Establishment of the Mergen Tradition of Mongolian Buddhism

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This chapter examines the development and unique features of the Mergen Tradition of Mongolian Buddhism, which stands as a unique tradition in the history of Buddhism in Mongolia. Apart from the Mergen Tradition and some Buddhist popular practices, virtually all of Mongolian Buddhism has been practiced in Tibetan language throughout its history, spreading over eight centuries since the reign of Khubilai Khaan. The Mergen Tradition originated from the Neichi Toin’s lineage of Mongolian Buddhist practices, which form a set of local Buddhist practices centered in Mergen Monastery and in approximately twenty-four affiliated monasteries of the Urad Right Duke Banner of Inner Mongolia. Since this unique tradition originated and endured in Mergen Monastery and its core figure, Mergen Gegeen, was the chief incarnate lama of Mergen Monastery, I call it here the “Mergen Tradition.” The Third Mergen Gegeen, Lubsangdambijaltsan (Tib. bLo bzang bstan pa’i rgyal mtshan, 1717–1766, Mergen Gegeen hereafter), was a great scholar who established it as a Mongolian language-based tradition, which never became a Manchu-centered or exclusively Tibet-oriented tradition. As such, the Mergen Tradition became a locally sponsored, internally oriented, and self-generating system, which has endured to the present, and whose influence has spread to different parts of Inner and Outer Mongolia.
Seeking to shed light on the tradition in terms of its socio-political and religious contexts, I have based my analysis of the Mergen Tradition largely on the following primary sources preserved in Classical Mongolian, dating to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and on Mergen Gegeen Lobsangdambijaltshan’s works. Prajñā Sāgara’s *Rosary of Wish-fulfilling Gems — The Illuminator of the Narrative About the Holy Lama Neiĉi Toin Dalai Mañjuśrī* (DCH hereafter), Dharma Samudra’s *Lamp of Faith That is Perfect with Seven Jewels — A Biography of the Holy Neichi Toin Khutuṭu Vakisuvra Sumadi ṣa sa na dhvaja, the Glorious One With an Exalted Birth* (CHJ hereafter), Galdanwangchugdorji’s *Record of the Origin of the Two Monasteries Called ‘Prospering Religion and Gathering Joy’ which is kept in the Da Lama’s Office of the Western Monastery* (DB hereafter), the collected works of Mergen Gegeen Lobsangdambijaltshan, titled *Collected Works of the Reincarnation of Vajradhara Mergen Diyanči Lama* (CW1 hereafter), and Lobsangdambijaltshan’s *Golden Summary* (AT hereafter).

**The Origin of the Mergen Tradition of Mongolian Buddhism**

In the early period of the second conversion of the Mongols to Buddhism, Tibetan teachers and scholars such as Mañjuśrī Khutuṭu, Shiregetū Gūushi Chorji, and Maidar (Maitreya) Khutuṭu, who were officially sent to Mongolia, had close ties to relatively independent Mongol rulers, and they helped them establish a Tibetan line of Buddhist practices. Later, their Mongolian successors and reincarnations and the leading Mongolian monasteries, such as Yeke Juu
and Shiregetü Juu monasteries in Kökekhota, created a basis for the Manchu-controlled Tibetan line of Buddhism in Mongolia.

Two Mongolian Buddhist teachers who endeavored to disseminate Buddhism in the Mongolian language were Zaya Pandita Namkhai Jamtsu (1599-1662) and Neichi Toin (1557-1653). Although these two scholars belonged to the same Gelukpa tradition, they took two different routes in their efforts to spread Buddhism in the Mongolian language. While Zaya Pandita was a scholastic monk who built monasteries and translated scriptures from Tibetan, Neichi Toin was a tantric master who widely spread Vajrayāna Buddhism among Mongolian laity. He deliberately chose to disseminate Buddhism in the eastern part of today’s Inner Mongolia because of the prevalence of Shamanism in this region at that time. He initiated a Mongolian line of Buddhist practices in this region, which I refer to as the Neichi Toin line.ix

In the DB: 234, we are told the following:

Thorgud Gegeen (Neichi Toin), the first generation of the Toin Gegeen (Neichi Toin),x advanced the extraordinary Tantrism of Tsongkhapa, which combined the sÔtras and tantras [spread] among the completely fortunate people in the East during the reign of Dgedê Erdenê (Chi. Emperor Chong De, 1636–1644). Therefore, Mergen Gegeen called him the “Second Tsongkhapa” and prayed to him. At that time, [Neichi Toin] taught the reading and memorization [of the doctrine] in the Mongolian mother tongue in conformity with the beginners’ mental level. Due to the growth of the people’s enthusiasm as a result of reading, together with the compassion of the Bogd Lama (His Holiness) and with the power of people’s faith, more and more people achieved siddhis and knowledge. Furthermore, religion was widely disseminated in Tibetan and Mongolian languages. Bogd Toin Khutu©tu-yin Gegeen (Neichi Toin) bestowed the quintessential instructions on listening, contemplation, and meditation to the completely fortunate people of our direction in the Mongolian mother tongue, and he led them to the path of liberation. The Mergen Gegeen further
promoted the path and turned it into a type of practice with new translations. (DB: 234).

Two events mark the beginning of the Mergen Tradition—the establishment of Mergen Monastery and the initiation of Mergen Gegeen’s line of reincarnations. Mergen Monastery lies south of Mona Mountain and north of the Yellow River. It has been known under different names: as Mergen Keid, Mergen Juu, and Mergen Süm-e, all carrying the meaning of “Mergen Monastery.” A name given to it by the Qing court was Shashin-i Badaragulugchi Süm-e (“A Monastery That Makes Religion Prosper”).xi Mergen Süm-e was a chief monastery of the Urad Right Duke banner of Ulaanchab League (present Urad Front Banner of Linhe City).xii The Urad people (literary meaning “craftsmen”) became subjects of Khabtu Khasar, who occupied the eastern part of the Mongol Empire, when they were given to him by his brother Chinggis Khaan. Urad nobles considered themselves descendants of Khabtu Khasar, and are known as a branch of the Khorchin Mongols. However, the name Urad has been in use only since the seventeenth century. Burakhai, the fifteenth in the line of the descendants of Khabtu Khasar, named the people he ruled Urads and divided them into three groups within the Külün Buir region. Around 1633, Urads, together with the Khorchins, were allied with the Manchus and gained political merit by fighting for the Manchu Dynasty in the cause of empire building. In 1648, they became organized into Front Urad (Urad Eműnedü), Middle Urad (Urad Dumda), and Rear Urad (Urad Khoitu) banners. Their chiefs were made into rulers (jasa₇) bearing the title of duke (gung). In the same year, they were moved from Külün
Buir to the present Mona Mountain territory by the Qing court to guard the region from the Khalkha Mongols to the north and from the Oirat Mongols to the west. xiii

Although there is no available information on the Urads' acquaintance with Buddhism prior to their move to the Mona Mountain region, it is possible that they already had some contact with the First Neichi Toin, because they were related to the Khorchins through their joint fighting on behalf of the Qing court. Once the Urad Mongols had settled in the Mona Mountain area, they built their own monastery. In the DB, Galdanwangchugdorji gives two accounts of the introduction of Buddhism to the Urads. In the first account, he states the following:

