

THE ORAL HISTORY OF TWENTIETH CENTURY MONGOLIA



Nadmid

Basic information

Interviewee ID: 990160
Name: Nadmid
Parent's name: Jamsran
Ovog: Holboo het
Sex: f
Year of Birth: 1936
Ethnicity: Zahchin

Additional Information

Education: none
Notes on education:
Work: [blank]
Belief: Buddhist
Born in: Manhan sum, Hovd aimag
Lives in: Songinohairhan sum (or part of UB), Ulaanbaatar aimag
Mother's profession: herder
Father's profession: herder

Themes for this interview are:

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

family; collectivization; cultural campaigns; privatization; work;

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

Kazakh uprising; collectivization; privatization; lamas; repression; literacy; cultural campaigns; herder's life before collectivization; official regulations; collectivization; collective member; herder; consumer goods; deel - clothes; cultural campaigns; changes in household culture; privatization; work - labor; women's life; belief;

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Translation:

Sarantsetseg -
Hello.

Nadmid -
Hello.

Sarantsetseg -
I have introduced you to the oral history project, so let's start the interview.

Nadmid -
All right.

Sarantsetseg -
What is your name? Where were you born? What is the name of the place where you were born? What kind of people were your parents? Which child of the family are you? Please tell me about yourself.

Nadmid -

All right. I was born in 1936. I am my parents' fourth daughter. My father's name was Jamsram, my mother's name was Hönt. When I was a child I was working, I was looking after the sheep and lambs. My parents had many animals so unfortunately I couldn't go to school. My parents didn't send me to school. I helped them tending the sheep and lambs. They didn't want me to go to school, but to herd the animals, and they were right at that time. They had over one thousand heads of livestock and hence we would move over large distances. What year was that? I was about thirteen, or sixteen, seventeen, when the cooperative movement began and our 1000 animals were collectivized. Now I think it would have been good to write down everything, but I was illiterate, I was young and naive. My dad died when I was thirteen, and I was left with my mother. We were four children. My parents had given an elder sister and a younger one to my grandfather. He raised them as if they were his own children so as to have company and help for tending the animals. Therefore there were only the four of us left at home and we grew up with our parents. One of us, Daariimaa, went to school and today she lives in Bormuur. She finished fourth grade. She is my youngest sister. My younger sister who lived with my grandfather is Sodnomdarjaa. Because my grandfather was a wise man he somehow managed to send her to school and she graduated from university in the city. She worked for the Agricultural Superintendency in the aimag center. Now she is retired. And my elder sister who lived with my grandfather finished fourth grade. My elder brother, my elder sister and me, the three of us have only just opened the door of the school. We herded animals and never got educated. My poor elder sister, she went to one of those study circles and I attended a fifteen-day training. My mother sent me there. It was really difficult. They taught us how to read and to write in fifteen days and then we had to take an exam. Thinking about it now, it really was just a fake exam. They gave me a thing that said that I had attended a fifteen-day course and that I had become literate. Until today I regret that I didn't go to school, not even for four years. However, that's how I lived. Later, when we joined the cooperative we gave our many animals to the cooperative. To put it simply, it was a kind of assault. We had so many official assignments to fulfill and a lack of wool would be a crime, a lack of milk the same. Meat couldn't be missing and the same with all things. They even took the sheepskins and the lambskins. If a household had this and that number of animals, it had to deliver this and that number of skins, this and that amount of fat and oil, this and this and that amount of butter. These official assignments came with a lot of pressure. Later I realized that this was indirect pressure, that behind it there were state policies. I understood that much later, but at the time we didn't know anything. When did the cooperatives start? It was in the 1950s. The year in which the cooperatives began, we gave our livestock away. My grandfather had one thousand heads of livestock, his name was Bornooson. My grandfather had given half of his animals to my father and later they both became myangat malchin. At that time, households with a thousand animals were very rich...they would have colored canvas tents, buckets made of cypress wood. We had many sheep and my grandfather too. We had beautiful colored calico tent decorated with a silver ram, meanders and a soyombo, which we used during the sum naadam. We gave it to the cooperative together with the livestock. The only things that were left were silver dress ornaments, the silver ram and the bucket made of cypress wood. We also gave them our raking machine. I was little so I didn't know much, I almost didn't know anything. Households with a thousand animals had such a haymaking machine with rakes, and I remember this colorful tent with big meanders, which we used to put up during the naadam. I don't really know what we did with those many animals, how many we handed over in the beginning. During the third wave of collectivization they put pressure on us saying that we hadn't given a single animal. In the end, they established that every family had to give a certain number of animals and they pushed us a lot. Then all the animals were collectivized and we herded the animals of the cooperative. How many years passed between the establishment of the cooperatives and this? 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21...I had herded sheep for five or six years. After the collectivization of

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our herds, I was nothing but a little girl sitting at home. I lived with my mother then. My younger sister was in fourth grade and she finished school after that. Those who worked the hardest in that period were my mother and me. There were my eldest sister and my elder brother and all those many animals. Oh yes, I skipped this. My mother couldn't manage on her own with all these animals, so she made our older brother who was 16 at that time marry. That is at that time he was considered 17, because we added a year, today he would be 16. She forced him to marry at seventeen, there was no other way to tend to so many animals. Poor thing. She did nothing wrong. She didn't manage with so many animals and meant to lessen her burden a bit. She had far more than one thousand heads of livestock, two stallions and I don't know how many cows, maybe fifty or sixty, forty or fifty? For sure forty or fifty, I remember we had about fifty cows. My father had died, so my mother married off her eldest son and gave him half of the property in order to lessen her burden. After that the livestock was collectivized. My brother was three years older than me, born in the year of the rooster, my mother arranged it all. I used to blame her for that, but it wasn't her fault. She needed help with all these animals and that's why she took in a daughter-in-law. She brought a girl home and introduced her to my brother. She made her stay at our place, she made her sew and then she introduced her to my brother. Then she set up a ger for them and gave them a share of livestock. She married him off, that's how it was. In the course of this hard life, I think I started to herd sheep when I was three years old. I was barefooted. Until the snow melted in spring we would wrap our feet in tookuu. At that time life was really hard. 'Until the snow melts, wrap your feet in tookuu, my children', that's how it was. We would wear tookuu and look after the animals between the rocks, for not wasting any material in the snow. It was a way of to protect our clothes from damage. Of course we had boots. My mother made them because there were no shops. The animals were collectivized four years after my father had passed away, I was a young girl then, 16 or 17 years old. The herds were collectivized in three waves with one or two years in between. During the third wave so many animals were collectivized and they still rebuked us for not having given more for the military forces and for not having prioritized horses and camels. The people whose herds were collectivized...

Sarantsetseg -

Weren't you allowed to keep one or two large animals as pack animals for every 75 heads of bog mal?

Nadmid -

Yes, we kept that number of animals. My mother had a few horses for herself, maybe three, and they forced her to give them away accusing her that she did not want to give any. That's how the herds were collectivized, so she decided to marry off her son and to give him a share of livestock. However, they were all given to the cooperative.

Sarantsetseg -

You had a large herd. Did you have a family who helped looking after them?

Nadmid -

Yes, we did. I forgot to talk about this. My mother used to tell me that during the Kazak war they had been greatly affected by the raids.

Sarantsetseg -

What did she tell you?

Nadmid -

She said that during the Kazak lootings, animals were slaughtered, valuable things were carried away and the men were killed. It happened in the year of the dog. My husband was born in the year of the dog and it happened in the year he was born. She used to tell me about the Kazak year of the dog and what had happened. There was a Kazak uprising and they raided the Mongolians who were nomadizing along the Western border. They robbed all their belongings, sometimes they would spare the lives of the wives and the children, sometimes they would kill them. So many poor Urianhai families came from the west after their animals had been killed. Poor people, they helped my parents a lot when I was little, to me they seemed very nice. A family with a hatguur came and settled in the area of Tsagaan Chuluut.

