

Urartian Bells and Samos

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Archaeological remains indicate that from the very beginning of the Greek and Cretan Bronze Age, Aegean cities maintained contact with neighboring lands in Egypt and the Near East. These contacts are indicated by imported objects and materials excavated at sites on the Greek mainland and on various islands in the Aegean Sea, and, especially during the Late Bronze Age, by Greek material found in Egypt and the East. After the collapse of the Mycenaean civilization and the onslaught of the Dorian invasions, sometime in the twelfth century B.C., foreign imports are no longer encountered on Greek sites, and there is no evidence that Greek goods continued to be exported. These facts, coupled with the lack of monumental architecture and the sparse remains from Greek sites, clearly indicate that Greece suffered a cultural decline and that ties to the East had been severed. A change occurs at least by the tenth century B.C., if not slightly earlier, for a number of sites in the Near East have yielded Greek Protogeometric pottery, a sure indication that earlier contacts were being renewed. But during this period the flow of goods apparently moved in only one direction, West to East, and it was not until the late ninth century, at the earliest, that a reciprocal relationship began. It is at this time that the earliest near eastern material is recovered in post-Mycenaean Greece, in particular at Athens. Aside from these early finds—a bronze decorated bowl, faience beads and plaques, and gold earrings either imported or made under near eastern influence—the archaeological record is silent until approximately the mid-eighth century B.C. Beginning at this time, and continuing for some decades of the seventh century, there is a quickening of imports to Greece, and it is during this period that the greatest number of near eastern objects arrived.¹

It is one thing to recognize that a particular object recovered on Greek soil is non-Greek, that it is an import from the Near East, but it is quite another to determine accurately and to everyone's satisfaction the specific area or culture that produced the foreign object—although this would yield valuable insight with respect to those near eastern centers that attracted the Greeks and were involved in their spiritual and material development. Indeed, from the very first discussions of imports in the nineteenth century, scholarly opinion concerning whence they derived has been expressed, and with the growth of our knowledge of near eastern material remains, these opinions have of course been modified and refined. Nevertheless, the difficulties involved in attributions are underscored by the fact that consensus has not been reached concerning the specific

1 For summaries, discussions and bibliography of the imports from this period see O. W. Muscarella, "Near Eastern Bronzes in the West: The Question of Origin," in S. Doehringer, D. G. Mitten, and A. Steinberg, eds., *Art and Technology* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970). 109 f.; H. V. Herrmann, "Hellas (orientalischer Import im frühen Griechenland)," *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (1975), 4:303–11.

place of origin of every near eastern object and motif encountered in the West. In particular, a great deal of the disagreement on origins has centered on studies of the griffin protomes and siren cauldron attachments found in some quantity at many Greek sites, as well as in Italy.

For many years almost every scholar who studied the siren attachments has concluded that they were imported from Urartu and that the locally made copies represent evidence for the penetration of Urartian art into Greece²; only a few earlier writers suggested Phoenicia or Assyria as the source.³ Likewise many scholars also claimed an Urartian background for the griffin protomes, seeing them either as imports or as examples of Urartian influences.⁴ But far more important than the issue of the origin of these groups of objects *per se* is the fact that most scholars who have championed their Urartian background have taken the position that Urartu played a significant role—the major role some would argue—in the near eastern encounter with Greek culture in its formative stage.

A vigorous reaction to this position, the “Urartu-These,” began to develop in the 1960s, and a growing number of scholars maintain that the sirens and griffins, and still many more objects—bronze vessels, horse blinkers, plaques, ivories, and assorted motifs—derived from North Syria, not from Urartu. Therefore, it follows that it was not Urartu but the North Syrian cities that played the crucial orientaling role in Greece.⁵ In addition, the contributions of Phrygia, Assyria,

2 There are approximately 79 examples known to date. From the Greek mainland there are 38 oriental and 9 Greek examples, all excavated at sanctuaries, plus 3 Greek and 1 oriental examples in museums that are attributed to Greece (a Greek example in Boston is the mate of an example from Olympia); Delos and Rhodes each have one oriental type, and 6 are from Italy, from tombs. Two aberrant examples were excavated at Olympia and 4 aberrant examples come from Salamis, Cyprus. From the Near East there are 8 sirens from Gordion and one example reported from Alishar, on the Araxes River. A total of 10 examples have been attributed to the Van area but all derive from dealers or private owners; one example has been attributed to Nimrud. Recently, the Munich art market had for sale a cauldron with siren attachments *in situ* of a type hitherto not encountered. For relevant bibliography see note 3, below.

