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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

Figurative or non figurative steles, generally girded with a warrior's belt with hanging weapons, are known to have existed, in the First millenary B.C., throughout the Northern areas of Eurasia, from the Elbe 1 in the west, to the Kama 2, the Yenisey 3, and as far east as Mongolia and the Gobi environs 4. Remarkably enough, these steles, situated in areas so remote from each other, sometimes show analogous designs, including cryptic motifs (pls. A, B), which have been viewed as pictographs or ideograms. Such similarities can perhaps be explained by the migratory movements which took place in the First millenary B.C., through the start of pastoral nomadism 5. However, the steles with stag depiction were rare in the West but very frequent in the East, and the stag figure increased in size, in Easternmost regions 6. The recent discovery of fragments of steles, with stag depiction, used as building material, in a tomb of the Arjan 7 group, in the Yenisey area, dated in the VIIIth–VIIth centuries B.C., may point to the Yenisey, as the oldest yet known focus of the steles with stag depiction. This paper will only be concerned with the non-figurative North-Eastern

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1 Savinova–Členova, 78–90, pl. 2, 3.
2 See Xalikov.
4 Vol’kov, 69.
6 See notes 28, 33 infra.
7 Devlet (1976), 33.
Asian steles, attributed to the Northern group of the tribes called at in the Third century B.C., "Ting-ling", 9, by the Chinese, and with the non-figurative variety of Turkish steles in the Kök-Türk period (550-745). The latter generally included inscriptions in runiform Turkish script. The figurative steles, an extensive subject, remain outside this study 10.

The Northern Ting-ling, 11 reported to live in present Mongolia and the Yenisey area, in the First century B.C., were said to be the issue of the "Red" (southern) group of the non-Chinese peoples, named Ti 12 by the Chinese, whose home had been, in the pre-Christian millennia, some Northern and Western regions of present China. The Ting-ling, the reported descendants of the Ti, however, were also scattered much beyond present Northern China, Mongolia and the Yenisey area. According to Chinese reports of the Third century A.C., dealing with events of the Third to Second centuries B.C., the Ting-ling lived also to the north of the Issik-köl (Altay) and of Taşkent (or Samarqand) 13. This report may somewhat contribute to explain the propagation, in the First millenary B.C., of the same styles, from present Northern China (Ordos, Jehol) to present Mongolia, further to the Altay and as far as the west of the Ob river 14. Amongst such "Karasuk" features, one may cite the cryptic signs, common on steles with stag-depiction (pls. A, B) and the Ta'o-t'ieh-like mask, (sometimes with stag's antlers) 15 on Karasuk steles which equally appears in one stele with stag-depiction (pl. II/a). The origin of the Ta'o-t'ieh-like mask may perhaps be linked to the horned deities and warriors of Eurasia 17. On the other hand as noted by Kiselev 18 the cryptic signs on Karasuk steles, seem clearly connected with Shang-Chou cosmology.

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19 See Masao Mori, op. cit. in bibliography. Clauson, Turk, 113. Eberhard, Simdî, 71.
21 See de Groot, Humen, 61-2, 199, 221; Prušek, 73, 84, 99 and other sources given in KT, 7-9, 14-16, 34-42 and notes U/10, 123, 152.
23 See note 9 supra.
24 Ibid.
25 Ibid.
26 Sources given by Prušek, 81-4, 103-105.
27 Vadeckaya, fig. 9. Devlet (1976), figs. 6/19-21.
28 Členova, pl. 6/2; Mannaj-ool, pl. II/1. On the stag myths, see notes 48-56 infra.
29 On the mythologic significance of the Ta'o-t'ieh mask, and its connection with the Northern prince and god of war "Ch'i-h'yu", see Granet, index, "Tch'e-yeou", "Ta'o-t'ieh" and "Lokal", 20/3a. On the stag myths, see note 48-56 infra. On European myths of horned heroes and war-gods: see A. Ross, Pagan Celtic Britain (London 1974), 202-205, fig. 209 (stag-horned god).
commemorative steles, similar to those of the Chinese. The Turkish funerary temples (ev-bark) 25, accompanied by "rocks of immortality" (boğu-tay), sometimes with long inscriptions (bitig-tay) 26, are well-attested. The ruins of funerary temples of the Ting-ling, or Kök-Türk periods, in Mongolia, are now all called, in reference the kingdom of Kırgız Turks in the IXth century, Xirxiz ur (Kırğız nest) or Kereksur 27. The steles with stag depiction which concern the Ting-ling and the Turks, lie within a territory extending, in the west, from the Altay 28, to the Transbaykal in the east 30; in the north from the Yenisey and its confluents 31, to the Hangay 32 region (where over 400 were found) and the Gobi outskirts, in the south 33. Some cemeteries, composed of rows of kereksur, were found in an area extending between 90°–100° in longitude and 45°–50° in latitude 34, from the valley of the Ugug river in the north, southwards to the valleys of the Müren, of the Uşkin–uver, of the Togla, of the upper Selenge, of the Or'kun, of the Hanüy, of the river Temir, where the Kök–Türk sacrificed to heaven 35 and to the West of the residence of Kök–Türk şahans, on Mount Ötüken (the Hangay), to the range of naked mountains, where the Kök–Türk worshipped the earth god 36. Prof. Kļaštorņijs was kind enough to inform me that he recently discovered the cemeteries of Türksh šahans of the VIth–VIIth centuries, east of the Gobi.

