

THE ORAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MONGOLIA



Doljinsüren

Basic information

Interviewee ID: 990127
Name: Doljinsüren
Parent's name: Batmönh
Ovog: Ööld
Sex: f
Year of Birth: 1943
Ethnicity: Halh

Additional Information

Education: incomplete secondary
Notes on education: This most likely means 7 years of schooling.
Work: retired / herder, kindergarten teacher
Belief: Buddhist
Born in: Galt sum, Hövsgöl aimag
Lives in: Mörön sum (or part of UB), Hövsgöl aimag
Mother's profession: herder
Father's profession: herder

Themes for this interview are:

(Please click on a theme to see more interviews on that topic)

collectivization; cultural campaigns; work; childhood; education / cultural production;

Alternative keywords suggested by readers for this interview are: (Please click on a keyword to see more interviews, if any, on that topic)

cultural campaigns; children's education; collectivization; childhood; schoolchildren's life; collectivization; Five year plan; cultural campaigns;

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Translation:

Tsetsegjargal -

Thank you for giving an interview for our research project. Would you introduce yourself?

Doljinsüren -

I was born in 1943 in Gal Sum. I was brought up by my parents. There are ten of us. I'm the sixth daughter. I'm 65 now. My parents had been the State Excellent Herders. My mother... my mother brought us up, and my father made us become really good people. When we went to look after the animals, we'd go in pairs, two children of almost the same age. We were born year after year. We'd would look after the herds always two of us, two small children. My mother used to say that three days after the delivery she was already up again milking the cows. It wasn't like today. Three days after the delivery she'd go to look after the animals and milk the cows, because her children were all small. Then my father passed away, so we grew up with our mother. We went to school and I finished the 7th grade. All my brothers went to the army. Actually my mother gave birth to sixteen children, you know. And of those sixteen children, you see, those who went to study in Ulaanbaatar and in Arhangai, they died. All those who went to the army had no education, and people said that the army was the right thing for them. Our eldest brother is a herder, he is the director of a farm. Each of us...I started working as an inspection milker when I was fifteen, and I did that until I was seventeen. An inspection milker would milk other people's, the farms' cows in turns, you know. One family's cows I would milk today and the other day another family's cows. In such a way I'd go from one family to another. The young women would milk a lot, but people didn't like it when we milked much. That's how I worked as an inspection milker. And, well, my wages depended on how much I had done. I would milk someone's cow and then I would get paid. It was like that. It was strange, you know. People didn't like it when I milked a lot, they'd say 'You didn't consider the calf.' Or they'd just say 'Enough, enough.' That's how I worked as an inspection milker. Later I got cows on my own and I milked independently for two years. Two or maybe three years? Then life's circumstances brought me to Hövsgöl Province and I worked here. I worked as a nursery and a kindergarten teacher. I worked as a teacher for 27 years and then I retired. I married my husband in 1970. After I got married I had a surgery and after that I couldn't have children anymore. So I adopted five children. We adopted five children, during the day we'd go to work and in the evenings we'd do our household work. We'd make our children sit outside and we'd saw the firewood. We'd open the door to have some lamplight. We worked very hard to live.

Tsetsegjargal -

In what year did you come to Mörön?

Doljinsüren -

In 1967. I came to Mörön in 1967 and I worked in the kindergarten. I worked with the kindergarten children and then I got married. It was really nice to become a kindergarten teacher after having been a milkmaid. I liked my work, it was interesting.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did the kindergarten teachers treat the children at that time? Tell us about the children of that period.

Doljinsüren -

The kindergarten teachers of that time would teach the children the required subjects, they'd teach the lessons and songs, they'd do everything. We had around 20, 20-25 children. When you work well with many children and their parents, it's really wonderful. Their parents would just surround you, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

According to what kind of programme were the children in the kindergarten educated at that time?

Doljinsüren -

At that time, people would mostly focus on math. We used to teach mainly mathematics, music and songs and physical education. That's what we did. But there were differences between the classes. There was the cradle class, the crawl class, the middle class, the three-year-olds, the four-year-olds and so on by the age. I was in the middle class. These were my children, you know. There's that Nyamjav in Ulaanbaatar, the one who participated in the Olympics, named after... However, Nyamjav's son was there in my class. Now they are grown-ups (laughs), they are over thirty, nearly forty years old now.