Sarantsetseg -

What is hatguur?

Nadmid -

A hatguur was a kind of hut with only one rafter, a high door and a small smokehole. They had made this kind of hut and then they came to our area, they were that poor. They were so poor, so they went to places where food, drink and livestock were abundant. In our place we used a lot of people. Attracted by so many animals, they came and helped us to milk the animals, to tend them and to produce dairy products in order to fill their children's bellies. That's what they did. Thinking about it, there were many such families. There was the Sharbaatar family and the Balsan family, who were always next to us. Then there were the Tünjin and the Manjuudai families. As far as I know, there were four families who came to us in turns and helped us greatly with the animals. Poor people, they helped when the animals cast their young, they looked after parts of our livestock and in summer they helped milking the sheep. The children prepared food for themselves at home, and thanks to them we had a lot of support. That was the year before the cooperatives were established, I skipped that. Then after we had given our livestock to the cooperative, we would get wages. We herded the animals of the cooperative and received wages in return. It seemed like a nice new thing. For some time, the cooperative was wonderful, you know. Everything was plentiful, animals were cheaper than today, there were plenty of consumer goods. It was bad at first, but something very nice came out of it. After the establishment of the cooperatives, we used to grow a lot of grain and vegetables. The leader of the cooperative, a certain Luvsan who is very old now, he took specialized vegetables growers to grow grain. Luvsan became Hero of Labour, he was the leader of our cooperative in Manhan for many years. And for a few years he worked as cooperative leader in the west, in Bulgan. He is still alive and he still lives with his wife. They grow soy beans and the like, they are incredibly industrious people. That old man really made our cooperative flourish. For some time it was really wonderful. Life was good then and our children were still small. My husband had worked in the sum center for a few years and then he went to the countryside. He worked as bookkeeper and brigade leader all his life until he retired.

Sarantsetseg -

One bag... How many families belonged to one bag?

Nadmid -

Quite many, I think sixty or seventy families.

Sarantsetseg -

You said that many Urianhai people had come and settled down. In the end, did they join the cooperatives too?

Nadmid -

Well, the cooperative... They didn't have any possessions, so how could they join the cooperative? Maybe they joined it just to become members, to become workers? Since we had given all our livestock to the cooperative, since our livestock had been collectivized, we certainly didn't need any servants anymore. They continued visiting for a while, but then they became more and more distant. They went off thinking about themselves and their own lives.

Sarantsetseg -

One necessarily had to have livestock in order to join the cooperative?

Nadmid -

Usually only those who had livestock and capital joined the cooperatives, you know. Of course it was like that. They would give their livestock to the cooperative, so it became the property of the cooperative. Then they would tend the cooperative animals, receive their wages and grow a lot of grain. There was a lot of talk about sharing the profits and the share was given in the form of wages. They would give a sack of flour or of vegetables. The cooperative produced grain and vegetables and gave it to its members. They would give sacks of flour, which were detracted from the wages people earned with the animals. So people didn't get any money.

Sarantsetseg -

Did families that had very large herds hide their animals?

Nadmid -

Well, some people got into troubles because they hid their animals. We didn't have anything to hide and we didn't even think about it. We gave our livestock away and it felt almost like the right thing to lessen our burden. There was also a lot of pressure because of the assignments. A lack of anything would make us become criminals. There was one of my father's uncles, his name was Höh. One of his sons, Tseveen, now lives in Hovd. He became a criminal because he didn't fulfill the milk quota and was sentenced to a year and six months. So you can imagine how terrible it was back then. After having joined the cooperative it became a little easier, the burden decreased a little.

Sarantsetseg -

When joining the cooperative, did people have to participate in the meetings?

Nadmid -

Well, of course. My grandfather gave the name to our cooperative. What name was it again... 'Joyful Life'. In the beginning there were about twenty families. After the propaganda meetings, where they made people understand that they should join the cooperatives, they had understood that it was the right thing to do, so they gave large part of their livestock to the cooperatives and became members. After the cooperative had been established, they thought about a name and asked people for suggestions. My grandfather's name was Bornooson and during the first meeting of the cooperative members he suggested to call it 'Joyful Living'. Later 'Joyful Living' was changed into 'Joyful Life' and later it really prospered. All things were plentiful then. I used to sew clothes for our children. There were no kindergartens or nurseries. Our last child...which child was that, the fifth, Byambasüren, which child was he...the fifth, the sixth... (thinks). Yes, our Byambasüren now works for the traffic police. We gave him to the kindergarten, and the other few after him went to the kindergarten in the sum center, too, when I worked there. I gave my children to the kindergarten and all my life I was busy with them, washing their clothes, sewing, cooking, doing the household chores. I regret that I never went to school, I guess things would have been different if I had received an education. Sometimes I console myself by thinking that this was probably my fate.

Sarantsetseg -

When the cooperatives were first established, did people like them, did they accept them? Or did they dislike them? In the beginning membership was voluntary, right?

Nadmid -

Well, there had been a lot of propaganda and agitation. The first twenty something families joined, and these cooperative members and my grandfather gave the cooperative its name.

Sarantsetseg -

What did the propaganda say?

Nadmid -

I was a child then, so I don't know well. The cooperative...well, it took the livestock and paid us wages. And of course they reduced our official assignments. The animal and meat issues were really strange, too. Households with a thousand heads of livestock had only very few rams to slaughter, you know. Male animals are slaughtered in May, you know, so in May they would drive away all the male animals and we did not manage to fulfill the meat quota. They didn't take female animals or big yearling sheep, really strange. There are females that don't lamb, you know, barren ones. So we added one of those in order to fulfill the meat quota. If not we would become criminals, you know.

Sarantsetseg -

Your husband was working as bag leader. The bag leaders visited the households to carry out propaganda, right?

Nadmid -

The bag leaders appeared later, you know. Of course my husband worked as bag leader when the cooperative was at its height.

Sarantsetseg -

What was each family's meat quota? Was it a lot?

Nadmid -

No, do you mean the meat for consumption?

Sarantsetseg -

No, the amount that had to be delivered.

Nadmid -

It depended on the total number of animals, you know. I don't know how much we had to deliver. We would drive the sheep along in a flock, all the male ones. I would follow the flock. My father delivered them when my grandfather was still there. My mother and older brother followed my father and all relatives would help to drive the sheep to deliver them. We had to pay if the number of animals was not sufficient. We added a male yearling and a female in order to fulfill the quota. If not we would have become criminals, who did not fulfill the official assignment. My mother used to tell that they were interrogated. When I was little, we didn't have enough wool, so my father went to westwards to get some. I don't know how he got it, maybe he paid with some animals, but he came back with wool. Not to deliver enough wool was a crime, too. The official production quotas were really dangerous. They left only very little profit to the herders, they would even classify the fat, melt it and take it away. Then they broke the fat in pieces to check it. If it contained acid, if it was a bit coarse because it had frozen in the cold, they wouldn't take it. It was really dangerous. My father churned butter all summer long in a goatskin-bag, in a höhüür. We call it arhad, but people in the east call it höhüür. So my father churned butter in an arhad and then he went to the sum center to deliver it in a big goatskin-bag. He was carrying it on a camel, but the leather bag fell down. It was in Höh Hötöl. He had passed our summer pasture, going along with the man of the family, who helped with the milking. Then the bag fell down and the butter spilled, like a big carpet. It was a hot summer, so how could he collect the spilled butter? He declared that he spilled it when he was running away. If he did not deliver it he would be charged with a crime. This official assignments were a heavy burden on the herders. Milk, butter, they would take so many things. The only thing they didn't take was aaruul. People made butter and delivered it. They melted the animal fat and delivered it. They also took the skins, the intestines, all the raw materials. They even took the skins from young animals that had died. My mother was given a 'Certificate of Distinction' for raising young animals well. I still have it. People who raised them poorly, below the planned target, would be blamed, and those who exceeded it would get a distinction. That's how it was.

