

СЕКЦІЯ VIII. МАТЕРІАЛЬНІ ТА ПИСЕМНІ ПАМ'ЯТКИ СХОДУ

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IMAGE OF ROOSTER IN THE ART OF SCYTHIA: IRANIAN CONTEXT

Key words: Scythian art, rooster, gold, plaques, image, Iranian art, Sraoša.

The focus of my report is the image of a rooster that is quite rare in Scythian art. It first appears in the 5th century BC as a part of clothes decoration. The image of a rooster with a head turned back is represented on the urygold plaque from the barrow no. 2 of Semibratni mounds (Kuban region) (**fig. 1**). Another gold plaque with an image of rooster was found in the barrow no. 17 of the Nymphaeion necropolis (Eastern Crimea)¹ (**fig. 2**).



Fig. 1. The image of rooster on a plaque from the barrow no. 2 of Semibratni mounds, Kuban region, 5th cent. BC (after 5, S. 29, Abb. 50)



Fig. 2. A plaque with an image of rooster from the barrow no. 17 of the Nymphaeion necropolis, Eastern Crimea, 5th cent. BC (after 5, Bildtaf. 106)

¹ All these plaques are kept in the Funds of the State Hermitage (Saint Petersburg).

In the 4th century BC images of a rooster appear on the decor of the armament. The image of two face-to-face roosters (the motif of cockfights) is represented on the gold scabbard of a ceremonial sword from the Tovsta Mohyla (Dnipropetrovs'ky region)² [2, с. 68, рис. 52; 72] (**fig. 3**).

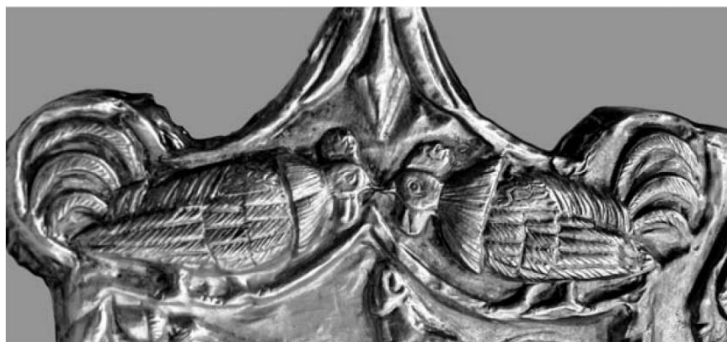


Fig. 3. The images of two face-to-face roosters on the gold scabbard of a sword from the Tovsta Mohyla, Dnipropetrovs'ky region, 4th cent. BC (after 4, с. 457, рис. 1.2)

During the same century, a synthetic image combining the features of a rooster and a man is appeared. The unique ornithomorphic image of a «rooster-man» is shown on a gold ornamented latticed plate that decorated a *goritos* of a noble Scythian warrior from the Soboleva Mohyla (burial no. 2) (**fig. 4**). The massive plate³ (height: 12.7 × 8.8 cm; weight: 26.62 g) depicts a male deity in an «Egyptian» style: the body is shown frontally, and the head and legs are in profile. The man has long hair and a pointed beard, as well as an oversized eye. On the neck, either the collar (strings) of the suit or the neck decoration is shown. Almost the entire human body is covered with a stylized image of feathers. Behind him are shown radially-diverging four pairs of wings. Below the knees, the legs of a person turn into the image of a rooster's feet with claws and spurs. The ornithomorphic character stands on the bodies of two winged-horned snakes, which he holds with his hands by the horns [3, с. 178–179].

² The sword is kept in the Treasury of the National Museum of the History of Ukraine (Kyiv), inv. no. 2492–2493.

³ The plate is kept in the Funds of the Institute of Archaeology of the National Academy of Sciences of Ukraine, inv. no. Z-1968.



Fig. 4. The image of a «rooster-man» on a gold ornamented latted plate of *gorytos* from Soboleva Mohyla, 4th cent. BC (after 10, p. 303 (Cat. 154))

The question arises why the image of the rooster existed in the art of Scythia, given that this bird is not typical for nomadic economy. From the other hand, it is significant the image of rooster is known even in the art of Eastern area of the «Scythian world» – in the Pazyryk culture of Altai [1, c. 143–156]. Obviously, this image should be considered on the Iranian background.

