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The metalwork of the Carchemish region and the development of grave repertories during the third millennium BC

Graham Philip

Introduction

A considerable quantity of metalwork is now documented from 3rd millennium BC sites in the Carchemish region. Much of this originates in burial contexts making it clear that metal artefacts played an important role in the marking of status in mortuary contexts. As the material was probably manufactured in the area, it ought to reflect local patterns of demand, and in recent years our knowledge has increased to the point at which it should be possible to determine whether there existed styles and practices which were distinctive to the Carchemish region, or whether customs documented there simply reflect a localised version of developments in the Middle East generally.

However, this investigation can also be set in a wider framework. A growing emphasis upon the use of metal artefacts within grave repertories is documented in many parts of the east Mediterranean and Middle East during the third millennium BC (Moorey 1994, 258–259; Muhly 1985, 123–134). The key question is, however, to what extent does this represent a single unified phenomenon? If the data indicates a similarity of artefact types and modes of use in contemporary societies across the Middle East, this would suggest a broad inter-regional acceptance both of metalwork as a suitable material for status marking, and of particular modes of use. Such a phenomenon would have significant implications for the nature, scale and intensity of inter-regional communication, the development of shared elite ideologies and so on. On the other hand, the evidence might indicate that there existed significant inter-regional differences in the typology, chronology and contextual deployment of metalwork. In this case, we would have to think in terms of the gradual incorporation of metal artefacts within a series of divergent, local, socio-political and ideological schemes. Furthermore, under such circumstances, any evidence for growing consistency of practice between regions over time would require a specific explanation.

There is now a sufficiently large body of comparative material from sites in Southern Mesopotamia, south-east Anatolia, and the Levant to permit this question to be addressed, at least in a provisional manner. As an area which can now offer a large sample of metalwork covering most of 3rd millennium BC, the Carchemish region represents a good starting point for such an investigation. This paper therefore seeks to provide a comparative perspective on the metalwork of the Carchemish region, by reviewing the presence and/or absence of particular metal-types in different regions, and considering the contexts within which different types were deployed. However, before we consider the extent to which there existed styles and practices which were distinctive to the Carchemish region during the 3rd millennium BC, we need to review the evidence for the role of metalwork in the preceding 4th millennium BC.

The evidence from the fourth millennium BC

The Nahal Mishmar hoard from Chalcolithic Palestine (Bar-Adon 1980), which most scholars would assign to the earlier part of the 4th millennium BC (Levy and Burton 2001, 1233) provides important evidence. When this group, and the related material from contemporary settlements in the Southern Levant (Shalev and Northover 1993), is considered along with the impressive hoard of late 4th millennium metalwork from Arslantepe VIA (Caneva *et al.* 1985; Palmieri 1981, 110–111), it becomes clear that the rarity of metal artefacts in the archaeological record of the 4th millennium does not imply that a sophisticated metal industry did not exist at that point. For example, the presence of a major administrative complex at Arslantepe in period VII, dated to the first half of the 4th millennium BC (Frangipane 2002, 124–126), is indicative of the level of sophistication attained by late Chalcolithic societies. However, in the absence of a significant emphasis on metalwork as a grave item during the 4th millennium BC, we are dependent upon occasional hoards to provide an indication of the kinds of material which were in circulation.

Moreover, the distinctive copper-arsenic-antimony ternary alloy used in the manufacture of the Nahal Mishmar hoard is likely to have originated in the ore deposits of eastern Anatolia (Tadmor *et al.* 1995), as did the copper worked at Tell esh-Shuna in Jordan in the later 4th millennium (Rehren *et al.* 1997), and the various silver artefacts which occur in 4th millennium graves at Byblos and less frequently at other sites (Philip and Rehren 1996; Philip 2002, 219–220; Prag 1978). In light of the foregoing, the quantities of metal available in Uruk-period South Mesopotamia (Moorey 1994, 257), and the strength of Uruk contacts with the north-west, it appears likely that metal from Anatolian sources was being shipped around western Asia in significant quantities during the 4th millennium. This is despite its relative infrequency in the archaeological record.

