

IVOLGINSKI DATSAN

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- Ivolginsky Datsan (Russian Иволгинский Дацан) is the Buddhist monastery, Buryatia, 23 km from Ulan Ude, near Verkhnyaya Ivolga village.
- It is believed that already from the 2nd century BCE, proto-Mongol people (the Xiongnu, Xianbei, and Khitans) living on the territory of nowadays Ivolginsk, were familiar with Buddhism. Namely on the territory of the Ivolginsk Settlement, remains of Buddhist prayer beads were found in a Xiongnu grave.
- At the end of the 17th to the beginning of the 18th centuries, Buddhism spread throughout the Transbaikal region.
- The highest development period for Buryatian Buddhism has been considered from the second half of the 19th century until the 1930s.
- After the communist revolution in 1917, an anti-religious law that separated the church from the state came out. In Buryatia, the anti-religious law was enforced in 1925. The spiritual values that were created and accumulated for centuries were destroyed in a short period.

IVOLGINSKY DATSAN

- Between 1927 and 1938, forty-seven active datsans were destroyed, and practically nothing was preserved.
- About 1,864 highly-educated scholarly lamas were sent to prisons, to hard labor, and hundreds were shot to dead without any trial.
- Shortly after World War II, Stalin allowed Buryat lamas, those who survived the purges of the 1930s, to resume the performance of Buddhist rites. This was on a very limited scale, under strict control of the state officials and, of course, under constant KGB surveillance.
- In 1945, the Ivolginsky Datsan was opened as the only Buddhist Spiritual Centre of the USSR. Several years later the Aginsky datsan resumed operations.
- Over the course of time Ivolginsky datsan changed into the monastic centre with a residence of Pandito Khambo lama.
- According to the Soviet legislation, it was only in these two places that the Russian Buddhists were allowed to practice their religion, and any religious propaganda was officially forbidden.
- Until today, Buddhism in Buriatya and USSR during the soviet period is not much researched and recorded, generally all informative sources skip the period of 1945 until 1991.

AGINSKI DATSAN



HAIDUB GALSANOV AND STALIN

- The revival of Buddhism is associated with the lama Haidub Galsanov from Aginsky datsan.
- In the early XX century, Haidub Galsanov, a student of Agvan Dorjiev, was part of the delegation of lamas attending a reception of Lenin at the Kremlin. During the conversation in the cabinet, Lenin called Stalin to enter. Lenin turned to Buryat lamas and asked to solve the question with Stalin. Having read the proposal of the lamas, he said that it will be decided next time. "The next time" was delayed for a long 20 years, and the question of Buddhism in Russia was decided by Stalin in his own way.
- In 1944, Haidub Galsanov returned from the front. During the war, Galsanov was at a parade on Red Square, when troops from the square went to the front. After the speech of Stalin, the priest came out with a cross and blessed the troops. Galsanov remembered this and began to seek an audience with Stalin. He was granted an audience as a war hero and there he reminded Stalin of the previous conversation.
- At the meeting Stalin recognized him and also remembered their meeting with Agvan Dorjiev. Stalin was ready to open the datsans, but demanded a letter from Buryatia with at least 16 signatures.
- They also agreed that Buryats will donate money to the Peace Fund (which actually belonged to the Ministry of Defense).

THE LETTER

- When Galsanov came to Ulan-Ude and began to look for people, everyone was afraid. Bidja Dandaron was the first who supported him and wrote a paper with him. The meeting was held in Erhirik (4-5 km from Ulan-Ude) and on the first night, 16 signatures were not collected. The old lamas decided that only they would sign the letter to protect the youth from possible repression.
- Then the old people said that close to the previous Orangoi datsan are living some old lamas who had come from prisons. Before there were many lamas, they had bold and independent characters, and the datsan was famous for its art school - they were skillful builders of temples, artists and sculptors.
- Orangoi lamas agreed, the necessary number of signatures was collected, and the letter was sent with gabsha Haidub Galsanov and few old men (including Lubsan Nima Darmaev, Tsybzhit Dampilov and Osor Nimayev) to Moscow. Stalin gave the permission.
- Galsanov returned to Buryatia and began to discuss this issue with the remaining lamas. In the summer of 1944, Galsanov together with representatives of lamas and believers issued a patriotic appeal to believers in the Buryat-Mongolian language with a call for help.
- In response to this appeal, they began to raise funds for the Peace (Defense) Fund and Buryats donated enormous amounts to have their datsan. 353 100 thousand rubles arrived to the Peace Fund from the faithful Buddhists.

