



Mongol cultural sites and customs in modern 'Dam gzhung (Tibet Autonomous Region)

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There is a long history of political, cultural and economic relations between Tibetans and Mongols. In the middle of the 17th century Gushri Khan, the leader of the Hoshod Mongols after occupying the Kokonor region led his troops into Central Tibet, supported the Fifth Dalai Lama and became the ruler of Tibet. Gushri Khan and his Mongolian descendants selected 'Dam gzhung, to the north of Lhasa, as their main residence. Here a large part of the Mongolian army and their horses were stationed, since this was the best grassland in the vicinity of Lhasa. Nowadays the 'Dam gzhung community considers itself to consist of the descendants of Gushri Khan and of the Hoshod Mongols of the 17th century. Even though the people of 'Dam gzhung speak exclusively Tibetan and have abandoned the Mongolian language, they keep a strong sense of their history and descent. This is reflected in some of the local customs and in the organisation of the community.

On basis of historical textual sources, recent local publications in Tibetan and Chinese and my own ethnographic research I will outline in my paper:

- 1) The area of 'Dam gzhung, its location and its early history
- 2) The political change during the Hoshod rule (1640–1720)
- 3) The political situation under the Qing Amban and the Tibetan government (1720–1912) and afterwards
- 4) The organisation of the community in the Eight banners of 'Dam gzhung
- 5) Mongolian cultural sites and customs in modern 'Dam gzhung