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*Mediterranean Archaeology and Archaeometry*  
Vol. 20, No 3, (2020), pp. 91-105  
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DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.3930422

# CENOTAPHS IN RITUAL PRACTICE OF COMPLEX SOCIETIES: PROTO-BACTRIAN CULTURAL CONTEXT

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Received: 18/06/2020

Accepted: 20/08/2020

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## ABSTRACT

Among the many problems in the archeology of Djarkutan, there is one seemingly particular issue, which, however, is of exceptional importance in understanding the spiritual culture of Proto-Bactrian civilization. This is a question about cenotaphs, or false burials, their place and role in the ritual-cult practice of the ancient agricultural society of Southern Uzbekistan. The use of cenotaphs as specific objects of archaeological research allows us to clarify many aspects of socio-ideological and ritual-symbolic transformations in the culture of complex societies. Meanwhile, the question of the place and significance of cenotaphs in the funerary practice of Sapalli culture of Bronze Age is still a poorly explored topic. In a number of works devoted to complex societies of Bronze Age of Central Asia, cenotaphs are usually mentioned in passing or in the most general views. However the ritual meaning of cenotaph burials goes far beyond the burial practice and has social and ideological sense. Cenotaph rituals were diverse and historically changed both in time and in space. In this article, I will try to consider some cultural specifications and historical positions of cenotaphs in social and ritual-cult functions on example funeral objects of Sapalli culture. I attempt to show that cenotaph ritual is a means of transmitting vital issues of society and social challenges. My proposal is being developed comprehension of cenotaphs as specific symbolic practice and as a mode of regulating social relations, reflecting experiences of integration inside the cultural system. The formation of rituals and other symbolic actions is determined, first of all, by the formation of a new system of social-normative values in proto-state civilizations.

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**KEYWORDS:** Cenotaph, Sapalli culture, Djarkutan, Proto-Bactrian civilization, mortuary practice, ritual process

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Many archaeological ruins of urban areas (that means, the Uzbekistan sites of Sapallitepa, Djarkutan, Molali, and Bustan, and Dashli in Afghanistan, on both banks of the central Amu-Darya River) were discovered by A. Askarov and V. Sarianidi in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They confirm the existence of a unique, settled, agricultural civilization in the ancient Bactrian region a thousand years before the arrival of the Achaemenids (Askarov, 1977; Sarianidi, 1977; Kohl, 1984; see, Fig.1). After the abandonment of the important early urban centers of southern Turkmenistan and northern Iran, the epicenter of state genesis and urbanization was located near the Amu-Darya drainage basins. Sapalli culture became the cradle of the most ancient urban civilization in Uzbekistan.

Djarkutan consists of a temple and palace building, a citadel, living quarters, craft areas, irrigation canals, and cemeteries. Many years archaeological excavations at the site of Djarkutan by the Institute of Archaeology of the Uzbek Academy of Sciences (Samar-kand) discovered separate tribal quarters where each had its economic and residential areas, covering more than fifty hectares. Each area had its own tribal cemetery, in which burials of both ordinary people and tribal leaders were discovered. Over the last decades, the burial grounds of Djarkutan have been archaeologically studied, and some cemeteries (Djarkutan 3A and 4V) have been completely excavated. In this article I use predominantly materials of Djarkutan 4V and some other Djarkutan cemeteries, which were excavated by author in 1985-1988.

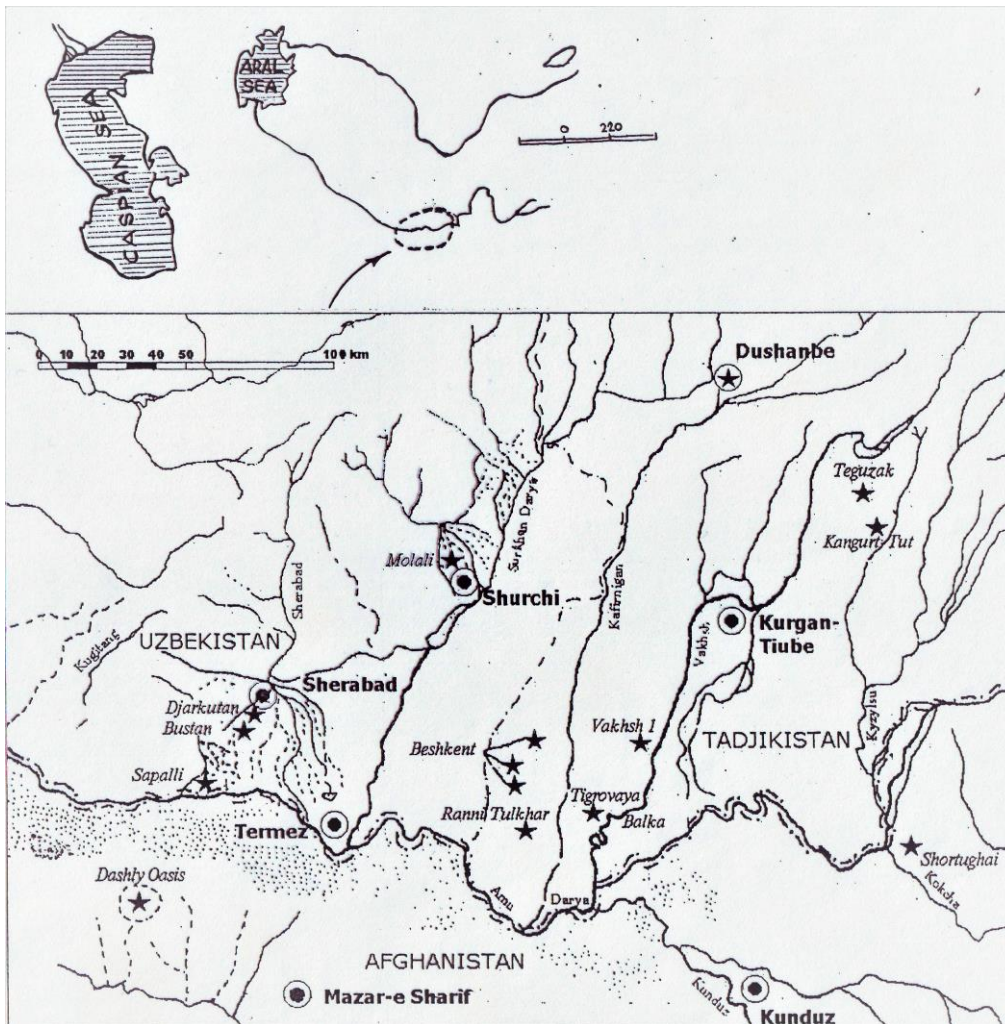


Fig.1. Map of objects of Proto-Bactrian area and related regions (adapted from Kohl, 1984)

It should be noted, cenotaphs are most prevalent primarily in the Late Bronze Age in Central Asia, the mass distribution of cenotaphs occurred precisely at this time, archaeologically dated to the Namazga VI period. The cenotaphs were the most widespread the

first and foremost during the late Bronze Age. It was then that cenotaph rite formed in the mortuary practice of the settled and the cattle-breeding tribes of the Central Asia. The cenotaphs have the special place in large massive of Sapali culture's funeral complexes.

