

Xiongnu Rulers' Residences in the Historical Records of the Han Dynasty

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Abstract

Han Dynasty chroniclers recorded valuable information about key settlements in the Xiongnu Empire, specifically those where the residence of the Chanyu was located. Though the first nomadic empire's political centre is linked to theories of early urbanisation in the eastern steppe, detailed examination of the historiographical terminology is lacking. We analyse the terminology to assess how settlements were perceived through the lens of Han culture and language. Six Chinese and two Xiongnu terms describing settlement form or function are identified and compared with form and function of the settlements known from archaeological materials. Some of the terms relate to traditional mobile structures, whereas others attest to substantial earthen structures of unquestionable political and ceremonial import influenced by Han technologies. We also propose a solution to the problem of when and how these technologies were introduced into nomadic society.

Keywords

Xiongnu – Han Dynasty – historiography – urbanism – palaces

Introduction

Soon after 209 BC, the unification of various tribes and kingdoms in the eastern Eurasian Steppe led to the formation of a large-scale, complex polity, often referred to as the “first nomadic empire” (Barfield 1981; Kradin 2001: 23; 2011: 77; Miller 2024). Known in the historical accounts of the Han Dynasty (202 BC–AD 220) as the Xiongnu 匈奴, they went on to dominate the Inner Asian steppes until AD 91. The growing power and status of the ruler and his clan in the Inner Asian political arena allowed them to take control of the main communication routes over a vast area and establish an extensive tributary system and diplomatic network, supported by regular marriage alliances (Di Cosmo 2004: 188–90; Chin 2010). All these changes affected the functioning and appearance of the centres of power in the steppe (Honeychurch and Amartuvshin 2006: 265–8).

The main Xiongnu political centre has been the subject of much academic debate, primarily focused on identifying its geographic location and establishing whether there was one centre or several, whether they were mobile or fixed places, and how the names recorded by other polities relate to archaeological remains (e.g. Wang 1983; Tan 1996; Yü 2008: 384; De Crespigny 2007; Bemmman 2011; Loginov 2012; Iderkhangai et al. 2020). Another theme has been to examine the political centre within the broader context of urbanism in the eastern steppe, since Han Dynasty chroniclers began referring to certain Xiongnu settlements as ‘cities’ (*cheng* 城) around the same time that urban sites appear in the archaeology. Studies on this theme have mainly linked materials on the Xiongnu to the emergence of urban centres among later polities (Danilov 2004; Rogers et al. 2005; Waugh 2010; Honeychurch 2015; Kradin 2019; Vasyutin 2022), whereas the functions of these sites and their connections to political authority in the Xiongnu Empire remain unclear.

Han written records represent the main sources on Xiongnu political centres; however, this information is yet to be the subject of focused analyses. Specifically, the Han sources use a variety of different names to refer to the political centre. Following the basic principles of the semiotic approach to analyses of historical narratives (Lotman 1990), including analyses from both synchronic and diachronic perspectives (Saussure 1959), we examine the terminology for rulers’ residences in the Han records and then compare this to

the archaeological record attributed to the Xiongnu to verify the accuracy of the texts. The synchronic aspect involves compiling the list of names used by Han authors for Xiongnu settlements then analysing these comparatively and contextually to elucidate the structure, proper naming conventions, and connection to the sociocultural and linguistic environments, and to identify different names for the same settlements. The diachronic aspect involves determining the date of each name according to information provided in the texts or inference from general context and then comparing the chronologies and meanings of different names with known Xiongnu history, geography, and archaeology. This allows us to trace changes both in the names for rulers' residences and in the settlements' attributes over time and across regions.

1 Our Sources

The primary source of information is the historical records of the Han Empire: the *Shiji* 史記 (*Records of the Grand Historian*) compiled by Sima Qian 司馬遷 around 91 BC; the *Han Shu* 漢書 (*Book of Han*) compiled by Ban Gu 班固 and others circa AD 82; and the *Hou Han Shu* 後漢書 (*Book of the Later Han*) by Fan Ye 范曄 and others circa AD 445. In these texts, information about settlements is provided only tangentially when the authors describe the territorial and political structure of the nomadic state, its customs, and the most important military or political events, especially Han campaigns against the Xiongnu. The types of settlements are also limited to only those that are significant enough to Han politics, meaning they are typically the locations of rulers' residences, with some infrequent mentions of residences of the nobility and border settlements. Thus, information about site location is usually incomplete, and the localization of most residences remains contested. Generally, none of these sources provide details about the settlement's architectural appearance or the materials and technologies used in its construction, and sources sometimes contradict themselves. For example, the beginning of chapter 110 in the *Shiji* claims that the Xiongnu "move from place to place, following water and grass, [they] have no inner and outer city walls, fixed places to live, nor practices of cultivating fields" (逐水草遷徙，毋城郭常處耕田之業). However, the same chapter of the *Shiji* later mentions two cities and further confirms their existence in chapters 108, 111, and 112. Similar descriptions of the Xiongnu's lack of fixed settlements are given in the *Yan Tie Lun* 鹽鐵論 (*Discussions on salt and iron*) by Huan Kuan 桓寬, which includes details of discussions at the Han court in 81 BC (ch. 52: 503–4): "the Xiongnu have no protection of inner and outer city walls, nor fortification of ditches and moats" (匈奴無城郭

之守，溝池之固)，instead they “use mountains and valleys as inner and outer city walls” (因山谷為城郭); also, “the men do not carve ingenious items, and do not have skills of constructing palace buildings and inner and outer city walls” (男無刻鏤奇巧之事，宮室城郭之功). However, in the same way as the *Shiji*, Chapter 44 of the *Yan Tie Lun* contradicts these statements by mentioning the existence of a city. The situation is further confused by the simultaneous use of several terms, names, and transcriptions to denote settlements.

Archaeology presents another source of information. More than 20 structurally diverse, walled sites, some with palatial remains (which is an obvious indicator of a high-level political power), have been discovered in Mongolia, as well as Transbaikal, and Southern Siberia (Perlee 1957; Kyzlasov 2001; 2006; Turbat 2013; Danilov and Zhavoronkova 1995; Danilov et al. 2016; 2018; Eregzen 2017; Botalov and Battulga 2017; Ankhbayar 2017; Egiimaa 2019; Miller et al. 2019; Iderkhangai et al. 2020). Traditional mobile dwellings are also depicted in Xiongnu art (Miniaev and Sakharovskaia 2007). In contrast to the historical records, the archaeological data comprises settlements of all types. Not only do these have clear geographical locations, but they also provide evidence for construction technologies, materials, and architectural features.

Both forms of evidence offer information about Xiongnu rulers' residences that the other lacks, and an interdisciplinary investigation of the two can provide a deeper understanding of architecture and settlement patterns, as well as the history and culture of the Xiongnu. Some settlements mentioned in the texts have even been identified with archaeological finds in recent years, such as one on the Orkhon River that produced roof tiles marked with the title of the Xiongnu ruler (Iderkhangai 2021). Similarly, a settlement with a Han-style palace in Southern Siberia—previously argued to be the residence of Xiongnu nobles Li Ling 李陵 (Evtyukhova 1946) or Xubu Dang 須卜當 (Zhou 1956), or the impostor emperor Lu Fang 盧芳 (Kovalev 2011)—has been demonstrated to be the northernmost residence of the Xiongnu ruler Zhizhi 郅支 for the period 48–43 BC (Esin 2022a; Miller 2024: 158–159).

2 Terms for the Chanyu's Residence

In the historical records of the Han Dynasty, several Chinese terms are used simultaneously to designate the place where the Xiongnu ruler, the chanyu 單于, resided for long or short periods of time. These include *quluo* 區落, *ying* 營, *ting* 庭, *cheng* 城, *du* 都, and *ci* 祠. Three of these—*ting*, *ci*, and *cheng*—are used in compound names in multiple variations (Table 1), which complicates the picture. We use ‘residence’ as a general term for the variants discussed below.

TABLE 1 The frequencies of compound names for Xiongnu rulers' residences in Han-Dynasty historical records

Compound names Records and elements of names	單	于	北	朔	南	匈奴	虜	龍	龍	趙	鄧	單
	庭	庭	庭	庭	庭	庭	庭	庭	庭	城	城	城
1. <i>Shiji</i>	1								5	2		
2. <i>Han Shu</i>	11				1			8		3	1	2
3. <i>Hou Han Shu</i>	3	13	1	3		3	2	4				
Total in 3 records	15	13	1	3	1	3	2	4	8	5	5	2
Total with <i>ting</i> 庭	38: 1/12/25											
Total with <i>cheng</i> 城	21: 7/14/0											
Total with <i>long</i> 龍/龍	19: 5/8/6											

2.1 *Quluo*

The residence of the founder of the steppe empire—Modu Chanyu 冒頓單于 (r. 209–174 BC)—is called a *quluo* 區落 in chapter 23 of the *Hou Han Shu*, meaning ‘an encampment, a settlement [of non-Chinese tribes]’ (Oshanin 1983–1984, 2: 1259). This implies traditional Xiongnu dwellings made of a light-weight willow frame covered with felt¹ that apparently lacked the folding lattices of later yurts (Vainshtein 1976; Kryukov and Kurylev 2000). The name was transcribed from the Xiongnu language into Chinese as *qionglu* 穹廬 and *qionglü* 穹閭² (*Shiji*, ch. 110: 2913; ch. 27: 1338). These dwellings can be identified in Xiongnu art which provides more details of the design (see section 3.2). The term *quluo* appears in the account in a figurative comparison of two first chanyus’ residences, with the later one dating to the end of the 1st century AD. This comparison was part of a commemorative text compiled by Ban Gu in AD 89 after a successful Han military campaign, during which the chanyu’s residence north of the Gobi was captured and burnt: “thus, [they] passed over Zhuoye [Mountain], crossed the Anhou [River], ascended Yanran [Mountain], trampled the *quluo* of Modu, burnt the *Longting* of Laoshang (r. 174–161 BC)” (遂踰涿邪，跨安侯，乘燕然，躡冒頓之區落，焚老上之龍庭). On the way back into Han territory, the commanders Dou Xian 竇憲 and Geng Bing 耿秉 performed a sacrifice on a mountain, engraving Ban Gu’s text on a rock surface to commemorate their achievements (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 23: 815). The rock inscription was recently discovered by Mongolian researchers (Battulga et al. 2016) on the lower reaches of the Ongi River (Fig. 1.a). The text

1 Its general description is given in the *Yan Tie Lun* (ch. 52: 503): “The woven [twigs of the] willow serve as dwelling, the felt mats serve as roof” (織柳為室，旃蓐為蓋).
2 The meaning of the characters corresponds well to the object they denote: *Qiong* 穹 ‘vaulted’, *lu* 廬 ‘hut’ / *lü* 閭 ‘village’.

