

# THE ORAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MONGOLIA



## Garamhand

### Basic information

Interviewee ID: 990297  
Name: Garamhand  
Parent's name: Janaa  
Ovog: Magsarjav  
Sex: f  
Year of Birth: 1934  
Ethnicity: Halh

### Additional Information

Education: incomplete secondary  
Notes on education: graduated 7th grade  
Work: retired  
Belief: none  
Born in: Hutag-Öndör sum, Bulgan aimag  
Lives in: Bayan-Öndör sum (or part of UB), Orhon aimag  
Mother's profession: herder (milkmaid)  
Father's profession: herder

### Themes for this interview are:

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

**childhood; family; education / cultural production; industrialization; new technologies;**

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

**Hatanbaatar Magsarjav; World War II; repression; school / education; trade / shops;**

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### Translation:

*Khishigsüren* -

Today is the 25th of July 2009. I am in the Chuluut bag of Bayan-Öndör Sum in Orhon Province. I got the permission to interview the senior lady Garamhand. Thank you for allowing me to interview you. Shall we begin?

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

Let's begin with this question.

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

Would you please introduce yourself? Where were you born and where did you grow up? What kind of people were your parents? How did you spend your childhood? Let's talk about this.

*Garamhand* -

I was born in Hutagt Sum in Bulgan Aimag. I lived with my parents until I was twenty years old. My father died when we were little. I grew up with my mother herding animals.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Then I went to the Gobi and lived there for a while. Then I went to the city, and for most of my years there I worked in a carpet factory.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

In 1975, I went to Bulgan for three years. Then I went north, where a new state farm had been established then, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

My husband was appointed as head of the party committee there. When our child went to school, we went to the city together, and then my husband became the director of a state farm in Gachuurt.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Later, when the first elections were held he became leader of his sum and in 1993 he came here. Then he retired...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

I retired in 1987, and I haven't done anything since then.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

I retired when I was in Gachuurt.



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*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. You have a portrait of Hatanbaatar Magsarjav, who played an important role in the Mongolian history of the 20th century.

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

What relationship do you have with this person that you keep his portrait?

*Garamhand* -

All this belonged to him, was used by him. But because we are bad and foolish, we didn't clean it.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

I was very little. I don't remember whether I had already turned six or not. My father used to make me sit backwards on the horseback to go to the hüree. It was his hüree, you know. He was Sandagdorj's only son, and his father sent him to Namnan's hüree to get educated.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

So he was educated there and he also tended horses and other animals, he was a valuable person. When he grew up, he was given property and land.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

There were the 'Three Hairandaa', the Western Hairandaa, the Eastern Hairandaa, and the Central Hairandaa. He was given a share of the property and the Hairandaa Hüree, which had been established right in the middle. He married and had children and then he was sent there.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

So he stayed there. The foundation of the hüree is still there.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. How are you related to him?

*Garamhand* -

Well, my paternal grandmother's younger brother...his name is Choijilsüren...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Your paternal aunt?

*Garamhand* -

My father's mother. That means she was my grandmother.

*Khishigsüren* -

So he was your grandmother's younger brother?

*Garamhand* -

Yes. My grandmother.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

My grandmother was this man's younger sister.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Whose children were they? How many...

*Garamhand* -

They were Sandagdorj's children.

*Khishigsüren* -

How many brothers and sisters were they?

*Garamhand* -

There were five of them.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Where are they...

*Garamhand* -

They are almost all gone.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

He was my grandmother's eldest brother. She died at the age of 77 in the 1960s. They were four sisters and one brother.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

My grandma used to call her elder brother Ongoo.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

When I was little I asked her whether she was afraid of her brother, and how her brother used to act. They were very afraid. They couldn't even walk loudly outside when he was around, you know. But he was away very often. He went to the west. He was among those who freed Khovd, you know. At first...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

So he used to go there.

*Khishigsüren* -

We know the history of Hatanbaatar Magsarjav from the official movies and books. Almost all the Mongolian people know him. So you are related to him.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
A relative...

*Garamhand* -  
Even though I am his relative, I was very little then, so I have very little knowledge.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I now think I should have asked my grandmother many things. She died when she was over seventy. She still had a very clear mind, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
But I didn't ask, I didn't know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. How did people interact with you during the socialist period, knowing that you were relatives of Hatanbaatar Magsarjav?

*Garamhand* -  
Oh.....

*Khishigsüren* -  
Did they know?

*Garamhand* -  
No, they didn't. My father used to tell that for some time he was considered a counterrevolutionary and that his property was confiscated. That was a very terrible time.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
In later days our mother used to say to us 'You are innocent, nothing will be confiscated'. My father had a pink Shantung deel.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
So she did this. She said 'Now you won't get into troubles', and she gave each of us shantung for a deel.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah..

*Garamhand* -  
She said that she made a deel with that shantung.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. So ordinary people didn't know.

*Garamhand* -  
Ordinary.

*Khishigsüren* -  
No, what I mean by ordinary is whether you told people from your place or the people you encountered in other places that you were Hatanbaatar Magsarjav's relatives.

*Garamhand* -  
No, we never talked about it. People don't know because we never talk.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
There was the 125th anniversary, I can't remember whether it was in the 80s or in the 90s.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Well, we were invited to the sum.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. When you went to the celebration of his anniversary, where their people who knew his life history. Didn't anyone talk about what kind of person he was? Didn't anyone talk about all sorts of memories?

*Garamhand* -  
No, nobody talked about old memories or about what kind of person he was. Before I talked a lot. Later when I grew up and my husband was a party secretary, he never cared much about appearing as that person's relatives.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Are there any relatives of his in Hutagt-Öndör today?

