

The Global Journey of the  
**'LIVING BUDDHA'**  
Diluv Hutagtu Jamsaranjav (1883-1965)

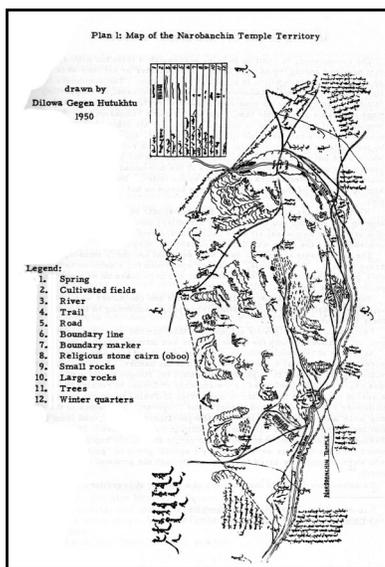
The story of the 110 years old Mongolian reincarnation  
of the 10th Century North Indian Buddhist Saint Tilopa  
and the Spiritual Leader of the Khalkha Mongolian Diaspora's  
travels from Mongolia, thru Asia, on to America  
and finally back to His Homeland.



*Written by Palgi Gyamcho  
December 21, 2016*

On the moonless night of March 8th, 1931, a caravan of eight camels crossed the Outer Mongolian border into the Inner Mongolian territory. The clandestine party of five had begun their journey days earlier in Daa Khuree (\*1), the capital of the Outer Mongolia (\*2) as it was known back then. Leading the party was *Diluv Hutagtu Gegen Jamsaranjav* (\*3), age 48, accompanied by personal attendant, Gendun, another lay disciple and his friend, and an Inner Mongol Lama, also a disciple. For all of them, save for one, it was to be the final journey out of the country once they reached the sanctuary in Inner Mongolia.

Diluv Gegen's extraordinary globe encompassing journey began in a place called Oigon Bag, on the southern flange of a mountain called Bayan Airag, in the banner of Tushie Gung, in the province of Zasaktu Khan, in the year of the Monkey, the ninth year of the Manchu Emperor KuangHsu (1884), on the eight day of the tenth moon, in the hour of Dragon, about sunrise.



Narobanchin territory map drawn by Diluv Gegen

He was born to an Onhit clan nomad family of modest means, owning twenty or so sheep, four cows, and two horses. He had a sister of fourteen and a brother age ten. At the age of five, he was recognized as the fifth reincarnation of the Diluv Hutuagtu. His childhood name, Jamsaranjav (*Lord of the Ice Plague*) was given in light of the severe winter of his birth year. Long before his official recognition, the young incarnate exhibited remarkable recollection of his previous worldly existence; so much so that from among the pool of potential candidates, he unerringly identified the everyday utensils and worldly possessions of the previous reincarnation. And to ameliorate any doubt, the young candidate recalled, with unequivocal certainty, the geographical details of the monastery associated with his past lineage; despite the fact neither he nor anyone in his family had ever visited the location.

The roots of his lineage goes back to Mangala, a disciple of Buddha. One of his successive reincarnations was Tilopa, a sesame oil seed merchant in Northern India. The subsequent reincarnations were discovered in Tibet and the most renowned being 'Milarepa' (\*4). The successive reincarnations were all discovered among the Mongols. During the K'ang Hsi period of the Manchu dynasty (1662-1722), the first reincarnation designated as 'Dilowa Khutagtu' was recognized by the Manchu Emperor.

Diluv Gegen spent the first two decades of his life immersed in ecclesiastical and civil training necessary to administer his monastery and its territory. Uniquely, he was expected to assume the dual role of secular and the spiritual head of his domain situated some 150miles or so south of Uliastai, the capital of the Zavkhan (\*5) province, in north-western Mongolia. This administrative territory known as the Narobanchin (\*6) Monastery was sanc-

tioned by the prevailing Manchu Imperial Court in Peking, China.

He spent his formative years under the tutelage of renowned scholars pursuing an ecclesiastical and secular education incumbent to his position as one of only thirteen 'Incarnate Saint of First Rank' recognized by the supreme spiritual head of the Mongolian Gelugpa Buddhist order, Khalkha Jetsundamba (7) and at the same time sanctioned by the power of the Manchu Emperor of the Ching Dynasty. The spiritual training entailed the mastery of the Tibetan language, the monastic discipline of logic, metaphysics, Middle Path, general monastic rules of order, and the monastic liturgy with the mastery in the use of ritual objects and instruments. And given his secular administrative responsibilities, he also mastered the classical Mongolian script as well as Chinese.



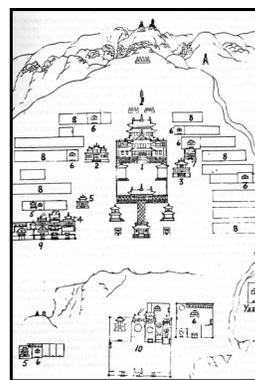
Diluv Gegen early on in his life - Source Walther Bosshard

As a part his monastic training he underwent the demanding discipline of memory training, committing to memory the entire 'Collected Works' of the famous Tibetan lama Songkhapa (1357-1419), the founder of the Gelugpa order. The training entailed not only mastery, but the absolute capacity for recall, of this and innumerable Tibetan sutras ranging from canonical, liturgical, to medicinal topics.

