

## NEWLY DISCOVERED MONUMENTS OF WORSHIP OF XIONGNU

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The paper introduces series of sites which as the authors suppose are associated with religious rituals of Xiongnu. Authors note that such sites as Talyn Gurvan Kherem in Ugiinuur soum, of Arkhangai Province, Khugdiin Talyn Balgas and Bor Azargyn Kherem of Battsengel soum of the same Province and Ulaan Kherem in Bayannuur soum of Bulgan Province have unified shape and layout, also their common feature is absence of any findings of architectural items. All of them are surrounded by earthen wall, square in shape; they have large earthen platform of the central structure and a group of three smaller structures located to south-west from it. Also, all of them have small platform in the south from the central platform connected

with the latter by earthen path. Results of the excavation of Talyn Gurvan Kherem site made by joint Mongol-Chinese expedition are presented in this paper. The research has revealed a structure of the constructions on earthen platforms, of the gate in surrounding site earthen wall and of the path which connects central and south platforms. Radiocarbon dating and found artifacts to date this site to II c. B.C. — beginning of the I c. A.D., i.e. to the time of Xiongnu Empire. Basing on historical records and on the data obtained in the process of excavation the authors come to conclusion about ritual purpose of the researched sites.

*Keywords:* Xiongnu, monuments of worship, Talyn Gurvan Kherem, Mongolia.

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## INTRODUCTION

It is barely mentioned in historic sources that the Huns (Xiongnu) used to have a custom to offer a special worshipping ritual. Nevertheless, it was unclear so far where, in which place and how they used to do so. However surrounded by the earthen wall monuments of worship with individual structures and organizational components situated in the northern part of Tamir River valley in the territory of Ugiinuur Soum, Arkhangai Province have attracted our attention. Local people call it as Talyn Gurvan Kherem (Three Fortresses of Steppe). Some researchers thought that Talyn Gurvan Kherem is a ruin built and used by ancient nomads (Perlee 1961: 40—41). Since that time the researchers tended to describe it as an ancient town ruins (Batsaikhan et al. 2006; Batsaikhan, Baatarbileg 2002: 36—38; Purcell, Spurr 2006: 20—32). Although the previous researchers used to think that Talyn Gurvan Kherem is ancient towns' ruins, it was surprising that no single construction material was found inside the earthen wall of monuments and in nearby areas. If to watch carefully, there is no difference between three walled monuments of Talyn Gurvan Kherem in their structure and organizational compositions, they look quite similar. It causes doubt to call it a town or a settlement. On another hand, Talyn Gurvan Kherem had been set up pretty far from river and water sources, as if leaning the mountain southern slope. The monuments of worship Ulaan Kherem (Red Wall) in Bayannuur Soum, Bulgan Province; Khudgiin Talyn Balgas and Bor Azargyn Kherem (Brown Stallion Fortress) both located in Battsengel Soum of Arkhangai Province previously discovered by us look quite similar by their appearance and organizational components with Talyn Gurvan Kherem and also no any construction materials were found in nearby areas (Fig. 1).

During the surveillance process, we had concluded in advance that Talyn Gurvan Kherem, as well as Ulaan Kherem, Khudgiin Talyn Balgas, and Bor Azargyn Kherem monuments might be not towns, but mausoleum graves of nomadic noblemen, or facilities specially built for worshipping rituals. Basing on these suppositions, we had developed the methodology of how to excavate the Talyn Gurvan Kherem site. So we decided to excavate in order to find out the intended purpose of walled monuments, and the Mongolian-Chinese joint archaeological research team made small-size test excavations in Talyn Gurvan Kherem in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively. First, let us introduce the descriptions of above mentioned walled monuments.

## DESCRIPTION OF TALYN GURVAN KHEREM

Before making an archaeological excavation, we had entitled three monuments of Talyn Gurvan Kherem from west to east as Western Wall, Middle Wall and Eastern Wall and made short descriptions of each of them.

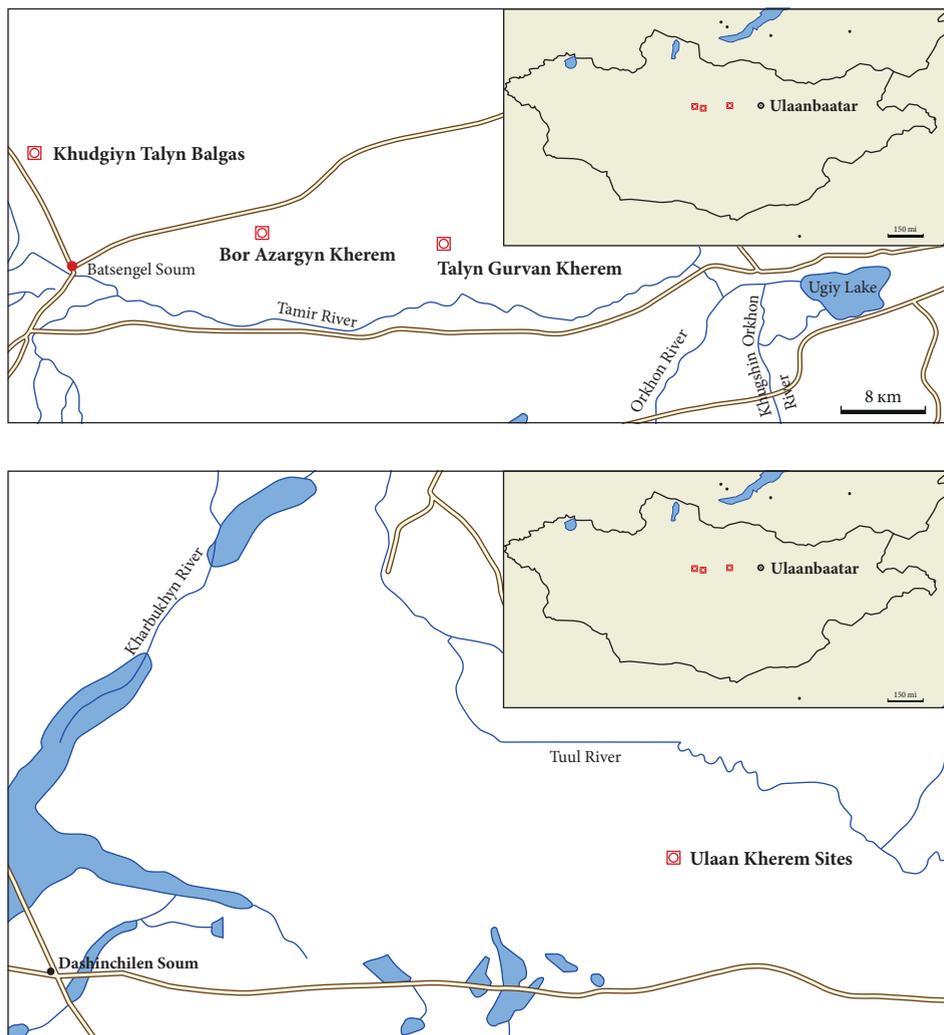


Fig. 1. Position of sites mentioned in this work

The Western Wall is located at geographical coordinates  $47^{\circ}48'5.87''$  N and  $102^{\circ}21'20.73''$  E and 1370 m above the sea level. The wall has a square shape and it has four gates one at each side. West side of the wall is 397 m long, east, north and south sides are 430 m, 473 m and 480 m long respectively. The width of west, east and south gates is 4 m and the one of the north gate is 7 m. An average height of the earthen wall is 1.4 m, its base is 15 m wide and the width of its top is 1.7 m. There is a moat 5.5 m wide and 0.5 m deep outside of the wall. There are 5 mounds inside the wall and the biggest one is located in the center. The mound has an oval form directed from northwest to southeast, its size is  $45 \times 32$  m, height — 2,4 m, and there is something resembling a grave 180 cm in diameter covered by stones in the center of the mound (it was burial of Rouran period (Li et al. 2018)). There are 3 earthen mounds forming a line to the west from the central mound inside

the wall. The most northern of them is the mound No. 2. Its size is 27×41 m, it has an oval shape and is 1.6 m high. The 3<sup>rd</sup> mound is 1.5 m high, it has slightly oval shape 22×31 m. The 4<sup>th</sup> mound is 1.7 m high and has round shape 24×25 m. The 5<sup>th</sup> mound is 1 m high; it also has a round shape 18×20 m. There is a stripe of earthen elevation connecting the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 5<sup>th</sup> mounds.

