

SOME RESULTS OF THE PRELIMINARY RESEARCH ON THE RUINS, DOV DERS

A. Ochir, Kh. Tserenbyamba

The paper presents results of archaeological researches of Dov Ders ruins situated near Orkhon River in Bulgan aimag of Mongolia in 2011–2012. The site is a rectangular walled town with earthen wall 360×400 m and big earthen platform in its central part. In the process of excavation the central platform 52×57 m was cut by test trenches in meridional and latitudinal directions; it allowed to ascertain the construction of the structure. It became clear that it is a basement 110–120 cm high built by layerwise tramping of earth. Remains of low earthen wall were found on edges of the platform. Also four stone pillars bases were unearthed on the surface of the basement. In the third and fourth phases of excavation four fragments

of ceramic vessels were found over the surface of the platform. Two of these fragments were identified as wheel-made. Test trenches across small mounds scattered near walls inside the site have demonstrated their natural origin. Authors come to conclusion that the central structure of the site is remains of the mansion with walls and roof made of fur or soft material like cloth. Comparing this site with similar by lay out sites like Xiongnu walled towns Gua Dov and Tereljiin Durvuljin they note that Dov Ders is much larger. Authors suppose that this walled town could be summer or autumn mansion of Xiongnu shanyu mentioned in historical records.

Keywords: Mongolia, Xiongnu, Dov Ders ruins, basement of a mansion.

In recent years, towns and settlements of the ancient nomads have been discovered in the territory of Mongolia.

At first, we made a plan and a brief description of the Dov Ders ruins in 2010. This ruins stand on the southern edge of a valley with a mire and also a brook named Burd¹. The Dov Ders ruins are located in the southern part of the Burdiin khundii valley, stretching out from west to east side of it (Fig. 1). The ruins are situated at N48° 19.28.1 and E1022 25.56.7, their elevation above sea level is 1359 m.

Ochir A., Dr.Sc., Professor, Senior Coordinator, International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations UNESCO, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Очир А., доктор исторических наук, профессор Международного института исследования кочевых цивилизаций ЮНЕСКО, главный координатор, г. Улан-Батор, Монголия.

E-mail: nomciw@magicnet.mn

Tserenbyamba Kh., Junior researcher, International Institute for the Study of Nomadic Civilizations UNESCO, Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia.

Цэрэнбаямба Х., младший научный сотрудник Международного института исследования кочевых цивилизаций ЮНЕСКО, г. Улан-Батор, Монголия.

E-mail: nomciw@magicnet.mn

¹ The first plan and a brief description of the Dov Ders ruins were made in 2010 by A. Ochir and E. Urtasan.



Fig. 1. Location
of the Dov Ders ruins

Burd Brook runs behind the ruins from west to east and flows into Orkhon River in 10 km. There is a mountain with trees named Gunjiin nuruu, it stretches from the north to the south along the west side of the ruins and there are also mounds in the south and southeast of the ruins as well as a rocky mountain Deli-in Uvur along the north side of the ruins.

In 2011² and 2012³, totally two times, the excavations were carried out, but not broadly. Let us lay out preliminary results of these researches and excavations briefly.

STRUCTURE OF THE RUINS

There is a big construction in the center of the ruins and an earthen wall surrounding it. Each of the north and south sides of the wall measure 400 m and each of the western and eastern sides of it are 360 m long. There is a gap in the south wall; it is remains of a gate. The gap is 12 m long. In some parts, the wall became hardly traced due to erosion by wind and water.

Now the maximal width of the wall is 15 m, the minimal one is 6 m. Southwest, northwest, southeast parts of the wall are a little bit taller than other parts. The northeast part of the wall is destroyed and hardly traceable.

Besides the large central construction, there are seven small mounds covered with feather grass inside the wall. These mounds are not man-made, probably they were built by accumulation of the sand and soil due to the wind (Fig. 2).

As to the large construction in the central part of the ruins, its south and north sides are 57 m long, west and the east ones are 52 m. The height of the construction is 1.7 m and it is covered with feather grass. Near the construction, a fold for livestock was built adjoining it. As for the numbering of the small mounds, the mound close to the south side of the central structure was referred to as No.1 and other mounds starting from the one in south-east corner of the wall were numbered in a clockwise direction, the descriptions of the mounds are as follows:

² The Institute of History of the Mongolian Academy of Sciences has supported the excavation and the research study in 2011.

