

Natalia A. Sutiagina^{1,✉}

¹Hermitage Museum
The State Hermitage Museum,
Dvortsovaya naberezhnaya, D 34, 190000
St. Petersburg, Russia.

The Ballod kurgan. Research methods and the reconstruction of the funeral rite

Summary. The Ballod Kurgan is the largest tomb among the Xiongnu burials located in the north of Mongolia, in the Noin-Ula Mountains. The study of the famous archaeological site was started with the excavations of the object by A. Ya. Ballod in 1913. Ten years later, in 1924, members of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition led by P.K. Kozlov re-examined the stratigraphy of the kurgan and completed the excavations of the burial chamber. Until the 2010s, the materials of that tomb were practically not taken into account in archaeological research, since information about it was scarce and scattered. The reason was the division of archaeological collections and archival documents among different scientific institutions in the first third of the twentieth century.

A comprehensive analysis of all identified archaeological, written and visual sources made it possible to correct ideas about the stratigraphy of the grave pit, to restore the system of complex ceilings of the wooden burial chamber, to determine the features of its internal structure, and to reconstruct the arrangement of objects in the ‘corridors’ and the inner chamber of the burial structure. The peculiarities of the funeral rite and the set of accompanying inventory make it possible to consider this burial as the main kurgan in the Tzurumte Pad’ and, in general, in the Noin-Ula archaeological complex.

Keywords: *Xiongnu, Noin-Ula, Ballod kurgan, Funeral rite, Archival documents*

Наталья А. Сутиагина^{1,✉}

¹Улсын Эрмитаж музей
ОХУ, Санкт-Петербург хот,
Дворцовая набережная д. 34. 190000

Баллодын булш Оршуулгын зан үйлийн нэхэн сэргээлт түүний судалгааны арга зүй

Товчлол. Баллодын хэмээн нэрлэгдсэн булш нь Монголын хойд хэсэгт орших Ноён уулын хүннүгийн үеийн булшнуудаас хамгийн том нь юм. 1913 онд А.Я.Баллод уг булшийг малтсанаар энэхүү гайхамшигт дурсгалт газрын судалгаа эхэлсэн. Үүнээс арав гаруй жилийн дараа 1924 онд П.К.Козловын удирдсан Монгол-Түвэдийн экспедицийн судлаачид энэхүү булшийг бүрэн хэмжээгээр нь малтан судалж, бунхныг малтаж дуусгасан байна. 2010 оныг хүртэл энэхүү булшны олдвор, эх хэрэглэгдэхүүн археологийн судалгааны эргэлтэд, түүний тухай мэдээлэл бүрэн бус, харилцан адилгүй байсантай холбоотой юм. Энэ нь XX зууны эхний гурван арванг дуустал хугацаанд археологийн олдвор хийгээд архивын тэмдэглэлүүд нь хэд хэдэн эрдэм шинжилгээний байгууллагуудад байрлаж байжээ.

Археологийн олдворууд дэлгэрэнгүй тэмдэглэлүүдийг нэгтгэн судалсны дунд булшны ерөнхий зохион байгуулалт, онцгой содон хийц бүхий модон бунхны бүтэц, дотоод засал, бунханд хүрэх зам зэргийг сэргээн тодруулах боломжтой болсон. Оршуулгын зан үйл, булшинд дагалдуулсан эд өлгийн зүйлсэд тулгуурлан Ноён уулын Зурамтын аманд орших хүннүгийн язгууртны хамгийн гол дурсгал энэ булш байжээ хэмээн дүгнэж байна.

Түлхүүр үг: Хүннү, Ноён уул, Баллодын булш, Оршуулгын зан үйл, Архивын баримт

Introduction

The Ballod Kurgan is the largest tomb among the Xiongnu burials located in the north of Mongolia, in the Noin-Ula Mountains. It occupies the highest northern position in the central group of burials in Tzurumte. Its ground structure (35 × 35 m, height – 3.2 m) is oriented to the cardinal points. The width of the dromos in different areas reached 10.8–9.35 m, its length has not been established [Руденко, 1962, с. 12–13]. On the western and eastern sides of the kurgan, there are eleven accompanying burials in two chains. The remains of adult men were found in three excavated graves [Полосьмак и др., 2015, с. 385–389; Эрдэнэ-Очир и др., 2021а, с. 172–185].

For the first time, the plan of the burial ground in the Tzurumte Pad and the register of identified burials were compiled by members of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition S.A. Kondratiev, A.D. Simukov and K.K. Danilenko in 1924–1925. According to the field reports, drawings and descriptions, twelve burial kurgans were recorded in Tzurumte, occupying the middle and lower parts of the southern slope [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 40; Inventory 4. File 57. P. 2, 3, 6, 12; Сутягина, 2016, с. 7–9, рис. 2, 3]. All the burials of the central Tzurumte group discovered at that time are indicated with numbers (No. 1–12). The first number was the Ballod Kurgan excavated in 1913 [Сутягина, 2014, с. 258–277]. Separately standing terrace tombs are marked with the letters ‘A’ (‘Andreevsky’ named after A.D. Simukov) and ‘B’ (‘Kondratievsky’ named after S.A. Kondratiev). In the southern part of the burial ground, the

letter ‘C’ marks another burial. Later, A.D. Simukov indicated in his report that he chose that kurgan for excavations in 1927, after the completion of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition [Симуков, 2008, с. 41–42]. P.K. Kozlov noted in his diary that, to the southeast of the Ballod Kurgan, the expedition members recorded the Mongolian kurgan with traces of support in the shaft [Козлов 2003, с. 196]. However, only three large individual burials were marked on the Tzurumte plan, and the Mongolian kurgan was not marked at all.

The results of a modern topographic survey and a new plan of the burial ground in Tzurumte, made in 2021, confirm the accuracy of the drawings of the first quarter of the twentieth century (fig. 1). The total number of recorded tombs increased to 37 objects due to the identification and fixation of accompanying burials near the terrace tombs. All the burial kurgans are located down the slope at an altitude of 1430–1400 m. The plan shows that most of the burials are concentrated in a small area, where the Ballod Kurgan occupies the northernmost position. The general plan shows eleven burials accompanying the Ballod Kurgan; they were discovered and studied in 2007 and 2015, and located in two chains to the west and to the east. Besides, there are two more circular graves to the south of the dromos (No. 10 and No. 11). It cannot be ruled out that they are also related to the Ballod Kurgan complex, but it is impossible to confirm this before the excavations [Эрдэнэ-Очир и др., 2021а, с. 22; Эрдэнэ-Очир и др., 2021b; Эрдэнэ-Очир, Сутягина, 2022, с. 212–216, рис. 1]. According to

modern survey data, the terrace tombs ‘C’, Kondratievsky, and Andreevsky are located separately, as it was supposed earlier. The latter is located about 20 m above the main group. The location of the Mongolian kurgan is still unknown.

The history of the research

The excavations of the Ballod Kurgan and the beginning of the research of funerary monuments in the Noin-Ula Mountains are associated with the activities of A.Ya. Ballod, the Mongolor Company director of prospection for gold ore in the Khara River Valley. In the winter of 1913, in the course of the reconnaissance work, Ballod and a group of workers discovered ancient pits in the Tzurumte Valley, which he mistook for ore developments, and laid several pits in them. Pit No. 2 turned out to be the most informative, which fell directly on the wooden burial chamber of the kurgan. Fragments of burnt wood, coals, scraps of fabrics were found there. Ballod collected detailed information about burial feature in several letters sent to the East Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographical Society. The found objects were also sent there. He described thoroughly the discovered burial and all the finds in a letter dated March 9, 1913, attaching drawings of individual objects and several field photographs [Юсупова, 2011, с. 10–13; Сутягина, 2014, с. 259–262; 2016, с. 6–7; Sutiagina, 2017, p. 6–7]. Knowing that the locals were ready to start independent excavations, and in fact to rob graves, A.Ya. Ballod, in each letter in correspondence with the East Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographical Society, expected a positive response regarding further research of the burial ground. But in those years the work has not been continued.