On the whole, significant archaeological evidence for metalwork is available only once metal artefacts start to play a significant role in the mortuary record. Graves from Period I at Susa, which date somewhere around the transition between the 5th and 4th millennia (Tallon 1987, 311–312, fig. 49), have produced relatively large numbers of copper artefacts, including flat axes, mirrors and pins, providing a precocious instance of this practice. The contrast between the data from Susa and the much poorer evidence for metalwork from neighbouring Late Ubaid South Mesopotamia was highlighted by Moorey (1994, 256), and suggests that metal artefacts were very differently implicated in the social practices of the two regions at this point.

To summarize, the evidence suggests that during the 4th millennium BC, sophisticated metal industries existed in many regions, supplied by the long-range transport of metal. However, there were also marked differences in the ways in which metal artefacts were incorporated within local ideologies and social practices. This becomes all the more clear when we consider the evidence from the 3rd millennium BC.

Metalwork of the earlier third millennium BC

The Carchemish region

Only recently, as a result of the excavation of an extensive range of material from the Birecik Dam Cemetery, located some 25 km north of Carchemish, has it become possible to characterise the metalwork of the region in the early 3rd millennium BC (Squadrone, this volume). The most striking aspect of the early 3rd millennium (i.e. immediately 'post-Uruk') metalwork is simply the sheer quantity of material present in the graves. According to Squadrone the cemetery can be roughly divided into an earlier and later phase. The metal types most generally associated with the early phase are: pins with either conical, grooved, knobbed or zoomorphic heads and decorated shafts (Squadrone, this volume, see Figs 13.1, 13.2) cylindrical pendants, animal figurines (see Fig. 13.5), flat axes, and tripartite spear heads (see Fig. 13.6). These artefacts, while certainly stylish in appearance, were relatively simple in technical terms. Production required nothing more than lidded moulds, the castings from which could be finished by hammer-working.

The emphasis upon weapons in the form of axes and spearheads is interesting. Both forms employed considerably more metal than more ornamental artefacts such as pins or pendants

and would have been costly to remove from circulation through interment. Thus their presence in graves presumably indicates that the equation of weaponry with high status had already been accepted within local societies by this point.

Squadrone (this volume) observes that while this material has parallels north of the Taurus, it is especially at home within an area running from Carchemish northwards to Hassek Höyük. While many of the metal types discussed by Squadrone have good parallels in the cist graves from Carchemish (*Carchemish* III, 221–222, pl. 60a, 61c), of particular interest are the parallels with material from the late 4th millennium hoard ascribed to Arslantepe period VIA (Palmieri 1981, 109–110, figs 3, 4) and a richly furnished early 3rd millennium grave belonging early in period VIB (Frangipane *et al.* 2001). The grave goods in this tomb suggest a particular focus upon metal weapons and ornaments. The former included tripartite spearheads and several elaborate tanged daggers with broad medial zone, which were in some cases decorated using a silver-copper alloy. The range of ornaments encompassed a number of pins, including forms with multiple spiral-heads, bracelets, hair-rings, head bands and a few metal vessels. This tomb currently represents the earliest documented instance of the conspicuous consumption of metal artefacts in a funerary context from the region.

One point of note is that most of the material from the Arslantepe grave was not worn on the body (Frangipane *et al.* 2001, 109, fig. 6), but was placed in the grave, almost in the manner of a hoard. This may indicate that in elite burial contexts metalwork was not just associated with the individual deceased, but was being deployed within social strategies organised around the mortuary event and which emphasised the visible 'consumption' of quantities of a valuable material. It is also interesting to note that the axe and spearhead, both of which were well represented in the Carchemish area (Squadrone, this volume), were to appear regularly in Early Dynastic Period representational art (Rehm 2003, 14–15).

