

Emblems of Authority

The Seals and Sealings from Hasanlu IVB

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In the ancient Near East, small stamps and cylinders with carved or molded designs were used as emblems of status or authority. Their impressions on lumps of clay, called sealings, served to indicate ownership or rights over goods, and to control access to containers or storerooms. While seals and sealings have long held an artistic interest because of their designs, more recent studies have also begun to recognize the value of such artifacts as a means of reconstructing aspects of economy and society.

Most of the seals in museums and private collections today have been purchased and are without an archaeological provenience. Isolated from their cultural context, such artifacts are of limited value, even for traditional studies of style. The 9th century Citadel of Hasanlu affords an unusual opportunity to study a corpus of seals and sealings with controlled stratigraphic contexts, which provide them with a precise archaeological and cultural setting.

This report summarizes the results of a multifaceted study of the seals and sealings (collectively referred to as glyptic art) from Hasanlu IVB, incorporating stylistic, functional, and locational evidence. In addition to information on the local economy, it provides valuable

insights into foreign relations between northwest Iran and the major centers of the ancient Near East in the early 1st millennium B.C., especially with the powerful state of Assyria in northern Mesopotamia (Fig. 2). This kind of analysis is particularly important at Hasanlu, since the site has yielded virtually no written texts.

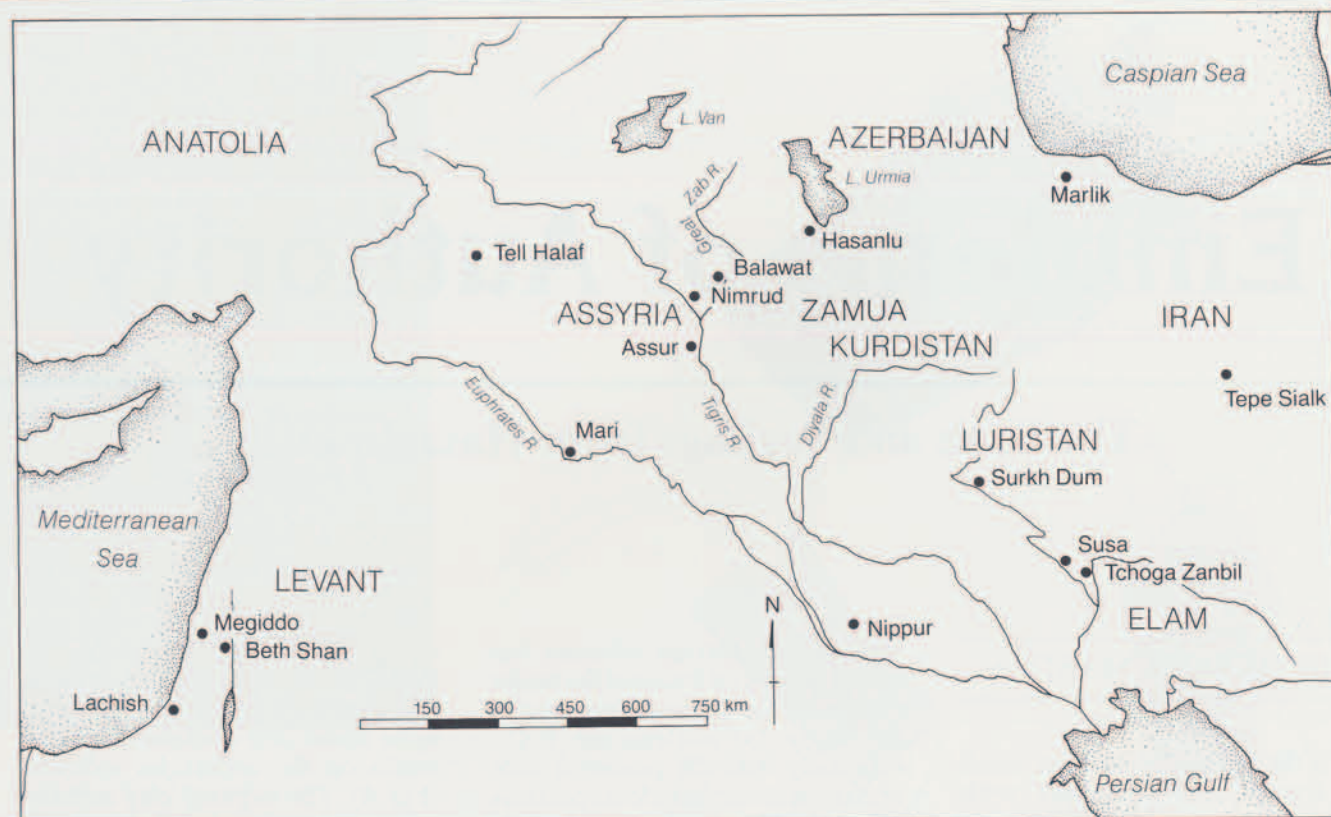
The Hasanlu Evidence

Excavations carried out between 1957 and 1974 recovered 105 seals and clay sealings from buildings

