

CHAPTER II

CHINA AND THE EURASIATIC NORTH IN PREHISTORY

That man existed in China in the remotest of periods, namely in the palcolithic age, has been proved by the discovery of a great number of stone implements (1), but no works of art as old as these have been found. There is also nothing that may be compared with the rich discoveries from Malta, near Irkutsk (2).

Since the excavations of Andersson, we know the Chinese neolithic period particularly by its painted pottery (3). This pottery long outlived the metal age, and the discovery of a painted potsherd at An-yang, on the site of the capitol of the Yin is positive proof of this (4). It has been frequently suggested, and with good reason, that the painted pottery of China must in some way be connected with that of the Mediterranean coast or of southeastern Europe. But it cannot possibly have taken the "road across the Steppes" without leaving some trace. On the other hand this art is entirely lacking in northern Asia. There is only one locality in this district where painted potsherds have been unearthed, that is near the Amour in the region of Chabarovsk (5). However, the latter must be considered as a northern outgrowth of Sino-Manchurian art. There can therefore be question of only one road by which painted pottery was brought into China, the southern route passing through Chinese Turkestan along which it has even been possible to point out the halting places. This assertion is of importance, since Andersson found painted pottery in the province of Kan-su, in localities which also produced bronzes in the animal style about which we shall speak here (6). He prudently draws no deduction from this surprising fact. If we keep in mind the inventory of Siberian art, we may feel sure that any connection between these two categories of objects : painted pottery on the one hand and animal style bronzes on the other, is absolutely impossible.

The situation is different for primitive stone weapons which are not always necessarily neolithic, but which often continue the traditions of this period into a later epoch. Hentze has shown that the Pi, symbol of heaven, corresponds with the more or less circular axes, hollowed out in the centre, which are a part of the European neolithic age (7). As these weapons are often of soft stone