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## THE CULTURES OF THE EARLY IRON AGE IN CHINA AS A PART OF THE SCYTHIAN WORLD\*

Based on archaeological and written sources, the authors characterize the two ethno cultural regions of the 9<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE that developed in the east of the Scythian world — in Xinjiang and North China. In the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE there, in local cultures of transitional appearance, burial complexes with “Scythian triad” individual elements in the Animal style in a horse bridle are recorded. It is obvious that both of these areas were the early Scythian cultures formation centers like the center in Tyva. At the same time, according to all sources, the Animal style was brought to the China territory from Mongolia. Due to natural factors, in these areas up to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Scythian cultures developed almost in isolation from each other in contact with the adjacent Kazakhstan, Southern Siberia and Mongolia regions. In the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE the northern part of Xinjiang (including the Tien Shan) get closed culturally with Pazyryk culture of Altai, and then to the Sakas and Wusuns of Kazakhstan. At this time the North China cultures were in close contact with South Siberia population. At the same time, some Scythian-like features were preserved in them until 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE, even after the Han and Xiongnu empires formation at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE.

**Key words:** Scythian world, Sakas, Wusuns, Early Iron Age.

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## КУЛЬТУРЫ РАННЕГО ЖЕЛЕЗНОГО ВЕКА В КИТАЕ КАК ЧАСТЬ СКИФСКОГО МИРА

Авторы на основании археологических и письменных источников характеризуют два этнокультурных региона IX—III вв. до н.э., которые развивались на востоке скифского мира — в Синьцзяне и Северном Китае. В IX—VIII вв. до н.э. здесь в местных культурах переходного облика зафиксированы погребальные комплексы с отдельными элементами «Скифской триады» в зверином стиле в узде коня. Очевидно, что оба эти района были центрами формирования ранних скифских культур, как и центр в Тыве. В то же время, по всем данным, звериный стиль был завезен на территорию Китая из Монголии. В силу природных факторов на этих территориях до II в. до н.э. скифские культуры развивались практически изолированно друг от друга, соприкасаясь с соседними регионами Казахстана, Южной Сибири и Монголии. Во второй половине IV в. до н.э. северная часть Синьцзяна (включая Тянь-Шань) находилась под влиянием пазырыкской культуры Алтая, а затем саков и усуней Казахстана. В это время культуры Северного Китая находились в тесном контакте с

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населением Южной Сибири. В то же время некоторые скифские черты в них сохранялись до III—II вв. до н.э., даже после образования империй Хань и Сунну в конце III в. до н.э.

**Ключевые слова:** скифский мир, саки, усуни, ранний железный век.

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The concepts of “Scythian world”, Scytho-Siberian cultures (world), “Scytho-Siberian Animal Style” and their derivatives firmly entered the researchers’ lexicon. They are also used by domestic and foreign specialists when dealing with cultures existing in the east of the Urals in (9<sup>th</sup>) 8<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE where the Scythians never existed. However, Herodotus’ messages about the Scythians arrival from Asia and the simultaneous European and Asian Scythians (Sakas and Massageteans) existence imply the presence of cultures close to the Black Sea Scythians in the East (Herod., I, 201, IV, 11, 13; etc). For the first time a significant number of “Scythian” Animal style samples were found not in the Black Sea region but in Siberia in the second half of the 17<sup>th</sup> — early 18<sup>th</sup> centuries. Such items were found by *bugrovschiki*<sup>1</sup> when digging out burial mounds, as well as by ore miners and peasants completing their work. Some of these items became the Peter the Great's Siberian collection at the beginning of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, some were exported abroad (Bogdanov 2006: 15). The Scythian mounds excavation in the Black Sea region started only in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but significant materials together with the Herodotus evidence immediately acquired a special status to the Scythian culture of the Black Sea. At first, many believed that the Northern coast of the Black Sea was the center of the Scythian culture and Animal style formation. At the same time, individual Scythian appearance items were also found in the far east of Eurasia — in Northern China from where they came to European collectors. As a result, in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century in European museums and private collections cumulated significant number of Animal-style items from the Black Sea region, Siberia and China have been formed. Soon, the scattered data were interpreted by researchers, and in 1897 two science papers were published. The authors (N.M. Yadrintsev and P. Reinecke) accentuated the connection between the findings from the Black Sea region, Siberia and North China (Chlenova 1967: 7). Thus, the latitudinal boundaries of Scytho-Siberian circle cultures (peoples) distribution latitudinal boundaries were determined for the first time in general terms. These assumptions about the «Scythian» culture existence far to the east were reinforced in the first third of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by publication of Animal-style items (“Ordos bronzes”) several large collections<sup>2</sup>. They are still used nowadays. However, in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century in China there has not yet been a proper scientific excavation of archaeological sites

<sup>1</sup> Mound robbers of 17<sup>th</sup> — 19<sup>th</sup> centuries.

<sup>2</sup> Note. Initially, “Ordos bronzes” meant the entire collection of bronze items found in the Ordos region. Among them there are the Late Bronze Age items of the Karasuk appearance, Scythian and Hunnic times. At present, “Ordos bronzes” are more often understood as Scythian time items found “by accident” in North China. These materials were actively used by Soviet archaeologists, including those actively working in Siberia (Kiselev 1951: 242, 246, 249, 270, 317; Rudenko 1960: 317—322; Chlenova 1967: 110—143).

containing the Animal style examples. The Ordos bronzes chronology has not yet been established and therefore the level of their interpretation often was not accurate<sup>3</sup>.

In the 50—60s of 20<sup>th</sup> century Scythian time archeology within the borders of the USSR reached a new level. Dozens of remarkable sites were discovered in Central Asia and Siberia; generalizing monographs were prepared and published. However, foreign and Soviet researchers' knowledge about the alleged Scythian-like cultures in China remained at almost the same level. The main reason for this is undeveloped archeology in China, language barrier as well as the deterioration of relations between the PRC and the USSR. Nevertheless, Scytho-Siberian cultures researchers in the USSR somehow tried to relate their materials to the Chinese history. Let's point at the position of three acknowledged researchers who largely determined the archeology directions of the Scythian time in Southern Siberia territory. S.V. Kiselev who examined the scarce archaeological data from Northern China and Mongolia in light of Ancient China written sources came to the conclusion that there was a commonality in space from the Scythians in the west to the Baikal region, Mongolia and Ordos population<sup>4</sup>. In his opinion, they all used "the same weapon, the same horse harness, similar adornments and were carried away by the same images and moods in art" (Kiselev 1951: 303). S.I. Rudenko who, in fact, had the same materials saw the Scythian world in a relatively narrow framework from the Black Sea region to the Pamir and Tien Shan where according to Herodotus the European and Asian Scythians lived. He attributed the Pazyryk culture to the Asiatic Scythians that advanced from the south through the Kazakh steppes to Altai. He believed that in the 6<sup>th</sup> — 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE this culture was a kind of outpost at the northeastern end of the Scythian world (Rudenko 1952: 248; 1961: 62). S.I. Rudenko connected "Ordos bronzes" of the Scythian appearance with the Huns explaining the Animal style presence by the earlier West Siberian and the Altai Mountains (Pazyryk) art influence on the "art of the ancient Xiongnu tribes" (Rudenko 1960: 313, 317).

At that time the Xinjiang territory continued to be a "blank spot" where many researchers (including S.I. Rudenko) traditionally placed the Yuezhi and Wusuns tribes based on the ancient (Rudenko 1960; Zadneprovsky 1992) Chinese chronicles<sup>5</sup>. According to S.V. Kiselev, at the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> — beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE Xinjiang was subordinated to the Yuezhi (Massageteans). At the same time, they allegedly penetrated into North China and Mongolia. Then in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE under Xiongnu blows of the they left through Xinjiang back to Central Asia (Kiselev 1951: 315—317, 322, 391). N.L. Chlenova also supposed migration of "significant population masses" who brought Middle Eastern art to North China and South Siberia to migrate (Chlenova 1967: 129) through Xinjiang<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A. Salmoni who published a large C.T. Loo collection dated the items of the Karasuk and Scythian appearance to the Han time (2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE — 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE), and items similar to Tagar — about 500 CE (Salmony 1933: 28).

<sup>4</sup> Unlike a number of researchers, S.V. Kiselev also differentiated Scythian time items preceding the Xiongnu ones among the "Ordos bronzes" (Kiselev 1951: 242, etc.).

<sup>5</sup> A large number of publications are devoted to these peoples habitat issues. It is traditionally believed that in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE Yuezhi lived in Gansu. Somewhere nearby the Wusuns also roamed (Borovkova 2001: 91). However, judging by the available data domestic and foreign researchers who localize Yuezhi in Xinjiang to the Hami region in the east are right (Barkova 2005: 17; Romgard 2008: 42). In this case, they were separated by about 1 thousand km from the Qin kingdom and later the Han Empire sphere of influence. It is not surprising that during the struggle against the Xiongnu the Han empire and Yuezhi did not unite against the common enemy of the Xiongnu at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. It is indicative that the Yuezhi complete defeat (about 167 BCE) was recognized in Han only after 25—30 years.) Accordingly, the kingdoms of China did not have trade relations with Yuezhi. It should be added that all the numerous attempts in China and Central Asia to identify the burials of Yuezhi are doomed to fail. Obviously, they did not leave the Shajing culture in Gansu, but all other cultures in Xinjiang could equally be part of Yuezhi association.

<sup>6</sup> By the overwhelming number of Russian-speaking, Chinese and "Western" researchers Xinjiang is still perceived as a passageway between Central Asia and China since the 2<sup>nd</sup> — mid-1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE. In particular, the penetration of the Saks into China in the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE is still assumed (Yang, Linduff 2013: 74, 79; Kang 2018: 410).

In general, with the accumulation of materials by the 60s, 20<sup>th</sup> century an increasing number of researchers began to incline towards an expanded interpretation of the “Scythian world” as a community that covered the entire Eurasian steppe belt concept. Large-scale archaeological excavations were carried out in Central Asia and Siberia territory, the deer stones of Mongolia were published (Volkov 1981: 2001). However, Russian-speaking archaeologists’ knowledge and ideas about Scythian-like cultures in China remained almost at the same level. It is significant that in M.P. Gryaznov’s science paper (Gryaznov 1980: 1983) it was assumed the Early Scythian sites in North China presence at the beginning of the 80s, 20<sup>th</sup> century BCE, while Xinjiang was not even mentioned. It is not surprising since the first large Scythian-like burial ground Chawuhugou-1 (8<sup>th</sup> — 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in Xinjiang) was started to be studied only in 1983, and it’s data in Russian were published much later (Khudyakov, Komissarov 2002: 54—59, fig. XI—VI; Varenov, Labukina 2003; Shulga 2010: 24—42, fig. 2—26).

In North China systematic Scythian-like sites excavations began earlier in the 70s, 20<sup>th</sup> century. However, the first detailed publication of information about the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture of the 11<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in Russian appeared only in 1987 (Komissarov 1987). At about the same time but more actively and at the level of summary materials from China were published by “Western” (Debaine-Francfort 1989; Graberkatalog Maoqinggou 1992; Bunker 1997) researchers<sup>7</sup>.

One way or another, to date, significant material on the cultures of the Scythian time has been accumulated on the territory of China. It is of particular importance, since it represents the last two large and peculiar Scythian world areas which are still poorly studied, — Northern China and Xinjiang.

Let’s consider them separately since in the period from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE cultures in these territories developed in isolation from each other and belonged to Scythian world different areas. It is important to note that these areas population differed racially as well. Since the Bronze Age Xinjiang has had a predominantly Caucasian population, and China (including Gansu) had a Mongoloid population<sup>8</sup>. Mongolia and Transbaikalia territory inhabited by Mongoloids basically corresponded to the Slab graves culture. The Mongoloids also left all the Scythian-like cultures located along the Ancient China northern and western borders: Maoqinggou, Yanglangg and Shajing<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> It should be noted that excavation materials in China are usually published in fragments. There are a few monographic editions with full publication of materials, which makes it extremely difficult to analyze Chinese Scythian-like cultures.

<sup>8</sup> According to T.A. Chikisheva, in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE “northern continental type” Mongoloids were “stably localized in the east of the early nomads’ world” and almost did not move westward (Chikisheva 2011: 354).

<sup>9</sup> Thanks to Grumm-Grzhimailo, the opinion about the Caucasoid tribes existence on the territory of Northern China and Southern Siberia confirmed in the Russian-language literature. They, first of all, included the Dinglings with whom, in particular, the Karasuk and Tagar cultures were associated (Kiselev 1951: 180—183) Moving forward, we note that the “problem” arose as a result of Chinese chronicles free interpretations including tribes “di” collective name (狄— di, or often 北狄— bei di, “north di”). It was unreasonably associated with the “dinglings”. However, Chinese researchers according to the available written sources indicate that the actual “dinglings” (丁零 or 丁灵) (not to be confused with the di tribes — these are different hieroglyphs) in China became known only from the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE when they were conquered by the Mode Shanyu in the Baikal region (Yang 2007).

## Northern China

According to Chinese chronicles, ancient China kingdoms were constantly been attacked by “barbarians” from the north and west in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In particular, their involvement led to the fall of Western Zhou in 770 BCE<sup>10</sup>. There is only one “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture at such an early time in North China<sup>11</sup>. This culture burial and settlement sites are located in an area favorable for pastoralism which included the Inner Mongolia (Chifeng city) region and the regions of Hebei and Liaoning provinces from the south (fig. 1). Their greatest concentration is observed in the strip stretching along the Laoha river 150 km south of Chifeng. At the same time, the southern sites are located only 200 km from Beijing where for a long time there was the capital of the Yan kingdom. Chinese archaeologists have been studying and analyzing this culture burial and settlement complexes for more than 60 years (Liu 2000; Wu 2007: 174—176; Zhao 2018). The topic was also highlighted by English-speaking (Bunker 1997; Psarras 1999) authors<sup>12</sup>. However, Chinese and foreign researchers did not have a common view on this culture content and chronology.