The Middle Wall is located at coordinates 47°48'5.87" N and 102°21'20.73" E, 1370 m above the sea level. Its west side is 421 m long, east, south and north sides are 423 m, 452 m, and 445 m long respectively. An average height of the earthen wall is 1.4 m, the width of its top and base is 1.7 m and 16 m respectively. There is a moat 7.5 m wide and 0.5 m deep outside of the wall. There are 8 mounds inside the wall. The biggest mound is situated in the center. Its size is 46×46 m in the base, 25×22 m in the top and its height is 3 m. The mound's top is even and square. There are 3 mounds forming a line southwest from the central mound. The most northwestern of them is 25 m in diameter, and its height is 1.7 m. The 5<sup>th</sup> mound is in about 50 m right to south from the central mound. Its diameter is 21.5 m, height is 1.2 m. There is the 7<sup>th</sup> mound near the east gate. Its diameter is 20 m, height is 1 m. The 8<sup>th</sup> mound situates near the north gate. Its diameter is 11 m, height is 0.4 m. A stripe of earthen elevation connects the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> mounds. The elevation is 49 m long, 6 m wide and about 20 cm high. The 6<sup>th</sup> mound is close to the south gate.

The Eastern Wall is located at the coordinates 47°48'06.33" N and 102°22'30.72" E and 1410 m above the sea level. The length of the west, east, south and north sides of the wall is 261 m, 271 m, 307 m and 333 m respectively. The width of the earth wall is 1—1.4 m at the top and 9—10 m at the base. Its height is 0.7—1 m. The wall has 4 gates, one in each side. The east gate is 7 m wide, west, north and south gates are 5 m, 4 m and 6 m wide respectively. The moat outside the wall is 5—7 m wide and 0.5 m deep. There are 5 earthen mounds inside the wall. The biggest mound situates in the center of the wall; it is 37 m long, 27 m wide and 3 m high. There are 3 mounds to southwest from the central mound. The most northwestern of them, the mound No. 2 is 40×22 m, and 1.5 m high. The 3<sup>rd</sup> mound situates in front of it; it is 24 m in diameter, and 0.9 m high. The diameter of the 4<sup>th</sup> mound is 26 m and height is 1.5 m. The 5<sup>th</sup> mound is in the distance of 46 m to south from the 1<sup>st</sup> mound; it is 13 m in diameter and 0.3 m high. There is a stripe of earthen elevation connecting the 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> mounds. The elevation is 45 m long, 5 m wide and 20 cm high.

Ulaan Uul (Red Mountain) stands in 4 km distance right to the north from Talyn Gurvan Kherem and Tamir River flows in 6 km to south. Talyn Gurvan Kherem had been built on a smooth even ground and can be seen from everywhere.

Three walls of Talyn Gurvan Kherem are similar or at least have resembling features. First of all, all three have earthen walls with similar square shape, and there are moats outside of the walls and all have gates in four sides. In addition, there is a stripe of earthen elevation starting from the southern side of the largest mound situated in the center of each wall and running to the southern mound (Fig. 2; 3).

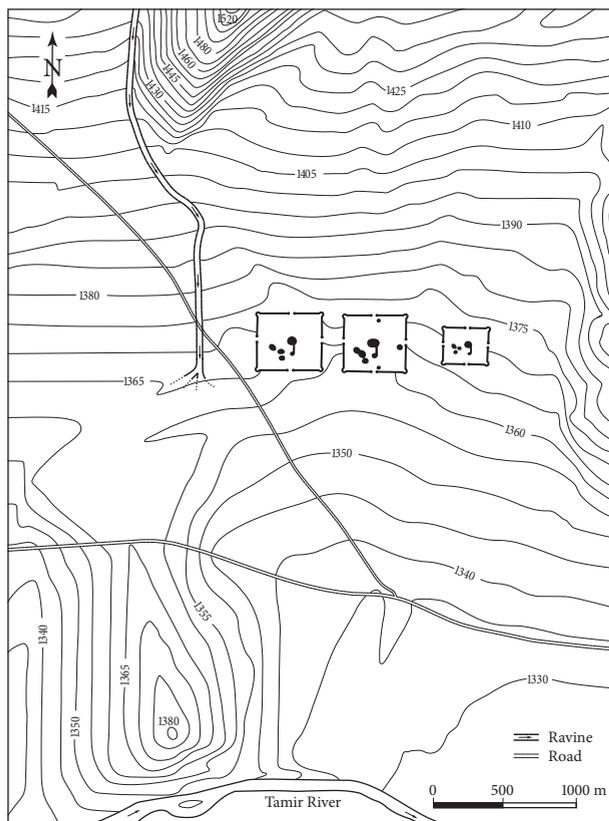
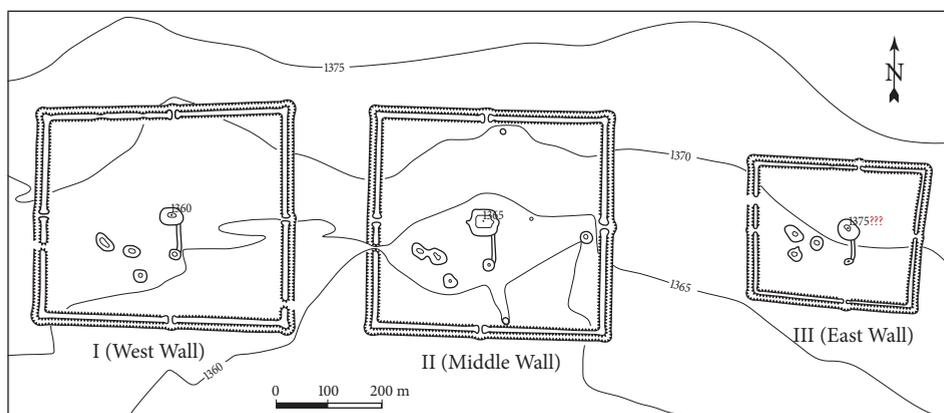


Fig. 2. Plan of Talyn Gurvan Kherem



## DESCRIPTIONS OF OTHER MONUMENTS OF WORSHIP

### ULAAN KHEREM MONUMENTS

There are about 10 earthen mounds some with outside walls and some without walls in area near Ulaan Kherem ancient town located in the territory of Bayannuur soum, Bulgan Province. These mounds may be referred at least to 3 different time periods. Four of them are a bit different from others, have unique layout



Fig. 3. Aerial photo of Talyn Gurvan Kherem. View from Southeast

and look like they might have worshipping purposes. We had discovered these 4 monuments in 2003 and entitled them as Ulaan Kherem — 2, 3, 4 and 5. If we describe in brief the mentioned 4 monuments, the following things would be revealed (Fig. 4; 5).

**Ulaan Kherem — 2.** This wall is adjacent to southwest corner of Ulaan Kherem — 1 — large ancient town belonged to Khitan Empire period. Its northeastern and northern parts are pretty destroyed and erased. South and west sides of this wall are 320 m and 310 m long respectively. There is an earthen mound 25 m in diameter and 1.2 m high in the center of the wall. There are 3 oval mounds situated very close to each other to the west from the central mound. These earthen mounds are pretty similar to each other by sizes; they are 20—15 m in diameter in average. Currently, location of only one gate is known.

**Ulaan Kherem — 3.** It is situated at coordinates 45°55'29.21" N and 104°32'7.02" E, 978 m above the sea level. This wall is in 100 m south from Ulaan Kherem — 2. West and north sides of the wall are 300 m long, a length of the east side is 270 m and the one of south side is 320 m. This wall is 2—8 m wide at the base and 2—6 m at the top. Its average height is 0,3—0,5 m. There is an oval-like earthen mound 37 m in diameter and 1,1 m high in the center of the wall. There are also 3 earthen mounds 15—30 m in diameter and 0,4—0,8 m high to the west from the central mound. The location of the gate in this wall is not known.

