

ARTY CATS

Scythian Pectoral, Ukraine By Greg Balagian

Scyths, or Sacae, were a nomadic tribe of Central Asia that established control of the plain north of the Black Sea from the 7th to 6th centuries BC.

Many of the most impressive pieces of Scythian art were cast of solid gold, the names of the artisans lost in antiquity.

Ukrainian Post depicted one of the most significant archaeological finds, a gold pectoral (necklace) once worn by a Scythian king. Archeologist Borys Mozolevsky discovered the pectoral in the Tovsta Mohyla burial mound, in the Ukrainian steppe in 1971.

This incredible gold ornament, dated 4th century BC, weighs 2½ lbs (1150 grams) and is about 12in (30.6c) in diameter.

Issued on December 12, 2013, the pectoral is on a miniature sheet comprised of four stamps (two each, 4h and 5.60h) and two labels.

The crescent-shaped pectoral consists of three tiers divided by gold braiding with each telling a story in superb and imaginative workmanship.

Animal art, including felines, dominates the motif of the period. The outer band and the widest, features winged



Ukraine's archaeological treasure, a gold pectoral, is on a 2013 miniature sheet.

griffins attacking horses (Fig. 1) with lions and leopards pouncing on a wild boar from opposite sides (Fig. 2). Other animals are depicted fleeing.

Both stylized and realistic flowers adorn the central band. Scythian appear on more peaceful, bucolic scenes portrayed on the inner band.

Stylized heads of lions at either end of the pectoral are decorated with holding rings in their mouths which serve as clasps.

The pectoral is part of the collection at the State Museum of Historical Treasures in Kiev, Ukraine. 🍀

Partial List of Sources

Encyclopedia Britannica

Pidvysotska, Olena & Tetyana Samina. "Perfection Embodied in Gold." Ukraine Government website.

Two scenes from Ukraine's gold Scythian pectoral depict cats. Fig. 1 (below): two mythical griffins (body, tail and back legs of a lion; head, wings and talons of an eagle) are attacking a horse. Fig. 2 (right): a leopard and a lion attack a boar.

