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Archaeological perspectives on early 17th century Mongolian buddhist temples: a study of Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin

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Archaeological perspectives on early 17th century Mongolian buddhist temples: a study of Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin

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Abstract - In the territory of Ikhet sum, Dornogovi province of Mongolia, there are the remains of buildings known as "Olon baishin" and "Kheseg baishin". Excavation research was conducted in 2018 and 2019 as part of the "Cities of 17th-century Mongolia" project by the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences. The inscription on a light monument in front of Kheseg baishin mentions the people who founded the temple. However, there was no specific information available about Olon baishin. Through our excavation research at these two sites, we were able to establish a more precise timeline for the construction of these monuments. Additionally, during the excavation of Olon baishin, a manuscript page was discovered, which is an important find reflecting the writing culture of the Mongols in the 16th-17th centuries. Based on previous research on Kheseg baishin and Olon baishin, as well as our own excavation findings, we conclude that these monuments were Buddhist temples built in the early 17th century, following the Tibetan-Chinese style and belonging to the Gelug (Yellow Hat) sect.

Keywords— 17th century, Buddhism, Archaeology, Gelug sect, Tibetan-Chinese style

1. INTRODUCTION

Scholars believe that Buddhism spread three times among the nomadic people. The first spread occurred during the Hunnu period (3rd century BC – 1st century AD), the second during the Mongol Empire period (13th-14th century), and the third spread took place during the 16th-17th centuries. While archaeological research on ancient nomadic peoples in Mongolia has been well

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conducted, there has been little research on archaeological sites from the 16th-17th centuries until today. Initiated by the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Academy of Sciences, the "Cities of 17th Century Mongolia" project conducted archaeological excavations on eight monastery sites between 2013 and 2020[†]. One of the monuments excavated as part of this project is the site known as Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin

The historical monuments Olon baishin "many buildings"[‡] and Kheseg baishin "A group of buildings"[§] are located in the territory of Ikhhet soum, Dornogovi province, Mongolia, in an area known as Büsiin chuluu^{**}, situated approximately 5 km apart (Fig. 1).

Olon baishin is positioned in the northern section of Büsiin Chuluu and, unlike Kheseg baishin, lacks an external fortification wall. The site consists of over 80 structures, varying in size and form, most of which are stupa-like constructions. At the center, the ruins of four large buildings can be found. Additionally, a massive eight-sided stupa, approximately 20 meters in diameter and 7 meters in height, is preserved in the central part of the site.

To the west of the main stupa, at a distance of 100 meters, remnants of another building foundation have been identified, encircled by the remains of eight smaller stupas. The architecture of Olon baishin is characterized by the use of both stone and brick, demonstrating its unique construction technique and artistic features (Fig. 2).

Kheseg baishin, on the other hand, is located 5 km southwest of Olon baishin, in the southern part of Büsiin chuluu. This site is a fortified temple complex, where the remnants of several stupas are still visible within the walled area (Fig. 3). At the entrance of the stone fortress, a stone turtle base, which once supported a commemorative stele, remains intact (Fig. 4). Additionally, a small ritual temple was located within the fortress walls. However, in recent years, local herders have begun using the walled area as an enclosure for livestock, resulting in significant damage to the monument, with some sections even disappearing.

[†] The leader of the "Cities of 17th Century Mongolia" project is Academician S. Chuluun. The field research was led by E. Urtnasan and Ch. Enhtul.

[‡] The name "**Olon Baishin**" was given by local residents due to the presence of multiple building ruins in one place.

[§] The term "**Kheseg Baishin**" was given by local residents to describe a place where a small number of buildings are located together.

