

**FLUTED MACES IN THE SYSTEM OF
LONG-DISTANCE EXCHANGE TRAILS
OF THE BRONZE AGE: 2350-800 BC**

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Editor's Foreword

Fluted maces (*Kannelierte Streitkolben*) have not been an object of a monographic study so far. The reasons for this deficiency was the paucity of assemblage finds (mainly grave ones) and the fact that they occurred in the borderland between the East and West of Europe. Both reasons made it difficult to identify them chronologically and keep a full record of finds. The present monograph sums up almost 25 years of studies that at the outset were limited to Poland and only gradually were expanded to include the whole continent. This was made possible owing to the goodwill of many people and institutions from the Danube area, the Balkans and the Russian Plain.

The present volume of *Baltic-Pontic Studies* consists of two parts devoted, respectively, to the current state of knowledge on the position of the mace in the Near East and North Pontic civilizations, and the forms, chronology, origins, functions and socio-organizational significance of one of its types, namely the fluted mace.

As in previous volumes in this series, our intention is to inspire team, interdisciplinary studies involving scholars from different centres and countries. Only such a wide-range co-operation will bring about new developments in the areas discussed in this volume.

Editorial comment

1. All dates in the B-PS are calibrated [see: Radiocarbon vol.28, 1986, and the next volumes]. Deviations from this rule will be point out in notes.
2. The names of the archaeological cultures and sites are standarized to the English literature on the subject (e.g. M. Gimbutas, J. P. Mallory). In the case of a new term, the author's original name has been retained.
3. The spelling of names of localities having the rank of administrative centres follows official, state, English language cartographic publications (e.g. *Ukraine, scale 1 : 2 000 000*, Kiev: Mapa LTD, edition of 1996; *Rèspublika BELARUS; REVIEW-TOPOGRAPHIC MAP*, scale 1:1 000 000, Minsk: BYELORUSSIAN CARTOGRAPHIC AN GEODETIC ENTERPISE, edition 1993).

ERRATA

BALTIC-PONTIC STUDIES, vol. 11

Page 45, fig. 11:

1 – single maces from the Baltic zone; 2 – sets of maces from the Baltic zone;
3 – single maces from the Pontic-Caspian zone; 4 – sets of maces from the
Pontic-Caspian zone

Page 53, fig. 16:

3 – southern limit of the Nordic circle; 6 – approx. borderline between
Corded Ware culture (west) and Fatyanovo culture (east)

Piotr Taracha

THE MACE IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST AND EGYPT ACCORDING TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOURCES

The mace was a key weapon for hand-to-hand fighting in wide use from the earliest times until the second half of the 4th millennium BC, and long after it had become obsolete as a battle weapon, it still remained the symbol of authority of the king and the god. Since the history of the mace in Egypt widely parallels the situation in the Near East, I shall describe various types of mace from both regions [see, generally — the Near East: Bonnet 1926:4ff.; Cocquerillat 1951:21ff.; Salonen 1966:69ff., 190ff.; Calmeyer 1976-1980; Korfmann 1976-1980; Egypt: Petrie 1920:22ff.; Wolf 1926:4ff.; Wildung 1977:414-415; Ciałowicz 1987; 1999:112, 132, 212-213]. The discussion will concern only the mace, i.e. a large, heavy club with a head, and omit all other sorts of battle staffs, curved sticks, scepters, etc. [cf Bonnet 1926:1ff. (*Schlagstock*); Wolf 1926:7-8, 57, 78 (*Knüppel*); see also Popko, Mace-heads. . . , in this volume].



Fig. 1 Clay model of a saucer-shaped mace from El Amrah, 4th millennium BC. After: Wolf 1926:Fig. 1.

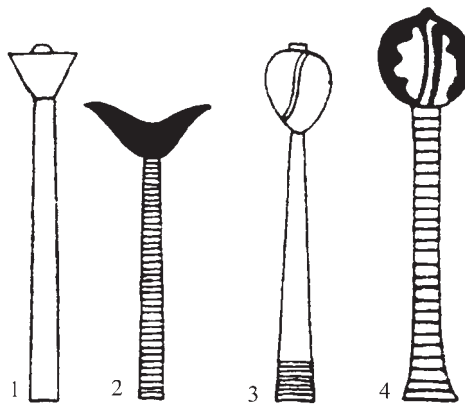


Fig. 2. Saucer- and pear-shaped maces in painted friezes of objects, XIIth Dynasty (c. 1991-1785 BC). After: Wolf 1926:Pl. 1.11-14.

