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## THE FIND OF URARTIAN BRONZES AT ALTIN TEPE, NEAR ERZINCAN

By R. D. BARNETT and N. GÖKCE

IN 1938 NEAR Erzincan an important find of Urartian metal-work was made, which is now in the Ankara Museum. In view of the rarity of Urartian material as yet recovered and of the brief character of the only publication of this find,<sup>1</sup> we thought it desirable to publish a fuller account.

### THE SITE

In 1938 workmen employed on the railway between Sivas and Erzurum excavated a hill 60 metres high called Altın Tepe. This hill is said to lie just south of the road from Erzincan to Erzurum, 4 kms. south of Cimin and 20 kilometres east of Erzincan.<sup>2</sup> Von der Osten, who visited the hill, describes it as once fortified and containing red-polished Urartian sherds. He adds that the site was "eine grössere, in den Fels geschlagene Anlage", built up with carefully cut rectangular blocks. He adds, however, that it would have to be cleared to be understood, but from the contents and the state of their preservation it seems likely that it was a chamber tomb belonging to an Urartian soldier. Von der Osten suggests that it was the grave of the commander of the military post stationed at this strategic junction of the road and river. It is much to be hoped that an opportunity may some day be found to clear this hill, thereby perhaps throwing more light on Urartian burial customs.

### THE FINDS

The material consists of the following pieces<sup>3</sup>:

(1) (Mus. Inv. 8823.) A huge bronze cauldron in perfect preservation. Height 0.51 m., by 0.72 m. broad (from the tip of one bull's horn to that

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<sup>1</sup> Von der Osten, VI Int. Kongress für Arch., 1939, *Neue Urartäische Bronzen aus Erzincan*, hereafter called v.d.O. The illustrations reappear in Bossert, *Altanatolien*, figs. 1186-1194.

<sup>2</sup> Dr. Hamit Koşay, Director of the Ethnographical Museum at Ankara, kindly informs us that the site, also known as Simi Sazlı Tepe, is located 500 metres S. of the high road (which skirts the plain on the north), south-east of Cimin. (Dr. von der Osten has drawn our attention to a photograph of the hill in an article by Professor J. Garstang in *A.J.A.* 1947 (1943) fig. 6, where it is described as the ancient site of Erzincan.) Hamit Bey has also kindly sent us two cuttings with illustrations from the Turkish newspapers, *Cumhuriyet* of 12th April, and *Ulus* of 15th April, 1938, describing the find. These reports add that these objects were found in one of six small chambers belonging to an ancient building on the east side of the hill four metres below the surface. The illustrations show the shield reposing on the cauldron, top uppermost, as a lid. The capacity of the cauldron is estimated at 300 litres.

<sup>3</sup> Von der Osten has been kind enough to inform us that, in addition to the pieces listed here, there were also found twenty silver bars, some inscribed with cuneiform signs, which were unfortunately stolen before the Department of Antiquities was able to take charge. The newspapers mentioned describe the bars as thick pipes, weighing in all fifteen kilos, and of "84 carat" quality, and state that they were found not at Altın Tepe but in excavations on another hill nearby two days later.

of the opposite head), the walls .003 m. thick. The bowl is made of beaten bronze or copper raised all from one piece, but with three handles in the form of bulls' heads, cast and chased, each of which is brazed onto a T-shaped plate at right-angles rather resembling a bird, which in its turn is riveted to the rim of the cauldron with four rivets. On either side of each T-plate on the rim of the cauldron there are remains of a pair of further

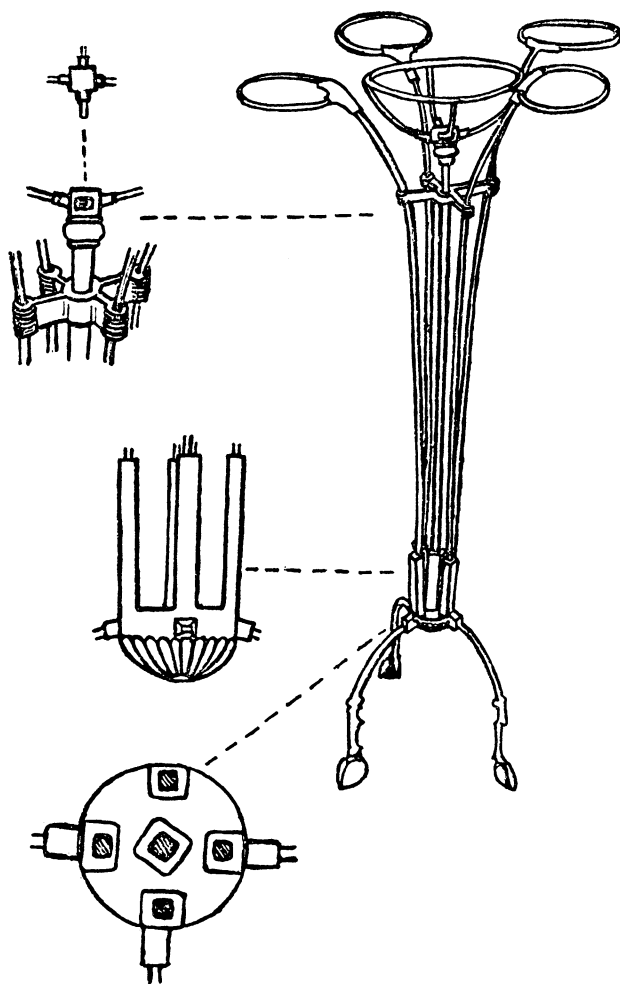


FIG. 1. Tripod-stand.

rivets, suggesting that it was originally intended to fit larger plates. (Plates XIII, XIV, XIX, 1.)

