

# Warfare at Hasanlu in the Late 9th Century B.C.

OSCAR WHITE  
MUSCARELLA

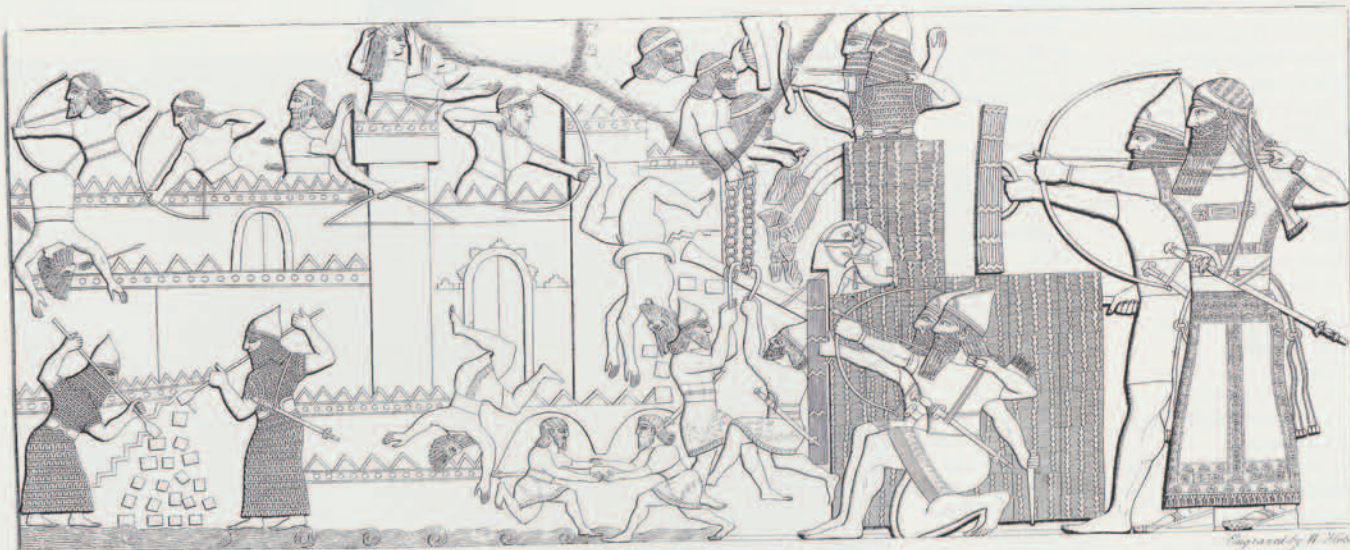
Warfare in the ancient Near East is abundantly documented by written and archaeological evidence. The use of force to settle political disputes, and to validate the role of kings or leaders is not only common but is glorified in both historical texts and representational art. Excavations at the site of Hasanlu have produced information about the culture, peaceful or otherwise, of the people who

inhabited the site at the beginning of the first millennium B.C., and evidence of a conflict that annihilated them. The most obvious manifestation of warfare at Hasanlu is the complete destruction of the late 9th century B.C. (period IVB) settlement by a conflagration, and the interment within its ruins of the battle's victims.

## Ancient Near Eastern Warfare

The human actions that produced the archaeological remains

at Hasanlu can best be understood when viewed against the contemporary historical background, specifically the 1st millennium Assyrian and Old Testament systems of war and their treatment of the enemy (see box). The full force and extent of the horrors of ancient Near Eastern warfare are presented to us in gruesome and explicit details in the annals and records of the Assyrian kings of the late 2nd and early 1st millennia B.C. In the 13th century B.C. Assyrian texts inaugurate what was to become a commonplace attribute of 1st millennium Assyrian records: the explicit description of battle slaughter and the



**1** The Assyrian kings decorated their palaces with stone reliefs showing their triumphs in battle. This scene, from the throne room of King Aššurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) at Nimrud, shows an attack on a walled settlement defended by archers. Victims of the battle fall from the battlements, and a woman in a tower holds her head in sorrow (top center). Assyrian soldiers wearing pointed helmets are undermining the walls (lower left) and attacking with an armored battering ram (lower right). (Layard 1849; Pl. 19)

gory events that followed. King Shalmaneser I (ca. 1272-1244 B.C.) records that he blinded over 14,000 enemy prisoners; Aššurbelkala in the 11th century first mentions the flaying and impaling of prisoners; Tiglath-pileser I (ca. 1114-1076 B.C.) mentions the deportation of captives.

In the 9th century B.C. the texts of Aššurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III again record the mutilation of captives: the cutting off of their noses, ears, limbs, impaling and blinding, and the immolation of male and female prisoners. Aššurnasirpal II, like the Akkadians 1500 years earlier, mentions the deliberate massacre of prisoners (see Schneider, this issue). Brutalities, along with associated battle scenes, are also vividly and realistically depicted on the bronze and stone wall and gate reliefs that decorated the 9th century palaces of the Assyrian kings (Fig. 1). These reliefs served equally as historical records and as propaganda, inspiring both local and foreign visitors with awe, and warning of the consequences to be suffered if they betrayed Assyrian interests.