The kereksur were generally in rocky valleys, situated on the flanks, or peaks of high mountains. One cemetery 37 was composed of rows of kereksur, accompanied by a triple row of parallel steles, with stag depiction. The steles, attributed to the Ting-ling, faced the east, as in the case of Turkish grave-statues 38, while Chinese steles were turned southwards 39.

25 Ibid., Ev-bark: see note 91 infra.
26 Ibid.
28 Vajnberg–Novgorodova, 68.
29 Evljuxova–Kiselev (1949), fig. 49.
30 Sosnovskij, op. cit. Vol'k'ov (1967), 69 and fig. 27.
31 Mannay-oool, op. cit.
32 Novgorodova–Vol'k'ov, op. cit.
33 Vol'k'ov, 69.
35 Liu, 10.
36 Ibid.
37 Novgorodova, 67.
38 Ibid.
39 RS, III, 984.

II – THE COSMOLOGIC BACKGROUND

a) The Shang–Chou–Karasuk period

It has been remarked, in the introduction, that the cryptic motifs on the Karasuk steles, including those with stag depiction, bore the influences of the Shang and Chou cosmology to which it now seems necessary to turn, for elucidations. Eberhard, Granet, de Groot, Hentze, Kiselev, and others 40, who studied the subject, from the angles of history, philology and iconography, suggest in brief, the following general explanation. The cosmology as well as the cryptography of the Shang–Chou–Karasuk periods expressed the epitome of the theory on the cyclic evolution of life, as particularly developed in the Chou age. This doctrine considered the human soul, in cyclic evolution, between two poles, that of the cold and chthonic darkness of death and that of life, in the warmth of celestial light. In the opinion of some scholars 41, the ancient Chou believed that the cyclic re-births occurred, in each fifth generation, in the same family. The human soul had two components which were the shen, the heavenly, brilliant and warm soul and the kuei, the terrestrial, dark and cold soul 42. The shen and kuei resided respectively in the upper and lower parts of the body 43. When death happened the kuei soul, in expectation of re-birth, went northwards, (the conventional abode of darkness), to the subterrenean "Yellow springs" (yellow was the emblematic colour of the earth). The shen soul tried to soar towards its celestial essence. The soul was however in danger of being devoured by demons, which could take feline aspects 44. Immediately after death, a ceremony was performed in which an elegy was pronounced and the soul was called back, to reside in an indicated abode. The temporary abode prepared for the soul was, anciently, the standard on which the zoomorphic emblem, considered to be the essence of the deceased, was represented 45. As the emblem of heroes and monarchs was the wild bovine, the standard with the yak-tail (kotuz in Turkish), raised on the war-chariot, was considered the temporary
an abode of the heroic or royal soul. Later, a temple, or the model of a temple (chu) and a stele were erected, as definitive abode of the soul. Hentze concludes that the chu was either in the shape of a cylindric and domed tent, sometimes with a polar chimney aperture (perhaps like the dwellings of non-Chinese nomads), or a Chinese kiosk (pls. VII/d/1, 2).

The invention of a funeral monument was attributed to Fei-lien, who was a wind spirit, with cervine-avian-dracontine aspects, as well as a semi-historical personage. Fei-lien had been the principal ally of the Northern monarch and war-god Ch‘ih-yo, in the latter’s combat against the Chinese emperor Huang-ti (the T‘ao-t‘ieh mask represented Ch‘ih-yo’s decapitated head). Fei-lien led a tribe of ironmongers and masons, initially issued of a bird’s egg. Some of the successive generations had therefore the particularity of having an avian beak. As a semi-historical figure, Fei-lien had been born in the land of non-Chinese tribes and had lived, at the time of the foundation of the Chou state (ca 1050 B.C.). Fei-lien’s cervine, dracontine and avian features reflected the wind-like velocity and the power of flight ascribed to the stag and to the mythical dragon, as well as the significance of the word fei (to fly). On the other hand, Granet notes that an avian beak (aquiline nose) and a stag’s beard (hairyness) represented, amongst the Chinese, the features of the non-Mongoloid races. He adds that present Shansi, where Fei-lien’s tribe lived, was in the pre-Christian millennium the home of the non-Chinese Ti.

Fei-lien’s connection, with a funerary monument, referred to the following episode. In his historical aspect, Fei-lien had been the minister of the last Shang emperor and had built, in memory of the emperor, a stone “box”, on a mountain in the west of China (in Kansu). The legend of Fei-lien, a spirit with avian-cervine features, who had made a commemorative stone, is evidently reminiscent of our subject, the memorial steles with representations of sometimes avian-beaked stags (pls. II/a; VIII/c). Later, around 109 B.C., a Chinese emperor, who wished to sacrifice to celestial beings, built on a mountain peak (a location said to be favoured by celestial beings), a multiple-storied temple, called “the observatory of Fei-lien”, or the “Mirador of the stag”. Beside this monument grew the “plant with nine stalks”, which granted immortality. In Chou period legends, the stags and unicorns which lived on sacred mountains, ate that plant and became the symbols of immortality. This legend seems echoed in the Turkish name of the memorial stele, “the rock of immortality” (beğü-taş). The yearly growth of the stags’ antlers constituted equally an allegory of re-birth.

