

The Metropolitan Museum of Art Bulletin

Summer 2010





DISCOVERING THE ART OF THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

Archaeological Excavations Supported by
The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931–2010

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The Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York

Director's Note

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Front cover: Excavations at Nippur, Iraq, 1961, view from the southwest with the ziggurat in the background (see pages 23-27). Inside front cover: Openwork plaque with a ram-headed sphinx, from Rooms SW 11/12, Fort Shalmaneser. Phoenician style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia (see pages 15-21); Neo-Assyrian period, 9th-8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 3 1/8 in. (7.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1964 (64.37.7). Inside back cover: Four wall panels with vegetal motifs (detail), from El Ma'aridh. Ctesiphon, Mesopotamia (see pages 12-15); Sasanian period, ca. 6th century A.D. Stucco, h. 2 1/2 in. (64.77 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.5-8).

The portions of the text not followed by initials were a collaborative effort of the staff of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art.

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The origins of many aspects of civilization lie in the ancient Near East. The collection housed in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art at the Metropolitan Museum includes works of art that were made over a span of more than 8,500 years in a vast region that stretches from the Mediterranean Sea to the Oxus River in Central Asia and from the steppes of Eurasia to the Arabian Peninsula. These objects, with their great variety of forms and styles, offer a glimpse of peoples, cities, kingdoms, and empires that flourished over thousands of years.

Archaeology is the backbone of the study of antiquity, providing a deeper understanding of all aspects of ancient civilizations through the material culture revealed by excavation. This issue of the *Bulletin* chronicles the excavations the Metropolitan Museum has supported at thirty-five different sites in the Near East over nearly eighty years, from 1931 to the present day. That this history should appear in the Metropolitan's *Bulletin* is only fitting, as it was the *Bulletin* that published the first reports from the ancient site of Ctesiphon, in Iraq, in the 1930s and for decades relayed information about the progress of Museum-sponsored fieldwork to Museum members.

The works of art that the Museum has acquired through archaeological excavations are among the most valuable in the collection in terms of their potential to illuminate our shared history. They entered the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art through the excavations supported by the Metropolitan. These excavations represent the work of men and women devoted to the exploration of ancient civilizations and to discovery in the purest sense. Such work is driven by the desire to understand these extraordinary cultures through research into the artifacts left behind, allowing critical links to be made between objects and cultures. This is also the very *raison d'être* of this institution.

We wish to express our appreciation to The Adelaide Milton de Groot Fund, in memory of the de Groot and Hawley families, which generously supports the Metropolitan's archaeological efforts and has helped to make this publication possible.

Thomas P. Campbell

Director, The Metropolitan Museum of Art

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* Dates refer to the years of Metropolitan Museum support







ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE DEPARTMENT OF ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN ART

JOAN ARUZ

And Cush begat Nimrod: he began to be a mighty one in the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord. . . . And the beginning of his kingdom was Babel, and Erech, and Accad, and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. Out of that land went forth Asshur, and builded Nineveh, and the city Rehoboth and Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah: the same is a great city.
—Genesis 10:8–12

Passages like this one from Genesis, reinforced by writings on the geography of the Holy Land, inspired early American missionaries to travel to the Middle East to bear witness to the veracity of the Bible. Their interest in Mesopotamia was further stimulated by archaeological discoveries, most prominently those of the British explorer Austen Henry Layard. By the mid-nineteenth century Layard had captured the imagination of Victorian society with accounts of his work at the Assyrian site of Nimrud, ancient Kalhu (Calah). The spectacular sculptures discovered at Nimrud—many of which had already been transported by sea to London and placed on view at the British Museum—spurred a movement to secure monumental images of the Assyrian king and his winged attendants for seminaries and colleges concentrated mainly in New England, notably Dartmouth, Williams, Yale, Amherst, and Bowdoin. Many were eventually acquired by the Metropolitan Museum, indirectly from the early travelers or from the collection Layard transferred to England. These sculptures now form the

central architectural focus of the Museum's galleries of ancient Near Eastern art, re-creating an Assyrian audience hall (fig. 1, and see figs. 29, 30).

The early exploration of Nimrud and other sites in Mesopotamia had a profound effect on the academic world, which eventually led to the formation of the field of ancient Near Eastern studies and to the creation in 1932 of the Metropolitan's Department of Near Eastern Art, which then encompassed both the ancient and Islamic phases of the art history of the region. Mesopotamian clay documents from the famed Cesnola Collection and others acquired in London were already part of the Museum's inventory when it opened its doors on Fifth

1. Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery for Assyrian Art, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 2010. The gallery re-creates an Assyrian audience hall with reliefs from the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Nimrud, the ancient city of Kalhu, near present-day Mosul in northern Iraq.



2. Installation of Assyrian sculpture in the Great Hall, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1933



3. Workmen clearing a trench behind the Taq-i Kisra, Ctesiphon, Iraq. Joint Expedition of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931–32

Avenue in 1880, just a few decades after scholars had succeeded in deciphering the ancient cuneiform script in which the documents were written. These holdings were further enriched by the purchase of a much larger group of seals and tablets from the Reverend William Hayes Ward, who under the aegis of the Archaeological Institute of America led the Catharine Lorillard Wolfe Expedition to Babylonia in 1884. This was also the year in which the first Assyrian relief entered the Museum's collection, to be followed in 1917 and 1932 by substantial gifts of Assyrian monumental architectural sculptures. Their display in the Great Hall in 1933 (fig. 2) marked a turning point in the presentation of the arts that formed the foundation of Western civilization. The human-headed bull and lion colossal gateway figures, or *lamassu*, installed next to a cast of the Olympian Apollo, were exhibited not as pieces of biblical history but rather, in the words of Museum director Herbert Winlock, as "a branch on the family tree of art and culture."

By 1933 Winlock had already played a major role in the promotion of ancient Near Eastern archaeology at the Metropolitan. In 1931, while still head of the Museum's Egyptian Department and director of its Egyptian Expedition, he had recommended that the Metropolitan join the German State Museums in excavating the important Parthian and Sasanian site of Ctesiphon on the east bank of the Tigris River (fig. 3). Creating a model that persisted for many decades, the Museum sent

curatorial staff from the Department of Near Eastern Art and provided funding, receiving in return a portion of the finds. The arrangement has provided an invaluable resource, allowing the Museum to present an array of finds from Ctesiphon in the context of an architectural setting, represented by impressive stucco reliefs and other sculpture. Partage, as the practice of dividing archaeological finds was called, also brought to the Metropolitan a substantial collection of objects from other regions, such as those from the Levant that came as gifts from the Colt family, who had supported and participated in British excavations at Tell ed-Duweir (ancient Lachish) in Israel.

Once a new antiquities law ended the French monopoly on excavations in Iran, the Metropolitan expanded its activities there and embarked on expeditions to Qasr-i Abu Nasr and then to Nishapur in the 1930s and 1940s, later donating expedition equipment to the local authorities. In exchange, the Museum received a range of objects dating from the prehistoric to the Sasanian and Islamic periods from these and other well-known sites such as Susa and Persepolis.

The 1950s marked one of the most important periods in the Museum's involvement in archaeological exploration in the Near East. The new excavations at the site of Nimrud under Sir Max E. L. Mallowan of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq, which began in 1951, drew attention to the significance of ancient Near Eastern

4. Tribute bearer with an oryx, a monkey, and a leopard skin, from Fort Shalmaneser, Room NE 2, south wall niche. Phoenician style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 5 ³/₈ in. (13.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1960 (60.145.11)



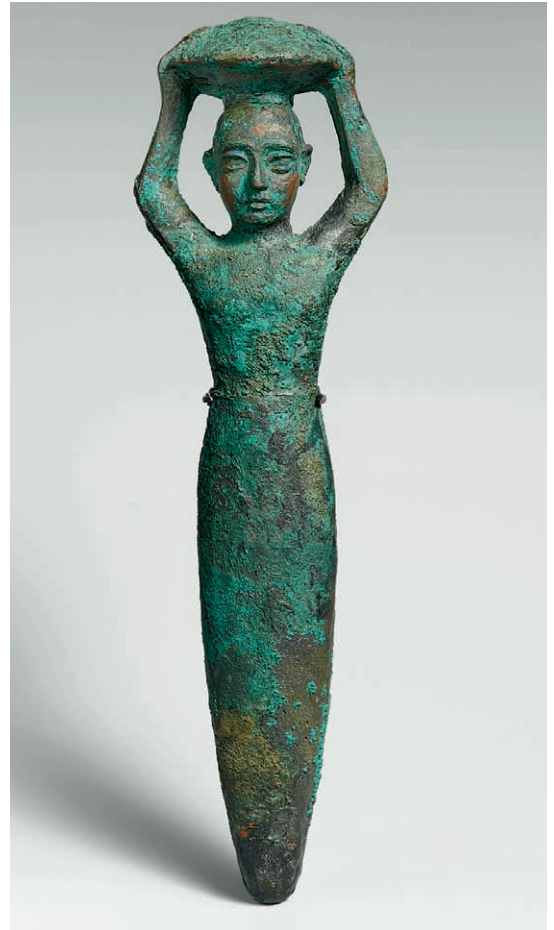
studies. Just five years later, a new Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art was created at the Metropolitan, for the Museum had already begun to receive a portion of the spectacular discoveries shared by the Iraq Museum in Baghdad and the British Museum. The objects included the famous Nimrud ivories (see figs. 4, 16–22, 24–27), as well as superb stone vessels, clay figurines and pottery, shell ornaments, architectural elements, and seals and tablets from the time of rulers such as Ashurnasirpal, Sennach-

erib, and Ashurbanipal. Another fruitful collaboration came a few years later when the Metropolitan participated in the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago's expedition to the holy city of Nippur (figs. 5, 6). The collection was immeasurably enriched by the Museum's share of finds from these two sites, which represent temple and palace traditions from the Early Dynastic period of the third millennium B.C. to the Assyrian era of the ninth to the seventh century B.C.



5. A workman removing a statue from a foundation deposit dating to the Ur III period (ca. 2100–2000 B.C.). Inanna Temple excavations, Nippur, Iraq, 1956

6. Foundation figure of king Shulgi of Ur carrying a basket, from the Inanna Temple, Level IV. Nippur, Mesopotamia; Ur III period, ca. 2100–2000 B.C. Copper, h. 12¼ in. (31.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.41.1)



One last expedition, in 1959, was undertaken under the partage system: the Hasanlu Project in the Solduz Valley of northwestern Iran, conducted under the direction of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania and the Archaeological Service of Iran (see fig. 7). Objects from Hasanlu and other sites in the region truly anchor the Metropolitan's display of the arts of Iran from the Bronze and Early Iron Ages and demonstrate their connections with the Assyrian world. Although fieldwork ended in 1978, department staff members have been involved in ongoing academic studies of the extraordinary range of materials uncovered by the Hasanlu expedition.

The Metropolitan Museum's strong commitment to archaeological exploration in the Near East has survived the changes to the antiquities laws that no longer support the transfer of objects to foreign lands. In the decades following the Museum's initial involvement at Hasanlu, it has supported projects in western and Central Asia, in Turkey, Iraq, Yemen, and Turkmenistan, and, most recently,

at the sites of Tell Brak, Tell Mozan, and Umm el-Marra in Syria. All in all, the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art has participated in and provided funding for work at thirty-five sites (see map, pages 4–5, and fig. 49), which are arranged in this *Bulletin* first by region and then chronologically according to the dates the Museum supported the excavations. The displays in the galleries have been further enriched through an active program of securing long-term loans of scientifically excavated works of art, notable among them spectacular copper ritual objects from the Nahal Mishmar Treasure that belong to the Israel Museum, a glazed brick panel depicting a dragon (*mushhushshu*) from the Ishtar Gate in Babylon that is part of the collection of the Vorderasiatisches Museum in Berlin, and two ivory rhyta from Parthian Nisa that are from the State Museum of Oriental Art, Moscow.

Archaeologically excavated materials are among the most precious in the collection, forming the basis for the display of the history of ancient Near Eastern art over its

long span of more than 8,500 years, from the Neolithic through the Sasanian period, and extending from the Mediterranean to the Oxus and beyond. Their discovery, study, and presentation have been an integral part of the mission of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art and have provided enrichment for scholars and visitors alike, allowing a glimpse into the great traditions that lie at the roots of modern society.

