

THE ORAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MONGOLIA



Ariunzaya

Basic information

Interviewee ID: 990351
Name: Ariunzaya
Parent's name: Tömörbaatar
Ovog: Borjigon
Sex: f
Year of Birth: 1976
Ethnicity: Halh

Additional Information

Education: secondary
Notes on education: бүрэн дунд
Work: self-employed
Belief: Protestant
Born in: Мөнххаан сум, Сүхбаатар аймаг
Lives in: [None Given] сум (or part of UB), Darhan-Uul аймаг
Mother's profession: Erdenenet machinist
Father's profession: Erdenenet electrician

Themes for this interview are:

(Please click on a theme to see more interviews on that topic)
travel; belief; illness / health; funerals; family;

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

Christianity; missionaries;

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Translation:

Otgonbayar -

Ariunzaya, in this second interview let's talk about the churches in Mongolia. How have the first churches been established? You said, for instance, that you went to Dornod to serve. Could you please talk about how you went to Dornod alone and how you established the church there?

Ariunzaya -

I decided to go to Dornod in 1996. My mother's sister lived there so I had a place to stay. I gathered all my courage and decided to go. I talked to my elder brothers and sisters and they agreed, but I had made the decision on my own. I prayed a lot and I thought that God was using me, that I was necessary to Him. I was indebted to God, I wanted to love Him even more and I wanted to be loved more. That's why I submitted my life to Him and I prayed asking Him to bless my life. So I decided to go to Dornod, I told my brothers and sisters and I went. We used to go to Dornod by car, it's far away, almost 600km. Once you leave town it's only steppes, you don't see a single tree. It's really difficult to drive across the steppes. I have never been able to travel by car. I get all weak in a car and I vomit. Today it's fast, you can do it in 7 hours, but then it took 12. People would leave town at 6 in the morning and sometimes stay overnight on the way. When it was raining it was extremely difficult. Taking the plane was really expensive and I needed the money to live there, so I decided to go by land. There was one egch in Dornod, her name was Ganzul. She was the first believer who had gone there. I got in touch with her and I met her as soon as I arrived. Even though there were other brothers and sisters who came in the van to spread the Gospel, only one stayed there with her.

Otgonbayar -

A believer.

Ariunzaya -

Yes, he was a believer. In 1993 he had been in Ulaanbaatar. So when I went there with the other brothers and sisters, I met my aunt. I went to see her and I told her the truth, that I had come to live there. I asked her whether I could stay with her and said a lot of other things, too. She said yes and I lived with her. They had a three-room flat in the center of Dornod.

Otgonbayar -

She is your mother's younger sister?

Ariunzaya -

Yes. So I first went to see my aunt and then I saw Ganzul egch and she introduced me to a lot of people, she would say 'There is somebody who might become a believer.' Our goal was to tell people about Jesus, to establish a church with many believers, to gather people full of love for others. This is what inspired me when I first went there. In the beginning we were the only people and we needed to tell the good news to many people, so we immediately started to search for people whom to talk to. We wondered with whom to talk first, where to go to spread the Gospel. Then Ganzul egch told me about a family who used to sell bread in the center of Dornod. That was Nyamdelger egch and we went to see her. She was terribly thin with short hair like a man, a market woman with a sharp tongue. I thought 'How can a person like that believe in Jesus?' She seemed like a tough woman and her movements were crazy. Well, we met her and we told her that we needed a space for our gatherings. We could rent an old house for 500 an hour. At that time the currency value was not too high. We talked about renting that cheap place to organize gatherings on the weekends. Of course we had to invite people to the gatherings, so we also invited Nyamdelger egch. The bread in Dornod is really tasty. She was arranging a lot of loafs and said 'You invited me, I will come for sure', but I wasn't sure that she would come. I met with Ganzul who had invited her relatives. The next day we went to the place and cleaned it. Ganzul's younger relatives all came, including really young ones, and then Nyamdelger egch came, too.

Otgonbayar -

How many people came?

