

BIRMINGHAM MUSEUMS & ART GALLERY

Luristan Bronzes in Birmingham Museum and Art Gallery

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Version 1.0 March 2011

Introduction

The collections of “Luristan” and other Iranian bronze artefacts are presented here to make them known both to a wider audience and to those scholars able to give a more critical appraisal of them where this is necessary. This catalogue is not intended to be a definitive treatment of the pieces and discussion and comparanda have been kept to a minimum.

Luristan is a province in central western Iran, on the border with Iraq. It is an area of plains surrounded by the high ranges of the Zagros mountains and has supported a population of hardy mountain people for thousands of years.

There is evidence for bronze working in the area from at least 3000 BC onwards though the products were very much part of the general near eastern tradition comprising mainly tools, weapons and jewellery. However, during the ninth to seventh centuries BC Luristan is set apart by the appearance of large numbers of cast ornaments (so-called finials) with elaborate decoration usually involving characteristically grotesque animal motifs. There is also a prolific production of horse trappings and decorated pins.

The apparently sudden appearance of this new tradition is usually attributed to newcomers from outside the area though there are no certain contenders for this honour. It is more than likely that they were a nomadic people, at least originally. The industry probably flourished due to the declining power of the Elamite civilisation in Khuzistan at the hands of the Babylonians and it was probably brought to an end by the ascendancy of the Medes and Persians.

Bronzes from Luristan first began to appear in Britain around the middle of the nineteenth century. During the 1920s however the commercial value of the bronzes was realised and they began to appear in much greater numbers. All seem to have been recovered from clandestine excavations in the ancient cemeteries, the locations of which were often kept secret, and there were many forgeries, reproductions and composite pieces in circulation.

The earliest acquisition of Iranian bronzes at Birmingham was in 1948 with five pieces from a private collection and another two from a larger antiquarian collection comprising mainly flint tools. Where or how these pieces were originally acquired is unknown. A single finial was purchased from Sothebys in 1951 though this was a late addition to the sale among the “various properties” and is therefore not described in the catalogue. Two considerably larger groups were acquired in 1955 with thirteen pieces purchased from a London dealer and another thirteen from a private collection. The latter had been collected in Kermanshah during the winter of 1931-32 and although the owners were of the opinion that “undoubtedly the bronzes were brought straight from the digs in Luristan” the collection did contain two modern bronze cylinders. The latest addition to the collections was in 1982 when twenty one pieces were transferred from the Wellcome collection. These had been purchased at various sale rooms during the years 1931 to 1933.

Finials, Decorated Tubes and Finial Mounts

The Luristan finials can be divided into two main groups; those comprising two antithetically arranged animals (usually felines or goats) grasping rings in their fore and hind paws through which passes a separate sheet bronze tube; and those where the flanking animals and the central tube are cast as one piece. Only three of the Birmingham pieces (1-3) belong to the former group; in all of them the flanking animals are feline. The majority of the Birmingham finials therefore are from the second group and of these the greater number consist of animals grasping an anthropomorphic tube (4-11). These finials appear to represent a separate group, distinct, stylistically at least, from the true “master-of-animals” type where the figure of the central tube has arms which hold the creatures by their necks. It should be noted that these pieces are, for the most part, of the thicker, heavier, more naturalistic type, characteristics which have been taken as an indication of earlier date (Moorey 1971, 140). They are therefore likely to be the precursors of the master-of-animals type which normally display much thinner, more curving and more elaborate forms. Such a sequential development may be outlined among the Birmingham pieces. Numbers 4 to 8 are of the thickest type with the forepaws and/or claws of the flanking animals clearly grasping the figure of the central tube and their muzzles either fused with (4, 6-8) or very close (5) to the ears on the tube. Numbers 9 to 11 are, comparatively, taller, thinner and of a more open and more stylized design; forelegs and claws are not indicated and, while in number 9 the jaws of the animals are still fused with the ears, in numbers 10 and 11 they stop well short of the human head.

The addition of arms to the central tube, grasping the necks of the flanking beasts, produces the true master-of-animals type. Of the two examples in Birmingham (12-13) number 12 is simpler both in overall decoration and in lacking the subsidiary heads sprouting from the necks of the flanking animals and midway down the tube. Note that the figure depicted on the central tube in this example is of the more stylized, more elaborate type and therefore, stylistically, probably the latest of the Birmingham finials. However even the demonstrable stylistic developments are unlikely to have any great significance with regard to absolute chronology of the pieces because of the relatively short time span over which finials were in vogue (Moorey 1971, 145).

Closely related to the finials are the so-called “decorated tubes” of which Birmingham has four examples (14-17). The first of these belongs to Moorey’s group of “Fertility” tubes, where an entire human figure is represented, though it is somewhat unusual in lacking the distinctive emphasis on the sexual organs normally encountered on such pieces. The remaining three anthropomorphic tubes are of the grotesque Janus-headed type; note the curling sidelocks and horned headdress on number 17. The Birmingham collection contains no examples of zoomorphic tubes.

The finial mounts within the collection (18-21) all fall within the normal range of variations and hardly call for further comment.

