

Michael D. Danti, with contributions by Megan Cifarelli, *Hasanlu V: The Late Bronze and Iron I Periods. Hasanlu Excavation Reports III*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 2013. Pp. xxiv, 483,. ISBN-13: 978-1-934536-61-2. \$89.95

This handsomely produced book is a welcome addition to the long-delayed publication of the important site of Hasanlu, in Iranian Azerbaijan. The site was excavated by a University of Pennsylvania team, together with the Metropolitan Museum of Art and the Archaeological Service of Iran from 1956–1977, under the direction of Robert H. Dyson, Jr., as part of the Hasanlu Project, which also studied other sites in the region, including Dinkha Tepe, some data from which are also included here. A history of the excavations at the site and previous research is outlined by Danti in the Preface (xxv–xxvi), with a “History of Scholarship”, reflecting both written reporting and field work found in Chapter 2 “Hasanlu V: Definition, Research Questions and History of Scholarship” (28–43).

Although the title of the book is “Hasanlu V”, in fact the book covers Hasanlu Periods VIa, V, and IVc (xxvii), as well as some discussion of the archaeological periods both before and after. The subtitle “The Late Bronze and Iron I Periods” reflects much of the time period the book covers, although Danti also pays a fair amount of attention to the Middle Bronze period (13–15, *passim* in chapter 2, 55–59, 146–182, 282–301), as well as Iron II (e.g. 64–68, and Chapter 4 “Overview of the Ceramic Assemblages of Hasanlu VIA–IVC”). I should note here that one of Danti’s missions in this volume is to redefine the labels of the periodization of the 2nd millennium as previously defined by the Hasanlu project, to bring them in line with the period labels of Mesopotamia (xxvi–xxvii, 30, 328–329). As redefined, they would also correspond at least in the later periods to the usage in the South Caucasus,¹ to which this area of Iran also has connections. This new terminology is summarized in Cifarelli’s contribution to the volume (314): MBII (Hasanlu VIb), 1900–1600 BC; MBIII (Hasanlu VIa), 1600–1450 BC; LBA (Hasanlu V) 1450–1250 BC and Iron I (Hasanlu IVc), 1250–1050 BC.²

Danti had the unenviable task of publishing the stratigraphy, ceramics and contextualized burials of a site that he did not excavate; he emphatically states the challenges in several places (eg. 25–27, 48–50, 279–280, 325). Regardless, the volume contains a large amount of valuable data, including drawings of ceramics, tables of carbon dates, site photographs, a large separate map of the Solduz valley with archaeological sites, and many stratigraphic drawings (a full table of contents is at the end of this review). Danti, together with at least one student³, did a huge amount of work.

¹ Smith et al. 2009:34.

² Hasanlu IVc was inserted by the reviewer. It is omitted in the text on page 314.

³ Laetitia Taiciulescu. Her work on the Hasanlu cemetery is noted only in chapter 6, by Megan Cifarelli.

Unfortunately, however, the book is a challenge to use. For example, there are 30 sections of the Hasanlu excavations reproduced in chapter 3, interleaved within the chapter on pages 53–142. The concordance of section numbers and stratum descriptions is in Appendix III, pages 367–396. Other kinds of information are also broken up in ways that make it hard to understand full data sets or to find relevant citations, which are not consistently provided. Although sometimes pointed to in a general way from one place to another, in a book of almost 500 pages, the referred-to data can be hard to find. For example, in Chapter 5, “The Middle Bronze, Late Bronze, and Iron I Graves of Hasanlu and Dinkha”, a Dinkha IV Phase D tomb is referred to (277), although there is a typographical error [the tomb is referred to as B10a Burial 28 (27 is correct)]. Among the references, which here include the original publications of the tomb, it says “see also Chapter 4.” Chapter 4 is more than 100 pages long! In fact, that tomb is first discussed on pages 56 and 58, in chapter 3, where the original publications of the tomb and its contents are cited. As noted in Danti, the ceramics from this tomb are discussed in detail in chapter 4, where on page 163 there is a section headed with the tomb number, but no citation of the original publication. The ceramics are illustrated in figures 4.12 and 4.13 and indeed are mentioned in Danti’s catalogue of types and their ceramic parallels throughout chapter 4. Clearly, if one were to read the book from beginning to end, one would be able to go back from Danti’s discussion to the original publications of this tomb. But if one were to be thumbing through the volume and saw the section heading in bold and read only chapter 4, there would be no way to get back to the primary data.

Besides difficulties with the layout and cross-referencing, the book contains discussions that, while interesting, do not pertain to the question at hand, for example the section on “Burned Building III and the Dating of the Hasanlu IVb Destruction” (63–68). A culling of these for use elsewhere would have produced a more focused volume addressing the primary issue that Danti sees in the data, that there was no abrupt change between Hasanlu VI and Hasanlu V, but rather what he terms Monochrome Burnished Ware (MBW), which was previously called Grey Ware, “emerges no later than the mid-2nd millennium and is rooted in MBA traditions regardless of whether such traditions are viewed as indigenous to northwestern Iran or typical of northeastern Mesopotamia and the southern Caucasus” (xxvii, 323). This might have allowed a less abrupt conclusion, where the “Biases and Weak Points in the Dataset” are just a list and “Cultural Processes” are addressed in little more than a page.

The chapter by Cifarelli, “The Personal Ornaments of Hasanlu VIb-IVc” is based on mortuary data; the quantity of such objects in these periods is limited. She lays out the sound and thoughtful methodology that is the basis of her analysis and prepares the groundwork for the analysis of the Hasanlu IVb materials which she and Danti are preparing. Even with the small data set, Cifarelli suggests some patterns of mortuary deposition that might reflect, age, gender and status. She concludes “the notion of a powerful local elite operating within a complex, hierarchical society during these periods is bolstered by the evidence for differential mortuary treatment for different segments of

the community, expressed through patterns of distribution of significant ornaments as well as the geographic distribution of burials” (319).

Overall, despite the editorial and organizational issues, this is a valuable volume for those who need access to the data from Hasanlu for their research. It is not a book for those with a casual interest in the history of Iranian Azerbaijan in the 2nd millennium BCE; for them the takeaway should be the main point of Danti’s work here, that there was a gradual change in the Ušnu-Solduz valley in the mid-second millennium BCE, rather than an abrupt change from one ceramic tradition to another and the migrations that were hypothesized to be demonstrated by that abrupt change.

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