

PART V

Documenting Worship Structures in Northern Mongolia's Hovsgol Aimag, 2009

Paula T. DePriest

Museum Conservation Institute, Smithsonian Institution

In 2009 the Smithsonian-Mongolian Deer Stone Project's botany team had a goal of locating, photographing, and documenting as many worship sites – ongons, ovoos and sacred springs – as possible in the homelands of the Dukha and their neighbors, the ethnic Darkhads of Hovsgol Aimag, northern Mongolia. Between the dates of August 27 and September 17, 2009, with participants O. Sukhbaatar, J. Oyumaa, Oyunbileg, Otengeral (Ogie), and Dulgun; Dukha guide Sanjim and his sons Amerijeral (Khalzan), Batmonkh, and Bayamonkh, his foster sons Zolzaya and Batzaya, and his brother-in-law Mondokh; and Darkhad guide Erdenebat, we visited and documented more than 45 worship sites. We traveled in vans, driven by Nayma and Tsogoo, from Ulaan Baatar through Hovsgol Aimag to Tsaagan-nur sum, Kharmai gol (N51 15.377 E99 10.264), and Tengis gol (N51 28.989 E99 02.880); by horse from the Rinchenlumbe wetlands (N51 31.310 E99 38.264), over Urtrag Davaa (N51 40.018 E99 54.730), to Khankh sum on Hovsgol Lake; and by van along the east bank of Hovsgol Lake to Halh (Khalkh) Bulnay Hot Spring Resort (N50 46.549 E100 47.976) and Dayan Deerkh Buddhist cave (N50 33.053 E101 58.915), and then back to Ulaan Baatar via Erdenet (Figure 1). This path has led us through the territories, or areas of influence, of a number of northern Mongolia's ethnic groups – Dukha (Tsaatan), Darkhad, Buriat, Hotgoid, and majority Khalkh—and active religions—Shamanist, Yellow Shamanist, and Buddhist.

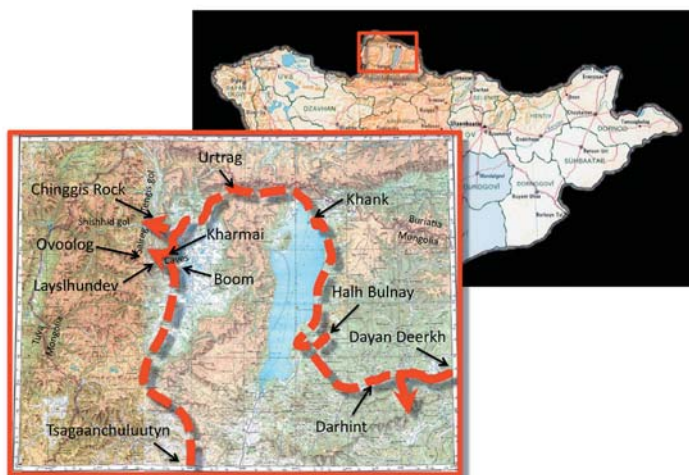


Figure 1. Map of the Botany Team's travels, by van and horse, through northern Mongolia.

Ovoos

Of the 45 outdoor worship sites that we documented, the majority, 37 with GPS readings, represent ovoos—piles of stones or teepees of sticks that cap mountains or mark passes and difficult river crossings and river headwaters that honor the spirit masters of these places. Ovoos change and grow with every passerby who adds stones, sticks and objects while completing the ritual of circling the ovoos three times to ask for luck in their travels. We have documented change over time for some ovoos, for example PTD 2009-7 (Figure 2), 2009-15, and 2009-16 (see entries below) that have been photographed multiple times over the nine years of the Deer Stone Project. At least two of the ovoos



Figure 2. Ovoos (PTD 2009-7) on the road to a Deer Stone Project site that is visited annually, as photographed in 2008.

were newly constructed between our 2008 and 2009 field trips, 2009-19 and 2009-23. While some of the ovoos are elaborate, such as the 13 ovoos of Olyin Davaa Ovoos (2009-16), Khankhiin Arvan Gurvan (2009-58: Figure 3), and Darhint (2009-74: Figure 4) or the 17 of Tsagaanchuluutyn (2009-13: Figure 5), others are so simple that without seeing their hidden altars with offerings of khadags and paper money they would have been dismissed as piles of brush, for instance 2009-68 and [No GPS], September 15, 2009 (Figure 6). The most remarkable ovoos was Ovoo (2009-41: Figure 7), a cluster of 13 rock ovoos on a barren ridge above the West Taiga fall reindeer camps which, according to Dukha legend, was built by Uighurs 500 years ago.

Shaman Trees

At least nine of the worship sites include ongon or shaman trees, *Бөө мод*. These are trees that are worshiped as one-of-a-kind features that radiate power either because of their great age, unusual form, isolation on the steppe or tundra, or association with

a shaman, an ancestor ongon, or a magical event. One of the first shaman trees that we documented, [No GPS] August 28, 2009 (Figure 8), was a very old elm bole with a large, highly convoluted gall. Shaman trees at Tsagaanchuluutyn (PTD 2009-13) and Olyin Davaa Ovoos (2009-16) are linked with Mongolian heroes and historic events. Trees at three well-known sites, Bogj Davaa ovoos (-34), Chinggis Rock ovoos (2009-36), and Husuit Monument ovoos (2009-85) were recently decorated as shaman trees, most likely representing the resurgence of shamanist worship in recent years. Trees at two sites, Darkhad cave (2009-27) and the nearby Huyt Ovoos (2009-33), were private ongon trees with skulls of *setered* (consecrated) horses tied to them with blue khadags. The most remarkable shaman tree was the 100 Branch Tree (2009-75: Figure 9), a larch tree of great diameter and height with a thick concentration of up-swept branches.

Sacred Springs

Of the worship sites that we visited five were sacred mineral springs — Tuvan: *ar-shaan* or Mongolian: *rashaan*: Boom (PTD 2009-32), Saireg (2009-39: Figure 10), old Urtrag (2009-47: Figure 11), new Urtrag (2009-48: Figure 12), and Halh (Khalkh) Bulnay (2009-70: Figure 13). Each had



Figure 3. Part of the line of 13 rock ovoos at Khankhiin Arvan Gurvan, with a khadag decorated duck figure constructed from two lake rocks (PTD 2009-58).



Figure 4. Central tipi-like ovoos of the line of 13 ovoos at Darhint (PTD 2009-74).



Figure 5. Central pyramid of tightly fitted logs shared by the two intersecting lines of eight ovoos at Tsagaanчулуутын Овоо (PTD 2009-13).



Figure 6. Brush ovoos with blue khadags and paper money offerings near Chandmani-Ondor (PTD 2009-68).



Figure 7. Ancient rock ovoos at Ovoolog, according to Dukha legend built by the Uighers 500 years ago (PTD 2009-41).



Figure 8. Shaman tree, a very old elm tree with a large gall (No GPS, September 28, 2009).



Figure 9. 100 Branch Tree, a very large larch tree with a fence of khadags (PTD 2009-75).



Figure 10. Botany Team members and Dukha guides examining the medicinal springs at Saireg (PTD 2009-39).

multiple springs that were individually identified for healing distinct ailments. All of the springs except Boom even had log cabins for private bathing. Three of the springs, Saireg, old Urtrag, and new Urtrag, had numerous offerings of carved plaques commemorating visits by Dukha and Darkhad, representing the comparative leisure to make elaborate carvings afforded by the required seven-day treatment in an area far from their herds and pastures. One, old Urtrag arshaan, was of great significance to our guides as it was the location where Sanjim's mother Sadev died in 1955 when Sanjim was fifteen. Halh Bulnay is of particular interest because it was one of Mongolia's official resorts or sanitariums used to restore ill or injured collective workers during the communist era.