UNCOVERING THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST THROUGH ARCHAEOLOGY

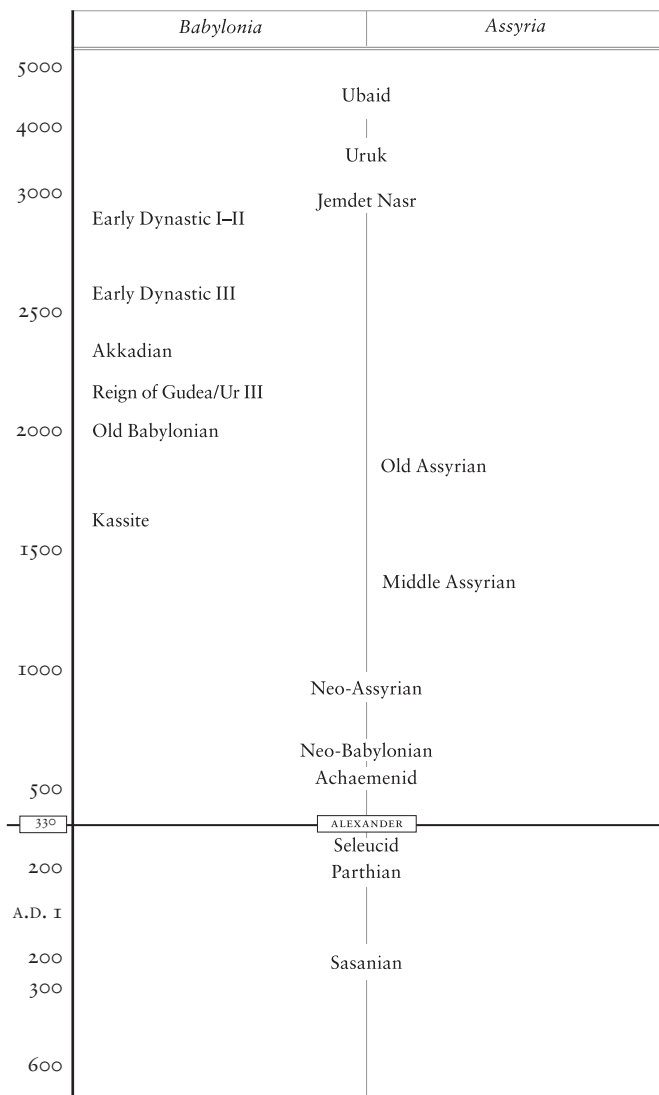
The cities of the ancient Near East were built primarily of mud brick. Each generation repaired or rebuilt their settlements on top of the rubble of earlier buildings, creating layers of debris. After cities were abandoned, rain, wind, and occasional flooding gradually wore them down, so that they now resemble low hills or mounds (see fig. 7).

As archaeologists dig down into an ancient mound (called a *tell*, *tel*, *tal*, *höyük*, *choga*, or *tepe* in modern Near Eastern languages), they keep precise records of what they find in relation to stratigraphy—that is, the arrangement of the debris layers or levels they dig through (see fig. 31). Architectural remains and objects found in the stratum just below the surface are usually from the most recent period in time, with those in the next stratum being older. Excavating down to the lowest, or deepest, stratum allows archaeologists to form a full picture of the sequence of a site, the development of its material culture, and its relationships with other regions. Typologies created by analyzing the variations over time in the shape, material, style, and iconography of objects such as pottery and sculpture are powerful tools for dating artifacts and placing them in historical context. Interpretations of the ancient past continue to evolve and change, however, because of the dynamic nature of archaeology, with new discoveries being made all the time.



7. Excavations at Hasanlu, Iran. Joint Expedition of the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, the Archaeological Service of Iran, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, August 1962

MESOPOTAMIA



Mesopotamia, the land between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in modern-day Iraq, is the core of the ancient Near East. For five thousand years the region was a nexus for routes connecting the eastern Mediterranean and Egypt, Iran, the Indus Valley, and Central Asia. It was here in the fertile pastures and farmland between the rivers that urban civilizations began to develop in the Uruk period of the fourth millennium B.C. In the Early Dynastic period of the third millennium, southern Mesopotamia, later called Babylonia, was dominated by city-states. First unified under the Akkadian Empire that followed this period of regional rulers, southern Mesopotamia flourished again under the Ur III kings at the end of the millennium. During the second millennium B.C. Assyrians took power in the northern part of Mesopotamia, while Babylonia was ruled first by Amorite leaders such as Hammurabi of

Babylon and then by a dynasty perhaps of western Iranian origin called the Kassites. A regional collapse of ruling powers about 1200 B.C. was followed by a period when all of Mesopotamia was ruled by great empires, first the Assyrians and then the Babylonians. Mesopotamia would later be conquered by powers from beyond the region: the Iranian Achaemenids, Alexander the Great and the Macedonian Seleucids, and the Parthians from Iran and Central Asia. The Sasanians, an Iranian people who ruled from their great capital at Ctesiphon, were the last pre-Islamic Mesopotamian empire.

CTESIPHON

In the barren Mesopotamian landscape some twenty miles south of Baghdad a romantic ruin is all that remains of one of the marvels of the ancient world, the fabled palace of the Sasanian emperor Khusrau I in his capital, Ctesiphon (fig. 8). “My goal was Ctesiphon,” the famed English archaeologist Gertrude Bell wrote in 1911. “The huge fragment of the palace, which is all that remains of the Sassanian capital, [is] one of the most imposing ruins in the world. The great curtain of wall, the face of the right wing, rises stark and gaunt out of the desert, bearing upon its surface a shallow decoration of niches and engaged columns. . . . The gigantic vault, built over empty space without the use of centering beams, is one of the most stupendous creations of any age.”

For almost eight hundred years Ctesiphon flourished as the royal capital of the last two dynasties to rule the ancient Near East before the Islamic conquest. In 140 B.C. the Parthians, a seminomadic Iranian tribe, invaded Mesopotamia. They conquered Seleucia, the capital of the Seleucids founded by Seleucus, one of the successors of Alexander the Great. Seleucia was located on the west bank of the Tigris River about thirty-seven miles north of Babylon. On the east bank the Parthians built a garrison in a village named Ctesiphon. Seleucia continued to flourish as a commercial city, and it was only in A.D. 42, after a seven-year rebellion by its inhabitants, that the Parthian kings, the Arsacids, gave Ctesiphon the status of capital.

The struggle against the Roman Empire weakened the Parthian kingdom, and both Seleucia and Ctesiphon suffered devastating campaigns in the second century A.D. Arsacid rule eventually succumbed in A.D. 224 to the revolt of a vassal prince from Iran named Ardashir, who became the first king of a new Sasanian dynasty. Ardashir was crowned in A.D. 226 at Ctesiphon, which was confirmed as



8. Taq-i Kisra, the palace of king Khusrau I (r. 531–79), Ctesiphon, Iraq, view from the northeast. Joint Expedition of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931–32

the official capital. In the following centuries Ctesiphon flourished as one of the most important Sasanian centers. It spread well beyond its original boundary and became a metropolis consisting of a series of settlements along both banks of the Tigris, so that the area became known as *el-madain*, “the cities.” A Zoroastrian fire temple, a rabbinical academy, and two Christian churches attest the presence of different religious communities.

In the final phase of Sasanian rule Ctesiphon epitomized the splendor and the glory of the imperial power. King Khusrau I (reigned 531–79) built a new settlement there called Asbanbur (the Persian word for breeding stud), which included the royal stables, an aviary, and a game reserve (a Persian “paradise”) filled with ostriches, gazelles, tusked boars, lions, and bears. Close to the park was the royal palace, known as Taq-i Kisra, or the Throne of Khusrau. The palace, built of baked bricks, consisted of several buildings around a central courtyard. Its main feature was the legendary vaulted throne hall of the Sasanian emperor. The hall’s vast interior, more than 144 feet deep, was lavishly decorated with marble and glass mosaics and carpets made of silk and precious stones. Its parabolic barrel vault, the largest in the world built without centering, was 115 feet high and spanned 84 feet.

The long and glorious life of Ctesiphon ended in A.D. 637, when the city fell under the Muslim army of Sa’d bin Abi Waqqas. The story goes that the Muslim soldiers stopped to pray under the great vault of the Taq-i Kisra and that the crown of Khusrau was transferred to the Ka’aba in Mecca. Islamic settlers inhabited the spot

until it was finally destroyed in the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries by the invading hordes of Mongols under Timur (Tamerlane).

The first attempt to reconstruct the topography of Ctesiphon was made in the early nineteenth century by Claudius Rich, the British traveler and scholar who identified the ruins of the round city on the Tigris with Seleucia and the Taq-i Kisra with Ctesiphon. The first systematic excavations at the site were undertaken by an expedition in 1928–29 sponsored by the German Oriental Society and directed by Oscar Reuther. Work was resumed in 1931–32 by a joint expedition of the Staatliche Museen of Berlin and The Metropolitan Museum of Art led by Ernst Kühnel, director of the Islamic Art Department in Berlin, and F. Wachsmuth of the University of Marburg. The Metropolitan Museum was represented by Walter Hauser, a member of the Museum’s Egyptian Expedition, who served as field assistant, and Joseph M. Upton of the Department of Near Eastern Art, who was in charge of the classification of the finds. From 1964 on, an Italian archaeological mission worked at Seleucia and Ctesiphon—Veh Ardashir, conducting surveys, photogrammetry, and restoration that has been continued by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage.

The excavations in 1931–32, which employed about five hundred workmen, focused on the Taq-i Kisra area and on three different mounds on the east bank of the Tigris. Excavation of a mound east of Taq-i Kisra known in Arabic as Umm ez-Za’tir (Mother of Thyme) brought to light a large Sasanian house. The structure, built of

mud brick, was centered around a rectangular courtyard, with two vaulted halls, or *iwans*, opening on its east and west sides. Stuccoes decorated the *iwans* and the adjoining walls, while the other rooms were covered with gypsum plaster wash. The stucco reliefs found mostly in fragments in the house debris and in the Taq-i Kisra area (see fig. 9) were divided under the system of partage among the Iraq Museum in Baghdad, the Staatliche Museen in Berlin, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art.

In the ruins of the houses uncovered in a row of mounds called El Ma'aridh stretching north of the Taq-i Kisra, remains of columns originally decorated with stucco revealed the presence of porticoed vestibules opening onto a court. Besides vegetal and geometric patterns, the stuccoes portray nude female dancers and men playing harps and drinking. Fresco fragments as well as bronze pins, glass, terracotta figurines, and coins were also found at El Ma'aridh. South of Taq-i Kisra, a building within a large enclosure was unearthed in a mound known as Tell Dheheb (Hill of Gold). The walls were preserved to the extraordinary height of twenty feet, with small windows on the top. A cross and a pomegranate design in the stucco on the walls were evidence of a Christian presence.

The collection of stuccoes in the Metropolitan Museum offers extraordinary insight into the iconography and style of Sasanian architectural decoration and provides a unique glimpse into the palaces and fashionable houses of the Sasanian elite. The stucco decoration and the *ivan* typology are both of Parthian heritage, but the technique the Sasanians used was new. Instead of individually carving single stucco pieces, they employed molds to produce a series of panels with identical decoration. The traces of red and blue color that remain on some pieces give a hint of the polychrome surfaces that once decorated the interiors of the vaulted halls. Most of the panels were square; the large roundels decorated with radiating palmettes like the beautifully preserved example in the Museum's collection (fig. 10) were probably designed for palace decoration. The motifs on the panels fall into two main groups: floral elements such as pomegranates, rosettes, grapes, acorn leaves, palmettes, lotuses, grapevine scrolls, and undulating stems; and geometric motifs such as maeanders, lozenges, and circles, freely repeated and combined to produce an apparently endless variety of decoration. The origin of the motifs is to be found in the traditions of the ancient Near East, mostly in Assyria and Achaemenid Iran, and in the vocabulary of the Graeco-Roman world, known in the area because of the spread of Hellenism.

As is true in all forms of Sasanian art, animal motifs appear quite often on the stuccoes. The symbolic animals relate to royal imagery as well as to religion, mythology, and astrology. Divine apotropaic Zodiac figures are represented by real animals, such as rams, bulls, boars, and birds, or by fantastic creatures. At Ctesiphon small plaques with animal figures were set in a friezelike composition that ran along the inner walls of the *ivan*. Some of the plaques are rectangular like the one now in the Metropolitan that depicts a running bear in a schematic landscape of trees and mountains (fig. 11). Others are



9. Fragments of stucco roundels in situ, Taq-i Kisra, south building, Ctesiphon, Iraq. Joint Expedition of the Staatliche Museen, Berlin, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1931–32



10. Roundel with radiating palmettes. Ctesiphon, Mesopotamia; Sasanian period, ca. 6th century A.D. Stucco, diam. 42 in. (106.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.4)



11. Wall panel with a charging bear, from Umm ez-Za'tir. Ctesiphon, Mesopotamia; Sasanian period, ca. 6th century A.D. Stucco, h. 11 5/8 in. (29.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.23)

squares enclosing spiral- and pearl-bordered roundels (a pattern also typically used on silverware and textiles) like the one in the Museum that frames a guinea fowl (fig. 12), a favorite representation of the power of good in the symbolism of Zoroastrianism, the Sasanian national religion.

