

## THE ORIGIN OF XIONGNU ARCHAEOLOGICAL CULTURE BASED ON FUNERAL RITES

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**Abstract.** *This paper addresses the issue of the origin of Xiongnu archaeological culture (3rd century BC – 2nd century AD) by examining certain aspects of their funeral rites, namely the exterior and interior structures of tombs, orientation and position of bodies – features resembling the Bronze- and early Iron Age culture of slab graves. The author argues that there has been a strong link between the two distinct archaeological cultures of slab graves and that of the Xiongnu; yet does not underestimate the influence of early nomadic cultures of northern China. The early stages of “xiongnuization” are represented by several tombs of 4th-3rd centuries BC from northern and western Mongolia, bearing certain archaic features typical of the funeral rite of the slab grave culture. It also meant that the ethno-cultural history of native population of Inner Asia was a continuous process that lasted throughout eighteen centuries. The paper is based on recently unearthed archaeological evidences of both Xiongnu tombs and slab graves found in Mongolia.*

### INTRODUCTION

The Xiongnu founded the first nomadic empire and were the first successful steppe power to confront the Chinese pressure during Qin and Han dynasties. Throughout three centuries of their dominance, the Xiongnu unified and controlled the steppe and left a deep mark in the history of Inner Asia. With their westward migration, coupled with their activities across Central and Western Europe, the Xiongnu laid down the first recorded contact between the eastern and western parts of Eurasia. Nevertheless, the problem of their origin and archaeological culture has yet to be determined holistically. In particular, despite the conventional acceptance of the proto-Turkic origin of the Xiongnu, “there still are many points to argue” to challenge this approach (Konovalov 1999: 45). In their effort to identify the linguistic affiliation of the Xiongnu, the scholars generally take the proto-Mongol or proto-Turkic approach, but historical and linguistic evidences are not sufficiently compelling to make a final judgment. Thus, it is evident that only archaeological sources have decisive

role in solving such a complicated problem. Hereby I attempt to offer some additional arguments based on my research findings on funeral rites of the Xiongnu common burials in Mongolia.

## DISCUSSION

As far as the origin of the Xiongnu archaeological culture is concerned, two different theories are widely shared among the scholars, namely: First, that the Xiongnu culture was created upon the bases of the slab-cist grave culture of Mongolia; Second, that it originated from the cultures of Karasuk and Scythian period of northern China. We hereby present argumentations behind each proposition, eschewing a biased preference of either one of them.

**Links between Slab Graves and Origins of the Xiongnu.** Mongolian senior archaeologist Ts. Dorjsuren referred to the slab graves as “the most ancient of the Xiongnu tombs,” and concluded that Xiongnu common burials stem from the slab graves on the grounds of the resemblance of the slab graves and Xiongnu tombs in positioning and orientation of the body, patterns on the exterior as well as the items found in the interior (Dorjsuren 1956: 41). He also stressed that “identical key patterns on porcelain of both the Bronze Age and the Xiongnu period, and identical technique used in production thereof cause to stipulate the mutual linkage in tradition”, and pointed out to other similarities in certain types of knives and arrowheads, all leading to the assumption of ethnic kinship (Dorjsuren 1956: 96). D. Tseveendorj supported Ts. Dorjsuren’s ideas on common origins of the slab grave culture and the Xiongnu culture (Tseveendorj 1987: 75). Likewise, a prominent Russian figure of Xiongnu studies, Lev N. Gumilev thought that the slab grave culture was an early stage of an independent Xiongnu culture (Gumilev 1997: 37).

Furthermore, D. Navaan concludes, the slab graves common to the vast areas of Central Asia ... are reflected, in many ways, in the Xiongnu tombs. Indeed, among the Xiongnu there were many followers of the rites of the slab grave period; the funeral rites of the latter almost explicitly follow the former, with a slight change in the depth of burials, from shallow layer of the soil to deep incision (Navaan 1975: 127-8). Although D. Navaan did not mention what particular features resemble each other in slab graves and Xiongnu tombs, he apparently did enclose what were becoming the subject to differentiation – most likely the emerging Xiongnu practice of positioning the body of the deceased headed toward the North, despite the existence of other directions, such as to the East, the Southeast and the South among some Xiongnu groups. In D. Navaan’s view, such diversity was caused by “changes in