**Ulaan Kherem — 4.** It is situated at coordinates 47°55'44.45" N and 104°31'29.79" E, 977 m above the sea level. This wall is located in 600 m west

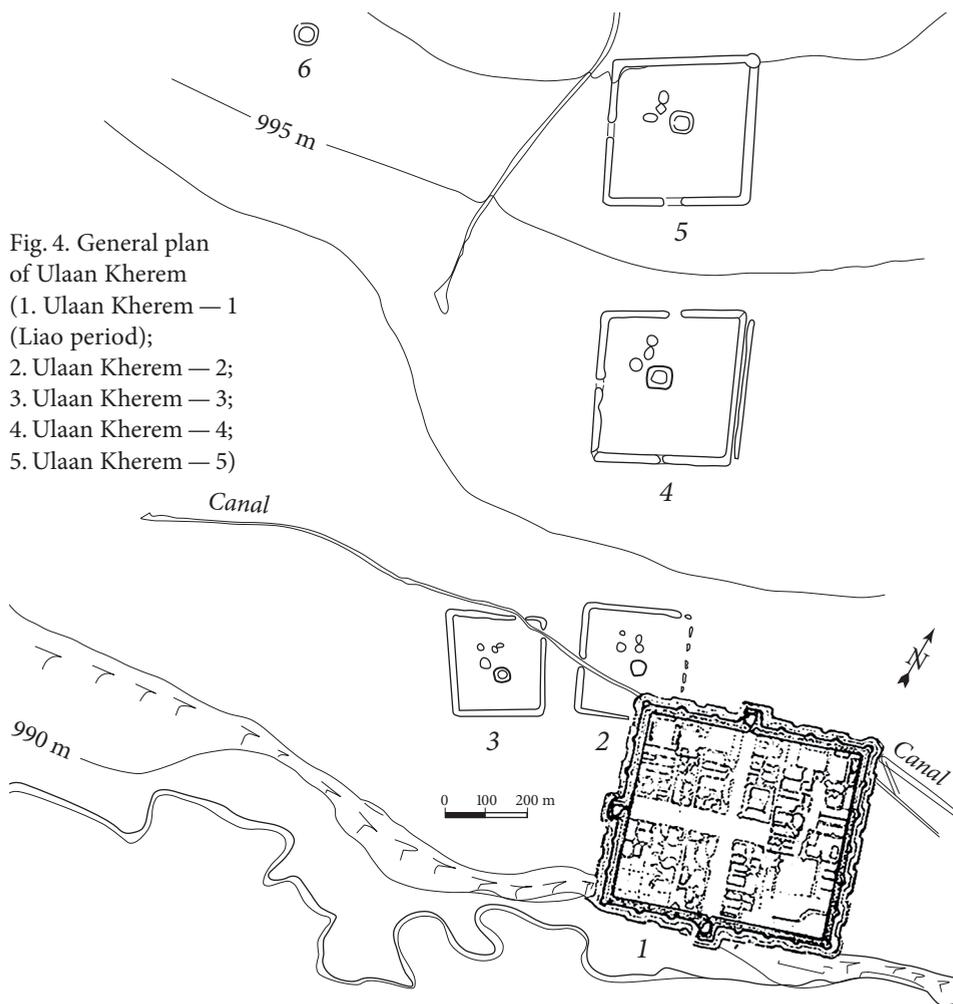
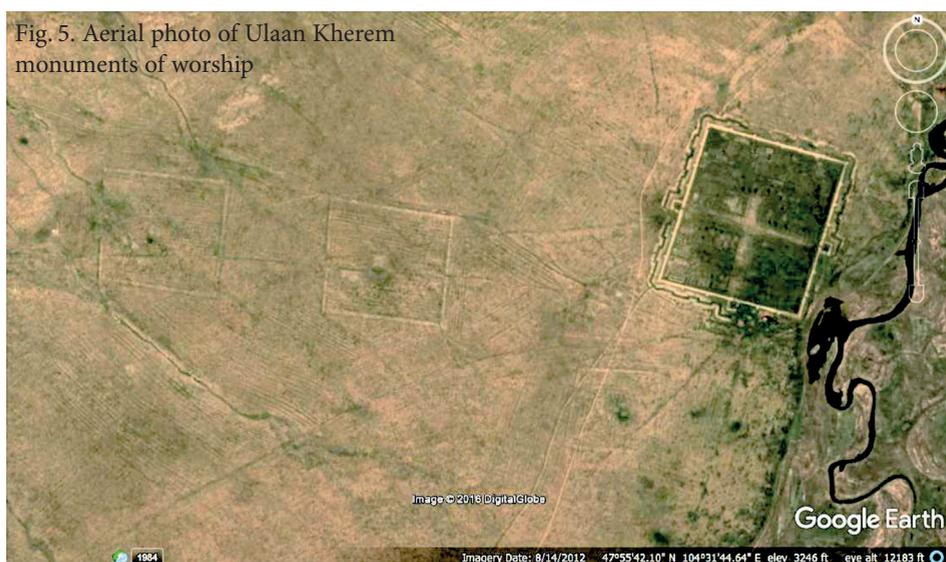


Fig. 5. Aerial photo of Ulaan Kherem monuments of worship



from Ulaan Kherem — 2. The wall has a square shape. North and south sides of the wall are 420 m long; its east and west sides are 380 m long. At present a width of the earthen wall is 10 m and its height is 0.4—0.8 m. There is a gap about 20 m wide, it might be a gate area. There are some traces of the channel and earthen dam along the northern side of the wall. An oval-like earthen mound 50 m wide is in the center of the wall. Its height is 1,6 m. Three other earthen mounds 18—22 m in diameter and 0,9 m high situate in the west from central mound; two of them are merged.

**Ulaan Kherem — 5.** It is situated at coordinates 47°55'47.18" N and 104°30'54.49" E, 1000 m above the sea level. This wall is in 300 m west from Ulaan Kherem — 4. The length of north and south sides of the wall is about 400 m, the one of east and west sides is 380 m. The wall is 8 m wide and around 0,4—0,7 m high. There is an earthen mound about 1,5 m high and 40 m in diameter in the center of the wall. There are 3 earthen mounds about 18 m in diameter each to southwest from the central mound. Two gaps 30 and 25 m wide are in east and south sides of the wall respectively. These gaps might be a gate area.

#### *KHUDGIIN TALYN RUINS*

There is ancient town ruin in the place called Khudgiin Tal (Steppe of a well) in the east valley of Khalzan gol (Bald River) in 10 km north from the Battsengel soum center, Arkhangai Province. It is located at coordinates 47°52'21.9" N and 101°55'53.8" E, 1587 m above the sea level. South and north sides of the wall are 300 m long, east and west sides are 400 m long. There are gates in 4 sides of the wall; a width of the north, west and east gates are about 4 m, and the one of the south gate is about 3 m. On both sides of each gate the wall is higher than in other places. Present width of the wall is 16—19 m. No moat is detected outside of the wall. There is a 1.5 m high 49×54 m square mound in the center of the wall. Three other earthen mounds are to southwest from the central one. Their average height is 0.6 m. The sizes of the northern, middle and southern mounds are 15×23 m, 16×18 m and 22×27 m respectively; all of them have an oval-like shape. Other four earthen mounds situated inside the wall near each of 4 gates. Their average height is 0.5 m. There are remains of one old ruin located east from this Khudgiin Tal wall and several other small mounds northwest from it (Fig. 6).

#### *BOR AZARGYN KHEREM*

There is a wall on the southern slope of the Bor Azargyn Mountain in 14 km northeast from the Battsengel soum center, Arkhangai Province. It is situated at coordinates 47°48'34.55" N and 102°10'4.91" E, 1548 m above the sea level. The wall is made of a piled earth and has a square shape. The length of the south and north sides of the wall is 440 m, the one of the east and west sides is about 420 m; the width of the gate in its north side is about 6 m; other sides of the wall are vague, so it is impossible to know the position of gates there. Present width of the wall is 12—16 m. No moat is detected outside of the wall. South and east sides of the wall are most blurred. There is 1.8 m high square mound 41×40 m in the center of the wall. Three more earthen mounds are in southwest from it.

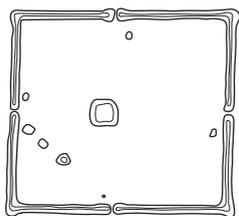
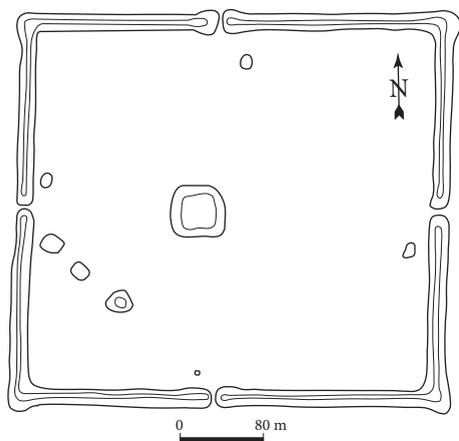


Fig. 6. Plan of Khudgiin talyn ruins



Their average height is 0.5 m. The size of the northern mound is 10×7 m, of the middle one is 15×17 m and of the southern one is 21×22 m; shapes of these three mounds are oval-like (Fig. 7).

