

**Studia Antiqua et Archaeologica, VI, Iași, 1999**THE KIEV RUSSIAN *KOLTS*.  
THEIR ANALOGS AND PROTOTYPESS. S. RIABTSEVA  
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The Kiev Russian head-dress pendants, known as *kolts*, are one of the most interesting types of female jeweler ornaments of XI-XIII centuries A.D. Some main types of these ornaments are selected: the gold *kolts*, decorated with polychrome enamels; the silver *kolts*, decorated with *niello*; silver star-shaped *kolts*, covered with granulation. The imitations of these expensive ornaments were produced from bronze and tin. It is necessary to mark that the temple decorations close in form to Kiev Russian *kolts* were rather widely distributed in Carpato-Balkan region starting with the XIII century. As well as in Russia the style of wearing of these ornaments in this region also has come from Byzantium, but each jeweler school has developed its own favorite variants of decoration of *kolts*.

Ear-rings and temple decorations similar to *kolts* are known among the various peoples in earlier time. Such a similarity of the forms inevitably brings scientists to the problem, whether there was any eligibility between the close forms of ornaments, distributed in various periods. So N.P.Kondakov considered as the prototype to Byzantine *kolts* the ancient ear-rings manufactured from large pearls and filled by spirits. During walking and movements of the head drops of perfume sprinkled the hair, neck and shoulders. N.P.Kondakov supposed that ancient ear-rings, so-called *kalatch*, are imitations in metal to this fragrant pearls (KONDAKOV 1892, p.312).

From the middle of II thousand B.C. the *kalatch* ear-rings are known on Cyprus, Miken and Three (BEREZOVA, KLOČKO 1995, p.37-53).

In Greece and Near East similar ear-rings are characteristic of the VII century B.C. In the period of golden age of Greek jewelry (V-VI centuries B.C.) the uniform style of such ornaments was widely practiced

in continental Greece, both on Balkan, in Black Sea area and in the Scythian steppes. The simple variants of *kalatch* ear-rings were popular also in Sarmat and Hun cultures. From the V century A.D. these ear-rings are distributed in Kama region in the antiquities of Lomovatovsky culture. Early examples of these ornaments had a form of hollow *kalatch* (typical for ancient, Sarmat and Hun ear-rings), late, living up to XII century they had a form of flat *kalatch* (GOLDINA 1985, fig.16/7, 8).

In case with *kalatch* ear-rings (the tip of ornament having a long period of employment) we can observe an interesting regularity. The earliest forms are very simple, without any decoration. Later these ear-rings begin to be enriched with filigree and granulation; the form of *kalatch* is lost in an abundance of additions. In V-VI centuries B.C. magnificent gold *kalatch* ear-rings are embellishment with suspensions, figures of the gods, beards, griffins, flowers. After this period abundance of decor again disappeared and ear-rings practically returned to the initial simple appearance.

In due course correlation between *kalatch* ear-rings and *kolts* seems to me rather problematic. But the familiarity with medieval jeweler ornaments, discovered on the territory of modern Macedonian, forces me to agree with the supposition of N.P.Kondakov. On this territory there are met hollow *kalatch* ear-rings up to XII century. Among *kolts*, living here up to XV century, there are some samples with the chosen bottom recalling hollow *kalatch* ear-ring, entered in the flat *kolt* (MANEVA 1992, pl. 23/ fig. 31/77, 23/1).

Probably the form of ancient *kalatch* ear-ring was saved by the Byzantine jeweler tradition and served as one of the bases for addition to the form of medieval *kolts*. On the territory of Iran there are met *kolts* (manufacture probably in Egypt or Syria by the provincial Byzantine jeweler workshops) in form very close to *kalatch* ear-rings (pl.5/6-8). But the construction of these ornaments is typical not to ear-rings, but to *kolts*. The main difference between *kolt* and any ear-ring (including *kalatch*) consists in a type of fastener. A hoop of a *kolt* on one hand was inserted into a hinge, and with other - fastened to small metal ring. In *kalatch* ear-rings fastener and hinge are absent.

Except the *kalatch* ear-rings another the prototypes of Byzantine *kolts* can be considered the Hun temple decorations. In the fifth century of

our era the Hun aristocracy had temple decorations which have received in archeological literature the title *kolts* (ZASETSKAJA 1975, p.5). It is possible to detect common characteristic features between these ornaments and later Byzantine and Old Russian *kolts*. The main characteristic features are: encircling of the central part of the suspension by «rays»; selection of composite centre of the ornament and inlays; usage of motive of «Life tree» and sane symbolic.

