

UDC 904

DOI: 10.22162/2712-8431-2020-10-2-5-23

## Dariganga Perception of Archaeological Sites

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**Abstract.** The article discusses the local perception of the two archaeological sites that create the native land of Dariganga ethnic group in Sukhbaatar province of south-eastern Mongolia. The first site is a complex of four stone statues at the south-eastern foot of Dari Mountain in Dariganga county of Sukhbaatar province. The second one is a complex of eight tombs with two stone statues at Tavan Tolgoi Mountain in Ongon county of Sukhbaatar province. These two sites and relics found in them are highly respected by the Dariganga people who claim to be the descendants of the people buried in these tombs, thus disagreeing with the researchers' assumption that Dariganga ethnic group were not indigenous inhabitants of the area. The article gives a detailed description of the archaeological sites and relics as well as the oral stories and beliefs connected with them.

**Keywords:** local perception, archaeological sites, relics, veneration, ancestors

**Acknowledgement.** The article was presented at the international scientific online conference "Mongolian Studies at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century: Current State and Development Prospects – II", held with the financial support of RFBR (project № 20-09-22004) and partial support of the Russian Government Grant (№ 075-15-2019-1879).

**For citation:** Bilegsaikhan Tamirjav. Dariganga perception of archaeological sites. In: *Desertum Magnum: studia historica*. 2020. No. 2. Pp. 5–23. DOI: 10.22162/2712-8431-2020-10-2-5-23

УДК 904

DOI: 10.22162/2712-8431-2020-10-2-5-23

## Восприятие археологических памятников представителями народности дариганга

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**Аннотация.** В статье говорится о восприятии местными жителями двух археологических памятников, которые находятся на территории проживания этнической группы дариганга в провинции Сухбаатар на юго-востоке Монголии. Первый памятник — это комплекс из четырех каменных статуй у юго-восточного подножия горы Дари в округе Дариганга провинции Сухбаатар. Второй памятник — комплекс из восьми гробниц с двумя каменными статуями у горы Таван Толгой в округе Онгон провинции Сухбаатар. Эти два археологических памятника высоко почитаются народностью дариганга, которые утверждают, что являются потомками людей, захороненных в этих могилах, что расходится с мнением ученых, утверждающих, что дариганга не являются коренными жителями данной местности. В статье приводится подробное описание самих памятников и археологических находок, а также устные истории и предания, связанные с ними.

**Ключевые слова:** восприятие местными жителями, археологические памятники, археологические находки, почитание, предки

**Благодарность.** Материалы статьи апробированы на Международной научной онлайн-конференции «Монголоведение в начале XXI в.: современное состояние и перспективы развития – II», проведенной при финансовой поддержке РФФИ (проект № 20-09-22004) и частичной поддержке гранта Правительства РФ (№ 075-15-2019-1879).

**Для цитирования:** Bilegsaikhan Tamirjav. Dariganga perception of archaeological sites // Desertum Magnum: studia historica. 2020. № 2. С. 5–23. DOI: 10.22162/2712-8431-2020-10-2-5-23

## Introduction

In the paper, I attempt to discuss the local perception of two archaeological sites, which create the native land of Dariganga ethnic group\* in Sukhbaatar province, south-eastern Mongolia. Contemporary Darigangas actively use those archaeological sites for making their historical homeland. This kind of process has commonly happened in some communities around the world.

For example, in her work about the landscape of the Telengits in the Republic of Altai, Agnieszka Halemba notes that the Altaians strongly claim a mummy of a Scythian woman, which was found in the Altai mountains, should belong to Altai based on the local people's survey [Halemba 2006: 18–19]. Moreover, many Khakassians, similarly to the Altaians, believe that the dead buried on the territory of the republic are their close relatives. Several hundred stone obelisks and mounds in the field area of Łukasz Smyrski, who studies the southern Siberia, are essential spots. For Khakassians, the historical sites are the source of dignity and national pride and what is more — an exceptional energy supplier [Smyrski 2008: 264–265].

In general, the idea of creating the historical place in my study area is similar to cases of above researchers. For example, Darigangas contemplate that they belong to owners of archaeological relics. In this condition, ancestors of contemporary Darigangas are regarded as the native residents of Dariganga territory and not the immigrants in the region. To examine in details the perception of historical landscape of Dariganga ethnic group, I collected materials related to two spaces. The first one is a complex of four stone statues at the south — eastern foot of Dari Mountain in Dariganga county of Sukhbaatar province\*\*. The second one is a complex of eight tombs with two stone statues at Tavan Tolgoi Mountain in Ongon county of Sukhbaatar province.

