

The Adventure of the Illustrious Scholar

Papers Presented to Oscar White Muscarella



Edited by

Elizabeth Simpson



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Luxury Arts of the Ancient Near East

Elizabeth Simpson

A large category of ancient Near Eastern arts may be termed “luxury arts,” because of their inherently valuable materials, fine workmanship, and associations with the elites in whose tombs they were buried. These are sometimes called “decorative arts” or “minor arts,” although they were really neither. Even the word “art” is debated, as it was not employed in the ancient world per se, although ancient peoples clearly appreciated well-made objects of prized materials.¹ Such consciously artistic creations—metalwork and jewelry, faience and glasswork, elaborate textiles and clothing, and fine furniture—are discussed in the present essay. This overview draws from the works of many authors, only a few of which can be cited here. Preeminent are Roger Moorey’s *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries* (1994) and Jack Sasson’s *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East* (1995). Numerous scholars have written on individual sites and types of objects, aided by practitioners, conservators, and scientists. Following the lead of Oscar White Muscarella, more and more scholars now distinguish carefully between excavated and unexcavated (plundered) objects, in order to determine what is authentically ancient, and to keep forgeries of provenience from contaminating the record.² In this regard, ancient Near Eastern “art” cannot be dissociated from archaeology. I am pleased to present this article to Oscar Muscarella, who has made such a major contribution to the study of the arts of the ancient Near East—through his uncompromising work as a master sleuth.

Early Arts and Technologies

The so-called Neolithic Revolution was characterized by a series of technological innovations, including the annealing of native copper (Çayönü, Turkey, ca. eighth millennium B.C.), the smelting of copper ore (apparent evidence from Çatalhöyük, Turkey, ca. 6,000 B.C.), and the casting of copper in a mold (Can

¹ Winter, “Surpassing Work.”

² Muscarella, “The Antiquities Trade and the Destruction of Ancient Near Eastern Cultures.” On archaeological “provenience,” see Muscarella, *Bronze and Iron*, 11.

Hasan, Turkey, ca. 5,000 B.C.).³ Early surviving textiles include fragments of twined bast fiber from Çayönü (ca. 8,000 B.C.) and of woven hemp from Çatalhöyük (ca. 7,400 B.C.).⁴ The warp-weighted loom is attested at Çatalhöyük by ca. 6,000 B.C.⁵ Furniture was in use at Çatalhöyük in the same period.⁶ Jewelry in the form of beads of stone, teeth, and copper was found at Çayönü, Çatalhöyük, and other Neolithic sites (Plate 32.1).⁷ The fine stone beads were shaped with stone or copper tools, and the holes were drilled with a bow drill, a laborious and exacting process.

The earliest extant worked gold has been excavated from graves at the site of Varna in Bulgaria (fifth millennium B.C.); among the earliest gold objects from Mesopotamia are fluted beads from the site of Tepe Gawra in Iraq (fifth–fourth millennium B.C.). Faience and “glazed” stone (mainly steatite) occur in the Near East as well as Egypt by the fifth millennium B.C.⁸ By the fourth millennium, the predominant copper alloy in the Near East was arsenical copper (.9% arsenic or greater), occurring as a natural or artificial alloy.⁹ Maces, standards, scepters, and “crowns” of arsenical copper and cast by the lost-wax method were discovered in 1961 in the Nahal Mishmar cave in the Judean desert (fourth millennium B.C.).¹⁰ Tin bronze was introduced as a commodity in Mesopotamia in the early third millennium B.C. There is disagreement over the percentage of tin required to indicate a deliberate alloy (less than 3% may be considered sufficient, based on ancient texts), as well as over the earliest methods of bronze manufacturing and also the sources of tin (see below).¹¹ With the introduction of bronze technology, one enters the Bronze Age, with its many important sites and luxury objects.

3 See Muhly, “Mining and Metalwork,” 1503. It has not been possible to cite comprehensively all sources relevant to the many topics addressed in this article; additional bibliography may be found in those publications listed. Dates, in many cases, are approximate.

4 Good, “Textiles,” 337. Although textiles are rarely preserved in archaeological contexts in the Near East, interesting studies of textile manufacture and dress are now being undertaken. See Nosch, Koefoed, and Strand, *Textile Production and Consumption in the Ancient Near East*; Harlow, Michel, and Nosch, *Prehistoric, Ancient Near Eastern, and Aegean Textiles and Dress*; Breniquet and Michel, *Wool Economy in the Ancient Near East and the Aegean*; and Burke, *From Minos to Midas*.

5 Barber, *Prehistoric Textiles*, 249.

6 Simpson, “Furniture in Ancient Western Asia,” 1647.

7 Mellaart, *Çatal Hüyük*. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 77. Bahrani, “Jewelry and Personal Arts,” 1635–1636.

8 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 168–173.

9 *Ibid.*, 242, 250.

10 Muhly, “Mining and Metalwork,” 1504.

11 *Ibid.*, 1506–1507. Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 251–252.

The Early Bronze Age: Luxury Arts in the Third Millennium B.C.

The Royal Cemetery of Ur

The tombs of the “Royal Cemetery” of Ur in southern Iraq produced an enormous corpus of fine Sumerian objects of metal, stone, shell, reed, wood, and other materials, buried as grave goods and also worn by attendants sacrificed as part of the funerary ritual.¹² Sixteen or 17 tombs dating to the Early Dynastic IIIA period (ca. 2550–2400 B.C.) were considered exceptional (“royal”) by the excavator Leonard Woolley. The burials contained items of copper, tin, bronze, gold, electrum, silver, lapis lazuli, and carnelian—all imported materials—and included weapons, tools, cylinder seals, jewelry, vessels, musical instruments, and funerary furniture. Many of these survived in good condition, due to the careful excavation methods of Woolley and his team. Works from the Royal Cemetery were among those damaged in the looting of the Iraq Museum in April 2003, although most had been transferred to storage in the basement of the Baghdad Bank in 1990, prior to the 1991 Gulf War.¹³

Tomb PG 800, as described by Woolley, comprised a “death pit” with 23 retainers and a tomb chamber that held the burial of Queen Puabi and three attendants. The queen wore an elaborate headdress of gold, lapis lazuli, and carnelian over a complex coiffeur, as well as gold lunate earrings and a necklace of gold and lapis lazuli (Plate 32.2). Covering her upper body was a “cape” of beads, and at her waist was a beaded belt. Near the bier lay her “diadem,” reconstructed by Woolley from tiny lapis beads, gold amulets, and delicate floral elements. The queen’s attendants were also suitably attired. Additional finds include gold and silver vessels, gold “loop-in-loop” chains, a silver and electrum rein ring, bronze and copper vessels and tools, ostrich and cockle shells, stone and silver offering stands, a gaming board, a toilet box, a harp, a sledge, and a “wardrobe chest” ornamented with human and animal figures in shell and lapis lazuli.¹⁴

Numerous metalworking techniques are exhibited in the objects from the Royal Cemetery: the raising of metal vessels, repoussé and chasing, casting, soldering (which involves an agent) and brazing (which does not), precious metal overlay, metal inlay, wire and chain making, cloisonné for stone inlay,

12 Woolley, *The Royal Cemetery*; Zettler and Horn, *Treasures from the Royal Tombs of Ur*.

13 Bogdanos, “Casualties of War.” Lawler, “Mayhem in Mesopotamia.”

14 Woolley, *The Royal Cemetery*, especially 72–91. Aruz and Wallenfels, *Art of the First Cities*, 108–117. For textual references to Sumerian and later jewelry, see Bahrani, “Jewelry and Personal Arts,” 1639–1642.

and filigree.¹⁵ It has often been stated that the earliest evidence for granulation comes from the tomb of Puabi, but this cannot be substantiated.¹⁶ The item in question, a ring bead, is said to be from PG 800, although it does not appear in the published inventory.¹⁷ To find early instances of gold granulation with a secure archaeological context, one must turn to the site of Troy in northwestern Anatolia.

