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**The influence of Scythian decorative and applied art
on the development of the artistic culture of Central
and Western European peoples**

Abstract. This study aimed to examine the influence of Scythian ornamental motifs on the development of early medieval European art, with particular emphasis on metalworking techniques. The research focused on how Scythian cultural elements were transformed and integrated into European jewellery traditions and artistic heritage. The methodology involved a comparative analysis of archaeological finds, including jewellery, weaponry, and ritual objects. The study explored the dissemination of Scythian techniques – specifically casting, embossing, and inlay – through trade and military contact with European peoples, and how these techniques were adapted to local needs and aesthetic traditions. The findings revealed that Scythian ornamental motifs, particularly zoomorphic and geometric designs, played a significant role in shaping the artistic language of early medieval European art. In particular, animal motifs and abstract patterns were incorporated into European decorative art, undergoing changes under the influence of local styles and religious requirements. The analysis also revealed that Scythian metalworking techniques had a significant impact on the production of intricate jewellery and ritual artefacts in Europe. Inlay techniques, in particular, played a key role and were refined by European craftsmen based on Scythian models. Furthermore, it was established that Scythian heritage contributed to the development of medieval European cultural traditions, especially in jewellery art, where Scythian symbols and techniques were transformed into new artistic forms. These motifs became embedded in a religious context, acquiring new symbolic meanings within Christian Europe, where they came to represent spiritual protection and authority

Keywords: nomadic cultures; ornamental motifs; metalworking techniques; inlay and embossing; artistic exchange

INTRODUCTION

Scythian decorative and applied art is a significant component of Eurasian cultural heritage, which played an important role in the development of the artistic traditions of many peoples, particularly those in Central and Western Europe. The works of Scythian craftsmen are notable for their rich symbolism, unique techniques, and high level of skill, which not only characterise the culture of the

Scythians themselves but also influenced the art of other peoples. Cultural contacts between the Scythians and European peoples facilitated the development of various aspects of artistic creativity on the European continent, creating new directions in decorative and applied art. Academics have already extensively researched Scythian art, including its evolution, characteristics, and influence on other

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cultures. The study of archaeological findings, the analysis of manufacturing techniques and materials used, as well as the examination of stylistic elements, are important parts of studying this art. At the same time, these studies highlight the general aspects of cultural exchange between the Scythians and the peoples of Europe, confirming the close connection between the cultures. Research into Scythian decorative and applied art has covered broad aspects of cultural interaction, technological innovations, and symbolism, as manifested in artefacts and artistic traditions. Each author has made a significant contribution to the study of various aspects of this topic.

Cultural interaction between the Scythians and the Greeks has attracted the attention of many researchers. E. Jacobson (2022) analysed these processes, focusing on how Scythian art influenced the Greek artistic tradition through the adaptation of Scythian ornaments and styles in Greek decorative art. The author emphasised that the Scythians, as a nomadic people, brought their unique motifs to settled cultures, such as the Greeks, contributing to the enrichment of their artistic tradition. An important aspect was also the study of craft techniques, particularly jewellery art. O. Lifantii (2023) focused her attention on the local production of Scythian jewellery, specifically analysing archaeological finds that confirmed the existence of local workshops and a high level of craftsmanship among the Scythians. She challenged the long-held hypothesis that most gold artefacts found in Scythian burial mounds were imported from Greece or other neighbouring civilisations. The researcher demonstrated that the Scythians not only mastered complex techniques for making ornaments, such as granulation and relief depiction, but also developed their own artistic traditions.

B. Sharkey (2022) focused on researching the Scythian zoomorphic style, revealing the symbolic meanings of animal depictions in Scythian art. He analysed how animals fulfilled a cosmological role, representing not only the Scythians' worldview but also serving as protective amulets in their culture. The author noted that zoomorphic motifs, particularly scenes of struggle between predators and their prey, reflected the philosophy of the fight for survival, which was central to the Scythian religious system. He also investigated how these motifs influenced neighbouring cultures, specifically through cultural contacts with the Greeks. P. Hupfaut (2024) expanded on the theme of the interaction between the art of the Eurasian steppes and European cultures. His research demonstrated how the artistic traditions of the Scythians penetrated European decorative and applied arts through contacts and exchange.