and graves dating to Hasanlu period IVB. The sealings (31) are lumps of clay that were pressed when moist upon doors and containers, as the marks on the undersides indicate (Fig. 6). The exposed clay surface was then impressed with a seal and allowed to dry, leaving a firm but fragile symbol of rights over the contents of the room or container. In addition to such commodity sealings, several flattened, ovoid-shaped tabs of clay that likewise preserve seal impressions were found. The undersides of the tabs are smooth, showing no signs of having been pressed against another



1 Roll-out drawing of the design on a silver beaker illustrating the Hasanlu local style. (HAS 58-427, Burned Building I. Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran 10770. Drawing by Grace Freed Muscarella. Photo courtesy of Oscar W. Muscarella)



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Map of the ancient Near East.

surface, and their function is uncertain.

On the basis of a stylistic and iconographic analysis of the seal designs, it has been possible to classify the Hasanlu assemblage into discrete stylistic groups, and to establish criteria for distinguishing between locally produced works and foreign imports. The following discussion will concentrate on four major stylistic groups of glyptic art from period IVB: two "local" categories and two foreign styles. Each style provides a somewhat different insight into the function and meaning of seals at the site.

Local-Style Seals

The notion of a "local style" at Hasanlu IVB was first introduced by Edith Porada (1965), with special reference to the designs incised on a silver beaker and gold bowl (Fig. 1, and Winter, Figs. 4, 5, this issue). More recently, Oscar Muscarella has identified a local style in the

carved ivory fragments from the burned Citadel (Figs. 3-4). Similar motifs and forms occur on 4 cylinder seals, made of bone, terracotta, and an artificial compound called Egyptian blue, and 18 of the 26 different seal designs impressed on sealings and tabs fall within this group (Figs. 5-7).

The local style is characterized by a tendency towards surface patterning and geometrization, and a liveliness of the representations. Human figures are rendered with large heads, prominent noses, low receding foreheads, and exaggerated eyes. Animals are featured, especially horses and lions. The latter regularly have large heads, often turned in reverse, with wide-open mouths, prominent teeth, and squared-off muzzles.

While the particular human and animal forms of the local style are so far restricted to Hasanlu, many of the themes are derived from the art of the Neo-Assyrian empire. For example, the subject carved in the lower register of the design in



3

Fragment of a local-style ivory carving showing the profile head and upper torso of a human figure. Ht. 2.9 cm, W. 2.2 cm, Th. 0.3 cm. (HAS 64-920, Room 6, Burned Building II. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 65.163.16, Rogers Fund, 1965. Photo courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. See also Muscarella, this issue)

4

Fragment of a local-style ivory carving of a winged lion, typically shown with a wide-open mouth, prominent teeth, and squared-off muzzle. The wing is decorated with a herringbone pattern. Ht. 2.3 cm, W. 3.1 cm, Th. 0.45 cm. (HAS 64-912, Room 6, Burned Building II. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 65.163.22, Rogers Fund, 1965. Photo courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art)



Figure 7—a seated figure with a bow receiving a standing attendant holding a vessel and towel(?)—is perhaps best known from the large-scale reliefs that decorated the palace of the Neo-Assyrian king Aššurnasirpal II (883-859 B.C.) at Nimrud in northern Mesopotamia (Fig. 8). In the reliefs, however, the king is usually flanked by several attendants, with his bow held either before or behind him.

In a discussion of the relationship between the local Hasanlu art style

and Assyrian art, Irene Winter (1977) has argued convincingly for a model of emulation by which the Hasanlu elite attempted to absorb some of the status of the neighboring Assyrian empire. Related to this notion is the selection at Hasanlu of emblems of authority and power associated with Assyrian monuments—motifs dealing with military activity and the hunt, courtly activity in the processions, and the embellishment of elite public buildings with glazed wall

tiles. The sealings support this analysis and add another courtly theme to the list: attendance of a seated figure.

