



THE BLUE SCARF

The revival of Buddhism in Mongolia

Documentary film – 52 minutes

Gilles Blaize
Tibet Foundation
1 St James's Market
SW4 7QH London, UK
Tel UK: +44 (0)207 930 6001
Tel Fr: +33 (0)2 38 45 15 47



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DESCRIPTION

Technical information

Duration: 52 minutes

Format: DV - HDV

Shooting Location: Mongolia, India, United-Kingdom

Shooting Date: Autumn 2007

Theme

The revival of Tibetan Buddhism in post-soviet Mongolia viewed through the work of the British charity Tibet Foundation.



Subject

In the 13th century, the leader of the great empire of the Mongols decided to make Tibetan Buddhism the religion of the state. Seven hundreds years later, Mongolia is emerging in the modern world. And despite the systematic destruction of Buddhism under 70 years of soviet rule, the majority of the population is still devoted to their religion. But things have changed; the young democracy is experiencing at first hand the globalization, the new cultures, new challenges. Mongolian language has also changed, the alphabet is now in Cyrillic, and for the Mongolians, religious or lay, most of the Buddhist knowledge that has been saved is in Tibetan and therefore inaccessible to them. This is where Tibet Foundation appears. Meeting the will of Mongolians to regain their tradition, the British charity has been working for 15 years to preserve and promote Buddhism in Mongolia. Its last and most ambitious project is the introduction of Buddhism as a subject into the secondary school curriculum. This film, by following Tibet Foundation projects in the land of blue scarves, will reveal the recent history of Buddhism in Mongolia.





PROPOSAL

We propose to make a documentary film appraising the revival of Buddhism in post-soviet Mongolia through the work of the British charity, Tibet Foundation. This film is aimed towards being educational as well as entertaining but is not intended to be a deep study of Buddhism. It is a snapshot of the present time, a testimony showing the will of a country with a glorious past to protect its unique culture while embracing the modern world.

During the communist rule in the 20th century, a large part of Mongolia's heritage was destroyed. After the peaceful revolution at the end of soviet power came globalization, an economic boom, appearance of other religions, other cultures and the loss of traditional values that sustained Mongolian culture for many centuries. Mongolia is now trying to find its way back to its traditions. One of their cultural cornerstones is Tibetan Buddhism. Mongolia is the only country in the world that shares this unique form of Buddhism with Tibet.

We intend to reveal the core of Mongolia's identity by building on the work of Tibet Foundation in Mongolia, and especially its last project, introducing Buddhist studies in Mongolian secondary schools. We will understand how recent history, influenced by decline and destruction of hundreds of years of tradition, has shaped the present and future of this country, once became a great empire of Asia. While Tibetan Buddhism is in a critical situation in Tibet, there is some opportunity for its preservation in Mongolia.

The World, and particularly the West, doesn't know much about Mongolia, apart from images of Genghis Khan and his Golden Horde. This film wants to discover the face and the soul of modern Mongolia. It also offers another way to present a subject which affects us all - the struggle between our own identity and globalization, the loss of our guides, our references. By the example of Mongolian situation, we hope to outline perspectives that can be of some importance in the viewers' everyday life.

We are proposing that the film is of 26 minutes in length and will be shot on videotape. Most of the spotted locations have already been found, as well as the interviewees and the archives. We expect to start the shooting at the summer 2007 to coincide with the completion of the textbooks project and the distribution of the books to the schools.



TREATMENT

The documentary will reveal the renewal of Buddhism in modern Mongolia and the work of Tibet Foundation to promote this renewal. To do so and broaden the angles of approach, the film will use a mix of interviews, archived and new footage shot on location, and graphic animations.

As the story explores the past to expose the present, and draws the future of Mongolia, the mix of material, videos and photographs from Mongolia, Tibet in Exile and Tibet Foundation archives, will create a bridge of knowledge with the new material, the interviews of Mongolians and the other witnesses of the past and the present of Mongolia, plus the footage of the country, of the life of the people, lay and religious, in 2007.

The story telling will be a combination between a voice over and the comments of the interviewees. However these interviewees will be the core of the narrative. They are old monks remembering communist rule, but also the moment of liberation with the peaceful revolution. Lay people, explaining their position towards Buddhism and the modern world. They are Westerners, scholars or friends of Mongolia. They are the Tibet Foundation team that runs the projects of the charity. They are beneficiaries of the projects, Mongolian students or scholars. They are the professors and translators behind the textbooks project. Finally, they are officials, from Mongolia or Tibet in exile, expressing their will to preserve their own culture.

