An Evaluation of the "Luristan Bronzes" in Istanbul University Rıdvan Çelikel Archaeology Museum (IURAM) in Comparison to the Luristan Bronzes Found in Archaeological Excavations*

Arkeolojik Kazılarda Bulunmuş Örneklerden, Luristan Bronzları Üzerine Bir Değerlendirme: İstanbul Üniversitesi Rıdvan Çelikel Müzesi'ndeki Luristan Bronzları

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Keywords: Luristan bronzes, Iron Age material culture, typology and authenticity, museum collection.

Abstract: Luristan bronzes have been of popular interest for European museums and private collectors since the early 20th century when archaeological expeditions to the region also began. Despite ongoing archaeological excavations in Luristan, illicit digging and large-scale looting of cemeteries continued as did the purchasing of artifacts by museums and private collectors around the world. These circumstances present a great impediment to the systematic study, typological classification, and chronological assessment of Luristan bronzes. Prof. Mehmet Özdoğan (pers. comm.) informs us that the Luristan bronzes housed in the IURAM were purchased by Kurt Bittel from a private collector named Hans von Aulock in the 1960s and were donated to the university. In this study, artifacts registered as "Luristan bronzes" in the IURAM collections are evaluated in the light of results from archeological excavations conducted in the Luristan Province of Iran. Unfortunately, systematic excavations are scanty in the region. Excavations at Pusht-i Kuh, Surkh-i Dum, and Sangtarashan, however, have yielded notable finds.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Luristan bronzları, Demir Çağı materyal kültürü, tipoloji ve özgünlük, müze koleksiyonu.*

Özet: *Luristan Bronzları, 20. yüzyılın başlarından itibaren, bölgeye yönelik arkeolojik keşiflerin de başladığı dönemde, Avrupa müzeleri ve özel koleksiyonerler için popüler bir ilgi konusu olmuştur. Luristan'da arkeolojik kazılar devam etmesine rağmen, kaçak kazılar ve mezarlıkların büyük ölçekli yağmalanması sürmüş, dünya genelindeki müzeler ve özel koleksiyonerler tarafından eser satın alma pratiği de devam etmiştir. Bu durum, Luristan bronzlarının sistematik incelenmesi, tipolojik sınıflandırılması ve kronolojik değerlendirilmesi önünde ciddi bir engel teşkil etmektedir. İURAM'da bulunan Luristan Bronzları ise, Prof. Dr. Mehmet Özdoğan'ın aktardığı bilgilere göre, 1960'lı yıllarda Kurt Bittel tarafından, Koleksiyoner Hans von Aulock'dan alınarak İstanbul Üniversitesi'ne bağışlanmıştır. Bu çalışmada, İURAM'daki eserler, Luristan'daki bilimsel arkeolojik kazılardan gelen veriler ışığında değerlendirilmiştir. Ne yazık ki bu kazıların sayıları oldukça azdır. Buna karşılık Pusht-i Kuh, Surkh-i Dum ve Sangtarashan kazıların hatırı sayılır bulgular vermesi açısından önemlidir.*

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"I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my advisor, Prof. Dr. Erkan Konyar."

Introduction

Luristan is a highland region situated in the central zone of the Zagros Mountains, surrounded by lowland plains of Hemedan to the north, Isfahan to the east, Huzistan to the south, and Elam to the east. Kabir Kuh, Kuh-e Safid, and Kuh-e Garin ranges define the topography of the region that has an altitude of 3000 meters above sea level (Fig. 1). Among these, the Kabir Kuh range splits Luristan into two regions called Pusht-i Kuh ("behind the mountain") and Pish-i Kuh ("in front of the mountain"), and the former is further split into two regions by the Kuh-i Safid. From north to south, the Harsin, Khawa, Dilfan, and Alishtar plains and plateaus are the main geographical features of the region east of the Kuh-i Safi. On the western side of the Kuh-e Safid range, the plains of Hulailan, Tarkhan, Kishmahar, Kuh-i Dasht, and Rumishgan stretch from north to south. In the Pusht-i Kuh region, Chardaval-Shirwan, Aivan, and Ilam plateaus and valleys lie north, and Arkavaz, Maimah, Salihabad, Bedir, Dar-i, and Abdanan plains and valleys lie west of the mountain range (vanden Berghe 1983: 13). Climate is characterized by rainy winters and dry summers in the region, and intermontane plains and valleys in the highlands provide habitable micro-climate niches. Topographic and climatic conditions of the region present an ideal environment for semi-nomadic communities practicing transhumant nomadism. High-altitude intermontane valleys in the northeast provide a cool habitat in the hot, dry summers, while the lowland plains and river valleys in the southwest provide an environmental niche with mild winters. Overall, these environmental conditions have contributed to the development of adaptive strategies and lifeways that involve inter-regional seasonal migration patterns (Overlaet 2013: 378).

Pastoralist nomads in the Pish-i Kuh region camp on the intermontane plains and highland pastures in Harsin, Dilfan, and Alishtar in the summer, and they camp on the Hulailan, Tarkhan, and Rumishgan plains in the winter. In Pusht-i Kuh, nomadic communities who camp on the highland pastures of the Kabir Kuh during the summer descend to the lowland plains in Salihabad for the winter. Pusht-i Kuh provides an ideal habitat for pastoral nomadism, while Pish-i Kuh is more suitable for permanent settlements sustainable by mixed farming and small-scale agriculture.

In the late 19th century, the British Museum, the Louvre, and other notable European and American museums began to purchase bronze idols allegedly originating from the Luristan Province of Iran. In Luristan, the earliest archaeological research was carried out in Pish-i Kuh by E. Herzfeld in 1928 (Herzfeld 1929: 65-75). Soon after, in 1930 A. Godard led an expedition to the regions east of Harsin for identifying the provenance of these bronze artifacts and published comprehensive monograph-length studies about Luristan (Godard 1931, 1954). In 1931-1932, R. Ghirshman and G. Contenau conducted excavations at Giyan with the objective of finding more Luristan bronzes (Contenau et al. 1935). Concurrently, also in 1931-1932, F. Stark led an expedition to Luristan and conducted extensive regional surveys (Stark 1933). In the 1930s, R. Dussaud

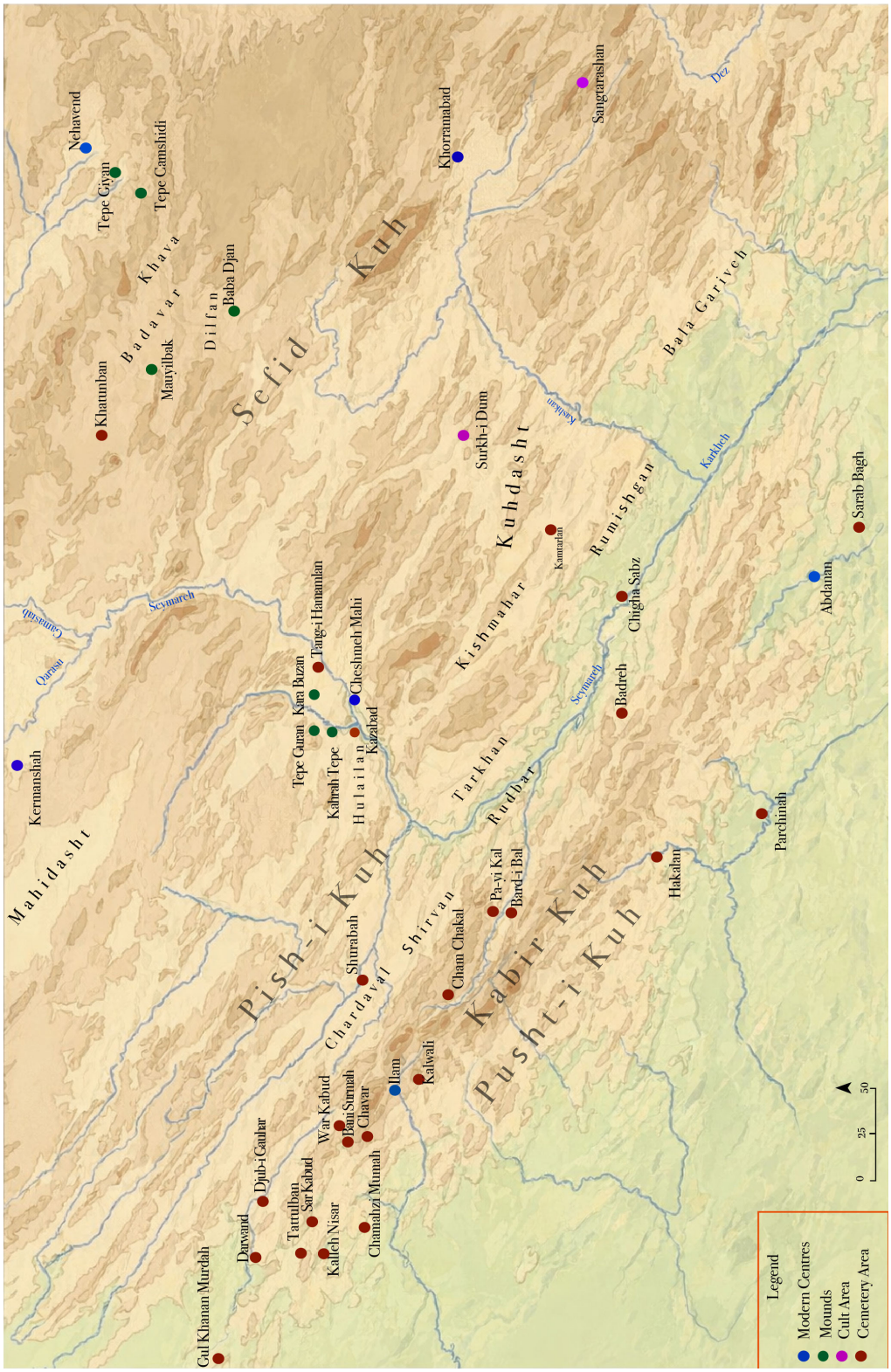

Figure 1. *The physical geography of Luristan Province (map by Ş. Kaya).*

published a typological study of the Luristan bronzes with a particular focus on spiked axes (Dussaud 1930), and in 1931, V. Minorsky published a chronological evaluation of the bronzes (Minorsky 1931; vanden Berghe 1983: 19). Concurrently, in the 1930s and the 1940s, many Luristan bronzes housed in museums and private collections were published, as well.

