

# The "Hasanlu Gold Bowl": Thirty Years Later

IRENE J. WINTER

Just over 30 years ago, the extraordinary vessel known as the "Hasanlu Gold Bowl" was discovered in the debris of Burned Building I-West, part of the major architectural complex belonging to period IVB on the High Mound. Found not far from the skeletal hand of the individual who had been fleeing with the piece when the building collapsed toward the end of the 9th century B.C., the bowl was raised aloft by its excavator, Robert H. Dyson, Jr., almost 3000 years later (Fig. 1).

It was immediately evident that the new find represented a unique and important example of the ancient goldsmith's craft, displaying a high degree of technical mastery and a wide range of decorative motifs that, it was hoped, could provide a key to the religious and mythological traditions of the site. Within a year of its discovery, the bowl had been published in *Expedition* by Edith Porada (1959)—a penetrating study of style and imagery that remains a primary source of information on the piece. Over the intervening years, the bowl has been discussed in countless scholarly books and articles. Most recently, the accumulated literature on the bowl has provided the opportunity for an important analysis by Marie-Therese Barrelet



**1** The Hasanlu gold bowl and its discoverer Robert H. Dyson in 1958. Called "Baby" by members of the excavation staff, it was placed in the vault of a local bank for safe-keeping. (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

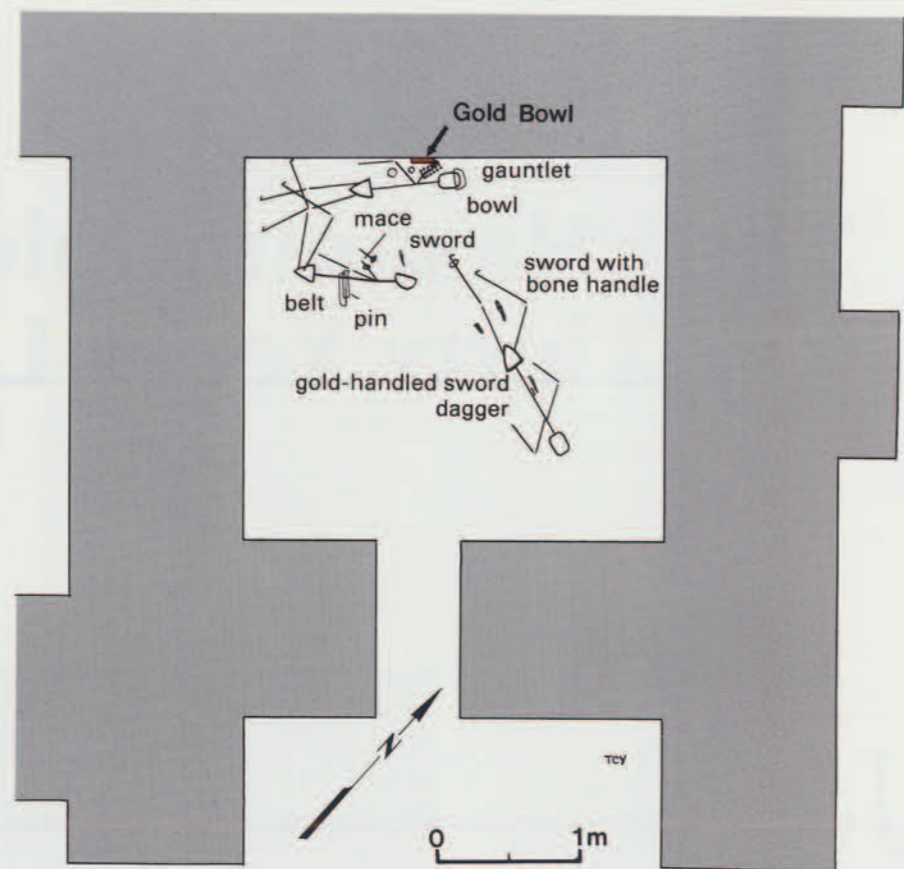
of the very nature of empirical data, scholarly inference, and explanation in our field (1984).

Nevertheless, as scholars of the ancient Near East continue to debate the bowl's proper chronological place, the decipherment of its motifs, and the ethno-linguistic tradition behind its manufacture, the "meaning" of the bowl continues to elude us. Thus, for this special issue of *Expedition* devoted to Hasanlu it seems timely to review where we stand, and perhaps also to point the way toward some fruitful avenues of future research, given shifts in analytic perspective and the accumulation of new data over the past 30 years.

## Background

The history of discovery of the gold bowl is generally provided by Porada and has been repeated with a variety of details in subsequent publications, but some points are worthy of mention here. The bowl was discovered in association with a party of three men (Fig. 2). All were found sandwiched between a thick layer of burned material below and heavy bricky collapse above, in the southeast room (9) of Burned Building I-West (see Dyson, "Architecture," Fig. 10). The leader of the party carried an iron sword and a gold-handled dagger. The second individual, who had been carrying the bowl in his right hand, wore a gauntlet marked by several rows of bronze buttons. The third man bore a star-shaped mace, dagger, and sword. Neither the buttons nor the weapons have permitted scholars thus far to determine if these men were among the invaders or the local defenders at the time of the destruction of Hasanlu in period IVB.

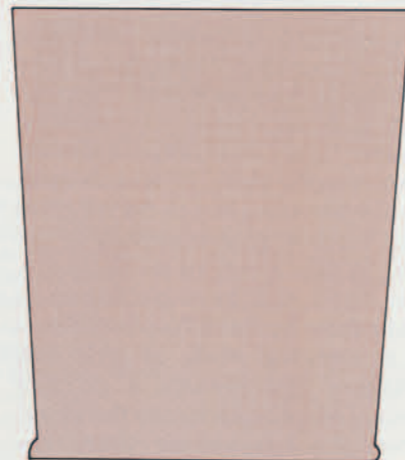
The bowl was found lying against the north wall, just beyond the fingerbones of its bearer. A low column of stone in the center of the adjacent southwest room is now understood to have been the center support of a stairway leading to the upper floor, and perhaps to the roof as well. Since the three men were facing away from the stairs as



2 Sketch plan showing the archaeological context in which the gold bowl was found (Burned Building I-West, Rm. 9). The bowl was being carried by a party of three men, two of them armed, when the building collapsed and buried them in brick debris.

they fell, one cannot argue that they were racing toward the stairs to escape; they may, however, have been heading toward a window in the exterior wall that gave onto a back alley, as the building was being gutted by fire. While the absence of other objects in the debris might suggest that the men were on the roof rather than in an interior room, two stratigraphic considerations suggest that they were indeed on the second floor. First, they were thoroughly buried by collapsed brickwork; second, the volume of collapse, when added to the height of the standing walls found in excavation, implies the presence of a second story (R. Dyson, pers. com.).

Because the bowl was found flattened, it is difficult to reconstruct its original shape exactly. On



3 Reconstruction of the original shape of the gold bowl (HAS 58-469): ht. ca. 20 cm, rim diameter ca. 18 cm, base diameter ca. 15 cm.

4,5

(4, above) Gold bowl, view 1. (Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran, No. 15712). (5) Gold bowl, view 2. (Photos courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



the basis of rim and base measurements, it seems clear the vessel had slightly flaring sides (Fig. 3): maximum rim diameter ca. 18 cm, maximum base diameter ca. 15 cm, height ca. 20 cm. It is thus actually more likely to have been some sort of large cup or beaker than a "bowl," but barring certainty, we shall retain the original terminology here.

The piece was hammered in low repoussé relief from the inside, then chased on the exterior, with the base and sides covered in a series of figural scenes (Figs. 4, 5, 6, 20). Scholars from Porada to Barrelet have provided motif-by-motif descriptions and interpretations of the bowl's imagery, and I will not recapitulate the arguments for each one here. Rather this article will summarize prior work as it relates to our understanding of the bowl as a whole, and as it points the way to work that still needs to be done.

There are three major areas where unanswered questions warrant renewed study today: (1) Where and When?: the place and date of manufacture; (2) What?: the iconography and narrative reading of the motifs; and (3) Who?: ethnic, linguistic, and cultural associations of the site of Hasanlu and of the bowl's decorative scheme.

## Where and When?: Place and Date of Manufacture

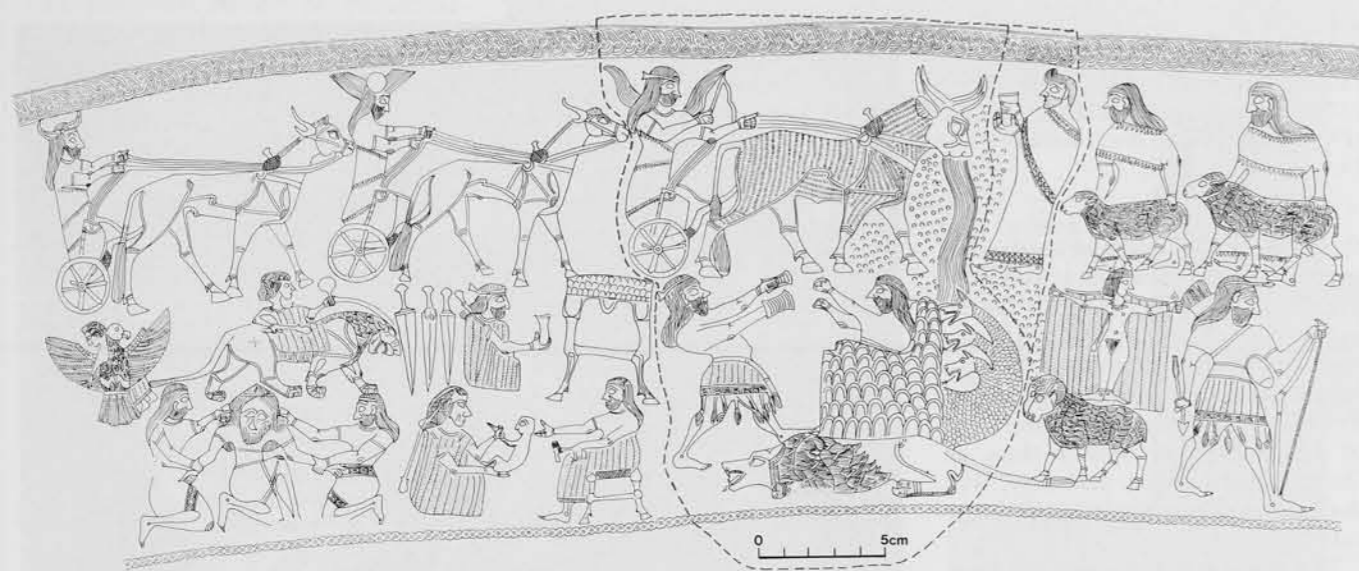
### Place

As with any archaeological find, we must ask whether the object was likely to have been manufactured at the place where it was discovered or elsewhere, and if elsewhere, whether within the same general cultural area, or imported from outside. At present, there is no evidence to contradict a hypo-

thesis of manufacture at Hasanlu. The bowl seems quite consistent in style and rendering with what has been defined as the "local style" of level IVB, exemplified by the silver beaker also found in Burned Building I-East (Fig. 7), and other related finds such as ivory carvings and seal impressions (see Marcus, this issue). And the gold bowl is significantly different in style from the closely related but more elegantly executed gold vessels found

at Marlik Tepe in the south Caspian region to the east (Fig. 8).