According to averaged data, the culture dates back to the 11<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. It flourished in the 9<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Weapons, horse harness, and Animal-style items were found in the Nanshangen-type burial group. They date back by located in the same complexes “Chinese” bronze ritual vessels and spear ge of the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Wu 2007: 177; Bunker 1997: 71). The few bridles details (bits and cheek pieces) from the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture burials and adjacent Shiertayingzi-type (“culture”) sites have practically nothing in common with the early Scythian ones of 9<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. They differ from accidental finds from Mongolia and from bits and cheek pieces of Chinese chariot bridles. According to available data, these are local variants with a three-hole cheek piece design and articulated bits (fig. 2: 12—16). The weapon also cannot be attributed to the Scythian types (fig. 2: 1—7). The only exceptions are daggers with crosshairs in the form of directed at an angle to the blade “tendrils” with knobs at the ends (fig. 2, 6). They are similar to those found in Arzhan-1 (Savinov 2018: 94). This eastern form did not become widespread in the Scythian world. At the same time, well-defined “tendrils” crosshairs with knobs at the ends are found only in daggers with a violin-shaped blade. Daggers with such a blade appear in the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture from the southeast under the Shiertayingzi culture influence (Kang 2011: 90) and did not become widespread in the Scythian world either.

Having fully developed Animal style images is pretty unexpected. Moreover, they are found on daggers that have analogies in the Late Bronze Age (fig. 2: 1—5). In the Nanshangen, Xiaoheshigou and some other burial grounds there are curled up crouching cat predators (fig. 2: 1, 2, 4, 9, 10, 13, 14), deer (fig. 2: 5) and stylized raptor-headed tines (Liu 2000: fig. 11—15; Kovalev 1998; Bogdanov 2006: 36—39, 56—57; Kang 2011) (fig. 2: 2) Like burial complexes, Animal-style objects date from the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Bunker 1997: 71; Wu 2007: 177). A.A.

<sup>10</sup> On this basis, their connection with the possible nomadic world activation in the east represented by the Arzhan-1 mound (Tyva, about 800 BCE) was assumed (Savinov 2002: 36).

<sup>11</sup> The author of the proposed work does not give various pastoral peoples’ names mentioned in the Chinese chronicles. Judging by the available archaeological data and the conclusions of authoritative researchers, ethnonyms such as “di”, “rong”, “hu”, “xiongnu” and others usually referred to heterogeneous tribes and clans. Their culture and funeral rites (including the early Xiongnu) are unknown. For this reason, in North China there are several mutually exclusive definitions for almost every group of “barbarians” burials.

<sup>12</sup> Archaeologists in the post-Soviet space are almost not aware of this culture. The culture materials as a whole were considered only once (Komissarov 1987), have been partially addressed upon the Xiongnu culture origins (Minyaev 1991; Kovalev 2002; Minyaev 1985) and the Animal style (Kovalev 1998; Bogdanov 2012: 36) as well as the Yuhuangmiao culture origin (Shulga 2015: 18—19).

Kovalev dated them from “IX — at the latest the beginning of the VII century BC” (Kovalev 1998: 127). Thus, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE in the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture area the Scytho-Siberian Animal style items were already been produced. E.S. Bogdanov also came to this conclusion. He believes that the curled up and crouched predators images were perceived by nomads from Chinese culture (Bogdanov 2006: 36, 56). D.G. Savinov also notes the significant influence of Western Zhou era China on some Animal style and equipment features at the Scythian culture formation stage (Savinov 2018: 94—96).

In order to clarify the Animal style origins in the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture let us note that they are not recorded either at this culture early stage and in Northern China Bronze Age cultures or in the “violin-shaped dagger” culture that had a strong influence and in the Chinese culture. The only source for the fully developed animal style “classical” examples emergence may be the Mongolia Late Bronze Age cultures<sup>13</sup>. The Animal style there is remarkably represented on deer stones which were probably been made in the 10<sup>th</sup> — 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE or at the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (Volkov 2001: 18, 22). The spoon-shaped pendants variety in the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture may also indicate a certain influence of Mongolia and Transbaikalia.

The “Xiajiadian upper layer culture” was one of the foundations for the subsequent Yuhuangmiao culture formation in the 7<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. These cultures inventory and burial ceremony are very close. In China this similarity is usually interpreted as a result of the earlier “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture influence (Yang 2004: 78; Liu 2000: fig. 17, 19; Jin 2018: 65).

### *Yuhuangmiao culture*

The next recognized Scythian-like culture with a complete “Scythian triad” is the Yuhuangmiao culture. This culture sites are located to the north of Beijing. At the same time, its area partially overlaps with the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture area. The Yuhuangmiao culture funeral rite has been most fully traced at the Yuhuangmiao burial ground. There 400 undisturbed burials were uncovered and their relative chronology was traced within the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> — 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Shulga 2015). The graves were oriented with a long axis in the latitudinal direction and were located on the burial ground rather tightly without significant grave superstructures. A wooden coffin was installed at the graves bottom 1,5—2 m deep. One person was buried in the coffin in a supine position, elongated, with his head to the eastern sector (fig. 5: B1). A large ceramic vessel was often placed in the heads. In the grave filling above the deceased’s head were the cattle and horses skulls and leg bones facing the east as well as the small cattle and dogs skulls. Men often had bronze daggers paired with knives and type-setting belts details in the belt area, bronze arrowheads, celts paired with “adzes” and horse equipment at their feet. The women were buried with earrings, spoon-shaped pendants on trimmed with badges breast accessories and pincushion at the right hip. Many of these ritual features are fixed in the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture, including the tradition of covering the deceased’s face with a cloth with several sewn badges.

Of the weapons there are daggers with a butterfly-shaped crosshair and arrowheads which have full analogies in the Altai-Sayan (fig. 3: 2, 4, A5—A8, B5—B8). Horse harness contains bits with pawn-shaped ends (fig. 4: A2, B2) typical for the Scythian world’s eastern part, “Eastern” ones with

<sup>13</sup> A.A. Kovalev originally believed that the Animal style in Manchuria was formed with the participation of the Sakas (Kovalev 1992: 74) but then suggested that the “Animal style images” from Nanshangen burials “formed much earlier, at least, in the VIII century BC and at that time existed in the territories adjacent to Inner Mongolia” (Kovalev 1992: 130).

a rein frame (fig. 4: *A1, B1*) and Eurasian ones with stirrup-like ends (fig. 4: *A3, B3*) as well as the earliest construction of bits and double-hole cheek pieces inserted into their outer ends (fig. 4: *A2*). The Animal style is represented by numerous images of feline predators curled up and crouching to the ground (fig. 3: 3—9), deer with bent legs (fig. 3: 12, 13), standing wild boars (fig. 3: 18), stylized predatory bird's heads (fig. 3: 2*a*), horses without a grin in various poses (fig. 3: 11, 15), ibex (fig. 3: 14) as well as specific images of grinning horses in predator crouching to the ground pose (fig. 3: 10) and dogs (fig. 3: 16, 17). In the Yuhuangmiao culture inventory and art the influence of the "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture as well as of the northern nomads, who merged before coming to the Jundushan mountains, is well traced<sup>14</sup>. "Northern nomads" inventory analogies lead us to Mongolia as well as in Tyva and the Minusinsk Hollow inhabited by Caucasians<sup>15</sup>. However, this Caucasians did not take part in the Yuhuangmiao culture creation since the deceased in Yuhuangmiao were Mongoloids. At the same time, prestigious Chinese items were found in the elite Yuhuangmiao burials, as well as in Nanshangen: bronze ritual vessels, spears *ge* and daggers. As a rule, the belts were fastened with Chinese-type hooks. The celts and most of the knives were mass-produced apparently in workshops. Over time, ceramics were also made on the wheel using Chinese technology.

Thus, considering the interconnected "Xiajiadian upper layer" and Yuhuangmiao in Northern China cultures we must take into account at least three sources of their formation: 1) the local pastoralist's culture; 2) northern nomads periodic influence; 3) Chinese culture influence including Zhongyuan, the Yan kingdom and some other cultures. At the level of our knowledge, it can be assumed that the "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture perceived the Animal style from Mongolia in the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Based on this culture and "northern nomads" new wave in the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE Yuhuangmiao culture was formed. Its area was located directly to the north of the Yan kingdom borders and partially overlapped transforming and dying "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture area (fig. 1).

In the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE the northern component at the Yuhuangmiao burial ground suddenly disappeared completely and the culture faded away in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE. However, in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE the part of Yuhuangmiao culture population moved about 300 km westward where at the lake Daihai the Maoqinggou culture was formed ((6<sup>th</sup>) 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries. BCE). Some researchers distinguish the Taohongbala "culture" in the Ordos northern part (Wu 2007: 322—356). However, the sites attributed to it are rather late and poorly documented. There are also vivid items in the Animal style but their chronology and cultural affiliation are not clear.

### *Maoqinggou culture*

The Maoqinggou culture became known after Maoqinggou burial ground materials publication in China (Tian, Guo 1986) and in German (Graberkatalog Maoqinggou 1992). At the same time these materials were often involved in the discussion of this culture possible attribution to the Xiongnu culture early stage. The connection between the Maoqinggou burial ground and Central Kazakhstan Tasmola culture was also assumed. Currently, Chinese researchers increasingly regard the Maoqinggou culture as the Yuhuangmiao culture successor. The Maoqinggou culture monuments geographic location, as well as the funeral rite and inventory peculiarities, suggests that it was an intermediary in the contacts between Mongolia and southern Siberia tribes and the Ninxia-

<sup>14</sup> The two groups of Mongoloid population merger at the Yuhuangmiao burial ground is also confirmed by anthropologists (Beijing shi wenwu yanjiusuo 2007).

<sup>15</sup> A lot of similarities were revealed in the course of comparing the Yuhuangmiao funeral rite with images on Mongol-Transbaikalian deer stones (Shulga 2012) and Transbaikalia.

Gansu region cultures (the Yanglangg and Shajing cultures) (fig. 1). The overwhelming cultural monuments majority are ground burials located to the northeast of the Huang He (Daihai Lake area).

The Maoqinggou culture has a special resemblance to the Yuhuangmiao burial ground where a similar burial rite is recorded — single burials on the back, elongated with the head to the east. The domestic animals skulls were placed in the grave filling (fig. 5: *A, B*). The inventory order of arrangement and composition largely the same with the only difference that the inventory in Yuhuangmiao has earlier forms and there are many Chinese products. The early Xindianzi burial ground demonstrates the undoubted proximity (apparently one-culture) with Yuhuangmiao near Daihai. The genetic relationship between these burial grounds is also confirmed by anthropological data. As a result, the Maoqinggou culture absorbed the northern component from the Yuhuanmiao culture and the southwestern one from the Yanglangg and Shajing cultures.

In the first period of culture formation in the Daihai lake area the funeral rite and inventory are generally correspond to Yuhuangmiao (fig. 5), but the Yanghai culture influence is well traced in the belt furniture design. Apparently, it was from there that large belt badges with a conditional scene of herbivore torment by predator (“animal combat scene”) (fig. 5: *B5*), butterfly-shaped badges in different variations (fig. 5: *B4*), various piercing badges with the bird of prey’s head on the shield and also having analogies in the Shajing culture corrugated tubules and badges with a zigzag bridge. Probably, this set also included buckles with a protruding “nose” (fig. 5: *B3*). Although, earlier this design buckles have been already borrowed from Yuhuangmiao, in particular, in the curled up predator form (fig. 3: 7). Daggers and belt hooks of the Chinese type were not recorded at the Maoqinggou early stage.

At the second stage, Chinese type belt hooks, daggers with a butterfly-shaped crosshair and a “vulture” finial, as well as socketed shaft three-vane arrowheads were added to the already mentioned complex. In later burials some of the daggers and belt furniture were made of iron. Horse harness is represented by only a few distributors and simple ringed bits. Elite Maoqinggou culture burials have not yet been identified.

### *Yanglang culture*

Until recently, the Yanglang culture was practically unknown to archaeologists in the post-Soviet area. It did not attract “Western” researcher’s attention although the materials were published there (Bunker 1997: 41—46). The situation changed after elite burials at the Majiayuan burial ground of the 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE excavation. A peculiar Animal style from Majiayuan gave rise to ideas about its indirect links with Saka culture. There were even suggestions about groups of Saka masters penetration into North China. There, these masters allegedly created wonderful decorations in Majiayuan and Xinchuangtou (M30) (Kang 2018: 410). The position of Wu Xiaolong seems to be more balanced; he pointed to the Yanglang culture funeral rite and animal style characteristic features which are clearly visible in Majiayuan (Gansu sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2014; Yang, Linduff 2013; Xiaolong 2013).

To date, the Yanglang culture is the most representative Scythian culture of the 6<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries in North China. Only there elite burials (Majiayuan) have been identified, and all the “triad” components are present: Animal style, weapons and horse harness. Most of the known Yanglang culture burial grounds are located in the Ningxia Hui Autonomous Region southern part, as well as in adjacent Qingyang County of Gansu eastern part (Xu et al. 1993; Ningxia wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2016; Varenov 2011; Shulga, Shulga 2019) (fig. 1).



In the Yanglang culture burials the "triad" is represented much more fully than in the Maoqinggou and Shajing cultures. Horse harness includes numerous details of bridles and trappings with bits, cheek pieces, various distributors for horse head belts and badges. This was mostly chariot horse's equipment as indicated by the chariots parts that is indicated by often found in burials four bridles sets and chariot cheek pieces with a large central hole. Probably, the chariots were already used at the culture initial stage. According to Wangdahu burial ground materials, chariots with four horses were been used throughout its operation entire period from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. Even in the Majiayuan elite tombs of the 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE there were five chariots types including those for war, hunting, and ceremonial trips (Xiaolong 2013: 126). In the Yanglang early sites a significant number of bronze "oriental" bits with dedicated rein frame similar to those found in Yuhuangmiao (fig. 6: 6, 7) were found. They could be used in riding and draught horses' bridles. Bronze and iron S-shaped double-hole cheek pieces and articulated bits with large rings at the ends, which were used later, had common Eurasian shapes (fig. 6: 5, 8).