The Old Testament is another important source of information for war and its tactics and brutalities in the early 1st millennium B.C., especially for the western states of the Near East—Israel, Edom, Syria. Aside from the usual recording of warfare, we read also of the blinding or killing of prisoners of war, and the slaughter of a captive city's population:

When you invest a city, you must offer it terms of peace....But if it will not make peace with you, but wages war with you, you are to besiege it, and when the Lord your God delivers it up to you, you must put every male in it to the sword; but the women and children and live stock and everything that is in the city, that is, all its spoil, you may take as your booty....[I]n the cities of the peoples here, which the Lord your God is giving you as a heritage, you must not spare a living soul; but you must be sure to exterminate them, Hittites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivvites, and Jebusites, as the Lord your



**2a,b**

Spears made of iron or bronze with sockets that fitted over a wooden shaft were the most common weapons found in the ruins of Hasanlu. (a) The iron weapons were often in fragments, but a complete example was found in Burned Building VI. (b) This bimetallic spearpoint has a bronze blade riveted to an iron socket and mid-rib. This weak construction and the rarity of such weapons suggest they may have had a ceremonial rather than a utilitarian function (see Pigott, this issue). (a: HAS 74-249, L. 34.5 cm, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran; b: UM 65-31-196, L. 57.0 cm. Photos courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

God commanded you, so that they may not teach you to imitate all the abominable practices that they have carried on for their gods, and so sin against the Lord your God. (Deuteronomy 20:10-18)

And ten thousand others did the Judeans carry away alive, and they brought them to the top of a crag, and cast them down from the top of the crag, so that all of

them were dashed to pieces. But the men of the band whom Amaziah had sent back without allowing them to go with him to battle fell upon the cities of Judah from Samaria to Bethhoron, and slew of them three thousand and took a large amount of spoil. (2nd Chronicles 25:12-13)

(See also Josh 6:17, 24; Judges 1:6, 17:21; I Sam 11:2, 30:17; II Kings 25:7).





3

This reconstruction of a Hasanlu warrior with spear, small shield, and feathered headgear is based on carved ivory plaque fragments. The laced boots may not have been worn by soldiers, but follow the form of a ceramic model. (Drawing by Ruth Stern)

## The Warriors of Hasanlu

The inhabitants of Hasanlu apparently did not differ greatly from their neighbors in the emphasis placed on military activities. Lacking written documents from Hasanlu itself, we do not know whether its foreign policy involved a defensive strategy or an offensive one, or both. Artifacts found at the site, however, certainly indicate that the inhabitants were prepared for war. Weapons were recovered in all areas of the Citadel, inside and outside buildings. In some cases, their number and disposition indicate that they were found as they had been stored—and never put to use in the final battle; other isolated weapons were apparently abandoned or lost in the heat of the battle.

Judging from the quantity excavated, the most common weapon employed at Hasanlu was the socketed spear, some made of bronze but the majority of iron (Fig. 2);

hundreds were found in the debris of the upper floor of Burned Building II, where they apparently had been stored. Other weapons include:

maceheads (Fig. 4)

48 stone

23 bronze

2 iron

3 iron/bronze

swords (Fig. 5)

2 bronze

28 iron

9 iron/bronze

1 with a gold cloisonné hilt

daggers (Fig. 5)

21 iron

1 bronze

3 iron/bronze

many blade fragments

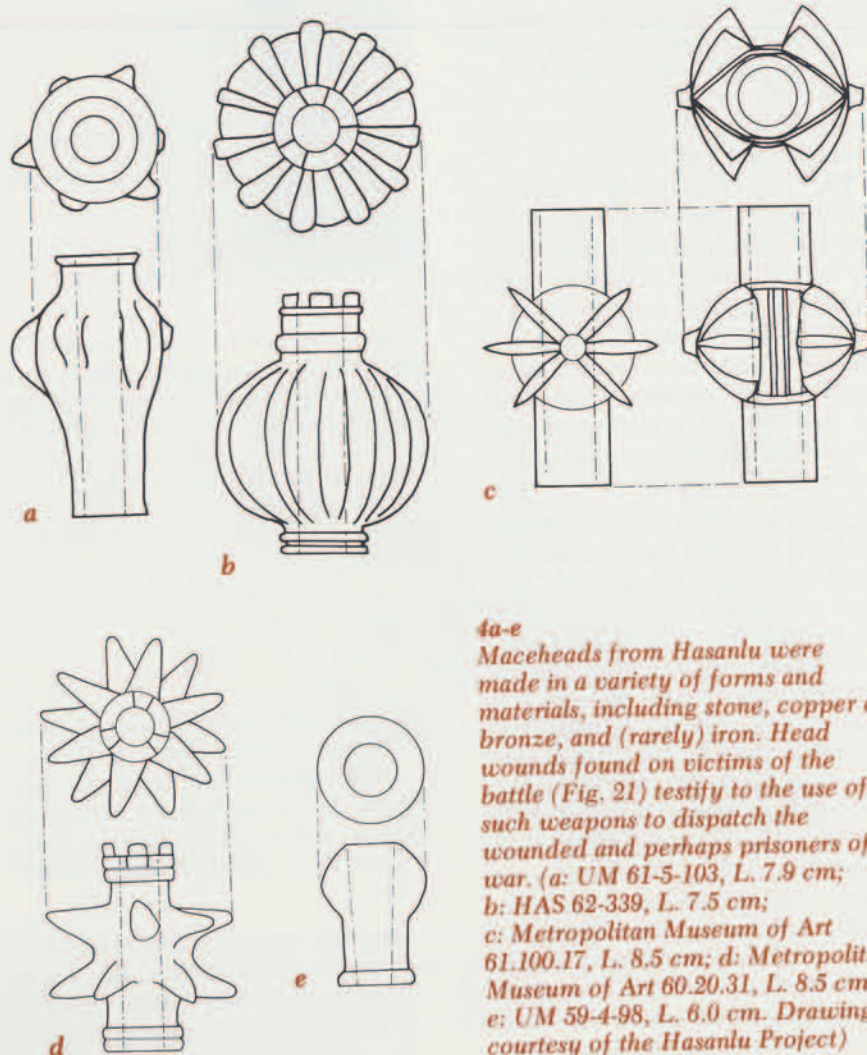
bronze axes (Fig. 6)

iron pikes

Evidence for the use of the bow is provided by arrowheads (Fig. 7), sometimes found massed in a quiver. There were at least three bronze quivers, as well as a unique iron quiver with bronze trim (Fig. 8).