Figure 11. Old Urtrag Arshaan with abandoned ovoos, bathing cabins, and medicinal springs (PTD 2009-47).

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Caves

We made a special effort to examine caves with the hope of finding

ancient worship structures or rock art. We visited and documented two small caves (PTD 2009-28 and 2009-29: Figure 14) and a rock shelter (2009-25) in the Darkhad Valley, but there was no evidence of any drawings or paintings on their walls. Dayan Deerkh Cave (2009-81: Figure 15), with its elaborately decorated altar, multiple chambers, and painted rock is an excellent representation of a Buddhist contemplation cave, albeit with a Yellow Shamanist merging of Buddhist and Shamanist ritual. With the cave's and its spirit owner Dayan Deerkh's legendary connection to Chinggis Khan, the site is of both religious and Mongolian national significance.



Figure 12. New Urtrag Arshaan ovoos constructed around three larch boles, with numerous carved commemorative plaques and items (PTD 2009-48).

Buddhist Sites

In addition to Dayan Deerkh cave and monastery in Tsagaan-Uur sum (PTD 2009-81), we visited another famous Buddhist site, Layslhundev (2009-22: Figure 16) in the Evt Valley of Tsagaannuur sum. These sites represent the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Century push by the Lamaist Khalkh to subjugate and convert the northern Mongolian Darkhad and Dukha to Buddhism. Despite naming the region



Figure 13. Bathing cabins at Halh Bulnay hot springs resort with two sanitarium clinics on the slope above (PTD 2009-70).



Figure 14. Botany Team members and local herder in front of the small cave opening they had just explored (PTD 2009-29).



Figure 15. Cave with decorated altar used by shaman and Buddhist lamas at Dayan Deerkh (PTD 2009-81).

as a Buddhist ecclesiastical estate, Darkhad Ikh Shav', under the direct jurisprudence of the Jebtsundamba Khutuktu, and establishing monasteries in the Darkhad Valley and at Dayan Deerkh, they only achieved moderate success in merging Shamanist and Buddhist practices in Yellow Shamanism. Yellow Shamanism has been revived in recent years among the Darkhad, Oriat, and Buriat groups as is evidenced in the combination of Shamanist and Buddhist symbols in the Darhint ovoo (2009-74: Figures 4 and 17), and the spirit owners that represent merging of Shamanist ongons and Buddhist deities at Darhint, Dayan Deerkh, and Layslhundev.



Figure 16. Botany Team members and Dukha guides in front of the Layslhundev rock shelter that holds Buddhist carved items and plaques (PTD 2009-22).

The following description, a contribution to the author's long-range study of worship structures and landscape ritual in the Darkhad-Khovsgol region of Khovsgol aimag in northern Mongolia, documents sites visited in 2009 and is presented in the order in which they were recorded. Elevations in meters.



Figure 17. Spirit owner of the Darhint ovoo, Ochirvaani, a traditional Mongolian deity that is "merged" with the Buddhist bodhisattva and protector Vajrapani (PTD 2009-23).

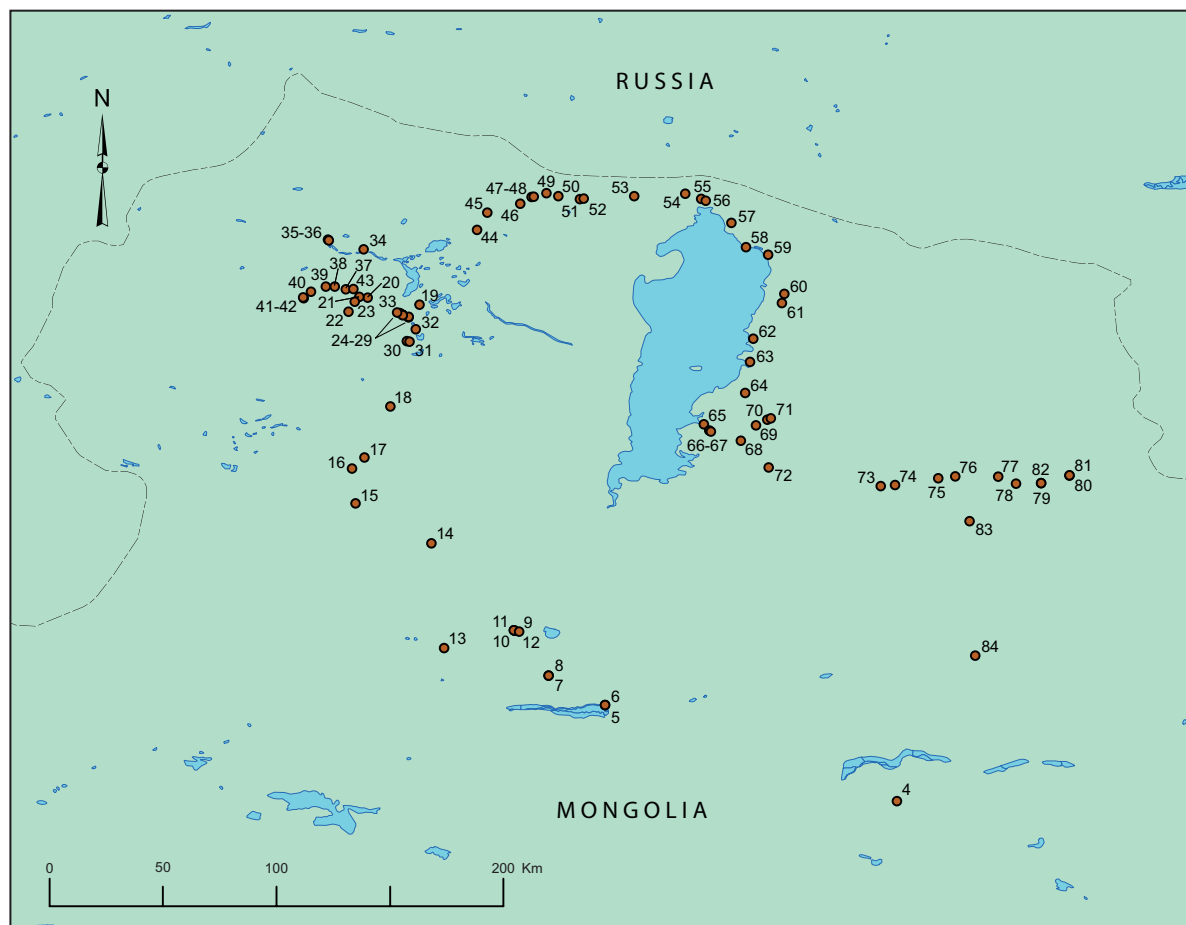


Figure 18. Map of 2009 Survey sites. Produced by Dan Cole, Smithsonian Institute cartographer.

August 27, 2009

PTD 2009-03: Zaluchuud Hotel

Location: Ulaan Baatar

GPS: N47 55.482 E106 55.305; Elevation: 1310

Hotel in UB.

August 28, 2009

[no GPS]: Shaman tree at Nyasldag

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Rashaant Sum

Old, gnarled elm (*Ulmus pumila*) bole with large gall, decorated with blue, orange, and white khadags; in isolated stand of elms in the steppe pasture. The age of the tree, its large gall, and the isolation of the stand of elms in the larger steppe makes this a one-of-a-kind feature that is worshiped as a place radiating power and called a shaman tree, *Бөө мод*. (see Pedersen, 2009:139).

PTD 2009-04: Mountain Pass with Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Rashaant Sum

GPS: N49 15.679 E101 17.892; Elevation: 1656

Dangerous place ovoo, highest mountain pass on road from Ulaan Baatar to Muren; large ovoo of poles and sticks on base of heaped rocks, with numerous blue khadags, a few yellow and white hadags, and Buddhist printed prayer flags; offerings include many tire inner tubes.

