

THE ORAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MONGOLIA



Davaasambuу

Basic information

Interviewee ID: 990074
Name: Davaasambuу
Parent's name: Өөлдөх
Ovog: Achit
Sex: m
Year of Birth: 1958
Ethnicity: Dörvöd

Additional Information

Education: incomplete secondary
Notes on education: This most likely means 7 years of schooling.
Work: НХХЯ-ны харьяа "Тарни" амралтын наряв
Belief: Buddhist
Born in: Böhмөрөн сум, Uvs аймаг
Lives in: Mandal сум (or part of UB), Selenge аймаг
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)

childhood; education / cultural production; military; work; democracy;

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

sports; prison; military; democracy; privatization;

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Translation:

Khishigsüren -

We are at the 'Tarni Resort', which belongs to the Department for Social Welfare and Service. It is situated in the territory of the bag no.5 of Mandal Sum in Selenge Province. The interview is given by Davaasambuу гуай, who works and lives at the resort. To begin with, please talk about your childhood, about yourself and your parents. Where did you spend your childhood? What kind of life did make you come and settle here?

Davaasambuу -

I grew up with my parents, who were herders. I spent most of my childhood among herders. When I was eight I was told to go to school and I did. I went to school until I was sixteen. Actually I had not yet turned sixteen. I had to interrupt school for two three years, because of the demands life placed on me. I completed 8th grade when I was eighteen and went straight to the military. When I was in school, our living conditions were very bad so I was always worrying about my family. And my condition at school was quite bad, too. Because we were poor, I didn't have notebooks and textbooks, and I think that that had an impact on my studies. However, step by step you grow older and you learn, and at 18 I finished 8th grade.

Khishigsüren -

When were you born?

Davaasambuу -

I was born in 1958, and I finished the 8th grade in 1976. In 1975...in 1976 I went to the military. But in 1974 I interrupted school for two years. When I went back to school, I studied quite well and I also did a lot of sports. I was really good at it. I was outstanding in the school and in the sum, at the provincial level and even nationwide.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of sport did you do?

Davaasambuу -

Athletics. I was a runner.

Khishigsüren -

Please tell me about your life before school? In what kind of environment did you live in until you went to school at the age of eight? Did you help your parents? If you compare your childhood to that of others, in what ways was it special?

Davaasambuу -

How special could it have been? Unlike children today, we had deels made of drill. We didn't have shirts or school uniforms like today, you know. I had a white shirt made of calico and to two pairs of trousers made of light blue drill. That's what I used to wear. And then I had a cotton bag. When I first went to school, my mother made a square bag of drill for me.

Khishigsüren -

Do you have any particular memories of the first eight years of your life?

Davaasambuу -

First, there is my teacher Yanjiv. Thinking about it now, he helped us a great deal. He prepared the ink for us in our ink pots every morning and every evening. I remember that well.

Khishigsüren -

Did you live in the dormitory?

Davaasambuу -

Yes, I did.

Khishigsüren -

How were the conditions in the dormitory at that time?

Davaasambuу -

I think that the dormitory conditions at that time were all right. It was difficult for the children to stay far away from their parents with whom they had been living. We missed our families. And then there were a lot of quarrels and dislikes between the children. The children who came from well-off families were different from the poor ones. They wore different



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clothes and so on. That's what I thought at that time. I can still picture the white dormitory building of the school. I picture it beginning from the locks on the doors.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of a person was the dormitory teacher? Can you recall life in the dormitory?

Davaasambu -

I remember that they did a lot of things. There used to be inspections by the Ministry of Education and provincial ones. They checked our clothes and underwear for lice and they checked our stool. Then we changed our clothes. We were all given new white shirts to wear. It seems that the school spent quite some money at that time. Whether in the socialist period this screening and changing of clothes improved the school's reputation or the teachers' reputation is an interesting question. We had a special person who washed our clothes. When they came for the inspections, we were given new clothes.

Khishigsüren -

What about the times when there were no inspections?

Davaasambu -

In those times it was relaxed. Inspections happened once in a while. Then the older students would be checked for lice. Those who had them were cleaned and washed. And then the leader of the dorm room would beat them and say 'Collect your lice'. That's how it was at that time.