While making descriptions we have noticed that Talyn Gurvan Kher-

em, 4 walled sites near Ulaan Kherem, Khudgiyn Talyn Kherem, Bor Azargyn Kherem and others all look quite similar by their general layout, structure and organizational components. First of all, all the walls have square shape. In addition, all mounds situated in center of the wall are larger than others. All monuments have 3 earthen mounds forming a line stretched from north to south in southwest from the central large

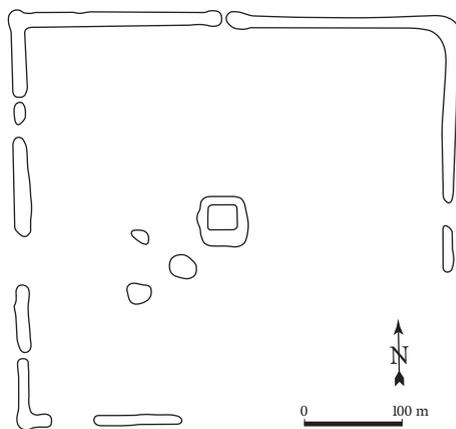


Fig. 7. Plan of Bor Azargyn Kherem

earthen mound. Also, a common feature is a presence of earthen mound near each gate of the wall. Talyn Gurvan Kherem and Khudgiin Talyn Kherem are similar by having a gate in each of four sides. No construction materials were found in the walls in above mentioned 3 sites and in nearby areas. It makes us to think that these monuments of worship might be built in same time period or in close time periods and might be built specially for something.

## EXCAVATION OF TALYN GURVAN KHEREM AND ITS RESULTS

### *EXCAVATION OF THE WESTERN WALL*

**Excavation of the 1st or largest earthen mound located in the center of the wall.** This monument by its appearance and shape resembles the earthen mound over the mausoleum tomb of nomadic people and surrounding it earthen wall. So we thought that it might be an area of entrance to the mausoleum and made test excavation pits 30×2 m and 3.10×2 m in two places on its south part in order to check our suggestions. According to the test excavation, the natural base soil had been revealed at approximately 20—30 cm under the modern surface. So, we had stopped the excavation. In other words, this meant that this monument has no entrance zone. So, we found out that this monument is not a mausoleum tomb and made two ditches one 46×2 m from west to east, another 40×2 m from south to north going through the center of the mentioned largest earthen mound. As the excavation result, the 10 cm thick dark soil with humus and vegetable roots had been revealed on the mound top and then the rammed red earth was found below this dark soil. Thanks to this excavation, we had found out how the mounds were built. First, many wooden poles were fixed on the chosen plot of land enclosing an area of square or a bit oblong shape. The red earth was purified of the big stones and then it was used for filling the square. Layers of red earth up to 10—15 cm thick were rammed one by one, forming the mound. The surface of mound's four sides was faced with sticky blue-color earth mixed with tough grass and then painted with white powder which formed a thin layer.

The mound was about 3.2 m high in the center and its top had a bit rounded dome like a top of modern time Mongolian ger (jurt). Its four walls were a bit inclined inwards starting from the base and their modern height is 1—1.7 m. This mound consisted of red earth it has oblong and rectangular shape, 35×19 m. Upper parts of the mound had been collapsed down due to many years of wind and rain erosion processes; about half of 4 sides had fallen (Fig. 8; 9).

One bronze knife had been found the outside of the mound's south side. This knife is 16 cm long and curved in the middle (Fig. 10). And one piece of white porcelain vessel was found at the depth of 40 cm in the center of the mound. The vessel was put with a top rim up and then covered by stones and earth. This vessel is an artifact referred to the 16—17<sup>th</sup> centuries. It is a kind of local worshiping traditions occurred in rather later times to bury bowls and vessels in remnants of ancient towns and settlements.

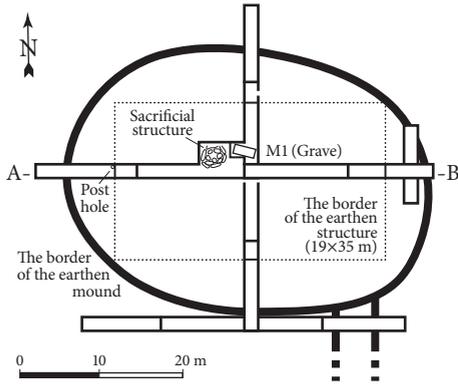


Fig. 8. Plan of excavation of the 1<sup>st</sup> mound of the Western Wall

Fig. 9. The Pole and Column Holes unearthed at the west side of the 1<sup>st</sup> mound of the Western Wall

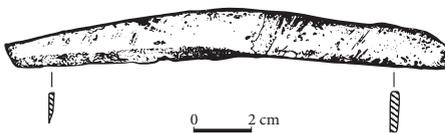


Fig. 10. Bronze knife

**Excavation of 5<sup>th</sup> mound of the western wall.** This monument is located in 40 m to south from the largest (1<sup>st</sup>) earthen mound and is connected with the latter by the stripe of earthen elevation (Fig. 11).

The 5<sup>th</sup> mound is 1 m high and has oval shape 18×20 m. In order to build the monument, firstly the area of construction was fenced by wooden poles and then filled of red earth. During the excavation process, 2 pole holes with wood remnants inside had been revealed at depth about 40 cm. The distance between them is 16 cm. As far as we know now, this monument is 12 m long, 10 m wide and 1 m high in the center. Nevertheless, it is clear that the monument was gradually collapsed and dispersed around. Also a narrow

Fig. 11. The scheme of position of test excavation trenches and pits in area of 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> mounds and earthen elevation in the Western Wall

and long wood laying in across position was found at the depth of 35 cm in the spot of junction of the 5<sup>th</sup> mound and the earthen elevation. The mentioned wood is 95 cm long and 5 cm in diameter. Perhaps, this wood had been originally used in order to keep the earth of the structure, not allowing it to disperse away (Fig. 12).

**Excavation of the earthen elevation.** We excavated 6×4 m area of the earthen elevation of the western wall. Before the excavation a size of the elevation was 49×6 m. Thanks to the excavation, it became clear that this earthen elevation was something like a path made of red earth and fenced by short wooden poles. 3 pole holes had been discovered: two in west and one in east edges of the elevation. These holes were much shallower than the pole holes of the mounds. They also were much

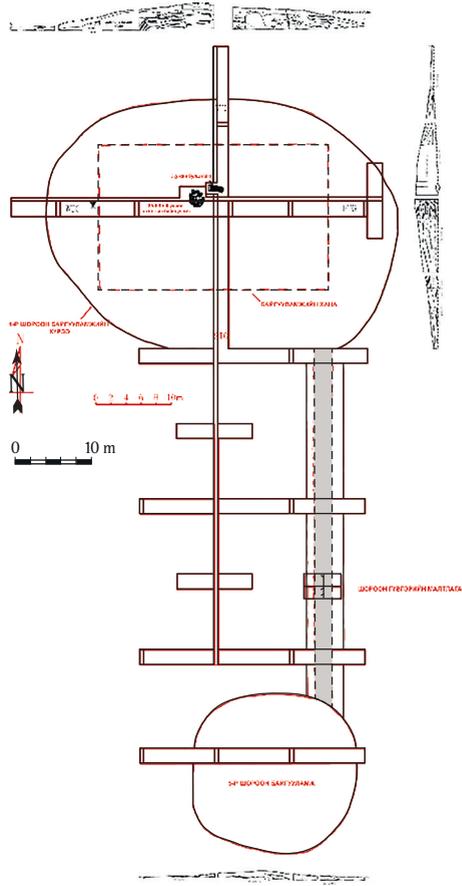
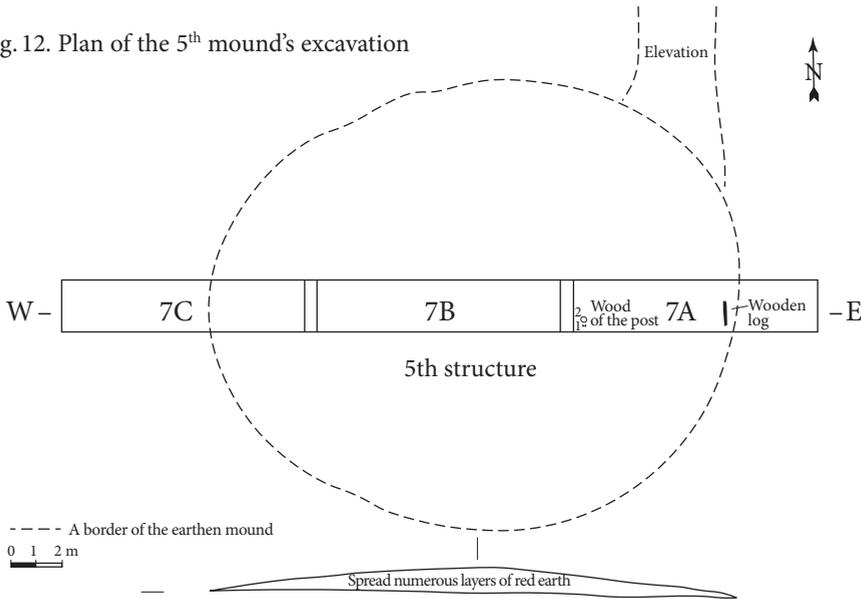


