
AN AXEHEAD FROM IRAN DEDICATED TO MANIŠTUŠU¹

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ABSTRACT

This article presents the study of an axehead kept in a private collection of Iran. It is dedicated to the Sargonic king Maništušu (23rd century BC) by a charioteer, who was probably a member of the military elite. The blade, made of copper or bronze, belongs to the group of the so-called epsilon-shaped and crescent-shaped axes. The study of its physical features and the identification of close parallels from Susa suggest a provenance from the area of the Susiana, in Khuzestan, a territory over which king Maništušu had consolidated his power.

KEYWORDS

Mesopotamia and Iran, Sargonic dynasty, Maništušu, votive cuneiform inscription, axehead.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta el estudio de un hacha conservada en una colección privada de Irán. La pieza está dedicada por un conductor de carros, probablemente un miembro de la élite militar, al rey sargónico Maništušu (siglo XXIII a.C.) La hoja, de cobre o bronce, pertenece al grupo de las llamadas hachas en forma de épsilon y de media luna. El estudio de sus características físicas y la identificación de estrechos paralelos en Susa sugieren una procedencia de la zona de Susiana, en Juzestán, territorio sobre el que el rey Maništušu había consolidado su poder.

PALABRAS CLAVE

Mesopotamia e Irán, Dinastía sargónica, Maništušu, inscripción cuneiforme votiva, hacha.

The axehead presented in this contribution, dedicated to my admired friend and colleague Giovanna Biga, was allegedly found by local illegal excavators two years ago, somewhere between the south of the Luristan province and the north of Khuzestan, in Iran. It was acquired by a private collector of Khuzestan, who in turn sold it to a friend from Shiraz, where it is kept now.

1. The axehead

The axehead is apparently made of bronze or copper, but no direct exam or analysis could be made to ascertain the alloy used. It measures 20.5×8 cm in its longest dimensions, and bears an inscription dedicated to the Sargonic king Maništušu (Figs. 1-3). The blade is slightly curved, rounded rectangular, provided with three pierced tangs which would have been inserted into the shaft and secured by rivets. In view of the position of the inscription and the length of the tangs, these would have been covered by the wooden handle only partially.

¹ I am deeply grateful to Amir Zamani and Sina Abaslou, who contacted the owner of the axehead, obtained permission for publication and took the necessary photographs and measurements.

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It belongs to the group of the so-called epsilon-shaped and crescent-shaped axes, widely treated and discussed by several scholars². Axes from this group, generally cast, have a curved, crescent-shaped metal blade, which is secured into the shaft by one or more tangs. Tangs could be bent around the haft and hammered down, or attached by means of rivets: the first method is earlier in date than the second³. They can be found in Palestine, Syria, Anatolia, Mesopotamia and Iran from the middle of the 3rd to the end of the 2nd millennium, and in Egypt until the 1st millennium.

To the best of my knowledge, the closest parallels to the axehead presented here come from Til Barsip and Susa. The former, excavated at the hypogeum at Til Barsip (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936: 106 no. 7, pl. XXVIII 6; Philip 1989: 47 no. 451 Type 3; see fig. 4 below), is 24.7 cm long and has been dated to the late Early Bronze III period (Tubb 1982: 4), roughly contemporary then with the Maništušu axehead. The blade from Susa (Tallon 1987: I 104-105, II: 17, 155 no. 96; see below fig. 5)⁴, made of tin, is 24.8 cm long and most probably dates to the Sargonic period; it is fitted with two rivet holes on each of the end tangs, and only one on the central tang. It is also worth mentioning a similar blade from Susa, made of copper or bronze, which is not provided with rivet holes and its tangs have been tapered to be inserted into the shaft (Tallon 1987: I 105, II 17, 154 no. 95)⁵. The low effectiveness of this method of attachment and the way in which epsilon-shaped and crescent-shaped axes are represented on Sargonic steles (see below) have led Tallon to stress their symbolic function (1987: I 104-105).