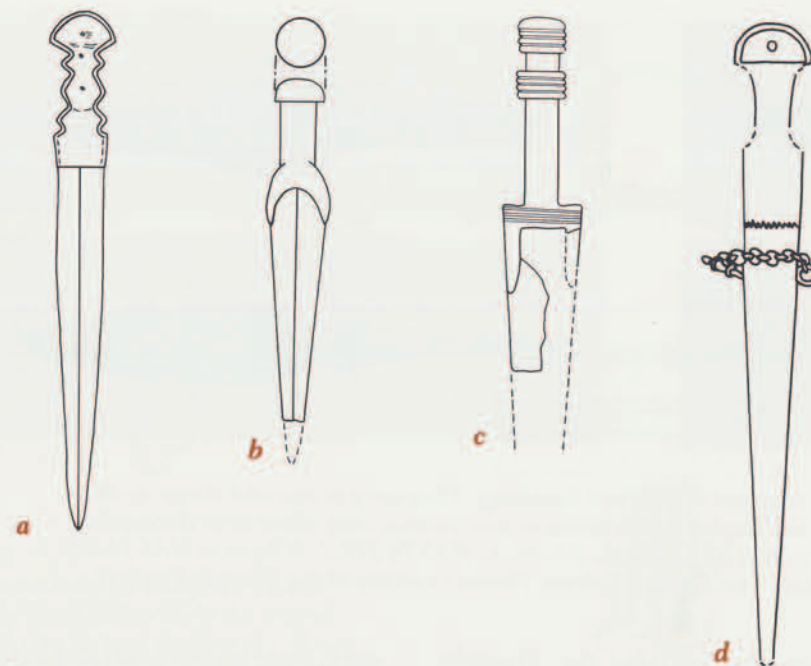
Given this arsenal of weapons, it is not surprising that the Hasanlu finds included protective metal armor. Among the bronze helmets were 2 crested (Fig. 9) and 3 pointed (Fig. 11) examples, as well as 3 detached crests, their (leather?) helmets having disintegrated; the crested helmets had separately added ear guards. Three bronze shields, a pair of bronze shoulder guards and a number of bronze and iron armor plates were also recovered. Even horses sometimes wore armor on their heads (see de Schauensee, this issue).

Both military techniques and



4a-e

Maceheads from Hasanlu were made in a variety of forms and materials, including stone, copper or bronze, and (rarely) iron. Head wounds found on victims of the battle (Fig. 21) testify to the use of such weapons to dispatch the wounded and perhaps prisoners of war. (a: UM 61-5-103, L. 7.9 cm; b: HAS 62-339, L. 7.5 cm; c: Metropolitan Museum of Art 61.100.17, L. 8.5 cm; d: Metropolitan Museum of Art 60.20.31, L. 8.5 cm; e: UM 59-4-98, L. 6.0 cm. Drawings courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



5a-d

Daggers and swords were made of bronze or iron, and often had decorated hilts, inlaid with ivory or wood. (a: Metropolitan Museum of Art 63.109.4, L. 10.3 cm; b: UM 59-4-129, L. 29.5 cm; c: HAS 59-880, L. of hilt 23 cm, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran; d: UM 61-5-112, L. 41.0 cm. Drawings courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

attitudes toward warfare can also be reconstructed from representational art found at the site. In typical Near Eastern fashion, the ruling elite of Hasanlu commissioned the illustration of battle scenes, which were displayed or stored in important buildings. These scenes appear primarily on 72 small and fragmented ivory carvings that were recovered (along with fragments bearing other motifs) from the second story collapse of Burned Building II, identified as probably a religious structure or temple. (By contrast, only two battle scene

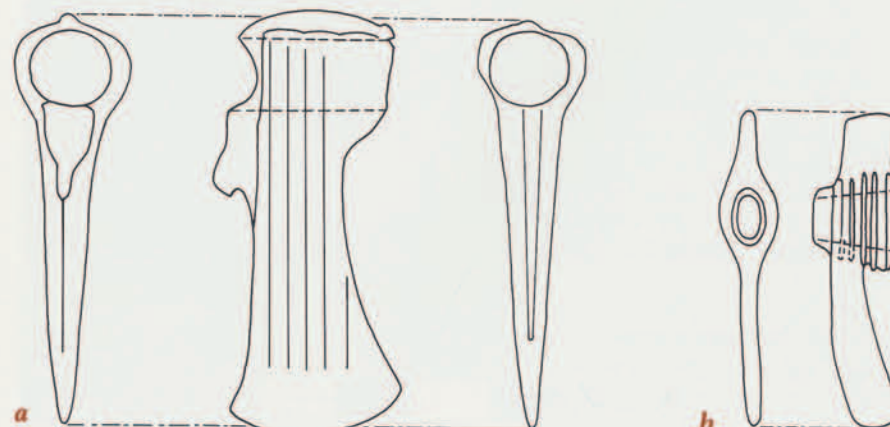
fragments came from Burned Building I, identified as probably the rulers' residence.) Battle scenes were also depicted on a silver and electrum beaker from Burned Building II, and on five small rectangular bronze or iron plaques from Burned Building I.

The ivory plaques had originally been attached with pegs to wooden objects. Because the plaques had broken and scattered when they fell with the collapse, the kinds of objects they decorated remain unknown, as does the original grouping of the plaques and the way in

which they were juxtaposed. Lacking information on the relationship between plaques, we cannot say to what extent they represent parts of a story or narrative. Both because of their fragmentary nature and because none of the ivories has an inscription (no local writing occurs at Hasanlu), we are also unable to identify or explain a number of specific aspects of these scenes; for example, what is the ethnic or political identity of the fighting forces, and what are the historical event(s) represented?

Through analogy with other Near Eastern representations, we may assume that the victorious, energetic attackers are the "locals" (probably but not necessarily the Hasanlu army), and that those they oppose and those trampled under chariot and cavalry horses are the enemy (Fig. 15). But aside from this basic information we are able to study the scenes only formally, and in isolation. Collectively, the battle scenes depicted on the ivories follow the conventional patterns known to us from Assyrian texts and representations, with only minor variations in details. The military forces represented are infantry, chariotry, and cavalry for the locals, and infantry and perhaps chariotry for their antagonists.

