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## The Artifact Value of the Types of Dishes in the Turkic Culture

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**Abstract.** The article analyzes and comprehensively considers one of the material benefits of the Turkic culture - dishes as an important source in the study of the archaeological heritage, starting from the monuments of the Saka period, which are considered the genesis of the indigenous Turks, and ending with the pottery used in the settlements of the Bronze Age and the types of dishes used in the traditional environment. The purpose of the research article is to consider the types of pots and inscriptions on them preserved from the indigenous Turkic world as a form of traditional culture and study them as material evidence. To do this, the study focused on comparing artifacts found during archaeological excavations and their features. The article tells about the value of a monument of the Saka era - a silver bowl with a 26-character inscription found during excavations in Esik burial mound (5-6 centuries BC), reading options, material and manufacturing technique. In addition, attention is paid to such issues as faience dishes, their forms, the rules for constructing a pattern system, which are valuable data in the study of material monuments of the Bronze Age, and the significance of patterns on dishes as an ethnic indicator is explained. Information is also given on the continuation of the types of bowls, which are one of the outstanding examples of the material culture of the Turkic times, in modern ethnic culture, their place in the popular worldview, and the functions of the vessels used by our people in everyday life. The scientific article uses archaeological data and special literature.

**Key words:** Issyk burial mound, Saka period, ancient Turks, runic writing, dishes, symbol, culture.

### Introduction

In the modern era of globalization, the cultural and spiritual unification of nations with common historical roots has become a legitimate process. This is one of the most relevant topics at present because, firstly, each ethnic group aims to preserve and enrich its own culture,

and secondly, it is the culture that protects people united by a common history from various political provocations in the current period. After all, culture is a phenomenon inherent to all mankind, being a kind of golden bridge that consolidates people together. In general, the spiritual experience of any ethnic group is of great importance for preserving national culture, civilization and spiritual space.

The focus of our article is the consideration of the utensils from the Bronze Age to the present, in terms of the features of their use and production technology based on archaeological data. The utensils are one of the significant sources of the material culture of the Turkic peoples.

### **Materials and research methods**

The material base of the research work is archaeological artifacts belonging to the Bronze Age. Among them, there is a silver bowl with runic inscriptions found in the Issyk mound, and also the other samples of dishes belonging to the ancient Turkic period. This material evidence was considered as a source that provides information about the worldview and culture of the ancient peoples. The mentioned material evidence was examined using the methods of systematization and historical comparative analysis. The methods of internal and external verification of source study were used to determine the authenticity of material items of culture. This allows for the correct study of special signs and inscriptions in archaeological materials.

### **Results and discussions**

The article analyzes material data and special studies found in archaeological excavations dating back to the Bronze Age. In accordance with the topic of the study, the main part of the utensils among the samples of material culture of the ancient Turkic period is made up of artifacts found in southern Kazakhstan. The most original of these are silver and pottery vessels found in the *Yssyk kurgan* burial mound. For example, K. Akishev in his work “Kurgan Issyk” focuses on the pottery jars found in the kurgan (Akishev, 1978: 130). Among the archaeological studies, K. Baipakov also has sufficient data found in the territory of southern Kazakhstan. The researcher analyzes this in detail in his work “Settlements of Saka and Usuns in the Territory of Zhetysu and Almaty” (Baipakov, 2008: 173). A.S. Amanzholov, on the other hand, studied a silver bowl found in the Issyk burial mound and attempted to read the inscription on it. In his work “History and Theory of Ancient Turkic Writing”, he analyzed the monuments of the Turkic period, and especially focused on the inscription on the silver bowl (Amanzholov, 2003: 368). Similarly, in the works of M. Zholdasbekov and K. Sartkozhauly, “A Complete Atlas of Orkhon Monuments”, the authors touched upon the current issues of the ancient Turkic written monuments in Mongolia (Zholdasbekov, 2005: 360). In addition, the works of researchers such as Zh. Beisenbayuly and L. Turganbayeva provide the semantics and basic facts of vessels of the Turkic period.

