scale trade which exploited the ordinary Mongolian people.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, the Chinese traders had companies, stores and other outlets in all the Mongolian *khoshuu*, *sum*, *bag*, and *otog*.² These traders were widely scattered and engaged in buying up Mongolian livestock products and raw materials at low prices while simultaneously supplying tea, tobacco, cloth, flour, and grain at exploitatively high prices. The Chinese company *Da Sheng Hu*, for example, had an annual income of forty million pieces of silver and exported several hundred thousand head of livestock from Mongolia. In addition, the *Tian Yi De* and *Yi He Dong* companies each had an income of several million pieces of silver.

At the start of the twentieth century, trading companies from Russia, England, Germany, and Japan had penetrated as far as *Khüree*, the present-day *Ulaanbaatar*, and some of the larger *aimag* and *khoshuu* centers, in particular *Tsetserleg*, and *Tariat Khüree* of [Duke] *Dalai Choinkhor*. As a result of increased borrowing and debts owed to foreign capitalists, ordinary Mongols became impoverished and their standard of living deteriorated day by day.

The ordinary people had to provide labor for the horse relay stations, frontier guard and military service conscripts, pay official taxes and provide innumerable necessities for the palace of the Manchu emperor. For over two hundred years they also fulfilled the demands of the Mongolian feudal nobility.

In Northern Mongolia³ the population was largely engaged in a nomadic economy. Children were sent to temples as disciples in order to study Buddhism. In 1725

¹ By this time, the Manchu empire consisted of the Manchu homeland and several countries and territories conquered and annexed by the Manchus. These included China, Mongolia, and Eastern Turkestan.

² These four terms refer to local administrative units, listed in descending order. A *khoshuu*, or banner, is equivalent to a county; a *sum*, with the original meaning of arrow, is the largest subdivision of a *khoshuu*; and *bag* and *otog* are the smallest administrative units.

³ During the Manchu dynasty, Mongolia was divided, in addition to various other units explained in note 2, into Outer and Inner Mongolia, referring to the northern and southern parts of the country, respectively. These terms lost their *raison d'être* when the Manchu dynasty was abolished in early 1912.

Tüsheets Khan aimag⁴ was partitioned and our area was administered by Sain Noён Khan,⁵ one of the eight ruling princes of Khalkha during the Enkh Amgalan reign period of the Manchu Qing dynasty.⁶

The thirteenth and last Sain Noён Khan Namnansüren,⁷ who was born at the end of the 19th century, participated energetically in the struggle to take Mongolia out of the Manchu empire. He headed the delegation of Mongolian representatives which went to Russia.⁸

Dalai Choinkhor Chin Van (Wang) Tsedensodnom who was lord of one of the banners of Sain Noён Khan aimag and the eighth successor in line, assisted the Manchu army general based at Uliastai during the Manchu period.⁹ His banner was regarded as one of the wealthier and larger banners of Khalkha.¹⁰ Its total population was 25,000, of whom 7,000 were lamas living in over 100 temples. This banner also had about 600 taij¹¹ noblemen and their families who lived as independent units. There were 30,000 livestock in total in the banner.¹² The land was truly khangai,¹³ with many rivers such as the Ider, Khoid Terkh, Urd Terkh, Gichgene, Khanui,¹⁴ and so forth. Apart from the great water resources contained in the lakes such as Sangiin Dalai, Züün, and Terkhiin Tsagaan,¹⁵ mountains were the main feature of the land with small and large mountain valleys, forested ridges, rivers and streams, wells, lakes and ponds which made it a very beautiful place. Besides producing the very best dairy products, such as *öröm*, *eezgii*, *khuruud*, *aaruul*, and *tsagaan tos*,¹⁶ there were many blacksmiths, silversmiths, engravers, and

⁴ An aimag is the largest administrative unit in Mongolia, roughly corresponding to a province.

⁵ The resulting aimag covered most of present-day west-central Mongolia, including southern Khövsgöl, most of Zavkhan aimag, and portions of Bayankhongor, Övörkhangaï, and Ömnögov' aimags.

⁶ Enkh Amgalan (Engke Amugulang) means "peace, tranquility" and refers to the years 1662-1722 which outside Mongolia are best known as the Kangxi reign period.