1 Zoomorphic Finial (Fig. 1c)

Two rampant lions with gaping jaws and protruding tongues. Eye coils and ears fairly naturalistic except for a “blob” at the base of each ear. Long curving necks with manes indicated by coils. Long tails curl at the tips to form small loops. Claws on front and rear paws indicated by incised lines. Both fore and hind paws hold rings to support a separate bronze tube. Although stylized the animals have, nevertheless, a naturalistic appearance, particularly the facial features, hind feet and the proportioning of the hind quarters. Very light, open design.

Dimensions: H 105, max W 45 mm.
Accession number: 1951A139
Sotheby sale catalogue 18.01.1951, lot 251A (not described)

2 Zoomorphic Finial (*Fig. 1a*)

Two rampant lions, the head of one missing, with gaping jaws and protruding tongues. Prominent eyes indicated by horizontal rolls rather than the more normal circles. Long necks with manes indicated as coils. Articulation of the shoulders, front claws and rear claws is emphasized by incised lines. Long tails curl round to form a loop at the end. The fore paws grasp a fairly wide ring while the rear paws are joined so as to form a ring through which passes the remains of a separate sheet bronze tube.

Dimensions: H 122, max W 54 mm.
Accession number: 1982A2224 (ex Wellcome collection A 220664)
Sotheby sale catalogue 14-15.05.1931, lot 185, no. 10

3 Zoomorphic Finial fragment (*Fig. 1b*)

Upper portion only of a rampant lion with widely gaping jaw and protruding tongue. Long thin neck with mane indicated by a fine coil. Shoulder well modelled and articulation further emphasised by a single vertical incised line. Fore paws raised but now broken.

Dimensions: H 72 mm.
Accession number: 1982A2244 (ex Wellcome collection A 192095)
Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 160

4 Finial (*Fig. 2a*)

Finial comprising an anthropomorphic tube flanked by a pair of rampant animals. The human face has fairly naturalistic features with reasonably shaped eyes, not too prominent a nose but with a protruding bottom lip. Plain ears touch the muzzles of the flanking animals. No girdle. The animals are unusual and appear to be a composite of young goats and lions. Their heads appear to be those of young goats with flattened snouts, large prominent oval eyes, small ears and a single conical horn with spiral decoration. The head is set at such an angle that the curved neck appears to be humped at the top. Thin forelegs spring from the thickened shoulders to grasp the central tube below the human head with fused feet on which claws? are indicated by incised lines. The haunches are those of lions with long tails curling round at the bottom to form rings which are now broken away. Claws not indicated on rear paws. There is a thickened moulding at the bottom of the tube only. A close parallel to this piece is Moorey (1971, 175) with a similarly composite animal though note the many differences in detail and, especially, the treatment of eyes and forelegs.

Dimensions: H 121, max W 74 mm.
Accession number: 1982A2226 (ex Wellcome collection A 192093)
Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 160



Fig. 1 – Nos. 2, 3 and 1

5 Finial (Fig. 2b)

Anthropomorphic tube with a thickened bevelled rim at top and bottom. Human face has large, but not prominent, nose and eyes, comparatively small ears and a large mouth crudely indicated by a roughly oval blob with two horizontal incised lines. The body is short and wears a double girdle. Flanking lions grasp the tube just above the girdle and, although open-mouthed, have fairly realistic features with small ears and simple eyes rather than highly stylized coils. Incised lines on their heads presumably indicates fur but the manes are not indicated on their almost straight necks. The shoulders are rounded with thin forepaws applied as separate pieces of wax. Long tails curl round to form rings. The rear feet are turned outward. Claws are indicated on both front and rear paws by incised lines. A blob protrudes from each side of the central tube immediately above the animals' claws.

Dimensions: H 121, max W 63 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2225 (ex Wellcome collection A 192099)

Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 162

6 Finial (Fig. 2c)

Anthropomorphic tube with thickened rims, bevelled at the top, rounded at the bottom. Human face has very prominent nose and ears with circular staring eyes. Long neck and elongated body with triple girdle. The peculiarly composite flanking animals have sharply curved necks with gaping feline jaws and prominent eyes above emerge two thin curving horns, all now unfortunately broken. There is a horizontal ridge above the exaggerated and angular haunches. Very thin rear legs. Thin tails curl round at the ends to form loops. Claws indicated on both front and rear paws by incised lines. Broken in two pieces at the haunches.

Dimensions: H 129, max W 65 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2227 (ex Wellcome collection A 152258)

Glendining sale catalogue 08.08.1932, lot 187

7 Finial (Fig. 2d)

Anthropomorphic tube with thickened rim at bottom and encircling bands at top. Human face has large nose, circular staring eyes and very prominent ears, drawn out so as to fuse with the animals' heads. Neck very long and thin. Thin body without girdle but thickened above the haunches of the flanking animals. Flanked by lions with sharply curved necks, gaping jaws and circular eyes from which the ears are separated by a single incised line. No mane indicated on either head or neck. Shoulders indicated by a rudimentary thickening of the neck. Hindquarters disproportionately small; tails curl to form loops. Claws indicated on stylized front paws by straight incised lines; rear claws fused. A ridge protrudes from each side of the tube level with the top of the haunches.

