



Stone as Symbol in the Funerary Practice of the Srubnaya-Andronovo Cultural Sphere

Ilshat Bakhshiev ¹

1. Acting Director, Chief Researcher, R. G. Kuzev Institute of Ethnological Studies of the Ufa Federal Research Center of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Ufa, Russian.

Email: ibahsh@gmail.com

Article Info	Abstract
Pp: 127-143	This article is devoted to analyzing the role of stone as a symbolic substitute for the body of the deceased in the funerary practices of the Srubnaya-Andronovo cultural circle during the Late Bronze Age in the Southern Urals. The research is based on materials from the Kashkarovsky kurgan burial ground (Bashkir Trans-Urals), particularly Burial 3 of Kurgan 5, where an anthropomorphic stone stele was discovered and interpreted as the central element of a cenotaph. It is suggested that, in this context, the stone fulfilled a certain sacred function and also served as a substitute for the absent body of the deceased. The study presents a typology of similar complexes, distinguishing four groups based on the intentional placement and characteristics of stones in burial pits. Group A includes stele-like stones in burial pits; Group B consists of individual stones deliberately laid at the bottom of the burial pit, sometimes imitating a flexed body position; Groups C and D comprise cenotaphs with several stones or single slabs at the bottom of the grave. The burial pit with a stone stele at the Kashkarovsky burial ground is, in fact, a unique funerary cenotaph complex in which the deliberate placement of a stone at the bottom can be confidently associated with the ritual of substituting for the bodies of the deceased. The limited number of analogies points to the atypical nature of this rite in the funerary practice of the Srubnaya-Andronovo population of the Late Bronze Age Southern Ural forest-steppe. The origin of the tradition remains unclear; however, its connection with the Alakul-Fedorovo funerary traditions of sites in the Southern Urals and Kazakhstan has been identified. Confirmation of this hypothesis requires an expansion of the archaeological source base.
Article Type: Research Article	
Article History:	
Received: 2025/04/09	
Revised: 2025/05/13	
Accepted: 2025/06/18	
Published Online: 2025/07/23	
Keywords: Late Bronze Age, South Ural, Bashkir Trans-Ural Region, Funeral Rite, Stone Stele, Cenotaphs.	

Cite this The Author(s): Bakhshiev, I., (2025). "Stone as Symbol in the Funerary Practice of the Srubnaya-Andronovo Cultural Sphere". *Journal of Archaeological Studies*, 17(2): 127-143.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jarcs.2025.397096.1433548>



1. Introduction

The question of the use of stone in the funerary rites of the Srubnaya-Andronovo cultural and chronological horizon is primarily considered in studies on the construction methods of burial and above-ground structures. In this context, its application as a component of the ritual among the Late Bronze Age populations of the region has traditionally been associated with the Alakul and Fedorovo (Kozhumberdy) cultural traditions.

However, cases exist in which the stone itself served as an item of sacralization and/or as the central element of the ritual. Without delving into semantic interpretations, we should highlight one key point: researchers have noted a special attitude of ancient people toward stone as a link between the world of the living and the world of spirits ([Petrin, 1992](#)). The role of stone as a sacred item in the worldview of the Andronovo tribes has been studied by [Usmanova \(2005: 124–126; 2007; 2013: 113–118\)](#). It has been observed that stone in the Andronovo funerary rite was used to symbolize the idea of human death and served as one of the earliest images and forms of a substitute for the deceased.

2. Materials and Methods

Topography and General Characteristics

The Kashkarovsky burial mound is located on the eastern slope of the forest-steppe Zilair Plateau, at the southern extremity of the Ural-Tau Ridge, on a flattened, forested summit of the primary terrace on the left bank of the Krepoštnoy Zilair River. This site is situated at the narrowing, meridionally oriented watershed between the Krepoštnoy Zilair and Sakmara rivers. The burial ground consists of 20 kurgan mounds and two groups of menhirs (see: [Fig. 1](#)).

The burial complex was discovered during the investigation of kurgan 5 in the western group of the necropolis. Three burials with stone superstructures and two later earth graves were identified. The burials with stone coverings were located in the northern sector of the mound (Burials 1–3), while the earth graves were recorded beneath its central part (Burials 4–5). All interments were arranged along a west–east axis and oriented in a meridional direction.

The earlier complexes consist of burial pits with coverings made of stone slabs laid at the level of the ancient ground surface (Burials 1–3). The total depth of the pits, taking into account the ancient surface, reached 0.85–0.9 meters. Thus, a ground necropolis was initially formed on the site, bounded to the west and east by outcrops of two rock formations. Such a situation is not unique; in particular, the “integration” of burial components into the structure of natural rock outcrops is clearly evident at the Alakul-Fedorovo burial ground Urefty I in the forest-steppe Trans-Urals ([Stefanov and Korochkova, 2006](#)).

The highlighted text continues the preceding section. During the construction of Burials 1–3, the site functioned as a flat cemetery without a mound. The kurgan mound was constructed only later, when Burials 4–5 were added. This explains their location beneath the central part of the mound. It is likely that both burials were made within a short time span, as indicated by the preservation of their linear arrangement (along a west–east axis) and their simultaneous coverage by the mound.



Fig. 1: Map of Eurasia showing the location of the Kashkarovsky Kurgan Burial Ground (WGS 52°21.028 N, 57°47.232 E).

3. Description of the Complex

The stone slab of burial 3, with a fracture along its longitudinal axis of symmetry, was found at the level of the ancient ground surface. The dimensions of the slab (measured at the extreme points) are 2.05×0.9 meters. During the cleaning of the natural soil at the southern edge of the slab, the clear outlines of a burial pit were found. Part of the eastern and western walls at the southern edge of the burial pit were lined with stone slabs (see: Fig. 2).

The grave itself is of an irregular sub-rectangular shape (1.45×0.8 meters), with its long axis oriented north–south. It is recessed into the natural subsoil to a depth of 0.55–0.6 meters. The floor of the pit is flat. The northern and southern walls are vertical, while the eastern and western walls widen toward the bottom. The fill of the pit is homogeneous, with no signs of later disturbance (such as looting pits, animal burrows, etc.). The break in the slab did not disrupt the fill of the pit. The fracture area was located 0.1 meters above the spot. It gives the impression that the interior space of the grave remained unfilled for some time, forming a kind of crypt. The humus backfill of the burial pit and the break in the slab are likely associated with the period of the kurgan mound's construction.