3 Bibliography and discussions in detail concerning the origins of sirens and griffins are to be found in Muscarella, *Near Eastern Bronzes*, 109 f., 116; idem, “The Oriental Origin of Siren Cauldron Attachments,” *Hesperia* 31/4 (1962), 317–29; H.-V. Herrmann, *Die Kessel der orientalisierenden Zeit* (Berlin, 1966), 25 f., 50 f., 131 f.; idem, “Urartu und Griechenland,” *Jdl* 81 (1966), 79–141; idem, *Hellas*, 303 f., 306 f.; P. Amandry, *Gnomon* 41 (1969), 796 f.; V. Karageorghis, *Excavations in the Nekropolis of Salamis III* (Nicosia, 1973), 97 f.; P. Amandry, “L’Art ourartien et ses relations avec le monde grec,” *Proc. of the Xth Inter. Congress of Classical Arch.* (Ankara, 1978), 5 f.

4 See note 3 for references. U. Jantzen, *Griechische Greifenkessel* (Berlin, 1955), reported about 250 examples; G. M. A. Hanfmann, *Gnomon* 29 (1957), 241–46, added over 60 more; others continue to be excavated (e.g., *AA* 1978, 3, 396, fig. 15). Over 220 have been excavated on Greek soil, 24 from Italy, 5 from France, and one from Spain. One example was excavated at Susa, two are in the Ankara Museum, one in Izmir, and 2 gold examples have been attributed to the site of Ziwiye, in Iran.

5 Especially Muscarella, *The Oriental Origin*, and *Near Eastern Bronzes*; Herrmann, *Die Kessel*, and *Urartu und Griechenland*. See also R. S. Young, “A Bronze Bowl in Philadelphia,” *JNES* 26 (1967), 150; J. Muhly, “Homer and the Phoenicians,” *Berytus* 19 (1970), 49; I. J. Winter, “Phoenician and North Syrian Ivory Carving . . .,” *Iraq* 38 (1976), 14, 16f., 21; idem, “Carved Ivory Furniture Panels from Nimrud . . .,” *MMA Jour.* 11 (1976), 42; idem, *AJA* 80 (1976), 202; Amandry, *L’Art ourartien*, 5f. A few scholars still support an Urartian origin for sirens and griffins; S. Korti-Konti, “Orientalizing Bronze Work in Greece,” *Athens Annals of Archaeology* 4/2 (1971), 281f.; S. Salvadori, “An Urartian Bronze Strip in a Private Collection,” *East and West* 26, 1/2 (1976), 106; C. Burney, *The Ancient Near East* (Ithaca, 1977), 183; A. M. Bisi, “Éléments anatoliens dans les bronzes ouragiques de Sardaigne,” *Proc. of the Xth Inter. Congress of Classical Arch.* (Ankara, 1978), 356f.

and Iran have been better defined.⁶

This writer has long maintained that there are no recognizable Urartian objects or motifs on Greek soil, nor in the West in general, and that "Urartu seems, to my mind, to have played no recognizable role at all" in the transmission of oriental art and motifs to the West.⁷ H.-V. Herrmann has referred to the alleged presence of Urartian material in the West as an "archäologische Legende," and he notes "dass Urartu beim Export nach Griechenland keine nennenswerte Rolle gespielt zu haben scheint."⁸

