

We cannot say for sure that burials from Tamiryn Ulaan Khoshuu, Emeel Tolgoi, Naimaa Tolgoi are precisely from the Wusun period; so this association so far is a guess. Further, we need to take into account the fact that Indoeuropean tribes were already migrating from the West to western parts of Mongolia as early as the Neolithic, Eneolithic, and Bronze Ages, and once there they mixed in among the native people. By the time of the Xiongnu they were settled in the center of the empire, which meant that not only their culture but also their anthropological characteristics began to change and disappear. Yet there is still sufficient evidence in the sources to identify some of the burials at the given sites as being those of the Wusun.

Finally we can say that the Xiongnu people who emerged from the Wusun later participated in the process of the establishment of the Turkic-Mongolian ethnic group. Both the written sources and archaeological findings prove that the carriers of this culture migrated into and settled in the western part of the Xiongnu empire.

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Investigation of a Xiongnu Royal Tomb Complex in the Tsaraam Valley

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The Xiongnu, otherwise known as the Asiatic Huns, created a powerful alliance of cattle-breeding tribes in the late third to early second century BCE and then dominated the eastern part of Central Asia for four centuries. Systematic studies of Xiongnu archaeological sites have been carried out for more than a century. At present, materials of considerable value in the characterization of settlement complexes and cemeteries of various types have been obtained. However, elite barrows, which usually contain important

information about social structure, material culture, and the art of a particular society, are neither well-known nor systematically investigated using archaeological techniques.

In 1996 the Trans-Baikal Archaeological Expedition of the Institute of History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences, St. Petersburg, initiated a survey of the Tsaraam valley, situated 1.5 km to the south of Naushki village (Buriat Republic, Russian Federation) (Fig. 1). Archaeological work at the

Tsaraam Cemetery began in the nineteenth century with the discovery of the site in June of 1896 by the pioneer of Xiongnu archaeology, Iu. D. Tal'ko-Gryntsevich. He recorded, '...more than 20 barrows, dispersed in a forest' in the Tsaraam location. In June 1903, Tal'ko-Gryntsevich and Ia. S. Smolev excavated five of the burials. All of them had been robbed, and only few artifacts were found (Tal'ko-Gryntsevich 1999: 117-118). Tal'ko-Gryntsevich drew a schematic map with an approximate location of the

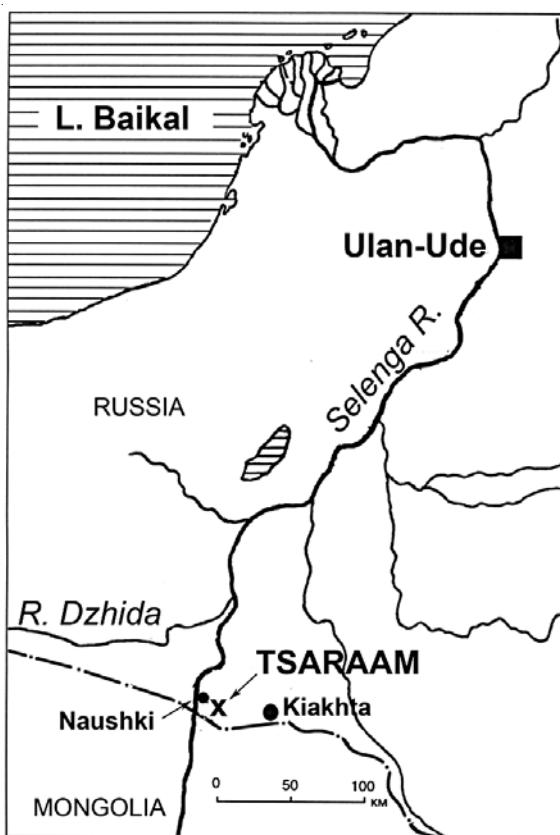


Fig. 1. Map showing location of the Tsaraam Valley. Copyright © Sergei S. Miniaev 2006.

burial site; however, over time the cemetery was forgotten. In September 1996 the cemetery was rediscovered by the Trans-Baikal Expedition, which made an accurate map marking the location of all barrows. The survey showed that in the valley were concentrated the largest burial structures of the Xiongnu now known in Russia, and these are among the largest anywhere. In 1997, the expedition began to excavate the cemetery and chose to focus on the large and central Burial Complex No. 7 (Fig. 2). The Russian Humanities Foundation, the Institute of History of Material

culture of the Xiongnu confederation.

