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► **To cite this version:**

Annie Chan, Huiqiu Shao. The Andronovo elements of Xinjiang in the Eurasian Bronze Age. Contemporary Solutions to the Current Problems of Eurasian archaeology. Collection of Scientific Papers, vol. 2, Sep 2018, Barnaul, Russia. hal-03220976

HAL Id: hal-03220976

<https://hal.science/hal-03220976v1>

Submitted on 10 May 2021

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УДК 902«637»(575)

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THE ANDRONOVO ELEMENTS OF XINJIANG IN THE EURASIAN BRONZE AGE

Work is performed with support from the Tang Postdoctoral Research Award in Early China, Columbia University, and National Social Science Foundation of China (17ZDA221)

This paper assesses the corpus of materials from sites across western and northern Xinjiang attributed to the Andronovo culture or its influence. As one of the most extensively examined archaeological cultures in recent Central Asian scholarship, the Andronovo's dominion over Xinjiang, the purported eastern periphery, remains yet a perplexing phenomenon. The geography of Xinjiang shares many similarities with its adjacent regions; its mountain steppes and river basins constitute landscapes characteristic of environments in which elements of the Andronovan material culture thrived.

To address this eager inquiry into how and in what respects the archaeological record of Xinjiang was connected to the rest of Central Asia in the Bronze Age, this paper reviews a sizable corpus of excavated materials from local field research since the 1980s that however lacks synthesis and cross-examination. It considers the characteristics of these assemblages against the Andronovo's nomenclatural complexity and the history of its discourse in Eurasian archaeology. Specifically, we assess the critical physical and symbolic components of Andronovo culture in funerary, ritual and domestic contexts, and their variability in time and space. We propose a pluralist view of the Bronze Age of Xinjiang and the influence of the Andronovo. Through an integrated view of the evidence in hand, we seek to chart a more informative representation of the spatial reach of the “Andronovo” in Xinjiang and its implications in cultural terms based on substantive and systematic categories of evaluation that address rather than lean on differences in typology.

Key words: Xinjiang, Andronovo culture, Bronze Age, typology, Chinese archaeology, archaeology of Central Asia.

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ЭЛЕМЕНТЫ АНДРОНОВСКОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ СИНЬЦЗЯНА В ЕВРАЗИЙСКОМ БРОНЗОВОМ ВЕКЕ

Работа выполнена при финансовой поддержке Танг постдокторской премии в области науки в раннем Китае, Колумбийский университет и Национальный фонд социальных наук Китая (17ZDA221)

В статье рассматривается состав материалов из памятников Западного и Северного Синьцзяна, связанных с андроновской культурой или ее влиянием. Андроновская культура является одной из наиболее хорошо изученных археологических культур в ближайшем среднеазиатском регионе, однако предполагаемая ее восточная периферия в Синьцзяне все еще остается неисследованной. География Синьцзяна имеет много общего с сопредельными территориями; его межгорные степи и бассейны рек представляют собой ландшафты, характерные для мест, в которых процветали элементы материальной культуры андроновской общности.

Чтобы обратиться к запланированному исследованию, в котором будут рассматриваться вопросы о том, как и в каком отношении археологические данные по эпохе бронзы, полученные в Синьцзяне, связаны с остальной частью Средней Азии, в настоящей публикации представлен значительный объем имеющихся материалов, добытых в ходе местных полевых работ с 1980-х гг., которые, однако, не имеют обобщений и не прошли перекрестную проверку. Демонстрируются особенности этих коллекций в соответствии со сложившимися представлениями об андроновской культуре и истории ее обсуждения в евразийской археологии. В частности, дается оценка основных физических и символических компонентов андроновской культуры в погребальных, ритуальных и бытовых контекстах, учитывая их изменчивость во времени и пространстве. Предлагается плюралистический взгляд на эпоху бронзы Синьцзяна и на влияние андроновской культуры. Используя комплексный подход при рассмотрении имеющихся доказательств, авторы стремятся наметить с помощью картирования более информативное

представление о пространственном распространении памятников андроновской культуры в Синьцзяне, обращая внимание на результаты изучения, основанные на оценках систематизации предметных категорий, а не на их типологическом различии.

Ключевые слова: Синьцзян, андроновская культура, эпоха бронзы, типология, китайская археология, археология Евразии.

The Bronze Age Andronovo Culture in what is today's Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region of China has largely been characterized and contextualized in the absence of a close scrutiny of the term's etymological and chronological complexities in its longstanding Eurasian discourse. Built on a tendency toward perfunctory intra-regional comparisons and arbitrary nomenclature, the classification and periodization of prehistoric materials from Xinjiang have therefore seen limited progress in spite of the exponential increase in archaeological findings as a result of more extensive fieldwork. Here below, we summarize a number of our key findings and propose steps toward a more substantive and explicative Andronovo schema for the purpose of studying materials discovered in Xinjiang. The full research will be published at a later date.

First, we note that "Andronovo" research in Xinjiang archaeology remains largely shaped by traditional methods of object classification. The identification and coining of local material cultures are often prioritized and overshadow the need to address research questions of analytical and theoretical value. The context of the findings is seldom addressed independent of their cultural designations; thus, interpretations are often based on the comparison of packaged "cultures" and their presumed distribution and chronology.

