

Elamite Community and Representation at Kurangun

43844979 Kaula, Emma Jean

Bachelor of Arts, Ancient History
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Abstract

Perched above the Fahliyan River in Fars, Iran, is the open-air sanctuary of Kurangun. It is decorated with three panels of monumental reliefs depicting ritual scenes. Its central panel is dated between the 17th and 16th centuries BC in the Sukkalmah period, whilst two additions were made during the later Neo-Elamite period, c.9th-8th, and c.7th-6th centuries BC. The reliefs represent Elamite worshippers in contrasting ways: the Sukkalmah period relief depicts six elite attendees receiving flowing water from a divine couple. The Neo-Elamite reliefs show a distinct community of people, numbering around 40 figures, who descend the sanctuary's stairs.

This project concerns the communities represented in the two different periods, and probes the identities of these people, questioning the socio-political background of Kurangun.

In order to contextualise the sanctuary and gain an understanding of the communities who worshipped there, this project utilises an art historical and semiotic approach. An art historical analysis consults visual and iconographic parallels, enabling a contextualisation of the site's features and relationship with the natural environment. Furthermore, an understanding of Kurangun's semiotic capacity provides insight into how signs and symbols were transmitted and received.

Due to Kurangun's melding of political and ritual expression, the role the sanctuary played for the Elamite communities becomes apparent; allowing for a further articulation of the communities represented, their relationship with each other, and the world around them.

Statement of Originality

This work has not previously been submitted for a degree or diploma in any university. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the thesis itself.

(Signed)_____

Date: 9th October 2019

Emma Jean Kaula

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I would like to acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the of this land, the Wattamattagal clan of the Darug nation, and pay my respects to Elders past, present, and future, who have nurtured this land since the Dreamtime. Their sovereignty on the continent now called Australia was never ceded.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Ancient communities and political centres demonstrated their power in different ways; in ancient southwestern Iran, they constructed monumental rock reliefs depicting worship practices, conceptions of authority and power, and their cultural identities. The open-air sanctuary of Kurangun is an example of the way that diverse people groups of Elam expressed their cultural and political identities. It offers a unique glimpse into the political and ritual lives of the Elamites, as the sanctuary was first used in the Sukkalmah period (1900-1500 BC) and subsequently in the Neo- Elamite period (1100-539 BC). In these two periods, there appears to have been two different people groups that worshipped, or at least were depicted, at Kurangun in its three reliefs. This is based on the contrasting artistic tradition evident between the Sukkalmah-dated relief and the two Neo-Elamite-dated reliefs, which demonstrates how the sanctuary functioned within each community.

This thesis seeks to examine the individuals and communities represented on the reliefs of Kurangun, interrogating their presence within the socio-political context of the times. This quest will inform our understanding of Elamite complex and evolving diverse society as well as the role of highland open-air sanctuaries in the formation of religious and cultural identities in the ancient world.

1.1 Elam

1.1.1 What is Elam?

The name ‘Elam’ will be used in this study both as a geographical term as well as referring to the inhabitants of southwestern Iran. Although the name is an artificial construct made by Mesopotamian scribes, ‘Elam’ has been typically used throughout scholarship to refer to the region and its diverse populations.¹ The term ‘Elam’ will not be isolated to those who used Elamite and are thought to have had a shared culture, as the geographical extent of Elam at the height of its power included such a large area that we cannot expect there to be a homogenous language and culture. This is especially relevant as there is no indication that the

¹ Potts 1999: 1.

communities inhabiting southwestern Iran ever identified themselves by a common term as all-encompassing as Elam.²

The highland tribes, although they likely experienced close contact with the Susian-based lowland state, viewed themselves as distinct from those in the lowlands. However, geographically, they fall under the umbrella of ‘Elam’ for this study, and as such, will be referred to as ‘highland tribes’ or ‘highland Elamites’.