Already in 1924, members of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition led by P.K. Kozlov returned to that monument. The famous traveler learned about the excavations in the Ballod Kurgan and about the finds from one of the employees of the ‘Mongolor’. This is evidenced by an entry in his diary dated February 29, 1924: “Hills of ancient origin with deep graves! There are, they say, three such groups, in close proximity to one another. One of these groups was examined — one kurgan was dug up. Very interesting finds have been recovered: a stroller, gold jewelry, lacquerware, hair, vases, and so on. The ornament on gold jewelry is of interest. ... Most of the items obtained were sent to Irkutsk, to the department of the Russian Geographical Society, the smaller, but valuable — gold — was hidden in pockets” [Козлов, 2003, с. 144]. He gave a negative assessment to the works of A. Ya. Ballod.

About that time, the widow of A.Ya. Ballod handed over to the expedition several more items found in 1913: “...several small fragments of sheet gold (one with inlay), small pieces of grayish cloth with which

the walls of the rooms were pastered over, a piece of wood polished on both sides, a strand of black hair, and a decoration in the shape of a snake made of a transparent orange mass, resembling either amber or rosin” [Жизнь и научная деятельность..., 2006, с. 147].

On March 24, 1924, new excavations of the Ballod pit were initiated. At all stages of that work, a detailed description was carried out, plans for the tomb and a section of the mound were made, an inventory of objects found in the burial was compiled [SA RGO. Fond. 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4, 5, 16; Inventory 4. File 53. P. 8, 9]. By April 1924, the excavations of the Ballod Kurgan were completed.

In 2007 and 2015, in the course of the work of the Russian-Mongolian expedition led by N.V. Polosmak and D. Tseveendorzh, they conducted research on the peripheral part of the Ballod Kurgan. On the eastern and western sides of the kurgan, two chains of accompanying burials were found, consisting of six and five tombs, respectively. Three tombs have been excavated. The accompanying burials of the Ballod Kurgan are characterized with rather large dimensions of the grave pit (3.6 × 2.2–3.1 × 1.6 m, depth within 3 m) and the presence of stone ceilings [Полосмак и др., 2015, с. 385–386; Эрдэнэ-Очир и др., 2021a, с. 170–185].

Despite the fact that the largest kurgan in Noin-Ula was one of the first to be excavated and to get field documentation, information about it in the research literature is fragmentary and brief. Until now, there is no complete publication of all the materials on this burial. Letters from A.Ya. Ballod, his inventory of the finds, and several drawings with explanations were published by Ya.N. Khodukin [Ходукин, 1926]. Al. Salmony introduced the European professional community the latest discoveries in Noin-Ula, including the results of excavations of 1913. He published photographs of several items from the excavations of A.Ya. Ballod and gave them his own interpretations [Salmony, 1930–1932, p. 86–92]. A brief description of the kurgan, drawings and illustrations of several finds were included in the monographs by S. Umehara and S.I. Rudenko [Umehara, 1960, p. 6, 42, 44, 52, 88, tab. LXX, LXXVIII; Руденко, 1962, p. 12–14, fig. 9–11; p. 50, fig. 44; tab. XXXV, 4, 5]. Separate finds from the largest kurgan of Noin-Ula have been presented in various publications [Ivanov, 2011, p. 285–289; Сутягина, Иванов, 2012, с. 441–447; Сутягина, 2013, с. 305–310; Елихина, 2017, с. 299–303]. Information about the excavated accompanying burials aside the Ballod Kurgan has been fully introduced into the research circulation [Эрдэнэ-Очир и др., 2021a, с. 170–185].

In the 2010s, a new line of research of the Noin-Ula burial kurgans was outlined, associated with the

introduction into the research circulation of field reports, original technical drawings of burial structures and wooden tombs, plans of burial grounds, photographs and drawings of objects, accounting and storage documentation. Based on the example of the Ballod Kurgan, the method of source study synthesis was developed and applied, which made it possible to restore the process of excavation and the details of the funeral rite, the complex of accompanying inventory of the largest kurgan in Noin-Ula [Сутягина, 2014, с. 258–277; 2016, с. 5–20; Sutiagina, 2017, p. 5–20].

Research methods

The method of source study synthesis used for the reconstruction of the funeral rite and the complex of accompanying inventory of the Ballod Kurgan involves the integration of all identified archaeological¹, written², and visual³ sources, their comprehensive analysis and thorough verification [Сутягина, 2021, с. 11–12]. Since the excavations of the barrow were undertaken by different researchers, and the collections and field documentation are divided among several museums and archives, the proposed method made it possible to determine the reliability of each of the sources and reasons for its use in the course of the detailed reconstruction of the funeral rite and the object complex.

Information on this kurgan and the process of its excavations is contained in the official letters of A.Ya. Ballod, P.K. Kozlov about the excavations of 1924, the diaries of P.K. Kozlov and S.A. Kondratiev, draft notes of the staff of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition, in the field and museum descriptions of the finds. An important part of the corpus of sources are photographs, graphic illustrations and technical drawings.

In his letters addressed to the East Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographical Society, A.Ya. Ballod thoroughly described the layers, structures, and objects found in the pit and intra-grave trenches he had laid, and attached an inventory of his finds. In the list of the found objects, he made descriptions of them, indicating their shape, material, quantity, and place of discovery. Together with the letters, a sheet with drawings and photographs taken in the field were sent to the the Russian Geographical Society (fig. 2, 3).

¹ *Archaeological sources in this work mean the archaeological monument in the Noin-Ula Mountains at whole, the burial structure of the kurgan, the entire set of finds.*

² *Written sources in this article are understood as all documents covering the processes of excavation, studying, and storage of materials from the Ballod Kurgan: official reports on excavations, official and personal correspondence of the expedition members, personal diaries and field records, accounting and storage documentation.*

³ *Visual sources include technical drawings, drafts, drawings, photographs of objects.*

The pictures show things from the pit No. 2. A detailed description of the finds and the presence of illustrations made it possible to identify items from the field list and the museum collection, confirming their authenticity and to establish their exact origin [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 9, 10, 18 rev.; SPbB ARAS. Fond 142. Inventory 2. File 26. P. 5; Сутягина, 2014, с. 262, рис. 2, 3].

The new excavations at the Ballod Kurgan in March 1924 marked the next stage in the study of the Noin-Ula archaeological site and the continuation of the formation of the body of sources. At all stages of the work, a detailed description of the actions taken, observations, discovered structures and objects were carried out.

Most of the field documentation was prepared by P.K. Kozlov and the direct supervisor of the excavations, S.A. Kondratiev. S.A. Kondratiev and his colleagues compiled plans of the tomb and section of the burial kurgan in the field, on the basis of their measurements of funerary structures. The method of connecting the logs of the outer chamber of the Ballod Kurgan was drawn by analogy with the inner chamber, since the frame construction itself could not be dismantled due to the danger of the collapse of the mound. The drawings of the burial structure contain additional notes about its structure, the scale, the lines of the longitudinal and transverse profiles, the places of a trench laid by Ballod and a robber's hole, and the description indicates the location of the found objects and remains (fig. 7, 8). The handwritten report was completed with an inventory of items found during the digs [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4, 5, 16; File 231. Л. 24–25, 29; Inventory 4. File 53. P. 8, 9].

The published personal diaries of P.K. Kozlov and S.A. Kondratiev are to be considered especially [Козлов, 2003; Жизнь и судьба..., 2006]. Despite the fact that the information from these diaries is often used to illustrate archaeological contexts and to build some arguments [for instance: Полосьмак и др. 2011, Полосьмак, Богданов, 2015, 2016; Елихина, 2017], as well as to solve archaeological problems, their content requires critical analysis. Due to scholarly traditions, they recorded a variety of everyday information. For archaeological reconstructions, it is more reliable to use reports and draft records [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102, 231]. In the notes of S.A. Kondratiev, information about the excavations takes an insignificant place. During almost a year and a half of continuous work of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition in the Noin-Ula Mountains, the head of the group was often absent. P.K. Kozlov examined the valleys several times; he was present at the excavations of the Ballod and Kondratievsky Kurgans, during the dismantling of the burial cham-

ber of the kurgan No. 25, at the first stage of the study of the Andreevsky Kurgans as well as No. 1 and No. 6 [for example: Козлов, 2003, с. 182–184, 193–202, 212, 271–293, 301]. Due to the long absence in the expedition camp and field works, it is necessary to distinguish in diary entries between his own observations and retelling of information received from S.A. Kondratiev and other members of the expedition [for example: Козлов, 2003, с. 227, 234–236, 251] and notes made after the fact, which are memoirs [for example: Козлов, 2003, с. 187, 192, 263–264].