This adherence to object-centric typologies is also undergirded by a strong bias toward funerary structures, which have been the focus of most local archaeological projects that were carried out often in the interest of urban developmental and non-archaeological agendas. Furthermore, results of many archaeological expeditions remain unpublished or unavailable, inhibiting interpretations that can be made concerning the origin, regional variability and geographical extent of the Andronovo in Xinjiang. A fundamental objective of our research is, therefore, to collate and re-systematize existing materials available to address these questions at hand.

Second, the problem of characterizing the Andronovo Culture in Xinjiang can be understood from the perspective of its discourse. Metallurgy has been the predominant focus of research since the discovery of the Agarsheng bronze hoard in the 1980s, which was the herald of intensive research into the Bronze Age of Xinjiang. The identification of Andronovo bronze, an alloy containing 3–10% tin (Sn), was an important breakthrough, although the most diagnostic of these bronze finds are surface finds with no burial contexts. Specifically, the bronze objects discovered in burials are almost exclusively ornaments.

In light of the importance of ceramics in Andronovo periodization on a trans-continental scale, another interesting development in the Xinjiang Andronovo discourse is the lack of systematic investigation into ceramics until the recent decade. The most important conjecture made so far is the connection between the Ili River Valley and the Semirechye region on account of their comparable vessels with a footed base. These are vessels with the most prominent etched decorations, which render them promising material for establishing typology. For ceramic finds from other regions of Xinjiang (Tacheng, Pamir, Bortala), the research is less cohesive; researchers are confronted with the problem of data availability and condition of preservation. Entire vessels have only been recovered from burials; descriptions of ceramic fragments found at habitation sites are brief and not conducive to further interpretations.

Third, the relationship of the Andronovo to other Bronze/Iron Age cultures in Xinjiang is another subject of our investigation. The range of calibrated radiocarbon dates place it squarely in the second millennium BCE, with most dates in the later half of the millennium. The geography of their distributions is clear in that the edge of Tian Shan and the Dzungarian Basin mark respectively the eastern and northern limits of the Andronovo material culture, beyond which are archaeological remains attributed to the Qi'ermuqieke (Chermuchek), the Eastern Tian Shan painted pottery tradition, as well as necropolises in the Tarim Basin.

To identify the basis of what "Andronovo" presents in the Bronze Age archaeology of Xinjiang, we refer to the development of Andronovo studies that began during the time of the Soviet Union in the 1920s. We consider various schemas and schools of thought that were devised to organize and analyze materials discovered in regions extending from the Caucasus to southern Siberia. The Andronovo is represented by a complex lineage of local cultures and technological traditions from the Southern Urals, to the Minusinsk Basin, the Yenisei Valley, and the Semirich'ye, each characterized by a different trajectory of development that embodies regional characteristics as well as globalized traits, most notably in ceramics (e.g. of Alakul and Fedorovo). We argue that aligning this evolving understanding of the geography of the "Andronovo community", as is referred to in Russian literature, with materials from Xinjiang, has important implications for contextualizing Bronze Age Xinjiang on a regional scale. Specifically, we point out the importance of not confounding regional nomenclature with actual material traits, especially when the terms can subsume multiple elements of material culture that were of mixed local and foreign descent.