Site Description

The Tsaraam valley is situated 30 km to the west of the town of Kiakhta (Kiakhta district of the Buriat Republic, Russian Federation), not far from the Russian-Mongolian border (E. 106° 08'61.3", N. 50° 21'22.8"; 650-670 masl). The length of the Tsaraam valley from north to south is 1.5 km, and its width approximately 700 m east to west. Low mountains with pine forest border the eastern section of the valley while the western section

the central part of the valley. In total, the area known to have burials measures approximately 600 m north-south and 400 m east-west. The largest barrow of the cemetery is located in the northern part of the valley, and 300 m to the southwest a line of seven additional large barrows stretches from the northeast to southwest. The large barrows have similar surface construction, which includes a low square mound with a round depression in the center. Around several of the large barrows are located smaller barrows which, according to both the historical sources and recent archaeological evidence, are likely to have been sacrificial interments. The combination of a central large barrow ringed by several smaller barrows can be considered a single mortuary complex.

Judging from their external and internal structural similarity to other Xiongnu sites such as Noin Ula or the Elm valley, the Tsaraam tomb complexes presumably date to the Xiongnu period. The Tsaraam group features large burials too and is therefore thought to be related to the highest social strata of the Xiongnu confederation.

Surface and Internal Structures of the Central Barrow

Barrow No. 7 is not only the largest Xiongnu barrow in Russia but also one of the largest known at present anywhere. The surface construction of the central barrow consists of a quadrangle-shaped platform surfaced with clay. It measures approximately 29 x 28 m with a height of approximately 1.5 m above the present surface. The entrance chamber is 20 m long and extends to the south of the central platform. The walls of the platform are sided with stone slabs marking the perimeter of the walls. Several stone stelae were discovered, some of which were intact and others of which had fallen away from the platform.

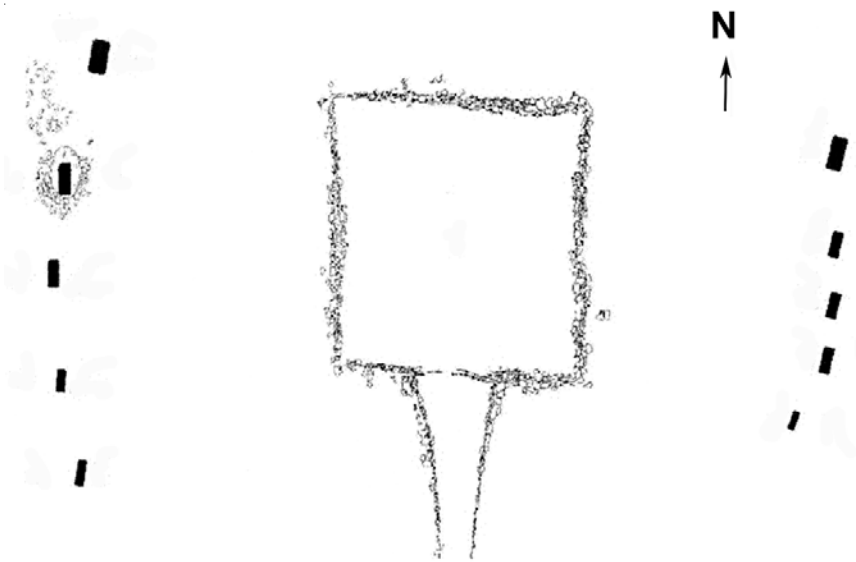


Fig. 2. Burial Complex No. 7 in the Tsaraam Cemetery. Drawing © Sergei S. Miniaev 2006.

Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences and National Geographic Society (United States) provided financial support for this project. Excavations during the field seasons of 1997-2005 investigated surface and internal constructions of Barrow No. 7 and the ten adjacent sacrificial burials. Chinese silk items, a Chinese chariot, lacquered artifacts, textiles, felt carpets, jade, gold, silver, bronze and iron objects, funeral dolls and an "animal cemetery" were found. As a result of the excavation we now have extremely important new data about the society and

opens on the Selenga River valley. Mixed conifer and deciduous trees cover lower slopes of the valley while the central portion is open with plowed fields and grassland vegetation. Agriculture has been carried on in the valley since the nineteenth century, and in more recent times mechanized plowing has been used to prepare fields on a fairly large scale. As a result of these activities, many of the stone surface features marking burial areas have been destroyed.

Almost all barrows of the Tsaraam Cemetery are situated in

A single longitudinal and seven perpendicular partitions divided the upper section of the burial pit into nine distinct compartments. Each partition was constructed from wooden logs stacked one upon another, sometimes having a thickness of two to three logs. Four covers of the burial chamber were excavated under the partitions. The uppermost cover of the burial chamber consisted of stone plates and wood; under the logs was a reed stratum. The second cover of the burial chamber was situated in 1.5-1.7 m below the upper one and covered the entire area of the burial pit. This second cover consisted of large stone plates, stacked in close proximity to each other. There was also a thin stratum of reed 0.7 m below the second cover. In both the upper and second covers, there was some difference between the eastern and western parts. The eastern part of the second cover consisted of large plates and boulders approximately 100 x 70 cm in area and with a thickness of 40-50 cm. The stone plates of the western half of the cover were of smaller size, approximately 40 x 50 cm and with a thickness of only 10-15 cm. At each corner of the burial pit on the level of the second cover there were small-sized stones lying on top of the large ones. The third cover was 11 m below the modern surface. This third cover consisted of large stone plates; under the stones there was a stratum of pebble, charcoal, birch cortex and small-sized stones. Bones of domesticated animals were found along northern edge of the third cover, among them skulls of horses, cows, sheep and goats which were placed in line with each other. Near the skulls were tail and leg bones. The fourth cover, located one meter below the third one, consisted of large stone plates, birch cortex, a stratum of pebble mixed with small-sized stones and a stratum of charcoal. This fourth cover was situated directly on the roof of the burial chamber.

Intraburial construction

The burial chamber itself consisted of three chambers: an external framework, an internal framework, and the coffin. The external chamber consisted of seven rows of squared beams; the overall height of the chamber was ca. 170-180 cm. The longitudinal and transverse beams were connected by means of interlocking joints of tongue-and-groove construction cut through the entire width of each beam. There were no additional reinforcing connectors between the beams.

The ceiling of the chamber consisted of boards 20-35 cm wide laid in the east-west direction. The boards were placed flush with one another, without any connectors holding them together or attaching them to the upper beams of the chamber. The ends of the ceiling boards rested on the upper beams of the frame, and in the middle on three transverse beams laid equidistant from one another in a north-south direction. The ceiling beams rested on the upper beams of the chamber (which had notches cut in them to secure the beams) and on columns located along interior of the northern and southern walls of the chamber. In the northern section of the burial structure along the external wall of the external chamber were three columns, and another three columns were parallel to the first along the northern wall of the internal frame. Along the southern wall of the chamber were another three analogous columns. Thus each of the three ceiling beams of the external chamber had five points of support: two on the northern and southern upper beams of the chamber (where the ends of the beams were fitted into special notches), two on the columns on the northern side and one more on the southern columns. The external chamber rested on a floor of beams laid in an east-west direction. The internal frame consisted of five

rows of squared beams each measuring 20 x 20 cm. The construction of the rows of the frame was analogous to the construction of the rows of the external chamber. As in the case of the external chamber, the frame had a covering of transverse boards and a floor similarly constructed of transverse boards. The coffin inside the frame had been to a considerable degree destroyed by the robbery from the south end and by the subsequent collapse of the chamber. One may suppose that its floor and roof consisted of two boards laid lengthwise; the side walls of the coffin were made of wide boards, one to each wall.

