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THE LAST OUTSTANDING MONGGHUL FOLKSONG SINGER  
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*He has swept aside all other Mongghul and Tibetan folksong singers in his hometown.*

*He has memorized many Tibetan Buddhist scriptures and chanted them proudly throughout his life.*

*He is the last outstanding Mongghul folksong singer among the Mongghul folksong singers.*

*He is a high-ranking Mongghul folksong singer who has taken part in a number of Mongghul and Tibetan weddings, as well as other rituals and folksong competitions in the Huzhu area.*

*He has taught his Mongghul knowledge to many Mongghul youths. During the Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) many young Mongghul continued to secretly visit his home, bringing gifts and asking him to teach them Mongghul folksongs and oral literature. Once, he was punished by local officials for continuing to teach such 'outdated feudal culture.'*

*Though he may look 'common', he is quite humorous, eloquent, and knowledgeable.*

Lamuzhaxi, Mongghul, is from Guangma Village, Danma Town, Huzhu Mongghul Autonomous County, in Haidong Municipality. He speaks Mongghul, Tibetan, and the local variety of Chinese. He was ninety-two years old when my wife, Jugui, and I visited him in his home on 1 March 2014. In the following, Lamuzhaxi retells his life story, especially his experience as a folksinger. Jugui and I first recorded his voice,<sup>1</sup> and later wrote down what he had said.

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<sup>1</sup> The recording was made using a SONY IC RECORDER ICD-UX543F.

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My name is Lamuzhaxi. I was born in Guangma Village on the twentieth day of the ninth lunar month in 1923. I have a younger brother and a younger sister. I had an older sister, but she died soon after birth – nobody knew why. My younger sister married into a man's home in our village. My mother, Lamutari, died at the age of ninety-two. Her natal home was in Shdangja Village, Danma Town. She got her name from Shdangja Nengneng, a female goddess. Father's name was Nengnengbog (1897-1963). My grandfather, Zhumaxja, was born in Jughuari Village, Wushi Town. He married into my grandmother's family, because at that time, their family had no son. My grandparents cared for me very affectionately until I was four or five years old, when I was old enough to take care of myself while playing with other children in village lanes. When I was ten, I became responsible for looking after my younger brother and sister while other family members went out working in the fields.

When I was about fourteen, I heard there was a school in Eastern Danma Village, about five kilometers south of my village. One day, I asked Father if I could go study there, because it was the only school in our area. My sudden question surprised Father. Why did his son want to study Chinese? At that time, no one in my village had ever studied Chinese. Nobody went to school. After I repeatedly asked him, Father finally agreed, led me to the school, and enrolled me. It was an elementary school and was built at a site where Eastern Danma Village's temple had formerly been located. I could still see a painted *purghan*<sup>2</sup> on the wall of our classroom when I went to study in the school.

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<sup>2</sup> The *purghan* [*pram*] is a deity represented in the form of a seated image carried in a sedan chair by four men, or a cloth-covered pole held by a single man. The *purghan* permeates Mongghul village life. It is available for consultation and represents the possibility that supplicants' distresses may be alleviated. It is consulted to identify a suitable spouse, treat illness, exorcise evil, ensure well-being and good harvests, and alleviate droughts. In the case of a seated *purghan*, moving forward is affirmative while moving backwards is negative. Pole *purghan* move up and down to signify a positive answer. *Purghan* communicate through interaction between an elder who asks the *purghan* questions and a man who holds the sedan poles and, in the case of a pole *purghan*, the man who holds the pole.

There was only one teacher in the school. He was a local Chinese, from somewhere to the south, maybe from today's Halazhigou Township, Huzhu County. During the three years I studied in the school, a herder from Lasizikoori Village often bullied me as I was passing his village on the way to and from school every day. This made me very angry, and we often fought. Once, he even injured me, and when Father heard this, he took me out of school. He was extremely angry when I told him the details of the situation, and he was determined to solve the problem. At that time, Father was a government administrator<sup>3</sup> for the three villages of Guangma, Warima, and Xiuma, which meant he was powerful in those three villages. He wanted to build a new school for those three villages, so the boys from Lasikoori Village would no longer bully our students. In addition, our village was too far from the school in Eastern Danma.

At that time, Father had a close relationship with Zhuashidi Nangsuo,<sup>4</sup> who was a very powerful person locally – even the local governors in Danma Township could not control him. Father said to Zhuashidi Nangsuo, "Our children need to learn knowledge. There is not one single knowledgeable person in the three villages of Zhuashidi, Guangma, and Warima. We will withdraw our students from Danma School, and build a new school in our village for them to study in." Zhuashidi Nangsuo supported Father's new plan, and a

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<sup>3</sup> A *baozhang*, a low level administrator in the *baojia* system during the Republic of China. Usually, a *baozhang* was set up for every dozen to one hundred households. The position of *baozhang* rotated among the households within the *bao*, however, powerful landlords sometimes monopolized the position. Their primary responsibilities were local policing duties and carrying out government dictates (Yan and Wang:195).

