

Recent Investigations at Hasanlu and Reconsideration of its Upper Strata

Hamid Khatib-Shahidi¹

Abstract

With the publication of one complete edition of the journal *Expedition* in 1989 on Hasanlu project by American archaeologists, engaged there during pre-revolutionary period, the present study highlights some of the accepted mistakes in the explanation and interpretation of the facts in the articles of that journal on one hand, and the beginning of the activities by Iranian archaeologists in 2000 which necessitated the changes in chronology and stratification, on the other. Dyson also implied tracing the relics found at Hasanlu IV with the Mannaeen state despite the opposition by some of the investigators. However, the accepted errors with regards to the lineage of 2nd defensive wall to Mannaeen, although formally declared to that of Urartian and the continuation of Urartian in Hasanlu up to later 7th and early 6th century B.C. and attributing of rooms inside the fort to them, is not verifying the findings of Iranian team. Further, going through the part of the Urartian mud brick defensive wall and the way the layer was stratified need more study and consultation. With regards to the above –mentioned changes, writer, being the head of Iranian team at Hasanlu present a new chronological chart against the one presented by Dyson in 1989.

Keywords: Hasanlu, Iranian Archaeology, Chronology, Stratification

1. Assistant Professor of Archaeology, Tarbiat Modares University

Introduction

Renewed archaeological activities at the ancient site of Hasanlu in the autumn 1379 after the survey conducted by wing of the Cultural Heritage Organization from the ruined condition of the historical monuments in this tepe, continued till the summer and autumn of 1380. The first season was mostly served for mobilization and search of the team for settling, safeguarding the important monuments. In the second season, the activities continued at the gate of the Urartian castle as the original entrance was found in the excavations. From the southern section of the outer gate to the projection of defensive wall, had encircled and considered for the digging and in some of the sections digging continued till the below of defensive wall. In the year 1989, before the beginning of the activity of Iranian team in Hasanlu, Prof. Dyson and his colleagues had brought out one complete and special edition of the journal "Expedition" on former Hasanlu Project. In that issue and other articles that were published later, pointed some of the errors in explanation and interpretation, stratification and dating of this site. Now, it is the best opportunity, in this background to produce the new facts of the upper levels of Hasanlu (I-IV) and offer new proposal in this regard.

Ancient site of Hasanlu is situated 85km. south of Urmia and 9km. north west of Naghadeh, in a rural set up, in the district of Mohammadyar. Plains of Urmia, Mahabad and Miandoab respectively are separated from Solduz plain where the site of Hasanlu is situated, in the north and south by the low elevated mountains and the branches of Zagros in the west by marshy land and further in the east, it is connected to the Ushnavieh plain. Important life line to this plain is river Ghedar (Qaderchai) which had its sources from the frontier mountains of western Ushnavieh and thus rising with the secondary branches in the north south direction irrigating the plain of Ushnu and Solduz and finally fall into the Urmia lake (Figure 1).

Small lake of Shorgul creates beautiful scene in the farthest end of Solduz plain that probably helped in the selection of the ancient Hasanlu tepe for the establishment of the very effective rule-on the religious inhabitants of the area in the last phase of 2nd millennium B.C. The existence of this lake like the river basin and Urmia Lake near it, create favorable climatic condition and helped to grow bushy pasture land around Hasanlu.



Figure 1 Situation of Hasanlu in the Solduz and Ushnu plains

Hasanlu Tepe from the very early times i.e. Neolithic period (famous as Hajji Firuz Culture) or perhaps even before, the instances of settlement have been traced, which cannot be excavated due to the elevation of the water level below the surface and in the upper layer of that settlement the traces of Ilkhanid period have been seen. Dyson has recorded the settlement at Hasanlu after the excavations (Dyson, 1983: xxvii) in the following sequence:

- 1- Hasanlu I: Islamic settlement around 14th century A.D.
- 2- Hasanlu II: Historical period around the 3rd century B.C.

