

# From inhumation to cremation

rites de passage

# Eneolithic - Early Bronze Age

- Visibility (fences, ground structures as barrows)
- Isolation, but not union with other dead community
- Cremation (calcined bones)
- Cist burials (since 2300 BC)
- Not complete bodies and partially cremated
- Still bended or corched positions of deceased
- “Grave goods” (pottery, blades/knives/daggers)



# Fedorovo/Andronovo



*Adunqiaolu: new evidence for the Andronovo in Xinjiang, China*



*Figure 7. The north (left) and south (right) sections of the cemetery (photographs by D. Cong).*





**Begazy-Dandybai**



# Tripartite structure to rites of passage

- By Van Gennep
- **Pre-liminal** (affirmation of existing identities and relationship leading up to separation the person from others), **liminal** (the body also physically transformed via mummification, cremation or decay) and **post-liminal** (reincorporation of the person into a wider community and the acknowledgment of their new identities and relationships)
- Culturally specific rites of passage which changed over time



# Change over time

- Earliest just sealed by stone slab or cairn, latest backfilled by earth and stones
- Earliest some display of the dead, latest involved seclusion and separation, perhaps successive episodes of containment, and sometimes the severing of the dead from the living through various means including knives and fire.
- These activities repeatedly and gradually separated the dead from the living at the onset and perhaps sometimes the conclusion of the liminal phase of the mortuary process
- From isolated burials to cemeteries



# Cremation

- Cremated outside of burial place
- Cremated inside of burial place (cist, grave)
- Some cists and pits were burned, before inhumation
- Cremated bones with vessels and other artefacts similar to inhumations (= to intact body)
- Pyre sites - places where intact body was cremated
- Multiple cremation deposits are far more common than multiple inhumation



# Case study of “Northumbrian Early Bronze Age”

- Urns with cremated remains placed upside down on natural pits, in cairns, or on the top of cists, but never in cists
- Necklaces placed around neck of urn
- Link between cup-marked stones and cremation pyre
- Placing under southern quadrants of barrow or cairn and orientation to southerly direction
- Buried immediately or after days, or even years



# Conclusive remarks

- Cremation show some changes in mortuary practices, however the meaning of rituals remains almost the same.
- More cultural innovations than evolutionary change
- Accelerate the process of rites and given as offering
- Inhumation as burials and cremation as offerings