



ESSAYS ON

Near Eastern Art  
and Archaeology

IN HONOR OF

Charles Kyrle Wilkinson

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Published with the aid of a grant from  
**THE HAGOP KEVORKIAN FUND, New York**

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Charles Kyrle Wilkinson

*Edited by* Prudence O. Harper and Holly Pittman

THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM OF ART  
New York

# Acknowledgments

THE EDITORS wish to thank Edith Porada and Ira Spar for advice and assistance. Polly Cone undertook the copy editing and prepared the manuscript for publication with skill and efficiency.

A grant from The Hagop Kevorkian Fund made this publication possible. We acknowledge the support of the trustees with particular gratitude.

## PUBLISHED BY

The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Bradford D. Kelleher, Publisher

John P. O'Neill, Editor in Chief

Polly Cone, Editor

Peter Oldenburg, Designer

Type set by National Photocomposition Services,  
Inc., Syosset, New York

Printed and bound by Halliday Lithograph, West  
Hanover, Massachusetts

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## LIBRARY OF CONGRESS CATALOGING IN PUBLICATION DATA

Main entry under title:

Essays on Near Eastern art and archaeology in honor of  
Charles Kyrle Wilkinson.

Proceedings of a symposium held at the Metropolitan  
Museum of Art, 23 February 1981.

1. Art—Near East—Congresses. 2. Near East—  
Antiquities—Congresses. 3. Art, Islamic—Near East.  
4. Wilkinson, Charles Kyrle, 1897— . I. Harper,  
Prudence Oliver. II. Pittman, Holly. III. Wilkinson,  
Charles Kyrle, 1897— . IV. Metropolitan Museum of  
Art (New York, N. Y.)

N7265.E78      1983      730'.0935      82-18838

ISBN 0-87099-324-0

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# Foreword

ON FEBRUARY 18, 1981, the new, permanent installation of the Museum's collection of Assyrian reliefs from the palace of Assurnasirpal II in northern Iraq opened in the Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery for Assyrian Art. This happy event provided the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art with an opportunity to pay tribute to Charles K. Wilkinson and to acknowledge the tremendous contribution he has made to the Museum over the years. The Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art came into being in 1956 under Charles Wilkinson's direction and grew and expanded over the years under his beneficent care. During the opening ceremonies of the symposium in his honor, at which the papers published in this volume were presented, the late curator in charge of the department, Vaughn E. Crawford, made the following remarks:

It is my pleasure on behalf of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art to welcome you to a series of lectures in honor of Charles K. Wilkinson, curator emeritus of this department. This event has been made possible by those who administer The Hagop Kevorkian Fund.

A series of lectures, or a similar form of recognition for Charles, is long overdue. Why has it taken so long? Simply because we felt it was unfair to hold such a celebration unless it coincided with a new exhibition of ancient Near Eastern art we hoped would please Charles. As incredible as it may seem, for more than twelve years the department's exhibition space had been reduced to one small gallery on the second floor. Now, however, thanks to the beneficence of Raymond and Beverly Sackler, our Assyrian reliefs from Nimrud are installed in a grand new setting. Since the reliefs are arranged basically the way Charles arranged them in 1960, when the carved panels were first assembled in a courtyard at the northernmost end of the Museum, this seemed a most appropriate time to invite all of you here to honor Charles.

Charles served the Museum for many years in Egypt and Iran as well as here in New York, where he played a number of roles; his last position was that of curator of ancient Near Eastern art. Because of Charles's many interests, we wanted to invite lecturers well known to him to speak on Egyptian and Islamic art and archaeology as well as on that of the ancient Near East. Regrettably, we were unsuccessful in finding a speaker to represent Egyptian art, a failure all the more regrettable since Charles's contribution to the Museum was great in that area. Fortunately, however, scholars of Islamic and ancient Near Eastern art have responded favorably. To all our speakers from far and near we express gratitude for their contributions to this gala occasion.





# Charles K. Wilkinson

**C**HARLES KYRLE WILKINSON's years with The Metropolitan Museum of Art have been many and distinguished. In 1956 he became curator of the new Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, having already spent a number of years with the Museum's archaeological expeditions in Egypt—at Thebes and the Kharga Oasis—and in Iran—at Qasr-i abu Nasr and Nishapur. Trained in England, his native country, at the Slade School, University College, London, Charles joined the Graphic Section of the Metropolitan in 1920 and is responsible for many of the color facsimiles of ancient Egyptian tomb paintings on exhibition in the new Lila Acheson Wallace Galleries of Egyptian Art.

The departments of Ancient Near Eastern Art and Islamic Art were combined under the curatorship of Charles K. Wilkinson in 1959. Following his retirement from the Museum in 1963, Charles became curator emeritus of Near Eastern art. In 1970 he returned to museum work, accepting the newly established position of Hagop Kevorkian Curator of Middle Eastern Art and Archaeology at the Brooklyn Museum, where he remained until 1974.

The Metropolitan Museum's collection of ancient Near Eastern art increased enormously under the curatorship of Charles Wilkinson, both through extensive and judicious collecting and through renewed archaeological fieldwork. In collaboration with the British School of Archaeology in Iraq and the late Max E. L. Mallowan, the Museum began in 1951 a joint archaeological venture at the site of Nimrud, the ancient Assyrian capital city of Kalhu. An important and particularly fine group of ivory carvings of the ninth to seventh centuries B.C. came to the Museum as a result of the contribution of funds and staff to this expedition over a period of more than ten years. Other archaeological projects to which Charles brought the support of the Museum and other donors were the expeditions of the University of Pennsylvania at Hasanlu in Iran and of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and the American Schools of Oriental Research at Nippur in Iraq. The division of finds from each of these sites has added important works of art to the Museum's collection of ancient Near Eastern art.

In addition to his curatorial work at the Metropolitan and Brooklyn museums, Charles Wilkinson was an adjunct professor of Islamic art at Columbia University

from 1964 until 1969. He also organized a number of special exhibitions: *Iranian Ceramics* at the Asia House Gallery in 1963; *The Pomerance Collection of Ancient Art* at the Brooklyn Museum in 1966; and *Chess: East and West, Past and Present* at the Metropolitan Museum in 1968. He has written extensively on Islamic and pre-Islamic objects in the Metropolitan Museum and other collections, most notably in the Abegg-Stiftung in Bern: *Two Ram-headed Vessels from Iran* (1967) and *Ivories from Ziwiye and Items of Ceramic and Gold* (1975). In 1973 Charles published a large volume titled *Nishapur: Pottery of the Early Islamic Period*, and presently he is working on a second Nishapur volume, tentatively titled *Nishapur: Wall Decorations of the Early Islamic Period*.

Charles Wilkinson has contributed in many ways to The Metropolitan Museum of Art and to the field of Near Eastern studies. He brings to his work an eye and taste for beauty, an ability to express himself easily and to inspire others with his enthusiasm, and a concern for the discovery, preservation, and presentation of works of art. The Museum's collections of Islamic and ancient Near Eastern art are a reflection of these talents.

PRUDENCE O. HARPER

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# List of Abbreviations

AAA	<i>Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology</i>
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AHw	W. von Soden, <i>Akkadisches Handwörterbuch</i> (Wiesbaden, 1959)
AnOr	<i>Analecta Orientalia</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARAB	D. D. Luckenbill, <i>Ancient Records of Assyria and Babylonia</i> (Chicago, 1936)
ARI	A. K. Grayson, <i>Assyrian Royal Inscriptions, Records of the Near East</i> , 1, 2 (Wiesbaden, 1972)
Bagh.Mitt.	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
BMMA	<i>Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art</i>
CAD	<i>The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago</i>
FuB	<i>Forschungen und Berichte</i> (Berlin)
JAOS	<i>Journal of the American Oriental Society</i>
JNES	<i>Journal of Near Eastern Studies</i>
KAR	E. Ebeling, ed., <i>Keilschrifttexte aus Assur religiösen Inhalts</i> , 2 vols. (Leipzig, 1915–19)
OIP	Oriental Institute Publications
RAI	<i>Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale</i>
RLA	<i>Reallexikon der Assyriologie</i> (Berlin, 1928)
VAT	Tablets in the Vorderasiatische Abteilung of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin
ZA	<i>Zeitschrift für Assyriologie</i>



# The Program of the Throneroom of Assurnasirpal II

*Irene J. Winter*

University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia

THE HISTORY of excavation at Nimrud is well known, from the work of Layard and Loftus in the nineteenth century to the seasons of work by Mallowan and David Oates on behalf of the British School in Iraq, and finally to the most recent investigations by the Iraqis and Poles while they were restoring the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II on the citadel.<sup>1</sup> Luckily, most of the sculpture and reliefs originally found by Layard in the Northwest Palace were carefully numbered in situ before they were removed—mainly to the British Museum; watercolor renderings were made of individual slabs in addition to reconstructed views that attempted, through nineteenth-century eyes, to evoke the palace as it “must have been.”

The present paper owes much to the early excavators' careful recording, as well as to the subsequent inventories and studies made by Julian Reade and Janos Meuszcziński, particularly with regard to the throneroom (Room B), of the Northwest Palace.<sup>2</sup> And insofar as Charles Wilkinson has played a major role at two institutions in the husbanding of important Assurnasirpal reliefs, it is a particular pleasure to present this study in his honor.

The shift of the Assyrian capital from Assur to Nimrud in the fifth year of Assurnasirpal II (885–856 B.C.) is documented historically. Inscriptions record how the city was built and populated, with particular attention placed on the construction of the royal palace and of various temples on the citadel. Especially clear is the description of huge gateway figures and decorated stone slabs or orthostats set throughout the vast rooms of the palace.<sup>3</sup>

It would be useful to know more about the preceding Middle Assyrian period, and about Neo-

Assyrian buildings at Assur before Assurnasirpal's shift of the capital, but it would seem that the king's scheme of sculptural decoration integrated into architecture was an innovation greatly indebted to the highly developed Neo-Hittite states to the west of Assyria such as Carchemish.<sup>4</sup> The style of the Assurnasirpal reliefs, however, is uniquely Assyrian. The slabs stood about two meters above ground, some divided into two registers, others containing figures the full height of the stone. All contained a version of the same “Standard Inscription” carved across the middle, however; the complete text took from sixteen to twenty-three lines and was repeated in toto on each slab.<sup>5</sup> The same repetitive approach was used in the decoration of most reliefs, as whole rooms were devoted to alternations of griffin- or human-headed “genii” shown individually or flanking the “sacred tree.” Occasionally standing or seated figures of the king were included, often flanked by attendants, as in Rooms G and H of the palace; but the only significantly expanded repertoires that can be reconstructed with certainty come, not surprisingly, from the throneroom, Room B, and on the external facade of that room, facing into Court D.<sup>6</sup>

The throneroom itself, a long transverse room separating the more public area from the more private, or ceremonial, wing of the palace, is extremely long in proportion to its width: forty-five by ten meters (Fig. 1).<sup>7</sup> The original position of the reliefs in the room was, as noted above, recorded at the time of Layard's excavation and is generally known (Fig. 2); however, basic publications in the field have tended not to consider placement of the reliefs a significant factor in their identity. They are rather presented mainly as an accumulation of contents: battle



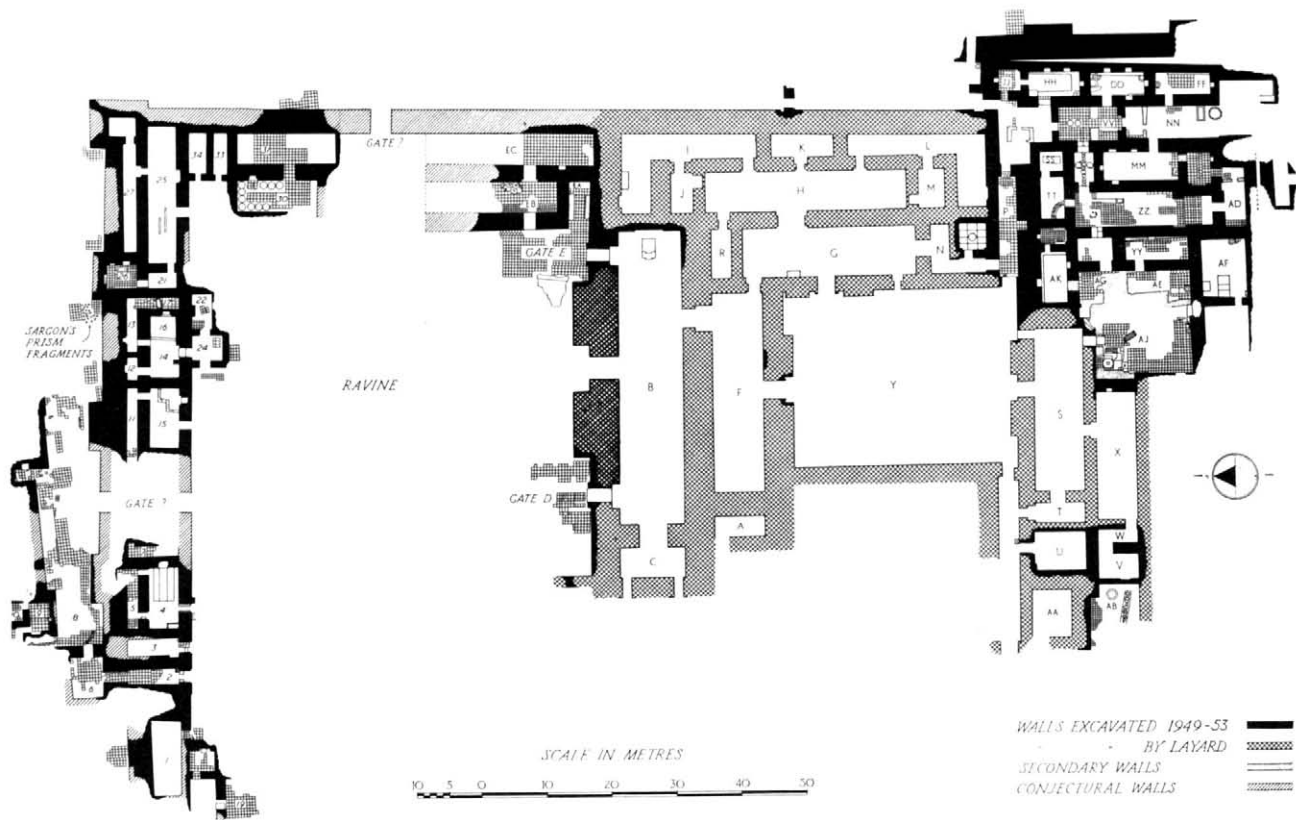


FIG. 1 Plan of the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud.

Adapted from M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2 vols. and maps (New York, 1966), and B. Abu es-Soof, "Further Investigations in Assur-nasir-pal's Palace," *Sumer* 19 (1963): 66-68.

and/or hunt scenes, ceremonial representations, etc., with particular stylistic characteristics that enable us to recognize the work attributed to the reign of Assurnasirpal in the ninth century. Occasionally parallels are also drawn across media, as when motifs like the king represented on either side of the "sacred tree" (slab 23 from the throneroom) can be directly compared to similar representations on cylinder seals.<sup>8</sup>

The relief on slab 23 in particular (Fig. 3) is generally considered a statement of the king's role in maintaining ritual fertility, and thus the balance of the state in relationship to divine principles (physically embodied in the position of the god Assur within the winged disk in the field above the tree). Compositionally, also, the organizing principles are clear: axial symmetry governs the placement of the tree at the center; the repetition of figures on either side maintains the axis and absolute balance. The priority of figures moves in to the center and then up: from the "genii" at the far sides, to the king in his role as main-

tainer, to the central tree, and then to the god in the winged disk, set precisely on the axis. It is no different from the organization apparent on the facade of a Gothic cathedral, for example, as a key to the theological structure of medieval Christianity: basal quatrefoils, as at Amiens, containing earthly and didactic themes; apostles flanking the central door, as the aspiration of men; the figure of Christ on the trumeau at the middle of the central portal as the highest achievement of man; then, directly above all, the scene of the Last Judgment on the tympanum, leading ultimately to an elevating visual as well as religious experience.<sup>9</sup> The theological priorities are as clear there, then, as one may suggest them to be on slab 23 of Assurnasirpal.

The position of the slab within the throneroom is thus crucial. For, with an investigation of the records of Layard, and particularly following with the study by Meuszcziński, we find that it occupies the primary location immediately behind the throne base at the eastern end of the room, the base on which the king

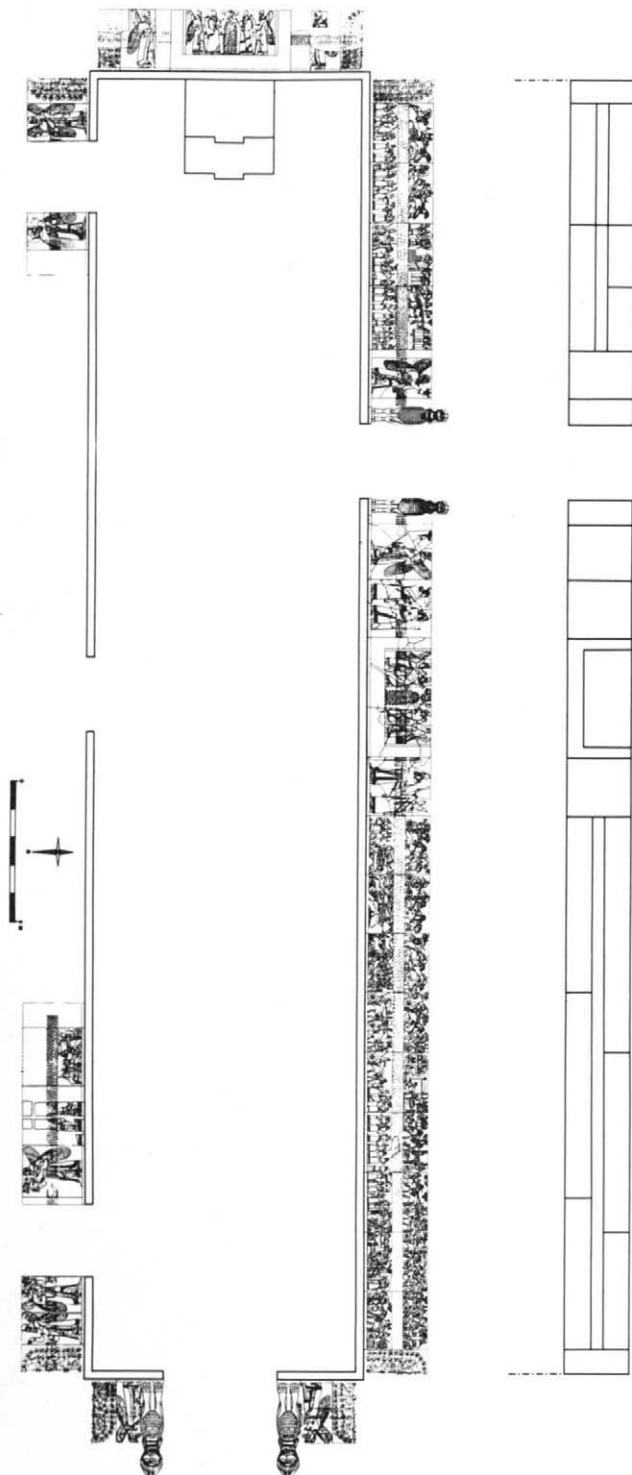


FIG. 2 Detailed plan of throneroom (Room B), Northwest Palace.

Drawing by Elizabeth Simpson.

himself would have been seated (see detailed plan, Fig. 2). In effect, then, slab 23, set directly behind the king, functions much as the Gothic tympanum does, “behind” and above the figure of Christ on the trumeau.

But Layard also found fragments containing parts of a repetition of this same scene. He identified this as slab 13, on the long south wall of the throneroom—placed in a location that at the time seemed almost a random interruption of a long sequence of battle narratives to the east of a small door into the anteroom F. Only with the subsequent excavations and restoration activities of the Polish expedition did it become clear that this relief was in fact placed directly opposite a major doorway in the north wall of the room. That door, missed by Layard and reconstructed in his plan as a solid bit of wall,<sup>10</sup> it would now seem, was the major entrance to the throneroom from Court D. The repetition of the symmetrical scene of king and “sacred tree” opposite this door thus becomes the pivot point of the entire room, orienting the viewer immediately upon entrance, and reorienting him as he turns ninety degrees to face the king on his throne and the identical relief above. That this was intended is apparent from the fact that these reliefs alone neither occupy the full height of the slab, as do the apotropaic doorway “genii,” nor are they divided into two distracting registers, as are the narrative scenes; rather they are set one-third of the way up the orthostat in their own unique disposition of space, visually apart from the figures on other slabs. It is as Oppenheim has noted (in his *Ancient Mesopotamia*): the old Sumerian bent-axis temple approach has been incorporated into the Assyrian royal palace;<sup>11</sup> these two slabs, B23 and B13, with their religious imagery, become the anchors of the entire room.

The apparent disjuncture of these two focal points, however, is softened in the room as a whole by various devices: in particular, the placement of “genii” at the doorways, and especially of “genii” flanking “sacred trees” in each corner. The axis of the corner is also the axis of the tree, which then bends around the corner, creating a unity of the space by articulating all four wall planes in relation to each other and effectively making of the throneroom a total integrated space.

As we proceed to the more “narrative” reliefs, a



FIG. 3 Slab B23 from the throneroom. King and “sacred tree.” British Museum 124531.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.

similar degree of planning becomes apparent. Along the south wall, in the corner closest to the royal dais, are two slabs representing bull and lion hunts respectively (slabs B20 and B19; see Fig. 4). The pitting of the royal figure against these two particular animals is traditional in earlier Mesopotamian art, all the way

back to the Warka lion-hunt stele of the late fourth millennium B.C.<sup>12</sup> As Assurnasirpal in his accounts makes reference to the actual hunting of a rather wide variety of animals—ostrich and elephant, for example, as well as lion and bull<sup>13</sup>—the selection of these latter two suggests more than anecdote, as does



FIG. 4 Slab B19a. Lion hunt. British Museum 124534.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.

the placement of the hunts so close to the throne. (It is unfortunate that the reliefs of the opposite, north, wall are not preserved in situ, so that we might know if there was a parallel placement, where doors permit, of opposing or related themes.)<sup>14</sup>

When the hunt scenes—for example, the lion hunt, slab B19—are seen in the context of the entire slab, it is also striking that originally they were organized around a principle of action in the upper register (the hunt itself) and consequence in the lower (i.e., the libation poured over the dead animal; Figs. 4 and 5). This relationship is often overlooked, as the double-register slabs of the throneroom were all sawn in half in the nineteenth century to facilitate their transport to England, and so often tops and bottoms of the same slab are illustrated separately, in no relationship to one another. A similar organization may be observed in the immediately adjacent slabs (B18 and B17) along the same south wall, where battles (action) are represented above, and overseers, prisoners, and booty (consequence) are represented below (Figs. 6 and 7).

The innovative nature of these battle narratives should not be passed over lightly. I wish we knew more about the art of the Middle Assyrian period in order to see the immediate antecedents.<sup>15</sup> However, by the Neo-Assyrian period, not only do details reflect specificity of dress and landscape; but also the consistency of a profile view, the engagement of all

figures, and the lack of emphasis on the king except for his identification by headdress and garment all permit attention to be entirely focused on the action unfolding within each sequence. This is significantly different from earlier known monuments—the stele of Naram-Sin of the late third millennium, for example (Fig. 8), in which the king does not draw his bow, but merely stands triumphant, so that despite the extraordinary spatial alignment of the total field and the inclusion of landscape elements, we are presented with a “commemorative” rather than a “narrative” scene.<sup>16</sup>

As one proceeds across the doorway and over the repetition of the king and tree, slab B13, and on down the southern wall, one sees a further extension of these battle narratives. Action now extends beyond the confines of the single slab, to include up to three or four slabs in a single sequence (see Figs. 9 and 10). The relationship between upper and lower registers is completely abandoned, but the action in each sequence is played out with greater drama, incorporating temporal factors of attack, conquest, and aftermath into a single sequence. One “reads” the register as one would a line of text.

For example, in a sequence showing a battle on horseback—slabs B11a to B9a—the king’s chariot and those of his personal vanguard ride over bodies of fallen enemy and shoot at fleeing individuals. In this sequence, as in virtually all the others, the king is



FIG. 5 Slab B19b. Libation over lion. British Museum I24535.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.



FIG. 6 Slab B17a. A citadel in the river. British Museum 124538.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.



FIG. 7 Slab B17b, detail. Prisoners and booty. British Museum 124539.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.

FIG. 8 Stele of Naram-Sin, from Susa. Akkad period, about 2230 B.C. Louvre Sb 4.

Photo: Département des Antiquités orientales, Musée du Louvre, Paris.



at left, facing right, and all action moves to the right, down the wall, just as the king sits on his throne at the far eastern end, facing down the room to the west. All action therefore emanates from him, and an individual approaching the throne would be moving against the direction of the action, confronting the king in each situation.

In only one instance do the king and the action

reverse direction. That is in the sequence of slabs B5a to B7a, where the king is shown walking his chariot to the left (Fig. 11). It is significant that this is not a battle/action scene, but rather an aftermath, and one sees from slab B7a that the destination of this procession is the king's own camp. He is clearly returning to it, with prisoners in tow. The reversed direction then conforms to the narrative.

FIG. 9 Slab B5b from the throneroom. The king before a walled citadel. British Museum 124552.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.



FIG. 10 Slab B4b. Siege of a walled citadel, a continuation of Fig. 9. British Museum 124554.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.



FIG. 11 Slab B5a. The king returning to camp. British Museum 124551.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.

It was when I registered this very conscious visual parallel to the narrative that I began to wonder to what extent the individual sequences might have been recognizable in antiquity—not only as generic “types” of campaigns, but as records of specific places and historical events. Unfortunately, the complete annals of Assurnasirpal II have not been preserved, and the account on the Standard Inscription is much abbreviated. However, in the Ninurta Temple inscription there is an annalistic account of the campaigns of years one through eighteen, presumably adapted from the annals.<sup>17</sup> There not only does one find specific reference to the aftermath of a particular battle in which the king returns to his established camp after the siege of Mt. Nisir in the north,<sup>18</sup> but also several other striking correspondences to the narrative sequences depicted on the reliefs.

For example, in only one instance, the attack against Damdammusa on the northern Tigris in the king’s eighteenth year, is specific mention made of cutting down orchards along with the beheading of enemy in a massacre—and this can be directly related to the siege of a citadel, slabs B5a–B3a (see Fig. 12), on which trees and decapitated bodies are carefully represented in the reliefs.<sup>19</sup> For slab B17a (Fig. 6), only three times are places mentioned as not at but in water: Anat, an island in the Euphrates near Suḫu,

i.e., south; Arwad, on the Phoenician coast, described as being an island in the sea; and Carchemish, when the Euphrates was in flood.<sup>20</sup> However, only one mention occurs in an account that combines a record of an attack with the description of crossing a river on floats, and this is at Carchemish. Carchemish is also the only state mentioned as providing tribute in ivory tusks to the Assyrian king, and just such tusks are represented among metal vessels and other goods being received by Assurnasirpal from a subservient king in the lower half of the same slab, B17a. The same degree of precision in representation and textual description can be observed in a variety of other cases: the combination of the use of siege towers and battering rams at Mt. Kashiari in Urartu, in relation to slabs B5b to B3b; and the elaborate description of the army crossing the Middle Euphrates by boat and float in Suḫu and Laqe, as compared to slabs B11 to B9b.<sup>21</sup> In fact, this accuracy should not be at all surprising, as Assurnasirpal himself announces, in his Banquet Stele found by Mallowan in 1951, that he has decorated the palace walls with scenes representing “his heroic deeds”<sup>22</sup>—that is to say, with specifics, not generics.

What is all the more remarkable is that, if one looks at the geographical distribution of the identifiable campaigns depicted on the south wall, they are all situated in an arc from vaguely southwest to west



FIG. 12 Slab B3a. The king in a chariot at the siege of a citadel with fruit trees. British Museum 124555.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.

to north of the Assyrian heartland. It is indeed unfortunate that the north wall of the throneroom is not more complete: the only sequence actually preserved represents the pursuit of horsemen along a river (slabs B27b to B28b; Fig. 13). However, this is the scene suggested by Barnett to represent Iranians,<sup>23</sup> and it is in the Zagros that Assurnasirpal describes

encounters with horsemen alongside river torrents.<sup>24</sup> In other words, if this identification is correct, it is situated in the east. I would be tempted to dismiss this tantalizing opposition were it not that in the Standard Inscription written across each slab of the Northwest Palace, as Assurnasirpal elucidates his territorial expansion, the southwestern, western, and

FIG. 13 Slab B27b. The pursuit of horsemen. British Museum 124559.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.





northern campaigns are grouped into one sequence, while the eastern, southeastern, and southern campaigns are grouped in the next.<sup>25</sup> It is very tempting, therefore, to see this same division as part of the conscious program of the throneroom, along much the same lines as the decoration on the exterior of a Gothic cathedral where Old Testament scenes were often allocated to the north (cold) side and New Testament scenes to the south. Interior fresco cycles from Byzantium to the Renaissance were also frequently organized around similar polarities.<sup>26</sup>

Further support for such a reading can perhaps be adduced from Assurnasirpal's own statement in another context, in which he asserts that he has "brought under one authority ferocious (and) merciless kings from *east to west*" [emphasis mine], a pattern that continued to be used by later kings—for example, Shamshi-Adad V of the late ninth century, who announces the extent of Assyrian power as "from Nairi in the East to opposite Carchemish in the West."<sup>27</sup> In what may be a visual rendering of the same formula, the thronebase of Sargon II from Khorsabad has depicted on one side a campaign in the mountains (generic for the east) and on the other a campaign in riverine territory (as the Euphrates or the Mediterranean in the west; see Fig. 14a, b).<sup>28</sup> What we would then be presented with in both text and image is an articulation of the boundaries of the empire—implying not only the limits of the king's territory, but what the boundaries enclose as well. The walls of the throneroom then both echo the limits of the empire and at the same time make the throneroom itself the symbolic "center," creating a physical microcosm of the state.<sup>29</sup>

Let us now look beyond the immediate confines of the throneroom, Room B, of the Northwest Palace, to the western end where Room C is set off by two screening walls decorated with "genii." On the back, west, wall of that room there were originally three slabs, of which only fragments remain. Because those fragments clearly indicate the presence of figures who attended the king, Stearns has reconstructed a standing king in the center, on the lines of the decoration of the east wall of Room G.<sup>30</sup> However, the dimensions of the available space on these three fragmentary slabs would equally have permitted a seated figure of a king, as preserved on the

north wall of Room G.<sup>31</sup> Whether shown standing or seated, the royal figure in the center of attendants would have been directly on axis with the wide doorway connecting Room C to Room B and would also have been directly on axis with the actual king seated down at the far, eastern, end of the throneroom. The decoration of the western wall in Room C, therefore, in a sense "closes" the throneroom and must be considered part of its decorative scheme.

