

Kurgans, Ritual Sites, and Settlements
Eurasian Bronze and Iron Age



Kurgans, Ritual Sites, and Settlements Eurasian Bronze and Iron Age

Edited by

Jeannine Davis-Kimball

Eileen M. Murphy

Ludmila Koryakova and Leonid T. Yablonsky

BAR International Series _____

2000

Table of Contents

Introduction	ix
Jeannine Davis-Kimball	
Part I. Eurasian Archaeological Theory	1
“Scythian Triad” and “Scythian World”	3
Leonid T. Yablonsky	
Some Current Problems Concerning the History of Early Iron Age Eurasian Steppe Nomadic Societies.....	9
Vladimir A. Bashilov and Leonid T. Yablonsky	
Some Notes About the Material Culture of Eurasian Nomads	13
Ludmila Koryakova	
Iron Age Nomadic Burials of the Eurasian Steppe: A Discussion Exploring Burial Ritual	
Complexity	19
Bryan Hanks	
Part II. Archaeological Excavations	31
Ancient Sanctuaries of the Aral and Caspian Regions: A Reconstruction of their History	33
Valery S. Olkhovskiy	
Excavations of the Aksai Kurgans in the Volga-Don Region (Russia).....	43
A. N. Dyachenko, A. S. Skripkin, V. M. Klepikov, A. I. Kubyshkin, and A. Mabe	
Burials and Settlements at the Eurasian Crossroads: Joint Franco-Russian Project.....	63
Ludmila Koryakova and Marie-Yvane Daire	
With assistance of Patrice Courtaud, Esther Gonzalez, Andrew Kovrigin1, Luic Languet, Dominique Marguerie, Dmitry Razhev, Svetlana Sharapova, and Marie-Celine Uge	
The Environment of Iron Age Burials and Settlements at the Eurasian Crossroads (Urals, Russia):	
Preliminary Results of the Charcoal Analysis of Anthropogenic Fires	75
Dominique Marguerie and Nancy Marcoux	
The Kazakh-American Talgar Project Archaeological Field Surveys in the	
Talgar and Turgen-Asi Areas of Southeastern Kazakhstan: 1997-1999	83
Claudia Chang and Perry A. Tourtellotte	
The Beiram Mound: A Nomadic Cultic Site in the Altai Mountains (Western Mongolia)	89
Jeannine Davis-Kimball	
Part III. Interpretations of Eurasian Archaeology: The Bronze Age	107
Bronze Age Textiles of the Caspian Sea Maritime Steppes	109
Natalia I. Shishlina, Valery P. Golikov, and Olga V. Orfinskaya	
The Eurasian Steppes: The Transition from Early Urbanism to Nomadism	118
Elena Kuzmina	
Sintashta Burials and their Western European Counterparts	126
Karlene Jones-Bley	
The Sintashta “Chariots”	135
Karlene Jones-Bley	
Investigation of Bronze Age Metallurgical Slag	141
S. A. Grigoryev	
Part IV. The Iron Age	151
Historical and Archaeological Sources Relating to the Migration of Nomadic Peoples	
Toward Central and Southern Europe During the Imperial Age (1st - 5th centuries AD).....	153
Paolo de Vingo	

Early Iron Age Pastoral Nomadism in the Great Hungarian Plains:	
Migration or Assimilation? The Thraco-Cimmerian Problem Revisited	160
Carola Metzner-Nebelsick	
Intercultural Relations among Eurasian Pastoral Nomads: The Case of Northern Fennoscandia	185
Kjell-Åke Aronsson and Sven-Donald Hedman	
A Comparative Study of the Early Iron Age Cultures in the Lower Volga and	
the Southern Urals Regions	194
Maria A. Otchir-Goriaeva	
Iron Age Ceramics of the Transurals	207
Svetlana Sharapova	
Looted Graves or Burials Without Bodies?	215
Ann-Marie Kroll	
Enarees and Women of High Status: Evidence of Ritual at Tillya Tepe (Northern Afghanistan)	223
Jeannine Davis-Kimball	
From a Settled Way of Life to Nomadism	240
N. B. Vinogradov and V. Epimakhov	
Variants in Models of Transition: The Cimmerian Traditions of the Gordion Tumuli (Phrygia):	
Found in the Altai Barrows (Bashadar, Pazyryk)	247
Leonid Marsadolov	
“Animal Style” and Shamanism: Problems of Pictorial Tradition in Northern in Central Asia	259
Burchard Brentjes	
Post-Mortem Trepanations in Central Asia: Types and Trends	269
Maria Mednikova	
Mummification and Body Processing: Evidence from the Iron Age in Southern Siberia	279
Eileen M. Murphy	
The Origins of the “Geometric Style” in Hsiung nu Art	293
Sergey Minyaev	
The Origins of Horse riding and the Development of Ancient Central Asian	
Nomadic Riding Harnesses	304
N. A. Bokovenko	
Petroglyphs and Sacred Spaces at Terekty Aulie, Central Kazakstan	311
Kenneth Lymer	

