

Archaeology Characteristics of The Khogno Khan - The Special Protected Area of Mongolia -

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Abstract

The Khogno Khan mountain special protected area belongs to Khogno Khan subdistrict of Gurvanbulag district of Bulgan Province and is 46.9 sq.km. with its main feature being mountain forest zone. In this paper we present some results of research of the Anthropological and archaeological team of Mongolian Korean Joint research expeditions carried out in Khogno Khan mountain special protected area from 27 July to 1 August, 2000.

During archaeological reconnaissance we discovered around 27 localities of archaeological monuments belonging to different historical periods (from the Neolithic up to the Mongolian period, 13th-17th Century) in the territory of the Khogno Khan special protected area. Based on the results, we especially want to point out 1). The archaeological and historic monuments (from the Neolithic up to modern era) found in the Khogno Khan mountain and its surrounding area show that since the Neolithic period (around 8000 years ago) this area was occupied by the ancestors of Mongolians and it was used during subsequent historic periods on the one hand. 2). On the other hand the Khogno Khan mountain region was one area where there occurred intensive admixture between populations of Kurgan culture, Deerstone culture from the West Mongolia and the population of slab graves culture from Central and East Mongolia during Bronze and Early Iron Age. 3). Today the mountain is one of the area with a unique assemblage of archaeological monuments from different historic periods, what naturally seems like an open-air natural museum of Mongolian Prehistory.

1. Introduction

The Khogno Khan mountain area belongs to Khogno Khan bag (subdistrict) of Gurvanbulag sum (District), Bulgan aimag (Province) and is located in the western part of Central Mongolia. This area is 46.9 sq. km. with its main features of mountain forest zone. The Khogno Khan mountain and its surrounding area was adapted as the special protected area in 1997 by the Mongolian Government. All protected areas is under local governance (Gurvanbulag sum's Governor).

Some linguists point out that originally the name 'Khogno Khan' is Turkic and the name was mentioned

in the Runic inscription in Tariat (Terkhin). The Runic inscription is one of the historic monuments of the Turkic Haganite (5-6th Century AD). The Tariat Runic inscription was discovered in Tariat sum of Arkhangai Province (Central Mongolia) by Mongolian Turkicologist Shinekhuu (1975) and Russian investigator Klyshorny (1983) and Turkish investigator Talat Tekin (1986).

The investigation of anthropological and archaeological team of Mongolian Korean Joint research expeditions was carried out by K. Bae of Korea and D. Tumen of Mongolia in the Khogno Khan mountains special protected area from 27 July to 1 August, 2000. The expedition was organized by the Department of

Nature Protection, Ministry of Nature and Environment of Mongolia and the Korean National Council for Conservation of Nature.

2. Archaeological reconnaissance in the Khogno Khan Area

During our archaeological reconnaissance we discovered about 27 localities of archaeological monuments belonging to different periods (from the Neolithic up to the Mongolian period, 13th-17th Century) in the territory of the Khogno Khan special protected area. It is notable that plenty of prehistoric sites remain for future research and the beautifully preserved masonry Buddhistic temple of the Medieval times is an extraordinary monument in this world.

Prehistoric settlement sites of potteries and microlithics. Two localities yielded some potteries with microlithic industries. It is unclear the age of the sites, however possibly may go back to Neolithic period on the basis of presence of microlithic tools. A prehistoric site was discovered in Elest Ovoo (Sand Mound) in 7 km northeast from Gurvanbulag sum center. The site is situated on sand dunes in the middle of the valley. Artefacts were exposed in digging hole for construction. Many artifacts of the micro-tools tradition and fragments of gray plain coarse ceramic were found at the site. In spite of flaked stone pieces, the presence of the potteries indicate the site was used during the late part of prehistoric period. At the site, a collapsed stone cist was exposed without any artifacts found around. Most of stone artifacts, mostly flakes and wasted pieces, were made of dark colored shale and quartz.

Other Neolithic artifacts were found in Bayalagiin Am (Wealthy valley) in southeast foothill of Khogno Khan Mountain, where we collected two gobi-microlithic cores and blade cores, and many waste pieces made of shale(fig. 1). The site is situated on gentle slope in small valley facing east. In addition to stone artifacts,

two different types of potteries were found; reddish coarse grained plain pottery and grey stone ware decorated stamped short lines. It is not clear whether the two type of potteries belong to same period or different period. The grey pottery is probably believed to be one from historical period. It is highly likely that multiple cultural layers will found in case of excavation.

The Bronze Age and subsequent historic periods.