The few human figures in the stucco decoration at Ctesiphon—erotes and drinking youths and female dancers

probably related to Dionysiac themes—were derived from the Hellenistic-Roman repertoire. The rough workmanship on these figures is quite unlike the striking sharpness and perfection of the floral or geometric motifs. Beginning in the fifth century A.D., monograms became popular in Sasanian stuccoes. As with most Sasanian motifs, the groups of letters in Persian script, embellished with a crescent moon above a pair of wings encircled by a pearled roundel within a square plaque with palmettes at the corners (see fig. 13), must also have had symbolic meaning.

Sasanian stuccoes thus represent the merging and reconfiguration of elements from different traditions that created a new corpus of decoration. Aspects of these motifs were adopted by other cultures who often stressed their ornamental value while dismissing their original symbolic and religious significance. Islamic, Eastern Christian, and European medieval artists translated the Sasanian grammar of ornament into their own languages.

EVF

NIMRUD

The ancient city of Nimrud (Assyrian Kalhu, biblical Calah) comprises a high mound surrounded by a rich agricultural area in the heartland of Assyria, twenty-two miles south of Nineveh at the eastern edge of the Tigris River valley. The site was settled from prehistoric times,



12. Wall panel with a guinea fowl, from Umm ez-Za'tir. Ctesiphon, Mesopotamia; Sasanian period, ca. 6th century A.D. Stucco, h. 10 1/2 in. (26.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.13)



13. Wall panel with wings and a Pahlavi device encircled by pearls, from Umm ez-Za'tir. Ctesiphon, Mesopotamia; Sasanian period, ca. 6th century A.D. Stucco, h. 15 3/8 in. (39 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1932 (32.150.48)

but the majority of the archaeological remains there date to the ninth through the seventh century B.C., when Nimrud was one of the capitals of the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Early in his reign king Ashurnasirpal II (reigned 883–859 B.C.) moved his court from the religious center of Ashur to Nimrud, where he built a palace and other lavish structures. The city encompassed an area of nearly 900 acres, with palaces, temples, and other monumental buildings concentrated in a citadel, the so-called Acropolis, in the southwest corner atop the remains of earlier habitation.

Nimrud was the starting point for increasingly frequent Assyrian military campaigns into Syria and the Khabur River basin and expeditions to the east and north as Assyria further expanded its vast territorial empire. Its military character is evident in the strongly fortified city walls and especially in the building now known as Fort Shalmaneser, which is called an *ekal mašarti*, or arsenal, in inscriptions on its bricks. The building was probably used for gathering battle equipment, mounts, and troops before campaigns and for inventorying the spoils of war afterward. Nimrud reached its zenith during the reigns of Ashurnasirpal II and his son Shalmaneser III (reigned 858–825 B.C.), and in later years it probably served primarily as a storeroom, with the consequence that lavish quantities of luxury goods, including tens of thousands of carved ivory fragments, have been found there during modern archaeological excavations. One of the richest sites of the ancient world, Nimrud has been producing spectacular discoveries for more than a hundred and fifty years.

The first significant investigations at Nimrud were conducted in 1845–47 and 1849–51 by Austen Henry Layard, a young English explorer whose work was sponsored by the British government and the British Museum. In spite of a limited budget, Layard uncovered most of the major buildings on the citadel: the Northwest Palace of Ashurnasirpal, the Ninurta and Ishtar Sharrat-niphi Temples, and the Central, Southeast, and Southwest Palaces. The focus of his excavations was unearthing the monumental carved stone reliefs and colossal guardian figures, which were then dispersed among his British sponsors or given to American missionaries who sent them home to colleges in the northeastern United States to be displayed as relics of the biblical world. (Several of these sculptures were subsequently sold or donated to the Metropolitan Museum; see figs. 1, 29, 30.)

For a century following the first period of sustained activity in the mid-1800s, investigations at Nimrud were sporadic and brief. In 1854–55 W. K. Loftus worked in the Central, Southeast, and Southwest Palaces and the Nabu Temple, discovering a cache of fine carved ivories

in the Southeast Palace (now known as the Burnt Palace). In 1873 George Smith, the pioneering cuneiform scholar who was the first to decipher works of Mesopotamian literature in the modern era, brought tablets from Nimrud back to the British Museum. Layard's former assistant Hormuzd Rassam excavated the Kidmuri Temple in 1877–79.

On March 18, 1949, the British School of Archaeology in Iraq began new excavations at Nimrud under the direction of Max E. L. Mallowan (who was succeeded in 1958–63 by David Oates and in 1963 by Jeffrey Orchard). By the 1951 season the excavations had expanded significantly, thanks to the financial and staffing support of the Metropolitan, a collaboration that marked the Museum's first involvement in the excavation of a site in Iraq with primarily pre-Sasanian levels. The excavations reinvestigated and extended many of the areas dug in the nineteenth century and produced greatly improved plans



14. Workmen excavating ivories in the “Ivory Room” at Fort Shalmaneser, Nimrud, Iraq, 1963



15. Archaeologists cleaning ivories in the ivory storeroom, Nimrud, Iraq, 1963

of the buildings on the citadel. They also opened previously unexplored areas of the mound, most importantly near the arsenal, which was called Fort Shalmaneser after an inscribed brick bearing the name of king Shalmaneser was discovered there in 1957.

The Metropolitan Museum of Art received a share of the cuneiform tablets, stone sculptures, bronzes, and cylinder seals discovered at Nimrud during the seasons for which it provided support (1951–53, 1956–58, and 1960–63). It also acquired a portion of the more dramatic finds from the storerooms of Fort Shalmaneser and the Northwest Palace: thousands of carved ivories, some still retaining traces of the gold foil and colored inlays that once enlivened them, that had been collected and hoarded over several centuries of Assyrian imperial domination (see figs. 14, 15). Most of the ivories were fragments of luxurious furniture the Assyrian kings acquired as booty or tribute from vanquished enemies or vassals in Syria and along the Phoenician coast, although finds of unfinished carved ivories indicated that there were also workshops at Nimrud itself. Distinctive styles and iconographic motifs can be identified that place the carved ivories within the spheres of Assyrian, Phoenician, or Syrian artistic tradition (see figs. 16–20).

Nimrud and the other Assyrian capitals were thoroughly sacked in 614 and again in 612 B.C., after the defeat of Assyria by allied forces from Babylonia and Media, a militarily powerful state in western Iran. While the invading troops stripped most of the carved ivories of their gold foil overlay, they left the ivory itself behind, often in a broken and mutilated state but sometimes retaining evidence of the original vibrant surface decoration. A small fragment in the Museum's collection that was originally richly inlaid with colored glass has lost almost all its inlays except the left leg of the figure (fig. 21).



16. Plaque with a kneeling bull, from Room S 5 of Fort Shalmaneser. Assyrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 9th–8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 1½ in. (3.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.107.21)

Traces of the original coloring still stain the empty cloisons of this and other ivories (see fig. 22). Also left behind in the debris of the devastation were nine small plaques that constitute the earliest known painted glass from the ancient Near East. One of them is a plaque of clear glass painted with images of a lotus plant approached by a winged sphinx with Egyptian-type head ornaments (fig. 23) that was perhaps intended as an inlay or was part of a molded vessel.

In 1952 a well in the Northwest Palace yielded a group of spectacular ivories. The large, staring eyes and thin lips on a female face from this group (fig. 24) suggest that it was carved in Syria or by artisans from that region. The subtle modeling of the cheeks and chin creates a counterpoint for the severity of the expression, and the recessed



17



18

17. Panel with back-to-back griffins against a ground of lotuses, from Room SW 37 of Fort Shalmaneser. Phoenician style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (10.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1961 (61.197.1)

18. Plaque with a figure wearing an Egyptian-style crown slaying a griffin, from Room SW 37 of Fort Shalmaneser. Syrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 9th–8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 4 $\frac{1}{8}$ in. (10.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1961 (61.197.11)



19



20

19. Plaque with a standing winged female figure, from Room SW 7 of Fort Shalmaneser. Syrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, 9th–8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 10 in. (25.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1958 (58.31.2)

20. Chair-back panel with a warrior holding lotuses, from Room SW 7 of Fort Shalmaneser. Syrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 11 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (28.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.107.7)



21. Winged youth on a plaque originally inlaid with colored glass, from Room SW 37 of Fort Shalmaneser. Phoenician style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 9th–8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 2 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (5.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1961 (61.197.10)

eyebrows and the choker, which retains traces of inlay and gold leaf, suggest that the face would have been richly ornamented. This and other ivories found at the bottoms of wells in the Northwest Palace were preserved by the thick sludge that coated them, binding any fragmentary pieces together and giving them a distinctive muddy brown color. Other ivories from Nimrud display a range of colors. Some were blackened by the fires that accompanied the city's destruction (see fig. 25). A remarkable indication of the care with which the ivories were retrieved and cleaned is the mud impression of an ivory fan handle removed as a single piece from the ivory it protected (figs. 26, 27). The scene on the fan handle, in which beardless, perhaps female



22. Head of a man, from Room SW 12 of Fort Shalmaneser. Phoenician style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 9th–8th century B.C. Ivory with traces of Egyptian blue in the cloisons, h. 3 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (8.71 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1962 (62.269.2)



23. Fragment of glass with the head of a youth and part of a lotus. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 8th century B.C. Painted glass, h. $\frac{3}{4}$ in. (1.5 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.107.25, 26)



24. Head of a female wearing a necklace originally filled with colored vitreous material and gold, from Well NN of the Northwest Palace. Syrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 9th–8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 5 $\frac{3}{8}$ in. (13.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.117.2)



25. Female head with a rosette diadem, from Room 23 of the Burnt Palace. Syrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, 8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 1 3/8 in. (4.19 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.117.8)

attendants kneel on either side of a stylized palmette tree, parallels the relief slabs in the Northwest Palace on which the king or supernatural creatures flank a similar type of tree. This may indicate that the handle was carved in the palace workshops at Nimrud, or that the carver deliberately referenced images closely connected with the priestly ideology of the Assyrian kings. In either case, the ivory handle, when used by court officials in the palace, reinforced the visual messages repeated on the reliefs decorating the walls.

The walls of the monumental buildings at Nimrud were decorated not only with reliefs but with wall paintings and panels of colorful glazed brick. One painted brick fragment (fig. 28) shows the head of a horned animal similar to those that flank elaborate stylized trees on the wall paintings in the Middle Assyrian palace of Tukulti-Ninurta I, who reigned from 1243 to 1207 B.C. Horned animals depicted with vegetation, already an ancient motif in the second millennium B.C., seem to have been associated with fertility and abundance. Other rooms in what may have been residential areas of the Northwest Palace and Fort Shalmaneser were decorated with scenes incorporating vegetal and geometric motifs and human figures that recalled those on the stone reliefs.



26. Handle of a fly whisk or fan, from Well NN of the Northwest Palace. Assyrian style. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 8th century B.C. Ivory, h. 4 in. (10.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.117.3)



27. Mud impression of the handle in fig. 26. The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1954 (54.117.4)



28. Brick fragment with the head of an ibex. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, ca. 9th century B.C. Glazed ceramic, h. $4\frac{7}{8}$ in. (12.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1957 (57.27.28)

Spectacular finds continued to be made at Nimrud under the direction of the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage. During the 1989 and 1990 seasons archaeologists working in the Northwest Palace discovered remark-

able carved ivories and four royal tombs belonging to Assyrian queens that were lavishly furnished with extraordinary gold jewelry, crowns, vessels, and other luxurious goods. SBG

NEO-ASSYRIAN RELIEFS IN THE METROPOLITAN

The collection of thirty-four Neo-Assyrian reliefs and colossal sculptures originally from palaces at the ancient sites of Nimrud and Nineveh (see pages 15–21, 28–29) is one of the most often visited and frequently published treasures of ancient Near Eastern art at the Metropolitan Museum. The majority of these impressive works stem from the extensive excavations at these two sites undertaken by Austen Henry Layard on behalf of the British Museum between 1845 and 1851. Most of Layard's finds were sent to the British Museum, but several found their way to other institutions or into private hands. Layard himself sent twenty-six sculptures to the country home of his cousin Lady Charlotte Guest at Canford Manor in Dorsetshire, England, where they were installed in what was called the "Nineveh Porch." In 1919, after Lady Charlotte's death, sixteen of those reliefs and two colossal winged guardian figures (see figs. 29, 30) were sold to the New York dealer Dikran Kelekian by Ivor Churchill Guest, Lady Charlotte's grandson.



