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THE ANIMAL STYLE
AMONG THE NOMAD TRIBES OF
NORTHERN TIBET



SEMINARIUM KONDAKOVIANUM

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Ю. Н. РЕРИХЪ

ЗВЪРИНЫЙ СТИЛЬ
У КОЧЕВНИКОВЪ СЪВЕРНАГО
ТИБЕТА

JURIJ NIKOLAEVIČ ROERICH (GEORGE N. DE ROERICH).

Author of TIBETAN PAINTINGS, Paris, 1925; LE BOUDDHA ET
SEIZE GRANDS ARHATS, Paris, 1930; TRAILS TO INMOST
ASIA, Yale University Press, 1931, SUR LES PISTES DE L'ASIE
CENTRALE, Paris, 1931; etc.

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THE ANIMAL STYLE

AMONG THE NOMAD TRIBES OF NORTHERN TIBET

by

J. N. ROERICH

(Archaeological investigations on the uplands of Tibet)

In recent years, the science of Orientalism has to face the problem of the historical role played by the nomad tribes of Central Asia and the South Russian steppes and their influence on the ancient centers of culture of the Mediterranean basin and the Far East.

The great nomad empires which once occupied vast geographical areas, still remain almost unexplored. The historical annals and literary documents of their neighbours contain a vast amount of information about the nomad tribes of the borderland, their history and customs, and witness to the indelible impression left by the tremendous swing of events which took place in the vast expanses of Inner Asia.

The only monuments left behind their passage, are the numerous groups of barrows or tumuli that cover the vast expanses of the Russo-Asiatic steppe country. Most of these barrows still await the spades of excavators.

The considerable interest aroused by the remarkable and unique stylisation of the art of nomad tribes, the vast spread of that style among different tribal groups of Inner Asia and its great influence on the arts of neighbouring cultures, has brought up the question of the cultural role of the nomads. It is the object of nomad archaeology, this new branch of Oriental archaeology, to reconstruct the past of the nomad world, this link between the cultures of Ancient China, India and the Mediterranean basin.

The wide belt of barrows, left by nomad tribes, stretches from the plains of Hungary far towards Western China and is only superficially explored. The archaeology of nomad Central Asia is still in its infancy. Most of the Central Asiatic Expeditions limited themselves to the exploration of the town cultures of the oases situated along the great caravan routes, connecting ancient China with the countries of the Near East.

The numerous barrows of South Russia have long attracted the attention of scholars. The Russian scientists were the first pioneers in this fascinating field of antiquarian research, and this priority belongs to them in the other fields of archaeology of Inner Asia.

Private archaeological explorations have been conducted in the steppes north of the Caspian and the Aral Sea, in the region of Semirechye, in the Russian Altai (the excavations of Prof. W. Radloff near the village Katanda [Cf. Dr. Alexis Zakharov: *Antiquities of Katanda — Altai — pp. 37—57, Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute, Vol. LV, January-June, 1925*] and the recent explorations of Prof. Rudenko), in the Minusinsk steppes (the Yenisei basin), in the Trans-Baikal Province (the excavations of Dr. Talko-Hrynecwicz), and finally the rich finds of Hiung-nu graves made by the expedition of General P. K. Kozlov in the Noin-ula mountains of Northern Mongolia.

There remain unexplored the numerous tumuli that cover the grass country along the northern slopes Tarbagatai and Dzhair of the T'ien Shan, the steppes of Dzhungaria, the Mongolian Altai, the desert mountain ranges of Karlygh-tagh and its desert continuation the rocky chain of Koko-tumurte-yin ula, along the Uriangkhai mountain country, Western Mongolia (the mountain system of Khangai) and the almost unexplored river valley of the Kerulon in Eastern Mongolia.

Across the whole of Central Asia extends this belt of Steppe and mountain-pasture once the cradle of mighty nomad confederations. Until very recently the southern limit of this belt of nomad barrows was said to pass along the T'ien Shan mountains and the several parallel chains of the Gobi or Mongolian Altai, stretching far into the Gobi desert.

In the course of the last few years this southern frontier of nomad barrows has been pushed far towards the south and south-east. The successful explorations of Dr. J. G. Andersson have discovered a rich nomad culture in the Ordos region of Southern Mongolia, in the eastern part of Kansu and the Sino-Tibetan borderland.

In 1925—28 the Central Asiatic Expedition of Professor N. Roerich, one of whose objects was to explore the nomad barrows of Chinese Turkestan, Altai, Western Mongolia, and Tibet, discovered traces of the "animal" style among the nomad tribes of Northern and Central Tibet and thereby moved the southern boundary of its distribution down to the Northern slopes of the Trans-Himalaya. The desert uplands of Tibet were suddenly found rich in remains of an ancient nomad culture, which still survives among modern Tibetan nomads. The finds of several "animal" motives well known from Scytho-Siberian barrows, stressed yet again the ancient link that once existed between Tibet and the rich nomad world of Inner Asia, and which is mentioned frequently in the historical annals of China.