BUILDING DATSAN

- Stalin ordered to allocate land for the datsan's construction and to start work. In total, Stalin allowed to open two datsans. By resolution of the Council of People's Commissars of the Buryat-Mongolian ASSR of May 2, 1945, No. 186-ж "On the opening of the Buddhist temple" Khambin Sume "in the uluss of Middle Ivolga" the building of a new datsan was allowed.
- A group of lamas led by Galsanov was offered land on the Bald Mountain (the outskirts of Ulan-Ude). Lamas did not agree - the datsan should be built at a distance from the secular centers, although not too far, so that the laity can easily visit it. In addition, in the 1930-s lamas were killed near the Bald Mountain. Then the authorities allowed the lamas themselves to choose the land.
- Pandito Hambo Lama Munko Tsybikov told his student Vello Vaartnou in the 1980s how the place was decided for datsan. Namely while the delegation of lamas went out to find the place, the white horse of one of the lamas "marked the ground" at the site of the future Ivolginsky datsan. It was considered a favorable sign and they did not search further.
- The Buddhist community began collecting money and religious utensils. With the collected funds in the Ivolginsky Valley in the area of Osor-Bulag a wooden house in the shape of temple was put up and believers began to take an active part in construction work.

OPENING OF THE DATSAN

- An order was issued approving three lamas to the Ivolginski datsan- Rinchin Dorzho Zhamyanov, Shirap Zhamso Dorzhiev (both former lamas Yangazhinsky datsana) and Sartul-Bulak datsana Lubans Nima Darmayev (Pandido Hambo lama from 1946 -1956).
- Economic, financial and personnel problems, also the requirement to co-ordinate each step with the relevant government bodies, all this was on the shoulders of Pandido Hambo Lama Lubsan-Nima Darmayev and his closest assistants.
- On December 12, 1945, the first open service "Sahuusan Khural" headed by lama Haidub Galsanov was held. In February 1946 the New Year services - "Sagaalghanay Khural" was passed with observance of all religious and ceremonial canons.
- In those years, at the Ivolginsky datsan was registered 14 lamas gelongs.
- In May 1946, the Buddhist Sangha in Buryatia was officially reinstituted on the initiative of a group of senior monks and laymen headed by two former members of the Central Spiritual Board, lamas H. Galsanov and L.N. Darmayev. Like its predecessor, the body found itself in the firm grip of the state, and was used as a convenient tool for Soviet propaganda abroad.
- Despite the official permission of religion, and for the construction of datsan and allowing to perform religious rites, the government bodies secretly fought against religion, made discord and disagreement between the lamas of the Ivolginski datsan and steppe lamas, and spread anti-religious propaganda.

IVOLGINSKI DATSAN 1962



1946-1956

- In 1947, it was decided to move the temple to a new location. Within half a year the temple was relocated with a new extension of 14m long and 7m wide.
- In 1948, the second floor was completed. In November 1948, Hambo Lama Darmayev brought a gilded 'ganjir' (ornament on the roof of the temple), a wheel with two deer and solemnly installed it on a new datsan. The first Dzogchen-dugan was erected in 1948 with the construction of the second Dzogchen, which became Choira-dugan of the Faculty of Philosophy.
- In 1951, land for the monastic complex was officially allocated. 5-6 houses were built for lamas. A year later, a fence was put around the datsan, and the problem with water was solved by digging a well.
- In 1956, gabsha Lama of Tamchinsky datsan Yeshe-Dorji Sharapov was elected Pandito Hambo lama (due to the old age of the Hambo Lama Darmaev). During his period, international relations were established with Buddhist organizations and Buddhists of the countries of South-East Asia.
- In November 1956, a delegation of Buddhists of the USSR led by Pandito Hambo Lama Sharapov, which included also Did Khambo Lama Gomboev, Secretary Sanje Dylkov and a lama from Ivolginski datsan, attended the Fourth World Conference of Buddhists in Kathmandu.

