

## THE MAIN POINTS OF THE PH.D. THESIS

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### **Bogdiin Khüree: Monasteries and Temples of the Mongolian Capital (1651-1938)**

#### **Aim of the Ph.D. Thesis**

Among the numerous nomadic yurts scattered throughout the Mongol land monastic cities and monasteries (*khüree khiid*) had been the only places of education and culture for more than three centuries. The moving camp originally founded in 1651 by Öndör geegen Zanabazar (1635-1723), the 1<sup>st</sup> Bogd or *jewtsündamba khutagt* is considered as the base of the present-day capital city. In the beginning this camp consisted of only a couple of yurts locating in the area of the present Öwörkhangaï province. In 1654, when the camp moved to Khentii province, an assembly hall (*tsogchin dugan*, Tib. *tshogs chen 'du-khang*) was constructed to make it possible for the lamas to hold their everyday chanting. During the following centuries, under the lifetime of Öndör geegen's seven further incarnations the camp developed to the biggest monastic city, called Ikh Khüree or Bogdiin Khüree. Apart from being the Bogds' residence, thus the most significant religious place of the Yellow Sect, it was also a centre of Manchu administration, and Chinese and Russian commerce. After 28 relocations the city settled down in 1855 in its final place, in the present Ulaanbaatar basin.

After the collapse of the Manchu empire in 1911 the 8<sup>th</sup> Bogd, known also as the Bogd khaan, became the head of all religious and political power in Mongolia which resulted in a Golden Age of the Buddhist Church. During his reign (1911-1921) the city became famous nationwide for its high-level monastic education, ten monastic schools (*datsan*, Tib. *grwa-tshang*), several temples, 15000 lamas, thirty lama districts (*aimag*), spectacular religious festivals, and wealthy treasuries and financial units (*san jas*). The Russian-supported young generation introduced reforms from 1921 that caused serious political, economic, and social changes. Collectivization of ecclesial properties, suppression of religion had started that resulted in the purges of 1937/1938 when thousands of lamas were executed, sent to the army or disrobed, and almost all the one thousand monastic sites of the country were completely destroyed.

The monastic city could not survive the destruction. Today, the whole area of the old capital city has been utterly built in and only a few important buildings, some exhibited

artifacts and old photos kept in the archives represent the old times. Though after the democratic change in 1990 several temples started to be (re)built and Buddhism is said to be revived in the capital city and all over in Mongolia, the present-day lama generation interprets religious views in a different way, and the city's inhabitants do not know even what the name of their old city was.

Thus, the overall goal of composing the present work was to show the beauty of the once flourishing monastic capital city and the vivid life of its monasteries and temples, monastic schools, monastic districts and lay population quarters. After the establishment and development of the city the description of its districts and their temples follow, enabling the reader to get a more complex picture about the colourful life of the 8<sup>th</sup> Bogd's city in the first part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

### **Sources and Survey Methods**

Due to the distinguished role of the city a wide variety of sources are at the researchers' disposal. Although the stormy events of the 20<sup>th</sup> century have already been studied thoroughly, the religious life of the monastic city has never been in the focus of interest. About the foundation of the camp and the most important monastic complexes Tibetan and Mongolian chronicles were studied, whilst travellers' notices and Mongolian researchers' recent publications were used to analyze the city structure and life of temples in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Foreign researchers' books, and books and articles published in the Socialist period were surveyed related to political changes.

To list the once-existing temples of the city Rinchen's map published in 1979 was used as the primary source, whilst Jügder's painting from 1913 helped to imagine the arrangement of the old city. Other lists, maps, drawings and paintings, and a couple of old photos available in books and in the collection of the Film Archives were also used to identify certain temples.

To get authentic data about the old administration and religious life of the city approximately 230 catalogues of the National Central Archives (*Ündesnii Töv Arkhiw*) were thoroughly studied in Ulaanbaatar. Apart from some local archivists this collection have not been researched. Therefore, the thesis makes an attempt to describe the contents of the catalogues related to the city's temples mentioning different text types. Moreover, the most significant text type that is a data sheet listing the ceremonies of more than 20 temples that were held in 1937 immediately before the purges are analyzed as the latest authentic religious written sources of the era.