^{**} The name of a natural formation with continuous rocky terrain



Fig. 1. Location of Olon Baishin and Kheseg Baishin

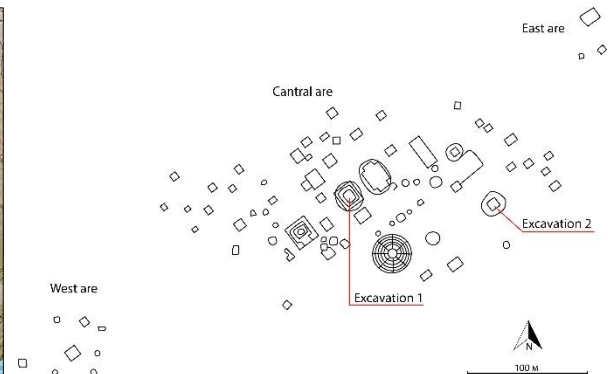


Fig. 2. Topographic Plan of Olon Baishin

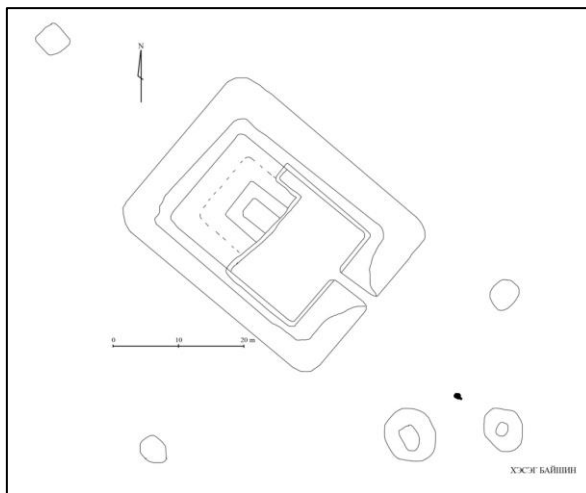


Fig. 3. Topographic Plan of Kheseg Baishin



Fig. 4. Stone Turtle Stele Base in Front of Kheseg Baishin

2. RESEARCH OVERVIEW

The historical sites of Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin were first introduced into academic research by Timkovsky. During his stay near Olon baishin in 1822, he recorded information from Ipam, an assistant of Khardal Zasag's hoshun, who claimed that "300 years ago, the Mongolian noble Sain khuntaij resided in Olon baishin" [1].

In 1859, Pallady Kafarov, while traveling northward from China along a postal route, stayed overnight at Büsiin chölöö station and examined the ruins of Olon baishin and kheseg

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Baishin. At the time, Kheseg baishin was referred to as “Khetsiin baishin”, and Kafarov noted that its main gate was arched [2].

In 1923, researchers V. A. Kazakevich and D. Natsagdorj visited Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin under the assignment of the Institute of Sutra and Historical Writings. They documented the sites and collected oral traditions and legends from local residents. Additionally, they created two copies of the inscription on the stele at Kheseg baishin [3].

During the 1950s, scholar Kh. Perlee deciphered the Mongolian script inscriptions of Kheseg baishin and cross-referenced them with Mongolian historical sources. Based on his findings, he concluded that Kheseg baishin was established between 1616 and 1659 by various Mongol tribes, including Avga, Avganar, Khuuchid, Sönöd, Üzemchin, and Tavnan, who had settled in the middle reaches of the Kherlen river [4].

In 2019, Ch. Gansukh, the curator of the Mongolian manuscript and block-print collection at the National Library of Mongolia, discovered a copy of Kheseg baishin’s stele inscription in the library’s archives. He transcribed and transliterated the inscription into modern Mongolian script, confirming Kh. Perlee’s research findings [5].

However, further research by B. Natsagdorj of the Institute of History and Ethnology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences, reassessed the inscription and concluded that Kheseg baishin was not built in 1659, but in 1599 [6].

3. ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION

The Field Research Team of the Institute of History and Ethnology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences (MAS) conducted archaeological excavations at Kheseg baishin in 2018 [7] and at Olon baishin in 2019 [8]. During these investigations, the team documented detailed descriptions of both sites, created topographic maps to illustrate the layout of the structures, and analyzed architectural features to understand the construction techniques used. They also discovered significant artifacts that provided insights into the historical context of the monuments. These findings have contributed to a deeper understanding of the structural characteristics and historical significance of Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin.

3.1 EXCAVATION AT KHESEG BAISHIN

The main structure of Kheseg baishin is rectangular in shape and enclosed by a stone fortress wall. The wall measures 33 meters in length, 28 meters in width, and 4 meters in thickness, with a single entrance on the southern side. Inside the stone enclosure, there was a small building measuring 6.10×4.80 meters. Additionally, the remains of three stupas were found on the southern side of the fortress, while one low stupa base was identified on both the western and northern sides. In front of the fortress, a stone turtle stele base, traditionally used to support an inscription stele, was found facing south.

During the excavation of the small building foundation inside the fortress, a compacted earth floor was uncovered at a depth of two meters beneath the surface. In the central part of the room, a brick structure measuring 2×1.5 meters, built from red and blue bricks, was discovered (Fig. 5). Several artifacts were unearthed near this brick foundation, including carved bone ornaments, fragments of blue and white porcelain, bone chess pieces, a stone incense burner base,

roof tile fragments, and remains of small livestock bones. These artifacts suggest that the building was used for religious purposes.

One of the most significant discoveries was a solid silver cup wrapped in silk, found beneath the brick floor, which appears to have been a consecration deposit (shünshig). Inside the cup, various ritual and decorative objects were carefully placed, including thin gold leaf, silver earrings, crescent-shaped silver ornaments, silver wire, pearls, copper, brass, and iron objects. Additionally, seashells, coral beads, agate stones, crystal figurines shaped like animals, and grains were discovered within the deposit. The presence of these sacred offerings strongly suggests that this structure was an integral part of a buddhist temple or monastery (Fig. 6).

This excavation provided valuable insights into the architectural structure and religious significance of Kheseg baishin, confirming that it was a significant spiritual and cultural center in the past.



Fig. 5. Excavation Process and Post-Excavation Condition of Kheseg baishin



Fig. 6. Artifacts Discovered During the Excavation of Kheseg baishin

3.2 EXCAVATION AT OLON BAISHIN

The archaeological excavation conducted at Olon baishin in 2019 focused on two primary areas: building No. 1, located at the center of the site, and a stupa situated on the southeastern side of the complex.