Tsetsegjargal -

You said you were an inspection milker. What kind of work was that?

Doljinsüren -

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It was said that people milked very little. We kind of checked whether people milked according to the norm or not. Yes, so if strangers would milk someone's cow they'd milk much, you know. That's how it was.

Tsetsegjargal -

When you were a child, did the nationalization of livestock and the formation of cooperatives flourish? Do you remember that period?

Doljinsüren -

At that time, it was said that livestock would be collectivized. The herds of those who joined a cooperative were nationalized. Sometime in the 1950s, my father had his livestock nationalized and joined a cooperative. We joined, we had a lot of animals. So we drove the sheep to the cooperative, leaving at home only a few. A member of the cooperative would usually keep fifty heads of livestock, and the rest would go to the cooperative. They would just drive the animals there. My mother together with my eldest brother drove them to another family.

Tsetsegjargal -

Why was livestock collectivized at that time? How were people involved in the collectivization movement?

Doljinsüren -

Livestock was private, there were only private owners. So by joining the cooperative everybody would have the same rights, there wouldn't be any 'superior' or 'inferior' anymore, everybody would become the same, everybody would give their livestock to the cooperative and keep only fifty heads privately. It was a very difficult time, that's why we joined the cooperative. Before that it was really hard, you know. We went to a small school and in fact we had a five-year plan, which was very strict. In order to fulfill the five year plan people would deliver their wool and so on. When you killed a few animals, they'd take them to make machine oil. If you ate some, they seized the skin. We had nothing to make deels for children. It was that strict. A sheep cost two Tögrög. Therefore the belongings of the family were taken away for nothing. Then the five-year plan we had. We even had to give away our rugs and mats, unraveling them and pulling out threads, you know. It was that awful. So when we joined the cooperative it became easier. There weren't so many animals. We were overjoyed (laughs) that we didn't have to look after that many animals anymore. When we had many animals, we had to go in pairs with my brothers and sisters. We'd share the task between us. We had a lot of animals, so when the sheep were driven to the cooperative we were really happy. We were excited about the sheep becoming less, you know. My mother would reprimand us, and say 'Oh, those sinful dumbbells' (laughs). She used to say that, poor thing.

Tsetsegjargal -

So the five-year plan was before the collectivization movement, right?

Doljinsüren -

Yes, it was before. That five-year plan was so terrible. My father had many small children. He would use one or two sheepskins to make a deel for the children. Then he would cry out, "Run, it seems someone is walking outside. Go out!", because if they saw it they would take it away. It was that difficult. We grew up wearing sheepskin deels and clunky boots. When we went to school, we'd carry a bag made of cloth. There were neither books nor notebooks, we only had one or two. It was impossible to find books, and if you found a pencil it was a great thing! We didn't have any kind of dresses or nice shirts. We were almost naked. Well, so we used to wear deels made of pieces of sheepskin. You would say it's a lie, in fact, people usually don't believe it.

Tsetsegjargal -

You said the family belongings were seized for the five year plan?

Doljinsüren -

The agent would come and take it away, you know. There was one appointed to each family by the state. There were the sum leaders, the bag leaders and the agents. They would come and inquire how many animals had been eaten, and about the fat and the machine oil etc. When an animal was killed, we would squeeze out the fat and the oil with all our might. The meat would become white as snow and we would eat it. We'd put the oil and the fat in the paunch and they'd take it away. What was left for us? We'd eat only a hyaramtsag and millet. That's how it was, that's how children lived at that time. It was difficult for those who had many children, you know. They wouldn't eat much even if they had many animals. They eat only the worst, you know. In order to fulfill the five-year plan we were martyred. The revolutionary period was that difficult.

Tsetsegjargal -

What happened if you didn't fulfill the plan, if you couldn't deliver?

Doljinsüren -

In case you couldn't deliver, it was like this... They would certainly take it, without exception. We had to give, that's how it was.

Tsetsegjargal -

How was the announcement of the collectivization movement spread? What was the incentive for people to join?

Doljinsüren -

Well, it was something new. When something new appears, well, how to put it, maybe it was a new state. Maybe it was kind of a turnover of the state. It was something of that kind. And the announcements would be everywhere. The brigade leaders would go around the brigades and say 'Join, you cannot not join'. They would go around calling out 'Join, join!'. And we did.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did people join the cooperatives at that time?