Reminiscences of contemporary people were also studied, and interviews were recorded with elderly data providers, especially old lamas who lived in Bogdiin Khüree before the purges. Seven old lamas, among them Ts. Dashtseren (born 1921) as the main data provider, helped to fill the gaps based on their personal memories.

During the fieldwork all the exact or presumable sites of all the temples were determined (GPS) and their present condition was documented. As the majority of the once existing temples has no remnants this assumption could not be entirely completed.

Simultaneously with writing the present Ph.D. thesis a survey was carried out between September 2005 and March 2006 together with Zsuzsa Majer at the request of the Arts Council of Mongolia (ACM) with the aim of recording all the monasteries that were closed before the purges, and the temples which were revived or newly established after the democratic change in 1990. The result of the survey was used in the theses of the researchers and was offered to the ACM to upload it to their database ([www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)) that includes all the once existed as well as all the present-day monastic sites in the territory of the present Mongolia.

## **Chapters and their Contents**

In sources the city is mentioned under various names, such as Urga in western sources (Örgöö, ‘residence’), Great monastic city in Mongolian sources (Ikh Khüree), Riwozejai Gandanshaddüwlin (Tib. *ri-bo dge-rgyas dga’-ldan bshad-sgrub-gling*) in Tibetan sources. As the old lamas refer to their old city as Bogdiin Khüree (‘monastic city of the *bogd*’) this was chosen as title for the present paper.

The thesis consists of five chapters. Chapter 1 summarizes research methods and lists all the used written and oral sources. Chapter 2 gives a chronologic overview about the three hundred year development of the city. After a brief account of the Manchu overlordship (1691-1911), the residence establishing activity of Öndör gegegen Zanabazar is discussed in detail, followed by the re-locations of the camp and the formation and development of its districts, monastic schools, temples and palaces during the life of Öndör gegegen’s reincarnations. After the collapse of the Manchu empire, the 8<sup>th</sup> incarnation had a distinctive role in the country (1911-1921), thus his reforms, and the events of the Soviet suppression ending in the purges are also summarized.

Chapter 3 discusses the religious organizations of the city, i.e. the lama hierarchy, main festivals and ceremonies, eminent polymaths, Buddhist arts and craft, printing activity, morals, and lama life. Though the most significant Buddhist masterpieces and collected works

of eminent lamas are well-known from published catalogues, the present work omits the particulars.

Chapter 4 provides basic information about the administrative and financial organizations of the city detailing the activity of the Ministry of Ecclesiastical Affairs (*Erdene Shanzodwiin Yaam*), which was responsible for the operation of the temples and monasteries subordinated to the Bogds. Incomes and expenses of the treasuries and financial units (*san jas*) are discussed. Archives data clearly show how operation of the Ministry and the administration of the city were reformed in 1925 and later.

Chapter 5 is the most extensive part of the study. It discusses all the monastic sites one by one according to their location in the capital city. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century the monastic city was divided into the following main parts: the principal monastic districts called Züün Khüree and Gandan (or Baruun Khüree); the quarters inhabited by lay people (*kharchuud*), called *Ikh shaw'*, *Züün kharchuud*, *Züün ömnöd khoroo*, and *Baruun ömnöd khoroo*; the trade quarters *Züün damnuurchin* and *Baruun damnuurchin*; the Russian quarter called *Konsuliin denj*; and Maimaachen, the Chinese merchant quarter. All the quarters had their particular religious assemblies, and as some of them were complexes with several shrines we can conclude that more than 100 temples stood once in Bogdiin Khüree.

In Züün Khüree ('eastern monastic quarter'), which was the biggest district of the city the main assembly hall was situated in the centre together with the Bogd's fenced-off Yellow Palace, with four temples and several yurts in its courtyards. Three monastic schools (medical, tantric, astrological), and about 10 other temples, and the residences of the city's main abbot (*khamba nomon khan*) and main treasurer (*erdene shanzodwa*) situated nearby. This centre was surrounded by 30 lama districts (*aimag*) where the lama population lived. All the *aimags* had their own temple.

