

# The cultural heritage of the monasteries of Arkhangai aimag of Mongolia<sup>1</sup>

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## *The cultural heritage of the monasteries of Arkhangai aimag of Mongolia*

The article is devoted to the problems of preservation of the monasteries of Arkhangai Aimag (one of the Provinces of Central Mongolia), which was from 1600-1920 a Center of Buddhist Art. There are many objects of cultural heritage – the tangible and intangible. Monasteries were founded in the XVI-XVIII centuries at this region and played an important role in the economic and cultural development of Central Mongolia. Around monasteries formed a large settlement, city, trade, transport, craft and social infrastructure, developed education, medicine. A significant part of the residents of the Arkhangai Aimag devoted themselves to the service of the Monasteries. Monasteries were centers of culture and art. Silk road, crossing the Aimag, contributed to the integration, mutual influence of European and Asian cultures. From 1928 the Buddhist Religion was persecuted by the communist party. The Monasteries were collectivated. Already the adoption of the law on the separation of Church and State, the mass repressions of the second half of the 1930-ies most of the monasteries were destroyed, some changed to the use as utility rooms, ware-houses, institutions for culture. 1937 in relationship to Stalin's Terror the Soviet Military was stationed in Mongolia and all of the Monasteries were closed or destroyed. Monks were taken from their positions in the Monasteries and secularized. Since 1990, Mongolia began the revival of religious associations, the return of former monasteries to liturgicactions. The surviving monastic building are the monuments of material culture. Many of them turned into ruins and relate to archaeological objects of cultural heritage. The article contains a general description of Buddhist Monasteries of Arkhangay Aimag, compiled in the course of the Russian-Mongolian expedition conducted in the summer of 2017 with the financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFFI) №17-21-03551. The article includes conclusions and recommendations for further study and use.

Key words: the cultural heritage of the monasteries, material culture, intangible cultural heritage, art, monuments, religious culture

Buddhist monasteries have long attracted the attention of scientists of different specialties. Historians study their role in the formation of statehood and the development of society. Ethnographers are interested in the way of their life, cultural and everyday features of monastic life and interaction with the rest of the population. Physicians are trying to understand the secrets of Tibetan healing, the main custodians of which are still monasteries and their special schools. Philosophers, psychologists, physicists, astrologers, art historians and other specialists find subjects of their interests of study in Buddhist monasteries and temples.

The scientists dealing with objects of natural, material and intangible cultural heritage have their subject of research. These are the problems of their identification, description, study,

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<sup>1</sup> The expedition was conducted in 2017 with financial support of the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (RFFI) №17-21-03551.

protection, restoration, popularization and use.

This range of problems not only denotes the subject and the main aspects of studying the object of scientific discipline, which some scientists call heritology. They, in fact, reflect the main components of the system of practical activities for preservation of natural and cultural heritage. The technology of this activity, the conditions and factors of its implementation, concrete experience accumulated in different countries, should also be considered as a subject of heritology.

The heritological approach was the basis for the joint Russian-Mongolian project of studying Buddhist monasteries of Archangay aimak of Mongolia. The project was developed by a group of university scientists from Barnaul (Russia) and Erdenet (Mongolia) and supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research and programs of the RAS and the Academy of Sciences of Mongolia. In June 2017, the first reconnaissance expedition to Archangay aimak was conducted. Its main task is to test the methodology for identifying, describing, photofixation the state of monastic buildings in the field conditions.

The territory of Archangay aimak was chosen not by chance. Located in the center of Mongolia, at the crossroads from east to west and from north to south, not far from the ancient capital of Khalkh, the town of Kharkhorin, it has been in the center of events throughout the centuries-long history of the country. And a lot of settlements of aimak, scattered in the mountains and river valleys, far from the big roads, still preserve the ancestral culture in its original form.



**Pict. 1:** The first monastery that we visited in Mongolia was Erdene-zuu. It was built in 1586 in Kharkhorin and was the first monastery of Mongolia

The acquaintance of the Mongols with Buddhism took place during the creation of the Genghis Khan empire in the XIII century. However, at that time the Mongolian nobility did not need religious bonds of the state and provided an opportunity for representatives of Islam, Catholicism, shamanism, Buddhism to conduct competing sermons. Only by the 16th century, the power struggle between the descendants of Genghis Khan encouraged them to turn to Tibet's gaining influence. Over the next two centuries, more than 20 legislative acts have been adopted, pursuing shamanism and providing legislative support to the new religion<sup>2</sup>. This

<sup>2</sup> ZHUKOVSKAYA, L. I. Lamaizm v Mongolii. In: *Buddizm: Slovar'*. Moskva : Izd-vo «Respublika», 1992, p.165.

meant official recognition, reinforced in the construction and growth of economic, political and spiritual influence of the monasteries.