Doljinsüren -

People would hand over their property. They would hand over their animals. Those who had animals would hand them over, and those who didn't they'd give something small and join. And in that way you became a cooperative member. Once you had become a cooperative member some would go to look after the sheep and others would milk. I went with the cows and worked as an inspection milker. Then later I took some cows and milked them on my own. I was very young then. I was only fifteen or sixteen.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did people react to the process of collectivization at that time?

Doljinsüren -

They were very happy. But the rich people were not so happy with it. Those who had large herds and who were rich they just observed until the end of it. They really did that. And somewhat reluctantly they joined. Those who had many animals handed over many, those who had a few took the cooperatives animals and herded them. It was like that. After becoming the cooperative member I... my sister turned sixteen then. I followed her and the two of us took cows and we became milkmaids. One of my brothers became a farm manager and my younger brothers and sisters would look after the cows. All of us children looked after the cows, always two of us together. My younger brothers Tseden and Gongorsüren watched the cows. The others were smaller. That's how it was. Then my mother, when she was almost sixty, she adopted an orphan. There was no one to take him. Nobody would take a seven day baby orphan. His mother had died. Along with her ten children my mother adopted that child. She raised him and she made him a man. She sent him to the army and she made him finish the vocational school. And he took good care of his mother. He took very good care of her. His wife is a physician.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did children and young people of your age join the cooperative during the collectivization movement?

Doljinsüren -

They joined in the same way. They all joined it together. That is families joined. Once they were grown up, once they turned sixteen, they would become members of the cooperative.

Tsetsegjargal -

Was the quota calculated by family, or did every family member have to contribute individually?

Doljinsüren -

By family. And every grown-up child of the family would become a cooperative member. Whatever they had, whether many or few animals, they would give them to the cooperative and then they'd join it. And each individually would work. There was nobody who didn't work. Everybody would work.

Tsetsegjargal -

Approximately how many heads of your family's livestock were nationalized at that time?

Doljinsüren -

I think it was about 400 to 500 heads of livestock. We had many animals, we were a State Champion Herder Base.

Tsetsegjargal -

Were there cases in which herders hid their livestock?

Doljinsüren -

Yes, there were such cases. I think there were such cases everywhere. It was told that people hid their animals in this and that way. Of course they'd do that. People would say that they were tied up in the woods, that they had been driven to the mountains. And some would go to the mountains and bring them back. It was like that. The animals would be driven to the open plains. There were many such cases.

Tsetsegjargal -

So was a group organized to find those hidden animals?

Doljinsüren -

Well, it was observed and people would go to the mountains to investigate. People would also have a rough estimate of the rich families' property. That's how it was.

Tsetsegjargal -

Was the information about the collectivization movement disseminated in the press at that time? How were the agitations and the propaganda carried out?

Doljinsüren -

There were agitations and propaganda. There used to be propaganda and an agitation notebook. It would be published in the newspapers and so on. We would read a lot about it. When we joined the cooperative, we had such an organization. There was the farm manager and he would organize collective activities. People would listen to music and read books. Illiterate people were taught, and then dances would be organized. It was very cultured. We also read newspapers. We had a special place, a ger provided by the state, by the sum. And there we'd just have a good time the whole night, you know. We'd finish milking and begin dancing. It was really nice.

Tsetsegjargal -

What would the newspaper articles say about the call for collectivization? Was there radio broadcasting?

Doljinsüren -

Well, there was the 'Eh Oron' radio in the countryside that some well-off families had, I think. Of course, there was radio broadcasting. It was cultured, because it was the period of the cultural campaigns.

Tsetsegjargal -

What would the newspapers and magazines write about during the collectivization movement?

Doljinsüren -

Well, the collectivization movement... the cooperatives would make the private owners join the cooperatives. We used to hide our altars at that time, and they would instruct us how to wipe our bowls and scoops because of the cultural campaigns. It was really strict, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

What would the agitators talk about during the collectivization movement?

Doljinsüren -

They'd go around separately. They'd go around and talk about the events that happened in the aimags and sums, you know. And they organized newspaper readings in the countryside. By becoming a member of the cooperative you also got educated, you know. Those who hadn't joined yet, they were sitting there with an open stove and getting smoked. Once you joined the cooperative you became civilized, the gers became white and you would get a stove with a pipe, you know. And like that you became really very cultured.