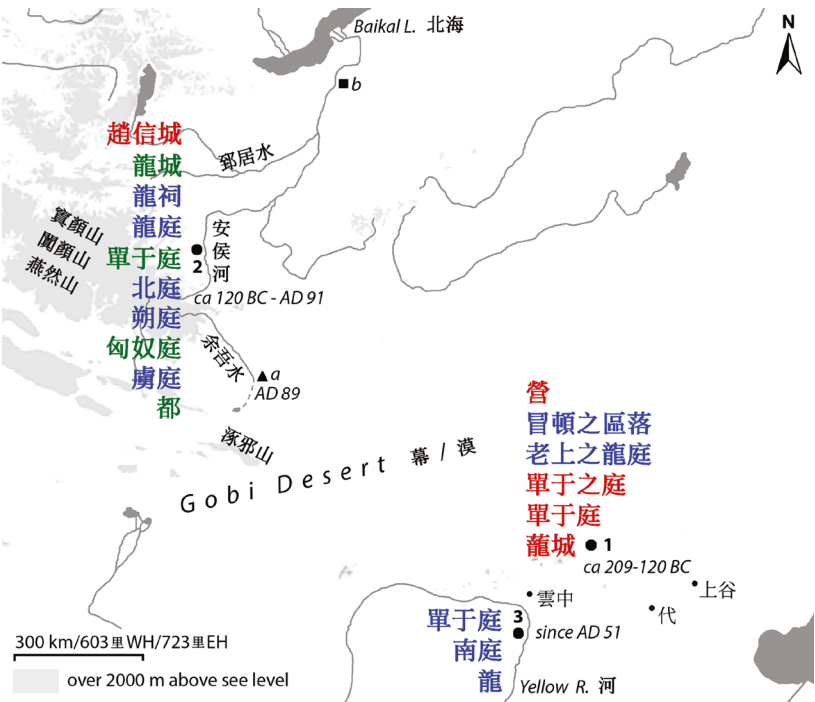


FIGURE 1 (1–3) Locations of the main Xiongnu rulers’ residences, (a) the rock inscription composed by Ban Gu, (b) the Tsaraam cemetery, and probable identification of several toponyms: *Zhiju shui* 鄧居水 for Selenga river; *Anhou he* 安侯河 for Orkhon river; *Yuwu shui* 余吾水 for Ongi river; *Zhuoye shan* 涿邪山 for Gurvan Saikhan mountains; *Tianyan shan* 賀蘭山 / 闐顏山, *Yanran shan* 燕然山 for Khangai mountains. The seats of the Han commanderies, Yunzhong 雲中, Dai 代, and Shanggu 上谷, are also marked. Red – *Shiji*; Green – *Han Shu*; Blue – *Hou Han Shu*

on the rock, however, deviates slightly from that recorded in the *Hou Han Shu* (Qimudedao'erji and Gao 2019). According to the *Han Shu* (ch. 94b: 3803), Modu Chanyu’s place of residence was in the Yin Mountains 陰山.

2.2 Ying

In chapter 110 of the *Shiji*, the place where the chanyu lived is designated with the word *ying* 營, meaning ‘camp’ (Oshanin 1983–1984, 2: 2361). The text states that “in the morning, the chanyu comes out of camp [and] pays obeisance to the rising sun, in the evening [he] pays obeisance to the moon” (而單于朝出營，拜日之始生，夕拜月; *Shiji*, ch. 110: 2892). The contexts in which this word is used in Han records indicate that the camp was most likely military in nature. A variant of such a camp is described during the Han campaign



FIGURE 2 A birch bark box decorated with a depiction of the mobile residence of a high-ranking Xiongnu noble from Tsaraam cemetery. The biggest *qionglu* of the highest status (d) sits at the centre of several smaller *qionglu* (c, e) and covered carts (a, b, f) with flags (1). After Miniaev and Sakharovskaia (2007: fig. 11)

against the Xiongnu in 119 BC: “And then the General-in-chief ordered covered war chariots to be placed in a ring to make a camp” (於是大將軍令武剛車自環為營; *Shiji*, ch. 111: 2935). The same camp arrangement is described in the *Han Shu*, when the Han commander Li Ling 李陵 established a military camp in Xiongnu lands in the autumn of 99 BC by arranging large, wheeled carts to form a camp: “by means of large wheeled carts [he] made a camp” (以大車為營; *Han Shu*, ch. 54: 2452).

The method of arranging carts to form a defensive structure was also utilised by the Xiongnu. A noble's residence protected by carts in front of the *qionglu* is depicted on a vessel from an elite Xiongnu burial in the Tsaraam Valley, Transbaikial, dating to the end of the 1st century BC–1st century AD (Fig. 2). The excavators suggest that this was the grave of the chanyu or one of his close relatives (Miniaev and Sakharovskaia 2007: 50). Due to its geographical location in the lands of the Dingling (Esin 2022a: 34–5, fig. 9), it could be the grave of the King of Dingling (*Dingling wang* 丁靈王). The design on the vessel may show either his own camp or that of the chanyu.

It is possible that this type of camp used by some Han military leaders was an adaptation of nomadic warfare tactics, as seen in other aspects of military operations against the Xiongnu (Di Cosmo 2002: 273). Unfortunately, the spatial and chronological usage of the word *ying* as a chanyu's residence is not defined in the *Shiji*. The general context indicates that the term *ying* was used to denote the ruler's residence in the early period of Xiongnu history. However, mobile types of residence undoubtedly existed throughout Xiongnu history to accommodate the ruler and aristocracy during military campaigns and other trips. The same practice was true for the Han.

2.3 *Ting*

The place where the chanyu lived is most often designated with the character *ting* 庭 in Han accounts, and the most typical compound name with this term is *Chanyu ting* 單于庭 (Table 1). After the division of the Xiongnu into northern and southern factions in the middle of the 1st century AD, further specification was briefly given with *Bei ting* 北庭 or alternatively *Shuo ting* 朔庭 for the Northern Chanyu (*Bei chanyu* 北單于) and *Nan ting* 南庭 for the Southern Chanyu (*Nan chanyu* 南單于). Sometimes *ting* is combined with the name of the people themselves, *Xiongnu ting* 匈奴庭, or with the derogatory term *lu* 虜 ([northern] barbarian) to create *Lu ting* 虜庭.

According to the *Shuowen jiezi* 說文解字, a dictionary compiled in the Eastern Han period (AD 25–220), the word *ting* refers to the inner part of a palace (*Shuowen jiezi zhu*, 443). In the context of Han culture, *ting* is typically translated as ‘court’, as in the case of *Han ting* 漢庭 to mean the ‘Han court’ (*Han Shu*, ch. 94b: 3832; Taskin 1973: 66). Thus, the royal family and councilors, constituting a ruling power, were designated via their association with a palace by lexical semantic change. However, many publications translate *ting* as ‘headquarters’ or ‘encampment’ for Xiongnu contexts, which suggests that a nomadic ruler’s residence was more likely to be impermanent and consist of a yurt or tent rather than a fixed palatial structure (Bichurin 1950: 49; Kychanov 1997: 11–2). Even scholars who use ‘court’ assume that the structure was “presumably, a mobile encampment” (De Crespigny 1984: 507). A similar concept based on theories of the spatial politics of nomadic states in the eastern steppe understands the nomadic court as a group of elites that moved constantly from place to place (Honeychurch 2015: 311). Han writers evidently viewed the *Chanyu ting* quite differently from how modern researchers do—although they used the word *ting* to demonstrate a settlement’s political function, for them it was inextricably linked to a palace. But how does this fact compare with descriptions of the geographical location and other contexts of the word itself, as well as with archaeological data on Xiongnu settlements?

Across different periods of Xiongnu history, the geographical location of the *ting* varied greatly. Conversely, however, within these periods, the location was stable. In the *Shiji*, there is one definite description that relates to the 2nd century BC: “The court of the Chanyu is located opposite [i.e. to the north of] the Dai and Yunzhong [commanderies]” (單于之庭直代、雲中; *Shiji*, ch. 110: 2891). Thus, the court is described as lying northeast of the Ordos Loop in the Yellow River and south of the Gobi (Fig. 1.1). This place corresponds to the Yin Mountains, in which Modu Chanyu lived and no doubt his successors continued to live for several decades, but which were lost to the Xiongnu during

the reign of Yizhixie Chanyu 伊稚斜單于 (r. 126–114 BC) due to increased Han military pressure (*Han Shu*, ch. 94b: 3803).

From the end of the 2nd century BC, the chanyus' residence is described as lying to the north of the Gobi on the Orkhon River, which the *Han Shu* calls the 'Anhou River' (*Anhou he* 安侯河; Yu and Li 2014: 489). This relocation occurred around 121–120 BC, after Zici King 自次王, formerly Zhao Xin 趙信, Marquis of Xi 翕侯 in the Han, presented his plan to "reside north of the desert" (*ju mu bei* 居幕北) to Yizhixie, assuming the region to be beyond the reach of Han troops (*Shiji*, ch. 110: 2910), and Han records initially called the new residence *Zhao Xin cheng* 趙信城. Details on the routes to the Orkhon *ting* and surrounding toponyms have been preserved in several Han military accounts, especially those headed by Li Guangli 李廣利 (*Han Shu*, ch. 94a) and Dou Xian (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 23). The remains of a chanyu's residence were recently discovered on the Orkhon River at Kharganyn Dörvölzhin (Iderkhangai et al. 2020); its location corresponds with the description of the *Chanyu ting* north of the Gobi Desert (Fig. 1.2).