The first monastery of Mongolia - Erdene-zuu, was built in 1586 in Kharkhorin. In the same year, the first temple was laid on the southern slope of the sacred mountain Bulgan, which eventually grew into one of the largest monasteries of the country. This monastery became the base of the city of Tsezerlag, the capital of Archangay aimak. By the end of the XIX century, about a thousand lamas resided there, and in the days of great khurals up to four thousand lamas gathered here.<sup>3</sup>



**Pict. 2:** There are a lot of buildings which were formerly Buddhist Temples in these area. Now they are used as museums and as churches

The monasteries of Archanghai were always in the center of events in Mongolia. In 1932 they were one of the most powerful centers of anti-government uprising in order to restore the theocratic system. This largely predetermined the fate of the monasteries during the repressions of the late 1930s. Most of them were blown up or burned, and many lamas were shot or sent to camps.<sup>4</sup> Only some buildings of 29 monasteries, located on the territory of the aimak, survived, and later they were found another application to. The return of a number of buildings to church communities began only with the beginning of democratic transformations at the end of the 20th century.

Another reason for choosing the monasteries of Archangay aimak as an object of research was the insufficient degree of study of the problem of preserving their cultural heritage. Except for Erdene-zuu, declared by UNESCO in 2004 as the World Heritage Site, about which the largest number of books and articles are written, the history of the creation and development

<sup>3</sup> POZDNEEV, A. M. *Mongoliya i mongoly*. S. Peterburg : Tipografiya Imperatorskoj Akademii nauk, 1896, p. 415.

<sup>4</sup> KUZMIN, S.L. *Oyunchimehg. Vooruzhennyoe vosstanie v Mongolii v 1932 godu*. Moskva : Izd-vo MBA, 2015, pp. 35-67.

of the Zaya gegeniy huree - one of the oldest monasteries in Mongolia - has been most fully recreated.

One of the first researchers was a well-known Russian specialist in Mongolian studies A.M. Pozdneyev, who gave the detailed description of the monastery. During his second trip to Mongolia in 1892-1893 he visited Tzetzlerlag and recorded in his travel notes a detailed description of Zaya gegeniy huree, biographical information about his founder and Khubilgans.<sup>5</sup>

A monograph of the famous Soviet architect N. Shchepetilnikov, who worked in Mongolia in the 1950s is extremely interesting from the point of view of a detailed analysis of Buddhist religious buildings. Relying on his own observations and archival documents and photographs, he reconstructs the development of Mongolian architecture from the first nomadic buildings to the middle of the twentieth century. Special chapters are devoted to the typology of monasteries, the principles of their planning, and the influence of Tibetan and Chinese traditions on the local temple architecture. Among the numerous illustrations there are photos of four temples from the ensemble of the monastery Zaya gegeniy huree.<sup>6</sup>

Among the books published in Mongolia, it is worth mentioning the works of local historians S. Zhunsh and T. Yadamsuren who dedicated their history to Archangay aimak, especially to its main attraction – the monastery, its inhabitants and their famous compatriots. The books are generously illustrated with photographs, many of which reflect the now lost Buddhist monuments.<sup>7</sup>

The monograph of Hungarian researchers J. Mayer and K. Teleki, who reconstructed the history of the monastery Zaya Pandita, described places of worship, holy springs, suburgans located on the territory of Archangay aimak, presents a great interest as well. A separate chapter is devoted to the re-creation of monastic traditions in modern conditions. A special value of the monograph is the use of a wide range of historical sources: archival documents, photographs, drawings, memoirs of participants recorded by the authors.<sup>8</sup>

Unfortunately, almost all the published materials cover the description of the temples located in Tzeczarlage, the capital of the aimak. The information about 28 monasteries of other somons is absent.

These studies do not settle the problems of preserving the cultural heritage of Buddhist monasteries in Archangai Aimak, especially since most of them are not even mentioned in the published sources. Their common destiny – they were destroyed during the political repressions of the 1930s - speaks only of the need to restore historical memory, reconstruct the history of their emergence and development. And, where and if it is still possible, to locate, describe and photograph their foundations, ruins, debris, structures in emergency or other conditions, defining measures for conservation, restoration, protection, popularization of objects, and establishing special regimes for their preservation.

