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Lyre shaped motif and its origins

Tikhonov D.G., Tikhonova E.D.

Annotation. Lyre shaped ornament is a common motif of ornamental and folklore applied art. But, unfortunately, the origins of the lyre shaped motif are still not well investigated. In the paper we review the literature devoted to the study of the emergence and spread of a lyre shaped motif and analyze museum exhibits from catalogs and published sources.

The aim of the study is to define the centers of the lyre motif origin and the paths of its distribution.

Material and methods. Article analyzes lyre shaped motifs in museum artifacts, folk arts and crafts using materials presented in published literature and catalogs of museum exhibits.

A spiral motif originated in Egypt. The origins of the lyre motif in ancient Egypt are probably connected with the iconography of the Egyptian god of Hathor, who was depicted as a woman with a headdress decorated with lyre shaped horns and a solar disk between them. It should be noted that the tradition of depicting a human face with cow horns has connections with the Neolithic period of the Nile Valley, where cattle breeding arose in the 6-5th millennium BC. The first cases of using a lyre shaped motif occurred in scarab-like seals of Egypt and Minoan culture. Artifacts with a lyre shaped motif were observed related, dating from the Minoan and Mycenaean periods, during to the period of classical Hellenistic Greece. A lyre shaped motif was spread along trade routes from Crete to the Danube, the Elbe, the shores of the Baltic Sea and, together with the Celts, penetrated into Britain, from the Greek colonies of the Black Sea to the Scythians. In the Asian part of the Eurasian steppes, this motif symbolized the image of the eagle totem animal depicted like a griffin, especially in the early Scythian and Hunnic period. The origins of the lyre shaped motif in the Asian steppe, apparently, were the ancient motifs “taotie” in China and “masks” in the Russian Far East.

The popularity of the lyre shaped motif in the folk arts and crafts of the Turkic peoples was probably due to the spread of this motif within the Scythian community, when there was a cult of the eagle-like griffin and totem.

Key words: lyre shaped motif, origins, ancient Egypt, ancient Greece, ancient China, Etruscans, Celts, Scythians, Pazyryk, Huns, tamgas, eagle-like griffin, lyre shaped motif in folk art, modern peoples of Russia.

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Introduction

Lyre shaped ornament is a common motif of ornamental and folklore applied art. It got its name for the shape resembling a lyre, an Ancient Greek musical instrument. The lyre is one of the oldest musical instruments. Earliest depictions of the lyre in murals of Greek vases were found in 1200-800 BC [1] but only the shape of the lyre's shoulders very roughly resembles a lyre shaped pattern. Classic lyre shaped motif is an ornament consisting of two S-shaped patterns presented against each other. According to U. Johansen, it can take the shape of W [2]. For the first time, the term "lyre ornament" was mentioned in 1793 in the work of the English furniture maker T. Sheraton [3]. In October 1846, designer R.P. Resor from Ohio, Cincinnati (USA) received a patent for the design of "lyre ornament" on the tile (Courts of the USA, 1847) [4]. The term "lyre shaped ornament" has been widely used since the second half of the 19th century,

But, unfortunately, the origins of the lyre shaped motif are still not well investigated. It should be noted that the reasons for the wide distribution and popularity of the lyre shaped motif in the folklore applied art of the peoples of Siberia are not quite clear. In this paper, we make an attempt to investigate the emergence and spread of a lyre shaped motif by analyzing the published literature and museum exhibits derived from catalogs and published resources.

The goals and objectives of the study

The aim of the study is to define the centers of the lyre motif origin and the paths of its distribution. The solution of this goal will contribute to determining the reasons for wide popularity and defining the ways of forming an abstract symbolic image of a lyre shaped motif among different peoples (the images of "cornucopia", apotropaic charms, amulets, totems or decorative traditions).

