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ARTISTIC AND PICTORIAL PECULIARITIES OF THE SYMBOL OF THE TREE OF LIFE IN THE KYIVAN GOLD BUSINESS OF THE XI – FIRST HALF OF THE XIII CENTURY

The study is devoted to the art historical analysis of the images of the symbol of the Tree of Life on the ornaments of the Kyiv princes in the XI - first half of the XIII centuries. The article examines the artistic features of similar images, presented in the works of Byzantine jewellery art. The history of the tradition of using the symbol of the Tree of Life in the jewellery art of Kyivan Rus is covered. The symbolism of the Tree of Life is regarded as a part of the semantic and semiotic system of the Kyiv-Rus iconography of the 11th – first half of the 13th centuries.

Aspects characterizing the image of the Tree of Life as a symbol indicating the spiritual truth of Christianity have been revealed. His place and purpose in this artistic system are explained.

A comparative analysis of the practice of using the symbol of the Tree of Life in Byzantine jewellery with the jewellery of princely Kyiv has been carried out. Artistic peculiarities and purposes of separate works are considered. The main types of exhibits are outlined. Technical and technological features of execution, specific artistic commonalities and differences are specified.

The results of the study showed that the decorations of the times of the prince of Kyiv, in particular the symbolism of the Tree of Life, which was a dominant element of their decoration, are still of great interest to masters of modern Ukrainian jewellery art.

Materials of this study are proposed for use in the process of creating new exclusive collections of jewellery hot enamel, filigree, graining, engraving, and niello. The results of the presentation of such conceptual collections will contribute to the popularization of the cultural and artistic heritage of Ukraine in the world.

The study used historical-cultural and art-project approaches in combination with comparative and presentation methods.

Key words: *Tree of Life, kolts, cloisonné hot enamel, Kyivan goldsmithing XI – first half of XIII century.*

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ХУДОЖНЬО-ОБРАЗНІ ОСОБЛИВОСТІ СИМВОЛУ ДЕРЕВА ЖИТТЯ У КИЄВОРУСЬКОМУ ЗОЛОТАРСТВІ XI – ПЕРШОЇ ПОЛОВИНИ XIII СТ.

Дослідження присвячене мистецтвознавчому аналізу зображень символу Дерева Життя на ювелірних виробках княжого Києва XI – першої половини XIII ст. У статті розглянуто художньо-образні особливості подібних зображень, представлених на творах візантійського золотарства. Висвітлено історію виникнення традицій застосування символу Дерева Життя в ювелірному мистецтві Київської Русі. Висвітлено символіку Дерева Життя як частину цілісної семантико-семіотичної системи побудови києворуської іконографії XI – першої половини XIII ст.

Виявлено аспекти, що характеризують образ Дерева Життя як символ, що вказує на духовну істину, закладену у християнстві. Розтлумачено його місце і призначення в даній художньо-образній системі.

Виконано порівняльний аналіз практики застосування символу Дерева Життя у візантійському золотарстві з ювелірними виробами княжого Києва. Розглянуто художні особливості та призначення окремих творів. Окреслені основні різновиди експонатів. Уточнені техніко-технологічні особливості виконання та специфічні художньо-образні спільності та відмінності.

Результати дослідження показали, що ювелірні вироби доби княжого Києва, зокрема, символіка Дерева Життя, що була домінуючим елементом їх декору, досі викликають неабиякий інтерес у майстрів сучасного ювелірного мистецтва України.

Матеріали даного дослідження запропоновано застосовувати в процесі створення нових ексклюзивних колекцій ювелірних прикрас з гарячою емаллю, філігранню, зерню, гравіюванням і чорнінням. Результати презентації подібних концептуальних колекцій сприятимуть популяризації культурної та мистецької спадщини України в світі.

У дослідженні використано історико-культурний та художньо-проектний підходи у поєднанні з порівняльним та презентаційним методами.