PTD 2009-05: Muren Ger Camp

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Muren Sum
GPS: N49 38.489 E100 08.596; Elevation: 1282
Dul Ger Camp in Muren, overnight stay.

August 29, 2009

PTD 2009-06: repeat

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Muren Sum
GPS: N49 38.489 E100 08.597; Elevation: 1282

PTD 2009-07: Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tunel Sum
GPS: N49 45.445 E99 55.234; Elevation: 1655

Low pass where roads and trails cross, migration crossing for local herders, ovoo with ornate millstone and rocks carved with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum*¹ (Hail the jewel in the lotus, or alternatively “Jewel-Lotus”- a name referring to the bodhisattva Avalokitesvara), khadags and Buddhist flags.

August 30, 2009

PTD 2009-08: repeat

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tunel Sum
GPS: N49 45.444 E99 55.229; Elevation: 1648

PTD 2009-09: Ulaan Tolgoi Ovoo, Ovoo 1

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Alag-Erdene Sum
GPS: N49 56.117 E99 47.188; Elevation: 1853

Ulaan Tolgoi (red top) mountain ovoo for local herders, ovoo of stacked red stones, no khadags or offerings except horse heads. The path up the ridgeline passes a distinctive turtle rock; turtles symbolize longevity.

PTD 2009-10: Ulaan Tolgoi Ovoo, Ovoo 2

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Alag-Erdene Sum
GPS: N49 56.200 E99 46.997; Elevation: 1853

Ulaan Tolgoi (red top) mountain ovoo for local herders, smaller ovoo of stacked red stones, no khadags or offerings.

PTD 2009-11: Ulaan Tolgoi Wind Turbine

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Alag-Erdene Sum
GPS: N49 56.226 E99 46.968; Elevation: 1854

Ulaan Tolgoi (red top) mountain ridge wind turbine on a tall tripod.

PTD 2009-12: Ulaan Tolgoi Deer Stone Site

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Alag-Erdene Sum
GPS: N49 55.924 E99 48.232; Elevation: 1629

Deer Stone Project Ulaan Tolgoi research site where we examined DS4 for continued loss of lichen cover.

PTD 2009-13: Tsagaanchuluutyn Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Arbulag Sum
GPS: N49 52.006 E99 30.403; Elevation: 2195

Ovoo in honor of Khotgoid clan hero and descendent of Chinggis Khan Chingünjav (Mongolian: *Чингүнжав*, also known as Marshal Chingünjav, Mongolian: *Шадар ван Чингүнжав*, 1710 - 1757), who rebelled against the Manchu rulers of China. Chingünjav was captured near Khankh sum (or in some legends at Van-Tolgoi hill near “the Darkhat little temple at Shishkit” see Kaplonski, 1993: 255). He was taken to China where he and his entire family were tortured to death.

The site has 17 ovoos, organized in two crossed lines of eight, sharing the large central ovoo. The central ovoo with a tightly-fitted pyramid of wood logs on heaped flat red rocks, has all types of decorations and offerings, including a Buddhist altar with a *shiree* offering table and two open cabinets filled with small figures –horses, frogs, birds, prayer wheels,

etc.; blue khadag roping; blue, yellow, and white khadags; printed Buddhist prayer flags; and necklaces of goat ears. The site includes two shaman trees, one standing larch and one downed bole that are decorated with blue and white khadags and small rocks. Pegg (2001: 35-36) notes that in the Chingünjav legend five trees were planted behind Ikh Uul of Arbulag sum; these shaman trees would represent the original trees. This historic episode is transmitted in oral history as the Shidyrvan cycle (Kaplonski, 1993: 250).

PTD 2009-14: Lunch Stop

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Arbulag Sum
GPS: N50 16.873 E99 27.433; Elevation: 2030
Area of camps and corrals in steppe pasture.

PTD 2009-15: Tooms Davaa Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Bayanzurkh Sum
GPS: N50 26.337 E99 09.419; Elevation: 2233
High pass, the highest point on the road between Muren and the Darkhad Valley, and migration crossing for Darkhads of Tooms Brigade; one large ovoo, 3 small oovos of heaped rocks with blue-khadag draped poles and various offerings including horse heads. Tooms Brigade, south of the pass at the crossing of the Belts gol, is a traditional stop between Muren and the Darkhad Valley. Most likely today's Tooms Brigade was the site of the guard post along the "Darhadian Road" that, after border negotiations in 1727 between Tsarist Russia and the Manchu, controlled and limited passage between the Lamaist Khalkh Mongolian and shamanist Darkhad, Urianhai (Tuvan), and Siberian territories (see Purev, 2003: 63). Toom's Davaa would have been on the ancient "Darhadian Road" and as a dangerous crossing is most likely a site of ancient oovos.

PTD 2009-16: Oliyn Davaa Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Bayanzurkh & Ulaan Uul Sum
GPS: N50 34.642 E99 08.579; Elevation: 2115
Historic ovoo and worship site for Bayanzurkh, Renchinlkhümbe, and Ulaan Uul sums; site of annual naadam and ovoo festival (see Pegg 2001: 288, and Petersen, unkn.); Pegg (2001: 26) notes a local legend that Jochi, Chinggis Khan's son, crossing the site to accept the surrender of the Forest People in 1204, created the wide open bald (*oliyn*) by magic, so that only a single tree remained. A tree stump on the west side of the road is worshiped as this tree. The line of 13 tipi-style oovos has all types of decorations, Buddhist and shamanist. Recently, carved stones celebrating shamanism were placed on the site.

PTD 2009-17: Overnight camp

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Ulaan Uul Sum
GPS: N50 37.240 E99 11.531; Elevation: 1764
Campsite at the taiga/steppe boundary on the northwest side of the Horidol Saridag.

August 31, 2009

PTD 2009-18: Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Ulaan Uul Sum
GPS: N50 49.348 E99 17.673; Elevation: 1640
Recent ovoo in a gentle pass, less than 10 years old. A horse herder we met at the ovoo reports that he set up the ovoo because the large trucks had trouble driving up the hill. The small ovoo had a few sticks with khadag on a base of heaped rocks. Herds were passing through this area to go to pastures with salty soils for a few days of grazing before their fall migration.

PTD 2009-19: Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum
GPS: N51 13.554 E99 24.610; Elevation: 1576
New (2009) ovoo along the roadside across from a picturesque lake in the Shishged wetlands. The beautiful ovoo is constructed of tall, thin poles on a base of heaped large rocks, and has a carved light granite rock carved with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07) and the date 2009.

September 1, 2009

PTD 2009-20: Kharmai Winter Camp

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 15.190 E99 12.268; Elevation: 1631

Batmonkh's winter camp with his Darkhad father-in-law. The camp has multiple barns, corrals, and winter cabins – *baishins*. Batmonkh's father-in-law (the shaman photographed with his drum and ongons at the Soyo festival in July 2008, see DePriest, 2009b) was cutting and stacking hay to dry when we visited.

PTD 2009-21: Kharmai Winter Camp

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 15.377 E99 10.264; Elevation: 1682

Sanjim's winter camp with barns, corrals, baishin, new (uncompleted) baishin, and fresh-water spring. This is the site of the ongon reported in DePriest (2009a).