The letters of the expedition members addressed to each other are important for the reconstruction of the funeral rite. In one of the notes, V.A. Gusev recorded working measurements of the outer chamber and the inner chamber, described and sketched the structure of the burial chamber, including its ceiling and floors [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 231. P. 24–25; Inventory 4. File 53. P. 9]. Later, it made possible to reveal fundamental differences in the arrangement of the wooden tomb of the Ballod Kurgan in comparison to all other burial structures of the Xiongnu in Noin-Ula.

The complex of the accompanying inventory of the Ballod Kurgan turned out to be divided between the Irkutsk Regional Museum of Local History (excavations in 1913) and the State Hermitage Museum (excavations in 1924–1925 and objects handed over by the widow of A. Ya. Ballod). The finds sent to the East Siberian Branch of the Russian Geographical Society already in August 1913 were accepted for storage in the Irkutsk Museum of Local History, as evidenced by the entry in the Book of Acquisition dated August 15, 1913 and the Inventory book of the Irkutsk Museum (collection 7217) [BA IRM LH. Vol. 1. Part. 2. 1897–1922. P. 221] The content of this museum collection almost completely coincides with the inventory of finds attached by A. Ya. Ballod to his letter dated May 22, 1913 [SA IR. Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 9, 10, 21, 21 rev.; Сутягина, 2014, с. 268–269].

Materials of the Ballod Kurgan from the excavations of 1924, together with finds from other burials explored by the Mongol-Tibetan expedition, were delivered to Leningrad in the autumn of 1924. They entered the Ethnographic Department of the Russian Museum, where S.A. Teploukhov⁴ compiled the first museum inventory of the Noin-Ula collection. When comparing field and accounting documents, it turned out that the museum inventory of the complex of Ballod Kurgan additionally included seven gold and two stone items, given by the widow of A. Ya. Ballod [SA

IHMC RAS MD. Fond 2. Inventory 1. 1925. File 68. P. 35]. Only three of them — a gold plaque depicting a snake, a decoration in the form of a coiled beast, and a round amber bead — have confirmation of their belonging to it [Сутягина, 2014, с. 270–271].

Over the next seven years, things were transferred to various institutions for verification of their composition, restoration, studying, and further storage. In 1925–1926, at different times, the items were in the premises of the Russian Geographical Society, the Ethnographic Department of the State Russian Museum and the State Academy of Material Culture⁵ [SA IHMC RAS MD. Fond 2. Inventory 1. 1925. File 68. P.12–12 rev., 16, 33–34; 1926 г. File 107. P. 18]. By the summer of 1926, the finds from the Ballod Kurgan, as part of the archaeological collection of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition [more than 3,600 items], arrived at the Antiquities Warehouse of the State Academy of Material Culture⁶, where they were inventoried. Each item was assigned a number according to the Book of Acquisitions, which also indicated a brief description of the find, the number of things in the room, the field number, and the number according to the inventory of S.A. Teploukhov for things that arrived from the State Russian Museum. The expeditionary marking of the find was preserved on the objects, to which was added a tag with the number according to the Book of Acquisitions of the Antiquities Warehouse [SA IHMC RAS MD. Fond 2. Inventory 1. 1926. File 54. P. 3–4; 1930. File 64. P. 9, 9 rev.]. After the completion of the research, a significant part of the items was to be deposited with the Ethnographic Department of the State Russian Museum.

However, in October 1931, a decree was issued on the transfer all the finds from the burial kurgans of Noin-Ula for permanent storage to the State Hermitage Museum [SA SHM. Fond 1. Inventory 5. File 1208 (104). P. 7; Сутягина, 2020, с. 330–342]. Items from the Ballod Kurgan were received by the Orient Department of the State Hermitage Museum from the State Russian Museum according to the act with inventories No. 2 “1925. Collection of P.K. Kozlov. Mongolia, near Urga. Excavations — 1924 Tzurumte, Ballod Kurgan” and No. 10 “1925. Collection of P.K. Kozlov. Mongolia, near Urga. Excavations — 1924. Items without indication of kurgans and No (clay shards from box No. 35 delivered by Kozlov,

⁵ Since 1918 – Russian Academy of the History of Material Culture, since 1926 — State Academy of the History of Material Culture.

⁶ The Antiquities Warehouse was formed in 1919 to accommodate all the items transferred first to the Archaeological Commission, and then to the Academy of the History of Material Culture. There the primary processing of archaeological finds, their systematization, and accounting were carried out. All items were recorded in the Book of Acquisitions.

⁴ Since December 1922, he has been the head of the Paleo-Ethnography Sector of the Ethnographic Department of the State Russian Museum; from October 1925 till November 1933 he was a Curator of the Ethnographic Department of the State Russian Museum.

and items delivered by Teploukhov — shards of fabric of unknown origin and 2 gold items from the Ballod Kurgan, /according to Kondratiev/⁷ [SA SHM. Fond 1. Inventory 5. File 1789 (78). P. 82, 93, 93 rev., 117–118]. Later, those finds, together with other objects from the kurgans of Noin-Ula, were included into the Inventory of exhibits of the State Hermitage Museum under the code “MR”.

Thus, the study of written and visual materials is a necessary step in the reconstruction of the funeral rite and the complex of accompanying inventory of the Ballod Kurgan. Comparison of field documentation data from different years made it possible to reconstruct the content of the grave pit, the arrangement of a complex ceiling, and the construction of a wooden chamber. The comparative analysis of the content of the letters and the field inventory of A.Ya. Ballod with the Inventory book and the Book of Acquisitions, a field inventory of the finds of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition, Inventories of the Ethnographic Department of the State Russian Museum and the Antiquities Warehouse of the State Academy of the History of Material Culture, Inventory books of the State Hermitage Museum under the code “MR”, and information on the markings of objects ensures the verification of the composition of the complex of accompanying inventory of the Ballod Kurgan, identification of museum exhibits and a field finds. It made possible to restore the topography of objects inside the burial structure.

Reconstruction of the funeral rite of the Ballod Kurgan

The comprehensive analysis of the sources makes it possible to reconstruct the burial rite of this barrow in the following way. The pit, laid in 1913 in an old depression 2.77 m deep⁸, ‘passed’ through several layers of filling the grave pit. It, probably, partially touched the robber's hole, as evidenced by burns, fragments of charred wood and broken things. At the depth of 5.3 to 10 m⁹, “fragments of copper products and a large amount of copper oxide” were found [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 17]. Based on the materials of museum collections, this observation

⁷ In the Inventory No. 10, there are two things: “a golden oblong plate with a stamped image of a lying horse” and “a gold openwork round plaque”; they are accompanied with a comment: “according to Kondratiev, they come from the Ballod Kurgan” [SA SHM. Fond 1. Inventory 5. File 1789 (78). P. 118].

⁸ In the letter from March 9, 1913, A.Ya. Ballod wrote, that the depth of the pit — 1.3 Sazhen, i.e. 2.77 m (1 Sazhen is 2.134 m) [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 17]. Members of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition used the existing construction [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4].

⁹ In the text, there is mentioned the depth of 2.5 to 4.8 Sazhen [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 17].

can be interpreted as follows. A significant number of bronze items stored in the Irkutsk Museum are associated with the design of a chariot: the tops of the umbrella spokes, bronze corner plates on the body, the shackles from yoke, the wheel hub (fig. 9, 10). During the additional investigation, a fragment of a wheel rim with dark lacquer coating was found at the bottom of the outer chamber (fig. 11). Most of the found details have analogies in the terrace tombs of the Xiongnu; however, there are also unique things [Сутягина, 2013, с. 305–310]. On the base of these data, it can be concluded that a chariot was used in the funeral rite of the Ballod Kurgan: it was, probably, installed at a designated depth and later destroyed by the robbers’ hole [Сутягина, 2014, с. 260, 271–272].

The profile of the excavation pit, recorded in 1924, was published by S.I. Rudenko [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 4. File 53. P. 7; Руденко, 1962, с. 13, рис. 9]. Although the published drawing reflects not the actual stratigraphy of the kurgan, but the state of the shaft at the time of the start of the new excavations, it shows the layers of the wooden tomb overlay, its profile and the area where A.Ya. Ballod made a trench (fig. 4).

