ДРЕВНИЕ И СРЕДНЕВЕКОВЫЕ КУЛЬТУРЫ ЦЕНТРАЛЬНОЙ АЗИИ

**СТАНОВЛЕНИЕ,
РАЗВИТИЕ И ВЗАИМОДЕЙСТВИЕ
УРБАНИЗИРОВАННЫХ И СКОТОВОДЧЕСКИХ
ОБЩЕСТВ**

Материалы Международной научной конференции,
посвященной 100-летию со дня рождения
д. и. н. А. М. Мандельштама и 90-летию
со дня рождения д. и. н. И. Н. Хлопина
10–12 ноября 2020 г.
Санкт-Петербург

INSTITUTE FOR THE HISTORY OF MATERIAL CULTURE
OF THE RUSSIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES
STATE HERMITAGE
PETER THE GREAT MUSEUM OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND ETHNOGRAPHY
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**ANCIENT AND MEDIEVAL CULTURES OF CENTRAL ASIA
(THE FORMATION, DEVELOPMENT AND INTERACTION
OF URBANIZED AND CATTLE-BREEDING SOCIETIES)**

*Proceedings of the international scientific conference dedicated to the 100th birth anniversary
of Doktor Nauk in Historical Sciences Anatolii M. Mandelstam and the 90th birth anniversary
of Doktor Nauk in Historical Sciences Igor' N. Khlopin*

10–12 November 2020, St. Petersburg

St. Petersburg
2020

ИНСТИТУТ ИСТОРИИ МАТЕРИАЛЬНОЙ КУЛЬТУРЫ РАН
ГОСУДАРСТВЕННЫЙ ЭРМИТАЖ
МУЗЕЙ АНТРОПОЛОГИИ И ЭТНОГРАФИИ
ИМЕНИ ПЕТРА ВЕЛИКОГО (КУНСТКАМЕРА) РАН
ИНСТИТУТ ВОСТОЧНЫХ РУКОПИСЕЙ РАН

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2020

*Организация конференции и издание сборника ее материалов осуществлены
при финансовой поддержке Российского фонда фундаментальных исследований, проект № 20–09–22011*

Утверждено к печати Ученым советом ИИМК РАН

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Древние и средневековые культуры Центральной Азии (становление, развитие и взаимодействия урбанизированных и скотоводческих обществ): Материалы Международной конференции, посвященной 100-летию со дня рождения д. и. н. А. М. Мандельштама и 90-летию со дня рождения д. и. н. И. Н. Хлопина (10–12 ноября 2020 г., Санкт-Петербург). — СПб.: ИИМК РАН, 2020. — 308 с., ил.

ISBN 978-5-907298-09-5

DOI 10.31600/978-5-907298-09-5

LIFE AND DEATH IN THE SCYTHIAN WORLD OF SOUTHERN SIBERIA: A SOCIAL BIOARCHAEOLOGICAL STUDY OF THE MOBILE PASTORALISTS FROM AYMYRLYG

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ЖИЗНЬ И СМЕРТЬ В СКИФСКОМ МИРЕ ЮЖНОЙ СИБИРИ: СОЦИАЛЬНО-БИОАРХЕОЛОГИЧЕСКОЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЕ МОБИЛЬНЫХ СКОТОВОДОВ ИЗ АЙМЫРЛЫГА

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DOI: 10.31600/978-5-907298-09-5-244-247

Keywords: *Early Iron Age, South Siberia, Aymyrllyg burial ground, nomads, bioarchaeology, diet, health, trauma, violence, care.*

Ключевые слова: *ранний железный век, Южная Сибирь, могильник Аймырлыг, кочевники, биоархеология, питание, здоровье, травма, насилие, лечение.*

