

Double-Disc Hilt Dagger / Sword

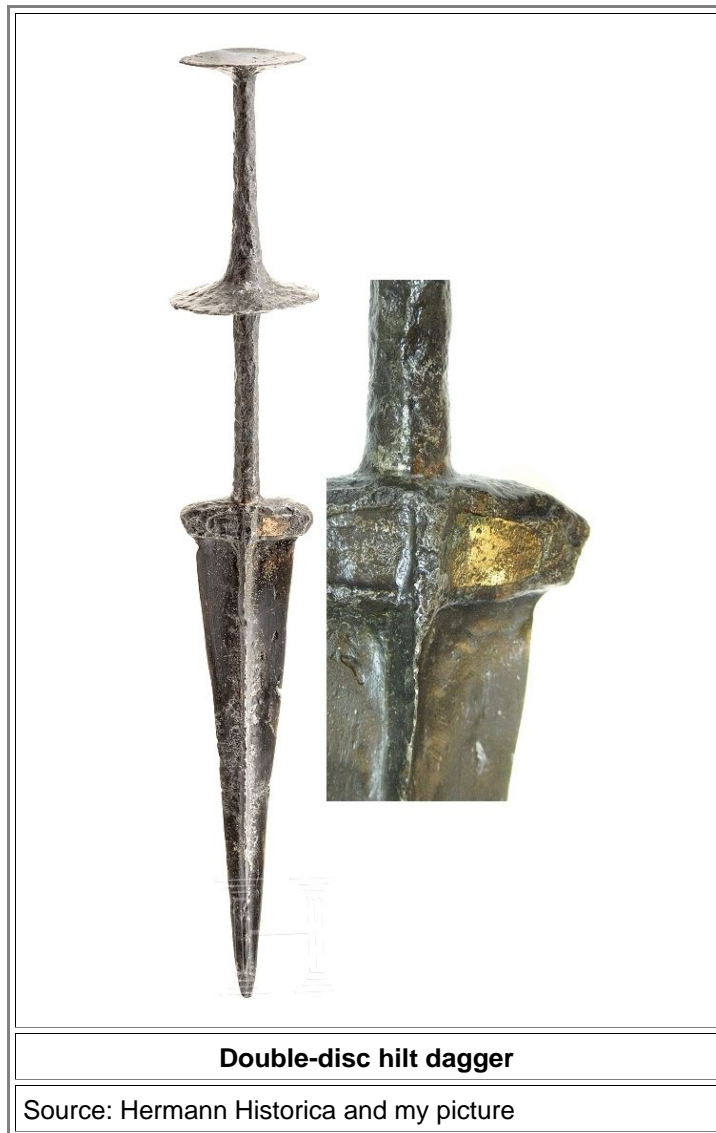
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First Iron
Swords

The One That Made Me Curious

Science

The designation "**double-disc hilt dagger / sword**" is my creation. In the literature you may find descriptions like "**cotton-reel pommel dagger**" or "**double disc pommel**" dagger. There are indeed daggers or swords with a *pommel* resembling a cotton reel made from two discs. That implies that your hand holds the dagger *below* that special pommel. However, the "Leitfossil" dagger shown [here](#) and below, while featuring two discs, does *not* have a double-disc pommel because you hold the dagger with your hand between the discs. I have access to this dagger and this is the way you hold it, no doubt whatsoever.



● The double-disc hilt dagger shown above is 43 cm long and could be bought in an auction. It was described as "Scheibenknaufdolch, Eisen, Luristan, 9. - 8. Jhdt. v. Chr". While the date might be correct, its origin may not have been in Luristan but in northern Iran.

▸ The dagger above is remarkable for two reasons:

1. It is - so far - the *only* "double-disc" dagger *made completely from iron* that is documented in a decent picture one can find in the Internet (including scientific papers found in the Net). Digging for a some time in big libraries might unearth some more specimen described in books - but who knows. I'm certainly not going to do this.
2. It still has some remains of a gold inlay at the guard (see inset above). So far it is the only *old* iron dagger / sword with a gold embellishment that I'm aware of.

- Cool - but does it qualify as "complex" iron object? Your judgement is as good as mine. Imagine you are challenged to make one. If you can do it from *one* piece of iron, you are a master smith and the dagger is definitely a complex object. Stitching it together from several pieces could be easier but would not be a simple task either.
Of course, no such dagger has ever been analyzed so we don't know how it was made. I just will count it under complex iron objects.

What do we know about these "double-disc" weapons? Not much it appears. What I found after an extensive Internet search of the literature is:

1. They come in three versions: all-bronze, bi-metal, and all-iron. That might indicate that they were made for a few hundred years, like from - roughly - 1200 BC to 800 BC.
2. We have daggers with true double disc *pommels* (relatively small discs close together), rather large discs but still used as the pommel, and the ones as shown above where the pommel became the grip.
3. Blades tend to be triangular.
4. These daggers were probably items for show (some with gold or other decorations). Something you could not overlook.
5. We do not see them on the Assyrian and other reliefs and sculptures. But those are typically from later times when the prevailing custom called for [akinakai](#)

Other Double-Disc Weapons

All Bronze Types

First, a few specimen made completely from bronze, probably by joining two or more separately cast parts:






● From left to right we have

1. British Museum, asset No.322135001. "Copper alloy sword, 10thC BC - 9thC BC, Excavated/Findspot: Iran, North West".
We already know that dagger; it is the "*pastiche*" described [here](#). So the hilt belonged originally to a *bi-metal type*.
2. Offered at Christie's some time ago and described as "Luristan bronze sword from about 9th - 7th century BC. 48 cm long.
3. Offered by Artemis Galery some time ago and described as "Near East; north-western Iran, Luristan, ca. 1000 - 1800 BC double disc pommel sword."