<sup>4</sup> Angsuo, one of Tughuans, or internal affairs officers. During the period of 1573-1619 under the Ming Dynasty, it was granted by Tibetan religious elites to Mongghuls. There were three *angsuo* in Huzhu: Tuhun Angsuo (also called Tuguan Angsuo), Xawaai Angsuo (also called Shibadonggou Angsuo) and Zhade Angsuo (also called Zhuashitu or Baizhade Angsuo). The position was hereditary. They governed the local people in present day Hongyazigou and Halazhigou townships and Wushi Town. The *angsuo* system was abolished in 1930 after Huzhu was established as a county (Yan and Wang:864).

new school was built in Warima Village, which is the most central of the three villages, and was thus the most convenient place for the three villages' students to attend school. The school's courtyard wall was built from rammed earth, and there were six rooms inside the courtyard. The money to build the school was collected from all the households, and part was also donated from the Nangsuu himself.

After the school was built, a local Chinese teacher was invited there to teach in Chinese. He taught from three books: *The Disciple Rules*, *The Three Character Primer* and *The Book of Family Names*. At that time, there were only a few students in the school. The teacher's salary was paid in the paper money of the Republic of China. It was collected from all the villages, and each village paid a different amount according to how much land it had.

Once the school was built in Warima Village my educational career reached a turning point. Late one afternoon, several village children and I were playing in a patch of wild roses<sup>5</sup> on a high slope below my village. Suddenly, one of the children found an arrow on the ground. We were all surprised to see the sharp-headed arrow, and decided to make a bow to test it. We chopped at the wild rose bush, but, unfortunately, a twig flicked into my right eye. I immediately felt excruciating pain. Blood and other liquid flowed from my eye. In the following days it became swollen, and then gradually it shriveled up and I became blind in my right eye. That year, I was sixteen years old. Fortunately, my family invited a local deity to treat my injured eye. We also invited more than ten monks to my home to chant Buddhist scriptures, otherwise I would have lost my life from the infection. Afterwards, I continued going to school, but did not do very well because of the problem with my eye.

My family had a shortage of men to do labor – only my mother worked in the fields. Father was afraid of work. I never once saw him work in the field – he was afraid his clothes would get dirty. He always dressed well and neatly, and went out to do his administrative business daily. Because of this, I finally dropped out school and began working with my mother in the family fields. At that time my younger brother and sister were too young to work.

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<sup>5</sup> *Rosa xanthina* Lindl. (M. xralijin).

Apart from working in the fields, I used my knowledge of Chinese to assist Father in writing, recording, and accounting various village affairs as part of his administrative position. Many villagers also came to ask me for help when they needed to write or read Chinese, or to do some simple accounting. From this work, I continued to expand my knowledge and skills, even though I had stopped studying in school. I became known as a 'knowledgeable' man in the three villages.

I married when I was sixteen years old. My wife's name was Niiga (1923-1986) and she was from Gurija Village, Danma Town. She died from pleurisy. My mother and her mother were sisters, and they were both from Shdangja Village, Danma Town. My mother was the elder sister. It was said that once, my mother and my wife's mother were going to Rgulang Monastery.<sup>6</sup> At that time, they were both pregnant. They were walking and chanting pleasantly on the road to the monastery, and my mother said to her younger sister, "Little Aunt,<sup>7</sup> if the child in my belly is a boy, and yours is a girl, please give your daughter to become my son's wife. On the other hand, if you have a son and I have a daughter, I promise to give my daughter to become your son's wife when they grow up. If both of them are sons, they will become sworn brothers, and if they are daughters, they will become sworn sisters. Is that OK for you?"

"It's a great idea! Today we are on the way to a sacred place. Our important decision will be supported by Rgulang Monastery!" her younger sister applauded. They had reached this agreement.

Later, my mother gave birth to me, a son, and my mother's younger sister gave birth to a girl. When my mother's younger sister's girl and I grew up, we were married without hesitation, just as my mother and her younger sister had previously agreed.

I have two sons. My first son's name is Sishidendanzhuu (b. 1941), and my second son's name is Gindindarijii (b. 1950). I have four daughters. The first daughter's name is Zhuaxi (b. 1940), and she married into a Tibetan family in Gantan Village, Wushi Town. The

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<sup>6</sup> Rgulang (Youningsi); Dgon lung dgon pa, a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Huzhu County.