Ariunzaya -

Four or five all together. To me it seemed like a lot of people and I was very happy. I had expected to be there alone with Ganzul egch. I was full of joy and then Nyamdelger egch came. We prayed and we sang psalms and we talked. We were only a few people. So we spread the Gospel and talked about the Lord. Nyamdelger egch said straightaway 'You don't have a place, why do you have to spend money? Let's do the meetings at my place. My husband doesn't believe, but he will.' So this egch invited us straightaway to hold our meetings at her place. I was very happy. Even if it is just one family, it is a lot. I was ordered to tell her husband about the Gospel immediately, that same evening. The next weekend we held our meeting there. We were so happy, we gave back the other place and went straight to Nyamdelger egch's place. When we got there, here husband was lying in bed. His name is Enhbold. He is a careless person and we started immediately to



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tell him the Gospel. 'What do people generally live for and worship? Do you think there is nothing or do you think that God exists?' He was lying in bed and didn't pay any attention to my words, so I sat next to him even though he was lying. I started 'Ah, I would like to talk about God.' He opened his eyes straight away, he became different, he stood up and sat down and stood up and sat down next to me. I asked him 'Do you really want to believe? Do you want to accept Jesus?' He said yes and he called the Lord's name. I asked him if we could hold our meetings at his place and he agreed. It was a small place that could hold maybe ten people and it rained through the roof.

Otgonbayar -

Was it an adobe house in the ger district?

Ariunzaya -

It was like a small shed, they lived in pitiful conditions. They sold bread which they made in two ovens and that's how they made their living. I felt really sorry for them. So we started to organize our meetings, but in the beginning it was difficult, because there was no peace as in the meantime they continued to do their household chores. Nobody said 'Please sit down.' Furthermore, in the beginning quite a lot of new members came. In the aimag center there was the building no.3 and all members of the family who lived there became believers. So we alternated and organized meetings at their place, too. I did it only once or twice, I wasn't very good at doing it at that time. So there was Ganzul egch and Nyamdelger egch, who had a really nice younger sister. So I had two families and one egch. She said 'I have a nice sister, I want you to meet her', so we went there. It was Nandia, the smiling girl.

Otgonbayar -

Of the church in Dornod?

Ariunzaya -

Yes, I think she and her family are serving in the church in Dornod. Nandia's grandmother was bed-ridden, because she had spasms in her legs. She used to take care of her grandmother. I was really happy to meet her and I thought to myself that this is a girl who loves God. She prays a lot. But she couldn't come to church because she couldn't leave her grandmother alone during the day. She was very grateful to God. She got up every morning at 6 and prayed and read God's words for her brothers and sisters and for the earth. She loved God that much. I had seen for myself that God's words were real and that's how I had started to believe. When Nandia invited me to her place I was very grateful. I cried and thanked God. 'How beautiful, a family,' I said. We were happy about every single person and there was a family.

Otgonbayar -

What was Nandia's grandmother's reaction?

