

CHAPTER IV

HISTORICAL CONNECTIONS BETWEEN CHINA AND THE NORTH AFTER THE CHOU PERIOD

Towards the end of the Chou period, an event took place which clearly shows in what way elements from the circle of the Eurasiatic Steppes could have penetrated into China. Ssü-Ma Ts'ien reports that Wu Ling, king of Chao (325-298 B.C.) wished to put an end to continuous conflicts due to barbarian aggression (1). His kingdom embraced what is actually Shan-si and western Chih-li, and was particularly exposed to danger. The king decided to adapt Chinese military organization and equipment to barbarian customs, and it is related that certain of his subjects offered forcible resistance to these innovations. Literature on archeological subjects has often used this sure text (2). Pelliot shows in detail what was adopted in this period by the Chinese from their warlike neighbours (3). Chariots bearing arquebusiers were to be replaced by cavalry, as was customary for people who lived on horseback and who could draw the bow while riding. A new type of equipment naturally demanded clothing different from the traditional costume of the Chinese; above all, instead of the flowing cloak and long skirt, a jacket held by a belt, and trousers; in brief the dress of the nomadic horsemen. But Pelliot also points out that this reform only appeared after the Han and did not dominate until the T'ang. Although the borrowing of north Asian forms, so important to Chinese art, already began at the end of the Chou period, the results are not felt before the III century B.C., or in the majority of cases, at the earliest, during the Han dynasty. As for Chinese objects bearing northern Asian characteristics, the possibility arises that they may date from the first period of this artistic exchange between the centre of culture and the periphery; but there is always another possibility, that of a later creation.

To what race and to what people did these barbarians belong from whom the Chinese consciously borrowed weapons and implements, and, because of this, artistic forms? Ssü-Ma Ts'ien speaks of the Hu as neighbours of the Chao kingdom. According to De Groot the eastern Hu should be considered