On the west of the site a monument was built in 1997 on the 130th anniversary of Zava Damdin’s birth. On its west two newly built stupas stand, one of them was erected in 2004. It has the following inscription in Tibetan:


(The inscription on the stupa is written in Mongolian as well.)

Attachments:
Main data from the interviews made with B. Süren gavj, monk of Gandantegchenlin monastery, and Lovon monk of Gandandarjaalin monastery, Ulaanbaatar
March 2006, 2007. 05. 18.

According to the informant, who was born in 1911, and belonged to this monastery from the age of 18 to 27 (1929-1938), there were 5 aimags (5 residential sections for monks) here:
Darjaalin, Choinkhorlin, Choimbellin, Dashchoijillin, and Janchüvlin (the last also known as Janchüvdechinlin from other sources). (On an old picture there are only 4 aimags marked, but it may refer to an earlier period). He mentioned the following temples and monastic schools: Tsogchin, Baruun datsan = Gungaa, Dashchoimbel datsasn, Jüd datsan, Mamba datsan or Manal, Dünkhor datsan, Lamrim datsan, and Maidar temple, and Manzshir or Jamyaan temple.

The monastery specialized in philosophic studies. Süren monk himself belonged to Gungaa datsan.

Different exams were taken regularly in the monastery, such as Dom, Gavj, Agramba (Tantric), Maaramba (medical), Zeerembe, and Düirembe (the last two in Dünkhor datsan, Kalachakra monastic school). According to him, there were 5 stupas in one place.

In the monastery Tsam dance was not held, neither was the Ganjuur circumambulation (Ganjuur ergekh).

However, the Maitreya circumambulation was held (Maidar ergekh) yearly, in the last spring month. In the monastery they used to hold the ceremony called Sünchindena chogo.

The main deities of the monastery were Lkham, Gombo, Choijoo, and Ochirvaani.

About 300-400 monks belonged to the monastery.

The temple buildings were made of wood, except for the Tsogchin temple and Gungaa datsan, which were made of mud and bricks. The aimag temples were also made of wood.

There was a printing house in the monastery, where many books were printed, such as Ondogjan, Umanjug, Doodüd, and the 18 volumes of the works of Zava Damdin himself.

The two philosophical schools (Choir) were named Gungaa and Dashchoimbel datsan.

Tibetan master did not reside in the monastery.

Chinese merchants lived about 15 kms from the monastery.

There were some Zoch masters in or nearby the monastery and the informant named Tokhoi zoch or Dendev, and Choijid zoch as the most famous ones.

He himself took the Dom exam in the monastery, but could not take the Gavj exam because of the purges.

He finally took this exam after the democratic change, in 1991 in Gandan, together with the present abbot, Choijamts.

According to him, a famous teacher of the monastery was Dorj Minjürur lovon, who was arrested in the purges.

The monastery was closed in 1937.

Data from the interviews made with S. Dagya, gergen monk of Mamba datsan, Ulaanbaatar.

Written by Krisztina Teleki and Zsuzsa Majer
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Additional Material collected by Survey Team

March 2006., May 2007

This informant, who belonged to this monastery from the age of 12, followed his brother there from Mökhiin khiid. His brother was the 3rd incarnation of the Shireet lam huulgaan. The informant said there were 3 aimags (Note: seems incorrect) and about 150 monks. There were about 20 temple buildings, and he could name the following: Tsochgin, Choir, Zurkhai, Mamba, Jüd, Gürem.

According to him there were 3 aimags: on the south-west, on the north, and on the east. There were many stupas, and there was also a printing house (Barkhan).

According to him, the temple buildings were made of stone, and were one-storey buildings. The monastery was situated on the north-west of Baga gazriin chuluu.

1 page photocopy
2 pages „drawing’s"
3 pages Mongolian

Interview A51  Data from the interview made with Luvsandarjaa monk, head of the monastery and incarnation of Zava lam Damdin monk.

According to this informant, the origin of the monastery goes back to the time of the 4th Bogd, who said that a monastery should be founded on the Delger Mountain. Later, in 1918 it was founded by the local noble, Möökhiin Ochir Noyon for the use of Zava Lam Damdin. Zava Damdin was a very famous monk, who studied in Güngaachoilin Datsan in Gandan in Bogdiin Khüree, and compiled 16 volumes works on different subjects such as philosophy, history, and many other religious topics. His most famous work is a religious history called Horchojinjun (TIB: hor cho-s-byung).

The protector deity Setev Gürtemme Chojio used to be invited to make prophecies in the monastery.

The original Tibetan name of the monastery was Gandanchoidarlin or Gandanchoijilin (?) and later the 8th Bogd gave the name Choinodserlin (chos-dbyings 'od-gser gling) to it.

It was a privileged monastery, as it belonged to the highest category of monasteries, under the authority of the emperor (at the time it was the 8th Bogd), and had the right to have 1000 monks as well as having other privileges. According to the informant, archival data proves that it had 600 monks, but he says that he got to know from its old monks that it, in fact, had 800 monks.