Hun *kolts* are flat, executed from two oval sheets of gold. The face side of this ornaments was decorated with geometric patterns, facing granulation and garnet inlays. Less magnificent turnaround side could be decorated with several inlays or subject compositions. On the *kolt* from destroyed grave from farm Verhne-Jablochnoe the back side is decorated with granulation image of «Life tree» (*ibidem*, p.15). On the top of the tree represented the bird, on each side of the tree – dogs pursing goats.

Hoops of Hun *kolts* as a rule are not saved and we can tell about their method of strengthening only that they have not any hinges. The rays of these ornaments were made from roll up sheets of gold. Such rays are ended with small metal balls, decorated with granulation. But closer to late Byzantine *kolts* are Huns ornaments, which rays are executed from small pyramid of granulation. These *kolt* were produced for Hun aristocracy by Byzantine jewelers.

In Byzantine masterly manufactured probably ornaments for Turkic languages nomads, who replaced Huns on spaciousness of steps in VI-VII centuries. In graves of nomad aristocracy on Altai, Don, Volga, Crimea and Hungary are found large hollow *kolts*, with stand out in relief sheet. Instead of rays on these ornaments are soldered wire composition (fig.1). The central sheet is also encircled by wire composition. All the space of the ornament was decorated with triangles, made of small granulation, (located in circle around the centre) and concentric circles of large granulation. The most magnificent samples in addition were decorated with inlays, filled with multi-coloured mastic, turquoise and amber. The interesting find of a similar ornament, decorated with granulation image of a bird, was made in Egypt (KONDAKOV 1892, p.312).

Fig. 1. Mihaelsfeld (near Anapa).

In addition the form and decor of *kolts* had affected also ear-rings, widely distributed in Byzantine in VI-XII centuries. The form of these ear-rings is close to the form of the *kolts*. But ear-rings are not hollow as *kolts*, they are flat and open-worked (pl.2/1-3,7).

As a rule one side of a hoop of such an ear-ring is soldered and another – threaded in a loop. But there are some examples with hinge, or imitation of a hinge with rivet.

Ear-rings were decorated with images of Christ, cross, stylized plant shoots, birds (**ROSS** 1965, No. 87, 90, 137).

The direct prototypes for Old Russian *kolts* are Byzantine *kolts* of XI-XII centuries (pl.1/1-4). The amount of these ornaments is extremely limited. They spring, as a rule, from casual finds, that extremely hinder work with this group of the material. Nevertheless we can schedule some basic lines in their development.

Variant 1 – *Kolts*, decorated with enamel, filigree and insertions with jewels. This type is represented by two pairs of magnificent gold *kolts* purchased by the collector I.P. Balashov in Constantinople (**KONDAKOV** 1896, pl.14). These *kolts* are executed from two halves, joint by the sheets of metal (pl.1/1). The central parts of *kolts* are single out with shield. On one side of ornament shield is decorated with an enamel, the other consists of open-worked grille decorated with granulation. The interior of the *kolt* is also covered with wire grille. On the lateral area of the ornaments there are soldered loops, through which, probably, pearl string was passing. All the space of the *kolts*, not occupied by shields, is filled with patterns of filigree. The edges of *kolts* are decorated with

granulation. The enamels are of white, light-blue, dark blue, green and red colours.

Variant 2 – Open-worked *kolts* executed from a gold wire and decorated with complicated vegetative shoots and small filigree rinds. Jewels are replaced by filigree knots or hemispheres. The ornaments, as well as in the previous variant, have acting shield, and, in a number of cases – closed loops for pearl string. In the picture of one *kolt* from Syria (*Jewelry 7000 years*, 1991, p.146, fig. 336) it is possible to see that the upper orifice is covered with open-worked. Except Byzantine and its provinces such *kolts* are met in Iran (pl.3/1-3; pl. 4/1-4).

Variant 3 – Small *kolts* with a rectangular orifice. From four sides and from below they are decorated with soldered hemispheres. Hemispheres are decorated with filigree and granulation. Similar ornaments were produced presumably in Egypt or Syria (pl.5/1-4) .

Variant 4 – *Kolts* recalling volumetric crescent or kalatch-shaped ear-ring. On some of these *kolts* shields obviously act and are decorated with filigree half-balls, on another shields are chosen only graphically – by imprinted vegetative ornament. These ornaments were produced presumably also in Egypt and Syria (pl.5/7, 8).

Variant 5 – *Kolts* of similar form, but without chosen shields. All space of an ornament is covered with granulation. Springing from Egypt (pl.5/6).

