History

The 13th Dalai Lama, Thub-bstan rgya-mtsho (1876-1933) came to ikh Khüree, the Mongolian capital, in November 1904, when he was escaping from the British army led by Younghusband. Jambal (English text p. 35-46., Mongolian text p. 714-726.) accounts that when the Dalai Lama arrived, he was initially installed in a meditation tent and two yurts in Gandan in the place where the stupas of the 5th and 7th jewtsündamba khutagts were (5-r bogdiin shariliin süm, 7-r bogdiin shariliin süm, ‘the relics temples of the 5th and 7th bogd’ (These temples are currently called Ochidarin süm or Vajradhara temple, which is the Tsogchin temple of Gandan monastery, and Zuugin süm, the Buddha temple beside it.) In addition, 50-60 extra yurts were put up in the fenced-off area (khashaa) of the lama dwellings of Gandan for the Tibetans who accompanied him into exile. (According to Jambal these were all men as no women or children were among them). Jambal also claims that all the expenses incurred by the Dalai Lama and his retinue were covered by the four aimags and the ikh shaw’ (subordinated areas), the five divisions.

According to Dügersüren (p. 53.), a fenced-off building called Dalai lamiin san (‘Treasury of the Dalai Lama’), with its fenced-off area being called Dalai lamiin sangiin khashaa (‘The court of the Treasury of the Dalai Lama’) was built as a dwelling of the 13th Dalai Lama in 1905. According to Dashtseren lama, a Tibetan quarter (Töwdiin khoroo) sprang up around this building, which served as a refuge shelter (nömörögön) for the Tibetan inhabitants. As it was situated neither in in Gandan nor in Zün Khüree where commerce was not allowed, it became a commercial centre selling Chinese goods. In effect it was a free trade zone.

This Töwdiin khoroo was situated in Baruun ömnöd khoooro, the South-west district occupied by laymen, where there were numerous other small assemblies. The exact location of the Tibetan quarter was on the east bank of the Baruun Selbe River, next to the Buryat quarter (Buryatiin khoroo), where there weren’t any temples.

According to Pürew’s book (Mongolii uls törin töw, p. 46.) the treasury (Dalai lamiin san or Töwdiin san) for the temple was established with donations believers gave in honour of the Dalai Lama that was later managed by the Shanzaw töwdiin gazar (‘treasury of the Tibetans’), the financial office.

Geleta claims (Forbáth, p. 172.) that for Mongols the majority of the devotional objects and religious artifacts were ordered from Tibet. An envoy was appointed to manage and maintain this flourishing commercial connection between Tibet and Mongolia. Thus Choini Lussan Chinde lama (Forbáth’s transcription, Lussan should be Luwsan, Tib. chos-? blo-bzang ?, see his photo in Forbáth, p. 104.) represented the Dalai Lama in Ulaanbaatar in the 1920’s. He had very good diplomatic skills and commercial acumen and managed to obtain all the commissions for Tibetans rather than using Chinese sculptors and masters, who had a famous workshop in Dolonnuur.

The Tibetan assembly (Töwdiin khural), situated in the Tibetan quarter, was also called as Unzai lamiin khural. Reproduced for the Arts Council of Mongolia by kind permission of the authors of the report ‘Monasteries and Temples of Bogdiin Khüree, ikh Khüree or Urga, the Old Capital City of Mongolia in the First Part of the Twentieth Century.’ Survey conducted by Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki, Budapest, Hungary. Published in Ulaanbaatar 2006. © held by the authors.
Монголын Сүм Хийдийн Түүхэн Товчоо Төсөл

khural, most probably after its head, Unzai lam. It occupied a wooden building. Only Tibetan male lamas belonged to this Gelukpa (Yellow Sect) temple, about 30 in number. Daily chanting was held. According to Dashtseren lama, some of the lamas had wives.

No other data was found on this assembly.

Current situation

According to Rinchen’s map, the assembly temple must have been situated behind the present State Department Store, which was the north-eastern part of Baruun ömnöd khoroo. According to Idshinnorow (p. 34.) the Tibetan quarter was situated around the present School No. 24. on the west of State Department Store. There are no remains, the whole area is built up.