Ключові слова: *дерево життя, колти, гаряча емаль, киеворуське золотарство XI – першої половини XIII ст.*

Statement of the problem. The course of recent important historical events, taking place in Ukraine on the way to the revival of cultural traditions, provokes the process of rethinking its artistic heritage. Given that the interpretations of individual achievements of princely Kyiv's culture and art, which were proposed in the twentieth century, today have lost their relevance, resulting in a need for revision, in-depth study and art rethinking.

In modern scientific and art history discussion, the Kyivan Rus goldsmith's heritage is proposed to be considered a self-sufficient component of decorative and applied art, because artistic artefacts, in particular the preserved items of goldsmith's art, allow understanding better the points of intersection of the artistic culture of separate cells. Creative prerogatives and facts of a certain unity

Application of various stylizations of the Tree of Life symbol, created because of the influence of Byzantine civilization by masters of princely Kyiv, are still reflected in the modern decorative and applied and the fine art of Ukraine, in particular jewellery. Such a tendency of contemporary artist-masters to address the sources of their own cultural and artistic heritage today is an extremely important process on the way to the restoration of the national consciousness of Ukrainians.

Analysis of research and publications. The basis of this study is biblical characteristics of the Tree of Life from the First Book of Moses «Genesis» (The Bible, 1990: 24) and the Fifth prophetic book from the New Testament «Revelation of St. John the Evangelist» (The Bible, 1990: 279).

Among the important works for the study of this topic is the monograph «Jewelry of Princely Kyiv» by Ukrainian researcher L. Pekarskaia. The author of this work presented the outstanding works made by the Kyivan goldsmiths in the second half of XI - the first half of XIII cc. This allowed acquainting a wide circle of experts with the unique authentic works of Kyivan Rus goldsmiths, which contain stylizations of the symbol «Tree of Life» (Pekarska, 2011: 175).

Of particular interest in the context of the topic under consideration are stylizations of the symbol «Trees of Life» as a dominant decorative element in the princely Kyivan jewellery found on the territory of contemporary Ukraine, the collective work of

domestic art critics O.Shkolnaya, O.Sosik, O.Sytnik and I. Kashshaya is of great value for this research.

In the above-mentioned authors' work «Kyivan Rus kolts with enamel and niello: genesis, inspiration sources, iconography, attribution questions» the variations of this sacral symbol stylization presented in the monuments of the Kyivan Rus' (Shkolna) epoch are described and analyzed in details (O., Barbalat, O., Sytnyk, I., Kashshay, O., 2021: p. 646).

Also important for this study was the work of Polish researcher W. Myszor who interpreted the work of famous Saint and early Christian theologian Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–160 –c. 200–205) comparing it with the image of the cross on which Jesus was crucified (Myszor, 1997: 98).

In general, the symbolic representation of the sacred symbol of the Tree of Life which was widely used in the works of Byzantine and Kyivan Rus gilding still arouses interest among modern artists-masters, and its place in the semantic-semiotic system requires additional research and clarification as it remains insufficiently disclosed in the domestic art history space.

The article aims – to study the artistic and imaginative features of the symbol «Tree of Life» in the Christian sacred jewellery art of princely Kyiv. Determination of its place and purpose in the semantic-semiotic system of the Kyivan Rus iconography of the 11th – first half of the 13th century.

Presenting main material. The cult of the Tree of Life was common in the vast majority of world religions, it also existed in the paganism of our ancestors. The very idea of the «World Tree» was rethought simultaneously with the introduction of Christianity in Rus as the state religion by Prince Vladimir the Great (958–1015) at the end of the tenth century.

Simultaneously with the spread of Christianity, certain changes took place in the symbolic purpose of jewellery. Rus with the centre in Kyiv took Christianity from Byzantium – the millennial civilization, whose cultural and artistic reflection is now considered imperishable heritage. To create its own, distinctive style, Kyivan Rus adapted pagan artistic traditions in the creation of Christian art objects.