The excavation of building No. 1 revealed a three-tiered buddhist altar, 90 cm in height, positioned at the central part of the structure. Along the eastern and western walls, four smaller Buddha pedestals were discovered on each side, totaling eight pedestals. Additionally, in front of these pedestals, two 100×100 cm platforms, standing 40 cm high, were found (Fig. 7).

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Further analysis of the building's interior structure and decorative elements uncovered significant architectural and cultural artifacts, including roof tiles, blue bricks, phoenix and dragon-themed building decorations, fragments of ceramic household items, wooden embellishments, and fragments of buddhist texts written in Mongolian script on birch bark.

Several wall paintings depicting multicolored plant motifs, along with clay and metal sculptures, were also discovered. Among them were small clay Buddha fragments, a human face-shaped clay sculpture, a monkey head figurine, and a bronze Buddha statue of Chinese craftsmanship, all of which reflect the artistic, architectural, and religious characteristics of the period.

The excavation of the stupa revealed that its foundation measured 15×15 meters and was constructed using a stepped architectural design. At the central part of the stupa, at a depth of three meters, a black-glazed pottery vessel (20 cm high with a narrow opening) was found. Inside the vessel were two types of silk, fruit pits, and nine types of precious materials, providing strong evidence that ritual consecration practices (shünshig) were performed when the stupa was constructed (Fig. 8).

The building materials excavated from building No. 1 included various types of roof tiles, such as green-glazed ridge tiles, face tiles featuring dragon motifs, and phoenix-shaped drip tiles, which serve as crucial references for studying the architectural style of the site. Green-glazed ornaments placed along the main ridge and eaves, along with clay decorations depicting animals and a water buffalo head ornament, further highlight the sophistication of architectural craftsmanship during that period (Fig. 9).

Regarding the interior decoration, painted wooden embellishments featuring floral patterns in red, green, and white pigments were discovered, while Buddha pedestals were painted in red, blue, black, and white, with fine artistic detailing. Notably, human head-shaped clay sculptures made from sandy red clay were painted white and red, with oval-shaped black glass inlays used for the eyes. A thin iron wire ran through the top of these sculptures, forming a loop, suggesting that they were once attached to something. These human head sculptures were likely representations of skull beads associated with wrathful deities [9].

The discoveries at Olon baishin provide valuable insights into religious practices, architectural design, ornamental artistry, and literary traditions of the period. These artifacts serve as a crucial source for the study of Mongolia's cultural heritage, shedding light on historical Buddhist rituals and monastic architecture.



Fig. 7. Excavation Process of Building No. 1 at Olon baishin



Fig. 8. Excavation Process of the Stupa



Fig. 9. Selected Artifacts Discovered During the Excavation of Building No. 1

4. ARCHITECTURAL STRUCTURE AND LAYOUT

In the early 17th century, Buddhism spread across Khalkh Mongolia, and major nobles and aristocrats began to invite Tibetan monks as religious teachers. Around this time, approximately 50 monasteries [10]. Were established in Khalkh Mongolia, while over 30 monasteries were built in Inner Mongolia. The monasteries in Inner Mongolia were built in the Tibetan-Chinese style, but gradually Mongolian designs started to be incorporated [11].

Historical records indicate that Tibet played a significant role in the establishment of monasteries in Khalkh Mongolia in the early 17th century. The biography of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama, written by Zaya Bandida, includes several interesting details related to the history of the Saridag Monastery. These details include:

"After him, from Golok (the Dalai Lama's main palace), a teacher from Namjal Datsan was appointed as a monastery lama, and Jayiul's Abbot Nambei Sharqan was consecrated. The treasurer of the Breybum Jasan was in charge of managing funds, and the religious scholar, Jamabalin Bayenbag, a monk, healer, and foreign missionary, Dagvadrung Tsoba, was also designated as a prominent religious figure. The teachings of the head lama, Zonkhova's disciple Donduv Rinchen, were imparted on the Jajun Bragin seat. The winter of the Year of the Rabbit (1651) saw him arrive at the monastery"[12].

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This passage indicates that the Dalai Lama specially sent Tibetan monks to build the Ribogejagandanshadublin Monastery in Khalkh Mongolia. Other biographies of the Great Fifth Dalai Lama mention his discussions about establishing a religious monastery in Mongolia, which was highly praised and supported by the Dalai Lama, although there are no records about the exact establishment of the monastery. From these sources, it is clear that Tibetan monks were sent to Khalkh Mongolia to build monasteries.

The architectural structure and layout of Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin reflect the distinctive characteristics of 16th-17th century Mongolian religious architecture. Excavations have provided critical insights into the design, structure, and function of these historical sites. Findings from the excavation confirm that Olon baishin was a large-scale religious complex with multiple structures. The overall layout consists of a central sanctuary, surrounded by smaller temples, stupas, and auxiliary buildings. The main structure is rectangular in design, aligned 148° southeast, and measures 10.5 × 13 meters.

