

[for Online supplementary material]

Tracing the flows of copper and copper alloys in the Early Iron Age societies of the eastern Eurasian steppe

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The chronological issues

Unfortunately, there is no universally accepted chronology for the pastoralist cultures of the Early Iron Age across these areas, and we are often reliant on reference dates from key monuments to establish a relative chronology for analysed artefacts. Among these critical monuments are the kurgans around Arzhan in Tuva, which provide a series of well-dated reference assemblages (especially for items of horse harness and animal-style ornaments) between the ninth and mid-seventh centuries cal. BC (Alekseev *et al.* 2001; Zaitseva *et al.* 2007). Contemporary with these finds are the early Tagar complexes in the Minusinsk Basin (Svyatko *et al.* 2009), the early 'nomadic' cultures of the Altai (Moskova & Rybakov 1992: 164), and the early Slab-Grave cultures of the Transbaikal (Tsybiktarov 1998)—although the precise chronological position of the latter is still a matter of debate. While we have provisionally accepted the published chronological interpretations associated with the

analyses (e.g. Sergeeva 1981; Khavrin 2008), we hope that further archaeometallurgical research, integrated with reliable radiocarbon dates, will provide better chronologies for comparison in the future.