At the bottom of the grave, in its northeastern part, a massive stele-like stone was discovered, elongated along a northwest–southeast axis. The stone showed no traces of working, yet it differed from the slabs used in the construction of the superstructure by its relief configuration. Most likely, the choice of this stone was deliberate and determined by its resemblance to an anthropomorphic form. The base of the stele is wedge-shaped and narrow, while the middle and upper parts of the stone widen. The length of the stele is 90 centimeters, the maximum width is 42 centimeters, and the greatest thickness is 15–18 centimeters. To the west, almost adjacent to the slab, was a squat, pot-shaped vessel (see: Fig. 2).

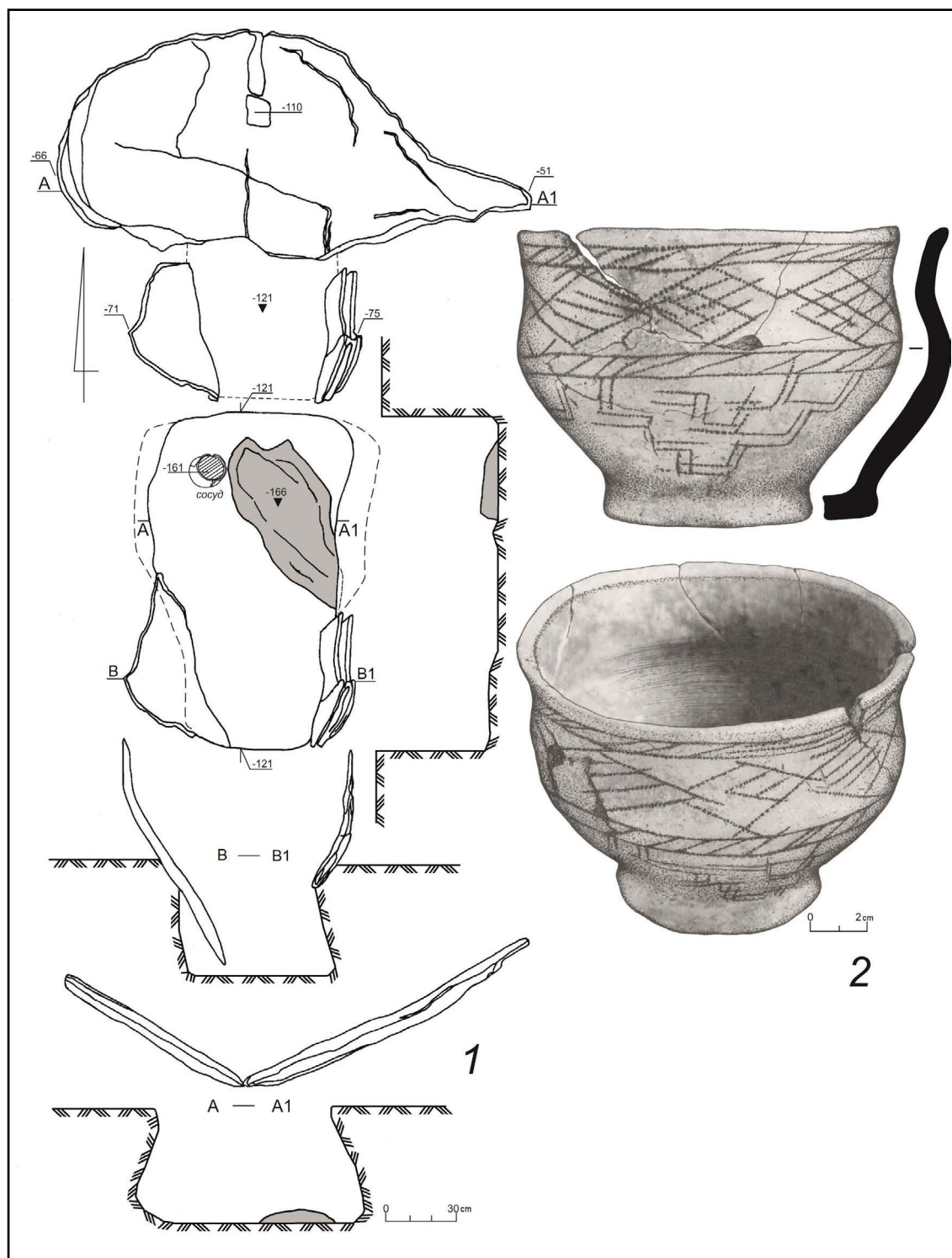


Fig. 2: Kashkarovsky Kurgan Burial Ground. Kurgan 5: 1. Plan and section of burial 3; 2. Vessel from burial 3.

The profiling of the vessel is smooth. At the transition from the body to the base, a basal protrusion (rim) is observed. The neck, as well as the slightly pointed rim, are gently flared outward. The surface is well-smoothed, with traces of burnishing visible in certain areas.

Table 1: Main Parameters of the Vessels.

	Rim Diameter	Neck Diameter	Maximum Body Diameter (at shoulder)	Base Diameter	Vessel Height	Neck Height	Body Height
Burial 3	14	13,5	14	7,5	10,5	4	6,5

With the exception of the base and the area near the bottom, nearly the entire surface of the vessel is covered with ornamentation. The decorative technique consists of impressions made with a fine-toothed stamp. Along the upper part of the neck, two parallel horizontal lines run. The space between them is filled with oblique, right-leaning segments. The neck is further decorated with a row of filled diamonds. In one of the diamonds, the fill consists of parallel oblique strokes. The shoulder zone is marked by the same ornament as that found at the top of the neck. On the body, the ornamentation takes the form of a two-part stepped pyramid with its apex pointing downward.

