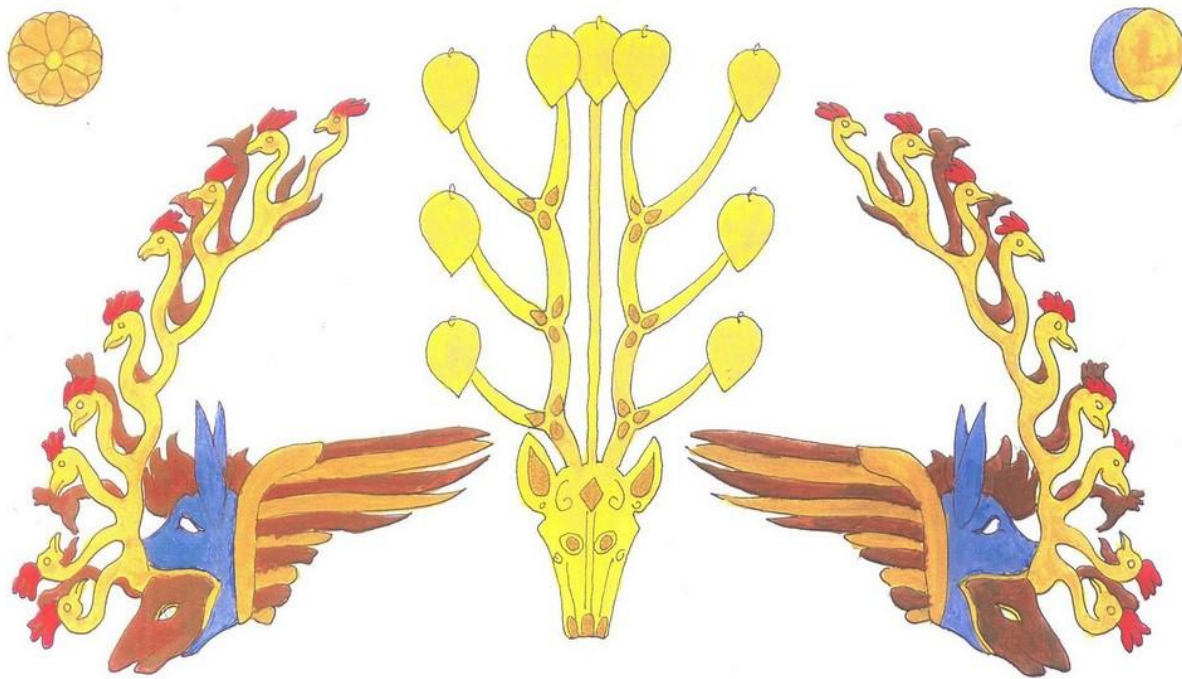


BÉRCZI, Szaniszló

Hun (Xiongnu) Scythian Art¹

The Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art has once expanded over the steppe belt of Eurasia. As the amount of unearthed archaeological art-treasures becomes richer and richer so unfolds the recognition about the common roots and strong relations between the two great equestrian peoples. Their common heritage is well-known in traditions surviving in China, Mongolia, Hungary, and in the Countries of the Eastern and Western Turkestan Countries, likewise in Japan and Korea. It is easy to make a selection from this heritage, especially for those who are inhabitants of these countries.



HUN - SZKÍTA MŰVÉSZET

Bérczi Szaniszló, Budapest, 2008

Fig. 1. The front cover of the booklet exhibits symbols of old traditions of this old culture: sun and moon, eternal symbols of life and oath (agreement), horses redressed to deers, and the birds in the antlers – a rich heritage from the Scythian and Hun(Xiongnu) royal tombs especially from Pazyryk, Egiin Gol, Noin Ula and Aluchaideng.