After the division of the Xiongnu into northern and southern states in the mid-1st century AD, the Orkhon *ting* remained in the hands of the northern faction but was destroyed in AD 89–91 during hostilities with the Han. Meanwhile, the Southern Chanyu established his *ting* near a bend of the Yellow River. According to the *Hou Han Shu* (ch. 89: 2943 and 2945), in AD 50 the Guangwu Emperor (r. AD 25–57) ordered the *ting* be established 80 li from the western part of the frontier (*xibu sai* 西部塞) in Wuyuan 五原 Commandery, potentially on the same place as where the earlier residence of Huhanye 呼韓邪 Chanyu (r. 58–31 BC) had existed in 52–42 BC. Soon after, the Emperor gave permission for the Southern Chanyu to live in Yunzhong Commandery, then, in AD 51, he ordered the *ting* be moved to Meiji 美稷 County in Xihe 西河 Commandery (Fig. 1.3). These residences of the Southern Chanyu, in addition to those of the first chanyus prior to the move to the Orkhon, still await discovery.

Though the Han sources suggest that the chanyus' residences *ting* were more geospatially fixed and permanent than the modern theories argue, this does not preclude the use of traditional nomadic dwellings there. The *Shiji* (ch. 110: 2913) records that the Wuwei Chanyu 烏維單于 (r. 114–105 BC) hosted formal diplomatic receptions in a *qionglu*. This, however, does not mean there were no long-term constructions at the Wuwei Chanyu's residence, as yurt-like structures could have been used alongside other types. An entry in the *Hou Han Shu* for the summer of AD 47, for example, mentions that an official meeting of Xiongnu chiefs took place in the Chanyu's tent (*Chanyu zhang* 單于帳) during a traditional seasonal gathering at the *ting* (ch. 89: 2942).

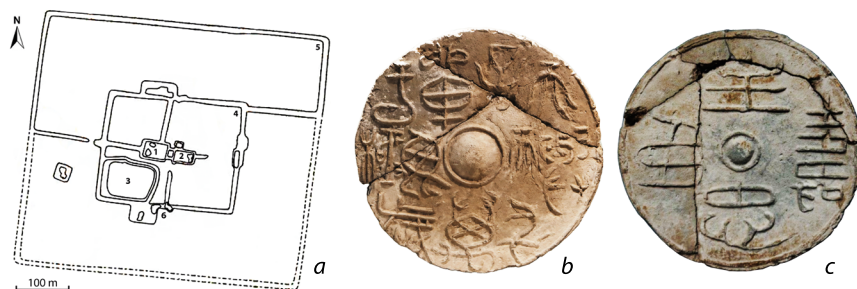


FIGURE 3 (a) Plan of the Kharganyin Dörvölzhin walled site on the Orkhon river, 1 and 2: main palaces; 3: pond; 4: inner palace wall; 5: outer wall; 6: southern gate of the inner palace wall. (b) The main type of a roof tile finial (diameter – 17.5 cm) with moulded inscription with the title *Tianzi Chanyu* 天子單于 ‘Son of Heaven Chanyu’, and (c) less common type with word *zhu* 主 ‘ruler’. After Iderkhangai (2021; 2023)

Archaeological materials support the interpretation of *ting* as relating to a palatial structure, with Han-style palaces appearing in the steppe at a certain point. The Orkhon River residence is a prime example of this, with two main, south-facing palaces (Figs 3.a.1 and 3.a.2) and a large pond (Fig. 3.a.3) in the central part. These are enclosed by an earthen wall forming a rectangle with dimensions 250×210 m (Fig. 3.a.4) set with gates. The entire complex has an earthen outer wall with a perimeter of approx. 550×550 m (Fig. 3.a.5; Iderkhangai et al. 2020; Iderkhangai 2023). In addition to the extant, long-term structures, there is plentiful space to pitch yurts both within and without the central enclosure. The Han influence on the structure is clearly demonstrated by the construction materials used for the roof and inscriptions on it. The majority of finials of the roof tiles (*wadang* 瓦當) are decorated with moulding in small seal script auspicious characters: 天子單于千萬歲與天毋極 “To the Son of Heaven Chanyu—a thousand and ten thousand years, together with Heaven having no limit” (Fig. 3.b). *Wadang* of a later type (Fig. 3.c) without this elevated title (“To the ruler—longevity and loyalty of officials” 主壽臣忠) were discovered on the southern gate of the inner wall, which reflects the long-term use of the residence and its alteration.

Complicating the concept of *ting* as exclusively the chanyu’s residence is the fact that the same historical records use the term for residences of the highest echelons of Xiongnu aristocracy. Chapter 110 of the *Shiji* includes references to the *ting* of the Xiongnu kings (*wang ting* 王庭), and chapter 94a of the *Han Shu* mentions the *ting* of the Luli King of the Right (*You luli ting* 右谷蠡庭). The import of these residences is attested by palatial ruins at several sites outside the Upper Orkhon, especially in Eastern Mongolia (Miller et al. 2019;

fig. 1) in the territory of the Empire's most powerful kings of the Left. Similarly, a heavily fortified residence (with palatial building, inner (55 m side length) and outer (119 m side length) earthen walls, wooden wall, ditch, gates) has been found in the Lower Selenge Basin—Bayan Under (Danilov 2004: 37–8; Bessonova et al. 2020)—which could have belonged to the King of Dingling.

The earliest, narrowly-dated example of *ting* being used in relation to the Xiongnu in the *Shiji* relates to an incident in 124 BC, when the court of the Worthy King of the Right (*You xian wang ting* 右賢王庭) was seized (ch. 111: 2926), and slightly later in 119 BC when the Xiongnu were defeated: “After that, the Xiongnu fled far away, and there were no kings’ courts left south of the desert” (是後匈奴遠遁，而幕南無王庭; ch. 110: 2911). The *Hou Han Shu* also uses *ting* for the Laoshang Chanyu’s residence (see section 3.1).

2.4 *Cheng*

The word *cheng* 城, which in Chinese characterises a city wall and a city (Oshanin 1983–1984, 4: 11727; Schuessler 2007: 185; Falkenhausen 2008), is also used by Han authors in relation to the Xiongnu, commonly in the *Shiji* and *Han Shu* (Table 1). It is found in several names of Xiongnu settlements from the second half of the 2nd century BC³ and during the 1st century BC.

The most thorough data on the architecture and layout of the *cheng* settlement is provided in chapter 70 of the *Han Shu*, specifically in the description of the fortified residence of Zhizhi Chanyu 郅支單于 (r. 56–36 BC) known as *Zhizhi cheng* 郅支城 (Zhizhi’s City) or *Chanyu cheng* 單于城 (Chanyu’s City) built on the Kangju 康居 Kingdom’s border circa 40 BC. The residence was targeted as part of a military campaign headed by Gan Yanshou 甘延壽 and Chen Tang 陳湯 in 36 BC and was reportedly built on the orders of Zhizhi Chanyu himself, so the layout and structure should have followed the main construction principles in Xiongnu architecture, though it could have had more substantial defensive structures than most walled sites within Xiongnu territory.

The city was protected by an earth/clay wall (*tu cheng* 土城), which was most likely quadrangular, since the Han army surrounded the city on four sides and this would be similar to other fortified settlements discovered on the Mongolian Plateau. Along the outer perimeter ran a reinforced, wooden

3 The *Shiji*, ch. 93 also mentions *Tuidangcheng* 犢當城 in the context related to 200 BC. This *cheng* was located somewhere in Xiongnu lands and is mentioned as the place where the younger son of Xin, King of Han (*Han Wang Xin* 韓王信) was born. Unfortunately, excepting the name there is no other information on this city. Considering the meaning of the character *tui* 犢 (ruined; dilapidated), this is possibly some old city that came under the control of the Xiongnu.

wall (*chong mu cheng* 重木城) surrounded by a ditch (*qian* 塹) and set with city gates (*cheng men* 城門). Wooden towers (*lou* 樓) for archers to defend the approach to the settlement were positioned outside the earth walls but behind the wooden wall.

When Han soldiers broke through the earth wall, more than 100 defenders retreated to the ruler's palace (*danei* 大內), which became the last line of defence. In the Han Dynasty, *danei* was used as an alternative to *gong* 宮 to denote a palace, and it designated a complex of multiple buildings within a self-contained wall. *Danei* in Zhizhi's City probably referred to one or several palace buildings within the city walls separated from the rest of the city by another wall, as seen in Xiongnu settlements on the Orkhon and Abakan rivers.

The *Han Shu* records that, "[he] sent the people to build the city, 500 persons worked every day; therefore, it was finished in two years" (發民作城，日作五百人，二歲乃已; *Han Shu*, ch. 70: 3009). After the city fell to siege in 36 BC, a total of 1,518 people were killed, 145 armed combatants were captured, and over 1,000 people surrendered, suggesting that Zhizhi's City was built and defended by about 3,000 people. This number corresponds approximately to the reported size of the detachment that accompanied Zhizhi to Kangju, which will have constituted the body of the city's population and lived within the earth wall near the *danei*. The Chanyu, his wives, and concubines would have numbered several dozen in total, and they would have lived in the *danei* along with close relatives and servants.

The structural components, materials and methods, construction time, and size of the labour force described could be relevant to other Xiongnu walled settlements in the 2nd–1st centuries BC. This is demonstrated both by archaeological sites and by another part of the *Han Shu* describing the activities of the Han defector Wei Lü 衛律 circa 84–81 BC, who designed several Xiongnu settlements surrounded with walls of rammed earth (*zhu cheng* 築城)—a typical Han technology—and outfitted with wells (*jing* 井), grain stores (*cang gu* 藏穀), and similar towers (*lou* 樓) to defend against attacks by the Han. Though the *Han Shu* mentions that several hundred wells were dug, and several thousand trees cut down for timber, Wei Lü's plans were not implemented fully (*Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3782). The main reasons for that were the Xiongnu's fears that they would not be able to defend the cities, and that grain stores might become easy loot for the Han army. Such a case occurred in 119 BC, when Han troops captured *Zhao Xin cheng*, where large millet (*su* 粟) reserves were also stored (*Shiji*, ch. 111: 2935). There is no description of how they were stored but probably in deep pits (*da jiao* 大窖) lined with felt (*zhan mao* 旃毛), one of which was mentioned in the residence of Qiedihou Chanyu 且鞮侯單于 (r. 101–96 BC)—apparently, the former *Zhao Xin cheng*. The empty pit was used

to imprison the Han ambassador Su Wu 蘇武,⁴ who was suspected of involvement in the attempted kidnapping of the Chanyu's mother and murder of Wei Lü (*Han Shu*, ch. 54: 2462–3).