Khishigsüren -

You said that you missed your home when you were away from your parents. How was it to be homesick?

Davaasambu -

I was hungry when I felt homesick. I would get depressed. And I wasn't good at school.

Khishigsüren -

Was that in the elementary school? Your parents said that you often ran away from the dormitory and from school. Was that in 8th grade?

Davaasambu -

That was in the end.

Khishigsüren -

Did you run away when you didn't feel like studying?

Davaasambu -

Mostly I didn't go back to school after I had been at home.

Khishigsüren -

At home during the holidays?

Davaasambu -

Yes. I would go home for the holidays and then not go back to school.

Khishigsüren -

Why not?

Davaasambu -

Well, my study prospects weren't good, that's why I didn't go back. And I was probably also not that much interested. And moreover I was homesick. Our living conditions weren't so good, so I felt uncomfortable, you know. And because I was a bad student, I wasn't interested. I guess that I lagged behind because the living conditions were like that.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of people were your parents? How did they educate you?

Davaasambu -

Well, I have nothing to complain about my parents. They taught me what's wrong and what's right. What could have been a bad education? They paid a lot of attention to the animals. But nevertheless they thought about how to give a good education. They hadn't studied and weren't very sophisticated. I think they didn't have very refined teaching methods. They taught me things about herding, they were interested in making me do that, but as for other more complicated things they didn't have any influence on me. We didn't have a radio, and my parents never read any newspapers.

Khishigsüren -

Did you tend cooperative animals? Did you have sheep?

Davaasambu -

Yes, we had sheep.

Khishigsüren -

Did you look after the sheep during the summer holidays?

Davaasambu -

Yes, during the summer and the winter holidays. I would spend most of my time looking after the animals.

Khishigsüren -

How would a child that was herding animals spend the day on the pastures? What did you think?

Davaasambu -

I would visit one or two families if there were any nearby. And while looking after the sheep I would collect firewood, hargana as we call it here. I collected hargana and dung.

Khishigsüren -

When you dropped out of school for two years and then came back, you said that you became very active in sports and involved in social activities. What was the reason for your sudden improvement?

Davaasambu -

The reason for becoming active, well, when I was little I didn't participate very actively in any of these things. And there hadn't been any sports at school. Later the sum organized cultural activities. We used to go to the provincial center. I guess I became more active because I was a little bit older. In any case, I had won several competitions at the sum school and was sent to the provincial center to participate in the western regional competitions. I participated in the provincial junior championships. I participated in all these competitions. They encouraged me and made me want to continue studying. When I was in 7th grade, it was like this, even though I had been thinking about quitting after the 7th grade. I thought 'They give me a colt and a folding bed, that's fine!'

Khishigsüren -

As a representative?

Davaasambu -

Yes, as a representative.

Khishigsüren -

Did the cooperative give these things?

Davaasambu -

Yes. First I thought of taking them and quitting after the 7th grade. But the same year I won the championships and I decided to continue on to 8th grade. Well, and then....

Khishigsüren -

How did secondary school teachers treat pupils with bad marks? Generally, what kind of people were the teachers at that time?

Davaasambu -

I had two, three teachers whom I respected. That's how I felt about them at that time and also later. They were teaching until they started sweating. I still remember that. There was one subject I really disliked. And just when I started to understand it, I quit. I didn't actually quit, but I finished the 8th grade. There were three teachers, Sürenjav, Tsedenbal and Bathüü, who used to teach really well. They would come into the classroom, write on the blackboard and explain almost without looking at their notes. Especially Sürenjav bagsh used to teach until he started sweating. He would write again and again.

Khishigsüren -

What subject did he teach?

Davaasambuу -

He used to teach chemistry. And I think he taught Russian, too. He taught me a lot of Russian and taught the chemistry lessons really well. He took notes and when a pupil couldn't answer he would make them stay and teach the lesson again from the beginning. Poor thing, by the time of the break he was exhausted and tired. He would tell us to meet at a certain hour in the evening and teach the lesson again. He really was a tireless man. Later an article about him was hung up on the notice board of the sum government. He was really industrious. He used to teach us everything one by one.