Sarantsetseg -

What kind of cooperative animals did you herd mostly? Cows or sheep?

Nadmid -

I tended only sheep. We had only sheep, and after we had given them to the cooperative we went back to look after them. They weren't our own animals anymore, but they had become the property of the cooperative and we herded them as cooperative herders. We often used to go haymaking. In addition, every family had to make hay, repair enclosures, dry hargana as firewood for the school and other government buildings, because we don't have any trees in our territory, and then we made hay again. We did that along the shores of Lake Har Usan, and because we were little then, we were overtaken by the flies and the mosquitoes. There was an awful lot of black flies and we were stung by the yellow flies. These were the conditions in which we went haymaking. Our faces and eyes almost disappeared under the yellow flies. Those who belonged to brigades in the mountains they never saw those flies, they didn't have swollen faces like us. We took a bottle of shimiin arhi each and drenched ourselves with it. It made it a little bit better, I guess because it neutralized the poison of the flies. There were so many yellow flies and mosquitoes. We would go haymaking in autumn, in August, you know. The yellow flies were like clouds, there was no way we could sleep peacefully at night. Haymaking was that difficult.

Sarantsetseg -

So in the mountains there were no flies nor mosquitoes?

Nadmid -

In the mountains, there are no flies, but in our sum there are. But we were in a brigade in the mountains, in a place without flies and mosquitoes. That's why we encountered so many hardships. We couldn't fill our bowls with aaruul and boortsog, but only with dry things like aaruul. And that's how we went haymaking or to do other work. And there...

Sarantsetseg -

You didn't have flour for boortsog?

Nadmid -

No, there was no flour then. When I went haymaking as a child there was no flour.

Sarantsetseg -

Where did you get the tea from, the green tea?

Nadmid -

There was no tea, it was impossible to get any. When I was a child, my parents had yellow tea and they would divide into four parts. My mother would make me some tea and then my parents wouldn't have any, we would take tea from each other, it was called 'Four Tea' or 'Hözör Tea'. It was a square tea brick, and we would divide it into four parts, so it would become four tea bricks, which were called hözör. It was terrible, wasn't it? (laughs) It shows how scarce things were back then. It was shortly after the war, the country hadn't developed yet and consumer goods were scarce. It was a very hard time, you know.

Sarantsetseg -
Could you find material to make deels?

Nadmid -
No, we couldn't. At best we could find drill, but even that was rare.

Sarantsetseg -
Did the children have summer clothes?

Nadmid -
My children's childhood was not too bad, but mine was very difficult. For my children's generation it wasn't too bad.

Sarantsetseg -
What did you wear when you were a child?

Nadmid -
Back then we wore deels made of drill.

Sarantsetseg -
And in winter?

Nadmid -
In winter, too. We still wore sheepskin, but my children didn't anymore. We wore drill or cotton deels lined with fur or cotton. At that time, drill was the best material. Later, all sorts of consumer goods became available, the country developed, industry developed. Everything became very nice. When my children were small, I always made their clothes by myself. I bought calico and made dresses for my daughters and all sorts of jackets for my boys. I made trousers and shirts, and also wide trousers with an elastic band here. Those were a great thing! Children of poor or negligent families, they ran around naked or in ragged clothes, you know. It was the same when I was a child and during my children's childhood. We weren't like this. My husband was an educated person, even though he hadn't gone to school either. His father was a very erudite man and it is said that his father's ah Jajaanorov was very erudite. He was incredibly well-educated for his time, he had been educated by lamas. Sometimes they taught the Mongolian script and sometimes they didn't. It is said that he knew the old script as well as Cyrillic. Those who attended the study groups were usually young illiterate wives who hadn't studied because they had to look after the animals, all illiterate people including the wives. That ah was teaching them. I hadn't married yet. That Jajaanorov was a very erudite man. He gathered all the wives and taught them how to read and to write. And my husband learnt from his uncle. He wrote very well, both the Mongolian script and Cyrillic. He learnt thanks to his own efforts, he had never gone to school.

Sarantsetseg -
Has anyone among your relatives been repressed?

Nadmid -
I don't know well, but I don't think there was anyone. My mother's maternal uncle was charged with a crime, he left and he never came back. That's what my mother used to say. But I don't know whether that had to do with the repression or not. He was charged with a crime, left and never came back. She said that he was repressed for a crime. But he hadn't been a lama. She said that he had been falsely charged and that he never came back. I think he was just a normal herder in the countryside. My mother's family had many cows and yaks and a few small animals. That's what she told us about her childhood. As for my father, he was his father's only son. My grandfather's wife was much older than him. She became old and knew that she wouldn't live much longer. They employed a young girl and she said 'Let her cook for you, she can do your work. Don't send her away, you don't manage to do the work.' My father is the only son of his father, that's why his mother talked like that and my father married the girl who served their family. His mother was much older than his father, she grew old and tired and perhaps she knew that she would die soon. So my grandmother, my father's mother said 'Take care of me until I die, don't mistreat me. She can do your work, let her do the work.' We called her our grey-haired mother. She was beautiful. My grandfather's last wife, our grey-haired mother, raised my elder sisters. One, Byatshandai, lives here. And Sodnomdarjaa lives in Hovd. Our grey-haired mother never cursed and she never got irritated. She was very peaceful, our father's mother, poor thing. She said 'Take care of me, don't mistreat me, you can't mistreat me. There is Tsegmid, one of my father's relatives. He has about ten children who live in Manhan and also in the city. Two or three of them are herders, the others make their living as drivers. They live quite well, and they have many children like me. She is about ten years older than me. You don't know Tsegmid, but your father knows him very well. He is my father's younger brother. He is the son of my grandfather's last wife, he was adopted. Then there was our grandmother's only daughter, she married and they lived along the Zereg River, they had many animals. And then she raised my two sisters. My elder sister married somebody in Möst. My elder sister, who was born before me, she married and lives here. She also has many children, eight of them.

Sarantsetseg -
So the majority of children of your generation didn't go to school but stayed with the animals, right?

Nadmid -
Right. There weren't many schools back then. After finishing fourth grade they could go to a school in Zereg Sum on the Zereg River to finish seventh grade.

Sarantsetseg -
Manhan had a four-year school?

Nadmid -
Yes, in Manhan we could study only for four years. There were no higher classes, but later it became an eight-year and then a ten-year school. As our country developed our schools improved. My children, they got higher education. Byambasüren, the young man who works for the Traffic Police, he studied at two schools. He graduated from university and now he studies something else and he is working for the Traffic Police. One is a teacher...it was nice when she did the Teachers College. Her name is Sarantuya and now she works in Bornuur. She went to school and then she graduated from the Teachers College. The others, well, at that time it was difficult to find technical colleges and before going to one students needed to stay in the countryside for two years. Those who finished school after eight years had to do herding for two years and those who finished school after 10th grade had to do herding for a year before they were sent to participate in the competitive examinations, and even then they would be frustrated, at my children's time. So some of our children couldn't go to a good school. Baasansüren had been a very good student at a good school, but for a twist of his destiny he failed. He had gone to Russia to a school of what, a law school, it was an excellent school, but then his luck failed and he did not manage to graduate. Who knows whether the cause was him or his illness. He developed adenoids and the hospital there had very strict regulations. He left for the holidays before he had completed the treatment, and because of that he was expelled, that's what he said. I think that's probably how it was. He was a student at a law school, but his luck left him. Of all my children Pürevsüren and Sarantuya were the best students. The others studied at technical colleges. Vanchinsüren and Pürevsüren, my children live good lives, all of them, they don't need to ask anyone for anything.