The reason why my ancestors worshipped this lama [Mergen Gegeen] and the reason for building the monastery is that Duke Darmashiri generated faith, since our great grandfather Duke Nomun had made Bogd Toin Gegeen (Neichi Toin) his lama. The Duke Darmashiri cooperated with a man called Mangkha and built the first monastery in a place called Mergen. Therefore, the previous Mergen Monastery was called Güng-ün Süm-e (Duke's Monastery). Duke Darmashiri also invited Mergen Diyanchi Lama from a place called Khairtu and installed him on the throne of Mergen Monastery, because Bogd Toin Gegeen [gave him a golden Tsongkhapa [statue] and appointed Mergen Gegeen to Duke Nomun as his lama at [Duke's] request. (DB: 5)

In the second account, Galdanwangchugdorji says:

Mergen Diyanchi Dinu-a was well known as the first of the dearest, heartfelt sons, the thirty disciples of Bogd Toin Gegeen. It is recorded in the archive kept in our government that at the time of Nomun, the fourth Imperial Duke asked for Neichi Toin Khutugtu Lama, invited his disciple Mergen Diyanchi Lama, and worshipped him in his banner. Later he [Mergen Diyanchi Lama] changed his robe (passed away) and reincarnated into the family of a man called Solungkhur of the Middle Urad Duke Banner. Our fifth Duke Darmadai also invited him and worshipped him. His [Mergen Dayinchi's] name was recorded as Danjinjamsu in the archive presented to the great Department (DB: 178).
Also, according to the DB: 234, 178, and 228, Mergen Monastery was first built in the forty-first year of the Kangxi Emperor (1701), and the second reincarnation of Mergen Diyanchi was invited to the throne of Mergen Monastery in the forty-fourth year (1704) (DB: 234). The text also relates the following:

The Duke Darmashiri invited the reincarnation of the high lama from the place called Khairtu to his monastery and presented him with the chair and the cushion (i.e. he gave him the monastery’s throne), a ma’ala, and a ritual scarf (Mon. khada; Tib. kha btags); Janggi Amugulang presented him the chair (i.e. the throne) on the twelfth of the White Month (the first lunar month of a year) of the forty-fourth year of the Kangxi Emperor, the Year of the Monkey (1704). The lama was quite possibly the reincarnation of the Mergen Diyanchi Din-a, Danjinjamtsu. After the Mergen Diyanchi-yin Gegeen was invited to the throne of Mergen Monastery, the Banner Monastery in the forty-fourth year of the Kangxi Emperor [1704], the Gegeen ordered his disciples to come and stay in Güng-ün Süm-e [Duke’s Monastery] in the fiftieth year of Kangxi (1710) (DB: 178, 228).

After Mergen Diyanchi Din-a’s death, the Duke Darmadai found his reincarnation, the Second Mergen Diyanchi, called Danjinjamtsu. He built a monastery, which became both Mergen Monastery and a banner monastery. Since the previous Mergen Monastery was called Güng-ün Süm-e, it is possible that there had been a monastery before Darmashiri’s Mergen Monastery and that the First and Second Mergen Diyanchis resided there. This can be inferred from the sources.

Mergeen Gegeen notes in one of the texts, I-14 (“I” stands for volume one and “14” for text number fourteen, same rule applied hereafter), included in his collected works:
Before Mergen Monastery was built, the place was called Mergen because there was someone called Mergen living in the vicinity of Mona Mountain. Later, the ruling Duke Darmashiri of the Front Urad Banner built a monastery at the mouth of the Mergen [Valley] on account of his faith, for the sake of benefitting living beings and religion, and for the sake of the longevity of the Holy Lord, Mañjuśrī (Emperor Kangxi). He invited Mergen Diyanchi Lama to reside there. From then, the monastery was called “Mergen Monastery” (CW1, I: 88v-89r).

The Mongolian scholar Möngke rightly points out that the Neichi Toin, who appointed Mergen Diyanchi Lama to the position of the Duke Nomun, cannot have been the First Neichi Toin (1557–1653), but must have been the second one (1671–1703). It is also worth noting that the Mona Mountain area was very close to Kökekhota, the centre of Inner Mongolian Buddhism, which followed the Tibetan line of Buddhism and had long-established lineages of high lamas. There are two possible reasons why the Duke Nomun did not worship any high lama in Kökekhota and why he chose Neichi Toin as his lama. One reason could be his ethnic affiliation with the Khorchins, the patrons of Neichi Toin; or, he and his predecessors, together with their subjects, had some prior contact with Neichi Toin.

Mergen Diyanchi was a key figure in the founding of Mergen Monastery. The name Mergen Diyanchi first appears in the biography of the First Neichi Toin. However, two individuals by the name Mergen Diyanchi are mentioned in the DCH. One is Arigun Mergen Diyanchi, and the other is referred to as Mergen Diyanchi. In the DCH: 115–116, we are told that when the First Neichi Toin went to meditate in the Chogtu Sümbür Agula (Magnificent Sumeru Mountain) in Abaga Khara-yin Agui (Cave of Black Uncle), all of which is situated east of
Kökekhota, Arigun Mergen Diyanchi was already meditating there. At first, Neichi Toin served the Arigun Mergen Diyanchi as his disciple until the latter recognized him as an extraordinary lama and regretted the way he had treated him. In the DCH: 128, Arigun Mergen Diyanchi is described as the one who “achieved a single-pointed meditative concentration.”

By the time Neichi Toin arrived to eastern Inner Mongolia, Arigun Mergen Diyanchi had already been there for some time because of military unrest in the area of Kökekhota. He offered all of his wealth to Neichi Toin and asked him to be his lama for the rest of his life and to never be separated from him (DCH: 133). It seems that he stayed with Neichi Toin from then on, accompanying him to Kökekhota, when the latter was sent there by the Fifth Dalai Lama. Upon the death of Neichi Toin, Arigun Mergen Diyanchi was put in charge of a temple that was built over a stupa on the spot where Neichi Toin’s body was cremated (DCH: 177). Since no other material about Arigun Mergen Diyanchi is available to us, we do not know if he stayed there to guard the temple in eastern Inner Mongolia or whether he returned to Kökekhota.

