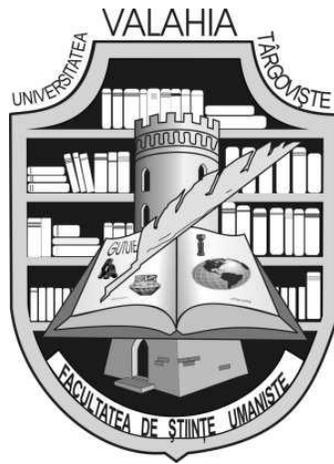


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## The Specifics of the “Animal Style” in the Decorative and Applied Art of the Forest Kama and Ural Population in the Early Iron Epoch

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**Abstract:** The article poses a question whether it is appropriate to use the notion “animal style” to refer to the decorative and applied art of the forest Ural and Kama population in the early Iron Epoch representing the Ananyino, Kara-Abyz, Pyanobor and Glyadenovo cultures. Using the method of comparative and statistical analysis, the author shows that the artefacts of the above archeological cultures with the depictions of animals differ, first of all, by their functions: the Ananyino culture is characterized by applique plaques decorating a suit, the Kara-Abyz culture – by plaques for decorating belts, the Glyadenovo culture - by sacrificial objects, while the in the Pyanobor culture, there are no such artefacts at all. Second, the repertoire of the “animal style” images of this population also differs: a bear in the Ananyino culture, a goat/horse – in the Kara-Abyz culture, and a wolf/dog – in the Glyadenovo culture. The author concludes that the “animal style” samples in the decorative art of the forest Ural and Kama population have rather sacral (amulets, talismans, apotropaions, charms etc.) than aesthetic meaning unlike the animal style in the art of early Eurasian nomads (Scytho-Siberian).

**Key words:** animal style, sacral, totemism, the Ananyino culture, the Kara-Abyz culture, the Glyadenovo culture, the Pyanobor culture, decorative and applied art, Scytho-Siberian animal style, amulet, apotropaion.

The applied art of the forest Ural population in the Early Iron Epoch has a long history of study, large historiography, and various interpretations. At the very beginning of the archeological study of the Middle Volga and Kama Region, A.F. Likhachev, D.A. Anuchin, Ya. Appelgrin-Kivalo, A. M. Talgren, V. A. Gorodtsov, A. A. Spitsin, the first gatherers and explorers of the region’s antiquities, placed the samples of applied art in a special category. In accordance with the understanding of the ethnicity of the region’s ancient population (the end of the XIX - the beginning of the XX centuries) and the territory of the most numerous findings of appropriate artefacts, they were specified as the “Chud or Permian art”. As the source base on the archeology of the Volga and Kama areas enlarged and their culture and chronology were differentiated and systematized, the views of the researchers on the culture of the ancient decorative and

applied art changed. At the beginning of the 1920es, M. G. Khudyakov united all the Volga-Kama monuments of the Early Iron Epoch, like the Ananyino burial widely known since the middle of the XIX century, in the Ananyino archeological culture stretched across the vast territory of the Eastern European forest strip from the Vetluga River in the west to the middle course of the Belaya River in the east. By analogy with the “Scythian triad” involving the objects decorated by the depictions of animals and birds (“animal style”), M. G. Khudyakov (1923) nominated similar artefacts of the Early Iron Epoch in the Volga-Kama area as the “Ananyino animal style”. So far, this notion has been rooted in historiography.

The history of the “Ananyino animal style” was further developed in the studies of A. V. Shmidt (1927) and A. V. Zbrueva (1952). The main conclusion of the researchers: the “Ananyino animal style” was

developed under the influence of the Scytho-Sarmatian animal style; however, it remained authentic as the images and plots of the Scytho-Sarmatian (Indo-Iranian) mythology had been refracted in the consciousness of the Ananyino (Finno-Ugrian) tribes.

In accordance with the content of the Volga-Kama archeological map established throughout the XX century, modern researchers also identify, apart for the Ananyino animal style, “the Kara-Abyz animal style” (on the materials of the monuments of the Kara-Abyz archeological culture identified by the archeologist A. Kh. Pshenichnyuk in the Belaya River basin), “the animal style of the Pyanobor epoch” (on the materials of the monuments of the Pyanobor culture in the Lower Kama area), and “the Glyadenovo animal style” (on the materials of the monuments – sacrificial places – of the Glyadenovo culture in the Middle Kama area) for the Early Iron Epoch. It means that the current source base for the decorative and applied art of the Volga-Kama population in the Early Iron Epoch (the second half of the I millennium BC - the beginning of the I millennium AD) allow the researchers to identify artistic styles (not only animal/zoomorphic, but also anthropomorphic, astral, and geometric) for each of the known archeological cultures, compare them and elaborate the genetic scheme of development of the decorative and applied art of the region’s ancient population not only in its artistic-aesthetic context, but also in the worldview context (K. I. Korepanov, M. F. Obydenov, 2014).