Comparison with the evidence from Mesopotamia

Thus far Mesopotamia has produced relatively little evidence from the early 3rd millennium BC that appears closely comparable to that from the Carchemish region. For example, while 19% of the 330 graves from the Jamdat Nasr period cemetery at Ur produced metalwork, this consisted of a small number of tools, some ornaments such as pins and a mirror, and a large number of metal vessels, the majority of which were made of lead; there were no weapons (Woolley 1955, 104–123). The evidence from Ur is broadly confirmed by the metalwork from contemporary Tello, and Early Dynastic I graves from the Diyala (Delougaz *et al.* 1967, 134–142, table 1; Moorey 1994, 258) which consists mainly of copper pins, mirrors, and sheet metal vessels, and includes only the occasional flat axe or knife blade. A similar emphasis upon lead vessels is documented at Susa during the Uruk period (Tallon 1987, 318), suggesting the adoption there of practices from Uruk Mesopotamia. Thus both the forms and the actual metals employed in Mesopotamian graves of the early 3rd millennium differed from those currently documented in the north. Neither the focus upon vessels, nor the extensive use of lead find ready parallels in the Carchemish region.

This should come as no surprise, however. Winter (1999, 229) has pointed out that such vessels may have served quite specific roles in connection with performances undertaken as part of the funerary rites. Seen in that light, the emphasis upon lead vessels in Southern Mesopotamia and Susa (Moorey 1994, 294; Tallon 1987, 318) should be seen as indicating the spatial extent of the particular funerary beliefs and ritual actions within which they played a role. The contrast between the role of metal vessels in southern funerary assemblages, and the growing emphasis upon a range of weapons and personal ornaments in the north, should probably be seen as instances of the different ways in which metalwork could be utilised according to the requirements of particular cultural schemes.

It is not yet clear whether the apparent absence of rich 4th millennium graves from Mesopotamia results from a lack of fieldwork or provides an accurate reflection of the situation. However, it is possible that Uruk period bureaucratic elites may have expressed status through means other than the conspicuous consumption of goods on burial. Equally, it is possible that the growing power of institutions was such that they were able to exercise tight control over the circulation of valuable metal within the local economy and were thus able to restrict its 'leakage' out of the system through deposition in graves.

The repertory of flat axes, spears, square-

section chisels, tanged leaf-shaped knife blades and awls recovered from two 'hoards' at Tell Gubba VII in the Hamrin (Ii 1989, fig. 12, pls 46–48) might be seen as indicative of the kinds of metalwork which were in circulation in Mesopotamia by the early 3rd millennium, and which were not entering the grave record to any great extent. Admittedly, contemporary graves from Kheit Qasim (Forest 1983, 138) produced a combination of tools and some weapons – chisels, knives, flat axes – although weapons were not common within this cemetery. However, it is not clear how far a relatively peripheral zone like the Hamrin can be considered to be representative of South Mesopotamia as a whole.

The evidence from North Mesopotamia remains limited at present, and is thus difficult to assess, but there is little to suggest the presence there of significant concentrations of metalwork in early 3rd millennium graves (Bolt and Green 2003). This is consistent with the suggestion that societies in the Ninevite V zone were organized around a system of staple, rather than wealth finance (Schwartz 1994). It therefore points to a situation in which modes of expression documented in North Mesopotamia differed from those predominant in both South Mesopotamia and the Euphrates Valley.

To date, neither western Syria, the Southern Levant, or Cyprus, have yet produced evidence for the large-scale use of metalwork in burial contexts of early 3rd millennium date (Philip 1989; 188–197; 1991; Weinstein-Balthazar 1990). That being the case, it is likely that north-west Syria and south-east Anatolia played a key role in the early development of the use of metalwork as a status indicator in grave contexts. The presence of a hoard of high quality metalwork in level VIA at Arslantepe suggests that the concept of such items as prestige objects was well established in the Malatya area before the end of the 4th millennium BC, although it may not, at that point, have been specifically associated with mortuary behaviour.

