

DOI: 10.17746/1563-0110.2017.45.2.016-025

A.F. Shorin

*Institute of History and Archaeology, Ural Branch, Russian Academy of Sciences,
S. Kovalevskoi 16, Yekaterinburg, 620990, Russia
E-mail: iia-history@mail.ru*

Koksharovsky Kholm and Chertova Gora, Two Neolithic Sanctuaries in the Urals and in Western Siberia: Similarities and Differences

Two Neolithic sanctuaries are compared: Koksharovsky Kholm in the Middle Urals, and Chertova Gora in Western Siberia. They were apparently established by related but separate populations represented by the Koshkino-Boborykino and Kozlov-Poludenka decorative traditions (respectively), dating to the 7th–5th millennium cal BC. Sanctuaries were arranged on high salient promontories. At Koksharovsky Kholm, the ritual meaning of each place was accentuated by two ditches separating the sacred space from the dwelling area. Another attribute of these sanctuaries was variously sized and shaped structures made of wooden poles or slabs. At Koksharovsky Kholm, remains of much smaller (less than 1 × 1 m) structures resembling chests were found, and at Chertova Gora, birch-bark box-like containers. Stone tools from the two sites differ. Parallels include intact or broken clay vessels, rods with notches, flint arrowheads, etc. Some appear to have been made for ritual purposes, and some were broken intentionally. Offerings of artifacts were accompanied by sacrifices of wild animals, birds, and fishes. At Chertova Gora, an offering of hemp grains was found. Parallels with the Mansi, Khanty, and Udmurts may imply ideological continuity.

Keywords: *Trans-Urals, Western Siberia, Neolithic, sanctuaries, sacred space.*

Introduction

The objects that have received the name of “sacrificial hills” or “rich hillocks” stand out by their external appearance among the Neolithic sites of Northern Eurasia. Ten such sites are known; all of them are located north of 58° N, in relatively confined areas of the Trans-Urals Peneplain and the Konda Lowland, both of which are adjacent to the eastern spurs of the Ural Mountains. The best-known of such hills are the Ust-Vagilsky, Makhtylsky, and Koksharovsky, as well as Chertova Gora (Fig. 1), which have been interpreted as sanctuaries. The sites of Koksharovsky Kholm and Chertova Gora have been most fully excavated, and are described in publications (Shorin, 2007, 2010; Shorin, Shorina, 2011; Sladkova, 2007, 2008). The coinciding time when the sanctuaries functioned at a certain stage

of the Neolithic was the second–third quarter of the 6th millennium BC. The objects belonged to related groups of the population, which, however, were not identical in archaeological and cultural terms. This allows us not only to analyze each site on its own, but also to identify specific features of their cult-space by exploring their similarities and differences.

In this article, these ancient sanctuaries will be compared according to topography, main structural elements of sacred space, and cult attributes.

Structure of sacred space and the cult attributes of the sanctuaries

The sanctuary of Koksharovsky Kholm is located in the Verkhnesaldinsky District of the Sverdlovsk Region,

on a narrow high cape (about 2 m in height) formed by the native shore of the Lake Yuryinskoye, at the point where a small stream flows into the lake. The sanctuary of Chertova Gora is located near the village of Mezhdurechensky in the Kondinsky District of the Khanty-Mansi Autonomous Okrug, on the native terrace of the small taiga river of Zaporskaya (the right tributary of the Konda River), where the river makes a sharp turn and flows on three sides around a 2 m high cape. This place is prominent in the surrounding landscape; from the terrace, the river is visible for a large distance in both directions. While still in the Neolithic, sloping grounds of sanctuaries were repeatedly filled with soil and leveled; thereby both capes, especially in their shore parts, increased by about 2 m in height. Soil was added to Koksharovsky Kholm in the Early Neolithic (from the turn of the 7th–6th millennium BC up to the turn of the 6th–5th millennium BC) by the Koshkino and Koksharovo-Yuryinsk (Kozlov) human groups, and in the Late Neolithic by the Poludenka groups (last quarter of the 6th–third quarter of the 5th millennium BC) and the Basyanovsky groups (early 5th–third quarter of the 5th millennium BC) (Fig. 2). Addition of soil at Chertova Gora was performed in the second–third quarter of the 6th millennium BC (Sladkova, 2007, 2008) by the local groups whose pottery, according to its morphology and decorative design, corresponded to a greater degree to the Koshkino decorative tradition; to a lesser degree to Kozlov and Poludenka tradition; and to an even lesser degree to the Basyanovsky-Boborykino tradition (Fig. 3). L.N. Sladkova has found a similarity between two vessels of the Koshkino culture, decorated in the

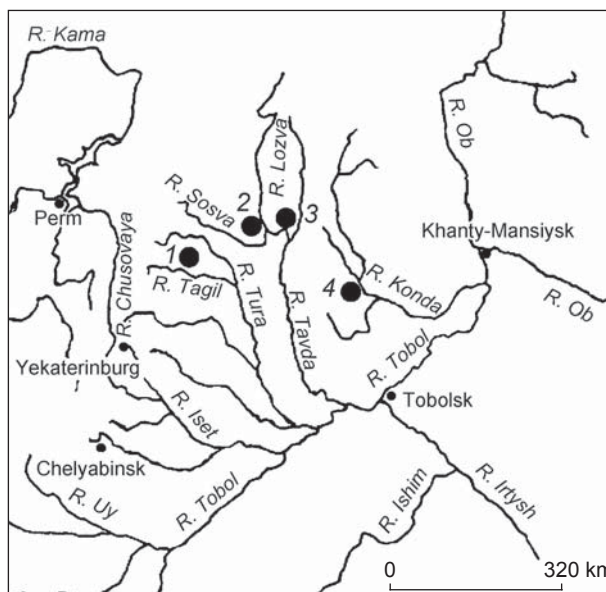


Fig. 1. Location of sacrificial hill-sanctuaries in Northern Eurasia.