Objects Found Inside the Burial Pit.

Fragments of a Chinese mirror and Chinese chariot were found inside the burial pit. The fragments of the mirror were stacked one on top of the other under the logs at the second level of the longitudinal partition in the center of the burial pit, 218 cm below the surface of the grave. Some of the fragments had traces of soot, indicating they probably had been placed in a fire during a funeral rite. The mirror, whose diameter is 13 cm, is of a well-known type with a design including four nipples, quasi-dragons and birds (cf. Tal'ko-Gryntsevich 1999, fig. 3c, p. 50; Chou 2000, cat. no. 20, p. 39). Such mirrors are normally dated from the first century BCE to the first century CE (Miniaev and Sakharovskaia forthcoming).

A Chinese chariot was found between the third and the fourth covers (Miniaev and Sakharovskaia 2006). This chariot had been partly destroyed by two robber's entries, but wheels, a canopy, yokes and some bronze fittings were preserved. The construction of the chariot has very close parallels among chariots of the Han Dynasty period. Like the Han examples the Tsaraam chariot has a canopy

consisting of a wooden framework covered by some organic material, four wooden posts supporting the canopy, a trellised seat and wooden 'elbow-rests.' The body of the chariot and the painting of the wheels are remarkably similar to those of a recently restored chariot from the burial of the famous Han general Huo Qubing (d. 117 BCE) who fought against the Xiongnu. Judging by the number of yoke-heads, the Tsaraam chariot was originally intended for a team of three horses. That explains the use of two-yoke shafts instead of the more typical Han arrangement with a single central shaft whose use implies an even number of horses in the team.. Quite probably the chariot found in Tsaraam was a gift from the Han court to one of the representatives of the Xiongnu elite.

Objects Found in the Burial Chamber

The bulk of the burial goods were located in the corridors between the walls of the chamber, the frame and the coffin.

- In the western external corridor were objects from several sets of harness (iron bits, cheek-pieces, harness buckles) and two burial dolls. Each doll was formed from the skull of a baby, to which had been attached several braids interwoven with beads. The long ends were shaped like lacquered wooden sticks. The grave inventory of the dolls consisted of iron belt buckles and lacquered wooden boxes with cosmetic accessories (a fragment of a Chinese mirror, hair pins and birchbark containers of cosmetic pigments). The boxes were decorated with appliques of red lacquer on a yellow lacquer background; the birchbark containers were ornamented with drawings of yurts and carts.
- The finds in the eastern external corridor were practically the same as those in the western one. Here there were also sets of bridles (consisting of iron bits, cheek-pieces and buckles) and burial

dolls. One of the dolls was preserved in its entirety: It had been formed in a fashion similar to the dolls in the western corridor and had practically the same burial goods, i.e., lacquered wooden boxes with a mirror and birchbark containers. The other doll apparently had been removed by the robbers; only its feet remained.

- There were practically no finds in the western internal corridor: only two bronze bracelets in the southwestern and southeastern corners of the grave.

- The finds in the eastern internal corridor were confined to its southern part, since the northern part had been destroyed by robbers. These finds included sets of harnesses (iron bits, cheek-plates, bronze harness-plates, silver chest medallions with images of mountain goats), arrowheads, a lacquered wooden staff, silver plaques with depictions of a goat, a lacquered wooden cup and a lacquered wooden quiver with iron arrowheads.

- To a substantial degree the northern external corridor had been destroyed by the entrance of a looter, but fragments of ceramics and lacquered wooden objects were found there. Nothing was found in the southern external corridor, but in that corridor, attached to the interior wall of the external chamber, were remains of a woolen carpet which had been destroyed by the shifting of the beams of the chamber.

- In the southern internal corridor were a flat iron ring and two iron fasteners.

