

Stone altars of the early iron age as markers of cultural invasions.

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Stone altars are trimmed items of different forms with support or without, which are made of stone. They are reflection of spiritual and material cultures of nomadic tribes in the VII – IV, partly III centuries BC. They are widespread on the territory of steppes and even forest-steppe: in the Ural-Kazakhstan steppes, in the Eastern Europe, In the Southern Aral sea region, Ustyurt, Caspian sea region and even in the Upper Ob' and Tuva.

In contrast to items of horse harness, mirrors and weapons, stone altars hardly could be things of trade exchange.

First of all stone altars help to retrace ways of cultural invasions, contacts. Thus, stone vessel were found in the Ol'vian necropolis in the Northern Black sea coast (1), its form features only for the territory of the Southern Urals. None the less the situation is interesting with stone vessel from rich burial in Tuva in Arjan-2 necropolis. Its beak-shaped form are common for the Southern Aral sea region and Ural-Kazakhstan steppes (2). But in spite of similarity, they have their own features. These territories are separated by big distance. Also there are many other examples, which could show this kind of processes. Single findings of such kind of artifacts in the foregoing regions don't deny the idea of existence of marriage contacts, cultural invasions, single or mass migrations.

In paper I'll also try to touch upon a problem of functional understanding of altars.

References:

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- (2) Čugunov K.V., Parzinger H., Nagler A., Der skythenzeitliche Fürstenkurgan Aržan 2 in Tuva, Mainz, T. 66.