The oldest evidence of an epsilon-shaped axe blade is possibly found on a seal impression dated to the Late Uruk period (Boehmer 1999: 25 Abb. 20 b; Miglus 2005: 169). Blades with three tangs also belong to the “Halawa Type”, possibly dated to the Early Dynastic I-II (Lüth 1989: 168-170; Helwing 2007: 36); they are similar to the one represented on an inlay from Kiš dated to ED II (Langdon 1924: pl. XXXVI; Mackay 1925: pl. III 7; id. 1929: pl. XXXV 2). An epsilon-shaped blade dated to the late ED II was found at the Šara temple in Tell Agrab, in the Diyala region (Hillen 1953: 211 fig. 1; Helwing 2007: 35 no. 34 A-E2); in Mari, an axe of this type was found in an ED II grave (Parrot 1938: 4). In northern Syria, more epsilon-shaped axes were found in Amarna, dated to ED III/Akkad (Tubb 1982), and in Tell Kaškašok III, Tell Chuera, and the cemetery at Tawi (references in Miglus 2005: 169). Examples from the Levant from Jericho, Bab edh-Dhra’, Tell el-Hesi, Kfar Monash and Byblos are given by Tubb 1982: 8-9. In southern Mesopotamia, epsilon-shaped axes, dated to ED IIIA and ED IIIB/Akkad respectively, were found in the cemeteries of Ur (Woolley 1934: 556, pl. 224 Type A 12 U. 10435 [PG 800], 573, pl. 224 Type A 13 U. 11754 [no context]) and Kiš (Langdon 1924: 77, pl. XIX; Mackay 1925: pl. XVII no. 8). In Anatolia, another example of an epsilon-shaped blade, allegedly from Bayındırköy (Stronach 1957: pl. VIII b2, 123 fig. 14 2), belongs to the same period as the axehead from Til Barsip (Tubb 1982: 6); two more examples, roughly dated to the last century of the 3rd millennium, come from the hoard of Soli (Bittel 1940: pl. IV S3397, S3398), and allegedly from Horoztepe (Özgüç and Akok 1958: 57, pl. XVIII 1-2).

² Maxwell-Hyslop 1949: 116-119; Hillen 1953: 211-212 (“scaloped axes”); Kenyon 1955: 10-18; Stronach 1957: 122-125; Deshayes 1960: 244-245 (“haches a double languettes”); Calmeyer 1969: 29-30; Moorey 1971: 54-57; Tubb 1982: 1-12; Tallon 1987: 104-109; Philip 1989: 45-48; Bänder 1995: 223-224; Rehm 2003: 21, 23-24; Miglus 2005: 169-170; Helwing 2007: 35-37; Schrakamp 2010: 447-450.

³ A diachronic analysis of these axes, in relation to their typology and the fixation method, is provided by Tubb 1982: 10-11, and Tallon 1987: 106-107.

⁴ Sb 6811 (Musée du Louvre). Photographs of this axehead are available in the Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010180366>.

⁵ Sb 9390 (Musée du Louvre). Photographs of this axehead are available in the Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010182142>.

In Iran, a further example of an epsilon-shaped blade from Luristan (“Amlash”), probably dated to the Sargonic period, is provided by Calmeyer 1969: 30 Gruppe 13 a Abb 29. Moorey (1971: 57) refers to this and to another isolated example from an excavation at Deylaman (north Iran, Egami 1965: I 59 fig. 9), which would be related to the axeheads that he personally catalogued (1971: 54-57 nos. 22-23), kept in the Ashmolean Museum. From Susa, besides the above-cited examples, it is worth mentioning one more epsilon-shaped blade dated to the post-Akkadian period (Mecquenem 1924: 112 fig. 5; Tubb 1982: 6, fig. 2 10; Tallon 1987: I 105, II 17, 155 no. 97)⁶.

The monuments of the Sargonic period also represent different types of axes⁷, including epsilon-shaped and crescent-shaped axes. These (Helwing’s Form A-E4) are found on the Akkadian reliefs from Susa, where they were taken to as war booty. Relief Sb 1 (Nassouhi 1924: 66-70 figs. 2-4)⁸ represents Sargon on one of its friezes, followed by a servant and five officers carrying crescent-shaped ceremonial axes; relief Sb 3 (Nassouhi 1924: 73 fig. 8)⁹ shows a procession of enemies captured in combat, forced forward by a soldier who carries an axe with a crescent-shaped blade; relief Sb 4 (Victory stele of Naram-Sîn, De Morgan, Jéquier and Lampre 1900: 144-158)¹⁰ shows a similar axe carried by the warrior who immediately follows Naram-Sîn, and another one under an emblem held by the warrior behind. From Tello comes a stone plaque dedicated to Naram-Sîn, on which are carved three axes of the crescentic type (De Sarzec 1884-1912: I 446, II/1 pl. LVII, II/2 pl. 26bis 1)¹¹. On Fragment A (Basmachi 1954: 116-119 IM 55639) of the Nasirīyah stele, also dated to the Sargonic period, there is a warrior carrying in his belt an axe with a curved handle, which shows an epsilon-shaped blade secured by riveted metal loops that go round the handle¹². Fragment C (McKeon 1970: 228 fig. 2 MFA 66.893) of the same stele shows a warrior holding a similar axe¹³.