The armament was also varied. A significant number of Eurasian appearance bronze daggers with a butterfly-shaped crosshair and a ring-shaped or antenna pommel were found (fig. 6: 1—4). The belt furniture including "classical" for the Scythian world eastern part large badges with a conditional scene of herbivore torment by predator (fig. 6: 10—13) as well as butterfly-shaped and six-section badges and corrugated tubes are remarkably presented (fig. 6: 16—27). These four items types are known in the east of the Scythian world up to the Angara in the north and the Upper Ob region in the west. The Animal style is varied. A significant similarity to the Maoqinggou culture between weapons and jewelry can be traced (Xu et al. 1993). At some burial grounds two types of belt badges significant series specific for the Shajing culture were found (fig. 6: 25—34). Apparently, it was from the Yanglang culture that the above-mentioned belt furniture details spread in the east of the Scythian world at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.

The relatively isolated Shajing culture revealed in the Gansu corridor apparently had a certain influence on the Eastern Scythian cultures (Varenov 2011) (fig. 1). Two large ground cemeteries investigated near the Jinchang city (Gansu sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2001) gave homogeneous material. There the dead were buried on their backs with their heads to the north in simple pits with steep walls or in undercut graves. The inventory bulk in these burial grounds is represented by bronze belt furniture. There were corrugated tubes (fig. 6: 27) as well as various badges, including six- and nine-sectional (fig. 6: 25, 28—34) among its details. The last one is apparently the earliest in the Scythian world's eastern part. It is interesting that they are not found in the nearest Yanglang and Maoqinggou cultures but they are found in significant numbers on the Upper Ob in the monuments of the 6<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE together with butterfly-shaped badges (Frolov 2008: fig. 77, 147). Weapons and horse harness are almost not represented. Chinese researchers date the Shajing culture within the framework of the 8<sup>th</sup> — 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Li 1994: 515). Bronze knives of early forms (including "tailed" knives), which have analogies in the monuments of the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE, seem to correspond to this.

The materials analysis makes it possible to trace the Scythian cultures in North China formation and transformation process. The earliest is the "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture. Its representative monuments date back to the 9<sup>th</sup> — first half of the 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. At that time the population in its area was in close contact with the Yan kingdom and neighboring cultures. Presumably, as a result of contacts with the Mongolia nomads in 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE, already established distinctive animal style images were spreading in the art of culture. By the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE the "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture population part and nomadic Mongoloid tribes from Mongolia moved 150—250 km west to the Chinese kingdom of Yan northern border, where they

mixed and settled. According to some researchers, the “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture had a significant impact on the later ethno cultural formations of North China (Yang 2004: 78). Interestingly, according to DNA data, some of the horses in the Yanglang culture come from the “Xiajadyan upper layer” culture area (Chifeng area), where their ancestors were in the Early Bronze Age (Ningxia wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2016: 697—698).

In the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Yan agricultural population was gradually assimilating and ousting the Yuhuangmiao culture “barbarians”. A part of the Yuhuangmiao culture population, which retained ties with the “northern nomads”, migrated 250—300 km west to Ordos in the Daihai Lake area. On this basis, at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> — beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the Maoqinggou culture was formed there (fig. 1). In (6<sup>th</sup>) 5<sup>th</sup> — 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the Yanglang and Shajing cultures population groups came to the same territory from the southwest, which is well documented by the funeral rite and implements specific features introduced by them (see above). In the Daihai lake area aliens buried their dead in the same cemeteries with the Maoqinggou culture bearers. The “northern nomads” complex disappearance from the Yuhuangmiao culture (primarily from the Yuhuangmiao burial ground) in the first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE did not mean severing of the established links with the “northern nomads”. On the contrary, it was at that time the so-called “eastern” bits with a rein frame spread among the non-Chinese population, including in the Yanglang culture (the Ningxia region and the adjoining part of Gansu). They are known on Mongolia and in Tyva territory in a 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE burial but the largest number of them was found in the Minusinsk Hollow (Shulga 2015: 121—122). The earliest examples of these bits appeared in the late 7<sup>th</sup> — early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE at the Yuhuangmiao burial ground site No. 2 (fig. 4: *AI*). Apparently, they were borrowed from there by the population of Northern China, Mongolia and the Minusinsk Hollow where they were been used during the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

In the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE a new stage of relations between North China Scythian-like cultures and South Siberia, with the participation of Ancient China Kingdoms, began. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE a full-scale trade with nomads began on the northern Chinese kingdoms Qin, Zhao and Yan borders (Di Cosmo 2014). At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE the Pazyryk culture the area of which at that time expanded several times to include the part of the Mongolia north-west and northern Xinjiang, also became an active Chinese goods consumer. The unfolded trade initiators were the Northern Chinese kingdoms involved in escalated struggle for hegemony in China. Apparently, similar events took place in the 4<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE in Qin as well.

It should be noted that the Northern China Scythian cultures economic activity was characterized by a greater sedentarity degree which left its mark on their funeral rites and means of transportation. The cultures cemeteries without mounds are similar to cemeteries of population living for a long time in one place. Thus, on the territory of Northern China, the Yuhuangmiao burial ground, where they were buried for about 150 years, had 400 graves with a distance of 1—4 m between them. At the same time, the graves were consistently built in one direction. There were no burial mounds. A large number of dog skulls in the burials (Yuhuangmiao), cattle skulls (Yanglang and Maoqinggou cultures), the pig bones appearance in the later stages also indicate a high degree of sedentarity. In the “Xiajadyan upper layer” culture long-term dwellings are noted. At the same time, cattle breeding played main role in “barbarians” economy. Apparently, the most mobile way of life was seasonal nomadism in a limited area with only a part of the capable population participation.

Another feature of the “nomads” (“early nomads”) who lived on the territory in the Scythian time is that many of them reliably used chariots from the 7<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE inclusive like the Chinese kingdoms and state formations inhabitants such as Zhongshan. At the same time, it is not entirely clear when and in what form they mastered horse riding. Oddly enough, riding horse

harness reliable sets with bridle and saddle with a girth details for the 8<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE has not yet been found there. We can see riding horses with saddles only in Qin Shi Huang “terracotta army” reflecting the situation in the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. In Yuhuangmiao cultures (starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE), as well as Yanglang (up to the 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE) were used for several types of activities. It should be especially noted that “shan-rongs” soldiers from Yuhuangmiao where the chariot horse harness was found had special charioteer decorations hanging from the waist not suitable for the rider (Shulga 2015: 60; Shulga, Shulga 2020). In this regard, the TJ Barfield’s opinion of that “horse nomadic pastoralists appeared on the Chinese border shortly after the beginning of the IV century BC” and that “Earlier Chinese sources on the border regions history collected in the “Zuo Zhuan” work, mention only the poorly organized Rong and Di tribes who fought in small detachments on foot” (Barfield 2009: 36).

Apparently, before the pastoralists total displacement from their lands start in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE a significant part of them lived settled. Some of them were familiar with the Chinese-shaped bronze vessels ritual side of use. In this respect, the Yuhuangmiao burial ground left by sedentary pastoralists who used Chinese products and fought on chariots is indicative.

## Xinjiang

Large-scale archaeological work in Xinjiang began relatively late — in the 80s — 90s, 20<sup>th</sup> century. Basically, they were associated with the intensive Tien Shan foothills economic development. The northern and southern regions are much less studied. Nevertheless, archaeological research has recently intensified there, in particular, in the areas adjacent to Kazakhstan, Altai Mountains (Kazakhstan, Russia) and Mongolia<sup>16</sup>. At the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century several summarizing monographic studies on Xinjiang Bronze Age and Early Iron Age cultures have been published (Han 2007; Guo 2012). Relatively recently, a monographic study on specified time bronze items was published (Liu 2017), materials from the Saensayi (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2013) and Mohuchakhan (Zhang, Alifujiang, Tan 2016). were published in full. However, most of the excavations results information is still published selectively in brief reports and articles.

In the 8<sup>th</sup> — 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the Xinjiang population was predominantly Caucasian belonging to Kazakhstan and southern Siberia cultures range. At the same time, the special burial rite and ceramics unambiguously indicate the main known cultures (Chauhu and Subeixi) local and independent formation. No noticeable ties or mutual influence with North China nomads is recorded. There is no significant evidence of trade relations between the population and Western Asia. The tribes located on Dzungaria periphery, of course, interacted with neighboring peoples which is clearly visible in the Ili river basin (Sodunbulake culture) as well as in the north in the Altai district (Pazyryk culture) and in the northeast — on the border with Mongolia where large *hereksurs*<sup>17</sup> and a high number of deer stones are recorded at the Sandaohaizi site. Altai-Sayan and Western Mongolia cultures influence is also noticeable in the Hami region in the north-east of Xinjiang (Yanbulake culture).

<sup>16</sup> In Xinjiang southern part along the rivers flowing from the mountains separated from Tien Shan by the Taklakan Desert, interesting Scythian time sites are also revealed and studied, for example, early Scythian time Lushui burial ground on the Keriya river (Wang, Wu 2011), Zhagunluke burial ground of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE and others (Guo 2012: 169—189). However, their cultural affiliation is not entirely clear, and they are not considered at this work.

<sup>17</sup> From Mongolian. Peculiar mounds of stones laid out in the form of a wheel with a central embankment and “spokes”.

In Tyva, adjacent to Xinjiang Altai and Kazakhstan territories the Early Scythian sites ((8<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> — early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) are fundamentally different from Scythian time ones (second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE) identified in the same territory. This distinction occurred as a result of an epoch-making change in Scythian world cultures approximately in the middle — second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE. In the relatively isolated Xinjiang ethno cultural changes during this period were not so dramatic. For example, Chawuhu culture burials at the Chawuhugou-4 cemetery where been made from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Shulga 2010: 35—39). However, after an epoch-making change of cultures at the end of the 6<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE out of 248 graves only 5 graves were built. After that, no burials were made at the burial ground. In some areas (for example, in Hami) it seems that there is a continuity between the early Scythian sites and the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> BCE centuries ones, but there is not enough information for confident conclusions. In this regard, it is advisable to consider Xinjiang Scythian monuments within two periods: 9<sup>th</sup> — 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE and 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE.

For the period of the 8<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE in the Tien Shan and Dzungaria most researchers recognize four main cultures located along the Tien Shan from west to east: the Ili river basin culture (Sodunbulake culture<sup>18</sup>), Chawuhu, Subeixi and Yanbulake (fig. 1)<sup>19</sup>.

The Chawuhu culture got its name from studied in 1983-89 four burial grounds Chawuhugou-1, 2, 4, 5 located in the Southern Tien Shan, to the west of the Bagrashkel lake about 250 km south-southwest of Urumqi (Wang 1999; Shulga 2010: 24—42) (fig. 1). These and other Chawuhu culture burial grounds were dated within the framework of the 8<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Moreover, there are only a few late burials of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE among them. The culture has become significantly older after the recent exploration of Mohuchahan burial ground of the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE located 48 km west of the burial grounds in Chawuhugou (Zhang, Alifujiang, Tan 2016).

The Chawuhu culture is the most studied in Xinjiang. In addition to the numerous articles, materials from the Mohuchahan and Chawuhugou-1, 2, 4, 5 burial grounds have been published at monographs. At these burial grounds the culture can be traced from its emergence in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE until its complete extinction in the 6<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. It is important that the earliest Mohuchahan burial site materials where a consistent change in the funeral rite and inventory during the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE is traced have been fully published. There is almost nothing in the Mohuchahan burial ground materials from the “Scythian triad” in its original understanding. However, according to all data, this burial ground belongs to the Chawuhu culture represented by the Scythian-like burial grounds Chawuhugou-1, 2, 4, 5. This situation is very similar to that recorded in North China. There, in the “Xiajadyan upper layer” early cultural sites of the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the “triad” is represented only by the Animal style. However, this culture is genetically related to the subsequent undoubtedly Scythian-like Yuhuangmiao culture (see above).

There are no Animal style and distinctive weapons in Mohuchahan. All inventory fits into the transitional period from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age (Shulga, Shulga, Khasnullina 2019). At the same time, specific Arzhan type cheek pieces were found in Mohuchakhan (fig. 7: 11—13) apparently even earlier than in Arzhan-1 (fig. 8: 3—7). All known Arzhan type cheek

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<sup>18</sup> The Sodunbulake culture was singled out relatively recently (Guo 2012: 217—221). The burial rite and inventory at the culture burial grounds are rather homogeneous and almost completely corresponds to the Ili River valley in Kazakhstan Sakas and Wusuns culture.

<sup>19</sup> It should be noted that these cultures content is interpreted differently by Chinese researchers. Based on the criteria taken by the researchers only Chawuhu and Sodunbulake with reservations can be considered the Early Iron Age archaeological cultures of Xinjiang.

pieces in Tuva, Altai Mountains (Russia, East Kazakhstan) and on the Upper Ob River are dated by researchers to the Early Scythian time initial stage no later than the VIII century BC. It is not excluded that the early group close to the Chawuhu population left burials in the Altai Mountains in Kurtu-2 attributed to the Biiken culture initial stage. Kurtu-2 also contained the Arzhan-type cheek pieces near the horse's skull (Sorokin 1966: fig. 5: 1).

In general, the Chawuhu culture burial rite evolution is as follows. The earliest published Mohuchahan and Chawuhu-5 burial grounds were located on river terraces in gorges 2—9 km from river mouths. These were long-functioning sedentary pastoralist's cemeteries. The graves number in their cemeteries reached 235 (Mohuchahan) and 150 (Chawuhugou-5). The burials were made sequentially in a certain direction which makes it possible to establish their relative chronology. The graves were located at a distance of 1—3 m from each other. There were no burial mounds, but oval and then fences in the shape of a triangle were built around the pits. At the Mohuchahan burial ground final stage altars with the horses and small cattle's skulls appeared in the fences tops. Similar altars in fences became a characteristic feature in the Chawuhugou-1, 4 burial grounds. Burial chambers in Mohuchahan were initially built of large pebbles in small graves (depth 20—60 cm, length 150—200 cm). One or two passages were made at the ends of the chambers. At an early stage one person laid on his side with the turn to his back, with his head in the northern sector was buried in the chamber. Over time, the graves and chambers became larger, and two people were buried in them more often. Group (3—4 persons), including secondary, single-layer burials appeared in Mohuchahan at the Mohuchahan burial ground functioning very final stage (fig. 7: A).