Important data on the material culture of ancient Kazakhstan are, first of all, artifacts found as a result of archaeological research. In this regard, it is important to delve into the history of the Saka tribes, the first inhabitants of the territory of Kazakhstan as it is clear that

archaeological materials belonging to the Saka era have a high historical and cultural value. The study of monuments of the Saka period in our country was widely expanded in the early and mid-20th century. As a result, Saka burial grounds were discovered in East Kazakhstan, Zhetysu, the lower reaches of the Syr, and Central Kazakhstan. Among them, many ritual burial grounds were excavated, and research was carried out. Meanwhile, the burial grounds of the Tasmola culture in Central and North Kazakhstan, the Issyk (the Golden Man) Besshatyr burial grounds in Zhetysu, etc., burial mounds, kurgans, and excellent artifacts of the ancient Saka, have become the object of research. In addition, the Saka monuments are monuments that possess a common cultural value not only for Kazakhstan but also for the entire Eurasian steppe.

As is well known, the ancient Saka's principal occupation was nomadic animal husbandry. However, there is an opinion that the numerous millstones and stone hoes found during excavations indicate that the Saka were engaged in winter agriculture. This can be evidenced by artifacts found in the territory of Central Kazakhstan. The type of economy that the ancient inhabitants were engaged in was clearly reflected in their culture. After all, the climatic and natural features of the local area affected the way of life of people, as well as the food they ate, the methods of preparing it, and the tools and utensils they used. The Saka tribes, inhabiting the vast territory, used resembling tools due to their economic and climatic similarity. This not only formed their uniqueness in terms of economic management, but over time became the basis for the formation of a collective ethno-culture as an ethnic group.

The unique animal style of Saka art is one of the invaluable achievements of human civilization. The household items most often decorated with the animal style elements were metal pots, sacrificial vessels, swords and daggers, axes and quivers, horse harnesses and mirrors, on which the Saka skillfully depicted the faces of animals familiar to them, such as argali, maral, elk, eagle, saiga, wild boar, wolf.

Valuable information about the monuments of the royal burials of the later period is provided by the Besshatyr burial ground and the Issyk burial ground, which date back to the middle of the 1st millennium BC. This Issyk Kurgan has a collection of artifacts that gives multiple data on the history and culture of the Saka tribes who lived in the 5th-4th centuries BC. It was discovered as a result of excavations by a group of archaeologists led by Kamil Akishev near the Yssyk river, 50 kilometers from Almaty, in 1969-1970. More than four thousand of its decorative items were made in the animal style using metalworking techniques such as forging, molding, engraving, welding, gilding, and grinding. Among these, in addition to the Golden Man, one of the most valuable items found was a bowl with 26 runic-like inscriptions. In addition, many other vessels made of clay, wood, and metal were found in the tomb of this Golden Warrior – a total of 31 vessels. Along the southern and western walls of the chamber are placed clay and wooden vessels: jars, bowls, plates, etc. There is also a metal vessel in the form of a bowl made of silver and bronze (Great Steppe, 2020: p. 26).

This bowl is not only a tangible monument preserved from the Saka period, but also a source of written information. The inscription on the bowl revealed the early formation of the civilization of our ancestors to the world community. The inscription consists of 2 lines and 26 characters. Although almost 50 years have passed since the discovery of the silver bowl, the secret of the inscription on the bowl has not yet been fully examined and revealed. However, no

type of writing similar to the Saka script has been found to date. K. Akishev believed that the Saka script was based on Near Eastern scripts. However, this script is similar only to some of the writing systems of the region, and attempts to read it using the Near Eastern alphabet were unsuccessful. (Gold of Centuries, 2016: 47). There are now several readings of this script by well-known scientists such as Zaur Hasanov, Altai Amanzholov, and others.