⁷ For a brief biography, see Ad'yaagiin Dashnyam, *Khalkhyn Sain Noён Khan Namnansüren* (Ulaanbaatar, 1990).

⁸ Namnansüren and his delegation were in St. Petersburg in December 1913 and January 1914.

⁹ Tsedensodnom was appointed head of the (dai zhong zuo) banner in 1894 and transferred to his post in Uliastai on August 11, 1902. See *Qingdai Menggu guanshi zhuan* (Beijing: Minzu chubanshe, 1995), p. 748-9.

¹⁰ A term used by many Mongols nearly interchangeably with Northern Mongolia.

¹¹ Taij is the lowest of seven hereditary ranks.

¹² The figure of 30,000 head of livestock seems to be in error, the actual figure probably being at least ten times larger.

¹³ This term describes any hilly area with a pleasant climate, fertile soil, forests, rivers, and lakes.

¹⁴ The Ider, one of several rivers forming the Selenge River, originates in Ider sum of Zavkhan aimag, at 48 N 98 E. The Khoid Terkh, Urd Terkh and Gichgene all originate in the Khangai Mountains which form the border between Arkhangai and Bayankhongor aimags; they jointly form the Suman River which joins the Chuluut River which in turn becomes a tributary of the Selenge River. The Khanui is the easternmost of the rivers mentioned in the text and flows directly into the Selenge.

¹⁵ The Sangiin Dalai is located in Bürentogtokh sum of Khövsgol aimag, bordering Zavkhan aimag, ca. 49 N 99 E. The Terkhiin Tsagaan is south of there in Tariat sum of Arkhangai aimag, ca. 48.20 N 99.50 E. As its name suggests, the Züün lies east of there. In 1964 Shirendev wrote a poem about this lake, but it was not published until thirty years later. See "Züün nuur," in *Shöniin tald aduu yantsgaana* (Ulaanbaatar: Mongol Uran Zokhiol Khevelelin Gazar, 1994), p. 403-404.

¹⁶ There are two basic processes in the making of dairy products: scalding or boiling (*khöörüülekh*) and curdling (*eedrüülekh*). Of the five products mentioned in the text, *öröm* and *tsagaan tos* belong to the first process. When milk is sufficiently boiled, a skin forms on the surface. Scooped up and dried, this skin is called *öröm*. When the skin is not dried but admixed with fat from another process, that of making airag, a mildly alcoholic beverage, the mixture is churned. The pure fat part rises, is skimmed off and becomes butter (*shar*

saddlers.

In addition, it was mostly poor people who worked metal to make knives, lighters, silver articles, rings, locks and keys, as well as saddles, wooden ger¹⁷ frames and so forth. The ranks of the poor included some poor lamas.

The saddle pommels and saddle boards in this banner were decorated in spiral patterns made from *khargana*¹⁸ and cherry tree bark. A reputedly very talented craftsman called Jaa made hand guns and traditional Mongolian locks with many keys.

From early times, the banner was famous for its wrestlers. There was a lot of talk about a wrestler called Arslan [Lion] Tsagaan of Dalai Van. He lived with his parents in a poor household which owned one bull and one mare. From an early age whenever this Arslan Tsagaan worshipped at an ovoo¹⁹ and then went to wrestle he would always eventually win. For this reason, he was very interested in the wrestlers who went to compete in the *khoshuu*, *aimag*, and national *naadam*.²⁰ Late one spring, when the first month of summer had nearly arrived, his family wanted to move from their winter camp but due to their poverty and lack of transport they were unable to move for some time. In order to make a profit and to improve his life, that spring he decided to go to wrestle at the supreme *naadam* of the Bogd²¹ in Da Khüree.

Before leaving for Da Khüree, he killed his only bull and gave the dried meat to his parents, telling them to use the meat and remain there until his return. He boiled the beef entrails and packing them on his horse, set off towards Da Khüree riding his only mare. However, due to the summer heat, the packed offal began to go bad and he had to eat it all at once and go without food for the next few days until he reached Da Khüree. On arrival there he went to a place called Doloos Khudag in the present-day Batsumber Valley²² where *danishig* rituals were conducted. Many tents were pitched and several thousand people, including lamas, laymen, nobility and ordinary herdsmen, had gathered there. Then he found the tent where the wrestlers who had journeyed from the banners used to stay. He tested his strength with them and defeated all of them.