Xiongnu customs as a result of emerging differentiation of tribes” (Navaan 1975: 128). Finally, he stressed that those who constructed the slab graves were the ancestors of the Xiongnu, and that some later groups of their descendants occupied the Trans-Baikal region. He also noted a striking evidence of the proof of structural similarity between the slab grave and the Xiongnu graves, found in Tomb 1 of the site in Bayan county of Central province of Mongolia: a prolonged-shaped rock placed at the head of the body as a corner, and the sidewalls built in wood. This tradition of placing cornerstones at the head and feet of the body and fences the outer perimeter with wood, typical of the slab graves was passed onto the next variations of burial, along with the emerging usage of wood in tomb construction (Navaan 1975: 37). Tomb 3 of the Gurvan Zaghal site contains an outer wall built in stones, however, a separate wooden coffin was placed within, with its sides spiked to the outer stone walls, and its corners meticulously defined (Navaan 1975: 37). These facts, in D. Navaan’s view, reveal the transformation of slab graves from stone-only internal structures gradually to a combination of stone- and wooden structure; and that the Xiongnu maintained this tradition intact.

V. V. Volkov, upon the findings of the slab and Xiongnu graves excavation, concluded that “the slab graves culture served as a source for the Northern Xiongnu culture”, and noted the appearance of stone-assembled coffins not only among slab graves, but among the Xiongnu tombs as well (Volkov 1967: 44-5). He stressed on a number of similarities in funeral rites of both periods, while explaining this phenomena by a hypothesis that the builders of slab graves were among the numerous tribes incorporated to the Xiongnu Empire. (Volkov 1967: 102-3). Hence, Mongolian and Russian historians and archaeologists maintained a belief in continuity between slab grave culture and Xiongnu culture, based on resemblance in funeral rites and some unearthed items found in respective sites. Supported by solid archeological evidences, this approach is quite verifiable, especially since it coincides with the general regularity of the Central Asia’s historic and cultural development.

**North China Early Nomadic Cultures and the Xiongnu Culture.** Chinese archaeologists carried through the belief that the amalgam of advanced Bronze- and early Iron Age nomadic archeological cultures unearthed in Inner Mongolia, Manchuria and northern China proper are proto-Xiongnu in characteristics. Chief among the scholars upholding such approach are Tian Guanjin, Wu En, Zhong Kan, Li Jinzeng, Tian Zinmin, Guo Suxin and Jin Fengyi. It is noteworthy to name Russian scholars who share the same view – S. S. Miniayev, A. V. Varenov, S. A. Komissarov, S. V. Alkin, T. A. Postnova etc. (Konovalov 1999: 52).

Tian Guanjin linked the Ordos Bronze Culture (13th-6th centuries BC) to proto-Xiongnu culture of the pre-Imperial period (i.e. prior to 209 BC) (Tian 1993). This culture emerges during the Shang period and reached its climax during the reign of Zhou dynasty (12th-6th centuries BC). According to Tian, geographic area covered by this culture overlaps with the realms of such ethnies, as *guifang* during the Shang era, *xianyun* of the Zhou era, and *di* of the Chongqiu (Spring and Autumn) period – hence, although bearing different designations at a time, all these were indeed one stock (Tian 1993). He thus stipulated that the Ordos animal style, reflected in the weaponry and handicraft items, is a typical feature of Xiongnu culture. In Tian's view, the core geographic area of the dispersal of Xiongnu culture is Inner Mongolia, and adjacent Han Chinese provinces - namely the sites of Taohongbala, Maoqingou, Hulusutai, Yulongtai, Aluzhaideng, Xigoupan, and Xujigou etc. On the contrary, Wu En did not directly accredit the aforementioned graves to Xiongnu, he nevertheless hypothesized that those served as base layer of the classical Xiongnu culture. In his view, tribes, such as *linhu* and *loufan*, that populated northern China during the Chongqiu and Warring States periods, have undoubtedly joined the Xiongnu tribal confederation (Wu 190: 422).

S. A. Komissarov joins in his opinion with the above-mentioned views of the Chinese scholars. He supported Tian Guanjin's proposition that the realms of the ancestors of Xiongnu, such as *guifang*, *xianyun*, *hongyi*, *rong*, *di*, *hu* etc., overlap with the area of the spread of Ordos Bronze Culture. In doing so, he used Wang Guowei's conclusion that all tribes called *guifang*, *xianyun*, *hongyi*, *rong*, *di*, *hu* etc., did indeed represent a single ethnic component later known in history as the Xiongnu (Komissarov 1998: 100-2). In addition, he defined two periods in the development of the Xiongnu culture, as found in the aforementioned sites, namely: first, Taohongbala and Maoqingou of the 7th-6th centuries BC, and second, Hulusitai, Xigoupan, Yulongtai, Aluzhaidang and Xiojigou of the 3rd-1st centuries BC, dated just like the sites in Mongolia and Transbaikalia (Komissarov 1998: 100). A. V. Varenov conducted a detailed research on items unearthed from the Daodunzi, Taohongbala and Maoqingou and came to a conclusion that some elements of their funeral rites stem back to more distant ancient cultures of their respective regions (Varenov 1993, 1995a, 1995b). In particular, he singled out the Daodunzi grave where sacrifices were made with animal bones, and referred to the Yanglan site in Ninxia-Hui Autonomous Region, considered to have belonged to the *rong*, as its typological predecessor (Varenov 1995b: 125). According to his observations, if the early graves of the Maoqingou site (5th-4th centuries BC) have the human bodies buried with their head direction toward the East, the later graves