Troy

By the mid-third millennium B.C., Troy was an important and wealthy commercial center, to judge from the impressive architecture of the citadel and the 21 “treasures” discovered by Heinrich Schliemann (1872–1890). Treasure A, or “Priam’s Treasure,” unearthed in 1873, contained a stunning array of luxury objects, including precious metal vessels, two ornate gold diadems with sheet-gold pendants suspended from chains, 60 gold earrings and hair rings, gold bracelets and “torcs,” and around 8,700 tiny gold beads (Plate 32.3).¹⁸ Pendants on the diadems are worked in repoussé in imitation of gold granules; actual granulation occurs on several lunate earrings.¹⁹ Other Troy “treasures” include six gold bars with perforations or incised markings, and from Treasure L, four ceremonial hammer axes—three of jade and one of lazurite. The Troy Treasures are now among the most famous—and most hotly contested—of all ancient artifacts.²⁰

Schliemann smuggled his treasures out of Turkey and into Greece, eventually bequeathing them to the Berlin State Museums, where they remained until the end of World War II. In 1945, they were removed by Soviet trophy brigades to the U.S.S.R., where they were kept in secret repositories in the State Hermitage Museum, Leningrad, and the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow. Their location was revealed only in 1991, and officially acknowledged in 1993. The finds in the Pushkin Museum, including Priam’s Treasure, went on display there in 1996, accompanied by a comprehensive catalogue with new color photographs and extensive information on materials and techniques.²¹ Works from Troy are now housed in around 50 museums throughout the world. Gold objects

15 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 227–230.

16 Ibid., 228–232. Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery*, 36.

17 Ogden, *Jewellery of the Ancient World*, 65, figure 4:55. According to Jack Ogden (pers. comm.) this bead was given to a member of his family by Leonard Woolley, who said it was “from the Royal Cemetery.”

18 Easton, “Priam’s Treasure”; Tolstikov and Treister, *The Gold of Troy*, 27–94.

19 Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery*, 48–51.

20 Simpson, *The Spoils of War*, 191–213.

21 Tolstikov and Treister, *The Gold of Troy*.

were donated to the National Archaeological Museum in Athens by Sophia Schliemann after her husband's death; others were claimed by the Imperial Museum in Constantinople (Istanbul Archaeological Museum). A group of 24 gold items acquired in 1966 by the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia, was given back to Turkey on "indefinite term loan" in 2012.

Alaca Höyük and Horoztepe

Outstanding jewelry and metal artifacts were recovered from 13 Early Bronze Age "royal" tombs at Alaca Höyük in central Anatolia, dating to the second half of the third millennium B.C. Burial goods included gold diadems and jewelry, along with other objects of copper, bronze, iron, gold, silver, bone, clay, and stone.²² As at Troy, sheet gold items were worked in imitation of granulation, but true granulation is not found.²³ Among the most intriguing works are the so-called standards, featuring animal figures or fields of geometric decoration. The standards are typically made of arsenical copper or tin bronze, and both lost-wax and mold casting are apparently attested.²⁴ Some of the figures are inlaid with silver or electrum; the use of combined metals also occurs in vessels from the tombs and a silver idol with boots and breasts of gold. Perhaps most exceptional is a dagger from Tomb K with a gold hilt and iron blade, recently analyzed and shown to have a high nickel content (7–8%), plausible evidence for meteoritic and not terrestrial iron.

The site of Horoztepe, some 150 km to the east, indicates that small items of furniture could be placed in graves in the region. Rescue operations were carried out in 1956–1957, after several chance finds were brought to the attention of the Turkish government (1954). One tomb was excavated, dating to the later third millennium B.C., along with remnants of others that had been disturbed and plundered. The intact burial contained vessels, weapons, and other metal objects, some of which had been intentionally bent or crushed.²⁵ Among these were furniture attachments, including the bronze sheathing for two small tables, the earliest actual tables from the Near East (Figure 32.1). Each table had four legs, with feet in the form of boots.²⁶ More metal samples have been analyzed from Horoztepe than from any other Early Bronze site in Anatolia, revealing the presence of unalloyed copper, arsenical copper, tin bronze, gold,

22 Muscarella, "Tombs of Alaca Höyük." See Çınaroğlu, "Reconstructing the Early Bronze Age Hattian Royal Tombs," in this volume for recent work at the site.

23 Maxwell-Hyslop, *Western Asiatic Jewellery*, 43.

24 De Jesus, *Prehistoric Mining and Metallurgy*, 125–127, 322.

25 Özgüç and Akok, *Horoztepe*.

26 Simpson, "Furniture in Ancient Western Asia," 1653.

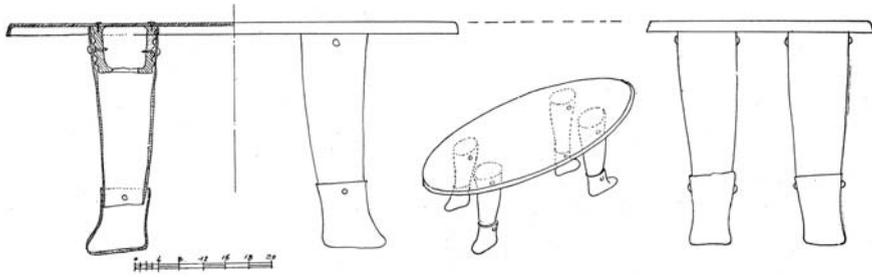


FIGURE 32.1 *Small bronze table from Horoztepe, Turkey, later third millennium B.C. Özgüç and Akok, Horoztepe, figure 1.*

silver, electrum, and lead.²⁷ Several important copper and bronze artifacts apparently from Horoztepe made their way to New York; these were bought by the Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1955 and are on display in the galleries of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art.²⁸

•••

With the appearance of tin bronze in the third millennium B.C., scholars have sought to trace the source of the tin. This is the subject of debate, about which much has been written.²⁹ Afghanistan is considered a likely candidate, with the Taurus Mountain region in Turkey also proposed.³⁰ Early evidence of glass occurs at this time, in the form of beads from sites in Mesopotamia and Syria. In antiquity as in modern times, glass was made by combining silica and impure soda in a liquid melt, normally carried out in stages by fritting at a low temperature, grinding, and remelting, until glassy material occurs.³¹ Most of

27 De Jesus, *Prehistoric Mining and Metallurgy*, 130–131.

28 The museum acquired 41 bronzes in the 55.137 series (one was later deaccessioned). Muscarella, *Bronze and Iron*, 394–411. Photos of 31 of these are published in Özgüç and Akok, *Horoztepe*, plates VII: 4–5, XVII–XVIII, and XIX: 1–7. These illustrations show photos of objects “which most probably seem to have come from Horoztepe” that “recently turned up in the antiquities market.” The photos were obtained by a colleague and given to the excavators, who included them in the volume. At the time of publication (1958) they did not know that the objects had been acquired by the Metropolitan Museum. *Horoztepe*, 38, 56.

29 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 297–301.

30 Muhly, “Mining and Metalwork,” 1507–1514; Yener, “Early Bronze Age Tin Processing.”

31 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 190–192. For ancient methods carried into the 20th century, see “Glassmakers of Herat,” Corning Museum of Glass. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BMYE83DJU4Q>.

the evidence for Early Bronze Age luxury arts comes from cemeteries, repositories of the finery buried with the elites. Some city sites have also produced objects of importance, such as fragments of inlaid furniture from Uruk (Riemengebäude) in southern Iraq, and carbonized remains of a carved wooden table and chair from Palace G, Ebla, in Syria.³² Such instances are rare, however, since those abandoning their living quarters normally took their valuables with them. This is especially true of metal, which could be used as a means of payment or exchange, with silver (*kaspum*) in particular considered an index of value in the third millennium B.C.

The Boston Treasure and the Dorak Affair

No discussion of the luxury arts of the Early Bronze Age would be complete without reference to two well known “treasures,” which may serve to illustrate the lure of precious objects and the love of a good story. The “Boston Treasure” is a “hoard” of gold jewelry acquired in 1968 by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston. The hoard was “dated” by a gold cylinder seal inscribed with the cartouches of two Fifth Dynasty Egyptian pharaohs. Quotation marks are required, because the terms “treasure” and “hoard” are used to disguise the fact that the objects are all unexcavated. Therefore, from an archaeological perspective, they cannot be said to form a coherent group, and the collection cannot be dated by any individual piece. In addition to the seal, the acquisition included 125 pieces of gold jewelry. Despite the lack of archaeological context, a fantastic narrative was invented for the articles, involving an exotic princess from “some still-barbaric kingdom north of Egypt” who had died and been buried “in the regalia of her rank.” A scandal ensued, and the museum was quick to attribute the problem to “the greed of whoever dug it up and peddled it abroad” without acknowledging its own role in the sequence of events that led to the acquisition.³³

The “Dorak Affair” likewise involves a fabulous “treasure,” supposedly from two royal tombs. According to archaeologist James Mellaart, the “finds” were dug up around 1920 near the village of Dorak in northwest Turkey, and shown to him by a girl he met on a train in 1958. “Anna Papastrati” reportedly allowed Mellaart to examine and draw the objects and provided faded photographs and a sketch of the graves (Figure 32.2).³⁴ In 1959, Mellaart published drawings of the finds in *The Illustrated London News*, revealing “the most important discovery

