

<http://www.hunzaturism.com/attraction/ondrafort/>

## **”Ondra Fort”**

### **Location: Gulmit Gojal upper Hunza**

Like other valleys of Gilgit- Baltistan the Gojal valley in Upper Hunza is host to a number of historical monuments found in its villages. Gulmit, the main town, is dotted with wooden mosques, maktabas (religious schools) shrines and forts.

Among the forts and fortresses such as Qalandarchi fort in Misgar, Reshit fort in Chapursan valley, however, the Ondra fort is more prominent. This fort is perched on the Ondra hill rock overlooking Gulmit kamaris and Ghulkin villages. This fort is believed to have been built by Qutlugh in the 16th century. He was the first wakhi ruler who established his rule in Gulmit threatening the Mirs of hunza. Before him, Gulmit was under the central of Azur Jamshid (1550-1556) who was the ruler of Gilgit.

His sons Su malik and Mir Malik were deputed to collect tax from Gojal Upper Hunza valley. Once on their way back from Yishkook in Chapursan valley where they had gone to collect the tax, they liked the area and decided to live in Gulmit. After the death of Azur Jamshid, Su Malik, who was his elder son, rushed to Gilgit to sit on his father’s throne. He became the new ruler of Gilgit (1556-1578). According to Muhammad Zia, noted genealogy keeper (zoon) of Gulmit, after some time, Mir Malik, Qutlugh with the help of the locals captured Gulmit and surrounding villages during his stay in Gulmit, Mir Malik is believed to have built a mosque there which carried his name. Unfortunately, the mosque of Mir malik does not exist today. Qutlugh belonged to the charshambi kotor (clan) lineage of Wakhis of Gulmit.

The territory of Qutlugh started from Khyber village and ended at Gulmit. In order to secure his territory from invaders, he built two gates, one at Khyber village and the other at Gulmit, which were used to be closed at night. The remains of both the gates and the fortification wall can still be seen at Khyber as well as in Gulmit. In order to rein in the advance of the enemies from north and south, he built the Ondra fort. To its north lay the state of hunza and on the south the Kirghiz in invaders who used to attack Gulmit. An oval shaped, the height of the ram parts of the Ondra fort are six to fifteen feet high. There were living quarters inside the fort on the north and south side separated by a central wall that runs east-west. The central ram part is higher than southern and northern fortification walls. The northern quarters were can structured for the army of Qutlugh to keep eye on enemy movements from that side and the southern quarters housed soldiers who watched the enemy from hunza side.

The fortification walls have been provided embrasure and melons. Only the northern and fortification walls have been provided embrasure. The ramparts of the fort are still in good conditions. However the eastern and western fortification walls have crumbled. The Ondra fort reflects the power of wakhi ruler Qutlugh who was never defeated by the Mirs of hunza. He was famous for his gallantry and sword man ship. The Mirs of hunza were scared of his rising power. They never dared to cross the territory. Qutlugh was poisoned to death by one of his elderly female servants. She was sent on this mission by Mir of hunza. She administrated poison in the food of Qutlugh and his courtesans. After the death of Qutlugh Gulmit was recaptured and Ondra fell in to the hand of Mir of hunza. Qutlugh was buried in Gulmit along with his courtesans. According to elders of Gulmit the grave Qutlugh was located were there is now the government girls high school.

Qutlugh ruled over Gulmit and it is adjoining areas for twelve years. During his rule, land and life was safe and secure. He pushed the advancing Kirghiz back to their land and never let them succeed in their purpose. The heroic stories of Qutlugh are still remembered by wakhi people from Ondra fort, one can have a panoramic view of Gulmit valley, headquarter of Gojal tehsil. From south one can see

Gulmit and as far as shishkat villages and from north one can view and enjoy the seeing is Ghulkin village and glacier, the Tupopdan peak and Qaroon peak. From west, there are amazing views of Gulmit glaciers, Gulmit tower, shisper peak and Ultar Sar. And from east is the spectacular view of upper Hunza River. One can enjoy the sun rise and sunset views from Ondra fort on the surrounding peaks. Keeping in view the tourist potential of the spot, efforts should be made to preserve the fort. The Aga Khan cultural service Pakistan (AKCSP) who has done a valuable work in preserving ancient Baltit and Altit fort in hunza and Shigar fort in Baltistan may take up this project along with other places of historic and cultural interest in the valley.