On present evidence it appears that in the earlier 3rd millennium:

1) the range of material present at sites in the Carchemish region was distinct from that appearing in contemporary graves in Mesopotamia;
2) the pattern of metal artefact use documented in the Carchemish region represents a genuine local development, which draws upon forms present in the area in the late 4th millennium; and
3) the equation between the conspicuous consumption of metalwork in graves and the marking of status had become accepted in the Carchemish region and areas further to the north by *c.* 3000 BC and so, on present evidence at least, rather earlier than was to be the case in South Mesopotamia.

But why should this have been the case? One explanation would see this as a largely endogenous development, in that the Carchemish region was located relatively close to major copper sources (Palmieri *et al.* 1993). Local communities would presumably have had a relatively good awareness of, and access to, metal. Thus the very accessibility of metals may have contributed to rendering these more suitable for conspicuous deployment than some other potential materials. As the region lay on the vital route to centres of demand in Mesopotamia and the Levant, we might suspect that local perceptions as to the 'valuable' nature of metalwork would have been influenced by the extent of that demand, and the efforts which southern communities were prepared to make to obtain supplies.

However, Frangipane *et al.* (2001) suggest a rather different explanation. Noting the parallels between the metal (and other) items from the Arslantepe VIB tomb and material from the Transcaucasia region, they suggest that the presence of this rich burial indicates an important change in the manner in which power was exercised at the site. They posit a shift from a system where the exercise of power was based around administrative control of the staple economy in the 4th millennium BC, to a system, influenced by the presence of population groups from the east, for whom the consumption of valuable artefacts (and the sacrifice of human beings), formed a key element in the marking of individual status.

Whatever the specific reasons for this change, the kind of metalwork first documented at Arslantepe in the late 4th millennium and presumably, the associated practices, appear to have provided the essential ideas and the material resources for the developments documented in the Euphrates Valley during the earlier 3rd millennium.

