

A FRAGMENTARY URARTIAN BELT IN THE DİYARBAKIR MUSEUM

by RAFET ÇAVUŞOĞLU

Bronze belts are widely attested in the Urartian civilisation. The belts are made of thin sheet bronze, and have embossed and chased decorations. They are generally about 70-120 cm long and about 5,5-17 cm wide¹. A belt in the Diyarbakır Museum (inv. no. 16.13.83) is noteworthy in terms of its unique type and iconography. A scene of a lion hunt is engraved on the right end of the belt. It is unique in depicting only one topic: a hunting scene (Fig. 1-3)².

The fragment is 16 cm long, 6,2 cm wide and 0,2 cm thick and its outer border is marked with an embossed line. Two holes pass through the belt at the right end and another one on the top and at the bottom (Fig. 1, 3). The holes differ slightly from those in the Urartian examples³ already known to us and this suggests that the belt was used in a different way (Fig. 1, 3). The fragment may have been attached with rivet holes to the right end of a thick cloth or leather strip (Fig. 4). It is also possible that there may well have been an identical one at the left end of the belt (Fig. 4). It is known that the ends of the Urartian belts have generally more elaborate decorations⁴ and differed from Assyrian and late Hittite examples⁵. This supports the view that the belt under study was attached to a cloth or piece of leather. This represents a new example of the Urartian belt tradition and thus sets it apart from other metal belts.

The design of the belt ending consists of a panel containing a large-scale representation of a lion hunt. The hunter on the right is riding a horse, holding the reins in his left hand and thrusting the spear with his right hand into the lion running on his right side. The wounded lion, on its hind legs, turns its head back, with its left paw raised and sweeping upwards. There is also a winged hunter (the representation of a divinity?) to the left of the lion. His right knee is bent and he is stepping forward with his left leg, thrusting a spear towards the lion's chest. There are also two figures of wild birds (eagles) in the panel: one is flying behind the rider and the other is between the hunter and the lion on the top right⁶. Finally a sacred tree is incised to the left of the hunting scene.

¹ Kellner 1991a, 21-22 Pl. 1-88.

² Special thanks are due to Prof. Dr. Veli Sevin for his help and guidance, to Necdet İnal, the director of Diyarbakır museum, for giving permission to analyse the belt and publish it, and to the archaeologist Nevin Soyukara, for helping me during my works.

³ Kellner 1991a: 17, Pl. 66-71/251-282; Çavuşoğlu 2002: 44-46, Pl. 293-344.

⁴ Kellner 1991a: 13, Pl. 2-88/15-448; Çavuşoğlu 2002: 157, Pl. 62-271.

⁵ Kendall 1977: 36, Fig. 6a,b,c,d.

⁶ Wild birds in battlefield are seen both in Assyrian and Urartian representational art: Saggs 1962: 480, Pl. 47; Reade 1983: 20, Pl. 22, 46; Çilingiroğlu 1991: 15f., Fig. 1; Bahşaliyev 1997: 41vd. Fig. 26; Belli 1998: 76, Pl. 43, 46, Fig. 17; Çavuşoğlu 2002: 41, 118, Fig. 52, Pl. 242, 243.

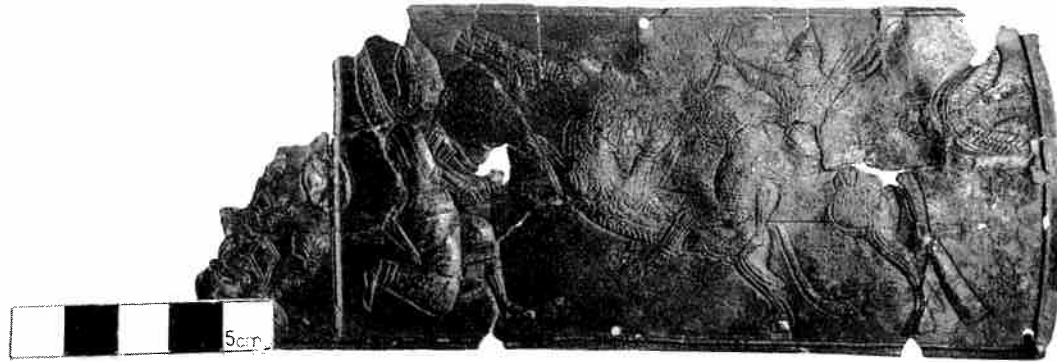


Fig. 1.