Further, the sages and charismatic kings had the power to subjugate Fei-lien, the cervine-avian-dracontine spirit of the wind, and to ride on his back, to celestial zones. The power of soaring to heaven was the privilege of these chosen few. The manifestation of the shen soul in the human breath, and the belief that the spirit, as a vaporous exhalation, as well as the fumes of incinerated victims and incense rose to heaven, is again linked to Fei-lien’s character of wind-spirit and to the significance of the word fei (to fly). The bird and feather motifs, connected with another aspect of Fei-lien, which simultaneously were symbols of heaven, of an asterism and of the human soul, equally figured in funerary steles and objects. Some sages were said to have flown to the sky, after death, riding on an aquatic bird (often a crane). The bird was however, as well, a royal emblem. With the propagation of Buddhism, the souls of the blessed were also thought to fly to the paradise of Amitabha, on the shores of the Western cosmic ocean. In legends, which went back to the ancient Chou age, the souls of common people could equally take the shape of birds, which sometimes dwelt on the roof of the funeral temple, or on the tree beside it. The Chinese planted ever-green trees near tombs, such as pines and cypresses, in numbers in accordance with the rank of the deceased.

Fei-lien and his issue became epic symbols, through the legends of Fei-lien’s combat against the Chinese emperor Huang-ti and in later episodes, a scion of Fei-lien’s tribe, reputed

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46 Li-chi, I, 167, 220.
47 Hentze (1951), 88-9, figs. 114, 116.
48 Fei-lien: see sources given in Stiğular–beği, 132 and Gök ve yer, 19-20, 36, 82, which include the following: W. Eberhard, Lokalkulturen im alten China, suppl. to «TP…» XXXVII (1942), Reihe 20/a; Granet (1959), 486, 488 and index, Fei-lien, Kao-yao; «SMT », I/105, II/1-4, III/10, 308, V/11, 46. On the region where the Fei-lien legend started, see Prulek, 24, 184, 190. Ch‘ih-yo: see note 17 supra.
49 SMT, III, 508.
50 Sources cited in Stiğular–beği, 130-31.
51 Hentze (1961), 91.
52 Granet (1959), 525.
53 RS, IV, 57.
54 RS, IV, 7.
55 Granet (1959), 371.
56 See notes 17 and 48 supra.
57 Tsung, 245. Sacrificial themes, 756.
59 Hentze (1951), 51. Id. (1961), 63. Williams, Crane. RS, I, 142, 200 (cock).
60 RS, I, 187, 225.
61 Hentze (1961), 63.
62 See sources indicated in note 59 supra.
63 Hentze (1951), 51, 120.
64 RS, I, 462.
65 See note 17 and 48 supra.
to have a stag's beard and a bird's beak, adopted from the Ti, his non-Chinese neighbours and probable relations, their clothes, their military equipment and the use of cavalry. A reminiscence of Fei-lien's epic dracontine avatar, is perhaps found in the Turkish expressions büke/böke (dragon) and yil-böke (wind-dragon), which respectively occur in the Kök-Türk period lapidary inscriptions and in Kâşgârî's Divân, to designate a heroic figure 66.

The dragon or dracontine arch was depicted on funerary steles, as symbol of an asterism which represented the rotation of the heavenly wheel, by indicating the succession of seasons 67, and thus pointed, as well, to the cyclic evolution between death and life 68.

The zoomorphic symbols of the asterisms of the four heavenly quadrants (the dragon, the bird, the tiger, the snake and tortoise), the luminaries, and Ursa Major (considered as a polar handle, which indicated the seasons) as well as the ideograms of fire, were represented on tombs and funerary objects, in the belief that they added strength to the shen soul, in its efforts towards heavenwards ascension 69. The ideogram of fire, which sometimes took the shape of a thrice-pedimented diadem, was equally the symbol of the deceased ancestor, possessor of a fiery soul. Metal mirrors, thought to produce fire, and metals and gems, which were considered heavenly, such as gold and jade, were placed in tombs 70. Elixirs of immortality were concocted with gold and jade.

The cicada, which lived underground as worm, but acquired wings in summer, was another symbol of re-birth, common on funerary objects 71.

In temples of princes of the reigning dynasty, a soul-tablet was placed, which represented the deceased 72. The tablet was as oriented as it turned its back to the conventional region of darkness in the north, and held its face towards the location of the solar meridian, in the south. In ancient times, the tablet represented not only the soul, but also the cosmos, its upper part being associated to heaven, while the lower section was considered terrestrial. To obtain the penetration of the heavenly soul into the tablet, seven holes, corresponding to the eyes, the nostrils, the ears and the mouth were "pointed", on the head-part of the tablet. Later, the tablet bore also the posthumous name of the deceased, which allowed the calculation of the date of expected re-birth. Jade, silk, libations and sacrificial meat were offered to the symbolic tablet. In ancient times, they greased the tablet's mouth 74 which took the shape of a dotted oval (pl. VI/d/3) (as on Karasuk steles), or of a cup (pl. VI/d/5) (as held by Turkish grave-statues) 75. The Shang beheaded the sacrificed victims, in the belief that they would resuscitate, to serve as meat, mount, or guide to the dead soul 76. Only young male animals were considered worthy of sacrificial rites. Mountain goats, ovines and boars were sacrificed to princes, while the monarch's soul was given 77, in addition, bovines, or stags, which as noted by Biot 78, seemed in Chinese concepts to be equivalent. The Chou consumed, in banquets, the meat of the heraldic emblem which constituted their "essence", whit the purpose (in Granet's view), to gain thereby some additional strength 80. During rites, the sacrificial victim was offered to the gods, as well as exposed to some prey-birds, which were considered heavenly messengers 81 (or perhaps, souls of the dead?) 82. The nomads who were contemporaries of the Chou had apparently similar customs. The Altaic graves, in which sacrificed horses wore masks of stags and ovines, seem to point out that the latter animals were more estimated, as victims, than the horse 83. The giant rocks which served as sacrificial altars showed also depictions of cervices, together, with horses 84.