With this royal image of Room C included, it is now possible to expand the discussion of the parallelism between text and image in the throneroom. Until now, I have merely suggested a more literal correspondence between verbal accounts of battle and visual representations than hitherto assumed. However, the reliefs of Room C bring to four the types of scenes in which the king is depicted, and these may be compared to ways in which the king is described in text. In the Standard Inscription, as well as in the Ninurta Temple inscription, the titulary that closes the annalistic recounting of the king's activities begins:

I, Assurnasirpal, attentive prince, worshipper of the great gods, *ušumgallu ekdu*, conqueror of cities.<sup>32</sup>

If one understands the adjective *ekdu* as "fierce," otherwise applied only to wild bulls and lions, and the noun *ušumgallu*, derived from the Sumerian, and, although obscure, literally as "great unique one," the whole phrase appropriate to one of fierce, great properties of heroic proportions,<sup>33</sup> then the correspondence is extraordinary between the titulary applied to Assurnasirpal and the four types of representation in the throneroom. In fact, they correspond exactly:

1. King himself, seated or standing
2. King in attendance upon the "sacred tree" and the god Assur
3. King as heroic hunter of wild bulls and lions
4. King as victorious in battle, conqueror of enemy citadels

What is more, the relationship we have observed between action and consequence, whether from upper to lower register or within a narrative sequence, is also one of the main characteristics of the



FIG. 14a, b Thronebase of Sargon II, Room 7, Khorsabad. Northeast side (a), Iraq Museum, Baghdad. Southwest side (b), Oriental Institute, Chicago, A 11257.

Photos: Oriental Institute, Chicago.

way the king's achievements are presented in the earlier part of the Standard Inscription. In a string of epithets, the initial attribute is given in an active mode: e.g., "fearless in battle," and those that follow are consequences: "enemies trampled," etc., or, "king who captured lands" (action), followed by "receipt of tribute, taking of hostages" (consequence).<sup>34</sup>

There is also in the Standard Inscription a series of shifts of subject, when reference is made to Assurnasirpal, from the first person singular to the third person singular: from "I, Assurnasirpal" to "he. . ."<sup>35</sup> This, too, has its correspondences in the duality of the king both present in the throneroom and depicted on the walls. And finally, although I propose this most tentatively, in the very organization of the narrative sequences it will be

noted that the subject of the action is always clearly defined and is always the same: the king. Variation, therefore, occurs in the predicate. But as we read the events—for example, when the king is depicted against a citadel he has conquered—the sequence of events as represented may be said to follow the word order of unmarked Semitic Akkadian: subject-object-verb.<sup>36</sup> The king, with or without attendants, generally appears at the left (subject); the object of his attention follows; and only at the end is the verb perceivable. In the example cited, for instance (slabs B5b to B3b), in actuality the king shoots a bow, but the governing action of the scene is that he "conquers," and that verb is apparent only at the end as one views the total scene.

My last point about structural parallels between the Standard Inscription and the throneroom reliefs



FIG. 15 Tributary figures from Court D, Northwest Palace. British Museum 124562.

Photo: Courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.

must include a consideration of the architectural units immediately to the north and south of the main chamber: Room F and Court D. The decoration of Room F consists entirely of alternating sequences of “genii” flanking the “sacred tree.”<sup>37</sup> What is most significant about these reliefs is the absence of variation. I feel that the motif must be considered the paradigm, or the abbreviation that stands for the whole in the total decorative scheme of the palace—much as the Standard Inscription is repeated over every slab. It is the kernel of the message, elaborated most fully in the throneroom into a fuller statement.

Along the external facade of the throneroom that faced onto Court D one can make out, despite their fragmentary condition, a procession of non-Assyrians, fists raised in a gesture of greeting, carrying various valuable goods (for example, see Fig. 15).<sup>38</sup> Layard further recorded evidence for figures of Assyrian court officials at the head of the procession

and, in addition, the figure of the king as the recipient of the procession.<sup>39</sup> The whole, then, must have been quite like the external facade of Sargon II’s throneroom at Khorsabad, giving onto Court VIII.<sup>40</sup>

The tributaries carry jewelry (presumably of gold), metal vessels, and textiles. One figure is accompanied by two simians. The tributaries’ dress permits them to be identified as from the West, corresponding in headgear and garment to figures labeled elsewhere as coming from Carchemish, Bit Adini, or Phoenicia.<sup>41</sup> Significant in the present context is the fact that, according to the Ninurta Temple inscription, these are precisely the places cited as providing Assurnasirpal with tribute that included gold bracelets and necklaces from Carchemish and two female apes, large and small, from the Phoenician coast.<sup>42</sup>

Once again, then, we seem to have a literal representation of what is also preserved in text. But how it fits into the scheme of the program as a whole is, I believe, apparent only when one examines the full text of the Standard Inscription carved over every relief slab. For there, although I again submit this with some hesitation, it would seem that the structural organization, not only of individual parts, but of the whole text, can be matched to the structure of the decorative program of the throneroom.

The diagram (Fig. 16) presents the sequence<sup>43</sup> in both text and image:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| 1. (I am) Assurnasirpal  | King himself on throne <sup>44</sup>  |
| 2. Vice-regent of Assur  | King flanking tree and Assur  |
| 3. Titulary I: attributes (action: consequence)  | Hunts and battles: generic attributes (action: consequence)   |
| 4. Annalistic account of specific campaigns  | Individual battle sequences   |
| 5. Titulary II: more attributes, including “praiseworthy king”                                     | King seated on throne, or standing (Room C)   |
| 6. Description of building of palace plus tribute received (founding of capital; center of empire) | Throneroom as a whole, plus Court D facade of tribute (founding of palace, and capital; center of empire) |

This is not the place to pursue the ramifications of these observations in the art of the later Neo-Assyrian period. However, despite the absence of

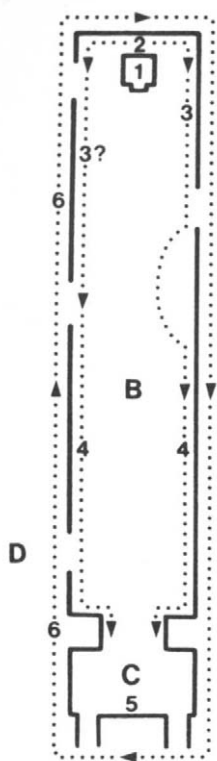


FIG. 16  
Schematic plan of Room B,  
Northwest Palace at Nimrud.  
Drawing by Elizabeth Simpson.

large-scale reliefs bearing the king and the “sacred tree,” the motif and its meaning had to have continued, since it appears as designs on the tunic of Assurbanipal in the seventh century.<sup>45</sup> So, also, does the related organizational principle of passing from action to consequence prevail in Assurbanipal’s lion-hunt reliefs from Nineveh, the expanded registers notwithstanding.<sup>46</sup> Similarly, the battle scenes remained a strong iconographic element, proliferating throughout Assurbanipal’s entire palace. The same principles of opposition must also have been maintained, as with the suggested east-west division of the throneroom: in Room 1 of the palace of Sennacherib at Nineveh—probably his throneroom<sup>47</sup>—two battle cycles are represented, a seascape on the one hand (flight of the Phoenician king of Sidon) and a mountainous country (i.e., the east) on the other.<sup>48</sup>

I leave to another occasion the exploration of these later reigns. What is crucial, however, is the need to examine all these reliefs in context and to pursue questions of “program” wherever possible. If I am correct in my analysis of the throneroom of Assurnasirpal II in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud, then

the “program” is most carefully selected and consciously applied—manifesting an extraordinary degree of correspondence between the organization of the decorative scheme and that of the text accompanying it.

Whether this correspondence reflects a conscious translation of the text into visual terms, or whether instead it reflects an unconscious cultural ordering that underlies text and image equally I cannot answer, but it is the relationship between text and image that counts, and that relationship is manifest both in structural organization and in content.

We also see at Nimrud the emergence of the fully developed historical narrative—a phenomenon that came about surely not as the accidental product of evolutionary stylistic development or pure invention, but rather precisely at the very moment in which the political state we call empire was also in the process of being made fully operative. These Northwest Palace reliefs, with their specificity of dress, landscape, and event, functioned then as visual validations for the territorial acquisitions of the state.

Just who the intended audience(s) would have been for the program is not clear, although several possibilities—not all of which are mutually exclusive—present themselves: the gods, the king himself, various functionaries within the state, or visitors from without. More information on how the throneroom was used could help to answer this question, beginning primarily with who could be expected to see the reliefs and under what conditions.

This then raises a further question—that of the meaning of the various subjects in the “program,” in conjunction with the “reading competence” of the intended audience. One of the more interesting aspects of the historical narratives as they are constituted—i.e., action in the present—is that they can be read/understood easily, albeit on a less complete level, as simply the king before a citadel, victorious in battle, etc., and thus have meaning to one who had no prior knowledge of specific circumstances. Prior knowledge enters into the picture when one knows which citadel, when, and why a specific battle was important—that is, its place in the sociopolitical system of the empire. This is likely to be the optimal level of reading, but the image is also viable on a minimal level and is therefore quite different from the cultic representations that are in-

terspersed with the historical narratives in the throneroom. For example, the representation of two duplicated kings before a tree has no meaning at all to one without a large store of prior knowledge. This in itself suggests various explanations for the proliferation of narrative themes: the successive secularization of the state and/or a heterogeneous audience with less shared vocabulary, as is characteristic of an empire in the process of territorial expansion.<sup>49</sup>

In any case, the power and impact of this decorative program is apparent to us even today. Information is conveyed not only by the content of the reliefs, but by their style—in the size and proportion of the human and semihuman figures. With their powerful muscles, broad shoulders, and massive bodies, the supremacy of the state is literally “embodied” in each of these individuals. Every unit contributes to the collectivity, and, in a sense, “style” becomes “iconography.” Visual emphasis is of course concentrated on the king. The totality, however, speaks not only for the king, but for the state as a whole. In the process, of course, the role of the king in the hierarchy of the state is strengthened through the very existence of the program, announcing the royal personage as the sole agent through whom divine patronage and military victory can be made available to the system. And the very fact that it is all presented as events in the present rather than as history or prophecy further emphasizes the rhetoric of the narrative.

What is before us in the comprehensive program

of the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal, then, is an integrated architectural, pictorial, and textual representation of the institution of kingship and the ideal of the Neo-Assyrian state. It is a “message in the artifact mode”<sup>50</sup>—compelling royal rhetoric aimed at all those who must accept the message if the state is to remain stable and the power elite to remain in control. The throneroom, with its program, thus functions as the symbolic center of the empire and its resident lord as the sole legitimate force in its maintenance.

An earlier and very differently ordered version of the present paper has been published as “Royal Rhetoric and the Development of Historical Narrative in Neo-Assyrian Reliefs,” *Studies in Visual Communication* 7,2 (Spring, 1981): 2–38. That paper emphasized the role of narrative within the ideological system of the Neo-Assyrian Empire as a primary phenomenon, the throneroom of Assurnasirpal being used as a particular case study for purposes of illustration. In the present paper I have reversed the emphasis, establishing the program of the throneroom as primary, the role of narrative and the integration of program into the ideology of the state thus becoming the results of the initial descriptive analysis. It has been an interesting exercise for me—not at all redundant, but rather instructive in the intellectual ordering of issues and phenomena with different approaches and audiences in mind. In this second version, I have enjoyed the benefits of several individuals’ reactions to the first, and would particularly like to thank Geoffrey Harpham, Robert C. Hunt, Max and Joyce Kozloff, Michael W. Meister, Kapila Vatsyayan, Vance Watrous, and Norman Yoffee. I would also like to spell the name of Piotr Michalowski, who was of invaluable help in the first version, correctly in the second.

## NOTES

1. See N. Postgate and J. E. Reade, "Kalhu," in *RLA* 5, 3/4 (1977): 303–21, for a complete account of the latest excavations and for bibliography.

2. J. Meuszcziński, "The Throneroom of Assur-nasir-pal II (Room B in the North-West Palace at Nimrud)," *ZA* 64 (1975): 51–67; J. E. Reade, "Twelve Assurnasirpal Reliefs," *Iraq* 27 (1965): 119–34; J. E. Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Sculpture," *Bagh.Mitt.* 10 (1979): 52–110.

3. *ARI* 2, paras. 667, 653.

4. I. J. Winter, "Art as Evidence for Interaction: Relations Between the Assyrian Empire and North Syria as Seen from Their Art," in *Mesopotamien und seine Nachbarn* (25th *RAI*), H. J. Nissen and J. Renger, eds. (Berlin, forthcoming).

5. Editions in S. M. Paley, *King of the World: Ashurnasir-pal II of Assyria, 883–859 B.C.* (Brooklyn, 1976); W. De Filippi, *The Royal Inscriptions of Assur-Nasir-Apil II (883–59 B.C.): A Study of the Chronology of the Calah Inscriptions Together with an Edition of Two of These Texts*, in *Assur* 1/7 (1977): 132–269; *ARI* 2, paras 650–653, which is the edition used here for reference.

6. See drawings and reconstructions in J. B. Stearns, *Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II* (Graz, 1961).

7. A. Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia: The Classical Art of the Near East* (London, 1969); "Die Bildgliederung des jungassyrischen Wandreliefs," *Jahrbuch der Preussischen Kunstsammlungen* 51 (1930): 141–58; Meuszcziński, *ZA* 64. The height has been estimated, on the basis of the arches preserved in the walls, to have been some six to eight meters (according to Reade, cited in M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2 vols. and maps [New York, 1966]: 454).

It should be noted that fallen painted plaster fragments have been observed in the center of the throneroom (*ibid.*: 105; J. E. Reade, "Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject Matter," *Bagh.Mitt.* 11 [1979]: 19; B. Abu es-Sooof, "Further Investigations in Assur-nasir-pal's Palace," *Sumer* 19 [1963]: 66–68). Some of the decoration is geometric, and, since the fragments had impressions of roof beams on the reverse, they therefore must come from the ceiling. Other bits, however, include what were identified as parts of human figures and a chariot wheel and are assumed to have continued the decorative scheme of the reliefs on the wall surfaces, above the tops of the reliefs. Unfortunately, given the poor state of preservation of the fragments, it is impossible to reconstruct what role they might have played in the total scheme of the throneroom. Nevertheless, it may be noted that since the reliefs stood some two meters high, clearly they were intended to provide the principal visual impact in the room, and so I have proceeded as if they constitute a complete program.

8. E.g., H. Frankfort, *Cylinder Seals: A Documentary Essay on the Art and Religion of the Ancient Near East* (London, 1939), pl. 33a and p. 196.

9. Cf. W. Sauerländer, *Gothic Sculpture in France, 1140–1270* (New York, 1972): 460–66.

10. Abu es-Sooof, *Sumer* 19; Reade, *Iraq* 27.

11. A. L. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia* (Chicago, 1964): 328.

12. See Moortgat, *The Art of Ancient Mesopotamia*, fig. 14; A. J. Sachs, "The Late Assyrian Royal Seal Type," *Iraq* 15 (1953): 167–70.

13. E.g., *ARI* 2, paras. 598, 681.

14. Portions of reliefs preserved in London and Berlin, found in secondary contexts, do present both bull and lion hunts from chariots; however, they, too, are moving from left to right—i.e., what would be into the corner rather than down the room, as do their opposite numbers on the other (south) side. Since slabs B27 and B28, which are in place on the north wall, do read from right to left down the wall, it is very possible that these hunt scenes do not come from the throneroom at all, but rather from someplace else in the Northwest Palace, such as the eroded West Wing, where Reade would place additional narrative representations (cf. R. D. Barnett and M. Falkner, *The Sculptures of Assurnasirpal II, Tiglath Pileser III and Esarhaddon from the Central and Southwest Palaces at Nimrud* [London, 1962], pl. 115; F. Wetzel, *Assur und Babylon* [Berlin, 1949], fig. 10; Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 10 [1979]: 59).

15. With the exception of its cylinder seals, the art of the Middle Assyrian period is one of the least well known segments in the Mesopotamian sequence. We are provided with tantalizing glimpses in Middle Assyrian texts, but with little real evidence. What definitely does seem to be attested in the texts is the use of stone gate- or doorway figures of large animals, at least from the time of Tiglath Pileser I (1115–1077 B.C.)—cf. E. Weidner, "Die Feldzüge und Bauten Tiglatpilesers I," *AfO* 18 (1957–58): 352. Lines 69–71 tell of how the king had likenesses of a creature called a *burhiš* (*CAD* 'B': 329: "wild ox?") made in basalt and stood them at (the entrance of) his palace, right and left. (In addition, a possible fragment of just such a sculpture found at Assur is published by Weidner [fig. 3 and p. 356]. This may represent part of the hair/beard curls of a bull.) Tiglath Pileser I also tells us that at his palace at Assur, he "surrounded with basalt slabs" the house of the *šahunu* and "with limestone slabs" the house of the *labūnu* (*ARI* 2, para. 102). Thus, there may have been orthostats already in position, but whether they were decorated or not is not clear. Certainly even in the time of Assurnasirpal II at Assur, before his move to Nimrud, the major form of wall decoration seems to have been glazed terracotta plaques, each with individual motifs, such as the king in his chariot,

or purely floral patterns (cf. W. Andrae, *Die farbige Keramik aus Assur* . . . [Berlin, 1923]; C. Preusser, *Die Paläste in Assur* [Berlin, 1955]: 21 and pls. 14–16). We therefore have no evidence for visual narratives, although there is evidence that narrative texts were already being written—particularly by Tiglath Pileser I. These texts are preserved on octagonal clay prisms from Assur, however, not on stone slabs. They deal with the taking of tribute and taxes from foreign regions (*ARI* 2, paras. 14, 30), campaigns and booty (*ibid.*, para. 34), the hunting of wild animals (*ibid.*, paras. 43, 44), etc. The accounts are all written in a more “literary” and rhetorical style than the later Neo-Assyrian texts and may represent the beginnings of a genre that did not attain its full annalistic style until the Neo-Assyrian period; the tradition, however, is certainly there. The narrative tradition in literary compositions, then, would seem to have preceded the development in visual representations, the two coming together in a fully developed form only in the ninth century. (In fact, H. Tadmor, “Observations on Assyrian Historiography,” in *Essays on the Ancient Near East in Memory of Jacob Joel Finkelstein*, M. de J. Ellis, ed. [Hamden, Conn., 1977]: 209–13, would argue that the earliest example of narrative style common in Neo-Assyrian historical inscription goes back as far as Shamshi-Adad I in the Old Assyrian period and marks the specifically north Mesopotamian contribution to history writing as distinct from the south Mesopotamian/Babylonian tradition of literature.) As far as the visual arts are concerned, then, what was in existence in the Middle Assyrian period seems best summarized on three clay tablets from Nineveh of Assur-resh-ishi (1133–1116 B.C.), in which we are told that he 1) decorated his palace with glazed brick, including representations of date palms (*ARI* 2, para. 125); 2) decorated doors with bronze door bands; 3) built gateway figures at the entrances (*ibid.*, para. 132); 4) inscribed stelae; and 5) made colossal statues of himself and wrote descriptions of his victories on them (*ibid.*, paras. 222, 255).

16. To a certain extent, the limited and self-contained nature of the freestanding stele slab may have placed some constraints on the way a scene was rendered as a selected culminating scene or commemoration; however, it should be noted that the Assurnasirpal battle reliefs B18a and B17a are also confined to single slabs, albeit juxtaposed in sequence, and yet they do depict narrative sequences of action rather than a frozen moment. Clearly, then, the mere fact that a stele is of limited dimensions cannot be the only factor in determining how the story is to be told. The distinction between “recreating” a historical scene and simply “signifying” one is most significant in the development of historical narrative as we are concerned with it here.

17. *ARI* 2, paras. 536–91.
18. *Ibid.*, paras. 556–58.
19. *Ibid.*, para. 587.
20. *Ibid.*, paras. 577, 586, 584, respectively.
21. *Ibid.*, paras. 587, 579.
22. D. J. Wiseman, “A New Stela of Aššur-nasir-pal II,”

*Iraq* 14 (1952): 24–44, and esp. 30, ll. 30, 31.

23. R. D. Barnett, “Assyria and Iran: The Earliest Representation of Persians,” in A. U. Pope, ed., *A Survey of Persian Art*, vol. 14 (Tokyo, 1967): 2997–3007.

24. *ARI* 2, para. 556.

25. *Ibid.*, para. 651.

26. L. D. Ettlinger, *The Sistine Chapel Before Michelangelo: Religious Imagery and Papal Primacy* (Oxford, 1965); C. Davis-Weyer, *Early Medieval Art, 300–1150* (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., 1971): 84–85.

27. *ARI* 2, para. 652; *ARAB* 1, para. 716.

28. G. Loud, *Khorsabad*, vol. 1, OIP 38 (Chicago, 1936): 65 and figs. 79, 80.

29. M. Liverani, “The Ideology of the Assyrian Empire,” in *Power and Propaganda*, M. T. Larsen, ed. (Copenhagen, 1979): 297–317.

30. Stearns, pl. 85, above, and pl. 87, registers 2–4.

31. *Ibid.*, pl. 87, above.

32. *ARI* 2, paras. 652, 539.

33. See CAD ‘E’: 62–63, for *ekdu*; *AHW*, fasc. 15: 1443, for *ušumgallu*; in addition to which, I am grateful to Å. Sjöberg of the Babylonian Section of the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, for guiding me through the files of the *Sumerian Dictionary*, and to T. Jacobson of Harvard University for his comments on the proper translation of *ušumgallu*.

34. *ARI* 2, para. 650.

35. *Ibid.*, shift from para. 652 to para. 653.

36. Cf. T. Givon, “Topic, Pronoun and Grammatical Agreement,” in *Subject and Topic*, E. N. Li, ed. (New York, 1976): 151–85.

37. Stearns, pl. 85, registers 2–4.

38. The reliefs and colossi associated with this facade have been enumerated by Reade, *Iraq* 27: 131, and are the subject of a recent article by J. Meuszcziński, published posthumously: “La Façade de la salle du trône au Palais Nord-ouest à Nimrud,” *Etudes et Travaux* 11 (1979): 5–13.

39. Reported in M. Mallowan, “The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalḫu), 1952,” *Iraq* 15 (1953): 28.

40. Loud: 28–40 and fig. 34.

41. M. Wäfler, *Nicht-Assyrischer neuassyrischer Darstellungen*, AOAT 26 (Neukirchen-Vluyn, 1975).

42. *ARI* 2, paras. 584, 586. Strengthening this identification, W. de G. Birch and T. G. Pinches, *The Bronze Ornaments of the Palace Gates of Balawat* (London, n.d. [1903?]), published two fragments of Assurnasirpal bands in addition to those of Shalmaneser III (pls. Na, Nb), in which a procession of men bearing textiles, trays, and buckets and wearing garments identical to those of the figures on the reliefs of Court D are actually labeled “tribute of Tyre and Sidon” and are juxtaposed to representations of a large body of water, men carrying logs off from a mountain, and a stele of the Assyrian king apparently set in the mountains. This would correspond well to the description recorded in the Ninurta Temple inscription, where we are told that, after receiving the tribute of Tyre and Sidon, Assurnasirpal

climbed Mt. Amanus to cut logs of cedar, cypress, and juniper (*ARI* 2, para. 586). Even though no rock relief of Assurnasirpal is known, the inclusion on the Balawat bands of a royal stele cut in the mountains does correspond to the Black Obelisk inscription of Shalmaneser III, in which the king records climbing Mt. Amanus, cutting timber, and then setting up his royal image as well (cf. *ARAB* 1, para. 556).

43. The breakdown of the inscription into its component parts follows to some extent Paley: 125–33, but telescopes his parts 6 and 7 into our part 6, dispenses with his part 1, “location of the inscription,” and divides his part 2, “lineage,” into our parts 1 and 2.

44. It has recently come to my attention that Geoffrey Turner made a related observation when he noted that all of the throne daises found in Neo-Assyrian palaces—the Northwest Palace, Fort Shalmaneser, Khorsabad, and Til Barsip—were set within a niche behind the throne and protruded out “as if the king were emerged from the wall as an extension of it himself” (“The State Apartments of Late Assyrian Palaces,” *Iraq* 32 [1970]: 185). In other words, this would imply that the king was, when present, a part of the decorative program, with which I would fully agree, and so use the phenomenon in exactly that way here, to correspond to part 1 of the text as I would isolate it.

45. R. D. Barnett, *Sculpture from the North Palace of Assurbanipal at Nineveh* (London, 1976), pls. 5, 8, 12, on the lion-hunt reliefs of Room C; however, the detail is really visible only before the actual reliefs in the British Museum (nos. 124858, 124867, 124854), not in the published photographs. Reade, *Bagh. Mitt.* 11: 81, has suggested that wall hangings set behind the throne may have taken the place of sculpted slabs bearing this motif in the thronerooms of Sargon II and Assurbanipal.

46. Barnett, *Sculpture from the North Palace*, pls. A, E.

47. Turner, *Iraq* 32: 183.

48. A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: The Palace of Sinacherib* (The Hague, 1915), pls. 7–11.

49. It might be instructive to undertake a comparative study of throneroom programs and ideologies in other historical epochs—particularly in those that incorporate similar political systems. The Roman Empire is the other period in antiquity that immediately comes to mind, where historical narrative played a significant role in the visual arts—i.e., the column of Trajan (cf. P. G. Hamberg, *Studies in Roman Imperial Art* [Copenhagen, 1945]), esp. 159–63). There was also a clear attempt made in Rome to define the cardinal virtues that endowed the ruler with his ability to govern and his right to exercise imperial power—i.e., to

define the necessary attributes of kingship, as we have called them here. In the case of Rome, these constitute *virtus, clementia, iustitia, et pietas* (N. Hannested, “Rome—Ideology and Art, Some Distinctive Features,” in *Power and Propaganda*, M. T. Larsen, ed. [Copenhagen, 1979]: 361–90, esp. p. 365). This is different in some substance from the attributes of Assurnasirpal, but there is certainly overlap in terms of piety, and, if one associates “attentive prince” with civic virtues, then a combination of clemency and justice is added to the king’s heroic virtues as *ušumgallu ekdu* and as conquerer of cities.

Perhaps even closer is the tradition of royal iconography that developed in Byzantium, where the emperor was displayed in essentially four ways: as “himself”; as performing religious duties or identified directly with Christ; as victorious in battle; and as “fit to govern”—i.e., speaking to his subjects or sitting in council (cf. A. Grabar, *L'Empereur dans l'art Byzantin* [Strasbourg, 1936; reprinted by Variorum Reprints, London, 1971]). Missing in the Neo-Assyrian repertoire is the king officiating at legal/government functions, but the king enthroned and receiving tribute is part of the demonstration of the obeisance of his subjects. At the same time, although in Byzantium the dual battles of the hunt and of war are telescoped into a single category, and for the Assyrians are clearly two separate aspects, both cultures include both functions as part of royal display (see C. Walter, “Papal Political Imagery in the Medieval Lateran Palace,” *Cahiers Archéologiques* 20 [1970]: 155–76, and 21 [1971]: 109–36).

Similar representations of virtues as attributes selected for display occur in the decoration of Renaissance palaces and secular ceremonial spaces and give rise to similar analyses of program to function of public space and intended message (e.g., C. M. Rosenberg, “The Iconography of the Sala Degli Stucchi in the Palazzo Schifansia in Ferrara,” *Art Bulletin* 61, 3 [1979]: 377–84; G. Gorse, “The Decorative Program of the Villa Doria in Genoa,” lecture presented at the University of Pennsylvania, 23 February 1980). The investigation could be pursued for later periods as well. The Neo-Assyrian narratives and throneroom programs, then, would be seen to take their place at the beginning of a long continuum of royal public display, each with a visual tradition deeply embedded in a functioning cultural matrix. The challenge of such a study would be to see how public imagery is selected from the possible range of possibilities, given particulars of social and political issues.

50. H. M. Wobst, “Stylistic Behavior and Information Exchange,” in *For the Director: Research Essays in Honor of James B. Griffin*, E. Cleland, ed. (Ann Arbor, 1977): 322.



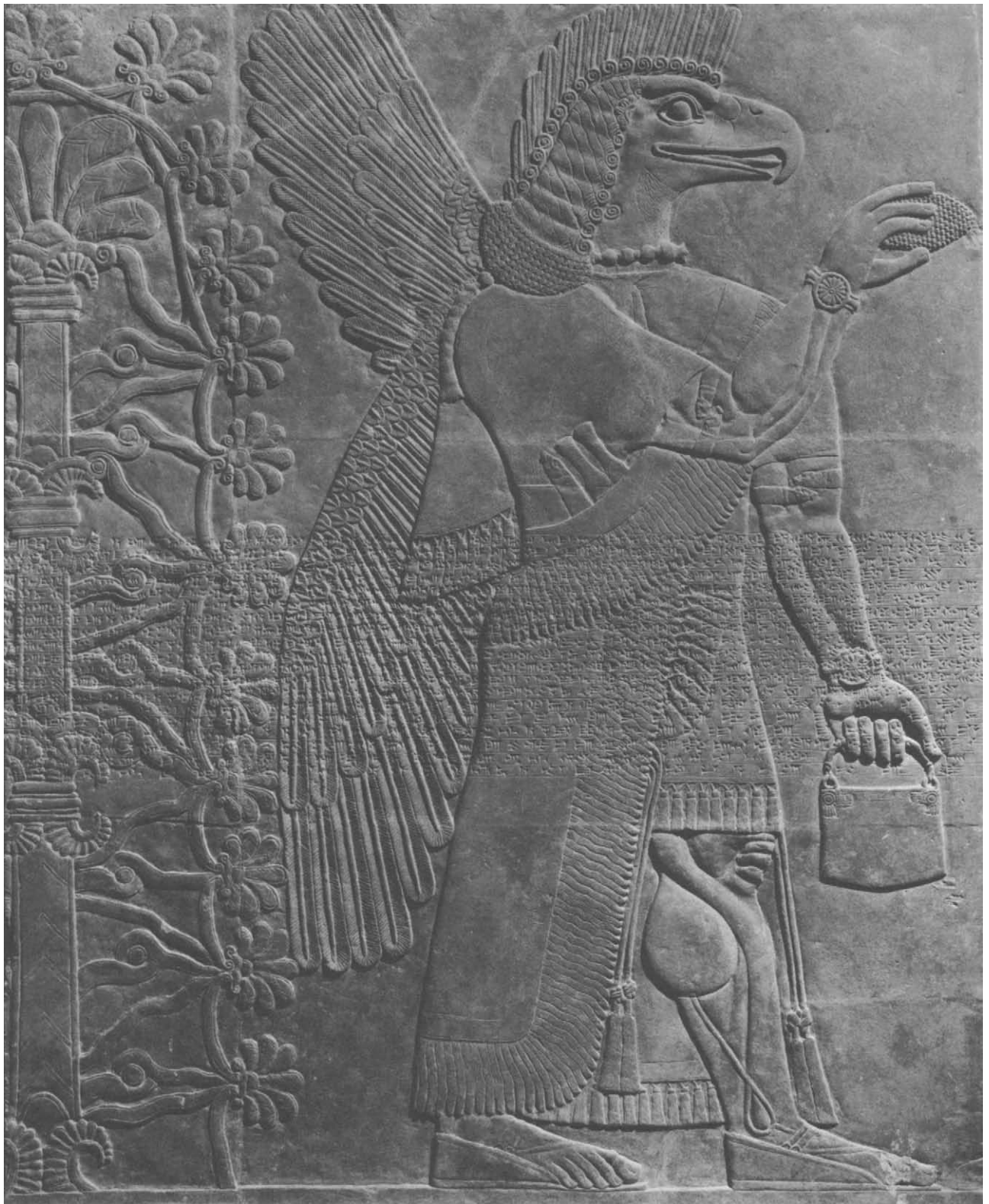


FIG. 1 Relief showing winged bird-headed “genius” holding a bucket and cone-like object. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1931 (31.72.3).

# Magic and Ritual in the Northwest Palace Reliefs

*Barbara Parker Mallowan*

Former lecturer, Institute of Archaeology,  
University of London

TWO SUBJECTS having magical or ritual significance appear frequently in the reliefs of the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II. The first is the “genii,” a human-headed creature with wings and, in some instances, a bird’s head. Most of the “genii” are performing an action involving a bucket and a conelike object (Fig. 1). The second commonly found motif is a highly stylized decorative tree (Fig. 2).

