

## New data on the culture of the ancient Turks of Zhetysu

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**Keywords:** archaeology, Zhetysu, Almalyk, medieval nomadic, Turkic society, burial of a man with a horse, earring ‘Saltov’ type, horse harness

**Түйін сөздер:** археология, Жетису, Алмалық, ортағасырылық көшпелілер, ежелгі түркі қоғамы, адамды жылқымен бірге жерлеу, «салтов» типіндегі сырға, ат әбзелдері

**Ключевые слова:** археология, Жетису, Алмалық, средневековые кочевники, древнетюркское общество, погребение человека с лошадью, серьга «салтовского» типа, конское снаряжение

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**Abstract.** In 2017, rescue excavations were carried out near the village of Almalyk, during which the burial of a man with a horse was discovered. Among the clothing inventory, the so-called ‘Saltov’ type bronze earring deserves attention, which gives us the opportunity to determine the cultural and chronological framework of the monuments, and to a certain extent emphasizes the social status of the buried in ancient Turkic society. Iron objects related to the equipment of a riding horse were also recorded in the burial. During the search for an analogy, the close relationships and connections of the local ancient Turkic population with the early medieval population of East Kazakhstan and Altai were revealed, which once again proves the special importance of horse equipment in the era of medieval nomads, when large-scale hostilities and mass migrations of the population took place in this territory. A comparative typological analysis of the finds revealed a circle of analogies closest in morphological and technical characteristics, the analysis of which to a certain extent indicates belonging to the ancient Turkic society. The monument dates from the 8<sup>th</sup> – 9<sup>th</sup> centuries.

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### **Жетісу өнірінің ежелгі түркілері жайлы жаңа мәліметтер**

**Аннотация.** 2017 ж. Алмалық ауылының маңында құтқару қазба жұмыстары жүргізілді. Қазба барысында адам мен жылқының жерлеу орны анықталды. Табылған олжалардың ішінде ерекше атап өтуге болатын қоладан жасалған «салтов» типіндегі сырғаны айтуға болады. Бөлшекті қола сырғаның табылуы зерттелген ескерткіштің мәдени-хронологиялық шенберін анықтауға мүмкіндік береді және белгілі бір дәрежеде мәйіттің ежелгі түркі қоғамында алеуметтік мәртебесін көрсетеді. Қабір шүнқырында ат әбзелдерінің темірден жасалған бөлшектері табылды. Ұқсастықтарды іздеу барысында Жетісу мен Шығыс Қазақстан, Алтайдың ерте ортағасырлық тұрғындарының арасындағы тығыз қарым-қатынасы мен байланысы анықталды. Табылған олжалар Еуразияның далалы және таулы аймақтарында ауқымды соғыс қимылдары мен халықтың жаппай көшуінде орын алған ортағасырлық көшпенділер дәүірінде ат әбзелдерінің ерекше маңызын тағы да дәлелдейді. Табылған заттарды салыстырмалы-типологиялық сараптау мен талдау барысында морфологиялық және техникалық сипаттамалары жасалып, ұқсастықтары бойынша жақын ұқсастықтары анықталды. Жерлеу орнынан шакқан олжаларды талдау негізінде ескерткіштің ежелгі түркі қоғамына тиесілі екендігін көрсетті. Ескерткіш VIII–IX ғғ. мерзімделеді.

**Алғыс:** «Аман» гуманитарлық қорының вице-президенті Г.Н. Ошақбаеваға және кор қызметкерлері А. Пак пен А. Битасовқа ескерткішті зерттеу кезінде көрсеткен өтеусіз көмегі үшін алғысымызды білдіреміз.

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### **Новые данные о культуре древних тюрков Жетысу**

**Аннотация.** В полевом сезоне 2017 г. были произведены аварийно-спасательные раскопки близ с. Алмалық Талгарского района Алматинской области, в ходе которых было обнаружено погребение человека с лошадью. Среди инвентаря заслуживает внимание бронзовая серьга так называемого «салтовского» типа, которая дает возможность определить культурно-хронологические рамки памятника и в определенной степени подчеркивает социальный статус погребенного. В погребении также были зафиксированы железные предметы, относящиеся к снаряжению верхового коня. В ходе поиска аналогий были получены косвенные свидетельства в пользу существовавших контактов между раннесредневековым населением Жетысу и Восточного Казахстана, Алтая. Это еще раз доказывает особое значение конского снаряжения в эпоху средневековых кочевников, когда на данной территории имели место масштабные боевые действия и массовые миграции населения. Сравнительно-

типовический анализ находок выявил круг наиболее близких по морфологическим и техническим характеристикам аналогий, которые указывают на принадлежность памятника к культуре древних тюрков. Памятник датируется VIII–IX вв.