4. Results

Cultural and Chronological Attribution

Turning to the cultural interpretation of the kurgan, it can be stated that all the burials exhibit a mixture of Srubnaya and Alakul-Fedorovo features in both ritual and grave items. The closest parallels for the construction of the burial pits and above-ground structures, as well as for the vessel discovered, are found in Srubnaya-Alakul complexes of the Southern Trans-Urals and the steppe regions of the Pre-Urals, which are characterized by diverse combinations of cultural traits. For example, stone coverings are a rare phenomenon in the steppe and forest-steppe zones of the eastern foothills of the Southern Urals. In terms of territorial proximity, the most similar burials with stone slab coverings are found in kurgan necropolises of Bashkir Trans-Urals: IV Bekeshevsky (Kurgan 2), III Komsomolsky (Kurgan 2, Burial 3), ([Morozov & Pshenichnyuk, 1976](#)); II Tavlykaevsky (Kurgan 2, Burials 1, 3, 10; Kurgan 3, Burial 1; Kurgan 4, Burial 1), ([Morozov, 1984](#)); and Sibaysky II (Kurgan 11), ([Rutto, 1995: 46](#)). Burials with stone coverings have also been recorded in Srubnaya-Alakul cemeteries of the steppe Trans-Urals, such as the kurgans near the Sistema station ([Koshtyukov & Alaeva, 2004](#)), Ak-Mulla I ([Gavrilyuk et al., 2006](#)), Ilyaska I ([Lyubchansky & Ivanova, 1996](#)), and Peschanka-3 ([Alaeva & Markov, 2009](#)).

In general, the meridional orientation of burial pits is also a typical feature for the territory of Trans-Ural Bashkiria.

A distinctive feature of the vessel under consideration is the combination of several pottery traditions: Srubnaya (Srubnaya-Alakul?) and Kozhumberdy. The latter is evidenced by the smooth profiling, overall ornamentation, use of a comb stamp, and signs of surface burnishing. The carelessness in the application of the ornament and its slight asymmetry correspond to the Srubnaya tradition of ceramic decoration.

The stepped pyramid motif observed on the vessel is quite clearly associated with the Alakul ornamental tradition ([Kuzmina 1994: 113, fig. 2, 12–13; Matveev, 1998: 271, 273, Table 9](#)).

At the same time, the motif in the form of two-part or nested pyramids is rather rare. In this regard, a direct analogy to the ornament in question can be found in the Komsomolsky III burial ground (Kurgan 1, Burial 2), located 25 km northeast of the Kashkarovsky kurgans (Morozov and Pshenichnyuk, 1976: fig. 5, 6).

Overall, the Kashkarovsky barrow necropolis is a multi-grave cemetery. The burial rite practiced within it demonstrates stability: there is no pronounced manifestation of professional or social stratification in the funerary ritual or material culture, and the ceramic vessels recovered from the burials are highly standardized. The chronological framework is associated with the spread of the Srubnaya-Andronovo community in the Ural-Kazakhstan region (the developed stage of the Srubnaya culture, Alakul, Fedorovo, Cherkaskul, Srubnaya-Alakul cultures, and others). The absolute dates for this period fall within the 18th-16th centuries BCE (Epimakhov *et al.*, 2005: 26, 28; Epimakhov *et al.*, 2024). Dates for the Alakul-Fedorovo complexes also lie within this range, illustrating the interaction between the two traditions. Modeling results have been compared with the dates of Andronovo monuments in Kazakhstan, the Baraba forest-steppe, and southern Siberia. The dating values are closely aligned, except for an earlier series from Kazakhstan. When compared with the results of dating Alakul sites in Trans-Urals (19-16th centuries BCE), their chronological priority and a prolonged period of coexistence between Alakul and Fedorovo traditions were established (Epimakhov & Alaeva, 2024). Complexes of the Srubnaya culture, as well as mixed Srubnaya-Alakul sites of the Cis-Urals, are also synchronous with the Alakul and Fedorovo antiquities, most of them arising in the 18-17th centuries BCE (Kuptsova *et al.*, 2018: 103–105). More precise chronological attribution of the material is possible after conducting radiocarbon dating.

5. Discussion

Stone as Symbol: Analogies and Classification

The investigation of kurgan 5 at the Kashkarovsky burial mound has demonstrated that burial 3 represents an original funerary complex: a cenotaph with the symbolic interment of a stone as a substitute for the deceased.

Based on the tradition of placing vessels at the upper part of burials in the cultures of the steppe and forest-steppe zones of Central Eurasia, the vessel adjacent to the stele likely marks the northern orientation of the presumed buried individual. With a certain degree of caution, it may be suggested that the placement of the stone slab at an angle to the longitudinal axis of the burial pit indicates the arrangement of the body in a flexed position on its side (see: Fig. 3, 2). The cenotaph is part of the overall system of arrangement of the other burials (nos. 1–2). All are positioned strictly along a west–east line and oriented northward. The stone in the cenotaph is likewise “oriented” to the north.

The manifestation of the cult of the stone-substitute for the deceased within the Srubnaya-Andronovo milieu becomes increasingly pronounced in the sites of the steppe Pre-Urals, the forest-steppe Trans-Urals, and the Upper Tobol region. However, to date, there is only one close analogy

to the Kashkarovsky complex: an anthropomorphic stele discovered in the Alakul burial ground of Ishkinovka III in eastern Orenburg. Here, in the center of the main burial, a vertically positioned stele with highly schematic anthropomorphic outlines was found in situ, at the base of which were discovered two slab mortars, tools associated with mining and metallurgical production (Tkachev, 2012). Thus, these two typologically similar complexes, located approximately 100 km apart, form a distinct group (Group A) that is, in fact, integrated into the structure of a unified historical and cultural space. The meridional orientation of the upper courses of the Ural and Sakmara rivers, along with the natural barrier of the Ural-Tau Ridge, historically ensured a high level of communication between the steppe and foothill regions of the Trans-Urals and the Orenburg-Kazakhstan steppes (for more details, see: Saveliev, 2011). A characteristic feature of this group is quite clear: intentionally installed or laid stele-like stones in the burial pit without any evidence of a buried individual (cenotaph), which can be confidently associated with the ritual of substitution for the deceased (see: Fig. 4, 1–2).