1 – Koksharovsky Kholm; 2 – Makhtylsky Kholm; 3 – Ust-Vagilsky Kholm; 4 – Chertova Gora.

retreating-pricked technique combined with “smooth rocking stamp”, and pottery found at Barsova Gora (2008: 155). It can be concluded that the groups that created the sanctuaries of Koksharovsky Kholm and Chertova Gora had similar archaeological and cultural traditions. It is clear that the dwellers in the Yuryinsk settlement built the sanctuary of Koksharovsky Kholm in the center of their settlement. As far as Chertova Gora

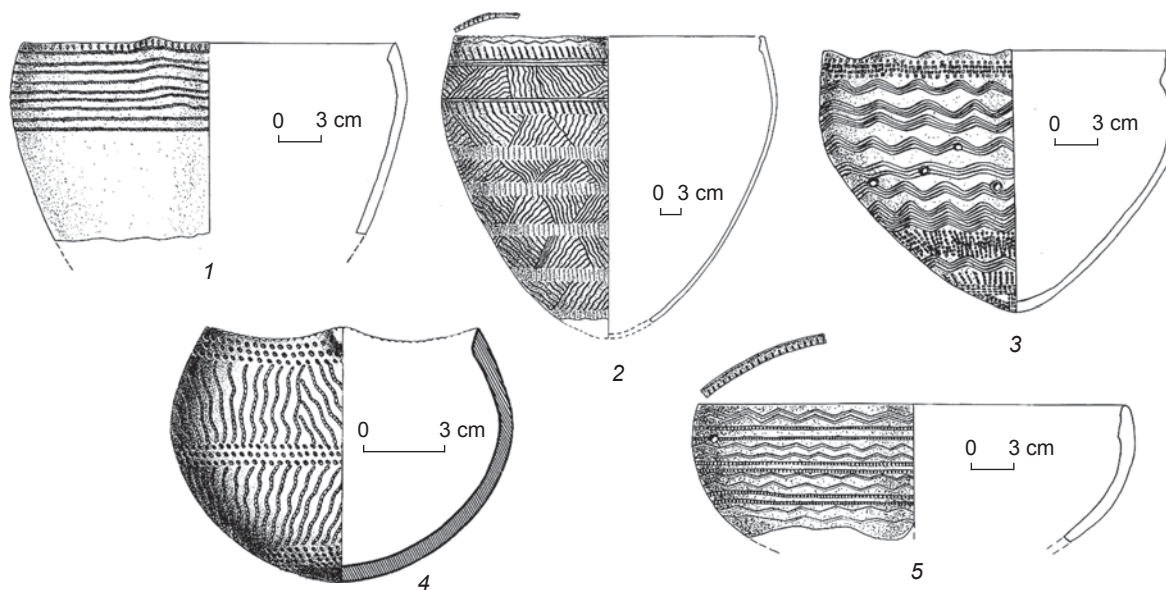


Fig. 2. Vessels of the Koshkino (1), Koksharovo-Yuryinsk (2, 4), Poludenka (3), and Basyanovsky (5) types of the Neolithic period from the sanctuary of Koksharovsky Kholm.

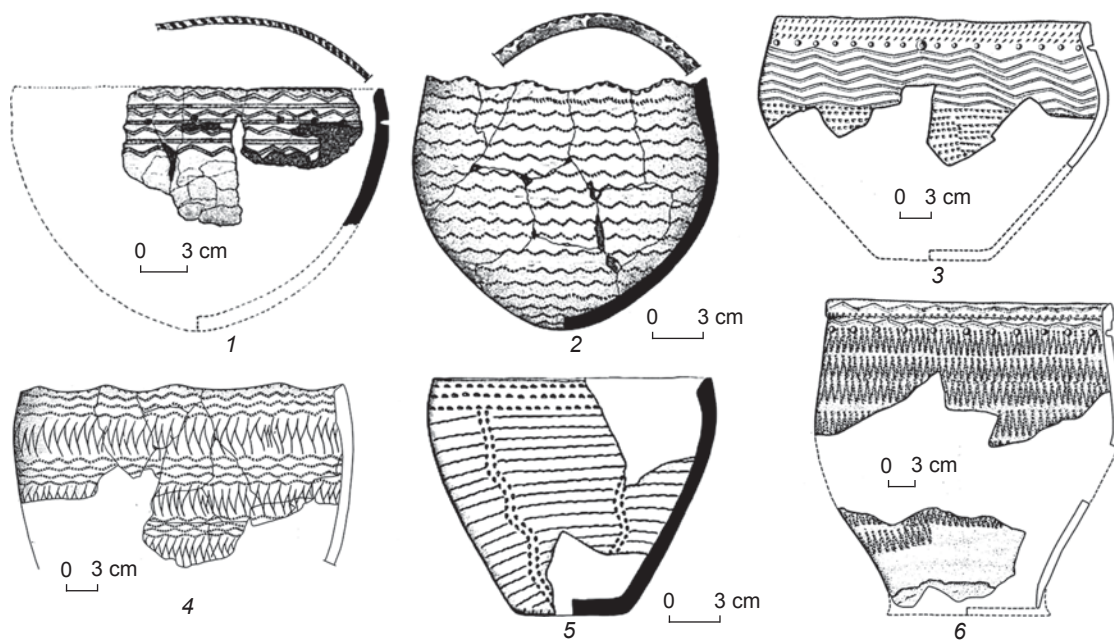


Fig. 3. Neolithic vessels from the sanctuary of Chertova Gora (after: (Sladkova, 2007: Fig. 5, 3, 5; 2008: Fig. 2, 1, 9; 3, 9)).

is concerned, Sladkova did not mention the presence of a settlement next to the “mountain”, which means either that there was no settlement near the sanctuary, or she simply did not find it, or did not search for it.

Thus, one of the essential features of both sanctuaries is their location on a high place, on a “mountain”, to which soil was added during their use. These “mountains” are clearly visible in the terrain, including the view from the river. In addition, the sanctuary of Koksharovskiy Kholm stands out in the terrain thanks to two ditches separating the sacred space from the profane space of the inhabited Yuryinsk settlement (Fig. 4). Ditches have not been found around Chertova Gora, but there were no excavations at the foot of the hill (Ibid.: 147).