September 2, 2009

PTD 2009-22: Layslhundev Ovoo (Ivediin Aav 'Father of Ived' 1829)

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 11.856 E99 07.709; Elevation: 2233

Historic Buddhist worship site associated with the ill-fated Darkhad Monastery that was located to just south along the Ived (Evt) gol (for the legend see Dioszegi, 1961). The stacked rock shelter is almost completely obscured by encircling tree boles and branches. There are at least five small ovoos in the immediate area. The shelter houses an altar with 21 carved items², most notably archaic warriors on horseback (perhaps General Hanuman³) and the Buddha. Purev (2003: 56) reports that an ongon "Ivediin Aav" was placed on this mountain in 1829, and the mountain renamed Layslhundev (Tseepil and Tseepilmaa, 2005: spelled as Laishlhuneg in Purev 2003:56) in 1912 when a lama and shaman led joint worship to celebrate Mongolian independence from China after the fall of the Qing Dynasty.

PTD 2009-23: Sukhbaatar's Ovoo (Built for Professor O. Sukhbaatar, 2008)

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 14.232 E99 09.173; Elevation: 1760

New (2008) ovoo along trail from the Kharmai Meeting Place to Minge Bulag summer camp. The ovoo is constructed of heaped large rocks with a small, branched larch tree emerging from its center. The tree is decorated with a blue khadags of blue, and strips of blue, yellow and white cloth. The ovoo was constructed by Dakha university students to honor and thank Professor O. Sukhbaatar who arranged for their college entrance.

September 3, 2009

PTD 2009-24: Van parking for cave, Huyt

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 10.519 E99 21.964; Elevation: 1560

Edge of the steppe pasture, between southwest facing ridge and a spring or summer camp with house and two small baishins and with a panoramic view of the Shishged wetlands.

PTD 2009-25: Small rock shelter with wolf prints

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 10.641 E99 21.993; Elevation: 1670

Shallow cave with broad opening, located at the base of cliffs high on the southwest-facing ridge, looking toward the Shishged wetlands, which provided shelter from a fast moving sleet storm. The shelter has both wolf prints and a possible wolf den.

PTD 2009-26: Edge of forest burned in 1996, hardwood seedlings

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 11.530 E99 19.883; Elevation: 1776

Larch forest on north side of the ridge-line that was burned in 1996 – a year of many forest fires. The regenerating forest is thick with larch and birch seedlings. Nearby is a tall cliff face with a small shelter, and a Darkhad winter camp in the larch trees.

PTD 2009-27: Ongon with two horse heads, above caves

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Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 11.177 E99 20.562; Elevation: 1794

Lunch stop where we met two herders whose family winter camp is in the area. They, reluctantly, agreed to show us the caves and led us by this ongon tree with horse head, most likely belonging to their family, without a comment.

PTD 2009-28: Deep cave

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 11.084 E99 20.595; Elevation: 1744

The first of two caves on a small ridge promontory, referred to as the deep cave because of its immediate drop just inside its mouth. The mouth of the cave is almost perfectly round and the interior drops to a slanting perch almost 1.5m down before continuing down.

PTD 2009-29: Long cave

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 11.072 E99 20.599; Elevation: 1735

The second of two caves on a small ridge promontory, referred to as the long cave because its chamber(s) travel deeper into the ridge. The mouth is small with just enough of an opening for the reclining guides, driver, and local herders to slip by the gravel wash to entered cave. Once inside they can all stand for a photograph, although they have to stand in water on the cave floor.

PTD 2009-30: Zuulun Davaa ovoo

Low mountain pass between Hog River bridge (Sukhbaatar's bridge) and Renchinlumbe sum center, used as a migration crossing for local herders. The ovoo of tree boles and sticks has blue khadags, white strips of cloth, horse skulls, carved rifles, and woolly camel hair.

PTD 2009-31: Duuren Davaa ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 04.756 E99 22.236; Elevation: 1665

Minor mountain pass between Zuulun Davaa ovoo and Renchinlumbe sum center, used as a migration crossing for local herders. In contrast to the nearby Zuulun, this ovoo has a base of heaped rocks, fewer tree boles and sticks, few khadags, but more horse heads.

PTD 2009-32: Boom Mineral Spring

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 07.722 E99 23.716; Elevation: 1555

The Boom mineral spring complex has a large decorated ovoo and 14 mineral springs, each with a carved wood plaque indicating its medicinal use. The ovoo, on the steppe above the spring and the Shishged gol and wetlands, has a heaped rock base with tree poles and branches forming a wide tipi. The ovoo is decorated with many blue khadags, carved plaques, and a number of horse heads. Its altar has a small wooden trough and a wooden mortar for pulverizing brick tea, and offerings of paper money and matches. The many of the 14 springs, by our count, were fitted with long wooden gutters -- dugout tree poles -- to pipe the mineral water for easy access.

PTD 2009-33: Huyt Davaa ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Ulaan Uul Sum

GPS: N51 11.664 E99 19.245; Elevation: 1769

Marshy mountain pass used as a migration crossing for local herders, with a Darkhad clan ovoo. The ovoo of very tall tree boles with a flat rock altar, is decorated with many blue khadags, white strips of cloth, bundles of horsehair, and a few horse heads. A nearby tree has a new horse head tied to the bole with a blue khadag.

September 4, 2009

PTD 2009-34: Bogj Davaa ovoo and shaman trees

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 26.691 E99 11.326; Elevation: 1644

Rocky pass over a ridge promontory that overlooks a small stream from the sacred Renchinlumbe Uul joining the Shishged gol; migration crossing for the Ukher (*Yxep*: cow) Darkhad moving to their summer camps at the confluence of the Shishged and Tengiss gols. The ovoo, a large stack of tree boles and branches over a rock base, has numerous

khadags in blue, yellow, white, red, and green, and offerings including a blue teapot holding paper money and a number of vodka bottles. The pass also has two larch trees recently decorated as shaman trees with khadags. Dukha guide Sanjim reported first visiting this ovoo in 1955/56 and because of its significance to him shared his snuff bottle with senior Botany Team member O. Sukhbaatar.

PTD 2009-35: Tengis River

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 28.989 E99 02.880; Elevation: 1559

Lunch site along the broad Tengis gol near its confluence with the Shishged gol. The area is summer pasture for Darkhad herders, especially for cow and yak herds. In the winter the herders either return to the area around Targan nuur and Tsagaannuur, or cross the Shishged at a low water ford and camp along the Saireg and Öl (*Өл*) gols. Tengis Gol is an important site for Mongolians as legend dictates that the Mongol clan originated from a blue-grey wolf and a fallow doe along a body of water named 'Tenggis' (see de Rachewiltz 2004: 231-234 for a discussion of the mythical location).

PTD 2009-36: Chinggis Rock ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 28.804 E99 03.048; Elevation: 1644

Historic Chinggis Khan-era site on a rocky dome above the confluence of the Shishged and Tengis gols; given the importance of Tengis as a ancient trail to Todz Tuva and beyond into Siberia the high dome would have provided an important defensive fortification. Local legend (recounted by Purev, 2001: 87) calls the mound "Chinggis Khan's ger foundation" and a group of small depressions Chinggis and his horse's footprints. The site has a long rock fence (measured by O. Sukhbaatar in 2009) and two rock circles (possibly ovoo that have been pulled down) that were apparently created in ancient or historic times. It is likely that Chinggis Khan's eldest son Joci (and not Chinggis Khan himself) visited this site to accept the peaceful surrender of the People of the Forest in 1207/08. The dome has a new ovoo of mound stones wrapped with blue khadags with a number of poles and a single cow's skull. The site also includes a few trees marked with khadags.

September 5, 2009

PTD 2009-37: Shavardakh (?) spring pasture

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 17.176 E99 07.064; Elevation: 2001

The easternmost beginning of the expansive marsh at the headwaters of the eastern Sarig gol, the area of the marsh closest to Kharmai and the winter camps. The marsh is the spring pastures for the Baruun (west) Dukha's reindeer herds. It is muddy, giving it a name something like *Шавардах* (Shavardakh), to cover with mud.