³ The Ministry of Education, Culture and Science of Mongolia (by support of Minister Yo. Otgonbayar) has supported the excavation and the research study in 2012.

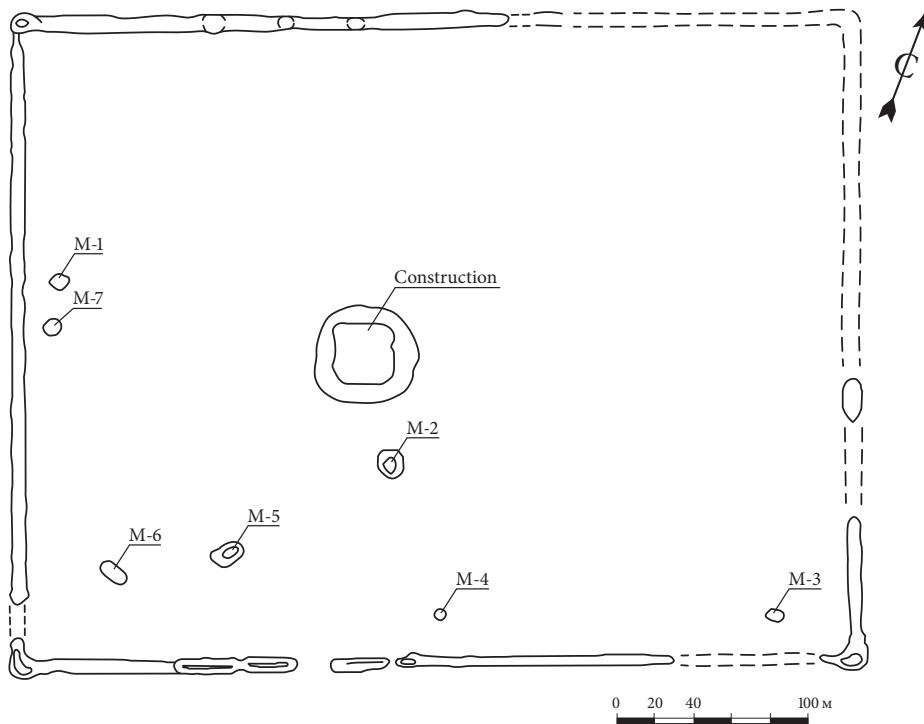


Fig. 2. Plan of the site

1. This mound is rectangle-shaped 18 m long and 15 m wide. Its current height is 0.6 m.
2. A mound which is located in the eastern corner of the wall. The length of the east and west sides is 8 m, the one of the north and south sides is 6 m, and its height is 0.4 m.
3. Current height of a mound near the central part of the south wall is 35 cm. The mound is measured 6×6 m.
4. A mound which is located in the west of the central construction. The length of each of the east and west sides is 18 m, the one of the north and south sides is 12 m, and its current height is 0.5 m.
5. A mound is rectangle-shaped and is measured 14 m in length and 6 m in width. Its height is 0.3 m.
6. One of two neighbor mounds near the west wall. This mound is oriented along the north to south and measures 8×8 m. Its height is 0.2 m.
7. Second of two neighbor mounds is oriented along the west to the east. The north and south sides are 10 m long, the east and the west sides are 8 m long, and its current height is 0.2 m. It is grown with feather grass.

The excavation

As we selected, we carried out an experimental excavation of the large construction located in the center of the wall. Being man-made it differs from other small mounds of natural origin (Fig. 3). We have divided the construction area