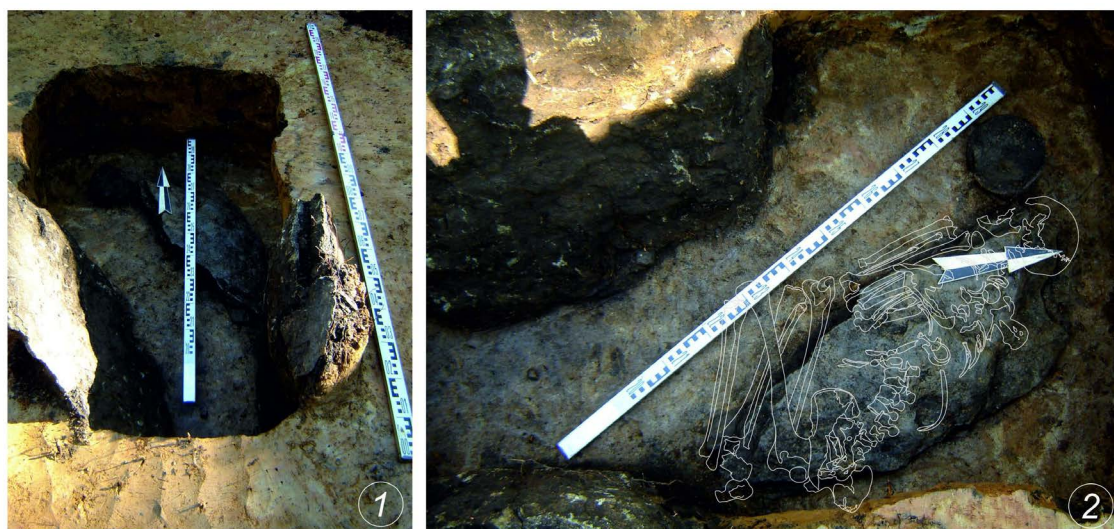


Fig. 3: Kashkarovsky Kurgan Burial Ground. Burial 3. The Stone as a Substitute for the Deceased: 1. General view from the south; 2. Top view (reconstruction of the arrangement).

Further search for analogies to the ritual in question revealed a significant number of burial pits that do not contain skeletal remains but do include archaeological material and individual stones not related to above-ground constructions. In most cases, the archaeological context of the stones' presence in the burials is ambiguous, and the absence of a skeleton could be explained by several factors: decomposition of bone material in infant or child burials, the activity of scavenging animals, looting, etc. Thus, the formation of the source base was carried out according to several criteria, the primary of which are the following: the undisturbed state of the complex, the original absence of a skeleton, and the non-random placement of a stone or stones in the grave. For objective reasons, the latter two parameters involve a certain degree of assumption. The absence of one of these features, or ambiguity in its interpretation, served as grounds for excluding a complex from the source base. As a result, a significantly reduced database was

obtained compared to the original version, including only thirteen burials distributed across five necropolises: those already mentioned (Kashkarovo and Ishkinovka III) as well as Lisakovsky I and Urefty I. All of the sites, with the exception of Urefty I, are located in open steppe and forest-steppe areas of the eastern foothills of the Southern Urals and Tobol, and are situated almost along the same latitude, $52^{\circ} \pm 1^{\circ}$ N.

Table 2. Source Base.

№	Burial grounds	Geographical Region	Reference	Ritual Group
1	Kashkarovsky, Kurgan 5, Burial 3	Bashkir Trans-Urals		Group A
2	Ishkinovka III, Kurgan 1, Burial 4	Steppe zone of the Southern Trans-Urals	(Tkachev, 2012)	Group A
3	Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 6, Burial 2	Tobol	(Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 11)	Group B
4	Lisakovsky I, Group A, Enclosure 13, Burial	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 23, fig. 12, 8)	Group C
5	Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 6, Burial 1	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 5)	Group C
6	Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 12, Burial	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 48, fig. 25, 7)	Group C
7	Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 5, Burial	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 4)	Group C
8	Lisakovsky I, Group Г, Enclosure 12, Burial	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 59, fig. 33, 9-10)	Group C
9	Urefty I, “Kurgan” 13, Burial 2	« – »	(Stefanov and Korochkova 2006: 60, fig. 41, 7, 9)	Group C
10	Lisakovsky I, Group A, Burial 15	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 25, fig. 13, 3)	Group D
11	Lisakovsky I, Group A, Burial 24	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 26, fig. 16, 2)	Group D
12	Lisakovsky I, Group Г, Enclosure 11, Burial	« – »	(Usmanova, 2005: 59, fig. 35, 6–8)	Group D
13	Urefty I, Kurgan 2, Burial 9	Forest-Steppe Trans-Urals	(Stefanov and Korochkova 2006: 19, fig. 11, 6)	Group D

The next group, of analogous complexes (eleven in total) includes cenotaphs with symbolic stones from the Lisakovsky I and Urefty I burial grounds. In her study of the manifestation of the stone cult in the materials from the Lisakovsky I cemetery, Usmanova identifies a group of cenotaph graves that show no signs of looting, at the bottom of which stone slabs were found (Usmanova, 2007: 89; 2013: 117–118). In some cases, the slabs were placed one on top of another. The care with which these slabs were arranged in the burial pit led to the conclusion that these stones were used as symbolic substitutes for the deceased (Usmanova, 2005: 125–126).

When analyzing the materials from the Urefty I burial mound, researchers also note the presence of so-called sacred burials (cenotaphs) in the Alakul section of the necropolis (Stefanov & Korochkova, 2006: 72–73). In the present study, their observations regarding the use of stone in the arrangement of Alakul burials are of particular interest. Three types are distinguished:

- Stone as a commemorative marker. It was installed at the edge of the grave, near the sod mound constructed above the pit, or on top of it;
- Stones on the covering. After the covering was destroyed, they ended up in the pit or in the fill;
- Stones intentionally laid at the bottom of the pit.

Three variants of using stone as a symbolic substitute for the deceased are thus noted. A separate group (Group B) is comprised of the unique Burial 2, discovered in enclosure 6, group B of the Lisakovsky I burial ground (see: Fig.4, 3). Here, within a rectangular pit, a curved stone arrangement was recorded, which, in our view, imitates the presumed flexed position of a skeleton on its left side. The “head area” is marked by a vessel and a large stone (Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 11). This group occupies an intermediate position between cenotaphs with stele-like stones as substitutes for the deceased and burial groups where the symbols are represented by individual small stones or slabs, or several stones placed in a specific area of the burial chamber floor.

