

Reliefs / Sculptures with Swords and Daggers

[Home](#)

First Iron Swords

General Remarks and Assyrian Stuff

Science

Does artwork from the time in question (say 1200 BC - 700 BC) shows people wearing the kind of sword we are interested in? That is the questions, indeed. Major sources of relevant art are from [Neo Assyrian](#) palaces in, for example in Ninivah or Khorsabad. That dates them to around 700 BC, give or take 50 years. The [Achaemenid Empire](#), ca. 550 BC – 330 BC, the first Persian empire founded by Cyrus the Great, also provides for many reliefs mostly from **Persepolis**. Then we have Hittite places and some others. Read up on these empires [here](#). The Assyrian reliefs are at least 100 years too young to provide for pictures of the swords we are after here. The Persepolis ones are even younger. Nevertheless, these artworks are of some interest.

Here are a few reliefs I have already used elsewhere in this Hyperscript. Use the links for a detailed description When I started this module I hoped to find a lot more and better pictures. Well - there is still hope. But so far not much has come up, sorry.



[Assyrian princes with swords](#)
Khorsabad Palace; Reign of Sargon II,
721 - 705 BC

[Assyrian Noble with his sword](#)
Source: Khorsabad (I believe)

[Large-size picture](#) of similar guys



[Sargon II](#)
Found in the north palace in Ninivah;
from 645 BC

[Assyrian king Ashurnasirpal II](#)
(ca. 883-859 B.C.)

Now let's look at what I found in the meantime. First a few more Assyrians:



Alabaster bas-relief depicting Shalmaneser III,
Ashurnasirpal II's son, attacking a city. Neo-Assyrian
Period, 865-860 BCE. Detail of Panel 4 (bottom), Room B,
the North-Palace Palace, Nimrud, modern-day Iraq. (The
British Museum, London



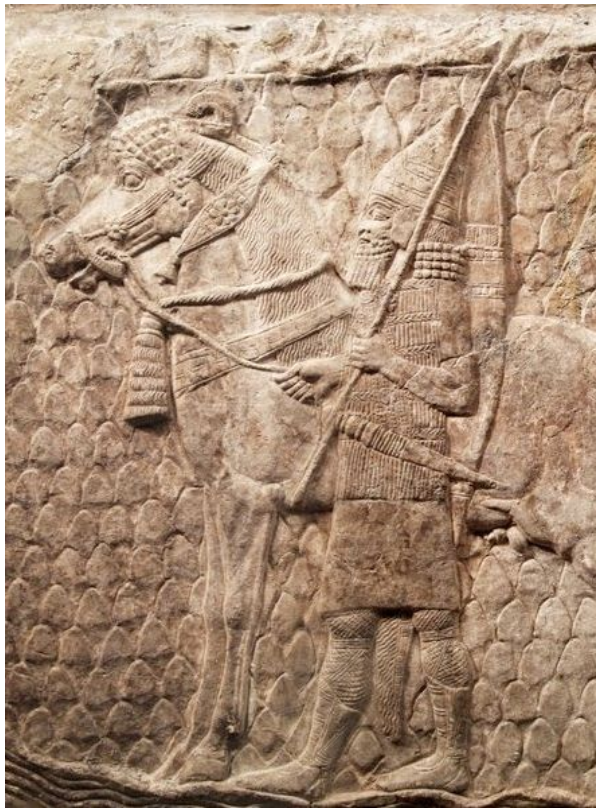
**Two depictions of Ashur-nasir-pal II;
King of Assyria from 883 to 859 BC**

Source: Wikipedia and Metmuseum



Sennacherib; From the ruins of Nimroud
Wood cut after the relief

Source: ? (Internet)



Assyrian King Sennacherib (704 - 681 BC) From Ninivehg

Source: Internet

▀ All reliefs except for the last one show long slender straight and possibly double-edged swords, very likely made from iron / steel.. The sheath has a chape characteristic for cavalry and the hilt typically consists of a sequence of rings and spheres. The only exception here is the hilt of the sword in the woodcut picture two up.

● In essence., two statements can be made:

1. No halfway well preserved sword has been found so far that resembles the ones in these art pieces. The best one could come up with are some (heavily corroded) finds from [Hasanlu](#).
2. Assyrian reliefs (including the ones not shown here) *never* show somebody wearing a sword that resembles one of the "Leitfossilien" swords we are after.