- In the preserved southern section of the tomb were the remains of a covering of some organic material (felt or compressed fur), two iron buckles covered in gold foil and depicting a satyr, two gold necklaces, and a small gold container with the image of a mountain goat.

Conclusion

The scope of the finds so far at the Tsaraam complex is impressive, and suggests that continuing the excavations in the Tsaraam Valley will add substantially to our knowledge of the Xiongnu. Apart from the main tomb of Burial Complex No. 7, the sacrificial burials around it have yielded interesting information which we have discussed elsewhere (Minaev and Sakharovskaia 2002). Of course full analysis of the results of such a large excavation remains to be done. The most urgent task is preservation of the finds. The organic materials — such items as the birchbark containers, lacquerware and cloth — deteriorate rapidly; it is essential that the financial means be obtained for their proper preservation.

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The authors are on the staff the Institute for the History of Material Culture, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg). **Sergei Miniaev** is a Senior Scientific Fellow there and has been at the Institute since 1968. He wrote his *kandidat* (Ph.D. equivalent) dissertation on Xiongnu bronzes and has compiled a distinguished record of publication on Xiongnu history, art and archaeology. His articles have appeared in journals such as *Das Altertum*, *Ars Asiaticus* and *Orientalia*. Of particular importance is his monograph *Derestuiskie mogil'nik* (The Derestui Cemetery) (St. Petersburg, 1998) in the series *Arkheologicheskie pamiatniki Siunnu* (Archaeological Monuments of the Xiongnu) which he edits.

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Archaeology of the Mongolian Period: A Brief Introduction

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The Mongolian period (13th-14th c. CE) in Inner Asia is well documented in written historical sources. These include narrative histories and documents in Persian, Chinese, Arabic and other languages. For the earliest stages of the history of the Mongol Empire, one of main sources is 'The Secret History of Mongols,' written in the thirteenth century, whose oldest copy is written in transcription by means of Chinese characters. The 'Secret History' has been studied from a variety of viewpoints: historical, linguistic, ethnological, and literary. The Mongols had not had their own written language and borrowed scripts from other cultures, such as the Uighur. However, in 1269 they established the new 'squared' script. While it never replaced Uighur, it was used in Qubilai Khan's time on seals and paizas or passports which guaranteed free passage for diplomats and others through Mongol lands.

In addition to the written sources, archaeological investigation in Mongolia and its surrounding territory has discovered various monuments belonging to the period of the Mongol Empire, including ruins of settlements, human statues, inscriptions on stone and wood, and graves. Ruins of several historically attested settlements from the period of the Mongol Empire have been the subject of scholarly investigation. The earliest one is Aurag Balgas (early thirteenth century). The Aurag Balgas ruin was discovered by Mongolian scholar Kh. Perlee in the

1950s. In 1990-1993 the Mongolian-Japanese 'Gurvan Gol' expedition reexamined the ruin. A Mongolian-Japanese expedition continues archaeological excavation of the Aurag Balgas ruin today.

Karakorum, the former capital city of the Mongol Empire in the thirteenth century, is the best studied archaeological site from the period. Russian scholar N. M. Iadrntsev first discovered its ruins in 1889. The Mongolian-Russian historical and cultural expedition led by Russian archaeologist S. B. Kiselev undertook major excavation of the site in 1948-1950, at which time they explored what they determined was the ruin of Khan Ogedei's palace (Kiselev 1965). In 1976-1980, Mongolian archaeologist N. Ser-Odjav and his team renewed excavation of the city's ruins. Among their unique discoveries was a Muslim cemetery with burials of ordinary people. In 1995 a Mongolian-Japanese expedition undertook an archaeological survey and made a topographic map of the city's ruin. Since 1999, the Mongolian-German joint archaeological expedition has been excavating at Karakorum (*Dschingis Khan* 2005). [They found the kiln used to produce the numerous ceramic dishes and roof tiles of Karakorum and recently have concentrated on the area in the center of the commercial district of the city occupied, it seems, by Chinese artisans and merchants. In exploring further the site Kiselev's expedition had established as the palace, the Mongolian-German team has raised doubts about that