

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)

childhood; family; belief; travel; illness / health;

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

Christianity; mining; alcoholism; domestic violence;

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Translation:

Otgonbayar -

I'm here with Ariunzaya, who lives at 4/21 in Har Us, in the bag no.3 of Dereven' village in Darhan-Uul Province. She has a small computer business. Would you please briefly introduce yourself? Where and when were you born? Who were your parents? Where did you spend your childhood?

Ariunzaya -

I was born in 1976 in the Bürentsogt mine in Sühbaatar Province. I guess it doesn't exist anymore. Both my parents worked in the mine and I was born there in 1976. When I was three, in 1979 or in 1980, the GOK company was established in Erdenet and my parents were appointed to work there. At that time many people were sent there, and I guess that the Bürentsogt mine closed because of the establishment of the Erdenet mining company. My elder brother and I were both born in the Bürentsogt mine, and when I was three we moved to Erdenet. In the beginning there was not much in Erdenet. There were almost no buildings, except for one or two four- to five-storey buildings built by the Russians. We lived with an uncle. I was three but I remember. Then the company gave us an apartment and now we live there.

Otgonbayar -

I see.

Ariunzaya -

Yes. We moved here and the GOK gave us an apartment. So I spent my childhood in Erdenet.

Otgonbayar -

That means that your childhood coincided with the establishment of Erdenet.

Ariunzaya -

Yes. At that time the Erdenet mining company was very famous in Russia and there were mainly Russians living there. Our building was full of Russians, but today only one or two are left.

Otgonbayar -

Right.

Ariunzaya -

Yes. Two, I guess, in our building. It was a big building, which was facing another one like this.

Otgonbayar -

It was a one-storey building?

Ariunzaya -

No, a four-storey building built by the Russians. The Russians built it very well, it is still intact today. Then my three younger siblings were born. My elder brother and I spent our childhood there. When the school no.4 opened we went to study there. I have an older brother and three younger brothers. We all went to the school no.4 for ten years.

Otgonbayar -

So you finished school after 10 years at the school no.4?

Ariunzaya -

Yes. Sometime in the 1980s when the market economy began, we had to buy things with coupons. I remember that it was a very difficult time. We had to queue and queue and queue to buy bread for 3.60, 1.20, 3.20 or 1.60. At that time the value of the tögrög had not yet decreased, it was really nice. For three tögrög twenty we bought two round loafs of bread at 1.60 each from the dugui store. It is now a bar. When we lived there we had to queue for bread, and our wages were paid in coupons. Then we got 10kg of flour, or was it 5kg per person? Later there was no flour anymore and we were given oatmeal instead. We prepared our meals with oatmeal, you know.

Otgonbayar -

Did you sift it?

Ariunzaya -

No, we didn't, we ate it immediately. At the time of the coupons, when we finished the flour we made noodle soup with oatmeal. At that time we cooked mostly noodle soup. Mongolians didn't eat vegetables, but soup with meat and noodles. We got most of our food from Sühbaatar Province, especially in winter. We, I ate a lot of meat, because we got so much



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from Sühbaatar Province. Then we went to school. The period of the coupons was difficult. In '94 or '92 I finished 8th grade. It was '92, when I started to believe in Jesus.

Otgonbayar -

After finishing 8th grade?

Ariunzaya -

Yes. After finishing 8th grade, one of my classmates told me about Jesus. When I heard about God, I felt that I had found what I had been searching for. I was very touched, I had found the meaning of things, the meaning of my life. My father used to drink a lot. At that time many people drank a lot. I was a small child. An eighth-grader seems very young, but I carried a lot in my heart and I couldn't talk about it with anybody. I lost interest in life, I didn't have any goal in life. I was sad and lonely at that time. When I was told who Jesus was I started to believe in Him. I thought that there had to be a God and that people shouldn't live like that. Life was difficult. Even small children suffered because of what they had experienced from when they were little. My parents are good people but when they drank they became dangerous.

Otgonbayar -

When did they begin to drink?

Ariunzaya -

When exactly did they start...they usually drank at work. The most difficult period was payday when they drank with their friends. The moment my father received his salary, we were on the alert thinking of what could happen.

Otgonbayar -

Was that before 1990?

