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## **The Making of Mongol Buddhist Art and Architecture: Artisans in Mongolia from the sixteenth to twentieth centuries**

**Isabelle Charleux (CNRS-GSRL)<sup>1</sup>**

In the matter of art, architecture, and crafts in general, the Mongols have a reputation of being consumers (or destroyers) rather than producers, and it is generally accepted that they employed craftsmen whom they had captured, or imported luxury goods from their neighbors both during the Middle Ages and in the modern period.<sup>2</sup> The same views are held in academic works about the Scythians and the nomads of the Northern Chinese frontier: the artefacts' artistic and technical quality would generally indicate that they were produced by sedentary craftsmen for the specific use of the nomads of the steppe—the latter being “traders and raiders,” not producers.<sup>3</sup> The nomads have been said to have neither the time and the place, nor the technology for artistic production, which requires fixed workshops and professional artists and craftsmen. The widespread view that the nomads were dependant on their neighbors (including being economically dependent), however, is now coming under critical examination (Di Cosmo 1994). My own research fits into this larger questioning by looking at a major section of Mongol artistic heritage—the arts produced for over two thousand Buddhist monasteries—and by asking what is Mongol-designed and Mongol-made about them. It addresses the issues of the ethnicity and ethnic style of carpenters, painters, sculptors and other artisans in pre-

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<sup>1</sup> An earlier version of this article was published in French in 2008 under the title “Peut-on parler d'art mongol? Icônes et monastères de Mongolie du XVI<sup>e</sup> au début du XX<sup>e</sup> siècle.” (Charleux 2008)

<sup>2</sup> Although I use the term “art”, the Mongols do not consider their Buddhist icons as works of art, but as objects of cult, visualisation, teaching, and a means to acquire merits. Besides, no clear distinction can be made between “artists” and “artisans.” However a sharp distinction did exist between the Buddhist scholars who produced texts (on iconometry for instance), gave instructions and supervised artisans/artists, and artisans/artists who had to follow strictly the rules and textual prescriptions (although the Buddhist master and the artist were sometimes the same person). The former sometimes had no direct experience of the *modus operandi* of the artisans. (Lo Bue 1990: 190)

<sup>3</sup> Title of the catalogue by So & Bunker (eds) 1995. Michael Treister (2001 [1999]) and Esther Jacobson (2001 [1999]) have recently tried to deconstruct this prejudice.

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1911 Mongol society through an examination of the development of an original Mongol style.

The Chinggisid Mongols, perhaps more than their predecessors in the steppe, bought luxury goods from their neighbours and employed captured (as well as refugee and exiled) craftsmen and carpenters in imperial workshops. (Boyer 1952: 162, 164) The artisans were organized in military units and worked in the capital's workshops or in artisans' colonies in North China. Their number is estimated between 200,000 and 400,000. (Chu 1972 [1956]: 243; Farquhar 1990 200-214) Chinese and Central Asian slave-artisans built and decorated the different capitals of the empire, Kharakhorum, Shangdu and Dadu (Beijing). (Steinhardt 1988: 62) The Mongol imperial family sponsored Chinese, Middle-Eastern, Centrasianic and Tibetan arts,<sup>4</sup> but did they not also have an indigenous production as well as Mongol artists and artisans? Many scholars working on the arts of the Mongol empire do not even bring up this issue.<sup>5</sup> However the biographies of Mongol court painters, sculptors and calligraphers<sup>6</sup> prove that Mongol artists did actually exist, and the statuary in stone as well as other preserved artefacts show that the Mongols were not only eclectic sponsors and collectors of foreign arts, but also created typical Mongol works of art. Besides, the artistic taste of Mongol patrons, the metissage of arts and of artists, and the transfers of foreign artisans to cities of the Mongol empire resulted in multiple transmissions of techniques and a tremendous artistic creativity, and offered Chinese, Persian and Tibetan arts new sources of inspiration.

Similar processes were at work during the period following the fall of the Mongol empire, when Chinggis Khan's descendants, who ruled small independent steppe polities, were (re-)converted to Tibetan Buddhism and later, for the majority of them, submitted to the Manchu empire. The Buddhist revival and the subsequent rapid growth of the Mongol Buddhist institution created a new demand for sedentary architecture, statuary, painting, and cultic objects. **(fig. 1)** From the end of the sixteenth century onwards, an intense architectural activity attracted numerous carpenters and smiths from North China, but local sources also mention native artisans. What were the respective roles and specialities of Mongol and foreign artists and artisans?

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<sup>4</sup> Lee & Ho 1968: 2-3; Weidner, 1989; Hearn & Smith (eds) 1996; Shi Shouqian & Ge Wanzhang (eds) 2001; Komaroff & Carboni 2002.

<sup>5</sup> For instance Kessler *et al.* 1993: 145-167; Komaroff & Carboni 2002.

<sup>6</sup> Short biographies in Amuer Batu 1997: 241-247.

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**Fig. 1:** Inventory of icons, paintings, books and musical instruments belonging to the monasteries of the Baarin Left Banner (Jou-Uda League, Inner Mongolia) in 1935 (from *Yexing Gaolibu* 1985: 555).

|                     | Number of cult images in |            |        |       |          | Number of books in |        | Number of ritual instruments |       |
|---------------------|--------------------------|------------|--------|-------|----------|--------------------|--------|------------------------------|-------|
|                     | silver                   | red copper | bronze | earth | painting | Tibetan            | Mongol | of music                     | other |
| Shanfu Si           | -                        | 40         | 403    | 40    | 7        | 177                | -      | 762                          | 14    |
| Ayuitu Süme         | -                        | -          | 56     | 28    | 82       | 359                | -      | 542                          | 160   |
| Longfu Si           | -                        | 76         | 23     | 111   | 4        | 101                | 21     | 401                          | 97    |
| Baitazi Miao        | -                        | 2          | 6      | 5     | 5        | 47                 | -      | 1052                         | 32    |
| Chagan Baiqi Miao   | -                        | -          | 115    | 8     | 97       | 405                | -      | 660                          | 350   |
| Zhaoci Si           | 1                        | 12         | 1,040  | 705   | -        | 144                | -      | 237                          | 127   |
| Gangyan Süme        | -                        | 5          | 2      | -     | 40       | 103                | -      | 204                          | 7     |
| Chuangjin Miao      |                          | 70         | 3      | 73    | 42       | 223                | 108    | 1,746                        | 284   |
| Üniyetü Süme        |                          | 46         | -      | 1     | 16       | 100                | -      | 2,051                        | 33    |
| Yamun Süme          |                          | 22         | -      | -     | 17       | 100                | 24     | 817                          | 105   |
| Dongban Miao        |                          | 58         | -      | -     | 55       | 21                 | 8      | 875                          | 46    |
| Beizi Miao          |                          | 1          | 74     | 6     | 60       | 24                 | -      | 8,278                        | 76    |
| Tabin Süme          |                          | 19         | 8      | 4     | 40       | 124                | -      | 472                          | 58    |
| Kilayanatu-yin Süme | -                        | 24         | 24     | 5     | 20       | 115                |        | 155                          | 81    |
| TOTAL               | 1                        | 351        | 1,754  | 981   | 485      | 2,043              | 161    | 12,248                       | 1,470 |

### **Chinese carpenters in Inner Mongolia under the Ming and Qing dynasties**

After an original conversion of the Mongol elite during the Yuan dynasty in the thirteenth century, Mongols were reconverted to Tibetan Buddhism in the late sixteenth century and began to build temples and palaces using Chinese manpower.<sup>7</sup> The builders of sixteenth-century Hohhot (Höh Hot), the present-day capital of the Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region of China, but at that time a walled palace, were Chinese immigrants, refugees or prisoners of war living at Altan Khan's (1507/8-82) court.<sup>8</sup> Those who had some notions of architecture were employed to build and decorate palaces and temples: a first palace for the Khan in 1551, a second one in 1565-67, Hohhot palace in 1572, a temple on the shore of Kukunor Lake

<sup>7</sup> Charleux 2006. The Tibetans also called for Chinese carpenters, in 1449 for instance (Serruys 1963: 195), and this is still the case for domestic and religious architecture in Eastern Tibet.

<sup>8</sup> See Serruys 1959; Huang Lisheng 1995; Charleux 2006: Chapter 1.

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(Chabchiyal Temple) in 1577, the Ih Juu (the Great Temple, Ch. Da Zhao[si] 大召 [寺]) in Hohhot in 1579, etc. They also built villages and developed agriculture around Hohhot. In 1572, there were obviously not enough of them since Altan Khan asked the Ming court to send him master carpenters and other artisans to build a temple. The Ming court overcame its initial reluctance and sent him carpenters, hoping they would act as guarantees of peace and sinicization. (Charleux, 2006, Chapter 1) However, the Chinese were not the only foreign experts, since Nepalese artists were also invited for the making of statues (see below).

Although they had climbed up the hierarchy and gained the princes' esteem thanks to their contribution to the Mongol economy, the Chinese carpenters lost all influence after the 1571 peace treaty with China. In turn many of them adopted Mongol Buddhism and became mongolized.

During the early Qing dynasty, Chinese immigration was almost stopped due to a policy of segregation aiming to artificially maintain the Mongol ethnic identity imposed by the first Manchu emperors, and only a small quota of Chinese merchants was allowed to enter Mongolia. But this policy collapsed owing to the social and economic crises of the mid-nineteenth century, which caused massive Chinese immigration into Mongolia. The Chinese presence in Mongolia intensified during the early twentieth century: in 1912 the Chinese population of Inner Mongolia exceeded 1.5 million (for only 878,000 Mongols), and in 1937, they were three million. An estimation for the number of Chinese in Northern (Outer) Mongolia in 1918 was around 100,000, 75% of whom were traders, 15% "workers," and 5% farmers. Many carpenters, geomancers (*fengshui* 風水 specialists) and artisans moved from North China to Inner Mongolia, attracted by the growing demand for construction, metal statues and ritual objects. Mongolia had become in the late nineteenth century an important commercial centre for large-scale Chinese production (and to a certain degree, for Russian production), creating dependence in food, cloth, and many goods of daily life.<sup>9</sup> Mongol princes developed a liking for Chinese luxury goods and had sedentary palaces built in the steppe.