The Mergen Diyanchi who was appointed to the Right Urad Duke Banner could have been one of the two previously mentioned disciples by the same name. But it was most likely Mergen Diyanchi because the above-mentioned accounts of him match the previously cited account from the DB, which states that Mergen Diyanchi Dinu-a was well-known as the first of the dearest heartfelt sons, the thirty disciples of the Bogd Neichi Toin Gegeen, and that he was appointed as the worshipping lama of the Right Urad Duke Banner (DB: 177).
The claims made by Möngke and other scholars\textsuperscript{xviii} that Arigun Mergen Diyanchi was the first of the Mergen Gegeen line of reincarnations have no basis. Khurchabilig’s suggestion that Mergen Diyanchi was Ariyan Diwa seems more reasonable.\textsuperscript{xix} Ariyan Diwa used to be called Chagan Ubashi (White Up\textsuperscript{s}aka) during his discipleship to Bogd Chagan Lama. With the approval of the Bogd Chagan Lama, he became a disciple of Neichi Toin, who named him Ariyan Diwa.\textsuperscript{xx} In Khurchabilig’s view, the word Dinu-a is a variation of Diwa, which implies that Ariyan Diwa was the first disciple of Neichi Toin. This interpretation accords with a repeated saying that the Mergen Diyanchi was the first Neichi Toin’s disciple. It is also reasonable to assume that he was called Mergen Diyanchi because he was accomplished in meditation (diyan, Skrt. dhy\textit{\-}na). Unfortunately, Khurchabilig still related Ariyan Diwa to Arigun Mergen Diyanchi rather than to another Mergen Diaynchi who was ignored by all the scholars concerned, including Khurchabilig. According to the CHJ: 225, the old disciples of the First Neichi Toin found, recognized, and installed his second incarnation, the Second Neichi Toin, and were in charge of his early education. However, neither Arigun Mergen Diachgy nor Mergen Diyanchi is mentioned among them. On the contrary, it is said that the Second Neichi Toin gave initiations of the Guhyasam\textit{\-}aja and other tantras to his disciples, who were headed by Mergen Diyanchi Tenzin Gyatso (Tib. Bstan ’dzin rgya mtsho). When the Second Neichi Toin was invited to visit the Khorchins at the age of twenty-four, there were very many people who requested initiations and teachings from him. Hence, he assigned the task of giving teachings to the people on his behalf to the first of his
accompanying disciples, Mergen Diyanchi Tenzin Gaytso and to others (CHJ: 205). It is certain that Mergen Diyanchi cannot be either of the two Mergen Diyanchis who appear in the DCH. Prior to his death, the Second Neichi Toin ordered Tenzin Gyatso and others to teach his other disciples (CHJ: 234). When the CHJ relates the accomplishments of the Second Neichi Toin’s disciples, Mergen Tenzin Gyatso is mentioned first and described as “the first and best among the disciples, the one of wisdom, of good will and purpose, perfected in virtue, majesty, and splendor” (CHJ: 240). This accords with the statement about the Mergen Diyanchi given in the DCH. Mergen Diyanchi took his own disciples to Güüshiri Mergen Shiditü of the Ordos to learn the Mongolian ali kali script, reading and writing rules of the nine kinds of scripts, including the Indian lanza script, translation from Tibetan into Mongolian, and the secret “black and white ways of astrology” (CHJ: 240). Mergen Diyanchi, who is mentioned as the first and best of the Second Neichi Toin’s disciples, was not among the old disciples of the First Neichi Toin who were the teachers of the Second Neichi Toin. Instead, he was taught by the Second Neichi Toin. Furthermore, the Mergen Diyanchi accompanied the Second Neichi Toin until the latter’s death. This Mergen Diyanchi was most likely a reincarnation of the Mergen Diyanchi, but not the Arigun Mergen Diyanchi appear in the DCH. However, the CHJ does not give a clear picture of how Mergen Diyanchi was appointed to the Duke Nomun, nor of what happened to him after that appointment.

A brief account of the Second Mergen Diyanchi in the DB provides some clarification:
After he (the First Mergen Diyanchi) changed his robe (died), he reincarnated into the family of a man called Solungkhur of the Middle Urad Duke Banner. He was invited and made a lama by our Fifth Duke Darmadai. His name was recorded as Danjinjamtsu in the archive presented to the government office. On the 12th of the white month of the forty-fourth year of Kangxi (1704), the Duke Darmashiri invited the reincarnation of the High Lama (the Second Mergen Diyanchi Danjinjamtsu) from a place called Khairtu to his monastery. In the fifty-fifth year of Kangxi [1715], the Second Mergen Diyanchi Danjimjamsu went to Dolon-nuur to see the Second Jangjia Khutugtu Agwanglobsangchoindan. He received many initiations and consecrations and presented the latter with two hundred lans of silver and two hundred horses. He died in the fifty-sixth year of Kangxi (1716). His relics were enshrined in a sandalwood stÔpa and placed in the hall of worship behind the great hall of Mergen Monastery (DB: 178).

Since Danjinjamtsu is a Mongolian pronunciation of Tibetan Bstan 'dzin rgya mtsho, it corresponds to the name of the Mergen Diyanchi spoken of in the CHJ. The periods of these two lamas, the Second Neichi Toin (1671–1703) and the Second Mergen Diyanchi (1680s–1716), is also very close.

We can assume that the First Mergen Diyanchi was requested to be a lama of the Duke Nomun in his old age, during the time of the Second Neichi Toin’s early age. Not long after, the First Mergen Diyanchi died and his reincarnation, the Second Mergen Diyanchi, was sought and found by Duke Darmadai. The Second Mergen Diyanchi studied with the Second Neichi Toin and came to be the first and best of his close disciples, as his predecessor had been to the First Neichi Toin. At the same time, he was still a revered lama of the Right Urad Duke Banner. Therefore, the Mongolian line of practices was able to endure without disruption. All the other six lineages of reincarnations of other lamas in Mergen Monastery came into existence at the time of the Second Mergen Diyanchi, and they all became his disciples. Apart from the Second
Neichi Toin, there was no other accomplished lama who could have been a master of the Second Mergen Diyanchi. This means that the First Mergen Diyanchi did not and could not foster a new generation of disciples in the Right Urad Duke Banner. The Second Mergen Diyanchi learned and inherited the First Neichi Toin’s tradition of Mongol practices not only from the Second Neichi Toin, but also from some of the old disciples of the First Neichi Toin. Thus, the Mergen Diyanchi who truly transplanted and developed the Neichi Toin’s Mongolian line of Buddhist practices in the Right Urad Duke Banner was the Second Mergen Diyanchi and not the First Mergen Diyanchi. The Second Mergen Diyanchi was the actual initiator of the Mongolian line of Buddhist practices in Mergen Monastery. His study of translation skills and various scripts, together with his disciples in Ordos, laid a solid foundation for the later development of a Mongolian line of Buddhism. His training of many highly educated scholars played an important role in the Third Mergen Gegeen’s great success in establishing the Mergen Tradition. As will be discussed later, some of his disciples were very influential teachers of the Third Mergen Gegeen. Thus, the Second Neichi Toin and the Second Mergen Diyanchi were crucial figures in transplanting a Mongolian line of Buddhism in Mergen Monastery, which was initiated by the First Neichi Toin. The First Mergen Diyanchi served only as a connection between the two lines.

Institutionalization of the Mergen Tradition

Galdanwangchugdorji asserts that before Mergen Gegeen’s “new translation” appeared, the First Güüshi Da Bagshi’s “old translation and old chanting” had
been used (DB: 179). The First Güüshi Da Bagshi was among the Second Mergen Diyanchi’s disciples summoned to stay in Güng-ūn Süm-e. He was known as a great translator and scholar, and his name was Urad Dharma Samudra (Mong. Nomundalai). He authored the biography of the Second Neichi Toin. The First Güüshi Da Bagshi Nomundalai translated a large number of texts from Tibetan, among which are the liturgies used in Tashilhunpo Monastery and other monasteries of Tibet. However, it was by the endeavor of the Third Mergen Gegeen that a Mongolian line of Buddhist practices developed into an independent tradition of Mongolian Buddhism.