*Garamhand* -  
No.

*Khishigsüren* -  
There aren't any today?

*Garamhand* -  
No, there aren't. I was very little. When I was a child we went to our hüree and opened a temple. It was bigger than this temple. My father made me stand like this and told me to take off the silk from the Güngervaa. And so I took it off. He told me to take it down and I took it down. It was a big yellow brass Buddha, as big as a three-year-old sitting child, and my dad took it outside. I played with it.

*Khishigsüren* -  
What do you mean?

*Garamhand* -  
He used to carry it on a bullock cart. I don't know for what purpose.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Where from? From the hüree?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, from the hüree.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah

*Garamhand* -  
Then my dad's mother used to live in the lamasery, you know. She had a big cat and a small ger next to a beautiful big wheel...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Does it mean it was close to today's Gandan?

*Garamhand* -  
Aa?

*Khishigsüren* -  
Does it mean it was next to today's Gandan?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. Actually she had been there all the time.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. So your grandmother followed her son to the monastery? She herself...

*Garamhand* -  
No, she went there later.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Do you have any objects related to this man? Things that he used and cared about? Things that he kept. His descendants...

*Garamhand* -  
This you see. This person might have been a shaman, maybe he wore this in those days. There was this brown silk deel, its color had faded a little. It had laces everywhere and slits.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
He was a left-handed.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
There was our only brother. He has already passed away. He worked in the zoo in Bugat.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
He was left-handed and he was given a shooting board and bullets. He did ankle-bone shooting. My mother said 'You are left-handed, this will suit you'. It was originally made for left-handed people. The shooting board and the bullet.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
It was there, but when my younger brother died his wife didn't even tell me. She gave it to her daughter's son Tsolmonbaatar.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Now they are there. Tsolmonbaatar has them, the deel, the shooting board and the bullet.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. It's like a shaman's deel with decorations, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
It belonged to Magsarjav?

*Garamhand* -  
It has laces made of brocade. My mother would cut off little pieces and give them to people who asked for it. When I asked her why she tore apart the deel, she used to say 'It belonged to a good man. They want to make their child inhale its smoke, so that the child will get well.'

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
That Tsolmonbaatar has it now.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah

*Garamhand* -  
It has a big old ornament. It is made of brown silk.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
The collar is impregnated with sweat. In the old times, the collars of the lamas were all full of sweat. Tsolmonbaatar brought it to the 125th anniversary.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I think he took it to the dry-cleaners to make it look better.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
It is in an exhibition. We used to have an incense burner. It was very big...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Like this bowl and even bigger.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
After I had been in the countryside for two years people from the State Museum came.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
They came to search for his gun and sword. They asked if we had any other objects of his. So I gave them the incense burner. Tsolmonbaatar was there. He said to me 'Why did you give it away without asking me first? You shouldn't have given it away.' But I said that it was better to keep it in a military museum established in his honor rather than to store it in the wrong way. It was under this man's picture. Gerelsüh's mother, who lives in the city, took it away. There is also a beautiful sandalwood table.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah

*Garamhand* -  
It is small. It's small like from here to here. It has very beautiful carvings.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
It is said that it came as a gift from the west.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Does that mean from the western provinces?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, but I don't know where it comes from.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
They have that table.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I said it should be where his picture is. So they said that I can come and take it any time. She has just been here with her son for holidays.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I want to take it and put it under his portrait.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. You mean that table?

*Garamhand* -  
Ah. Yes, that table.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Do you have a photo of him?

*Garamhand* -  
A photo?

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
My younger sibling has a very respectable photo of him sitting behind a table. There was a very beautiful photo. He was holding a pipe like this. My mother used to talk about it. At that time weren't there. Then somebody came from the city, his name was Dashdorj.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
He took the picture saying that he'd make a copy of the picture in the city and he never came again to give back the picture. We searched for him by his name and his address, but we couldn't find him. We never found that picture again. What did he do with it?

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
It was tough. That photo was really rare. It was the only one. It had been hung up rather carelessly in the ger without a glass cover so it had become all smoky and sooty. My mom used to clean it with cotton and put it back where it was.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
It was a really beautiful picture.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. What kind of family did Magsarjav guai have? What kind of people were his children? How many children did he have? I'm talking about his own children.

*Garamhand* -  
He had five children. His grave is on Jargalant mountain in our sum. In the beginning there were no trees there and now it is full of trees.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
On a small podium, there is an inscription on a wooden tablet saying 'The father of Magsarjav was Sandagdorj, the father of Sandagdorj was Dorj, was it? Several generations are buried there.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
The ground there has fallen in. Well, they used to build a kind of small fence made of poles and bury people there.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Are his children there?

*Garamhand* -  
No, they aren't.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Do you know what happened to those five children?

*Garamhand* -  
Aa?

*Khishigsüren* -  
What are the names of Magsarjav's five children? What kind of work did they do?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. The eldest son was Sunduisüren. When his father was still alive and involved in military campaigns, was he at the Ministry of the Interior? He is said to have worked there as a scribe. He reached old age and died. His younger brother was called Majigsüren. He died in the '80s at the age of 85. He is Tsolmonbaatar's father.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
After him there was a woman called Horloo. She was also more than 70 years old when she died in the 1980s. Then there was Javzan. She also died when she was over 70. The youngest was called Dari. It is said that she worked at the stud that was in Jarant before.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Her only adopted daughter is in the city. Her name is Doljinsüren, she lives in '120'.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I heard that in spring she wasn't very well. But I don't know how she is now.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Are you in touch with Magsarjav guai's grandchildren? You just mentioned their names.