Cenotaphs are worth of special examination due to their amount as well as to a wide range of rites connected with them.

Askarov, examining some general questions of the Bronze Age history, have repeatedly touched upon cenotaph's problem, but unfortunately, he did not continue this research (Askarov, 1973, 134-135; 1977, 141, 153; Askarov, Abdullaev, 1983, 48, 52, 54; Ionesov, 1988, 1990a, 1990b, 1990c, 1992, 2000, 2015a).

Cenotaphs were mentioned in some works dedicated to other objects of the Central Asia of the Bronze Age (Gonur - in Margiana, Dashli - in South Bactria, Sumbar and Parkhai - in South-West Turkmenistan, Tandyriul - in the Gissar valley, as well as in a number of cattle-breeding burial grounds: Vakhsh, Tigrovaya Balka, Djarkul, Oikul, Maconi-mor, Bishkent 1 - in the lower reaches of Vakhsh and Kyzylsu (Fig.2), but they were mentioned and observed in the most general way while characterizing the interment rite of some societies (Masson, 1984, 1986; Khlopin, 1983, 87, 90; Sarianidi, 1977, 55; Litvinskiy et al., 1977; Vinogradova, P'ankova, 1984; Iravani Ghadim & Tahmasebi Zave, 2018).

Cenotaphs and the development of cult of heroes were seen in the Achaean Greece. The people made up a grave hill, devoted to the memory of their prominent persons, who died in the Troy War. It was a place for dead warriors to find their deserved peace and rest (Homer, *Odyssey*, I, 287; IV, 584). According to ancient Greek views, a soul of an unburied body

could not gain the last peace. In Greek mythology, Pelops (king of Pisa in the Peloponnesus region) built empty funeral mound (cenotaph), which was sacral place for sacrifice to deities and heroes. In another case Pausanias (*Korithiaka* 2, 25, 7) refers to a pyramidal polyandrion in Argolis (near Ligourio), that is a collective tomb of soldiers from Argos after a battle between Pretus and Akrisias, which takes the case back to the 3rd millennium BC. (Liritzis & Raftopoulou 1998).

The cenotaph ritual had used in funeral practice of Late Minoan III cemeteries of Bronze Age Greece. In recent report about of archaeological excavation in Mochlos-Myrsini region is marked some tombs contained no skeletal remains (Smith, 2020).

The origins of the Central Asian cenotaphs as a qualitatively new phenomenon in the funeral rite, according to Masson, date back to the late stages of Altyn-depe (1986). Cenotaphs of the cattle-breeding tribes of the South-Tadjik part of the ancient Bactria were examined a bit more thoroughly in monograph written by P'yankova (1989, 24-26, 125-128). To interpret this type of burial we use certain historical and ethnographical material and propose to take into consideration a more profound level of religious views based on belief of obligatory character of following certain social rules, and beliefs in certain structure of the society situated partly in this world and partly in the other one (P'yankova, 1989,125).

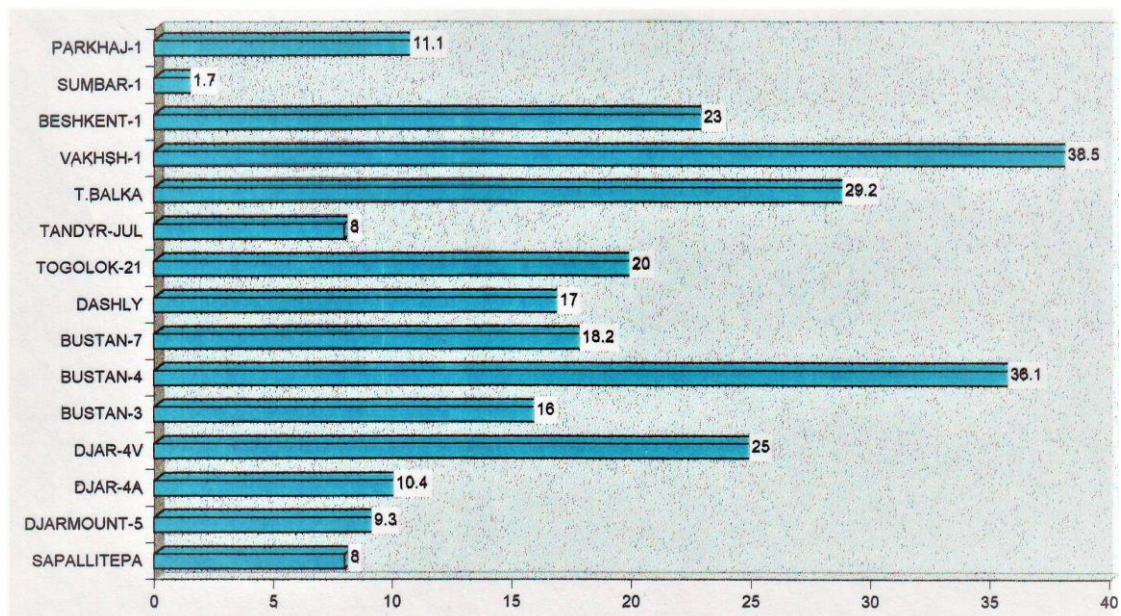


Fig.2. Percentage correlation of cenotaphs in Bronze Age of Central Asia

In addition to these works, but in relation of other regions on this problem we should single out a well-known article by Postovskaya (1957, 1959) concerning the king cenotaphs of the ancient Egypt, some publications by Obelchenko concerning mound cenotaph

burials of Kuyu-Mazar (1957) of the first centuries AD and publications by Smolyak (1969) concerning false burials of the tribes of the lowest reaches of the Amur.

The monograph devoted to special types of the catcomb burials has been published by Melnik. Quite

detailed classification and interpretation of symbolic burials (cenotaphs) was given there in a special chapter, some possible meanings of the cenotaph attributes were proposed (1991,45-55). According to Melnik (1991, 71), highly developed animistic views of the catacomb people were realized in cenotaphs as a post human accommodation for a soul of a dead or missing person.

In whole, we are bound to state that cenotaphs were frequently mentioned in archeological literature. However, they were studied rather fragmentary mainly under description of archaeological objects.

