

second millennium. The handle is geometrically decorated with dotted and zig-zag ribbons. The latter are repeated at each narrow side, framed by three buttons. The animal decoration above the loop is doubled. It is not possible to see by the reproduction in profile that there are two heads separated by a space, with three quarters of each muzzle in front and only one half farther back. The four nostrils are again cups, while the eyes seem to be pierced. The two horns, slashed horizontally, that is geometrically and quite unnaturally, are connected by a button at the middle of the curves. The ears have been broken. This head shows an unsurpassed disintegration of the motive, so exaggerated as to be absurd. It is more an abstract ornament than an animal figuration. There can be no doubt of its being of a later period than a realistic creation. It is still always unexplained, however, how the famous "Asiatic retardation" could have embraced so long a period.

c) Knives with ring-topped handles.

The original form, knives with thorns, has already suffered numerous alterations even in Minussinsk. An example of this fact is the substitution of other forms for plastically decorated handles. Teplouchoff considers that the knife crowned with a flat ring belongs to the Kara-Suk period (cf. Plate III, line III, no. 52). But he also knows of examples of the Kurgan period (cf. Plate III, line IV 2, no. 88). As is the case with nearly all forms from the Jenissei valley, this too has successors at the Chinese frontier, but for these the date is particularly difficult to find, as decorations are often more or less lacking and the object therefore offers no guiding-marks. Sometimes conclusions may be reached from the general form. We always find a slight S-shaped curve which begins above the point and curves in the opposite direction. But the thorn is sometimes indistinct or has entirely disappeared. When it is very marked as in Plate XXXVII no. 1 the object deserves to be placed among the first Chinese repetitions, that is, in the Han period. This date is confirmed by the large symmetrically formed ring, by the careful casting, and finally by the patina.

The opening may also be placed on the handle itself. In this case a flat button is often found above it. With an example of this type (Plate XXXVII no. 2) we have already touched the end of the I millennium, as clearly the ornamentation is of a geometric character. It is composed of kauri shells, a motive extremely ancient in the east, but which at the Chinese frontier has probably lost its original meaning. In the course of our study we have a number of times run across such reliquas where all symbolic meaning has been lost.

The knife with attenuated thorn (Plate XXXVII no. 3) is to be considered an example of the same period. The ring on the handle has become an elliptic loop. The decoration on each side is composed of birds, absolutely geometric, placed irregularly along the handle, the summary rendering of which is in perfect agreement with the general tendency accepted here.