At the Chawuhugou-1, 2, 4 burial grounds the rite further evolution from the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE is traced (fig. 7: B, C, D). The number of deaths in the graves gradually increased to 7, 16 and even 21 people. They began to be buried in layers in burial chambers made of gravel that increased in height. At the final stage in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE the chambers overlap raised above the surface level. These chambers upper part began to be covered with stones, with the result that stone mounds appeared.

The Mohuchahan and Chawuhu-1, 2, 4 inventory composition in these burial grounds coincided largely by categories (weapons, horse equipment parts, knives, ceramics, awls, spindle whorls, mirrors). However, almost all of them differed typologically with the exception of ceramics. According to all data, the main reason for the differences in inventory is the greater Mohuchahan burial ground antiquity.

It should be noted that in the standard burial grounds from Chawuhugou there are almost no weapons and relatively few Animal style items. However, almost all of them came from belt fittings, which have full analogies in the Altai-Sayansites of the VII century BC (fig. 7: 1—5). The only exception is a bone (horny) three-hole cheek-piece decorated with a ram's head<sup>20</sup> (fig. 7: 7) and two bronze mirrors from the Chawuhugou-4 burial ground early part. On these mirrors there are images of curled up predators (fig. 9: 8, 9). It's not entirely clear where these mirrors were produced. As the author's research has shown, to some extent they continue the tradition noted in the Mohuchahan burial ground, which has its roots in the Bronze Age (fig. 9). These images presence on the mirrors rather indicates the mirrors import. At least, none of the documented complexes known to the author in Xinjiang have such images, but there are quite a lot similar badges with a curled predator and edge of radial lines in North China.

<sup>20</sup> This image is named by A.A. Kovalev "vulture-goat", that served as the basis for the conclusion about mentioned by Herodotus Asiatic Scythians arrival from Xinjiang to Western Asia and the "European steppes" in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Kovalev 1996: 124—127).

In general, the Chawuhu culture looks like a crop pastoralists and agriculturalists ethno-cultural formation formed in a limited area in the transitional period from the Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age in the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE. Horse harness, knives and then other equipment categories in the chawuhu correspond to the Altai-Sayan and Kazakhstan cultures clothing complex. At the same time, the funeral rite and ceramics are distinguished by special features that have almost no analogies in adjacent territories.

The second most studied and informative Scythian-like culture in Xinjiang is called the Subeixi culture (fig. 1) dated within the framework of the 8<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE (Han 2007; Guo 2012; Shulga 2010).

The culture content issue is still under discussion (Festa 2017: 149). Meanwhile, the Subeixi-1, 3 sites belong to the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE. The Early Scythian time is represented sufficiently at the Yanghai-1, 2 burial grounds to the Subeixi culture as well. They are located 40 km east-southeast of the Turfan city, 15 km south-southwest of the burial grounds in Subeixi. There the burials of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE are located on three isolated forest terraces separated by ravines. Accordingly, three burial grounds Nos. 1—3 were identified, where 591 burials were opened, and items were collected after about 150 graves looting. The Yanghai graves layout is close to the Chawuhu culture. So, the graves in Yanhai-1 are often arranged in very dense clusters where they are 30—40 cm apart from each other and sometimes are connected. Obviously, these are the so-called ground burials without fixed grave structures (embankments). The early types of burials (types A and B) include relatively small graves (depth 70—160 cm, length up to 180 cm), oriented with a long axis along the line ESE-WNW. In the graves upper part there were longitudinal ledges for a transverse covering made of wood. Single burials of the dead on wooden beds or mats prevailed. People were placed in a supine position with their knees bent up or on their side with their legs bent. Deceased orientation with their heads to the southeastern sector (close to ESE). Items made of bronze and wood were often found. A few ceramic vessels were found.

The Yanghai-2 burial ground surpasses the neighboring ones both in the number of burials and in the importance of finds (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004: 45—46). Despite the graves of types A and B small number a significant number of burials and published material date back to the early Scythian time. Burial M2001 with wooden buckets decorated with images of goats, deer, wild boar, camel and cat predators in the Scytho-Siberian style is indicative (fig. 10: 1, 3). There were also early Scythian harness details bow cases with bows, specific ornaments made of bronze tubes with bells and others. Other graves also contained horse equipment, weapons and remarkable wooden buckets with images of animals carved on the walls (fig. 10: 2, 4), painted ceramics and “kunhou” zithers. The mummified human remains with clothes were also found there, as well as unique leather protective covers for the sleeve and finger of archers. The graves contained skeletons parts and skulls of animals, mainly goats, sheep, horses and cattle. At the same time, in burials were found staffs and a vine of red grapes on the ceiling. In addition, evidence of metallurgy (duct pipe) and weaving (bone fabrics “fork”<sup>21</sup>) were found in the burials. All this indicates pastoralists and agricultures sedentary lifestyle in whose culture crafts and the art of playing the harp were developed. The art of images carving in animal, plant and geometric styles was at a high level. Summing up, the Scythian cultures of Southern Siberia and Kazakhstan, the Subeixi culture in Yanghai-1, 2 are related to the Animal style, horse equipment and whetstones.

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<sup>21</sup> Mentioned in the text bone (bronze) “forks” with short teeth (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004: fig. 21, 22) were used in the manufacture of fabrics on a loom.

Judging by archaic axes, crane-beake axes, knives and some harness details presence this developed Scythian-like culture was formed in the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE and possibly even earlier<sup>22</sup>. In that connection, one of the horny combs is similar in shape to the remarkable bronze comb from the Mohuchahan burial ground, and some bronze knives, axes and crane-beake axes have analogies in transitional complexes. It is important to emphasize that all the variety of Animal style in Yanghai was discovered only on wooden buckets and dishes (fig. 10: 1—4). If the tree was not preserved in Yanghai as the Chawuhu burials the Animal style would be represented with reservations only by the rams heads on the several ceramic vessels handles (Shulga 2010: fig. 45: 23, 26) and at the ends of two poorly documented horn cheek pieces from Yanghai-1<sup>23</sup> (fig. 10: 5—7) (Kovalev 2014: fig. 3: 3). In this regard, it is possible that in the synchronously existing Chawuhu culture, located at a distance of only 250 km, the animal style could be more widespread on products made of organic materials.

In the early Scythian time more mobile pastoralists groups (?) simultaneously lived on Xinjiang territory. Their burial grounds planigraphy and “embankments” arrangement were similar to most of the nomads burial grounds scattered across Eurasian steppes. These burial grounds contain a relatively few burial mounds. They are located at a considerable (up to tens and hundreds of meters) distance from each other and are grouped into chains or clusters near the largest mounds. In Xinjiang some of them were probably associated with more sedentary, possibly related, cultures. For example, in the Qunbake burial ground located in the Chawuhu culture area there are collective burials and ceramics of specific forms known in the Chawuhu culture. In Qunbake early burials dating from about the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE harness and belt furniture, bone tubes, whetstones<sup>24</sup>, weapons and a few examples of the animal style were found. Judging by the published IM27 burial, such a rite was preserved there until the 5<sup>th</sup> — 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Shulga 2010: fig. 29: 1—12). Another similar site is the Saensayi burial ground located near the Urumqi city (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2013). Single and group burials of people oriented to the northwestern sector were located in mounds arranged in groups with stone and ground embankments. The deceased were laid outstretched on their backs. At the feet were the horse’s skulls. In general, the burial ceremony strongly resembles the Tasmola culture of Central Kazakhstan. The inventory is also characteristic of neighboring territories Scythian cultures. At the same time, the harness and weapons are significantly different from the early Scythian complexes in Xinjiang. At the same time, paired and group burials presence and painted ceramics is undoubtedly a local feature. During the initial materials analysis the author made the assumption that the Saensayi burial ground could have been left by 1) Central Kazakhstan Tasmola culture people descendants 2) people from the poorly studied “northern part of Xinjiang (Dzungaria)”, where “a similar cultural group existed in parallel” (Shulga, Shulga 2015: 532). The second option is supported by the archaic nature of the harness, weapons and equipment, which apparently indicates the greater antiquity of Saensayi in relation to the Kazakhstan Tasmola culture. To a certain extent, this is confirmed by new excavations in Xinjiang northern part.

Over the past 10—15 years during large-scale excavations in Xinjiang northern part (Altai District), more than 600 burials of various eras have been uncovered. In 2015 the Xinjiang Institute of Archeology and Cultural Heritage published brief reports on excavations at 17 burial grounds including seven early Scythian burials from four burial grounds: 1) Saerbulake; 2) Eastern Talide;

<sup>22</sup> According to Guo Wu, the early burials group on Yanghai-1, 2 dates from the 9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (Guo 2012: 104).

<sup>23</sup> Based on realities, we can consider the heads from Chawuhugou-1 and Yanghai only as completely naturalistic variations of ram heads. According to the available materials, we are not aware of any vulture-ram images in Xinjiang.

<sup>24</sup> A rectangular stone about 15 cm long. It was hung on warrior's belt and often had a symbolic meaning.

3) Habaihan; 4) Tuvaxinqun on the Kanas lake shore (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2013). Selectively published burials constitute a small part of the actually investigated burial mounds of the 8<sup>th</sup> — 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in the area. Nevertheless, some generalizations can be made on this basis. 1. Almost all burials are single. 2. The dead were buried on their backs with outstretched arms and legs, with their heads in the north-western sector. 3. Ceramic vessels were not placed in the grave or in the mound embankment. 4. With a few exceptions, animal bones and harness details are not found in burials and in embankments. 5. Two of the seven burials were made in undercuts and four in structures such as stone boxes. 6. The inventory and horse equipment details found with the deceased in general correspond to those found in the Altai-Sayan and Kazakhstan, including a remarkable gold earring decorated in the style known in Arzhan-2 (Čugunov, Parzinger, Nagler 2010). Some finds indicate a relatively late time for these burials in the late 7<sup>th</sup> — early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.

The funeral rite in the burials bearing similarity in the Altai western foothills and in Kazakhstan but did not involve animals additional burial. The deceased position in the Altai district is close to Central Kazakhstan Tasmola culture ritual, as well as to one recorded much to the south in the Saensayi burial ground near the Urumqi city. The influence of Tyva (earring) and Western Mongolia (deer stones) can be assumed. No noticeable contacts with North China population, the Tien Shan Chawuhu culture and the Altai Mountains Biiken culture have been recorded from the available materials.

A special position is occupied by the Sandaohaizi site, which includes several groups of large *kherksurs* with a diameter of up to 200 m, as well as 33 deer stones of the Mongolian-Transbaikal, Altai-Sayan and Eurasian types. They are located in high-mountain valleys (about 2700 meters above sea level) near three lakes close to the border with Mongolia, about 50 km northeast of the Chingil (Qinghe) county center (Guo 2012: 191—199). On this basis Chinese researchers distinguish a special archaeological culture “Sandaohaizi” of 10<sup>th</sup> — 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE.

Significant archaeological works were carried out in Xinjiang northeastern outskirts. In Hami and Barkul area a variety of representative sites from the Bronze Age (Tianshanbeilu burial ground) to the supposed burials of Yuezhi and Xiongnu have been investigated. Of interest is the M015 mound of the Dongheigou burial ground. In addition to the central grave, there were several other burials with equipment that were virtually indistinguishable from the early Scythian burials of the 7<sup>th</sup> — early 6<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE in the Altai-Sayan: bronze ring mail knife, belt buckle and a badge with stylized eagles' heads, an awl and a mirror with a loop on the back, as well as a whetstone, horned *vorvorka*<sup>25</sup> and an arrowhead with a thorn.

As shown, in the early Scythian time on the borders with Kazakhstan, Altai and Mongolia the neighboring cultures influence can be traced in the inventory (except for ceramics), the Animal style, partly in the funeral rite, as well as in deer stones and *kherksurs* appearance.

### **The sites of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE**

#### ***Ili River basin (Sodunbulake culture)***

According to the collection of sites for 2011 in the Tien Shan western part in the Ili river basin second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE burial grounds studied at 20 sites located from the border with Kazakhstan to Wusu city. The burial grounds vast majority correspond to nomadic cemeteries in their characteristics: the graves were covered with mound structures (embankments); the mounds

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<sup>25</sup> Conical fastener with a hole in the middle.



were arranged in chains (often meridian) or in clusters with intervals between them. The funeral rite is fairly uniform. Around the mounds (sometimes up to 30 m in diameter and 2—3 m in height), ring-shaped fences lined of stones were often arranged. Under the mounds one (rarely two) graves, as a rule, oriented with a long axis in the latitudinal direction, were arranged. The graves are rather narrow — simple, with sheer walls and the same but with undercuts (usually in the northern wall). One person was placed in the grave on his back, elongated, with his head in the western sector. The poor inventory (mainly ceramics) was placed near the heads. The ceramics on the eastern part cemeteries closest to the Urumqi city are often painted, and sometimes there are forms known in the Chawuhu culture. Closer to Kazakhstan the ceramics are fewer painted, and the vessels bottom is rounded. Chinese archaeologists relate these burial grounds to the Sodunbulake culture named after the burial ground near the Chapchal city. At the same time, Chinese researchers rightly point out that the burials are very close to the Sakas and Wusuns ones along the Ili river from neighboring Kazakhstan (Guo 2012: 220, 241—242). Indeed, nearly identical burials with a similar modest inventory existed at that time in the neighboring Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan regions (Akishev, Kushaev 1963; Zadneprovskiy 1992: 81—85). The burials are dated within a wide framework - the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE (5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> — 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE, etc.)

