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# PINCHUGA-6 BURIAL GROUND — A NEW SITE OF THE FINALE OF THE IRON AGE IN THE LOWER ANGARA REGION Pavel V. Mandryka, Polina O. Senotrusova, Alyona V. Dedik

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Abstract: The article presents the preliminary results of studying of the Pinchuga-6 burial ground in the Lower Angara region. This site is the first large necropolis of the late Iron Age to be explored in the region. 16 cremated burials on the side were recorded at the necropolis. Eventually 30 individuals of different ages were identified. The research revealed single children's and adults' burials, collective and paired complexes. In the collective complexes the remains of three or five people are buried. Based on the results the main features of the funeral ceremony were identified. Among the finds from the burial ground and the inter-burial ground space are weapons, tools, ceramic vessels, objects of Western Siberian cult casting and adornments. According to the analogy, the burial ground dates back to the second quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD. In addition materials of the Tashtyk and Late Kulai guises have been collected at the site along with local elements of the Lower Angara region.

*Keywords:* Lower Angara region, finale of the Iron Age, burial ground, burial ceremony, funeral equipment, ceramics, dating, cultural connection

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# МОГИЛЬНИК ПИНЧУГА-6 — НОВЫЙ ПАМЯТНИК ФИНАЛА ЭПОХИ ЖЕЛЕЗА В НИЖНЕМ ПРИАНГАРЬЕ П.В. Мандрыка, П.О. Сенотрусова, А.В. Дедик

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**Резюме:** В статье представлены предварительные результаты исследования могильника Пинчуга-6, расположенного в нижнем течении Ангары. Памятник стал первым изученным крупным некрополем финала эпохи железа для этого региона. На нем зафиксировано 16 погребений, выполненных по обряду трупосожжения на стороне. Идентифицировано погребение останков 30 индивидов разных возрастов. В ходе исследований выявлены одиночные детские и взрослые погребения, парные и коллективные комплексы. По итогам работ выделены основные черты погребального обряда. Среди находок из могил и межмогильного пространства отмечены предметы вооружения, орудия труда, керамические сосуды, предметы западносибирского культового литья, украшения. Многочисленные аналогии позволяют датировать могильник в рамках

2-й четверти I тыс. н.э. На памятнике вместе с местными нижнеангарскими элементами присутствуют материалы таштыкского и позднекулайского облика.

*Ключевые слова*: Нижнее Приангарье, финал эпохи железа, могильник, погребальный обряд, инвентарь, керамика, хронология, культурные связи

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## ntroduction

Archaeological study of the sites of the Lower Angara region at the finale of the Iron Age is at an early stage. Burial complexes of the second quarter of the 1st millennium AD are not known on this territory. Isolated random finds attributed to this period did not allow a detailed description of the culture of the region's population.

The first large studied necropolis of the finale of the Iron Age in the region is the Pinchuga-6 burial ground, discovered by an archaeological expedition of the Siberian Federal University. During field research in 2018–2019 on an exposed area of about 700 m², 16 burials were identified. The received finds began to be processed recently. Anthropological research has already been made for the sites. In addition the funeral equipment allowed preliminarily determining its cultural and dating affiliation.

The Pinchuga-6 burial ground is located on the right bank of the Angara River, 180 km above its mouth, opposite the settlement of Pinchuga in the Boguchan District of the Krasnoyarsk Territory. The burials were arranged in rows along a low sandy ridge on the surface of the terrace. Five burials were desecrated by hoardfinders of the 16 studied burials. The hoardfinders were interested only in bronze toreutics. The metalware, the fragments of horn finds, the glass and stone beads were left by them in the robbed graves. All disrupted holes were fixed and plotted on the plan before excavations. Further, a correlation was made between abandoned things and discovered burials.

#### The burial ceremony

Every burial was made according to the ceremony of cremation on the side. Some variability in the methods of placement of remains and funeral equipment was identified.

The first group contains most of the burials (13 out of 16). The burials were situated in earthen pits of oval, rectangular or irregular geometric shapes. The size of the pits varies from  $30\times27$  cm to  $70\times90$  cm, but medium-sized graves predominate. In most cases, the walls of the pits are vertical, the bottom is even. Cremated human bones were located in the pits in compact sets. The sets were most often in one of the sectors of the burial pit, less often they are located in center. The remains were placed in the burial in two compact sets in two cases.