Material. Mace-heads made of stone constitute the bulk of the finds. The earliest known specimens from the 6th millennium BC, found at Çatalhöyük [Mellaart 1964:94], Asia Minor, and Jarmo [Braidwood, Howe *et al.* 1960:45], north Mesopotamia, are of white marble, conglomerate or limestone, a stone that works relatively easily, but later on, in the Chalcolithic and Early Bronze Age, also a hard, heavy stone, like hematite, was used both in the Ancient Near East and Egypt. Concerning various sorts of stone in Egyptian mace-heads W. Wolf lists: porphyry, syenite, limestone (which is the most popular material — the Egyptian word for pear-shaped mace is *ḥd* ‘the white one’ owing to the fact that they were usually made of white limestone [cf Wolf 1926:6]), diorite, breccia, alabaster, marble, schist, and basalt [Wolf 1926:7]. The stone material we encounter in Near Eastern maces is largely the same. A copper mace-head of the simple round type from Can Hassan, Asia Minor, is dated by the excavator to the 5th millennium BC [French 1962:33], and from the 4th millennium BC, when copper was just becoming known, much more specimens of the type were found at various sites in Palestine [*Abu Matar* — Perrot 1955:79, 172, Fig. 20, 24, Pl. 15A; Yadin 1963:120; *Naḥal Mišmar* — Bar-Adon 1962:Pl. 36, 38-39, 42; *Ein Gedi* — Yadin 1963:40] and Iran [*Tepe Hissar IIB, IIIA* — Schmidt 1937:Pl. 29, 48, 52]. Here I agree with Y. Yadin’s statement: ‘The fact that mace-heads were molded from copper is explicable only in terms of the high importance of this weapon, so much so that neither resources nor efforts were spared to strengthen its striking power’ [Yadin 1963:40]. Bronze was used for ceremonial and votive mace-heads from the mid-3rd millennium BC onwards, and there is also textual evidence for the maces of lapis lazuli, (gilded) iron and silver [Salonen 1966:70ff.]. In south Mesopotamia, where the stone ma-

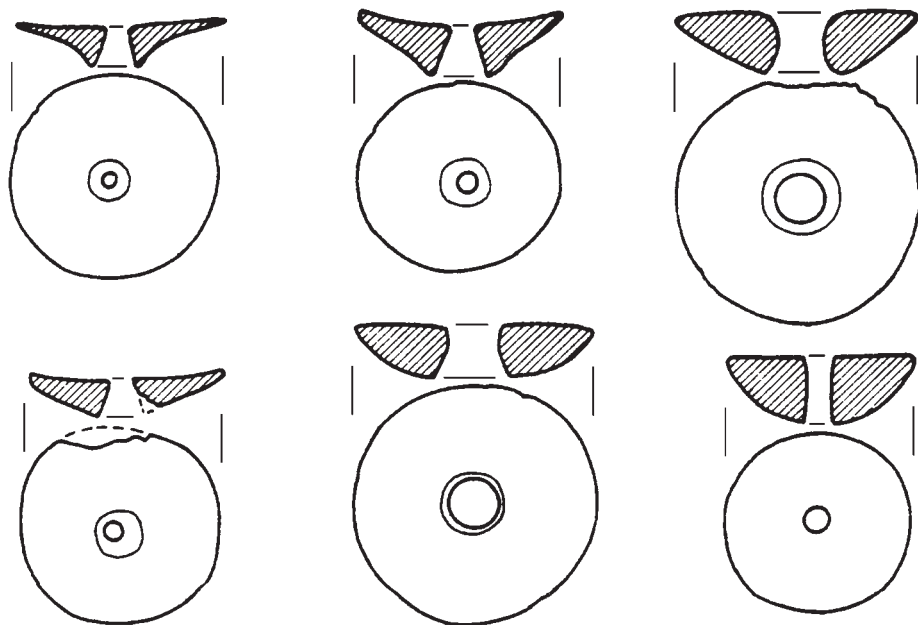


Fig. 3. Saucer-shaped mace-heads, Nagada I (c. 3900/3800-3500 BC). After: Ciałowicz 1999:111 Fig. 46