At the age of eighteen, he formally accepted the mantle of both the supreme spiritual and the secular head of the Narobanchin monastery and its territory, encompassing some 1250 square miles, three hundred or so resident monks, some four hundred or so households representing over two thousand odd individuals. He had now joined the rank and file of the thirteen seal vested incarnate dignitaries of the Gelugpa Buddhist Order. Comparably, his rank equated to that of an arch bishop of the Roman Catholic religious order.

For the next twenty eight years from 1901-1929, Diluv Gegen led a tranquil yet austere monastic life devoted to the mentioned studies. This period was disrupted first in 1911 when upon the collapse of the Manchu Dynasty, Outer Mongolia declared its independence and established a sovereign theocracy with 8<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jetsumdamba at the head of state. For the previous several centuries it had been a self-administered entity nominally under the suzerainty of the Manchus, not unlike its southern counterpart in Tibet headed by the Dalai Lama lineage.

By 1911, at the age of 27, he had taken over the administrative responsibility for his monastery and its territory for almost a decade. He toiled diligently to improve the living conditions of his subjects. Concerted effort over several years was required to mitigate the



Narobanchin Monastery in 1890's as drawn by Diluv Gegen

usurious financial obligations incurred by the local inhabitants with the Chinese traders. And in times of need he negotiated with the provincial administrators to alleviate heavy tax burdens imposed on the subjects of his territory.

During 1911 to 1924, in recognition of his capability he was actively courted by the newly established theocratic government of 8<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jetsumdamba to serve in various official capacities. For a while he served as the deputy governor of the capital of his territory and subsequently in 1919 at the age of 36, he was dispatched as the second in command of a punitive military expedition to address local conflict brewing in the far west of Mongolia adjoining the Russian border. The very next year he was appointed as part of a delegation tasked to negotiate with Chinese officials the restoration of Mongolia's autonomy which the Chinese Nationalist government had abrogated a year earlier. The delegation was also tasked to enlist other foreign countries, specifically the United States, to garner support for the restoration of Mongolia's independence.



Image of 8th Khalkha Jetsumdamba from Diluv Gegen's worship altar, from April 1931 issue of Asia magazine

In retrospect, Diluv Gegen's first exposure to Americans came in 1920, some twenty nine years before he set foot on the American soil. Undoubtedly he may have among the very first high level Mongolian officials to hold direct talks with the representatives of the United States. Earlier counsels and trade officials from the American consul at Kalgan, in Inner Mongolia, had visited Daa Khuree and were entrusted with documents soliciting American support for Mongolian independence. He also served as the intermediary between his government and an American official named Sokobin. Subsequently, as a part of the official Mongolian delegation, he met the American military attache in Beijing, China, to deliver a petition from the 8<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jetsumdamba seeking assistance on the issue of Mongolia's independence.

During the brief period of the theocratic government under 8<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jetsumdamba, several initiatives had been launched seeking Russian intervention against the aggressive policies of the Nationalist Chinese government contrived to supplant the Manchu suzerainty over Outer Mongolia with Chinese sovereignty. Historically Mongols in the so called territory of 'Outer Mongolia' were self-administered under nominal control of the Manchu court in distant Beijing. But now they were determined to shake off the foreign rule once and for all.

In this unsettled period, a Soviet inspired socialist revolution brought into power the Mongolian People's Revolutionary party and thus began the political, cultural, and social trans-

formation that was to drag feudal Mongolia into the twentieth century. The ever present Chinese existential threat to its independence ushered in the period of close collaboration with the Soviet Union. An entirely new political class led by ordinary Mongols, rather than the established aristocracy or the spiritual rank and file, came to replace the desposed theocracy.

A key figure who rose to political prominence during this period was Khorloogiin Choibalsan, a commoner who survived the leadership purges of the period to eventually consolidate absolute political power and establish Mongolia as a totalitarian entity mirroring Stalin's Soviet Union. The excesses of the purges in 1920's and 1930's have been attributed to his repressive policies. However, Diluv Gegen, in his memoirs never castigated Choibalsan personally, rather intimated that Choibalsan had positive potential as a person and that the turmoil of the period was not entirely his fault. In hindsight several sources conjecture that if it were not for Choibalsan's intervention and his personal sentiments, Dilowa Gegen might very well have suffered the fate of other Khutagtus' of the period.

In his memoirs Diluv Gegen unequivocally claims Choibalsan as a friend and states that he, despite the state sanctioned prohibition against religious worship, openly maintained a worship alter in his private residence. Then there are curious references in the memoir about possible secret mission that Dilowa Gegen was to have been assigned were he to receive permission to visit Panchen Gegen (\*) in North China in 1927. Nothing came of the said mission as the travel permission was turned down.

The nascent theocracy under the 8<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jebundamba was short lived as the geopolitical upheaval sweeping across the Czarist Romanov Empire arrived on Mongolian soil. In 1921, the Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party emerged to establish a Soviet satellite, world's second socialist government, in Mongolia. For the next two decades the country underwent drastic political, cultural, and social transformation. When the 8<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jebundamba passed away in 1924, the country entered a tumultuous period where all the vestiges of the country's spiritual heritage along with its rank and file, and the aristocracy were eradicated.

