

Bělka, Luboš

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## *The Restoration of Buryat Buddhism: Some Notes about Monasteries*<sup>1</sup>

Luboš Bělka

Buryatia is an East Siberian country which is bordered by Lake Baikal on the north and Russia-Mongolia on the south.

Buryatia is the most northern reach of Tibetan Buddhism. Some literary sources call the religion Lamaism or Northern Buddhism.

Tibetan Buddhism (in this case, the teaching of Gelugpa or the Yellow Hat Sect) appeared in Buryatia in the middle of the seventeenth century and was accepted by the Buryats in their own particular way, integrating shamanistic features into Buddhist rituals. In 1741, the daughter of Peter the Great, the Tsarina Elizaveta, declared a policy of tolerance towards Buddhism, and Buryatia was selected as the Buddhist centre in Russia. This was not the fate of other Buddhists, such as the Kalmyks in Povolzhie who were subjected to repression.<sup>2</sup> At that time, Western Buryats converted to Buddhism and those who did not were later forced to join the Christian-Orthodox khurch. Most

1 The project named, "The Restoration of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatia in 1993", was the ground for this paper. It could not have been possible without the kind and considerable help of friends, colleagues and foundations. The author's appreciation goes out to all people who support the areas of inquiry of this study, be it the philosophical or the geographical one, areas that may seem quite distant to some of us. (Names are in alphabetical order and without academical degrees): Oleg Anenkhonov; Lama Munko Arsalanov; Sergei Baldanov; Jan Beneš; Dan Berounský; Jiří Borecký; Zdeněk Brabec; Lama Gonchog Budaev; Věra Capponi; Tim Clark; Darima Ts. Tsyrenzhapova; Ojuna Dorzhigushaeva-Dondukova; Ivana Grollová; Monika Gryčová; Richard Burton Haas; Jan Heller; Ivan Horáček; Břetislav Horyna; Jan Hošek; Jiří Fopa Chýla; Viacheslav Kipluk; Marie a Jaroslav Šimako Luďvíkovi; Dušan Lužný; Jiří Mlíkovský; Tuyana Naidanova; Zdeněk Neubauer; Alice Němcová; Vladimír Novotný; Lama Lobsan Garchin Oshorov; Dalibor Papoušek; Stanislav Polášek; Natalia M. Rabdanova; Lama Agvan Rigzen; gelong Lama Danzan-Khaibzun Samaev; Jaroslava Sedláčková; Vladimír Sládek; Petr Stýblo; Lama Sultim; Jiří Svoboda; Slava Shegodoev; Pavel Štingl; Jana Švecová; Petr Švéda; Vladimír Švihla; Lama Zhamso Zhargal. Special thanks belong to the foundations which financially supported the project: Czechoslovak Foundation of Chart 77 - Prague; Czech Literature Foundation - Section for Scientific and Special Literature; Josef, Marie and Zdeňka Hlávka's Foundation; and Faculty of Arts of the Masaryk University. Other special thanks belong to Institution of Ecological Dreams and Realities - Society for the Limitation of the Deficit of Ecological Capacities, Prague. This institution thanks its sponsors Starorežná Prostějov a. s., Lihovar Kralupy a. s., Dalekohledy Matoušek, Pěfárna - Klečka, and University of Agriculture, Prague, for their financial support.

2 S. G. Batyreva, *Starokalmýtskoe iskusstvo*, Elista: Kalmyckoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo 1991, 128 p., see 23.

Eastern Buryats remained faithful to shamanism and were consequently disapproved of by lamas as well as by Russian orthodox clergymen. The government in power made painstaking efforts to destroy the relations that existed between Buryats and Kalmyks on one side and their brothers in faith from Tibet and Mongolia on the other (including cutting contacts with the Dalai Lama). During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Russian government created an institution at the head of which they nominated a high commissioner for the so called yellow faith, he was refereed to as the Buryat Bandido Khambolama.<sup>3</sup> This white soul teacher lived in the famous monastery in Tamcha near lake Gusinoe Ozero in Zabaikalie. Such white soul teachers were supervised by the commissioner for other religions whose seat was in Saint Petersburg. All denominations and religions, except the Eastern Orthodox Church and Western Christianity were placed under his administration.

In the first decade of the twentieth century, the aftermath of the 1905 revolution and the outcome of the Russian-Japanese War had determining consequences on religious life in Russia. The revolutionary trend grew in importance and led to a new tolerance policy (1905) which brought about an area of great freedom for the Buddhists in Russia; meanwhile, the values of non Orthodox Christians in Russia were put to shame. The leading figures among the Buryats and the Kalmyks took advantage of this situation and skilfully used the means at their disposal to bring their people together. The Buddhist religious representative Tsanit Khambo Agvan Dorzhiev played an important role in so doing. Indeed, Dorzhiev had a deep compassion for the Kalmyks, and the construction of the first "datsan" (Buddhist monastery) built in the Astrakhan area in the Small Desert in 1906 can be attributed to his efforts.<sup>4</sup> Agvan Dorzhiev is also a founder of Saint Petersburg's datsan named *Gunzeichoinei*, which was consecrated on August 10th, 1915.<sup>5</sup> This datsan is the only one to be located outside of an area where Buryats live.