The "Urartu-These" surfaced in force again in 1972 with the publication by U. Jantzen of the Egyptian and near eastern finds from the Greek sanctuary of Hera on the island of Samos. Jantzen claimed that twelve of the many near eastern bronze objects excavated over the years on Samos were Urartian.⁹ Almost all the reviewers of Jantzen's publication resolutely rejected the Urartian attribution of at least eleven of these objects.¹⁰ Indeed, only one of the bronzes was accepted by some of the reviewers as being of Urartian manufacture: a statuette of a horned male figure with outstretched hands (B1217). Herrmann, Börker-Klähn, Hanfmann, and Kyrieleis¹¹ all agreed that B1217 is Urartian, and only this writer expressed reservations, claiming that the attribution was "not proven," that "at best B1217 is 'Urartian?'," and that it could be Assyrian. Moreover, to Herrmann, not only is the Samian bronze B1217 the only example of an Urartian object from Samos, it is the only example of Urartian workmanship recovered to date in the Greek world.¹² This position, with the reservations about B1217, is one that I have accepted and maintained up to the present. But now new information allows us to modify this view slightly.

Jantzen published eight bronze bells all of which were attributed by him to the Caucasus.¹³ This view has been generally accepted, although a few writers have called attention to the wide

6 For Iran, with bibliography, see O. W. Muscarella, "The Archaeological Evidence for Relations Between Iran and Greece in the First Millennium B.C.," *JANES* 9 (1977), 31–48; for Phrygia and Assyria, see 32 and 47, n. 67; also Herrmann, *Hellas*, 306, 310f.

7 *Near Eastern Bronzes*, 122; see also *The Oriental Origin*, 325f.

8 *Urartu und Griechenland*, 80; *Hellas*, 396. Note also Amandry, *L'Art ourartien*, 7: "... on ne trouve dans le monde méditerranéen aucun objet qui soit indiscutablement d'origine ourartienne."

9 U. Jantzen, *Samos VIII, Ägyptische und orientalische Bronzen aus dem Heraion von Samos* (Bonn, 1972), 80f., pls. 76–79.

10 O. W. Muscarella, *AJA* 77 (1973), 237; H.-V. Herrmann, *Gnomon* 47 (1957), 399f.; J. Börker-Klähn, *OLZ* 70/2 (1975), 545; Amandry, *L'Art ourartien*, 4, 6; G. M. A. Hanfmann, in *Bi. Or.* 30, 3/4 (1973), 199, alone accepted Jantzen's attributions.

11 See note 10 and H. Kyrieleis, "Orientalische Bronzen aus Samos," *AA* 1969, 2, 166f., J. Börker-Klähn, "Verkannte neuassyrische Bronze-Statuetten," *Bagd. Mitt.* 6 (1973), 248f.

12 It is not quite clear just how certain Herrmann is about the Urartian origin of B1217, in *Urartu und Griechenland*, 126f. he said of it "das berechtigte Anwartschaft darauf hat, als urartäisches Werk zu gelten . . ."; and in *Gnomon* 47 (1975), 400, he states that it "bleibt als gesichertes urartäisches Importstück . . ."; but in *Hellas*, 306, he seems more hesitant, B1217 "mag eine vereinzelte Ausnahme sein," i.e., may be the only Urartian object known in the West. Amandry in *L'Art ourartien*, 6, also expressed reservations about the Urartian origin of this piece; however, he suggests that a bronze horse from Samos, B492, could be Urartian, a position I do not share.

13 *Samos VIII*, 81f., pls. 79, 80. A total of 20 bells were excavated on Samos, 12 of which are considered to be Greek made.

distribution of bells and suggested that the Samian bells could have come from several areas.¹⁴ One of the bells from Samos (B474) stands out from the rest (Figure 1): it has eight faceted sides with a double row of rectangular apertures separated by a raised horizontal ridge and with another ridge at the base; the top area consists of a heavy rosette moulding on which is a solid loop set on a low platform. At the time the bell was published two similar examples were available for study. One (Figure 2) is the octagonal bell with a single row of rectangular apertures and raised horizontal ridges, two at the base, one at the top, reported to have been found at Alishar on the Araxes River together with two other bells and a bull and siren cauldron attachment.¹⁵ The uncontrolled find, made by Kurds in 1859 in a rock chamber (a tomb?), precludes any objective information concerning the nature of the deposit, or whether all the objects were indeed found together. Nevertheless, the octagonal bell is inscribed with the name of the Urartian king Argishti, *Argi-iš-ti-i ú-ri-iš-ḫi* 'From the arsenal of Argishti' (whether the first or second is not certain and need not concern us here), and the bull attachment claimed as part of the find is certainly of Urartian manufacture. Further, one of the other bells, uninscribed (Figure 3), is also octagonal, although with only two rectangular apertures, and it is clearly related in form to the Argishti bell. But apparently because the third bell seems to be a typical Caucasian type (Figure 4), and because the other bells are fenestrated, a feature which is considered to be Caucasian,¹⁶ and because Alishar is situated on the border of Urartu, in Transcaucasia, scholars failed to identify the faceted bells as Urartian. In any event, and for whatever reasons, the Alishar Argishti bell was not cited by those who studied the Samos bells.