Tsetsegjargal -

What was people's attitude towards the collectivization movement?

Doljinsüren -

They liked it. Perhaps there were also people who didn't like it. But mostly they liked it.

Tsetsegjargal -

What changes occurred in people's economic and intellectual life after the flourishing of the collectivization movement?

Doljinsüren -

There were many changes. Regarding the intellectual aspect, you know, you got money if you worked and your living standard would improve. At that time if you got twenty, thirty Tögrög it was big money, you know. You can do a lot with that money. Tea cost two Tögrög, tobacco two. It was like this. Flour and rice would be given by the cooperatives. During the revolutionary period, before the collectivization, you wouldn't find any, you know. But after the collectivization we would get flour and rice. The families that had many children, when they all began working at least they could get mattresses and a bedcovers. They could renew their clothes. And those who wore Mongolian traditional boots would get working boots. Everything became completely different, it developed in a completely different way. After that we'd be in the countryside and then we'd go to schools and somehow we'd have a decent life all of us and we'd dress nicely. We would come back wearing beautiful clothes.

Tsetsegjargal -

What changes were there in your family when you joined the cooperative?

Doljinsüren -

Well, I was telling you that we'd work each individually. Everyone would buy clothes individually. Nobody would prohibit it or take away your things, you could do as you wished. If you worked then everything was all right. If you worked on the trucks or made firewood, you got money. If you herded cows you'd get almost one hundred Tögrög. For milking cows you'd also get about one hundred Tögrög. And the children, they would do it by themselves. Even our mother wouldn't take what we had earned. We'd use the money for ourselves. We'd use it to buy clothes and boots. My mother was very peaceful, she never got angry.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did the development and well-being proceed after that?

Doljinsüren -

Our cooperative center was in the sum, it was a big center. A brigade center was opened. Each sum had brigade centers. The party members, the agents, the party seniors who were in charge of the party members, and the newspaper distributors were in the brigade center. So after joining the cooperative we were all busy with our individual work. There was no one without work. We worked a lot. We got money only if we worked. We'd milk the cows in the morning and then we'd go haymaking. And then in the evening we'd come back. We would make hay the whole day and then in the evening we would milk again. We began to work at five in the morning so that we would manage to do everything. We would make hay and usually did all the work. People's living standard generally improved. In the end we used to bake our own bread. There was enough rice. There was enough sugar everywhere, it was a really pleasant time. We would think about buying black silk for 22 Tögrög and use it to make a deel, you know. Everything was plentiful and splendid. We'd buy many things with our wages. That's how it was. People would get married. Back then getting married was different from today. They'd set up a small ger, put in two trunks and a bed and that was it. If there were one or two kettles, it was actually all they had, not like today. We didn't have as many things as today, you know. That's how we got married.

Tsetsegjargal -

Were there any benefits or incentives when the cooperative members got married?

Doljinsüren -

No, there weren't any. There was nothing of that kind. But later, much later, in the 1970s, yes, I think it was in the '70s, when cooperative members got married a two-year old female calf would be given to the bride and a male fowl to the groom. Such a thing emerged later. So as to help, well, though it was not helping, it was a present for the newly wed. People had such a kind of life. Nowadays everything is available. Nothing is lacking.

Tsetsegjargal -

Was there any difference between members of the cooperative and those who hadn't joined?

Doljinsüren -

Well, there might have been some pressure on those who hadn't become members. They were pushed a little. They seemed to be forced out of their territory, you know. In the olden times people would fight for their territory, they'd tear apart their deeds and scream. They had marked off their territory and then say that this and that person's animals had entered their territory. It was a little awful before the cooperatives. But after the cooperatives were established everything became better. The arguments over land ceased. Before the cooperatives, people used to fight with each other over land.

Tsetsegjargal -

Before you mentioned the cultural campaigns. What were these cultural campaigns at that time?

Doljinsüren -

The cultural campaigns were when the families, well, how to put it? The hygiene was examined, the bed sheets were checked and the cleanliness of the kitchen utensils was examined. If the bed cover was dirty, they'd take it, wash one half, leave the other half dirty and bring it back. Well, it was frightful. One family had to have bed sheets for each person and additional ones for change. Everyone was supposed to have a towel, and there had to be four to six chairs. Every person had to have a change of bed sheets. So after they were changed, a certificate was handed out. I also got that certificate.