PTD 2009-38: Shavardakh (?) spring pasture

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 17.829 E99 04.437; Elevation: 1996

The westernmost ending of the expansive marsh at the headwaters of the eastern Sarig gol where Gongoric, the Shaman, has his spring cabin, the area furthest from Kharmai and the winter camps. The marsh is the spring pastures for the Baruun (west) Dukha's reindeer herds. This site is almost 4 km from the beginning of the marsh at site PTD 2009-38.

PTD 2009-39: Saireg Arshaan

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 17.840 E99 02.345; Elevation: 1910

This sacred mineral spring is used for medicinal treatments by both the Darkhad and Dukha. It has a large ovoo with commemorative plaques so long in length that they look like the poles of the ovoo; they are carved with the names and dates of visits. In all there are more than 80 carved offerings, mostly plaques. We were able to locate the plaque from Dukha guide Sanjim's first visit in 1991. An older ovoo is nearby and unique in that the poles are very precisely laid to form almost solid walls as we saw in the central ovoo at Tsagaanchuluutyn Ovoo, PTD 2009-13. The ovoos point the way to the mineral springs on the lower slope. Most notably there are two bathing cabins, one for men and one for women, with hollowed pole gutters bring in spring water to make a shower. Each of the multiple springs have a label for their medicinal use, and many have wooden gutters to channel the spring water. In the area of the springs there are old logs from the original structures prepared by the Buddhist monks. The spring was recently reconstructed with funds provided by a Tsagaannuur businessman.

PTD 2009-40: Ovoolog fall pasture

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 16.613 E98 58.842; Elevation: 2097

Fall pasture for reindeer in the sheltered valleys at the headwaters of the Ikh (big) Sarig gol, open shrub areas with grasses, sedges, and lichens. The trail along the stream has a number of deep holes and crevices, making the footing dangerous for the horses.

September 6, 2009

PTD 2009-41: Ovoolog ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 15.077 E98 57.078; Elevation: 2547

Ovoolog (in Tseepil and Tseepilmaa, 2005: Oboologyn eh, "Mother of Ovoolog") is a cluster of 13 rock ovoos on a barren ridge above the Ikh Sarig gol fall reindeer pastures, used for worship during the fall migration. The ovoos, constructed of flat slate, are in a single line with one ovoos in the pass below. The ovoos are very simply decorated following Dukha tradition with small number of plaques, animal figures (fish and bear), tools (horse sweat scraper), and weapons (pistol) carved from wood, and a few blue and white prayer cloths, khadags. The earliest dated carving is a commemorative plaque from 1984. Our Dukha guides conducted worship by burning artz (incense Juniper), adding khadags, and even scratching our initials and the date on a flat stone to make an impromptu plaque.

PTD 2009-42: Ovoolog fall camp

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 15.262 E98 56.947; Elevation: 2371

Fall reindeer camps of Khalzan, Batmonkh, Batzaya, and Doigie, located in the sheltered valleys at the headwaters of the Ikh Sarig gol, open shrub areas with four ortzes and up to 80 reindeer, including a number of reindeer bulls who were actively scrapping the velvet from their antlers preparing for mating season. Each of the families has a sacred reindeer marked with ribbon seters.

PTD 2009-43: Kharmai Winter Camp

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaannuur Sum

GPS: N51 17.246 E99 08.863; Elevation: 1823

Beautiful winter camp of Batzaya and Erdenchimig at the boundary of the steppe and taiga near the headwaters of a tributary of the Kharmai gol. The camp, used primarily for reindeer and horses, has barns and corrals, a storage baishin, a ger circle, and large pastures with stacks of drying hay that Batzaya has just cut. Soon the hay will be moved to the barn roofs and into a special corral. The pasture is enclosed on the steppe side by a fence.

September 8, 2009

PTD 2009-44: Sharga gol wetlands

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 31.310 E99 38.264; Elevation: 1609

Fall and winter pasture in the wide Sharga gol wetland with freshly cut hay. The wetland pastures are used by the Darkhad yak herders. As part of their long fall migration, the herd eats their way through the Sharga on the way to winter camps as far away as our destination in the Ikh Horoo gol (Erdenebaatar. 2003:25) valley north of Hovsgol Lake. We met the Dukha guides and horses at this site after driving by van around Targan nuur, and stopping at a summer camp owned by Bayaraa – a Todz Tuvan who was raised by a Darkhad family and now is a Darkhad Yak herder.

September 9, 2009

PTD 2009-45: Sharga gol at Urtrag (meridian) gol

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 35.420 E99 40.676; Elevation: 1607

Lunch at a traditional stopping place near where the Urtrag (meridian) gol joins the Sharga gol in the wetlands. After being blocked from directly crossing the wetlands because of the sucking mud, we rode along the west edge until we could cross along the north edge of the wetlands, passing camps with corrals and barns, even extra tall barns for camels. In winter 2008-2009 this area suffered a late winter zuud with severe losses of cows and yaks. Following the Urtrag gol there is a hard surface road where we met Russian tourists on horseback and pine nut pickers. The pickers, taking pine-

cones from tall Siberian pines and shelling them, are traveling on foot and in old large trucks. This is traditional employment to pay for going to school.

PTD 2009-46: Honogtsol campsite

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 37.504 E99 48.476; Elevation: 1845

Traditional overnight campsite for the Urtrag trail, as it indicated by its name *Хоногцол* that is derived from *хонох* (khonokh: to stay the night). Logs stored in the site appear to be from old corrals. Such camps for overnight stops must be correctly spaced and have adequate grass for groups of the twenty horses, as with our group.

September 10, 2009

PTD 2009-47: Old Urtrag Arshaan

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 39.091 E99 51.212; Elevation: 1966

This sacred mineral spring is no longer maintained but it has a number of interesting structures. It has an ovoos of sticks over a rock base that is decorated with commemorative plaques, a few carvings, blue khadags, white cloth strips, and a rock with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07). Another ovoos-like area has fancy turned-wood posts and a flying bird on a log pole – just as we saw at the Buddhist site Layslhundev (PTD 2009-22). The spring area has numerous springs with their medicinal use identified with signposts, some wooden gutters, and four bathing cabins, one of them a double size cabin. The cabins have pits for bathing in the mineral water. The area has a population of a rare sawwort, *Saussurea* sp., traditional medicinal plants that are collected for sale in the market at Muren (see Walker, 2007). Old Urtrag arshaan was of great significance to our guides as it was the location where Sanjim's mother Sadev died after being brought to the spring for treatment after a difficult childbirth. Sadev died in 1955, when Sanjim was fifteen, in the camping area for this sacred spring and was buried in the trees along the banks of the Urtrag gol. The guides visited her burial site, many for the first time, and worshiped with offerings of artz and khadags.

PTD 2009-48: Urtrag Arshaan

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 39.196 E99 51.720; Elevation: 1979

This sacred spring, replacing the older spring area sometime before the mid-1970s, has an amazing number and diversity of carvings. The ovoos, around a clump of three old larch boles—one now fallen, is formed from heaps of carvings with ropes of khadags in blue and white. In with the more typical commemorative plaques, like the one made by Sanjim for a visit with his daughter Arundel (called Ania by Walker, 2008), are fanciful carvings such as two notable fish, and a number of more modern subjects, such as a rocket dated 1974. The main altar is a large carved tree bole with a flat rock for burning artz, with a backdrop of a large plaque carved with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07). An additional altar tray has a carved truck – the very same type used by the nut pickers working in the area. The site includes numerous springs, each marked by the medicinal use, and four bathing cabins. The spring area has a lush wetland with remains of summer-blooming rare sawwort, *Saussurea* sp.