It is easy to explain the transmission of themes in Assyrian art to Hasanlu, since there were ample opportunities for interaction. We know from the royal annals, for example, that the Assyrians were engaged in military campaigns in northwestern Iran in the mid-9th century B.C., and that dignitaries from the northern Zagros areas



5a,b

Modern impression of a local-style bone(?) cylinder seal (a) and drawing of the design (b). Nearly all of the local-style seal designs are arranged in two even registers. The upper register of this example shows a standing figure before a horse-drawn chariot. The figures have the large heads, prominent noses, and exaggerated eyes characteristic of the local style. Also standard is the striated body of the horse, which is shown wearing a bell or tassel suspended by a strap below his neck. In the lower register are a winged bull and winged lion, both with upraised tails and hatched bodies. The lion is differentiated from the bull by the typical open jaw, angular thrust of the muzzle, tufted tail, and upraised hair along his back. (HAS 62-198; test trench east of Burned Building VII and south of Burned Building III. Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Modern impression of seal at The University Museum; photo courtesy of the Hasanlu Project, University Museum. Drawing of impression by Denise L. Hoffman)



6a-c
Box sealing impressed with two partial rollings of a local-style cylinder seal. Determinations of sealing function are based on the often neglected but vital information preserved on the sides and backs of sealings. Here, the back bears the imprint of a small round knob with concentric wood grain lines (reconstructed diameter 2.1 cm), the end of a dowel impressed with a string groove, and string holes near the knob. In addition, there are traces of electrum preserved on the back (blackened in the drawing). All of this information suggests that the sealing was attached originally to a gilded wooden or ivory box constructed with dowels, having a small wooden knob, and wrapped with string before the sealing was applied. (See Fig. 7 for a composite drawing of the complete seal design based on impressions of the same seal on this and nine other sealings.) (HAS 64-658. 2nd story collapse, Room 7, Burned Building II. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 65.163.64, Rogers Fund, 1965. (a) Front, back, and side views of sealing; photos by Steve Broulis; (b) drawing of front, back, and section by Denise L. Hoffman; (c) reconstruction drawing showing how the sealing might have originally been used to secure the contents of a box with a wooden knob; by Denise L. Hoffman)

were among the guests at the dedication ceremonies of Assurnasirpal's new capital at Nimrud around 860 B.C. (see Schneider, this issue). The residents at Hasanlu could have heard descriptions of the Assyrian reliefs or even viewed them first-hand. At the same time, small-scale objects bearing designs similar to those carved on the reliefs could have been brought to Hasanlu as diplomatic gifts or items of a mutual exchange—for example, ivories, textiles, metal objects, and cylinder seals (see below and Pigott, this issue).

Other elements in the local-style glyptic art point to North Syrian sources. Specifically, the Hasanlu lions with gaping mouths and prominent teeth (Figs. 4-7) are close in form to representations on contemporary stone monuments from Carchemish and Tell Halaf, as well as on lion bowls imported to Hasanlu. At the same time, the overall decorative tendencies and liveliness of the representations in the local style relate to long-standing traditions within western Iran—from decorated gold vessels from Marlik near the Caspian Sea to glazed tiles from Susa and seals from Susa and Choga Zambil in southwestern Iran (Fig. 9; also see Winter, Fig. 8, this issue). Despite the wide range of visual source materials, the specific combination of elements in the Hasanlu local style—its unusual animal and figural styles, and the adoption of potent Neo-Assyrian and North Syrian themes—has been found so far only at this site.

An intriguing aspect of the local-style seals and sealings is their distribution within the major



7
Composite drawing of a local-style seal design, based on partial rollings of the same seal on ten different sealings (including the box sealing in Fig. 6). The upper register shows a figure on horseback wielding a spear, held above his head, against a stag. The hunter typically has a large head, prominent nose, and hair rising in a point in the back, above his neck. The horse wears a bell or tassel suspended below his neck, as in Fig. 5. At the right are two vertical snakes with large open jaws.