1.1.2 Geography

Elam’s physical geography played an important role in its politics. This is because the lowland regions of Susa and Khuzestan bordered Mesopotamia in the west, and thus experienced a heightened level of cross-cultural contact, both peaceful and aggressive in nature. This geographical scope of Elam also extended from the Khuzestan plain to Fars in the southeast, which encompassed a lot of the more mountainous, highland regions. Daniel Potts also takes the northern boundary of Elam as the ‘Royal Road’, extending from Baghdad to Kermanshah, Kangavar, and Hamadan.³ There likely also was a cultural distinction between these two areas, probably between Ram Hormoz and Behbahan, or Darab and Sirjan.⁴ Most of the Elamite landscape is encapsulated within highland Elam and the central and southern Zagros mountains. The mountains experienced varying degrees of climate, with cold winters and hot summers, but toward Fars there is a reduced elevation and precipitation where rivers flowed more seasonally. Further, regions have differing climates ranging from arid to semi-arid to dry. It is these varying climates and rainfall measurements that encouraged a joint method of agriculture and transhumant pastoralism in order to sustain the population.

1.1.3 Highland and Lowland Elam

Elam, at its greatest extent, consisted of the lowland Khuzestan plain, and the highland Zagros extending to the district of Fars (fig.1). The Elamite state was located at Susa, in the lowland

² Potts 1999: 3; There are many regions and people groups attested to in late 3rd millennium sources, and Persian period sources like the Persepolis Fortification Archive that provide an image of the diverse populations that covered the area, all of who were covered under the umbrella-term of ‘Elam’ (Potts 1999: 4). See Emberling & Yoffee (1999) for a discussion of ethnicity in Mesopotamia; although it doesn’t specifically refer to Elam, it provides a useful way of thinking about ethnicity regarding the diaspora of Southwestern Iran.

³ Potts 1999: 10.

⁴ Henkelman 2003: 119; Potts 1999: 10.

plains, while the majority of the ‘Elamite’ peoples lived in the larger highland regions.⁵ Iconographic, onomastic, and epigraphical evidence suggests that the two regions had differing cultural traditions and ways of life: those residing in the plains led primarily sedentary, agriculturally based lifestyles, while the highland communities had dimorphic ways of life.⁶ Within this dimorphic model a portion of the community lived in the cities and engaged in agriculture to produce capital and sustenance; where the other portion were transhumant pastoralists and would seasonally traverse the mountains with their sheep and goats in order to sustain their population.⁷

1.1.4 Elamite and Iranian Acculturation: A Historical Context

Another characteristic that appears to be distinctive to Elamite culture from the late Middle- to early Neo-Elamite period is the concept of an Elamite-Iranian acculturation. The Iranian-speaking communities are thought to have migrated into the highlands around 1000 BC during which there was likely a level of integration between them and the indigenous Elamite tribes.⁸ The integration of Elamite and Iranian communities would eventually become visible in Persian culture wherein Elamite tradition existed alongside the culture of other Iranian-speaking groups. Discovered in Nippur during the Kassite period (c. 1595-1155 BC) were several personal names in cuneiform texts that appear to be Iranian in origin, indicating the presence of some Indo-Iranian speakers.⁹ However, the first evidence to specifically attest to Iranian speakers in western Iran was in the Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) who encountered Iranian communities in the Zagros highlands.¹⁰ There is prevailing evidence that suggests that there was a process of integration between the Elamites of the hinterlands and migrating Iranian speakers. According to Henkelman, the border region between the Khuzestan plains and the highlands were instrumental for understanding the idea of acculturating Elamites and Iranians. This is the region of Ram Hormoz and Behbahan which demonstrates elements of Elamite material culture alongside that of the Iranians in Fars, discussed in §7.4.2.

⁵ Potts 1999: 4; Most people living in the highlands identified themselves as Anshanite, Shimashkian, from Harshi, Sapum, and Kimash, and with other non-Elamite ethnic names (Zadok 1991: 226-30).

⁶ Examples includes the Arjan bowl, the Persepolis fortification archive, and other etymological evidence.

⁷ Henkelman 2008: 42; See Potts (2014: 2-4) for an outline of the main features of pastoral nomadism in pre-modern Iran and models of semi-nomadic pastoralism that may be applied to the period.