Besides the architecture, another important feature of Zhizhi's City were the five-colour flags (*wucai fanzhi* 五采幡織) hung from the walls that could be seen from up to 3 *li* away (*Han Shu*, ch. 70: 3013). The 'turban' radical in *fan* 幡 and the 'silk' radical in *zhi* 織 indicate that *fanzhi* were long pieces of silk cloth. Similar to the clan-emblems and titles stamped into eaves tiles at Xiongnu settlements (Fig. 3.b), flags played an important function in communication. Flying flags from the ruler's or nobles' residences is attested by the image of a mobile residence carved on a vessel from an elite Xiongnu burial in the Tsaraam Valley. Long, narrow flags presumably made from cloth are mounted on two covered carts (Fig. 3.a1 and b1), apparently flanking a guarded gate for passage to the largest yurt in the camp (Fig. 3.d),⁵ with a smaller yurt for servants or personal guards nearby (Fig. 3.c).

The colours on Zhizhi's flags are notable, since chapter 7 of the *Shiji* interprets the combination of five colours (*wucai* 五采)—traditionally black, red, blue, white, and yellow—as the symbol of the Son of Heaven, i.e. the Han emperor. Other records similarly record that the five-colour flag distinguished the emperor's chariot following Zhou ceremonial rites (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 119). In the concept of the five elements, the five primary colours each correspond to part of the earthly world, and their combination symbolised power over all lands. Not only did Zhizhi's flags have the five colours, but the tiles of his residence on the Abakan River were stamped with the title *Tianzi* 天子 (Son of Heaven) (Esin 2021; 2022a).

2.4.1 *Longcheng* and the problem of the word *long*

The most common compound name with a *cheng* component is *Longcheng* 龍城/龍城, which appears five times in the *Shiji* and eight in the *Han Shu*, and thus, deserves special attention. The first time it appears in a clearly dateable context as a designation for an apparent centre of Xiongnu power which was the target of an attack by the commander Wei Qing 衛青 (d. 106 BC) launched from Shanggu 上谷 Commandery in 129 BC (*Shiji*, chps 108 and 110–112). The description of the city's location corresponds to another chanyus' residence

4 A similar interpretation of this pit as a former grain store, but without explanation, was given by Yan Shigu 顏師古 (AD 581–645) (*Han Shu*, ch. 54: 2463).

5 The use of two flags at once coincides with a Chinese rule recorded in chapter 6 of the 5th–4th-century BC *Guoyu* 國語 (*Discourses of the Kingdoms*) stipulating two flags (*pei* 旆) be hung from the gate of military camps (*Guoyu*: 121).

that are known to lie “opposite [i.e. to the north of] the Dai and Yunzhong” and are designated elsewhere in the *Shiji* as *ting* (Fig. 1.1). The records of the *Han Shu* also use *Longcheng* to denote the settlement once the Xiongnu had relocated north of the desert (Fig. 1.2).

Longcheng is written with two variants: *Longcheng* 龍城 is used throughout the *Shiji*, while *Longcheng* 龍城 is used throughout the *Han Shu* and the *Yan Tie Lun* (ch. 44: 454). The characters for *long* in both cases are identical phonetically, but the former has a ‘grass’ radical. There are two explanations for the meaning of *long*.

The first is that it may be the Chinese transcription of a Xiongnu name for the settlement (De Groot 1921: 59; Pulleybank 1962: 241). According to De Groot (1921: 59 and 166) it could originate from a place name in Central Mongolia associated with the name of the Ongi River. The main problems with his hypothesis are that the original *Longcheng* was not located in Central Mongolia, and that the name given for the Ongi in the *Shiji* (chps 110, 111, and 126) and the *Han Shu* (ch. 94a) is *Yuwu shui* 余吾水.⁶ An alternative idea, since the established reading of both characters for *long* in the Han Dynasty was **ron*, is that it was used to transcribe the Proto-Turkic **orun*, meaning a ‘throne, headquarters’ (Dybo 2007: 84 and 114). Though it was previously suggested that the Xiongnu language was ‘Palaeo-Asiatic’ (Yeniseian) in origin (Pulleyblank 1962; Vovin 2000; Vovin et al. 2016), recent studies in historical linguistics and population genetics have effectively ruled this out and instead supported the alternative hypothesis that most Xiongnu words reported in Chinese records relate to Late Proto-Turkic, though some other words (almost entirely terms for dairy products and some titles) were of Eastern Iranian origin (Dybo 2007; Janhunen 2010: 294; Savelyev and Jeong 2020; Robbeets et al. 2020). Thus, *long* can be considered to refer specifically to a ruler’s residence in the Xiongnu language.

An alternative explanation is that *long* is a Han translation or adaptation of a Xiongnu name, a theory first put forward by Cui Hao 崔浩 (AD 381–450) in the 5th century AD (Rosthorn 1923; Kyuner 1961: 74; Ishjams 1994: 154; Vyatkin et al. 2002: 445; Batsuren 2013: 127). Since *long* 龍 means ‘dragon’ (Oshanin 1983–1984, 4: 12272), *Longcheng* would mean Dragon City. While this interpretation is very popular among historians and archaeologists, including Iderkhangai (2021: 184), no data in Han records on cults and ideologies support the idea that the dragon was significant to the Xiongnu. Among archaeological materials, there are images of dragons and snakes on bronze belt buckles from Xiongnu burials, but there are just as many other animals represented on other

6 This identification is supported both by the geographical context in the records and by the ancient phonetic forms of the characters (see Baxter & Sagart 2014).

buckles from the same burial grounds, as well as objects excavated from graves belonging to the Xiongnu nobility, which does not support a predilection for dragons (Kilunovskaia and Leus 2020). Kyzlasov (2006: 145) also interprets 'dragon' from a Han cultural perspective as the emperor's symbol, suggesting that *Longcheng* means 'the city of the emperor', with 'emperor' here suggested to refer to the chanyu.

The most compelling argument against the dragon etymology of the city's name, however, is that the character used for *long* in the *Shiji* has a grass radical, which gives it a completely different meaning. Some translate it as 'water weed' (Nienhauser 2010: note 174—'Water-weed City') or interpret it as lush vegetation (Matsushita 2023: 65—'Steppe City'), while others assume the character meant 'a cover, to cover', which could suggest a 'burial mound' or a 'barrow' (Vyatkin et al. 2002: 445). However, the fact that the name *Longcheng* is used repeatedly despite changes in the city's geographical location suggests that the character may relate more to the function of the city than any of these options. Another meaning is 'to crowd, to gather' (Oshanin 1983–1984, 4: 12293), which fits more closely with the city's function. This is particularly the case as *Longcheng* is constantly emphasised in the historical records as the venue for regular gatherings where the Xiongnu would conduct sacrifices and discuss state matters. The *Shiji* describes three gatherings per year:

歲正月，諸長小會單于庭，祠。五月，大會龍城，祭其先、天地、鬼神。秋，馬肥，大會蹕林，課校人畜計。

On the first moon every year, there is a small gathering of chiefs at the *Chanyu ting*, [they] perform sacrifices. On the fifth moon, there is a big gathering at *Longcheng*, [they] make sacrifices to the ancestors, Heaven, Earth, and the spirits. In the autumn, when horses are fattened, there is a big gathering at *Dailin*, [they] count and verify the number of men and livestock (*Shiji*, ch. 110: 2892).

Thus, it is very likely that *Longcheng* denotes a walled city with a ruler's residence, and that the character was chosen to reproduce the phonetics of a foreign word in the Han records, while emphasising that big gatherings took place there.

The difference between *Chanyu ting* and *Longcheng* in the given quotation is also noteworthy. In this case, *Longcheng* would be the bigger summer residence (the fifth month corresponds approximately to June in the modern calendar) and *Chanyu ting*—the smaller winter one, which would be consistent with the traditional way of nomad life. A similar practice, for example, is known among the Uyghurs and Kyrgyz during the Early Middle Ages: the

rulers' smaller winter residences were located about 60 and 90 km respectively from the cities where they spent the summer (de La Vaissiere 2024; Esin 2022b: 87).

In the late 2nd century BC, the Han court seemed to consider *Longcheng* to be the Xiongnu's main, permanent political centre, and Wei Qing's military force headed there in the autumn not the summer. In another fragment of the *Shiji*, however, the Xiongnu's main political centre is called the "Court of the Chanyu" (*Chanyu zhi ting* 單于之庭; *Shiji*, ch. 110: 2891). As different parts of the *Shiji* were composed on the basis of different primary reports from different periods, the *long* settlement may have been referred to as both *ting* and *cheng*, reflecting different aspects of the settlement—specifically its political function and form. The most obvious example of this is the use of the name *Longting* in chapter 23 of the *Hou Han Shu* (Table 1). In the earlier *Han Shu* (ch. 94a), both names can be interpreted as synonyms when describing political events in the 80s BC, with one relative of the chanyu refusing to participate in "gatherings at *Chanyu ting*" (*hui Chanyu ting* 會單于庭) and two others refusing to participate in "gatherings at *Longcheng*" (*hui Longcheng* 會龍城), resulting in the total cessation of visits to the ruler's residence by both sets of nobles.

In the *Hou Han Shu* (ch. 89: 2942), all annual gatherings in the AD 40s were called "court gatherings" (*ting hui* 庭會), showing that *ting* completely supplanted *cheng* to indicate the Xiongnu ruler's headquarters. All annual gatherings at the residence of the Southern Chanyu by AD 93–94 were called "*long* gatherings" (*long hui* 龍會; *Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2954), showing a significant degree of equivalence between the Chinese word *ting* and the Xiongnu word *long*. In this example, *long* is clearly the Xiongnu's own term for their political centre. Both combinations are close to the traditional Han designation for the "[emperor's] court gatherings" (*chao hui* 朝會), a term that was also employed for the Xiongnu—"court gatherings of the Xiongnu" (*chao hui Xiongnu* 朝會匈奴; *Shiji*, ch. 123: 3168)—revealing similarities between *long* and the Chinese word *chao*.

