

Part 1: Basics about Scythians and their Akinakai

The Starting Point

Link Hub

Iron and steel technology developed slowly and was limited for quite some time to relatively simple objects that were extremely precious. [King Tut's iron dagger](#) from around 1330 BC may be seen as the high point of this early technology. *Complex* iron / steel objects, like the Luristan mask swords or Celtic "Hallstatt" swords, [appeared "suddenly"](#) around 900 BC all over the place, it seems. Exact dates are very difficult to come by, however, and not many studies into the evolution of *complex* iron products have been made.

● As pointed out in the the module accessible by the link given above, the major objects one could study are the [Luristan iron swords](#) (type 1 and 2), the early Celtic / [Hallstatt swords](#), sundry swords from here, there and then - and, possibly, early [akinakai](#) and in particular early **Scythian akinakai** ¹⁾.

Why? Because they are around in relatively large numbers; easily acquired from one of the many auctions houses dealing with antiquities. We thus could spare a few for "destructive" in-depth metallurgical studies.

Scythian akinakai are easily distinguished from the general type since they have a guard of the "[bollocks](#)" type; examples can be seen [here](#). I use the somewhat indelicate word conscientiously since the old Scythians were proud of that part of their anatomy as demonstrated by one of their big chieftains [here](#).

Scythian akinakai also do not have elaborately decorated hilts for showing off but project rather power, prowess and violence; in contrast to other akinakai around in 800 - 600 BC.

What I'm trying to here is to look at Scythians and their akinakai in the context of who else was around after, say, 800 BC with a sufficiently powerful iron technology. Did other powers / cultures / empires and so one produce or use bollocks types of akinakai?

● Questions that come up in this context are:

1. How can you tell an *early* Scythian akinaka (i.e. form 800 - 600 BC) from a later one? Later ones are of smaller interest since we must assume that after 600 BC or so all and sundry had access to complex iron / steel technology
2. How were the early akinakai made? In other words: How does the smelting and forging technology compare with (the little) we know about 800 - 600 BC technology from elsewhere, e.g. Luristan?
3. Who actually made the *early* Scythian akinakai? The Scythians? If so, did they invent the technology or learn it from somebody else?

Nothing helps. We need to get a grip on "The Scythians and their bollocks akinakai" plus their relations to other folks around then and there, like the Assyrians, Medians, Cimmerians, Dacians, Persians, Greeks, etc.) who definitely used weapons and might have produced weapons similar to Scythian akinakai.

At this point a scientist like me needs to study the literature in order to find out what is already known about the technology used for making all kinds of Akinakai.

● Well, that turned out to be easy: Next to nothing is known about the metallurgy of akinakai and thus also next to nothing is known about the technology used. More to that in the "[Akinakai](#)" module

On a positive note, we do have a kind of dating system for akinakai that allows to make [educated guesses](#) at the age of the akinakai around in museums and private collections. That motivated me to take a closer a look at some akinakai and to start this special "Scythian Akinakai" module. At the time I'm writing this (March 2020), I have no idea to where this will lead to but I hope that some new information will become available.

In this module I now look at some basics about the Scythians and their possibly akinakai making and wielding contemporaries

Scythians - Some Basics

You can't do much better than Wikipedia for a concise but still detailed description of Scythians. In what follows I use mainly Wikipedia texts but shorten or embellish them here and there.

"The Scythians were a *nomadic people* who dominated Pontic steppe from about the *7th century BC* up until the 3rd century BC. They were part of the wider Scythian cultures, stretching across the Eurasian Steppe, which included many peoples that are *distinguished from the Scythians*. Because of this, a broad concept referring to all early Eurasian nomads as "Scythians" has sometimes been used. Within this concept, the *actual Scythians* (=wielders of the bollocks type of akinakai?) are variously referred to as Classical Scythians, European Scythians, Pontic Scythians, or Western Scythians.

The Scythians are generally believed to have been of *Iranian* origin. They spoke a language of the Scythian branch of the Eastern Iranian languages, and practiced a variant of ancient Iranian religion. Among the earliest peoples to master mounted warfare, the Scythians replaced the *Cimmerians* as the dominant power on the *Pontic Steppe* in the *8th century BC*. During this time they and related peoples came to dominate the entire Eurasian Steppe from the Carpathian Mountains in the west to Ordos Plateau in the east, creating what has been called the first Central Asian nomadic empire. Based in what is modern-day Ukraine and southern Russia, the Scythians were led by a nomadic warrior aristocracy known as the Royal Scythians, who called themselves Scoloti

In the 7th century BC, the Scythians crossed the Caucasus and frequently raided the Middle East along with the *Cimmerians*, playing an important role in the political developments of the region. Around 650–630 BC, Scythians briefly dominated the *Medes* of the western Iranian Plateau, stretching their power to the borders of Egypt. After losing control over Media, the Scythians continued intervening in Middle Eastern affairs, playing a leading role in the destruction of the *Assyrian Empire* in the Sack of Nineveh in *612 BC*. The Scythians subsequently engaged in frequent conflicts with the *Achaemenid Empire*. The Scythians suffered a major defeat against Macedonia in the 4th century BC and were subsequently gradually conquered by the *Sarmatians*, a related Iranian people living to their east."

I stop here because we are not much interested into anything after about 500 BC.

