



Nomadic Art of the Eastern Eurasian Steppes: The Eugene V. Thaw and Other New York Collections

Emma C. Bunker

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Four thousand years ago, a remarkable culture emerged in the Eastern Eurasian steppes north of the Great Wall of China, in what is now Inner Mongolia. Herding, hunting on horseback, and agriculture characterized the way of life for the pastoral nomads of this region, and the art they produced reflects the equestrian culture that evolved over the centuries. Lightweight and portable, the weapons, bronze and gold belt plaques and chariot fittings, and objects of personal adornment display skilled craftsmanship and highly abstract designs, featuring animals, both wild and domesticated—tigers, bears, ibex, horses, camels—as well as raptors, dragons, and other mythical creatures.

Trade, intermarriage, and warfare between the nomadic peoples and their settled Chinese neighbors during the first millennium B.C. led to a complex interrelationship that contributed to the cultural development of both groups. This book examines the artistic exchange between them and chronicles the culture of the pastoral peoples by focusing on nearly two hundred artifacts from the distinguished collection of Eugene V. Thaw, with additional works selected from other private collections and from The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

(This title was originally published in 2002/03.)

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