Due to the Third Mergen Gegeen’s institutionalization of the Diyanchi Tradition, the tradition turned into a strict monastic establishment. In Galdanwangchugdorji’s words:

Bogd Toin Khutugtu-yin Gegeen (Neichi Toin) had bestowed quintessential instructions on listening, contemplation, and meditation to the completely fortunate people of our country in the Mongolian mother tongue and led them to the path of liberation. Mergen Gegeen further promoted the path and made it into a type of practice with new translations and new regulation of services and rituals. (DB: 234)

Galdanwangchugdorji frequently speaks of the qualification for Mongolian chanting and regulation of services set by Mergen Gegeen as special criteria for appraising the accomplishment of the clergy of Mergen Monastery. He supposedly heard others saying that the Second Chorji Bagshi was an outstanding holy person who had strictly held services exactly as it had been set out by Mergen Gegeen (DB: 5, 177–185).
A clearer picture of the Mergen Tradition of Mongolian Buddhism emerges from the complete works of the Third Mergen Gegeen. Later practices of the Mergen Tradition essentially follow the program and regulations set by the Third Mergen Gegeen and were based on his written works until the communist revolution in Inner Mongolia. In contemporary times, the monks of the Right Urad Duke Banner maintain that their liturgical texts and their way of chanting originate from the Third Mergen Gegeen’s reformation of practices.

**A Lineage Root Lama of the Mergen Tradition**

In Mergen Gegeen’s writings, Neichi Toin is firmly established as a lineage root lama of the Mergen Tradition. Mergen Gegeen refers to Neichi Toin with exalted names such “Glorious Lama” (Tegüs Chogtu Lama), “Vajradhara Lama,” “Holy Lama” (Bogd Lama), “the Second Tsongkhapa,” “Holy Mañjuśrī,” and “Bodhisattva Lama.” These names denote not only the special position of Neichi Toin in the Mergen Tradition, but also give a special identity to the lineage of the Mergen Tradition. Several of Mergen Gegeen’s works are dedicated entirely to Neichi Toin. The first two texts of Mergen Gegeen’s collected works, which deal with refuge taking, mention Neichi Toin as the most important refuge. In the text I-1, titled *Taking Refuge* (*Itegel yabuɣulhui*), he writes: ‘I prostrate to you, Vajradhara, Holy Lama. I will follow you, Holy Lama, in order to abandon what is inappropriate and to do what is appropriate until I achieve enlightenment” (CW1, I: 2r). In text I-2, “The Meaning of Instructions of Taking Refuge,” (*Itegel-ün kötülbüür-in utɣa kemegdekü orusiba*) the Third Mergen Gegen explains why his Holy Lama is to be taken as the most important refuge even though he is not
mentioned in Tibetan texts on refuge taking. In Mergen Gegeen’s view, the Bogd Lama Neichi Toin is the most important refuge because he was the first to disseminate the Gelukpa tradition in eastern Inner Mongolia. Text I-3 consists of a prayer dedicated to Neichi Toin and is titled *A Prayer to the Second Tsongkhapa, His Brilliance of the Holy Lama* (*Khoyadur Tsongkhaba boryda blam-a-yin gegegen-ü jalbarilkemekü orusiba*). In this prayer, Mergen Gegeen enumerates various kinds of Neichi Toin’s virtues and accomplishments: he was more compassionate than all the Buddhas, he became a Holy One in Mongolia, he generated an altruistic motivation of *bodhicitta* and abandoned the desire for happiness, he firmly observed his precepts, eliminated faults, became perfected in wisdom, and delivered all kinds of teachings. During the final phase of the degenerated era, when religion was in a substandard condition, he disseminated the three trainings (Classical Mon. ©urban surtal, Tib. bslab pa gsum), transmitted scriptures and insight, and spread the light of the essence of the heart of the supreme and precious sūtras and tantras among all the people using the Mongolian language. He gave a complete consecration into Vajrayana, preached the vajra tantras, gave doctrinal instructions, and bestowed vajra blessings. Mergen Gegeen avows to Neichi Toin in these words: “I will worship you on the top of my head throughout all my lifetimes with your blessings, and I request, ‘Bless me to fulfill your instruction and please your mind.’” (CW1, I: 10r.) In the colophon to this text, he declares himself to be a servant living by the grace of the Holy One.
In I-6, titled *A Code of Writing (Jokiyal-un temdeg bičig kemegdekü orusiba)*, Mergen Gegeen again stresses the important role of Neichi Toin in the spread of Buddhism in Mongolia:

Although there had been translations of the Ganjur and Danjur, the teaching and learning of the doctrine became distorted due to the efficacy of time. Neichi Toin came to Mongolia to illuminate the darkness here, and he made the religion of the Lord Buddha like the sun. He widely spread the doctrine of tantra, a short path, by teaching [it] in our language. Following this custom, readers and watchers, learners and teachers prospered and received the tradition without wasting it. (CW1, I: 19v–20r)

In the subsequent text I-7, *Indoctrinating the Monks (Khuvaraγ-un tsoγdam ailadhal)*, Neichi Toin is mentioned again as a Holy Lord, Saintly Monk of Noble Origin (Ejen Bogd Toin Khutugtu), who initiated the Buddhist religion of Mongolia and bestowed the benefits of the sūtras and tantras (CW1, I: 21r–25r). In I-8, *Jewel Rosary: Various Documents Designed as an Instruction to the Monks of Öljei badaryasan Süm-e (Öljei badaryasan Süm-e-yin khuvaraγ-tur jakhiy-a bolγan tsoγdam bičig eldeb jüil erdeni-yin irike kemekü orusiba)*, Mergen Gegeen asserts the greatness of Neichi Toin, saying: “We are successors of the master of religion of the Mongols in the east, of a refuge of beings, the liberator Bogd Neichi Toin, a jewel of brightness” (CW1, I: 26v). In the text I–36, *A Prayer to the Reincarnations of the Deliverer, the Holy Lama (Getülgeγi boγ-da blam-a-yin törül üyes-ün jalbaril kemegdekü orusiba)* Neichi Toin is spoken of as Mañjuśrī, who had been prophesied to become Śīmhanāda Buddha (CW1, I: 175v). The Definite Emperor of the Power at the Top of the Standard: A Biography of the Mañjuśrī Dalai, Holy Neichi Toin, and I–37, *A Prayer to His Three Generations with a Verse of Supplication to Remain Stable (Manjusiri dalai
boγda neic'i toin-u çadiγ ba manduγulun γurban törül boluγsan-u jalbaril masi batu orusil-un silüg lüge nigen-e maγad tuy-un orui dehi erke-in khag'an kemekü orusiba) is a versified biography designed for chanting purposes. Its account of the life of Neichi Toin corresponds to that in the DCH. In I–38, A Prayer to the Brilliance of the Lama: A Prayer for the Longevity of the Holy Lama (Blam-a-yin gegegen-u jalbaril ölmei batudkhu selte kemekü orusiba), Mergen Gegeen points out that the name of Neichi Toin is mentioned for the sake of evocation (CW1, I: 188r). A reason for that is that usually one is not allowed to utter the name of such a venerable lama. Indeed, the name Neichi Toin seldom appears in any other texts of Mergen Gegen, apart from the biography mentioned above.