The peripheral regions of Southern and Eastern Tibet with their deep-cut river valleys, border on the north and north-east on grass uplands which for centuries have been inhabited by nomad tribes. This belt of grass country with an average altitude of 13,000—15,000 feet is usually designated by native Tibetan geographers by the name of "dok" meaning pasture ground or an uncultivated plain of high altitude unsuited for agriculture; hence the word "dok-pa", nomad, cattle-breeder. This upland belt of grass land is inhabited by a scanty population of nomad tribes, the Nyarong-was, the Chang-pas, Hors, Panags and the Goloks, the last named do not represent a homogeneous ethnic group but are a body of malcontents to whose pastures fled all the malcontents from the districts subject to China or the Government of the Dalai Lama. All these tribes have preserved the primitive nomad culture and the

archaic forms of Tibetan speech, a thorough study of which would undoubtedly throw much light on the phonetic structure of the ancient Tibetan language.

Modern scientists are of the opinion that the upper course of the Huang-ho in Western China was the original home of the Tibetan-Chinese race. The forefathers of the modern Tibetans invaded the country from the North-East. The high tablelands of the Koko-nor and the surrounding mountain country afforded sufficient grazing for the moving hordes and their cattle. It is from this gigantic region that the hordes of ancient Tibetans, displaced by some other tribal movement had been forced to seek new pasture grounds descending the river valleys of South-eastern Tibet. The character of the country forced the raw nomads to take up agriculture. In these valleys a population of sedentary tribes created the theocratic culture of Tibet, which remains now the only untouched civilization of Asia. The river valleys of the Tsang-po (Brahmaputra), Kyi-chu, Nyang-chu and the Yalung became the centers of Tibetan state building.

But the south was not the only direction of Tibetan migratory movement, another body of Tibetan tribes moving from the Koko-nor region across the northern uplands, struck the mighty Nyen-chen Thang La and was forced to turn westwards along the northern slopes of the Trans-Himalayas, searching for an easy passage across the mountain range into the basin of the Tsang-po or Brahmaputra. The great pilgrim route from Nag-chu through Nam-ru to the holy Kailasa mountain, probably represents an ancient migration route, which has been followed by Tibetan migrating tribes during their movement towards the far west of the Tibetan upland. These nomad tribes brought with themselves that highly conventionalized art of nomad Central Asia which is distinguished by the so-called "animal" style. The Chinese historical annals contain rich information about the nomad tribes of the Tibetan borderland. We know about their migrations, their alliances with the Hiung-nu and their raids in to Chinese territory. The Annals of the former Han dynasty contain a mass of informations about the Tibetan tribes of the border or Kiang. The Chinese Emperors of the Han epoch were trying to prevent the conclusion of alliances between the Hiung-nu and the mountain tribes of the Kiang. In the course of their numerous campaigns to pacify the frontier and to insure the safety of the caravan trade-route to Chinese Turkestan, their chief object was to isolate the Tibetan tribes from the Hiung-nu.

The epoch of the VIIth and the VIIIth centuries A. D. was full of Tibetan military raids. The raids of Tibetan cavalry spread all over Chinese Turkestan and China proper.

The XIth and XIIth centuries A. D. saw the growth of the Hsi-hsia or Tangut Kingdom occupying the lowland of Kansu and large tracts of Inner Mongolia (the Edzingol basin -Western Ala-Shan).

In the course of the following centuries, the successive waves of Mongol invasions, drove the nomad tribes of Tibet (Tangut) into the mountains of the Koko-nor region and the upper course of the Yellow River.

The nomad tribes of modern Tibet form a separate group in the population of the country. A thorough study of these tribes from the point of view of ethnology, archaeology and linguistics, would undoubtedly reveal a good many important data, and complete the picture of early migrations in innermost Asia.

The Central Asiatic Expedition of Prof. Roerich succeeded in discovering a number of interesting monuments of a remote nomad past. The accompanying map of Tibet (pl. V) shows the region of the spread of ancient monuments. All the discovered monuments can be classified in three groups.

- 1) Graves (Stone graves, barrows).
- 2) Megalithic monuments (menhirs, cromlechs, alinements).
- 3) Objects in "animal" style, discovered in graves, and also found in the everyday usage of nomads.

From the above classification we can see that the whole of the monuments discovered can be divided into archaeological and ethnographical finds.

We shall begin our description of monuments of the Tibetan nomadic past with the stone graves:

Burial is completely unknown to the nomad tribes of modern Tibet. The modern nomads either expose their dead on the top of mountains, or throw them into lakes or rivers, or follow the general Tibetan custom of cutting the dead body to pieces and feeding the flesh to vultures, found in great numbers on the Tibetan uplands.

The ancient Tibetan literature knows the burial of a dead body in "Stone cists" or burial chambers made of large stone slabs. No traces of such burials in stone chambers have so far been discovered, although one cannot deny the possibility of discovering them.

The graves discovered in Northern Tibet belong to the type of "Stone graves" well-known in Northern Mongolia, the Trans-Baikal Province and the Altai Mountains. Stone or slab graves are graves fenced in with slabs or flat boulders. Such graves have been discovered by the Expedition in the region of Hor (Hor-sde) or Jya-de in Nam-ru, and in the frontier districts of the neighbouring region of Nag-tshang, to the South of the Salt Lake of Pang-gong tsho-cha. Along the Southern shores of the great salt lakes of Ngantse-tsho and Dangra-ym tsho, stone graves were not found, although the nomads possessed knowledge of "Stones (rdo) placed in a circle".

It is interesting to note that the area over which are distributed stone graves corresponds to the region of megalithic monuments, and also of objects in "animal" style and characteristic bronze arrow heads. In most cases the stone graves of Northern Tibet are met with in small groups, two or three graves in a group. Large graveyards, similar to those of Northern Mongolia, are never found in Tibet. As in Mongolia, the stone graves, and megalithic monuments are found on the Southern slopes of the mountains (Cf. the analogous observation made by G. I. Borovka, Northern Mongolia, II, 1927, p. 44).