In the Khogno Khan special protected area there are different archaeological monuments belonging to the so-called stone kurgan culture, so called kerecsur, deerstone culture, petroglyphs and stone slab graves culture of the Bronze and the Early Iron Ages. It should be noted that the above mentioned monuments of this historical period (the kurgans, slab graves and deerstone monuments) were found at the same place of all surrounded valleys of the Khogno Khan mountain. Most of the sites were situated on the foothill of the mountains.

Petroglyphs

In the Senjit Tsohio of Moiltyn Am valley of the southern foothill of the Yamaat branch of the Khogno Khan mountain range there were petroglyphs with images of wild goats (mountain goats), hunters and deer. The monuments are located at an altitude of 1387 m. above sea level and at N 47°34'32", E 103°41'50". Three localities of petroglyphs were surveyed that were made on flat surface of sedimentary rocks exposed on the top part of the mountains. Erosion of falling rocks is being processed on some parts of the petroglyphs. Near the one of the rock arts, the biggest one(fig. 2), seven rectangular stone slab graves were found adjacent area (not far from the petroglyphics). Other petroglyphs with images of wild goats, wolf (may be dogs) and deer were found in Yamaat valley(fig.3). The petroglyphs location was identified at altitude of 1444 m. above sea level and at N 47°34'47", E 103°42'19". Such images are recorded worldwide, and are particularly characteristics of Mongolia and the Altai mountain region (Okladnikov, 1980; Jacobson and et.al., 1996).

Deer stones, stone slab graves and kurgan (kereksur)

In the Khogno Khan specially protected area, plenty of archaeological sites belong to late prehistory, Bronze age and Iron age were found. In this short expedition, it was possible to make observation of couple of deer stones, some stone mounded kurgans (fig. 4) and stone slab graves (fig. 5,6) on the foothill of mountains. The cultural complexity of this area indicates that the two different prehistoric cultures from east and from west of the Mongolia were compounded. The three archaeological components often appear in associated context in same place. There are some variations in size and forms in these archaeological components. The two types of tombs are found together, often in one compound. Stone slab tombs are often attached to stone mounded tombs, kurgan or kereksur, although some found isolated or independently. The deer stones observed during this research were situated independently, with some distance from other types of archaeological sites.

It is very interesting that many kereksurs were found in this area. This area must be the eastern limit of the distribution of kereksure which is one of the most important archaeological feature in the western part of the Mongolia during the first millennium B.C. Kurgans are constructed by mounding stones with enclosure. Two types enclosure of circled and rectangular shape are observed in this area. Rectangular ones are made of a line of stones which is appeared to representing grave area. Outside the boundary line in mostly, many stone rectangulars or small stone circles are found. In some cases, stone slab tombs are found at each corner of rectangular of kereksur. These stone circle and rectangular are believed to be kind of attached burials for the main burial of kurgan at the centre, if they are tombs.

Two kurgans with squared enclosures were identified in the Urid Bulgin valley on the southeast side of Khogno Khan. One kurgan was 55x55 m. in size and another one was smaller than the first one. The kurgans are located at N 47°28'03", E 103°43'39". In the Bayalagiin Am valley of Southeast Khono Khan were discovered seven kurgans with circled or squared enclosures, and

two slab graves and one burial of the Hunnu Khiug-nu period (III Century BC- I Century AD), and one burial of the Mongolian period. The first and fifth kurgans (on the mountain side) had circled enclosures, 25 m. in diameter. Other kurgans had squared enclosures with different sizes. The sixth and seventh kurgans were the biggest and were almost 50 m. in diameter. Also in several places such as Khadagt Khoshuu, Bumbatyn Zokhio, Nuramtyin Enger, Rashaant khad and Khadagyn Am on the Southeast side of Khogno Khan mountain kurgans with circled or squared enclosures of different size were discovered. Beside these kurgans, there were also several burials belonging to the Hunnu and Mongolian Periods. Another group of kurgans (six kurgans with circled or squared enclosures) was discovered in Khoshoogiin Ovoljoo valley (Southwest side of Khogno Khan).

The next stage of our expedition involved the examination of the area between Khogno Khan special protected area and Gurvanbulag Sum's Center. The distance between the two points is around 70 km. (northwest from Khogno Khan Mountain). One interesting archaeological locality was discovered in the Bayantsogt valley (about 30 km. From Khogno Khan). An assemblage of different historical periods was identified there. So in this valley there were around 60 kurgans (different size) with circled or squared enclosures, more than 15 slab graves, seven deer stone sculptures, and one runic inscription.