The last mention of *Longcheng* appears in relation to the death of Xulüquanqu Chanyu 虛閭權渠單于 (r. 68–60 BC), who passed a few days after the gathering in 60 BC. A short time later, a new ruler, Woyanqudi Chanyu 握衍胸鞬單于 (r. 60–58 BC), was proclaimed at *Longcheng* (*Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3789). The wife (*yanzhi* 閼氏) of a previous chanyu, Huyandi Chanyu 壹衍鞬單于 (r. 85–68 BC), reportedly played a key role in the proclamation, and unlike the noblemen of the right and left wings of state, she did not leave *Longcheng* after the gathering, suggesting that *Longcheng* was her permanent residence where she became adept at wielding influence in the Xiongnu court.

Since the *Shiji* and *Han Shu* localize *Longcheng* in different places and even describe the Xiongnu as a nomadic people without cities or constant

residences (*Shiji*, ch. 110: 2879), some researchers have concluded that *Longcheng* was not a fixed city but simply the name of a specific geographic location (Wang 1983: 143). For example, it has been described as “*Lung-Cheng*, ‘The Dragon Site’, the nomadic tribal encampment and headquarters of the Hsiung-nu shan-yu” (Ishjamts 1994: 154), or “the sacred site” (Di Cosmo 2002: 237; De Crespigny 2007: 171). Following the same idea other researchers avoid *Longcheng* when discussing settlements of the Xiongnu (Kradin et al. 2020; Vasyutin 2022). This, however, contradicts the meaning of the component *cheng* which well corresponds to the walls around many archaeological sites attributed to the Xiongnu including the residence of their rulers on the Orkhon River, as well as the walls that are noted in detailed descriptions (see above) of Zhizhi Chanyu’s last residence on the Talas River, captured by the Han troops in 36 BC (*Han Shu*, ch. 70: 3013–4).

2.5 *Du*

When describing the Xiongnu civil war in the middle of the 1st century BC, the *Han Shu* refers to the new political centres several times as *du* 都. During the Han Dynasty, this designated the main, capital city where the residence of a state’s ruler was located. The ancestors’ temple where the ruler made sacrifices was also an important part of a *du*. If there was no such temple, then the city was called *yi* 邑 (*Shuowen jiezi zhu*, 283). The word ‘capital’ was used for the residences of two competing chanyus after the Xiongnu split into separate factions:

遂復都單于庭。

After that [Huhanye] restored [his] capital to *Chanyu ting* (*Han Shu*, ch. 94b: 3796).

呼韓邪破，其兵走，郅支都單于庭。

Huhanye was defeated, his warriors fled, Zhizhi relocated [his] capital to *Chanyu ting* (*Han Shu*, ch. 94b: 3796).

These examples show that *Chanyu ting* for the Han author denoted not one or another elite group but rather a certain place, which was considered the permanent, fixed political centre of the entire Xiongnu state. It can be identified with the walled palace site of Kharganyñ Dörvölzhin (Fig. 3).

Around 49 BC, Zhizhi Chanyu left *Chanyu ting* and soon founded a new *du* in the Jiankun 堅昆 Kingdom (*Han Shu*, ch. 70: 3008; ch. 94b: 3800). As in previous cases, use of *du* for this new political centre helped the Han authors

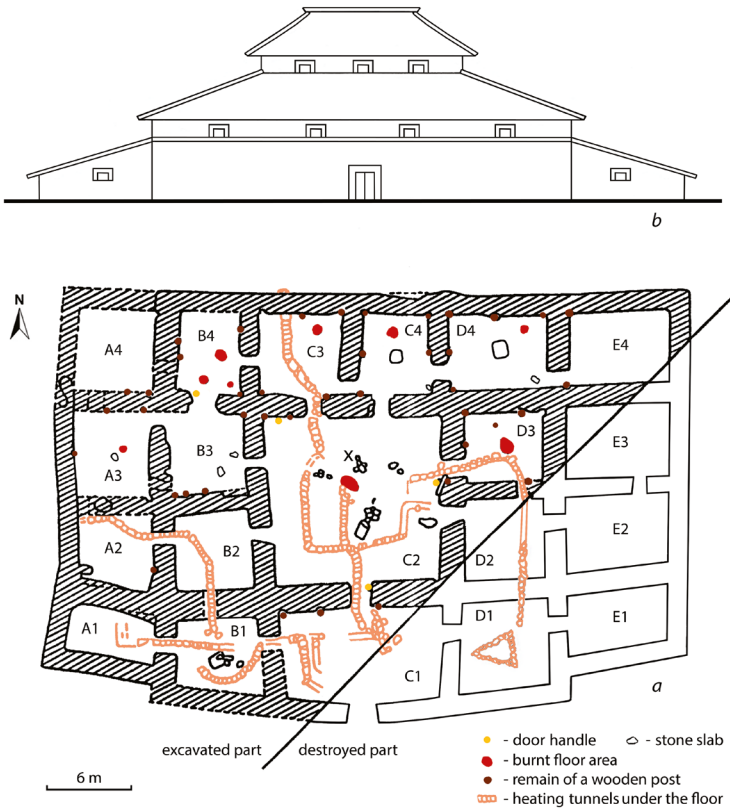


FIGURE 4 (a) Plan of the Abakan Palace based on documentation of the excavated area in 1940–46 (see Evtyukhova 1947 and Kyzlasov 2001) and (b) reconstruction of the front view. Probable function of the rooms: C1 – entrance hall; C2 – hall for receptions, gatherings, and various ceremonies (X – place for the ruler); A1, B1, D1, E1 – rooms for heating system operation, for servants and guards; C4, D4 – rooms for cooking; D3 – private room of the ruler.

distinguish it from the residence on the Orkhon River, though in one case this new residence of Zhizhi is also referred to as a *ting* (*Han Shu*, ch. 70: 3009). The new *du* has now been identified with the remains of settlement and a Han-style palace (Fig. 4) excavated on the Abakan River in Southern Siberia (Esin 2022a).

2.6 *Ci*

One more designation, *Longci* 龍祠, is used in chapter 89 of the *Hou Han Shu*. Here, the second character *ci* 祠, similar to the structure of the compound names *Longcheng* and *Longting*, is a Chinese word. A meaning of *ci* is 'to make a sacrifice; a temple' (Oshanin 1983–1984, 3: 5555); therefore, the word emphasises collective sacrifices at the ruler's residence (*long*) specifically.

Ci has two possible semantic emphases, the first of which is placed on the physical place where sacrifices were conducted. The majority of researchers favour the interpretation that *Longci* denotes a specific place, thus some translations of the *Hou Han Shu* have even replaced *Longci* with *Longcheng* to show continuity with the *Shiji* and *Han Shu* (Taskin 1973: 70 and 82; De Crespigny 1984: 271; 2007: 16). Alternatively, it has also been translated as 'altar' (Taskin 1973: 98), which likewise places the emphasis on location rather than action. An example supporting the emphasis on place reads:

究掩其窟穴，躡北追奔三千餘里，遂破龍祠，焚罽幕，阬十角，梏閼氏。

launched a surprise attack on their lair, followed them north, chasing across more than 3000 li, completely destroyed *Longci*, burnt woolen tents down, buried the 10 Horns⁷ alive, [and] shackled the Yanzhi (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2967).

This example relates to the Northern Xiongnu and describes the successful campaign of the Han army and its allies to the north of the Gobi in AD 89. The use of *Longci* here parallels the use of *Longting* in chapter 23 of the *Hou Han Shu* when describing the same campaign, meaning that at least in this case the two names were used interchangeably to denote the same place. The verb used to describe what happened to *Longci* (contrasting to the woolen tents) indicates the presence of permanent structures. The capture of the Yanzhi here is also noteworthy, since the *Han Shu*, describing events in 60 BC, mentioned the Yanzhi living in *Longcheng*.

Alternatively, another meaning of *ci* is that, as opposed to the physical place where sacrifices were conducted, it emphasises the act of making sacrifices. Examples include the below:

7 'Horns' refers to the 10 highest military leaders of the Xiongnu.

匈奴俗，歲有三龍祠，常以正月、五月、九月戊日祭天神。

According to Xiongnu customs, three *longci* take place every year: constantly on the *wu* day of the first, fifth, and ninth moons, [they] make sacrifices to Heaven and the spirits (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2944).

已勅諸部嚴兵馬，訖九月龍祠，悉集河上。

[I] have already ordered all divisions to prepare warriors and horses and by the *longci* of the ninth moon gather in entirety at the river [Yellow River] (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2952).

兩骨都侯頗覺其意，會五月龍祠，因白單于，言奠韃日逐夙來欲為不善，若不誅，且亂國。

Both *guduhou* fully perceived his intentions, and [when] gathering for the *longci* of the fifth moon, reported to the Chanyu, saying that *Yujian rizhu* had had long-standing improper desires, and if [he] were not executed, [he] would throw the nation into disorder (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2942).

The two first examples use *longci* in relation to events concerning the territory of the southern Xiongnu; the second one is from the Southern Chanyu's letter of AD 88 about preparations for the joint campaign with the Han against the northern Xiongnu. The last event took place in AD 47 and the description corresponds to the annual gatherings at *Chanyu ting* on the Orkhon River. In these examples, *longci* designates the main state ritual ('*long* sacrifices') involving the chanyu as opposed to the chanyu's residence itself.

3 *Dailin* and *outuo*

Besides *Longcheng*, another major gathering mentioned in the *Shiji* took place at *Dailin* 蹕林, which was apparently located near the Chanyus' residence in the Yin Mountains. According to Fu Qian's 服虔 (fl. late 2nd century AD) commentary on an account of the same event in the *Han Shu* (ch. 94a), it was held during the eighth moon. *Dailin* has been suggested to be another city (Psarras 2003: 125) and possibly even the winter capital of the Xiongnu (Kyzlasov 2006: 145). However, it is more likely that *Dailin* was the name of a geographical feature, as *dai* 蹕 means 'to surround, around' and *lin* 林

means 'a forest', making it highly likely that this was the name of a forest (Watson 1993: 137; Kychanov 1997: 33). This is supported by chapter 2 of the *Liao Shi* 遼史 (*History of the Liao*), which mentions that, many centuries after the disappearance of the Xiongnu Empire, Emperor Taizu 太祖 of Liao (r. 907–926) "paid obeisance to the Sun in *Dailin*" (拜日於蹕林) near the former residence of the Xiongnu chanyus on the Orkhon River (Dmitriev 2009: 85). This toponym perhaps appears on the Orkhon after the Chanyu's residence was relocated north of the desert, which also caused a change in the locations of the three main state rituals.