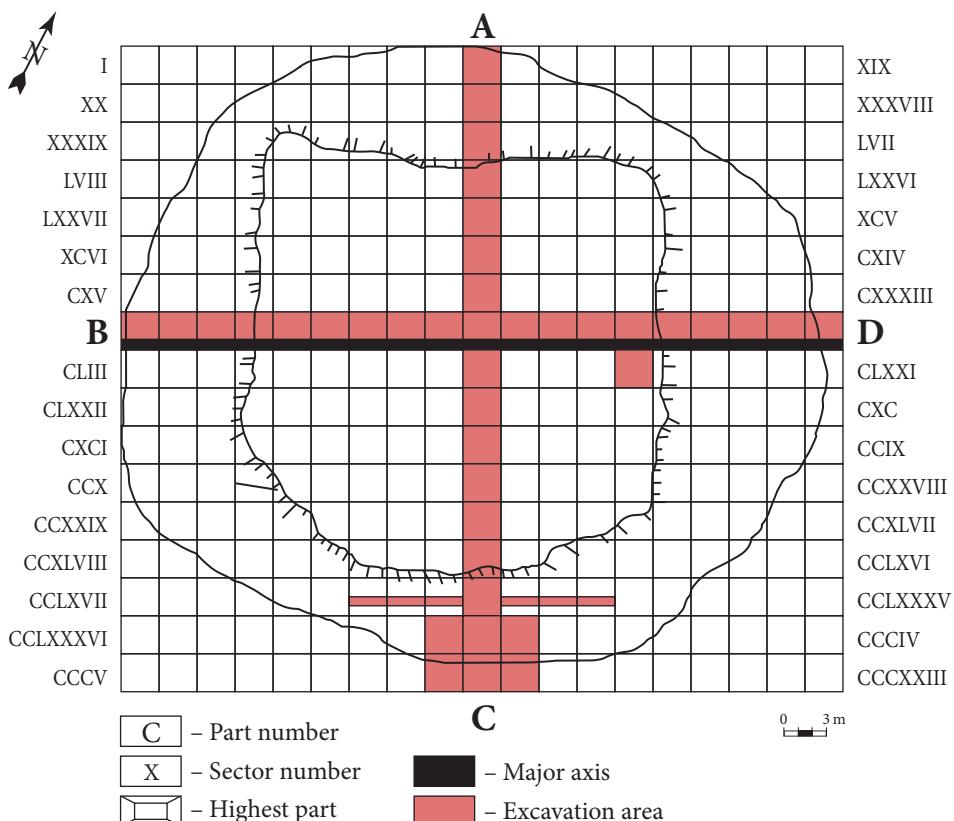


Fig. 3. Plan drawn of the excavation

into small sectors, each one measuring 3×3 m and numbered them starting from northwest sector. This way, as branched from the central point of the construction to four directions, excavation areas were marked as 'A', which measuring 24×3 m oriented along the center — north line; as 'B', measuring 27×2 m, stretched along the center — west line; as 'C', measuring 27×3 m was along the center — south line; and as 'D', measuring 27×2 m was along the center — east line. The areas A, B, C, D or in other words, a whole cross section was made along horizontal (east — west) and vertical (south — north) lines (Fig. 4).

In 2011 an excavation was carried out in the whole 'A' area including sectors X, XXIX, XLVIII, LXVII, LXXXVI, CV, CXXIV, CXLIII, a 16×2 m part of 'B' area including sectors CXXXVII, CXXXVIII, CXXXIX, CXL, CXLI, CXLII and a 18×3 m part of 'C' area including sectors CLXII, CLXXXI, CC, CCXIX, CCXXXVIII, CCLVII.

In 2012 we have excavated an area measured 11×2 m in sectors CXXXIV, CXXXV, CXXXVI, CXXXVII of the 'B' area, continuing from the excavation area of 2011. Also, the excavation was continued in 'C' area and we dug a trench which measured 12×3 m covering sectors CCLVII, CCLXXVI, CCXCV, CCCXIV, moreover we excavated sectors CXLIV, CXLV, CXLVI, CXLVII, CXLVIII, CXLIX, CL, CLI, CLII measured 27×2 m in 'D' area.

The excavation phases were as follows:

The first phase: We marked a point with number '0' on the highest part of the excavation area and dug through soil layers as intended. Here, dark brown soil layer was continued to a depth up to 15—20 cm.

The second phase: In this phase, a layer of burnt, dark brown and soft soil was unearthed, there was a layer of light gravelly loam directly under it at a depth between 10 and 15 cm; then there was a 15—20 cm thick layer of a combination of dark brown soil, light gravelly loam, and gravelly clay loam below it.