In the Ulzii Tolgoi valley (Northeast side) of Khogno Khan were found four slab graves which located at N 47°29'57", E 103°46'49". These are situated on foothill of mountains overlooking lowland. All of them were constructed with big thin stones exposed on ground in half. In particular, one is made of very tall thin stone panels. In other area, stone slab tombs were made of relatively small thin stones. At each coner of rectangular, taller stone were often used as posts. Also two deer stone sculptures were found there not far from the slab graves (around 100 m.). Deer stones were erected in a stone rectangular on ground, which nis similar form of stone slab graves. Engravings with three different

sections were observed, but it was very difficult to identify forms on deer stones because of erosion for a longtime. It is often suggested that kerecsur and deer stone are related archaeological feature, but in this area the number of deer stones is fewer than that of kerecsur.

Archaeological investigations of the kurgans from western and central Mongolia, South Siberia and Russian Altai mountain region show that the monuments belong to the Bronze and Early Iron Ages. The stone kurgans from all regions have same surface features i.e., square or circle shaped stone enclosures. Generally, the stone enclosure of a kurgan has a large size, at least 40-50 m. in diameter and some times it reaches more than 100 m. In the center of the enclosure there is large stone mound with a diameter of 15-20 m. Usually, under the stone mound was found burial (Erdenebaatar, 1998). The slab grave with rectangular enclosures of stone slabs set on edge is typical of the Bronze Age monuments of Eastern Mongolia and Baikal Lake basin. In spite of its wide distribution, the slab graves culture was very homogeneous (D.Navaan, 1975).

Buddhisgic temples

In the south and northwest slopes of the mountain there are two ruins of Buddhist temples which were built in 17th Century. Local people told us that since the 17th century the Khogno Khan mountain became one of holy places of Tushet Khaan Khoshuu and Bishrelt Gun Hoshuu (Khoshuu is equal to a district) of the Tusheet Khaan Aimag. One of those Buddhist temples, the so-called "Ovgon khiid" was established in the Zuunbulgin valley of the southeast foothill of the Khogno Khan Mountain in 1612 and it was destroyed by Oirat Mongolians in 1688. The temple site is situated deep in the valley. A spring is found nearby. The masonry buildings were constructed on flat valley bottom and some small buildings were on leveled surface of mountain slope. The plan of the main building is rectangular and facing toward south. Main halls consist of man small rooms and court yard behind main gate are surrounded by high stone walls. Local people reconstructed part

of this temple after 1990. Also in 1869 another Buddhist temple, the so-called "Khogno Tarni Khiid", was built on the northwest side of the mountain at the mouth of the valley and the temple was destroyed in 1932(Fig. 7). This new temple was adobe building. The structure seems to be almost same, but mostly destroyed. At present, monks live in one modern building. Two small pavilion buildings for mandara were built back of the old temple site. A fragment of Buddha image indicate that some part of the adobe building was painted in polychrom(Fig. 8). In addition to these buildings, many private houses form a temple village which is quite different type of settlement pattern in this area. These historical sites are specially important to understand the history and philosophy of people lived in this area.

Archaeology of the Khogno Khan

Finally, we want to notice that any of those archaeological monuments have not been still studied carefully. No site ever be excavated or no extensive surface survey been carried out yet. There was short term archaeological reconnaissance carried out to register archaeological monuments in 1998. But the expedition registered just part of archaeological monuments in this area. The archaeological culture in this area is considered to be very important to understand human migration and cultural diffusion in late part prehistory in central Asia as well as in Mongolia.

Based on the results of our archaeological reconnaissance, we especially want to point out 1). The above mentioned archaeological and historic monuments (from the Neolithic up to modern era) found in the Khogno Khan mountain and its surrounding area show that since the Neolithic period (around 8000 years ago) this area was occupied by the ancestors of Mongolians and it was used during subsequent historic periods on the one hand. 2). On the other hand the Khogno Khan mountain region was one area where there occurred intensive admixture between populations of Kurgan culture, Deerstone culture from the West Mongolia and the population of slab graves culture from Central and East

Mongolia during Bronze and Early Iron Age. 3). Today the mountain is one of the area with a unique assemblage of archaeological monuments from different historic periods, what naturally seems like an open-air natural museum of Mongolian Prehistory. This means that the Khogno Khan should be protected by Mongolian Government as one of the important historic monuments in Mongolia.

3. Concluding Remarks

Based on the results of our archaeological reconnaissance, we especially want to point out

1) The above mentioned archaeological and historic monuments (from the Neolithic up to modern era) found in the Khogno Khan mountain and its surrounding area show that since the Neolithic period (around 8000 years ago) this area was occupied by the ancestors of Mongolians and it was used during subsequent historic periods on the one hand.

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open-air natural museum of Mongolian Prehistory.

Considering some similarities between archaeological remains of the Khogno Khan and of the Korean peninsula in each time period, joint researches of the two countries should be expanded for more extensive understanding of cultural pattern in Asia.

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