The walls were built using a combination of stone and brick, with a thickness of 0.8 meters at the northern section and 0.5 meters at the southern section. However, the original height of the structure remains undetermined due to the level of deterioration. The building was constructed on a stone foundation measuring 16.7 × 14.6 meters, elevated one meter above the ground, with parts of the staircase reinforced with clay (Fig. 10). These findings contribute significantly to the understanding of Mongolian buddhist architectural traditions during the late medieval period, shedding light on the construction techniques and spatial organization of monastic complexes in the region.

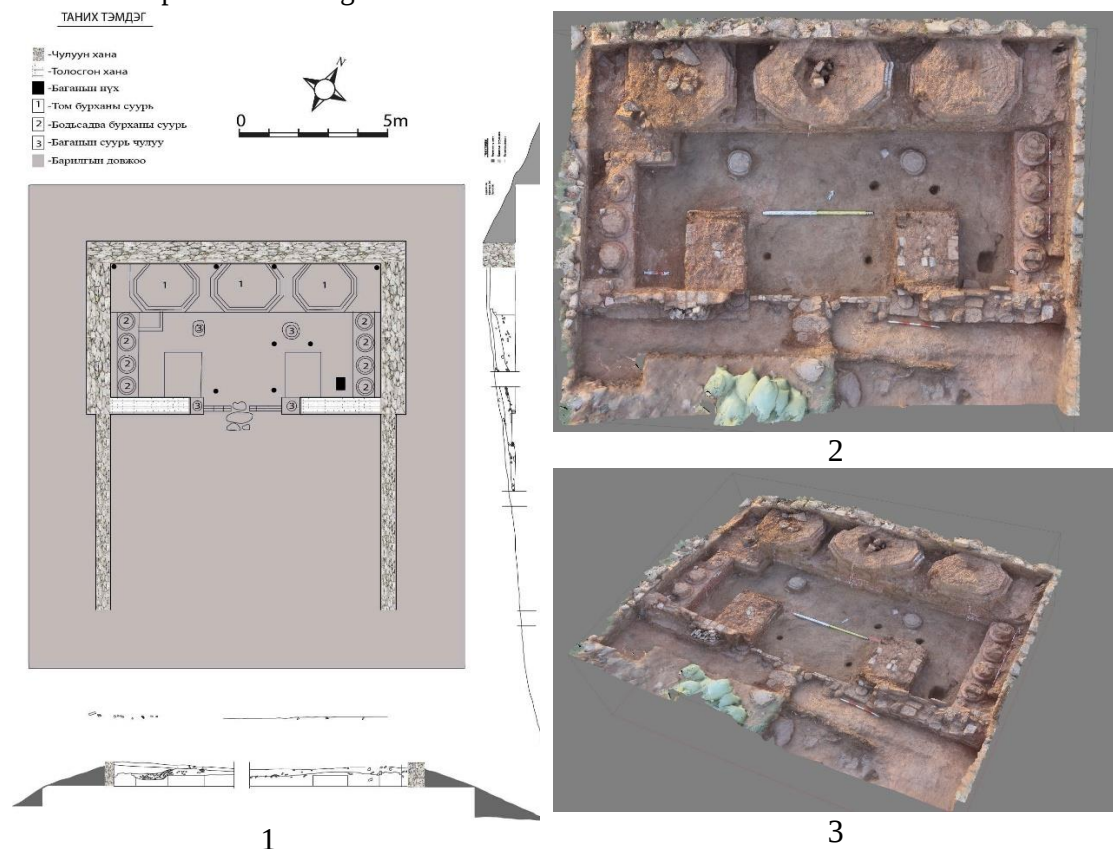


Fig. 10. 1 - Schematic Drawing of the Structure of Building No. 1 at Olon baishin; 2, 3 - Interior Structure and Buddha Pedestal



Fig. 11. Roof Tiles Discovered from Building No. 1 at Olon baishin

The excavation of the building revealed green-glazed roof tiles, blue bricks, animal-shaped ornaments, wooden carvings, and ritual objects used as consecration (shünshig) deposits, confirming that the structure was a high-status temple or monastery. The relief carvings of dragons and phoenixes on the roof tiles align with the traditional architectural style of large monastic complexes (Fig. 11). The excavation also confirmed that the stupas within Olon baishin were large, stepped structures with intricate craftsmanship. The foundation of the stupa measured 15×15 meters, and at its central part, at a depth of three meters, a black-glazed pottery vessel (20 cm high with a narrow opening) was unearthed. Inside the vessel, two types of silk, fruit pits, and nine types of precious materials were found, indicating that ritual consecration and offerings were practiced during the stupa's construction (Fig. 12).