The role of the Pontic region as a cultural bridge between the Scythians and the Greeks was explored by G.R. Tsetskhladze *et al.* (2021). They analysed how Greek colonies on the northern coast of the Black Sea became a site of active cultural exchange, which facilitated the dissemination of Scythian artistic traditions into the Greek world. These contacts contributed not only to the introduction of new techniques in Greek art but also to the creation of syncretic artistic styles that combined elements of both cultures. The study of the symbolism of Scythian swords and their depiction in Greco-Scythian art, conducted by A. Shelekhan and O. Lifantii (2022), revealed the importance of these objects not merely as weapons but also as symbols of

social status and military glory. They showed that swords played a central role in Scythian culture, reflecting military identity and providing a connection with religious rituals, particularly through their depiction on funerary reliefs.

J. Boardman (2023) focused on the dissemination of classical art through contacts with the Scythians, examining how artistic styles changed as a result of these interactions. His research showed that Scythian art, thanks to its unique techniques and styles, influenced the development of European artistic traditions, particularly in the field of metalworking and ornamental art. O. Shelekhan (2023) focused on the functionality of Scythian knives, analysing them as important tools in daily life and military conflicts. She demonstrated that Scythian knives were not only weapons but also symbolic objects reflecting social status and ritual practices. C.P. Atwood (2024) considered the broader global context of Scythian culture, including its influence on classical civilisations such as Persia and China. His research revealed that the Scythians played a central role in the development of Eurasian civilisations, shaping the classical era through artistic traditions, cultural exchange, and technological innovations. C.P. Atwood underscored that the Scythians contributed to the transformation of many cultural processes in Eurasia, and this research allowed for a deeper understanding of their role in creating cultural bridges between different regions.

However, the question of the influence of Scythian decorative and applied art on the artistic culture of Central and Western Europe requires more detailed investigation, particularly in the context of how this influence was integrated into local artistic traditions. It is necessary to examine how Scythian artistic traditions were perceived by European craftsmen, which elements were adopted and adapted to new cultural conditions. It is also important to trace the paths of dissemination of these cultural influences and to understand how European artists adapted Scythian elements into their own creative practices. This will allow for the uncovering of the processes of cultural interaction and the enrichment of artistic traditions.

The purpose of the study was to analyse the influence of Scythian decorative and applied art on the development of the artistic culture of the peoples of Central and Western Europe, which will allow for a deeper understanding of the processes of cultural exchange and the integration of elements of Scythian art into European traditions. In conducting the research, specific tasks were set to achieve the goal, namely: to analyse in detail the features of Scythian art that could have influenced other cultures; to study the cultural exchange between the Scythians and European peoples and identify the elements of Scythian art that were integrated into European artistic styles; and to trace how these elements changed in new cultural conditions.

In the course of the study, the main avenues through which Scythian zoomorphic and geometric motifs penetrated the decorative traditions of European peoples were examined. Everyday objects, weaponry, and ornaments were analysed where visual elements borrowed from Scythian art had been reinterpreted and adapted to local traditions. A comparative analysis of the artistic styles of early European tribes such as the Celts, Franks, and Germanic peoples allowed for tracing the development of Scythian motifs in new cultural contexts, including their symbolic

transformation within the framework of European culture. Metalworking techniques such as casting, embossing, and inlay with precious stones were also investigated. A detailed analysis was conducted on the manufacturing technologies of Scythian jewellery, and these were compared with the methods employed in Byzantine and Frankish goldsmithing. Particular attention was paid to the introduction of innovative technologies in the creation of church and royal regalia, which served not only a decorative but also a ritual function. This allowed for the identification of how Scythian inlay craftsmanship and complex ornaments became part of European aesthetics. Within the framework of researching the cultural influence of Scythian heritage on the development of traditions in medieval Europe, the processes of integrating Scythian symbols and techniques into local craft traditions were analysed. It was revealed that contacts between the Scythians and European peoples occurred through trade, political, and military interactions. This analysis examined both material objects (weapons, ornaments, ritual items) and the cultural interactions that led to the emergence of new artistic forms, particularly in jewellery art, architecture, and church decor.

THE INFLUENCE OF SCYTHIAN ORNAMENTAL MOTIFS ON EARLY MEDIEVAL ART

Scythian animalistic art played a significant role in shaping the aesthetic and symbolic traditions of early medieval European art. The main characteristic of Scythian zoomorphic stylistics lay in the dynamic depictions of animals, which were often used to convey religious and cosmological symbols (Fig. 1).