Unfortunately, not enough sites within the general area of northwest Iran have been excavated to demonstrate the range of styles and forms in metalwork and other luxury materials that could confirm attribution to local manufacture. Needed are the excavation of more Iron Age sites in the Solduz and adjacent valleys, as well as excavation in the Outer Town area of



6 The decorative scheme of the Hasanlu bowl, based upon the 1974 drawing by M.T.M. de Schauensee. Highlighted area suggests the focus of the bowl's decorative scheme. (Courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



7 Silver beaker from Hasanlu, presumably of local manufacture. The scenes of warfare may be attributed to Assyrian contact. Ht. 17.0 cm. (HAS 58-427; Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

8 Gold beaker from a grave at the site of Marlik near the Caspian Sea. Ht. 17.5 cm. (Grave no. 26; Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran; photo courtesy of Ezat O. Negahban)



Hasanlu, where a metal workshop dating to Hasanlu IV has been found (de Schauensee 1988). Until such investigations have been carried out, it seems reasonable to proceed within the hypothetical—but tenable—framework that the bowl is indeed a product of northwest Iran and could well have been made at Hasanlu itself.

#### Date

Archaeological and historical evidence suggests that Hasanlu IVB was destroyed toward the end of the 9th century B.C. (Dyson and Muscarella 1989). Clearly, the bowl

had to have been made before this destruction. Just how much earlier depends on how one weighs typological and stylistic comparisons with other, related material. Essentially, either the bowl was made sometime during the period IVB occupation (ca. 1000-800 B.C.), or it was older, a valued heirloom that continued to be used into the 9th century.

All of the arguments concerning the chronology of the bowl have been summarized in Barrelet (1984). Most scholars have followed Porada in placing its manufacture in the late 2nd millennium B.C. (1250-1000), contemporary with period IVC at Hasanlu (see Dyson, "Rediscovering Hasanlu," Fig. 5; Dyson and Muscarella 1989). This date has been suggested on two grounds: 1) stylistic parallels with finds in Mesopotamia historically dated to the late 2nd millennium; and 2) the absence of themes and narratives denoting contact with the Assyrians, apparent in architecture and in some artifacts associated with period IVB (e.g., the silver beaker, Fig. 7). Nevertheless, Muscarella (1971, 1988b) and Barrelet prefer a date in the 10th-9th century, contemporary with the bowl's archaeological context, based upon iconographic links

with other 1st millennium works. Specifically, Muscarella has argued that the closeness of composition and motifs between the Hasanlu bowl and 9th-century carved stone reliefs from Carchemish—for example, gods standing on the back of a couchant lion (Fig. 9), and a woman with mirror seated on a lion (Fig. 10)—must be seen as evidence of contemporaneity.

This is a problem that needs further and systematic study; its ultimate determination depends not only on the validity of the particular parallels drawn, but also on very basic underlying principles of how scholars weigh evidence in argument. At issue is how one independently considers stylistic details, iconography, and composition, and how one decides to give greater weight to one or the other if the evidence does not concur on all counts.

I think it is important to emphasize the strength of some of the arguments for the later date, no matter where one stands in the end. First and foremost is the archaeological context of the bowl's dis-

covery. Stylistically the bowl is very much at home with other works in metal and ivory found within the Hasanlu period IVB occupation, a fact that must be explained away to accommodate a date of manufacture in the 2nd millennium. If the bowl was made in the late 2nd millennium, this would fall within Hasanlu period IVC, which begins during the 12th century B.C., or during Hasanlu period V (ca. 1500-1200 B.C.), a phase that has major architectural and ceramic continuity with period IV (see Dyson and Muscarella 1989, Dyson 1976, Young 1967). Unfortunately, we have virtually no decorated works from either period IVC or from period V with which to compare the bowl. We need to know a great deal more about the artifactual and cultural continuities between the phases in order to determine whether the "climate" of periods IVC or V could have produced or sustained the bowl.

Second, the chronological evidence provided by three swords or daggers depicted on the bowl is ambiguous. Porada rightly points

out that these are types known from 2nd millennium tombs; however, two of these types may also occur in later contexts. A single example of the type with a horizontal guard just below the hilt has been found on the Citadel at Hasanlu in the same building as the bowl (Fig. 11; see also Muscarella 1988b). The second dagger type depicted, with a crescent-shaped attachment between the blade and the hilt, poses a problem because the Late Bronze Age tombs in which this type is found have generally been re-opened and contaminated with later, Iron Age,



9 Relief from Carchemish in North Syria showing the sun and moon gods on a lion. (Archaeological Museum, Ankara, No. 10078. Photo courtesy of the British Museum, Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities)



10 Relief from Carchemish in North Syria showing a goddess (or priestess) seated on a lion. (Archaeological Museum, Ankara, No. 141. Photo courtesy of the British Museum, Department of Western Asiatic Antiquities)

materials (see Schaeffer 1948:407; Dyson 1964). Thus, until close typological analysis of the weapons depicted on the bowl is undertaken, followed by a comparison with the corpus of related pieces excavated and published in recent years, they should not be used as evidence for an earlier origin of the bowl.

The third, more complex argument for a later date concerns conservative tendencies in artistic decoration under certain cultural and historical circumstances. One of the most compelling arguments for the 2nd millennium dating of the gold bowl is that it evinces none of the Assyrian elements apparent on the silver beaker and on other artifacts from the site. Since

historical contact with Assyria is documented in the early 1st millennium, the argument goes, the bowl must precede that contact—just as the silver beaker must post-date it. However, in a study of the effects of Assyrian “influence” upon Hasanlu, I have argued that Hasanlu was not equally receptive to the Assyrian imprint in all cultural domains. It is in the public/political arena where we see Hasanlu responding to Neo-Assyrian stimuli—the external facades of buildings, sumptuary goods such as ivory, motifs of political power—while the interior organization of architectural space and the religious system largely retain their local configurations (Winter 1977). If that is so, then the necessary precedence of the bowl in relation to the beaker vanishes, because its subject-matter would fall into the more conservative realm of the religious and so *need not* reflect Assyrian contact. Such an interpretation clearly leaves open the possibility of a 9th-century date for the gold bowl, contemporary with the beaker but representing a different, more conservative aspect of Hasanlu society.

In future studies, then, it would be highly desirable to have more systematic articulation of stylistic criteria in the establishment of

relative dating sequences. Further analysis of archaeological comparanda and of the complex cultural context for the Iron Age levels at Hasanlu, already in progress, would need to be considered, and, of course, we must have more excavation!

### What?: Iconography and Narrative Reading of Motifs

We may turn now to the second area of needed study, the bowl's decorative scheme. This section can be subdivided into three parts: (1) the identification of individual motifs; (2) the compositional relationships between motifs; and (3) the possible narrative “reading(s)” of the bowl as a whole.

#### Motifs

Porada laid the foundations for the interpretation of individual motifs, based upon visual and textual parallels to material from across the ancient Near East and stressing the “Hurrian” connections (see box on Hurrians). Subsequent studies have added associations and/or shifted emphases, and the whole range of attributions has



11  
Copper/bronze sword from Hasanlu. L. 46 cm. (Burned Building I-West, Rm. 1; HAS 58-241, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran, No. 10591. Drawing courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



12  
Detail, upper zone of the gold bowl: storm god in chariot and priest. Only the doubled horns of the front bull indicate that there are indeed two overlapping animals. (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

recently been summarized for each motif (Barrelet 1984:43-46).

An array of three deities in chariots appears in the upper field, moving from left to right, meeting a delegation of three walking or standing men facing left (Fig. 6). The lead deity has been identified as a storm god by virtue of his attribute animals, the bulls pulling the chariot, from whose mouths issue streams of water or rain (Fig. 12). The chariots following are pulled by equids (mules?). The second deity may be identified as the sun god by the disk and rays or wings issuing from the top of his head, represented similarly at Carchemish (Fig. 9) and elsewhere in the early 1st millennium B.C. The third deity may perhaps be identified as the moon god on the basis of the association between the pair of bulls' horns set on his head and the curve of a lunar crescent, as well as the frequent pairing of sun and moon gods (Fig. 9) and the equally frequent references to the importance of storm, sun, and moon in the Hurrian pantheon (Lambert 1978).

The leader of the three men confronting the divine array extends a goblet or beaker before the lead chariot, while each of the two individuals following him brings a ram, presumably for sacrifice. This

combination of libation and sacrifice is well known in the texts and representations of the Hittite and Neo-Hittite periods to the west, and of Elam to the south (see Dyson, “Rediscovering Hasanlu,” Fig. 13). The libation especially, as performed by priests and/or rulers, was part of standard ritual practice (Haas and Wilhelm 1974, Porada 1970). The sacrifice of sheep to the high gods, especially the weather god, is attested from Hurrian and Hittite contexts in the 2nd millennium as well as from Urartu in the 1st (Haas and Wilhelm 1974, Zimansky 1985). The three offerants thus add a human, liturgical component to the otherwise divine and mythological elements of the bowl's decoration.