¹ Example issue from the Coloring Booklet Series of Eurasian Arts No. 22. (with the drawings of the author). It can be downloaded from the following address: <http://www.federatio.org/tkte.html>

The artistic decorations on archaeological finds of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art can be found on cliff-drawings, bronze, ceramic, wood, textile artifacts and on the murals and wall covering carpets of the royal tombs. But common parts of the folk music, folk tales and dances, clothes and cooking all preserve the cultural heritage of the peoples living together on the Eurasian steppe. The Hungarian word “kocsi” preserves till today that common primary knowledge about the car and the role it played in developing the lifestyle between the Pacific and Atlantic Oceans. At that time the car driven by horse was a high-tech item.



Fig. 2. The backside cover of the booklet exhibits the Chinese character Meng meaning oath, or in today's usage any kind of agreement. And this character can be found on over 100 coats of arms in Hungary. The stratification of the stag and horse, one changing the other in the everyday life is also a characteristic feature of the steppe Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian peoples.

One of our deep-rooting cultural threads is our language. The words of this ancient language are scattered over and loaned by the languages of peoples all over Eurasia. The loan words are prints from one language in the other, in any time. The words of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian language are also preserved in such prints. The most beautiful example is the case of the stag and horse. They were the primary adoration animals. After the ice age our ancestors followed the moving stags toward north, because it was their universal (factotum) animal. As the Lapponian people today, they used all parts of the stag in making tools, cloths and meals. The cult of the stag is alive even today and in earliest times the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian peoples were the peoples of the stag.



Fig. 3. Representation of the changing of the cloth of the horses into a stag is a custom in the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art. The left side figure exhibits the re clothed horse from the Pazyryk rpyal tomb, Altai-mountains, Russia; the right hand side figure is a gold stag-dressed horse with beak-head ornament from Nalingaotu, Ordos-region, China.

The miracle stag myth of the Hungarians preserved this early period. Later the horse took the role of the stag when domestication of the horse transformed this animal into a true fellow of the steppe peoples. This stratification has been preserved by the changing of the cloth of the horses into a stag is a custom in the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art, as shown by the finds in the Pazyryk and Berel royal tombs.

The bronze mirrors are also beautiful objects of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art. Some of them are decorated by horse and stag at the same time. Rudenko (1953) exhibits several examples in his famous book on Pazyryk excavations and Érdy (2001) also showed examples of the beak-head decorated horses.

Later periods are preserved on swords. Their characteristic shape can be found with animal decoration along the steppe belt from China to Hungary. Our booklet on Mesopotamian Art (Bérczi, 2005) has shown several examples of it.

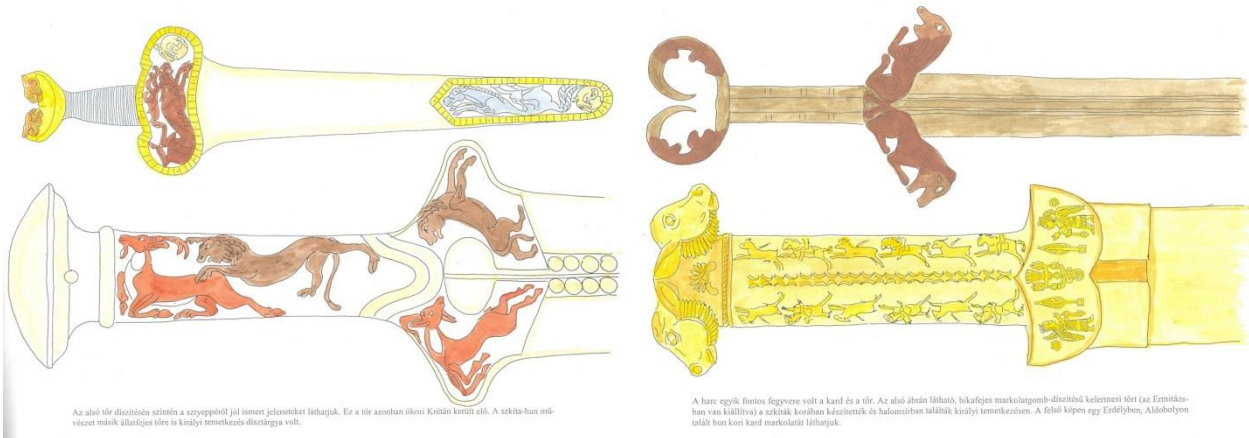


Fig. 4. The most valuable everyday life tool representations of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art are found on arms, knives, belt-mounts, bells, cups. Rich animal ornamentation is decorating them.

