The world of images in the art of the ancient population of the Central Kazakhstan (1 millennium BC)

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Abstract

The findings of the last years in the Central Kazakhstan which were received during the excavation works on such monuments as Taldy-2, Birlik, Nurken-2, Karashoky, Akbeit, Tegiszhol enlarge the available data on art culture of the ancient population of this region and make a great contribution to the treasury of knowledge. By now owing to archeologists’ researches of both previous generation and works of present expeditions the unique collection of the subjects illustrating esthetic tastes of tribes of the early Iron Age is received.

Keywords: Central Kazakhstan, art, zoomorphic ornaments, nomads.

1. Introduction

The material on art culture of the Central Kazakhstan of 1 thousand BC is presented by the objects of indoor sculpture.

The present work is aimed at generalizing available graphic monuments of the Central Kazakhstan representing subjects of small plasticity, characterizing the shape of art culture of the region throughout 1 thousand BC, fully as far as the volume of the sources introduced into scientific circulation allows, considering the problems of origin and genesis of these or those images and plot and finally planning the prospects for further researches.

2. Heading styles

The register of the findings representing subjects of small plasticity and having anthropo - zoo – phytomorphic ornamental design was made for the present research based on available publications. Thus, the selection of the research included 61 subjects, including the following distribution on decor: anthropomorphous – 3 copies, zoomorphic (the number of zoomorphic images included images of birds) – 37 copies, phytomorphic – 8 copies and

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with ornamental elements – 13 copies. As a result of the carried out researches 14 animalistic images have been distinguished. On the degree of frequency of image occurrence the following sequence is evident: predator from cat’s family (23), bird of prey (14), saiga (10), mountain goat (10), human being (8), the stylized ornithomorphic image with elements of syncretism (4), boar (4) and in other cases the images of horse, elk, deer, argali, camel, wolf and bird are recorded individually.

At this stage of our research we will refrain from serious conclusions concerning genesis of early sack culture of the Central Kazakhstan. However, we will note that for the process of formation of powerful cultural complex of 1 thousand BC there had to be certain conditions.

The surfaces of the most various subjects are decorated by animalistic images and ornamental motives: elements of a suit and horse equipment, arms and toolware, ware, cult objects and toilet ware. All these subjects were part of the real world of ancient saryarkins.

The abundance of golden plaques in the form of the image of a predator from cat's family in the period of early nomads, owing to specifics of economical development, social organization, public relations, culture, ideology allows to speak about formation of nomadic civilization. It made special sense and did not carry only decorative function. In this case we can see imposing the value of an animalistic image, its artistic realization, quality of metal – gold, emphasizing the status of the buried. It was said several times in publications. Besides estimated source widespread in mythology and is the heroic epos where the hero is in a tiger (panther) skin. Considering this data it is possible to trace some common ideological and world outlook principles on the territory of east part of the Euroasian belt of steppes.

On a plaque from the burial ground Karashoky (fig. 1:1) the profile image of the tiger standing is submitted. The openwork image through which the characteristic striped handle of animal skin is transmitted, gives ease to the image of the tiger. S-shaped curls which characterize the sak time and provide the base for the image, are shown in a new way, turning into the stylized eagles and eagle griffins – one of favorite and deep semantic images of the saks. They were often used by the early nomads and enter the image field. A powerful neck of a tiger and a shovel, the line of a hip, wool are distinguished by curls, and thus they carried out double function. As a whole the griffins entering in the image of a tiger are almost similar to the ones of the early sak barrows of the burial ground Sherubay. The long tail is traditionally coiled and the length of predator’s sharp claws is emphasized. Besides shrewd graphic technique the idea as a whole of the fantastic creature combining images of tiger and eagle, their proximity in attitude of the saks is expressed.

The stylistic technique finds some analogies in the art of early nomads. The openness which involved imposing the image cut out from a gold foil on a contrast background, makes us pay attention to the early sak products from Zhalauly treasure in Zhetyus. At the same time transfer ring characteristic strips and dense long locks of tiger’s wool can be met later during the period of blossoming of the sak Pazyryk culture in Altai in the images of a tiger. The profile image of a tiger from Karashoky if to accept the assumption that its ornamental decor consists of the stylized profiles of eagle griffins is semantically close to the image of a tiger on leather application from the barrow 2 the burial ground Tashanta II: the spur in the form of the head of an eagle griffin is shown on the shoulder of the animal (Bogdanov E.S., 2006. tab. CXXII 8). The pose unambiguously depicts an aggressive animal. His mouth is open, big canines are seen, the feet directed forwards with long sharp claws. Though on the product from the Central Kazakhstan a predator’s pose is quiet. Another similar image is a leather application in the form of a tiger with horns from the 1st Tuckky barrow (Zolotye oleni..., cat. 197, page 220). Inside the contour filling consists of helicoid curls, the ears are also shown in a head contour, claws are dismissed. Horns are the only distinctive features of this image.