<sup>7</sup> Mongghul women moved into their husbands' homes once they married. Sisters call each other 'Aunt', especially after they have children.

second daughter, named Zhuuxji (b. 1957), married into a Mongghul family in Mula Smeen Village, Weiyuan Town. The third one is called Chuangwa (b. 1959), and she married into Maja Raxi Village, Weiyuan Town. The fourth one is called Linxjin (b. 1962), and she married into Ziiri Tang Village, Danma Town. They all married into Mongghul families. Now all my daughters take care of me nicely. If they learn that I have a cold or am feeling unwell, they immediately come to visit me. They are very filial to me, and often invite me to stay in their home. But, I mostly decline, because I like staying in my own home.

Currently, I live together with my second son, one of my grandsons, the grandson's wife, and two great-grandchildren.

This year I'm ninety-two years old. I get up at seven o'clock every morning. I no longer offer incense and make prostrations on the roof every morning, like I used to. My son does it instead, because I'm old, and it's difficult for me to climb up the ladder to the roof. After washing my face, I sit down on the bed and chant Buddhist scriptures while I drink my morning tea. After I eat bread for my breakfast, I continue chanting Buddhist scriptures while other family members go to work in the fields. If it's sunny, I boil a pot of tea and take it to them in the fields at about lunchtime. I'm unable to go to pray in my local temple, which is located in Zhuashidi Village, about three kilometers away, because my knees get painful if I walk too much. After lunch, I chant Buddhist scriptures until I go to bed at about nine clock in the evening. The main scripture I chant every day is *Zhualima*. Chanting it is related to all kinds of daily things; for example, if you had an evil dream the night before, it indicates that some misfortune will befall the family, so I chant to avoid it. In addition, chanting *Zhualima* protects family members and keeps them safe from disease and disaster, avoid quarrels and fights both in and outside the family, gives longevity, and also brings more children and grandchildren. From early morning to late night, I can chant *Zhualima* more than twenty times. In a word, my daily work is to chant Buddhist scripture.

Mongghul, Tibetan, and Chinese people live mixed together in my village. When I was young, Tibetans still spoke their language, but nowadays they no longer do – they speak the local Chinese language

instead. In my childhood, I spoke Mongghul with Mongghul children and Tibetan with Tibetan children when we played together in the village lanes or herded on the high slopes. By doing this, I learned Tibetan. I rarely played with Chinese children, so my Chinese language, including reading and writing, was mostly learned in school, where teachers only allowed us to speak Chinese.

When I started learning Tibetan songs, I asked the singers to tell me the lyrics in Tibetan. Then, I wrote down the sound of the Tibetan in Chinese characters, using a brush and ink. Because I could speak Tibetan and learned Chinese characters, it was easy for me to learn Tibetan songs in this way. I never learned to read Tibetan.

When I was young, I always enjoyed the folksongs whenever there were drinking parties or weddings and gradually, I became more and more interested in listening to and singing folksongs. When I was in my twenties, I realized that I would have to learn Tibetan songs, otherwise I would be defeated by others in singing competitions, and I felt it would be a great shame if I were defeated by them. Later, after I had learned some folksongs, and had gained some fame in our area, some people would say to each other, "Be careful of this great singer!" if they encountered me at drinking parties or other occasions when folksongs were sung. Then I would tell them, "Yes, you should be careful of me, but I don't need to worry about any of you." Meanwhile, I always told myself secretly that I should be wary of everyone.

I exerted a lot of effort to learn Tibetan folksongs, with the sole aim of never being defeated. At that time, I promised myself that I would win every folksong competition, whenever or wherever they were carried out. With this motivation, I learned folksongs and competed with numerous singers on numerous occasions. In the end, I really did achieve my goal – I never once lost face in a singing competition in my whole life.

My grandfather did not know any songs. Father learned some, but not many. So I once told Father, "Father, your songs are so limited that you are unable to take part in formal celebrations and compete with other singers." I learned more than Father. I started learning folksongs formally when I was in my twenties... almost thirty. At the beginning, I just listened while others were singing. The more I

listened, the more interested I became, and I found out the rules of singing Tibetan songs. I realized that to sing Tibetan songs, you need to play tricks on each other. This pushed me to not only learn more songs, but also to study them each in great detail. If I found a man who knew a lot of great songs, I tried my best to ask him to teach me. "You know so many songs. Please instruct me. You are getting old. Instruct me, and I will keep your songs in the future." I mostly learned songs from singers in my village, and from Zhuashidi Village.