Gandan, or the western monastic quarter was the place of education and pure morals in the city. Apart from the main assembly hall and the relics temples of the 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, and 8<sup>th</sup> Bogds, Avalokiteçvara temple, three philosophical schools training thousands of lamas, some small temples were situated there surrounded by 22 lama districts. The huge *Jarankhashar* stupa stood behind the complex.

As for the palaces, the Bogds' five residences, namely the White Palace, the Green Palace with the winter palace, a garden, the *Khaistai lawran*, and *Pandelin* were constructed on the banks of the Tuul River. The temple complex of Choijin Lama, the state oracle was surrounded by some small assemblies, and the Temple of *Yonzon khamba lama* stood on its right side.

The Mongolian lay population (*kharchuud*) of the city and the lamas who could not keep the monastic regulations, thus were cheated from the monastic districts, lived in yurts in the lay population quarters (*khoroos*). These also had some small Yellow Sect and Red Sect temples, and assemblies of a couple of tantric practitioners (*zoch*, *lūijinch*) were also situated in these areas.

As for foreigners' belief the Manchu governor had a private shrine on the bank of East-Selbe River before 1911. In 1861 the Russian Consulate opened, and in 1873 a small Orthodox church was detached to it. The Chinese population in the city increased intensively over the centuries. In 1778 they were settled 7 kilometers from the city centre to their merchant town, the fenced-off Maimaachen. Inside its fence seven Chinese temples stood (Taoist, Buddhist, Muslim, the main temple in honour of Guan-yu, a temple in honour of Confucius, a temple in honour of the Lord of Death), whilst out of the fence there were a Chinese temple and six Mongolian temples, among them *Dashsamdandlin datsan* or 'the temple of the half-castes'. When the Chinese town was emptied out in the 1920's the temple of Guan-yu was moved to the Chinese trading area near Gandan.

In the suburbs two large monasteries (*Dambadarjaalin*, *Dashchoinkhorlin*), and a meditational retreat (*Shaddiawlin*) was located as well as 7-8 individual chapels where local shepherds worshipped the mountains and water spirits.

The chapter describes all the temples, together with their history, administration, function, religious life, deities worshipped, special ceremonies based on archives data and other sources. The Appendices include maps, lists, old photos, and other useful charts, such as a list of names of the 279 financial units, and a glossary containing 904 terms mentioned in the present study.

## Conclusion

The result of the thesis is an overview about what we call Bogdiin Khüree. Its most significant outcome lies in the fact that other than Rinchen's map, which is incomplete, the temples and monasteries of the Mongolian capital city prior to the purges have not even been fully listed or mapped. Until now, except for the very few historically important monasteries (*Gandan*, *Dambadarjaalin*), the majority of the temples covered here have not been described at all, or have only scattered references. Using all the available sources and interviewing old lamas it was possible to include data not only about the vivid religious life of the city, but even on some of the smaller assemblies that have no written sources.

Thus, if all the temples within the big monastic complexes are considered separately,

we can conclude that there were about 47 monastic sites with about 100 temples in the old capital before the monastery demolition, and the present piece of work deals with all of them one by one describing their origin, religious life, and other characteristics. The 47 sites are the following: 2 monastic complexes (i.e. 20 central and 30 *aimag* temples of Züün Khüree, 11 temples of Gandan), 7 palaces (5 palaces of the Bogd on the banks of the Tuul River, the temple complex of Choijin Lama, the palace of the *Yonzon khamba*), 3 suburban monasteries (*Dambadarjaalin*, *Dashchoinkhorlin*, *Shaddüwlin*), and 36 individual temples (1 in Gandan hill, 3 near Choijin Lama's temple complex, 8 in the layquarters, 1 next to the Russian Consulate, 14 in the Chinese town, 1 in the Chinese merchant district, 7 in the outskirts), among them 1 Manchu, 1 Ortodox, 9 Chinese (among them one Muslim, one in honour of Confucius, two in honour of Guan-yu, two in honour of the Lord of Death), and at least 6 Red Sect assemblies. It is obvious that the majority of the temples belonged to the Yellow Sect (each temple of Züün Khüree, Gandan, *Dambadarjaalin*, *Dashchoinkhorlin*, *Shaddüwlin*, etc.).