The objective of my research to argue the social and ideological functions of cenotaphs as specific cultural reality and symbolic practice in Proto-Bactrian society on example burial grounds of Sapalli culture. It is important to show that funeral ritual of cenotaph is system of meanings in fixation and transmitting urgent tasks of society, which had captured the complex community in time of epochal transition to the early state.

## 2. SOME CLARIFICATION ON ARCHAEO-METRICAL CHRONOLOGY OF FUNERAL OBJECTS OF SAPALLI CULTURE

This article uses the traditional chronology of archaeological sites of the Late Bronze Age (period of Namazga VI), which includes all the famous funerary objects of Sapalli culture. The periodization of archaeological sites of the Late Bronze Age was elaborated and refined in the works of several authors (Masson, 1984; Askarov, 193, 1977; Sarianidi, 1977; Avanesova, 2009, 2010; Rakhmonov, 1987; Ionesov, 1990a) and corresponds to the period of the 2nd millennium BC. In recent years, some researchers (based on new radiocarbon studies) have proposed earlier dating of archaeological sites of Sapalli culture (with shift the lower line in dating to 2400 BC).

So, the research archaeological materials of Djarkutan (from excavations 1994 to 2003) by archaeologists from the German Archaeological Institute and there "study of burial data from the sites of Sapalli culture led to are revision of the region's chronology: in the early second millennium, the local Sapalli Culture has two distinct stages, Late Bronze I and II, which can be differentiated by their pottery, burial customs and, above all, by their metal inventories" ( Kaniuth, 2007).

However, many presented of dating are very different and often do not take into account other criteria and identification markers in determining the chronological affiliation of archaeological objects, including cultural, stratification, anthropological and other measure factors (Görsdorf & Huff 2001; Teufer 2005; Kaniuth, 2007; Kohl, 1984).

As correctly notes Kircho and Popov: "it shows that there are a lot of problems, depends on the different system of calibration, sometimes not corrected cultural and geological position of specimens or even mistakes in publications" (2005). The results of processing the most representative series 14C of the dates of Altyn-Depe and the adjacent monuments of the Bronze Age are, in general, "show, that the radiocarbon chronology of this site sequence is close to the traditional chronology system and it forces cautious about the attempts made by some of western researchers to do more ancient the chronology of these archaeological complexes (for 300-400 years)" (Kircho & Popov, 2005).

Archaeometrical work is also highly efficient in analysis of Sapalli culture's funeral objects. Regarding the chronology and recent research on radiocarbon dating applications and new possibilities with calibration archaeological sites see, Liritzis et al, (2020).

## 3. CENOTAPHS IN FUNERAL COMPLEXES OF SAPALLI CULTURE

Cenotaphs were the most widespread the first and foremost during the late Bronze Age. It was then that cenotaph rite formed in the mortuary practice of the settled and the cattle-breeding tribes of the Central Asia. Besides, cenotaphs were in the most detailed way presented in the data on Northern Bactria archaeological relics (up to the 90% of all known cenotaphs of the Bronze Age).

Speaking of that data, cenotaphs of the early urban South Uzbek civilization are of great interest, since it is there that more than half of all known cenotaphs of the Northern Bactria was concentrated (Fig.3). To present time over 350 cenotaphs were excavated in the interment complexes of Sapalli-tepe, Djarkutan and Bustan so far. The majority of them, what is important, were not robbed. Besides, it is important that cenotaphs can observed during quite a long chronological period on the base of having a developed archaeological periodization of the Sapalli culture. It does possible to work out their typological and sociological classification in terms of evolutionary continuity of the civilization.

As symbolic complex, the cenotaphs have great importance as for comprehension of the spiritual culture of the Sapalli-tepe civilization. This question concerns cenotaphs, their role and position in the ritual and cult practice of ancient agricultural society of the South Uzbekistan.

Cenotaph's ritual in Sapalli culture is seen in the use of anthropomorphic clay figurines, models of altars, sacrifice areas, methods of grave construction, burials of animals, and urn burials. The most distinctive of these features are the cenotaphs and the votive bronze replicas of tools and weapons.

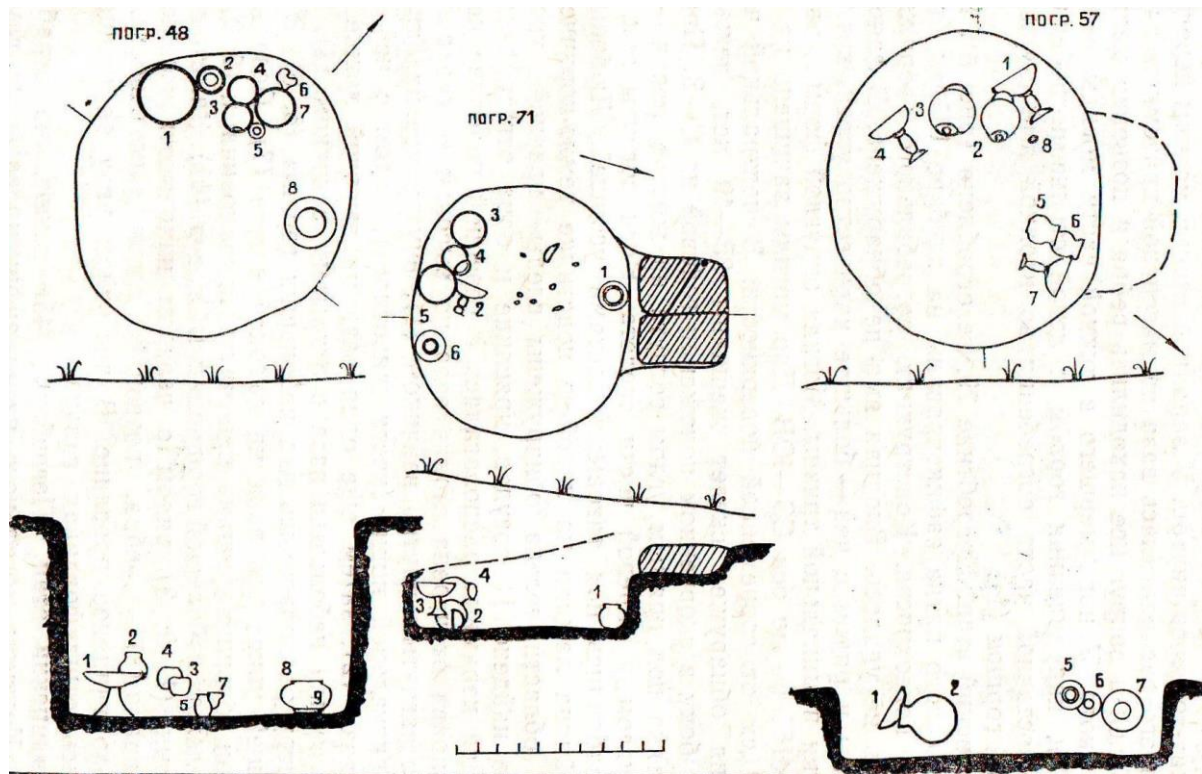


Fig.3. Cenotaphs of Sapalli Culture (#48, 57, 71 – Djarkutan 4V)