The video format that we chose is HDV. It allows a good compromise between high quality and low cost. The Tibet Foundation archives are shot in this format or in DV. Some of the Mongolian and Tibet-in-exile video archives in other formats will be digitized and will be used with still images taken from the past to give an historic aspect to the film. Our attention in the new footage will especially go toward the set up of the interviews, to create a strong identity and symbolism for each of the interviewees. We will also take advantage of the beauty of Buddhist subjects and Mongolian scenery to achieve a high aesthetic film quality. Special effects and animations will be used to summarize information and figures in the most accessible graphic way.

Mongolian original music will serve to personalize and highlight moments with special interest or meaning. It will enhance the sentiments and emotions that the sequence expresses, the death of many Buddhists under soviet rule, the happiness and the hope created by the peaceful revolution...



SYNOPSIS



The film opens on details of paintings and sculptures describing an historic scene: in 13th century, the Tibetan Chögyal Phagpa, head of Sakya branch of Tibetan Buddhism, was invited to the court of Kublai Khan, the Mongolian emperor. During his stay, Phagpa invented a new script based on Tibetan language in which to write the Mongolian language. Kublai Khan was so

impressed by Phagpa's performance that he asked the Tibetan to be his religious teacher and declared Buddhism the state religion of Mongolia. Here starts the bond between Mongolia and Tibetan Buddhism, a strong and unique bond still existing at the present time.

Modern Ulaan Baatar, capital of Mongolia. Among the cars, mobiles and new buildings, and after 70 years of Communist rule, you can see again Buddhist monks walking free, more and more women taking their vows and lay people going to the newly rebuilt monasteries and temple. This is the renewal of Buddhism in post-soviet Mongolia, in this new democracy in a period of economic growth, where other religions emerge and rich Christians are building churches; a key time for Mongolian people to re-discover Buddhism and their tradition.



Mongolian Buddhism shares its roots with Tibetan Buddhism, and most of the Buddhist texts are in Tibetan, inaccessible to most of the Mongolians. The British charity Tibet Foundation, with its will to work toward the continuity of Tibetan Buddhism, has been working in Mongolia for more than 15 years. Tibet Foundation is a



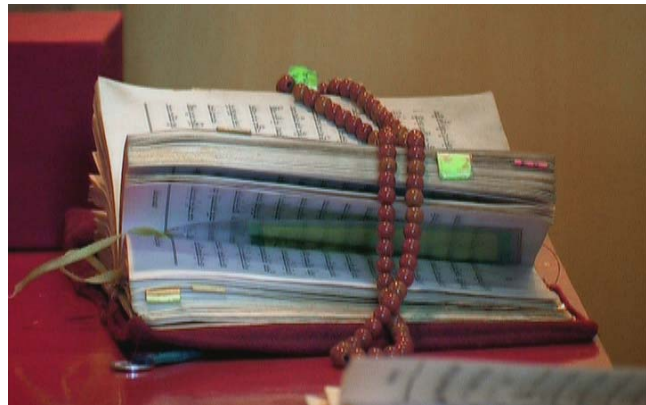
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well-established charity with a long and rich experience in implementing different kinds of projects. The Mongolian program is called 'Buddhism in Mongolia'. Its early projects include tours of Mongolian musicians in the West, sending Tibetan scholars to teach in Mongolia and Mongolian students in India to study Buddhism in the Tibetan monastic institutes in exile.

The current and most ambitious project of 'Buddhism in Mongolia' in partnership with the Mongolian Government is the introduction of Buddhism textbooks as a part of the social science in the Mongolian secondary school curriculum. The aim is to give the young Mongolians the opportunity to understand the role Buddhism has played in shaping their country's history and identity.



To understand the origin of 'Buddhism in Mongolia' program, we need to look at the recent history of Mongolia. In 1990, the

peaceful revolution ended 70 years of communist rule. During the soviet time, thousands of monks have been killed, monasteries closed or destroyed, and



religion banned. Lots of people, after decades in secrecy, tell their family that they have always been monks and start to wear the robe again. Religious artefacts, paintings, sacred texts are discovered. The renewal of Buddhism has begun. But the situation is horrendous: there is no Buddhist education anymore, destroyed by the soviet regime with most of the tradition.