Although they tried hard to allow Arslan Tsagaan to take part in the Bogd's

tos). The remaining sediment (*chöb*) is given some additional churning and turns into a kind of impure butter, called *tsagaan tos*, "white butter."

The other basic process, curdling, involves two major lines of development, natural and forced fermenting (*khöröngötei*). *Khuruud*, a kind of cheese, is the result of natural fermenting, while *eezgii*, a form of cottage cheese, is produced through forced fermenting. Finally, a specific form of fermenting, called *bürekh*, is used in the production of yoghurt, called *tarag*. When the yoghurt is subjected to boiling, it results in two new products, buttermilk (*shar us*) and sour cottage cheese (*aarch*). When the latter is dried, it becomes *aaruul*.

¹⁷ Ger is the proper name for the traditional Mongolian house.

¹⁸ *Caragana arborescens*.

¹⁹ A cairn used for special religious ceremonies in honor of the local spirit or deity.

²⁰ *Naadam*, "game, play," refers to a sports event still hugely popular in both Northern and Southern Mongolia. It features contests in the "three manly sports," to wit, wrestling, horseback riding, and archery. Professor Schwarz adds, "I use quotation marks because in recent times I have witnessed, here and there, some female participation."

²¹ Bogd means "holy, sacred, divine" and is used here to refer to Bogd Khan, also known as the Jebtsundamba Khutugtu. As both head of the Buddhist Church and of the government, he was the theocratic ruler of autonomous Mongolia in the decade between 1911 and 1921. When the Communists took over in 1921, they kept the Bogd Khan as a figurehead, and when he died in 1924, they abolished his position, forbade a search for his reincarnation, and established the world's first people's democracy.

²² Due north of Ulaanbaatar.

naadam tournament as one of the famous wrestlers of Dalai Van, it was the custom at that time to prohibit untitled and unknown wrestlers from participating in the Bogd's tournament. So the naadam tournament began, but on the day before the wrestling competition, Tsagaan fell asleep with his feet protruding under the edge of the tent. A group of people who were watching the wrestlers preparing for the tournament came past the tent and saw Arslan Tsagaan's feet. They stopped at once and looked with interest at the sole of one of his feet which indicated that he must have the strength of a tiger.

After they reported this to the officials in charge of the wrestling, Arslan Tsagaan was allowed to enter the wrestling tournament for the first time. Tsagaan won the naadam and received the title Arslan straight away. He collected the winnings from his bets and won prizes for his victory including tea, flour, cloth, which he took home.

He won the Bogd's tournament several times more and looked after his parents until he died. Soon after his death his corpse was deposited in the steppe.²³ It was said that even five years later wolves were still using his rib cage to give birth in.

The banner lords obtained some well-made milk foods and artistic ornaments made out of silver, iron and wood from their own subjects. They were proud of their good wrestlers and competitions were held in wrestling and shagai [a game using sheep's anklebones] with the banner of Chin Van Khanddorj, a famous banner of Khalkha. For example, among the senior lamas of myandag rank²⁴ in Tariatyn Khüree, there were disputes over theological debates. Good relations continued to be strained until finally they ceased to get along with one another.

Several high-ranking lamas left their original monastery and founded the so-called North Monastery in a beautiful valley with flowing water and north facing forests at the far end of Tariat Pass. The main temple buildings were constructed at the top of a beautiful peak. Since the lamas had to climb up the mountain to reach the temple hall, granite steps were laid which still remain today. The reason why the lamas built granite steps up to the temple buildings on a high peak was to compete with the relatives of Chin Van Khanddorj, who had constructed an artificial lake in the middle of which was a mound made of stone and mud. At the top of this there was a tiny artistically constructed temple called Divaajin [Paradise]. The center of the banner of Dalai Choinkhor Van was northwest of Terkhii Tsagaan lake and was called Tariatyn Khüree, which was the site of the above-mentioned monastery. There was a large rock in this lake where sacrifices were made every year at the expense of the banner.