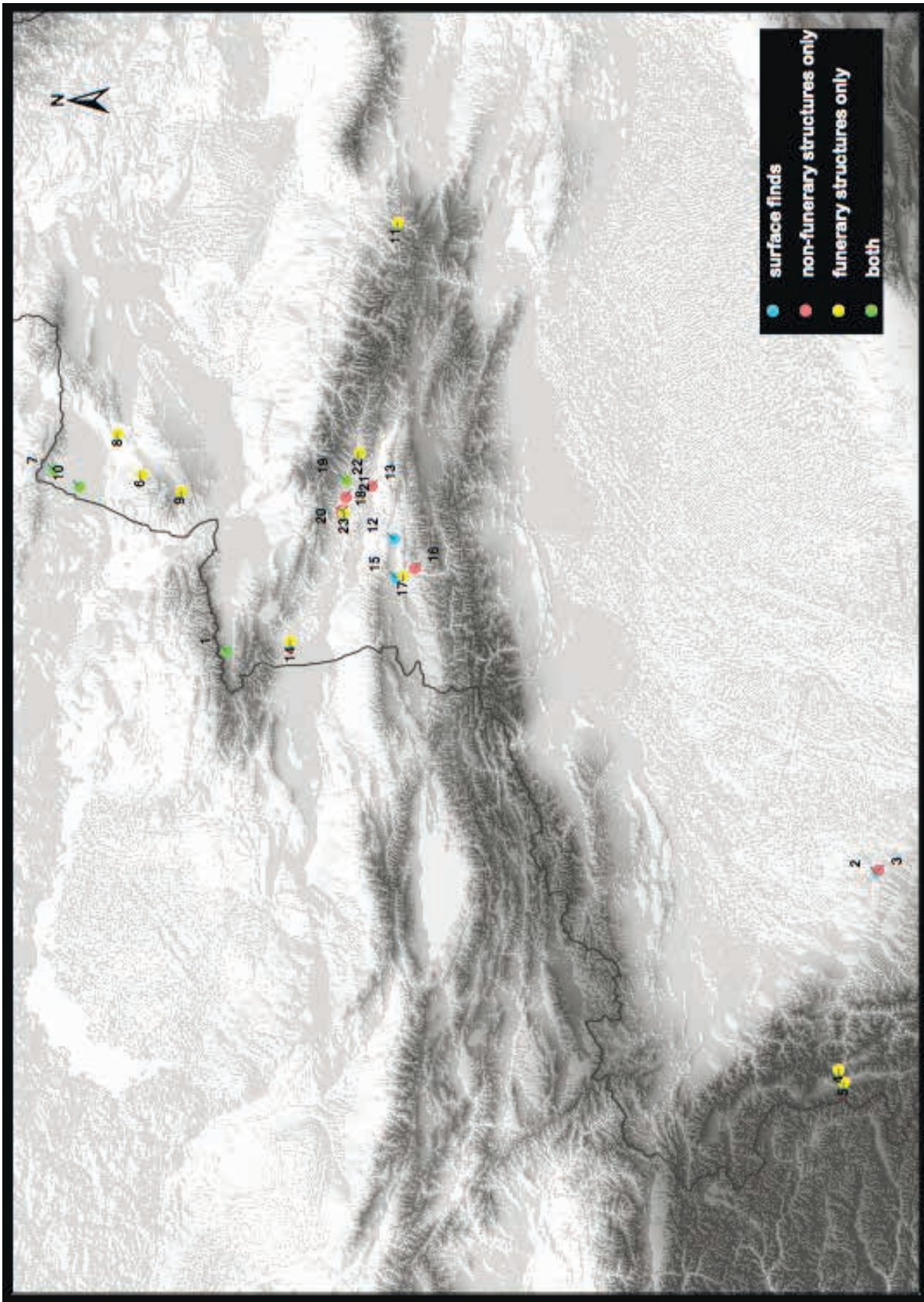


Fig. 1 Sites in Xinjiang with finds attributed to the Andronovo or its influence Рис. 1. Памятники в Синьцзяне с археологическими объектами, относимыми к андроновской культуре или связанными с ее влиянием

On the basis of a collective assessment of the corpus of archaeological material discovered in Xinjiang, our presentation will focus on 1) devising substantive criteria of assessment that enhance the analytical value of typologies for present and future research; and 2) clarifying diachronic and geographical patterns of variability and connectivity within the region of Xinjiang and with regard to the economic and sociocultural landscapes represented by other contemporaneous cultures in Central Asia.

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УДК 903(571.150)

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К ПРОБЛЕМЕ РЕКОНСТРУКЦИИ НЕОЛИТИЧЕСКОГО КОСТЮМА: ПО МАТЕРИАЛАМ МОГИЛЬНИКА ФИРСОВО-ХІ

Работа выполнена при финансовой поддержке РФФИ (проект №18-09-00779
«Антропологические и археологические грани этногенеза населения
юга Западной и Средней Сибири в эпохи неолита и ранней бронзы»)

Грунтовый могильник Фирсово-ХІ расположен в лесостепной зоне Алтая, на правом коренном берегу Оби, напротив Барнаула. Всего здесь раскопано восемь неолитических (энеолитических?) захоронений. Погребальный обряд единообразен: ингумация в грунтовой яме вытянуто на спине, руки вдоль туловища либо кисти покоились на верхней части тазовых костей. В шести погребениях обнаружены просверленные в корне зубы животных (волка, оленя, медведя), служившие элементами декора одежды. Наиболее информативным было парное погребение №14. Анализ расположения нашивок позволил предположить, что костюм для усопших специально шили к траурной церемонии. Согласно представлению авторов, покойные похоронены в легкой одежде: короткие куртки с узким горлом, которые одевались через голову; штаны; обувь ниже колена; возможно, без головных уборов. Есть основания предполагать, что погребения осуществлялись в теплый период года.

Ключевые слова: неолит, Алтай, погребение, реконструкция костюма, ожерелья из зубов животных.

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THE PROBLEM OF RECONSTRUCTION OF A NEOLITHIC COSTUME: BASED ON THE MATERIALS OF THE FIRSOVO-XI BURIAL

The work was supported by the Russian Foundation for Basic Research (Project No. 18-09-00779
“Anthropological and Archaeological Facets of the Ethnogenesis of the Population
of the South of Western and Central Siberia in the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age”)

Groundwater burial ground Firsovo-XI is located in the forest-steppe zone of Altai, on the right bank of the Ob river, opposite Barnaul. In total, eight Neolithic (Eneolithic?) burials have been excavated there. The funeral rite is uniform: the inhumation in the pit, the body is stretched out on the back, hands along the body or hands rest on the upper part of the pelvic bones. Six burials reveal the teeth of animals (wolf, deer, bear) drilled in the root, which served as ornamentation for clothes.