The main scene of the lower register consists of a seated figure holding a bow before a standing attendant, who holds a cup in one hand and a towel(?) in the other. The chair has a high slanted back, as seen in some local-style ivory carvings. At the left is a lion, striding to the left with his head reversed. He has a wide-open mouth, prominent teeth, squared-off muzzle, and upcurled, brush-tipped tail typical of lions in local-style works in other media (cf. Figs. 1, 4). There is an arrow(?) in the field before the lion's mouth. The terminal design consists of two irregularly shaped, six-pointed stars, set one above the other. (Drawing by Denise L. Hoffman)

burned buildings on the Citadel Mound and the information that this distribution provides on the function of such artifacts, as well as of the buildings themselves. While most of the seals from the site (closed circles, Fig. 10) were found directly on building floors, most of the sealings (closed triangles, Fig. 11) were discovered in collapsed debris that presumably fell from a second story. The sealings were found in three main clusters in two major buildings: the northeast and southeast areas of Burned Building II, and the southeast corner of Burned Building V. These findspots

are significant because they coincide with the major discoveries of carved ivory plaques at the site, as well as other precious goods, such as gold jewelry and silver vessels (Muscarella 1980:2). Judging from the markings on the undersides, the sealings seem primarily to have secured the contents of small containers, including reed baskets, wooden boxes, and leather bags, as well as doors (Fig. 6).

The distributional evidence therefore suggests that sealed treasuries were originally located on the second stories of Burned Buildings II and V. Within these treasuries

were stored precious goods in sealed containers. Thus the local-style seals and sealings offer a kind of information that other artifacts do not: a record of storage arrangements and implied economic and cultural transactions.

Other Iranian Seals

This category is made up of objects that may have been made at or near Hasanlu, but that do not conform to the local style as defined above. This group includes conoid-knob stamp seals and geometric-



8
Drawing of a relief of a seated king with attendants from Room G, Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II, Nimrud. (From Layard 1849: Pl. 5; original in the British Museum)



9
Cylinder seal from Choga Zambil showing overall decorative tendencies characteristic of the art from western Iran. Composite material, Ht. 3.7 cm, W. 1.02 cm. (TZ 466.1956; Louvre SB 5038. Drawing by Edith Porada, from Porada 1970: no. 50)

HASANLU FIRST FLOOR FINDS

● SEAL
▲ SEALING



HASANLU SECOND FLOOR FINDS

● SEAL
▲ SEALING



style cylindrical seal-beads.

Conoid-knob stamps are made of quartz composite material (Egyptian blue) which may be glazed or unglazed. The stamps have a truncated conical base, short indented stem with a perforation, and short conoid knob. Figure 12 represents one of seven examples of this stamp type from Hasanlu IVB. The designs on the seal face include an insect, birds, sun disks, and geometric designs.

Although the general form of these stamps has antecedents in 2nd millennium Anatolia, only a handful of 9th century parallels are known for both the shape and seal designs. One or two examples each are known from sites ranging from Surkh Dum in central western Iran to Tell Halaf in northern Syria (Schmidt, van Loon, and Curvers 1989; Oppenheim 1962).

Conoid-knob stamps are more numerous at Hasanlu than at any other site. Although frequency does not necessarily indicate local production, there are other hints that point in that direction. First, the form and details of a bird in one conoid-knob seal design have parallels on two local-style ivory plaques (Muscarella 1980: Nos. 160, 161). Second, several sealings from Hasanlu preserve impressions that could have been made by conoid-knob stamps: both the size and shape of the seal face and some of the designs are similar.

Nevertheless, the origin of this group of stamps is particularly difficult to determine, and the evidence for Iranian production of the conoid-knob stamps from Hasanlu is not conclusive. Until we

10,11
The distribution of the seals, sealings, and tabs in the major Burned Buildings (BB) on the east side of the Citadel Mound. More detailed maps in Marcus 1988 include the finds from Burned Building III and information on the style of each object. (Maps by Denise L. Hoffman, based on a site plan by Robert H. Dyson, Jr. Final locus maps will be published by the author in a forthcoming University Museum Monograph)

have far more comparative evidence from stratified Iron Age contexts in the ancient Near East, it remains uncertain whether we are dealing with a number of widely scattered workshops for stamp production or with more centralized production.

Geometric-style cylindrical seal-beads are made of fused quartz composite materials carved with simple geometric designs, such as crosshatching and vertical rows of chevrons (Fig. 13). Although parallels are known from sites all over the ancient Near East, including Tepe Sialk on the Iranian plateau and Choga Zanbil in Khuzistan, there is no reason to look outside Hasanlu for the place of production of the geometric cylinders.