The overlapping of the wooden burial structure had a complex structure¹⁰. In the draft materials of the field report of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition, a drawing and description of the sequence of layers, the total thickness of which was about a meter, were preserved [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 231. P. 23–25] (fig. 5). Descriptions by A.Ya. Ballod and drawing made by V.A. Gusev (fig. 6) allows us to reconstruct it as follows. The wooden tomb was covered with a layer of stones. Below it was a layer of ‘a reed flooring¹¹’ mixed with the ground, in which in 1913 burnt metal and wooden objects, gold round plaques with two holes, and gold foil items in the form of petals were found, pulled out by robbers. Then, there was the transverse overlap of the outer chamber. The fact of the presence of a log ceiling of a grave pit (not a wooden tomb) remains unclear: it is present in one of

¹⁰ Concerning the overlapping of the Ballod Kurgan, the confusion arose in the field documentation of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition and in the literature. S.I. Rudenko did not write anything about the overlap, although it is noted on the published drawing [Руденко, 1962, с. 12–13, рис. 9]. The information was not included in the official report of P.K. Kozlov, despite the fact that the plan and description of the sequence of overlap layers were preserved in the draft materials [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 231. P. 24–25, 29]. At the same time, the head of the expedition wrote in his diary about the ‘six-layered’ log ceiling of the Ballod Kurgan, which does not correspond to either the drawings or the descriptions [Козлов, 2003, с. 288].

¹¹ According to A.Ya. Ballod, a burnt layer 0.1 sazhen (about 0.2 m) thick consisted of “woven reeds like Chinese mats, and partly from one straw of the same reeds”. It laid on a wooden floor [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 17]

the drawings and in the description, but it is absent in the technical drawing by V.A. Gusev, who dismantled it. On the base of the given analysis, it can be concluded that the funeral rite of the Ballod Kurgan provided at least one stone ceiling, the use of coal and clay, and the construction of a complex log roof of the burial chamber.

The burial chamber was placed on logs, which created a free space between the floor and the bottom of the pit¹², revealed at a depth of about 11 m. The space between the walls of the outer frame and the grave pit was filled with fine gravel [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4 rev.].

The dimensions of the log house recorded on the inside were 5.87 × 3.8 m with a height of 2.13 m (seven log layers) without taking into account the width of the unexcavated southern ‘corridor’¹³. The dimensions of the inner chamber are 4.27 × 2.14 m with a height of 1.51 m (five log layers). A unique feature of the design of the wooden tomb of the Ballod Kurgan is the presence of the floor of the inner chamber. It was composed of fifteen transversely laid logs 0.1 m thick. The ceiling, made in a similar way, rested on eight racks (section width 0.12–0.17 m) and mats (0.2 m thick) placed along the inner perimeter of the chamber. The inner chamber is also installed on longitudinal logs (0.2 m thick) in such a way that the western (0.68 m wide), eastern (0.68 m wide) and northern (1.6 m wide) ‘corridors’ were formed. Six columns were fixed in the northern ‘corridor’ to support the longitudinal mats and the ceiling of the outer chamber. The space between the floors was filled with sand and mud in the course of time, the burial chamber was filled with ‘silty sand’ (blue clay?) (fig. 9). The coffin has not been preserved, but a massive bronze decoration in the form of a quatrefoil was found inside the chamber. On the fragments of the beam, the remains of a paint layer with a dark base and fine yellow and red colour painting have been preserved. The

¹² In the ‘Preliminary Report’ P.K. Kozlov said that the floor of the inner chamber and the outer log cabin was cut to study the structure of the tomb and to measure the thickness of the logs. He wrote that the floor of the outer chamber was laid “directly on a flat stone surface” [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4 rev.]. But in the drawing made by V.A. Gusev and on the longitudinal section of the tomb, there is a beam shown under the floor of the outer frame. The technical drawing of the tomb is also accompanied with a commentary describing the free space between the lower floor and the leveled stone surface, on the basis of which it was suggested that there were several logs, the number and position of which could not be determined [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 231. P. 25 rev.; Inventory 4. File 53. P. 9].

¹³ S.I. Rudenko registered the length 5.87 m as a general length of the outer chamber, but in fact it was not measured exactly. The southern ‘corridor’ was not dug because of the danger of collapse and difficult works [Руденко, 1962, с. 12; SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4 rev.,

thickness of the wooden base suggests that these are the remains of a coffin. S.A. Kondratiev, referring to the words of a participant in the excavations in 1913, I.Ya. Ezho, wrote in his diary that the walls of the tomb were decorated with textile [Жизнь и научная деятельность..., 2006, с. 147].

In the process of additional investigation of the kurgan, they found the old robbers’ hole in the southwestern corner of the tomb ceiling and traces of the trench, through which A.Ya. Ballod penetrated from the northern part of the chamber into the ‘northern corridor’ [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 4 rev.]. This allows us to assume the location of the items he found at the time of the old excavations¹⁴.

Some of the finds come from the northern ‘corridor’¹⁵. There were collected strands of hair and braids. There was also one of ceramic vessels. On one of the logs, a fragment of silk fabric in the form of a festoon was found. The rest of the things were found presumably in the inner chamber: jade plates (fig. 12), dishes (handles of an er bei lacquer cup, fragments of bronze and ceramic vessels), a fragment of a bronze

¹⁴ In a letter dated March 9, 1913, A.Ya. Ballod wrote that four trenches were laid in the direction of the longitudinal wall of the structure. However, the work was hindered by “old buildings”, permafrost, loose soil and stones. He informed that most of the finds were made in the lower trench, the length of which was about 3 m: “...one half-preserved ceramic jug of impressive size, several of similar jugs... even larger, broken. There were also golden buttons. Further, along the old wall, a partition was met in the same direction, which consists of two compartments. From these compartments, human hair was extracted, long, cut, in the form of braids and loose. From the accessories of the women’s toilet, we found: a tortoise-shell hairpin, something like a brooch made of a thin gold plate. Large round [beads?] made of a resinous substance [larch resin or rosin], which probably served as decoration. Fragile. Brittle. The colour is very similar to amber. Figures of the same material: a recumbent camel, an elephant, a large snake, a dragon, and so on. Hair of different hues: blond — coffee, chestnut, and others dirty red or yellow-linen. <...> Charred and decayed rags were found from dresses or clothes, but exclusively from silk fabrics, and from furs — sable and beaver”. He also noted that animal bones were found in the grave, but no human remains were there [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 19 rev.; Сутягина, 2014, с. 262]. In a letter dated May 5, 1913, A.Ya. Ballod added information about the finds: “...The found objects were mostly from the lower crosscut. Encountered wood from the old building greatly hindered the work. To this, in some places, permafrost came across <...> and even further, an exceptionally disorderly, loose, laying of stones [boulder], which collapsed at the slightest shock. <...> Through the gaps in the stone laying in front of the face, another clay vessel was visible, but it was not possible to get to it” [SA IR Fond 293. Inventory 1. File 700. P. 19 rev.; Сутягина, 2014, с. 262].

¹⁵ Significant part of the additional inventory has been published [Ходукин, 1926; Иванов, 2011, р. 285–289; Сутягина, Иванов, 2012, с. 440–447; Сутягина, 2013, с. 305–310; Елихина, 2017, с. 299–303].

mirror (?), jewelry (tortoiseshell hairpin, gold stripes in the form of round buttons, large beads and items in the form of animal figures), fragments of silk fabric and fur (sable and beaver), details of horse harness (fragments of a browband, cheek-piece, and harness decorations). During additional investigation in 1924, wooden fragments with dark lacquer coating, pieces of silk fabric in the form of triangular festoons (fig. 13), and fragments of birch bark (fig. 14–15) were found on the floor of the inner chamber [SA RGO. Fond 18. Inventory 1. File 102. P. 12, 16 rev.]. As a result of studying the human remains, M.P. Gryaznov determined that they belonged to an adult male 40–50 years old [SA IHMC RAS MD. Fond 2. Inventory 1 1925. File 41. P. 51–52, 79; Сутягина, 2020, с. 334, 335, табл. 1].

Conclusion

The proposed methods for studying materials from excavations of distant years made it possible to supplement and correct previously known information about the funeral rite and the buried person. At present, the largest Xiongnu burial mound in Noin-Ula — the Ballod Kurgan — can be presented in the most detailed and complete way.