The third phase: During the excavation of this phase, combination of dark brown soil and light gravelly loam layers continued layer by layer with thickness ranged from 15 cm to 25 cm until the excavation reached a *depth* of 60—70 cm. In sectors LXVII, CXLIII and CXLI stone bases of pillars one in each sector were found at that depth. The stone base unearthed in sector LXVII, was marked as No. 1; the one from sector CXLIII was numbered as No. 2; another one from sector CXLII was numbered as No. 3. Probably, the stone base No. 1 was moved quite a lot from its original position. The distance between stone bases No. 1 and No. 2 was 12.2 m (Fig. 4).

The stone base No. 1: The stone base, found in sector LXVII, was made of gray-colored granite with touched up edges, its size is 50×60×12 cm.

The stone base No. 2: The stone base, found in sector CXLIII, was also made of gray-colored granite with touched up edges and two polished sides, its size is 50×55×12 cm.

The stone base No. 3: The stone base, found in sector CXLII, was made of gray-colored granite with touched up edges and two polished sides, its size is 50×45×15 cm. There was a pit 5 cm in diameter and 60 cm deep under this base. We suppose that this pit was dug deliberately (Fig. 5).



Fig. 4. Stone bases of pillars
(bases No. 1 and No. 2)



Fig. 5. The pit under the stone base No. 3

This can be related to an ancient legend. As narrated, there was a sea empire located under earth and if someone connected with the empire, he will become wealthy. This leads to that it could be a symbol to connect dignitaries' mansion to the empire, based on this belief. The pit was not filled with soil and was left open; the pillar stone base was put on it.

In the third excavation phase, a fragment of a black vase's mouth was found in sector LXVII. The fragment is of well fired, gray fine-textured clay with small particles of stone and its outer surface was blackened by fire.



Fig. 6. The stone base No. 4

The vase was made of fine-textured clay, well fired; it probably had the rim which was pointed slightly outward; the neck seems to be decorated with five parallel horizontal lines. Also a fragment of a vase body was found in sector CL, at depth of 76 cm from the surface of the ground. This vase is wheel-made of well fired fine-textured clay. The fragment measured $3 \times 3.5 \times 1.3$ cm and its outer surface was blackened by fire. It is hard to identify the form and size of the whole body because the fragment is small. Also, a fragment of blue vase body measuring $3 \times 3 \times 1$ cm was found in sector CXLVI. The vase was wheel made of fine-textured clay (Fig. 8).

The fifth phase: To clarify height of the earthen basement and method for making it, cuttings were made through the construction, their location was selected in sectors CXLVI, CCLVII, 3×1 m each, in sector CXLIII, 1.1×1.1 m, and in sectors CXL, CCXCIV, 2×1 m each (Fig. 9). A cross-section at the entrance to the basement, has revealed different layers of soil, they are: a fine-textured yellowish soil or clayey loam rammed layer 10—12 cm thick, below it a 6—8 cm thick layer of dark brown soil and then a 12—14 cm thick layer of yellowish-red soil. All layers were tamped and equally spread out. Below them the following rammed layers were found: a layer consisted of mixture of brown and yellow clay, 4—10 cm thick; a layer of fine-textured yellowish soil or clayey loam up to 8 cm thick; a 3—5 cm thick brown soil layer; a 10—12 cm thick rocky yellow clayey soil; fine-textured dark green-colored clay soil. The dark green-colored soil was more compacted

