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ZOOMORPHIC HANDLE CERAMICS FOUND IN MYNTOBE BURIAL GROUND

Archaeological research reveals the special role of the image of animals in the worldview and religious beliefs of the nomadic tribes inhabiting the Eurasian continent. For a specific purpose, ancient inhabitants made vessels with images of animals intended for everyday life or religious rites. When researching the monuments of nomadic and sedentary tribes, vessels and cauldrons with zoomorphic handles, swords, and daggers with zoomorphic handles are increasingly found. Unfortunately, their purpose, chronology, area of distribution, and typology of zoomorphic pens have been little studied. In this article, therefore, we have presented a comparative analysis of zoomorphic handles found in monuments of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes living in the Eurasian continent, focusing on the purpose, zoning, chronology and regional peculiarities of zoomorphic-handled ceramics. From this comparative analysis, we have identified the specific features of zoomorphic handles of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes and the chronology of steady ceramics from burial ground number 3 in Myntobe. In addition, the article provides information about the Zhetasar, Otyrar-Karatau, and the distribution of the Kauynshy cultures.

Key words: Zoomorphic handle, Kangly, Sarmatian, Myntobe, Syrdarya, Kaunchi, Otyrar-Karatau, Zhetiasar.

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Мыңтөбе қорымынан табылған зооморф тұтқалы керамика

Еуразия құрлығында мекендеген тайпалардың дүниетанымы мен діни-ғұрыптық сенімдерінде жануарлардың маңызды орынға ие болғандығын археологиялық зерттеулер дәлелдеуде. Себебі, көшпелі және отырықшы тайпалардың ескерткіштерінен зооморфты тұтқалы керамикалар мен қазандар, зооморфты сапты қылыштар мен қанжарлар көптеп табылуда. Өкінішке орай зооморфты тұтқалардың қолданылу мақсаты, таралу аймағы, хронологиясы және аймақтық ерекшеліктері аз зерттелген. Біз бұл мақалада, осы күнге дейін аз зерттелген зооморфты тұтқалы керамикаларды зерттей келе, зооморфты тұтқалы керамикалардың қолданылу мақсатына, таралу аймағына, хронологиясына және аймақтық ерекшеліктеріне тоқтала отырып, Еуразия құрлығында мекендеген қаңлы және сармат тайпаларының ескерткіштерінен табылған зооморфты тұтқаларға салыстырмалы анализ жасадық. Зерттеу нәтижелерінде салыстырмалы анализ жасаудың арқасында қаңлы және сармат тайпаларының зооморфты тұтқаларының өзіндік ерекшеліктерін, Мыңтөбе қорымындағы №3 обадан табылған зооморфты тұтқалы керамиканың хронологиясын анықтадық. Сонымен қатар, мақалада қаңлы тайпаларының Қауыншы, Отырар-Қаратау, Жетіасар мәдениеттерінің таралу аймағы, өзіндік ерекшелігі және зерттелу тарихы жайында мағлұматтар бере отырып, Қауыншы, Отырар-Қаратау және Жетіасар мәдениеттеріне тән ескерткіштерден табылған зооморф тұтқалы ыдыстардың ұқсастықтары мен өзіндік ерекшеліктерін анықтадық.

Түйін сөздер: зооморф тұтқа, қаңлы, сармат, Мыңтөбе, Сырдария, Қауыншы, Отырар-Қаратау, Жетіасар.

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Зооморфная керамика с ручкой, найденная на могильнике Мынтобе

Археологические исследования раскрывают особую роль образа животных в мировоззрении и религиозных верованиях кочевых племен, населявших Евразийский континент. Изображая животных на сосудах, различных предметах, предназначенных для повседневной жизни или религиозных обрядов, древние жители преследовали определенную цель. На ряде памятников кочевых и оседлых племен найдены сосуды и котлы с зооморфными ручками, мечи и кинжалы с зооморфной рукояткой. К сожалению, предназначение, хронология, область распространения и типология зооморфных ручек исследованы недостаточно. Найденный при исследовании кургана №3 могильника Мынтобе сосуд с зооморфной ручкой относится к типу стилизованного сокращенного вида. Также в статье представлена информация о территории распространения данного типа керамики в Жетиасарской, Отырар-Каратауской и Каунчиских культурах. Сосуд из могильника Мынтобе датируется нами I в. до н.э. – III в. н.э., в целом сосуды с зооморфными ручками встречаются со второй половины I тысячелетия до н.э. Работа выполнена в рамках проекта МОН РК № AP13068455 «Исследование археологических курганов нижнего течения реки Келес в контексте археологии и междисциплинарных наук».