Another remarkable example from a later period is the relief of Anubanini (Morgan and Scheil 1893: 100-105)¹⁴, from Sarpol-i Zohāb (Iran), probably dated to the Early Old Babylonian period, which shows an epsilon-shaped blade riveted to the haft, very similar to the one presented here; the same blade is also found on two other reliefs from Sarpol-i Zohāb¹⁵. A similar epsilon-shaped blade can also be found on a rock-relief from Bitwāta (25 km NE of Sulaymaniyah, Iraq)¹⁶, with an inscription of Iddin-Sîn of Simurru, probably also dated to the Early Old Babylonian period (Shaffer, Wasserman and Seidl 2003).

⁶ Sb 10249 (Musée du Louvre). Photographs of this axehead are available in the Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010182975>.

⁷ Bänder 1995: 221-224; Rēhm 2003: 15-25; Abrahami 2008: 11.

⁸ Sb 2, AS 9785 (Musée du Louvre). Other photographs, illustrations and descriptions can be found in Börkher-Klähn 1982: 127-128 no. 18 (and plates); D.P. Hansen, in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003: 192 fig. 54; Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010123451>.

⁹ Sb 3, AS 6078, AS 1319 (Musée du Louvre). Other photographs, illustrations and descriptions can be found in Börkher-Klähn 1982: 129 no. 20 (and plate); F. Demange, in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003: 199 no. 127; Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010123453>.

¹⁰ Sb 4 (Musée du Louvre). Other photographs, illustrations and descriptions can be found in Börkher-Klähn 1982: 134-137 no. 26 (and plates, specially 26f); D.P. Hansen, in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003: 196 fig. 59; Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010123450>.

¹¹ AO 3296 (Musée du Louvre). Museum number according to Louvre online catalogue: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010121772>. Other publications give AO 3291 (e.g. Gelb and Kienast 1990: 97 Narāmīn 11 Text B; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 312 W 19; Frayne 1993: E2.1.4.27 ex. 2).

¹² A good photograph has been published by McKeon 1970: 229 fig. 4.

¹³ Photograph and description by P. Collins can also be found in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003: 204 no. 131.

¹⁴ This relief and its inscription have been extensively discussed. Note particularly Hrouda 1976 II/7: 7-11 no. 2, pl. 5-6; Börker-Klähn 1982: 138-139; no. 31; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 379-381 Varia 13; Frayne 1999: 704-706 E4.18.1.1; Nasrabadi 2004.

¹⁵ Hrouda 1976 II/7: 11-13 nos. 3 and 4, pl. 7-8; Börker-Klähn 1982: 138-139, nos. 32 and 34.

¹⁶ For the provenance of this relief, purchased by the Israel Museum in 1971, cf. Al-Fouadi 1978.

Finally, some examples of the epsilon-shaped blade represented on cylinder-seals, dated to the Akkad and post-Akkadian periods, are provided by Tallon 1987: I 107.

2. The inscription

The inscription on the axehead presented here reads as follows:

ma-an-iš-tu-su

LUGAL

KIŠ^{KI}

ma-šum

šū^{ĜIŠ} GIGIR₂

ARAD₂-zu

“(For) Maništušu, king of Kiš, Māšum, the charioteer, his servant.”

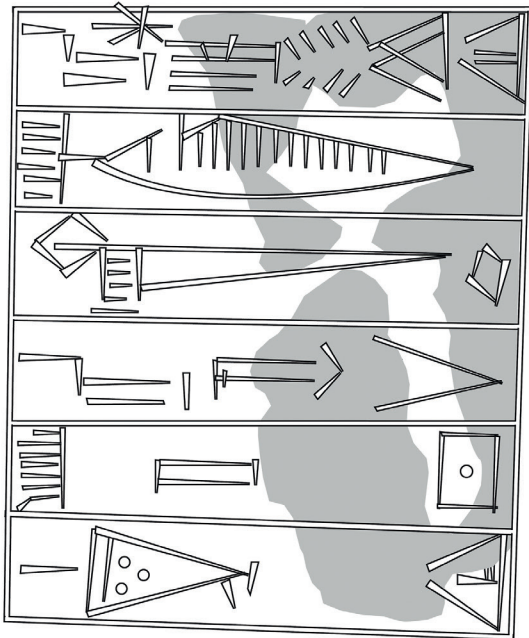


Fig. 1. The inscription. 31×37 mm. 2:1. Handcopy by M. Molina.

Photograph by A. Zamani and S. Abaslou.