The action of the “genii” with cone and bucket has been related to two Late Assyrian texts from Assur<sup>1</sup> that give directions for making clay and wooden figurines to be buried in strategic spots underneath the floors of a house to exorcise it or protect it from evil.<sup>2</sup> In the Assur texts the bucket carried by certain figures is called *banduddû*, which appears in Akkadian texts as “ritual bucket.”<sup>3</sup> The other object described in the texts as carried by these figures is called *mullilu*.<sup>4</sup> This word simply means “purifier,” which tells us nothing about its appearance, but it may be the cone-shaped object carried by the “genii.” Whatever the nature of the *mullilu*, its purpose according to the texts is clear: to insure “that the foot of evil may not come near the man’s house.”<sup>5</sup>

The figurines with bucket and purifier referred to in the Assur texts are specified as “clad in the skin of a fish” or “with bird faces clad in wings.” Clay figures of both types have been found (Figs. 3, 4). One of the Assur texts calls them *apkallu*,<sup>6</sup> which is defined as “wise man, expert (mythological sage).”<sup>7</sup> The connection between *apkallu* and fish is easily made; the magician *āšipu* is a servant of the water god Enki, the master of magic. However, the significance of the bird face is more difficult to explain.

The denizens of the underworld were birdlike, but the relationship between *apkallu*, the learned ones, and the underworld is not readily apparent. The eighth-century B.C. clay figurines excavated in the Burnt Palace at Nimrud have the merest suggestion of a bird’s face,<sup>8</sup> but the plaque found at Assur underneath the incantation priest’s house, dating to the seventh century B.C., has a true griffin’s head, distinguished by its crest (Fig. 5).<sup>9</sup>

The iconography of the griffin man performing a ritual action goes back to an Old Hittite cylinder seal (Fig. 6) of unknown provenance in the Louvre, perhaps dating to the sixteenth century B.C. The griffin man depicted carries a large libation vessel of Anatolian shape. Seal impressions on tablets found at Nuzi show persons dressed in griffin masks, cloaks, and wings (Fig. 7), holding flasks and, in one case, pouring water. All these examples suggest that the subjects may be cult figures that are the predecessors of the griffin men seen in the Assyrian reliefs.

Other figures carrying the bucket and purifier may be clearly identified by their horned headdresses as gods. A number of gods bear the title *apkallu*, the name given in the texts to the scale-clad bird-headed men. These gods are Ea, Marduk, Ninurta, Adad, Nabû, and Girra.<sup>10</sup> In the incantation series *Šurpu* two gods—Amurru and his other form, <sup>d</sup>AN.-MAR.TU—are described as carrying the bucket and purifier and the exorcising staff of heaven and earth.<sup>11</sup>

“Genii” wearing a fillet or wreath of daisy-like flowers around which strands of their hair are wrapped are also shown holding a bucket.<sup>12</sup> In



FIG. 2 Two-register relief showing winged "genii" worshipping the "sacred tree." The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York. Gift of John D. Rockefeller, Jr., 1932 (32.143.3).

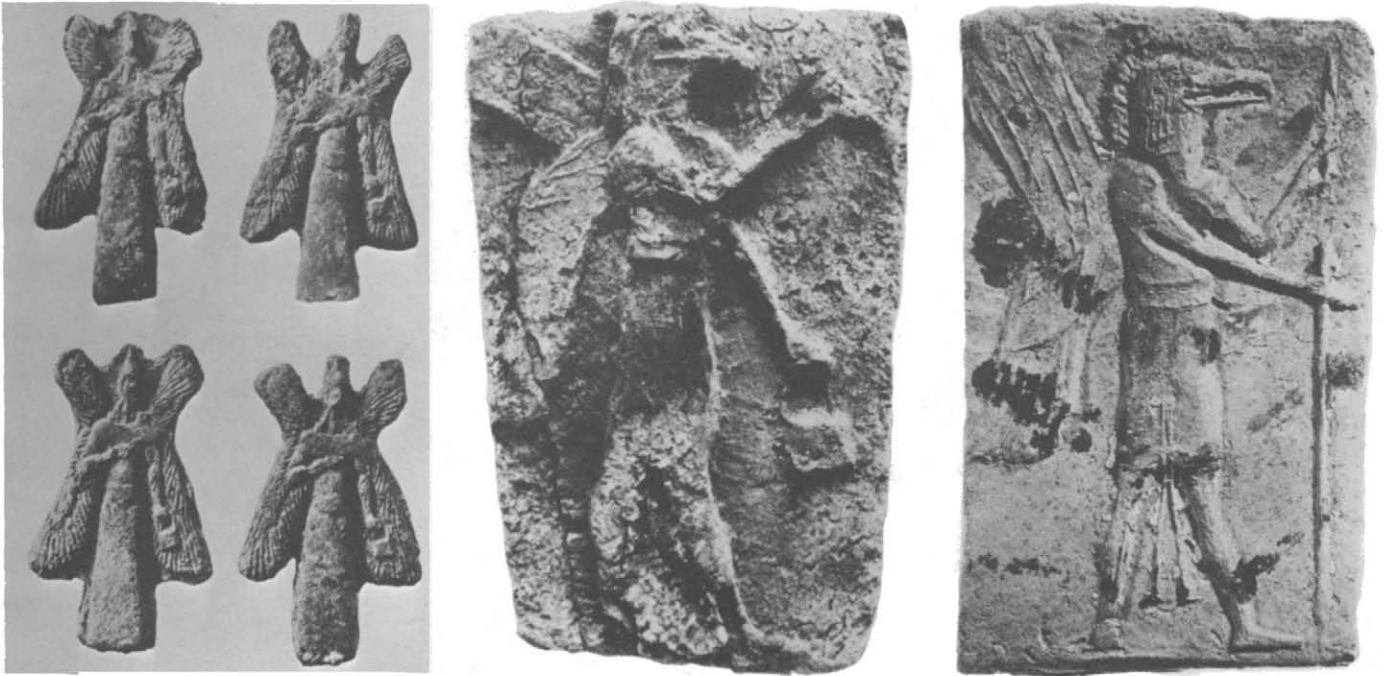


FIG. 3 Four terracotta plaques of winged bird-headed "genii" holding buckets.

From E. Klengel-Brandt, "Apotropäische Tonfiguren aus Assur," *FuB* 10 (1968).

FIG. 4 Terracotta plaque showing winged bird-headed "genius" holding a bucket and cone-like object.

From M. E. L. Mallowan, "The Excavations at Nimrud (Kalhu), 1953," *Iraq* 16 (1954), pl. 17.

FIG. 5 Terracotta plaque of griffin man holding staff.

From E. Klengel-Brandt, *FuB* 10.



FIG. 6 Detail of an impression of an Old Hittite cylinder seal showing a griffin man.

From A. Parrot, "Cylindre Hittite nouvellement acquis (AO 20138)," *Syria* 28 (1951), pl. 13.

FIG. 7 Impression of a cylinder seal on a tablet from Nuzi showing a figure wearing a griffin mask, cloak, and wings.

From E. Porada, *Seal Impressions from Nuzi*, *Annual of the American Schools of Oriental Research* 24 (1944-45), pl. 6, 93.

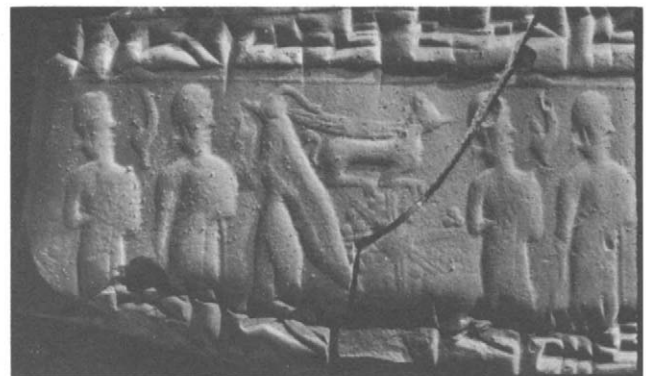




FIG. 8 Winged "genius" holding a flowering branch. From the doorway of Room S, Northwest Palace.

From J. B. Stearns, *Reliefs from the Palace of Ashurnasirpal II* (Graz, 1961), pl. 51.



FIG. 10 Winged "genius" holding a flowering branch. Passage z, Northwest Palace.

From E. A. W. Budge, *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum: Reign of Ashurnasirpal, 885-860 B.C.* (London, 1914), pl. 38, 1.



Room H of the Northwest Palace (see Fig. 1, p. 16) they stand beside the king, who is represented holding a drinking bowl; in other parts of the palace, however, the "genii" hold objects. They are placed near doorways and are shown holding branches or a goat or stag. One figure with flowering branches

FIG. 9 Fragment of a relief showing a "genius" holding a flowering branch. Room B, Northwest Palace.

From C. J. Gadd, *The Stones of Assyria: The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture, Their Recovery and Their Original Positions* (London, 1936), fig. 2 opp. p. 8.



FIG. 11 Winged “genius” holding a goat. Room T, Northwest Palace.

From S. M. Paley, *King of the World: Ashur-nasir-pal of Assyria, 883–859 B.C.* (Brooklyn, 1976), pl. 21c.



FIG. 12 Winged “genius” holding a stag. Room B, Northwest Palace.

From Paley, pl. 21d.

flanks doorway b, which leads from Room S into the domestic quarters (Fig. 8). Similar figures are found in Room B beside entrance b (Fig. 9) and in passage z leading to Room T (Fig. 10). A figure with a goat is positioned at entrance a to Room T (Fig. 11), and a figure holding a stag appears in Room B beside entrance d (Fig. 12). A god holding a branch with pomegranates is beside entrance d in Room T.<sup>13</sup>

Because the “genii” are so pointedly positioned at entrances, particularly at one of the main entrances from the public court into the throneroom, Room B, they are probably meant as figures for the protec-

tion of the palace, and the plants and animals they hold are probably important elements in their magical function. The goat may be the *mašhulduppû*, the scapegoat, used in exorcism and purification rituals.<sup>14</sup> A passage in a *Bît mēsiri* text reads: “To avert evil I set up a scapegoat opposite the gate.”<sup>15</sup> In the royal purification ritual *Bît rimki*, the exorcist is instructed to “purify the palace with a scapegoat.”<sup>16</sup> No instance of an *ajalu* (deer) being used for this purpose is known, but deer horns were used in medical prescriptions and for fumigations.<sup>17</sup>

The plants the “genii” carry have daisy-like flowers or palmettes. The former defy botanical identifi-

cation, but occur so frequently in Assyrian ornamentation that their propitious meaning can be taken for granted. The branch with palmettes might be intended to represent a palm offshoot, GIŠ.PEŠ. GIŠIMMAR, used in an exorcism to purify a house.<sup>18</sup> The “genius” carrying a goat also carries a palm frond. The use of the palm is well illustrated in one of the figurine texts from Assur (*KAR* 298), which describes “statues of the god X of tamarisk wood carrying a palm frond [*anu*].” The priest is instructed: “[you write] on their arm ‘tear out sickness.’”<sup>19</sup> The apotropaic value of the date palm is also illustrated by a passage in tablet 12 of the incantation series *Utukkū lemmūti*:

Igisigsig [‘green face’], the head gardener of the god Anu, tore off a palm frond with his pure hands, and the incantation priest of Eridu, the messenger of Ea, took it and recited the incantation Eridu. In an effective incantation he placed [the frond] upon the head of the patient; he bound it on the limbs of the man, the son of his god.<sup>20</sup>

The palm is also used in the *Maqlū* series of incantations to counteract the effects of witchcraft: “May the palm that catches every wind release me.”<sup>21</sup>

The decorative, stylized tree with bands linking palmettes ornaments the walls in repeated designs in Rooms F and S and in ablution Rooms I and L. In the throneroom, B, reception room G, and its antechamber, H—whose walls illustrate royal campaigns and rituals—the tree occupies the corner of the room, carved over two slabs that meet in the corner in a very decorative manner. The corner of a room is one of the strategic locations for burying apotropaic figurines, for it was a place where demons were thought to lurk.<sup>22</sup> The placement of the trees in the corners may therefore be significant.

It has been argued that the Egyptian papyrus and not the date palm was the prototype from which the motif of the palmette developed.<sup>23</sup> However, the second-millennium Assyrian kings were already using the motif of the date palm in their architectural decoration. The facade of the temple at Tell Rimah, dating to about the time of King Shamshi-Adad I (1813–1781 B.C.), was decorated with engaged columns of molded mud brick representing palm trunks.<sup>24</sup> Tiglath Pileser I, in completing his father’s palace at Assur, faced the towers with glazed bricks

depicting date palms.<sup>25</sup> It seems likely, therefore, that Tukulti Ninurta’s artists, who designed the frescoes on the walls of the new palace at Kar Tukulti Ninurta<sup>26</sup> and created the intricate banded palmettes of the “sacred tree,” derived their inspiration from the date palm.

All the kings mentioned above had special connections with Babylonia, where the date palm was a native tree. Shamshi-Adad is reputed to have spent several years in exile there, and Tukulti Ninurta I and Tiglath Pileser I captured Babylon. The date palm does not thrive in the modern-day location of Assyria and is killed in cold weather. As there is no evidence that the climate in Late Assyrian times was much different from that of today, the date palm would have had no agricultural value or practical significance. Its adoption by the Assyrians as an apotropaic motif must have been the result of Babylonian influence. The date palm, however, is not the only plant used in the composition of the “sacred tree.” A glazed-brick panel of Shalmaneser III in his fortress at Nimrud has a central palmette surrounded by a band of alternating palmettes and pomegranates,<sup>27</sup> and reliefs of Tiglath Pileser III found recently at Nimrud have a “sacred tree” composed of alternating pomegranates and lotus(?) buds.<sup>28</sup> The pomegranate was used in incantation rituals for potency and purification<sup>29</sup> as well as in medical prescriptions. An inventory of treasure found in the palace at Kar Tukulti Ninurta (Berlin, VAT 16462) describes the decoration of a throne with a pomegranate tree, treetops, and foliage separated by *riksānu* (bands) of artificial lapis lazuli.<sup>30</sup> Another object is decorated with fruit, ten buds or shoots, and six palm hearts(?) also separated by bands.<sup>31</sup> *Riksānu*<sup>32</sup> could refer to the bands linking palmettes in the Kar Tukulti Ninurta fresco. Andrae, in discussing the palmette tree of the frescoes, likened the undulating bands linking the tree trunk and the outermost band of palmettes to streams of water.<sup>33</sup> Edith Porada enlarged on this idea in her discussion of the “tree” of the Northwest Palace reliefs of Assurnasirpal II; she suggested that it represented the palm as seen from above with surrounding water courses.<sup>34</sup> It is possible that both bands and water are represented, although we do not yet have confirmation of this in a text.

The rituals performed on the “sacred tree” by the

“genii” were doubtless thought to have some beneficial effect, although the precise nature of the ritual is the subject of scholarly dispute. However, as we have learned from the incantation texts, the date palm had apotropaic power in its own right. A traditional duty of the king—one going back to the third millennium (era of Lugalzaggesi)—was to master

certain magical practices. The royal title IŠIB, “purification priest,” was revived by Tiglath Pileser I, and Assurnasirpal II followed him by using as one of his titles *išippu na’du*, “exalted priest.”<sup>35</sup> The many gods and “genii” that people the reliefs on the Northwest Palace walls may reflect a special interest of the monarch in magical protective ritual.

## NOTES

1. KAR 134, 298.
2. See O. Gurney, “Babylonian Prophylactic Figures and Their Rituals,” *AAA* 22 (1935): 31–96; D. Rittig, *Assyrische-Babylonische Kleinplastik Magischer Bedeutung vom 13–6 Jhs.* Münchener Vorderasiatische Studien 1 (Munich, 1977): 163ff.
3. CAD l’B’: 79–80 (*banduddû*).
4. CAD l’M’ 2: 189 (*mullilu*).
5. KAR 298: 1; for another translation, see Rittig: 163.
6. KAR 298: 12ff.
7. CAD l’A’ 2: 171 (*apkallu*).
8. M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2 vols. and maps (New York, 1966), 1: 229, top (fig. 191).
9. E. Klengel-Brandt, “Apotropäische Tonfiguren aus Assur,” *FuB* 10 (1968), pl. 2: 3, 4.
10. CAD l’A’ 2: 171–72 (*apkallu*).
11. E. Reiner, “Shurpu: A Collection of Sumerian and Akkadian Incantations,” *AfO*, Beiheft 11 (1958): 41–42, tablet 8.
12. S. M. Paley, *King of the World: Ashur-nasir-pal II of Assyria, 883–859 B.C.* (Brooklyn, 1976), pls. 4, 5, p. 33.
13. For other figures with pomegranates, see E. A. W. Budge, *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum: Reign of Ashur-nasir-pal, 885–860 B.C.* (London, 1914), pl. 48, 1 (Room S, beside entrance e).
14. CAD l’M’ 1: 365 (*mašhulduppû*); R. D. Barnett (*Assyrian Palace Reliefs in the British Museum* [London, 1970]: 12, n. 25) has already suggested this.
15. See G. Meier, “Die zweite Tafel der Serie *bīt mēseri*,” *AfO* 14 (1941–44): 150, l. 214.
16. CAD l’M’ 1: 366 (*mašhulduppû*).
17. CAD l’A’ 1: 266 (*ajalu*).
18. Meier, *AfO* 14: 149, ll. 188–90.
19. Rittig: 167, ll. 9–10.
20. For the latest edition of tablet 12 of the ritual series *Utukkū lemnūti*, see M. J. Geller, “A Middle Assyrian Tablet of *UTUKKŪ LEMNŪTU*,” *Iraq* 42 (1980): 29, 35.
21. G. Meier, “Die Assyrische Beschwörungssammlung Maqlu,” *AfO*, Beiheft 2 (1937): 8, pl. 1, 22.
22. Meier, *AfO* 14: 147, l. 98.
23. B. Hrouda, “Zur Herkunft des Assyrischen Lebensbaumes,” *Bagh.Mitt.* 3 (1964): 41ff.
24. D. Oates, “The Excavations at Tell al Rimah, 1966,” *Iraq* 29 (1967): 80, pl. 33.
25. E. Weidner, “Die Bauten Tiglatpileser I in Ninive,” *AfO* 19 (1959–60): 141–43.
26. W. Andrae, *Coloured Ceramics from Ashur* (London, 1925), pls. 2, 3.
27. J. E. Reade, “A Glazed-Brick Panel from Nimrud,” *Iraq* 25 (1963): 38–47; see pl. 9.
28. E. Bleibrau, *Die Flora der Neuassyrischen Flachbildkunst* (Vienna, 1977): 37, 38.
29. CAD l’N’ 2: 346 (*nurmu*).
30. See F. Köcher, “Ein Inventartext aus Kar-Tukulti-Ninurta,” *AfO* 18 (1958): 305, col. 2, ll. 23–26; 303, col. 1, l. 3; 308–9, n. 2.
31. *Ibid.*: 303, col. 1, 3.
32. *Ibid.*: 308, n. 2.
33. Andrae: 5, n. 1.
34. E. Porada, “The Palace and Reliefs of Ashurnasirpal II,” in *The Great King . . . King of Assyria* (New York, 1945): 32.
35. L. W. King, *Annals of the King of Assyria* (London, 1902): 182, l. 35, 261, l. 21. For the latest reading, see *ARI* 2: 120, para. 539.



# Balawat: Recent Excavations and a New Gate

*Joan Oates*

Fellow, Girton College, University of Cambridge

**T**HE LENGTHY controversy over the origin of the bronze gates of Shalmaneser III, now in the British Museum, was one of the less edifying in the history of Near Eastern archaeology. It involved the personalities of Hormuzd Rassam, a Chaldean Christian from Mosul who was once Layard's overseer and general assistant and was later to succeed him as the British Museum's representative in Mesopotamia, and Wallis Budge, sometime keeper of antiquities at the British Museum—a man not lacking in self-esteem. In 1876, after some years away from Mesopotamia, during which time he had held various political appointments and had been involved in a curious incident with King Theodore of Abyssinia,<sup>1</sup> Rassam returned to the East on behalf of the British Museum. There was considerable delay in obtaining the appropriate firman, but he finally reached Mosul early in 1878. Before leaving London he had received through a friend in Mosul fragments of two bronze plates ornamented in relief with Assyrian figures and decoration, and he set about at once to discover their place of origin. This, he discovered, was a small mound some twenty-eight kilometers southeast of Mosul, near the modern village of Balawat. Within a few hours of opening excavations at the site, Rassam unearthed more bronze strips like those he had received in London.

The monument was very much corroded and injured from the length of time it had been lying in damp soil. As soon as the relic was exposed to the air it began to crack, and I had very great difficulty to remove it entire. It was lying on its face and spread like a gigantic hat-rack with the top part rising to within four feet of the ground, and the lower part gradually descending to about fifteen feet deep. The plates seemed to have belonged to the

covering of a monument, which proved to be a huge gate with double leaves. Each leaf had seven panels eight feet long; and, according to the way they were lying, it appeared as if they were used to cover the wooden frame in the shape of belts. Each leaf had a thick bronze pivot, which is shown by the bend at the end of the panels in the shape of a scroll. These revolved in hard stone sockets, that were found still standing in their former position. The plates, which are embossed with a variety of subjects, and religious performances, are divided into two panels surrounded by a border of rosettes.

Sixty feet to the northwest of the first pair of gates Rassam encountered a second pair, which he described as

another copper monument half the size of the first; but instead of plates being ornamented like those of the former with double rows of figures, they had only one set on each, and the representations were larger. . . . They were found very much injured and as soon as they were exposed to the air, they crumbled to pieces. . . .

Unfortunately, Rassam made no adequate plan of the site or drawings of the layout or positions of his discoveries at Balawat, although his description does suggest that the doors stood in some sort of architectural setting:

In front of each of these monuments there was a T-shaped marble platform, with a brick border constructed so coarsely that it looked more like the work of the Sassanians than that of the Assyrians. . . . The monument stood in front of the narrowest part, and on a level with it; the sockets being fixed at each corner so that when the two leaves were opened they rested against the sides of the narrow ledge, as far as the widest part.

However, Rassam himself considered the gates to be commemorative monuments set up in isolation without associated buildings, perhaps not a surprising conclusion in view of his very apparent inability to distinguish mud-brick walling. In another part of the mound Rassam's men came upon a marble coffer containing two beautifully inscribed tablets that gave the ancient name of Balawat as *Imgur-Enlil*. Further excavation revealed that the coffer

was placed at the entrance of a room which had been burnt down and proved afterwards to have been a temple. At the northwest of this chamber there was an altar ascended by five steps, on which we found an inscribed marble tablet of the same size and shape as the other two.<sup>2</sup>

Despite the lack of accurate plans and drawings, Rassam's description of the site of Balawat and the discovery of the gates is quite extensive. In 1890, however, long after the gates had been published and become famous, the site was visited by Wallis Budge, who had no hesitation in asserting that "none of the natives had ever heard of the discovery of the bronze plates." He added that Nimrud Rassam, with whom he visited the site, questioned the natives closely and "was convinced that someone had made a mistake."

From every point of view it seemed unlikely that Shalmaneser would have set up such a wonderful monument as the "Gates" in an out-of-the-way place like Tell Balawat. . . . There is no room on the mound for a temple, still less a temple and a palace, however small. . . . Mr. H. Rassam may have obtained from Tell Balawat the plates and the coffer, etc., which he sent home, but if he did the natives must have taken them there.<sup>3</sup>

Hilprecht, writing in 1903,<sup>4</sup> accepted Rassam's claims without question, "although he soundly condemned both the morality and the method of his excavations."<sup>5</sup> Yet Budge's authority created a doubt that lingered long among scholars who were not field archaeologists. L. W. King, who published the Shalmaneser gates in 1915, also agreed "that the site of *Imgur-Enlil* is still problematical, and that the place where the bronze reliefs were found has not yet been ascertained,"<sup>6</sup> and in the third edition of the British Museum guide (1922), it is written of the

gates that they were "said to have been found at Balawat." In 1942 Seton Lloyd, then adviser to the Iraqi directorate general of antiquities, visited the mound, where the visible remains of Rassam's trenches convinced him of the truth of the original attribution:

In the unoccupied space [much of the mound was covered by graves] and among the outlying graves are the remains of Rassam's trenches and collapsed tunnels, perfectly matching the dimensions and dispositions which are mentioned in his account. At another point near the edge of the mound, his "Assyrian well" is still exposed, and near it a brick aqueduct which he also mentions. Amongst the older villagers the story is still told of the visit of the *Balios* and the antiquities which he found.<sup>7</sup>

In 1956 Max Mallowan received permission to excavate at Balawat on behalf of the British School of Archaeology. Not only did this work confirm the general accuracy of Rassam's account of the original discoveries, but in the course of the excavations another gate was discovered. This is now in the Mosul Museum, but remains as yet unpublished. It is the purpose of this paper to provide some information about this new gate. Information about the site itself is based on the preliminary report on the excavations published by David Oates in 1974.

Budge described Balawat as "an out-of-the-way place," but in fact it lies on what must have been a major Late Assyrian road that ran directly from Nineveh to the crossing of the Greater Zab at Tell Abu Sheetha, and thence directly to Kirkuk by way of the Late Assyrian city of Kalizu (formerly read "Kakzu"). The layout of Balawat is clear in the ploughed land that now surrounds the mound, where a low ridge marks the site of a city wall enclosing some eight hundred square meters, a layout reflecting that of Nimrud and Khorsabad and one of two conventional plans of Late Assyrian military architecture. One axis of the enclosure was aligned toward Nineveh, the other toward the ford at Abu Sheetha. Thus, Balawat appears to have been a road station on an important Late Assyrian road, and its distance from Nineveh—some twenty-eight kilometers—suggests that it was the first-night stop.

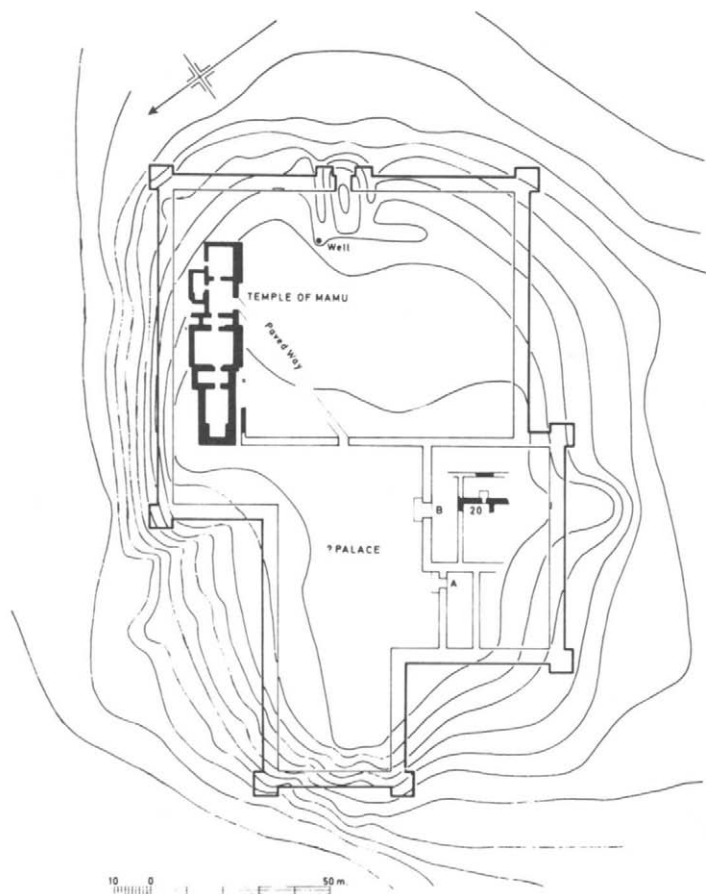


FIG. 1 Plan of Balawat tell.

After D. Oates, "Balawat (Imgur-Enlil): The Site and Its Buildings," *Iraq* 36 (1974), pl. 26.

The only building it was possible to excavate with any degree of completeness in 1956 was the Temple of Mamu, the god of dreams, on the northeast edge of the tell (Fig. 1). The principal shrine, at the northwest end, was the only room of this complex excavated by Rassam, who found there the coffer and stone tablets of Assurnasirpal now in the British Museum. The floor in the main part of the cella rose by three shallow steps to an alcove; this was paved with bricks surrounding a large slab of Mosul marble on which the divine statue had presumably been placed (Fig. 2). The slab is described by Rassam, but had been robbed, presumably after he left the site. The outer doorway of the antecella opened onto a small courtyard.<sup>8</sup> Its sill was paved with limestone blocks, against the inner edge of which were found the remains of one of the pair of original doors; these

had been plated with bronze reliefs in the same manner as those found by Rassam elsewhere on the mound. The other door had been standing ajar, supported by a fragment of brick, for its pivot had rotted (Fig. 3). A subsidiary chapel, immediately to the north of the southeastern rooms of the temple, reproduces on a small scale the plan of the main shrine. In the partially excavated small chamber just to the north of the chapel were found a number of seventh-century economic texts, subsequently published by Barbara Mallowan.<sup>9</sup> Erosion of the edge of the mound made further recovery of the plan impossible.

The outer doorway of the temple gave onto an open space across which a brick pathway—possibly Rassam's "brick aqueduct"—led westward toward the middle of the mound. On the southeast side of the open space was a well, also mentioned by Rassam and reidentified by Lloyd. A slight eminence nearby probably marks the site of a towered gate. Owing to the presence of the modern cemetery, it was not possible to investigate the positions of the two doorways in which the original gates were situated. However, a further chamber was excavated (Fig. 1, Room 20). It had originally been lined with stone slabs, one of which remained in situ. It seems likely that this chamber had been previously excavated by Rassam, who recorded that the slabs were removed by the villagers of Karakosh. If this identification is correct, then the two hollows visible nearby (marked "A" and "B" on the contour plan) are almost certainly the sites of the two Rassam gates. Both pairs of gates must have faced northeast and formed the entrance of reception rooms built by Assurnasirpal and Shalmaneser respectively. The contours of the mound also suggest some demarcation between the precinct containing the Temple of Mamu and the paved way, and that to the northwest containing the original gates and presumably their associated palace. This twofold division of the settlement is perhaps illustrated on the gates discovered in 1956, on which there is a representation of Imgur-Enlil (Balawat), and presumably its citadel, with one side shown higher than the other (Fig. 4).<sup>10</sup>

It has already been mentioned that Balawat must have been a road station on the major route from Nineveh to Kirkuk. The site obviously enjoyed con-

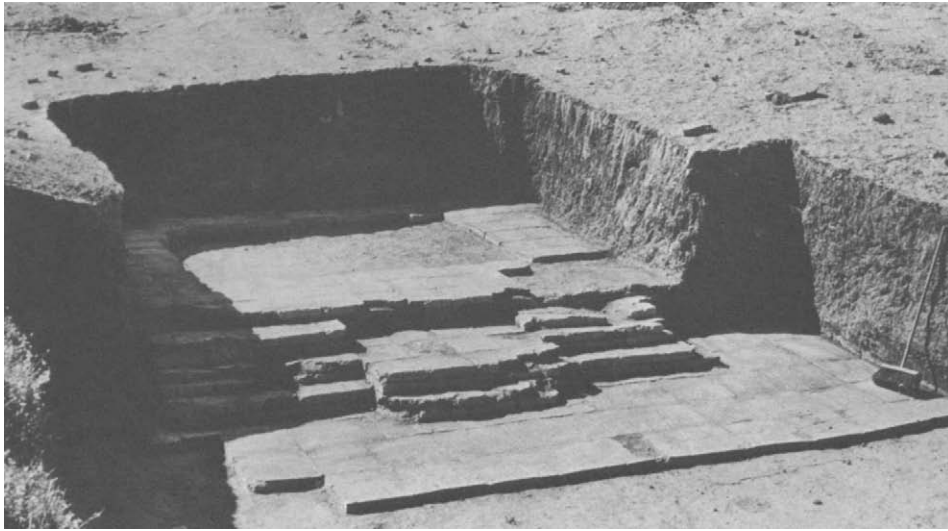


FIG. 2  
The shrine of the Temple of Mamu, Balawat, from the 1956 excavations.