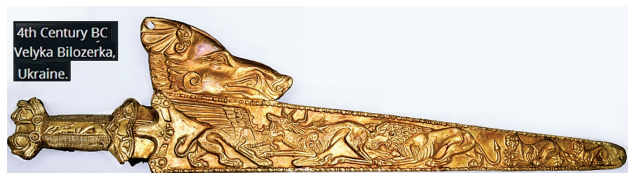


Figure 1. Scythian weapon with animal depictions

Source: Scythian special large pictures (2019)

These motifs, particularly scenes of struggle between predators and prey, penetrated the culture of many European peoples, ranging from the Celts to the Germanic tribes. In medieval decorative art, their echoes were manifested in the use of zoomorphic ornaments on everyday objects, weaponry, and jewellery. In the early Middle Ages, peoples such as the Franks and Lombards actively borrowed Scythian zoomorphic styles for the decoration of their artefacts, creating new interpretations of these motifs. Specifically, in metallurgy and jewellery art, animal images were widely used as symbols of strength and protection. Motifs including depictions of deer, gryphons, and horses became an integral part of the symbolic repertoire of many early medieval tribes. The influence of Scythian art was particularly noticeable in the depiction of animals on swords, brooches, and decorative buckles. These objects not only demonstrated skilled metalworking but also reflected the worldview system of early medieval society, in which animals acted as spiritual guides and guardians (Kia, 2022). Following the animalistic motifs that played a significant

role in shaping early medieval art, Scythian geometric elements also became an important source of inspiration for European peoples (Fig. 2). The Scythians were known for their masterful use of geometric ornaments, which combined clear lines, rhombuses, spirals, and triangles.

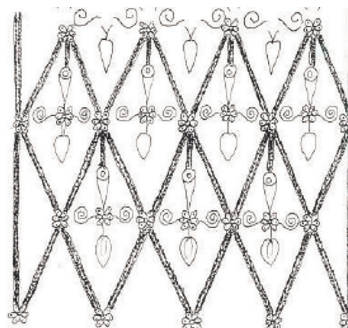


Figure 2. Scythian ornament

Source: A pattern of the Scythian hair adornment (2012)

These elements became the basis for creating visual harmony and rhythm, which were used in many decorative crafts in early medieval Europe. Scythian geometric motifs were widely employed in ornaments on fabrics, metal products, and ceramics. After the period of contact between the Scythians and European peoples, elements such as rhombuses and spirals became part of the artistic heritage of many tribes, particularly the Celts and Germanic peoples. They used geometric patterns to adorn everyday objects, ritual artefacts, and military accoutrements. In the context of the Christianisation of Europe, Scythian geometric motifs transformed but did not lose their significance. They were adapted to new Christian symbolism, creating models for Byzantine and Western European church art. Geometry, as a form of expressing order and harmony in the world, continued to play a key role in shaping the visual language of medieval art (Gytnyk, 2022). Following the borrowing of animalistic and geometric elements of Scythian art, European craftsmen turned their attention to plant motifs, which also played an important role in Scythian culture (Fig. 3).



Figure 3. Scythian golden lotus

Source: Scythian Gold Lotus Flower Appliqué (2024)

Plant ornaments reflected the Scythians' deep connection with nature and were used for decorating various objects such as jewellery, ceramics, and fabrics. In the decorative and applied art of Europe, these elements found their echo in depictions of plant scrolls, stems, and flowers. Plant motifs, such as stylised flowers and leaves,

often adorned ceramic products and metal ornaments in the early Middle Ages. These influences were particularly noticeable in the art of the Celts and Franks, where plant ornaments enriched local artistic styles. They used Scythian depictions of nature to decorate cult objects and symbolic items, adapting them to their religious and cultural needs. In medieval Christian art, Scythian plant motifs underwent transformation, becoming part of Christian symbolism. Depictions of grapevines and flowers were used for decorating temples and religious texts, where they symbolised spiritual growth and rebirth, transforming old pagan motifs into new Christian symbols (Radanova, 2023).

Scythian symbols, which carried deep sacral meaning for this nomadic people, significantly influenced the development of the craft traditions of Western European peoples. Scythian culture, based on complex symbolism, encompassed both religious and social elements, which subsequently penetrated the craft technologies of Europe through active cultural exchange. Ornaments and symbols, such as stylised animals, plants, and abstract geometric figures, played an important role in shaping the artistic language of many European peoples of the early Middle Ages. Specifically, Western European craftsmen, inspired by the richness of Scythian ornaments, adapted them for decorating metal products, ceramics, and textiles. The symbolic depiction of predators, such as lions and wolves, was widespread in Celtic and Germanic art, which emphasised military might and protective power. Scythian geometric symbols also transformed into ornamental patterns used in the decoration of temples and religious texts. Through this, craft items, such as swords, helmets, ornaments, and everyday objects, became carriers not only of a practical but also of a sacral function. This influence can also be traced in the development of zoomorphic symbols in medieval Europe, which incorporated the traditions of Scythian culture. European craftsmen often combined their traditional symbols with new ones borrowed from Scythian art, thus creating unique artistic items.

