

PREHISTORIC BRONZE OBJECTS IN INDONESIA

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This paper will discuss bronze objects found in Indonesia during the last decade. Most were obtained from excavations by our Research Centre, while the remainder were delivered to us by chance finders.

Kettle Drums

The bronze kettle drum is an extremely important element in the so-called Dongson culture in Southeast Asia. Since 1975, new discoveries of drums have been made at Seran (Sumbawa island), Aimoli (Alor island), Sangeang island, Weleri (near Yogyakarta, Central Java), Rengel, Montong and Lamongan (East Java) and Bengkulu (South Sumatra). While most of the drums in Indonesia are of the Heger I type, the one found in Weleri is of the Heger IV type. These kettle drums, except the one from Sangeang, were found accidentally by villagers who were digging their land for agricultural purposes. Sometimes a peasant had a dream that he found something precious in the soil, whereafter he started digging and found a kettle drum. The specimen from Sangeang was excavated by a team from the National Research Centre of Archaeology in 1983.

The drum from Rengel, near Tuban, measures 74 cm in height and 93 cm across the tympanum. It is a Heger I type, and very much damaged. Found inside the drum were a bronze elephant statuette (Plate 1, top) together with some bronze axes, a spearhead and a chisel. Lamongan has produced two major finds - a single drum of Heger I type (Plate 1, bottom) and, found separately, a pair of kettle drums buried one on top of the other. The upper drum is of Heger I type, 42 cm high and 27 cm across the tympanum, with geometric decoration. The lower one, of the so-called Pejeng type, has almost the same measurements. Inside the two kettle drums were found beads of chalcedony and gold; gold ornaments comprising a necklace, an umbrella-shaped ornament and gold leaves; and various bronze objects including a container (Plate 2, top), a lid, bowls and other vessels, pendants, and waist bands. Iron objects included a spearhead and chisels, and there were also earthenwares, animal bones, and sub-adult human bones (Bintarti 1983).

Mokos (Pejeng-type kettle drums)

These drums differ from the Heger types and may be regarded as local Indonesian variants. They are called moko on the island of Alor. Except for Java, moko are found only in the eastern part of Indonesia, namely in Bali and in Nusa Tenggara (in Alor, Adonara and Flores). Moko can be classified into 4 types with regard to decoration (Bintarti 1981b):