In its philosophic monastic school (Choir) the philosophic manual of Vanchin Sonomdagva was followed, and also the manual Günchin Jamiyaanshadav and in the end also the Sera manual (Igchaa).

(Other sources and also some old monks say that there were two philosophical monastic schools in the first half of the 20th century, of Vanchin and Günchin manuals.)

The monastery was situated at Delgertsogt or Delger Mountain. When Zava Damdin passed away in Bogdiin Khüree in 1937 on the 25th of the first summer month, his relics (Sharil) were brought here and placed here.

The main deities in the monastery were Setev, Dorjshügden and Lkham.

One of the teachers of Zava Damdin, Minjüürdorj also worshipped Shügden deity and composed 2 volumes on his worship, entitled Dorjshügden Bebüm.

The yurt of Zava Damdin is on display in the Dundgovi aimag museum, and a smaller yellow coloured his yurt that he used when he was travelling on pilgrimage is kept in the yurt temple of the revived monastery.

The temple had a printing house (Barkhan) where his works and other books were printed.

On the north of the site there were 8 stupas.

The informant did not provide data on the temples and monastic schools, as he said everything is in books and can be seen in the old picture which is in the calendar they published this year (2007)

Luvsandarjaa monk explained that as Zava Damdin was away in Bogdiin Khüree and was also ill, at some time in 1937 a monk called Jaal Sharav became the abbot here. He survived the purges and lived near the monastery site till his death in the 1960’s.

Old monks of this monastery managed to save and hide old objects of worship and old pictures and books (see attachment #004).

They also held ceremonies in secret during the communist era.

Many of the old monks who survived participated in the revival of the monastery, in the early 1990’s. See
Additional Material collected by Survey Team

- #007
Description of the site of Delgeriin Choir monastery (current situation)

The monastery was revived in 1990 on the site of the old monastery. The ruins are still visible. Most of what remained is the buildings of the monks residential dwellings' small buildings (about 2 x 3 meters, 2 x 4 meters) made of brick and mud.

Most of the remains of these buildings are in the south-west part of the site, but there are some remains in the middle of the southern part and in the south-east of the site (there were 4 or 5 aimags - residential quarters for monks - originally). Some of these building remain almost intact, while others are damaged but the walls remained, and again some only have partial remains or, as on the north-west and north-east areas, only the foundations are visible. These buildings were arranged in rows behind each other.

The sites of the old temple buildings are only shown by raised areas on the ground, or by such being marked by stones in encircling lines to show the bases of the temples.

The temple buildings were situated in the middle part (see also the old sketch and the sketch of the site (attachment 001, 002 and 003 of ДУДЦ 034).

There were the following temples in the monastery: (see also the interviews)

Tsogchin (main assembly hall), Jüd (tantric monastic school), Zurkhai Datsan (astrological monastic school), Manzshir (Temple of Manjushri), Manal (Medical Monastic School), Choir (philosophic monastic school, there were two of them), Janchüw Tegchenlin temple, Myangan Burkhan (Temple of the thousand Buddhas), Lamr (Temple of the Gradual Path), and Düinkhor (Tantric monastic school). Some of the temples had separate sections for objects of worship (Gonkhan).

More of them have more remnant than those elevations on the ground. In front of the monastery there was a protection wall (Yampai) though there are no remains of it now. There were 3 flagpoles in front of the monastery. Today there are two such poles, but probably not the original old ones from before the purges.

On the north of the monastery, on the hill, there were 8 stupas. On this site a new stupa has been built with a small chapel in front of it.

On the top of the hill to the north there were an ovoo. Today there is also one.

On the site of the old Manjushri temple a new temple has been built, dedicated to Manjushri (Manzshir).

On the approximate site of the old main assembly hall (Tsogchin) there now stands the huge yurt temple called: Badralguu Tsagaan Gerelt örgöö.

On the site debris from the old buildings, like stones, bricks and terracotta ornaments, is scattered around.

On the remains of the Manzshir temple, a temple building was built in the 1990's, but later fell down. In 2007 a new, third temple was being built there.

In 2006 a summer building, Lavran was built to the north-east of the Manzshir temple.

(See details of Manzshir temple in DUDTS 035, attachment #002)

(See details of worship objects in the two temples in attachment #002)

(See details on ceremonies in the present monastery in attachment #002)

On the west of the site a monument was built in 1997 on the 130th anniversary of Zava Damdin’s birth.

On its west two newly built stupas stand, one of them was erected in 2004. It has the following inscription in Tibetan:

blo-bzang rgyal-ba'i ring lugs 'drin-pa-la
kun-gyis blus-pa'i chos-sde lhun-grub-ste
rung bde-skyid 'chi-med phun-tshogs-nas
rdo-rje-'chang-gi sa-la reg gyer-cig
rtsa-ba bla-ma ming-can-gyis bris / dga'o
(The inscription on the stupa is written in Mongolian as well.)

The inscription was written in Mongolian.