E. F. Schmidt's archaeological fieldwork in Pish-i Kuh conducted in 1934-1935 and 1937-1938 marks a turning point for the archaeology of Luristan. Especially the building remains excavated at Surkh-i Dum and the bronze artifacts found in this context provided evidence for the presence of Luristan bronzes in non-funerary contexts for the first time (Schmidt et al. 1989). Importantly, A. Stein's monograph titled *Old Routes of Western Iran* presented an extensive discussion of his 1936 expedition to Luristan including valuable information on the geographical and social characteristics of the region and calling attention to its archaeological potential (Stein 1940).

New archaeological excavations conducted in the Middle East and Caucasus after the Second World War led to the development of new scholarly approaches to the study of the Luristan bronzes. Based on the results from these excavations, C. Schaeffer dated the iconic bronze artifacts of the Luristan region to 1500-1200 BC (Schaeffer 1948). Subsequently, in 1964 E. Porada published a comprehensive typological reassessment of these bronze artifacts, in which she identified chronological categories and sub-types of the Luristan bronzes based on their iconographic aspects, material, and manufacturing technique, as well as a historical analysis of the inscriptions on bronzes and a stylistic analysis of the seals found together with the bronze artifacts (Porada 1964). Archaeological excavation projects in Luristan continued in this decade. In 1963-1964, a Danish archaeological expedition conducted excavations at Tepe Guran and other sites (Meldgaard et al. 1963; Thrane 1964; Thrane et al. 2001) and from 1966 to 1970, C. Goff directed archaeological excavations at Baba Djan in the Dilfan Valley (Goff 1968, 1976, 1977, 1978; vanden Berghe 1983: 26).

Systematic surveys and excavations of the Belgian Archaeological Mission (B.A.M.I.) in Pusht-i Kuh from 1965 to 1979, directed by Louis vanden Berghe under the auspices of Ghent University in collaboration with the Iran National Museum, constitute the foundations of the terminology and the chronological framework used for evaluating the material culture remains in Luristan (vanden Berghe 1968, 1983). New data and evidence from this regional project resulted in refined typological classifications of the Luristan bronzes (Amiet 1976; Calmeyer 1969; Moorey 1971a, 1971b, 1974a, 1974b; Muscarella 1988; vanden Berghe 1981, 1983; vanden Berghe et al. 1979).

Other archaeological excavations were initiated by Iranian archaeologists in this era like Khatunban excavations led by Ali Ekber Sarfaraz in 1975 and Ilam excavations in Pisht-i Kuh led by Mahmud Kordovani in 1976. Artifacts from these excavations registered in museum collections were studied by E. Haerinck and B. Overlaet in 2001-2003. Following this study, Haerinck and Overlaet went to Luristan in September 2003 with the objective

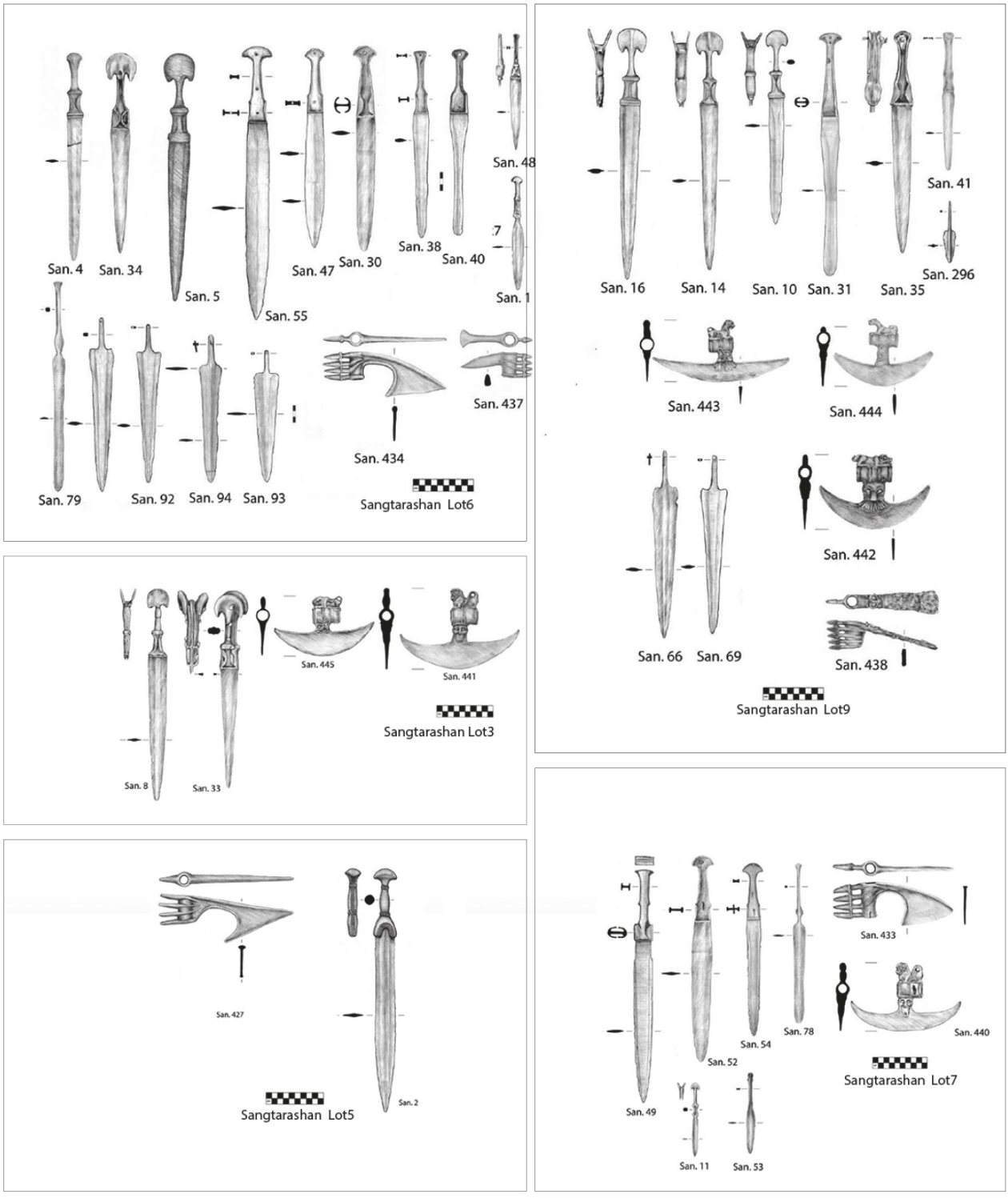

Figure 2. *Objects uncovered during excavations at Sangtarashan (Hashemi et al. 2023; Malekzadeh et al. 2017).*

of finding the location of Khatunban and they published an evaluation of the excavated finds housed in the Iran National Museum in Teheran (Haerinck et al. 2004). Overlaet continued to publish detailed reports on the excavations conducted by the Belgian Archaeological Mission in Pusht-i Kuh (Overlaet 2003), and his analyses allowed for a more comprehensive classification of the Luristan bronzes and new chronological observations in the light of new and well-documented evidence (Overlaet 2005). Haerinck and Overlaet also published detailed reports of their past collaborative fieldwork at cemeteries of the Luristan Province conducted by the same team (Haerinck, Overlaet 1998, 1999, 2004).

Recently, Sangtarashan excavations is a major project that has contributed notable datasets to the archaeology of Luristan (Fig. 2). Sangtarashan is not a cemetery, and the site has an architectural plan that is roughly circular with discernable limits. Almost a century after the discovery of Luristan bronzes at Surkh-i Dum in the late 1930s, which remained a unique context, diverse types and groups of Luristan bronzes in large numbers were found associated with architectural remains in a non-funerary context for the second time at Sangtarashan (Hashemi et al. 2023; Malekzadeh et al. 2017).

Archaeological Contexts of the Luristan Bronzes

For evaluating the artifacts classified as Luristan bronzes in the collections of the Istanbul University Rıdvan Çelikel Archaeology Museum (IURAM), analogies shall be drawn between these unprovenanced artifacts and the bronze objects that are unearthed by systematic excavations in Luristan Province. Systematic archaeological excavations at Luristan cemeteries were carried out mostly in the Aivan, Chavar, Ilam, Arkavaz, Badr, and Chardaval regions within Pusth-i Kuh. Excavations of the Belgian Archaeological Mission unearthed 121 graves in eleven cemeteries (Haerinck, Overlaet 1998, 1999, 2004; Overlaet 2003; vanden Berghe 1968, 1983), which have yielded an abundance of bronze artifacts.

All known cemeteries in Pusht-i Kuh are extramural cemeteries. Many tombs are collective burials with multiple interments found in a commingled state, and it is not possible to assign individual artifacts as burial gifts for specific individuals in the tombs. Chamber tombs in the early phase of the Iron Age generally have a rectangular or ovoid plan with the entrance positioned on the short wall, typical for the Iron IA period (1300/1250-1150 BC). Smaller, square- or squarish-planned chamber tombs containing multiple interments become the standard tomb type for collective burials in Iron IIB-IA period (1150-900 BC). In Iron Age II, stone cist tombs constructed with vertically placed slabs and capped with flagstones appear as a new tomb type in the region. In these collective tombs, skeletal remains from earlier interments are pushed towards the back or the side walls of the burial cist to make room for more recent burials. In Iron Age III (800/750-650 BC), Luristan cemeteries are more densely populated, and the number of tombs increases considerably in comparison to the earlier phases. Single burials are more common, but multiple burials

containing up to four individuals are also known, and tomb types include stone-built chambers, cist tombs, simple inhumations covered with flagstones, and pithos tombs, albeit few (Haerinck, Overlaet 1998, 1999, 2004; Overlaet 2003: 545-572).

