

doi:10.17746/1563-0110.2022.50.2.090-100

**N.N. Seregin<sup>1</sup>, M.A. Demin<sup>2</sup>, and S.S. Matrenin<sup>1</sup>**<sup>1</sup>Altai State University,

Pr. Lenina 61, Barnaul, 656049, Russia

E-mail: nikolay-seregin@mail.ru; matrenins@mail.ru

<sup>2</sup>Altai State Pedagogical University,

Molodezhnaya 55, Barnaul, 656031, Russia

E-mail: mademin52@mail.ru

## Decorative Belts of Xianbei Period Nomads from Karban I, Northern Altai

*In 1989–1990, five decorative belts worn by the Xianbei Period nomads were excavated from the Karban I cemetery in the Chemsalsky District, Altai Republic. Their details (33 plaques, five buckles, six “units”, and two “pendant tips”) were found in four undisturbed graves of males (mounds 11, 27, 33, and 39). They are described with regard to function, decoration, and chronology. Parallels from the Altai and adjacent territories, dating to the late 1st millennium BC–early 1st millennium AD, are listed. A more precise attribution is the Early Xianbei Period (100–300 AD), correlating with the Bulan-Koby culture of the Altai. Available facts suggest that the style of these artifacts was influenced by the Xiongnu and Xianbei traditions. On the basis of the finds in situ, several variants of belt sets, some of which are hitherto unknown, have been reconstructed. The composition of the belts is unrelated to the owners’ age and evidently mirrors their personal preferences. The results demonstrate the social relevance of the belts, since most were found in burials of top-ranking males.*

**Keywords:** Altai, Xianbei Period, cemeteries, decorative belts, reconstruction, chronology.

### Introduction

Belts for fastening outer garments and attaching various items were one of the main types of equipment used by the peoples of Eurasia in Late Antiquity, the Middle Ages, and the Modern Period. The analysis of the surviving elements of belts discovered in archaeological excavations testify to their importance for dating the sites, obtaining their more accurate chronology, and reconstructing various aspects of intercultural interaction and social organization of populations. Such items have been subject to multidisciplinary analyses, the results of which have been described in comprehensive monographs and numerous special publications.

Judging by the results of excavations of archaeological sites, decorative belts were an important part of the material culture of the population living in the Altai from the 2nd century BC to the 5th century AD. Various aspects of decorative belts have been researched. One of the first scholars to study them was V.N. Dobzhansky. He proposed reconstructions of belts from the necropolises of Balyktyyul and Kok-Pash (Dobzhansky, 1990: 26–27, pl. XVII, 1; XIX, 1). These results were taken into consideration while analyzing belt sets from the Kok-Pash site (Vasyutin, 2000), and were summarized in a book on the evidence discovered in the excavations of that site (Bobrov, Vasyutin A.S., Vasyutin S.A., 2003: 25–27). Individual belts from the Verkh-Uimon cemetery were

described in a monograph by V.I. Soenov and A.V. Ebel, which made it possible to demonstrate some features of items from the archaeological sites of the Rouran Period (1992: 53–55). Decorative belts of the Altai population were analyzed by Y.V. Teterin (1995). A number of important observations on the specific features of belts from the Xianbei Period in the Northern Altai were made by A.Y. Borisenko and Y.S. Hudiakov, who used evidence from the Ulug-Choltukh I cemetery (2004). Chronological interpretation and reconstruction of decorative belts from the Xiongnu Period, based on the finds from the Yaloman II site in the Central Altai, appeared in the publications of A.A. Tishkin and S.S. Matrenin (Matrenin, 2017: 99–102; Tishkin, Matrenin, 2020). The results of studying the decorative belts of nomads in the 4th century AD appeared in a series of works on the evidence from the excavations of the Stepushka complex (Tishkin, Matrenin, Kungurov, 2015; Soenov, Konstantinov, Trifanova, 2018: 41–43; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 97–109).

According to the history of research briefly described above, the comprehensive reconstruction of decorative belts directly depends on the degree of preservation of belt sets made of metal (mainly iron), as well as on careful records on the location of items in the burials. However, it should be kept in mind that in some cases incomplete (“symbolic”) belts, serving as an expression of the entire set, could have been placed in graves. An important factor is that a significant part of the available sources remains unpublished. This article intends to partly fill this gap by describing a series of well-preserved and carefully recorded finds from undisturbed burials at the Karban I necropolis, and reconstructing several variants of decorative belts used by the population of the Northern Altai in the Xianbei Period on the basis of these finds.

### Description of the sources

The burial and memorial complex of Karban I is located on the left bank of the Katun River, 1.7 km northwest of the village of Kuyus in the Chemsalsky District of the Altai Republic (Fig. 1). In 1989–1990, a series of burials of the Bulan-Koby culture was excavated at that site by an expedition from the Barnaul State Pedagogical Institute (now the Altai State Pedagogical University), led by M.A. Demin in the framework of rescue archaeological works (Seregin, Demin, Matrenin, 2021). Metal decorative belt sets were found *in situ* in four male burials. Gradual clearing of the discovered items, while keeping all finds in place before and after extracting the bones of the postcranial skeletons, has made it possible to establish the order of their placement from the buckle to the supposed end of the belt. The description of the identified sets and information important for reconstructing the belts are presented here.



Fig. 1. Location of the Karban I burial and memorial complex.

*Mound 11.* The decorative belt includes a large number of metal elements unearthed mainly above the pelvic bones of a deceased male 25–35 years of age\*. The location of the preserved items revealed the contour of a completely decayed leather belt. An iron buckle with movable prong directed toward the left side lay on a lumbar vertebra (Fig. 2, 1). Seven bronze plaques in the form of clips (Fig. 2, 2–8), and two iron attached plaques with pins (Fig. 2, 16, 17), which decorated the front right half of the belt, were found 6 cm from the buckle. When the skeleton was removed, an iron half-clip plaque was found in the area of the center of the back (Fig. 2, 18). A large iron attached plaque (Fig. 2, 20) which overlapped the bronze clip/plaque (Fig. 2, 9), was above the left wing of the pelvis. Judging by the size of the attached plaque and the surviving pins in the corners, the leather base of the belt in most areas was 3.5 cm wide. In the projection of the belt bend, near the left side of the man, a bronze clip-plaque (Fig. 2, 10) and an iron half-clip plaque with movable ring (Fig. 2, 21) were located. The front left half of the belt was decorated with four bronze clip-plaques (Fig. 2, 11–14) and two iron attached plaques (Fig. 2, 22, 23). An iron “unit” in the form of a ring (Fig. 2, 19), which probably hung on a short strap, was found below this accumulation of artifacts. The length of the unpreserved leather base

\*Owing to the poor preservation of the material evidence, the sex was established based on the composition of the grave goods. Hereafter, anthropological identifications were made by S.S. Tur.

