

Монголын Сүм Хийдийн Түүхэн Товчоо Төсөл

UBR 930

Rinchen 930 - Amgalangiin Geser süm

English name: Geser Temple in Amgalan

Chinese name: Guan di/Guan yu

GPS was taken at *Dar' ekhiin süm* (Rinchen 931) and is given here only to mark the area of Amgalan (its temples were situated very near to each other). This temple was situated to the north-west of *Dar' ekhiin süm*.

Elevation 1293 m,

N. 47 54.375'

E. 106 59.955'

Data providers: Dr O. Pürew; B. Daajaw architect

Sources: Dүгөрсүрен, Л., *Улаанбаатар хотийн түүхкөөс*. (2nd edition), Улаанбаатар 1999

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Ölzii, J., *Mongoliin дурсгалт уран барилгиin түүхкөөс*. Улаанбаатар 1992

Sereeter, Ö., *Mongoliin Ikh Khүree, Gandan khiidiin түүхкөн бүтөтсийн товч*. 1651-1938. Улаанбаатар 1999

Photos: Mäidar (60), Film Archive (23973, 23974, 23981, 24720 (figure of Geser hero)), Palsi (112-113, 114? (may also represent *Dar' ekhiin süm*)), Geleta/Forbäth (184, two pictures)

History

The biggest and the most prominent Chinese temple inside the walls of Maimaachen was *Geser süm* dedicated to Guan di, the Chinese hero. According to Ölzii (p. 158.) it was founded in 1870. The temple, with a three-storey large gate in front, was situated in the central place, at the centre of the Chinese town in the north, and was approached from the main southern gate along the main road, which divided the Chinese town into two parts, east and west. The Film Archive has some pictures of this temple (within the Chinese temples category, K-23971–23987, box 93). As the photos show, the complex was built in typical Chinese style.

Guan di is 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 began around the 7th century and was strongly influenced by Buddhist ideas. He was also accepted as a Protector of China. Guan di is most often portrayed as a standing tall giant in full armor with a long beard. According to G. Enkhbat (p. 254.) at the time when the Manchu dynasty was established, the Manchus invoked the spirit of Guan yu (Guan di being the honorific form for Guan yu). With his spiritual power, they succeeded in defeating all their enemies thus expanding their empire. They founded many monasteries for his worship. The name *Geser süm* was frequently used for temples founded by the Chinese in Mongolia. In Mongolia, there were two temples in Urga, one in Khowd, one in Uliastai and others in some strategically important places in the country with the same name. *Geser mergen khan* was the deity of all of these temples.

Gesar or Geser is also the name of an epic hero in Tibetan and Mongolian folk literature. Some make the assumption that the name Geser is connected with Caesar. The connection between Geser and Guan di is not clear, but the two figures were juxtaposed in Mongolia. There is a photo in Film Archive, which shows an image of Geser Hero in a Chinese temple (K-24720, box 95). The Chinese lamas (*khuushaan*) of the temple were called *khökh malgait*, that is, Blue Hat lamas, different from lamas of the Red and Yellow Sects of Tibetan Buddhism. (This form of Chinese Buddhism originated in the 5th century, when the Teaching of Buddha first reached China.)

Mostly Mongolian lay people visited the temple. According to Dүгөрсүрен (p. 65.) painted glass oil lamps decorated the temple representing the 100 chapter story of the 'period of the Three dynasty'. A notebook showing records of the weather of Ikh Khүree over a period of 200 years was also kept in the temple. Chinese merchants worshipped *Tsonlkha* (Tib. *tshong lha*) here, the deity of trade and wealth, to help them increase their wealth.

Ungern von Sternberg's troops devastated Maimaachen in 1921, followed by the expulsion of all the inhabitants, both the Chinese merchants and Mongolians, after the Revolutionary Party of Mongolia came to power. Reproduced for the Arts Council of Mongolia by kind permission of the authors of the report 'Monasteries and Temples of Bogdiin Khүree, Ikh Khүree or Urga, the Old Capital City of Mongolia in the First Part of the Twentieth Century.' Survey conducted by Zsuzsa Majer and Krisztina Teleki, Budapest, Hungary. Published in Ulaanbaatar 2006. © held by the authors.

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power. After this the Maimaachen area became a military barrack for the Russian with Russian shops. In 1925 this area was renamed as Amgalanbaatar.

According to O. Pürew, *Geser* temple was moved to its new building (*Baruun Geser süm*, Rinchen 914), near Gandan in 1927 by Dambadorj who had Chinese wife. According to O. Pürew, the Chinese merchants were expelled from the area in 1928 after their trade was made impossible.

Current situation

There are no visible remains. Based on the sources, the exact sites of the temples of Amgalan can be determined roughly in relation to the ruins of *Dar' ekh* temple (Rinchen 931) and the remnants of a Chinese store building. In the whole area there are no other temple remnants than that of *Dar' ekh* temple. According to Oyuunbileg, Z., the lions that were situated in front of this temple survived and are now at the Lion Bridge (*Arsantai güür*), on Peace Avenue over the Selbe River.

Remark:

In the area where Maimaachen once was, today there is a temple going by the name *Choi dechin dashsümprellin* that is operating in a yurt. It is situated between the ruins of an old Chinese store (next to Janjin Club), which was *Nomtiin pүүs*, according to O. Pürew. However, the head of the new temple, J. Batkhaan (Choi) says that these are the remains of the old *Geser* temple of Amgalan. We could not find any source to confirm this assertion and all the other sources we consulted say that the only remaining temple in Amgalan is *Dar' ekhiin süm*.

For information about *Choi dechin dashsümprellin* temple see UB 24 (New Temples entry 24).