Sarantsetseg -
Did you hear about the repression when you were a child, about people being arrested and about their trials?

Nadmid -
In my time there was no repression.

Sarantsetseg -
Did the mass media talk about it?

Nadmid -
I don't know well about it.

Sarantsetseg -
Do you know about the period of the cultural campaigns? About how the cultural campaigns were carried out?

Nadmid -
Of course I know about the cultural campaigns, they were wonderful, I thought they were great! People's lives, including mine, were really difficult, you know. We had no soap to wash the clothes, hardly any clothes for change. That time was terribly difficult. Sometimes we got lice, of course, because people lived very poor lives. They had no possibility to take a bath and we used detergent to wash our hair, just imagine. I was seventeen or eighteen and when I wanted to wash my hair after having mixed that yellow dung in spring or been busy with the animals, there was no shampoo, only a square brown all-purpose soap. If we had had today's white soap it would have been different, but it was a dark brown soap that we used once in a while to wash the dirt off from our heads. Later when I used to drive herds, commodities had become

plentiful, there were goods of all colors and many soaps. Today there is soap everywhere like rubbish. Today things are plentiful. But behind the beautiful appearance, people are...

Sarantsetseg -

How old were you when the cultural campaigns started?

Nadmid -

I had already married. So I was over twenty.

Sarantsetseg -

You were over twenty?

Nadmid -

Twenty... let's see, I was twenty something. A doctor came from our sum and told us to take out all of our clothes. That was the inspection that they did during the cultural campaigns. We lived in the sum center then. Two or three people came, in the countryside they always went in groups of two three or three four to visit the families. My husband went very often to inspect lice, nits and dirt (laughs). He used to tell a lot of funny stories about that. So our doctor came, who was that again, I totally forgot the name. In any case, a big doctor in Manhan...after the year in which we got a big medical branch, a hospital in our sum with a few good doctors...it was in that period, but I forgot the name. Well, a doctor came to do the inspection and told us to take out all of our clothes. Two people came. When they said that they would do inspections, I washed all the clothes and ironed them. We had a black cast-iron pressing iron, that we would heat up with hot ashes that we put inside. So I washed the clothes, trying to preserve the hygiene. So I washed my husband's shirts, undershirts and T-shirts and my own clothes and underwear, I ironed them, wrapped them in a piece of cloth and put them into the chest. We didn't have any shelves or drawers then. So the doctor said 'Let me see your clothes' and I showed them to them. They praised me 'These clothes are so nicely ironed, clean and washed', and so on..

Sarantsetseg -

What else did they check? Did they check the personal hygiene?

Nadmid -

Of course they did. They checked the fingernails, those whose nails were a bit so so had to take off their boots. Maybe we were decent, because they never checked neither our feet nor our heads. I never had lice or dirt in my hair, as a child yes, but later after I got married I managed and sometimes there was soap...

Sarantsetseg -

Did they check the change of bed linen?

Nadmid -

Of course they did. They would tell us to take out the bed linen for the guests. I washed and ironed them, so I showed them saying 'These are the bed linen for the guests', and then they would carefully check the towels and the dishcloth. It really made people become better.

Sarantsetseg -

What if people didn't meet the requirements?

Nadmid -

Heavens, they would fine us.

Sarantsetseg -

How much would they fine you?

Nadmid -

I'm not sure how much it was and then they would put up the names on the blackboard. Even our children... there was this case. There was this old man, his name was Eriimed and they went to his family. Old people of course had lice and a few lice must have come out. They wrote a note saying 'On Eriimed guai's shirt were several lice.' Children and adults alike were laughing about it (laughs). They said 'What, now they are even counting the lice!' And when they went to see households that were a little bit dirty they would say 'Take off your shoes and show us your nails', and they would ruffie their hair to check for nits and if they found any they would give a fine. And they would give a warning before leaving.

Sarantsetseg -

Did the cultural campaigns have a positive impact on people's lives?

Nadmid -

Oh, they certainly did. It seemed very wonderful to me that they made people clean and healthy. The cultural campaigns made people leave the dirt, they were truly wonderful. All families became very cultured and nice. They became clean and neat. Of course there were some people who didn't clean, who were a bit strange, but that was not the standard.

Sarantsetseg -

Where any measures taken in the fields of health and education during the cultural campaigns?

Nadmid -

Of course. There were a lot of theatrical performances and movies that were moving from brigade to brigade. So in addition to the inspections, the art brigades motivated the herders of the sum by showing things. They screened films, performed concerts and played disc records. It wasn't all sorts of music, like today. They played the records on a record player, and in my time there were competitions within every brigade. The singers would prepare a concert and the best singers would be sent to the sum centre to be evaluated. That's how it was.

Sarantsetseg -

Didn't they also organize study groups to teach how to read and to write to the illiterate during the cultural campaigns?

Nadmid -

That was earlier, much earlier. But probably the campaign to make 100% of the population literate continued at the same time. They made illiterate people go to study groups in the sum centre. Teachers were teaching there, in my time for sure, they were taking their time to teach in the group, to teach how to read and to write to the girls and young people from the countryside. That's how it was. I sat in such a group for fifteen days, but you can imagine what it was. They forced us to do some bad reading and writing. We learnt to count to ten, to a hundred, to write something full of mistakes. And then they would declare that we had studied, that we had become literate, give us an almost fake thing and send us away.

Sarantsetseg -

Did you get newspapers or any other publications?

Nadmid -

Yes, we did.

Sarantsetseg -

Was that during the cultural campaigns?

Nadmid -

We got the newspapers when my father was still alive. He was a party member, you know. People say that he had been a senior agitator. My father was a very educated lama, my biological father. He had been a lama and then he became a layman, so he wasn't repressed. My grandfather, he had heard something about the repression, that monasteries and lamas were being eliminated, so he took his only child, my father, who was the disciple of a lama, out of the monastery. So my father knew the scriptures, he knew the old Mongolian script and Cyrillic. He was that educated. Then he became a party member and a senior propagandist and he went around the countryside a lot. At that time, he visited families, in other words he carried out propaganda work, that's what they said. So even though he had livestock, my father never stayed at home very much, probably because educated people had become rare then. He was also working as an agent, because educated people were rare. He was educated and he knew math. He used to say 'People who don't know math, how can they calculate how much they sold? That's why I do it.' So he wasn't able to look after the animals because he was working as a trade agent, probably because there weren't any other educated people in our brigade. Educated people like him were very rare, you know. My mother used to say 'My uncle-in-law was such an educated person', my grandfather's elder brother, she had studied in his study group. She wrote really well. She would ask, scratching her head 'Can you read? Or have you given up?' and she would give the names of the ones she had asked. Scratching her head she would teach the other women how to read and to write. Some could write quite well, some could read quite well, some couldn't read, some couldn't read even though they could write quite well, some couldn't write even though they could read. That's how it was, there were quite many people. And we were making fun of our mother scratching her head and

wishing that they would learn how to read and write well (laughs). She was already over thirty when she was teaching, an old woman.

Sarantsetseg -

Didn't your father, who was such an educated man, try to make his children study?