Settlement sites of the Iron Age in Luristan are known from the Pish-i Kuh region. A number of these sites like Tepe Guran, Giyan, and Baba Djan were investigated by excavations, revealing important information about Iron Age settlement patterns and site types (Goff 1968, 1977; Thrane et al. 2001). Colonnaded building complexes like the one unearthed by excavations at Baba Djan are identified as tribal lords' mansions, which reflect the tribal social structure of the communities inhabiting this highland region. Additionally, architectural remains of a building complex were unearthed by Erich Schmidt's 1937-38 excavations at Surkh-i Dum, and the site was identified as a cult center or a temple complex (Schmidt et al. 1989: 34). Architectural characteristics of this multi-room building and its in-situ remains bear evidence for its ritual function. The ground floor of the building is built of stone walls, while the second floor is built of mudbrick. Architectural remains were recorded at different elevations at the site, and the chronological phasing of these multiple strata was based on the height of the walls, floor levels, and the soil color/consistency of archeological deposits. Accordingly, three occupation levels were identified within the building's remains and deposits, Building Level 3 being the earliest occupation phase (Schmidt et al. 1989: 49). Building Level 2 at the site is defined as a multi-room temple complex, where inscribed objects devoted to the Goddess Ninlil were found.

The most significant archaeological site among the recently discovered sites in Luristan is Sangtarashan. The site lies in Sangtarashan Village at 1,650 meters above sea level, about 52 km southwest from Khorramabad. Bronze artifacts were discovered by chance during infrastructure work in the village and salvage archaeological excavations were carried out in 2005-2006 (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 61). At the time, the extent of the site was estimated to be about 1 hectare. Later, systematic excavations at the site unearthed architectural remains with a circular layout (Hashemi et al. 2023; Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 90). Four occupation phases were identified based on the characteristics, consistency, and color of the archeological deposits. Accordingly, the brown layer of agricultural topsoil is defined as Phase 1, and the loose, fine black soil layer underneath is defined as Phase 2. Below this black soil is a distinct layer consisting of a homogenous red soil that is rich in a variety of archaeological finds (Phase 3), and below it is an orange-red, gritty soil layer that is defined as Phase 4 (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 64). The loose soil deposit in the upper phase below topsoil has yielded mostly finds dateable to Iron Age III, while the finds from the red soil deposit of Phase 3 are associated with Iron Age II (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 97). Metal objects consist of weapons, personal ornaments, and vases. Weapons and vessels were found side-by-side, and their manner of deposition suggested that these objects were related with a ritual offering (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 97). Findings from the site indicate that Sangtarashan was probably a sacred and ceremonial site in Iron Age II and III (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 98).

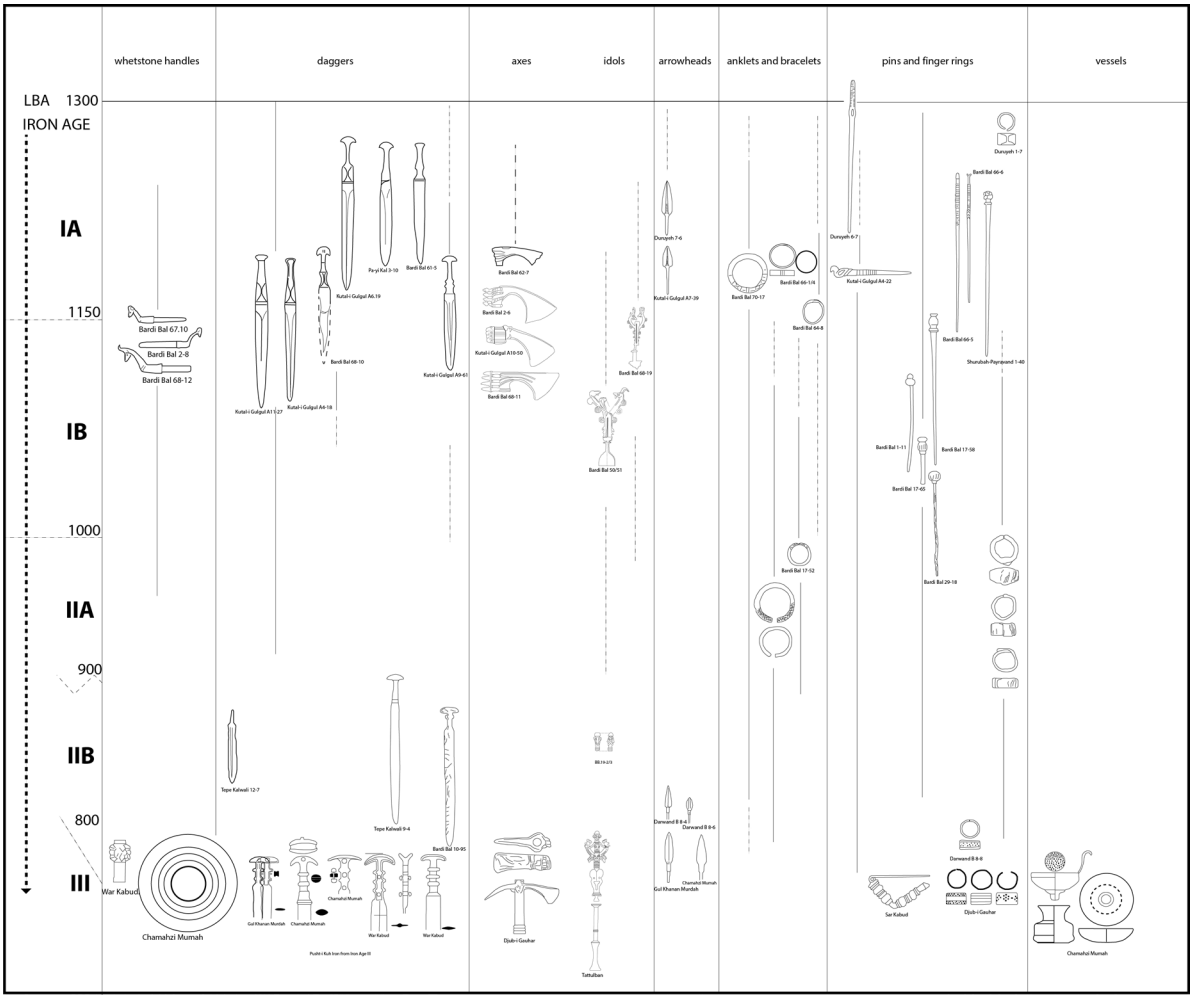

Figure 3. *Chronological overview of metal finds from the Luristan Province (Overlaet 2003: Fig. 184).*

The Chronological Context of the Luristan Bronzes

In the archaeological literature of the ancient Near East, the highland region of Luristan in Iran is known for its idiosyncratic material culture that chronologically spans from 1300/1250 BC to 650/600 BC (Fig. 3). The chronological phases of the Iron Age in Luristan Province were delineated in comparison to the chronological sequence of the Iron Age in Iran. While the typological distinctions between Iron Age I and II are not very clear in the cemetery assemblages, diagnostic traits of the Iron Age III are more clearly defined and ubiquitous. Data from archaeological excavations, textual evidence, find contexts, and the typology and iconography of the bronze objects allow for a general overview of the main characteristics of the chronological phases in the culture-historical sequence of the region (Overlaet 2003, 2005; Schmidt et al. 1989).

Iron Age IA begins in the first quarter of the 13th century BC and continues until about 1150 BC. Crescentic-butted daggers, flanged-hilted daggers, spike-butted axes with a flaring blade and a convex cutting edge, zoomorphic finials for standards, and whetting-stone handles shaped as an animal head date to the late Iron Age I period (Overlaet 2003: 236-237; 2005: 11). Bronze arrowheads featuring a raised mid-rib decorated with a herringbone design, duck-headed ornamental pins, shaft-hole axes with a sharp blade and zoomorphic decorations, and snake-headed bracelets are among other types ascribed to this period.

The Iron Age IB/IIA period (1150-900 BC) represents the final phase of Iron Age I and the transition to early Iron Age II (Overlaet 2003: 237). The two criteria used for dating archaeological sites and contexts to the Iron Age IB/IIA period are the lack of diagnostic Iron Age IA material culture, and the occurrence of objects made of iron. This chronological assessment is based on the premise that the presence of iron artifacts in tombs increases in the Iron IB/IIA period. Bronze axes with a flaring blade, spike-butted axes, standard-finials with antithetical extensions shaped as goats, animal-headed bracelets, and flanged daggers remain in use.

In the Iron Age IIB period (900/800-800/750 BC), iron weapons appear as new types (Overlaet 2003: 237-238); however, most weapons and other objects are still made of bronze. The typology of bronze weapons is not very different from the previous phase (vanden Berghe 1983: 62). Ornamental pins with globular, pomegranate-shaped, and duck-shaped heads continue to be manufactured as typical objects in this phase (vanden Berghe 1983: 63). Iron weapons are produced in forms and types that imitate bronze weapons of the period. Composite artifacts with different parts made of iron and bronze are noteworthy for this period. Examples of such composite objects are daggers with an iron blade and a bronze hilt, and ornamental pins with a cast bronze head and an iron stem (vanden Berghe 1983: 63). Goats and human-headed, winged mythical creatures are frequent figures in the glyptic iconography of cylindrical and ring-shaped seals of this period. Finials develop into more intricate compositions in this phase (vanden Berghe 1983: 56-59). Sandstone whetting-stones with a bronze handle terminating in a zoomorphic form are also ascribed to this phase (vanden Berghe 1983: 65).