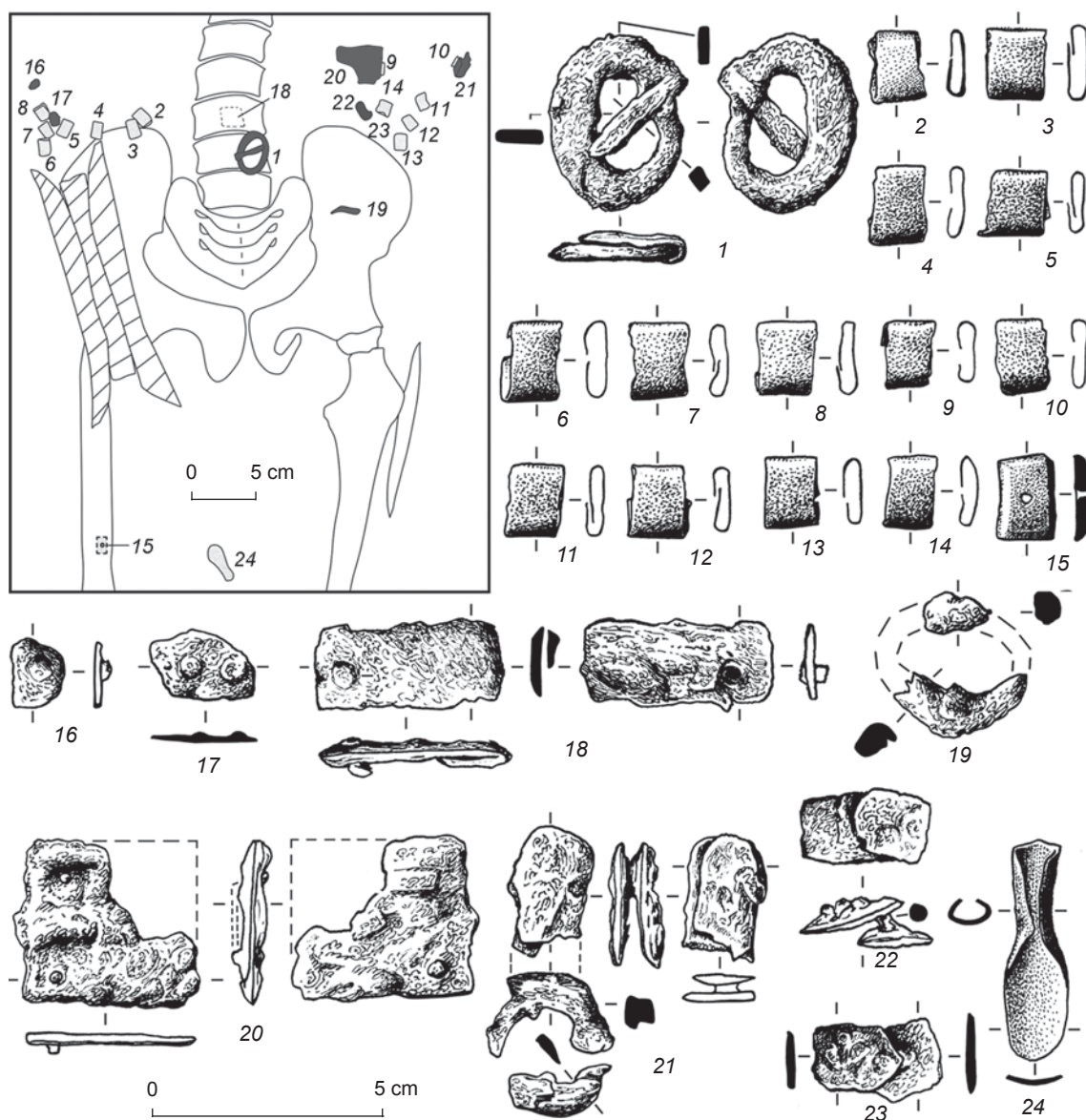


Fig. 2. Decorative belt sets from mound 11 (1, 16–23 – iron; 2–15, 24 – non-ferrous metal).

between the farthest metal objects on the sides was at least 34 cm. The elements of the belt might have also included a bronze attached plaque found under the right femur (Fig. 2, 15), and a spoon-shaped “pendant tip” discovered between the leg bones (Fig. 2, 24). These items were most likely attached to long straps hanging down.

**Mound 27.** Iron parts of the decorative belt were located mainly near the pelvic bones of a deceased male of mature age. A buckle with movable prong (Fig. 3, 1) lay on the right wing of the pelvis and was directed toward the left side. Two iron attached plaques (Fig. 3, 2, 3) were found 15 cm from it, near the right side of the man. A “unit” of rounded-trapezoid shape (Fig. 3, 4) and a half-clip plaque with movable ring (Fig. 3, 5) which

a whetstone and a whip with bone handle were hung from, were discovered at the left wing of the pelvis, in the projection of the lateral bend of the belt. In addition, the belt included an iron attached plaque in the form of a four-petalled rosette (Fig. 3, 6) and a bone spoon-shaped “pendant tip” (Fig. 3, 7).

**Mound 33.** Simple and decorative belts were found in the burial of a male 35–45 years of age. The decorative belt lay in the abdomen area of the deceased and included the following iron items: a rectangular buckle with movable prong (Fig. 4, 1) oriented toward the left side; a ring-shaped “unit” (Fig. 4, 3) found at the elbow joint of the right arm and attached to the belt probably with the help of a movable leather loop; two rectangular attached plaques with pin fastening (Fig. 4, 4, 5), placed on the