The gravestones of these burials have not been reliably identified. It was difficult to characterize the tombstones due to their poor preservation. The presence of charred birch bark leaves at the bottom of the burial pit and above the cremated remains was noted only in three cases. Also, there were three thin wide charred wooden billets in one burial at the bottom of the pit. Furthermore some pieces of coal were recorded in the infill of ten graves and the soil in the infill was calcined in three cases.

The second group contains three burials which consist of a surface and an underground part. The finds with fragments of cremated human remains are scattered at the level of the original surface in the surface part. The scatter of artifacts is significant and ranges from 1.3×0.6 m to 2.2×1.8 m. One, two or three ground pits are recorded under the surface sets of finds and the human remains. Fragments of the cremated human bones, the funeral equipment, the pieces of coal and the fragments of organic materials were also placed in these pits. The finds from the upper and lower levels of such complexes are typologically uniform. For instance, some parts of the broken horn finds found in them are glued together. These complexes contain the largest number of the finds. For example, 115 specimens were found in burial №8 and about 170 specimens were found in burial №16. In addition, to the second group contains conditionally burial №1. This burial was the most desecrated by hoardfinders. As a result, only 25 finds and small part of the cremated human remains have survived.

Also, the second group of objects is characterized by the presence of all categories of funeral equipment. Moreover, the breakdown of ceramic vessels with thin-rolled decor and blacksmith's tools were found only in these burials. Probably, people buried in these complexes possessed specific knowledge and skills of metallurgy and could occupy a special place in the structure of society. In addition, finds and fragments of cremated human bones were found scattered over the grave at the level of the ancient surface. This fact may indicate the presence in antiquity of some terrestrial objects, for example gravestone structures or a "gravestone" tree. Some human remains and some finds could be placed on them during a funeral or during funeral repast.

Every burial of the Pinchuga-6 burial ground contains a large number of funeral equipment. Moreover their placement in the planigraphy of the complexes is different. It was noted that large objects were found both at the bottom of the burial pit with cremated bones, and in the filling of the graves above the main set of remains. Traces of pyrogenic effects are recorded on some finds. At the burial ground weapons were found (including arrowheads, bow lining, dagger), tools (namely knives, adzes, hammer, chisels, fishhooks, scraper, needles), ceramic vessels, objects of Western Siberian cult casting, adornments (for example, appliques, plates, beads, combs, chains, hairpins), and fragments of things made of organic materials were also fixed at the burial ground. Non-inventory complexes have not yet been identified.

The remains of at least 30 individuals have been identified in the 16 burials. 14 individuals are children of different ages and 16 are adults (Fig. 1). The burial ground is dominated by single burials. Also, two paired and five collective burials were identified. In these burials there were remains from three, four or five people. Among children's burials, single ones predominate ( $N_2$  9,  $N_2$  12,  $N_2$  13), one collective burial ( $N_2$  4) with the remains of three children of different ages was noted. There are also single ( $N_2$  5–7,  $N_2$  10,  $N_2$  14) and collective burials ( $N_2$  3) among the adult burials. The rest of the burials are paired and collective with the remains of children and adults. The weight of the bones from each set is different and varies from 0.007 to 4.4 kg. The total weight of all cremated remains at the burial ground of 30 people is about 14 kg.

Analysis of anthropological remains showed that fragments of the skull were found in 87.5% of burials, teeth — in 81.3%, fragments of long bones — 100.0%, ribs — in 43.8%, vertebrae — in 43.8%, pelvic bones — in 25.0%. Thus, the identified remains contain bones from all parts of the skeleton. This indicates that various parts of the skeleton fell into the burial after the cremating. This means that there was no certain selectivity connected with any ritual.