Iron Age III (800/750-650 BC) is better documented in Pusht-i Kuh. Bronze vessels that are rare in Iron Age I-II become prevalent in Iron Age III. The iconic Luristan bronzes are only sporadically found in this period (Overlaet 2003: 238; 2005: 15). Mace-heads, shields, quivers, axes, and adzes are still made of bronze in this period. Cast bronze ceremonial mace-heads feature a tubular head decorated with knobs or spikes in star-like arrangements (vanden Berghe 1983: 74), and round shields have a discoid umbo featuring a prominent conical boss surrounded with decorative concentric ribs (vanden Berghe 1983: 78). Another characteristic type found in the tombs of this period is double-headed adze-axes. In this type of adze-axe head, one of the cutting edges is vertical to the shaft while the other is horizontal. In many cases, the two sides of the shaft-hole in the

center are decorated with an embossed human head figure. Personal ornaments known from this period consist of finger-rings, bracelets, rings/loops, and fibulae. Pins decrease in number and are gradually replaced by fibulae. An iron, D-shaped fibula was found on a floor in Level 2C at Surkh-i Dum. This type of D-shaped fibula is dated to the late 8th century BC in the Iron Age III period (Schmidt et al. 1989: 488). Fibulae of this period are known from War Kabud (Haerinck, Overlaet 2004: 73; vanden Berghe 1968: 36b-c), Sar Kabud (vanden Berghe 1983: Cat. 152), and Cham Sol and Dam Chaft Paliyah cemeteries (vanden Berghe 1983: 78). Some fibulae are D-shaped with a curved body, while others are triangular with a bent body. In general, pins are made of bronze, but pins made of iron also exist. Geometric notched decorations are commonly seen on bracelets, anklets, and pins. Animal-headed ornamental pins decrease in this period. Spouted, globular jars and bowls made of bronze become frequent in graves. These forms are particular to the Iron Age III period. Bronze beakers are also found in tombs dated to this period (Haerinck, Overlaet 1998).

Luristan Bronzes at Istanbul University Rıdvan Çelikel Archaeology Museum (IURAM)

The intensive looting of cemeteries and bronze artifacts in Luristan most likely began in the 1920s as an aftermath of the First World War and it continued in the following decades. In 1928 museums and private collectors were already purchasing large quantities of bronze objects and this trend continued in the 1930s. In the early 1940s, the quantity of Luristan bronzes on the antiquities market decreased (Muscarella 1988: 113). The unprovenanced "Luristan Bronzes" purchased into museum collections, which constitute the great majority of this idiosyncratic group of ancient bronze objects, present two major challenges to the study and analysis of these bronzes: how to classify these bronze objects chronologically and typologically, and how to assess their genuineness as original archaeological objects. After all, these iconic bronze artifacts first appeared in the antiquities market in the mid-19th century, and they were purchased in large numbers by European and American museums beginning with the first quarter of the 20th century before any systematic excavations were conducted in their alleged region of origin. Investigations and debates about the provenience and genuineness of some of these artifacts housed in the collections of major European and American museums continue today.

True provenience and genuineness of the artifacts that have been acquired by museums by purchase from individuals or antiquities auctions is always a dubious matter. Antiquities dealers often misinform purchasers or are hesitant to share information about the findspots of artifacts coming from other dealers and illicit diggers, and in many cases, dealers do not know or care about the origin of the antiquities they are trafficking. Such deliberate misinformation or lack of reliable information presents a major impediment

to the systematic analysis and chronological assessment of this group of objects known as Luristan bronzes, the great majority of which are unprovenanced objects that cannot be directly associated with any archaeological site. The situation is further complicated by the circulation of fake bronzes in the antiquities market, as well as the presence of bronze artifacts that are modified by antiquities traders. Furthermore, there are instances in which parts of original artifacts have been joined together to create more exquisite forms by dealers, which are misleading for the typological classification and interpretation of the known corpus of "Luristan bronzes" (Overlaet 2013: 378).

In the collections of the Istanbul University (IU) Rıdvan Çelikel Archaeology Museum (RAM), there are 43 artifacts registered as "Luristan Bronzes". According to Prof. Mehmet Özdoğan (pers. comm.), the Luristan bronzes housed in the Rıdvan Çelikel Archaeology Museum of Istanbul University were purchased by Prof. Kurt Bittel in the 1960s from a private collector named Hans von Aulock and donated to the university. A detailed examination of this assemblage of artifacts, which were at the time categorized and labeled as Luristan Bronzes, allow us to observe certain traits that cast doubt about their identification as having originated from Luristan. To reassess the issue of the origin and the genuineness of this group of 43 registered finds within a systematic framework, we present below a critical analysis of these objects in terms of typological style, formal attributes, production techniques, and materials in direct comparison with the iconic bronzes of Luristan retrieved from excavated, secure archaeological contexts.

Among the "Luristan Bronzes" at IURAM that we had a chance to examine, the following main types can be identified: axes, hilted daggers and dagger blades, spearheads, an arrowhead, ornamental pins, spirals, coils, and rings, a horse-bit fragment, and miscellaneous objects like a button/spool, a spoon, and a bell.

Axes

Elaborate cast-bronze axes that are frequently found in archaeological excavations and represented by many examples in museum collections constitute a significant group of the iconic Luristan bronzes (Fig. 4). Axes are typologically categorized based on the shape of the axe head, the cutting edges, and the shaft-hole, as well as the form and number of the spikes on the butt and decorative applications.

There are eight bronze axes in IURAM collections, and they can be evaluated under two main categories. Spike-butted (or spiked) shaft-hole axes represent an important type among the iconic bronzes of Luristan, and spiked axes are sorted into three prominent sub-types. In IURAM, three of the spiked axes (Fig. 5a and 6: IURAM.97, IURAM.96, IURAM.95) belong to a single sub-type in which the shaft-hole is ribbed, and it features four spikes on the butt; the flaring head has a sharp, convex cutting edge, and both edges are thickened. Another spike-butted axe in the collections (Fig. 5a and 6: IURAM.98) represents a different type. In this axe type, the upper edge of the blade is straight, while

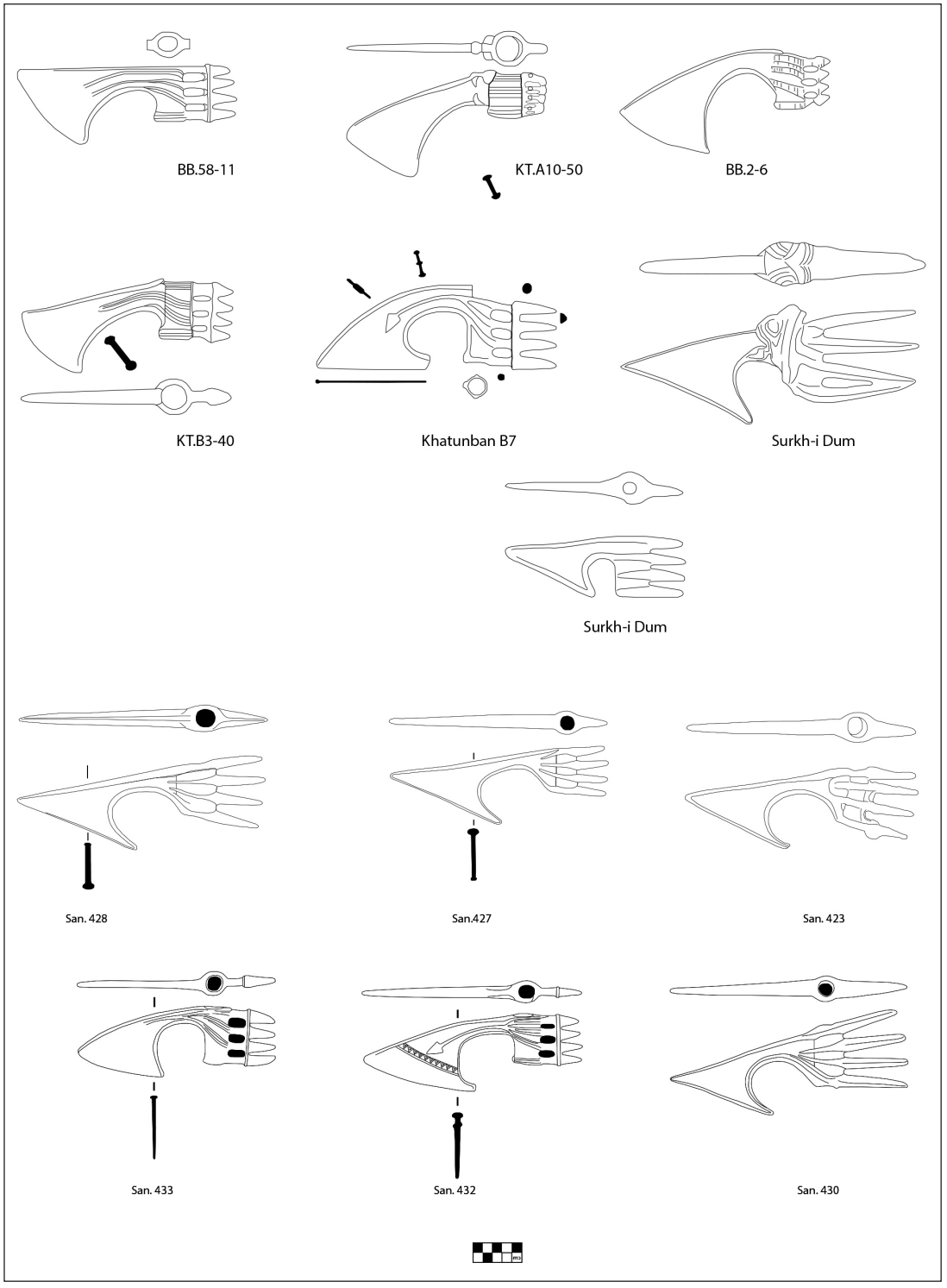

Figure 4. *Spike-butted axes recovered from archaeological excavations in Luristan Province (Haerinck et al. 2004; Hashemi et al. 2023; Schmidt et al. 1989).*

the lower edge is sharply cut away and the cutting edge is at a 45° angle to the shaft-hole. The blade terminates in a pointed tip, and the cutting edges of the blade are blunt with thickened rims, bearing no sign of use-wear. In this example, the spikes at the butt are splayed and a decorative embossed arrow figure extends from the cylindrical shaft-hole to the blade (IURAM.98). Similar examples were found at Khatunban (Fig. 4: Khatunban B7) (Haerinck et al. 2004: 152, Pl. 12) and Sangtarashan (Fig. 4: San. 432) (Hashemi et al. 2023: 50, Fig. 18). The decorative arrow on the shaft-hole is formed by the two central ridges extending from two of the spikes at the butt. The uppermost and the lowermost spikes extend across the shaft-hole as two parallel ridges and they continue to form the thickened edges of the flaring blade. This decoration technique is commonly used in Luristan axes.

