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The possibility has to be admitted that late antique users of spolia also automatically reused blocks in the same type of systems for which they had been originally quarried.

The review copy of F's book is described on its back cover as a 'Mybook paperback, a faithful copy of the original edition' (which presumably had on the cover a reproduction of the construction scene from the 4th-century tomb of Trebius Justus in Rome listed in the preliminary page but which is not on the cover of the review copy). A Mybook paperback, it goes on to say, 'is only available for authorised users of the e-book edition', so your present reviewer is not able to judge the original edition and does not know if that edition had better and clearer reproduction of the photographs than those in 'Mybook'.

Birmingham, UK

Richard Tomlinson

A. Gass, with contributions by J. Faßbinder and J. Gresky, *Das Siebenstromland zwischen Bronze- und Früheisenzeit: Eine Regionalstudie*, Topoi: Berlin Studies of the Ancient World 28, Walter de Gruyter, Berlin/Boston 2016, xiv+549 pp., illustrations (many in colour). Cased. ISBN 978-3-11-030923-2/ISSN 2191-5806

This volume by Anton Gass deals with the archaeological remains, dating between the Bronze and the Iron Age, in the so-called 'Land of Seven Rivers' in Kazakhstan. This small region in the Eurasian steppes (in Russian, Semirech'e), is constituted by the basins of the Ili, Karatal, Bien, Aksu, Lepsa, Baskan and Sarkand rivers. For his study G. emphasises the role played by the cemeteries and settlements located in the south-eastern part of the area – from Almaty to Kegen – located just south of the Karachagai reservoir and alongside the northern border of Kyrgyzstan. The work, the first comprehensive investigation of those remains, represents an important contribution to our knowledge about the historical-cultural evolution of the region and in particular to the Saka question. The volume contains the main text (pp. 3–190), followed by summaries in conclusions in German (p. 191), Russian (p. 201), English (p. 214) and Kazakh (p. 223), translated by Emily Schalk; then a catalogue of the finds (pp. 235–438; Figs. 106–273), C14 dating (pp. 439–55), list of Bronze Age finds studied (pp. 456–63), Bronze Age find-spots with proven source (pp. 465–69), Early Iron Age find-spots with proven source (pp. 470–75), lists of mapped localities (pp. 476–77), references (pp. 478–94), 24 colour tables (pp. 495–522) and an appendix with scientific analyses by J. Faßbinder (p. 523) and J. Gresky (p. 541).

The study begins with the history of research in the region since N.A. Abramov in 1860, extending to the recent joint research projects of the Prussian Cultural Heritage Foundation, the German Archaeological Institute and the A.C. Margulan Institute of Archaeology in Almaty. The description of the region (p. 25) follows the work of R.I. Abolin of 1930, concentrating on its different living spaces, landscape and climatic units: *Artemisia* steppe (at 850–950 m above sea level), grass steppe (800–1500 m), mixed grass Steppe (800–1800 m), wooded zone (1800–2000 m) and Alpine zone (above 3000 m). The geographical setting is geologically distinguished as alluvial plain, alluvial fan, loess hill and northern T'ien Shan mountains. The find-spots, settlements and cemeteries of the Early Iron Age are recognised in three other different areas, more or less corresponding to the geological varieties. The climatic variations are strong continental, continental and nival. The geological and landscape situation suggests to G. that the area saw the emergence of

rich flora and that it was always very attractive for crop-cultivating communities as well as for livestock-raisers. The Bronze Age cemeteries, mostly distributed between the Trans-Ili Alatau and Kengej-Alatau ranges, are widely dealt with by G. (p. 28). Those cemeteries belong to the so-called Kul'sai group, amounting to only 22%. Indications of social differentiation among the dead could not be discerned. Settlements of the Bronze Age are represented by only a few sites that were very little excavated. This cultural group is a regional variant of the Middle Bronze Age Andronovo-Fedorovka culture, which dates to the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, evidenced by G.'s proposal to modify the Bronze Age chronology of eastern Eurasia (pp. 51–64). The Early Iron Age can, then, be chronologically and culturally subdivided into three phases: Early Saka, Saka and Wusun (pp. 65–74). The following scheme for the culture historical development is proposed: Early Bronze Age, 25th–19th centuries BC; Middle Bronze Age, 19th/18th–14th centuries BC (Kul'sai group); Late Bronze Age, 14th/13th–10th centuries BC; transition from Late Bronze Age to Early Iron Age, 9th–8th centuries BC; Early Saka phase of the Early Iron Age, 8th/7th–6th century BC; Saka phase of the Early Iron Age, 6th/5th–3rd/2nd centuries BC – evidenced by the presence of Sakan *kurgans* and Early Iron Age settlements; and Wusun phase of the Late Iron Age, 3rd/2nd century BC–5th century AD.