Now let's look at some of the catch words from above

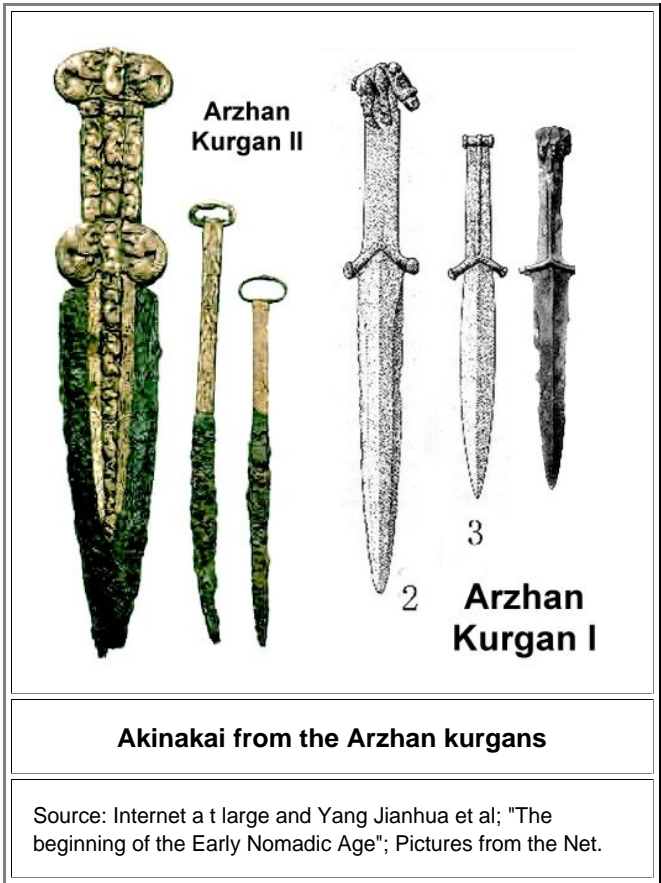
- **Nomadic People.** The Scythians of whatever specific domination were actually "*Reiternomaden*", meaning horse-based nomads, i.e. people without a permanent place for living who moved around on horseback. There seems to be no good English word for that; you see once more the advantage of using the [true language](#). Horses were domesticated (as far as we know) somewhere in the Eurasian Steppes approximately 3500 BC. The Scythians moving around the Pontic steppe (and beyond) in the 7th century BC and later thus had plenty of time to become experienced horse breeders and riders, feared by all and sundry that did not have an effective cavalry of their own. Their main weapon was the [composite recurve bow](#), allowing powerful shots from horse back. The Romans (and many others) were quite impressed. Nobody was impressed by their akinakai, which were of course, rather useless while on horseback.



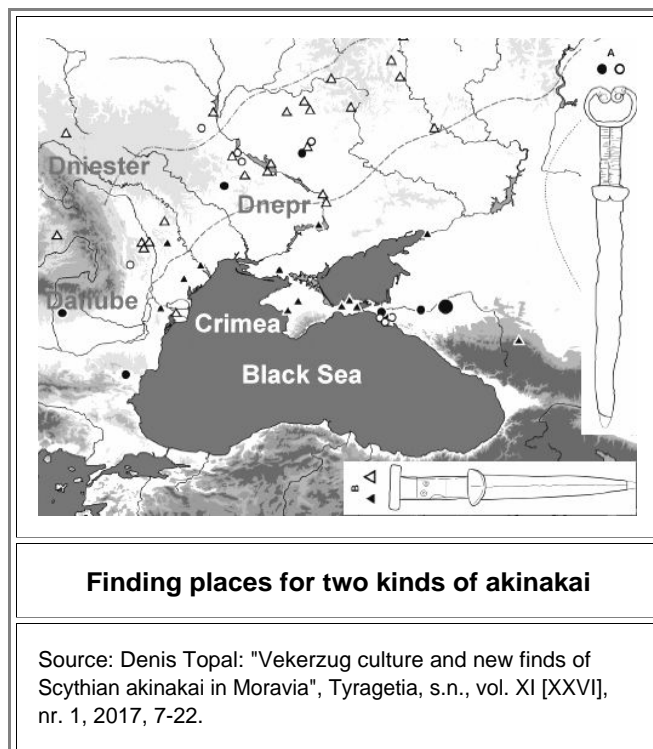
- **Actual Scythians** wielding a bollocks type of akinakai may have been around all over the place too, but here we concentrate on those that have settled down (up to a point) in the Crimea and North of the Black Sea (see above and below). Their akinakai have a very typical guard of the [bollocks](#) type. If you use [this link](#) you can see why this term is quite precise, if a bit vulgar.

▲ A very learned and long paper about the Scythians is provided by the "[Encyclopædia Iranica](#)". Refer to it for all details and in particular if you are interested in the writings of Herodotus and others about these folks. Unfortunately, we learn very little about Scythian metal technology. Now let's give a quick look to the Scythian *culture*. Once more, via Wikipedia.

- "The Scythian cultures are characterized by the Scythian triad, which are similar, yet not identical, styles of weapons, horses' bridles and Scythian art. The question of how related these cultures were is disputed among scholars. Its peoples were of diverse origins, and included not just Scythians, from which the cultures are named, but other peoples as well, such as the *Cimmerians*, Massagetae, Saka, Sarmatians and obscure forest steppe populations. Mostly speakers of the Scythian branch of the *Iranian languages*, all of these peoples are sometimes collectively referred to as *Scythians*."
"The Scythian culture flourished across the entire Eurasian Steppe during the *Iron Age* from approximately the *9th century BC to the 2nd century AD*"
"Recent excavations at *Arzhan* in Tuva, Russia *have uncovered the earliest (around 800 BC) Scythian-style things found so far*"
- Here are the early Scythian-style daggers or akinakai that were found among those things