Ariunzaya -

Yes, it was before. I came here in the 1980s when I was three years old, and that's when it started to be like that. My mom was always pregnant and she gave birth to my three younger brothers. My dad said that he wanted to divorce and left. I followed my mum to stay at another family's place. It was difficult to stay there, eating and drinking was a problem and not even the children had any freedom. Children's rights didn't exist, it was difficult. Until the 8th grade, my life was generally very difficult. One day I watched the movie 'Am'dralyn Nahia'. I will never forget it. It is about a girl who becomes insane because her father drinks. I cried a lot watching that movie and then my classmates said 'Let's go'. I had never told them about my suffering, I kept it all inside, you know. I didn't tell anybody, and the other children's lives didn't seem to be like that. I couldn't open up to others and I couldn't establish close friendships with other children. I didn't have a close girl friend. I only had friends of the kind with whom you don't talk about how you feel, with whom you don't cry. Those tears were the tears I had kept inside my heart. I cried from the beginning to the end of the movie. My eyes were all swollen, I will never forget that. The children got a rough idea of what my life was like. They looked at me and I was embarrassed, it was the first time that I had shown how I felt. That movie calmed down people's hearts, you know. It was just like real life, she goes out with her younger sibling to search for cigarette ash and just continues to walk. I had been walking just like that. My mother had been running away like that. It was just like my life. I cried so much and it soothed my heart. After I saw my life again and I was terribly down and that's when God came to me. At first I was a baby who didn't know God very well. I started to believe. One egch asked me whether I really believed in God, whether I had encountered Him, whether I could really feel that he exists. I didn't know what to say, I was nervous and I lied and said 'Yes, yes, He exists, I know.' I wasn't an outgoing person, I felt worried about having said a lie and I couldn't sleep the whole night. 'I really have to get to know God, I really have to know whether He is with me', I thought and then I watched the movies and cried a lot. After that I didn't cry much anymore, I had a lot of endurance. Then one morning after I had said that I got up at six. Close to our home there was a big mountain. I climbed up the mountain and cried out Jesus' name. 'Oh, Jesus my Lord!' I called. All the difficulties of my life appeared in front of my eyes and I couldn't say anything. I could only call Him. I called 'My Lord Jesus' and everything was in front of my eyes, I couldn't say anything else. While I was like that all my problems left me. It dawned, the sun came up and the rays fell on my eyes. When I opened my eyes it was like a miracle. The heavy burden that I had kept inside was gone and I felt very light. I returned home. Before when I had to go home my heart used to sink, but this time my legs felt so light they wanted to run home and my heart was full of joy. Since then my life doesn't feel so difficult anymore, but it has become very light. All my burdens have gone. I didn't lose my strength at home anymore, my life was not without a goal anymore and I knew that God had come inside me. When I suffer I talk to Him. There were so many difficulties and I often talked to Him and cried. I started to talk with God always. I didn't tell my things to the people in church, but only to God. There was only one thing that I used to say 'Oh, my Lord Jesus, I love You,' I said, 'I love You, and even though I can't see you because I am a sinner, I cannot love anybody except for You.' I submitted my entire life to Him, including whom I should marry. I never forget about that. At that time Mongolians lived a terrible life like my father, ruining their children's lives. Family life was generally like that, people didn't know each other well and husbands used to drink a lot. In such difficult conditions children grow up trembling in fear. I submitted my life to God because I wanted to get away from such a life and because I felt compassion for other people. I don't want to live like this. 'I love You because I live a free and joyful life in the family of God', I said. What people came to visit us? Always my father's friends, who all drank. They would drink for days in a row. They lose interest in life and it gets worse and worse. I didn't want to have such a life, but one without alcohol, including on festive occasions. I prayed for a family that would sit together and worship God, but then I forgot about it. I forgot that I had prayed for it. This is how I lived when I was a child. Then I found this person and I developed a great courage and desire to live. When I was young my faith wasn't very good. Every time I made a small mistake my heart hurt and I didn't go to church until I had resolved it. Because I wasn't able to talk about it. I lost a lot of time in this way. I started to go to church in 1993. That's when I submitted my entire life to God, and the only sad thing that happened in my life at that time was my parents' divorce. They divorced in 1993.

Otgonbayar -

How old were your parents?

Ariunzaya -

My mom was over 30.

Otgonbayar -

At that time.

Ariunzaya -

Let me see, what year did they divorce? My younger brother was born in 1998. No, no, in 1996. It was the year before I finished 10th grade and became a student, so '95. I was very...

Otgonbayar -

Was your father drinking?

Ariunzaya -

My father was drinking and he oppressed us. And my mother, too.