Khishigsüren -

If you think about secondary school, what kind of children were the best? Those children's performance must of course have been very good. How was the relationship between the good students and the bad ones in situations outside of the classroom?

Davaasambuу -

The good students would stick to themselves. The bad students never asked them anything. The good students would work independently, even though the teachers would ask them to supervise. So the ones didn't want to study and the others didn't want to teach. If students understood the lesson, they made progress. When I came back I wasn't very good. But I was friends with the good students in our class and they helped me. I didn't perform very well in the 7th and 8th grade, but I had two, three good students by my side. When I studied and did well in sports, the teachers treated me differently during the normal lessons. When I couldn't do it they just left me alone. There were special central exams. At that time I studied by copying from the others. I can't say that I did well though. I thought that I couldn't do well, because I hadn't understood it in the beginning. But in the end I understood some lessons, and I realized that I could understand even though in the beginning I hadn't studied.

Khishigsüren -

Then when you were eighteen you went to serve in the army?

Davaasambuу -

After finishing 8th grade, I thought about continuing my studies. I was thinking about entering a technical college.

Khishigsüren -

Which one did you want to go to?

Davaasambuу -

One for a technical profession. At that time, people came to our area with machines to drill wells. I was very interested in that. And then there was the mine at Hotgor. When I was herding, I had always been interested in the excavator. I was interested in the drivers. It was so nice when the excavators loaded the coal. Also the machine that mixed the coal seemed to be very beautiful to me, but I didn't realize my dreams. I was interested in that from the very beginning. So my first choice would have been that, and my second becoming a well builder.

Khishigsüren -

So you never wanted to become a herder, right?

Davaasambuу -

When I was looking after the animals, I thought that in any case I wanted to work to get a state award. I wanted to be successful and get some award.

Khishigsüren -

You wanted to become famous, right?

Davaasambuу -

I think I achieved that. I got a state award.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of award?

Davaasambuу -

The Honorary Medal of Labor.

Khishigsüren -

Did you get it after you came here?

Davaasambuу -

Yes. I had won the provincial, the city and the sum championships several times. I still have the ribbons. So I did achieve my goal. But the only thought I had on my mind was to become an excavator driver. I missed out on that. At that time I got into some troubles, and when I got out I should have gone straight there. I should have stayed in Nalaih. There was one of our kids, Böhmörönii Dorj. I should have stayed there somehow. Tsedenbal bagsh supported me. If I had asked, stayed there and gotten an excavator, I think that today I would work in a gold mine or another nice big place. But unfortunately I wasn't able to do it. That's the only thing I didn't manage to do.

Khishigsüren -

In what year did you go to the army?

Davaasambuу -

I went to serve in the army in 1976 after finishing 8th grade. I wanted to go to the Övörhangai Technical College to study water works and well building. An acquaintance of mine was studying there. So I thought of going there.

Khishigsüren -

Before or after the military service?

Davaasambuу -

That was before, after I had finished school. I was about to go, but somebody else had taken my place so I couldn't go. The director of our school, Chuluunbaatar guai told me to go to tenth grade and gave me a place. So I wanted to do that, but in July our young people spent their days visiting families and drinking, because they were about to go to the army. In the spring, I had been doing sport all the time. I had gone to national and regional championships and in the end even to Bayan-Ölgii province. That was the spring when I finished 8th grade. I was supposed to take four exams, but I did only two. I was excused from those two exams so that I could go to three competitions of the western regions that took place in Bayan-Ölgii. I was really tired after those regional competitions. I had been swimming in the river Böhmörön, and I got pneumonia. I was sick, went home and finished school. Then on the 13th of July, after the national holiday on the 11th, that's what happened. In summer, the families of the second brigade of Böhmörön would shear their sheep at the Hotgor mine, but they didn't deliver enough wool. Trucks came from Böhmörön. They distributed an official letter from the governor saying that they have to deliver the missing wool. On the 13th of July I came to the Hotgor mine with a camel carrying a bit of wool. When I got there, there was an order from the sum center to catch me.

Khishigsüren -

Catch you?

