

## CHAPTER IX

### OBJECTS FROM MINUSSINSK

Of all Siberian centres where discoveries of large groups of objects have been made, that of the upper Jenissei is nearest to the northern Chinese frontier. Chinese texts have stated that the inhabitants of this region were in touch with the Celestial Empire, a fact that is additionally proved by the discovery of various Chinese pieces at Minussinsk. Already in previous chapters the study of the ornamental decoration has obliged us to refer to the Jenissei group. It is therefore not surprising that the same necessity arises when we refer to the utilization of numerous objects.

1) Sculpture in the round.

a) Burial statuettes.

The animal representation in the round with a hollowed and open base is one of the most usual types at the northern frontier of China. But we lack a sure foundation for any supposition concerning its purpose. The horizontal position of the figures, as well as their often considerable size, prevents their having been used as standard-tops. A bronze receptacle in the Cernuschi Museum in Paris has a small animal of the type here under discussion, that serves as a handle on the lid (1). But I believe this to be an exceptional case, and that the majority of animal statuettes accompanied the dead. China might be considered the originator of this custom if Minussinsk had not already many such examples. The Jenissei valley is, moreover, the only part of Siberia where burial statuettes are found. There, as in our region, the favourite animal is the roe, usually of tiny dimensions (2), with legs folded and framing the hollow underneath the body which is treated in the round. Only birds (3) of the beginning of the Kurgan period (beginning of our era, Plate XXXIII no. 1) are of a larger size. As these bird forms have not been entirely preserved, there is always the possibility of their having served another purpose. Besides they have not the hollow under the base which, at the Chinese frontier, the technical process by which they were cast, that is to say, the joining of two identical halves, does not sufficiently explain. It is possible that the opening at the base was the means