The available studies, in spite of their advantages, have a drawback – they lack rigorous source evaluation. In the result, the conclusions drawn from the consideration of a particular artefact (or a small group of artefacts) are extrapolated on the entire bulk of sources and the entire territory of the archeological culture under consideration. A reader with little knowledge of the source base on this topic has a wrong idea of the situation reflected in real archeological material.

**The goal of this article** is to show a concerned reader how the plots and images of the decorative and applied art of the Ural tribes in the Early Iron Epoch are reflected in real archeological material (in this case, we will discuss only the plots and images of the “animal style” as the most expressive category of art). We are going to consider whether it is appropriate to refer this notion to the culture of the region’s population and to define the signs that enable, first, to discuss the presence of the animal style in the art of the Ural population in the Early Iron Epoch at all, and,

second, to reveal the specifics of this style for each of the cultures, whose representatives formed the region’s ethnocultural map at that period.

Unlike my predecessors, I do not analyze the material of the Middle Volga and Lower Kama monuments of the Early Iron Epoch (near the confluence of the Kama River with the Volga River): the Akhmylovo culture – by V. S. Patrushev or Akozino culture – by S. V. Kuzminykh and A.A. Chizhevskiy. Geographically, this is the Volga area, while ethnically, these are eastern Finns established on other ethnocultural basis than the Kama and Ural tribes with a predominant Ugrian ethnic component (A. M. Belavin, N. B. Krylasova, 2009). Thus, the object of analysis is the material from the territories directly neighbored with the Western slopes of the Ural Ridge – the basins of the Kama River in its middle and partly lower course, and the Vyatka and Belaya Rivers.

The sources base on the “animal style” in the decorative and applied art of the representatives of the Ananyino culture (the Ananyino cultural-historical community - ACHC) was almost simultaneously worked through by two researchers: K. I. Korepanov in his Doct.Sc. thesis “The Art of the of the Middle Volga and Kama Population in the Early Iron Epoch, 8 century BC - 3 century AD” defended in 2000 in Moscow (MSU) and S. A. Vasilyev in his PhD thesis “The Art of the Ancient Volga and Kama Population in the Ananyino Epoch (Origins and Development)” defended in 2002 in Saint Petersburg. In quantitative expression, these are 320 objects – plaques, bracelets, combs, hooks for fastening belts, particular figurines, spindle whorls (weights for a spindle), psalia (cheek-pieces), battle hammers, handles of swords/daggers and knives etc. S. V. Vasilyev (2002) reports that the most interesting for us “animal style” is represented on the patches for decorating a suit (18.7%), in the form of particular figures (11.9%), on the cheek psalia (11.5%), knife handles (10,9%), belt hooks (7,2%), combs and spindle whorls (4.7% and 5.0% respectively). However, if we sum all the finds of weaponry – swords/daggers, bronze pole-axes and battle hammers – decorated by zoomorphic images, they will form 10.3% of all the known artefacts performed in the “animal style”. Thus, unlike the Scytho-Sarmatian animal style, the “Ananyino animal style” has a clear tendency to be a protective talisman, and not a symbol of military valor and fierceness.

There are various interpretations of the images of the “Ananyino animal style” as well. According to K. I. Korepanov (2000), the most popular images were

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(decreasing): a wolf/dog, a griffin’s head, a predatory cat, a snake, a bear, a bird of prey, a horse. According to A. S. Vasilyev (2002) - a bear, a bird of prey, a griffin’s head, a wolf/dog, a predatory cat, an elk.

What does it mean? First of all, the “Ananyino animal style” had no thoroughly tried techniques of reproducing a particular image and a consumer of the product probably perceived the image of an animal at the associative level – he recognized it without excessive concretization, which we are surely deprived of.

K. I. Korepanov (2000) studies the peculiarities of the genesis of the animal style in the art of the Volga-Kama population and divides this process into three periods: the VII-VI centuries BC; the V-IV centuries BC, and the IV-III centuries BC. Only the first and the second periods refer to the Ananyino epoch, therefore, in this case, the researcher’s conclusion that “the influence of the Scythian art best manifested in the South-Western areas of the Ananyino territory is predominant in the development of the Ananyino animal style” is quite acceptable.