1960-1970

- In 1962, there were already 26 lamas registered in the Ivolginsky datsan: 15 people at age 70 years and more; 6 people at age 60-70 years, 4 people about 50-60 years, 1 person 46 years old.
- In 1968, foreign delegations started official visits to the USSR and the Ivolginsky Datsan. For example, President of the Sri Lanka Buddhist Society Sri Sumanatissa Thero, Sikkim Buddhist delegation, King of Sikkim with Queen and Secretary, Indian delegation, Bakula Rinpoche etc.
- In the 1970s, most of the temples of the datsan were built. At the call of the Hambo Lama J.-D. Gomboev, many believers, old carpenters wished to take part in this sacred affair. The construction of datsan received donations from the laity of believers. In a short time, a three-story building was erected, at the same time the construction of auxiliary structures (boiler room, water tower and garage for 3 cars) was carried out by an experienced landowner, a 70-year-old pensioner from Selenga Aimak, former lama of Tamchinsky datsan, Lubansov Aidop.
- From 1970-1973, a small wooden temple, Maidar Sume, was built especially for the sculptural image of the Buddha Maitreya, a gift from Mongolian Buddhists. During the same years, the office was built and in 1977, a 2-story guest house was erected.
- In February 1976, the fire destroyed the main temple. People all over Buriatya started to collect and send money on their own initiative. In May of the same year, main temple was rebuilt and already in November the first service was held in the new main temple.

BUDDHIST UNIVERSITY

- In 1978, 8 Stupas of Medicine Buddha were built.
- From 1980-1986, Sahuyusan Sume was built and 4 large prayer wheels (Donshuur Maani hurdee).
- By efforts of two successive Hambo lamas, Zhimba-Jamso Erdyneev and Munko Tsybikov, the Buddhist university Dashi Choinkhorling attached to the datsan was opened in 1991.
- Today there are about 100 students studying at four faculties: philosophical, tantric, iconographic and medical.
- The merits of the older generation of lamas are invaluable in the revival and development of Buddhism in Russia, and I would like to duly reflect on their contribution to the people and the state.
- The harsh truth of life is that they did not leave behind any detailed autobiographies or stories about themselves, they just served people.

HAMBO LAMA ERDINEEV (1907 – 1990)



PANDITO HAMBO LAMA ZHIMBA-ZHAMSO ERDYNEEV

- Pandito Hambo Lama Zhimba-Zhamso Erdyneev was born in 1907 in the district of Khoyto-Aga Aginsky district in the family of Dashin Erdeni. When he was ten years old, his father took him to the Aginsky datsan. After ten years of hard study, he defended himself on the degree of the gabsha lama.
- Granting of this title comes before a large committee of lamas of all datsan. All those who are admitted to, must first recite the indigenous text of the Abhis-May-Alankara by heart. (the basic material in the teaching of the primal-paramita, i.e. Section of the sutras, revealing the main meaning of the entire Teaching of the Buddha.) When they go to answer to the lamas from the oldest courses, they take off the headpiece and carefully hide under the cloak, thereby showing respect to the elders. Then they go to answer the students of junior courses. Such kind of examination usually lasts for three days, after which they can be safely called gabsha lamas.
- After a successful defense, Zhimba-Zhamso, proceeded to prepare the next learned degree of the lama, but the time of troubles came and in the autumn of 1933 he was exiled, having declared the people's enemy. From this moment on the hardest period of his life began, full of deprivation and difficulties.
- He was sent to Tshernovsky colony. In the colony the prisoners were under strict regime and worked in coal mining. Unable to withstand the hardest working conditions, prisoners fell ill and died. Later, during the war, in 1942 Zhamba-Zhamso was commissioned for health reasons and worked at the warehouse as a guard. After the war, he spent another nine years working as a shepherd in the collective farm "Pobeda" and three years in the collective farm "Progress".