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### *Introduction*

In this article, for the first time, new materials obtained during the study of the emergency monument located on the southwestern outskirts of the village of Almalyk, near the Talgar-Akulak highway, are introduced into scientific circulation (fig. 1). The burial was dis-

covered by chance during construction and earthworks. The emergency rescue group of the Issyk State Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve examined the area. The work on the mound was emergency, since the monument was located on the territory of private land ownership



Fig. 1. Location of the mound near the village Almalyk on the map

1-сүр. Картадағы Алмалық а. жаңындағы обаның орналасуы

Рис. 1. Расположение кургана у с. Алмалык на карте

and soon the construction of the fence was to begin directly at the facility. Since excavations were carried out in late autumn, excavation equipment (mini-excavator) was involved for research. With the help of technology, part of the soil that appeared as a result of human activity was removed from the surface of the object.

#### *Material characteristic*

The surface of the mound was a stealthy destroyed embankment with a height of 0.2 m. For the purposes of its study, a small excavation with an area of 2×1.5 m was laid, oriented along the line of the NS–WE. It was revealed that the upper part of the embankment was built of clay soil. In the process of cleaning, stones were recorded, which, apparently, were part of the ground burial structure in the form of a fence. Due to the destroyed surface of the mound, it was not possible to identify any of its structural features. A single burial of a human (man?) was found in a grave pit oriented along the W–E line, accompanied by the burial of a horse laid on a belly with bent legs, the skull faces north, that is, towards the buried (fig. 2). Both skeletons are located at the same level, at a depth of 1.4 m from the daily surface. The bones of the buried were in the northern part of the grave pit, the body lay in an elongated position on his back, head to the east. In the process of cleaning, near the skull on the right side, a bronze earring was discovered, decorated with beads and pearls (fig. 3). No other finds were found.

When clearing the skeleton of a horse, iron details of horse equipment were recorded: in the jaw area, bits with cheekpieces were found (fig. 4, 1–2), as well as a rounded object, which was probably an additional ring of the outer end of the bits to connect to the rein or

served as a link connecting the bridle parts with the plague belt (fig. 4, 3); two stirrups were recorded in the area of the horse's crupper (fig. 5, 1–2); buckle with movable tongue (fig. 5, 3).

#### *Discussion*

As a result of the study of the monument, only some data were obtained on the funeral rite, due to the fact that it was destroyed. Attention is drawn, first of all, to the escort of a dead man with a horse carcass.

Burials with a horse are found in almost all regions of steppe Eurasia and belong to the era of the early Middle Ages: in Altai, in Tuva, Zhetysu, Saryarka, Tarbagatai, Kyrgyzstan, etc. [Толегенов, Бесетаев 2012: 166]. The closest analogies are the burial grounds of Arasan, Alakol [Кушаев 1964], burial near Almaty [Курманкулов 1980], Sulu koyan [Самашев 1986], burial at the village Zhanaturmys [Нұрмұханбетов и др. 2012], Akterek [Айтқұл 2016], Butakty I [Горячев, Мотов 2018] etc. According to the burial rite, the above-described burial of a person with a horse should be dated with a wide chronological framework – 6th–9th centuries. Further, for more specificity of this dating by the typology method, we will try to determine the cultural and chronological framework of the monument from the discovered things in the grave pit.

*Earring.* Made of bronze. Arch in the form of an oblong triangle, with rounded corners. In the upper part, a little aside of the center there is a short pin decorated with a small pearl. The pendant is freely rotating, attached to the arch in the area of the bell. The bell is placed in the center of the arch and has a triangular projection in the upper part. Pendant is made of rounded wire in sec-