Hittite and Neo-Hittite Art

▀ There isn't all that much, it appears. In fact, there seems to be nothing at all from the Hittite empire proper, that collapsed in the dark years around 1200 BC. What we have is some stuff from Neo-Hittite kingdoms, sort of smaller and less powerful survivor states somewhere in today Turkey

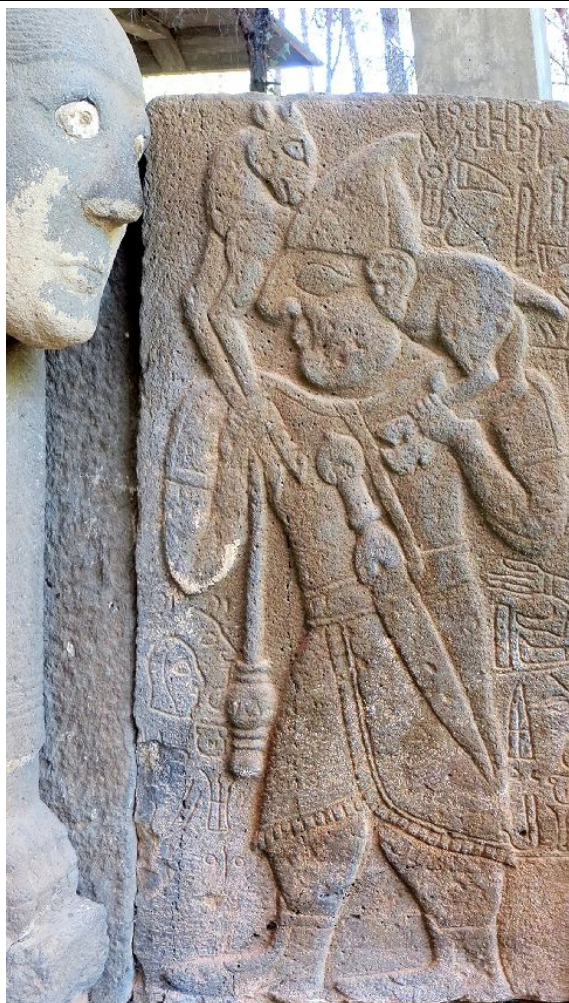


**Basalt relief from the citadel walls of Sam'al, Turkey,
10th-8th C. BC.
Hittite God of War with a spear, sword, and shield.**

Source: Pergamon Museum, Berlin, Wikimedia Commons

Unfortunately we do not see much of the sword. But it could be what I have called a [Luristan type II](#) variety.

Here is another Neo-Hittite (or Luwian, if you like) warrior / God / King with a well visible short sword or dagger. He also wears a mace and a goat.



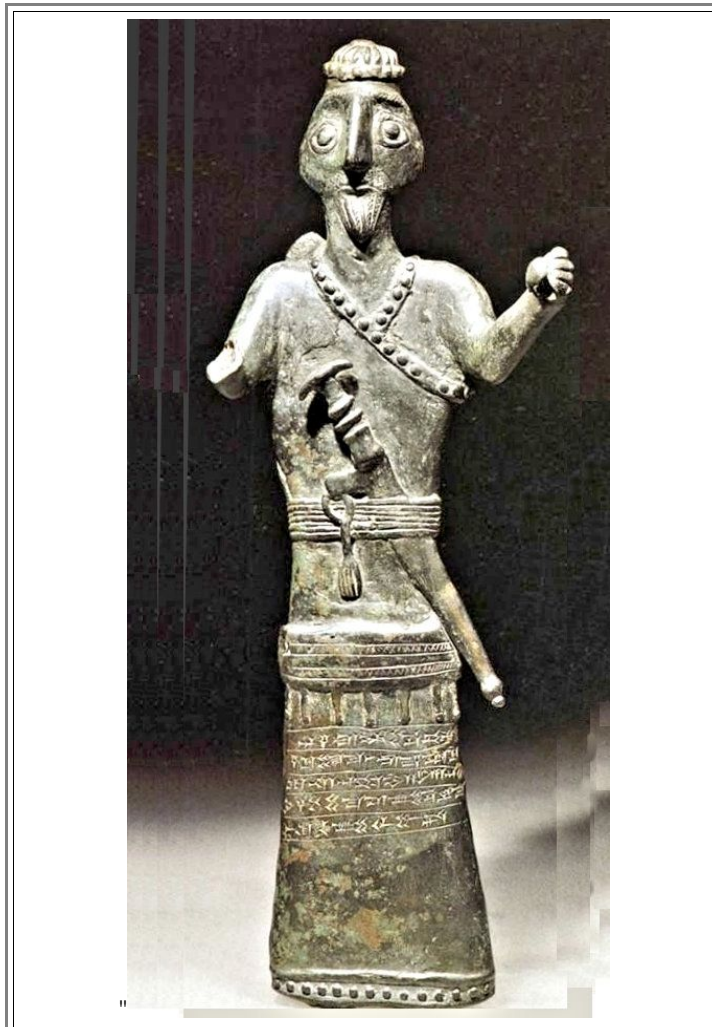
Karatepe-Aslantas; Guy with sword

Source: Photographed by me, 2013

- Kara tepe It became an important Neo-Hittite center after the collapse of the Hittite Empire in the late 12th century around the end of the 8th - 7th century BC. The site's eighth-century BC bilingual inscription reflects the activities of the kings of Adana from the "house of Mopsos", it is given in Hieroglyphic Luwian. Interesting - but the sword above is not of the type we are looking for.