⁸ Tavernier 2018: 164; Henkelman 2008: 47.

⁹ Potts 2014: 59; The Medes are one group that has been associated with Iranian migration into the Zagros region, additionally the Cimmerians and Scythians have also been believed to have entered the area in the mid-first millennium BC. But although there is evidence of this, Potts states there is nothing that suggests that these people collectively remained in the region (Potts 2014: 87).

¹⁰ Tavernier 2018: 164.

1.2 Kurangun

Kurangun is an open-air sanctuary with monumental rock reliefs located in the Mamasani region of southwest Fars in Iran (fig. 2). It is positioned on the southern face of the Kuh-e Pataweh 80 metres above the Fahliyan river which dominates the surrounding landscape (fig. 3). In order to reach the sanctuary, one must descend three flights of stairs which links the hill to the rectangular platform of the site. The sanctuary is situated in a distinct middle-ground between highland Anshan and lowland Susa, specifically on a road that would take travellers to and from the region, likely for economic purposes, and would have been a convenient path for transhumant pastoralists.¹¹

The Kurangun sanctuary is decorated with three reliefs. The centre relief, dated to the early Sukkalmah period (c.19th-17th centuries BC), will be referred to as Kurangun I (fig. 4a).¹² It depicts a divine couple with six attendants or worshippers who receive two streams of water flowing from an object held by the male deity. The platform of the sanctuary is dated to the same time and has 26 swimming fish carved into its surface.

The other two reliefs are both dated to the Neo-Elamite period. To the left of the Kurangun I relief will be referred to as Kurangun II (fig. 4b) and is the earlier of the two, dated between 9th and 8th centuries BC.¹³ In this relief, around 40 figures are represented standing or proceeding down a staircase that mirrors the physical ones used to access the sanctuary. Kurangun III (fig. 4c), to the right of the central panel, is dated between the 7th and 6th centuries BC and shows seven, badly eroded, individuals also climbing a staircase in the same manner as the Kurangun II relief.¹⁴

1.2.1 Function

The main function of the Kurangun sanctuary was as a place of worship. It demonstrates Elamite art and religious ideologies which would suggest how the site was visualised in both the Sukkalmah and the Neo-Elamite periods. There is an indication, based on the contrasts in iconography between the Kurangun I, and Kurangun II & III reliefs, that the sanctuary was used and conceptualised differently by the people who worshipped there in both periods. This

¹¹ Potts 1990: 143.

¹² Álvarez-Mon 2019: 19.

¹³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 19.

¹⁴ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 19.

is an aspect that is discussed later in the project, but concerns the traditions of each community represented, and the socio-political background in which the reliefs were constructed and observed.

2. THE MAMASANI PLAIN: An Archaeological Survey

The Mamasani plain, in which Kurangun is situated, is located within western Fars around a series of fertile mountain valleys along the main road between Susa and the highland Kur River Basin. The excavation and survey of the region aimed to provide an overview of key sites along this route of communication, specifically between Susa and Anshan.¹⁵ The most prominent sites surveyed were Tol-e Nurabad and Tol-e Spid, which were key sites of Elamite occupation in the region. Tol-e Nurabad is located approximately 14.8 km south-southeast of Kurangun, whilst Tol-e Spid is situated just under 3 km northeast of the sanctuary. Tol-e Spid was clearly associated with Kurangun, based on its synchronous occupation and proximity. And although Tol-e Nurabad is much further away, on the other side of the Fahliyan river, it is still connected to Kurangun and may be relevant to the function of the site.

2.1 Regional Settlement Patterns

The Dasht-e Rostam-e Yek and Dasht-e Rostam-e Do valleys were surveyed in order to establish broad patterns of settlement phases in the Mamasani region.¹⁶ Painted buff or light brown ceramics, red slipped, and grey wares which include grit and vegetal temper all point to occupation during the Kaftari period (2200-1600 BC).¹⁷ The increase in Kaftari wares indicates that there was an increase in the sedentary population in the valleys, specifically in Dasht-e Rostam-e Do, because of their connections with long-term occupation.¹⁸ However, the overwhelming presence of caprid remains suggests that some form of pastoralism was utilised alongside agriculture that accompanies a sedentary lifestyle.¹⁹

The chronological occupation of Fars is difficult to determine. The presence of both Middle Elamite plain wares, which have parallels from Susa and Chogha Zanbil, and painted Qaleh, Shogha, and Teimuran wares at Fars, demonstrate its occupation during the late 2nd to 1st

¹⁵ Refer to Figure 1, the Map of Elam and relevant sites, to view the settlement dispersion.