Probably, the described tiger represents one of development lines on predator's images with spotty and striped trunks on deer stones the contours of which are filled with strips or spot. Moreover, they transfer, probably, the skin handle (tiger, leopard), but there a bit different iconography – generally feet are slightly bent and extended forward (Volkov V.V., 2002, tab. 40, 1; 130).

As a whole, such ease, imponderability and transparency of images is common for nomads of Pazyryk culture of Altai that is shown in the images from foil, skin on a tattoo of the buried person, in interlacing ornamental motives from thin color felt (fig. 1). Meticulousness of images, surface decorating by thin lines of the curls which are often forming the animal shape of eagle griffins is characteristic for gold products of the Filippovka burial ground in South Ural, which also belongs to the times of blossoming of the early nomad culture. Analogies to products of
tasmoly culture are traced in transferring separately executed profile head with vertically extended long horns (Zolotye oleni..., 2001). The authors of the materials from Filippovka come to a conclusion about a genetic linkage of South Ural nomads with the sak-massagets world (Pshenichnyuk A.Kh., 2006, page 37). The gold plate in the form of a panther shows the similar outlook, it depicts spiritual culture of early nomads of the Great Steppe. The paws and tail of the panther are ornamented with relief images of the cat's predators which coiled from the early Scythian Kelermess barrow in the North Caucasus that is similar graphic technique in transferring the predatory features of an animal. The products from the early sak Tasmoly barrows allow to suggest that the tradition of creating images of unreal creatures in the early sak art started developing already in the time of early saks. The origin of an iconographic image and its filling, probably, goes back to transitional period from the Bronze Age to the early Iron Age, the period about which tell, for example, materials of excavation works in Zhetsus by A.A. Goryachev. The burial of two kittens of a snow leopard to the North from an entrance to a structure is revealed on the monument Turgen-2 the third stratigraphical horizon (transitional period from bronze to the early Iron Ages or early sak period) (Goryachev A.A., 2011, p. 261).

In this regard the similar position of cat's predators in the early sak time in a decor of subjects of Central Asia (Tyva, Northern China ...) (Bogdanov E.S., 2006, tab. LXXVI, 4, 5; LXVIII) including with dot, striped or helicoid filling of a trunk is of great interest. It is remarkable that the mirror from Shantsunlin between heraldic profile images of cat's predators the image of a bird with open wings and a hooved animal are placed. Probably, the semantic link to the idea embodied in plaques from Zhalauly, Shilikty, Baygetobe, Taldy is traced.

It is confirmed by K.V.Chugunov's conclusion about the connection between the art of early Scythian time of Tyva, Khakass-Minusinsk Hollow, forest-steppe Altai and Kazakhstani, Central Asian origin of traditions of animal style art from the complex of the barrow Arzhan-2 (Chugunov K.V., 2011).

K.V. Chugunov considered scrutinizingly the parallels in models of ancient art from the burial grounds Arzhan-2, Taldy-2, Shilikty, Baygetobe and Zhalauly. The new findings received from the barrows Sherubay and Karashoky represent the early stage of Tasmola culture and supplement lines of cultural connection between the population of Tyva and Central Kazakhstan in the early sak times. So, openwork pins used for women's hairdress and a plate (Čugunov K., Parzinger H., Nagler A., 2010, tafl. 74, 1, 2; 71, 3) have something in common with a stripe in the form of the stylized griffin from the burial ground Sherubay. The openwork stripes cut out from a foil are the stylized griffins from Sherubay and Kichigino (fig. 1:7) have accurately allocated beak and cere, cop, crest (?), and tail. In Tasmola culture a decor of a dagger handle from Nurmanbet IV, a barrow 1 strongly stylized ornamental decor has something in common with openwork products from Taldy-2 and Karashoky (fig. 1:6) (Kadyrbayev M.K., 1966, fig. 38, 1).

It is curious that the image of an eagle with the head turned back, embodied both in products from gold, in petroglyphic art and in petroglyphs, is accompanied by the image of argali or tauteke what find analogies in subjects of small plasticity, for example, in the image on a metal plate from Baygetobe where the composition is formed from tauteke and the whole figure of a bird (Toleubayev A.T., 2011, photo 3). The plot on a plaque from the Zhalauly treasure has a similar semantic meaning. However the whole figures of two deer in a sacrificial pose are shown here (Tasmagambetov I.N., 2003, a photo 3). They are almost identical, except for inserts of turquoise, a plaque with images in the form of two mountain goats with a bird in the center from Taldy-2 and Shilikty (Baygetobe).