Before describing the stone graves of Tibet, it is interesting to recall the analogous graves, found in Northern Mongolia.

In Northern Mongolia, the graves are classified in four groups:

1. Graves with an enclosure of stone slabs. These graves date back to the Scytho-Siberian culture of the VII—V centuries B. C.
2. Tumuli (qurghans) with stone cairns.
3. Graves with a stone-heap on the top of the mount, and a stone enclosure. So called "Kereksur". In all probability these graves belong to the Turkish period in Mongolia (VII—VIII centuries A. D.).

4. Turkish princely barrows with stone figures (babas). Date from VII—VIII A. D.

The graves found in Tibet belong to the stone grave class with an enclosure of stone slabs. Along its route the Expedition found only stone graves: the "Kerksur" are completely unknown. It is important to note that the graves discovered in Tibet correspond to the oldest form of graves in Northern Mongolia and the Altai Mountains. The accompanying illustrations (fig. 1—2) represent a typical stone grave of Northern Tibet. At Rati in the region of Nag-tshang were discovered five stone graves. Three among them had their enclosure damaged; the smaller stones had been carried away by local nomads and used in the construction of curious conical structures recalling bee-hives, which serve as store-rooms of this quality.

It is worth mentioning that the women here have a characteristic head-dress shaped like an oval tiara (kokoshnik) ornamented with brass-plaques in "animal style", precious stones and turquoises. The anthropological type of the local nomads is different from their neighbours.

The "stone" graves of the Tibetan Northern upland (the region of Hor, Nam-ru, eastern Nag-tshang) have an oval enclosure, closely set, the corner-stones somewhat projecting outside. The graves are orientated according to the cardinal points. All the graves discovered lay E. and W.

The type of the grave is usually 2.75×3.00 m. A big stone slab stands on the Eastern side of the grave; it possibly indicates that the body lay with the head eastwards (Cf. Borovka, *ibid.*, p. 60). Most of the "stone" graves have been destroyed by rodents which abound in the grass country of the Tibetan upland. The only objects found in the graves are the three-sided arrow heads. The arrow heads found in the graves can be classified in four groups:

- 1) Bronze arrow-head. Most frequent type (fig. 3. I).
- 2) Bronze three-sided arrow-head with straight lines. Do-ring, and Rati (fig. 3. II).
- 3) Bronze three-sided arrow-head. The Hor region, Do-ring, Rati, and Chö-khor (fig. 3. III).

All the above forms of arrow heads have their counterparts among the arrow heads described by Dr. Paul Rau in his book: *Die Gräber der frühen Eisenzeit im unteren Wolgagebiet*, Pokrowsk, 1929, plates I, II, III. and belong to the early archaic period and to the late archaic period of the Rau's chronology. It is still impossible to assign a date for the Tibetan arrow-heads.

4) Brass three-sided leaf-shaped arrow-head. Rare type. Apparently belongs to a late period (fig. 3I. V).

5) Iron leaf-shaped flat arrow-head (fig. 3. V).

6) Iron leaf-shaped arrow-head. Frequently met with on arrows of Chinese make. Commonly used in Eastern Tibet (Modern Times, fig. 3. VI).

At present it is hardly possible to determine the date of Tibetan stone graves. Local nomads showed me crania found in graves. These finds of human skulls attest the fact that the Stone graves of Tibet belonged to a long-headed race, which perhaps has to be connected with the long-headed burials in Uriangkhai and in the Minusinsk Steppes.

It is not without interest to trace the analogies existing between the graves of Northern Tibet and the so-called "Dard" graves, discovered by the Moravian mis-

sionaries in the locality of Teu-gser-po in the neighbourhood of Leh, the capital of Little Tibet or Ladakh.

The late Dr. A. H. Francke, one of the best connoisseurs of West Tibetan lore and antiquities, gives in the first volumes of his monumental work "Antiquities of Indian Tibet" (vol. I, p. 71) a brief description of these graves. The walls of the graves consist of masonry of unhewn stones. The graves explored were found to contain numerous clay-vases, made by hand, which were filled with bones. Many graves contained several skulls. Dr. A. H. Francke is of the opinion that we have to do here with the ancient custom of removing the flesh from the bones, and cutting the dead body to pieces. It is known that this custom existed among ancient Tibetan tribes and an account of this gruesome custom is found in Chinese historical Annals. According to Dr. Francke the clay vases or pots were originally placed on wooden shelves, fixed to the walls of the grave and now decayed and fallen down.

Besides skulls and clay-vases, the missionaries discovered numerous bronze objects of every day life: plaques, pendants, and strings of beads.

Dr. Francke stressed the fact that almost all the skulls discovered had dolichocephalic indexes. The learned author ascribes these graves to a Dardic period, at present it is still impossible to ascertain the origin of the graves. The missionaries had to discontinue their excavations, and since the departure of Dr. Francke from Ladak, the interest in West Tibetan antiquities has lapsed into oblivion. We are however of the opinion that the Ladak graves are closely related to the stone graves discovered in Northern Tibet, and that they belong to an ancient dolichocephalic race, which once populated the Tibetan plateau and whose vestiges are found all over Central Asia and the Siberian borderland. The whole question requires further investigation, and thorough exploration of Tibetan graves.