Material and methods

We analyzed lyre shaped motifs in museum artifacts, folk arts and crafts on the basis of materi-

als obtained from catalogs of museum exhibits and open resources. Searching for sources was conducted in the following databases: JSTOR, the Russian eLibrary, the Google Scholar search platform. We also performed searches through links to articles and monographs. Images of the lyre shaped pattern were obtained from catalogs of exhibitions and catalogs of the world's largest museums: British Museum, Metropolitan Museum, State Hermitage Museum, Louvre, etc. The JSTOR database was analyzed by means of the following search queries: «lyre shaped» ornaments, «lyre shaped» motif, «double volute» ornament, «double volute» motif, «double S-shaped» ornament, «double S-shaped» motif, «lyre scroll». We revealed 176 sources containing search queries and selected 14 sources for inclusion in the article. All other literary sources were found by means of searching links with articles, browsing directories and using the Google Scholar platform and Russian eLibrary database. In total, more than 10000 sources and images of artifacts were viewed.

The results of the study

The origins of the lyre shaped motif in ornamental art had its roots in the past. The scientists claim that the first cases of using a lyre shaped motif in the scarab-like seals occurred in Egypt and Minoan culture. According to A. Evans, spiral shaped motifs in the seals of the Minoan culture are borrowed from the scarabs of the XII dynasty of Egypt [5], such motifs have been observed in Egypt since the time of the V dynasty [6]. If connected continuous S-shaped motifs, which were mirrored opposite each other, are characteristic of the Egyptian ornament, nevertheless, they were marked in the territory of Greece at later time. The classical lyre shaped motif as an independent element of the ornament was identified on the scarab-shaped seal of Egypt dated 1955-1630 BC and on the golden ring of 1200-1100 BC (found in the ancient city of Presos, Crete). The ornament on the golden ring from Crete was made by means of the filigree and granulation techniques. It should be noted that such a technique arose in the Middle East and Egypt, and the Etruscans were the ones who mastered this technique perfectly.

Artifacts with a lyre shaped motif were related, dating from the Minoan and Mycenaean periods, to the period of classical Hellenistic Greece. According to A. Evans, a spiral motif spread along trade routes from Crete to the Danube, the Elbe, the shores of the Baltic Sea and, penetrated into Britain together with the Celts [7]. The lyre shaped motif may also have spread along this path throughout Europe. We see this pattern among the Etruscans, on Roman jewelry, Celtic artifacts (Holstat and La-Tene cultures).

According to A. Evans, a spiral motif arose in Egypt as a decorative element, and probably had no symbolic meaning. But the origins of the lyre motif in ancient Egypt are probably connected with the iconography of the Egyptian god of Hathor, who was depicted as a woman with a headdress decorated with lyre shaped horns and with a solar disk between them. One of the earliest images of a human face in Egypt with cow horns is the Narmer palette, dating to the end of the 4th millennium BC. The horns in this palette do not have a lyre shape, but on the other side of the palette there are two lions with long necks forming an S-shape, which are intertwined in the form of a lyre shaped motif (see Fig. 1). According to D. Wengrow, the tradition of depicting a human face with cow horns, has connections with the Neolithic period of the Nile Valley, where cattle breeding arose in the 6-5th millennium BC. [8]



Fig. 1. A fragment of the Narmer Palette. Photo from Wikipedia. One of the earliest examples of S-shaped figures of animals (lions) contrasted against each other

In the more ancient seals of the Minoan culture, the lyre shaped motif was presented as a decorative element. The lyre shaped motif possibly acquired symbolic meaning later. It is necessary to note that the head of a bull in Minoan art was depicted with lyre shaped horns [9]. In fig. 2 there is an image of the seal with a bull, and the symbolic image of the bull horns represents obvious features of a lyre shaped motif. It should be indicated that in Minoan culture, the bull played an important role in the lives of Cretan islanders as a symbol of prosperity, strength and even power.



Fig. 2. Imprint of the seal from Zakros (Ashrnolean Museum) [10].