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In 1991, the Dalai Lama, spiritual and temporal leader of the Tibetans in exile, visits Mongolia. Thousands of Mongolians come to see him and to offer the blue scarf, the Mongolian Buddhist symbol of welcoming. Following this event, the Dalai Lama advised Tibet Foundation to help the Mongolians in their effort to

preserve Buddhism. Their first project was inviting Mongolian art groups and scholars to United-Kingdom for creating a greater awareness in the West of Mongolian culture. The success of these initiatives led to more demands from Mongolians on Tibet Foundation for their help.

In 1993, the charity establishes 'Buddhism in Mongolia', its aid programme to help Mongolians in their effort to revive their Buddhist tradition. While temples and monastery were being rebuilt, Tibet Foundation focused on what was most urgent for the survival of Mongolian



Buddhism: the Education. For 15 years, 'Buddhism in Mongolia' has achieved many projects, like helping Tibetan scholars to go to teach in Mongolia, helping Mongolian students to study in Tibetan institutes in India, renovating and restocking libraries, reviving the Tibetan Buddhist herbal medical tradition, translating and publication of Buddhist texts into modern Mongolian language,



helping preservation of masterpieces of Mongolian Buddhist arts...

It also promotes Buddhism among women. In the post-soviet Mongolia, there weren't many nuns. But the place of women is changing in Mongolian society, bringing hope for young Mongolian nuns. To support this hope, Tibet



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Foundation has helped to educate Mongolian nuns in India and developed a four year degree in Mongolia.

The key point of 'Buddhism in Mongolia' was to translate Buddhist teachings (most of them in Tibetan) into modern Mongolian language. And after publishing some of them and making them available to lay people, the Foundation decided

to restore the Mongolian traditional Buddhist education in their schools. This is their most ambitious project to date in Mongolia: in partnership with Mongolian Ministry of Education, it will introduce textbooks of Buddhist subject in the secondary schools, as part of the History and Social Science curriculum. The covered subject includes topics such as: virtue and non-virtue; the master and disciple relationship; major and minor sciences of Buddhism; tales and stories on moral and ethical subjects, etc. The last grades of the curriculum will also refer to other philosophies, religions and cultures to provide a point of reference for the students.



The textbooks project has been initiated after a meeting between Phuntsog Wangyal and the Mongolian Vice-Minister of Education in 2005. Funded at 80% by the charity, the textbook project is coordinated from Tibet Foundations' London office. A team of scholars, translators and advisers, both Mongolians and Tibetans in Mongolia, India and UK worked on the project; many meetings were held, many textbooks were consulted, hundreds of pages were translated, and the work went under several reviews before completion.

The last review of the textbooks was held in India in February 2007 and the Review Team presented the



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draft to the Dalai Lama for his comment. This was a moment of great emotion for all of the project team. Dalai Lama was very pleased with the project. He said, “This gives the Mongolians the opportunity to learn their own tradition and to be part of that spiritual history that they could be proud of”.

In September 2007, many discussions between scholars, Tibetan and Mongolian, the long work and repeated corrections resulted in a great achievement: the completion of the books. After printing the books in a Mongolian printing-house, more than 8,700 schools in Mongolia are receiving them. At the end of the first year of teaching, advice for the teachers’ experiences of working with the textbooks will be collected to allow further adjustments. But we already get reactions of teachers and parents during the distribution, and of all the people involved in this project, officials, scholars, Tibet Foundation and Mongolia’s friends about the completion of this great project. Introduced at a critical stage in the country’s development these textbooks are likely to have long lasting beneficial effects on the well being and healthy mental development of bringing up Mongolian children.



Finally, while the credits roll, some children tell us something about Buddha or Dharma.





APPENDIX I: THE AUTHORS

Phuntsok Wangyal (author)

Born in 1944 in East Tibet, today Sichuan Province China, Phuntsog escaped to India in 1959 after fighting with the Resistance Movement in Tibet. Following his Masters Degree for International Relations and Master of Philosophy Degree in Delhi, he traveled extensively in Europe and settled in UK in 1975. He became the first representative of His Holiness the Dalai Lama for Europe in the 80's, he was elected in the 90's as a member of The Assembly of Tibetan People's Deputies (in exile) representing Tibetans in Europe.