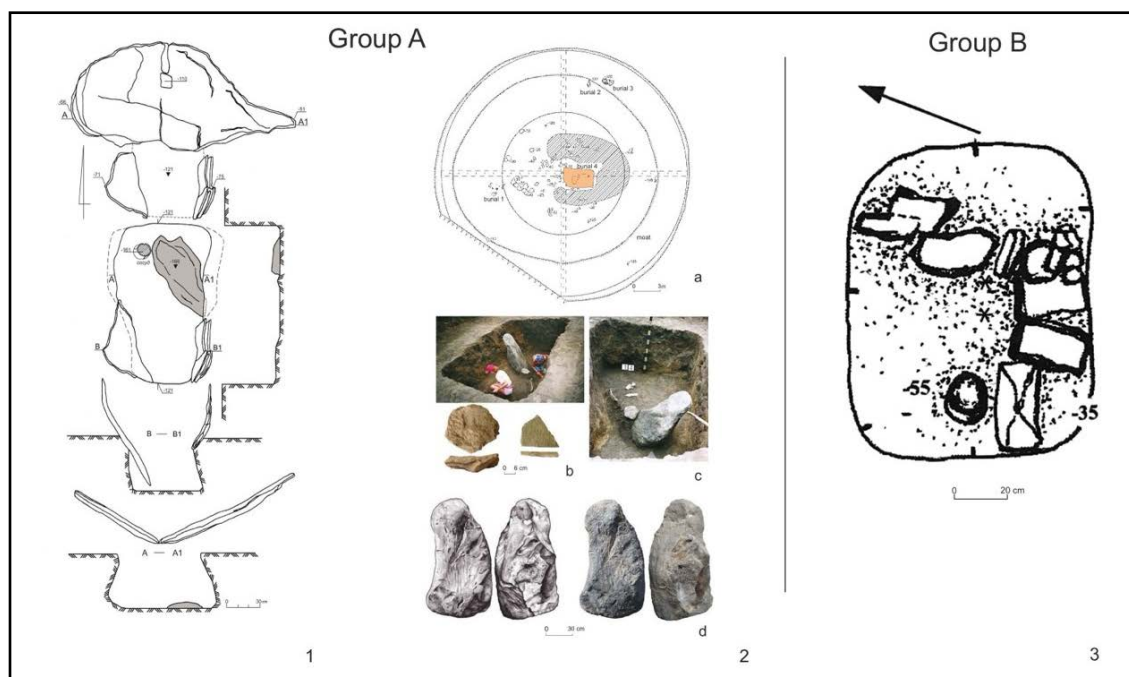


Fig. 4: Ritual Groups (A and B) of Cenotaph Burials with Stones as Substitutes for the Bodies of the Deceased. Bronze Age. Ural-Kazakhstan Region. 1. Kashkarovsky, Kurgan 5, Burial 3; 2. Ishkinovka III, kurgan 1, burial 4 (Tkachev, 2012: fig.1, 3), 2a. plan of the kurgan; 2b. stone tools from the burial; 2c. photographs of the burial pit; 2d. stone anthropomorphic stele from the Burial Pit 3 – Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 6, Burial 2 (Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 11).

Group C includes six burials: five from the Lisakovsky I burial ground and one from the Urefty I burial mound (see: Fig. 5). The main difference from the previous group is that here, the substitute for the deceased is represented by 2–4 individual stones or stone slabs measuring 0.15–0.2 × 0.3–0.5 meters. The placement of the stones tends to be toward the center of the burial chamber in three complexes from the Lisakovsky I burial ground (Group A, Enclosure 13, Burial; Group B, Enclosure 6, Burial 1; and Enclosure 12, Burial), (Usmanova, 2005: 23, fig. 12, 8: 46, fig. 24, 5: 48, fig. 25, 7).

In two burial pits at the Lisakovsky I burial ground, the stones were found near one of the short walls. In the burial of Enclosure 5, Group B, four stones were arranged in a row along the wall (Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 4), while in the burial of Enclosure 12, Group Γ, the stones were positioned in the rounded corners of the burial chamber (Usmanova, 2005: 59, fig. 33, 9–10).

Only in one case can it be stated with sufficient certainty that the stones were laid along the long wall of the pit at the Urefty burial mound, “Kurgan” 13, Burial 2. Here, three large stones were uncovered in a row along the long western wall of the chamber (Stefanov & Korochkova, 2006: 60, fig. 41, 7, 9).

