

Ulug-Khem archaeological culture of the Xiongnu period in Tuva

Pavel Leus

Berlin DE

Abstract

In recent years, in course of regular work around the Sayan-Shushenskoe reservoir in Central Tuva (Russian Federation), the Tuvan Archaeological Expedition of the Institute for the History of Material Culture (St. Petersburg) found two undisturbed cemeteries located 4.5 km apart, Ala-Tey 1 and Terezin. The both are unquestionably dated to the early period of the Xiongnu era, 2-1 century BCE. The excavations at the reservoir are receiving support from the Society for the Exploration of Eurasia (Switzerland).

To date 99 burials have been uncovered in the Ala-Tey 1 cemetery, and at Terezin 31.

The cemetery of Ala-Tey is located on the bottom of the reservoir and the excavations work there is possible only during about 3-4 weeks a year in May to June. During the rest of year the cemetery is at a depth of 16-17 m under water.

The finds from these cemeteries (burial rite, grave goods like bronze openwork belt plates, pottery, chinese mirrors and coins etc) allow us to formulate more precisely the identification signs of the Ulug-Khem archaeological culture of the Xiongnu period in Tuva (and its connection to Han China) and to confirm the justification of its distinguishing.