Despite the apparent similarity of the funeral rite with other burials, this funeral monument has a whole set of distinctive features that emphasize the significance and high status of the buried person. These features include the significant scale of the construction, the multi-layered overlap of the burial chamber and the double floor of the wooden tomb, the presence of eleven accompanying burials systematically organized along the sides of the kurgan.

As a part of the accompanying inventory, there is a range of objects and categories of things, which also distinguishes this object from other terrace tombs. A set of well-crafted jade plates was found here. Such plates could be used both to shape the vestments of the deceased, by analogy with the Chinese rite, and as luxury items. Numerous bronze details and a fragment of a wheel testify to the placement of a chariot inside the grave pit. In its design and management, amalgam was used, which were not found in any Xiongnu burials, but have direct analogies in the Chinese funeral rite. At the same time, this burial has all the hallmarks of an elite burial of the Xiongnu and demonstrates similarities with terrace tombs of the late first century BCE — the first half of the first CE, both in Noin-Ula and in other monuments.

The results obtained provide significant opportunities for further study of the features of the formation of Xiongnu necropolises in the Noin-Ula Mountains and its comparison with other synchronous burial sites of the northern and southern groups. At the same time, a detailed reconstruction of the funeral rite of

well-preserved burials allows us to turn to the study of research problems of the introduction of terrace tombs and the formation of a new burial tradition, the influence and interaction of nomadic and ancient agrarian cultures of Central and East Asia.

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Abbreviation:

SA SHM – Scientific Archive of the State Hermitage Museum

SA RGO – Scientific Archive of the Russian Geographical Society

SA IR – The State Archive of the Irkutsk Region

BA IRM LH – The Book of Acquisition of the Irkutsk Regional Museum of Local History

SA IHMC RAS MD – Manuscript Department of the Scientific Archive of the IHMC RAS

SPbB ARAS – The Archive of the Russian Academy of Sciences. St. Petersburg Branch

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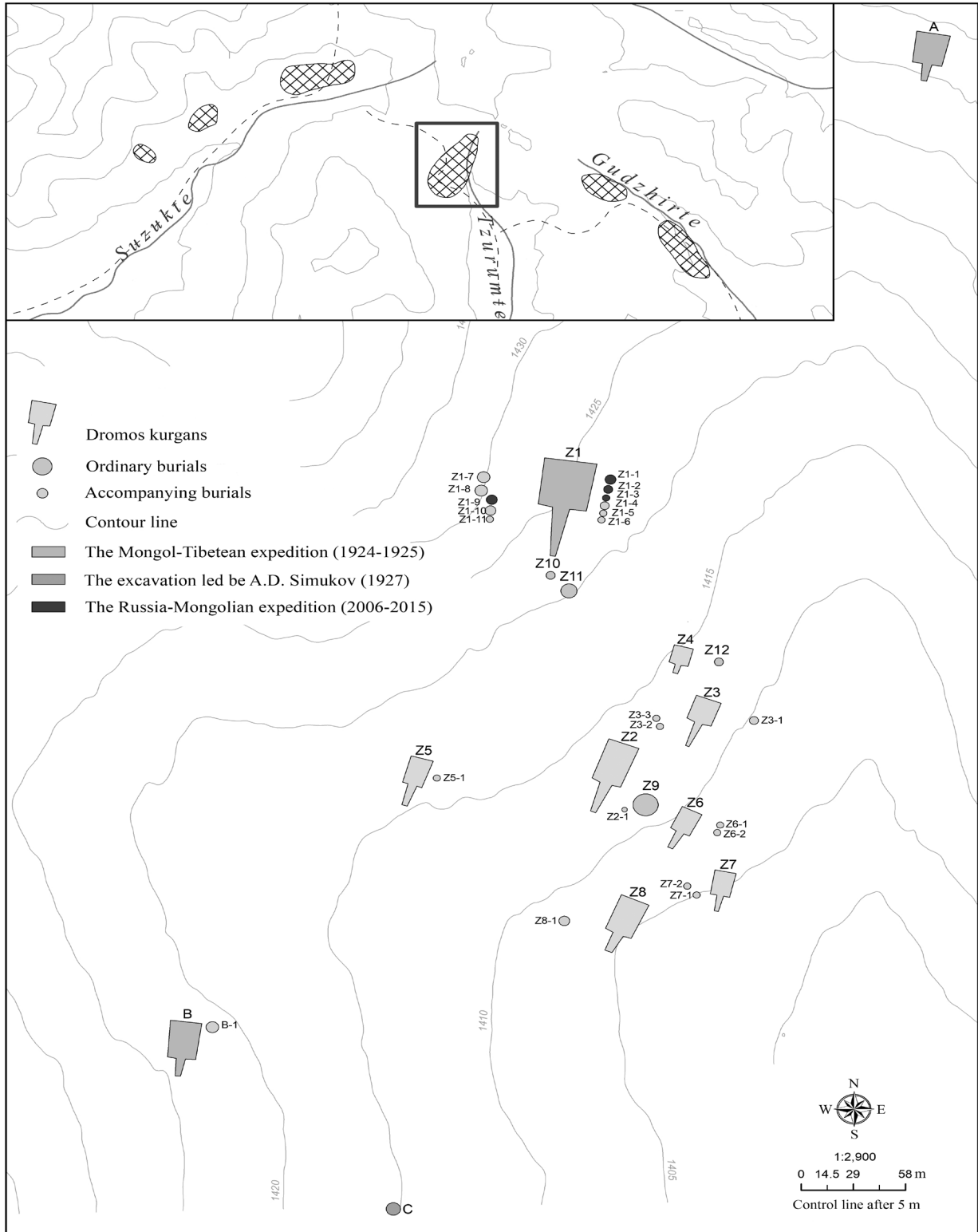
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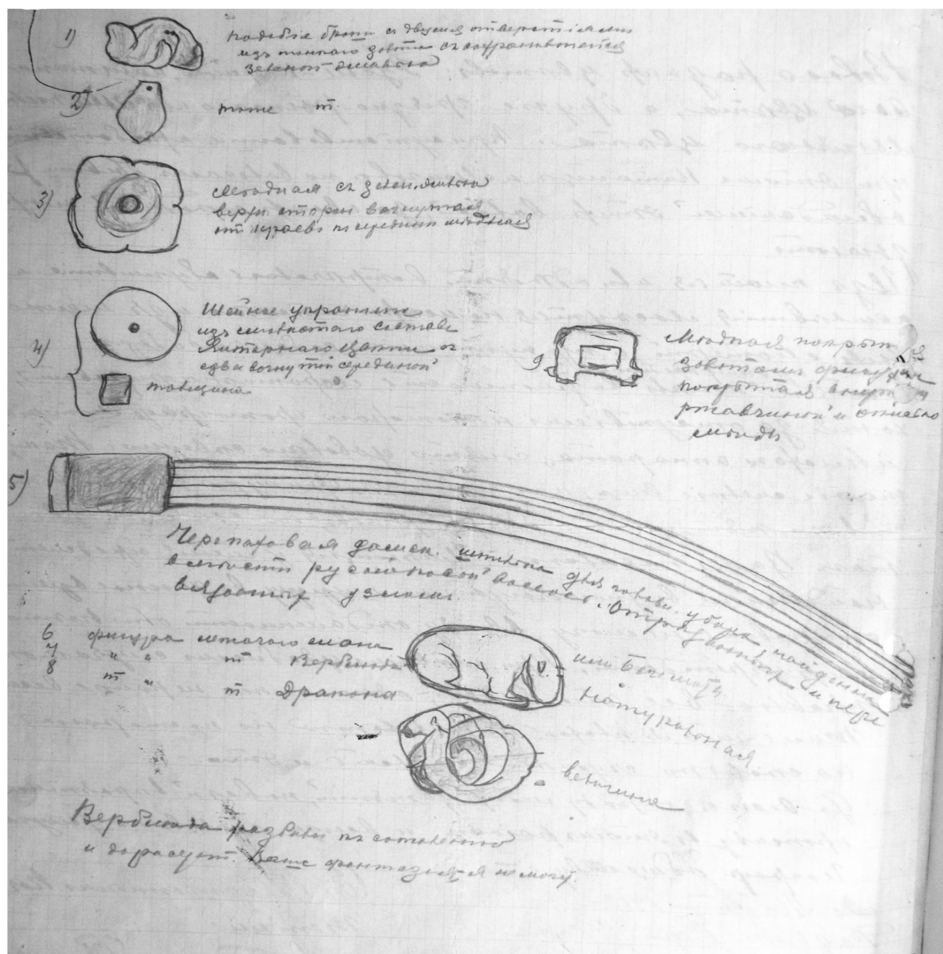
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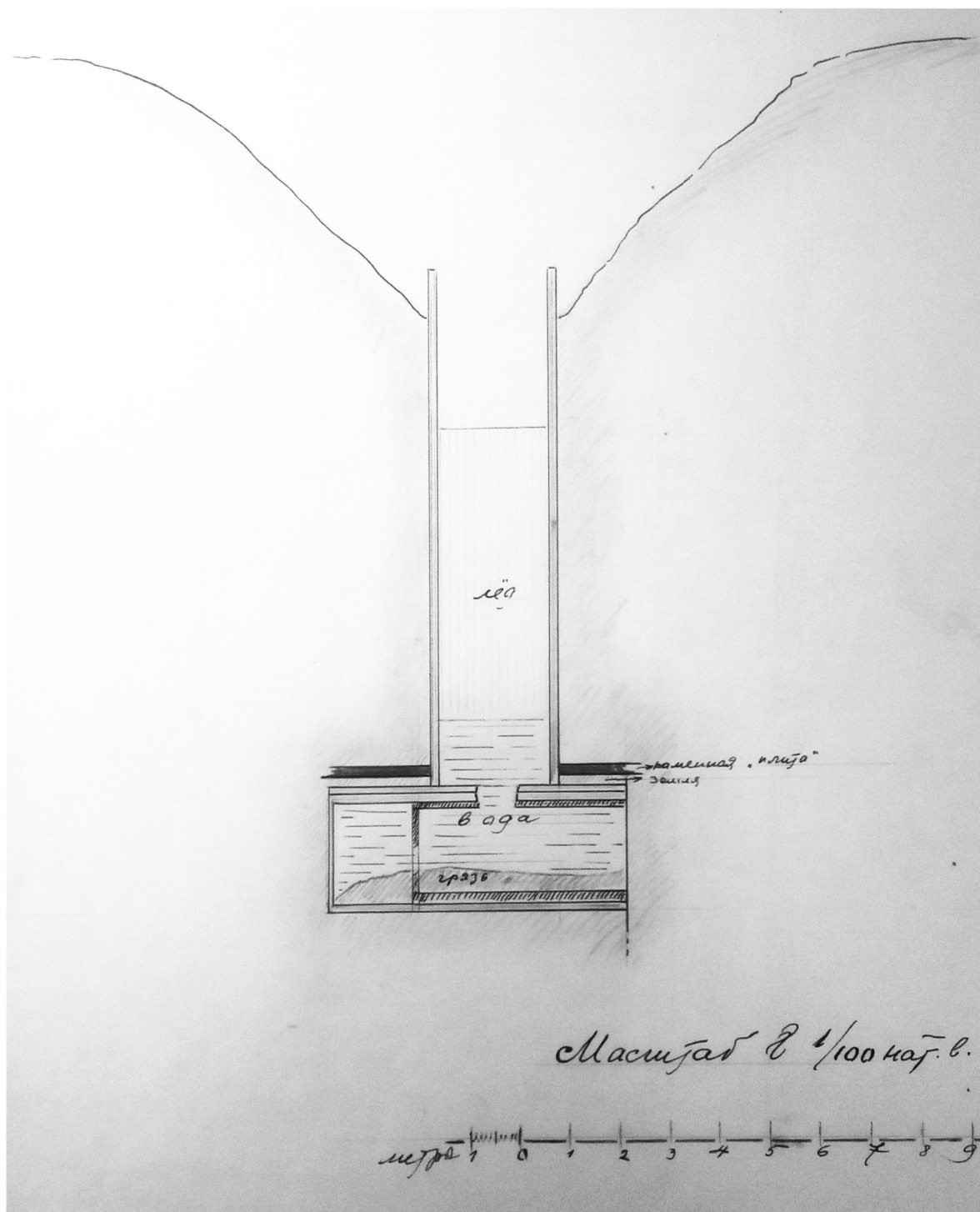
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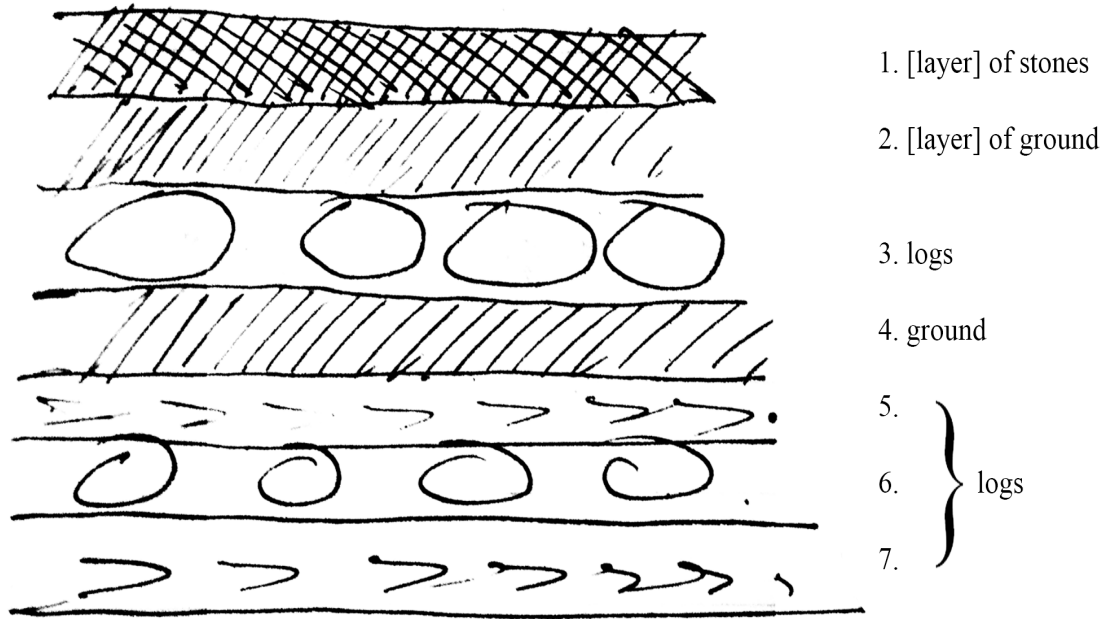
The results of a modern topographic survey and a new plan of the burial ground in Tzurumte, made in 2021 (fig. 1).