A systematic liquidation of Buryat Buddhism was initiated in the 1930's. A great number of Buryat monasteries were destroyed and during the following years approximately ten thousand Buddhists were either murdered or deported. Buryats themselves refer to this period as the time of Red Barbarism. The elimination of Buddhism was so thorough that governmental forces managed to dismantle Buddhist shrines and altars located in most Buryats' homes.

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3 In some sources there is another name of the head of Buryat Buddhists - pandita n'Kampo, see W. A. Unkrig, "Aus den letzten Jahrzehnten des Lamaismus in Rußland", *Zeitschrift für Buddhismus*, Sonderdruck No. 20, München: Oskar Schloß Verlag 1926, 21 p., see 6.

4 W. A. Unkrig, o. c.

5 A. I. Andreev, *Buddiiskaya svatynya Petrograda*, Ulan-Ude: EkoArt 1992, 125 p., see 20.

The linguistic diversity and the various geographical locations of Buryats are specific traits of the Buryat sense of variety, which is also reflected in their religious diversity. Indeed, it would be erroneous to say that a majority of Buryats have embraced the Buddhist faith, since around Irkutsk the Buryat population is mainly Christian-Orthodox. As for the number of Buryats with no religious denomination (agnostics or atheists), it is quite difficult to advance any statistics since the data provided by recent sources are unreliable. The beginning of the development of Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatia can be traced to the region of Zabaikalie where most datsans were located. From there, the faith expanded to the Predbaikalie's Khongodor Buryats.

The restoration of Buryat Buddhism can be observed in the construction of new datsans and "dugans" (small shrines) or the renovation of former datsans and dugans. Considering the annihilation of Buryat Buddhism in the late 1930's, at which time there were approximately fifty monasteries, the fact that today twenty can be accounted for, there is clear proof of a dynamic revival of Buddhism in the country. From a comparison of the number of datsans and dugans with the number of monks in the past and today, it is possible to make the hypothesis that the religious need of Buryats is today so intensive that monks are more oriented to fulfil the need for new datsans than to restore the original number of monks in the datsans and dugans. There is another reason for the emphasis on datsan construction; there are simply not enough young "khuvaraks" (novice Buddhist monks) and lamas. For instance it is frequent today to find five lamas living in datsan which used to shelter five hundreds lamas and khuvaraks.<sup>6</sup>

The author led an expedition to Buryatia from May to August, 1993. The main purpose of the expedition was to determine and describe the current state of the restoration of the Buddhist religion, datsans, dugans and other important religious sites in the region. The three-month journey fulfilled original expectations and in many aspects even exceeded them. For instance, the original goal was to visit the three or four known datsans and dugans in the region. Ultimately, the expedition visited seven datsans, four dugans, and three important religious sites. The author was able to live in the datsans and dugans, and to participate in the "khurals" (Buddhist holiday ceremonies). The expedition visited datsans in Ivolginsk, Tamcha, Egita, Ana, Kizhinga, Zhemchug and Kyren, dugans in Soldatskoe near Ulan-Ude, dugan in Ulan-Ude itself, the preaching house of Foundation "Ahalar", the preaching house of "Ob'edinenie buddistov - miryan" (the Union of lay men Buddhists), two natural sites which are important from the Buddhist religious point of view (Chilsan hill near the city of Kizhinga and the pilgrimage site of Khukhn

6 S. V. Bashancheev - A. Molocev - D. Ts. Tsyrenzhapova, *Pamyatnik istorii i arkhitektury XIX veka Aninsky datsan, khorinskogo rayona. Proekt restavratsii, tom. II, kniga IV. Istoriko-arkhivnoe i bibliograficheskoe izyskaniya*, Ulan-Ude: Buryatproektrestavratsiya 1993, 212 p., manuscript.

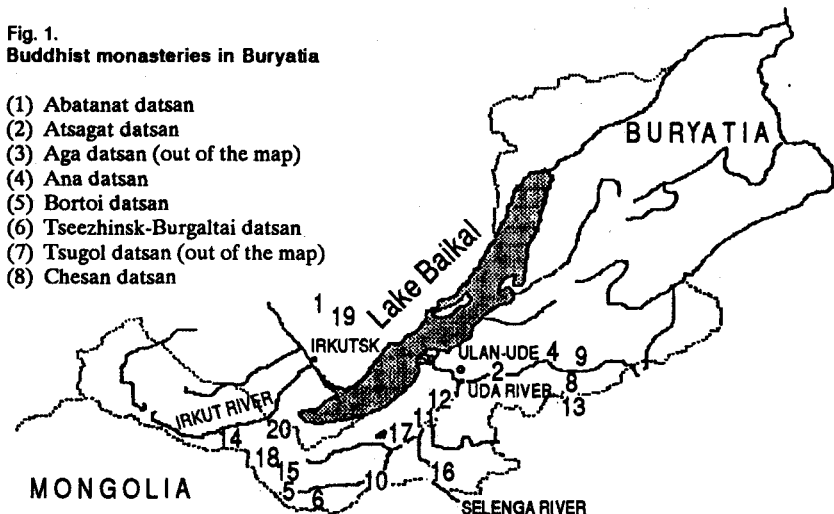


Khate in the Shumak river valley in the Sayana mountains in West Buryatia) and the building site of the "suburgan" (stupa) Dzharun Khashor Chodden Lkhakhan which is located in the Kizhinga datsan.

