

Gold disks of Shymkent

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Abstract

In 2012, during archaeological works carried out on the northern outskirts of Shymkent city in South Kazakhstan, two gold discs were found. These disks were discovered at the entrance to the study of the burial mound-2 of Kaitpas burial ground, consisting of ten hills with earth banks, chain-lined in the directions south-west and north-east and since the ancient times have been repeatedly ravaged. According to the preserved archaeological complex of findings, this burial ground dates back to the IV-II centuries BC.

Particular attention should be paid to the disks found in the cist in situ, which are obviously of imported nature, made, undoubtedly, in ethnocultural environment alien to nomads.

The disks on the external ring have diameter of 6.7 cm, on the internal base of 3 cm. There were three-dimensional insertions from sea shells with a through hole in the internal base of the discs. There are up to twelve holes on the external edge for attaching the discs to the base with 6 mm gold nails. Relief designs are plotted on the matrix and have right-hand and left-hand mirror image on both discs.

Analysis of iconography of these findings revealed, in contrast to the expected animal style, the presence of images of marine life – fish of various sizes, snails, sea horses, shrimp, etc. Direct analogies to these subjects have not been found to date, which makes it impossible to localize the geography of the origin of the gold disks from Shymkent.