This inscription's primary value is in the fact that it is the earliest evidence of the language of the Saka, who inhabited the territory of Kazakhstan, and it is Turkic (Amanzholov, 2003: 224). It also proves that the traditional opinion that the ancient nomads of Kazakhstan did not have writing is groundless, and it proves that 2500 years ago, Turkic-speaking tribes knew alphabetic writing and used it widely (Salgarauly, 2007: p. 59). Found on the territory of Kazakhstan are inscriptions on a stone on Mount Ketpen in the Almaty region, an inscription on a stone seal found along the Talas River, and two bronze mirrors with ancient Turkic inscriptions found in the Shemonaikha district of the East Kazakhstan region. Ancient Turkic inscriptions, including inscriptions on tombstones, describe the deeds of the rulers of the country, such as Tonyukuk, Bilge Khagan, Kül Tigin, etc., the state of the Turkic people at that time, their relations with neighboring states, and their worldview. The monument to Kül Tigin was erected by his brother Bilge Khagan. The inscription on the monument begins: "I am the Turk Bilge Kagan, born of God, created by God. My father, the Turk Bilge Khagan, was a supporter of his throne. There were six good esirs (thrones), nine Oghuz lords, the glorious begs of the land of Edyz, the Turk people of Tengri" (Great Steppe, 2019: 256).

28 earthen and wooden dishes found in the Yssyk kurgan were filled with the necessary amount of food, and oil was poured into a large bowl. In many countries, oil was considered a sacred food. Therefore, the expression 'pure oil' is in line with the Yssyk text. It is not a mere coincidence that a silver spoon is placed next to it. According to K. Akishev, the presence of alphabetic writing proves the cultural level of the state at that time, the stage of socio-economic development. "The bowl with an inscription" is a unique work that tells about the history, civilization and culture of the nomadic tribes that lived in the territory of Kazakhstan, and is now included in the list of world cultural values (Akishev, 1978: 80).

The unique appearance of this small bowl displays the value of the vessel to ancient cultures. Now it is kept in the funds of the National Museum of the Republic of Kazakhstan. According to the material, it is silver, cast. Height 2.2 cm, diameter 7.7 cm. The bowl is of semi-spherical shape with a straight lip that turns into a convex shape. On the outer surface, there is a two-line inscription consisting of twenty-six characters, carved with a pointed tool (Kazakh jewelry art, 2016: 267).

The bowls found during archaeological excavations were made of gold and silver. As these materials are naturally malleable and melt at low temperatures, they allow for the use of various technical methods of processing: forging, drawing, molding, casting, welding, blackening, etc. Besides, the choice of silver is not accidental - according to ancient beliefs, it has healing and protective properties (Kazakh ethnographic categories, 2017: 15). The healing properties of silver were well-known among ancient cultures. Among them, the ancient Egyptians gave special priority to the use of silver. For example, in India, it was used to speed up wound healing and to increase immunity. And in Russian churches, water with silver added was considered sacred. People believed that such water gives vital energy. In modern times, the start to the

scientific study of silver properties was given only at the end of the 19th century. Silver ionizes when it comes into contact with water and remains in it for a very long time. Therefore, ionized water eliminates a large number of harmful microorganisms in the human body. Silver had been often used as a treatment before the advent of antibiotics. However, antibiotics display an effect of addiction when the bacteria get used to them, and the disease becomes irreversible. However, this is not the case with silver, which does not lose its effectiveness. Silver is one of the necessary microelements for the immune system; its decrease is one of the reasons for the loss of resistance to infectious diseases. Silver not only destroys disease-causing elements but also expels unnecessary toxins and microbes from the body. Even a slight deficiency of silver in the body causes the deterioration of working capacity, the sense of fatigue and weakened immunity. Otherwise, an adequate level of silver leads to stronger immunity and a good appetite.