Otgonbayar -

Did he beat you?

Ariunzaya -

Yes, he did. A lot of terrible things happened in front of our eyes. My mother, she really...there is no law that protects women. She lived in such a terrible situation that she went away in order to protect herself, leaving her children behind. These children grow up seeing all the terrible things their father does. This is how my younger brothers grew up. In 1995 she filed for divorce, but she had to wait for another three months. During those three months nothing changed, and in the end he boasted and called us idiots. This is how the law punished us. Then the eldest two children were summoned to court, because we had already finished 8th grade. They asked us whether we wanted to live with our father or with our mother.

Otgonbayar -

When you were summoned did you go?

Ariunzaya -

Yes, we did. I think that if our parents hadn't divorced then, our life wouldn't have been so difficult.

Otgonbayar -

Really?

Ariunzaya -

Since we were children we wanted to stay with our mother. My elder brother and I discussed whether we should separate, and we decided not to and to stay united with our younger siblings. From this perspective divorce is very destructive.

Otgonbayar -
It was that difficult?

Ariunzaya -
Yes, it was tough. Even God said so, you know. People should not divorce. Through divorce life begins to deteriorate. While before my mother was limited by her husband, now she was free. She was free to meet anyone and behave as she wanted to. So in 1995 I followed her to live with another family together with my four brothers. My mum shouldered all the burdens, but even though our father drank he was of help, too. That's when I felt that there should be a man who leads the family. I was very sad in that period and I thought that the law was wrong.

Otgonbayar -
What happened with the flat?

Ariunzaya -
The flat was given to my father. My father got the three-room flat and my mother wanted to leave as soon as possible, so she moved into a room in another family's apartment.

Otgonbayar -
Did you rent it?

Ariunzaya -
Yes. My youngest brother was four years old, he was like my son. With the divorce of my parents one of the providers had disappeared. At that time the state paid child support, but I don't know how my mum maintained us with her salary. In any case we often went to bed without dinner and we were hungry. My younger brother was so hungry he would cry, poor thing. After I finished 8th grade I worked a little bit and it was the time when I went to church. I would go to church and receive God's love. God made me live, I didn't live for anything else but for Him. Then the GOK gave my mother a flat. When we went to see our father in his three-room flat he was always drunk and all sorts of people were around at his place.

Otgonbayar -
It had become a place where people went to drink.

Ariunzaya -
Yes. So my elder brother and I talked with each other, my mother didn't say anything. We were young, sixteen, seventeen, but we shouldered the burdens of life. We decided that he would stay with our father and I would stay with our mother. Our mother used to see a lot of young men and she had started to drink a lot.

Otgonbayar -
She drank, too?

Ariunzaya -
Yes she did, she didn't care. So I said to my elder brother 'You go and look after dad and I will look after mum. If you stay with him you can chase away all those people who come to his place.' My brother agreed, our father was housing people, you know. I was staying with my mother, who had started to drink a lot. It was very difficult. I prayed a lot and asked the Lord to protect my brothers. But I myself couldn't go on living like that. Because I was young I became interested in a lot of things. I wanted to find friends or marry. Then I thought I could handle life, but because I was still a child I changed my mind often. At that time I could have chosen the wrong path. I was so tired of life that I could have just walked away. But there was God's love. He knew how to save me and where and how to make me live. He sent me to Dornod. I had been praying 'Please let me live in Dornod. If I stay in Erdenet, I won't be able to lead a stable life, even though I have many brothers, even though you are in my life. Because my faith is not firm I am afraid of life. I am afraid of leading a bad life, of living like my mother.' I was exhausted inside, it was very difficult. At that time God called me. In '96 I submitted my life to His will and started to live in Dornod. In the beginning it was difficult.

Otgonbayar -
Would you please talk about how you went to Dornod?

Ariunzaya -
It was in 1996, a year after my parents' divorce. I was going to church then.

Otgonbayar -
The church in Erdenet?

Ariunzaya -
No, in Ulaanbaatar. At that time the pastor organized large gatherings many times a year, every two or three months. I attended the gatherings, I submitted myself to God, and the time of the Gospel began. There were people who said that they would take care of themselves and I bore testimony for the first time. I decided to submit my life to God. I had nothing else in my life to hold onto. I needed only God, I didn't have anybody else to whom I could entrust my life. So I gathered all my courage and decided to live only for Him. Then my brother approved of me going to Dornod.