Thus, Neichi Toin is considered to be a founding lineage lama of the Mergen Tradition because he disseminated the Gelukpa tradition in Mongolia. He widely propagated the doctrine of tantra, a swift path to liberation, and most importantly, he taught Buddhism in the Mongolian language. Mergen Gegeen indirectly suggests that Neichi Toin was the first to succeed in spreading a proper Buddhism in Mongolia, since prior to his arrival Buddhism in Mongolia was unsuitable. This might mean that Buddhism prior to Neichi Toin was practiced in Tibetan with Tibetan masters and confined only to the monasteries which were sponsored by rulers. From the previously mentioned prayers it appears that Mergen Gegeen did not consider himself a follower of any tradition other than that of Neichi Toin.

Mergen Gegeen’s Regulations Regarding Monastic Practices
Mergen Gegeen’s first contribution toward the institutionalization of the Mergen Tradition involved the systematization and regularization of all the practices in Mergen Monastery. His collected works include five texts pertaining to the regulation of the practices in the monastery. The text I–9, called *A Text of Regulations Called ‘The Idea of Managing with Internal Harmony (Dotuγadu eye-ber tükegerekü jüil-үn sanay-a kemekü dürimlekü bicig)* presents a systematized body of regulations regarding administration, precepts, study, services, and readings in Mergen Monastery. According to the text, the monastery disseminated Buddhism in all directions by turning the following three wheels: 1) the wheel of deeds: lamas and monks observe their vows and do everything in conformity with the given rules; 2) the wheel of meditation: lamas and monks meditate on the stages of the paths of *sūtra* and *tantra* during the summer and winter seasons; and 3) the wheel of learning: lamas and monks listen and reflect upon the stages of the path of *sūtra* and *tantra* in spring and autumn. In Mergen Gegeen’s words, he instituted these regulations because “a coherent, internal rule is necessary for an easy management of religious affairs” (CW1, I: 53v).

According to Galdanwangchugdorji’s account, there were twenty-four monasteries in the Right Urad Duke Banner, all of which conducted services in Mongolian (DB: 229). As seen from the following passage, the rules given in Mergen Gegeen’s above-mentioned text, I–9, were designed for the cohesive management of all the twenty-four monasteries.

Divide all the monasteries into four divisions (*aimaγ*). Choose one person from each division as a manager (*daγγaγγamal*) of the division. Make one of them a main master of discipline (*Mon. gebküi*, Tib. *dge bskos*), one a minor master of discipline, and two
the stewards of the monastery at the place of assembly. Choose one person from each division and make one of them a main chanting leader (Classical Mon. umjad, Tib. dbu mdzad), one a minor chanting leader, and two the ordinary chanting leaders. Appoint one head lama (terigün lama), one chair lama (shiregen lama), and one a deputy lama (ded lama). The seats of the head lamas will be arranged according to their learning at the time of teaching, but according to their duties and ranks at the time of ritual and assembly. At other times, they are arranged according to their vows or convention. Under the head lama, appoint two major bursars (Classical Mong. demči) and two minor bursars. Place a treasurer (Mon. nirba, Tib. gner-pa) and an assistant treasurer in every treasury. (CW1, I: 54r)

Although this collective administration of twenty-four monasteries of the Mergen Tradition developed in a strictly hereditary, aristocratic, Mongolian society, it itself was to some degree flexible and open, as the following rule indicates:

If the duration of a position is long, things will become habitual; if it is too short, one’s mind will not be sufficiently used. The chair lamas and deputy lamas serve in nine-year terms; the masters of discipline, chanting leaders, treasurers, and stewards [serve] in seven-years [term]; and assistants in five-year term. If one’s personality and performance are good and if there is not a suitable replacement, one can remain [in the same position] for three terms (CW1, I: 55r-56r).

However, the holders of the aforementioned positions were not elected but were appointed by their superiors. All the monks in a given division had to be registered, and their certificates, positions, and social status had to be recorded. Likewise, their former occupations, their original banners, and their monastic status such as that of a fully ordained monk (gelong), a partially ordained monk (getsül), or a novice (bandi) also had to be recorded. The records would be handed to the head lamas or masters of the relevant disciples. A decision as to whether one should be excluded from the record or included in it was to be made
by one’s own lama and by the master of discipline through discussion. Those registered were not allowed to leave as they wished. It was necessary to seek permission from the manager for a three-day leave, from the chair lama for a seven-day leave, and from the head lama for a fifteen-day leave or for a leave longer than fifteen days when the attendance at a service in another banner was needed (CW1, l: 56r). The text further relates punishments for not returning to the monastery at the designated time, a regulation of seating arrangements in the service, and allocation of shares (ibid: 57v-58r). After giving a list of the rules for administration, Mergen Gegeen specifies the readings for annual services, regular services, and daily services. Regulations pertaining to the precepts are also given in detail. For example, only dried meat may be included in an assembly meal, and no meat may be cooked in the assembly’s meal pot (Classical Mong. mangjan to©u-a). One was not allowed to slaughter an animal within the boundaries of the monastery unless the meat of the animal was used for nourishment. No alcohol was to be kept in the monastery, and women were prohibited from spending the night in the monastery. When a woman’s stay was necessary, it had to be reported to the lama and to the master of discipline (ibid: 61v-62r). The agendas of the daily routine, activities, and relevant discipline are also detailed in the text.

In the work titled A Text of Regulations Called ‘A Punishing through Internal Harmony’ (Dotuγadu eyeber shidgekü kemekü dürimlekü biçig), Mergen Gegeen specifies different kinds of punishment for a violation of the discipline. The colophon indicates the date of the text as the “fifteenth year of Qianlong”
(1750). In the text I-10, called *Instruction* (*Jakiy-a bichig*), Mergen Gegeen specifies the discipline and general conduct of monks that need to be maintained at the time of assembly. In the text I-11, titled *The Eight Points of Instruction* (*Naiman jüil suryal*), he gives an eight-pointed instruction regarding the bad behavior of monks. It is stated in the colophon: “This is the order decided by *lamain Gegen* (Mergen Gegeen) and posted in the main hall of the monastery. It was copied on the fourteenth of the second month of the Year of the Red Dog, in the thirty-first year of Qianlong (1766)” (CW1, I: 82r-82v). The colophon was obviously copied from a regulation pasted on a wall of the hall after the death of the Third Mergen Gegeen within the same year. In the text I-12, *A Program of Chanting in Mergen Monastery’s Services* (*Mergen Süm-e-yin khural-un ungshily-a-yin temdeg bichig*), Mergen Gegeen provides a program of daily readings. The text was written on the fifteenth of the middle winter month of the Year of the Dragon, which could be either 1748 or 1760. In the text I-13, *A List of Readings in Mergen Monastery’s Services* (*Mergen süme-yin khural-un ongsig-a-yin toγ-a bichig kemekü orusiba*), Mergen Gegeen designated a minimum number of texts necessary for memorization for the monks to hold services. The contents of the above-mentioned five texts of regulations overlap and yet lack consistency. Since I–9, *A Text of Regulations Called The Idea of Managing with Internal Harmony*, includes the components of all the other four texts and since its regulations are presented in a more standardized and systematic manner, it can be assumed that the other four texts were written individually and chronologically prior to the composition of this text. They most likely were written during the
process of Mergen Gegeen’s institutionalization of the tradition, whereas *A Text of Regulations Called The Idea of Managing with Internal Harmony* was composed at the end of the process.