Russ' transformation into the Christian world needed masters of goldsmithing to create liturgical and other objects of sacred significance. The system

of ornamentation of Christian-themed jewellery was delivered from Byzantium by the Greeks, simultaneously with new techniques and methods of work. One of the centres of gilding was medieval Kyiv, where the main focus of jewellery making was on the symbolic signs of Christianity, the language of which became a sacral reflection of stylized plant elements in semantic ornamental motifs (Barbalat, 2020: 73).

Enamel icons, gold and silver settings, diadems, bards, colts, abundant, body and altar crosses, and medallions depicting saints, made in filigree, grain, niello and hot enamel techniques, supplemented with minerals. To themselves, symbolic phytomorphic ornaments, the dominant element among which was the symbol of the «World Tree» (Barbalat, 2020: 75).

For example, the composition of the «Tree of Life» in combination with the birds Sirin and Alconost, probably symbolizing the duality of existence, the balance of phenomena in the universe, is present in the vast majority of the Kyivan stakes.

The then «brand» of Ukrainian jewellers, known as kolts, is the embodiment of the highest achievements of the artistic opinion of the masters of that time, behind which can be felt a huge inner spiritual culture and their professional flawless knowledge of materials and techniques. (Shkolna, O., Sosik, O., Barbalat, O., Sytnyk, I., Kashshay, O., 2021: P. 646).

Stakes with images of the «Tree of Life» were found in many Kyiv treasures: in 1896, found near Knyazhskaya Mountain near Kaniv, in 1909, found near Desyatynna Church, in 1936, found near St. Michael's Golden-Domed Monastery, etc.

Traditionally, colts are decorated with images of birds and birds, located on both sides of the «Tree of Life».

Already in the princely times (X–XIII centuries) jewellery manufacturing becomes sophisticated and turned into a real craft.

The basis of the artistic and figurative system of Kyivan Rus goldsmithing of the outlined period are pre-Christian traditions, harmoniously combining them with the symbolism of Byzantine goldsmithing, having obtained new qualities herewith. It should be mentioned that during the early Christian period of Byzantine sacred art (III century) special allegorical images were created by believers for secret information transmission. The reason for this was their constant persecution by the Roman authorities, which lasted until the Edict of Milan in 313, which became an important step on the way to making Christianity an official religion of the empire (Barbalat, 2021: 63).

In general, the formation of the iconic symbolism of Christianity began with the art of the catacombs. Under the considerable influence of the Byzantine Empire, decorative-applied art, including jewellery

art, actively developed in Rus. An integral part of this was pagan artistic images that absorbed the artistic traditions of the East.

The culture of Kyivan Rus is a result of a long process of internal development of the pagan society, with the external influence of Christianity of Byzantium, whose artistic heritage has left a significant imprint on the formation of traditions in fine and decorative-applied art.

To avoid the full influence of Constantinople, the leadership of princely Kyiv preferred its cultural peculiarities in different spheres of art. The presence of the Tree of Life symbol in Kyivan decorative-applied and fine art was due to church dogmatics.

Medieval Christians understood every element of the world as a manifestation of God, paying special attention to the religious significance of plants. The active process of the conversion of Byzantine phytomorphic ornaments with sacred meaning can be traced to the artistic monuments of Byzantium and Kyivan Rus in the 11th – early 13th centuries.

Among other things, for Ancient Greece and Rome, whose pagan components Byzantium absorbed, gold was an important component, symbolizing divine light, that is, it can be called an absolute metaphor for the energy of the Creator (Garneczarska, 2020: 88).

The key position in the system of sacred symbols in the culture of Byzantium, and later in Kyivan Rus, was held by the Tree of Life. This was due to the references to it in the Holy Scriptures.

