

An engraved design is on the knife of Plate XXXVII no. 4 under the large ring but only on one side. This stag is far from having the fresh and natural treatment of an early period. One has only to notice the shape and bad proportions of the legs to realise that this drawing is the work of an awkward period, that is the period that comes after the year 1000.

The thorn has entirely disappeared on the knife (Plate XXXVII no. 5) the decoration of which is composed of a row of triangles on one side, while the other has a smooth ribbon with a triangle at the top. Kurgan art at Minussinsk does not lack knives ornamented in a purely geometric manner (Plate III, line III no. 53), but there, careful work is nearly always found on both sides. The infinitely more primitive ornament of the Chinese frontier should belong to the beginning of the II millennium.

The same date should be given to a decoration in the form of rows of dots, in this case on both sides of the handle of a knife (Plate XXXVII no. 6), the uncertain contour of which is in itself sufficient reason for a late date.

d) Knives with handles crowned with animal forms or buttons.

The diversity in the types of knives to be found at Minussinsk is inexhaustable, and there are thousands of examples. The straight or slightly curved knife is possible on the Jenissei in the Han period, but it is relatively rare among the Scythians of the Black Sea, and when found, is decorated with an animal-head and belongs to the end of that-art (V-IV centuries) (12). However, Bobrinskoj dates an example from Chigirin of the VI-V centuries (13). Merhart has already spoken of the considerable independance of Siberian knife forms (14). He is inclined to consider them local creations. Tallgren particularly mentions the long duration of knives at Minussinsk (15), and speaks of their "late age" of "the end of the bronze age" and of an example in a Russian collection which bears an Uigur inscription of the VIII century (probably authentic). The conclusions of the Finnish scholar agree very well with ours and supply an essential support.

Undoubtedly the Minussinsk knives were developed at the Chinese frontier, since decorative details are found there which are not included in the Jenissei inventory of forms. The ring-shaped opening which is predominant on Plate XXXVII is seldom entirely missing, but is sometimes reduced in size. At times it nearly disappears between the legs of animals only slightly in the round which stand on the handles (16). While in the Jenissei the muzzles do not considerably protrude over the handles but bend down towards the forelegs, the boar on a knife from the Loo collection projects well over one side (Plate XXXVIII no. 1). The details have become greatly stylised, a tendency that is emphasised by the spirals on the joints. We place this piece about the year 1000. An animal, turned in the opposite direction to the blade, is unusual (Plate XXXVIII no. 2) while the position and size correspond to those we know from