Davaasambuу -

Jaamyа ah came from the sum center in a beautiful '30' truck. There was a division representative called Havdal Hasag. He called 'Hey! Come here. You have been called up for military service', and he gave me the draft call letter. I was with my father's brother Ligden. I took the letter, read it and cried. I said 'What military service? I want to go to school!'. And my uncle said 'You go home, my son. I will take your camel and deliver the wool'.

Khishigsüren -

Did you go straight away without going home?

Davaasambu -

They told me that I would leave the next morning, So I rushed home crying. I went into the ger and told my parents and then I lay there and cried for a while. And then I went to the military.

Khishigsüren -

When young men in the countryside were about to leave for the military service, groups of them would meet up to visit families and drink a lot. Did you participate in that?

Davaasambu -

No, I didn't. I was lying at home thinking about going to school, you know.

Khishigsüren -

Where did they send you to do you military service?

Davaasambu -

To the city. Before I thought about one of our relatives. His name is Batjargal, and he was deputy head of some big place in the province center or something like that. And he was the director of the Society for the Protection of Lake Uvs. In that period, he was the first secretary of provincial Union Committee. So I went to see him, and he said something about me remaining there. So I tried not to go to the military. He tried to keep me there through the channels of the union, but he didn't succeed, the military division didn't approve because they didn't have enough people. So I went. I was assigned to the 8th construction battalion and I served for three years. And a month before I should have been discharged I got involved in a criminal case.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of case did you get involved in?

Davaasambu -

It was a case of theft. We worked with Czech specialists and a considerable amount of building materials disappeared. It was about the disappearance of these things. I was involved in the theft, quite a number of soldiers of our battalion were. Of course it was my fault, but our superiors, the older soldiers had started with it much earlier. Some of them had already been discharged. A lot of soldiers did it, and some had already left. Because of my involvement, I was sentenced to six years, which were then reduced to three. However, after a year in prison I was released, I think it wasn't even a full year. But I also think that it taught me a lesson. I would go out before sunrise and come back in the evening after dark.

Khishigsüren -

You mean at that time?

Davaasambu -

Yes.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of work did you do?

Davaasambu -

I did the work that had been assigned to me. I left in the morning and worked until the evening, until the job was done. That's how it was.

Khishigsüren -

What kind of work was that?

Davaasambu -

I did environmental restoration, growing forests. At that time it was a valuable job, but today nobody talks about it anymore. We collected and classified pine cones, tree seeds and larch seeds in Selenge Province. The special ones were for exportation. We used to collect them from September till March. I collected 40 to 50 bags a day. In spring, summer and autumn we dug up the ground and planted the seeds in those places around the mountains where there were no trees. If trees grow from the black earth they grow very slowly. That's why we tilled the soil, loosened it up, before we planted the seeds. That was our work.

Khishigsüren -

Was there any kind of pressure?

Davaasambu -

First a group, or a team, was formed among the prisoners of my section. When I arrived, it already existed. There was always a considerable number of old people, and there were also young people. These were people who served long sentences, up to 13 or 10 years. I was the youngest one, within their group I was a special worker, and I was released after not even a year. We had so-called 'work days', and I worked off all of them. The prison director and higher instances had implemented a system of incentives and rewards. I got such a reward in a really short time, in 60 days, so I got a reward every quarter.

Khishigsüren -

What did the reward consist in?

Davaasambu -

In work days...

Khishigsüren -

That means they were detracted from the sentence?

Davaasambu -

The prison director could give a reduction of 60 days, and the section heads 40 days I think. Then there were additional meals. That's how I got by.

Khishigsüren -

What was it like in the army? Where there differences between the soldiers, for example based on the year they had been drafted and so on?

Davaasambu -

Of course. I was beaten up there.

Khishigsüren -

Did you accept it as normal? Couldn't you fight it by telling your superiors?

Davaasambu -

There was no such thing as telling. I was beaten up and pounded, I went through all this. I think that those who beat up the others were cool, but those who were beaten had strong bones and sinews. I was beaten up a lot.

Khishigsüren -

Were you beaten by superiors or by soldiers?