Motifs in the lower field have proved more elusive, but also more intriguing. Porada early identified what appears to be the principal scene of a heroic figure wearing kilt and some sort of boxing gloves(?), engaged in stylized combat with a half-human figure emerging from a rock enclave out of which issue three fierce serpents (Fig. 13). She associated it with the Hurrian myth in which the youthful storm god Tešub does battle with Ullikummi, a stone monster created by the aged god Kumarbi in an attempt to unseat Tešub and re-

sume his former place as chief god. How this would relate to the couchant lion upon whose back the whole event seems to be taking place is uncertain, although there is the precedent at Carchemish for divine figures to be set upon such a creature (Fig. 9).

Other elements of the same myth, preserved on tablets from Boğazköy, have been seen by some scholars in the motifs to the immediate left and right of the battle. (Boğazköy was the capital of the Hittite Empire in central Anatolia at a time when close relations between the Indo-European Hittites and the neighboring Hurrian population can be attested; see box on Hurrians.) At left, a squatting female handing an odd-looking baby(?) to a seated male could well represent the preamble of the same story, when the infant Ullikummi was born and laid on the knees of his father, Kumarbi. To the right, the nude goddess on two rams may be identified as Ištar/Šaušga, sister of the storm god in the Hittite/Hurrian version, who tries unsuccessfully to seduce Ullikummi before Tešub engages him in battle.

It is important to note, however, that within the Hurrian repertoire, there may well be other myth cycles whose events fit better the imagery on the bowl, but which are less well known. For example, we now know of an episode similar to that about Ullikummi, in which the god Kumarbi engenders a second monster (called Hedammu) to combat Tešub (Siegelová 1971). The creature's name is written with the determinative sign for snake or serpent (significant for the three serpents attached to the mountain stronghold here?), and in this sequence the goddess Ištar/Šaušga is successful in seducing him, thereby breaking his power. This very fragmentary text is enough to indicate that even better literary parallels for the imagery than the Tešub/Ullikummi story may eventually turn up within the Hurrian canon. The other motifs on the bowl are less easy to identify, much less to associate with a known narrative, but some parallels can be cited for individual elements. The figure



13  
Detail, lower zone of the gold bowl: combat scene. (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

## Glossary of Gods

**Ea:** high-ranking Mesopotamian god of sweet waters, associated with wisdom; appears also in Hurrian pantheon and myth-cycle of Tešub

**Etana:** youthful hero in Mesopotamian myth, who flies to heaven on the back of a bird

**Gilgamesh:** legendary ruler of the Mesopotamian city-state of Uruk, hero of an epic cycle translated into a variety of contemporary languages, including Hittite, Hurrian, and Elamite

**Haldi:** chief god of the Urartian pantheon, associated with the storm

**Hedammu:** snake or serpent monster created by Kumarbi to combat Tešub, youthful storm god/hero of the Hurrian pantheon

**Humbaba:** demon guardian of the Cedar Forest, battled by Gilgamesh and his companion, Enkidu

**Ištar:** Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and war, who also appears in a number of other ancient Near Eastern pantheons

**Kubaba:** chief goddess of the 1st millennium Luwian pantheon of Carchemish and elsewhere, frequently shown seated upon a lion, and holding a spindle and/or mirror

**Kumarbi:** antagonist of Tešub in Hurrian mythology, formerly chief god of the pantheon, who was replaced by the younger god. He devised a number of monsters to combat Tešub in an attempt to regain dominance; sometimes associated with Enlil of the Mesopotamian pantheon

**Nergal:** major deity in the Mesopotamian pantheon, associated

with the underworld; appears also in other traditions, such as the Hurrian and Hittite. Associated with the sword

**Šaušga:** name of goddess comparable to Ištar in the Hurrian pantheon, whose seat was at Nineveh in northern Mesopotamia. In the eastern Hurrian realm, she was the consort of Tešub

**Tešub:** chief deity of the Hurrian pantheon in the 2nd millennium, associated with the storm; protagonist of a myth-cycle in which a number of demonic creatures must be fought and defeated. In the Urartian pantheon, a youthful hero-god ranked below Haldi

**Ullikummi:** stone monster created by Kumarbi to combat Tešub (see also Hedammu); defeated in battle in the midst of the sea, as preserved in Hurrian myth



14

Detail, middle zone of the gold bowl: goddess seated on lion. (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)

apparently carried on the back of an eagle evokes the Mesopotamian myth of the youthful male Etana, who flew to heaven on such a carrier; however, on the basis of the distinctive braided hairdo, comparable to that of all the other women on the bowl and different from the straight hair of the men, the figure seems undeniably female.

The motif of two kneeling males subduing a large central figure has been associated with an episode from the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh, in which Gilgamesh and his companion Enkidu do battle with the demon of the Cedar Forest, Humbaba. It is not at all clear whether this fairly common motif always represents the Humbaba episode or whether it can be applied to other heroic contests as well; however, the presence of mythological elements best known from Mesopotamian sources is not problematic, since we now have versions of the Gilgamesh epic in several languages, including Hurrian, Hittite, and Elamite. Gilgamesh even appears in some Hurrian mythological texts as a character (Güterbock 1951-2), and the "Humbaba" motif in particular is frequently represented in 9th-century Neo-Hittite reliefs (for example, at Carchemish), where Hurrian and Indo-European components are mixed.

I would also suggest that superposition of the carrier eagle and the three figures in combat may not be accidental. There is a late 2nd millennium cylinder seal from Tell Billa in north Mesopotamia that, although damaged, shows clearly the two motifs juxtaposed in the same field (D. Matthews, pers. com.).

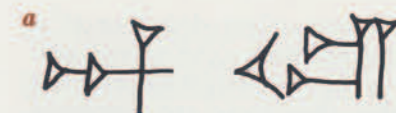
The female figure seated on a lion (Fig. 14), holding a mace or spindle in her right hand and a mirror in her left hand, has a long history in south Iranian/Elamite representations (Porada 1965). It is also familiar from Syria and Mesopotamia and appears again in a number of guises on Neo-Hittite reliefs (Fig. 10). This last figure is associated with the chief goddess of the late Hittite pantheon, Kubaba, who is generally represented with similar attributes (Hawkins 1981).

The three swords immediately to her right are quite mysterious.

Some hints as to their associated reference may be suggested, however, from the following facts: (1) one of the logographic writings of the name of the Mesopotamian god of the underworld, Nergal, uses the sign for "sword" (Fig. 15a); (2) this same logogram is used for writing the name of the comparable Hittite god; (3) a single down-pointed sword with human/lion-headed pommel is thought to represent that very god on the rock-cut reliefs of Yazılıkaya near Boğazköy, which, although a product of the Hittite Empire, incorporate a number of Hurrian elements (Fig. 15b); (4) Nergal is included in Hurrian god-lists as an important deity (Diakonov 1981); and (5), in a number of Hurrian texts, a goddess who incorporates aspects of both Ishtar and Kubaba is often paired with the Hurrian Nergal, so that the juxtaposition here of the swords with the goddess on a lion would not be out of place (see Wegner 1981).

Most enigmatic is the representation of a squatting male with a beaker in his right hand extended toward an empty stool, altar, or table. This piece of furniture, with its bull's feet and cross-bar, resembles somewhat the stool on which a male figure is seated just below; however, its scale-patterned surface is different, as is its size in relation to the accompanying human figure. The offering of a beaker (libation?), not unlike the object held by the ritual figure in the upper field, suggests something sacred. Is this then an offering/prayer before an empty divine throne/stool or altar/table? In fact, we do have evidence of offerings made to the "Lord of the Stool" and to the stool of the goddess Hebat in Hittite/Hurrian contexts (Haas and Wilhelm 1974), as well as similar representations on 2nd millennium Elamite cylinder seals, on one of which a joint of meat is held above an empty stool (Porada 1986).

The hair, beard, and garment of the squatting male seem closely related to the figures of a man and a woman with infant below, and one wonders whether he could be connected to the same narrative. If the furniture could be demonstrated to be an altar, offering table, or stool



15a, b  
The swords in the lower field of the Hasanlu gold bowl may refer to a male deity. a) A link between swords and the Mesopotamian god of the underworld, Nergal, is suggested by the way in which the god's name is written in Assyrian texts. The sign or logogram to the right when written can mean "sword"; when combined with the sign for "deity" (to the left), it is read as "Nergal." b) Rockcut reliefs within the shrine of Yazılıkaya near Boğazköy portray Hittite deities. This representation of a down-pointed sword with human/lion-headed pommel is thought to represent a Hittite god whose name is written with the logogram used for Nergal in Mesopotamia. (Photo courtesy of M.M. Voigt)

of an unmanifest deity, or if it relates to either the storm god above or the narrative combat nearby, then there are numerous lines of inquiry to pursue: (1) Babylonian/Kassite representations of altars as divine symbols on carved boundary stones (*kudurrus*) of the late 2nd and early 1st millennium; (2) Hittite and Neo-Hittite reliefs of offering tables before divine or deceased figures; (3) the full range of Elamite libations and offerings depicted on seals; and (4) textual references to offerings to deities, manifest and unmanifest, across all of the above traditions.

What is interesting in this regard is that the stool/altar/table motif is placed to the right of the three swords, the goddess-on-lion, and the woman carried by eagle, and it may relate to them in meaning. It may as well be related to the scene of squatting woman, infant, and seated man (Kumarbi?) below. This leads us to the second part of the present section.

#### Composition and Relations Between Motifs

##### Upper and Lower Fields: Primary Focus

The upper field of the bowl's decoration is clearly demarcated by the implied groundline of the gods and opposing males. It is as if the three deities receive the offering or worship represented by the beaker and sacrificial animals brought by the three men. At the same time, some visual unity between the upper and lower field is achieved through the device of the punctate circles that fill the space between the storm god and the libation "priest" and then fall about the serpents of the mountain enclave. These circles have been identified as water, appropriate to both the Ullikummi story in which the stone baby grew in the midst of the sea, and also the related Hedammu myth where the creature similarly resided in the sea. It is also apt in that, in the Ullikummi episode at least, Tešub's prayer to the god of sweet waters (Ea) results in the cutting off of the stone monster

from his base, permitting the hero's ultimate victory (see Porada 1965).