Exploring the subject, it is worth noting that, for example, the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil is one of the two particular trees in the story of the Garden of Eden in the Book of Genesis: «And the Lord God raised out of the ground every tree that was attractive and tasty for food, and the tree of life in the middle of Eden and the tree of knowledge of good and evil» (The Bible, 1990: 24). Furthermore, some scholars argue that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is simply another name for the Tree of Life. It symbolizes knowledge, including holistic categories, the ability to know personally what is good and evil.

An unchanging symbol of the eternal rebirth of nature and at the same time the transience of human destiny – the «Tree of Life» – existed in the beliefs of many peoples. In the countries of the ancient world: Mesopotamia, Egypt, Greece, Babylon, Persia and India it was believed that its fruits could provide immortality (Sprutta, 2015: 329).

In the jewellery of princely Kyiv the compositions depicting cross-shaped ornamental patterns, which could symbolize the four elements that nourished the «Tree of Life»: earth, water, air and sun (Fig. 1), were widespread. The vine in such compositions, as a rule,

was part of the World Tree and embodied the image of the totality of the believers (Barbalat, 2021: 69). The dots of red inside the composition symbolized the blood of Christ shed for the sake of humanity's salvation, and the birds, probably doves, were the embodiment of the Holy Spirit (Fig. 2).

Birds and «Tree of Life» is a common elements in the decoration of Kyivan Rus gold kolts, XI – first half of XIII century, decorated in the technique of hot enamel with webbed patterns of clearly expressed sacred content.

For a better understanding of the sacred meaning of the Tree of Life symbol among Christians, we should refer to the text from the Revelation of St. John the Evangelist. John the Evangelist refers to the Tree of Life growing in Heavenly Jerusalem as follows: («<...> – He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches: to the overcomer I will give of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God – <...> – In the middle of his street and on this side and on that side of the river – the tree of life, bearing twelve times its fruit, every month bringing forth fruit. And the leaves of the trees are for the healing of the nations – <...>») (Bible, 1990: 279; 296).

Drawing attention to the above, it is worth mentioning the image of the trees, of which the Garden of Eden is composed. Similar symbols can be seen on the background of an outstanding enamel icon with the image of the Archangel Michael of the late 10th and early 12th centuries, created in Constantinople and now preserved in the Treasury of the Cathedral of San Marco in Venice (Italy) (Fig. 3). The images of stylized trees simultaneously resemble oak leaves, which, probably, were identified with the Tree of Life.

Such images were later widely used in the decoration of the Kyivan Rus gold colts of the 11th – the first half of the 13th centuries.

One of the popular images, which were used in the decoration of jewellery of princely Kyiv, are cross-shaped ornamental compositions, the schematic model of which presumably describes the self-sacrifice of Christ, who showed the way to eternal life. The centre of its composition of these elements is a circle which is associated with eternity, inside which is a red rhombus – the symbol of the sponge with vinegar from which Jesus was given to drink during the Passion of the Cross. It is inside an ornamental composition consisting of stylized white halves of lily, symbols of innocence and purity. And the small pomegranate-coloured dot inside the rhombus probably symbolized the blood of Christ. Nineteen small white circles around the overall composition, according to the British researcher John Stuart Mill (1806–1873), could mean the establishment of the divine order (Stewart, 1984: 49).

In general, enamel rosettes decorated with plant ornaments symbolizing the «Tree of Life» from Heavenly Jerusalem were a common element in the decoration of gold liturgical items and works of Kyiv sacred jewellery (Fig. 4).

A famous Saint and early Christian theologian, Irenaeus of Lyon (c. 130–160 –c. 200–205) regarded the symbolism of the Tree of Life in the form of the cross as the idea of the cosmic tree, comparing it to the image of the cross on which Jesus was crucified. («<...> – the crime that was committed using the tree was removed by the obedience of Jesus Christ, nailed to the tree than the one who rejected the knowledge of evil introduced the knowledge of good – <...>») (Myszor, 1997: 98).

