RESULTS OF THE 2005 JOINT AMERICAN-MONGOLIAN ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXPEDITION TO *TAMIRYN ULAAN KHOSHUU,* ARKHANGAI AIMAG, MONGOLIA

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During the summer of 2005 an archaeological expedition jointly mounted by the Silkroad Foundation of Saratoga, California, U.S.A. and the Mongolian National University, Ulaan Bataar, investigated two sites near the confluence of the Tamir River with the Orkhon River in the Arkhangai Aimag of central Mongolia. The first site is a cemetery of the Xiongnu (Hunnu) people, designated Tamir 1. Tamir 2, the second site, is a group of earthen-walled structures 10 kilometers to the west. Tamir 1 is located on a prominent granitic outcrop known as *Tamiryn Ulaan Khoshuu* near other cemeteries of the Neolithic, Bronze age, and Mongol periods. The significance of this place may derive in part from its prominent visibility within the Tamir and Orkhon valleys, and its proximity to the broad, well-watered floodplains of these major rivers. Investigations during July and August of 2005 included the preparation of detailed maps of each site using handheld GPS units, photodocumentation, test excavations, and the excavation of five graves at Tamir 1.

Tamir 1 consists of 287 graves visible on the surface as torus-shaped low mounds of rocks clustered on a south-facing slope around the head of a series of dry washes that are tributary to the Tamir River. Documentation of Tamir 1 entailed the preparation of two maps, and completion of a table that recorded the size, condition, orientation, and attributes of each grave. One map completed in 2005 is a detailed plan view of this portion of the cemetery; the other is a plan of the entire site, shown in relation to the natural drainage system. The cemetery encompasses 561 x 389 m, an area of 21.8 hectares. Each grave was documented as a "feature" and numbered sequentially from 1-290 (three numbers were omitted). The surface expression of the graves ranged from 2 m in diameter to 12 m, with an average of 4.59 m (n=273) and modes of 4.0, 5.0, 3.0, 6.0 m. The median feature diameter is 4.5 m, n=269). Some of the graves (n=31) feature single boulders set upright in the ring of rocks, often on the southeastern or northeastern edge. The graves located closer to the Tamir floodplain appear to be smaller in diameter, in closer proximity to one another, and more densely clustered than are graves located higher on the slope, farther from the river's edge. Dr. Zagd Batsakhan previously excavated in Tamir 1, but the site has also been subjected to unscientific and unauthorized excavations, including several graves observed in 2005 that appeared to have been very recently looted. Five graves were completely excavated by our expedition in 2005: Features 97, 100, 109, 160, and 201.

Three *gorodische* or earthen-walled fortifications, labeled Structures A-C from west to east form Tamir 2. The enclosures extend in an east-west line 1,725 m across a broad, gentle plain at *Hermental*, west of Tamir 1. The plain is a part of the Tamir Valley that is bounded by ranges of hills to the west, north, and east, and extends in a long slope that gradually flattens to the south where it merges with the floodplain of the river. From Tamir 2, *Tamir Ulaan Khoshuu* is a dark, prominent landmark on the horizon to the southeast. The expedition mapped the structures at Tamir 2 and produced plan view maps of each structure individually to show detail and of the three together to show their relationship. During the collection of the UTM coordinates with the GPS

receivers, the site was traversed many times on foot, with detailed notes recorded abut the form, condition and orientation of the *gorodische*. No artifacts dating before the modern period were observed, other than a single pottery sherd found in a rectangular excavation on the top of an earthen mound within Structure B. In an attempt to find temporally or culturally diagnostic artifacts, the expedition initiated a program of test units in Structure A, consisting of 1 x 1 m units dug every 50 m. Each of the 15 units was excavated 15-20 cm below the present ground surface to within the upper few centimeters of a dense calcic soil. The development of such soils typically requires many millennia, with their formation pre-dating the Xiongnu horizon. No artifacts or buried features or cultural deposits were exposed in the test units. In addition, three other hand excavation units were judgmentally placed in or near architectural features (such as walls and gates) to expose details of their construction, and were in some cases expanded to follow interesting deposits. The previous excavation on the central mound in Structure B was also cleaned and profiled, providing details of its construction. No artifacts were discovered within any of the judgmental units. Given the vast areas encompassed by each of the *gorodische*—ranging from 7.2 hectares in Structure C to 16.3 hectares in Structure A—the absence of findings by this very limited testing is not surprising. Further research is necessary to establish the age and cultural associations of these features through archaeological means, despite their apparent similarity to other features east of Ulaan Bataar previously studied by Dr. Batsakhan.