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\* Indeed, 27 412 people were counted as Dariganga ethnic group that was 1,0 % of all population by the last census of 2010. By distribution of Darigangas, the largest one is that 78,4 % of Dariganga (21 500 people), who inhabit in Sŭkhbaatar province. The second — largest, 15,0 % of them live in Ulaanbaatar, capital of the country. Furthermore, the most significant percentage (33,1) of Darigangas, 7 116 people, in Sŭkhbaatar province were inhabiting in Baruun-Urt town. At that time, they were 43,9 % of 16 200 permanent inhabitants in the provincial centre. Nevertheless, they are the majority in the following counties. For example, 1 494 people are 83 % of the total inhabitants in Asgat county. Moreover, Bayandelger — 4 020 (83,5 %), Dariganga — 2 408 (83,5 %), Khalzan — 1 249 (78 %), Naran — 1 333 (89,2 %), and Ongon — 2 924 (81,2 %). Additionally, 408 dwellers of the Tuvshinshree county were Dariganga people (13,3 %), and few Dariganga people are living in other Khalkh counties of the province.

\*\* One of the six counties in the province where Dariganga people live.

Exploring the anthropological approach on the archaeological sites, I will sometimes cite the archaeological studies in the text. Here I will first describe the stone statues at Dari Mountain; then, I will discuss the tombs with statues at Tavan Tolgoi Mountain.

## **1. Stone statues in Dariganga**

### *a. A brief review of archaeological studies*

Vladimir A. Kasakevich initially published the information of Dariganga 17 statues with their photos in his publication. There he attempted to date them as belonging to the Turkic period [Kasakevich 1930: 35]. Nevertheless, soon he raised the alternative hypothesis that these monuments originated in Khitan dynasty of the 10<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries. Since then the idea was long prevalent among scholars that all stone statues in the territory of Mongolia were associated only with the ancient Turkic period. A theory was supported by the fact that from the very beginnings of archaeological research in Mongolia, the grandiose monuments of ancient Turkic culture were discovered in the Orkhon river valley, which attracted the great attention of Turkologists all over the world.

However, the common approach has been criticised by some scholars in recent decades. For example, Dovdoin Bayar undertook archaeological expeditions in the Dariganga area for three decades and studied 54 statues, about 30 of which had been previously unknown. He argues that the Eastern Mongolian stone statues under review differ essentially in their manner of imitative canon from similar monuments of the Ancient Turkic and other periods. Analysis of the attributes and iconography of these sculptures as well as the results of excavations of the mounds on which the statues were erected points to construction date corresponding to the Mongolian Empire of the 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries [Bayar 2002: 180].

According to the official information from Mongolian Academy of Sciences about stone statues in the country, Mongolia has 2 stone statues dating to the Bronze Age period, 737 stone statues of the ancient Turks (6<sup>th</sup>–8<sup>th</sup>), 8 stone statues of Uighur and Khitan (8<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup>), and 74 stone statues of Mongol Empire (13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup>) [Chuluun et al. 2016]. The stone statues of Mongol Empire have been registered in 17 counties of 8 provinces in Mongolia, but the majority of them are located in Dariganga territory.

### *b. Dariganga perception of the stone statues*

The several hundred stone statues of Mongolia are widely studied by archaeologists, but none of them is much detailed in any ethnological research. In this circumstance, my ethnological studying of the statues is entirely different from the previous studies. The primary goal of my research is to clarify the local perception of the historical artefacts in the paper. Interestingly, Darigangas have a unique approach to the stone statues which differs from that of majority of Mongols. For instance, they call stone statues

unlike people in other parts of Mongolia. Mongols often name stone statues “stone men” (*khün chuluu*), whereas Darigangas call the statues “portrait” (*khörög*) or “stone portrait” (*khörög chuluu*). In the contemporary Mongolian language, the word “*khörög*” is commonly considered a portrait; its sense is “altar object” (*shuteenii zuil*) to the dead people. In condition, I was initially surprised by another usage of the word relating to a stone man in Dariganga.

D. Bayar follows the explanation of linguists who referred that *khörög* has originated from Turk word meaning “look-see”. Therefore, he concludes that native *khörög* means “icon sign” [Bayar 2002: 153]. Moreover, Isabelle Charleux expresses that Mongolian stone statues and *ongons* generally belong to the category of “inhabited portraits” or “animated portraits,” that is, images serving as a support for the soul. The human representation in Mongolia was strongly linked to death and worship and was restricted to a few powerful personalities, particularly the divinised ancestors who protected the clan, the shamans, and potentially dangerous human spirits [Charleux 2010: 7].