of the same site (late 3rd century BC) maintain another direction – toward the North (Varenov 1995b: 124). S. V. Alkin calls a group of Bronze- and an early Iron archaeological culture found in the peripheries of Gansu and Qinghai provinces to possess “a certain archaeological agglomerate”, and claims this area to be the actual homeland of the Xiongnu (Alkin 1990: 68-70).

Besides the favorable Ordos-Gansu-Qinghai area, the search for the proto-Xiongnu sites goes beyond it further east. For instance, based on some elements of items unearthed from Scythian-period graves in Ordos, S. S. Miniayev concluded that their builders later had become the core of the Xiongnu confederacy (Miniayev 1975: 75-6). However, he later recalled his previous statement as erroneous and proposed that the Scythian-period graves in Xiajiadian (graves of the “upper layer culture”), Nanshangen and Dongnangou sites in southern Manchuria bear striking resemblance to classical Xiongnu graves in Mongolia and Transbaikalia, in exterior and interior structure, as well as in certain items – thus, the Xiongnu culture originated in the banks of Rivers Liaohe and Liaohahe (Miniayev 1987: 142-5). S.A.Komissarov provides a slightly different interpretation, linking the Xiajiadian site rather to the Donghu, as many Chinese scholars do, while attributing the similarities between Xiongnu common burials and upper Xiajiadian culture to “... common experience within a single cultural-economic pattern, constant interaction”, as well as to the fact that some groups of the donghu joined the Xiongnu confederacy (Komissarov 1988: 89).

In addition, A. A. Kovalev challenges the continuity between the slab graves of Xiajiadian and Xiongnu tombs by the total absence of Xiongnu-style porcelain in the former (Kovalev 2002: 104). Amid such controversy around Xiajiadian site, the discovery of Yuhuangmao conglomerate of sites in a mountainous region north from Beijing by the Chinese scholar Jin Fengyi is of particular interest. Chinese historiography refers to this area as the homeland of the shanrong, or the “mountain rong”. The graves unearthed therein were classified into a separate category due to their resemblance to both early graves of Ordos on the one hand, and to Xiajiadian graves of southern Manchuria, on the other (Konovalov 1999: 60).

A. A. Kovalev attempted to define the Xiongnu homeland based on Chinese sources and archaeological findings. Accordingly, the Xiongnu territory by the 3rd century BC stretched from the present-day Lanzhou in the west, then spreading north via the then-Zhaoxianwang border encampment, passing the northern Ordos on the northeastern bank of the Huanghe River (where resided the tribes of Loufan and Baiyan), and reached the statuaries of Dai Kingdom bordering the kingdoms of Yan and Zhao (lands in present-day Inner

Mongolia, north from Shanxi Province and northwest from Hebei Province) (Kovalev 2002a: 118). In other words, the Xiongnu occupied a huge landmass rim, following the northern bank of the Huanghe River, stretching from the arid deserts of Gansu and Alasha all the way to the Yinshan Mountains. Hence, the three sites of Maoqingou, Yinniugou and Guoxianyaozi, all located in the Liangcheng banner of Inner Mongolia, can be categorized as influenced by Xiongnu (Kovalev 2002: 119). These graves are attributed to the 5th-3rd centuries BC and are rectangular in shape, with bodies buried in a relatively larger space, with their heads directed to the east, and specially decorated porcelain jar placed by the head. Links to the Xiongnu is reinforced by the resemblance in certain items, such as the aforementioned porcelain jars, thin-necked and decorated with waved patterns, as well as the bone joints of a bow. Although Kovalev himself thinks that these items belonged to the linhu tribe, albeit under a “Xiongnu influence”, the research nevertheless must be furthered (Kovalev 2002: 119). In addition, though still a subject of debate, some graves of the three sites of Dabeishan, Yujiazhuan and Samengcun, all located in Pengbu village, Guyuan district, Ningxia-Hui Autonomous Region, can be classified as “influenced by Xiongnu”. Those graves are likely to be dated to 8th-4th centuries BC, and according to Kovalev, they belonged to the rong tribes of Yiqü. In addition to the above-mentioned, N.V.Polos'mak and Yu.A.Zadneprovsky claim to have revealed certain elements of the Saka culture of Western Central Asia within the graves of Taohongbala, Maoqingou and Daodunzi, and that these influences owe their existence to the bearers of the Tasmolin culture migrated eastwards bypassing the Altai Mountains. (Polos'mak 1990: 101-7; Konovalov 1999: 55). On the contrary, there is an alternative approach, that ...the Tasmolin culture is quite unique within the Saka cultural area, resulting from the influence of immigrating proto-Xiongnu stock (Konovalov 1999: 55).

