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Review

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EMBLEMS OF IDENTITY AND PRESTIGE: THE SEALS AND SEALINGS FROM HASANLU, IRAN, by *Michelle I. Marcus*. (University Museum Monograph 84; Hasanlu Special Studies 3.) Pp. xxviii + 171, pls. 45, figs. 118, tables 6. The University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia 1996. \$50. ISBN 0-924171-26-X.

This innovative study, part of the Hasanlu special publications series, focuses largely on the seals and sealings from the destruction level at Hasanlu IVB (ca. 800 B.C.). The author takes full advantage of the unique opportunity afforded by this corpus—for which chronological and contextual information is well documented and relatively secure—to explore the relationship between seals and society and, more broadly, between art and culture. The great contribution lies more in the questions asked of the material than of those definitively answered in this attempt to bring into focus the significance of seals to the people living at Hasanlu. At the heart of this multidisciplinary presentation, which utilizes the tools of art history, archaeology, and social anthropology, are theoretical considerations of the relationship between style, region, and individual craftsman; center and periphery; as well as cultural exchange and the transfer of status or prestige. Both the aims of the study and definitions of terms are clearly presented.

The interpretation of the relatively small number of sealings at the site (31), of which only 12 could be inspected, provides the basis for the major conclusions in this study regarding the use of seals as prestige items and the nature of relations between Hasanlu and Assyria. Sealings are carefully analyzed with attention to the most important parameters: type of seal impressed, completeness, position and number of seal rollings, fingerprints, and fabric. They are divided into types based on shape and impressed materials: jars, bags, baskets, boxes, doors (pegs and knobs), each clearly described and well illustrated. Plans plotting their findspots show that, for the most part, the sealings were found in association with ivories and other precious goods in the collapse of what appear to have been treasuries on the second floors of ritual structures (Burnt Buildings II and V).

Patterns of sealing use are also addressed. Two seals, both with elaborate court and/or ritual imagery, were impressed on doors or containers in both buildings. One seal was used to impress over half the sealings found in Burnt Building II, representing an “intensive” pattern of sealing generally associated with internal administrative practice—but not the repeated opening and closing of the same door or same type of container.

The fact that only seals of the Hasanlu Local Style were impressed on the relatively small number of sealings at Hasanlu leads Marcus to conclude that the foreign-style seals found at the site served a different purpose, one unrelated to the tracking of goods. Only one type, the “tab” (elsewhere called “tongue,” or “sample sealing”) bears an Assyrian-type design, related to Middle Assyrian glyptic. As Marcus notes, such devices are impressed with only a single seal rolling, generally clearer and more complete than on other types of sealings. If the “tab” acted as a

sample, then Assyrian seals must have been used at Hasanlu. The interpretation of “tabs” is uncertain, however, and Marcus elsewhere discusses them in terms of magical practices. In many cases, “tab” impressions do not preserve the composition probably intended on the original seal (see P.O. Harper et al. eds., *Assyrian Origins: Discoveries at Ashur on the Tigris* [New York 1995] 100).

Stylistic analysis provides the main framework for discussing the Hasanlu glyptic corpus, and styles such as the Hasanlu Local Style, as well as both “central” and “provincial” Assyrian styles, are clearly defined. The question of Hurrian influence is referred to in the inquiry into the sources of Hasanlu Local Style glyptic. The conclusion is that, despite the predominance of late second-millennium Mitannian common-style seals at sites in northwestern Iran (e.g., Marlik, Dinkha, and Surkh Dum) and the possibly related seal C2 from Hasanlu V, very little of this style survives in the ninth century B.C.

In her discussion of “Other Iranian Styles,” Marcus focuses on stamp seals of the “conoid-knob” type (found also at other northwestern Iranian sites) and related sealings. While disputing a previous assignment of this type to Urartian manufacture (37 n. 207), she also expresses doubts about their Iranian origins. Certainly, Anatolian precedents for the form and material look quite similar, for instance, the faience “stud” seal from Gordion (M. Mellink, *A Hittite Cemetery at Gordion* [Philadelphia 1956] pl. 23m, n).

The only other types discussed in this chapter are the “seal-beads” with their very generic geometric patterns. (The distinction made between the “cylinder seal” as a device with figural imagery [used for sealing] and the “cylindrical seal bead” [to be worn and not used administratively] may work for the Hasanlu corpus at hand, but is not necessarily valid generally, as Marcus herself notes.) The seals that may be possible candidates for “other Iranian styles” are those in the “provincial Assyrian” group. As a result of Marcus’s art historical analysis in chapter V (see table 2, p. 45), these seals have been convincingly differentiated from the few central Assyrian imports found at Hasanlu. The noted non-Assyrian stylistic features, such as body surface patterning, are consistent with an Iranian origin, but Marcus opts for the hypothesis that they were made by Assyrian craftsmen. These seals, for the most part, look like imitations or adaptations of Assyrian linear-style glyptic, some made of stone and with metal caps. They differ significantly from Hasanlu Local Style production, where Assyrian elements have been completely transformed.

The interpretation of the “provincial” group as Assyrian rather than Assyrianizing leads Marcus to designate its source as a provincial Assyrian center in the Zagros, which she identifies with Zamua. The center-periphery model is then modified to include “province” as an intermediary between the two. With this attractive explanation in mind, where more accessible Assyrian goods from the provinces would yet retain the prestige of the center, one wonders about other crafts that would have been produced in Zamua and coveted by the Hasanlu elite, such as ivory furniture. In looking at O.W. Muscarella’s catalogue of ivories at Hasanlu, one finds beautiful central Assyrian-style examples, but none clearly “provincial.” Iranian-style ivories include not only the Local Style, but some frag-

ments of winged bulls with finely formed bodies and surface patterning.