In this circumstance, I follow the above points, because Darigangas consider the stone portrait in their local territory to be an iconic portrait, which was serviced as dignity place of Mongolian khans, and upper-level aristocracies.\* Even though a large number of stone men in Khalkh Mongolia are regarded as memorial statues to well-known historical people; they are less considered than the dignity site of Dariganga. In condition, I would say that Darigangas venerated stone statues (henceforth I also call *khörög* in the paper) in the region more than others. It is related to the local perception of the Mongolian stone statues for making the historical landscape.

## 2. Respected *khörögs* at Dari Mountain

### a. Aristocratic *khörögs*

During my first visit to Dariganga county centre nine years ago, I saw four stone figures at the south-eastern foot of Dari Mountain. At that time, I quickly understood that the area is a respected space in the local community by their offered materials, such as *khadag*, silk, prayer bead, currency, white rice, milk, cake even pieces of golden and silver jewellery, and toys. After visiting a majority of stone statues across Dariganga steppe, I found out that the group figures at Dari Mountain are the most revered *khörögs* among the Dariganga stone statues. The reason why the group figures are highly respected is based on the community interpretation of the historical objects.

Darigangas call the most massive stone figure (110x61x48) “Lord *khörög*” (Ноён хөрөг), and the second one (100x57x60) “Lady *khörög*” (Хатан хөрөг). The Lord and Lady *khörögs* are located together on one site. Moreover, a small stone statue, namely “Son *khörög*” (Хүү хөрөг) (76x47x38) exists in front of Lord and Lady *khörögs*. Those *khörögs* are sitting on the luxury chairs,

\* Ikhesiin gazar or takhilgyn gazar — a sacrificial site.

whereas one standing statue, namely “Daughter-in-law *khörög*” (Бэр хөпөр) (125x55x39) exists separately, at 500 m distance from other three statues. Overall, Darigangas firmly believe that those *khörögs* are the icon sign of an aristocratic household.

*b. Veneration of “family khörög”*

“The aristocratic family *khörög*” (*survaljit ger büliin khörög*), consisting of four statues, is a highly respected pilgrimage object for local dwellers and even many people from other parts of Mongolia also purposely arrive at the site. Pilgrims believe that those figures have special powers. For example, Lord *khörög* supports own believer’s useful life and happiness. That is because the *khörög* is considered as dignity site of the owner of Dariganga territory. Moreover, Lord and Lady *khörögs* are estimated as the parents, who always support their children. More interestingly, Daughter-in-law *khörög* is regarded as a supplier of children to a childless family, and good spouse to single people. In particular, infertile women usually pray the *khörög* for baby. Therefore, Daughter-in-law *khörög* is somewhat revered across the country. Thus, many people beg the *khörög* to grant their wishes. For instance, I witnessed one pilgrimage during my first expedition in 2011.

In my initial fieldwork, I was temporally hosted by Batkhürel, a local herder in Bayangol valley of Dariganga county for a couple of weeks. One day, we had special guests from Dornod, the neighbouring province of Sükhbaatar. A middle-aged couple, namely Darambazar and Tsetsegmaa, arrived at Batkhürel’s house which was 360 km away from their home. They knew Batkhürel as his younger sister had married Darambazar’s younger brother the previous year.

Darambazar runs a small supermarket and his wife is an accountant in a bank in the province centre. Even though their career was somewhat well, they had a huge problem. They had been childless for 15 years since their marriage. The couple consulted many doctors in Mongolia; they even went to the Republic of Korea for treatment. Unfortunately, in their case doctors could not find any remedy. What is more, they asked several lamas, shamans and traditional healers, but the results were the same as with doctors. At that time a new sister-in-law from Dariganga county suggested that they should beg Daughter-in-law *khörög* for a baby. Therefore, they came to pray the *khörög* in Dariganga county.

The following morning the guests went to the *khörögs* with the son of Batkhürel, who guided them. Then they came back at Batkhürel’s home in the afternoon having begged the *khörög* for a child. At that time, they believed that the *khörög* would help them. Luckily, I heard that the couple had two children in 2012 and 2014. Consequently, the couple with their infants arrived at Dariganga county and prayed both *khörögs*, because they strongly believed that the *khörögs* helped and gave them children.