Dimensions: H 135, max W 74 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2228 (ex Wellcome collection A 113004)

S.M. Frank & Co, London 07.06.1932

8 Finial (Fig. 2e)

Anthropomorphic tube, slightly flaring at the bottom and ending at the top in a truncated conical headdress with seven vertical incisions. Face has large drooping nose, circular eyes, slight mouth and very prominent ears fused with the snouts of the flanking animals. The latter have short curving necks and gaping jaws with protruding tongues though the bottom jaw is very abbreviated. Ears somewhat pointed and more those of a caprid than a feline. Mane not indicated but claws on front

and hind paws shown by incised lines. Hindquarters broad and exaggerated with articulation indicated by shallow incised lines. Hind legs disproportionately small. Tails curl to form loops at their tips.

Dimensions: H 117, max W 59 mm.

Accession number: 1955A373



Fig. 2 – Nos. 4, 5 (top) 6 7, 8 (bottom)

9 Finial (Fig. 3b)

Anthropomorphic tube with thickened bevelled rim and encircling band at top, flaring at the bottom. Face with prominent pinched nose and pinched eye ridges above circular incised eyes. Impressed mouth. Long neck and short body wearing a triple girdle consisting of a thicker decorated central band between two plain thinner bands. The sharply curved necks of the stylized lions spring from the tube immediately above the girdle. The lions have gaping jaws fused with the prominent ears and very simplified features. Shoulders are perhaps indicated by a very slight thickening where the necks join the tube but forelegs and claws are not shown at all. The haunches and rear legs are equally simplified and tails are not represented except for slight protruberances at the bottom of the legs. Their legs appear to stand on three encircling ribs. The technique of modelling and general appearance may well lead one to question the authenticity of this piece.

Dimensions: H 153, max W 60 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2231 (ex Wellcome collection A 151242)

Stevens sale catalogue 19.09.1933, lot 204

10 Finial (Fig. 3a)

Anthropomorphic tube with thickened rim at bottom and two encircling ribs at top. Face with prominent drooping nose and very prominent ears. Elongated neck and body with two groups of four thin encircling bands presumably intended to represent a four-stranded necklace and quadruple girdle respectively. The flanking lions have curved necks with open, but not gaping, jaws stopping well short of the human ears, bulging eyes and a cock's comb. Shoulders and fore paws are not indicated at all. The hindquarters are cast in a lighter, more open technique than on the other pieces and have small haunches with long spindly legs. The abbreviated tails end in solid blobs at the bottom. The rear paws are not indicated.

Dimensions: H 185, max W 75 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2229 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

11 Finial (Fig. 3c)

Anthropomorphic tube flaring at top and bottom. Face with very small pinched ears, pinched nose, incised circular eyes and impressed mouth; long thin neck with short, slightly flattened body; no girdle. Very stylized and simplified lions with gaping jaws and curving necks springing from the tube; a slight thickening is perhaps a rudimentary indication of shoulders. No indication of fore paws. Simple haunches with no indication of articulation; legs and tails fused and simply merge into the tube at the bottom. Length of circular rod, probably modern, protrudes from the bottom of the tube. Overall a very simplified piece with very little representation of detail.

Dimensions: H 144 (excluding modern rod), max W 60 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2230 (ex Wellcome collection A 220662)

Sotheby sale catalogue 14-15.05.1931, lot 185

12 Master of Animals type Finial (Fig. 4a)

Anthropomorphic tube with thickened rim at top above a truncated conical headdress. Face has prominent pinched nose ears, circular eyes and impressed mouth. Small breasts. Two-stranded necklace and girdle of two thin and one thick central encircling ribs. The figure grasps two flanking lions with gaping jaws and prominent eye coils. No mane indicated and shoulders only by a thickening at the point where the necks join the tube. Paws with claws indicated by incised lines appear on the tube below the breasts but the forelegs are not shown. Articulation of hind quarters

indicated by incised lines; long tails curl at their tips to form small loops. Bottom of tube damaged and piece broken in two across the girdle.

Dimensions: H 153, max W 59 mm.

Accession number: 1955A372



Fig. 3 – Nos. 10, 9, 11

13 Master of Animals type Finial (Fig. 4b)

Anthropomorphic tube with slightly bevelled rim and two encircling bands at the top, plain at the bottom. The tube has two human faces; one at the top with prominent nose and quite deeply incised circular eyes and one in the centre. The central figure grasps the necks of the flanking animals which represent very stylized lions with exaggerated gaping jaws, circular eyes and cocks' combs; a cock's head facing downwards sprouts from the base of their curved necks. Below the second head is two

groups of three simple raised bands. The hindquarters are fairly open with thin knobby-kneed legs and abbreviated tails curling into solid discs at the bottom. On one side of the tube only there are two protruding blobs, side by side, and level with the bottom of the feet.