terial is hardly obtainable, mace-heads were sometimes made of burned clay with a bitumen coating. For instance, the specimens from Jemdet Nasr date to the last centuries of the 4th millennium BC [Mackay 1931:268; Christian 1940:Pl. 135.2; Salonen 1966:69]. In Egypt, clay mace-heads were found in several Nagada I burials (3900/3800-3500 BC) [Ciałowicz 1999:112]. Models of maces, made mostly of clay (Fig. 1; e.g., clay model of a saucer-shaped mace from El Amrah [Randal-MacIver, Mace 1902:Pl. 12.1; Wolf 1926:5 Fig. 1]), terracotta and wood (e.g., white painted, wooden mace-head of a New Kingdom date, with the wooden handle inserted into it, from tomb 35 at Schech abd el Gurna, now in Berlin [Wolf 1926:6]), sometimes also of precious metals, lapis lazuli and glass, occur both in Egypt and the Near East (e.g., lapis lazuli model of a pear-shaped mace-head with an ivory handle from Abusir el-Melek [Ciałowicz 1999:213]; glass models of maces from Nuzi [Starr 1939:Pl. 121A, 130B]; glass and terracotta models from Elam [Ghirshman 1966:Pl. LXXV.405, LXXVIII.448, 451, LXXXI.514]; small knobbed 'mace-head' of gold from Alacahöyük, Asia Minor, dated to the last centuries of the 3rd millennium BC [Arik 1937:Pl. 173]).

Handles. Only few handles of maces have survived since they were usually made of perishable materials, mostly wood. Note here two handles of ivory and horn,

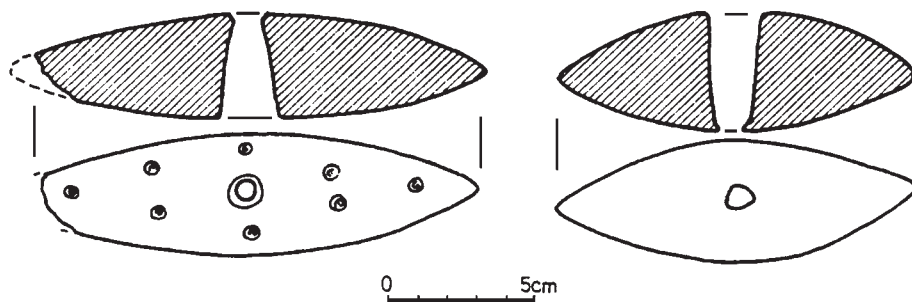


Fig. 4. Spindle-like mace-heads, Late Nagada I (c. 3500 BC). After: Ciałowicz 1999:111 Fig. 46

belonging to the saucer-shaped maces of a Nagada I date, found by W.M.F. Petrie at Diospolis, Egypt [Petrie 1901:33, Pl. 5; Wolf 1926:5; Ciałowicz 1999:112]; later finds from Egyptian tombs [cf Bonnet 1926:13]; and two hilts of iron with bronze elements, both from 'Iran', unpublished, which can be dated to the late Parthian or the Sassanian period [Calmeyer 1976-1980:579].

Wooden handles of ceremonial mace-heads had sometimes a copper, gold or silver casing. Suffice it to mention here several examples. Two Nagada III pear-shaped stone mace-heads from tomb 1/137 at Sayala, Nubia, were found together with gold sheathings of their handles [Ciałowicz 1999:213]. A copper tube from Tello, Mesopotamia, was interpreted as a covering of a mace handle [Heuzey 1910:77; Bonnet 1926:14]. Two handsome ceremonial maces were part of the royal treasure (dated c. 2500 BC) discovered at Dorak in northwest Anatolia. One mace has a pink veined marble head and a gold sheathing over its wooden handle, while the other, much smaller, has an amber head and a silver cased handle [cf Yadin 1963:142].

The models and the depictions of maces yield an additional bit of information on their handles (cf Fig. 1)[see Bonnet 1926:12ff.; Wolf 1926:5-6, Pl. 1.11-16]. The handle was inserted into the head and tightened by strips of cord or — in Mesopotamia — fastened with bitumen [Heuzey 1910:77; Bonnet 1926:13]. In Egypt it was also bound with cord on its whole length or only in the lower part, probably

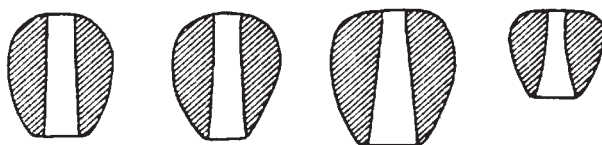


Fig. 5. Pear-shaped mace-heads, Nagada II (c. 3500-3200 BC). After: Ciałowicz 1999:132 Fig. 61



Fig. 6. Slate palette of king Narmer from Hierakonpolis, c. 3100 BC. Cairo Museum. After: Ciałowicz 1999:324 Fig. 178

to prevent slipping, and sometimes tapered toward the head and broadened at the base to prevent the weapon from flying out of the hand when swung (Fig. 2; cf also Fig. 9). Neither the cording nor the swollen base of the handle is attested in Near Eastern maces.