On the print of the seal from Zakros the central element of the composition is the bucranium. According to M. P. Nilsson, the upper field shows two compound bows [10]. Two ducks are sitting on the horns of a bull. The explanation suggests itself: "Take the bow and shoot the ducks." The picture resembles an antique cornucopia. Similar "cornucopias" depict owls, cuttlefishes, canthari on the seals of Minoy. The image of the print impression in supporting material (No. 22 in Table 1) represents mirrored S-shaped figures of a later origin that emerge directly from a cornucopia. In our opinion, it is likely that by that period an abstract symbolic image of the "cornucopia" as a lyre shaped motif had finally formed. According to P. Yule, S-hooks or spirals were not marked in the glyptic design dated after the MM III period [11]. This circumstance is explained by the extinction of S-spiral motifs borrowed from Egypt. But during

the period of classical Greece, a lyre shaped motif adorned the pilasters of the parastas the capital of the Erechtheion temple and the acroterion of the pediment of the temple of Afaya. These facts confirm a symbolic and cult significance of the lyre shaped motif for ancient Greece. This ornamental motif was common not only for the period of classical Greece, but also the Hellenistic period.

Further spread of the lyre shaped motif is observed among the Etruscans. The Etruscans adopted this motif most probably from the Greeks, apparently not earlier than the 6th century BC. The origin of the Etruscans has been a subject of debate since the time of Herodotus, who considered the Etruscans as immigrants to Lydia (Western Anatolia). Thucydides believed that the Thyrsens (Etruscans): "...once lived on Lemnos and in Athens" [12], i.e. recognized their Greek origin. Four centuries later, Dionysius of Halicarnassus came to the conclusion that the Etruscans had been an autochthonous population [13]. The debate about the origin of the Etruscans has not faded until the present. In 2004 and 2007, an international group of researchers, led by Italian geneticists, recognized the Lydian origin of the Etruscans and noted that the presence of their genetic markers, which coincided with the modern inhabitants of Tuscany, was the result of the assimilation of the Etruscans by the Romans [14, 15]. In 2013, another group of Italian researchers came to the opposite conclusion that the Etruscans were very likely the ancestors of the modern inhabitants of Casentino and Volterra [16].

Undoubtedly, the Etruscan art developed in close contact not only with Greek, but also Middle East one. For example, the Phoenicians, a small Tyrrhenian-based community, brought the technology of filigree and granulation of gold objects into Etruscan art [17]. Such technologies are presented in the earrings of the 6th-4th centuries BC exhibited in the collections of the Thorvaldsen museums in Copenhagen, Denmark (see supporting material, Tab. 2, No. 3 and 11) and the British Museum London, United Kingdom (https://www.britishmuseum.org/research/collection_online/collection_object_details.aspx?objectId=429886&partId=1&searchText=Etruscan&images=true&page=12

access 03.11.2019). Not only the Etruscans' jewelry was decorated with lyre ornament, but also works of monumental art [18], bronze objects (Table 2 No. 8–10, 12, tripods (Table 2 No. 8) [19], mirrors (Table 2 No. 10, 12, 16), paintings and handles of ceramic vessels (Table 2 No. 14, 15, 17).

In some cases, the symbolic image of the lyre shaped motif among the Etruscans is probably sea demons. So, the lyre shaped motif of No. 5 in Table 2 is formed by the bodies of wriggling snakes, of the sea demon: the serpentine foot of Typhon and central snakes, wriggling and framing the head of the Medusa Gorgon (Table 2. No. 6, 7). These terracotta antifixes were installed on the roof of the temple and played the role of the apotropaic charms. It should be noted that the lyre shaped motif among the Etruscans probably also played the role of an apotropaic charms.



Fig. 3. Roman gold lyre shaped earrings 2-3 c. AD [20]
Photo courtesy of Timeline Auction House.