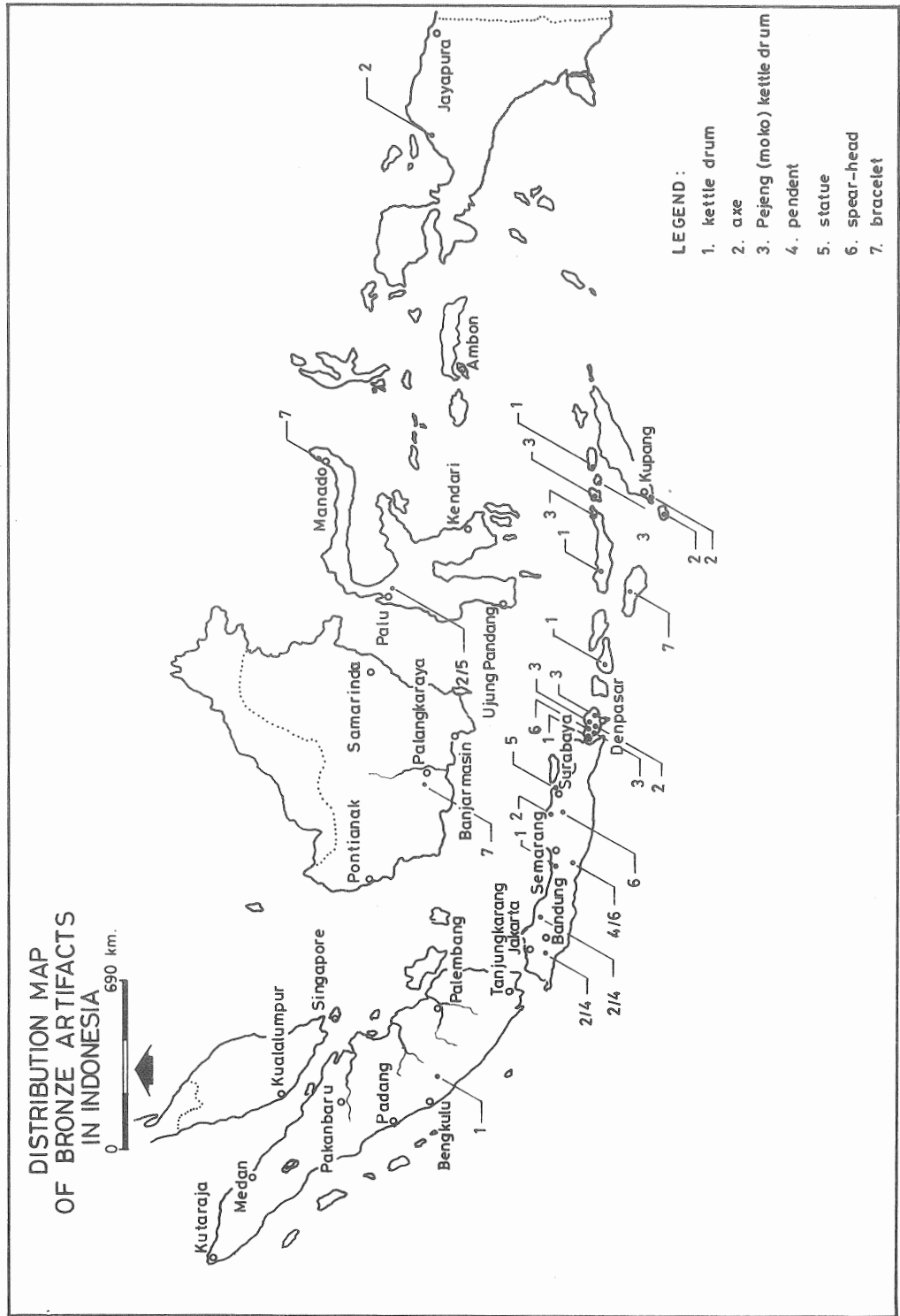


Figure 1. Locations of recently-discovered bronze artefacts in Indonesia.

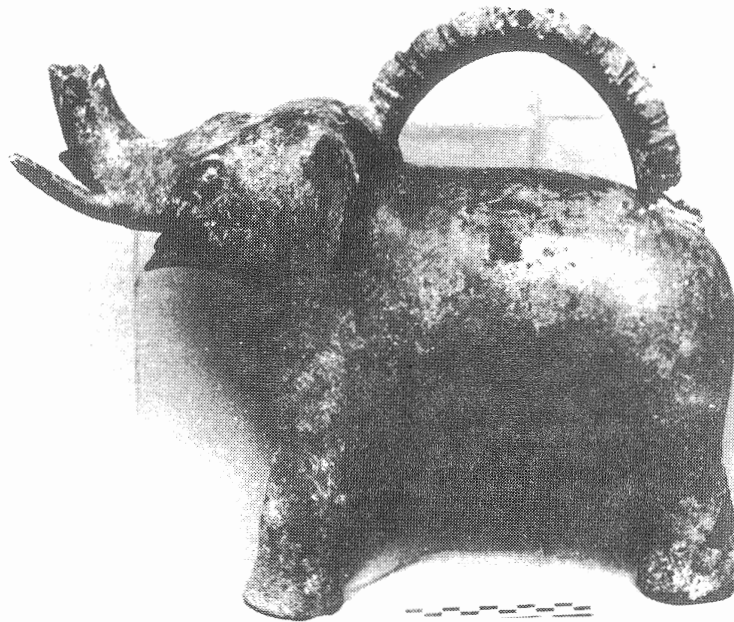


Plate 1. Top: bronze elephant statuette found inside the Heger I drum from Rengel, near Tuban, Java. Scale in cm.
Bottom: the lower of the two drums from Lamongan, East Java.