The second bell of concern to us was excavated at the Urartian site of Karmir Blur and was published in 1955 (Figure 5).¹⁷ It is octagonal and has a single row of rectangular apertures and raised horizontal ridges, two at the base and one below the top; in fact, it seems to be a mate to the Alishar example, except that it is uninscribed. This bell was also ignored by those seeking parallels for the Samos bells, and B474, along with the other seven examples published by Jantzen, was assigned to the Caucasus.¹⁸

Recently, new information has appeared that now allows us to conclude without reservation that there is a distinguishable Urartian bell type, a type that includes the Alishar and Karmir Blur examples and the bell from Samos, B474. In 1977 Oktay Belli of Istanbul University published

14 Herrmann, *Hellas*, 311, and *Gnomon* 47 (1975), 400; Börker-Klähn, *OLZ* 70 (1975), 545; Muscarella, *AJA* 77 (1973), 237, and *JANES* 9 (1977), 39f., n. 32, for further references; H. Möbius, "Kaukasisches Glocken in Samos," *Marburger Studien* (Darmstadt, 1938), 156f. Even J. Bouzek accepted the Samos bells as Caucasian, "Macedonian Bronzes . . .," *Památky archeologické* 65 (1974), 305, 309, 323, 333, 335; idem, *Graeco-Macedonian Bronzes* (Prague, 1973), 84, 87, 89, fig. 25: no. 4 is B474 (*infra*), but it is an inaccurate drawing.

15 See P. Calmeyer, "Glocke," in *Reallexikon der Assyriologie* (1969), 3: 429f., fig. 5; B. B. Piotrovskii, *Urartu: The Kingdom of Van and Its Art* (London, 1967), 82f., figs. 58, 59.

16 Of course, the Caucasian apertures are typically triangular in shape, not rectangular: see Möbius, *Kaukasisches Glocken*, 159f., pl. 68:4, 5-11.

17 B. B. Piotrovskii, *Karmir Blur* 3 (Leningrad, 1955), 46, fig. 35; idem, *Karmir Blur* (Leningrad, n.d.), pls. 56, 58.

18 Muscarella, *AJA* 77 (1973), 237, mentioned Urartu along with other areas as possible sources for the Samos bells, but neither the Alishar nor the Karmir Blur bells were cited. P. R. S. Moorey, *A Catalogue of the Ancient Persian Bronzes in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1971), 138, mentioned both Urartu and the Caucasus as possible sources for the Samos bells—but he could not have had B474 in mind as it had not yet been published.

19 Oktay Belli, "Van Bolge Müzesindeki Çivi Yazılı Urartu Tunç Eserleri," *Anadolu* 4-5 (1976-77), 198f., fig. 8, said to come from Patnos; fig. 9 has the Menua inscription; fig. 10 has the Argishti inscription.

an article on Urartian horse equipment¹⁹; he included three bells, all derived from illicit digging in eastern Turkey and presently in the Van Museum. Two of these bells, said to come from near Dizgin Kale, are inscribed, one with the name Argishti, *Ar-gi-iš-ti-i ú-ri-iš-ḫi* (Figure 6), the other with that of Menua (ca. 805–786 B.C.), the father of Argishti I (Figure 7); the third, uninscribed, is said to come from Patnos (Figure 8). All three are octagonal with a single row of rectangular apertures and raised horizontal ridges, at the base and top. And all have another characteristic feature—one shared by the Alishar and Karmir Blur bells (and apparently by B474), as well as by the next bells to be discussed—namely, that the suspension cross bar that held the clapper, usually made of iron, was inserted through holes at the top below the loop and its two ends project slightly.

