

State Museum of Gold and Precious Metals

In accordance with the Order #190 by the Council of Ministers of Kazakh SSR from August 21, 1990, the Museum of Gold and Precious Metals was established in Kazakhstan.

On May 24, 2000 the resolution #779 'On additional measures for the conservation of some objects of historical and cultural heritage of Kazakhstan people' was adopted by the Government of the Republic of Kazakhstan. Under that resolution, the Museum of Gold and Precious Metals was converted into the National Museum of Gold and Precious Metals.

In October, 2000 due to relocation of country's capital, the museum was moved to Astana and situated in the Presidential Cultural Center.

By the nature of museum's work, the museum is classified as the mass cultural institution for scientific research – the main repository for the complexes of Kazakhstan's jewelry art from the times of early nomads up to the modern ethnographic collections. The funds are annually replenished with the new, unique exhibits. The Museum promotes its collections through mass media.

The multi-directional activity of the National Museum of Gold and Precious Metals is aimed at the practical implementation of the ideas provided by the Head of the State N.A.Nazarbayev about the promotion of history and culture of the nomadic world in the international scientific circles. Other goals of the museum are introducing the wealth of spiritual and material cultures of Kazakh people to the world community, as well as the artwork from the natural materials of the Kazakh lands (gold, precious metals and stones) and the archaeological artifacts discovered in the course of implementation of the State Programme 'Cultural Heritage'.

The principles of historicism and objectivism are the key principles in the museum's work. It deals with collecting and systematizing valuable artifacts, their conservation and restoration. Also, it has to do with the scientific description of the materials and their preparation for the expositional displays including foreign exhibitions and cultural-educational and informational work.

The museum does scientific research of the history and culture of the Scythe-Saka Civilization period and history of Kazakh artistic metalwork and decorative applied arts.

The goal of the National Museum of Gold and Precious Metals is to occupy its rightful place among 5 leading gold museums of the world, such as Diamond Fund in Moscow, the Treasury of the British Crown in London, the Gold Museum in Bogota (Columbia), the National Museum of Jewelry in Tehran (Iran) and the Kievo-Pechorskaya Lavra in Kiev (Ukraine).

There are 5 departments in the museum: Department of funds and storage record, Department of Science and Data work, Department of Excursion and Expositional work, Department of the Care-takers and the Maintenance Department.

Famous complex 'The Golden Man' is the main treasure and the basis for the funds and expositions of the museum. It was found by a group of archaeologists led by Kemal Akishev in the diggings of the Issyk Kurgan in Almaty Region in 1969-1970. The find is dated by V-IV centuries BC. The kurgan is located in 50 km from Almaty and is 60 meters in diameter and 6 meters high. Over 4000 gold items were crafted using different techniques like forging, stamping, engraving, granulation and others.

The museum has a permanent exposition located in two halls that displays the artwork from the Early Nomad Epoch and the samples of applied art of Kazakh people from XVIII-XX centuries. There are temporary thematic exhibitions as well.

Museum Fund:

Museum Fund is the main repository for the items and series of Kazakhstan's jewelry art from the Early Nomad Epoch up to the present day.

Museum Funds divide into departments of: 1. Archaeology. 2. Numismatics. 3. Jewelry. 4. Household items.

One of the world's monuments of the Saka epoch – the Issyk Kurgan – is a part of the Issyk Complex of Burial Mounds that stands on the left bank of the mountain river Issyk 50 km east of Almaty.

In 1969, under the leadership of a famous archaeologist Kemal Akishev, a burial chamber with a tomb of a young Saka leader was discovered in one of those mounds. The diameter of the mound was 60m, height 6m.

Over 4000 gold items and various burial accessories of the young leader were laying there untouched in the same order as they were made for the ceremony of farewell into the eternal world. That allowed archaeologists, culturologists and restorers (A.Sadomsky, A.Tanabayev, K.Altynbekov) to recreate the unique model of the Golden Man.

The Mountain Goats is a part of clothing adornment of the Golden Man.

The animal is made in such manner, that the ends of its hoofs on the front and hind legs are joined. The relief realistically conveys the characteristics of the species of a mountain goat. Its horns have markings of the annual ring.

The mountain goats are the inhabitants of the sky-high mountains – a special sphere of the space which is accessible to the chosen. They are the attribute of leader's power.

Near the head of the Golden Man, a golden earring was found. It was fully adorned with turquoise pendants crafted using the grain technique. The earring was made in a form of a ring of golden wire with unlocked ends. Its diameter was 1.15x1.00 and the diameter of the additional ring of the pendants was 0.45 cm. There were three pendants from the turquoise beads of different sizes.

Turquoise was one of the favorite traditional semi-precious stones known to the nomads and cattle-farmers, which was being used as a decoration element from the deep antiquity to the present times. Along with the other stones and minerals, that stone was attributed magical and healing properties. For example, ancients believed that turquoise brought happiness and self-confidence to its owner, as well as the victory over the enemy and long life in prosperity.

The grain technique was the practice frequently used for the decoration of nomad's jewelry, practice that is in use to this day. In works of the modern applied art, there are elements completed in grain and false-grain technique.

The grivna is in four spirals with the ends in a form of a leopard's head. The animal is depicted in a traditional Saka manner: with ears against the head, scooped and with curls at the base; the head is flattened and the forehead is oblique; almond-shaped eyes with emphasized pupils are standing out. The nose is large and flat. The upper lip is wrinkled in a grin. The collar is illustrated with deep grooves and stretched upward.

Grivna had an important function in the system of the Golden Man's dress. It was not only symbolizing the higher social rank, but also performing a security function. It was an averter, for its placement on the neck, where the head (the top) and the body (the middle) meet required certain functional load and a corresponding decoration. Therefore, the early nomads usually designed grivnas with a standard set of images – leopards, tigers, wolves and griffins. Grivna's diameter is 13.8x13.6cm. Grivna's diameter is 13.8 x13.6 cm.

Kurgan Berel, East Kazakhstan, V-IV centuries BC.

Archaeological resources allow saying with good reason that Berel citizens were excellent craftsmen: metallurgists, builders, potters, jewelers, wood carvers and artists. Inside the Berel Burial Mound, some horse saddles were found, which presently are considered to be the oldest in Kazakhstan. The horse saddle covered with the fur skin of a predator and felt application on the saddle lining depicting the griffin tearing apart some hoofed animal are particularly remarkable. Badges, psalia, pendants, belt separators – everything is decorated only from the front side and covered with the gold foil 5 microns thick and with the tin. Through the holes on the inner side, they were attached to the belts of the horse harness.

Coins of the Hun Period, I-II centuries AD.

Location – Kargaly Settlement.

The name 'Huns' is well known in the history. The historical name of that vanished nation is Hunny. It is associated with the militancy, cruelty and barbarism. Headed by Attila, Hunnu made devastating raids to European countries. They set the start for the Great Migration of the people that led to the fall of the Roman Empire. Their history was connected to the territory of Kazakhstan. The archaeological diggings and Chinese written sources serve as the resources for learning about those people.

The site of the ancient city of Saraishyk is located on the Zhaiyk River in 50 km from Atyrau. The ruins of Golden Hordes settlement became the object of study as far back as in XVIII century.

Presently, among the coins found at the city site, the coin that dates earliest is dirham minted in the rule of Mengu-Timur (1266-1282).

The exponents of the museum, including the maquette of a marvelous example of ancient civilization art – the Golden Man – were exhibited in many countries of the world: Finland, France, the USA, Italy, Japan, Germany, the United Arab Emirates, Mongolia, Tajikistan, Russia and others.