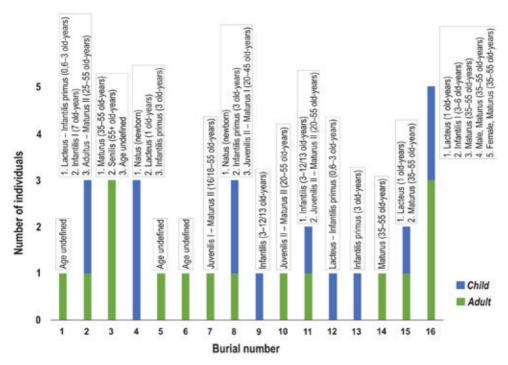


Fig. 1. Distribution of children and adults in burials Рис. 1. Распределение детей и взрослых в погребениях

Different colors and sizes of cremated remains indicate different degrees of firing. Moreover, the difference is observed both between burials and between the fragments within the same burial.

The correlation between the age and gender groups and the characteristic features of the funeral ceremony did not give stable connections. The design features of children's and adults' burials are the same (including the shape, size of the grave pits, and the location of human remains). Children's burials are located with adults' ones and do not occupy a special place in the necropolis. At the same time, it should be noted that only in children's burials finds of bronze cult West Siberian casting were found. One of the characteristic features of single children's burials is the presence of a small number of related items, mainly adornments.

#### The dating and cultural characteristics

The funeral equipment of the Pinchuga-6 burial ground has numerous analogies among the materials of archaeological cultures of adjacent territories. Most of the tools, arrowheads, some adornments and ceramics are compared with the funeral equipment of the Bohr type burials. These inhumation burials were discovered in the forest-steppe Krasnoyarsk region [Mandryka, Makarov, 1994]. In addition some of the finds correlate with the materials of the Tashtyk culture (Fig. 2.-5, 9), including a belt clip with volute-like decor, an openwork fastener (applique?), fragments of horn pins with a globular head. The decor with volutes is often found in the belt sets of the Tashtyk culture and serves as a cultural and dating indicator. The wares find analogies in the Tashtyk burial complexes of the middle of the 1st millennium AD [Senotrusova, 2021].

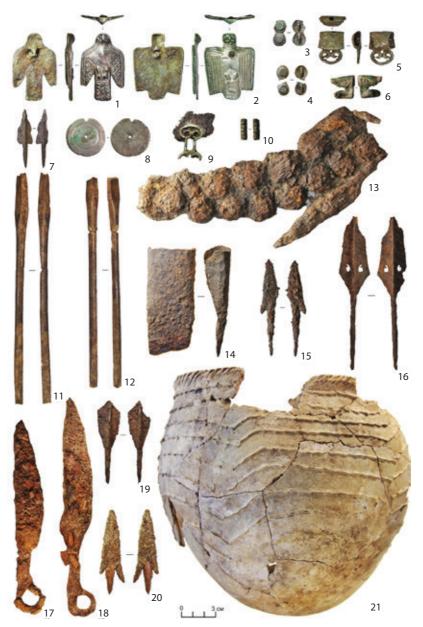


Fig. 2. Finds from the Pinchuga-6 burial ground: 1-6, 8-10 — bronze; 11, 12 — bone; 21 — ceramics; the rest is iron. 1 — from burial № 9; 5, 11, 12, 21 — from burial № 1; 6 — from burial № 12; 13 — from burial № 7; 15 — from burial № 3; the rest is from the inter-burial ground space

Puc. 2. Находки из могильника Пинчуга-6. 1-6, 8-10 — бронза; 11, 12 — кость; 21 — керамика; остальное — железо. 1 — из погребения № 9; 5, 11, 12, 21 — из погребения № 1; 6 — из погребения № 12; 13 — из погребения № 7; 15 — из погребения № 3; остальное — из межмогильного пространства

Another group of finds is associated with the Late Kulay complexes of Western Siberia. Among them are ornithomorphic images of diurnal birds of prey (Fig. 2. -2). Two such items were discovered at the Pinchuga-6 burial ground. The images are realistic and haut-relief, with wealthy decor. Also a guise is schematically marked on the chest of one bird. These wares find analogies in many Late Kulai complexes namely in the Tomsk burial ground, Ishim, Kholmogorsk hoards etc. [Ermolaev, 1914; Zykov, Fedorova, 2001: 104; Shirin, Khavrin, 2012: 7].