Fig. 12. Plan of the 5<sup>th</sup> mound's excavation



narrower. Judging by the distance between pole holes, the elevation had been made the following way: firstly wooden poles at interval of 2.3 m were installed, and wooden fences were built on them, then the space between fences was filled by layers of rammed red earth. The red earth was 15—20 cm thick and 2.8 m wide (Fig. 13; 14).

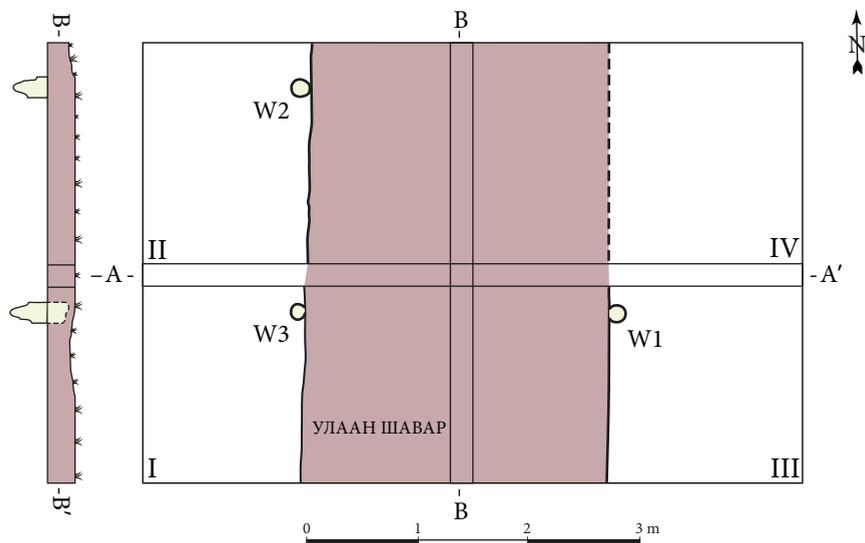


Fig. 13. Plan of the excavation across the stripe of earthen elevation in the Western Wall



Fig. 14. Excavation pit across the stripe of earthen elevation in the Western Wall

**The gate area excavation.** We made excavation pit 24×14 m in the area of east gate of the Western Wall. The gate area was 1.2 m high, 5 m wide and had 3 m gap in the wall. The excavation field totally covered area of the gate in the wall. 9 pole holes were found in the inner part of the wall gate area. Four of them were large holes (an average diameter of such round hole was 54 cm) and their average depth was around 47 cm. The remaining 5 holes were narrower (with average diameter of 20 cm) and 30 cm deep in average. Other 3 pole holes had been revealed in outer area of the gate. The bottoms of those holes had remains of the wood. The diameters of these holes were around 45—73 cm and their depth was about 60 cm; flat stones had been put in the holes' bottoms. The holes also kept stuffing stones (Fig. 15; 16). As the excavation result, it became known that in order to build the eastern gate of the western wall, firstly the wooden poles had been installed at interval of approximately 1.5 m in lines on both sides of the passage and along sides of the both ends of the wall. Then a wooden fence was built on these poles. Finally, the fenced area was filled with earth forming something like the 1.4—1.5 m high side platform of the gate. And that platform was 8 m long and 5 m wide. The post holes had been dug on the northern and southern boundary areas of that platforms till their junction with the earthen wall, stones had been put on the bottom of holes, wooden posts had been fixed on them and perhaps, the solid wood gate supporting framework was made this way. Perhaps, the upper parts of newly set-up walls were connected and strengthened again by woods and

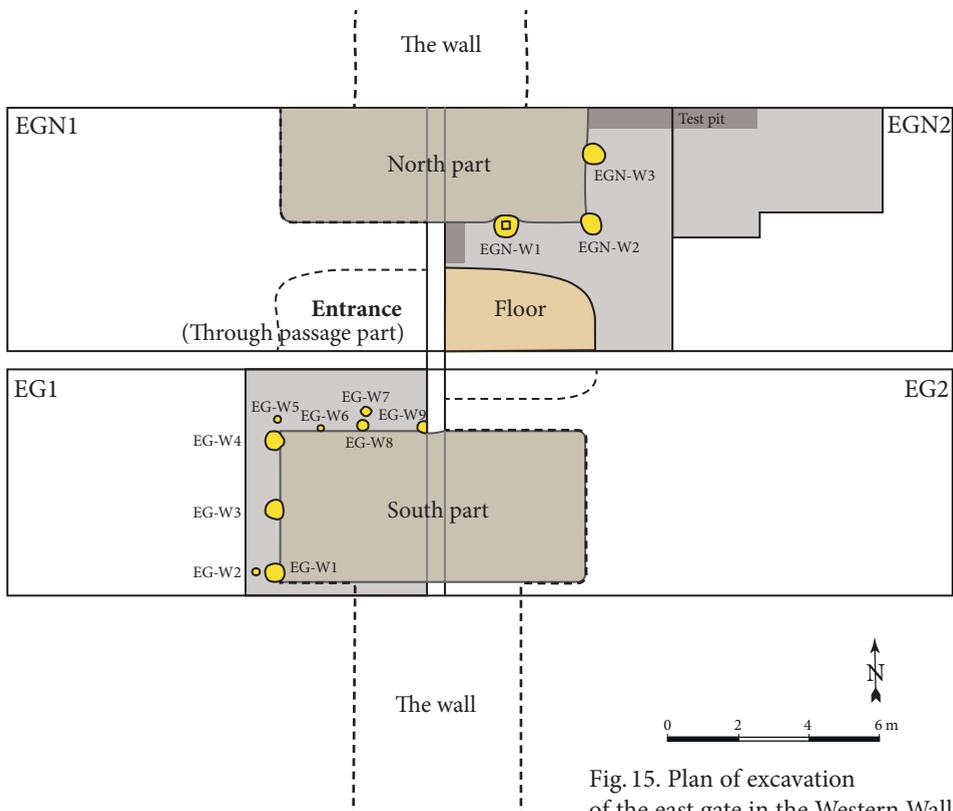


Fig. 15. Plan of excavation of the east gate in the Western Wall



Fig. 16. Excavation of the east gate in the Western Wall

a big solid wood gate of a square form had been made in this manner. The mentioned solid wood gate, perhaps, had a triangle spine frame and wooden roof. There is no moat dug outside of the wall. This gate, perhaps, was build especially for people and carts to enter and exit.

**The wall excavation.** We excavated the 25×1.5 m area across the wall and its outside moat in the spot to south from the east gate of the western wall. Thanks to the excavation, it became clear that the moat outside of the wall had been excavated first and then the wall erected using earth mass taken from that moat. The earthen wall is approximately 1.52 m high, 4.5 m wide in base and 4 m wide in top and its cross-section has a form slightly narrowing from the base to the top. The blue earth collapsed and flowed from the wall had been accumulated in inner and outer parts of the wall. After erecting, the wall had been faced with blue earth and this blue earth had been collapsed and dispersed around due to the long years of erosion. It became clear thanks to the cut done through it that the wall had been made of 2 different kinds of earth. The lower parts of the wall had been made of sandy soil taken from the upper layers of the moat when it was dug, and upper parts of the wall were made of brown grey soil with small stones. This earth is also from the moat, but from its lower layers. The wall while being erected, was not hardened deliberately, but due to long years passed, the earth used in the wall construction had subsided and became hardened. The moat had been dug in about 1 m distance outside of the earthen wall. The moat's walls have sharp decline (90°) downwards, the moat is 1.6 m deep and 6 m wide. The depth of the moat and the height of the wall were almost similar. The moat used to be dry, and was built to prevent the domestic as well as wild animals, flooding and rain water entering into the wall (Fig. 17).