This compositional relationship between the upper and lower fields raises another issue, the nature of the drawing by which the imagery of the bowl is seen and studied: although laid out as a flat, two-dimensional schema, the bowl is after all a three-dimensional cylindrical object. If we may assume that the culmination of the scene in the upper field is the point of meeting of the two processions, divine and human, as emphasized by the special patterning of water as well, then the scene directly below it (i.e., the combat) would have been the primary visual focus of the lower field, facing the viewer as the "front" of the bowl (Fig. 16).

##### The Lefthand Zones

When the drawing is laid out to conform to the readable narrative in the upper field (Fig. 6), it is easier to see how the rest of the motifs in the lower field fall into place. While figures in the upper field are de-

ployed in a band of consistent height, those of the lower field are subdivided into two zones to the left of the combat motif, with smaller scale figures. Thus, the eagle-vehicle, goddess and lion, swords, and man with stool/altar/table are set above the Humbaba complex, and the woman, child, and seated man. All of these figures are shown seated or crouching, which helps diminish their scale. However, their position just below the celestial deities of the upper field should not be lost sight of.

This positioning calls to mind the standard organization of divine symbols on the more-or-less contemporary Kassite *kudurrus* referred to above, which sometimes have horizontal rows of symbols or deities clearly divided by register lines, but frequently also have them merely distributed in hierarchical zones. This association is particularly enticing, as the established hierarchy on the *kudurrus* calls for the celestial gods (sun, moon) above, with the next highest ranking gods just below (e.g., Fig. 17).



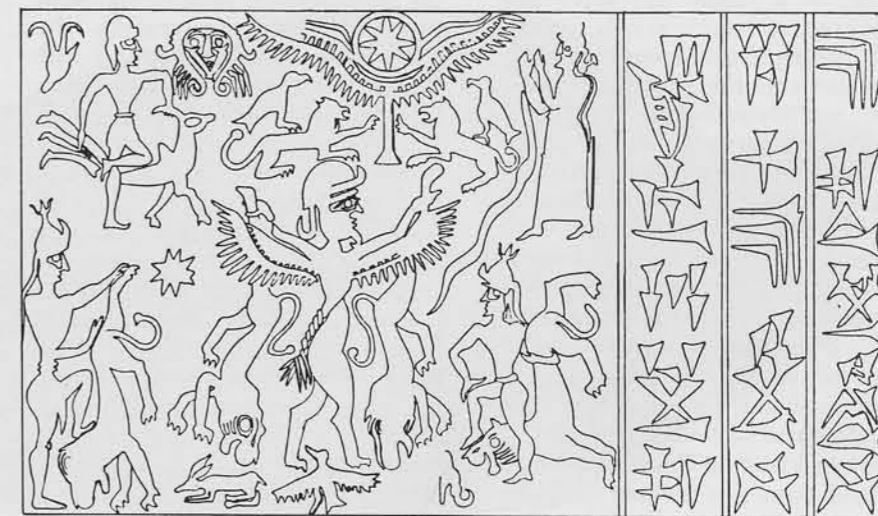
16  
The gold bowl in a 1958 field photo. (Photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project)



17  
Kassite kudurrus or boundary stone, found at Susa. (Musée du Louvre, Paris, SB22; photo courtesy of the Département des antiquités orientales)

And if we have identified the middle zone on the gold bowl as referring to the goddess (Kubaba) and god (Nergal), with mythological scenes (Gilgamesh and Kumarbi) below, we have here also a hierarchical arrangement that unites the upper, middle, and lower zones.

In fact, this division into hierarchical zones is not only typical of Kassite *kudurrus*, it is also apparent in the distribution of motifs on a well-attested cylinder seal belonging to Šauštatar, ruler of the Hurrian kingdom of Mittani in the mid-2nd millennium (Fig. 18). This last is especially interesting, since it has been shown that the seal was an heirloom used secondarily by dynastic successors, and impressions of it have turned up on tablets from Nuzi, 50 to 75 years after the death of its original owner (D. Stein, unpublished ms.). Given the sharing of so many texts and motifs across the whole Near East in our period, one might hope to narrow the field of attributions by looking not only at individual motifs but also at compositional devices, and by posing the question of whether certain preferences in composition might not have a more restricted distribution, thereby allowing better identification with particular regional and/or ethno-linguistic traditions.



18  
Seal of Šauštatar, ruler of the Hurrian kingdom of Mittani. (Drawing of impression on tablet from Nuzi, courtesy of Edith Porada)

We have suggested above that the empty altar/table to the right of the swords might represent a deity. If it were a reference to the high god Ea, this would be appropriate on several counts. First, he would join the ranking of the gods on the level just below the celestials, as is consistently the case on the *kudurrus* and also seems to have been the case in the Hurrian pantheon (Lambert 1978). Second, since Ea plays a role in the Tešub-Kumarbi myth cycle, the motif would have a narrative link to the scene immediately below, as well as to the larger scale major scene of combat to its right. In this way, both motifs to the left of the principal combat scene in the lower field would relate to the narrative at the same time as they participated in the hierarchy of the lefthand zones.

##### The Righthand Zones

Our drawing of the bowl places the nude goddess and archer to the right of the combat scene. We cannot be certain that this is how the scene was intended to be read, and again we must stress that the bowl was round, so the archer/hero figure (Fig. 19) would also appear to be facing the eagle and its human burden in a continuous circle. Nevertheless, it is important to note that the archer here wears a similar headband and the same kilt as the hero of the combat (Fig. 6). This brings up the important question of a dress "code" as employed on the bowl to emphasize aspects of meaning and significance.

Porada has suggested that the hero fighting the stone monster in the lower zone is the same figure as the lead god in the upper zone, since we know Tešub to have been the storm god in the Hurrian pantheon, as well as the hero of the myth cycle; he has merely changed his clothes, the kilt being more appropriate for battle (1965:103). One problem with this identification is that the storm god of the upper zone seems to be winged, or at least to be portrayed with rays issuing from his shoulders, but the kilted hero is not. If, however, this detail were to be argued as not inconsistent with the identity of the two figures, then the squatting figure to the left of the combat



19  
Detail, lower zone of the gold bowl:  
hero as an archer. (Photo courtesy of  
the Hasanlu Project)

scene who extends his beaker could well represent the very same character with yet another garment (his hair, beard, and headband are identical) at another stage of the narrative (Tešub imploring Ea for help, as the text records?). We would then be faced with the familiar device of a "consecutive narrative," in which several episodes in a single narrative are represented sequentially, often with principal characters repeated.

There is another possibility, however, and that is that the differences in dress are meant to signify separate sets of figures from differing realms. In such a way, all three of the celestial gods in chariots wear the same long wrap-around fringed garment with short sleeves; the three men approaching them all wear a slightly different garment, long but apparently not wrapped, with a shawl covering the right shoulder and no evidence of sleeves. The two kneeling figures battling a central third are dressed in short-sleeved tunics (mythical heros?). The goddess on a lion, male with beaker, squatting woman, and seated male all seem similarly

dressed in long, vertically paneled and patterned garments, with an identical pattern used for the cloak/unwrapped dress of the nude female standing on two rams (all deities, but distinct from the celestial gods above?). And finally, the two full-size figures of the lower field, combat-hero and archer, are virtually identical in their hair, headbands, and fringed kilts, the only exception being the projection of a snake's head at the end of the archer's headband. Are they separate-but-related youthful hero/gods? Or could they represent the same individual? Within the context of the Tešub myth cycle already identified, this last would not be impossible. For, if the framing scenes around the central combat all relate to the same mythical narrative, then the hero's repeated representation in triumph at the far right would fit well. Such an identification is particularly compelling since recent work on differences between the eastern and western branches of the Hurrian population in the 2nd millennium show that in the east, Ištar/Šaušga was higher in status than in the west; she often stood next to Tešub in visual representations (for example, on cylinder seals from Nuzi); and she was considered as his consort, not just his sister (Wegner 1981; Stein 1988). Since any Hurrian elements likely to be present at Hasanlu would be equally part of the eastern tradition, the juxtaposition here of the nude goddess (an iconography demonstrable for Ištar/Šaušga) with the tall hero/god, victorious after his combat with the stone-monster, would make excellent compositional sense in the narrative flow of the lower field.

Again, such suggestions only point the way toward future study. One would have to reconcile the alternatives of the three possible figures of Tešub in different dress in the first system with the two figures of Tešub in identical dress in the second. Especially at issue would be the possibility of combining the two systems simultaneously, and/or the identity of the storm-god in the upper field were he not to represent Tešub (see below).

### The "Reading"

This leads us to a summary of the visual imagery on the bowl as it can be reconstructed thus far. Once again, one must picture the bowl as a slightly flaring three-dimensional object of impressive size (Fig. 16). What one would then see is several sets of independent, overlapping, and interrelated themes across multiple zones, employing both the height and the circumference of the bowl. The upper field is filled with two files of figures, converging to a point of dramatic interaction. If we consider this meeting to be the focal point of the upper field, then we may also conclude that what falls immediately below this point would be the focal point of the lower field. Indeed, what is represented seems to be identifiable as the culmination scene in a mythological cycle associated with the Hurrian god Tešub.

To right and left of this focal point in the lower field seem to be dependent motifs belonging to the same narrative. At the same time, if the extra division into zones to the left of the focal scene can be read as related to the hierarchical order of the Hurrian world of gods and heros, then here too there is visual organization from top to bottom, as well as along the horizontal plane. Similarly, the placement of the nude goddess and hero god to the right of the focal scene in the lower field corresponds well to the disposition of the two men bringing sacrificial rams in the upper field (see Fig. 6).

In sum, the organization of the various motifs into a readable composition, into overlapping sets of images that add up to a grand scheme of meaning and reference, clearly seems to have been carefully worked out by the designer of the gold bowl. Aspects of the divine, the liturgical, and the mythological have been combined into a tense and dynamic whole. There is much more to be done in the identification of individual motifs and in the analysis of the visual organization, based especially upon new texts translated within the past 30 years, as well as upon recent studies of representations on cylinder seals. And one would want also to pursue the design on the base of the bowl,

with its four goats, one on each side of a square checkerboard panel (Fig. 20); this may seem merely decorative but could well yield some information when compared to other known vessels, particularly from Marlik Tepe (Negahban 1983). This last notwithstanding, the very fact that one may now see the various motifs on the bowl as compositionally and meaningfully interrelated and readable is no small progress in the face of the bowl's enigmatic imagery.

