

CHAPTER III

CHINA AND THE EURASIATIC NORTH IN THE PERIOD OF THE CHOU DYNASTY (1122-255 B. C.)

1) European literature on possible interrelations.

As soon as the art of bronze had escaped from the shadows of prehistoric times, it made use in China of a strongly developed animal ornamentation that was of a peculiar character unknown elsewhere. This ornamentation usually forms hieroglyphics so confused that they are unrecognizable, and seldom are they realistic. The attempts to connect these animal-forms with countries outside of China are nearly as numerous as books on Chinese art. In searching for the inspirers students have turned many times towards the circle of the Steppes in northern Asia. Such an attribution is of special interest when it is made by a famous scholar, an expert on the art of nearby countries. Rostovtzeff, for instance, first believed it possible to derive Scythian as well as Chinese animal representation from an unknown locality in Central Asia (1). He later upheld this theory with less assurance (2), and now he has entirely given it up (3). Borovka has maintained the same point of view with considerable energy (4). The dragon and monster masques of the Chou bronzes, that is, the most frequent motives, he considered as derived from Scytho-Siberian art. In the end he himself felt the chronological discord between very early Chinese forms and their would-be models of so much later date. This resulted in his doubting the Chou date on pieces which to his mind had been influenced from outside (5). However it is not our knowledge of China that is at fault, but rather the theory of Borovka.

2) Chinese historical texts.

When we study Chinese texts, we find the tangible possibility of a connection with the Barbarians. Plath has already supplied a list of neighbours differing from the Chinese either by their culture, their language, or their race (6). Maspero has classified them again according to their origin, and to their geographic distribution (7). The texts group them systematically and geographically. To the east on the peninsula of Shan-tung live the I; to the west, particularly