

A curious example of rod and rattle seems more to be of Chinese origin than from the circle of the Steppes. (Pl. VII no. 3). The oblique position of this pole-top decoration is particularly unusual, but at the same time the socket made to fit a pole leaves no doubt as to its purpose. Here, the customary loop appears at the angle of socket and rod. Only geometric perforations decorate the disks that form the rattle, and are not much help for dating. Identical pierings can be found on pole-tops of probably the end of the Chou period, which are associated by Kalgren (11) with the solar disk. This piece is probably a radiation from China towards the north that took place in the first part of the I millennium A.D.

b) Small pole-tops affixed vertically.

Rostovtzeff considers the smaller bronze pole-tops of the type described above to be tops of walking-sticks, sceptres or swords (12). He mentions examples, not yet reproduced, from a Scythian tumulus (13). Knife-handles in bronze or bone with animal heads are found in the civilization of Ananino, that is to say in the upper valley of the Volga (14). We should add as a hypothesis their use as handles of whetting-stones, well known to us in Luristan art (15), but also found among the Scythians (16). Finally we should mention the possibility that miniature copies of decorated standard-tops may have been placed with the dead in their tombs.

Such a supposition seems justified if the shape of the animal makes any practical use seem improbable. That is the case with the small replica of the Saiga antelope (Pl. VII no. 4). The socket is missing, but the position of the legs, drawn together under the body, shows that there was once one. Only the horns and ears, the latter very small, allow for a zoological determination. The head appears conventionalized, but the open jaws and hanging tongue, probably observed in the hunted animal, add a certain life to the figure. The legs are bent as we noticed in Plate VI no. 1, and ill proportioned. Lacking as this piece does in all the Jenissei elements it must be placed at the end of the I millennium. A small pole-top, the socket-piece of which is only two flat plaques, each with two holes (Pl. VII no. 5), has a well observed but heavy ram with clumsy legs. This object enters into the T'ang epoch when the Jenissei forms were degenerating and proportions were weakening.

The idea that standard-tops may have been reproduced in miniature seems particularly convincing when we find a long stem between the animal and the socket (Pl. VII no. 6). Heikel states that he found traces of wood inside the socket of a piece connected with western Siberia (17). He calls this type of object a handle. But it is impossible, as with the two pieces described above, that the artist expected the object to be held in the hand; in this case the bear prevents such a supposition. While the animal head is lifelike the body is out of proportion, easily explained by the fact that it had to fit a narrow base.