

More Luristan Swords

Luristan mask swords

When one mentions "Luristan swords" one usually means "Luristan iron *mask* swords", the kind shown right below. Like most people dabbling in the field, I was not aware that there is another kind, too. It is discussed shortly [here](#), and pictures can be found in this module further down.

In 2015 I became aware of an extremely well preserved Luristan sword and a rather corroded one with only the handle left. Below are pictures



Illustration



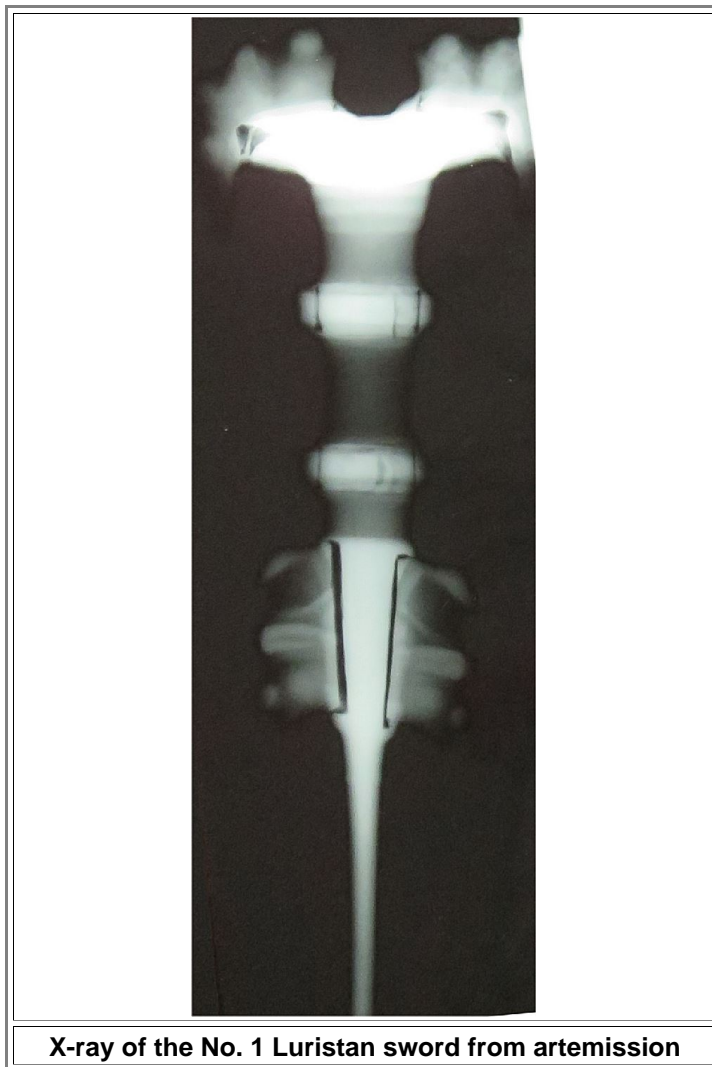
No. 2 Luristan sword (without blade) on sale at Hermann Historica, Munich

▲ A major question comes up: How do I know that these swords are not fakes?

- If genuine, both swords must come from the illegal digs undertaken around 1920 - 1930. According to the dealers, the "artemission" sword was "previously property of Mr. I. Roper, London, UK. Acquired from an old British collection of 1970s"; the Hermann Historica sword handle comes from a "Deutsche Privatsammlung, erworben in den 1970er Jahren im Münchner Kunsthandel" (German private collection, bought 1970). But that doesn't prove they are not fakes.

There are fake Luristan swords about. Not too many it appears, and probably not from many years ago. Anyway, all I can say is that I simply don't know for sure if the "Hermann" sword is genuine. For all kinds of indirect reasons (like it was too cheap to make a profit by faking it) I do believe that it is genuine.

The "artemission" sword has perfectly preserved "lions" and is in generally in excellent condition, causing some suspicions. Fortunately, it could be X-rayed [2](#). Here is a picture:



X-ray of the No. 1 Luristan sword from artemission

- There are a few more X-rays and it appears that this sword is genuine. A little doubt remains, however. Look at the following pictures of a **faked sword** - and be careful if you consider getting one yourself.

