



# NEW EXPLORATIONS OF THE EARLY IRON AGE MONUMENTS ON THE TERRITORY OF ALMATY

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### Abstract

The article reviews the latest archaeological researches by the specialists of the Museum of Almaty city history on the territory of the ancient monuments of nomads located within the city borders. It presents detailed descriptions of archaeological findings and assumptions in their interpretation. The implemented studies strongly suggest that the territory of Almaty was a sacred-political center of the ancient state of the Saks already in the 5th century BC.

**Keywords:** Almaty, mound, burial, golden figure of feline predator, heraldic image, ancient state of the Saks.

Burial mounds of nomads – are the most popular monuments of the cultural heritage of Eurasia. The region of Almaty is particularly rich within these monuments. First scholars were interested in the monuments of the ancient nomads. Later, scientists have concluded that already in the V century. BC. On the territory of Almaty, sacral-political center of the ancient state of the Saks was existed. Archaeological research in the city for over a hundred years is associated with the monuments of the Saks.

In 2014 specialists of Almaty City History Museum conducted archaeological research on Kok-Kaynar mound which is located in the neighborhood with Kok-Kaynar micro-district, on the left bank of the river Boraldai, on the west side of the modern Muslim cemetery (Fig. 1).

Two mounds were investigated. The mound ("kurgan" in Kazakh) №1 is located on the territory of present-day cemetery. The mound remained satisfactory, there is no modern burial mound and circuit is not

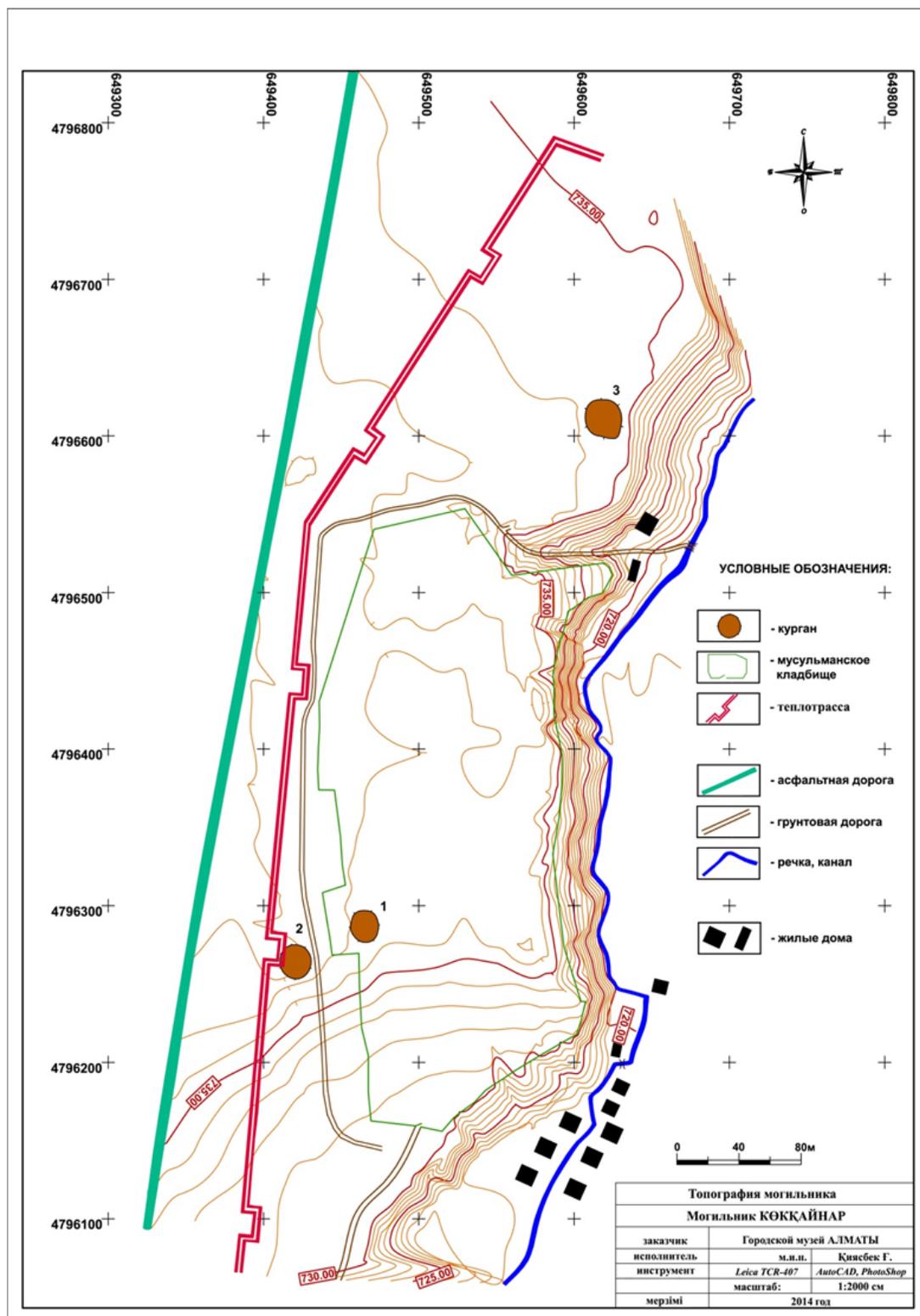


Figure 1. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Topography destroyed. The diameter of the mound is - 20 m, height - 1 m. A bulldozer cut the mound in the middle by stripe of 4.5 m width. The orientation was from "N" to "S". After stripping the soft soil zone was

identified. On this site, the contours of the pit of 1 m wide and 2.1 m long were revealed after the last light rain. The walls of the pit were straight, plastered by sulfur bentonite clay.