- The Arzan "**kurgan**" (=tell=burial mound or hill) is several 1000 km to the east of the Crimea, the center of the Scythians area after they settled (as far as horse people settle) there around 700 BC or so. What we see is also not quite the typical "[bollocks](#)" type of Scythian akinaka. It would be interesting to learn something about the metallurgy of these weapons but (of course) no investigation has been made.
- ▲ In short: Wherever and whenever the Scythian culture evolved might be open to discussion but is not of much interest to us here. We simply lack iron objects from this early time. The akinakai we could investigate originated most likely from an area north of the Black Sea as shown below:



- All the other kinds of akinaikai shown [here](#) in a roughly chronological order were also found in this general area (which includes present day Turkey, Bulgaria; Rumania, Moldova, Ukraine, Russia, Georgia and Armenia). The oldest ones date from the 7th - early 6th century, i.e. from roughly 700 - 570 BC. That does not imply that akinaikai weren't also found outside the region shown above, e.g. in present day Hungary or [even Poland](#). The Hungarian National Museum in Budapest shows a [nice one](#) from around 650 BC, for example. There are older akinaikai too (like the ones shown above) but they seem to be rare and certainly not available for a metallurgical examination. If there are much older akinaikai of the bollocks type I don't know.
- If you want to know more about the Scythians around the Black Sea, read the Article in the [Encyclopædia Iranica](#). In the remainder of this module we take a quick look at other cultures next to the Scythians in time and place. This will help to appreciate what makes the Scythians Akinakai so special. To some extent this will overlap with what I have written [here](#) and [there](#) - but so what.

Other Folks

Background

- Next we take a quick look at the other folks around during the early Scythian period, i.e. during 7th - early 6th century and what kind of akinaika, if any, they carried. What we encounter, according to Wikipedia (plus **additions in red** by me) , is:

Iron Age II B	900 – 700 BC	Kingdom of Israel, Phrygia, Urartu, Neo-Assyrian Empire, Kingdom of Judah, first settlement of Carthage, Luristan, Cimmerians, first Scythians, Dacians and Thracians
Iron Age II C	700 – 539 BC	Neo-Babylonian Empire, Median Empire, fall of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, Phoenicia, Archaic Greece, rise of Achaemenid Persia, Scythians, Dacians and Thracians

● We may just about forget about the Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah. They were of no importance and come up only because the old guys there heeded the first law of scientific success: *publish or perish* and produced (parts of) what later became known as "bible". The Neo-Assyrians also left a lot of (cuneiform) writing - in contrast to, e.g., the Luristanis and Scythians, who left heavy metal.

▸ It is also helpful to look at a list of major happenings in the beginning of the first millennium (from Wiki, of course; except for lines 9. and 10.):

1. 926 BC – Jerusalem becomes the capital of the (southern) Kingdom of Judah after the split of the United Monarchy.
2. 884 to 858 BC – **Ashurnasirpal II**, king of *Assyria*, embarked on a vast program of expansion, and moved his capital to the city of Kalhu (*Nimrod*).
3. 884 to 612 BC – *Neo-Assyrian Empire*.
4. 800 to 480 BC – Archaic period in **Greece** with the rise of the city-states, Greek colonies, and Epic Greek poetry: onset of Classical Antiquity.
5. 776 BC – first Olympic Games.
6. 745 to 727 BC – Tiglath-Pileser III, king of Assyria who introduced advanced civil, military, and political systems into the empire.
7. **717 BC - Sargon II conquered the small, but wealthy, Kingdom of Carchemish**
8. 711 BC – **Sargon II** conquers the kingdom of Israel and exiles the inhabitants of Samaria.
9. **713 BC - Sargon II began the construction of Dur-Sharrukin (present day Khorsabad) as his new capital. Moved in in 706 BC.**
10. 710 BC – Sargon II captures Babylonia.
11. **705 BC Sargon II dies in battle. His successor Sennacherib abandoned Dur-Sharrukin and moved the capital to Ninive.**
12. 689 BCE – *Babylon destroyed* by Sennacherib, king of the Assyria.
13. 677 BC – Esarhaddon defeats the rebellion of Abdi-Milkutti, the king of the Phoenician state of Sidon.
14. 678 to 549 BC – **Median Empire**
15. 672 to 525 BC – Twenty-sixth dynasty of Egypt.
16. 667 BC – Ashurbanipal defeated the 25th Dynasty king Taharqa near Memphis.
17. 646 BC – Ashurbanipal sacked *Susa* the Elamite capital. Elam recovers, however.
18. 626 to 539 BC – **Neo-Babylonian Empire**; also known as **Chaldean Empire**.
19. 612 BC – Fall of Niniveh by a coalition Babylonians, Medes, Persians, Chaldeans, *Scythians*, and **Cimmerians**, leading to the *destruction of the Neo-Assyrian Empire*..
20. 605 BC – Battle of *Carchemish* between the Babylonians and the Egyptians allied with the remnants of the Assyrian army
21. 609 BC – Battle of Megiddo between Necho II and Josiah of Judea.
22. 597 BC – King **Nebuchadnezzar II** of Babylon captures Jerusalem.
23. 587 BC – King Nebuchadnezzar II of Babylon destroys Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple.
24. 570 to 495 BC – Pythagoras, founder of Pythagoreanism.
25. 539 BC – **Cyrus the Great** conquered Babylon and Elam. End of Neo-Babylonian empire and Neo-Elam and beginning of the Persian Achaemenid Empire.
26. 550 to 330 BC – *Achaemenid Empire*.

▸ I'm going to skip the early Jews and the Egyptians because they have (as far as I'm aware of) nothing to offer in terms of iron technology. Contrariwise, I have emphasized the enterprises of Sargon II because his 160 tons of iron found in his (short-lived) capital in [Khorsabad](#) make a kind of strong statement.