Nadmid -

No, he didn't. He made us look after the animals. It's more important to put one's efforts into the livestock rather than into books. If the children had gone to school, there would have been nobody to tend the animals. Since he didn't do herding himself, things would have become difficult. (laughs)

Sarantsetseg -

Were there medical checkups during the cultural campaigns?

Nadmid -

Of course there were. It was an awful thing, you know. There was a terrible venereal disease, and there was scabies. There checked for these. The cultural campaigns freed people from the venereal disease and they freed us from lice. They were really effective, they made people really nice.

Sarantsetseg -

At what age did you come to the sum centre from the countryside?

Nadmid -

Let me see, I had two children... We lived in the sum centre for a few years. My first child, my eldest daughter Enhtuya, she was born in the sum centre. My husband was shearing livestock at the electric power station. He operated a kind of motor, was it in that Kazak sum further north? It was on the path where they drove the livestock. They gathered all the animals, then they weighed them and drove them to that road and sheared them. They had twelve scissors and my husband operated the motor. That's how they sheared the animals, one next to the other. They would tie twelve sheep at a time and then twelve men would shear them with those electric scissors. They had a motor, so they can be called electric scissors. When we married my husband did that kind of job. And then he went to the north...

Sarantsetseg -

How old were you when you got married?

Nadmid -

I was twenty two, including the year more. I gave birth to my eldest daughter in the sum centre. My husband worked there for several years without going to the countryside. Later he became the bookkeeper of a brigade in the countryside and then he worked as brigade leader for several years and then he retired.

Sarantsetseg -

Did you have livestock when you lived in the sum centre?

Nadmid -

No, we didn't.

Sarantsetseg -

You lived only on your husband's salary.

Nadmid -

Yes, we lived on my husband's salary, we didn't have any animals. As officials we had only a few, maybe 75 heads, very few. We lived like that and in the end the animals...after our children had grown up and we had retired, the livestock was privatized, you know.

Sarantsetseg -

The animals were privatized and given to the herders, right?

Nadmid -

Yes, they were privatized and returned to the herders. The cooperatives, how to put it, is it right to say that they went bankrupt or that they were disbanded? They were dismantled and their name changed, in today's language they became something like a company. What was it called again? It had a name, it stopped to be called 'cooperative'. No, I can't remember the name. So they began to privatize the cooperatives, you know. Every animal was privatized and given back, the state resolved to return the animals to the herders. Large families got many heads of livestock and small families only a few. How many animals did each member of the household get... I think it more than ten. Some of my children didn't get anything because they had gone to school. They should have received books, but they didn't manage to get anything.

Sarantsetseg -

How many heads of livestock were allocated to your family?

Nadmid -

Quite a lot. Cows and yaks with calves, one or two camels and quite a number of bog mal. So my husband and I took our children's livestock, my husband retired, and we moved to the countryside. We raised the animals, bred and herded them, we worked really hard. How old was I when we moved to the countryside? Maybe 52 or 53. Your father knows well about it. We went up the Shuugiat River and built a proper pen in the center of our brigade. In the beginning, when my husband and I had been told to tend the cows, the calves and the yaks, my husband said 'Well, they told us to tend yak calves, shall we go to the countryside? Shall the two of us move there, shall I quit this job and we go to the countryside?' He hadn't retired yet and we did what he had said. One day he said that he would build a nice pen at the source of the River Shuugiat where there is water to tend those yak calves. He asked me what I thought about moving there and I agreed. We had been in the brigade centre and then we moved away from there to the countryside. I was 52 or 53. And the two of us really began to look after those yak calves.

Sarantsetseg -

Did you have any experience with yaks?

Nadmid -

No, we didn't, only when I was a child we had cows and yaks. After I married, for many years I didn't have any contact with livestock. After we moved there we didn't stay long, maybe two or three years. State work can sometimes be really treacherous, you know. The calves were separated from their mothers, who were still nursing them. Then they gave them to us and we went to the countryside and built a nice pen. Twelve carpenters came to build a beautiful nüürevchtei hashaa. If you have gone to the countryside you should have seen it, if you haven't then you wouldn't know. A nüürevchtei hashaa is a closed pen with a kind of curtain called nüürevch. It had a cellar and rooms attached to it. It was such a beautiful pen that they built for us. It was built for the livestock of the cooperative, for the yak calves, and the two of us worked there. There were about 400 yak calves in the first year. Only yaks, they were the property of the Botgon cooperative, but not only. So what did they do? Mother yaks are very jealous and strong and they calve in spring. So they were separated from the calves that weren't allowed to suckle all the milk, that way lactation stopped, and the decision was made to separate the calves from the mothers and raise them. I remember it was only for two years, for two or three years we had the calves...in the beginning it was terrible. Animals are very dangerous, you know. The calves are born, then a spring, a summer, autumn, winter, another spring summer and winter pass. They are nursed by their mothers until the autumn or winter when they are six or seven months old, they are called husran, and they continue to be nursed by their mothers no matter whether they have already become fertile or not. All of them were separated from their mothers and then brought to us. In the beginning we were stupid and inexperienced, when we took the calves. We felt sorry for them, so the next day we let them out to make them graze and they scattered in all directions. It was terrible, you know (laughs). My husband was there and a young man called Byambasüren. The two of them ran after them, but the calves ignored horseriders as well as people walking. These calves that had drunk their mothers' milk are terribly smart, they went right back in the direction from where they had come. They scattered and ran away. We managed to hold half of them, grabbing them by their backs, but quite a lot disappeared. The next day my husband and that young man went to take the calves back, but the herders didn't want to separate them from their mothers, because that meant that they wouldn't have milk to drink. The yaks calve when they need it, then they herd them and they milk them to have milk to put into their milk tea. If the calves are separated lactation stops, and of course the herders didn't like that. The herders' work was based on the idea that they needed milk for the tea, and that yaks calve when they calve and stop to lactate when they stop. They asked to leave the calves so they would have milk for the tea. So they left some and took away the others. It was such a funny situation. Never before had we asked people for advice, and of course the calves didn't want to move after they had spent the night with their mothers. Instead of giving them grass and earth in the pen, we had let them out because there was a lot of grass. We had let them out so that they could eat grass, we had no idea that they would run away. There are a lot of things that even old people don't know. So they ran away and went back to their own homes, those calves, six seven months old. Some families pleaded for the calves to be left there so they would have milk

for the milk tea. My husband left some and drove back only a few. To the north there was a family with livestock. oh, I felt like dying... He was fifty something, a young man by today's standards. North of the River Shuugiat there was a steep rocky scarp where the grass is beautifully yellow. I wanted to pasture the calves there, but I didn't know how to prevent them from jumping here and there. In the end I took a stick and started whipping and throwing stones. In this way he managed to keep the majority of them. Donorov, that old man, used to say 'You have run quite a bit.' In order not to lose the calves, in order to stop them, I had been running so much I felt like dying and my heart was racing that it was scary. The next day that old man said 'You really have been running a lot!'. (laughs). It seems like yesterday. So we managed to keep the majority of them. So we put them in the pen and we didn't let them out for two or three days. We hadn't asked anybody for advice, but in the end people explained what we had to do. We thought that they would be hungry if they stayed inside for two three days with only hay and water. We didn't think that they would run away (laughs). This was a big confusion. That year the grass was beautiful and there was snow too. So we kept the weak ones inside, fed them with grass and fodder and collected the dung. The strong ones, we let them out and herded them like sheep and then we drove them back inside.

Sarantsetseg -

Did you have to deliver produce to the brigade, or did they give you the animals just so you would herd them?

Nadmid -

We tended them and we were paid for it.

Sarantsetseg -

How much was your wage?