### **The northern part of Xinjiang on the border with Altai (Russia) and East Kazakhstan**

In the course of archaeological work over the past 25 years the Pazyryk culture distribution boundaries (second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> — first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE) were established fairly well on the territory of Kazakhstan, Altai Region, the Altai Republic, as well as in the adjacent part of Western Mongolia where the Pazyryk people penetrated from the Chui steppe and Ukok through the easily passable Saylyugem ridge. On the South Altai dividing ridge there are also several passes from the Bukhtarma River (East Kazakhstan), as well as from the Ukok plateau (Altai Republic, Russia). The several Pazyryk type burials with additional burials of horses discovery in the Altai district (Varenov 1999) and indirect data (Polosmak 1998; Shulga 2010: 109) indicated the Pazyryk people penetration to the north of Xinjiang. These assumptions were confirmed in the course of recent excavations in the adjacent to Ukok from the south Altai District. On the basis of these materials, it is possible to talk about one of the Late Pazyryk centers, like ones investigated in the Chuya head waters existence within the Altai district. Suffice it to say that of the 17 burial grounds presented in the collection, located at a distance of 200—250 km from Ukok in four counties of the Altai district (Kaba, Burchun, Altai, Fuyun), Pazyryk culture burials were found in 12 burial grounds (fig. 12). According to published data (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2015: 61—106), in the Altai district of the XUAR almost all types of burials presented in the Altai Mountains, as well as some additional features, can be traced. These burials date from the late 4<sup>th</sup> — early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, which corresponds to the Pazyryk people expansion time in the western and eastern directions. The population close to the Pazyryk people burials in Jiaohe Goubei (Tien Shan) discovery allows us to assume the related cultures closely connected to the Altai Mountains existence on this territory in the 4<sup>th</sup> — early 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE.

### ***Turfan region***

The Subeixi-1 and 3 burial grounds, as well as the close ones Yanghai-3 and Jiaohe Goubei, date back to the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE. Their connection with the early Scythian time sites is not obvious. Finds from Subeixi and Yanghai-3 are widely known. Some of the brightest complexes of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE with mummies and lots of organic items were

discovered there. The most of Subeixi culture burials of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE are presented at Yanghai Necropolis. More than 400 graves of C, D, E types were uncovered there. The burials typology and chronology proposed by the excavations authors are not entirely substantiated<sup>26</sup>, but most of them fit into the framework of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE, and there are no Xiongnu period products. Horse equipment, bow cases, bows with arrows, ornaments, hones and spindle whorles are quite consistent with other Scythian cultures. The Animal style is also presented. It should be noted that the E type burials with undercuts in the mounds from Yanghai-2 and in ground graves attributed to the latest ones are fully or partially correspond to the relatively early Scythian burials in Jiaohe Goubai of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE.

The Jiaohe Goubai burial ground located near the Turfan city has been published fairly detailed (Jiaohe gucheng baohu xiushan bangongshi 1998; Shulga 2010). The graves with undercuts in mounds M16, M01 and in the “tangou” section are similar in arrangement to ones from Yanghai-2, 3, but have some peculiarities associated with horses and camels additional burying. Some of them can be considered as varieties of the Pazyryk funeral rite, which involved the burial of a person oriented to the eastern sector with a horse on a pest. The equipment of many horses in Jiaohe included horn harness sets similar to those found in Altai (fig. 11) but the funeral rite, ceramics and implements peculiarities leave no doubt about the site local character. It seems that the Jiaohe Goubai burials belonged to population group that were a part of tribes inhabited Dzungaria, East Kazakhstan, the Altai Mountains and partly the southwestern part of Mongolia in the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE. It should be added that in Alagou (M30) there are harness details and funeral rite features similar to the Pazyryk ones. The northwestern Xinjiang population and Pazyryk people of the Altai Mountains cultural and ethnic affinity was also noted on the basis of costume, fabrics and anthropology from the Subeixi burials analysis (Polosmak 1998: 341—342; Polosmak, Barkova 2005; Polosmak, Chikisheva 2019).

### *The North-eastern part of Xinjiang, Hami region*

In the defined Yanbulake culture area a significant number of sites of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE are known (Shulga 2010). However, only the Dongheigou and Heigouliang burial grounds have been published in sufficient detail (Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2007; Mo 2008). The Heigouliang burial ground is the most homogeneous. Formally, the burial ground is similar to the “Wusun” ones in the Ili river basin. Small stone mounds were arranged in chains. The deceased were often buried in the undercuts one by one (sometimes 2—3) on their backs, elongated, with their heads in the western sector. However, this is a completely different culture associated with the Altai-Sayan eastern part. In addition to a large number of ceramics, votive bronze and iron daggers and crane-beaked axes, arrowheads and knives, medal-shaped mirrors and jewellery were found. Some items are decorated in the Altai-Sayan look Animal style. Almost all products with the exception of ceramics have analogies in Tyva, the Altai Mountains, the Upper Ob and in Kazakhstan. The bronze harness distributors for horse head belts and doublers, “quiver” hooks relatively early forms of, horn tips with strongly protruding stitches, some features of mirrors, a large number of bronze knives and corrugated tubes indicate the burials of 5<sup>th</sup> — 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE presence. There are also materials from the 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE (Mo 2008). The culture of population who left the burial ground belongs to the Altai-Sayan circle, but the specific burial rite and ceramics indicate its local roots.

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<sup>26</sup> See the critical review (Shulga 2010: 56—57).

Let's note Dongheigou M012 covered by tumulus burial ground. It was the main burial in a wooden tomb chamber at the bottom of the pit. Next to the human skeleton laid stretched on his back, with his head to the northeast, there were items made of gold and silver foil with four types of griffins images. On three gold and three rectangular plates a scene of torment with a hoofed griffin on its knees and a feline predator with a wolf's muzzle tormenting it is depicted. On two small silver badges there are peculiar images of "a curled up griffin with horns, beak, ear and hooves". One-horned griffins on two plates are also unusual. It should be noted that images of a hoofed griffin are known from images of the 4<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE in Altai, Tyva and North China, as well as among the early Xiongnu, but this is the first case of depicting such a creature in Xinjiang (Shulga 2010: 131—136, fig. 55, 90). These reworked images of hoofed griffins find again points to the relative isolation of the Xinjiang tribes from the cultural processes taking place in neighboring territories. In this regard, it is important to note almost complete absence in Xinjiang of special for the North China and Altai-Sayan pastoralists belt fittings details (badges with a conditional scene of torment, butterfly-shaped badges, corrugated tubes). In Xinjiang there are no pre-Han mirrors that were supplied to northern nomads by the Chinese kingdoms (Shulga 2016), as well as rattle-mirrors and their simplified copies supplied from Bactria and Western Asia to nomads from the Urals to the Altai Mountains (Shulga, Oborin 2017).

## Conclusion

Scythian cultures on China territory from the borders with Kazakhstan to the Liaodong Peninsula were poorly studied for a long time. The short and inaccessible archaeological publications published there were translated and used very limitedly outside of China. At the same time, the Scythian time "nomads" from ancient Chinese sources were often included in dozens of researchers' various constructions. To date, a large amount of material has been accumulated on Xinjiang and Northern China territory, which in general allows to reconstruct the ethno-cultural situation among Northern China pastoralists in the 9<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE<sup>27</sup>.

Ethno cultural processes in Xinjiang and North China differed significantly. This is logical. These areas were almost completely isolated from each other in the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BCE until the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE. Each of these areas traditionally maintained contacts with different cultural entities. At the same time, the North China cultures were closely related to the Chinese civilization. "Scythian triad" elements appear in these areas at about the same time — in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. Otherwise, until the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE they went their own ways.

The Scythian-like cultures formation and transformation process in North China is as follows. The "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture is the earliest. There, in sites like Nanshangen (9<sup>th</sup> — 8<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE) already established animal style images were recorded for the first time. On this basis, by the middle of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE with the participation of nomadic Mongoloid tribes the Yuhuangmiao culture is taking shape on the Yan Chinese kingdom northern border (fig. 1). This culture population was gradually "Chineseizing", but in the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BCE part of it, which retained ties with the "northern nomads" migrated 250—300 km west to Ordos in the Lake Daihai area. It is possible that the Daihai lake inhabited by Yuhuangmiao culture representatives from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. On this basis, in the 6<sup>th</sup> — 5<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE the Maoqinggou culture, which partially adopted the aliens from the Yanglang and Shajing cultures formed there. In the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE Yanglang culture population has probably became the part of the Qin kingdom, but preserved its cultural specificity. Moreover, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> — 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BCE

<sup>27</sup> Due to the lack of materials, the situation in the north of Ordos ("Taohongbala culture") and Gansu corridor population ("Shajing" culture) is not quite clear) and in most areas along the Tien Shan in Xinjiang.

the local elite reached Chinese aristocracy level building unprecedented large tombs with a rich inventory (Majiayuan). The Shajing culture fate from the 5<sup>th</sup> — 4<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE is unknown. One can only note its contacts with the Yanglang culture and a slight penetration to the north of Ordos.

In the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE a new stage of relations between the Scythian cultures of Northern China and Southern Siberia began, but with the active participation of the Ancient China kingdoms. In the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE full-scale trade with nomads began on the Qin, Zhao and Yan northern Chinese kingdoms borders. Workshops manufacturing the items of belt and harness accessories from gold and silver for nomads appeared. In some kingdoms an aristocracy stratum from the non-Chinese population supposedly formed (Xiaolong 2013). At the same time, the pace of pastoralists' land grabbing increased. At the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE Pazyryk culture became an active consumer of Chinese goods as well. At that time its range expanded along the Altai mountain system towards the Northern China kingdoms and the Tien Shan<sup>28</sup>. It is believed that in the east of the Great Steppe the Scythian era ended with the Sünnu (Xiongnu) nomadic empire formation at the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE. However, that is not entirely true. The Xiongnu inherited main features of North China pastoralists' and farmers' funeral rituals as well as the animal style. In this regard, the III-II centuries BC Han and Xiongnu empires simultaneous formation events can be considered as phenomena of the same order, which did not lead to previous cultures complete destruction.

In Xinjiang the Scythian features appear in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE in a bridle with specific Arzhan-type cheek pieces form in the Mohuchahan burial ground. Everything else in Mohuchahan belongs to the transition period from the Late Bronze Age to the Early Iron Age. Around the 8<sup>th</sup> century BCE in the Turfan region Yanghai-1, 2 type sites (Subeixi culture) appeared. The harness and the Animal style represented mainly on wooden buckets have Scythian-like features there. Its source was probably the culture of Mongolia as well. Its influence preserved in the northeastern borderland (*hereksurs* and deer stones). In the Chawuhu and Subeixi cultures sites of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE details of harness and belt furniture typical for Altai-Sayan are presented. In addition, closeness with Kazakhstan and Mongolia cultures is also recorded in the border zones at this time.

From about the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE traditional cultural ties between Xinjiang and neighboring northern and western regions were becoming stronger. In the Ili river basin the Sako-Usun appearance culture of the 5<sup>th</sup> — 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE was spreading. In the north of Dzungaria Pazyryk culture syncretic version took shape. Sites similar to the Pazyryk people also appeared in the Turfan region. Hami region population culture tends to the Altai-Sayan and Western Mongolia. In the central part of the Tien Shan, near Urumqi and Turfan, Subeixi culture sites are preserved (?) and there are undercut graves. Inocultural burials of Xiongnu period Mongoloids appeared in the central and eastern parts in the 2<sup>nd</sup> — 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE.

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<sup>28</sup> Remarkable expression of the Animal Style with animal combat scenes in the Dian people culture of the 4<sup>th</sup> — 1<sup>st</sup> centuries BCE in the Dianchi Lake area of the Yunnan province in southern China should be noted (Wu, Wang 2010: fig. 7: 4, 5). There is no clear explanation for this phenomenon.