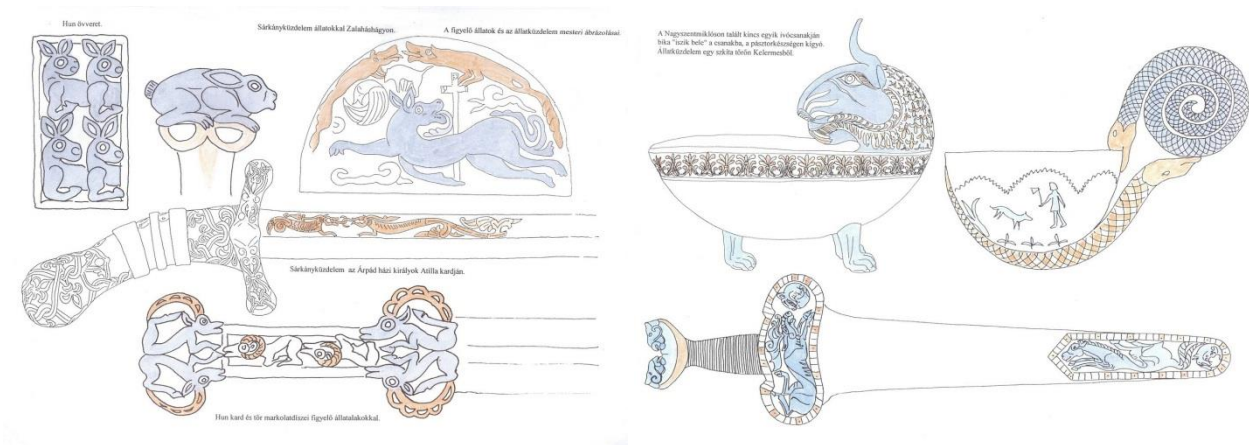


Fig. 5. The Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian animal art can also be found on bronze and stone tools and carvings with animal fight scenes, listening small animals, dragon fight, bull, bird, snake, rabbit and donkey.



Fig. 6. There is a characteristic pair of animals on the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art objects: this is the fish-bird pair. The upper one is from Pazyryk, Russia, the lower one is from Wettersfelde, Poland (5th century B.C.).