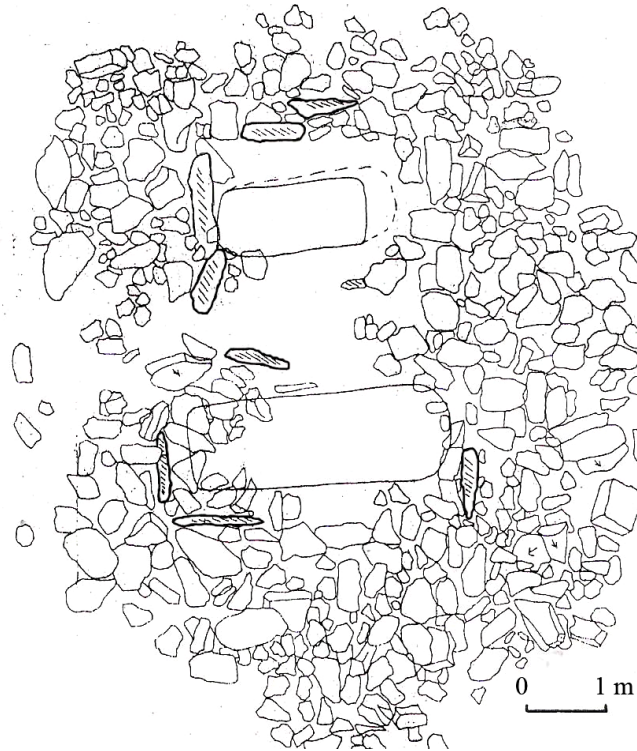
Another Russian scholar, T. A. Postnova, thinks that the Ordos sites do connect with the proto-Xiongnu, in a way that they were later evolved into classical Xiongnu-type graves. In her assessment, the earth graves without the exterior structure found in Ordos is only the reflective of climatic and geographic conditions of the northern China with its tender soil; yet the lands north of Gobi required burying the deceased in graves with additional stone structures ([Postnova 1996: 57]. Thus, she concluded that defining the connection between slab grave culture and the Xiongnu culture would serve as a key to solving a problem of the ethnic origin of the latter.

In our own turn, we emphasize the following issues that could shed light on the ethnic identification of the Xiongnu, based upon our research on the common burials of the Xiongnu period, their funeral rites and structural features thereof.