My best teacher was a Tibetan monk, named Losiza, from Zhuashidi Village, Danma Town. At that time he was a monk in Mantuu Monastery.<sup>8</sup> He was so knowledgeable in Tibetan Buddhist scriptures that no one in the surrounding area could compete with him, not even monks from Rgulang, the largest and most prestigious monastery in the area. Losiza Monk's magic Buddhist scriptures were so efficacious that he was often invited to protect villages from hailstones during the summer and autumn. Once he was invited, he went atop a hill, made prostrations to Heaven and then began chanting Buddhist scriptures. His chanting made the black rolling clouds immediately split apart and change direction. Local villagers appreciated his assistance and paid him generously in paper money and grain.

I studied *Szii* (divination) and *Rdang*<sup>9</sup> from Losiza Monk. At that time, only Losiza Monk had really mastered these two long philosophical scriptures. No other monks had grasped them as well as him. Whenever I was free, I visited him at his home to learn from him. Once, Losiza Monk made fun of me and asked, "I can teach you, but I'm worried that you will murder somebody if you learn them too well." He was suggesting that I was learning Buddhist scriptures just to defeat other people in song competitions. I listened to him chant, and then I wrote down the scriptures in Chinese characters. When I was back home, I reviewed what Losiza Monk had taught. I visited

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<sup>8</sup> A monastery located in Danma Town.

<sup>9</sup> Here *rdang*, a Tibetan word, means to mix, blend and mingle. It refers to the mixing of the three religious scriptures (*Sanjiaojing*) from Buddhism, Daoism, and Shenism. They summon each of the multitudinous gods by name in Tibetan. We are sure the three religions are Buddhism, Daoism, and Shenism, and do not include Confucianism. Reported by Monk Gen Deng (b. 1968), from Rgulang Monastery.



him whenever I had free time, including early mornings, lunchtime, and even deep in the night. In addition, I began singing the two scriptures on some drinking and singing occasions.

In addition to studying with the Losiza Monk, I studied some other songs from other singers. I always studied in the same way as with Losiza Monk.

My first daughter married into Gantan Tibetan Village in Wushi Town. In the past, everyone in the village spoke Tibetan. In 2014, only those over the age of fifty still spoke it. My daughters' marriage created an opportunity for to me to go there and learn Tibetan folksongs from Tibetan singers. At that time, there were many singers in the village – in particular, there were many Tibetan *hguandii*.<sup>10</sup> Every time I visited the village, I would use up a thick stack of paper transcribing lyrics, which I brought home and quickly reviewed again and again until finally, I completely grasped them.

During this intense time of folksong study, I often carried a notebook, brush, and a bottle of ink in my pockets all day long. Even if I met a singer on the road, I would ask them to stop their walking, and we would sit together, and beseech them to sing with me. After parting, I would think back and remember as I walked and wrote down any new things they had sung to me. Truly, I was infatuated with learning folksongs.

In all, I know *Szii*, *Qarog* (Formation of the Earth),<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> A *hguandii* begins his study of Buddhist scriptures inside 108 tents in an uninhabited place, encapsulated in such expressions as '*qulangshidari so*' 'sit by a well and learn scriptures in tents'. The *hguandii* sits crossed-leg for long periods in the course of learning scripture and his master's magic arts. *Hguandii* are capable of both good and evil; they summon and command evil. In certain circumstances, a *hguandii* might expel evil from an ailing person's body. They also can send illness to a certain person. A female body part strengthens their magic power. Consequently, *hguandii* fasten the hair of a young dead woman to their own hair. An eighteen-year-old girl's foot-bone is regarded as a potent weapon in expelling evils, while a girl's flesh is considered a *hguandii*'s delicious food. They polish their bone weapons on the bones of dead young girls.

<sup>11</sup> This song is about how the Earth formed in the past. Initially, Heaven and Earth were in darkness; later the great deities created all living beings. It is sung antiphonally with questions and answers. It is said that certain high-ranking singers needed several days and nights to conclude this folksong.

*Zhualima, Rdang, Huni*<sup>12</sup> and *Xog* (cross talk). These are all sung in Tibetan, not Mongghul. I can't sing any songs in Mongghul. Historically, our area was Tibetan, as can be seen from the names of village: Guangma (Upper Village), Warima (Middle Village), and Xuuma (Lower Village, also known as Zhuashidi,). People here only sing Tibetan songs. Mongghul songs, for example, Tangdarihgiima,<sup>13</sup> are mostly sung in remote mountainous areas.<sup>14</sup> Historically, all famous Mongghul singers sang in Tibetan, not Mongghul.