During the Qing dynasty, the presence of Chinese carpenters, itinerant or hired from China by Mongol princes, is attested across the entire Mongolian territory, including Western Mongolia,<sup>10</sup> they largely outnumbered Mongol carpenters. Among

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<sup>9</sup> Karamisheff (1925: 275-277) calculated that in the early twentieth century, 31% of the average budget of a Halh family was spent on goods purchased every year from foreign merchants, including saddles, knives, kitchen utensils and other typical nomad gear. According to Mostaert (1956: 288), "comme presque la totalité des objets dont se servent les Mongols sont importés de Chine par les marchands chinois ambulants, ou peuvent s'acheter dans les villes chinoises proches des contrées habitées par les Mongols [Ordos], et qu'en outre les Mongols peuvent louer à volonté des artisans chinois, tels que des maçons, des charpentiers et menuisiers, des pelletiers et des feutriers etc., leurs capacités techniques se sont peu développées et ils n'exercent que peu de métiers." Also Binsteed 1914: 882.

<sup>10</sup> For instance Ablai Hiit, built by the Hoshot Mongols in 1656-1657.

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the Chahar of Inner Mongolia, the bricklayers and carpenters were all Chinese, and were usually paid in cash. (Vreeland 1962 [1957]: 50) Many of these artisans were originally itinerant.<sup>11</sup> C.W. Campbell, the British Consul in China who travelled around Mongolia in 1902 informs us that “everywhere in East Mongolia the temples and monasteries are repaired by itinerant Chinese workmen, the Mongols themselves being unable to do such a work and unwilling to learn.” For instance, the Ih Burhan monastery “was being repaired by Chinese masons and carpenters imported for the purpose from Dolon Nor. The enterprise of these men can be judged from the fact that they made the journey in a month on foot, practically working their way, for they started with light purses.” (Campbell 1903: 504)

But when they worked for several years to build a monastery, many of them progressively settled in small villages next to the monasteries or in the handful of urban centers. They were organized into guilds and corporations, and mostly lived in Chinese villages. Near Hohhot there were carpenters' villages, metalworkers' villages, and painters' villages.<sup>12</sup> During the eighteenth century, the carpenters who were invited from Shanxi and Hebei to build the Huining monastery 惠寧寺 in present-day Liaoning (China) settled in villages called “Carpenters' Ravine” (Mujianggou 木匠溝), “Roofers' Ravine” (Wajianggou 瓦匠溝) and “Painters' Ravine” (Huajianggou 畫匠溝), which still exist nowadays. (Li Xiangdong 1997: 43-45) Craftsmen from China who built the Bandid Gegen monastery settled in its vicinity and opened shops; in 1926 more than seventy families descended from them. (Gendong Zhengli 1997: 138) Many modern Mongol cities such as Tsetserleg in Mongolia grew from the reunion of a monastery and a Chinese settlement (Maimaicheng 買賣城 or “trade city”).

The Chinese carpenters working in Hohhot were famous throughout Mongolia. Abatai Khan invited (Chinese?) carpenters from Hohhot to Northern Mongolia, where they built and restored the monastery of Erdene Juu in 1585-86.<sup>13</sup> Forty Chinese artisans from Hohhot were summoned to restore Erdene Juu and other Halh monasteries in the nineteenth century. (Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 298)

But the Chinese artisans who moved from one building site to another or established in Mongolia had to compete with carpenters hired from Han areas. The architect of the imperial monasteries of the Yongzheng era, Amarbayasgalant Hiit (1727-36) and the Yellow monastery (1727-31) of Dolonnor was Lei Jinyu 雷金玉 (1659-1729), a famous Chinese architect of imperial palaces, temples and gardens, working for the Imperial Office of Architecture Design (the Yangshifang 樣式房). The Mongol founders of monasteries frequently summoned famous carpenters, geomancers and masons from Northern China. Well-off builders wanted the best

<sup>11</sup> Campbell (1904: 23) met itinerant Chinese carpenters in the early twentieth century.

<sup>12</sup> See the remarkable study of the guilds and corporations of Hohhot by Himahori Seiji (1955).

<sup>13</sup> Dharmatāla's *Padma dkar-po'i phreng-ba* (ed. Klafkowski 1987: 338); Bawden 1961: 37, f. 2r-2v; Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 298.

Isabelle Charleux, « The Making of Mongol Buddhist Art and Architecture: Artisans in Mongolia from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century » - Author's own file, not the published version.  
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contractors, as well as the best geomancers. Although it was usually a monk astrologer who selected the site and the auspicious time to start the construction, the Mongols did not perceive any incompatibility between Tibetan and Chinese geomancy, and often summoned a Chinese *fengshui* specialist or a carpenter who practiced *fengshui*. In 1735, for the construction of a temple in Shonghoriin monastery (Horchin Banner, Inner Mongolia), an “outside” architect and a thousand “famous artisans” were summoned. (Erihen Batu 1986: 79) In 1796, thirty carpenters from Beijing traveled to Mongolia to erect the Gegen Süme (Horchin Banner), and in 1818, carpenters from Beijing built the Dechin Süme (Naiman Banner, Inner Mongolia), among them, Tümen Öljiiit, obviously a Mongol. (Feng Xuezhong 1991: 868) In 1698, the Jebtsündamba Hutuhtu summoned Chinese workers to build a monastery near modern-day Züünmod in Töv Province, Mongolia. (Du Halde 1736, IV: 518)<sup>14</sup> In the early twentieth century, Chinese carpenters and bricklayers were called from the neighboring Chinese town to restore or rebuild the monasteries of the Horchin Boo Wang Banner (Jirim League). The villagers carried out the minor restoration work. (Pao 1970-71: 666)

Many Chinese and Manchu craftsmen and carpenters also accompanied the Manchu princesses sent to Inner Mongolia to be married to Mongol nobles, and settled there. A Manchu wife of a Mongol Harchin prince brought Manchu and Chinese artisans with her, who built the Hatun Süm (“Princess’ monastery”). (Haslund-Christensen 1949: 48-56) Seven Manchu slave-carpenters and bricklayers who came in the retinue of a Manchu princess married to a noble of Horchin Jasagt Han Banner settled in Inner Mongolia in the Qianlong era. They took Mongol wives, and their descendants had a special status until the end of the Qing dynasty.

Several factors contributed to the Chinese quasi-monopoly on construction in Mongolia<sup>15</sup>: first, the fame and large numbers of Chinese carpenters living in Mongolia. Second, the Mongols’ taste for Chinese-style architecture and especially Chinese sloped roofs covered with tiles, which required technical skills and considerable manpower to build. Nowadays, many Mongols have forgotten the Chinese origins of these roofs and believe their shape comes from the tent.<sup>16</sup> The third factor is the technical advances in Chinese architecture at the time. During the Ming dynasty, the use of standardized elements of framework, lime mortar that strengthened the buildings and reduced the risk of fire, and larger coal-fueled kilns to bake bricks and tiles led to a boom in Chinese construction and mass production.<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Other examples in Du Halde 1736, IV: 46; Pozdneev 1977 [1898]: 300; Binstead 1914: 881.

<sup>15</sup> See also Binstead 1914: 881-883.

<sup>16</sup> Sloping roofs are generally called *asar*, which means 1) rectangular cloth tent; 2) gatehouse, roof over a gate, tower, pavilion.

<sup>17</sup> The bricklayers built one or several kilns to bake bricks in the vicinity of the monasteries. On construction materials: Charleux 2006, Chapter 4; Pozdneev 1971 [1896]: 83-85.

Isabelle Charleux, « The Making of Mongol Buddhist Art and Architecture: Artisans in Mongolia from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century » - Author's own file, not the published version. Please see the published version in *Meditation. The Art of Zanabazar and his School*, Elvira Eevr Djaltchinova-Malets (ed.), Varsovie, Varsovie : The Asia and Pacific Museum, 2010, p. 59-105.

Mongol carpenters (*mujaan*), by contrast, were few and far between. Only a few names are recorded in monastic archives or local gazetteers, and their very mention seems to underline their rarity. They were probably initially *modchin* (“woodmen”) who were trained in framework building and brick-making by skilled Chinese artisans. The Chahar Diyanchi Hutuhtu may be the first builder to have summoned two Mongol carpenters for the erection of the Chahar Lama Juu (west of Hohhot) in 1606: “Xiguer” 希古爾 [Shüger?] and “Baila” 拜拉 [?]. (Qiao Ji 1994: 51) The Dilowa Hutuhtu, one of the great reincarnations of Mongolia, interviewed by H. Vreeland, informs us that in his monastery, the Narobanchin (a great monastery south of Uliastai):

“There were only a handful of carpentry specialists in the entire Narobanchin population, and these, like the woodworkers of the Haggai, combined carpentry with animal husbandry. They worked at home on boards brought to them by their customers, their most common products being clothes boxes, shelves, and doors. One of the best of these carpenters was a layman named Lamajab, who owned about 100 sheep and 1-2 horses, but made most of his living at carpentry. In addition to making the common household items, he could make such things as wooden buildings and stairs, and at one time he was employed by the Dilowa to build a small wooden temple. For this he headed a crew consisting of himself and four others, all carpenters of various degrees of ability, Lamajab being the most skilled. No set price was asked or offered prior to commencement of the work (as is done in the case of Chinese artisans hired on contract) and the carpenters were paid in horses, clothes and food.” (Vreeland 1962 [1957]: 50-51)<sup>18</sup>

Among the largest monasteries of Inner Mongolia, the Bandida Gegen Süme,<sup>19</sup> and the Ganjuur süme (in Hulun Buir) were exclusively built by Mongol carpenters. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most of the carpenters and craftsmen of Urga (Ih Hüree)<sup>20</sup> were Chinese, but a few Mongol monks and lay carpenters were also active, and were said to work much better. They were also “woodmen” (*modchin*) and made tables, benches, caskets to keep Buddhist books, etc.<sup>21</sup> Some Mongol architects were renowned, such as Baajar, who designed the great Gate of Peace in front of the summer residence of the Eighth Jebtsündamba Hutuhtu between 1912 and 1919.