Nadmid -

Well, they gave us something, but I don't remember how much it was per calf. My husband received the pay slips, so I never got to see much money, I never paid attention to how much our wages were. He was a strange person, only he knew about the wages. I didn't know anything, just like a child. My husband would pick them up and come back and that was it. So we herded the calves for four years, no, for two winters. In the third year the privatization process began and as a result we got our own private animals. We also got the pen, which became our spring pasture as your father knows well. He passed by it, it's by the source of the River Shuugiat, it has a two-story pen with a curtain. We would keep the weak animals inside and the strong ones outside.

Sarantsetseg -

Did the privatization have an impact on the herders' lives?

Nadmid -

Yes, it did. People, who previously hadn't any, got animals, it was wonderful. It had a positive impact, you know. The smart ones herded their animals, the not so smart ones let them die, it depended on how much people worked. If people worked hard they multiplied their herds, and if they were lazy most of their animals died. Our animals multiplied very nicely, and we divided them among our children. In the end there was our daughter Enhtuya, you perhaps don't know her but your mother does. She lives in the Czech Republic. She married and we gave her her share, like to all our children. It was strange but I realized that my husband was possessive about the animals. I said 'Don't be so possessive, give the children the one and two-year olds. The two of us are far from having 1000 heads of livestock, don't let the children go empty handed, give them some animals'. They were living in the province center, Baasansüren, Püreevee, Lhagvaa, Vanchin, three four families were in the province center, and some of them lived in the sum center. One day when my husband seemed a little bit possessive I said 'Don't let the children go empty handed, they come to visit their parents, maybe they expect that their parents give them a calf and they certainly eat our food and dairy products. What are you so grumpy? They come once in while, don't let them go empty handed, give them some animals.' Our livestock had multiplied really nicely, they didn't even fit in the pen anymore, and we separated the barren ones from those that we milked. So after a while I said 'You have to divide the property among the children who have married, you or I might just drop dead. I have seen a few people who didn't divide their property among their children while they were still alive, and when they died things became very unpleasant. People fight, you know. Let's give these families their share of livestock.' Only our Otgontuya had married here. All the others had already set up their families. So that's what I told him. He listened to my words, poor thing. He has always been a very silent nice person. When he became a bit possessive that's what I told him and he listened to me and divided all our property among our children. I had said 'Who will die first, you or me? In any case it will be terrible like throwing a bone into a pack of dogs. Give them their share, what difference does it make if they waste or squander it. Just give each of them the appropriate number and put your seal there.' My husband, poor thing, he listened to me and gave away the animals. It seems right like this. Our youngest son Nyamaa, who has gone to Korea, he received the largest share, the others got a different number, and the two of us and Otgontuya we kept some 50 or 60 heads of livestock.

Sarantsetseg -

So all the brigade and cooperative animals were privatized, but what happened to the other property like the rakes, the machinery and the tractors, how were they divided?

Nadmid -

I don't really know. Maybe they broke or maybe they were sold...to some place where they make hay and do agriculture.

Sarantsetseg -

In the city a few people got the factories when they were privatized. What do you think about that? Who do you think got more than others?

Nadmid -

Well, those who were in charge seem to have gotten quite a lot. There's a saying 'a word come from a word'. So if you ask me, this is how it went. It is said that my grandfather had received a financial award. My elder brother had that bucket made of cypress. Our grandfather was like a child. They say that old people and children are the same. Luvsan darga, he was rather cunning. He moved around the expensive things and sent people away. He was found out it is said. Perhaps the haymaking and agricultural utensils were brought to another place too and sold.

Sarantsetseg -

The herders got only livestock, right?

Nadmid -

Yes, what else could they get? They didn't get anything else, you know. And...

Sarantsetseg -

Did gender affect the privatization process? Were there differences between men and women?

Nadmid -

I don't think there was any difference. Animals were allocated per person per family, you know. We got a few animals and we multiplied them. In the end we had more than ten calves. We hadn't received many animals, only a few. And our children didn't get any even though they tried. I guess if we had tried more to get animals for all our children we would have succeeded. The number of animals was based on the number of family members, one family got that and that number of animals, and if we had tried maybe we would have gotten more. But we couldn't. They had studied and were living in the city. Our eldest daughter Püreevsüren had moved to the city very early. Our Byambasüren had enrolled at the Music and Dance College already beginning from the fourth or second grade. People were going around to enroll children, so she enrolled and went to study there beginning from the 5th grade. Enhtuya had studied at a TMS for public service and graduated in light engineering. Since then she has worked in the city.

Sarantsetseg -

When you came to live in the sum center, you didn't have any livestock and you lived on your husband's wage. How did you manage?

Nadmid -

Oh, it was very difficult. I worked in order to earn 180 tögrög for the children, you know. I worked as a cleaner and a maid and I sent the children to the kindergarten. I worked for two, three months as a maid in a hotel as a replacement for somebody who was on pregnancy leave. I couldn't find any other job. There was no job for me, because sometimes I was in the countryside and sometimes in the sum center. Had I been permanently in the sum center, there would have been work. In the end they made me work in the mothers' home. I worked there for several months, but I couldn't work there for a year, because my husband was told to go to the countryside to work as brigade leader. I stayed behind for the sake of those 180 tögrög. I gave Otgontuya, Dunia, Lhagvaa and Byambasüren, who now works for the traffic police to the kindergarten. The women I was friends with had told me with the best intentions to send my children to the kindergarten. 'How can you cope like that?', they said, and so I gave them to the kindergarten. And someone came who offered me work. I replaced a woman on leave as cleaner in the club. I would clean and do the laundry. There was a young projectionist, who used to call me Naania egch. 'Naania egch, he said, 'you clean too much. You clean as if you were at

home. How do you manage to do that in a place where so many people dance? In the morning, there were educational activities, lectures, then there were movies, ballroom dancing and the red corner. All sorts of performers came. Even really talented people came from the city, and then the artists from the sum center. And artists from the sum would prepare performances and go from to brigade to brigade. The lectures, the morning educational sessions, the evening lectures and the red corner were always crowded. The club had one big hall that I couldn't cope with. I replaced a woman on leave, who had her baby and stayed at home to rest. I cleaned the floor for a few weeks until she came back for 180 tógrög. That was a lot of money at that time, you know. It seemed very nice to me to get 180 tógrögs.

Sarantsetseg -

How much did your husband earn?

Nadmid -

My husband was a bag leader and earned about 500. At that time, 500 were a lot of money. Bag leaders earned that much in the end, in the beginning I don't know how much he earned. He didn't talk about it and I didn't get involved into his salary.

Sarantsetseg -

How has the situation of men and women changed compared to when you were young?