As another result of the present work, the contents of 159 local catalogues (Manchu Period: 51 catalogues, Bogd khaan's reign: 52, Modern Period: 56) of the National Central Archives are briefly summarized here at first, representing various text types and the features of the changing political and administrative system. The collection includes documents about 57 temples of the city (among them 39 temples of Züün Khüree, 7 of Gandan, 3 palaces of the Bogd (White Palace, Green Palace, *Pandelin*, Choijin Lama's temple complex, a *Zod* assembly in the layquarters, *Dashsamdanlin datsan* and two *aimag* temples in Maimaachen, and the three suburban monasteries. An additional 5 catalogues of administrative organizations (*Erdene Shanzodwiin Yaam*, etc.) exist as well as the catalogue of a Chinese store.

Beside the most attractive religious festivals (e.g. *Tsam*, Maitreya circumambulation) more than 400 ceremonies are mentioned here (by analyzing 15 data sheets kept in the archives) which were annually held until 1937 in the temples of the city. Being the only written sources about ceremonial practice these lists have primary importance when studying the unique features of Mongolian Buddhism.

Evaluating the effects of the purges and the monastery destruction it must be concluded that not much remained from the old city and faith. During a field study the exact and presumably site of the temples and their present-day condition were determined. We must state that no monastery complexes or individual temples survived completely intact. In case of the majority of the temples there are no surviving remains and, it is impossible to locate the

exact site where the temple had stood in the present entirely built in Ulaanbaatar (for example in the area of *Maimaachen*). What has remained from the old capital city is: 3 yurt-shaped temple buildings of Züün Khüree (the temples of *Wangain aimag* and *Erkhem toinii aimag* were revived in 1990 and house *Züün Khüree Dashchoilin khiid*, whilst the building of *Ekh Daginiin aimag* is still used as a Circus College); the main courtyard and Avalokiteśva temple of Gandan functioning as an active monastery; the Bogd's Green Palace together with the Winter Palace housing a museum; some buildings of *Khaistai lawran* used as domestic dwellings; the temple complex of Choijin lama functioning as a religious museum; *Geser* temple of the Chinese merchant district used by new assemblies unrelated to the original Chinese one; a part of the small Orthodox church used now as a warehouse of the nearby food shop; Tārā Temple of the Chinese town housing an assembly of Buddhist nuns; a couple of buildings of the walled-off and revived *Dambadarjaalin* monastery; the foundation of *Tsetsee giin* assembly in Bogd Khan Mountain, on which an *owoo* was erected for the good fortune of Mongolia.

All the remained artifacts are exhibited in museums or in Gandan, while the Buddhist texts which were not burnt are kept in the National State Library or in Gandan. The National Central Archives preserves the documents related to the administration of the old city.

Of the more than 10 000 lamas of Bogdiin Khüree only seven were found. Though it is obvious that the purges decimated the population considerably, and numerous lamas escaped to the countryside, or disrobed, and joined the army, the number of still alive old lamas of the city is extraordinarily low. In 1990 still more lived and helped the revival of a couple of temples and the basic Buddhist traditions. After the democratic change several new temples were established as well and Buddhism is said to be reflourishing again. However, comparing the present with the Golden Age of Buddhism it is a very disputable statement. Although the most important religious practices (everyday chanting, *Tsam*, Maitreya circumambulation, etc.) were revived, today the number devotees and lamas, and especially their morals, education and practice are extremely moderate.

The present thesis is dedicated to the memory of the lamas of Bogdiin Khüree. A part of the results is available for a wide audience ([www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)), while other parts will serve as a basis for planned articles (Description of the material preserved in the National Central Archives; Ceremonial practice in 1937 based on archives sources; Interviews with 75 lamas of the old monastic Mongolia, etc.)

As a wider scope to study and preserve oral history searching for and interviewing old informants have preliminary importance. Excavation of few sites is possible (e.g.