The third spiked axe type has a smaller head with a rectangular form and a narrow blade, while the shaft-hole is cylindrical. This axe type has a single spike or a pair of spikes at the butt that are shorter than other types. The specimen in IURAM collections features two broad spikes (Fig. 5a: IURAM.265).

In spike-butted axes, the blade is placed vertically to the handle. In the specimens that have a broadly curved and sharp blade, the blade is at a nearly 45° angle to the shaft. There are extravagant examples with splayed spikes at the back of the shaft-hole, and there are examples in which the spikes join in a conical form. Formal characteristics of these spiked axes like the thickened ridges along the edges of the blade, the angle at which the blade is positioned in relation to the shaft, and the wide diameter of the shaft hole have led researchers to conclude that these axes were manufactured for ceremonial purposes rather than practical use (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 70; Overlaet 2003: 168-172).

Although there are many examples of spike-butted axes in museums and private collections, they are rarely found at archaeological excavations. This axe type is associated with graves dating to the Iron Age I-II period and they are not found in cemeteries that date to Iron Age III (Haerinck, Overlaet 2004: 125). Some of these axes bear cuneiform inscriptions that enable dating these objects to the reigns of historical kings. However, it is important to emphasize that these inscribed axes do not come from secure excavated contexts. Therefore, it is possible that the inscriptions were engraved by antiquities dealers to increase the market value of the original object that is looted. One such inscribed spiked axe bears an inscription in Akkadian citing the name of the Elamite king Shilhak Inshushinak I (1150-1120 BC), and two spiked axes that are inscribed in Babylonian indicate that the axes were dedicated to the God Marduk by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar I (1125-1104 BC) (Overlaet 2003: 166-168). Especially axes with zoomorphic attachments are characteristic artifacts and their production and use were geographically confined to Luristan. At Surkh-i Dum, axes with a sharp blade are dated to the earlier phases and they are thought to have been functional objects. Axes with thickened rims and a cut-away lower edge that terminates in a pointed blade, on the other hand, are dated to the 9th century BC and they are identified as ceremonial axes which were not functional

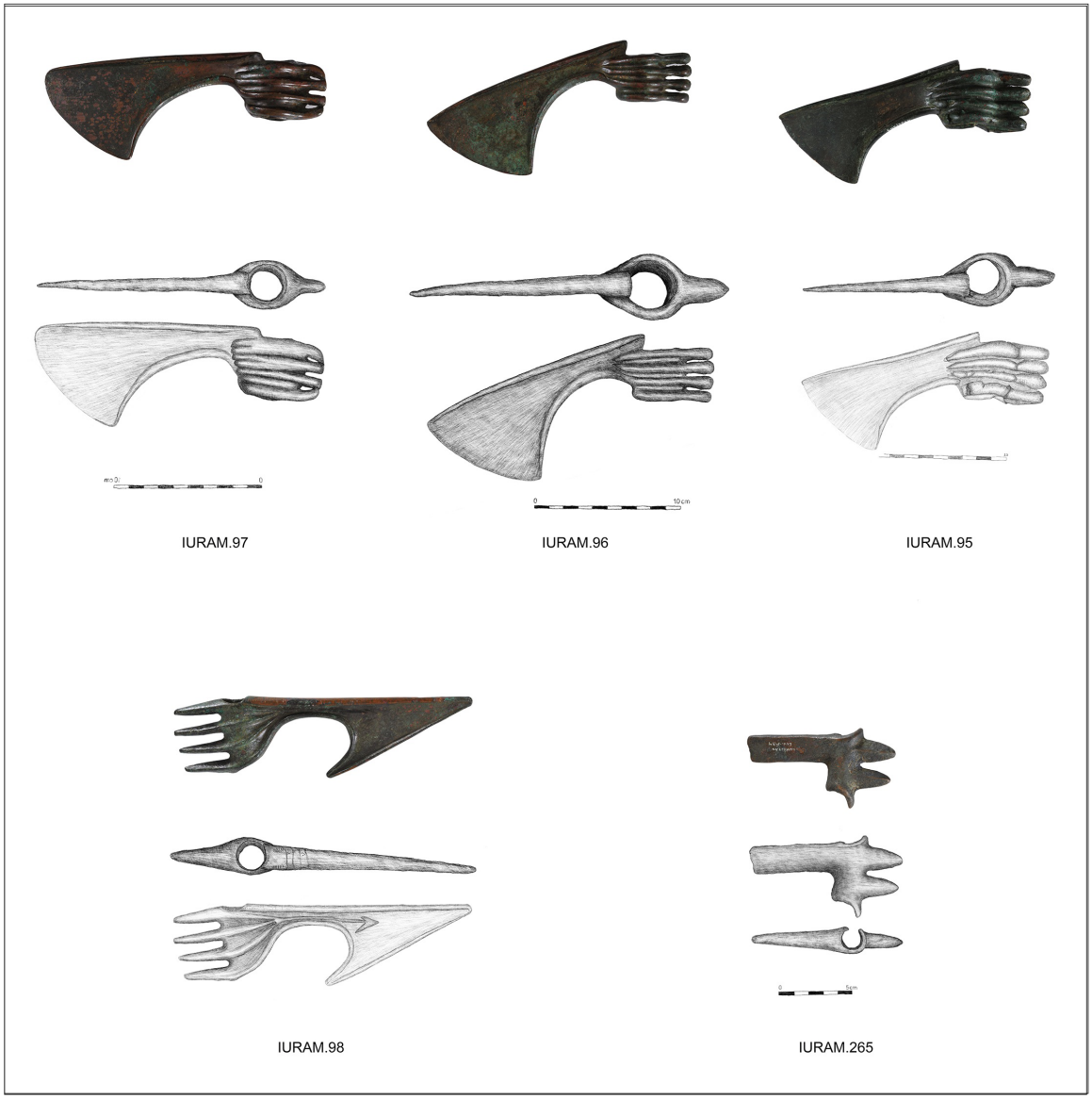

Figure 5. *Cast-bronze axes in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

weapons. Spiked axes with a shaft-hole shaped as a lion's head and the blade protruding from the lion's open mouth also fall in this latter category (Schmidt et al. 1989: 256). Excavators of Sangtarashan state that such ceremonial axes found at the site were in use until the early 9th century BC, and they are not found in the archaeological record of the Iron Age III period (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 92).

Figure 6. *Spike-butted axes in IURAM collections.*

In addition to the spiked axes in the collections of IURAM, the second group of bronze axes comprises shaft-hole axes with a tubular shaft-hole (Fig. 5b: IURAM.264, IURAM.267, IURAM.266). The blade and the cutting edge have a different form in these axes. The first axe in this group is a remarkable example and its size and form render it fit for practical use (IURAM.264). In this axe, a long and narrow blade extends from a cylindrical shaft-hole, and the blade gently tapers to a wide cutting edge. The second specimen that belongs to the same type is distinct due to its smaller size (IURAM.266). The third specimen in this category is distinguished by its typological characteristics (IURAM.267). In this last specimen, the butt of the tubular shaft-hole has a thin and flat, semi-circular projection. No axes of this type are known from any archaeological site where iconic Luristan bronzes were found. Similar examples are known from Nihavend and vicinity, where they are dated as early as the Middle Bronze Age. Although it has also been suggested that these axes were in use in the early phase of the Iron Age, a broad body of evidence suggests that they are a product of the Bronze Age traditions in Luristan and their use or manufacture in the Iron Age is questionable.

Daggers and Blades

Iconic bronze daggers of Luristan are widespread across the region throughout the Iron Age I-II (Schmidt et al. 1989: 256). Daggers with a flanged hilt and a blade cast in one piece constitute the characteristic dagger type in Luristan. Flanges of the hilt are reinforced with raised rims and feature rivets for attaching decorative inlays made of ivory, bone, or wood. The second type of dagger is shaped as a pointed, double-edged blade with an extension for affixing a hilt, which would have been made of organic and perishable materials like bone or wood. These elongated blades may have been used as daggers or as spearheads. Because the hilts of these blades have not survived, it is not possible to determine their

function with certainty. In some flanged daggers, the flanges are folded onto the inlaid material decorating the hilt, which appears as a characteristic trait in bronze daggers. Iron daggers and blades that reflect the same typological characteristics as the bronze daggers are also known. Based on findings from Pusht-i Kuh region, it has been suggested that while bronze was in intensive use in Iron Age I-II, all known weapon types were cast from iron in Iron Age III (Overlaet 2003: 150-166). There are bimetallic specimens, which may be the products of a transitional phase. In these composite examples, the functional part of the weapon (blade) is made of the stronger metal (iron), while decorative parts are made of bronze (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 92).

In IURAM collections, there are three daggers that fit the typological criteria of the iconic Luristan daggers (Fig. 7: IURAM.94, IURAM.240, IURAM.307). All three have flanged hilts. The cross-guard has a crescentic form in one of the flanged daggers (IURAM.307), while it is straight in the other two. The hilts of these daggers would have been decorated with inlays made of wood, ivory/tusk, or bone. Similar daggers were found in