● We might actually take this iron as a focal point for this module. Why did Sargon hoard 160 tons of iron in the form of double-pyramid bars, the result of about 16.000 iron smelting runs? Just to be prepared for bad times? Or did he actually take it from the extremely rich kingdom of Carchemish (line 10. above)? Wikipedia reports: "[This conquest allowed Sargon to secure Pisiri's large treasury, including 330 kilograms of purified gold, large amounts of bronze, tin, ivory and iron and over 60 tonnes of silver](#)"

In any case, we may assume that the double-pyramid bar was the starting material for most iron products in the general area around 700 BC and probably for many years before and after. Most if not all early akinakai were probably made from this kind of iron.

▸ We now need to look at the Assyrians and (neo) Babylonians

Assyrians and Babylonians

We start with line 2. from above:

"884 to 858 BC – **Ashurnasirpal II**, king of *Assyria*, embarked on a vast program of expansion...". We have the start of the Assyrian empire. 279 years later (605 BC) it will be overtaken by the Neo-Babylonian empire.

There is not much I can say here that I haven't [said before](#).

We seem to know next to nothing about the "iron" of these empires as stated [here](#). Well, not quite true. Iron is mentioned ever so often in written material and we have some iron artifacts. More to that in the [paper of Caroline van der Brugge](#).

Maps and some information about these empires you will find in [this link](#). However, we need to remember once more that Sargon II not only built "Dur-Sharrukin" (meaning "Fortress of Sargon"; present day Khorsabad) but had a stockpile of 160 tons of iron there, roughly 20,000 double pyramid bars. You needed 15,000 - 30,000 smelting runs for producing that much iron. It appears to be a lot of iron but it is just about enough to fully equip 20,000 - 30,000 soldiers and their entourage with weapons and supporting stuff.

We must conclude that the Assyrians (and therefore also the Neo-Babylonians who took over later) were running a sizeable iron industry after, roughly, 750 BC. We just don't have any products.

- However, looking at various stelae, friezes and sculptures of Assyrians, we see swords and daggers but no bollock types akinakai. Examples follow.

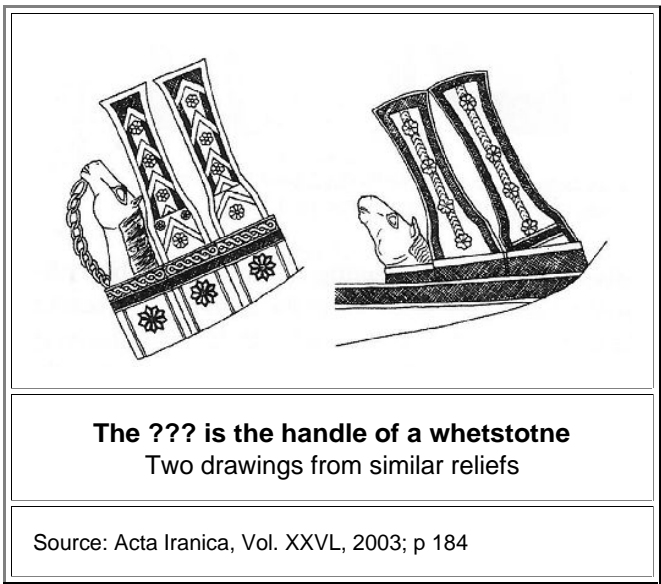


Ashurnasirpal II, King of Assyria from 883 to 859 BC.

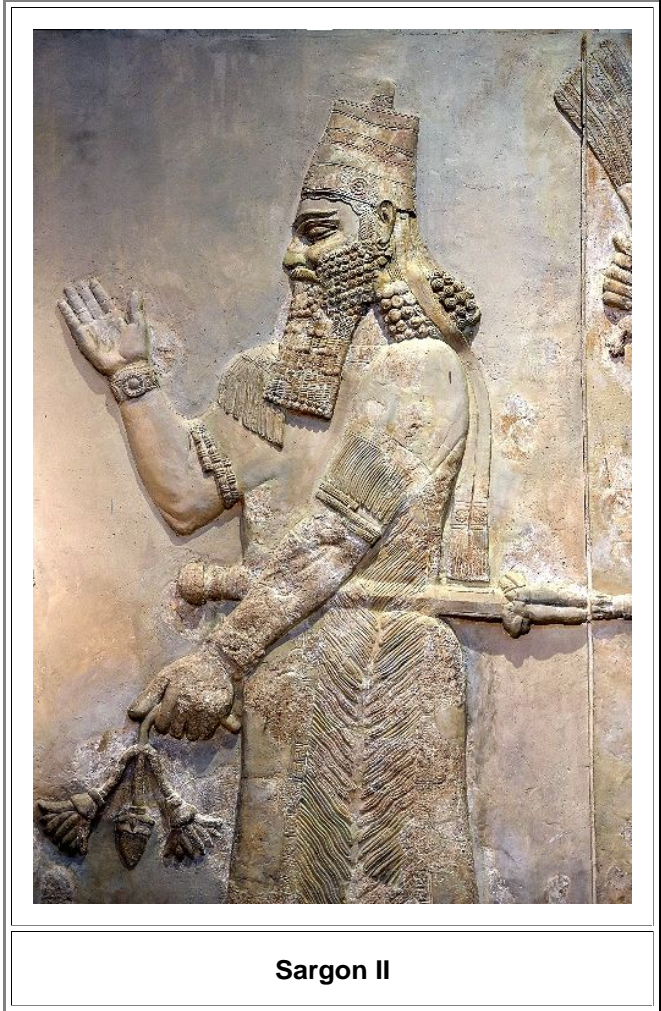
the guy who started the Assyrian empire

The inset shows two daggers and a ??? (probably whetting stone) in his belt

Source: Royal Palace of Nimrud. Now in the British Museum in London. All over the Net