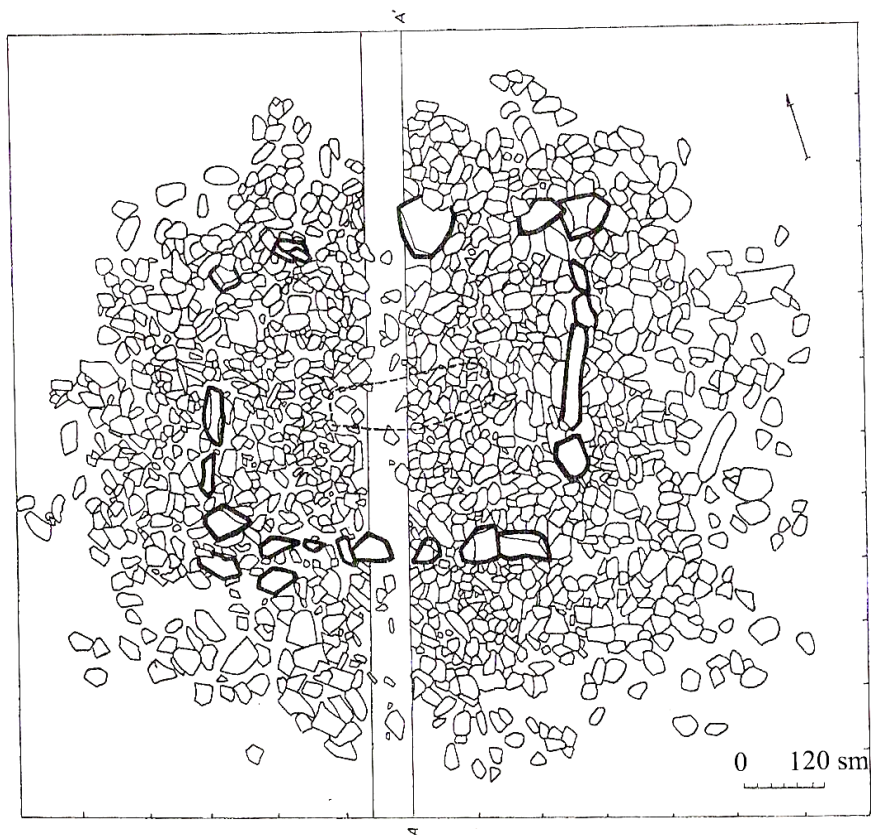
**Exterior structure of tombs.** As some archaeologists point out, the outward appearance of Xiongnu tombs resemble in some way the slab-cist graves. Analysis of the exterior structure of the tombs led us to classify the Xiongnu graves into: (a) rectangular or quadrangular shape, with slab stone plates pointing to the corners of the globe; (b) multiangular, or broken circular shape (Fig.1). Accordingly, at least the outward rectangular/quadrangular appearance of some Xiongnu graves might lead to a conclusion that they belong to a similar category with slab graves. It must be also noted that there are certain graves that are literally the same in shape. The example is Tombs 38 and 38a (Fig. 2), with twin burial entry located under a single stone structure to the south from Burkhan Tolgoi site in Northern Mongolia. Its radiocarbon dating reveals the period between 158 BC and 67 AD to be the time of its construction (Turbat et. al. 2003: 136), and is considered among the earliest within that particular site. Though eroded with time, it is evident that the original shape of the outer structure was rectangular, with stone plates directed to the four corners of the globe. Plates possess twin shallow cavity, situated at the center through left-right lane and fenced by prolonged-shaped stone.



**Fig. 1.** Plan of a Xiongnu tomb. Tomb #3, Burkhan Tolgoi cemetery (Turbat 2004).



**Fig. 2.** Plan of grave #38 with twin burials (Turbat 2004).



**Fig. 3.** Plan of slab grave of Bronze Age. Chuluty cemetery (Tsybiktarov, 1998).



In general, the outward appearance of this grave resembles that of the slab grave with low stone fences. The body in that grave was positioned so that the head would be oriented toward the east. Since its temporal scope lies within 2nd century BC – 1st century AD, and its external resemblance and internal funeral rite with slab grave is remarkable, we assumed that this grave was of an intermediary type, constructed during the transition from slab graves to Xiongnu graves proper (see the Fig. 3). It is verifiable therefore that some Xiongnu graves did maintain the features of the graves of earlier periods. Most likely that the later during its own evolution the Xiongnu graves acquired certain specific features, namely in the change of direction for the bodies of the deceased, forms and patterns of certain items etc., thus gradually evolving into a distinct culture of its own.

**Positioning and orientation of the body.** Our research uncovered that among the Xiongnu there were several directions for the burial of the deceased. Those include 97 graves (or 58 percent) with bodies directed to the north, 15 graves (9 percent) – to the northeast, 21 graves (13 percent) – to the northwest, 3 graves (2 percent) – to the south, and 30 graves (18 percent) to the east, including the southeast. This statistical data reveals the preference of the north and its deviations among Xiongnu. The southern direction, although visibly present, is likely a specific irregularity. The eastern direction, however, is common that shouldn't be ignored; instead, it should be treated as none other than a specific version of the burial. At Burkhan Tolgoy, the “eastward-directed” graves are situated together at the southern edge of the site, with majority of them being the twin-burials, including the aforementioned Tombs 38 and 38a. These graves also maintain the largest average size within the site, as well as the richest items unearthed, including the animal sacrifices. Yet the most interesting fact is the result of their radiocarbon dating, pointing at the 4th-1st centuries BC, or the early period of Xiongnu archaeological culture. Moreover, the bronze mirror found in Tomb 6 of Ulaan Khoshuu site in the Tamir basin, the burial with same “eastward direction,” is dated to Western Han period, or between 206-25 BC, which coincides, again, with the early Xiongnu period. These facts make it clear that some graves of the early Xiongnu period have maintained the tradition to place the deceased with the head directed toward the east, akin to the tradition of preceding slab grave culture. It is not a coincidental phenomenon, but rather a proof of continuity between the slab grave and Xiongnu cultures. Lack of any difference in the burial of the human reinforces the ethnic link between the builders of the two respective cultures.