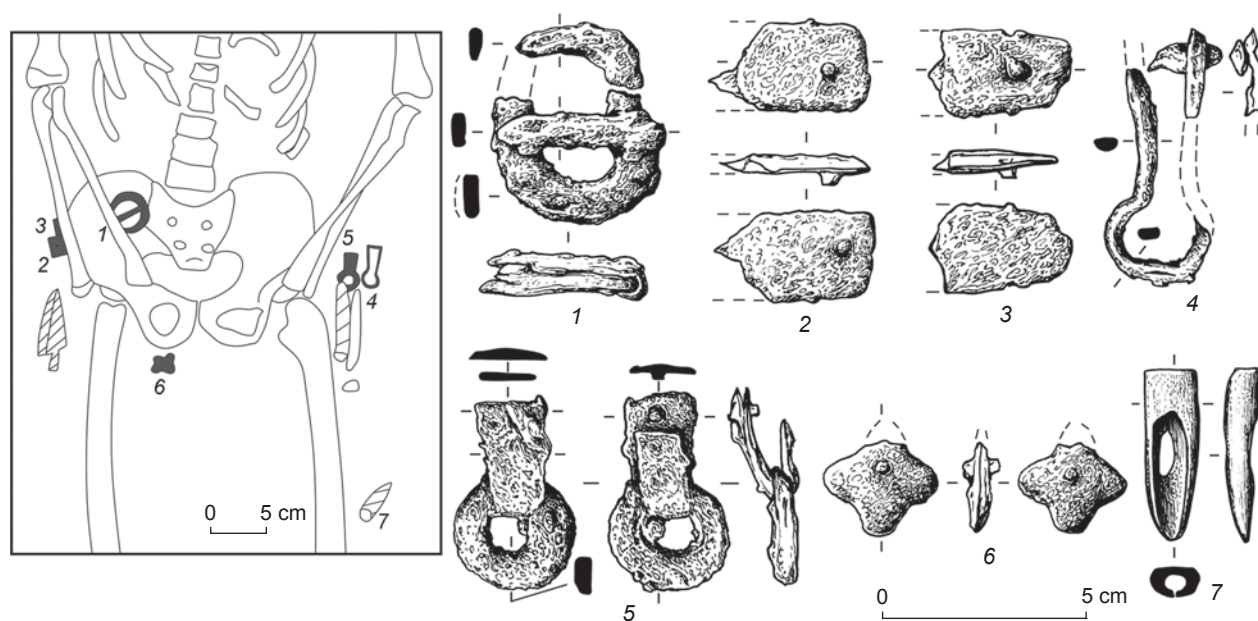


Fig. 3. Decorative belt sets from mound 27 (1–6 – iron; 7 – bone).

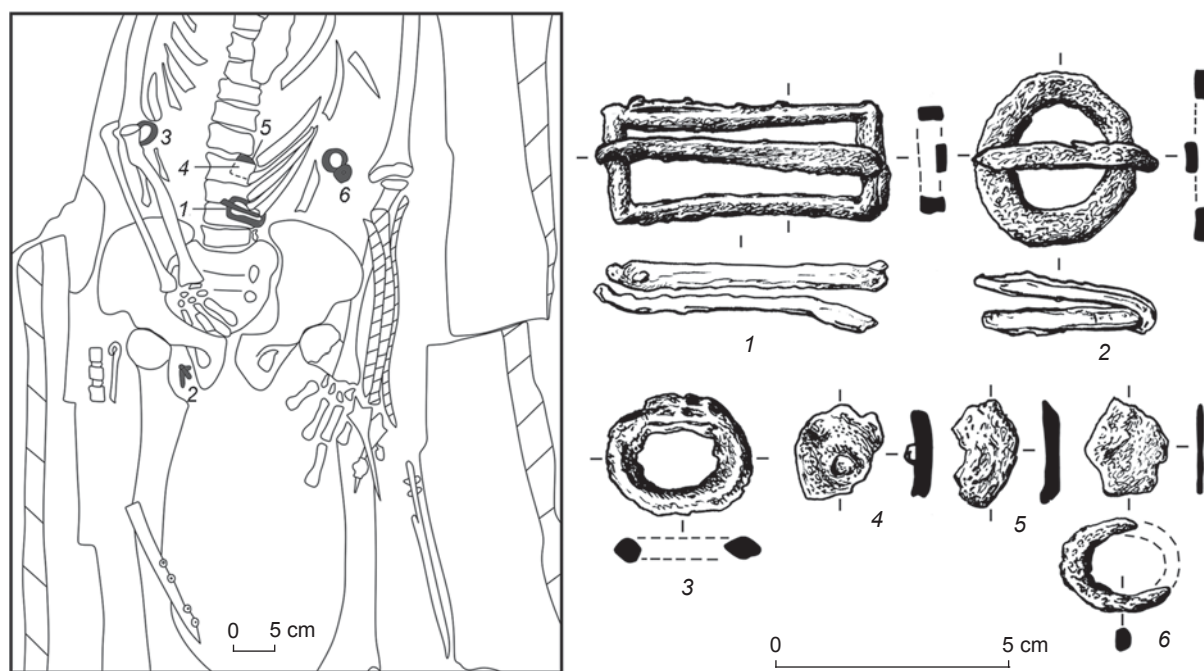


Fig. 4. Iron decorative belt sets from mound 33.

belt at the back almost in the center, and a half-clip plaque with movable ring (Fig. 4, 6), located at the left elbow, in the projection of the lateral bend of the belt. The distance between the farthest items, symmetrically located on either side, indicates that the length of the belt along the back was about 30 cm; the length of the front section on the right half of the body was about 16 cm, and the length on the left front side was at least 25 cm. The simple belt

was placed below the pelvis, had an oval buckle with movable prong oriented toward the left side (Fig. 4, 2).

*Mound 39.* Two decorative iron belt sets were unearthed in the burial of a male 35–50 years of age. The elements of the “upper” belt were located in the abdomen area of the deceased. A rectangular buckle with movable prong directed toward the left side lay on the ribs of the right half of the chest (Fig. 5, 1); a half-clip plaque