32 Simpson, “Furniture in Ancient Western Asia,” 1652–1653.

33 Simpson, “Tall Tales,” 35–37.

34 For a full account, see Pearson and Connor, *The Dorak Affair*.

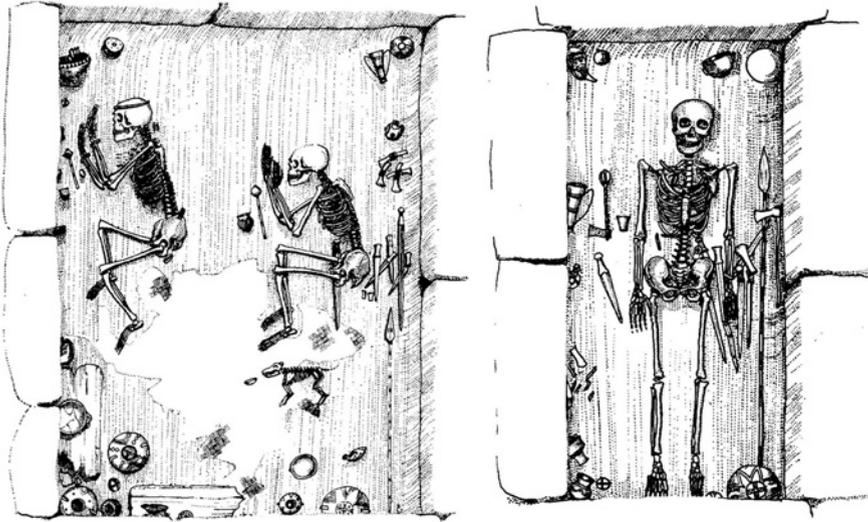


FIGURE 32.2 *Dorak tombs, reconstruction drawings of the finds as allegedly excavated. Drawing, Martin Wearver. Lloyd, Early Highland Peoples of Anatolia, 33. COURTESY THAMES AND HUDSON.*

since the royal tombs of Ur”: weapons of bronze and precious metals, jewelry and vessels of gold and silver, five female figurines, textile remains (a woven “kilim”), two wooden tables, and a gold-plated throne, supposedly dismantled before burial.³⁵ Also noted were an iron sword (recalling the Alaca Höyük dagger) and four hammer axes (as at Troy) of nephrite, lapis lazuli, obsidian, and amber. Conveniently, the gold sheathing for the throne bore the cartouche of the Fifth Dynasty Egyptian pharaoh Sahure, dating the tombs to ca. 2500 B.C.

Although the objects themselves were not in evidence, the “Dorak treasure” took its place in the Early Bronze Age repertoire.³⁶ The finds were never located, however, and Anna Papastrati and her house were likewise missing. Mellaart was accused of smuggling the works out of the country, and after 1965 he did not excavate in Turkey again. The Dorak Affair has been investigated—but not solved—by numerous scholars and journalists. Recently, the idea that Mellaart made it all up has gained ground,³⁷ supported by a close look at the evidence. Aside from the complete absence of the Dorak “finds,” it seems all too fortuitous that (1) the graves were drawn with archaeological accuracy; (2) materials and techniques were identified with certainty; (3) suspiciously

35 Mellaart, “Royal Treasure of Dorak.”

36 Lloyd, *Early Highland Peoples of Anatolia*, 29–33. Muscarella, *Bronze and Iron*, 396–398.

37 Mazur, “The Dorak Affair’s Final Chapter.”

close parallels can be cited in many instances, particularly for the four hammer axes; and (4) it is virtually impossible for two wooden tables and an Egyptian gold throne, even if dismantled, to have fit into the graves as represented. Both the Boston and Dorak “treasures” must be removed from the corpus of luxury arts of the third millennium B.C.

The Middle and Late Bronze Ages: Luxury Arts in the Second Millennium B.C.

In the early second millennium B.C., the Babylonians came to power, and by the 18th century B.C., King Hammurabi ruled extensive territories from the city of Babylon. Hammurabi’s code of law reveals much about value and commerce, including the trade in precious materials, but much more extensive documentation exists in ca. 23,000 clay tablets from Kültepe (Kaniš/Neša) in central Anatolia (ca. 1945–1730 B.C.). Kültepe is a large site with a citadel mound and the remains of an Assyrian trading colony (*karum*) that oversaw the trade in metals, stones, and textiles between Anatolia and Assyria in the early second millennium B.C. The Kültepe merchants exported gold, silver, copper, and other materials to Assyria, and imported tin and textiles.³⁸ It has been estimated that approximately 100,000 textiles and 100 tons of tin were imported into Anatolia by caravan over a 40–50 year period.³⁹ References to these textiles have been studied extensively, revealing much information about a valuable commodity that is rarely preserved in the archaeological record. Women occur repeatedly in the texts, engaged in textile production and also as their husbands’ representatives in commercial and legal dealings. Finds from Kültepe include characteristic pottery vessels and luxury items such as precious metal jewelry with lapis lazuli, carnelian, and agate beads and inlays.

To the west of Kültepe/Kaniš is the large site of Acemhöyük, which likely supported a *karum* as well. Two impressive palaces have been excavated there (19th–18th centuries B.C.), although little of their contents has survived, due to the ancient destruction by fire and modern looting of the site.⁴⁰ Recovered from the Sarıkaya palace were rock crystal and obsidian vases, gold ornaments, beaded fabric, and several ivories—which can be associated with a group of extraordinary furniture attachments of hippopotamus ivory in the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Acquired in the 1930s, the museum’s “Pratt ivories” can

38 T. Özgüç, *Kültepe*.

39 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 298.

40 N. Özgüç, “Acemhöyük Kazıları.”

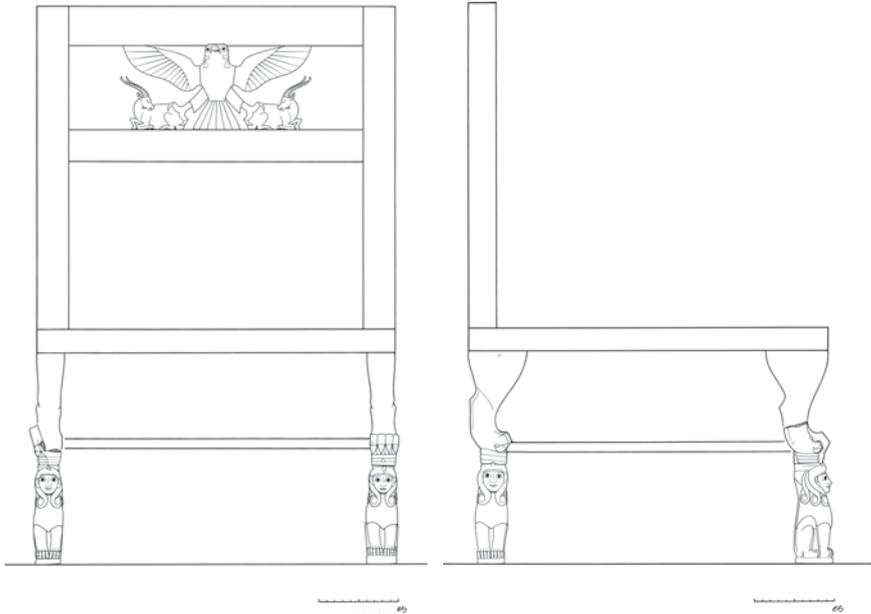


FIGURE 32.3 *Ivory chair from Acemhöyük, Turkey, 19th–18th century B.C. Reconstruction drawings, front and side views, E. Simpson, 2013.*

now be attributed definitively to the site of Acemhöyük (Plate 32.4).⁴¹ Four ivory sphinxes and three lion legs, as well as a number of carved ivory plaques, belonged to a chair or throne of wood with ivory fittings; the ivories were apparently originally stained red and gilded. This fine chair can be reconstructed in drawings, although not all the plaques can be positioned with certainty (Figure 32.3). The Pratt ivories underscore the problems associated with unexcavated objects: had the pieces been found *in situ*, the form and materials of the chair could have been recovered, and the ivory plaques could be placed in their proper positions.