There is a lack of historical literature about the Buryat datsans<sup>7</sup> and contemporary literature is only now being developed for scholarly purposes.<sup>8</sup>

Fig. 1.  
Buddhist monasteries in Buryatia

- (1) Abatanat datsan
- (2) Atsagat datsan
- (3) Aga datsan (out of the map)
- (4) Ana datsan
- (5) Bortoi datsan
- (6) Tseezhinsk-Burgaltai datsan
- (7) Tsugol datsan (out of the map)
- (8) Chesan datsan



- |                                 |   |
|---------------------------------|---|
| (9) Egita datsan                | (15) Murocha datsan                     |
| (10) Gegeta datsan              | (16) Sanaga-Bulaga datsan               |
| (11) Gusinoozersk prison dughan | (17) Tamcha datsan                      |
| (12) Ivolginsk datsan           | (18) Tarbgaltai datsan (out of the map) |
| (13) Kizhinga datsan            | (19) Ust'-Ordynsk datsan                |
| (14) Kyren datsan               | (20) Zhemchug dughan                    |

7 See A. M. Pozdnev, *Kistorii razvitiia buddizma v Zabaikal'skom krae. Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniia imperatorskogo Russkogo arheologicheskogo obshchestva*, I. Sankt-Peterburg 1887; A. M. Pozdnev, *Ocherki byta buddiiskikh monasteri i buddiiskogo dukhovenstva v Mongolii v svyazi s otnosheniiem sego poslednego k narodu. Zapiski Vostochnogo otdeleniia imperatorskogo Russkogo arheologicheskogo obshchestva*, t. XVI. Sankt-Peterburg 1887; N. Kirilov, *Datsany v Zabaikal'e. Zapiski Priamurskogo otdela Rossiiskogo geograficheskogo obshchestva*, t. 1, vypusk IV. Khabarovsk 1896; A. D. Rudnev, *Zametki o tekhnike buddiiskoi ikonografii*, Sankt-Peterburg 1905; A. P. Barannikov, "Zabaikal'skie datsany", in: *Materialy po etnografii*, III, vypusk 1. Leningrad 1926.

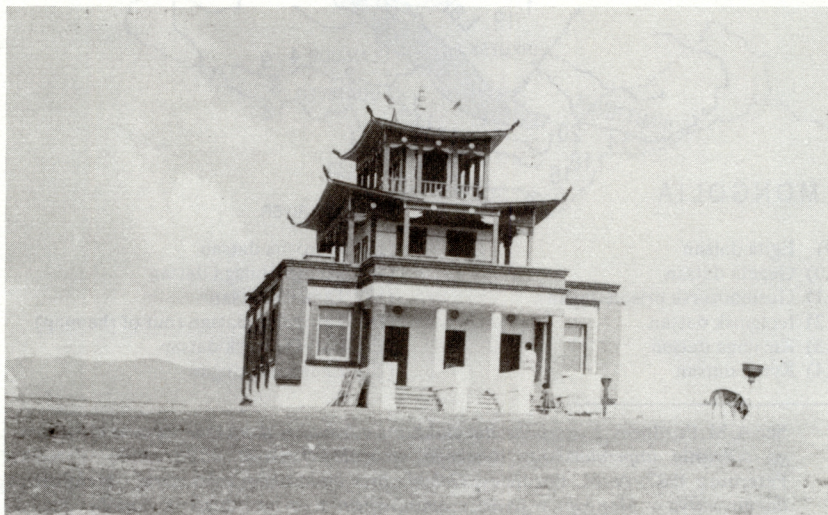
8 L. K. Minert, "Proiskhozhdenie arkhitektury buryatskogo buddiiskogo khrama", *Stroitel'stvo i arkhitektura* 1980 (8); L. K. Minert, *Pamyatniki buryatskoi arkhitektury*, Novosibirsk: Nauka 1988; G. P. Galdanova - K. M. Gerasimova - D. B. Dashiev - G. Ts. Mutupov, *Lamaizm v Buryatii XVIII - nachale XX veka. Struktura i sotsial'naya rol' kul'tovoi sistemy*. Novosibirsk: Nauka 1983, 236 p.; B. B. Baradiin, "Buddiiskie monastiri", *Orient. Al'manakh*, Vypusk 1, 1992, 61-120; N. L. Zhukovskaya, *Lamaizm i rannie formy religii*, Moskva: Nauka 1977, 200 p.; N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), *Buddizm. Slovar'*, Moskva: Respublika 1992, 287 p.

While obtaining information about the monasteries presently open in Buryatia, it was often necessary to rely on questionable sources such as personal communication with local residents, lamas and khuvaraks. Tsonsiderable help was obtained from the specialist of the arkhitektural atelier Buryat-proektrestavratsiya (sic). Though even here, a complete list of the existing dugans and datsans was not available. A similar situation existed in "Ob'edinenie buddistov - miryan" in Ulan-Ude and in the preaching house owned by the Foundation Ahalar in Soldatskoe near the city of Ulan-Ude.