3- Hasanlu III: Iron Age III from 8th to 4th century B.C. consisting two secondary layers of A and B.

4- Hasanlu IV: Iron Age II from 1100 to 800 B.C. consisting three layers of A, B and C.

5- Hasanlu V: Iron Age I from 1450 to 1100 B.C.

6- Hasanlu VI: Later Bronze Age (Dinkha Painted Ware) from 1900 to 1500 B.C.

7- Hasanlu VII: Earlier Bronze Age (Painted Orange Ware) dated to 3rd millennium B.C.

8- Hasanlu VIII: Later Copper Age (Pisdeli Ware) 4th millennium B.C.

9- Hasanlu IX: Earlier Copper Age (Dalma Ware) 5th millennium B.C.

10- Hasanlu X: Later Neolithic Age (Hajji Firuz Ware) 6th millennium B.C.

With due attention to the remains at Hasanlu in the IVth period and after that have relations and up till now the activities of the Iranian team have accomplished the same. The detailed study of those periods based on the last chronological chart presented by Dyson (Dyson, 1989: 6) will be analyzed (Figure 2).

Relation between Hasanlu IV, especially IVB and Mannaean, has continued and this aspect took longer time by American Project during their presence in Iran. Both excavators and the inquisitive inhabitants of the area related the mud brick monumental structure and scattered unpainted gray pottery on the top and around the site to that of Mannaean. The relation of that unskilled period was established due to the lack of the knowledge of historical geography of the area, especially about Mannaean kingdom. However, the resemblance of some of the products of Hasanlu with the Mannaean sites like Ziwiye, for example ivory plaques of the upper stage are comprehensively soliciting to the Assyrians, confirm that they were descendents but in the same period manifestation of the material culture especially in the production of the pottery, which is the most obvious indication

have brought differences. During Urartian attack in the Solduz plain and Hasanlu at the end of 9th century B.C. gray ware was used and information regarding material culture of Manna unfortunately is very limited which were mentioned in the Urartian and Assyrian texts. We can only say about the later phase i.e. during the interval of 8th and 7th centuries with respect to the evidences of potteries which were of buff color in Ziwiye and Qalachi in the Iron Age III. It is far from belief that shift from gray ware of Iron Age II in Hasanlu to the Buff Ware found in Mannaean sites like Ziwiye and Qalachi were sudden after the military overthrow of Urartu at the end of 9th century and that was the beginning of Iron Age III 8th century B.C.

On the other hand, the writing of last head of the American group does not point to the Mannaean and apparently after the publication of *Expedition* (1989) they had accepted that Mannaean were present in south and east of Hasanlu (Dyson, 1989: 8-9). This area had relation with the countries around it like Manna and Assyria. However, the stele found at Karqanduz (in Turkey) which is a duplicate of Dash Tepe Inscription (near Miandoab), says nothing about Manna and only talks about Ispuini and Menua (kings of Urartu) and their conquest of the cities Meshta, Qua, Saritu and Nigibi and the country of Parsua. Salvini considers Hasanlu as ancient Meshta (Salvini, 1984: 19-21, 57-62).