What is more, Darigangas speak that the powers of the family *khörög* is related to one story in the region. One of my interlocutors told me the secret story of the *khörög* family. *In the early period, the wealthy aristocratic family inhabited the Dariganga territory. Unfortunately, a spoilt young man of the aristocratic family usually made wrong things, such as fought innocent people even his spouse, and drank alcohol. Ultimately, his desperate father begged the Lord khörög to calm his son. Unfortunately, the young man died soon after his father's praying, because of his massive karma. In condition, the noble parents painfully regretted his son's unexpected death by severe punishment from the khörög. Therefore, the parents soon passed away, and the widowed wife of the young man lived alone for her whole life. Even though she mainly suffered from the dangerous husband and was childless, she had always supported local dwellers. Therefore, local people highly honoured her. After she passed away, she is believed to be continuously supporting the suffering people untill today.*

Darigangas view that souls of the family members transferred into the four *khörögs*. Thus, the local people slightly avoid Son *khörög*, because it is considered the ferocious *khörög*. Moreover, Lord *khörög* is estimated as an honest man, who makes an impartial decision. Darigangas also view that the Lord and Lady *khörögs* represent a love of parents to their children. More surprisingly, the woman, who suffered from her terrible husband and was childless, becomes the supplier of a good spouse and a child to believers out of her generosity. All in all, the generous Daughter-in-law wished for the excellent spouse and children; therefore, she helps the people, who have a problem like her in the present.\*

Interestingly, local people state that the story related to the family of Dari nobleman, the owner of Dariganga region before the establishment of Dariganga Pasture. In fact, it is the big argument in history, because many historical sources only mention that noble Dari didn't have descendants. However, the oral story of the famous leader of the region has a different ending. Thus, below I will first describe the brief history Dari nobleman.

### **3. Making history from the *khörög***

#### *a. The brief history of Dari, an owner of Dariganga territory*

After collapsing the Yuan Empire, a power of khan sharply decreased, whereas, the authority of local noblemen thoroughly dominated in their fiefs across Mongolia for two hundred years. Then Dayan Khan and his queen

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\* The case of the Daughter-in-law *khörög* is similar to the power of the Mother rock (*eej khad*) in central Mongolia. The natural figure like human called mother rock is regarded as a supporter of the childless family. Interestingly, local story related to the mother rock originated from a generous woman, who could not give birth to a child in the region (see more *eej khad* from [Humphrey 1993; Gohen 2007]).

Mandukhai once unified Mongolia by their over forty years' struggle. However, after the death of Dayan Khan, his descendants again divided the country to various small ownerships. For example, his 11<sup>th</sup> son Prince Gersenje (*Gersenje Jalair Khun Taiji*) –became the owner of Khalkh *tümen* (the administrative unit). Furthermore, a queen of Gersenje divided Khalkh between their seven children after the death of the prince in 1549. At that time, the fifth son of Gersenje, namely Dari, became the owner of Khatagin and Khokhuit *otogs*, which were located in the contemporary Dariganga territory. According to Christopher Atwood, *otog* was a basic unit in a system of territorial divisions, which he calls “appanage community” till 1634 [Atwood 2012: 37–39].

According to the historical sources, Dari led his ownership until early 17<sup>th</sup> century, then those *otogs* were joined with his older brother Amin dural's *otogs*, because Dari did not have any children. As a consequence, Sholoi's ownership, the eldest son and a successor of Amin dural, suddenly powered till establishing Tsetsen Khan province, the primary three parts of Khalkh in the pre-Qing period. Later on, Kangxi Emperor of Qing Empire created personal pasture in the Dariganga territory of Tsetsen Khan province and transformed several thousand people from Chakhar banners and other parts of the Mongolia for herding imperial livestock. It is a short history of Dariganga territory and its owner Dari nobleman before the imperial pasture based on historical sources.

*b. Local interpretation of the khörög*

Modern Darigangas sharply oppose the academic approach that they are descendants of migrants, who arrived in the region from Chakhar, Khalkha, and western Mongolia during the early Qing period. In this circumstance, they argue the point of scholars, who mainly studied the history of Dariganga, such as Tseveen 1934, Jamsran 1994, and Bilegsaikhan 2015. According to Dariganga local people, they are heirs of Dari's subjects, who have been residing in their native territory for several hundred years. Moreover, they claim that native dwellers of the region did not move anywhere; so they joined with few immigrants and created contemporary Dariganga ethnic group. Surprisingly, their argument is based on oral history and their assumption of the family *khörög* at the Dari mountain and the mountain itself.