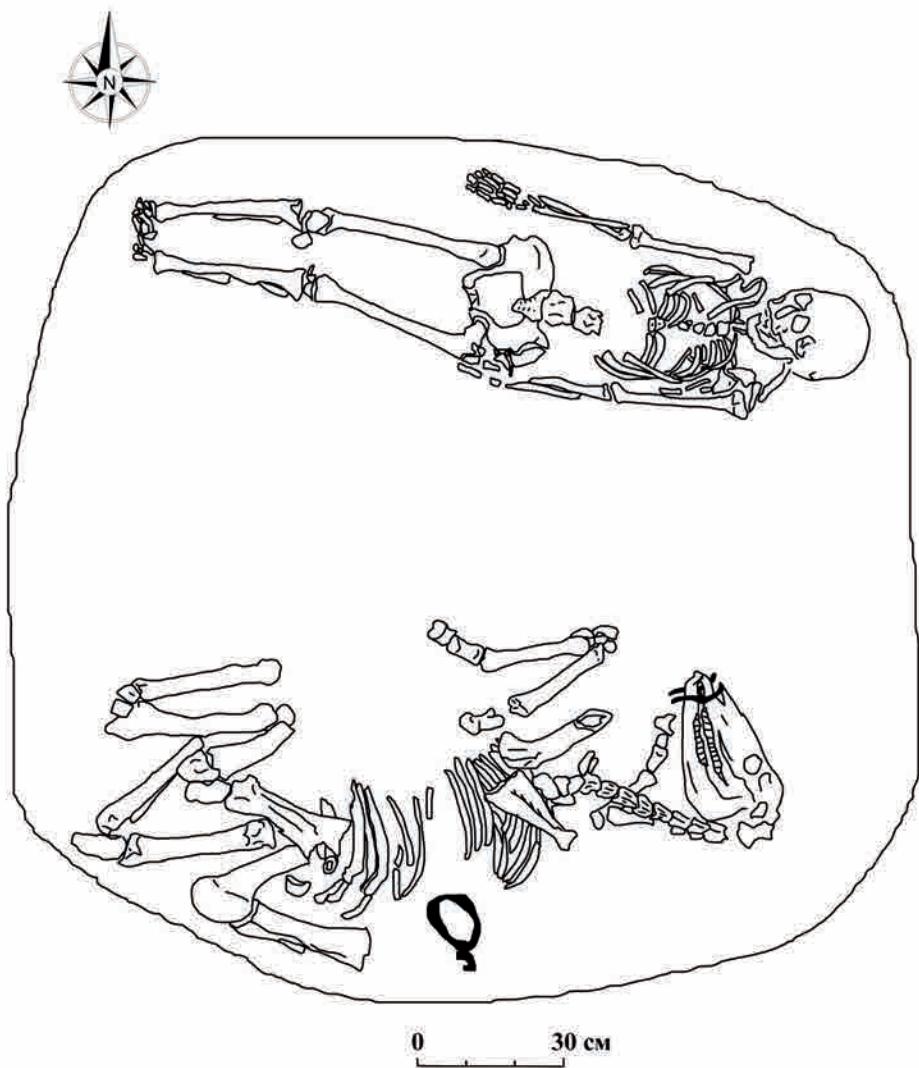


Fig. 2. Mound at the village Almalyk. Plan of the burial of a person and a horse  
2-сур. Алмалық а. жанындағы оба. Адам мен жылқыны жерлеу жоспары  
Рис. 2. Курган у с. Алмалык. План погребения человека и лошади

tion. Three small golden beads with a corrugated surface and a pearl are tightly nested on it.

Today, the medieval earrings of the population of steppe Eurasia are relatively well studied. This type of jewelry is sufficiently detailed in the research of V. Deopik [Деопик 1963: 131–132], A. Gavrilova [Гаврилова 1965: 64],

S. Pletneva [Плетнева 1967: 137–138], D. Savinov [Савинов 1982: 102–122], B. Ovchinnikova [Овчинникова 1990: 45–53], D. Stashenkov [Сташенков 1998], G. Kubarev [Кубарев 2005: 59–61], K. Tabaldiev [Табалдиев 1996], Arslanova F. [Арсланова 2013] and other.

A similar type of earring refers to the so-called «Saltov» [Мерперт



Fig. 3. Mound near the village of Almalyk.  
Bronze earring

3-сүр. Алмалық а. жанындағы оба.  
Қола сырға

Рис. 3. Курган у с. Алмалык.  
Бронзовая серьга

1951: 30], to the category of compound [Овчинникова 1990: 47]. As a result of the search for local versions of this category of jewelry, as well as their distri-

bution, D. Stashenkov came to the conclusion that Saltov type earrings should not be considered as imports, but as one of the manifestations of Eurasian fashion [Сташенков 1998: 213–231]. Relying on the developed typology of Alan jewelry by V. Deopik, B. Ovchinnikova with some changes identifies 12 types of early medieval earrings in the territory of Sayano-Altai, where she unites them according to specific characteristics into common groups and builds them in a certain chronological series [Овчинникова 1990: 48–50, рис. 10].

