

“The Golden Man” of K.A. Akishev

The “Golden Man” is the main exhibit of the Museum Fund of Kazakhstan. It is the exhibit which has been representing Kazakhstan at the major exhibitions and international vernissages since 1974. The Gold Warrior was discovered more than 40 years ago. We don't know anything about the life of this young Saka leader who, probably, died in the battle with enemies. However, the modern “biography” of this unique archaeological find is surrounded by numerous legends. And everybody who touches it creates his own history, the history of life, deeds and accomplishments. This is the fate of all significant discoveries. Gradually, they get their own history, a new biography and begin to live in different dimensions - as a scientific phenomenon, as an artistic image, as a historical fact, as a unique find ...

Archaeologist Kimal Akishevich Akishev discovered the Golden Man. The main achievement of the scientist is the reconstruction of the Warrior's full dress which created visible image of our ancient ancestor. And in his completed look the Golden Warrior became another one treasure, masterpiece of world culture.

The Golden Man was buried in the mound which was a part of royal burial ground located 50 kilometers East of Almaty on the outskirts of modern settlement Yesik (Issyk). At the foot of Ile/Zailiysky Alatau in picturesque place on the bank of Issyk River the huge burial ground is located. It is consisted of several dozens of large mounds of 4-15 meters in height and 30-90 meters in diameter. Mounds are made of river gravels and big stone boulders. There are craters on the tops of mounds – the sign of predatory excavations. Unfortunately, almost all major burial mounds were robbed at the ancient time by those who constructed them. The Issyk Mound also experienced this.

Everything began prosaically. The settlement Issyk expanded on the territory of burial ground. During the construction of automobile base the need to remove one of the major mounds arose. With this aim the appropriate application was addressed to the Institute of History, Archaeology and Ethnography of the Academy of Science of the KazSSR. Archaeologists headed by K.A. Akishev appeared there in autumn of 1969. They removed half of the mounds and in the center found grave hole which was repeatedly robbed. Only separated bones of human skeleton and little fragments of broken golden jewelry were there. At this point archaeological works in 1969 were stopped. Excavation was continued in April 1970. It was necessary to investigate remained Southern half of the mound. Archaeologists were surprised when bulldozer cleared timbers of another one grave. As a rule, each mound, despite its size, contained one grave. In the Issyk Mound in 15 meter to the South from the central tomb another one burial place was discovered. Ancient robbers didn't know about it, therefore it has remained until the present days.

Immediately, the work of bulldozer was stopped. People used spades and brushes. It became clear that the grave hadn't been robbed. Its depth was 2,7 meters. Wooden felling (3,0x1,5x1,5 meters) was situated on the bottom. Its floor was covered with planks. Remains of human skeleton were found on the floor under the Northern wall. The corpse was on his back with the head to the West. Accompanying items stood along the walls. The most difficult thing was to clean golden plaques decorating the dress, headdress and shoes of the Saka Warrior. It was necessary to clean them without moving from the place and to fix, draw a sketch and make photos. Long and painstaking work had begun. Very soon this place began to be visited by curious people.

The whole skeleton of the man was covered with golden plates and plaques. 150 golden plates were discovered only near the skull. The order helped to reconstruct headdress of the noble warrior. Golden statuette of argali which crowned the complicated construction of the headdress

was found in 65 centimeters from the skull. From the left side of the skull golden ear-ring decorated with small granulation and pendants was situated.

A total number of golden items accounted 4000. It is necessary to say that all of them were artistically decorated. Larger in size plaques and plates were made in the form of figures or images of animals, mostly tigers, leopards, elks, and horses.

The full dress of the Golden Man consisted of iron sword which handle was decorated by gold. On the left side near the pelvic bones archaeologists discovered an iron dagger, placed in wooden sheath. The end of the scabbard was decorated with golden plates. The whip and silk handbag with a bronze mirror were found next to the buried man.

31 vessels of clay, wood and metal were placed in the grave. It is possible to say that it was the whole set which included a silver spoon and wooden ladle. Dishes were placed in a particular order: wooden vessels were at the southern wall of the chamber, while clay and metal items - at the western. Wooden utensils included trays of rectangular shape and relatively large size (67x37 cm). The pottery was presented by pitchers, bowls, and cups.

The most unique finding was small silver cup 2,2 cm in height with 26 signs of unknown writing on its bottom. It meant that ancient tribes in Kazakhstan had their own writing! They were literate and correspondence ... They even put the cup with farewell words to the grave of dead warrior.

Undoubtedly, the Golden Man from the Issyk Mound was the leader, ruler of the ancient Saka tribes who created their state on the territory of Kazakhstan. The information about them is kept in ancient Persian, Antique and Chinese chronicles. In general, they contain separated facts of political history. Material culture, beliefs, cults, way of life – everything was reconstructed on the basis of archaeological recourses. And the Golden Man is an important recourse. The suit of the Golden Man is a ceremonial dress of the ruler reflecting state ideology of the Sakas in the 5th and 4th centuries BC. When ruler appeared in front of his subjects in sparkling dress and high hat with golden halo of arrows and flying birds, nobody could doubt in his godhead origin and power.

Archaeologists faced the need to open the first in the Republic Museum of Archaeology. Vast area in the center of Alma-Ata was dedicated to this aim. New models of museum showcases were brought from the Baltic region. The plan of exposition was developed. At that moment the idea to reconstruct the look of the Warrior in a full dress appeared.

Kimal Akishev told that to make casting form they used plastic - fuses from champagne thrown out by Alma-Ata Distillery. 45 forms to make artistic plaques and plates were created. Judging the technical characteristics, the copies made of anodize aluminium are almost authentic to the original. Archaeologists worked every day. After the creation of all plaques they found mannequin, made leather jacket, pants, boots and sewn the plaques on the dress for a long time. When they exhibited ready-made “Golden Warrior” in ceremonial dress with long sword and dagger-akinake on his belt, it was a sensation even for the archaeologists.

Since 1974 the “Golden Man” visited all continents of the planet, many countries of Europe, in the US, Egypt, Japan, India, Turkey and everywhere he attracted the attention of visitors and surprised restorers by the quality of work. In foreign press he was called “Shooting Exhibit” of the Soviet pavilion.

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