The function of these artifacts is not yet certain. Although sealings with geometric-style impressions have been discovered at earlier sites in southern Mesopotamia and Iran, none have been found at Hasanlu. Rather, most of the geometric cylinders from Hasanlu IVB were discovered in groups with other beads, suggesting that they were worn as beads and were probably not used in economic transactions.

Syro-Palestinian Style Stamp Seals

Among the foreign-style seals from Hasanlu IVB, the most unexpected group has ties with the far west, at contemporary or slightly earlier sites in the Levant. This category includes: (1) small stamp seals of an unglazed composite (fused quartz) material, carved in the form of recumbent lions, with animals or human figures on the seal face (Fig. 14); and (2) scarabs made of composite material, also carved with animals on the face. Both of these seal types have good parallels at Beth Shan, Megiddo, and Lachish in the southern Levant.

It is uncertain whether these Syro-Palestinian style stamp seals reached Hasanlu directly from the Levant or, more likely, were transmitted through Assyria, where similar goods have been found. Although this issue cannot be resolved

at present, it has a bearing on the important question of whether Assyria controlled the trade routes to northwest Iran in the 9th century B.C., or whether there was independent access from the Levant east.

Neo-Assyrian Style Seals

The fourth stylistic group of seals from Hasanlu IVB has connections with Neo-Assyrian glyptic art. It is made up of at least 21 "linear-style" cylinder seals (Figs. 15, 16). At Hasanlu, as at contemporary sites such as Aššur and Nimrud in Assyria proper, linear-style seals are generally manufactured of soft stones and were originally fitted with metal caps and suspension pins with a looped end. The style is characterized by a dependence on outline, with finely incised designs arranged in a single register. Typically such seals show archers shooting wild animals or mythological creatures, or monsters attacking smaller ruminants.

The presence of objects in Assyrian style has long been recognized among the finds from Hasanlu IVB. In addition to seals, they include ivory carvings and glazed wall tiles. To date, such goods at



0 1 2cm

12
Conoid-knob stamp seal (top and side views) and modern impression. (UM 71-23-188; composite material. Pit above floor level, Lower Court. (Photos by Steve Broulis)



3 cm

13
Geometric-style cylindrical seal-bead and modern impression. (HAS 60-952; composite material. Floor, Room 5, Burned Building II. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 61.100.115. Purchase, Mrs. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff Gift, 1961. Photo by Steve Broulis)



0 1cm

14
Syro-Palestinian style lion stamp seal (top and side views) and modern impression. (UM 63-5-256; composite material. Floor level collapse, Room 4, Burned Building III. Photos by Steve Broulis)

Hasanlu have been regarded as direct imports from the imperial centers in northern Mesopotamia. In the case of the seals, however, this assumption may be challenged.

When compared with excavated seals from Assyria proper, only six of the Hasanlu seals can be confirmed as typical products of the latter region. Among these is the example shown in Figure 15. The theme and composition are standard for central Assyria: a winged griffin attacks a kneeling wild ram whose head is turned in reverse; a palmette is set between them (Fig. 17). Also characteristic of Assyrian seals are the indications of the muscles and rib cage of the animals; the well-defined facial features; the form of the palmette and its short base of three horizontal lines; the eight-pointed star in the sky; the crescent moon; and the chevron border pattern.

In contrast, the majority of the linear-style seals from Hasanlu (15 of 21) consistently exhibit certain non-Assyrian features that suggest they were made outside of the imperial center (Fig. 16). Most notably, this seal group exhibits a marked tendency towards surface patterning and a liveliness of representation, features absent from the excavated central Assyrian products but common on seals assigned to the Iranian and local styles at Hasanlu. For instance, in Figure 16, the face of the archer is defined by

horizontal incisions, and the stag's body is divided into segmented parts marked by overall surface patterns, especially horizontal and vertical striations that do not conform to the natural anatomy of the animal. When Assyrian seals show incisions on animal bodies (as they often do), they carefully follow the natural form of the animal to indicate the muscles or rib cage (Figs. 17, 18), and in general do not present the same degree of elaborate overall patterning that marks a number of the Hasanlu seals. Another un-Assyrian characteristic of the seal in Figure 16 is the border of oblique hatching, and the carelessness by which elements from the main scene intrude into the borders and the omission of the archer's feet altogether.