Two bulls' heads, clearly from a similar cauldron, were found in the excavations of H. Rassam, at Toprak Kale, and are now in the British Museum.<sup>1</sup>

This cauldron must be one of the largest metal vessels surviving from antiquity. Large cauldrons approximately of the present form are depicted

<sup>1</sup> R. D. Barnett, "British Museum Excavations at Toprak Kale," *Iraq*, XII, 1950, Pl. XVI.

as captured by the Assyrians in Babylonia <sup>1</sup> in the time of Sennacherib, and in Urartu (Muşasir), in the time of Sargon.<sup>2</sup>

(2) (Mus. Inv. 8823A.) Massive tripod-stand. Diameter 0·58 metres, height 0·66 metres. Made of rounded bars which are secured to one another and to a horizontal ring by rivets, the ends of which have been sawn off and smoothed down. At one point in the horizontal ring a piece about 4 cm. long has been inserted, as the circle as originally planned evidently proved too short. The bars rise in groups of three in the form of a  $\nabla$  from three heavy cast feet, each of which ends in a bull's hoof and is decorated with horizontal lines in relief. (Plates XIII, XIV, 2, and Fig. 1.)

The idea of using bulls' hooves on tripods is quite ancient. A triple bowl in clay from Til Barsip, c. 2000 B.C., shows it already in existence.<sup>3</sup> Tripods of this kind are not depicted on Assyrian monuments, unless the example from Muşasir is meant for this, shown in abbreviated form. It is, however, certain that they must have been known, for a bronze foot exactly like the feet of the present tripod was found in 1878 behind a sculptured slab in the Palace of Sennacherib, at Kouyunjik.<sup>4</sup> Again, in the "Room of the Bronzes", at Nimrud, Layard found fragments of at least half a dozen tripods made of bronze and iron, of which only the bronze portions now in the British Museum survive, the iron being mostly rusted away. With the



FIG. 2. Shield, side view.

aid, however, of the present example they may be reconstructed, and will be eventually shown to be very similar to it.

(3) (Mus. Inv. 11045.) Bronze shield, perhaps used as a lid for a cauldron. Its rim is broken off, but from its present edge it rises 10 cm. to a raised centre; maximum surviving diameter 0·55 m. On the inner side are attached a large handle of semicircular shape, tubular in section, and on either side of it two smaller clips in the shape of a letter  $\Pi$ . The handle is anchored at each end by three rivets, and the clips by two; the heads of these rivets rise in the form of studs on the outer surface of the shield.

Compare the shield from Toprak Kale, Barnett, loc. cit., p. 11, fig. 8. Layard found a pair of shields at Nimrud, in the Room of the Bronzes (*Nineveh and Babylon*, p. 193). These were somewhat similar, but did not rise to a pointed centre and lacked the  $\Pi$ -shaped clips. The diameter of the larger he reported to be 2 ft. 6 in. (76 cm.). This shield is now in the British Museum. (Plate XV, and Fig. 2.)

<sup>1</sup> S. Smith, *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum from Shalmaneser III to Sennacherib*, Pl. XLVII.

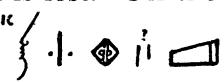
<sup>2</sup> Botta, *Monument de Ninive*, Pl. 141.

<sup>3</sup> Thureau-Dangin and others, *Tell Ahmar*, Fig. 9, Pl. XXV.

<sup>4</sup> B.M. 91252.

(4) (Mus. Inv. 10750.) Bronze vase with rounded belly, sharply offset from the neck, which in its turn has a small roll both at the lip and at its junction with the belly. The foot is raised to form a small ring base. Neck and belly apparently made all in one piece. There are two small holes on the shoulder  $\cdot 0075$  m. apart. There are holes in the lower part of the belly caused by rusting. Height  $\cdot 325$  m., diameter  $\cdot 36$  m. (Plate XVI, 3).

The purpose of the two holes on the shoulder is obscure. It is possible that they were intended for a string or thong to pass through for suspending or manipulating the vessel. Two similar holes, however, were bored in vases of exactly the same shape in clay found in the Urartian cremation burial-ground at Malaklyu, near Iğdir, on the north slope of Mount Ararat.<sup>1</sup>

(5) (Mus. Inv. 11046.) Bronze vase similar to last, but with the twin holes in the shoulder closer together. The under-belly has a large hole caused by rust, and part of the neck is lost. On the shoulder is incised an inscription in Hittite hieroglyphs : “ a-wa-ku-x-tu. Height  $\cdot 375$  m., diameter  $\cdot 32$  m., diameter of neck  $\cdot 12$  m. (Plate XVI, 1, 4).

(6) (Mus. Inv. 10749.) Bronze vase similar to last, but neck made separately and secured to belly with rivets. These were attached from the inside and brazed on, and their points then filed down on the outside so that they are quite invisible. On the shoulder two drilled holes 7 cm. apart. The foot, though broken away by rust, survives. Height originally about  $\cdot 365$  m., diameter  $\cdot 37$  m., diameter of neck  $\cdot 14$  m. (Plate XVI, 2).

(7) (Mus. Inv. 10751.) Bronze vase as last. Neck and part of shoulder destroyed. Maximum surviving height  $\cdot 33$  m., diameter  $\cdot 35$  m.