29. Two relief panels with cuneiform inscriptions in Akkadian, from the Northwest Palace. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.). Gypsum alabaster, h. of each $92\frac{1}{4}$ in. (234.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.4, .6)



30. Bearded, winged, human-headed bull figure with a cuneiform inscription in Akkadian, from the right side of a doorway in the Northwest Palace. Nimrud, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, reign of Ashurnasirpal II (r. 883–859 B.C.). Gypsum alabaster, h. 10 ft. 3 ½ in. (3.14 m). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.1)

From storage in New York the sculptures went to the University Museum in Philadelphia, where they stayed for eight years, pending purchase by the museum's board of trustees. When the board did not act to acquire them they were sold to John D. Rockefeller Jr., whose wife, Abby Aldrich Rockefeller, wished them to be given to The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Rockefeller donated an additional five relief fragments to the Museum between 1931 and 1933. Today most of the Rockefeller sculptures, along with others given by J. P. Morgan and Benjamin Brewster, are on view in the Museum's Raymond and Beverly Sackler Gallery for Assyrian Art (see fig. 1). KB

NIPPUR

Throughout the early history of Mesopotamia, Nippur had a special function as the great holy city in which Enlil, the supreme god of the Sumerian pantheon, resided. According to a Sumerian creation myth, Enlil struck his pickaxe into the ground at Nippur and mankind sprang forth. An ancient text calls Nippur a "city grown together with heaven, embracing heaven; City of Enlil, bond between heaven and earth." Possibly because it was a religious center, Nippur did not suffer the destruction that befell other ancient Near Eastern cities like Ur, Nineveh, and Babylon. The archaeological remains of the site are unparalleled and span more than 6,000 years, from the beginning of the Ubaid period (ca. 5500–4000 B.C.) to about A.D. 800 in the Islamic period.

Since archaeological fieldwork began in Iraq in the mid-nineteenth century, excavations have been carried out at Nippur, located in the center of the southern Mesopotamian floodplain at the approximate boundary between ancient Sumer and Akkad. The site forms one of the largest ancient mounds in Iraq, measuring about a mile across and covering about 370 acres. The first American expedition to work in Iraq excavated Nippur between 1888 and 1900 under the sponsorship of the University of Pennsylvania. In 1948 the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago and the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania formed a joint expedition to reopen excavations at Nippur. After the University of Pennsylvania withdrew in 1952, the University of Chicago continued the excavations in partnership with the Baghdad School of the American Schools of Oriental Research until 1962. During the 1957–58 and 1960–61 seasons (see fig. 31) The Metropolitan Museum of Art also contributed funds to the expedition. As a result, some two hundred objects from Nippur entered the collections of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art in 1959 and 1962. By 1964 the University of Chicago was the



31. Inanna Temple excavations, Nippur, Iraq, view from the northwest, 1960–61

sole sponsor of the Nippur excavations. The most recent season of excavation at the site was the nineteenth campaign in 1990.

Nippur was not only a sacred center but was also of great political importance, because royal rule over Mesopotamia was not considered legitimate until it was recognized in its temples. The Temple of Enlil—called the House of the Mountain (É-KUR in Sumerian)—dominated the city, but there were also temples dedicated to other deities. Excavations conducted from 1955 to 1962 of the temple of the goddess Inanna, prominently located just southwest of the Temple of Enlil along the canal that ran through the city, provide the longest continuous archaeological sequence for a Mesopotamian site, with more than twenty building levels dating back into the Uruk period in the

fourth millennium B.C. In the lower levels the area comprised buildings of a residential nature. Exactly when the area was dedicated to the goddess is unclear, but the Inanna Temple existed at least from the beginning of the Early Dynastic period (ca. 2900–2350 B.C.) and was continuously rebuilt until the Parthian period (247 B.C.–A.D. 224), some three thousand years later. Because it was the main focus of excavations during the seasons the Metropolitan Museum contributed funds to the Nippur expedition, the majority of objects that entered the collection are from the Inanna Temple.

One of the domestic buildings in the earliest levels of the area later occupied by the Inanna Temple yielded a



32. Cylinder seal and modern impression showing squatting “pigtails ladies” and pots, from Level XV B of the Inanna Temple, Nippur, Mesopotamia; Late Uruk period, late 4th millennium B.C. Limestone, h. $\frac{3}{4}$ in (1.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1962 (62.70.74)



33. Inanna Temple excavations, Level IX, Nippur, Iraq, 1960–61



34. Votive bowl with a cuneiform inscription in Sumerian that is a dedication to the goddess Inanna, from Level VII of the Inanna Temple. Nippur, Mesopotamia; Early Dynastic III period, ca. 2600–2350 B.C. Calcite, h. 2¾ in. (7.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.41.11)

cylinder seal carved from pink stone (fig. 32) whose composition, formed of a series of holes executed with a drill, shows two pairs of female figures (“pigtailed ladies”) seated opposite one another manipulating what appear to be vessels. Prior to the Inanna Temple excavations this type of seal had been incorrectly dated to a later phase, but we now know that its carving style first appeared in the Late Uruk period in the late fourth millennium B.C., when the first urban centers emerged in Mesopotamia.

During the succeeding Early Dynastic period a number of city-states, consisting of one or more urban centers and the surrounding land, began to flourish in southern Mesopotamia. The first definite religious structure in the Inanna Temple area at Nippur, dating to the Early Dynastic period, was designated Level IX (see fig. 33). It followed the plan of the previous buildings but now contained mud brick altars and other cultic furniture with thick layers of mud plaster, which was also applied to the walls and floors of certain rooms. The stratum above that, Level VIII, represented a change in plan and had the unique feature of two sanctuaries side by side. The plan of Level VII followed that of VIII, but its internal divisions were more complex and the temple was larger.

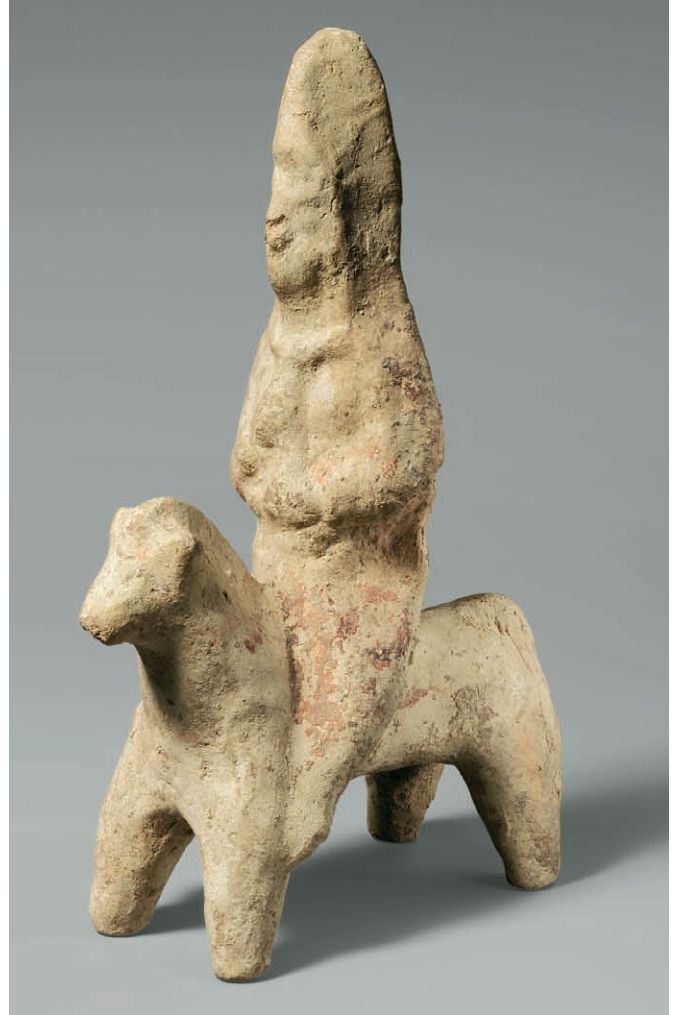
The hundreds of dedicatory objects from Level VII, among which are the earliest inscribed dedications to the goddess Inanna, include human and animal sculptures, stone vessels (see fig. 34), door plaques, pegs, furniture

35. Standing female worshiper, from Level VII B of the Inanna Temple. Nippur, Mesopotamia; Early Dynastic IIIa period, ca. 2600–2500 B.C. Limestone inlaid with shell and lapis lazuli, h. 9¾ in. (24.9 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1962 (62.70.2)





36. Inlay with a woman wearing a cylinder seal and playing a flute, from Level VII B of the Inanna Temple. Nippur, Mesopotamia; Early Dynastic IIIa period, ca. 2600–2500 B.C. Shell, h. 2½ in. (6.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1962 (62.70.46)



38. Horse and rider, from Level II of the Inanna Temple. Nippur, Mesopotamia; Parthian period, ca. 150 B.C. Ceramic and paint, h. 6¾ in. (17.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.41.23)



37. Cylinder seal and modern impression showing a worshiper pouring a libation before a seated god, from the fill below Level II in the Inanna Temple. Nippur, Mesopotamia; Ur III period, ca. 2100–2000 B.C. Stone, h. 1 in. (2.6 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1959 (59.41.37)

attachments, and shell inlays. The inscribed examples indicate that gifts were dedicated to the Inanna Temple during the Early Dynastic period by individuals of an elite class. Once such gifts were presented, the dedicatory objects became part of the temple and never left its sacred space. They were disposed of by being built into the architecture and cultic installations or buried under the floors. A standing female figure and a shell inlay of a woman playing a musical instrument now in the Metropolitan (figs. 35, 36) were found among the many objects that had been laid out on a mud brick bench in one of the sanctuaries; they were then covered over with mud plaster.

Some objects were found in the Inanna Temple in levels that were much later than the ones in which they were made. A cylinder seal discovered in the fill of the huge platform upon which the Parthian-period temple was erected (fig. 37) is carved with a presentation scene that

is characteristic of the Ur III period (ca. 2100–2000 B.C.), some two millennia earlier. It therefore likely originated in Level IV, which had inscriptions recording the building activity of king Shulgi of Ur (reigned ca. 2095–2047 B.C.). The Ur III Inanna Temple and subsequent levels were largely destroyed by the building operations of the Parthian period.

The Inanna Temple of the Parthian period remarkably still retained the Early Dynastic configuration of two sanctuary complexes, in one of which a horse and rider figurine now in the Museum was found (fig. 38). Cuneiform texts indicate that the place where Enlil struck his pickaxe into the ground and man emerged was located in the Inanna Temple at Nippur. One of the sanctuaries of the temple was perhaps associated with this Sumerian creation myth. The configuration remained consistent throughout the history of the Inanna Temple, even after Babylonia was incorporated into cultures with different religions. Echoing the city's long history as the religious center of southern Mesopotamia, Nippur was the seat of a Nestorian bishop in the eighth century A.D., shortly before it was abandoned.

JME

AL-HIBA

The site of al-Hiba (ancient Lagash) was first investigated in 1887 by the German architect and archaeologist Robert Koldewey, but extensive work began only in 1968, when a joint expedition was mounted under the direction of Vaughn E. Crawford of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and Donald P. Hansen of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University (see fig. 39). Work ceased during the Iraq–Iran War (1980–88); it resumed in 1990 only to be interrupted once again, this time by the first Gulf War. Al-Hiba is one of the largest mounds in southern Iraq, covering some 1,500 acres, and only a small part of the site has been excavated.

Among the several structures the joint expedition uncovered at al-Hiba were two temples: a temple of Inanna called the Ibgal at the southwest edge of the city and a temple precinct called the Bagara dedicated to Ningirsu, the patron god of Lagash, at the highest point on the western side of the mound. In the Bagara there appears to have been a brewery where beer was prepared for the ritual feeding of the deity. Most of the occupation dated to the Early Dynastic period, from about 2900 to



39. The administration building in the excavations in Area C at al-Hiba, Iraq, 1970–71



40. Nineteen ornaments. Tell Taya, Mesopotamia; Late Akkadian period, ca. 2300–2150 B.C. Faience, w. of largest bead $1\frac{1}{4}$ in. (3.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1972 (1972.222.11–29)

2350 B.C., when al-Hiba and Tello (ancient Girsu) were the two most important cities of the state of Lagash, dominating a large area of southern Mesopotamia. After that the site was largely abandoned, although religious buildings continued to be constructed into the second millennium B.C. A large number of important artifacts were excavated at al-Hiba. There was never a division of the finds, but a selection of pieces lent by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage was on display at the Metropolitan Museum in 1972–73.

TELL GENJ

In 1977, when it applied for a fifth season of excavation at al-Hiba, the joint expedition of The Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University was asked by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage to excavate at a salvage site in the Hamrin Valley in an area northeast of Baghdad that was to be flooded by the construction of a dam. The site was Tell Genj, which was excavated from December 1977 to January 1978 under the direction of Karen Wilson Briggs. Excavation of a square area about 30 feet on a side and a 16-foot sounding down to virgin soil indicated that the site was occupied for a short period of time. Two small terracotta plaques and several pottery sherds found at the site date the occupation to the early second millennium B.C.