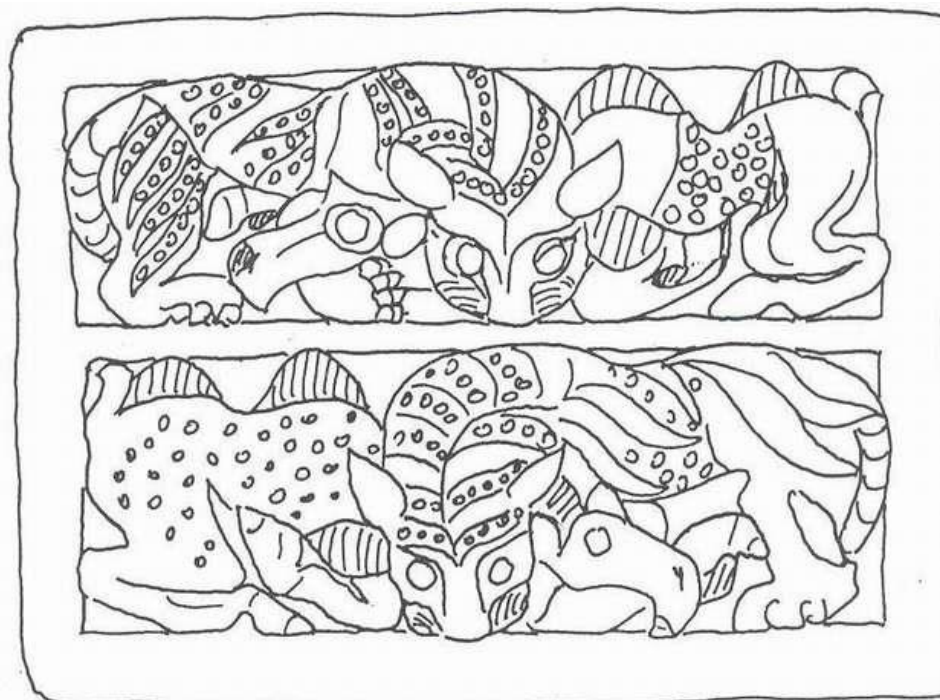


Fig. 7. Animal fight scene on a belt buckle from Xigoupan, China.



Falfestmények Dunhuangból.

Vadászjelenetek ábrázolása. A jelenetet a kínáivá váló hunok és utódaik is tovább vitték, fejlesztették, gazdagították.

Fig. 8. Mural with the Parthian shoot hunter scene from the late Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian age, in Dunhuang, China.

The most characteristic tool and sacred object of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian life is the great caldron. Miklós Érdy has collected the data of more than 200 Xiongnu-Hun caldrons from China to the Carpathian Basin, along the way of the Huns (Érdy, 2001). The latest archaeological find was that of the caldron from Rádpusztá, Somogy County, Hungary.