Founding trustee of the British charity Tibet Foundation, Phuntsog is now giving lectures and attending conferences on Tibetan Buddhism and Tibetan culture, writing articles on the above subjects and appearing on international media - television, radios, journals and newspapers.

Gilles Blaize (author/director)

Gilles Blaize was born in France in 1973. After studying History and Broadcast Journalism in Paris, he started as an assistant cameraman for the Japanese broadcast corporation NHK, then became deputy chief editor of the interactive service of the French news channel I>Television. Frequently traveling in Europe and Asia, he is currently living in UK where he makes films, TV, Web and radio programs. He has been working for Tibet Foundation for the past 4 years.

Gilles's previous credits include radio programs 'Londonitude', 'Porte d'Embarquement', 'Histoires de Marins'; TV series 'J'M'En Foot'; short-films 'Return to Tibet', 'Aldous in London', 'Istanbul Stories'; documentaries 'Rishikesh', 'In the Land of Khampas' (for Tibet Foundation).





APPENDIX II: INTERVIEWEES

You will find below the list of the people interviewed during the film:

- His Holiness the Dalai Lama
Spiritual leader of Tibetan Buddhism, Peace Nobel Prize
- His Holiness the Sakya Trizin
Head of the Sakya branch of Tibetan Buddhism
- Enkhmandah
Mongolian Foreign Affairs Vice Minister
- Tumur-Ochir
Mongolian Education Vice-Minister
- Samdhong Rinpoche
Tibetan Prime Minister in Exile
- Tsering Phuntsok
The Dalai Lama's Minister of Religion and Culture
- Tenzin Geyche Tethong
The Dalai Lama's Secretary
- Choijamts
Gandan Monastery Abbot
- Davaasambuu
Mongolian Ambassador in UK
- Dorjsuren
Tenger Institute Professor
- Sue Byrne
Former BIM Programme Manager
- Choimaa
Mongolian National University Professor
- Soninbayar
Zanabazar Buddhist University Head



- Baasansuren
Erdenezuu Monastery Abbot
- Mendbayar
Narhajid Women Buddhist Centre Director
- Sonam Wangchuk
Pethub Monastery Director
- Mrs Agizul
Former Tibet Foundation Office Manager in Ulaanbaatar
- Otgonbaatar
Sakya Pandita Dharma Chakra Monastery Director
- Regzendorj
Tenger Institute Senior Professor
- Lobsan Darjaa
Choir Monastery Abbot
- Tsegmid
Senior Nun
- Norovbadam
Pethub Monastery Monk
- Danzantseren and Dashkhuu
Buddhist Couple
- Genden and Lkhamsuren
Nomads
- Dr Nick Swann
Tibet Foundation Newsletter Editor
- Mongolian monks at Sakya Centre, India
- Lobsang Gonpo
Mongolian monk at Drepung Monastery, India
- Mrs Uranchimeg Nansal
Mongolian National TV Director



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- Mrs Gantumur
Tugs Bayasgalant Women Buddhist Centre Head
- Richen Khandro Choegyal
Tibetan Nuns Project Director
- Dr Oyunbaatar
Pethub Monastery's Naidan Traditional Hospital
- Dr Dawa
Tibetan Medical Institute Director
- Enkhbat
Mongolian Cultural Heritage Centre Director
- Dorjpalam
Khar Khorum City's Secondary School Teacher
- Luvsantseren
Mongolian National University Professor
- Tenzin
Sera University Professor
- Iderbaatar
Tenger Institute Student





APPENDIX III: MESSAGES OF SUPPORT

“The work that you have done is important and very valuable. Mongolia and Tibet are the only two countries that have successfully preserved and continued a very unique Nargajurna tradition of Mahayana Buddhism up to this time. You should be proud of what you have been able to do. Tibetans are in a difficult position at the moment. You, Mongolians are free and you have a great responsibility to carry the work further. We are not saying that students should believe or practise Buddhism. But it is very important that they should be given the opportunity to learn their own tradition and to be a part of that spiritual history that they could be very proud of. I would like to thank you all for your good contribution towards this valuable work.”