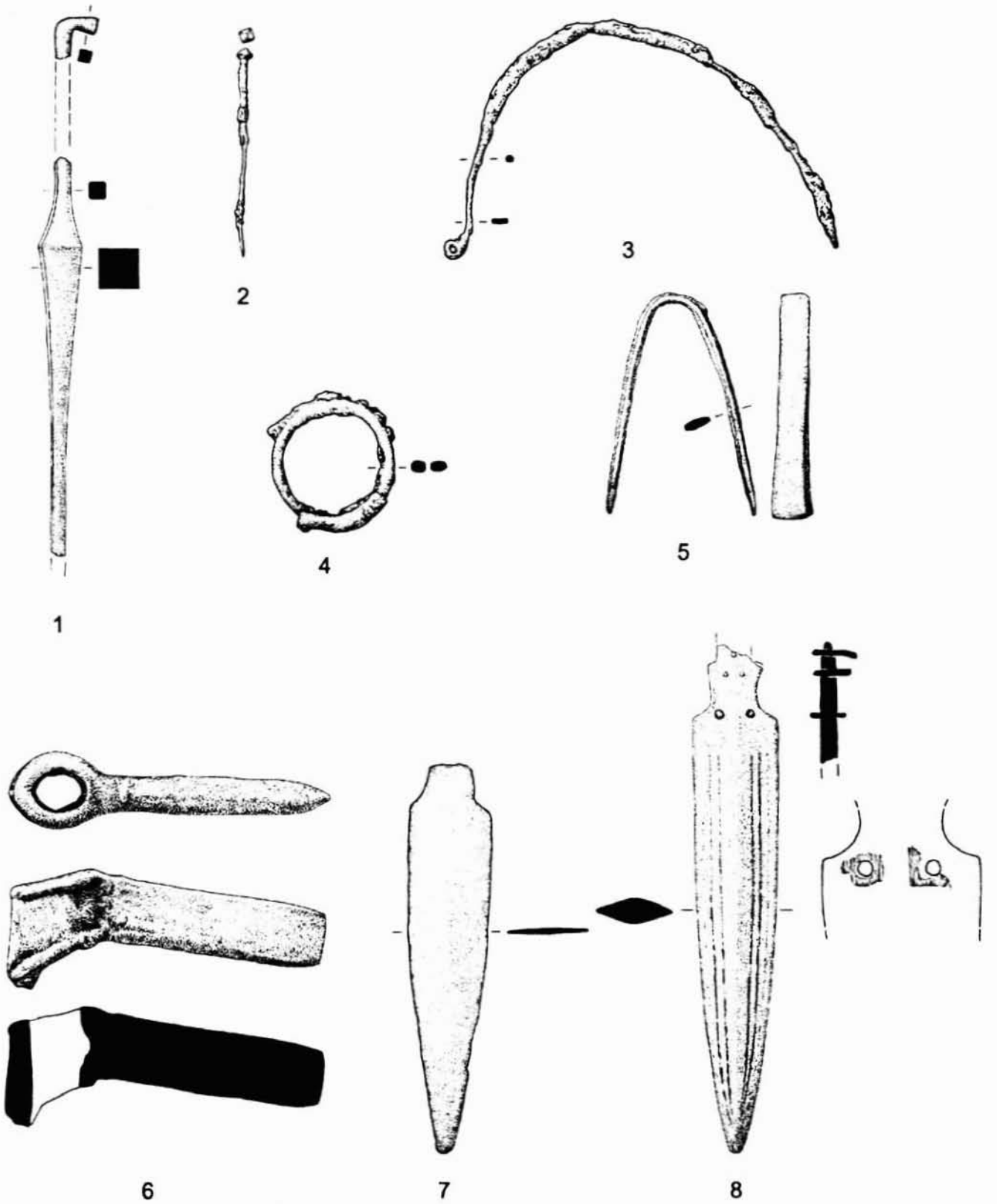

Fig. 12.1. Specimen metalwork from Jerablus Tahtani tombs (not to scale). 1) spearhead JT 363, T. 302, L. 143 mm; 2) pin JT 2288, T. 1687, L. 150 mm; 3) torque JT 2954, T. 2618, L. 173 mm; 4) bracelet JT 2953, T. 2618, Diam. 50 mm; 5) tweezers JT 654, T. 302, L. 80 mm; 6) axe JT 281, T. 302, L. 115 mm; 7) dagger blade JT 449, T. 302, L. 153 mm; 8) dagger blade JT 263, T. 302, L. 208 mm

Metalwork of the later third millennium BC

The Carchemish region

Squadrone (this volume) suggests that while some forms continue from the earlier period, the later graves in the Birecik Dam Cemetery are characterised by a rather different set of metal artefacts of which the following stand out: bracelets, torques, and toggle pins in the ornament category and poker butt (i.e. simple bipartite) spear heads which become increasingly common among the weapons. One feature noted at this point is the appearance of spearheads with a bent tang (Fig. 12.1, see Philip 1989, types 5 and 8). This is best understood as an evolution of the straight tang, and represents a particular mode of hafting which was widely adopted in parts of Anatolia, Cyprus and the coastal and Southern Levant during the later 3rd millennium BC. It has not, however, been much reported from Mesopotamia and so is best seen as an element of a northern metalworking industry. Many of these forms are also characteristic of the later 3rd millennium graves at Jerablus Tahtani.