According to Old Babylonian tradition, Maništušu succeeded his brother Rimuš and was the third king of the Sargonic dynasty. Instead, the Ur III manuscript of the Sumerian King List considers Maništušu the successor of Sargon, a line of descent also implied in the much later “Cruciform Monument” (Steinkeller 2003: 278). In support of this possibility, Sallaberger and Schrakamp (2015: 95 n. 281) have stressed the “Early Dynastic style” of an alabaster statue dedicated to Maništušu by Ešpum (see below 2. 4. 6); similarly, Huh (2008: 290) has argued in favour of Maništušu as Sargon’s successor. As the order of succession is still subject to discussion, the time span covered by Rimuš (ruled 15 years) and Maništušu (8 years) would be dated around MC 2284-2262 BC (Sallaberger and Schrakamp 2015: 136).

Several votive inscriptions dedicated to or by Maništušu, either excavated officially or from the antiquities market, are currently known. They were inscribed on the following objects:

2. 1. Stone mace heads

2. 1. 1. *Marble mace head. From Sippar. BM 91018 (British Museum)*

Inscription: *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ, *a-na*, ^dNIN-a-a, A.MU.RU “Maništušu, king of the totality, dedicated it to Bēlataya”. Bibl.: CT 21, pl. 1; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 78 Maništušu 3; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 47 K 25; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.4; photograph in CDLI P216553.

2. 1. 2. *Alabaster mace head. From Isin. IM — = IB 1878 (Iraq Museum)*

Inscription: *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ, *a-na*, ^dnin-isin₂, A.MU.RU “Maništušu, king of the totality, dedicated it to Nin-Isin”. Bibl.: Gelb and Kienast 1990: 79 Maništušu 5; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 47 K 26; Sommerfeld 1992: 150, pl. 43-44, 57 (photograph); Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.5.

2. 2. Metal weapons

2. 2. 1. *Copper spear-point. From Assur. VA 8300 (Vorderasiatisches Museum)*

Inscription: *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ, *a-zu-zu*, ARAD₂-su, *a-na*, ^dbe-al-si-si, A.MU.RU “Maništušu, king of the totality: Azuzu, his servant, dedicated it to Be'al-si-si”. Bibl.: Andrae 1935: 1-2, fig. 1 (photograph); Gelb and Kienast 1990: 79-80 Maništušu B 1; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 88 MW 4; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.2002.

2. 3. Vases

2. 3. 1. *Bronze bowl. Said to come from Qamišliyyah, a Syrian village close to the Turkish border town of Nusaybin, now in the private collection of K. Frauenberger (Germany)*

Inscription: *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ “Maništušu, king of the totality”. Bibl.: Nagel 1970: 195 (with photograph); Braun-Holzinger 1991: 160 G 206; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.7.

2. 3. 2. *Bronze bowl. From the antiquities market, sold at Christie's on May 2002, lot 244, now in the private collection of Laurent Hebenstreit (Paris)*

Inscription: *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ “Maništušu, king of the totality”. Bibl.: Földi 2013: §3. 1; photograph in CDLI P459161.

2. 3. 3. *Stone (dolerite) vase. From Nippur. CBS 9918 (University of Pennsylvania Museum)*

Inscription: [*ma-an-iš*]-t[*u-su*], LUGA[L], KIŠ, *a-na*, ^den-li[l₂], A.M[U.RU] “Maništušu, king of the totality, dedicated it to Enlil”. Bibl.: BE I/2, no. 118; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 79 Maništušu 4; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 160 G 207; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.3; photograph in CDLI P216552.

2. 3. 4. *Stone vase. From the antiquities market*

Inscription: *a-na*, ^dinanna, *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ “For Inanna, Maništušu, king of the totality”. Bibl.: CMAA 017-M0018 (unpubl.); photograph in CDLI P257555.

2. 4. Statues and steles

2. 4. 1. *Fragment of the base of a diorite statue, probably dedicated to Šamaš. From Susa. Sb 51 (Musée du Louvre)*

Inscription preserves lines 15-25 and 47-59 of the “standard inscription” of Maništušu, where the king records his conquests. Bibl.: MDP 14, pp. 1-3, pl. 2 4 (photograph); Gelb and Kienast 1990: 76-7 Maništušu 1 A; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 257 St 93; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.1 Ex. 1; photograph in Louvre online catalogue <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010121486>.

2. 4. 2. *Fragment of statue or a stele. From Susa. Sb 15566 (Musée du Louvre)*

Inscription preserves lines 16-19 of the “standard inscription” of Maništušu. Bibl.: MDP 4, p. 2, pl. 1 2 (photograph); Gelb and Kienast 1990: 76-7 Maništušu 1 B; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 257 St 94; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.1 Ex. 2; photograph in Louvre online catalogue <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010187910>.