Otgonbayar -
Alone.

Ariunzaya -
Yes. I went to Dornod. Before I went there, my elder brothers and sisters had gone to spread the Gospel. About ten of them went with a van, and Batbold ah stayed there. He was a student then. Two ah and two egch stayed. They spread the Gospel among a few people and then they came back. After that there was nobody to go to Dornod. Then the Lord called me, but I hadn't studied anything and couldn't go just with pure faith. However, even though I was weak, I had submitted myself to God, so I went home and then to Dornod and then back home. I had to decide what to do about Dornod. I lived there for a while and I can still see my ah and egch who lived there and spread the faith. The ones who had stayed were dearer than my own family. But I didn't know what to do. At that time Paak egch and her husband Yonchol came. Paak egch had been in Korea. Ahoyon was born and brother Yonchol what I asked me what I was planning on doing. I didn't make any decision. In any case I wanted to go home. My family was having a hard time and when I arrived at home the situation was really rough. My parents had gotten back together. My mother had massive debts. She had sold the flat, but was still unable to pay them back. Her life had become really bad, she was in a really difficult situation.

Otgonbayar -
How was your dad?

Ariunzaya -
He was just the same, still drinking.

Otgonbayar -
Was he working?

Ariunzaya -
Yes, they were both working, they had no other choice. After having led separate lives for such a long time there was no life together anymore for them. As he became older my father became a wise man. I loved him very much when he was old and I pitied him a lot. He looked at my mother thinking 'I destroyed her life. I turned her in such a person. I made my five children live this way. I couldn't be a father for my five children, so they got to know the toughness of life already when they were little. They suffered a lot, so I have to give them my flat.' He decided this on his own. There was my youngest brother, the rest of us had left. My youngest brother Chinese had been separated from his father when he was four. My father began to love him dearly. 'I left my son when he was only four. I couldn't show him the joy of life', he said and he gave us the three-room flat. It was his own decision. He said 'I won't live here anymore, you live here. You had to live like vagabonds, you had to live through so much.' My father had become very wise. He went to work in Ulaanbaatar. He had a good job as a watchman at a holiday resort in the countryside. We stayed there and then we came back to live in the flat. God told us so. We lived separately, but my little brother Chinese had started to go to school and because he was little he didn't separate from me. We were always together, we went everywhere together, even to church.

Otgonbayar -
You took the place of his parents.

Ariunzaya -
Yes. When people asked him 'Who gave birth to you?', he would answer 'My mother'. And when they asked who he mother was he would say 'Zaya' (meaning the interviewee). When I looked at Chinese when he was little, I thought 'What about my brothers and sisters in Dornod? If I don't go, there is nobody else.' But when I saw my younger brothers and

Chinee, I couldn't leave them behind. So I stayed with them and did a small job for more than three months.

Otgonbayar -
What kind of a job?

Ariunzaya -
I sold ice cream and vegetables. I left with 1000 tögrög and came back with 2300. At that time it was profitable to sell vegetables and ice cream. People had just started to do business. We only needed a fridge so it was profitable. I made pretty good money. That was in 1998.

Otgonbayar -
How long had you stayed in Dornod?

Ariunzaya -
I had been there for a year, but I don't remember well. And soon thereafter I stayed with my brothers. I was young. But I stayed with people in Dornod for quite a long time. I hadn't yet decided where to live. So I went back home. When I saw Chinee I pitied him and my mother's situation had completely deteriorated. She had become an alcoholic. I cried a lot and wondered what would happen to Chinee and my other brothers. I had been away for almost two years, and in the meantime my brothers had become really big. Chinee had become very tall. They had missed me a lot and they cried. We all cried and talked a lot and I decided to live at home. One day brother Nyamdavaa called me and asked 'How are you? How is your life? Are you going?' But I couldn't decide straightaway, I couldn't give him an answer. When I saw Chinee he seemed so small. I prayed the whole night 'My Lord, my other brothers have grown up, but I can't leave my youngest brother. Shall I take him with me?' Our lives are in God's hands, you know. My life is in God's hands, so I entrusted my beloved little brother to Him and I prayed. It was 2 am. I cried a lot. I had submitted my life to God so I had to go to Him no matter what. I prayed for my little brother and submitted his life to God. 'Because You are here, You will protect the family.' Nobody had gone to Dornod. My brothers and sisters were very kind to me. I hadn't studied much and I couldn't love God, so I decided to follow them. The next morning I went to Nandia ah and told him that I would go to Dornod. I told my mother that she wasn't able to pay attention to my life and to guide me. She was working, then she would get angry and when she was at home there were always a lot of problems. I was very upset that she didn't see me off when I left for such a faraway place. I was upset in my heart, but I always prayed for her.