Davaasambu -

By older soldiers. One soldier was forced to do the 'flight of geese', and he had to go to hospital to get his muscles separated which had gotten all entangled. For the 'flight of geese' the soldiers were made to run all night long, and at some point one of them couldn't go any further and collapsed having convulsions. His muscles got entangled, you know.

Khishigsüren -

I wonder what kind of pleasure they got from that. When you became a senior soldier, did you ever beat up anyone?

Davaasambu -

I don't know. That's how it was. But we didn't do such things. There was a certain Sononyn Jambaldorj, you know. When I was beaten up by another soldier who had been drafted the same year as me, the soldiers from my homeland would beat him up together. The head of my section was Kazak and he beat me a lot. Then the soldiers from my homeland united and almost killed him. We often used to fight in groups based on the area of origin.

Khishigsüren -

Didn't the superiors take any measures against it when they got to know?

Davaasambu -
No.

Khishigsüren -
Did they know about it?

Davaasambu -
They didn't care.

Khishigsüren -
They thought it was normal?

Davaasambu -
Yes.

Khishigsüren -
So you came directly here after a year in the 'big family'?

Davaasambu -
Yes. My adopted brother used to be a projectionist here. I came here without any documents. I came here and got employed. Then there was some confusion with my documents, but they somehow solved them and I remained here. And this is how I became a resident of this region.

Khishigsüren -
How did people treat you when you first came here to work? How long did it take you to get used to the new work?

Davaasambu -
I got used to it, I just did it. For some time people discriminated me. There were a lot of people like me who had come from prison.

Khishigsüren -
Do you mean here?

Davaasambu -
Yes. Some people discriminated them because they were ex-cons. I was discriminated too. And after a while my brother went to Sögnögör.

Khishigsüren -
When did you come here?

Davaasambu -
In 1980. In 1981, and in December 1981 my brother was transferred and I stayed here. In 1982, my wife was sent here as a gardener. And then we married.

Khishigsüren -
In what way did they discriminate you?

Davaasambu -
Some people discriminated us for being former prisoners. First, they knew we had been in prison. Secondly, it wasn't just me but several people. I didn't say anything, but the others would drink and talk about things, and that's probably why they said this and that. But when those people disappeared after 1990, it became silent. No, it wasn't 1990, it was 1995 when this kind of talk stopped. Now we have hardly anyone like that anymore.

Khishigsüren -
Why were there so many former prisoners here?

Davaasambu -
Well, their parents lived here and so they came to stay with them. Or they were local people.

Khishigsüren -
When you came here, how long had the resort already existed?

Davaasambu -
It was established in 1946, you know. Until 1980, how many years would that be?

Khishigsüren -
What kind of work did you do when you came here?

Davaasambu -
Well, what to say. At that time there was only one vacancy, it was for a radio fitter. I installed radio loudspeakers in every room of the resort and I operated them. And outside I installed a megaphone and I operated that, too. I switched it on at six in the morning and switched it off at eleven in the evening. I had to make sure that it operated normally. I also was responsible for free games for the vacationers. They played tennis and billiard. And when we were showing movies, I worked as a projectionist. That's what I did. At that time I earned 400 Tögrög. That was a good salary.

Khishigsüren -
Where did you live here?

Davaasambu -
I stayed with my brother.

Khishigsüren -
Was he living in the workers' housing?

Davaasambu -
Yes.

Khishigsüren -
Then a year later your wife came?

Davaasambu -
Yes. My wife came in April 1982, as a gardener for the Mongolian Trade Union Council. A few people were sent here by the Council in order to establish auxiliary facilities at the resort. She came here and worked at the resort. So we did our jobs, and we met toward the end of the year 1982, and then we married. That's our history.

Khishigsüren -
So what kind of work did you do here? When your superiors and colleagues changed, how did relationships and the work change?

Davaasambu -
I started working here some time in April 1981, I think. For about a year I was in charge of the games. Then I worked as a projectionist for five to six years. I worked as a projectionist, club manager and librarian all at the same time. I was considered to be good at doing all kinds of economic calculations, so I was appointed as bursar.

Khishigsüren -
Beginning from what year?

