

Монголын Сүм Хийдийн Түүхэн Товчоо Төсөл

UBR 914

Rinchen 914 - Baruun Geser süm

English name: Western Geser Temple, Geser Temple, Temple of the Blue Hat lamas

Chingeltei district, Tasganii owoo, Geser süm

GPS was taken at the entrance on the south of the complex

N 47°55.389'

E 106°53.953'

Data provider: Dr O. Pürew

Sources for the historical part: Enkhbat, G., "Geser süm", in: Dashnyam, L. (ed.) *Mongol nutag dakh' tüükh soyoliin dursgal. Sedewchilsen lawlakh*. Mongoliin Khümüünligiin Ukhaanii Akademi. Ulaanbaatar 1999, pp. 254-255.

Ölzii, J., *Mongoliin dursgalt uran barilgiin tüükhees*. Ulaanbaatar 1992

Photo: Dashnyam (254)

Description of the site

At the foot of Dasgaanii owoo hill (to the west of *Gandan*) there is a temple complex with high walls enclosing a collection of pink and white temples and other buildings all with green ceramic tiled roofs. The script OM MANI PADME HUM is written in red on the wall. There are two entrances, with the main entrance on the south side and the other on the east. Inside there are two courtyards. Entering through the main entrance, there are the two small buildings on either side of the first courtyard with the *Badma yogo datsan* belonging to *Gandan* monastery at the far end, which has recently been repainted. The buildings on the sides are now classrooms for the Secondary School of *Gandan* monastery (*Shashnii surgalttai 112 dugaar surguul*, '112th School, providing religious training'), where Buddhist subjects are also taught. (One of them used to be the residence of Zakhar, the founder. (See History section.) There are also consulting rooms for astrologers in these buildings.

Behind the temple, in the second courtyard, there are two yurts: one belongs to *Badma yogo datsan* being used for holding ceremonies; the other is the consulting room for a traditional doctor. At the head of this courtyard there are stairs leading up to the old brick building called 'temple of the Heros', now being used by *Zurkhai datsan* (see current situation part). Below the stairs in the second courtyard in front of *Zurkhai datsan* there are two wooden buildings one of which is used by astrologers, the other being a small shop selling religious articles as well as being the reception for ordering the text readings in the *Zurkhai datsan*.

In front of this main building in the second courtyard there are fragments of stone statues and stupas, prayer-wheels, and images of *Ochirwaan'* (Tib. *phyag-na rdo-rje / phyag-rdor*, Skr. Vajrapani) and *Namsrai* (Tib. *rnam-(thos)-sras*, Skr. Vaishravana) painted on a stupa in front of the building.

Recently, the wall of the complex was extended and renovated. On the front walls of *Geser süm* complex, in 2007 a colourful neon floodlighting was placed: a mantra in Tibetan script in red colour, in the centre the name of one of the temples housed in *Geser süm*, *Badma yoga datsan* written in white, blue and yellow, and on the two sides in written Mongolian '*Gandang tegčenling dačang*' in yellow and red. This is crowned with three green horse heads in the upper part.

History

Jügder's painting does not show this complex as it was built after 1913. A Chinese Buddhist believer, Zakhar, from the Guwe family (Enkhbat, pp. 254-55.) set up the *Geser süm* in 1919-1920. His main aim was to spread Chinese Buddhism in the Mongolian capital. He raised money from rich Chinese silk merchants and lamas to build the temple. However, according to O. Pürew, a Mongolian called Dambadorj, who had a Chinese wife, moved the *Geser* temple (Rinchen 930) to this site near *Gandan* from *Amgalan* (Maimaachen) in 1927. It is possible that both these devotees gave money, sponsored the moving and building of the new temple. (We could not determine which of the sources above is more authentic.)

The temple got its name after Guan di, a Taoist god of war who is also respected by Chinese Buddhists. He was a historical person who became a renowned general of the Three Kingdoms Period. His cult, which was strongly influenced by Buddhist ideas, began around the 7th century. He became known as the God of War and
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Protector of China. Guan di is portrayed wearing full armour as a tall giant of a man with a long beard. When the Manchu dynasty was established, the spirit of Guan di was implored to lend his spiritual power to help the new dynasty defeat all their enemies and to expand their territory. To this end several monasteries were founded for his worship with the name *Geser süm* being frequently used for these Chinese temples in Mongolia. According to Rinchen's map 44 there were temples dedicated to the honour of *Geser* in several of the bigger settlements throughout Mongolia, such as Khowd, Uliastai, Tsetserleg, Khyagt and in the present Choibalsan, where there were also Chinese inhabitants.

Geser mergen khan was the main deity in the temple. *Gesar* or *Geser* is also a name of an epic hero in Tibetan and Mongolian folk literature. The connection between the *Geser* hero and Guan di is not clear, but in Mongolia it appears that the two figures were fused. There is a photo in the Film Archive, which shows an image of *Geser* hero in a Chinese temple (K-24720, box 95), but it is not known in which Chinese temple this image stood.

The Chinese lamas (*khuushaan*) belonging to this temple were called *khökh malgaitai*, which means 'Blue Hat lamas'. They followed a different Buddhist tradition from the Red and Yellow sects of Tibetan Buddhism. This form of Chinese Buddhism originated in the 1st century, when the teaching of Buddha first spread to China. The ceremonies and texts in *Geser süm* were in Chinese and both Chinese and Mongolian lay people visited the temple. In the main temple there was an idol of Guan di. In the temple of the hero on one side there were wall murals of Guan di's chestnut horse, while on the other side was his white horse. In the 1960's D. Danzan, a famous artist lama in *Gandan* monastery, repainted the figure of Guan di. The 180cm picture showed *Geser khan* with his two consorts. (These murals did not survive into the present.)

According to Ölzii (p. 157) the *Dar' ekhiin süm* (Tara temple) was built behind the main assembly hall by adding a small room to it, in the 1930's while the two buildings of the Chinese School were built in 1932 on either side at the back of the main hall. In the same year a fenced-off yard was built for *Dar' ekhiin süm*.

The complex of the temple was not destroyed, but closed from 1933. It was used as a dormitory for state artists from 1937-1940, an office dealing with the revival of cultural heritage from 1950-1960, a library and archive for *Gandan* monastery from 1960-1970, and medical school (Manba datsan) of *Gandan* monastery from 1970. The secondary school was established in 1990 by *Gandan* monastery to educate a new generation of lamas aged 12-16. The Mongolian Government recognized it as an official school in 1991 whereby regular academic subjects following the national curriculum were taught, as well as classic Buddhist subjects. A traditional medical centre also worked within the temple.