### Who?: Ethnic, Linguistic, and Cultural Associations

We now turn to the third and most difficult issue on which research is needed: the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural traditions of the makers and the users of the gold bowl. The very attempt to identify an underlying linguistic or cultural tradition for an art object raises major questions of interpretation. Specifically, with the population mixtures attested throughout the ancient Near East in the 2nd millennium (see box on Hurrians), we must assume that the resultant interactions would produce a high degree of shared literary traditions, design repertoires, and even compositional devices. In such cases, a

particular iconographic element could no longer be assumed to belong exclusively to any one ethnic or linguistic population.

What is more, although it is often convenient to assume that a given ethnic group and its associated language would be mapped with identical boundaries, or that a single language group would manifest a single and distinctive culture, there are many occasions where this may be demonstrated not to be the case: instances in which a group that exhibits behavioral patterns and belief systems that would be recognized as a cultural unit may contain within it several different language groups; or conversely, instances in which a single linguistic group may be divided into several distinct ecological and cultural adaptations.

Does this mean we should not attempt to pursue the "Who?" of the Hasanlu gold bowl? No. But by emphasizing the complexity of the issue, we are stimulated both to articulate and to further refine the logical and methodological implications of asking such questions, and so, hopefully, to come closer to the complexity of the specific historical situation before us.

What has been striking in our discussion thus far is the consistency of "Hurrian" literary and visual associations with the decorative scheme of the Hasanlu bowl. Most scholars have been careful to point

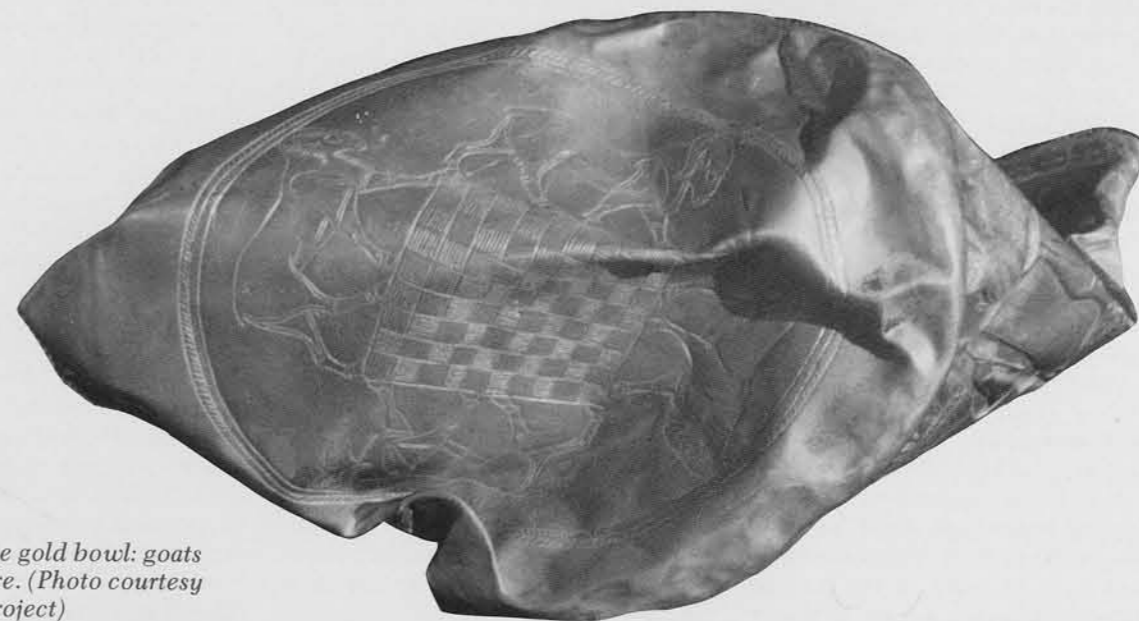
out these elements without actually postulating the necessity of Hurrian manufacture—although they may speculate about a possible Hurrian background underlying its manufacture (Porada 1959, Mellink 1966, Barrelet 1984).

In the present case, if we take as a point of departure the Hurrian literary and stylistic parallels that have been demonstrated for the bowl, it is not unreasonable to pursue the possibilities for a "Hurrian" context of manufacture and usage, as long as we are judicious in distinguishing evidence from assumption. And since it is generally agreed that the gold bowl is at home within the "local style" of Hasanlu IVB which cuts across several media and was associated with functioning artifacts, the "Who?" of the bowl may be said to be closely tied to the "Who?" of the site itself.

### 2nd Millennium Hurrians?

There is no written evidence from Hasanlu that would attest to the identity of the inhabitants. We know neither the ancient name of the site, nor the state to which it may have belonged, much less the linguistic and/or ethnic affiliation(s) of its population—neither preceding nor during the period with which we are concerned.

In the absence of textual sources from the site, we are thrown back



20  
Detail, base of the gold bowl: goats  
and central square. (Photo courtesy  
of the Hasanlu Project)

upon an evaluation of the archaeological record. On occasion, pottery types have been used as benchmarks for identifying the presence of a specific ethno-linguistic group. When a type is limited in distribution and clearly linked, it can be a most useful marker: for example, a particular red water jar is used in present-day Iran only by Turkish-speaking households in various areas of the country. The common buff- or orange-colored water jar used by the rest of the population in Iran today is, however, widespread across various subgroups (Persians, Kurds, Lurs), and would not serve as a marker of any specific group. One must therefore be able to isolate a particular ceramic type as significant using ethnographic or historical information.

For studies of the past, where the validity of a marker cannot be confirmed by observation on the ground, a single variable such as pottery will probably not be sufficient to identify distinct ethnic groups. Rather, multiple variables will need to be isolated and correlated, including distinctive subsistence patterns, associated animal bones indicating variant food practices or prohibitions, and specialized distributions of small finds. Such variables might then be interpreted as indicating ethnic, linguistic, or cultural differences, rather than merely differences in social class or wealth.

In the case of the Hurrians, we may trace them back to an arrival in the Near East via the Caucasus sometime in the late 4th to early 3rd

millennium B.C. The newcomers seem to have brought with them a highly burnished black or dark gray colored pottery, identified with the Kura-Araxes culture in the Caucasus. This pottery appears suddenly in Anatolia and Iran around 3000 B.C., associated with significant changes in architectural construction and metal technology, changes that suggest large-scale population movements rather than internal change or trade. Since Hurrian is known to be a member of a Caucasian language group, and since the first Hurrian texts and place names are later attested in areas where the Kura-Araxes culture appears, the identification of this archaeological culture as Hurrian is at least strongly suggested, if not absolutely confirmed. Thus,

## The Hurrian Language and People

Hurrian is a non-Indo-European, non-Semitic language first attested during the Akkadian period (ca. 2400-2300 B.C.) by inscriptions and place names. It has been demonstrated to belong to a North-Eastern Caucasian linguistic family that also includes ancient Urartian and modern Georgian (Diakonov and Starostin 1986). The Hurrians have drawn the attention of scholars for decades, but only recently have enough texts been translated to permit a history of their place in the ancient Near East (see especially, Wilhelm 1989). Hurrian-speaking peoples seem to have entered the Near East around 3000 B.C., in large-scale migrations that fanned out from the Caucasus: south into northwest and central Iran; southwest into eastern Anatolia and North Syria. They have been tentatively associated with the excavated material of the Kura-Araxes culture in the Caucasus, which has close links with pottery and architectural features of the Early Bronze Age in regions to the south and west.

potamia, as well as Hurrian-speaking peoples in areas north and east of lower Mesopotamia, adjacent to the Zagros mountains of western Iran. By the mid-15th century B.C., Hurrians were responsible for the establishment of the powerful territorial state of Mittani, extending from the Zagros to the Euphrates—an important early rival of the Hittite Empire. Yet another major installation of Hurrians was at Nuzi, east of the Tigris near modern Kirkuk, where the Akkadian texts, associated seals, and all personal names were all either heavily Hurrianized, or actually Hurrian.

Hurrians also made up a significant portion of the population of a state in southeastern Anatolia called Kizzuwadna, which included Luwian-speaking Indo-Europeans. From there, Hurrians entered into close relations with the Hittites to the northwest, providing queens, myths, gods, and ritual practice to the Hittite court in the mid-13th century. Thus, the Hurrian pantheon was represented in the rock carvings of Yazilikaya, and many Hurrian texts were recovered from Boğazköy, the Hittite capital.

Studies of the distribution of Hurrian populations from the Tigris to Anatolia suggest quite different regional adaptations, with differing degrees of loan-words from sur-

rounding languages, different absorption of cultural styles and practices from neighboring peoples, and distinct rankings of the gods in their respective regional pantheons (Diakonov 1981). It is also the case that Hurrian names were mixed in among a basically Semitic population in parts of Syria, and among Kassites in southern Babylonia, just as there were Kassite names known from Hurrian Nuzi, and Indo-European names and words attested from Mittani (see box on Indo-Europeans). All of this suggests significant mixes of ethno-linguistic populations throughout the Near East from at least the mid-2nd millennium on; and there are some scholars who would argue that Hurrians and Indo-Europeans may have been in contact at the time of their earliest migrations.

Also of interest is the demonstrated relationship between Hurrian and Urartian—a language associated with the 1st millennium polity of Urartu, centered around Lake Van in eastern Turkey. A number of questions arise, such as whether Hurrian and Urartian represent separate languages of the same family (as, for example, Spanish and Italian), or whether Urartian could be a 1st millennium descendant of 2nd millennium Hurrian (as, for example, modern English is of Old English).

scholars have seen the arrival of Kura-Araxes-type pottery in Anatolia and Iran during the early 3rd millennium, and in the Levant during the late 3rd millennium, as evidence of the Hurrian migrations. (Kura-Araxes pottery occurs in Iran to the north of Lake Urmia and along its eastern shore, as well as in central Iran; however, there is no evidence in Solduz for a related occupation.)