The hunter on horseback, wearing a short-sleeved shirt and a decorated tunic stretching to his knees, is a dynamic and powerful figure. He has a conical helmet and a quiver in which there are a bow and two arrows. The trappings of the tall, slim horse and its muscles are shown in detail. The tail of the horse is knotted at the rump level and falls parallel to its hind legs (Fig. 2). The winged hunter is larger than the rider and wears a short-sleeved shirt, a long ornamented skirt, and a short tunic decorated with small circles. He also has a conical and possibly horned (?) helmet. The front leg of the injured lion is rather short and fully drawn. It seems that the raised left leg of the lion was added later to the body. The lion's mouth is open, the eyes are almond-shaped and the ears round. The animal is snarling and its mane is drawn with concave double lines like a fire ball. The body of the lion is divided into two parts, with the bottom line vertically drawn and the top line defined with short, broken lines (Fig. 2).

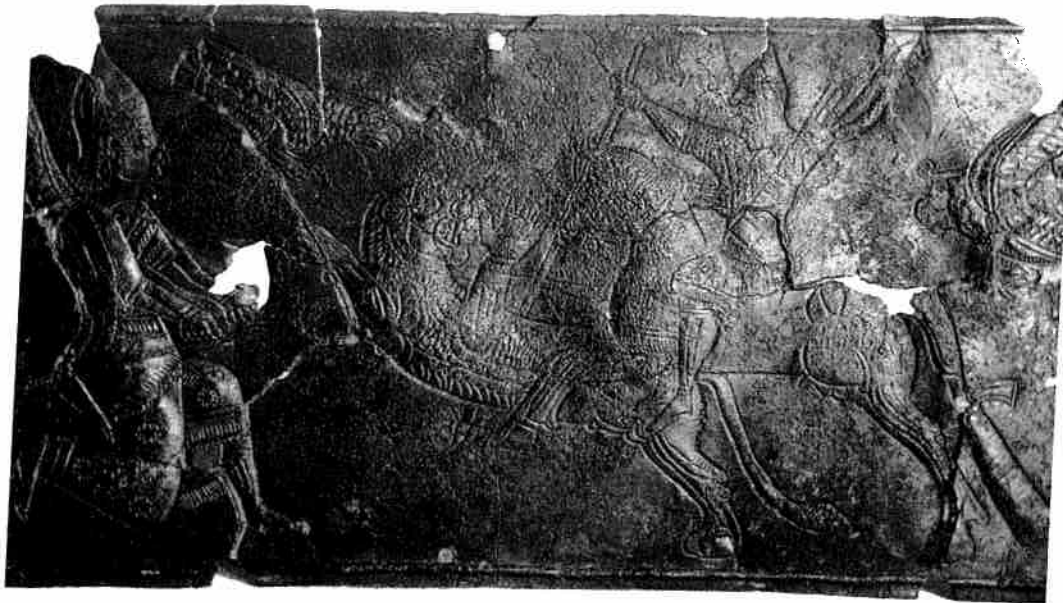


Fig. 2.

Hunting compositions generally depicting a royal hunt are common in Urartian metalwork. The subjects of war and hunting were combined on a few of the belts and these scenes furnish a lively representation of the period⁷. The lion hunt represented on our fragment is different from other decorated belts in being placed inside a panel, like the belts depicting royal hunts in Adana⁸, New York⁹, and Paris¹⁰ Museums. In these three examples the riders hunt lions. On the New York belt a lion wounded by a spear is in running position, on the Paris belt the hunter is about to thrust his spear into the lion, whilst on the Adana belt the rider is turning his head and running after the lion. The lion-hunting scenes on these three belts, repeated side by side and on top of each other, are not very lively. In terms of iconography, the representation of hunting on the Diyarbakır belt is more vivid.