Many eighteenth and early nineteenth-century monasteries were built in Tibetan style with Tibetan materials and techniques, or in imitations of Tibetan style. To satisfy the founders of such monasteries, the carpenters invented original techniques to combine Chinese and Tibetan architecture (such as a Tibetan framework supporting a Chinese framework) or to give a Tibetan aspect to a brick and wood

<sup>18</sup> On Mongol woodsmen in Uliastai : Pozdneev 1971 [1896]: 175.

<sup>19</sup> Ch. Beizi Miao 貝子廟, Shilinhot, Shilingol League.

<sup>20</sup> Monastery-residence of the Jebtsündamba Hutuhtu, now Ulanbator, capital of Mongolia.

<sup>21</sup> Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 85; also Lattimore 1962: 54, 103. Pozdneev (1971 [1892]: 69) counted more than forty carpenters' workshops in Urga, the majority coming from Kalgan (Zhangjiakou).



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building, with coating, painting and decorations of glazed tiles. The Tibetan terrace roofs made of *arka*—a specific material used for roofing—were replaced in Mongolia by “dirt roofs” (rammed earth). The transmission of Tibetan construction techniques to Mongolia would require further studies. Mongol monks trained in Tibet and Tibetan monks settled in Mongolia built monasteries using Tibetan-style architecture, but to meet the demand Chinese carpenters may also have acquired these techniques. For instance, in 1651, Zanabazar (Danjanbazar), the first Jebtsündamba Hutuhtu (1635-1723), came back from Tibet to Mongolia along with six hundred Tibetan monks from Amdo, among them many artisans, to build monasteries. (Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 328)

All in all, during the Ming and Qing dynasties, Mongol carpenters had difficulty competing with Chinese carpenters who were able to employ the high degree of standardization in Chinese building techniques to their advantage. Although woodcraft was well developed in Mongolia, the craftsmen were obviously not trained to meet the demand of religious construction and the requirements of the contractors.<sup>22</sup> Besides, like the other artisans, no carpenter ever grew rich at their trade. Nowadays, most of the monasteries of Inner Mongolia are restored by Chinese carpenters. In 1978, the People's Republic of Mongolia invited carpenters from Vietnam, a “brother country”, to restore the great Amarbayasgalant Hiit. Modern Halh Mongols have forgotten the ancient techniques of (Chinese) framework, and in several regions even bricklaying techniques have been forgotten. In 2005, the Tibet Heritage Fund restored the Sangiin Dalai Hiit in the Gobi, and hired bricklayers from China to instruct the Mongols how to build kilns and bake bricks again. (Alexander et al. 2006)

### **The respective roles of contractors, patrons, and lamas**

Biographies of monks, and the few extant monastic archives that have become recently available can help us understand the building process of Mongol monasteries. Several actors played a part in the construction: the patron (for instance a Mongol prince, the Chinese emperor, a community), a Buddhist master whose role varied from supervising to managing the project, a contractor, various religious and para-religious specialists such as astrologers and geomancers, and workers. Due to the importance of the timber work, the contractor was generally the head carpenter (as in Tibet and China). The contractor supervised the various types of skilled workers: wood sawyers, stonemasons, bricklayers, roofers, painters,<sup>23</sup> scaffolding

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<sup>22</sup> Antoine Mostaert (1956: 288) mentions Mongol carpenters in Ordos but adds that “leurs capacités ne sont pas très grandes.”

<sup>23</sup> In all Mongolia, Chinese painters decorated wooden frameworks with scenes from the great Ming novel “The Journey to the West,” also well known to Buddhist Mongols.

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builders, joiners, etc. He also employed local unskilled manpower, recruited among Chinese or Mongols. Officials could also recruit soldiers and locals liable for corvée to build and restore monasteries. (Pozdnev 1971 [1896]: 184)

The participation of Mongol lamas and the distribution of responsibility in the building project varied considerably according to competences and inclinations. In many cases, a lay founder entrusted a famous lama with the task of building a monastery. The lama collected the donations, gathered the materials, decided the general layout of the monastery and the elevation of the main buildings, and contracted the work to a master carpenter.<sup>24</sup> For instance, the famous missionary Neichi Toin (1557-1653) is said to have restored the monasteries of Hohhot on imperial order; actually he ordered the General of Hohhot, Cöhör, to manage the work, and the latter delegated this responsibility to a certain “Zhangmian Labadai” [Jamyang Rabdai] (obviously, a Mongol). Neichi Toin also received temples as donations, but their foundation is attributed to him.<sup>25</sup> But the lama or the lay patron was considered to be the real “founder” and gained merit from his act.

The large monasteries with up to five hundred or a thousand monks required large-scale human, financial and technical resources. The building of Chagan Ovoo Süm (“Monastery of the White Cairn,” Sünit Left Banner, Shilingol League, Inner Mongolia) is a typical example of a large-size construction. Luvsang Norbu (1656-1736), a Tümed monk from Hohhot’s main monastery (Ih Juu), after having completed his studies in the Amdo monasteries of Kumbum, reached the Sünit region in 1688 and settled in a cave to meditate. In 1694, he undertook to collect donations to build a small temple that he called Öljiiit (“auspicious”). This first, modest foundation was certainly built by local manpower supervised by Luvsang Norbu. A few years later, Luvsang Norbu designed a more ambitious project. In 1708, he went to Halh Mongolia to request the help of the Jebtsündamba Hutuhtu, who offered wood for the construction. In 1709, he travelled to Hohhot, Dolonnor and Kalgan to gather renowned Chinese and Mongol carpenters and artisans, construction materials and means of transport, to build the Chagan Ovoo Süm, 35 kilometres from the first temple, near the Halh frontier. He was recognized as the first Chagan Gegen, the reincarnation lineage of the monastery. (Delege 1998: 661)

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<sup>24</sup> We are unfortunately poorly documented on the role of the master carpenter: did he draw sketches in cooperation with a religious master, or even impose his views? For Chinese vernacular architecture of the Ming dynasty, the contractor decided 50% of the plan, and the sponsor 50% (*Luban jing* 魯班經, a fifteenth-century construction manual, transl. by Ruitenbeek 1993: 30). A late Qing author also says: three tenths depends on the carpenter and seven tenths on the master. No information concerning religious architecture is provided.

<sup>25</sup> Biography of Neichi Toin, Heissig 1953: 17, 19.

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Knowledgeable lamas learned notions of architecture in the Buddhist colleges of Tibet and Mongolia, and during their travels in Tibet.<sup>26</sup> They were often able to supervise the building site and the carpenters. Some of them did indeed act as contractors and carpenters and distinguished themselves by their architectural skills and their involvement in large-scale constructions. When they traveled to Tibet, they drew sketches of the great monasteries of Lhasa and Amdo, acquired paintings representing famous monasteries, and when they returned home, some of them decided to build monasteries based on the model of Gandan or Tashilunpo. Zanabazar drew the sketches for several temples, among them, the Great Assembly Hall of Urga, built in 1654, for which he even anticipated further extensions. (Bawden 1961: 60, f. 21r) According to these polymaths' hagiographies, they were already building miniature temples at the age of three, and founded their first monasteries before the age of ten.<sup>27</sup> They were versatile artists, skilled in architecture, sculpture, painting, and writing (Bandida Gegen, Zanabazar).

In Inner Mongolia, Agwan Luvsang Danbi Jalsan, the Second Bandid Gegen (fl. 1799), a reincarnation and renowned erudite, artist, doctor, musician..., himself drew architectural sketches, supervised lay and monk craftsmen, and made the statues, mural paintings and musical instruments of the Bandid Gegen Süm. (Gendong Zhengli 1997: 133) The First Doinghor Bandid himself drew the complete sketches of Batgar Choiling süm, erected between 1727 and 1749.<sup>28</sup> In 1795, the second reincarnation of Gegen Süm,<sup>29</sup> who had studied in Tibet, drew sketches to enlarge his monastery, based on the model of a Tibetan one. Although he died before having completed his project, the extension was carried out following his sketches. (Feng Xuezhong 1991: 868) The First Darhan Hutuhtu (1757-1821) himself drew the sketches of the Moruiin Süm<sup>30</sup> based on the model of Sera in Tibet, and supervised the construction from beginning to end, from 1785 to 1806.<sup>31</sup> The Second Ganjurwa Mergen Nomiin Han (d. ca. 1750) called for renowned artisans from Yingzhou 應州 in Shanxi, travelled himself to Tibet to visit, study and make sketches of monasteries, in order to build the Beiliin Süm,<sup>32</sup> following Tibetan models, from 1702 to 1705.

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<sup>26</sup> Architecture was not a separate discipline in their education. The *Vinaya* (the third part of the Buddhist canon) only includes some basic prescriptions concerning the organization of monastic buildings. (Rossi Filibeck 1987)

<sup>27</sup> Biography of Zanabazar. Similar observations can be made for Tibetan lamas; for instance, Jamyang Zhepa (1648-1720), founder of Labrang monastery, used to build miniature temples before the age of four.

<sup>28</sup> Ch. Wudang Zhao 五當召, main monastery of Inner Mongolia, located northeast of Baotou. (Huhe Bayaer 1984: 155)

<sup>29</sup> Ch. Gegen Miao 噶根廟, Horchin Jasagt Wang Banner (Keyouqian Qi), Xing'an League, Inner Mongolia.

<sup>30</sup> Ch. Moli Miao 莫力廟, Tongliao Municipality, Inner Mongolia.

<sup>31</sup> Badama 1997: 346. About another lama-builder and sculptor in the early twentieth century in Jou-Uda League: Wang Qiga 2002: 30 sq.