Tsetsegjargal -

What were the requirements to get that certificate?

Doljinsüren -

In addition, the surroundings had to be clean, everything had to be clean, the household had to be clean. The certificate was given only to those families who had made those changes and satisfied all the requirements. The bag leader would then write a certifying letter. That's how it was given. Then they'd speak through loudspeakers, which were put on a truck, and go to do the inspections. It was so difficult, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

They would go around with a truck with a loudspeaker?

Doljinsüren -

Yes. People with loudspeakers would go through the streets and say this family is like this and that family is like that, and they'd do the inspections. In a group they would go and do the inspections, you know. It was that harsh. The loudspeaker, you know, that shouts? They'd announce through it that this family was good and that family was bad.

Tsetsegjargal -

What was people's attitude toward the cultural campaigns?

Doljinsüren -

Each family accepted it with great responsibility. All were in favor of its realization, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

Why were the cultural campaigns considered necessary?

Doljinsüren -

Only in that way a family became cultured. The families became lastingly neat, you know. We even had those songs and poems. I have forgotten them. We were to memorize them firmly, but unfortunately I've forgotten them.

Tsetsegjargal -

Don't you remember at least one or two verses?

Doljinsüren -

No, I don't. The people of the bag were to memorize theirs, the aimag people were to memorize those of the aimag. It was very strict and serious in the olden times, you know, during that revolutionary period.

Tsetsegjargal -

What was required from the people during the cultural campaigns?

Doljinsüren -

Whatever was written in the newspaper we had to fulfill it, you know. There used to be such guidelines. We had to act according to them. Only those who fulfilled the requirements were included.

Tsetsegjargal -

Do you remember what kind of guidelines they were?

Doljinsüren -

Well, the least they asked was how many bed covers we had, how many changes there were, how many members in a family and so on. Then they'd check the bed sheets and the blankets. I think there were six to eight blankets. If you had six blankets you had to have changes for them. Then there was the underwear with the changes. Everyone would do their things individually. You can't put all the clothes together in a heap, you know. They should be put in a box individually. And when the inspector comes you show your individual things. That's how it was. Then the family had their dishtowels and everything. Then in the city and in the countryside, the environment would be cleaned and encircled. It was encircled with stones, a big area. 50km, or 50m and inside of it everything would be cleaned from garbage. It became that clean. People living in the center would clean their area. The cultural campaign was a terrifying thing, you know. When you are constantly doing it, the families naturally begin washing and cleaning. People began taking baths. They began cleaning their environment. Even the places where they took their water and snow from were really clean. In such a way the country developed, it was like that everywhere, and it became so nice, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did they do the inspections during the cultural campaigns?

Doljinsüren -

They'd check. They would come in and say 'Come and show the dishtowels, show your clothes, how many changes of bed sheets, how many changes of clothes and dishtowels to you have?' If there was a dirty blanket, they would take it and bring it back half of it washed and the other half still dirty, and they would show it at the meetings. It was that strict.

Tsetsegjargal -

Meetings?

Doljinsüren -

Yes, there were meetings of the hot ail, you know. They would show it, ruining people, making people feel disgust. The hair and heads would be washed and even searched for lice and nits. They would make you take off your clothes and check.

Tsetsegjargal -

It means a special commission was set up?

Doljinsüren -

They were mostly from the hospitals. Commission hospitals and so on. And there would be people in charge.

Tsetsegjargal -

What if the requirements weren't met?

Doljinsüren -

Well, usually we would meet them. What else could we do. We'd be told to be ready next time when they came. And we would do it. Next time they came we'd be clean and neat.

Tsetsegjargal -

Would they give you the tasks with a deadline during the cultural campaigns?

Doljinsüren -

Yes. They gave us the tasks with a deadline. They would say, 'Clean and wash your things until we come back in three

days. Wash the heads of your children, make them take a bath in the water or in the snow. We'd do everything before they came back. And little by little that family would prosper.

Tsetsegjargal -

Were there cases when people were punished for not fulfilling the requirements during the cultural campaigns?