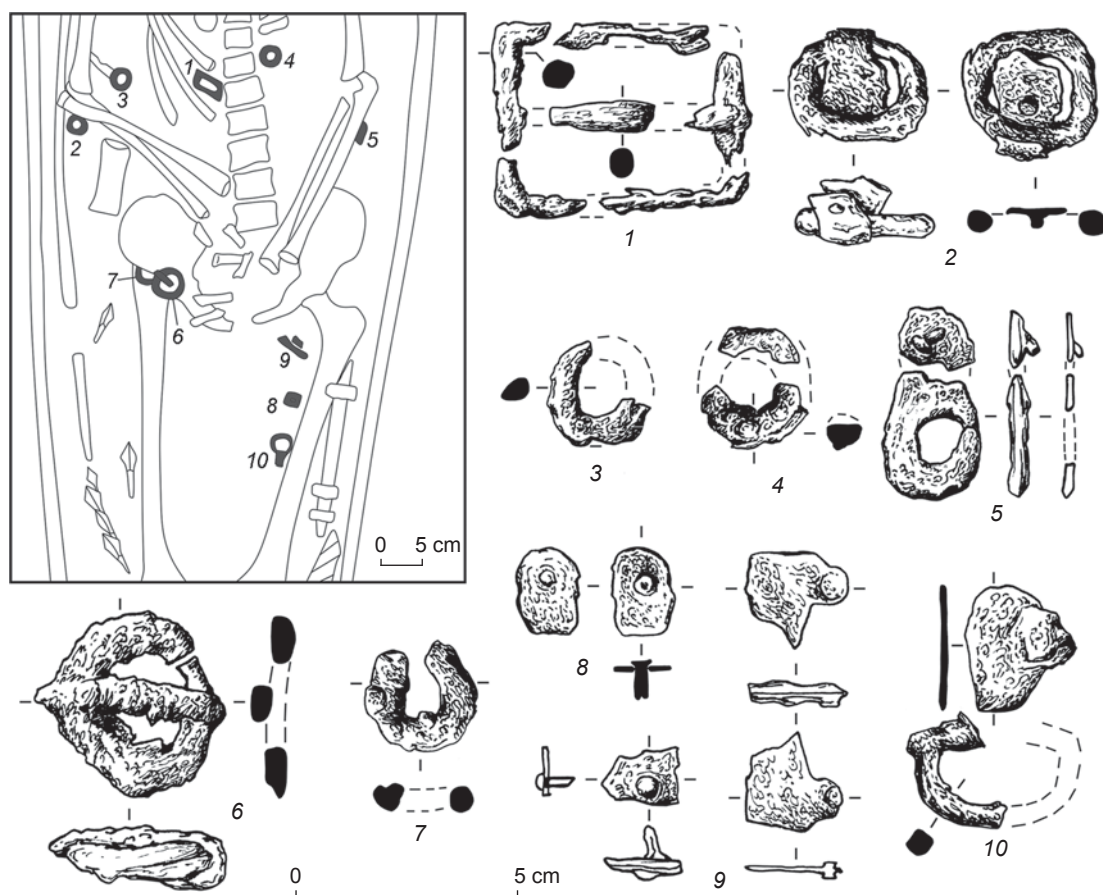


Fig. 5. Iron decorative belt sets from mound 39.

with movable ring (Fig. 5, 2) and a bone item, which was probably a clasp, were near the elbow joint of the right arm. A ring-shaped “unit” was found 8 cm from the plaque (Fig. 5, 3). A similar item was unearthed under the skeleton in the area of the center of the back (Fig. 5, 4). A plaque with immovable ring was found under the bones of the left forearm, in the projection of the lateral bend of the belt (Fig. 5, 5). Judging by the location of the farthest metal parts, the length of the belt on the back was at least 34–38 cm. The remaining metal elements of the second belt were found at the lower part of the pelvic bones and on the inside of the left femur. A buckle with movable prong and oval frame (Fig. 5, 6) was located on the right wing of the pelvis. A “unit” in the form of a ring (Fig. 5, 7) was almost right next to it. Metal elements were absent from a significantly extended section of the belt corresponding to the back and area of the left lateral bend. Two attached plaques of different sizes with pin fastening (Fig. 5, 8, 9) and a half-clip plaque with movable ring (Fig. 5, 10) were found on the inner side of the left femur. These items decorated the front left half of the belt. There are reasons to believe that the “lower” decorative belt was placed in the grave unfastened.

Most of the discovered elements of the belt sets were in a good and satisfactory state of preservation. This makes it possible to perform a complete study of their typologically important morphological features and compare them with the known evidence from other necropolises of the Bulan-Koby culture of the Altai, as well as with the data obtained during the excavations of archaeological sites from the last quarter of the 1st millennium BC to the first half of the 1st millennium AD in Central, Northern, and Middle Asia.

### Analysis of the evidence

Analysis of the decorative belts from the burials of the Karban I cemetery includes their detailed morphological description based on the chronological attribution of the items. These decorative belts were fastened with iron buckles with movable prong attached to the base of the frame without a shield. The oval items from mounds 11, 27, and 39 (see Fig. 2, 1; 3, 1; 5, 6) were the most common variety of belt fasteners among the Bulan-Koby people in the Altai in the 2nd–5th centuries AD (Matrenin, 2017:

30–31, 43). Buckles with shortened rectangular frame, as that discovered in mound 39 (see Fig. 5, 1), could be found from the 1st century BC until the first half of the 4th century AD (Ibid.: 43). The rectangular buckle with horizontally elongated body from mound 33 (see Fig. 4, 1) has dated parallels in the evidence of the Early Xianbei Period (late 1st–early 3rd century AD) from the Southeastern Transbaikalian region and Tuva (Mandelshtam, Stambulnik, 1992: Pl. 81, 41; Yaremchuk, 2005: Fig. 97, 3; 102, 4, 8), and belongs to relatively rare examples of equipment used by the cattle breeders of the Altai in the late 1st–4th centuries AD (Matrenin, 2017: 31, 43; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 76, pl. 17, 8–9).

All the belts from the burials of the Karban I complex had metal plaques, the number of which considerably varied from 4 to 20 in a set. The study of such items (33 spec. in total) in terms of combination of variable parameters (method of fastening to the belt, structure of the body, presence/absence of rings and method of their connection with the plaque, shape of the frontal part, size of the item) makes it possible to draw the following conclusions.

Iron attached plaques in the form of straight or slightly bent plates of subsquare and rectangular shape and various sizes without rings, which were attached to the belt with one or more inserted pins (see Fig. 2, 16, 17, 20, 22, 23; 3, 2, 3; 4, 4, 5; 5, 8, 9), have numerous parallels in the Xianbei equipment of the late 1st–4th centuries AD (Yaremchuk, 2005: Fig. 96, 6; 97, 4, 7; 99, 1, 2, 5–7, 10). The distribution of these items among the nomads of Tuva in the 2nd–4th centuries AD was associated with the Xianbei influence (Dyakonova, 1970: Pl. XII, 9; Pamyatniki..., 2010: 61, 65; and others). In the Altai, such plaques resulted from the local development of belt sets based on the imitation of Xianbei models (Tishkin, Matrenin, Kungurov, 2015: 128). Considering these parallels and the trend of some “delay” of the archaeological evidence of the region in relation to the Xianbei sites, the emergence of such belt attached plaques among the Bulan-Koby population can be dated to the 2nd century AD. Similar iron items were widely used in the Altai until the mid 1st millennium AD, demonstrating the “survival” of individual items in the material culture of the Turkic peoples in the second half of the 5th–6th centuries AD (Ilyushin, 2000: Fig. V, 10).

Iron attached plaques, in the form of half-clips with movable ring on the lower side of the body (5 spec. in total) (see Fig. 2, 21; 3, 5; 4, 6; 5, 2, 10), first appeared in Central Asia among the Xianbei people of the Eastern Transbaikalian region (late 1st–early 3rd century AD) and population of Tuva (2nd–4th centuries AD) (Dyakonova, 1970: Pl. XI, 13–24, 47; XII, 5–7, 23–28; Nikolaev, 2000: Fig. 1, 4, 6, 10; 3, 4, 12; Yaremchuk, 2005: Fig. 96, 5). In the Altai, such belt plaques were common among the Bulan-Koby people during the 2nd–5th centuries AD

(Bobrov, Vasyutin A.S., Vasyutin S.A., 2003: Fig. 6, 29–31; 11, 25–27; 13, 12–13; Matrenin, 2017: 75; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 89–90).