Mace-heads. The types of mace-head used in Egypt in the first half of the 4th millennium BC differ from their Near Eastern counterparts in shape and function. While the earliest Near Eastern mace-heads are of the simple round type, in Egyptian Nagada I period a rather strange type of mace-head was in wide service, shaped like a disk and slightly concave (Figs 1 and 3) [Wolf 1926:4-5, Pl. 1.1-2; Bonnet 1926:8, Fig. 3; Ciałowicz 1999:112, Fig. 46]. This type survived in ceremonial weapons till the end of the Pre-Dynastic period (Nagada III, last centuries of the 4th millennium BC), and maces of a reminiscent shape still occur in the Middle Kingdom wall paintings (Fig. 2.1-2). Concerning this type of mace Y. Yadin states: 'It is clear that the designers of the disk-shaped (or saucer-like) mace-head sought to make it also a cutting instrument by giving it a sharp edge, but this necessarily reduced its smiting power' [Yadin 1963:40]. Also a rare type of pointed, spindle-like



Fig. 7. Fluted pear-shaped mace-heads from Tell Agrab, Mesopotamia, Early Dynastic (3rd millennium BC). Museum of the Oriental Institute, Chicago. After: Yadin 1963:120

mace-head (Fig. 4) [Wolf 1926:6, Pl. 1.7 (*Spitzenkeule*); Ciałowicz 1999:112, Fig. 46], which appears around the middle of the 4th millennium BC, was virtually designed for both purposes.

‘Eventually they realized that the two aims could not be achieved through a single instrument, and apart from isolated experiments here and there, they settled on the mace for striking and the axe for piercing and cutting’ [Yadin 1963:40]. Thus, in the Nagada II period (c. 3500-3200 BC) more effective, pear-shaped mace-heads (Fig. 5; cf also Fig. 2.3-4) of Oriental origin gradually replaced the earlier types [cf Wolf 1926:4ff.; Ciałowicz 1999:132, Fig. 61]. This weapon was so characteristic of the time that it even became the symbol of the pharaoh’s might (Fig. 6).

The mace of the egg- or pear-shaped type was in wide use in all countries of the Ancient Near East. Earliest, ovoid examples are dated to the 5th millennium BC (Tepe Sialk I 2; Tepe Gawra XVIII). In the 4th millennium BC the type — developing into a pear-like form, more or less — becomes characteristic of Amuq phase G in north Syria and the ‘Énéolithique récent’ in Byblos (3700-3200 BC), and its climax in north Mesopotamia falls in with Tepe Gawra VIII-VI, i.e. from c. 3200 BC onwards [Korfmann 1976-1980:585]. At the time, pear-shaped mace-heads appeared in the Transcaucasus, too, as a result of strengthened contacts with southwestern Asia. The finds from Mingechaur on the Akstafa river, Azerbaijan (3200-2900 BC), and the Karmir-Berd cemetery in the Ararat valley, Armenia (2300/2100-1900/1800 BC), establish the chronological brackets of their use there [Kushnereva 1997:63, Fig. 23.19, 116].



Fig. 8. Bronze mace of Akkadian king Naram-Sin, c. 2250 BC. After: Salonen 1966 Pl. XXIV.1.

This type of mace frequently occurs in Mesopotamia during the Early Dynastic and Akkadian periods [cf Solyman 1968:19ff., 65ff.]; sporadically we encounter it through the 2nd millennium BC, and the latest evidence is found in the Assyrian imperial reliefs [Calmeyer 1976-1980:580-581.]. In the Early Dynastic period pear-shaped mace-heads were sometimes fluted (Fig. 7). 'This last type, which was also found in Syria, succeeded in some measure in giving the mace a cutting function with the sharp edges between the grooves, without reducing its power to stun' [Yadin 1963:41]. There is also a group of bronze maces, cognate with the above mentioned, in which a long tube and a head were molded together [cf Bar-Adon 1962:Pl. 38, 39A, 42]. One of the earliest examples is the mace dedicated to the Akkadian king Naram-Sin (c. 2250 BC), with the fluted, ovoid head (Fig. 8) [Salonen 1966:191, Pl. XXIV.1; Calmeyer 1976-1980:581]. Other specimens, sometimes also with vertical grooves on their heads, date to the end of the 3rd and the 1st millennium BC [Calmeyer 1976-1980:580-581].