Mongolia's political, economic, and military ties to the Soviet Union continued to deepen and on January 6, 1946, the Nationalist Chinese government formally acknowledged Mongolian independence, a crucial and historical development. Heretofore, the term 'Outer Mongolia' coined by the Manchus was now replaced with Mongolian People's Republic.

Following the establishment of the Mongolian People's Republic the country underwent cycle of repression that progressively grew vicious as the newly minted socialist movement undertook the task of incremental reform directed against the old feudal ways of the Manchus. The secular and the religious aristocracies bore the brunt of repression as forcible expropriation were directed against monasteries and the estates of the nobility. Diluv Gegen and his Narobanchin monastery did not escape the onslaught. Anticipating the inevitable, by

1925, he had divided his personal treasury and transferred half of it over to his monastery. He turned over his entire herd of 2,500 horses, over 300 camels, some 600 or so cattle, and about 7,000 sheep to the monastery. But in short order, given his esteemed reputation as a learned monk, he had amassed 36 camels, over 700 sheep, 135 horses, and 70 some odd head of cattle between 1925 and 1928. All of this was confiscated as the incremental expropriation campaign intensified. By the end of 1928 his worldly possessions were reduced to a tiny winter house, a Mongol ger <sup>(*\*9*)</sup>, four changes of clothing for the four seasons of the year, five or so horses, and just enough sheep to sustain him and his charges. A basic complement of everyday worship objects were left intact but all the rest of the valuables were either taken or sold off for pittance. The final tally of the confiscated goods and possessions amounted to over 200,000 lan <sup>(*\*10*)</sup>.

In late 1928, he was summoned by the ruling authorities of Mongolia, from his Narobanchin monastery, to serve as a witness in the trial of Taij Eregdendagva <sup>(*\*11*)</sup> at the high court in the capital city. The defendant, along with several accomplices, was charged with counter-revolutionary plot to enlist Chinese military authorities in overthrowing the existing government. In the course of events leading up to the trial, the original summon to serve as a witness was set aside and instead Diluv Gegen, along with two other prominent Khutagts, Manjusri and Yeguzer lamas, were charged as accomplices in the plot. What had been a mere legal exercise now became an existential issue. He faced being accused, condemned, and summarily executed. The total number of accused stood at thirty eight and after a month long trial, seven were sentenced to death and executed within twenty four hours, others received sentences ranging from ten years to two months of imprisonment while some were acquitted. Manjusri lam was given a suspended probationary sentence of ten year imprisonment, and Diluv Gegen received a five year sentence, suspended, but subject to onerous probationary terms. As such the two Gegens faced summary execution at the whim of the authorities. Seven years later during a subsequent purge, Manjusri Lama was executed. Diluv Gegen was released from detention in the middle month of autumn of 1930 after a two year-long incarceration period.

In retrospect, none of the so called thirteen seal bearing Khutagtus of this period survived. Every one of them was eventually liquidated. The sole survivor, Diluv Gegen, made his way south across the Mongolian border to a sanctuary in Inner Mongolia, and eventually arrived in the United States in March of 1949, at the age of 66.

Historically, it has been suggested that Diluv Gegen was an interloper who abandoned his birthright to collaborate with the Imperial Japanese forces and the Chinese Nationalist government to undermine the sovereignty of his birth country. Nothing can be further from the truth <sup>(*\*12*)</sup>. If anything, he remained a life-long nationalist, consumed with preserving Mongolia's independence, culture, society, and above all its religious tradition during his long exile abroad.

As recounted earlier, in early March of 1931, Diluv Gegen and his party departed Daa

Khuree following the longer and more roundabout southern route through the Gobi rather than the northern road across the Khangai Mountains to ostensibly return to his monastery, Narobanchin. Four days later they veered off course to take a little used road south to enter Inner Mongolia by way of Dund Gun banner. Along the way a guide from Ulgei Khiid (\*13) in Dund Govi joined the party and on the dawn of the fifth morning, Diluv Gegen and his companions approached the border and spent the final day hiding in a shallow Gobi depression. At dusk, skirting clear of frontier post, they silently navigated through the low Gobi hills towards their destination in Inner Mongolian territory. It was the moonless night of the 20<sup>th</sup> of Tsaagan Sar, he later recalled in his memoir.

Thus began the extraordinary journey of Diluv Gegen who was to spend the next fifteen years in and around Inner Mongolia during the turbulent years of geo-political struggle between the Japanese Imperial forces and the Chinese Nationalist government. By 1931 the Japanese forces had established control over greater part of Inner Mongolia. The various branches of the Imperial Japanese government, specifically the military intelligence, actively sought to recruit the local Mongols, not only the native but also those fleeing Outer Mongolia in the wake of its brutal purges of the 1930's.

The Japanese military intelligence conspired to use Mongols to facilitate their geo-political objective of occupying Outer Mongolia and the mineral rich territory there and beyond. Of the many schemes hatched by the Japanese, the most ambitious was the initiative to revive the legacy of 9<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jebtsundamba, the last theocratic ruler of Outer Mongolia, who had passed away in 1924. They organized a campaign to recognize the subsequent 9<sup>th</sup> reincarnation. To accomplish this, the Japanese authorities sought to enlist the services of Diluv Gegen, then the most prominent of Mongolian spiritual luminaries. Given the geo-political circumstances, he intuitively realized that the Japanese were never to be a viable ally, politically or otherwise, given their imperialistic ambitions. The veneer of their Pan-Mongol support belied their long term exploitative agenda.