It is rather difficult to draw a parallel between the stone graves of Northern Tibet and those of Northern Mongolia and the Altai Mountains, although one has to note the existence of striking analogies between the two types of burial. The scarcity of finds does not allow of a comparative study, and one has to await future investigations in this fascinating field of antiquarian research. Prof. Radloff in his monumental Atlas of Mongolian Antiquities points out that the stone graves of Northern Mongolia recall the burials of the Bronze age discovered in the valley of the Yenisei. Some analogies exist between these burials and those discovered by Dr. Talko-Hryniewicz in the Trans-Baikal Provinces of Siberia.

The recent excavations of the learned curator of the Hermitage Museum, Dr. G. I. Borovka in Northern Mongolia (Archaeological Exploration in the valley of the Tola river to the SW of Urga) have shown that the stone graves belong to the Scytho-Siberian culture.

At present, one has to limit oneself to the statement, that the Tibetan stone graves belong to an ancient dolichocephalic race of nomads, and date from a period antedating the VIIth century A. D. from which period we possess the first detailed written accounts of the nomadic tribes in Tibetan uplands.

Archaeological reconnoitring should be carried out in the region of the upper course of the Hoang-ho and the Koko-nor. It is a great pity, that this important region has been so far neglected by archaeologists and we have no information about archaeological monuments there.

During the stay of the Roerich Expedition in the Nan Shan north of the salt marshes of Tsaidam, I carried out a reconnaissance of the grazing grounds with the object of collecting information about ancient monuments, but had little results. The local Khoshut-Mongols had no knowledge of pre-Buddhistic monuments. This archaeological investigation should be continued and special attention should be given to the region of Baga and khe Khaltynbol, where, according to local information, exist graves.

The Expedition carried out an archaeological survey of the oasis of Shih-pao-ch'êng, but the only monuments found in this region, were caves of the Buddhist period and stupas, and ruined Chinese forts and watch towers.

The second class of ancient monuments discovered in the northern Tibetan upland are the megalithic monuments. This type of monuments is represented by three distinctive forms:

- 1) Menhirs
- 2) Cromlechs
- 3) Alinements.

The sanctuaries of the primitive religions of Tibet are little known. Most of the discovered places of that sort, represent stone altars or lha-tho composed of two large stone slabs, with one slab placed horizontally. These stone altars are frequently met with in groups on mountain-tops and on the top of mountain passes. Several such stone altars were found in Western Tibet, and described by the late Dr. A. H. Francke.

The Expedition of Professor Roerich was fortunate in discovering several megalithic monuments to the South of the Great Lakes. These were the first megalithic monuments discovered to the North of the Himalayas. In a place called Do-ring situated some thirty miles to the South of the Great Salt Lake of Pang gong tsho-cha, the Expedition found important alinements consisting of eighteen rows of stone slabs or menhirs, placed in parallel rows, and running East and West (fig. 4, 5). At the western extremity of the alinement, was placed a cromlech or stone circle consisting of two concentric circles of menhirs or stone slabs. Inside the cromlech were situated three menhirs with a crude stone-table (lha-tho) or altar in front of them. The central menhir was some 2.75 *m* in height, had traces of butter libations, and I was told by a local headman that the stone was the abode of a lha or god protecting the route and travellers. The place is named Do-ring after this menhir. The local headman considered the alinements to be natural formations. If one compares the famous megalithic monuments of Carnac in France with the megalithics discovered in Tibet, one is at once struck by the remarkable similarity of the two sets of monuments. The Carnac alinements run from East to West, and have at their Western extremity a cromlech or circle of stones. The Do-ring monuments have precisely the same arrangement. (The presence of a cromlech at the western extremity of the alinement deserves careful study. Cf. groups of megaliths at Kerlescan (Carnac). Sainte-Barbe, Saint-Pierre-Quiberon. Cf. Déchelette: Manuel d'archéologie, I, 1908. p. 442, on the different theories, see, *ibid*, p. 447.)

The sacerdotal use of the Carnac monuments remains unknown to the present day, notwithstanding the numerous theories advanced it seems to me that we possess a clue to the explanation of the megalithic structures of Northern Tibet. The megalithic monuments of Do-ring have a huge figure in the shape of an arrow laid out with

stone slabs and situated at the eastern extremity of the alinement. The arrow is an important symbol in the ancient Nature cult of Tibet, and is connected with the cult of the sun, and heavenly fire in the form of lightning, which it symbolizes. The present day nomads wear ancient brass arrow heads as amulets, which are said to represent the lightning that has grown cold after it has struck the ground. Incidentally it has to be said, that the arrow is sometimes regarded as a symbol of King Kesar, whose connection with Nature worship has been definitely demonstrated by Dr. A. H. Francke. The presence of the arrow figure at the eastern extremity of the Do-ring monuments indicates clearly that the whole structure was dedicated to some Nature cult. Analogous megalithic monuments have been discovered by the Expedition in several other places South of the Great Lakes: at Rati, South of the Ngantse tsho, at Lap-chung and Tsuk-chung in the Trans-Himalayas, situated at an altitude of 17,000—18,000 feet.

All the megaliths discovered are built on a similar plan: cromlech-alinements-stone arrowhead.

The alinement at Lap-chung, North of the great pass Sangmobertik, towering to a height of some 20,000 feet was partly buried by drifting sand, so that only the points of the menhirs forming the alinement were visible above the ground. I tried to excavate one of the stones, but it went deep into the ground, and my excavations attracted the attention of the local nomads, who like all Tibetans, are very particular in not allowing gods of the soil to be disturbed by excavations. I had to stop, and leave the investigation for the future when the Government of Tibet would sanction scientific excavations on its territory.