Function. 'The mace was an effective weapon so long as the enemy was not armored and his head, in particular, was unhelmeted' [Yadin 1963:41]. This 'age

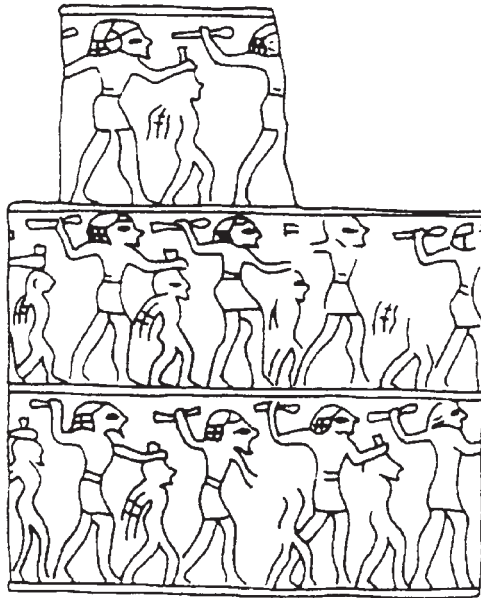


Fig. 9. Ivory cylinder seal from Hierakonpolis with representation of a bound captive being struck with a mace, Ist Dynasty (c. 3050-2890 BC). British Museum. After: Ciałowicz 1999:349 Fig. 194

of mace' came to an end in the last centuries of the 4th millennium BC. However, captives being struck with a mace occur in Egyptian (Fig. 9) and Near Eastern iconography until the 1st millennium BC [for Early Dynastic and Assyrian representations, see Calmeyer 1976-1980:582-583]. On the evidence of Assyrian reliefs, executions of captives with the stroke of a mace sometimes took place in the presence of the god, in front of his temple. Here, a legitimate reason for using the mace in the slaughter was its symbolic significance as the god's weapon [Calmeyer 1976-1980:583].

The mace became one of the most important insignia of chieftaincy and royal power, and consequently, as we see on the basis of iconographical and written sources from the 3rd millennium BC onwards, it was connected with various gods as their weapon and attribute [Bonnet 1926:15; Salonen 1966:71ff.; Calmeyer 1976-1980:583]. Apart from the texts [see Popko, Mace-heads. . . , in this volume] there is also abundant archaeological evidence of the symbolic role of the mace. First ceremonial mace-heads appear as early as the 5th millennium BC, like a handsome specimen from Tepe Sialk, Iran, level I2, decorated with incised zigzags and red incrustation [Ghirshman 1938:Pl. 53.4]. Moreover, many mace-heads of a 4th millennium BC date have so narrow hollows that their handles were not strong enough