The quantitative data given in S. A. Vasilyev’s thesis show that the bulk of the “animal style” objects relate to the period of the V-III centuries BC (68.5% of all the findings). Besides, the “cross-cutting” objects for this period are handles of daggers, swords, or knives, belt buckles, pole-axes, some types of plaques, combs, spindle whorls (S. A. Vasilyev, 2002, table 2). The author identifies the known imported samples and their local replicas among the objects of the “Ananyino animal style” according to the manufacture technology and visage. Moreover, the quantity of the imported products is very small and inevitably decreases throughout the Ananyino period, while the quantity of copies and imitations increases.

Therefore, the main K. I. Korepanov’s conclusion is that “the development of the Ananyino animal style in the V-III centuries BC is associated with the active elaboration of the forest fauna motifs – an elk (2.8%), a bear (6%) and a wolf (21,3%), the introduction of these images in the art and their adjustment to the stylistic forms and requirements of the Scytho-Siberian art. In the V-IV centuries BC, **there begins the reverse impact of the Ananyino art on other regions of the Eurasian animal style. This influence is most clearly seen in the art of the Ural Sarmats** (highlighted by the author – V.I.), while S. A. Vasilyev has quite an opposite opinion: “the Scythian plots and images are most intensively perceived by the Ananyino artistic tradition ‘in the period of the Scythian classics’, but

even then the original plots of the “Ananyino animal style” were developed only in the particular areas of the ACHC – the lower course of the Kama River and in a lesser degree – the Vyatka river. **However, there was no original ‘Ananyino animal style’** (highlighted by the author – V.I.)” I assume that this conclusion is the most adequate to the available archeological material.

We can more or less definitely discuss the signs of the animal style in the decorative art of the representatives of the *Kara-Abyz* (the IV century BC - The IV century BC.) and *Glyadenovo* (the III century BC - the IV century AD) cultures. Moreover, the animal style of the representatives of the Glyadenovo culture is obviously ceremonial. In the “animal style” of these cultures, a deer/goat and a wolf/dog in the Kara-Abyz people, and a wolf, a bird of prey and a snake in the Glyadenovo people absolutely predominate. According to M. F. Obydenov and K. I. Korepanov (2014, p. 183), the “Kara-Abyz animal style” is distinct by “the development of its two trends at the initial stage: ornamental-chematizing trend (area) of the IV-III centuries BC and simplified naturalistic trend of the V-III centuries BC. Both trends co-existed in the IV-III centuries BC”. The authors assume that the ornamentally-schematizing trend in the Kara-Abyz “animal style” is most fully represented in the development of the image of a mountain goat (almost 63% of all the products made in the “animal style”). In practice, these are bronze patches for decorating belts that occur in the Kara-Abyz tombs in various numbers (interestingly, the animals depicted on these patches were identified either as horses or as mountain goats – A. Kh. Pshenichnyuk, M. G. Moshkova). It is impossible to see the manifestations of the simplified naturalistic trend, and the researchers do not give any explanations on this point in their publications.

The Kara-Abyz griffins, wolfs/dogs, and predatory cats are applique plaques (griffons), belt hooks similar to the Ananyino ones (wolves), and plaques with eyelets in the form of lion (?) heads. Stylistically, all products items represent the copies from some original performed with various skills, which came (here all the researchers are unanimous) to the “Kara-Abyz people” from the Sarmatian or the Saka-Massagetae world. Besides, it is quite difficult to trace any stylistic or plot transformation of these images on the available materials.

Possibly, the image of the Kara-Abyz deer, whose development from the appropriate images of the Scytho-Siberian art is traced by N. S. Saveliev, is the

only exclusion. However, this image is exclusive with neither repetitions nor reminiscences outside the territorial and chronological boundaries of the Kara-Abyz culture.