There exists a second, but rarely met, type of megalithic structures, which consists of a cromlech with several (usually three) menhirs in the centre, but without alinements or arrow figures. Such cromlechs or stone circles were found along the route leading from Do-ring to Rati.

(Dr. A. H. Francke (*ibid.* p. 22) mentions the existence of a stone pole (menhir?) in the village of Poo in the valley of the Sutlej).

Two miles East of Saga-dzong, on the trade route to Lhasa (rgya-lam), the Expedition discovered a tall menhir (about 4 *m*). The menhir had traces of frequent butter libations, and on all sides was surrounded by small pyramids of white stones (quartz). It was found on investigation, that the menhir was an ancient cult place of the old pre-budhistic religion of Tibet, and was dedicated to the protecting deity of the Saga region. The Buddhist missionaries, who converted the local population to Buddhism, had declared the stone (Do-ring) to be the abode of the goddess Pal-den lha-mo.

(Megalithic monuments, consisting of menhirs, cromlechs and alinements have been discovered in the Kulu sub-division of the Kangra District, Punjab. At present the Himalayan Research Institute of the Roerich Museum, is conducting scientific explorations of these groups of megaliths).

What was the ritual performed before these stone altars and cromlechs, we shall be able to tell only after a thorough search of the voluminous Bön literature. The great Bön collection of sacred texts, some three hundred volumes in all, still remains a closed book for us. Undoubtedly from some of the texts on rituals, incorporated into them, we should learn the precise significance of menhirs, cromlechs and alinements. The Bön literature is a treasure grove of ancient beliefs, going back to a

remote past of the age of migrations, when the ancestors of modern Tibetan tribes swept over the mountainous country of Tibet, and brought with them their tribal religion.

At present it is still difficult to determine the exact date of Tibetan megaliths. Have we to place them in the late neolithic period or in the bronze age — the question will be decided only after a thorough exploration of the Tibetan upland. The finds of bronze objects in the region of megalithic monuments seem to indicate the possibility of ascribing them to the early bronze age.

We have already stated that the region where have been found stone graves and megalithic monuments corresponds to the region where are found objects ornamented in "animal" style. It was discovered that a number of nomad tribes of Northern Tibet produce brass and silver objects, imitating the ornamental motives of the "animal" style. During recent years the objects ornamented in "animal" style have become rare in the local markets, and their place has been taken by objects decorated in purely Tibetan style. This was largely caused by the curtailing of trade relations with the regions of Amdo and Derge, and the increasing import of Lhasa-made goods.

The map of Tibet accompanying this volume (pl. V), shows the spread of "animal" style, so far this could be determined by the Expedition. Finds of the objects in "animal" style are limited to the province of Amdo and Derge in the North-East of Tibet, and to the large provinces of Hor, Nam-ru and Nag-tshang.

The province of Derge with its monastic center Derge-gönchen is the best metal-working region of Tibet. Temple furniture and objects of everyday life, covered by rich silver ornamentation, silver plaques and side-arms — all this is furnished by the art workshops of the district.

Modern art workshops are under the strong influence of China, but on some of the older objects we shall see the ancient motives of "animal" ornamentation.

The explorations conducted by the Expedition have shown that the region Nub-hor or Western Hor is the center of this "animal" style. The boundary lines of the vast province are ill-defined. The frontier lines run in most cases along mountain ridges, although in many cases the Hor tribes are found to graze their cattle on both sides of the frontier. The southern boundary of the province runs along the mountain chain in which the Tu-sang-la (altitude 16,570 feet) is situated, although the narrow mountain valley immediately South of the Pass is still a part of the Paworo tribal territory.

To the South of the Pass lies the district of Nag-chu, in which is situated Nag-chu dzong, the first Tibetan custom station on the great trade route leading from Lhasa towards China and Mongolia. To the West, the Hor region borders upon the tribal territory of Amdo tsho-nag, inhabited by immigrants from the Province of Amdo. The northern boundary of the region is the Dri-chu or the Yang-tze, North of which lie the uninhabited Tibetan highlands, the Chang-thang proper.

To the East and the North-East, the Hor region stretches far towards Tashi-gompa and the Nang-chen Province.

The Hor region is a country of rolling, grass-covered hills, broad valleys with swampy grounds and several important snow-ranges, which mostly run from West to East. From ancient times this grass country was inhabited by a nomad race. The

nomads inhabiting the region of Western Hor, represent a mixed ethnic type, and are clearly discernable from the rest of Tibetan nomad tribes. They form five *çorkas* or tribal divisions. Each of the five *çorkas* are governed by a headman or *gem-po*. At the head of the five *çorkas* stands a district chief or *de-pön* (*şde-dpön*). The Tibetan Government appoints a Frontier High Commissioner, an official of the 4th grade, and whose duty is to protect the northern boundary of Tibet.

The five tribal divisions are as follows:

1. Tse-mar (*rtse-dmar*)
2. Atak-Memar (*'Artags-me-dmar*)
3. Atak thomi (*'Artags-mtho-mi*)
4. Paworo (*Dpā-wo-ro*)
5. Khömaro (*Khö'i-ma-ro*).

These *çorkas* are only administrative divisions and have no ethnic character.