The cult of a rooster played an important role in the religious and mythological beliefs of the Iranian peoples, and perhaps goes back to pre-Zoroastrian times [9, p. 377–380; 11, p. 878–882]. The god Sraoša acquired the features of the rooster which is often considered as a purely Zoroastrian deity [7; 8]. However, the rooster acts as his assistant in the Avestan corpus (*Vīdēvdād* 18.14–15), and thus becomes his symbol and sacred embodiment. Zoroastrians were even forbidden to eat this bird [11, p. 878]. Already in the *Gāthās* of Zoroāstra, the ultra-fast nature of Sraoša is indicated: «(He is) faster than two horses, faster than two winds, faster than two rains, faster than two clouds, faster than two good-flying birds, faster than (arrows) that were well shot» (*Yasna* 57.28). Sraoša is depicted as a deity who is responsible for the cosmic balance and protects believers in both worlds (*Yasna* 57.25). During the day and (especially) at night, he fights against monster-like demons that capitulate to him (*Yasna* 57.17–18, 31). All this contributes to the fact that the believers turned to him in the most critical moments [6, p. 235]. After all,

Sraoša is the mediator between the two worlds and acts as a guide of the souls of the departed, and these functions remain with him even in Muslim Iran.

The Classical literary texts associate the rooster with the military sphere of the Iranians (Persian), in particular with the concept of valor. Thus, Plutarch in «Comparative Biographies» mentions that Artaxerxes II ordered the Carian warrior who killed Cyrus the Younger in the battle of Kunax to carry a golden image of a rooster on his spear in front of the army (Plut. Art. 10).

Since in the beliefs of the ancient Iranian peoples a rooster was associated with the concepts of victory, cosmic balance and military prowess, it is quite possible that a rooster in Scythian beliefs played the same role, connected with a deity close in his functions to Sraoša. However, since the Scythians were not Zoroastrians, it was probably a more archaic figure of the Iranian rooster-god. As for the image of a «rooster-man» on the Soboleva Mohyla plate, in my opinion, it depicts not so much the struggle of the hero/deity with winged snakes but, rather serves as depicting their being restrained, which guaranteed the maintenance of the cosmic balance, in particular, between life and death in the eschatological sense.

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THE NEPALESE KORA SWORD FROM THE COLLECTION OF THE LVIV HISTORICAL MUSEUM: TO THE QUESTION OF DATING AND ORIGIN OF THE OBJECT

Key words: Nepal, kora sword, Himalayan weapons, Religious symbols, Buddhism, Lviv, Lviv Historical Museum.

The kora sword in the Lviv Historical Museum collection is a unique and rare artefact in Ukraine. However, the sword almost did not attract the attention of researchers. Koras are usually associated with Nepalese soldiers, the Gurkha troops/ That is not groundless – this kind of weapon was actively used in the times of the Gurkha wars and the unification of Nepal under the leadership of the Shah dynasty in the 1750s–1760s. The sword itself has cultural and religious significance in Indian / South Asian tradition – it is a sword of true Indian warrior, a true raja and a weapon of tantric Buddhist and Hindu deities. So, it is important to investigate the religious symbolism of the sword in Buddhism, and in this context the place of kora sword had in the religious practices and ideology of the Nepalese (as well as their neighbours) in pre-modern and early modern times. Often kora swords had images of the eye, lotus, or other religious symbols linked to Buddhist and Hindu Tantric ideas. The sword from the Lviv Historical Museum collection has the image of a solar sign.

It is possible to speak about a few main types of kora swords and their iconography. Basing on a comparison with existing objects from the museum and private art collections around the world, the author draws conclusions about the typification of kora swords. Thus it enables to reveal the type to which the sword from Lviv belongs. The analysis of the iconography of kora from Lviv Historical Museum including the images on the blade, the features and texture of the metalwork etc, also helps to date this Himalayan weapon