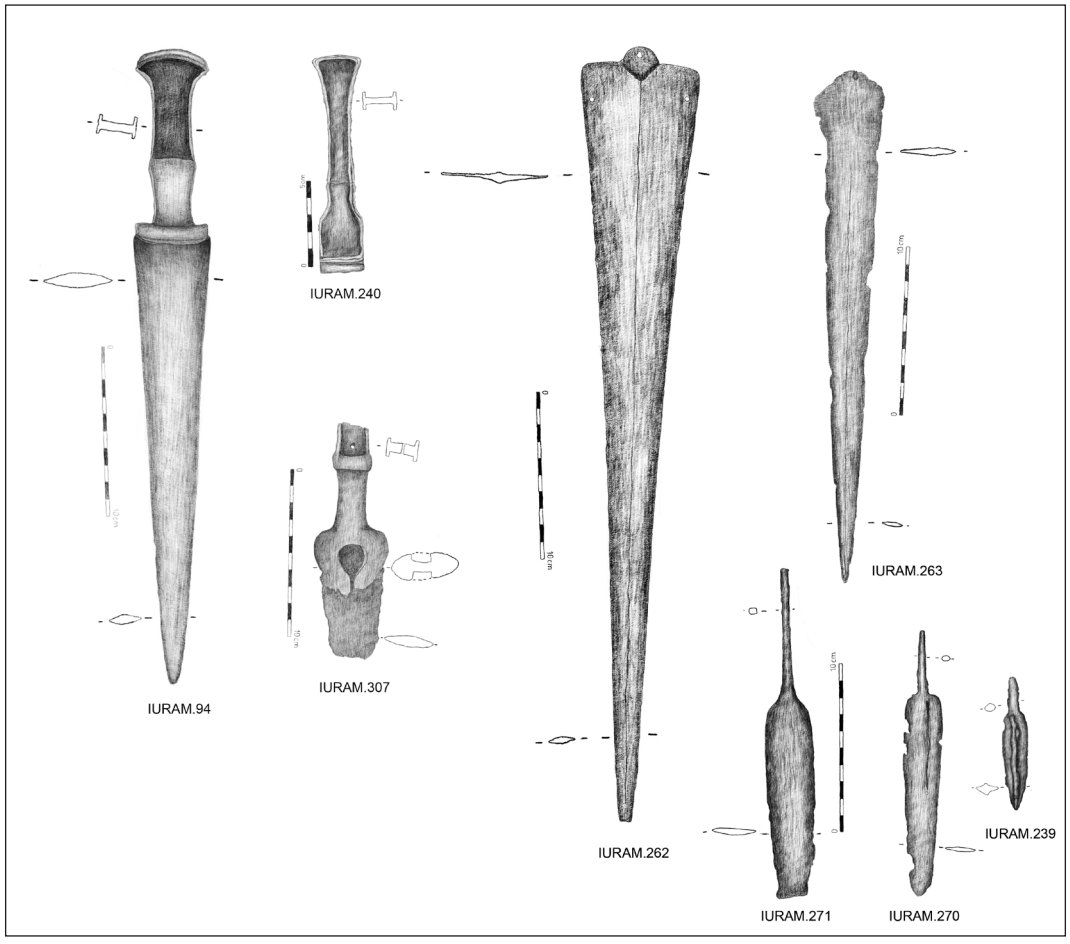

Figure 7. *Hilted daggers, dagger blade, spearheads, and arrowhead in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

Pusht-i Kuh cemeteries and in Surkh-i Dum Luri and Sangtarashan. A fourth specimen in the collection (Fig. 7: IURAM.263) may also be categorized as a dagger blade. This blade has no hilt. The hilt would have been made from a perishable material like wood or bone and fastened to the blade with rivets.

Arrowheads and Spearheads

Arrowheads and spearheads have typologically similar forms, and the two terms are sometimes interchangeably used in describing these weapons. Because a standard classification does not exist, these artifacts may be categorized into different subtypes according to size or weight. Arrowheads may be distinguished by their relatively low weight and shorter tang in comparison to spearheads. In general, projectile points that are shorter than 10 cm are classified as arrowheads, and those longer than 10 cm are considered spearheads. Weight is an important consideration, as well. In projectile points, weight and size are adjusted differently depending on whether the point is to be used as an arrowhead in a simple or composite bow or to be thrown like a spear or a javelin, and whether it is intended for hunting or battle. Various sub-types of arrowheads are known from contexts dated to the Iron Age I-II period: simple ribbed arrowheads and ribbed arrowheads decorated with a herringbone design; pointed and ovoid arrowheads with a leaf-like form and a solid stem with a round cross-section, arrowheads with a raised midrib, tanged arrowheads, small tanged arrowheads, and small, leaf-shaped arrowheads with a tang that has a square cross-section (Hasanpour et al. 2015: 182; Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 74-76; Overlaet 2003: 173-179).

In IURAM collections, there are four cast bronze weapons that fall in this category. The first is 46.5 cm long and it can easily be categorized as a spearhead considering its size, form, and proportions (Fig. 7: IURAM.262). The back end of the blade, where the cross-guard would be located, features three small rivet holes, which would have served to affix the blade to a wooden shaft. The second specimen is a 30-cm-long blade with no tang, which can be classified as a spearhead (IURAM.263); however, it should be noted that weapons of this type and length can also be classified as daggers (see above). The blade has sharp cutting edges on both sides. The back end of the blade is broken in this specimen, but three small rivet holes are visible, which would have been used for affixing a wooden shaft. These first two specimens can be categorized as dagger blades or as spearheads. There are two spearheads with a long tang in the collection that show similar characteristics and can be evaluated as belonging to the same type. These two specimens exhibit the typical form and dimensions of classic spearheads. In the spearhead that is 14 cm long (Fig. 7: IURAM.270), the tang gradually tapers to a narrower tip. The blade has a prominent mid-rib. The latter specimen (IURAM.271) has a plain and flat projectile point and its tang is straight and longer than the first specimen. In general, arrowheads are rarely attested in assemblages containing Luristan bronzes. In IURAM collections, there is only one

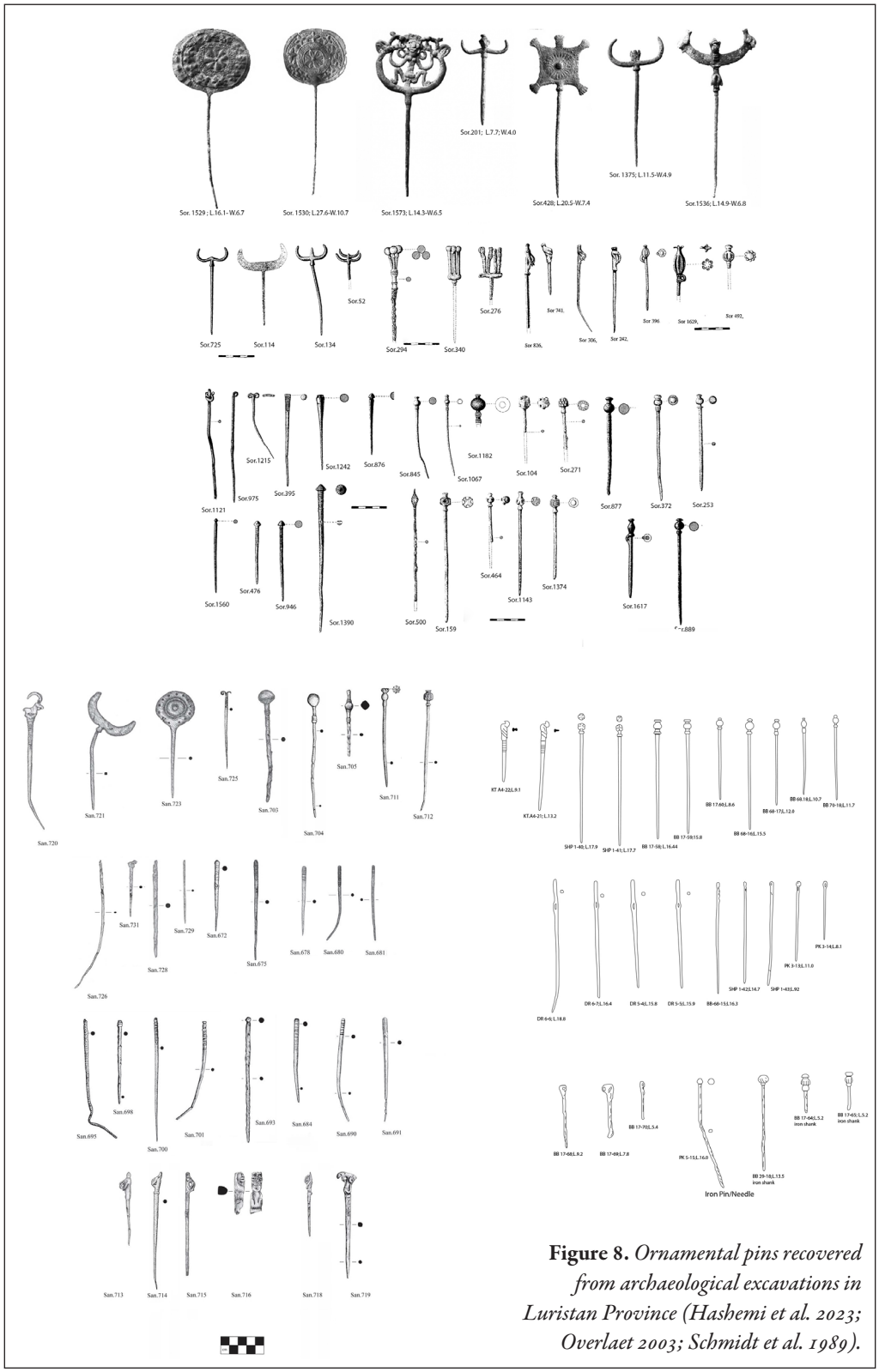

Figure 8. *Ornamental pins recovered from archaeological excavations in Luristan Province (Hashemi et al. 2023; Overlaet 2003; Schmidt et al. 1989).*

arrowhead (IURAM.239), which is tanged, and the point features a prominent midrib, reflecting the typological characteristics of the standard arrowhead of this period.

Ornamental Pins

Ornamental pins are among frequently attested grave finds in Luristan cemeteries. Many bronze pins were found by archaeological excavations at Surkh-i Dum, Sangtarashan, and Pusht-i Kuh cemeteries (Fig. 8) (Hashemi et al. 2023: 74-80; Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 83; Overlaet 2003: 200-201; 2013: 389; Schmidt et al. 1989: 266-272; vanden Berghe 1983: 110). Bronze ornamental pins that are found in graves may have been used for fastening the hairdo, the garments, or the shroud of the deceased or they may have been left in the grave as mortuary offerings by the attendants of the funeral. Starting with the 1st millennium BC, pins become typologically diverse and more ornate. In life, the main function of these toggle pins was to fasten clothes, but they were also used for fastening a headscarf or hair. Pins are classified according to their size, the form of the head and its decorative elements. Commonly attested types include simple pins with a pointed, thickened, squarish, forked, knotted, bent, double-spiral, flanged, hemispherical, globular, and conical head, and more elaborate pins with complex ornamentation on the head feature multiple rings and complex head forms shaped as a fruit, a poppy, a flower, a crescent, a zoomorphic or an anthropomorphic figure. Ornamental pins with a head shaped as a circular or square plaque decorated with intricate compositions in openwork and embossing techniques are also present. Examples of such bronze openwork pins found in excavations indicate that they were in use in the Iron Age beginning with the Iron Age IA period (Overlaet 2003: 205-207).