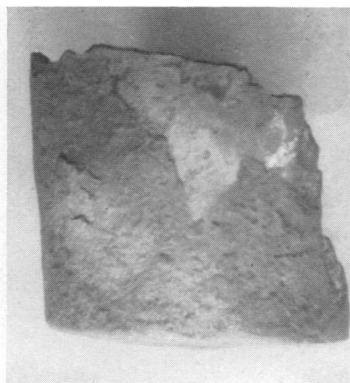
(8) (Mus. Inv. 10752.) Bronze three-footed stand of uncertain purpose, the top of which is fitted with loops. This object,  $\cdot 92$  m. high, rested on three feet shaped as sheep's hooves. One, however, is now lost, and has been replaced by a model. (The horizontal reinforcement wires binding the feet to each other are modern.) At the junction of the three feet is a solid vertical member, cast and filed. On its under-side it is shaped as a hemisphere, decorated with flutes resembling an inverted bowl (this decoration occurs in a similar position on the Urartian tripod at Erlangen<sup>2</sup>). On its upper face this piece divides into five arms which act as sockets for five vertical bars fitted into them, one central, the others around it. These bars are held at their upper ends by an X-shaped horizontal member, through the ends of which they branch out to grasp four horizontal rings  $\cdot 12$ – $\cdot 13$  m. in diameter. The central bar alone rises through the middle of the X to hold a circular ring by means of four curved arms.

<sup>1</sup> Kuftin, *Urartskii 'Kolumbari' u Podoshey Ararata i Kuro-araksskii Eneolit*, (*Vestnik Gos. Muzea Gruzii*, XIII B.) Tiflis. [I owe to Professor Gordon Childe my thanks for making his copy of this work available to me. It is hoped to publish a summary of it elsewhere—R. D. B.]

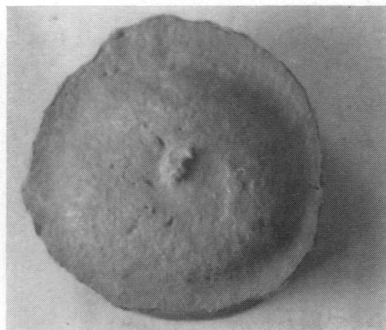
<sup>2</sup> Reproduced in Barnett, “Excavations of the British Museum at Toprak Kale” *Iraq*, XII, 1950 Fig. 13.



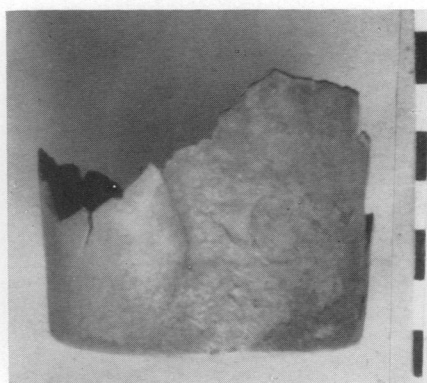
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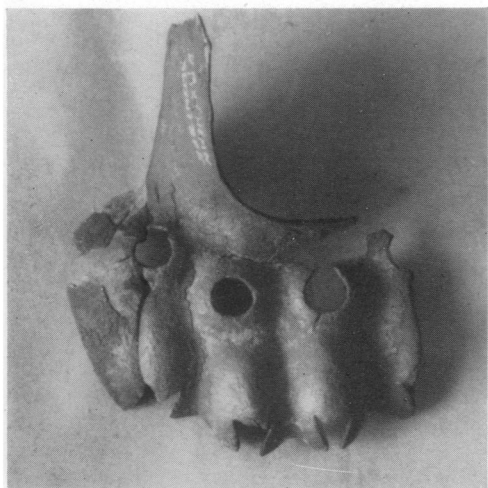
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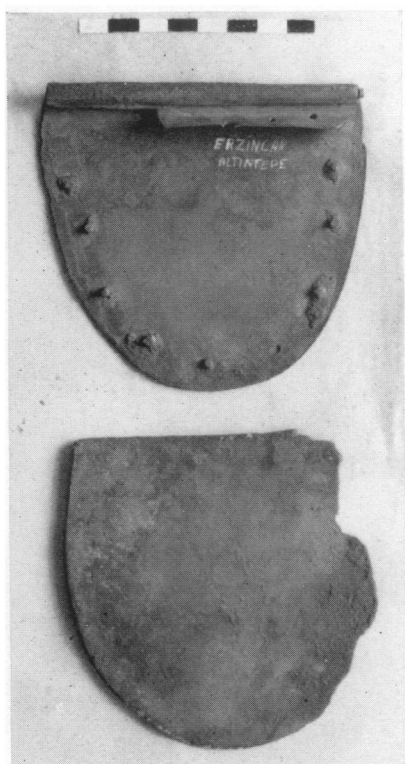


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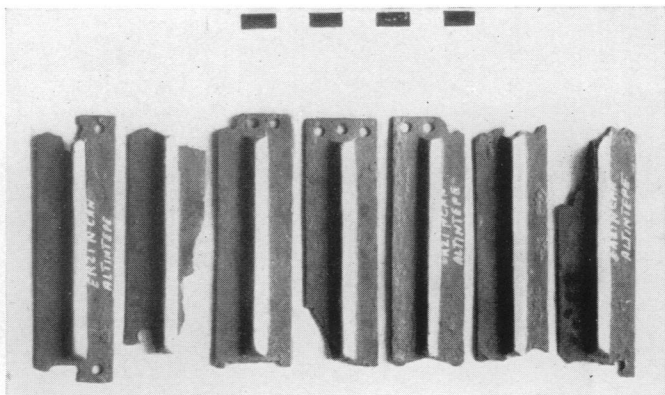


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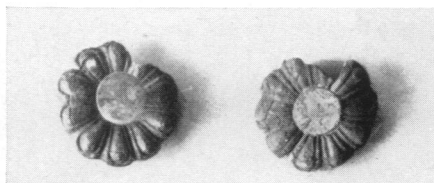
Cups of bronze (1) and silver (2-4) with lid and pieces of furniture (5-6) from Altun Tepe.