Typologically the cenotaphs of Sapalli culture can be divided into six main groups: (1) those with figurines made of wood or cloth; (2) those with clay anthropomorphic figurines and other ritual objects; (3) those with roof-shaped vessels; (4) those with immolated sheep; (5) those with sheep and figurines and (6) those without grave goods (Ionesov, 1992). The social and ritual functions of cenotaphs have been explored

(Avanesova, 2016; Ionesov, 1992). The cenotaphs of Sapalli culture are divided into six chronological stages: Sapallitepa (1700-1650 B.C. 7.9%; Djarkutan I (1650-1550 B.C.), 10.4%; Djarkutan II (1550-1350 B.C.), 3.1%; Kuzali (1350-1200 B.C.), 16%; Molali (1200-1050 B.C.), 17%; Bustan (1050-950 B.C.), 27.6%. Other cenotaphs objects with undefined dating – 18% (Fig.4).

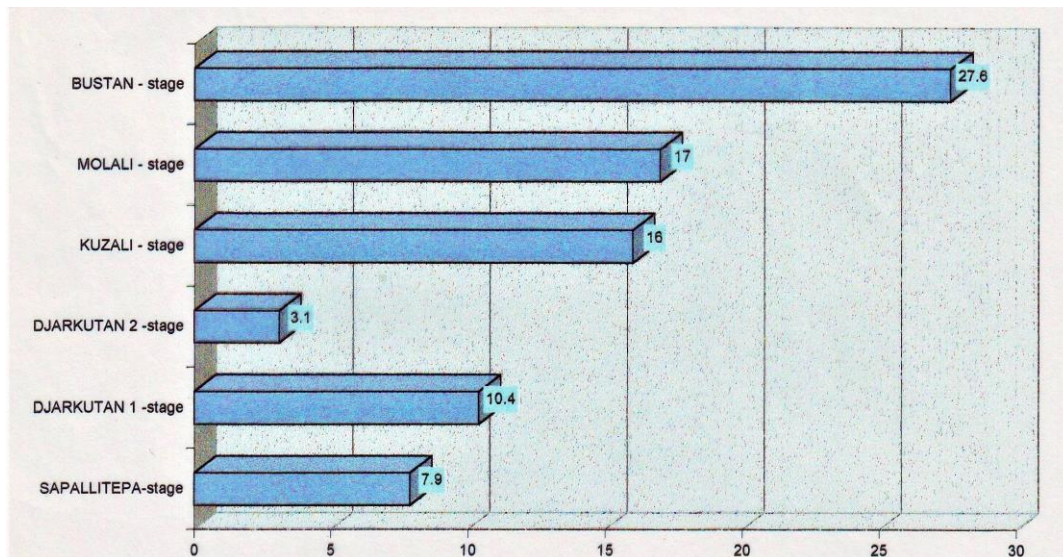
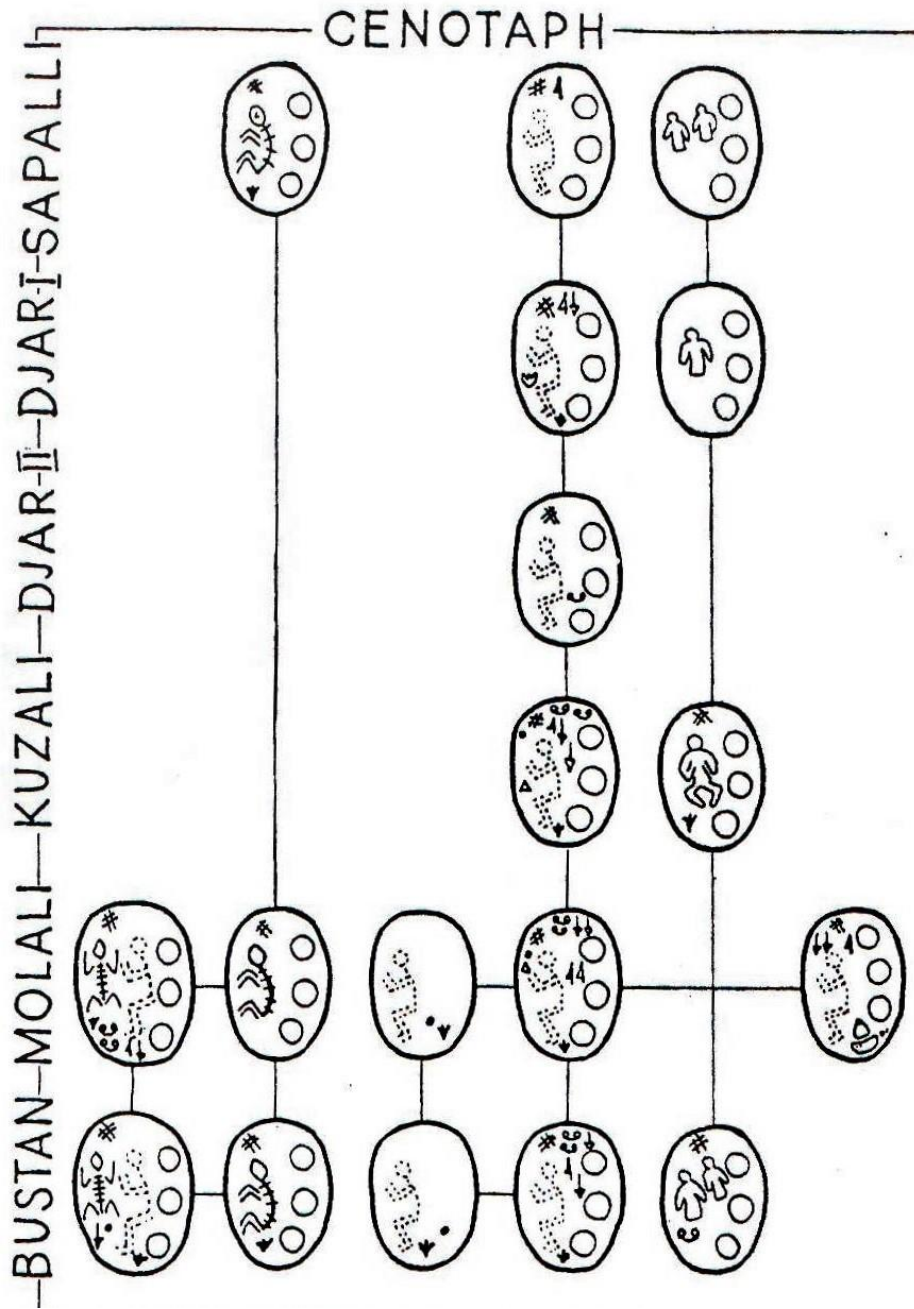