*Garamhand* -  
I sometimes visit Doljinsüren.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Are you in touch with anybody else besides Doljinsüren?

*Garamhand* -  
I sometimes visit Tsolmon. When he hears that I come, he makes me stay overnight. When Tsolmonbaatar was adopted, I was still small. We lived in the same neighbourhood.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
We grew up in one place.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Your grandmother.... Magsarjav guai wasn't an ordinary person.

*Garamhand* -  
That's right.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Did people ever say that he became a person out of the ordinary thanks to somebody's influence? Thanks to his parents for example?

*Garamhand* -  
No, no.

*Khishigsüren* -  
There was no such talk? Ah. Shall I ask you another question?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Some of your family members were victims of the terrible repression, which happened in Mongolia.

*Garamhand* -  
Aa?

*Khishigsüren* -  
The repression?

*Garamhand* -  
No, there was no such thing.

*Khishigsüren* -  
No? But your... during the repression...

*Garamhand* -  
It is said that Güüremjav was repressed. But I don't know exactly whose relative he was, whether my father's or my mother's. I heard that he was arrested.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Also my grandmother used to talk about it. His wife lived until much later.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
People said that he didn't come back.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I think that he was repressed.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
My parents used to tell me that one night they were sleeping. Then they got up and left when it was still night. They were afraid that everybody would be arrested, so they all went to the city together.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah

*Garamhand* -  
My father went everywhere to gather his things and put them in order. You remember that he made me hold the Buddha statue and take off its cover? We kept all the things he had been using. There were many of us in the family. I don't know, but some things were lost, there were all sorts of silver objects.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
They were all here.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. So you were born in 1935, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Right.

*Khishigsüren* -  
In the 1940s there was the Second World War. That was the period when you grew up and started understanding things, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
How did the war influence the people who lived in the countryside?

*Garamhand* -  
When I was six or seven years old, I used to call Sundui ah 'Sundui ah'. And Mijigsüren ah, we called 'little ah'. In spring when the sheep were lambing, the two of them came on their horses and they made us move.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
We had many sheep. I was pressing my body against the door and I cried, saying that I didn't want the sheep to be sold. I can't remember anything else.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
So they made us move. There is this place called Hüimandal. We moved there. During the war we lived there.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
At that time we lacked everything. It was tough, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
My father brought us third rate flour, I have no idea from where, and we used it to prepare our meals. That's how it was.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Let's continue to talk about this, but let's have a short break.

Let's continue the interview.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
So what did you say about the flour during the war?

*Garamhand* -  
During the war we lived in Mandal Sum in Batsumber. We...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
We moved there when I was six.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
After that I went back to my homeland when I was 14.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
When I was twenty, I married and we lived in Dornogov'.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Later we lived in the city...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
In 1979, I returned there.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -

My husband became the secretary of the party central committee here. Then we lived in Gachuurt for six years, and then we came back because he was sum leader for two or three years.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Then he retired. We have been here since '93, '94.

*Khishigsüren* -  
What else do you remember about the time of the war?

*Garamhand* -  
I don't know anything else about the war.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. What did the herders in the countryside say about the war, beginning from the supplies they had at home?

*Garamhand* -  
Oh, they talked a lot. Red tobacco reached the price of a two-year old calf, a cow, or a sheep. And we couldn't find round bricks of tea.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
My grandmother, my father's mother lived with us. We couldn't find any tea. She taught us how to find 'steppe tea' in the grassland. We picked it, fried it in butter and made tea with it. But it didn't taste like tea, it tasted like grass.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Flour and rice were very scarce. So was drill fabric. It was wrapped into little bundles like this. One bundle of drill fabric cost one cow, one two-year old calf.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
That's how it was. That's what I know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. I have another question. In what year did you start going to school? How were schools in the countryside when you went to school?

*Garamhand* -  
When I reached school age we were in Batsümbert. At that time, those who could take their children out of school were considered powerful people.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I was told not to go to school but to go to our homeland. I stayed there for a year, or half a year. I didn't go to school during that period. And when school was over, I went back to my family.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
When school started again they sent me to the countryside another time. In such a way I never went to school.

*Khishigsüren* -  
So at that time the powerful and rich didn't send their children to school. That means that poor people sent their children to school, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
What was the reason for that?

*Garamhand* -  
Who knows? My mother's older sister's son was two years older than me. When he finished 7th grade my mother's parents were the superintendents of the school. They had connections. They knew the head of the provincial department for education. Maybe it was through him that they took their child out of school. They would boast saying that he knew important people and that they had taken their child out of school.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Cunning and powerful people didn't send their children to school.

*Khishigsüren* -  
So the value and the importance of education were very different compared to today, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. They never paid attention to schools and education. Now it has changed for the better.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. How did you become literate?

*Garamhand* -  
You see, it's funny. In 1948, groups for the diffusion of the new script were organized everywhere. They told my mum to attend, but she sent me. I was twelve. She said to go instead of her.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. (laughs). You were her replacement!

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. I went there for six days, instead of her. A teacher with a golden tooth was teaching the lessons. Not lessons, but the letters.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
At home we didn't have iron beds. That family had an iron folding bed. I used to look at it. So I attended for six days, and then they sent us away saying that we had become literate.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.



*Garamhand* -  
So I learnt 35 letters, because I had gone there on behalf of my mum.

*Khishigsüren* -  
In 1948 you were 13, right? The teacher was teaching the letters in his own ger?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, in his own ger.

*Khishigsüren* -  
There was no special ger?

*Garamhand* -  
No, there wasn't. And there was no other building. It was winter.

*Khishigsüren* -  
How many attended?

*Garamhand* -  
Five or six people all together.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. How old were those who attended?