The same toponym is, however, also seen in other areas (Malyavkin 1981: 145), indicating that this ritual was not exclusively the prerogative of the ruler but also performed at the local level in different parts of the nomads' lands. The name *Dailin* in this case may originate from the ritual known as *dai*. In chapter 94a of the *Han Shu*, Yan Shigu comments that the Xianbei 鮮卑 continued this autumn ritual, during which they rode horses rapidly three times around a forest or a ritual object constructed from upright branches (Kyuner 1961: 310; De Crespigny 1984: 508). A similar ritual is documented among the High Carts (*Gao che* 高車), a people descended from the Dingling. In the autumn, when the horses became fat, the High Carts rode their horses several times as a group around an altar on which many willow branches were placed vertically (*Bei Shi*, ch. 98: 3271).⁸

Researchers have typically viewed the autumn gatherings as an event related to taxation and therefore significant to the Xiongnu economy (Kychanov 1997: 33; Kyzlasov 2006: 145). However, well-fed, healthy horses and skilled riders will have been key to successful military campaigns, so such an event was a way for the chanyu, as well as other, lower-ranking chiefs of the polity, to assess available forces, as suggested by the Southern Chanyu's letter of AD 88 quoted above in which he orders horses and warriors from all parts of his domain to attend the autumn sacrifice in preparation for a military campaign (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2952).⁹

8 The description in the *Bei Shi* also mentions several other elements of the High Carts autumn ritual: the sacrifice of a black ram and white curdled milk, the lighting of a fire, the drawing of swords, and incantations for purification by a female shaman.

9 A similar ritual with a visible military aspect involving armed, combat-age men and their horses is still practised among herders in eastern Tibet. One of the authors observed this practice in August 2018 near Saikang Monastery on the upper reaches of the Yangtze River (Esin 2020: Fig. 1). Though the ritual has undoubtedly received substantial Buddhist influences over the centuries, the format bears similarities to the earlier records. At sunrise, riders from the district were gathered by their chiefs close to a river on a large flat area near the sacred mountain. Horses were first arranged in several lines for ritual purification, which

Another word encountered throughout the *Shiji* and *Han Shu* deserves attention—*outuo* 甌脫 (also written 區脫 in the *Han Shu*).¹⁰ Similar to *long*, it is a Chinese transcription of a word from the Xiongnu language. Early post-Han commentators considered it as a term and suggested it means an ‘earthen room’, ‘earth pit’, or ‘place of the border guard’ (Taskin 1968: 131; Kychanov 1997: 21; Chen 2016: 5–7). Some modern researchers have linked and continue to link it to the Turkic word *ordu*, suggesting it was a military camp and headquarters of the chanyu (De Groot 1921: 52; Taskin 1968: 132; Kradin et al. 2020: 44; Vasyutin 2022: 59). However, the *Han Shu* (ch. 94a: 3783) states that *outuo* was governed by a special king, the *Outuo Wang* 甌脫王, and contexts in the records show that *outuo* designated military camps on the borders of Xiongnu lands. The *Shiji* (ch. 110: 2889) mentions such camps on the border with Donghu 東胡 in the late 3rd century BC indicating that both nations had their own *outuo* (‘each [of them] lived on their own edge [of abandoned land between Xiongnu and Donghu, where nobody had settled] making *outuo*’ 各居其邊為甌脫), while the *Han Shu*—on the border with Han in the 1st century BC. Apparently, these military camps were located on traditional ways through the desert and served for defense from enemy attacks, control over the movement of tribes and livestock across the border (*Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3788) and sometimes for carrying out frontier raids (*Han Shu*, ch. 54: 2465).

In 80 BC, during a raid, *Outuo Wang* was captured. Fearing that he would show the Han army the way through the Gobi, the Xiongnu retreated from the southern border and “sent people to encamp at *outuo*.”¹¹ The next year, [they] again sent 9,000 horsemen to encamp at Shouxiancheng¹² for defence against the Han” (發人民屯甌脫。明年，復遣九千騎屯受降城以備漢; *Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3783). The use of the Chinese word *tun* 屯, which means to set up a military camp, reinforces the meaning of *outuo* as a military camp. In this context, *tun outuo* evidently meant to strengthen existing border camps with additional warriors. As with the camp near Shouxiancheng, the records

involved monks reading hymns and splashing the horses with liquid while various plants were burnt on a special altar. The ritual culminated with multiple collective horse rides from east to west then back again around the altar (i.e. along the course of the Sun). This tradition may have been transmitted to eastern Tibet via a branch of the Xianbei—the Tuyuhun 吐谷渾—that established a powerful state in northern Qinghai in the early 4th century AD by subjugating local Qiang 羌 people (de La Vaissière 2024).

10 *Ou* 甌 ‘bowl’/區 ‘area’, *tuo* 脫 ‘take away’.

11 These camps, according to the text, were located south of the Yuwu River but north of the Han fortresses, i.e. somewhere in the area of the modern Gurvan Saikhan Mountains.

12 ‘Town for receiving surrender’—a Han fortress outside of the fortifications of the northern border.

contain references to similar Xiongnu border camps but do not use the word *outuo*. For example, in 68 BC, “to protect against the Han, the Xiongnu again dispatched two encampments of 10,000 horsemen each” (又發兩屯各萬騎以備漢; *Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3788). Both encampments were led not by the *Outuo Wang* but by other high-ranking military leaders.

The last use of *outuo* in the records dates to 43 BC (*Han Shu*, ch. 94b: 3801), but in Han terminology associated with the Xiongnu other similar transcriptions can be found. In 7 BC one such word appears slightly modified as part of a noble title *Wen Outu Wang* 溫偶駢王 (*Han Shu*, ch. 94b: 3810). This latter title designated a noble living on the Xiongnu's southern border north of Zhangye commandery 張掖郡. Even later, descriptions of military events in AD 73–76 mention the title *Wen (Yu/Ou)du Wang* 溫禺犢王 (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2949),¹³ which is a clear equivalent to the previous title. This title appears in relation to the southern border, with *Wen (Yu/Ou)du Wang* described as repelling enemy attacks with an army of several thousand north of Zhangye near the Zhuoye Mountains 涿邪山 (now Gurvan Saikhan Mountains). *Wen (Yu/Ou)du Wang* is further recorded at the same area as fighting the southern Xiongnu in AD 85 (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2950) and the army of Dou Xian and Geng Bing in AD 89 (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 23: 815). These later titles are all similar in structure and phonetic form, but most importantly they are all associated with the same border area and function. A similar title with a different third character for two military leaders of the Left and Right (which matches well with the meaning of *ou* 偶/禺) existed around the same time among the southern Xiongnu, namely *Wen (Yu/Ou)di* 溫禺鞮 (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 89: 2944; Miller 2015: 161).

Analysis in synchronic perspective suggests that the title *wang* 王 was not part of the original Xiongnu title but was added for the Han people to clarify the individual's high status (Psarras 2003: 127). The original title will have consisted of two components: (1) *wen* 溫 + (2) *outuo/outu/oudu*. Since we know that the second component referred to military units on the border, we can assume that *wen* indicated the role of the title bearer in their managing. His authority was similar to a Han *wang*, which caused *wen* to be dropped in some passages of the Han records to make *Outuo Wang*. Analysis in diachronic perspective shows changes in the transcription of the Xiongnu term for military camps: 𪛗脫/區脫 (late 3rd–middle 1st centuries BC) > 偶駢 (late 1st century BC) > 禺犢 and 禺鞮 (late 1st century AD).

13 The second character in the title has two alternative readings: traditionally in the literature on the Xiongnu it was considered as *yu* 禺 (district) but it also can be read as *ou* 禺, a variant of *ou* 偶 (one of a pair) (Schuessler 2007: 407). The next character *du* 犢 (calf) parallels with the *tu* 駢 (mythical horse) in the earlier title.

The number of riders mentioned in the records gives some indication as to the maximum size of these camps. They could have been structured into discrete groups of traditional mobile dwellings. If post-Han commentators are correct, then such camps had earthen structures, feasibly earthworks and ditches, around their perimeters. From the end of the 2nd century BC, when the Xiongnu resettled north of the desert and before the collapse of the Northern Xiongnu, border camps were permanently located south of the Ongi River near the Gurvan Saikhan Mountains on a key route from the Ordos Loop of the Yellow River through the Gobi to Khangai. This area was adjacent to the Han fortresses outside the fortified line, which were used from 104–68 BC and the remains of which have already been discovered (*Shiji*, ch. 110: 2915; *Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3787; Amartüvshin et al. 2011; Kovalev et al. 2011).

Modern linguistic analysis has shown that it is phonetically impossible to reduce *outuo* to *ordu*—the word is more comparable to the Proto-Turkic **kol-ut* (singular **kol*) meaning ‘encampments’ (Dybo 2007: 91 and 114). What is clear is that *outuo* was distinct in meaning compared to *long*, giving some idea of the system for designating settlement hierarchy in the Xiongnu language.