V. V. Ovsyannikov (2013) gives quite a dynamic interpretation of the genesis and evolution of the image of bear in the “animal style” of the Kama and Ural tribes in the Early Iron Age. He assumes that the plot of a “bear in the sacrificial posture” so popular in the art of the Ugrian tribes of the region in the I millennium AD is rooted in the art of the “Ananyino, Kara-Abyz and Pyanobor people”, from whom it extends to the north, to the Glyadenovo people and to the north-east, to the representatives of the Kulai culture of the Western Siberia (V. V. Ovsyannikov, 2013, p. 81). We can hardly agree with this conclusion. It contradicts the dynamics of the incidence of this image in the “animal style” of the representatives of Ananyino, Kara-Abyz and Glyadenovo cultures: S. A. Vasyliiev assumes that the depictions of bear totally prevail in the “Ananyino animal style” (K.I. Korepanov assumes that the bear is quite rare there - 6%), while in the Kara-Abyz and Glyadenovo “animal styles”, their incidence abruptly falls and obviously gives way to the images of wolf/dog (in the Glyadenovo people) and deer/goat (in the Kara-Abyz people). Therefore, V. V. Ovsyannikov’s (2013) interpretation of the decorative and applied art of the Ural tribes in the Early Iron Epoch as a source of artistic images for other territories and tribes (through the example of the image of bear) contradicts to the logics of available sources.

The comparison of the incidence of particular images of the animal style in the decorative art of the Kama and Ural tribes in the Early Iron Epoch shows that they have little if anything in common, since similar images in various cultures have their own stylistic embodiment.

S. A. Vasyliiev notes that “...the depictions of animals in certain postures performed with certain techniques...Due to the similarity of the Ananyino and Scythian items in the animal style, they are sometimes united under the common notion – the Ananyino animal style somehow related to the Scytho-Siberian style and treated as the early stage of the Permian animal style. **Its origin and nature are not clear** (highlighted by the author) (S. A. Vasyliiev, 2002, p. 5).

According to K. I. Korepanov and M. F. Obydenov, “The Early Iron Epoch associated with the epoch of ancient artistic styles is divided into two subperiods. The first one is represented by the ancient artistic styles of the Early Iron Age and relates to the

Ananyino epoch (VIII-III centuries BC). The art of this epoch involves the Ananyino animal style, the Ananyino anthropomorphic style, the Ananyino ornamental style, the Ananyino astral style, the Ananyino vegetative style and the syncretic style.

The Ananyino animal style has the following basic trends in its development: a) generalized - naturalistic trend of the early period (the VII-VI centuries BC), which artistically generalizes the real image (prototype); b) the classic trend of the V- the first half of the IV century BC; c) the simplified - naturalistic trend of the late period (the IV-III centuries BC); d) the ornamentally-schematizing trend (movement) of the late period (the IV-III centuries BC) schematizing a real prototype and rendering it in the ornamentally stylised form (K.I. Korepanov 2000, p. 44-49). **These trends agree with the periods and areas of the Scythian art** (highlighted by the author – V.I.)” (K.I. Korepanov 2000, p. 44-49; K.I. Korepanov, M.F Obydenov, 2014, p.150-151).

Thus, rare, sporadic, and eclectic artefacts performed in the animal style make the researchers draw quite uncertain and often contradictory conclusions when considering them in the terms of Scytho-Siberian animal style.

The author of the article has made the following **conclusions:**

- the notion “animal style” referred to the decorative and applied art of the forest Kama and Ural population is conditional and “technical” and is actually used to denote the group of different artefacts, which contain the depictions of animals but are made from various materials and in various technique – bronze casting, bone carving, graffiti, microplastics;
- the only thing that unites them is the depictions of animals themselves, with a bear, a griffon and birds of prey dominating in the “animal style” of the Ananyino culture, a deer/goat dominating in the Kara-Abyz culture, and a wolf/dog – in the Glyadenovo culture. There is no stylistic unity in the depiction of these animals – everything depends on the material and functions of an object. It turned out that there was no “animal style” of the Pyanobor culture at all.
- judging by the functions of the objects with the depictions of animals prevailing among the appropriate artefacts (plaques in the “Ananyino people”, belt and breast decorations in the “Kara-Abyz people”, apparently ritual sacrificial objects in the “Glyadenovo people” as well as by the

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apparent prevalence of the image of some animal (a bear – in the “Ananyino people”, a goat (or horse?) – in the “Kara-Abyz people”, a dog/wolf – in the “Glyadenovo people”), the objects decorated by their depictions were probably protecting amulets associated with a totemic cult;

- The samples of the “animal style” (conditionally) of the forest Kama and Ural tribes should not be directly associated with the Scytho-Siberian animal style: in the decorative and applied art of the early Eurasian nomads, the animal style is an aesthetics, while in the forest tribes of the region under examination, it is one of the sacral elements (amulet, talisman, charm, apotropaion).

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