Otgonbayar -
Did you take your younger brother with you?

Ariunzaya -
No, I left him. I had no other choice but to leave him behind. It wasn't clear where I would live and I thought it would be tiring for him. I left him behind and decided to live in Dornod for my whole life. And looking at them now, all my brothers have a good life.

Otgonbayar -
What about Chinee?

Ariunzaya -
Yes, he has become a believer. My younger brothers are all well. I have four brothers.

Otgonbayar -
They all received God's love.

Ariunzaya -
Yes, I did a lot for my brothers. Since I was a girl I carried them on my back. That's why today I am hunchbacked. When my three younger brothers were still little I always carried them. I carried them to the kindergarten. I carried them to entertain them. Chinee practically grew up on my back. This is how I raised my younger brothers. The one that was born right after me, Erdene, made me suffer a lot. Because he was a boy he worked in the period before I went to Dornod. He was an eighth- or a sixth-grader at that time. He worked as a digger. We had no clothes to wear, nobody in my family had clothes. The next younger one is a dancer. He used to dance and sell soft drinks at the Orlyonok Cultural Palace. He also, you know those ovens? He used cooking vessels to make ovens and sold them. I was working in a tavern. The three of us worked to earn the money to buy food. I have no idea where our mother's money went. I guess she used it to pay off her debts and she spent it on alcohol. I still don't understand how she got into debt. What we earned was thus the only money we had. We bought food. At that time Chinese slippers had started to appear, with black and white soles. There were a lot of them. In the beginning, when my younger brother sold them he gave for the first time a pair to his brother. I earned about 12000 a month. I worked at Erka egch's tavern. When I received my money I never thought of anything. Other girls spent their money for themselves and were pretty. I wasn't like that at all. When I got my money I would buy bread and a lot of those small potatoes, because I would get many for my money. And I bought bones. I remember that we used to eat it for many days. I would buy a few things with my 12000 tögrögs and go home all happy. We never made nice things like tsuivan. I really like tsuivan, but when I made them my younger brother got angry and said that if we made tsuivan the next day we wouldn't have anything to eat anymore.

Otgonbayar -
Oh, you poor things.

Ariunzaya -
The one who got angry with me was the one who worked as a digger. 'Tomorrow we won't have anything to eat. Why did you make tsuivan? Tomorrow we won't have anything to eat. Why didn't you make bantan?' When we made bantan, our food lasted for many days. Our life was like that. Then that brother of mine stopped going to school and he joined some bad guys.

Otgonbayar -
Right.

Ariunzaya -
I prayed for my brother a lot. I cried and prayed to God 'My Lord, please stop my brother. I can't live with him stealing with those people. I submitted my three brothers to your will. Only this younger brother of mine is impossible. He joined some kids and he steals.' My elder brother was with my father. One day my younger brother disappeared, he didn't come back home. He had filled a milk can with water and left, but I hadn't noticed it. Then those kids, with whom he was always together, came and called him. He went to join them, but in that moment the police came and arrested him. Our mother wasn't there. So I went to my elder brother. I cried and told him that Erdene had been arrested. My brother was alone and my father was completely drunk, even though my brother was there to look after him. My mother wasn't there, my father was totally drunk, so I went to the police with my brother. The police station in Erdenet is far away from the center. We walked there and because we were children we didn't really know where we were walking. I was thinking about my little brother, I cried and I prayed to God a lot 'It would be so terrible if he stayed with those bad people, please take him away from them.' When we arrived we asked whether he was there or not, we asked them to help us, because we didn't know where the police had taken him. They told us that he had been sent home and that he wasn't implicated in anything. So we hurried back home in the dark. We thought that he must already be at home and he was. It was a terrible time. Now he has graduated from the Military University and he is a sergeant. He is abroad now.

Otgonbayar -
He is in Sierra Leone.

Ariunzaya -
Yes, he went to Sierra Leone and to Iraq. Now he is a sergeant here in Erdenet.

Otgonbayar -
At the military unit.

