ТӨЦЭ 028 Ar Bulgiin Khoural (Rinchen 377: Ar boulgin Khoural)

Current situation (2004)

Today, the only remains on the site are the stone platforms or foundations of several temples, the ruins of a stupa and a fragment of a pillar. The site was located in a valley on the western side close to the 'Ar Boulag' river. Parts of an incense burner were found on the eastern side of the main temple and the remains of another inside. There is a plan to restore a temple but there is no money. At the time of the survey there were no resident monks or shamans in this area. In 2004 all of the monks from the 1937 community have passed away.

Source (s):

Source 1. Dash who lives with the Sangia family. He was 8 years old when the monastery was destroyed. Contact details: Toev Aimag, Ougtaaltsaidam Soum, Asgat Bag)

Source 2. Dashdondog: Tov Aimag, Ougtaaltsaidam soumin bor khujir, nogoo brigad, Luvsangiin Dashdondog

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Alternative names: Ar Boulgiin Dugan (Source 1)

Oral Histories

The source did not know when this monastery was founded. Ar Boulgiin Khoural belonged to the yellow sect (Gelugpa). On the hill called Khuilee Khaan, oppostite the Khoural, there was a spring called Balgansonsgol. People used to use the water for healing. As is customary, women were not allowed to go to the top of the hill where an owoo was situated.

Source 2's information about the Khoural buildings: there was a wooden fence about 70 metres long on each side surrounding the khoural complex that housed around 8 temples. A white stupa surrounded by prayer wheels was located outside the fence in the northwestern corner. The entrance to the monastery was on the southwestern side. The main temple was close to the entrance. Both were oriented towards the south. Shape: Most of the temples were rectangular but one of them was round like a ger. Materials used: wood with clay roofs, stone foundations. Colour: reddish-yellow, maroon. Height of the main temple: 3m. There are the remains of buildings just outside the fence on the east. These could have been small temples or buildings in which offerings and food were prepared. On the hilltop next to the monastery on the eastern side there was a big grave probably of a monk or nobleman. According to Source 2 it was built in the 18th century as were many other graves of this area. GPS: Elevation: 1174 m E105°37.061' N048°26.179' It was a custom to wrap the dead in a white cloth and leave them in a lonely place.

Source 1's information about the Khoural buildings: There were about 2-3 (or in Artsatin Khoural) Dugans where high-ranked monks gathered and small Dugans of 'Agrambas' (the title given to those who complete the highest level of tantric study). The rectangular temples were made of wood and bricks and painted in different colours. There was one quite big suburgan/stupa a little further to the northwest of the Khoural. He thought there were probably no khashaa/fence but open land.

The monastery had its own herds and about 30 monks of all ages lived either with their parents or their wives in gers situated around the monastic complex. People from the surrounding area of up to 40 or 50 km would come by horse and cart to worship at this monastery for the day. On appropriate days the monks carried sutras on carts throughout the surrounding countryside with people coming to pray and receive a blessing as they passed. At big celebrations such as Tsagaan Sar people would offer khadags, matches and money to the monks (where people mostly offered small coins because one Tugrik was enough to buy a sheep). The present names of some of the nearby settlements are: Ugtaal, Jargalant, Zaamar, Zeel.

Энэхүү нэр дурдсан хүний аман ярилцлагын үгчилсэн тэмдэглэл нь зөвхөн ярилцагчийн хувийн мэдээллээс бүрдсэн болно.
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Мэдээллийг Төв аймагт 2004 онд хийсэн сүм хийдийн анхны судалгаагаар цуглуулсан
Information collected by surveyors in the DOMM Pilot Study in 2004 in Tov Aimag

Wealth and Economy: Every summer about 20-30 nomad families would settle in this area close to the Teel river to pray in the Khoural and offer dairy products, meat and animals. The 'Jasin mal' (Khoural herds) numbered around 300-400 cows and 500-600 sheep.

Shamanism: In times gone by the 'black religion' (shamanism) lived peacefully alongside the 'yellow religion' (Gelugpa Buddhism) and adherents of each made offerings at the owoo. There never any resident Chinese traders but there were some a little further to the north, around Zoeoekhein Khoural in today's Jargalant Soum (See Rinchen 366. Zoeoekhein Khoural).

Mongolians destroyed the Khoural in 1937. Most of the monks were arrested although some escaped and some of these were alive up to 2003. Source 1 was 8/9 years old when the monastery was destroyed. His brother Gombodorj who was a *Gavj* (Tib: Geshe Lharampa) was arrested and imprisoned. He was in prison from 1937-1947 and died in 1981. (A *Gav*j is a very high-ranking monk who has undertaken the study and passed exams in five foundation subjects. It could be that he was also a *Gelong* (Pali: Bikkhu) which means he had taken the full set of Buddhist vows.) There were about 30 monks in the monastery at the time of the destruction. All 14 *Gavj* attached to one of two dugans were arrested. They were taken to Ulaanbaatar where the arresting authorities, the Dotood Yam (Ministry for Internal Affairs), sentenced some to 10 years hard labour, while they ordered others to be killed. (The sentencing was based on the monk's 'rank' and the length of time he had been a monk.) The labouring monks worked very long days receiving bread, rice and horsemeat to eat. They were also ordered to remove religious texts from the monastery and to destroy everything. The Monastery had many texts and sutras, thrones and monks' benches, shells, clay and gilded statues such as the Janraisig (Tib: Chenrezig) statue, a larger version of which can be seen in Megjidjanraisig Temple in Gandantegchinling (Rinchen 913). Some monks managed to keep small Burkhan (statue of a deity, often a Buddha), which they worshipped. Also some local families kept and buried their own Buddhist texts and ritual objects.

Different ranks of monks: Gavj (see above – it is the religious title for a lama who has passed the fifth level of Gelugpa religious examination), Agramba, Marramba (from the Tibetan title for a lama-doctor or religious healer/doctor). Bandi (novices) were the young boys who were studying, helping and supporting the monks, for example, by preparing the meals.

Source: 1. Dash who lives with the Sangia family. He was 8 years old when the monastery was destroyed. Contact details: Toev Aimag, Ougtaaltsaidam Soum, Asgat Bag)

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