TELL TAYA

Three seasons of work, from 1967 to 1973, were undertaken at Tell Taya in northern Iraq by Julian E. Reade on behalf of the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. The Metropolitan Museum provided support for the last season. Starting in about 2500 B.C. Taya developed into a substantial town and regional center, until it declined and was then abandoned about 2000 B.C. It was reoccupied about 1900–1800 B.C., when it might have been called Samiatum, as attested by a document found at the site and contemporary administrative records found elsewhere. Between 850 and 600 B.C. Taya existed as a small citadel with the central mound ringed by a massive stone terrace and probably also fortifications. A number of objects from the first two seasons of excavation at Tell Taya entered the Museum's collection as part of the division of finds that went to the British School of Archaeology in Iraq. Among them were a number of pottery sherds and faience beads the Museum acquired in 1972 (see fig. 40).

NINEVEH

Austen Henry Layard undertook the first major excavations at the site of Nineveh, located on the Tigris River in northern Iraq. Between 1846 and 1851 he uncovered a large area of what he called the Southwest Palace of the Assyrian king Sennacherib, who reigned from 704 to 681 B.C. Work continued at the site intermittently throughout the latter part of the nineteenth century. The British Museum conducted excavations at Nineveh under R. Campbell Thompson in 1904–5 and 1927–32, and from the 1960s onward work was undertaken by the Iraqi Department of Antiquities and Heritage. Between 1987 and 1990 the excavations were resumed by a team from the University of California at Berkeley under the direction of David Stronach and supported in part by the Metropolitan Museum.

The earliest remains at Nineveh date to the fifth millennium B.C. By the second millennium B.C. the city was renowned for a temple dedicated to Ishtar, the Mesopotamian goddess of sexual love and war. But the city attained the height of its power and prestige under Sennacherib, who transformed it into Assyria's capital city. The most ambitious undertaking, built over some ten years around 700 B.C., was the huge Southwest Palace the king named the Incomparable Palace or the Palace without a Rival. Sennacherib's grandson Ashurbanipal, who reigned from 668 to 627 B.C., built his extensive North Palace at Nineveh



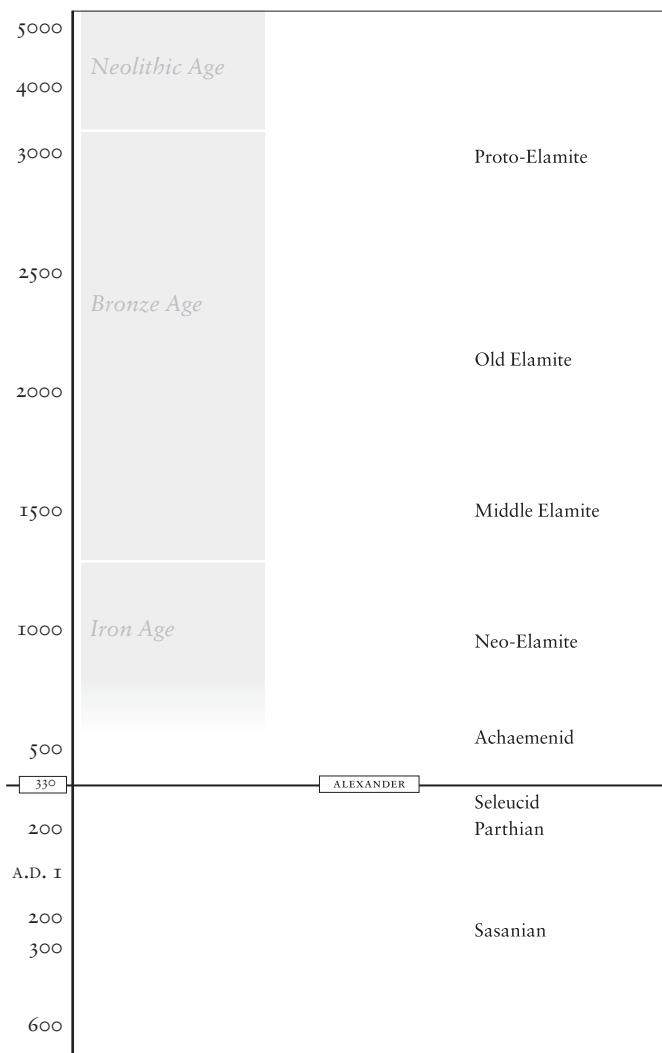
41. Fragment of a wall relief showing a cavalryman leading his horse beside a stream, from the Southwest Palace of Sennacherib. Nineveh, Mesopotamia; Neo-Assyrian period, 704–681 B.C. Gypsum alabaster, h. 23 ³/₈ in. (59.3 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr., 1932 (32.143.18)

as well. The city was destroyed in 612 B.C. by the armies of the Medes from Iran and the Babylonians of southern Mesopotamia.

During the first half of the twentieth century the Metropolitan Museum acquired as gifts a number of carved

reliefs from Nineveh (see pages 21–23). Among them is a fragment of a wall relief that was a gift of John D. Rockefeller Jr. (fig. 41). It shows a cavalryman in full battle armor leading his horse through rough terrain along a river or stream.

IRAN



Beginning in the eighth millennium B.C., during the Neolithic period, agricultural communities settled in the various distinct regions of Iran. During the late fourth and early third millennia B.C. the ancient culture scholars call Elam, in what is now southwest Iran, shared the urbanized culture of the cities of southern Mesopotamia, just to the west. By the second millennium B.C., during the Bronze Age, Elam had become a powerful state that took advantage of periods of political and military weakness in southern Mesopotamia to invade and plunder its cities. The Elamites and other Iranian peoples, particularly the Medes in the northwest, were frequent adversaries of the Assyrian rulers who dominated the Near East in the first half of the first millennium B.C., during the Iron Age. Later in the first millennium, the Achaemenid Persians ruled what was then the largest empire in history—reaching from Turkmenistan to

the Mediterranean coast and Egypt—from their capital at Persepolis in the region of Fars. Alexander the Great, whose Macedonian armies burned Persepolis to the ground, annexed the empire in 330 B.C. After Alexander's death in 323 B.C. his empire was divided among his generals, with Seleucus receiving most of the Near East. The Seleucids eventually fell to the Parthians, a group of nomadic Iranian origin, who were in turn defeated after nearly five centuries of rule by another Iranian dynasty, the Sasanians, in A.D. 226. Ongoing conflict between the Sasanians and Byzantium ended only in the seventh century with the Islamic conquest of Mesopotamia, Iran, and almost half of the Byzantine Empire.

QASR-I ABU NASR

In 1932, after a single season of excavation at the site of Ctesiphon in Iraq, the Museum sent an expedition to the site of Qasr-i Abu Nasr in Fars province in southwestern Iran, where a new antiquities law passed in 1930 had just ended a French monopoly on archaeological exploration. The newly formed Persian Expedition consisted of Joseph M. Upton of the also newly created Near Eastern Art Department and Walter Hauser and Charles K. Wilkinson of the Museum's Egyptian Expedition. (Wilkinson would become head of the Museum's Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art in 1956.) The Museum's Persian Expedition excavated for three seasons at Qasr-i Abu Nasr between 1932 and 1935 (see fig. 42). Some five hundred clay sealings from the site, a number of which bear personal names (usually of officials) followed by place-names, especially Shiraz, demonstrate that Qasr-i Abu Nasr, which contained



42. Excavations at Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Iran. The Persian Expedition, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1932–33



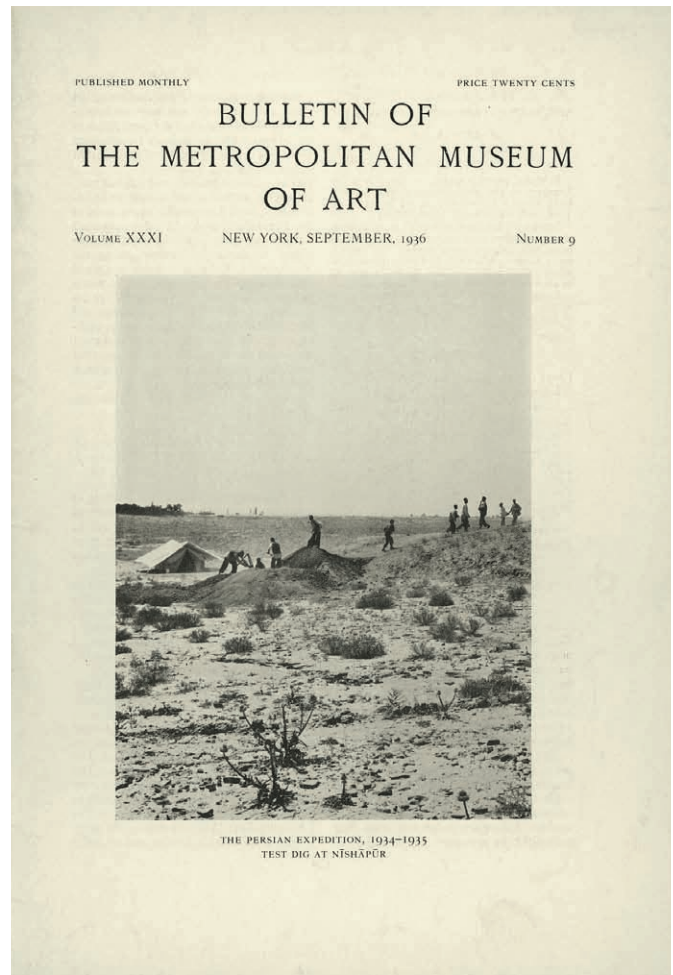
43. Plaque with the figure of a lion. Qasr-i Abu Nasr, Iran; Achaemenid period, ca. 6th–5th century B.C. Black limestone, h. 2½ in. (6.4 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1934 (34.107.62)

a large fortress and enclosure wall, was part of a local Sasanian provincial system. Most of the more than one hundred coins found at the site date to the late Sasanian period (ca. A.D. 500–600). In addition to a large number of Sasanian objects, works from the Achaemenid and Parthian periods (ca. 550 B.C.–A.D. 224) at Qasr-i Abu Nasr also entered the Museum’s collection through the division of finds, among them a black limestone plaque depicting the head and forelegs of a snarling lion (fig. 43).

NISHAPUR

The site of Nishapur, in northeastern Iran, was excavated by the Museum’s Persian Expedition (renamed the Iranian Expedition in 1936) from 1934 to 1940, with a final season in 1947 (see fig. 44). The excavations, spread over several mounds, revealed residential quarters as well as a palace or government building. Nishapur was apparently founded in Sasanian times, by either Shapur I (reigned 240–72) or Shapur II (reigned 309–79), although pottery sherds dating from the fifth to the third millennium B.C. suggest an earlier settlement there. Textual sources indicate that in 430 the city was a regional capital and that under the Sasanian king Yazdegird II (reigned 438–57) it became a royal residence. Nishapur fell to the Arab conquerors of Iran in 651. Initially it remained an important town but subsequently declined in significance. Nishapur’s fortunes revived in the ninth century under the Tahirid dynasty, and from the tenth through the twelfth century it became one of the great political, commercial, and cultural centers of medieval Iran and the Islamic world.

A large number of objects excavated at Nishapur entered the collection of the Department of Near Eastern Art, which at the time included both pre-Islamic and Islamic objects. Most of the later material was transferred



44. “The Persian Expedition, 1934–1935: Test Dig at Nīshāpūr.” Cover of the *Bulletin of The Metropolitan Museum of Art*, September 1936



45. Spouted jar with painted decoration. Tepe Sialk, Iran; Iron Age, 9th–7th century B.C. Ceramic and paint, h. 7⅞ in. (18.19 cm). Gift of Museum of Teheran, 1939 (39.60.9)



46. Excavations in Trench Z, Yarim Tepe, Iran, 1962

47. Textile fragment with bands of rosettes and pearls (reverse), from Room 23, Site VI. Shahr-i Qumis, Iran; Sasanian period, 6th century A.D. Wool and cotton, dyes; $9\frac{1}{4} \times 16\frac{1}{8}$ in. (23.5 x 41 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, H. Dunscombe Colt Gift, 1969 (69.24.35)

to the Department of Islamic Art when it was formed in 1963. To balance the division of funding and finds and in exchange for surveying equipment it acquired at the close of the expedition, the Teheran Museum presented the Metropolitan with several objects from other sites in Iran, such as Tepe Sialk, Susa, and Persepolis, that are now in the collection of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art (see fig. 45). The work of the Persian Expedition signaled the beginning of many years of the Museum's support of archaeology in Iran.