RETURN TO DATSAN

- In 1957, at the invitation of the shiretui lama, Zhambal-Dorji Gomboev, Zhimba-Zhamso Erdyneev returned to the Aginsky datsan.
- At that time, many people brought to datsan the surviving Buddhist books and statues, other religious accessories.
- A large number of randomly assembled books were gathered in the library, and Zhimba-Zhamso completely learned them, made a catalog and attached to each scroll a qui-stream with a designation to which section of the sutras this book belongs.
- From 1963, he located to Ivolginski datsan and did exactly the same gigantic work in the Ivolginsky datsan library.
- In 1983, at the age of 76, Zhimba-Zhamso Erdyneev was elected XX Pandito Hambo lama.
- Hambo Lama Erdyneev remained a remarkable work, which showed the high level of education of Buryat lamas - "Catalog of some essays and treatises written by Buryat"

VELLO VAARTNOU AND HAMBO LAMA MUNKO TSYBIKOV



PANDITO HAMBO LAMA MUNKO TSYBIKOV (1907 -1993)

- Munko Tsybikov was born in 1907 in the Turhul area of the Vitimsk of the Khorin Duma. At the age of eight he was given to the Egituiski datsan "Damchoy Rabzheling".
- At a young age, he happened to meet with Tsanid Khambo lama Agvan Dorjiev, who during his stay in the Egituiski datsan said the following prophetic words regarding Munko Tsybikov: "He will be of great help to people."
- Munko Tsybikov studied Buddhist treaties, Tibetan medicine, Buddhist philosophy.
- In 1930, he defended the academic title "gabsha", which roughly equals the candidate of Buddhist philosophy - the first spiritual degree.
In the 1930s, repression began in Buryatia.
- In 1936, the Egituysky datsan was closed, and the lamas who remained at large, dispersed along the ulusses. After the closing of the datsan, Munko lama got a job as a stove man on the Karl Marx collective farm in the village of Egita.
- In 1939, he was charged under Article 58-10 part 1 (for counter-revolutionary activities) and exiled to the Kolyma gold mine in the Magadan Region.

22 YEARS IN STALIN` CAMPS

- Munko Tsybikov spent twenty-two years in Stalin's camps. He managed not only to survive in the harsh conditions of Kolyma but also to save dozens of people from certain death, having managed to collect medicinal herbs for prisoners in the short Kolyma summer days.
- Munko Tsybikov had special authority not only as a healer, but also a man with pronounced leadership talents. It was these qualities that contributed to his return from hell, in which he managed to save many of his companions.
- After returning from prison, on the recommendation of Zhalsan-Gabzhi, known as the Urnyanay-lama, he was enlisted as a full-time lama in the Ivolginsky datsan. In 1962, he was rehabilitated.
- Since 1963, he held the post of the shiretee lama of the Ivolginsky datsan, and was famous as a skillful emchi-lama (doctor lama). When he was a Pandito Hambo lama, the traditions of the Khurals were restored in Tunkinsky, Kizhinginsky and Egituysky datsans.
- In 1991 the Buddhist University "Dashi Choinhorling dedicated Damba Zayayev ", was established.
- His life is closely connected with the Buddhist shrine - Zandan Zhuu (Sandalwood Buddha), the only lifetime statue of Buddha Shakyamuni, taken from China in 1910 during the boxer uprising by the lama Gombo-Dorzho Erdyneyev from Egituiski Datsan. It was Pandito Khambo lama Munko Tsybikov who managed to return the statue to the Egituysky datsan from Odigitrievsky Cathedral in Ulan-Ude, where it was located throughout the Soviet era.