Introduction

This richly illustrated volume, which will add immensely to the small, yet growing corpus, of Eurasian Archaeology published in the English language. Comprised of thirty articles, the authors have focused on the Bronze Age beginning in the third millennium BC to ca., continuing to include the first millennium BC Early Iron Age, with a terminus of ca. AD 500. The geographic range extends from the far western great Hungarian plains, north to Fennoscandia and its relationship with Siberia, south to include northern Afghanistan and the Kalmyk steppes, and east to the Altai Mountains in western Mongolia. The volume has been divided into four parts: Part I, Eurasian Archaeological Theory; Part II, Archaeological Excavations; Part III, Interpretations of Eurasian Archaeology in the Bronze Age; and Part IV, Interpretations of Eurasian Archaeology in the Early Iron Age.

Although the majority of the articles resulted from papers presented at the European Archaeological Association sessions on Eurasian archaeology in 1998 (Göteborg, Sweden) and 1999 (Bournemouth, England), organized by Ludmila Koryakova and Leonid Yablonsky, other appropriate articles have been included, some of which were presented at the Eurasian session, Society for American Archaeology 2000 meetings (Philadelphia, U.S.A.), organized by Sandra Olsen. The arguments presented in these papers embrace a wide stroke of topics: art and “Animal Style;” Cultural Horizons; symbiotic relationships between forest-steppe and steppe folks as well as sedentary and nomadic tribes; their anthropomorphic sculptures, petroglyphs, and trepanations realized for cultic, religious, and mortuary beliefs; but weaponry, warriors, and chariots contrast with sumptuary votive offerings, with similar iconographic motifs from diverse regions, mundane textiles, and the practical and luxury of metallurgical riches. The authors are as diverse in their origins as their works are in content, penning their research from England, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Russia, Sweden, and the United States.

Eurasian Archaeological Theory” (Part I) begins with two articles that discuss longstanding terminology relating to the Early Nomads: “Scytho-Siberian,” the Scythian World,” and the “Scythian-Triad” and, further, the need to establish regional classifications so that historical and scientific approaches can be achieved. As a partial answer to these problems, the second paper proposes Cultural Horizons (after the Pre-Columbian model) in order to rationally discuss the degree of similarity and differences between regional Early Nomads. As an adjunct methodology for extracting specific cultural continuities (or lack thereof), the third article reviews the significances of architecture and mortuary offerings in identifying nomadic social power and ideology. The last paper in this section analyti-

cally explores the relationship between archaeological theory and mortuary interpretations using excavated materials from the southern Ural region.

Archaeological Excavations (Part II), presents six recent expeditions, emphasizing the Early Iron Age and adding significantly to Eurasian data. The first article treats artifacts from an ancient sanctuary, dated to the last half of the first millennium BC and located in the Ustyurt Plateau between the Aral and Caspian seas. There, the architecture relates to the Zoroastrian *dakhma*; the popularization of a mythic hero is emphasized by anthropomorphic sculptures that represent “warriors;” and *tamgas* (brands) indicate the presence of Sarmatians nomads. In the second report, several years’ excavations in the steppes between the Don and Volga (with hundreds of artifacts illustrated) are summarized. Although some kurgans show the presence of Bronze Age peoples, the majority of the burials were Sarmatian with Early, Middle, and Late Sarmatian periods represented, and new interpretations on the elusive Middle Sarmatian period are presented. Between the 7th century BC and the 3rd century AD, nomads and semi-nomadic herders, now known as the Sargat Culture, occupied the forest, forest-steppes, and steppes east of the Ural Mountains. Excavations in this region revealed the symbiotic interaction of the diverse populations, particularly during the Early Iron Age, that created a distinctive architecture and practiced their specific mortuary, economic, and the stylistic traditions. The following article, also using materials from the excavations of the Sargat kurgans, provides a paleoenvironmental and paleoethnographical sketch of the Sargat Culture through the identification of numerous wood samples used in constructions.