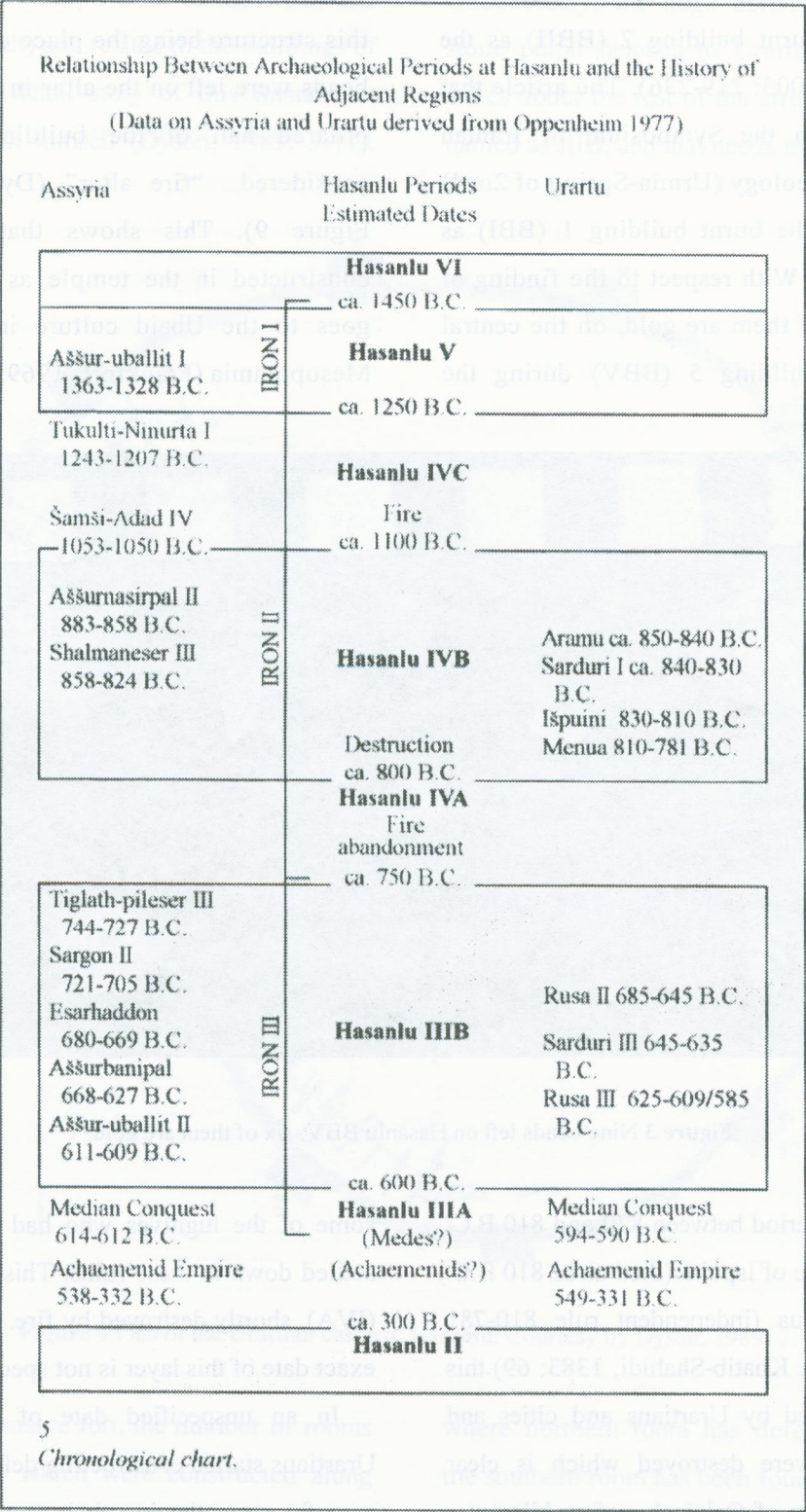


Figure 2 Chronological chart of Hasanlu (Dyson, 1989: 6).

Prof. Dyson in one of his recent articles has introduced the burnt building 2 (BBII) as the temple (Dyson, 2003: 219-236). The article that was presented in the Symposium of Iranian Northwest Archaeology (Urmia-Spring of 2004) still considered the burnt building 1 (BBI) as the ruling house. With respect to the finding of nine beads, six of them are gold, on the central altar of burnt building 5 (BBV) during the

excavation of 1379, shows the probability of this structure being the place of worship. These beads were left on the altar in the middle of the pillared hall of the building which Dyson considered "fire altar" (Dyson, 1989: 114, Figure 9). This shows that the altar was constructed in the temple as "gift altar" that goes to the Ubaid culture in the prehistoric Mesopotamia (Frankfort, 1969: 2).



