The unification of China under the rule of the Han Dynasty and the subsequent prosperity of the state inevitably led to a sharp increase in the production of gold and silver products. The Hanshu (汉书), the official history of the dynasty, describes the change from the beginning of the dynasty: "Gold and silver items are made in Guanghan in Sichuan. Five million coins are spent on both a year". According to a source, treasury expenses on the three highest officials of the empire "amounted to 50 million coins". The emperors of the Western Han Dynasty often rewarded officials who had served with gold to the extent that cast gold discs and gold bars were included in circulation. In addition, it was believed that the use of gold and silver utensils could contribute to longevity, which also played a role in the powerful increase in demand for the items. Looking at the gold and silver items that archaeologists find in the tombs of the Han period makes one see the superiority of utensils in this era over the products of previous periods both in quantity and in their typology, and possibly in terms of manufacturing complexity.

Having become an independent craft, separate from traditional bronze casting, it strongly influenced the art of subsequent Chinese dynasties. Gilding technologies appeared in China as early as the early Zhangguo period. This highly marketable art used in the decoration of bronze, which was densely covered with gold, reached its maturity in the pre-Qin period and gained popularity during the Han Dynasty. Most importantly, in the Han Dynasty, the fine art of decorating with silver and gold reached a new, higher level and, no longer being part of the bronze casting craft, received independent development.

Silver utensils of the Han period are found even throughout the territory of modern China. Silver caskets, funnel-shaped vessels and many ornaments were found in the tombs of the Jin king, Liu Sheng, in Zhongshan, the Hui king, Liu Xi, and the Mu king, Liu Chan, in the same city district. Gold and silver vases are evidence of the development of the art of working with gold and silver. Silver and gold vessels that archaeologists find in the graves of the highest tribal nobility of the Han Dynasty not only speak of the high level of this industry in the Han Dynasty but also testify to a unique culture and help us better understand the society of this time.

Keywords: Han Dynasty, gold and silver, gilding technologies, cultures during the Han Dynasty, mysterious utensils

Summary: The unification of China under the rule of the Han Dynasty and the subsequent prosperity of the state inevitably led to a sharp increase in the production of gold and silver products. The emperors of the Western Han Dynasty often rewarded officials who had served with gold to the extent that cast gold discs and gold bars were included in circulation. In addition, it was believed that the use of gold and silver utensils could contribute to longevity, which also played a role in the powerful increase in demand for the items. Looking at the gold and silver items that archaeologists find in the tombs of the Han period makes one see the superiority of utensils in this era over the products of previous periods both in quantity and in their typology, and possibly in terms of manufacturing complexity.

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1. The unification of China under the rule of the Han Dynasty and the subsequent prosperity of the state inevitably led to a sharp increase in the production of gold and silver products. The Hanshu (汉书), the official history of the dynasty, describes the change from the beginning of the dynasty: "Gold and silver items are made in Guanghan in Sichuan. Five million coins are spent on both a year". According to a source, treasury expenses on the three highest officials of the empire "amounted to 50 million coins". The emperors of the Western Han Dynasty often rewarded officials who had served with gold to the extent that cast gold discs and gold bars were included in circulation. In addition, it was believed that the use of gold and silver utensils could contribute to longevity, which also played a role in the powerful increase in demand for the items. Looking at the gold and silver items that archaeologists find in the tombs of the Han period makes one see the superiority of utensils in this era over the products of previous periods both in quantity

2. In the Historical Notes (史记) by Sima Qian, in the chapter "Basic Records [on the Acts] of Emperor Xiao Wu (孝武本纪)", it is said that "if from...gold to make dishes for drinking and eating, life can be extended". - See: Historical Notes (Shi chi). V.2. Sima Qian; translated from Chinese and commentary by R. Vyatkin and V. Taskin; edited by R. Vyatkin. - Moscow: Vostochnaya Literatura, 2003. - P. 256.
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Gilding technologies appeared in China as early as the early Zhanguo period (战国). This highly commendable art used in the decoration of bronze, which was widely covered with gold, reached its maturity in the pre-Qin period and gained popularity during the Han Dynasty. Han craftsmen not only used techniques such as gilding and inlay but also made gold and silver sheets or powder, which were used to decorate lacquer or silk items. Most importantly, in the Han Dynasty, the fine art of decorating with silver and gold reached a new, higher level and, no longer being an appendage to the bronze casting craft, received independent development.