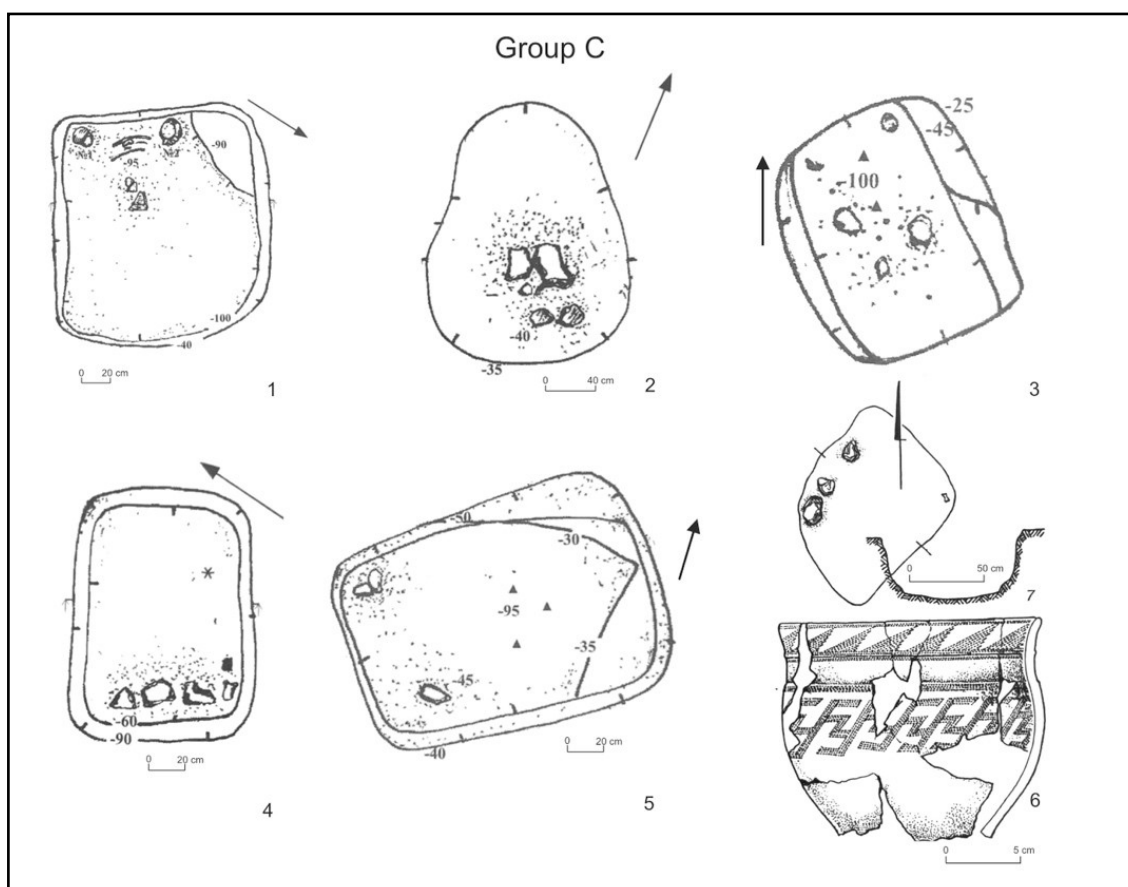


Fig. 5: Ritual Group C of Cenotaph Burials with Stones as Substitutes for the Bodies of the Deceased. Bronze Age. Ural-Kazakhstan Region: 1. Lisakovsky I, Group A, Enclosure 13, Burial (Usmanova, 2005: 23, fig. 12, 8); 2. Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 6, Burial 1 (Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 5); 3. Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 12, Burial (Usmanova, 2005: 48, fig. 25, 7); 4. Lisakovsky I, Group B, Enclosure 5, Burial (Usmanova, 2005: 46, fig. 24, 4); 5. Lisakovsky I, Group Γ, Enclosure 12, Burial (Usmanova, 2005: 59, fig. 33, 10); 6. Urefty I, “Kurgan” 13, Burial 2 (Stefanov & Korochkova, 2006: 60, fig. 41, 9).

Group D consists of cenotaph burials in which a single stone, measuring $0.2\text{--}0.25 \times 0.3\text{--}0.4$ meters, was placed at the bottom. A total of four such complexes have been identified: Group A, Burial 15; Burial 24; Group D, Enclosure 11, Burial at Lisakovsky I burial ground (Usmanova, 2005: 25, fig. 13, 3; 26, fig. 16, 2; 59, fig. 35, 6–8) as well as Kurgan 2, Burial 9 of the Urefty I burial mound (Stefanov & Korochkova, 2006: 19, fig. 11, 6). In all cases, the stone was located near the short wall of the burial chamber, opposite the wall where vessels were placed (see: Fig. 6).