Type I: this type has the same decoration as the so-called Moon of Pejeng, a kettle drum 180 cm high which is kept in a temple in Pejeng, Bali. These drums are decorated on the main body with a human face with protruding nose, bulging eyes, and long-stretched ear-lobes with coin-shaped ear rings. Other decoration includes an eight-pointed star in the centre of the tympanum, wavy lines with knots and loops, geometric designs, and houses. Type I moko have been found in Bali, Alor (Plate 2, bottom left), Flores and Adonara.

Type II moko have also been found in Flores and Alor. The decorative motifs resemble those on ancient temples in Java, and include shadow-puppet-like figures, monster (kala) heads, floral motifs and spirals. For these reasons, these drums are classified as "classical" or Hinduistic.

Type III moko show western influences (Dutch and English) and are found in Alor and Flores. The decorations are European-inspired and include Zeus-heads, lions, crowns, grape vines and grape leaves.

Type IV moko are pre-World War II drums which have very complicated decoration, some of human figures and animals, others of floral or geometric forms. These moko are found in Java, Alor and Flores.

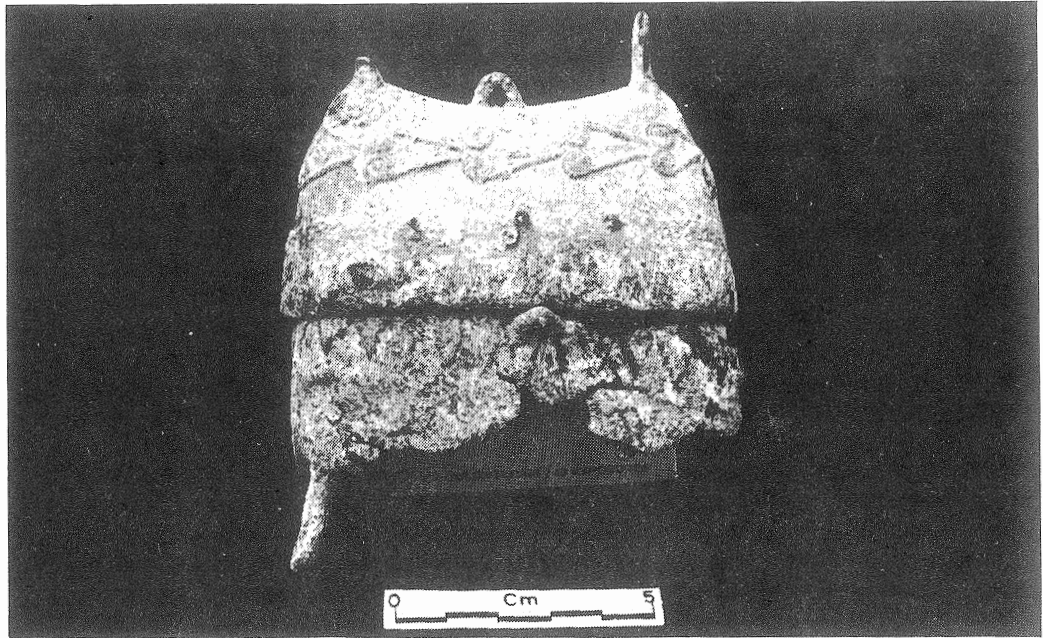
Axes

Bronze axes have been found recently throughout Java and Bali, and in Central Sulawesi, Irian Jaya and East Nusa Tenggara. They can be classified as types I, II, V, VI, VII and VIII in Soejono's classification (1972). Type I has been found in Central Sulawesi; type II (the swallow-tail type) in West and East Java; type V (crescent-bladed) in Bali; type VI (heart-bladed) in Bali, Sabu and Rote; type VII (halberd type) in East Java; and type VIII (monocasted exquisite type) in Sabu and Rote. The fine, large specimens from Sabu of Soejono's type VI are very sophisticated, and and it doubtful whether the term "axe" should be applied to such objects. Though their forms resemble axes, they are too large to be useful as tools; one is 75 cm long and the other is 1.55 cm. The decorative motifs are human masks and geometric designs (Bintarti 1981a).

Statuettes

Bronze statuettes have been found in Central Sulawesi, Flores and East Java. The statuette from Central Sulawesi is in the same style as the Bangkinang statuettes from Riau Province in Sumatra (van Heekeren 1958: Plate 9), which are dynamic in style and are shown in dancing poses.