Scythian ornaments, which reflected pagan worldviews and rituals, began to acquire new semantic meanings in the Christian art of medieval Europe. With the penetration of Christianity, these elements started to be adapted to reflect new spiritual and religious ideas. This was not a simple replacement of old motifs with new ones, but rather a process of their transformation, where old symbols acquired new meanings in a Christian context. Plant motifs, which in Scythian culture symbolised natural cycles and the forces of nature, in Christian art came to embody eternal life and spiritual rebirth. Thus, the motif of the grapevine, which had a pagan meaning in Scythian ornament, became a powerful symbol of Jesus Christ, embodying ideas of salvation and the immortality of the soul. Similarly, geometric elements, which previously had a protective or magical function, began to be used for decorating religious objects, such as churches, and acquired the meaning of divine order. Scythian symbols, adapted in Christian art, were used for decorating temples and creating religious texts (Runcan, 2022). This was not merely an expression of artistic synthesis but also the preservation of certain traditional elements within a new religious framework. Thanks to this integration, Scythian ornaments did not disappear from European culture but, on the contrary, continued to exist, enriching the symbolic repertoire of Christian art.

SCYTHIAN METALWORK AND ITS REFLECTION IN THE EUROPEAN JEWELLERY TRADITION

Scythian craftsmen achieved a high level of skill in metalworking, employing technologies that were innovative for their time, including casting, embossing, inlay, and the use of precious metals. They actively worked with gold, silver, bronze, and iron, creating both everyday objects and ritual items that held deep symbolic meaning. These technologies not only highlighted Scythian craftsmanship but also significantly influenced European craft, particularly during the medieval period. The primary method of metalworking among the Scythians was casting, which allowed for the creation of complex three-dimensional forms. Cast items such as belts, ornaments, and horse harnesses were adorned with exquisite ornaments and stylised depictions of animals.

Figures of deer, lions, and horses, symbolising strength and protection, were particularly popular. European craftsmen, particularly Byzantine and Frankish, adopted this technique for manufacturing their own ceremonial and military items, such as swords and helmets. Another equally important technology was inlay – the insertion of precious or semi-precious stones into metal items. Scythian jewellers used turquoise, carnelian, and garnet to adorn their ornaments and weaponry. This technique had not only a decorative but also a symbolic function, imbuing the items with magical power and emphasising the social status of the owner. European jewellers quickly adapted this method, using it for decorating royal regalia and religious items. Embossing was another technique that the Scythians used to create relief ornaments on ornaments and weapons. These reliefs often depicted hunting or battle scenes, which held both aesthetic and symbolic significance (Fig. 4).



Figure 4. Depiction of a battle on a Scythian relief
Source: The Scythians: Who were they? (2021)

This technology became the basis for the development of embossing in early medieval European craft, particularly in the work involving swords and church relics. The influence of Scythian technologies on European craft was felt not only in the application of techniques but also in the understanding of metal as a material carrying symbolic meaning. European craftsmen adopted the concept of metal items as carriers of religious and political content, which significantly enriched the jewellery tradition of medieval Europe (Ripoşan & Stan, 2023).

Gold and silver were central materials in Scythian culture, and their use significantly influenced European jewellery art, especially in the context of religious

and ritual objects. The Scythians viewed these metals not only as symbols of wealth and power but also as carriers of spiritual energy. Their use in ornaments, weapons, and funerary artefacts held sacral meaning, which was adopted by European craftsmen. Among the Scythians, gold was extremely valuable and held ritual significance. Gold items were often used in elite burials, as well as in the creation of ritual objects, such as bowls and plaques for weaponry or horse harnesses. One of the most famous examples is the discovered golden pectoral, which is striking due to the detail of the scenes depicted on it, where the symbolism of nature is combined with the might of animals (Fig. 5).