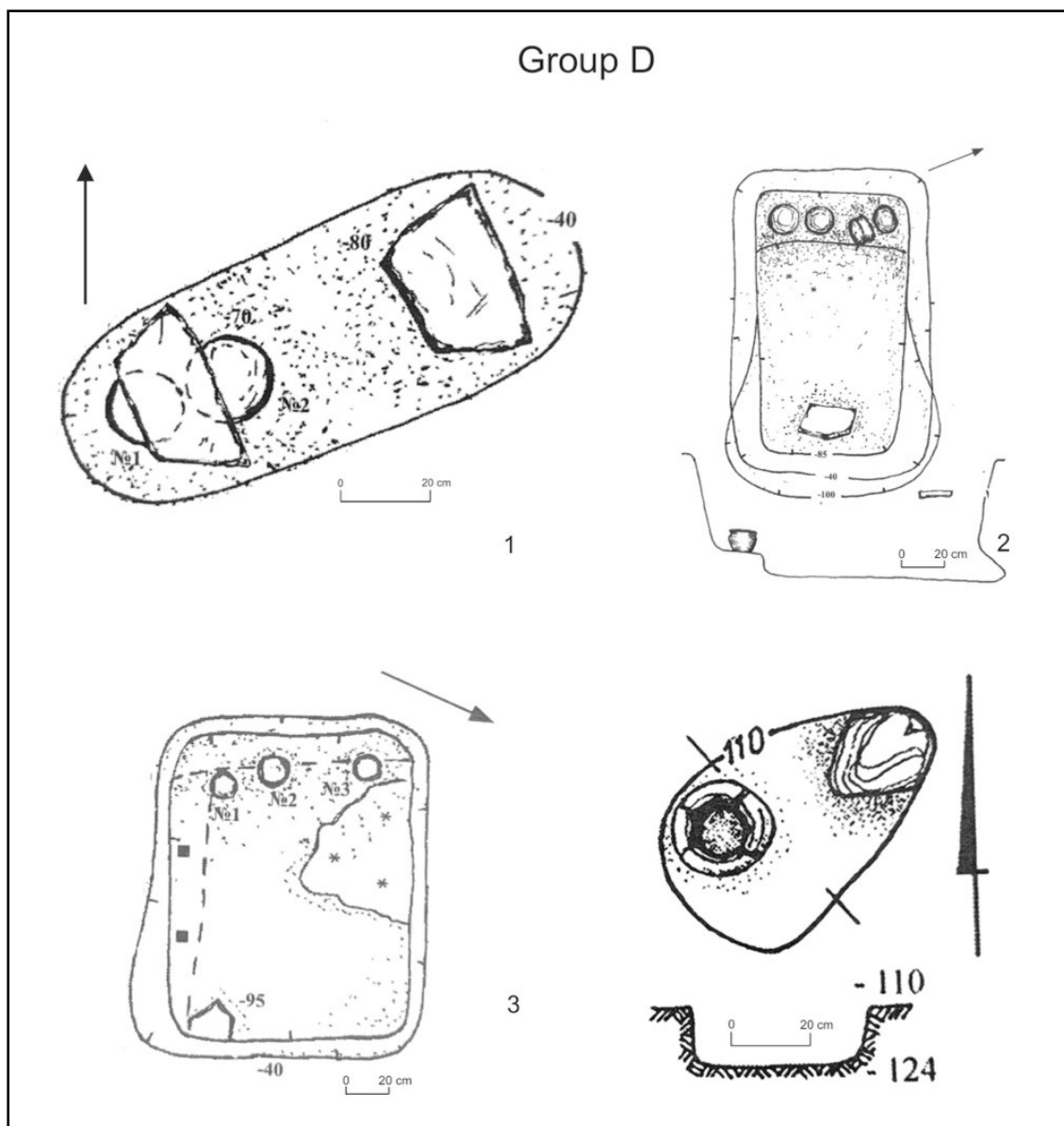


Fig. 6: Ritual Group D of Cenotaph Burials with Stones as Substitutes for the Bodies of the Deceased. Bronze Age. Ural-Kazakhstan Region: 1. Lisakovsky I, Group A, Burial 15 (Usmanova, 2005: 25, fig. 13, 3); 2. Lisakovsky I, Group A, Burial 24 (Usmanova, 2005: 26, fig. 16, 2); 3. Lisakovsky I, Group F, Enclosure 11, Burial # (Usmanova, 2005: 59, fig. 35, 6); 4. Urefty I, Kurgan 2, Burial 9 (Stefanov & Korochkova, 2006: 19, fig. 11, 6).

6. Conclusions

These specific forms of funerary ritual among the Late Bronze Age populations of the Southern Urals and Tobol are not unique to the steppe zone of Central Eurasia. Only a few examples will be mentioned here. For instance, in catacomb funeral rites, amorphous anthropomorphic stone stelae are present, often found in the shaft at the entrance to the chamber. Studies distinguish three interpretations of their function in burials: utilitarian (as structural supports), sacred or protective functions, and as symbols of human sacrifice (Feshchenko, 2014).

Recent studies of ritual sites with deer stones and structures in the khirigsuur kurgans of Tuva and Mongolia have demonstrated that these served as symbolic substitutes for real individuals

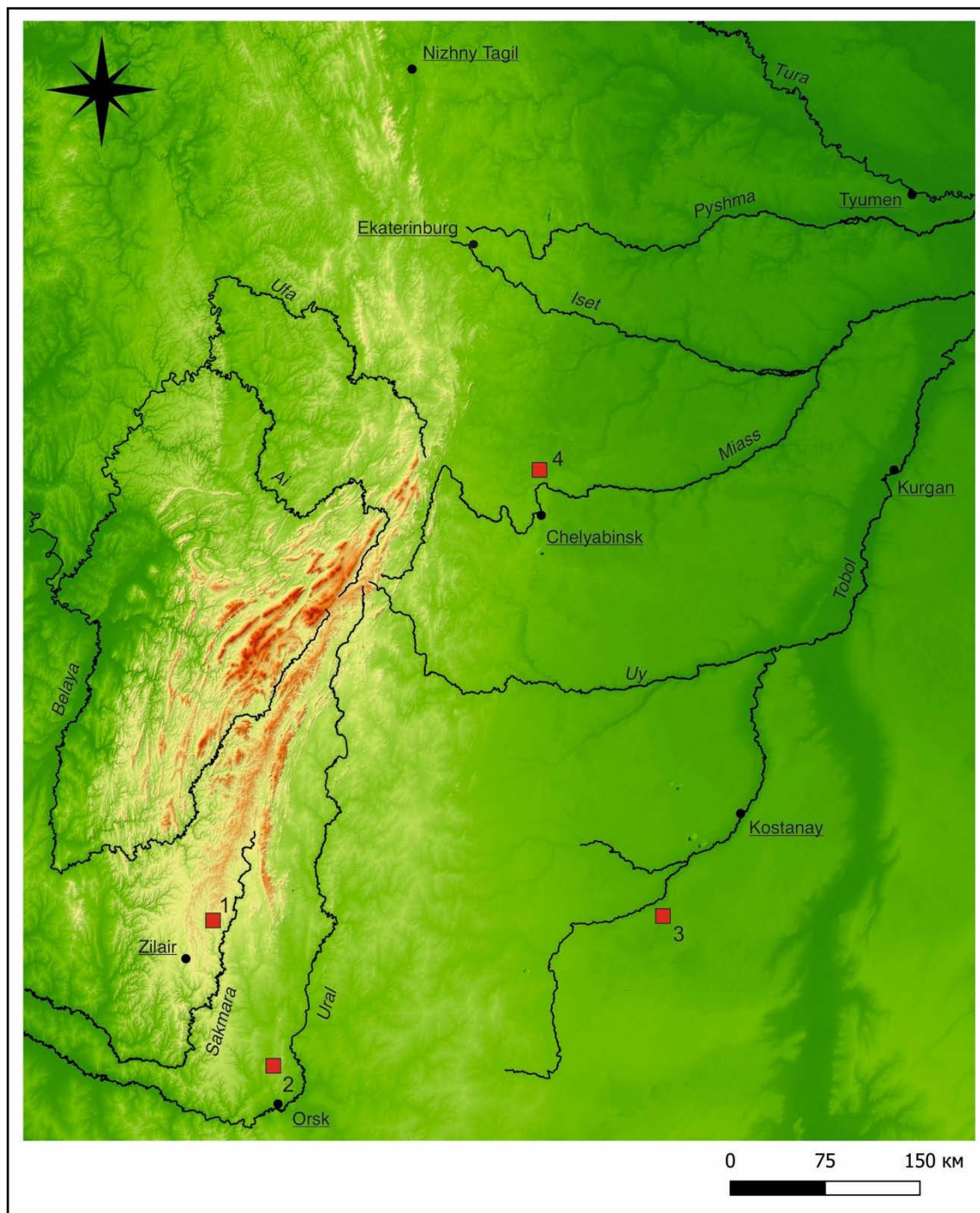


Fig. 7: Map of sites. 1. Kashkarovsky; 2. Ishkinovka III; 3. Lisakovsky I; 4. Urefty I.

within such complexes ([Kovalev and Erdenebaatar, 2007: 104](#); [Kovalev et al., 2014: 50](#)). [Fedorov-Davydov \(1976: 92\)](#) defined ancient Turkic stone statues not only as temporary receptacles but also as substitutes or doubles of the deceased. [Kubarev \(2007\)](#), following Fedorov-Davydov, does not consider the tradition of making or installing stone statues to be a widespread cult, restricting the sphere of veneration to relatives.