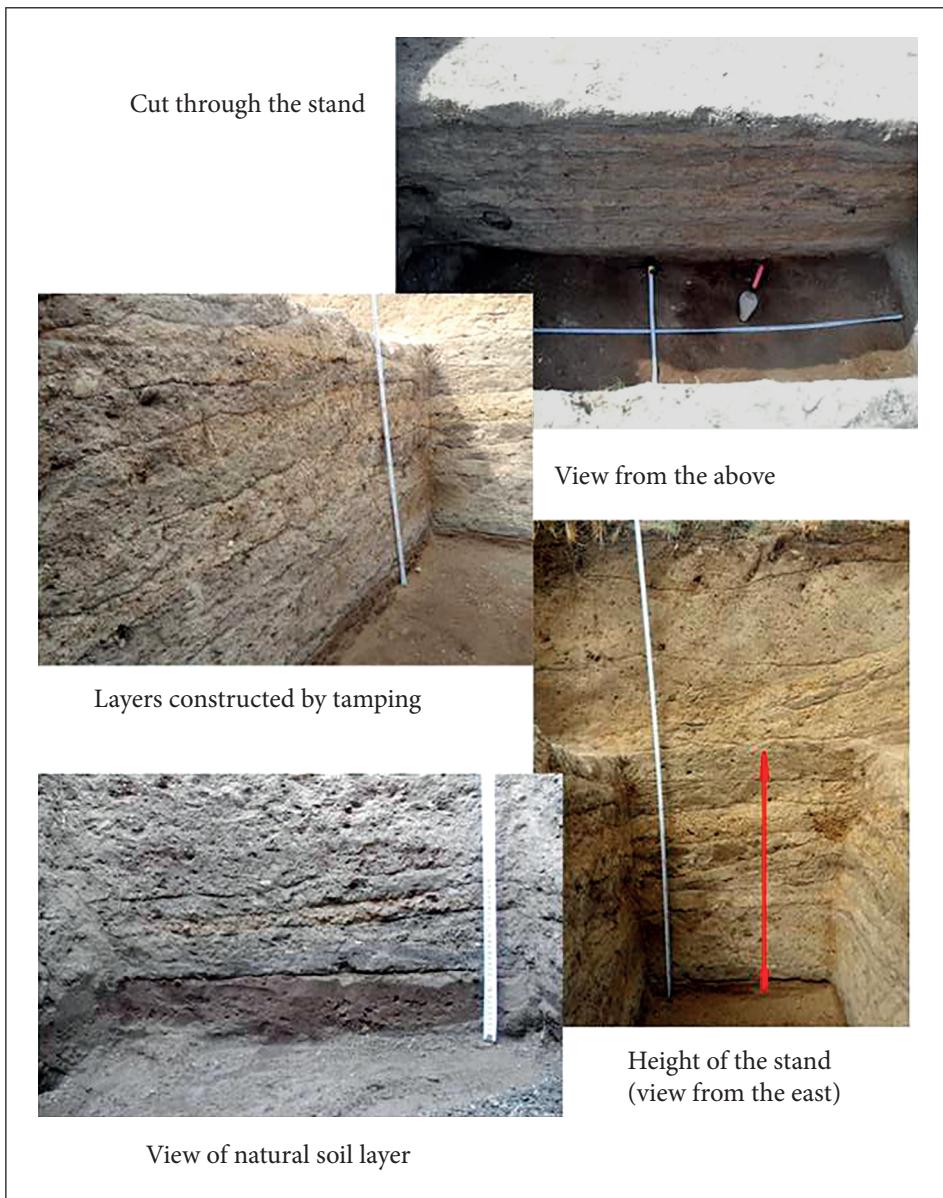


Fig. 7. Cut through the basement of the central basement

than others and so it was placed deliberately in the central part of the construction. During the excavation, it became obvious that the height of the earthen basement is around 110—120 cm and it was constructed by 8—12 layers of rammed soil with layer's thickness ranged from 3 cm to 20 cm (Fig. 7).

The high basement measured 27×21 m. The edges of the stand were quite worn by rain and wind, became smooth; and yellow clayey soil fallen from the edge formed a layer 4—8 cm thick. This layer should be ruins of the wall of the construction. As for the found stone bases of the columns, the first, second and fourth