Ornaments

The most numerous class of artefacts is toggle-pins, of which the form with hemispherical head is particularly frequent (Fig. 12.1.2). The graves from Jerablus Tahtani (and other sites, see Klein 1992, 256) provide many instances of toggle-pins positioned in the region of the neck or shoulder where they presumably functioned to fasten a shroud. Also increasingly common at this point are metal torques with curled ends (Fig. 12.1.3). A number of examples have been reported from the Birecik Dam Cemetery (Squadrone, this volume), which suggests that the type begins some time before the middle of the 3rd millennium, while examples in silver are documented at Jerablus Tahtani, at the neck of a female burial in a rich EB IV grave at Tell Umm el-Marra (Schwartz *et al.* 2003, 333, fig. 17), Tell Selenkahiye (van Loon 1968, 27), and Tell Banat Tomb 9 (Porter 2002, 21). Copper instances appear at Jerablus Tahtani, in late 3rd millennium graves at Tell Bi'a (Strommenger and Kohlmeyer 1998, 12, taf. 20.8, and 31, taf. 36.6), and from 'Hammam' (Woolley 1914, 91, pl. 21c). These are sufficiently common in the Carchemish area to be seen as a characteristic feature of local regional metalworking traditions. Graves from the region have also produced a significant number of metal bracelets (Fig. 12.1.4). These appear in a range of sizes suggesting that some were designed for use in child burials. Also present are spiral ear-rings, often made in silver.

Another innovation of the later 3rd millennium is the appearance of small tweezers made from a single piece of copper-alloy folded into simple U-shape (Fig. 12.1.5). In addition to an example from Jerablus Tahtani Tomb 302, instances are documented at several EB IV tombs in the Euphrates Valley (Porter 1995, 23, table 1, fig. 7.A. 386; Orthmann 1981, 57, pl. 71.9). Tweezers appear to have been restricted to high-status burials and almost certainly represent personal grooming equipment. The appearance of similar tweezers in late 3rd millennium graves on both Crete and Cyprus (Branigan 1974, 32; Catling 1964, 228; Weinstein-Balthazar 1990, 384) is probably best understood in the context of the appropriation of elements of Syrian elite material culture by societies in the east Mediterranean basin.

Weapons

Taking the material from Jerablus as an example, the first point to note is that the rich Tomb 302 contains the most striking artefacts. Flat axes have now been replaced by shaft hole forms (Fig. 12.1.6). This is more than just a stylistic change as it reflects a shift from an artefact which could function as either a tool or a weapon, to a form that was designed purely for fighting, and which was produced using a particular technology, the two-piece mould. It is probably no coincidence that it is around the middle of the 3rd millennium that the axe became a major element in elite male burials across the Middle East, with increasingly more elaborate forms being developed until its final disappearance late in the Middle Bronze Age (Philip 1995).

In contrast, the large tripartite spearheads are superseded by simple square-sectioned examples, often secured using a hooked-tang (Fig. 12.1.1). The latter were probably easier to produce, and their simplicity may reflect a relative decline in their status value, perhaps concomitant with the growing elaboration of the axe. Daggers occur, but these mainly consist of simple small riveted blades (Fig. 12.1.7). However, the presence of a dagger blade bearing ribbed decoration (Fig.

12.1.8) which has a good parallel at Umm el-Marra (Schwartz *et al.* 2003, 334, fig. 21) appears to foreshadow developments generally seen as typical of the Middle Bronze Age. Like the axes, the production of such daggers also required two-piece moulds, a technical innovation which allowed the consistent output of relatively elaborate forms, while offering the potential for large scale production. This situation speaks of a developing integration between artefact style, artefact symbolism and artefact production.

On present evidence, a similar range of material occurs within an area running from Tell Mardikh eastwards to Mari on the Euphrates and northwards along both banks of the river towards Carchemish. That said, no torques have yet been reported from Mari (Jean-Marie 1999, 6, 9–10). It is interesting to note that a significant part of the growing quantity of metalwork appearing in mid–late 3rd millennium grave contexts consists of dress ornaments, high visibility items designed to be worn on the person in a conspicuous manner – torques, pins, bracelets etc. Tweezers too with their association with personal grooming might also be regarded as a component of 'the appropriate presentation of the self'. This situation is made all the more interesting by the limited range of forms taken. In essence, by the later 3rd millennium a stereotyped range of metal artefacts had become accepted over a large part of north-west Syria, as fulfilling expectations regarding the appropriate representation of the individual in funerary contexts.

