

but slight patina are more likely to belong to a later period than those whose surfaces are decomposed. Such patina is to be found on all the objects of a group published by Pelliot. Thanks to his careful analysis we are spared a detailed study. They are amulet-seals from the region of the Ordos (3). Pelliot connects them with the Öngüts of the XII-XIII centuries because of their Nestorian ornamentation. We only remark on the relatively late date for bronzes with surfaces in this condition. If there is little or no decomposition, this condition of the bronzes still makes a late creation possible.

The method of casting also deserves to be considered. It is certainly not again necessary to mention the fact that the most ancient bronzes, both in China and in the circle of the Steppes, are technical masterpieces. In the majority of cases the method was that of casting by the "lost wax" process. Besides this method, there is in Siberia an infinitely more primitive process, that of casting in an open mold. In this case the underside is exposed to the air and is therefore covered with characteristic blisters. This technical process often demands a cleaning of the edges over which the molten metal easily overflows, that is to say, it demands a retouching which artists from our region often abandoned. This careless method is never found in Siberian articles of an early period, but only in later pieces, especially those from the vicinity of Tomsk. They are dated by Tallgren of the middle of the I millennium A.D. (4). I am inclined to make this period even later. Such a technical flaw would not have been possible at the northern Chinese frontier, except at a period where people of the same stock and of the same social status were undergoing conditions that brought about a weakening in technical skill.

2) Parallels in the Eurasiatic Steppes.

A comparison of sure materials should undoubtedly be considered as the best support for dating the art with which we are concerned. Since both use and ornamentation lasted over a long period at the Chinese frontier, a comparison does not permit us to place derived objects in the same period as their models, but later, sometimes very much later.

a) Minussinsk. There is no Siberian site of discoveries of which we shall speak so much in the following pages as the southern section of the Jenissei valley. In Chapter IX we shall deal with the uses peculiar to this region. But even when these uses have been noticed elsewhere, and earlier than at Minussinsk, one must often turn to this region in order to derive from there the decorations and the way in which they are treated. This is not at all surprising when one remembers that of all Siberian centres Minussinsk is nearest to the Chinese frontier. It is fortunate that S. Teplouchoff, the greatest expert in the art of the Jenissei, has built up a relative chronology of this region and has published explanatory drawings (5). We have reproduced on Plate III and IV the designs that deal with the metal ages.