Ariunzaya -
Yes. That's how he was. I thank God a lot. I cried and prayed so much for my brothers. I think God rewarded me with the good life my brothers are leading now. Even though my younger brothers don't believe very much, I guess they will later. I think that one day they will believe. All this was God's love. God blesses and guides you. My younger brother, the one who works at the Palace of Culture has always been very silent, and I prayed a lot that God would bless him. I love my elder brother. When I left, my elder brother shouldered the responsibility for the family and he got a job in a factory. Thanks to God's help all of them found work. When my younger brothers were in difficulties, my elder brother was unemployed. But then he found a job at the factory, and as soon as he started to work he started to maintain his younger brothers. When guys get their salaries, they usually spend it on alcohol, but not my elder brother. When he got paid he took a string bag, just like a woman. Once when I came home I followed him, I really loved him, you know. On payday he would take his brothers and the string bag and buy food for the month. He did a really hard job and he didn't get married

until very late. I think he married when he was already over 30, he was 31 when he married almost two years ago. I felt very sorry for him when he was alone and I prayed that he would find a good wife. He is such a good brother and a fine and intelligent person. He never drank and he never abandoned his brothers. God helped me and he looked also after my elder brother. I prayed for him and he found a good wife. She is very caring, and she deals very well with the negative aspects of his character. He has such a good wife, they have two children and they lead a good life. My family and my youngest brother are very devoted to God. I always go and visit him, because his family has problems because of my mother's condition. They have a difficult life. My mother has become very addicted to alcohol, but she believes in God and wants to stop.

Otgonbayar -
Your mother.

Ariunzaya -
But the bodily desire for alcohol just gets hold of her. She can't quit, it's really difficult. My younger brothers are very good and wise people and they never leave her alone. They don't let her out of the house. In that way if she drinks she drinks at home. They make her stay at home and when she does something wrong they go and get her. People call them and they carry her back home. They don't loathe her and that's why I love them so much. Look at the drunkards who live on the streets. They have been rejected by their children and that's why they have become such terrible people. They never leave my mother. Just now in summer, no in spring, she fell when she was drunk. She fell down the stairs. People don't care about drunkards and they even push them down. We take care of her so that she doesn't get hurt, but her condition has gotten worse. I guess she was pushed and she got a laceration here.

Otgonbayar -
On her eyebrow.

Ariunzaya -
Ah her eyebrow, it was terrible. She is a woman and her face looked awful. My younger brother, the dancer, said that it doesn't matter whether she drinks or not, her face has become ugly and he paid 120000 tögrög for plastic surgery. It was expensive, but you can't see anything anymore. 'Even though my mother is an alcoholic', he said, 'her face should look nice.' When I heard him say that, I immediately started to cry. They are so understanding. They could leave her and say 'So what? It's her own fault', but they don't. With plastic surgery everything has healed without leaving a scar. When she is sober, she thinks that she makes her children suffer a lot. She says 'I make you suffer a lot, but you don't abandon me. I am very grateful for that. I realize what you are doing.' I was very happy and I told my brothers 'Our mother will not live long, she won't make us suffer very long, her health is very bad.'

Otgonbayar -
Because she had been drinking for a long time.

Ariunzaya -
She had been drinking for a long time. But she also doesn't have a healthy organ, because she has been working at the GOK for many years. She has a kidney disease. No matter from which perspective you look at her, she deserves compassion. That's why she doesn't owe us anything. We owe her and that's why we have to look after her until she dies. It is difficult to lead such a life every day and my youngest brother is very upset about it. Sometimes he says to me 'Sister, even though I believe in God, my life doesn't change. It is so difficult. I don't want to go home, I sleep at a friend's place.' Then I tell him God's words 'Mother is like that because God puts you through trials. Reach out for Him even more, love Him even more, stay close to Him and the more you will feel His presence. God is really blessing our family and He knows our mother. He knows what to do. Please treat our mother well, don't be hard on her.' My brothers can be very hard, when they get angry with our mother. Sometimes she does things that even I can't put up with her anymore. When she is like that she is really annoying. We put her in her room and close the door. Sometimes she behaves so badly that I want to hit her. But my brothers never do anything like that, they are so understanding. I respect my brothers very much. They don't abandon our mother and when they get paid they always celebrate her birthday. I never send any presents, but I think next year I will start sending her one. My mother likes to eat candies and fruit, and they always give her a lot of the things she likes for her birthday. And they always celebrate Tsagaan Sar with her. They have a new deal made for her and they dress her very nicely. But our mother leaves the things she likes here and there and then they disappear. They say 'Mother, losing the things you sons gave you is too much.' But they still make her stay beautiful, they buy her clothes and whatever else she needs. I am very happy about that. I have good brothers.