The iron plaque in the form of a rectangular plate bent into a half-clip without rings (see Fig. 2, 18) is one of the items that does not have known exact parallels at the Bulan-Koby sites of the Altai. In comparison, we can point to iron specimens with supposedly lost rings and a narrow bronze plaque from the burials of the 4th century AD at the Stepushka complex (Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: Pl. 19, 13; fig. 40, 11–13). The emergence of plaques of this type can be viewed in the context of the genesis of buckles with movable, laminar, shield-like half-clips, as well as belt tips with similar design from the Altai sites dated not earlier than to the late 2nd century AD.

The iron plaque with immovable ring on the short side of an oval-rectangular frame (see Fig. 5, 5) shows parallels to belt sets from the Xiongnu sites of the late 1st century BC–1st century AD (Konovalov, 1976: Pl. XIII, 1, 2, 4–7; Miller et al., 2008: Fig. 8; and others). In the Altai, iron attached plaques with immovable rings are quite rare and are dated with a broad range from the 2nd to the 5th centuries AD (Matrenin, 2017: 64, 74).

The iron rosette-shaped plaque with pin fastening (see Fig. 3, 6) has no parallels among the evidence of the Bulan-Koby culture. In its shape it resembles the polychrome plaques of the Xiongnu of Mongolia and Transbaikalian region of the late 1st century BC–1st century AD (Konovalov, 1976: Pl. XIX, 19; Erôl-Erdene, Gantulga, 2008: 244, 248, 251, 278, 287).

Noteworthy is a series of belt plaques made of non-ferrous metal (mound 11), which very rarely occur in the Altai at the sites of the first half of the 1st millennium AD. The thirteen distinctive items are flat, subsquare bronze plates folded into a clip and having no attachment elements (see Fig. 2, 2–14). These items were placed close to each other in the middle of the belt with a width of 3.5 cm. The plaques might have been attached to the belt by threading through narrow horizontal slots in the leather belt and tightly pressing the front and back parts of the frame against it. The high probability of such a method of fastening is confirmed by the evidence from the Bulan-Koby Stepushka burial ground (Central Altai) of the Xianbei-Rouran Period, where a bronze half-clip plaque with the remains of the leather base was found *in situ*. The bent plate located with the open side down and fixed with an inserted pin was passed through a small, horizontal slot near the upper edge of the belt (Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 99, pl. 19, 13, fig. 77, 13).

Bronze clip-plaques were discovered as a part of the Bulan-Koby belt sets in the Altai for the first time. Taking into account the archaeological age of the burial where they were found, these finds have tentatively been dated to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD. Typologically, they can be



considered as one of the prototypes of similar but later (3rd–4th centuries AD) belt half-clip plaques with pin fastening (Matrenin, 2017: 78–79; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 91).

The bronze plaque in the form of a straight quadrangular plate attached to the belt with an inserted pin (see Fig. 2, 15) has no morphological parallels in the materials from the Xiongnu sites, which definitely suggests its dating to no earlier than the 2nd century AD. Production of such plaques by the Bulan-Koby people was associated with similar iron modifications that received distribution in the region and reflected the influence of the Xianbei traditions. The closest specimens, which were not identical and probably came from a later period, were found in burials at the Balyktyul (mid 3rd century AD) and Stepushka (4th century AD) cemeteries (Sorokin, 1977: Fig. 6, 9–10; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 90, pl. 19, 9).

The decorative belts from mounds 11 and 27 were equipped with “pendant tips” attached to the ends of freely hanging straps. The bronze, inserted specimen in the form of a solid tube-socket with a cut-off, spoon-shaped front edge (nose), having a tongue-like shape in plan view (see Fig. 2, 24), has parallels in the evidence from the Central Asian Xiongnu sites of the late 1st century BC–1st century AD (Erôl-Erdene, Gantulga, 2008: Zur. 13; Brosseder, 2011: Fig. 50, 36). This specimen is dated later than cast samples with slotted socket that became widespread among the peoples of Northern Asia under the influence of the Xiongnu in the 2nd–1st centuries BC (Matveeva, 1994: Fig. 58, 21; Savinov, 2009: Pl. XXIV, 44; XXV, 3–4; XLVII, 14–15; Kuzmin, 2011: Pl. 40, 22–24; 74, 3, 4, 24, 29; 89, 16–17; Leus, 2011: Fig. 20, 3; Borodovsky, Larichev, 2013: 85, 95, 98; fig. 16, 1, 2; 31, 17, 18; 33, 8, 18; 38, 4, 8). The evidence from the Karban I cemetery indicates that the upper chronological boundary of inserted tips of this type among the population of the Altai was the 2nd–3rd centuries AD.

The belt “pendant tip” in the form of a solid bone tube with a cut spoon-shaped front edge showing a keeled outline (see Fig. 3, 7) is close in appearance to the items from the sites of the Bulan-Koby culture, dated mainly to the 2nd century BC–1st century AD (Chendek, Pazyryk, Ust-Edigan, Yaloman II) and less often to the 2nd–3rd centuries AD (Bosh-Tuu I) (Sorokin, 1977: Fig. 10, 1; Mamadakov, 1990: Fig. 65, 15; Soenov, Ebel, 1992: Fig. 21, 2; and others).

Three decorative belts from the Karaban I site were equipped with iron “units” in the form of small round or oval rings without attachment elements (see Fig. 2, 19; 4, 3; 5, 3, 4, 7). Their number in sets varied from one to three; these “units” might have been used to connect and tighten belts, or to hang some things (whips, whetstones, handbags, containers) from. They could have been attached to a movable leather loop or a loosely hanging shoulder

strap. Similar elements of the waist set became widespread among the Bulan-Koby people in the 2nd–5th centuries AD (Matrenin, 2017: 94–95; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 94, 96). Outside the Altai, they were most common among the nomads of Tuva in the 3rd–4th centuries AD (Kenk, 1984: Abb. 29, F, 8; 33, B, 2; 35, E, 1; 38, D, 3, J, 2, K, 3; 41, A, 8; 42, A, 17; Nikolaev, 2000: 70–71).

The iron, rounded-trapezoid “unit” from mound 27 (see Fig. 3, 4) has no parallels in the known collections from the Bulan-Koby sites of the Altai. It can be approximately dated to the Xianbei Period (2nd century to first half of the 4th century AD). At the same time, it should be mentioned that the item under discussion resembles in its appearance those T-shaped buckles and belt dispensers that became widespread in the Altai in the 3rd–5th centuries AD (Matrenin, 2017: 44–45, 50, 53, 54, 93; Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 79–80).