PTD 2009-49: Urtrag Davaa

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 40.018 E99 54.730; Elevation: 2273

This difficult mountain pass is one of two passes used by Renchinlumbe herders to reach their winter camps in the Ikh Horoo Valley. The annual migration through Urtrag is described in Wiltshire (2006: 196-217, as Utrag Pass). The pass has an ovoos with a base of rocks and a few splaying branches, that was constructed in 1988-89 according to its carved plaque. It has offerings of blue khadags, white strips of cloth, horse heads, and a pair of yak horns. The rocky road up to the pass was hard on our horse's unshod hoofs.

PTD 2009-50: Urtrag Davaa alpine tundra ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 39.329 E99 57.514; Elevation: 2338

Small ovoos of stacked rocks dot the margins of the small lakes in Urtrag Davaa. When Sanjim was a young boy in the 1940-50s this area was summer pasture for a few reindeer herding families; these ovoos may date from that time. Sanjim's family kept their reindeer nearby on the mountains just south of Urtrag, beyond the three Khuush (*Хүүш*) mountains.

PTD 2009-51: Urtrag Davaa, end of alpine tundra

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 38.601 E100 02.682; Elevation: 2223

Edge of the Urtrag basin, overlooking Ikh Horoo Valley, the Renchinlumbe yak winter pastures. To the north the highest mountain in the Sayans, the glacier capped Mönkh Saridag (*Мөнх сарьдаг*, also known as the sacred Bürenkhaan), and the Russian-Mongolian border range appear to grow out of the golden meadows.

PTD 2009-52: Ikh Horoo winter pasture

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Renchinlumbe Sum

GPS: N51 38.763 E100 03.540; Elevation: 2089

Overnight campsite near Ikh Horoo winter camps and the freshly cut winter pastures. Because the pastures are only used one season of the year, the grass is lush and tall – much to the liking of our horses.

September 11, 2009

PTD 2009-53: Ikh Horoo Valley

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 39.301 E100 15.532; Elevation: 1881

Lunch stop in the Ikh Horoo winter pastures near the large winter camps with barns, large corrals, and baishins. Although the migration trails from the Renchinlumbe summer pastures to these winter pastures are long and difficult, the conditions are so good in this valley that the herders prosper and the herds multiply.

PTD 2009-54: Shar nuur (Yellow Lake)

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 39.874 E100 27.677; Elevation: 1954

Overnight campsite at the beautiful crescent lake Shar nuur (Yellow lake), just under Mönkh Saridag (Mongolian: *Мөнх сарьдаг* or Bürenkhaan) the highest mountain in the Sayan Mountains at 3,491 meters, and the border between Siberia and Mongolia. The mountain seems very close and even small from our camp, but it is a massive, dangerous mountain that was never climbed until 1967. The Mongolians sent a climbing team up the mountain in 2007 to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the climb; I received a card about this climb from our translator Ogie's uncle in Khank. The clear waters of the small lakes around Shar nuur reflect the Mönkh Saridag ridgeline making it picture perfect. Mönkh Saridag is one of Dukha guide and shaman Khalzan's sacred mountain, represented by a female spirit.

September 12, 2009

PTD 2009-55: Hovsgol Lake road

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 38.660 E100 31.431; Elevation: 1743

After five days on horseback, we reach the road between Ikh Horoo and Khankh, and wait for vans with a herd of horses. The herd's yearlings eagerly greet the yearling traveling with us. Nearby we met Russian tourists who stop to take our photograph; in this area the Dukha guides and horses are a tourist attraction.

PTD 2009-56: Hovsgol Lake road

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 38.207 E100 32.537; Elevation: 1693

Our lunch stop down the road toward Khankh where we continue to wait for vans. Only after we flag down a motorcycle heading toward Horoo, do we get a message to the drivers that we came onto the road closer to Khank than expected. The message arrives and we are all found. When we leave for Khankh some of the guides go into town with us to visit relatives of Batmonkh's wife; they have brought their one-year old son Tsahiur for his first visit. The other guides and horses stay at this camp waiting for our drivers to bring back them for the return trip. We stay in Khank at the ger camp managed by Ogie's uncle.

PTD 2009-57: Havtsal ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 32.993 E100 38.657; Elevation: 1821

Tall ovoo with a base of white tumbled lake rocks and a tipi of long, thin larch boles. Some boles still have dried larch branches and needles, so these boles were recently added. The ovoo is decorated with a few blue khadags and white

strips of cloth. Of the three altars inside the ovoos, two are cut from large tree boles and one is a flat rock for burning artz. This gentle pass is a migration crossing for local herders.

September 13, 2009

PTD 2009-58: Khankhiin Arvan Gurvan (13) ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 27.193 E100 42.103; Elevation: 1697

The name of this ovoos *Арван Гурван* (Arvan Gurvan) means, literally, thirteen for the number of ovoos in the single east-west line. The ovoos are constructed of smooth, white lake rocks in a simple heap that is enclosed within a circle of the same rocks. Each of the ovoos has a central pole completely wrapped in blue, white, yellow, and a few green and red khadags. The central ovoos is larger with a very tall central pole with at least nine poles set as spears in the ovoos pile. Nearby two rocks form a duck with its own khadag. Horse heads, Buddhist flags, cigarettes, and Russian coins are offerings for the ovoos. These ovoos date to the restoration of the site in the last few years. An older line of ovoos is still visible in the grass just in front. Looking south Hovsgol Lake is laid out at your feet; to the north Mönkh Saridag now appears massive. This ovoos is one of the most sacred in the area, an ovoos for a very dangerous place as this is where originally riders, and now drivers, make their way out on the winter ice and head for the island Modon Khuis, the lake's tree covered "navel," for the quick crossing of the lake to reach the southern ports and Mongolia. This lake, and this very location, is the ancient trail to Buriatia, Lake Baikal, and Russian Siberia beyond.

PTD 2009-59: Toin gol ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 25.391 E100 47.334; Elevation: 1738

The poles of this simple ovoos lean over an old larch stump. It is decorated with blue khadags, white strips of cloth, two horse heads, and, at the time of this report, a brown bottle hanging from a long pole. This low pass, Shirdegiin davaa (?), just south of the Toin gol is the connection between the Khank wetlands and the mountainous taiga boundary, all parts of a local herder's annual migration.

PTD 2009-60: Turag Shagnuuliin Davaa ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 16.097 E100 51.171; Elevation: 1854

This leaning ovoos of branches and poles has one long pole with three banners, white, green, and blue. The ovoos is decorated with two horse heads and blue khadags. This low pass is in an area of sandy soil and is crossed during migration by local herders.

PTD 2009-61: Noyon gol ovoos at Olzii Hashiin Davaa

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 13.921 E100 50.647; Elevation: 1900

This leaning ovoos of brush, branches, boles, and bark is decorated with a central horse head and a blue khadag. It has one additional horse head. The site overlooks the sandy grasslands along the Noyon gol, and is used by local herders bringing their animals into the river valley.

PTD 2009-62: Lunch Stop along the Anjist gol

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N51 05.464 E100 43.789; Elevation: 1660

Lunch stop under a row of larch trees in a sandy valley at the mouth of the Anjist gol.

PTD 2009-63: Borsog Memorial ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N50 59.926 E100 43.051; Elevation: 1781

The ovoos is large and well constructed with a base of rock and thick timbers forming a secure foundation for a tipi of branches and boles. It is decorated with three horse heads, blue khadags, and a string of Buddhist prayer flags. Adjacent is a new sign from the Mongolia Sunrise to Sunset project and has the message in Mongolian "Do not dump your waste if you respect nature." The ovoos is just above the beautiful Borsog inlet. The site of this ovoos looks across Khovsgol Lake to Modon Khuis, the lake's sacred island whose name is literally, "tree covered navel." The ovoos and the nearby small memorial, a small white pyramid structure, are for Russians whose automobile fell through the ice, into the lake near the island.