Ariunzaya -

At that time, we didn't tell the Gospel to her grandmother. We became close with Nandia and I got to know her family situation. It was a very difficult one. Only the father was working and they never had enough money. After we had had our meeting at their place two or three times, we thought about telling the Gospel to the grandmother. She had been there during the meetings, but she had been very silent. I said 'Grandmother, you must know about God. You have lived a whole life. Your body is exhausted. Now your only companion, the only one you can call, is God. Now you are suffering a lot.' She had been bed-ridden for more than seven years without being able to move her legs. Her pelvic bone was perforated, that's why she was lying and the situation had become really terrible. In order to treat it she was using badger fat mixed with a red medicine against tuberculosis. I had had a hard heart, but I was becoming more soft-hearted. So I started to take care of her, not in order to make her believe, but because I pitied her. I took care of the bedsores on her back and after two, three times I started to tell her about the Lord. I felt like telling her. 'If you believe in God, He can really help you in your suffering and He will give you strength.' The grandmother cried and said 'I will accept Jesus. He is the only one I need now.' This is how she accepted the Lord and from that day on she continued to call His name. I got to know her much better, and I began to help Nandia to look after her, because she got very tired looking after her alone. One night Nandia's father looked after her. When he wasn't working he looked after her at night, and when he was working Nandia did it. Because I didn't have much to do, I started to take turn with them during the nights to look after her. From the moment she heard about God and called Him, she lived her life in front of Him. I continued to see her and she died a year before I got married. She very often prayed to Lord Jesus to ease her pain during the night and let her sleep. In this way she slept. Usually she couldn't sleep because she was in so much pain. I was thinking to myself that she must be exhausted and I prayed 'My Lord Jesus, the time has come for you to take her. If she has to stay like this much longer her whole body will be sore and swell.' And I got up to move her. I was almost continuously praying and I became very close with Nandia and I helped her a lot. Nandia loved Jesus very much, too. She would cry and talk to God. She was a great blessing to the family. Her grandmother died in '98, two years later. Just before she died she called 'My Lord Jesus!'. Then she said 'Amen' and peacefully passed away. When people die, their bodies usually become stiff, but grandmother's body stayed all soft. She had gone to God very peacefully. I came just after she had taken her last breath. Ganzul egch had been with her in that moment. That evening I was busy at home and Ganzul had been looking after grandmother together with Nandia. Ganzul had gone over because she had suddenly thought of grandmother. Then her sister came to call me 'Zaya egch, grandmother is about to pass away. Come quickly.' My place was really close and I ran over, but when I arrived grandmother had already peacefully passed away. Grandmother always thanked God and she prayed for me like for her own daughter. 'She comes at night and cleans me. Sending me a person who looks after me as if she was my own daughter is God's deed. My Lord, please bless this wonderful girl who comes and takes care of me.' When I saw her praying like that I always cried a lot. I would say 'Thank you, grandmother. I also pray very much for you, let's pray together and call the name of the Lord.' When her children came, she would always tell them to believe in God, that God would help them only if they believed. That's why she believed. Her children were Buddhists, that's why they had to go to a lama to 'open the golden vessel'. Nandia said 'I looked after her and hence I wish to bury her according to my own religion.' But her relatives didn't agree, so I said to Nandia 'My sister, God has already taken her with Him, it doesn't really matter what happens after. If your relatives want to do it that way, let them. But the two of us will stay faithful and honest to God and show Him everything. Grandmother is now with Him. Grandmother had not given birth to children on her own, but she had adopted two children. People call such a woman barren and that's why the children want to go to the lama to have her purified. God will show himself, let's pray to Him just the two of us.' When her children came back from the ceremony they said that the lama had said 'This person is blessed, there is no need to read any scriptures for her. She is with Buddha, Buddha has taken her himself.' He opened the golden vessel immediately and when her children came back they said 'He didn't say that she was bad because she hadn't had children on her own. He said that she has become a Buddha, that Buddha has taken her. He said that she has found her way on her own.' Nandia was very grateful that our God takes people to Him Himself. The two of us sat down and thanked him very much, after the other people had finished doing everything for the funeral.

Otgonbayar -

Following the Buddhist custom.

Ariunzaya -

Yes. The two of us knelt down and prayed 'Our God, grandmother has come to You and is resting. We are very thankful that You have taken her.' Usually people cry when somebody dies, but we prayed to God and thanked Him. Nandia and I were together at that time and our good grandmother passed away as a believer. She was over eighty years old. I will never forget her. She loved God so much. She had been a believer for only two years. I had found such a family and they are very dear to me. Nandia has been blessed, she met a good man at the meetings and they are now a family that sincerely loves God. Enbold ah's family lives very well, he is working as a carpenter and he helps a lot during the meetings with regards to economic questions. They were very poor, but we prayed. They made fun of me when I asked God to give them a different house. 'Please fix this house and change their lives,' I prayed. They were being suffocated by their enormous debts and I prayed that God would give them a good life. They made fun of me because I called their house a barn. Now they have changed their house. They built a nice house. They had a lot of problems but thanks to God's blessings they all went away. I think that God really loved and blessed them. At that time they helped us a lot. At that time I didn't have a job, so I did everything I could for my brothers and sisters. They liked it very much. They would say 'Just keep on visiting us. We will help you.' I didn't have anything, so I had to make my own bread to earn a little bit. During our gatherings we shared some bread and black tea. It was sweat and really delicious. In this way we celebrated really wonderfully, joyfully. Then Ganzul egch brought a friend of hers called Yanjmaa, who loved us very much and came often. She brought her straight to my place, and because my aunt wasn't there we told her about the Lord immediately. We told her about our small community. We said that in order for God to be close to people we had to love people. We spoke about loving other people and that egch accepted immediately. Every morning at 6 we went to the riverside to pray. Some slept and didn't come, so we were only a few. Some were working. Yanjmaa always came, always. She never missed the prayers. While she was away the two of us taught psalms at her place. She was terribly poor, too. She lived with five children, her husband and her younger siblings in a really small house, which was maybe for four people. They were living all squeezed. I saw this family, the people in Dornod, and I felt really sorry for them. The rich were really rich and the poor terribly poor. People of the middle class in between the two were very few. Life in Dornod was generally like that. When I thought about it I felt very sorry. Those who believed in God were all poor. But they never talked about their lives. They didn't tell people and they weren't depressed because of it. They just lived. They were very good-hearted and patient people. Now he works as a builder. The husband has become a believer and the children, too. Then Yonchol ah's family came from Ulaanbaatar and from Erdenet. They were Korean but had lived in Mongolia for many years. Yonchol ah helped the believers a lot and that's why he came from the city. He came to share God's love. We went to see Yanjmaa, they were so poor. The youngest daughter was just one year old. When we arrived, she had just burnt herself. She had