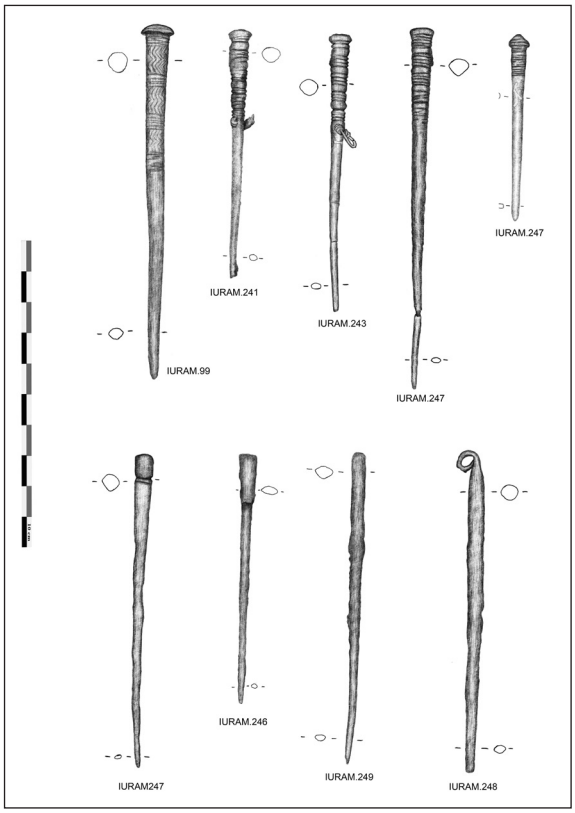

Figure 9. *Ornamental pins in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

In IURAM collections, there are nine ornamental pins identified as having originated from Luristan (Fig. 9). All are cast from bronze, and they can be categorized into types based on their formal and decorative characteristics. The collection includes pins with a grooved stem and a thickened head, pins with a flattened head, and dome headed,

conical headed, rolled headed, and simple headed pins. The decoration on the dome-headed pin is noteworthy (Fig. 9: IURAM.99): the upper half of the stem between the head and the shank is decorated with four sets of parallel grooves and wavy lines are incised in the sections between the grooves. This same linear decoration is known from pins found at Surkh-i Dum excavations (Schmidt et al. 1989: 165/h, 178/d). Another specimen is a conical headed pin (Fig. 9: IURAM.247 top right), in which the top of the stem is decorated with finely stacked parallel grooves just below the head. The mid-section of the stem is flattened for a hole, but it has not been perforated. Bronze pins of this type are known from Surkh-i Dum (Schmidt et al. 1989: 165/l-q). The remaining three pins in the museum collections are plain examples with a simple head (Fig. 9: IURAM.247 bottom, IURAM.246, IURAM.249). In two of these specimens, the head is more prominent and marked with a single groove. One of the specimens in the collections is distinguishable from all other pins with its rolled head forming a hole (Fig. 9: IURAM.248). This pin type is frequently found in tombs in Luristan cemeteries throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages.

In pins with a thickened head and a grooved stem, parallel or irregular grooves cover the upper part of the stem from mid-section to the head. Two of the pins with a thickened head feature wire ring attachments (Fig. 9: IURAM.241, IURAM.243). These wire rings that are attached to the body of the pin were used as hooks for attaching other decorative accessories to the pin. This usage is known based on artistic depictions and examples found in situ in excavations. It may be suggested that the pins with perforations on their stem (toggle pins) may have been an alternative pin form for affixing such decorative accessories using wire rings (Hashemi et al. 2023: Fig. 30: Type c, Pl. 79/b-d, 79/f; Schmidt et al. 1989: Pl. 166/e-f).

Spirals, Coils, and Rings

Bronze and iron rings and coils were found in tombs in excavated cemeteries of the Pusht-i Kuh region. Some rings have a solid round cross-section, while others are made of thin sheet metal. Rings may be bent into a circle with two open ends or with two ends overlapping, or they may be coiled into a spiral form (Overlaet 2003: 208-209). Iron rings bearing the same characteristics as the bronze rings are also found. While some rings appear to be items of personal ornamentation, others may have been utilitarian items used for hanging weapons or other belongings. In-situ rings found in graves at Tepe Kalwali and Darwan show that they were used as finger-rings. Examples found associated with male individuals in Tepe Guran graves are significant for bearing evidence for the use of finger-rings by men (Thrane et al. 2001: 95). Items of personal ornamentation were also found at Sangtarashan and Surkh-i Dum (Malekzadeh et al. 2017: 82; Schmidt et al. 1989: 262, Pl. 160).

One of the bronze ring-shaped objects in IURAM collections is a hollow, spiral coil with a diameter of 3.5 cm (Fig. 10: IURAM.350). Spiral coils with a similar form in various

sizes were found in Sangtarashan (Hashemi et al. 2023: 81, 263-264, Fig. 32, San. 765, 772, 775, 776, 777, 807). Two other bronze objects in IURAM collections that fall in this category are simple rings. Both have a similar form: the rings are ovoid, their two ends are overlapped, and they both have a round cross-section (IURAM.349). Similar rings were found at Sangtarashan (Hashemi et al. 2023: 264-265) and Surkh-i Dum (Schmidt et al., 1989: 262, Pl. 160n-w). Another specimen in the museum collections that can be evaluated in this category is a composite example consisting of multiple interlinked rings (IURAM.355). The final example in this group is a 1.5-cm-diameter ring with a round cross-section and a spherical attachment (IURAM.352). Although this object's form resembles a typical finger-ring, its original purpose and usage remain unknown.

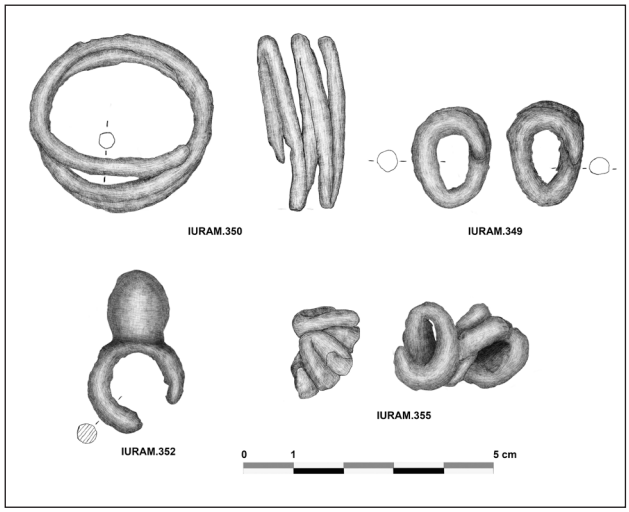

Figure 10. *Spirals, coils, and rings in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

Horse-Bits

Among the artifacts that are identified as iconic Luristan Bronzes, horse-bits and harness fragments with figurative decorations constitute one of the most debated group of objects. None of the "Luristan" horse-bits were found by archaeological excavations. The cheek-guards in some of these examples are so large that they could not have been functional. For this reason, they have been considered votive offerings. However, some of these pieces have use-marks, which renders this interpretation not valid for all specimens (vanden Berghe 1983: 105-106). At Khatunban, excavators have interpreted certain bronze rings as belonging to horse bits (Haerinck, Overlaet 2004: 127-133). On the other hand, no objects identifiable as horse-bits or harnesses were uncovered at excavated centers in Pusht-i Kuh, at Sangtarashan or Surkh-i Dum.

The object inventoried with the number IURAM.252 (Fig. 11) in the museum's collections is a bronze ring that can be considered a horse-bit fragment based on its formal characteristics. This solid, circular ring has an ovoid cross-section, and attached to it is a figurative element consisting of two stylized deer in an antithetical composition. There are protrusions on the bodies of the deer, which may have been originally attached

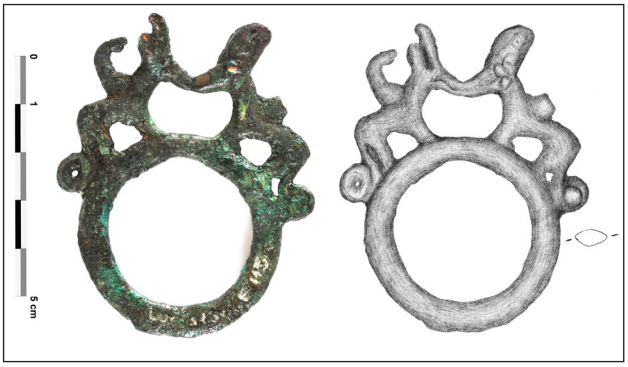

Figure 11. *Bronze horse-bit fragment in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

to other figurative elements. The volute on the tail and the curves of the body of the deer are frequently attested decorative traits in animal depictions on Luristan Bronzes. Variations of this antithetical composition with animal depictions attached to a ring are known from other collections of Luristan Bronzes; however, these examples do not originate from archaeological excavations. In addition to the objects that are interpreted as figurative horse-bits, there are cast-bronze antithetical animal compositions, which may have been ornamental pin heads (Amiet 1976: 128; Moorey 1974b: 90-92).

Conical Button

Among the objects registered as Luristan Bronzes at IURAM, there is a curious bronze object that is shaped like an hourglass with a biconical body featuring a groove in its midsection (Fig. 12: IURAM.250). The function of this object is not readily apparent, but its form is fit for use as a spool for winding thread or as a button for fastening clothing. To use this object as a button, two ends of a textile/garment or two pieces of leather would be perforated, and the spool-like object would be inserted through both holes. Similar buttons were found in graves at Khatunban (Haerinck, Overlaet 2004: 10, Pl. 152).