Nadmid -

Well, there have been great changes. Maybe it's useless to talk about my life, I was terribly shy. I used to follow the buttocks of a thousand sheep, tend the sheep and the lambs, collect dung, carry water and snow. I grew up having all this work, having a hard life. But the environment was such and I never thought I was tired. I just thought about what I had to do. It was terrible... You will laugh when you hear how I married my husband (laughs). My mother wanted me to marry. She said 'This is a nice young man, he is educated, he is a good son, his parents are nice people.' That's how my mother tried to introduce me to my future husband. I didn't want to, I was wild and shy, you know, that was the most important thing. And then he had come back from the army. He had gone when he was 18 and served for three years. Did they go the army when they were 18? Anyway, we married the year after he had come back from the military and we lived together with his parents. Today young girls would never live with the parents, they would refuse to live together unless there is a nice comfortable apartment. They have become terrible, they are never afraid or shy. They want to be admired, there is no shyness...I was too...I really have to blame myself. I was too uncivilized, too bad, too weak I think. But he never blamed me for that. My in-laws were really good to me. My husband came on a horse to take me. My mother had accepted the hadag, and she had told me that she had accepted it before so that I could get used to it. 'That family's son has come back from the military. He is an educated young man. He's got nice parents,' she said. My in-laws really were fine people. There is this man called Norov, your father must know him, he is my husband's only younger brother. He has two younger siblings, a sister and a brother, they are both good people. It's true that there is destiny. I didn't want to, I was living in a place called Ulaan Enger. My parents-in-law lived in Muhryn Am, they took me and in the winter they had sent a hadag. My mother had accepted it (laughs). She said that she had taken it to make me get used to the idea. 'My daughter, you are now twenty and girls who stay at home longer than that surely get a bad reputation. It is better that you marry somebody,' she said. I would just sit there in silence neither saying yes nor no. I was shy, but he was really shy too. At that time both boys and girls were. And he was also very humble, a good person. When he saw that my mother was friendly, once he gave her a letter, and I could hardly read it (laughs). That's how it was, he gave a letter to my mother because he was too shy to meet me (laughs). Then one evening he came when I was at home, and I thought that my mother had told him to come. At that time 'come' meant 'come to stay over night'. Today girls would go wild if a young man would come to stay overnight like that. How funny, it was my mother who did that. She said 'You two go and look after the horses.' It was an autumn evening and the horses were in a place called Tsagaan Burgasny Am. The grass was bad and she told us to look after the horses. And so we did. I didn't say no, I was very obedient, wasn't I? I always did what my mother told me to do. I never disobeyed her. So we went to the Burgasny Am Gorge, where there was a sort of enclosure. My mother had said that we should tie the horses there and look after the horses. Maybe she didn't want to tell that young man to look after our horses by himself or maybe she wanted us to be together, poor thing. She also wanted us to get to know each other and that's how she went about it. The two of us had never taken our horses for a rendezvous, you know. I was shy and he was shy, too, so we rested our heads on our own saddles and spent the night all dressed. The two of us...what could we talk about? So uncivilized and terribly shy, the environment simply was such. In some ways it was a difficult time. I hadn't gone to school, I hadn't learned to open up, I had never left the animals, I had never left home, that's why I was so uncivilized and shy, you know.

Sarantsetseg -

Were there any policies aiming at supporting women during the socialist period?

Nadmid -

No, there weren't. Later I gave birth to many children, seven or eight. Women were encouraged to have less children in order not to lose their labor capacity. A male gynecologist at the hospital said that. In Manhan, in the sum we had a big health department with some wonderful doctors. There was a male doctor called Davaasüren. He organized meetings for the women and told them to have less children. He explained that are methods for not getting pregnant, such as taking medicines and keeping a period calendar. While he was talking the women were laughing and nudging each other, they didn't know anything those wild women. (laughs). Well, I didn't take any precautions and it happened as it was destined, how do they say, it's God's destiny. I got pregnant eleven times. I had one miscarriage because the doctor gave me the wrong medicine. All others are well and I am very proud of them.

Sarantsetseg -

How did people get employed in the socialist period? What was the process of getting employed like? How did it change?

Nadmid -

Also at that time it happened that people didn't find a job. If you couldn't find a job there was a lot of pressure to get an education. Our Sarantuya, she participated in the entry exams for university after she had finished 8th or 10th grade, she was a good student, so there wasn't any obstacle for her to continue her studies. She went to the aimag center for the exam. I heard that there were several competitors who took the exam. I didn't go to school so I don't know much about it. Anyways, they told that she would be sent to school if she went herding for two years. After having finished 10th grade, she had to do herding for two years and then she had to take the entry exam. They didn't send her to school and she went herding at the livestock base, it was really ridiculous. Their was this forage and veterinary base, where weak animals would be kept and fed with really nice grass. They had a vet. The cooperative had to sufficient hay and fodder. It was plentiful, the cooperative members made hay and the harvest was abundant. They piled up ash, fodder and salt. I also worked at that forage and veterinary base for two years, while my husband did his job.

Sarantsetseg -

The weak animals were brought there, right?

Nadmid -

Right. It was for those weak animals, which wouldn't have survived the winter, those that would have died in a zud. The herders separated them from the herds and the cooperative took care of them.

Sarantsetseg -

Was there only one family, who took care of those animals, or were there several?

Nadmid -

There were two families. Those that were doing better were kept on the pastures, and the really weak ones taken care of inside the pen. They were given hay and water. Some were given lukewarm water with salt, onions, horse and cow liver. Cows get a lot of nourishment from liver. I cut the liver in little pieces and salted it with this powdery salt. At first the animals wouldn't eat it, so we would put it into the corners of their mouths and then they would really get into it and follow people. They would revive really nicely. We had to give them onion and liver, lukewarm salty water, fodder and hay. Since I was a child I had tended livestock, so I was very good at looking after them. In the end the leader of our cooperative was a man called Tsedenbal, he came after Luvsan guai. He was a zootechnician. Then there was a young woman in Manhan, who was a vet and treated the sick animals. That forage and veterinary base had one vet and two herders. In this way, I worked for two years. In spring the animals look terrible, you know. We would put white cloth in the holes in the wall of the pen. We would tear the white ger cotton cover into pieces and put it in the holes and in the gaps in the walls. There was a young woman who worked with me, she was a very silent person. The two of us worked very hard. We fed onion and liver, we would wipe the noses of the animals, because in spring their noses run, it means that they are tired. It's just the same as with old people, their noses start running when they are tired. The noses of very weak animals run a lot. The two of us were wiping them with a cotton cloth when Tsedenbal darga came and complimented us. We did the best we could and wiped the noses with cloth and he laughed and said 'Oh, you even wipe their noses!'. Tsedenbal was a 'Distinguished Member of the Cooperative', he was a high-ranking man, you know. He was cooperative leader in the last years. Well, it means that my work was valued. I regret that I haven't studied anything, but what can I do now? I'm over seventy now, what would I study now?

Sarantsetseg -

How was people's attitude towards their work?

Nadmid -

Well, I don't know well. It depends on the person. Those who were smart and wanted to work, worked really nicely. And the mediocre ones were mediocre.

Sarantsetseg -

What was the thing that you were most proud of in your work and what did you detest the most?

Nadmid -

I really dislike lazy and dirty people, you know. I would always tell my children 'It is really bad to be lazy and to live in a dirty environment. Lazy people never advance. If you aren't lazy but work, one day you will have the possibility to live well.'

Sarantsetseg -

Were your and your husband's wages sufficient to raise your children and to live?

Nadmid -

Well, we somehow made ends meet. I bought cloth to make clothes for the children and we simply had to make it work.

Sarantsetseg -

Could people buy any imported goods?

Nadmid -

No, there was no such thing. It's just recently that so many consumer goods have become available, that they are piling up, that there are all those TÛTS and shops. Trade has developed, all sorts of things that I have never seen before have appeared and markets have developed. Before goods were distributed by trade agents, including rare goods. There was a time when things were really scarce and I made everything by myself, including boots for the children. I would bring the children to bed at night. In the countryside we didn't have electric lights, we got them only when we moved to the sum center and they seemed really beautiful to us. In the countryside I would light a candle and sit there sewing things while the children were sleeping because during the day I would not have found the time to sew. The family of the brigade leader gets a lot of visitors, all sorts of people come, you know. This is why during the day I didn't have the possibility to sit down and make clothes. I was very busy cleaning inside, outside and around the ger.

Sarantsetseg -

Did the cooperative members get any incentives? Were any such measures taken?