Ключевые слова: Зооморфная ручка, кангюй, сармат, Мынтобе, Сырдарья, Кауыншы, Отрар-Каратау, Жетиасар.

Introduction

The Myntobe burial ground is located on the right site of the Syrdarya river, near the river Keles which pours water into Syrdarya. The geographical coordinates of Myntobe are: N 41.013238; E 68.626213; 285 m above sea level. In the southwestern-northeastern direction, 2 km away, there are 646 plaques scattered around a cemetery. The cemetery's oblong diameter is 6 to 33 m and the height is 0.65 to 4.30 m. To the east of the tomb are the ancient Karatobe, Kauynshytepe, Zhuantobe,

Aktepe and Shash towns and to the north-west are the Kultobe, Utirtobe, Aktobe, Shaushykumtobe and Shardara (Map 1). The region is one of the most fertile regions in Central Asia, as the Kurkeles, Keles, Chirchik and Angren rivers terminate along the Syrdarya River. Looking at the cities and large tombs located above rivers, it is possible to see that nomadic tribes in the region lived from ancient times. It is clear that Syrdarya is a natural boundary between peoples engaged in nomadic livestock farming in Central Asia and those engaged in sedentary cropcultivation.



Map 1 – Archeological map of Keles region. [Maksimova et al.1968]

One of the oldest tribes living in the region is the Kanglys (BC 2th – AD 5th centuries), ranging from the Fergana region in the south to the lower Syrdarya river, and from the Karatau slopes to the Talas river in the east [Bichurin 1950; Baipakov, Taymagambetov 2009]. Over the years, scientists such as G.V. Grigoryev, S.P. Tolstov, A.N. Bernshtam, and L.M. Levina have divided the Kanglys culture into three distinct regions. These zones were named the Zhetasar, Otyrar-Karatau and Kauynshy cultures [Baipakov, Taymagambetov 2009: 208-230].

Monuments of the Zhetasar culture are located to the east of the Aral Sea, in the Kuandarya and Zhandarya valleys along the lower reaches of the Syrdarya [Levina 1971: 10]. From 1948 to 1951, the Khorezm ethnographic archaeological expedition under the leadership of S.P. Tolstov revealed a number of monuments that are richer and now more accurately described [Baipakov, Taymagambetov 2009: 223]. Within the Otyrar-Karatau culture, monuments are located in the valleys of the Syrdarya river, the southern and northern slopes of Karatau, and along the Talas, Arys, and Bogen rivers. From 1948 to 1952, as a result of the South-Kazakhstan archaeological expedition conducted by Bernshtam, the Otyrar-Karatau culture has been identified and introduced into the scientific

circulation [Ageev, Patsevich 1958; Levina 1971; Baipakov, Taymagambetov 2009]. The monuments of the Kauynshy culture are located in the valleys of the Syrdarya, Kurkeles, Keles, Shyrshyk and Angren rivers in the Tashkent oasis. In 1934-1938, under the leadership of G.V. Grigoryev, an archaeological expedition reidentified the Kangly cultural monuments in the Tashkent oasis as those of the “Kauynshy culture”, based primarily on the work of expedition researcher Yangiyul [Levina 1971; Baipakov, Taymagambetov 2009]. Based on the archaeological finds found in the monuments of the three above-mentioned cultures, these three Kangly tribes dominated the establishment of the state, between the 2nd century BC and 5th century AD. [Levina 1971; Baipakov, Taymagambetov, 2009].

In the aforementioned Kangly tribe’s homeland, we can say that the monuments along the Kurkeles and Keles rivers are very under researched. Therefore, in August-September 2017, we excavated a burial ground on the Keles river, focusing on a catacomb labelled tomb № 3 (Fig.1). Five sets of skeletal remains, a sculpture, seven pieces of ceramic pitchers, three winged iron arrowheads, an iron knife, and ten beads and bronze tubes were found in this tomb. The handle of one of the identified pitchers is zoomorphic.