Luristan and Others

- ▣ There are innumerable Luristan bronzes around - but only one shows somebody with a sword. This rare exception lives in the Teheran Museum of Archaeology



A bronze human figure with inscription in Babylonian cuneiform script from the 1st millennium BC

Source: EL Zorro Blog: A Journey in Time .1st stop Tehran: 6 Bronzeware of the Museum of Archaeological Iran

Another picture and a picture of a similar sculpture are [here](#).

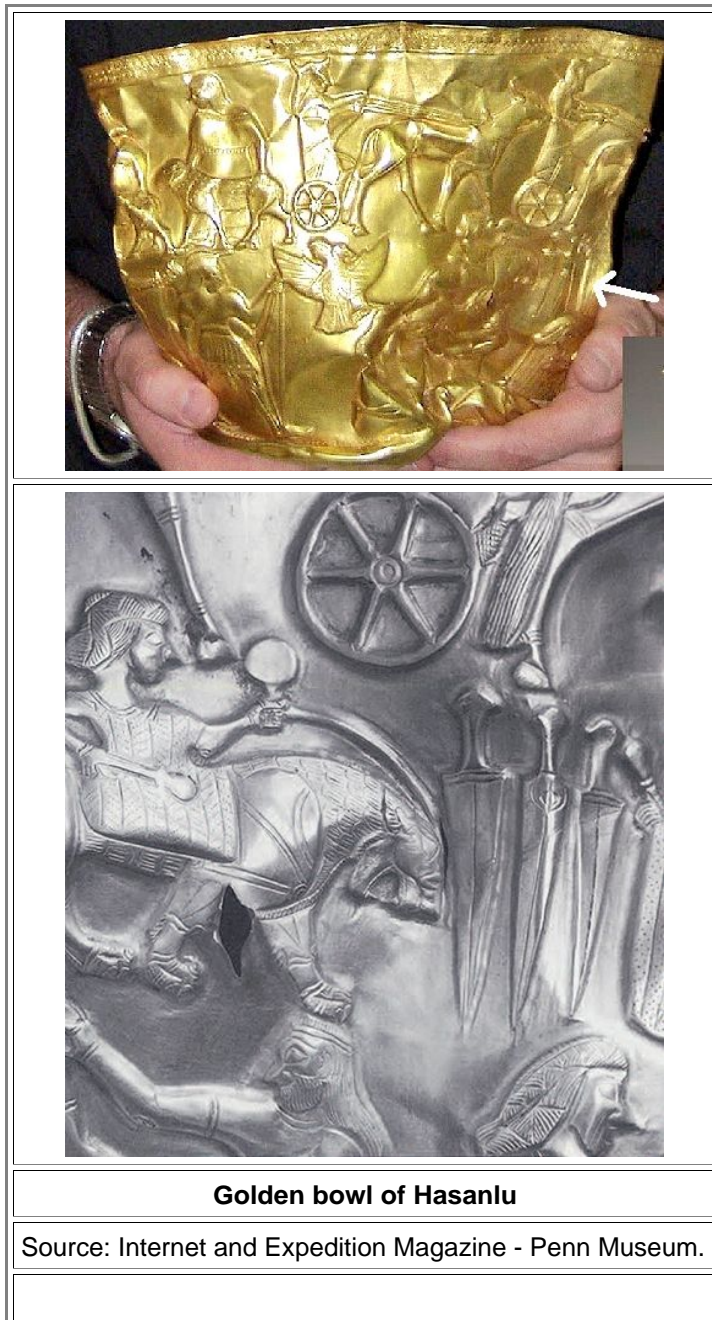
- The museum doesn't seem to offer much informations but we have Angelika Berlejung's book: "Divine Secrets and Human Imaginations: Studies on the History of Religion" and from that we learn:

The following example (*fig. 1*), found in Pusht-e Kuh (Luristan, West Iran), is an abducted divine image – at least according to the Babylonian Marduk-šarrani. The bronze statue is iconographically dated ca. 1000–900 B.C.E. and was inscribed around 600 B.C.E. with the following inscription:³⁰

1. The god of the city of Iltirgazi, 2. who was deported and 3. set up 2. in the city of Burnakku 3. Marduk-šarrani, the son of Šulmanu-ašaridu (?), 4. the governor of the lands of Šemaiš returned (*tāru* D) him and 5. let him dwell (*wašābu* Š) in his (appropriate) place.

● Tough luck! The inscription is not helpful, the origin and the date of the statue is not too clear. The sword, however, might be a proper if short Luristan type II sword.

▀ Finally the golden bowl of Hasanlu It was discovered by Robert H. Dyson in 1957. The bowl is estimated to be around 3200 years or older. It shows a collection of three (bronze) daggers that look rather familiar:



● Nice but not helpful.