

*Gia Avalishvili*THE ELEMENTS OF THE KOLKHIDA-KOBAN ART
IN THE SCYTHIAN "ANIMAL STYLE"

The problem of interrelation between the two styles, such as the Scythian "animal style" and the Caucasian Art, especially, that of Kolkhida-Koban, had not been the subject of special exploration up to the present times. But in spite of this situation there were a number of interesting considerations about these problems and all of them came up to two opposite points of view. According to one of them, the Scythian "animal style" is originated from the Caucasian Art, especially from that of Kolkhida-Koban¹, and according to the others, this very style has nothing to do with the south Caucasian Art².

As to us, the Scythian "animal style" is not originated from the Kolkhida-Koban bronze culture, but at the same time, in the process of cultivation of some of its definite features, there are felt the elements of the above mentioned art.

First of all in these forms there are included the features of different animals and all of them are given in one wholly full plastic composition. In Scythian "animal style" there is a special manner of stylizing the animal shape which is shown mainly in the bow-shaped, circle-shaped and s-shaped setting of the animal figures. Analogical, but more early facts had also

¹ F. Hancas, *Kaukasus-Euristan*, ESA, IX, Helsinki 1934, p. 291, S. Amiranashvili, *The History of Georgian Art*, Tbilisi 1961, p. 2.

² M. Rostovzev, *Iranians and Greeks in south Russia*, Oxford 1922, s. 193-197.

taken place in Transcaucasia. These peculiarities are shown best of all in the Kolkhida-Koban bronze object.

Except the drawings made on Kolkhida-Koban axes there also are sculptures. The axe butts have sculptured ends³. On some examples this element is shown by the figure of a catlike animal ready to jump and maybe, it is a snow-leopard (panther or leopard?). This kind of axes are found in Tcagvery, in Fascaw cemetery near Galiat village, in Tly collection. All of them are dated back to VIII-VII centuries B.C.⁴ These sculptured figures are very much alike of the sculptural features of so called scythian mirrors and especially of the features made on the curved bronze knives and deggars from the well-known Tagar culture (Minusinsk hollow) which is dated by N. Chlenova to the end of VII-V centuries B.C.⁵ so, in a case like this, the idea of the independent and conyergate appearance of the decorations of tool and weapon details, seem hardly probable. At the same time they decorate the very details which are never used practically.

It is matter of special interest that at the early stage (VI cent. B.C.) of the Scythian "animal style" development there - a lion on different things and it changes by a wolf⁶ a little bit later - in the fifth century B.C. must be pointed here, that the wolf is a characteristic feature for the south-Russian steppe. At the early stage of the Scythian "animal style" development, except the lion, there appears another catlike animal - a snow-leopard (a panther or a leopard). A lion and a snow-leopard seem to be conditional and quite strange animals for the Scythian Art. But everything becomes clear if we look through the art of ancient East and Transcaucasia. As we know, the lion native lands are Africa, Asia and Caucasia but it is also a

³ D. K o r i d z e, *Kolchian Axes*, "Soviet Arts" 1968, No 10, p. 76-80.

⁴ L. P a n t k h a y a, *For the History of Kolchetian and Koban Decorative Art*, Manuscript, Tbilisi 1975, p. 185.

⁵ J. C z l e n o w a, *Proischozhdieniye i rannaja istorija plenien tagarskoj kultury*, Moskwa 1967, s. 13, tab. III-24-26, IV-11, XXVIII-13.

⁶ W. I l i n s k a j a, *Niekotoryje motivy rannieskifskogo zwierinigo stita*, "Sowietskaja Archieologia" 1965, nr 1, s. 87.

well-known fact, that there were two kinds of lions in Caucasus - Caucasian and Transcaucasian⁷.

At the same time in the Near East Art one seldom meets a snow-leopard (a panther or a leopard) if not to take into consideration a well-known Sakkiz hoard, discovered near Zivie⁸ place in Kurdistan, and here the priority again belongs to a lion. So, it is quite possible that the tradition of drawing a cat-like animal such as a snow-leopard, is adopted from Caucasus and Transcaucasus by the Scythian "animal style". The idea of interpretation of a cat-like animal itself is a point of special interest. As a rule, the weapons (axes, deggars) are decorated with such motives which underline the purposes of their using. The feature of a cat-like animal (a snow-leopard in this case) gives sharpness, force and firmness to the weapon. As we see, it was not enough to decorate the weapons with the different animal figures only; most of it, each kind of weapon was to be decorated with the definite animal features. So, a certain kind of weapon is connected to the definite zoomorphic feature.