Figure 5. One of the most famous Scythian ornaments – the golden pectoral

Source: Scythian gold grouping illicitly removed from Ukraine recovered by Spain's Policía Nacional (2023)

Gold was also used for inlay and the decoration of weapons and ritual items, emphasising the social status of the owner. Silver held a similar significance to gold, although it was used more frequently for everyday items. Silver plaques and ornaments found in Scythian burial mounds demonstrate a high level of skill in working with this metal. Scythian craftsmen often combined silver with other materials, such as bronze or gold, which provided the items with complex contrasts and visual depth. European craftsmen, particularly during the medieval period, adopted the Scythian tradition of working with gold and silver. In Byzantium, for example, gold and silver items, such as crowns, panagias, and crosses, were actively used for religious and ceremonial purposes. Like the Scythians, European craftsmen viewed gold as a symbol of spiritual purity and divine power. Royal regalia in medieval Europe, adorned with gold and silver, often served as a reflection of power and political status. Silver was used for the manufacture of smaller everyday items, such as goblets, spoons, and other ritual artefacts. European jewellers continued to refine silverworking techniques, actively using it for decorating weapons and church artefacts (Meyer, 2013). Gold and silver in both traditions held a dual meaning – as symbols of social status and spiritual purity – and their use in jewellery and religious contexts left a deep mark on European culture (Westropp, 2023).

Another important factor in the influence of Scythian culture on the development of European art can be considered Scythian inlays. Scythian inlays, which combined

precious and semi-precious stones with metal, played a key role in the development of jewellery art not only within their own culture but also became a significant influence on European jewellery traditions. Scythian craftsmen used the inlay technique to adorn weaponry, ornaments, and ritual items. Key stones, such as turquoise, carnelian, garnet, and other gems, were integrated into gold and silver bases, creating complex ornaments that emphasised the symbolism of power, as well as the religious and social significance of the owner (Fig. 6).



Figure 6. Scythian gold buckle inlaid with turquoise
Source: Scythian art summary (2023)

In the European context, inlay techniques inherited from Scythian traditions found their application in Byzantium and later medieval cultures of Western Europe. Byzantine jewellers actively used stones to create crosses, crowns, sacred reliquaries, and other church items, which carried not only a decorative but also a deeply sacral function. In Western Europe, Frankish and Germanic craftsmen adopted inlay techniques for decorating ceremonial and religious artefacts such as swords, buckles, and fibulae. Of particular interest is the fact that Scythian inlay had not only a decorative function but also a deep ritual meaning, as each stone held its own significance related to spirituality and protection. European craftsmen adapted this symbolism to their own traditions, particularly within the context of Christian art, where stones became symbols of divine power or spiritual protection. This type of inlay was preserved and developed in Western European royal and ecclesiastical ornaments, where stones often symbolised heavenly intercession or the secular power of monarchs. Inlays played a crucial role in shaping European jewellery art, giving it a new level of aesthetic and symbolic depth that influenced the development of religious and secular culture (Unwin, 2021).

Scythian jewellery had a significant influence on the development of medieval European jewellery, especially in terms of ornamentation, manufacturing techniques, and symbolism. The Scythians developed a unique style that was based on the combination of animal and plant motifs with geometric ornaments. These elements served not only as decorative adornment but also held important ritual significance. European jewellers, particularly in the early Middle Ages, actively borrowed Scythian approaches to jewellery design, adapting them to their own cultural contexts. In the Frankish kingdom, among the Celts and Lombards, Scythian motifs were used to create fibulae, belts, and other elements of ritual attire. A characteristic feature was the use of zoomorphic images – lions, deer, eagles – which symbolised power and protection. In some

cases, animal images were transformed into allegories of royal or spiritual authority, which was characteristic of medieval Europe. Furthermore, Scythian techniques of inlay with precious stones were also widely adopted by European craftsmen. Byzantine and Western European craftsmen often used inlay to adorn royal regalia and church items, emphasising their importance and symbolic status. The religious symbolism of Scythian ornaments also influenced European ecclesiastical jewellery tradition. Complex ornaments, inlaid with precious stones, became part of the decoration of chalices, crosses, panagias, and other religious artefacts. Depictions of plant motifs, such as spirals or flowers, which were widespread among the Scythians, gained new life in European jewellery art, particularly in the creation of church ornaments. These plant elements not only added aesthetic appeal but also carried deep religious symbolism, underscoring the connection with the spiritual world (Pollio, 2021).

