

face. In all, there are about sixty arrows. When complete they measure from 57 to 78 cm. in length, and are fitted out with two tufts of feathers, one at the base and the other a little behind the middle, Pl. 7: 11—14. Only the quills of the short feathers are secured to the shafts, with a lashing of red or brown wool. This arrangement of the feathers makes the arrow unsuitable for practical use, and as there is no notch for the bow-string we may safely assume that they were never meant for shooting, but made only as symbolic arrows offered to the dead for their hunting tours beyond the grave. A few specimens, such as 5. E: 3 (Pl. 7: 11) and 5: 46 are also too crooked ever to have been in actual use.

Many of them are decorated with rows of small incised triangles filled with red colour, and arranged in transverse bands, each band consisting of two lines of triangles pointing towards each other. These bands, many of which give the impression of a zig-zag line, are arranged in groups of four or five, Fig. 14: 1, 2, 9, 10. There is always the same number of bands in each group on the same specimen; four are more common than five. On some specimens the space between these groups have two — in a few cases three — longitudinal triangle-bands either straight or in spiral, Fig. 14: 1, 2, 10; here the triangles are broader and less regular. These minutely carved incisions recur over and over again on the symbolic arrows, and it is therefore not unreasonable to regard the ornamentation as symbolic, too, and containing some quality valuable to the dead. It is of course very tempting to try to explain these triangles as having something in common with the fertility cult in the way proposed by several authors, for instance HANNA RYDH (Rydh 1929), and that they were carved on these mortuary objects for the benefit of the dead, their red colour being intended to enhance their vitalizing magic power. I am not sure, though, that a triangle pattern necessarily represents a quest for fertility; but like most ornaments occurring in primitive art it had some sort of symbolic meaning. As the triangles in our case are diminutive they manifest themselves only through their multitude, and I believe that the continually recurring arrangement of rows and bands etc. cannot be incidental but may be the chief object of the whole decoration, the exact meaning of which we can hardly interpret.

Before leaving this multiple triangle pattern, these saw-like indentations, or whatever we may call them, it is worth while to draw some parallels.

All kinds of primitive civilizations use triangular designs for decoration. Those lying nearest at hand in our case, both in time and space, and which are also best known, are the bronze cultures with centres in the Ordos region on the Sino-Mongolian borderland, and around Minusinsk in Central Southern Siberia. Our knowledge of the chronology of these, in some respects, closely allied cultures is not so well founded as might be desired, but it is quite evident that they originated earlier than the construction of the Lop-nor graves, and probably lasted till after that time. From among the published Ordos bronzes we may refer to the following, bearing a serrated ornament resembling our triangle-bands: Andersson 1932, Pl.