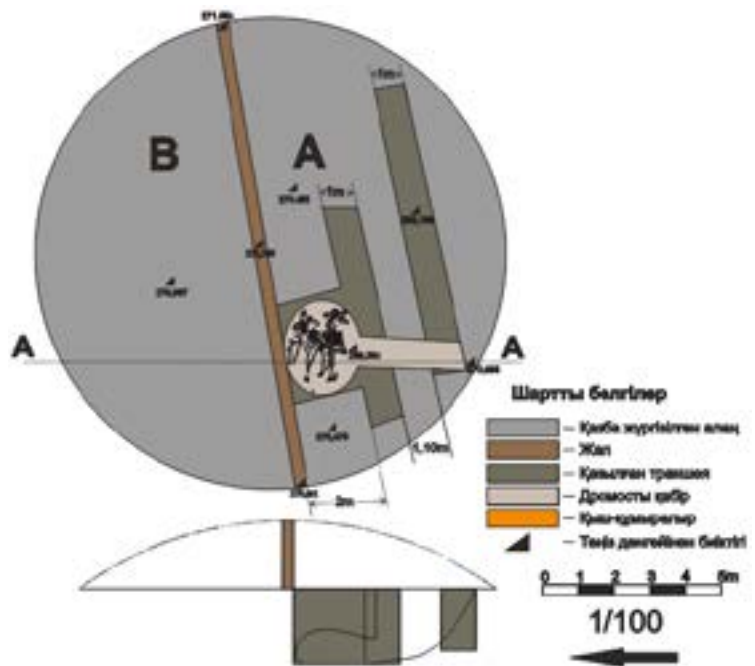


Figure 1 – The Myntobe tomb № 3 is a catacomb drum burial.

History of Research at the Myntobe Burial Ground

Briefly speaking about the history of the research of Myntobe, it is important to consider the history of the burial ground together with regional studies of the Tashkent Oasis. The first research in the region was conducted by ethnographer and regional linguist E.T. Smirnov. He conducted research in the middle of the Syrdarya river from the late 1880s to the early 1890s, describing the region's large and small rivers in his report, and posing a question regarding the use of the hills by the tribes in the past. Smirnov also gave information that people of Niyazbash (a suburb of Tashkent) had found a ceramic pitcher on one of the hills [Smirnov 1896: 7-17].

The first archaeological excavation in the region was carried out in 1887 by ethnographer of regional history N.P. Ostroumov. He described the architecture of the drum catacombs in the region, identifying about 20 burial grounds in the Nikiforovski area near Tashkent [Ostroumov 1891]. Archeological excavation was continued in the region by members of the Turkic Circle of Amateur Archeologists [Vreevsky 1895: 4-5]. The members of the Circle described the ancient cities, settlements, and burial sites of the Syrdarya river and excavated a number of monuments [Ostroumov 1899; 1906; Rudnev 1900; Kravaev 1914].

Archeological research in the region has been carried out systematically since the 1930s. In 1934-1938, with head of research G.V. Grigoryev, the Yangiyul archeological expedition conducted excavations in the ancient Kauynchi-Tepa, Alimbai-Tepa, Shurali-Sai and other sites at the Kauynchy-Tepa burial ground [Grigoryev 1935; 1940; 1948; Grigoryev, Gromova 1940]. As a result of these archaeological investigations carried out by G.V. Grigoryev in the ancient Kauynichy-Tepa and its surroundings, the unique culture of Sangaria, including the oasis in the Syrdarya region, was named the "Kauynchy Culture" [Levina 1971; Baipakov, Taymagambetov 2009].

From 1948 to 1952, under head researcher A.N. Bernshtam, members of the South Kazakhstan archeological expedition E.I. Ageeva and G.I. Patsevich conducted archeological research in the region. This work resulted in the discovery of several ancient cities and burial ground in the middle stream of the Syrdarya on the river Keles. In addition, the above-mentioned scientists conducted archaeological excavations and described the chronology of monuments at the Aktobe and Shaushikum settlements, and at the Myntobe and 1Uzun-Ata burial grounds [Ageeva, Patsevich 1958:

19-60].

From 1958 to 1962, under A.G. Maksimova members of the Shardara archaeological expedition M.S. Mershiey, B.I. Vainberg, L.M. Levina, A.A. Charikov, and F.H. Arslanova conducted an archaeological exploration on the middle stream of the Syrdarya, Keles and Kurkeles rivers discovering several ancient cities and burial ground. The first information about the Myntobe cemetery appears as a result of these studies, and the burial site was mapped (Map 1). The above-mentioned scholars also had archaeological excavations in the region at the Aktobe I-II and Shaushikum villages and the Zhaman-Togai, Aktobe, Shaushikum, Torebai-Tumsyk, and Shardara burial grounds which determined chronology, architecture, and monuments of the area [Maksimova 1958; 1959; 1960; 1961; 1962; Maksimova, Mershiey 1960; Maksimova et al. 1968; Mershiey 1960; 1962; 1965; Charikov 1959; Arslanova 1960].