Photo: J. Oates.

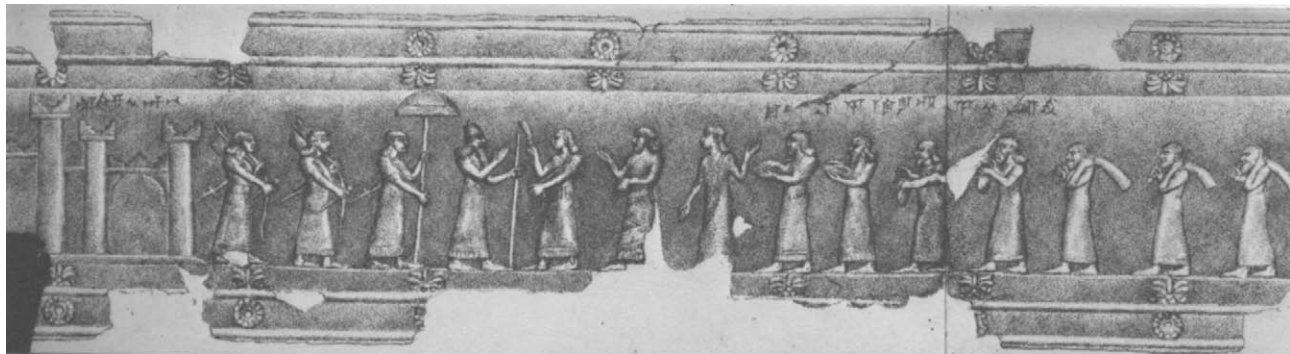


FIG. 3  
The remains of the base of Assurnasirpal gates in situ. Temple of Mamu, Balawat.

Photo: J. Oates.

FIG. 4  
Tribute of Kudurru of Suhu before the citadel of Imgur-Enlil (Balawat). Temple of Mamu gate, Balawat.

Drawing by Marjorie Howard, reproduced courtesy of the trustees of the British Museum, London.



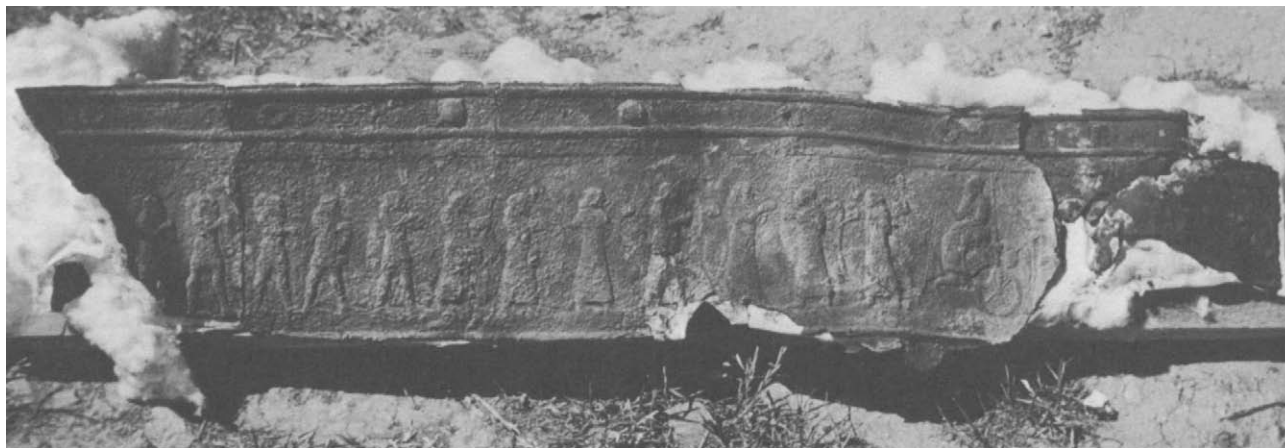


FIG. 5 Second panel depicting tribute of Kudurru of Suḫu before the king in his chariot. Temple of Mamu gate, Balawat.

Photo (taken before restoration): J. Oates.

siderable royal patronage under both Assurnasirpal II and his son, Shalmaneser, whose gates were found there by Rassam. The annals of both kings, together with inscriptions from Balawat itself, indicate that while building was going on at the site Nineveh was the headquarters from which the annual campaigns, represented on the gates, were mounted. In the first five years of the reign of Assurnasirpal the campaigns were directed toward the mountains north and east of Assyria, in particular against Zamua on the southeast, and the army must often have taken the Balawat road.

It is tempting to associate the erection of a temple of Mamu, god of dreams, at the spot where Assurnasirpal would have slept on his first night out of Nineveh, with the taking of omens for the coming campaign. But the bronze gates discovered in 1956 provide interesting confirmation that Balawat was more than a mere staging post, for they depict Assurnasirpal standing outside the gate of the citadel to receive the tribute of Kudurru, governor of Suḫu, which lay below Ana on the middle Euphrates, a campaign mounted from Nimrud in his 6th year.<sup>11</sup>

Clearly Assurnasirpal was using Balawat as an occasional royal residence at the time, and we may infer that Shalmaneser followed his example, at least during the early years of his reign, possibly because the great *ekal mašarti* at Nimrud (Fort Shalmaneser)

was still under construction. Certainly a site lying, as does Balawat, only sixteen kilometers from Nimrud, would have provided a convenient base from which to supervise the construction of the new palace and military headquarters there.

We have no knowledge of the history of Imgur-Enlil after the brief period of royal favor under Assurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III, beyond the fact that it took part in the revolt of Assur-danin-apli at the end of the reign of the latter.<sup>12</sup> It is clear, however, from the collection of economic and legal tablets recovered in 1956, that small-town life went on here in the seventh century and that the shrine of Mamu continued in use. It was destroyed, with Nineveh and Nimrud, in 612 B.C., at which time the gates of the temple were left ajar, as we found them (see Fig. 3). There followed a period of abandonment, and the only evidence of later occupation is a level, some eighty to one hundred centimeters above the Assyrian floors, which yielded pottery of a type identified at Nimrud as belonging to the Hellenistic period, about 250–150 B.C.

The Assurnasirpal II gates excavated in 1956 have now been pieced together from their many fragments by the staff of the British Museum, and the sixteen panels—eight on each side—have been drawn by Marjorie Howard, who also participated in their excavation. The events depicted on the new

gates illustrate not only the campaign against the land Suḫu (*māt Sūhi*), which occurred in Assurnasirpal's sixth year (eponym of Dagan-bel-nasir, 878 B.C.), but also the submission of Bit Adini, of Carchemish, of the Urartians, and of the Phoenicians (Fig. 6). Unfortunately, the dates of these latter campaigns, and hence the approximate date of the gate itself, are far from clear.

At this time in Assyria there are three basic types of royal inscriptions in which military conquests are described: the "annals," the "display texts," and combinations of the two. Yearly records of campaigns, dated by eponyms (*limmu*), which first appear at the time of Assurnasirpal, of course provide unequivocal evidence for chronology. In "display texts," however, the narration of military events is geographical. The "annals" of Assurnasirpal II, one of the longest Assyrian royal inscriptions, is in fact a combination text, in which the various parts do not necessarily appear in order of composition. For example, the clearly dated sixth campaign, in which it is alleged that Suḫu is vanquished, follows a portion of the text of the display type in which the king claims to have subdued not only the land Suḫu, including the city Rapiqu, but also all the territory from the Tigris to Mount Lebanon and the Great Sea, campaigns that took place well after Assurnasirpal's sixth year and the annalistic narration of which follows considerably later in the annals themselves. Unfortunately, the only other dated passage refers to the eighteenth year (eponym of Shamash-nuri, 866 B.C.). This follows directly after a passage recording the campaign against Carchemish and the journey to Mount Lebanon and the Great Sea, but, as has already been noted, textual juxtaposition does not necessarily reflect chronological order. Indeed, there remains some uncertainty whether the Carchemish and Mount Lebanon expeditions, although often described together, actually occurred in the same year.<sup>13</sup> Thus, the date of the newly discovered Balawat gate cannot be precisely determined, but it is certain that these late campaigns cannot be earlier than about 875 B.C. and likely that they took place before 866. They can, of course, have been later still, and there is some reason to believe that the references to Urartu, which appear in Assurnasirpal's surviving inscriptions only as textual variants, represent a campaign late in his reign.<sup>14</sup> Thus the gates cannot have been made ear-



FIG. 6 Fragment depicting a coracle, from a panel illustrating the campaign in Phoenicia. Temple of Mamu gate, Balawat.

Photo: J. Oates.

lier than 875 and were probably erected at some much later date.

The position of Kudurru of Suḫu, whose importance is clear from the new gates—the presentation of his tribute is depicted on two panels (see Figs. 4, 5)—is of some current archaeological interest. The land Suḫu stretched roughly from Rapiqu, near modern Ramadi, to Hindanu, several days' march north of Ana (Anat) on the middle Euphrates. Strategically situated at the northwestern boundary of Babylonia and controlling the Euphrates route to northwestern Syria and the Mediterranean, Suḫu was a petty kingdom of considerable wealth and prosperity. Assurnasirpal's annals mention the siege of Suru, the "fortified city" of Kudurru, which lies downstream from Ana, and a battle involving not only Kudurru, but also the Babylonian king Nabu-apla-iddina and his brother Sabdanu. It is alleged that Kudurru "fell back into the Euphrates to save his life," while his stronghold was "razed and destroyed."<sup>15</sup> Silver, gold, tin, casseroles, precious stone of the mountain, chariots, teams of horses, equipment for troops and horses, the palace women, and other valuable booty are mentioned. In

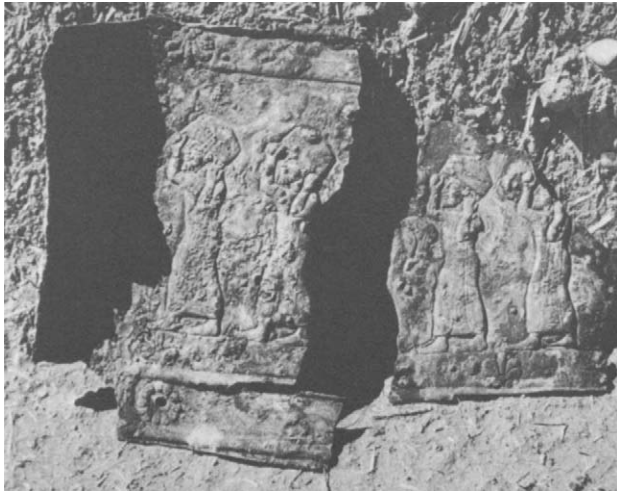


FIG. 7 Fragments depicting tribute bearers carrying bronze cauldrons. Temple of Mamu gate, Balawat.

Photo: J. Oates.

addition, among the tribute illustrated on the gate are tusks of ivory. Yet it is clear from subsequent entries in the annals that Suḥu was far from vanquished and from the gates that Kudurru himself does not appear as a subject king. Indeed, even in 878 B.C., at the time of his famous “victory,” Assurnasirpal was unable to proceed further down the Euphrates, and, although the display inscriptions continue to include the phrase “the king who subdued the land Suḥu including the city Rapiqu” after 878 and despite reports of total rebellion, there is no record of his armies penetrating even as far as Anat and Suru.<sup>16</sup> Moreover, as Brinkman has noted,<sup>17</sup> the fact that Suḥu sent to the famous banquet festivities at Kalḫu *šaprāte* (envoys), who are mentioned together with ambassadors from such independent cities as Tyre and Sidon,<sup>18</sup> suggests that Suḥu was not subject to Assyria in the strict sense. Among the presents from the *šaknu* (“governor”) of Suḥu were five elephants with which Assurnasirpal was so pleased that he took them with him on his campaigns.<sup>19</sup> It should perhaps be noted that the date the commemorative Banquet Stele was erected at Kalḫu must be later than “soon after 879 B.C.”<sup>20</sup> The Carchemish and Mediterranean campaigns, and indeed that in Urartu, are mentioned not only in the introductory section of the inscription on the stele itself, but on the “Standard Inscription” recorded on the walls of the Northwest Palace.<sup>21</sup>

Suḥu is of especial current interest in the context of the Iraqi State Organization of Antiquities’ Salvage Project along the Euphrates, upstream from the new Haditha Dam—i.e., roughly between Haditha and Ana, in the heartland of ancient Suḥu. Surveys carried out along the Euphrates have already revealed several heavily fortified sites that have been identified as Neo-Assyrian. Among these are the opposing fortifications of Sur Jur’eh and Glei’eh on opposite sides of the Euphrates just north of Haditha, Sur Muhreh, and Sur Telbis. This last site lies on the east bank just downstream from the island of Telbis (ancient Talbish, opposite which Suru itself is said to have been situated, according to the annals of Tukulti Ninurta II).<sup>22</sup> At least one Neo-Assyrian signal station has also been reported. It is tempting to identify the first pair of sites with two fortified cities founded by Assurnasirpal sometime after 877 B.C.: “I founded two cities on the Euphrates, one on this bank which I called Kar-Ashur-nasir-apli and one on the other bank which I called Nibarti-Ashur.”<sup>23</sup> However, as has been noted, there must be considerable doubt whether there was any real Assyrian presence here during this king’s reign. In fact, in putting down the middle Euphrates rebellion, which followed the campaign of 878 B.C., Assurnasirpal appears not to have penetrated very far south of the famous narrows, an obvious site for fortifications. Suḥu seems even to have maintained its independence under Shalmaneser III. Although the Black Obelisk from Nimrud depicts a governor of Suḥu bringing “tribute,” Suḥu was not the object of any of Shalmaneser’s campaigns, while in the time of Adad-nirari III, even Nergal-eresh, the Assyrian governor of the “Western Marches,” who held *limmu* office in both 804 and 775 (under Shalmaneser IV), exercised considerable independence.

Recently tablets dated to the time of Shamash-resha-usur and his son, Ninurta-kudurri-usur, have been found at Sur Jur’eh. Both men were independent “governors” (*šaknu*) of Suḥu and Mari, the father well remembered in ancient history for introducing bee keeping, a fact recorded on a stele found in the museum maintained by Nebuchadnezzar and his successors at Babylon.<sup>24</sup> The date of these “governors” remains uncertain, although the most likely period for an independent principality on the middle

Euphrates would be the eighth century, sometime after Nergal-eresh, who himself so offended royal sensibilities that his name and achievements were deliberately erased from the famous stele dedicated to Adad-nirari III (810–783 B.C.), found in 1967 at Tell al Rimah.<sup>25</sup> There can be no doubt that Suḥu was independent at the time of these newly discovered texts. Shamash-resha-usur, dated by his own regnal years, dedicated buildings in his own name.<sup>26</sup> The activities of Bel-harran-bel-usur, *nāgir ekalli* under both Shalmaneser IV and Tiglath Pileser III, yet at the same time the founder of a city named after himself to the south of Tell al Rimah, suggest a very

likely time for this middle Euphrates episode.

The newly discovered gate of Assurnasirpal, together with that from the reign of the same king, found by Rassam in the nineteenth century, then forgotten and thought to have been destroyed, provide a welcome addition to our knowledge of both Late Assyrian history and art. The gate Rassam found has now also been restored in the British Museum.<sup>27</sup> I am pleased to present this brief commentary on the gates on this occasion in honor of Charles Wilkinson, for whom I had the pleasure of working many years ago and who has remained a lifelong and valued friend.

## NOTES

1. E. A. W. Budge, *By Nile and Tigris*, 2 vols. (London, 1920): 303.
2. H. Rassam, *Asshur and the Land of Nimrod* (London, 1897): 207–8.
3. Budge 2: 80.
4. H. V. Hilprecht, *Explorations in Bible Lands During the 19th Century* (Philadelphia, 1903).
5. D. Oates, "Balawat (Imgur-Enlil): The Site and Its Buildings," *Iraq* 36 (1974): 173.
6. L. W. King, *Bronze Reliefs from the Gates of Shalmaneser, King of Assyria, B.C. 860–825* (London, 1915).
7. S. Lloyd, *Foundations in the Dust* (London, 1980): 154.
8. Oates, *Iraq* 36, pl. 25 (Room 3).
9. B. Parker [Mallowan], "Economic Tablets from the Temple of Mamu at Balawat," *Iraq* 25 (1963).
10. Oates, *Iraq* 36, pl. 27.
11. *Ibid.*: 175.
12. *LAR* 1: 715.
13. Compare the opinion of J. A. Brinkman ("A Political History of Post-Kassite Babylonia, 1158–722 B.C."

- AnOr* 43 [1968]: 393) with that of W. Schramm (*Einleitung in die Assyrischen Königsinschriften*, pt. 2, 934–722 B.C. [Leiden, 1952]: 27–29).
14. *ARI* 2: n. 634.
15. *Ibid.*: 138.
16. *Ibid.*: 138, 3: 26.
17. Brinkman: 187.
18. D. J. Wiseman, "A New Stela of Assur-nasir-pal II," *Iraq* 14 (1952), ll. 143–45.
19. *Ibid.*, ll. 95–97.
20. *Ibid.*: 26.
21. *ARI* 2: 164–65.
22. *Ibid.*: 102.
23. *Ibid.*: 140; 3: 48.
24. J. Oates, *Babylon* (London, 1979): 195.
25. D. Oates, "The Excavations at Tell al Rimah, 1967," *Iraq* 30 (1968).
26. Cf. Brinkman, n. 1127.
27. R. D. Barnett, "More Balawat Gates: A Preliminary Report," in *Symbolae Biblicae et Mesopotamicae F. M. T. Liagre Bohll Dedicatae* (Leiden, 1973): 21.



# Assyrian Palace Reliefs: Finished and Unfinished Business

*Samuel M. Paley*

Associate Professor, Department of Classics, Director of Judaic Studies,  
State University of New York at Buffalo

**I**N 1945 THE Buffalo Museum of Science acquired a small piece of an Assyrian bas-relief on which were carved two kneeling Assyrian soldiers—an archer drawing his bow and a swordsman crouched behind his tall, curved shield (Fig. 1a,b).<sup>1</sup> Before it was purchased, the relief had been reconstructed from three small, irregular fragments, and restorations had been made to the faces of the figures (to the archer's eye and the swordsman's forehead) as well as to the quiver, the scabbard, the shield, the bow, and the margin of raised stone at the left edge of the piece. Rough edges and the reverse were smoothed so that the piece fit snugly into a rectangular wooden frame, creating an attractive object for show.

This small, neat composition is part of a larger scene that depicted the siege of a city. Similar pairings of figures—a kneeling archer and a swordsman with a shield—can be traced back in the iconographic repertory of Assyrian bas-relief to sculptures that decorated the throneroom of the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal II at Nimrud.<sup>2</sup>

As is usual when small, fragmentary pieces of Assyrian art are offered for sale, this sculpture was attributed to a known series of palace reliefs. The attribution enhanced its value and stimulated the imaginations of prospective buyers. In this case, the two figures were said to belong to the Assyrian army with which Sennacherib laid siege to the Judean city of Lachish. The Lachish event, depicted on the walls of Room 36 of the Southwest Palace at Nineveh, is one of the best known, most studied, and most described relief series in all Assyrian art.

The association with an event intimated in the Bible (II Kings 18: 13ff.; Isaiah 36: 1ff.) made this piece doubly attractive. To date, it is the only example of an Assyrian relief in a Buffalo museum.

The purpose of this paper is to discuss the fragment and its attribution, and therefore the forever unfinished business of assigning Assyrian carved reliefs their proper positions on the walls of Assyrian palaces, a subject to which I have devoted attention in the past, with the most cordial cooperation and inspiring help of Charles K. Wilkinson. I will present my opinions in the context of the iconographic differences between the sculptures of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal II in the rendering of garments and weapons, as well as in the composition of the subject matter.<sup>3</sup> Some remarks will also be made about the carving of the Buffalo piece, especially with regard to its "finishing."

The Buffalo soldiers wear standard conical helmets with protective earflaps reinforced with metal appliqué. The hair is depicted combed in typical Assyrian fashion and collected in a bunch at the nape of the neck. The beards are rendered as short, curled facial hair ending in long, even locks.

Both soldiers are dressed in knee-length tunics. At the archer's waist is a short sword sheathed in its scabbard. The sculptor did not provide a scabbard for the swordsman's weapon. Such omissions of detail were common in every period of Assyrian art.<sup>4</sup>

Over his tunic the archer wears a sleeveless vest, or cuirass, divided into panels of alternating wide and narrow registers; the wide panels are incised with



FIG. 1a Relief fragment depicting Assyrian soldiers.  
Buffalo Museum of Science, C15549.

FIG. 1b Reverse of above.



vertical lines, the narrow ones with cross-hatching. The panels are separated by narrow, plain, horizontal bands. This vestlike garment, commonly worn in the eighth and seventh centuries B.C., may have been made of tooled leather or heavy cloth, onto which small metal rectangles had been sewn. The lowest panel of rectangles falls below the archer's waist and seems to have been pushed aside by his thigh when he knelt. This suggests either that the lowest panel was made of metal pieces hung loosely from the hem of the vest or that the vest was cut away in the front; this particular style of rendering has been most often identified on depictions of Sennacherib's soldiers.<sup>5</sup> Other depictions of soldiers in Assyrian armies of the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. have different renderings of the lower "panel" of the cuirass that suggest either fringes of a shawl wrapped obliquely across the body (a corner of this shawl falls between the legs) or a decorated cloth. Soldiers who do not carry shields or do not have other means of protection (archers, cavalymen, or charioteers) commonly wear this protective garment.<sup>6</sup> The swordsman, protected by his shield, could be shown without a cuirass, wearing only his tunic.

The archer's quiver is slung across his back. The carving of its strap is unclear, lost in the rendering of the panels of the vest. Only the upper part of the quiver cover appears, and this area is largely a modern restoration. What was restored is not a typical Assyrian quiver cover, which ended in either a cock's head or a piece of cloth pulled closed by a tasseled string, but rather an Elamite quiver cover with a palmette top.<sup>7</sup>

Beneath their tunics both soldiers wear knitted stockings that cover the knees and thighs. These stockings, probably made of wool, seem to have been fastened higher up the leg and were perhaps held by a belt from the waist. The decoration on such hosiery varies: oblique cross-hatching; horizontal and vertical cross-hatching; or herringbone de-

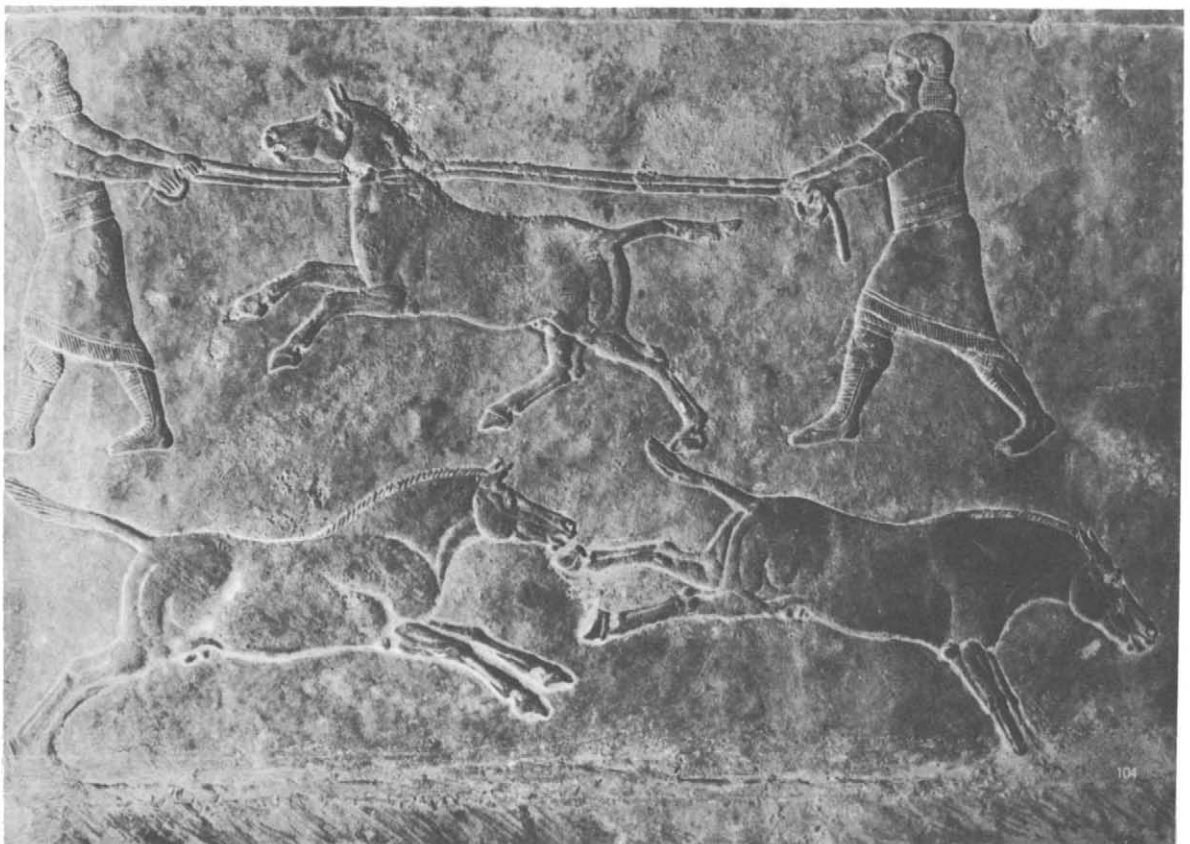


FIG. 2 Assyrian cavalry in pursuit of the enemy. From Room 33 of the Southwest Palace, Nineveh. Reign of Assurbanipal. British Museum 124801.

From R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs and Their Influence on the Sculptures of Babylonia and Persia* (London, 1960), pl. 120.

vices. The most common type is the oblique cross-hatching shown here.

The soldiers' lower legs are protected by boots, probably made of leather, which served as both jambau and solleret. The boots were laced up the front over the tongue and fitted like slippers. The laces were then pulled up, tied around the leg, and fastened with clips below the knee. Until the time of Assurbanipal, all these details were not always clearly shown. And even on Assurbanipal's early monuments in the Southwest Palace, warriors' boots are sketchily rendered, as are the boots on the reliefs of Sennacherib (Fig. 2).<sup>8</sup>

The boot shown on reliefs known to belong to the later period (late in the reign of Assurbanipal and in the reigns of succeeding Assyrian rulers)—the style worn by soldiers depicted on the North Palace reliefs and on the late reliefs in Room 28 of the Southwest Palace—is different from the boot on the Sennacherib relief. The boot of the Assurbanipal period has a longer tongue, laced under or over the back of the boot. The backstay does not follow either the curved contour of the leg muscle or the curved edge of the top of the boot tongue, a detail usually described as a step effect. In addition, in the later reliefs, the lacing is clearly rendered (Fig. 3).<sup>9</sup>

Armlets and wristlets complete the personal adornments of the warriors on the Buffalo relief.

Fragmentary sculptures of this size and state of preservation are difficult to attribute more precisely than to a certain "palace style," that of either the Southwest Palace or the North Palace. When attempting to assign a date to small sculptures it is im-

FIG. 3 Capturing wild onager. From Room S of the North Palace, Nineveh. Reign of Assurbanipal. British Museum 124882.

From Barnett (pl. 104).

portant not to rely exclusively on formal details such as boots or vests since iconographic and stylistic features that characterize sculptures made during the reign of Sennacherib may have persisted into the reign of Assurbanipal, and new sculptures may have been added to an older palace that was refurbished by a later king.

To establish the date of fragmentary sculptures from the Southwest Palace it is necessary to consider more than simple iconographic details. The innovations that were introduced into the Southwest Palace in Assurbanipal's time concern first the composition of the sculpture and then its iconography (see Fig. 4). They are:

1. The use of two wide, horizontal panels separated by a narrow, undecorated band. These panels were subdivided into several horizontal registers, the ground line of each suggested by a raised rib with an incised line running along its length. In some reliefs this subdivided panel effect was eliminated to achieve a broader interrelation between the parts of the total composition.

This special paneling made the same wall space available for more than one subject or composition so that two or more unrelated narratives could be planned, each stretching out in opposite directions around the room, one in the broad panel above and the other in the panel below.<sup>10</sup>

2. The overlapping of figures with the landscapes and with each other to an extent never before accomplished.

3. Extensive captioning.

While the compositional differences between the reliefs of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal have been the subject of several studies, little has been said about the extensive captions found on the latter king's reliefs.<sup>11</sup>

Captions were the real telling point in the original attribution of the reliefs from Room 33 to the reign of Assurbanipal.<sup>12</sup> When Sennacherib's artists completely abandoned the lines of inscription between the upper and lower panels of narrative sculpture upon which either standard inscriptions or annals were inscribed, they compensated by expanding the amount of information in the caption that named the place of the specific event. Captions that only named a city under siege, for example, had been the practice on the reliefs of earlier kings such as Tiglath Pileser

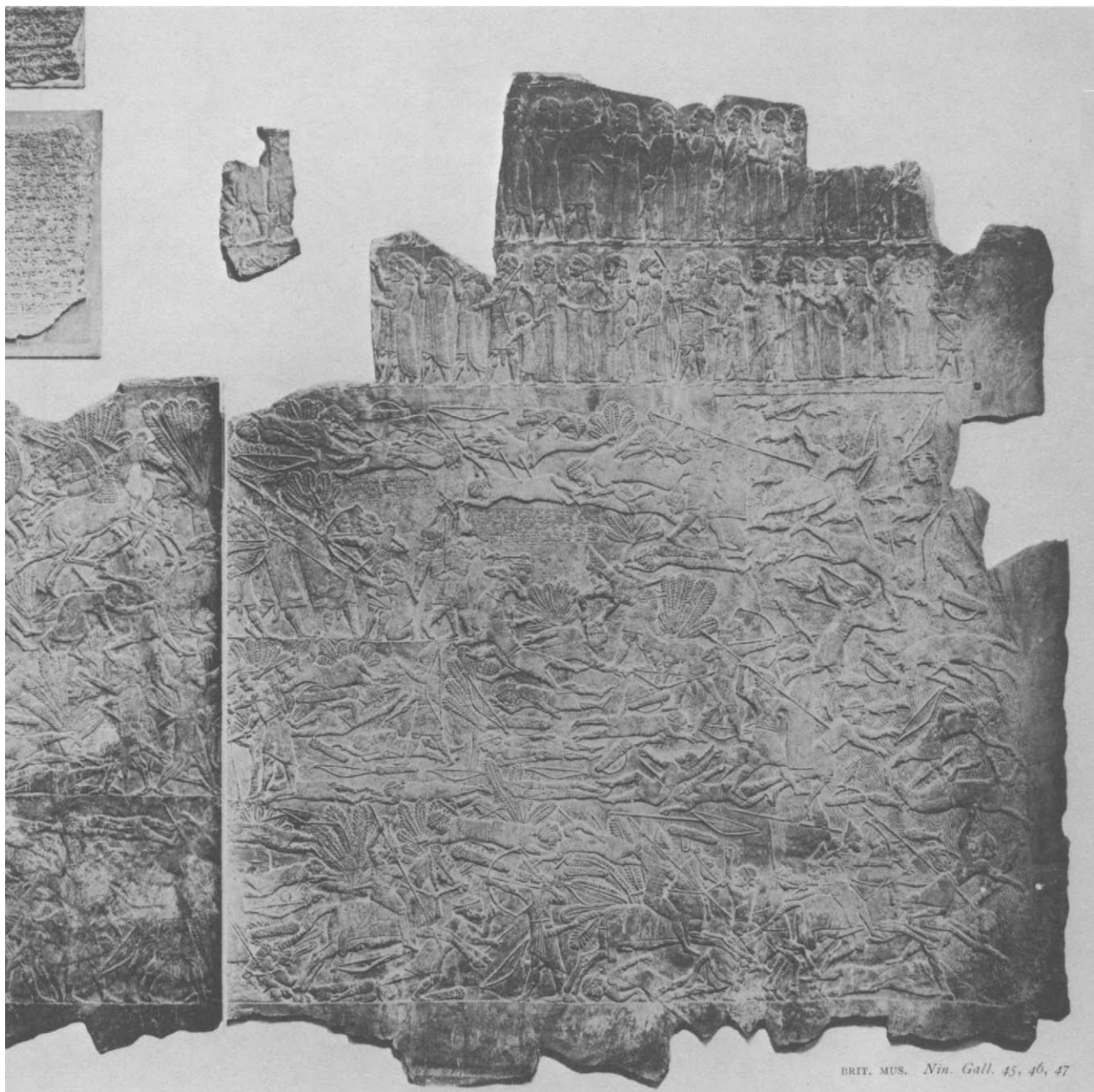


FIG. 4 Erbil march (above); Victory at Ulai (below). From Room 33 of the Southwest Palace, Nineveh. Reign of Assurbanipal. British Museum 124801.