They are organized by the principle of mirror symmetry and show well the connection between the images of a mountain goat and a bird (7 century BC). Stylization is close to the way of showing the deer's head from the barrow of Arzhan-2 (the end of 7 century BC) and Filippovka (5-4 centuries BC) where similar images with vertically located horns are present. In a plaque from Zhalauly (the end of 7 century BC) images of deer are used that once again testify to proximity of religious views of the early sak tribes and interchangeability of images of bird, deer and mountain goat.
The author of the excavation works A.T. Toleubayev names the composition which is a basis of the plaque from Baygetobe the "mask" of a cat's predator formed by pro-volumes of two mountain goats and a bird in the middle. As a whole, it resembles the composition from barrows of Pazyryk culture in Altai, made by a profile contour of two eagle griffins (fig. 1:4, 5) (Rudenko S.I., 1960, fig. 146, d). The experts agree now on the opinion that during the early sak period use of syncretic images was not widespread yet. It is possible to assume that one of lines of development of this whole as a result of an image is a new generalized creature, an eagle griffin with ears, horns, crest; and also the image combining signs of hoofed animal and a bird which originates from such compositions.

Judging by iconography the bird which is depicted on Zhalauly, Shilikty and Taldy plaques, probably is not a predator, but a usual bird. Therefore it is possible to assume other semantics of composition unlike the combined images of beak-shaped deer in monuments of pazyryk culture. The researchers see plot expression "a good torment" of herbivorous hoofed animals by predators (Cheremisin D.V., 2006, page 100).

In Tagisken the gold plaque representing "a lying lion" is distinguished from other findings. It is with the head face from the barrow No. 3. Stylistically it is close to gold plaques from the barrow No. 3 Tasmola in the form of a lying lion (Artamonov M.I., 1973, fig. 20 and 30 a, b). In separate fine details the images of animals are not identical, but as a whole it is obvious that products are of the same social standing. The images of a lying cat's predator from Filippovka are close as a whole to the images of Tasmola. The later date indicates a vector planned by openworked products from the territory of east regions

The plaques in the form of cat's predators from the burial ground Taldy coincide with the profile images of "a lying lion" and "a walking lion" from the burial ground Tagisken, No. No. 31 and 53 (Artamonov M.I., 1973, fig. 21, 22). On the parts of plaques from Taldy-2 there are a powerful neck with a mane (?) pleated legs, meanwhile
there is no tail. It is possible that here the generalized image of a cat's predator was transferred or a plaque was stamped by the person who had never seen this animal. If to compare very close images of cat's predators in a profile despite the unambiguous similarity of products from Tagisken, Taldy-2 and Arzhan-2, it is evident that images from Taldy-2 are the least realistic. The iconography of the half-polled pose of a cat's predator is a characteristic of Tyva and Central Kazakhstan and it is known up to monuments of East Aral area. The images of animals resting of later times from the monuments Ob Plesy-2, burial ground 3 and Kosh Pey1 have same features (Bogdanov E.S., 2006, tab. XLI, 1, 6).

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The revealed parallels mark possible vectors of connection between the early sak tribes – culture carriers. The analysis of objects of the early sak art shows connection between the regions: Tyva-East Kazakhstan-Saryarka and Zhetyusu-Aral area. One more vector of territories connection between Saryarka and Zhetyusu is represented by bronze sculptural figures of goats from horse equipment from the barrow 2 Tasmola V and bronze finials in the form of the head of a mountain goat from Bizhe. They are stylistically different, but have much in common. K.A. and A.K. Akishevs consider that Bizhe is connected by the monuments of early sak time – Uygarak, Tagisken – with culture of Zhetyusu. In its return, Bizhe is in the same line with Tasmola and Arzhan (Akishev K.A., Akishev A.K., 1978, p. 59). Until recently the only available materials on art of Central Kazakhstan tribes of the early Iron Age were limited to the data suggested by M.K. Kadyrbayev which was received in Shiderta and Zhylanda. The researcher, as we know, in the 1960th noted a number of parallels in cultures of Central Kazakhstan and neighboring regions, and pointed to Tasmola's certain proximity to the culture of Altai. New materials from a burial ground of Taldy-2 the studied barrows of which are dated from 7 – the beginning of 6 centuries BC (Beysenov A.Z., 2011), now allow to present more clearly, at least, the main directions of cultural connections. The definition of their essence, clarification of the mechanisms of interferences, i.e. disclosure of the main content of ethnocultural processes during the early sak time on the territories of the specified regions. All this demands detailed researches.

References