PTD 2009-64: Santyn (Santgan) ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Khank Sum

GPS: N50 52.557 E100 41.926; Elevation: 2066

This ovoo is quite exceptional as it has both unique structure and materials. The base is stacked volcanic rocks with lake rocks on top giving it a two-tone appearance. A number of poles (nine?) surround this base. A very tall center pole has a crowning metal structure with a number of elaborate symbols -- a central trident, sun, and moon, and an encircling band with *Ханх сум* (Khankh sum). The ovoo is decorated with numerous blue khadags with a few white, yellow, red, and green, and each of the base poles are completely khadag-wrapped with the front poles joined by roping of khadags with a fringe of more khadags. The central pole has white cloth strips and khadags tied at intervals all the way up the pole, with multicolor banners tied to a circle of pegs about one meter from the top. The ovoo offerings include chipmunk pelts, yak hair, horsehair, and a tea pitcher holding paper money. A tire inner tube caught in the sun's spoke-like rays creates an interesting design. This is a very significant ovoo as this difficult stretch of road rules the connection of Khankh to the rest of Mongolia. It marks the boundary of Khankh sum and is a site for clan workshop.

PTD 2009-65: Fork in the road

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 45.165 E100 32.092; Elevation: 1699

Just north of Ikh Khilengiin (Hilengiyn) Davaa, we came to a fork in the road and took the less traveled forest track -- and got stuck repeatedly.

PTD 2009-66: Wet meadow

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 43.686 E100 33.371; Elevation: 1774

Beginning of the wet meadow where our vans were stuck in the mud over night. In crossing a low pass, we are no longer in the watershed of Hovsgol Lake; these meadows drain into the Khokhoo gol on the way to the Arig gol near Chandmani-Ondor.

September 14, 2009

PTD 2009-67: End of wet meadow

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 43.424 E100 33.727; Elevation: 1773

End of the wet meadow where the drivers cut a track through the trees to get our vans out of the mud. In almost 18 hours we made just over one half kilometer.

PTD 2009-68: Herder's ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 41.217 E100 40.840; Elevation: 1581

Simple brush ovoo with a few khadags in a golden hay meadow -- no photograph. In this valley near Ulaan Asgat we followed a road to the north.

PTD 2009-69: Herder's ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 44.859 E100 44.480; Elevation: 1894

Roadside ovoo with a base of rocks and some brush and branches, with blue khadags. The offerings are mainly empty vodka bottles. The ovoo for local herders is located in a small, forested pass, a burned area with many birch trees and seedlings. The forests east of Khovsgol Lake have more birch trees than those in the area around the Darkad.

PTD 2009-70: Halh Bulnay entrance ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 46.244 E100 47.144; Elevation: 1794

Ovoo in Rashaan (spring) davaa, the entrance to the Halh Bulnay hot spring resort. The ovoo has a small heap of rock with an ochre-stained post and a curved pole forming the tipi base for brush and branches. Another post has a carved and painted wooden sign with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07). The poles are wrapped with khadags, blue and one yellow, and white cloth strips.

PTD 2009-71: Halh Bulnay (Bulnai) Arshaan

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 46.549 E100 47.976; Elevation: 1682

Sacred hot spring and resort with sanatorium and many small bathing houses, each with door signs noting the temperatures of its waters between 28 and 53°C. The spring area, along a small stream in a wetland, is enclosed by a wooden fence. The main spring has a line of blue khadags along a wooden fence that protects its headwaters, large rocks including one with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07), and offerings of paper money. At least 12 small cabins, whitewashed siding with blue doors and signs indicating their use and temperature, sit askew over individual springs. The cabins have spring-fed bathing pits. Some older bathing stalls are found along the back row. On the hillside above the cabins are two sanatorium buildings, and at the top of the hill another ovoo. Halh Bulnay was one of around 20 springs used as a sanatorium resort for collective workers, including local herders, during the Soviet era. Nearby are tourist cabins and a new tourist camp owned by our translator Ogie's relatives where we have lunch.

PTD 2009-72: Herder's ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Chandmani-Ondor Sum

GPS: N50 34.872 E100 47.443; Elevation: 1436

Roadside ovoo of heaped rocks with seven branches –two decorated with blue khadags, a short post, and a white rock with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07). The ovoo is in a low pass used as a migration crossing for local herders, just above the Khokhoo gol.

PTD 2009-73: Herder's ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 30.469 E101 14.077; Elevation: 1293

Roadside ovoo of brush, branches, and cut larch poles constructed around the base of a now-dead larch tree. The ovoo is decorated with three khadags and has an altar area of rock with a few vodka bottles. The ovoo is in a low pass used as a migration crossing for local herders, just above the Arig gol between its tributaries the Kholman and Darhint gols.

PTD 2009-74: Darhint (Darkhint) Ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 30.733 E101 17.502; Elevation: 1195

Darhint ovoo, connected with the Dayan Deerkh Monastery, represents Yellow Shamanism blending shamanistic and Buddhist traditions that is common in this area (see Purev, 2003: 63)⁴. This important site has 13 ovoos in a single line --12 representing the animals of the Chinese zodiac and one a large central ovoo honoring a Buddhist deity; a lion carved from white stone with a banner on a tall pole; a Buddhist figure carved in relief on a flat stone, and two signs. The ovoos are tipis of poles and branches, decorated with largely blue khadags. Each of the 12 zodiac ovoos has an altar with a wooden display case with a framed depiction – now completely faded or absent; a plaque with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07); and at least two carved plaques of the zodiac animal – one a fanciful painted cutout. The central ovoo has an offering table shiree; a display case with a Buddhist ritual bell, offerings of paper money, and an empty vodka bottle; a wooden carving of the Buddhist deity; and a plaque with the Tibetan Buddhist protective mantra.

The deity and owner of the site, Ochirvaani (Vajrapani) as named on the upper right of the depiction⁵, is a wrathful Buddhist deity that is the protector of the faith and of Mongolia. With his right arm he lifts his vajra -- thunderbolt to the heavens and with his left arm lassoes enemies of the faith. He represents the power of all Buddhas. With three flashing eyes, barred fangs, hair standing on end, and typically a thundercloud blue body Ochirvaani is frightful. The phrase “*Мөрөн хот нутгийн зөвлөл*” (my translation: Muren town local council), with the dates 2004, 2004, 2007, and 2008, appears carved on the altar rock, on the stone with a deity carved in relief, on a carved plaque, and on the sign.

PTD 2009-75: 100 branch tree

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 32.350 E101 27.756; Elevation: 1171

Sacred 100-branch tree with a fence of blue khadags, and some white, yellow and green khadags, along the road between Chandmani-Ondor and Tsagaan Uur. The larch tree appeared to have a diameter of as great as two meters and numerous branches sweeping upward. This site was visited after sunset and with only a pale moon for photographing the tree.

September 15, 2009

PTD 2009-76: Tsagaan-Uur Sum

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 32.797 E101 31.748; Elevation: 1134

Overnight campsite just east of Tsagaan Uur on the flood plain of Uur gol. The next night one of our vans would become stuck in the Uur gol nearby while being towed across by a tractor.

PTD 2009-77: Ongony Davaa ovoo

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 32.680 E101 41.978; Elevation: 1270

This large and imposing ovoos sits in a small opening in a park-like larch and birch forest encircled by a sandy road. The ovoos is a broad tipi of larch poles and branches decorated with numerous blue khadags, including a line of khadags hanging from a horizontal pole, on its altar side. The altar includes a shiree offering table and an open case both holding gifts or paper money, matches, and cigarettes. The ovoos is in a low pass used as a migration crossing for local herders, between the Uur and Uylgan river valleys.