Comparison with the evidence from Mesopotamia

The Mesopotamian material, as exemplified by the Royal Cemetery at Ur, demonstrates a number of differences from that described above. In the graves of the Early Dynastic period (Pollock 1985, 168–188) bracelets are rare, torques absent, and while toggle-pins are numerous, most conform to the type with a globular head, with versions with both a straight and bent shaft common (Woolley 1934, Types 1 and 7). While bracelets are a little more frequent in graves of the Akkadian period, torques continue to be absent, while toggle-pins with a hemispherical head, the dominant form in north-west Syria, remain infrequent (Pollock 1985, 231). In contrast to the situation in the Euphrates Valley, metal vessels are common (Müller-Karpe 1993). Thus, while there exist broad parallels between the repertories of personal ornaments occurring in Mesopotamia and Euphrates valley, there are many specific differences.

The mortuary evidence for weapons in grave contexts from Southern Mesopotamia has been summarized by Moorey (1994, 258–259), and more recently by Rehm (2003). It is clear from these studies that with the exception of the 'cart burials' from Kish there is very limited evidence for the large-scale inclusion of weapons in graves before ED III. Both the Kish graves and the Royal Cemetery at Ur produced weapons in larger numbers and more elaborate styles than occur in earlier tombs. These include shaft-hole axes and high quality daggers as well as a significant quantity of tools, copper vessels and zoomorphic rein rings. While this material echoes that occurring in the contemporary Euphrates Valley, numerous differences in detail remain. As far as weapons are concerned, for example, the majority of the socketed axes from Ur conform to Woolley's Type A3 with a lobed blade, and are thus distinct from the forms characteristic of north-west Syria (Philip 1989, 63–64).

Taking the evidence of ornaments, vessels and weapons together, we can make the following observations:

1) the practice of depositing metalwork in graves appears to have had a rather greater antiquity in north-western Syria than in Mesopotamia;
2) there are significant differences in the usage of metalwork in grave contexts in the two regions in the earlier 3rd millennium;
3) by the middle of the 3rd millennium the previously distinctive metalwork of the Carchemish area had become subsumed within a fairly homogeneous range of metal types which had come to dominate the funerary assemblages of a large part of north-west Syria and the Euphrates Valley; and
4) there is evidence to suggest a degree of convergence between the grave metalwork of Mesopotamia and that of the Euphrates Valley by the middle of the 3rd millennium, although a number of very clear distinctions remained.

The deployment of metalwork

While ornaments occur in many tombs in the

Euphrates Valley (Montero Fenellós 1999–2000), a few graves contain a number of weapons that is well in excess of that required to constitute a personal set. Such concentrations of weapons tend to appear in the larger and richer tombs such as Jerablus Tahtani Tomb 302 and the Hypogeum at Tell Ahmar (Thureau-Dangin and Dunand 1936). According to Peltenburg (1999, 432–433) this represents post-mortuary activity, concerned with the making of periodic offerings to the ancestors. There are both documentary and archaeological indications of the existence of a royal ancestor cult at Tell Mardikh/Ebla (Archi 2001). In contrast, in the Royal Cemetery at Ur, when weapons were present in a grave they usually occurred in direct association with a particular individual (Pollock 1985, 179, 1991, 376) and are therefore best understood as personal items.

Discussion

The metalwork found in the Carchemish area during the early 3rd millennium BC constitutes a distinctive regional assemblage. On present evidence, this was markedly different from that documented from contemporary Southern Mesopotamia. Aspects of this repertory appear to have been derived from forms in production in more northerly regions during the later 4th millennium BC. However, it is not yet possible to determine to what extent the metal styles (and perhaps the associated social practices) reflect connections with Transcaucasia, or were developed locally in the context of a period of rapid social and economic change at least partly-fuelled by contacts with the Mesopotamian Uruk world.