Davaasambu -
Let me think. I worked as bursar for three years, from 1983 to 1986, and then I stopped. I fought with my superior, and I decided to quit the job. But some people made an effort to keep me, so they hired me as a baker. I did that for more than 10 years. I provided the people nearby with bread, in summer I provided bread also for two state farms with 400, 500 workers. I used to work from early in the morning until late at night. Working in this way, I received a state award. Two or three times I became sum champion. And I became champion of the Trade Union Council. I got this medal.

Khishigsüren -
What year was that?

Davaasambuу -
I think it was 1986. It was during the 60th anniversary of the revolution. That's how it was.

Khishigsüren -
The people who worked with you treated you well because you were a good worker, right?

Davaasambuу -
Yes, of course.

Khishigsüren -
They took you back after you quit your job because of that fight with your superior, right?

Davaasambuу -
Moreover, I was sent to travel in the Russian Federation for 21 days. Right at that time the president of the Mongolian Trade Union Council visited and said that one person from our collective would be sent to the Russian Federation. He said to decide who ourselves, so we had a reunion, wrote our opinion on a piece of paper without our names, and in the end I was selected. Also state awards were given in that way, through anonymous voting. So our collective generally believes in me. There are no bad people. My father passed away in 1983 in Uvs. At that time there were no telephones. My brother came at night to tell me, and I said that I would go to the airport the next morning to go to Uvs. The same night I rushed to see my boss and told him what had happened. The next morning he issued an order and gave me 350 Tögrög as support, which I didn't have to pay back. The plane ticket was 303 Tögrög at that time. I had those 350 Tögrög and everybody gave some money, all together another 300, 400 Tögrög. So I had money for a return ticket. Then they calculated my vacation money and gave it to me. Then my wife's relatives collected plenty of money and I thought it was very nice. A collective is such a wonderful thing. I had such great grief and the collective helped me. Then a son of mine died, who was born after our daughter. I had two daughters and two sons. But this son of mine got very sick and had to go to hospital quite often. He died in the city. Our collective provided a car and money. It is such a wonderful thing to have a collective in times of sorrow. And then the market economy came. Things became a little difficult when the market economy came. But I didn't fall into poverty, because there used to be a big storage place behind your place. I was responsible for it. I got 120 tons of potatoes from there. I used to make bread with them. There were coupons for flour, but I wasn't searching for flour. I baked bread with it. People were going around searching for flour, but we had loads of it in the storage. Lately I have been thinking about it.

Khishigsüren -
Was the storage property of the resort?

Davaasambuу -
I still have the keys, you know. I have them, but there is nothing there anymore, it's empty. When the resort was closed after the shift to the market economy, I got it together with 120 tons of potatoes. When the state farm went bankrupt, our resort bought 120 tons of potatoes. In that spring, there were no potatoes in Ulaanbaatar. Not even one potato, and the '30' trucks were queuing in front of our storage to get potatoes.

Khishigsüren -
What year was that?

Davaasambuу -
1990 or 1991?

Khishigsüren -
When did you bring your mother here?

Davaasambuу -
When did you come here?

Khishigsüren -
We came in 1998.

Davaasambuу -
She came in 1995, around that time. I took me a long time to get her here. One part we brought here on your truck, and the other with other trucks.

Khishigsüren -
So you had no problems at work here. People who worked well were treated very well. So you have been here for more than 20 years. How has the natural environment changed? Have you noticed any changes in the ecological environment?

Davaasambuу -
There are changes, very noticeable ones. People talk a lot about droughts all over the world. It is felt a lot.

Khishigsüren -
How do you notice it?

Davaasambuу -
For instance, there are no bushes along the river anymore. I used to heat the storage, you know. I would light a fire in the morning, and in the evening, well there were plenty of bushes along the river. First, it's because of the drought, because the water and humidity have become less, and secondly, it's because of the livestock. At that time, we had a terrible zud and the animals of the families of the '53rd' climbed towards the bushes, breaking and eating them. And poor people would collect firewood there. In such a way the bushes disappeared. But if you get closer, you see that the bushes have been destroyed even in places where human hands can't reach. I think it's linked to desertification like in the Gobi. They have fallen out of the ground with the roots. These bushes were so beautiful! And there used to be very beautiful larches on the lower southern and eastern slopes of the mountains. They have disappeared, too. It's clear that this is a process of desertification. Many trees were planted around the source of the river and in the mountains. Right after the shift to democracy and the market economy, trees weren't planted anymore, but later yes. Well, one part of the trees has been cut to make battens. Another part was terribly destroyed in the time between 2000 and 2005, and in 2007. They were used for timber. Well, at that time people needed to eat, that's why the trees were destroyed.