In 1982, N.P. Podushkin began to draw the attention of archaeologists to the area. He conducted archaeological explorations, submitted the local reservoir to a semi-descaling projector, and also placed the basement on the surface as shown on the map 1st BC – 5th AD centuries [Nurgaliev 1994: 223-224]. From 2016 to 2018, A. N. Podushkin, who has been studying the kangli culture for many years, conducted archaeological excavations at several burial sites in the Myntobe Burial Ground, identified the catacombs of Dromos, and collected valuable data belonging to these tribes. Based on the data collected in the course of the research, the burial mounds that were excavated belong to the next kangli period and date back to the III-IV centuries BC (Podushkin, Donec, 2018: 99-104).

In 2017 and 2022, scientists of the Research Institute of Archaeology of the International Kazakh-Turkish university named after Khoja Ahmed Yasawi conducted archaeological research in the Myntobe burial ground, identifying 2 catacombs of Dromos and 2 saganaly burial sites. It turned out that the discovered objects belong to the kangyu culture (Zhetibaev, Sizdikov, Gursoj, 2020: 409-418; Taleev, Sizdikov, Seraliey, 2019: 48-62).

Purpose of Zoomorphic handled Ceramics

Considering that zoomorphic-handled ceramics and boilers, zoomorphic rope swords, and daggers were all found in the monuments of tribes living in the Eurasian continent, zoomorphic images occupy an important place in the outlook of nomadic and settled tribes. It is clear that tribes living in ancient times depict animals that they see around in their daily lives or in religious practices.

From the end of the 19th century, interest has increased in zoomorphic ceramics. Scientists researching zoomorphically-articulated ceramics have come up with various conclusions about the purpose of the zoomorphic handles. Studying the zoomorphic-handled ceramics, K.M. Skalon points out that zoomorphic images on the ceramic handle of ceramic tiles were made as defender of the detecting the continuity of the zoomorphic ceramics into the ethnographic period [Skalon 1941: 182-184]. This conclusion is supported by G.V. Grigoryev, who points out that the zoomorphic levers were associated with the beliefs of ancient tribes and symbolize the taut mages of their faith in vessels [Grigoryev 1935; 1948]. E.I. Ageeva argues that the zoomorphic levers are associated with the farming practices of the ancient tribes, with the nomadic or settled tribes depicting the handles of the animal's foundations [Ageeva, Patsevich, 1958; Maksimova et al. 1968]. Following years of ceramic study, B.A. Litvinsky says that zoomorphic leavers

on the handlebars are associated with ancient *hvarn* symbols, and that zoomorphic levers arose in the religious ritual beliefs of nomadic and settled tribes under the influence of celestialism. In addition, Litvinsky considers zoomorphic handles signs of luxury, guarantors of health, and protection against evil forces [Litvinsky 1968: 7-100]. Supporting research suggests the zoomorphic handles are imbued with magic properties. The findings of the above-mentioned authors are E.G. Kastanian [Kastanian 1955: 247-255], M.E. Voronets [Voronets 1951: 62-63], K. Baypakov [Baypakov 1980: 32-45], V.M. Kosyanenko [Kosyanenko 1998: 167-178], etc.

K.M. Scalon's conclusion has been criticized by V.B. Vinogradov, who researched the zoomorphic-handle vessels of Sarmatian tribes. He suggests that zoomorphic handles were used for decorative purposes, not for cult purposes, given that the zoomorphic handles of gold or silver could attract the attention of the person (Fig. 2) [Vinogradov 1961: 43-45].



Figure 2 – Zoomorphic handle dishes found in the Filippovka burial ground, tomb № 1 [Fedoseenko 2003: 19-23].

In this article, we will show that zoomorphic handles were created in the beliefs of nomadic and settled tribes as a sign of prosperity, guarantor of health, protection against evil forces, as well as for the protection of the container and the substance, based on the work of the above-mentioned researchers. Traces of black smoke remained inside of handled dishes found during archaeological excavations,

suggesting that nomadic and settled tribes often used zoomorphic handle dishes in religious ceremonies and everyday life (10 YR 4/1).

Zoomorphic handle ceramics found in Myntobe burial ground and in other regions Zoomorphic-handled ceramics are found in monuments of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes living in the Eurasian continent. In this article, we can say

that archaeological finds reveal that zoomorphic leaflets depicted the images of animals including sheep, wild boar, horses, birds, dogs, griffins and other unidentified types (Fig. 3). In addition, the zoomorphic handles of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes are being identified.