Finally, and here the best comes last, at least two other bells available for study indicate beyond doubt that Samos B474 is of Urartian origin. In 1974 the Ashmolean Museum acquired on the art market a bronze bell (Figure 9)²⁰ that is octagonal and has a double row of rectangular apertures separated by a raised ridge and another at the base, and a heavy rosette moulding at the top surmounted by a solid loop set on a double ring platform; the photograph does not show the holes for the suspension bar, but they surely are there. The bell has the same Menua inscription as that on the Van bell just mentioned. Although narrower in width, it obviously shares all the features of B474 from Samos.

The second bell of interest here is one that was recently donated to the Metropolitan Museum of Art by Nathaniel Spear, Jr. (Figures 10, 11).²¹ This bell is also octagonal with a double row of apertures and ridges in the appropriate places, and it too has a heavy rosette moulding at the top surmounted by a solid loop set on a low platform; the iron clapper is now missing but the iron suspension bar is extant (Figure 11). And it is inscribed with the name of Argishti, in the very same manner as on the Alishar and Van bells. The Metropolitan Museum bell is clearly of the same type as the Ashmolean bell, but more significantly, in all features, except for the inscription and its size—it is 7 millimeters shorter and ca. 2 to 3 millimeters wider—it is a duplicate of B474 from Samos.

Given the readily identifiable characteristics of the Urartian bronze bells under review here, it should be relatively easy to recognize other examples, or adaptations, in the West—if they exist—and, indeed, at least one adaptation of an Urartian bell excavated on Greek soil exists. Spear, who published the Metropolitan Museum bell, as well as those from Alishar,²² perceptively called attention to their resemblance in all essential details to a small bronze bell from Pherae in Thessaly, Greece (Figure 12). This bell has seven facets, a row of rectangular apertures, a raised ridge at the base, a heavy undecorated moulding at the top surmounted by a solid loop set on a low platform, and the ends of the suspension bar project from its holes.²³ To my mind the Pherae bell is a copy of an Urartian bell, rather than an import. If so, it is at present the first certain example of a local Greek copy of an Urartian work. Perhaps it might be rash to conclude that the Pherae bell is directly dependent on Samos B474, but it is relevant in this context to note that there were extensive contacts between Macedonia and Thessaly and Samos in the eighth and seventh centuries

20 P. R. S. Moorey, *Ancient Iran* (Ashmolean Museum, 1975), 25, pl. XIV; its height is 8.5 cm. Moorey claims the bell came from "Western Iran," but this attribution comes from a dealer and therefore has no archaeological value.

21 N. Spear, Jr., *A Treasury of Archaeological Bells* (New York, 1978), 111f., figs. 121, 122; height 8.7 cm.

22 *Treasury*, 110f., figs. 118–20.

23 *Treasury*, 158f., fig. 185; height 5.1 cm. Holly Pittman called my attention to the Pherae bell.

B.C., as we know from the important research of J. Bouzek.²⁴ Thus it is archaeologically acceptable to posit that the Pherae bell was made as a result of contact with Samos, reinforcing Bouzek's conclusions. At the same time, Bouzek believes that there is good evidence for suggesting that there was contact between Macedonia and the Caucasus,²⁵ which means that we must equally allow for a more direct transmission.

At this point in our discussion two questions arise: How does the presence of an Urartian bell on Samos affect the thesis that there are no examples of Urartian art in the West? How does the recognition that the Pherae bell is adapted from an Urartian prototype affect the conclusion that Urartu played no recognizable role in the formation of the Greek orientalizing taste and style?