Dimensions: H 164, max W 64 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2232 (ex Wellcome collection A 167113)

Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 165



Fig. 4 – Nos. 12, 13

14 Decorated Tube (Fig. 5a)

Hollow tube with human face on one side only; features less grotesque than usual though proportionately the pinched ears are rather small and the nose rather prominent. It wears a tall headdress with two encircling ribs, the top rounded and overhanging, and a two-strand necklace. The encircling ribs making up both the necklace and the double band on the headdress have vertical incised lines, perhaps to indicate individual beads. The upper arms are separated from the body of the tube and the hands meet on the lower thorax; incised lines indicate fingers and articulation of hands and/or bracelets. The figure wears a broad plain girdle above small protruding buttocks whose cheeks are separated by a short incised line. Pubic triangle is indicated by incised lines forming a V with a vertical line through the angle, an indication that we are dealing with a male. Note that the figure does not have breasts and that the hands are clasped across the waist, not holding the breasts or drawing attention to the genitals which are the most usual hand positions for female figures. Feet taper to a point and are not separated. The tube extends, slightly indented, beyond the base of the feet and suggests that that the piece may have been mounted into some sort of socket. This is a fairly carefully modelled and detailed piece.

Dimensions: H 158 mm.

Accession number: 1955A118.1

15 Decorated Tube with Grotesque Janus Head (Fig. 5c)

This piece has prominent ears and simple circular applied eyes. A prominent nose and fleshy lips were formed from the same piece of wax. There are three encircling bands immediately below the head and another two at the bottom of the tube. Top of tube has a rounded rim.

Dimensions: H 86 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2237 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

16 Decorated Tube with Grotesque Janus Head (Fig. 5d)

The head has small prominent ears, eye coils slanting obliquely outwards and downwards below prominent ridges and protruding nose and lower lip. There are two encircling ribs below the head and one above the flared base. Thickened moulding at top of tube decorated with oblique slashes.

Dimensions: H 88 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2233 (ex Wellcome collection A 192102)

Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 162

17 Decorated Tube with Grotesque Janus Head (Fig. 5b)

Features comprise circular eyes, pinched nose and thickened lips. The protruberances from the side of the head have a spiral pattern and are probably to be regarded as curled sidelocks rather than as ears. Above, the figure wears a headdress of incurving bull's horns. Two groups of five flattened encircling ribs are positioned one immediately below the head and one nearer to the base of the tube. Features suggest regarding this piece as an anthropomorphic tube with horned head-gear rather than as a zoomorphic tube. For a similar motif with curled sidelocks and horned headdress c.f. Moorey 1971, no. 435.

Dimensions: H 69 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2234 (ex Wellcome collection A 167117)

Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 165



Fig. 5 – Nos. 14, 17 (top centre), 15 (bottom centre), 16

18 Finial Mount (Fig. 6a)

Typical mount with flanged top, tubular neck and bell-shaped body; thickened at base. Undecorated.

Dimensions: H 77, base di 34 mm.

Accession number: 1955A118.2

19 Finial Mount (Fig. 6e)

Typical bell-shaped type with two incised encircling lines at the base of the tall neck and three more at the base of the body which is not thickened.

Dimensions: H 100, base di 31 mm.

Accession number: 1948A254

20 Finial Mount (Fig. 6d)

Body more rounded and tapers to base which is decorated with three encircling incised lines but not thickened. Moulded rib where neck joins body.

Dimensions: H 115, base di 32, max di 46 mm.

Accession number: 1948A253



Fig. 6 – Nos. 18, 21 (top), 22, 20, 19 (bottom)

21 Finial Mount (Fig. 6b)

Thinner type with encircling rib approximately half way down the neck and three incised lines at the junction of the neck with the body. Base thickened to form an everted rim.

Dimensions: H 82, base di 17 mm.

Accession number: 1948A252

22 Finial Mount (Fig. 6c)

Thinner type with body tapering in to a narrow base with thickened everted rim. Six flattened encircling ribs on lower neck. Body has an encircling band of incised vertical hatching.

Dimensions: H 120, base di 23, max di 30 mm.

Accession number: 1948A251

Pins

The Birmingham collection includes pins from Moorey's classes Ia, Ib, Ic, II and III (Moorey 1971, 172). The geometric (23) and floral headed pins (24-26) depicting stylized poppy seed cases and pomegranates are of familiar types and need no further comment. The collection shows more variety in its range of pins with zoomorphic heads (27-34). Of the pins with antelope heads (27-30) no. 30 is more likely to be a whetstone socket (Moorey 1971, 98) but otherwise they are of a standard type as are the examples with a duck's head (31), lion mask (32) and winged monster (33). More unusual is the couchant lion head of no. 34. The class II (35-36) and class III (37-38) pins are all in typical Luristan style.

23 Geometric-headed Pin (Fig. 7b)

A simple class Ia pin with a domed circular head.

Dimensions: L 119, di head 25 mm.

Accession number: 1955A368

24 Floral-headed Pin (Fig. 7d)

Class Ib pin with a highly stylized poppy head; flat top, constricted neck and globular body merging into the plain tapering shank. It lacks however the pedestal foot often found on such pins.

Dimensions: L 146 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2239 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

25 Floral-headed Pin (Fig. 7c)

Class Ib pin with the head in the form of a stylized poppy seed case. Three crater-like depressions defined by ridges around their circumferences are set at equal distances around the ovary. Above is nine-rayed stigmatic disc characteristic of *Papaver somniferum*, the opium poppy. At the top of the shank are two closely spaced groups of four encircling ribs.