By the 2nd millennium, the presence of Hurrians is well documented in northern and eastern Mesopotamia. "Habur-ware" pottery (with dark painted horizontal bands on a buff ground), characteristic of both northern Mesopotamia and the Solduz valley in this period (Hasanlu period VI), was originally thought to be indicative of the distribution of Hurrian-speaking peoples of that period. It has now been effectively shown, however, that the distribution pattern for the pottery defines a socio-economic "interaction-sphere" of more than a single ethno-linguistic group (Kramer 1977). This does not preclude the possibility of a Hurrian population at Hasanlu in period VI, but

does indicate that the presence of a single type of decorated pottery is not sufficient to confirm it. Thus for the time being we can neither prove nor disprove the presence of Hurrians during the early 2nd millennium at Hasanlu on the basis of pottery.

### Indo-European Immigrants?

In the archaeological record characterizing Hasanlu periods V and IV—pottery assemblage, architecture, burial practices, clothing style—the changes from the previous period VI are so marked as to suggest a significant disruption, and even a shift of the dominant local cultural tradition/population. This shift, and particularly the new ceramic industry (differing from that of period VI in both technology and style, and characterized by burnished monochrome vessels in black, gray, red, and tan), was initially associated with the coming of the Indo-European Iranians onto the plateau (see box on Indo-Europeans; Young 1967).

Recent archaeological research in the central Zagros has led to a rejection of the hypothesis (Young

1985). In the region of west central Iran where Assyrian references do include Indo-European geographic names, and where Iranians, therefore, can with confidence be said to have been settled, the characteristic pottery is not burnished monochrome (so-called gray ware), but instead buff-colored and painted (for example, that at Babajan in the 8th-7th century B.C.). In the most recent linguistic study on the subject, the presence of Iranian speakers in west central Iran is not considered certain before the 9th to 8th century. Thus, neither the archaeological nor the available linguistic evidence can be used to argue for the presence of Iranians in the late 2nd and early 1st millennium at Hasanlu, that is during periods V and IV (Dandamaev and Lukonin 1989).

Nevertheless, it is still possible that the cultural disruption represented by periods V and IV at Hasanlu is in some way related to the arrival of Indo-European elements from the east (Young 1985). It is also certainly the case that changes in material culture indicating a shift in the dominant

## Indo-European Languages and Peoples

Indo-European is the name given to a language group whose associated peoples were spread in antiquity from India to Ireland. Within this group are found Sanskrit and a number of modern South Asian languages, Persian, Greek and Latin, as well as the Celtic, Romance, Slavic, and Germanic languages of modern Europe, including English.

Indo-European words and names first appear in the historical record in Old Akkadian texts from Anatolia of the early 2nd millennium B.C. By the mid-17th century B.C., there are written documents in Hittite proper, the best-known of the Indo-European languages in the Ancient Near East, associated with a powerful and expansive kingdom in central Anatolia during the second half of the 2nd mil-

lennium. Equally important is Luwian, a related dialect first found in states to the south and east of the Hittite Empire and used later during the "Neo-Hittite" period of the early 1st millennium in a number of small states of northern Syria and southeast Anatolia—particularly Carchemish on the Euphrates.

Indo-European speakers are likely to have been present in Anatolia before their first mention in texts. It is generally thought that they did not originate in the area, but rather moved in from elsewhere, mixing with indigenous peoples. Much attention has been paid by philologists, archaeologists, and historians to the "original homeland" of the Indo-Europeans, the routes of their migrations, and the timing of their various arrivals (Gamkrelidze and Ivanov 1984, Diakonov 1985, Renfrew 1987). This theorizing is often based upon abstract projections of linguistic change or putative population move-

ments, rather than upon solid archaeological evidence. The most persuasive recent survey is that by J.P. Mallory (1989), who sees the Indo-Europeans in place in Anatolia by ca. 3000 B.C.—having first moved west out of the steppe above the Caspian sea and then arriving on the Anatolian plateau via Eastern Europe in a west-to-east trajectory.

In any case, there is likely to have been more than a single incursion of Indo-Europeans into the ancient Near East. Personal names and loan words of the Indic (Sanskritic) sub-family seem to have been present in the Hurrian kingdom of Mittani in north Mesopotamia (see box on Hurrians) in the mid-2nd millennium B.C., at the same time as the main branch was becoming established in the Indian subcontinent. Another sub-family, known best as the Medes and Persians, is thought to have moved onto the Iranian plateau sometime between ca. 1500 and 700 B.C.



population need not represent a total population replacement in the valley (Dyson 1976). Nor would such changes necessarily entail total linguistic shifts, much less the total transformation of the former inhabitants' culture (Diepold, In press). Hence there could have been within the occupations of Hasanlu V-IV a significant mixture of people formerly in residence, now dominated by or subsumed under those newly arrived.

It is, however, very possible that the archaeological record of Hasanlu V and IV does not mark the arrival of Indo-Europeans at all. Against the presence of this linguistic group at Hasanlu is the absence of Indo-European personal or place names in any Assyrian references to the area. In the absence of such references, there now remain no compelling reasons for an association of the burnished monochrome pottery of the Iron Age in Solduz with Indo-Europeans.

#### 1st Millennium Hurrians?

Since there is neither local linguistic evidence to provide a clear indication of the identity of the inhabitants of Hasanlu V and IV, and the archaeological (that is, ceramic) evidence is ambiguous, scholars have attempted to approach the problem from the perspective of historical texts available from Neo-Assyrian and later Urartian itineraries and geographical descriptions. Hasanlu has variously been included in the ancient lands of Mannaea, Gilzanu, and Armarili, or identified as the site of Mesta (Boehmer 1964, Reade 1979, Levine 1973-74, Salvini 1984).

Based upon the premise that names given to geographical phenomena and sites in an area generally reflect the language group of the local inhabitants, Boehmer has argued that the predominantly Hurrian place names associated with Mannaea in 9th-century Assyrian texts indicate a Hurrian population in that country. Now, Mannaea is presently understood to have been located to the east or southeast of Hasanlu; the uncertainty is whether or not Mannaea extended as far as

Hasanlu to the northwest. For the present all we can say is that, with evidence for a Hurrian population to the south and east of Hasanlu at the end of the 9th century, as well as evidence at the Mesopotamian site of Nuzi for a Hurrian population to the west of Hasanlu in the later 2nd millennium, the possibility of some Hurrian presence in the intermediate area is relatively high (see Muscarella 1987).

#### Hurrians, Iranians, and the Bowl

Let us now come back to what can be said of the "Who?" of the gold bowl, based upon its decorative scheme. As noted above, the most striking parallels that can be cited for the Hasanlu gold bowl to date come to us from Hurrian sources: the episodes in the Kumarbi cycle of the conflicts between Tešub and Ullikummi and between Tešub and Hedammu as literary references; the relationship between Ištar/Šaušga and Tešub in the east Hurrian pantheon; and the disposition of motifs in upper and lower zones comparable to the seal of Šaušatar (Fig. 18). But it is important to keep in mind that even these parallels may simply be a function of the accidents of archaeological recovery. On the one hand, there may well have been other myth cycles within the Hurrian repertoire that are presently unknown to us, but would fit better the imagery of the bowl; on the other hand, there may be other, less well documented traditions where the fit would be better if only we had the data. And there is an additional possibility that must be considered: that what had indeed originally been part of the Hurrian tradition had already been absorbed by and accommodated into a later, non-Hurrian tradition. Thus, before we assign the bowl to the Hurrian sphere, it is important to pursue alternatives to the Hurrian parallels. For example, given the questions surrounding the identity of the peoples associated with the occupation of Hasanlu V-IV, it seems necessary to inquire into the larger world of possible Indo-European sources for the same imagery.

The Indo-European pantheon was also headed by a storm god, and Indo-European speakers among the Mittani and in the Indian subcontinent have been strongly associated with chariotry. What is more, the Indo-European Hittites of the Anatolian plateau in the 2nd millennium had already absorbed stories and images gathered from a number of surrounding traditions (hence the copies of Hurrian myths and ritual texts preserved at Boğazköy, and the Hurrian gods depicted at Yazilikaya), and the Indo-European Luwian peoples in southeastern Anatolia/northern Syria were mixed with a base population that was probably heavily Hurrian. It is precisely here, on reliefs from the sites of Malatya and Carchemish, that several parallels in imagery with scenes on the gold bowl may be noted (Mellink 1966). Scholars looking at the art of these two sites are therefore confronted with the same sort of dilemma as at Hasanlu: determining whether what we are seeing in the art of the late 2nd and early 1st millennium is to be attributed to a tradition brought in by the newcomers, to a tradition belonging to the earlier base population of the region, or, finally, to a tradition assimilated by one group through contact with another. The problem is exacerbated by the lack of characteristic features in art that can demonstrably be called "Hurrian" as opposed to generalized Near Eastern, since the Hurrians also seem to have absorbed and adopted the motifs and styles of peoples with whom *they* came in contact (see Barrelet 1984, Muscarella 1988a).

Questions we must therefore ask ourselves are: first, whether we could be missing the relevant Indo-European mythological texts and visual materials, be they Hittite, Luwian, or Iranian, that would provide parallels to the bowl as viable as those in the Hurrian sources already noted; and second, whether what we are seeing are perhaps original Hurrian themes now in an Indo-European repertoire. In the first case, attempts to substitute Avestan (later Iranian) sources for Hurrian in explaining

the iconography of the bowl have not been successful (Duchesne-Guillemin in Barrelet 1984); also, whenever "Iranian" elements have been referred to, they are in the nature of minor details of representation rather than larger issues of narrative or motif. It is the second case that appears the most promising, for in the classical Greek tradition, much of the Kumarbi cycle had been incorporated by the poet Hesiod into his account of Chronos and Zeus—a good "Indo-European" Greek myth.

