Excavations at Emeelt Tolgoi Site: The third Report on Joint Mongolian-Japanese Excavations in Outer Mongolia

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Introduction

Two distinct burial customs existed on the Mongolian Plateau during the Bronze Age: Khirigsuur and stone-slab graves. Khirigsuur are distributed in the western part of Mongolia; on the other hand, stone-slab graves are distributed in the eastern part of Mongolia. In central Mongolia, there is a mixed distribution of both burial customs (Цыбиктаров, 1998). Khirigsuur date to a relatively earlier period than stone-slab graves (Fitzhugh ed., 2005). Khirigsuur do not usually contain grave goods like bronze weapons. In some cases, pits containing the remains of sacrificed horses are present under the cairns outside the enclosure of Khirigsuur. The size of Khirigsuur is indicative of the scale of social units or social cohesion at that time (Wright, 2014). On the other hand, some stone-slab graves contain grave goods such as bronzeware, beads and pottery. The kinds of grave goods found in stone-slab graves differ greatly depending on the social status of the individual buried there, much more than with Khirigsuur. In this case, it is assumed that much more esteem was given to the personality of the social group in the stone-slab burial culture than that of Khirigsuur.

In this paper, I would like to classify stone-slab graves based on the development process of the burial structure and functional meaning of the burial construction in reference to Sosnovsky and Cybiktarov (Цыбиктаров, 1998). There are three categories of burial structure in the stone-slab burial culture (Fig. 93): rectangular stone construction graves (Type 1), figured graves (Type 3) and stone-slab graves (Type 2).

Type 1 consists of a stone structure with a square or rectangular stone fence, inside of which is piled up with stones. Type 1 can be divided into two sub-types depending on whether or not stones have been piled up outside the stone fence: Type 1a and Type 1b (Fig. 94). In the case of Type 1a, no stones have been piled up outside the stone fence; in the case of Type 1b, however, stones have been piled up outside the stone fence. Because stones have been piled up outside as a means of supporting the stone fence, it is believed that stone fences in Type 1b enabled stone structures to be constructed much more easily than those of Type 1a.

Type 3 refers to figured graves. Type 3 can be divided into three sub-types: Type 3a, Type 3b and
Type 3c (Fig. 95). The classification of sub-types is based on the degree of curbing of the stone fence. Type 3a does not exhibit a significant curved line of the stone fence, which does not extend to any significant degree to the corners. Type 3b has a significant curved line of the figured stone fence, which extends to the corners. Type 3a would subsequently change into Type 3b. Type 3c is a stone fence in the shape of a horse’s hoof. Type 3c would eventually be modified from Type 3a or Type 3b.

Type 2 has a rectangular stone fence with four corners. Burial structures such as a stone construction are typical of stone-slab graves. Type 2 can also be divided into three types: Type 2a, Type 2b and Type 2c (Fig. 96). Type 2a has a rectangular stone fence, outside of which is not piled up with stones. Type 2a has a rectangular stone fence, outside of which has been piled up with stones to support the stone fence. It is probable that double pit burial structure of Type 2c means the existence of wood trunk coffin. Type 2c has the same stone structure as that of Type 2b, but the stone fence of Type 2c is much higher than that of Type 2a and Type 2b. The function of the pile of stones outside the stone fence is to allow for a bigger stone fence for Type 2c. Therefore, it is supposed that Type 2a gradually changed into Type 2b and then changed into Type 2c. This process of change also indicates the development of stone structures for Type 2.

Additional mention must be made of burial customs. All types of stone-slab burial cultures usually utilized pit burials. However, the location of these pit burials differs among the three types. In the case of Type 1, pit burials are not located in the center of the stone construction; however, those of Type 3 and Type 2 are located in the center. Among these, only Type 2 has cover stones over the pit burials, with a different number of cover stones according to the sub-type of Type 2. Type 2a also has only one cover stone, but Type 2b and Type 2c have multiple cover stones, such as three stones. Only Type 2c has a double pit burial structure, the construction of which would have required much labor; other types have only one pit burial. Type 2c, which has a bigger stone fence and double pit burial, indicates a much higher social status, given the amount of intensive labor required for the construction of the grave.

When discussing these graves, the combination between the classification of the stone construction and that of the pit burial should be made clear in order to constitute the sub-types. Table 10 shows combinations of the classifications of several attributes. Combinations of the attributes clearly indicate the particularity of the sub-types and the typological shifted line. Therefore, we can understand the process of change of the types as follows: from Type 1a to Type 1b, from Type 3a to Type 3b, and from Type 2a to Type 2b and then to Type 2c. In addition, it is supposed that Type 1a changed to Type 3a.