By the middle of the 3rd millennium significant changes can be detected within the repertory of metal types. These include the increasingly frequent appearance of elements drawn from a standardized range of personal ornaments (pins, bracelets, torques and less commonly tweezers), all of which appear to be focused upon physical appearance and the presentation of the body. There are also a number of changes to the repertory of weapons, including a move towards rather more distinctive and elaborate forms of axe and dagger and simpler versions of the spearhead, perhaps reflecting changes in the relative status value of such items.

The key to the appearance and rapid spread of this standardized material lies in recent documentary evidence from Tell Mardikh/Ebla which indicates that specific types of metal artefact were given to high status individuals, as indicators of rank at important points in their lives (Archi 2002, 161). Burial was one such event. Our concern here is less with the exact items given to specific individuals but rather the general range of material employed in such transactions. For men the list of suitable items included garments, and belts and daggers decorated in precious metals (Archi 2002, 181). For high status women the lists include earrings, beads, hair-ornaments including gold and silver head bands, necklaces, jewellery, silver toggle-pins (often in pairs) and bracelets, again alongside garments. Both sexes could be provided with torques. Archi (2002, 179) stresses that these artefacts were not the personal belongings of the deceased, but were issued by the central administration, as deemed appropriate to the status of the individual concerned.

This new range of metalwork indicates that we are dealing with a world of stylised, choreographed elite behaviour. The high degree of intra-regional standardisation reflects the crystallisation of a distinctive regional metal repertory and can be explained by the existence of regular communication between polities in Northern Syria. For example, some of the high status women from Ebla listed in the texts discussed by Archi (2002) were destined to marry men from towns such as Nagar (identified with Tell Brak), and Harran. Contacts of this sort would surely have facilitated the rapid interchange of fashions, styles and modes of behaviour. Moreover, the various forms of diplomatic contact and exchange between elites documented in texts from Ebla and Tell Beydar (*e.g.* Archi 1998) would have helped to create a degree of shared symbolism and practices of elite representation in Syria around the middle of the 3rd millennium.

The other side of the growing demand for metal products is represented by the harnessing of metallurgical production to the needs of the elite by the employment of attached craft-specialists working directly for the palace (see Mazzoni 2003). The stability and support so provided would have encouraged technological innovation, such as the development of two-piece moulds which allowed the repeat casting of more elaborate forms while also providing craft workers with a reliable source of demand

for their products and a degree of security of raw material supplies.

Clearly the number of graves containing metalwork suggests that the desire to deploy material of this sort extended some way beyond the elite. In fact, the presence of highly stereotyped copper-alloy material in many graves should be seen as reflecting a desire by other members of these communities to emulate elite behaviour, including aspects of their mortuary practices, and a corresponding effort by metalworkers to produce a range of material designed to satisfy that demand.

We can now return to the question set out at the beginning of this article. Recent data suggests that there was a genuine difference in the manner in which metalwork was deployed in Mesopotamia and the Carchemish region in the earlier 3rd millennium. At least some of these differences are likely to reflect the contrasting forms of political economy and modes of representing 'elite' status which had developed in the two regions. While developments in the two areas appear to have started from rather different points, the appearance of a number of broad structural parallels between the funerary metalwork from the Euphrates Valley and that of Mesopotamia by the second half of the 3rd millennium, suggests that there existed a degree of convergence in the ways in which such material was employed. That said, there remain sufficient differences in both specific typology and elements of practice to indicate that communities in both areas were continuing to use metalwork in distinctive, if perhaps gradually converging ways. In contrast, by the later 3rd millennium there appears to have developed a marked similarity of practice *within* much of Syria, presumably indicative of intra-regional political and economic relationships that were far closer and more regular than were communications with Mesopotamia.

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