

# Chach. (Finds Of the Objects with Christian Symbols)

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**Resume:** The article publishes subjects related to Christian culture. There are published unique finds of objects from Chacha of the period of antiquity and the early Middle Ages.

**Key words:** coin, money turnover, coinage, Byzantium, weight, Sogd.

## Introduction

Data from written sources on the problem of the Christians entering Transoxiana and the rare archaeological finds have been investigated by orientalists and archaeologists [2, 1959 y. ; 3, 1963y.; 4, 1966 r.; 6,7, 1968 y.; 1974y.; 11, 1972y.; 19, 1954y. : 15 – 19; 21. 1973 y. 232-234; 18, 1984y.; 1, 1994r.; 8, 2010y.; 20, 2014y.; 13-17, 1994 y., 2010 r., 2012 y., 2012a y., 2014y.]. The first compilation of articles about the history of Christianity in Central Asia was published in 1994. It includes 13 articles by 15 authors informing about archaeological and numismatic research related to Christianity (10.1994y.). Many illustrations from the articles of the compilation was used by A. Gritsina without reference to the primary source [5, 2018 y.].

However, new finds confirming the Christians' arrival in Transoxiana remained largely unknown until recently. After 2010 year, fixing lots of new artifacts with Christian symbols have been recorded, as in Varakhsha hillfort in Sugd and its surroundings area, Paikend, and in Chach (Kanka hillfort, Mayskiy township).

## Material and methods

The number of finds on the Kanka hillfort and in the surrounds of Varakhsha, connected with christianity in ancient Central Asia was made in the 2000s. (Pic. 1). Finds of objects from Byzantium are very rare for a museum. The last time Byzantine coins entered the museum was 70 years ago. However, over three years (2010-2013), the collections of the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan were replenished with unique Byzantium exhibits. A copper coin of Arkady (395-408), the first Byzantine emperor, was found at the Kanka hillfort and transferred to the museum (Pic. 1, 1). Among the finds from the Kanka hillfort there are two weights, one of them with a weight of 3 nomisms and the second one weight of half of 3 nomisms. In addition, crosses were found at this hillfort: one of the Nestorian types with a turquoise insert in the center, the second with an imitation of the insert, it was broken off, pectoral crosses the third one - stone made (Pic. 1, 5,6). Unfortunately, the finder did not indicate the exact place of finds on the territory of the site. By analogy with the crosses from Sogd they can be dated back to the 7th - 8th centuries. [20: 154 –160].

In 2019 the State Museum of the History of Uzbekistan of the Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan (hereinafter referred to as the GMIUz) receives items from the Kanka site. Most of these items are ceramic with Christian symbols. The most remarkable archaeologically is the whole dish with the image of a high-throated jug with the image on its body of a Nestorian-type cross.

And finally, the unique, priceless for science receipt of items from the township of Mayskiy, Tashkent region in 2013 (Pic. 1, 2,4). All these finds testify to the trade, cultural and historical ties of the ancient state formations of Central Asia with the Byzantine Empire in the 5th-6th centuries.

In early May 2013, in the village of Mayskiy, during excavation works to lay water trays, workers discovered gold objects. Subsequently, these finds were transferred to the State Museum of History Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Uzbekistan (GMIUz) by the employers of the National Security

Service of the Republic of Uzbekistan, including various parts of a gold belt set, plaques applied to the bridle, gold stripes and plaques on clothes and fragments of other objects. The whole complex of objects discovered in Mayskiy suggests that, most likely, the workers discovered a unique burial of a noble Byzantine warrior or nobleman. The fact that this was not an ordinary person is evidenced by the details of the golden Byzantine belt set. Golden belts belonged only to very wealthy people who occupied a certain place in the system of the state apparatus or a high military position. There are numerous examples of references to this in written sources. There is no doubt that typesetting belts in the early Middle Ages reflected the origin, official or military rank, and the merits of their owners. For violations, as Procopius of Caesarea testifies, they were deprived of "the belt and rank." The high position of the owner of the belt was reflected not only in the choice of the precious metal in this case - gold, but also in the shape of the belt details, in their design. The simplest belt was wearing by all members of society, and more expensive leather belts with bronze plaques could had only a circle of people of a certain income. A special role in society was played by people who had belts with gold plaques and onlays.