I thought it was disgraceful or shameful to be defeated by rivals during folksong matches. One learns folksongs in order to show one's ability in public gatherings, such as weddings, family affairs, or village or household celebrations. If a family held a wedding in a village, I always went there and sat in an inconspicuous place or in a corner so that other guests would not pay attention to me. I listened and listened and waited for a chance to sing. Then I (sometimes with my partners) started to sing. At first, our songs just praised the hosts. For example, if it was at a wedding in a groom's home, we might sing:

How venerable the hosts are!  
The hosts ought to be offered phoenix feathers,  
The hosts ought to be offered *qilin* horns.

The hosts ought to be offered lion's milk,  
From head to toe and from toe to head,  
The hosts ought to be covered with silk and satin.

I would praise them with songs like this until eventually, I would ask them to sing a certain song, which I would pretend to not know well. "Could you please just teach me?" I would say. "I would appreciate it very much if you taught me." This would put them in a bind if they didn't know the song I asked for. Actually, I would just be

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<sup>12</sup> It is a traditional Mongghul folksong historically recorded in Tibetan because Mongghul had no written system. The folksong was composed by a Mongghul leader named Shba who was eventually imprisoned. During his incarceration he felt sad and alone and composed this folksong to reflect Mongghul history from the standpoint of his personal experience.

<sup>13</sup> A popular Mongghul song.

<sup>14</sup> Such as in Dongshan Township.

tricking them, because in fact, I would know the song well, and also knew that they didn't know it, and wouldn't be able to respond. The result is that they would be disgraced.

"We understand that you're asking for a certain song, but we are all sorry that we don't know this song very well," one of the guests would answer, their face showing embarrassment and helplessness.

Hearing their apologies, I would secretly celebrate to myself.

In other cases, I would sing at weddings to praise the bride's escorts:

The brightest star is Venus,  
The highest quality wood is sandalwood,  
The best relatives are those of the married woman's parents  
    home,  
The most wondrous mountain is snow-covered,  
The largest lake is Qinghai Lake,  
The most beautiful flower is the lotus.

The songs would continue, and the maternal uncles and all the guests would happily be paying attention to my songs. At this juncture, I would suddenly ask them, "Dear guests, do you know what zodiac signs the bride and groom are? Do you know if the bride and groom's zodiac signs fit together smoothly and harmoniously? Do their zodiacs have metal, wood, water, fire, and earth – the five elements in ancient Chinese philosophy and fortune-telling?"

When my voice faded, they would blush, because they didn't know the answers to my questions. I would follow up my victory and continue to ask further, "If you aren't clear about such an important thing, how and why did you come to have a party here in the groom's home?" This would always make them more embarrassed and ashamed.

Actually, this was just a game. My only intention was to embarrass them.

At that time, guests were not entertained inside the house during weddings, but in the courtyard, or inside the family's sheep shed or cowshed. People were constantly filling guests' tea bowls and some people were offering liquor to guests. At this time, I would just

silently walk close to those singers who were singing with great gusto. Then, I would seize a chance to begin singing a song, or to ask those dear guests to teach me this or that song, which I knew of but didn't know well. They would teach me if they knew or I was told they didn't know the song. Actually, I often asked people to teach me songs that I already knew. My only intention in asking was to embarrass them by singing their songs better than they could.

My singing ability reached its peak during my fifties. I was the best singer not only in the three villages, but also in the surrounding areas. I was often invited to sing in other areas. For example, if there was a wedding in a village nearby, it sometimes happened that guests from the bride's side were great singers. Then, the groom's family would be embarrassed, so they might send for someone like me to avenge them during the wedding. I would agree and ask two or three other singers to accompany me to the party.

I needed those companions to sing with me, but also in case there was a fight. During the singing, if guests had difficulty answering my questions, they often felt embarrassed and ashamed. If they were drunk, they sometimes lost their temper and scolded us, "Where did you, stray dog, come from to bite us?" In this way, they would insult us and try to pick a fight. So it was always good to have someone to help, in case a fight broke out.

Once, a man named Darijii was holding his wedding in Gamogou Village in Danma Town. The bride's natal family was from Gantan Tibetan Village, Wushi Town. More than forty people had come with the bride to the groom's home. They were entertained in a sheep shed, and there were several *hguandii* among them. *Hguandii* always knew a lot of folksongs and Buddhist scriptures. They were almost always great singers. After some time competing, the groom's side was easily defeated by the bride's side. They felt ashamed, disgraced, and helpless. At this juncture, someone sent two people to my home, and invited me with a *kadog*<sup>15</sup> to request me to help avenge them. I graciously their invitation, and then set off quickly with my two close singing partners.