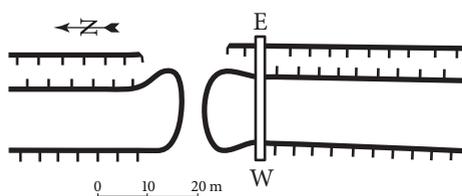
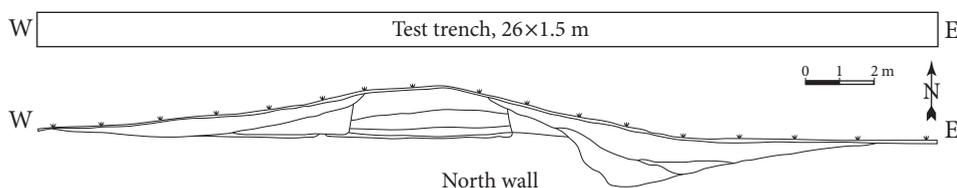


Fig. 17. Plan of the excavation trench across the wall to the south from the east gate of the Western Wall



### EXCAVATION OF THE MIDDLE WALL

**Excavation of the 1<sup>st</sup> mound.** We have entitled this square earthen mound situated in the center of the wall as the monument No. 1. Its size is 46×46 m at base and 25×25 m at the top, and its height is 3 m. We have divided the monument into 4 parts in accordance with directions of 4 gates and made test excavations of the mound's south part along the vertical (north-south) axis (excavation pit A1), west part along the horizontal (east-west) axis (A2), higher area of western

part (A3) and western top corner (B1). The test excavations of the southern and western parts started from the base of the earthen mound foot till the upper flat terrace. We excavated the southern part till the side of the structure itself, the side was upright and slightly inclined. One pole hole was discovered near the base of the side of the mound. The hole's depth was 70 cm and its diameter was 21 cm. The body of the mound in the western side consisted of rammed layers of grey earth in lower part and of rammed layers of red earth in upper part. The monument side here was vertical with 10° inclination inwards.

Five post holes had been revealed during the excavation along the western side. Two of them adjoin the earthen mound side and have 4 m distance between each other. An average diameter of these holes is 90 cm and the depth is 75 cm. The remaining 3 holes formed a row parallel to former two holes outside of them. They situated in an even distance of 3.8 m one from another, their average diameter was 20 cm, and the depth was 60 cm. All the holes lined in direction from north to south along the monument's western side. There were remnants such as scattered flat stones, stuffing stones remained in bottoms of some of mentioned above two types of holes. The western side of the 1<sup>st</sup> monument is 1.4 m high. When we removed the 15 cm thick surface soil on the part of this monument grown with the broom-grass, we reached rammed red earth and immediately stopped the excavation. As a result of this excavation, we've got a notion about the possible way of building of this largest monument situated in the center of the wall.

First, the place was chosen, and then many columns were installed in the ground as if making a square form, and thinner wooden poles were set up in holes dug in 10—20 cm distance outside of those columns. The latter were connected with wood, forming a fence. After that, the space inside this fenced square was filled with rammed layers of red and grey kinds of muddy earth, each 10—15 cm thick, thus forming an earthen platform 42×42 m and 2.8 m high. It seems that the outer thin wooden poles were intended to keep the earthen platform in a form and prevent it of being collapsed, but the inner thick wooden columns were destined to support the wooden roof over the platform.

The holes for thick posts were stuffed with small-size stones, and flat stones were laid in the bottom. It prevented, from one side, the columns to get moisture from below and get decomposed, and from another side also prevented them from sinking down in the ground and get easily movable. At the same time, the holes for small poles had been stuffed with stones in order to prevent of being leaned especially outwards. And the sticky and muddy earth had been put in some pole holes for strengthening purpose. When the construction of the platform-like earthen monument was completed, small fencing poles were removed by loosening. This action can be traced by the appearance of the edge of the hole. Such holes are wider in top part or their shape is oval in one particular direction.

It is most probable that the ramps had been additionally made after setting up the big, high earthen platform. The way of their construction was the same as of the main platform; using wooden fencing and rammed earth. Most probably, the ramps to the platform were intended for climbing up and down. The size of upper part of the platform was 25×25 m; it looked like a cone with cut off top (Fig. 18—22).

NEWLY DISCOVERED MONUMENTS OF WORSHIP OF XIONGNU

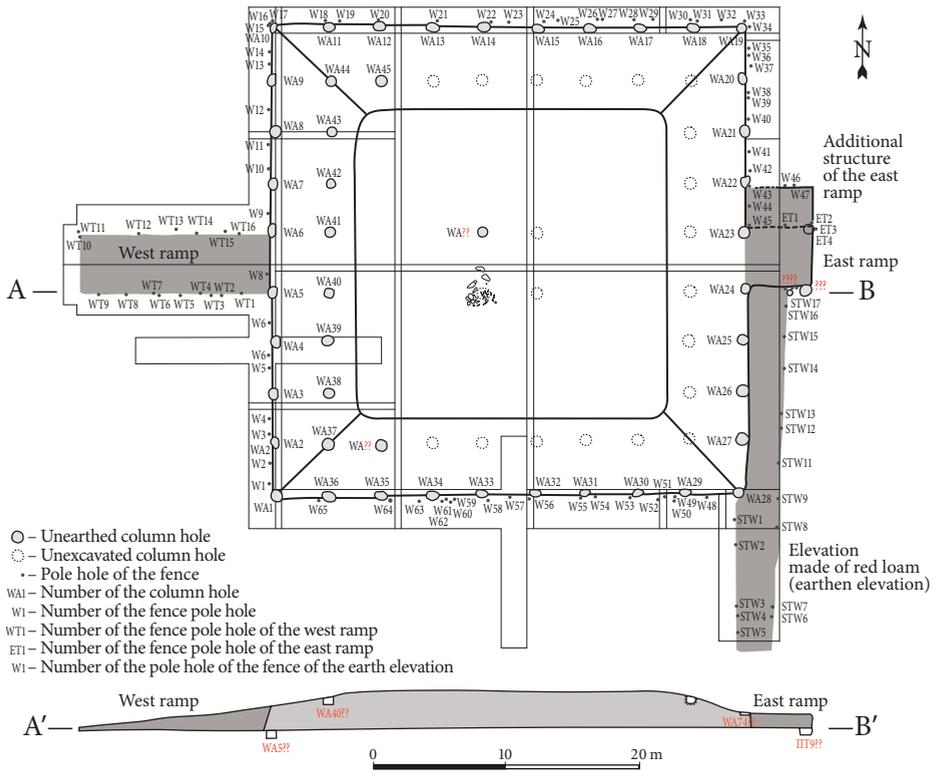


Fig. 18. Plan of the 1<sup>st</sup> monument of the Middle Wall



Fig. 19. The Excavation Process of 1<sup>st</sup> monument of the Middle Wall. View from Northeast



Fig. 20. South side of the platform of the 1<sup>st</sup> monument of the Middle Wall. View from East

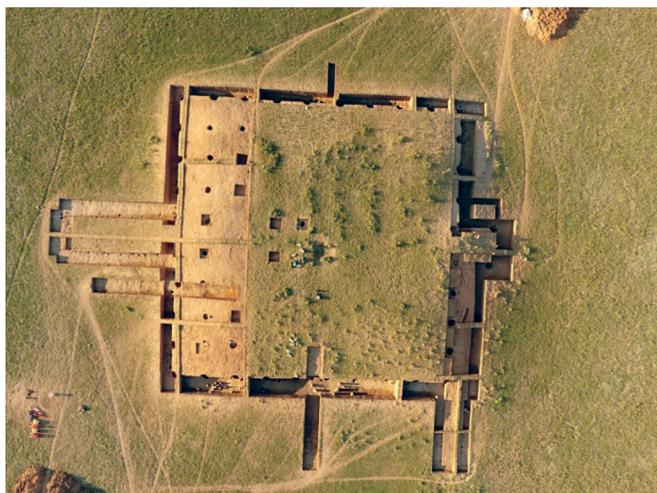


Fig. 21. The 1<sup>st</sup> monument of the Middle Wall  
on completion of excavation

The four sides of this platform had been faced with mixed sticky blue earth. Now that polished blue earth has collapsed off and accumulated in the bottom along the walls.