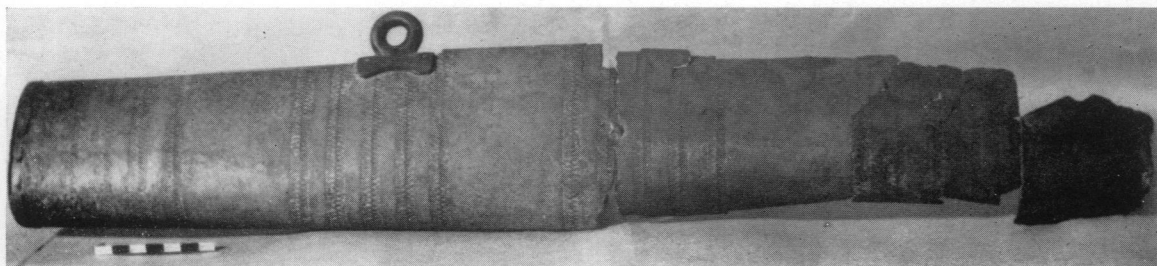
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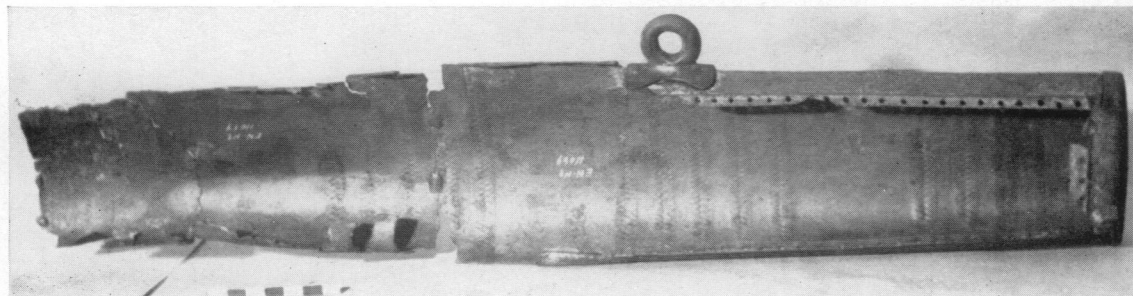
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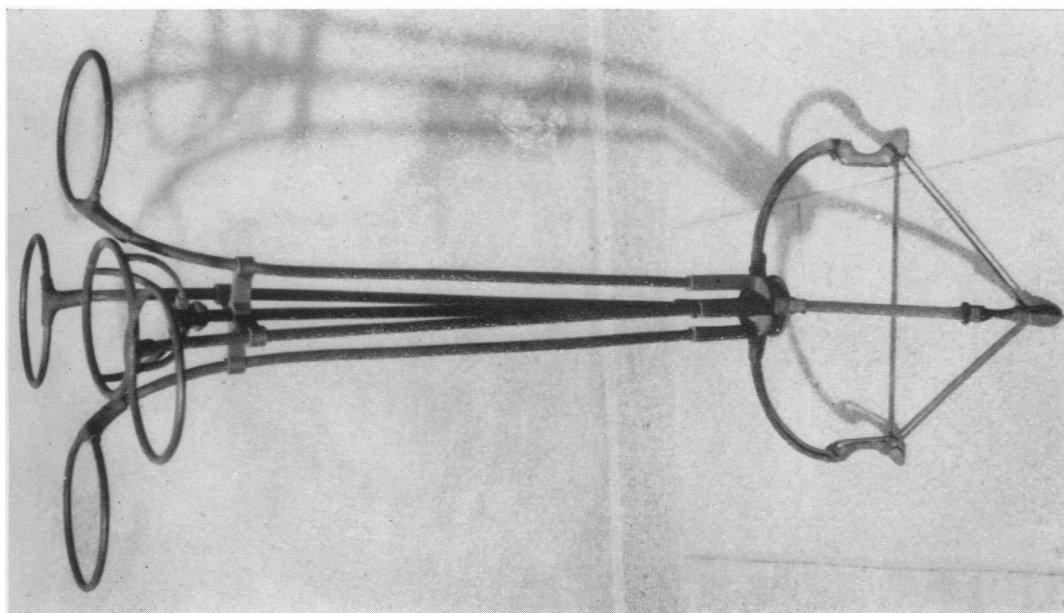


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5

(1) Cheek-pieces, (2) scale armour, (3) handles, (4-5) quiver from Altun Tepe.



2



1

1. Detail of cauldron. 2. Tripod stand.



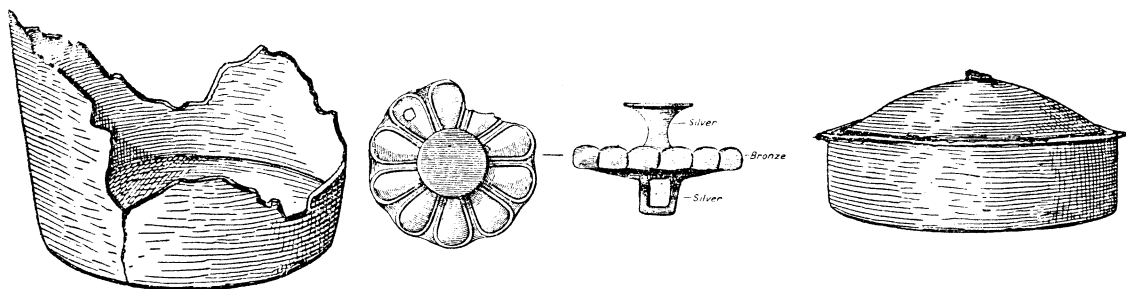
The purpose of this extraordinary piece of furniture can only be conjectured. It was perhaps intended to hold lamps, cups or offerings, perhaps four cups in the side rings and a basin or bowl in the centre. Published v.d.O., pl. IXd. (Fig. 4 and Pl. XIX, 2).