*Dashchoinkhorlin* monastery), and protection and renovation of the remained temples (e.g. *Dambadarjaalin* monastery, *Khaistai lawran*) are strongly recommended. Studying the enormous material kept in the National Central Archives is needed to get to know basic and particular events of the Manchu Period, the Bogd khaan's reign, and especially the political changes of the 1920-1930s. Rehabilitation of lama victims of the purges has already started, but as nobody considered these valuable sources (lists of lamas to pay tax, call-up papers, etc.), it could not have been completed yet. The collection of the Party Archives should be studied thoroughly, as well as the Archives of the State Intelligence Agency and that of the Military Affairs. Though foreigners are still not allowed to enter these places, their visit is inevitable when studying the purges.

Old masters and their novices have a significant role in the revival and preservation of the old Buddhist faith. The present work wants to contribute to it.

#### **Publications related to the Topic of the Thesis**

- Mongólia kolostorai az Arany Krónika jegyzéke alapján. [Monasteries of Mongolia based on the List of the Golden Annals]. In: Birtalan Ágnes (ed.), *Bolor-un Gerel. Kristályfény*. Tanulmányok Kara György professzor 70. születésnapjának tiszteletére, ELTE Belső-ázsiai Tanszék, Budapest 2005
- Majer Zsuzsa – Teleki Krisztina: A mai Ulánbátor kolostorai és szentélyei. [Present-day Temples and Monasteries in Ulaanbaatar], In: *Keréknyomok. Orientalisztikai és Buddhológiai Folyóirat*, Budapest 2006, pp. 147-158.
- Az egykori mongol kolostorfőváros szentélyei. [Old Temples and Monasteries in Ulaanbaatar], In: *Keréknyomok. Orientalisztikai és Buddhológiai Folyóirat*, Budapest 2008 winter, pp. 63-85.
- Zsuzsa Majer– Krisztina Teleki, Monasteries and Temples of Bogdiin khüree, Ikh khüree, or Ugra, the Old Capital City of Mongolia in the First Part of the Twentieth Century. 2007, [www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)
- Zsuzsa Majer – Krisztina Teleki, Survey of Active Buddhist Temples in Ulaanbaatar in 2005 – 2006 with some annotations in 2007, 2007, [www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)
- Zsuzsa Majer – Krisztina Teleki, All entries of old and present-day monastic sites of Öwörkhangai and Dundgow' aimags, and of the south part of Töv aimag (descriptions of 190 sites), 2007, [www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)



### **Forthcoming publications**

- Dambadarjaa kolostor [Dambadarjaa Monastery].Távol-keleti Tanulmányok
- Zsuzsa Majer – Krisztina Teleki, Report on the interviews recorded with old monks in 2006 and 2007 in Ulaanbaatar, 2007, Documentation of Mongolian Monasteries, [www.mongoliantemples.net](http://www.mongoliantemples.net)

### **Presentations related to the Topic of the Thesis**

- 2004 Summer Course for Young Mongolists, Ulaanbaatar  
*Mongol ulsiin dacanguud (Monastic Schools in Mongolia)*
- 2007 Kőrösi Csoma Sándor Association  
*A mongol főváros vallási élete régen és ma (Monastic Life in the Mongolian Capital City: Its Past and Present)*
- 2007 Young Mongolists' European Workshop, Songeons, France (with Zsuzsa Majer)  
Old Temples of the Current Ulaanbaatar Area, Survey of the Currently Working Temples of Ulaanbaatar  
*Workshop: Revival and Rivalry of Buddhism and Christianity in Present-day Mongolia*
- 2007 International Conference dedicated to the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Zava Lam Damdin, Ulaanbaatar  
*Altan dewteriin Mongoliin khüree, süm khiidüüdiin jagsaltiin tukhai (List of Monasteries in the Golden Annals composed by Zava Lam Damdin)*

### **Scholarships related to the survey (Ulaanbaatar)**

- 2004 Hungarian Scholarship Board (six month)
- 2005 Hungarian State Eötvös Scholarship (five month)