The influence of Scythian ornaments was multifaceted and manifested in various aspects of medieval European jewellery art. The combination of complex ornamental motifs, inlay techniques, and symbolism, which was characteristic of the Scythians, gradually became part of European aesthetics. Scythian traditions related to the use of precious metals and stones, particularly turquoise and carnelian, influenced the style and techniques that European craftsmen adapted for their products.

THE INFLUENCE OF SCYTHIAN HERITAGE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN MEDIEVAL EUROPE

Cultural interactions between the Scythians and the peoples of Europe were complex and multifaceted, contributing not only to the exchange of goods but also to the spread of technologies, particularly in the fields of metallurgy and jewellery art. The Scythians, being a nomadic people, not only utilised developed metallurgical technologies to create ornaments, weapons, and ritual items but also transferred this knowledge to new territories through trade routes and military campaigns. Their technologies and artistic traditions actively spread among European peoples through interaction at political, economic, and cultural levels. An important mechanism of cultural exchange was the establishment of trade links between the Scythians and Greek colonies on the Black Sea coast. Through these ports, Scythian metal items reached Europe, where they impressed local craftsmen with their technological perfection and the complexity of their ornamental motifs. These contacts facilitated the spread of Scythian casting, embossing, and inlay techniques to the territories of Western and Central Europe, notably among the Celts, Germanic peoples, and Franks. Research indicates that Frankish and Byzantine craftsmen actively borrowed Scythian techniques for working with gold and silver, which influenced the development of European jewellery (Makhortykh, 2021).

Another significant channel of cultural interaction between the Scythians and European peoples consisted of military campaigns and migrations. The Scythians repeatedly engaged in conflicts with neighbouring tribes, which contributed to the spread of their metallurgical technologies through military spoils and captured craftsmen. This process particularly influenced the development of military

accoutrements in Europe, as Scythian embossing and inlay technologies became part of the production of weaponry and armour used by European warriors (Du, 2022). An important component in the dissemination of Scythian technologies was also the integration of their artistic motifs into religious artefacts. Scythian symbols, such as depictions of predators and ornamental motifs that held ritual significance, were adopted by European craftsmen and gradually integrated into the creation of church items, including crosses, chalices, and icons. Byzantine craftsmen, renowned for their skill in creating church reliquaries, actively used Scythian inlays and embossing techniques to create religious artefacts. Through these items, Scythian technologies became part of European Christian heritage, highlighting the significance of exchange between the cultural traditions of nomadic and settled peoples (Korol, 2023).

It is important to note that Scythian influence was not limited solely to craft technologies but also had a deep cultural impact on the perception of the symbolism of metal items in Europe. European craftsmen adopted from the Scythians the idea that metals and precious stones possess not only a decorative but also a sacral function, as manifested in their use for creating amulets and symbols of power. This led to European jewellery becoming not merely luxury items but also symbols of spiritual protection and social status. Thus, cultural interactions between the Scythians and European peoples became a significant element in the formation of the medieval European jewellery tradition. Scythian technologies, style, and symbolism left a profound mark on European culture, influencing the development not only of jewellery but also of military accoutrements and religious art. These interactions constituted a complex process of cultural exchange that unfolded through trade, military conflicts, and religious transformations, and resulted in Scythian heritage becoming an integral part of the European artistic and craft landscape (Berczi, 2000).

The stylisation of Scythian motifs in European jewellery art became a key element in the formation of early medieval traditions of ornaments and ritual items. Scythian culture, which flourished thanks to close trade and cultural ties with other peoples, encompassed a rich set of motifs, symbols, and techniques that not only held decorative significance but also reflected the social, spiritual, and political ideas of the Scythians about the world. Among these motifs, zoomorphic depictions of animals predominated, particularly predators and horses, which symbolised strength, power, and protection, as well as complex geometric ornaments that often carried magical meaning. These motifs became particularly popular among European peoples, such as the Franks, Celts, and Germanic peoples, who adapted them to their own needs and aesthetic standards (Wendelken, 2000). The stylisation of Scythian motifs within European traditions involved the transformation of original depictions and ornaments through the prism of local cultural contexts. For instance, animal motifs from Scythian art, such as depictions of predators, were transformed into symbols of royal or military authority in early medieval Europe. In the Frankish kingdom and among the Germanic peoples, images of lions, wolves, and eagles were frequently used on weaponry, fibulae, and ceremonial ornaments as symbols of strength and protection. European craftsmen reshaped Scythian motifs into more stylised forms

that corresponded to local aesthetic standards and political realities, imbuing them with additional symbolic weight. For example, the predator motif could become part of royal regalia or religious attributes, symbolising not only physical strength but also divine power (Trigg & Welch, 2023).