In the banner center was the lord's own treasury and office of the ruling prince, together with an enclosure containing gers. This was where official duties were carried out. The lord himself lived in a large enclosure. On the northern side of this was a large Chinese-style summer building with many glass windows. On the east and west sides were the buildings housing the summer quarters. In the middle was a large space for the so-called lord's residence, which actually consisted of several gers, the lord having his

²³ Traditionally, the corpses of most people were taken to designated localities and placed on the ground rather than buried. This practice, which received much negative comment from foreign visitors, was partly rooted in the ancient belief that the earth must not be violated by digging into it, lest the local deities who reside in these localities wreak vengeance on the offenders. This practice was reinforced later on by the Buddhist view of the body as being merely a vile vessel and the ideal of being kind to all sentient beings. Thus, placing corpses in the open field was seen as the final act of kindness by offering sustenance (and shelter, as shown in the text) to animals.

²⁴ Myandag, < Tib. *ming-hdags*, is a ceremony in which a lama receives a religious name.

own large personal ger containing ten sections of lattice wall frames.

Also living in the lord's enclosure were his principal, second and third wives, his favored son, and his khongor, or favorite daughter. Their food and drink was prepared by servants and maids who worked in the enclosure. There were also some seamstresses. Close relatives and followers of the lord also had their own enclosures and there were several enclosures for the lord to move to in spring and summer.

The lord owned several hundred horses, tens of thousands of sheep, and many cattle and camels. They were herded by official serfs in specially designated areas of the countryside.

At the age of eighteen the lord was made deputy to the Manchu amban [governor] in Uliastai. Our lord was well educated in Mongolian, Tibetan, and Manchu. Highly respected by Sain Noën Khan Namnansüren, he was appointed deputy minister when autonomy was established.²⁵

The principal wife of the lord was a somewhat cruel woman who enjoyed her privileges. It was said that when the cook brought her some tea she would refuse to drink it, saying it was too thin. If it was then boiled and thickened, she considered it too thick and still rejected it. Many meals were considered by her to be too fatty, or else not rich enough or tasteless, and so were rejected. It was difficult to please this difficult woman. One summer when the lord was on a visit to the northern edge of the banner he came to our district. We were spending the summer in a valley called Shar Khooloi [Yellow gorge], on the west side of Khökh Nuur [Blue Lake] when news of the arrival of the lord caused a great flurry of activity. As well as having to pay official taxes, rich and poor alike gathered to collect together the choicest offerings of livestock and milk foods as gifts to their superiors. They did this out of faith and as an act of worship but were also careful to do it in a most flattering way.

One summer's day at about noon, some horse and camel carts arrived together with many people on horseback who dismounted at the northern edge of the lake. We could see that several large and small gers, more than ten blue tents with white spiral patterns, and some yellow tents were being erected. Then, quite a while after these tents and gers had been erected, some people appeared with a few decorated horse carts. A coach arrived adorned with rubber tassels followed by several more people with horse carts. In front of, behind, and on both sides of those horse carts were crowds of people accompanying them on horseback.

The mounted people were wearing all kinds of hats, jackets, plumes, and buttons. We also saw fancily attired people on foot. These were the lord's close officials, footmen, and retainers who were in the procession with him. Starting from where the lord had appeared, the local people knelt down everywhere right up to the tents. They made libations of milk, read scriptures, and prayed. When doing so, the people prostrated themselves in places quite far from the road with the children in their midst in a state of bewilderment.

Wealthy people, commanders and officers of the sum, and famous lamas and monks went to the place where the lord had alighted and met with his footmen and retainers. They talked as if they had had an audience with the lord, even though they did not meet him but prostrated themselves on seeing his figure in the distance. There were

²⁵ In 1911. See note 21 above.

also people who boasted that the lord had smiled when he saw them. In reality, no middle-ranking or poor people were allowed near the place when the lord arrived and were actually chased away.

We heard it said that he scolded the gatekeepers and footmen and had them whipped. Then, after a rest, the lord set off in the morning back to the banner center. The children and young people went to where the lord and his followers were staying and gathered things like the knucklebones of butchered sheep. This was in fact, one of the largest events to have taken place in the area.