Syria and the Eastern Mediterranean

The eastern Mediterranean region was important in antiquity, with its timber, metals, and other natural resources as well as its access to the sea. Several technological advances are thought to have occurred there first, including the fabrication of glass vessels around the middle of the second millennium B.C. Stratum II at Nuzi (Iraq) produced many fragments of core-formed vessels

41 Simpson, "An Early Anatolian Ivory Chair." N. Özgüç, *Acemhöyük—Burušhaddum 1*, 10, 28–29.

(15th–14th century B.C.) in contexts indicating that these were luxury goods.⁴² Colored glass was meant to imitate valuable stones, such as lapis lazuli or turquoise, as shown from ancient texts detailing glass terminology and production methods.⁴³ Early core-formed vessels were likely made by rolling the core in powdered glass, heating the glass-covered core, repeating the operation until the desired thickness was achieved, and then trailing on the decoration (for a later example, see Plate 32.8).⁴⁴

A substantial amount of wooden furniture has survived from Middle Bronze age tombs at Jericho (Palestine) and Baghouz (Syria)—a rare occurrence in the Near East, where wood normally deteriorates when buried in the soil.⁴⁵ The pieces were well made but not ornate, perhaps not luxury items, except in that sense that the possession of furniture in general indicates privileged status. The Jericho tombs contained more than 50 tables, stools, and beds, along with platters, combs, and boxes, some with wood or bone inlay (17th–16th centuries B.C.).⁴⁶ In many cases, the design, construction, and woods could be determined. Joinery methods included mortise-and-tenon, lap, and mitered bridle joints as well as a characteristic collar-and-tenon technique for joining table tops to legs, found well into the first millennium B.C. across a wide geographical area. Woods included acacia, ash, olive, poplar, oak, willow, and tamarisk.⁴⁷ Tombs at Baghouz contained wooden beds, round tables with removable legs, stools, and bowls dating to the early 2nd millennium B.C.⁴⁸ Traces of food such as roasted mutton were found on tables from Jericho and Baghouz, no doubt the remains of a funerary meal deposited with the deceased.

Contemporary royal furniture is attested in texts from Mari (Syria), and actual evidence in the form of ivory fittings has been excavated at the sites of Ugarit (Syria) and Megiddo (Israel) dating to the 14th–12th centuries B.C. Recovered from the palace at Ugarit (*Cour III*) were a beautiful carved headboard (or footboard) of a bed and fragments of a circular table, both of elephant ivory.⁴⁹ Found in the Treasury of the Canaanite palace at Megiddo were the remains of ivory furniture and luxury items such as bowls, boxes, combs,

42 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 196–197.

43 Von Saldern, et al., *Glass and Glassmaking in Ancient Mesopotamia*.

44 Nicholson and Henderson, “Glass,” 203–204; as opposed to Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 204. A convincing reconstruction of the powdered-glass method can be seen in Dudley Giberson’s “Core Vessel Video” from www.joppaglass.com.

45 Parr, “Middle Bronze Age Furniture.”

46 Kenyon, *Excavations at Jericho 1–2*.

47 Cartwright, “Bronze Age Wooden Tomb Furniture from Jericho.”

48 Mesnil du Buisson, *Baghouz*.

49 Schaeffer, “Fouilles de Ras Shamra-Ugarit,” 51–61, plates 7–10.

and gaming boards, stored along with alabaster vessels and gold jewelry.⁵⁰ A fine ivory plaque from Megiddo shows a ruler seated on an elaborate throne flanked by winged sphinxes, recalling the Ark of the Covenant, which featured a seat of gold with winged cherubim at the sides, on which the Lord was said to be enthroned (Exodus 25:10–22 and 1 Samuel 4:4).⁵¹

The Amarna Letters

Quantities of sumptuous objects are listed in the Amarna letters, correspondence between the Egyptian pharaohs and rulers of several Near Eastern kingdoms in the 14th century B.C.⁵² The tablets detail the diplomatic gifts and dowries of the elites, and indicate that luxury items traveled to—and were prized in—lands other than those in which they were made. Gifts from Egypt to the kings of Babylon included beds, chairs, and footstools of ebony overlaid with gold and ivory (EA 5); gold necklaces, bracelets, and anklets set with precious stones; silver sandals; silver and gold vessels and mirrors; silver ladles with handles of boxwood and ebony; gold knives, ladles, and other implements; boxes, figurines, combs, and headrests of stained ivory; hundreds of textiles of linen and byssos; and chariots and a cedar ship overlaid with gold (EA 14). Sent from Tušratta of Mitanni to Amenhotep III were gold horse gear and weaponry; gold and iron jewelry; leather shoes decorated with gold and stones; garments and textiles of purple wool; vessels and cooking implements of gold, silver, bronze, boxwood, ebony, and ivory; and perfume containers holding precious scents (EA 22). If one wants a glimpse of the luxury arts in the Late Bronze Age, one should read the Amarna letters.

The Uluburun Shipwreck

Trade and commerce in the 14th century B.C. are brought to life by the finds from the Uluburun shipwreck, excavated off the south coast of Turkey between 1984 and 1994.⁵³ Recovered were more than 15,000 artifacts, the products of many different regions: Egypt, Nubia, Canaan, Babylonia, Assyria, Cyprus, and Mycenaean Greece, as well as the Baltic, Balkans, and Central Asia. Ten tons of copper were on board, in the form of oxhide and bun-shaped ingots, and nearly 1 ton of tin (which, if alloyed, would have produced around 11 tons of tin bronze). Around 350 kg of glass ingots were also on the ship, along with 18 logs of Egyptian ebony (*Dalbergia melanoxydon*), a section of an elephant tusk, 14

50 Loud, *Megiddo Ivories*.

51 Simpson, "Furniture in Ancient Western Asia," 1656, 1659.

52 Moran, *The Amarna Letters*.

53 Pulak, "The Uluburun Shipwreck and Late Bronze Age Trade."

hippopotamus teeth, and a writing tablet of boxwood with ivory hinges. Gold and silver jewelry was also present, as well as a bronze figurine with gold plating. In addition to raw materials and precious objects, the ship held a large quantity of pottery, some containing the remains of terebinth resin, spices, and foodstuffs—a reminder that the contents of vessels were also valuable commodities. Metal and stone balance weights had served to facilitate trade.⁵⁴



The Anatolian kingdom of the Hittites was a major power in the cosmopolitan world of the Late Bronze Age, although little survives of its luxury arts beyond a number of unexcavated pieces.⁵⁵ Texts and temple inventories list Hittite cult items, such as maces and scepters, jewelry, vessels (with their contents), furniture, and sculpture. Some of these were made of iron (AN.BAR), including statuary and a monumental throne. Once considered a Hittite monopoly, the working of “good iron” is now thought to have been more widespread.⁵⁶ By the 12th century B.C., iron smelting was practiced along with carburization, which produced steel; quenching, which hardened the metal; and tempering (reheating), which reduced brittleness and increased strength—creating a superior material. This advance occurred in the Levant, Cyprus, and Aegean in the late second millennium B.C. and came to predominate in many areas in the first millennium B.C. The period is thus known as the Iron Age, its inception dated variously according to region.

Luxury Arts of the Iron Age

The Neo-Assyrians

While many of the major kingdoms of the Bronze Age had fallen by the end of the second millennium B.C., the power of the Assyrians increased, with extensive territorial gains in the ninth century resulting in all manner of tribute. Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.) moved the capital to Nimrud (Kalhu) in Iraq, where he built a fabulous palace decorated with sculpted reliefs and colossal guardian figures. The “standard inscription” found throughout the Northwest Palace lists the precious woods and other materials used in its construction,

54 Ibid, 300–301, 369–371. See also Salisbury, “The Weight of Good Measure,” in this volume.

55 Aruz, Benzel, and Evans, *Beyond Babylon*, 181–184.

56 Moorey, *Ancient Mesopotamian Materials and Industries*, 286–289. Muhly, “Mining and Metalwork,” 1514–1517.

as well as booty brought in from subject states.⁵⁷ The palace surely contained many luxury items such as those depicted in the carved reliefs. A relief in the British Museum shows Ashurnasirpal holding a bowl and wearing bracelets on his wrists, armlets above his elbows, a necklace, and earrings.⁵⁸ He is dressed in an elaborate royal robe, woven or embroidered with patterns and figural scenes. The king is seated on a backless throne with ornate attachments and a cushion, his feet on a footstool with sculpted lion's feet (Plate 32.5). The famous "banquet stele" from Nimrud records the feast held by Ashurnasirpal upon completion of his palace (879 B.C.), to which 69,574 guests were invited, and featuring, no doubt, an impressive array of banquet furniture and fine tableware.⁵⁹ A spectacular collection of Assyrian royal vessels and jewelry was recovered from three burials excavated in 1988 and 1989 in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud.⁶⁰

The Nimrud tombs were vaulted structures, built beneath the floors of rooms in the domestic quarter of the palace. Tomb II held the remains of two female bodies covered with textiles and gold appliqués,⁶¹ along with gold and rock crystal vessels, 18 gold armlets and anklets, 30 rings, 79 gold earrings, 90 or so necklaces of semi-precious stones, a gold crown, and a gold mesh diadem (Plate 32.6). The occupants have been identified as Yaba, queen of Tiglath-Pileser III (r. 744–727 B.C.), and Ataliya queen of Sargon II (r. 721–705 B.C.). Tomb III contained an empty stone sarcophagus, robbed in antiquity, which had once held the burial of Mullissu-mukannišat-Ninua, queen of Ashurnasirpal II. The tomb's antechamber, however, was intact, and produced even more objects than found in Tomb II. Three bronze coffins yielded evidence of at least 13 burials of the eighth century B.C., along with such finery as a gold crown adorned with flowers, winged genii, vines, and purple grapes; also a gold spouted ewer with bands of figural and geometric decoration. A total of 449 separate objects were found in the antechamber, the gold and silver weighing approximately 23 kg. The finds from the queens' tombs were among those affected by the 2003 U.S. invasion of Iraq. What became known as the "Nimrud gold" was stored in the basement of the Baghdad Bank in 1990, along with works from the Royal Cemetery of Ur, and retrieved in June 2003. The objects have only recently been studied in detail; they have now been published by the

57 Paley, *King of the World*, 125–144.

58 British Museum 124564–124566. Layard, *Monuments of Nineveh*, plate 5.

59 Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains 1*, 57–73.