Furthermore at the Pinchuga-6 burial ground six flat white bronze discs with a circular ornament and hollow volumetric bronze head of a fish (pike?) were found (Fig. 2. -8, 6). Similar finds are known in Western Siberia in many hoard collections, they are also found in the Tomsk burial ground [Zykov, Fedorova, 2001: 112; Shirin, Khavrin, 2012: 5; Yakovlev, 2001: 189]. These West Siberian analogies date of the second quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium A.D. [Shirin, 1993].

The dating of the site within the second quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD other materials is also confirmed. Eight-shaped white bronze appliques with imitation of granulation along the edge (Fig. 2. -3, 4) find analogies among the adornments from the burials of the Fominsk culture of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD [Shirin, 2003: 73, 105]. A heavily corroded knife with a humped back finds analogies in Altai complexes of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD [Tishkin, Matrenin, Schmidt, 2018: 59]. The same knives are also found in the Kuznetsk Basin in the sites of the Kok-Pash type in the 5<sup>th</sup> century [Bobrov, Vasyutin, Vasyutin, 2003: Fig. 46].

The most numerous categories of finds at the Pinchuga-6 burial ground were round convex hemispherical iron appliques of various diameters. They were located in two rows closely adjacent to each other in two burials (Fig. 2. -13). The appliques were scattered in the rest of the complexes. The similar decorations date back to the finale of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries in the Barnaul Ob region AD and in the Novosibirsk Ob region are dated to the finale of the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> century AD. The earliest copies of such appliques from the sites of the Tomsk Ob region belong to the 5<sup>th</sup> — first half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century AD [Belikova, Pletneva, 1983: Fig. 10.-4; Troitskaya, 1996]. Also such finds appear not earlier than the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD in the foothills of the Kuznetsk Alatau [Shirin, 2003: tab. LXIII.-4, 6; LXVII.-1, 2].

In addition to hemispherical appliques on the Angara, single flat rectangular and square belt appliques of iron were found. The transition from bronze to iron belt sets took place in the  $1^{st}-2^{nd}$  centuries AD on the territory of the Sayano-Altai Uplands. Such iron plates were most spread in the period of the  $2^{nd}-5^{th}$  centuries AD [Tishkin, Matrenin, Schmidt, 2018: 8].

Analysis of the funeral equipment of the Pinchuga-6 burial ground assumes the site to be dated to the second quarter of the 1st millennium AD. The presence on the site of beads made of bronze spiral-twisted wire, flat triangular and three-bladed arrowheads and knives with a looped pommel, socketed adzes, and blacksmith's tools does not contradict the proposed dating. Probably, further research of this site will clarify the dating.

Today it is difficult to define the position of the Pinchuga-6 burial ground among other complexes of the Lower Angara region of the first half — the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD due to limited sources. The only synchronous objects are the burials of the third group of the Ust-Zelinda-2 burial ground. These are six burials in the form of scattered cremated human remains on an original surface. These burials contain iron arrowheads, pierced beads, beads, fragments of ceramics with thin rollers. Researchers associate the finds of objects of Western

Siberian cult casting with the same complexes [Marchenko et al., 2012: 457]. Anthropological researches of these remains have not yet been studied.

In the territories adjacent to the Lower Angara region, at the finale of the Iron Age, the ceremony of cremated is known in the Krasnoyarsk forest-steppe and characteristic of the burials of the Borovoe type [Mandryka, Makarov, 1994]. The cremated remains were buried in ground pits along with funeral equipment and a ceramic vessel was placed next to it in these burials. There are similar arrowheads, adornments and similar ceramics with an ornament of thin rollers and fingertips in the Krasnoyarsk and Angarsk burials. All these facts testify to the dating and probably cultural closeness of the Angara complexes and the burials of the Bohr type.

#### Conclusion

The Pinchuga-6 burial ground is the largest studied necropolis of the second quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD. The finds make it possible to characterize the burial ceremony of the population in the Lower Angara region. The materials also allow tracing the directions of cultural connection and highlighting the main markers of the complexes of this period. New materials demonstrate that the population of the lower reaches of the Angara at the finale of the Iron Age participated in a complex system of cultural communications that existed at that time between different regions of Siberia. Moreover, the materials of the second quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD stand out in a separate dating complex, which is synchronous with the sites of the Borovsk type, the Tashtyk culture and the late stage of the Kulai culture/community.

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