

served as fastener is often missing, and the loop is frequently replaced by a perforation that forms part of the general composition. On the other hand loops are sometimes found at the back (always mentioned in the notes on the Plates). In the latter case these plaques may have served to decorate the equipment of the warrior and his horse, and were not meant as fasteners. These objects should then have been added to those grouped under Chapter VI no. 2. Pelliot has already pointed out the fact that some plaques have an outward-turned hook, that is to say, turned in the opposite direction to its normal position (5), and that sometimes it is reduced to a mere stump. He sees no explanation for this strange phenomenon. I believe that many belt-plaques must be considered as burial objects and were never meant to serve any other purpose.

a) Mythological scenes.

There is a bold plastic character in the plaques from western Eurasia. All the details rise from the background in strongly modeled relief. The gold Siberian plaques have the same artistic character, although the majority are openwork. The same is applicable to Chinese frontier plaques, especially when the human figure plays the dominating role (Pl. XXI nos. 1-4). Rostovtzeff has made considerable study of this type (6), and we have little to add to his very complete explanation. Let us first deal briefly with Plate XXI no. 1. Two men in the characteristic costume of the Sarmatians are wrestling, their horses behind them. A bird soars overhead. They stand between trees upon a stylised ground. Plate XXI no. 2 agrees in all the essential details with the preceding piece, although the bird is less clear, while in exchange we are able to see more distinctly the harness of one of the horses. There is no background in this second case, which proves that the same scene could be reproduced in an openwork as well as in an unperforated style. I feel that I cannot entirely agree with Rostovtzeff in the dating of such objects. The horses are still modeled but not with the accuracy of the early Sarmatian animals. What is also found in countries influenced by Sarmatian art is the use of the grooved and pointed oval in the shape of a leaf, originally intended to be inlaid with color. But it is above all in the figures of the wrestling men that we find a stylization way beyond any western or Siberian parallels, and which justifies a date between 200 and 500 A.D. Except for the heads, arms and torsos, little modeling is apparent. There are only raised outlines around a uniformly flat plane. The linear tendency is beginning to show itself, we shall find it further developed in other pieces.

As for the two plaques, authoritatively described by Rostovtzeff as scenes from the life of the Hero Hunter (Plate XXI nos. 3 & 4), I believe that the Han date which up to now has been given to them must also be corrected. We find on them the Persecutor of Demons standing before his chariot laden with trophies (Plate XXI no. 3). Rostovtzeff has pointed out that the dog placed at the thin edge is not in a natural position, but set vertically, head down, as otherwise there was no