Doljinsüren -

I think they were fined. Those who were really bad they were fined.

Tsetsegjargal -

Did the cultural campaign requirements for children, men and women differ from each other?

Doljinsüren -

Everybody had to do it individually, whatever they had to fulfill. They would tell us whatever we were required to do. For instance, they would say 'You, get a haircut, put your clothes in order and wear them decently. To the wives they would say 'Clean your home, it is dirty'. The countryside families wouldn't set up their altar openly, you know. If that hadn't put it away it they were told to hide it. They would say it was completely prohibited. The women would be instructed to wipe the cups, even to wipe well the bottom of the cups, it was that terrible. They would teach how to wipe well the bottom circle of the cups. They would teach, and then organize meetings, you know. Wipe like this, clean like this, keep the dishtowels clean, they would say.

Tsetsegjargal -

Were the altars taken down during the cultural campaigns?

Doljinsüren -

Yes, they were. In fact, already before it was prohibited to set up the altars openly. They would instruct us how to hold the cup when serving tea to people, they told us not to put the finger into the cup. The instructions were that detailed.

Tsetsegjargal -

Did they instruct or advise you on interpersonal relations?

Doljinsüren -

They would give advice, they would give a lot of advice. They would say 'Do this and that, do this and that with your clothes' and so on. They would teach us to keep our households clean and cultured, educate our children the right way, you know. Many agitations were organized. And we would do it all, not doing it was impossible, you know. The nicely clean families were given the cultural campaigns' Certificate of the Cultured Ail. Those certificates would be hung on the bookshelves. You couldn't be without books, you had to have a bookshelf and books. And everything was supposed to be neat and orderly.

Tsetsegjargal -

Were there norms for behavior?

Doljinsüren -

No, they would only say to have good and right relations with people. They strived to teach us how to relate with people in good and right ways.

Tsetsegjargal -

In which years did the cultural campaigns take place? When was their apogee?

Doljinsüren -

I think the apogee was from 1957, 58 to 1965, 66. They developed in such a way. It was not 1965, maybe it was almost until 1970.

Tsetsegjargal -

In what fields of society did the cultural campaigns bring about changes and progress. What impact did they have on people's life?

Doljinsüren -

We would have the right relation with society and with people. We became clean, and every family would strive for that. The families would be clean and neat, they would shine. Everyone had an equal life, and the families wouldn't be nice this day and become bad the next, you know. They would just continue to be clean and neat. People would take a bath once a week, once a week they would change their clothes. Generally everything was all right.

Tsetsegjargal -

How were the baths for the countryside people organized?

Doljinsüren -

People had hot water. They would heat the water and have a bath. It became so nice during the cultural campaigns. We'd even built houses, you know. Then we'd heat the water and take a bath. Whoever wanted would take a bath. It was like that. It was really wonderful, it became like that, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

And was this cleanliness of the cultural campaigns kept up?

Doljinsüren -

We became accustomed to it, it became normal, you know. Until this day we are used to it. It was generally a very influential and wonderful thing. It would teach people to be clean and neat, the children learnt to be parsimonious. It was wonderful in fact.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did the information about the cultural campaigns reach the people?

Doljinsüren -

We would hear it on the radio and we would subscribe to newspapers and also to books. Then the agitators would work a lot. They would talk about culture and about how to meet the cultural and educational requirements, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did your childhood time differ from that of other children?

Doljinsüren -

Well, my childhood. We'd go to school from the 1st grade to the 7th grade. Until that time children didn't differ from each other. We used to make and wear the same dresses, the same clothes. It was the same in the higher grades. We would study. I used to practice contortion. Maybe that made me a little different from the others. I practiced contortion at school, from the first until the fourth grade. The children would take me to their dormitory and make me do contortion and they would give me a notebook (laughs). Well, it was something special. The contortion teachers would teach me, during physical education. Two or three children used to do it.

Tsetsegjargal -

What was the dormitory life like?

Doljinsüren -

Yes, children used to live in the dormitory. Well, it was OK. The food was a little poor, now that I think about it. We used to be hungry and we would stay overnight with our relatives, and we would somehow finish school.

Tsetsegjargal -

How were the relationships between the children in the dormitory?

