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## **BARANGOL: A PAZYRYK CEMETERY ON THE LOWER KATUN, GORNÝ ALTAI\***

*The article outlines the results of a comprehensive study of human skeletal remains from the Barangol cemetery, Gorny Altai, representing the northern variant of the Pazyryk culture. Archaeological, demographic, craniometrical, osteometrical, and pathological findings are discussed. Results suggest that the Early Iron Age populations of the Lower and Middle Katun River and of southeastern Altai were related by origin, but differed in economic specialization. As well as pastoralism, the northern Pazyryk people widely practiced agriculture.*

**Keywords:** *Gorny Altai, Katun River, Early Iron Age, Pazyryk culture, physical anthropology, paleodemography.*

### **Introduction**

Climatically, Gorny Altai falls into a comparatively arid southern part and a more humid northern part with rainy summers. These parts are connected by Seminsky Pass. South of it, stone barrows are salient under a thin layer of turf, whereas north of the pass the turf layer is thicker, blurring the burial structures. Therefore known Early Iron (Scythian) Age cemeteries in that area are few.

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In the late 1990s, they were even believed to be absent there, allegedly owing to specific climatic conditions. On the basis of this assumption, researchers interpreted this territory as a buffer zone between mountain areas of the Altai and the steppe area of the Upper Ob region (Mogilnikov, 1986a, b).

However, in the late 20th and early 21st century, burial sites were discovered in the mountain area of the Lower Katun valley (Fig. 1) (Borodovsky, Borodovskaya, 2013). At present, the most representative cemeteries dating to the Early Iron Age are Barangol-1, -2, and -4, and Chultukov Log-1 and -2, which include about 150 unlooted kurgans (burial mounds). As the excavations revealed, some of those mounds are associated with a single culture—the northern variety of Pazyryk (Barangol-1, -2, and -4, and Chultukov Log-2)—whereas

at Chultukov Log-1, Pazyryk burials co-occur with contemporaneous ones related to other cultures, such as Kara-Koba and Bystryanka.

### Materials and methods

The Barangol cemetery, comprising three groups of kurgans, denoted as Barangol-1, -2, and -4, is located in the Maiminsky District of the Altai Republic, 60 km south of Gorno-Altaiisk, between Munny and Barangol villages, along the Chuya Highway. The cemetery was discovered by A.P. Borodovsky in 1991 and was excavated in 1991–2000. It is situated at the foot of a talus on the offshoot of the Iolgo ridge, on an ancient terrace of the Katun River, adjoining the mountains along the Chuya Highway. The mounds are arranged in three chains extending west to east across the valley (Borodovsky, Borodovskaya, 2013: 121, fig. 28).

Barangol-1, located in the southern part of the cemetery, consists of 21 kurgans (Fig. 2). It is dated to the 5th/4th–early 3rd century BC, and was attributed to the northern variety of the Pazyryk culture. This attribution is based on finds such as bronze medal-shaped mirrors, a bronze dagger with an openwork haft, butchering knives, miniature acinaci and klevets pick-axes, cauldron-shaped pendants, nail-shaped pins covered with gold foil (triquetras), iron knives with ring heads, and loop-shaped ear-rings.

Barangol-2, located north of Barangol-1, includes eight kurgans, some of them with secondary burials (Fig. 3). It also belongs to the northern variety of the Pazyryk culture. On the basis of burial rite and grave goods, the site dates to the 3rd–2nd centuries BC.

Barangol-4, consisting of three stone mounds and one additional mound, is located in the central part of the cemetery. These kurgans, too, represent the northern variety of the Pazyryk culture and date to the 4th–3rd centuries BC.

The principal features of the burial rite practiced by the Barangol people are west to east orientation of mound-chains across the river valley; kurgans with single burials, rarely accompanied by horse burials (Fig. 4); and predominantly southern orientation of the bodies, which is rare at Early Iron Age sites in Gorny Altai. Over the entire functioning period, the number of collective burials was gradually increasing, and secondary burials eventually appeared. On the Lower Katun, secondary burials similar to those excavated at Barangol-2 were discovered at Chultukov Log-2. On the Middle Katun, secondary burials were found in mounds at Verkh-Elanda II (Stepanova, Neverov, 1994: 11–24; Kiryushin, Stepanova, 2004: 21–23). At all large Early Iron Age cemeteries of Gorny Altai, kurgans are arranged in small chains. This, as certain researchers hold, indicates the familial nature of

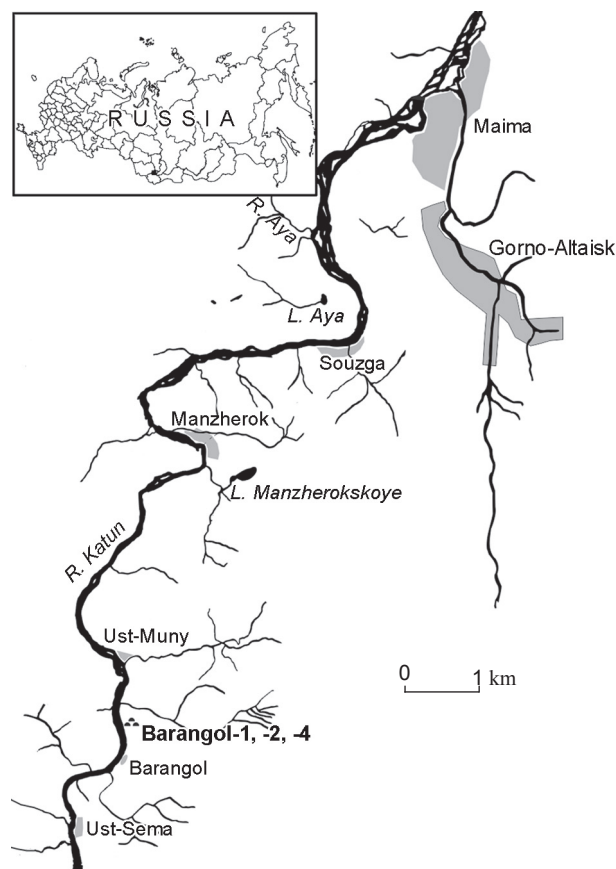


Fig. 1. Location of the Barangol cemetery.

such clusters (Kubarev, 1991: 188). A single-component Barangol cemetery of the Pazyryk culture is located in close proximity to the large multicomponent Chultukov Log-1, comprising over 100 mounds of the Scythian-Sacaeen period. Such a situation is rather typical for the northern Altai in the second half of the 1st millennium BC. Thus in the mountain area of the Inya River valley (Krasnoshchekovsky District of the Altai Territory), single-component Pazyryk groups of burial mounds (Khankarinsky Dol) neighbor multicomponent Early Iron Age cemeteries (Chineta II) (Dashkovsky, 2011; Dashkovsky, Meikshan, 2014).

The demographic pattern of the Barangol populations was assessed on the basis of survival tables (Chamberlain, 2006) and juvenility index (JI) (Bocquet, Masset, 1977). The latter estimates the children-to-adults ratio, and is calculated as the proportion of the number of children aged 5–15 to that of adults aged 20 and above ( $D_{5-15}/D_{20-60}$ ). JI shows a tight correlation with the probability of death before one year of age ( ${}_1q_0$ ) and before five years of age ( ${}_5q_0$ ), with life expectancy at birth ( $e_0$ ), and with total fertility rate (TFR), calculated as the average number of children born to a woman over her entire reproductive period (Bocquet, 1979; Chamberlain, 2006: 35). The juvenility index prevents distortions of the demographic

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