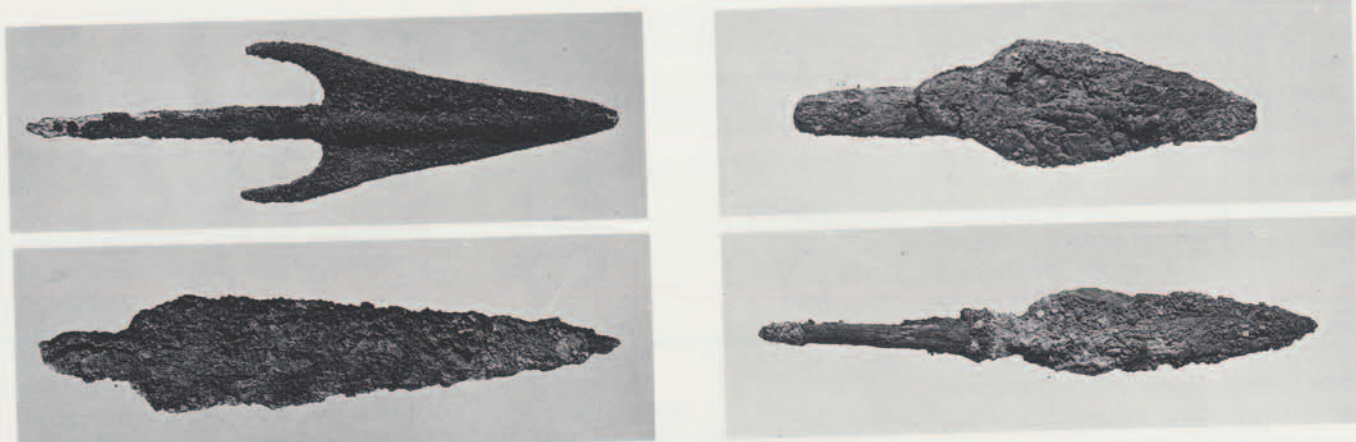
The "Hasanlu" infantry wore belted kilts that may have been protected by armor plates, feathered (or crested) helmets, sometimes with ear guards, and they fought barefoot or with sandals. Their weapon was the spear, perhaps also the sword, and they carried small shields (Figs. 3, 16). No axes, daggers, or maces are



6a,b

Bronze axes such as these from Hasanlu were a traditional weapon in Mesopotamia, depicted by the Sumerians as early as the 3rd millennium B.C. (a: HAS 62-1085, L. 18.0 cm; b: HAS 58-194, L. 13.5 cm. Both in Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Drawings courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)





**7a-d**  
Arrowheads of iron and bronze were found throughout the burned buildings. They vary in size and shape, so that a complete study of their distribution within the site (including weapons in storerooms) may allow us to distinguish between the arrows of defenders and attackers. (a: HAS 74-269, L. 9.9 cm; b: HAS 74-278, L. 6.2 cm; c: HAS 74-290, L. 9.5 cm; d: HAS 74-276, L. 11.0 cm. All from Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Photos courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

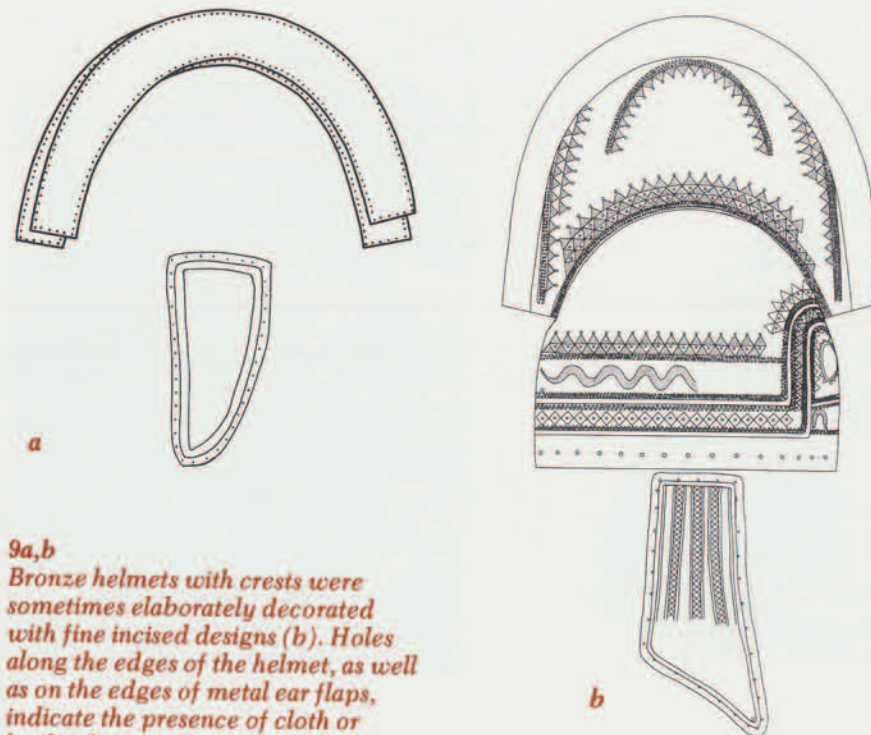
evident in the plaque scenes, although as noted above, these weapons were recovered at Hasanlu. The diameters of the 3 shields excavated at Hasanlu are respectively 33, 37, and 43 cm; the first two, at least, could be the same size as those represented on the ivories. That the belts worn may have been metal is suggested by the many bronze examples excavated at Hasanlu. It is almost impossible to determine how the enemy infantry was outfitted, but one certain representation shows an unhelmeted figure wielding a spear against local chariotry (Fig. 17); another fragment shows barefooted antagonists fighting each other (shown with another fragment in Fig. 16).