Khambo-lama Munko Tsybikov passed away in 1993.

ZANDAN ZHUU (SANDALWOOD BUDDHA)



VELLO VAARTNOU ABOUT HIS TEACHERS

- From 1976-1987, an Estonian Buddhist Vello Vaartnou studied under the guidance of a number of teachers of Ivolga monastery including Ven Munko Tsybikov and Ven Zhimba Erdineev. In soviet times, non-Buryats were not allowed to study in Ivolginski datsan, so he is a rare exception of that time.

Vello Vaartnou:

- - “I went to the monastery (Ivolginsky datsan) for years, and studied and communicated with them. In my opinion, they were these people who carried inside themselves the taste of old Buddhism. I consider their Buddhism as it was before the October Revolution in 1917 because religious propaganda was forbidden in SU.
- I was astonished by the determination of these men which derived from Buddhism, and the simplicity how they handled Buddhism in everyday life. Thanks to these people who went through Stalinist camps and came back to monastery, I got my knowledge and part of the atmosphere that they carried within themselves.
- I studied both with Hambo and Munko, and I think they were patient with me. Because when I first time came to the monastery they were surprised that an Estonian wants to learn Buddhism. They found that it would be better for me become a Christian because it is closer to me due to my living place, Estonia, but I was able to convince them of the opposite.”

VAARTNOU (LEFT) AND BAASHAN(RIGHT)
STUDYING TEXTS TOGETHER



VELLO VAARTNOU:

- “I feel that our day Ivogla lamas are not same as were old lamas. Looking at their activities, it is clearly seen that they are inspired and enthusiastic in building outer aspect of Buddhism but inner aspect is a bit behind.
- However, such development is currently seen over the world – less study and more teaching. Before it was the opposite way - more study, less teaching.
- Thanks to such inner slackness, the level of Buddhism, its philosophy and ideology is lower. Such opinion about contemporary Buddhism arises in me when I look back in time at my teachers who told me: "To Learn, to learn, to learn."
- My teacher Munko was from Egituisky datsan, he studied medicine and other subjects for several years, until the repressions started against Buddhism and lamas. He told me that one morning his guru went to bring food but was shot to death by communists on his way to town.
- Munko was arrested in Egituisky datsan and was the last one who closed the gates of the datsan. He was over in Kolyma for over 20years, the worst labor camp in former SU. There he healed people using his knowledge gained in Egituisk, taught Buddhism when possible and also studied himself."

MUNKO LAMA WITH ESTONIAN BUDDHISTS
IVOLGA 1979



MUNKO LAMA IN MAIN TEMPLE



ABOUT THE 4TH WORLD BUDDHIST CONFERENCE IN 1956

- “Munko told me that In November 1956, a delegation of Buddhists of the USSR led by Pandido Hambo Lama Sharapov and few lamas attended the Fourth World Conference of Buddhists in Kathmandu.
- For some reasons, Munko went to the conference as well. He told me there was a reception at the King of Nepal for the conference delegates. Firstly Hinayana delegates were invited for welcoming speeches. There were standing many ministers and officials and then a tall bearded Hinayana guy came to speak. Hambo told that this is Brother Vahindra who was speaking. Next to him was another bearded monk – his student Friedrich Lustig.
- The Queen of Nepal gave a White Tara statue to Vahindra and Lustig and then Hambo Sharapov who sat among the most important guests, went to deliver a speech. After ceremony they went out and talked long time with Karl Tonisson as he spoke Mongolian.
- Munko told also that one day they took a photo on Boudhnath and then they were together with Vahindra as well. The officials of SU embassy who were accompanying Buryat delegates, told lamas not to communicate with Vahindra and Lustig.
- On the last day of the conference, they went to Chinese Embassy, where were residing Dalai Lama and Panchen Lama, who blessed them. And then Dalai lama wished them all good success in building communism. The embassy officials liked Dalai much.”