Fig.4. Proportion of cenotaphs on chronological stages of Sapalli culture



- doll (dummy)
- sheep
- clay anthropoid figurine
- ceramic vessels
- ritual cylindrical and roof-shaped vessels
- bronze weapons
- stone weapons
- bronze tools
- stone tools
- bronze adornments
- stone adornments
- rods ( symbols of authority )
- mirror
- - shingle (pebble)
- traces of fire ( small pieces of coal )

Fig. 5. Typology and evolution of cenotaphs in Sapalli culture

The analysis of all stages of the known cenotaph burials of the Sapalli culture quite eloquently testifies to growing tendency of their development. The mostly number of cenotaphs are in late stage of Sapalli culture (Molali-Bustan period).

There were six types of cenotaphs:

- (1) burials containing a wooden dummy and grave gifts;
- (2) burials containing no grave gifts;
- (3) burials containing clay figurines, modeled miniature vessels and other grave gifts;
- (4) burials containing animals imitating a position of a dead body (usually that of a man);
- (5) burials containing a dummy, a sacrificed sheep and grave goods;
- (6) burials containing ritual clay vessels of a cylindrical shape (Fig.5).

The final stage of Sapalli cenotaph ritual is the most complicated and socially determined. Bustan cenotaphs contained traces of ritual fire (23.9%) and animal immolations (47.8%).

The funeral rituals included the use of clay, anthropomorphic figurines, models of altars, sacrificial areas, methods of grave construction, burials of animals, and jar burials. However, most distinctively, rituals were connected with cenotaphs and votive bronze objects replicating miniature, functional tools and weapons (Fig.6).

To present time, over 350 cenotaphs have been discovered in the Sapalli burial grounds. The artifacts found in the cenotaphs can be divided into six main groups: a) dolls made of wood or cloth; b) anthropoid clay figurines and other ritual objects; c) ritual mortuary roof-shaped vessels and d) immolated (sacrificed) animals (sheep).

	A	B	C	D	E	F
stage	Bronze tools and weapons	Bronze votive replicas	Metal adornment and toilet articles	Jewelry	Stone and clay tools and weapons	Article for special use
Sapalli						
Djarkutan I						
Djarkutan II						
Kuzali						
Molali						
Bustan						

Fig. 6. Bronze and stone artefacts of Sapalli culture on chronological stages

#### 4. CENOTAPHS, THEM SYMBOLIC ARTEFACTS AND RITUAL ATTRIBUTES

##### 4.1 Cenotaphs and Anthropomorphic Clay Figurines

The features and disposition of anthropomorphic clay figurines from Djarkutan (Djar) and Bustan (B) cenotaphs express the special symbolics in modeling

of mortuary rites. For example, in cenotaph 12, Djarkutan 4B (Fig.7), two such figurines were placed in front of a miniature clay altar precisely replicating the round altars of the temple.

The cenotaph also contained a miniature clay vessel with a tiny spoon and several cone-shaped clay objects (Fig.8). Apparently, symbolic event with prayer by mourners was being represented here.