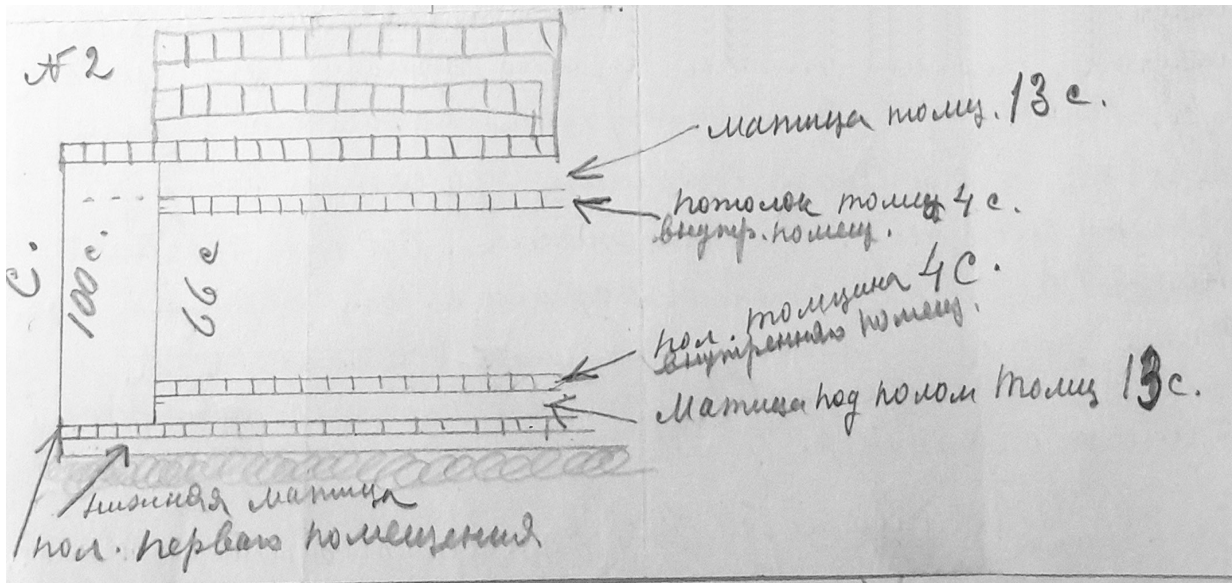
In the list of the found objects, he made descriptions of them, indicating their shape, material, quantity, and place of discovery. (fig. 2, 3).