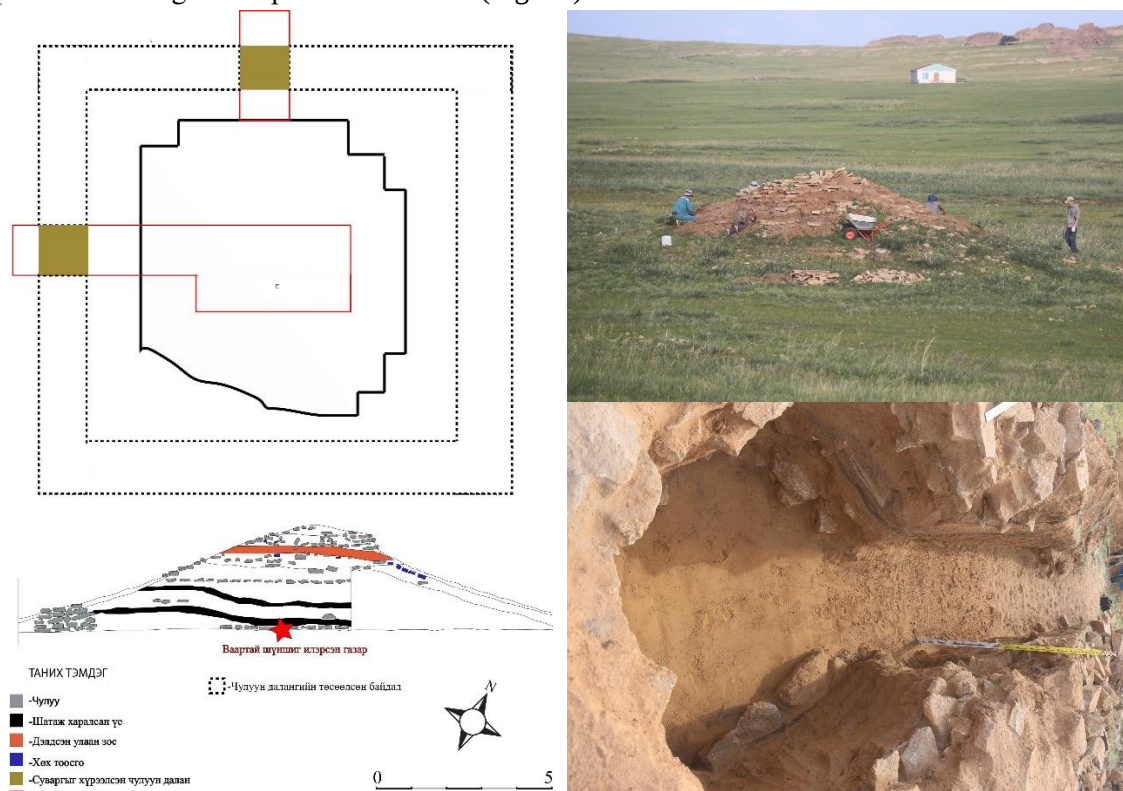


Fig. 12. Excavation process of the stupa at Olon baishin and schematic drawing of its structure

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Kheseg baishin was enclosed by a stone fortress wall with an arched entrance on the southern side and contained a ritual temple inside. The total length of the fortress wall measured 33 meters, with a width of 28 meters and a thickness of 4 meters. The architectural layout suggests that this temple served as a place of worship and a center for religious ceremonies. Excavations within the fortress revealed the remains of a small temple, along with green-glazed roof tiles, finely crafted decorative fragments, multicolored blue tiles, intricately carved bone ornaments, bone chess pieces, and ritual consecration (shūnshig) objects, all of which indicate that the site was a high-status religious structure.

Outside the fortress walls, there were four stupas—two on the southern side, one on the western side, and one on the northern side. The stone turtle stele base, located at the entrance of the fortress, along with the fragment of an inscribed stele, provides concrete evidence that the structure was built in 1599.

The architectural structure and layout of Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin suggest that these sites were among the major religious centers of 16th-17th century Mongolia. Their design and construction closely resemble elite buddhist monasteries built under the patronage of Mongol rulers and nobles. The findings indicate that the layout of Olon baishin shares similarities with Erdene zuu monastery's main temple (Gol zuu), Tsogt prince's White Palace (Tsogtiin tsagaan baishin), and Chojin lama temple, demonstrating strong ties to Mongolia's significant buddhist architectural traditions (Fig. 13).