The main feature of the sacred space in both sanctuaries is the presence in the area of the cape of structures, which differ in size and design but show functional similarities. These are cult buildings of rectangular shape, built of wooden poles or slabs. In some places, narrow and shallow ditches were found along the outer walls of the structures, and also pits where posts (structural elements of the buildings) had probably been dug into the ground. The walls might have been deepened below floor-level, or there might have been drainage ditches along the walls. At Koksharovskiy Kholm, the structures were built above-ground; only the ditches surrounding the walls of some buildings were deepened into the subsoil. At Chertova Gora, the buildings were deepened into the subsoil by 0.5–1.5 m. At Koksharovskiy Kholm, there are six objects ca 2×2 m (1–5, 8) and five objects up to 5×5 m (6, 7, 12, 14,

and 17) with a height of over 1 m (Fig. 4). The sizes of the objects at Chertova Gora range from 3.2×3.5 – 4.8×3.5 to 6.0×4.3 m (Fig. 5). According to Sladkova, large number of charcoal and hearth stains in the layer of this sanctuary can be explained by the lack of roofs in the structures (Ibid.: 156). At Koksharovskiy Kholm, given that in the stratigraphic section of object 12 two layers were found containing burned wood (traces of small poles), separated by a layer of sandy loam at least 1 m thick, the buildings probably had roofs (and wooden floors) (Shorin, 2013: 32). Some buildings at this site were built on special banking of thin alternating layers of light native sand and charcoals, or on silvery quartz coarse-grained sand, or on ocher banking of various colors ranging from pale red to crimson, whitish interlayers with fibrous structure, etc. The objects are overlain with such banking. At both sanctuaries, not only individually standing cult objects, but also the structures united in complexes have been found. Two complexes appear in the center of Koksharovskiy Kholm: one consists of five interrelated objects (12a–e), while the second combines two objects (3, 4). Sladkova united objects 2–5 into a single complex or a cult Neolithic site (2008: 149–150, 155–156). Taking into account the transverse ditch in the center, she divided this site into two parts: northern part with objects 2 and 3, and southern part with objects 4 and 5 (Fig. 5)*. She also admitted that the southern area covered over the northern

*In her publication, the numbers of the objects are designated with Roman numerals.

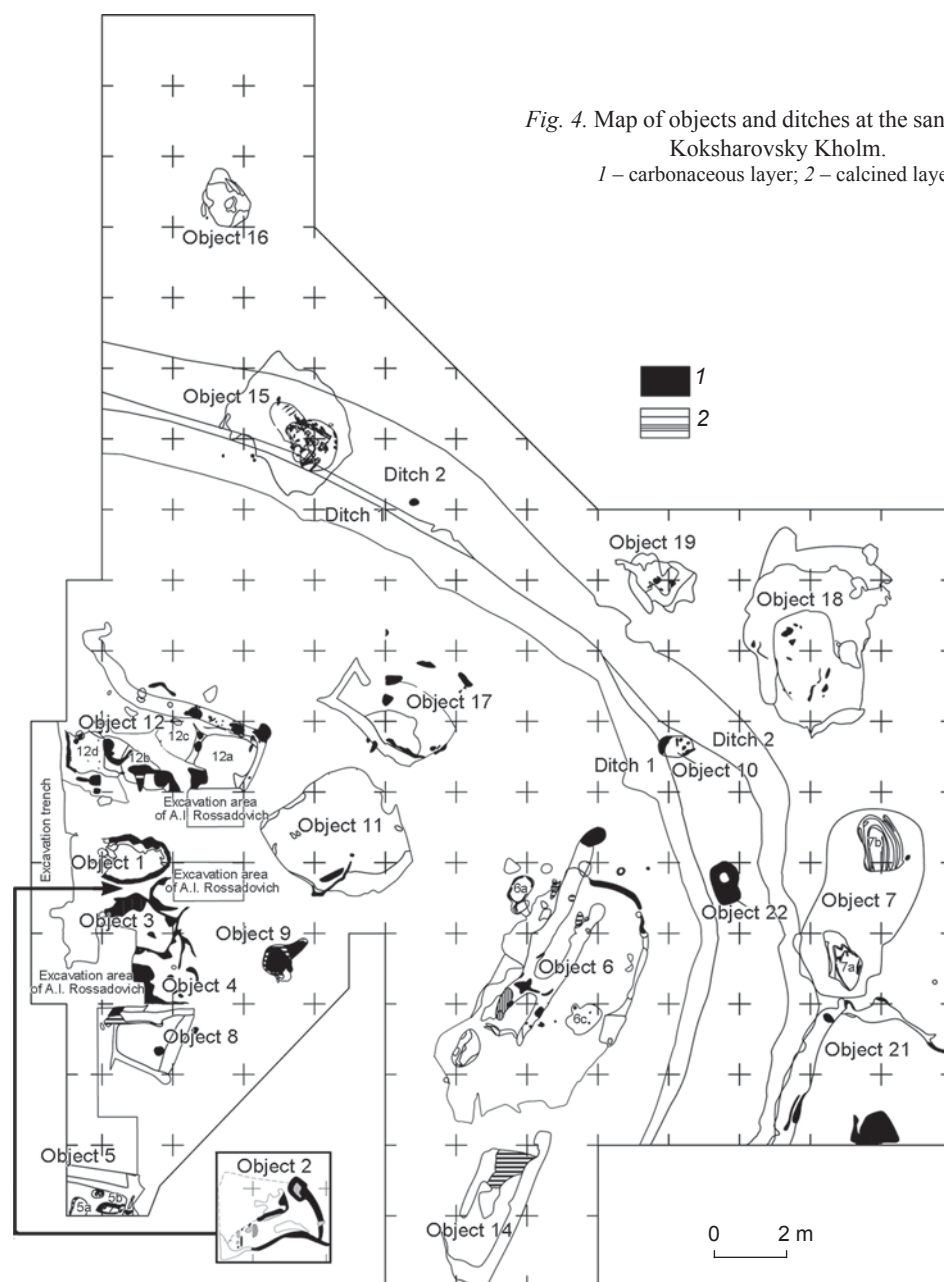


Fig. 4. Map of objects and ditches at the sanctuary of Koksharovsky Kholm.
1 – carbonaceous layer; 2 – calcined layer.

one (the complex of structures); in other words, we either have a complex consisting of four structures, or two complexes each including two structures.

Generally, these objects are very close in size, and probably in their structure also, to the *sumyakhs* of the Mansi, the spirits' barns of the Khanty, or the *kualas* of the Udmurts. They served as houses for offerings and sacrifices (Shorin, 2013: 30–32).