In pursuing the significance of intercultural mixes such as one finds on the "provincial style" seals, it might be useful to focus attention on the roughly contemporary Urartian glyptic. In this corpus one finds a wide range of shapes and materials, including a variety of stamp seal types and stone stamp cylinders with metal loop handles. Many examples are engraved with complex scenes adapting Neo-Assyrian royal and ritual iconography—images of authority and power—possibly also instances of "emulation to absorb status."

The support for the many stimulating interpretations in this volume rests in the catalogue, which is exemplary in its clarity, comprehensive lists of parallels, and illustrations. The author has provided us with an extremely well written and usable volume, which utilizes very carefully delineated stylistic differences in an attempt to elucidate historical and social phenomena.

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ASWAD ET GHORAIFÉ: SITES NÉOLITHIQUES EN DAMASCÈNE, SYRIE, AUX IX<sup>ème</sup> ET VIII<sup>ème</sup> MILLÉNAIRES AVANT L'ÈRE CHRÉTIENNE, by *Henri de Contenson*. (*BAHBeyrouth* 137.) Pp. 392, pls. 16, figs. 115, plans 92, tables 15. Institut français d'archéologie du Proche-Orient, Beirut 1995. ISBN 2-7053-0673-0.

LES PREMIERS VILLAGEOIS DE MÉSOPOTAMIE: DU VILLAGE À LA VILLE, by *Jean-Louis Huot*. Pp. 223, figs. 76, plans 42, maps 6. Armand Colin, Paris 1994. ISBN 2-200-21493-6.

The publication of a final excavation report is always welcome, and H. de Contenson and his collaborators should be congratulated for the detailed presentation of their findings at Aswad and Ghoraifé. This monograph summarizes the results of limited probes at two large Aceramic Neolithic (Pre-Pottery Neolithic) tells strategically located in the Damascus Basin, which thus provide a physical connection between the southern and northern Levant. Given the sizes of both sites (each some 5 ha in extent and 2.5–6.0 m thick), the scale of the excavations could, at best, give only a minute sample of their contents (totaling just 32 m<sup>2</sup> in two separate areas at Aswad and 16 m<sup>2</sup> in four test pits at Ghoraifé). This of course raises serious questions as to how representative the results are at each site. Indeed, as the numerous plans and sections indicate, no comprehensible architectural remains were documented. Nevertheless, Aswad is of particular significance in that it is the only site in the south-central Levant that displays continuity from the PPNA to the PPNB, while Ghoraifé can be assigned to later in the PPNB sequence.

The volume is divided into two main sections describing the sites individually. Following chapters outlining the research and stratigraphy of each site, specialist reports are presented of the various categories of finds. They include detailed typological analyses of the chipped stone tool assemblages (M.-C. Cauvin), as well as ground and polished stone tools (H. de Contenson), ornamental items (C. Maréchal), bone industries (D. Stordeur), clay figurines (H. de Contenson), human remains (J. Clère), microwear analysis of chipped stone tools (P. Anderson), charred wood remains (M. Dupeyron and H. de Contenson), and a preliminary note on the faunal remains (P. Ducos). For some reason these are not always presented in the same order. A brief chapter of conclusions follows, including a summary in English. The illustrations are comprehensive.

The material culture as a whole, and particularly the stylistic traits of the lithic assemblages, indicate that both Aswad and Ghoraifé fit more comfortably within the south Levantine PPNA and PPNB regional spheres than in that of the Euphrates tradition. Recovery techniques in the excavations, conducted between 1971 and 1974 perhaps according to norms then common, suffer from methodological deficiencies that are inevitably reflected in some of the studies. This long interval between excavation and final publication is, of course, a problem with many site reports. In this case, it rendered technological analysis of the chipped stone assemblage impossible, since the débitage, debris, and seemingly most of the less standardized tools and cores were discarded. In particular, the Aswad assemblage could have been used to address the question of the innovation or introduction of the naviform technology, while recent research in the southern Levant has demonstrated that the more standardized technologies and tools from naviform blank production are often not quantitatively predominant.

The omission of a detailed report in the volume on the seed remains is surprising and unfortunate, for it is in this field of research that the contribution of Aswad is especially critical. Although the results were previously published by W. Van Zeist and J.A.H. Bakker-Heeres (*Paléorient* 5 [1979] 161–69; *Paleohistoria* 24 [1982] 162–256), researchers in the past decade have questioned the domestic as opposed to cultivated status of cereals during the PPNA in the southern and central Levant (M.E. Kislev, in P.C. Anderson ed., *Préhistoire de l'agriculture* [Paris 1992] 87–93). The brief summary table of the plant remains in chapter 9 (by Dupeyron and de Contenson) in no manner addresses this important issue. Recent advances in the study of both botanical and faunal remains indicate that the processes involved in domestication were far more complex than previously thought, and required detailed and meticulous analyses. Even inclusion of the original reports would have at least rounded out the volume.

Yet, notwithstanding the deficiencies and omissions described above, the contents of this volume provide a vital and timely geographical and chronological bridge between the southern and northern Levant, on the one hand, and the PPNA and the PPNB, on the other, at a time of major changes in human lifeways.

J.-L. Huot's *Les premiers villageois de Mésopotamie* is a useful and comprehensive volume summarizing the current