The dating of the graves can prove this chronological hypothesis. Table 11 shows the dating of the types based on the AMS data for human bones or sacrificed animal bones. According to this table, the dating of Type 1a covers the period from 1530 - 1187 cal. BC, and is relatively earlier than those of Type 1b, which covers the period from 1440 - 804 cal. BC. And the dating of Type 3a, which covers the period from 1500 - 1110 cal. BC, is also earlier than that of Type 3b.
and Type 3c, which covers the period from 1270 - 812 BC. Based on the dating of Daram Site, we can infer that Type 2a dates to an earlier period than Type 2b and Type 2c. In addition, the rectangular stone construction grave (Type 1) and the figured grave (Type 3) are relatively earlier than the stone-slab grave (Type 2).

Figure 97 shows the chronology of grave structures in the stone-slab burial culture. Based on the distribution and dating of square stone construction graves, it is believed that Type 1a rectangular stone construction graves originated from the eastern Mongolian Plateau and spread westward to the central Mongolian Plateau, where they changed into Type 1b. Recently Type 1a rectangular stone construction graves at Ar Khavstal Site of Khotont sum in Arhangai province dating 12th to 10th century BC are reported (Enkhtör et al. 2018). This discovery is the proof that Type 1a rectangular stone construction graves lately spread to Central Mongolian Plateau from Eastern Mongolian Plateau. Also, Type 1a rectangular stone construction graves changed into Type 3a figured graves in the central Mongolian Plateau. Type 3a then changed into Type 3b and Type 3c in the central Mongolian Plateau. These rectangular stone construction graves and figured graves were distributed in the eastern and central Mongolian plateau from the 15th to 9th centuries.
BC. On the other hand, stone-slab graves (Type 2) were distributed in this same region from the 8th to 3rd centuries BC. The stone-slab grave replaced the rectangular stone construction grave and figured grave in the eastern and central Mongolian Plateau. This process of change poses questions regarding

Table 10 Combinations of attributes in the typology

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Fig.97 Changes of the grave structure in the stone-slab burial culture (1 Bulgiin Ekh, 2 Daram Grave No. 9, 3 Chandomani Khar Uul Grave No.31, 4 Tevsh Grave No. 1, 5 Daram Grave No. 4, 6 Daram Grave No. 8, 7 Daram Grave No. 1)
the origin of Type 2a, as well as why the stone-slab grave came about. We do not know how the four corner stones in Type 2 originated; all we can say is that the rectangular stone construction grave and figured grave do not have these four corner stones. A square stone fence with four corner stones, which is believed to have originated from Khirigsuur, was found at Grave No.1 (Fig. 98) at Khyar Kharacha site, Gobi Altai Aimag (Miyamoto ed., 2017). This grave dates to 1306 - 1054 cal. BC (90.1%, 2 sigma) and 1325 - 1209 cal. BC (68.8%, 2 sigma), which correspond to the dating of the rectangular stone construction grave and the figured grave (Table 11). Grave No. 82 at Emeelt Tolgoi site is also the same type as that of Grave No.1 at Khyar Kharacha site. If this type of Khirigsuur is indeed the origin of the stone-slab grave (Type 2), we would name the prototype of the stone-slab grave after this type of Khirigsuur. The prototype of the stone-slab grave is found in western and central Mongolia. The prototype of the stone-slab grave spread from the western Mongolia Plateau to the central Mongolian Plateau in the same way the Khirigsuur spread, leading to the supposition that this is the origin of Type 2a stone-slab graves.

2. Chronology of the Khirigsuur culture

Khirigsuur are distributed throughout western and central Mongolia. Khirigsuur consist of a stone mound enclosed by a round or square enclosure in which there is a cairn containing the remains of sacrificed horses outside the enclosure. According to the plan of the enclosure, Khirigsuur are divided into
two types: round type and square type. Amgalantugs believed that the two types dated to different periods, with the round type being relatively earlier than the square type (Amranaatser, 2015). But it is probable that the difference in the plan is based on the different customs of groups or different clan symbols of the groups.