YARIM TEPE

Yarim Tepe ("Half Mound"), located east of the Caspian Sea in northeastern Iran, was excavated by David Stronach for the British Institute of Persian Studies in 1960 and 1962, with support in the second season from the Metropolitan Museum (see fig. 46). The oldest remains at Yarim Tepe are of a Neolithic village dating to the fifth millennium B.C. After a long gap, the site was reoccupied sometime between 3200 and 2900 B.C. At levels dating to about 2900 B.C. metal grave goods, or objects buried with the dead, became more plentiful and very fine gray burnished pottery was common. The new settlement flourished for some seven hundred years. The site was abandoned again in about 2000 B.C., but it was resettled at the end of the second millennium B.C. and occupied until the Parthian period, about A.D. 200. Pottery from the last period of occupation at Yarim Tepe parallels examples excavated at Shahr-i Qumis.



SHAHR-I QUMIS

In 1967, with the support of the Metropolitan Museum, David Stronach and John Hansman, representing the British Institute of Persian Studies and the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago, excavated Shahr-i Qumis, one of the key Parthian-period sites in eastern Iran. A second season took place in 1971 under the auspices of the National Geographic Society. Among the structures uncovered were a mud brick building with a vaulted basement, an elevated ground floor, and a much-denuded first floor and the ground plan of a large rectangular residence that may date to the first century A.D. Fine stamped clay impressions of rings, stamp seals, and two impressions derived from cylinder seals were recovered from the site, along with textile fragments dating to the Sasanian period (see fig. 47).



48. Spiral beads. Tepe Nush-i Jan, Iran; found at Median-period level, ca. 8th–7th century B.C. Silver, w. of largest bead (lower left) 2 in. (5.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, H. Dunscombe Colt Gift, 1969 (69.24.1–4)

TEPE NUSH-I JAN

Tepe Nush-i Jan was excavated by David Stronach on behalf of the British Institute of Persian Studies for five seasons between 1967 and 1977. The Metropolitan Museum provided support for all but the final season. Located in northwestern Iran, the site is built on a natural outcrop and dominates the surrounding plain. Three periods of occupation were identified: a Median level of about 750–650 B.C., which was the best preserved; a level of poor squatter structures; and, after a break, a

Parthian-period level dated to the first century B.C. Four major Median mud brick buildings—the Central Temple, the Old Western Building, the Columned Hall, and the Fort Building—were in use for more than a century. On the last day of the first season a hoard of 231 silver objects was found in a bronze bowl in the so-called Fort Building. These included quadruple-spiral beads, a form known from the late third to the early second millennium B.C., that must have been kept for the intrinsic value of the silver they were made from (see fig. 48). In return for its support of the excavations at Nush-i Jan, the Museum received a portion of the finds, as well as objects from the British Institute's excavations at Pasargadae and Tall-i Nokhodi.

THE HASANLU PROJECT

In 1959 The Metropolitan Museum of Art joined the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania (now the University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology) and the Archaeological Service of Iran as a cosponsor of the Hasanlu Project. The site of Hasanlu in the Solduz Valley of northwestern Iran was the primary focus of the project, but its aims also included excavating other sites in the valley, sometimes simultaneously with Hasanlu, in order to gain additional information about the area's cultural and political history. The sites, in the order they were excavated, were Pisdeli Tepe, Dalma Tepe, Hajji Firuz Tepe, Agrab Tepe, Dinkha Tepe, Qalatgah, and Sé Girdan (see map, fig. 49). The combined evidence provided by these sites presents a picture of cultural developments in northwestern Iran from the Neolithic Age through the Iron Age. Two sites not in the

49. Sites in northwestern Iran excavated as part of the Hasanlu Project sponsored by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania, the Archaeological Service of Iran, and The Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1959–78. For Ziwiye and Tal-e Malyan, see the map on pages 4–5.





50. Period IV buildings,
Hasanlu, Iran, 1960

Solduz Valley were also excavated under the auspices of the Hasanlu Project: Ziwiye and Tal-e Malyan.

Robert H. Dyson Jr. of the University Museum led the Hasanlu Project, and many students, scholars, and archaeologists participated over the years. The Metropolitan Museum was represented primarily by Oscar White Muscarella, who joined the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art in 1964, and other members of the department also participated. Many objects from the sites investigated by the project entered the Museum's collection. Although fieldwork ended in 1978, studies of the Hasanlu material continue to be published.

HASANLU

The site of Hasanlu, in northwestern Iran, was settled from the sixth millennium B.C. through the Achaemenid Persian period of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C. After a long abandonment, the site was reoccupied in Islamic times until the thirteenth century A.D. In 1936 Sir Aurel Stein undertook the first excavations at Hasanlu, which were followed by those of the Iranian Archaeological Service in 1947 and 1949. It was in 1957 (following a survey the previous year), however, that the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania initiated large-scale excavations. The Metropolitan Museum of Art joined forces with the University Museum and the Archaeological Service of Iran in

1959 and continued as cosponsor of the excavations until 1974, when fieldwork ended. Excavation included stratigraphic soundings as well as horizontal clearance of the Iron Age levels.

Excavations at Hasanlu focused on the ninth and eighth centuries B.C., named Period IV, from which the architecture and artifacts are extremely well preserved (see figs. 50, 51). Period IV came to an end sometime in the eighth century B.C. when the citadel was violently destroyed by fire. The resulting collapse of buildings buried not only much material but also many of the inhabitants. More than two hundred and forty men, women, and children were fatally trapped under collapsed wooden and brick structures. Little is known about Hasanlu (even its ancient name remains a mystery, as no local written documents have been found) and the people who lived there. While no tablets were discovered, several fragments of stone artifacts carry names that indicate both Assyrian (north Mesopotamia) and Elamite (southwest Iran) contacts. An inscription at the nearby site of Qalatgah records the establishment of Urartian power in the region in about 800 B.C. Urartu, a major kingdom with its homeland centered on Lake Van in eastern Anatolia, was a political and commercial rival of the kingdom of Assyria, to the south in Mesopotamia. Hasanlu Period IV may have been destroyed as part of the struggle between the two powers for control of the region.



51 (far left). Spouted jar and stand, from the Cemetery, Hasanlu, Iran; Iron Age II, ca. 9th century B.C. Ceramic, h. 8½ in. (21.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1960 (60.20.15)

52 (left). Furniture leg(?) with a recumbent lion supporting a deity, from Burned Building II, Citadel, Period IV. Hasanlu, Iran; Iron Age II, ca. 9th century B.C. Ivory, h. 2⅞ in. (7.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1965 (65.163.1a-c)

The excavations uncovered five major burned brick public buildings (and other smaller ones), each comprising an elaborate entryway and a central columned hall surrounded by subsidiary rooms. In the halls were brick benches along the walls, a centrally placed “throne” area, and hearths. The scale and quality of the buildings suggest that Hasanlu was a major administrative and political center during the early centuries of the first millennium B.C. Indeed, thousands of remarkable objects made of terracotta, bronze, iron, silver, gold, stone, glass, ivory, and other materials were found in the debris of the destroyed buildings. Many of these objects were imported from abroad, in particular from northern Syria and Assyria, reflecting Hasanlu’s wide-ranging connections.

Among the hundreds of fragments of carved ivory objects and furniture inlay discovered at Hasanlu, four distinct styles may be identified: a local style (recovered from only two buildings), a more generally Iranian style, a North Syrian style, and an Assyrian style. One of the most intriguing carved ivories is a fragmented sculpture joined from two separate pieces (fig. 52). Carved in the local Hasanlu style, the lower area depicts in relief three males, two beardless and wearing gorgets, the other with a beard and drinking from a vessel. Above, and probably supported symbolically by the male figures, are the remains

of a deity standing on a recumbent lion. An ivory plaque with a winged, snarling lion is one of several similarly decorated ivory fragments excavated at Hasanlu (fig. 53). The creature’s mane is rendered in triangular tufts, while its wing is shown with four feathers emerging from a curved band. A dowel hole at the upper left suggests



53. Plaque fragment with a winged lion, from Burned Building II, Citadel, Period IV. Hasanlu, Iran; Iron Age II, ca. 9th century B.C. Ivory, h. ⅞ in. (2.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1965 (65.163.22)



54. A skeleton and lion pins in situ in Burned Building II, Period IV, Hasanlu, Iran, 1962. The lion pins are the green objects positioned at the skeleton's chest and waist.



55. Pin in the form of a lion, from the gateway area of Burned Building II, Citadel, Period IV. Hasanlu, Iran; Iron Age II, ca. 9th century B.C. Bronze, h. 2 1/4 in. (5.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff Gift, 1961 (61.100.10)

how such carved plaques were once attached to pieces of furniture or other objects. Although winged lions exist in both Assyrian and North Syrian art, this example reflects the Hasanlu style of ivory carving.

Many of the objects discovered at Hasanlu are characteristic of that site alone. One of the most distinctive objects from Hasanlu is the so-called lion pin. More than sixty have been excavated at the site, most in Burned Building II, the largest structure, where they are associated in groups of one, two, or three with the many skeletons of individuals who perished in the building at the time of its destruction (see fig. 54). Each of the pins, which were presumably used to fasten garments, is a solid bronze recumbent lion with the front paws extended that is joined at the rear to an iron pin. A bronze chain attached to a loop created by a curve in the tail held the pin securely to the garment. The lion pins vary in size and weight as well as in details of body decoration. An example in the Metropolitan (fig. 55) has a long mane running the length of its back, an upward-curling tongue protruding from its wide, gaping mouth, and globular eyes set on either side of its flattened head. Their form, size, and heaviness suggest that the pins had apotropaic value in addition to serving as fasteners.

Lions were clearly popular in the imagery of north-western Iran. One powerful representation is cast solid in the form of a snarling lion's head with a hollow cylindrical neck that has four openings near the base and a solid tang below (fig. 56). It has a slightly protruding tongue, a wrinkled muzzle, and eyes formed from solid spheres.



56. Lion's-head terminal, from west of Burned Building III, Citadel, Period IV. Hasanlu, Iran; Iron Age II, ca. 9th century B.C. Bronze, h. 4 3/4 in. (12.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1963 (63.109.1)

The object is one of a pair (its partner is in Teheran). No other object or material was found near the pair to give a clue to their function; they may have been placed on an article of furniture, perhaps at the top of the uprights of a chair.

A large number of metal vessels of a variety of shapes were excavated at Hasanlu. Many were recovered either crushed or in fragments. One hammered bronze shallow bowl was decorated with two handles in the form of stylized long-necked birds with outstretched wings and tails (fig. 57). The birds' heads, which faced out from the bowl, project slightly forward. There is a herringbone pattern on the beaks and necks, the eyes are simple concentric circles, and the wings and tails are decorated with incised herringbone patterns to suggest separate feathers. Such bird-head attachments are represented in Near Eastern art on buckets and cauldrons as well as bowls and basins. They were popular in both Assyria and Iran during the ninth and eighth centuries B.C.

Among the more spectacular objects recovered at Hasanlu was a large gold beaker now in the museum at Teheran. It is decorated in repoussé with three gods riding in chariots, heroes in combat, and other elements that probably reflect Mesopotamian and Anatolian myths and symbols. This technique for decorating metalwork was common in Iran in the late second and early first millennia B.C. Such work testifies to the region's economic, social, and perhaps political importance at the time.

PC



57. Pair of bird handles, from Burned Building II, Citadel, Period IV. Hasanlu, Iran; Iron Age II, ca. 9th century B.C. Bronze, h. $4\frac{1}{4}$ in. (10.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff Gift, 1961 (61.100.3a, b)

PISDELI TEPE

A small area of Pisdeli Tepe was excavated in 1957 as part of the Hasanlu Project. The finds included a distinct form of plain and painted pottery, termed Pisdeli ware, dating to the Neolithic period (ca. 4000 B.C.). The decoration and form of the vessels has been compared with the Ubaid pottery tradition of northern Mesopotamia. Similar pottery was discovered at Hajji Firuz.

DALMA TEPE

The Neolithic site of Dalma Tepe was explored as part of the Hasanlu Project in 1958, 1959, and 1961. A particular type of handmade pottery decorated with red paint (later versions have impressed designs) was discovered at Dalma Tepe (see fig. 58). This pottery, now known as Dalma ware, has been found at other sites in the Solduz Valley and appears to have been confined to the northern and central Zagros Mountains. It is characteristic of levels at Hasanlu that are dated to about 5000–4000 B.C.