Modern historical data show that the ancient Babylonians and Greeks, knowing the disinfecting properties of silver, kept their kings' daily drinking water in silver vessels. This information is supported by archaeological excavations. Silver vessels were also found in the royal tombs who lived 4 thousand years ago. The properties of water poured into silver vessels were known even by warriors during the time of Alexander the Great. They used to put silver coins in the vessels in which they drank water. The writings of the famous historian Herodotus also show that the king of Persia kept his drinking water in silver vessels, which directly helped the country survive the epidemic (Yskakqyzy, 2010). Silver was also widely used in the Eurasian steppe during the Saka period. In traditional ethnoculture, pure silver was known under the names of white silver, genuine silver, white bullion, cast silver, lump silver, and urgashi (female) silver due to its mildness. In traditional crafts, silver was used not only to produce jewelry but also to decorate horse harnesses and dishes. In addition, in order to save silver, the jewelry was first forged from iron and then the iron surface was covered with a thin layer of melted silver. This was called silver plating. (Beisenbayuly, 2017: 405-406). These elements are not subject to corrosion.

The famous archaeologist K.M. Baipakov in his work "Settlements of Saka and Usuns in the Territory of Zhetysu and Almaty" wrote that the Early Iron Age settlements were mostly washed away, with only traces remaining, in which stone tools and millstones, as well as pottery, were found. The earthenware items differ not only in their function but also in the quality of their manufacture. Most of them are the remains of poorly fired, thick-walled cookware, such as fragments of khums, jugs, bowls, and pans (Baipakov, 2008: 23).

Domestic archaeology has achieved significant success in the study of material artifacts of the Bronze Age. Pottery, which is a valuable historical resource, constitutes the main category of artifacts from archaeological findings. By studying pottery, we can determine the relationship of various groups of ancient populations, some aspects of their worldview, the integrity of their archaeological cultures and their origin. Among the inhabitants of the settlements, the technology of making pottery was mainly mastered by women. The patterns on the pots consisted of hatched triangles, zigzags, fir-tree-shaped, round patterns, and lines. By looking at the pots, one can learn about the technology of their manufacture. Before making the pots, clay was brought, slightly bent, and left to dry. The pots of the Bronze Age were predominantly vessels with straight or protruding sides, a neck turned inward, and a flat bottom.

The jars typical of the Middle Bronze Age have a flat bottom and a groove between the neck and the side. The patterns are triangular, zigzag, and intersecting. Sometimes the bottom of the vessel is decorated.

Almost all the pots of the later Bronze Age were round, with protruding sides. The typical patterns were of a herringbone. The pottery patterns are important in distinguishing archaeological cultures due to the fact that ancient people discerned between themselves by the ornaments they wore on their clothes, as well as the patterns on their vessels. Therefore, when studying it, it is very important to determine not only its structure and elements, but also the rules for constructing each pattern system, which is an ethnic indicator in the pattern. In some cases, the pattern also provided information about the calendar. This is because clay vessels reflected the mythological consciousness and the worldview of ancient people through their unique form of inscriptions and decorations, i.e., vessel relief, which was like a mirror of their understanding of the sky, the environment and the cosmos, and natural phenomena.

The emergence of changes in pottery of the new period is explained by the arrival of a new culture. According to the data of the analysis of the technology of pottery manufacture, the appearance of belted ceramics confirms the contact with outsiders. The life of the Bronze Age tribes was directly dependent on nature. Since the forces of nature were understood as sacred spirits, these forces were plants and animals, fire and the solar system. The solar system and fire give warmth - all this was associated with benevolent, powerful spirits. Symbols related to the sun god can be seen in decorative items - in the meanders with patterns in the form of rays emanating from the sun on camisole fasteners and pottery. For example, the patterns on the pottery found in North Kazakhstan are characterized by unique lines, complex meanders, triangles, rhombuses, and a series of belts. This indicates their depiction of the lifestyle based on cattle breeding and hunting.