Dimensions: L 140 mm.

Accession number: 1955A366

26 Floral-headed Pin (Fig. 7a)

Class Ib pin with head in the form of a pomegranate represented by an oval open cage consisting of four vertical bars each decorated with two incised lines and separated by circles incised with spirals. Vertical stigma at top. Below the head is a side-loop. The shank, which is broken, passes through the cage to connect with the stigma.

Dimensions: L 50 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2238 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931



Fig. 7 – Nos. 26, 23, 25, 24, 31, 32, 29, 28

27 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 8a)

Class Ic pin with head cast as a continuation of the plain shank. The head is in the form of a stylized antelope head with extended neck, large eyes, long straight ears and horns swept back to re-join the shank. The snout forms a convex nail-head top to the pin. There is a side-loop immediately below the head.

Dimensions: L 206 mm.

Accession number: 1955A363

28 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 7h)

Class Ic pin having an antelope's head with long thin ears and horns which arch back to re-join the shank, curling away again at the tips. Shank broken off.

Dimensions: L 38 mm.

Accession number: 1955A365

29 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 7g)

Class Ic pin with plain shank and separately cast head in the form of an antelope's head with extended neck, long ears, swept back horns and bulging eyes with prominent ridges.

Dimensions: L 120 mm.

Accession number: 1955A364

30 Animal-headed Pin/Whetstone socket (Fig. 8b)

Class Ic pin head or whetstone socket in the form of an animal's head, probably an antelope, though only the carefully modelled ears and horns, the latter swept back over a hollow socket, survive. The upper surfaces of the horns are decorated with notches. Inserted into the socket is a tapering shank of square cross-section, probably modern. Iconographically this piece falls closest to the antelope-headed pins but its size suggests that it is better regarded as a whetstone socket.

Dimensions: L head 47, L shank c. 180 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2236 (ex Wellcome collection A 192094)

Sotheby sale catalogue 27.07.1931, lot 160

31 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 7e)

Class Ic pin with head in the form a duck with its head turned back over its body and with stylized wings forming a Y-shape. Incised lines indicate features on the duck's head. The tapering shank of circular section is plain except for two closely spaced groups of four encircling ribs below the head.

Dimensions: L 127 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2240 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

32 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 7f)

Class Ic pin with head cast as a flat plaque depicting a stylized lion mask. The eyes are rendered by raised coils straightening and extending downwards to form the nose. There are three encircling ribs at the base of the head otherwise the shank is plain. The back of the plaque is undecorated.

Dimensions: L 120 mm.

Accession number: 1955A367

33 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 8d)

Class Ic pin with plain shank and head cast as a schematic winged monster having the form of a quadruped *couchant* with long neck and snout, bulging eyes and prominent ears or horns. It is slightly thickened at the shoulders from which rises a crescentic wing. The tail is very exaggerated.

Dimensions: L 249 mm.

Accession number: 1955A111

34 Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 8c)

Class Ic pin with head in the form of an animal *couchant*, probably a lion although if so it appears unusually young and tame looking. Features on the head are rather crude but the body is well modelled and the muscles of the shoulders and the haunches are subtly indicated. No mane is indicated on the head or neck but the spine has a raised ridge decorated with incised chevrons. The top of the shank is decorated with four "striated bead" and three "double reel" mouldings, three incised encircling lines and chevrons. The head was cast in a two part mould as indicated by casting scars on the base and the front of the neck. Although the motif of the lion *couchant* may suggest to some a Urartian provenance the bead and reel moulding definitely points to Luristan as its place of origin.

Dimensions: L 277 mm.

Accession number: 1955A112



Fig. 8 – Nos. 27, 30, 34, 33

35 Double Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 9a)

Class II bronze pin head cast onto an iron shank all but a stub of which has been lost. A pair of animal heads with circular eyes, long thin ears and swept back horns curving up at the tip (almost certainly antelopes) on long sharply curving necks flank a central feature representing a duck with its head turned back over its body which forms a Y shape. There are four incised lines below the duck and five encircling bands on the shaft below the necks of the flanking animals. The bottom of the shaft has a thickened rim.

Dimensions: H 57, max W 55 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2235 (ex Wellcome collection A 151244)

Stevens sale catalogue 19.09.1933, lot 204

36 Double Animal-headed Pin (Fig. 9d)

Class II pin with plain shank. The head takes the form of two lions' heads with long sharply curving necks, exaggerated eyes and gaping jaws flanking an inverted lion mask with stylized features (ears, mane, eyes, nose) indicated by linear and circular raised ridges. Incised lines where the neck joins the shaft indicate claws. The bottom of the shaft is moulded as two ridges each with three incised encircling lines. The reverse is plain.

Dimensions: L 207 mm.