For example, my informant Nyam, a senior man of Dariganga county, explains one story related to *khörögs* at the Dari Mountain. *A nobleman, who was the only rightful owner of Dariganga territory passed away in the early time. Therefore, his subjects buried him at the local worshipped mountain, namely Zakhiin Khar Öndör, and built altar object of his family on the stone khörögs at the foot of the mountain. Since that time, the khörögs are honoured as the aristocratic khörögs, which are dedicated for the family of the late leader. What is more, the mountain was also renamed by the name of the leader 'Dari'. After that Dari Mountain has been venerated highly by inhabitants of the region for several hundred years* (taken from a personal interview).

In the circumstance, I asked my informants how to connect the *khörög*, which was made in 13–14<sup>th</sup> century, with Dari nobleman, who lived in 16–17<sup>th</sup> century. Interestingly, Darigangas do not deny that the stone *khörög* was created before Dari noble. Nevertheless, they claim that subjects of Dari owner transformed the stone statue in their territory for icon sign of their late leader in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, the figure is considered as the *khörög* of Dari owner till today. Therefore, local inhabitants worship Lord *khörög* with Dari Mountain in one day.

The offering ritual for Lord *khörög* together with the ceremony of worshipping Dari Mountain is the most significant difference between the veneration of majority stone *khörögs* in Dariganga, and oboo worshipping across Mongolia. For example, I participated in the offering of the *khörög* in 2013. At that time, Darigangas initially worshipped Dari Mountain then they directly made offering ritual for the Lord *khörög*. In short, both offering ritual of Dari Mountain and Lord *khörög* are dedicated to Dari nobleman, who was the only one rightful owner of Dariganga territory.\*

The historical religious text “Rites and so on for the establishment of an oboo (*ovoo uildekhiin zan uiliin selt orshiv*) in 1649–1691” mentioned that royal oboos (*khaan khunii ovoo*) should be built on the summit of high mountains. It would nearly exist in some waters. The oboo for noble lamas and ordinary nobles should be located on high terraces or plateau, and the oboos for commoners and ordinary people should be located in low mountain passes [Sneath 2007: 141]. In fact, the landscape of Dari Mountain is suitable for building supreme oboo in the region. For example, several lakes and springs exist in the vicinity of Dari mountain. In the circumstance, the subjects of Dari nobleman transformed the mountain and stone statues for dignity place for family of their true leader of the appanage community.

In condition, modern Darigangas believe that the most sacred mountain “Dari” is oboo for the Dari owner, and *khörögs* at the mountain are icon signs for the family of the nobleman. According to Darigangas, the owner of the local community in the region transformed to the mountain and the stone statue.

In the initial part, I analyzed the idea of Darigangas which is building their native land based on historical *khörögs*. By their point of view, descendants of local people in the region have been continually settling down in their original land from generation to generation. One of the primary proof of local assumption is that native residents have been venerating the dignity site of their real leader until today.

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\* These personifying natural figures has happened across the Mongolian community. For example, Buriad worshippers name their shrine mountain commonly by their ancestors [Tatar 1976: 6]. Moreover, during the spreading of Buddhism in Buriad, although Buddhist missionaries considered shamanism a wrongful religion, they were willing to adopt the cairns for the worship of warriors and leaders as *ovoo*s, and simply re-named them [Evans, Humphrey 2003: 199].

#### 4. The dignity site of Great khans at Tavan Tolgoi Mountain

##### *a. Archaeological complex of the royal khörög*

Now I move on to my second study area, namely Tavan Tolgoi Mountain, which consists of five hills, located 47 km southeast of the Ongon county centre. Once I visited Tavan Tolgoi with my host Uchraa during my fieldwork. We initially reached two stone statues in the middle of several ancient tombs. Additionally, a big stone pillar remained of a ritual building; circular shaped stone objects existed near the stone statues. The stone statues of Tavan Tolgoi had been more skillfully executed among other stone statues created in 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The stone statues were made of grey marble stones and some of their items were engraved life like, such as the seat of the stone statue covered with tiger fur, cloak decorated with cloud and dragon ornaments. In the archaeologists' point of view, the stone statues represent Mongolian kings and rulers of 13<sup>th</sup>–14<sup>th</sup> centuries as the two statues called “King and his Queen *khörögs*” (Хаан, хатан хөрөг) by local people. Unfortunately, the *khörögs* are harmfully broken, their heads already disappeared. Uchraa told that two separated heads existed next to their stone bodies approximately twenty years ago. However, there are not any original heads of the *khörög* surrounding place today.