The symbol of the Tree of Life surrounded by birds is still a powerful source of inspiration for many domestic artists. It is difficult to imagine in general the educational process in Ukrainian art schools without reference to this sacred basis of the universe. It is worth noting that interest in the iconic symbolism of phytomorphic ornaments used to decorate jewellery of princely Kyiv, in particular the symbol of the «Tree of Life», is increasing significantly in recent years.

Conclusions. So, the artistic image of the «Tree of Life» was a popular element of the decoration of the princely Kyiv jewellery and the main motif of the decoration of the colts, bracelets, diadems and other works of the Kyivan Rus gold of the XI – first half of the XIII centuries.

Cruciform decorative rosettes with phytomorphic ornaments, embodying the World Tree acquired great sacral significance as they were directly related to the biblical characteristics of the structure of Heavenly Jerusalem. The symbol of the Tree of Life combined the ideology of pagan ideas about the universe, which were in harmony with the biblical subjects.

In general, it should be noted that the development of Kyivan Rus golden traditions in the period of the tenth – the first half of the thirteenth century is distinguished by the powerful cultural relations with the whole continent. As a result, there was an acceptance of borrowed artistic images in its artistic traditions.

The religious reform of Prince Vladimir the Great in 988 could not displace completely the paganism established on the territory of Kyivan Rus. At the same time, the process of layering the newly accepted religion on pagan traditions took place. As a result, the artistic images of Kyivan Rus art acquired new meanings.

The Tree of Life symbol became a central element in the semantic and semiotic system of building the Kyivan Rus iconography of the 11th – first half of the 13th century. The stylizations of this symbol, created by the artists-masters of princely Kyiv, are still a strong source of inspiration for the creation

of modern Ukrainian artists of fine, decorative, and applied arts. This process of imitation of ancestors' traditions is indispensable for the revival of culture, self-identification, and formation of national con-

sciousness and, finally, for victory in the war, which today is based on historical and cultural heritage. The great idea that guided the rulers of princely Kyiv is the driving force and the basis of our future victory.



П. 1. A fragment of the decoration of the Kholmetskaya Miraculous Icon of the Mother of God. 12th century. Kyivan Rus. Gold, cloisonné hot enamel. Museum of the Volyn icon. Lutsk, Ukraine

Рис. 1. Фрагмент прикраси з Холмської Чудотворної ікони Богородиці. XII ст. Київська Русь. Золото, перетинчаста гаряча емаль. Музей волинської ікони. м. Луцьк, Україна



П. 2. Fragment from the Kyivan kolt. 12th century. Kyivan Rus. Gold, cloisonné hot enamel. Metropolitan Museum of Art. New York, USA

Рис. 2. Фрагмент з києворуського колта. XII ст. Київська Русь. Золото, перетинчаста гаряча емаль. Музей мистецтва Метрополітен. м. Нью-Йорк, США



П. 3. A fragment depicting trees from the Garden of Eden from the icon of Archangel Michael. The end of the 10th – the beginning of the 12th century. Byzantium, Constantinople. Gold, notched-membrane hot enamel, emerald. Treasury of the Cathedral of San Marco, Venice, Italy

Рис. 3. Фрагмент із зображенням дерев з Райського саду з ікони Архангела Михаїла. Кінець X – початок XII ст. Візантія, Константинополь. Золото, виймчасто-перетинчаста гаряча емаль, смарагд. Скарбниця собору Сан-Марко м. Венеція, Італія



П. 1. A fragment of the decoration of the Kholmetskaya Miraculous Icon of the Mother of God. 12th century. Kyivan Rus. Gold, cloisonné hot enamel. Museum of the Volyn icon. Lutsk, Ukraine

Рис. 4. Фрагмент прикраси з Холмської Чудотворної ікони Богородиці. XII ст. Київська Русь. Золото, перетинчаста гаряча емаль. Музей волинської ікони. м. Луцьк, Україна

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