fallen on the stove because it was so crowded in that house. She was a child and she fell on the fire. Her hands looked terrible. Yonchol ah and I went together. I went out, cried a lot and prayed 'My Lord, this family doesn't have anything. They are very poor and they have small children. You have to help this family and these children.' Yonchol held his hands over the child and prayed 'Please bless this family. Take the pain from this child.' At that time we hadn't even thought of putting oil on the wound. Then Yonchol ah asked whether we should go to buy some Horomhon burn ointment. The Lord had heard our prayers. Because Yonchol ah couldn't go to visit many other families he entrusted them to God, and he stayed quite a long time before he left. I healed straightaway, you know. God healed it immediately. It was a miracle, God was there for those people. God has come here for people like them. People like this need God. It healed without leaving a scar. The flesh had come off, it was so terrible. I cried 'My God, You are the God of these poor people, you love them, and you sent us here. You sent us here because You love them. How dear You are. God, You look after this family because they have found faith.' I didn't have a job, so I couldn't help. When I went to visit them the children might be without food. When we had our meetings, we would fry gambir, that was the food of the poor. They would make them for us and for Ganzul egch, but not give them to the children. So we would share them and they would wait for the meeting in the morning. One day when we had a meeting their Tanya had really high fever. There was a year difference between her and the other child and they looked much alike. She had really high fever. So I prayed 'My Lord, we don't have money to buy medicine and their daughter has a terrible fever. Please forgive this family. If there are problems in this family please forgive them. If there is sin please forgive them. Satan must not touch this child, the devil must not take her.' I touched her and she felt really hot. I held her in my arms and prayed, and even though she was only three years old she prayed, too. 'Oh Lord Jesus, please make my illness go away. Amen.' I cried and prayed that God would heal her and then we left. Her fever went away straightaway, they said. When we held our meeting the next day she said 'God healed me, God helped me!' Such a beautiful family. They had found the Lord. Then Yanjmaa egch had another baby. Even though she had already many children, when she became pregnant again her faith never wavered. She already had three daughters, and she gave birth to a son just before I left for Darhan. They had only one son and she wanted to have another son. She believed that it would be a son and that's how it was. But the baby fell ill and died. It was a very difficult period. I don't really know what kind of illness it was. Thinking about it now, it was some kind of sepsis. The body was full of pus. He was a cute, plump baby and then he lost weight. He was just over a year old. Even though he became really thin, Yanjmaa's faith, her love for God was great. She leaned on Him. We took turns looking after him, he was really exhausted. We wanted him to get injections, but one cost 36000 tögrög. That was in 2000. At that time the currency value had risen a lot and we weren't able to afford it. So we prayed to God 'If you really need to take our little brother take him. If he needs to rest, please take him.' Gansüh ah came from Ulaanbaatar, he was based in Darhan.

Otgonbayar -

He is the one from our church?

Ariunzaya -

Yes, he used to come to our church. They moved here, together we prayed a lot and we were very close with Yanjmaa egch. Because she loved God she said 'It is all right even if my son leaves us, I have submitted him to the Lord. Maybe my son would have had a life full of suffering in this world. After they are born, children encounter much suffering. Maybe God is taking my son so that he won't suffer.' I was happy because I knew that she was prepared. Then her son died. I heard that he had passed away in the evening and I went to the hospital. I was afraid of seeing her face and I shed some tears. Then suddenly she came out and it was as if God had appeared. Her appearance was peaceful, full of blessing. If she didn't believe in Jesus she would have asked why her son died, why he didn't become healthy. But she was very peaceful, and then we had the son's...

