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## ASSYRIAN OBJECTS FROM ROOM M.2

By RICHARD BARNETT

The group of small objects from the priestess' room at Sultantepe is of much interest, firstly because they are well dated, secondly because they show signs of mostly originating from some not too distant market. Whereas the source of the alabaster may well be North Syria, it is perhaps not too bold to see in the fayence objects the products of a local factory, perhaps Harran itself.

PL. V

### IVORIES

(a)  $16 \times 9$  cm. Palette in natural-coloured ivory. Front: circular hollow for pigment. Beneath: in relief, couchant winged sphinx with northern Egyptian crown and lotus. Behind: circular rosette ornament in relief (Fig. 8).

(b)  $1.5 \times 1.25$  cm. Female head in dark blue-grey ivory with gold inlaid diadem. Fragment broken from a relief?

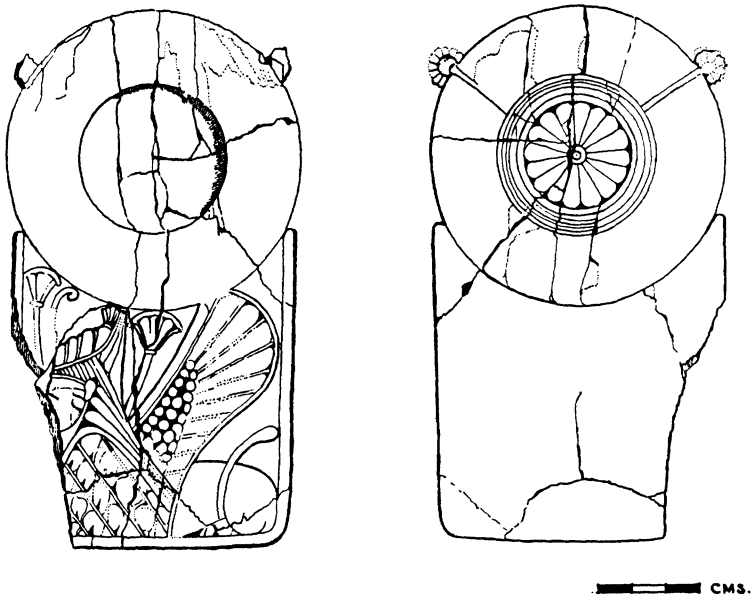


FIG. 8. Ivory palette.

The palette, with a circular bowl having a broad rim and a large flat spade-like handle ornamented with carving, is a shape well established among the North Syrian ivories from the South-East Palace (or "Burnt Palace") at Nimrud, of 9th-8th centuries B.C. The subject of the winged Egyptian royal sphinx crouching is not very frequent in Phoenician art, though it appears on a stone carving (Perrot and Chipiez, *Histoire de l'Art dans l'Antiquité*, III, Fig. 73). There is a curious misunderstanding on the present piece of the bars on the chest and shoulder, which run down from right to left instead of vice versa. (cf. Crowfoot, *Samaria*, I, *The Ivories*, Pl. V, 3a; Thureau-Dangin and others, *Arslan Tash*, Pl. XXXVII.)

The style of the small female head is more related to the North Syrian school of ivories than to the Phoenician.

Both pieces are of special interest in showing that the Syrian and Phoenician ivory schools continued to work at least to the end of the 7th century B.C.

## PL. V, c.

## BEAD OBJECT

13 × 17 cm. Bag or purse composed of disk-shaped beads of coloured frit. Surviving arrangement of bead fabric shows object to have had the shape of a flattened cylinder, apparently closed at one end. Pattern : on a background of irregular white and pale blue, rows of lozenges alternately outlined in dark red and filled with white, or outlined in yellow and filled with red. Colours very bright.

This object appears to be unique ; the beads were presumably threaded, the thread being caught by other threads at right-angles to a cloth background. Alternatively they formed a weft against a warp of plain thread. This was the technique used on the extraordinarily fine " cloth of gold ", made up of tiny beads of gold, discovered by Sir Leonard Woolley at Carchemish (Woolley and Barnett, *Carchemish*, III, 1952, p. 251).