Data from the article of Kh. Shonkhorr:
Zava Damdini süüliin khorin jil ba Delgeriin Choir (Lavain egshig, Gandantegchenlin khiid, 1997/2.) pp. 67-69.

It was first commanded by the local noble, Tserendorj, that Zava Damdin, who was at that time a child, should once
be the abbot of Choir. He became a monk in Tsakhiurtiin khiid. At that time Choir khiid was moving from place to place. The next local noble, Batsuuri, however, did not care about Zava Damdin. In 1906 Mönkh-Ochir became a new local noble and he acknowledged Zava Damdin as the abbot of Choir in 1917. So Zava Damdin settled in Choir khiid on the hillside of Delgeriin uul.

Zondol monk from Gungaachoiin datsan became the Tsoyr monk and the Shunlai monk became Sharav gavj.
The ex Daa lam of Tsakhiurtiin khiid, named Khoohk, or Damdin gavj became the Daa lam. There was also a monk from Olgiin khiid, Nünee Sharav.

When the monastery moved from Ikh jas, this monk, Nünee Sharav did the meditational fasting Duvkhan maaniin Baragzand nünaa.

The four monks who had played the main role in founding Choir monastery all had the rank of Gavj, and 2 were called Damdin and 2 were called Sharav, which is interesting. Before the monastery settled at Delger Mountain, it was moving about to different places, such as Tevshiin jas (where it was originally founded), Maikhan khar, Khoshööen tal, Ikh jas. From Ikh jas it moved to Delger Mountain, or, it is also said, it separated from Ikh jas.

There were the following temples in Choir monastery:
2 philosophical monastic schools: (Choir), one with Vanchin igchaa, and one with Günchig igchaa manual Tsogchin (main assembly hall), Dünkhor (Kalachakra temple), Zurkhai (Astrology temple), Manzhish (Manjushri temple), Jūd (Tantric monastic school), Mamba datsan (medical monastic school), five aimags temples (Erdene akhai, Gūchin, Gol, Barun and Zūün), the two shires of Ganjuur and Danjuur (Ganjuurin süm, Danjuurin süm), a separate chapel for the wrathful protectors (Sakhiusnii gongphon), 2 stupas, a printing house (Barkhan), all in all about 20 temples and other buildings.

There were about 320 monks in the monastery, which was the main monastery of Daichin beiisii khoshuu. It was a specialized monastery where monks from the area could come and take different philosophical or other exams such as Gaaramba, gavj, agramba (Tantric), düirembe, Maaramba (medical), Zeerembe (astrological), and Düira (TIB: bsdus-grwa). Even monks from Bogdiin khüree came to take their exams here.

Famous monks from other monasteries in Mongolia and also Tibetan masters used to come every year to give initiations and empowerment here (lün, van, janan).

Among the monks, who lived there permanently, about 15-17 per cent (about 50-60 monk) had the exams (degrees) of gaaramba, gavj, agramba, düirembe, ravjamba, maaramba or zeerembe. The author of the article lists the names of some of the most famous monks of this monastery: Jaal Sharav gavj, Shar choijun Ayush, who was an astrologer (Da zurkhaich), Naidan monk, and Gelegdorj.

The local noble, Mönkh-Ochir was a chanting master (Unzad) in the astrological monastic school (Zurkhai datsan) of Choir monastery when he became the noble.

Zava Damdin’s activity was very wide:
He founded a monastic school (Choir) in Khötliin khiid in the same area of Daichin beiisii khoshuu, he initiated the Tsam dance about the most famous religious history, Khorchoijün (TIB: hor chos-‘byung), and visited many monasteries to give initiations (lün, van, janan).

His activities were supported by other people, such as: the 8th Jewtsündamba; Angi Shagdar; Yündendorj; Sanjjav, who was also known as Nomchiin lam, and was the larnon of Ulaan Sakhiusnii monastery of Noyon khutag Danzanravjaa, which was situated about a half Örtöö (relay station, there were situated 30 kilometers from each other); Sandüijav who was the abbot of Zoogiin khiid; Luvsangonchig, who was the abbot of Khadan usnii khiid in Tüshee vangin khoshuu, and who edited the work Khorchoijün; Jamiyaaandonoi, who was the Shireet lam (enthroned abbot) of Mönkh-Ochir noyon, the local noble (who died in 1924). As the monastery of Delgeriin Choir was founded in 1917-18 and closed in 1937, it only functioned for 20 years.

Data from the book ‘Dundgovi aimagin tol’, Mandalgov, 2002
The book gives the same data on the moving and settling down of the monastery. It also names the temples. It adds that the Tibetan name was Dashchojjilin or in Mongolian translation, ‘Ölziit Nomiin Uchralt Töv’. Regarding its closure and destruction, it says that in 1937, on the 15th of the first spring month, when the monks were holding the ceremony ‘Choiim dirol jivaa’, people from the ‘Internal Security’ office (Dotood khamgaalalt) came and took away the high-ranking or influential monks. It was totally closed the next year.

For data from this book on its revival see additional information page in (ДУДЦ 035).

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