Otgonbayar -
What about your dad?

Ariunzaya -
He was working...

Otgonbayar -
He went to the city?

Ariunzaya -
He lived in Ulaanabaatar and he died in 2004. He was 56. He had liver cancer, his health was very bad and he lost a lot of weight. He was very thin.

Otgonbayar -
Did he stay in the city all the time?

Ariunzaya -
Yes, but he got a pension from Erdenet, so he would come, pick up the money and give it to his children. He took a bit for alcohol, but the rest he gave to his children for clothes. He was very wise, our father. When he came to Erdenet in March, I went home and met him. The other times when he was in Erdenet I couldn't come home. That time I went back. He was drunk and singing a song about a wife 'My wife, I would like to love and make you happy.' When he was drinking he was always full of remorse and he would say 'I destroyed her life, I made her become like that.' He was very disappointed with himself. In 2004 I was pregnant with my second child and I was afraid of having a miscarriage. So I decided to go to him and give birth there. I had heard before that my father was in a bad state. They said that he was very ill, that the doctors didn't know what he had but that they were treating his lungs. So I went to see him.

Otgonbayar -
So your father was at home then?

Ariunzaya -
Yes, at that time he lived at home. He lived at home the last three years of his life. Our mother stayed in the small room, my father in the big one. They would call each other and drink together. After having been drinking they would become like wolves. We would send each in their room and close the doors. My brothers had gotten used to it and Chinese had found a way to handle them. He put them in separate rooms, but those were three tough years. My father was getting old so he didn't make us suffer much. He would be very silent, not like when he was younger. I was always full of remorse and then he died of spleen cancer. I came to Erdenet in 2004 with such a big belly. I came to give birth, I still had 20 days to go. I saw my father and then he was told to go to Ulaanabaatar. That was in May. I went to Erdenet and as soon as I arrived, I got examined by a doctor, who said that I had started dilating and that I would give birth early, that the birth process had already started. So I checked into hospital while my father went to Ulaanabaatar. I stayed in hospital for a week and I prayed a lot, asking God to prevent me from giving birth early, to make me deliver on time. And God really helped me. People behave in a strange way when they look at their bodies. They think that they are so tired and wonder whether they should really give birth or not. I was due on the 18th of May. My father died on the 14th of May. I was in hospital, but thinking that I was not due yet, that I hadn't given birth even though I had started dilating, I left the hospital. So I was at home when my father died on the 14th.

Otgonbayar -
You father had gone to the city, right?

Ariunzaya -
He went to Ulaanabaatar for an endoscopy, because there hadn't been any diagnosis. With the endoscopy they discovered that he had spleen cancer. He had gone down the wrong path, one that he shouldn't have. I couldn't talk to him very well about the Lord. When I first became a believer, the most incredible person was my father. I ran up to him and said 'Dad, I have started to believe in Jesus!' And he said 'He exists.' I will never forget that. He said 'Jesus exists, my child.' I believed in my father's words. I thought 'How wonderful, he really exists.' I believed it immediately and the one who had said those words was my father. When he died I thought a lot about it. Even though my father was not a believer, inside he believed that God exists. He died repenting before God. I stayed in the city for four nights. He died on the 14th and I had arrived on the 13th. I had become huge and my breasts were big like this. I couldn't move. On the 17th and on the 18th I felt pain. And I was tired because of all the people.

Otgonbayar -
Because of the funeral.