## PL. VI

## PICTORIAL ENCRUSTATION

Encrusted ornament from objects the material of which (wood?) has completely disintegrated. Inlay pieces consist of lapis lazuli or a paste of powdered lapis, alternating with dark red paste, all laid upon a base of greenish-white substance (probably a mixture of powdered frit and calcium, as in the new Nimrud ivory inlays). Interstices between inlay-pieces filled with gold ribbon-wire.

(a) 13 × 11 cm. Depicts sun in the form of winged scarab (Kheper) in reed boat. Beneath : frieze of lotus flowers and buds. Above : running ornament of undetermined character. (See also Pl. VIII, 2, from a water colour by Mrs. Lloyd.)

(b) Frieze of figures depicting presentation-scene. A male individual is presented by Thoth and Horus (recognisable by their attributes) to an unidentified god and goddess, whose figures are twice repeated at either end of the frieze. Female figures are distinguished by pale blue paste. Beneath : a frieze of lotus flowers and buds. Elsewhere : geometric ornament.

The scene of the Sun-god crossing the Underworld during the night in a reed boat is a regular Egyptian subject, appearing in illustrations of the Book of the Dead. The boat, however, is incorrectly depicted here, and this strongly suggests that the craftsman was a Phoenician imitating as usual the Egyptian manner.

## PL. VII

## MINIATURE VESSELS OF FAIENCE AND GLASS

(a) and (c) 7 × 6 cm. Pair of miniature jars in coloured faience ; lower half modelled with lotus leaves in low relief. Pale blue glaze outside. Upper half has three horizontal bands of ornament superimposed in blackish glaze. Flat bottom ; moulded rim ; two unpierced moulded lugs.

(b) 6 × 5 cm. Similar to (a) and (c) but with superimposed pale green glaze on lotus leaves and other blackish markings.

(d) 8 × 4 cm. Miniature bottle in coloured faience with two pierced lugs. Overall whitish glaze, turning blue around rim. Superimposed horizontal bands of ornament in blackish glaze with bands of yellow between. Two pierced lugs.

(e)  $8 \times 6$  cm. Miniature lentoid flask in coloured faience. Lotus flowers and two buds modelled in low relief on each side. Pale blue glaze overall. Bud-stalks emphasised in black. Two pierced lugs. Intact.

(f)  $15 \times 6$  cm. Miniature bottle of opaque glass with reeded neck and two pierced lugs. Colour of glass on body alternates between pale blue and white to form reciprocal chevron ornament in manner of earliest Amarnah glass objects. Glass breaks with green section.

A design very similar in general effect to that on Pl. VII (b) recurs on a miniature jar from Ialysos (*Clara Rhodos*, III, grave LXXI), but in that example the jar has a small tubular neck.

The "pilgrim flask" (e) has to be taken in conjunction with Pl. VIII (c). The belly of such vases is usually plain, though there is an exception from Ialysos (von Bissing, *Zeit und Herkunft der in Cerveteri gefundenen Gefässe aus äg. Fayence*, Sitz. Bayr. Akad. Wiss. ph. h. Abt., 1941). Both Pl. VII (e) and Pl. VIII (c) have lotus designs which, though reminiscent of Egyptian art, are seen through Phoenician eyes.

The glass vessel is without an exact parallel, largely because the history of glass making in Syria and Mesopotamia in this period is so little known. Its nearest parallel seems to be vases without handles found at Ur (now in the British Museum, B.M. 120659), ascribed to the Cassite period (Fossing, *Glass Vessels before Glass-blowing*, Fig. 20), or from Babylon (Reuter, *Merkes*, grave CXIX, Pl. LXXIV), dated between the 10th and 7th centuries B.C.

#### PL. VIII, 1

##### MINIATURE VESSELS OF FAIENCE AND STONE

(a)  $14 \times 5$  cm. Miniature jar in alabaster with two unpierced lugs.