*Garamhand* -  
I was the youngest. When I think it back, they were much older than me. People in their twenties.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Both women and men?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, both women and men.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Who of you learnt the script best in those six days? Perhaps you did, because you were young?

*Garamhand* -  
I was young, so I was sitting there looking at all the decorations that family had. And then I learnt those 35 letters.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You weren't interested?

*Garamhand* -  
No, I wasn't. I was just sitting there looking at that family's belongings. I didn't have any desire to study.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. So what happened later?

*Garamhand* -  
Later I started working in the carpet factory and I went to an evening school.

*Khishigsüren* -  
What year was that?

*Garamhand* -  
1962. Yes, it was that year.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You were required to study...

*Garamhand* -  
At that time the evening schools began from the third grade. That's wonderful, isn't it? The goal was to provide education to the entire population. I participated in that and I really wanted to study. In order to go to the evening school, I had to take an exam. How was I to do that? I didn't know the four methods of mathematics. I didn't even know how to write my name. The daughter of one of my egches was studying at the teachers college. She said that she would take the exam for me. They didn't know me...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Because she took the exam for me I passed. I began the evening school from the third grade and finished after the 7th.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I finished 7th grade in 1966. When I finished, I almost felt as if I had graduated from a college. I thought of myself as a literate person.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
One of my acquaintances was the director of the railway technical school. He said 'Just continue from here. I will take you without exams.'

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
He said 'The communications course is the easiest. Take that'.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I said 'Oh really? But I would like to do something related to math. I won't study communications. My children are small. I have to bring up my children.' And so I stopped going to school. I finished 7th grade and that's it.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Were you good at math?

*Garamhand* -  
I just liked it.

*Khishigsüren* -  
It's interesting, isn't it.

*Garamhand* -  
It is.

*Khishigsüren* -  
How old were you in 1962? If you were born in 1935 you were in your 20s. Was it difficult for you to go back to studying?

*Garamhand* -  
It was all right. I was 25, 26. And when I was invited to study at the technical school I was 29.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Wow! You were nearly 30.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. I was nearly 30.

*Khishigsüren* -  
So it had become necessary for you to study, right?

*Garamhand* -  
If my children hadn't been so small I would have continued.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
But my children were small, and I thought I'd better bring up my children rather than studying myself. Gerelsüh's mother was in the 7th or 6th grade then. She was together with me. She was my only friend, I didn't have anybody else.

*Khishigsüren* -  
When you were little, how often did movies, plays and theaters tour the countryside? What was the first art form you saw?  
A play?

*Garamhand* -  
It was in 1948. A resort had been built close to the Jargalant State Farm. It was called Ar Tolgoit. It was in a north-oriented valley. That's were our winter and spring pastures were. In the spring they organized a concert in the club there. I was a child then and I went there wearing my shabby clothes for the spring snow. Let me think whom I saw then. It was Tsozolmaa guai, who was singing. After the concert there was dancing for all. I really like going to concerts.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I can't sing myself, but I like to see people singing.

*Khishigsüren* -  
How did going to the cinema and to concerts affect you? What did you take from it?

*Garamhand* -  
Aa?

*Khishigsüren* -  
How did going to concerts influence you?

*Garamhand* -  
I just liked listening to the songs.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You liked listening to the songs. How did the actors and singers, who were singing in the theaters, look like?

*Garamhand* -  
They were so beautiful. I would watch them and exclaim 'What wonderful and educated people they are! How do they manage to learn so well?'

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
They were so beautiful and elegant! I was small then, so they looked really beautiful to me.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Where did they perform? Such a building...

*Garamhand* -  
There was a club.

*Khishigsüren* -  
There was a club. More or less how many people would come to watch?

*Garamhand* -  
Well, by today's standards only a few. But for that time it was very many.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Everybody from the sum would go, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. The countryside people like to watch performances, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Everybody would go, also the children, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Did they have two kinds of tickets, one for adults and one for children?

*Garamhand* -  
No, such a division was unknown. I don't think that they took money. I certainly never paid. But maybe people didn't see me because I was little. I never paid.

*Khishigsüren* -  
What was the first movie you ever saw? Do you remember?

*Garamhand* -  
I was very young then, even younger than that girl that is running there. My mother's father was the superintendent of the school, he was very intelligent even though not very educated.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Once they showed a movie there. They put such a small thing on the table and rotated it manually. There was no sound, just the picture.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I was so excited to see that. I wore a blue deel, which my mother had made of drill cloth, and I cried because I was late. And then I went to watch the movie.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
That was the first movie I ever watched.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Where did they show it?

*Garamhand* -  
In a ger. In my grandfather's ger...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
The neighborhood gathered there...

*Khishigsüren* -  
So the people who ran the mobile cinema were spreading the news. Does this mean you mother made a deel for you especially for watching the movie?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. She had made it before. I used to wear it on special occasions. A deel made of blue drill...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Did you wear boots when you were little?

*Garamhand* -  
Aa?

*Khishigsüren* -  
Footwear? Some people of your generation say that they didn't wear boots, you know.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, I used to wear them. In summer we mostly walked around barefooted, but in winter we wore Mongolian boots.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
We grew up wearing boots with white soles. When you walked back and forth with them, they used to make a crunching noise, which was great!

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. What did girls wear at that time when they dressed up? What do they wear now?

*Garamhand* -  
They wore a new deel made of drill. I think I was 16, 17, when I went to the factory to milk the cows instead of my mother. I was wearing a sky blue deel made of drill, and a lot of colors had been sewn into it with a sewing machine. In my eyes it was very beautiful.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You mean that it had been made using yarn of many colors?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I mean the edging...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. Let's have a short break...