PTD 2009-78: Suvarga Hairhan ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 31.038 E101 46.195; Elevation: 1095

This ovoos used for joint Buddhist and Shamanist worship sits on a mountaintop overlooking the Uylgan river valley. The mountain was photographed at a distance from near Nara's summer camp where she fed us freshly baked sourdough bread with cream butter, and distilled milk vodka in a large chamber over a simmering pot of fermented milk. Nara told us the story of her mother, a Buriat who, as a young girl, accidentally herded her sheep and goats over the Russian-Mongolian border and was never allowed to cross back to her family. She spent the rest of her life as a Mongolian, wondering if her family knew she was alive.

PTD 2009-79 Horse Meeting Place

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 31.180 E101 52.184; Elevation: 1244

The steppe-forest boundary near the winter camps on the slopes above the Uylgan river valley. This is the area where we met the border guards' horses guide to ride to the Dayan Deerkh cave.

PTD 2009-80: Dayan Derkh ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 32.942 E101 58.887; Elevation: 1417

This worship site at the base of the Dayan Deerkh cliff has lines of khadags, mainly blue but including all colors and scraps of silk, strung between larch trees and wrapping their bases, a shiree offering table with opened bricks of tea, and an altar rock with at least 15 ritual brass candle holders. A small clump of birch trees are also decorated with khadags. We left our horses at this place to climb up to the main cave.

PTD 2009-81: Dayan Derkh cave

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 33.053 E101 58.915; Elevation: 1507

The cave, entered through a square-cut opening in the white cliff and by then climbing down a handmade ladder into the main chamber, has an elaborate altar of stacked rocks. The altar is heaped with multicolor khadags, with blue khadag roping connecting to the corners of the chamber. The altar has a flat rock with barely visible paintings that is wrapped in prayer beads and blue and yellow khadags, a carved wooden warrior figure wearing a brass shaman's mirror that is riding a horse, and a framed illustration of the "owner;" all representations of Dayan Deerkh himself. The altar is topped with wooden carving of weapons, such as a highly detailed bow and arrow and multiple (at least five) 2-3 meter spears or knives completely wrapped in khadags. A shiree offering table has a brick of tea, a flat rock for burning ground artz (juniper incense); a display case with dozens of Buddhist brass offering bowls, candle holders, horses, and other small ritual objects. At the back of the chamber a curtain of silk panels and a painted tanka conceals the opening to a passageway that travels back and up into the ridge with more handmade ladders for accessing more and higher chambers. The wall of the cave has some writing and wads of paper money stuffed into some small holes.

The cave, located on the Deerkh gol, is part of the Dayan Deerkh (alternative spellings: Deerh, Derhe, Derkh, Derx) Sharavliin complex—the center where shamans and Buddhist lamas worshiped together (Shimamura, 2004:650). In 1864

a Shaman Prayer Center of Outer Mongolia was established at the Dayan Deerkh Monastery, just down the Deerkh gol from the cave, effectively placing yellow shamans or “shaman prayers” under the supervision of Buddhist lamas and merging their religious practices (Purev, 2003:58). As evidence of this merging, the Buddhist monastery was named for Dayan Deerkh, the patron of shamanic initiation for Khalkhs and Buriats (Pegg, 2001: 141) that had been worshipped as an ongon (spirit) since the Chinggis Khan era, the 13th Century (Purev, 2003:58). The legend, somewhat confused with that of Chinggis Khan’s shaman Tiv Tengger, is that Dayan Deerkh stole the wife (or daughter) of Chinggis Khan and when he was about to be captured, hid in the cave and changed into a rock (Purev, 2003:43). Until the 1920s a stone image in the cave represented his incarnated spirit (Pegg, 2003: 141).

PTD 2009-82: Horse meeting place

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

GPS: N50 31.186 E101 52.179; Elevation: 1240

The steppe-forest boundary near the winter camps on the slopes above the Uylgan river valley. This is the area where the van drivers waited for us when we rode the border guards’ horses to the Dayan Deerkh cave.

[no GPS]: Herder’s ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Tsagaan-Uur Sum

This roadside ovoos look like a pile of brush except for the blue khadags and offerings of paper money.

September 16, 2009

PTD 2009-83: Hereet Ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Erdenebulgan Sum

GPS: N50 22.116 E101 35.187; Elevation: 1547

This large bushy ovoos sits in Badaryn Davaa, a high mountain pass that is one of the few connections between the Eg gol and the upper Uur gol. It marks the border between Tsagaan Uur and Erdenebulgan Sums. The ovoos, a tipi of long larch boles filled in with many sticks and branches, is decorated with blue khadags, and a few white, yellow, green, and red khadags, around its altar. Offerings include paper money, empty vodka bottles, horsehair, a Buddhist “wheel of Dharma,” an artificial flower, and a used tire inner tube.

PTD 2009-84: Huvtyin dorolj Ovoos

Location: Hovsgol Aimag, Erdenebulgan Sum

GPS: N49 50.218 E101 36.523; Elevation: 1535

This small ovoos sits in a low pass between the Huvtyin and Chichin gols. It has a single layer of white rocks covered by a short, but broad tipi of branches. It is decorated with three blue khadags.

September 17, 2009

PTD 2009-85: Husuit Monument Ovoos

Location: Selenge Aimag, Baruunburen Sum

GPS: N49 05.083 E104 36.569; Elevation: 1314

These two spectacular ovoos mark entrance into Baruunbüren sum in Selenge Aimag. They stand on the ridgeline pass above the main road to Erdenet. One ovoos, the closest to the road, is a huge heap of rocks with khadag-draped poles emerging from its top and an altar rock, engraved with the Tibetan protective mantra *Om Mani Padme Hum* (as in PTD 2009-07), that holds three Buddha figures and a ‘speak-no-evil’ monkey. Offerings include an empty frame – perhaps originally holding a Buddhist image, a painting of a mother and child, matches, paper money, a pair of crutches, and horse heads. The main ovoos, higher on the ridge, is stupa shaped, constructed of tightly fitted flat stones topped by a post with a carved finale. In addition to this post, eight similar poles surround the ovoos; the posts are khadag draped and connected by lines hung with khadags and printed Buddhist prayer flags in multiple colors. The altar niche has a rock engraved with the protective mantra, three tea pots – two metal and one multicolored pottery with its opening tightly covered with multiple khadags, a brick of pressed tea, a intricately carved horse scraper, matches, and paper money. The site includes a khadag-decorated birch shaman tree and a large sum marker with the names Selenge and Baruunburen, and stylized wheat sheaths celebrating the wheat production in this aimag.

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(Footnotes)

1 ཨོཾ་མ་ཎི་པུ་ཊེ་ཧྲི་མུ་མུ་

² Plaques with Buddha (1), General Hanuman on horseback (see footnote 3 below) (4), King of Shambhala (1), Buddhist symbols (2), and rabbit (1); carved bird (4), bear (1), yak (1), trees (1), arrow (1), sword (1), other weapons (2), and holder for unidentified stand (1).

³ General Hanuman is the final reincarnation the Bogd Gegen of Mongolia. The General, along with the last King of Shambhala, will lead the final battle against the enemies of Buddhism.

⁴ Purev (2003:63) notes that, because of the conflicts between shamanists and Buddhists, Yellow Shaman worshipping at Dayan Deerkh Monastery were not allowed to return to the west of Lake Khovsgol and the Darkhat and remained in the vicinity of Dayan Deerkh, including Darkhint and Khokhoo.

⁵ The name Ochirvaani (or Ochirvani) is used for a traditional Mongolian deity that is "merged" with the Buddhist bodhisattva Vajrapani.