**Interior structure of tombs.** In a number of cases of Xiongnu common burials excavated in Mongolia, the tombs have a stone coffin either alone, or in combination with wooden structure. 23 graves, or 13 per cent of the total registered by our research, have coffins erected by stone compilations as the only structure to fence the body; they in general are simple in interior structure, less wealthy in terms of accompanying items (Fig.4, 5). Moreover, some of this kind was infant burial. Among 13 graves at Burkhan Tolgoy, 5 (28 per cent) belonged to male person, 4 (22 per cent) – to the female and 9 (50 per cent) – to children. All of them were directed northwards. Shape of the stone fences herein resemble those of the slab graves, and in our view, are reminiscent of the preceding tradition. Thus, the evolution of the Xiongnu graves' interior has apparently departed from a solitary stone fence, developing into incorporating a more sophisticated wooden coffin. This hypothesis of ours can be verified by excavations of Tomb 1 of Bayan County and Tomb 3 of Gurvan Zaghal conducted by D. Navaan. Nonetheless, in some cases the preceding tradition was kept intact by building solitary stone structure for the smallest and simplest graves. In other words, we do not attribute the coffin (solitary stone or wooden structure) solely to the wealth and social status of the individual buried within; it could have been a practice to bury children in a retro manner (or in a conservative tradition), placing their bodies in solitary stone confinement. Hence structure-wise, both exterior and interior of the common Xiongnu burials, as well as ritual-wise, the positioning and orientation of the bodies, bear numerous similarities to the slab-cist graves of the preceding period. It is therefore our conclusion that the populace that created the slab grave culture, contributed to the foundation of the Xiongnu archaeological culture. Yet we also stipulate that the Bronze- and early Iron Age nomadic populations of the Trans-Gobi region of North China have also contributed to the composition of the Xiongnu culture. In particular, as the Chinese scholars have concluded, the inhabitants of Ordos, builders of Maoqingou and other sites of Inner Mongolia, did likely play certain important roles in this endeavor. In any way, the tribe to be referred as Xiongnu since 3rd century AD, entered a symbiosis with the aborigines when they crossed over the Gobi Desert, further laying down the foundations of a new culture.

**Ethnic affiliation of the Xiongnu.** As it is mentioned above, determining the ethnic and linguistic affiliation of the Xiongnu is a highly controversial task, still lacking a conventional acceptance. The Mongolian archaeologists keep aiming at solving the Xiongnu ethnic genesis problem, by utilizing the gravesite findings (Tseveendorj 1987, 1989, 1993; Batsaikhan 2002).

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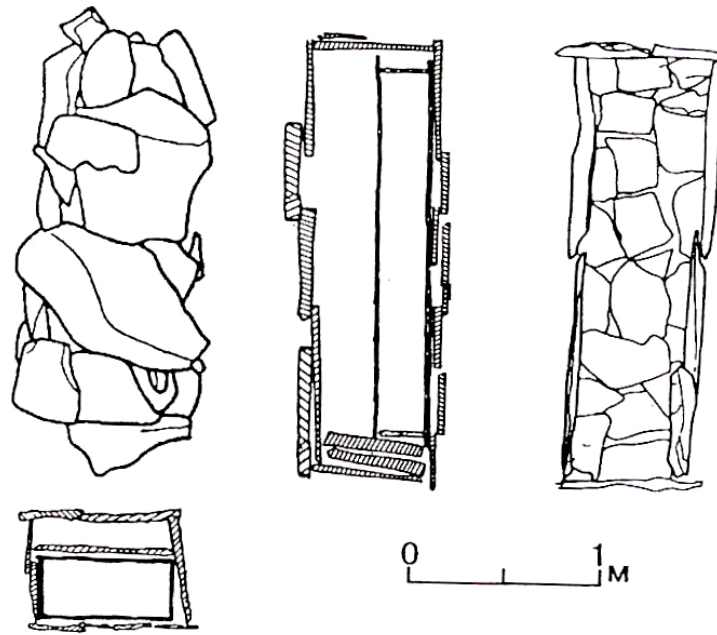


Fig. 4. Funeral stone cist of Xiongnu tomb (Turbat 2004).