Cemeteries with tumuli (*kurgans*) of the Saka elite are examined (pp. 75–173). The diameter of the *kurgans* ranges from a few metres to more than 100, while their heights vary between a few centimetres to more than 10 m. Three categories are considered: exceedingly large, with a height of more than 8 m, larger (4–8 m) and large (2–4 m). Almost all bear traces of looting and their immediate surrounds were severely damaged too (p. 148). In some cases the *kurgans* were surrounded by processional ways, circular ditches or circular stone settings and could appear within a chain of tumuli. The size of the processional ways always varies. In the Scythian-Saka cultural sphere they are a peculiarity of this particular area. The ditch itself was either continuous or there were interruptive earthen bank(s) probably made in order to allow access to the delimited space around the *kurgan*. The processional ways, circular ditches, stone circles and walls might be understood as a means of distinguishing the sacred space around a grave mound. The large *kurgans* contained a central grave-pit with rounded corners or square, in which the deceased was interred, oriented west to east, and where grave-goods such as weapons (daggers/*akinakes*, swords), elements of dress, dishes and wooden, bronze and silver containers were found.

Then follows an overview of settlements already existing during the Early Iron Age (pp. 174–87): fortified habitations, a central trapezoid mound enclosed by defence walls and ditches. The north side of the Trans-Ili Alatau range was a preferred settlement area in the area of transition from loess hills to alluvial fans or flatlands. Settlements always stood on the banks of rivers or streams, especially where a river exits a mountain gorge into the flatland. A second concentration of settlements was found in the high mountain valleys, oriented towards alpine pasturage. They were located in small gorges, protected on two or three sides by the mountain, and in the vicinity of streams or sources of water. The pottery can be linked to the Saka culture. Other finds include grinding stones, fish hooks, a bronze chisel and a Saka bronze cauldron. A few settlements investigated on a small scale revealed that semi-subterranean pit houses or yurt-like structures were built during the Early Iron

Age, in the transition area from loess hills to flatlands on the north side of the Trans-Ili Alatau. Settlement areas in high mountain valleys, conversely, consisted of above-ground houses and were used only seasonally, during the summer months. A kind of 'line of settlement' could be recognised, which began near the city of Almaty in the west, running 80 km to the east along the northern slopes of the Trans-Ili Alatau, and from there continuing into the mountains, to the south-east in the direction of Kyrgyzstan (Lake Issyk-Kul). Some settlements were localised in the vicinity of cemeteries with *kurgans* of the Saka elite. One could assume that cemeteries and settlement sites existed at the same time, and that the habitations displaying different kinds of architecture had different meanings for the Saka. Furthermore, it was observed that fortified settlements were built only on the northern side of the Trans-Ili Alatau range. Habitation sites in higher lying mountain valleys were always unfortified. This circumstance may indicate that settlements in the flatland or open steppe were constantly endangered. The number of settlements does not stand in the same relationship to cemeteries with princely *kurgans*. Most fortified sites were likely to have been places of refuge sought by the sedentary population in times of danger, or they were caravan stations.

A final aspect is the analysis carried out on the classification of landscapes (pp. 188–90). As geo-archaeological studies have shown, the area under study can be divided into four landscape units: the northern T'ien Shan mountains with high-lying mountain gorges and plateaus in the south; the loess landscape to the north; the adjoining alluvial fans; and the alluvial plain or flatland further north. All of the cemeteries in the area examined were located solely on alluvial fans, and the conscious choice of site for a cemetery accorded with specific cultural canons. Settlements were more variable during the Iron Age and built at the transition from loess hills to alluvial fans, and, thus, associated with two types of landscape. This picture shifted in the course of the Early Iron Age to the flatlands and bordering loess hills on the northern side of the Trans-Ili Alatau. One exception is the high plateau of Kegen, which represents a link between the flatland north of the mountains and the Chinese provinces in the south-east, on the one hand, and, on the other, with the Issyk-Kul valley further south. The northern side of the Trans-Ili Alatau can be designated a centre of the Saka culture, for exactly here, in the flatland north of the mountains and on their periphery, a large number of Saka cemeteries are located. The rider-warrior nomadism of Saka communities invigorated the study area; combined with a new way of life, a new structure in society and new forms of economy developed. At the time, the area offered the best conditions for agriculture as well as for stock-raising. The material remains of the Saka elite in the area, represented foremost by mighty *kurgans* with magnificent grave-goods, formed new, eye-catching markers in the landscape. The places in which the heroes, 'princes' and 'kings' were laid to rest still characterise the countryside today.

To sum up, the volume, though certainly affected by the typical data organisation of a thesis, nonetheless offers an overview of the monuments in the area during the Iron Age, tracing developments in relative and absolute chronology during the Bronze Age (2nd millennium BC) until the Early Iron Age (1st millennium BC).