<sup>32</sup> Ch. Bailing Miao 百靈廟, Municipality of Baotou, Inner Mongolia.

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(Wuyungaowa 1997: 128) The Sixth Jarligiin Gegen (d. 1944) of Dechin Süm studied architecture in Tibet. Back in Inner Mongolia in the 1910s, he decided to rebuild his monastery and drew the sketches and elevations of temples himself. He personally directed the religious and lay artisans. (Kürelsha 1993: 189-202) In Beijing, the Zhangjia Hutuhtu Rolpe Dorje (a Mongor) supervised the construction of the Yuhua Pavilion in the Forbidden City, and organized with his master the Second Galdan Shireetü Hutuhtu the transformation of Yonghe Palace 雍和宮 into a great monastery. He also participated in the construction of the Xumifushou and Pule temples of Chengde.

For small-scale projects, the lamas were able to employ unskilled local manpower to build temples made of adobe and wood (or, in some places, felt or wooden yurts), without outside assistance. In such instances the lama played the role of astrologer, contractor and carpenter all at once: he selected an auspicious building site, gathered donations, and performed the necessary rituals before and during the construction. This was for instance the case of Tohuiin Juu in Ordos (Inner Mongolia), rebuilt in 1752 by the monks themselves. This may still be observed on the field today. Since 1980, lamas have been undertaking single-handedly the reconstruction of ruined temples such as Baruun Hiit and Züün Hiit<sup>33</sup> in Alashan Left Banner, or Gembiin sūme in Arhorchin Banner (Inner Mongolia). But for the building and restoration of large monasteries with Chinese-style pavilions, Chinese skilled workers were and continue to be needed.

The Dilowa Hutuhtu gives us details about a major restoration of the main hall of the Narobanchin monastery he initiated in 1916. This restoration can be seen as typical of great construction projects. This

involved replacement of ridgepoles and supporting timbers, brick and tile work, general carpentry, and painting. This entailed considerable work which could not be adequately done by local labor, since it called for skills not possessed by the Mongols; nor were all the materials locally available: clay, straw, horse-hair for making bricks and tiles, and rock for making cement material, were locally available, but the timbers and planks, and the paints, had to be secured elsewhere.

These considerations meant that a major construction job had to be let on contract to Chinese artisans and that some of the materials had to be acquired from outside the territory. For this job, a considerable sum of money had to be collected to pay the Chinese contractors and arrangements had to be made to secure timbers and planks from neighbouring banners.

Before any other arrangements were made, the Dilowa called an assembly of all officials and household heads and presented them with the idea of the restoration project. Following this he held a smaller meeting, attended by officials and heads of the wealthier households in the territory, in which he asked for their help, pointing out that no individual could finance such an undertaking. It had to be a community affair. (Vreeland 1962 [1957]: 112)

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<sup>33</sup> “Right” and “Left monasteries” (Ch. Helan shan nansi / beisi 賀蘭山南寺 / 北寺).

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After discussion, they all gave him “the signal to go ahead with his plans at his own discretion, agreeing to provide as much of the capital as they could.” To these voluntary contributions from his people (actually the Dilowa could have required compulsory taxes, but hoped that people would give more and cooperate better on a voluntary basis), the Dilowa added a contribution from his own treasury, and also sent *badarch*, lama-collectors into neighbouring banners to collect more voluntary offerings. The Dilowa managed to get two groups of artisans from two neighbouring banners interested in working for him and asked them separately for estimates, but the two “joined forces and announced that the job had to be done in partnership.”

The combined group of artisans was finally accepted on contract, for a base sum of 30,000 ounces of silver, but since the repairs took a total of about 4 years, during which time additional payments were made to the artisans for special gifts and for their return to China over the slack winter months, the final cost of the repair work, including painting was about 60 000 ounces of silver.

Paint was provided by the Chinese but timbers and planks had to be secured from Hoshochi Beise banner [...]. Here the banner chief asked for 6 ounces of silver per log but the Dilowa persuaded the chief to let him have the logs outright as a religious offering [...].(Vreeland 1962 [1957]: 112)

A poor woodsman and carpenter of this banner offered his services and joined the project after having obtained the banner chief's authorization. With his family and friends, he felled the timber and was compensated with food, clothing, sheep, and one or two oxen. The Dilowa made arrangements with the *aimak* (province) authorities of this banner for the transportation service, and managed to hire, borrow or requisition carts.

The logs were moved to the temple by camels and ox-carts. [...] The clay for the bricks and tiles was hauled from the nearby river by the camel herds belonging to the temple [...] the horse hair required for making tiles was collected (from the people) [...]. Besides providing the service of carting supplies, many of the people, both lamas and laymen, assisted in the actual repair work as far as their time and ability permitted. Initially, the work of making brick and cement was done entirely by Chinese, but as the work went on, some of the Mongols learned the techniques; at least one Mongol became so skilled at brick making that he eventually took charge of this operation when the Chinese went ahead on the painting. Some of the Mongols were satisfied with offering their services in return for board only; others who presumably worked longer and harder were made gifts of cattle.” (Vreeland 1962 [1957]: 115-117)

To conclude, Chinese craftsmen and carpenters built temples under the direction of Mongol lamas according to their Mongol patron's tastes. But the true founder who gained merit and to whom the general architecture of the monastery was attributed was the lama, not the carpenter. When the Mongol founder wanted a Tibetan-style temple, Chinese contractors learnt how to build according to Tibetan techniques, or else disguised their own techniques of construction under a Tibetan-style exterior.

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Consequently, the temples built by Chinese artisans for their Mongol patrons have unique features, representing a blend of Chinese, Mongol and Tibetan materials, techniques, and decorative elements: they are neither copies of Tibetan architecture nor characteristic Chinese buildings. Chinese-style pavilions as well as simple yurts could easily be turned into temples, since less importance was given to the outside, which served merely as a shelter, than to the objects within (sacred texts of the Buddhist canon, stupas and images), and to the consecration ceremony that empowered the temple. More important than the ethnic origin of the builder was the quality of his work. The strong reputation of Chinese carpenters led to a specialization comparable to that of Newar bronze workers in Medieval Tibet.

### **Mongol monastic workshops: painting and crafts**

Smiths, goldsmiths, locksmiths, sculptors, painters, woodcarvers and many other specialists participated in monastic construction and the making of pieces of furniture and ritual paraphernalia. The largest monasteries had their own workshops, which produced painted and appliqué thangkas, statuary in wood, earth, stone, *tsam* masks in papier-mâché, wood and semi-precious stones, mandalas, etc. The painters (*zuraach*) were generally Mongol monks; painting and iconometry was a part of their religious curriculum, and was taught in some colleges.<sup>34</sup> On average, their training lasted up to eight years, after which they travelled from monastery to monastery to practice their art and complete their sketchbooks. **(fig. 4)** They excelled at free-hand drawing. Others were independent monk-painters owning their own small workshops, working for laymen and travelling to markets and fairs or living near cities. (Vestergaard 1996)

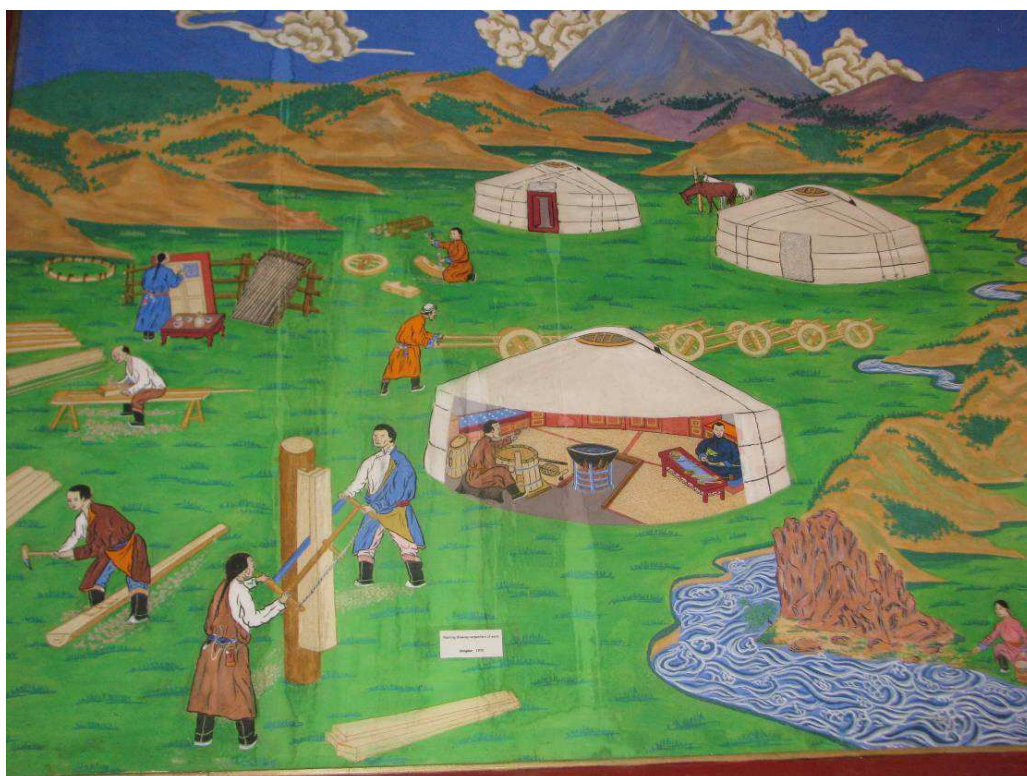
The painting school of Urga had about forty renowned monk-artists in 1900.<sup>35</sup> In the early nineteenth century, the painters Agwan Sharav, Luvsanjamba, Luvsandash, Luvsantseveg, and the engravers Luvsanchoidog, Tserendash, Choïrov and Choinjur participated in the making of the “Five hundred icons pantheon” published in Urga in 1811. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, famous painters included Baldangombo (1870s), Tserendorj, Shirbazar, Gedendamba, Luvsanbaldan and Jügder. Tavhaïbor, Danjin, Tsend, Baldangombo and Hasgombo were specialized in appliquéés. Ishbaljir (1704-1788), Agwanhaidav (1779-1838) and Agwantseren wrote manuals of iconography. (Damdinsüren 1995: 62-74)