The chief of our district was called Dejid Khünd, an old man who wore a blue button.²⁶ Dejid was short and wore a pigtail. He was usually seen wearing a steel striker and knife decorated with silver. Our family used to make our spring and summer camp near to his, and although my brothers and I were afraid of him, we were occasionally brave enough to go into their ger hoping to get a bowl of yoghurt or something else to eat or drink. Dejid had about ten horses, over twenty cows, about 200 sheep, and the three of them—himself, his wife, and son—lived together in a ger. Thinking about it now, their ger seemed to be about five or six lattice wall sections in size. Inside this tidy ger there were chests with old-fashioned mottled designs, cupboards with drawers, and stands for utensils. As well as the usual offerings to the Buddha which were found at the back of the ger as in all households, one peculiarity was a cupboard with drawers at the end of the bed where there was a pen, an ink pot, a flat writing board, and a writing book made of cloth-bound paper. I realize now that the hand-written book contained the accounts which were the official work of a commander.

Although there was only a small number of people in total in our district, there were many wealthy people and the majority of local people were of average wealth. It was said that there were not many poor people there.

The rich and famous people of the district were Khunkhaan Badrakh, Altan, Lkhagva, Ayuush the gelen [monk], Danzan the officer, his son Davaajav, and others. The main household of each owned 1000 sheep, 300-500 horses, over 100 cows, and fifty to sixty camels. Apart from their large ger and the extra gers used for storage, there were also the households of their sons young and old. A large accompanying family did the milking and looked after the sheep and horses of these rich people. The poor people became the servants of the rich and included our family, the Modon Gongor, Tsogbadrakh, Tümbii-Oidov and other families.

The rich people kept poor people at their winter and summer camps. If there was a grown-up boy, they would get him to look after the horses. Others would be made to look after the sheep. The little ones would look after the calves and lambs. The children's mother would have to milk the cows. In the summer the father would beat wool and make felt, in winter he would slaughter the animals for food and do similar hard work. At that time, no-one received wages for doing household chores. Instead, the main payment consisted of getting enough food to live on from the household.

²⁶ During the Manchu dynasty, civilian officials wore various insignias, including different colored buttons on top of hats. Of a total of nine ranks, the two top ranks wore two shades of red, the next two shades of blue, followed by two shades of white, two shades of gold, and with the lowest rank wearing silver. See Brunnert and Hagelstrom, *Present Day Political Organization of China* (Shanghai: Kelly & Walsh, 1912), p. 508. The events described in the text took place well after the fall of the Manchu dynasty, so Dejid appears to have been an official of the autonomous government of Mongolia. If that government had chosen to retain the insignias of the Manchu dynasty, Dejid was an official of either the third or fourth rank.

Because some of the rich people made their servants work in permanent jobs, they would give them a few ladlefuls of butter or dried curds after the butter had been churned, or the heads, shanks, and offal of slaughtered animals. Once or twice a year a half brick or, if one was lucky, a whole brick of tea or else some cotton cloth and a few pounds of flour would be provided. Such generosity among the wealthy people was highly praised by the poor, who did their work as requested.

Some of the wives of the rich lords occasionally behaved irritably and arrogantly towards their servants, who were treated like beggars, vagrants and other hapless people. For the poor serfs, on the whole, there was no way but to accept this situation. Sometimes, they could no longer tolerate bad treatment and in despair confronted the wealthy people by refusing to do the work. As our area had only a small number of poor serfs, the wealthy used all kinds of coercion in response to serf rebellions to restore the situation to normal. However, it was said that only people like the rich man Lkhagva and the clerk Badrakh were severe enough to fall out with their serfs.

Apart from these serfs the people of the district were divided up into the original clans of Khariad, Bökhchüüd, and Dairtan. The Dairtan and Bökhchüüd each consisted of several dozen households. The Khariad however, called themselves either senior, middle, or junior Khariad. These three groups of Khariad amounted to several hundred households in total. In earlier times, the so-called Khariad might have been called Krid, [? Kereid, tr.] or Gerüüd. As well as being prohibited from marrying within their clan, at New Year people would go to visit those of their relatives who were the most senior members of their clan, whom they would formally greet. Our family was included among the junior Khariad.