2. 4. 3. *Fragment of a diorite statue or a stele. From Nippur. CBS 19925 + CBS 19926 (University of Pennsylvania Museum)*

Inscription preserves lines 15-20 of the “standard inscription” of Maništušu. Bibl.: PBS 5, no. 35 (CBS 19925) + CBS 19926 (unpubl., photograph of cast in CDLI P216548); Gelb and Kienast 1990: 76-7 Maništušu 1 E; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 336-7 Stele 11; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.1 Ex. 3.

2. 4. 4. *Fragment of a granite stele. From Sippar. BM 56630 (British Museum)*

Inscription preserves lines 12-19 of the “standard inscription” of Maništušu. Bibl.: CT 32, pl. 5; Walker and Collon 1980: 102 no. 56; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 76-77 Maništušu 1 D; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 337 Stele 12; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.1 Ex. 4; Reade 2002: 271 no. 8.

2. 4. 5. *Corner fragment of a stone (olivine gabbro) monument, possibly a statue base. From Sippar. BM 56631 (British Museum)*

Inscription preserves lines 12-21 of the “standard inscription” of Maništušu on one face, and a dedication to Enlil on the other. The latter reads: [*ma-an-iš-tu*]-s[*u*], [LU]GAL, [KI]Š, [*a*]-na, ^[d]UTU, [A.MU].RU “Maništušu, king of the totality, dedicated it to Šamaš”. Bibl.: CT 32, pl. 5; Walker and Collon 1980: 102 no. 57; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 76-77 Maništušu 1 C, and 78 Maništušu 2; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 288, 348 Sockel 4 and Taf. 22 (photograph); Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.1 Ex. 5; Reade 2002: 270-71 no. 7¹⁷.

2. 4. 6. *Alabaster statue. From Susa. Sb 82 (Musée du Louvre)*

Inscription: *ma-an-iš-tu-su*, LUGAL, KIŠ, *eš₄-pum*, ARAD₂-su, *a-na*, ^dna-ru-ti, A.MU.NA.RU “Maništušu, king of the totality: Ešpum, his servant, dedicated it to Naruntī”. Bibl.: MDP 10, pp. 1-3, pl. 1 (photograph); Gelb and Kienast 1990: 80 Maništušu B 2; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 257-8 St 95; Frayne 1993: E2.1.3.2001; photograph in Louvre online catalogue <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010174506>.

As can be observed from the texts cited above, the spelling *ma-an-iš-tu-su* found in line 1 of our inscription is characteristic of votive inscriptions dedicated to this king. It is also found in administrative texts (PBS 9, no. 25 rev. 9) and on the Maništušu Obelisk (OIP 104, no. 40), while in Ur III documents a spelling with *-ti-* or *-ti₂(DIN)-* was preferred.

What makes our text more peculiar is the use of the semantic indicator KI in KIŠ^{KI}. In fact, this determinative is consistently omitted for the title LUGAL KIŠ in Sargonic royal inscriptions, and particularly in the votive texts of Maništušu (see above 2.1.1, 2.1.2, 2.2.1, 2.3.1, 2.3.2, 2.3.3, 2.3.4, 2.4.5, 2.4.6), which were found in distant places such as Isin (2.1.2), Nippur (2.3.3, 2.4.3), Sippar (2.1.1, 2.4.4, 2.4.5), Assur (2.2.1) and Susa (2.4.1, 2.4.2, 2.4.6). It is generally accepted that the title *lugal kiš^{KI}*, when written with the indicator in Pre-Sargonic texts, meant “King of Kiš”, although already at that time it had

¹⁷ Reade suggests that this fragment (BM 56631) and possibly the former (BM 56631), although found at Sippar, could have originated at Nippur because the inscription has a dedication to Enlil. Note nevertheless that this dedication is found on the Old Babylonian copies of the “standard inscription” of Maništušu, while BM 56631 bears a dedication to Šamaš, worshipped at Sippar.

the generic meaning of universal ruler (Steinkeller 1993: 120). The consistent omission of the determinative in the title LUGAL KIŠ when used by the Sargonic kings would point to its correspondence to the later title *šar kiššatim*, “King of the totality” (Steinkeller 2013: 146). This would be supported by the fact that the Maništušu Obelisk adds the indicator when the toponym KIŠ^{KI} is recorded, but omits it for the title (OIP 104, no. 40 i 6’-8’); moreover, Sargon and his successors were kings of Akkade, but never claimed the kingship of Kiš, which was ruled by a semi-independent ruler. The writing of the determinative KI in the axehead presented here would point to Maništušu using the title “King of Kiš” in this text with the same generic meaning of an hegemonistic kingship as used by the Pre-Sargonic kings of southern Mesopotamia.