The small bronze elephant mentioned earlier, found inside a kettle drum at Rengel in East Java, is depicted standing with a handle on its back (Plate 1, top).



Lidded bronze vessel with circle and tangent decoration, found inside the two drums at Lamongan, East Java.



Plate 2. Top: as labelled. Bottom left: a type I moko from Alor. Bottom right: bronze statuette of a woman nursing a child, and weaving on a backstrap loom. From Larantuka, Flores.

In Flores, bronze statuettes have been found in Larantuka and Maumere. The Larantuka statuette was actually an heirloom of a tribe in eastern Flores, kept in a cave and regarded as sacred, but unfortunately stolen. The thief was arrested and the statuette kept at the District Attorney's Office during prosecution. We examined and photographed the statuette at this office; it shows a woman weaving, while holding a child in her lap whom she is breast-feeding (Plate 2, bottom right).

The bronze casting from Maumere represents a large canoe (Plate 3). It is an heirloom from the village of Dobo, and is regarded as the ship on which the ancestors arrived in the area. It is said that the ship sank due to a storm. The story of its arrival is told in a poem which is sung on special occasions. The casting depicts people rowing on the lower part of the vessel, while on the upper part are shown people giving directions. Unfortunately, a portion of the upper part is missing.

Rings, bracelets and pendants

Rings and bracelets are sometimes found together with arm protectors and girdles, and always with human skeletons. They occur in burial monuments such as waruga (northern Sulawesi), sarcophagi, stone slab graves, and also in simple earth graves. The bracelets are generally plain, but on some, such as those found in the waruga of northern Sulawesi and in the excavations at Gilimanuk in Bali (Soejono 1977), there are geometric motifs which include triangles (tumpal), ladders, meanders and circlets. There are three types of pendants with basically anthropomorphic, zoomorphic or conical shapes. They have been found in Bogor, East Java, and Bali.

Spearheads and fish hooks

During the excavations at Gilimanuk and Plawangan small spear heads were found in association with skeletons. One from Gilimanuk had an iron blade with a socket of bronze. Bronze fish hooks were also found in Gilimanuk.

Bronze plates

It is not known what the original function of these small bronze pieces was; perhaps they were fragments of girdles. One was found inside the kettle drum found at Rengel, near Tuban, in association with other objects and human bones, and more were unearthed in Gilimanuk. The bronze plates here were found in association with human skeletons and are decorated with triangle motifs. Other plates of pentagonal form have been found inside Balinese sarcophagi and in the Gilimanuk excavations.