It can be claimed that there are about twenty functioning datsans and dugans in Buryatia (fig. 1) from the information obtained in Ulan-Ude from Buddhist and Buddhological literary sources and on the basis of personal communication with lamas and khuvaraks as well as from personal experience.

fig. 2

Atsagat datsan



### A list of existing and functioning Buryat datsans and dugans

(1) **Abatanat datsan** is being built near Ust'-Ordynsk in the Irkutsk rayon; one dugan has been built and in the future three canonic buildings will be added as well as some auxiliary buildings. The motivating force behind the construction of the datsan is Ivan Aleksandrovich Manuev, a former communist, who spent twenty-five years as a Red Army officer. The place devoted to the datsan was consecrated by Kushok Bakula-Rimpoche<sup>9</sup>, Lama and President of the Asian Peace Tsongress. Kushok Bakula-Rimpoche holds

9 M. Yakovlev, "Stroitsya datsan", *Gulamta* 1993 (2).

the second highest position in the hierarchy of Tibetan Buddhism according to some opinions.<sup>10</sup>

(2) *Atsagat datsan* was founded between 1825 and 1831. Its Tibetan name is *Gandan Darjaling*. The "sakhyusan" (god-defender/patron) is the *Zhamsaran*. The current "shiretui" (abbot of the monastery) is Lama Tuvandorzh. The Manba medical school was located here. The shiretui has studied Tibetan medicine in Buryatia, Mongolia, Tibet and Nepal. H. H., the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso has personally visited and consecrated this datsan as well as some other datsans. The construction of the main building of the datsan began in Spring of 1991 one kilometre from the former datsan building (fig. 2). The monastery was ceremonially opened on the 10th of October, 1992. The permanent staff now consists of four khuvaraks and three lamas. Only the brick building of the "sokchen datsan" (the main building of the datsan complex) has been completed. Other smaller buildings are planned in the near future. The sokchen datsan is very similar to the original one especially the entrance to the shrine. A sculpture of Tsanit Khambo Agvan Dorzhiev seated in the lotus position (about 1.5 metres high) is located in the central part of the sokchen datsan altar. Three stones from the original datsan building lie in front of the sokchen datsan. The Museum of Agvan Dorzhiev will be opened near the monastery.<sup>11</sup>

(3) *Aga datsan* was founded between 1811 and 1816. Its Tibetan name is *Dashi Lkhundubling*. The sakhyusan is the *Dzhamasaran*. The monastery consists of the sokchen datsan and seven smaller "sume" (preaching rooms and small shrines). The latter are dedicated to Buddhist pantheon gods and are respectively named after them: Ayuchi, Demchok, Otochi, Gunrik, Abidy, Maidari (Maiteria) and Ar'yabala (Avalokiteshvara). The Aga datsan is famous because it celebrated the Maaniin holiday (also known as Ar'yabalyin Buteed). Maaniin khural is a special holiday only attaining significance when observed for one hundred years without interruption. There were about sixty lamas and khuvaraks - physicians - in the monastery. Among other important facts belongs the opening of the philosophical school Tsanit (Tsanit Choira), in 1861. This monastery is probably known before all because of its important xylography workshop which was founded in 1816.<sup>12</sup> The publishing house has at its disposal 47,525 wooden flat matrixes which contain Tibetan and Mongolian texts, illustrations and cultic pictures. Works of philosophy, medicine, astrology, logic and theology, and also some popular publications, dictionaries, and didactic literature were published here. The monastery was closed down in the middle of the 1930's. The buildings were destroyed or moved (namely the wooden ones) to new places. From the late 1930's to the 1940's monastery complex served for non-religious

10 Ch. Gomboin, "Rad snova pobyvat' v Buryatii", *Svyashchenny Baikal* 1, 1993 (0), 15.

11 Personal communication of Lama Zhamso Zhargal from the Atsagat datsan.

12 J. Kolmaš, "Po stopách G. C. Cybikova v Zabajkalsku," *Nový Orient* 44, 1989 (2), 53-55.

purposes. For instance, there was a tuberculosis sanatorium situated in the former sokchen datsan. All rare and expensive items and artifacts such as Burkhas (sculptures of Buddhas, Bodhisattvas and other figures of the pantheon), tankas (scroll wall pictures on canvas) and ceremonial objects, were moved to Moscow and Leningrad. The datsan was re-opened in 1946, and consists of one building staffed by about twenty lamas and khuvaraks.<sup>13</sup> Among them is also one lama, a physician from Tibet who closely co-operates with other colleagues from the Atsagat datsan. The Aga datsan is located in the Aga Buryat Autonomous Area in the Chita rayon of the Russian Federation which is not a part of today's Buryat Republic. The datsan was consecrated in 1816. H. H., the Fourteenth Dalai Lama, Tenzin Gyatso visited the datsan in the Summer of 1991. At that time, the shiretui was Lama Zolto Zhigmitov.<sup>14</sup>

(4) **Ana datsan** was founded between 1775 and 1795. The monastery is located on the right bank of the small Ana river (after which it has been named). At the beginning of our century, the Ana datsan consisted of a stone sokchen datsan, twelve dugans as well as other buildings. The datsan was well-known for its two philosophical schools Tsanit and Dzhud as well as its Manba medical school. There was also one sume dedicated to Maidar and Duinkhor, a special sume Munke Maaniin devoted to a one-hundred year long khural, a print workshop and suburgans around the datsan. Three of the suburgans were rebuilt by residents of the village of Ul'durga (the Erana rayon) in 1986. These suburgans are north of the sokchen datsan and are devoted to Da-Rimpoche, Chaidap-Rimpoche a Zhalsab-Rimpoche. A suburgan located northeast of the sokchen datsan, was built in 1811 on the site of the first wooden building of the first sokchen datsan. The suburgan Zugdul mamzhilma was erected east of the current stone sokchen datsan in 1904. Today, only a few fragments of the foundation of the suburgan in the Ana datsan remain. Its special feature was a four-column design with arches that allowed a horse and rider to pass through the suburgan. The suburgan was built during the Russian-Japanese War and thus some weapons were ceremonially placed in its foundation. The residents of the Buryat village Ul'durga have restored another suburgans near the end of the 1980's. Documentation about the origin of the suburgans has still not been discovered.<sup>15</sup>

