

2) Schamanistic objects.

a) Schamanistic plaques.

In many region of the Siberian Steppes at the end of the I millennium we notice a strange alteration in style. In place of objects adapted to a definite use, we find flat plaques that were not meant for any evident purpose. They may have been votive gifts, appliques for the clothing of the schamanes, or objects for exorcism. The transition from a developed to a weakened animal style is well shown in the find from the Ischimka river (5) which I date later than is customary (that is at the end, instead of at the middle, of the I millennium). This primitive and undeveloped stage is also well demonstrated by a group of finds from Tomsk (6) which I believe already reach a period about 1000 or even later. These are all flat plaques that had been cast in an open mold.

The same type of plaque, for no clear purpose and with a completely smooth back, is also found at the northern frontier of China (Plate XLIII nos. 5 & 6). There can be no doubt that these two pieces go together because of the similarity of the outlines that are in relief and that frame flat, unarticulated surfaces. The roe with backturned head (Plate XLIII no. 5) adds to the repertory of north of China forms a degeneracy that far surpasses any we have so far encountered. On the other hand, Plate XLIII no. 6 adds a new motive to Siberia as well as to our region, the fabulous winged human-headed creature. The Eurasiatic west knew such fantastic forms through the proximity and influence of ancient civilizations of Asia Minor. We must seek the inspiration of our example in the sphinx of Seldchuk art found on mirrors belonging to that civilization (Plate XLIII no. 3). Except for the position of the head, the north of China plaque follows its model fairly closely. Such degenerate revivals should belong to the middle of the II millennium.

b) Sorceror's implements.

The implements which Siberian schamanes used in their exorcising practices have been little studied. Works that have been published in Russian are difficult to obtain. However, we can reach one conclusion—Siberian sorcerors, like the sorcerors of other lands, wished to make a noise. Bell and other rattles fulfilled this aim, the simplest of all rites. Ancient Chinese texts have already spoken of a knife to which bells were attached (7). The form of Plate XLIV no. 1 is derived from a knife (Plate XXXVI nos. 3-4). The animal-head, however, is stunted, and the object as a whole has the appearance of a long pin, slightly curved. It has one loop on the inside, and six on the back, to which metal pieces were attached, one of which remains. Thus there was noise with each motion. I know of no exact parallels in Siberia. But the contour of the animal-head gives it a place in this chapter. Its date should be about the beginning of the II millennium.

Clearly a rattle is the object represented by two examples in the Loo collection