The most notable achievement of the Han metal-workers was the invention of gold grain inlay technology, in which small pieces of gold, the size of a grain of rice, and gold threads were welded to the items, forming ornaments. The earrings from the Shangwancun burial in Linzi (Shandong Province), dating to the Zhanguo period (Fig. 1), are the earliest evidence of the existence of the art of surfacing in ancient China known to us. A gold earring with precious stones of different colours, turquoise and agate, gives a remarkable beauty to the item. Surfacing with gold balls creates a kind of glow and shine effect, and gold threads give the item a shape, so a very harmonious combination is obtained. It is also worth noting that gold threads were used to connect the plates of jade suits, a classic example of which is Liu Sheng’s suit found in his tomb. Thus, in the Western and Eastern Han Dynasties, the art of working with gold and silver continued to develop. Having become an independent craft, separate from traditional bronze casting, it strongly influenced the art of subsequent Chinese dynasties.

The rulers of the Han Empire had a large amount of gold at their disposal. In addition to various decorations, household utensils and vessels, there were also gold discs and gold ingots of a special form - gotijin (gotin). These are slightly cup-shaped ingots that were made in the shape of a horse’s hoof or qilin’s foot and were called linnao (麒麟). Gotijins are cylindrical in shape, hollow inside, with a hole at the top. Later, for convenience, they began to be divided into two types - ingots in the form of a horse’s hoof and ingots in the shape of a qilin’s foot. There is a mention of them in the

Hanshu section of the Chronicle of the Deeds of Emperor Wudi (汉书·帝纪), where it is said that in 95 BC, “on the third month, an imperial edict came out, which said: At the suggestion of officials, We went to the west of the city to Longshou Mountain to make sacrifices to the Heavenly Sovereign, hunted a white qilin to present to the ancestral temple. The heavenly lord’s horse came out of the waters of Wo-wa, and gold appeared on Mount Taishan; the old laws should be changed for better luck. Now gold will be cast in the form of a qilin’s foot, a hoof, a cloud, and serve as a symbol of good omens”. Commenting on this text, Yan Shigu (颜师古), a famous scientist and writer of the late 6th - first half of the 7th centuries, later explained that Wu Di changed the widespread shape of ingots into a qilin’s foot and a horse’s hoof to attract good luck, thereby changing the old laws. Yan Shigu’s contemporaries, according to his testimony, found golden hooves in the ground, and “the shape of these items was magnificent, and the gold was of the highest quality.”

The tomb of Prince Liu He (刘贺), the Marquis of Haihun, is a rare example of a well-preserved tomb of a Han-era zhouhous aristocrat. There is a lot of gold and money in the tomb, including ingots in the form of a horse’s hoof (Fig. 4) and the upper parts of qilin’s feet made of gold (Fig. 5), all with elegant and skilful patterns. It is a filigree work: gold was pulled into a thread, from which various ornaments were formed, after which the thread was welded onto the item. During the manufacturing process, gold in the form of the thinnest thread was processed using a variety of complex technologies - rolling, drawing, filigree, additives, followed by surfacing. As can be seen, it was delicate work. In addition, the coins were also encrusted with pieces of glass, which was considered a precious material during the Han Dynasty. Gotijins, the creation of which required incredible skill from the emperor’s artisans, high-quality gold, inlaid with valuable glass at that time, and mastery of complex technologies, clearly show us the level of gold processing available to the Han people. Of course, the cost of such items was extremely high; thus, it is likely that these were not money that went into circulation but that the emperors of the Western Han Dynasty used them during sacrifices. They gave them to zhouhu princes and kings at the end of the rituals.