The early explorers of Tibet (Oragio della Penna, Ippolito Desideri and, also, the pandit-surveyors in the service of the Government of India) constantly mention the existence of an extensive province Hor, North of Nag chu, and stress the mixed origin of Hor tribes.

Recent authors seem to have the tendency to give the name of Hor to Turkish-Mongolian tribes of Turkestan and Mongolia, and even erase the name of Hor from the map of Tibet. It is true that in Tibetan historical works the name of Hor often designates Turkish-Mongolian tribes. Sometime ago the European explorers had a tendency to designate by the name of Hor the descendants of the Mongol troops left behind by Gushi khan, who settled in the region of Tengri-nor, and the district Dam.

The Tibetans themselves draw a line of demarcation between the Tibetanized Mongols-Khoshuts of the Dam district and the nomads, grazing their herds in the region North-East of Dam.

This difference is clearly demonstrated by a comparative study of the physical types of the Hor-pa and the Dam-sog.

Among the Hor nomads we often find individuals with long-headed indexes, eyes set horizontally, aquiline noses, and no prominent cheek bones. The admixture of foreign blood in them is very prominent, and we easily discern Mongolian, Turkish and even *Homo alpinus* types, the last probably due to an admixture of Iranian or Scythian blood. The presence of this foreign blood explains, perhaps, the preservation of the "animal" style among the Hor-pa.

During the Expedition's eight months stay among the Hor-pa nomads, we discovered a number of objects ornamented in "animal" style. Flint-pouches, belts, plaques, and fibulae, the scabbards of swords, charm-boxes — all were found ornamented with well known motives of the Scytho-Siberian art. Among them were running deer, antelopes, reclining deer, birds, and figures of fantastic animals, often transformed into a purely ornamental composition. All these finds attest the ancient connection of nomad Tibet with the great artistic province of Central Asia. The remote mountain valleys of Tibet have preserved reminiscences of this past. Neither the influence of Lhasa, nor the cultural pressure of China succeeded in destroying the vestiges of the ancient nomad art of Tibetan tribes. The Tibetan nomad continues to seek his inspiration in the surrounding of Nature, and follows the rules of "animal" ornamentation.

In historic times Tibetan tribes have had a considerable intercourse with Iranian and Paleo-asiatic tribes that wandered along the frontier of Western China.

The earliest known account of a penetration of foreign Central Asian elements into the region populated by Tibetan tribes (K'iang of the Chinese Annals) is found in Chapter 123 of the Shi-ki, by the famous historian Ssü-ma-ch'ien.

Up to the time when Lao-shang, shang-ü of the Hiung-nu, killed the king of the Yüe-chih (Iranians) and made a drinking vessel out of his skull, the Yue-chi had lived between Tun-huang (now Sha-chou) and the ch'i lien (a mountain SW of Kan-chou fu) but when they were beaten by the Hiung-nu, they fled to a distant country and crossed to the West of Yüan (Ferghana), attacked Ta-hia (Bactria) and conquered it. Subsequently they had their capital in the North of the K'ue-shui (Oxus) and made it the court of their king. The minority which were left behind and were not able to follow them, took refuge among the K'iang (Tibetans) of the Nan-shan and were called Hsiao-Yüe-chih (small Yüe-chih).

(Fr. Hirth: The story of Chang-k'ien., JAOS, vol. 37,2, 1917, p. 96).

We are concerned here only with the end of the above passage. A section of the Yüe-chih, an Iranian tribe of Central Asia inhabiting the modern Kansu and Southern Alashan, had wandered into the mountain country South of the present Kansu Province of China and became gradually amalgamated with the autochthonous Tibetan population of the mountains.

These tribes brought with them their nomad culture and that highly conventionalized art of nomad Central Asia, distinguished by "animal" ornamentation and those long and heavy swords, which are still the favourite arm of Tibetan nomads.

Modern research has established the fact that Iranian tribes were the carriers of the "animal" style, and the influence of Iranian tribes is attested by striking analogies in the armament of the horseman and his mount.

The "New animal" style remains until now the favourite style of ornamentation among Tibetan nomad tribes.

Among the Hor-pas it is still cultivated and the accompanying illustrations show several characteristic objects in Tibetan "animal" style:

1) Tinder and Flint Pouch (pl. I, 1).

The pouch is made of black tawed leather, ornamented with brass figures of animals. The style is distinctly Central Asian, and belongs to the so-called "animal" style. The animal figures represent hinds with their fawns. The execution of the animal figures and their decorative treatment attest the close affinity of this object to the great Central Asian nomad art. In the centre of the pouch is a brass plate with representations of the eight happy signs (Ta-gi ta-gye). The pouch comes from the region of Western Hor.

2) Tinder and Flint Pouch (pl. I, 2).

The pouch comes from the same region. It is made of black tawed leather, ornamented with brass figures of animals. We see on it two conventionalized figures of foxes picking up fruit from a tree. The treatment of the two figures and the presence of the tree between them — are all motives frequently seen on Scythian and Siberian antiquities (cp. Borovka s. 2 B.).

3) Tinder and Flint Pouch (pl. II, 1).

4) A brass buckle representing a two-headed eagle inside a circle (pl. II, 2). The buckle comes from Ching-kar, a place West of Nag-chu. Plaques representing two-headed eagles have been discovered in the Kuban barrows of the Northern Caucasus. The two-headed eagle motive can be traced back even to the Hittite art of Asia Minor.

