

c) Groups of different animals.

Many scenes that have been called "animal-combats" do not deserve that title and are not derived from the gold plaques. One piece of which several examples are known (Plate XXIV no. 1) does not show us an attacker and a defender, but an animal and its food. The tiger is about to devour a dead roe. The very openwork appearance of the plaque reminds us of the Jenissei valley where we find, as it happens, almost the identical subject (10). At Minussinsk there is usually nothing left of the prey but its head. The passionate movement of the gold plaques is unknown there, probably because the inhabitants of that region so favoured by nature, were rather shepherds than hunters, and therefore preferred their art to represent peaceful rather than dramatic events. The works of art created on the Jenissei at the beginning of our era cannot have been reproduced at the Chinese frontier before the middle of the millennium. Plate XXIV no. 2 shows us the developed scene of the animal-repast. It has degenerated. A lion with very short paws holds a roe in its jaws. The square loop destined to hold the hook is here in an unusual position, between the two animals. The representation of a lion is unexpected. In the eastern Steppes we only find this animal in the north of Lake Issik Kul, in the country of the Seven Rivers (Semiretschi) but these examples have not been published. The stylised drawing of the mane, and the uncertain proportions place this object in the last period, the most barbarian period of north China, which may have easily lasted far into the II millennium.

At this particular stage in the artistic intercrossing, there appears a strange intermediary scene between the animal-combat of the gold plaques and the animal-repast of Minussinsk. It has no parallel in the Steppe circle. The wild animal is made the principle figure, while frame and other details are discarded. Plate XXIV no. 3 shows us the earliest type. The wild animal seems to be derived from the tiger. The loop is inorganically placed between forehead and nose. The prey is unrecognisable. Incised ribbons that start from the joints and increase in width, decorate the body. The ornamental elements overshadow the organic and naturalistic elements, but there still remains some memory of anatomical construction. This first example of the motive should be placed about 500 A.D.

A change of but little importance is found on Plate XXIV no. 4. The striped ribbons have been replaced by dotted and spiral lines. Once more we are able to follow the development of stylistic degeneracy even in the smallest details. On Plate XXIV no. 5 the composition has become still more confused. Above the shoulder where usually a spiral is found there is a bird-head. The principal animal reminds us of the art of the Altai where the tiger becomes fantastic through curling the upper lip, placing a scroll in the ear, and forming a pad of the whiskers. This pad is shaped like a half leaf, drawn with barbs like those of a feather, especially in those carved wood pieces from the Katanda river (11), that is to