HAJJI FIRUZ TEPE

Hajji Firuz Tepe was excavated by the Hasanlu Project in 1958, 1961, and 1968. The earliest settlement dated to the seventh millennium B.C., and the site was occupied a number of times between then and the fourth millennium B.C. A survey showed that Hajji Firuz Tepe was one of at least six Neolithic villages in the region. Its small rectangular mud brick houses were each divided into two rooms, one used for living, the other for storage and



58. Vessel with a red painted design. Dalma Tepe, Iran; early 5th millennium B.C. Ceramic and paint, h. $5\frac{7}{8}$ in. (15 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Mrs. Constantine Sidamon-Eristoff Gift, 1962 (62.173.7)



59. Agrab Tepe, Iran, view from the north, 1964

cooking. The dead were buried in bins alongside the inside walls of the living room, an unusual custom in the Near East, where burials were usually in pits or under house floors. The pottery with distinctive styles of geometric decoration that was found at Hajji Firuz is some of the earliest painted ware created in Iran.

AGRAB TEPE

Agrab Tepe, named Scorpion Mound by the excavators because of the scorpions infesting the site, was excavated in 1964 as part of the Hasanlu Project. The site consisted of a single large building that was destroyed at least twice by fire and rebuilt using the same plan. The thick outer defensive walls had a foundation of roughly cut stone blocks and a brick superstructure (see fig. 59). Projecting from the walls were eight buttresses and one massive tower entrance. The purpose of the structure, which would have been within sight of the city of Hasanlu, is unclear, but it seems to have functioned as a fort. Agrab Tepe flourished in the seventh century B.C. The cause of its final destruction sometime in the late seventh century B.C. is unknown.

DINKHA TEPE

Sir Aurel Stein worked at Dinkha Tepe for six days in 1940, and the Hasanlu Project excavated the site in 1966 and 1968. Discoveries below an Islamic level revealed a cemetery dating from about 1400 to 800 B.C.

Many of the same Iron Age artifact types, including monochrome gray and red pottery (see fig. 60), metal weapons, and jewelry, were found at both Dinkha and Hasanlu. Architecture and burials dating from the eighteenth to the fifteenth century B.C. were uncovered, as well as part of a thick mud brick fortification wall standing to a height of about thirteen feet.

QALATGAH

The site of Qalatgah was briefly surveyed as part of the Hasanlu Project in 1968. Pottery sherds recovered on the surface there are similar to those found at Hasanlu. They date to the late eighth and seventh centuries B.C. and are typical of the powerful kingdom of Urartu. Indeed, the survey recovered an inscribed stone, which had been reused in the wall of a small modern dam, that recorded the foundation of a city at Qalatgah during the joint reign of



60. Spouted pitcher. Dinkha Tepe, Iran; Iron Age, ca. 1300–1100 B.C. Ceramic, h. 8 3/4 in. (22.2 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Rogers Fund, 1966 (67.247.13)

the Urartian king Ishpuini and his son Menua (ca. 800 B.C.), demonstrating the expansion of Urartu into this region.

SÉ GIRDAN

In 1968 and 1970, as part of the Hasanlu Project, six of eleven surveyed tumuli were excavated at the site of Sé Girdan. Four of the six tombs had been plundered, and only one was recovered intact, but with relatively few objects inside. All were rectangular pits, some with a perimeter lined with flat stones and a pebble floor, and all were encircled by a rubble-stone revetment. Based on the limited findings the burials were dated to the eighth and seventh centuries B.C. More recent work in the northern Caucasus has demonstrated a relationship between tumuli there that date to the so-called Maikop period (ca. 3600–3000 B.C.) and those of Sé Girdan.

ZIWIYE

Ziwiye was explored as part of the Hasanlu Project in 1964. The site was chosen in the hope that it might answer a variety of questions about the wider region of northern Kurdistan during the first millennium B.C. The excavations revealed a stairway thirty-three yards long leading up to a fortified structure (see fig. 61) with several rooms that contained pottery that probably dates to the

seventh century B.C. and a few other objects. The building may have been the stronghold of a local lord. Ziwiye became famous in 1947 when it was reported that a major find of gold, silver, bronze, ivory, and ceramic objects had been discovered there. Although many of the objects of the so-called Treasure of Ziwiye (some of which are in the Museum's collection) are extraordinary, there is no evidence that any of them came from the site itself.

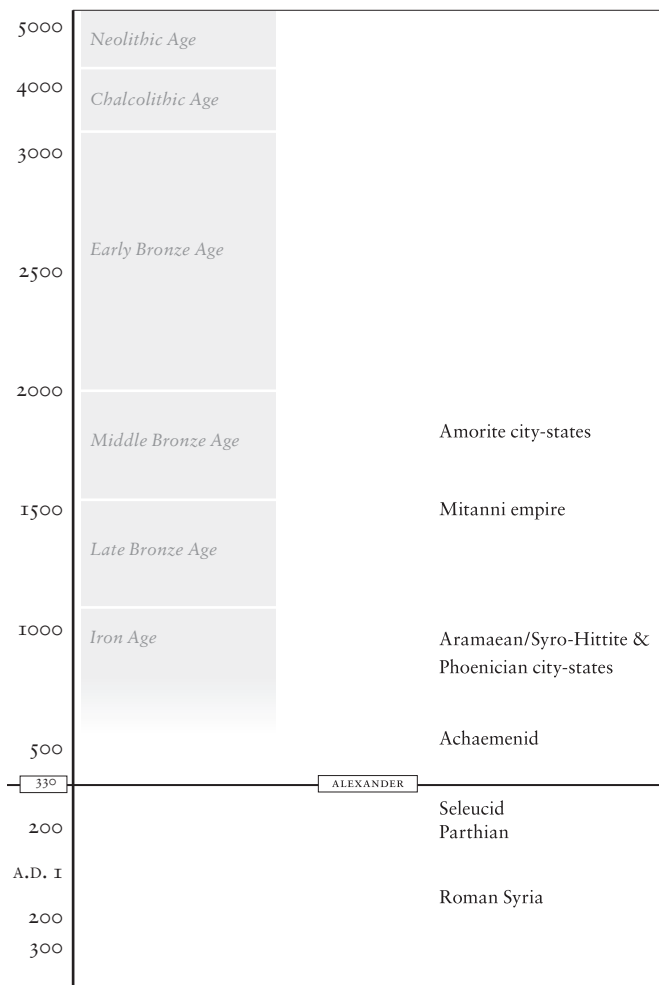
TAL-E MALYAN

Located near the southern limits of the Zagros Mountains in southwest Iran, Anshan (modern Tal-e Malyan), together with Susa, was a capital of the ancient kingdom of Elam. Limited excavations were undertaken at Tal-e Malyan by the Archaeological Department of Fars in about 1960, but major work, supported in part by the Metropolitan Museum, was conducted by the University Museum of the University of Pennsylvania over five seasons between 1971 and 1978 under the direction of William M. Sumner. The pottery evidence suggests that the site was occupied nearly continuously from about 6000 B.C. and into the Islamic period. The city was largest in the first half of the second millennium B.C., when the Elamite kingdom rivaled that of Babylon to the west in Mesopotamia.



61. Excavation of stairs at Ziwiye, Iran, 1964

THE LEVANT AND SYRIA



Ancient Near Eastern scholarship adopted the fifteenth-century name “Levant”—a term referring to the direction of the sunrise as seen from the West—for the area that today encompasses southern and coastal Syria, Israel, Jordan, the Palestinian territories, and Lebanon. Ancient inland Syria, however, is commonly referred to by the country’s modern name. Archaeologists in the Levant and Syria use a system that divides historical eras according to the advances in technology that characterized them: stone tools and objects thus define the Neolithic Age, while the Chalcolithic, Bronze, and Iron Ages are defined according to the metal-working techniques widely used during these periods. The fifth and early fourth millennia B.C. saw the spread of settled agricultural communities in the Levant and Syria. During the Early Bronze Age (ca. 3300–2000 B.C.), pre-eminent urban centers in the region controlled many of the emerging trade networks that would reach their zenith in the following millennium. The Mitanni state, a formidable but still little understood empire that controlled a vast area

in Syria and northern Mesopotamia, rose to prominence around 1500 B.C. After the widespread collapse in about 1200 B.C. of the Mitanni empire and the other great powers that ruled the Near East at the time, the region fragmented into a number of small states led by rulers from varying linguistic and cultural backgrounds, including Phoenicians and Syro-Hittites. Assyrian control over Syria and the Levant in the early centuries of the first millennium B.C. was followed by Babylonian and then Achaemenid Persian conquests. In the fourth century B.C. Alexander the Great claimed much of Syria for his empire. Later, in the first century B.C., Roman armies clashed with Parthian forces, as did the Byzantines and Sasanians who followed them, along a frontier delineated by the central and northern Euphrates.

TELL ED-DUWEIR

The site of Tell ed-Duweir, in modern-day Israel, was identified as the ancient city of Lachish in 1929 by the celebrated American archaeologist and biblical scholar William Albright. Remains from the Chalcolithic through the Hellenistic period (ca. 5000 to 100 B.C.) are evidenced at the site. The large fortified town constructed early in the first millennium B.C. was the second most important city of the Kingdom of Judah. It was destroyed in 701 B.C., when the Assyrian army, led by Sennacherib, stormed its walls, a fate that is chronicled in the Bible and represented in wall reliefs from the Assyrian palace at Nineveh.

Tell ed-Duweir was excavated by the British Wellcome-Marston Archaeological Research Expedition under the direction of James Leslie Starkey from 1932 to 1938. Harris Dunscombe Colt, who would later found the Colt Archaeological Institute, was a member of the expedition for the first season. He and his father, New York lawyer Harris D. Colt, also provided financial support in the form of a gift to the Metropolitan Museum to offset its contribution to the expedition. As a result, the Museum acquired objects from the excavations, among them a figurine of a nude female with clearly articulated mold-made features (fig. 62).

TAWILAN

Located to the north of Petra in southern Jordan, the area of the biblical Kingdom of Edom, Tawilan was surveyed in 1933 by Nelson Glueck. Glueck’s interpretation of the site as an Edomite town dating from the thirteenth to the sixth century B.C. that was surrounded by a defensive wall with towers was revised by excavations undertaken



63. Open bowl. Tawilan, Levant; Nabataean period, ca. 1st century B.C.–1st century A.D. Ceramic and paint, diam. 8⅞ in. (22 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, H. Dunscombe Colt Gift, 1977 (1977.234.12)

62 (left). Figurine of a nude female. Tell ed-Duweir, Levant; Iron Age, ca. 8th–7th century B.C. Ceramic, h. 7⅞ in. (18.1 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Harris D. and H. Dunscombe Colt, 1934 (34.126.53)

by Crystal-M. Bennett in 1968–70 for the British School of Archaeology in Jerusalem and in 1982 for the British Institute at Amman for Archaeology and History. Bennett's excavations revealed an unfortified agricultural community dating from the seventh to the sixth century B.C. that was then used as a cemetery in the first or second century A.D. In the final stage of occupation, during the Mamluk period (1250–1516), a square structure (one of Glueck's towers) was built.

Because the Metropolitan provided support for the 1969 season at Tawilan, it was allocated a portion of the finds: a variety of metal, shell, and ceramic objects that included a red-orange Nabataean bowl with a radiating rotational design (fig. 63). The Nabataean kingdom emerged as a trading power in the Levant in the early first century B.C. and was absorbed into the Roman Empire in A.D. 106.

TELEILAT EL-GHASSUL

Ghassul was a thriving Late Neolithic and Chalcolithic agricultural community at the southern end of the Jordan Valley that existed for a thousand years, from about 4500 to 3500 B.C. (In fact the Chalcolithic period in Israel and Jordan is called the Ghassulian period.) The site was investigated from 1929 to 1938 and again in 1960 by the Pontifical Biblical Institute of Rome. In 1967 the British



64. Professor J. Basil Hennessy drawing the sections in Area F, Teleilat el-Ghassul, Jordan, November 1977



65. Tell Brak, Syria, view from the north, 2007

School of Archaeology in Jerusalem excavated at Teleilat el-Ghassul under the direction of J. Basil Hennesy, and from 1975 to 1978 further work, until 1977 led by Hennesy, was carried out by the University of Sydney and the British School of Archaeology in Amman (see fig. 64). The Metropolitan Museum of Art provided support for the 1967 and 1976–77 seasons and as a result received a selection of Chalcolithic stone and bone tools. The excavations revealed that large rectangular mud brick buildings on foundations of river stones had succeeded circular houses with subterranean rooms. The interior walls of some of the buildings were covered with plaster and painted, in places more than twenty times over.

TELL LEILAN

Tell Leilan lies in the eastern Khabur Plains of northeastern Syria. Ongoing excavations there by Harvey Weiss of Yale University were supported in part by the Metropolitan Museum from 1979 to 1987. Much work at the site has been devoted to understanding the role of Leilan and the surrounding region during the second half of the third millennium B.C., when the city was called Shehna and the area was first dominated by the Akkadian Empire of southern Mesopotamia and then deserted, perhaps due to climatic changes. About 1800 B.C. Leilan reemerged as an important center under the Assyrian king Shamshi-Adad I (reigned ca. 1808–1776? B.C.), who unified much of northern Mesopotamia and established Leilan as his capital city, renaming it Shubat-Enlil. A large temple from the second millennium B.C. with spiral and palm-tree columns decorating its facade was excavated on the Acropolis, the highest part of the site.