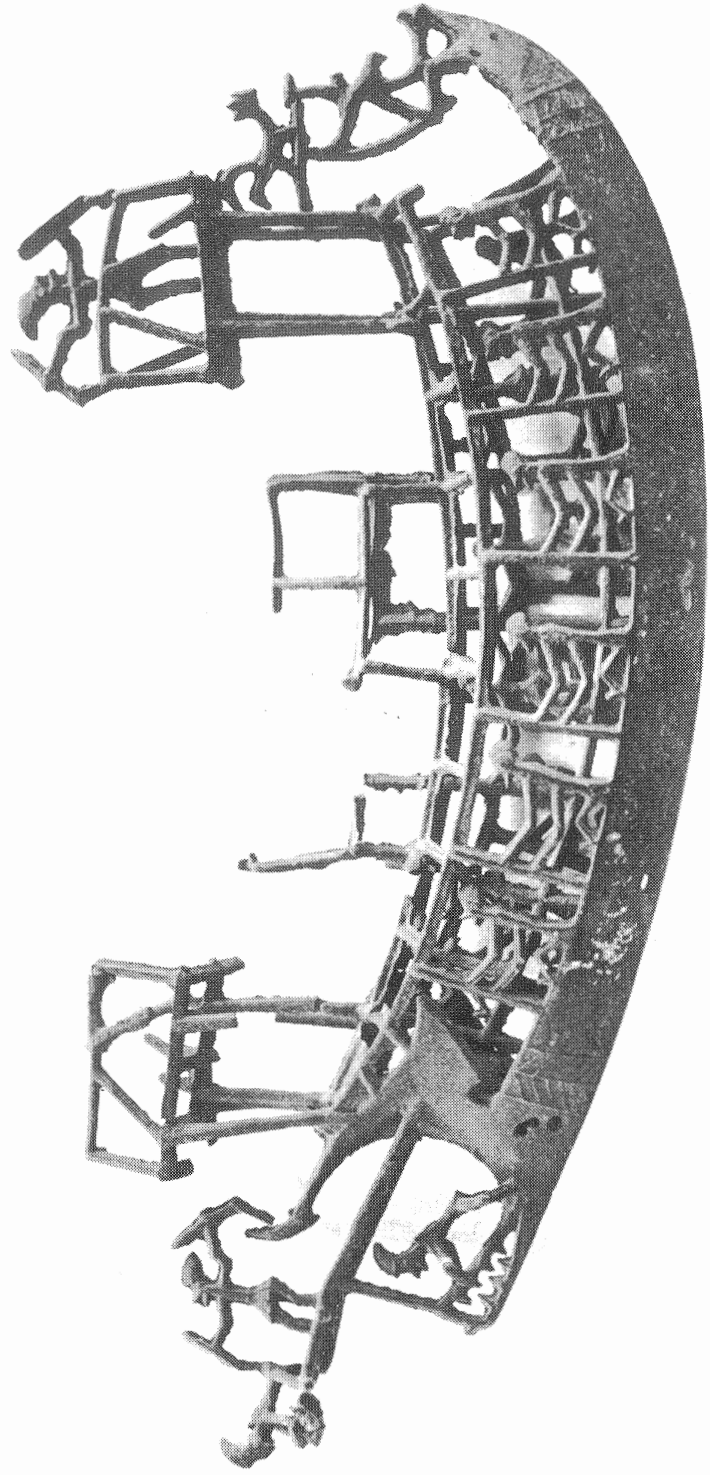


Plate 3. Bronze canoe model from Dobo village, Maumere, Flores.

Stone objects

It is interesting that stone kettle drums and a stone moko have been found in some places. Two stone kettle drums are known from Bima on Sumbawa island. The first has a tympanum with many holes (about 50 pit marks) and no handles; its form is of the Heger I type (Plate 4, top). The second is much smaller than the first, but is also of Heger I type. Its tympanum is plain, and it has four handles but no holes (Plate 4, bottom).

In Bali a moko of stone is kept in the Pura Puseh Kangen Carangsari. It is 49 cm high, and has a diameter of 32 cm. This stone moko is used as a pedestal for a statue of a Hindu deity (Widia 1980).

CONCLUSION

During the past ten years, bronze objects have been found all over Indonesia, and particularly in the eastern part of the archipelago. The most sophisticated objects have strangely enough been discovered in isolated places such as Sabu, Rote, Alor, and the cave of Liang Bua in Flores.

Moko of Type I, which in the past had only been found in Bali, have now been discovered in Adonara, Solor and Alor in eastern Indonesia.

Perhaps most interesting is the find at Lamongan, since the upper kettle drum is of the Heger I type, whereas the inverted one below is of the Pejeng type. The function of the miniature kettle drums found in Tuban, Seran and Bogor is not known yet; they could have been used as funeral gifts. The large kettle drums found in Salayar, Sangeang and Alor were used to pray for rain; during a drought they would be turned upside-down and beaten.

Moko in eastern Indonesia can have differing functions. In Bali they were often placed on pedestals or altars and regarded as divinities during religious ceremonies in temples. In Adonara, on the other hand, the moko is regarded as a symbol of fertility. Before the harvest, it is taken out of storage and offerings are brought to it. These offerings consist of some of the food plants which are about to be harvested.

Since moko are regarded as sacred in Bali and Adonara, it is forbidden to touch them. The moko of Lembata island is regarded as an ancestral heirloom, and is worshipped. In Alor the moko serve as bride payments, and it is believed that without the presentation of a moko a marriage will not last long.

Also of unusual interest are the two axes from Sabu (Bintarti 1981a). Both have the same stylized mask as a decorative motif, and both appear to have been used for ceremonial purposes.