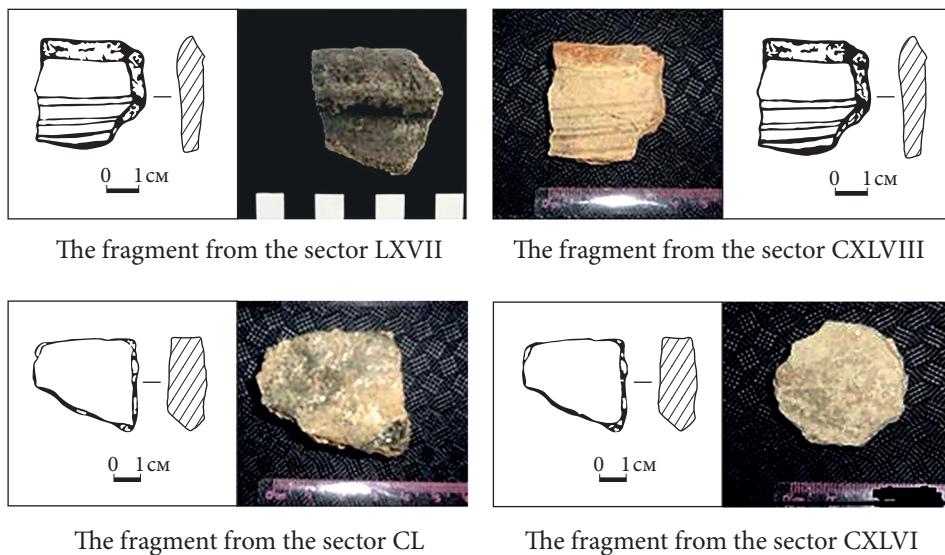


Fig. 8. The fragments unearthed from the excavation

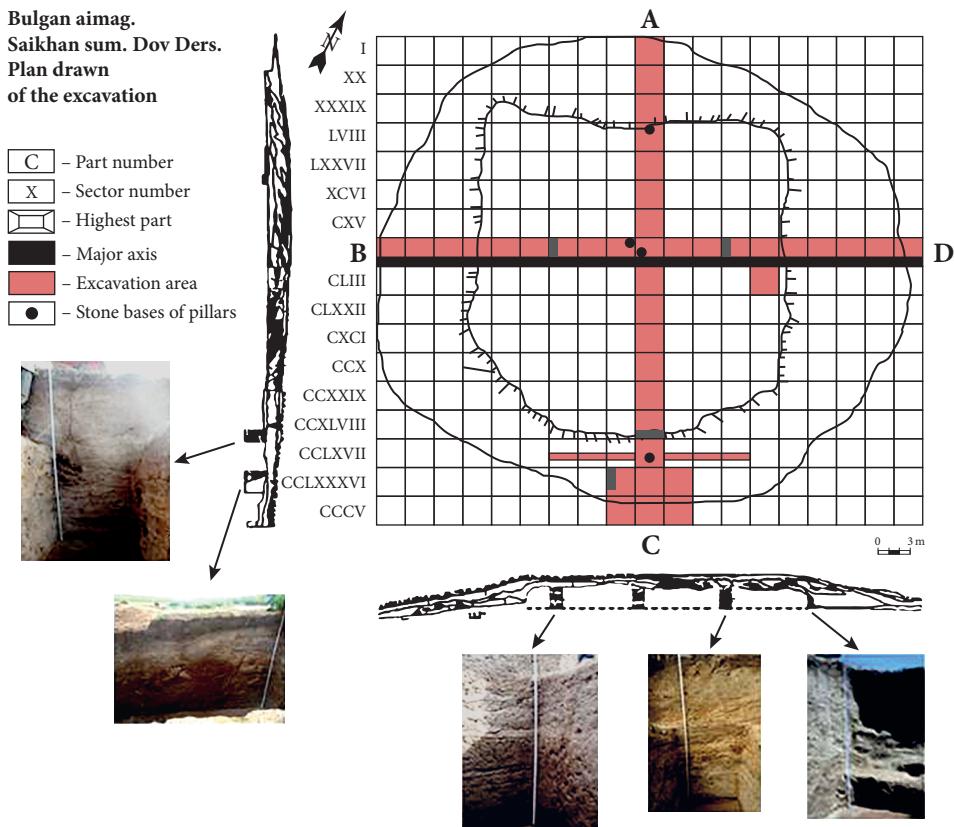


Fig. 9. Cut along horizontal and vertical lines

bases form a line, one after another; the second, third, and fourth bases were in their original position. While the distance between the first and the second bases is up to 12.2 m, the distance between the second and the fourth bases is about 19 m. The third base was located at distance 180 cm west from the second base. It is assumed that there were several pillars at distance 180—250 cm west and east from a pillar supported the beam of the roof.

It was identified during the excavation that the ruin Dov Ders was a construction which had wooden pillars that supported the roof and half wall, about 150 cm high, placed on the basement risen 110—120 cm above the surface of the ground.