The similarity between the sanctuaries is also manifested by the presence of objects of much smaller sizes near some of the structures. At Koksharovsky Kholm, these are the objects 0.7–1.0 × 0.3–0.8 m in size and at least 25–40 cm in height. One such object (6a)

is located near structure 6, and the other two (5b and 6c) are inside objects 5 and 6 respectively. Three more small objects (object 9, 1.9 m to the east of structure 3, and objects 10 and 22 between ditches 1 and 2 (see Fig. 4)) are located separately, and not associated with the structures. The objects are of rectangular shape, and resemble wooden boxes or chests. They may possibly be the typological equivalents of sacrificial chests, birch-bark boxes *paiys*, or the *Vorshud* boxes* for keeping

*Among the Udmurts, these are the containers for storing cult offerings to the deity Vorshud, the spirit-patron of the family clan.

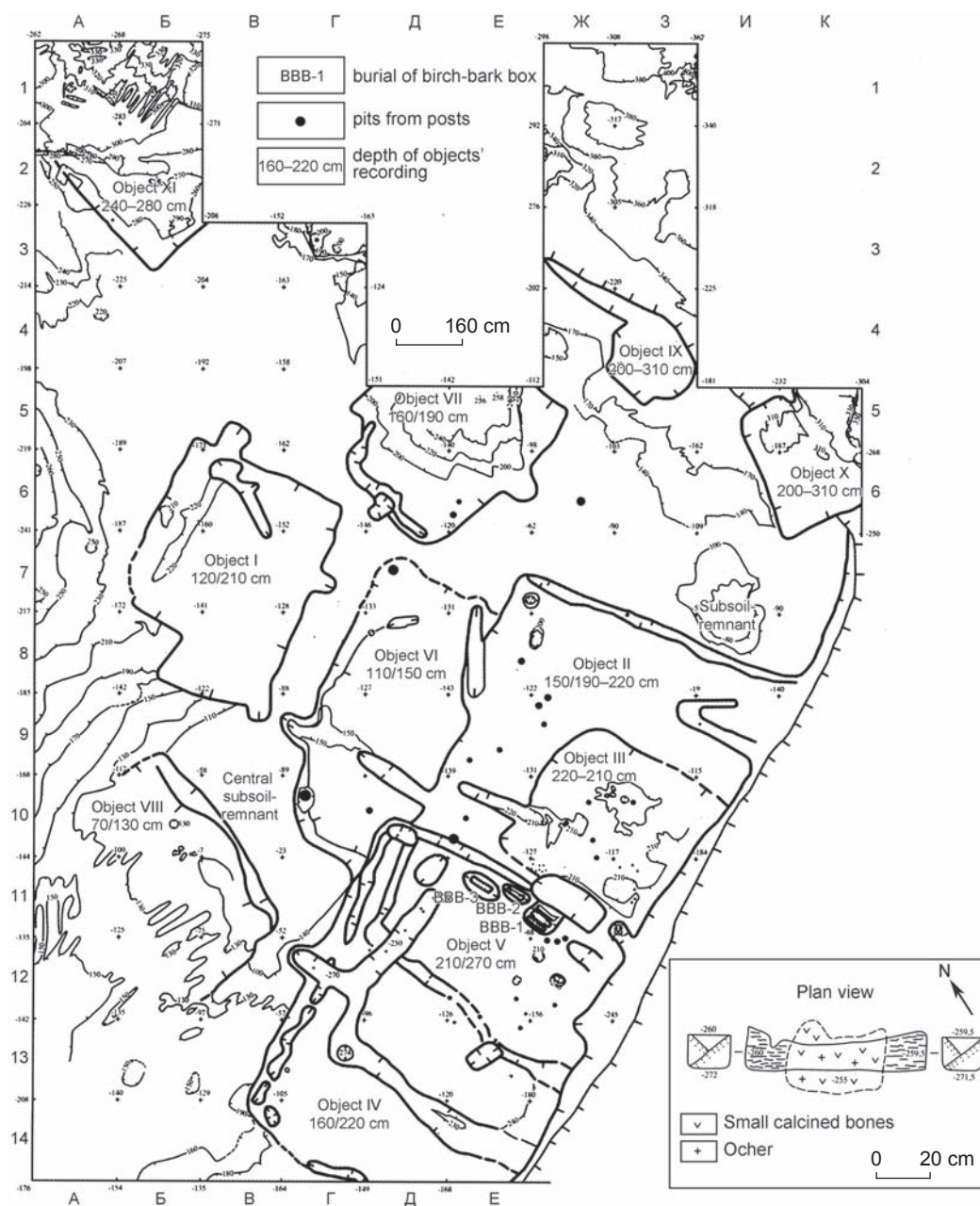


Fig. 5. Map of objects at the sanctuary of Chertova Gora; map of the burial of birch-bark box 3 in the inset (Sladkova, 2008: Fig. 1, 6).

offerings, which are found everywhere at the sanctuaries of the Mansi, Khanty, and Udmurts. The objects were built of poles or slabs 4–8 cm thick, had planked floors (object 5b), and were covered with something like mats made of sedge or reeds (object 6a). A polished plaque was found on the covering of object 5b, and a stone hammer was discovered in the filling of object 5a. Objects in the form of pits (measuring 1.0–1.6 × 0.5–1.1 m, 20–60 cm deep) were also found at Koksharovskiy Kholm. Object 7b was covered with wooden planking; the walls of object 5a were overlain with wood or birch-

bark (?). Small wooden structures similar to chests-boxes were found inside pits 7a and 22.

At Chertova Gora, small objects constituted a complex (Sladkova called it “a burial”) of birch-bark containers (Fig. 5, inset), which were located at the northern ditch-wall inside object 5, in individual oval pits deepened by 0.4–1.0 m into the subsoil. The first group complex (burial 1) consisted of three long items, placed in a row, which resembled cylindrical containers 48 cm long and 10–12 cm in diameter, decorated with pattern of bands 2–3 cm wide made of ocher pigment. The fourth container

(burial 2) was a cylindrical box without a cover and measuring $47 \times 16 \times 16$ cm, which was found 40 cm to the southwest of the first complex. The fifth container (burial 3) was discovered 20 cm to the south-west of the second container and was partially unearthed. It was similar to the second container, but had a lid; it was a narrow high (up to 60 cm) box measuring $65 \times 15 \times 14$ cm. The box and the containers were sewn, and had holes from the needle. Ocher-covered hemp grains were placed in the first and third containers. According to the head of excavations, the boxes constituted a single complex, most likely, of ritual purpose (Sladkova, 2007: 159, 161; 2008: 155–156).