Khishigsüren -
Isn't it forbidden? Aren't there any controls?

Davaasambuу -
No, there aren't. Even if there were, people wouldn't care. They would probably unite and share the profit, who knows. There is nobody who would say or resolve anything. But it seems it's getting better since last year. However, people still steal the trees and carry them away. The young delicate trees should be cared for. And the rotting ones that are about to fall down, as well as blue ones that are thinning and drying up from the bottom should be cut. There is a lot of work to do. I wonder if anyone is aware of that. The same thing applies to the plants. There are medicinal plants and I hear people pick their roots. These are plants that are on the Red List.

Khishigsüren -
What kind of plants are they?

Davaasambuу -
There are peonies. It is said that they grow here. They can almost not be picked, except for during the last month of autumn. But people pick them in the last month of spring and in summer. Those who pick them sell them almost at the price of tobacco and alcohol. There are things like that for example.

Khishigsüren -
What is the object that carries most memories for you? As I understand, it is the medal. Are there any other objects to which many memories are attached? Do you have things like that?

Davaasambuу -
It is this. An award from our ministry. Well, not actually from the ministry, but from a department. Let me fetch it to show you. There is a certificate too.

Khishigsüren -

Let me see. Let me see your many champion certificates. How were the relationships among the workers and between the staff and the superiors at the resort? How was it during the socialist period and how did it change after?

Davaasambu -

There were quite a few changes. The Democratic Union, democracy, flourished for some time here. And old man, who had been the leader of a cooperative, came here as director. He fought a lot against the privatization of the resort. Then the State Property Committee was established in that period. When our people heard about it, they appealed to the Committee saying that from the perspective of the Communist Party we were being humiliated and maltreated. Our salaries had been cut, and things had become difficult. Then I joined the Democratic Union. I was the only one among the staff at the resort, among those who were working. All others were unemployed people. They were always fighting against the resort. But I joined from the lines of the working people. Those who didn't work would organize meetings, they wanted the managers of the resort to resign and the resort drivers to be laid off. They criticized them a lot, saying that they got paid without doing any work and that they were just racing around with their cars. I listened to all of that. They all drank alcohol. They said that they would attack the director of the resort, that they would fire him and give him the notice the next day. They said that they would bring the leaders of the Democratic Union to carry out elections. At that time the Democratic Union had several leaders. They informed people about the meeting and told them to come or they picked them up from home. So there was a meeting. We met up and went to my place to eat something. That time was really difficult. Some of my colleagues rebuked me and told me that I had joined the wrong group of people and that I was working against the resort. We would gather at the resort gate and demand the closure of the resort and various other things. It was difficult.

Khishigsüren -

Why had you joined it?

Davaasambu -

Because of my opinions, you know. I had seen their manifesto. Things weren't fair, starting from people's wages.

Khishigsüren -

So you thought that things were unjust, right?

Davaasambu -

There are unjust conditions, beginning from the labour law. The person, who was in charge of the toilets, got a toilet bonus. The labor law...our porter worked for 24 hours. What about those who did the nightshifts, what about those 12 hours? And what about the 12 hours of the day shift? The wages should be different for the nightshift. The wages and the vacation money should reflect the working conditions. If you read the laws carefully, the constitution, you see that the Democratic Union distinguishes these things. They talk about differentiating the salaries. I agreed with that. I wasn't that wrong, you know. Then my superiors said this, and those jobless people said that. It was really awkward and tough.

Khishigsüren -

The activities of the Democratic Union...

Davaasambu -

Yes, the activities of the Democratic Union. No matter whether they are right or wrong, it is always difficult to implement official decisions by force. We invited people from the Democratic Union at the provincial level. There was a big fuss about the initiative to dismiss the director of the resort. Today there is a history book about it. The resort director wrote it secretly. It is about the activities of the leaders of the last period, it is very interesting.