60 Oates and Oates, *Nimrud*, 78–90.

61 For gold-spangled textiles, see Gaspa, "Golden Decorations in Assyrian Textiles."

Iraqi State Board of Antiquities and Heritage in collaboration with the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.⁶²

Thousands of beautiful ivory artifacts were excavated at the site of Nimrud.⁶³ The first ivories were discovered by A.H. Layard in the Northwest Palace beginning in 1845. These include plaques depicting animals, sphinxes, griffins in floral settings, and “women at the window,” carved in Egyptianizing styles that have been attributed by scholars to Phoenician workshops. A second group, found by W.K. Loftus in the Burnt Palace in 1855, includes pyxides, bowls, handles in the form of female figures, and furniture attachments in Syrian style. Excavations under the British School of Archaeology in Iraq (1949–1963) produced additional ivories, such as the “Mona Lisa” of Nimrud, her “Ugly Sister,” and two gilded and inlaid plaques showing a lion attacking an African boy in a papyrus thicket, found in a well in room MM of the palace (Plate 32.7).⁶⁴ An entire room of ivory furniture was recovered in Fort Shalmaneser (SW7), which contained the remains of 19 magnificent chairs, assigned to north Syrian workshops of the ninth or eighth century B.C.⁶⁵ The SW7 ivories are carved in a number of “regional styles” that have also been identified among ivories from other contexts at Nimrud and elsewhere in the Near East.⁶⁶ In 1990, most of the ivories in the Iraq Museum were stored in the basement of the Baghdad Bank; in 2003 they were subject to the flooding of the bank vault at the time of the U.S. invasion. One of the plaques with the lion and boy from well MM was lost in the looting of the Iraq Museum.

The vast numbers of imported ivories at Nimrud—acquired by trade, tribute, or capture—attest to the formidable power of the Assyrian kings. Such fine ivories are also found elsewhere, prized by lesser rulers as symbols of their authority and taste. Arslan Tash and Zincirli in north Syria, Hasanlu in northern Iran, Salamis on Cyprus, and Samaria, the capital of Israel in the ninth century B.C., yielded ivories related in style and theme to those from Nimrud.

62 Hussein, *Nimrud: The Queens' Tombs*.

63 The Nimrud ivories have been studied extensively by R.D. Barnett, M.E.L. Mallowan, Georgina Herrmann, Irene Winter, and other scholars, and are published in numerous books and articles, including several definitive volumes in the series *Ivories from Nimrud*, British School of Archaeology in Iraq (British Institute for the Study of Iraq). For a summary see Simpson, “Furniture in Ancient Western Asia,” 1658–1661.

64 Also given as room NN. The ivory plaques were distributed among the institutions participating in the excavation. The “Ugly Sister” is in the Metropolitan Museum (54.117.2), one of the plaques with the lion and African boy is in the British Museum (127412), and the second such plaque and “Mona Lisa” were retained by the Iraq Museum, Baghdad.

65 Mallowan and Herrmann, *Furniture from SW7*.

66 Herrmann, “Ivory Furniture Pieces from Nimrud,” 154.

Phoenician and “South Syrian” styles are in evidence at Samaria and elsewhere,⁶⁷ bringing to mind the Phoenician craftsmen who worked on Solomon’s temple complex in Jerusalem (1 Kings 5–8 and 2 Chronicles 1–7) and recalling the king’s ivory and gold throne (1 Kings 10:18). The seafaring Phoenicians were known for their valuable products, most notably the expensive purple dye used to color textiles.⁶⁸ Their metal vessels, gold jewelry, and glass beads and unguent flasks have been found over a wide area, ranging from the Near East to North Africa and Spain (Plate 32.8).⁶⁹ As in the Late Bronze Age, luxury items and associated technologies circulated throughout the greater region in the early first millennium B.C., facilitated by trade or enforced by colonial and military interactions. This resulted not only in Near Eastern imports in the west, but also the adoption of Near Eastern styles, motifs, and techniques, most famously by the Greeks and Etruscans in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C.

The Kingdom of Urartu

Other Near Eastern kingdoms vied with the Assyrians for regional control, including the Urartians in the area of Lake Van in eastern Turkey and north-west Iran. The Assyrian king Sargon II captured and sacked the Urartian city of Musasir in 714 B.C., looting the palace and temple of valuable booty: gold, silver, bronze, iron, and ivory weapons and implements; thousands of shields; 33 silver chariots; hundreds of brightly colored and purple garments; chairs and tables of maple and boxwood inlaid with silver and gold; and the gold-embroidered robes, ivory couch, and silver bed of the god Haldi.⁷⁰ This text is of interest not only in terms of the items listed—it also provides an inkling of the quantity of valuable goods that existed in ancient Near Eastern cities and sanctuaries, only a fraction of which has survived.

Many extant Urartian objects are without archaeological provenience, due to the plundering of sites in the region. While luxury goods have indeed been excavated, such as wooden furniture with bronze and silver fittings from Altintepe, unexcavated works are more numerous.⁷¹ Of 363 important Urartian

67 Winter, “Is There a South Syrian Style?”

68 Although “Tyrian purple,” made from Murex snails, is associated with the ancient eastern Mediterranean, evidence suggests that the Minoans were extracting purple dye on Crete as early as the Middle Bronze Age. Burke, *From Minos to Midas*, 34–42.

69 Moscati, *The Phoenicians*.

70 Luckenbill, *Ancient Records* 2, 94–98.

71 Simpson, “Furniture in Ancient Western Asia,” 1666–1667. For some excavated examples, see Çilingiroğlu, “Artifacts Belonging to Queen Qaquli and Mr. Tigungsagga from an Elaborately Decorated Quarter of the Ayanis Fortress,” in this volume.

objects illustrated in the catalogue of an exhibition held at the Israel Museum (1991), exactly 13 have an archaeological provenience listed (Toprakkale), but only six were actually excavated.⁷² Some of the finds from Toprakkale (Rusahinili) are associated with the “Toprakkale throne,” a collection of furniture attachments unearthed by locals in the late 19th century. Several were acquired by the British Museum, which undertook subsequent excavations at the site (1880), while others are in museums in New York, Berlin, Paris, Brussels, and St. Petersburg. Due to the circumstances of discovery, the “throne” is not well understood, and the extant elements are now thought to have belonged to more than one piece of furniture.⁷³

Marlik, Hasanlu, and Ziwiyé

In 1961–1962, 53 rich tombs were excavated at the site of Marlik in northwest Iran. Grave goods included exceptional gold and silver vessels, gold jewelry, seals, bronze and iron weapons, and bronze belts dating to the 12th–11th centuries B.C. (Iron Age I).⁷⁴ The excavated Marlik finds are particularly important because their archaeological context was intact. Especially noteworthy are eight gold beakers decorated with friezes of animals and mythical beasts worked in relief. A comparable gold beaker was excavated further to the west at Hasanlu in 1958, dating to the destruction of the site, ca. 800 B.C. The remarkable context of this and other works from Hasanlu allows certain items to be associated with individuals: the gold beaker was carried by a man who died in the fire.⁷⁵ Also recovered from Hasanlu were numerous ivories, some in local style and others relating to the Nimrud collections,⁷⁶ as well as distinctive metalwork and jewelry. Excavations at Marlik and Hasanlu revealed important but formerly unknown cultures, a reminder that new archaeological investigations can and will augment our present understanding.