## Discussion

The study of the sets remaining from decorative belts (4 buckles, 33 plaques, 5 “units”, 2 tips) from the Karban I necropolis makes it possible to conclude that most of these items appeared among the Altai population no earlier than the 2nd century AD, and were local replicas of the Xiongnu and Xianbei equipment. According to a comparative analysis, the finds under consideration can be attributed to the Early Bely Bom stage of the Bulan-Koby culture of the Altai (2nd to the first half of the 3rd century AD).

Despite the fact that the leather bases of the belts have not survived in any burial, the location of the parts found *in situ* relative to the bones of postcranial human skeletons makes it possible to make reconstruction drawings of the decorative belts, taking into account a number of procedural and methodological aspects. First, a most accurate measurement of the distance between the elements was crucial when analyzing the data at their location. Second, the burials might have contained individual parts of belts as a symbolic expression of the whole set. Third, the interpretation of the functional purpose of several items was not always unambiguous.

The decorative belt from mound 11 was the most distinctive and sophisticated in its composition (Fig. 6, 1). The reconstructed set had a main belt with iron oval-framed buckle, 14 bronze clip-plaques, five iron attached plaques, and two iron half-clip plaques, including those with movable ring. A long (about 29 cm) hanging strap with bronze plaque was attached to the right side; two hanging straps were attached to the left side; an iron “unit” was attached to one of the straps (about 6 cm long), and a bronze spoon-shaped “pendant tip” was attached to the other strap (about 30 cm long). The maximum width of the belt was 3.5 cm. The belt was passed into the slot of

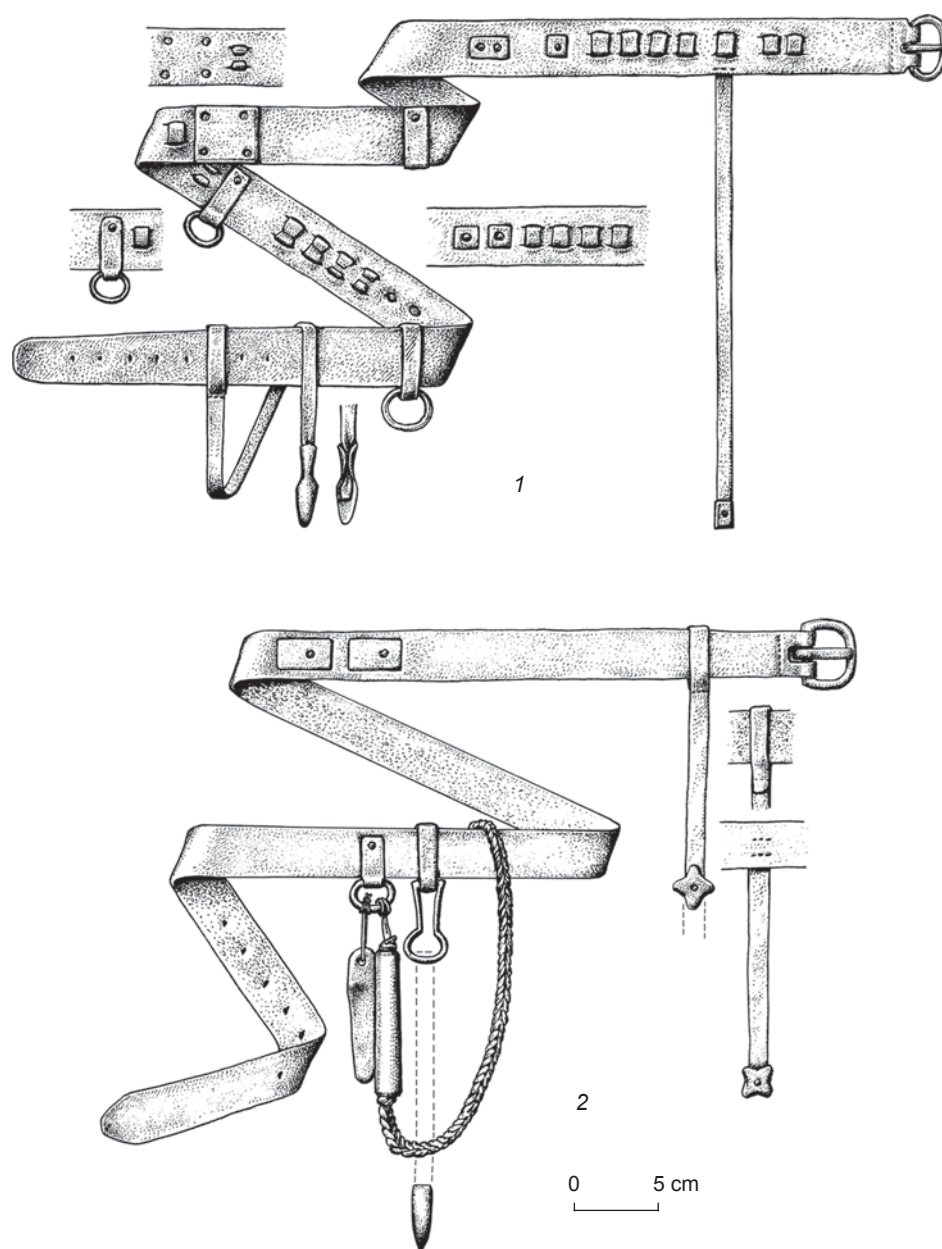


Fig. 6. Reconstruction of decorative belts from mounds 11 (1) and 27 (2).

the buckle from left to right. Such a belt was found in the burials of the Bulan-Koby culture of the Altai for the first time.

The decorative belt from mound 27 (Fig. 6, 2) was fastened with an oval-framed buckle and had various decorative and functional elements of a main belt (two attached plaques, “unit” of a round-trapezoidal shape, half-clip plaque with movable ring), and hanging straps (attached plaque in the form of a rosette, bone “pendant tip”). The belt was passed into the slot of the buckle from left to right. Exact parallels to this set in the archaeological evidence from the Altai are unknown to the current authors.

The decorative belt from mound 33 (Fig. 7, 1) turned out to be the simplest: it had a rectangular buckle, half-clip plaque with movable ring, two quadrangular attached plaques, and a ring-shaped “unit”. The belt at the buckle was fastened to the left. Its width was believed to have been about 2.0–2.5 cm. Parallels to such a belt in the Altai have been found among the evidence from the sites of the 2nd–5th centuries AD (Matrenin, 2017: 111).

Mound 39 contained two decorative belts. The “upper” belt (Fig. 7, 2) had an iron set (rectangular buckle, pair of plaques with rings on the sides, and two ring “units” on the back), and was about 2.0–2.5 cm wide. The belt at the buckle was fastened to the left.