When we arrived in Darijii's home, we saw a number of

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<sup>15</sup> A blue or yellow strip of silk, offering to respected persons.

people in front of his courtyard gate. Folksongs were rising up from inside the courtyard. We entered Darijii's sheep shed and saw all the bride's escorts singing, drinking, and laughing. They were self-satisfied and arrogant. They didn't even notice us arriving. When I saw my chance, I began singing, and soon they found that I was an extraordinary singer, and not just any ordinary Gamogou villager.

I easily found that the several *hguandii* did not know much more than my teacher, Losiza Monk. What's more, their ability to recall those scriptures was imperfect, unlike my knowledge, which was complete. Although they could read all the Buddhist scriptures, they only remembered some. So, that made it easy for me to quickly defeat them. Finally, one of the *hguandii* stood up from his seat and took a white *kadog* out of his robe. He walked to me and put the *kadog* on my shoulders. I immediately understood that they had conceded defeat and were surrendering. People from the groom's side started clapping their hands, roaring for a long time in great excitement, signifying I had regained their honor.

Then, we stopped the song competition for that day. My two partners and I were invited into a guestroom by the groom's side, and were treated as guests of honor. They offered us liquor, milk tea, butter, *taligha*,<sup>16</sup> boiled meat, and *kadog*.

At that time, inviting someone with a gift of a *kadog* was the greatest honor that could be shown to someone. If guests offered me a *kadog*, it meant they were surrendering because they didn't know enough songs to compete with me. We competed *Szii*, The Sheep Song (*Yangka Luu* in Tibetan), *Qarog*, and The Horse Song (*Shdan Duwa* in Tibetan).

When a full roasted sheep was offered to the escorts from the groom's side in a wedding, the groom's side should sing the sheep song in Tibetan before escorts began eating the sheep meat. If they could not sing the song, it was a great disgrace. For example, someone might ask, "The sheep's body has a pagoda. What is it?" and they should answer that it is the sheep's tail.

After the groom's side finished the songs for offering meat to the guests, the escorts then sang about each part of the sheep's body

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<sup>16</sup> Roasted highland barley flour.

as they cut off and offered meat to each other.

I mostly went to sing in this area including, Dughuari, Guangma, Warima, Zhuashidi and Ziiri villages, in Danma Town, and Gantan and Kuilog villages in Wushi Town. I never went to the Wuuzin side<sup>17</sup> because Mongghul people there sing the song *Qijia Yanxi*<sup>18</sup> and in Dongshan Township they sing *Tangdarihgiima*.<sup>19</sup> They mostly sing songs in Mongghul or local Chinese. Since folksong competitions are a Tibetan tradition, they didn't have any such competitions, even though they sing some songs in Tibetan, mostly drinking songs, which are short and simple. Folksong competitions were popular in areas where both Tibetan and Mongghul reside together.

Tibetans aren't like Mongghul people. They make fewer jokes, and practice folksong contests very seriously. So, I rarely made jokes at weddings or other drinking parties. Our purpose was just to sing and to defeat our rivals and to accept liquor and *kadogs* from them as signs of defeat.

Tibetans from Gantan and Kuilog villages, Wushi Town, had a custom that if they defeated their rivals in a folksong competition, they would threaten to cut the front lower part of their rival's robes with a knife. However, they only said such things as a threat – it never really happened. The two sides in a folk song competition rarely fought with each other, because if they fought, it would spoil the wedding and be unlucky for the groom's family.

A Mongghul singer from Rgulang Village, Wushi Town, named Xoshidosirang, was once famous in the Wushi area. He was my student. He came to study from me when he was in his fifties. He

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<sup>17</sup> Mainly today's Weiyuan Town, Taizi and Dongghe townships.

<sup>18</sup> The song describes the eighth-generation Qi Tusi (*tusi* = native chief) who, at over eighty years of age, was sent by the emperor to modern Luoyang City, Henan Province to suppress a rebellion. He was murdered on his way home after successfully defending Luoyang. The song is sung in the local Han dialect during gatherings when liquor is consumed. A version of this song is available at <https://archive.org/details/QijiaYanxiAMongghulNarrativePoemSungInQinghaiChineseDialect>, accessed 2 June 2015.