**Excavation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> mound.** The middle one of 3 mounds situated to southwest from the large central platform of the Middle Wall is numbered as the monument No. 3. This earthen mound is directed from northwest to southeast and has an oblong oval form. Its dimension is 40×30 m and height is 1.6 m. We excavated 34×2 m test trench going this mound and made excavation of the 20×16 m

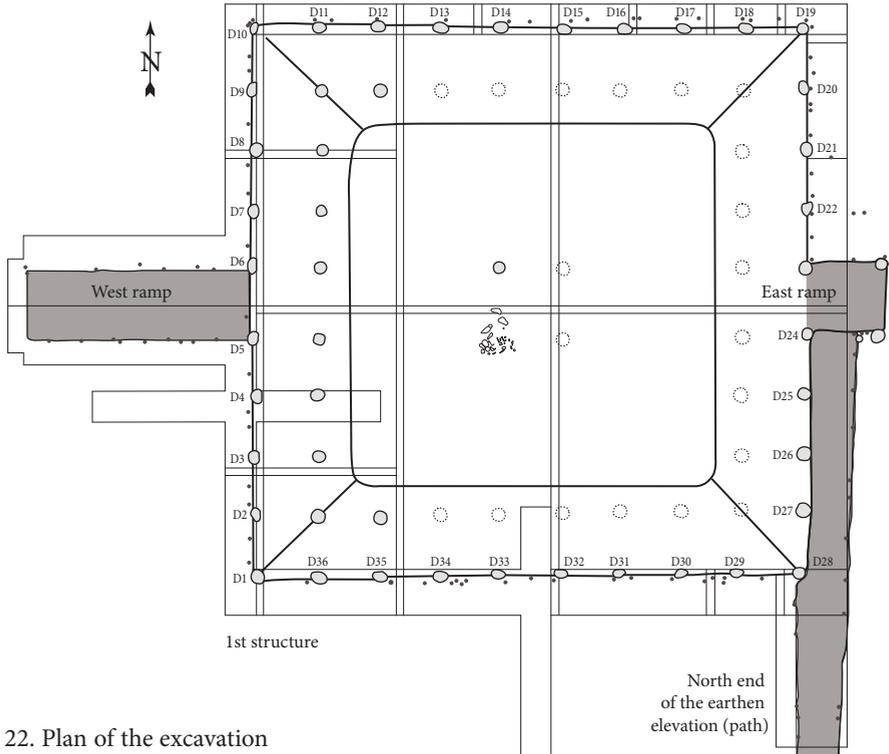
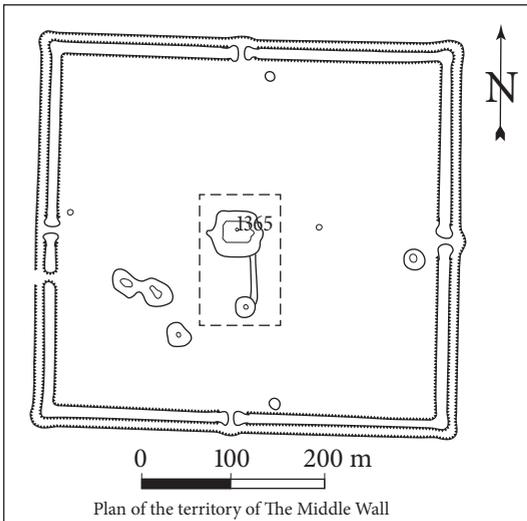
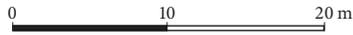
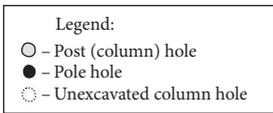
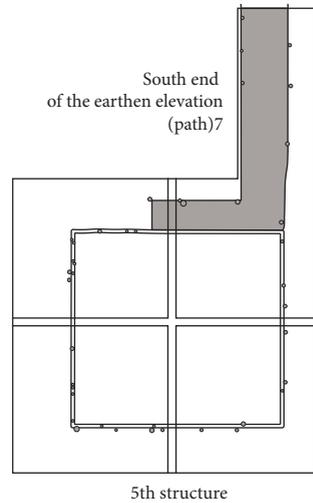


Fig. 22. Plan of the excavation of 1<sup>st</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> monuments of the Middle Wall



Plan of the territory of The Middle Wall



5th structure

area in the southeastern part and another area of 4×2 m in the southwestern part of the mound. Thanks to the excavation, it has been found out that this mound was built the same way as other mounds described above; first 20 poles (12 in south and north sides and 8 in east and west sides) were installed in the ground with 4—2.6 m space between each other creating a rectangular form, and then red muddy earth was spread inside it in many layers forming a mound low in edge areas and high in the center. Judging by the location of fencing poles, its size was 24×15 m, about 1.5 m high. It was oblong and rectangular platform with its wider side faced to south. Sides of the mound were vertical with 10° incline inwards; they were faced with mixed sticky blue earth (Fig. 23; 24). Fragments of the neck and a wall of ceramic pot were found at the base of the south side of this monument.

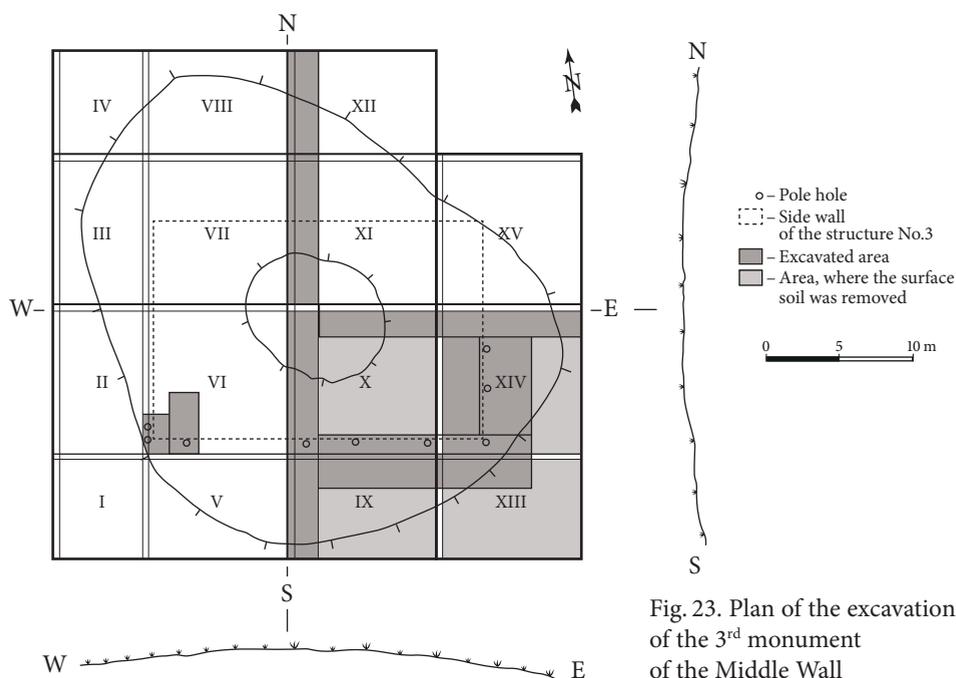


Fig. 23. Plan of the excavation of the 3<sup>rd</sup> monument of the Middle Wall