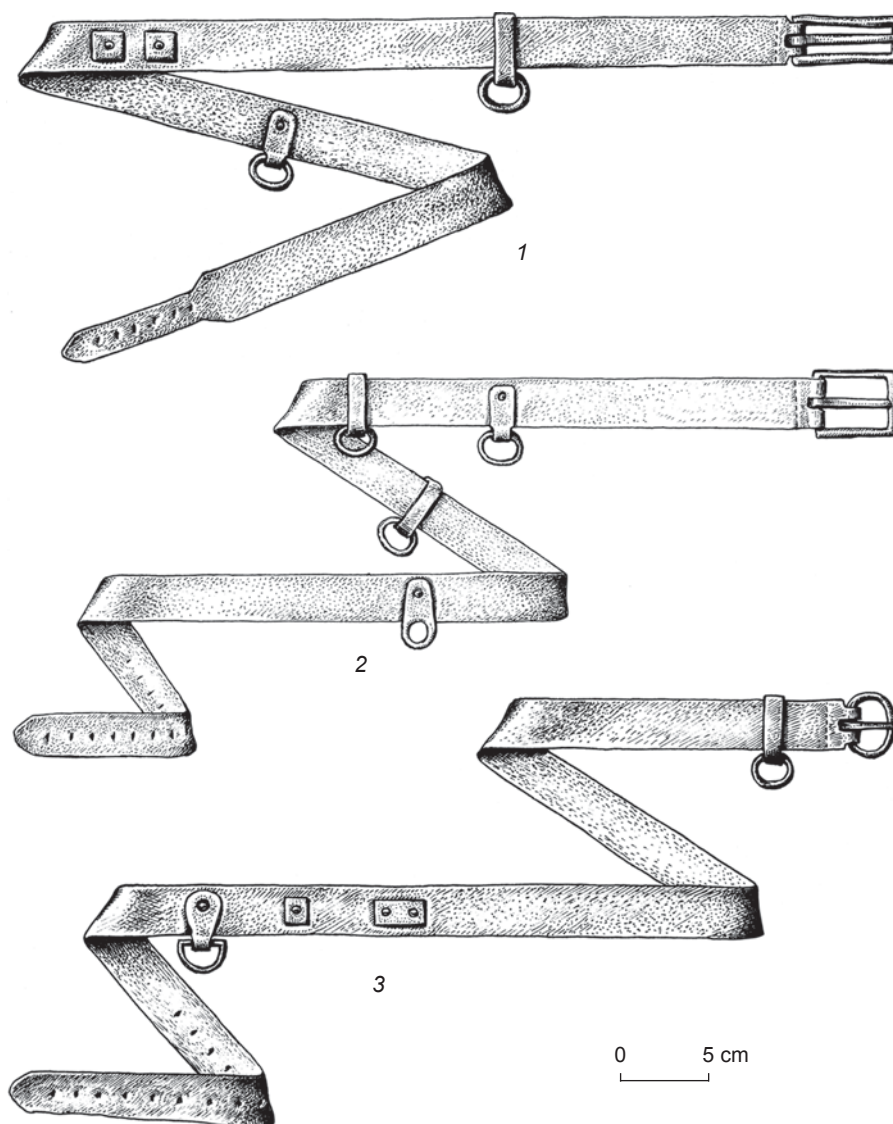


Fig. 7. Reconstruction of decorative belts from mounds 33 (1) and 39 (2, 3).

A similar set has been found in a Bulan-Koby burial of the 4th century AD at the Stepushka cemetery (Tishkin, Matrenin, Shmidt, 2018: 98–99, pl. 24, II). The “lower” decorative belt (Fig. 7, 3) also had only iron elements (oval-framed buckle, “unit”, two attached plaques, and a half-clip plaque with movable ring), and was 2.0–2.5 cm wide. This belt was fastened to the left. Belts similar in the composition of elements have been found in the Altai in the complexes of the Xianbei (Airydash I, Bulan-Koby IV) and Rouran (Verkh-Uimon, Dyalyan, Yaloman II) periods (Matrenin, 2017: 111).

The distinctive sets of decorative belts from mounds 11, 27, and 39 suggest that they existed for a relatively short period in the 2nd–first half of the 3rd century AD. The difference in sets of elements does not reveal any connection with the age of the deceased males,

and apparently reflected the personal preferences of their owners.

The evidence confirms the social role of decorative belts, most of which have been found in the burials of males with numerous grave goods (primarily weapons and tools), who had high status in the social and property-related stratification of the local group of representatives of the Bulan-Koby culture buried at Karban I.

### Conclusions

Publication and interdisciplinary studies of finds (buckles, plaques, “units”, “pendant tips”) from the burials at the Karban I cemetery have made it possible to obtain common, specific, and individual characteristics of

decorative belts used by the population of the Northern Altai in the first half of the 1st millennium AD. Analysis and chronological attribution of the belt sets indicate that in the 2nd–3rd centuries AD these items evolved among the Bulan-Koby people of the Altai under the influence of the equipment used by the Central Asian nomads. Qualitative and quantitative diversity of the functional and decorative elements of belts, including the presence of items with no parallels among the evidence of the Bulan-Koby culture, is noteworthy. The dating of some types of items to the Xianbei Period can be corrected taking into account the archaeological age of the closed complexes where they were found.

The discovery of the items in graves *in situ* has made it possible to perform fairly objective reconstruction drawings of several types of decorative belts, including their rare and previously unknown varieties. Differences in the composition of the belt sets reflected the personal preferences of their owners. Decorative belts came from the burials that contained the richest goods among the male burials excavated at Karban I. This observation emphasizes the high position of these individuals in the social and property-related stratification of the local group of the Bulan-Koby living in the Xianbei Period.

### Acknowledgments

This study was supported by the Russian Science Foundation (Project No. 20-18-00179). Treatment of the materials from the excavations at the Karban I cemetery was carried out under the program of strategic academic leadership of the Federal State Budgetary Educational Institution of Higher Education at the Altai State University.

