Published: December 15, 2003
Last Updated: January 3, 2014

ḤASANLU TEPPE I. THE SITE

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Ḥasanlu Tepe is the largest site in the Qadar River valley and dominates the small plain known as Solduz. The site (37°00’ N, 45°13’ E) consists of a 25-m high central “Citadel” mound surrounded by a low Outer Town, 8 m above the surrounding plain. The entire site, once much larger but reduced in size by local agricultural and building activities, now measures about 600 m across, with the Citadel having a diameter of about 200 m.

Figure 1. Provisional plan of the structures of Ḥasanlu IVB within the period IIIB fortification wall.

Figure 2. Overview of Ḥasanlu. Used by permission of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, Philadelphia.

Figure 3. Ḥasanlu period IV B drawing of Horse breastplate of bronze found with a mess of horse gear. L 42.28 HT 20.2 cms. HAS 74-241. Iran Bastan Museum, Tehran.

The Qadar River rises to the west in the Zagros on the Assyrian frontier near the ancient Urartian city of Musasir. Its eastern end drains into marshes north of the modern town of Mahābād, which lies northwest of the ancient country of Mannai. Ḥasanlu is the largest site in this valley, but it is only one of many dating to various early periods. Several of these mounds, Ḥāji Firuz, Dalmā,

Pisdeli, Denḵā (qq.v.), Se Gerdān, and ʿAqrab Tepes, were partially excavated as part of the Ḥasanlu Project of the University of Pennsylvania Museum, the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Archeological Service of Iran between the years 1956 and 1977. Earlier brief excavations at the site occurred in 1934-35 (Ghirshman, II, pp. 78-79, 253-54, pl. C), 1936 (Stein pp. 389-404, figs. 106, 108-10, pls. XXIV-XXVI, XXX, XXXI) and 1947 and 1949 (Ḥākemi and Rād). Prior to 1956 only one major site with a stratigraphic sequence had been excavated in Azarbaijan, that was Geoy Tepe (q.v.) located fifty miles north of Ḥasanlu near Urmia (Burton-Brown, 1951a). The excavation lasted only two weeks and lacked stratigraphic control, the objects being recorded primarily by inches below the datum. It was the purpose of the Ḥasanlu Project to develop a carefully controlled sequence of cultural remains providing substantial information on as many aspects of occupation as possible for the prehistoric periods in the area.

The stratigraphic sequence at Ḥasanlu, developed over ten three-month excavation seasons, produced a number of ceramic phrases numbered X to I from the bottom up, with subdivisions in VII, IV and III. The sequence (Voigt and Dyson, 1992, I, pp. 174-75, II, p. 137) began with a Neolithic village (X) better known from excavations at nearby Ḥāji Firuz (Voigt), and continued through the Dalmā and Pisdeli period occupations of the fourth millennium B.C.E., characterized by distinctive geometric painting styles (Hamlin, 1974; Dyson and Young). These ceramic phases were followed by a phase with rare pottery sherds painted with parallel vertical lines interspaced with circles with a dot in the center (VII C). In the mid-third millennium B.C.E., the settlement expanded to include the Outer Town area and a new kind of pottery, Painted Orange Ware, appeared (VII B and A; Dyson and Pigott). Then followed a period in the second quarter of the second millennium B.C.E. of painted "Ḵābur Ware." This pottery reproduced shapes, fabrics, and designs identical to those known from northern Mesopotamia at this time (Hamlin, 1974), but neutron activation analyses showed that the Ḵābur Ware at Ḥasanlu and Denḵā is locally made.

In the second half of the second millennium B.C.E., a major change took place in burial customs, ceramics, and architecture with the appearance of burnished gray, black, red, and brown pottery made in a variety of shapes, including stemmed goblets, spouted jars, and vessels reproducing metal techniques such as gadrooning. At the end of the second millennium B.C.E., the top of the Citadel mound was occupied by a series of monumental buildings, of

which at least one was a large temple with a columned hall measuring 18 by 24 meters with four rows of six columns each, a forerunner of later columned halls in Media and Achaemenid Anshan (q.v.).

During this period, the mound's summit was surrounded by a narrow wall with small buttresses which ran down the western slope enclosing three parallel ramps. These sloping ramps gave access to areas and to a small chariot gate that led to the central open area. Horse trappings recovered from the excavations were for both ridden and driven horses, and the charred remains of a chariot were identified. The gear, and several horse skeletons, were recovered from the collapsed remains of the temple center, which had been destroyed by burning in a sudden attack at the end of the ninth, or early in the eighth, century B.C.E. by an unknown foe.

Due to the suddenness of the sacking, most of the buildings retained their contents, especially the materials stored on their second floors. Over 7,000 artifacts were identified (Dyson and Voigt, 1989) which include a wide range of utensils, weapons, jewelry, decorative wall tiles, metal and ceramic vessels, horse gears, seals and sealings, and so on. Materials represented include iron, bronze, gold, silver, antimony, shell, ivory, bone, amber, glass, wood, and stone. No written tablets were recovered, but stone maceheads and vessel fragments preserve names connected to Assyria and Elam (qq.v.).

Unique among the artifacts of this period, found in 1958, were a silver beaker ornamented in electrum figures, showing a victory scene with chariot, driver, soldiers, and prisoners, as well as a two-and-a-quarter pound solid gold bowl ornamented with repousée figures (see the next article; see also Porada; for detailed color illustration, see *Life* magazine, 12 January 1959). The bowl, executed in a local style, draws on the iconographies of ancient Mesopotamia and Anatolia and is a major document for the art history of this period, the subject of much discussion and speculative interpretation (Winter, with references).

Following a hiatus in the 8th century, the abandoned site was occupied by the Urartians, who built a massive fortification wall with towers and buttresses to house a garrison meant to anchor the southern frontier of their territory (period IIIB). Sometime, probably in the later 7th century, this fortress was abandoned. There was another hiatus, followed by the final ancient occupation (period II/IIIA) of the Achaemenid-Early Parthian period (Dyson, 1999).

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