From the third millennium B.C. onward in the Near East, scenes representing the hunting of wild animals like lions were symbols of nobility and power, and were often depicted on palace reliefs¹¹. The most famous reliefs of royal hunts are those commissioned by Assurbanipal for his palace at Nineveh, built about 645 B.C.¹². There are also some other examples in late Hittite art. Among these there are the

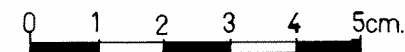
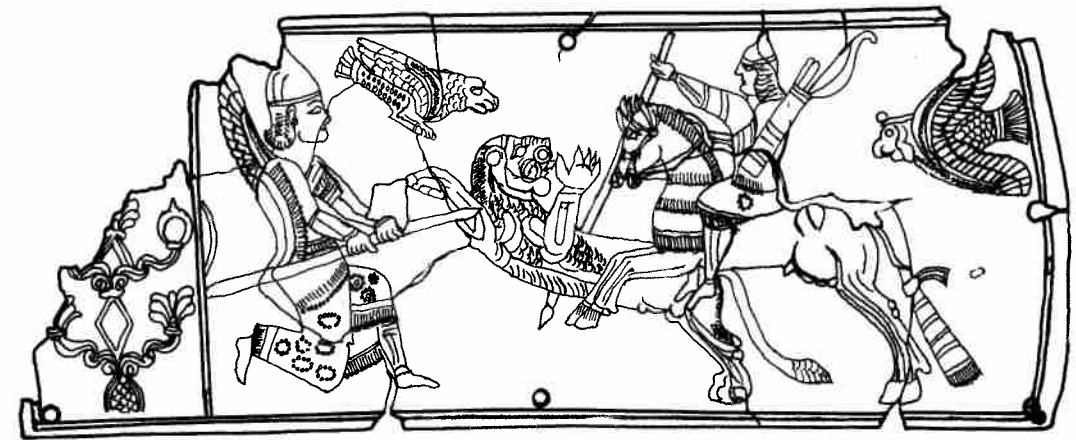


Fig. 3.

⁷ For the belts with hunting and war scenes, see. Burney 1966: 77-78, Fig. 10, Pl. IXb, XIb; Kellner 1991a: 32-33, Fig. 10, Pl. 8-9/33-36; Çavuşoğlu 2002: 34, 53f, 168f. Fig. 4, Pl. 10-19, 26, 29. See also V. Sevin «Elazığ Müzesi'nden Bir Kemer ve Urartu Narratizmi», *Festschrift Güven Arsebük* (in print).

⁸ Taşyürek 1977: 153, Fig. 1, Pl. 6.

⁹ Kellner 1991b: 150, Pl. 9.

¹⁰ Kellner 1991b: 150, Pl. 10.

¹¹ Madhloom 1970: 30, Pl. XIV/3,5,6; Darga 1992: 239, Fig. 245, 246.

¹² Barnett 1970: 30, Pl. XVIII; Reade 1983: 57f. Fig. 80, 83, 84.

wounded lion looking back from Kargamiş¹³, on relief blocks, and the hunter thrusting a spear into a lion on the Sakçagözü¹⁴ relief blocks. These scenes are similar to those on the Diyarbakır belt. The enormous influence of Assyrian art on late Hittite art (middle of the 9th century B.C.) suggests that the source for these scenes was Assyria¹⁵. Although in Urartian art there is no direct figurative evidence of kings on horseback joining the hunts, these representations may certainly represent royal hunts. On our belt, however, the most important element is the winged figure helping the hunter (fig. 1-4). This may well be an expression of divine assistance which is a completely new phenomenon in both Urartian and Assyrian iconographies, already seen in some of the Assyrian records from Tiglat-Pileser I onwards¹⁶.

In order to date our belt the hunter and, in particular, the style used to depict the lion are important elements. We see similar examples of a suffering and wounded lion turning its head and left flank from the middle of the 7th century B.C. in Assyrian art at Nineveh¹⁷. On the other hand, the development of the style of the sacred tree in the Urartian art is also an important factor. On the belts the sacred tree¹⁸ is usually placed at the right end in a rectangular frame, but on our piece it is placed on the left of the hunting scene (Fig. 1, 3). At the beginning of the 8th century B.C. the sacred trees in Urartian art have branches ending in buds. In the period of kings Arğišti I