<sup>19</sup> This refers to a melody used to sing many songs, particularly wedding songs. The meaning of the word 'Tangdarihgiima' is unknown to people we asked over the years.

was not a high-ranking singer. He only sang some parts of *Qarog* during his life. There was once a high-ranking singer in Pudang Village, Sughuasirang (~1892 - ~1984). He was an illiterate farmer, and a well-known Mongghul singer and orator. Guiliin, from Gurija Village, was also a well-known singer in the Danma area. He was my student too. He learned some part of The Sheep Song from me. There was a singer in Huarin Village, Danma Town, who only sang The Sheep Song. As I remember, in the Fulaan Nara<sup>20</sup> area, there were no high-ranking Mongghul singers. There was one singer in Qulang Village, Danma Town, but he only sang The Sheep Song. If he met me at a party, he was not courageous enough to sing in front of me. When I was young there was a high-ranking singer in Lawa Village, Danma Town, however, he was unable to sing *Szii*.

Later, by singing in many areas numerous times, I was gradually recognized by many people in our area. What's more, people could always recognize me because of my blind eye. Once they recognized me, important guests immediately invited me to sit on the heated adobe platform or in an important seat if the party was in the courtyard. I always quickly replied, "Please don't treat me this way! I'm not worthy to sit here!" But they understood that my powerful songs would defeat everyone quickly. Of course, they knew I was a high-ranking singer in our area. I always tried my best to decline their invitation to sit with the honored guests. But, they would often continue to insist.

My dear teacher, Losiza Monk, was a greatly knowledgeable monk when it came to Buddhist scriptures. He chanted all of them completely and I sung them after learning them from him. For Tibetan songs, you can use whichever melody you want. There are several melodies to choose from. At that time, if someone could sing *Szii* and *Qarog* they were regarded as an above average singer, and were regarded as being eligible to attend a folksong party. It took several days and nights to sing *Szii* if it was done fully and strictly. It's the equivalent to finishing a thick book of lyrics. Few people were determined enough to learn folksongs by spending countless hours and working tirelessly until they became a qualified singer.

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<sup>20</sup> Includes modern Wushi Town, Hongyazigou and Songduo townships, Huzhu County and Dala Mongghul Township, Ledu Region, Haidong City.

Now the Mongghul language is vanishing. When the language dies it will signify that the Mongghul people have disappeared forever. Young Mongghul children in our village neither speak nor hear the Mongghul language. In my home, only my son and I speak Mongghul daily, while my grandson and his wife, and my great grandchildren all speak the local Han dialect. We are helplessly facing the extinction of the Mongghul language. Once we die, no one will talk to you in Mongghul, even if you speak to them in Mongghul. Jasiriisang<sup>21</sup> once came to Huzhu and said, "Mongghul should speak their language and wear their Mongghul clothes." He said this, but people do not do what Jasiriisang instructed. Nowadays, just a little more than ten old people in my village speak Mongghul, and they only speak it when they meet together. I guess that after forty years the Mongghul language will have vanished from our village. If someone sings the sort of traditional folksongs that I used to sing, young people will no longer want to listen to them. They think such songs are outdated and treat them as noise. Instead, they enjoy drinking much more than singing.

Now everything is great; we are free. We don't need to worry about being seized to become a conscript laborer like before, when I was a young man during the Republic of China. Also now, we can believe and practice religion as we like. When I was about sixteen years old I was seized from my village to become a conscript laborer, and taken to Weiyuan Town. When all the conscripts were lined up in a square, some military officers checked us one by one. They examined me and asked, "What's wrong with your eye?"

"It was hurt by a prick when I was walking inside of a black thorn wood," I answered.

"Do you know Chinese characters?" the officer asked again.

"Yes, I do," I answered.

I was confident that I would not be asked to become a soldier because I cannot aim a gun because I was blind in my eye.

Soon, I was freed and returned home again, thanks to Father's effort – he bribed some officers. Anyway, my eye was the key reason that I was saved from conscription, otherwise I would have had to

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<sup>21</sup> Jiase (Jiaseduanyuequjiejiacuo, Rgyal sras don chos kyi rgya mtsho), the founder of the Rgulang Monastery and first abbot of the monastery.



become a soldier for the Ma Family.<sup>22</sup> On the one hand, there were two sons in my family, on the other hand I reached my age for soldier service. This meant I would have needed to become a soldier if I hadn't been blind in one eye, and if Father hadn't intervened.

I haven't been to any other areas, except I spent some time in Minhe County to cart lumber, and I also went on pilgrimage to Labrang<sup>23</sup> and Hgunbin monasteries.

Figure 1. Lamuzhaxi is on the right . Photo by Jugui in August, 1997 in Pudang Village, Danma Town, Huzhu County.



## REFERENCES

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<sup>22</sup> A warlord (1903-1975) and member of the Ma Dynasty that controlled much of northwestern China, from the 1860s to 1949.

<sup>23</sup> (Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil; Labuleng si) Monastery, Gansu Province.