Besides the research of the large structure in the center of the site, two small mounds inside the earthen wall were excavated. In 2011 a test trench was made across a mound which is located in front of the first construction and marked as No. 2 in plan (Fig. 2). The layers in this cross-section are as follows: a brown soil layer with roots 5—8 cm thick, below it was a layer of mow-burnt and dark brown soil with thickness of 15—20 cm followed by a yellowish soil layer with thickness up to 25 cm. Then natural soil was revealed. This mound was not remains of any construction (Fig. 10).

Also, in 2012 a crosscut was made across an 18×12×0.5 m mound which was marked as No. 5 in the plan of the site. In the test trench measured 9×1 m oriented from the north-west to southeast the following soil layers were revealed:

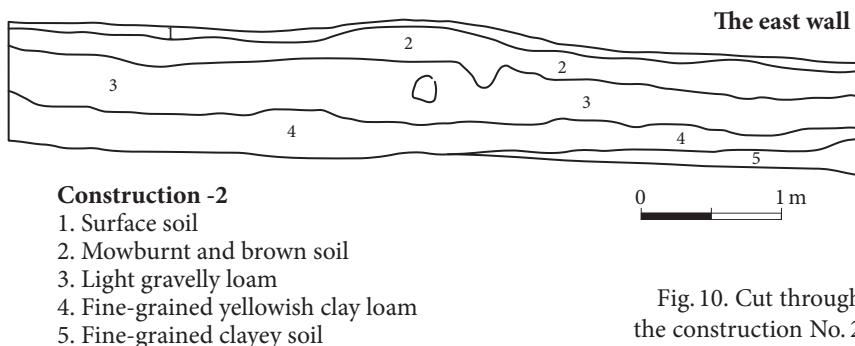


Fig. 10. Cut through the construction No. 2

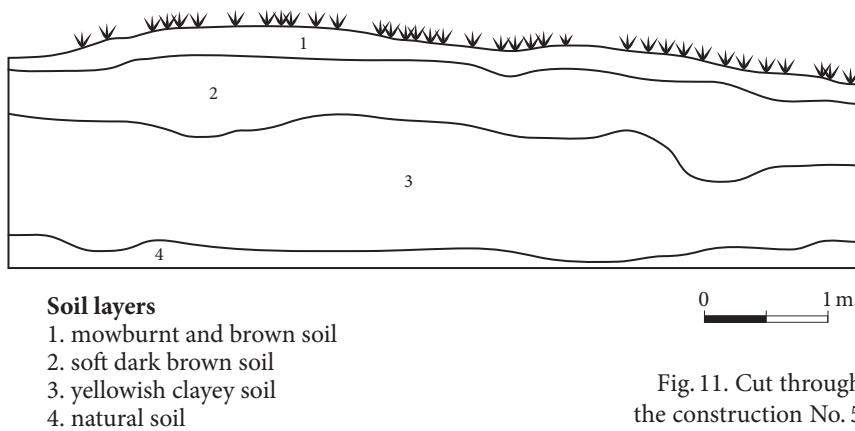


Fig. 11. Cut through the construction No. 5

a layer of brown soil 8—10 cm thick; a 15—20 cm thick layer of soft dark brown soil; a yellow soil layer 25 cm thick; a soft natural soil layer (Fig. 11). As concluded from results of the excavations, these small mounds with feather grass on them were not any constructions but heaps of earth formed by the wind.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Dov Ders of Burd is an archaeological site which belongs to the period of Xiongnu Empire. During the process of the excavation, the large structure inside the earthen wall was identified as a square-shaped foundation 21×27 m and 110—120 cm high made up of rammed earth layers.

On the foundation, there was another construction also designed as square-shaped and measured 19×18 m, which has a short wall made of rammed soil. The wall was approximately 150 cm high. It can be assumed that upper side of the wall and the roof of the construction were made of felt or soft material like cloth and wooden pillars with stone bases supported roof of the construction. Similar structures built on such rammed earthen platform were found in such ruins as Gua Dov (Perlee 1961: 31) and Tereljiin Durvuljin (Perlee 1957: 200; Ochir et al. 2007: 23). However, the rammed earthen basement of Dov Ders as well as the construction with half wall built on it are larger than those of Gua Dov, and Tereljiin Durvuljin.