The burial earring near the village of Almalyk is close to the second type of the second group of such jewelry according to the typology of B. Ovchinnikova and dates from the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries. [Овчинникова 1990: 49–50, рис. 10, 6].

On the territory of Zhetsu earrings of this type are rare. The analogy can be traced in the barrow 448 of the

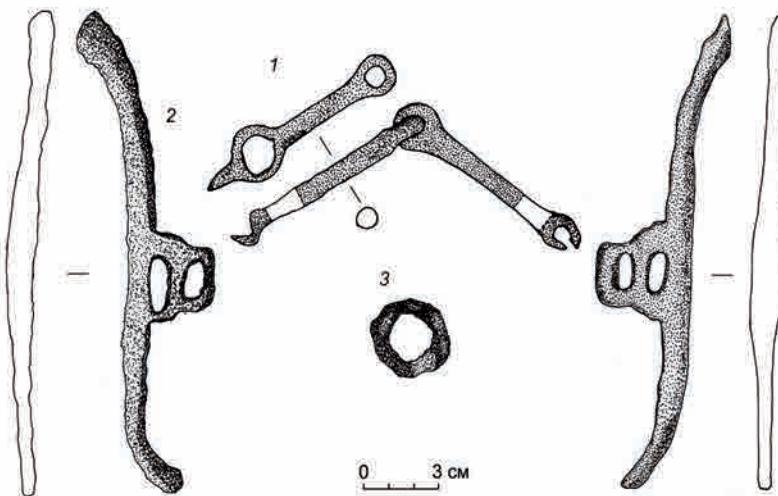


Fig. 4. Mound near the village of Almalyk. Details of the bridle complex (iron):  
1 – bit; 2 – bit hoops; 3 – bridle ring

4-сүр. Алмалық а. жанындағы оба. Жүген жабдықтарының бөлшектері (темір):  
1 – аузыздық; 2 – сұлық сақинасы

Рис. 4. Курган у с. Алмалык. Детали уздечного комплекса (железо):  
1 – удила; 2 – пасалий; 3 – уздечное кольцо

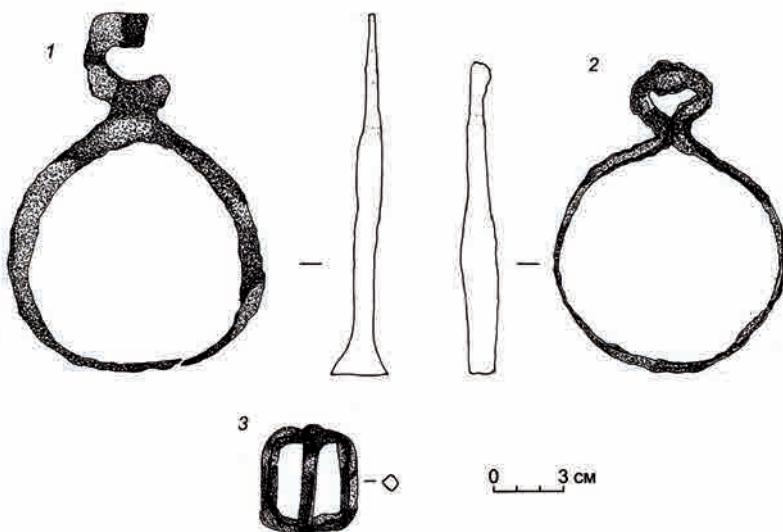


Fig. 5. Mound near the village of Almalyk. Details of the saddle complex (iron):  
1 – stirrups; 2 – buckle

5-сүр. Алмалық а. жаңындағы оба. Ер-тұрман жабдықтарының бөлшектері (тәмір):  
1 – узенгі; 2 – айылбас

