The archaeological ruins of Chalchuapa lie within a broad, fertile valley in the western portion of seldom-visited El Salvador, the smallest of the Central American Republics. Seen today, the site consists of clusters of ruined earth-adobe mounds surrounded by fragments of stone sculpture and surfaces littered by broken cultural debris, all gathered about the fringes of the Spanish Colonial town of Chalchuapa. However, prior to the Spanish conquest, it is evident that Chalchuapa was one of the dominant ceremonial and occupational centers in the valley of the Rio Pzal and a southeastern bastion of Highland Maya culture. Investigations carried out by the University Museum in 1954 and 1966-68 have shed much light upon Preclassic Chalchuapa, especially during the Preclassic era, provided much needed information on this little known area of Mesoamerica, and furnished new clues as to the origins, development, and character of Maya culture.

Beginning in 1954, under the direction of Dr. William R. Coe (see The University Museum Bulletin, 1955, Vol. 19, No. 2), and later in 1966-67 under the direction of the present author, the University Museum sponsored extensive archaeological research at the El Trapiche Mound Group, located one kilometer northeast of Chalchuapa. Both of these programs included test excavations along the north shore of the Lago Cuauchapalitl, a small lake formed in an extinct volcanic depression half a kilometer east of Chalchuapa. During the summer of 1968, I conducted test excavations within the previously untested Casa Blanca Mound Group (one-half kilometer northeast of Chalchuapa), the largest cluster of ruins at the site.

The archaeological investigations at Chalchuapa's El Trapiche Mound Group have produced significant new data bearing upon the Preclassic cultural development of the Maya, including several surprising and unique discoveries. This research has indicated that El Trapiche was a ceremonial center constructed and occupied during the Late Preclassic era (est. 200 B.C.—A.D. 200). The center is composed of six formally aligned temple platforms constructed of earth and rubble fill and faced with adobe that apparently supported non-permanent temple structures. The largest mound at El Trapiche is Mound I (23 m. high), and is among the largest Preclassical structures in the Maya area. The excavation of this mound's access ramp in 1967 produced a rich array of Late Preclassic ceremonial deposits, including a total of twelve dedicatory pottery caches containing thirty-two intact or reconstructible vessels. These caches have provided an invaluable sample of the diversity and excellence of ceramic art practiced at Chalchuapa during the Late Preclassic. In addition to these potteries caches, the battered fragments of three stone monuments were found buried at the base of the Mound I ramp. The most important of these is a unique, although badly mutilated fragment of a Late Preclassic sculptured stela, containing a seated figure with an extensive hieroglyphic inscription (one relatively undamaged Maya glyph has been identified), all carved in low relief in a sophisticated Maya style. The other monuments consist of the upper portion of a large sculptured effigy jaguar head (the first of this type found in a Preclassic context), and a plain (unsculptured) monument fragment. These monuments were found where they had been deposited, apparently during a Güêerkei murnung ritual of destruction, and are mute testimony of the abandonment of El Trapiche at the close of the Late Preclassic (about A.D. 200). It is believed that this deliberate flurry of destruction and abandonment may have been in response to a local volcanic eruption, for the effects of such a catastrophe were seen in a layer of dense volcanic ash overlying the smashed monuments, as well as blanketing the entire Chalchuapa area.

Another result of the El Trapiche investigations has been the development of the first detailed ceramic sequence for this part of Mesoamerica. This chronological sequence, based upon the analysis of pottery sherds recovered from the excavations, spans much of the Preclassic era:

- **Tok Ceramic Complex**
  - (Early Preclassic) est. 1100-800 B.C.
  - (early Middle Preclassic) 800-500 B.C.
- **Chul Ceramic Complex**
  - (late Middle Preclassic) 500-200 B.C.
  - (Late Preclassic) 200 B.C.—A.D. 200

**Note:** Fragment of a mutilated Late Preclassic sculptured stela found buried at the base of Mound I, El Trapiche Mound Group (Chalchuapa). Scale, 1:10.
The establishment of a basic chronology consisting of broadly defined cultural phases from the earliest village settlements to the beginning of the historic period; the elucidation of each of these periods with some knowledge of technological development, social organization, architecture, funerary customs, and settlement pattern; and the integration of this information into the broader picture of Iranian prehistory—these are the three major goals which have been set for the Hasanlu Project which has just completed its tenth season of excavations in the Soltuz and Ushna segments of the Qadar River valley in southwestern Azerbaijan, Iran.

During this ten year period the Project has been jointly sponsored and aided by the Archaeological Service of Iran. It has been supported for seven seasons also by the Metropolitan Museum of Art of New York City with Dr. Vaughn E. Crawford and Dr. Oscar White Muscarella serving as co-directors. Additional support has been received for specific aspects of the work from private donors, the Explorers Club of New York, the Kevorkian Foundation, the University of Kansas, the Royal Ontario Museum, the National Geographic Society, the Ford Foundation. Through the support of these various organizations it has been possible to carry out the desired research and at the same time provide field training for outstanding graduate students from several universities. Many of these students have now gone on to responsible professional careers at the following institutions: Harvard University (John Cumber—Karlovsky); the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Dr. Oscar White Muscarella); the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago (Dr. Mauris Van Loo); the Royal Ontario Museum (Dr. T. Guyler Young, Jr.); the University Museum (Dr. George F. Dales); and Yale University (Dr. Richard Ellis).

Other students from the University of Pennsylvania are currently working on or toward dissertations on the prehistory of Iran and neighboring Iraq (Mary M. Voigt, William M. Sumner, Regnar B. Keaton, Louis Levine, Carol Hamlin, and Christopher Hamlin). All of these staff members and others who have participated as senior or junior members of the party have contributed their own understanding, suggestions, and questions which, combined with constant open discussions with other colleagues, have led to the results so far obtained.

Some of these results, accumulated over the past decade, are illustrated in the current University Museum exhibition. They may be further elaborated here in terms of the three basic aims set forth above.

The basic chronology of the valley under study has been developed in the following way: excavations undertaken at the major site studied, Tepe Hasanlu, produced a stratified sequence of superimposed ceramic remains to a depth of 27½ meters (about 89 feet). This sequence included nine recognizable ceramic phases each characterized by a major shift of fabric, shape, and style. A tenth, earliest phase, was inferred from sherds found out of position, but was never reached due to the high level of the water table brought about through the extensive irrigation practiced around the site. This ceramic development began with low fired ware decorated with red or brown painted geometric designs and ended with the dark wheelmade buff wares of the early historic period. The periods were numbered from the top of the mound downward from I through X. Period II produced no sherds (and was based on architectural remains) but Period III subsequently was found to consist of an early and a late ceramic phase (IIBB and IIIA) bringing the total back to ten. Transitions between phases, given the local evidence at only this one site, appear abrupt, but they are almost certainly not always so. In one instance, that of the Early Bronze Age (3000-2500 B.C.) there seems a real possibility that there may be a major hiatus in the sequence.

Excavations carried out at Pisdeli Tepe, Dalma Tepe, and Hajji Firuz Tepe confirm the basic stratigraphy of Hasanlu as well as confirming the inferred basal position of Hajji Firuz Ware as