Complete cleaning of the burial was

carried out. As a result, it was recorded burial in a wooden box of hewn timbers with an overlap on the top. The width of the box is - 60 cm, the length - about 2 m. The backbone was oriented to the southwest. The total length of the backbone - 150 cm. Frontal and occipital bones of the skull were preserved. Facial bone and lower jaw were lost. Bones of the right hand are fully absent. The ribs and the bones of the spine are also missing. Pelvic bones in situ. The main bones of the legs were here. Above of the head of skeleton – ram's vertebrae was situated. Ceramic pitcher and bowl were found nearby, as well as large bronze mirror and bronze studs (Fig. 2-5).

Available inventory indicates an



Figure 2. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 1. Burial pit № 1. View from the south



Figure 3. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 1. Ceramic tableware and bronze mirror

untouched character of the burial. The lack of a significant number of bones was possibly due to the so-called two-act graves. Such burials were opened for several years after the funeral, the front



Figure 4. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 1. Ceramic tableware from the grave pit № 1



Figure 5. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 1. Burial pit № 1. Bronze Mirror

part of the skull and upper torso were destroyed, or the entire skeleton was thrown out.

Kurgan №2 is located in 30 meters to the west of the kurgan №1. Its diameter is - 22 meters, height - about 1 m. On the surface of the mound, it was visible stone ring with a diameter of 20 m (Fig. 6). Inside the ring, the grave pit had been looking. For this purpose, the excavation was laid. At the southern wall of the excavation of the grave pit, the wall plastered by bentonite clay was fixed. Following the detected wall the southwest corner where the remains of vaulted structure and fire traces were fixed (Fig. 7).

Inside this building the land was slipped and the grave pit has been revealed. Around the pit the path of 50 cm width was defined. The study showed that the grave pit has a depth of 190 cm from the ancient skyline. The finds are scarce, as the funeral



Figure 6. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 2. Ring fences on the north side



Figure 7. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 2. Burial pit



Figure 8. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 2. Golden statue of feline predator



Figure 9. The burial ground Kokkaynar. Kurgan № 2. Gold plate with the image of a bird

was robbed. But among them two unique gold objects were found: golden figure of feline predator and golden plate with the image of a bird.

The figurine of feline predator was done of two relief plates. Its length - 3.3 cm, height - 2 cm, thickness - 0.4 cm. Figures pose can be roughly defined as "playing kitten". Croup raised, hind legs stretched forward. Tail curled into a ring. The figure has a brush at the tip of the tail (Fig. 8). The figure was a part of a headdress composition.

Gold plate with the image of the bird has the following dimensions: width - 1.8 cm, height - 2.2 cm. The figure made by punching technique. The plate shows a prey bird. Her head turned to the left, a

large beak strongly curved downward. Below it has a vulture-like head-collar. Wings widely straightened and lowered. The tail has a triangular shape. Embossed legs are visible. The bird is depicted on the background of round shape, on the sides of which there were small horns (Fig. 9). This is heraldic image.

Interpretation and chronological dating of these artifacts need to be clarified. Now, the monument can be dated not earlier than the III century BC.

These findings show the rich ancient history of our city. In spite of the fact that this year the 1000th anniversary of the medieval Almaty is celebrated, we believe that the history of the city is much older.

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## **АЛМАТЫ ҚАЛАСЫ АУМАҒЫНДАҒЫ ЕРТЕ ТЕМІР ҒАСЫРЫ (ДӘУІРІ) ЕСКЕРТКІШТЕРІНІҢ ЖАҢА ЗЕРТТЕУЛЕРІ**

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### **Аңдатпа**

Мақалада Алматы қаласы Тарих мұражайы мамандарының қала маңында орналасқан көшпенділердің ежелгі ескерткіштері аумағындағы соңғы археологиялық зерттеулеріне шолу жасалады. Археологиялық табылған заттарға егжей-тегжейлі сипаттама берілген және олардың интерпретациясына болжаулар айтылған. Жүргізілген зерттеулер нәтижесі б.д. дейінгі V ғасырда-ақ, Алматы аумағында ежелгі сақ мемлекетінің саяси-сарай орталығы болғандығын айғақтайды.

**Трек сөздер:** Алматы, қорған, қорым, мысық тұқымдас жыртқыштың алтын мүсіні, геральдикалық бейне, сақтардың ежелгі мемлекеті.

## **НОВЫЕ ИССЛЕДОВАНИЯ ПАМЯТНИКОВ РАННЕГО ЖЕЛЕЗНОГО ВЕКА НА ТЕРРИТОРИИ Г. АЛМАТЫ**

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### **Аннотация**

В статье производится обзор последних археологических исследований специалистов Музея истории города Алматы на территории древних памятников кочевников, расположенных в черте города. Приведены детальные описания археологических находок и высказаны предположения по их интерпретации. Проведённые исследования убедительно свидетельствуют о том, что уже в V веке до н. э. на территории Алматы был сакрально-политический центр древнего государства саков.

**Ключевые слова:** Алматы, курган, могильник, золотая фигурка кошачьего хищника, геральдическое изображение, древнее государство саков.