(5) **Bortoi datsan**,<sup>16</sup>

(6) **Tseezhinsk-Burgaltai datsan** was founded in 1830, and was reconstructed in the Summer of 1991.<sup>17</sup>

13 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c., 29-30.

14 K. Boldokhonov - Kh. Ral'din, "V aginskoi stepi", *Buddizm* 1, 1992 (1), 12.

15 Information about the Ana datsan are based on the S. V. Bashanchev - A. Moloev - D. Ts. Tsyrenzhapova, o. c., 1-212.

16 B. Sh. Dorzhiev, *Zakamna. Istoricheskii ocherk*, Ulan-Ude: V-SGIK 1993, 116 p.

(7) **Tsugol datsan** was founded in 1826. Its Tibetan name is *Dashi Choinpolling*. The sakhyusan is the *Choizhal*. The Tsanit philosophical school (Tsanit Choinra) was opened in 1850. The lamas of the Tsugol datsan were the founders of the Tsanit philosophical tradition which came among Khorinsk and Selenga Buryat people. The Tibetan medical school Manba has been there since 1869. The head of the school was the Mongolian monk Lama Choi-Manramba. The Buryat lama, Guru-Dharma Biliktuev, was the head of the school in 1899. The fourth khubilgan (a voluntary reincarnation, tulku in Tibetan) Gandzhira Gegen has occasionally taken refuge in this datsan. The datsan's publishing house has been of considerable historical importance. The Tsugol datsan was re-opened in 1990.<sup>18</sup>

(8) **Chesan datsan** was founded in 1828 and re-opened in 1991.<sup>19</sup>

(9) **Egita datsan**, sometimes called Egituevsky datsan was founded between 1824 and 1826. This was also the premises for the Manba medical school. The datsan was re-opened during 1991.<sup>20</sup> The monastery is located in a picturesque location on a steppe about five kilometres from the small village of Egita in Khorinsk. The monastery lies in a gentle sloping valley; around it are small hills with the suburgans. Six suburgans remain today. Two of them are located on hills about three kilometres from the datsan, three of them are near the datsan and the last one is in the southwest corner of the datsan complex. The suburgans have the following names: Sorzhyn Lamkhain, Zodbyn Lamkhain, Khularagai Lamchain and Zrdenyn. The names of the last two suburgans remain unidentified. The famous wooden Burkhan, called Zandan Zhuu, is once again deposited here. It was moved from the former sokchen datsan into the new two-store sokchen datsan on the occasion of the big Buryat Buddhist holiday: the Maidarin khural, on the 22nd of July, 1993. Baksha Lama, a ninety- two year old Buryat is the oldest lama in the area, he lives in the datsan.

(10) **Gegeta datsan** was founded in 1769.<sup>21</sup>

(11) **Gusinoozersk prison dugan**.<sup>22</sup>

(12) **Ivolginsk datsan** is the best known and certainly the most important Buryat monastery (it is now the Bandido Khambolama's residence). It was founded in 1946. Its Tibetan name is *Gandan Dashi Choinchorling*. The

17 B. Sh. Dorzhiev, o. c., 61.

18 See S. Garmazhapov, "Tsugol - dal'nyi ugol", *Buddizm* 1, 1992 (1), 24; D. Ts. Tsyrenzhapova - V. Lysakov, *Pamyatnik istorii i arkhitektury XIX veka Tsugol'sky datsan, s. Tsugol, Chitinskoi oblasti. Proekt restavratsii. Tom II., kniga IV. Istoriko- arkhivnoe i bibliograficheskoe issledovaniya*, Ulan-Ude: Buryatproektrestavratsiya 1992, 450 p., manuscript; I. G. Vasil'eva, "K istorii Tsugol'skogo datsana na Onone", *Orient. Al'manakh* 1992, 1, 121-135; N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.