- Ashurnasirpal is fingering his "typical" Assyrian sword (no good one was ever found, bur look [here](#)) and at least two daggers that are definitely not of the bollocks akinaka type. Here is Sargon II:





Sargon II once more

Source (both): Wikipedia; low-reliefs from from the walls of the palace of Sargon II at Dur Sharrukin. Now in the Iraq Museum, Baghdad (we hope)

- Sargon II was the Assyrian King from 722 BC - 705 BC. Royal fashion has not changed much since Ashurnasirpal but Sargon no longer burdens himself with daggers. Similar kind of sword, though. Note that his sword has what I called a [winged chape](#), hinting at [cavalry use](#), like the (rather long) sword of Ashurnasirpal II (ca. 883-859 B.C.) [shown here](#).
- Sargon II was the one who in 713 BC began the construction of *Dur-Sharrukin* (present day Khorsabad) as his new capital. He moved in in 706 BC and out (by being killed in battle) a year later (705 BC). After his death the city was abandoned - with the 160 tons of iron left back! Obviously it was not all that precious. Sargon's successors (Sennacherib, 705–681, Esarhaddon, 681–669 BC, Ashurbanipal, 668–631 BC and so on) kept the empire going for another 100 years or so until the final (bloody) end in 609
- Starting 612 BC we now have the **Neo-Babylonian empire** also known as **Chaldean empire**. It started more or less with King **Nebuchadnezzar II** of Babylon causing a lot of grief to early Jews (destruction of Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem in 687 BC, **deportation of the Jews** to Babylon in 597 BCE, 587/586 BCE, and 582/581 BC respectively). That resulted in a lot of bad press for Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians, with topics like the building of the tower of Babel followed inciting some God confounding speech, or the ever popular **whore of Babylon**.
- However, the Jews doing time in Babylon failed to write down something about Babylonian iron technology. So did everybody else (failing to write down something about iron technology and its products) and as a result we seem to know exactly nothing about this topic. It doesn't matter much, however, because the Neo-Babylonians came too late to be of much interest anymore. They obviously were an aggressive bunch given to warfare and thus must have had all kinds of iron / steel weapons. But in 600 BC iron technology was well established in Mesopotamia and elsewhere. That doesn't mean that we know much about this but we can't expect big surprises anymore if we ever get around to analyzing the little we have.

- How did the Scythians relate to the Assyrians? In many ways, says Wikipedia:
 "In the 670s, the *Scythians* under their king Bartatua raided the territories of the *Assyrian Empire*. The Assyrian king Esarhaddon managed to make peace with the Scythians by paying a large amount of tribute."
 Did the tribute, perhaps, include iron and iron products like akinakai?
 "Bartatua was succeeded by his son Madius ca. 645 BC, after which they (i.e. the Scythians) launched a great raid on *Palestine* and *Egypt*. Madius subsequently subjugated the *Median Empire*. During this time, Herodotus notes that the *Scythians* raided and exacted tribute from "the whole of Asia".
 That is just another way of saying that the Scythians had access to whatever iron technology was around then.
 "In the 620s, Cyaxares, leader of the Medes, treacherously killed a large number of Scythian chieftains at a feast; the Scythians were subsequently driven back to the steppe. In 612 BC, the *Medes and Scythians* participated in the *destruction of the Assyrian Empire* with the Battle of Nineveh. During this period of influence in the Middle East, the Scythians became heavily influenced by the local civilizations".

 - Maybe the Scythians made their own bollocks akinakai, maybe somebody else was persuaded to make them for them. In either case, given the constant loving or not-so-loving interaction of everybody down there with everybody else, we may be safe in assuming that the bollocks akinakai mirror the general status of iron / steel technology in the area.

Early Greece

- Point 4 is next: 800 to 480 BC – Archaic period in *Greece* with the rise of the city-states, Greek colonies, and Epic Greek poetry. Not to mention the first Olympic Games in 776 BC.
 We know that the ancient Greeks were good fighters with several kinds of sword types; refer to [this link](#). We have the **xiphos**, **makheira** and the **kopis** / falcata - and most of what he have was made from bronze.

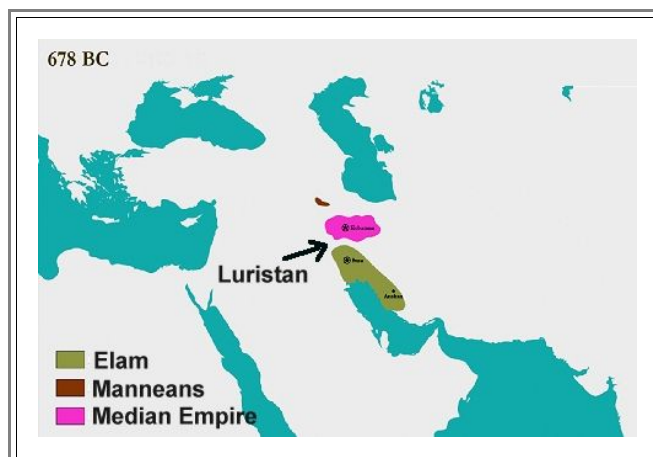
 - What I can say about Greek iron technology here is exactly the same as what I have said in the link above: *Nothing!* I know nothing about Greek iron, and I have no idea if the old Greeks ever fashioned something like a (bollocks) akinaka.
- I know, however, (e.g. from Wikipedia) that the Scythians and the early Greeks interacted quite a bit:
 "In the 6th century BC, the Greeks had begun establishing settlements along the coasts and rivers of the Pontic steppe, coming in contact with the Scythians. Relations between the Greeks and the Scythians appear to have been peaceful, with the Scythians being substantially influenced by the Greeks".
 True enough, just look at the famous "Scythian gold" that shows heavy Greek influence.