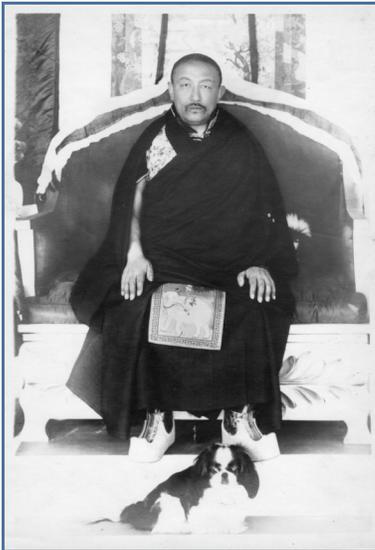
Similarly, the Nationalist Chinese government option was also fraught with shortcomings given their concerted efforts to transform the Manchu suzerainty into Chinese sovereignty over Outer Mongolia. Diluv Gegen hemmed in by prevailing circumstances and hedging against all possibilities, acquiesced to serve as an advisor in the Mongol-Tibet Affairs Committee of the Nationalist Chinese government headed by Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek. At this moment in time, the Nationalist Chinese had become a close ally of the Americans and so strategically they represented a conduit, however oblique, to United States, one of the three great world powers of the era.

Diluv Gegen, according to his personal attendant Jambal Dorj(\*14), intimated on numerous occasions that having escaped the wrath of Communism in Mongolia, he had no intention of cooperating with either the Japanese or the Chinese. Instead he remained focused on his goal to go to Tibet and possibly settle down there if circumstances permitted. In essence, he knew that the future of Mongolia was contingent on the outcome of the on-

going world wars, especially the one between the Imperial Japanese forces and the Nationalist Chinese government of Chiang Kai Shek. It was his intention, according to Jambal Dorj, to wait out the situation in Tibet.

Meanwhile, it's been conjectured that Diluv Gegen was sent on a secret errand by the Mongolian authorities into North China to neutralize Panchen Gegen's nefarious ambitions to overthrow the socialist government in Mongolia and at the same time covertly relay intelligence reports on the geo-political circumstances in North China. To date no historical materials have emerged to validate the veracity of the said conjecture, other than what's been related by Diluv Gegen's personal attendant, Jambal Dorj.

Nonetheless, for the sake of appeasement he went along with the Japanese and their schemes, all the while entertaining the notion of escaping their control. He knew a similar initiative in the previous decade ended disastrously when the Mongolian representatives surreptitiously visited Tibet to negotiate the incarnation of the 9<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jebsumdamba tentatively identified by the Tibetan Regent, Reting Rinpoche (\*15), but not formally recognized by the Mongolian authorities. The said representatives were apprehended upon return and executed for espousing counter-revolutionary plot to revive the religion.



Pachin Gegen - from Diluv Hutagtu's collection

The opportunity to finally escape both the Japanese and Chinese control materialized in early 1944 when he accepted the Japanese mission to verify and escort back to Inner Mongolia, the 9<sup>th</sup> reincarnation of Khalkha Jebsumdamba from Tibet. Diluv Gegen faced the choice of two travel options, the arduous overland pilgrimage route through bandit infested territories of North-western China, or the more expeditious sea route from the port of Shanghai to Calcutta on the Bay of Bengal and then to trek overland through Nepal and Sikkim into Tibet. The latter option meant less than a month of journey whereas the overland route meant nine months of travel through some of the most challenging and inhospitable terrain in Asia.

The journey to Lhasa, Tibet, was interrupted when he disembarked in Hong Kong. The British authorities, tipped off by Kuomintang (\*16) spies in Peking, detained and then shipped him back to China, where the Chinese Nationalist leader, Generalissimo Chiang Kai Shek, placed him under house arrest in Chungking. The house arrest lasted through early 1946, when finally with the personal intervention from the renowned Mongol scholar Owen Lattimore and the British Authorities, Diluv Gegen made his way through India and onto Tibet. He arrived in Tibet in June of 1946 and spent the next eight months in Lhasa fulfilling his

lifelong aspiration of paying homage to the numerous spiritual destinations in and around Lhasa, and also having an audience with the then young 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama. He also had a brief encounter with the reincarnate candidate of the 9<sup>th</sup> Khalkha Jebsumdamba tentatively identified by Reting Rinpoche, the first of the two Regents during the interregnum period between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lamas. The said candidate, a young novice aged 14, was not formally endorsed by Dilowa Gegen, nor denied to the contrary, according to Jambal Dorj present during the encounter. The candidate was accorded traditional obeisance of a silk scarf, bolt of hand-made cloth, and a yak load of Tsamba (\*17). Later in private, Diluv Gegen declared that the prevailing geo-political world circumstances had changed so much so as to preclude a formal recognition. Thus, he fulfilled his primary obligation to the extent possible given that the outcome of the war in North China rendered the primary objective of the Japanese mission null and void.