The cemetery complex of Aymyrllyg is located in the Ulug-Khem region of Tuva deep in south Siberia near the border with Mongolia (Fig. 1). It spanned a vast distance of some 10 km and was located alongside a tributary of the mighty Yenisey River. It was excavated over a 16-year period between the 1960s and 1980s by Dr. Anatolii M. Mandelstam, one of the two great Russian archaeologists commemorated in this conference, and E. U. Stambulnik of the Sayan-Tuva expedition team from the Institute of the History of Material Culture in Leningrad. The excavations were necessary because the entire zone was scheduled to be flooded as part of the workings of a hydro-electric power station. The human skeletal remains were brought to the Department of Physical Anthropology of the Kunstkamera Museum. A detailed osteoarchaeological and palaeopathological analysis was undertaken of the population for PhD research and this study has formed the basis for additional and ongoing projects (see Murphy, Chistov 2020). Approximately 800 individuals were recovered from the burial ground — most of the earlier 607 interments dated to between the 5th and 2nd centuries BC and were attributed to the Uyük Culture of the later Scythian period (Мандельштам 1992: 185). The remainder of the population were derived from the Shurmak Culture of the early Hunno-Sarmatian period and was associated with the expansion of the Xiongnu Empire into Tuva (Стамбульник 1983: 34). This abstract will focus on the Scythian people.

The Aymyrllyg burial ground has yielded one of the most substantial and thoroughly analysed populations of the later Scythian World. In Book IV of his *Histories*, the 5th century BC historian Herodotus led us to believe that Iron Age populations of Scythia were highly nomadic and extremely violent. Modern bioarchaeological research on the human skeletons from Aymyrllyg has somewhat corroborated aspects of his writings. The scientific evidence derived from the remains, however, has enabled more nuanced understandings to be gained about the lives of these people, including diet and subsistence strategies, attitudes towards physically impaired individuals, weaponry and the nature of violent death, as well as funerary practices. Unlike the Scythian people buried in the spectacular royal tombs at Pazyryk in the Altai region of southern Siberia those interred at Aymyrllyg would have been the ordinary members of society

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Fig. 1. Map showing the location of Amyrlyg (drawn by Libby Mulqueeny)
Рис. 1. Местоположение могильника Аймырлыг на карте (рис. Л. Малквини)

and their study has enabled us to learn more about the lives and deaths of these men, women and children.

The Scythian burials at Amyrlyg were located at the edge of the river terrace and were distributed in chains which ran along the riverside. The exterior of each tomb generally comprised a low, rectangular-shaped wall composed of stone slabs sunk edgewise into the ground. A rectangular log house tomb placed within a deep pit dug into the ground formed the subterranean features of most tombs. This was a community burial ground used by these Iron Age semi-nomadic people; during the summer they probably spent their time roaming the steppes with their livestock, returning to the Amyrlyg environs during the colder months. We know this because some of the bodies had been treated in a way that suggested processing for their long-term storage; they had been reduced to small parcels and in some cases the soft tissues had been deliberately removed. These were the bodies of those who had died far from the cemetery during the summer months and required storage before the autumn journey down to the valley.

Herodotus gives the impression that the Scythians were a blood thirsty society who spent much of the time marauding in bands across the steppe lands. Among the Amyrlyg population there were clearly those who had suffered a violent death, particularly from the lethal blow of a battle axe (Fig. 2). While most of those who had died violently were adult males, some females and teenagers also displayed weapon injuries and presumably would also have been involved

Fig. 2. Battle-axe injuries in the skull of a 35–50-year-old man from Aymyrlyg (burial 8, skull 1). No evidence for healing was visible and it is probable the man died as a result of these blows (photo: Eileen Murphy)

Рис. 2. Раны от ударов боевого топора на черепе 35–50-летнего мужчины из Аймырлыга (погребение 8, череп 1). Видимых следов заживления нет — скорее всего, мужчина умер в результате этих ударов (фото: Э. Мерфи)

in warfaring practices. The involvement of women should be no surprise since Herodotus described in detail the Amazons; a tribe of female warriors. While the evidence for violent death is compelling only a small proportion of the Scythian people buried at Aymyrlyg had died in this manner; around 3 % of the adults.

Evidence of care and community support was also evident within the graves at Aymyrlyg that does not quite fit with the stereotypical image we have of Scythians and enables a more rounded understanding to be gained of these people. Some individuals displayed serious physical impairments that would have made it very difficult for them to have carried out daily tasks necessary for survival. One young woman, for example, displayed severe scoliosis or lateral curvature of the spine. Others must have invested life support measures in her, probably from when she was a relatively young age. Her bones were very light and delicate, suggesting she was largely immobile.

The important excavations of Anatolii M. Mandelshtam at Aymyrlyg have enabled the stories of these people to be told some 2500 years since they roamed the steppe.

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