From J. E. Reade, "Narrative Composition in Assyrian Sculpture," *Bagh.Mitt.* 10 (1979), fig. 18.

III and Sargon II. During the reigns of Sennacherib and Assurbanipal a short summary of the central event in the composition became a regular feature of

Assyrian reliefs.

The expanded caption had been the invention of Sargon's artists, who had only occasionally used it.

Assurbanipal's artists expanded upon this practice, perhaps for more than one reason. If there were many visitors to the redecorated Southwest Palace and if Sennacherib's rooms were still accessible or in use, the king would have wanted his visitors to know which were Sennacherib's deeds and which were his own.<sup>13</sup> Since the amount of information provided in each caption and the number of captions increased, the inscription was a superior record not only for the visitor, but for the king himself—serving as a reminder of the many activities of his reign, in some of which he may not have participated personally.<sup>14</sup> It is also said that Assurbanipal read cuneiform.<sup>15</sup>

We are reminded of the story of King Hezekiah of Judea, a contemporary of Sennacherib, who proudly showed Babylonian visitors around his own palace complex, his treasure house, armory, and stores (Isaiah 39: 1ff.; II Kings 20: 12ff.). An illiterate visitor to the Southwest or North Palace could ask someone who could read to point out and explain the representations (if he were sufficiently aware of what an inscription was and what it might contain). Tourists in churches or museums are often guided by docents who read the captions in order to remind themselves of the meaning of the piece to be explained. The tradition that gave birth to the expanded caption persisted in the North Palace, even when the apparent rivalry between Assurbanipal and his ancestor was not so proximate or juxtaposed.

The Buffalo relief belongs iconographically to the Southwest Palace. Where, in this palace, do scenes of kneeling archers occur? Kneeling archers, in pairs or alone, are usually represented in the forefront of a battle line, at the base of the siege mound, tell, or fortification wall, or on the siege ramps of an embattled city.<sup>16</sup> This is well documented in the Lachish battle sequence in Room 36 in the Southwest Palace.<sup>17</sup> Additionally, the figures on the Buffalo relief seem to have the more static bearing that has been recognized as a stylistic characteristic of the reliefs of Sennacherib.

The decoration on the preserved slabs begins with the soldiers engaged in battle: the artillery, companies of slingers in the rear, and rows of archers advance into battle across slabs 5 and 6. On the bottom two registers of slab 6 the lancers with their round shields, who are specialists in hand-to-hand combat,

have already broken into a charge. Standing figures on the top, partly preserved, register are meant to be in the distance, since close proximity to the wall of the city would seem to warrant more aggressive action. It is among the front ranks or immediately in front of them that the kneeling archers are most commonly found. (There is one lone incongruous archer in a rear rank of the second register of slab 5, a motif repeated elsewhere in the reliefs.) Kneeling archers are also prominent among the fighting soldiers on both the siege ramps: the small ramp to the left of the outer gate<sup>18</sup> on slab 6 and the larger one to the right of the gate on slabs 7 and 8.<sup>19</sup> In this composition there is no empty place that might be filled by a pair of archers of the Buffalo type.

Another series of reliefs, long recognized as a sequence similar to that of Lachish, is the so-called siege of . . . *alammu* series, discovered in Room 14 of the Southwest Palace. There were seventeen slabs in this room; portions of ten of them have been identified.<sup>20</sup> As in the Lachish room, the scene depicting the siege of the city was positioned directly opposite the entrance to the chamber.

The story depicted is similar to that of the Lachish siege. Soldiers march to war through the countryside. The advance is toward the siege of a citadel and two outlying villages. As in the Lachish composition, the army approaches from the left. Close to the city first slingers, then archers are portrayed in action as the artillery. Again, in the front lines are the kneeling archers and the swordsmen (Fig. 5). Beyond the siege, which is mounted against the city wall to the left of the gate, are the files of prisoners and soldiers approaching the royal officials and perhaps the royal guard. There is, however, no figure of the king preserved on the known reliefs.

There is no place for the Buffalo relief here either; all possible positions for kneeling archers are accounted for. However, it is here that we see the closest parallels to the motif of our kneeling pair. It is also here that we recognize the significance of the raised margin of stone at the left edge of the Buffalo composition. These two soldiers belong to a siege scene in which they kneel at the base of a wall—perhaps in the inset of an inset-outset, buttressed fortification—and fire at the defenders on the ramparts above them.

In sum, the two Buffalo warriors are certainly

from the Southwest Palace. They were part of the front line of a siege scene in which they were positioned at the base of a wall. They are probably to be dated to the period of Sennacherib.

It is unfortunate that no published drawing or relief is available from which a more exact identification can be made. However, our figures now have a more specific context, which may be useful to scholars in the future, should more information about the Southwest Palace come to light.

With these points in mind, we can now turn to a consideration of the carving of the figures and the surface treatment of the stone. The carving is probably no better and no worse than many other examples of seventh-century B.C. sculpture in Assyrian palaces. The impression that the Buffalo pieces and many others seem to leave is that the figures were hurriedly made.

The rules of composition, which determined how this motif, depicting a pair of overlapping figures, was to be carved, were ironclad: the figure behind—the swordsman in this case—is always shown slightly forward, higher, and sometimes larger than his fellow, so that his face, the front of his body, arms, and one leg could be seen as more than a thin silhouette. At the same time, however, the swordsman's chest is a solid mass of undifferentiated stone; his arms seem too small for his torso, his hands too large for his arms, and his legs too large for the rest of his body. Also, the archer's bent arm and leg make him seem twisted in an act of self-protection behind the swordsman's body and shield.

The figures were carved into the background. Stone has been chiseled away in the usual Assyrian fashion by channeling around the outlines of the figures. This accentuated their shapes. Channeling casts short, dark shadows immediately around the figures rather than letting the shadows dissolve along an even surface of stone. The surface of the background has been left uneven anyway. All in all, this is a rather coarse rendering, even for Assyrian work. It suggests that these figures and this portion of the relief were finished hurriedly or, at the very least, not carefully. Perhaps to support this contention, there are parallel chisel marks visible on the right part of the stone.<sup>21</sup>

What do these chisel marks represent? Are they marks that would have been smoothed out by more

careful artists? Are they marks from the dressing of the stone in the quarry left unsmoothed? Are they redressing left when the figures were cut on the stone?<sup>22</sup> Were they left or made purposely so that there was a rough surface, a scoring, to which paint could adhere more easily? If this relief were painted, much of the coarseness that seems to characterize it would have been obscured.

It has often been suggested that Assyrian bas-relief was painted. The finished product would have resembled painted brickwork in relief or wall paintings. Julian Reade has argued that only certain details were painted "for special effect."<sup>23</sup> Other writers, including myself, have suggested that the whole relief was covered with color to enhance the thousands of small details that otherwise could not have been visible.<sup>24</sup> I favor the painted-stone idea because the Egyptians and Persians painted their stone bas-relief<sup>25</sup> and because of some evidence discovered in my examination of the reliefs from the Northwest Palace of Assurnasirpal in the Brooklyn Museum. While removing the rubber squeezes used to make copies of the inscriptions, I recovered small bits of what seemed to be plaster from the deep incisions of the cuneiform signs. These chalky colored bits were either from the "melt" of disintegrating mud brick and plaster from the upper wall, which settled into the incisions after the ceilings of the building collapsed and filled the rooms of the palace, or they were the remains of a coat of white "paint" that covered the reliefs from top to bottom. Also, when the white rubber mixture was first applied to the stone, the relief work, details and all, came alive in the overhead lighting of the gallery. A white background would have served as a surface upon which the other colors—blue, red, yellow, and black—were added to enhance the figures themselves, their clothing, and other effects.<sup>26</sup>

Whether we accept the idea or not, painting would indeed have covered up any number of mistakes in the carving, changes of idea in the details of the composition or of the design, or even relief work that was somehow never finished.<sup>27</sup> How much more "finished" the Buffalo warriors would look against a white city wall, shooting yellow arrows with black points and red feathers; carrying yellow swords; their hair, beards, and the pupils of their eyes black; wearing white tunics covered with black or

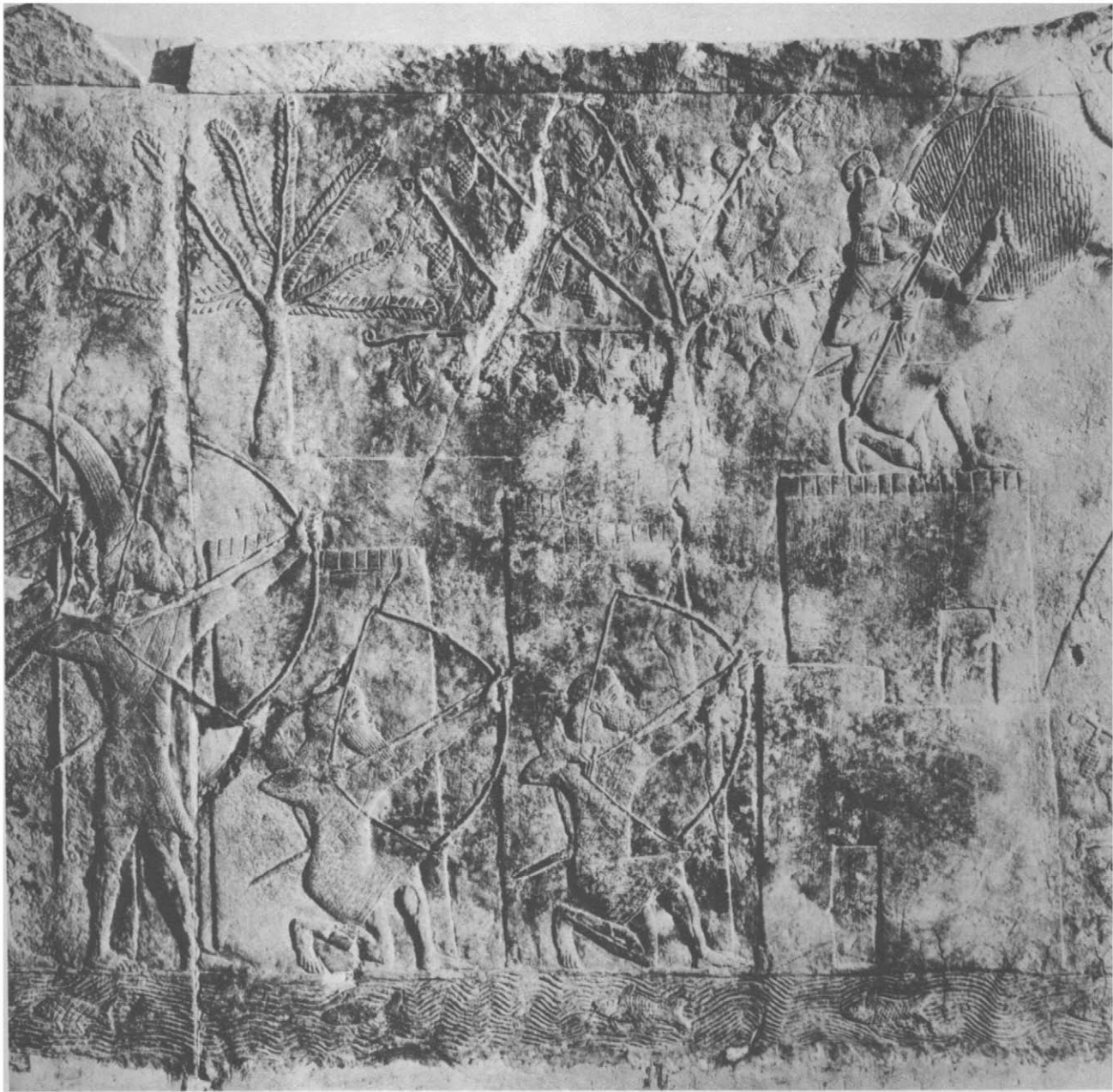


FIG. 5 Assyrian soldiers at the “siege of . . . alammu.” From the Southwest Palace, Nineveh. Reign of Sennacherib. British Museum 124785.

From S. Smith, *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum from Shalmaneser III to Sennacherib* (London, 1938), pl. 62.

blue bracteates; shod in blue boots laced with red laces; their legs in blue and red hose; and with blue helmets on their heads.<sup>28</sup>

The particulars of the color scheme might be left

to the next restorer’s imagination, but there can be no question that painting would have vastly changed our perception of the Buffalo warriors.



## NOTES

1. Buffalo Museum of Science, no. C15549. Formerly in the collection of A. G. B. Russell, College of Heralds, London. My thanks go to Buffalo curator Richard M. Gramly for allowing me to study this piece and for providing the photographs. The relief is here published for the first time since it was bought at Spink and Son, London, in 1945. It is 8½ inches high and 6½ inches wide and averages between ¾ and ⅞ of an inch in thickness.

2. R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs and Their Influence on the Sculptures of Babylonia and Persia* (London, 1960), pls. 10, 11, and detail, pl. 12. These slabs are numbered B5b–B3b and are from the throneroom of the Northwest Palace at Nimrud (see E. A. W. Budge, *Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum: Reign of Ashur-nasir-pal, 885–860 B.C.* [London, 1914], pls. 23, 2; 24, 2; 18, 2; and J. E. Reade, “The Neo-Assyrian Court and Army: Evidence from the Sculptures,” *Iraq* 34, 2 [1972]: 103; see also n. 4, below).

3. Edith Porada reminded me that the discussion that first brought these points into critical focus was the work of Margarete Falkner (“Zwei Assyrisches Reliefs in Durham,” *AfO* 16 [1952–53]: 247–51). See E. Porada, review of R. D. Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace of Ashurbanipal at Nineveh (668–627 B.C.) and Assyrian Sculpture in the British Museum in American Journal of Archaeology* 84, 4 (1980): 533–34. The discussion is considerably refined by W. Nagel (*Die Neuassyrische Reliefstile unter Sanherib und Assurbanaplū* [Berlin, 1967]) and J. E. Reade (“Assyrian Architectural Decoration: Techniques and Subject Matter,” *Bagh.Mitt.* 11 [1979]: 17–51; “Narrative Composition in Assyrian Sculpture,” *Bagh.Mitt.* 10 [1979]: 52–110). My thanks go to Julian Reade for sending me offprints of these last articles.

4. For example, the pommel on the sword of the front figure could also be omitted. See Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 40, in which the standing bowman and swordsman face left (Tiglath Pileser III); pl. 147, middle register (Shalmaneser III); pl. 77, from the North Palace (Assurbanipal), shows the sword and scabbard together. We must differentiate between conventional, repeated omissions, which might have originated because of artistic license or a lack of space, and the haphazard omissions probably made by poorly supervised or unskilled craftsmen. See Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 11: 23–24, 26f., who has adopted a commonsense approach to the subject while reiterating the central points of his article in *Iraq* 34, 2, 90f.

5. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pls. 46–48 (Sennacherib’s soldiers at Lachish) and pl. 120 (Assurbanipal’s soldiers on a campaign at the Ulai River—a campaign Reade refers to as the “battle of Til Tuba” [*Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 96ff., pls. 17, 18]—as rendered in the Southwest Palace, Room 33). The differences in the dress of the Assyrian soldiers on Sennacherib’s reliefs are discussed by Nagel (p. 15). See also Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 11: 23ff.

6. Y. Yadin, *The Art of Warfare in Biblical Lands in the Light of Archaeological Study*, 2 vols. Trans. from the Hebrew by M. Pearlman (New York, 1963), 1: 196–97; 2: 354.

7. Two types of “Elamite” quiver cover are depicted on Assyrian reliefs of the seventh century B.C.—one with a decoration of concentric circles and the other in the shape of a palmette. T. A. Madhloom (*The Chronology of Neo-Assyrian Art* [London, 1970]: 50, 51, pls. 35, 2; 49, 2) dates both types to the period of Assurbanipal. However, the type with concentric circles (*ibid.*, pl. 49, 2) belongs exclusively to the period of Sennacherib. For the rooms of the Southwest Palace decorated during Sennacherib’s reign with rows of captives from various countries—among them, Elamites—being herded off to Assyria with their remaining possessions, see Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 89–90 (Rooms 43, 44, 46, and 47). See also *ibid.*: 92–93 (Court 6); *ibid.*: 88; A. Paterson, *Assyrian Sculptures: Palace of Sinacherib* (The Hague, n.d.), pls. 17–20, 81, 82; and A. H. Layard, *Discoveries in the Ruins of Nineveh and Babylon: With Travels in Armenia, Kurdistan, and the Desert: Being the Result of a Second Expedition Undertaken for the Trustees of the British Museum* (New York, 1853): 582–84. Reade attributes parts of Paterson, pl. 82, to Room 46; he makes no positive attribution of any slab to Room 47.

As Madhloom states, the palmette-shaped quiver cover belongs exclusively to the reliefs of Assurbanipal and is associated both with the Elamites depicted in the reliefs in the Southwest Palace (Paterson, pls. 62–66; Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pls. 118–27, 129–31, portraying the battle of Til Tuba at the Ulai River) and with those in the North Palace (Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, pl. 28—Elamites hurrying to battle; and 62—“Persians” in the triumphal procession). See also Barnett’s discussion at *ibid.*: 55. For more on feather caps and Persians, see Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 98, with n. 95. The restorer of the Buffalo relief not only drew from a motif belonging to the wrong period, but also made a palmette lacking a center for its “blossom.”

8. Falkner’s original observation concerning boots (p. 249) was clarified by B.-F. Hrouda (*Die Kulturgeschichte des Assyrischen Flachbildes* [Bonn, 1965]: 50, 115, pls. 8: 3–7, 60). See also Madhloom, pl. 46, 4–6. Thus, the relief published by S. Smith (*Assyrian Sculptures in the British Museum from Shalmaneser III to Sennacherib* [London, 1938], pl. 41) and Paterson (pl. 98, no. 30) may be explained as a recarving of a Sennacherib relief by Assurbanipal’s artists in Southwest Palace style.

9. For the sculptures attributed to either “late Assurbanipal” or Sinsharishkun (Paterson, pls. 51–58), see Reade (*Iraq* 34, 2: 89–90 with nn. 17, 18—the “late group”; *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 92–110, n. 116). Reade’s is the most logical analysis, considering the state of our knowledge. These re-

iefs resemble most closely those in the North Palace. Cf. Nagel: 31ff. For the so-called sculptor's model dating to the period of Assurbanipal, upon which the details of the boots are clearly visible, see Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*: 35, pl. 1 (British Museum no. 93011) and an enlarged reproduction in H. R. H. Hall, *Babylonian and Assyrian Sculpture in the British Museum* (Paris, 1928), pl. 57.

10. Paterson, pls. 62–66; Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pls. 118–27, 129–32; and Reade's schema in *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 100–101, with pls. 17–20. Compare the use of horizontal paneling in the North Palace, in which arrangements vary from scenes similar to those in Room 33 (Room 1) to hunting scenes occupying several panels (see Barnett, *Sculptures from the North Palace*, passim).

11. Reade's discussion (*Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 96–101) is the first thorough treatment. The following discussion relies upon his work on this subject.

12. Layard's descriptions (pp. 446–59) are curiously inverted, probably because he suspected that the king for whom the slabs were made was not Sennacherib.

13. Reade suggests that the sections of Sennacherib's building that remained functional after his death were a reason for later kings like Assurbanipal to redecorate in order to "advertise their personal victories." See J. E. Reade, "Two Slabs from Sennacherib's Palace," *Iraq* 29, 1 (1967): 42–48; at 45, and Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 109–10.

14. For example, the campaign in Egypt (A. Spalinger, "Assurbanipal and Egypt: A Source Study," *JAOS* 94, 3 [1974]: 316–28; see 317, 324–25).

15. Reade, in *Bagh.Mitt.* 11: 32, and *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 86–101, summarizes the content of the captions of the Assurbanipal relief cycle in Room 33 of the Southwest Palace. See *ibid.*, n. 91 (p. 96), in which Reade observes that the difficult names were omitted from the captions. Was this perhaps to make them easier for the king to read? See D. D. Luckenbill, *The Annals of Sennacherib* (Chicago, 1924): 156–57, for examples of Sennacherib's captions.

16. Reade, *Iraq* 34, 2: 103–5, identifies an auxiliary archer in Sennacherib's army as well.

17. The only information we have about the four slabs not preserved from Room 36 is cursory. For example, see Layard's brief description of the whole series (pp. 149–53), in which he writes: "The reserve consisted of large bodies of horsemen and charioteers" (p. 149). Since the only charioteers and horsemen preserved on the published slabs are in the king's guard, which Layard describes further on, it is logical to assume that the subject he describes is actually the Assyrian army advancing through mountainous terrain near Lachish, with appropriate scenery—vineyards and olive groves—at least in the top and bottom registers. The importance of the geographical setting of Lachish has been described by Olga Tufnell (*Lachish III: The Iron Age* [London, 1953]: 34ff.).

At some point on slab 4, which occupied the corner of

the room, there was a transitional scene; the marching army gave way to platoons of soldiers engaged in the attack. The platoons (or ranks) are probably represented by pairs of soldiers, a motif that is one of the main building blocks of all Assyrian siege scenes.

It is tempting to suggest that fragments of relief work in various collections depicting soldiers filing to the right and set against a mountain backdrop might belong to the missing slabs of this series. For example, British Museum nos. 124777 and 124778, attributed to Room 45 by Smith (pl. 39), and by Reade (*Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 89 ["slabs 2, 4?"]). Smith, pl. 38—British Museum nos. 124775 and 124776—could also belong to slab 4, were it not that behind the slingers of no. 124775 is a tree that is not appropriate to the landscape of the Lachish countryside, at least according to what has been preserved on the relief series.

18. R. D. Barnett ("The Siege of Lachish," *Israel Exploration Journal* 8, 3 [1958]: 161–80; see 162) considered this gate the outer doorway of the fortified entrance complex. See Barnett, *ibid.*, pl. 30B, for a reconstruction, which was republished (in color) by Yadin (vol. 2: 436–37).

19. This second ramp was thrown up from two directions—hence D. Ussishkin's "fan-shaped" ramp ("Excavations at Tel Lachish, 1973–1977," *Tel Aviv* 5, 1–2 [1978]: 69–71)—perhaps against the towers of the inner gate or, possibly, against another tower that lay between the gate citadel complex and the corner tower at the southwest corner of the city as depicted by the Assyrian artist (see *ibid.*: 4, map). Unfortunately, the section of the relief showing the destination of the soldiers ascending the ramp is not preserved. However, the eye is drawn to this enormous ramp as the focal point for the gathering of Assyrian troops, and it is obvious that it was here the breach of the city wall was made. It seems logical that a two-pronged attack would have been made against the city—one against its main gates and another at an accessible point along its walls.

Assuming that an artist made sketches that were used as the basis for the composition of the wall relief, it is interesting to speculate about his position. If the purpose of the small ramp on the left was to breach the wall between the inner and outer gate towers, and the result of this effort was not visible to the artist, it is likely that he was positioned south and west of the city gate. This contention is supported by recent excavations, in which the large siege ramp has been tentatively located near the southwest corner of the city. This seems to be the direction taken by the exiting prisoners carrying food and the soldiers laden with booty (slabs 11, 12). The southwest also seems to be the position of the enthroned king, his camp, and his entourage (slabs 12, 13).

After my work on this subject had been prepared for publication, I read D. Ussishkin's comprehensive article, "The 'Lachish Reliefs' and the City of Lachish" (*Israel Exploration Journal* 30, 3–4 [1980]: 174–95, pls. 19, 20), which

supersedes all other treatments. The reader is directed specifically to Ussishkin's comments on pages 182–85, which give more detailed information about the genesis of the discussion and offer opinions about the position of the artist who prepared the sketches for the Lachish reliefs.

The story of the siege of Lachish ends at the doorway of Room 36, having made full use of the wall space in the chamber.

20. Paterson (pl. 39) republished Layard's drawings of slabs 8 through 11. Smith (p. 19, pls. 42, 43, 57–59) recognized other reliefs belonging to the sequence and drew the parallel between them and the Lachish group. See also Paterson (pl. 98, nos. 27, 28). Reade repeats the idea and identifies the positions in *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 94ff., after C. J. Gadd (*The Stones of Assyria: The Surviving Remains of Assyrian Sculpture, Their Recovery and Their Original Positions* [London, 1936]: 166–67).

21. There are many other examples of parallel chisel marks. See, for example, E. Porada, "Reliefs from the Palace of Sennacherib," *BMMA* n.s. 3, 6 (1945): 152–60; specifically MMA no. 32.143.13, discussed on 152–53. The same piece is discussed by Reade (*Iraq* 29, 1: 45–48). See also Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 81, a slab from Room R in the North Palace of Assurbanipal; the chisel marks are most noticeable between the dogs and their leashes. Other marks are obviously the result of the chiseling of the shapes and figures. See the channels on the frontispiece of S. M. Paley, *King of the World: Ashur-nasir-pal of Assyria, 883–859 B.C.* (Brooklyn, 1976).

22. Parallel chisel marks should not be confused with the marks made by a claw chisel, a tool not generally used on Assyrian reliefs. The marks under discussion were certainly not made by the claw chisel, though perhaps the superficial resemblance gave rise to the discussion C. Nylander resolved in a most intelligent way (*Ionians in Pasargadae: Studies in Old Persian Architecture* [Uppsala, 1970]: 54, especially the notes and fig. 2a [points, droves, and flat chisels] versus fig. 2b [toothed chisels]). The marks I have been discussing are closer to those in fig. 2a.

23. The evidence is summarized by Reade in *Bagh.Mitt.* 11: 18ff.

24. Paley: 10f., with references.

25. Egyptian examples are too common to cite. Edith Porada gives bibliographical references to painting at Persepolis; see her "Some Thoughts on the Audience Reliefs of Persepolis," in *Studies in Classical Art and Archaeology: A Tribute to Peter Heinrich von Blackenhagen*, ed. by G. Kopcke and M. Moore (Locust Valley, N.Y., 1975): 40–42, n. 40.

26. The blue backgrounds of the glazed brick panels discussed by Reade (*Bagh.Mitt.* 11: 18–20) might have been made for special kinds of representations, such as a scene of the king before his astral deity (M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2 vols. and maps [New York, 1966], 2: 453–54 and fig. 373) and for decoration high on the walls or on ceilings. Blue might also have been used in special scenes in stone reliefs as well. I am reminded that in the Bible *sapîr* (blue lapis lazuli) is the color of the heavens (Exodus 24: 10; Ezekiel 1: 26).

27. For example, a relief in Detroit from the time of Tiglath Pileser III (W. Peck, "The Arts in Detroit," *The American Connoisseur* [July 1973]: 200–209; see p. 200, fig. 1), on which the fringes and sandals at the bottom of the sculpture are unfinished. Also see a relief from the southwest corner of Room T in the Northwest Palace at Nimrud (Metropolitan Museum of Art no. 17.190.2082), on which the left edge of a tree trunk is both unfinished and misdrawn. See Paley: 75, slab 5 (with references). Could this mean that the stone was first painted, then carved, as Edith Porada has suggested in her discussion of the audience reliefs at Persepolis (see *Studies in Classical Art*: 40–42). Cf. Reade, *Bagh.Mitt.* 10: 25, who suggests that sketches could be omitted with small-scale reliefs. He may be referring to relief work in which set decorative conventions were repeated again and again.

28. With apologies to the artists of Til Barsip. See A. Parrot, *The Arts of Assyria*, trans. by S. Gilbert and J. Emmons (New York, 1961), fig. 347.

# Hasanlu Horse Trappings and Assyrian Reliefs

*Maude de Schauensee*

Keeper, Near Eastern Section Collections  
The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania

*Robert H. Dyson, Jr.*

Director, The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania

ONE OF THE richest visual documents of ancient Near Eastern equestrian equipment is the remarkably detailed group of stone wall reliefs excavated in the major palaces of Assyria (Figs. 1, 2).<sup>1</sup> The variety of equestrian activities shown in these reliefs—and on associated objects of ivory and metal—provides an extensive repertory for comparison with objects from nearby areas. Furthermore, since these reliefs are clearly dated by inscriptions to the reigns of individual Assyrian kings, they provide a reliable chronological context for the horse trappings as well.

An important aspect of the Assyrian evidence is its ability to provide a model for the identification and reconstruction of the elements of contemporary systems of harnessing used in less well-known areas. The elements of gear in question include headstalls, appliqué decorations, bits and cheekpieces, forehead plaques, bead necklaces or collars, pendants and bells, metal breastplates, and, in the case of chariot horses, shoulder rondels. Yoke saddle pommels are also illustrated along with other objects.

It is rare to find a body of material that offers such chronological control and such a range of types of horse trappings.<sup>2</sup> An exception to this statement is the unique collection of finds from the excavations at Tepe Hasanlu in western Azerbaijan, Iran, conducted by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and the Archaeological Service of Iran

from 1957 through 1974.<sup>3</sup> These excavations were supported with enthusiasm by the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art of The Metropolitan Museum of Art beginning in 1959 through the initiative of Charles K. Wilkinson. Support of the project continued under his successor, Vaughn E. Crawford. Many important objects recovered from the Hasanlu excavation have entered the Museum's collection and are now on exhibition.

The strategic location of Hasanlu in the Solduz valley at the southwest corner of Lake Urmia places it just east of Assyria, south of Urartu and Caucasia, and north of Luristan. It should, therefore, be a key site for a comparative study of the development and spread of various kinds of equestrian equipment over a wide geographic area. Such a study will be further enhanced by the range and degree of preservation of the available artifacts and their firm position in a reliable stratigraphic and cultural context dating to the ninth century B.C.<sup>4</sup>

A comparative study, of which this paper is but an initial step, of the finds at Hasanlu and the details of the Assyrian reliefs should provide the opportunity to make significant observations along several lines. First, the firm stratigraphic context allows for the reliable dating of the wide range of types found at Hasanlu itself, since the material is all preserved in the context of the sacking by the Urartians at the end



FIG. 1  
Detail from a drawing of  
an Assyrian relief show-  
ing a typical chariot  
horse.