On the ivories, the Hasanlu cavalry employs only the spear; this contrasts with the way in which Assyrian reliefs display their cavalry, shown wielding the spear, the bow, or both. The Hasanlu riders wore boots, and seem to have ridden bareback since no saddles are depicted (Fig. 15b). Chariots were driven by two horses and staffed by two men, the rider and an archer—paralleling Assyrian and North Syrian custom for this period. Chariot wheels had six spokes (Fig. 15a), although one fragment shows a four-spoked wheel, perhaps an indication that this is an enemy chariot. Unlike Assyrian custom of the 9th century, but similar to contemporary North Syrian ca-

valry, there were no outrider horses used for the cavalry or chariots, nor are blinkers, bits, or horse armor depicted.

Two, possibly three, ivory fragments depict the siege of a city, a common motif on Assyrian reliefs. On one fragment a ladder placed against a platform is being mounted by an attacker who confronts a defender (Fig. 18). Another poignantly depicts a female holding her head in grief, next to a city turret just struck by an arrow (Fig. 19; see also Fig. 1). On a bronze plaque, four archers shoot from platforms (like those of Fig. 18) seemingly set above fortification walls, probably representing a city under siege. Other metal plaques depict archers,

**8**  
Empty quivers were apparently discarded during the course of the battle, and this unique example lay on the paving of the Lower Court. Made of iron with bronze bosses and tacks, it presumably had a leather lining. The iron sheeting was decorated with hammered (repoussé) fluting and figures of people and animals (see Pigott, this issue). L. 58.3 cm. (UM 71-23-324; photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



**9a,b**  
Bronze helmets with crests were sometimes elaborately decorated with fine incised designs (b). Holes along the edges of the helmet, as well as on the edges of metal ear flaps, indicate the presence of cloth or leather linings. Plain leather(?) helmets must also have been worn, documented by metal crests and flaps (a). (a: Metropolitan Museum of Art 61.100.39, L. of ear flap 14.0 cm; b: HAS 60-528, Ht. of helmet 31.0 cm, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Drawings courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



**10**  
The archer in this reconstruction wears a costume like that depicted on the silver cup from Hasanlu (see Marcus, this issue). His iron arrow and bronze quiver reproduce artifacts recovered from the burned settlement. (Drawing by Ruth Stern)

cavalry, and chariots, but not in scenes where an enemy is present. Only in one instance, on a silver and electrum beaker found at Hasanlu (see Marcus, Fig. 1), is a prisoner of war apparently represented, for here an armed soldier clasps the wrist of an unarmed figure.

As fragmented as they are, the ivory carvings enable us to present some observations about battle arrangements. Cavalry and chariots are shown fighting in action together side by side—depicted on the carvings by overlapping figures (Fig. 15a, lower right; note the hooves of a cavalry horse directly in front of the chariot horses). Likewise, infantry are shown fighting alongside chariot and cavalry horses (Fig. 15a, upper right; the hand of an infantryman wielding a spear may be seen in front of the two chariot horses' heads). Several fragments depict soldiers attacking cavalry and chariot horses (Fig. 17), and others show infantry fighting hand to hand (Fig. 16). The cavalry, albeit without stirrups for support,

seem to have functioned as lancers (Fig. 15b).

The distinct impression that one derives is that chariots, cavalry, and infantry seem to have participated in battle together without functional division—but it should be noted that the depictions may be merely an artistic convention and not necessarily a literal recording of battle maneuvering. It is thought by military historians that before the late 1st millennium B.C. (the Achaemenid period) chariots functioned primarily to transport troops to battle and to harass the enemy with arrows (see Xenophon *Cyropaedia* VI,i:27-30). The chariots were not to get too close to their infantry, because of the vulnerability of the horses to enemy weapons. The Hasanlu scenes do not seem to conform to this concept, although in fact, we may be viewing a representation of a mopping-up activity against a fleeing, broken enemy.

Light war chariots had been functioning in battle throughout the Near East for about 1000 years before the destruction of Hasanlu, but the use of a cavalry corps is not attested before the time of the Assyrian king Aššurnasirpal II in the early 9th century B.C. During his reign and that of his successor Shalmaneser III, cavalry is often mentioned in battle descriptions and depicted in art. In addition to its use in Assyria, a cavalry corps is recorded as forming units in several other armies, including those of Urartu, Babylon, Adini, Israel, and Syria. In the 9th century B.C., then, both cavalry and chariotry were normal constituents of a Near Eastern army. A large number of horse bits, protective breastplates, and harness equipment, as well as the skeletons of horses have been excavated at Hasanlu. A fragmented mass of wood together with a long pole from Burned Building IV-V may be the remains of a chariot; and some bronze and carved stone objects that may be yoke saddle pommels for chariots were recovered (see de Schauensee, this issue). Thus, the archaeological remains support the pictorial evidence that chariots and cavalry functioned as elements of the Hasanlu army.





**11a,b**  
Pointed bronze helmets of the type depicted on Assyrian troops in 9th-century reliefs (Fig. 1) may also have been worn by the soldiers of Hasanlu. Several archaeological examples were found (a), and the central figure on a decorated breastplate from Hasanlu wears similar headgear (b). (a: UM 61-5-352, Ht. 26.0 cm; b: HAS 74-241, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Photos courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

## A Brief History of Warfare in Mesopotamia

Evidence for warfare in Mesopotamia and adjacent regions begins in prehistoric times, very soon after people began building permanent settlements. Among the earliest fortified towns and villages are the early Neolithic site at Jericho dating to the 8th millennium B.C.; late Neolithic-Chalcolithic Hacilar in Anatolia, 6th millennium B.C.; Tell-es Sawwan in Mesopotamia, ca. 6000 B.C.; Ugarit in Syria, and Mersin in Cilicia, ca. 5000 B.C. Archaeological evidence also documents settlements that were destroyed by fire and abandoned, commonplace events that in some cases surely reflect hostile human activity. Fortified sites with destruction levels are recorded by archaeological research throughout the greater Near East for many millennia.