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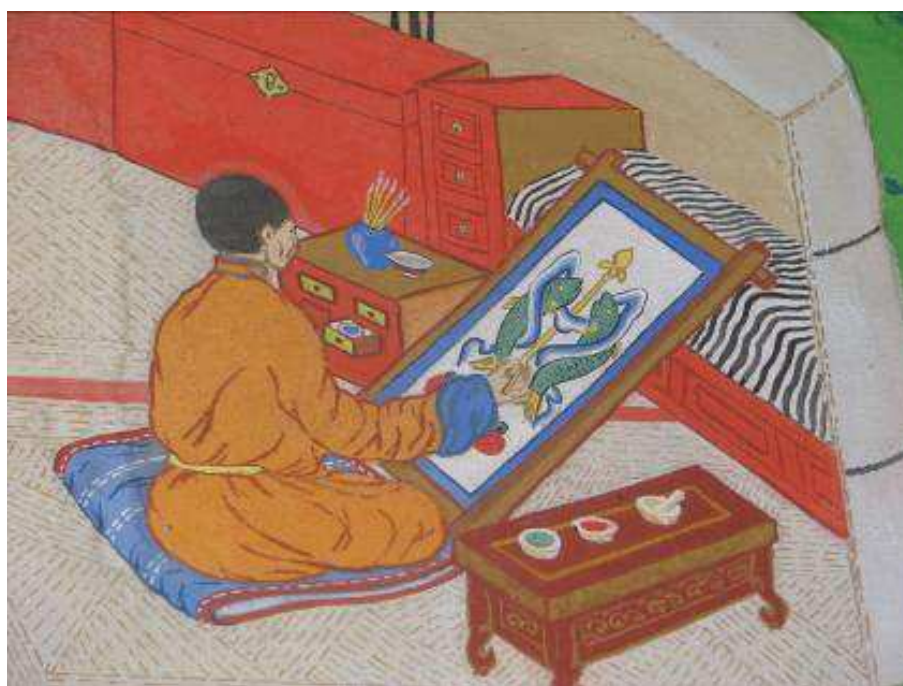
<sup>34</sup> On a research project on pigments, canvas and pictorial techniques of the 150 thangkas of the Haslund-Christensen collection in the National Museum of Denmark: Vestergaard 1996. On Haslund-Christensen's meeting with Lodoi, a Mongol artist in Hohhot in 1938: Haslund-Christensen 1996 [1944]. About the making of Mongol painting, see the books edited by the Mongolian Institute of Buddhist Art in Gandantegchinlen Monastery (Ulanbator).

<sup>35</sup> See the memoirs of D. Damdinsüren (1995), monk-painter at Urga who trained in the early twentieth century.

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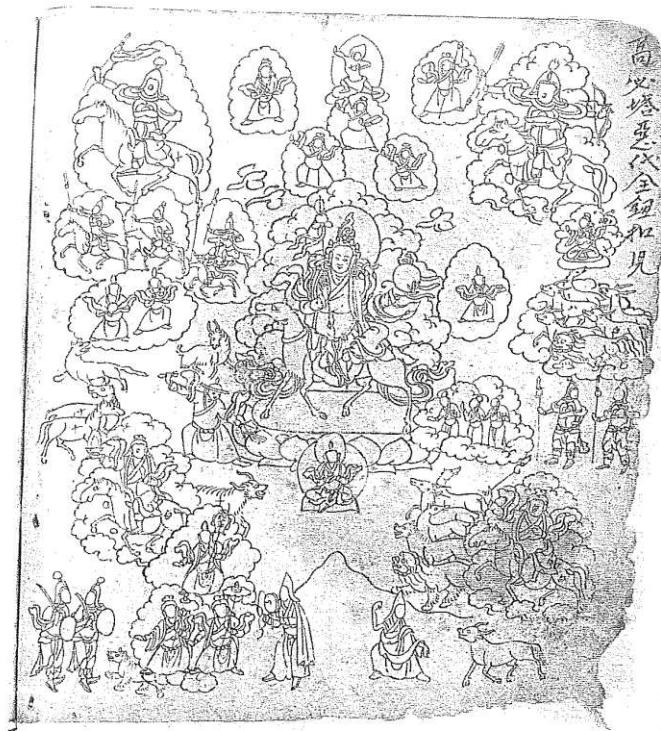


**Fig. 2.** Painting representing artisans, twentieth century, Arhangaj Museum, Zayain Hüree, Mongolia © I. Charleux



**Fig. 3.** Painting representing a painter, twentieth century, Arhangaj Museum, Zayain Hüree, Mongolia © I. Charleux

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**Fig. 4.** Detail of a Mongolian painter's sketchbook collected by Henning Haslund-Christensen at Chagan Hüree in the Haslund-Christensen collection, the National Museum of Denmark (Vestergaard 1996: fig. 4, photo John Lee)

In Inner Mongolia, the Hohhot monasteries attracted monk-painters from all the southern banners. The most famous among them was Lhündüb.<sup>36</sup> History records the names of “Qingke” 慶克, master-painter from Ordos (settled in Hohhot), Sharab and Jamyang Rashi from Dörvön Hühhet Banner, who were masters in appliquéés. Several famous Mongol monks also taught in the painting school of Kumbum in Amdo.

The monk-painters left few written traces, but a book on biographies of artists from Abaga and Abaganar Banners (Shilingol League) allows us to think that there were many polyvalent artists in Inner Mongolia.<sup>37</sup> Among them, Dalijiyan was so skilled at thangkas, sculptures and *tsam* masks that his fame reached Tibet. He practiced his art in several monasteries in Shilingol and Chahar, and was in charge of the making of butter sculptures in Kumbum for several years. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, “Budebalade” 布得巴拉得 [Budbold?] was renowned for his “realistic” paintings and sketches of Bandid Gegen Süm.

<sup>36</sup> Shortly before 1949, there was only one master painter left in the Ih Juu of Hohhot. (Amuer Batu 1997: 278)

<sup>37</sup> “The Mongol artists of Abaga”, cited by Amuer Batu 1997: 294-296.



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Beside specialist monk-artists, the great polymaths were also skilled at painting and sculptures, the most famous of them being Zanabazar, nicknamed by the Mongols as “the Michelangelo of Mongolia.” Over forty of his sculptures are preserved, but tradition also ascribes him many paintings. The Fifth Noyon Hutuhtu Danzan Ravjaa (1803-56) of the Gobi, poet and eccentric, was also a great painter. In Inner Mongolia, the Second Degdiin Gegen (1747-1807) of Baruun Hiit was known for his paintings, seven of which are preserved, as well as mural paintings in a cave near his monastery. (Delege 1998: 387) The Fifth Chagan Gegen of Chagan Owoo Süm was a calligrapher, painter, doctor and wood-carver. (Deligeercang 1997: 228) The Eighth Chagan Darhan Hutuhtu (1876-1943) of the Han monastery in Arhorchin Banner was famous for his statues, paintings and appliqués, and had several disciples in painting and Mongolian calligraphy, such as Yangsong Gegen. (Jimuyan 1997: 269-270) However, except for the Zanabazar statues preserved in Ulanbator, and Danzan Ravjaa's drawings and paintings, hidden under the sand of the Gobi in 1937 and only recently rediscovered,<sup>38</sup> due to the destruction and the dispersion of the Mongol cultural heritage, very few works of art can be ascribed to these great artists.

Monastic craftsmanship was also flourishing in Qing dynasty Mongolia. The monks-artisans manufactured religious objects, such as miniature paintings made with poncifs or printing blocks, papier-mâché and clay statues, clay votive plates made with moulds (to be inserted in portative reliquaries), rosaries, prayer flags (wind-horse), amulets, offering tables; they cast offering cups and lamps, but also made profane goods for the market. Because natural pigments were mostly prepared in monasteries, carpenter and wood-carver monks also made yurt frames and painted pieces of furniture, which constituted a significant income for monasteries. (Pozdneev 1978 [1887]: 247; Chabros 1987: 251, 256) Among them were the best tailors, weavers, dyers etc. For Pozdneev, “monks work far more than do ordinary laymen.” (Pozdneev 1978 [1887]: 247) Although some of these artefacts could also be purchased from lay artisans or Chinese merchants,<sup>39</sup> crafts made in monasteries were sanctified in the hands of monk-artisans. Goldsmith and silversmith monks also sold jewellery, ornaments and metal curios at the monastic fairs. Besides, *badarch* lamas who travelled all over Mongolia to collect funds for construction and

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<sup>38</sup> They are now kept in the Sainshand Museum, Dornogov' Province. (Tsagaan, ca 1991)

<sup>39</sup> The Hangai region was reputed for its woodwork, which was not a highly developed craft among the Mongols elsewhere in Mongolia. Herdsmen occasionally made their own tent doors and shelves but not elaborate woodwork such as cartwheels and *toono* (circular crown of the round tent). The *toono* is the most difficult part of the yurt to make properly, requiring skill in bending and shaping. The herders of the Narobanchin territory depended on trade with the Chinese merchants, on Chinese artisans employed locally on contract, and partly on a group of Mongol woodworking specialists who lived in the Hangai and combined skilled woodwork with herding. Their products (framework and the *toono* of the yurt, chests, shelves and cartwheels), were transported on carts and peddled in the Narobanchin territory and as far south as the Gobi desert. (Vreeland 1962 [1957]: 30) Nowadays, the best woodcarvers of Mongolia are said to be the artisans of Arhangai.