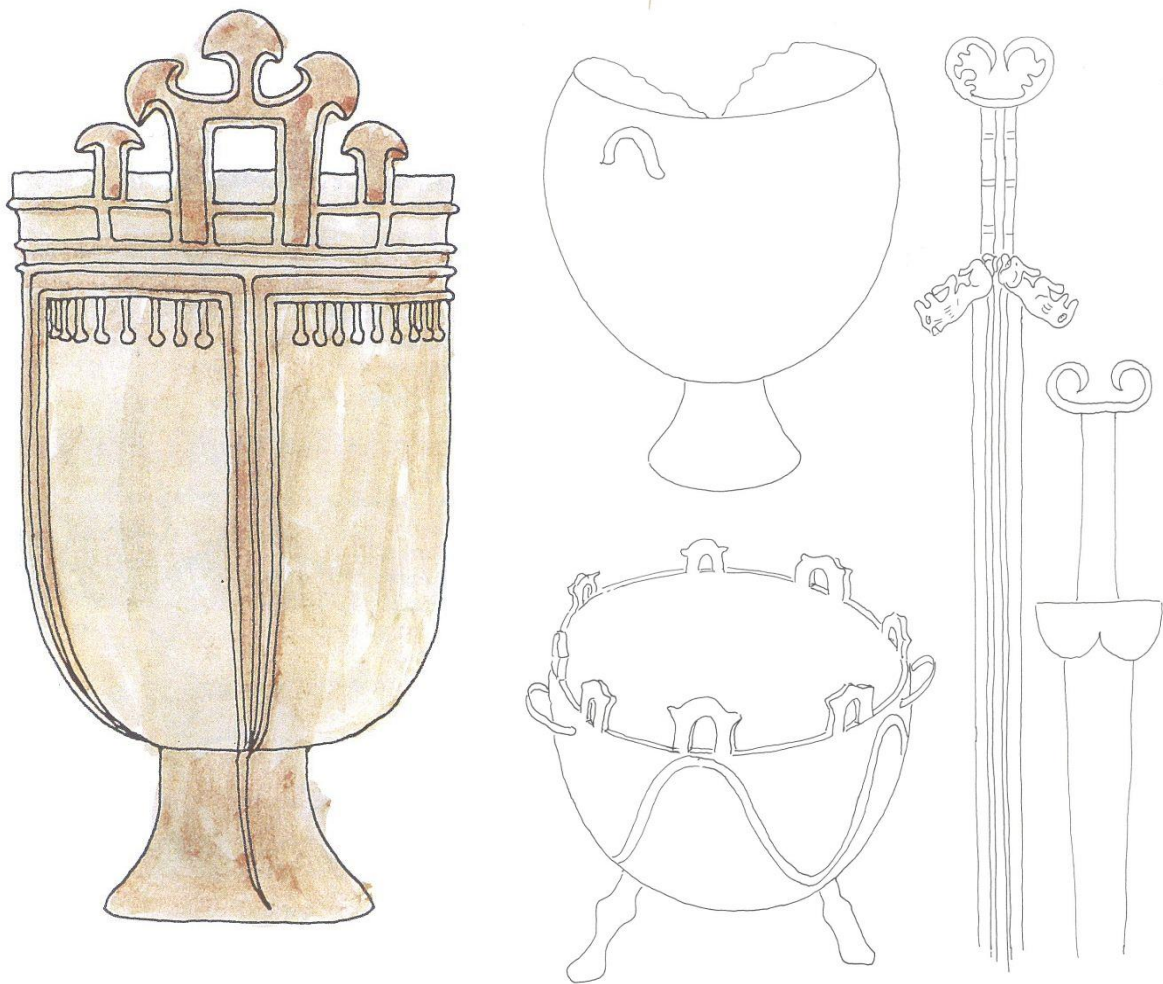


Fig. 9. Bronze caldrons from the Carpathian Basin: Uljap, (Russia) and Scortaru, (Romania). (The swords are from the Carpathian Basin, drawings from the Budapest Scythian Gold Treasury Exhibition in the National Museum.)

Probably one of the best known archaeological finds of Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art is the belt decorating bronze mount set. One example from the Siberian Gold Treasury of Peter the Great of Russia is in the Ermitage, Saint Petersburg. This is a B-type double-buckle with a mirror-symmetric arrangement of the resting hunter. He sets his head in the lap of a lady. This belt buckle has two identifications. Historically it was called Scythian, however, the great majority of these style buckles can be found in Ordos, China from the Xiongnu age. (This scene is painted on murals in Hungary in the medieval Churches as Legend of Sanctus Ladislaus. Bérczi, 2000, 2004, 2007, 2009).



Fig. 10. Bronze belt buckles: one of the most beautiful small-plastics art of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythians. As the Xiongnu art objects were later carved from jade, so did the Hungarian art preserved the scenes as Christian motifs in the Medieval ages. The resting scene in the mural series of the Sanctus Ladislaus Legend is almost a copy of the Xiongnu-Hun-Scythian bronze (or gold) scene in Eurasia.

One new discovery in the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythians art is the ethnomathematics in the ornamental decorations. (Bérczi, 2000). Wide range of ornamental decorations describe what kind of plane symmetry patterns were known in the ages of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythians masters. In order to show some of them we exhibit two composite patterns from the scientific journals published by the author (Bérczi, 2011, 2012).