From A. H. Layard, *The  
Monuments of Nineveh, from  
Drawings Made on the Spot*,  
vol. 1 (London, 1849), pl. 31.

of the ninth century B.C. Second, the burial of clusters of objects as the result of the sudden collapse of burning buildings at the site uniquely preserved the association between the various elements, thus allowing the reconstruction of headstalls,<sup>5</sup> bits, cheekpieces, and so on. Such reconstructions allow us to identify equipment in use at Hasanlu and permit us to make comparisons with Assyria and other areas in western Iran. Third, the material will eventually yield some quantitative information on the relative popularity of various types of equipment. Fourth, the Hasanlu objects will help us to date items from other sites in western Iran found in less reliable chronological contexts. And fifth, the degree of similarity and difference between the types in use at Hasanlu and in Assyria can indicate the relative distinctiveness of the culture of Hasanlu and the nature and degree of Assyrian influence upon it.

The settlement of Hasanlu, although lacking the imperial splendor of Assyrian cities, was nevertheless a place of some elegance and scale. The architectural layout included a large group of buildings of sundried mud brick and uncut stone with tall (two-story) central halls. These halls, with poplar-wood columns, were surrounded by auxiliary rooms on

the first- and second-floor levels.<sup>6</sup> In the ninth century these structures were organized around courtyard areas with controlled access. More than seven thousand artifacts have been recovered from the debris of the burned buildings. They provide an extraordinary inventory of objects and contextual information for their use in ninth-century B.C. northwestern Iran.

The equestrian equipment came primarily from three locations: from the main complex on the Citadel Mound (Burned Buildings II, IV East, V, and IV-V; see Fig. 3), from just inside the main gate on the upper western slope of the mound (B.B. VI), and from the northwestern area (B.B. III). Of particular interest, because of the large number of objects and the remains of small horses they contained, are B.B. IV East, V, and IV-V. Unfortunately, none of the animals had any harnessing on them when they died. Dyson has speculated elsewhere that these structures were used as, or were connected with, stables.<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, B.B. I yielded virtually no horse trappings, and those in B.B. II were primarily copper/bronze bits or cheekpieces.<sup>8</sup>

The evidence for horse trappings at Hasanlu is of two kinds: representational and artifactual. The

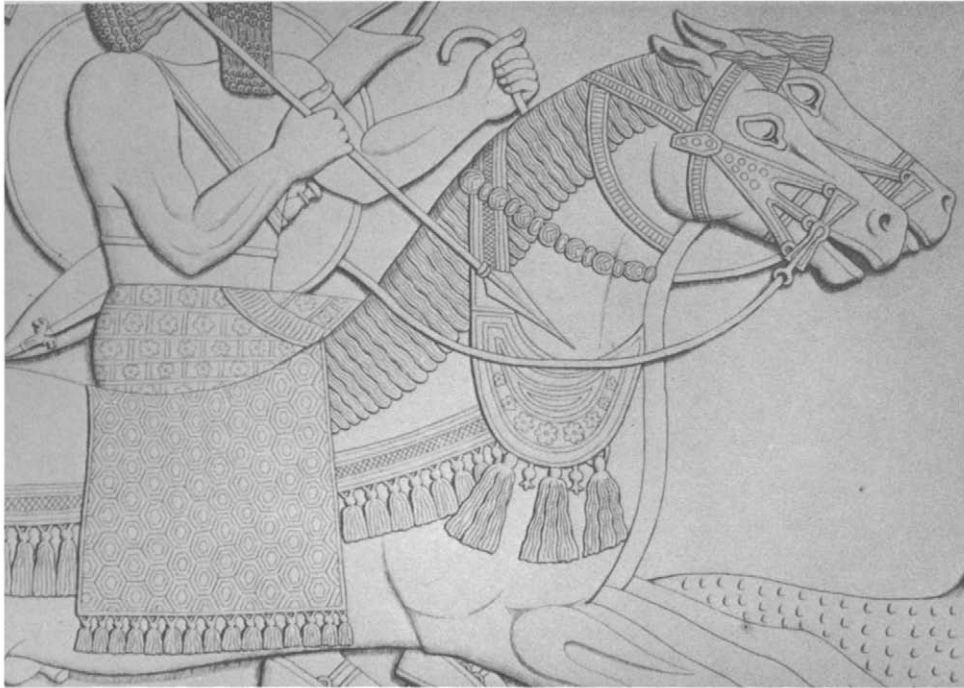


FIG. 2  
Detail from a drawing of  
an Assyrian relief showing  
a typical mounted  
horse.

Layard, pl. 32.

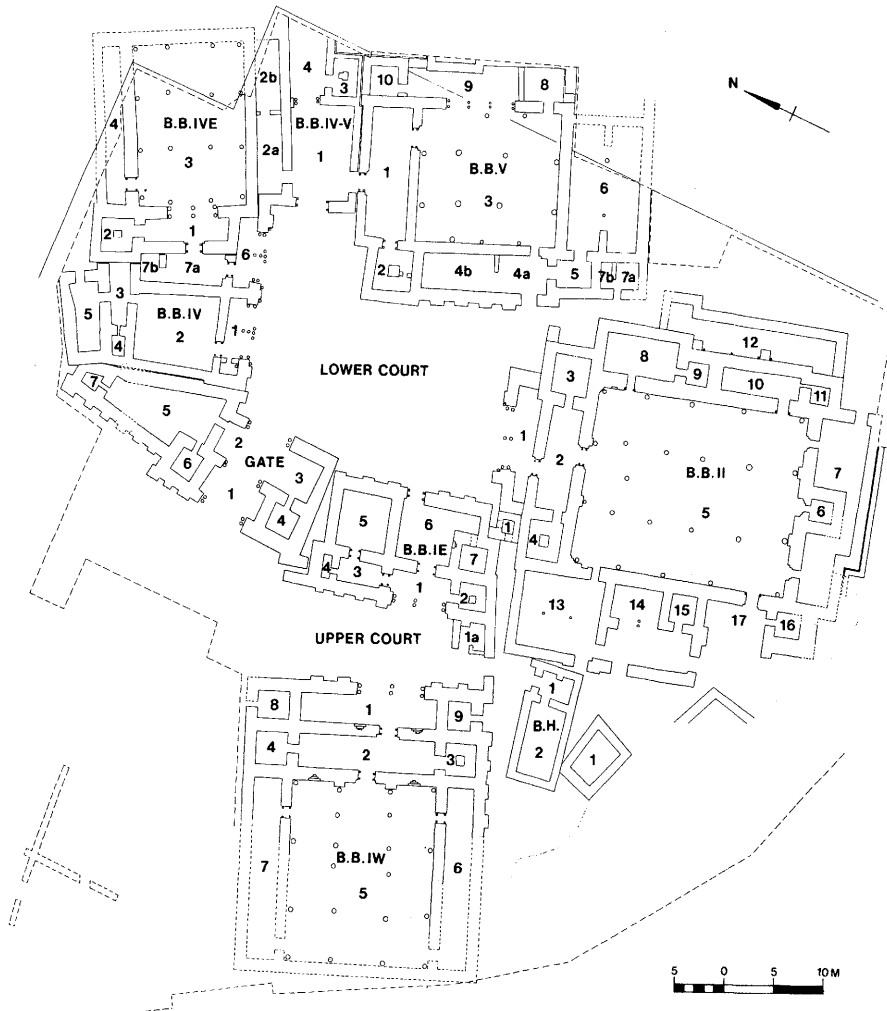


FIG. 3  
Plan of the main building  
complex on the  
Citadel Mound of  
Hasanlu, level IVB.

Drawing by R. H. Dyson, Jr.

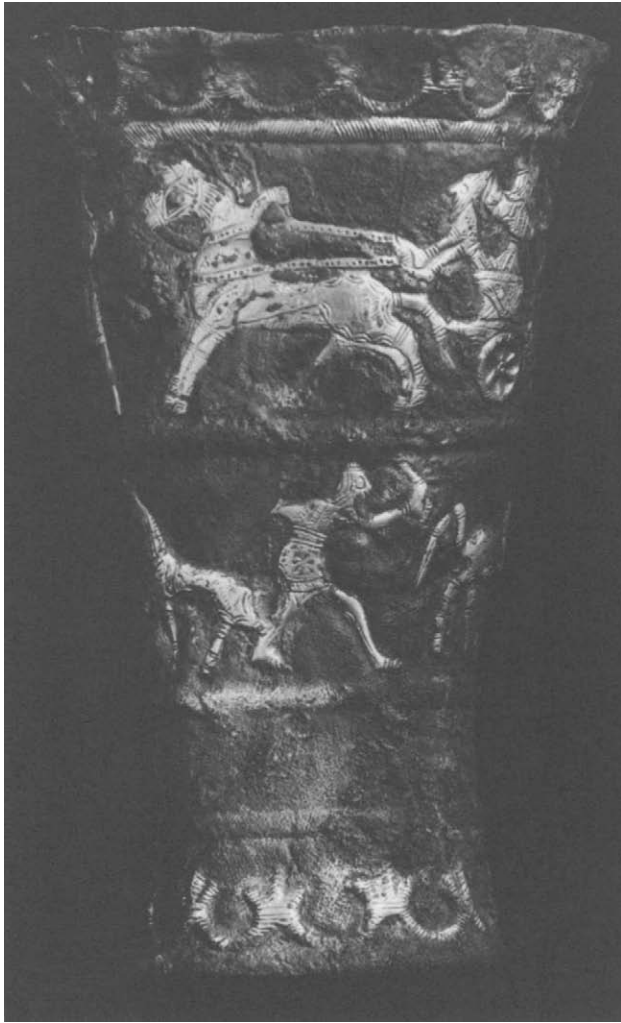


FIG. 4 Silver and electrum beaker showing a horse-drawn chariot.

Has 58-427, Musée Iran Bastan, Tchran, no. 10770.

former is very limited in quantity and very simple in form, although it gives enough detail to indicate that the basic harnessing elements were generally similar to those of the Assyrians. Some of the representations are of complete animals, almost always drawing chariots. The most detailed is the chariot horse on the silver beaker from B.B. I (Has 58-427; Fig. 4).<sup>9</sup> The bridle is of a type apparently less usual at Hasanlu and is one rarely found depicted on ivory fragments. The chariot horse on this beaker also shows either a very elaborate yoke saddle pommel or, more likely, an elaborate yoke terminal. It may possibly be a chariot-pole terminal. A second full

representation is seen on the gold bowl (Has 58-469; Fig. 5), also from B.B. I, on which two gods ride in chariots drawn by some kind of equid. The animals wear simple halter-like headstalls with nosebands and browbands joined by cheekstraps and with crownpieces passing behind the ears. This arrangement of straps seems to be the basic one used at Hasanlu for headstalls, although in representations on ivory fragments the browband is sometimes omitted.<sup>10</sup> The bowl also illustrates rounded yoke saddle pommels on the harness of the bull as well as on that of the equids. An abbreviated representation of the yoke terminals is also seen on the harnesses of the bull and the equids on the gold bowl. Although it was found in the ruins of the sacking of about 800 B.C., the gold bowl may be an heirloom originating several centuries earlier.

In addition to these representations, two other complete animals are shown: one on a cylinder seal of bone or ivory (Has 62-198) and another as a gold overlay on a flat piece of copper/bronze (Has 64-512). These items, however, give us no additional information other than to show a horse being ridden (the latter) and another chariot being drawn, probably by two horses. Fragmentary representations of horses occur on pieces of wood and ivory as well.<sup>11</sup> These fragments—pieces of inlay and parts of boxes and furniture—have been preserved by charring in the fire that destroyed Hasanlu at the end of the period of level IVB and are mostly from objects stored in B.B. II. They provide some details of harnessing, but do not allow for the reconstruction of any single complete animal and its harness.

The second category of evidence includes a wide range of artifactual remains. These have been found individually and in groups and represent the range of objects listed above as illustrated on the contemporary Assyrian reliefs. This material is currently being analyzed by Maude de Schauensee, who is preparing to publish a full catalogue. In this paper we wish to present some selected observations on headstalls, bits and cheekpieces, pendants and bells, breastplates, shoulder rondels, yoke saddle pommels, and head armor—all items that may be compared to representations on the Assyrian reliefs.

At present, there appear to be about fifteen reconstructable headstalls. All except one or two have bits, are with or without knobbed corner buttons<sup>12</sup> and



FIG. 5 Drawing of a portion of the gold bowl from Hasanlu showing an equid drawing a chariot.

Has 58-469, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran, no. 10712. Drawing by Maude de Schauensee.

with or without other buttons or decoration. Three of the headstalls have rigid cheekstrap covers, in at least one instance decorating a second cheekstrap.<sup>13</sup> Some of the headstalls are better preserved than others, but few are very dubious. The distribution of the presently reconstructed headstalls is as follows: from B.B. IVE, the columned hall (Room 3)—five certain and one probable; from B.B. IV-V (Room 1)—three (or four) certain and two (or three) probable; from B.B. V, columned hall (Room 3)—one certain; and from B.B. VI, gate area—one probable. Four of these may be used to represent the kind of evidence available.

The first headstall (Fig. 6) was found on the paving of the Lower Courtyard and consisted of an

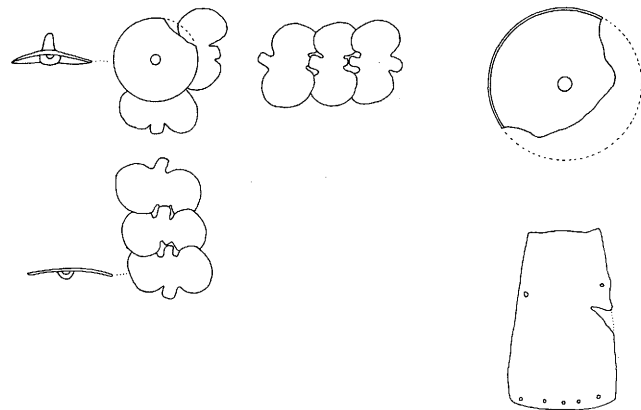


FIG. 6 Drawing showing the probable arrangement of the headstall and bit.

Bit: Has 59-837, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 60-20-198. Headstall elements: Has 59-838, University Museum, no. 60-20-261, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1960 (60.20.54 a-f and 60.20.71a,b). Drawing by Maude de Schauensee.



iron bit (Has 59-837) and a copper/bronze headstall complex (Has 59-838). Associated with the bit was a group of bilobate copper/bronze appliquéés of a type also found in tomb 15, Sialk B.<sup>14</sup> These were arranged on the straps to form an overlapping pattern, and some of the appliquéés retain traces of what appears to be leather on the reverse. Found with these were a large button with a solid central knob and two smaller buttons of similar type. It is apparent that the smaller buttons were placed at the juncture of two straps (we suppose the browband and cheekstraps), as some of the appliquéés were corroded in position on one of the buttons, showing the direction of the two straps. The large button would have been placed in the center of the forehead. Associated with this headstall complex, but in an indefinite position, were a pair of pointed conical appliquéés. What was apparently a forehead plaque was represented by a tapered rectangle of hammered copper/bronze sheet metal with a single row of holes at the lower end and two holes partway up the sides. The upper end was broken away. A hinged noseguard inscribed for King Menua is reported from Karmir Blur.<sup>15</sup> Another was found at Baba Jan, Luristan, in a horse burial dated to the seventh century B.C.<sup>16</sup> A similar copper/bronze piece is attributed to Ziwiye,<sup>17</sup> along with others of silver with chased designs of the eighth to seventh century B.C.<sup>18</sup> Chariot horses depicted on the Assurnasirpal reliefs wear a more elaborate version of this type of

noseguard.<sup>19</sup> From this combined evidence as well as from the fact that the plaque was associated with the rest of the bridle gear it may be firmly established that this object formed part of the headstall. Two three-hole antler cheekpieces pointed at one end (Has 59-891) were found in the same excavation unit as the headstall and may have belonged to this complex.

The second headstall (Has 74-222; Fig. 7) also contains a forehead plaque. This one is complete with a row of holes at the wide spatulate lower end and a rolled loop at the narrow top. With it were found an iron bit, a pair of three-hole copper/bronze cheekpieces, and one large and four small buttons with solid central knobs, as well as several smaller buttons apparently used to cover the headstall straps. The latter were found in two groups, apparently on either side of the bit. This is the only instance at Hasanlu in which copper/bronze cheekpieces were found with an iron bit.

The third headstall (Has 72-115; Fig. 8a, b) came from the top of the bench along the south wall of the columned hall (Room 3) of B.B. IVE. It consists of an iron bit with one iron cheekpiece, four copper/bronze buttons, each with a solid central knob, one larger button of the same type, and twenty-five small round copper/bronze buttons with central domes, but without knobs. The small buttons were apparently arranged along the straps of the headstall, like the bilobate appliquéés and buttons described



FIG. 7

The bridle in situ, showing the disposition of the two groups of buttons covering the straps of the headstall.

Bridle: Has 74-222, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.



FIG. 8a. The bridle and necklace or collar in situ.

Bridle and pendants: Has 72-115, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, nos. 73-5-67 (pendants from collar or necklace), 73-5-369 (bit, cheekpiece, and rod fragments), 73-5-371 (headstall buttons), 73-5-550 (pendant from necklace or collar). Beads from the collar or necklace: Has 72-116, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, De Groot Funds, 1976 (1976.233.10) and Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

FIG. 8b.  
Drawing of the bridle  
and necklace or collar  
in situ.

Drawing by Maude de  
Schauensee.

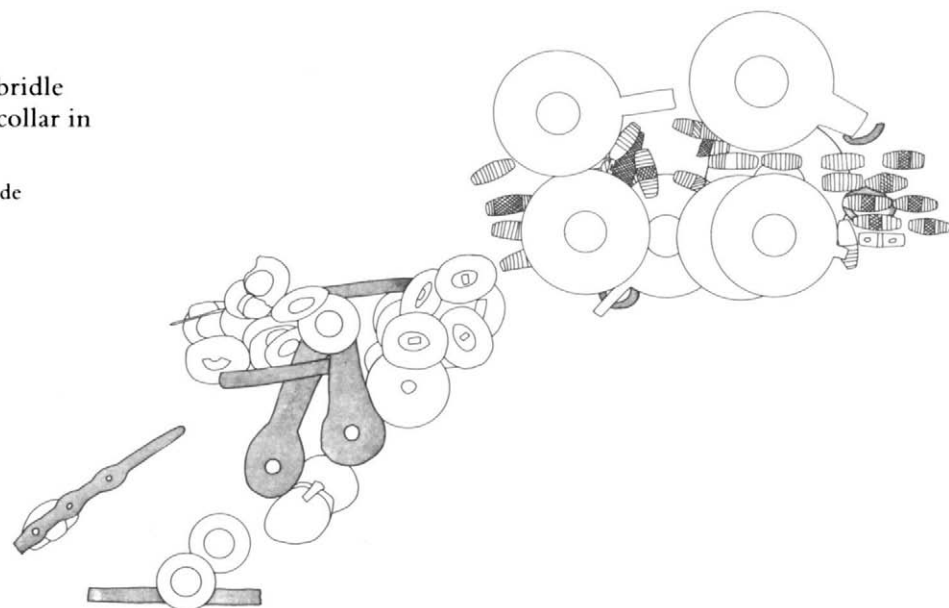




FIG. 9a.  
The bridle in situ.

Headstall: Has 72-26, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 73-5-554. Bit and cheekpieces: Has 72-35, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

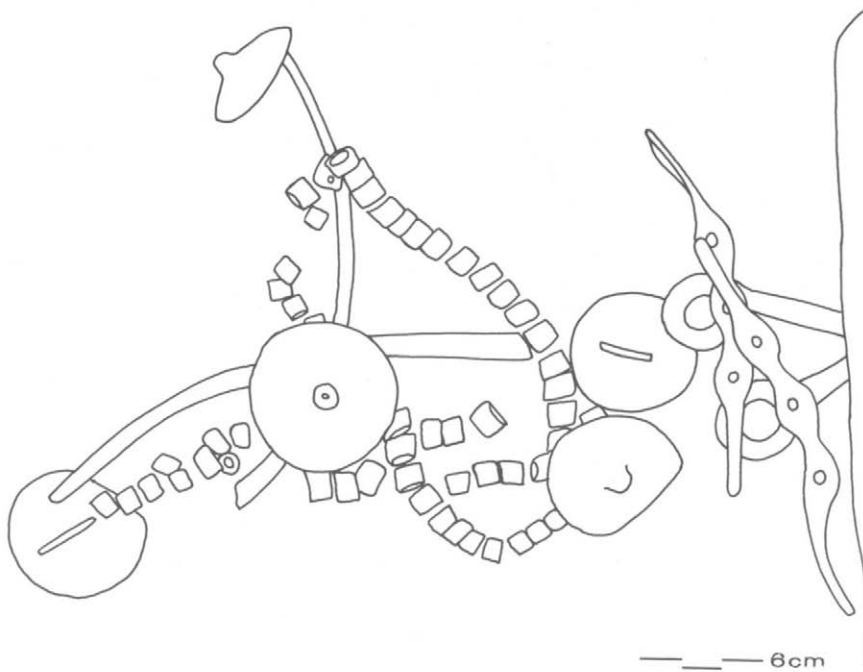


FIG. 9b.  
Drawing of the bridle in situ.  
Drawing by Maude de Schauensee.

above. The large buttons with central knobs would have been placed at the corners of the straps and in the center of the forehead. As found, the small round buttons lay in two groups of almost equal size on either side of the bit, with two or three loose ones at a little distance from the rest. Two iron rods were found on either side of the bit and appear to be related to it. Another rod and two medium-size buttons were found above the iron cheekpiece. The iron cheekpiece was found a little apart from the main headstall group. Forming a group of its own and related to, but slightly separated from, the headstall group were seven round pendants with domed centers and solid tangs pierced by iron suspension loops. These were found interspersed with glazed frit beads and appear to have formed a collar or necklace (Has 72-116). The presence of two-hole spacer beads as well as the arrangement of the beads themselves indicate a two-strand arrangement. Pendants similar to these are represented on a horse-shaped bronze cheekpiece from Nimrud.<sup>20</sup> Other groups of similar beads, but without pendants, were found at Hasanlu associated with objects usually considered to be horse trappings. Beads of apparently similar type are shown on Assyrian reliefs as necklaces on horses (see Figs. 1, 2).

The fourth bridle (Has 72-26, Has 72-35; Fig. 9a, b) was found in the East Portico of B.B. IV and included a copper/bronze bit with twisted and wrapped wire canons and a pair of copper/bronze cheekpieces of the three-hole type with snake-head terminals at the upper ends. The headstall, as found in situ, had one large button with a central knob in the center of the browband and four smaller ones at the junctures of the browband and cheekstraps and of the cheekstraps and noseband. A series of short, flattened copper/bronze tubular segments were crimped over the leather (?) straps of the headstall. Two long, curved, and rigid tapering copper/bronze elements were also crimped over straps. They appear to be about the same length as indicated for the cheekstraps by their tubular segment coverings, and it is possible that the tapered pieces were used as secondary decorative cheekstraps. They cannot have decorated the ends of the reins, as their position in the ground indicates that they, like the tube-covered cheekstraps, were attached near the corner buttons of the browband.

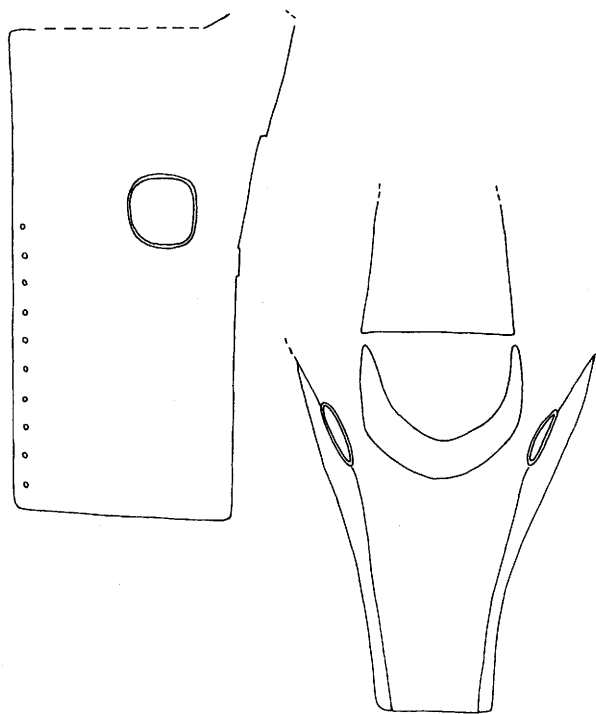


FIG. 10 Drawing of the horse's helmet.

Has 64-460, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Drawing by Maude de Schauensee.

The four headstalls just described seem to indicate the use of a standard form of decoration consisting of five copper/bronze buttons, usually with a solid central knob—four placed at the juncture of the straps and one in the center of the forehead. The straps appear frequently, though not always, to have been decorated with appliqués, small buttons, or tubular elements and to have been attached to a pair of three-hole cheekpieces and a jointed bit.

The only example of true equestrian headgear recovered at Hasanlu is a unique piece of head armor (Has 64-460; Fig. 10). This is made of copper/bronze sheet metal cut out and hammered to form a protective helmet for the horse's head. It covered the area from the top of the nose to above the forehead and down the sides of the head over the eyes. This object had fallen from a second-floor storeroom into the southeast corner of the columned hall (Room 5) of B.B. II. The helmet might perhaps be a crude imitation of the protective and decorative forehead



FIG. 11 Copper/bronze bit with twisted and wrapped wire canons.

Has 64-373, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 65-31-185.

plaques of Assurnasirpal's chariot horses; these extend in a strip from above the nostrils to over the forehead and poll of the horse. They do not, however, extend to shield the area of the eyes, nor are they shown on horses with other protective coverings.<sup>21</sup>

Bits and cheekpieces were found separately as well as in association with headstalls. A total of forty-two bits were found at Hasanlu on the Citadel Mound. Twenty-four of these are copper/bronze and eighteen are iron. The copper/bronze examples come in five or perhaps six variations, and thirteen of the twenty-four have twisted and wrapped wire canons (Fig. 11).<sup>22</sup> The bits found at Hasanlu are without exception made with jointed canons, so that as a group they form a distinct contrast to those reported from Luristan, which are almost always of the cast-bar type.<sup>23</sup> The section of the wire of the twisted and wrapped wire bits at Hasanlu is square, so that the edges are sharp, making the mouthpiece more painful to the horse. Two copper/bronze bits with twisted but unwrapped canons were also found (Fig. 12).

The twisted and wrapped wire canons never passed through the cheekpieces. The latter are smooth, narrow bars of copper/bronze (Fig. 13) or—very rarely—iron with three centered and evenly spaced holes. The holes are all of the same small size—too small to have received the canon. Cheekpieces were often found near bits, but never attached to them; therefore, they must have been tied to the bit with a thong or rope, probably in more or less the position shown in the unique bit cast in one with its cheekpieces (Has 59-772; Fig. 14). A similar system, but with more gracile, bent cheekpieces, is known in the eighth-to-seventh-century example from tomb 3 at Tepe Giyan in Luristan<sup>24</sup> and in an example of the

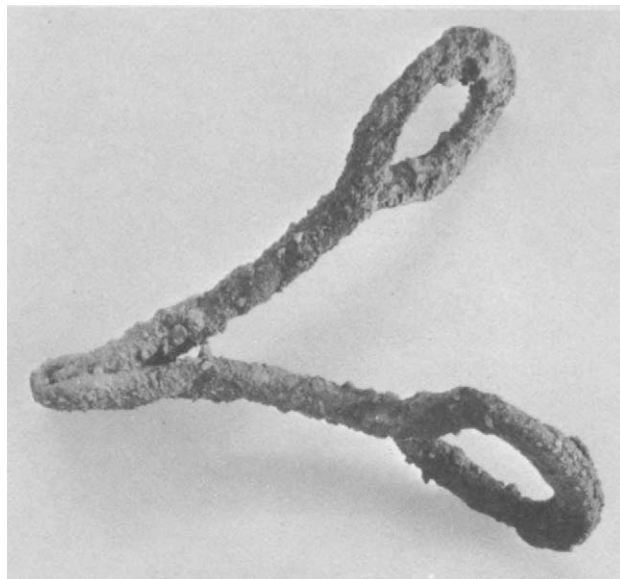


FIG. 12 Copper/bronze bit with twisted, but not wrapped, wire canons.

Has 60-846, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

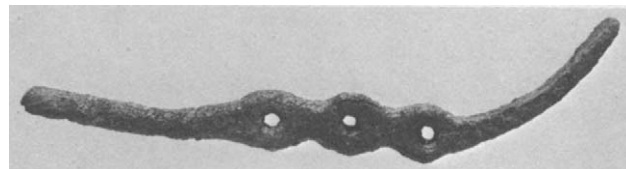


FIG. 13 A typical three-hole copper/bronze cheekpiece.

Has 74-222, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

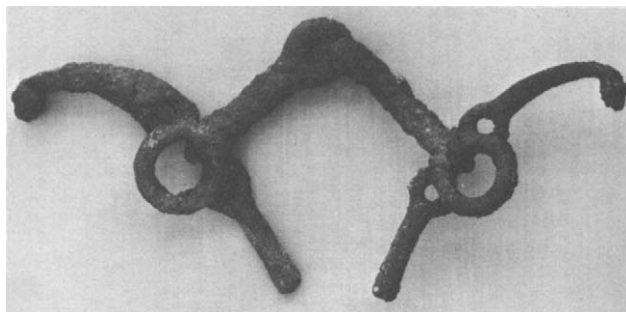


FIG. 14 The unique copper/bronze bit apparently cast in one with its cheekpieces.

Has 59-772, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 60-20-171, and Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran, no. 10933.

same date from Kaluraz in Gilan province near the Caspian Sea.<sup>25</sup> A fragment of a similar iron cheekpiece with an animal's head at one end, probably of seventh-century date, is reported from Ziwiyeh.<sup>26</sup> Another variant, found at Marlik, had canons passing through the central hole and ending in loops, with additional holes piercing the sidebar on either side.<sup>27</sup> Altogether fifteen copper/bronze three-hole cheekpieces with undecorated ends and one or two pairs with snake-head terminals were found at Hasanlu. These constituted a minimum of seven sets (three pairs plus nine separate pieces). The three-hole copper/bronze cheekpieces range in length from 15.5 to 17.5 cms., with one short example at 11.3 cms. That cheekpiece, like the others of this type, is round in section at the lower end, becoming oval through the central portion, and ending in a flat, spatulate shape at the top. The spatulate ends of the decorated pairs are again oval, with eyes and a groove for a mouth added to form a kind of snake head.