Then we visited some excavated burial sites next to the King and Queen *khörögs*. There are lots of tombs, from which archaeologists have unearthed few graves in the recent years. At that moment, Uchraa reminded me not to pick up any tools from the archaeological site because the place, on which stone *khörögs* and tombs exist, is considered a dignity place of Mongol khans in the medieval century akin to the dignity site of Dari noble on the group *khörög* of Dariganga county (see the previous part). Besides, inhabitants of Ongon county do not like someone who is interested in the archaeological objects of Tavan Tolgoi Mountain. The objects are more strongly considered as the sacrificial site of Golden lineage of Chinggis Khan after the substantial archaeological discovery from the area in the 2000s.

##### *b. The discovery of Tavan Tolgoi Mountain*

Tavan Tolgoi Mountain of Ongon county is one of the most important archaeological sites of Mongolia.\* A lot of archaeological relics have been recently discovered there by the excavations of a team from the National University of Mongolia under professor D.Navaan in 2004–2005, and another team from Mongolian Academy of Science under Dr Ts.Törbat in 2010. In particular, the first excavation created a big sensation in Mongolia, because they found the remains of noble group people.

The team of National University of Mongolia refer that the graves excavated in 2004–2005 at the Tavan Tolgoi site all had a horse associated with the interred individual and are of great importance to the archaeology of

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\* Here I usually cite text from the main archaeological studies on the site.

the Mongolian period. Assuming that the findings are evidence that the Tavan Tolgoi site is connected with the history of Great Mongolian Empire, they conclude that graves TT-2004 B-1, TT-2004-B- 2, TT-2005 B-5, TT-2005 B-6, TT- 2005 B-7 were burials of nobles who had a close relationship to Chinggis Khan's Golden lineage [Tumen et al. 2006: 54]. Furthermore, their Korean co-workers analyze that “subsequent excavations yielded 13 samples for 14C dating, and 7 of them have been dated thus far. The calibrated dates were in the range of 1130–1250, which is in agreement with Chinggis Khan's lifespan. Artefacts strongly suggest that these burials belong to nobility or members of the royal family” [Youn et al. 2007: 685].

In fact, the Navaan's team found many unique relics, such as two golden rings with a falcon figure, golden *jins*,\* and other pieces of jewellery from the tombs of Tavan Tolgoi. I first saw a golden ring with the falcon figure during a seminar of the senior professor Navaan, when I was the first class student at the National University of Mongolia in 2005. At that time, the professor explained that the falcon image on the ring was found in the tomb of a noblewoman. In condition, he considered that the falcon image is a direct evidence that the burial is related to Chinggis Khan's family.

The gerfalcon was the *süld* of the Kiyat people to which Temüjin's father Yisügei belonged [De Rachewiltz 2004: 328–331]. Thus, archaeologists, who have studied the burial sites of Tavan Tolgoi, consider that the image of a falcon on the inner surface of a gold ring indicates close ties to the Chinggisids, and in combination with the other valuable and exotic items found in the graves indicate that these were members of the ruling elite during the Mongol Empire period (see such as [Fenner et al. 2014: 235]). Ultimately, the image of falcon of two gold rings, which was found with the noblewoman, was widely spread among the public beyond the academics (see more later).

According to the latest laboratory experiment of archaeologists, the first discovered five graves belong to the Golden family in Tavan Tolgoi. To define the genealogy of the five bodies and the kinship among them, SNP and/or STR profiles of mitochondria, autosomes, and Y chromosomes were analysed. Four of the five bodies were determined to carry the mitochondrial DNA haplogroup D4, while the fifth carried haplogroup CZ, indicating that this individual had no kinship with the others. Meanwhile, Y-SNP and Y-STR profiles indicate that the males examined belonged to the R1b-M343 haplogroup. Thus, their East Asian D4 or CZ matrilineal and West Eurasian R1b-M343 patrilineal origins reveal genealogical admixture between Caucasoid and Mongoloid ethnic groups, despite a Mongoloid physical appearance. In addition, Y-chromosomal and autosomal STR profiles revealed that the four D4-carrying bodies bore the relationship of either mother and three sons or four full siblings with almost the same probability. Moreover, the geographical

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\* A large pearl set on flower-shaped base: high-status marker.

distribution of R1b-M343-carrying modern-day individuals demonstrates that descendants of Tavan Tolgoi bodies today live mainly in Western Eurasia, with a high frequency in the territories of the past Mongolian khanate.