The name of the offerer was Māšum, an Akkadian word that means “twin”. It is a well attested personal name in Sargonic administrative texts, particularly in the area of Adab and in the Diyala region.

In the axehead inscription, he is designated as *šu* ^{giš}GIGIR₂ “charioteer”, lit. “the one of the chariot”. This profession is well attested, both as Sumerian *lu*₂ ^{giš}gigir and as Akkadian *šu-(ut)* ^{giš}GIGIR₂.

In the plural (*šu-ut* ^{giš}GIGIR₂ “charioteers”), it is recorded in a group of texts from Tutub (Tutub, nos. 8, 10, 11 and 15). These are personnel lists, where charioteers are recorded together with other workers such as craftsmen, cup-bearers or barbers (see Sallaberger 2000: 116); in one case (no. 8) they appear in relation to the “house of the chariots”, perhaps a workshop for the repair and maintenance of such vehicles (Abrahami 2008: 13). Charioteers were certainly in charge of the repair and maintenance of chariots, as is shown by CUSAS 20, no. 29, which records 13 wheels received by Bēl-ilī, the charioteer, on the occasion of a trip of Ur-Ašgi.

This profession is also attested in texts from the Lugalra archive in the Lagaš region (CUSAS 26, no. 204), Umma (BIN 8, no. 320), Sagub (Mesag archive, BIN 8, no. 122), Umm al-Hafriyat (CUSAS 27, no. 48: rev. ii 18, no. 135), and Ešnunna (MAD 1, no. 135 [declaration in court], no. 272). These texts, which in most cases record the allocation of food for personnel, do not make it possible to determine whether the chariots were intended for transport or for battle. They do show that the number of charioteers depending on an administration could be as high as fourteen (BIN 8, no. 122), and that they were hierarchically organized (CUSAS 27, no. 135 records an UGULA *šu-ut* ^{giš}GIGIR₂ “foreman of the charioteers”).

A military context is probably implied in OSP 1, no. 33 (Nippur), which records charioteers, boatmen, cooks and soldiers, although the text is too fragmentary to ascertain their function. The most interesting text in this regard is the Sargonic tablet from Adab published by Civil 2003: 54. It records a list of bows, quivers and arrows gifted as a *mašdari’a*-contribution by the governor and other dignitaries, such as generals (*šakkan*₆), chief-administrators (*šabra*), and “Urzu, the charioteer” (*ur-zu lu*₂ ^{giš}gigir). Abrahami (2008: 13) has pointed out that he could be the official in charge of the chariot of general Utusa, who precedes him in the list of contributors. In fact, Urzu was a well-known charioteer, since he is recorded in another text from Adab as the recipient of a quantity of beer together with another high official¹⁸ (CUSAS 13, no. 101). He is also probably the same man who witnessed an acknowledgment of a debt in CT 50, no. 75, a text from Girsu (other charioteers are recorded as witnesses in PBS 9, nos. 5 and 6, Nippur). What is remarkable about the *mašdari’a*-contribution in relation to the Adab tablet is that it was given by high- and middle-ranking dignitaries of the city to the king or his family¹⁹. As Civil cautiously suggests (*ibid.* 50), the

¹⁸ *šu-i*₃-*li*₂-*su ugula šu-gal*₅-*la*₂-*um*. For this office, see Keetman 2014: 6-7 n. 24.

¹⁹ For the *mašdari’a*-contribution in Sargonic Adab, see Molina and Notizia 2012: 51, with further bibliography.

weapons recorded in this Adab tablet could have been donated on the occasion of a royal visit or a military campaign.

All this points to the existence of charioteers who excelled in their position above the rest, either because they actually commanded a contingent of chariots, or because they exercised their position within the military elite. This was probably the case of Māšum, the charioteer who dedicated an axe to king Maništušu. The choice of the object was probably determined by the fact that, when used in warfare, chariots carried weapons designed for close-range combat, such as axes. An interesting example is a votive plaque dated to ED II-III and found at the Royal Cemetery of Ur (Woolley 1934: 376-377 and pl. 181b U. 8557)²⁰, which represents a chariot scene with two epsilon-shaped axes in a sheath.