Along with the production of pottery, vessels made of animal skin were widespread for their convenience during migrations and availability of the raw material, as livestock farming was a predominant occupation in Eurasia. In leather processing, scrapers, planers and other tools for kneading and stretching the skin were used. The burial tradition of the Bronze Age included the placement of felt under the person, and everyday items made of clay and leather were also found in several burial sites.

Thus, the first waves of the ancient historical and cultural community following the cattle pastures, moved westward, setting foot on the Dniester-Danube plain around 4400-4300 BC. During these processes, burial rites characteristic of the traditions of the Proto-Turks who inhabited the Caspian lowlands, including round-bottomed pottery vessels made with the addition of shell powder, flint tools, triangular arrowheads, horse bits, and symbols of power - stone staffs and maces - also reached these territory (Beisenbayuly, 2017:75-76). One of the important issues in the study of the Bronze Age material culture is pottery and its production. The main types of ornaments, such as 'vertical horns', 'broken horns', 'ram horns', equilateral triangles and festoons, are similar to the Begazy-Dandybai culture. Determining the time frame of that period, identifying cultural ties between the inhabitants of that era, and studying ethnocultural continuity are directly related to the art of pottery. Pottery vessels, which are often found in Bronze Age settlements, and the ornaments depicted on them provide a wealth of information about the crafts and types of economy of the inhabitants of the ancient world.

More than a dozen mosques built into underground rocks have been discovered on the Mangystau Peninsula in western Kazakhstan. The oldest one is located in the Shopan-ata cemetery complex. Several of the mosques were apparently carved out of a large rock on the edge of a gorge. A rectangular hall (7.1x5.1 m) was built in its central part, which served as a khanaka-inn. The steps led to several rooms above, where there were two chambers for burying the dead, along with a prayer room. Cauldrons, samovars, teapots, jugs, and buckets were placed along the back wall (Turganbayeva, 2011: 128).

The Kazakhs made utensils mainly from leather, wood, and the bones of domesticated animals. A wide variety of early vessels can be found in the material culture of the nomadic world of the Eurasian steppe. Many types of leather vessels differentiated in terms of shape, capacity and purpose were produced among the Kazakhs. For instance, a leather vessel for milking a mare in the form of a kettle. The largest of these was a specially treated horsehide vessel for preparing koumiss and shubat, called a saba. A vessel for transporting koumiss with a capacity of two buckets sewn from the neck of a horse, cattle or camel was typical of northern regions. In Semirechye and the western regions of Kazakhstan, a vessel called *a mes*, made of goat skin, was used.

Almost everywhere, leather jars *zhantorsyk* with a capacity of 10 liters were used to transport koumiss. They were sewn from the skin of animal legs, closed with a wooden stopper, and decorated with embossed and patterned silver plates. Also, even the stomach of animals was widely used in everyday life to store food, especially fat and butter.

In south-western Kazakhstan, poor families used gourd containers (*a kavak*) for milking and storing dairy products. Wooden buckets for milking mares, cows, and goats were often encountered. Utensils for pouring koumiss (*a shomysh*, *an ojaw*) were made in various capacities and shapes and often decorated with silver and bone elements.

The meat platters and large deep bowls (*a tegene*, *a shara*) for pouring koumiss and ayran were manufactured from wood. They were decorated with carvings and silver jewelry. Special bags, sacks made of calfskin, foal skin, and horsehead skin were sewn to store grains, salt, and other bulk products. Special household sacks (*a qap*) woven from wool were made to store grain and flour.

## Conclusion

The inhabitants of the Great Steppe have long used utensils and household equipment in their daily lives in accordance with the type of economy they were engaged in, depending on the natural and climatic conditions of the local area.

Each utensil type had its own purpose, depending on the traditional worldview and local customs. This fact indicates that the use of utensils as a main part of traditional culture and its presentation to people was subject to its own rules. The topic invites studies in a comprehensive interdisciplinary manner.