So it had a colorful edging. Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
I wore it when I delivered the milk in the morning.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
The rest of the time we wore torn and shabby clothes, you know. At that time, the poor people were very poor, you know. We were doing relatively well. There was someone of my age, who has already died by now. There was a family called Nordog, their ger was so small, poor people. You could see the inside of the ger from outside.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You mean that the cover of the ger had holes?

*Garamhand* -  
When you went in, there were children naked on the floor. They had no shoes, they were naked.

*Khishigsüren* -  
And no underwear?

*Garamhand* -  
No, no. Poor people, what could they have used to make it? They had three children.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Hmm.

*Garamhand* -  
Their daughter was of my age, and I liked to visit them.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Over there they ate only millet.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
They gave me millet wrapped in a small towel. On my way home I held it like this and threw it to play, I chewed on it until it was full of holes and leaking.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You were playing with the millet and spilled it?

*Garamhand* -

Yes. It was just a little bit of millet, right?

*Khishigsüren* -

Right. What did that family eat and drink? How many animals did they have being a poor family? What did they eat and drink?

*Garamhand* -

They didn't have any animals.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

They lived close to another family and milked their animals. They ate pounded millet, they had nothing else.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. What did they do in winter?

*Garamhand* -

In winter they also lived close to that family and tended their animals. The girl that was of my age went to school and became a teacher.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

She used to work as a secondary school teacher. Their youngest son Dashdeleg fell out of a window and died. Maybe he had been drinking and somebody had pushed him. He had graduated from a school in the north. He was a real scholar, he had passed his thesis defense.

*Khishigsüren* -

So all three children of that poor family became well educated, right?

*Garamhand* -

The youngest daughter and the son, but not the eldest daughter. In the end, she had a small job in a sewing factory in Amgalan and then she died. They all moved to the city.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. I have one more question. What kind of work did you do?

*Garamhand* -

In 1960, I ... there used to be the sewing workshop no.6, you know?

*Khishigsüren* -

In the city?

*Garamhand* -

Yes, in the city. It used to be in front of the Pioneer Palace, today it's somewhere else. There also used to be a TMS for tailoring. Now it doesn't exist anymore. I went to work there. At that time they hired a lot of people. I made carpets there for 17 years.

*Khishigsüren* -

May I interrupt you to ask a question? At the time when you started working in the factory, how did they select the workers? Did people like it?

*Garamhand* -

I don't know. They told me to come back for three or four days. And so I went back.

*Khishigsüren* -

Where did you first hear that they were hiring?

*Garamhand* -

I had never done a nice job before. In 1979, when we moved to the city I decided to work and they were advertising there. So I went there.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

The factory had just been opened, so they were hiring a lot of people, six people a day.

*Khishigsüren* -

The people they hired were all workers, I suppose?

*Garamhand* -

Yes. The carpet department had been established by a certain Handhüü and she was hiring.

*Khishigsüren* -

Who is Handhüü?

*Garamhand* -

Later she became Hero of Labor.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

She was the only Hero in the manufacturing cooperative. When she was young, she initiated many things. When I started working there, they were already using machines to spin the yarn. In the olden times, they used to spin the yarn for the carpets manually and they were dyeing it in cauldrons themselves. Things had developed quite a lot by the time I started.

*Khishigsüren* -

When you came, what kind of machines did the factory have to make carpets?

*Garamhand* -

We had wooden looms, and we were working sitting on chairs.

*Khishigsüren* -

Weaving carpets. By today's standards you would have to go to a TMS to learn that. How were you trained back then?

*Garamhand* -

When I went there, there were no professionals. You could work if you were young.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. What kind of people were those who worked in the factories, those who became workers?

*Garamhand* -

They weren't very educated, people like that. Our factory employed more than 300 workers. It was the only department....

*Khishigsüren* -

How did the workers like their work?

*Garamhand* -

Those who had never done any paid labor before liked it. They were eager to learn to work like the others. I weaved several carpets in front of a mirror. When I left the factory in 1975, I weaved a big carpet and three chair covers and I took

them with me.

*Khishigsüren* -

How did the equipment and the machinery in the factory change in the period in which you were working there?

*Garamhand* -

The machines that they are using in the carpet factory in the city today came from Germany much later. They are completely different, very beautiful, big machines.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

There is no work to be done manually anymore, you know. You just stand there and watch. I was weaving the carpets manually.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

No matter how many meters large it was, we did it manually using our own abilities. We made the carpets to orders that came in. Today the carpet department has become really beautiful. The carpet department that installed the German equipment is the same where I worked.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

When I visit, I am really interested in that. Because we weaved the carpets manually, I get dizzy when I see those weaving machines. There is a person who controls their functioning, and no work to do manually. It's amazing!

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Does that mean that before there were two carpet factories?

*Garamhand* -

Yes. There still are two.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. I see.

*Garamhand* -

From the organizational point of view it was one factory.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

There is the manual carpet department and the automatic one...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Were the wages sufficient?

*Garamhand* -

We were paid by the piece.

*Khishigsüren* -

If you did your best, how much money did you get?

*Garamhand* -

It took a month and a few days to make a 3x2 meter big carpet, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

So we would make an estimate and if you delivered it at the earliest date you got 1000 Tögrög a month.

*Khishigsüren* -

Wow!

*Garamhand* -

At that time 1000 Tögrög was so much money that you couldn't even spend it all. Wages were around 300 something or 200 something, but if you fulfilled the quota it wouldn't be less than 300.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. But for how much were the carpets sold?

*Garamhand* -

The price was calculated by decimeters. Actually it wasn't too bad. By today's standards it was cheap.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Were the carpets made for domestic consumption or for export? Do you know?