Whether the axe was used by Māšum in combat or taken away from the enemy, cannot be ascertained²¹, but the weapon was apparently functional, possibly dedicated to Maništušu after a successful battle, and was offered in a sanctuary somewhere between Luristan or Khuzestan, the area from where it allegedly comes²². In fact, other inscribed weapons from Luristan, dated to the Sargonic period, are known and are the testimony of the military activity of the Sargonic kings in this area of Iran. The inscribed metal weapons from Luristan known to me, all from the antiquities market, are the following:

– Shaft-hole axe. Private collection of Foroughi. Inscription: *šu-dur-ul₃, da-num₂, LUGAL, a-ka₃-de₃^{ki}* “Šū-Durul, the mighty, the king of Akkad”. Bibl.: Dossin 1962: 156 no. 11, pl. 22 (photograph); Calmeyer 1969: 27 Abb. 25 (Gr. 11 C), 162 no. 9; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 122 Šū-DUR.ÛL 1; Braun-Holzinger 1991: 89 MW 8; Frayne 1993: E2.1.11.1.

– Shaft-hole axe. National Museum of Iran. Inscription: *be-li₂-i-šar, da-num₂, LUGAL kiš¹* “Bēlī-išar, the mighty, king of the totality”. Bibl.: Godard 1965: 76 fig. 78; Calmeyer 1969: 33-34 Abb. 33 (Gr. 14 E), 162 no. 8; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 378 Varia 8 (Luristan 1); Braun-Holzinger 1991: 89 MW 8; Frayne 1993: E2.0.0.1015.

– Shaft-hole adze. Musée du Louvre (AO 27918). Inscription: *i-mi^d-UTU, DUMU im₄-ta₂-lik* “Imid-Šamaš, son of Imtalik”. Bibl.: Calmeyer 1969: 129 + n. 414 (Gr. 59), 161 no. 1; Gelb and Kienast 1990: 378 Varia 10 (Luristan 3); Braun-Holzinger 1991: 89 MW 9; photograph in Louvre online catalogue <https://collections.louvre.fr/en/ark:/53355/cl010152194>.

However, the axeheads from Luristan are typologically different from the one dedicated to Maništušu, and are dated to the final years of the Sargonic dynasty or even to the Gutian period. Since our closest examples come instead from Susa, it could be suggested, as an educated guess, that the axehead presented here originated from Susiana, in Khuzestan. This would be in line with the military expansion to this territory known to have been initiated by Sargon and consolidated by his sons Rimuš and Maništušu²³.

²⁰ See also photograph and description by J. M. Evans, in Aruz and Wallenfels 2003: 72 no. 31. For a possible date of the plaque to ED III, see Marchesi and Marchetti 2011: 93 n. 325.

²¹ Cf. the remarks by Braun-Holzinger 1991: 11-13.

²² In this regard, it is worth noting that, as Radner and Kroll (2006: 218-221) have shown, Luristan weapons with inscriptions of later Babylonian rulers were not brought to the Iranian highlands as booty, but instead were donated by Babylonians as votive offerings after a battle in the Zagros sanctuaries.

²³ For an outline of the territorial conquests of Sargon, Rimuš and Maništušu, see Westenholz 1999: 39-45; Foster 2016: 3-10; Steinkeller 2018: 185-187; 2021: 45-50. For an overview of the archaeology of Khuzestan, see Matthews and Fazeli Nashli 2022: 341-354.

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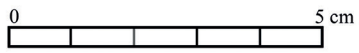


Fig. 2. Axehead dedicated to Maništušu.
Photograph by A. Zamani and S. Abaslou.

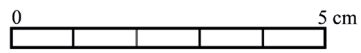
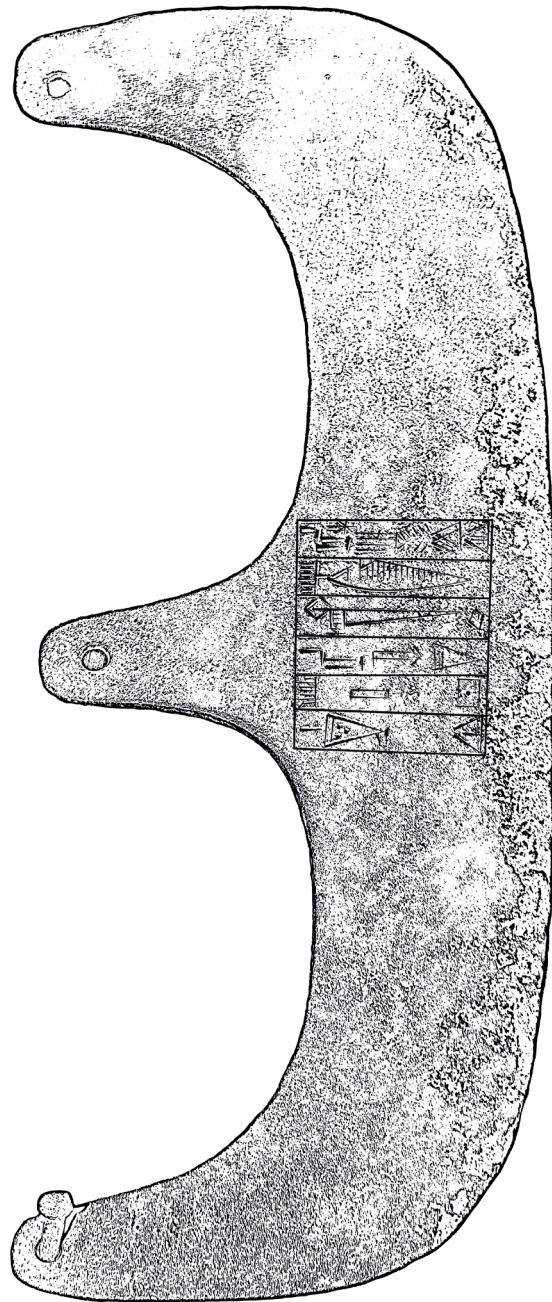