## Author Contributions.

**Amirova M.** – Corresponding author, Concept development and theoretical framework;

**Shauenova G.** – Field data collection and artifact classification;

**Urakova Yanc L.** – Analysis, interpretation, and editing.

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## Түркі мәдениетіндегі ыдыс-аяқ түрлерінің деректік құндылығы

**Аңдатпа.** Мақалада түркі халқының материалдық мәдениетіне жататын – ыдыс-аяқ түрлерінің археологиялық зерттеулерде маңызды дереккөз ретінде қарастырылады. Ыдыс-аяқ түрлері байырғы түркілердің генезисі саналатын сақ дәуірі ескерткіштері кезеңінде, қола дәуірі қоныстарында пайдаланылған қыш ыдыстар және дәстүрлі ортада қолданыста болған ыдыс-аяқ түрлерінен көрініс табады. Мақаланың мақсаты – байырғы түркі кезеңінен сақталып келген ыдыс-аяқ түрлерін, ондағы жазу белгілерін дәстүрлі мәдениеттің бір формасы ретінде қарастырып, оны заттай дерек ретінде зерделеу. Бұл үшін археологиялық қазбалардан табылып жатқан артефактілер мен оның ерекше белгілерін салыстырып зерттеу басшылыққа алынды. Мақалада сақ дәуірі ескерткіші – Есік обасына (б.з.б. V–VI ғғ.) жүргізілген қазба жұмыстары барысында табылған, түбінде 26 таңбалы жазуы бар күміс тостағанның құндылығы, оқылу нұсқалары, жасалу материалы мен техникасы жайында айтылады. Сонымен қатар, қола дәуіріндегі заттай ескерткіштерді зерттеуде құнды дерек болып табылатын қыш ыдыстар, олардың формалары, өрнек жүйесінің салыну ережесі сияқты мәселелерге назар аударылады,



ыдыс-аяқтарға салынған өрнектердің этникалық көрсеткіш ретіндегі мәні түсіндіріледі. Түркі кезеңіндегі материалдық мәдениеттің көрнекті үлгілерінің бірі болып табылатын ыдыс-аяқ түрлерінің қазіргі этномәдениеттегі жалғасы, ұлттық дүниетанымда алар орны, халқымыздың күнделікті тұрмыста пайдаланған ыдыстарының атқарған қызметі туралы да мағлұмат беріледі. Мақалада археологиялық деректер мен арнайы әдебиеттер пайдаланылған.

**Түйін сөздер:** Есік обасы, сақ кезеңі, көне түркілер, руна жазуы, ыдыс-аяқтар, таңба, мәдениет.

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### **Фактологическая ценность видов посуды в тюркской культуре**

**Аннотация.** В статье рассматривается посуда как часть материальной культуры тюрков. Посуда является важным источником при археологическом исследовании изучаемого периода. Хронологический период исследования: бронзовый век, железный век, средневековье до этнографического времени.

Цель исследовательской статьи – рассмотреть сохранившиеся от тюркского мира типы горшков и надписи на них как форму традиционной культуры и изучить их как вещественные источники. Для этого исследование ориентировалось на сопоставление артефактов, найденных при археологических раскопках, и их особенностей. В статье даны сведения о ценности памятника сакской эпохи – серебряной чаши с 26-значной надписью, найденной при раскопках кургана Есик (V-VI вв. до н.э.), вариантах прочтения, о материале и технике изготовления. Кроме того, получены ценные данные при изучении вещественных памятников бронзового века (глиняных горшков, способах их изготовления, системы орнаментов); также объясняется значение узоров как этнического показателя.

В заключении дана информация о преемственности в современной этнокультуре видов чаш, являющихся одним из выдающихся образцов материальной культуры тюрков, их роли в народном мировоззрении, о функции сосудов, которыми пользовался наш народ в повседневной жизни. В научной статье использованы археологические данные и специальная литература.

**Ключевые слова:** Курганы Иссык, сакский период, древние тюрки, руническая письменность, посуда, символ, культура.

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