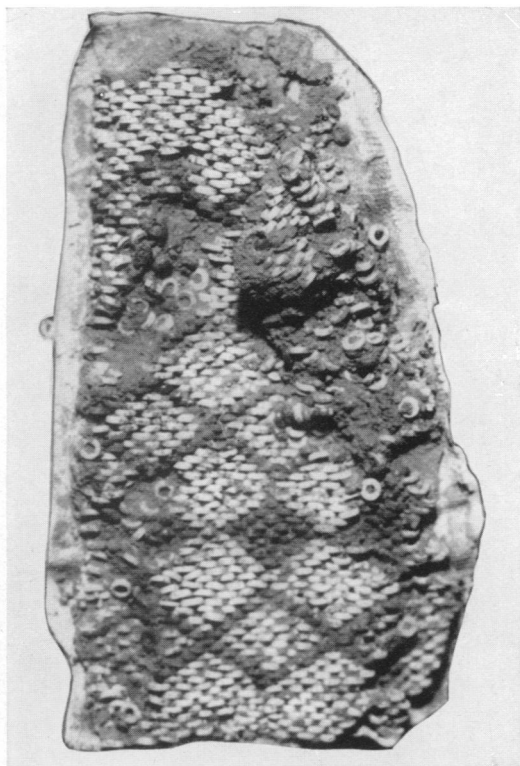
(b)  $3.5 \times 3$  cm. Miniature jar in alabaster.

(c)  $16 \times 13.5$  cm. Lentoid flask in coloured faience (fragments) with two pierced lugs (?) and ornament moulded in low relief. Overall whitish glaze. Band of geometric and lotus ornament at shoulder and frieze of palms beneath, picked out in superimposed yellow and blue-green glaze.

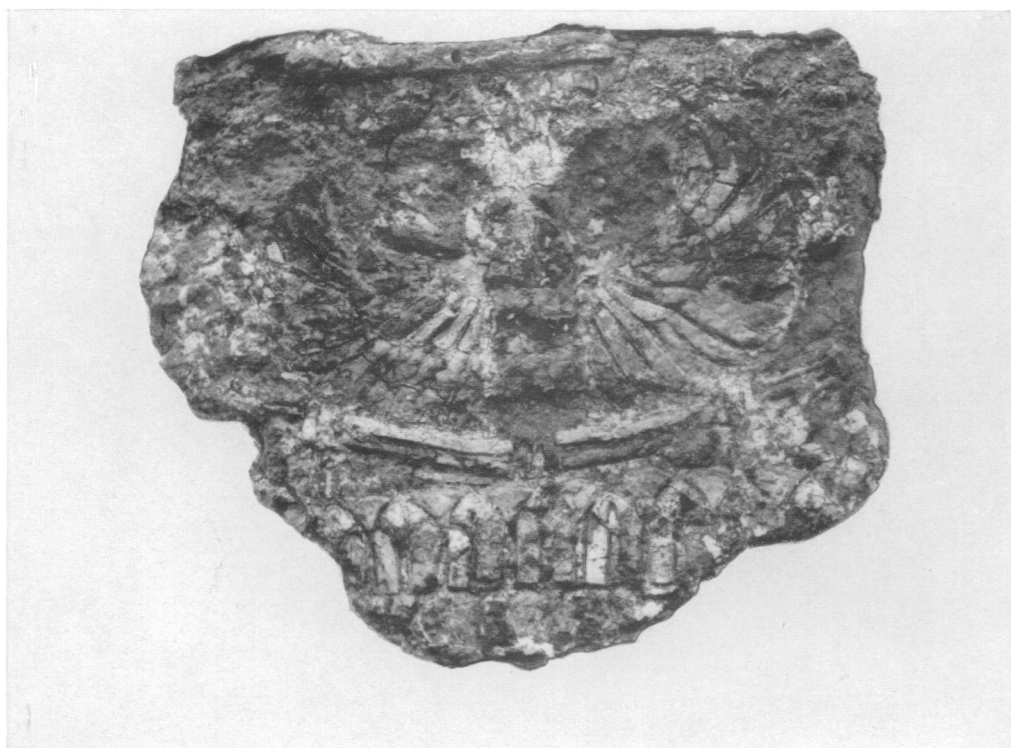
(d)  $5 \times 10$  cm. Miniature bottle in smooth black stone. Two pierced lugs.