His Holiness the Dalai Lama – New Delhi, February 2007



**MINISTRY OF NATURE
AND ENVIRONMENT OF MONGOLIA**

210620a Baga toiruu 44, Zasgiin gazriin III bair,
Sukhbaatar duureg, Ulaanbaatar, MONGOLIA
Tel: (976-11) 31-22-69, Fax: (976-11) 32-14-01
E-mail: monenv@mail.mn

Date 09.07.2007
Ref. 2/2095

BOARD OF TRUSTEES, TIBET
FOUNDATION LONDON

Dear Trustees,

Tibet Foundation has been actively implementing different projects mainly on revival of Mongolian Buddhist philosophy and its rich cultural heritage and traditions since 1992. From this year, Tibet Foundation is focusing on educating younger generations to protect environment, including our rare flora and fauna based on **Mongolian traditional moral upbringing** as compulsory subject in 10+2 system of secondary education. To evaluate results of past projects and to study necessary areas of its future work, they are making short documentary film in Mongolia.

If any kind of assistance needed from our side, we are ready to render. We wish Tibet Foundation for every success in their work.

Yours sincerely,

MR. ENKHMANKH

VICE MINISTER



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**МОНГОЛЫН
ҮНДЭСНИЙ ОЛОН НИЙТИЙН
РАДИО, ТЕЛЕВИЗ**

210524 Улаанбаатар хот, Баянгол дүүрэг,
Хувьсгалын зам 3, Утас/Факс: 32-16-14,
E-mail: mntv@magi.net.mn

To the Board of Governors of
The Tibet Foundation

2007.07.02 № 480
танай _____ -ны № _____ -Т

Dear Sir/Madam,

Greetings from Mongolia.

We very much appreciate many aid projects that Tibet Foundation has successfully undertaken in our country during the past fifteen years. Not only has Tibet Foundation brought great benefit to Mongolia by helping revive our Mongolian Buddhist tradition, but has also helped creating awareness about Mongolian art and culture worldwide.

Therefore, we would like to extend any possible assistance and support we can offer to help you in making this film about the revival of traditional Buddhist education in Mongolia.

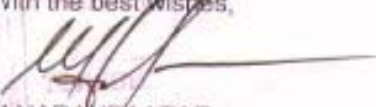
Our country is now experiencing a time of change as values of living are being redefined. Thus the message in this film will help not only Mongolians, but others throughout the world understand that our rich tradition could become a guide for the future in many countries.

The film, Tibet Foundation is producing will present a great opportunity for many to look over our recent history and the history of the revival of Mongolian Buddhist tradition. This may also generate interest in understanding the deeper meaning of Mongolian Buddhist tradition, and a useful debate amongst the Mongolian and international viewers.

The Mongolian National Public Television will cooperate with the film by providing access to its archives and will take interest in becoming an official promoter of this film.

We always appreciate and respect your immense and kind assistance.

With the best wishes,


M. NARANBAATAR
GENERAL DIRECTOR



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**MINISTRY OF EDUCATION, CULTURE
AND SCIENCE OF MONGOLIA**

210620a Baga toiruu 44, Zasgiin gazriin III bair,
Sukhbaatar duureg, Ulaanbaatar, MONGOLIA
Tel: (976-11) 26-24-80, Fax: (976-11) 32-31-58
E-mail: mecs@mecs.pmis.gov.mn
Web address: <http://mecs.pmis.gov.mn/>

Date 10. Feb, 2007
Ref. 70/3434

Tibet Foundation
Board of Trustee
London

Dear Trustees,

It is my pleasure to convey you my sincere greetings from the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of Mongolia.

Mongolia, although under populated, is a vast country. Preservation of Mongolia's rich cultural heritage and tradition is unavoidable. After a peaceful democratic revolution in Mongolia, reintroduction of moral education amongst the mass, especially in secondary schools is vital. Tibet Foundations' Wisdom Book project, cooperated by our Ministry is such a boo, first of its kind, that will serve as a main source to learn culture and tradition, as well as the fundamentals of Mongolian Buddhist philosophy, as well.

Moreover, cataloging of Buddhist cultural flat artifacts is another major project. This project is near completion and soon will be published. Such catalogue will give chance for scholars to learn more about Mongolian Buddhism, culture and preserve them. Tibet Foundation has been working in Mongolia with various institutes and monasteries towards revival of Mongolian Buddhism and its culture since 1992. After 15 years of activities in Mongolia, a short documentary film in Mongolia will be made to mark the works done here and to survey future works for the restoration of Mongolian Buddhist culture and traditional moral education among younger generations. Hence, we support the idea of making a documentary film and wish the Foundation success.

Sincerely,

Mr. Tumor-Ochir S.
Vice-Minister



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