The research methodology developed by us assumed the identification of the location of the destroyed monasteries by means of bibliographic and archaeological search. During the departure to the site of the dislocation, a visual inspection of the monuments was carried out,

<sup>5</sup> POZDNEEV, ref. 3, pp.410-426.

<sup>6</sup> SCHEPETNIKOV, N. *Architecture of Mongolia*. Moscow : State Publishing House of Literature on Construction, Architecture and Building Materials, 1960, pp. 85, 147, 156.

<sup>7</sup> RONGSHI, S. *The claim of Bandida Luwsanparenlein Olgij Nutar. Aryn Saikhan Hangay*. Ulaanbaatar Hot, 2013; YADAMSUREN, T. *Zaya gegeniy nuthiin jaya saitaytumen min. 2009's*. Ulaanbaatar, 124 p.

<sup>8</sup> MAJER, Z. – TELEKI, K. *History of Zaya Gegeenii Khuree, the Monastery of the Khalkha Zaya Pandita*. Ulaanbaatar, 2013, 174 p.

the results of which were recorded in a special document - "The map of the cultural heritage site". In all cases, photo-fixation of the state of objects, aerial photography with the help of a quadcopter, video recording of interviews of informers from among local residents and local historians was carried out.

The object map is the main document, in which all the results of the research are included. Some results are introduced before the expedition starts: name, location (aimak, somon, populated point or distance to it). GPS data, landmarks, exact location on the map are applied during the site visit.

Prior to the expedition, there are studied and introduced the results of bibliographic and archival research, the established dates of construction, the history of creation and activity, the found descriptions of the object, drawings, photographs, information on destruction, reconstruction, documents confirming the property right, on state protection, modern use.

If it is initially established that the object is not currently in use, because of the unusable condition, it is advisable to try to ascertain the composition of the structures entering the monastery complex, the types of temples, what religious trend they refer to, their architectural styles, description of each structure.

At visual inspection it is necessary to compare the received descriptions with real objects and to give an estimation of a condition on external signs. The evaluation is based on five main indicators. Evaluation of the "normal" state indicates that there is no need for repair work. "Satisfactory" condition requires routine maintenance with the elimination of local damages without strengthening the structures. "Unsatisfactory" means the need to strengthen and restore the load capacity of damaged structures. "Emergency" indicates that the damage made the structures unsuitable for operation; there is the danger of their collapse. "Ruined" condition states the destruction of structures, complete or partial collapse of the roof and walls.

After the assessment, the factors determining the state of the objects are identified. These factors can be natural, man-made and anthropogenic. The natural factors include, first of all, earthquakes, wind and water erosion, floods, landslides. Technogenic factors include disturbances in the geological environment, air and water basin pollution, disturbance of soil and vegetation cover as a result of economic activity. Anthropogenic ones are the lack of an effective owner, unqualified repair work, non-compliance with fire safety standards, vandalism, irrational use of the facility and others associated with acts or omissions, criminal negligence rights.

It should be emphasized that all assessments are carried out without the use of special instruments, laboratory studies, the involvement of specialists in the field of construction, architecture, geology, hydrology and others. The task of our research is to visually inspect objects and submit assessments of the state of objects of cultural heritage to state bodies authorized to protect monuments, to inform the public about the threats of their loss, to attract the attention of business and authorities to the rational and careful use of objects in the interests of preserving the national heritage.

An assessment of the state of a historical monument, the identification of negative man-made and anthropogenic factors that exert a destructive influence on it are undoubtedly the most important tasks of such studies that ensure the preservation of cultural heritage. However, no less important tasks are connected with the use of monuments, their inclusion in the modern socio-cultural context, the identification and dissemination of information about

their place and role in the cultural heritage, museification, making excursion routes, ensuring a comfortable stay of tourists at the site, training guides, natural and material cultural heritage from vandalism.

We fully realized the urgency of these problems during the expedition to Central Mongolia. The narrative should begin with the problems of identifying and searching for objects of cultural heritage.