b) The historical Turkish period

The belief in the two components of the human soul, one of which was celestial, luminous and warm, while the other was terrestrial, dark and cold, is also expressed in Uygur texts, translated or adapted from the Chinese and the Tibetan 85. Although those texts are Buddhist, they do not always expound the theory of the three emanations (nirmāṇakāya, sambhogakāya, dharmakāya) 85.

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66 See Dictionary, "büke".
67 See sources given in Gök ve yer, 15, 32-3, 77.
68 RS, I, 53, 58, 193; III, 971, 979.
70 RS, I, 166, 213, 271-73, 396, 402, 414; III, 861.
72 Granet (1959), 335, 544 (n. 3).
73 Sources given in Stığunlar-beği, 132-33, 142.
74 See note 72 supra.
75 Hentze (1961), 25.
76 Tsung, 63-96.
77 Tsung, 161 (reference to Li-chi).
78 Biot, I, 76.
79 Ibid. and Bodde, 57, 327-34.
80 Sources given in Stığunlar-beği, 132-33.
81 See sources given in Sacrificial themes.
82 See notes 56-63 supra.
83 Stığunlar-beği, 133 and pl. XII/a.
84 KT, pl. VII/b.
dharmakāya), but seem to reflect also concepts which were ancient in China and its vicinity. The fact that the doctrine of the dual-soul found credence, as well as an appropriate Turkish terminology, permits to conclude that these notions were familiar to the Turks. The terrestrial soul, viewed as the body, was called in Turkish et-öz (the soul of the flesh), or dölmeklig, etlig-kanlig öz (the mortal, fleshy, sanguine soul). The celestial soul was named isig öz (the warm self), or isig-tös (the warm soul), or yaruk-yaşık tös tib (the brilliant-luminous soul and origin) or tib (the breath). As in China, amongst Turks also the concept of isig öz (the warm soul) manifested itself, in the breath of living beings, which escaped heavenwards from the vertex, in a continuous steam (buu). When death happened the warm soul could fly away together with the breath and follow any one of the elemental five winds, which were of either terrestrial, or heavenly essence. An Uygur text and the elegy on a Kök-Türk period funerary stele (Altun-köl I) express the danger that the soul might be snatched away by evil spirits (kundacilər in the Uygur text) 86. According to the other Uygur text translated from the Tibetan 87, if rays of light and fiery winds were made to penetrate through the nostrils, or by spiritual means, the warm soul could gain enough strength to master the wind, which was compared to a rebellious horse. The warm soul was then metamorphosed into smoke (tūdūn) and rose with a fiery wind, towards heaven. The undulating vertical lines, sometimes together with a disc, which are seen above the heads of Turkish (pl. II/c) (and Karasuk) funerary effigies, indicated perhaps the skywards flight of the warm soul, as fiery smoke.

The elegy, on the stele at Altın-köl I, called back the soul of the dead hero, to dwell among his kindred. An Uygur text (Altun-yaruk) 88 described the division of the dual-soul after death. The warm soul (isig öz) was taken to custody in a leather—bag (tolguk) while the corporeal soul (et-öz) was conducted northwards, to the residence of Erklig Kan, the god of the sub-terrenean regions. The word tolgug/tolguk (leather bag) evokes the ancient nomadic and Turkish standards which represented ancestral, sometimes totemic souls (tös/tös in Turkish) 90 and consisted of a leather, or felt bag; raised on a pole, together with a human or zoomorphic effigy. The wind, penetrating into the leather (or felt) bag, made it wave and produced

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86 Gök ve yer, 20 (ref. to Kljaštornjy, Stely ..., on Altın-köl I). Kara-Zieme, note 233 where the passages published by F. W. K. Müller in Ugarica, II, 64/9–6 and 66/32 have been re-interpreted.
87 See note 85.
88 Çağatay, 7/10.
89 Dicionary, s. v.
92 See note 91 supra.
steles erected for Turks of high rank, or who had achieved a “heroic name” (er-ati), called ben歧-taş (rock of immortality) or bitig-taş (rock with inscription), were also sometimes supported by effigies of tortoises. The stele’s base thus corresponded to the north, the conventional area of darkness, the symbol of which was the tortoise, while its summit, generally decorated with astral signs, indicated the south, viewed as solar meridian. Apart from the steles with anthropomorphic head (pls. II/b, c) and the belted steles (pls. IV/b-e) which represented the deceased, the Turks also made the effigy (bediz) of the dead. The ceremony of the installation or enthronement (olun-mak) of the bediz, may have been analogous to the Chinese rite, in which the spirit was infused to the funerary tablet.