(Such flint pouches and buckles in "animal style" were found by us only among the Hor-pas. The Chang-pas of the Great Lake region have already the ordinary Tibetan flint pouches, ornamented with coral, turquoise and metal nails of silver and brass, but seldom gold.)

5) This figure of a running deer has been taken from a brass charm box coming from Derge (pl. II, 3), now in the collection of Mr. S. N. Roerich. The eight happy signs of Tibetan ornamentation are combined with the figures of running deer (fig. 6). The deer's figure unmistakably belongs to the great nomad art, characterized by the "animal style". The head of the deer is seen turned backwards, and this is a characteristic and frequently seen motive in Scythian and Siberian antiquities. The treatment of the animal's muzzle and eyes — all have their analogies in the antiquities found in the barrows of South Russian steppes and Southern Siberia.

6) and 7) The following illustration has been taken from a silvered iron pen case from Derge (pl. III, 1, 2, 3). On this pen case made of massive iron, among ordinary floral ornamentation we see a stylized figure of a sitting deer. The motive of the sitting deer (fig. 7), elks, or stags is well known, in Scythian and Siberian antiquities. (See plates in Gr. Borovka's *Scythian Art*, Benn, London, 1928.) The figure of the swan (fig. 8) is already under the strong influence of Chinese ornamental art. This figure is a product of a Chinese workshop producing art objects for the use of border tribes. It is interesting to note, that the swan figure on our pen case corresponds almost in every detail to the figure of a long necked bird (a swan?) with spread wings found on a piece of embroidery, discovered by General P. K. Kozlov in the Noin-ula mountains (the piece was reproduced on Plate VIII of the Preliminary report, published by the Academy of Sciences, 1925). The pose of the bird and the treatment of the wings are similar in both cases. The left wing is raised, the right one is lowered and forms a sharp angle. There can be no doubt that the two figures came from common Central Asian source, and represent some mythological figures.

8) Another remarkable example of Central Asian nomad art in the so called "animal style" is found in the collection of S. N. Roerich. He drew my attention to an iron silvered plaque in relief coming from Derge in North-eastern Tibet. This unique object represents a lion with his head turned to the left towards the onlooker. The animal's mane hangs about its head in thick tufts. The treatment of the animal's body is unusually powerful. It is represented sitting on its hind legs with its tail raised as if attracted by some noise and ready to jump. The back-ground is formed by two stylized trees. Under the lion's figure one sees highly stylized hills.

It is difficult to determine what was the use of the plaque. The two square openings on both sides of the plaque seem to be made for a piece of leather, which was passed under the plaque. The plaque could be used as a breast ornament or as a buckle for a belt. Among the objects discovered by the Kozlov Expedition in the tumuli of the Noin-ula mountains, is a metal plaque in relief representing a standing bull with his head lowered and turned to the left.

In comparing the two plaques, one can easily see the great similarity of composition. On both plaques the principal figure is that of an animal standing from right to left with head turned towards the onlooker. It is difficult to say whether the Kozlov plaque represents a yak. I am inclined to think that it represents an aurochs. The treatment of the animal's fur in both cases is analogous. Both plaques have a background of two stylized trees. The plaque in the S. N. Roerich Collection has as its background two trees branching out over the lion's head. These trees suggest a country with a warmer climate, whereas the Kozlov plaque has two pine trees that speak of the northern origin of the object.

It seems that the two objects depict an animal motive current in the nomad art of Inner Asia, but that the lion plaque originated in the southern parts of this artistic province and the aurochs plaque on its northern border. Both plaques depict highly stylized mountains, probably covered by forests.

Mr. Percival Yettis in his article on the Kozlov finds, (*The Burlington Magazine*, vol. XLVIII, April 1926, p. 168—185; for the plaque see Plate IV, J of the same article) puts forward the opinion that the Kozlov plaque served as a phalara or harness ornament. He draws attention to certain features that recall the Sassanian silver plate found around the upper course of the Kama.

The ancient plaque in the S. N. Roerich Collection is a striking example of this great nomad art, as it is found among the nomad tribes of Northern Tibet and the great metal-working region of Derge and Amdo. (The Kozlov plaque was published in the supplementary plates (I) of the Preliminary Report of the Kozlov Expedition, Leningrad, 1925, edited by the Academy of Sciences of the U. S. S. R.)

Metal ornaments representing figures of animals and birds are frequently met with on belts worn by Tibetan nomads. In the Collection of the Expedition are found several such belts richly decorated with silver and brass ornaments.

We have already mentioned the fact that the influence of Central Asian Iranian nomads is clearly noticeable in the armament of nomad tribes. The Chinese cavalry, created in the Han epoch, borrowed its armament and tactics from neighbouring nomad tribes, that constantly menaced the western borderland of China.

The long straight sword of the Chinese cavalry of this epoch is related to the "Sarmatian" swords of the South of Russia and of the nomad tribes of Central Asia (Iranians and Indo-Scythians) (cf. Prof. M. I. Rostovtseff: *Central Asia, Russia, China and the "animal style"*, *Scythica*, I, *Seminarium Kondakovianum*, Prague, 1929, ch. III, Waldemar Ginters: *Das Schwert der Skythen und Sarmaten in Süd Russland*, Berlin, 1928, p. 75).