Accession number: 1955A113

37 Disc-headed Pin (Figs. 9c, 21b)

Class III pin. The top of the shank is slightly swollen and decorated with incised chevrons and five encircling lines. The roundel forming the head has four *repoussé* dots equally spaced around the perimeter and a further one in the centre. The edge of the roundel and each of the *repoussé* dots are marked out with rings of tiny punched dots. Four chased ladder designs radiate from the central dot to points on the perimeter mid way between the other *repoussé* dots; the ladders taper so that they are wider at the perimeter than at the centre. The edge is damaged in places and one fragment has been re-joined. The chased ladder pattern is obviously a corruption from the stars which are often encountered on disc headed pins (e.g. Moorey 1971, 354, 355).

Dimensions: L 147, di head 40 mm.

Accession number: 1955A369

38 Disc-headed Pin (Figs. 9b, 21c)

Class III pin with plain shank with flattened swelling just below the head. The head itself comprises a central umbo surrounded by three concentric *repoussé* bands and two bands of chased guilloche pattern with punched dots. Further tiny punched dots surround and form an X shape on the central umbo. The perimeter of the roundel is marked out by small *repoussé* dots some of which are pierced through.

Dimensions: L 261, di head 80-89 mm.

Accession number: 1955A110



Fig. 9 – Nos. 35, 38, 37, 36

Other Personal Ornaments

Under this heading fall the bracelets (39-41) all of the open variety with animal head terminals and the anklets (42-45). The latter are designated as anklets purely on the basis of diameter and could conceivably have been armbands for a larger upper arm. Finally come three pendants (46-48) and the stamp seal with its unusual bulls' heads' decoration (49).

39 Bracelet (Fig. 10a)

Cast bronze open bracelet with terminals in the form of lions' heads. The heads are very flattened with broad cheeks and large eyes; the ears are flattened against the skull.

Dimensions: max external di 75 mm.

Accession number: 1955A117

40 Bracelet (Fig. 10c)

Cast bronze open bracelet with terminals in the form of animal heads. The heads are of highly stylized form consisting of an upturned snout, the mouth indicated by a horizontal incised line, blob eyes and upright circular ears. A ridge on top of the head may be intended to indicate swept back horns though the ears would suggest a feline type. Below the heads is incised decoration of lines and oblique hatching.

Dimensions: max external di 63 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2241 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

41 Bracelet (Fig. 10b)

Cast bronze open bracelet with terminals in the form of animal heads. Long somewhat flattened snouts, long thin ears and applied eyes. Two Y-shaped ridges behind each head. Although the heads are not those of lions there is no indication of horns.

Dimensions: max external di 69 mm.

Accession number: 1955A370



Fig. 10 – Nos. 39, 41, 40

42 Anklet (Fig. 11a)

Open type but the ends meet. Made from circular section rod. Decoration consists of incised lines forming a geometric pattern at the ends of the piece.

Dimensions: max external di 92 mm.

Accession number: 1955A371

43 Anklet (Fig. 11b)

Circular section rod bent to form an open hoop the ends of which overlap by 5 mm. Badly corroded.

Dimensions: max external di 115 mm.

Accession number: 1948A137



Fig. 11 – Nos. 42, 43 (above), 45, 44 (below)

44 Anklet (*Figs. 11d, 21d*)

This is a heavy hoop of more or less oval shape fashioned from thick circular section rod. The ends of the hoop almost meet. The outer surfaces closest to the opening are decorated with a pattern of incised lines and chevrons.

Dimensions: max external di 108 mm, wt 320 gm.

Accession number: 1955A116

45 Anklet (*Fig. 11c*)

In the form of a heavy cast bronze hoop of oval shape made from thick circular section rod. The ends of the hoop are approximately 15 mm. apart. Badly corroded and no traces of decoration remain.

Dimensions: max external di 116 mm, wt 390 gm.

Accession number: 1948A136

46 Pendant (*Fig. 12c*)

In the form of a bird with comb, thick curved beak and large plain eye; slight fan tail. Incised lines decorate the body and base of the neck. Suspension loop at base of neck.

Dimensions: L 34, H 31 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2243 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

47 Pendant (*Fig. 12a*)

This pendant depicts a pair of birds with combs and large curved beaks. Decoration consists of raised bands at the base of the neck and incised lines on the body. The birds fuse at the base of their necks. Fan tail. Suspension loop on back.

Dimensions: L 42, H 37 mm.

Accession number: 1955A121



Fig. 12 – Nos. 47, 48, 46

48 Pendant (*Fig. 12b*)

Cast bronze pendant in the form of a goat with long curving horns, circular eyes and a rather pointed snout. The back is concave and the tail upright. There are blobs on all four legs to indicate knees.

Three ridges decorate the front of the neck and incised lines the body. Suspension loop at base of neck. Tip of left rear leg missing.

Dimensions: L 40, H 45 mm.

Accession number: 1982A2242 (ex Wellcome collection un-numbered)

Puttick and Simpson sale 08.05.1931

49 Stamp Seal (*Figs. 13, 21a*)

Stamp seal comprising a circular base decorated with two moulded bulls' heads on the perimeter. The handle is circular in section, thickened near the base with four raised encircling ribs above. The top of the handle is flattened, pierced for suspension and decorated with two bulls' heads set at right angles to those on the base. The seal design on the base consists of three incised lines crossing through the centre to produce six segments.