Diluv Gegen at John Hopkins University Feb 06, 1952

In the early spring of 1947, as the snow in the high Himalayan passes melted, Diluv Gegen left Lhasa and after a month long stay at the Panchen Gegen's Tashi Lhumpo monastery (\*18), he crossed into the kingdom of Sikkim to spend a week in Gangtok (\*19), visiting his old friend, the Raja of Sikkim. Then he continued onto Kalingpong (\*20), India, and accompanied by his close disciples, he spent the next two months visiting all the many significant pilgrimage sites in Nepal and India. At the beginning of Monsoon season, he flew back alone to Nanking, China.

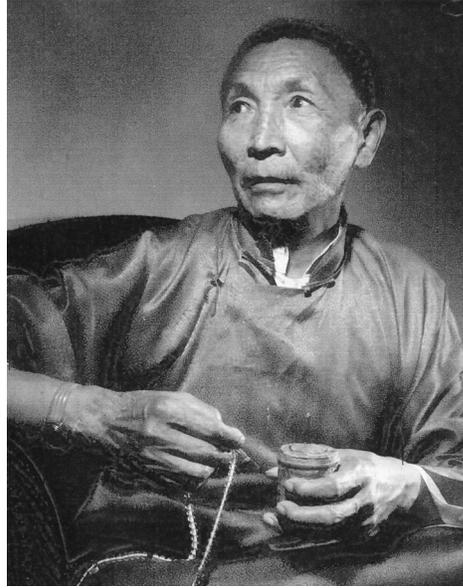


Diluv Gegen at John Hopkins University Feb 06, 1952

While in Tibet, he presciently counseled all Mongols to move to India at the earliest possible opportunity. In 1946, there were two Khalkha families, few lay and scores of lamas living in Tibet. By the end of 1949, most had



Diluv Gegen & Thaktser Rinpoche, 1955



moved to the border town of Kalingpong, in India, and by this time Diluv Gegen himself had already left for the distant shores of America.



Diluv Gegen & Owen Lattimore. Arrival in USA 1949

Diluv Gegen sought to settle his disciples in the United States and most of the Lamas eventually came to America and of the three families (\*21), one made it over and the other two returned to Mongolia in the early 1970's.



Diluv Gegen & Kalymk Lam Geshe Sandjiev Tsurun, 1950's

Meanwhile, the diaspora of Kalmyk Mongols who survived the Soviet purges after the 2nd World War managed to make their way to displaced persons camp under the jurisdiction of western allied powers. The 2,000 or so odd individuals eventually made their way to the United States to settle on lands donated by Countess Tolstoy in Freewood Acres, New Jersey. They went onto form the nucleus of the future Kalmyk Mongolian Buddhist community (\*22) in the United States.

Diluv Gegen was instrumental in establishing the first Mongolian Buddhist Monastery on the American soil in the early 1950's. As the rank and file of the few Kalmyk Buddhist lama

dwindled through age related attrition, he helped bring most of the Mongolian lamas (\*22) living in exile in various parts of Indian subcontinent.

*Diluv Gegen's exile ended thirty four years later at the age of 81, in a small apartment on West 32<sup>nd</sup> Street in Manhattan, New York, at 7:15am the morning of April 7<sup>th</sup>, 1965.*

*Fifty one years later, on Friday, December 9, 2016, his ashes were returned to Mongolia to be consecrated at the Ganden Monastery in Uliastai, the capital city of his birthright, Zavkhan Province.*

### **Reflections of Diluv Gegen's friends and acquaintances:**

**Thubden Norbu's**, (Dalai Lama's elder brother) and Diluv Gegen's paths first crossed in the late 1930's at Kumbun Monastery on the cultural border of Mongolia and Tibet in the Chinghai province of Tibet. Thubden Norbu, recognized as the next reincarnation of Thaktsar Rinpoche, had been installed at this monastery.

Thaktsar Rinpoche moved to the United States shortly after Diluv Gegen had made his way there in early 1949. For the next fifteen years or so they were constant companions. Years later Thaktsar Rinpoche recalled Diluv Gegen as being a brilliant and immensely gifted scholar. He stated that in the realm of Tibetan spiritual tradition, there were few to match Diluv Gegen's vast knowledge and erudition in the United States, India, or for that matter, in Tibet.

In the company of close friends, Diluv Gegen was an open, engaging, and witty companion with tremendous depth of knowledge both spiritual and secular, according to Thaktsar Rinpoche. He was an accomplished chess player as well. They spent countless hours over the years discussing the political situation in their respective homeland. Diluv Gegen confided that in the long run Mongolia's circumstances would dramatically improve but it probably would not happen in his lifetime. Since the dark period of the 1920's and 1930's,



Sandjiev Tsuren - Diluv Gegen - Sandja Ragva 1952

he personally witnessed historically significant and positive developments over the years, namely the international recognition of Mongolia's sovereignty right after the war and some fifteen years later its induction as a full-fledged member to the United Nations, and more was yet to come.

Thaktsar Rinpoche's contention was that in posterity Diluv Rinpoche should be remembered, not so much for his accomplishments, rather for his assiduous refusal to collaborate with the Japanese and the Chinese when it really mattered the most. From the time he sought sanctuary in Japanese controlled areas and later in Beijing with the Chinese, he extended just a modicum of cooperation to appease them. He was certainly influential enough to have significantly altered the course of history by aiding Japanese in their plans to conquer Mongolia and or sided with Chiang Kai Shek to impose sovereignty over his birth country. But other than to maintain a façade he limited his involvement to the extent possible.