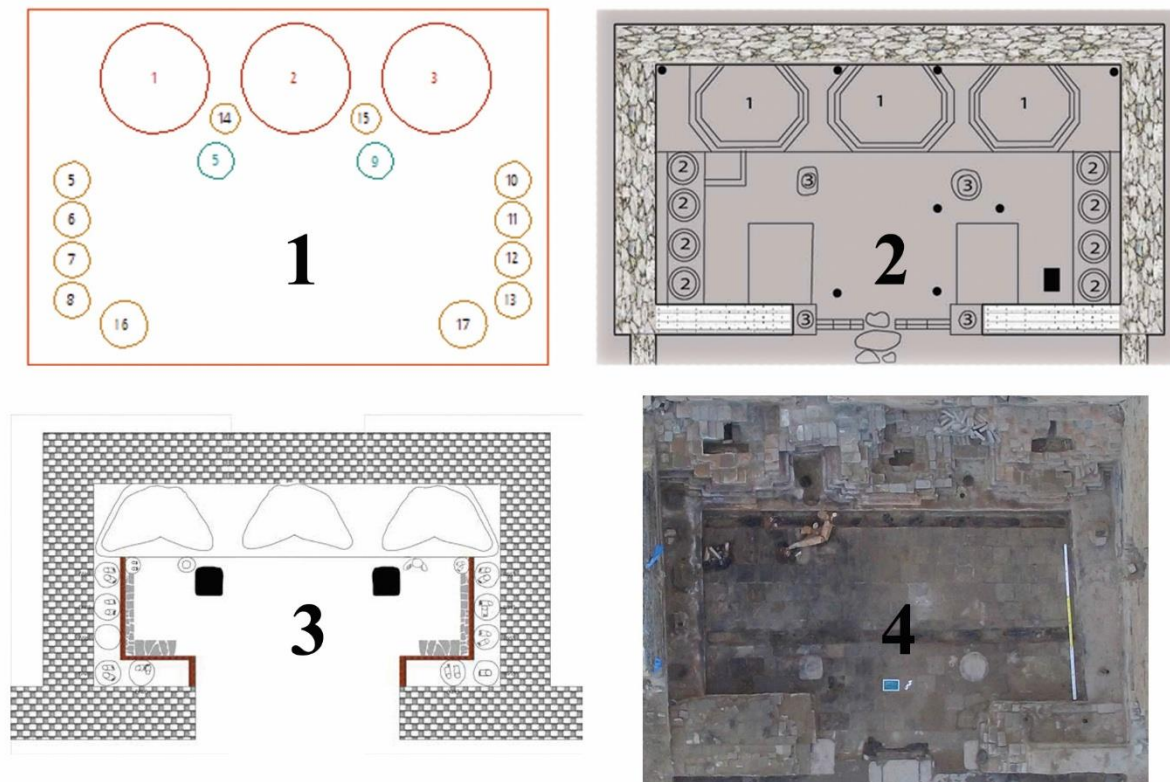


Fig. 13. 1 – Erdene zuu monastery, 2 – Olon baishin, 3 – Sáridag monastery, 4 – Interior layout of the main temple of Tsogt's White Palace (Tsogtiin tsagaan baishin)

5. ARTIFACTS AND THEIR SIGNIFICANCE

The archaeological excavations at Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin uncovered numerous significant artifacts related to religious rituals, architecture, script culture, and daily life of the period. These discoveries serve as crucial sources for understanding the development of buddhism in Mongolia, cultural influences, and architectural craftsmanship.

Among the excavated architectural materials, the various types of roof tiles hold particular significance. The roof of Olon baishin's buildings featured green-glazed tiles, face tiles, and ridge tiles, which were characteristic of high-status Buddhist temples and monasteries. The green-glazed tiles, originating from the Mongol Empire period, closely resemble those found at Tsogt Ikh Temple in Karakorum [13] and Nogoon balgas in the Orkhon valley [14]. The dragon and phoenix motif decorations on the tiles further highlight the symbolic representations and religious architectural elements of the time.

One of the most notable artifacts discovered during the excavation is a bronze Buddha statue of Chinese craftsmanship. Found in the central part of building No. 1, this 10.5 cm-tall figure is depicted in a seated posture on a three-layered lotus pedestal. The left hand rests palm-up on the lap, while the right hand is slightly clenched and positioned near the chest with a bent elbow, aligning with traditional Buddhist iconography. The hair is arranged in a raised bun, secured by a long ornamental pin that extends outward on both sides, with a ribbon-like element cascading down the back.

The facial features of the statue—a prominent aquiline nose, large ears, and slightly narrowed eyes—suggest Chinese artistic influence. This bronze Buddha statue serves as an essential artifact for studying the buddhist art of the period, bronze casting techniques, and the influence of Chinese culture on Mongolian religious art (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14. Bronze Buddha statue discovered from building No. 1 at Olon baishin

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One of the most remarkable discoveries among the interior decorative artifacts is the wooden carvings. These carvings feature floral motifs painted in red, green, and white pigments, while Buddha pedestals were ornately decorated with intricate paintings in red, blue, black, and white. Additionally, clay sculptures depicting human heads were found, crafted from sandy red clay and painted in white and red, with eyes made from black oval-shaped glass inlays. These artifacts not only reflect the fine craftsmanship of buddhist architecture but also provide essential insights into the decorative styles of monastic complexes during the period.

Among the script-related artifacts, the most valuable finds are birch bark manuscript fragments. Discovered at Olon baishin, these manuscripts measure 9×7 cm, containing 12-14 lines of Mongolian script written in black ink on a single side. The content is divided into two main sections: the first section pertains to divination, medical symptoms, and prognostic texts, while the second section consists of sutras related to Amitābha buddha [15]. These manuscripts serve as a crucial source for understanding buddhist ritual practices, the use of sacred texts in monastic settings, and the state of religious education at the time (Figure 15).