The most specific ethnographic examples of the use of symbolic substitutes for the deceased in funerary rites are found among the peoples of the Sayan-Altai region: the Khanty, Mansi, Nenets, Enets, Nganasans, and Yakuts (Gurvich, 1980). A similar rite has been recorded among the peoples of the Lower Amur: the Nanais, Ulchis, Negidals, and Orochis (Kuzmin, 2008). Regarding the peoples of the Volga-Ural region, the observations of Vasiliev (1904: 467) on the funeral rites of the Chuvash are of particular interest. Specifically, the use is noted, during the fortieth-day commemoration, of a substitute for the deceased in the form of a wooden or stone (emphasis added by us) block with crudely carved facial features.

Thus, the burial pit with a stone stele at the Kashkarovsky burial mound is, in fact, a unique funerary cenotaph complex, in which the deliberate placement of a stone at the bottom can be confidently associated with the ritual of substituting for the bodies of the deceased. The presence of only a small number of analogies points to the atypical nature of this rite in the funerary practice of the Srubnaya-Andronovo population in the southern Ural forest-steppe in Late Bronze Age. The question of the time of appearance and the origins of this tradition remains unclear. For now, it can only be stated that there is a clear Alakul-Fedorovo cultural dominance. However, confirmation of this hypothesis is possible only with the expansion of the source base.

The expansion of the source base and research field is a necessary condition for reconstructing the origins of this burial practice and for verifying hypotheses about the ways in which this specific funerary tradition spread among the Bronze Age pastoralists of the steppe and forest-steppe zones of Central Eurasia.

Acknowledgements

This research was conducted within the framework of the research project “The Museum of Archaeology and Ethnography of the Institute of Ethnological Studies, Ufa Federal Research Center, Russian Academy of Sciences as a Factor in Preserving the Historical and Cultural Heritage of the Southern Urals” (No. 1022040500512-4-6.1.1). Within this study, I would like to thank Dr. Petrov for sharing a selection of publications on over-the-burial structures of the Chuvash people as well as advice on several aspects of this paper.

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سنگ به عنوان نماد در آئین‌های تدفینی حوزه فرهنگی اسروبنایا-آندرونوو

ایلشات بخشیه‌ف^۱

۱. پژوهشگر ارشد مؤسسه مطالعات قوم‌نگاری «آر. جی. کازیف» وابسته به مرکز پژوهش فدرال اوفا، آکادمی علوم روسیه، اوفا، روسیه.
رایانامه: ibahsh@gmail.com

چکیده	تاریخچه مقاله
این پژوهش به بررسی نقش سنگ به عنوان جانشین نمادین پیکر متوفی در آئین‌های تدفینی حوزه فرهنگی اسروبنایا-آندرونوو در اواخر عصر مفرغ در منطقه اورال جنوبی می‌پردازد. مبنای پژوهش، داده‌های به‌دست‌آمده از گورستان تپه‌ای کاشکاروفسکی (واقع در بخش ماورالنهر از اورال باشقیرستان) است، به‌ویژه گور شماره ۳ از تپه شماره ۵ که در آن یک استل سنگی انسان‌نما کشف شد و به عنوان عنصر مرکزی یک «سنوتاف» (قبر یادبود بدون جسد) تفسیر گردید. به نظر می‌رسد که در این بستر، سنگ علاوه بر داشتن کارکردی مقدس، جایگزین بدن غایب متوفی نیز بوده است. این پژوهش گونه‌شناسی مجموعه‌های مشابه را ارائه کرده و آن‌ها را بر اساس نحوه قرارگیری عمودی و ویژگی‌های سنگ‌ها در گودال‌های تدفین به چهار گروه تقسیم می‌کند؛ گروه A سنگ‌های شبیه استل که در گودال‌های تدفین قرار داده شده‌اند. گروه B سنگ‌های منفرد که به طور عمودی در کف گودال گذاشته شده‌اند و گاه حالت بدن خمیده را شبیه‌سازی می‌کنند. گروه‌های C و D شامل سنوتاف‌هایی با چند سنگ یا یک تخته سنگ منفرد در کف قبر قرار گرفته است. گودال تدفین با استل سنگی در گورستان کاشکاروفسکی درواقع یک مجموعه تدفینی سنوتاف منحصر به فرد است که در آن قرار دادن عمودی سنگ در کف گودال را می‌توان با اطمینان به آئین جایگزینی بدن متوفی نسبت داد. تعداد اندک نمونه‌های مشابه، نشان‌دهنده غیرمعمول بودن این رسم در آئین تدفینی مردم اسروبنایا-آندرونوو در جنگل استپ اورال جنوبی در اواخر عصر مفرغ است. خاستگاه این سنت هم‌چنان نامشخص است، اما پیوند آن با سنت‌های تدفینی آلاکول-فدوروفو در محوطه‌های اورال جنوبی و قزاقستان شناسایی شده است. برای تأیید این فرضیه، لازم است دامنه منابع باستان‌شناسی گسترش یابد.	<p>صص: ۱۲۷-۱۴۳ نوع مقاله: پژوهشی</p> <p>تاریخ دریافت: ۱۴۰۴/۰۱/۲۰</p> <p>تاریخ بازنگری: ۱۴۰۴/۰۲/۲۴</p> <p>تاریخ پذیرش: ۱۴۰۴/۰۳/۲۸</p> <p>تاریخ انتشار: ۱۴۰۴/۰۵/۰۱</p> <p>کلیدواژگان: عصر مفرغ جدید، اورال جنوبی، منطقه ماورالنهر اورال در باشقیرستان، آئین تدفین، استل سنگی، سنوتاف‌ها.</p>

ارجاع به مقاله: بخشیه‌ف، ایلشات، (۱۴۰۴). «سنگ به عنوان نماد در آئین‌های تدفینی حوزه فرهنگی اسروبنایا-آندرونوو». مطالعات باستان‌شناسی، ۱۷(۲): ۱۲۷-۱۴۳.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.22059/jarcs.2025.397096.1433548>



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