It shows the layers of the wooden tomb overlay, its profile and the area where A.Ya. Ballod made a trench (fig. 4).



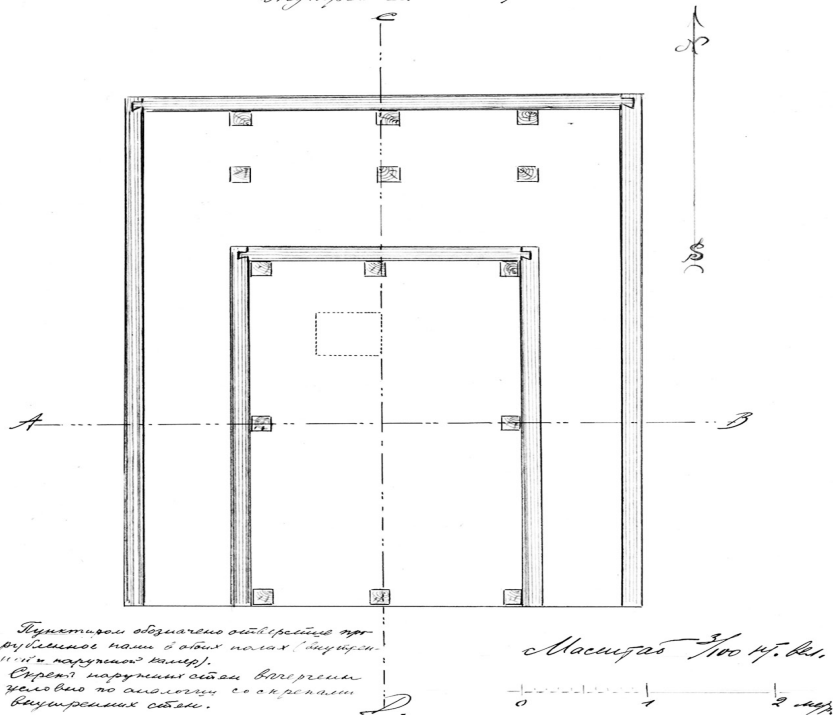
In the draft materials of the field report of the Mongol-Tibetan expedition, a drawing and description of the sequence of layers, the total thickness of which was about a meter, were preserved (fig. 5).



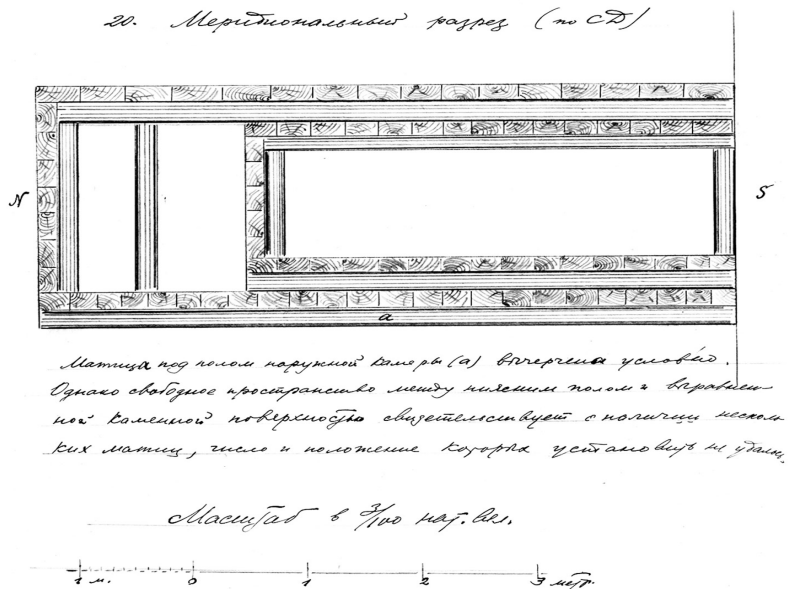
Descriptions by A.Ya. Ballod and drawing made by V.A. Gusev (fig. 6)

Баллодовский курган.

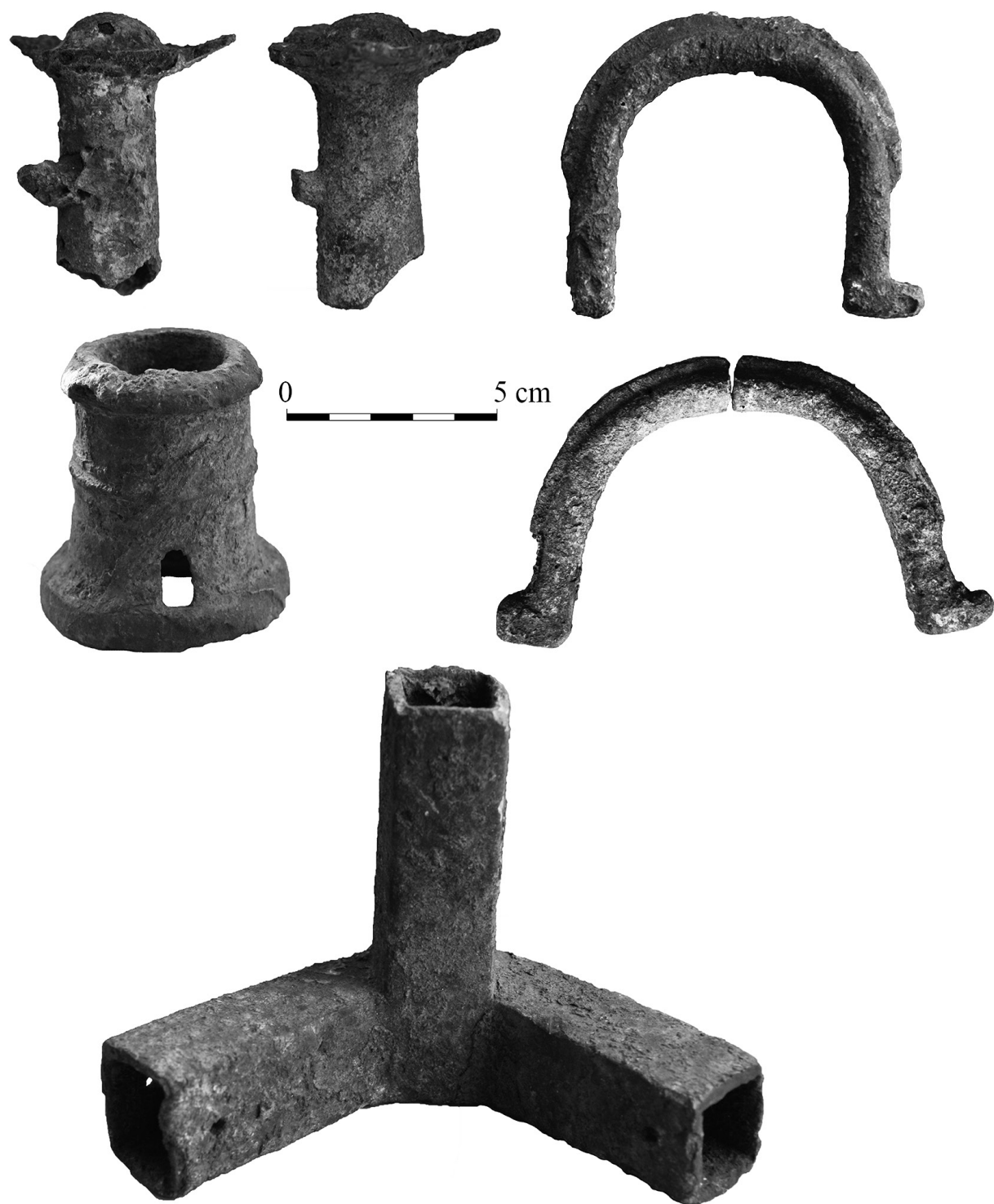
19. Трансверсальный разрез по середине высоты внутренней камеры.