BURYAT LAMAS WITH BROTHER VAHINDRA AND FR. LUSTIG FROM ESTONIA
KATHMANDU 1956



VELLO VAARTNOU AND HAMBO LAMA ERDINEEV



VAARTNOU ABOUT HAMBO ERDINEEV:

- “Hambo Erdineev was the smallest in monastery, about 1.52cm, (only Dharma Doji was smaller, about 1.40) and at the same time whole monastery listened to him and his word had weight both inside and outside the monastery, he was very wise.
- All Buriatya knew Hambo, and he was a big friend to Bakula Rinpoche who visited Ivolga often.
- I witnessed one of Bakula Rinpoches visits. It was a rainy day, everything was wet and about ten thousand believers had gathered to see Bakula Rinpoche. Everything was muddy, and to get Bakula Rinpoche with dry feet to the temple, wood panels and upon them red carpet was set up. But Bakula Rinpoche left the car that bring him to the monastery and stepped straight into mud. All these thousands Buriats so to say ‘fell down’ into mud paying respect to famous Rinpoche.
- His speech was always very quiet no matter with whom he talked. And he went to the temple and sat on Lion throne and started to teach. The problem was that his speech was so quiet. I was sitting in front of the temple, close to the throne and I heard him, but Munko`s helper Drolma had also heard all speech well, even she was half -death. I asked others as who were far from throne as well, and they all said they had heard Bakula Rinpoche very well. So the question is how could all people hear so well even he spoke very quiet?
- Hambo`s weakness and addiction was monastery library, he kept the library keys with him and he took good care of library. He published Buddhist literature in clever way. He proposed to scholar Bryansky to translate *Abhidharmakosa*-Bhasya of Vasubandhu. It was published in Russian and Tibetan, so it was possible to compare texts and this was the best translation ever. “

BAKULA RINPOCHE IN IVOLGA



LIFE IN DATSAN

Vaartnou:

- “Salary of monks was 72 rubles a month, paid by the monastery. Monastery had a storage -shed where all products were kept, and everybody could use it, and used as well.
- Every house had a phone which was a rare occasion in the SU at the time. Lamas panicked whenever the phone rang. The reason was that officials listened to what they talked about. They knew that phones were tapped by KGB. That's why they didn't use phones.
- Old lamas followed Vinaya seriously. When young monks came then most of them took a wife. It seems that such lifestyle has become a norm today, many of them are married and have children. Older generation lamas didn't like this at all, and from this derived disagreements between the old and the young.
- Hambo was very strict in following Vinaya, he expelled wives out from the monastery and said wives are not allowed to be there. The other thing was that young lamas parked their cars in the territory of datsan, next to their house.
- Hambo told them to keep cars behind the monastery gates. I must agree with Drolma who used to say: “Old time lamas were high as mountains; nowadays you cannot even see them”.

VAARTNOU AND DROLMA
IVOLGA 1984



DUGARZAB LAMA (LEFT) WITH MUNKO LAMA (RIGHT)



MAIN TEMPLE 1979



LIFE IN DATSAN

- "The day in the monastery started at 6am, everybody made circles to honor the monastery and then we had morning tea. After that we went to temple for recitations, and some people were left to recite for all day. After that everybody dealt with their own things.
- Munko went to his house and began to treat sick people. Hambo went to his house, and did not accept anyone, usually it was hard for outsiders to meet him; Dharma Dodij never accepted anybody as he was engaged in translations all the time.
- There were 3-4 older lamas in datsan who went to villages to perform rituals, but mostly people came to monastery with their wishes and problems. It was not allowed to use the oracle.
- When the Mayor of Ulan Ude came to datsan and he ordered his driver to drive the car 3 times around the monastery to pay respect. Datsan had also two astrologers; one of them - the main astrologer - had one addiction, alcohol.
- There were two doctors (emchi`s), one of them was not good but the other one, Munko lama, was famous all over Soviet Union as a unique healer."

