



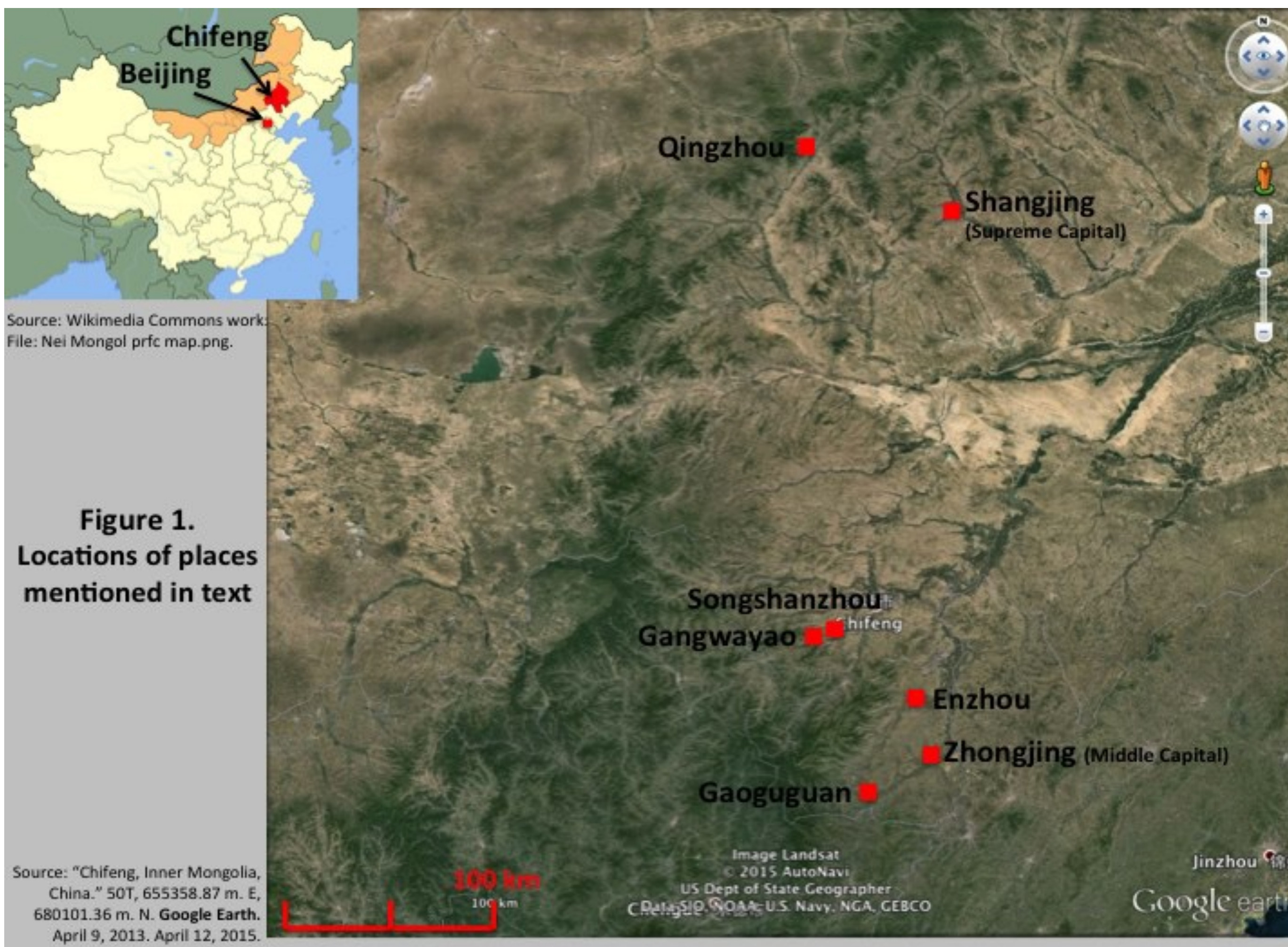
Khitan-Liao Archaeological Survey and History Project (KLASH)



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INTRODUCTION

- The KLASH Project is a multi-disciplinary collaboration between McGill University, University of Birmingham, University of Aberdeen and the Inner Mongolia Institute of Archaeology.
- We travelled to Northeast China and Inner Mongolia this summer to study the heartland of the Liao Empire.



Map: Sites of the Liao Empire's imperial heartland (Bennett 2015)

LIAO EMPIRE

- The Liao Empire was founded in the 10th century, lasting from 907 CE to 1125 CE.
- It was ruled over by the Khitan, a pastoral nomadic society from the north of the Han Dynasty's Great Wall.
- At the height of its power, the Empire stretched from modern-day North Korea to Kazakhstan and included most of northern China, Mongolia, and the Russian far-east.
- The Empire was noted for its frequent conflicts with its southern neighbour the Song Dynasty and its eastern neighbour the Goryeo.
- It lasted until it was conquered by the northern Jurchen who founded the Jin Dynasty (1115 AD – 1124 AD).
- Despite its power relatively little is known about the Liao Empire as there are few surviving historical texts and most of these texts were written by their enemies.
- This means that archaeological information is important for creating a less skewed depiction of the Liao.

QINGZHOU PAGODA

- The Qingzhou White Pagoda was a Liao period pagoda that survives to this day.
- It is in the center of the Liao city site of Qingzhou.
- Surface scatters of pottery at the site indicate that sectors of the city was associated with elite activities.
- Qingzhou was a funeral city and a place of exile for disfavoured Liao royalty.



XUANHUA LIAO TOMBS

- The Zhang family tombs in Xuanhua: Zhang Shiqing was a government official buried here in 1116 CE. His tomb is remarkably well preserved due to the arid conditions of North China.
- Buddhist and Taoist classical scripts were painted next to each other, along with the Western zodiac on the ceilings. Details like these allow for an interpretation of Liao ritual and beliefs.



SHANGJING (SUPREME CAPITAL)

- Shangjing was the Supreme Capital of the Liao Dynasty, where the imperial residences were located.
- The site is currently being excavated by the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. In our discussions with them, we were told that they discovered the Liao period main road which was then covered over during the Jin period with common dwellings.



SHERD DECORATIONS

Bidianwen



Cogwheel



Gangwayao



Green glaze rooftiles



- The pottery sherds we find in these locations are the key means through which archaeologists identify sites of interest, date these sites, and interpret their function.
- Because they are practically indestructible, they survive whereas other materials do not.

CONCLUSION

Project objectives:

- Discuss with current excavators and archaeologists who specialize in Liao
- Lay the groundwork for future archaeological investigations in the regions

Personal learning objectives:

- Identify Liao pottery and develop the skills of ceramic analysis
- Learn database management and sampling techniques for survey fieldwork

REFERENCES AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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