In the process of preliminary study of published sources, a certain discrepancy in the estimation of the number of monasteries in Archangai aimak, and in Mongolia in general, was revealed. The fact is that attempts to count the monasteries in Mongolia have been undertaken several times. And each time in the end different numbers figured. Thus, N. Hishigt, referring to the archival sources of the Main Intelligence Directorate of Mongolia, speaks of the existence in the late 1920s of 790 large and medium-sized monasteries with 2,960 temples and dugans, to which more than 100,000 lamas and huvaraks were attributed.<sup>9</sup> In his famous book *Three Maps of Towns and Settlements of Mongolia*, published in Russian in 1970, D. Maidar gives a table with the name and location of 750 monasteries, in which there were 1536 liturgical buildings (datsans, aimags, dugans, sums and svrags).<sup>10</sup>

For the purposes of our study, the divergence of experts in assessing the number of monasteries does not matter much. Considering that the historical process, the technology of political, economic, social, ideological, administrative, judicial, repressive suppression of the church, religion and its adherents in Mongolia has now been thoroughly studied by Russian and Mongolian scientists, it is much more important for us to see the total volume of objects of cultural heritage, dynamics, the nature of their destruction and the results of vandalism.<sup>11</sup>

In the framework of this article, we will confine ourselves to a brief summary of the actions of the authorities towards Buddhist monasteries. In the mid-1920s, as a result of the failure of economic and social policy, the leaders of the ruling Mongolian People's Revolutionary Party (MPRP), on the recommendation of the Soviet and Comintern leaders, decided to correct the economy by redistributing the property of the monasteries in favor of the state. With this purpose, during the next decade, taxes on monasteries were repeatedly increased until they reached proportions that were not covered by income.

At the same time, political pressure was exercised: deprivation, at first the leaders of the church, and then all lamas permanently living in the monasteries, of electoral rights. A criminal penalty was imposed for admitting young men under the age of 18 to the monasteries. A little later, the permission was given to families that only a third son who had reached the age of 18 could be sent to a monastery to become a monk.<sup>12</sup>

Under the pretext of the forthcoming Japanese aggression, in April 1937, the relocation of monasteries from the border area into the interior of the country began, which by the end of the year had assumed a mass character far beyond the danger zone. The relocation of monasteries served as the beginning of repressions, organized according to the experience of the Stalin regime. In 1937-1939 about 17 thousand lamas were repressed, more than 14 thousand of which were shot by the decisions of a notorious "troika" (three persons) - in the

<sup>9</sup> HISHIGT, N. Mongol'skie buddijskie monastyr'i: istoriya i sovremennost'. In: *Pamyat' mira: istoriko-dokumental'noe nasledie buddizma*. V. V. Minaev (ed.), p.30

<sup>10</sup> MAIDAR, D. *Three maps of cities and settlements of Mongolia*. Ulanbaator: Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the MPR, 1970, p 55.

<sup>11</sup> For more details, see: KUZMIN, ref. 4, p. 298-429.

<sup>12</sup> Ibidem.

Mongolian case an “editorial office” called the Extraordinary Plenipotentiary Commission, which signed falsified death sentences, accused political opponents of treason, espionage in favor of Japan, and all kinds of conspiracies.<sup>13</sup>

Since the main objects of the material cultural heritage of the monasteries are the buildings used for worship, we were certainly interested in their fate, especially in Akhangai aimak, where according to the data of D. Maidar, at the beginning of 1937 there were 33 Khuree and Hyida, which corresponds to modern concepts of monasteries and 22 independent temples: sum, dugan and datsan.<sup>14</sup>

It should be noted that the international expedition of 2004-2007, which included Mongolian and Hungarian specialists, identified 74 heathen temples, most of which were in a ruined state.<sup>15</sup>

When and how were the structures lost, many of which survived for 200-300 years? By the middle of 1938, the Lama Commission at the Central Committee of the MPRP began to distribute monastic real estate among the aimak organizations. For example, in Arkhangai, schools got 83 temple constructions, 8 constructions went to hospitals, associations of lamas and craftsmen got 38 temples, 234 constructions were given to trade organizations, 16 – to party organizations and 16 went to social organizations. 83 houses, 30 wooden yurts and 30 households were distributed among these organizations. At the same time about 400 buildings remained ownerless - there was nobody to transfer them to. Some buildings were away from settlements, some were in unusable condition and needed major repairs, some were burned and destroyed.

However, only a small part of the funds confiscated from the monasteries was aimed at the development of aimaks and their social infrastructure. The country, which had been under social and political turmoil for a decade and a half, survived the war with Japan in 1939, which gave its resources to the Soviet Union during the Second World War, could not afford to care about the preservation of architectural monuments. The buildings of the temples, most of which were built of clay and wood, gradually deteriorated, collapsed, and were taken away by the local population for economic needs.