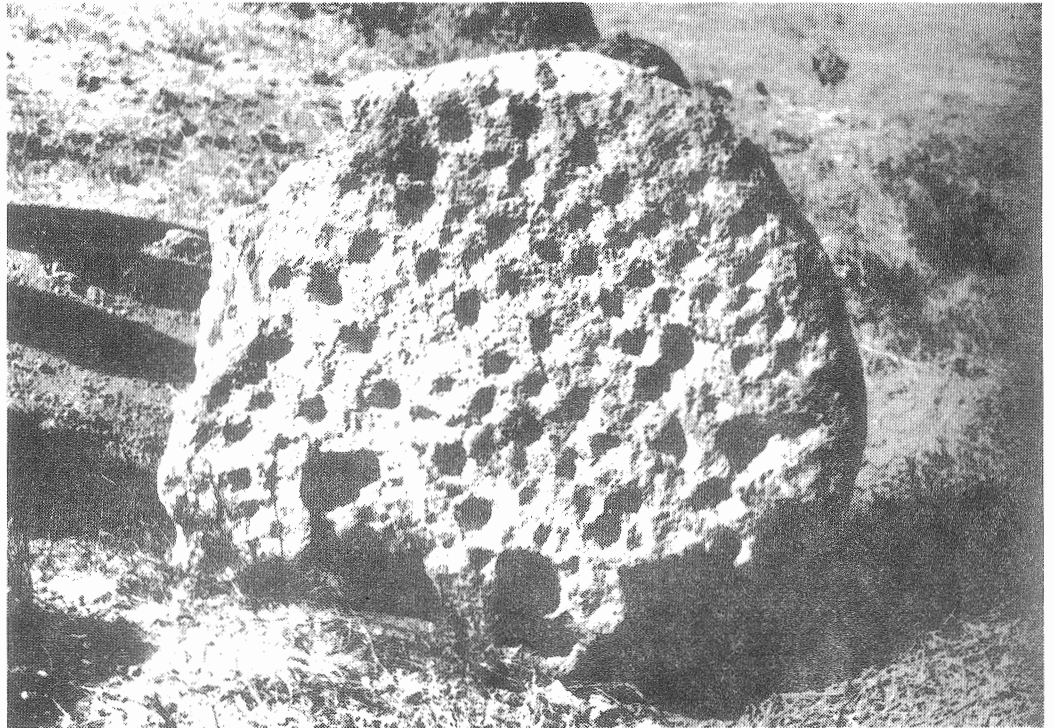


Plate 4. Top. The tympanum of a stone imitation Heger I drum at Wadu Nocu, Sumbawa. The drum has no handles, but the tympanum has many pit marks.

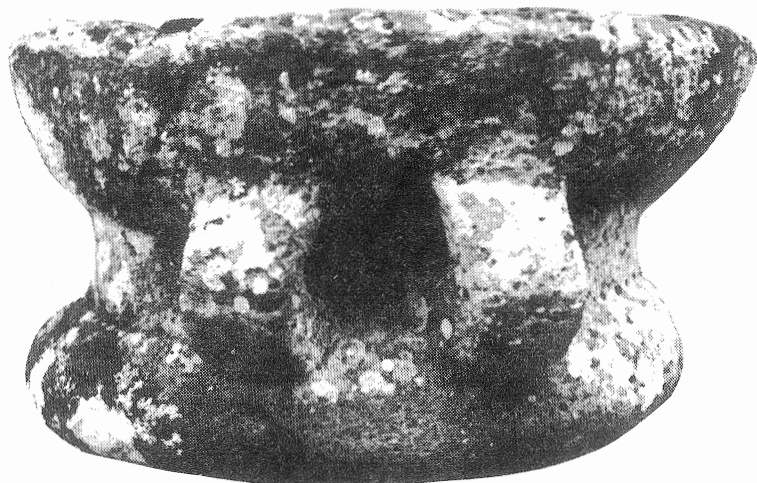


Plate 4. Bottom. Stone imitation Heger I drum with handles at Doro Parewa, Sumbawa.

These then are our preliminary notes on the bronze objects found in Indonesia during the last decade.

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