

What is less easy to understand is the reason for the large slit all along the back from neck to tail. This piece cannot be dated before the middle of the I millennium A.D.

The only small example that seems really adapted to be grasped as a handle is one where the animal form is part of the shaft. In this example of a ram (Pl. VIII no. 1) the simplified joining of the horns and ears may have been designed for such a purpose. It must be of the same date as Plate VII no. 4, therefore of the T'ang period.

c) Pole-tops to be affixed vertically with two or four supports.

Objects of a Scythian origin, when they reach China, become so transformed that their original purpose is modified. As soon as we find two or four supports instead of a socket, we are certainly no longer dealing with a pole or standard-top. There are simple examples of this type, the use of which is still unknown. Underneath a resting two-humped camel (Pl. VIII no. 2) there are two large pins with which to attach it. These pins also have holes allowing for the passage of horizontal bolts or pegs. The disjointed form and the bad casting dates it very late in the art of our limited region, that is the beginning of the II millennium.

A pole-top composed of three separate pieces and until now unduplicated in the west (Pl. VIII no. 3) has as base an elongated galoping horse. An example where the animal decoration has been treated and placed in the same way, and another piece with two animal-heads, have been reproduced and explained as being part of a horse's bit (18). Here, there are two round hollowed shafts serving as pegs, making such a use quite impossible. In these shafts there are transverse pieces so well adjusted that there can be no doubt of their being part of the object. The base is topped with two summarily modeled horses. One can see that the technique of the artist was unsure by the way in which the tails of the upper horses are attached to the hind legs, and the front hoof of the horse below is joined to its lower jaw. This piece also cannot be dated earlier than the second half of the I millennium.

With Plate VIII no. 4 its use as a pole-top is likewise uncertain. It is possible that these two stags may have served as a funeral statuette and should be included among the objects to be dealt with in Chapter IX no. 1 a). The four short legs perhaps stood on stakes. One can also imagine this piece so placed on a cart. In essentials these stags repeat the one on Plate V no. 3 and should therefore be dated about 500 A.D. They are different only in being more lively in movement, in the squatness of the antlers and legs, and in the fact that the round and ringed perforations are not confined to the eyes, but are also at the upper joints. This emphasizing ornamentation is an often observed invention of the Sarmatians who later passed it on to the whole circle of the Steppes.