With this case of cultural borrowing in mind, there are several tantalizing threads that need to be pursued. One such thread would be comparison with the details of an Indo-European myth of a hero who loses his herd to a three-headed serpent/monster, and who must then defeat the serpent in battle with the aid of a warrior god (Mallory 1989:131). A second thread would be to investigate fully the three-headed serpent motif, clearly quite popular in some later Indo-European artistic traditions (for example, on a silver-gilt mirror from Thrace of the mid-4th century B.C.; Mallory 1989:Fig. 12). And a third thread would be to seek parallels in cultural and structural phenomena, such as the prominence given to priests and warriors as classes in the Indo-European social order, as reflected also on the gold bowl.

Until such studies are undertaken, I feel we cannot resolve the question of whose literary and cultural tradition seems to underlie the imagery of the bowl. For the present, the Hurrian associations seem more viable than any Iranian or generalized Indo-European possibilities, so we should not underrate them until a well-formulated and better-grounded explanation presents itself.

It is indeed unfortunate that the Hurrian artistic tradition itself seems so ill-defined. It is also unfortunate that the only Hurrian literary parallels available to us for the bowl are from the 2nd millennium, while contemporary 1st millennium visual parallels seem to come from ethnically and linguistically mixed populations—a situation

that in fact could have prevailed at Hasanlu as well. One major avenue yet to be pursued stems from the demonstrated linguistic relationship between Hurrian and Urartian (see box on Hurrians). As Mellink has noted, if the languages are so closely related, then one should expect to find relationships in mythology and in artistic expression as well (1972-75). Therefore, before we propose or deny a Hurrian base to the imagery of the gold bowl, it is essential to look at the Urartian sources and the Urartian repertoire, even if the material preserved to us is largely 8th century, slightly later than the bowl.

#### An Urartian Connection?

Several lines of evidence suggest the importance of Urartian sources for our understanding of the bowl. First, both chariotry and sheep sacrifice, central motifs on the gold bowl, are significantly attested in Urartian sources (Zimansky 1985). Second, arrays of three rearing serpent heads on long necks are known from Urartian art, most particularly on Urartian royal helmets of the 8th century (Azarpay 1968: Pls. 10,16), and need to be carefully compared with the serpents that issue from the citadel in the combat motif of the lower zone on the bowl. Third, Urartian deities are just as frequently represented standing or seated upon their attribute animals as their Hittite and North Syrian counterparts, and these representations should be fully analyzed as parallels to the gold bowl's nude goddess on two rams and the seated female on her lion. This last, in particular, finds no less excellent parallels in Urartian bronzes than on the reliefs of Carchemish, where seated female deities hold something in an outstretched hand, and are shown seated on the back of a lion (Taşyürek 1977:Fig. 4).

Fourth and most important, in all of the 3rd and 2nd millennium Hurrian sources we possess, the weather god Tešub is the top-ranking deity of the pantheon. What distinguishes the Urartian from earlier Hurrian pantheons is the introduction of the god Haldi as

supreme deity (Diakonov 1981). Although he has clear aspects of a weather god, Haldi is quite distinct from Tešub. Tešub himself is still included in the Urartian pantheon, along with sun and moon gods and a variety of others, but he has been reduced to a lower rank, and it is the youthful, heroic aspects of the god that are emphasized.

When we look at the gods of the gold bowl, it will be recalled that the deity in the lead chariot of the upper zone has been identified as a weather god, and by his leading position it seems reasonable to assume that he is of top-ranking status. Yet, in our discussion of the dress code for distinctive sets of figures on the bowl, we have noted the difference in dress between this god and the figure in the lower zone tentatively identified as Tešub, by virtue of his participation in an identifiable "heroic" narrative. If it is possible for the same figure to wear different garments at different stages of the narrative (and to sometimes be shown with shoulder emanations and other times not), then the distinction in dress is not a useful one. However, if, as I suspect, types of garments are restricted to sets or classes of characters, then if Tešub is below, we must ask the question, Who is above? The Urartian pantheon provides an answer in ranking Haldi above Tešub. Now, Urartu is not the only 1st millennium tradition that distinguishes Tešub from the main storm god of the pantheon: on a stele from Til Barsib, near Carchemish on the Euphrates, a list of deities written in hieroglyphic Luwian includes both the primary storm god Tarhunzas and Tešub (Hawkins 1981:166). This separation may be a function of changes in the 1st millennium in general, or particularly within a Hurrian/Urartian sphere; in any case, it must enter into discussions of the fit between the iconography of the bowl and the religious system of a suggested host tradition.

If these comparanda turn out upon closer examination to be valid, then we must re-examine whether it is indeed necessary to seek explanatory parallels for the gold bowl from as far away in space

as Anatolia, or in time as the mid-2nd millennium. Concurrently, we need excavation and analysis of archaeological materials in the Urartian homeland in eastern Turkey to compare with 10th-9th century materials from north-western Iran. Specifically, we would want to know whether sites located between Lake Van and Lake Urmia were part of a single "interaction sphere" that could be identified as Urartian in the late 2nd and early 1st millennium, as it certainly was later (see Kleiss and Kroll 1977).

Sometime around 810-800 B.C., Urartian armies marched through the Solduz valley, and Urartian rulers left inscriptions attesting to their political annexation of the region. Period IIIB at Hasanlu has long been known to represent an Urartian occupation in the 8th-7th century B.C. (see Dyson, "Rediscovering Hasanlu"). It has thus been suggested that the Urartian invasion of the late 9th century may have been responsible for the destruction of Hasanlu IVB, although, again, we do not know 9th century Urartian material culture well enough to establish whether any of the armor or weapons found at Hasanlu could be identified as Urartian and/or belonging to the invaders (see Muscarella, this issue).

Even if we assume an Urartian destruction of the Citadel, we still cannot know whether this would represent a "first encounter," or whether conquest had been preceded by long-standing cultural relations. Presumably, the peoples identified as Urartian would have represented a closely related ethno-linguistic and cultural entity to the Hurrians, and would have shared significant portions of their mythological and religious traditions. Therefore, if the Solduz valley and Hasanlu had had significant cultural relations with, or were populated by "Urartians" prior to the end of the 9th century, then we cannot rest comfortably in a "Hurrian" hypothesis without factoring an Urartian component into the equation. It may even be necessary in the end to replace the Hurrian hypothesis with a "Urartian" one, for what, after all, is Urartu if not in some ways a 1st

millennium political confederation comprised of descendants or close relatives of 2nd millennium Hurrians?

Finally, a great deal of progress has been made in the last 30 years in recovering and understanding the late 2nd-early 1st millennium art of Elam to the south, the Caucasus to the north, and Bactria to the north-east (Amiet 1986, Oganessian 1988). The recent discovery of an Elamite version of the epic of Gilgamesh at a Urartian site in Soviet Georgia merely underscores the complexity of the cultural mixes and movements of the period (J.D. Hawkins, pers. com.). Before any final attributions can be made for the bowl, it must also be studied with regard to traits held in common with, or indebted to, these other artistic heritages, if only to better understand what the shared north-south Zagros tradition may have been without reference to either Hurrians, Urartians, or Iranians.

## Conclusion

Having defined the parameters of uncertainty surrounding the Hasanlu gold bowl, we can now begin to eliminate alternatives and move toward a picture of the best possible interpretive "fit" for the vessel's imagery and cultural background. As stated above, there are many Hurrian literary and visual associations for the bowl; however, even if these are accepted as valid, there are several competing ways of seeing the bowl in cultural perspective. In one view, a base population of Hurrians could well have been in the Solduz area, co-existing with an incoming group of Indo-European speaking peoples during Hasanlu periods V and IV; the bowl would then reflect a substrate literary and religious tradition, possibly even one adopted and assimilated by the arriving group as well. In another view, Indo-Europeans who moved into the area might long since have absorbed Hurrian myths through oral and literary traditions, and made them their own. In a third view, no Indo-Europeans arrived at Hasanlu at all; instead, the new population

we see in periods V and IV represents peoples related to the 2nd millennium Hurrians and 1st millennium Urartians, and the bowl is entirely at home in this context. In a fourth and final view, there is such a common pool of motifs in the period that we cannot specify the mythological or religious tradition underlying the decorative scheme of the bowl at all.

In the end, what is needed for a better understanding of the gold bowl is a clearer picture of the historical population movements and ethno-linguistic mixtures in northwest Iran during the late 2nd and early 1st millennium B.C., as well as clearer models for ethnic interaction in antiquity (see Kamp and Yoffee 1980). In addition, we need a far better understanding of the syntax, or structure, as well as of the individual motifs on the bowl. And we need to know a great deal more about the possibilities of establishing correlations between the structural properties of imagery, of language, and of a culture—that is, of identifying particular modes of representation with specific social, cultural, and ethno-linguistic groups.


Until some of these factors are better understood, the meaning of the gold bowl in the context of Hasanlu in the early 1st millennium B.C. will, I fear, continue to elude us. Nevertheless, despite the fact that the situation may be more complicated due to conflicting evidence than it was 30 years ago, I would argue that we have made some progress in deciphering the bowl. This progress reflects not only new excavated and textual data, but also new questions being asked by art historians and archaeologists of their material.

I myself am persuaded that the multiplicity of Hurrian sources—literary imagery, organization of the pantheon, visual subdivisions, narrative devices—is sufficient to keep alive the possibility of a Hurrian connection. If anything, the identification of Hurrian components on the bowl at the time of its excavation has been strengthened, and we now have a clearer sense of the "reading" of the bowl visually. In addition, the possibility

of a Hurrian or early Urartian presence in the Hasanlu area cannot at present be rejected. We must hand over to our archaeological, historical, and linguistic colleagues some of the problems of interpretation related to our uncertainty; and it may well be that we must first make significant progress on the "Who?" of Hasanlu, before we can answer questions concerning the "Who?" of the gold bowl. But there

is also more to do for the art historian in pursuing systematic analyses of the bowl's style and technique, its iconography and composition, and its relationship to materials from surrounding traditions. And we must keep in mind that we have been heavily dependent upon literary texts for parallels, but that visual representations can reflect an oral tradition as well: stories carried by bards who them-

selves can move between cultures and languages.

Hopefully, at the next 30-year review, we will have more answers to our questions and will be better able to see this most important of archaeological finds in its fullest, most complex social and historical context. For the present, the bowl continues to sing of a world of gods and men, heros and demons that resonates just beyond our ken. 