Figure 3 Nine beads left on Hasanlu BBV, six of them are gold.

However, the period between 820 and 810 B.C. during the joint rule of Ispuini (died circa 810 B.C.) and his son Menua (independent rule 810-781 B.C.) (Piotrovsky & Khatib-Shahidi, 1383: 69) this region was attacked by Uartians and cities and their population were destroyed which is clear from the inscription of Qalatgah, a few kilometer away from Hasanlu. Hasanlu (IVB) was ruined by fire in this attack. After the destruction of buildings

some of the fugitives who had saved their lives, settled down in these ruins. This rehabilitation too (IVA), shortly destroyed by fire. Unfortunately the exact date of this layer is not specified.

In an unspecified date of 8th century B.C. Uartians started constructing defensive forts in the area for strengthening their southeastern borders, built a nearly round castle in the top of Hasanlu Tepe. Mistakenly this huge wall has been named as

second defensive wall (in front of the weak and mud brick first wall) and related to the buildings of IVB phase. The detail story of this mistake is narrated by Dyson himself (Dyson, 1989: 3-11).

Undoubtedly, the huge defensive wall with the stone pulpit belongs to Urartu, but the problem arises about the rest of the structure that has been named as IIIB, and that needs more study.

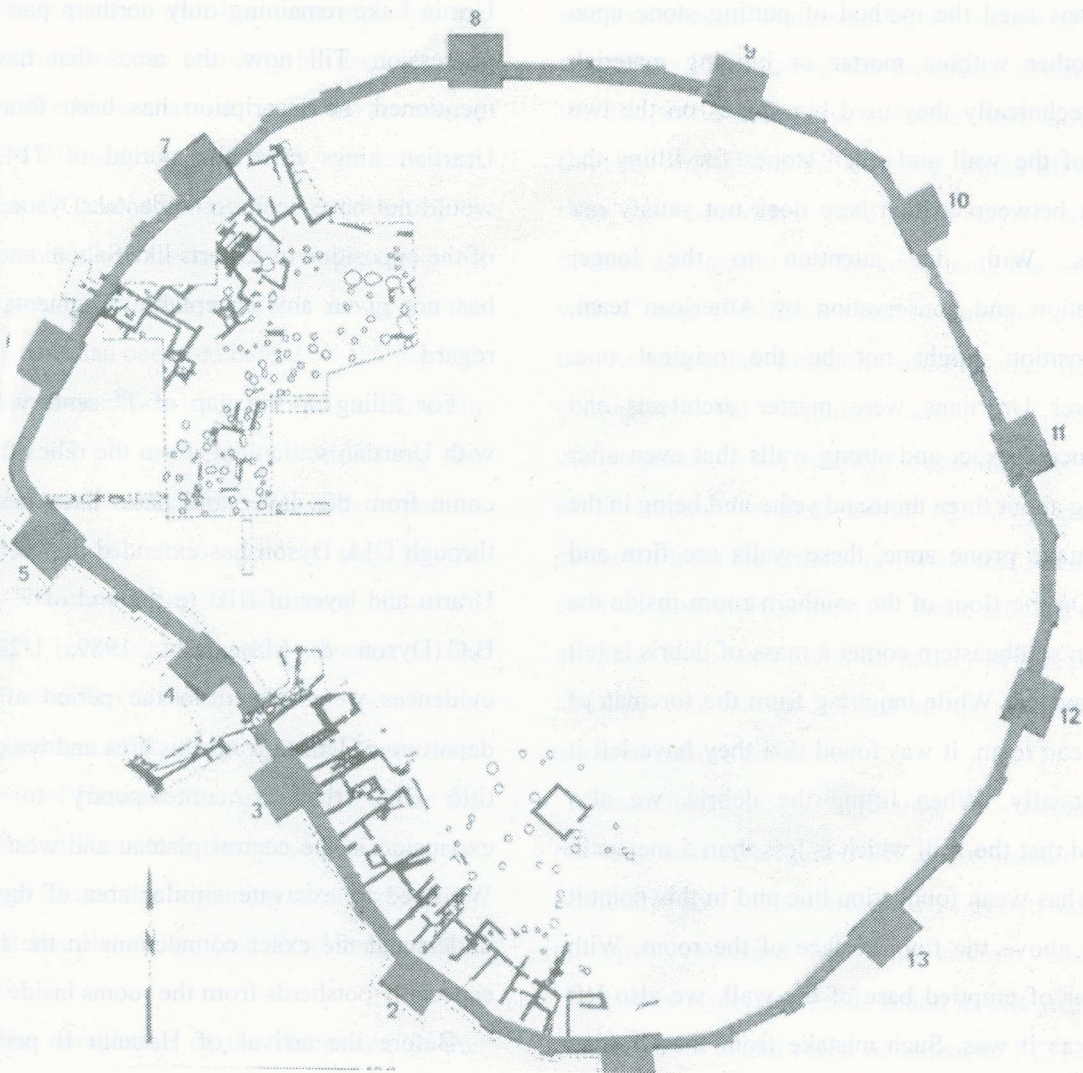


Figure 4 Plan of the Urtian castle of Hasanlu. Courtesy by Dyson, 1989: 7.

Inside this defensive fort, the number of rooms have been found, which were constructed along with the sidewall. Dyson has considered these as the “garrison rooms” of Urtian army. There are two rooms at the two sides of the entrance gate

where northern room has defective layout while the southern room has been found with proper plan. Unlike rest of the Urtian forts, none of these rooms have their opening toward the main gate, which shows that the entrance check posts were

not so important here. In a Military fort, it seems checking was impossible however, all of the Urartian castles had a control room on the right side of entrance with an opening toward it.

In the construction of stone socle of the walls, Urartians used the method of putting stone upon each other without mortar or binding material. Also technically they used big stones on the two sides of the wall and small stones for filling the gap in between, which here does not satisfy our queries. With due attention to the longer excavation and conservation by American team, the position might not be the original one.