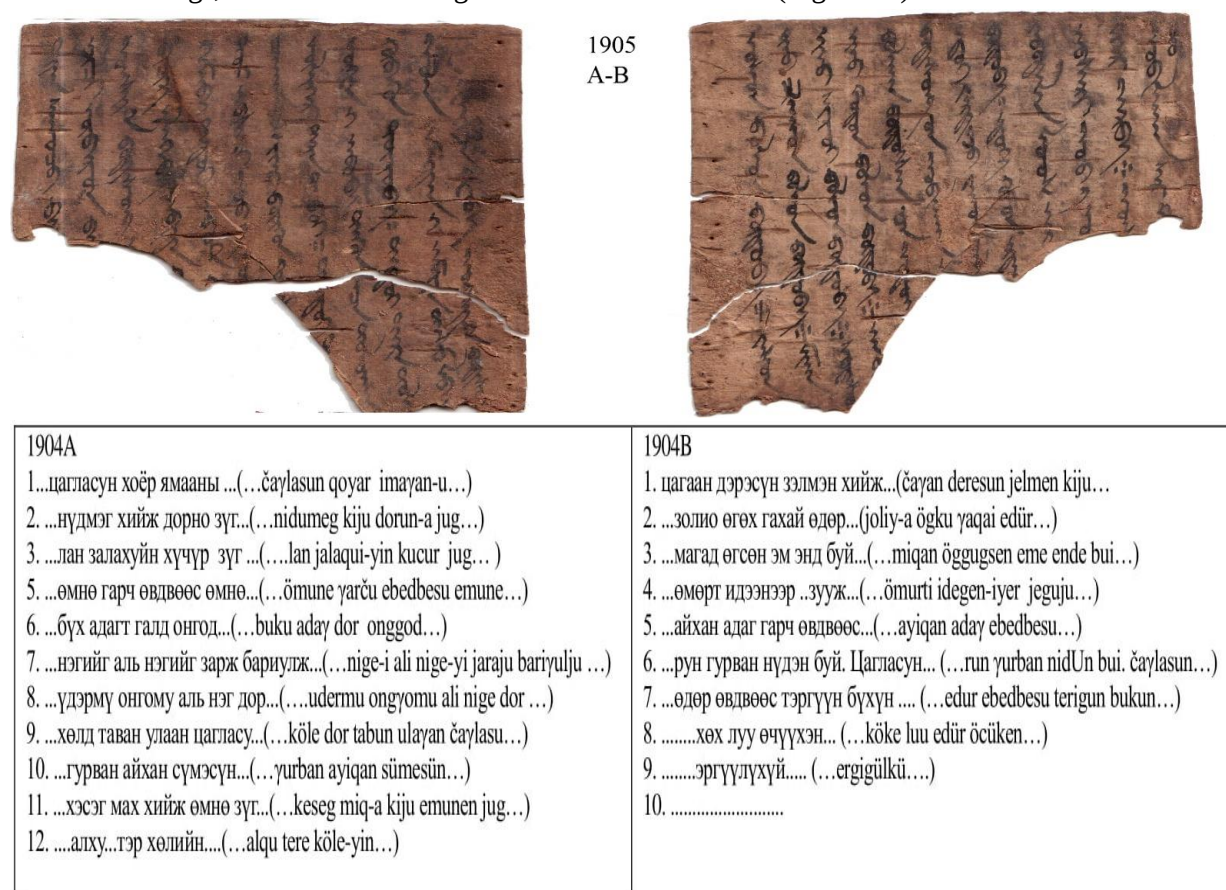


Fig. 15. Birch bark manuscript pages discovered from building No. 1 at Olon baishin

Among the ceramic artifacts discovered at Olon baishin, one of the most intriguing finds is a heavily fragmented vessel, consisting of 23 broken pieces, recovered from the central shrine area. This decorated ceramic features raised relief depictions of clouds, trees, and other natural elements. The background is painted in deep blue, while the clouds are rendered in black, gray, and ochre tones, and the tree leaves are embossed in a circular pattern.

Along the rim of the vessel, a raised cloud motif encloses Eight Auspicious Symbols (Ashtamangala), indicating that this artifact belongs to the Chinese FaHua (法华) ceramic tradition [16]. FaHua ceramics, known for their vibrant blue, turquoise, purple, green, yellow, and white alkaline glazes, were originally produced in China during the 12th century and became widely used in religious and decorative contexts (Fig. 16).

These artifacts provide invaluable insights into buddhist rituals, architectural organization, decorative arts, and script culture of the period. The findings further confirm that Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin were not merely religious temples, but also served as centers of high-level buddhist art and architecture in Mongolia, representing the peak of monastic craftsmanship and cultural synthesis of the era.



Fig. 16. 1 – FaHua style vase discovered at Olon baishin; 2 – FaHua vase found in China ^{††}



Fig. 17. Bone chess pieces discovered at Kheseg baishin

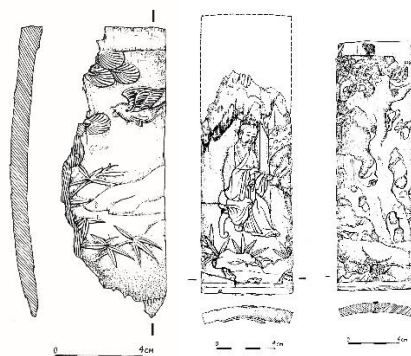


Fig. 18. Carved bone artifacts discovered at Kheseg baishin

^{††} <https://www.bonhams.com/auction/25357/lot/35/a-rare-and-large-fahua-bajixiang-and-dignitaries-jar-and-cover-guan-first-half-of-the-16th-century-2/>

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Fig. 20. Architectural clay decorations discovered at Olon baishin



Fig. 21. Clay sculptures of human and Monkey heads discovered at Olon baishin

6. CHRONOLOGICAL ISSUES OF OLON BAISHIN AND KHESEG BAISHIN

Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin are unique monuments of 16th-17th century Mongolian religious architecture, and determining their construction dates is one of the key issues in archaeological and historical research. The most important evidence for establishing the construction date of these monuments is the inscription on the stele at Kheseg Baishin, which indicates that it was built in 1599.