Nadmid -

Yes, there were incentives. The cooperatives pushed the milkers and gave them awards, like sending them to a holiday resort or a mineral spring. They were even sent to Janchivlan, all paid by the cooperative. It was wonderful. The 'Joyful Life' Cooperative treated its members really well. They organized performances inviting distinguished artists from everywhere. In his last years our poor Luvsan darga had lost his reputation quite a bit. He admonished us more than our parents, gave a lot of advice and during the women's meetings he used to say 'Why don't you visit each other and enjoy yourselves talking about the events of your childhood? Go and visit each other, have a good time, don't stay at home as if you had quarreled.' He used to say that during the meetings 'Be friendly to each other, eat and drink together, talk to each other, have a good time together.' Aren't these beautiful words? Not many parents would give such an advice. Luvsan guai always gave good advice, he read beautiful lectures, he taught us many things, poor thing.

Sarantsetseg -

How often were the cooperative meetings held?

Nadmid -

We met once a month.

Sarantsetseg -

Did you meet at the end of the year to share the profits?

Nadmid -

I think we met once a month. Oh, right, this was only once a year. The division of the profits would start in November, when the animals were slaughtered and the meat was frozen. At that time people would give their animals. The animals were slaughtered and the people were given food. We would bring them home and give them sacks of rye. The value of the food stuff was deducted from the wages. We used to grow a lot of vegetables, even watermelons with the help of the Chinese. We would bring them in a sack and plant them. Then we grew potatoes and onions for the food, there weren't any carrots, so we planted them and we grew watermelons. The children ran around eating washed raw carrots making sounds like goats 'tor tor'. So we had carrots. We used to plant all sorts of vegetables, turnips, carrots and cabbage. Our cooperative was a big enterprise, you know. We had chickens and pigs, and we got good varieties of cattle for breeding. We had special herders. It was a really big cooperative. It was really wonderful, the members had a good life. Money was worth more than today. One sheep or goat cost 50, 60 tögrög, later 80, 90, and then privatization began. Because money was worth so much more, it was 80, 90 tögrög, we wouldn't calculate in thousands then.

Sarantsetseg -

Oh, yes, at that time salaries were between 180 and 500 tögrög, right?

Nadmid -

Yes. That of a simple cleaner, in the end I had been working in what was called the 'public service', that is I had worked as a cleaner in the club for two, three months. It was really nice to get a salary, because I had never received one before. I had money to spend as I wished, to buy things for my children or to buy cloth for a deal of the color I liked. I could buy what I wanted for the home. At that time, 180 tögrög were a lot of money, you know. Later I worked in a big, colorful ger, a hotel. The person in charge came and said that one of their maids had left. I wanted to work, so I gave the children to the kindergarten. There was this elderly aunt-in-law. She was old and not doing so well, so I prepared the tea for her, I made the tea and gave it to her to drink. She was my father-in-law's elder sister. I prepared her some tea, put food close to her and then I rushed to work. I worked as a maid for several months, again as a replacement for somebody else. I worked really hard to get my 180 tögrögs a month (laughs). Then they told me that they would take me at the mothers' home, that they would hire me as one of the regular staff members there. He was an old man, poor thing, and he made me work because he thought very highly of me. The mothers' home served food to mothers on maternity leave. They also transferred them to hospital if they were in pain. There was no need to call the ambulance, they brought you to hospital if you had labor pains. It was really close, their building was really close to the hospital. It was an easy job to prepare food and tea for the mothers. I worked there for a year. Then my husband was sent to the countryside and I became unemployed because there was no job for me to do in the brigade center. I cooked for my old aunt-in-law, cleaned the house, cooked for my children. In my spare time I patched tears and holes in the clothes. I also sewed things for other people. I did that after they had gone to bed and it was very difficult when they were little, by candlelight...so my eyesight deteriorated and when I was 50 I couldn't see the eye of a needle anymore, when I was sewing things by hand. That's how it was.

Sarantsetseg -

How was the relationship between the leadership and the normal people in the socialist period? How was the relationship between the high-ranking and the low-ranking people?

Nadmid -

I don't know what it was like. I think it depended on the person. Those who worked well received support, while those who were lazy were fired.

Sarantsetseg -

Did the darga use and wear things that were different from those the workers used?

Nadmid -

Of course there was a difference. Today people's living standard has increased, so there is not much difference between superiors and subordinates. Things are plentiful now, so if the herders work they live really well, you know. That is the hardworking ones. Those who don't live well they don't work well.

Sarantsetseg -

Is there any event that had a deep impact on your life?

Nadmid -

What influenced my life very deeply is that I never received an education, I regret that very much. I think there is nothing

else that had such an impact on my life. From when I was little I looked after the animals. That was my environment and I regret that I never went to school. I think it affected me. If I had learned how to read and to write, if I had at least done four years of school, things would have been very different.

Sarantsetseg -

Is there anything unique or special in your life?

Nadmid -

How could I be more special or better than other people? Something special...well, I get along with people and I am very fond of old people. I regret very much that I couldn't take care of my mother-in-law and my own parents before they passed away. My father-in-law's elder sister lived with us until she died. Also my parents-in-law weren't on their own but stayed with us until they passed away. I think I looked after them fairly well and their buyan is coming to me. I am proud that I could make these old people happy.

Sarantsetseg -

Do you believe in religion?

Nadmid -

Well, religion, I visit the Gandan Monastery. It's not good not to worship the lamas and monasteries. I think it's good to follow one's environment and worship them. I still don't know how to worship well though. Once in a while I turn a prayer wheel, go to the monastery and pray. Once or twice a year.

Sarantsetseg -

To what extent did people believe when you were a child, when you were young?

Nadmid -

When I was a child, belief and religion had already been destroyed. We have had lamas and monasteries only for a few years now. Some people worship and some don't, there are all sorts of people.

Sarantsetseg -

Were there any monasteries in your place?

Nadmid -

Yes. There were a few old lamas and when they passed away it was closed. They were very educated, they had studied the old sutras and they also trained a few disciples. So there are their disciples. There are some people with a religious education in our territory and there is one who graduated from the religious college. Whose son is he again? Whose Gombon was he? Here from Manhan. He went to a religious school and now he is working.

Sarantsetseg -

How do you think has religion changed in Mongolia?

Nadmid -

Well, change, I don't know how it was in the old times. When I was little, religion had already been destroyed.

Sarantsetseg -

Were your parents religious?

Nadmid -

No, they weren't. What could they worship if all objects of worship had been destroyed? There was nothing to worship. Lamas, religion, all that had been destroyed at my parents' time. Fortunetellers who used stones and had a little education operated in secrecy, you know. If anyone had known about them, they would have been charged, arrested and repressed, that's why it was secret.

Sarantsetseg -

Did people conceal their religious activities from each other?

Nadmid -

It was all secret. Of course, close relatives and friends knew, but they would help only if it was kept a secret. If it became openly known they wouldn't help. Today it has become all free and wonderful. I think that democracy means that everything is free and freedom is a something wonderful, something to be proud of, you know.

Sarantsetseg -

During the Tsagaan Sar, families used to light lamps, did your family do that?

Nadmid -

Yes, that's right, but we never did. At my parents' time, my mother used to light a lamp, but I am over seventy now and I still don't manage to do it. I always think about it, but then I never do it. I want to light one, that's why people call it *zul sar*, *tsagaan sar*. How can I say that I believe if I can't even light a lamp? I'm really bad at worshipping even though I think it is a good thing. I just can't do it.

Sarantsetseg -

OK, we've talked for more than an hour. Let's finish for now and continue another time.

Nadmid -

Yes, your work, well I talked too much and wasted your time.

Sarantsetseg -

No, not at all.

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