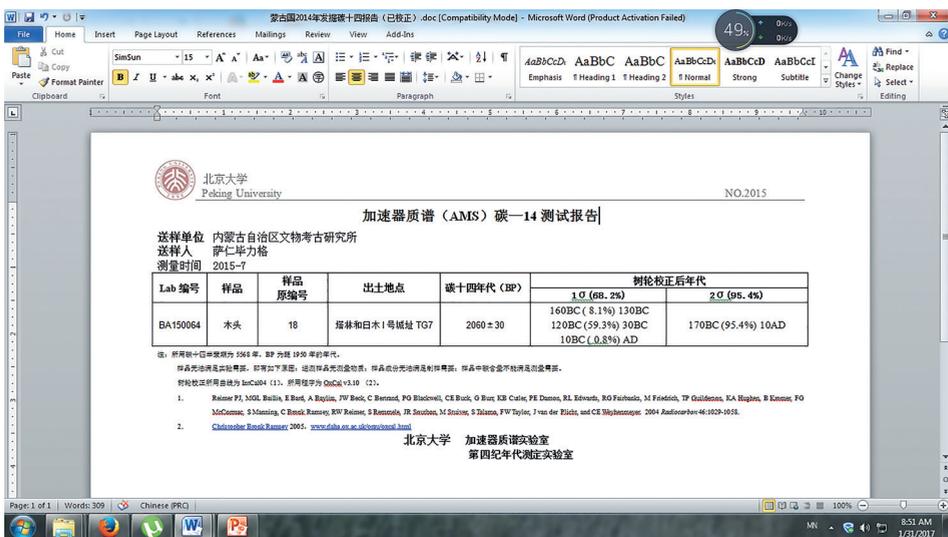


Fig. 24. The 3<sup>rd</sup> monument of the Middle Wall. View from Southeast

## CONCLUSION

The wood sample found by the Talyn Gurvan Kherem excavation had been sent to the Laboratory of Beijing University, People's Republic of China for  $C_{14}$  dating analysis in 2015. In accordance with the laboratory analysis, the wood age had been determined as between 170 BC and 10 AD (Fig. 25). It coincides with the time of existence of Xiongnu Empire (3<sup>rd</sup> Century BC and 1<sup>st</sup> Century AD). According to historic sources Xiongnu people used to have customs to conduct official worshipping ceremonies in spring, summer and autumn. In “Shi ji” (《史记》 “Historical Records”) it is written: 岁正月,诸长小会单于庭,祠。五月,大会茏城,祭其先、天地、鬼神。秋,马肥,大会蹏林,课校人畜计。“All leaders gather to minor assembly in the King (*shanyu*) Court every year in the first month of Lunar Calendar and make sacrifices. In the 5<sup>th</sup> month, all the people gather to grand assembly in Longcheng and make sacrificial donations to ancestors, Heaven and Earth, ghosts and gods — *guishen*. In autumn, after the horses got fat, the people gather in Dailin, count and verify the human and domestic animals resources” (Sima Qian 1963, juan 110: 2892). “Narration of South Xiongnu” in “Hou Han shu” (“History of Late Han Dynasty” 《后汉书·南匈奴列传》) also reports: “匈奴俗,岁有三龙祠,常以正月、五月、九月戊日祭天神。“In accordance with the Xiongnu customs, they do worship three times in a year. Always in auspicious days of first, fifth and ninth months they worship with sacrificial donations to deities” (Fan Ye 1973, juan 89: 2944).

In accordance with the above mentioned information, Xiongnu people did worshipping ceremonies at least 3 times in a year. But it seems to us that if in fifth and ninth months or in middle month of Summer and last month of Autumn worshipping ceremonies used to involve more people, including ordinary men and were bigger public events, the worshipping ceremony of first month, most probably, was for elite: Shanyu's relatives, and high officials gathered in the King Court.

Fig. 25. Result of the AMS  $C_{14}$  dating

There is no more information about how Xiongnu people did worshipping ceremonies recorded in historical sources. Nevertheless, thanks to Talyn Gurvan Kherem test excavation, it became possible to imagine some events of those Xiongnu worshipping ceremonies. First of all, they used to build special monuments for worshipping and did their ceremonies there. Those monuments had similar organizational components, structures and were architectural facilities of peculiar type. The specific composition, structure, components of those monuments had been built specially for worshipping ceremonies. Those Xiongnu ceremonies were the highly developed and regularly conducted state rituals. Therefore, there were many ceremonial and symbolic events that should be followed the worshipping ceremonies. It becomes clear from the Talyn Gurvan Kherem structure, organization and their dimensions.

Generally, Xiongnu Empire had a culture of highly developed urbanization at that time, and succeeded in creating its own architectural styles. Some of these skills and workmanship can be seen from way of building the gate area and central platform with many columns of Talyn Gurvan Kherem monument. It became known that Huns usually used to follow the symmetry principle while building the construction facilities. The Huns used to prefer south direction, as well as the number Three. There are groups of three earthen platforms situated to southwest from the largest central mound of the monuments for worship. These groups of 3 mounds are being repeated by their locations and numbers in such walls as Talyn Gurvan Kherem, Ugiinuur soum, Arkhangai Province, 4 walls near the Ulaan Kherem, Bayannuur soum, Bulgan Province, as well as in walls situated in Khudgiin Tal, and Bor Azarga near the Khalzangiin Gol, Battsengel soum, Arkhangai Province.

There is no reason to think that it is just a coincidence. It is worth thinking that exactly these groups of 3 mounds are the most recognizable marks of the large-dimensional Xiongnu monuments of worship. It is clearly seen from the structure and organizational components of these worshipping monuments that Huns used to prefer the number 3. The number 3 symbolism takes its root from the ancient shamanist point of view. According to the shamanist notion, the universe consists of 3 layers; and angels do live in the upper country, human beings and animals do live in the middle layer (i.e. Earth) and river and mountain spirits, mythical creatures do live in the lower universe. Perhaps, the ideology of giving preference to the number 3 and making it a symbol of strongpoint and entity was created basing on the notion of these three layers of the universe.

The Huns used to divide their State into 3 large units — “wings”. This structure of their statehood may be reflected in their monuments of worship and symbolism.

On another hand, Talyn Gurvan Kherem inner structures had been built using the red earth or red ochre. It is also a reflection of Huns’ point of view. According to the shamanist conception, the red color is called a life color. The shamans when they launch their drums and tambourine for the first time do use the red blood. Also when they did a ceremony of separation lives of twin babies, they used to connect the thumbs of twins with red rope and then to cut it off. Moreover, when transfer the sanctity from one animal to another, firstly, they tear

the ear of the sacred animal and deliver the new blood to the muzzle of the animal which is going to be declared as sacred. Such an ideology to connect the red color with a life has very ancient trace. As we know now, the red ochre had been used in the territory of Mongolia, starting from the burials and graves of late Stone Age (Dorj 2007: 49) and Bronze Age (Volkov 1976: 13—15; Navaan 1975: 39). The researchers found out that there was a common practice of scattering red ochre before burial in all Xiongnu graves excavated in the territory of Mongolia. It became known from the Talyn Gurvan Kherem excavation that the ideology to adore the red life color established in a deep ancient time had been inherited by the Huns too.

Therefore, it seems to us that it is possible to conclude that Xiongnu public worshipping ceremonies were actually of the shamanist nature and their other statehood rituals also were based on the shamanist ideology.

Based on locations of above mentioned monuments of worship, it seems to us that it is possible to detect the original territories where Xiongnu rulers and elite aristocrats used to inhabit that time. Most probably, the Huns didn't go far away for several times in a year in order to worship and do ceremonies, instead they used to build their monuments of worship in their native lands and do worshipping rituals on them. Consequently, it seems to us that the main core of the Xiongnu ruling elite and noblemen used to reside in the valleys of big rivers such as Tuul, Orkhon and Tamir, as well as along the basins of their tributaries.

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**НОВОЕ ОТКРЫТИЕ КУЛЬТОВЫХ ПАМЯТНИКОВ ХУННУ**

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Статья знакомит с серией памятников, которые, по мнению авторов, связаны с религиозными обрядами хунну. Исследователи отмечают, что памятники Талын-гурван-хэрэм в сомоне Угийнуур Архангайского аймака, Худгийн-талын-балгас и Бор-азаргын-хэрэм в сомоне Батцэнгэл того же аймака и Улан-хэрэм в сомоне Баяннур Булганского аймака отличаются от других единой формой и планировкой; также характерной их чертой является отсутствие находок каких-либо строительных материалов. Все эти памятники окружены квадратной в плане земляной стеной, имеют большую земляную платформу центрального сооружения и группу из трёх меньших по размерам строений юго-западнее её. Также у них есть небольшая платформа, соединённая дорожкой с южной стороной центрального сооружения. В статье приводятся результаты раскопок монгольско-китайской экспедиции на памятнике Талын-гурван-хэрэм. Выявлено устройство сооружений на земляных платформах, ворот в окружающей памятник стене и дорожки, соединяющей центральное строение с южной платформой. Радиоуглеродный анализ, а также найденные предметы позволяют датировать памятник II в. до н.э. — началом I в. н.э., т.е. временем существования Империи Хунну. Основываясь на письменных источниках и полученных в ходе раскопок данных, авторы делают вывод о ритуальном назначении исследованных памятников.

*Ключевые слова:* хунну, ритуальные памятники, Талын-гурван-хэрэм, Монголия.