The "Hasanlu Gold Bowl": Thirty Years Later

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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)
Background

The history of discovery of the gold bowl is generally provided by Forada 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 brickly 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 Hasana 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 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. comm.).

Because the bowl was found flattened, it is difficult to reconstruct its original shape exactly. On 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 relief on the inside, and then chased on the exterior, with the base and sides covered in a series of figurative scenes (Figs. 4, 5, 6, 20). Scholars from Forada to Modern times have noted motifs copying descriptions and interpretations of the bowl's imagery, and I will not recapitulate the arguments for each one here. Rather, this article will emphasize the way 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 Hasana 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. Elsewhere, and if elsewhere, whether it is the same general cultural area, or imported from outside. At present, there is no evidence to contradict a hypothesis of manufacture at Hasana. 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 north-west 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 excavations of Iron Age sites in the Solezur and adjacent valleys, as well as excavations in the Outer Town area of...
with other 1st millennium works. Specifically, Muscarella has argued that the closeness of composition and motifs between the Hassuna 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 discovery. Stylistically the bowl is very much at home with other works in metal and ivory found within the Hassana 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 Hassana period IV, which begins during the 12th century B.C., or during Hassana 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 wares from either period IV or from period V with which to compare the bowl. We need to know a great deal more about the artificial and cultural continuities between the phases in order to determine whether the "climate" of periods IV 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 Hassuna in the same building as the bowl (Fig. 11; see also Muscarella 1989b). 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,
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 postdate it. However, in a study of the effects of Assyrian “influence” upon Hasana, I have argued that Hasana was not equally receptive to the Assyrian imprint in all cultural domains. It is in the public/political arena where we see Hasana 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 preconditions 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 Hasana 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 comparisons and of the complex cultural context for the Iron Age levée at Hasana, 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 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 recently been summarized for each motif (Barrolet 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 attributes 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 Car-chemish (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 bull’s 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 1973).

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 Hasana,” Fig. 15). 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 Ugarit in the 1st (Haas and Wilhelm 1974, Ziman sky 1985). The three offerers 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 Teluah does battle with a stone monster created by the aged god Kurnamu in an attempt to subdue Teluah and assume 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 Bogazköy, have been seen by some scholars in the motifs to the immediate left and right of the battle (Bogazköy was the capital of the Hittite Empire in central Anatolia at this 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 figure holding an odd-looking baby(?) to a seated male could well represent the preamble of the same story, when the infant Ulukkummi was born and laid on the knees of his father, Kurnamu. To the right, the nude goddesses on two rams may be identified as Bītar/Saŋiga, sister of the storm god in the Hittite Hurrian version, who tries unsuccessfully to subdue Ulukkummi before Teluah engages him in battle. It is important to note, however, that although this Hurrian repertoire, there may well be other myth cycles whose events fit better the imagery of the bowl, but which are less well known. For example, we now know of an episode similar to that about Ulukkummi, in which the god Kurnamu engenders a second monster (called Idenammi) to combat Teluah (Siegelova 1971). The creature’s name is written with the determinative sign for snake or serpent (significant for the three serpent attached to the mountain stronghold here?), and in this sequence the goddesses Bītar/Saŋiga is successful in seducing him, thereby breaking his power. This very fragmentary text is too short to allow us to determine the narrative parallels for the imagery than the Teluah/ Ulukkummi 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
Glossary of Gods

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

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

Hedinnias: snake or serpent monster created by Kumari to combat Teshub, youthful storm god/hero of the Hurrian pantheon

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

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

Kabuba: chief goddess of the 1st millennium Lawian pantheon of Carchemish and elsewhere, frequently shown seated upon a lion, and holding a spina and/or mirror

Kumari: antagonist of Teshub in Hurrian mythology, formerly chief god of the pantheon, who was replaced by the younger god. He devised a number of monsters to combat Teshub in an attempt to regain dominance; sometimes associated with Ealil 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 Hititte. Associated with the sword

Saugna: name of goddess comparable to Istar in the Hurrian pantheon, whose seat was at Nineveh in northern Mesopotamia. In the eastern Hurrian realm, she was the consort of Teshub

Teshub: 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

Ulikumanni: stone monster created by Kumari to combat Teshub (see also Hedinnias); defeated in battle in the midst of the sea, as preserved in Hurrian myth

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 beaded hairdo, comparable to that of all the other women on the bowl and different from the straight hair of the men, the figure seems unambiguously female.