In condition, Tavan Tolgoi bodies would be Golden family members from qudas between the female lineage of Borjigin clan and the male lineage of rulers who dominated Eastern Mongolia, including the Ongud Kingdom. Ongud clan may be anthropologically Caucasoid rather than Mongoloid, according to their geographical origin. Therefore, the male bodies carrying R1b-M343 (prevalent in Western Europe) from Tavan Tolgoi, which was located within the territory of the Ongud Kingdom during the early Mongolian era, could be related to the Ongud male lineage, implying that Tavan Tolgoi bodies are genealogically Caucasoid [Lkhagvasuren et al. 2016: 1, 15].

By the recent research of the archaeology and biological anthropology, the majority of burials belonged to Ongud Kindom, and a lady of them belonged to Golden lineage of Mongol Empire. As a consequence, the majority of tombs were Caucasoid people, who lived in contemporary Dariganga region in medieval century, but their descendants certainly do not inhabit across modern Mongolia. However, Darigangas strongly consider that they are heirs of the owners of the tombs. In particular, Dariganga intelligentsias write that they are closely connected with the Golden lineage of Mongol khans. It is related to the local idea that the making of homeland and native people is based on archaeological site. Thus, in the following part I will further demonstrate how some Dariganga intelligentsias perceive the historical objects at Tavan Tolgoi Mountain.

## **5. Building historical homeland**

### *a. Reconstruction of archaeological findings*

In the closing part of the paper, I discuss the restoration of archaeological relics from Tavan Tolgoi, which is considered as the dignity place of Great khans of Mongol Empire. The objects of the dignity site hugely support creating a native territory of Darigangas. As Darigangas believe that the owners of the burial sites and stone statues were representatives of Golden lineage of Mongol Empire and so they are also direct relatives of the contemporary inhabitants of the region.

Noticeably, the ring with falcon figure from the tomb is a critical factor of increasing fame of archaeological discovery from Tavan Tolgoi among Darigangas. Mongols generally respect the bird, which was the *süld* of Chinggis Khan. The white falcon was even suggested to be the state symbol during the discussion of new Constitution of Mongolia in November 1991 (see more [Bulag 1998: 241]). As a result, inhabitants of Ongon county highly respected two rings with the falcon figures; so that, the county leaders requested from professor Navaan to leave one ring in the county museum. However, the professor took both rings for detailed analysis in Ulaanbaatar.

Even though professor Navaan was honoured among the academics, local people sharply criticised him. Indeed, their disfavour originated from fighting for the archaeological relics. According to the residents' of Ongon county point of view, the remnants under the graves must stay at the museum of the county after short investigation in Ulaanbaatar. However, the archaeologist denied the request of local people and keep the relics in the office of Department of Archaeology and Anthropology, National University of Mongolia. As a consequence, locals complain that the professor robbed them of their *süld* (august spirit object)

Local people actively complained that archaeologist Navaan transferred the *süld* of the territory out of the county. In this circumstance, Dүүrentөгс,\* a sculptor in Ulaanbaatar who is originally from Ongon county, regretted much the decision of the professor, because he initially brought Navaan's team to his home county. As a result, he initiated making the new *süld* monument in the county, and local people donated Dүүrentөгс to reconstruct the archaeological objects. Therefore, he created a massive memorial statue, namely *süld* of Ongon county, in county centre.

Local people think that two historical objects at Tavan Tolgoi mountain are related to one another. Therefore, most Darigangas firmly believe that the owners of both stone statues and graves are their ancestors. As a result, they highly respect new monument, namely *süld* of Ongon county at the mountain behind the county centre. In fact, the emblem of the administrative unit is not so widely spread across Mongolia. The new *süld* has two main parts, one of them is the above mentioned falcon, and another is a couple of *khörögs*\*\* The new *khörögs* are situated at the foundation part of the *süld* statue; therefore, pilgrims often touch them. Nowadays, pilgrims offer many things there. Although the shrine object was initially built as a simple monument of local historical and cultural heritage, it was changed to sacred object within one decade. Consequently, the veneration of the new *khörögs* has a close resemblance to the veneration of old stone *khörögs*.