The main part of the finds on Kangyuy period monuments is made of, alongside the dishes with zoomorphic handles in the shape of a sheep (ram), the containers where distinguishing and describing the animal represented in the handles is very difficult. The image of the sheep on the handle is placed vertically with its head pointing upwards, i.e. towards the neck of the vessel. Animal's head is raised, horns are in the shape of spiral bent inwards. The image of the sheep as well as boar dominate zoomorphic handles of Sarmat pottery. The figures are depicted vertically and heads are facing the walls of the container. The head of the animal is lowered or closes into the neck of the container. Identical finds of sheep figures also come across in collections

from city-sites of Kauynshy-Tepe [Grigorev 1935: 16], Alimbaitepe [Grigorev 1940: 12], Ak-tobe 2 [Levina 1971: 130-137], Zetiasar, Badikasar, Tompakasar [Levina 1996: 243-249] and others, and burials at Kauynshytepe (kurgan №11) [Grigorev 1940:12], Almalyk (kurgan №1) [Aminov, Buriyakov, Hodzhaev 1978: 79-87], Dashti-Bodomak (kurgans № 7, № 17), Asht (kurgans №2, №8), Charchanaksai (kurgan № 21) [Litvininsky 1973: 2-5], and Shirin-Say (kurgans № 14, 21) [Gaidukevich 1947: 92-109; 1952: 331-359], Shirin-Say (kurgan 28) [Sorokin 1954: 131-147], Karamazar (kurgans № 1, 2, 5-8, and 10-15), Tura-Tash (kurgan №3) and Isfarin (kurgan № 9) [Litvinsky 1973: Table 11-28]. Sarmat ceramics with the figures of boar and sheep were also found in the burials of Kyz-Aul (kurgan No 6), Fangori (kurgan no 46) [Medvedev 2012: 42-52], Manich, Mozdok (kurgan №6), Ust-Labin 2 (kurgan №46) Pochtovaya, Ladojski (kurgan № 22), Armavir (kurgan № 1) and in the burial ground near city of Kerch [Skalon 1941: 173-217].



Figure 3 – Zoomorphic handle ceramics: 1-Altyn Asar; 2-Kerch; 3-Ust-Labin; 4-Krasnodar; 5-Tashkent channel; 6-Altynrobe; 7-Zhutovski; 8-Ladojski; 9-Djun; 10 – Karamazar; 11- Myntobe

A particular zoomorphic-handle ceramic found in tomb №3 in Myntobe is handmade, 11.5 cm in height, 10 cm in rim diameter, 0.4-0.6 cm wide and with a 6 cm in base diameter. The handle of the crock depicts an animal that can't be identified clearly. The animal's mouth is twisted, with two

ears open and rounded two eyes. The total length of the zoomorphic handle is 8 cm and the thickness is 0.9-2.0 cm. Inside and outside of the container are traces of black smoke (10 YR 4/1). The pitcher consists of mica, tiny stone, lime, and herbs. The burn rate is moderate (Fig. 4.1).

The zoomorphic handles found in the Myntobe burial belong to the Kangly tribes, specifically the Kauynchy culture. After years of studying the ceramics of the Kangly tribes, Levina points out that images of a dog (or possibly a fox) do not necessarily describe the kind of animal in the zoomorphic levers that are typical of the Kauynchy culture (Levina 1971: 165). During our research, we used a comparative analysis of zoomorphic handles found in the Kauynchy culture. Characteristic of this culture are vertical bearded animals, which do not characterize the animal type, and zoomorphic levers, from which particular animals cannot be identified (Figure 4.1).

Chronology of Zoomorphic Handle Ceramics

It was discovered that simultaneously with the use of zoomorphic handles among the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes, zoomorphic handle ceramics appeared in the material culture of neighboring tribes.

Based on the research presented here and the findings of scientists studying Sarmatian culture, zoomorphic ceramics initially appeared in the 1st century AD in the Volga region [Moshkova 1956; Abramova 1959], then began to spread to the North Caucasus and Northern Black Sea regions [Smirnov 1951; Vinogradov 1961]. There are also

zoomorphic handle ceramics found in burial №6 in the tomb of Manych and the Mozdok tomb (1st century BC – 1st century AD), tomb №22 in Ladojsk, tomb № 1 in Armavir, tomb № 6 in Kyz-Aul [Scalon 1941: 173-217], and tomb №46 in Fangori. [Medvedev 2012: 42-52].