*Garamhand* -

Once in a while we made one for exportation. There were orders coming from Germany. They told us the size and the color and we would make it.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

We made them for domestic consumption. They were sold in shops, and we also made carpets for the halls in official buildings.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Sometimes walking around I see our carpets in the halls.

*Khishigsüren* -

You made durable carpets.

*Garamhand* -

Yes, the handwoven carpets are good.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Those made with machines aren't the same.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. Usually people working in factories were promoted, were those who worked with you? What did you do in order to get a promotion? In what ways could people get promoted?

*Garamhand* -

At that time they had hired a lot of people for some time. They were all young people, so many went to evening schools. After 5pm they went to the school no.3, which was very popular. And then there was the school no.23. But the courses at the school no.3 started from the elementary school level. The factory workers got a lot of pressure from above to go to the evening school.

*Khishigsüren* -

Did all of them go?

*Garamhand* -

Yes. They were pushed a lot.

*Khishigsüren* -

The whole day you weave in the factory and in the evening you go to school...

*Garamhand* -

At that time public transport was rare. We lived close to the railway. By the time I got back home and to the evening school, it was already 7pm. Buses were really rare, the lucky ones managed to catch them, the unlucky ones stayed behind.

*Khishigsüren* -

(laughs)

*Garamhand* -

I went home just to take the notebooks and then left again. But we lived close to the school. School was over at 11pm. I came home at night, ate something and at 6am I left again. At that time they were very strict with the time...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

We couldn't come late. If you were late by one minute, they would add one more, and when you had accumulated five you would be ridiculed. It was a big thing.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

We tried very hard not to get there. They checked the time in the morning, it was terrible.

*Khishigsüren* -

I was going to ask you this. You were always so busy. After work you would go to the evening school. So what about the household chores and the children?

*Garamhand* -

Oh, that was all quite chaotic.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Gerelsüh's mother lives with me. One night when I came home late she was all nasty...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

I told her that she had cooked a bad meal, that the food wasn't tasty.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

'First you make me work and work and work, and then you tell me that the food I made is dog food. Well, you won't throw it away, but eat it that dog food!', she yelled at me. After finishing 7th grade she had continued to study. She had been with me since the third grade.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

She cooked for me when I came home, but she was acting up too.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

'You say I make dog food but you eat it! You say that I make bad food but you eat it!', she would yell. When I sent her to get something, she would ask 'Am I your ox cart? You treat me like a slave.' And then I would scold her and say 'If you don't go, who will?'

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Because she was a secondary school student, she came home earlier. She was my only friend, I didn't have anybody else.

*Khishigsüren* -

What kind of people were managing the factory at that time?

*Garamhand* -

There was a man named Dashdorj. He was a tailor. He had graduated from a tailoring school in the north.

*Khishigsüren* -

This was a man?

*Garamhand* -

Yes, a man.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

His wife wasn't able to sew anything. She was working with us on the carpets. When the Naadam was approaching she said 'Dashdorj worked the whole night to make this deel for me. I will wear it tomorrow for the Naadam.'

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

We asked her 'Davaatseren, don't you sew yourself?'. And she said 'No, I don't. Dashdorj sews, so I don't.' At that time there was a beautiful parade for the Naadam.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

In later years, we were all given cloth cut for deels, all of the same color, before the Naadam. They would give them to us the day before and tell us to wear them for the Naadam.

*Khishigsüren* -

Wow! (laughs)

*Garamhand* -

Then we went home in the evening, sewed the whole night through to make rough and ready deels and then we would wear them for the parade.

*Khishigsüren* -

For the Naadam? Did all factories have to participate in the parade?

*Garamhand* -

Of course.

*Khishigsüren* -

So it was like participating in the Olympics!

*Garamhand* -

True.

*Khishigsüren* -

Where did the Naadam take place?

*Garamhand* -

Aa?

*Khishigsüren* -

Did you go to the stadium?

*Garamhand* -

We paraded on the square.

*Khishigsüren* -

I see.

*Garamhand* -

We paraded factory by factory, organization by organization.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. What material did they give you for the deel?

*Garamhand* -

In the later years they gave us very beautiful brocaded stuff.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

So many girls all wearing the same beautiful deels made of crêpe fabric, it looked really beautiful.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

The parade was really impressive. The sewing factory was the one with most workers. We were really famous. When the Children's Park was established, the seamstresses would be told to leave at 5pm. 'We are cleaning, you have to leave', with these words they would be chased outside. We all had to be there, the exact number of workers. We would go there after work, all of us.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Then we would dig the ground there until dark. Dashdorj made us do such work. And because the girls of our factory worked very well they were awarded 20.000 Tögrög.

*Khishigsüren* -

Wow! At that time 20.000 was...

*Garamhand* -

At that time 20.000 was an incredible amount of money! It was the largest award ever given in the history of the nation. In this way the Children's Park...it used to be a swampy place with a thin river flowing through it, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -

It has dried up and disappeared.

*Garamhand* -

Who knows? Maybe they dug out the foundations...

*Khishigsüren* -

Do you remember whether there were other directors at the factory besides Dashdorj?

*Garamhand* -

There were the department heads. The director of the factory was Dashdorj, and the head of our department was Handhüü. And then there was the coat and the hat departments. We made everything except for shoes and buttons. In later days, the coat department was transferred to Amgalan and our carpet department became separate.

*Khishigsüren* -

So the whole factory was broken up...

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

What was the name of the factory back then? Industrial combine?

*Garamhand* -

No, it was called workshop no.6...

*Khishigsüren* -

I see.