If some of the linear-style seals from Hasanlu were not produced in central Assyria, as the comparative evidence suggests, then where were they carved? While they could have been manufactured in an Assyrian province near the capital, the tendency towards surface patterning makes them most at home in or near Iran. In fact, as already mentioned, it is one of the hallmarks of the local art style of Hasanlu itself, as seen in glyptic art (Figs. 5, 6), ivories (Figs. 3, 4; see also Muscarella, Figs. 15-19, this issue), and metalwork: the Hasanlu silver beaker (Fig. 1) shows patterned garments on the human figures; animal bodies marked by



15
Typical Assyrian-style cylinder seal made of black talc/steatite, originally fitted with copper/bronze suspension pin with looped end (now removed). The theme of a winged griffin attacking a kneeling ram is characteristic of excavated linear-style seals from sites in Assyria proper. (HAS 60-1021; floor, Room 5, Burned Building II, in a group with 8 other cylinders. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 61.100.80. Purchase, Mrs. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff Gift, 1961. (a) Photo of seal and modern impression courtesy of The Metropolitan Museum of Art; (b) drawing of impression by Denise L. Hoffman)



a

b

3 cm



c

16a-c

Assyrian-style cylinder seal showing non-Assyrian decorative tendencies. Although the subject of an archer shooting a stag and the linear carving style of this seal design are characteristic of excavated central Assyrian seals, the liveliness and overall surface patterning in the human and animal bodies have more in common with local and other Iranian artwork, suggesting production at some marginal locality close to, or even in, Iran. (UM 61-5-20; black marble with metal pin in perforation. On stone paving of column base, Room 1, gate into Lower Court. (a) Photo of seal and (b) modern impression by Steve Broulis; (c) drawing of impression by Denise L. Hoffman)

rows of half-circles, herringbone bands, and horizontal and vertical striations; joints indicated by several parallel lines; and bands of oblique hatching between registers. As noted above, this marked tendency towards surface patterning is found all over western Iran (Fig. 9; see also Winter, Fig. 8, this issue).

Other specific details on some of the linear-style seals from Hasanlu also find local parallels. For example, the double outline around the stag's eye and the band of hatching along his belly on the seal in Figure 16 are similar to the representations of lions and other animals on the silver beaker and on local-style ivories (Figs. 1, 4).

Thus the combination of stylistic elements characteristic of Assyria with elements common in western Iran on some of the "Assyrian-style" cylinders seems to call for a place of production that was close to, or even in, Iran. This notion is particularly compelling because there is historical evidence of an Assyrian settlement in the mountains to the south of Hasanlu, in Iraqi Kurdistan, the probable location of the ancient region of Zamua (Levine 1974). And it was in Zamua that Aššurnasirpal II claims to have built a "palace for [his] royal residence," which he "decorated more splendidly than ever before" and named

Dur-Assur, or fortress of Aššur (Grayson 1976:par. 566; see Schneider, this issue). From this information, we may assume the presence of Assyrian artisans to decorate the palace—and perhaps Assyrian seal-cutters to furnish seals for the local administration.

As Zamua was one of the areas in the western Zagros closest to Assyria, and it was a major population center from which radiated important routes to the north, south, and east, it is tempting to envisage artists trained in the major centers of Assyria coming into contact here

with local styles or producing seals for customers who had acquired local tastes—a setting ripe for the production of some of the more decorative, unusual Assyrian-style seals from Hasanlu.

Also intriguing in this regard is the discovery at Hasanlu of an inscribed stone bowl that refers to the king of "the land of Idi," a place name mentioned in Assyrian accounts of campaigns in Zamua (Levine 1974). Although it is not certain that the Idi on the bowl is the same place mentioned in the royal annals, this object may document



17
Assyrian linear-style stone cylinder seal from Nimrud showing a winged human-headed creature attacking a kneeling ram. Ht. 4.0 cm. (From Layard 1853: Pl. 69, no. 47)



18
Modern impression of Neo-Assyrian linear-style cylinder seal of serpentine showing well-defined rib cage and musculature of animal body; from Assur (no. 111990ai). Ht. 2.9 cm, Dia. 1.3 cm. (Vorderasiatisches Museum 4212. Photo courtesy of the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Staatliche Museen, East Berlin)

the actual transmission of goods from Zamua to Hasanlu.