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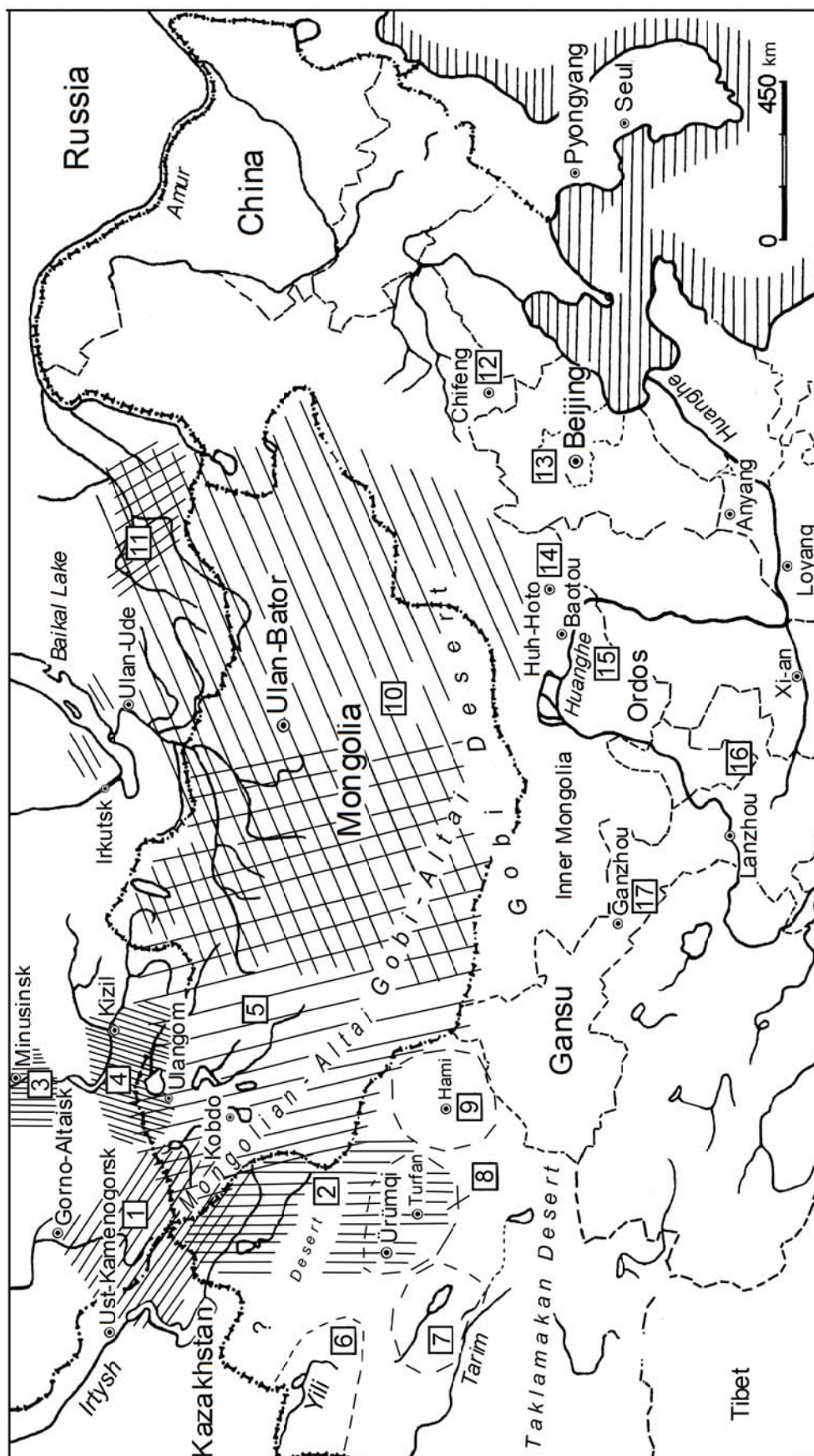
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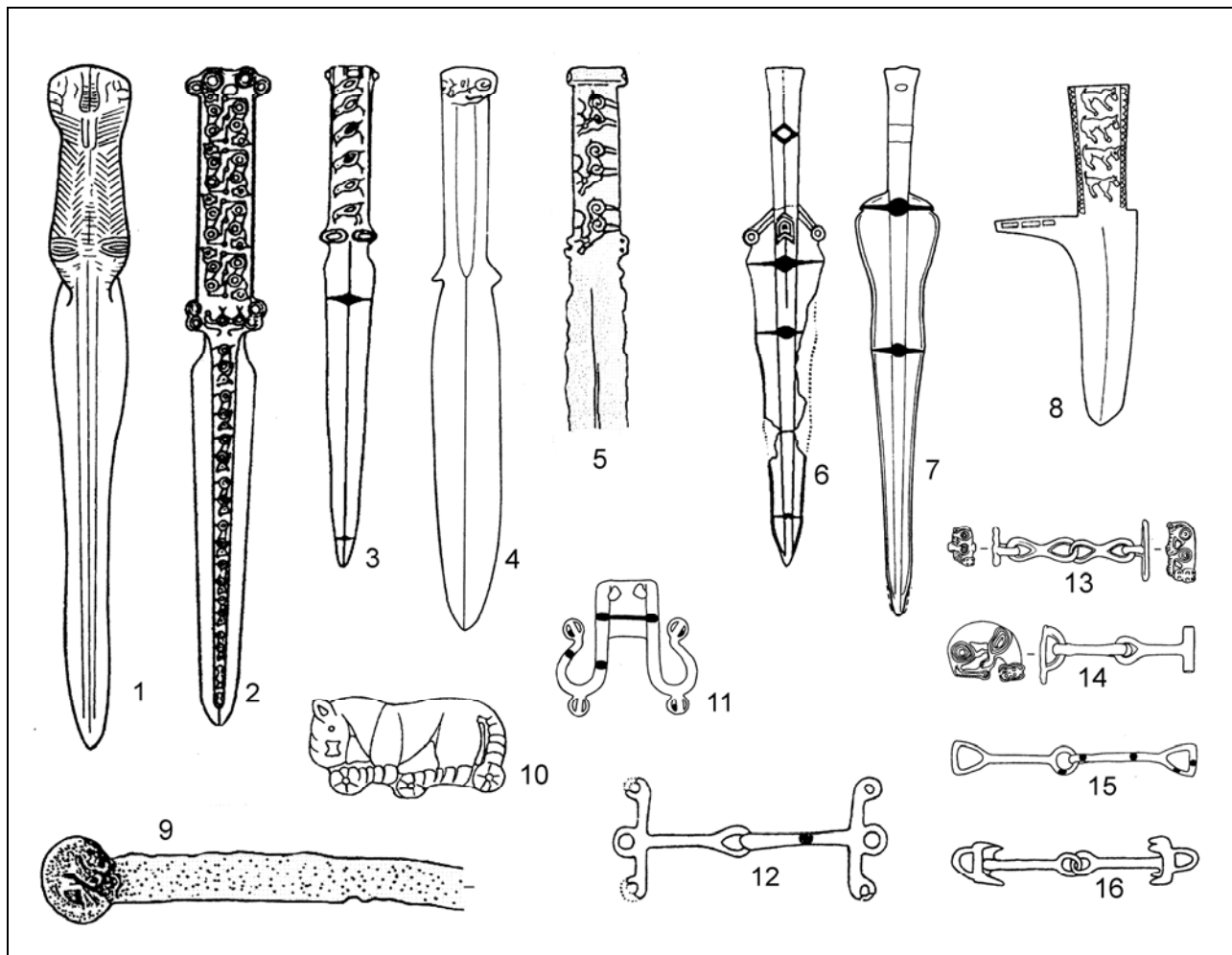
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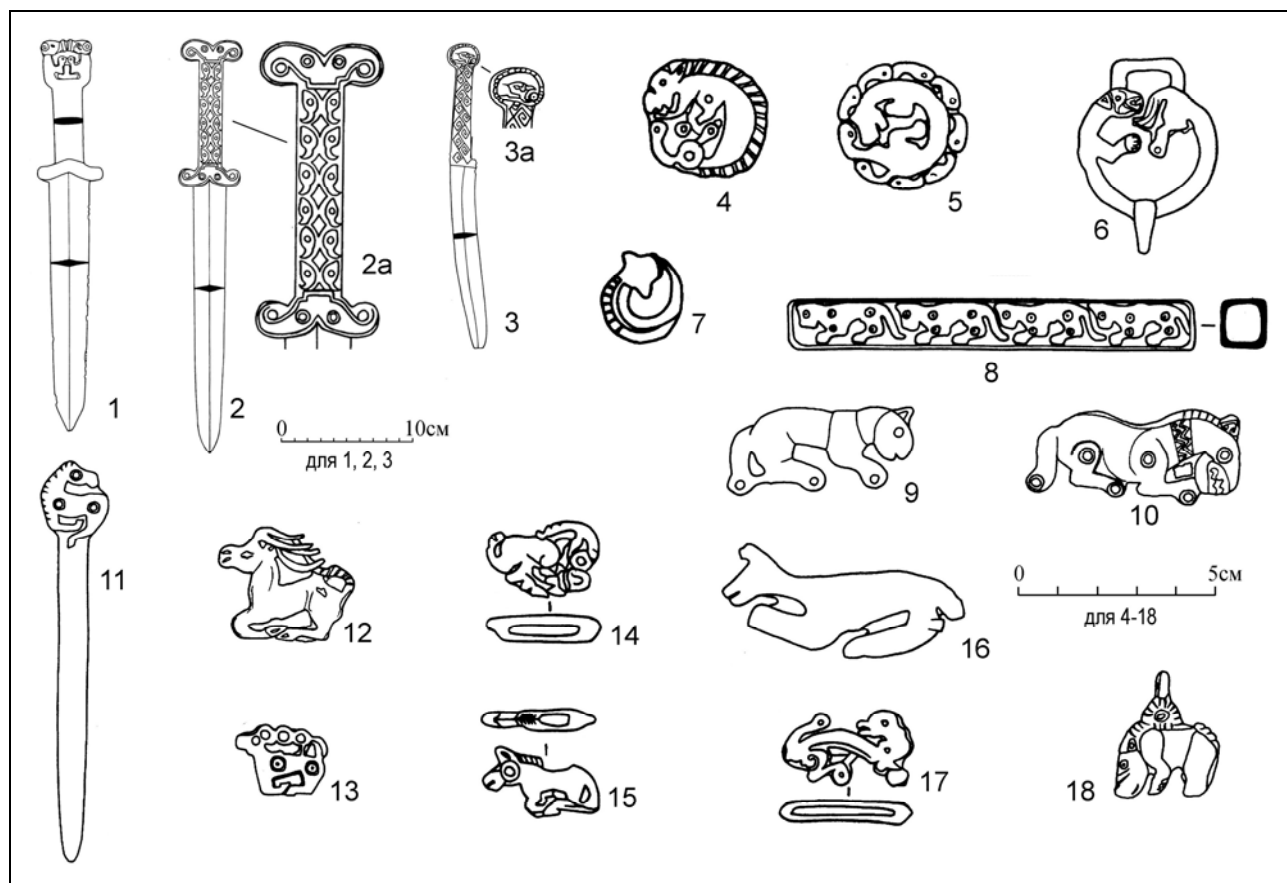
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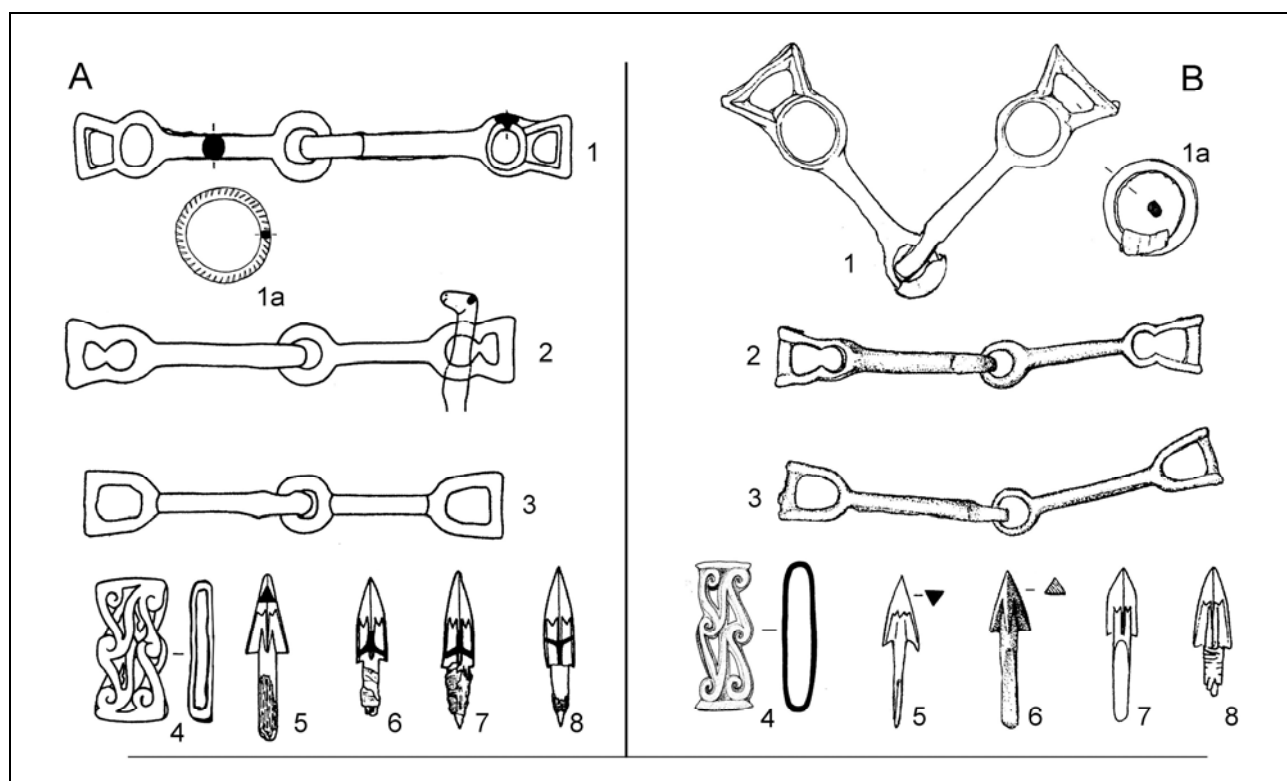
**Fig. 1. Scheme of Scythian-like archaeological cultures in Central Asia location:** 1 — area of the Pazyryk culture; 2 — the territory inhabited in the 5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE by tribes close to the Pazyryks; 3 — Tagar culture; 4 — Aldybel and Uyuk-Sagly cultures; 5 — culture of khereksurs and deer stones; 6 — Sodunbulake culture; 7 — Chawuhu culture; 8 — Subeixi culture; 9 — Yanbulake "culture"; 10 — Slab graves culture; 11 — Dvortsovo culture; 12 — "Xiajiadian upper layer" culture; 13 — Yuhuangmiao culture; 14 — Maqinggou culture; 15 — Taohongbala "culture"; 16 — Yanglang culture; 17 — Shajing culture.