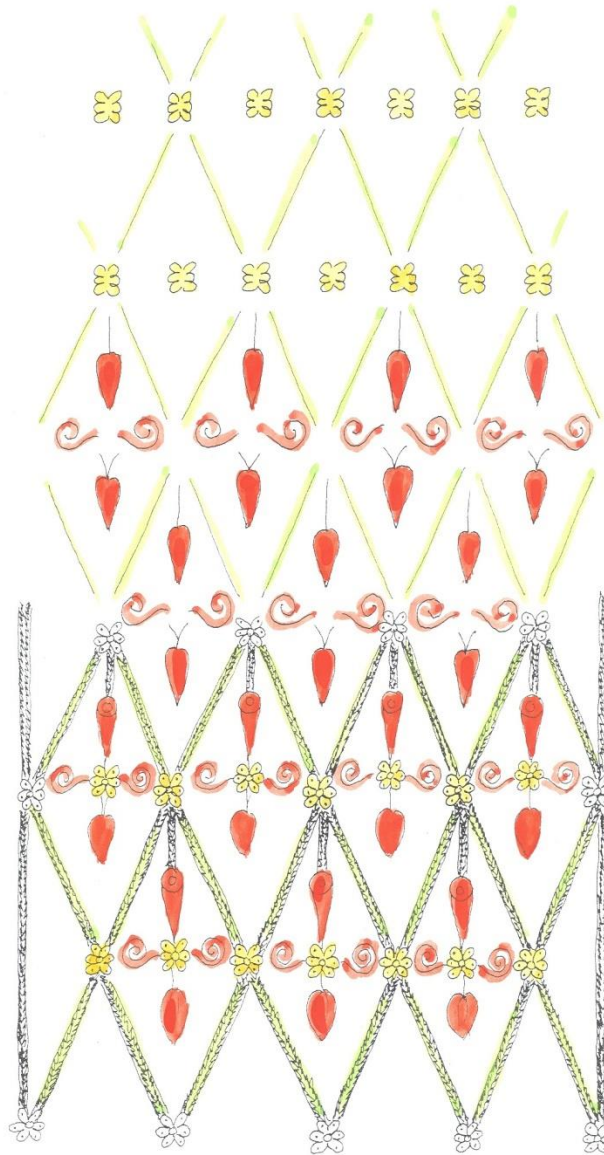


Fig. 11. Head dress from Kul Oba, Ukraine. There are 3 different ornamental plane symmetry types in it: the cm type is represented by the hanging ornaments in the rhombic shaped wholes. The pm type is the yellow flowers in the pattern, and the cmm pattern is formed by the grid system. This object belongs to the Scythian branch of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art (Bérczi, 2011).