#### *b. Interpretation of local intelligentsias on the archaeological site*

Here I explain the understanding of some local intelligentsias of the archaeological sites of Dariganga area. At the beginning of the paper, I described the knowledge of ordinary people about stone *khörögs* in the Dariganga county. On the contrary, the interpretation of intelligentsias is more profound than the idea of ordinary people as an administrative unit of

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\* He initially brought the team of D.Navaan to his home county and serviced as a guide for Navaan's expedition in 2004.

\*\* Dүүrentөгс explains that the two *khörögs* are a new version of King and Queen *khörögs* of Tavan tolgoi, which are believed to be king and queen of all Dariganga *khörögs*. In case, not only new *khörögs* are the representations of Tavan Tolgoi *khörögs*, but they also delegate Dariganga *khörögs*.

Dari noble in 16–17<sup>th</sup> century. For example, some intelligentsias view that the stone statues and tombs of Tavan Tolgoi were dignity place of Great khans of Mongol Empire. Moreover, they also regard that not only the objects of Tavan Tolgoi but also all stone statues across Dariganga were iconic objects of upper-level aristocracies in 13–14<sup>th</sup> century. Some scholars hugely supported the idea during the conference of Dariganga studies in 2013.

For example, in his presentation, a well-known poet and professor Mend-Ooyo sharply criticises the academic writing, which usually begins the history of Dariganga from 1696, the year when Dariganga Pasture was created. Indeed, he completely disagrees with the idea about the origin of Dariganga ethnic group. Thus, he makes the following argument questions: Is it a correct approach that the people of Dariganga Pasture consisted of immigrants from Chakhar, Khalkh, and Oirad Mongols? Who inhabited the area before establishing Dariganga Pasture? What was the original culture of native people? Who made the stone statues and unique pieces of jewellery from the noble tombs? However, the genetic survey says that the descendants of the majority owners of graves do not live in Dariganga region and even Mongolia in the present. On the contrary, Dariganga scholars strongly regard that their ancestors have been inhabiting their local territory since the 13<sup>th</sup> century till today.

For example, Mend-Ooyo answered his above questions that ancestors of contemporary Dariganga people made the historical objects, stone statues and tombs. Moreover, their descendants have been preserving the sites till today. In condition, Dariganga Pasture was mainly established based on the native people, instead of people transferred from outside. He also explains that many people from Golden lineage of Chinggis Khan participated in building Dariganga ethnic group. Furthermore, people of Golden lineage, whose role was to protect the dignity site of Great khans, have been living here from generation to generation. They still maintain their role of sacrificing stone *khörög*, which is still inherited among contemporary Darigangas. For example, modern Darigangas highly venerate the stone statues in the region. Ultimately, he proposes that researchers must consider the most ancestors of contemporary Dariganga people were representatives of Golden lineage, whose role was protecting the dignity place in the region [Mend-Ooyo 2013: 56–68].

### **Conclusion**

The Dariganga perception of the archaeological sites in their local territory is intimately connected with the idea of making the native land of the ethnic group. Thus, they try to relate inhabitants in the region pre-Dariganga Pasture to themselves. In short, it is a vital interest of Dariganga people that creating historical homeland and expanding their history is based on archaeological

sites. For instance, Darigangas firmly believe that the owners of both stone statues and graves are their ancestors. As a result, they created one monument, namely *süld* of Ongon county, which is combined the tombs and stone figures for reconstructing their ancestral relics.

To sum up, modern Darigangas actively use archaeological sites for making their historical homeland. Local intelligentsias sharply criticise some researchers' work that initial majority herders of Dariganga Pasture were transferred from different parts of Mongolia to Dariganga region in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. They attempt to link their ancestors with the owner of the archaeological funds located in their local territory. In the circumstance, they actively claim that real ancestors of modern Darigangas were native dwellers in the region rather than immigrants. More so, those forebears were intimately related to the Golden lineage of Mongol khans. The reason for that Darigangas have a big interest to create historical homeland and expanding their history. As a consequence, the archaeological relics are highly respected by Dariganga people.

## APPENDICES



Foto 1. Praying ritual at the stone statues, called Lord and Lady *khörōgs*, at *Dari Mountain*



Foto 2. Daughter-in-law *khörög* is firmly believed to support an infertile women



Foto 3. The archaeological complex of two stone statues, called King and Queen, at the Tavan Tolgoi Mountain



Foto 4. The headless *khörög*, namely Queen



Foto 5. The *süld* statue of Ongon county, located in the county centre, represented the archaeological relics from Tavan Tolgoi complex

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