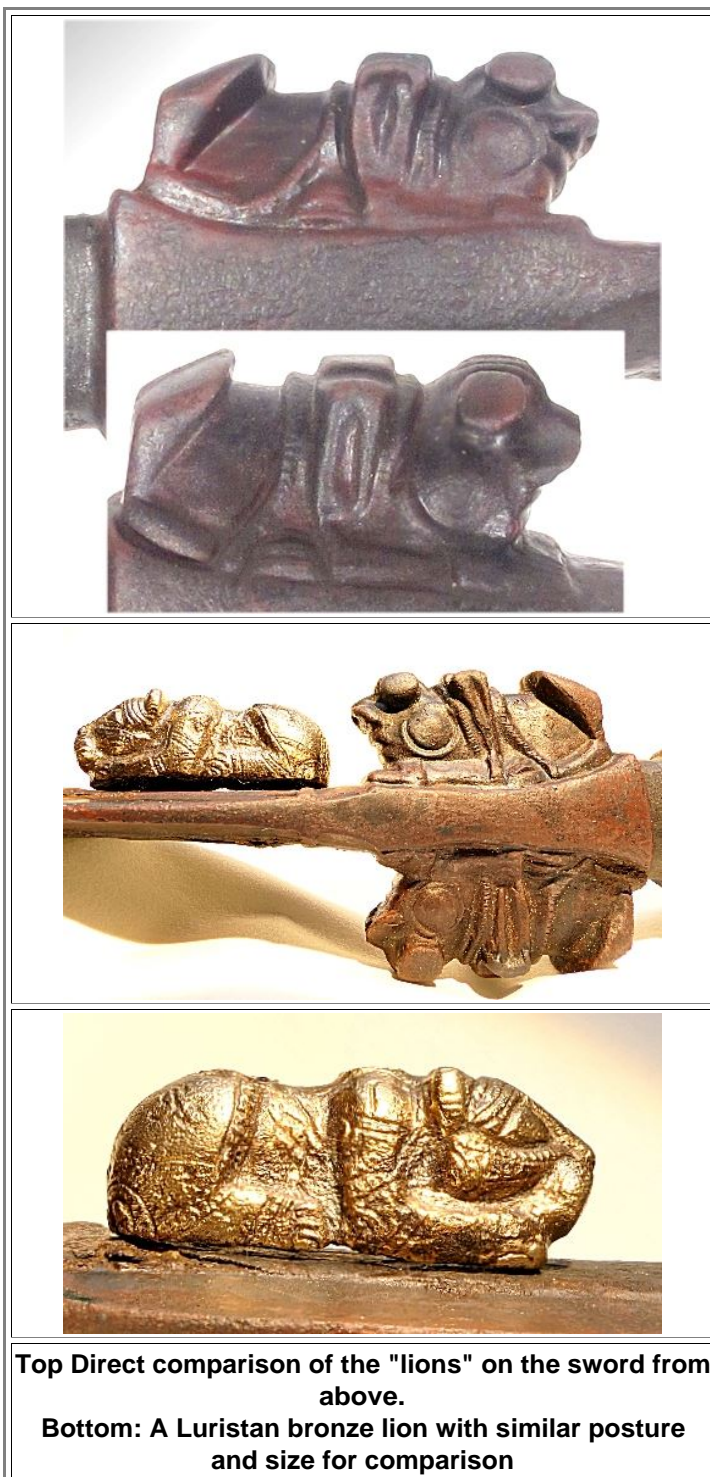


X-ray of a faked (cast iron) Luristan sword

Source: Sword Forum International, " Luristan Iron Age I Iron sword fake", April 2002 [3](#)

The lions on the first sword certainly look more like frogs than lions but the artist must have made these animals deliberately in this shape. If he would have liked to make a naturalistic lion, he certainly would have had the ability to do so.

The "lions" are in perfect conditions. So how were they made? I have pondered this question already [here](#) and won't go into it again. The sword, however, makes clear that the two lions, while quite similar, do not come from the same "mold" or form used for alleged swaging, just look at the picture below where one lion has been turned to allow a direct comparison:



- Considering that there are several concave features, it would not be possible to get the whole figure out of a form into which it had been hammered anyway. So swaging can't be the main technology. Moreover, if you can carve the negative form or mould needed for swaging from some (as yet unidentified) hard and durable material, you just as well could carve the (roughly pre-shaped) iron. The only advantage of swaging compared to direct carving would be the multiple use of the mould - and that has not been done.