Concerning the first question, it is of course obvious that the position must be modified to include B474; at least one Urartian object reached the West—or to those who accept the statuette B1217 from Samos as Urartian, there are now two objects. But one bell (and one putative statuette) does not make “influence,” and I believe it would be irresponsible to refer to Urartian cultural contacts with the West in any manner other than as the evidence permits. At present the evidence is minimal. Reacting to Jantzen's strong statement with regard to the alleged quantity of Urartian art on Samos, Herrmann said that “—die von J. aufgestellte Behauptung das sich in Samos ‘das urartäische Kunsthandwerk besonders deutlich dokumentiere’ (80), ist auf jeden Falle unhaltbar.”²⁶ I see no reason to modify this conclusion. Further, the conclusion that no Urartian work of art or motif has yet been recognized on mainland Greece at any important sanctuary—Athens, Olympia, Delphia, Perachora, Argos, Sparta, Ptoion, Tegea, Ithaca, etc.—still obtains and is still significant.

With regard to the second question, I believe that here too a conservative, cautionary posture should be maintained. Because there exists on Greek soil one bell that was manufactured with an Urartian model in mind does not in any meaningful way indicate that Urartu can now be included among those near eastern cultures, the products of which stimulated Greek artists and artisans.²⁷ Yet the Pherae bell with its “Urartianizing” features exists, albeit in an area north of the major Greek centers, and as such it deserves to be cited as an example—the sole example I believe—of a Greek object copied from an Urartian model.

24 *Macedonian Bronzes*, 305, 317f., 335, figs. 3–6.

25 *Ibid.*, 328f., 335. Note that Bouzek does not mention the Pherae bell; on p. 309 he says that “Genuine Caucasian bells are only known from Samos, but related pieces come from Pherai . . .” In *Graeco-Macedonian Bronzes* he cited B474 from Samos as Caucasian. Guenter Kopcke called my attention to Bouzek's discussion of Macedonian-Samos connections.

26 *Gnomon* 47 (1975), 400. Further, given the evidence presently available, I see no need to alter previously expressed conclusions that neither Urartian nor Iranian goods travelled across Anatolia to the West; Muscarella, *The Archaeological Evidence*, 45f., nn. 62, 63.

27 Amandry, *L'Art ourartien*, 7, stated it neatly: “Même si quelques produits des ateliers de la région de Van sont parvenus en terre grecque, on ne décèle, ni dans l'art grec du 8^e siècle, ni dans le premier art grec orientalisant—celui des styles protocorinthien et protoattique—aucun trait qui soit ourartien.”

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Oktay Belli, V. Lukonin, B. B. Piotrovskii, B. Philippaki, U. Jantzen, P. R. S. Moorey, and Nathaniel Spear, Jr., for their courteous and prompt cooperation and their permission to publish the bells from the Van Museum, Alishar, Karmir Blur, Pherae, Samos, and the Ashmolean Museum.



Figure 1: Bell from Samos, B474



Figure 2: Bell said to come from
Alishar, Argisht1; Hermitage Museum



Figure 3: Bell said to come from Alishar;
Hermitage Museum



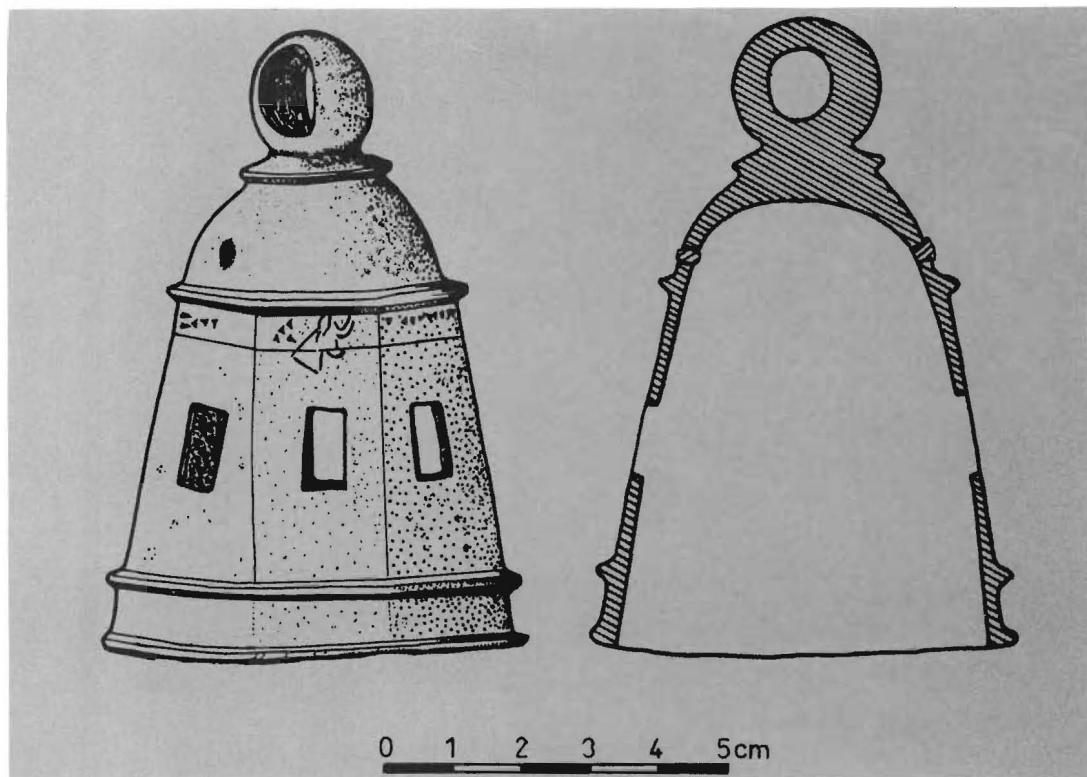
Figure 4: Bell said to come from
Alishar; Hermitage Museum