The excavation revealed no traces of roof tiles, bricks and building decorations. It makes the assumption that the structure had upper side of the wall and the roof of it made of soft material like cloth.

The characteristics of this construction lead us to conclusion that it was a house for summer or/and early period of fall. Also, the location of the Dov Ders ruins is a valley where breeze blows; it is suitable place for building summer house. It assumed that the ruins of Dov Ders, which reminds a structure of some settlements and ruins of the Hun/Xiongnu period, could be a summer mansion of Xiongnu. Some researchers suggested various assumptions for where a summer house of Chanyu (Shanyu, king) of Xiongnu Empire was located. They are:

Luu khot [Dragon city was located around Tamiriin gol] Tamir river, near Kharkhorum.

Long Ting was known as Fu — Gui-cheng around BC 923—936. Located near the bank of the Selenge River (Dashnyam: 33).

A settlement, called Long Cheng or Long Ting, was located in the area of Khangai Mountains (Perlee 1961: 21).

Land of Xiongnu included the territory of the basins of Orkhon and Tuul rivers as well as the territory located south from them to Tsagan Kherem and Chanyu's mansion was near Khushuu Tsaidam (Sukhbaatar 1980: 56), Arkhangai province.

No one mansion of Xiongnu Chanyu has been found so far. Based on the research, we recommend that this Dov Ders site which is located at distance of slightly more than 10 km west from Orkon River, is one of summer mansions of Chanyu of Xiongnu Empire.

REFERENCES

- Dashnyam n.d. *Olan mongol ayimag-un gazar-un oilolg-a bičig* [History of Different Tribes]. Transl. by Dashnyam into Mongolian from Manju. Manuscript. Ulaanbaatar: National Library of Mongolia.
- Ochir A., Erdenebold L., Ankhbayar B., Battbold G. 2007. *Mongol – OHU-yn hantarsan arkheologiin matлага sudalgaany tailan* [Report on the Mongolian – Russian Joint Archaeological Expedition]. Manuscript. Ulaanbaatar: Library of IISNC.
- Perlee H. 1957. *Hun naryn gurvan khermis in uldets* [Three Fortress of the Xiongnu]. Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences.
- Perlee H. 1961. *Mongol Ard Ulsyn ert, dundad ueiin khot suuring tovchoon* [Ancient and Mediaeval Towns and Settlement of the Mongolian People's Republic]. Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences.
- Sukhbaatar G. 1980. *Mongolchuudyn ertnii uvug* [Ancestorf of the Mongols]. Ulaanbaatar: Academy of Sciences.

НЕКОТОРЫЕ РЕЗУЛЬТАТЫ
ПРЕДВАРИТЕЛЬНОГО ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ
ГОРОДИЩА ДОВ-ДЭРС

А. Очир, Х. Цэрэнбаямба

Статья знакомит с результатами археологических исследований на городище Дов-дэрс близ р. Орхон в Булганском аймаке Монголии в 2010—2012 гг. Памятник представляет собой прямоугольное городище с земляным валом размерами 360×400 м с большой земляной платформой в его центральной части. В ходе исследований центральная платформа размерами 52×57 м была разрезана в меридиональном и широтном направлениях разведочными траншеями, что позволило определить конструкцию сооружения. Выяснилось, что это платформа высотой 110—120 см, построенная путём послойной трамбовки земли. По краям платформы выявлены остатки невысокой земляной стены. Также на поверхности платформы найдены 4 каменные базы колонн. На уровне третьего и четвёртого пластов раскопа над поверхностью платформы обнаружены четыре фрагмента керамических сосудов, два из которых определены как сделанные на гончарном круге. Разведочные траншеи через небольшие всхолмления на территории городища вблизи его валов показали их природное происхождение.

Авторы приходят к выводу, что центральное сооружение городища было остатками жилого здания со стенами и крышей из войлока или мягкого материала вроде ткани. Сравнивая с близкими по планировке памятниками, такими как хуннские городища Гу-дов и Тэрэлжийн-дурвуулжин, они отмечают, что Дов-дэрс значительно превосходит их по размерам, и предполагают, что это городище могло быть упоминаемой в письменных источниках ставкой шаньюю хунну.

Ключевые слова: Монголия, хунну, городище Дов-дэрс, платформа жилого здания.