Ariunzaya -

Yes, the day of the funeral I lay in bed. My body was in pain, it was really difficult. When I got up it hurt even more. It hurt and it was my second child. The labor pains had started and I prayed 'My Lord, even though my father is dead I want to see him. I want to see him and say goodbye to him.' But I couldn't, the contractions were three minutes apart. I cried a little bit. 'I want to go to my father's burial place and submit him to You, people have not arrived yet.' I so much desired to go to my father's burial place and submit him to God, but I couldn't. I told my mother, but she cried 'Your contractions are just three minutes apart, you can't go anywhere, you have to deliver the baby.' My mother became anxious and I went to hospital. In hospital my mother was walking back and forth, worried about her daughter and blaming herself for not having been a good mother. I was admitted immediately and at that point my contractions were 5 minutes apart. I was in terrible pain but still I didn't give birth. The labour pains continued the whole night. At 8 am I was still in pain, at home there were a hundred things to do, but I couldn't do anything. There were so many things to worry about. So I prayed to the Lord and He answered my prayers. I asked Him to make me give birth on time, and I delivered on the 18th of May. From 5 to 7am the pain became unbearable. At 5am it was still all right, but at 7 am the pain was so strong it was unbearable. I was looking out of the window and I could see the cemetery from there. Even though I could see it, I still didn't really see it. My heart was pounding and I so much wanted to go, to look at my father and pray next to him. I said that I would go, opened the door, but I didn't walk out immediately. I first told the doctor 'I go. My father is being buried. I just want to go to see him and then I come back.' The doctor was anxious and said 'You can't go, my daughter.' There was no-one from my family next to me. I couldn't decide what to do. The doctor took my hand, led me back into my room and said 'My daughter, stay here. Please control your feelings, your baby is very important. It is very important that you deliver now. I felt bad and I asked God to help me 'My Lord, it is difficult, I don't know how to give birth, please help me.' And I know that my Lord answered my prayer. I thanked him and I looked out of the window to see how my father would be brought out. I saw my mother getting into a car. It was past 8, more than an hour had passed. They still weren't bringing him out because his belly had not been stitched up yet.

Otgonbayar -
From the hospital morgue.

Ariunzaya -

That hadn't stitched him up and that's why it took such a long time. When they came out I immediately started to cry and I prayed. When I saw father I couldn't pray, but then I prayed for God's blessing. I remembered my father's words 'Yes, He exists.' 'Please forgive my father for not being a believer.' I prayed 'God, please forgive him. Beginning from his death he has become yours.' The doctor told me to go, but I wanted to stay a bit longer. Then the doctor took me. I think my brother say me through the window. I was in pain. I said to the doctor 'It is so difficult, who knows whether I will be able to give birth.' The doctor told me not to worry, that everything would be all right, led me to the bed and broke my water. At that time God spoke to me through the doctor. 'People's patience is put on trial in the most difficult moments of life. You have to be patient. To live and to die are the same. The dead are already gone. What is important is that a new person is coming to live. So please be courageous for the sake of the baby in your belly. The person who is about to be born is important.' I was so exhausted after the night, I had lost all strength. I said that I wasn't calm, that I was tired and I was in pain, and the doctor said 'Trust me. I will make you give birth immediately. I will protect you.' The pain had started in the morning, it was terrible, and I prayed to God to make me deliver fast. I forgot everything else and thought only about the baby, about my son. I thought it would be a son, I wished it would be a son. I had hope, but I was still lying on the bed. It took a long time and I gave birth at 1pm.

Otgonbayar -
Oh, so late.

Ariunzaya -

Yes, I was in terrible pain until 1.40 and then I delivered my baby without any problems. I had worked for so many days, I had been through so much and I hadn't had a rest during the night, so I couldn't push. The doctor said that if I didn't push the baby would suffocate and die. I prayed to God to give me the strength to push and deliver my baby. And then I found the strength and I was able to push. My girl friend works as a midwife, we went to school together. She said that she had never seen a woman as patient as me, one who was still able to give birth alone even though things were so difficult, and she said that she really respects me. Inside I thought that it had been God's strength. They put my son on my bed and because it had taken so long he hadn't gotten enough air. The doctors didn't know and I didn't know. They took my son and gave him to me. Then the doctor asked 'Don't you want to know the baby's sex?' And I said that I didn't care. He was born and he was healthy. I had a son and I started to cry and thanked God for the relief He had given me. I thank Him a lot and felt such a relief and I gave my son the name Mönhamgalan. My father was called Amgalan and I called my son Mönhamgalan. I couldn't call him just Amgalan. Yonchol ah came with his family and he saw all my suffering. He said 'God helped you to give birth and he gave you great relief. Call him Mönh-Amgalan.' I was full of joy and I fully agreed. It is written in the Bible that God gives peace in times of great suffering. When we entrust ourselves to God, relief will come. That's why in the Bible there is written 'May peace be with you forever.' I myself wish so much that peace will come to people always in this difficult time in which Satan has gotten hold over the world and there are bad souls. Even though this is a time when everybody is suffering I wish that peace may come. And I called my son Mönhamgalan.

Otgonbayar -
Thank you very much for this very interesting interview. Let's finish the first part.

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