### References

- Bobrov V.V., Vasyutin A.S., Vasyutin S.A. 2003**  
Vostochniy Altai v epokhu Velikogo pereseleniya narodov (III–VII veka). Novosibirsk: Izd. IAET SO RAN.
- Borisenko A.Y., Hudiakov Y.S. 2004**  
Naborniye poyasa kochevnikov Edigana v syanbiyskiy period. In *Problemy arkheologii, etnografii, antropologii Sibiri i sopredelnykh territoriy*, vol. X (1). Novosibirsk: Izd. IAET SO RAN, pp. 194–199.
- Borodovsky A.P., Larichev V.E. 2013**  
Iyusskiy klad (katalog kollektsii). Novosibirsk: Izd. IAET SO RAN.
- Brosseder U. 2011**  
Belt plaques as an indicator of East-West relations in the Eurasian steppe at the turn of the millennia. In *Xiongnu Archaeology: Multidisciplinary Perspectives of the First Steppe Empire in Inner Asia*. Bonn: Universität Bonn, pp. 349–424.
- Dobzhansky V.N. 1990**  
Naborniye poyasa kochevnikov Azii. Novosibirsk: Novosib. Gos. Univ.
- Dyakonova V.P. 1970**  
Bolshiye kurgany-kladbishcha na mogilnike Kokel (po rezul'tatam raskopok za 1963, 1965 gg.). In *Trudy Tuvin'skoy kompleksnoy arkheologo-etnograficheskoy ekspeditsii*, vol. III. Leningrad: Nauka, pp. 80–209.
- Erôl-Erdene C., Gantulga Z. 2008**  
Umard khunnügiyn yazguurtny negen bulshny sudalгаа. *Arkheologiyn sudlal*, vol. VI (XXVI): 149–189. (In Mongolian).
- Ilyushin A.M. 2000**  
Mogilnik Kudyrge i voprosy drevnetyurkskoy istorii Sayano-Altaya. In *Pamyatniki drevnetyurkskoy kultury v Sayano-Altaye i Tsentral'noy Azii*. Novosibirsk: Izd. Novosib. Gos. Univ., pp. 157–169.
- Kenk R. 1984**  
Das Gräberfeld der hunno-sarmatische Zeit von Kokel', Tuva, Süd-Sibirien: AVA-Materialien. München: Verl. C.H. Beck.
- Konovalov P.B. 1976**  
Khunnu v Zabaikalye (pogrebalniye pamyatniki). Ulan-Ude: Buryat. kn. izd.
- Kuzmin N.Y. 2011**  
Pogrebalniye pamyatniki khunno-syanbiyskogo vremeni v stepyakh Srednego Yeniseya: Tesinskaya kultura. St. Petersburg: Aising.
- Leus P. 2011**  
New find from the Xiongnu period in Central Tuva: Preliminary communication. In *Xiongnu Archaeology: Multidisciplinary Perspectives of the First Steppe Empire in Inner Asia*. Bonn: Universität Bonn, pp. 515–536.
- Mamadakov Y.T. 1990**  
Kultura naseleniya Tsentral'nogo Altaya v pervoy polovine I tysyacheletiya nashey ery: Cand. Sc. (History) Dissertation. Novosibirsk.
- Mandel'shtam A.M., Stambulnik E.U. 1992**  
Gunno-sarmatskiy period na territorii Tuvy. In *Stepnaya polosaya Aziatskoy chasti SSSR v skifo-sarmatskoye vremya*. Moscow: Nauka, pp. 196–205.
- Matrenin S.S. 2017**  
Snaryazheniye kochevnikov Altaya (II v. do n.e. – V v. n.e.). Novosibirsk: Izd. SO RAN.
- Matveeva N.P. 1994**  
Ranniy zhelezniy vek Priishimya. Novosibirsk: Nauka.
- Miller B.K., Ollard F., Erdenebaator D., Li K. 2008**  
Pogrebalniy kompleks syunnu: Raskopki mogilnika Gol Mod-2 (Mongoliya, 2002–2005 gg.). *Arkheologicheskiye vesti*, iss. 15: 55–71.
- Nikolaev N.N. 2000**  
Poyasniye nabory mogilnika Kokel. In *Mirovozzreniye. Arkheologiya. Ritual. Kultura*. St. Petersburg: Izd. SPb. Gos. Univ., pp. 70–85.
- Pamyatniki kokelskoy kultury Tuvy: Materialy i issledovaniya. 2010**  
St. Petersburg: ElikSis.
- Savinov D.G. 2009**  
Minusinskaya provintsia khunnu (po materialam arkheologicheskikh issledovaniy 1984–1989 gg.). St. Petersburg: IIMK RAN.
- Seregin N.N., Demin D.A., Matrenin S.S. 2021**  
Obyekty syanbiyskogo vremeni kompleksa Karban I (Severniiy Altai). *Narody i religii Yevrazii*, vol. 26 (2): 81–91.

**Soenov V.I., Ebel A.V. 1992**

Kurgany gunno-sarmatskoy epokhi na Verkhney Katuni. Gorno-Altaysk: Gorno-Alt. Gos. Ped. Inst.

**Soenov V.I., Konstantinov N.A., Trifanova S.V. 2018**

Mogilnik Stepushka-2 v Tsentralnom Altaye. Gorno-Altaysk: Gorno-Alt. Gos. Univ.

**Sorokin S.S. 1977**

Pogrebeniya epokhi “Velikogo pereseleniya narodov” v rayone Pazyryka. *SGE*, iss. 18: 57–67.

**Teterin Y.V. 1995**

Poyasniye nabory gunno-sarmatskoy epokhi Gornogo Altaya. In *Problemy okhrany, izucheniya i ispolzovaniya kulturnogo naslediya Altaya*. Barnaul: Izd. Alt. Gos. Univ., pp. 131–135.

**Tishkin A.A., Matrenin S.S. 2020**

Voinskiye poyasa kochevnikov Altaya khunnuskogo vremeni iz mogilnika Yaloman II. In *Kulturnoye nasledie v kontekste traditsionnykh i mezhdistitsiplinarnykh issledovaniy: Materialy Mezhdunar. nauch. kruglogo stola, 28–30 marta 2019 g., g. Pendzhikent*. Dushanbe: Donish, pp. 43–58.

**Tishkin A.A., Matrenin S.S., Kungurov A.L. 2015**

Naborniye poyasa kochevnikov Altaya epokhi Velikogo pereseleniya narodov iz pamyatnika Stepushka I. *Rossiyskaya arkhologiya*, No. 1: 121–135.

**Tishkin A.A., Matrenin S.S., Shmidt A.V. 2018**

Altai v syanbiysko-zhuzhanskoye vremya (po materialam pamyatnika Stepushka). Barnaul: Izd. Alt. Gos. Univ.

**Vasyutin A.S. 2000**

Zashchitno-portupeiniye poyasa predkudyrinskogo vremeni Vostochnogo Altaya. In *Pyatiye istoricheskiye chteniya pamyati M.P. Gryaznova*. Omsk: Om. Gos. Univ., pp. 24–25.

**Yaremchuk O.A. 2005**

Mogilnik Zorgol-1 – pamyatnik khunno-syanbiyskoy epokhi Stepnoy Daurii: Cand. Sc. (History) Dissertation. Chita.

*Received November 22, 2021.*

*Received in revised form January 21, 2022.*