



This summer with the help of the Jane C. Waldbaum Fieldwork Grant, I was able to offset the cost of travel to Mongolia and attend two field school sessions with NOMAD Science Mongolia. Throughout the eight weeks I spent in Mongolia, I was able to be exposed to several different kinds of archaeology while learning valuable skills for fieldwork across disciplines. The first three weeks the primary focus was salvage archaeology. We worked in the Darkhad Depression in Khovsgol province in Northern Mongolia. Our team would split into groups and move between excavating the burials and working in the lab with conservationists and our bioarchaeologist. Because of the location of these burials, much of what is buried is kept in the permafrost and can be very well preserved. In recent years with the changing climate, the melting of the permafrost *and* the extreme uptick in looting activity this cultural heritage is at risk of being lost forever.

The burials are from the medieval period and we primarily recovered textiles (leather, silk, birchbark), human remains along with some other metal artifacts. In the lab we helped the onsite conservationists clean and photograph the textiles and artifacts. We worked with a bioarchaeologist to clean and document the human remains and learned how to take samples for various purposes— DNA, isotope, and proteomic sampling (dental calculus). We were also taught and given resources about how to age and sex the individuals.

We also had days where, because of logistics or a backup in the lab, we stayed at camp and learned other valuable field skills. We work together to learn how to set up grids and we used the soil typing flow chart to practice typing soils (by feel) around camp. We also learned about floatation as a useful way to get archaeobotanical information about a site. Soil samples were taken from areas and burials of interest and we spend several days floating the samples to be analyzed. We also had a small lecture on lithics— identification, classification etc.— and spent an afternoon learning how/practicing drawing artifacts.

The second three weeks I moved North to the Western Taiga. The main goal of this expedition was to revisit several lithic sites recorded in 2019. The remote Taiga is not accessible

by car, so we traveled by horse three days to get to our first location. We conducted systematic surveys of the area to map the surface lithics. Then we dug test pits at these sites to try and gauge the possibility of sub surface finds and features. We dug test pits and mapped the lithic locations at two of the sites documented in 2019 and in our travels found two new sites that had not been recorded yet.

We also worked with a researcher studying Reindeer domestication. We assisted in conducting surveys to look for reindeer bones, specifically looking for mandibles. We learned how to identify reindeer bone and distinguish them from other livestock in the area such as cattle or sheep/goat. We collected hair samples from living reindeer and spoke with the herding families about how their herding practices and the primary uses of their animals. On surveys we would also collect plant samples (specifically what the reindeer are consuming) in hopes of setting an isotopic baseline for the area.

The project also worked with the EAP (Endangered Archives Programme), to bring digitized and printed versions of 100 year old glass plate negative photo's of reindeer herders to the folks here in order to help with identification and to get more context for the photographs. Even though the photos were not of reindeer herders from the same region, we were able to get context on what certain objects were and how practices, clothing, and tools differ between the two groups.

My time in Mongolia was so valuable for many reasons. I was able to meet many great archaeologists and privileged enough get to know the local communities and see how the projects work there contributes to the preservation of their material culture. I not only learned many valuable skills (that can only really be learned in the field), but also saw how flexibility is a huge part of the job. Being able to think on your feet and problem solve when things do not go as planned is just as important as knowing how to lay a proper grid. Thank you so much to the AIA and the Waldbaum scholarship for your support and this incredible experience.