The motif of two kneeling males holding 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 (Citerbock 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 spina in her right hand and a mirror in her left hand, has a long history in south Iranian/Elamite representations (Porada 1985). 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 Hititte god; (3) a single downward-pointing sword with human/lion-headed pommel is thought to represent that very god in the rock-cut reliefs of Yazılıkaya near Boğazköy, which, although a product of the Hititte Empire, incorporate a number of Hurrian elements (Fig. 15b); (4) Nergal is included in Hurrian godlists as an important deity (Dia- konov 1981); and (5), in a number of Hurrian texts, a goddess who incorporates aspects of both gods, 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 Weger 1951).

Most enigmatic is the representation of a squattung 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 Hititte/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 1985).

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...
of an undifferentiated deity, or if it relates to either the storm god above or the narrative combat below, then there are common threads as to the 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 millen- nium; (2) Assyrian and Northern Semitic beliefs of offering tables before divine or deceased figures; (3) the full range of Reconstructed Sumerian 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/altaurtable motif is placed to the right of the three swords, the goddess-on-lion, and the warrior on horseback, and 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 enclaves. These circles have been identified as water, appropriate to both the Uruk period story in which the stone baby grew in the midst of the sea, and also the related Hekdammu myth where the creature similarly resided in the sea. It is also apt that, in the Uruk period episode at least, Teshub’s prayer to the god of sweet waters (Ea) resulted in cutting off the stone monster from his base, permitting the hero’s ultimate victory (see Forada 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 in fact 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 Leffhand 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 depicted 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/altaurtable 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 registers, but frequently also have them merely distributed in hierarchical fashion. 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).

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

The right-hand 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 Sutud, 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 successively by dynastic successors, and impressions of it have turned up on tablets found in the eastern Hurrian sphere at Nazı, 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 ethnolinguistic traditions.

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 was in the running for the god of the universe, in the pantheon, 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 played a role in the Teshub–Kumarbi myth cycle, the motif would have a narrative link to the scene immediately below; this would tie into a 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 left-hand zones.

The Right-hand 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/her 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 simple headband and the same kind of dress 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.

Forada has suggested that the figure of the storm god in the lower zone is the same figure as the god lead in the upper zone. Since we know Teshub to have been the storm god in the Hurrian pantheon, as well as the hero of the myth cycle, he has more than one identity: he has been more appropriate for battle (1965:103). One problem with this identification is that the storm god of the upper zone seems to be being winged, or at least to be portrayed with rays issuing from his shoulders, but the killed hero is not. However, this detail was to be argued as not inconsistent with the identity of the two figures, then the squatt ing figure to the left of the combat
dressed in long, vertically paneled and patterned garments, with an identical pattern used for the cloak/undraped dress of the nude female standing on two rams (all dotted, but distinct from the celestial gods above). And finally, the two full-size figures of the lower field, combat-hero and archer, are vertically identical in their hair, headbands, and fringed kilts, the only exception being the projection of a savior'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 Tell es-Saadi myth cycle already identified, this last would not be impossible. For, if the framing scenes around the central combat are dated 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, Tell es-Saadi was higher in status than in the west; she often stood next to Tell es-Saadi in visual representations (for example, on cylinder seals from Nuzi); she as well as her sister was accorded the same distinction. At the same time, the extra division into zones to the left of the two groups is related to the hierarchical order of the Hurrian world of gods and heroes, and is reminiscent of the two groups attested throughout the ancient Near East in the 2nd millennium (see box on Hurrians). Thus, we must assume that the resultant interactions would produce a high degree of shared literary traditions, similar in character and visible in the narrative flow of the lower field.

In sum, such suggestions only point the way toward future study. One would have to reconcile the alternative hypotheses of the three possible figures of Tell es-Saadi in different dress in the first system with the two figures of Tell es-Saadi 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 Tell es-Saadi (see below).

The "Reading".

