
On funerary architecture, accoutrements, and activities and the permeation of the Bronze Age Andronovo Culture through Xinjiang

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Résumé

As one of the most extensively examined archaeological cultures in recent Central Asian scholarship, the Andronovo's dominion over Xinjiang, the purported eastern periphery, remains yet a perplexing phenomenon. The geography of Xinjiang shares many similarities with regions to its immediate west; its mountain steppes and river basins constitute landscapes characteristic of environments in which elements of the Andronovan material culture thrived. What followed this eager inquiry into how and in what respects Xinjiang was connected to the rest of Central Asia in the Bronze Age was an overwhelming output of archaeological materials from local field research that nevertheless lacks synthesis and cross-examination. This paper assesses the latest corpus of materials from over a dozen sites across western and northern Xinjiang attributed to the Andronovo Culture or its influence. It centers on building structures and accoutrements of burial and commemorative activities, which constitute predominantly slabbed pit structures and round cairns for the former and ceramic pots, bronze implements and accessories for the latter. We assess the critical components of funerary and ritual designs and their connection to the physical environment in both topographic and symbolic spectrums. Through an integrated view of the evidence in hand, we seek to chart a more informative representation of the spatial reach of the "Andronovo" in Xinjiang and its implications in cultural terms based on substantive and systematic categories of evaluation that address rather than lean on differences in typology.

Mots-Clés: Xinjiang, Bronze Age, Andronovo, typology, funerary architecture

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