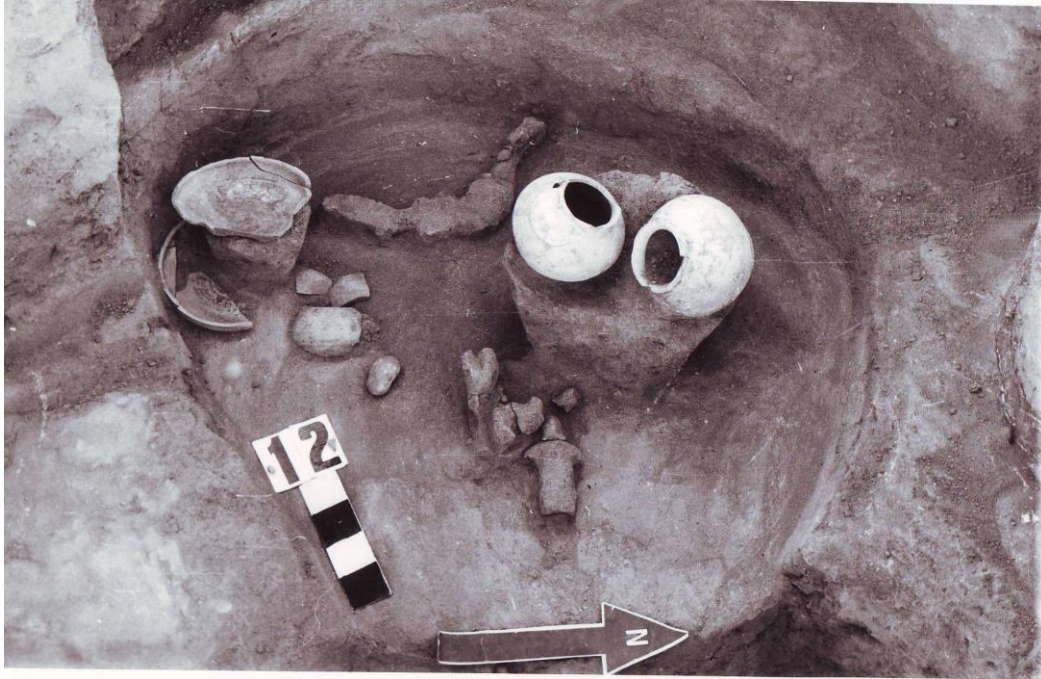


Fig.7. Cenotaphs #12 Djarkutan 4B with clay figurines

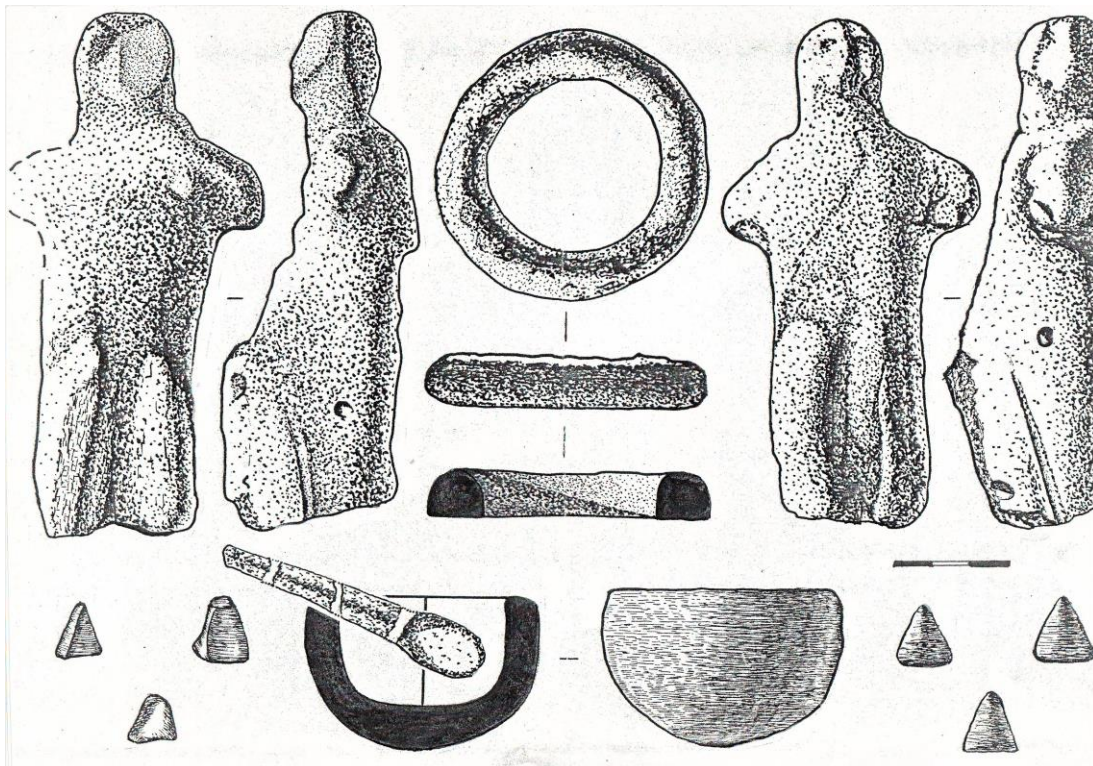


Fig.8. Ritual clay set from cenotaph #12 Djarkutan 4B



It is obvious that the votive objects were magical things; through them people tried to influence their immediate environment, and on being included in ritual they began to play an active social role. Every ritual is a means of transmitting vital messages of society and social challenges. Ritual is a mode of regulating social relations, reflecting experiences of integration inside the cultural system. The formation of rituals and other symbolic actions is determined, first of all, by the formation of a new system of social-normative values in proto-state civilizations. Symbolic artefacts of cenotaphs are very different on ideological meanings (Ionesov, 1990, 1999, 2000; Ionesov, Pavlenko, 2002).

Masson (1986) describes memorial complex Altyn-Depe with funerary equipment and large flattened stones as a ritual complex with the replaced the missing dead in the cell. Probably, that 20 similar ritual meaning had some Djarkutan and Bustan cenotaphs with large stones or flattened pebbles (#. 192,194,205,210,257 and others – Djar-4V; # 9,10,29 – B-4; # 38 – B-3 and others).

Avanesova (2016) has given the detailed descriptions and catalogued symbolic artifacts found at B-6 such as sculpture (anthropomorphic), altar, pottery (vessel, dipper-scoop and spoon) and the cone-shaped counter token are given in the recent book. The author shows that the clay items allow entering the world of ritualized self-consciousness getting not only utilitarian, but also the sacral-symbolic properties.

The symbolic artefacts from cenotaphs of Sapalli culture is specific expression of material text in mythic-religious system. The well-grounded analysis of the entire totality of artifacts of interments with votive attributes allowed the Avanesova (2016, 20-27) to deduce that “the language of symbols of clay items corresponds to the figurative graphic writing of ritual type (mythological iconography of ritual ‘text’). By means of manipulating the simplest materials objects created very complicated mythological compositions in the language of symbols.

#### 4.2 *Cenotaphs, Votive Objects and Magical Things*

We have at present over 300 bronze artifacts from burials of the Sapalli culture at Sapallitepa, Djarkutan, and Bustan (Fig.6). These artifacts are divided into five groups: a) tools (knives, butchers' and carpenters' adzes, chisels, mattocks, shovels, ladles, sickles, and the like); b) weapons (such as daggers, swords, points, and celt-adzes); c) household articles (such as ladles, spoons, and plates); d) toilet implements (mirrors, razors, and other cosmetic items) and e) unfinished (or indeterminate) votive artifacts (such as bronze wire and shapeless plates). All these artifacts

were made especially for burials and were not in household use (Ionesov 1999).

*Cylindrical vessels* with roof-shaped lids were discovered in some burials at Djarkutan and Bustan. Some 20 such vessels are currently known. They were unfired but colored with red pigment. They have holes in their sides and were usually associated with minute handmade cups. They are probably modelling of a home for the soul of the deceased. Some archaeologists interpret them as prototypes of the much later Zoroastrian ossuaries. Small pieces of charcoal were found in some of these cenotaphs, and the recent discovery of cylindrical vessels with roof-shaped lids inside a crematory at B-6 is particularly significant (Avanesova, 1995). Cenotaphs including such vessels may exceptionally have contained the ashes of the deceased.

#### 4.3 *Cenotaph with ritual sacrifices*

Cenotaph burials with ritual sheep sacrifices that were dedicated to male only (Askarov, 1977,141). A series of late Djarkutan cenotaphs with ritual sacrifices of sheep could also testify to the development of the relations of ownership in the Djarkutan society (#180, 200, 236, 258, 266 etc., Djar-4V). A dummy symbolizing man (usually a dressed dummy, which is proved by adornments found in certain places of a burial) was deposited next to a sheep. The sacrificed sheep was most likely to underline the wealth of a person buried with it in the cenotaph.

Comparative analysis of the folklore materials made by Propp (1986, 173). demonstrated that “dead-man as animal became the dead-man+animal” at a certain stage of development of the interment cult of some tribes. “A dead body was a sheep but he was the owner of the sheep as well”.

Judging by ritual differences of the Sapalli cenotaphs, however that general meaning was quite varied and could hardly be reduced to a single directive, since “every symbol now expresses a lot of topics and each topic can be expressed by lots of symbols” (Turner, 1983, 40).