This leads us to a summary of the visual imagery on the bowl as it can be reconstructed from the Hurrian texts (Fig. 19). Again, one must picture the bowl as a slightly flaring three-dimensional object of imposing size. What one would likely see is several sets of independent, overlapping, and interrelated visual motifs, each employing both the height and the circumference of the bowl. This is an illustrated field is filled with two files of figures, converging to a point of dramatic interaction. If we consider this point 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 a dramatic scene in a mythological cycle associated with the Hurrian god Tellub.

We now turn to the third and most difficult issue on which research is needed: the ethnic, linguistic, and cultural traditions of Tellub 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 present state of our knowledge we lack sufficient data to make a definitive assignment to one of the regions of the ancient Near East. However, it may be possible to identify groups of artifacts that are characteristic of particular ethnic or cultural traditions. We must therefore look for such groupings within the gold bowl.

To right and left of this focal point in the lower field seem to be the dominant motifs belonging to the same narrative. At the same time, the extra division into zones to the left of the two groups is related to the hierarchical order of the Hurrian world of gods and heroes, and is reminiscent of the two groups attested throughout the ancient Near East in the 2nd millennium (see box on Hurrians). Thus, we must assume that the resultant interactions would produce a high degree of shared literary traditions, similar in character and visible in the narrative flow of the lower field. In sum, such suggestions only point the way toward future study. One would have to reconcile the alternative hypotheses of the three possible figures of Tell es-Saadi in different dress in the first system with the two figures of Tell es-Saadi 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 Tell es-Saadi (see below).

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 (Négadhan 1983). This last notwithstanding, the very fact that one may now see the various motifs on the bowl as compositionally and meaningfully interrelated and read very small progress in the face of the bowl's enigmatic imagery.

Who? Ethnographic, Linguistic, and Cultural Associations

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2nd Millennium Hurrians? There is no written evidence from Hasanlu that would attest to the identity of the inhabitants. We cannot use the ancient name of the site, nor the state to which it may have belonged, much less the Hurrians (or their ethnic affiliations) 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 out these elements without actually postulating the necessity of Hurrian manufacture—although they may speculate about a possible Hurrian background underlying its manufacture (Porada 1939, Melikov 1965, Barreteau 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 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 IB-V 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 cannot use the ancient name of the site, nor the state to which it may have belonged, much less the Hurrians (or their ethnic affiliations) of its population—neither preceding nor during the period with which we are concerned.

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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 shown to be related to a North-Eastern Caucasian linguistic family that also includes ancient Urartian and modern Kurdish (Starostin 1998). The Hurrians have drawn the attention of scholars for decades, but only relatively 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 the same time as large-scale migrations that fanned out from the Caucasian south into northern Iran; south-west 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.

Through the end of the 4th and beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C., there is evidence of a Hurrian kingdom called Urkesh in the Habur-region of upper Mesopotamia, as well as Hurrian-speaking peoples in areas north and east of lower Mesopotamia, adjacent to the Zagros mountains on their respective regional panthons (Diakonov 1981). It is also the case that Hurrian is the earliest Indo-European language east of the Tigris near modern Kirkuk, where the Akkadian texts, associated seals, and personal names were all either Hurrianly/Hurrianly, or actually Hurrian.

Hurrian 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 in 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 Yazılıkaya, and many Hurrian texts were recovered from Bogazköy, 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 surrounding languages, different absorption of cultural styles and practices from neighboring peoples, and different Hurrian-a-Hittite—cultural associations among some scholars who would argue that Hurrians and Indo-Europeans are one and the same group. Not all hurrians were Hurrianly/Hurrianly, or actually Hurrian.

With this in mind, we can consider the Hurrian-related archaeological record, which is particularly well attested in the Levant, but also throughout the Near East. Hurrians are first attested by the 25th century B.C., and are attested in texts from the late 3rd millennium, as evidenced by the Hurrian migrations. (Rassieur 2003). The Hurrians appear in the Levant, the eastern Mediterranean, the Near East, and Anatolia, among other areas in the Near East. Hurrianly/Hurrianly, or actually Hurrianly, the presence of Hurrians is well documented in northern and eastern Anatolia. “Habur” is relatively well attested in Hurrianly/Hurrianly, and style—the changes from the previous period (e.g., Ur) 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 ceramic industry (differing from that of the Sintili III-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-European Iran Young 1967).