## Bibliography

- Azarpay, G.**  
1968  
*Urartean Art and Artifacts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Barrelet, M.T.**  
1984  
*Problèmes concernant les Hurrites II*. Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, Mémoires No. 49. Paris.
- Boehmer, R.M.**  
1964  
"Volkstum und Städte der Mannäer." *Baghdader Mitteilungen* 3:11-24.
- Dandamaev, M.A., and V.G. Lukonin**  
1989  
*The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran*. Trans. P. Kohl. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- de Schauensee, Maude**  
1988  
"Northwest Iran as a Bronzeworking Centre: The View from Hasanlu." In *Bronzeworking Centres of Western Asia, ca. 1000-539 B.C.*, ed. John Curtis, pp. 45-62. London: Kegan Paul.
- Diakonov, I.M.**  
1981  
"Evidence on the Ethnic Division of the Hurrians." In *Studies in the Civilisation and Culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians in Honor of E.B. Lacheman*, ed. M.A. Morrison and D. Owen, pp. 77-89. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns.
- 1985  
"On the Original Home of the Speakers of Indo-European." *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13:92-174.
- Diakonov, I.M., and S.A. Starostin**  
1986  
*Hurro-Urartian as an Eastern Caucasian Language*. Münchner Studien zur Sprachwissenschaft, Beiheft 12, NF. Munich: R. Kitzinger.
- Diepold, A. Richard**  
In press  
"The Traditional View of the Indo-European Paleoeconomy: Contradictory Evidence from Anthropology and Linguistics." In *Indo-European Symposium in Honor of W.P. Lehmann*, ed. E.C. Polomé and W. Winter. Berlin: Mouton-De Gruyter.
- Dyson, R.H., Jr.**  
1964  
"Notes on Weapons and Chronology in Northern Iran, ca. 1000 B.C." In *Dark Ages and Nomads ca. 1000 B.C.*, ed. M.J. Mellink, pp. 32-45. Nederlands Historisch-Archaologisch Instituut, Istanbul.
- 1976  
"Architecture of the Iron I Period at Hasanlu in Western Iran and Its Implications for Theories of Migration on the Iranian Plateau." In *Colloques Internationaux No. 567: Le Plateau Iranien*, pp. 155-169. Paris: CNRS.
- Dyson, R.H., Jr., and O.W. Muscarella**  
1989  
"Constructing the Chronology and Historical Implications of Hasanlu IV." *Iran* 27:1-27.
- Gamkrelidze, T.V., and V.V. Ivanov**  
1984  
*Indoeuropejskij jazyk i indoeuropejcy: Rekonstrukcija i istorijsko-tipologičeski analiz prajazyka i protokul'tury* (The Indo-European language and the Indo-Europeans: Reconstruction and historico-typological analysis of a proto-language and a proto-culture). 2 vols. Tbilisi: Izdatel'stvo Tbilisskogo Universiteta.
- 1985  
"The Migrations of Tribes Speaking Indo-European Dialects from Their Original Homeland in the Near East to Their Historical Habitations in Eurasia." *Journal of Indo-European Studies* 13:49-91.
- Güterbock, H.G.**  
1951-2  
"The Song of Ullikummi: Revised Text of the Hittite Version of a Hurrian Myth." *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 5-6:135-161, 8-42.
- Haas, V., and G. Wilhelm**  
1974  
*Hurritische und Luwische Riten aus Kizzuwatna*. AOAT 5/3. Kevelaer: Butzon und Bercker.
- Hawkins, J.D.**  
1981  
"Kubaba at Karkamiš and Elsewhere." *Anatolian Studies* 31:147-176.
- Kamp, K., and N. Yoffee**  
1980  
"Ethnicity in Ancient Western Asia During the Early Second Millennium B.C.: Archaeological Assessments and Ethnoarchaeological Prospectives." *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 237:85-104.
- Kleiss W., and S. Kroll**  
1977  
"Urartäische Plätze in Iran." *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 10:53-118.
- Kramer, C.**  
1977  
"Pots and Peoples." In *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*, ed. L.D. Levine and T.C. Young, Jr., pp. 91-112. Malibu: Undena.
- Lambert, W.G.**  
1978  
"The Mesopotamian Background of the Hurrian Pantheon." *Revue Hittite et Asiatique* 36:129-134.
- Levine, L.D.**  
1973-74  
"Geographical Studies in the Neo-Assyrian Zagros, I and II." *Iran* 11:1-27 and *Iran* 12:99-124.
- Mallory, J.P.**  
1989  
*In Search of the Indo-Europeans: Language, Archaeology and Myth*. New York: Thames and Hudson.
- Mellink, M.J.**  
1966  
"The Hasanlu Bowl in Anatolian Perspective." *Iranica Antiqua* 6:72-87.
- 1972-75  
"Hurriter, Kunst." *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*:514-519.
- Muscarella, O.W.**  
1971  
"Hasanlu in the Ninth Century B.C. and Its Relations with Other Cultural Centers of the Near East." *American Journal of Archaeology* 75:263-266.
- 1988a  
"Comments on the Urkish Lion Pegs." In *Mozan I: The Soundings of the First Two Seasons*, ed. G. Buccellati and M. Kelly-Buccellati, pp. 93-112. Bibliotheca Mesopotamica 20. Malibu: Undena.
- 1988b  
*Bronze and Iron: Ancient Near Eastern Artifacts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum.
- Negahban, E.O.**  
1983  
*Metal Vessels from Marlik*. Prähistorische Bronzefunde, Abteilung II, Band 3. Munich: Beck.

- Porada, E.**  
1959  
"The Hasanlu Bowl."  
*Expedition* 1(3):19-22.
- 1965  
"The Finds from Marlik, the Gold Bowls of North-Western Iran, and the 'Amlash Culture.'" In *The Art of Ancient Iran*, pp. 90-104. New York: Crown Publishers.
- 1970  
*Tchoga Zanbil IV: La glyptique*. Mémoires de la délégation archéologique en Perse 42. Paris.
- 1986  
"Le cylindre élamite du British Museum No. 134766." In *Fragmenta Historiae Elamicae, Mélanges offerts à M.J. Steve*, ed. L. de Meyer et al., pp. 181-185. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations.
- Reade, J.E.**  
1979  
"Hasanlu, Gilzanu and Related Considerations." *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran* 12:175-181.
- Renfrew, C.**  
1987  
*Archaeology and Language: The Puzzle of Indo-European Origins*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Salvini, M.**  
1984  
"L'identificazione della città di Mešta con il Tappeh di Hasanlu." In *Tra lo Zagros e l'Urmia*, ed. P.E. Pecorella and M. Salvini, pp. 19-21. Rome: Edizioni dell'Ateneo.
- Siegelová, J.**  
1971  
*Appu-märchen und Hedammu-mythus*. Studien zu den Boğazköytexten 14. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
- Stein, D.**  
1988  
"Mythologische Inhalte der Nuzi-Glyptik." In *Hurriter und Hurritisch*, ed. V. Haas, pp. 173-209. Konstanz: Universitätsverlag.
- Taşyürek, A.**  
1977  
"The Urartian Bronze Hoard from Giyimli." *Expedition* 19:12-20.
- Wegner, I.**  
1981  
*Gestalt und Kult der Istar-Šawuška in Kleinasien*. Hurritologische Studien III. Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag.
- Wilhelm, G.**  
1989  
*The Hurrians*. Trans. J. Barnes. See chapter by D.L. Stein. Warminster: Aris and Phillips.
- Winter, I.J.**  
1977  
"Perspective on the 'Local Style' of Hasanlu IV B: A Study in Receptivity." In *Mountains and Lowlands: Essays in the Archaeology of Greater Mesopotamia*, ed. L.D. Levine and T.C. Young, Jr., pp. 371-386. Malibu: Undena.
- Young, T.C., Jr.**  
1967  
"The Iranian Migration into the Zagros." *Iran* 5:11-34.
- 1985  
"Early Iron Age Iran Revisited: Preliminary Suggestions for the Re-analysis of Old Constructs." *De l'Indus aux Balkans: Recueil à la mémoire de Jean Deshayes*, ed. J.-L. Huot, M. Yon, Y. Calvet, pp. 361-378. Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations.
- Zimansky, P.E.**  
1985  
*Ecology and Empire: The Structure of the Urartean State*. Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 41. Chicago: The Oriental Institute.

### Acknowledgments

In 1959, Edith Porada published field photographs of the bowl; subsequently, she was able to include the drawing made at The University Museum by Maude de Schauensee in 1960, based upon a field drawing made by Charles Burney at the time of excavation. A new drawing was then made by de Schauensee in 1974, amending the 1960 drawing with the help of detailed photographs taken in 1962, checked against the bowl itself in Tehran. It is this drawing, which corrects and adds a number of details not visible in the drawing of 1960, that has formed the basis of the composite roll-out used here. The ideas, references, and encouragement of a number of people went into the writing of this article. I am especially grateful to the editor of this issue, Mary Voigt, and to Robert Dyson, Oscar White Muscarella, and Edith Porada for their close readings of a preliminary version of the text. Marie-Therese Barrelet, J.D. Hawkins, C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky, Michelle Marcus, Donald Matthews, and Holly Pittman contributed significantly to the formulation of some of the issues, Mary Virginia Harris and Maude de Schauensee to the grounding of the issues in hard data. Robert Hunt and Louis Levine provided the perspective, and the coast of Maine the atmosphere, without which the text could not have been written.



**Irene J. Winter** is currently a Professor in the Department of Fine Arts, Harvard University, having taught at the University of Pennsylvania from 1976 to 1988. With a B.A. in Anthropology from Barnard College, an M.A. in Near Eastern Languages and Civilizations from the University of Chicago, and a Ph.D. from Columbia University in the History of Art, she combines all three in her work on the art of the ancient Near East. Her field work includes Godin Tepe in west central Iran from 1967-73, and Hasanlu in 1974. She has published a monograph on the bronze horse's breastplate found at Hasanlu in that season, as well as a study of the impact of Assyrian contact on the site, and is presently working on a book dealing with the development of monumental art in the early Mesopotamian state.