Otgonbayar -

Funeral...

Ariunzaya -

Yes, the funeral. Her parents-in-law came and there were some problems.

Otgonbayar -

They wanted to have a Buddhist ceremony.

Ariunzaya -

Yes. They wanted to have a Buddhist ceremony. 'If your Jesus really existed, He would have saved his life', they said. Our egch was very hard. 'God gave him to me and God took him back. This is not our child, but my son who was born from faith. This is why I decide. It is not your child, it is my right.' Even though the husband wasn't a believer at that time, he supported his wife and said that he agreed with her. 'Please don't oppose this, it is good.' So they both agreed and then they called us. I had never been to something like that before.

Otgonbayar -

You had never been to a funeral.

Ariunzaya -

No, it was the first time. Gansüh ah had never been to one either. So in the evening the two of us talked about what to do. We had been entrusted with organization of the funeral and we did it even though we didn't have money. Gansüh ah said 'Since he is a small child, we don't need a coffin. It is enough to wrap him and bury him in a beautiful place. It doesn't necessarily have to be a cemetery. Since God made us from soil, we turn back to soil. That's why we have to bury him in a beautiful place and the few of us can do it without spending much.' The parents-in-law were old people and they said 'Well, do as you wish.' They were very hard and I was very scared. 'What now?' I asked, 'the relatives won't participate, so it's just us.' Our egch were very courageous and said 'Yes, we will do it our way.' We prepared a lot of things and then we buried Yanjmaa egch's youngest son in a beautiful sunlit place on the southern lower slopes of a mountain. We buried him and covered him with beautiful earth, so it didn't look like a grave. Man is made of soil and turns back into soil. We prayed for the child and we asked God to bless the family. The parents-in-law were there. Everybody was there and we did everything well and blessed the family. We really tried to do our best. When everything was over and we were cleaning and about to leave, the father-in-law thanked us. 'Thank you very much. What a beautiful ceremony this was,' he said. 'I have never seen such a thing, I have never known such pure and good-hearted people. Thank you very much.' We were so happy and I immediately shed some tears. Those who had first opposed it had softened. Because we had had the courage to stand on God's side, the husband became a believer when he heard the Gospel. He had stood on his wife's side and thus on God's side. He hadn't been saved, but after the funeral he was and also his parents. His younger brothers and sisters accepted God, too. They were very open. We would visit them and during the Tsagaan Sar they would wait for us and wonder why Jesus' people weren't coming. They became a very nice family. Now they love the Lord and they work for the church in Dornod. They help Yanjmaa egch and Ariuna düü very much. They have become such a family, in Dornod.

Otgonbayar -

For how many years did you stay in Dornod?

Ariunzaya -

I came to Dornod in 2000. I had been coming beginning from '96 and I settled here beginning from '98.

Otgonbayar -

Did you work in those two years? Did you have any income?

Ariunzaya -

I did not have any income. In the beginning I was working in my aunt's shop. While I was working there, I couldn't meet the believers. I just met my own needs and in the last year I hardly did anything. I just lived with the family of one düü, as if I was a family member. I did their household chores. In the last years the Lord has opened my way. My aunt's relative called me and I lived with her. For almost a year I wasn't able to work. I couldn't work because if I had gotten a job it would have been difficult for my brothers and sisters. So I stopped thinking about my own desires, and I thought that God would call me and provide for me. My brothers and sisters in Ulaanbaatar helped me a lot and gave me money for a year. I spent that money very carefully. I didn't spend it just like that, but very carefully and most of it for my brothers' and sisters' needs. People are really surprised when they hear on how much money I was living back then. Thinking about how expensive things are today they wonder how I managed to live. At some point I didn't have a place to stay anymore. My aunt didn't want me to live at her place anymore. She said that I had to look after myself, that I had lived with her for very long and that it was difficult for her family because I didn't work. I was praying a lot and I was wondering what to do, whether to get a job. There was my mother's elder brother's son, whom I met regularly. He was a very distant relative. He invited me to stay with them. He said it didn't matter whether I had a job or not. He wanted me to look after his child. He and his wife go down the Halha River to the Buir Lake to fish and then they go to Tianjin to sell the fish to the Chinese. It was a very profitable and big business. They would fish at night and their only daughter stayed with an aunt. Because they were just the two of them, they really needed a person to help them. They wouldn't take just any person to live with them, but they wanted someone very modest who wouldn't hang out with all sorts of people. He thought that I was a good fit because I always talked about Jesus, so he called me and said 'Stay with us as many years as you like. We will pay you. Look after our child.' He was a believer. I thanked God for providing for me. I had to look after their beautiful child and clean the house. I was really thankful.