According to Amgalantugs (Fig. 99), the round type and square type can be classified into subgroups (Amranaatser, 2015). The round group is divided into five groups. His 1A, 1B, 1E types have an enclosure. The types with no enclosure are round graves. Amgalantugs proposed the round grave separately. But it is difficult to distinguish between these types and Amgalantugs’ round type and square type can be classified into subgroups depending on whether or not four corner stones are present: Type 1a and Type 1b (Fig. 100). Type 1a is a round enclosure without four corner stones, and Type 1b is a round enclosure with four corner stones. Khirigsuur Type 3 consists of a square enclosure. Type 3 is also divided into two subtypes depending on whether or not four corner stones are present: Type 3a and Type 3b (Fig. 102). Type 3a is a square enclosure without four corner stones, and Type 3b is a square enclosure with four corner stones. Round graves have a round line with rimmed stones. These stone mounds are thought to be connected with rimmed stones and round enclosures in Khirigsuur Type 1. Because of this formation process, round enclosures can be included within the Khirigsuur burial system. Therefore, round graves can be called Khirigsuur Type 2. Type 2 is also divided into two subtypes depending on whether or not four corner stones are present: Type 2a and Type 2b (Fig. 101). Type 2a is a square enclosure without four corner stones, and Type 2b is a square enclosure with four corner stones. Round graves have a round line with rimmed stones. These stone mounds are thought to be connected with rimmed stones and round enclosures in Khirigsuur Type 1. Because of this formation process, round enclosures can be included within the Khirigsuur burial system. Therefore, round graves can be called Khirigsuur Type 2. Type 2 is also divided into two subtypes depending on whether or not four corner stones are present: Type 2a and Type 2b (Fig. 101). Type 2a is a square enclosure without four corner stones, and Type 2b is a square enclosure with four corner stones.

In addition, Khirigsuur culture graveyards often contain square graves with four corner stones. These are not the same as those rectangular graves of the stone-slab grave culture. This fact is exemplified by Grave No. 1 at Khyar Kharaach Site (Miyamoto et al., 2017). Grave No. 1 at Khyar Kharaach Site (Fig. 98) is
composed of a square plan, but there is small cairn in the center, something which is not found with slabstone graves. It is supposed that Khirigsuur Type 3b developed to be connected between the cairn and square enclosure with four corner stones and then became a square grave. A particular feature of square graves is the existence of pavement stones between the small cairn in the center and the square rimmed stones with four corner stones. Therefore, it is believed that the square grave belongs to the Khirigsuur culture. Square graves can be called Khirigsuur Type 4. Furthermore Type 3b and Type 4 have recently been called the Sagsai type (Tsond, 2016). The Sagsai type is distributed in western and central Mongolia.

Khyar Kharaach Site has four cemetery units, from Unit 1 to Unit 4 according to the grave distribution (Fig. 103). Khyar Kharaach’s graveyard belongs to the Khirigsuur culture and includes Type 1, Type 2, Type 3 and Type 4. Type 1 and Type 3 are the main types in this graveyard (Miyamoto ed. 2017). Figure 103 indicates the distribution of every type at Khyar Kharaach Site. According to these figures relating to grave type distribution, Type 1 and Type 3 are the main grave types at this site. Grave No. 20, which is Type 2b at Khyar Kharaach Site, dates to 1397 - 1259 cal. BC. Emeelt Tolgoi Site, excavated by a joint Mongolian-Japanese research team in 2016 and

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Fig.99 Classification of Khirigsuur by Amgalantugus Tsend (Amgalantugus 2015)
2017, also has mainly Type 1b and Type 2b in the same graveyards (Fig. 25). Type 1b Grave No. 30 and Type 2b Grave No. 40 and No. 44 at Emeelt Tolgoi Site date to approximately the same time, and the dating of these is roughly the same as that of Grave No. 20 at Khyar Kharaach Site. According to dating of Type 1b and Type 2b, these two types are believed to have existed simultaneously. The differences between Type 1b and Type 2b are conjectured to indicate differences in the social status of the buried individuals or of social cohesion of the groups included with the buried individuals. If true, we can conceive that the relationship between Type 1b and Type 2b is the same kind of relationship as between Type 3b and Type 4 (Fig. 104).

Figure 103 shows that the number of Type 1 graves is much larger than that of Type 2, and that these two types are clearly divided in location. According to Amgalantugs’s research, Type 1 dates to a relatively earlier period than Type 3 in the chronological scheme (Amraamor, 2015). If true, we can assume that Type 1a and Type 2a were distributed first at Khyar Kharaach Site, Type 1b and Type 2b were distributed at the next stage, and Type 3a and Type 4 spread to this site during the third stage. And it is probable that differences between Type 1 and Type 2 are reflected not only by differences in period but also by differences in the social group’s identity or social group customs.