We don't know, of course, if the other two are pastiches, too. If you happen to own such piece, there is an easy test for this: If a magnet sticks to the hilt, it has an iron core and the piece is a pastiche.

▀ You probably would place your hand inside the discs for all three daggers, making then the "double-disc hilt" type. Just for clarity, below proper bronze "cotton-reel pommel" daggers are shown:


Bronze dagger with a cotton-reel pommel
Source: Internet; obscure page

Cotton-reel pommel. bronze sword in the Louvre, Paris (No details given)
Source: Photographed Nov. 2021
 <small>HERMANN HISTORICA</small> Los 6006 Startpreis € 400 Bronzeschwert, Luristan, um 1000 v. Chr. <small>Einteilig aus Bronze gegossenes Schwert mit schöner Patina. Schilbblattförmige Klinge mit markantem abgeflachtem Mittelgrat. Teilweise starke Ausbrüche an den Schneiden sowie Reparatur. Halbzylinderförmig stark nach unten gebogene Heftflügel, in Resten geometrisch gravierter Griff mit doppelter ovaler Knautschscheibe. Länge 50 cm.</small>
Source: Hermann Historica catalogue Dec. 2022

▀ You can find more double-disc bronze daggers or swords in the Net or in publications ([Haerlink](#) shows drawings of two specimen, for example). However, it appears that they are found most easily in auctions and not in museums. They are often ascribed to Luristan but that is unlikely. Serious collections of Luristan items (e.g. in the Munich Museum [1](#)) or as shown in the [excavation report from Luristan](#) do not show any of those weapons. They are thus more likely to come from northern Iran or the general south Caucasus area. Compared to the ubiquitous "normal" Luristan daggers, of which thousands must float around, they are comparatively rare. [Piller](#) also show two double-disc daggers. one obviously made from bronze ([shown here](#)), the other one possibly bi-metallic (not clear from the text)

It is interesting in this context what [Piller](#) has to say about cotton reel pommel swords / daggers;:
"On the other hand, this is no explanation for the fact that prestige weapons such as the cotton-reel swords are missing at every Iron Age I site investigated so far. It is more likely that this type was developed after the turn of the millennium and does not appear before Iron Age II, i.e. after ca. 1000 BC."

He means bronze types. Then we have:

"Another type which is often produced in a bi-metallic technique are the so called swords with disc-shaped or cotton-reel pommels (Fig. 2b)7. The bronze parts of these weapons are often decorated with fine punched and incised geometric ornaments, while the blades can have a sophisticated cast surface with plastic midribs and ridges.. According to this decoration and the thinness of the blades, it is highly likely that at least some of these swords were never used in combat and had just a decorative and prestige purpose"..

Bi-Metal Types

Next we look at some bi-metal specimen:



From left to right we have

1. From the Royal Museum of Art and History in Brussels (the "home" museum of excavated Luristan things). Described as "Bi-metal sword from Iran ([Amlash](#)); 1500 BC - 501 BC (?).
2. From the collection of the Goethe Universität, Frankfurt am Rhein, Germany. Described as: "Sword with disc pommel; North Iran, 1000 BC - 800 BC. 45 cm long". Maybe it was even longer and was a proper sword?
3. A sword acquired in the trade and donated to the Royal History Museum ion Brussels.

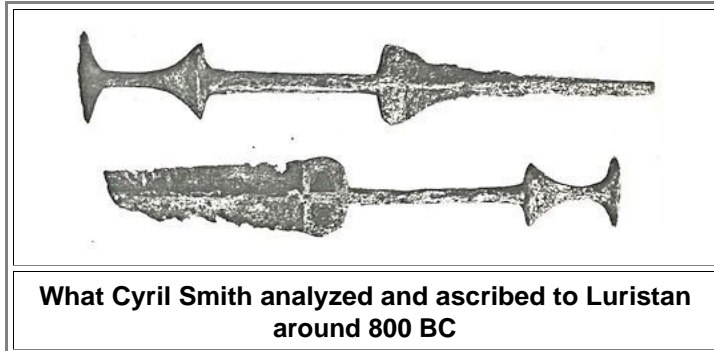
What can we learn from this? Not much, I'm afraid. All I can say is that bi-metal double disc hilt daggers / swords appear to be rare. It is quite likely that the iron part in many illegal finds was heavily corroded, removed and replaced by a bronze blade, making a "[pastiche](#)".

All Iron Types

Next we look at all-iron double disc hilt / pommel daggers / swords.

Well - look at the [top picture](#) and you have (almost) see them all. So far (May 2021) I have not found actual good pictures of another dagger / swords of the kind we are after.

What I have found are the (bad!) pictures of two daggers in the [publication of Cyril Smith](#) from 1971. Here is a picture. See also [this list](#).



The we have an all-iron double disc hilt dagger in [Khorasanis's wonderful book](#) described as: "iron dagger from Luristan". Here it is:



---- To be continued ----
(Hopefully)

¹⁾ Ausstellungs Katalog der achäologischen Staatssammlung, Band 3, 2005: "Luristan, Antike Bronzen aus dem Iran", München 2002"