In addition to tending the small livestock [sheep and goats] throughout the year, the herdsmen in our area herded cattle in winter, took the horses out to graze on distant pastures and the camels to remote desolate areas. The camels were brought in when their wool was to be gathered or when transportation was needed when moving camp. Camels had to be purchased from the gobi areas because they did not thrive in the Khangai Mountains. The red Mongolian cattle were relatively rare. The cattle consisted mostly of yaks or *khainag* [a yak-cow hybrid oxen] which were used for moving cargo, riding, pulling carts, and short-distance transportation.

Horses were not used for anything except riding. The mares were only rarely milked for airag (fermented milk).²⁷ The yak and *khainag* produced thick, creamy milk. The cream was stored and butter was churned from it. "White butter" was stored in leather bags, wooden tubs, and sheep's stomachs. In summer, the ewes would be sorted from the lambs and neighboring households would between themselves keep the lambs away from the ewes so that from June until the end of July, sheep could be milked for a month. The most fancy, precious and delicious cream, curds, and other milk foods were made from this milk. Sheep's milk whey mixed with the brown flour obtained from mekheer [viviparous snakeweed]²⁸ and butter would be offered when entertaining hon-

²⁷ Airag, produced through fermentation, is mildly alcoholic. It serves as the base for at least three additional and much more potent alcoholic beverages. When airag is distilled once, it becomes arkhi, when distilled twice arj, and three times, khorj. The latter can reach more than 90% alcohol by volume. However, in recent decades, with the availability of inexpensive liquors, especially vodka in the North, this liquor has fallen into disuse.

²⁸ A variety of polygonum.

ored guests.

The usual milk foods were cow's milk and sheep's milk yoghurt, buttermilk, and airag. Milk was soured to make curds and cheese, or fermented and distilled to make shimiin arkhi. To preserve milk for use in winter and spring, curds would be boiled to make aaruul, and stored in sacks and bags. Some households took their butter and milk foods to sell to the temples and settlements. In the first month of winter, every household prepared food for the winter and spring. Large and small animals were slaughtered for storage and for making dried meat.

The provision of food by each family depended upon its capital wealth. A rich family of four or five individuals plus its serfs would annually slaughter about two cattle and ten sheep. A similarly sized middle-ranking family would slaughter one cow and five or six sheep. A poor family would slaughter only one or two sheep, but normally, they would also feed their children on the shanks, heads, and offal obtained from helping other families to prepare food.

In order to help free the spirit of the animal killed for food an offering of candles was made from their tallow. After this food had been prepared, a ritual was performed. This was conducted on the twenty-fifth day of the first month of winter or "candle month." Nowadays, the ceremony of the "twenty-fifth of the candle month" is held at the end of October. This was the birth day and date of death of the Tibetan Holy Buddha Zunkhav [Tsongkapa] and the candles were offered to signify mourning. When the stars came out at night, the candles were protected from the wind by placing them in a large pot. Outside, many candles were offered and people prostrated themselves to recite prayers and offer their praises to the Bogd.

Among ordinary folk it was not unusual to find talented people who could sing old songs, play the morinkhuur [horsehead fiddle] or the flute, sing praises, and tell stories. Some of the poor households raised their children by living off marmots and other wild animals, selling skins and furs. In summer they picked and dried wild mushrooms which they traded with itinerant Chinese for a half or whole brick of tea, or a couple of pounds of flour. Poor families such as ours gathered gichgene,²⁹ yamaakhai,³⁰ mekheer, onions, and blueberries which were used to supplement our meals.

The so-called gichgene grew in dark soil in damp places. It was a leafy plant with tasty roots which could also be picked and eaten. The khonin tarna and ukher tarna (varieties of wild leek) grew in the gaps between rocks and were also collected and eaten. The mekheer was the plant most widely gathered for food. It grew in damp mounds of soil and had short tasty roots. These roots were gathered by a mouse called *mekheeriin bor* one at a time in the autumn. The mouse cleaned them and stored them underground for eating in winter. These stores of mekheer could be located by pounding the ground with a special club while listening for the hollow sound that signified the presence of a mouse den. Digging open the den with a stake, the bulk of the mekheer would be found less than 10 cm below ground. One store of mekheer would equal nearly half a sack-full. The young people of poor households would find several stores and dig out the mekheer which they then dried in the sun, fried, pounded, mixed with butter and whey, cleaned and boiled for addition to the meal.