Further to the east in southern Kazakhstan, ongoing field surveys conducted between 1997-1999 in the Talgar alluvial fan, and in the upland valleys of the Turgen and Asi rivers in the Tien Shan Mountains, disclosed 120 burial complexes and six settlement sites dating to both the Bronze Age and the Early Iron Age. The Talgar site appears to have had camps during the first millennium BC to the middle of the second millennium BC, while the uplands were utilized from the Bronze Age to present times. The final article in Part II is the excavation report of an isolated stone mound at the top of the Beiram Pass in the Altai Mountains, western Mongolia. More than 4,000 artifacts, deposited from ca. 5th century BC to present times, reveal an anthology of cultic convictions practiced by diverse nomadic populations, including the Manchu whose artifacts demonstrated strong lowland China ties.

The first article in Interpretations of Eurasian Archaeology in the Bronze Age (Part III), studies textiles constructed from plant

and animal fibers and types of looms used during the third-second millennia BC in the Kalmyk steppes west of the Caspian Sea. The next article discusses theories of horse domestication in relation to the possible modification of Eurasian Bronze Age dating based upon European, Anatolian, and Mycenaean chronologies. The final three articles turn to the Sintashta-Petrovka Culture east of the Ural Mountains for their inspirations. The first discusses burial practices in this region in relation to the Indo-Iranian customs recounted in the *Rig Veda* and the *Avesta*. In the next, theories advanced concerning the function of Sintashta-Petrovka Culture chariots, designed either for combat, ritual racing, or burials ceremonies are reviewed and textual evidence is brought to fore in the discussion. The final article investigates metallurgical technology used in Sintashta settlements, comparing it with similar technologies in diverse Eurasian regions to determine the origins of the Sintashta people.

Interpretations of Eurasian Archaeology in the Iron Age (Part IV), is comprised of fifteen articles. The first, employing both historical and archaeological sources, discusses nomadic migrations toward central and southern Europe during the early centuries AD. The next article considers the question of Thraco-Cimmerian migrations or assimilations on the great Hungarian plains. In northern Fennoscandia, archaeological finds indicate long distance contacts between this region and Siberia, which influenced the development of a reindeer domestication economy; thus not only did new settlement patterns come to fore, but nomadic contacts may have shaped some Saami mythological themes.

Returning to the southern Ural steppes, the next article compares Sauromatian and Sarmatian funerary rituals and their most diagnostic artifacts in the mortuary inventories, concluding that the two regions did not entertain a singular culture during the Early Iron Age. Decorative style and ornamental traditions based upon a formal typology is the methodology employed in the next article that studies ceramics from Transural excavations. The Sargat Culture, east of the Ural Mountains, is the centerpiece of the subsequent article in which the cenotaph is introduced as an additional burial category, contrasting with the looted grave.

Northern Afghanistan is the locale of the next article, which explores Tillya Tepe sumptuary mortuary offerings and their iconographic motifs to define statuses of the deceased. The Sargary Culture, the focus of the subsequent article, occupied the interfluvia of the upper Ural and the lower Tobol rivers, and is used as an example of a population regrouping resulting from changing climatic conditions leading to aridization. In the following article, cultural traditions revealed in the Gordion tumuli in Phrygia, and the Bashadar and Pazyryk kurgans in the Altai Mountains are compared, leading to conclusion that Cimmerian traditions were responsible for new burial rituals in the eastern region.

“Animal Style” art of the Early Nomads is considered, in the next article, as a derivative of shamanic art—or an “art of sur-

vival” and, moreover, as an expression of the warrior nobility was paralleled by Bactrian Bronze Age and Luristan art. Trepanations, embalming, mummification, and body processing in the ancient Mongolian, Tuvian, Kazakstan, southern Siberian societies are focused upon from diverse points of view in the next two articles. Moving to Hsiung nu geometric artwork examined in the next article, the author reveals evolutionary sequences that transformed the “Scytho-Siberian” Animal Style to one that appropriately conformed to new parameters demanded by the unique Hsiung nu ethnic, cultural, and possibly linguistic traditions.

Disclosed by archaeological materials, the development in three chronological stages of horseriding harnesses is discussed in the subsequent article, and illustrated by petroglyphic images and the ritual finds from the Arzhan and Pazyryk excavations. The final article in this vast corpus discusses sacred space—as revealed by petroglyphs at Terekty Aulie in central Kazakstan—in which different societies encounter different experiences, and the images carved on stone were symbols of spirits’ power and invisible realms.

Upon reading this corpus of material, one is left with little doubt that each prehistoric Eurasian population, sedentary or nomadic, had a many-faceted culture that requires many more investigative studies. The articles also illustrate the enthusiasm in which archaeologists are internationally collaborating and contributing to the scrutiny of Eurasian archaeology.

Jeannine Davis-Kimball
Berkeley, California
August 2000