Dimensions: H 40, di base 27 mm.

Accession number: 1984A233



Fig. 13 – No. 49

Horse Trappings, Tools and Weapons

The only introduction necessary for this section is to mention the two sword blades (53-54) which are not from Luristan but from Khurvin and Susa respectively.

50 Horse Bit and Cheek Pieces (Fig. 14)

The only horse bit in the Birmingham collections falls into Group I (Potratz 1966). It consists of a rigid mouthpiece of square section with the terminals flattened and curled over in opposite directions. The cheek pieces are in the form of rectangles with concave upper and lower edges. A bar runs horizontally from the sides to a central ring for the mouthpiece. There are loops at either end of the upper edge for a cheek strap. Two spikes on each cheek piece are positioned on the central bar, one on either side of the central ring.

Dimensions: internal width between cheek pieces 130, cheek pieces 90 x 70 mm.

Accession number: 1955A114



Fig. 14 – No.50

51 Axe head (Fig. 15a)

This axe head has a cylindrical shaft hole and four butt spikes, the lower three still joined by casting spurs. The curved blade is thickened at top and bottom.

Dimensions: L 186 mm.

Accession number: 1955A115

52 Axe Head (Fig. 15b)

With a cylindrical shaft hole and four butt spikes this axe head is almost identical to the above apart from its dimensions and the absence of casting spurs between the spikes.

Dimensions: L 204 mm.

Accession number: 1955A362



Fig. 15 – No. 51 (above), 52 (below)

53 Sword Blade (Fig. 16b)

Rat-tail tang with splayed head. Fairly straight sided blade tapering outwards into rounded shoulders. Rectangular section midrib. From Khurvin.

Dimensions: L 657 mm.

Accession number: 1962A714



Fig. 16 – No. 54 (above), 53 (below)

54 Sword Blade (*Fig. 16a*)

Very elongated, concave sided deltoid blade. Rounded tang beaten to a splayed chisel edge with a groove on either side. The two wings of the blade which project upwards parallel with the tang are thickened. From Susa.

Dimensions: L 581 mm.

Accession number: 1962A715

55 Staff Head (*Fig. 17*)

This is formed from a bronze tube with bevelled overhanging rims at top and bottom. The tube is thickened near the top and decorated with raised segments; three raised encircling bands above and below this swelling. There are two incised encircling lines near the base of the tube.

Dimensions: H 130, max di 47 mm.

Accession number: 1984A234



Fig. 17 – No. 55

Vessels

Of the the three bronze vessels in Birmingham one of them (56) is probably from north west Persia and Achaemenid in date; the design is also Achaemenid though with some Assyrian influence. The other two vessels (57-58) date to early in the first millennium.



Fig. 18 – No. 56 and detail of decoration

56 Bowl (Fig. 18)

This shallow open bowl with rounded base was beaten from sheet bronze. It has a plain rim. It is decorated with a winged, crowned, bearded, human-headed quadruped on one side and a crowned bearded figure wearing a long robe and seated on a high backed chair on the other. Internal decoration consists of three bands of triangles made up of punched dots; the apices of the triangles point outwards in the outermost band and inwards in the inner two bands. Although this shape of vessel occurs from the late third millennium onwards the decoration suggests an Achaemenid date.

Dimensions: H 49, rim di 147 mm.

Accession number: 1948A249

57 Bowl (Fig. 19a)

Sheet bronze bowl with slightly concave vertical neck and everted rim. It has a bulbous body to a rounded base. Three incised encircling lines decorate the shoulder.

Dimensions: H 87, max di 106, rim di 84 mm.

Accession number: 1955A120



Fig. 19 – Nos. 57, 58

58 Goblet (Fig. 19b)

Made from sheet bronze this goblet has a concave neck with everted rim, a squat globular body and a pedestal base. The neck is decorated with three encircling moulded ridges and the body with alternate panels of volutes and a scale pattern.

Dimensions: H 121, di body 85, rim di 98 mm.

Accession number: 1955A119

Miscellaneous

The two engraved cylinders catalogued below are obvious modern pieces but are included for the sake of completeness and because they were acquired in the early 1930s in Iran alongside quite genuine pieces. The designs on both pieces are loosely reminiscent of those found on cylinder seals and it seems likely that the maker had had sight of such pieces.

59 Cylinder (Fig. 20b)

Length of bronze or copper tube with etched? design depicting lions, stags, dogs and Gilgamesh type figure.

Dimensions: H 39, di 15 mm.

Accession number: 1963A1289

60 Cylinder (*Fig. 20a*)

Length of bronze or copper tube with etched design of two groups each of two figures holding standards. There is a crude attempt at an inscription which possibly reads ¹gis-sa-an-x-x; if not completely spurious it is probably copied from a cylinder seal.

Dimensions: H 33, di 16 mm.