²⁹ A generic word for a wide variety of silverweed.

³⁰ This appears to be a local name, possibly related to yamaa khargana (*Caragana pygmaea*).

In addition, the roots of the chikher öbs [*Glycyrrhiza*], degd [*Gentiana*], vongor tsetseg,³¹ sevelgene ("white potatoes" as known in Töv and Dornod aimags), would be gathered and handed over to lama-doctors. They took the leaves, roots and flowers of these plants and mixed them with many other things to make a white or green broth.

Many kinds of medicines were blended for treating people.

In summer, we were made to pick incense grass, juniper, wormwood, zeergene [ephedra], and green pine needles, which we mixed and boiled in a pot to produce a scented infusion. This was put in a shallow bucket which was then placed in a hole in the ground. Old people with chronic rheumatic conditions would sit around the bucket in their summer gowns and dip their feet in it for several days. This same method was used to obtain extracts from many types of plant to make curative waters. Sick people used them and later on they were found to be useful for treating rheumatic conditions. I mention this as an example of the traditional methods used in the lives of ordinary people. During my youth I considered these to be beneficial.

The pasture in the winter camp was carefully distributed as appropriate for the number of livestock possessed by each family. The chief of the district or sometimes the person appointed by the official ruling prince of the khoshuu would allocate the land. With winter pasture, apart from the basic difference in grazing between sheep and cattle, thin or sick animals would be put in nearby winter shelters. Thinking about it now, I recall that there was a 400-500 meter to two kilometer strip in the neighboring winter pasture which was not to be grazed by the animals and was left fallow. The sheltered slopes would be reserved during the lambing season for the pregnant animals and for livestock during windy snowstorms. The distant pastures on the mountain ridges would be grazed during the first month of winter by fattened animals, mostly cattle and horses. The pastures of the winter camp would be demarcated by specific mounds and rocks. Outside these established areas stones would be piled up and the locality markers made.

If a household allowed its livestock to graze on the winter pasture of another household, those animals would be penned for a few days by the owner of the pasture. When the owner of the animals arrived to reclaim them, words would be exchanged, and the animals would either be given back or [in cases where this did not happen], fighting would break out.

In our area, the happy joyous times were lunar New Year, the reading of family services, the summer sacrifices to local deities held at the ovoo, the meetings concerned with the local monastery, scripture readings, and the Maidar (Maitreya) ritual. Locally, there were Buddhist monasteries, temples, and several ovoids in the mountains. The flourishing of Buddhism which had forced out the pre-existing shamanism was a matter which I ponder even now.

There was a lama named Danzan who lived in a forest on the southern ridge of a valley called Tsokhiot.³² He lived with an old woman and owned several head of cattle. The people of our area spoke frequently about this lama whose camp I once saw while herding livestock. This lama used to read books in his ger which were fit for a library, and he was said to own many books.

One autumn a shaman named Damdin from Dayan Derkh near Lake Khövsgöl arrived at Lama Danzan's and aggressively demanded some offerings. Danzan, who was

³¹ This term is unknown to me.

³² In Jargalant sum of northern Bayankhongor aimag.

a Buddhist and had disliked Damdin previously, became angry and upset and they fought, almost killing each other in the process. Then, while the shaman Damdin was spending the night near Lama Danzan, he invoked some spirits and while putting a curse on Danzan to have him eaten, the shaman's drum came through the roof hole of Danzan's ger and revolved around the hearth. In reply, Danzan read some scriptures. While he was repelling the shaman's curse, Shaman Damdin's drum left the ger, and fell to the east side of the ger with a crash. Shaman Damdin lost consciousness, the spirit left and the sound of the shaman's reading stopped.

Lama Danzan had won and Shaman Damdin, having lost his magical power, became an ordinary person again. He returned home despondently. This short tale is an example of how Buddhism, which had flourished in Mongolia since the middle of the seventeenth century, forced out the old religion of shamanism.