A second type of copper/bronze bit (Fig. 15), of which three examples were found, has untwisted canons that are round in section, pass through the central hole of the copper/bronze cheekpiece, have a linked central joint, and end in large rein loops. The sidebars of these cheekpieces are narrow and round in section throughout their length, with a loop near each end for the attachment of the cheekstraps. Such cheekpieces occur only with this type of copper/bronze bit. The same type is seen in tomb 74 of Sialk B, where, however, the rein ring is held in a small hand in the manner of Luristan bits of the same type.<sup>28</sup> The type forms Group III in Moorey's *Catalogue of Luristan Bronzes*,<sup>29</sup> which is an elaboration of Potratz's categories.<sup>30</sup> Moorey is of the opinion that no close relative of this type exists on the Assyrian reliefs, but is cautious on this point because of the difficulty of reading the representations, which, in the case of bits, are at best partial.<sup>31</sup> Ghirshman would date the Sialk B material to the ninth to early eighth century B.C.,<sup>32</sup> but Moorey, following Dyson<sup>33</sup> and Boehmer,<sup>34</sup> dates it to the eighth or early seventh century B.C.<sup>35</sup> Moorey points out that the nearest equivalents appear on Assyrian reliefs of the mid-eighth century and later,<sup>36</sup> but a similar example inscribed for King Menua is reported from Karmir Blur in Urartu.<sup>37</sup> Since Menua is thought to have sacked Hasanlu at the end of the

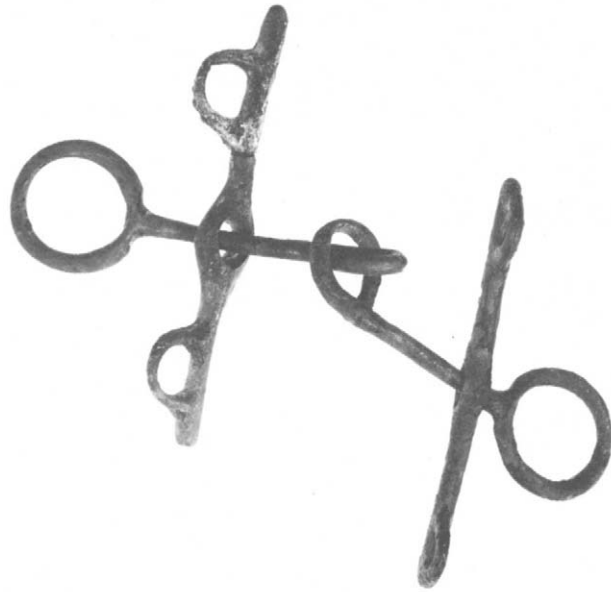


FIG. 15 Copper/bronze bit with smooth, untwisted canons passing through the cheekpieces. Linked central joint.

Has 60-741, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 61-5-188.

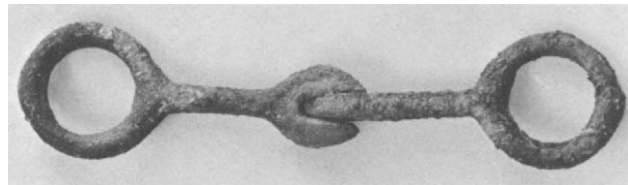


FIG. 16 Copper/bronze bit with smooth, untwisted canons and apparently hinged central joint.

Has 60-924, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

ninth century, the combined evidence would indicate the use of this type in the general region by this time. Only one example of a copper/bronze bit with untwisted canons—without cheekpieces—was found. This appears to have a possibly hinged, but certainly not a linked, central joint (Fig. 16).

A third, unique, copper/bronze bit was found where it had fallen into the stairwell of B.B. II from the second-floor level (see Fig. 14). We believe this

bit was made by casting the canons in one with the cheekpieces. We also believe that the canons were cast to appear twisted and were not actually made by twisting the metal. This method of manufacture has been supported by an X-ray of the piece. The upper ends of the cheekpieces are in the form of pairs of snake heads. A later version of this type was excavated at Kaluraz.<sup>38</sup>

The copper/bronze twisted and wrapped bits excavated at Hasanlu range in length from 18 to 24.5 cms.; the twisted and probably unwrapped ones measure 18.4 cms. The bit cast in one with its cheekpieces measures 18.1 cms. The untwisted bits, copper/bronze and iron together, range from 16.4 to 26.2 cms. in length, although the last measurement is unusually long and may be inaccurate due to the degree of corrosion of the iron. All the bits were measured from end to end. However, the canons would be the width appropriate for use on a small horse or large pony. This is the size indicated for the horses at Hasanlu by their skeletal measurements. On the Assyrian reliefs bits are shown used without nosebands or with high divided nosebands, in contrast to the representations at Hasanlu, which all show straight nosebands, sometimes in addition to the high, divided noseband.

In B.B. II fifteen bits were found in different locations. Fourteen of these were copper/bronze, including the unique example. With the possible exception of only one bit, all were from storerooms around the columned hall (Room 5) rather than in it—an unsurprising fact, since the small rooms on both the first and second floors around the columned hall functioned largely as storerooms.<sup>39</sup> Four copper/bronze cheekpieces without bits were found in the southeast storeroom, whereas nine bits found in the east storeroom were without cheekpieces, showing that these items were apparently sometimes stored separately. The horse helmet was found in the southeast corner of the columned hall.

Iron bits found at Hasanlu numbered about eighteen, including at least eleven with untwisted canons. No iron bits with the canons passing through the cheekpieces were found. We believe most iron bits to have had untwisted canons, although at least two examples have twisted, but not wrapped, canons (Fig. 17). The degree of corrosion of the iron bits makes twisting very hard to identify.

Cheekpieces associated with these bits were very rarely of the three-hole type made of iron. More usually they were of antler, also with three holes. There is only one example of an iron bit associated with copper/bronze cheekpieces. Antler cheekpieces were found on the paving of the Upper Court, in the anteroom and columned hall (Rooms 4a and 3) of B.B. V, and in B.B. VI near the main gate on the western slope. Such cheekpieces were never found associated with copper/bronze bits, as these always had copper/bronze cheekpieces. The fact that iron bits and antler cheekpieces did not occur in the two most elaborate buildings at Hasanlu (B.B. IW and B.B. II) suggests that less prestige was enjoyed by these items. Moorey notes that Assurbanipal's baggage mules wore horn cheekpieces, whereas the cavalry animals wore bronze, an observation that would also seem to indicate their lesser prestige.<sup>40</sup> In tomb 15 at Sialk B a pair of similar cheekpieces was found, but it is unclear whether they can be associated with the iron or the bronze bits.<sup>41</sup>

In summary, then, the Hasanlu bits are all of the jointed type and occur in almost equal numbers in copper/bronze and iron. The iron bits, however, seem almost always to have been used with antler cheekpieces, while the copper/bronze bits seem to have been used only with copper/bronze cheekpieces. Cheekpieces pierced by three holes, but unpierced by the canons of the bit, are the most common type. This type of cheekpiece appears to have been rare in Luristan and Assyria, but clearly represents a characteristic element in the harnessing used in northwestern Iran. This feature seems to set the area off quite distinctly from contemporary Assyria.

Headstall complexes found at Hasanlu are sometimes associated with collars or necklaces decorated with pendants (Fig. 18). The pendants include tubular copper/bronze examples (Fig. 18:1) and sometimes iron ones with copper/bronze or iron wire loops for attachment; a subrectangular plaque with suspension loop (Fig. 18:2); a flat disk with a flat perforated tang on the upper edge; and a disk with a domed center and a flat tang with an iron wire suspension ring (Fig. 18:4), among others. Fifty-five subrectangular plaques were found where they had fallen from the second floor of B.B. IV-V into the area that yielded the unique repoussé breastplate.<sup>42</sup>

Another pendant type of interest is that in the

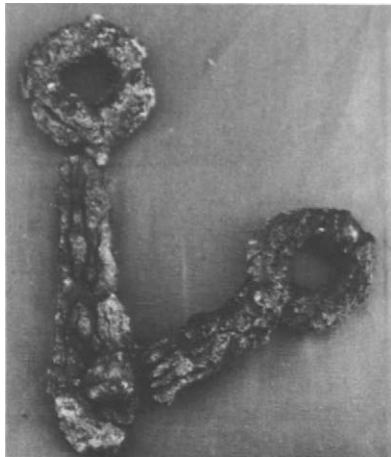


FIG. 17  
Iron bit with linked central joint.  
Wire canons probably twisted.

Has 72X-43. University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 73-5-59.

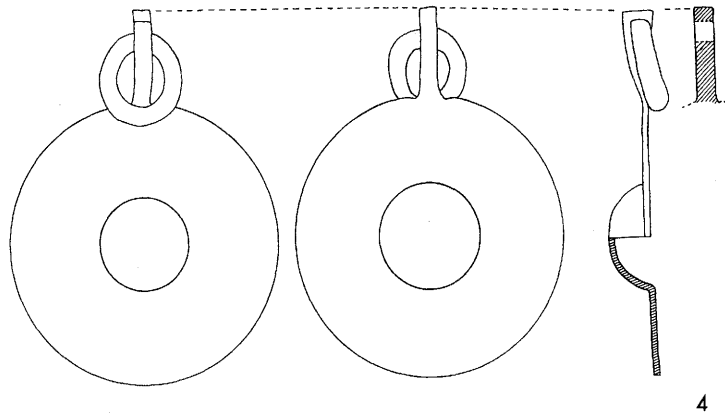
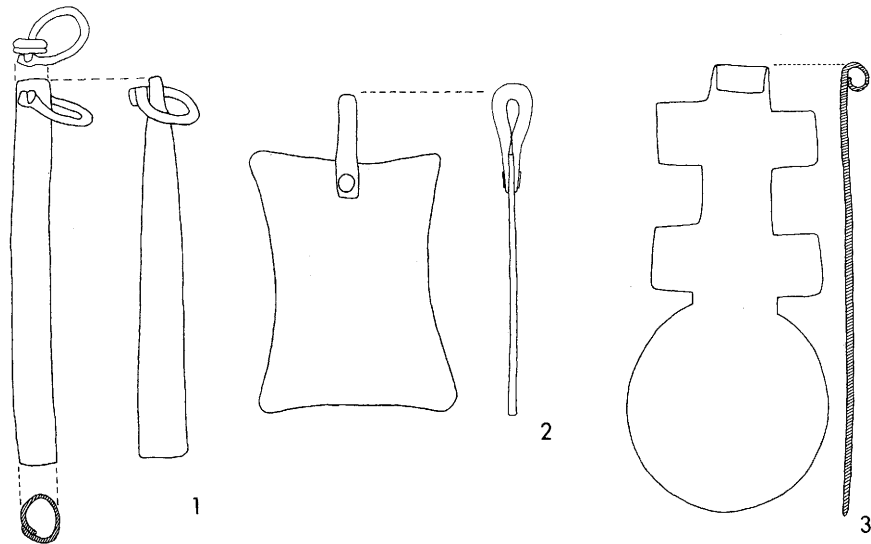


FIG. 18  
Drawings of typical pendants.

1. Copper/bronze tube pendant with copper/bronze wire suspension loop. Has 74-75, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.
2. Copper/bronze subrectangular plaque with copper/bronze wire suspension loop. Has 74-228, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.
3. Copper/bronze "banjo" pendant with rolled suspension loop. Has 72-111, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 73-5-429. Has 72-111a, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, De Groot Funds, 1976 (1976.233.36,37).
4. Copper/bronze disk pendant with domed center and iron suspension loop. Has 72-115, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 73-5-67, and Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran. Drawings by Laurence Garenne-Marot.

shape of a "banjo" (Fig. 18:3).<sup>43</sup> It has a flat, round body with two projecting horizontal tabs on either side of the narrow, flat tang. The tang also has a rolled suspension loop at the top, unlike Moorey's example, which has a suspension loop on the back of the tang.<sup>44</sup> Thirteen of these were found in one group in B.B. IV-V along with a bell—the whole ensemble probably forming a collar like that found in tomb 15 at Sialk B, where twelve such objects were found arranged as collar ornaments.<sup>45</sup> This type is also reported from Luristan,<sup>46</sup> at Tepe Giyan,<sup>47</sup> allegedly at Khurvin,<sup>48</sup> and at Ghalekuti in Dailaman.<sup>49</sup> Moorey,<sup>50</sup> following Boehmer,<sup>51</sup> dates

these all to the second half of the eighth century. They appear in Assyrian wall paintings from the reign of Tiglath Pileser III at Til Barsip and on the Khorsabad reliefs of Sargon II.<sup>52</sup> The Hasanlu evidence indicates that their appearance must be dated to the last quarter of the ninth century B.C.

Another type of equestrian ornament of importance found in the same B.B. IV-V deposit (a group of objects that had fallen from the second-floor storage area) was a large number of copper/bronze bells. One cluster consisted of twenty-two rattle bells—twenty of the plain fenestrated type and two of the fenestrated pomegranate type (Fig. 19a). The latter is



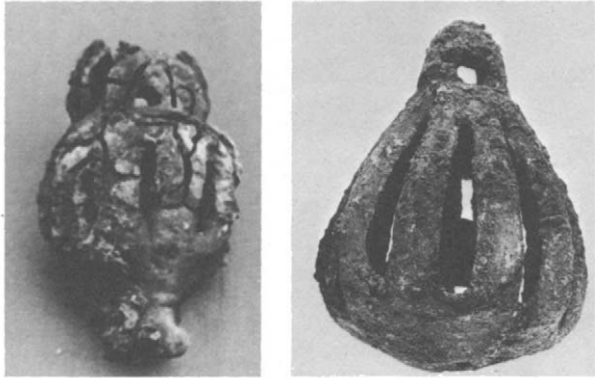


FIG. 19a. Fenestrated copper/bronze pomegranate bell.

Has 72-151b, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

FIG. 19b. Fenestrated copper/bronze bell with rounded base and sides.

Has 74-85, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

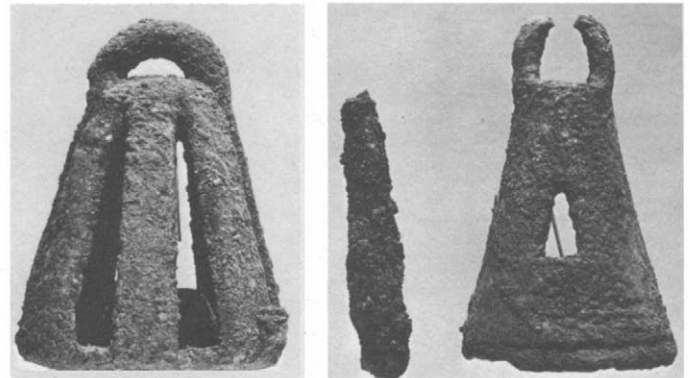


FIG. 19c. Fenestrated copper/bronze bell with straight sides and flat base.

Has 74-93, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

FIG. 19d. Conical copper/bronze bell with straight sides and three triangular openings. Open base and hanging iron clapper (beside bell).

Has 74-327, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

also known from Sialk B, tomb 15.<sup>53</sup> Altogether, sixty-nine bells of the plain fenestrated type were found at Hasanlu. Of these, thirty-one had rounded sides and rounded bases (Fig. 19b). This type is also known from Sialk B, tomb 15.<sup>54</sup> A variant form, of which there are thirty examples, has rounded fenestrated sides and a flattened base. Seven fenestrated bells with straight sides and flat bases (Fig. 19c) and one example with straight sides and a round base were also found. These bells all contained from one to three ball rattles, unless the slats were broken and the rattles lost. The type with rounded sides and flat base is reported from Luristan, as is the type with straight sides and flat base.<sup>55</sup> In general, these have been dated to the eighth to seventh century.<sup>56</sup> Only two bells with hanging iron clappers were found. They have open bases and are cone shaped, with three triangular openings in the sides (Fig. 19d). This type in a slightly different form is seen at Sialk B.<sup>57</sup> Individual conical bells may be seen hanging from the collars of horses on Assyrian reliefs.<sup>58</sup>

A third group of objects in this same general location included six shallow lunate copper/bronze equestrian breastplates, one with a row of small round bosses found in the central depression (Fig. 20), four deep collars (Fig. 21), two small pectorals, six suspension loops, a number of copper/bronze tube pendants, eighteen flattened and nineteen small

domed bosses, and long pieces of coiled copper/bronze strips or ribbons, which we think might have been used to decorate reins. Similar metal strips are known at Sialk B in tomb 15.<sup>59</sup> Also found were seventeen stud caps, eleven four-cornered "star" bosses (Fig. 22), also known from the Bronze Age at Tepe Djamshidi in Luristan,<sup>60</sup> and four groups of glazed frit beads. Breastplates are well known from the Assyrian representation on the palace reliefs of Assurnasirpal II (see Fig. 2) and on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III.<sup>61</sup> Another type of breastplate is illustrated on an ivory fragment from Fort Shalmaneser at Nimrud.<sup>62</sup> Eighth-century parallels occur at Salamis.<sup>63</sup> Breastplates are usually shown on mounted horses on Assyrian reliefs (see Fig. 2),<sup>64</sup> but appear to have sometimes been used on chariot horses as well.<sup>65</sup>

Another item shown prominently on Nimrud reliefs<sup>66</sup> and on the bronze gates from Balawat is the shoulder rondel worn by the chariot horse.<sup>67</sup> These ornaments are usually decorated with geometric patterns (see Fig. 1), although they occasionally have an animal motif.<sup>68</sup> Ivory fragments from Hasanlu show that such rondels were used there too.<sup>69</sup> Two circular iron disks found at Hasanlu, with perforated edges and repoussé winged horses in the center, almost certainly represent such rondels (Fig. 23). Fragments of other similar disks in copper/bronze may also have

FIG. 20  
Shallow lunate copper/  
bronze breastplate with  
some of its bosses.

Has 72-147a, The Metropoli-  
tan Museum of Art, New  
York, De Groot Funds, 1976  
(1976.233.44).



FIG. 21 Deep copper/bronze breastplate.

Has 72-143a, University Museum of the University of  
Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 73-5-555.



FIG. 23 Iron shoulder rondel with repoussé winged  
horse.

Has 60-876, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

FIG. 22 Copper/bronze "star" boss.

Has 74-218, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.





FIG. 24a.  
Remains of what may be  
a chariot box and pole in  
situ.

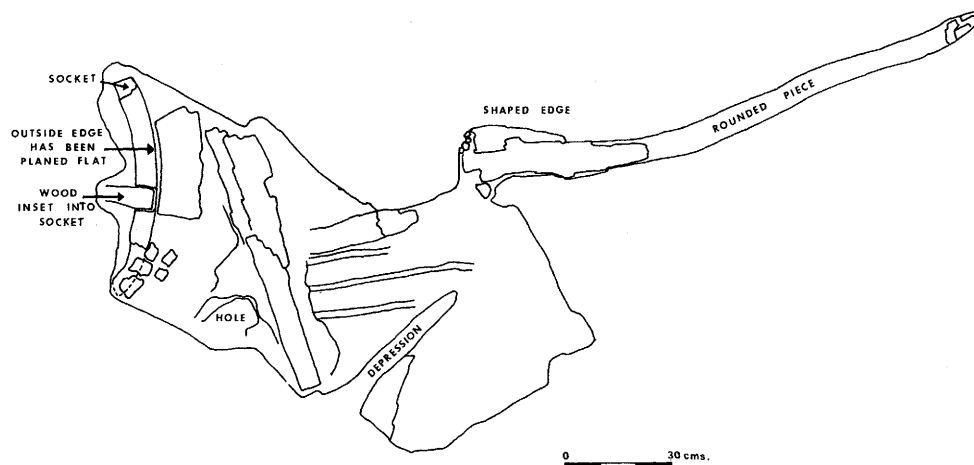


FIG. 24b.  
Drawing of the possible  
chariot fragments.  
Drawing by Laurence  
Garenne-Marot.

been found with horse trappings. A plaque similar to the iron ones from Hasanlu, now in the Musée Iran Bastan in Tehran, is attributed to Luristan.<sup>70</sup> Winter notes that the "Master of the Animals" plaque from Geoy Tepe is also probably a similar plaque.<sup>71</sup>

The representation of chariots on several objects found at Hasanlu indicates that chariots were used there. In addition, it is apparent that the roadway system and gates on the Citadel Mound were wide enough to accommodate wheeled vehicles. It may be

that an enigmatic mass of burned wood found on the floor of Room I of B.B. IV-V is a fragment from the body of a chariot and its chariot pole (Fig. 24a, b), but identification is far from certain. More important is the identification of yoke saddle pommels as seen both on the Nimrud palace reliefs<sup>72</sup> and on objects at Hasanlu (see Fig. 5). Comparable objects are found as far west as Beth Shan in Palestine and in Tutankhamen's tomb in Egypt.<sup>73</sup> At least eleven plain pyramid-headed polished white stone yoke

saddle pommels have been found (Fig. 25a). Three pairs were found in B.B. IV-V. One pair was found in the fill near the possible chariot fragments; one was found in the columned hall of B.B. V; two pairs in B.B. III on the east side of the forecourt; and one other south of the court. As noted above, all three of these locations were associated with horse skeletons and stored harness equipment. In addition to these stone pommels, there is one pair of dome-headed copper/bronze pommels (Fig. 25b) and another pair with tops shaped like lions' heads (Fig. 25c). These may have served a similar function. One may further recall the finely made Urartian chariot-pole terminal of the eighth century in the form of a horse's head.<sup>74</sup> Yoke terminals and chariot-pole terminals appear not to have existed at Hasanlu, although the bird's head shown on the silver beaker (see Fig. 4) may be a representation of one of these. No actual examples have been found.

Considering the presence of these pommels, the apparent use of shoulder rondels and forehead plaques, and the representation of chariots, the conclusion seems inescapable that chariots were in use at Hasanlu in the ninth century B.C.

The discussion above shows that equestrian objects at Hasanlu represent a wide range of the existing harnessing apparatus of the period and thereby establishes not only a definite identification for many types, but also, owing to the context in which they were found, a firm date for those types. At the same time, the objects and sets of objects found at Hasanlu establish the site as quite distinct in terms of its equestrian equipment from other previously well-known areas such as Assyria and Luristan. This distinctiveness is shown by the exclusive use of jointed bits and three-hole cheekpieces not pierced by a canon and by details of headstalls decorated with knobbed and unknobbed buttons at strap intersections and at the center of the forehead. These are factors that seem to set off the northwest area from both Assyria and Luristan. On the other hand, the use of sets of paraphernalia such as forehead plaques,

FIG. 25a. Pyramid-headed white stone yoke saddle pommel.

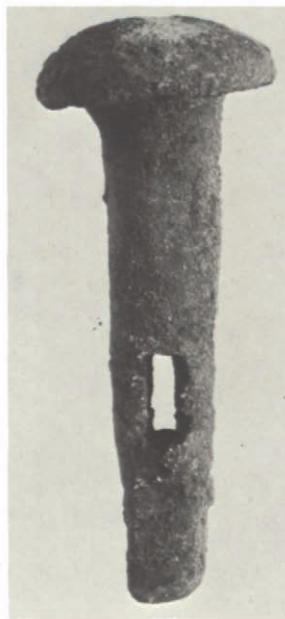
Has 64-322, University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, no. 65-31-1.

FIG. 25b. Dome-headed copper/bronze yoke saddle pommel.

Has 74-154, Musée Iran Bastan, Tehran.

FIG. 25c. Lion-headed copper/bronze yoke saddle pommel.

Has 62-39, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, Rogers Fund, 1963 (63.109.1).



breastplates, shoulder rondels, and the like is paralleled on chariot horses and mounted horses shown on the reliefs of Assurnasirpal II in Assyria. Certain details noted at Hasanlu, however—such as the unique repoussé decoration of the breastplate<sup>75</sup> and the use of the flying-horse motif on shoulder rondels—differ, although winged animals do occasionally appear on Assyrian shoulder rondels.<sup>76</sup> Moreover, there is the possibility that stone yoke saddle pommels were copied at Hasanlu, or perhaps imported to the city, as the excavated examples appear similar to those shown on Assyrian reliefs as well as to those on Egyptian reliefs and reliefs at Beth Shan.<sup>77</sup> It appears, then, that this type of pommel was widely used. However, the relationship with Assyria must certainly be considerable, owing to the amount of Assyrian contact visible at Hasanlu in objects such as cylinder seals, wall tiles, glazed vessels, and so on.

The objects found at Hasanlu are firmly dated by C14 to the ninth century B.C.; therefore, the chrono-

logical span of the parallels usually dated in Assyria and Luristan to the eighth to seventh centuries will now have to be extended back into the ninth century.<sup>78</sup> Of particular interest are the many parallels to Hasanlu found in tomb 15 of Sialk B, a fact that certainly suggests the dating of that tomb to the later ninth century in a time period parallel with Hasanlu period IVB. Such a conclusion supports Ghirshman's final argument for beginning the dating of Sialk B in the ninth century instead of in the eighth.<sup>79</sup>

This presentation has been an attempt to show the types of equestrian equipment identified at Hasanlu and to place them in context as much as possible both in time and in relation to similar types identified or represented in Assyria and to some degree in other areas as well. In the process it has become apparent that many types dated to the eighth to seventh centuries had their inception in the ninth and that northwestern Iran was an area of quite independent development in this process.

## NOTES

1. A. H. Layard, *The Monuments of Nineveh, from Drawings Made on the Spot*, vol. 1 (London, 1849); R. D. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs and Their Influence on the Sculptures of Babylonia and Persia* (London, 1960); M. E. L. Mallowan, *Nimrud and Its Remains*, 2 vols. and maps (New York, 1966).

2. P. R. S. Moorey, *Catalogue of the Ancient Persian Bronzes in the Ashmolean Museum* (Oxford, 1971): 101-7, 127-28.

3. T. C. Young, Jr., and L. D. Levine, *Mountains and Lowlands* (Malibu, Calif., 1977).

4. R. H. Dyson, Jr., "The Hasanlu Project, 1961-1967," *The Memorial Volume of the 5th International Congress of Iranian Art and Archaeology* (Tehran, 1972): 39-58; see C14 tables.

5. A headstall is the part of the bridle designed to hold the bit in place. (For a complete definition of terms, see M. A. Littauer and J. H. Crouwel, *Wheeled Vehicles and Ridden Animals in the Ancient Near East* [Leiden and Cologne, 1979], glossary.)

6. R. H. Dyson, Jr., "Hasanlu IV: Problems of Architectural Structure and Function," 28th RAI (Vienna, 1981).

7. *Ibid.*

8. The Hasanlu Project has adopted the term "copper/bronze" to indicate objects made of copper or bronze that

have not been analyzed.

9. E. Porada, *The Art of Ancient Iran* (New York, 1965), pl. 28.

10. O. W. Muscarella, *The Catalogue of Ivories from Hasanlu, Iran*, University Museum Monograph 40 (Philadelphia, 1980).

11. *Ibid.*

12. The term "button" is used here to indicate a harness appliqué attached to a surface by a strap, thong, or cord passing through a loop on the button's underside. The term "boss" is reserved for an appliqué attached to a strap, etc., by a tang on its underside.

13. For a typical headstall of Assyrian type, see Barnett, pl. 64; for a typical Hasanlu headstall as represented on ivory, see Muscarella: 80, no. 170 (Has 64-899). (Muscarella misnamed the location of the piece; it is in the University Museum: 65-31-350.)

14. R. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk près de Kashan*, vol. 2, (Paris, 1939), pl. 55.

15. R. D. Barnett, "Further Russian Excavations in Armenia (1949-1953)," *Iraq* 21, 1 (1959): 1-19; 15, fig. 13.

16. C. Goff Meade, "Excavations at Baba Jan, 1967: Second Preliminary Report," *Iran* 7 (1969): 115-30; see 123, fig. 7: 3.

17. A. Godard, *Le Trésor de Ziwiyé* (Haarlem, 1950), fig. 93.

18. *Ibid.*, figs. 96–100; Moorey: 138–39.
19. Layard, pls. 13–19.
20. Mallowan, fig. 70.
21. Layard, pls. 13, 14, 21, 23, 27; pl. 28.
22. The canon is the part of a metal bit that lies in the horse's mouth; the mouthpiece.
23. Cf. Moorey: 108, pl. 13, no. 109.
24. G. Contenau and R. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Tépé Giyan* (Paris, 1935), pl. 8, no. 6.
25. A. Hakemi, personal communication.
26. Godard: 55, fig. 46.
27. Moorey: 105, fig. d; E. O. Negahban, *Marlik* (Tehran, 1964), fig. 134.
28. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*, pls. 25, 75.
29. Moorey: 111–12.
30. J. A. H. Potratz, "Die Pferdetranssen des Alten Orient, *AO* 41 (Rome, 1966).
31. Moorey: 112.
32. R. Ghirshman, *L'Iran et les migrations des Indo-Aryans et des Iraniens* (Leiden, 1977): 59.
33. R. H. Dyson, Jr., "Problems of Protohistoric Iran as Seen from Hasanlu." *JNES* 24, 3 (1965): 193–217; see 207–8.
34. R. M. Boehmer, "Zur Datierung der Nekropole B von Tepe Sialk," *Archaeologische Anzeiger* 80, 4 (1965): 802–22; see 802ff.
35. Moorey: 112.
36. *Ibid.*
37. B. B. Piotrovskii, *Karmir Blur*, vol. 3 (Yerevan, 1955): 45, fig. 34.
38. Hakemi, personal communication.
39. Dyson, 28th RAI.
40. Moorey: 104, n. 9.
41. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*, pl. 57, 791a,b.
42. I. J. Winter, *A Decorated Breastplate from Hasanlu*, University Museum Monograph 39 (Philadelphia, 1980).
43. Moorey, pl. 28, no. 151.
44. Moorey, personal communication.
45. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*, pl. 25.
46. Moorey: 136, no. 151.
47. Contenau and Ghirshman, pls. 5, 6.
48. L. vanden Berghe, *La Nécropole de Khurvin* (Istanbul, 1964), pl. 38.
49. N. Egami, S. Fukai, and S. Masuda, *Dailaman*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1965), pls. 25, 26, 67.
50. Moorey: 137.
51. Boehmer: 804.
52. F. Thureau-Dangin and M. Dunand, *Til Barsip* (Paris, 1936), pl. 44; P. E. Botta and M. E. Flandin, *Monument de Ninive*, 5 vols. (Paris, 1849–50), pl. 136.
53. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*, pl. 25.
54. *Ibid.*
55. Moorey: 137, no. 156; no. 154.
56. *Ibid.*: 137–38.
57. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*, pl. 25.
58. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 64.
59. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*, pl. 93.
60. Contenau and Ghirshman, pl. 78.
61. Layard, pls. 26, 49; W. Orthmann, *Der Alte Orient, Propyläen Kunstgeschichte* 14 (Berlin, 1975), pls. 196, 204a; Layard, pl. 52.
62. Mallowan, fig. 205.
63. Winter: 5, 57, fig. 16.
64. Layard, pl. 26.
65. Orthmann, pl. 196.
66. *Ibid.*, pl. 202a.
67. Barnett, *Assyrian Palace Reliefs*, pl. 161.
68. Layard, pl. 27; Orthmann, pl. 205.
69. Muscarella: 11, no. 6.
70. G. Azarpay, *Uartian Art and Artifacts* (Berkeley, 1968), pl. 25.
71. Winter: 20–21.
72. Layard, pl. 28.
73. F. James, "Chariot Fittings from Late Bronze Age Beth Shan," in *Archaeology in the Levant: Essays for Kathleen Kenyon* (Warminster, U.K., 1978): 102–15—see 103; F. James, "Stone Knobs and Chariot Tracks," *Expedition* 16, 3 (1974): 31–39—see fig. 3.
74. Azarpay, pl. 27.
75. Winter.
76. Layard, pl. 27.
77. James, *Expedition* 16.
78. Dyson, 28th RAI.
79. Ghirshman, *Fouilles de Sialk*: 59; Boehmer; Dyson, *JNES* 24, 3.

# Return to Kotah

*Stuart Cary Welch*

Special Consultant in Charge of Islamic Art  
The Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG.1 Geese, simurgh, and arabesque. About 1700.  
Detail of ceiling, Chattr Mahal, Kotah Palace.



FIG. 2 Geese and dragons. Drawing, Kotah, about 1700.

Private collection. Photo: Michael Nedzewski.

**S**HORTLY before I was asked to participate in the symposium in honor of Charles K. Wilkinson, I had revisited a favorite place in India, the Rajput fort and palace complex at Kotah, to which I had gone especially to see the ceiling of the so-called Chhattar Mahal. These two rooms are within the vast building that had been favored by Maharao Chhattar Singh (r. 1866–89), one of the last avid patrons of painting among the Hara clan of Rajput princes.<sup>1</sup> Characteristically, Chhattar Singh deplored damaged works of art, and he seems to have instructed his artists to rework many of the wall paintings in the Chhattar Mahal. The murals of the inner chamber retain their seventeenth-century compositions down to the last figure, animal, or battlement, but are entirely repainted. In the outer room, where daylight seeps in from a charming courtyard, the murals are somewhat faded and retouched.