4 Discussion

The terms characterizing Xiongnu settlements can be divided into three groups based on the features they highlight. Those in the first group describe architectural features or components of a settlement (Table 2.A). Among them, *qionglu* is probably a transcription of a non-Chinese word¹⁴ for the traditional, domed dwellings made of willow branches and felt of the nomads. In the *Hou Han Shu*, however, this Xiongnu word was replaced by the Chinese words *zhang* (tent) and *jimu* 罽幕 (woollen tent), which were used as synonyms. The Xiongnu ruler also used long-term palatial buildings—*danei*—alongside the traditional nomadic dwellings. The existence of such buildings, as well as earthen and wooden walls, gates and ditches has been confirmed by archaeological excavations of a number of Xiongnu settlements. Wells and storage pits are not yet among the studied constructions but should be the subject of a search in the archaeological record at walled sites. Table 2 provides the most complete list of features according to the written sources, but of course not every Xiongnu walled site necessarily had all these elements. In addition, some

14 On the possible eastern Iranian origin of *qionglu*, see Bailey (1985: 29).

TABLE 2 Summary and classification of terms describing Xiongnu settlements in Han-Dynasty historical records. Black: Chinese words; Green: Chinese transcriptions of Xiongnu words

A. Architectural Features	B. Settlement Form	C. Settlement Function
1. Light frame dwellings: qionglu 穹廬 / qionglū 穹閭 / zhang 帳 / jimu 罽幕	1. Encampment: (a) quluo 區落 (b) ying 營 (c) outuo 鴈脫 / 區脫 / outu 偶騶 / oudu 禺犢	1. Court: ting 庭 2. Capital: du 都 3. Place of sacrifices: ci 祠
2. Palatial buildings: danei 大內 (gongshi 宮室)	2. Walled city: cheng 城	4. long 龍 / 龍
3. Earthen wall: tu cheng 土城 / zhu cheng 築城		
4. Wooden wall: mu cheng 木城		
5. Gates: cheng men 城門		
6. Tower: lou 樓		
7. Ditch: qian 塹		
8. Deep pit: da jiao 大窖; could serve as a grain storage (cang gu 藏穀) and for imprison		
9. Well: jing 井		

features present in certain sites may not have been mentioned by the Han dynastic records, such as the pond (perhaps accompanied by a small park) at Kharganyñ Dörvölzhin and Gua Dov sites.

Terms for designating settlements form two groups. One includes names associated with the form and structural elements of settlements (Table 2.B). Among them are *cheng*, indicating the presence of long-term defensive walls, *quluo*—as a name for a traditional Xiongnu settlement, and *ying*—camp. All of them evidently included dwellings in the form of felt tents, but *cheng* could also have long-term buildings such as palaces. *Ying* undoubtedly had some kind of protective fence, for which, for example, carts placed in a circle might be used. It is difficult to say what was meant by *quluo*. One possibility is that it was a settlement similar to *ying*, but without an external fence. For Xiongnu military camps, the records also used a term from their own language—*outuo*. In the *Shiji* this latter is undoubtedly a term associated with the form of settlement. In the *Han Shu*, however, it seems that this name is rather applied not to any military camps, but to camps in one specific location; that is to say, it sometimes gets the value of a place name for the Han authors. If the characters for this transcription were selected considering the correspondence of their meaning to certain aspects of the designated object (as in many other cases), then the earliest *ou* 鴈 (bowl) most likely indicates the round shape of such a camp, which, therefore, is similar to *ying*.

Another group is formed by terms indicating the special status/function of settlements (Table 2.C). Among them is the Xiongnu's own name for the ruler's settlement—*long*. Han authors perceived this latter more as a place name, so

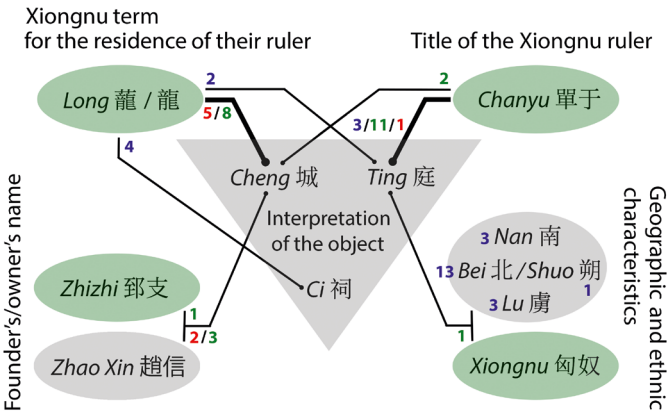


FIGURE 5 Schema of compound name construction for Xiongnu rulers' residences in Han-Dynasty historical records: the central triangle shows common terms for the settlement form or function and the circles show words used to specify and contextualise specific places. Grey: Chinese words; Green: Chinese transcriptions of Xiongnu words; Bold: typical combinations. The frequencies are indicated in red (*Shiji*), green (*Han Shu*), and blue (*Hou Han Shu*), see also Table 1

they constantly combined it with some Chinese terms into compound names. It has two Chinese equivalents: (a) *ting* ‘court’, indicating the location of the ruling family along with close associates; (b) *du* ‘capital’, denoting the political, economic, religious centre of the country. Another term used was *ci*, which specifically referred to the ritual function of this political centre.

The most common words for the ruler’s residence—*ting*, *cheng*, and *ci*—are usually part of a compound name. At some point, all three words are combined with the transcribed Xiongnu word *long*, forming *Longting*, *Longcheng*, and *Longci*. The repeated use of *long* suggests that these three names may designate the same settlement. In general, compound names for the rulers’ residences have two parts: 1) a term for the settlement form or function (*cheng*, *ting*, *ci*); and 2) an individual qualifier to specify the particular settlement from the Han point of view. This individual qualifier came from four potential themes: 1) the Xiongnu term for a ruler’s residence; 2) the title of the Xiongnu ruler; 3) geographic or ethnic characteristics; and 4) the name of the founder or owner (Fig. 5). As a functional term, *long* for the Xiongnu was as applicable to traditional mobile settlements with felt dwellings as to sites with earthen walls and palaces. For the Han, however, there were some restrictions in the

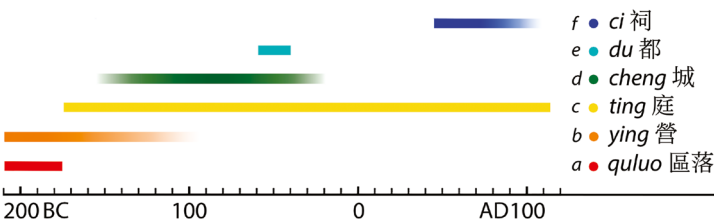


FIGURE 6 Chronological usage of the Chinese terms for Xiongnu rulers' residences in Han-Dynasty historical records.

use of terms. In particular, for the Han cultural milieu, the concept of *ting* was inseparable from a palace. Similarly, *du* and *ci* also had associations with long-term structures.

All six Chinese terms represent an interpretation of Xiongnu settlements from the perspective of Han language and culture. There are several possible reasons that different words were used, including the existence of different settlement types, changes to settlement structure over time, and the individual observations or preferences of different compilers and different authors in different periods, whose primary reports were later used to compile the Han Dynasty records.

Differences in the meanings of the terms over time (Fig. 6) could reflect chronological changes to the appearance of the settlements. Thus, in his memorial text on the military campaign against the Xiongnu, Ban Gu calls the residence of Modu a *quluo*, but refers to the residence of his successor Laoshang as a *ting*, creating a chronological distinction between the residences (*Hou Han Shu*, ch. 23). These may reflect information available to Ban Gu from Western Han period documents, and, if so, reflect real changes in the arrangement of the chanyu's residence, with palatial structures appearing. A few decades after the reign of Laoshang, by 124 BC, the upper echelons of Xiongnu aristocracy also had palace structures that were referred to in the Han records as *ting*.

In reference to narrowly dated events, the word *cheng* appears later than *ting*, being used for the first time for the proper name *Longcheng* around 134 BC when plans for a military campaign against the Xiongnu were being discussed at the Han court. However, since *Longcheng* was perceived to be the Xiongnu's permanent political centre, the settlement had presumably already existed for more than one decade.

Ci is the latest term to be used for a chanyu's residence, appearing in Han sources only during the Eastern Han. Use of *ci* emphasises the residence's

ceremonial value and may even reflect the emergence of special temples at the ruler's residence. Such temples, probably constructed in the late years BC–early years AD, have recently been identified at the site of Talyn Gurvan Kherem near the chanyu's residence at Kharganyn Dörvölzhin (Ochir et al. 2020). However, it is most likely that the use of *ci* arose through increased exposure of Han culture to activities and ceremonies held at the Southern Chanyu's residence in Xihe Commandery. Unfortunately, the remains of this residence have not yet been discovered.

The question of how *cheng*-type settlements appeared in the Xiongnu realm deserves special attention. In particular, a new residence built for Yizhixie Chanyu is connected with the defector Zhao Xin, who became the Chanyu's closest adviser, brother-in-law, and a noble of high rank after he defected back to the Xiongnu from the Han Dynasty in 123 BC. On his return, he brought a detachment of 800 people, who potentially participated in the construction of what the Han initially referred to as *Zhao Xin cheng* (*Shiji*, ch. 110: 2910), distinguishable from the previous residence south of the Gobi, which circa 140–120 BC was known as *Longcheng* at the Han court. The name *Zhao Xin cheng* also appears in the *Han Shu* in connection with military events in 90 BC (*Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3778), though Zhao Xin had already died around 108 BC. It is clear from the description that the city was located on the west bank of the Orkhon River and was at that time the residence of Hulugu Chanyu 狐鹿姑單于 (r. 96–85 BC).

At the end of the 80s BC, under the leadership of the former Han ambassador Wei Lü and in collaboration with 'Qin people' (*Qin ren* 秦人)¹⁵ to defend against Han troops, the construction of several *cheng* began¹⁶ (*Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3782). Apparently, the same 'Qin people' who would defend these settlements were also involved in their construction. It is possible that in the 90s or 80s BC Wei Lü reconstructed as well the former *Zhao Xin cheng*, decorating it anew with roof tiles stamped with the title 'Son of Heaven Chanyu' (Fig. 3). This title is never used in the *Shiji*, appearing for the first time in the *Han Shu* (ch. 94a: 3751). In one of his letters to the Emperor, Hulugu uses a similar but alternative structure, referring to himself as the 'Beloved Son of Heaven' (*Tian zhi jiao zi* 天之驕子; *Han Shu*, ch. 94a: 3780). This suggests that the title was in use during Hulugu's reign and went out of use before 31 BC, when the chanyus started to style themselves as 'Divine Chanyu' (*Ruodi chanyu* 若鞮單于) (for

15 This was a Xiongnu term for the Chinese who lived among them (after the Qin dynasty) (Taskin 1973: 138).

16 These settlements have not yet been identified. It is possible that these could include several walled sites on the upper reaches of the Ongi River (Miiagashev et al. 2021).

the translation, see Pulleybank 1966: 19; Dybo 2007: 112). For now, however, it cannot be completely ruled out that the title 'Son of Heaven Chanyu' may have already appeared on the *wadang* during the construction of the new residence in the reign of Yizhixie, but was not mentioned in the *Shiji* for political reasons. *Wadang* from the inner wall's southern gate with a neutral designation apparently appeared after Huhanye Chanyu returned to the Orkhon Valley at the very end of the 40s BC. Since he recognised his lesser status relative to the Han Emperor, it was impossible for him to use the same title. Also, after a long political crisis among the Xiongnu, he was in dire need of the loyalty of chiefs from the northern and western parts of his empire previously supported his rival Zhizhi which well corresponds to this *wadang*'s last characters.

