

Mounds of the Saka

These are huge constructions that compare with the Egyptian pyramids, reaching a height of 20 m and a diameter of 120-150 m, and the little hillocks up to 1-1.5 m and a diameter of 5-7 m. There are mass of mounds of various sizes in the range of these parameters. Large mounds called “royal.” This is true because under them are buried members of the ruling dynasties and military elite of ancient tribes.

There is a single burial mounds, a cluster of mounds, up to several tens, hundreds or even thousands. Mounds and burial mounds are found everywhere in Kazakhstan — in the steppes and semi-deserts, valleys between mountains, the mountains and foothills, river valleys. Especially numerous of them in Zhetysu-Seven Rivers, the foothills of the Junggar and Zailiysky Alatau, the mountains of Central Tien-Shan. The famous Issyk burial ground is located among them, which was excavated by archaeologists Issyk burial mound and found buried there “Golden Man”. It is also the burial ground Besshatyr on the right bank of Ili River in a narrow canyon between the Ili River and Zhelshalgyr mountain range. It is also widely known Talgar and Turgen burial grounds in the foothills of the Zailiysky Alatau, Kegensky in valley of the Kegen River, Dzhetytobe in the foothills of the Talas Range, Lebedev’s burial ground and Kyrk-Oba in Western Kazakhstan.

Besshatyr burial ground is located the right bank of the Ili River in the tract Shilbyr. It consists of 31 burial mounds. By the size of mounds burial mounds are divided into large, medium and small. The diameters of large mounds vary from 45 to 105 m, their height varies from 6 to 18 m; medium mounds, respectively — 25-38 m and 5-6 m, and small — 6-18 m and 0.8-2 m.

Excavated mounds were looted. However Besshatyr mounds gave a bright material (daggers, arrowheads), new types of monumental gravestones structures.

It should be particularly considered Big Besshatyr mound 104 m in diameter, height of 17 m. The mound has the form of a truncated cone with the diameter of the flat top 32 m. Stone cover of the mound, densely packed in several layers at the base, gives the impression cap, on which the rest mass embankment. Stone wall with 2 m wide runs around at a distance of 5-7 m. Circular constructions of large stone pillars (menhirs), dug into the ground, and large boulders, formed a “fence” are close to the embankment. The 94 of such fences are around the Big Hill. They are located around the mound. In some vertically standing stone pillars of fences were carved tamgas.

In the north-east of the mound there are seven such fences, stretching from southeast to northwest. Fences had a ritual function: have been associated with the cult of fire and the ritual sacrifice.

In Besshatyr were excavated three large mounds: First, Third and Sixth, three middle and all the small mounds. The first mound had a diameter of 52 m, height 8.93 m. The mound was composed of three layers of stone. The most powerful is the second layer, consisting from the earth and gravel with a thickness from 8.5 to 13 m. Under the bottom layer was a large wooden structure, built of logs processed Tien Shan spruce. Besshatyr tomb is a complex wooden structure consisting of several parts: a corridor (dromos), the input chamber and the burial chamber. All logs of Tomb well treated: branches and twigs were cut down and bark removed. The logs forming the walls were carefully hewn and tight fitting to each other. Thick butt logs alternately pointing in opposite directions to provide greater stability throughout the construction. The logs are only touching the corners and not bonded together, so Besshatyr construction is not felling in the usual sense of the word.

The flat floor of burial rooms, consisting of rolling logs, covered with layer of reed mats tied with chiy ropes.

Perhaps, after the burial ceremony entrance leading into the room being built with large stones and sections of the corridor were laid stone mixed with crushed stone to the top. Only after that over the burial structure was built mound from stone and rubble.

During the excavation of “Mound 14” opened a new type of funerary structures. The walls built of earth mixed with small crushed stone are the foundation of the burial mound construction. On the walls lay the floor of the three series of logs, two lower rows of logs were of Tien Shan spruce, and the upper range — from dzhida. The dome-shape roof, consisting of sixteen alternating layers of stone, shrubs, and saxaul shoots, was set on a log overlap. The tomb had the quadratic base and rounded dome-shaped roof.

The eastern side of the tomb had the input on both sides of which were two pairs of upright poles dug. Twin beams joined together with pegs hammered into the holes, but for the greater strength of the logs were still bound by thick chiy ropes. Above the entrance of overlapping on top of logs lay a double layer from reed mats tied with chiy ropes.

Besshatyr chronology set of findings in one of the small mounds. Skeletons of two of the buried were under the embankment in a big hole the size of 3.50 to 2 m, oriented from west to east. Skeletons were lying near each other in a stretched position on the back of his head to the west. Short-iron daggers akinak lay on the right side of each deceased, and the left side — the remnants of a quiver with bronze arrowheads (50 stemmed and socketed arrowheads of twelve different types of quivers). Daggers have the crossing in the form of butterflies, the tops have been destroyed. Iron umbon and, apparently, the remains of a wooden shield lying on the northern core left. Iron buckle was found at the waist. Four cornelian beads of the cervical vertebrae of buried were found among the bones and on the remains of the quiver of the southern skeleton found two beads, made of welded hollow gold grains.

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