However one important Iranian site, Ziwiyé, reveals little. “Discovered” in 1947, Ziwiyé is the supposed origin of hundreds of objects of gold, silver, bronze, and ivory, exhibiting a range of Near Eastern styles and types. In one of the most egregious “forgeries” of provenience, none of the works “said to be from” the site was actually excavated. All derived from antiquities dealers complete with the Ziwiyé attribution.⁷⁷ The objects were supposedly found in

72 Merhav, *Urartu*.

73 Seidl, “Urartian Furniture,” 185–186.

74 Negahban, *Marlik*. See also Piller, “Marlik Reloaded,” in this volume.

75 Winter, “The ‘Hasanlu Gold Bowl,’” 88.

76 Muscarella, *The Catalogue of Ivories from Hasanlu*.

77 Muscarella, “‘Ziwiyé’ and Ziwiyé.” See Adams, “Oscar White Muscarella and Sherlock Holmes,” in this volume, for additional information on Ziwiyé.

a bronze coffin, then divided up among the looters, and finally sold off. These included a gold vase, much gold jewelry, a gorget, gold plaques, a scabbard, a torque, and a belt fragment in the Metropolitan Museum decorated with panthers and bird heads in Scythian style (Plate 32.9).⁷⁸ Following the initial discovery, the already-large collection burgeoned, with more pieces “from Ziwiye” appearing on the market (along with forgeries)—to the point where several bronze coffins would have been needed to contain them.⁷⁹ The works were exhibited and published, and thereby integrated into the corpus of Near Eastern luxury arts. According to one theory, the “treasure” came from “the tomb of a great Scythian king,” although there is no evidence for this supposition.⁸⁰ A few items said to be from Ziwiye do reflect the Scythian “animal style,” including the gold belt fragment in New York. These led scholars to connect Ziwiye with the reported 28-year Scythian dominance of the Near East in the seventh century B.C. (Herodotus 4.1). But since the items were not actually excavated at the site, this cannot be substantiated.

The Scythians and Other Nomadic Peoples

The so-called “animal style” adorned all manner of works that constituted the portable wealth of the Scythian tribes. Excavated examples from the seventh–sixth centuries B.C. include a large gold panther from barrow 1, Kelermes, found resting on iron scales of armor and thought to have belonged to a shield or breastplate.⁸¹ With the Greek colonization of the Black Sea region, Scythian objects began to exhibit Greek features, seen in a gold vase from Kul Oba depicting Scythians engaged in various activities, and an elaborate gold pectoral from Tolstaya Mogila with scenes of Scythian husbandry, animal combats, and floral decoration, both executed in the Greek style of the fourth century B.C.⁸² Excavations have yielded information on the way metal attachments were used with organic materials, enabling garments, hats, shoes, and wood vessels with gold appliqués to be reconstructed.⁸³

Textiles, wood, and other organic finds were amazingly well preserved in the frozen tombs excavated at Pazyryk and elsewhere in Siberia.⁸⁴ The Pazyryk graves (fourth–third centuries B.C.) had been robbed in antiquity, but many

78 Metropolitan Museum of Art 58.42. Additional fragments are in the British Museum, BM 134383–4. Curtis, *Ancient Persia*, 27.

79 For forgeries, see Muscarella, *The Lie Became Great*, 76–81, 364–377.

80 Ghirshman in Muscarella, “‘Ziwiye’ and Ziwiye,” 205–206.

81 Piotrovsky, *From the Lands of the Scythians*, cat. no. 28, plate 5.

82 Ibid., cat. no. 81, plates 17–18; cat. no. 171, plates 31–33. Reeder, *Scythian Gold*, 326–331.

83 Reeder, *Scythian Gold*, 112–113, 117–122, 150–151, 162–163, 166–167, 234–235, 243–246.

84 Rudenko, *Frozen Tombs of Siberia*. See also Rolle, *World of the Scythians*.

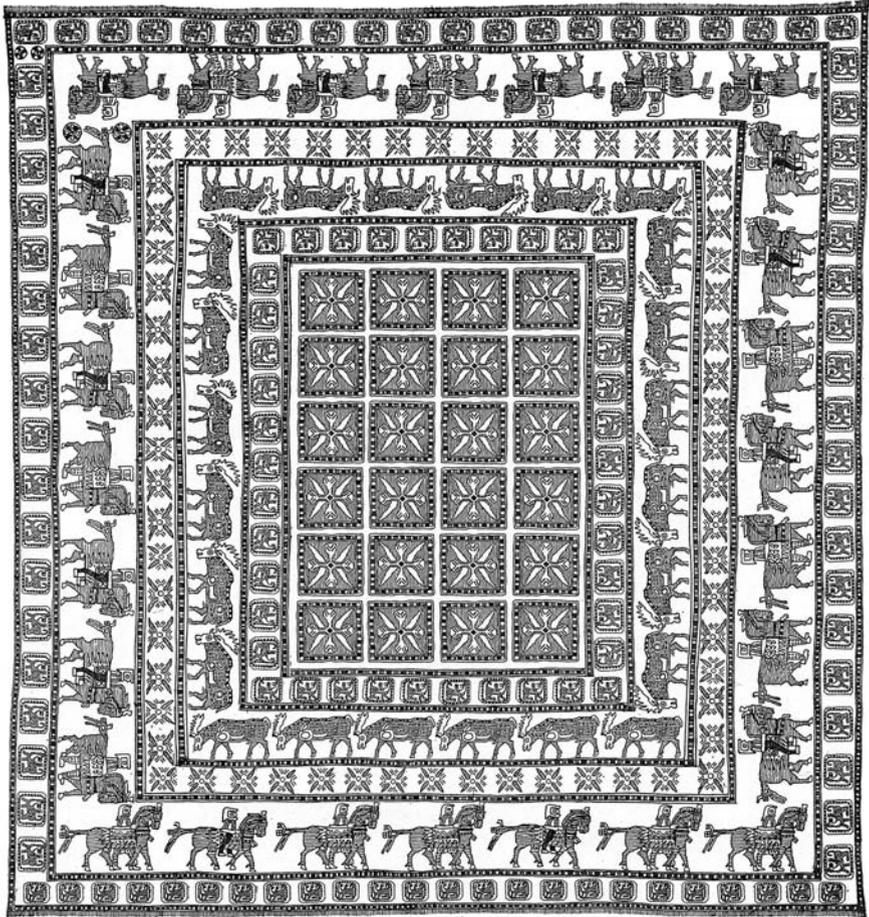


FIGURE 32.4 Wool pile carpet from Barrow 5, Pazyryk, Siberia, fourth–third century B.C. Jettmar, *Art of the Steppes*, 121, after Rudenko.

valuable items remained *in situ*: wooden tables, a wooden carriage, felt and silk hangings, and intact bodies of the tombs' occupants in their log coffins along with their clothing and other accessories. Clothing included sable caftans with leather and gold decoration, and red leather boots trimmed with beads and gold ornaments. Barrow 5 contained the earliest extant wool pile carpet (Figure 32.4), with designs related to those on Assyrian stone threshold slabs (and surely Assyrian carpets) and later Persian imagery. The Pazyryk carpet was likely woven in Central Asia, in a provincial interpretation of the Achaemenid court style.⁸⁵

85 Böhmer and Thompson, "The Pazyryk Carpet: A Technical Discussion."

Phrygia

A rare and unusual collection of luxury objects was excavated by the University of Pennsylvania at the Phrygian capital of Gordion in central Turkey, ruled by King Midas in the eighth century B.C. Bronze vessels, implements, and fibulae were found in great numbers in three royal tumulus burials, along with more than 90 pieces of fine wooden furniture and other wooden artifacts—the most spectacular assemblage of well-preserved wooden objects recovered from the ancient Near East.⁸⁶ Tumulus MM, the largest, was likely the tomb of Midas's father (Plate 5.1). The king's remains were found on a bed of textiles that covered the wood of his open log coffin.⁸⁷ Grave goods included three large bronze cauldrons on iron stands, 170 bronze vessels, ten bronze and leather belts, more than 180 bronze fibulae, and 15 pieces of wooden furniture—two inlaid serving stands, two stools, a chair, and nine three-legged tables, one of which was carved and inlaid (Figure 32.5). The stands and fancy table were made of boxwood, with walnut tops, and inlaid with juniper in complex designs representing fertility symbols and emblems of the Phrygian goddess Matar. Research has shown that the furniture and bronzes were used for a funerary banquet held outside the tomb before the burial (Plate 32.10). The menu of the feast has been determined by analysis of organic residues from the vessels: a spicy lamb or goat stew with legumes, and a mixed fermented beverage of grape wine, barley beer, and honey mead.⁸⁸