(9) (Mus. Inv. 11044.) Cup, yellowish metal, probably bronze, with vertical sides and slightly rounded bottom. Two rust holes in the base. Height 0.095 m., diameter 0.135 m. On the outer face of the base an inscription in Hittite hieroglyphs  $\Theta \parallel \approx = \parallel \supset$  *x-ā-mu(?) -tu(?) -a-x*, written from right to left.

Perhaps this cup was intended to stand with others on the rings of No. 8. (Pl. XVII, 1).

(10)–(13) Remains of three silver cups, much broken and corroded. The lower portions of two of these cups are illustrated. From other fragments it appears that they had a horizontal lip and perhaps a lid (13), which is shown seen from above in Pl. XVII, 3.

Diameter of cups at base 0.05 m. ; of lid, 0.07 m. (Pl. XVII, 2, 4, and Figs. 3, 5).



FIGS. 3–5. Silver cup and lid, and bronze and silver knobs.

(14)–(17) Four knobs or handles in the form of rosettes, of bronze with raised silver centres, which are continued through the lid to form stirrup-shaped loops on the inner side. These objects seem to be handles of lids, perhaps of wood. If they were of this material it would justify the stirrup-shaped loops, in which there are traces of nail holes.

Two are complete, two are fragmentary. Height 0.023 m., width 0.04 m. (Fig. 4, Pl. XVIII, 3).

(18) and (19) Two pieces of bronze, roughly half oval in shape, originally fixed with a row of rivets to a lining of some material, perhaps leather. Across the diameter of the oval are remains of a hinge. Perhaps these are cheek-pieces of a helmet?

Size : 0.11 × 0.105 m.

They are shown in the photograph seen from opposite sides. On the original outer side, it will be noticed, the heads of the rivets have been smoothed down and are invisible (Pl. XVIII, 1, a and b).

(20) Some fifty-two scales of scale-armour in bronze, rectangular, each with a raised ridge running centrally from top to bottom. Twenty pieces are more or less complete, the remainder much broken. At each end of

each piece there are three holes for sewing it on to a background, presumably a jerkin of leather.

Size per piece :  $\cdot 078$  m. long,  $\cdot 024$  m. wide (Pl. XVIII, 2, Fig. 6, 1).

Scale armour seems to have been invented in north-west Syria in the Late Bronze Age. Scales somewhat similar in type, having a central raised

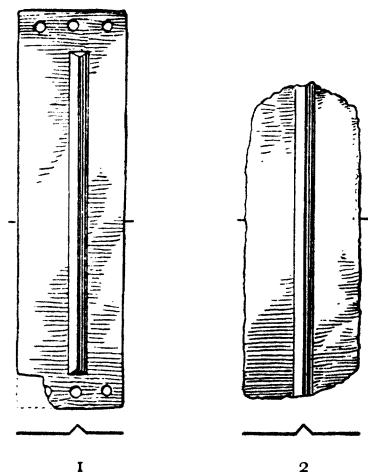



FIG. 6. Scale armour.

ridge on each scale, have been found at Nuzi, Atshana and Cyprus.<sup>1</sup> It is depicted as worn by Syrians on the chariot of Thothmes IV and by Assyrian soldiers on sculptures from Kuyunjik.

(21) Fragments of four pieces of iron scale-armour, much rusted. The scales are in this case rounded at one end. They possess the central raised ridge, but holes for sewing do not seem to have survived.

Size :  $\cdot 06$  m. long  $\times$   $\cdot 04$  m. wide (Fig. 6, 2).

(22) (Mus. Inv. 11049.) Quiver-case. In its present state of preservation this object presents the appearance of a long box, now  $\cdot 63$  m. long,  $\cdot 085$  m. wide and  $\cdot 045$  m. deep. In section it is almost almond-shaped. The whole of one long side was apparently once covered with some material made separately, perhaps leather, which was attached to a row of holes in the bronze. The almond-shaped ends were made separately but fitted to the long sides with small rivets. Along its length, on one side only, in the angle between the two long sides which thus form the point of the almond, there are traces of a long rod, perhaps of wood, now perished, which was apparently used to stiffen the framework of the object. This was especially necessary, as from this side it was suspended originally by two rings, of which one only survives, no doubt being slung from them round the body of the archer. It is decorated on the outside with a number of narrow bands of dog-tooth pattern  arranged in groups of five. This pattern recurs

<sup>1</sup> Starr, *Nuzi*, Pl. 126 and pp. 475 ff. ; Chariot of Thothmes IV : Wreszinski, *Atlas*, II, Pl. 1. Cyprus : *Swedish Cyprus Expedition*, II, Pl. CL ; IV, Pt. 2, pp. 132-3, Fig. 20 ; cf. Minns, *Scythians and Greeks*, p. 231.

on the helmet of Sardur found at Karmir Blur<sup>1</sup> and on the silver object found at Ziwiye, also in granulation on a gold lion's head from Susa found in the foundation deposit of In-shushinak (Plate XVIII, 4 and 5).

A quiver found at Hassanlu, south of Lake Urmia, published in *Basitan-i-shenasi* (Teheran), Vol. I, 1951, p. 72, containing remains of arrows, is said to be .355 m. high and .09–.125 m. wide. This appears to have been bronze on the one side, with leather or a similar material, now lost, on the other. A quiver, also of bronze, of tubular shape but again faced along one side apparently with leather, was found at Karmir Blur.<sup>2</sup> It was decorated with eight incised bands showing chariots and ritual scenes and was .66 m. long. Egyptian arrows in the British Museum vary in length between .66 m. and 1.05 m.