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restoration also sold small statues, reliquaries and amulets. Monasteries also housed, in separate outer buildings, secular metal smiths, usually Chinese, who made the less holy altar vessels: offering bowls, butter lamps. (Prejevalsky 1968 [1875], I: 156; Cressey 1933: 209; Boyer 1952: 120)

A major workshop in Inner Mongolia was that of the Chagan Ovoo Süm: the monks who were not engaged in monastic studies had to earn their living as carpenters, wood carvers, bricklayers, smiths, silversmiths, carpet-weavers, and even tanners (a job in theory forbidden to a monk). Thirty bricklayers, forty weavers, ten needle workers, five carpenters and tanners worked in these workshops. The Chagan Ovoo Süm sold women's jewellery, pieces of furniture, chests, scissors, spoons, weaved material and many other goods of daily life. (Dawa Jigejide 1997: 149-150)<sup>40</sup>

The monasteries also employed Mongol and even Chinese lay artisans. In Urga monasteries, the laymen skilled in painting were trained alongside monks. This is where the famous "Marzan" Sharav (1869-1939), one of the first lay painters of Communist Mongolia, learned his art. Among the Buryats of Transbaikalia, lay artisans competed with monk sculptors and painters to decorate the temples. (Rinchen 1959: 11-12) Appliqués were often made by lay women, supervised by monk iconographers and their confection generally required several years. (Tsultem 1986: Introduction)<sup>41</sup> Lay craftsmen living in the suburbs of Urga made clothing, boots, hats and various luxury articles for the lay and clerical aristocracy, as well as the Jebtsündamba's sumptuous silk robes decorated with pearls and precious stones.<sup>42</sup>

In Tibeto-Mongol Buddhism, the gap between monks and laymen was not as wide as in other Buddhist countries.<sup>43</sup> As a consequence, a young Mongol skilled in painting could work in a monastic workshop as a novice, or as a layman. He would receive an initiation when painting particular deities and Buddhas. A Chinese painter trained in Tibeto-Mongol rules of painting (iconometry) could also paint thangkas and mural paintings: the authors of the sixteenth and seventeenth-century mural paintings of a dozen monasteries in and around Hohhot (monasteries of Maidari, Chahar Lama and Ih Juu for instance) were certainly Chinese. These paintings show a strong Chinese influence; besides, some have Chinese characters giving colour indications.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> On lay Mongol crafts (textile, leather, wood...): Vreeland 1953: 47-51; Chabros 1987: 251; Badamxatan 1986: 95.

<sup>41</sup> Some clerics were also masters in appliqués.

<sup>42</sup> Majer & Teleki 2006: 117, and 144 about a woodcarvers' settlement.

<sup>43</sup> The monks did not live enclosed in a monastery and the great majority of them actually only took the ten fundamental vows of the novices and lived as herders in the steppe with their families, only visiting the temples during rituals. Only a small proportion of monks respected the 253 rules of the fully-ordained clerics. Many nobles and officials of the banner administration had received an education in monasteries. Besides, many laymen kept the five precepts of lay disciples.

<sup>44</sup> Charleux 2006 ; article by Du Xiaoli, from the Museum of Inner Mongolia, Hohhot, in *Cultural Relics News*, 19 August 2001, and commentary by Hao Jianwen, in *Cultural Relics News*, 14

Isabelle Charleux, « The Making of Mongol Buddhist Art and Architecture: Artisans in Mongolia from the Sixteenth to the Twentieth Century » - Author's own file, not the published version. Please see the published version in *Meditation. The Art of Zanabazar and his School*, Elvira Eevr Djaltchinova-Malets (ed.), Varsovie, Varsovie : The Asia and Pacific Museum, 2010, p. 59-105.

In the late nineteenth century, Chinese painters from Shanxi had founded seven workshops in Urga, but except for those who had a contract with a monastery, their activity was not flourishing and the wages were very low. (Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 69) The Mongol monasteries also bought thangkas painted in the Chinese workshops of Wutaishan, the sacred mountain in Shanxi province, and sold in the “Beijing shop” of Urga. (Halén 1987)<sup>45</sup> Paintings and religious crafts, however, were not the object of a volume of trade comparable to that of metal statuary.

## Metalwork

Bronze statuary, more costly and precious than painting, was generally made by lay professionals, or imported from Beijing or Tibet. The sixteenth-century Mongols requested the Chinese court to send them icons. For instance, in 1575, Altan Khan asked for statues and other cult images from the Chinese court, and, with authorization from Beijing, the Governor General of Datong had statues cast in Shanxi for the Mongols. Altan Khan expected to receive such presents every five years (Serruys 1963: 207, quoting the *Ming shilu*) In 1580, the Tümet Mongols also employed Newar (Nepalese) sculptors to make a large silver Buddha in the image of the most sacred of the Lhasa icons, the Jowo; in 1586 a Newar sculptor made a diadem for the same statue, as well as a large stupa decorated with jewels, gold and silver to shelter the ashes of Altan Khan.<sup>46</sup> Both were enshrined in Ih Juu, the main monastery of Hohhot. The presence of Nepalese artisans in Mongolia sheds new light on Newar influence in Mongol Buddhist art, an influence initiated by Arniko (Anige) at the time of Khubilai Khan. The influence of Newar sculpture on Mongol art is a key to understanding Zanabazar's statuary more than fifty years later.<sup>47</sup> Zanabazar's spectacular, large-sized lost-wax statues are the most accomplished bronzes ever made by a Mongol artist, and since they have already caused much ink to flow,<sup>48</sup> I will concentrate here on less prestigious and more common metalwork.

It seems that seventeenth and eighteenth century Mongols more often relied on local artisans for metalwork than for construction. Mongol lay smiths (*darhan*)<sup>49</sup>

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September 2001, quoted in *Chinese Archeology & Art Digest* 2001: 9. However, the colour indications in Mongolian in the fifteenth to seventeenth century paintings of cave 31 and 32 at Arjai (Otoy banner in Ordos territory, Inner Mongolia) would point to a Mongol origin of the painters. (Batu Jirigala & Yang Haiying 2005: 52)

<sup>45</sup> However, Roerich tells us that painted images were generally not found in shops, but made to order by monk-painters, and that rich families generally preferred images from Derge and Kumbum. (Roerich 1933: 83)

<sup>46</sup> Altan Khan's biography, *Erdeni tunumal neretü sudur orusiba*, ed. and transl. Elverskog 2003: 174, 187, 193.

<sup>47</sup> On the Newar influences on Zanabazar's lost wax statues: Béguin 1993.

<sup>48</sup> About Zanabazar, iconometric prescriptions, styles, bronze techniques: Béguin 1993; Berger & Bartholomew 1995.

<sup>49</sup> *Darhan* also designates a free man, exempt of taxes and corvées.

were commissioned small moulded copper statues, reliquaries, cult vessels and ritual paraphernalia for temples and domestic altars. The same smiths often worked iron, brass, bronze, silver and gold: they were first blacksmiths, but some became silver and bronze smiths because of the rapid expansion of these metals due to Buddhism and trade. (Mostaert 1956: 288; Tsultem 1986, Introduction) It was a male profession; smiths were respected and feared members of Mongol society, and enjoyed a relatively high social status.<sup>50</sup> Like leather or wood artisans, metalworkers worked part-time; they were itinerant, lived from their herds (except, perhaps, for some silversmiths: Badamxatan 1986: 94-95), and their activity was hereditary.<sup>51</sup> They mostly worked to order, and received payment in kind.<sup>52</sup> They supplied herders with all the metal implements of Mongol life: saddle ornaments, cartwheel rims, kitchen utensils (teapots, cooking-pot stands, buckets), husbandry and hunting tools (rifles, traps), quiver ornaments, helmets, coats of mail... (Boyer 1952) Every banner of Halh Mongolia was reputed for a speciality; for instance the best gold- and silversmiths were *dariganga*. (Tsultem 1986: Introduction) Silversmiths were reputed for their sumptuous women's headdresses, belts and belt pendants, sheaths, silver pipes... A relatively well-off Mongol typically owned an impressive number of silver artefacts.

These artisans were reputed for their great skilfulness in jewellery, headdress ornaments, silver bowls, in gilding, repoussé work, ornamentation with guilloché, gold inlays in sandalwood... (Kler 1957: 195) (**fig. 5**) Trade with Central Asia brought Indian coral, Afghan lapis-lazuli and other semi-precious stones used for inlaying. Although the quality of their work varied,<sup>53</sup> during the seventeenth century they had quickly mastered the techniques of Buddhist statuary and assimilated Tibetan models. The "Mongol artists of Abaga" gives short biographies of seventeen Mongol sculptors and smiths who made Buddhist artefacts (without

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<sup>50</sup> Boyer 1952: 164. The quasi-magic operation of metal transformation was surrounded by many precautions. Mongol smiths were respected like quasi-shamans, because they were *jayatai*, predestined, protected by powerful ancestors and were believed to have extraordinary "power/hability," *nüch chadal*; they were "masters of fire" and had their own *ongon* (supports for shamanic spirits) that represented their tools. (Chabros 1987: 274) But the fear they inspired could also marginalize them. (Pozdnev 1971 [1892]: 70; Pedersen 2006)

<sup>51</sup> Boyer 1952: 158. Camman (1951: 67) records his visit, in 1945, to an old smith living in the mountains west of Hohhot.

<sup>52</sup> Boyer 1952: 165; Chabros, 1987: 251. Badamxatan (1986: 94-95) gives the example of a silversmith who received an ox in payment for a teapot, but had to pay heavy taxes to the Buddhist Church.

<sup>53</sup> Kler 1957; Uray-Köhalmi 1989; Sonomtseren, 1972. Western travellers variously expressed either wonder (Kler 1957 and Mostaert 1956: 288 in Ordos; Vainshtein 1980 [1972]: 131-232 in Tuva) or disdain (Van Oost 1932: 106; Boyer 1952: 158-165) about Mongol metalwork, according to time, places and their own subjectivity. For Mr. Boyer, nomadism is responsible for the absence of individual artistic creativity and standardisation, because the herders are too busy with their pastoral activities to dedicate themselves to metalwork.