However Urartians were master architects and constructed exact and strong walls that even after passing about three thousand years and being in the earthquake prone zone, these walls are firm and safe. On the floor of the southern room inside the gate, in southeastern corner a mass of debris is left unexcavated. While inquiring from the foreman of American team, it was found that they have left it intentionally. When lifting the debris, we also noticed that the wall which is less than 5 meters in length has weak foundation line and in this point it comes above the floor surface of the room. With the fear of emptied base of the wall, we also left debris as it was. Such mistake from the Urartian architects is far from belief.

Prof. Dyson thus has accepted Urartians as the founder of the defensive stonewall and has dated the structure to 8th and 7th centuries, particularly 7th century B.C. According to him, whenever that would have been constructed, it was used till the end of 7th or beginning of 6th century B.C. This view has a lot of critics (Medvedeskaja, 1989: 439-

454). In reality, all the evidence denoted that with 8th campaign of Sargon II in 714 B.C. and crushing defeat to Urartu (it seems with the suicide of Urartian king) ended circa hundred years of rule of Urartu in the eastern, western and southern areas of Urmia Lake remaining only northern part in their possession. Till now, the areas that have been mentioned, no inscription has been found from Urartian kings after the period of 714, which would not have been coincidental. Dyson, despite of the opposition of experts like Salvini and Kleiss, has not given any acceptable arguments in this regard.

For filling up the gap of 7th century Hasanlu with Urartian settlement, from the relics that have come from this layer and dates have been fixed through C14, Dyson has extended the presence of Urartu and layer of IIIB to the end of 7th century B.C. (Dyson & Mascarella, 1989: 1-27). The evidences were related to the period after the departure of Urartu from this area and we offer the title IIIA, that is contemporary to Median expansion in the central plateau and west of Iran. We need to excavate similar area of the site to understand the exact connections in the findings, especially potsherds from the rooms inside the fort.

