CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

THE OCCUPATION OF CENTRAL ASIA BY PASTORAL TRIBES

The first Indo-Aryan migration to the south

Those who support an Indo-Iranian or Aryan attribution to the Andronovo culture have provided evidence of the migration of steppe tribes to the south into Central Asia and Afghanistan in the second half of the 2nd millennium BC (see bibliography in Kuz’mina 1994; P’yankova 1998). The appearance of horse bones and the depiction of horses in Turkmenia, where the horse was earlier unknown, and the spread of horse-drawn chariots in Namazga VI are all connected with this wave of migration (Kuz’mina 1980). In Bactria one horse burial is known from Dashly 19 (Sarianidi 1977: 148) and there are images of horse heads on ceremonial bronze axes and handles (Fig. 95; Pittman 1984: fig. 32; Amiet 1988: fig. 9b; Ligabue et al. 1988: figs. 96, 101; Fig. 95).

Recently there has emerged evidence of contacts between the population of the Urals and the south already in the Novokumak horizon. A lapis-lazuli bead, originating from Bactria, has been found in a Sintashta settlement; a plate imitating pottery from the BMAC has been found in a Petrovka layer on the settlement of Ust’e (Vinogradov 1995b: 72); under the mound of a kurgan at Krasnoe Znamya (Fig. 60) a bronze mirror with a protruding handle has been uncovered, ceramics of the Sintashta-Abashevo type, and two horse skulls; in the main burial (nr. 1) on this site was found a spear, adze, chisel, awl, knife, abrasives, three Sintashta vessels, bones of a ram and a dog skeleton (Sungatov et al. 1995: 60, fig. 2). The mirror is of Bactrian type (Sarianidi 1977: tab. 2.8, fig. 40).

The Zardcha-Halifa grave at Panjikent near Sarazm, on the left bank of the Zeravshan (Bobomulloev 1993; 1997; Bostongukhar 1998) is of great importance for clarifying the time and fate of the early Andronovo tribes (Fig. 65). The deceased lies in an oval grave, 3.1m long and 3.5m deep. He lies flexed on his right side, head to the south-west, one arm under the head and the other on the stomach. The skeleton of a ram was placed at his head. This rite is typical of the Sapalli culture of northern Bactria (Askarov 1977: 138). The assemblage of grave goods was rich. Ceramics included globular vessels with a narrow neck, two examples of an incised base and a tamga on the shoulder of one of the vessels. These were wheel-made and fired pink. Such ceramics are comparable to the Dzharkutan stage of the Sapalli culture, e.g., the Dzharkutan cemetery, partially Dashly 3 (Askarov 1977, figs. 31, 32; Askarov et al. 1983: 7, tab. xxi.7, xxviii; Sarianidi 1977, figs. 27, 28).

There are also analogies with other assemblages in the BMAC and in Iran. In Sapalli, Hissar III and the BMAC there are parallels to the bronze vessel (Askarov 1977, tab. xxvii.15; Sarianidi 1977, fig. 41.9; Amiet 1988, fig. 3), a bronze vessel with a knurled neck found in Bactria (Amiet 1988, fig. 11b, d); a
temple ring with bulges at the ends is similar to ornaments from Sapalli (Askarov 1977, tab. xxxix.17, 19) along with a gold cup, razor-knife, hafted dagger with straight shoulders, and gold and turquoise beads. A stone phallus-shaped pestle, 26.5cm long and 4.5cm in diameter is assigned to the same complex. N. Borofika (1998: a, b, 25) attributed it to the Andronovo V B type, close to type IV, which is characteristic of Central Asia during the Namazga V-VI period, and he dated it to 1800-1400 BC. Comparison with examples from Ulug-Depe and Parhai makes it possible to propose a date of 1800-1600 BC.

A bronze pin is of special interest (Fig. 68: 1). It is 18cm long, crowned with the figure of a horse. Pins with zoomorphic heads are widely known at Sapalli Tepe, Dzharkutan, Dashly-3, burials in Bactria, Hissar III and the Khak hoard (Kuz’mina 1966, tab. xvi; Askarov 1977, tab. xl.1, l.6, 5; Sarianidi 1977, fig. 43, 44; Sarianidi 1988, tab li, lvi; Askarov et al. 1983, tab. xxi.1; Amiet 1988, fig. 12; Ligabue et al. 1988, fig. 83). However, I am not aware of a horse-headed pin among the whole range of farming cultures. Stylistically, this image resembles to some extent the images of a horse found on a gold temple ring from the Andronovo cemetery of Mynchunkur (Kuz’mina 1994: 256, fig. on p. 5), on a knife from the Seyma cemetery (Bader 1970, fig. 52). The static posture, exterior, long tail and depiction of the mane are all similar.

Fragments of shield-shaped cheek-pieces were found at Zardcha-Halifa (Fig. 66), some of which have been reconstructed. These are of bone, 8cm in diameter, with a large central slot surrounded by a ridge and four solid tenons (Bobomulloev 1997: 127a, b, 4: 1, 2). They are assigned to type 1 of my classification and represent the most archaic form; they are characteristic only of the early Sintashta complexes of the Urals: Sintashta (Gening et al. 1992, fig. 57.8; Kuz’mina 1994: 171-189, tab. 4, fig. 37) and Bol’shekaragan (Botalov et al. 1996: 80, 81, fig. 17.10, 18.4). In Tanabergen (Fig. 64; Tkachev 1998, figs. 2, 10, 11) there are cheek-pieces of type 1 but without the ridge; in the Potapovka burial on the Volga they have the ridge but with additional slots (Vasil’ev et al. 1994, fig. 33.1, 42.3). A pair of bronze bits with rings and couplings at both ends, 11.5 and 12cm long, is connected with the chariot complex. Attempts to compare them with a bit from Kairak-Kum (Bobomulloev 1997) do not seem to be correct and I am unaware of any analogies.

Analysis of the Zardcha-Halifa material indicates that the greater part of the art may be assigned to the BMAC while the horse-headed pin and the cheek-pieces are characteristic only of the early Sintashta sites of the Urals. They help establish the zone where horses and chariot first appeared in Central Asia and the Zardcha-Halifa burial emerges as a reflection of the first wave of Indo-Iranian migrations to the south.

Of great importance is the discovery of the metal-working settlement of Tugai near Samarkand near the polymetallic deposits of the Zeravshan ridge (Avanesova 1996). Archaeologists uncovered a semi-subterranean house and metal-working complex with round hearths, furnaces for smelting ore, and traces of metal-working such as ore, bars, coal, and clay crucibles, as well as a bronze celt, stone axe, hammer and arrows. In addition to metal-working there is evidence for stock-raising as bones of cattle, sheep and goat were recovered. The cultural attribution of the complex is established by its ceramics which comprises 22 hand-made vessels (Fig. 69). They are of the Petrovka type, gray and black,