Miniature Spoon

One of the bronze objects in the collection is rather extraordinary in terms of its small size and its possible function (Fig. 13: IURAM.244). This object is shaped like a miniature spoon, which may have been used for applying or preparing cosmetics or medicines. The spoon's handle terminates in a human-head form like the anthropomorphic depictions on standard-finials in Luristan. The end of the spoon's handle is stylized as a human head on both sides with the typical pronounced facial features in Anatolian iconography like a pointed nose, bulging eyes, and prominent ears. A pointed conical cap that adorns the head forms the tip of the handle. The spoon's handle is shaped like a slender cylinder that is clearly partitioned into a lower, decorated section and an upper section that terminates in the form of a spoon.

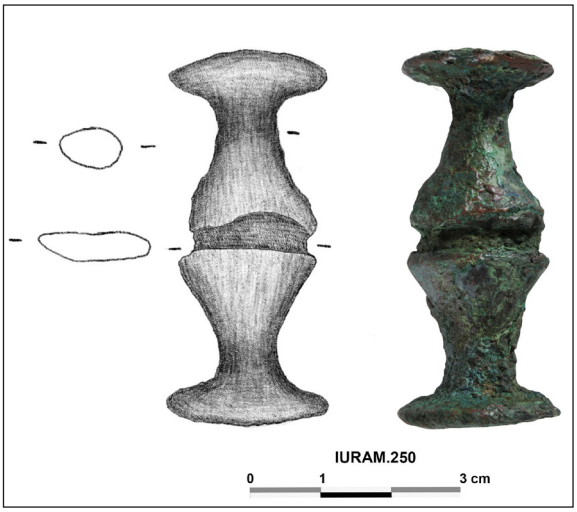

Figure 12. *Bronze biconical button or spool in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

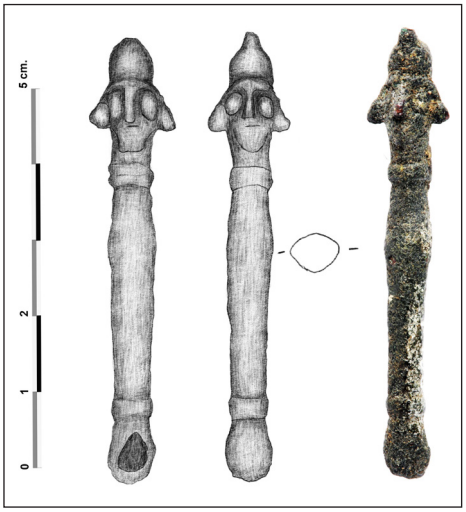

Figure 13. *Bronze miniature spoon in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

Bell

Another unusual object among the artifacts registered as Luristan Bronzes in the museum's collection consists of a body in the form of a hexagonal prism that is attached with a cylindrical stem to a base or a head (Fig. 14: IURAM.357). The hexagonal facets of the object are fenestrated in bronze openwork technique. Openwork bronze objects shaped as multi-faceted prisms with both tips ending in a reverse conical form resembling the one in the IURAM collections can sometimes be associated with horse-bits, while objects with similar formal characteristics may also be considered bells in other cases.

Similar bell-shaped objects were found in a tomb at the Baba Jilan necropolis (Hasanpour et al. 2015: 186, Fig. 3, Pl. 21). This grave is dated to the late 9th century BC based on C14 dates and other grave finds. A pomegranate-shaped bell was found in a tomb at the cemetery site of Nurabad Tepe, located in the same region (Sajjadi, Samani 1999: PI. 19:4). In Pish-i Kuh, a miniature bell with a simple conical form was found in the sanctuary area at Surkh-i Dum. However, due to their small size, these objects were considered pin heads (Schmidt et al. 1989: 260, 269, PI. 159b, 171a-c, 179a). In addition to these excavated examples, bells in various forms and sizes and spherical objects decorated in openwork technique are known from collections (Moorey 1974b: 98-102).

Discussion and Conclusions

The main challenge in the study of the Luristan Bronzes is that the chronological and typological assessment efforts have been based on unprovenanced weapons and ornamental items of alleged Luristan origin that are scattered in many European museums and private

Figure 14. *Openwork bronze bell in IURAM collections (drawing by Ş. Kaya).*

collections rather than finds from excavated archaeological contexts. In these assessments, certain diagnostic items and weapons are accepted as reference points for reconstructing a chronological and typological framework for the evaluation of collections. However, a correct evaluation of this impressive and intriguing corpus of metal finds based on these criteria is not always possible. Extant literature on Luristan Bronzes shows that a characteristic trait of this group of finds is an intricate decorative repertoire of fantastic, stylized human, animal (lion, bird, bull, horse, and wild goat), and vegetal motifs. Extraordinary compositions involving mythical/fantastic creatures, and human, animal, and plant motifs have called attention to these intriguing artifacts (Overlaet 2013: 384).

There is no firm evidence to justify the consensus that an increasing number of bronzes of Luristan origin on the antiquities market in the aftermath of the Second World War are fake, while the bronzes purchased by museums and collectors before the war are genuine. Apparently, local tribesmen and especially tribal chiefs had recognized the value of these artifacts for European collectors since the earlier decades of the 20th century. It is striking that the sons of these tribal chiefs acted as local guides for the earliest European travelers and researchers in the region (Overlaet 2003: 14). Possibly, archaeologists were misinformed or deliberately misguided by these local guides regarding the findspots of the artifacts, as is the case today with illicit diggers, and as a result, researchers were not able to discover the original findspots of the Luristan Bronzes.

Axes, standards, pins, and daggers are the most notable types among the iconic Luristan Bronzes. However, from a statistical point of view, it is striking that these artifact types are abundant in collections but lacking from systematically excavated contexts. The iconic standards, for example, are rarely found at archaeological excavations. No examples of horse-bits or cheek-guards adorned with zoomorphic depictions were found by archaeological excavations, while these artifacts are frequently seen in museum collections. Most specimens are too large to have been used as horse-bits, which casts doubts about the genuineness of these objects. A common hypothesis for these oversized cheek-guards is that these objects would have been produced as votive offerings rather than objects of utilitarian value, and yet this interpretation is not substantiated by sufficient evidence. Ornamental pinheads shaped as discoid or square plaques, pinheads bearing designs in intricate openwork technique, and bronze plaques adorned with embossed, figurative depictions are similarly dubious object types. Moreover, many studies on Luristan bronzes

mention the presence of composite bronze objects manufactured in modern times by joining parts of archaeological finds. These factors present significant challenges to assessing the genuineness of such unprovenanced collections.

The chronology of the Luristan Bronzes is also a much-debated matter. The primary reason for this confusion is because most of these artifacts were unearthed by illicit excavations and the find contexts are problematic even at systematically excavated sites. Another issue is that the relative dating of these artifacts is established in reference to the periodization of the Iron Age of Iran. In Northwestern Iran, the emergence of formal extramural cemeteries, the use of gray ware ceramics, and the use of iron in items of adornment are accepted as benchmarks for the beginning of the Iron Age. However, the assumption that the presence of iron jewelry is a marker for the Early Iron Age in Northwestern Iran and Eastern Anatolia is a debated subject today. Therefore, the dating of the archaeological contexts where these iron artifacts are found is also a debated matter. The use of iron in jewelry-making becomes widespread in the Iron Age II phase, which has led to the conclusion that iron was too valuable to be used for items of personal ornamentation in the Early Iron Age. However, this assertion is at best hypothetical and not substantiated by much evidence except a few debated finds. On the other hand, attestation of iron finger-rings and other jewelry items found in association with bronze objects in Luristan cemeteries have led to the assignment of the bronze assemblages to earlier periods. It is worth pointing out that, due to its glossy metallic appearance, bronze was the preferred metal for manufacturing elaborate and ostentatious items for votive offerings. Moreover, because bronze is malleable, it is more practical to cast intricate forms out of bronze and easier to decorate the surface with figurative and vegetal compositions in a variety of techniques. Bronze is particularly suitable for finely executed surface treatments like engraving, incision, and embossing. Objects made of iron, on the other hand, can only be formed by hammering and iron is not suitable for fine workmanship.

Spiked axes in IURAM collections are among the most ubiquitous object types within the assemblages of iconic Luristan Bronzes. These axes are used across the span of the late Iron Age I and early Iron Age IIA (1150-900 BC). At Sangtarashan and Surkh-i Dum, spiked axes with a sharp, pointed tip and a cut-away edge come from similar contexts across the phases and it is not possible to periodize the finds. This axe type goes out of use in the late Iron Age II phase. Among weapon types, flanged daggers are also dated to the Iron Age I-II period. In Iron Age III, this dagger type goes out of use, and instead, iron daggers or bimetallic daggers become more prevalent. Ornamental pins in IURAM collections show similarities with the ornamental pins of the late Iron Age I and early Iron Age II in Lurisan. Bronze rings and spirals can also be dated to the same period.

In conclusion, the iconic object types among Luristan Bronzes date to the 10th – 9th centuries BC. That said, certain object types (especially fibulae) found in association with object types classified as Luristan bronzes indicate that the use of these objects continued into the 8th century BC. Further systematic investigations at extramural cemeteries,

settlements, and sanctuary sites where these finds are uncovered would shed light on the historical development of the material culture of Luristan, which would aid in resolving problems discussed in this study.

A few exceptional cases aside, most mobile communities inhabiting the mountainous landscape of the Caucasus and the Zagros led a semi-nomadic lifestyle. These communities, whose main subsistence base was sheep and goat husbandry, developed adaptive strategies shaped by seasonal land-use and settlement patterns. Typically, semi-nomadic pastoralist tribes inhabiting this mountainous region spent the summer months on highland pastures located nearby fresh water sources, and they descended into river valleys and intermontane plains in lower elevations at the foothills of the mountains where their winter camps consisting of small, simple houses were located. Because surface finds are scanty, it is quite challenging to identify these houses and winter camps. The nature of the funerary assemblages in cemeteries and ritual deposits at sanctuary sites point out to a militaristic culture. The nomadic lifestyle, natural conditions, and survival strategies in this hostile environment seem to have shaped the religious and ritual practices, social relations, and aesthetic expressions of these communities, as well. Elaborate and fantastic depictions of animals and animal-human confrontations in standards, axes, and ornamental pins that are considered votive offerings are particularly significant in this regard and they are distinctive for the region. Regardless of their geographical place of manufacture, these metal objects reflect the aesthetic understanding and belief systems of the nomadic communities of Luristan.

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