Scythian geometric ornaments also found their reflection in European jewellery art. These ornaments, which held protective or ritual functions in Scythian culture, were adapted by European craftsmen for decorating religious and everyday objects. For example, spirals and scrolls, which were frequently found in Scythian ornaments, were used to create decorative elements on religious chalices, crosses, and other church items in Byzantium and Western Europe. The fusion of Scythian and European motifs can be traced in archaeological finds across Central and Western Europe, where jewellery with complex geometric ornaments, similar to Scythian ones, is often discovered. It is also important to note that Scythian motifs underwent significant changes during the process of stylisation when they were transferred to the European context. In some cases, animal depictions were transformed into abstract forms that corresponded to the aesthetic preferences of local cultures. European craftsmen often simplified or distorted the original Scythian depictions to adapt them to their traditions. This was particularly noticeable in the production of ornaments and weaponry, where Scythian motifs were often combined with local symbols, creating new artistic forms that blended old and new traditions. The stylisation of Scythian motifs also influenced the development of religious art in medieval Europe (Haselgrove *et al.*, 2023). Scythian symbols related to nature and the animal world acquired new meaning in a Christian context. Some animal depictions, which in Scythian culture symbolised protection and strength, became allegories of Christian virtues or divine patronage. This allowed European craftsmen to integrate Scythian motifs into church ornaments and other religious items, which enriched European Christian art with new symbolic meanings. Thus, Scythian motifs, adapted and stylised in the European context, became an important part of the artistic heritage of medieval Europe. Their use in jewellery, religious items, and military accoutrements testifies to the profound influence of Scythian culture on the formation of European artistic traditions. The influence of Scythian motifs was not limited to a purely decorative function but also contributed to the development of new symbolic meanings that corresponded to the political, religious, and cultural needs of medieval Europe.

The fusion of traditions and innovations in the process of forming medieval European jewellery art became a result of complex and prolonged exchange between different cultures, particularly Scythian and European. As the technologies, style, and symbolism of Scythian culture penetrated European territories through trade, wars, and cultural contacts, they interacted with local traditions, shaping new artistic directions and techniques. This process was not merely a copying of Scythian examples but rather a creative synthesis that combined elements of Scythian heritage with the new technological achievements and cultural needs of European societies. One of the key aspects of this fusion was the application of Scythian metalworking techniques in combination with European artistic traditions. The inlay technique, which was popular among the Scythians,

underwent further development in European jewellery art. European craftsmen refined these technologies, adding new inlay elements using precious stones, which were considered symbols of religious or royal power (Achverdjanová, 2021).

In Byzantium, where jewellery art attained exceptional sophistication, inlaid items became symbols of ecclesiastical and secular power, combining Scythian technologies with Christian symbolism. This fusion of traditions and innovations also manifested in the production of weaponry and military accoutrements. Scythian embossing and casting technologies formed the basis for the manufacture of European swords, helmets, and shields, which were often adorned with ornaments that held both a decorative and a ritual function. However, European craftsmen advanced further, developing these techniques and adapting them to local requirements. For instance, in the Frankish kingdom, swords and other military items were decorated with more intricate ornaments and inlays that symbolised not only physical strength but also the owner's political status. This process underscores the importance of cultural fusion, where innovations evolved from traditional knowledge. Furthermore, Scythian ornaments and symbols, including depictions of animals, predators, and plant motifs, became part of European religious art. In early medieval Europe, these motifs were transformed into Christian symbols used in church reliquaries, chalices, and icons. Depictions of lions or eagles, which in Scythian culture embodied physical strength and protection, became in the European context allegories of divine power or patronage. This combination of traditions and innovations created new artistic forms that corresponded to both the religious and secular needs of medieval Europe. A significant element of this process was not merely the spread of technologies and styles but also the reinterpretation of their symbolic meaning (Kantorovich, 2018). European craftsmen used Scythian techniques to create items that had new functions within the context of the Christian religion or political power. For example, royal regalia, adorned with inlays and complex ornaments, often served not only as a decorative element but also symbolised the divine right to rule. In this way, European traditions were enriched with new symbolic meanings that extended beyond the original Scythian context.