The lyre shaped motif is found in Roman items. Among the subjects of Roman possessions, this motif gained popularity, undoubtedly, as a result of the distribution of objects with lyre shaped motifs of Greek artisans, in particular, those who settled on the Apennine Peninsula and founded the community in Puglia (Table 2, No. 14–15). The popularity of the lyre-shaped ornament among the Romans was evidenced by the motifs presented on the murals of the houses of the Pompeii inhabitants (Table 2 No. 18-22) and jewelry of the Romans (in Fig. 3). The prevalence of Roman gold earrings shown in Fig. 3 and similar ornaments undeniably remi-

niscent of the lyre probably caused the emergence of the term lyre shaped motif and development of its symbolic meaning “cornucopia” of the Minoan civilization and apotropaic charms of the Etruscans in the Roman society.

The developed trade among the Etruscans with the Celts may have contributed to the spread of the lyre shaped motif among them. So, according to V. Kruta, images were mainly borrowed from the Etruscans [21] in the initial period of Celtic art. At the same time, it should be noted that L. Laing and G. Laing considered lyre shaped ornament (lire scroll) [22] one of the main motifs of Celtic early art. Motifs presented in supporting material (No. 2, 8 in Table 3) [23] are considered to be borrowed from the Etruscans. The Celtic lyre shaped motif has a decorative character due to the fact that it was borrowed from the Etruscans. It adorns jewelry (No. 3, 8, 9, 12 in Table 3), household items (Nos. 4, 7, 10 in Table 3). But often Celtic objects include military items decorated with the motif, for example, helmets (No. 11 in Table 3), scabbards of swords (No. 2, 13 in Table 3), chariot parts (Table 3 No. 1, 5, 6). It is not difficult to discern parallels between the motif and Scythian art. It should be noted that the ornamental motifs of objects under No. 5, 6, 7 in Table 3 have direct analogues in the Scythian animal style.

Starting from the 7th century BC, Greek cities arose along the northern coast of the Black Sea: Olbia, Hermonass, Phanagoria, Nymphaeum, Pantikopaeus, Theodosius and Chersonesos [25], which became centers of trade and dissemination of Greek Art. Along with Greek goods, lyre shaped motif penetrated the jewelry and applied art of the Scythians and Sarmatians. Images in supporting material (Tab. 4 No 14-18) were borrowed from Greek motifs or produced by Greek artisans for Sarmatian and Scythian nobles. Undoubtedly, the amphora-shaped ring, excavated by archaeologists from the mound near vil. Sokma Dniester (see supporting material Table. 4 No. 28).

An independent newly emerged center of the lyre shaped motif is the Far East. According to A. P. Okladnikov, spirals and curls resembling lyre shaped motifs, appeared in the lower reaches of the Amur and Ussuri, dated back to 3000 – 4000 BC.



Fig. 4. Petroglyph Sakachi – Alyana, Amur.
According A. P. Okladnikov [26]

[26]. In Fig. 4, you can see three groups of curls that form lyre-shaped motifs. In China, only 1000 km away from this center of the origin of the lyre shaped motif, archaeologists found a dagger with a handle with a lyre shaped pattern, dated back to 6-7 century BC (Tab. 4 image No. 2). Up to the present, the indigenous peoples of Amur and Sakhalin have preserved ornaments with a lyre motif in the samples of folk arts and crafts (Table 5 of the image under No. 2-17). The similarity with the Sakachi-Alyana petroglyph is of particular note (No. 17 in Table 5). A dagger scabbard with a lyre-shaped pattern, found in Inner Mongolia (China) (Table 4, No. 2), is still the oldest artifact with a lyre shaped pattern in the steppes of Eurasia. It is followed by artifacts from Krasnoyarsk, Altai and Pazyryk (see supporting material of Table 4, No. 3–12). If the lyre motifs found in the European part of the Eurasian steppe are mainly of Greek origin (see supporting material of Table 4 No. 14-18, 20, 28), then in its Asian part the lyre shaped motif, perhaps, was of another origin. So, I. S. Rudenko claims that ornamental motifs in artifacts Nos. 5, 6, 9 (Tab. 4) were processed versions of the lotus ornament of Western Asia [27]. At the same time, U. Johansen considers these motifs as lyre shaped ones and connects their genesis with the horns of argali ram, as a symbol of the sacrificial animal [2].