Accession number: 1963A1290



Fig. 20 – Nos. 60, 59

Bibliography

Moorey, P.R.S., 1971. *Catalogue of the Ancient Persian Bronzes in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford)

Potratz, J.A.H., 1966. *Die Pferdetransport des Alten Orient* (Rome)

Concordance of Numbers

Birmingham	Cat	Birmingham	Cat	Birmingham	Cat
1948A136	45	1955A121	47	1982A2227	6
1948A137	43	1955A362	52	1982A2228	7
1948A249	56	1955A363	27	1982A2229	10
1948A251	22	1955A364	29	1982A2230	11
1948A252	21	1955A365	28	1982A2231	9
1948A253	20	1955A366	25	1982A2232	13
1948A254	19	1955A367	32	1982A2233	16
1951A139	1	1955A368	23	1982A2234	17
1955A110	38	1955A369	37	1982A2235	35
1955A111	33	1955A370	41	1982A2236	30
1955A112	34	1955A371	42	1982A2237	15
1955A113	36	1955A372	12	1982A2238	26
1955A114	50	1955A373	8	1982A2239	24
1955A115	51	1962A714	53	1982A2240	31
1955A116	44	1962A715	54	1982A2241	40
1955A117	39	1963A1289	59	1982A2242	48
1955A118.1	14	1963A1290	60	1982A2243	46
1955A118.2	18	1982A2224	2	1982A2244	3
1955A119	58	1982A2225	5	1984A233	49
1955A120	57	1982A2226	4	1984A234	55

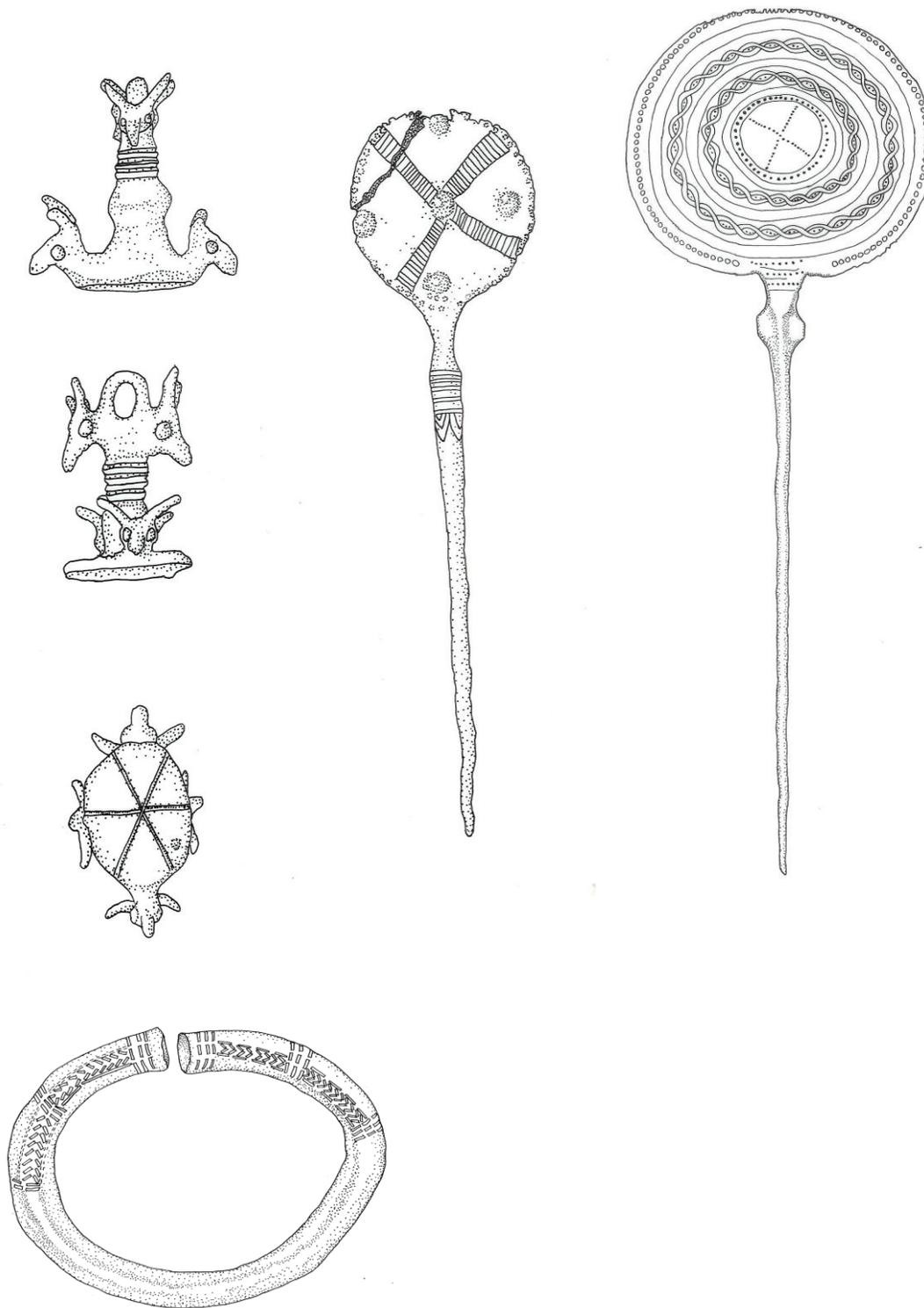


Fig. 21 – Nos. 49, 37, 38, 44