Ancient pictorial representations also furnish information about war. Seals and seal impressions dated to the Uruk period (late 4th millennium B.C.) in southern Mesopotamia and southwestern Iran depict battles and their consequences. Seals from the sites of Susa and Chogha Mish in Iran show scenes of battle and the taking of a walled citadel (Fig. 12a). Contemporary seals from the city of Uruk in Mesopotamia and from Susa depict men in undignified positions and with their arms tied behind their backs, scenes that may represent prisoners of war rather than civil criminals (Fig. 12b). A sealing from Chogha Mish shows a large seated figure in a boat, plausibly interpreted as a ruler returning home with his booty. In one hand he holds a mace, while the other grasps a rope attached to a pair of seated captives (Fig. 12c).

The earliest historical texts in cuneiform, written during the Early Dynastic Period in Sumer (ca. 2900 to 2350 B.C.), contain records of

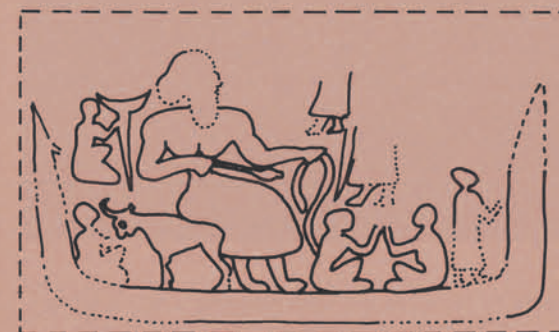
war between the independent city states of southern Mesopotamia and exaltation in the slaughter of the enemy. Contemporary sculptures depict warfare in vivid detail, and elucidate the cuneiform texts. One of the best-known monuments of the Early Dynastic period, the "Stele of the Vultures" (Fig. 13), was carved for King Eannatum of Girsu. On the stele are scenes showing disciplined uniformed troops from Girsu carrying spears and battle axes as they trample over the nude bodies of the soldiers of Umma; nearby are nude Umma bodies piled in a heap, while others are being buried under a mound of earth. A mosaic panel from the Royal Cemetery at Ur ("the Ur Standard") shows four-wheel war-wagons staffed by lancers that override the nude bodies of an enemy, and a procession of prisoners, their arms pinioned behind their backs. From this same period, shell plaques from Mari on the Euphrates River depict both soldiers bearing axes and bound



**12a**  
Scenes of battle are found in Near Eastern art as early as the 4th millennium B.C. An impression made by a cylinder seal from the site of Chogha Mish in southwestern Iran shows human figures on the walls of a fortress, hands raised in distress or surrender. Two larger figures (left) represent the conquerors, one of whom holds a small seated captive by the hair. (Drawing by Jon Snyder after Delougaz and Kantor 1972:Pl. 10:d)



**12b**  
A clay sealing from the site of Susa in southwestern Iran shows a citadel, its walls ornamented with horns. Three nude figures represent the defeated forces, falling or fleeing before a fully clothed archer. One of the small figures appears to have his hands bound behind his back. (Drawing by Jon Snyder after Amiet 1966:Fig. 11)



**12c**  
A sealing from Chogha Mish shows a triumphant ruler returning home with his booty. He holds a mace in one hand, while in the other he holds a rope around the neck of a seated prisoner of war. (Drawing by Jon Snyder after Delougaz and Kantor 1972:Pl. 10c)

prisoners. The portrayal of enemy dead in the form of nude bodies being overridden by victorious forces—usually chariots or cavalry—and of bound prisoners became standard victory motifs that continued to be represented in Near Eastern art to the 1st millennium B.C.

Beginning in the period of Semitic Akkadian control of Mesopotamia (2334-2154 B.C.) prisoners of war are mentioned for the first time in texts, and Akkadian reliefs dramatically depict them with their hands or arms held by rope behind their backs, and sometimes with their necks held in stocks. Also during this period texts mention the slaughter of prisoners for the first time; such an act is possibly portrayed on an Akkadian stele from Girsu that shows soldiers killing unarmed nude men. Deportation of the captured inhabitants of cities is first mentioned in the later texts of the Sumerian 3rd Dynasty of Ur period (ca. 2112-2004 B.C.).



**13**  
During the 3rd millennium, Mesopotamian rulers recorded their feats on sculpted stone monuments. The "Stele of the Vultures" shows the army of the city of Girsu trampling over the defeated army of Umma. (The Louvre; photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)





**14** Some of the people who died in the columned hall of Burned Building II were richly adorned with jewelry. The skeleton shown here belonged to a young woman in her late teens. She had a necklace of amber, carnelian, frit, and shell beads, and other strung beads lay below her pelvis. On her upper body were three lion pins bearing cloth impressions, one of them visible here (see Pigott, this issue). At her knee was an iron dagger with a bronze hilt; traces of a scabbard adhered to the blade. (HAS skel. 263. Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

It need not be assumed that the representations of battle scenes on the ivories were conceived by the local authority solely to emulate Assyrian propaganda techniques projecting power and royal might. And it is probable that the military forces of Hasanlu itself are represented fighting and defeating an historical enemy. If so, the depictions of a cavalry and chariot corps signify that there existed at Hasanlu an elite class that had the leisure and skills to practice and perform the necessary complex maneuvering tactics. Whether this class itself maintained and supplied the equipment and horses or whether this was a state function is unknown. Equally unknown is whether there was a conscript or a standing army, the latter being a standard feature of the Assyrians by this time.

### The Battle of Hasanlu and Its Victims

Approximately 246 skeletons of men, women, children, and infants were recovered, who perished either as a result of the fire, or as targeted victims of violence. A number of the unfortunates (about 157) were found in five of the burned buildings where they were caught when the structures collapsed. For example, in the Great Hall of Burned Building II about 50 victims were uncovered lying clustered near the main (northern) doorway, crushed beneath fallen walls and roof (Fig. 20). The victims included men, women, and many children. Some individuals were armed, while many of the females and children were wearing

jewelry, including relatively heavy lionheaded pins (Fig. 14). Another group of about 89 people were found where they fell in open areas, victims of slaughter. The cause of death is graphically documented by head wounds, or by disarticulated limbs; in the latter cases, the bodies could have been mutilated by animals and vultures, but the head wounds patently tell another story. In each category, those who perished from the collapse of the buildings, and those from slaughter, were men, women, children, and infants.