In the Scythian "animal style" Art except lions the deers were very popular too and it was one of the most favourite animal in Kolkhida-Koban Art also. As to some scientists, definite communications are observed among these facts. The earliest pictures of deers with the Scythian stylising elements (the end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth century B.C.) are connected with North Caucasus and they are quite near to the enormous Early-Koban sculptural and engraved pictures of the deers. It is interesting that M. Artamonov too connects the deer feature made on a bronze crook, discovered in Stanitsa Makhoshevskaya, with the sculptural bronze features from the Caucasian Koban Art⁹. Analogical features with the sculptural deers are found in Volkovitcy village and they are dated to the V-IV century B.C.¹⁰ It is notable what I. Anfimov writes about Meot "animal

⁷ BSE, 1953, 24, s. 583-584.

⁸ R. G i r s h m a n n, *Perse*, Paris 1964, tab. 147.

⁹ W. W i n o g r a d o w, *Centralnyj i siewiero-wostocznyj Kawkaz w skifskoje wriemia*, Groznyj 1972, s. 170.

¹⁰ M. A r t a m a n o w, *Proischozhdieniye skifskogo iskustwa*, "Sowiet-skaja Archieologia" 1968, nr 4, s. 32.

style": "Except the panther-leopard which is characteristic for the scythian «animal style», the features of deer-goat in Prikubanye are met perhaps earlier than in Pridneprovye, and these animals are widely spread in south-west Caucasian fauna".

Lately some scientists stated their points of view (but they made it very carefully) about the interrelation of Caucasian, especially, Koban Art, and the Scythian "animal style" in different parts of the scythian culture diffusion. As to K. Smirnov, in the animal style of Povolzhie group, there are motives and peculiarities of treatment connected with North Caucasia¹¹. A. Smirnov points to the influence of Koban Art on the Early Iron Age of Prikamya. He connects a gold table discovered in Ufa site with a horse feature on it with the Koban Art¹².

M. Artamanov sees the influence of the Koban heraldic figures on the heraldic features of two beasts from Tcukurlimann¹³. It is interesting that a beast feature on a bronze thing from "Starshaya Mogila", which was treated as if adopted from Near East Art with its ways of fulfilment (engraved) is typical for Caucasus and is quite unusual for the Early Scythian times¹⁴.

N. Chlenova points out more distant units. She says that a Koban pin with the features of three sheep is analogical with the Tagar awls, which are decorated with goats, and sheep; she compares also spiral-shaped horns of so called "minusink style" with the features of Kolkhida-Koban sheep¹⁵.

The very culture of Europe and Asia which is known as Scythian, was formed not earlier than end of the seventh and the beginning of the sixth centuries B.C. Before this there were spread the forms which had almost nothing to do with the Scy-

¹¹ K. Smirnov, *Sauranato-sarmatskij "zvierinnyj" stil',* [w:] *Tezisy III Vsesojuznoj konferencii po skifo-sarmatskoj arheologii,* Moskva 1972, s. 12.

¹² A. Smirnov, *O kulturnykh svyaziakh Kavkaza s Povolz'em,* [w:] *Kavkaz i Vostochnaja Ievropa v drevnosti,* Moskva 1973, s. 132.

¹³ Artamanov, *Proischozhdieniye skifskogo...*, s. 32.

¹⁴ M. Pirtkhalava, *Ancient Monuments of the Scythian Culture in Georgia (VII-VI cent. B.C.),* the thesis for a Candidate's Degree, Manuscript, Tbilisi 1975, p. 128.

¹⁵ Chlenova, *Proischozhdieniye i ramaja...*, s. 129, tab. 29-IX, 28-20, 21.

thian Art¹⁶. The forming of the Scythian "animal style" Art had to take place after the return of the Scythians to the Near East and Transcaucasia, was again through the Transcaucasus. Apparently, during this period had to happen the insertion of some of the elements of Kolchida-Koban Art in the Scythian "animal style".

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ELEMENTY SZTUKI KOLCHIDA-KOBAN W SCYTYJSKIM STYLU "ZWIERZĘCYM"

Kultury Europy i Azji znane jako scytyjskie uformowały się nie wcześniej niż w końcu VII i na początku VI w. p.n.e. Powstanie scytyjskiego stylu zwierzęcego miało miejsce po przybyciu Scytów w rejon Kaukazu. Wtedy również w tym stylu pojawiły się elementy sztuki Kolchida-Koban, głównie w zakresie plastyki figuralnej.

¹⁶ M. Artamanow, *Sokrowiszczna skifskich kurganow*, Praga 1965, s. 13.