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As we have just read, the writing of the Si-hias was first used in 1037. It must therefore have been invented but shortly before that date. As for objects from the Chinese frontier which bear Si-hia inscriptions, we are able to reach an exact date when the piece and the characters engraved upon it are of the same period.

3) Groups chronologically arranged.

One may be permitted to borrow names in use in the Celestial Empire with which to designate objects from the north of China, since the intercrossing and hybridism between China and the Eurasiatic Steppes brings this frontier art particularly close to the far eastern centre. When we use Chinese epochs we are able to form five principal groups :

a) The Han period (beginning of our era). We shall place here all that according to our actual knowledge agrees with the Scythians of the Black Sea (VII-IV centuries B.C.). Then all that is derived from their immediate successors, the Sarmatians (IV century B.C.-II century A.D.). Finally all that descends from the Kara-Suk civilization of Minussinsk.

b) Period of the Six Dynasties (more simply called, about the year 500 A.D.) The uncertainty of this group demands a certain leeway before and after this date. Objects connected with the Kurgan civilization are part of this group, also objects derived from Siberian gold plaques.

c) T'ang period (second half of I millennium). The number of objects to