Three clusters of skeletons revealed chilling episodes of death at Hasanlu. In the first two cases, random slaughter of fleeing troops and inhabitants seems to have occurred. South of Burned Building XI the skeletons of 11 adults, 3

teenagers, 1 child, and 1 infant were uncovered close to one another; none was armed. Six of the adults had head wounds, some multiple (Fig. 21). The others were probably killed by wounds to other areas of the body, which would not necessarily leave traces on the skeleton, a situation that no doubt applies to other skeletons uncovered. And to the east of the Upper Court Gate were uncovered the clustered skeletons of 6 adults, 2 teenagers, and 1 infant; one of the adults had a head wound.

The third group of skeletons almost certainly represents slaughtered prisoners. In Room 2 of Burned Building IV the skeletons of 27 people were discovered—16 adults, the rest children and infants. Found overlapping or close together in a mass, the skeletons were lying in disarray over the burned debris from the collapsed roof, and were covered by a layer of brick debris. Four of the victims had head wounds, unambiguous evidence that they had been killed by weapons; the form of bone damage indicates that the weapon(s) used, perhaps to dispatch an already wounded and helpless person, was a mace.

The fact that the victims were lying on burned debris indicates that they were killed after the initial



a

b

**15a,b (above)** Small ivory plaques from Hasanlu depict mounted soldiers with spears and chariots trampling over the bodies of the enemy. Following Mesopotamian tradition, the defeated soldiers are nude. (a: Metropolitan Museum of Art 65.163.19, 21, W. ca. 9.5 cm; b: Metropolitan Museum of Art 65.163.9, Ht. 4.5 cm. Photos courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)



**16 (left)** Vigorous battle scenes depicting foot soldiers fighting with spears and small shields are found on the Hasanlu ivory plaques. The man on the left wears a crested helmet (see Fig. 9). Ht. upper frag. 3.4 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art 65.163.8, 18. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)





**17** This ivory fragment shows a bare-headed soldier attacking chariot horses with a spear. Ht. 4.0 cm. (HAS 70-409, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

collapse of the building, but while the walls were still standing. This evidence suggests that the victims seem to have been purposely brought to Room 2 to be executed shortly after the fire had died out and the destruction had been accomplished. At some time after their death the walls collapsed and sealed them in the rubble.

Whether the killing of prisoners (if indeed such was the case here), as opposed to the random slaughter of fleeing inhabitants, was an isolated event at Hasanlu is unclear. Nothing is known of the dynamics that preceded the invasion of the Citadel by the enemy: whether the inhabitants surrendered only to be killed nevertheless, or whether they did not surrender, and being defeated suffered the consequences. In this context we may wonder if the massacre in Burned Building IV was a punitive political action or a religious one, such as sacrifice?

Likewise we wonder about the presence or absence of the Hasanlu armed forces: were they defeated in the neighboring plains, or were they absent on a campaign? Wherever they were, they could not prevent the invasion, an invasion that was accomplished by a strict following of the Assyrian method of warfare.

The fire that destroyed the site at Hasanlu either was deliberately set or resulted from an accident, but it must have started soon after the enemy entered the city. Whatever

the cause, the fire spread through the wood and brick buildings of the Citadel quite quickly, apparently preventing the enemy from acquiring much, if any, booty. There is no obvious evidence within the debris that looting or post-destruction digging for treasure occurred; rather the opposite is suggested. For example, the well-known gold "bowl" (actually a beaker; see Winter, this issue) was found in the arms of, apparently, a local inhabitant, who in the process of attempting to save it died in the collapse of Burned Building I-West. And the



**18** Fragment of a siege scene showing an attacker attempting to scale a wall or platform with a ladder. The feet of the defenders, one of whom carries a shield, are visible at the top. Between the fortress and ladder a horse's head is visible. Ht. 3.7 cm. (HAS 60-950, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

vast quantity of material recovered within the debris of all the buildings, some of it sumptuous (artifacts of silver, gold, ivory, Egyptian Blue), suggests that the city's contents remained essentially unplundered.

### Who Burned Hasanlu?

To encounter the material remains of the destruction of the buildings and inhabitants of Hasanlu is to confront the actualities of the written descriptions and illustrated reliefs of the Assyrians: burning, killing, massacre. Not a few archaeologists who excavated at the site were emotionally affected by the carnage and the human suffering that had taken place. Yet, there is no historical evidence that it was the Assyrians who destroyed Hasanlu. In fact, both locally derived chronology and archaeological and textual evidence of Urartian penetration into the neighboring Ushnu valley directly to the west (at the mountain-top site of Qalatgah) suggest that it was an Urartian army in the last decade of the 9th century B.C. that probably destroyed Hasanlu. This information soberly expands our perceptions, geographically and culturally, about the extent and

nature of the horrors of warfare in the first millennium B.C.

Urartian texts, while not so graphically descriptive as the Assyrian sources, do mention some Urartian military tactics, including the taking of prisoners in battle; and at least one text from the 8th century B.C. refers to the deportation of captured troops. Perhaps, then, we may assume that some prisoners—if not booty—were taken by the Urartians at Hasanlu. Urartian texts also reveal that the king himself led his forces in battle. It was King Ishpuina and his son Menua, the builders of Qalatgah in the late 9th century B.C. during their joint reign, who may have been responsible for the attack on Hasanlu. If so, then we may assume that both these kings were present during the site's destruction. And if this interpretation is correct, the destruction and slaughter at Hasanlu IV furnishes grisly information about the customs associated with a Urartian military campaign. Ironically, excavations at the Urartian site of Karmir Blur in Soviet Armenia reveal that when that city was destroyed in the last half of the 7th century B.C., it too experienced violent burning and slaughter.