Variant 6 – *Kolts* without acting shields, the central part of ornaments is nondedicated or poorly chosen (pl.1/2-4). For *kolts*, found in Iran characterize existence imprinted half-balls on an edge and, sometimes, on a lateral face of an ornament. The central parts of the suspensions often are filled with wire circles or granulation rosettes (pl.3/6, 7). An interesting silver *kolt* is stored in the collection of Baltimore gallery (pl.1/3). In the centre of this ornament there is the imprinted image of two birds (probably peacocks), bounded by necks. This motive of two birds is also very much characteristic of Old Russian *kolts*.

In Kiev Russia the first *kolts* appeared in the end of the XI century. From all mass of Old Russian *kolts*, decorated with enamels, T.I. MAKAROVA (1975, p.22) has selected one ornament, found in Galich.

Ornament and colour scale of enamels of this *kolt* are not characteristic of works of Old Russian jewelers and pull it Byzantine ornaments. This *kolt*

takes an intermediate place between Old Russian and Byzantine samples. Among the works of Byzantine jewelers, fulfilled for the great prince, or his favorites, T.I.Makarova also has ranked the Kiev *kolt* with an image of a peacock stretched wings. (*ibidem*, p.31-32). For this group of *kolts*, executed immediately by Byzantine jewelers, or on the Byzantine sample, G.N. Bocharov ranked the gold *kolt* with enamels, founding in 1876 in Kiev in the hidden treasure in manor of Leskov. As the closest analogy for the human head, represented on this ornament, the author considers images on the corona of Konstantin Monomah (1042-1050) and in medallions from Pala d'Oro in Venice (XI-XII centuries) (BOČAROV 1984, p. 45).

Old Russian jewelers have produced their own system of decoration of *kolts*. They had favourite characters – sirens, beards, griffins, images of saints. Filigree on Old Russian *kolts* was used less often, than on the Byzantine samples (pl.6/2). There is known only one pair of Russian *kolts* (pl.6/4), decorated with jewels and filigree – the *kolts* with the images of saint Boris and Gleb from Old Ryazan (*ibidem*, p.152). Because of the huge size these *kolts* could not be human ornaments, but the contribution to some icon.

All Kiev Russian *kolts* (both gold, decorated with enamels and silver with *niello*) could be divided into two large types.

The first type – smooth *kolts* without a shield (pl.6/1), with a composite cent chosen only by an image. Such *kolts* consist of two convex halves, joint with side plate. On the sides of gold *kolts* there were soldered loops, for fixing there was used a pearl string. It is interesting, that the side parties of Byzantine *kolts* were similarly decorated, for example *kolts* from the collection of Balashov.

When Old Russian jewelers were creating *kolts* of this type, they forged the sheets of metal on special matrixes for giving them a convex form. On the gold *kolts* outline there is an image put on with the help of template, then soldered a detailed tray and partitions for differentiation of enamels of different colours. The form of gold *kolts* as a rule is round, or is close to a circle. On the top of the *kolts* the semicircular hollow is located, surrounded by rather rough strips of metal on which hinges are

fasten. Gold *kolts* of this type were decorated as a rule with images of sirens and birds. Occasionally there are metal *kolts* with the images of saints. There is only one *kolt* of this type, decorated with the image of the

griffin. On the back of such *kolts* the enamel images of rosettes inserted in the circle are located. On the parties of this circle the stylized plant ornament or ornament known as «auroches horns» is put (pl.6/1a). The colour scale of an enamel is constructed with the combination of four main tones: red, emerald, dark blue or light green and white. Sometimes they are supplemented by black and pink (MAKAROVA 1975, p.20 sqq).

Old Russian silver *kolts* with *niello* of this type (imitating more magnificent gold ornaments with enamels), instead of pearls, were decorated with small cast or large stamp metal balls (pl.7/1, 2). In the middle of XII century similar *kolts*, decorated by pattern border appeared (pl.7/3). These *kolts* are decorated by images of birds, griffin and other fancy animas, frequently joint with wicker ornament. The images of birds-sirens are very seldom very represented on such *kolts* (*idem* 1986, p.49-62).

The second large type of Old Russian *kolts* make gold and silver ornaments with plug-in shields and multiradial border. These *kolts* were produced from two metal slices. The rays of the border were also cut from these slices. The radials were decorated on each side – by filigree and at the ends by stamp metal cap. In the centre of the *kolt* in the special setting there was inserted a shield with an image. On gold *kolts* the space between the shield and the rays was decorated by filigree, stamp hemispheres, pearl strings (pl.6/2, 3).

On gold *kolts* enamel images of birds, female heads, plant-geometric ornament were put. On silver – engraved images of birds and fancy animals (pl.7/3).

The close connection between the production of gold and silver *kolts* is proved by the finding on the territory of Russia of two pairs of gold *kolts* (pl.8/1,2) of the first and the second type, decorated by *niello* instead of enamels (*idem* 1975, No.62, 63). But if the gold *kolts* with enamels were elite ornaments, silver – were manufactured by rather big consignments.