Two objects (11 and 15) were found at Koksharovskiy Kholm, which differed in their design from both the structures of the same site described above, and from the structures at Chertova Gora. These were ground-pits of rectangular shape measuring 3.3×3.1 and 3.5×3.2 m at their upper parts, and 2.7×2.2 and $3.0\text{--}3.2 \times 1.6\text{--}1.9$ m at their bottoms, deepened into the subsoil by 1.5 (1.6)–1.35 (1.45) m. One pit (object 11) was discovered on the cult ground of the cape. The other pit (object 15), more expressive in design and richer in artifacts, was found in the flood-plain part of the Yuryinsk settlement (see Fig. 4). This pit was cut through by the ditches of the sanctuary, which implies that it was made at the very beginning of the functioning of the Koksharovskiy Kholm–Yuryinsk settlement's complex of sites, or prior to the construction of the sanctuary. This assumption is supported by dates of the late 7th to early 6th millennium BC, obtained for the pottery and charcoal from object 15 (Shorin, Shorina, 2011: Pl. 3, 12; 4, 1–9). The pit was covered by a layer of wooden poles 3–5 cm in diameter, and bark, on which two vessels of Koshkino type were placed: one large and decorated only in its upper part, and the other small and decorated over its entire surface. One vessel lay on its side with its neck down. A cluster of over 200 lithic artifacts was found on the same covering. Flakes, some of relatively large sizes, knapped from a large gray-green nodule of silicified loam, dominated among the artifacts. Object 15 can be considered a cult object (Shorin, Vilisov, 2008); however, object 11 did not show traces of cult functioning, and since there were no artifacts inside, it was difficult to determine its age and purpose.

Layers saturated with charcoal and calcined remains, burned wood, etc., have been found in cultural deposits of both Koksharovskiy Kholm and Chertova Gora, revealing the use of fire. Researchers of the “hills” agree on the important role of fire-rituals in the cult practices performed at the sanctuaries. In our opinion, cult objects were intentionally burned in the course of the ritual activities (Shorin, 2010: 33). Sladkova identified object 3 as an altar, and offered its reconstruction. She argued that this object resulted from the concentration of a huge amount of fragmented pottery and raw bones of animals and fishes, which were abundantly interspersed with

ocher, in the place where the altar was found. First, a purifying hearth was made at the site. It burnt only in the center, so it can be clearly seen that the chunks of wood were stacked as a teepee. Probably, in accordance with the ritual, unburned firewood remained unscattered and not trampled. In the base of the altar, a lens of small calcined bones densely covered with ocher (the subsoil underneath the lens was thoroughly calcined), a sheet of birch-bark, and a groove dug in the mainland and lined with bark were found. The remains of a charred pole 7–8 cm in diameter were in the groove. Apparently, pottery, tools, stones, parts of carcasses and organs of mammals, birds, and fishes, which were interspersed with ocher, would be placed on the altar, and a fire would periodically be made there. The remains of birch-bark sheets were found at different depths of the altar; its layer gradually increased along with the accumulation of sacrifices. Sladkova recorded a cluster of hearths to the north of the altar over an area of about 4–5 m². These are also charred firewood stacked as a teepee, with large or small lenses of calcined soil in the center. The hearths were covered with birch-bark sheets. Traces of active use of fire were observed in the first and other objects of Chertova Gora (Sladkova, 2007: 152–157; 2008: 149–155).

Cult attributes involved in the rituals at the sanctuaries under consideration show more differences than similarities. The similarities are manifested in the placement of vessels, which survived intact or in disintegrated form, near the objects (or inside of them) at the cult sites. There were usually one or two vessels, rarely more, near the objects*. In the altar in object 3 of Chertova Gora, two vessels, large and small, similar to the Koshkino type were found (see Fig. 3, 2, 4). The bottom of the small vessel was knocked out in the center, possibly by blows from the external side; the outer surface of the vessel was rubbed over with ocher. The use of large and small Koshkino vessels in the ritual was observed in object 15 at the sanctuary of Koksharovskiy Kholm; some of the vessels discovered in or near cult objects were placed upside down. Two disintegrated round bottoms of large Neolithic vessels were found at Chertova Gora, near the hearth discovered at the southern border of the southern zone in the cult Neolithic ground, which included objects 4 and 5; the bottoms of the vessels lay with their decorated surface upwards (Ibid.: 154–155, fig. 5, 14).

While describing altar-object 3 of Chertova Gora, Sladkova drew attention to the fragmentary nature and poor preservation of the pottery found in the object; this pottery could have been made hastily and did not last long (2007: 155). A large number of small undecorated fragments of Koshkino pottery were also found in

*In the western part of Chertova Gora, at the bottom of object 1, four disintegrated Neolithic vessels were found: three large and one very small (Sladkova, 2008: 150–151, fig. 2, 1–3).

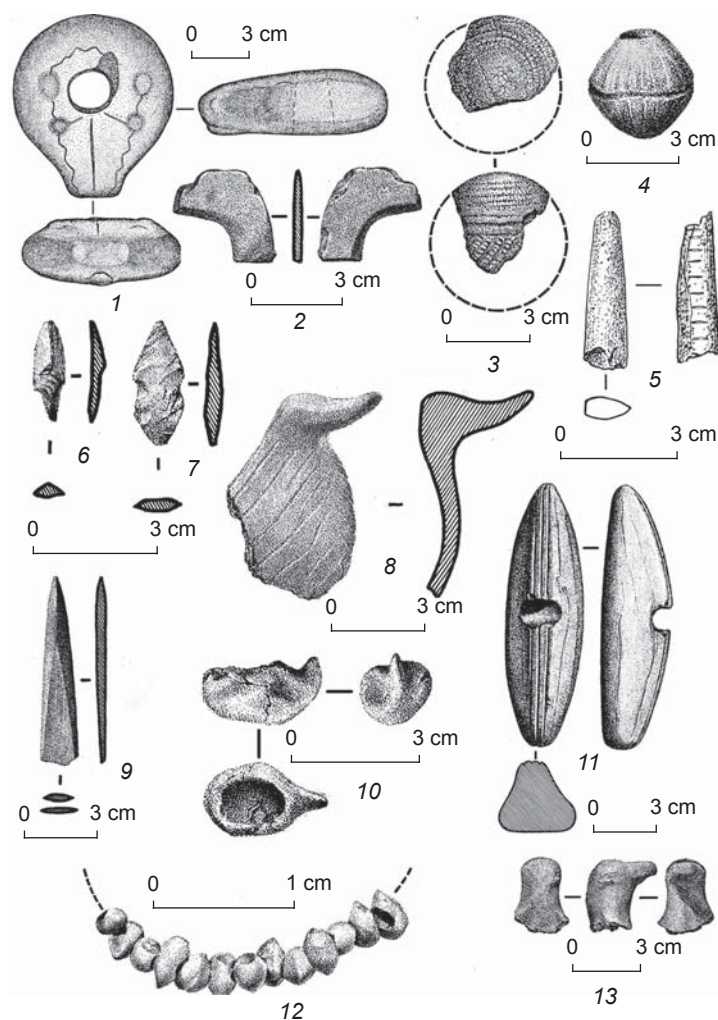


Fig. 6. Cult artifacts from the sanctuary of Koksharovskiy Kholm.