It should be noted that the evolution of the lyre shaped motif in the steppes of Asia occurred as a result of the geometrization of zoomorphic figures. S.S. Minyaev convincingly showed how zoomorphic plots were schematized and transformed into

geometric style of Xiongnu [28]. The simplification of zoomorphic images of animals and their geometrization in metal objects also occurred as a result of rust, as can be seen in the example of belt buckles presented in Table 4. So, the buckle under No. 24 is adorned with S-shaped figures mirrored to each other rising from a pair of griffin heads. On the buckle No. 25, the outlines of the griffins were erased, as a result of rust, and the figure represents a typical geometric lyre shaped motif. The ancient artisans probably transformed the figures of griffins into a lyre shaped motif (see a buckle under No. 24) due to the simplification and schematization of zoomorphic figures.

The Scythian and Siberian art of animal style is rich in objects depicting S-shaped animals and birds arranged in parallel and mirror symmetry. Examples and artifacts are presented in the supporting material of the Table 4 under No. 1, 3, 8, 10, 13, 19, 21-25. In Table 4 there are mainly artifacts depicting the neck. It should be noted that Scythian and Siberian art is replete with images of various animals with inverted croup. Ancient artisans attached the S-shape to the figure of the depicted animal [29] in this way.

The image of the Near-Asian mythical eagle-like predator received a warm response in the hearts of the ancient artisans of the Asian steppes due to the fact that the eagle was a totem animal in many cultures of the region. Separate tribes of the Yakuts, Tatars, Bashkirs, Buryats, Tuvans, Selkups, and other Siberian peoples recognized eagle as a totem [30, 31, 32]. In Arzhan 2, one of the most ancient royal burials of the Scythian time, a buckle of a gorite belt was found with mirrored S-shaped neck heads (Table 4 No. 1). In its form, it resembles the Sarmatian tamgas of the Circum-Pontic region [33]. The same tamgas exist in Altai [34] and Mongolia [35]. Tamga derivatives of this base character were found at Ulandryk IV burial, in Altai (IV century BC) [36], at archaeological sites of the Sarmatian time in the Circum-Pontic region [37, 38], on the artifacts of the ancient Turks in Central Asia [39], in the Caucasus [40].

The image of the lyre shaped motif in the Asian steppe is probably the mythical neck of the Scythian and Siberian art of animal style (see support-

ing material of Table 6). As shown in the Table, the favorite form of artisans of the Asian steppe is to give the protoma of the eagle-like bird of prey an S-shape and to mirror such forms in symmetry (supporting material in Table 6 Nos. 1-9). The images of the lyre shaped motif in Scythian and Siberian art of animal style, in all probability, are represented by mirrored figures of an eagle-like neck in an S-shaped configuration. As a result of the geometrization of these images, lyre shaped motifs probably appeared in ornaments, petroglyphs, and tamgas (see supporting material of Table 6, No. 11-15).

The reason for the special love of Scythian artisans to the S-shape has been unknown. The image of animal with the croup turned upside down was depicted in a sacrificial pose [41], but a predator torturing its prey was depicted in the same position (see Fig. 5). According to research of G. N. Volnaya, artifacts with twisted croup in the Sayan-Altaï region appeared circa the 6-4 century BC. According to the author, such an image style is more characteristic of Ordos, Central Asia and Siberia than of Asia Minor and Achaemenid Iran [29]. We can only assume that the penchant of Scythian artisans



Fig. 5. Waist plate, left. Predator tearing a horse. Not only a horse, but also a lion-like predator with turned croups and their bodies form S-shaped motifs. Gold, casting, chasing, 5-4 c. BC, Sak culture. Siberian collection of Peter I, State Hermitage Museum, St. Petersburg, inv. No. Si. 1727-1/6.

Photo courtesy of the State Hermitage Museum.
<http://www.hermitagemuseum.org/wps/portal/hermitage/digital-collection/25.+Archaeological+Artifacts/879837/?lng=ru>. Access 10/29/2019

for the S-shaped form can be explained by the deep influence of Neolithic cultures with their S-shaped spiral motifs in the art. In Asia these cultures were presented by Yanshao, Lunshan, Majiayao, and in Europe – Kukuten-Tripoli culture.