In 1923, V.A. Kazakevich and D. Natsagdorj visited Olon Baishin and Kheseg Baishin on a mission from the Institute of Sutra and Historical Writings, documenting their findings and collecting historical and legendary information from local people. They also made two copies of the inscription on Kheseg Baishin's stele, which became the foundational document for further research on these monuments. In the 1950s, Kh. Perlee deciphered the Mongolian inscription on the stele, and hypothesized that the monument was built by various Mongol tribes, including Avgga, Avganar, Khuuchid, Sönöd, Üzemchin, and Tavnar, between 1616 and 1659 in the middle reaches of the Kherlen river.

In 2019, Ch. Gansukh, the head of the Mongolian Manuscript and Block Print Department at the National Library of Mongolia, discovered a copy of the Kheseg baishin stele in the library's collection, and after reading and transcribing it, he found that it aligned with Kh. Perlee's conclusions. However, B. Natsagdorj, a researcher at the Institute of History and Ethnology, Mongolian Academy of Sciences, re-examined the inscription and concluded that Kheseg baishin was built in 1599, not 1659.

The archaeological excavation at Olon baishin revealed Chinese-style bronze Buddha statues, water buffalo (Figure 20-4), and monkey head figurines (Figure 21-6), which demonstrate that the builders of the temple had close cultural and trade relations with the Ming Dynasty, reflecting the cultural influence of China. This supports the information in the Kheseg baishin stele, which mentions the involvement of various nomadic Mongol tribes in the construction.

The architectural structure, roof tiles, decorations, and internal layout of the temples also play an important role in determining their construction date. For instance, green-glazed roof tiles, dragon-faced ridge tiles, and phoenix-shaped drop tiles were commonly used in Mongolian Buddhist architecture during the medieval period. Comparing these artifacts with similar findings from other archaeological sites, such as the ruins of Karakorum (Övörkhangaï) [17], Tsogt's White Palace (Bulgan) [18], and Sâridag Monastery (Töv) [19], reveals that Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin were likely constructed in the early 16th-17th centuries. Furthermore, the Mongolian manuscript found at Olon baishin, written in Mongolian script, has been dated to the 16th-17th century based on the writing style and word choices [20].

From the above evidence, it is clear that Olon baishin and Kheseg baishin were established in the 16th-17th centuries, with the involvement of nomadic Mongol tribes and became significant religious centers of the period. The construction dates of these monuments can be determined through inscriptions, archaeological findings, and architectural features, underscoring their importance in the development of Mongolian religious culture.

7. CONCLUSION

Within the framework of the "17th-Century Mongolian Cities" project, initiated by Academician S. Chuluun, Director of the Institute of History and Ethnology of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences, archaeological and historical research is being conducted on eight heritage sites, including Saridag Monastery, Sum Tolgoi Ruins, Tsogt's White Palace, Kharbukha Ruins, Khögnö Tarnyn Övgun Monastery, Sum Khukh Burd, Olong Baishin, and Kheseg Baishin.

During the 16th-17th centuries, Mongolian rulers and nobles established significant religious structures, as confirmed by ongoing research. Archaeological findings, including ceramics and Buddhist sculptures, indicate that these monasteries served not only as religious centers but also as political and cultural hubs.

Inscriptions on the stele of Kheseg Baishin confirm that it was founded by nobles of the Inner Mongolian tribes of Avgâ, Avganar, Khuchid, Sönöd, Üzemchin, and Tavnân. Artifacts such as bronze Buddhas, Chinese Fahua ceramics, and clay sculptures suggest Ming cultural influences on Mongolian Buddhism during that period.

Although Buddhism was introduced to Mongolia from India and Tibet, Mongolian monastery architecture incorporated Chinese elements and the yurt-like structures of the nomadic lifestyle. This is evident in sites such as Olong Baishin and Kheseg Baishin, which exhibit a Tibetan-Chinese architectural style with a central temple surrounded by stupas and auxiliary temples, similar to Erdene Zuu and Saridag Monastery.

Excavations have uncovered ceramics and roof ornaments that reflect the architectural traditions of Mongolian Buddhist monasteries. Ritual items such as silver cups, gold, and precious stones placed in the foundation of religious structures indicate that these sites were not merely buildings but centers of deep spiritual significance.

Unfortunately, these historical monuments are deteriorating due to natural and human factors, with some at risk of complete destruction. Therefore, further preservation, restoration, and detailed research are necessary.

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