Type 4 graves are also present at Khyar Kharaach Site. The particular features of Type 4 graves with four corner stones are the same as those of Type 1b and Type 3b. It is probable that those groups with four corner stones indicate the same cultural identities. However, there are very few Type 4 graves at Khyar Kharaach Site compared with other types - Type 1b and Type 2b - and graves of this type are located in a peripheral area of this graveyard (Fig. 103). The dating of Type 4 Grave No. 1 at Khyar Kharaach Site is 1306 - 1054 cal. BC and 1325 - 1209 cal. BC. Grave No. 1 dates to a relatively the same period as that of Type 2b Grave No. 20 at Khyar Kharaach Site and Grave No. 40, No. 44 at Emeelt Tolgoi Site. In addition, the results of physical anthropological research show that the individual buried in Grave No. 1 is genetically from the Mongolian line, while the individual buried in Grave No. 20 is genetically from the Caucasian line. This means that these two types of burial custom indicated different clan groups. Therefore, it is thought that people of Type 4 moved to this district from eastward district. Furthermore, people of the main burial customs of Type 1b and
Type 2b spread from a westerly direction with the migration of people to Khyar Kharaach Site.

In addition, square grave with four corner stones dating to 15th to 14th century BC was found Grave No. 49 at Emeelt Tolgoi Site. This grave is also belonging in Type 4 grave. But the scale and plan form of this grave are different from those of Grave No. 1 at Khyar Kharaach Site and Grave No. 82 at Emeelt Tolgoi Site. Type 4 can be divided into two subtypes: Type 4a and Type 4b. Grave No. 49 at Emeelt Tolgoi Site is called Type 4a and Grave No. 1 at Khyar Kharaach Site and Grave No. 82 at Emeelt Tolgoi Site are Type 4b. However, Type 4a square graves differ to Type 1 rectangular stone construction graves in southwestern Mongolia in terms of burial structure. The origin of Type 4a is unknown. On the other hand, Type 4b square graves developed from square Khirigsuur Type 3b with four corner stones on the enclosure. Square Khirigsuur Type 3b and Type 4a and Type 4b square graves of the Khirigsuur culture emerged in northern Mongolia and spread to western and middle Mongolia during migrations with round Khirigsuur and round grave. The Sagsai-type, particular in that it has four oval stones, is also assumed to have been established in northern Mongolia and spread to the western and middle Mongolian Plateau.

3. Development process of the stone-slab burial and Khirigsuur culture

The stone-slab burial culture has three distinct burial customs: the rectangular stone construction grave (Type 1), the figured grave (Type 3) and the stone-slab
Fig. 103 Distribution map of cemeteries at Khyar Kharaach Site

Fig. 104 Changes of the grave structure in the Khirigsuur culture (1 Ulaan Uushig Grave No. 4, 2 Emeelt Tolgoi Grave No. 30, 3 Bor Ovoo Grave No. 11, 4 Khyar Kharaach Grave No. 20, 5 Ulaan Uushig No. 4, 6 Khyar Kharaach Grave No. 1)
grave (Type 2). The former two burial customs, which date to between the 15th and 9th centuries BC, are of a relatively earlier period than the last one, which dates to between the 8th and 3rd centuries BC. The stone-slab burial culture is distributed in the eastern and middle Mongolian Plateau based on the Cybiktarov’s grave distribution map (Цыбиктаров А. Д., 1998) with recent excavation data (Fig. 105). The original location of rectangular stone construction graves (Type 1) is probably southeastern Mongolia according to the AMS dating (Table 11). This is because the dating of Type 1a of Chandomani Khar at Dornogovi and of Ulaanzuuk at Adgiin Gol, which are located in eastern Mongolia, covers the 15th to 12th centuries BC. Rectangular stone construction graves (Type 1) then spread to the central Mongolian Plateau and changed to figured graves (Type 3). Figured graves are mainly distributed in Central Mongolia (Fig. 105). Many figured graves are found south of the Yinshan Mountains in Inner Mongolia, which is the south of central Mongolia (Ma, 2015). On the other hand, figured graves in the Baikal area, which is in the north of middle Mongolia, are also concentrated here (Fig. 105). It is supposed that the rectangular stone construction graves of southeastern Mongolia spread to middle Mongolia and changed to figured graves. It is also possible to explain how the long edge line of the Type 1a square stone construction graves changed to be curved on the long edge lines to be the Type 3a figured graves in the typological changes (Fig. 97).

On the other hand, Khirigsuur culture which corresponds to the rectangular stone construction graves and figured graves of the stone-slab burial culture in this period were distributed in western and central Mongolia (Fig. 105). In most cases, as with Khirigsuur, graves belonging to the former two burial customs do not contain grave goods. The whole Khirigsuur culture graves does not possess a grave goods. The nature of Khirigsuur culture is suggestive of an egalitarian society, although the scale of graves is different. However, Baga Gazaryn Chuluu1, Dundgovi Aimag, a Type 3a figured grave dating to 1390 - 1110 cal. BC, contains relatively large quantities of grave goods. For example, its contents include a Karasuk style bronze knife, bronze arrow heads, a ground stone crucible with handles, and pottery (Nelson et al., 2009). Another figured grave at Tevsh Site, Bayankhongol Aimag, contains a Karasuk style golden earring (Волков, 1972). And the square stone construction grave at Emgent Hoshuu Site, Bulgan Aimag, contains bronze helmets (Erdenebaatar, 2004).

