

Berel - Artistic culture of the ancient nomads of Kazakh Altai

Art works made from organic material (wood, leather, felt and textiles) and metal decorated with religious items, costume, domestic items and harness.

The motive of the objects of Berel burial mounds was determined by the images of real animals and imaginary creatures and plant designs (sometimes highly stylized zoomorphic images), which are still isolated.

Specificity of art objects originating from the burial sites is that they are regardless of whether they used or not in real life, designed for a specific ritual prescribed by the existing norms in society religious ritual procedures in preparing the deceased for a new life and its transition from the world of the living dead to the world that provides for conversion of their former symbolic and conceptual content of images as images and turn them into a new text (mythological), which required the other key to decrypt.

Re-coding of metalanguage of the images-pictures occurred in the manufacturing process of unique and existed in reality in this sphere intended for the rites of "transition" and escorts the deceased into otherness. It is clear that with approach to the study of art images artistically designed "burial" of things, must take into account the context of funeral rites, memorial and religious views of the founders of a particular archeological culture, a particular historical epoch.

The image of the "Gryphon" is the most visible of artistic images that were used in the decoration of Berel products. In many cases, the Gryphons are usually called artistic images that do not match the natural prototype or depending on the prevalence of certain traits (iconic elements) to the definition of added quality features, such as eagle-headed griffin (although all the Griffins and Grif- or eagle-headed) rigger griffin, elk griffin, horse griffin, etc.

Among researchers there is no unambiguous understanding of the content of the image of "griffin" and iconographic close to it.

Griffin, for amenity of analysis, images of art objects from the Berel burial mounds can be called an integral piece of a syncretic orthomorphic zoo-being, which consists of merged together a full-body animal (wild animal or hoofed animal with a tail) and parts of a bird of prey (the head with a sharp beak and wings). These attributes and elements define the basis of polymorphic iconography of a griffin, in any case, the materials of Berel burial mounds. They bring together not only the presence of the visual image, and stylistic devices, methods of construction of tracks, especially on small surfaces of various materials and manufacturing different great figures.

The varieties of griffin images with some reservation can be attributed incomplete horn pendants in the form of associations of moose and neck (or eagle) from the

Berel burial number 36. Elk horns on the headstock (the eagle) serve as the main element of the zoomorphic transformations and strongly curved beaks, long ears and mane, increase the syncretic image.

Thus, the main morphological feature of the image constant griffin, as a complex sign of the complex, are the beak and wings of a bird of prey- vulture or an eagle, and the image of the body of an animal may vary and is determined by the functional purpose of things and mythos-ritual context. Fingerboard, natural bird of prey cannot be identified with the monster generated by human imagination – a griffin and its iconic sign in the works of decorative art.

The mythological and artistic images of the griffins seem to have undergone at least extend to other ethnic and cultural zone, a significant transformation from peaceful to aggressive.

The image of a griffin in mythology and art of the nomads in Central Asia, according to the textbook material, originating from early Scythian mounds (Arzhan -2 in Tuva, Shilikty in East Kazakhstan and Taldy in Central Kazakhstan, etc.), formed after 7th – 6th BC.

It is possible that the classic version of the image griffin –“Zeus’ the dogs” with lion body and the head of a bird of prey (version of Aristeas) in the mythology of ancient Greece was formed under the influence of mythos-ritual complex of the nomadic people of Altai mountain system, most likely after the 6th century BC. It is believed that the Greeks got this mythical figure in his poem of Aristeas (Zaporozhchenko, 1989, p. 62).

Returning to the fantastic images of visual materials from Berel burial mounds we note that a series of profile images of lying zoomorphic figures with horned head “Tiger”, sometimes with a protruding tongue and tail, as well as bulk three-dimensional shapes, some protomai ends the psalm with the same morphological features cannot be called griffins.

Images on religious subjects were found in Berel burial mounds. Sacred magical attribute, a symbol of supreme power is the standard, issued in the form of a sculptural image of being syncretic griffin – the predator’s body with a tail, wings and bird’s beak, that is, in the form of what it perceived close neighbors and distant nation as Pazyryks.