The golden discs of the Han Dynasty are similar in shape to Yue Bing mooncakes. Their surface is slightly convex due to drip casting - there are random voids, and the back side is convex, with a pattern of cracks (Fig. 6). On the gold discs from the tomb of a Haihun zhouhous prince (Western Han period), archaeologists found vague traces of ink. It was possible to make out some hieroglyphs: “Haihun zhouhous in the southern lands, dignitary He...Yuanxiang (元康).” In this case, “He” is the name of the prince, meaning the first zhouhous of a certain region called Haihun, and “Yuanxiang” is the third regal year of Emperor Xuan-di. That is, we are talking about 65-61 BC. In the Western Han, there was a special custom of the so-called “offersing for sacrificial wine” - each year in the eighth month, the tribal nobility, zhouhous princes and kings, who possessed land domains, brought gold as a gift to the imperial court. Gold could be offered either as a ransom in case of guilt or to purchase a title, and large sums were used to cover trade or military expenses. Also, the inscription preserved on the gold
disc has a high scientific value as it testifies to this custom of giving gold to the emperor.

Silver utensils of the Han period are found evenly throughout the territory of modern China. Silver caskets, funnel-shaped vessels and many ornaments were found in the tombs of the Jing king, Liu Sheng, in Zhongshan, the Huai king, Liu Xiu, and the Mu king, Liu Chan, in the same city district. At the same time, large silver items are rare. Thus, jian, a silver water basin (Fig. 7), 11.4 cm high and 74.4 cm in diameter, was discovered in the tomb of a Chu king in Shizishan (Suizhou) (徐州狮子山). The edges of the water basin are flattened; there are two small rings under them; the walls are low; the bottom is flat; the surface is smooth without complex patterns. It is ringed with a broken line inside. A hieroglyphic inscription in the Zhuan Shu calligraphic style of 25 characters is carved on the outside. From it, we can find out the basin’s purpose, volume and weight: “jian, a silver water basin for ablution, with a capacity of two dan, one dou and five sheng, weighing one jun eighteen jin and ten liang”. Judging by its size, the jian basin could not accommodate an entire adult; thus, it must be assumed that it was used to store water during bathing. Simultaneously with the basin, a silver cauldron and a Pan water basin were also unearthed - items used by a Chu king and his wives while bathing. Speaking of silver finds in burials, it is also worth mentioning other everyday items that could be found in a grave. For example, silver needles, bowls and vessels for diluting medicines were found in a burial in Mangcheng (满城) in Hebei province (河北).

Gold and silver vessels are evidence of the development of the art of working with gold and silver. Gold and silver vessels that archaeologists find in the graves of the highest tribal nobility of the Han era not only speak of the high level of this industry during the Han period but also testify to a unique culture and help us better understand the society of this time. It is a special property of thinking, characterised by “cherishing what is rare”, forcing people to present rather impractical things from a modern point of view, which were valuable precisely for the material from which they were made. In the Han Dynasty, where the belief in the similarity of the world of the living with the world of shadows reigned, wealthy representatives of noble families and members of the imperial family craved all the same wealth and luxury after their death, maintaining their status, the symbols of which were gold and silver, which they put in their burials.
грало свою роль в мощном увеличении спроса на изделия. Если взглянуть на те изделения из золота и серебра, что находились в гробницах каньонского периода археологии, то можно заметить, что они представляли собой предметы роскоши, предназначенные для упаковки ценных предметов, таких как кинжалы, ножи, наконечники стрел и др. Они были выполнены в технике филиграни, которая позволяла создавать изящные и сложные узоры из золота и серебра.

Золотые копыта цилиня, найденные в захоронении Чжаньго, были изготовлены при помощи филиграни, а золотые нити приваривались к мешковине из лака или шелка. Что наиболее важно, в монеты, изготавливаемые при помощи бисера, а также в сырье, использовались золотые и серебряные слитки.

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Доклад о раскопках захоронений эпохи Хань в Манчэне (河北) в захоронении в Манчэне (河北) были найдены серебряные иглы, плошки и сосуды для разведения лекарств.

История записок (Shi zi). – Т. 2. Сыма Цянь.

Говоря о серебряных находках в захоронении чжухоу Хайхуня в Няньчане.

БИБЛИОГРАФИЯ