Taking this into consideration, the Year of the Dragon in which *A Program of Chanting in Mergen Monastery’s Services* was written must be 1748 and not 1760, whereas *A Text of Regulations Called The Idea of Managing with Internal Harmony* was written two years later, in 1750. Likewise, in the above mentioned text I–13, the following is suggested: “Decide separately how to read and which texts [to read] during big services such as those in the intermediate services (*jabsar-un khural*) and during the New Year aspiration prayer services (*irügel-ün khural*). However, in *A Text of Regulations Called ‘The Idea of Managing with Internal Harmony*, all of the prescribed texts must be read during these two big services. Thus, one can say that Mergen Gegeen’s institutionalization of the Mergen Tradition was not a simple and straightforward task, but a long process of reworking and reformulation, culminating in *A Text of Regulations Called ‘The Idea of Managing with Internal Harmony*.

Mergen Gegeen’s second contribution to the institutionalization of the Mergen Tradition was reformation of the Mongolian chanting by his composition of standardized liturgical texts for all the services and practices in the Mongolian language. His liturgical texts for monastic services include new translations, rewritings, and new writings as well as matching Mongolian melodies to the texts.
These will be explored in the following sections.

**Mergen Gegeen’s Reformation of the Mongolian Chanting**

In addition to Neichi Toin’s Line and the Mergen Tradition, certain other monasteries conducted their services in Mongolian. According to the available, fragmentary information, these were Khonichi-yin Monastery in Gobi Mergen Wang Banner, Biligün Monastery in Tüshiye Göng Banner of Khalkha, Tegüs Büritgeltü Monastery in Bagarin Banner, Jarlig-iyer Keshig-i Shitügchi Monastery in Jüu Uda League, and Gegeen Monastery of Jarud of Inner Mongolia. They all conducted services in Mongolian. With the exception of Möngkebuyantu Monastery in Bayanhushigu in Tüshiyetü Banner, it is difficult to determine with certainty whether a Mongolian language-based chanting in those monasteries, especially in the monasteries of eastern Inner Mongolia, had any connection with Neichi Toin, the Mergen Tradition, or Mergen Gegeen’s works.

The focal point of concern regarding chanting in Tibetan or in Mongolian during religious services was related to the efficacy of the services. In the DB, Galdanwangchugdorji remarks:

I heard many people say that the blessing of Tibetan scriptures is greater than that of Mongolian ones because the Buddha taught in Sanskrit, from which teachings were translated into Tibetan, and from which they were translated into Mongolian. Thus, the blessings of Mongolian scriptures are smaller. I think such statements were made inconsiderately by those ridiculous, narrow-minded people who have not heard of the saying ‘there is no difference between the nature of the Buddha, Dharma, Saṅgha and all phenomena.’ (DB: 37)

In Mergen Gegeen’s view:
The rules of Tibetan texts originated from Indian scholars, but Tibetans composed readings by themselves for their chanting and practices. If one has to seek authenticity, there is nothing superior to Sanskrit texts. If you cannot chant [them] in Sanskrit, it is better to have them in your own language. (CW1, I: 84r)

Considering the use of the Mongolian language in Buddhist services as more effective, the holders of the Mergen Tradition sought to make Buddhism more accessible to the public and to make people firmly rooted in Mongolian society. Mergen Gegeen was convinced that a Tibetan tradition of Buddhist practices made Buddhism intangible, mysterious, and detached from Mongolian society, which would eventually cause the disappearance of Buddhism in Mongolia. In his chronicle, The Golden Summary (Altan Tobči), Mergen Gegeen cautions in this way: “Nowadays, some nobles and officials in Mongolia discriminate against all the religious teachings except Tibetan ones. Although these [Tibetan teachings] look powerful at the moment, they will completely disappear after filling the bags” (tulum-iyen dügürgeged)xxvi (AT: 32).

Mergen Gegeen also regarded the Mongolian liturgies that were chanted in Tibetan tunes from the old, literally translated texts as inadequate, and he emphasized the need for standardization of Mongolian chanting in the previously mentioned text, A Program of Chanting in Mergen Monastery Services. In this text, he describes the characteristics of the Mongolian language and writing system as unfitting to Tibetan chanting tunes. In his view, the old Mongolian chanting in Tibetan tunes sounds like a stammering of tongues and distorted rhythms (CW1, I: 83v). Mergen Gegeen made all the liturgical texts suitable for chanting in the Mongolian language by equalizing the number of syllables in all
the lines of a verse. He initiated the unique “Mergen Gegeen style” of Mongolian poetry, characterized by several patterns of a “strict, isosyllabic prosody” and facilitating a chanting with smooth, harmonious, and even rhymes. He did so by modifying the flexible patterns of Mongolian traditional poetry, while preserving its most essential characteristics.

Following his innovation in Mongolian poetry, Mergen Gegeen composed distinctive Mongolian tunes to suit the readings. To this day, people of the Urad Right Duke Banner sing the songs composed by the Third Mergen Gegeen. Galdanwangchugdorji says the following about Mergen Gegeen’s contribution: “When he was initializing a chanting with new rhythms and melodies, Mergen Gegeen seemed a bit discouraged, as it was new to the followers, and there were many kinds of people who were familiar with various other rules [of chanting]” (DBA: 13). The Mongolian scholar Cheringsodnam, who has compared the recordings of some chants of Mergen Monastery with Tibetan chants performed in Gandantegchiling and Dashichoiling monasteries, and in Western Monastery of Outer Mongolia, points to the similarity of Mergen Gegeen’s melodies to the melodies and rhythms of Mongolian folk songs and to the manner in which folk poetry is recited. He has also found that the tune of each chant is unique and matches the meaning of the text. Owing to Mergen Gegeen’s creative work, chanting in Mergen Monastery became the indigenous Mongolian way of chanting.

**Mergen Gegeen’s Reworking of Translated Texts**
Many of Mergen Gegeen’s translations are more or less his reworking of a given text. In the colophon to his I-15, *Liturgy for Offering to a Lama*, Mergen Gegeen gives a reason:

> There is a text for the ritual of offering to a lama written by the Panchen Lama, which was popular among both Tibetans and Mongols. In addition, there is a Mongolian translation that strictly follows the words and meanings of the original. In fact, there is no need to change it. However, when I try to cut the words into even lines, there are interruptions and distortions, and it becomes unclear whether or not it is Panchen Erdeni’s work. Therefore, I have made it into a Mongolian writing based on the Tibetan original. Then there will be less trouble and those [words] will be easier to read (CW1, I: 94r-94v).