Elam, Median Empire, and the Persian Achaemenid Empire

- Elam and the Median Empire lead up to the Achaemenid Empire and merit a few notes. Elam existed for a long time and was somehow connected to [Luristan](#), the [Jiroft culture](#) and many others. It left us breathtakingly beautiful [silver objects](#).

 - It did not leave us any iron artifacts however, not to mention swords or daggers. On occasion bronze daggers usually associated with Luristan are claimed to be Elamite but nothing is coming close to a bollocks akinaka.
- Same thing for the Median empire except that they did not last very long (see below) and left not many metal artifacts at all, certainly no iron daggers of any kind.

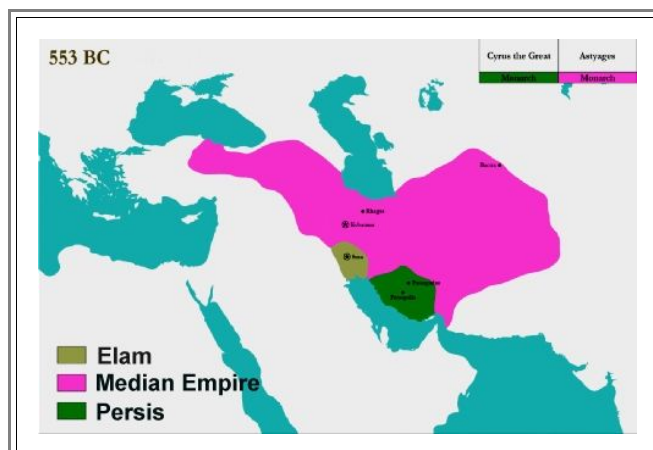
 - However, some of the guys shown in Persian friezes and stelae are Median warriors and they do carry something coming rather close to a bollocks akinaka (see way below), in contrast to the Persian guys sporting daggers that were definitely not of the bollocks type but rather of the "elaborate show-off hilt" type. But by then the Medians were already subdued by the Persians and that lead us right to the Achaemenid empire.
 For starters let's look at some maps showing what was going on in the Iranian core region between 678 BC and 547 BC:



Elam (in the form of "Proto", Old" and "Middle" Elamite) existed since 3000 BC in the region shown.

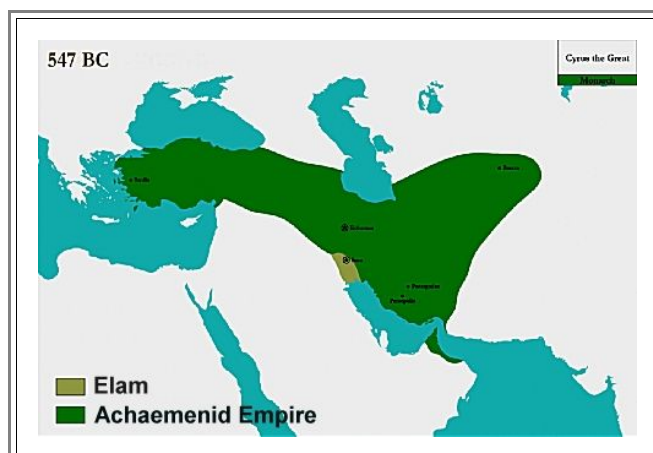
Forget the small and short-lived **Manneans** and notice the beginning of the **Median Empire**.

The approximate position of Luristan is indicated



Largest extension of the **Median empire**.

Down yonder the "**Persis**" are starting to grow



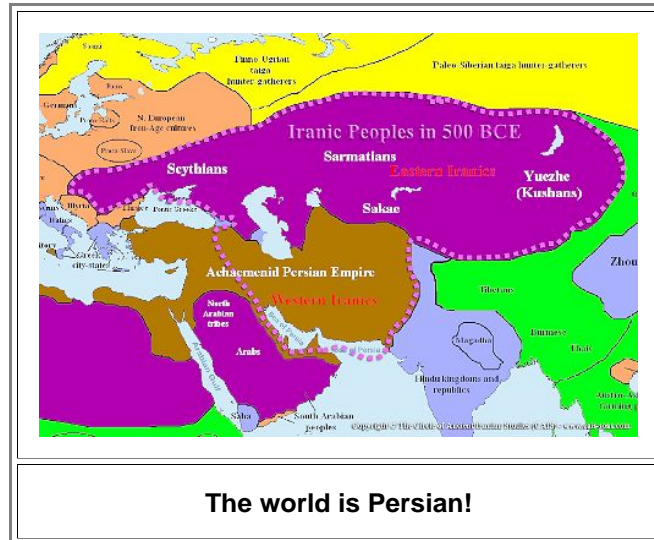
The **Achaemenid Empire** under Cyrus the Great.

Elam is still shown but more or less defunct and swallowed up in 540 BC

Source: Wikipedia

Persia - Achaemenid Empire

The way present day Iran feels about Iranians around 500 BC is neatly shown in the map below:



- Most about everybody who was somebody was some kind of Iranian, certainly the Scythians, Sarmatians, plus whoever lived in Mesopotamia, Turkey, Egypt, Arabia, etc. Just the "Greek City States", Thrace, Illyria and Etruscans / Romans are acknowledged as independent powers with some vague pretense to culture besides the sundry barbarians far away. Seems a bit strange but may not have been all that wrong. However, we look in particular at the time horizon 700 BC - 600 BC and then we still had the Babylonian, Assyrians, etc. as major powers, see below or [here](#).

Anyway - what do we know about the "Iranian" daggers / swords from around 700 BC - 500 BC?