Similarly, years later when the Communist Chinese pitted Thaktsar Rinpoche's influence against his brother, the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama, in their quest to take over Tibet. He feigned cooperation to gain their confidence and when opportunity arose, he exposed their ill intentions and fled south to sanctuary in India and then onto America just as his friend, Diluv Gegen, had done so previously.

**Reflections of Diluv Gegen's friends and acquaintances: *continued***

**Hisao Kimura** (\*24), otherwise known as Dawa Sambu, to his Mongolian friends and colleagues, met Diluv Gegen soon after his arrival at the refugee center for Outer Mongolians in the vicinity of Zarin Monastery on the border of East and West Sunit Banner. Dawa Sambu received language and other training to facilitate his future role as an intelligence officer to be embedded among the Mongols.

He was but a pawn in the Imperial Japanese's ambition to eventually take over all territories inhabited by native Mongols. Outer Mongolia and Buriatiya were especially enticing prizes given their tremendous natural resources. The Japanese envisioned uniting all the disparate groups of Mongols under the pretext of Pan Mongolism movement and then to parlay the outcome to establish a permanent sphere of influence for material exploitation and military gains.

In October of 1943, Dawa Sambu in the company of his Mongol friend, Danzan, and his wife, Tserentso, embarked on a spying mission to the remote western province of Sinkiang inhabited for the most part by the Uighur and the Khazak minorities. The mission objective was to discover and relay back information on alleged overland transport route starting at sea ports north of Moscow and ending in Chungking, China. It was rumored that this round-about route transported military and logistical supplies for the Nationalist Chinese troops.

As a cover story, Dawa Sambu posed as a Mongolian novice, accompanied by his sister and her husband, was traveling to study at the Drepung Monastery in Lhasa. His route out of Inner Mongolia headed westward for a distance along the traditional pilgrimage route between Mongolia and Tibet, then once clear of the various Chinese and native warlords, he'd simply head west all the way to Sinkiang. Once there, his assignment was to blend in with the locals and establish a sleeper cell, sending out periodic intelligence reports back to headquarters in Kalgan, Inner Mongolia.



Jambal Dorj & Diluv Gegen. New Jersey. Nov 1964

In time Dawa Sambu's spying endeavors were thwarted when Japan was defeated by combined Soviet and Chinese forces in North China. His spying mission to the western province of Sinkiang never came to fruition and instead he was forced to turn south for Tibet. Curiously enough just as his future Khalkha Mongol friend, Munkh Gyamsto had done in 1941, later he, too, accompanied Thaktser Rinpoche's caravan from Kumbum monastery to Lhasa.

Dawa Sambu recalls meeting Diluv Gegen on numerous occasions beginning in 1930's and later in early

1946 when he arrived in India on his way to Tibet. According to him, Diluv Gegen was tall, dignified and commanding in person and exuding intelligence and charisma in presence of strangers. And despite the recent two year confinement in China he was extremely well informed as he had developed a network of informants throughout Inner Mongolia, Northern China, and most of Tibet. He had befriended many important friends throughout the world and especially scholars of Tibetan Buddhism.

**Wesley E. Needham**, was a scholar of Tibetan art, language, and literature. He was an advisor in Tibetan literature at Yale University Library from 1953 to 1992. He corresponded with Diluv Gegen soon after his arrival in the United States. The two of them exchanged letters written in Tibetan and eventually realizing the scholarly potential of his Mongolian friend, Wesley Needham made arrangements for him to work with the extensive Tibetan Literature collections at Yale University Library. Diluv Gegen was a frequent guest at the Needham residence, so much so that eventually a permanent shrine was installed in the household for his daily rituals.

Wesley Needham considered Diluv Gegen to be the greatest Tibetan scholar to come to America and in a written article mentioned that he never ceased to be amazed at his “vast erudition and prodigious memory”. He goes on to mention that “Diluv Gegen had either mastered or committed to memory innumerable Tibetan Buddhist texts and could recite or write them out verbatim in his flawless calligraphy”.

In 1951, a group of Kalmyk refugees from Europe had arrived in the United States and thus Diluv Gegen embarked on his mission to establish the very first Kalmyk Buddhist monastery in Freewood Acres, New Jersey. This monastery was consecrated on 23<sup>rd</sup> of November, 1952, with Diluv Gegen presiding over the ceremony along with the Kalmyk Abbot and eight monks. The formal dedication of the monastery took place three years later, on the 19<sup>th</sup> of November, 1955. There were American notables such as Countess Alexandra Tolstoy (\*a), Pearl Buck (\*b), Lowell Thomas and his son (\*c), and others present during the dedication ceremony. This monastery continues to exist but was transplanted to another location in the 1970's. For the next fifty years Jambal Dorj, his personal attendant, presided as the abbot at this monastery.