Tumulus P was the tomb of a young prince, buried with bronze vessels, fibulae, belts, iron implements, painted pottery, a glass phiale, and 70 or more wooden objects. These included several stools, one decorated with bronze studs, numerous tables, a small throne, a bed with inlaid headboard, and an inlaid serving stand of boxwood, juniper, and yew (Figure 32.6). Also recovered were wooden spoons, plates, bowls, a parasol, and 12 miniature carved animals. Tumulus W contained a boxwood serving stand, decorated with bronze studs, along with several wood plates made on a lathe—the earliest evidence for the ancient lathe from a securely-dated archaeological context.⁸⁹ An unprecedented amount of information has resulted from the study and conservation of the Gordion wooden finds, regarding the tools, techniques, and types of woods used by the Phrygian cabinetmakers, as well as the optimum methods for the

86 Young, *Three Great Early Tumuli*.

87 For evidence for Phrygian textile design and manufacture, see Ballard, Burke, and Simpson, "Gordion Textiles."

88 Simpson, *The Furniture from Tumulus MM*, 127–135, and "Celebrating Midas."

89 Simpson, "Early Evidence for the Use of the Lathe."

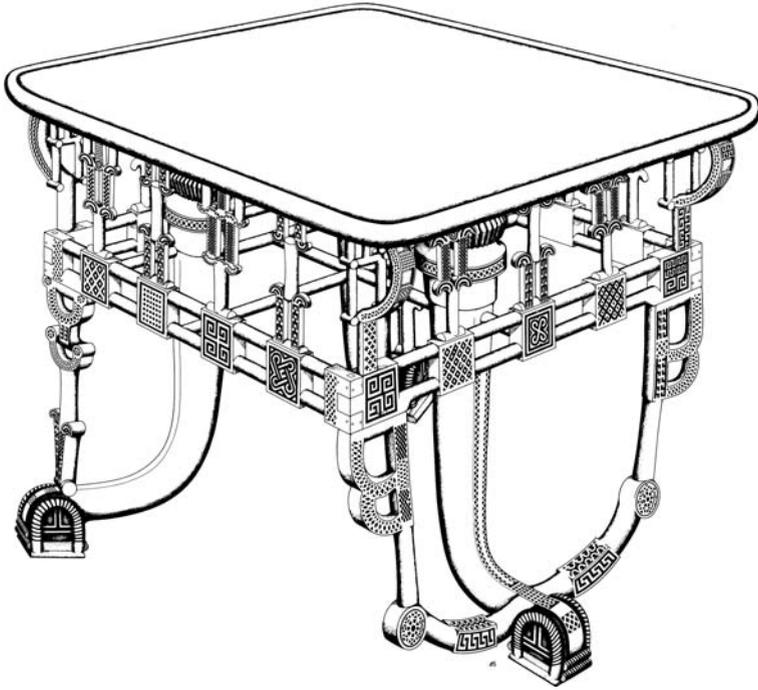


FIGURE 32.5 *Inlaid table, Tumulus MM, Gordion, Turkey, eighth century B.C. Reconstruction drawing, E. Simpson, 1985.*

treatment, display, and storage of the artifacts.⁹⁰ As with the contents of the Siberian tombs, the organic materials from Gordion would not have survived intact if they had not been scientifically excavated.

Lydia

The kings of Lydia were tremendously rich, as indicated by their dedications and burnt offerings at the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi: precious metal vessels, an iron krater stand, gold and silver couches, purple cloaks and tunics, gold statues, jewelry, and gold ingots (Herodotus 1.14, 25, 50–51). None of these splendid works has survived, but Lydian tombs in west-central Anatolia have produced many sumptuous objects from the sixth century B.C., although unfortunately the tombs were looted. The “Lydian Hoard” consisted of 363

90 Simpson, *The Furniture from Tumulus MM*; Simpson and Spirydowicz, *Gordion Wooden Furniture*. For the carbonized remains of furniture and other wooden objects from the City Mound at Gordion, see Spirydowicz, “The City Mound at Gordion,” in this volume.

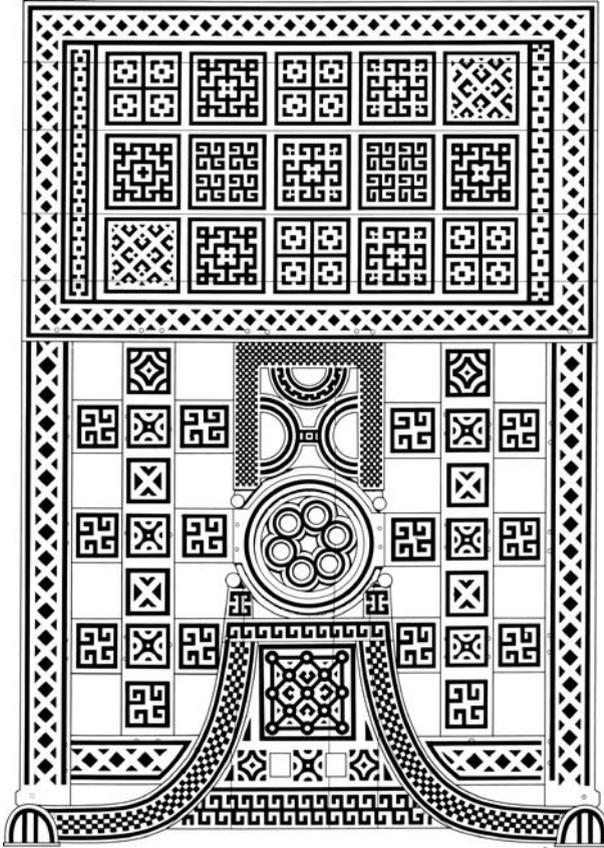


FIGURE 32.6 *Inlaid face of serving stand, Tumulus P, Gordion, eighth century B.C. Reconstruction drawing, E. Simpson, 1987.*

items plundered in the 1960s from four tombs; most were smuggled out of Turkey and eventually acquired by the Metropolitan Museum (Plates 1.7, 32.11, and 42.4). Luckily, something of their context was retrieved, due to the sleuthing of journalists, archaeologists (including Oscar Muscarella), and the US Customs Office.⁹¹ This led to a lawsuit in 1987 filed by the Turkish Republic, and the eventual return of the finds in 1993.⁹²

91 Özgen and Öztürk, *Heritage Recovered: The Lydian Treasure*.

92 See Adams, "Oscar White Muscarella and Sherlock Holmes," in this volume for details of the acquisition; see Kaye, "The Lydian Hoard and Its Progeny," and Greenfield, "Elementary," for further ramifications of the case.

The Lydian Hoard comprised a magnificent collection of jewelry, silver and bronze vessels and implements, and goldsmith's tools, as well as fragments of wall paintings and stone tomb furniture—constituting the most important evidence by far for the luxury arts of Lydia. The works reflect a number of traditions, including Achaemenid and East Greek. A gold brooch in the form of a hippocamp is now the most famous of the group, as it was stolen and copied (Plates 42.4–42.5), and the fake was placed on display in the Uşak Archaeological Museum.⁹³ The real hippocamp was located in Germany in 2012 and returned to Turkey in 2013.

Babylon and Persia

Nebuchadnezzar (r. 605–562 B.C.) rebuilt the city of Babylon, which, according to Herodotus, surpassed in splendor any city of his day. However, little is left of the Neo-Babylonian luxury arts beyond the small finds excavated from graves in the Merkes sector of Babylon. Herodotus reported on the contents of the lower shrine at Babylon (Esagila), in which a large gold statue of Marduk (“Zeus”) was seated on a gold throne with a gold footstool and gold table. The shrine on the ziggurat (Etemenanki) contained a gold table and couch covered with rich textiles, said to be used by Marduk when he visited the sanctuary. Herodotus noted but did not describe the many private offerings in the sacred precinct (Herodotus 1.181–183).

Babylon was captured in 539 B.C. by the Persian king Cyrus the Great. As with the Ishtar Gate and Processional Way at Babylon, colorful brickwork was also used by the Persians. Glazed brick archers from the Apadana at Susa in western Iran provide evidence of the elegant garments worn by the elite.⁹⁴ Such garments are shown on the reliefs of Persepolis, along with the kinds of objects valued by the Persians and their subjects, who bear tribute from all over the realm: vessels, armlets, weapons, skins, and ivory (Plate 32.12). Fine furniture and accoutrements are also shown on the reliefs, notably those from the Treasury, which feature the king's ornate throne with its plush cushions, his footstool, and incense burners on stands (Plate 2.2). The material wealth of Persia was legendary in antiquity—from the Persian spoils of the battle of Plataea (479 B.C.) to the treasures found by Alexander when he entered Persepolis—but little of this finery has survived.