(23)–(25) Remains of three frills in the form of hanging palm-leaves, originally the ornament from the legs of a bed or chair. They are poorly made of thin bronze sheet, and the central hole is not strictly central.

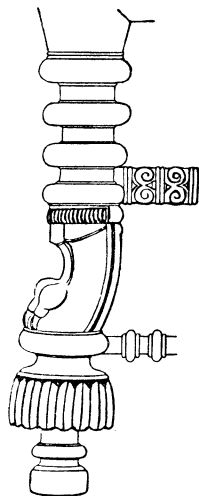


FIG. 7. Part of Persian throne.

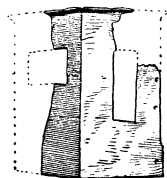


FIG. 8. Piece of ornament.

Diameter .09 m., height .04 m. (Plate XVII, 6).

(26)–(27) Remains of two feet from a bed or chair, in the form of lions' paws, also made of thin bronze sheet.

Maximum surviving width .085 m. (Plate XVII, 5).

(28) Numerous pieces of thin bronze sheet forming an ornament encasing furniture legs. Twenty-seven are more or less complete, four to six are more or less in fragments. These pieces, when put together four at a time, form a pattern of double volutes often represented on Assyrian furniture. They were originally nailed to the wooden cross-bars or legs of the piece of furniture by means of rivets, which are still visible on the inner side of the bronze. They have each a small offset rim which bears drilled dots, varying in number from one to four. These are obviously

<sup>1</sup> Barnett and Watson, "Russian Excavations in Armenia," *Iraq*, XIV, 1952, Fig. 15.

<sup>2</sup> loc. cit., Pl. XXXII, 1.

intended to indicate to the carpenter either the side of the object to which they belong or their relation to one another. A throne with decoration of this type was found at Nimrud, in the north-west palace. It appears to belong to the time of Sargon (B.M. 115502). A fragment of Persian sculpture showing all these decorative elements duly combined is also in the British Museum <sup>1</sup> (B.M. 118847) (Fig. 7, Plate XV, 3-5).

(29) Piece of casing with window-shaped pieces cut out and an offset rim, the whole shaped to form a right-angle. This piece is evidently intended to strengthen the joints of a piece of furniture. It has a row of rivet holes in the interior on one side.

Height .097 m. (Fig. 8).

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Von der Osten suggested in his publication that we have here the armour, equipment and tomb furnishings of an Urartian soldier whose military duties lay in guarding the east-west road from Erzurum to Erzincan. Whether this simple explanation, that the material comes all from one grave or chamber tomb, should be accepted to-day, is not quite so certain. The excavations conducted in 1913 by P. F. Petrov, at Malaklyu, on the north slope of Mount Ararat, disclosed a number of clay vases, similar to those found at Erzincan in bronze, containing incineration burials, while one alone was associated with an inhumation. Kuftin, in an important publication, recently drew attention to this excavation and proved that the cemetery in question was of Urartian date.<sup>2</sup> The possibility must therefore be borne in mind that the material from Erzincan represents not one but several inhumation or cremation graves, or perhaps a find of domestic or temple equipment.

These objects from Altın Tepe show with a few exceptions a very high degree of metallurgical skill, which we have learnt to expect from Urartian craftsmen. The exceptions are the remains of the chair or bedstead, which are of cheap, thin plating, whether because it was destined for the grave and thereby considered less important, or because metal was becoming scarce, we cannot say.

The use of Hittite hieroglyphs on two of the vessels is a remarkable detail. At Toprak Kale parts of the sacred throne of the god Haldi were found to be incised with hieroglyphs which, however, belonged to a system differing from the Hittite. The present examples are undoubtedly Hittite and not Urartian. It may be presumed that they are personal names and may indicate either that the vases inscribed with them were made in Hittite territory or perhaps that their owners spoke Hittite, or alternatively that Hittite influence had established itself at this date well beyond the frontiers where it originated. This is supported by the fact that two existing small-basalt sculptures in a provincial Hittite style were recently

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<sup>1</sup> Barnett, *Iraq*, XII, 1950, Pl. IV, 2.