19 Personal communication of Lama Agvan Rigzen from the Ivolginsk datsan.

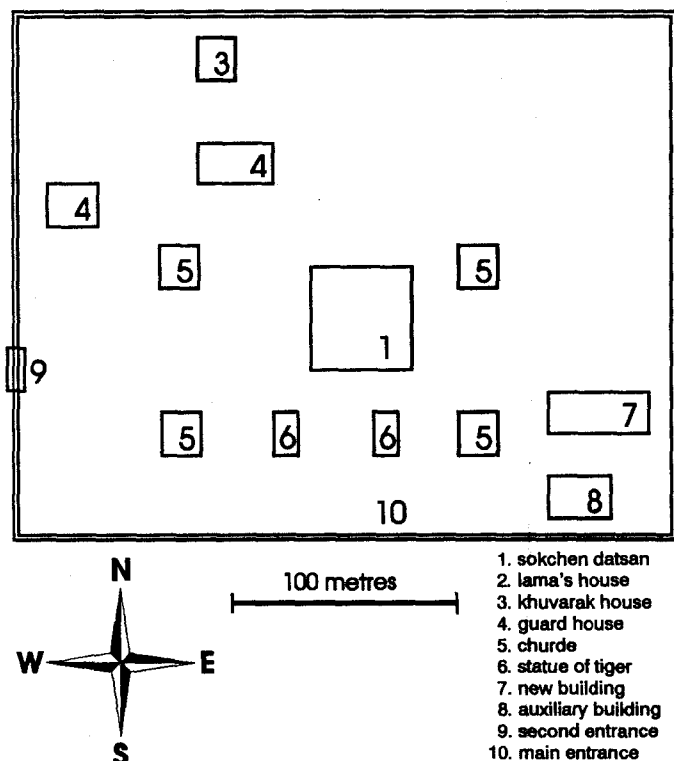
20 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.

21 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.

22 The dugan was seen, but for easily understood reasons was never visited.

sakhyusan is the Lkhamo. The sokchen datsan was built and consecrated in 1972.<sup>23</sup> Tibetan manuscripts and a xylograph library are located here. These are the only buildings to be closed to the public. The head-quarters of the "Tsentrāl'noe dukhovnoe upravlenie buddistov Rossiiskoi Federatsii" (Central Spiritual Administration of Buddhists in Russian Federation) is also situated in the datsan complex. The current shiretui is Lama Dashinima Garmazhapov.<sup>24</sup> The number of lamas varies. During the Summer of 1993, there were thirty-four Buryat and Russian monks plus three teacher-lamas

fig. 3  
Kyren datsan



from Tibet<sup>25</sup> another source claims that in fact seven Tibetan monks resided there.<sup>26</sup> A Buddhist Academy (high school level) is located about seven kilometres from the Ivolginsk datsan in the village of Tapkhar. This school offers a three-year program for the precise preparation of khuvaraks. It is the only one in Buryatia (in fact, in all of Russia). The academy is now placed

23 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.

24 M. Yakovlev, o. c., 3.

25 Personal communication of Lama Zhamso Zhargal from the Atsagat datsan.

26 Personal communication of Lama Munko Arsalanov from the Ivolginsk datsan.





fig. 4  
Tamcha datsan (sokchen datsan)

in buildings what use to be military barracks. Khuvaraks study mostly recitation of mantras, the Tibetan language (spoken and written), philosophy, and Buddhist theology as well as other disciplines. About eighty students (roughly seventy Buryats and ten Russians) have studied here. The semester

fig. 5  
Tamcha datsan (choira sume)



begins on 1st of August and the examinations are very demanding, according to many students who had to leave the school. School life is very strict. It is similar to monastic life and this rigor, together with the examinations, has

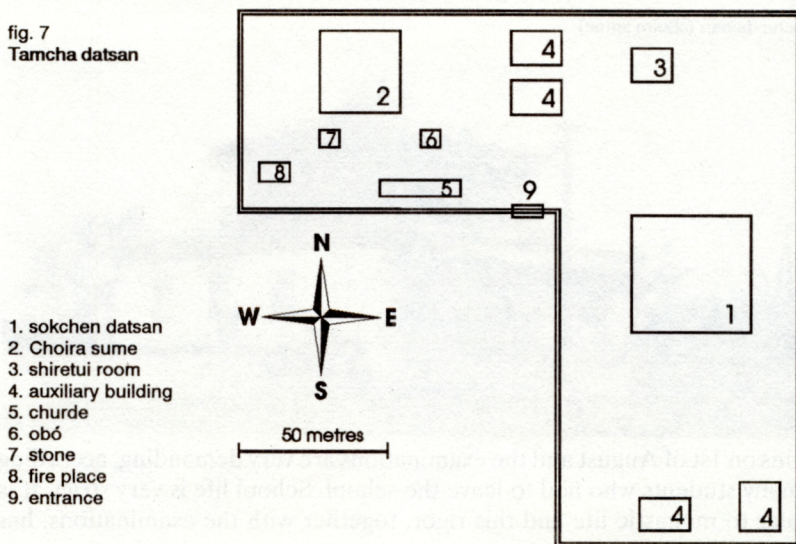




fig. 6  
Tamcha datsan (choira sume)

reduced the number of students. Food, accommodation and education are free of kharge. The khuvaraks wear civilian clothes, have shaved heads and make an oath of obedience when they begin the course of study. They can marry. Teaching staff includes also four lamas from Tibet.

fig. 7  
Tamcha datsan





(13) **Kizhinga datsan**, the current shiretui is Lama Ts. A. Dashitsyrenov. This datsan is well-known for its suburgan (stupa) Dzharun Khashor Chodden Lkhakhan.