There is a possibility that the original (or close to it) the image of a griffin was preserved for a long time only in the most conservative area of social life of Berel residents as the structure of power and ideology. In the field of arts and crafts as part of the artistic culture, the image was exposed to significant transformation, which is observed even in the analysis of materials alone Berel archeological complex. It is not very very difficult to clear up why the ancient Berel residents

chose as the principal public symbol syncretic image tiger griffin?

Logically, the highest representatives of the elite suit of Pazyryk society, buried under the stone mounds Berel steppes had no distinguish by special luxury, but in reality this category is the smallest.

Miniature and wooden figures, which plated with thin gold, of syncretic animal anthropomorphic creature with the body of a predatory animal and a human head, had been characterized as sphinxes, which most likely could adorn ceremonial burial-robe of women. Having one of the central figures of the two animals' torsos, joined together by one common head planted on the neck, which grows upward from the place of the joint bodies and several individual figurines to the right-left sided enclosures, allows to suggest that women's costume includes a component consisting of a set of several such polymorphic miniature creatures. It may be a product like inlaid neck of pendant from 2nd Pazyryk mound or decorative element of women's headdress. The image of the "Sphinx" is among the applications of truck tires.

Form of head dress of nobleman, buried in kurgan № 10 and semantics of animalistic images of his costume in general reconstructed in the context of burial ritual. It is correct by the analogy with standards of samples of Ukok and Pazyryk culture.

Majority artificially decorated items, founded in Berel kurgan, related to the decoration of horse harness.

Details of décor ammunition consists of horse images, which typical for Pazyryk decorative art: images of real representatives of the faunal assemblage of the Altai (horned ungulates – deer, elk, mountain sheep and various predators, including birds, fish, etc.) and fictional characters, combining species signs of several prototypes of natural animals and even with the features of anthropomorphism. Strict principle was kept in the animal's decoration to give its own special character to each horse.

Representation of torment scenes is one of the dominant in the fine arts of the nomads.

Among the images syncretic creatures a special place belongs to the polymorphous ones with anthro-po-zoo-ornithomorphic signs engraved on the lid of a felt saddle in a burial mound number № 10. The most notable element of the creature artistic image is a strictly anthropomorphic profile of head of a bearded, crowned with a mountain goat curved horns, small but expressive ears. Clearly it is possible to see eye and nose also the line of his mouth with intent inspection. The dual nature of creature is underlined by the fact that the back half of his body was painted in red and the front was painted in blue. Such contrast of the colors is not a casual

accident. It can be assumed that the front part of the body marked with blue color as the presence of heavenly sky and vertical elements –the wings and horns, symbolizes the most significant sacred sphere of representation and the back half of the creature’s body with a tinge of red is the earth. At the same time the cover of the horse saddle, lying side by side, has a similar composition of string of rooster, whose wings and rear are red.

Human head with horns and ears of the mountain goat, in the light of the zoomorphic transformations hypothesis can be interpreted not as a simple transformation of the image of a predator, but as an image of the masks: no man has a beast’s body, but the animal has a human mask.

One of the puzzling images used by Pazyryk artist for putting their artistic ideas is a cock. Perhaps the unusual natural qualities of a rooster is a multicolored body color and scallops, the ability to singing in the specific daily cycles and other features determined the emergence and popularity of his image in the mythology and the fine art of different nations.

The nature of the mythological image of a rooster initially ambivalent along with the ability to see the first dawn and crow is link with the sun and fire element. It symbolizes the death and darkness, and resurrection of the dead and reincarnation. Therefore its image is usually viewed in the context of modeling the whole complex of “life and death is a new birth”.

The saddle suspension, which looked like a fish, consisting of several pieces of the finest felt connected to each other with neat seams, was found in the mound number 11. It has 3 pairs of fins in one side. The image is identified as a highly stylized trout or burbot. If horse had fantastic image of bird that intended to deliver the soul of deceased to another world, the fish, perhaps could prevent the barrier created by water element. River in the mythological consciousness is the link between the spheres of the universe. One of the horses bridle from the mound number 10 is decorated with small pendants in the form of stylized figures of fish.

Thus, superb examples of art and cultures, associated with a complex system of funerary rites, memorial, exhibit, on the one hand, a high level of skill of the ancient carvers, artists and they reflect the specific mythopoetic way of thinking, religious beliefs and the whole outlook of the ancient nomads of Kazakh Altai.

Zainolla Samashev, Berel, Almaty, “Taimas” publishing house, 2011.