Together with the temples, there were lost religious shrines, a huge number of valuable books, thangki, church utensils. The export of the most valuable monastic property from Archangai aimak required 150 vehicles, which the government did not have. There were not enough workers to clean the temples: the local population was mostly hostile to the destruction of monasteries. Nevertheless, some of the books were delivered to the capital, where they were stored in three temples, saving them from destruction. Bronze figures and statues were brought to the remelting in Ulaanbaatar.

Over the decade, the severe Mongolian climate, the mismanagement of the authorities, the looting of the impoverished population, multiplied by official ideological denial and practical struggle with religion, turned the former greatness of Buddhist monasteries into ruins. This fact was repeatedly noted by Soviet specialists who worked in Mongolia in the 1940s-1950s.<sup>16</sup>

What is left in the inheritance to our contemporaries in Archangai aimak? This is what our Russian-Mongolian expedition tried to evaluate, choosing for the pilot survey three objects that differ in the degree of preservation and conditions of existence: a monastic complex in the

<sup>13</sup> KUZMIN, ref. 4, p. 315-420.

<sup>14</sup> MAIDAR, D. *Three maps of cities and settlements of Mongolia*. Ulanbaator : Publishing House of the Academy of Sciences of the MPR, 1970, pp. 55, 64-67;

<sup>15</sup> See: *List of old Temples of Arkhangai*. online: <http://www.mongoliantemples.org> (28.12.2017)

<sup>16</sup> For more details, see: KUZMIN, ref. 4, pp. 298-429.



capital of Tszarzaleg aimak, a monastery in the Jargalant settlement of Somon Batzangal and the ruins of the once large Khan-Undur monastery in the Somon Ich Tamir.

The monastery complex in Tzecerlage is commonly referred to as Zaya Gegeenii Khuree the Monastery of the Khalkha Zaya Pandita. It is one of the most ancient Buddhist monasteries on the territory of Mongolia. Founded at the end of the 16th century, it gained the fame of the center of enlightenment of the Khalkh. Throughout its history, the residence of the spiritual leaders of Mongolian Buddhism (Pandita in India - the honorary title of learned brahman, and Zaya means “victorious”) the monastery was known for its scientific schools.

By the beginning of the 20th century, the monastery complex, which in fact consisted of two parts: Daed Khuree (the upper monastery, at the foot of the sacred Mount Bulgan) and Dohod Khuree (the lower one, located a few kilometers in the valley) - contained, according to various sources, up to 30 temples, 5 monastic schools and religious schools for 600 people. In the monastery lived up to 1000 monks, and in the days of holy feasts more than 4.5 thousand people gathered here. Today we can see only some of the buildings of the upper monastery, since the lower monastery was razed to the ground.

Outstanding Russian orientalist A.M. Pozdneev, who visited this place in 1892, wrote: “... with the first general view of the old and together the main part of the monastery, as well as during more detailed acquaintance with it, the aspiration of the founder of this monastery, Luvsanprinlaya, to transplant Tibet to the Khalkh soil ... Architecturally, all the most important joss houses of its old Tibetan style, built in two and three floors, in many ways resemble, especially from afar, the construction of European two-storey buildings”.<sup>17</sup>

The picture by a local artist, painted on the basis of preserved photographs and descriptions, gives some general idea of what A.M. Pozdneev could have seen 125 years ago. Today, a photo taken by us from approximately the same angle shows that from the former original greatness there are only three structures left. Firstly, it is the Galdan Zuu temple, on top of the mountain, which in 1946 was completely disassembled for economic needs, and in 1994 it was recreated according to the surviving drawings and photographs. The building of the newly-made temple belongs to the local museum of local lore and is currently not accessible to visitors.



**Pict. 3:** Painting of a local artist. From the collection of the Museum of the History of Archangay aimak

<sup>17</sup> POZDNEEV, ref. 3, p. 414.