- Easy. A look into [Khoransani's](#) wonderful book "[Arms and Armor from Iran](#)" shows two things:
 1. Most "old" stuff (mostly bronze) is from [Luristan](#), the link shows plenty of examples.
 2. There seems to be nothing there that looks even remotely like a "Scythian" akinaka..Well, we also have stelaes, friezes and sculptures of old Iranians wearing weapons, like these guys:



Guys with daggers in their belts found in Persepolis

Left: A Persian; wearing a "no-bollocks-type" akinaka

Right a Median soldier wearing (perhaps) a bollocks type akinaka

[Large version](#)

Source: Internet, all over the place.

- Persepolis was the ceremonial capital of the **Achaemenid Empire** (ca. 550–330 BC), built (most likely) by Darius the Great. What we see above for the Persian guys does not look like the handles of Scythian "bollocks" types akinakai. [Other daggers](#) found on friezes might come closer to akinakai but they might be worn by members of other cultures like the Medians as stated before.

It is also of some interest that the peculiar kind of scabbard or sheath we find on those friezes does have close relation to some known from Scythians:



Gold scabbards and hilts from Scythian kurgans

[Large picture](#) (with more examples and the sources)

- ▾ I cannot imagine that huge empires like the [Achaemenide empire](#) had a metal technology that was inferior to that of the Scythians. Maybe the Scythians bought their akinakai from the Assyrians / Greeks / Iranians and so on, or just imported the know-how. They did take over a lot of Greek things (for example in their gold) art after all.

Cimmerians and Urartu

The Cimmerians were only mentioned once in line 19 in the list above but have much older relations to the Scythians as Wikipedia knows:

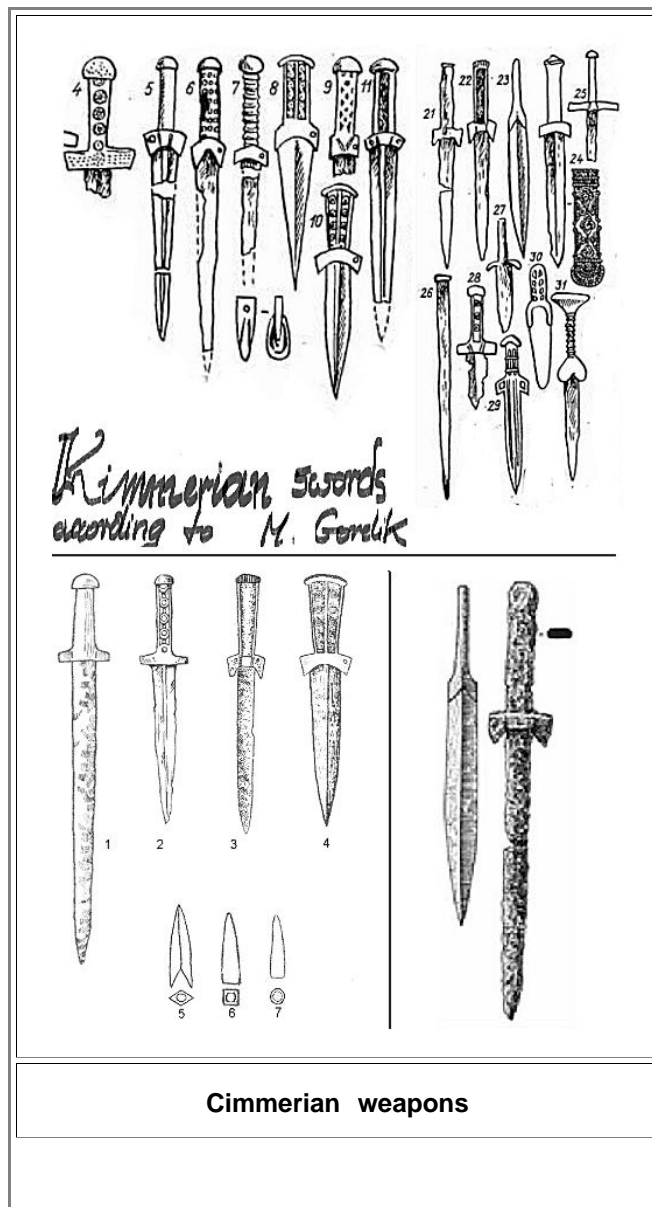
"The Cimmerians were a *nomadic* Indo-European people, who appeared about 1000 BC and are mentioned later in 8th century BC in *Assyrian* records. While the Cimmerians were often described by contemporaries as culturally "Scythian", they evidently differed ethnically from the Scythians proper, who also displaced and replaced the Cimmerians.

Probably originating in the Pontic steppe, the Cimmerians subsequently migrated both into Western Europe and to the south, by way of the Caucasus. Some of them likely comprised a force that, c. 714 BC, invaded **Urartu**, a state subject to the *Neo-Assyrian Empire*. This foray was defeated by Assyrian forces under *Sargon II* in 705, after which the same, southern branch of Cimmerians turned west towards Anatolia and conquered Phrygia in 696/5. They reached the height of their power in 652 after taking Sardis, the capital of Lydia; however an invasion of Assyrian-controlled Anshan was thwarted. Soon after 619, Alyattes of Lydia defeated them. There are no further mentions of them in historical sources, but it is likely that they settled in Cappadocia."