In what follows I will show Luristan mask swords as I find them then every now and then.
First a rather well preserved one from the Detroit Institute of Arts



Luristan Iron mask sword in the Detroit Institute of Arts

Source: Internet at large

The next one lives most likely in some museum in Madrid: No more details were given at the Internet source



Luristan Iron mask sword in some museum in Madrid

Source: Internet at large

Here is a rather corroded one from Frankfurt / Main



Luristan iron mask sword in the museum of the Goethe Universität Frankfurt am Main

Source: Internet at large

On the left a specimen from the "source", so to speak, the "Museum of Archaeological Iran" as taken from the blog of "El Zorro" whoever he might be. It is an amazingly poor example.
On the right a sword from an obscure auction - much better than the Teheran one.



Left: Luristan Iron mask sword in the Teheran Museum
Right: From an (obscure) auctions / sale; appriased as "Near Eastern Sassanian iron sword, 224 - 651 AD" No more need to be said

Source: Left <http://elzorro927.blogspot.com/2015/01/a-journey-in-time-1st-stop-tehran-6.html>

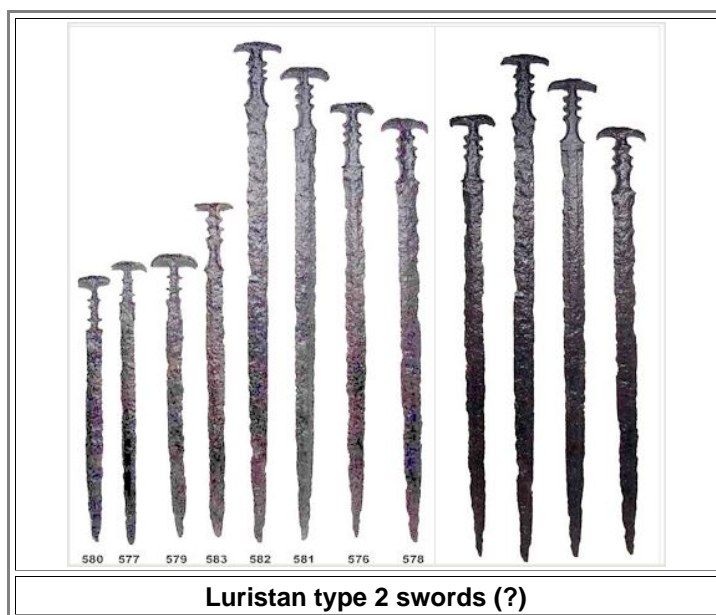
Right: Internet at large

Luristan Iron swords (Type 2)

▀ The roughly 100 known mask swords all came from the illicit digging early in the 20th century. In contrast, type 2 swords mostly were found by archaeologists during scientific legal digging and rarely made it to the antiquities markets. Here is one exceptions



▶ The [scientific literature](#) provides for several examples, so do various museums in the [Mediterranean](#). The Internet provide for the greatest number, however:



● The picture is from the (meanwhile abandoned) "Museum of Man" site provided by [M. Khorasani](#). The origin of the picture could not be asserted (Khorasani, when asked, could not supply an answer) but it is likely a museum in Iran.

▶ Finally a picture taken in the somewhat elusive Archaeological Museum in Teheran (as far as I can tell), showing various typical Luristan bronze weapons



- 2) I'm grateful to the help I received from the analytic people. I name no names because this was done without bothering the bureaucrats.
- 3) Here are the major texts from that Sword Forum blog (<http://www.swordforum.com/forums/showthread.php?21200-Luristan-Iron-Age-I-Iron-sword-fake>):

Dear Friends,

Several weeks ago Michael listed two Iranian swords on eBay, both of which he had purchased from Sadigh Galleries many years ago. I told him that one with a downswept pommel was a fake and that I was unsure about the other Luristan Iron disc pommel with two heads sword. I told him that the only sure way to tell if it was genuine was to have it x-rayed, which he did.

Today I received the following email from him, confirming my worst fears that everything coming from Sadigh Galleries should be considered to be a fake. His x-rays prove conclusively that his sword was cast in one piece, not hammer forged together with multiple pieces of bloom iron.

....

Hi John, Well, the xray was conclusive...the Iron Short Sword is a casting. The technicians told us that the spots seen in the casting are gas pockets and that the grip and blade were cast together and the heads and lower pommel parts were added. I am including scans of the xray for your reference and in the hope that they will help others that collect this pattern of sword. We are also including newer scans of the iron Sword...these came out much better. These newer shots were requested by Antonio who believed that the grip could be real, however, he thought that the blade was a later replacement...he called it a composite sword. The x-rays tell the story.