Before the arrival of Hasanlu II period and discussion about the obligatory changes, there are things to talk about is ruined mud brick upper part of Urartian defensive wall with about 3 meter thickness and 16 meter height. Thickness of the wall in the towers was more than 10 meter. Dyson in his writings has mentioned it mostly as "collapsed wall" that means fallen down by itself (Dyson, 1999b: 115-144). The moment the

thickness and height, there are examples of prehistoric period that the walls even less than 30 cm. and shorter than 3 meter, the lower part remains untouched in the debris of upper part fallen mud bricks. From there, apparently no sign of mud brick part of wall has been reported, the word "destruction" can correctly be used for that condition. We know that, on top of the remaining collapsed wall inside the fort, there was settlement related to 5th and 4th centuries B.C. which is evident from the buff wares with triangle design on them (Dyson, 1999a: 101-110). This shows that the ruining of wall had occurred before 5th century B.C. i.e. the ruined condition by that means occurred in the middle of 6th century B.C. indicating the rebellion by small rulers of the area. One important historical event in relation to this may be the rebellious situation during the beginning of the rule of Darius I. However, with due attention to the dating of the different phases of Iron Age of Iran and decipherment of their potteries have been done on the basis of Hasanlu, the ruined wall inside the Urtian fort at Hasanlu is the best sign for the end of Iron Age III and the beginning of Achaemenian period that has also called Iron IV (Young, 1975: 192).

With the completion of the discussion of the layers during the Urtian occupation and immediately after that, I view that naming of the layer related to 7th century B.C. with IIIA, the only interference has occurred with reference to the early layer i.e. IIIB, which was not accomplished separately, the position of the layer below the collapsed mud brick wall fixed and for the layers above this debris we will be getting other issue. All

the evidences extracted during excavation suggest that there was no gap between this and later stage. Dyson has specified the layers above the collapsed wall as II/IIIA (Dyson, 1999a: 101-110). This interference indicates the nonexistence of the gap and existence of similarities in the middle of these two layers. Concluding the secondary division of the III period below the collapse wall, now the time has arrived that the II period, which till recent time was considered as a single layer, will be divided as Hasanlu IIB for connecting the remains with 5th and 4th centuries B.C., contemporary with the Achaemenian kingdom and Hasanlu IIA for connecting the remains with 3rd century, contemporary to the Seleucid kingdom. Indications of the remains related to the IIB stage can be extracted from the articles of Dyson that have been referred above. However, in these articles much attention have been given on pottery of this period and the information related to the rest of the material culture are absent.

Remains related to Hasanlu IIA includes a building structure named PII and consisted with number of half subterranean rooms in two sides of an open courtyard and one column base in Hellenistic style. Potsherds found in this structure can be dated to the reign of Seleucus I (312-280 B.C.). However due to the limited material remains from this layer during the excavations by American Project, this has been named as "Mystery Period". Perhaps the rule of Atropates in Azerbaijan during Seleucid kingdom had caused minimum cultural changes in the life of the people and as such it is difficult to distinguish this with the period of Achaemenian, which is

immediately before that. In such circumstances only the presence of the new styles and figures that was prevalent during the arrival of Greeks, will open the way. However the excavations of 1380, outside of the Uartian gate and over the layers of that period on the one hand, and absence of famous Triangle Ware on the other

hand, make us believe that we are concerned to layer IIA.

Regarding Hasanlu I, we can only say that outwardly no sign from this is present today on the surface of the site and according to the last information published has been related to Ilkhanid period (Danti, 2002).



Figure 5 Architectural remains excavated at 1380.