A small number of works like those on the reliefs have been excavated at Persepolis, Pasargadae, and Susa. However, most Persian luxury objects lack archaeological context. Already mentioned are the Achaemenid silver vessels from the Lydian Hoard. To these must be added the mysterious “Oxus Treasure”

93 Waxman, *Loot*, 155–174. See Greenfield, “Elementary,” in this volume.

94 Curtis and Tallis, *Forgotten Empire*, 87–88.

in the British Museum, considered the most important collection of extant Persian metalwork (Plates 1.2–1.3).⁹⁵ The “treasure” comprises around 180 gold and silver artifacts supposedly discovered “on the banks of the Oxus” (Amu Darya) in Central Asia around 1877–1880, at the time of the second Afghan war. The story of its acquisition involves a cache of valuable antiquities stolen from Bokharan merchants east of Kabul; the recovery of much (but not all) of the treasure, by assistance of Captain Francis Burton of the 2nd Bengal Lancers; its sale to local dealers and then purchase by collectors in Rawalpindi; and its subsequent bequest in 1897 to the British Museum. Unfortunately, there is no evidence that the objects acquired by the museum constitute a coherent group, or that all actually came from the Oxus River site.⁹⁶ As with the other “treasures” already considered, forgeries are also an issue. It is unclear, then, how much the collection can tell us about the luxury arts of Persia.



The campaigns of Alexander brought an end to the Persian Empire, with the sack and burning of Persepolis, “the richest city under the sun,” in 330 B.C. (Diodorus 17.70–72). The East came under Hellenizing influence, reflected in the arts of the Seleucids and Parthians. This included Bactria (Afghanistan), with fabulous finds from Ai Khanum and Begram such as ivory furniture attachments and other luxury goods. The so-called Bactrian Hoard from Tillya Tepe comprised thousands of gold items as well as textiles and organic residues excavated from six tombs dated to the first century A.D.⁹⁷ This important aftermath, however, is beyond the scope of the present inquiry.

As this account makes clear, the story of luxury arts in the ancient Near East is predicated on the accidents of discovery. Always prone to repossession and melting down for reuse, ancient metalwork did not often survive; organic remains are even rarer. It is also a story of excavated and unexcavated artifacts, as well as authentic works and forgeries. As sumptuous items were highly coveted in antiquity and thus amenable to theft and plunder, so they are in modern times. Looters target such objects, which creates a market for fakes. The issue of forgery relates not only to individual works but also to provenience. Archaeological provenience is often manufactured, hampering attempts to reconstruct an accurate history. This type of forgery extends to the

95 Curtis, *The Oxus Treasure*.

96 Muscarella, “Museum Constructions of the Oxus Treasures.” See Adams, “Oscar White Muscarella and Sherlock Holmes,” in this volume for further details on the treasure.

97 Hiebert and Cambon, *Afghanistan*.

positing of coherent groups of (plundered) finds—often dubbed “hoards” or “treasures”—as well as romantic (but fabricated) scenarios for their burial and discovery. In an extreme case of multiple forgery, the Dorak Treasure was likely invented in every respect. All these issues must be considered when addressing the topic. When one does so, the narrative becomes more problematic, but more intriguing—and surely closer to the truth.



PLATE 32.1 *Necklace of stone beads and deer teeth, Çatalhöyük, Turkey. Land of Civilizations, Turkey, cat. no. 22.*

COURTESY MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS, ANKARA.



HEAD-DRESS OF QUEEN SHUB-AD, U. 10931, ETC.
Scale c. 1/2, v. p. 84

PLATE 32.2 *Headdress of Queen Puabi, PG 800, Royal Cemetery of Ur, Iraq, ca. 2550–2400 B.C. Reconstruction painting. Woolley, The Royal Cemetery, plate 128.*

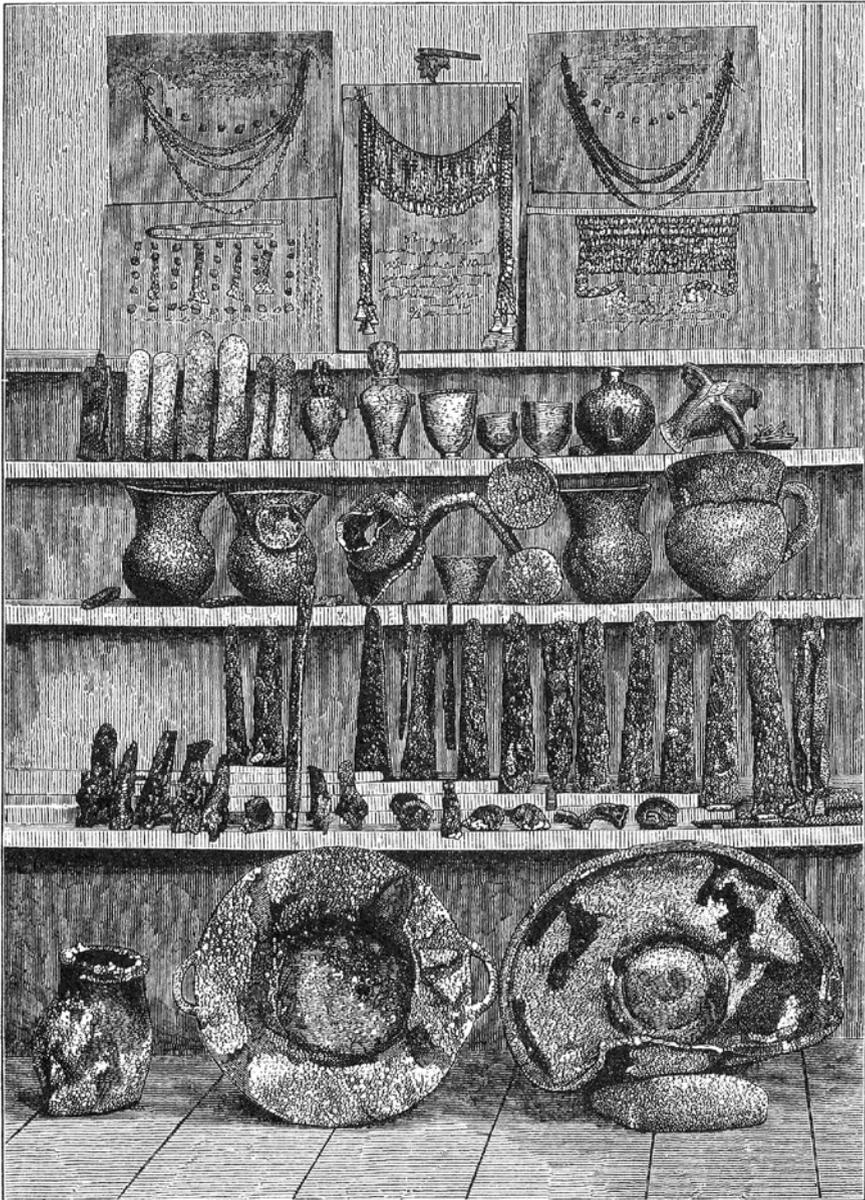


PLATE 32.3 *Objects from Treasure A, "Priam's Treasure," excavated by Heinrich Schliemann at Troy, Turkey, second half of the third millennium B.C. Schliemann, Ilios, 42.*



PLATE 32.4 *Ivory falcon and gazelles from a chair or throne, from Achemhöyük, Turkey, 19th–18th century B.C. Metropolitan Museum of Art.*

PHOTOGRAPH E. SIMPSON.



PLATE 32.5 *Relief from the palace of Ashurnasirpal II, Room G, Nimrud, Iraq, ninth century B.C. Layard, Monuments of Nineveh, Plate 5.*



PLATE 32.6 *Gold diadem, Tomb II, Nimrud, eighth century B.C. Iraq Museum, Baghdad.*
COURTESY DONNY GEORGE YOUKHANNA.



PLATE 32.7 *Ivory plaque showing a boy being attacked by a lion, Room MM well, Northwest Palace, Nimrud, ninth–eighth century B.C. British Museum 127412.*

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PLATE 32.8 *Glass core-formed oinochoe, from Tharros, Sardinia, seventh–sixth century B.C. Sassari, Museo Nazionale G.A. Sanna. Moscati, The Phoenicians, cat. no. 755.*



PLATE 32.9 *Gold belt plaque, said to have come from Ziwiyeh, Iran, ca. seventh century B.C. Metropolitan Museum of Art 58.42.*

COURTESY METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART.



PLATE 32.10 *Reconstruction of the funeral ceremony outside Tumulus MM, Gordion, prior to the king's burial, eighth century B.C. Painting by Greg Harlin.*

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PLATE 32.11 *Silver vessels from the Lydian Hoard, now in the Uşak Archaeological Museum, Turkey, late sixth–early fifth century B.C.*
COURTESY MUSEUM OF ANATOLIAN CIVILIZATIONS, ANKARA.



PLATE 32.12 *Armlets, bowls, and amphoras in the Persian style carried by members of the Lydian delegation, relief from the Apadana, Persepolis, late sixth–early fifth century B.C.*
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