Otgonbayar -

So you didn't have any financial problems.

Ariunzaya -

No, I didn't. They provided all the food. When they came they would bring food for the two of us and they provided also everything else we needed. I was so grateful to God. They made a lot of fun of me. 'When you get up in the morning it's Jesus, when you go to the bed in the evening it's Jesus, you pray and cry as if you were leading a sad life.' I would get up early in the morning, sit next to the fire and then 'you read a bit, cry and pray. What's that all about?' It was the wife who said that. She would always make fun of me and say 'Egch, you will never get anywhere. You are 25 or 23 and you aren't married and you don't think about marrying. You only think about Jesus. Some people think you are a bit crazy. For whom are you doing all this?' I was busy the whole day, I didn't have any free time. I read, I cleaned the house, I read a lot. When I was free I read to my brothers and sisters. I even read on the street when I went to pick up the child from the kindergarten. It was beautiful to be so busy in front of God. Every morning we went to Enhbold ah to pray, we prayed non-stop. We always read and helped each other and we assigned readings to our brothers and sisters. Then Gansüh ah came and got a flat. He said 'You have lived long enough there, now you live with us.' At that time, the couple I was staying with had stopped working and come back. It was the right moment, since they had come back I didn't have to stay there anymore, there was no need for me to live there anymore. Now I had to look after myself and work. So I left them and went to live with Gansüh ah, God had arranged all this. In the beginning I lived in a TUTS, that's what we called it, it was a small space where they kept their goods. I began to work for them. We worked together and it wasn't difficult. We would take turns, each family served for one week. We had meetings every day. One day Gansüh ah would go with his wife, the next day I would go with Gansüh ah. The day after that Anhaa egch and I would work together. I lived like that in Dornod and I came here in 2000. I hadn't been thinking about going home or to Darhan. That was the time when I got engaged with my husband. When I came home to Erdenet my husband proposed and we married immediately even though I had never met him before. I believed in God and I believed that God had sent him to me. When I came back from Dornod and we married, I asked him 'Why did you marry me? Why did you choose me?' And he said 'I believe that you have been sent to me by God. God gave you to me and hence I will love you.' At that time I had a revelation. After God had created the first human being Adam, he realized that Adam needed a companion. He made Adam fall asleep and while he was sleeping, he took a rib from Adam and created Eve. Adam hadn't been thinking of marrying somebody, but he opened his eyes he saw Eve. He said 'You are flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone' and he loved her immediately. My husband said that he loved me as soon as he saw me. He said that God had given me to him and this is how I had the revelation. I really had sat next to him when he was sleeping. When he saw me he said 'Flesh of my flesh, bone of my bone' and loved me very much. I immediately accepted this revelation and I agreed to marry him straightaway. There were no problems, I decided straightaway. I am very grateful to God. The longer I live the more understand that God answered my prayers. When I first became a believer, I asked God to make me have a peaceful Christian family. I believe that God gave me this life because I prayed for it. Our family leads a good life and it is very important for us to be caring and full of love, to love God. All of us love God very much and we have founded our family on this love. Now we live in Darhan and work for the church here. We have a small family, two children. One daughter and one son. It was such a good thing that Gansüh ah came to Dornod with his family. I believe that God's guidance rests on men, that men are anointed by God. So God called him to work for the church in Darhan. Many dear families were lifted up. Even though there were not many believers at that time, the first families I talked to were anointed by God. These are families who love God very much. I am very grateful for that. I share beautiful memories of the wonderful time spent in Dornod.

Otgonbayar -

Thank you for telling this really moving story.

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