*Footnotes:*

\*a *Alexandra Tolstoy was the grand- daughter of the famous Russian write Igor Tolstoy. She had established a humanitarian organization that assisted with relocation of the Kalmyk refugees from the displaced persons camp in Germany to the United States.*

\*b *Pearl Buck was the writer, traveler, and the winner of 1931 Nobel Peace Prize for Literature.*

\*c *Lowell Thomas was the well-known broadcaster and radio commentator of the era. He made famous the legend of ‘Lawrence of Arabia’ and later along with his son he visited Tibet in 1947 at the invitation of His Holiness the Dalai Lama. He was the first western journalist to enter Tibet.*

***Author's personal notes and observations:***

*The author of this article is the younger son of Munkh Gyamcho, a native of Gurvan Theste Sume in Omon Govi Aimag. His parents first met Diluv Gegen when he arrived from Mongolia in the fall of 1931. Their fealty to their new spiritual leader was to be transgenerational where once the parents left off, the children assumed the incumbent obligations.*

*In early 1941, Munkh Gyamsto and his wife, Sumjit, on the advice of Diluv Gegen departed Inner Mongolia for the distant destination of Lhasa, Tibet. He was to serve as the lead person to establish the Mongol diaspora presence in Tibet. Eventually by mid-1940's Diluv Gegen and most of his retinue had reached Lhasa, but their plan to settle there for the long term was disrupted by the threat of Chinese occupation of Tibet. Realizing the imminent threat, the retinue traveled further south to India. By early 1950's most had settled in the hill station of Kalingpong on the border of India, Sikkim, Nepal, and Bhutan.*

*Diluv Gegen moved to the United States in March of 1949 and immediately embarked on efforts to bring the members of his retinue over. It was to be a long and protracted effort and sadly he passed away in midst of the effort. By the time the Gyamsto household, consisting of his wife Sumjit, older son Togh-Togh Bazar, and the youngest Palgi, moved to America in late 1968, most of the lama's in his retinue had already come over. The two remaining families of Chanrav and Danzanhu decided to move back to Mongolia in the early 1970's.*

*Diluv Gegen's life long personal attendant, Jambal Dorj, arrived in America in September of 1964 to take care of his spiritual leader who by now was gravely ill with terminal cancer. Jambal Dorj survived him by another 57 years to pass away at the age of 102. During this period he served as the Khambo lam of the Mongolian Buddhist Monastery originally established by Diluv Gegen in 1952.*

*His disciple Gendun remained in Inner Mongolia only to disappear during the period of heightened confrontation between the Outer Mongolian and the Japanese period in late 1930's. Besides him, countless Mongols, native and Khalkhas, were caught up in the turmoil of the period and either executed by the Japanese or abducted by raiding Mongolian border troops. Of Diluv Gegen's original retinue, Khalkha Geshe Sanjmethav, passed away in Kalingpong in the early 1950's. His Khampa Tibetan wife, Khantso, remarried Danzan huu and she eventually made it to Mongolia in the early 1970's.*

*List of Mongolian Lama to immigrate from India to the United States:*

*Geshe Wangyal, Yaramphel Lharamba, Daa Lam Nyamgyal, Lobsang Khaidup, Geshe Kalden, Gombjav Geleng, Lobsang (Zorky Lam), Lobsang Osir, Choigyamtso, Chorj Lama, Tsultrim, Yonden Gyamsto, Dawa Sambu. List of Mongolian seculars to immigrate from India to the United States:*

*Samphel Norbu, Munkh Gyamsto, his wife Sumjit, older son Togh-Togh, younger son Palgi.*

## **FOOTNOTES:**

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\*1: *Daa Khure* - The capital city of Mongolia as it was called up until it was renamed to Ulaanbaatar when Mongolian People's Republic was established in 1921.

\*2: *Outer Mongolia* - This and its corollary 'Inner Mongolia' were geographic administrative terminologies used by the Manchu, whereas the Mongols referred to these areas as 'Ar Mongol' meaning Northern Mongolia and 'Uvor Mongol' would mean Southern Mongolia'.

\*3: *Diluv Khutagtu Gegen Jamsaranjav* - The title 'Khutagtu' otherwise rendered as 'Living Buddha' in the west, historically was accorded to high spiritual reincarnations revered among the Mongols. During the rule of the Manchu Dynasty, there were thirteen such reincarnations recognized by the Ecclesiastical authority of Mongolia as well as sanctioned by the Imperial Manchu Court in Peking, China. Each of these thirteen officially sanctioned Khutagtu was vested with official seal bearing power where they exercised absolute authority over their own territorial jurisdiction. They were the rulers of their own feudal domain accountable only to the Manchu Emperor. The title 'Gegen' the 'Enlightened One', was bestowed on Lama's of exceptional learning.

\*4: *Milarepa* - (Tibetan - *btsun mi la ras pa*) 1052 - 1135. Milarepa is generally considered one of Tibet's most famous yogi and poet. He was a student of Marpa Lotsawa and a major figure in the history of the Kagyu school of Tibetan Buddhism.

\*5: *Zavkhan* - The contemporary name of the province where Diluv Gegen was born.

\*6: *Narobanchin* - The name of monastery territory that was the administrative domain associated with the Diluv Hutagtu line of lineage in Mongolia

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\*7: *Khalkha Jebsumdamba* - The titular head of the Mongolia's state religion. He stood second only to the Dalai Lama in Tibet in the spiritual hierarchy of the Gelukpa Buddhism tradition.

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\*8: *Pachin Gegen* - In Tibetan 'Panchin Rinpoche'. This reincarnation represented a spiritual lineage ranked second to Dalai Lama in the spiritual hierarchy within Tibet. His seat 'Tashilhumpo monastery' was in Shigatse, a town just south of Lhasa.