Figure 5: Bell from Karmir Blur



Figure 6: Bell in Van Museum, Argishti



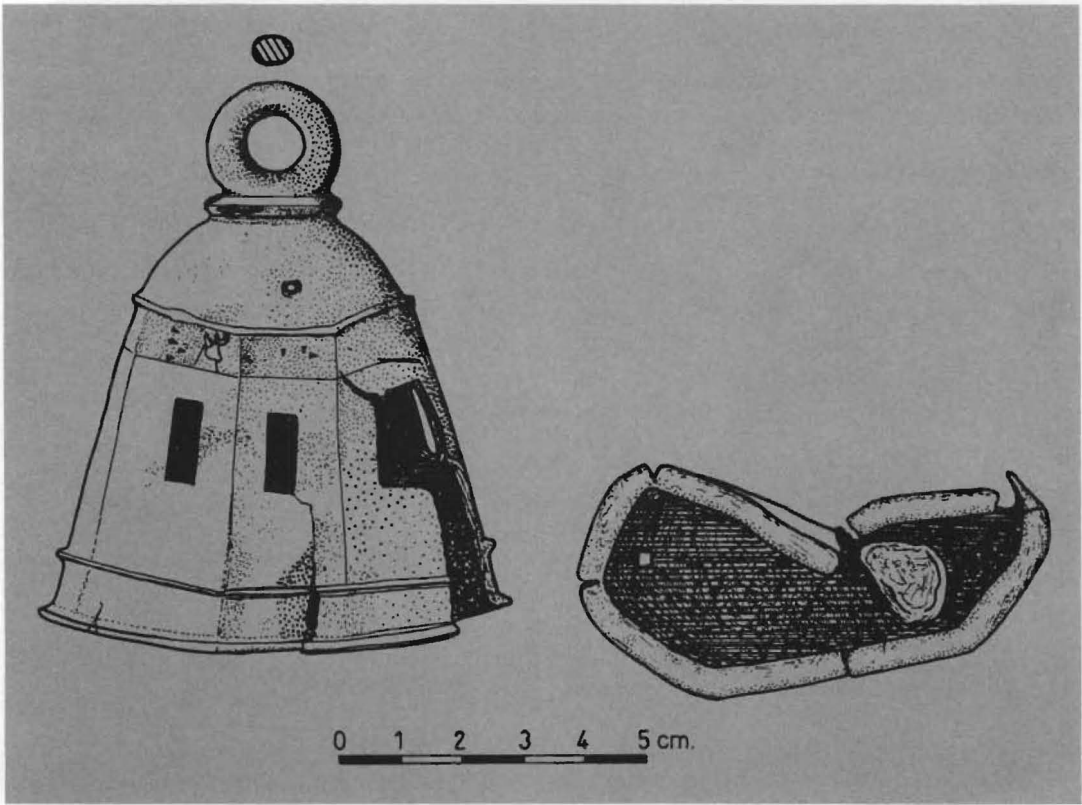


Figure 7: Bell in Van Museum, Menua

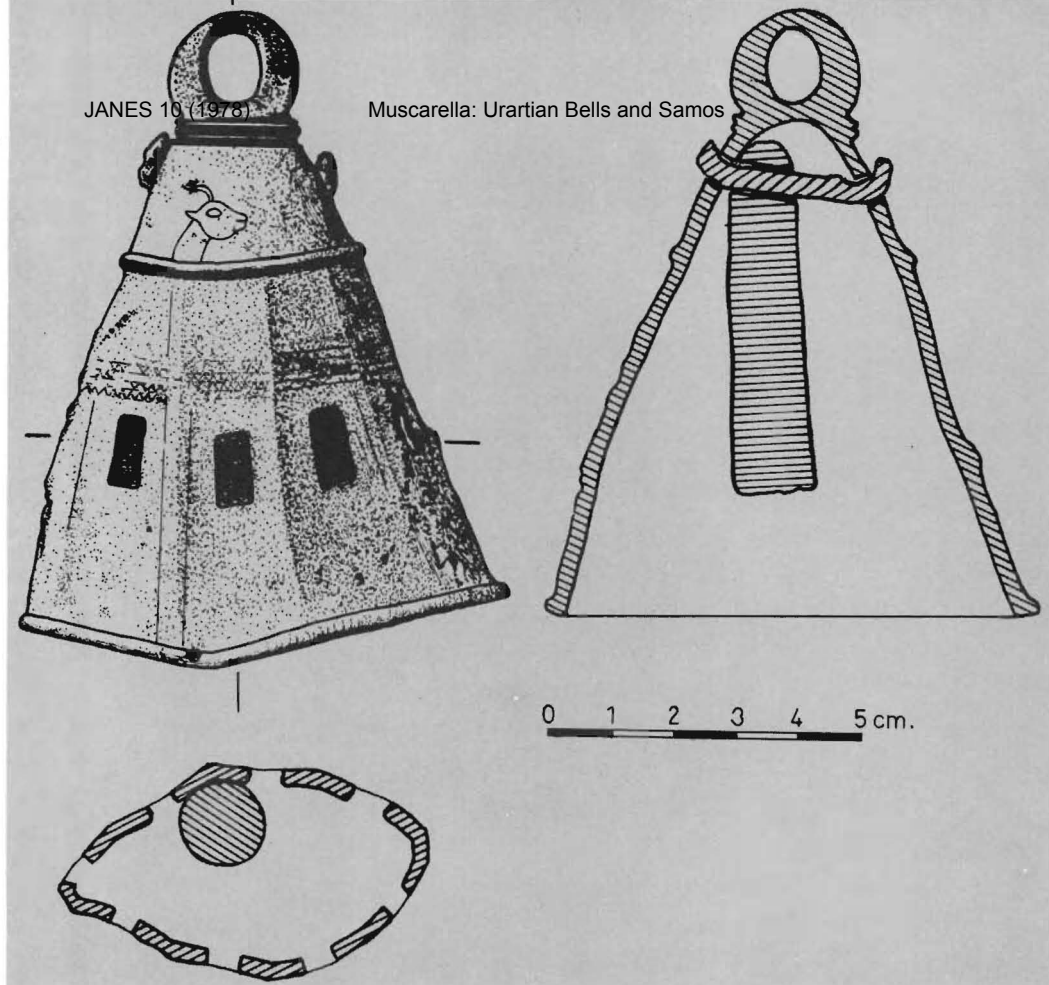


Figure 8: Bell in Van Museum
8b
8a



Figure 9: Bell in Ashmolean Museum, 1974.357,
Courtesy of Visitors of the Ashmolean Museum.



Figure 10: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1977.186; gift of Nathaniel Spear, Jr. (four views)





Figure 11: MMA 1977.186, bottom view.



Figure 12: Bell from Pherae, Thessaly; Athens National Museum