Conclusion

Now, due to the changes and new information that were discussed above, I propose for the correction of the chronological chart of upper levels at

Hasanlu, comparing with table figured out with Prof. Dyson (fig.2) and prepared by his own method:

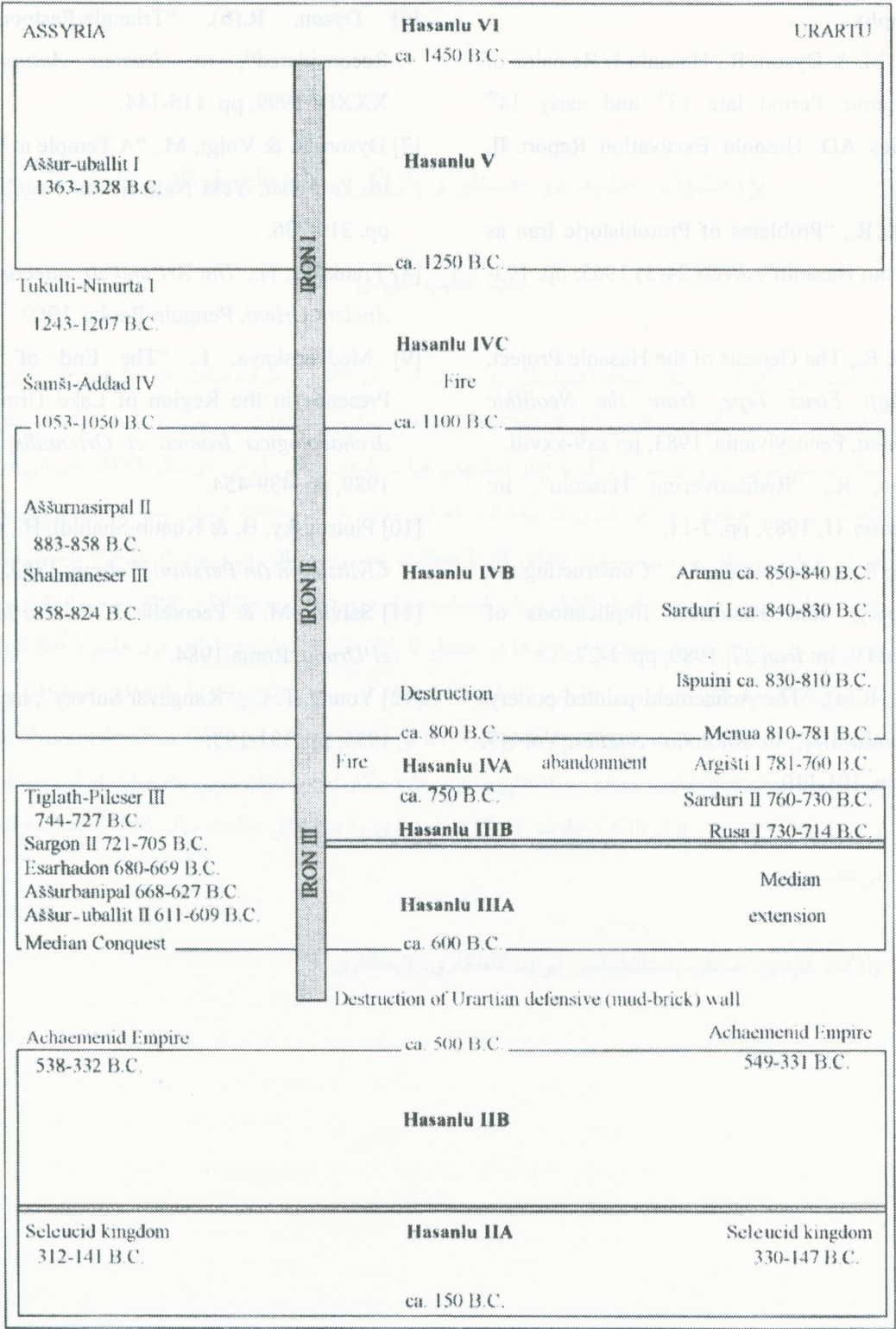


Figure 6 New chronological chart of Hasanlu proposed for author

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