Since people from the Han Empire played a key role in building later cities with walls in Xiongnu lands, they were probably also involved in the appearance of the first Xiongnu city south of the Gobi, *Longcheng*. One possible scenario is that the courtiers who accompanied Han princesses dispatched to the chanyu's residence as part of the *heqin* 和親 marriage strategy were potentially involved, since a similar situation is known for a herding society close to the Xiongnu in Wusun 烏孫 Kingdom. After the arrival of the first Han princess and her several hundred-strong entourage circa 105 BC, the first known, Han-style palace was built there: "The princess, on reaching their [Wusun] kingdom, herself constructed palace buildings to reside, once or twice a year together with the Kunmo¹⁷ held a gathering, set out a banquet, and bestowed the king and noblemen of the Left and Right with valuables and silk" (公主至其國，自治宮室居，歲時一再與昆莫會，置酒飲食，以幣帛賜王左右貴人; *Han Shu*, ch. 96b: 3903). In fact, her palace became the location for at least one seasonal gathering of the Kunmo's court per year, similar to those held by the chanyu. As we know from the same source, in her deep longing for her homeland, the princess composed a song in which she mentions her life in a *qionglu*,¹⁸ but this, undoubtedly, was not her permanent dwelling. Several decades after the palace appeared, the same residence came to be called *Chigu cheng* 赤谷城 'City of the Red Valley' (*Han Shu*, ch. 96b: 3906–7).

The first Han princess sent to the Xiongnu in 108 BC had higher status than the one sent later to the Wusun: she was introduced to the Xiongnu as the eldest daughter of the emperor's main wife. The emperor and his court had great hopes for her marriage and long-term plans to subjugate the Xiongnu through family ties and generous gifts (*Shiji*, ch. 99: 2719). Her retinue had to

17 Transcription of the title of the Wusun's king.

18 "*Qionglu* became [my] home, felt became walls!" (穹廬為室兮旃為牆; *Han Shu*, ch. 96b: 3903).

constructed a palace for her at the chanyu's residence too, though in the *Shiji* there is no such detailed information about princess for the Xiongnu as in the case of the Wusun in the *Han Shu*. During the reign of Laoshang, this palace may have become the summer residence of the Chanyu himself and was given the name *Longting* in Han records. Soon after, the settlement became bigger and was referred to as *Longcheng*. A Chanyu advisor from the Han court, Zhonghang Yue 中行說, could also have played a certain role in the arrangement of the residence at that time.

Among features of the Xiongnu cities in the historical records, the palace, rammed earth walls, and silk flags indicate significant Han influence on their architecture, materials, and construction methods. This is substantiated by technologies identified at archaeologically excavated palaces and settlements, where the mass-produced roof tiles, a process developed in dynastic China, are especially indicative. Simultaneously, adaptation of Han traditions and technologies due to a different cultural environment, as well as natural conditions, took place. For example, Abakan palace lacks the ubiquitous earth platform and had specific, underground heating system (Kyzlasov 2001: 61–87). Roof tiles at Terelzhiin Durvulzhin and other places sometimes have the wave-line design specific to Xiongnu pottery decoration and squared impressions in the central part of the *wadang* similar to the technological features on the bottom of their pottery (Danilov and Tsydenova 2011). These indicate that the craftspeople who made Xiongnu pottery were potentially involved in the production of roof tiles. The application of the ruler's title and noble clan-emblems on the roof tile finials also reflects the specific cultural traditions of the Xiongnu. In addition, on the tiles from the Abakan Palace and from Kharganyin Dörvölzhin, clan-emblems and images were sometimes drawn on the raw clay before firing by those who made them or controlled the manufacturing process; both the drawings and emblems related to the traditions of the nomads (Kyzlasov 2001: fig. 40–41; Iderkhangai et al. 2022; Iderkhangai 2023).

5 Conclusion

The existence of palaces and cities with fortifications, demonstrated by both written and archaeological sources, contradicts the *Shiji*'s and *Yan Tie Lun*'s claim that the Xiongnu have no such objects. As has been discussed in this article, the Han historical accounts generally show that only the early Xiongnu, before the reign of Laoshang, can be considered to have had “no cities”. This corresponds with analyses of the *Shiji*'s textual construction, which substantiates the fact that the information in this passage was based on a pre-Han text (Di Cosmo 2010: 312; Goldin 2011: 233 and 240). At the same time, such a view

represents the sedentary authors' general impression of ways of life among the main body of the Xiongnu. It was characteristic of many members of the Han elite, and would persist for many centuries, even in relation to mediaeval nomads.

The analysed terms include six Chinese and two Xiongnu words that were used to refer to Xiongnu settlements in Han historical records. They can be divided into two groups: (1) those that characterise the visible form and structure; and (2) those that characterise the function.

The first group includes: (a) *quluo*, indicating a special, non-Chinese type of nomadic settlement—encampments with traditional mobile structures; (b) *ying*, denoting a settlement in the form of a mobile military camp; (c) *outuo*, meaning military camp in the Xiongnu language; and (d) *cheng*, which highlights the presence of permanent walls in the settlement.

The second group includes: (a) *ting*, denoting the inner space of a palace where the ruling family and their entourage resided and hosted major socio-political engagements; it was also possible for high-ranking aristocrats of the *wang* status related to the chanyu to have their own *ting*; (b) *du*, denoting the city with the state ruler's residence and the centre of state power in all its aspects—political, economic, religious; (c) *ci*, specifically highlighting the religious significance of a settlement as a place of ritual veneration for noble lineages and ancestors (including the Han Emperor during the Southern Xiongnu), as well as deities and spirits that legitimised Xiongnu rule, its rulers and bequeathed prosperity to the state; and (e) *long*, denoting the residence of the ruler in the language of the Xiongnu themselves, which is partly equivalent to the Chinese terms *ting* and *du*.

The six Chinese terms reflect the authors' interpretations of the residence of the Xiongnu ruler from a Han cultural perspective. This made it possible for different terms to be used in parallel to refer to the same settlement, highlighting its different aspects. At the same time, this research has demonstrated chronological trends. The earliest residences of the Xiongnu rulers are designated by the terms *quluo* and *ying*. The term *ci*, on the contrary, was used only in the period of Eastern Han. The term *cheng* began to be used in the second half of the 2nd century BC but from the end of the 1st century BC it was completely replaced by the term *ting*, the first dated mention of which is associated with Laoshang Chanyu. The frequency of use of each of these terms in the records shows that Han authors considered the key feature of Xiongnu political centres to be the presence of a court with palatial buildings as its attribute rather than a city wall or the collective sacrifices conducted there. In many cases, the authors emphasise the political status of the settlement further by merging *ting* and *cheng* with the title of a ruler, and geographical (north, south) or ethnic (*Xiongnu*, *lu*) characteristics.

Unlike the Chinese terms *ting* and *du*, the concept of *long* arose in a nomadic pastoral society centred on the seasonal movement of settlements, and thus it does not show any connection to the built environment. The main method of governance in such a society was the regular gathering of the nobility for the most significant rituals of the annual cycle, organised by the ruler. The seasonal movements of the ruler's headquarters (Chinese terms in the records for this type of residence—*quluo* and *ying*) were limited to the central part of the country with regular places for different seasons. With the emergence of palaces and permanent walled settlements among the Xiongnu, this tradition did not disappear, at least in the early stages. The holding of three annual rituals in different places and the opposition of *Chanyu ting* and *Longcheng* in one passage of the *Shiji* reflects precisely this practice. At the same time, from the standpoint of the Han cultural environment, the use of the words *ting* and *cheng* in the names means that both of these seasonal settlements had earth/clay architecture, but the second, summer one was larger. Consequently, the use of a new type of constructions was adapted to the seasonal rhythm of life and other traditions of the steppe society: each settlement was used by the ruler only for part of the year, and the rest of the time its population was reduced. The summer settlement was apparently more populated, where some of the ruler's wives, children, other relatives, and probably also some officials, craftspeople, high status foreigners, and envoys could live permanently. In later sources, however, the contrast between the names disappeared: in the 1st century BC the same settlement on the Orkhon River is called both *ting* and *cheng*, and then only *ting*. There is no such opposition among the southern Xiongnu either. Perhaps by this time the rulers began to conduct rituals of the 1st and 5th months in the same residence, and the autumnal ritual in a location close by.

Although traditional yurt-type dwellings remained in use throughout the Xiongnu Empire, the main ruler's residence at certain point came to be modelled on Han palaces. Complex technologies for the production of all necessary materials and the construction of both palace-type buildings and other structures could not have appeared in the steppe without the participation of people who were familiar with them and had mastered aspects of their construction. This is even more evident than in the case of the construction of another type of complex architectural object—the terraced tombs of the Xiongnu nobility (Polos'mak, Bogdanov 2015: 118). The first palace was most likely built by a Han princess' retinue when she married the Xiongnu ruler in the early 2nd century BC, which, perhaps, later became the first *Longcheng*. Over the next century, Han immigrants, like Zhao Xin and Wei Lü, continued to play key roles in the construction of palaces and long-term fortifications

relying on the experience and labour of other people from Han territory, of whom there were quite a few among the Xiongnu. Local people were also involved at different stages of the construction processes which together with other factors opened the way for the adaptation of new technologies. However, the construction of such objects corresponded to the interests, resources and wills of chanyus themselves, otherwise they could not have appeared. Along with exotic trade items like silk textiles, rare jewellery, and Chinese chariots found in the tombs of the Xiongnu elite, Han-style architecture began to be used by the cosmopolitan steppe rulers for their own cultural politics as a symbol of status and power.

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