On the summit, and conventionally celestial part of the stele, the Turks also represented the asterism of the Heavenly or Azure dragon (Kök-luu in Turkish), astral pictograms and, the figurative depiction of the solar god (Künk–tengri), as well as other astral evocations 93. To assist the “warm soul” (isig öz) in its celestial ascension (ününmek), the Turks employed the same means as the Chinese. They placed, in tombs, copper mirrors (bağır köztüngü), which produced fire, and lit candles, when praying for the ascent of the soul (ününmek) 94 to Ursa Major 95. The term “Künk–ay az-dim/azidim”, on Kök–Türk funerary steles, is interpreted as the complaint of the soul who was deprived of the light of luminaries 96. The early Turkish custom of incinerating the corpse (sometimes on horse–back) 97 was perhaps thought to help the “warm soul” to turn into smoke (tïidün). As the belief in the metamorphosis of the princely soul into avian shape may be traced to the ancient Chou period 98, this concept which is supported in Turkish only by later texts, may equally have existed earlier among Turks. The verb uçmak (to fly), on Kök–Türk inscriptions, used to indicate the death of the prince, could have already corresponded to the image of an avian metamorphosis 99. The fire–fly (katyod–kurt, from the Sanscrit khatyoda) is substituted, in an Uygur text, to the cicada, ad emblem of spiritual light 100.

The ritual hunts in which sacrificial victims were shot, in Chou tradi-

94 Kara-Zieme, lines 31 and 904.
95 Arat, 238.
96 See Dictionary, “az –”, “až –”.
97 Gök ve yer, 84–5 (reference to Liu, 9–11 and 42).
98 See notes 56–63.
99 Gök ve yer, 21, 39. Orkun, index, “uc –”.
100 Kara-Zieme, lines 55, 268, 644.

tion 101, were equally practised by the Turks 102. The remains in graves, the scenes represented on steles 103 and the historical sources 104 prove that libations and sacrificial meat were proffered to the corpse and to the effigy. It is perhaps for this reason that the Turkish funerary effigies were depicted with a cup in hand (pl. III/a) 105.

Like the Shang 106, the Turks 107 believed that the severed heads and skin of the sacrificed victims would resuscitate, to serve the deceased, in after–life. The Turks pitched the heads and skins on poles 108. Some tribes believed that the dead together with the sacrificed victims, went on a long journey 109. The Turkish hrk (cryptogram) “Tağ”, like the corresponding Chinese kua, saw the mountain 110 as a symbol of death and resurrection and some tribes assumed that the dead, souls proceeded to a mountain. The mountain–shape, in which the funerary monuments of some Kök–Türk kağans have been described, may point to this symbolism. As noted in the introduction, the Kök–Türk worshipped the earth–god beside a chain of naked mountains.

It is known that the Turks sacrificed horses, ovines and cervines and that most of the sacrificial pits, beside funerary temples, contained the bones of the former two animals 111. However, in a pit within a funerary circumvallation, where effigies of lions were found and which is attributed to a member of the Kök–Türk dynasty, Kyzlasov discovered the bones of stags 112. As in the ancient Chou period, the Turks also ascribed a royal character to

101 See not 79 supra.
102 Abya egeým atta aş (My white horse which I sacrificed at the hunt): Orkun, III, 8 (part of inscription on a Kök–Türk period stele).
103 A Turkish funerary stele, in the Tuva region, showed two small personages holding vessels, who apparently offered sacrificial meat and libations to the deceased: Kyzlasov (1969), 18–23. On the related terms aq (sacrificial food), poğş (libation), tapîğ (sacrifice), see Dictionary. It is also suggested that, as in the Chou period (see notes 74, 75 supra), the mouth of the statues and the cups held by them, were greased: V. A. Kazakevič, Nad mogol’nye satay v Dary–Gange, in « Materialy po issledovaniju Mongolskoj i Tanguto–Tuinskjoj Respublik i Burjat–Mongol’skoj ASSR», (Leningrad 1930/5), 2–9.
104 The Oğuz placed the corpse of the dead dignitary within a tomb, in the shape of a domed tent, gave him a cup of meyh in hand and put a jug of wine in the tomb: Togan, 27.
106 Taung, 96.
107 KT, 83 (reference to Togan, 27 and Dieterich, II, 24).
108 Liu, 9–11, 42. See also note 107 supra.
109 Togan, 27.
110 Sources given in Gök ve yer, 12 and 86–7.
112 Ibid., 33.
some cervine species, perhaps simultaneously, from the heraldic, as well as the
cynegetic and the culinary angles. Indeed, the hunt of the cervine species was the privilege of princes. According to a Chinese report, a Kők–Türk prince had been in relation with an aquatic goddess, whose emblem was a deer (a figure reminiscent of the Iranian Anahita). Having shot a deer, the hunter prince and his issue were condemned to offer human sacrifices to the goddess. The tradition included a totemic legend, prohibiting the hunt of the white deer.

The cervine or caprine of the unidentified species, called in Turkish sigın, which had nine ar (red stripes or spots?) was considered dedicated to the god of heaven.

IV - THE INTERPRETATION OF THE CRYPTIC SIGNS ON FUNERARY STELES

The interpretation of the cryptic motifs, observed on funerary steles, can perhaps be partly deduced from the above cosmologic beliefs. It becomes evident that the funerary stele represented not only the deceased, but also the axis between north and south, along which the soul rose from subterranean depths, towards heaven. Indeed, on the celestial (southern) summit of the funerary steles, luminous motifs had been carved. These (pls. A/1; B/1–7) were circles, dotted discs (or ovals or lozenges) and crescents, which were respectively, the heavenly, solar and lunar ideograms of the Shang and Chou, as well as concentric circles (pl. V/a).

