

at the Chinese frontier that does not exist in the centre of civilization. The reason for this phenomenon is in the fact that the people who produced this art, while not sharing the cultural life of the Chinese, still remained under conditions particularly favourable to a preservation of ancient forms. Very often the social element, in our case the preference for hunting and cattle raising, is a determining factor of this art.

Undoubtedly the relatively primitive state of these frontier people would not have been sufficient reason for the preservation of the different uses and varied ornaments, if the objects had been destined solely for practical purposes. This is only possible in exceptional cases. There are two principal categories of utilization that have very much in common. One is the equipment of the dead, the burial object; the other the sorcerer's instrument, the equipment of the schamane. The ritual purpose in both cases explains the survival of the ancient forms and motives. It is always possible that in the course of time the original meaning had been forgotten.

An extraordinary amount of burial equipment is found in all the civilizations of antiquity. Numerous texts have proved it for China; Herodotus, for example, has proved it for the western Steppes. In the two extremes of the Steppes documentary information has been confirmed by numerous discoveries. One that approaches fairly close to our region is that of Pasirik in the Altai (1). It is of particular interest in that it has given us in great quantity certain objects designed for burial, such as harness ornaments, pendants, and similar articles. At Pasirik the purely burial aim is corroborated by the material used, wood among others. Because of their fragility, such objects could never have been used for the purpose to which they seem adapted, as for instance a bit. On the other hand resplendent gilding could easily give them the appearance of precious metal.

It is not at all surprising that sorcerers' instruments should follow ancient models both in material and in ornamentation. Even of a recent date there are descriptions of schamanistic practises to which we might turn here. The latest publication in a western European language is that of Nioradse, who especially mentions Chinese texts according to which "the ancient Turkish tribes like their neighbours, the Huns for instance, adhered to schamanism" (2).

1) Material and technique.

It is certain that all the bronzes reproduced here have come from the ground. Experience gained in the study of European antiquities as well as of well known Chinese objects, has taught us that metal surfaces undergo considerable change when they have been in the ground for 2000 years. The study in Russian and Siberian museums of the results from trustworthy excavations lead us to the same conclusion. What is surprising, is that among the Chinese frontier bronzes there is a considerable number having but slight if any patina. The metal is generally a brownish yellow tarnished with black. It is evident that bronzes with