In this way, some of his new translations became more an independent composition than a translation. Mergen Gegeen’s reworking extended from the Mongolian poetic forms and tunes to the content of a text, as he asserts in the previously mentioned text I–12:

> It is good to follow the old tradition. However, nobody with a contesting mind has abandoned the few unnecessary poems, such as the “Glorious One” (Tegüs čogtu) and the “Emptiness of Non-apprehension,” which were read before the “Taking Refuge” in the early Mongolian line of practices; and nobody with a creative mind has produced at present a few necessary poems like the “Dependent Origination.” Taking unrealistic texts and using them to teach future generations, while criticizing predecessors is a questionable activity. One clear thing is that even if Tibetans learned the doctrine from India, Tibetan masters did not directly adopt the prayers of Indian paṭṭitas. Now the Mongols take the prayers of Tibetan scholars (ubadini) to be supreme among all the liturgical manuals, and cause the trouble of endless, dull memorizing. This imitation needs to be examined. (CW1: I: 83v–85r)

His above-cited statement implies that monks of his time followed literal translations mechanically, without omitting components of the original Tibetan
texts that were irrelevant to their practices, and without adding other useful passages when needed. In doing so, they blamed their predecessors for memorizing the irrelevant elements and teaching them to the new generations.

Mergen Gegeen compiled a number of works by including translations of relevant episodes from other authors’ works. He expressed the necessity for such compilations in the same text I–12, with these words:

Tibetans did not merely adopt the prayers of Indian scholars even though the doctrine came from India. Nowadays Mongols always highly esteem the prayers of Tibetan masters. It is truly worth questioning the difficulties of endless memorization because of this convention. Of course, it is best if intelligent people can memorize the Ganjur and Danjur. However, for everyday chanting during services, since there have been no ready readings, it is difficult for young monks to memorize all sorts of those borrowed texts. (CW1, I: 84v–85r)

Mergen Gegeen simplified liturgical texts as much as possible. An example of this is the text I-1, *A Reading for Taking Refuge* (*Itegel yabuulkhui*), which has its own distinctive features. When relevant, Mergen Gegeen indicates which part of the text is from Atiśa’s work, which is from the Vajra Guru Tantra, and which is from a Yoga Tantra. The text III-9, *Readings for Offering Sacrificial Cakes for the External Meditation on the Oath-bound King of Dharma* (*Tangri tu nom-un khyan*) is compiled from the writings of several scholars, such as Tsongkhapa, Lalitavajra, Dalai Lama Gendunjamtsu (*dGe ’dun rgya mtsho*), Lama Umapa, and Panchen Sumadi Dharma Dhvaja. At the conclusion of this text, Mergen Gegeen asks the dharma-ra (nom-un kha©an) to forgive him, because he must have made some mistakes when writing Mongolian verses that had not previously existed.
Mergen Gegeen’s Composition of New Texts

Through the experience of his new translations, Mergen Gegeen concluded that it would be good to write his own texts as much as possible. In the I-6, *A Code of Writing*, he says:

> Some people who seek interesting things revere Tibetan, and they change and modify Mongolian words and style, which diverges a translation and a tune. No matter how many corrections are made again and again to such translations, there are still things to be corrected, and chanting rules are still Tibetan, which leads to a mixture. Although Tibetans had treatises, like the Danjur, translated from India, they still wrote in their own language . . . Most of their liturgical texts are also Tibetan writings. They rarely use Indian. If we Mongols write in our own language, the trouble of changing a translation again and again will be reduced (CW1, I: 20r).xxx

Another of Mergen Gegeen’s contributions is his popularization of Buddhism and integration of lay communities into the Mergen Tradition. This aspect of his work is of two types. One consists of his writings for popular rituals, in which he combined the traditional Mongolian folk literature with Buddhist liturgical patterns. By doing so, he infused Buddhist teachings into the minds of the laity and Buddhist character into popular rituals. The other contribution consists of writing various genres of popular literature in an attempt to educate and improve the quality of the entire community. Many such works have been passed down to the present day through oral transmission and are still popular among the Urad Mongols.

**Conclusion**
In conclusion, one can characterize the Mergen Tradition as particularly practice-oriented in its use of the Mongolian language. It brought Buddhism home and rooted it in Inner Mongolian society through understandable and harmonious liturgies. This explains why the Mergen Tradition’s chants became attractive to Mongols from other regions, why these chants survived the political turmoil of the communist revolution, and why they continue to gain an increasing popularity in Inner and Outer Mongolia.

According to Mergen Gegeen’s view, his tradition is distinctive and authentic. He constantly maintained that the form of Buddhism he practiced was Bogd Lama Neichi Toin’s Mongolian Buddhism. But he also indirectly acknowledged that it was Tsongkhapa’s religion. He did so by declaring Neichi Toin to be the Second Tsongkhapa, who disseminated the Gelukpa tradition in Mongolia. Therefore, one should not look at the Mergen Tradition merely as a “curious copy of Tibetan Buddhism” in a “degenerate and corrupt state,” as it was seen at the start of the twentieth century.\textsuperscript{xxxi} Mergen Gegeen hoped that the form of Buddhism that he institutionalized would reach the entire Mongolia. He saw the establishment of a firmly rooted Mongolian Buddhism as vital, as he firmly believed that a Tibetan line would in time completely disappear in Mongolia. This may explain why he endeavored to spread his program of practices among the Khorchins in eastern Mongolia.

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CW2. Mergen Gegeen Lobsangdambijalsan. 1774 Včir dhara mergen diyanči blam-a-yinGegegen-ber öljei badara©san süm-e-dûr khural-un unghshil©-a to©ta©a©san (Readings for Öljei Badaragsan Monastery Assigned by the Reincarnation of Vajradhara Mergen Diyanchi Lama), Peking wooden block print, British Library, Mon. 75; Mon. 78; Mon. 80.


DCH. Prajñă Sāgara. 1739. Bo©da Neići Toin dalai manzushiri-yin domu©-i todurkhai-a

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Degedü törüküit bi bogn-yn da btoin lutu-yu wagisuwara sumadi sa na dhvaja sain coj tu-yn cöding dolu-yan erdeni tegüsülsen süsügün jula kemegdekü orusiba), published in wooden block print in Peking in 1756.


Včir dhara mergen diyan'ic blam-a-yn Gegegen-ū 'bum jardii', which was published by wooden block print in Peking in 1783. It is a complete copy of the original wooden block print of Mergen Gegeen's collected works, now held in the British Library.

Altan Tobii. While the Golden Summary chronicles Mergen Gegeen's ideas regarding the Mongolian line of Buddhist Practices, the DCH, CHJ, DB, and DBA discuss the institutionalization of the Mergen Tradition of Mongolian Buddhism. Following a restoration of Mergen Monastery in the 1990s, Inner Mongolian scholars have extensively studied the available Mongolian sources of the Mergen Tradition. An editorial committee for Mergen Gegeen Studies was organized and pioneered by Professor B. Möngke. A series of books including the DB and the CW, an introduction to the Mergen Monastery, Mergen Gegeen's works and collected papers on Mergen Monastery and Mergen Gegeen have been published since 1994 until the present. B. Möngke's seminal work (2004) on Mergen Gegeen, summarizes previous studies and Mergen Gegeen's contribution to Mongolian Buddhism.

The second Dungkur Khutugtu Yon don rgya mtsho accompanied bSod nams rgya mtsho on the occasion of Altan Khan and Dalai Lama's meeting. The Mañjuśrī Khutugtu title was conferred upon him by the Third Dalai Lama on that occasion. He went to Mongolia with Altan Khan. Later he was invited to visit the Khalkhas in Outer Mongolia (Li 1989: 105).