Therefore, several rectangular stone construction graves and figured graves contain fine grave goods like bronzes. In addition, the profile on the pit burial at Tevsh Grave No. 3 indicates the likelihood that there was a wooden coffin or body wrapped in
textiles or feathers in the burial pit. The presence of pit burial facilities under the stone construction at figured graves means that those graves were invested with special labor. On the basis of this evidence, we believe social classification gradually started as early as the beginning of the stone-slab burial culture. On the other hand, Khirigsuur culture which originated in western Mongolia exhibits differences in grave scale. The differences between Type 1, Type 2 and Type 3 in the Khirigsuur culture corresponds to the scale difference of graves. These scale differences are supposed to indicate differences in social cohesion between the groups or clan systems of the buried individuals. Another interpretation is that differences in grave scale represent differences in group scale to which the buried individuals belonged.

On the other hand, such social differences improved during the phase of typical stone-slab graves. Daram Grave No. 4, a Type 2a stone-slab grave, has a pit burial with a cover stone under the stone construction. It is probable that there was a wooden coffin or body wrapped in textiles or feathers in the burial pit because of the distribution of grave goods. This stone-slab grave contains many grave goods, such as bronze ornaments and stone beads. Differences in grave goods in terms of quantity and quality show that there were social differences between individuals at that time. It is also very interesting that the individual buried in Daram Grave No. 4 is female. No social differences between the sexes have been confirmed so far, but the social differences between individuals are much more pronounced than those seen in Khirigsuur. In addition, Daram Grave No. 1, a Type 2c stone-slab grave, also has a wooden coffin in a burial pit with double pit graves. The wooden coffin in Daram Grave No. 1 was much larger than that of Daram Grave No. 4. Depending on the time period and stage of social development, not only the stone-slab grave structure itself but also burial facilities like wooden coffins under the stone construction were much bigger. This shows that social complexity based on the individual in social groups was gradually increasing.

Khirigsuur culture probably changed to Chandmani culture, which includes a wooden chamber or wooden coffin. Chandmani culture with iron tools was also established through the influence of the early Iron Age of Altai and the Minusinsk Basin, west of Mongolia. These cultures also indicate social complexity based on the individual.

**Conclusion**

Khirigsuur culture, in which the grave scale indicates the group scale of the buried individuals, corresponds to the Karak culture and is distributed in western Mongolia. Khirigsuur culture spread from western Mongolia to central Mongolia with the movement of people from central Eurasia (Fig. 105). A Caucasian genetic line of people of the Khirigsuur culture has been identified at Khar Kharaach Site (Miyamoto ed., 2017). Therefore, Khirigsuur culture is believed to have been influenced by the Altai or the Minusinsk Basin with the cultural attributes and immigration of people. The Khirigsuur in western Mongolia gradually changed in a horizontal space from westward to eastward in central Mongolia. The Khirigsuur symbolized the social unit or social group rather than a particular individual.

Figure 97 shows the changing processes of rectangular stone construction graves, figured graves and stone-slab graves in the stone-slab burial culture of central and eastern Mongolia. Two burial customs, the rectangular stone construction grave and the figured grave, gradually changed along a shifting line in the chronological framework from the 15th to 9th centuries BC, corresponding to the Karak culture of bronzeware. Rectangular stone construction graves originated in eastern Mongolia and spread to central Mongolia, where they changed into figured graves. The figured grave is mainly distributed in central Mongolia from the Bikal area in the north to the Yinshan Mountains in central Inner Mongolia in the south (Fig. 105).

Typical stone-slab graves gradually changed from Type 2a to Type 2b and Type 2c in central and eastern Mongolia, dating from the 9th to 3rd centuries BC, thus corresponding with the Tagar culture of bronzeware. This process of change also led to the social development of herding societies in the eastern steppe area. In particular, certain individuals gained esteem within the social stratification. This social particularity is seen in the stone-slab burial culture of central and eastern Mongolia. On the other hand, Chandmani culture, which consists of wooden chambers coffins, spread at the same time throughout western Mongolia under the influence of the Pazyrk culture of Altai. These social particularities and esteem for the individual in the social stratification is also seen in Chandmani culture.