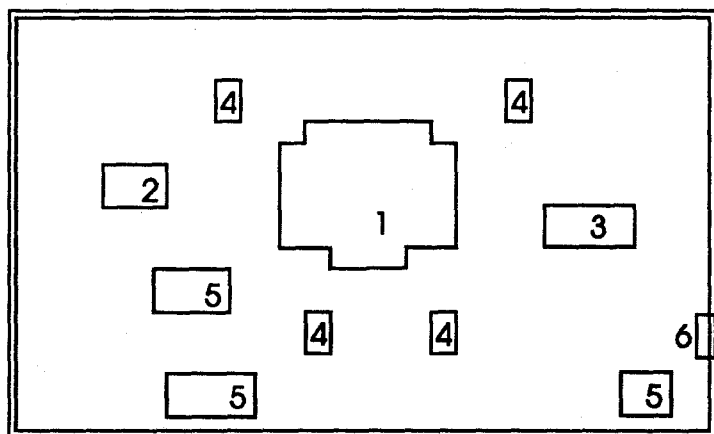
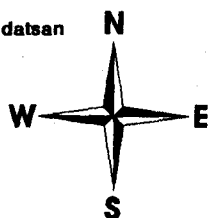


fig. 8

Zhemchug datsan



50 metres

1. sokchen datsan
2. west jurta
3. east jurta
4. churde
5. auxiliary building
6. entrance

A large stupa built between 1915 and 1919 stood here until 1937. It was the only one its kind in Buryatia, Mongolia and Tibet. There are plans to build a new stupa on their site. It will have a foundation of 44x44 meters and a height of 33 meters and will be a replica of the Nepali stupa Vodkhnatk which stands near Katmandu. According to the legend, the Vodkhnatk stupa was built in the third century B. Ts. during the Buddha Kashyapa kalpa. Nepali Lama Dugpakh Rinpoche consecrated the building site during a visit on September of 26th, 1990. He also gave a bumba reliquary to the representatives of the Kizhinga Buddhist society (the society was officially registered in May, 1990). The cornerstone for the foundation of the new suburgan was laid on May 23rd, 1991.<sup>27</sup>

(14) **Kyren datsan** was founded in 1817. The Manba medical school was located here. The monastery (fig. 3) was re-opened in 1991.<sup>28</sup>

27 P. Baldandorzhiin - D. Baiartuev, "O sroitel'stve stupy Dzharunkhashor v Kizhinge", *Garuda* 1, 1992 (2), 46-47.

28 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.

(15) **Murocha datsan.** The successor of the Tsugol datsan in Kiakhta aimak, Murocha was opened in 1991.<sup>29</sup>

(16) **Sanaga-Bulaga datsan** was founded between 1828 and 1831 and re-opened in August, 1991.<sup>30</sup>

(17) **Tamcha datsan**, named after place Tamcha, near the city of Gusinoe Ozero. Better known as Gusinoe Ozero datsan, it was founded in 1741, (fig. 4-7) and re-opened in 1990.<sup>31</sup>

(18) **Tarbgaltai datsan** was founded in 1825.<sup>32</sup>

(19) **Ust'-Ordynsk datsan** was re-opened in 1991. It is not clear whether it is the same datsan as the Abatanai datsan or is a new datsan.

(20) **Zhemchug datsan** (fig. 8) has a filial relationship with the Saint Petersburg datsan *Gunzeichoini*. The current shiretui is Lama Lobsan Garchin Oshorov.

This list is most probably incomplete, but certainly it includes the majority of datsans and dugans now functioning in Buryatia. Precise information about the datsans and dugans is not easy to obtain. Consequently, this list contains only the relatively well-documented monasteries. It is possible that other datsans are located in northwest Buryatia in the Oka rayon and in southern Buryatia near the Mongolian boarder. Because of the long distance, lack of time and bad travelling conditions, it was not possible to visit the northwest remote area and investigate the situation *in situ*. It was not possible to visit the South because of a large flood on the Selenga river in the Summer.

The following is a listing of dugans and datsans which either no longer exist, or their present existence cannot be verified.<sup>33</sup>

(21) **Tsongol datsan.** According to one source it was founded in 1741 - the same year in which Buddhism was officially recognised and tolerated in Russia. Another source dates the datsan from 1730. In any case, it is probably the first Buddhist monastery to exist in Buryatia. The complex was located near Khilgantui close to the Chilkoi river in Kiakhta aimak. Thus it is sometimes called the Khilganui datsan. The wooden sokchen datsan representing the core of the datsan complex was completed in 1758. The Tsongol

29 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.

30 B. Sh. Dorzhiev, o. c., 52.

31 N. L. Zhukovskaya et al., o. c.; N. L. Zhukovskaya, "Buddizm v Buryatii, nachalo, istoriya, den' segodnyaishii", *Svyashchenny Baikal* 1, 1993 (0), 12-14.

32 Personal communication of Lama Agvan Rigzen from the Ivolginsk datsan.

33 The list is mostly based on the following sources: G. P. Galdanova - K. M. Gerasimova - D. B. Dashiev - G. Ts. Mutupov, o. c.; N. L. Zhukovskaya et al. (ed.), o. c.; A. I. Andreev, "Iz istorii petersburgskogo buddiiskogo khrama", *Orient. Al'manakh*. 1992, Vypusk 1, pp. 6-37; B. B. Baradiin, o. c., 61-120; K. M. Gerasimova, *Lamaizm i natsional'no-kolonial'naya politika tsarizma v Zabaikal'e v XIX i nachale XX vekov*, Ulan-Ude: Nauka 1957, 129 p.; K. M. Gerasimova, *Obnovlencheskoe dvizhenie buryatskogo lamaistiskogo dukhovstva (1917-1930 gg.)*, Ulan-Ude: Buryatskoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo 1964, 180 p.; A. Zeman, *V kraji šamanů a lamů. Obraz života mongolských Burytů*, Praha: Památník odboje 1926, 167 p.; N. L. Zhukovskaya, o. c.

datsan was the first seat of the Buryat Bandido Khambolama. In 1809 the seat was moved to the Tamcha datsan near Gusinoe Ozero. Finally, in 1946 the residence of the Bandido Khambolama was relocated to the Ivolginsk datsan where it still remains. The Tsongol datsan included nearly twenty shrines at the beginning of the twentieth century and was closed in the late 1930's like every other Buryat datsans and eventually demolished. The Murocha datsan is regarded as its successor.