1 – mace; 2 – fragment of the butt of the knife; 3 – item of spherical shape; 4 – item of biconical shape; 5 – rod with notches; 6, 7, 9 – arrowheads; 8 – fragment of the handle of a vessel in the form of duck's head; 10 – miniature vessel; 11 – small wedge-shaped object; 12 – necklace made of fruits of a plant; 13 – representation of a duck's head.

1, 2, 5–7, 9 – stone; 3, 4, 8, 10, 11, 13 – clay; 12 – herbaceous plant.

the filling of one of the five objects in complex 12 at Koksharovskiy Kholm. This filling of the upper part of the object (possibly, its covering) also contained alternating layers of bright native sand and carbonaceous soil, which included thin lenses of whitish plant-fibers (reeds, sedge?) exposed to fire, as well as thin reddish-crimson lenses—possibly, ocher inclusions.

Such distinctive objects as rods with notches (ornamental decoration) have been found at both sanctuaries, including about a dozen rods at Koksharovskiy Kholm, in the area of the ditches. These rods were made of talc; almost all of them were covered with notches and were broken (Fig. 6, 5). At Chertova Gora, a fragment of a bar-rod of clay slate with crosswise incisions on the opposite facets was taken out of the altar (object 3) (Fig. 7, 4). Flint arrowheads of various types and polished

tools including arrowheads, axe, adze, slick, chisel, and suspension blank (Fig. 7, 5–14, 16) were found at this sanctuary—in particular, in the cult zone and in the structures. The cultural layers of Koksharovskiy Kholm contained more such objects, especially the arrowheads, by an order of magnitude. There were elegant polished and miniature arrowheads, apparently made for use as offerings (see Fig. 6, 6, 7, 9). On both sanctuaries, there were many knapped stones and pebbles, including flakes. At Koksharovskiy Kholm the connection of these finds with ritual practices is not indisputable, while at Chertova Gora it is obvious: the objects were usually found inside an altar or in the cluster of hearths. In one birch-bark box in object 5, two small unworked pebbles with cracks filled with ocher were found (Sladkova, 2007). Two more boxes in the same object contained ocher-covered hemp grains with tiny holes about 1 mm in size, made with a very thin tool. According to Sladkova, it was “as if they used to be strung on a hair” (Ibid.: 161). Similar grains were found at the sanctuary of Koksharovskiy Kholm. Here, next to cult object 5, in the filling of the Koshkino vessel turned upside down (aged 6020 ± 90 BP (Ki-16389): 5040–4790 BP (1s), 5250–4650 BP (2s)), a necklace of small fruits (nuts) of a herbaceous plant (European stoneseed, *Lithospermum officinale*) of the Boraginaceae family (see Fig. 6, 12) was found (Shorin, Chairkina, Shirokov, 2012).

A necklace of the same seeds was found in the grave at the foot of the banked sanctuary Ust-Vagil'skiy Kholm in the Eastern Urals, although that burial has been dated to the Chalcolithic period (Panina, 2014).

The comparison revealed some differences in the lithic inventories of the sanctuaries of Koksharovskiy Kholm and Chertova Gora. The former site contained many cores and blades, including those without any traces of treatment, which means that these products of reduction were not included into the subsequent production process. At the latter site, this feature has not been observed, probably because blade-technology had not been developed in that region in the north of Siberia, owing to the shortage of lithic raw materials. However, the traces of a knapping process as a possible version of ritualistic actions also occurred at Chertova Gora: altar-object 3 contained relatively many knapped stones and pebbles (38 spec.), as well as flakes of flint and quartzite (36 spec.), but few tools made of this raw material (Sladkova, 2007: 155).

The materials from the sanctuaries under consideration reveal even more differences if we compare the artifacts

belonging to other categories. Such objects found at Koksharovskiy Kholm exceed the finds from Chertova Gora both in terms of number and variety. These are vessels (including one miniature vessel) and fragments of pottery with relief (see Fig. 2, 4; 6, 8, 10); zoomorphic, and ornithomorphic appliques (over 90 objects); clay items of spherical and biconical shapes (7 spec., see Fig. 6, 3, 4); the butt, made in the form of an ornithomorphic head (see Fig. 6, 2), of a polished knife of broken slate with a crescent shape; a clay head of a duck (Fig. 6, 13); wedge-shaped objects of clay (one intact (see Fig. 6, 11) and six fragmented); a drilled stone mace in the form of stylized head of a bear or beaver (see Fig. 6, 1); and other items. The distinctive artifacts from Chertova Gora, which were probably used in cult practices, along with the above-mentioned, include a polished tile with complex geometric pattern, a fragment of clay ornamented item of unclear function, and a flint plate resembling fish in its shape (see Fig. 7, 1, 2, 15).

In addition, this group of finds includes six objects of birch-bark, two of which were found at the base of the altar. These are a large piece of birch-bark rolled into a tube (a knife-handle?), and a piece of birch-bark resembling a fragment of a recent wicker basket. Four more items were found in the cluster of hearths to the north of the altar: a “bowl” sewn of two birch-bark sheets and measuring 40 × 40 cm, a small birch-bark “bundle” lying on the edge of the “bowl”, a piece of limonite wrapped in birch-bark, and a piece of birch-bark with crossed lines.

Offerings were placed on birch-bark in cult objects, and then they were covered over. Ditches inside the structures were laid with birch-bark. The cultural layer of Koksharovskiy Kholm contains only a few small pieces of birch-bark; large objects of birch-bark laid over the wooden covering of the pit survived only in object 15 located in the floodplain part.