At the same time, turning farther to the south, there are among the recently published discoveries from Surkh Dum in modern Luristan linear-style seals showing the same attention to surface patterning as our provincial Assyrian group from Hasanlu (Schmidt, van Loon, and Curvers 1989). This evidence raises the possibility that similar goods were moving both north and south from a single source on the same trade route. Geographically, a town in Zamua or elsewhere in the northwestern Zagros would fit into the proposed reconstruction.

Wherever they were produced, the provincial Assyrian-style seals from Hasanlu raise the possibility of otherwise unknown centers of artistic production in the northern Zagros during the early Iron Age. Particularly intriguing is the notion of an Assyrian workshop in the Zagros acting as an intermediary between the major political center (Assyria) and its hinterland in northwest Iran, a site, perhaps, where center-trained artists produced and distributed Assyrian-type seals that had nonetheless been affected by aesthetic predispositions native to the provincial area in which they lived. It remains to be determined

whether the seal-cutters were Assyrians absorbing stylistic elements from Iran, or Iranians absorbing elements from Assyria. However, until far more rigorous criteria are developed within art history for attributing style to ethnicity, choosing between these two options may not be possible.

Symbols of Power

Still to be explained is the question of *why* Assyrian-type seals, whether products of the center or its provinces, were so desired at Hasanlu. They constitute about one-quarter of the entire glyptic assemblage from the site. Related to this issue is the need to explain the choice of themes in the local-style artwork. As discussed earlier, objects done in local style sometimes portray subjects best known from the large-scale reliefs that decorated the palaces of the Neo-Assyrian kings, for instance, chariot scenes and more ceremonial images of the enthroned king with attendants. Just as the borrowing of Assyrian elements by local seal makers may best be explained in terms of the Hasanlu elite actively trying to absorb some of the prestige of the

Assyrian imperial court, the acquisition of other Assyrian-style objects such as the linear-style cylinder seals may indicate a desire to match the cultural status of the court.

Were our Assyrian-type cylinders actually used as seals at Hasanlu, or were they collected solely as personal ornaments for their prestige value? The first possibility is unlikely, given the absence of Assyrian-style seal impressions on any of the clay sealings from the site. Instead, as discussed above, local-style seals were mainly used for actual transactions, presumably the protection of containers or store-rooms from theft.

The distribution of seals at Hasanlu lends positive support to the use of Assyrian-style cylinders as ornaments. It has already been observed that while most of the sealings were discovered in second-story collapse, most of the seals were found directly on the building floors (Figs. 10, 11). Often the Assyrian-style seals were found beside skeletons of people caught in the burning buildings at the time of the destruction of the settlement. In some cases they were found lying near or behind the necks of individuals, where they were probably originally worn as ornaments. In at least two cases, a seal appears to have been suspended by its metal loop from a cast bronze lion pin found with it (see Pigott, Fig. 13b, this issue).

However they were worn, the Assyrian-style seals seem to have belonged to elite individuals, judging from the quantity of high-status goods found with the skeletons. For example, one seal was found beside a body wearing 17 copper/bronze bracelets and buttons with gold overlay. While it is not certain that the skeletons with seals represent local citizens, as opposed to foreign attackers, the abundance of associated jewelry does suggest a non-military status. There is evidence, then, to suggest that the Assyrian-style seals from Hasanlu—whether from Assyria proper or the provinces it controlled—were valued and worn as personal ornaments, presumably as signs of status, and were probably not intended to actually seal goods.

Reconstructing the Ancient Past

Owing to our knowledge of the stratigraphic contexts of the seals and sealings from Hasanlu IVB, it has been possible to combine a stylistic and iconographic analysis of the seal designs with a functional and locational analysis of the actual seals and sealings. Only such a multifaceted approach, I would argue, can adequately deal with the com-

plexities both of the local cultural history of the site and of the interconnections between northwest Iran and the major centers of the Near East in the early 1st millennium B.C.

Although many questions remain unanswered, this analysis of the Hasanlu material has nevertheless served to generate hypotheses about the economic and social uses of these important artifacts at the settlement; the function of certain building areas; possible marginal places of artistic production in the Zagros; and patterns of exchange

between northwest Iran and regions to the west and south. I have tried as well to better understand the relationship in this period between the central power of Assyria and the lesser states of northwest Iran through the consumption of Assyrian seals and the incorporation of Assyrian themes into the local art style. On a more general level, it is hoped that the full investigation of the Hasanlu glyptic material serves to highlight the benefits of combining art historical, functional, and distributional studies in reconstructing the ancient past.

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