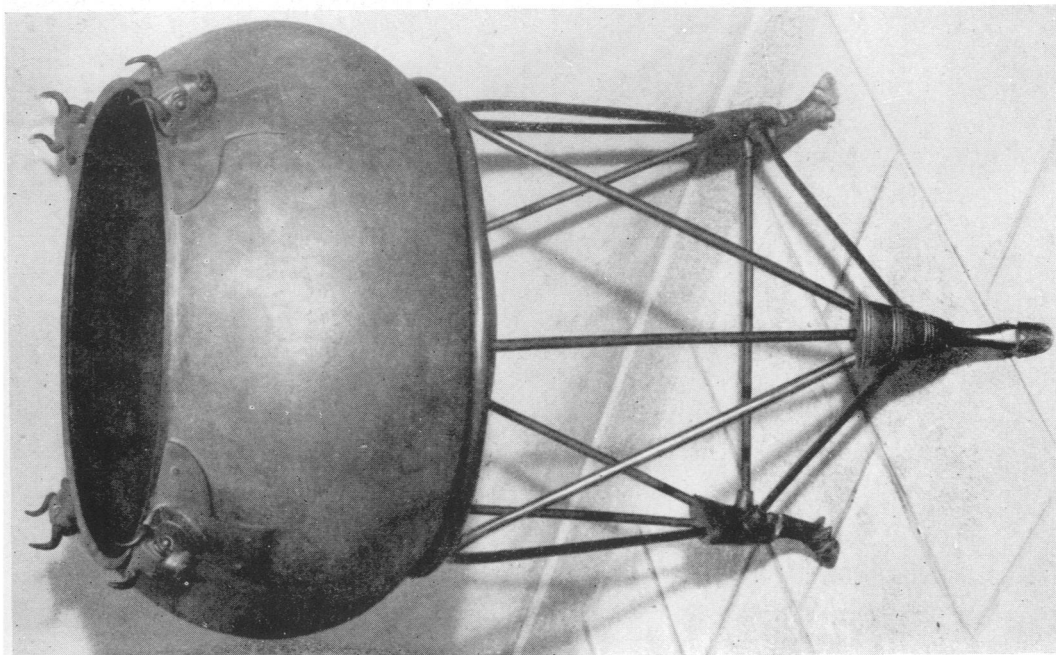
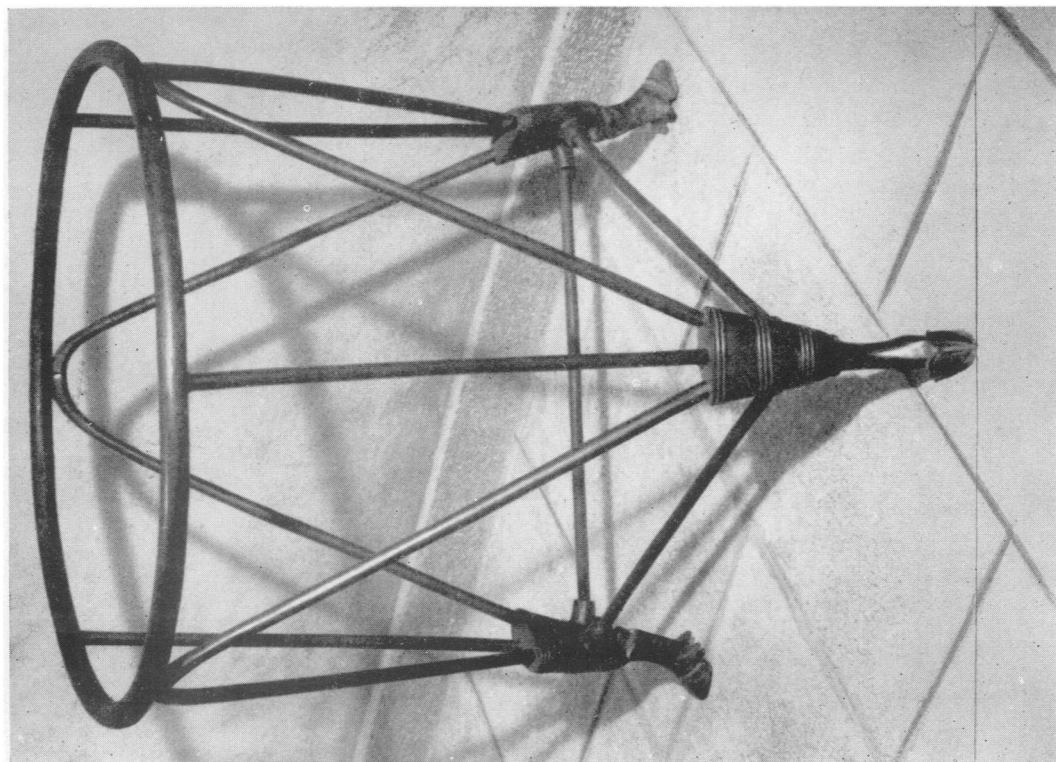
<sup>2</sup> See above, p. 100.

discovered at Erzurum and are now in the museum at Ankara. One represents a figure of a goddess walking, the other a roaring lion.

Regarding the date of these bronzes, we have not as yet very much by which to judge them. The bowl with the bulls' heads is very similar to that which must have existed at Toprak Kale, but of which only the bulls' heads survived. That piece was perhaps of the late 8th or early 7th century B.C. The style of the present bulls' heads is more summary. A good example of the Urartian skill in depicting these animals at their best is shown by a head formerly in the Brummer Collection, now in the Metropolitan Museum in New York. But even this piece is not dated, and from discoveries at Karmir Blur, where a clay vase with bulls' heads was found, it is clear that the taste for this type of object continued till the end of the 7th century. The tripod has closest affinities in the style of its feet to the candelabrum found at Toprak Kale. Comparison has already been made with the furniture in the palace at Nimrud. The Hittite script would not be inconsistent with a date in the early 7th century, when the Phrygian kingdom (which used it) was at its height, before the Cimmerian invasion had taken place. All in all, a date in the late 8th or early part of the 7th century B.C. seems likely.