It is obvious that the votive objects were magical things; through them people tried to influence their immediate environment, and “on being included in ritual they began to play an active social role” (Iordanskij, 1982, 46). The increase in the social importance of the means of production in the technological process gradually gave magical power to tools. The data from Sapallitepa, Djarkutan, and Bustan confirm Propp's (1986,192) thesis that the earliest such magical objects were animal parts, with the part standing for the whole and the idea replacing the image. In the first stage of the Sapalli culture the human corpse was imitated by the body of a lamb or sheep in the majority of cenotaphs. At this point the animal

may have played the dual role of double of the deceased and animal helpmate. Afterwards, there were dolls and anthropomorphic figurines and then votive replicas of clay altars, ritual vessels, bronze tools, etc.; and again, one imitation led to another.

In relation to the mortuary practice of ritual imitation it is impossible not to notice that in cenotaphs, we see a syndrome of double symbolization in the ritual process, associated with the compensation of a person's death and the absence of a corpse. Here, one symbolic form instigates the appearance of another one (Fig.9).

## 5. IDEOLOGICAL FUNCTION OF CENOTAPHS

As for the ritual arrangement of cenotaphs, certain ideological function was clearly seen there – it was symbolic complex that contained maximum number of animal bones, traces of inflammations, modeled ritual vessels, clay figurines and flattened pebbles. Cenotaphs as special way of imitations of social grief actively absorbed other symbolic ritual forms of religious rites (Ionesov, 1999).

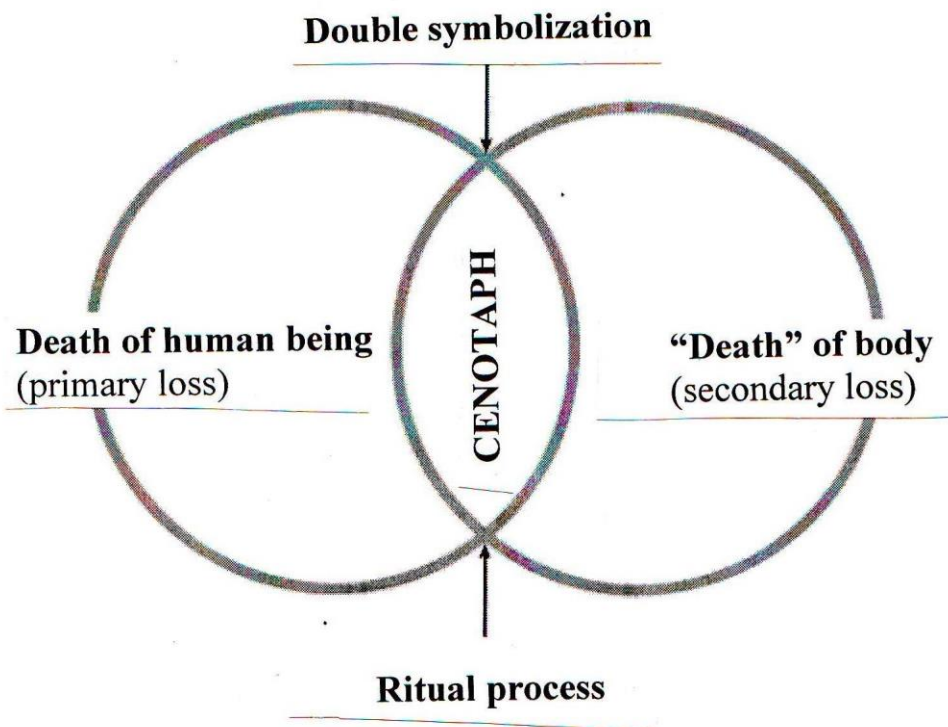


Fig.9. Cenotaph as double symbolic complex

The most wide spread interpretation of the cenotaphs is the version of their memorial importance. The difference is that some researchers propose to distinguish between 'cenotaphs', 'memorials' or 'memorial constructions in honour of the dead (whose bodies were not found) and missing people died abroad (Melnik, 1991, 10).

Avanesova (2016, 20-25) raise the issue on the separate group of objects in the necropolis such as the so-called fictitious, symbolic burial grounds, cenotaphs and sacrificial burials of animals. The author defines them as "graves of not direct burial purpose". However, may the objects named as "graves and burial grounds" be of not-burial purpose? The word combination "symbolic graves" should be specified. It seems that the use of "symbolic graves" as a contrast to the factual burial grounds may be admitted just at the level of empiric classification of objects (Ionesov,

2015a). In their ritual-semantic ranking the term of symbolic is surplus relative and its meanings are obscured, because it puts forward a question: do other ritual burials deprive of symbolic content and can the ritual practice be not-symbolic?

### 5.1 Ritual Imitation and Symbolic Burial Grounds

Cenotaphs in ritual process need to consider as part of multi-component mortuary-symbolic practice. Once I suggested regarding the burial rite in general and Sapalli culture in particular as a multi-stage cycle of ritual actions (all in all six stages were singled out) from the moment of death to the posthumous symbolic personification (funeral feasts and other commemorative acts). The sacral constructions of B-6 are excavated by Avanesova prove the presence of this burial cycle by the ritual transmission in

the Sapalli culture (Ionesov, 1999). The author has ascertained that the necropolis B-6 was not only a place for burial, but at the same time the ceremonial center – ‘sanctuary’ for the cult ceremonies and rituals (Avanesova, 2016).

The evidence is the well-organized ritual spatial structure of the necropolis being a stage ground for the symbolic dramaturgy of religious-ritual cults and burial practice. The systematically organized planographic structure of the site forms an uncommon nature of the site in comparison with the synchronous burial grounds. The necropolis landscape includes the worship objects and places for sacred actions. It is shown the system ritual relations between dead and living as a way of constructing place for the mourning symbolic space for ritual burial (cemetery). It is environmental structure of relations, signs and ideological and aesthetic communication between dead and living, which are in fact both engineered and perceived by the living. The symbolic transformation in mortuary practices with using of different means social and ideological ranging have described in literature (Liritzis et al, 2015; Zhang, 2020)

### 5.2 *Cenotaphs as Struggle Between Life and Death*

Interpreting the mythological content of imitative ritual is a complex issue. Using the Sapalli culture as an example, closer attention might be paid to a further important aspect of the mythological semantics of mortuary rites – the development of beliefs about the afterlife. Here the imitative rites stressed the spheres of life and death in the mythological-ritual area representing the world. This intention is clearly evident in Djarkutan's historical topography and the development of its cemeteries. In the period just before the construction of the temple, the cemeteries were located on a mound outside the settlement, separated from it by a river that is interpreted as the personification of the sacred element of water, the mythical boundary between life and death.

