

a return to primitiveness (Plate XXII no. 5). An undefinable wild animal fights a tiger, jumps on him with one paw under the belly, the other gripping a fore-leg. The tiger is characterised by line-drawn fur. The dots on the corkscrew tail show that nature is being sacrificed to a desire for ornamentation. Of all the treasure of Sarmatian forms, leaf drawn frame, emphasised joints, contorted bodies, nothing is left. A reminder of Minussinsk art, however, is felt in the round perforations. It was at about the beginning or towards the middle of the II millennium that the Mongols worked in such a primitive way, while still making use of their ancient subjects.

A distinct variation of the type is furnished by the rectangular plaque with an unperforated flat background (Plate XXIII no. 1). Here we see a ram overpowered by some wild animal that is biting its victim behind the shoulder. The animals are contorted in the Sarmatian manner as each pair of legs may be seen directly behind the head of the other animal. The Maikop plaque has already made the plain background and the twisted forms familiar to us. Such a composition is possible at the Han period, but details in the drawing do not fit so early a date. The very natural ridges of the backward-turned horns are also to be found on the spirals at neck and joints. It is clear that the artist was more interested in his ornamentation than in the realism of his scene. The pathos so often mentioned in groups of this type has been sacrificed to a rhythm of lines. So exaggerated a transformation in the animal-combat scene can with difficulty be dated before the middle of the I millennium. The development in the transformation and obliteration of motives may be followed on unperforated plaques. The hole for the hook is the only perforation that remains. The subject may borrow the most varied elements from the rich repertory of the animal-combat scene. Plate XXIII no. 2 shows us two horses in profile with birdlike heads, their backs gripped in the jaws of wild animals of which we only see the heads turned full-face. The two animal-heads above the hole are inexplicable. A decoration of spiral stripes entirely obliterates the bodies of the solipeds. They begin at the hind legs and go to the necks, and are derived from the ridges on ram-horns. This transformation of the animal-combat into an interlacing of animal figures has no parallel in the circle of the Steppes. It appears at about the middle of the I millennium in the region of the Steppes that is in contact with China.

Besides the ram and the horse we also find the antelope in this group (Plate XXIII no. 3). Four antelope are so arranged that we only see the fore-quarters of one pair. The legs follow a horizontal line across the middle of the rectangle. In the part destroyed by the larger hole, the hind hooves have wild animal-claws. Only above the other pair of antelope, and close to the edge, do we find tiger-heads biting the necks of the solipeds. Their legs and paws are necessarily forshortened. Between their contorted bodies and the ringed hole