The circle, the dotted disc, the crescent and the cup in semi-circular shape of Shang pictograms (pl. VII/a/3–6) are also thought to have been symbols of the “light orifice”, considered as “mouth” of the luminous soul, thence of the luminous soul itself, of the temple, or urn which was its dwelling and where sacrifices were offered and consequently of the sacrificial ceremony. In the Kők–Türk script, the once or thrice dotted disc, together with the motif consisting in a crescent and three dots could be read and (oath of allegiance, or vow). These letters appeared in Turkish cynegetic scenes (pl. VIII/b) with ritual aspect. One is therewith reminded that the Shang sacrifices were preceded by a vow, sometimes in inscribed form. The Turks might have done the same, or, as customary, the ancient sign of the dotted disc had kept up, in the Kők–Türk period also, its significance of sacrificial altar. In Uygur conventions, the circle was a solar symbole, while the moon was shown in concentric circles. The letter “y” (see pl. C) of the Kők–Türk script, which was in the shape of a circle, or semi-circle, was a phonogram which could be read ay (moon), or ay (bow). The Kők–Türk period representation of what seems to be a funerary temple, on a stele at Taldır–kürğan (pl. VII/b), shows a semi-circular symbol in the lower-axial region. The elegy on a Kők–Türk period funerary stele states that the erection of a “lunar ig (axis, pole?)” on the belt (depicted on the monument), expressed that the deceased “had acquired” virtue (perhaps of luminous quality: al McClig)!

The pictogram, consisting in a crescent and solar disc, was in the Shang–Chou, as well as in the Turkish period, when it was called kilin–ay, a symbol of the utmost celestial brilliancy, ascribed to temporal and spiritual monarchs.

It therefore appears that the celestial symbols were more or less equivalent and interchangeable and that all could indicate one or more of the related celestial notions, such as heaven, the luminaries, the luminous soul, its dwelling (temple, or urn) and the sacrifices offered to the soul.

The concepts on the avian motif noted above, allow a similar conclusion. The bird–head inscribed in a disc (pl. A/1/7th motif); or the aquatic bird (pl. A/VII/1st motif), or the flying bird, reduced to a head and wings (pl. IV/a), generally placed in the celestial zone of the stele, were probably the symbols of the departed soul.

Some discs on funeral steles (pl. I/b; II/b) are situated in the places reserved to the “seven holes” from which the principle of light was infused to soul–tablets (the eyes, the nostrils, the mouth, the ears). The discs on funerary steles which had been placed on the sides, at the level of the ears, were, as in Karasuk steles, circular ear–rings, sometimes with zoomorphic (perhaps totemic) motifs (pl. B/12, 13). Such ear–rings were often found, in graves of the Kők–Türk period. The discs with handle, also frequent on funerary steles (pl. V/b; B/17–18) are supposed to depict metallic mirrors, (of a variety seen amongst nomads of the pre–Christian millenium).
The two horizontal lines, or the joint beneath the head of the funeral stele is thought to represent the neck of the image, as it is usually decorated with what seem to be pearls, or a torque (pls. I/a; IV/d; V/b) 128. On one stele, a rython, attached to a torque, was observed, as usually seen on Scythian grave-statues (pl. A/VI, 6th object).

Amongst the weapons (pl. A/V), attached to the belt of the funerary steles, the most prominent was the short sword of the nomads 129, called akinakes by Herodotos 130 and ching–lu by the Chinese 131, both names being reconstructed as the Turkish kınıtrak (knife with double sharp edges) 132. Together with this short sword, a battle-axe, arrows and bows, an arrow-case (pls. A/V; B/29–36) and an undetermined shape designated as the "pentagonal object" (pls. V/b, c; VI/a–c), may be detected in the vicinity of the belt of funerary steles. The identification of the "pentagonal object", which sometimes contains a disc (pl. VI/b), is under discussion 133. Erdelyi sees it as a bag; while Savinov and Členova compare it to the thoracic bones; Devlet designates it as a shield and Vol'kov likens it to a house. Although one could easily view the "pentagonal object" as the Turkish suvluk 134 (bag or knotted handkerchief attached to the belt), our own inclination tends to interpret it as one of the "soul-dwellings". This tendency was motivated by the observation that, in some cases, the "pentagonal object" contained (pl. V/c), or was surrounded by animals (and a saddle and mirror ideograms: pl. VI/c) and must, thus, have a symbolic significance. A soul-dwelling, with a pentagonal appearance, could be one of the following 135: a tail–standard, or a soul banner, attached as in China, to a triangular pediment, a tolğu (the leather bag in which, in a Turkish text, the luminous soul was safeguarded); a temple or a temple–shaped urn. Some "pentagonal objects" (pl. V/a) could indeed depict a tail–standard, while others might be likened to a tolğu (pl. V/c; VI/b). As on some Chinese pictograms of soul-dwellings (pl. VII/a–c), and temple–shaped urns, the Kok–Turk period depiction of what seems to be a funerary temple, on the Taldi–kurgan 136 stele (pl. VII/b); or a Chinese funerary kiosk, such as erected for Köf Tigin. This last kind of "pentagonal object" (pl. VI/a) shows what may be vertical wooden posts, such as the ones on which the Turks pitched the heads and skins of sacrificed horses 137.

