The brass portrait (gündaa, Tib. skiu-'dra) of Jaljari gegeen (Lkhokh or Lkhaikh Jaljari Galsan Tüvden jigid Gegeen, Lkhokh Jaljari gegeen, Tib. 7 rgyal-sras bskal-bzang thub-bstan 'jigs-bjed), who, according to Jambal (English text p. 29., Mongolian text p. 706.) was the main Kalachakra tantra lama (Düinkhoriin jübin/jübin lam, Tib. dus-'khor-gyi rgyal-pa bla-ma) of the 4th jetsündamba and the Dalai Lama (presumably the 8th, Jam-dpal rgya-mtos, 1758-1804) was kept in Dechngelaw temple.

The highest ranking lama in Dechngelaw temple was the dorj lawon (Tib. rdo-rye slob-dpon) with the first dorj lawon being the 4th jetsündamba khutagt himself. According to the article in the volume of the Northern Buddhist Conference on Ecology and Development (p. 302.) the first disciplinary master was Chonzow noyon while the first chanting master was Badan. The second dorj lawon was the Tibetan lkhaaramba (Tib. lhams-rpo, the highest philosophical degree that could only be gained in Lhasa, only once a year during the Lunar New Year) of Shiteenni aimag, while the third was the Vice Abbot of Düinkhoriin aimag who was followed, after his death in 1921, by Toig Zandan, the tsorj lam of (Dash) Dardanlin aimag. The disciplinary master was changed every year.

There was a tradition that the outgoing disciplinary master led him back to the palace.

Pozdneev claims (pp. 57-59.) that, thanks to the 4th jetsündamba khutagt’s devotion to the Mongolian teachings, they have been enshrined in 1807. From this time, many other rituals were held there apart from the Kalachakra ceremonies. In 1809 the temple’s mezzanine and roof were solidly gilt. The jetsündamba khutagt then set up his yurt in its courtyard which became his personal residence. Since that time, this place, the fenced-off courtyard of the Yellow Palace, became the permanent winter residence of the jetsündamba khutagts.

Pozdneev says that the jetsündamba khutagt had his quarters in two yurts, one was made from wood and covered with felt, and the other was a typical Mongolian felt yurt (‘one of which is wood and covered with felt, and the other of felt alone’).

According to Pozdneev (p. 58.), the Dechngelaw temple along with the yurts and other quarters of the jetsündamba khutagt, burned almost to the ground on the night of 15 January 1892 (the last winter month according to the Mongolian calendar). As he visited Mongolia in that year, he claims the rebuilding of the temple began in the same year using 50,000 lán of silver provided by the great treasury (lkhan san) and the subordinated areas (lkhan shis). To do this, Pozdneev describes how the temple was again of the same, although the mezzanine was constructed in two tiers. Russian window panes donated by Buryats were installed in place of the former Chinese paper-covered windows. The jetsündamba khutagt ordered new sculptures from the famous workshops of Beijing and Doloon nuur.

As Pozdneev describes (pp. 58-59.), and old pictures show, Dechngelaw datsan was the most imposing building in the whole city: ‘All the wooden parts of its mezzanine and roof have been regilded, and now they literally burn in the sun... The cupola of the datsan, as before, is hung round with little bells, the low and silvery tinkling of which may be heard almost uninterrupted’.

According to Pozdneev (p. 59.), Tibetan lamas chanted everyday in Dechngelaw temple. They came to lkh Khüree rdo rje to be attendants of the khutagt. They lived near the khutagt’s palace and were the court staff or bodyguards. Public services were occasionally held in this temple though only when the jetsündamba khutagt could not go out to the main assembly hall (Tsogchin). In addition, a morning service was sometimes held here on the day of the Maitreya procession (Maidar ergekh). Pozdneev also explains that, as Dechngelaw was the Urga khutagt’s palace, all the lamas of the capital of the country except for the khutagt when his remains were brought to the temple until the time that he was buried (p. 59.).

Jüdiger’s painting shows the temple in its state in 1913. According to Sereeer (p. 84.) the temple burnt down once again in 1914, and was rebuilt again in 1915 from 34,500 lán silver collected from the four Khalkha aimags, and the subordinates (lkhan shis). From 1926 some financial units (jiso) belonged to the datsan, like Düinkhoriin and Zogdambadzin jiso.

The special ceremonies of the Kalachakra tradition were held in this temple. Most important of them was the great initiation of Kalachakra (Düinkhoriin won), held in the last spring month. On the 15th of the last spring month traditionally a Düinkhoriin chogo (Tib. dus-'khor-gyi cho-po) ceremony was held in all Mongolian monasteries and temples.

In the Dechngelaw temple, traditionally the Kalachakra (Düinkhori) ceremony began on the 3rd of the last spring month. On the 2nd day a ritual dance called Sagar or bsngi bjug (Tib. sa-gar, ‘Earth-dance’) was held seeking the permission of spirits for using the land where the Dülten jinshok (Tib. rdul-tshon dkyil-khor, coloured sand mandalas) was to be prepared. From the jinshok and the 4th day of the Dülten jinshok the sand mandalas were reproduced for the Arts Council of Mongolia by kind permission of the authors of the report ‘Monasteries and Temples of Bogd Khan Khüree, lkh Khüree or Urga, the Old Capital City of Mongolia in the First Part of the Twentieth Century.’ Survey conducted by Zsuza Majer and Kristiina Teliiki, Budapest, Hungary. Published in Ulaanbaatar 2006. © held by the authors.
prepared and consecrated and, on their completion, the Great Düinkhor ceremony began on the 13th day with the ritual dance of Chogar or Tahlilin bûjig (Tib. mchod-gar, ‘offering-dance’) being held on the 15th. On the last day of the ceremony, a fire-offering called Düinkhorin jinsreg (Tib. dus-khor-gyi sbyin-bsreg, ‘Kalachakra fire-offering’) was organized. The final part of the ceremony was at the end when the dûltsen sand mandala was destroyed with the sand being taken in a ceremonial procession to the source of Tuul River in Gachuurt (on the north-east of Ulaanbaatar) where it was offered to the spirits of land and water.

According an article in the conference volume of the Northern Buddhist Conference on Ecology and Development (p. 302,), Dechingalaw temple was closed in 1937 just before the important celebration of the great day of the 4th jewtsündamba khutagt on 15th of the middle winter lunar month. According to Sereeter, this temple ceased to operate in 1938. The tradition continued with a three-day Düinkhor ceremony using the painted mandala Raibri jankhar (Tib. ras-bris dkyil-khor) being held in the spring of 1938 in Düinkhorin aimag but this was also stopped. After this the Düinkhor ritual was not held again anywhere in Mongolia until 1961, when it was re-instated in Gandan since when it has been held once a year in spring.

Current situation

The original Dechingalaw temple in Züün Khüree was totally destroyed. It was revived in the courtyard of Gandan monastery in 1992, with the new building being completed in 1994. The traditional ceremonies, especially the yearly Great Düinkhor festival, have been revived and are once again held in the new temple. See the Current Situation entry for Gandan (Rinchen 912) for full details about the revived practices in this temple.