LAMA DOING OFFERINGS
IVOLGA DATSAN 1981



DUGARZAB LAMA



DHARMA DODIJ LAMA



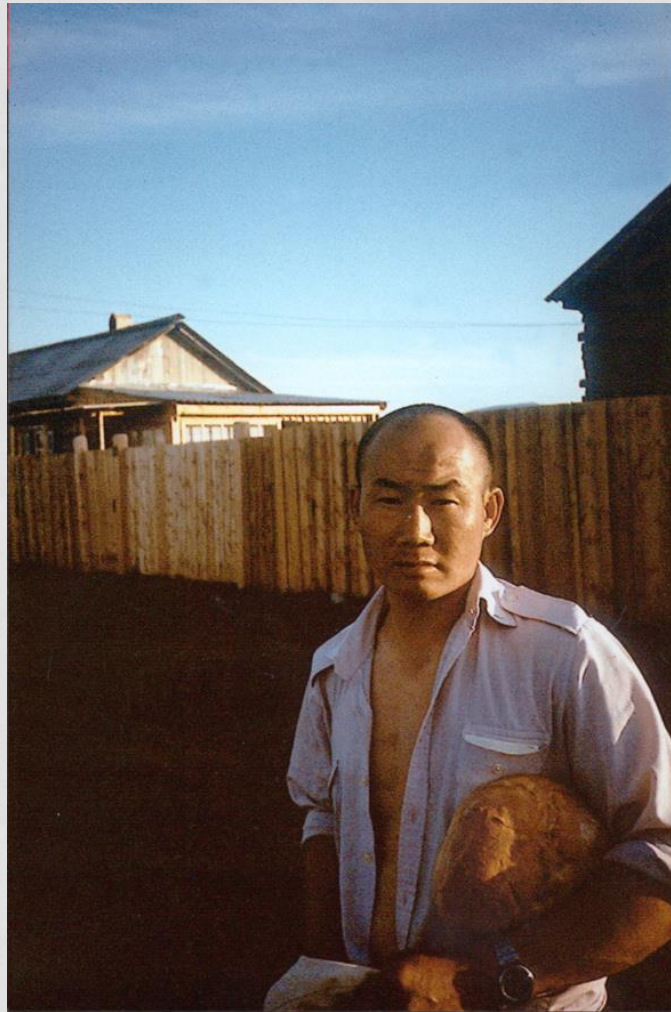
VAARTNOU AND DUGARZAB LAMA (RIGHT) IN DATSAN



MAIDAR HURAL IN BURYATIA

- “The best celebration in monastery was Maidar (Maitreya) hural, which was always held in July when it was extremely hot weather.
- From early morning tens thousands people gathered, bread bags with them and the camp was formed around the monastery.
- From early morning kettles boiled and smoked around the monastery and dumplings were made.
- The monastery was so over- crowded that it was hard to walk. once my friend and co-student Baashan lama from Mongolia simply disappeared in crowd with the bread we intended to eat.”

MY FRIEND AND CO-STUDENT BAASHAN LAMA FROM MONGOLIA



MAIDAR HURAL. MUNKO LAMA



MAIDAR HURAL

- “Celebrations were held 3 days and for 3 days kettles boiled around the monastery. On the last day there was a grand finale when Maitreya`s statue was taken out from temple and placed on a carriage.
- Then all this crowd of believers took the carriage 3 times around the monastery. I recommended to Hambo to use a rocket, because it would be good to use modern technology so that Maitreya would arrive faster. But Hambo said that it would burn down the monastery.
- Munko lama had a self-made volunteer –helper, her name was Drolma, who cleaned, cooked and organized the order of patients who came to Munko. 75 year-old Drolma ruled everything on the home side.
- Often Hambo and other lamas gathered to Munko`s house in the evening, and then we had long chats with tea and delicious dumplings made by Drolma. Munko small house was popular.
- The tallest lama in datsan was tantra teacher Davaa who also took care of Bodhitree.”

MAIDAR HURAL



MAIDAR HURAL



MAIN TEMPLE
WINTER 1980



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