Рис. 5. Курган у с. Алмалык. Детали седельного комплекса (железо):  
1 – стремена; 2 – подпружная пряжка

burial ground of Berkara [Бабанская 1956: 203, табл. 7, 10]. In neighboring territories, they are relatively often found in early medieval burials of East Kazakhstan [Арсланова 2013: 115, рис. 2, 20; 189, рис. 139; 228, табл. 1, 4; 317, рис. 2, 1–2; 342, рис. 2, 23], Altai [Гаврилова 1965: 64; Савинов 1982: 113; Кубарев 2005: 60, рис. 16, 1–6] and in the monuments of the Saltovo-Mayaki culture [Мерперт 1951: 24; Плетнева 1967: 123]. Two such earrings were discovered in Saryarka [Бейсенов, Кожаков, 2001: рис. 6, 1; Хасенова, 2015: рис. 6, 1]. A similar form of earrings is also known from images on stone sculptures of the Kazakh steppes and in Altai [Евтихова 1952: 105–107, рис. 62, 5; Ермоленко 2004: 27–28, рис. 13, 4].

Early medieval earrings found in burials or depicted on stone sculptures

served not only as a standard of beauty and fashion, but also emphasized a special status in society. Perhaps they served as a marker of age-sex difference [Овчинникова 1990: 50–51]. In early medieval funeral monuments, earrings are found in both male and female burials in one or two copies. There are also different earrings that make up the pair. According to B. Ovchinnikova, wearing different earrings was a kind of fashion [Овчинникова 1990: 47–48].

*Horse equipment.* The details of the bridle and saddle complex in the burials also serve as a relatively good indicator when dated by comparative typological analysis. Bits and cheekpieces are considered the most massive finds in ancient Turkic burials and are an important part of the bridle. Studying the ancient Turkic complexes of Altai, G. Kubarev

notes two main approaches in the issue of typology and classification of early medieval bits [Кубарев 2005: 119]. In the first approach, researchers consider this category in their evolutionary development, where bits and cheekpieces are a single «set» [Гаврилова 1965; Кирпичников 1973; Савинов 1984]. The object of analysis of the second approach are bits and cheekpieces separately [Кызласов 1983; Овчинникова 1990; Неверов 1992], issues of their compatibility are studied separately [Кубарев 2005: 119]. In the course of a detailed technical and typological analysis of the objects found in the burial, we will consider these categories separately, then by intercombination.

*Bits* are iron, forged, two-piece, both links are connected by two rings located on links in perpendicular planes. Outer rings of both parts belong to two-ring discharge and are arranged perpendicular to each other. Bits of this type with perpendicular-ring endings are relatively rare than “8”-shaped, the rings of which are located in the same plane. That is, large rings were intended to force cheekpieces, and external (small) rings were intended to tie the rein, possibly through special rings that were noted above. The outer (small) rings were broken. In this region, this type of bits has not yet been discovered, possibly due to the poor safety of iron objects in burials. According to the typology of B. Ovchinnikova, such bits belong to department “B” at the ends of the external links, and to the fifth type – perpendicular-ring in the location of the external rings [Овчинникова 1990: 92–93, рис. 41, 11], to the first type of the second group according to Kubarev G. [Кубарев 2005: 121, рис. 34, 14]. This type of bits is found in Altai, Tuva, Khakassia and Mongolia [Овчинникова 1990: 92–93; Кубарев 2005: 121].

*Cheekpieces* are iron, S-shaped, forged, have a two-piece protrusion (i.e. with one plate loop with two parallel oval holes along the rod). Both objects, like the bits, are highly corroded. Cheekpieces of this component of the bridle complex are relatively rare in neighboring regions and in interconnection too. Similar in shape and combination to bits and cheekpieces found in the mound No. 2 of the Tukta burial ground [Гаврилова 1965: 83–84, рис. 16, 4], mound at the sculpture in the tract Ak-Koba in Altai [Кубарев 2005: 121]. According to the method of fixing of the bits and cheekpieces, B. Ovchinnikova refers the present cheekpieces to the second section of the so-called «whole with a visor» [Овчинникова 1990: 96–97, рис. 42, 13–19].

In antiquity and the Middle Ages, the form, material and methods of combining of the bits and cheekpieces differed [Вайнштейн 1989: 69–72]. In this case, we can talk about the dynamic development of these parts in search of the most optimal functional value of horse equipment.