A dka'bcu Lama accompanied the Third Dalai Lama on his second visit to Mongolia in 1585 and stayed there as his representative, conducting religious affairs after his master's death. Because he was given the title Pandita Güüshi Chorji by the Dalai Lama and installed on the throne of the Dalai Lama in Shiregetü Juu Monastery, he was known as Shiregetü Güüshi Chorji or simply Shiregetü Khutugtu.

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For the purpose of veneration, Neichi Toin is rarely addressed directly, but is addressed as Bogda Lama and by other names. Galdanwangchudorji uses the title Toin Gegeen here, which means "a reincarnation lama of a noble origin." Toin refers to a lama of noble origin, usually of Chinggis Khaan's lineage. Torghud is a name of a western Mongol tribe from which the First Neichi Toin originated. He also uses the title Bogd Toin Khutugtu-yin Gegeen, adding the highest title, khutugtu for a reincarnated lama, which was usually conferred by the Dalai Lama and the Qing Emperors. However, Neichi Toin never had this title officially conferred upon him.

A number of Mongolian words are used for 'monastery,' including keid, süm-e, juu, kuri-γ and datsang. Keid is the earliest name. It came from Central Asia and originally referred to a hermitage. Juu derives from the Tibetan jobo and refers to a statue of Śākyamuni Buddha that was brought to Tibet by the Chinese princess Wen Cheng when she married Srong btsan sgam po in 641 CE. Because of that Mongols gradually came to call the temples or monasteries that contain the statue of the image of the Buddha juu; even Lhasa was called juu. So Tibet was called 'land of juu' (Mon. juu-γorun). Similarly, süm-e, derived from the Tibetan numerical word gsum for three, refers to a monastery because it is a place that contains the three jewels: the Buddha, the Dharma and the Sangha. Süm-e seems to have become most popular later. Now
süm-e and keid are combined together as süm-e keid for monasteries. Küry-e literally means ‘enclosure’ or ‘encircling camp.’ It was used for the monasteries in Khalkha and only the case in eastern Inner Mongolia. It might have come from the fact that Mongolian monasteries there and then were composed of numerous yurts camped in a circle. Datsang is used in Buryatia following Tibetan grwa tshang meaning monastic college. It is likely that the monastery’s first name was Keid due to its affiliation with the tantric tradition of Neichi Toin and Mergen Diyanchi. But one could also argue that its first name was Juu, following the examples of nearby Khökhot temples.

In the 1960s, Mergen Monastery came under the jurisdiction of Bugutu city when the eastern part of Urad Front Banner became the territory of the city.

In 1753, the three Urad banners were renamed into the Right Urad Duke Banner (Urad Barayun Gung-ün Khoshiyu), the Middle Urad Duke Banner (Urad Dumdga Gung-ün Khoshiyu), and the Rear Urad Duke Banner (Urad Jegün Gung-ün Khoshigu); and they became a part of the Ulaanchab League. After the establishment of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region in 1947, the original names of the banners were restored and reorganized into the Bayan-nuur League. In 1952, the Middle and Rear Urad banners were combined into Urad Middle-Rear Banner. Since 1960, despite certain changes, the three Urad banners have remained the same. In 2002, the league administrative unit was changed from the Bayan-nuur league into Linhe City.

According to the Mongolian scholar Möngke (1994: 50), Duke Nomun built a small monastery in the place called Khairtu and installed the First Mergen Diyanchi Dinu-a there. When Darmashiri built Mergen Monastery and invited the Second Mergen Diyanchi, the Monastery in Khairtu became the Duke’s Monastery. This seems reasonable although there is no mention of these events at all in the DB.

Janggi is a Manchu word that refers to a head of a Sumu (‘arrow’, an administrative unit).

There is a year difference in counting Kangxi’s year of coronation i.e. 1661 or 1662. Therefore, the forty-fourth year is said to be the year of the blue monkey (1704) or the year of the blue rooster (1705).

However, there is an additional name Dinw-a found here and in other instances in the DB (178 and 184). Neither of the two Mergen Diyanchi is mentioned in the DCH by the name Dinu-a.


The first Mergen Diyanchi’s dates of his lifetime is not known. However, it was sometime between 1619 and 1630 when Neichi Toin met the Bogd Chagan Lama who was a relative of one of the officials of Altan Khan and he became the follower of the Kagyü School of Buddhism (Wakamazi Hiroshi, 1985: 70). According to Heissig Bogd Chagan Lama Rashijamsu was a famous preacher and hermit of unknown origin who came during the time of Ming Emperor Wanli (1571–1620) to the mountains 80 li west of Höhhot died in 1627 (Heissig, 1992, 77). If Ariayn Diwa was the Mergen Diyanchi, we can assume that he was already a young adult in the 1620s when he became Neichi Toin’s disciple.

The Mergen Tradition of Mongolian Buddhism was practiced within the territory of Urad Right Duke Banner. Monasteries in the ‘brother’ banners—the Middle Urad Duke Banner and the Left Urad Duke Banner—practiced a Tibetan line of Mongolian Buddhism. The most academic monastery in Inner Mongolia, Jibkhulangtu, or Badgar Monastery, in the territory of the Left Urad Duke Banner, was a leading academic monastery in the Tibetan line. Although these three banners were comprised of the members of the same ethnic group, in terms of Buddhist practice they were divided into two distinct lines. There must have been strong reasons for the Mergen Tradition to be able to coexist with the established Tibetan line as its neighbor.

Based on a personal conversation with the monk Möngkebatu on May 18, 2005.

The services of the Mergen Tradition are not detailed here, but will be discussed elsewhere.

They are the following: Going for Refuge, Glorious Candana, Goddess Tārā, Prajñāparāmitā, Śīla-vakirō (Arslan terigüti), Vajravidārāa, Torma Offering, Lustration (ukiyal, Tib. khrus), Maṇḍala, Ča-bsom (Tib. cha gsum), White Dough Offering, Tea Offering, Migzem (Tib. dmigs brtse ma), Offering to Lama, Five Prayers, Sitatapatrā, Seven Hundred Million (külti), Growing Youth (Urγumal jalaγu), A Prayer for Prosperity of Religion, A Prayer for the Living and
the Dead, Petition to the Glorious King, The Power of Mighty One (Čidaγči-yin ekrhe), The Noble-minded One (Sain oyutu), Three Important Points (γurban ucirtu), Arhat (Mon. Aγui shitügen), The Four: Yamāntaka, Guhyasamāja, Amitāyus, and Vairocana, The two Mahākūlas, The King of Hell, Goddess (Lhamo), and Vaiśravaṇa (Mon. Bisman Tengri).


xxvi This statement can be understood, as the Tibetan lamas would disappear after collecting enough alms, which was their purpose of teaching in Mongolia.

xxvii The DBA: 13 reads: “The sage reincarnation (Mergen Düri) of Mergen Gegeen, the Third, translated all the readings into Mongolian by equalizing the syllables and making them easy for chanting.”


xxx Mergen Gegeen also composed texts that were too rigid for chanting. Texts included in his collected works (numbers I–36 to I–52) consist of prayers and supplication to remain to various lamas of the Mergen Tradition.