*Garamhand* -

Our Handhüü bagsh told us that it was founded as 'workshop no.6'.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

One took scissors and another a knife and then they joined forces...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
... and that's how it started, she said.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Where was the workshop no.6 based originally?

*Garamhand* -  
Do you know where the former Pioneer Palace is?

*Khishigsüren* -  
Yes.

*Garamhand* -  
Just opposite it, across the road.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Oh, yes. There's a school there today.

*Garamhand* -  
It was facing the road.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Behind the University.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. There's a yellow two-storey building.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Today it is pink.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes. Inside there were so many divisions. There was a cultural center inside, of the Central Council of the Trade Union

*Khishigsüren* -  
Today they do ballroom dancing there. There is a hall.

*Garamhand* -  
At that time there were a lot of dance parties, too. It was famous. It was called 'Ballroom of the Industrial Cooperatives'.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. When you were young everyone liked to go dancing, right? It was an essential part of life, wasn't it?

*Garamhand* -  
It was organized by the brigades of socialist labor. At that time they taught everything, even how to hold a bowl of food. And they were also teaching ballroom dancing. There would be ten-minute breaks at 3pm and at 10pm. They would teach you what you didn't know during those breaks.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Hmm. So there was no time to rest.

*Garamhand* -  
After that they would also tell us about the international situation. Those breaks at 3 and at 10pm were never wasted. Either they would tell you about politics for ten minutes or teach you ballroom dancing. They taught you whatever you wanted to learn.

*Khishigsüren* -  
So the factory workers would go dancing together. What else did they do together in their free time?

*Garamhand* -  
Actually there was not one day a week that we didn't do anything, you know. We had Trade Union meetings, the Trade Union Circle. Then we had hours of vocational training. Listening to the radio in the morning. These things seemed to be a bigger burden than the work itself.

*Khishigsüren* -  
They never gave you time to rest.

*Garamhand* -  
No. In spring, we had to take the exams of the circles. We had to draw a ticket. When my child was small once I came late. I hadn't seen my supervisor for many days, and in the factory they announced that in the evening there would be an exam. I wondered how to manage to take the exam. I could not not take it.

*Khishigsüren* -  
I see.

*Garamhand* -  
When I got there, Tseesüren had come from the tailoring division to supervise. She was quite well-known. 'Who are you?', she asked. I have never seen you. Are you from the tailoring division?' 'No, I am from the carpet division', I said. 'Where have you been all that time that you haven't met me?' 'What do you want?' 'I have come to take the exam.'

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
The vocational circle was meeting all the time. As if it was our main job and we talked about our work there. And then we were ranked.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. I understood it this way. In addition to your work, all your free time was filled with circles, meetings, assemblies, hearings, and lectures, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Right.

*Khishigsüren* -  
You talked about dancing. Were there orders from above that you had to learn dancing?

*Garamhand* -  
No, it wasn't like that. During socialism, the brigades were really friendly. We had to know some songs when we got together in our brigades. There were many brigades in one department, you know.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
One brigade had maximum 20 people and minimum 15 people. The brigades used to compete with each other.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
We had assignments. At that time, there was a certain Günjilham at the combine who was the leading norm fulfiller. And



then there was Amgalan, who fulfilled the norms too. We would write our yearly plans based on their example. If we fulfilled it we fulfilled it. If not not. Our performance would always be checked.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. So you worked following the excellent example of those great heroes...

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

Did you ever achieve to realize that ideal in your lives?

*Garamhand* -

Well, our assignments were modeled on Günjilham and Amgalan's achievements. We weren't supposed to overfulfill the norm, just to fulfill it and we tried really hard.

*Khishigsüren* -

So these people didn't become Heroes of Labor because they had invented something new that facilitated the work, but because they fulfilled the norm by 150 or 200%, right?

*Garamhand* -

Yes. Some people got assignments that they could fulfill. We worked manually, but they worked with machines.

*Khishigsüren* -

Aha.

*Garamhand* -

There were those people.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Amgalan and the others... Amgalan was a cutter.

*Khishigsüren* -

So the standard was set by a person who worked in a completely different factory...

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

How could that be implemented in factory where the work was done manually?

*Garamhand* -

I don't know how we fulfilled our quotas. We were always told to follow the example of those legendary exemplary people.

*Khishigsüren* -

Did anyone ever break Günjilhan and Amgalan's record?

*Garamhand* -

Well, they would just tell you to fulfill the quota that you had been assigned.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

And to follow those people's example...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

Constantly, every year we were given assignments. It was called 'socialist competition'. The standard for our assignments was always set by those in the division or the workshop, who were really good at their work. In our factory we worked manually, while the others were using machines. The tailoring division was using electric sewing machines, but we didn't have things like that.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah.

*Garamhand* -

However, since the establishment of the carpet factory, it is working very nicely.

*Khishigsüren* -

What job did you do after the 17 years in the factory?

*Garamhand* -

I went to Bulgan after that...

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. You went to Bulgan? Why did you go back there?

*Garamhand* -

My husband was appointed there as the head of the construction office, so we went there. However, it turned out that his appointment didn't conform with the regulations, so the job ended. For me it was time to retire, and when I went there, there was no job that I could do in conformity with the system. There was a food combine, they were bottling vodka there. According to the labor law I couldn't work in a place where they were making pastries and bottling vodka. However, I was told that if I followed my husband I did not have to work within my field, but I could do whatever work I liked.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. So these things were regulated?

*Garamhand* -

Then I worked in the trade sector in Bulgan. I did that for three years and then I went to a sum in the countryside.

*Khishigsüren* -

All right. In the socialist period, trade organizations were run by the province, right? How were they organized? What did you do?

*Garamhand* -

I was working as a cashier.