Another preserved structure is Lavran, the residence of Zaya Pandita Luvsanprynlay, not only a religious figure, but also an outstanding Mongolian educator, the author of the four-volume encyclopedia Todorho Tol (Clear Mirror). After the brutal repressions of the 1930s, the building of the palace was transferred first to the fire brigade, then it was adapted to the production premises, the warehouse of alcohol products, the food factory. And only since the beginning of the 1960s, the local history museum was located in Lavrane, which allowed preserving remarkable monuments of architecture.<sup>18</sup>



**Pict. 4:** Lavran - the residence of Zaya Pandita Luvsanprinlay

The palace complex consists of three buildings: the central one is Guden Sum, with three domes built by Luvsanprinlay at the end of the 17th century and forming two inner courtyards, Barouun Semchin Dugan (Western Semchin) and opposite Zuun Semchin Dugan (Eastern Semchin). The khurals were held in the Western Dugan, and in the East one there was the residence of the Third Gegen Luvsangzhigmaddorzha. Both buildings were reconstructed and by 1910 had acquired a modern look, having lost the third floor. The decor of all three buildings was updated in 2011 with the help of the Anthropology Museum of Monaco.



**Pict. 5:** Museum of the History of Archangay aimak

<sup>18</sup> MAJER – TELEKI, ref. 8, pp.44-47.

To the left of the Lavra lie the remnants of the main temple of the monastery of Tsogchin Dugan, built in 1706.

In A.M. Pozdnev's opinion, and with a simple comparison of old photographs, it can be seen that the architecture of Tsogchin Dugan is much inferior to the once nearby temples Gushig datsan and Gungarag datsan. However, even the foundations did not survive. In 2017, Korean specialists elaborated a reconstruction project for Tsogchin.

In general, it should be noted that after the start of democratic reforms in Mongolia, the aimak and the administration of the museum are supportive of preserving the history of the monastery. One of the halls of the museum, which stores numerous authentic exhibits, is



**Pict. 6, 7:** Ruins of the monastery Tsogchin Dugan

dedicated to it. And when in 1990 in many monasteries of the country the religious service began to revive, one of the former liturgical buildings, in which the museum of the history of religion was located, was handed over to the Buddhist community of Archangay aimak for use.



**Pict. 8, 9:** Monastery of Luo Guni huree in Batzangal

The fate of the monastery of Luo Guni huree in Batzangal appeared to be more difficult. Founded in 1846, it consisted of 10 religious schools and numbered about 500 monks. Today, the only temple preserved, representing historical and cultural and architectural value and in need of urgent restoration, since it is in an emergency condition. At the same time, since 1990, the church service resumed in the adapted building on the territory of the monastery. Through the efforts of the local community, with the active support of the Soman administration, a project for the reconstruction of the temple has been prepared, and funds are being raised for its implementation.

The fate of Khan Undur monastery in Ihtamir is tragic. This is one of the first monasteries of Central Mongolia. Its foundation is associated with the construction of the religious school Togchin in 1679. By 1934, the monastery had included about 30 temples and more than a thousand monks lived there. In 1939 the monastery was destroyed. Today, only from the 100-meter height you can see the foundations of the temples, which are depicted in the archive photograph.

Thus, there are three monasteries representing the cultural heritage of Mongolia. Most of the temples are destroyed and cannot be restored. Separate temples representing historical and architectural value are in emergency condition and in need of urgent reconstruction. Some facilities are in satisfactory condition, but are used for other purposes. How to preserve the cultural heritage?



**Pict.10:** The foundations of Khan Undur Monastery in Ihtamir

Obviously, not a single recipe exists that can cure the loss of historical memory. Evidently, we need a state program, which, first of all, must assess the scale of the disaster. The public, and not only the metropolitan, but also the local, should participate in the development and discussion of the program. It seems quite hopeless to recreate a thousand temples on the site of the destroyed ones. Some attempts have already been undertaken but appeared to be unsuccessful.

What was the conclusion of our expedition after the completion of its first stage? The most important thing is to preserve the historical memory of the generations who adopted Buddhism. It is equally important to remember those who tried to eradicate it, breaking the destinies of people, destroying the age-old foundations, squandering the national treasure, burning temples. The reminder of this time can take many forms. However, it will be natural if they correspond to the ethnic culture and the traditions of the people.

Given that Buddhist temples have never been erected in randomly chosen places, but coordinated by specially created commissions in sacred places, it seems logical to establish memorial signs in the form of destroyed temples in the form of mortars (suburghans) or other Buddhist spirituality close to traditions and forms. It is important for these signs to contain information about the destroyed churches, religious ascetics, who suffered for the faith. At the same time, information should be accessible to all generations, taking into account modern, including electronic forms of submission. Temples, including those destroyed, must be marked

on maps, included in tourist routes. Information about the temples and their history should be reflected in the media.

In the process of discussion, there will surely be other, possibly more interesting, proposals. It is important not to forget the tragic pages of history and continue its study.

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