Among the finds there is the only gold coin of Byzantium - a tremissis, presumably of the 6th century. The coin circle is slightly deformed with two edges. W. - 1.38 g (1.375 g); D. - 14.6x13.5 mm., The ratio of the axes - 6 hours (Pic. 1, 4). During this period, in Byzantium, a coin was released from gold - it was a solid, in addition there were coins in denominations of half a solid - a semissis and a denomination that was one-third of a solid - tremissis. On the obverse side of the tremissis from Mayskiy, there is a bust image of a beardless emperor in a ceremonial tiara - a royal headdress, the upper part of the armor and a fragment of a shield with the image of a horseman are visible. The initial characters of the legend probably convey the name of the Byzantine emperor Justin I or Justinian I

(preferably Justin I): "DN (I) YSTI ... XC / GIY ...". The reverse side of the coin features the image of Victoria. The image of Victoria, the goddess of Victory, is characteristics early Byzantine coins of the 5th-6th centuries. Goddess Victoria on the Byzantine coins impersonated the victory of the emperor in the war. During the reign of JustinI, and more likely at the end of his reign, the image of the goddess of Victory Victoria is replaced by an angel. Images of beardless emperors are traditional for early Byzantine numismatics up to the Emperor Phocas reign (602-610). Since 602, the emperors of Byzantium have been depicted with a beard. On a coin from Mayskiy, the emperor is depicted three-quarters to the right and without a beard. This gives us grounds to date the complex of objects to the 6th century. It is also known that in the 6th-7th centuries significant changes took place in the iconography of Byzantine coins, as a result of which the traditional image of Victoria on the reverse side of the gold solid was replaced by the image of an angel.

On the golden onlays from the belt from Mayskiy, there are images characteristic for the coins of Byzantium of the early period (Pic. 1, 2). This is a storyline traditional for Byzantine iconography - the image of an angel. Both the belt itself and the images of angels served as amulets for a warrior, not a simple owner of the belt. Such an angel, identical to the images of angels on early Byzantine coins, is found on the belt buckles from Mayskiy, which confirms the date given by the coin –6th century. According to Christian tradition, the angel embodied the image of the leader of the heavenly army against the forces of evil - the image of the Archangel Michael. In addition, Michael in the Christian tradition acts as a mediator between God and people. He is the keeper of the magical words that created the heavens and the earth, he enters the names of the righteous in the book. Michael taught Adam agriculture, on Mount Sinai he gave the tablets of the Law to Moses [5: 158-160]. The image of an angel on gold plaques from Mayskiy is almost identical to the image of this character on the reverse side of a rather rare type of gold coins from the period of the short joint reign of Justin I and Justinian I (April-August 527 y.).

Objects from Mayskiy undoubtedly contain products of Byzantine production, but there are also some details similar to finds from the Altai mounds dating back to the period of the 1st Turkic Khaganate. Period of the 5th-6th centuries is interesting in that this is the time of the search and restoration of contacts between Byzantium and the Sogdians, and later the Turks together with the Sogdians in the field of trade. The period of searching for new trade routes. Participation in the trade brought great profits. It is known that both the imperial house and representatives of the Byzantine nobility took part in trade, sought to enrich his treasury. Byzantium and Sogdians within the framework of the Turkic Khaganate, both skillful traders, were looking for ways and means of making trade deals. Sassanian Iran was a serious obstacle. Silk was the cause

of strife. As is known, even in the Kushan period, the Great Silk Road passed through Central Asia. It connected the countries of Central Asia with Rome. The Roman Empire and Byzantium needed silk. Silk was presented as a gift even to emperors. By that time, the Sogdians were already making silk fabrics themselves and were interested in trade with Byzantium.

Therefore, it is no coincidence that the finds from Mayskiy contain purely Byzantine items and separate plaques, similar to material from the Altai burial mounds.

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