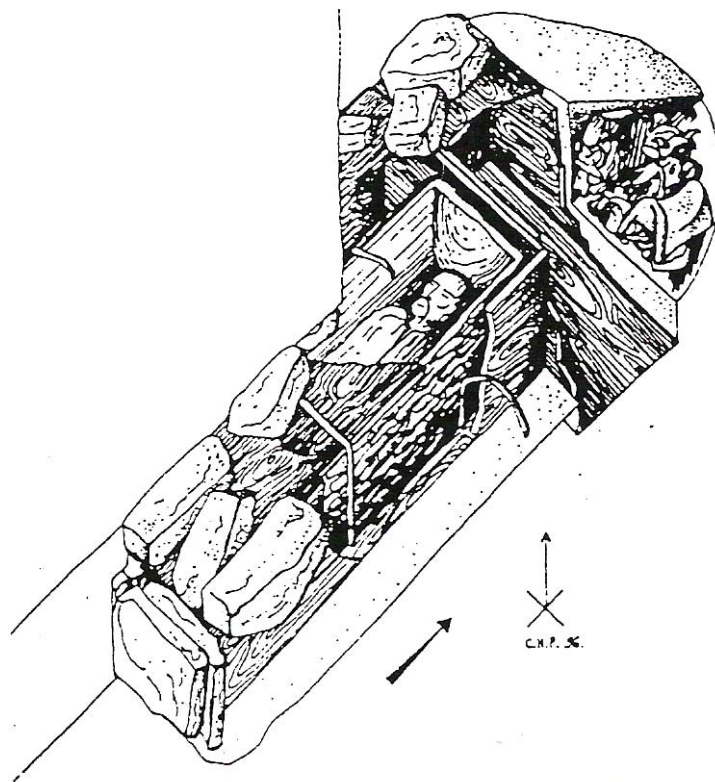


Fig. 5. Reconstruction of Xiongnu tomb's interior (Turbat 2004).

Ts Tseveendorj stated that a detailed analysis of the Xiongnu common burials show that many features, as emphasis on geomantic situation of the burial place (i.e. preference of northern, sun-bathing slope of the mountain), exterior structure of graves, techniques of burial

by digging a deep hallow and burying the diseased in a wooden coffin, then erecting a circular stone roof over it, placing the body in full length inside the coffin, with legs and arms straight down, the head directed toward the north facing up, and in terms of the accompanying items, resemble not only the medieval Mongol tradition, but contemporary customs as well; it hence can be seen as the main evidence of the archaeological proof of identical ethnic background between the Xiongnu and the Mongols (Tseveendorj 1987: 77). He further reiterated this approach in his later publications as well (Tseveendorj 1989: 68).

Specifically interesting within this regard is Ts.Tseveendorj's comparison of the net-shaped wall of the nomadic yurt and some utilities of a Xiongnu coffin. During his field research at Mt. Tevsh, Mt. Duulga, Morin Tolgoy Hill and elsewhere, he found in several common burials of the Xiongnu period, the coffins were made of thin slices of timber, with sidewalls fenced by net-shaped carcass made of joint thin metal sticks, and decorated with flower-patterned metal buttons. It is of a striking similarity to medieval Mongolian tradition of wrapping the diseased in actual yurt walls and placing the body in and by cave formations. According to Ts.Tseveendorj, both the Xiongnu tradition of decorating the outer coffin with wall-like structure and the Mongol way of wrapping the body in real walls are reflective of the idea to continue to keep the diseased in his home, and this custom was inherited from the Xiongnu to the Mongols (Tseveendorj 1993: 212-3). Similarly, Ts.Tseveendorj compares the Xiongnu tradition to breaking down the wheels of the oxcart after a funeral ceremony, covering the coffin roof with it and filling the holes with stones, to a custom live among the Mongols until recently, prescribing the family of the diseased to turn their oxcart upside down for several days following the funeral. Finally, he concluded that: the Xiongnu Empire was a hegemonic power incorporating many indigenous peoples of Central Asia, in addition to the Xiongnu proper, the core of the population. It is therefore important to consider the following problems when addressing the issue of the ethnogenesis of the Xiongnu. These include what was the original ethnic composition of the Xiongnu prior to their eastward migration from Western Central Asia and their subsequent intensive symbiosis with other people; and what ethnic background did the state-building core of the Xiongnu population have. Research findings from the last hundred years of the archaeological expeditions conducted throughout Mongolia and Central Asia reveal that Xiongnu funeral rites differ greatly from the Turkic tradition, but strikingly resemble the Mongol ones (Tseveendorj 1993: 214).