### 5.3 *Social and Cult Functions of Cenotaph*

Interpreting the cenotaphs historically we are bound to distinguish between the two essential functions of theirs – the social and the cult one. Moreover, I tried to prove that cenotaphs in the mortuary practice of Djarkutan were the basis for forming the official interment doctrine as well as of social disguise of class forming processes. As a rule, the role of cenotaphs was significantly increasing in terms of destabilized social and political situation and growing ethnic and cultural interrelations (migrations, social crises,

armed clashes etc.). Thus, social and political differentiation of life in this world resulted in differentiation of the mortuary rite.

We have some reasons to suppose that mass spreading of cenotaphs was sure to be connected with development of the predecessor cult that, in its turn, resulted from patriarchal relations of ownership (Propp, 1986, 153 etc.) The above-mentioned processes were reflections of establishing of the “patriarchal power of the head of the family and master of a house that resulted from growing social differences” (Tokarev, 1990, 265).

## 6. CENOTAPHS, TEMPLE OF FIRE AND TRANSITIONAL TIME

It is important to distinguish between three sides of ritual formalization: 1. the objective side (thing); 2. the processional side (gesture, procession, magic actions, and the like); and 3. the verbal side (word).

And there are two forms of the symbolic ritualization of social conflict:

1. the positive (natural) form and
2. the negative (symbolic-imitative) form (Ionesov, 2000).

The positive form of a ritual is a reflection or appearance of social possibilities, that is, ritual modeling with the help of real (natural) objects or positive signs. The negative form of ritualization comes from the most vital deficiencies that society is trying to solve by ritual means. Usually they are votive implements, sacred signs, symbols, gestures, invocations, weeping, and other such objects or actions. Imitation is precisely one of the many ways of negative ritualization.

Sapalli culture, being in a border position of historical development, strongly needed regulating, compensatory means of social adaptation (Ionesov, 1999) The symbolic attributes allegedly filled the vacuum in cultural life caused by the conflict between old and new power institutions during the transitional period. Imitation had a protective function

In light of Ural-Altai mythology, Sagalaev (1991, 132) comes to the conclusion that “*archaic thought strives to compensate for reality at turning points: the vanishing material object is replaced by its analogy*”. In the midst of epochal transformation, humans constantly extend “the limits of unreality” (Beylis, 1983, 29).

This typical moment should be considered to be a natural epochal phenomenon in the development of post-primitive societies. Through social transformation, a special system of symbolic communication is created within the mythological-ritual space.

Here is great a role of aesthetic means in ritual process. The beauty and ritual-mythological creativity are saving lighthouses for the rebellious spirit

and crisis-ridden consciousness in the changing culture. Moreover, the aesthetic process we can define as the special strategy of culture's survival and as cultural paradigm. It allows us to understand also how to exploit the crisis points and transitional situations in culture (Ionesov, 2015b). This process reflects the historical situation of the transitional, developmental stage of an ancient civilization.

The regulation of ritual by the temple gradually developed into domination of the whole community by the centralized religious ideology. A lengthy process of institutionalization of secular and sacred power preceded the spread of imitative ritual in the Sapalli Culture and culminated in the establishment of the palace and temple complexes at Djarkutan. Its Temple of Fire seems to reflect the incorporation of the novel imitative ritual subsystem into traditional practice. Almost all of the various evidences of imitation in burials (votive replicas, cenotaphs, sacrifices, etc.) are represented in the temple. Moreover, the temple itself was the embodiment of the imitative-ritual system; the complex and multileveled world of religious symbols was clearly reflected in its architecture, plan, and contents.

The Sapalli culture, being in a transitional phase of its historical development, required a regulative-compensatory mechanism for social adaptation. Its symbolic attributes can be viewed as filling the gaps in cultural life created by the conflict between old and new power institutions in a period of transition.

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The complex of factors characterizing the special features of the cultural-economical type of the Sapalli population and the historical condition in the Proto-Bactrian society in the late 2nd millennium BC assumes the existence of preconditions needed for the origin and spread of a new ideology.

And here, as Avanesova (2016, 26-28) supposed the serious stimulus for transformation was the penetration of some groups of the cattle-breeding population (the tribes of the Andronovo, Srubny, Tazabagyab

and Beshkent cultures) into the ancient Bactrian region. The artifacts of other cultures also indicate the presence of a diversity of the steppe traditions in the culture of the Bustan population.

I support the opinion of Avanesova (2016, 520- 526) that the action of steppe factor can explain the differentiated approach to the burial-ritual practice and spread of new forms of rites. However, the statement that the diversity of ritual practice is not linked to the inner tendencies of development of the Sapalli society seems to be quite radical. The more so because the author admits that at the final stage of the historical development of the pre-urban Bactria the penetration of the steppe population reflects a deep inner crisis taking place in the farming oases and connecting to the worsening demographic and economic situation.

## 7. CONCLUSION

Thus, in the historical interpretation of cenotaphs, it is necessary to distinguish two essential aspects – *social* and *ritual-cult*. Moreover, as we tried to show, it was the cenotaphs in the funeral practice of the Djarkutans that was the core on which the shoots of not only the official funeral dogma, but and the social masking of class formation processes actively grew. There is reason to believe that the spread of cenotaphs is most likely associated with the development of the ancestral cult, and the development of the ancestral cult with the development of male-female possessive relations, which was also a reflection of the "patriarchal power of clan and home domination affirmed in society, as a result of growing social differentiation.

I think that variety of the mortuary rituals during the late stages of the Sapalli culture to be testifying to ideological recognition of social stratification of the Djarkutan society. Under those circumstances, cenotaphs became a kind of a ritual instrument to solve and to recognize ideologically the growing social tension. V. Turner (1983, 71) points at the connection between the social conflict and ritual practice by the symbolizing formalization of the social drama.

Social orientation of cenotaphs by no means excluded but even supposed their clearly expressed ritual and cult function. During that stage of historical development of agricultural tribes sacred and social merged into an inseparable unity in the mythologized conscience of the society, creating a whole-integrated system of perception of the world. Practice of an 'imitation influence' on 'the other world', objectively resulted from social reality gained a profound sacred and ideological meaning in the mortuary rite and in cenotaph burials in particular.

It is known that every new generation on the way of creating its social order uses traditional institutions inherited from their predecessors, by means of them trying to make up a new type of social relations. It was

just the period of breaking down the tradition inside the tradition, which was common to transformational periods of social evolution including class formation.

As the society was officially established as a class state, cenotaphs ceased to perform their role of social disguise and ideological compromise. Anyway, during the following epochs cenotaphs perform but just

already the ritual and ceremonial function almost adequately reflecting their content.

Surely, explaining the value and symbolic nature of cenotaphs and their imitative attributes, using the mortuary rites of Sapalli Culture as an example, in no way exhausts this problem. It is just the beginning of a comprehensive, theoretical study of this topic.

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