Doljinsüren -

They were cute, you know, not bad at all. They'd all be friends with each other. Our class graduated in 1954. Last year we had a reunion. We were all over sixty and spend a week together in a resort remembering our youth. All of us big people.

Tsetsegjargal -

What subjects did children in that period mainly study? What kind of educational work was organized?

Doljinsüren -

Back then children used to study the same subjects as they do today. Generally, the lessons weren't bad. The educational work was carried out by the dormitory teachers. Well, for example, the schoolchildren would be taught about the dormitory schooling, and then there would of course be competitions. They would organize competitions.

Tsetsegjargal -

What movies did you like to watch?

Doljinsüren -

Of course we'd watch movies. The movies were very nice at that time. We all used to go together. Well, how to say it, I liked to watch every movie. It was easy to watch movies and children paid only 50 Tögrög.

Tsetsegjargal -

What was the relationship between parents and children like at that time?

Doljinsüren -

Well, they would never get angry, you know. The people of the olden times were very peaceful. Back then young people wouldn't drink like they do today and they were well-behaved. They just adapted to their environment. There was nothing for the parents to get angry about or scold the children for. The children would go to school, then they'd come home and some would do the household tasks while others looked after the animals. Generally, our childhood was generally like that. Parents wouldn't beat their children. I don't know, they were really peaceful.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did your mother educate her many children?

Doljinsüren -

My mom was a very quiet person, she would never get angry. There was no anger at all. She would scarcely instruct us to do things. We would just follow our instincts, and since there was no anger and no frustration we emulated her character, I suppose that's how it was. That was our upbringing. None of my brothers and sisters had any serious drawbacks, they don't drink and they all have work. My brother's children are herders, they have more than a thousand animals (myangat malchin). Also my younger brother is a myangat malchin. His children all have serious jobs, in the city and outside of it, they work as teachers and do such important jobs. All are really fine. We have around one hundred people in our family now.

Tsetsegjargal -

How did your life change and how did children's lives change?

Doljinsüren -

Of course there were many changes in the lives of children. In the olden times, children's lives were hard. All of them would start to work when they turned fifteen or sixteen, and they would earn money and maintain themselves. Today's children are used to finding things ready for them. From early childhood they eat delicious things, they wear beautiful clothes. The countryside people didn't have such things. They were on their own. The children today, they have too much, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

What are the specific features of the children who grew up in the socialist period?

Doljinsüren -

Well, children of that time used to wear deels made of pieces of sheepskin and worn out boots. They would cope like this. Those poor kids wore a wretched fur-lined deel and traditional boots until the 7th grade. All children, without exception, wore sheepskin deels and traditional boots in school. Today in the class photos of the elementary school all children wear a deel and boots. Children who had finished 7th grade were like that.

Tsetsegjargal -

What's the difference between your childhood and the children during the time when you worked in the kindergarten?

Doljinsüren -

Of course there was a difference. When I worked at the kindergarten I was already a young and sparkling woman, you know.

Tsetsegjargal -

How about the children?

Doljinsüren -

It's completely different. In our childhood, well, we were all a bit shabby. We were on our own, and the countryside children were, how to say, real children, you know. Today's children eat whatever is tasty and wear whatever is beautiful, as they like. Times have changed for the better, you know. For instance, we would go in pairs (laughs) to fetch water and ice, we worked a lot. We would fetch firewood. When we were ten years old we'd do as much as we could, we would saw the wood for the farm's fences, each of us would work. We did hard work, you know. We would clean our courtyard and our household and we'd look after the animals.

Tsetsegjargal -

Was there a difference between girls' and boys' work?

Doljinsüren -

Of course there was a difference between girls' and boys' work. The boys would go and look after the animals. The girls would do the household chores, milk the cows, and prepare the firewood, and we would sew by candlelight, you know. We would sit down in the evenings by candlelight and help our elder sister to make clothes for the younger siblings. Those of my children's generation, they grew up in a nice way. We sent them to kindergartens and to school. They married and they have two, three children. That's how they live. We did our best to raise them. It's not like it was before. There is plenty of food and plenty of things to wear and to have. If there is money, there are plenty of things. Now I take care of my grandchildren.

Tsetsegjargal -

Thank you for taking part in our oral history project and giving such an interesting interview about the collectivization period and the cultural campaigns.

Doljinsüren -

Thank you, too.

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