Khishigsüren -

Can I see it? Do you have it?

Davaasambu -

(laughs) It is really interesting for me to look through it and remember. And also for the leaders.

Khishigsüren -

What's the book about?

Davaasambu -

Well, it's a kind of record of the events at the resort after democratization. About the meetings that happened every day. It describes how things were.

Khishigsüren -

May I see it? Can I see the photos?

Davaasambu -

There are no pictures in it. It's just a big folder.

Khishigsüren -

Can I see it from the outside?

Davaasambu -

It's a thick book. It took two years to finish it.

Khishigsüren -

It was a big struggle. What were the results?

Davaasambu -

Well, I...

Khishigsüren -

Was the director replaced?

Davaasambu -

No, the director wasn't replaced. But with the advent of democracy, we separated from the Mongolian Trade Union Central Council. The state didn't allocate any funds anymore. We didn't have any affiliation. Thanks to our private auxiliary facilities, we were able to operate the resort independently for almost two years. During that time, there were a lot of problems concerning the director. So he distanced himself and disappeared. He had fought a lot against the privatization of the resort. During this process, I visited the government palace. He took me with him.

Khishigsüren -

That director?

Davaasambu -

Yes. He took me and an old man called Sharav with him, saying that we were against the privatization of the resort. The three of us went straight into the grey government building. If you have an appointment they let you straight in, you know. Why did we go there? The first year when the resort did not have an owner, the Central Sports Committee, the Olympic Committee bought it. Many wrestlers and athletes came to rest here. They were real 'food monsters'. They ate everything, they completely ruined the resort. They didn't pay nor did they give any contribution. Who knew about it? Nobody knew about the accounting documents, what had been given and what not. So it came to a crisis. Capital and livestock were gone, so we decided to approach the government. How did we do that? Well, we approached the Mongolian Seniors' Union. The president was an old man called Tseveen. He was a Buryat. He used to be the mayor of Erdenet, you know. So we approached him, and he received us. He visited our resort and guided us. He told us to form a commission of representatives and to see him again. So we went to Tseveen guai, the president of the Mongolian Seniors' Union, on the second floor of that grey government building. And he took us straight to the State Property Committee, and told them that he would take the resort and turn it into a resort for old people. That's how it became a resort of the Mongolian Seniors' Union.

Khishigsüren -

What was its affiliation before? Was it a public resort of the Trade Union Council?

Davaasambu -

Yes, it was a public resort. And then that story began.

Khishigsüren -

In what year was that?

Davaasambuu -
I think it was in 1995, 1996.

Khishigsüren -
So it hasn't been privatized yet, right?

Davaasambuu -
No, it hasn't. Since then until today it is a resort of the Mongolian Seniors' Union. Maybe in that period it also belonged to, I guess it was the Ministry for Labour. Didn't the Ministry for Labour later merge with the Ministry for Health? Well, it became what it is today after that.

Khishigsüren -
The records of the meetings of the Democratic Union must be very interesting, you know. We talked about the victory of the democratic movement. What do you think if you compare life before 1990 and after? How did the democratic achievements add to your life? You were a member of the Democratic Union.

Davaasambuu -
I had the membership book and all these things. I wonder where they are now. And one person even proposed that the Democratic Union should give me the 'Chinggis'.

Khishigsüren -
Do you mean the Order of Chinggis?

Davaasambuu -
Yes.

Khishigsüren -
When did you join the Democratic Union?

Davaasambuu -
In 1993.

Khishigsüren -
I asked you about how your private life changed as a result of the democracy. What do you think about that?

Davaasambuu -
Well, with democracy people obtained the right to express their personal opinions. Secondly, we are free to run private businesses. Of course this influenced our lives. We don't have to pay income tax on livestock and milk. It has become free. We can sell meat and milk freely, and we can invest the earnings or use them for ourselves, we are free to do as we wish. And I can say what I think in the newspapers, on radio and on TV.

Khishigsüren -
OK. Let's finish for today. We will continue tomorrow.

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