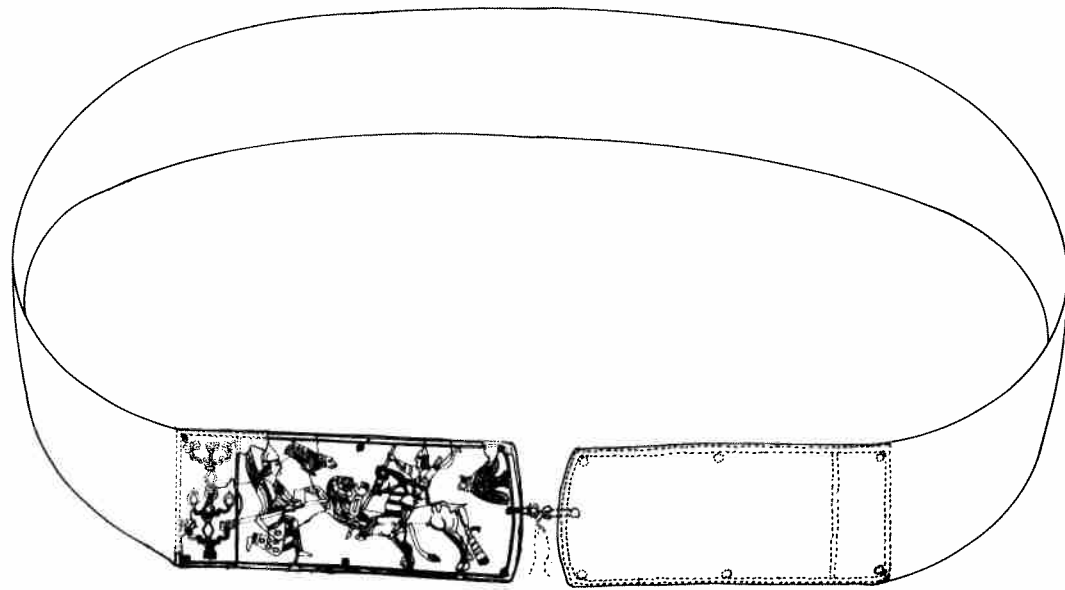


Fig. 4.

(786-764 B.C.)¹⁹ and Sarduri II (764-734 B.C.)²⁰ the trees are depicted inside a cartouche, this representation then continuing to the end of the century. In the 7th century, especially under Rusa II (685-645 B.C.), either palmette leaves or pomegranate flowers or buds are depicted at the end of the branches of the sacred trees. The sacred trees can be seen in all the artwork produced during the rule of Rusa II, and above all in that from Toprakkale²¹, the Ayanis *susi* temple²², and on some seal impressions²³. The sacred tree on the belt in the Diyarbakır Museum is similar to those of the time of Rusa II. Hence, in the light of the development of the sacred tree in Urartian art and the existence of similar examples in Assyrian art, we can propose that our belt with the hunting scene dates to the end of the reign of Rusa II, that is, to the first half of the 7th century B.C.

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¹³ Madhloom 1970: 32, Pl. VI/5; Darga 1992: 239, Fig. 246.

¹⁴ Madhloom 1970: 27, Pl. XIII/2.

¹⁵ Darga 1992: 239.

¹⁶ Grayson 1976, 16/43, (VI 58).

¹⁷ Barnett 1970: 30, Pl. XVIII; Salvatori 1976: 79; Reade 1983: 57, Fig. 80, 83, 84.

¹⁸ Kellner 1991a: 55, Pl. 45/175; 54/206; 55/208,211; 57/213,221; 63/235,240; Çavuşoğlu 2002: Pl. 221, 258, 270, 271, 139, 237, 239, 242, 268, 269.

¹⁹ van Loon 1966: 118, Pl. XXVI/b; Piotrovsky 1969: 160, Pl. 94-96.

²⁰ van Loon 1966: 176, Pl. XXVII; Piotrovsky 1969: 157, Pl. 93.

²¹ Barnett 1950: 5, Pl. 2; Seidl 1994: 70, Pl. 7/1, 9/2; Seidl 2001: 447, 448, Fig. 4, 8.

²² Çilingiroğlu 2001: 42f, Figs. 19-23.

²³ Salvini 2001: 316-318, Figs. 1-6, 8a-f; Abay 2001: 323f. Fig. 1, 2, 3, 5, 15, Pl. I, II.

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