The ceiling I had come to see is in a comparably “improved” state. Nevertheless, its surging composition of simurghs in combat with geese, framed by a lively arabesque, quickened my eye on this visit as it had when I first came upon it in 1974. From the moment I first saw the painting it was apparent that the original design and execution were by the greatest of a long line of Kotah artists, the nameless genius I have come to think of as the Kotah Master. This exciting work of art—perhaps the greatest of its kind in the Rajput canon—inspired thoughts in keeping with the multiple art-historical worlds of my friend Charles K. Wilkinson, whose careers have included painting, archaeology, and curatorships in both ancient Near Eastern and Islamic art.

In honor of Charles’s varied interests, I donned art-historical seven-league boots in order to trace some of the elements of the Kotah ceiling, of which we reproduce a large detail that measures about four by five feet in the original (Fig. 1). One is at once struck by the dynamism of the composition, the calligraphic sweep of the draftsmanship, and the artist’s talent not only for capturing the gestures and forms of flying birds, but also for expressing their untamed essences in a highly sophisticated ornamental design. This wounded masterpiece sparks a vivid series of comparisons. Its swooping birds, for instance, recall a small brush drawing on paper of geese and dragons attributable to the same hand (Fig. 2).<sup>2</sup> In drawing it, the artist deftly arced his fingers and wrist in strokes that are small-scale equivalents of the grand motions of his whole arm and body required to execute the ceiling. Whether applied to a small or large area, the same mentality was excitedly at work. The Kotah Master’s artistic fervor is also evident in the dragon-like heads of two elephants locked in combat, perhaps his most compellingly ecstatic drawing (Fig. 3),<sup>3</sup> and in his best-known painting, of Rao Ram Singh I of Kotah (r. 1686–1708) pursuing a rhinoceros (Fig. 4).<sup>4</sup>

The Kotah Master’s more lyrical and romantic mood is seen in a portrait of Rao Jagat Singh of Kotah (r. 1658–70; Fig. 5).<sup>5</sup> The brave and elegant prince occupies a throne that seems silhouetted against the full moon, but is actually the round platform mounted in the center of a superb formal garden. Three flirtatious girls attend this resting lion’s whims. Sparkling fountains, helter-skelter bursts of



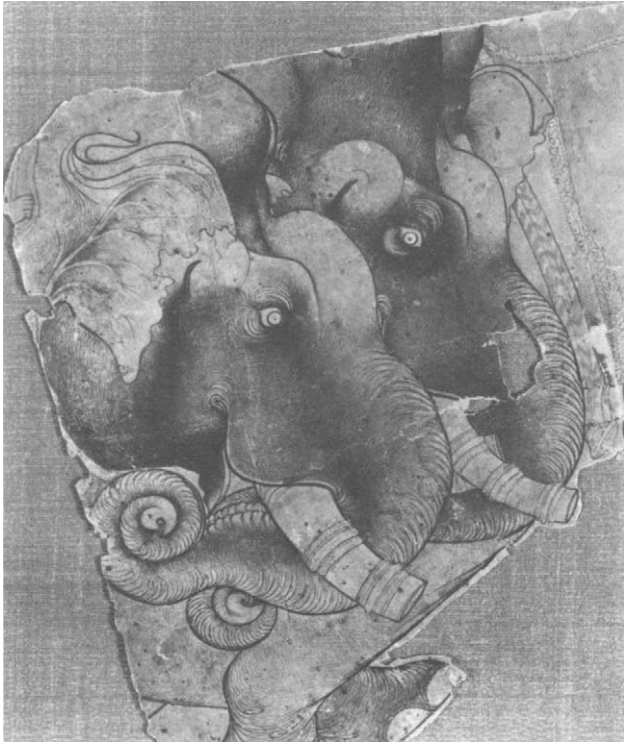


FIG. 3 Elephants in combat. Drawing, Kotah, late seventeenth century.

Private collection. Photo: Michael Nedzewski.

OPPOSITE:

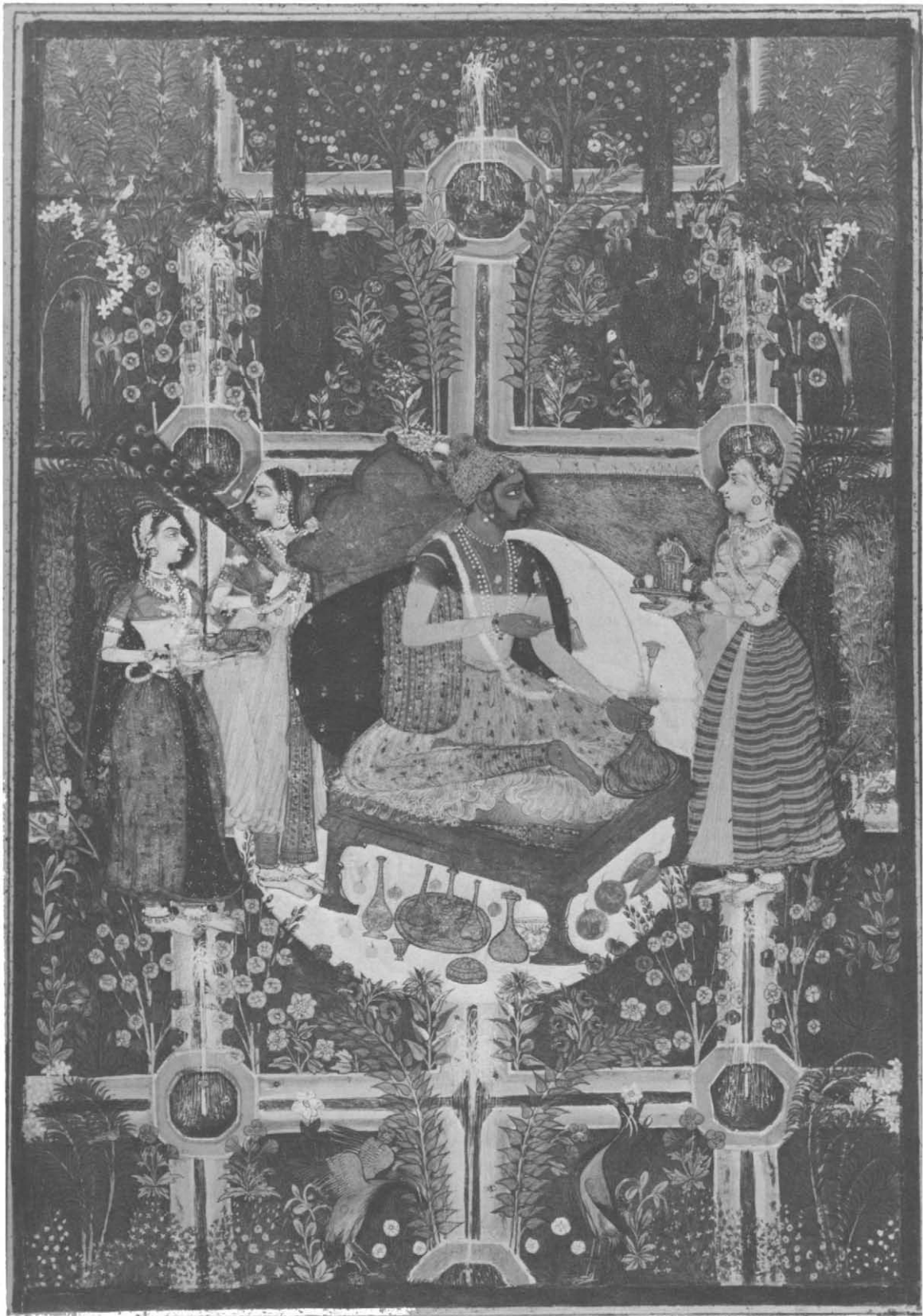
FIG. 5 Rao Jagat Singh of Kotah. Kotah, about 1670.

Private collection. Photo: Michael Nedzewski.

FIG. 4 Rao Ram Singh I of Kotah pursuing a rhinoceros. Kotah, about 1695.

Private collection. Photo: A. C. Cooper.





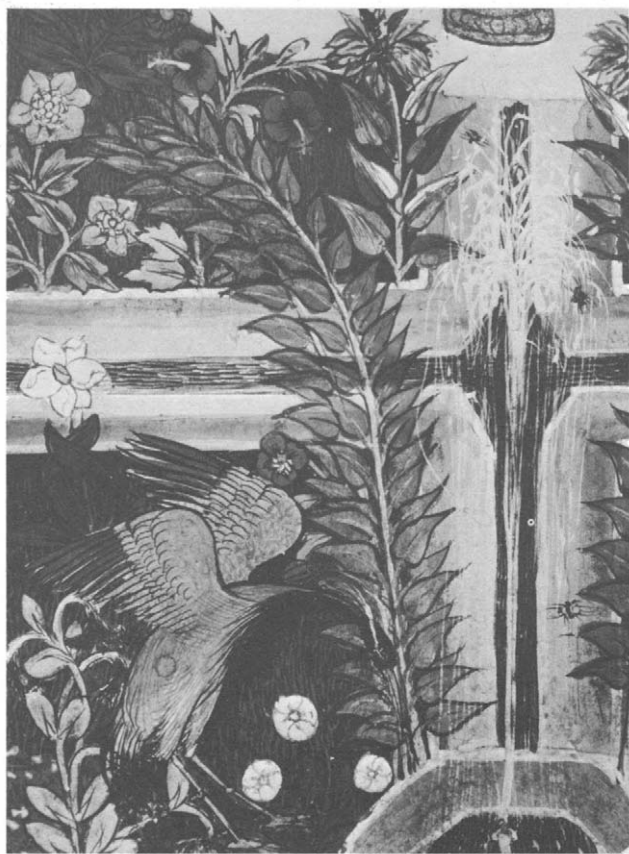


FIG. 6 The impassioned crane. Detail of Fig. 5.

flowers, and a pair of sarus cranes are placed within the grid of the garden plots in a sophisticated exploration of symmetrical geometry and freely organic forms. Perhaps the artist was consciously contrasting the Rao's active and quiescent moods, which he also symbolized in the cranes, one of which is calmly observant, while the other stretches his wings with aggressive passion (Fig. 6).<sup>6</sup>

As usual, history is crucial to art-historical speculation. In the seventeenth century the Kotah house split off from the Hara dynasty of Bundi. Although this did not occur officially until A. D. 1625, when the Kotah state was recognized by the Mughal emperor, the first Kotah ruler, Rao Madho Singh, was born in 1565, and, already at fourteen, "he displayed that daring intrepidity which gave him the title of Raja, and [made] Kotah with its three hundred and sixty

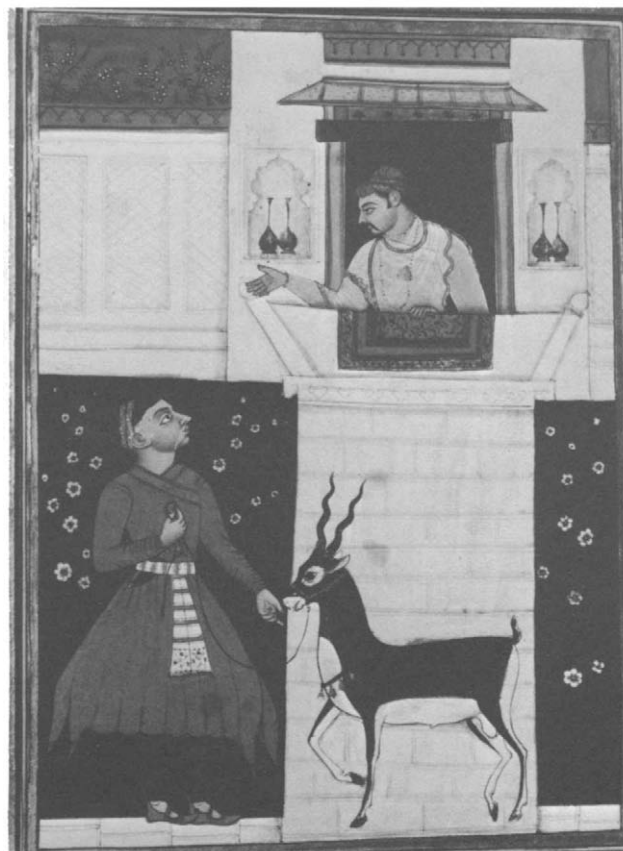


FIG. 7 Rao Madho Singh of Kotah receiving a courtier. Kotah, about 1620.

Collection of Sri Gopi Krishna Kanoria.

townships. . . independent of his father."<sup>7</sup> In all likelihood, this young prince, who lived until 1630, enjoyed all the prerogatives and activities of Rajput rulers well before 1625. He would have maintained his own court and *zenana* (harem) in his fort for wives and children, and he would have hunted, waged war, worshiped, and patronized craftsmen, musicians, and painters.<sup>8</sup> His likeness appears framed by a palace window, in a small picture in which he receives a courtier with a tame black buck (Fig. 7). This strong, broadly composed miniature is among the earliest known Kotah pictures, datable to about 1620.<sup>9</sup> Stylistically it is similar to a larger and more ambitious series of illustrations of a Hindu epic of the life of Lord Krishna, the *Bhagavata Purana*. Now in the Government Museum at Kotah, to which it was given by the Kotah Maharao, in the past it has been

cautiously dated to about 1640—too late, we believe, by about fifteen years. In a miniature showing an ascetic before an enthroned ruler, the latter can be identified as another portrait of Madho Singh (Fig. 8). In style neither this nor the painting of 1620 reveal any marked affinity to those we have seen by the Kotah Master. Rather, these Kotah “primitives” stem from the so-called popular Mughal idiom, which spread through the ateliers of the Rajput princes during the reigns of Akbar (1556–1605) and his son Jahangir (r. 1605–27).<sup>10</sup> After 1605, when the

connoisseurly Emperor Jahangir drastically “weeded out” the artists of the imperial workshops, many former court artists found employment in the bazaar at Agra, where they turned out manuscripts, portraits, and whatever else was marketable in a cursory version of the imperial mode. Their patrons, who ranged from priests to wealthy merchants and courtiers, not only bought miniatures and manuscripts, but, if they could afford to, hired painters for their own workshops. Thus one finds many elements of the Agra commercial style in such pictures

FIG. 8  
An ascetic before an enthroned ruler.  
Kotah, about 1625.

Government Museum, Kotah. From M. C. Beach,  
*Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota* (Ascona, Switzerland, 1974).





FIG. 9  
Rao Bhoj Singh of  
Bundi slaying a lion.  
Kotah, about 1720.

Private collection. Photo:  
Michael Nedzewski.

FIG. 10  
The wounded lion. De-  
tail of Fig. 9.





FIG. 11 Procession of Sultan 'Abdullah Qutb Shah of Golconda. Golconda, mid-seventeenth century.

Prince of Wales Museum of Western India, Bombay, Gift of Sir Akbar Hydari. From S. Kramrisch, *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan* (London, 1937).

as that of Madho Singh, as well as in paintings from Mewar, Bikaner, Bundi, and other centers.<sup>11</sup> In the Kotah Museum picture and the miniature of 1620, however, there is already evidence of a special Kotah flavor, a boldly heightened intensity, fresh lyricism, and plethora of details of costume and setting peculiar to the Kotah milieu.

We now return to the Kotah Master, to see one of his latest and most compelling works—a lion hunt in which an ancestor of the Kotah house, Rao Bhoj Singh of Bundi (r. 1588–1607), with the grace of a ballet dancer, slays a monstrous, but equally elegant, lion (Figs. 9, 10).<sup>12</sup> Datable to the early years of the eighteenth century, this large, richly tinted drawing, in which only the red-orange sky and Bhoj Singh himself are touched with opaque pigments, is as forcible and spirited as the master's earlier works. Like his elephants, people, birds, simurgh, and dragons, the lions here seem empowered with primal energy. Even more than before, the artist has transformed natural shapes, such as the lion's conchlike ear, hook claws, and his shillelagh of a paw into forms that are simultaneously credible, delightful to the eye, and potently expressive. As a composer, too, he has achieved new flights of inventiveness, as in the lunging diagonals of foliage that propel the lion like some great rocket through the dense jungle, until he is stopped dead by Bhoj Singh's arrow.

Although it is clear that the Kotah Master was an artist of great stature, in perfect creative harmony with his appreciative, stimulating patrons, Jagat Singh and Ram Singh, one wonders how such an

artistic flowering came about. The master's calligraphic flourishes, subtle but forceful overall design, and perfectly controlled palette set the tone for the most draftsmanly school of Rajasthani painting, which thrived from about 1670 until the end of the nineteenth century. History and visual evidence again combine enlighteningly. Jagat Singh, whose portrait by the master (see Fig. 5) marks the change from the comparatively simple style of Madho Singh's pictures (Figs. 7, 8) to the far more accomplished and sophisticated manner, spent many years in the Deccan as a Mughal *mansabdar* (commander) of two thousand horsemen. With exceptional discernment, the Kotah prince apparently hired his virtual artistic amanuensis in the Deccan; stylistic evidence strongly suggests that the artist had been trained at the court of the Sultan of Golconda, 'Abdullah Qutb Shah (r. 1626–72).

A remarkable procession, painted on cloth and measuring almost twelve by three feet, shows the Golconda sultan riding a state elephant and accompanied by a great entourage (Fig. 11).<sup>13</sup> Sadly for 'Abdullah, the sultanates of the Deccan had long been tempting prizes to the Mughals. Akbar was keen to take them in the late sixteenth century, and by 1636 Golconda was an imperial tributary, albeit slow in making its payments. Matters were brought to a head during 'Abdullah's reign, when Mir Jumla, an Iranian merchant-adventurer, greatly enriched by trading in Golconda diamonds, was appointed chief minister by the Sultan. Ruthlessly ambitious, he conquered a large part of the Karnatak in his own

name, thereby achieving increased power and independence. Feeling threatened, 'Abdullah tried to control him by arresting his son, a move Mir Jumla countered by plotting with Emperor Shah Jahan (r. 1628–57) and his effectively soldierly son, Aurangzeb, who then declared war on Golconda. Led by Aurangzeb's son Prince Muhammad Sultan, the Mughal armies promptly attacked Hyderabad in 1656, and Aurangzeb himself led the siege of Golconda Fort. Golconda was about to fall when Shah Jahan, influenced by his eldest son, Dara Shukoh, rescinded his order. Outraged, Aurangzeb made the best of a frustrating episode by arranging for Muhammad Sultan to marry a Golconda princess, with the promise from 'Abdullah that Muhammad

would be appointed his heir. Traitorous Mir Jumla was rewarded by being named Mughal prime minister.

Golconda survived until 1687, when Aurangzeb, Mughal emperor since 1658, finally fulfilled his long-standing ambition to annex it.<sup>14</sup> Inasmuch as Rao Jagat had died in 1670, two years before 'Abdullah Qutb Shah, he did not share in the imperial victory. Although he may have served at the attack on Hyderabad or the siege of Golconda, he is likely to have met his Golconda-trained artist at Aurangabad, not far from Daulatabad Fort, the center of Mughal power in the Deccan. As a result of the Mughal incursions and the rise of Mahratta power under Shivaji, the wealth and might of the Deccani sultan-

FIG. 12 The sultan's state elephants and an attendant. Detail of Fig. 11.



FIG. 13 Inhabited arabesque. Tinted drawing, Golconda, late sixteenth century.



Jagdish and Kamla Mittah Museum, Hyderabad.

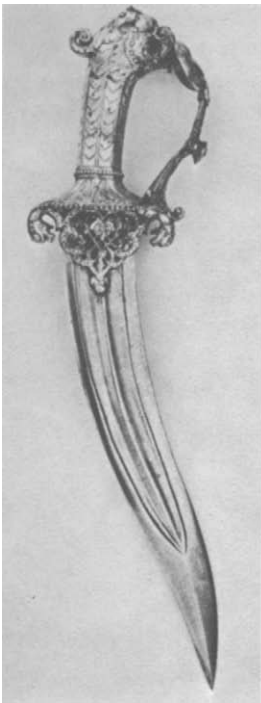


FIG. 14 Dagger. Gilt bronze. Golconda, about 1600.  
Formerly collection of Howard Ricketts, London.



FIG. 15 A hunter in combat with a lion. Golconda, mid-sixteenth century.

ates was lessening. Talented craftsmen and artists, therefore, left such major artistic centers as Golconda and Bijapur to find patronage with the Mughal commanders.<sup>15</sup> Inasmuch as the Kotah Master's portrait of Jagat shows that he was a fully mature artist by 1670, one can assume that he was in his late forties when he painted Ram Singh pursuing a rhinoceros and that he may have been in his seventh decade when he portrayed Bhoj Singh slaying a lion in about 1720.

A detail of the procession of 'Abdullah Qutb Shah showing the ruler's and his fan bearer's elephants exemplifies the artistic tradition from which the Kotah artist emerged (Fig. 12). Less fiery than the Kotah elephants, 'Abdullah's animals are nevertheless outlined in a strikingly similar way, employing many of the same formulas. The smaller elephant is amusingly depicted "head on," a view often found in Kotah painting, but rare in that of other Rajput schools.<sup>16</sup> If this Golconda procession is somewhat staid and formal, these qualities should be associated with a particular phase also noted for its vivacity. A

very small tinted drawing of an inhabited arabesque can be assigned to Golconda during the late sixteenth century, when the mood was more vivacious (Fig. 13).<sup>17</sup> Spiritually it is far closer than the Golconda procession to the Kotah Master's fantastically charged draftsmanship, returning us to the world of the ceiling in the Chattar Mahal or to the demoniac elephants in combat (see Fig. 3). Its dragons and simurghs (rarer in non-Kotah Rajput art than frontal baby elephants!) underscore the Kotah Master's point of origin. They are typical of Golconda, where the Kotah artist must have learned their anatomy, which he twisted into a humorous visual pretzel in the sketch of fighting dragons illustrated above (see Fig. 2).<sup>18</sup>

The visionary, dragonish force brought to Kotah art by Rao Jagat's artist is also apparent in two other examples of early Golconda work. The first is a gilt-bronze dagger of about 1600, the hilt of which is formed by a lion-like monster biting the neck of a simurgh (Fig. 14).<sup>19</sup> The second is a miniature of a brave hunter stabbing a fierce lion (Fig. 15).<sup>20</sup> This





FIG. 16 Pair of lions in a landscape. Turkman, Tabriz, about 1485.

Topkapi Palace Museum Library, Istanbul (album H 2153).

forceful picture, in which both man and lion are drawn to emphasize muscular strain and horror, and the flowering stalks burst with Kotah-like animal vitality, can be assigned to Golconda during the middle of the sixteenth century. It seems to look ahead to the Kotah rhinoceros hunt, in which the tall grass appears to be blown by the same wind, and it also looks backward to one of the most spectacular centers of Islamic painting, that of Tabriz in western Iran under the Turkmans. A pair of curvaceously amiable

FIG. 17 A lion in tall grass. Detail of Fig. 18.



lions reclining beneath a flowering tree in a notably orientalizing landscape was painted in about 1485 for Sultan Yaqub (r. 1478–90), one of the last great patrons of his dynasty (Fig. 16).<sup>21</sup> Not too surprisingly, considering the pictorial evidence, the founder of Golconda, Sultan-Quli Qutub' al Mulk (r. 1518–43) was also a Turkman from Tabriz; and one can assume that he favored the Turkman style of painting. In all likelihood he employed artists from Tabriz. He was descended from the Qara-Qoyunlu (“Black Sheep”) Turkmans, who were treated particularly badly by Sultan Yaqub, whose Aq-Qoyunlu (“White Sheep”) ancestor had defeated them. Sultan-Quli, therefore, was sent to India by his family to make his fortune. There, in the late fifteenth century, he entered the service of the Bahmanid sultan of Bidar, who eventually appointed him *tarafdar* (governor) of Tilingana, with headquarters at the great fort of Golconda. After the death in 1518 of Sultan-Quli's Bahmanid patron, Golconda became a separate state.

Tabriz had been a major school of painting under the Mongols as well as the Turkmans. It was a vital center of trade, both with Europe and China, and its patrons and artists not only saw, but welcomed, foreign motifs and ideas, which they adapted to their purposes. In Turkman art, Chinese dragons and phoenixes were drawn with additional verve, Hindu *sadhus* (religious ascetics) became darker and more elongated, and heartily striding European halberdiers, copied from engravings, were costumed with extra flourish.<sup>22</sup>

The lion in tall grass (Fig. 17) is of the same artistic family as the benign Turkman lions (see Fig. 16), the Golconda victim of stabbing (see Fig. 15), and the hunted Kotah beast (see Fig. 10). Although this passage could be mistaken for Kotah work, it was painted by the great Safavi artist Sultan-Muhammad, who worked at Tabriz, where he responded to the artistic legacy of the Turkmans as though to a great revelation. In fact, his growling animal stalks a very small corner of the foreground in a miniature of about 1533 painted for Shah Tahmasp's book of kings, a manuscript known as the Houghton Shahnameh in honor of its most recent owner (Fig. 18).<sup>23</sup> Fifteen or so years earlier, Sultan-Muhammad had painted a still more Turkman-like miniature, perhaps intended for the same



FIG. 18 Faridun crossing the River Dijleh, by Sultan-Muhammad. Tabriz, about 1533. From the shahnameh of Shah Tahmasp.

Private collection. Photo: Frank White.

manuscript when it was commissioned for Shah Tahmasp's father, Shah Isma'il (r. 1501–24), the founder of the Safavi state (Figs. 19, 20).<sup>24</sup> In his dramatic depiction of the Iranian hero Rustam's horse, Rakhsh, protecting his sleeping master from a lion, we meet another magnificent beast, whose jaws close on the heroic horse's leg with an almost audible crunch. Sultan-Muhammad set his empathic drama in a lushly enchanted forest, which brings to mind Turkman prototypes as well as the tropical flora of Golconda and Kotah.

Having leaped from the early eighteenth-century Kotah ceiling back to sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Golconda and thence to fifteenth- and sixteenth-century Tabriz, we cannot resist bounding yet further through time and space in honor of Charles Wilkinson. From painted lions to geese and

dragons, all the works of art we have seen are imbued with the elemental might so abundant in the traditions of the ancient Near East, which has been Charles's main concern. Inasmuch as artistic styles are usually perpetuated in either of two ways—through being handed down in ateliers from generation to generation or through being sparked by the rediscovery of the works of art themselves—it does not seem excessive to find links between Assyrian or Achaemenid reliefs, such as the one from the audience hall of Darius and Xerxes at Persepolis (Figs. 21, 22) and the equally virile idioms discussed and illustrated above. Although the Kotah Master was probably unaware of Persepolis and Tabriz or even of Sultan-Muhammad, his artistic contribution would be far less marvelous had it not flowed from the same watershed.

FIG. 19 The lion attacked by Rustam's horse, Rakhsh. Detail of Fig. 20.





FIG. 20 Rustam sleeping while Rakhsh fights the lion, by Sultan-Muhammad. Tabriz, about 1515-22.

British Museum, London (1948.12.11.023).



FIG. 21 A lion attacking a bull. Detail of a relief from the audience hall of Darius and Xerxes, Persepolis. Achaemenid, about 500 B.C.

## NOTES

1. I am grateful to Rajkumar Brijraj Singh of Kotah for his hospitality and for helping me to see Kotah Palace on this and other occasions.

2. First published in S. C. Welch, *Indian Drawings and Painted Sketches* (New York, 1976), no. 50.

3. For a related drawing by the same hand, see *ibid.*, no. 44.

4. This painting was first published, in color, in S. E. Lee, *Rajput Painting* (New York, 1960), cover and no. 36.

5. For other portraits of this ruler, see M. C. Beach, *Rajput Painting at Bundi and Kota* (Ascona, Switzerland, 1974), figs. 68, 69.

6. It is also possible that the active crane symbolizes the passionate Rao and the other represents his coy beloved. The flowers are identical to, though far more abundant than, examples in Golconda paintings, as, for example, in a portrait of Hazrat Sayyid Shah Raju, the religious preceptor

of Abu'l Hasan Tana Shah. See V. Raghaven, *Srngaramanjari of Saint Akbar Shah* (Hyderabad, 1951), pl. C.

7. J. T. Tod, *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan*, vol. 3 (London, 1920): 1521.

8. A traditional likeness of this dynamic member of the Kshatriya caste, showing his strong facial angles, straight nose, and sinuous moustaches, has been published by Thomas Holbein Hendley (*The Rulers of India and the Chiefs of Rajputana* [London, 1897], pl. 11, 1).

9. I am grateful to my friend Gopi Krishna Kanoria for permission to publish this miniature.

10. For a discussion of the popular Mughal idiom, see P. Chandra, "Ustad Salivahana and the Development of Popular Mughal Art," *Lalit Kala* 8 (1960): 25-46.

11. This style spread in a pattern consistent with the Rajput courts' relationships to the imperial court. Inasmuch as Amber and Bikaner, for instance, were related to the impe-

rial family by marriage, and their princes served the Mughals, their arts were strongly influenced by Mughal example. Secular subjects, however, tended to be more Mughal in style than religious ones, which often remained traditional when portraits or hunting scenes showed strong Mughal influence. In all likelihood, "popular Mughal" workshops existed at such centers as Ajmer as well as at Agra.

12. First published in S. C. Welch and M. C. Beach, *Gods, Thrones, and Peacocks* (New York, 1966), no. 31. Since the time of this publication, we have assigned the painting an earlier date. A companion picture, depicting a boar hunt, is in a private collection in England.

13. First published in S. Kramrisch, *A Survey of Painting in the Deccan* (London, 1937), pls. 16–19. This exceptionally large picture was painted on cotton, a technique also employed by the Kotah Master. Several fragments of a comparably large hunting scene from his hand have survived.

14. For the history of Golconda, see H. K. Sherwani, *History of the Qutb Shahi Dynasty* (New Delhi, 1974).

15. During the second half of the seventeenth century, the impact of Deccani painting was strong in many schools of north Indian painting, especially at Bikaner, Kotah, and Kishangarh, but traces of it can be identified as far away as the Punjab hills, and even the Mughal centers responded to its appeal.

16. A comical picture containing such a view was published by P. Chandra in his *Bundi Painting* (New Delhi, 1959), pl. 8. For another published example, see S. C.

Welch, *A Flower from Every Meadow* (New York, 1973), no. 22. Both miniatures can be assigned to the leading follower of the Kotah Master, whose name is also unknown. Conceivably, he was a member of the same family, which was probably Muslim.

17. I am grateful to the Jagdish and Kamla Mittah Museum of Hyderabad for having allowed me to publish this marvelous drawing as pl. 28 in Welch, *Indian Drawings*.

18. The Kotah Master's many surviving drawings reveal him to have been wittily and occasionally earthily humorous, as in *A Feast*, a brush drawing from life, for which see *ibid.*, no. 46.

19. I am grateful to Howard Ricketts of London for allowing me to publish this remarkable object and to Robert Skelton for the suggestion of a Golconda provenance.

20. I was given the photograph of this miniature by a friend in India many years ago. The present location of the picture itself is unknown.

21. For the major study of this Turkman dynasty see J. E. Woods, *The Aquyunlu* (Minneapolis and Chicago, 1976).

22. For a study of Turkman painting, see M. B. Dickson and S. C. Welch, *The Houghton Shahnameh* (Cambridge, Mass., 1981): 15–26.

23. For a study of this manuscript and related material, see *ibid.*

24. This miniature is discussed and illustrated in color in S. C. Welch, *Wonders of the Age* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), no. 2.



FIG. 22 Lion mask. Detail of Fig. 21.