Beside the Orta–tey "pentagonal object", together with mirrors with handles (cf. pl. B/17–28), there is an inscription in Kök–Türk characters (pl. VI/C), kindly deciphered by Prof. T. Tekin as "Ku Er". Ku was a name, borne by a Ku Seğên 140, mentioned in a Kök–Türk inscription which could in Prof. Bazin's view, be a tribal cognomen, as in Kun (Hun) and Kuman. In Prof. T. Tekin's opinion, ku may also be linked to kûn / köğu which designated, in Turkish, the swan. In such a case, the inscription would recall the legends on the metamorphosis of the soul, in an aquatic bird 141 and of a Turkish prince who was transformed into a swan 142.

The belts depicted on the funerary steles, do not, even in the Kök–Türk period, resemble the Turkish kûr 143, which was characterized through its buckle and pendant straps. The belts, on funerary steles, seemingly continue the tradition of the Ananin / Ting–ling periods (pls. A/III; B/29–36); and show dots, horizontal, or vertical lines and particularly, rows of single or double triangles (pls. I/c; IX/b). These may be viewed as decorative motifs, but on the other hand, some Kök–Türk letters (d, n; see pl. C), and the tanga of an Oğuz tribe 144, as well as the ideogram of ancient China, such as the Orta–tey stele (pl. VI/c), give the impression of a soul–temple, or a temple–shaped urn. One remembers, in connection with the Orta–tey "pentagonal object", that Clauson translated the Turkish ev–bark (which equally designated the funerary temple) as "house and furniture". The diagonal lines of some "pentagonal objects" suggest an edifice, in timberwork, such as the pavilion, in the shape of a domed tent, in which the corpse was incinerated, together with the sacrificial offerings and victims. In fact, some "pentagonal objects" (pl. VI/a), resemble the Shang funerary temple pictogram 137 and temple–shaped urns (pls. VII/a–l–6), as well as the Kök–Türk period depiction of what seems to be a funerary temple, on the Taldi–kurgan 138 stele (pl. VII/b); or a Chinese funerary kiosk, such as erected for Köf Tigin. This last kind of "pentagonal object" (pl. VI/a) shows what may be vertical wooden posts, such as the ones on which the Turks pitched the heads and skins of sacrificed horses 139.

128 Mannay–ool, 139.
129 Vol'kov, fig. 22/1.
130 Herodotos, IV/9.
131 Prusek, lo, 133.
132 Sources given in Gök ve yer, 55–73.
134 Sources given in Esin, Kûr–kurşak, notes 101–103.
135 See notes 45–7, 88–91.
136 See note 119 supra.
137 Tsung, symbols 551 and 557.
138 See note 91 supra.
139 See sources given in note 91.
140 Batmanov–Kuna, II, figs. 22–24 (stele found on the mountain Orta–tey, in the Yenisey region).
143 See Esin, Kûr–kurşak.
144 The Oğuz tængas: Yazıcı–zade (’Ali), Tarih–i Âl–i Selçuk, Topkapı Library, ms H. 1390, fols. 21, 22/b, 23.
which indicated fire and the fiery soul, equally had triangular shapes. The variety of diadem with three triangular pediments, which crowned the avian symbol of the fiery soul, on an ancient Chinese urn, appeared, in the Kök-Türk age, together with the bird motif, on the head of Költigin's funerary statue (and on other grave-statues), vouching for the survival of the symbolism.

Other cryptic signs on funerary steles have led to speculations. Erdelyi has shown that some of these were tribal *tamgas*. Some signs resembling the cross with equal arms, the swastika, the hook and the letter (T) appear indeed, as *tamgas*, on the Hangay rocks, and figure amongst Kök-Türk letters (b,d,g,n,r: see pl. C). The cryptic signs, in the shapes of single, double, and triple-forked hooks (pl. B/37–50), may equally be likened to the various horn motifs. The cicada, which in ancient China, was one of the symbols of re-birth, was represented in analogous pictograms. The letter (T) figured also in an Oguz *tamga* and represented, amongst Shang ideograms, the god of the earth. The cross, an ideogram of the junction of the four cardinal directions, was a Shang sign, also reserved to the earth-god or to a royal burial. The cross however, when inscribed in a circle, represented the celestial deity.

The steles with stag depiction generally display the maral (*cervus elaphus*) with developed antlers and, more rarely, the elk (*alces alces*) (pl. IV/c). The mountain–goat (pl. III/b); the ram (pl. IV/d) and the horse (pl. IV/a, e) were also depicted on funerary steles. A wheel, the four spokes of which are in the form of equine heads (pl. A/VII/motif 3), was identified, by Erdelyi, as an Altaic *tamga*. The boar appeared, more seldom on funerary steles (pl. A/VII/2nd motif). It has been noted that exclusively these animals were sacrificed by the Chou princes. The zoomorphic motifs, on funerary steles, were aligned, either horizontally, or vertically (pl. IV/b, e), or diagonally (pl. VIII/e). Erdelyi notes that, on the Tariat stele, two groups of stags have been affronted. The stag motif may suggest that the Tariat stele was connected with a funerary monument.