Based on the research of L.M. Levina, who studied the ceramics of the Kangly tribes for many years, we can say that zoomorphic handle ceramics emerged in the lower reaches of the Syrdarya in the second half of the 1st millennium BC and then began to spread to the middle and upper streams of the Syrdarya [Levin 1977: 517-518]. This is because zoomorphic ceramics were found in the town of Tompakasar located in the lower reaches of the Syrdarya river (Lewin 1977: 517-518), Kok-Mardan, Altyntobe [Baypakov, Taymagambetov 2009: 208-210], Ak-tobe 2 (Levina 1971: 130-137), located in the middle stream of the Syrdarya river (Levina 1971: 100) at tomb № 12 in Djun [Oboldueva 1988: 157-168], and tomb № 11 (Levina 1971: 168-179) (1 – 3rd AD centuries), and zoomorphic arched ceramics were found in tombs № 14, № 21, and № 28 (Gaidevich 1947: 92-109), and Tura-Tash tomb № 3 (Litvininsky 1973: 96-97) in the upper reaches of Syrdarya. These date to the 2nd to 5th centuries AD.



Figure 4 – Zoomorphic handle ceramics, which belong to Otyrar- Karatau culture tribes of Kangly: 1-Myntobe; 2-Kok-Mardan; 3-Altyntobe; 4- Kok-Mardan; 5- Kauynshytepe

This research and that from adjacent zones sheds light on the chronology of the zoomorphic handle ceramics found in tomb № 3 in Myntobe. Through analysis of the architecture of catfish burials, collective burial slabs, ceramic vases, mosaic articles, knives and three winged pistols, we date the Myntobe tomb № 3 between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AD. Therefore, the zoomorphic handle ceramics found in Myntobe tomb №3 also date to between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AD.

Conclusion

Animals had an important place in the world outlook and religious beliefs of tribes living in the Eurasian continent. The evidence for this is the zoomorphic handle ceramics, boilers, swords, and daggers found in the monuments of nomadic and settled tribes. It is clear that the tribes which lived between the 1st century BC and the 3rd century AD depicted animals that were common in their daily lives. In this regard, zoomorphic handle ceramics have been used in the beliefs of nomadic and settled tribes as signs of prosperity, guarantors of health, and protection against the evil forces. We can therefore say that zoomorphic ceramics were used in daily practice, and had strong ties to religious beliefs.

Zoomorphic handle ceramics found in the monuments of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes show zoomorphic leaves decorated with the images of animals (sheep, wild boars, horses, dogs, birds, griffins, and other unidentified animals) (Figure 3). Moreover, comparative analysis of the zoomorphic levers of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes revealed that the majority of zoomorphic levers found in the monuments of the Kangly tribes depict the image of animals which do not accurately reflect the true form of the animal species. The majority of zoomorphic monuments created by Sarmatian tribes depict a wild boar.

Zoomorphic handle ceramics found in the Myntobe burial were made to the specifications of those belonging to the Kauynshy culture. Our research undertook a comparative analysis of zoomorphic handles found in the monuments of the Kauynshy and Otyrar-Karatau cultures. This work shows that that in addition to the rugs in the zoo-shaped horns, which are typical of the Kauynshy culture, the vertical bearded animals are depicted and the Otyrar-Karatau culture in the typical zoomorphic levers, along with the ram of the sheep, the unlucky animal's ears that do not come to describe the particular animal (Picture 4).

Conducting comparative analysis of zoomorphic handles of containers from the monuments of the Kauynshy and Otyrar-Karatau cultures of Kangyu tribes, we have identified similarities as well as differences. Ceramics with zoomorphic handles in the shape of a sheep come across in Kauynshyas well as Otyrar-Karatau cultures, but there are differences too. Among zoomorphic pottery of Kauynshy culture, there are handles of unknown animal with ears, and in Otyrar-Karatauculture – there are unknown animal without ears and with long narrow jaw. Analysis of zoomorphic pottery with the handle in the shape of a animal with long ears from the burial Myntobe showed that it is identical in its shape and style of preparation with similar finds from the monuments of Kauynshy culture.

As a result of the chronological research, the zoomorphic handle ceramics of the Kangly and Sarmatian tribes appear in the second half of the 1st millennium BC. By comparing the zoomorphic ceramics found in the burial ground №3 in Myntobe burial with those found in neighbouring regions, we can say that this burial and its contents date to the 1st century BC – 3rd century AD.

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