The process of the fusion of traditions and innovations in medieval Europe not only preserved elements of Scythian heritage but also integrated them into a new cultural context, which contributed to the development of unique European artistic styles. This fusion continued to evolve over centuries, influencing the formation of European jewellery, military, and religious traditions. Scythian culture became not only a source of technological innovations but also a key element of European artistic heritage that formed the basis for the development of medieval art.

CONCLUSIONS

As a result of the study, a significant influence of Scythian heritage on the formation of cultural and technological traditions in medieval Europe was revealed, particularly in the fields of jewellery art and metallurgy. Cultural ties between the Scythians and European peoples facilitated the active spread of Scythian technologies, including casting, embossing, and inlay. The analysis showed that these techniques were adapted by European craftsmen, such as

the Franks, Germanic peoples, and Byzantines, who used them to create complex jewellery, religious artefacts, and ceremonial items. The introduction of these technologies into European art was crucial for the development of new forms of artistic expression in medieval Europe.

The study also confirmed that Scythian motifs, particularly zoomorphic and geometric depictions, played an important role in the development of medieval European symbolism. It was revealed that Scythian depictions of animals and abstract patterns, which often held ritual and cosmological significance, became a source of inspiration for European artists. In the process of adaptation, these motifs acquired new political and religious meanings, which allowed European artists to develop their own aesthetics, enriched by Scythian culture. The analysis also showed that Scythian metalworking technologies and innovative inlay techniques were harmoniously integrated into European jewellery traditions. European craftsmen combined traditional Scythian technologies with local artistic traditions, creating new forms of ornaments and military items. It was revealed that inlays with precious stones, for which Scythian items were renowned, became a mark of prestige in European jewellery, underscoring the social status and political standing of the owners.

An important outcome of the study was the finding of how Scythian symbols and ornaments were transformed within the Christian art of medieval Europe. Scythian plant and geometric motifs were adapted for decorating

religious objects such as crosses and chalices, acquiring new meanings within Christian symbolism. It was discovered that these motifs symbolised spiritual rebirth and divine order, enriching Christian art with new artistic elements. Overall, Scythian ornaments, technologies, and symbols had a multifaceted influence on the development of medieval European jewellery art and craft traditions. Complex ornaments and inlays, characteristic of Scythian items, were actively employed by European craftsmen while retaining a deep connection with Scythian heritage. Scythian ornaments not only became a source of technological innovations but also laid the foundations for a new aesthetic that combined local European traditions with elements of nomadic culture. Promising directions for further research could involve examining the economic and social aspects of interaction between the Scythians and European peoples, particularly the impact of Scythian trade and migrations on the formation of economic and social structures in early medieval Europe.

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CONFLICT OF INTEREST

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Вплив скіфського декоративно-прикладного мистецтва на розвиток художньої культури народів Центральної та Західної Європи

Анотація. Метою цього дослідження було вивчити вплив скіфських орнаментальних мотивів на розвиток європейського мистецтва раннього середньовіччя, з акцентом на технологіях обробки металів. Дослідження зосередилося на тому, як скіфські культурні елементи трансформувалися та інтегрувалися в європейські ювелірні традиції та художню спадщину. Методологія дослідження включала порівняльний аналіз археологічних знахідок, таких як ювелірні вироби, зброя та ритуальні предмети. У процесі дослідження було вивчено, як скіфські технології, зокрема лиття, карбування та інкрустація, поширювалися через торговельні та військові контакти з європейськими народами, адаптуючись до місцевих потреб і естетичних традицій. Результати дослідження показали, що скіфські орнаментальні мотиви, особливо зооморфні та геометричні зображення, відіграли ключову роль у формуванні художньої мови ранньосередньовічного європейського мистецтва. Зокрема, мотиви тварин і абстрактні візерунки перейшли до європейського декору, змінюючись під впливом місцевих стилів та релігійних потреб. Аналіз також виявив, що скіфські технології обробки металів значно вплинули на створення складних ювелірних виробів і ритуальних артефактів у Європі. Важливу роль відіграли технології інкрустації, які були вдосконалені європейськими майстрами на основі скіфських зразків. Окрім цього, було доведено, що скіфська спадщина вплинула на розвиток культурних традицій середньовічної Європи, зокрема у сфері ювелірного мистецтва, де скіфські символи й технології трансформувалися в нові художні форми. Ці мотиви знайшли своє місце в релігійному контексті, набуваючи нових символічних значень у християнській Європі, де стали символами духовного захисту та влади

Ключові слова: кочові культури; орнаментальні мотиви; технології обробки металів; інкрустації та карбування; мистецький обмін