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information about their lay or monk status). Among them, Danbi was known as far as Tibet for his engravings and sculptures. (Amuer Batu 1997: 295)



**Fig. 5.** Mongol artisan making a silver bowl, in *Folk Customs of the Ordos Mongolian People*, *Zhongguo minzu shying yishu chubanshe*, 1991, 49

Chinese sculptors and smiths were also active in Mongolia. From the sixteenth century on, attracted by the strong demand, iron- and silversmiths from North China travelled all over Mongolia to offer their services, and trade caravans from China criss-crossed the country to sell all kinds of metal goods, such as small Buddha moulded statues and reliquaries.<sup>54</sup> The few inscriptions that preserve names of Chinese smiths (as well as stone engravers, carpenters and painters) in late sixteenth and seventeenth century Tümet monasteries (Maidariin Juu, Huayan Si, Ih Juu)<sup>55</sup> are quite surprising: without any modesty, the caster of the iron lions of Ih Juu put his name at the head of the 1623 inscription, preceding the date and the names of the Mongol princely donors.<sup>56</sup> These artisans may have been Datong smiths who criss-crossed Mongolia, following commissions, or else sinicized Mongols who had taken

<sup>54</sup> See Karamisheff (1925: 281-282) for estimations of the amount of importation of religious objects (icons, copper cups, lamps, bells, hand-drums, rosaries etc.) in early twentieth century Halh Mongolia.

<sup>55</sup> Also in Halh Mongolia Chagan Baishing: Huth 1894.

<sup>56</sup> “On the auspicious day of the ninth month of the third year of the Tianqi era (1623), made in the steppe north of Datong by the caster Chen Er 陳二, to fulfil the vow expressed by...” [follows the list of donors]. (Huang Lisheng 1995: 311-312; Charleux 2006)

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Chinese names. The work of these smiths is not particularly good, and the inscriptions contain mistakes.<sup>57</sup>

In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the growing demand for metal artefacts and especially large-size statues, plus the presence of Chinese artisans who had settled in Mongolia, caused the progressive sinicization and sedentarization of metalwork, particularly in Inner Mongolia.<sup>58</sup> Contrary to the gold- and silversmiths' trade of small artefacts, the making of large copper and bronze statues required a high degree of specialization as well as the participation of many artisans, and therefore was not adapted to a nomadic lifestyle. Buddhist statuary requires considerable amounts of metal—iron for construction, brass, copper, lead, tin, silver, gold for statuary, ritual paraphernalia, architectural decoration... Despite Mongolia's great wealth in ore, metal was mostly imported because of Mongols' reluctance to dig the soil. (Boyer 1952: 170-175) The Mongols lacked iron as well as iron tools and utensils during the Ming dynasty, when the Chinese embargo on iron was maintained to prevent them making weapons. (Serruys 1960: 19, 43-44; Huang Lisheng 1995: 288-289) After the Sino-Mongol 1571 peace treaty, the Mongols asked the Ming court for gold and silver to cast their statues. In 1579 and again in 1580, one or two thousand horses were exchanged for the silver necessary to cast three Buddha statues. (Huang Lisheng 1995: 401) The Ming then agreed to export small quantities of iron, but the illicit iron trade largely exceeded the authorized quotas. (*Beilu fengsu*, transl. Serruys 1945: 155) In their turn, the Qing dynasty put restrictions on iron exported from Shaanxi to Mongolia, but without causing a shortage. Although the Manchu period witnessed the Mongols' craze for silver (Boyer 1952: 170-175), this metal was not frequently used in Buddhist statuary.

Two major production centres for bronze statues emerged during the Qing period: Hohhot in the early Qing, and Dolonnor (Shilingol League) in the late Qing period. In the seventeenth century, Hohhot was an important centre of copper, iron and tin artefacts for religious or profane use: large statues for monasteries, small sculptures for domestic altars.<sup>59</sup> Chinese and Mongol workshops and shops of blacksmiths, silversmiths, locksmiths, and copperware manufacturers were organized into corporations. The corporation of smiths specialized in Buddhist artefacts, called Fozuo Hang 佛作行 in Chinese, was one of the biggest. It employed twenty to thirty Mongol masters who received generous pay, and hired many workers. Eighteenth-

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<sup>57</sup> For instance the inscription of Maidariin Juu (Serruys 1958: 104, n. 19) and that of the iron lions.

<sup>58</sup> This was also the case of secular jewellery that in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries was generally made by Chinese or Moslem lay metalworkers, itinerant or living in villages that sprang up around the monasteries.

<sup>59</sup> In the early twentieth century, a Halh family spent on average 2.1% of its budget on religious objects and payment for Buddhist services. (Karamisheff 1925: 273)

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century Hohhot had sixty families of smiths and three hundred workers. Many of them were Chinese from Datong, who had settled in the Small monastery (Baga Juu) street during the Ming dynasty. Smith families were specialized either in *dalu* 大爐 (agricultural tools, incense-burners, iron lions, horse equipment), or *xiaolu* 小爐 (weapons, axes, knives). Many artefacts were made of pewter, such as teapots, dishes, butter lamps, and *gongpin* 供品 altar vessels. Hohhot was also a major production centre for carpets and rugs (with Baotou in the nineteenth century), paper (from the eighteenth century) and wood and leather craftsmanship.

During the late seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Chinese smiths became more and more numerous in Hohhot; they exported their production to North and West Mongolia. Inscriptions have recorded a few Chinese names, but at that period when many Tümet Mongols used to take Chinese names, it is difficult to guess if they were Chinese or Mongol—on the other hand, many Chinese who settled in Mongolia took a Mongol wife and became Mongolized. After 1850, the quality and quantity of metalwork produced in Hohhot declined, and the monasteries preferred to commission statues from Dolonnor. (Huang Lisheng 1995: 401-405) The profession declined among the Mongols, who transmitted their knowledge to the Chinese. The workshops had fallen entirely into the hands of Chinese craftsmen and traders from Shanxi by the late nineteenth century (the same who worked for the Wutaishan monasteries).

Hohhot's prestige was thus overtaken by that of Dolonnor, a trading town established as a satellite of two large imperial monasteries founded in the early seventeenth century, the Blue and the Yellow monasteries.<sup>60</sup> After 1732 when the Qing established an office to rule Mongol Buddhist affairs there, Dolonnor became a financial, economic and religious hub, sustained by the surplus of the Mongol economy and, to a certain extent, by the Manchu treasury. Like Hohhot, Dolonnor had a cosmopolitan population of twenty to thirty thousand inhabitants, was located on the roads from China and Tibet to Urga and Central Asia and attracted a great number of monks and pilgrims, traders and artisans.<sup>61</sup> Although the imperial monasteries encountered economic difficulties after the mid-nineteenth century, the presence of thirteen great reincarnations for part of the year maintained its spiritual prestige and trade continued to prosper. (Charleux 2006: 87-91)

Dolonnor had become the biggest Mongol production centre for bronze and copper statues in the nineteenth century (especially after 1880) and the first quarter of the twentieth century. It exported its production to China, Mongolia, Buryatia, Amdo and even to Central Tibet and Russia. (Tsybikov 1992 [1919]: 43; Prejevalsky 1968 [1875], II: 71) The Buddhist temple founded in Saint-Petersburg by Agvan

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<sup>60</sup> Both were partially destroyed by Russian troops in 1945.

<sup>61</sup> In the early twentieth century, Hohhot had about twenty Chinese temples, several mosques, Catholic and Protestant churches; and Dolonnor had twenty-five Chinese temples and six mosques.

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Dorjiev (1854-1938) in 1913-15 commissioned its statues in Dolonnor. Like in Hohhot, the workshops, first run by both Chinese and Mongols, fell entirely into the hands of Chinese craftsmen and traders in the late nineteenth century. The foundries were located at about 1.5 kilometers south of the monastery, in the trade centre. The two main foundries were Ayush Tunjan (*tunjan* < Ch. *tongjiang* 銅匠, metallurgists) and Haisandai.<sup>62</sup> In 1844, Fathers Huc and Gabet saw a caravan of 84 camels carrying different parts of a statue of Buddha to be offered to the Dalai Lama. (Huc 1987 [1924], I: 80) The Mongol lamas told the Russian explorer Pozdneev that they preferred Dolonnor statues to Beijing statues, because they were more respectful of iconographical canons and their gilding lasted longer. (Pozdneev 1977 [1898]: 179-182) The Torgut painters, sculptors and silversmiths who worked at the Yellow monastery of the Torgut were said to do more beautiful and original works than the Chinese. (Haslund-Christensen 1935: 302)

Like the contemporary production of Urga, the Dolonnor statues (in brass, copper alloy or bronze) were worked using the repoussé technique, and the different parts of their body were made separately and fastened together with rivets, dovetail joints and clasps, and later inlaid with turquoise, coral and lapis-lazuli.<sup>63</sup> This technique is less complex and uses less metal and fuel than the lost-wax technique favoured by Zanabazar; it permits a mass, stereotyped and cheaper production.

The craftsmanship of thangkas, Tibetan carpets and metal artefacts of daily life was also important in Dolonnor, a city that had four thousand shops in the second half of the nineteenth century.

Dolonnor bronze-smelters also established workshops in Maimaicheng, the Chinese settlement east of Urga monastic city. These artisans were Mongolized Chinese from Dolonnor and Beijing. They probably first opened branch-shops to receive and assemble statues delivered in kit, and later established their own workshops.<sup>64</sup> They had their own guilds and temples, such as Urchuudiin Süm (Craftsmen's temple) and Mujaanii Süm (Carpenter's temple) in Maimaicheng. Maurice Percheron (1953: 102-113) describes his visit to a large painting and sculpture workshop in Urga: the sculpture workshop was like a factory, a large room of more than 80 metres long and 25 metres wide, where a master trained forty disciples.