(22) **Sartul datsan**, according to some sources was founded in 1707, and may also have been the first Buddhist monastery in Buryatia.

(23) **Atsai datsan** was founded in 1743.

(24) **Dzhida datsan** was founded in 1749. The Manba medical school was located here.

(25) **Bultimur datsan** was founded in 1757.

(26) **Arakiret datsan** was founded in 1769.

(27) **Ichetuev datsan** was founded in 1773.

(28) **Zagustai datsan** was founded in 1769.

(29) **Iroisk datsan** was founded in 1810.

(30) **Kudarinsk datsan** was founded in 1831.

(31) **Yangazhinsk datsan** was founded in 1830. The Manba medical school was located here.

(32) **Kudunsk datsan** was founded between 1756 and 1758.

(33) **Tugnugaltai datsan** was founded in 1758. The Manba medical school was located here.

(34) **Khokhyurtaievsk datsan** was founded between 1828 and 1829.

(35) **Tsulginsk datsan** was founded between 1830 and 1831.

(36) **Zugalaevsk datsan** was founded in 1826.

(37) **Semiozern datsan** was founded in 1908.

(38) **Kondinsk datsan** was founded between 1909 and 1910.

(39) **Alkhanai dugan**.

(40) **Guninsk datsan** was founded in 1802.

(41) **Tokcha datsan** was founded in 1802.

(42) **Khuzhirtaevsk datsan** was founded in 1826.

(43) **Byrtsuev datsan** was founded in 1828.

(44) **Ul'khunsk datsan** was founded in 1832.

(45) **Barguzin datsan** was founded in 1818.

(46) **Koimor datsan** was founded in the 20th century.

(47) **Alar datsan** was founded in 1814.

(48) **Okinsk-Zhilgin datsan** was founded in nineteenth century.

(49) **Aliat dugan**.

(50) **Unginsk dugan**.

(51) **Bil'chirsk dugan**.

(52) **Kyrmen dugan** was founded in 1912.

(53) **Ol'khon dughan**. This is the only one Buryat datsan located in the Baikal island.

(54) **Kharatsinsk dughan** was founded in 1918.

(55) **Murinsk dughan** was founded in 1919.

(56) **Saint Petersburg datsan**, its Tibetan name is *Gunzejčojnej*. It was consecrated on 10th of August, 1915.<sup>34</sup>

Northern Buddhism is the predominant religion in Tibet, Mongolia and Buryatia. Of these regions, Buryatia is generally considered of second importance. There are a number of reasons for this approach. Firstly, Yellow Hat Buddhism came to Buryatia only about three hundreds years ago, relatively recently compared to the religion's appearance in Tibet and Mongolia. Secondly, in no other Yellow Hat Buddhist region did the repression of the religion hit so early and so severally. Efforts to eradicate Northern Buddhist religious practices in Buryatia begun in the end of 1920's. Within two decades all monasteries were closed down or totally destroyed. Thirdly, the isolation of the region was undoubtedly one of the reason for Buryatia to be overlooked. For nearly seventy years Buryatia was closed to foreigners.<sup>35</sup> Information gathered by Russian and Soviet research expeditions (for instance: A. M. Pozdneev, N. V. Kirilov, B. B. Baradiin, A. P. Barannikov, R. S. Merdygeev, N. N. Dambinov, K. M. Gerasimova) although their findings were notable, they remained virtually unknown outside of Russia.

This is another reason why focusing on Buryatia is significant, especially today when the comparative study of renovation of religions shows that Buryatia has a head start on other countries where Northern Buddhism is practised. This may be substantiated by the number and frequency of the H. H. the Fourteenth Dalai Lama's visits to Buryatia as well as by the growing number of datsans and dughans, khuvaraks and young lamas. The actual publication boom in the sphere of Buddhist literature and studies devoted to Buddhism in Russia is another proof of the fact that since the past three years it appears that Tibetan Buddhism in Buryatia is being resurrected.

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34 A. I. Andreev, *Buddiiskaya svyatynya Petrograda*, Ulan-Ude: EkoArt 1992, 125 p.; A. I. Andreev, "Iz istorii peterburgskogo buddiiskogo khrama", *Orient. Al'manakh*. 1992, Vypusk 1, pp. 6-37.

35 For instance famous French Tibetologist Alexandra David-Néel wanted to visit *"learned Buryat Buddhists from the Baikal"* in 1930's. Even the personal intervention of the French President Doumergue, as well as her personal contact with Lunacharsky were not sufficient for her to obtain Soviet visas. For more details see A. Bláhová, "Cestovní deník Alexandry David-Néelové", *Revolver Revue* 1992 (20), 245-259.