Fig. 3. Axehead dedicated to Maništušu.
Drawing by M. Molina.

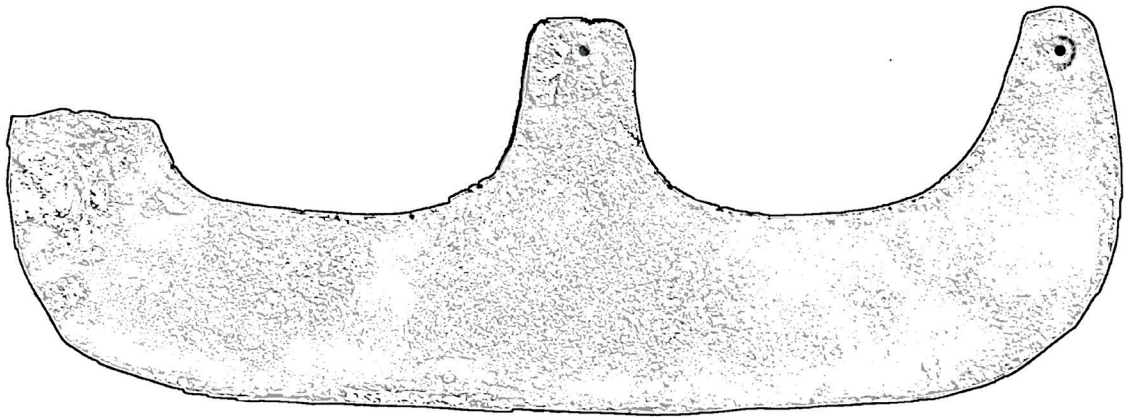


Fig. 4. Axehead from the hypogeum at Til Barsip, late EBIII, 24.7 cm long (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936: pl. XXVIII 6). Drawing by M. Molina.

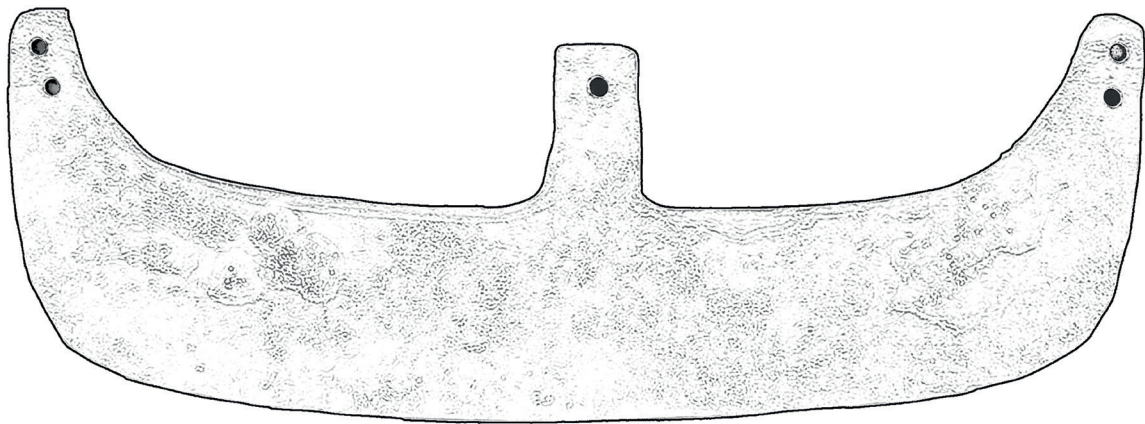


Fig. 5. Axehead from Susa, Sargonic period, 24.8 cm long (Tallon 1987: II 155 no. 96).
Photograph: <https://collections.louvre.fr/ark:/53355/cl010180366>. Drawing by M. Molina.