In the eastern part of Scythian and Siberian art, an S-shaped ornamental motif probably originated under the influence of China. It should be noted that the lyre shaped motif in Chinese art had been observed since the period of Erlitou, 19-14 centuries BC (see supporting material Table 7, No. 1), and in Chinese Huai-style of the VI – III centuries BC scientists observed the ornament of various curls, including lyre motif [42]. Bernard Karlgren, a well-known Swedish Sinologist and ancient art expert of China, wrote that the double S-shaped spiral in Chinese art had not been a Huai-style innovation, but the one that had directly passed from earlier periods and become a fundamental motive during the Shang (Yin) dynasty. He claims that such spiral exists everywhere in Chinese art [43]. Table 7 we present that the lyre shaped motif continuously manifested itself in various artifacts of Chinese applied art from ancient times to the Ordos and the Han Dynasty (see supporting material of Table 7, No. 1–26). The origins of the lyre shaped pattern in ancient Chinese applied art were probably the taotie motif (literally from the Chinese “glutton”). Taotie is a depiction of a mask – a terramorphic or zoomorphic image – in the ornament of jade and bronze objects. Until now, there has been no single view and generally accepted definition of the term. It should be noted that the taotie tradition can be traced back to the third millennium BC. (Liangzhu culture) [44]. A specific feature of taotie is the symmetrical arrangement of details that constitute the pattern relative to the central axis. The main elements of the motif are two central figures (often in the form of a circle), symbolizing the eyes. S-spiral patterns are often used on taotie patterns and are arranged in mirror symmetry, forming a lyre pattern (see Fig. 6).

Thus, in Asia there are deep roots of a lyre shaped motif, originating from the Neolithic of China and the Russian Far East. The origins of the lyre shaped motif were probably the ancient taotie motifs in China and the masks in the Russian Far East.



Fig. 6. Detail of the ornament on the upper stripe of the decoration of a ritual bronze vessel with a Fangyi lid for wine, reminiscent of a Taotie motif. The S-shaped scaly formation most likely represents the body of the dragon (the S-shaped figures in Chinese art often refer to the dragon). In the middle, the horn is depicted with a lyre shaped motif, 12-11 centuries BC, Shang Dynasty, China. Smithsonian Institution Collection, Freer Gallery, Reg. No. 54.13 [45].

The lyre shaped motif was one of the variants for depicting the ancient symbol of shrivatsa in India. The image of the symbol had undergone many transformations, and its lyre shape appeared at the beginning of our era [46]. Supporting material Table 4 shows the shrivatsa symbol (No. 26) on a fragment of a red sandstone plank. Object age dates back to approximately 20 BC, Mathura, Uttar Pradesh, State Museum, Lucknow, India [47]. In the same figure (In Table 4), No. 30 presents that the banknote image contains a stamped shrivatsa symbol [48]. The previous sign under No. 29 is the tamga stamped on coins of the Kushan kings [49]. The head gold pendants “Sovereign and Dragon” found in Tilla-Tepe (Afghanistan) depict mysterious animals resembling a dragon or a horse with an inverted croup, located in a lyre shaped configuration, held by the sovereign (supporting material table 4, No. 27). Thus, we observe the penetration of the lyre motif from Central Asia through Bactria to India in the 1st century BC.

At the beginning of the century and in the Middle Ages, the lyre shaped motif existed, it was found in Hunnic and Turkic items (see supporting material of Table 4 No. 31-33). At the beginning of the first century, zoomorphic plots with a lyre shaped

motif were replaced by a geometric ornament. Currently, the geometric ornament in the form of a lyre shaped motif is widespread in folk art in Central Asia (Turkic peoples), the European part of Russia (Caucasian peoples, Kalmyks, Russians, Udmurts, Turkic peoples) and in the Asian part of Russia among Turkic peoples and the territory of the Amur Region (see supporting material of Table 5 Nos. 1-68).