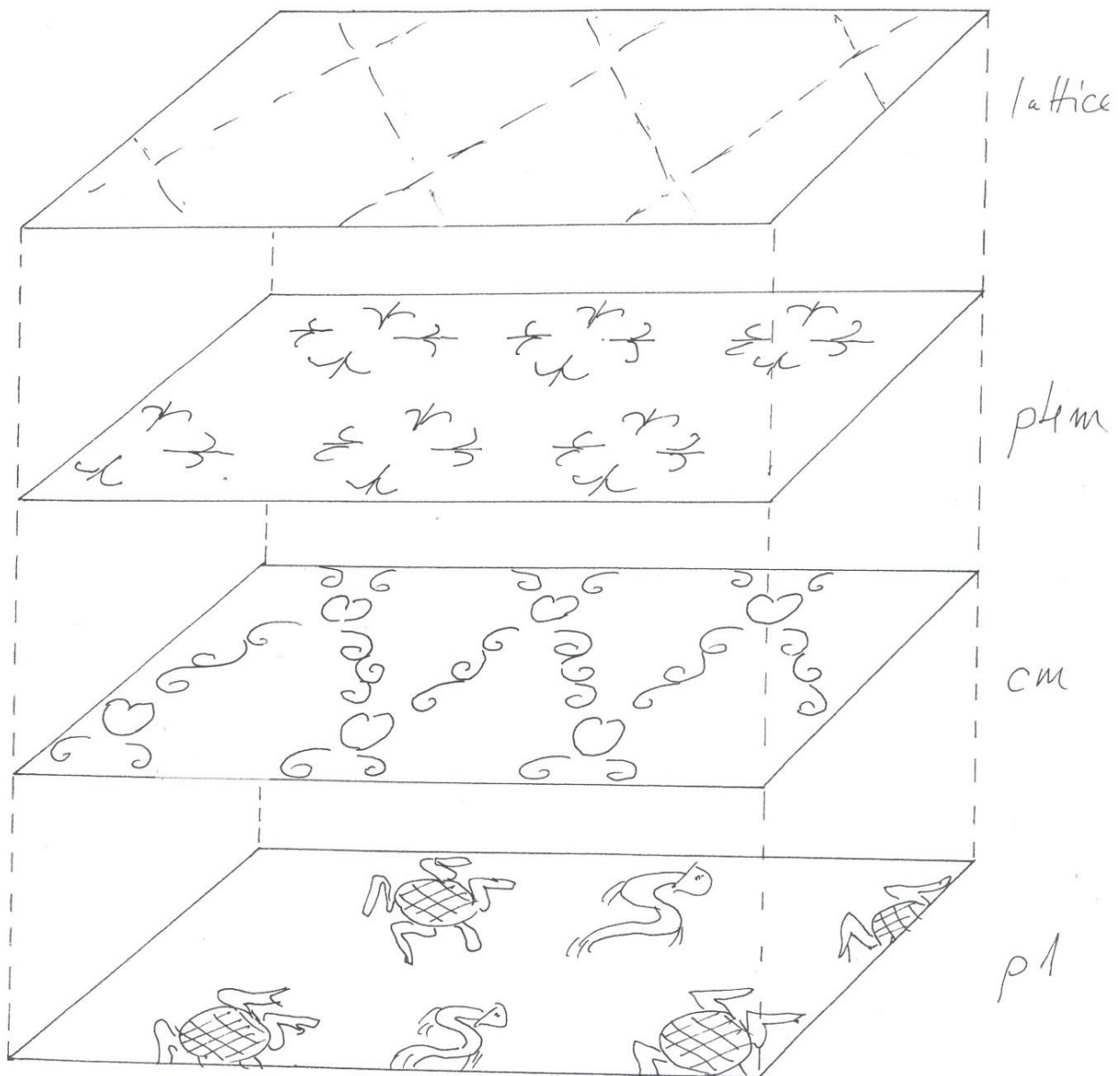


Fig. 12. Another interesting composite plane symmetry pattern can be found on a carpet from Noin Uul, Mongolia. We may call it a multi-layered structure in ethnomathematics, because 3 different layers of simple plane patterns are superimposed on each other. The $p1$ type is formed by animals, the cm type is formed by apple or heart-like motifs at the crosspoints of the grid, and the $p4m$ type is formed by thendril-like edges of the rhombic grid system. This object belongs to the Xiongnu(Hun) branch of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian art (Bérczi, 2012).

In our new booklet we selected treasures from the common Eurasian heritage of the Hun(Xiongnu)-Scythian peoples. Eurasia is the artistic and cultural horizon of the preserved artefacts. We may discover a more ancient common heritage behind it: the so called Andronovo Culture, which extended on the Eurasian steppe belt in the 2nd millennium before Christ. Several elements survived until today from this ancient culture. One of the best known parts is the drinking cup and arms decorated by animals. On drinking cups the herdsmen carved animal scenes even in the 19th century A.D. Earlier Rudenko, today Miniaev emphasized that Mesopotamian elements can be found in this art.

Miklós Érdy worked on the comparative archaeological topics and found that common heritage can be found on the archaeological finds of the Árpád People Hungarians and the Xiongnu(Huns)-Scythians. We already mentioned the caldrons, and another preserved heritage is the form of the burial of the death. Various forms of the man-and-horse burials were found from the 8th century B.C. till the Árpád Peoples burials in the 9th century A.D. This form is characteristic to the Huns and the Hungarians. Symbolic horse burials placed the skin and the head and leg bones of the horse into the tomb.

Another collection in our new booklet is the crowns and swords collection displayed along the Eurasian steppe. But the booklet exhibits mostly the virtuose drawings of animals. Our kind heritage of Sanctus Ladislaus Legend is also shown. The booklet brings the heritage of the last 4,000 years into one organic unit. I wish an exciting time to the readers during their adventures in this ancient world of Eurasian Xiongnu(Hun)-Scythian arts.