**19** Women are rarely depicted in the art of 9th century Hasanlu, in which scenes of warfare and ceremony predominate. This ivory plaque fragment shows a figure with braided hair; both the hairstyle and the position of the hands suggest this is a woman, in despair as she watches the enemy's attack. An arrow juts out of the tower behind her. Ht. 3.0 cm. (Metropolitan Museum of Art 65.163.24. Photo courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art)



**20** Victims of the battle at Hasanlu were often found trapped within buildings that had burned and collapsed. This group lay at the northern end of the columned hall in Burned Building II, near the outside door. Other items found on the floor included charred beams (upper left) and a red deer skull with antlers (in front of the workman). (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

Not knowing either the ancient name of the city, or its political affiliation, we are frustratingly unable to relate it historically to one of the many cities or states situated in Iran that are mentioned in Assyrian texts. Yet, as noted above, the historical and archaeological evidence suggest that the enemy that destroyed Hasanlu was Urartu. If so, we may ask if there is any evidence for the presence of Urartian troops within the ruins of Hasanlu. The answer is no, except for possible but tenuous indications or clues. One possible clue is the presence of five complete or fragmentary crested helmets (Fig. 9), which have been called Urartian by R.D. Barnett and J. Borchhardt. Crested helmets, without ear guards, were worn by North Syrian troops, and also by those Urartians represented on the bronze gates from Balawat commissioned by Shalmaneser III (858-824 B.C.).

The Urartian helmets on the Balawat gates, however, are depicted with short, pointed ear

guards made with the helmets, not added on as in the Hasanlu examples, and thus it cannot be argued with force that the latter belonged to the Urartian invaders. And if the ivory pictorial evidence indicates that the Hasanlu infantry wore feathered/crested helmets, they are not the same as the excavated examples. Who, then, wore the crested helmets recovered at Hasanlu? Equally puzzling is the presence of the pointed helmets (Fig. 11), which are very like the Assyrian standard form, and which after the mid-9th century were represented in art as also worn by Urartians. Did the Urartian troops wear both crested (for officers?) and pointed helmets while at Hasanlu? Or, did the local forces themselves employ a variety of helmet forms? More research and thought are needed to resolve this problem.

Another possible clue depends on the cultural attribution of a bronze mace head (Fig. 4c) with star or rosette faces. Two very similar examples, albeit found in a later



context, derive from Altin Tepe, an Urartian site in northeastern Turkey. Were the Altin Tepe examples booty from the Hasanlu campaign kept as heirlooms, or were they locally made in Urartu under northwestern Iranian influence; or is the Hasanlu example a weapon lost there by an Urartian soldier? We do not know. Nor in fact do we know how many (if any) of the other artifacts excavated at Hasanlu actually may have been left by the enemy forces and are thus not to be documented as local products. Here too, more research, not speculation, is required to resolve this tantalizing issue.

From all the evidence made available by archaeology—the destruction, the artifacts, the pictorial representations—it is attested that warfare was not a casual or incidental activity for the people of Hasanlu IV. Nevertheless, archaeology has also revealed that there was time, energy, and talent for architects and workmen to construct monumental buildings, and for highly skilled craftsmen to manufacture a large variety of objects, both luxury items and objects for daily use. At Hasanlu there was a time for war and a time for peace, but war was the ultimate event in its history.



21

*A large group of people were slaughtered outside the entrance to the settlement, to the south of Burned Building XI. Several in the group had head wounds, visible on the skulls as bone damage. Skeleton 392, a male of about 20, was killed by a mace that left a rounded depression on the back of the skull (right). A healed lenticular (sword) wound is also visible in the center of the photo; his age and the earlier wound suggest that he may have been a soldier. (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)*

#### Bibliography

- Amiet, Pierre  
1966  
*Elam*. Paris: Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.
- Brentjes, Burchard  
1986  
"Kriegswesen im alten Orient." *Das Altertum* 32:134-142.
- Delougaz, P.P., and Helene J. Kantor  
1972  
"New Evidence for the Prehistoric and Protoliterate Culture Development of Khuzestan." In *Vth International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology: Tehran, Isfahan, Shiraz*, Vol. 1, pp. 14-33. Tehran: Ministry of Culture and Arts.

- Dyson, R.H., and Muscarella, Oscar White  
1989  
"Constructing the Chronology and Historical Implications of Hasanlu IV." *Iran* 27:1-27.

- Gelb, I.J.  
1973  
"Prisoners of War in Early Mesopotamia." *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 32(1-2):70-98.

- Layard, Austen Henry  
1849  
*The Monuments of Nineveh*. Vol. 1. London: John Murray.

- Muscarella, Oscar White  
1980  
*The Catalogue of Ivories from Hasanlu, Iran*. Philadelphia: The University Museum.

- Rolle, R.  
1977  
"Urartu und die Reiternomaden." *Saeculum* 28(3):291-339.

- Schulman, A.R.  
1979-80  
"Chariots, Chariotry, and the Hyksos." *Journal of the Society for the Study of Egyptian Antiquities* 10:105-153.

- von Soden, Wolfram  
1963  
"Die Assyrer und der Krieg." *Iraq* 25(2):131-144.

- Yadin, Yigael  
1963  
*The Art of War in Biblical Lands*. 2 vols. New York: McGraw Hill.

Oscar White Muscarella is Senior Research Fellow in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. He received his B.A. in modern history from the City College of New York, and his Ph.D. in classical archaeology from the University of Pennsylvania. He has excavated in Colorado, South Dakota, at Gordion in Turkey, and at several sites in Iran. In 1958-59 he was a Fulbright scholar at the American School of Classical Studies in Athens. Muscarella's interests include the Iron Age archaeology of the Near East, the cultural relations between Greece and the Near



East in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C., and the problem of forgeries in ancient Near Eastern art. His latest book is *Bronze and Iron: Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*.