Offerings of things and plant sacrifices (hemp grains in two buried boxes in object 5 of Chertova Gora) were accompanied by blood sacrifices. Small calcined bones of wild animals, birds, and fishes have been found everywhere in the cultural layer of Koksharovskiy Kholm. These bones belonged mainly to elks and reindeer, less often to beavers, rarely to bears, foxes, wolves, hares, or pikes.

At Chertova Gora, in the altar (object 3), the following bones were found: a metapodium of a bear, and one of a hare; an elk’s antler; a lower jaw, a scapula, a humerus, an ulna, and metapodia of a fox; bones of a large bird (capercaillie or black grouse); pike vertebrae; and bones of unidentified fish. They were covered with ocher while

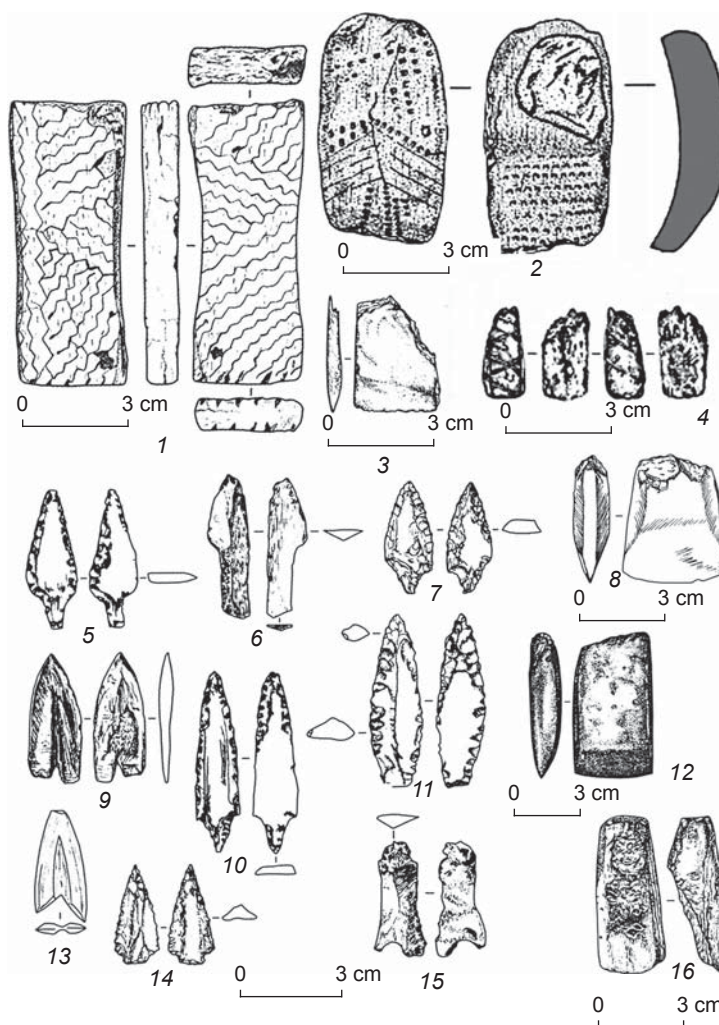


Fig. 7. Cult artifacts from the sanctuary of Chertova Gora (after: (Sladkova, 2007: Fig. 4, 2, 5; 2008: Fig. 8, 10–18, 22–26)).

1 – tile with pattern; 2 – unidentified object; 3 – chisel; 4 – fragment of a decorated bar-rod; 5–7, 9–11, 13, 14 – arrowheads; 8 – axe; 12 – adze; 15 – plate resembling representation of a fish; 16 – small anvil on the axe.

1, 3–16 – stone; 2 – clay.

in a raw state (Sladkova, 2007: 155, 157). Soil with small calcined bones and ash lay in the form of a lens on the lid of one of the birch-bark boxes (burial 3) covered with ocher; a “bundle” with hearth filling was possibly placed in the box. Biological examination for the presence of human hemoglobin in these buried boxes gave a positive result (Sladkova, 2008: 156).

Comparison of the cult complexes of Koksharovskiy Kholm and Chertova Gora with recent sanctuaries of the Mansi, Khanty, and Udmurts revealed some similarities in topography, nature of the sacred space, and cult attributes.

For sanctuaries, especially in the period prior to the Russian colonization and Christianization of the region, people would quite often choose the best-defined landscape elements (hills, mountains, capes, etc.) located near dwellings (Shorin, 2013: 29–30). The center of the

sacred space in archaeological and recent sanctuaries was usually a cult barn built of wooden slabs or logs, most often measuring about 2×2 m, sometimes 3×3 m or more, about a human's height or slightly lower. It was called 'sumyakh' among the Mansi, 'ura' among the Khanty, and 'kuala' among the Udmurts. The barns of this type used by the first two peoples mentioned had gable roofs; the Udmurts most often made them without roofs. The number of cult barns at each sanctuary was variable, usually amounting to 1–2 or 3–5, but sometimes reached 30 or more. At the sanctuary of Koksharovsky Kholm, objects smaller than 1×1 m were inside some religious buildings or next to them. There is reason to view these small objects of wood or birch-bark as typologically equivalent to sacrificial chests or *paips* (birch-bark boxes), and *Vorshud* boxes, commonly found in cult barns (or next to them) at the sanctuaries of the Mansi, the Khanty, and the Udmurts. Similar sacrificial chests have also been observed among other peoples of Eurasia: for example, the Buryats and the Nenets. According to ethnographers, the constructive features of religious buildings among the Mansi, Khanty, and Udmurts are associated with their archaic house-building traditions. A hearth was an obligatory structural element of the sacred space at the sanctuary, and of the cult practices performed at the sanctuary (Shorin, 2013: 30–33).

The cult attribution of the archaeological and recent sanctuaries certainly reveals comparatively more differences. However, the materials found at Koksharovsky Kholm included the items whose decoration employed zoomorphic and ornithomorphic imagery stylistically similar to that of the objects found in the offerings from the sanctuaries of the Uralic peoples of the 19th–20th centuries. This imagery most likely goes back to the totemic symbols and/or hunting cults of the bear, beaver, and owl or to sacred characters (waterfowl), which played an exceptionally important role in the mythological worldview of the Finno-Ugric peoples. Arrowheads, votive axes, adzes, knives, etc., were used at archaeological and recent sanctuaries for ritual purposes. Some ritualistic activities had the form of blood sacrifices. Their objects of sacrifice at the Neolithic site were wild animals, primarily elk and reindeer; while at recent sanctuaries these were replaced by domestic animals and birds, although wild animals were also used (Ibid.: 33–35).