Recent archaeological research in the central Zagros has led to a rejection of the hypothesis (Young 1989). In the region of west central Iran where Assyrian references to the Hurrians began to include Hurrianly/Hurrianly, and style—the changes from the previous period (e.g., Ur) 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 ceramic industry (differing from that of the Sintili III-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-European Iran Young 1967).

Nevertheless, it is still possible that the cultural disruption represented by periods V and IV in Hurrianly/Hurrianly, or actually Hurrianly, is in some way related to the arrival of Indo-European ele-ments emerging established in the 2nd millennium B.C. (Davandez and Lukanin 1969). 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 the Kura Araxes to the Indus Valley. 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 3rd millennium B.C. (in the reign of Yarim-lagash B.C., there are written documents in Hittite proper, the best-known of the early Indo-European languages, concerning the Ancient Near East, associated with a powerful and expansive kingdom in central Anatolia during the second half of the 2nd millennium B.C. Does indicate that the presence of a single type of decorated pottery is not sufficient to confirm it. Thus for the Hurrians it is not clear if they prove or disprove the presence of Hurrians during the 2nd millennium B.C. on the basis of pottery.

Indo-European Immigrants?

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The Indo-European pantheon was also headed by a storm god, and Indo-European speakers also worshiped a war god mostly confined to the south and east of Hasanal. The center of the Indo-European pantheon was the god of war, who was often depicted as a warrior on horseback, wielding a sword and shield. This god was associated with the sun and was believed to be able to control the weather, particularly storms and thunder.

Hasanal to the northwest. For the present all we can say is that, with evidence for a Hurrian population in the south and east of Hasanal at the end of the 1st millennium, the possibility of some Hurrian presence in the intermediate area is relatively high (see Muscari 1987a).

Hasanal is also mentioned in the Hittite and Hittite-Assyrian literature as a region where Hurrian deities were worshiped. According to the Hittite texts, the Hurrians were a warlike and powerful people who were known for their skill in metalworking and trade. They were also known for their role in the trade routes between the Mediterranean and the Near East.

In the absence of direct evidence, it is likely that the Hurrians had a significant presence in the region, and their influence can be seen in the art and architecture of the area. The Hurrians were also noted for their military prowess, and their wars with neighboring peoples were a constant source of conflict and tension.

An Urartian Connection? Several lines of evidence suggest the importance of Urartian sources for our understanding of the gold bowl. First, both chalcolithic and sheep sacrificial, central motifs on the gold bowl, are significantly attested in Urartian sources. Scholars have suggested that the Urartians may have been responsible for some of the stylistic features of the gold bowl.

Until such studies are undertaken, I cannot commit to resolving the question of Urartian influence. A cultural tradition needs to be seen in the context of the wider cultural milieu in which it developed. A clear understanding of the social and political context in which the gold bowl was created is necessary to fully appreciate its significance.

When we look at the gods of the gold bowl, we see a reflection of the Hurrian pantheon, with the sun god and storm god being prominent. The presence of these deities in the gold bowl reflects the importance of these gods in Hurrian culture.

In conclusion, the gold bowl from Hasanal represents an important piece of Hurrian art and archaeology. Its study provides insights into Hurrian religious beliefs and the cultural context in which it was created. Further research and analysis are needed to fully understand the significance of this object and its place in the wider context of Hurrian and Near Eastern history.
as Anatolia, or in time the mid-2nd millennium. Concurrently, we need excavation and analysis of the geoarchaeological materials in the Urartian homeland in eastern Turkey to compare with 10th-9th centuries BC records from northern and western Iran. Specifically, we would want to know where sites in eastern Turkey, the Black Sea region, and central Anatolia are located in our period. It may well be that we must first make significant progress on the "Who" of the gold bowl. But there is also more to do for the art historian in pursuing systematic analysis of the bowl's materials and technique, its iconography and composition, and its relationship to materials from surrounding traditions. We must keep in mind that we have been heavily dependent upon literary texts for parallels, but between oral representatives and written texts we can reflect an oral tradition as well. Stories carried by bards who themselves can move between cultures and languages. Hopefully, at the next 30-year review, we will have more to tell our audiences and will be better able to see this most important of all archaeological events. It may be that, in the most complex and subtle context for the present, the bowl continues to serve as a map of good and men, heroes and demons that resists just beyond our ken.
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. Lambberg-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.

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