20. Меридиональный разрез (по СД)



The drawings of the burial structure contain additional notes about its structure, the scale, the lines of the longitudinal and transverse profiles, the places of a trench laid by Ballod and a robber's hole, and the description indicates the location of the found objects and remains (fig. 7,8).



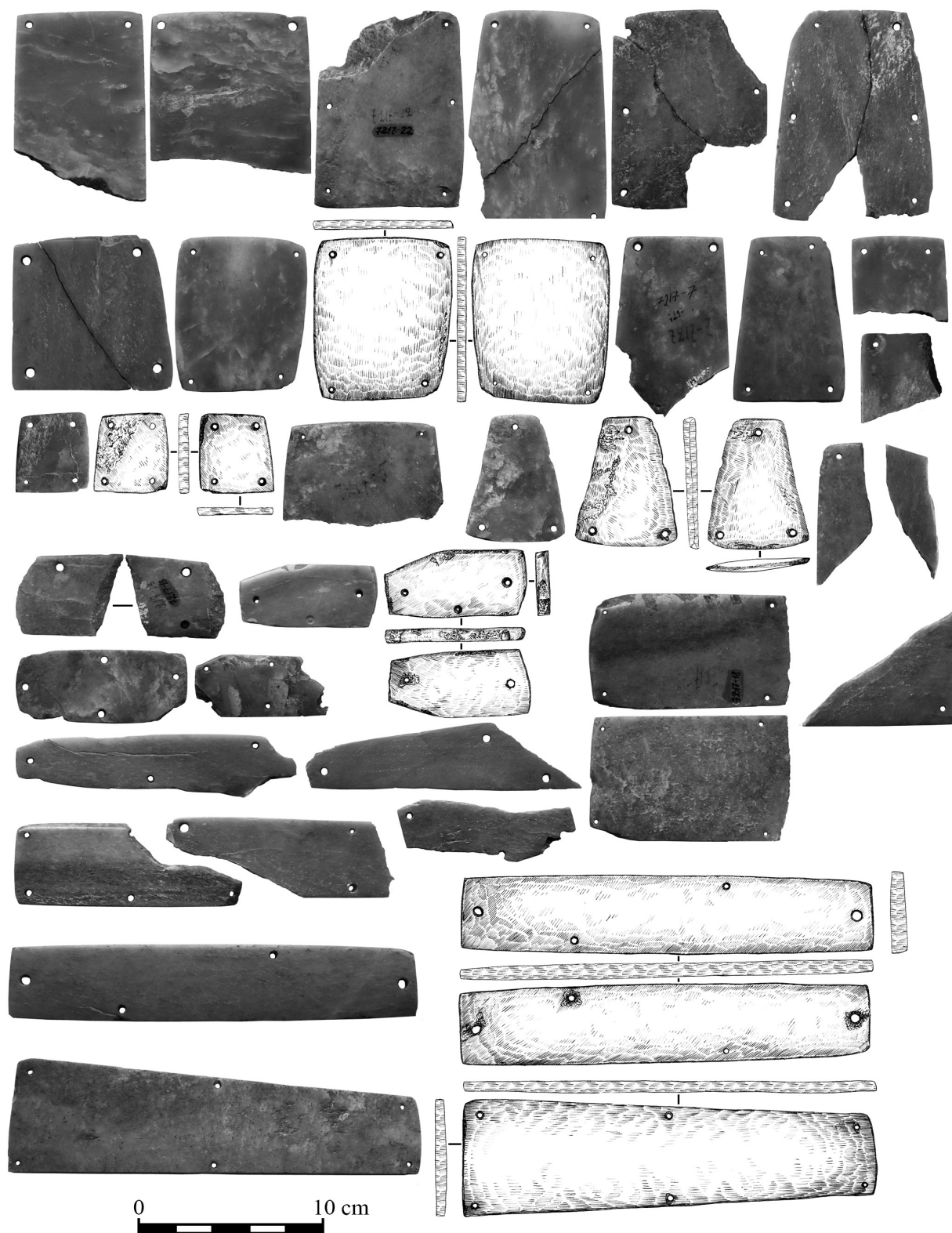
The tops of the umbrella spokes, bronze corner plates on the body, the shackles from yoke, the wheel hub (fig. 9).



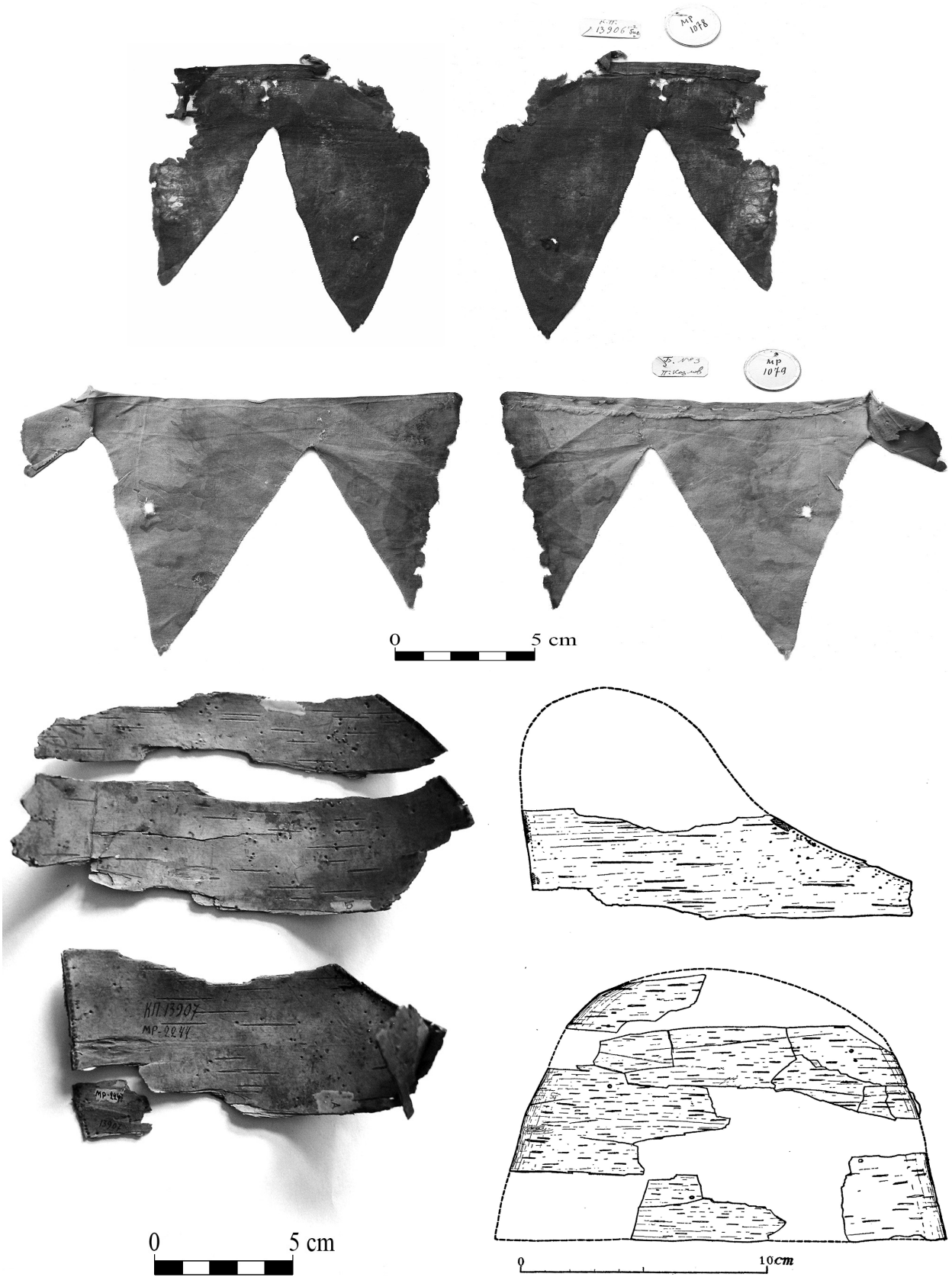
The tops of the umbrella spokes, bronze corner plates on the body, the shackles from yoke, the wheel hub (fig. 10).



Wooden object (fig. 11)



Jade plates (fig. 12)



Fragments of birch bark (fig. 14, 15)