TELL BRAK

Tell Brak, in the Upper Khabur Plains of northeastern Syria, is one of the largest ancient mounds in northern Mesopotamia, measuring more than 130 feet high and covering more than an acre (fig. 65). The site lies at a strategic point, providing access to the north, particularly to Anatolia and its metal resources, and also to the west, beyond the Euphrates to the Mediterranean. Evidence of occupation at Brak exists from the sixth millennium B.C. to the end of the Late Bronze Age, in the second millennium B.C. In the third millennium B.C. it was an important early urban center known as the city of Nagar.

Excavations at Tell Brak, which continue today, have provided significant information about northern Mesopotamia over a very long span of time and have also served as the setting for new archaeological research and strategies. The British School of Archaeology in Iraq excavated the site for three seasons in 1937 and 1938 under the direction of Max E. L. Mallowan. One of the most significant of Mallowan's discoveries was the so-called Eye Temple, the original version of which is now dated to the first half of the fourth millennium B.C. The uppermost level of this structure had a tripartite plan, elaborate niches and buttresses, and clay clone mosaic decorations. In a sequence of three earlier constructions the archaeologists discovered thousands of thin, flat stone figurines with incised eyes (see fig. 66). Some of these "eye idols," which vary in size, depict a single figure; others show a pair. It seems likely that they were deposited in the temple as votive offerings and may represent stylized images of worship-

ers. The Institute of Archaeology of University College London presented a group of eye idols to The Metropolitan Museum of Art in 1951 in return for its support of Mallown's excavations at Nimrud, and another was acquired in 1988.

Mallowan's other great discovery at Brak was the so-called Palace of Naram-Sin, in the southern part of the tell. Mud bricks stamped with the name of Naram-Sin, the Akkadian ruler of the late third millennium B.C., were found in the building, which had outer walls thirty feet thick and was probably a storehouse and administrative center. The Akkadians, who are credited with creating the first great territorial state, were based in southern Mesopotamia. The discoveries at Brak provided evidence for imperial Akkadian presence in the north.

The Brak excavations were interrupted by the start of World War II, and work did not resume until 1976, when the Institute of Archaeology of University College London sent a team directed by David and Joan Oates. The McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research at the University of Cambridge took over as sponsor in 1990. The Metropolitan Museum supported excavations at Brak from 1983 to 1990 and then again in 1998 and 2000. During the last two seasons Geoff Emberling, at that

time assistant curator in the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art, served as the field director of the project.

Small finds from the more recent excavations at Brak, including pottery fragments, indicate that the site was occupied in the sixth millennium B.C. By the late fifth millennium B.C. Brak already displayed many of the characteristics of later urban sites. Monumental buildings and numerous objects found at the site, including many seal impressions, attest its prominence in the fourth and third millennia. Second-millennium levels excavated at the highest part of the tell between 1984 and 1990 revealed a palace and temple with distinctive characteristics that date them to the middle of the second millennium B.C., when the region was occupied by the Mitanni. The palace had large rooms surrounding a central court and two staircases that provided access to an upper story. It was looted and burned during the Assyrian expansion in the early thirteenth century B.C. Egyptian vessels, fragments of gold and glass, and parts of wood, ivory, and bronze furniture from the destroyed palace provide evidence of the international contacts that defined the period. YR

TIL BARSIP

Ancient Til Barsip (modern Tell Ahmar) lies on the east bank of the Euphrates River in northern Syria. The site was probably occupied from the fifth millennium B.C. In the first millennium B.C. Til Barsip was the capital of the Aramaean kingdom of Bit-Adini. The city was renamed Kar-Shalmaneser when it was conquered by the Assyrian king Shalmaneser III in 856 B.C. An Assyrian palace decorated with pebble mosaics and elaborate wall paintings covered the entire acropolis. A French expedition excavated the site over three seasons, in 1929–31. In 1988 Guy Bunnens of the University of Melbourne began excavations that revealed large private houses, some with black-and-white pebble mosaics. The Australian expedition was joined in 1995 by a team from Columbia University led by John M. Russell and supported in part by the Metropolitan Museum. Excavations continue today, led by Bunnens with the support of the University of Liège.

UMM EL-MARRA

Umm el-Marra is situated on the Jabbul plain of western Syria on an east–west trade route linking Aleppo and the Mediterranean with Mesopotamia. Founded about 2700 B.C., Umm el-Marra flourished until about 2100 B.C., when a period of urban collapse affected it and other cities of the region. Occupation resumed in the Middle Bronze Age, about 1900 B.C., and the last



66. Eight eye idols. Tell Brak, Syria; Uruk period, ca. 3700–3500 B.C. Gypsum alabaster, h. of tallest idol $3\frac{3}{8}$ in. (9.8 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Gift of Institute of Archaeology, University College London, 1951 (51.59.1, .5–9, .11); Gift of Colt Archaeological Institute, Inc., 1988 (1988.323.8)



67. Students and a conservator working in Tomb 8, one of the elite mausoleums of the Early Bronze Age (ca. 2500 B.C.) on the Acropolis, Umm el-Marra, Syria, 2006

major occupation was in the Late Bronze Age, when Umm el-Marra became part of the Mitanni and then the Hittite empire. The site was first excavated by a Belgian team in the 1970s, and work there is currently being conducted by a joint expedition of Johns Hopkins University and the University of Amsterdam that began in 1994 under the direction of Glenn M. Schwartz and Hans H. Curvers. In 2000 excavators discovered the first tomb in a larger complex of burials dating from the mid- to late third millennium B.C. that have yielded metal weapons and gold, silver, and lapis jewelry and



68. Excavated area in front of the Temple Terrace, with the monumental staircase at the center, Tell Mozan, Syria, 2009

other rich furnishings (see fig. 67). The Metropolitan Museum of Art has provided support for the excavations at Umm el-Marra since 2006.

TELL MOZAN

Tell Mozan, the ancient city of Urkesh, is situated in the plain of the Khabur River, in northeastern Syria near the Turkish border. From about 3000 to 1500 B.C. Urkesh was an important stop on both the north–south trade route between Anatolia and the cities of Syria and Mesopotamia and the east–west route that linked the Mediterranean with the Zagros Mountains of western Iran. Excavations begun in 1984 under codirectors Giorgio Buccellati and Marilyn Kelly-Buccellati have revealed a temple terrace with a monumental stone staircase (fig. 68) and a royal palace dated to the Akkadian period, or about 2350–2200 B.C. Also from this period is a foundation peg in the form of the forepart of a lion the Museum acquired in 1948 (fig. 69). The peg can be linked to Tell Mozan through its inscription, which like the inscriptions on other objects found at the site names Urkesh. Urkesh was a capital of the Hurrian people, a little understood but powerful group whose culture these buildings and associated finds have helped elucidate. The Metropolitan Museum has supported the excavations since 2006.



69. Foundation peg in the form of the forepart of a lion. Probably from Tell Mozan, Syria; late 3rd millennium B.C. Copper alloy, h. $4\frac{5}{8}$ in. (11.7 cm). The Metropolitan Museum of Art, Purchase, Joseph Pulitzer Bequest, 1948 (48.180)

ANATOLIA, SOUTHWESTERN ARABIA, AND CENTRAL ASIA

Beginning in the 1980s the Metropolitan Museum expanded its involvement in the archaeology of the ancient Near East by supporting excavations in Anatolia, southwestern Arabia, and Central Asia, three distinct and varied regions. The cultures of Anatolia, encompassing modern-day Turkey from the Aegean Sea to Iran, developed in distinctive ways that were influenced by their ongoing contact with their neighbors. Anatolia became a major power in the ancient Near East under the Hittites, who ruled the region starting in the seventeenth century B.C. Southwestern Arabia, corresponding to modern Yemen, was legendary in ancient times for its wealth, which came from the trade in frankincense and myrrh. In the first millennium B.C. powerful kingdoms in the region vied for control of the aromatics trade. They shared similar languages, a pantheon of gods, a distinctive alphabet, and a common artistic tradition. Central Asia in ancient times included several regions from which and through which rich natural resources traveled to other areas of the Near East and beyond. The cultures that flourished from eastern Iran to the Indus Valley became part of the greater Silk Road that facilitated trade between China and Rome.

TELL GRITILLE

Located on the lower Euphrates River in southeastern Turkey, Tell Gritille was one of a number of sites explored as part of the Lower Euphrates Salvage Project in an area that was to be flooded by the building of two major dams. The Metropolitan Museum provided sup-

port for the four seasons of excavations at the site from 1981 to 1984, which were directed by Richard S. Ellis for Bryn Mawr College. Remains of settlements uncovered at the site date to the early Neolithic period (seventh to sixth millennium B.C.), the Early to Middle Bronze Age (late third to early second millennium B.C.), the Hellenistic period (third to first century B.C.), and the late Byzantine-Seljuk period (eleventh to thirteenth century A.D.). The site probably owed its long occupation to its command of a river crossing.

HACINEBI TEPE

Hacinebi Tepe lies in the Euphrates River valley of southeastern Turkey. Northwestern University undertook six field seasons of excavation at the site from 1992 to 1997 under the leadership of Gil Stein. The Metropolitan Museum provided support in 1993. The site was first occupied at the start of the fourth millennium B.C. One area of Hacinebi yielded evidence of people using southern Mesopotamian styles of pottery and seals in about 3500 B.C., at a time when the world's first urbanized societies were emerging in Sumer, at the confluence of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

JUJAH

With support from the Metropolitan Museum, Donald P. Hansen of the Institute of Fine Arts of New York University excavated the site of Jujah, in the Wadi Hadhramaut of Yemen, during two seasons in 1994 and 1995. In one area



70. The "Painted Temple," Level IV, Jujah, Yemen, 1995



71. Excavation of the city walls of Antiochus Margiana (now called Gyaaur Kala), which flourished from the Seleucid period (3rd century B.C.) to the Islamic conquest (7th century A.D.), Merv, Turkmenistan, 1999

a large private residential complex with ground-level and basement storage areas was uncovered. The size of the foundation stones and the thickness of the outer walls suggest that the building was at least two stories high. In a second area, beneath another residential structure, was a temple that in its earliest phase had plastered and painted walls (fig. 70). Visible in the polychrome murals that once decorated the cella, or inner sanctum, were fragmentary depictions of human and birdlike figures, textile patterns, and a partial inscription in South Arabian script. Carbon-14 dates for the earliest levels of the so-called Painted Temple fall between the late ninth and the seventh century B.C.

PIANDJIKENT

Piandjikent, in western Tajikistan, was a flourishing town in the fifth century A.D. Although the site had been known since the 1870s, work did not begin at Piandjikent until the 1930s. The Russian archaeologist Boris Marshak, who joined the expedition in 1954, when he was twenty-one years old, served as its director from 1978 until he died, at the site, in 2006 (at his request, he is buried there). The excavations uncovered extensive wall paintings and sculptures of clay and wood that date from the fifth to the eighth century. From 1994 to 1998 The Metropolitan Museum of Art embarked on a cooperative venture with the Institute of History, Archaeology, and Ethnography of the Academy of Sciences in Tajikistan to support the conservation of works excavated at Piandjikent. In exchange for the Museum's support, the institute initiated a long-term loan of works from Tajikistan to be displayed in the galleries of the Department of Ancient Near Eastern Art.

MERV

Merv, in southeastern Turkmenistan, was the principal city in a large oasis on the major trade route, the Silk Road, that stretched from Rome to China. The site was occupied in the sixth century B.C., during the Achaemenid period. The Seleucid ruler Antiochus I (reigned 281–261 B.C.) turned Merv into a metropolis with a fortified citadel, known as Erk Kala, and a walled city, Antiochus Margiana (now called Gyaaur Kala; see fig. 71), that flourished throughout the following Parthian and Sasanian periods (ca. 200 B.C.–A.D. 650), growing rich on the revenues of the trade flowing along the east–west highway. Sometime in the eighth century a suburb grew up outside the walls of Gyaaur Kala, to the west. This new suburb developed into the walled city of Sultan Kala, which became the principal eastern capital of the great Seljuk Empire.

Since 1890 Merv has been excavated intermittently by the Russians, the Americans, and the Soviets. In 1992 the National Institute for the History of Turkmenistan, the Institute of Archaeology of University College London, and the British Museum collaborated to create the International Merv Project, renamed the Ancient Merv Project in 2001. The Metropolitan Museum provided support from 1998 to 2001.

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