*Khishigsüren* -

Ah. At the central cash register?

*Garamhand* -

Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -

So not in the store?

*Garamhand* -

No, in the store. The food section in the store had a cash register. Consumer goods had a cash register too. I was working in the food section. I collected the money...

*Khishigsüren* -  
In what year was that?

*Garamhand* -  
I was there from 1975 to 1979.

*Khishigsüren* -  
The cashiers sat on high podiums.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, close to the door.

*Khishigsüren* -  
People raised up their hands to pay.

*Garamhand* -  
Right. True. It is really true.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Why?

*Garamhand* -  
At that time we had an electric cash register, which worked when there was electricity. When there was no electricity we turned the crank manually.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Yes.

*Garamhand* -  
We accepted even 20 Mōngö. At that time that was a lot of money, you know. Even 10 Mōngö were a lot of money. On days when there was no electricity, we would turn the crank manually. When there were many people, one side of my body became all numb because of turning the crank.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Was your shop a self-service shop? Would you please talk about the differences between the counters?

*Garamhand* -  
At that time, we didn't have self-service shops. There would always be a sales person and the cashiers.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Then in 1979, my husband was appointed as the director of a state farm.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
So in June I went to take care of the children.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Then there was talk about establishing self-service stores. That kind of talk continued for several days. I was in the food section. People were saying that self-service would make us lose goods, that there would be theft, and that together we would have to pay back the losses incurred in such way. There was an old man who was in charge of the section. His name was Luvsanjamts. He said, 'Everybody has to pay'. And I said 'Why would I have to pay? I'm collecting the money, while you guys are watching the goods. I won't participate'. So the two of us got into a fight. 'Why do I have to pay for the goods you lost? I am responsible for the money in the cash register. If I lose money, you don't have to pay either'. They turned the store into a self-service shop after I had left. In the city they started earlier.

*Khishigsüren* -  
That would be today's supermarket, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Once I went to a shop close to the factory. I saw a small child taking cookies and hiding them in the pockets. Nobody noticed and the child simply left the shop. Then the goods were cheap, but nevertheless money was valuable.

*Khishigsüren* -  
We used to get our goods from the shop assistant only with the receipt from the cashier.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, first you had to pay and get a receipt and then you could take your things and leave.

*Khishigsüren* -  
How much money did the shop in the province center make in a day? How much did the shop assistants and workers of the trade organization earn?

*Garamhand* -  
The store in Bulgan hadn't yet become a self-service shop. There were twelve shop assistants. It was a two-storey building.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Every province center had a 12-shop-assistant store, right?

*Garamhand* -  
The shop would make 3000 to 4000. We earned most during the holidays, and the holiday during which we earned most was the 8th of March. We would make 22.000 to 23.000 a day. At that time, 20.000 was an incredible amount of money.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Yes. Why was the 8th of March more special than the other holidays?

*Garamhand* -  
I don't know. I would have thought we would make most money during the Tsagaan Sar, but Tsagaan Sar wasn't exceptional.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
Instead it was March, on the 8th of March we made 23.000. I can't forget that. We all exclaimed 'Wow! Today we made 23.000!'. In the evening, they came from the bank and took the money away in bags. What a relief when they took the money!

*Khishigsüren* -  
Did they take the money away every day?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, they came every day by car to collect the money.

*Khishigsüren* -  
I would like to talk about the stores with the twelve shop assistants which you just mentioned. I was in the province center

and there was a two-storey 12-shop-assistant store.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
The shop assistants of those stores were highly respected, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Does 12 shop assistants mean 12 sections?

*Garamhand* -  
No, it doesn't. There were six upstairs and six downstairs. Flour and vodka were in one section, sweets were separate, pastries were separate, meat, milk and vegetables...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. On the second floor, I think there were the consumer goods.

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, they were also divided into different categories.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Into what categories? Clothes, housewares?

*Garamhand* -  
There was everything.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Everything together?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes, everything together.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Was the shop assistants' salary fixed? Or based on a quota?

*Garamhand* -  
It was fixed. The highest ranking shop assistant got 300 Tögrög, and the lowest 250...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah.

*Garamhand* -  
When I was in Bulgan, the brigade leader would organize meetings once a month or every few weeks...

*Khishigsüren* -  
Who chose what kind of goods and how much would be sold in the stores? Where did the goods come from?

*Garamhand* -  
They came from a warehouse.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. They all had fixed prices, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Yes.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Who accepted the goods, the bookkeeper or the shop assistants?

*Garamhand* -  
The bookkeeper, and then they were distributed to the shop assistants.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. What items were sold the most?

*Garamhand* -  
Food and beverages.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Ah. It's not comparable to today, right?

*Garamhand* -  
Oh, no it's not comparable.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Which items were the rarest? Among the food stuff?

*Garamhand* -  
Shoes. We always used to say that shoes for 180 Tögrög would come in only once in a while. We didn't get them very often, only once in a while.

*Khishigsüren* -  
And which food stuff was the rarest?

*Garamhand* -  
Food was generally all right. Usually we would get everything, even foreign candies and cookies. They arrived in the shops when meetings with the sum leaders were prepared in the province center. Rare items were given only to them. Once I was scolded by the deputy director. We had opened the shop at night, because during the day ordinary people wouldn't be let into the shop, so we let them in at night. I had to stay because otherwise the shop assistants could have taken the money. But in the morning I was scolded. 'You earn 200 Tögrög, you took more right?', they said. In the factory I had earned 250 Tögrög, that wasn't bad. But 250 Tögrög a month in a shop is really low, isn't it? And any loss would be deducted from our salaries.

*Khishigsüren* -  
Let's have a break.

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