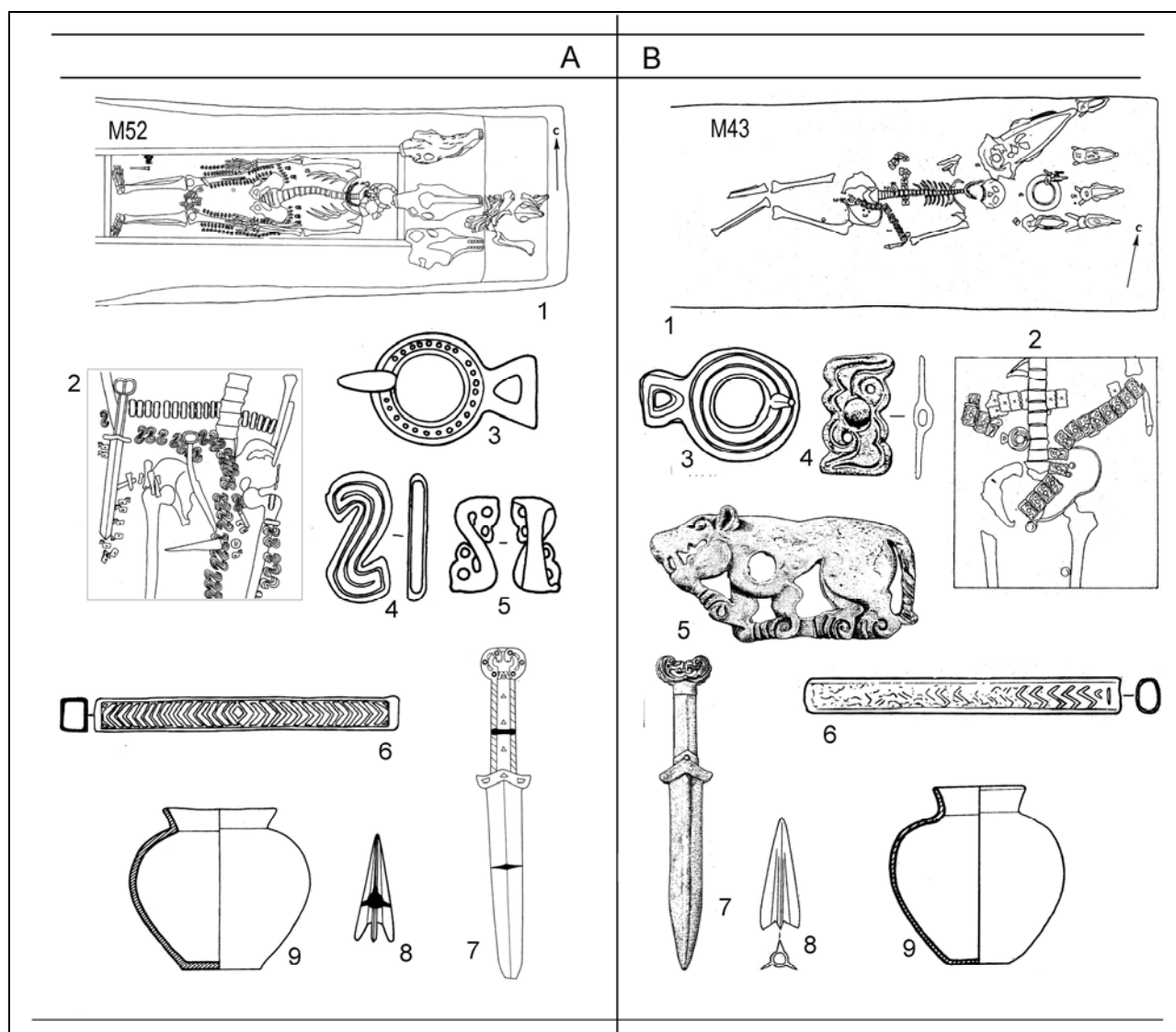
**Fig. 2. “Xiajiadian upper layer” culture. Bronze weapons, harness and Animal-style items:** daggers (1—7), spear ge (8), a knife with a finial in the form of a curled animal (9), a badge with an image of a cat predator (10), a chariot buckle (11), the one-piece bit with cheek-pieces (12—14, 16), a bit with a stirrup-shaped end (15) (after Wu 2007).



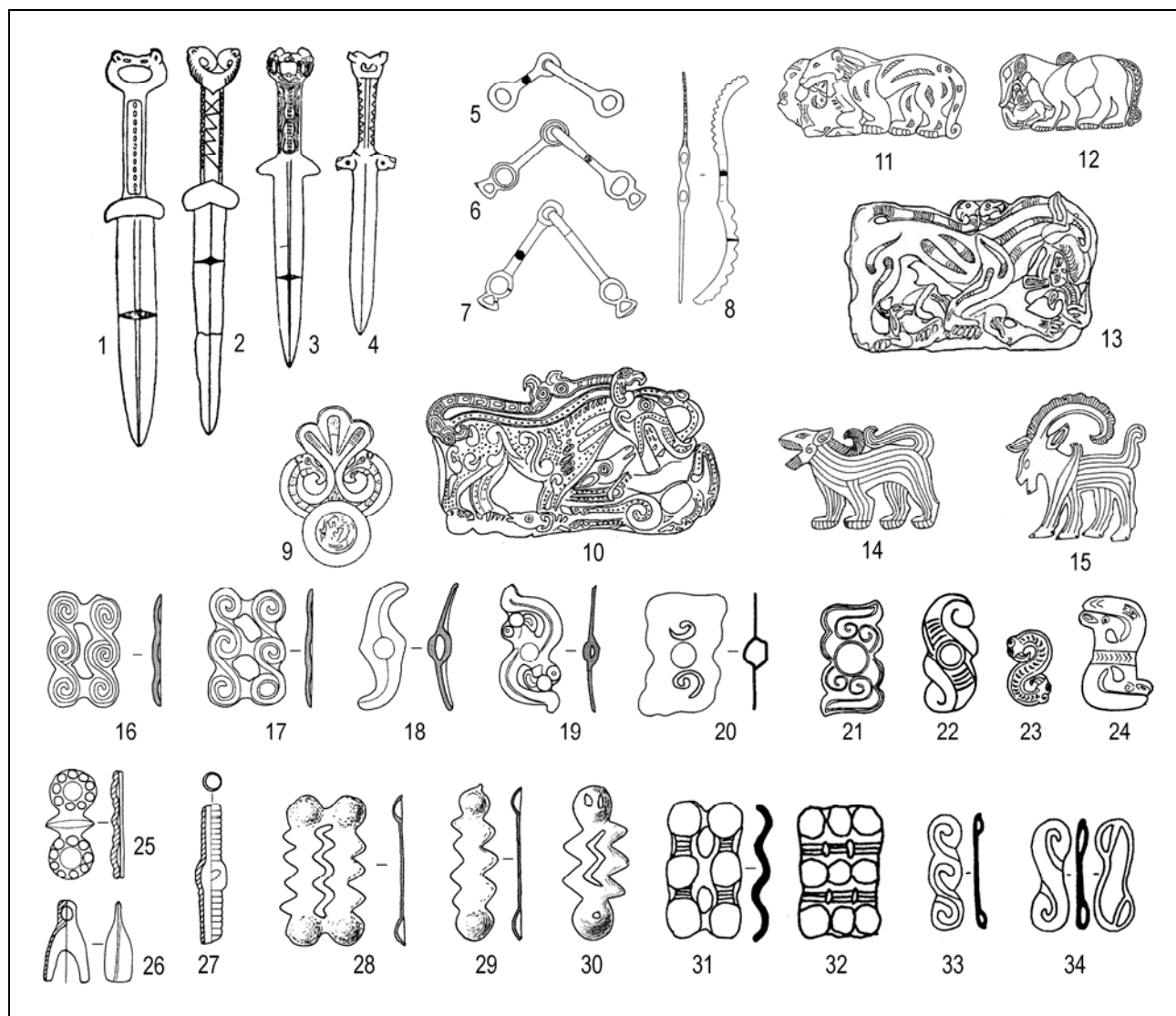
**Fig. 3. Yuhuangmiao culture.** Bronze items with animal-style images: daggers (1, 2), a knife with a finial in the form of a curled animal (3), badges in the form of curled creatures from clothes (4—6), a belt buckle (7), a needle case (8), pendants, clips and badges (11—18) (after Beijing shi wenwu yanjiusuo 2007).



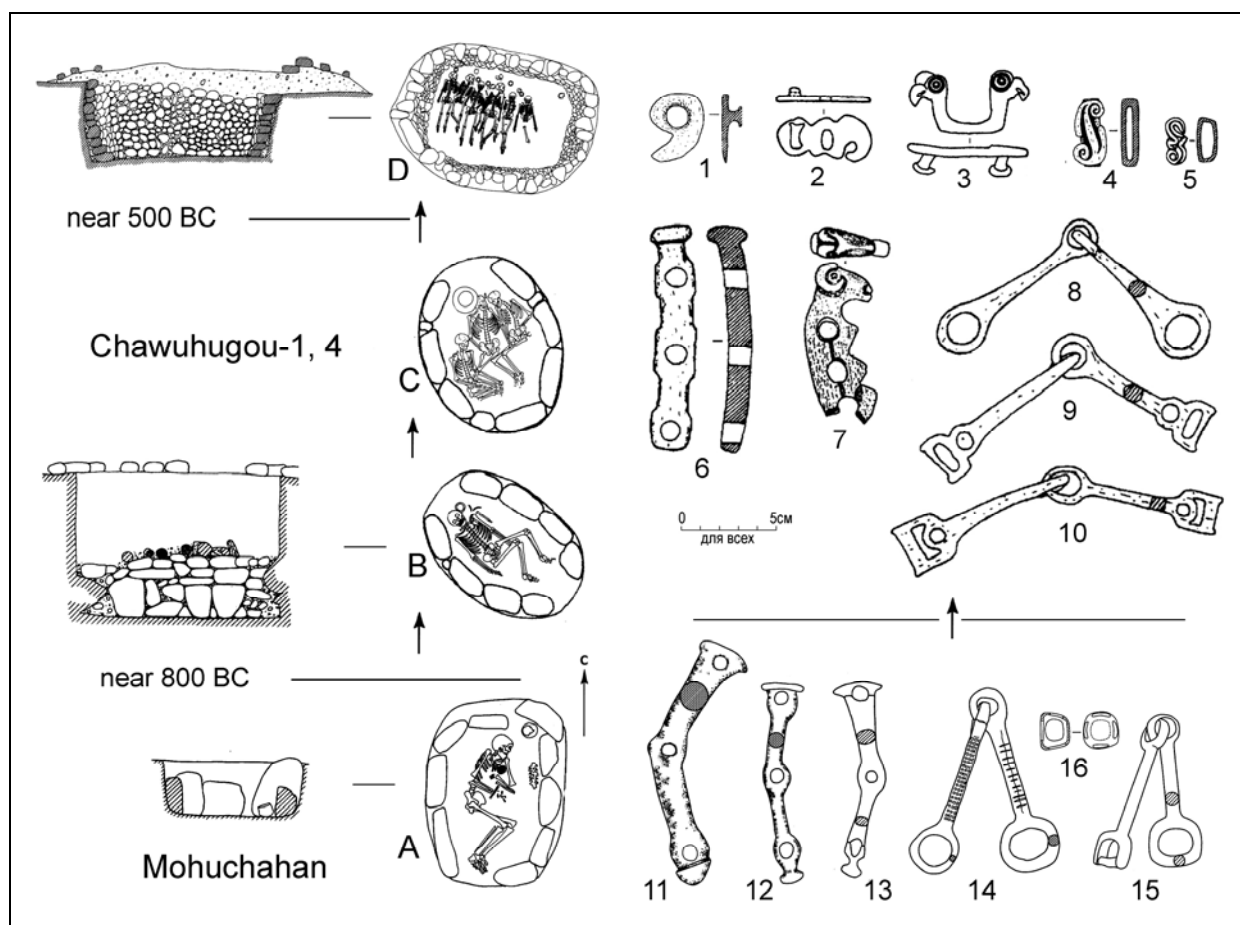
**Fig. 4. Yuhuangmiao burial ground (A) and Altai-Sayan (B) materials. Comparative table of bronze harness parts (1—3), belt clips (4) and arrowheads (5—8) (after Shulga 2015: fig. 123).**



**Fig. 5. Comparative table of the funeral rite and grave goods from the Yuhuangmiao (A) and Maoqinggou (B) burial grounds: 3—8 — Bronze; 9 — ceramics (after Beijing shi wenwu yanjiusuo 2007; Tian, Guo 1986).**

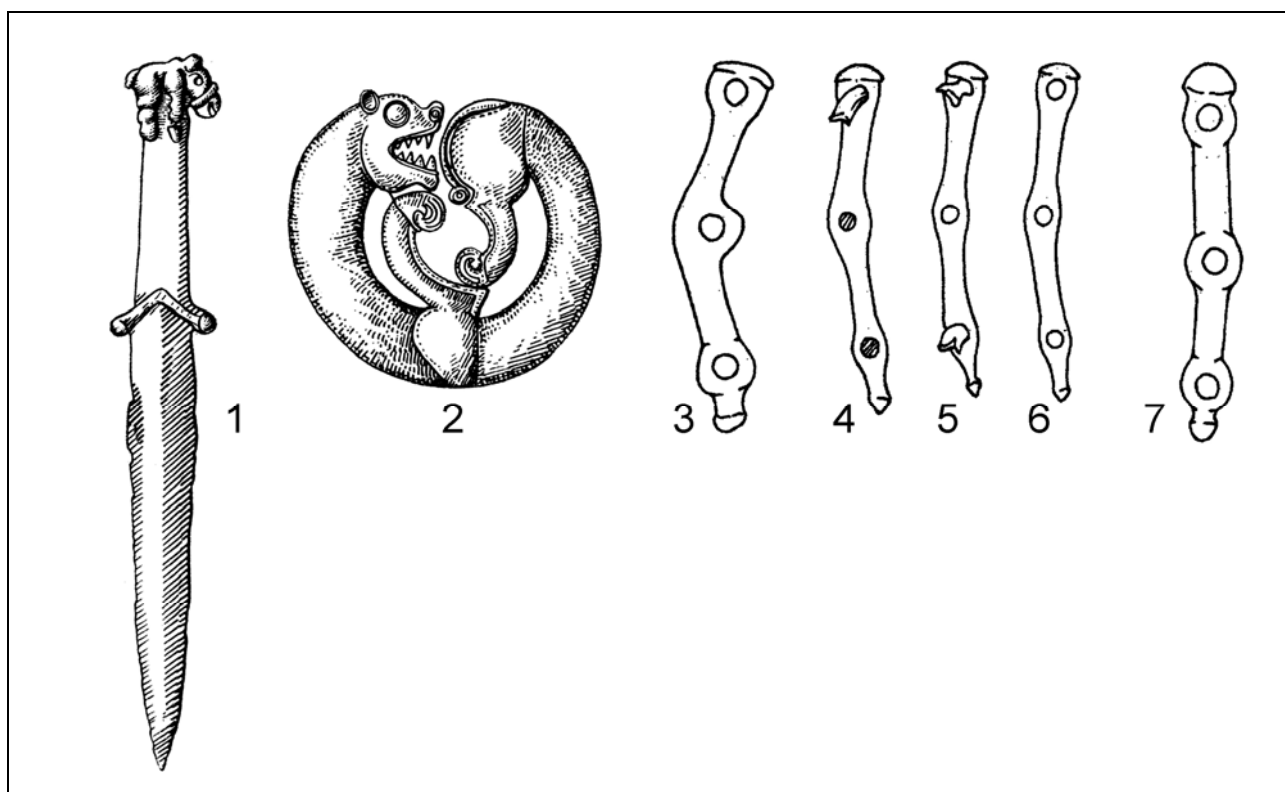


**Fig. 6. Yanglang (1—30) and Shajing (31—34) cultures. Weapons, harness and other Animal-style items: 13—15 — Gold; the rest is bronze (after Gansu sheng wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2004; Wu 2007; Yang, Linduff 2013; Ningxia wenwu kaogu yanjiusuo 2016.).**