The parallels noted above can be explained by the identical nature of main elements in the mythological worldview among the representatives of the majority of archaic and traditional societies. These principles determined the similarities in the cult practices of the peoples whose traditional way of life was based on a foraging economy. At the same time, genetic continuity of cult traditions among the Neolithic population that left the sanctuaries of Koksharovsky Kholm and Chertova Gora, and the present-day Uralic peoples is also possible (Ibid.: 36).

Conclusions

Two distinctive Neolithic banked sanctuaries (Koksharovsky Kholm and Chertova Gora) belonged to related groups of population, which however were dissimilar in archaeological and cultural terms. These groups were associated with the development of the Koshkino-Boborykino and Kozlov-Poludenka traditions of ornamental decoration in the Trans-Urals and Western Siberian region. The analysis of the sanctuaries revealed more similarities than differences in their main structural components.

1. The most important feature of both sanctuaries was their location on high ground, on a "mountain", to which soil was added during the time of their functioning. These "mountains" are easily visible in the surrounding terrain. Banked cult monuments of this type are known only in relatively small areas in the northern part of the Middle Trans-Urals and the areas of Western Siberia adjacent to the Ural Mountains; and only from the Neolithic. The sanctuary of Koksharovsky Kholm was built in the center of the Yuryinsk settlement by its inhabitants. There is no information about the existence of a settlement near Chertova Gora, just as there were no ditches similar to those that additionally marked the sacred space at Koksharovsky Kholm.

2. The main sign of sacred space at both sanctuaries was the presence of rectangular cult structures made of wooden poles or slabs, which differed in size and structural elements, but had a similar function. At Koksharovsky Kholm, structures built on the ground were found, measuring about 2×2 m (less often, up to 5×5 m), and covered with roofs, whereas at Chertova Gora structures were deepened into the subsoil, ranged in sizes from 3.2×3.5 – 4.8×3.5 to 6.0×4.3 m, and did not have roofs. At both sanctuaries, there were both individually standing cult structures and those united in complexes. The similarity was also observed in the presence of objects less than 1×1 m in size near some of the structures: at Koksharovsky Kholm, they resembled wooden boxes, chests, or "houses", while at Chertova Gora they had the form of birch-bark containers. Researchers of the "hills" unanimously agree on the important role of fire-rituals in the cult practices performed at the sanctuaries.

3. Cult attributes of the sanctuaries under consideration reveal significant differences. For example, cores and blades were widely represented at Koksharovsky Kholm, but were few in number at Chertova Gora. This may be because blade technology was not well developed in the northern region of Siberia owing to the scarcity of lithic raw materials—although the process of lithic reduction as a possible version of ritualistic activities at this sanctuary was reflected in the assemblage of knapped stones and pebbles, as well as flakes of quartzite and flint. However, there were also some similarities: intact or broken vessels,

including vessels placed upside down, rods with notches (ornamental decoration), flint arrowheads of various types, polished objects, etc., some of which had been intentionally broken, were found in the structures and near the structures on cult grounds.

4. Comparison of the objects belonging to other categories has revealed more differences. Distinctive artifacts appear more widely at Koksharovskiy Kholm than at Chertova Gora. However, at Chertova Gora, there were relatively many objects made of birch-bark, which are not often found in mineral soils of archaeological sites. Offerings of things were accompanied by blood sacrifices of various wild animals, birds, and fishes. Offerings in the form of hemp grains in two buried boxes of object 5 were found at Chertova Gora. Sladkova also provided information on the presence of traces of human hemoglobin in the buried boxes of this site.

References

Panina S.N. 2014

Fragment sakralnogo prostranstva epokhi eneolita u podnozhyia Ust-Vagil'skogo kholma v lesnom Zauralye. In *Trudy IV (XX) Vseros. arkh. syezda v Kazani. 2014 g.*, vol. I. Kazan: Otechestvo, pp. 330–333.

Shorin A.F. 2007

Istoriya i nekotorye itogi izucheniya Koksharovskogo kholma. In *Problemy arkh. Ural i Zapadnaya Sibir: (k 70-letiyu T.M. Potemkinoi)*. Kurgan: Izd. Kurgan. Gos. Univ., pp. 30–42.

Shorin A.F. 2010

Svyatilishche Koksharovskiy kholm v Srednem Zauralye: Markery sakralnogo prostranstva. *Uralskiy istoricheskiy vestnik*, No. 1 (26): 32–42.

Shorin A.F. 2013

O paralelyakh mezhdru neoliticheskim svyatilishchem Koksharovskiy kholm i svyatilishchami korennykh narodov Urala XIX–XX vv. *Rossiyskaya arkh. No. 2: 27–36.*

Shorin A.F., Chairkina N.M., Shirokov V.N. 2012

Issledovaniya po proektu "Istoki kulturnogo naslediya drevnego naseleniya Urala". In *Istoriko-kulturnoye nasledie i dukhovnye tsenosti Rossii*. Moscow: ROSSPEN, pp. 118–124.

Shorin A.F., Shorina A.A. 2011

Stratigraphy and relative chronology of the Neolithic assemblages at the Koksharovskiy Kholm sanctuary. *Archaeology, Ethnology and Anthropology of Eurasia*, vol. 39 (3): 70–77.

Shorin A.F., Vilisov E.V. 2008

Obyekt 15 Koshkinoskoi kultury Koksharovskogo Kholma: Versii ispolzovaniya. In *Voprosy arkh. Urala*, iss. 25. Yekaterinburg, Surgut: Magellan, pp. 128–136.

Sladkova L.N. 2007

Predvaritelnye itogi polevykh issledovaniy 1988, 2003, 2004 gg. na Chertovoi Gore v Kondinskom raione KhMAO – Yugry. In *Khanty-Mansiyskiy okrug v zerkale proshlogo*, iss. 4. Yekaterinburg, Khanty-Mansiisk: Basko, pp. 152–164.

Sladkova L.N. 2008

Chertova Gora – neoliticheskiy pamyatnik v basseine Kondy. In *Voprosy arkh. Urala*, iss. 25. Yekaterinburg, Surgut: Magellan, pp. 147–158.

Received July 7, 2015.

Received in revised form April 22, 2016.