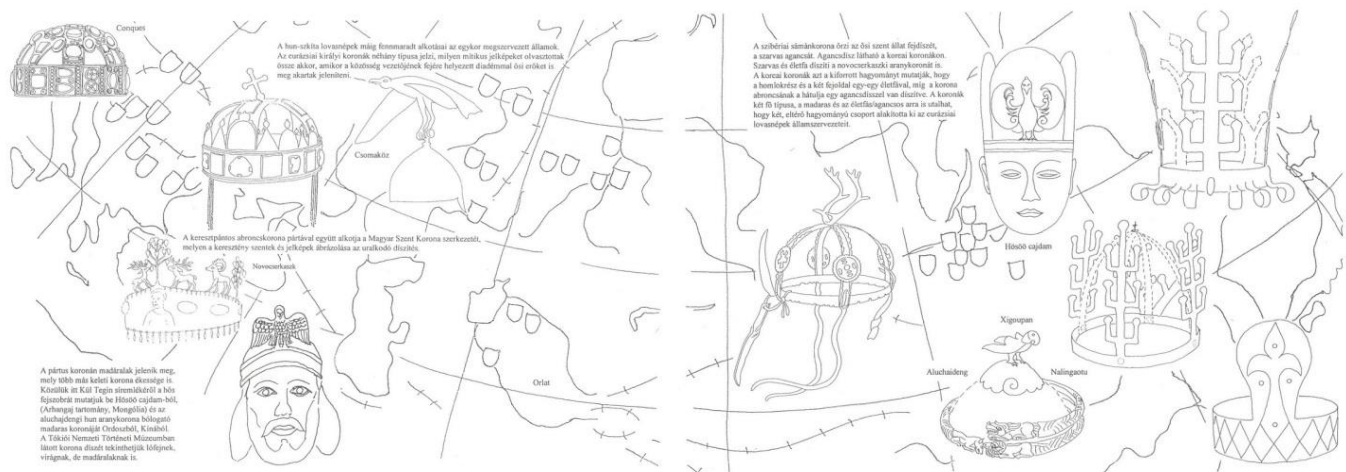


Fig. 13. In the art of Eurasian peoples the crowns have a specific role. Projecting them to the Eurasian horizon we can see how great distances covers the common heritage preserved till today in this object. Cross-banded crowns can be found in Korea, in Siberia (shaman crown, V. Diószegi) and in Hungary. Another decoration of the crown is the bird. Both types of crowns were appreciated and used among the Xiongnu(Huns)-Scythian peoples. This object proves how many things should be discovered and compared in the Eurasian archaeology, on a system level. This may help the investigations on the cultural stratifications.

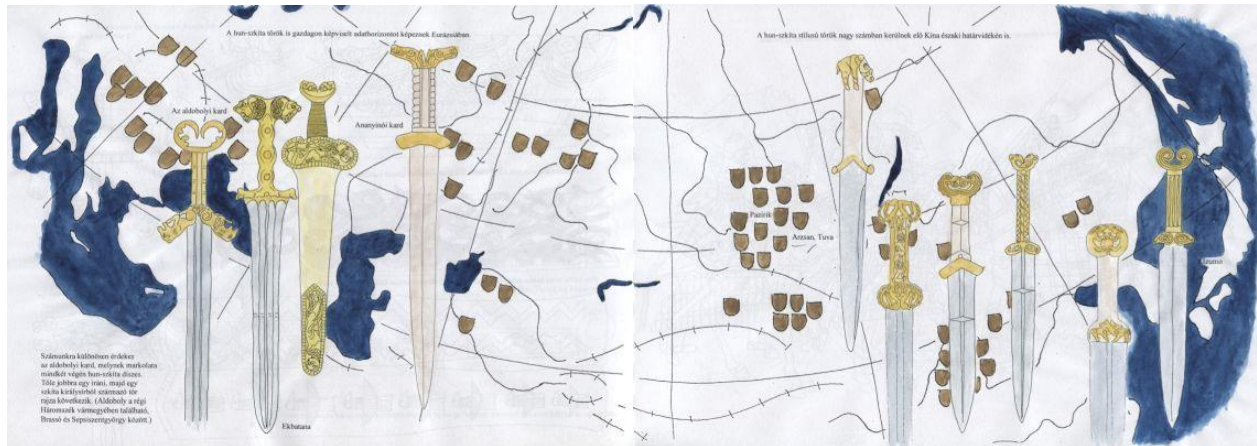


Fig. 14. Swords and sabres were also decorated with animal figures in the art of Eurasian peoples. Such swords are present in Eurasia from China to the Carpathian Basin, Hungary, scattered by the equestrian peoples during their migration.



Fig. 15. Pots, cups, air-vessels decorated with animal figures. When you drink your eyes are level with an animal. Such drinking cup were carved by herdsmen in Hungary even in the 19th century A.D.

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