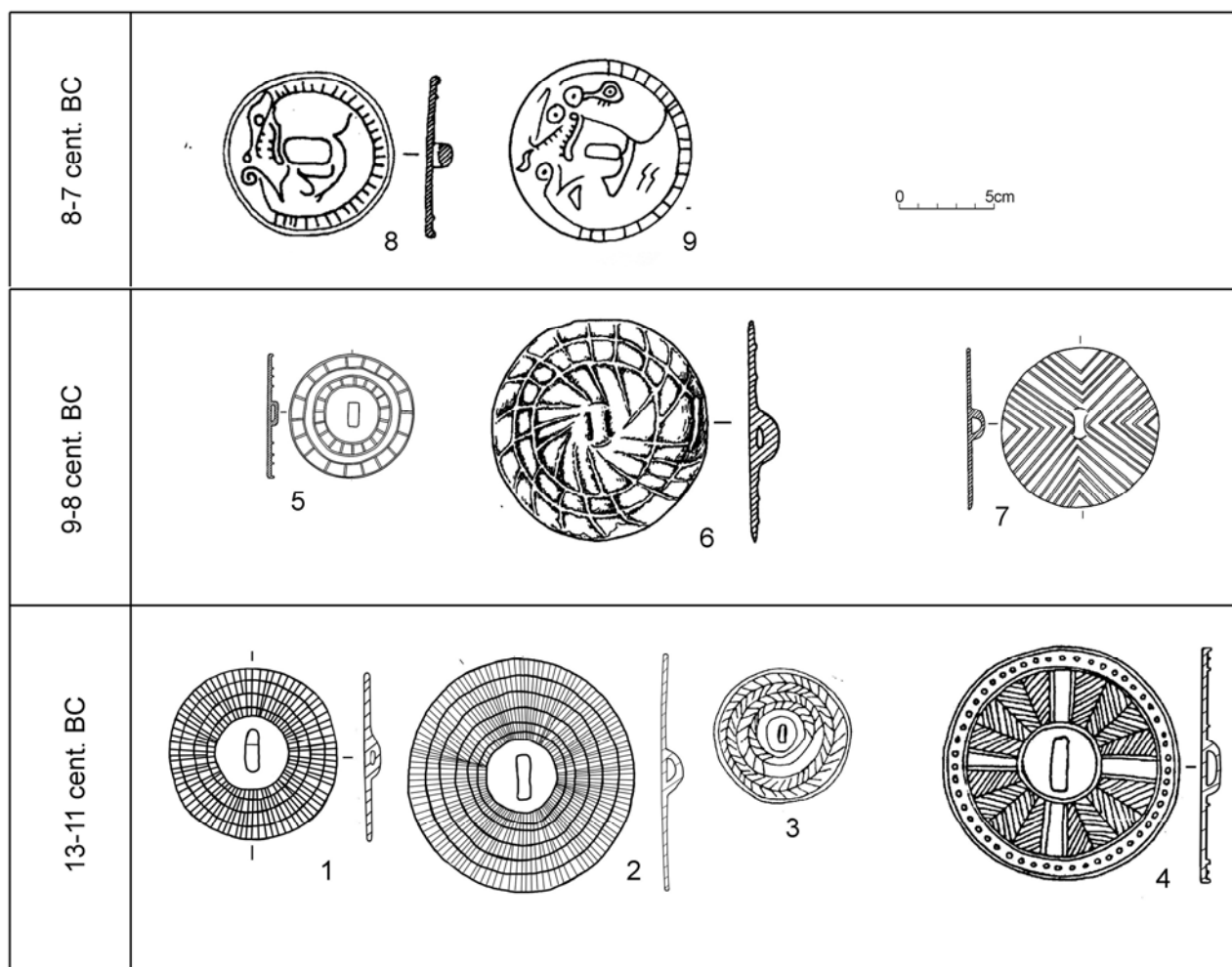


**Fig. 7. Chawuhu culture. Mohuchahan (A, 11—16) and Chawuhu-1, 4 (B, C, D, 1—10) burial grounds. The evolution of the funeral rite (A, B, C, D), inventory: 6, 7, 11 — Horn; the rest is bronze (after Wang 1999; Shulga 2010; Zhang, Alifujiang, Tan 2016).**

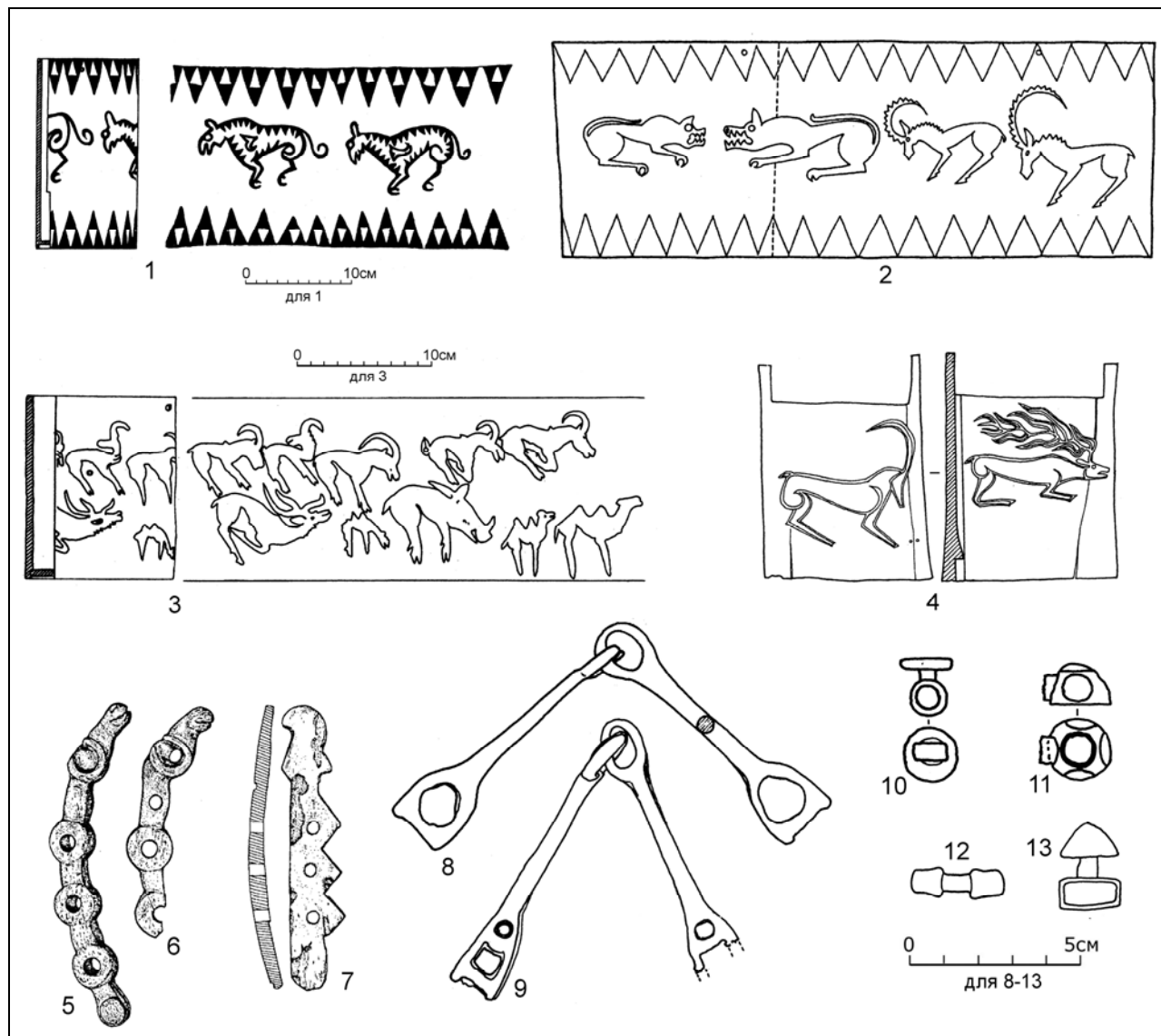




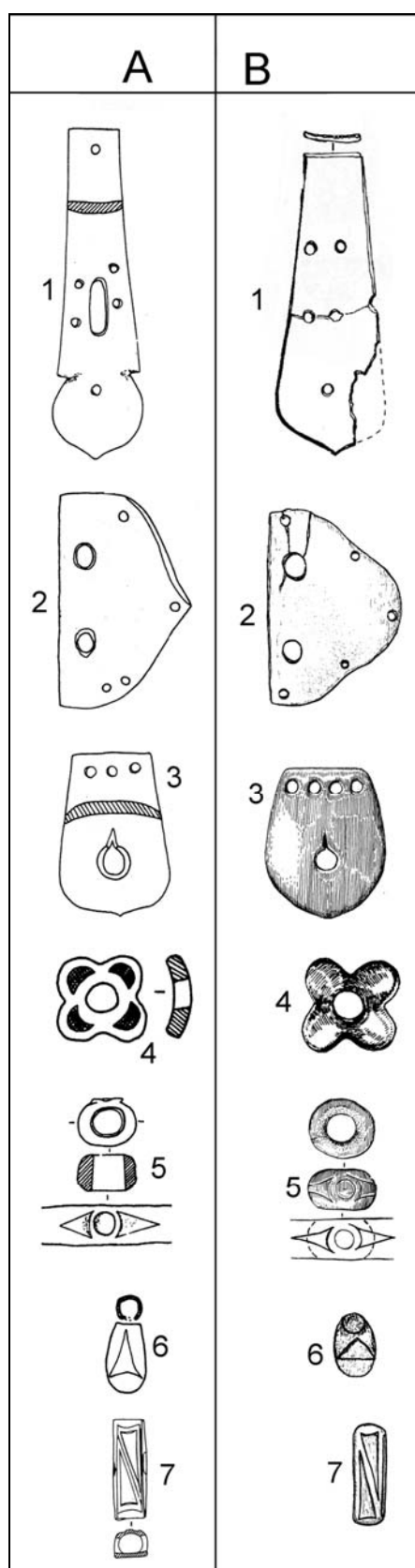
**Fig. 8. Arzhan-1 mound.** Bronze dagger with a narrow crosshair with “knobs” at the ends (1), a badge in the form of a curled up predator (2) and three-hole Arzhan type cheekpieces (3—7) (after Gryaznov 1980).



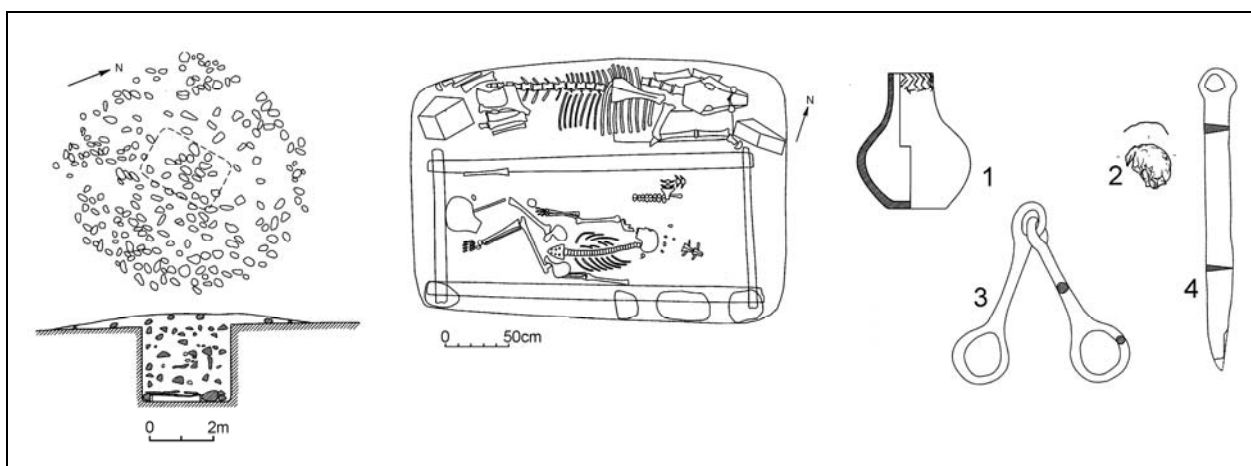
**Fig. 9. Evolution of bronze disc-shaped mirrors with a loop on the back. Xinjiang (1, 5—9), North China (2—4):** 1 — Tianshanbeilu burial ground; 2—4 — Fu Hao tomb; 5, 7 — Mohuchahan burial ground; 6 — Saensayi burial ground (after Han 2007; Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2013; Zhang, Alifujiang, Tan 2016; Wu 2017).



**Fig. 10. Subeixi culture. Materials of the early Scythian time from the Yanghai-1, 2 burial grounds:**  
1—4 — images on wooden buckets; 5—7 — horn cheek pieces; 8—12 — bronze harness details;  
13 — wooden clasp (after Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2004; Shulga 2010; Kovalev 2014).



**Fig. 11. Comparative table of horn harness details:** *A* — Jiaohe Goubei burial ground Subeixi culture (5<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE), *B* — the Altai Pazyryk culture of the 4<sup>th</sup> — 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries BCE (after Shulga 2010).



**Fig. 12. Man with a horse burial of the Pazyryk culture (mound 5) at the Tuwaxinqun burial ground in the Altai district (Xinjiang):** 1 — ceramic vessel; 2, 3 — iron knife and bit; 2 — gold foil (after Xinjiang wenwu kaogu yanjiu suo 2015).