At the end of the IVth century B. C. and the beginning of the IIIrd century B. C. the light cavalry of the Scythians and the Huns, whose chief arm was the bow and arrow, was replaced by a new type of cavalry — the heavy cavalry, protected by armour and armed with a long straight sword and a heavy lance. The carriers of this new type of armament and new cavalry tactics were Iranian tribes. This Iranian culture introduced new elements into the nomad art. The tremendous spread of Iranian tribes carried with itself the "animal style". The "animal style", which appeared in China during the Han epoch, belongs to this Sarmatian period.

Tibetan nomad tribes, that had ancient contacts with Chinese, Hiung-nu, and Indo-Scythians took over this new armament and have preserved it until the present day.

Among the existing types of Tibetan swords we find the following:

1. Long-hilted sword, carried by Tibetan infantry-men, before the introduction of modern armament in the army by the Lhasa Government. The length of the sword: about 1 m.

Usually this type of sword is called by the Tibetans: "pa-dam" (dpah-dam). These swords were carried by warriors either behind the back, or in front, stuck in the belt. The blade is made of iron and the point is oblique. The scabbard is usually made of wood, seldom covered with leather. The hilt is often covered with leather, or wound round with brass wire.

(Scandinavian swords had their hilts wound round with a silver wire, cf. Birger Nerman: *Die Verbindungen zwischen Skandinavien und dem Ostbaltikum in der jüngeren Eisenzeit*. Stockholm, 1929, fig. 80.)

The pommel, as also the guard are often ornamented with silver inlay, but seldom with turquoise or metal ornament.

The guard is usually straight, but often oval. The sword-knot is fixed either to the head of the hilt or to the handle. These long-hilted swords are only rarely found in modern Tibet, and are hardly ever used by modern Tibetans.

The author has seen several of such swords in the Tibetan fortress of Chaglung Khar in the district of Namru.

2. Long-hilted sword or "ti" (gri) carried by infantry and cavalry-men (fig. 9). Is worn in front and stuck in the belt. The length of the sword corresponds to the length of the rider's outstretched arm. Usual length of sword: 1 m. The hilt is often covered with leather or made of wood. The pommel and guard (straight) are often decorated with turquoise, stones or metal plates and ornament. The blade is made of iron, and the point is oblique as in Chinese swords. The ornament usually represents flowers and geometrical designs. Both ends of the scabbard, which is covered with leather, are also decorated with turquoise, stones and metal ornaments. The sword-knot is fixed either to the pommel or to the handle. This most frequent type of sword can be traced straight back to the "Sarmatian" swords of the Han epoch. These swords with a straight guard are widely spread. They were known to the Indo-Scythians of India and also in the Chinese Turkestan of the 6th and 7th cent. A. D. (Compare frescoes in Qyzil and Qumtura, Kucha Oasis.)

3. Short-hilted sword or "re-ti" (ral-gri) carried in front by cavalry and infantry-men (fig. 10). Both hilt and scabbard are covered with metal ornaments decorated with turquoise and stones. The following motives are most frequently met with: flower-ornament, Chinese dragon and groups of fantastic animals. The scabbard is covered with leather, the blade made of iron, with a very sharp point. In some districts of Khama (Eastern Tibet) swords of type 2 and 3 are worn on the left side on a strap attached to the belt.

4. Sabre (çog-lang) chiefly carried by cavalry-men of high grades. Usually attached to the saddle under the left leg of the rider. Hilt and ends of scabbard are often decorated with metal ornaments, turquoise and stones. Chinese ornaments dominate. The sharp end of the blade is slightly curved. Type of sabre taken from China and most frequently met with in Eastern Tibet.

Another arm used in Tibet is the lance. Tibetan nomads use two types of lances:

1. Heavy lance, narrow and made of iron. Length 7—10 feet.
2. Javelin or short lance. Length — 5 feet. The handle is tightly wound round with an iron braid. An iron ring with a strap or strong cord attached to it slides along the handle. As he throws the javelin the horseman holds it aloft with outstretched arm and always keeps hold of the strap letting the ring slide along the shaft. The distance of flight of the javelin is equal to the length of the strap. This javelin is used by nomads only for cavalry fights and at close quarters. This use of cold steel has made the Tibetans into shock cavalry, that aims at breaking the enemy by charging him hand to hand.

The modern battle of nomad cavalry consists of flank-attacks. Flying detachments of archers are unknown to Tibetans. At present the bow is seldom used in Tibet and chiefly for sport in national games. Most of the modern bows are imported from China and Bhutan (N. W. Rockhill-Notes on the Ethnology of Tibet, Washington, 1895, p. 71).

The famous yearly contests of riding archers which take place during the New Year's festivals are of foreign origin and their institution dates back to the epoch of Gushi-Khan. The participants represent the Mongolian cavalry of Gushi-Khan.

The nomads of Northern Tibet are beginning to use modern fire-arms. This may bring a change in the tactics of nomad armies. The question of the cuirass worn by the Tibetan warrior and his horse has still to be subjected to a thorough study. But there is no doubt that also in this line the Tibetans have been influenced by their north-eastern neighbours: the Iranians, Huns and Mongols who exercised a constant pressure upon Tibetan tribes of the borderland.

All the objects analysed in this work incontestably attest the existence of the ancient Central Asia nomad art in Tibet. The mountainous character of the country with its inaccessible valleys, helped to preserve many reminiscences of a remote antiquity and its nomad population treasures much of its Central Asian past. So far attention has been paid only to the religious art of Tibet, its colorful painted banners and fine bronzes. Now a new province of Tibetan popular art has been opened, that is the pre-Buddhistic art of Tibetan nomad tribes, a relic of a remote past.

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