The avian-beaked stags on some funerary steles (pl. A/VII; 3rd, 4th motif), may perhaps be linked to the legend of Fei-lien, the cervine avian wind–god, who became the mount of the luminous soul, in its skywards ascent. The motif of the avian-beaked stag is generally seen on steles in proximity of present Northern China, the home of the Fei-lien myth. The cynegetic scenes, showing hunted stags (pl. VIII/a); the images of weapons as well as discs, which were symbols of sacrifice, placed beside the stags (pl. VIII/e), may evoke ritual hunts, and the belief that the sacrificed victims would resuscitate in heaven. Some Turkish steles of artistic value (pl. IX/a–c) show delicate cervines, with avian beaks, and antlers, in flowery ramifications, surrounding as it were, the stele which represented the departed hero, and flying heavenwards with him, towards the solar pictogram, on the summit of the stele. Such steles recall a line, inscribed on a Kök-Türk memorial stone:

"I am the hero, amongst the flying stags (or preys) ."

Or, "I am carried amidst the flying stags (or preys) ."

(Or, "I am carried amidst the flying stags (or preys) ".)

The word *alık* which also indicated the beak of a bird, could be a reminiscence of the Fei-lien legend and an allusion to avian beaks, attributed to the flying stags.

At the Šivet–ulan complex, where Prof. Kljaštorný recently observed, on lion effigies, the *tamga* of the Kök–Türk dynasty, Ramstedt had observed a stele with stag depiction (pl. VIII/e). Šivet–ulan was, in Kljaš–
standing’s opinion, the funeral temple of Ilteriş Kagan, who after re-establishing the Kük-Türk empire, died in 691. If the circumvallation, fortifying the valiant soul, together with statues of vassals, of lions and of rams, a stele with stag depiction had then also been included.

In conclusion, it seems that the stele with stag depiction was a “rock of immortality” (bengü-taş), reserved to heroic personages and expressed the celestial ascension of their souls, within an eternal cycle of transmutations.

ABBREVIATIONS AND BIBLIOGRAPHY

A.: Ankara
AA.: Alma-ata
AAASH: Acta archaeologica Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
ADAW: Abhandlungen der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften.
AE: Archäologische Eerstenstätte.
Ant.: Antwerpen.
AO: Arxèologiâeskije otkrytija.
J. R. Aspeling, Alt-Altaische Kunstdenkmäler (H., 1931).
L. Bazin, Notes sur les mots Oğuz et Türk, in «Orients», 6 (Leiden 1953).
E. Biot, Le Tchéou-li, P. 1891.
CAJ: Central Asian Journal
E. Chavannes, 1) Does.: Documents sur les Taus-kiue (Turks) occidentaux, St. Pbg. 1903.
2) STM: Les mémoires historiques de St-Ma-Tsien, P. 1967.
3) “Wei-liu”: Les Pays d’Occident d’après le Wei-lıu, in «TP», II/6 (1905).
A. A. Carikov, O lokal’nyx osobennostях kamennyx izvyanij Priiril’sja, in «SA» (1979/2).

160 See note 166 supra.
166 See notes 49–50 and 110 supra.
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Plates A—B—Tables showing the cryptic signs and motifs of funerary steles, with stag depiction. After Vol'kov, fig. 29 and Vajnberg-Novgorodova.

Plate C—The Kök-Türk runiform letters. Orkun, I, 16.

Pls. I/a, b—Funerary steles, with stag-depiction, in present Mongolia. After Vol'kov, fig. 28; and Savinov–Členova, fig. 13/3-5; Vol'kov, fig. 23.

Pl. II/a—Funerary stele, with mask and stag depiction. Členova, fig. 4/2.

Pls. II/b, c—Funerary steles with inscription, of the Kök-Türk period, for the deceased of (er) heroic rank. Orkun, III, 8, 10.

Pls. III/a, b—The two faces of the funerary stele, signed by Kök-Türk artists, erected for Bilge Kagan, or some other member of the Kök-Türk dynasty (see the tamga of the dynasty, on the left proper, upper corner). After W. Radloff, Alterthümer der Mongolei (SPbg., 1896), pi. XV/2 and Orkun, II, 127.

Pl. IV/a—A funerary stele in the Uuyu region. Aspelin, fig. 238.

Pls. IV/b, c, d, e—The two respective faces of the funerary steles, with Kök-Türk inscription (see Orkun, III, 31, 35) at Turan–Uuyu and Turan–Arzan. Aspelin, figs. 329, 331.

Pl. V/a, b, c, d—Four faces of an Uuyu–Turan stele, with Kök-Türk inscription. After Orkun, III, 43 and Aspelin, fig. 326.

Pl. VI/e—The weapons and “pentagonal object” (with two horse figures), attached to the belt of a Kök–Türk period stele in present Mongolia. Erdelyi, fig. 8.

Pls. VI/a, b, c—Various “ pentagonal objects”, on funerary steles. After Aspelin, figs. 327, Erdelyi, fig. 4; Batmangan–Kuna, II, fig. 23 (together with a Kök–Türk inscription).


Pl. VIII/b – Fragment of a Kök–Türk period beğü-kaya (rock of immortality), showing a rider, shooting a cervine, seated within a crescent with three dots (a letter of the Kök–Türk alphabet, which may be read and: oath of faith or allegiance). Orkun, III, 95.

Pl. VIII/c – A drawing, by Ramstedt, of a fragment of stele, with stag depiction, from Sivet-ulan. Aalto, fig. 6.

Pl. IX/a – A funerary stele, with sun and stag depiction, from the region of Tuva. Vajn-štejn, fig. 21.

Pls. IX/b, c – Kök–Türk period funerary steles with stag depiction, in present Mongolia. Erdelyi, figs. 3 and 10.