NON-ENGLISH TERMS

*baozhang* 保长, a low level administrator in the *baojia* system during the Republic of China

Chuangwa, a person's name

Danma 丹麻 Town

Darijii, a person's name

Donghe 东合 Township

Dongshan 东山 Township

Dughuari (huashixia 花石峡) Village

Fulaan Nara, a place name, a place name in Huzhu and Ledu areas

Gamogou (Xiaomaogou 小磨沟) Village

Gansu 甘肃 Province

Gantan 甘滩 Village

Gindindarijii, a person's name

Guangma 广麻 Village

Guiliin, a person's name

Gurija (Qiaojigou 乔吉沟) Village

Haidong 海东 Municipality

Halazhigou 哈拉直沟 Township

Henan 河南 Province

*Hquandii*, 笨笨子 *benbenzi*, *dpon*

Hgunbin, 塔尔寺 Ta'ersi, Sku 'bum bya mas pa gling

Hongyazigou 红崖子沟 Township

Huarin (hualin 桦林) Village

*Huni* (yang 羊)

Huzhu 互助 County

Jasiriisang, (Jiaseduanyuequjiejiacuo 嘉色端悦却吉嘉措, Rgyal sras don chos kyi rgya mtsho), the founder of the Rgulang Monastery; the first abbot of the monastery

Jughuari (zhuoke 卓科) Village

Jugui (Lu Wanfang 鲁万芳), a person's name

*Kadog*, a blue or yellow silk cloth, offering to respectful persons

Kuilog (Kuילang 奎浪) Village

Labrang, (Bla brang bkra shis 'khyil; Labuleng si 拉卜楞寺)  
Monastery, Gansu Province

Lamutari, a person's name

Lamuzhaxi, a person's name

Lasizikoori (Lazhuang 拉庄) Village

Lawa (Lawa 拉哇) Village

Limusishiden (Li Dechun 李得春), a person's name

Losiza, a person's name

Luoyang 洛阳 City

Maja Raxi (Maji 麻吉)Village

Mantuu (Mantou 馒头) Monastery, located in Danma Town

Minhe 民和 County

Mongghul (Tuzu 土族), Monguor, Mangghuer

Mula Smeen (Xiaosi 小寺) Village

*Nangsuu* (Angsuo (昂锁), one of *Tughuans*, or internal affairs officers.

During the period of 1573-1619 in Ming dynasty it was granted  
by Tibet religious upper level class to Mongghuls.

Nengneng (Niangniang 娘娘), a female deity's name

Nengnengbog (Niangniangbao 娘娘保), a person's name

Niiga, a person's name

Pudang (Pudonggou 普洞沟) Village

*purghan* (*fala* 法拉), a deity represented in the form of a sedaned  
image or a cloth-covered pole held by four men or a man,  
respectively

*qarog* (Earth Formation), A traditional fairy tale, sung in Tibetan

Qi Tusi 祁土司, (*tusi* = native chief)

*Qijia Yanxi* (Qijia Yanxi 祁家宴席), a traditional folksong

Qulang (qulonggou 曲龙沟) Village

*Rdang* (*Sanjiaojing* 三教经). Three religious scriptures: Buddhist, Daoist, and Shenism.

Rgulang (Youningsi 佑宁寺); Dgon lung dgon pa, a large Tibetan Buddhist monastery in Huzhu County.

Shba, a person's name

*Shdan Duwa*, horse song

Shdangja (Dongjia 东家) Village

Sishidendanzhuu, a person's name

Sughuasirang, a person's name

*Szii* (divination), a Tibetan Buddhist scripture

Taizi 台子 Township

*Taligha*, roasted highland barley flour

Tangdarihgima, a popular Mongghul song

*The Book of Family Names* (Baijiaxing 百家姓)

*The Disciple Rules* (Dizigui 弟子规)

*Three Character Primer* (Sanjijing 三字经)

Tuhun (Tuguan 土官) Village

Warima (Wama 哇麻) Village

Wushi 五十 Town

Wuuzin (Weiyuan 威远) Town

Xewarishidi (Shibadonggou 十八洞沟; Xiawaer 夏哇尔)

Xog, cross talk

Xoshidosirang, a person's name

Xralijing, *Rosa xanthina* Lindi

*Zhualim*, a Tibetan Buddhist scripture name

Zhuashidi (Xiuma, Zhuashitu 抓什图, Baizhade 白扎德, Zhade 扎德  
or Baizhuazi 白抓子)

Zhuaxi, a person's name

Zhumaxja, a person's name

Zhuuxji, a person's name

Ziiri Tang (Zelintan 泽林滩) Village