Likewise, Z. Batsaikhan determined some features of the Xiongnu funeral rites to be similar to those of the Mongols, based on solid archaeological evidences. For instance,

archaeological evidence of metal plate-carved figures of the sun and the moon, sealed to the outer walls of Xiongnu coffins is interestingly compared by him with the astral (in particular, solar and lunar) worship of the Mongols (Batsaikhan 2002: 212-4). Moreover, Z.Batsaikhan links some Xiongnu graves (Mt. Delgerkhan, Mt. Chandamani etc.) with severed heads to the medieval Mongol belief that the human spirit resides in the head (Batsaikhan 2002: 214-5). Likewise, he points out that the burial of a dog, typical of the Xiongnu graves, should be compared to the written sources referring to importance of dog for funeral traditions of the wuhuan, and stipulates: evidently, funeral rites of the Xiongnu are similar to those of the wuhuan/xianbi, and moreover, certain elements thereof relate to the Mongols of the centuries later (Batsaikhan 2002: 217). He further addresses the funeral rites of the Xiongnu, stating that some graves contain the cattle and sheep bones in certain hierarchy, such as the head/skull, beneath it three pairs of shortest ribs, the tail behind the skull, followed by pairs of femur, symbolically reminiscent of an alive animal, and in principle, this custom is quite similar to the Mongol tradition of laying the sheep spine at festivities (Batsaikhan 2002: 219). Finally, he concludes that, certain specific features of the Xiongnu and wuhuan/xianbei funeral rites bear similarities with the later-emerging Mongols, thus showing the common ethnic origins of these people, and prove that the process Mongol ethnicity-building had started during the Xiongnu period and had continuously undergone ever since (Batsaikhan 2002: 231). It is evident therefore that in due process of a research conducted to uncover the Xiongnu ethnic background upon the basis of their funeral rites, many facts are revealed to prove the Xiongnu link and continuity to the Mongols.

In general, we cope in agreement with the aforementioned scholars. Our research defined that even such cosmological aspects of Xiongnu mentality, as their perceptions of the afterlife, location of this purgatory, means to reach it etc., basically coincide to those of the Mongols.

Finally, a few lines should perhaps be devoted to the latest genetic research on Xiongnu ethnic background, although is of no direct relevance to the discipline of archaeology. The French physical anthropology team led by Prof. Eric Crubezy has collaborated with our team at Burkhan Tolgoy site on the banks of Egyin River. Throughout 1998 and 1999 they were able to sample a total of 62 skeletons and retract DNA from it. Comparing those genetic data to the data relevant to the modern Mongolian population actually proves the general ethnic continuity between the Xiongnu and the Mongolians. (Crubezy et. al. 2002: 44). Still, some genetic samples, particularly of those found from the

western group of graves at Burkhan Tolgoy, chronologically proven to be the latest ones, match to a certain degree to the Turkic populace (Keyser-Tracqui 2003), which once again reinforces the complexity of the problem of the ethnic background of the Xiongnu.

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*ᠠᠶᠢᠶᠡᠭᠡᠨᠡᠭᠡᠨᠢ ХУРААНГУЙ*

Ц. Төрбат

**ХҮННҮГИЙН АРХЕОЛОГИЙН СОЁЛЫН ГАРАЛ ҮҮСЛИЙГ  
ОРШУУЛГЫН ЗАН ҮЙЛЭЭР СУДЛАХ НЬ**

Энэ өгүүлэлд хүннүгийн оршуулгын зан үйл, түүний дотор булшны гадаад ба дотоод зохион байгуулалт, нас барагчийг оршуулсан байдал болон чиглэл зэргийг хүрэл ба төмөр зэвсгийн түрүү үеийн дөрвөлжин булшны соёлтой харьцуулан судалж Хүннүгийн археологийн соёлын (МЭӨ III зуун- МЭ II зуун) гарал үүслийг тодруулах асуудалд зориулагджээ. Зохиогчийн үзэж байгаагаар дөрвөлжин булшны соёл ба Хүннүгийн археологийн соёлын хооронд бат бөх харилцаа байгаагийн зэрэгцээ Умард Хятадад байх түрүү нүүдэлчдийн соёлын нөлөөлөл багагүй байсан бололтой. Умард ба баруун Монголын МЭӨ IV-III зууны зарим булшинд хамгийн түрүү “хүннүчлэгдэх” үзэгдэл илэрч байгаа нь дөрвөлжин булшны хэв шинжтэй архаик хэлбэртэй байгаагаар нь харагдана. Төв Азийн уугуул оршин суугчдын угсаа-соёлын түүх олон зууны турш тасралтгүй үйл явц байсан гэдгийг мөн энэ баримт харуулж байна. Энэ өгүүллийг сүүлийн үед Монголд малтан судалсан хүннү болон дөрвөлжин булшны хэрэглэгдэхүүнд тулгуурлан бичжээ.