On the territory of modern Eurasia, the lyre motif is widely represented in the applied arts and several centers of its distribution are emerging. In the European part of Eurasia, there is a large center of the lyre shaped motif associated with Greek and Byzantine influence. The Central Asian (Arzhan, Mongolia), Semirechensky and Pazyryk areas of the motif distribution are probably associated with China. But in this Eastern Siberia during Scythian time, an eagle-like griffin, a symbolic image of this motif as the image of a totem, arose. The spread of the motif associated with the Hunnic influence, cover areas of southern Siberia and the Baikal region. The areas of the middle and lower reaches of the Amur River are probably the early centers of the spread of a lyre shaped motif. The distribution area of the lyre shaped ornament in Eastern Siberia (Yakutia) is presented separately; it is possible that the formation of the lyre shaped motif in this region began in Scythian time, but, apparently, it was finally formed in the Hunnic time.

Conclusion

According to our data, the earliest print with a lyre shaped motif was found in Egypt. According to A. Evans, for the first time S-shaped spirals arose in Egypt and penetrated Crete along trade routes. For the first time, a classical lyre shaped motif was noted in the scarab-shaped seal of Egypt of the XII-XIII dynasty (see supporting material of Table 1, No. 4), and then much later the motif was discovered on the gold ring found on the site of the ancient city of Presos in Crete (see supporting material of Table 1 No. 9). Later, the ceiling ornament of the tomb of Nebamun, represented by knotted lyre shaped patterns, penetrated the island. Thus, most likely the classical lyre ornament arose in Egypt, and its

origins is probably connected with the emergence of cattle breeding in the Nile valley in the 6th-5th millennium BC, represented in the deification of a cow and the appearance of lyre shaped horn with the sun disk between them in the iconography of the Egyptian god Hathor.

The results of our studies have established that artifacts with a lyre shaped motif had been observed, starting from the Minoan, Mycenaean periods, during the period of classical, Hellenistic Greece. The widespread motif in Crete and Greece was probably due to the fact that it symbolized the sign of abundance.

The lyre-shaped ornament penetrated into Etruria by trade routes from the Greeks and then spread throughout Europe, reached the Black Sea coast and entered Britain together with the Celts. We see this pattern among the Etruscans, on Roman jewelry, Celtic (Holstat and La-Tene cultures), Scythian artifacts of the Circum-Pontic region. It should be noted that among the Etruscans, the lyre motif very likely played the role of an apotropaic charm.

In the Asian part of the Eurasian steppes, this motif symbolized the image of the totem animal depicted as eagle-like griffin, especially in the early Scythian and Hunnic period. The origins of the lyre shaped motif in the Asian steppe, apparently, were the ancient taotie motifs in China and the "masks" in the Russian Far East.

Our studies revealed the widespread use and popularity of the lyre shaped motif in the folk arts and crafts of the Turkic peoples of Siberia (Tuvans, Altai, Khakass, Yakuts), Central Asia (Kazakhs, Kyrgyz), the Caucasus (Nogais, Karachais, Balkars) and Europe (Tatars, Bashkirs), unlike the Mongols, Buryats and Khakasses. The popularity of the lyre shaped motif in the folk arts and crafts of the Turkic peoples is probably due to the spread of this motif among the Scythian community, when there was a cult of the griffin and a lyre shaped motif was formed due to the geometrization of the figures of the griffin in folk arts and crafts.

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About authors

TIKHONOV Dmitrii Gavrilievich, MD, PhD, Professor, Senior Research Officer of the Scientific Research Center of the Medical Institute of the Northeast Federal University, 677009, Yakutsk, St. Builders 8, Russia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3385-9471>, e-mail: tikhonov.dmitri@yandex.ru

TIKHONOVA Elena Dmitrievna, designer of magazine «Siberian Research», str. Ivana Krafta 58, Yakutsk, Russia. <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6518-5013>

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