The third separate type is made by so-called star-shaped *kolts* (pl.7/4). To fasten a hoop of these *kolts* a hinge was not used. The suspensions of these ornaments are hollow and decorated in the centre by an acting metal hemisphere and small half balls. The imprinted rays are soldered on each side of suspensions and fixed in addition by delay. The rays are decorated by dense numbers of granulation, at the ends of the rays metal balls are soldered.

It is uneasy to notice, that despite all decorative differences, Old Russian and Byzantine *kolts* are subordinate to one composite scheme. On all these ornaments the centre is chosen by an image, or by pearl strings, or filigree, or jewels, or imprinted or wire half-balls. This motive of composite centre, enclosed by «orbits» of imprinted half-balls, large granulation, small wire rings, cast or filigree rosette even more visible, on the *kolts*, discovered on the territory of Bulgaria (pl.1/6,7).

In Kiev Russia the tradition of manufacture is finished almost at once after the Tatar invasion. In the Carpato-Balkan region the fashion on similar head-dress pendants continues to exist in XIV-XVI/XVII centuries (and the gold age of production of these ornaments fell here just on this period). So on the territory of Bulgaria in XIII-XVII centuries silver gilt *kolts* with the border from a set of pointed rays fare widely spread (**MAVRODINOV** 1966).

*Kolts*, springing from Macedonia are very close to earlier Byzantine samples. The main mass of *kolts* here is smooth, decorated with imprinted half-balls and filigree rings. But some times open-work ornaments, executed from filigree wire are encountered (**MANEVA** 1992, pl. 25, fig. 34/22; pl.27, fig. 24/21). The bottom of such of *kolts* is made as overturned filigree crescent-shaped pendant (lunula), decorated with vegetative sprouts. On the top of lunula a figure of halo is fastened. The extremities of lunula, located under the hoop, are executed as the heads of fancy animal, opening there jaws, as though threatening the bird (pl.2/8).

For the territory of Romania before the Tartar time *kolts* are not so characteristic. The ornaments from Voineshti treasure (**TEODOR** 1961, p.509-520, fig.6) and settlement Dinogetia (**POPESCU** 1970, cat.11), are obviously oriented on the Old Russian samples (pl.9/1, 2). In the later time (XV-XVI centuries) in Romania, probably, there was a production of *kolts*, close under the form of earlier byzantine ornaments (*ibidem*, cat.21,



26, 27). For these *kolts* large real or imitation granulation and glass or jewel insertions are characteristic (pl.10/1-3).

So on the territories, in a various measure undergone to the byzantine influence were created specific types of temple decorations – *kolts*. And if in Old Russia the production of these ornaments finished after the Mongol invasion, in Carpato-Balkan region they continued to produce various variants of *kolts* up to XVI/XVII century.

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Pl. 1. 1-4: Constantinople; 5-6: Macedonia; 7: Bulgaria XIII-XIV c. (col. of Sofia Archaeological Museum); 8: Gorna Bella Rechka (Bulgaria) XIV-XVI c.

Pl. 2. 1: Tars; 2-3: Crimea VI-VII c. (London: col. of The British Museum); 4: Byzantine VII c.; 5: Byzantine VI-VII c. (London: Victoria and Albert Museum); 6: Byzantine XIII c. (Athens: Benace Museum); 7: Crimea VI-VII c.: 8: Macedonia.

Pl. 3. 1, 3: Syria. XII c.; 2: Egypt XI c.



Pl. 4. 1: Egypt XI c.; 2-7: Egypt of Syria XI c.

Pl. 5. 1: Egypt XI c.; 2, 6-8: Egypt of Syria X-XI c.; 3-4: the place of finding unknown; 5: Macedonia..



Pl. 6. 1, 3: Kiev (the hidden treasures, foundings in 1906 and 1827);  
2: Chernigov (the hidden treasure, founding in 1850); 4: Old  
Riazan (the hidden treasure, founding in 1822).

Pl. 7. 1, 2: Terehovo (the hidden treasure, founding in 1876); 3: Iziaslavl;  
4: Kiev (the hidden treasure, founding in 1876); 5: Old Riazan (the  
hidden treasure, founding in 1937).

Pl. 8. 1: Col. of Russian Museum (from the col. of M.P. Botkin);

2: Kiev.

Pl. 9. 1: Voineshti (the hidden treasure, founding in 1926); 2: Dinogetia;  
3: Transylvania (apud Dan Gh. Teodor and M. Popescu).

Pl. 10. 1, 3: Transylvania; 2: the place of finding unknown  
(apud M. Popescu).

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