(e) and (f) Miniature jars in alabaster with two pierced lugs.  $5 \times 3.5$  and  $5 \times 1.5$  cm. respectively.

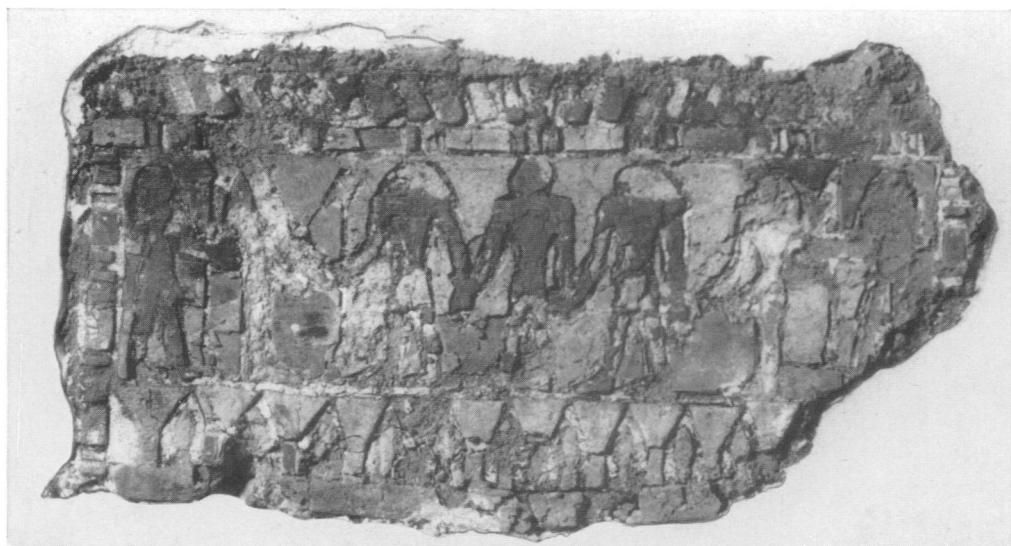
Pl. VIII, (a) and (f), throw light on an interesting class of stone vessel, the *alabastron*, which is well represented in Greek sites of the same date. Pl. VIII (a) is obviously related to its fayence equivalent Pl. VII (d), by its necklace-like decoration. In its elongated form it is closely related to the contemporary alabaster vases found, e.g. at Camiros (*Clara Rhodos*, VI-VII, Fig. 51, grave XI), but its closest parallel in shape seems to be a vase from Nimrud, found by Professor Mallowan in 1952 (ND. 2509). The Greek examples from Camiros (e.g. *Clara Rhodos*, IV, Fig. 409, tomb CCX, or VI-VII, Fig. 66, tomb XIII), like one slightly later from Babylon, (Reuter, *Merkes*, Pl. LXXVII), are usually more baggy than the present piece, with the centre of gravity lower, or they are quite tubular. All, however, agree in the 7th century in possessing, both in Greece and in the East, the slightly outwards-splaying neck. Andrae, *Das wiedererstandene Assur*, Pl. LXXIII, shows an extremely baggy specimen which, with others, is specified by inscriptions as carried off by Esarhaddon or Sennacherib as booty from Phoenicia. The alabastra of tubular type but with female heads, found at Gordion (Körte brothers, *Gordion*, 1900), and in the



*b*  
Ivories and Bead Purse.