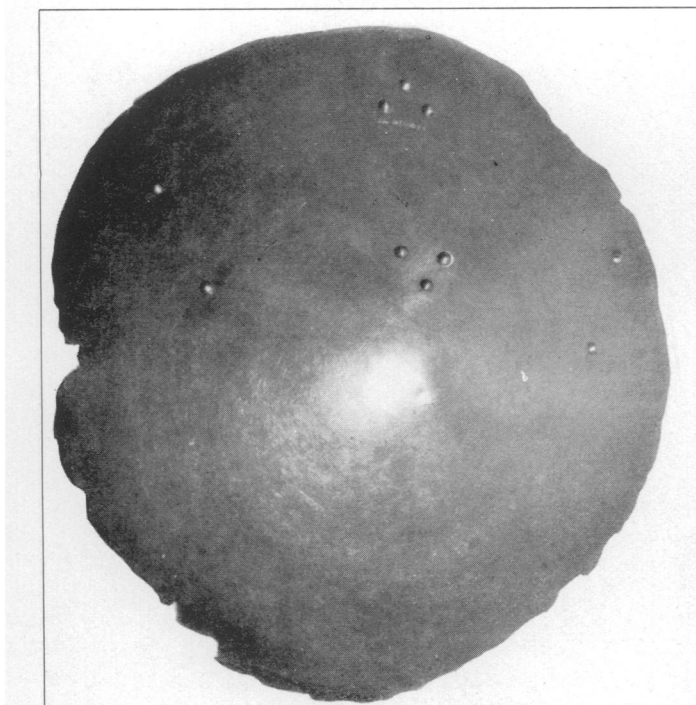
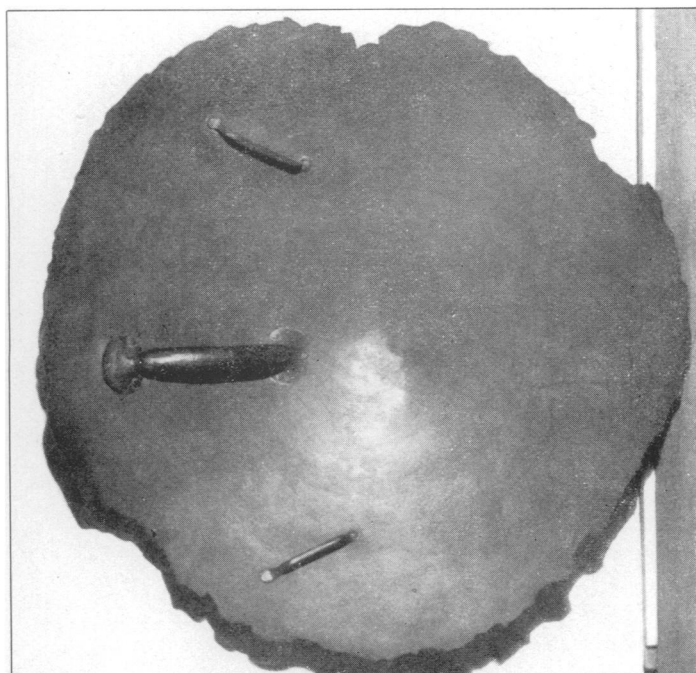


Urartian cauldron and tripod from Altun Tepe.

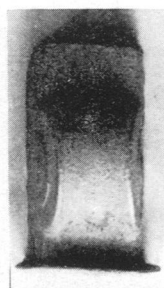


Urartian cauldron and tripod from Alun Tepe.

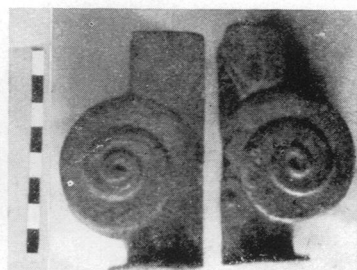




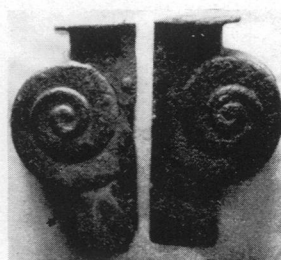
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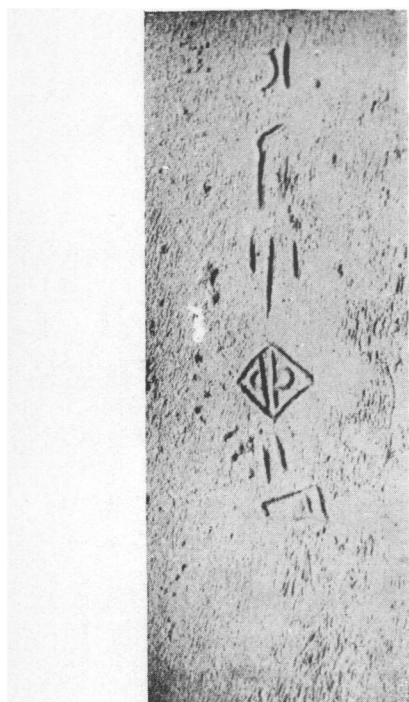


3

1

1, 2. Two views of shield. 3-5. Fragments of furniture ornament, from Alun Tepe.





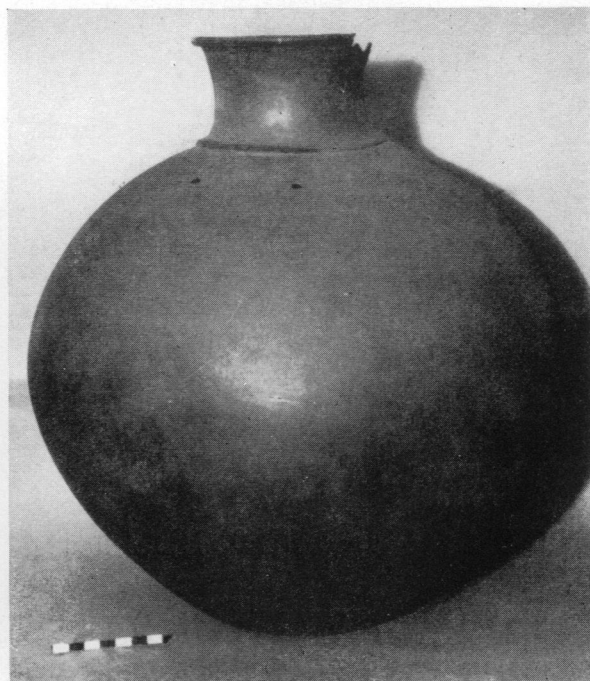
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2



3



4

2-4. Bronze vases from Altun Tepe.

1. Hittite hieroglyphic inscription on 4.