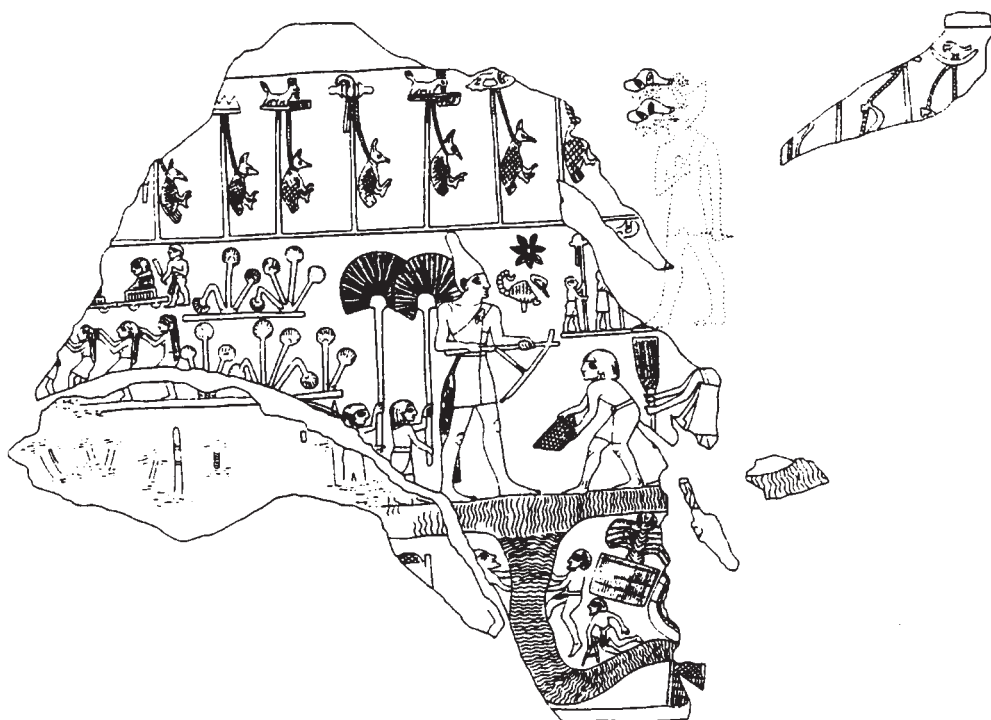


Fig. 10. Relief decoration of the king Scorpion mace-head from Hierakonpolis, c. 3100 BC. Asmolean Museum, Oxford. After: Ciałowicz 1999:336 Fig. 184

to ensure effectiveness of the mace in combat. In that case, its significance as the status symbol seems probable.

Undoubtedly, most mace-heads from the 3rd and 2nd millennia BC had a ceremonial and/or votive function. Worthy of notice here are the sculptured mace-heads from Egypt and Early Dynastic Mesopotamia. The excavations at Hierakonpolis brought to light one wholly preserved and three other fragments of such mace-heads dating to c. 3100-3000 BC, i.e. Late Pre-Dynastic and the very beginning of the 1st Dynasty. Most famous are those of kings Scorpion (Fig. 10) and Narmer [Ciałowicz 1987; 1997; 1999:336ff.; Millet 1990:53ff.]. The group of sculptured mace-heads from 3rd millennium BC Mesopotamia [on the style of reliefs, see Frankfort 1935:105 ff.] includes the lion mace-head of king Mesilim (c. 2600 BC) found in Tello (Fig. 11). The majority of the mace-heads glorify the king as NAMEŠDA 'Lord of the Mace' [this title of Mesopotamian king is attested as early as the 4th millennium BC, see now Selz 2001:13-14], while the others are connected with cult and can be considered offerings to the gods, as are those with dedicatory inscriptions (cf Fig. 8) [Calmeyer



Fig. 11. Mace-head of king Mesilim, c. 2600 BC. Louvre, Paris. After: Bonnet 1926:9 Fig. 4

1976-1980:582]. The finds of the mace-heads are sometimes regarded as evidence for the long-distance trade between Egypt, Palestine and north Mesopotamia [Mark 1997:46-47.].

Lastly, it should be stressed that offering of weapons to the gods after a victorious campaign was a well known practice in all countries of the Ancient Near East. In this connection worthy of mention is the 1st millenium BC 'mace museum' found in the city gate of Assur [Andrae 1913:34-35, Fig. 33; cf also Calmeyer 1976-1980:583].

Translated by Author and Piotr T. Żebrowski

ABBREVIATIONS

- AJA – American Journal of Archaeology, New York
AnOr – Analecta Orientalia, Rome
AnSt – Anatolian Studies, London
BPS – Baltic-Pontic Studies, Poznań
ČVSMO – Časopis Vlasteneckého spolku musejního v Olomouci, Olomouc
IEJ – Israel Exploration Journal, Jerusalem
JARCE – Journal of the American Research Center in Egypt, Boston
M.A.R.I. – MARI. Annales de recherches interdisciplinaires, Paris
MDP – Mémoires de la Délégation archéologique en Iran, Paris
RA – Revue d'assyrologie et d'archéologie orientale, Paris
RIA – Reallexikon für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie, Berlin – New York
TGIM – Trudy Gosudarstvennogo istoricheskogo muzeia, Moskva
WVDOG – Wissenschaftliche Veröffentlichungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft, Leipzig – Berlin
ZČSSA – Zprávy Československé společnosti archeologické při ČSAV, Praha – Brno – Nitra
ZfE – Zeitschrift für Ethnologie, Berlin

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