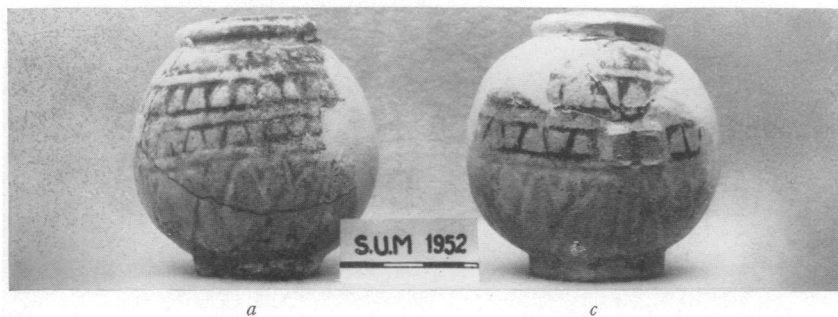


*a*

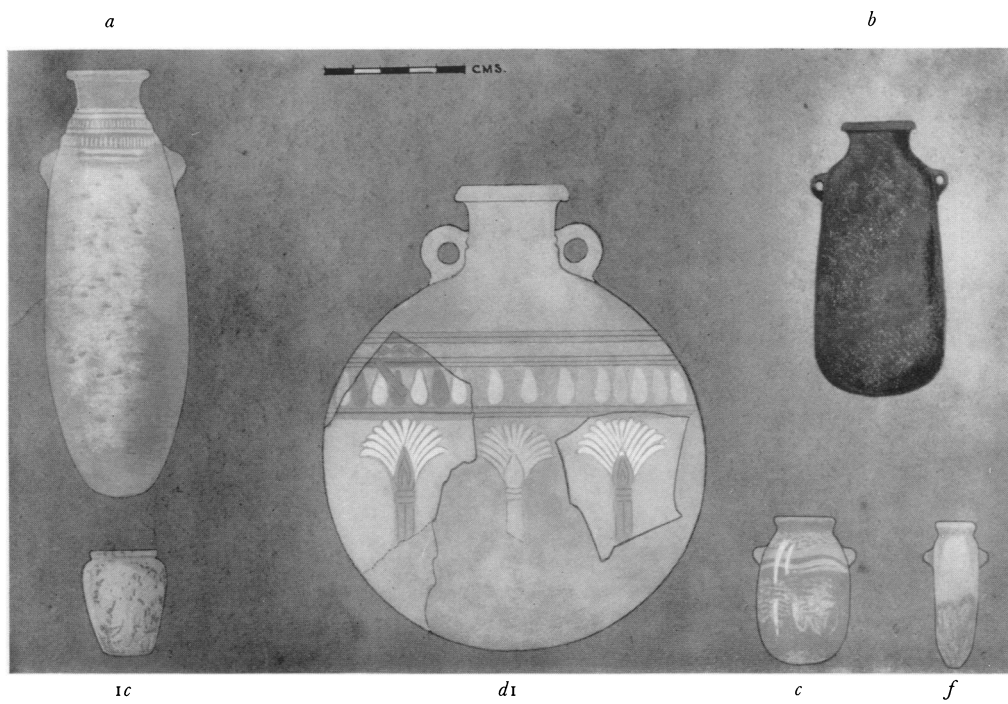


*b*

Box with Pictorial Incrustation.



Miniature vessels.



2  
Pictorial incrustation.

Polledrara tomb (Pryce, *B.M. Catalogue of Cypriote and Etruscan Sculpture*, Fig. 4, p. 160) are executed, as far as the heads show, in a style connected with North Syria. This suggests that both classes of vessel are native originally to the Syrian and Phoenician coast, though afterwards no doubt widely imitated elsewhere.<sup>1</sup>

The form of Pl. VIII (*d*) is more archaic, recalling the glass vase from Nimrud bearing the name of Sargon (Fossing, *op. cit.*, Fig. 22).

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A note on post-Assyrian pottery will appear in a subsequent issue.

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<sup>1</sup> See also von Bissing, "Alabastergefäße aus den deutschen Ausgrabungen in Assur," *ZA.*, 12 (1940), esp. figs. 32-3.