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<sup>62</sup> The four others were Üntsük Tunjan, Üntsügün Nomtu, Bayantai Tunjan and Huuchin Nomtu. (Pozdneev 1977 [1898]: 179-182; Prejevalsky 1968 [1875], I: 106; Tsybikov 1992 [1919]: 43)

<sup>63</sup> The statues of Dolonnor were destroyed or scattered during the destruction of the Dolonnor monasteries by Russian troops in 1945. Some are preserved in the Stockholm ethnographical museum (statues brought back by Sven Hedin in the 1930s), and in the Hermitage Museum of Saint-Petersburg. (Bartholomew 1995: 80-82)

<sup>64</sup> We do not know if the statues in the Dolonnor style preserved in Ulanbator (Choijin Lamiin Süm, Palace of the Bogd Haan) were carried from Dolonnor or made in Urga. (Berger & Bartholomew (eds) 1995, 84, 67, cat. 83)



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In the late nineteenth century, Urga had become the third main fabrication centre for metal statues, after Dolonnor and Beijing, with twenty workshops of blacksmiths, bronze smiths and silversmiths. But the price of the statues made in Urga was much higher than that of Dolonnor and Beijing.<sup>65</sup> The purchase of large statues represented, with that of Buddhist scriptures, a major part of the budget for the construction of a monastery.<sup>66</sup>

In Urga, shops called *Ri-bo rtse-linga puzu* (*Ri-bo rtse-linga* is the Tibetan name of Wutaishan and Ch. *puzu* means shop) also sold small statues in bronze and clay from Beijing, Dolonnor and Wutaishan, as well as ritual paraphernalia of poor quality (musical instruments, lamps, Tibetan and Chinese incense), monks' garments, etc. to monasteries or for domestic altars. (Roerich 1933: 83)<sup>67</sup>

Some names of talented Mongol masters of Urga were preserved too. For the foundation of the Choijin Lamiin Temple in Urga, "the finest craftsmen were summoned from all the banners in [Halh] Mongolia" to make the icons and the ritual objects. Most of the carpenters were Chinese, but those who made the Buddhist images and objects were Mongols such as Shoiv' Ayuush of Wangai monastic department (*aimak*), and the lama Vanchig from Noyon monastic department. (Jambal 1997 [1959], transl. Bawden: 11) For the construction of the Eh Dagini monastic department, the talented masters who made the three-dimensional mandala palace of Kalachakra were Tsogtzandan Tsorj, Tavhai Bor from Anduu Nar monastic department, Chültemsüren from Wangain monastic department, Dugarjav from Shüteen monastic department, the layman Lojoo, Tsagaan Jambaa from Sanga monastic department and others. (Dendev 1961: 42)

Although the Mongol monasteries often imported statues from Amdo and Central Tibet, at the end of the Qing dynasty the biggest share of the market was divided between Dolonnor and Beijing. The main Beijing workshop was located in the Western Yellow monastery (Xihuang Si), in the northern suburbs of the city. There, the monks made and sold bronze statues (following the same technique as in Dolonnor), prayer-wheels, incense-burners, ritual vases and bowls to be exported to Mongolia. (Bredon 1922: 224-228; Lipton & Nima Dorjee Ragnubs 1996: 268-271)

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<sup>65</sup> Pozdneev 1971 [1892]: 69. Urga was also an important art and craft centre: Pozdneev (1971 [1892]: 69-71.

<sup>66</sup> In the beginning of the nineteenth century, a 2.5-meter high statue was bought for 1,800 taels of silver in Dolonnor for a temple, the building of which had cost 5,000 taels of silver the same year. In 1916-1917, a monastery bought a 2.6-meter high statue for 700 taels of silver in Dolonnor and a bigger one for 2,000 taels of silver, plus a *Kanjur* printed in Beijing for 1,000 taels of silver. Dolonnor statues could be sold for up to 6,000 taels of silver, at a time when the construction of an average-size monastery cost about 10,000 taels of silver. (Charleux 2006, Chapter 4) In the early twentieth century, for the Megjid Janraisig temple of Ulanbator, a Halh prince named Handadorj, who served as ambassador to Russia collected the sum of 100,000 taels of silver for a gigantic Buddha and 230,000 taels for the temple. (Bawden 1989 [1968]: 147)

<sup>67</sup> Wutaishan shops still exist nowadays in Ulaanbaatar (one is located in front of Dashchoilin monastery).

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The monk-artisans were mostly Mongols. Large-size statues were also cast in the Yellow monastery,<sup>68</sup> but in the early twentieth century, the production was oriented towards cloisonné, small statues and incense-burners. Besides, the other Beijing workshops employed many Mongol artisans, such as the monk-painters of the thangka school of Yonghe Gong monastery (who also sold their works), the painters and bronze smiths of the imperial workshops (Zaoban Chu 造辦處, Zhongzheng Dian 中正殿 in the Imperial Palace, and the workshop of the Yuanming Yuan Summer Palace). The production of the Imperial workshops was intended for the Tibetan monasteries of the Imperial Palace, the summer palaces and diplomatic gifts to Tibetan dignitaries. Whatever their nationality, the artists received the same training, and their works reflected the personal tastes of the emperor (when he was interested in Tibetan art) and local Beijing traditions. Other private workshops are documented. Gösta Montell visited a large and flourishing Chinese copper workshop, “Jung Ho” (Ronghe) in 1930-32, and was impressed by the high degree of specialization and the exceptional skill of the workers. (**fig. 6, fig. 7**) “Jung Ho” was located near the Yonghe Gong monastery, and made small statues cast in a single piece of bronze as well as large intricate images with numerous parts. Sketches were drawn for complex statues. (Montell 1954 [1943])<sup>69</sup> Beijing was also the leading centre for printing Buddhist works and Mongol literature intended for the Mongol world. (Heissig, 1954)

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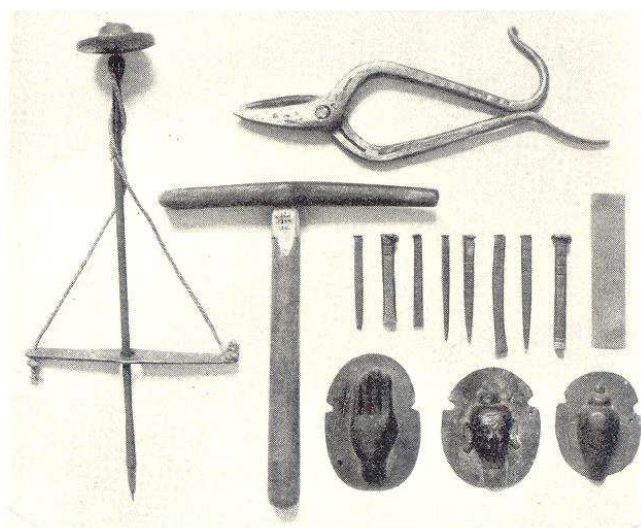
<sup>68</sup> Favier (1897: 370-371) describes a Buddha statue of more than seven metres high, cast in Xihuang Si, and transported in pieces on camelback to a temple of Central Tibet. A Mongol prince had paid « half a million » (taels ?).

<sup>69</sup> The copy of the Golden Pavilion of the Chengde temple Putuo Zongcheng Miao was made there in 1932, and then brought back to the World's Fair in Chicago by the Sven Hedin expedition.

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**Fig. 6.** Interior view of the “Jung Ho idol factory,” Beijing, 1930-32. (Montell 1954 [1943]: fig. 3)



**Fig. 7.** Tools and semi-finished parts in the “Jung Ho idol factory,” Beijing, 1930-32. (Montell 1954 [1943]: fig. 7)

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## Conclusion

In Buddhist Mongolia, although Chinese artisans have always held a large market share for construction and bronze sculpture, Mongol artistic production is well documented, with a reputation of high quality. The works of Zanabazar, whose quality and beauty is much superior to the production of the Beijing workshops, proves that the nomads were not only consumers but also artists—even though Zanabazar is somewhat of an exception in Mongolia. The existence of itinerant smiths shows that the production of luxury goods is compatible with a nomadic lifestyle.

Metal statuary (and printed books) were the object of trade and exchange throughout the Tibeto-Mongol area. In the late Qing dynasty, the Chinese organized this important international trade of religious bronzes, and flooded the Mongol market with standardized images made with moulds. The Chinese competition in terms of quantity of goods caused the decline of the local art and craft production.<sup>70</sup> The workshops that produced the large metal statues in Hohhot and Dolonnor, which were run by both Chinese and Mongols at the beginning of the Qing dynasty, had fallen entirely into the hands of Chinese craftsmen and traders by the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Some artifacts such as paintings, appliques, wood and clay statues and *tsam* masks, considered minor or less profitable, continued to be produced locally, by Mongol monks or laymen within monasteries.

The questions of the place of production, of the ethnicity of artisans, of routes of exchange, of cultural and artistic metissage resulting from contact between Han Chinese and Mongols need to be asked and are far from being solved. Martha Boyer (1952), when researching jewellery, showed that eighteenth and nineteenth century Chinese artisans strictly executed the will of their Mongol patrons according to regional styles. As for Buddhist art and architecture, the requirements of iconometry, canonical rules, and consecration only left a limited amount of freedom to the artisans, so the fact that they could be Chinese, Tibetan, Mongol or Nepalese was probably not as important a question as that of the way rules and styles were transmitted. The Buddhist works respected the Tibetan canons and followed the will of the Mongol patrons who had commissioned them; they have their proper style whose originality cannot be denied, and fully belong to the Mongol heritage. They reflect the multicultural tastes that the Mongols showed since the creation of their empire and the adoption of a universalist religion, and which are also apparent in profane arts.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>70</sup> For non-religious objects, similarly, in Halh Mongolia, the competition of Russian artifacts also provoked a decline of the local production, among the Darhat for instance. The high taxes were also detrimental to artisans. (Badamxatan 1986: 95)

<sup>71</sup> For instance, about fifteen Mongol painters and calligraphers won fame in Chinese art at the Qing court, such as Songnian 松年, Mangguri and Buyantu. These artists were Mongols of the Eight

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banners but also from Eastern Inner Mongolia and Halh Mongolia. They were sinicized literati who held official positions in the administration, and are well known of Chinese art historians. Songnian and Buyantu authored several famous works on pictural theory.

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