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\*9: *Ger* - In Russian 'Yurt'. The felt covered dwelling common to pastoral nomads of Mongol origin.

\*10: *Lan* - Approximately equal to one troy ounce of silver

\*11: *Taij Regdendagva* was in charge of a section of the Manchu Imperial relay post (*Ortoo*) from Ili, Sinkiang to Peking that crossed the Khalkha Mongolian territory, within it were twenty primary post stations, further sub-divided into five sections, with each station under the jurisdiction of a 'Taiji', or hereditary nobleman. The term Khalkha refers to the Mongols within the so called 'Outer Mongolian territory'.

\*12: *Nothing can be further from the truth* - *Jambal Dorj* recall that as long as he'd known Diluv Gegen, his daily ritual began with a spin on his prayer wheel with prayers offered foremost for the well-being and prosperity of Mongolia, his birth as well for his adopted nation and its citizens.

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\*13: *Ulgei Khiid* - A monastery named 'Ulgei' in the Dund-Gov province of Mongolia

\*14: *Jambal Dorj* - The life-long personal attendant to Diluv Gegen who started his service at the age of twenty two in Inner Mongolia.

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*\*15: Reting Rinpoche – The first of the regent who ruled Tibet during the interregnum period (1931-1946) between the 13<sup>th</sup> and the 14<sup>th</sup> Dalai Lama.*

*\*16: Kuomintang – The Chinese version of the Russian socialist party apparatus ‘Comintern’*

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*\*17: Tsamba – Tibetan roasted barley flour*

*\*18: Tashi Lhunpo – The home monastery of Panchin Rinpoche located in Shigiatse, Tibet*

*\*19: Gangtok – The capital of Sikkim, the former protectorate of India on the border of Nepal, Bhutan, and India*

*\*20: Kalingpong – The first trading hill station situated on the trade route between Tibet and India*

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*\*21: Khalkha Families in Tibet and India – There were three Khalkha Mongolian families who were part of the Diluv Gegen's entourage. Munkh Gyamcho and his family migrated to America in 1968. The Chanrav and Danzanhu families moved to Mongolia in the early 1970's. See epilog*

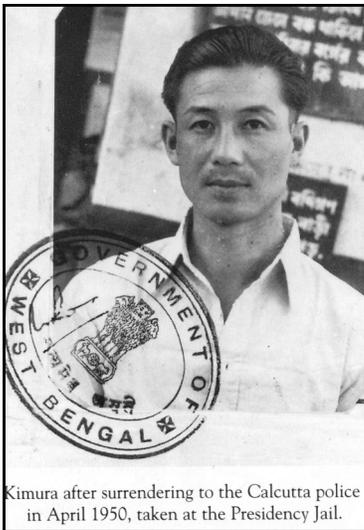
*\*22: Kalmyk Mongolian Buddhist Community in the United States - According to Jambal Dorj, Diluv Gegen often pointed out that the unshakable faith and devotion of the Kalmyk diaspora were instrumental in the spread of Buddhism in the United States. "A Gegen without his adherents cannot spread dharma" he often related. The first generation of Kalmyk elders and the accompanying lama's must be recognized for their unstinting efforts in this regard.*

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*\*23: Mongolian Lamas living in exile - see author's notes for a list of names*

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*\*24: Hisao Kimura - In early September, 1945, Hisao Kiumura, arrived in Lhasa, Tibet, accompanied by his companions. He came to be known as 'Rivin Dawa Sangbo', or the Japanese Dawa Sangbo, distinguishing him from other Dawa Sangbos in and around Lhasa. The moniker "Rivin" being the Tibetan term for Japanese. Although, he hoodwinked the Tibetan authorities with his adopted identity, the Mongols figured out early on that he was not one of them. As recounted by the author's father then living in Lhasa, his real identity came under suspicion on his very first visit to Lhasa's 'Barkhor' pilgrimage circumambulation circuit. As he joined the hundreds of pilgrims circling the 'Barkhor' circuit he carried himself in very non-Mongol fashion by having his arms, not tucked behind his back, but folded across his breast. This unconscious behavior was immediately noticed by a Mongol pilgrim and then spread among others.*



Kimura after surrendering to the Calcutta police in April 1950, taken at the Presidency Jail.

Dawa Sangbo's photograph in 1950 taken from his book JAPANESE AGENT IN TIBET.

*His real identity however remained undiscovered during his entire sojourn in Tibet in testimony to his remarkable command of Mongolian language and ways. He could affect perfect accent of many Mongolian dialects and went on to acquire respectable command of Tibetan as well. Later when he moved to Kalingpong, India, he learned English well enough to work at the Tibetan Language printing press run by Kunu Tharchin, the editor of the only Tibetan language newspaper then available. He was also sent on a covert reconnaissance mission to Eastern Tibet by the British authorities in India in the wake of the Communist Chinese invasion of that country. Finally in April 1950, he revealed his identity to the Indian authorities and after a brief period of house arrest he was repatriated to his homeland.*

*FINAL NOTE: All the photographs in this article are from Diluv Gegen's personal collections and as such no effort was expended to secure reprint permission from relevant sources. The original source of photographs have been cited where possible.*