*The girth iron buckle with a tongue*, found in the burial, is one of the main parts of the saddle complex. Buckle has sub-rectangular frame made by forging method. According to Gavrilova A., girth buckles do not serve as the basis for dating [Гаврилова 1965: 34]. However, based on already available materials, as well as referring to classifications and typologies already developed by researchers [Кызласов 1983; Федоров-Давыдов 1966], you can divide this category by form – section, by form detail – by types. Thus, the fixed girth buckle belongs to the second type of the first section according to B. Ovchinnikova [Овчинникова 1990: 120–121, рис. 49, 3–9].

The buckles included in this type are the most numerous. The range of their occurrence is wide both chronologically and geographically. Such buckles are known in Southern Siberia and Central Asia in the 9<sup>th</sup>–12<sup>th</sup> centuries [Овчинникова 1990: 120–121].

*Stirrups.* Iron stirrups differing in morphological indicators were found in the burial. The first is with a protruding plate eye on a short narrowed neck with a horizontal opening for the trench. The arches have an average curvature. Footsteps in plan are elongated-oval, in section they still have lowered edges and stiffeners. The second is “8”-shaped rounded and arched with a loop-shaped eye in the form of an oval open in the neck. The arches have an average curvature. The footsteps are narrow in plan. The arrow with a loop-shaped eye is considered to be earlier and survived all other forms of iron stirrups [Гаврилова 1965: 34]. According to the typology of Kubarev G., the arrow with a plate eye belongs to the second group with a plate eye-loop, the second – to the first group of «8»-shaped [Кубарев 2005: 131–132, рис. 37]. Similar types of stirrups in large numbers are known in the circle of monuments of the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries. Kazakhstan, Altai and Tuva [Курманкулов 1980: 194–195, рис. 4, 1; Гаврилова 1965: табл. VII–X, XIV, XXII, XXXI].

In the works of some researchers, assumptions were made about the appearance of saddles with a rigid backbone and stirrups in the Scythian and Hunnic times. In the works of S. Weinstein and A. Ambrose, it was found that the stirrups come from a one-sided footrest, which was suspended from the saddle on the belt on the left side and served to land the rider in the saddle [Вайнштейн 1966: 64; Амброз 1973: 83]. According

to the research of A. Ambrose, the first stirrups appeared in China, Korea and Japan in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries AD. They were made of wood and sheathed with sheet copper or iron, suspended on belts from the saddle on two sides [Амброз 1973: 83, 86].

### *Conclusion*

Based on the analysis of burial equipment at this level of the study, it was possible to establish that the burial near the village Almalyk dates from the 8<sup>th</sup>–9<sup>th</sup> centuries. The chronology of the earring, as well as the stirrups of two varieties, with a plate eye and an “8”-shaped, played a decisive role in the definition of dating. An important detail recorded during the study of this burial was the escort of a dead man with a horse carcass. It is the main hallmark of the funeral rite of the ancient Turks. Usually the horse was located to the left of the dead, in the southern part of the grave, and oriented in the opposite direction from the person [Кубарев 2005: 17]. It should be noted that in this burial, the orientation of the animal relative to man is uncharacteristic for ancient Turks.

Medieval monuments of Zhetysu play a crucial role in the study of the early stage of the history of Turkic tribes. According to written and archaeological sources, Zhetysu was the territory where the formation of the Western Turkic Khaganate took place [Досымбаева 1973: 138–162]. This region with the richest history acquires special importance, since here it is possible to trace the process of transforming the nomadic culture, which takes place at the turn of the eras – the era of the early nomads and the Middle Ages, which is complex in research terms. According to the famous orientalist Yu. Zuev, it is in Zhetysu that

continuity is traced in the culture of the ancient Turks and the population of the previous time [Зуев 2002: 23–27]. In this regard, the timely introduction of new materials from the territory under

consideration is extremely important. It is necessary to continue research, to further accumulate the source base so that our ideas about this era are as complete as possible.

### ЛИТЕРАТУРА

1. *Айтқұл Х.А.* ҚР Мемлекеттік орталық музейінің 2014 жылы Алматы облысы Жамбыл ауданына қарасты Ақтерек ауылдық округінде орналасқан археологиялық ескерткіштерге жүргізілген қазба жұмыстарының нәтижелері // «Қазіргі жоғарғы білім жүйесіндегі археология, этнология және музейтану» атты «VIII Оразбаев оқуалары» халықаралық ғылыми-әдістемелік конференция материалдары / жауапты ред. А.Б. Қалыш. (Алматы к., 1–2 сәуір, 2016 ж.). Алматы: Қазақ университеті, 2016. 137–146 бб.
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