Nomadic, from the Pontic steppes, etc. They also were prominent during Sargon's the iron hoarder's rule and beyond:

- 721–715 BC – Sargon II mentions a land of Gamirr near to *Urartu*.
- 714 – suicide of Rusas I of *Urartu*, after defeat by both the Assyrians and *Cimmerians*.
- 705 – Sargon II of Assyria dies on an expedition against the Kulummu
- 695 – *Cimmerians* destroy Phrygia. Death of king Midas
- 676-674 – *Cimmerians* invade and destroy Phrygia, and reach Paphlagonia
- 679/678 – Gimirri under a ruler called Teushpa invade Assyria from Hubuschna (Cappadocia?). Esarhaddon of Assyria defeats them in battle.
- 654 or 652 – Gyges of Lydia dies in battle against the *Cimmerians*. Sack of Sardis; *Cimmerians* and Treres plunder Ionian colonies

Busy guys with probably good weapons, not to mention bollocks. What do we know about that? Not much but we do have a few pictures:



Source:

Top: From some blog referring to it as: Cimmerian (Kimerian) swords drawn some years ago by M.V. Gorelik: No further information could be found.

Bottom left: From a blog contained in "MyArmory.com"; no source is given but the figure captions seems to be Rumanian.

Bottom right: Internet Encyclopedia of Ukraine; History of Ukraine, "Cimmerian artifacts from the northern Black Sea region (9th to 8th century BC)".



Cimmerian bronze akinaka

A few weeks after I wrote this, a perfectly preserved Cimmerian bronze dagger came up at an auction

Source: Hermann Historix auction catalogue May 2020

● Not the typical Scythian bollocks type of akinaka, but not so different from the early Scythians ones from [Arzhan kurgan](#).

▀ Now what about **Urartu**? "Urartu is a geographical region commonly used as the exonym for the Iron Age kingdom also known by the modern rendition of its endonym, the *Kingdom of Van*, centered around Lake Van in the historic Armenian Highlands (present-day *eastern Anatolia*). The kingdom rose to power in the *mid-9th century BC*, but went into gradual decline and was eventually conquered by the *Iranian Medes* in the early 6th century BC." says Wikipedia.

Some contact to the Scythians occurred but Urartu is hardly worthwhile to mention here - except for the fact that I have in my possession more pictures of Urartu daggers or short swords than what you find in the Net:



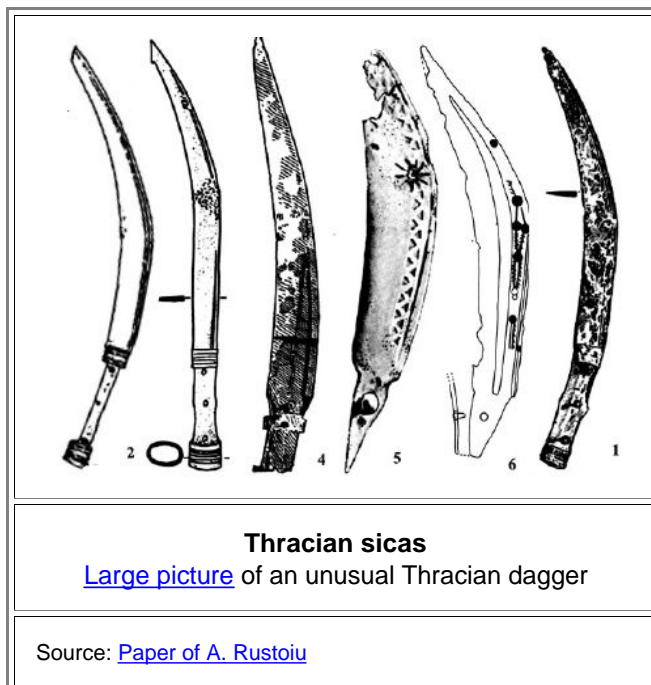
- The only picture in the Net is from a professional firm (Alamy) that wants money. Their picture shows the two swords on the right; it also supplies the German text inserted in the picture above. One thing is certain. These (bronze) weapons may or may not be from Urartu but they definitely are not bollocks akinakai. We thus can forget about Urartu. It may or may not have played a role in the development of early iron technology (as manifested in Bollocks type of akinakai) - we just don't know.

Dacians and Thracians

- ▀ These people figure heavily in Roman history and before in Greek history. They populated the area around and west of the Danube estuary, i.e. present day Bulgaria and Rumania since 800 BC or longer. While the Internet does produce "Dacian akinakai" on occasion, their known weapons were quite different. They wielded the (short) *sica* and the (longer) *falx*, inward curving blades of the [yatagan](#) type, similar to the [fkopis / alcata](#) known from ancient Greek.

See the [paper of A. Rustoiu](#) about Thracian weapons for details

- Of course we don't seem to know a thing about their early metal technology, so let's forget them at this point.



Conclusion

- ▶ Bollock type akinakai were made by smiths who had access to suitable raw iron and some technology. It is quite possible that these smiths were Scythians but it cannot be ruled out that these daggers were made by some of the other cultures around the Scythians. We don't know but it hardly matters. Given the constant belligerent or peaceful mixing of people and cultures during the time period in question, basic technologies and materials must have been accessible by all and sundry most of the time.
- That implies that whatever iron product from a given time horizon you analyze, it will point to the same general technology, no matter if it originally belonged to a Scythian, Assyrian, Median, or whoever. It will only point to the general technology since ancient smiths, as we know from analyzing for example, [Celtic swords](#), worked within a large bandwidth of capabilities, local customs, and statistical fluctuations of, e.g. iron quality. What that means is obvious:

Analyzing a number of akinakai would greatly enlarge our (almost non-existent) knowledge of iron / steel technology in the first millennium BC

- ▶ Let's do it! There are enough expendable iron akinakai around to "sacrifice" a few. It is not a real sacrifice anyway since the leftovers are still of large interest, witness the [Luristan cut-sword project](#)

¹⁾ Grammar: It's *one* akinaka or akinakes and *many* akinakai or akinakes.