

## CHAPTER VI

### OBJECTS OF SCYTHIAN ORIGIN

Numerous works have acquainted us with the Scythians and their art, Rostovtzeff, Minns and Borovka have given us the latest scientific data (cf. Bibliography). From our standpoint, the fluctuation in the dating of certain monuments is of no importance, especially the question of whether the earliest period is to be considered the VII or VI century B.C. It is certain that the IV century is the latest.

Any connection due to a direct migration between Scythian territory and lands bordering China cannot be historically proved. Artistic forms from the extreme west may have been carried into China by some trade medium, such as intermediaries who received and used Scythian elements. If we examine the contents of Scythian tombs, the majority not sufficiently studied and not fully published, and if we put aside all things coming from the Near East and Greece, there will then remain as the patrimony of these people a well defined and often described treasure. Among the wealth of forms we find many types of implements that are duplicated at the Chinese frontier, such as standard-tops, harness appliques, and belt-buckles.

#### 1) Standard-pole-tops.

To the east as well as to the west of the Steppes we are familiar with bronze sockets having on them animals or heads of animals, animals forming rattles or animals above rattles (1). There are usually two or four holes on the socket with which to attach it to the wooden pole.

#### a) Pole-tops affixed vertically.

The most obvious use for this object is that of crowning an upright pole. Rostovtzeff has proved it not to be a Scythian invention, but derived from the Near East (2). These decorated poles probably served as a commander's insignia, as an army standard, or for funeral ceremonies. Chinese texts speak several times of pole-bearers (3). The Turks, the most important neighbours of the T'ang Empire, are especially mentioned as having their standards crowned with gilded wolves' heads (4). It is also possible that these embellished caps of