¹⁶ Zeidi et al. 2009: 147.

¹⁷ Zeidi et al. 2009: 155; The Kaftari Period refers to the period in which 'Kaftari ware' were utilised in Fars. The term was first coined by Louis Vanden Berghe based on surveys of the Marv Dasht region of the Kur River Valley in highland Fars (Vanden Berghe 1954: 402-403). The chronological dates of the Kaftari Period (c. 2200-1600 BC) originated from Tal-e Malyan and parallels from the region of Khuzestan (Miller & Sumner 2004: 87-88). The Kaftari period occurs within Old Elamite period (c.2700-1500 BC), although it is not exactly aligned with its chronological dates and overlaps with the Sukkalmah dynasty that concerns this work. This is why the term 'Kaftari' is usually isolated to the archaeology and relevant discussion, rather than a determination utilised throughout this paper.

¹⁸ These sites are MS1, MS4, MS8, MS12, MS14, MS24, MS44, MS47, MS51 (Zeidi et al. 2009: 155).

¹⁹ See §7.4.1; 7.4.2; 7.4.3. for more information on the co-existence of sedentary populations and transhumant pastoralists.

millennium BC; however, ceramics of the Middle- and Neo-Elamite periods are similar in form, making it difficult to draw a firm distinction.²⁰

2.2 Tol-e Nurabad and Tol-e Spid

Tol-e Nurabad was a site occupied from the Neolithic to Hellenistic periods and the period during which Kurangun was in use is no exception.²¹ The settlement mound covers 9 hectares and is 23 metres higher than the surrounding plain itself; but of this area, only two small two by two metre trenches were excavated, the first, Trench A, was cut 5m down whilst Trench B was 7m deep.²² The rest of the site remains to be excavated. A wide range of archaeological finds, including ceramics, and a ‘pyro-technological installation’ demonstrate that it was still occupied during the Kaftari period, or Old Elamite Period.²³

Large mudbrick features found in Phase B9 at Tol-e Nurabad are similar to structures found at Tal-e Malyan and Susa during the Middle- to Neo-Elamite periods, suggesting that its use continued into this epoch, despite the ambiguous pottery.²⁴ This indicates that Tol-e Nurabad was not only geographically connected to Kurangun via the Fahliyan River, but was also occupied during the periods of Kurangun’s use. There is a possibility that the inhabitants of Tol-e Nurabad were the same people who worshipped at the sanctuary in the Neo-Elamite period, if there was a processional ritual or pilgrimage associated with the site.²⁵ And although this may be impossible to pin-point, it at least attests to highland occupation during the same period in which the additions to Kurangun’s reliefs were made.

Tol-e Spid, near the centre of the plain of Dasht-e Rostam-e Yek, is the most important site regarding the study of Kurangun, as stratified remains indicate that it was occupied in the Sukkalmah period, contemporary to the central panel at the sanctuary.²⁶ The site is much smaller than Tol-e Nurabad, covering 2 hectares and rising 3-4 metres above the plain; however of all this space, only one trench was excavated measuring 2 by 3 metres.²⁷

Occupation of Tol-e Spid during the Sukkalmah period is further confirmed by the presence

²⁰ Zeidi et al. 2009: 155-56.

²¹ Weeks et al. 2009: 31.

²² Weeks et al. 2009: 31.

²³ Weeks et al. 2009: 72.

²⁴ Weeks et al. 2009: 72; The term “phase” refers to the stratigraphy of Tol-e Nurabad and Tol-e Spid in which individual trenches are assigned to phases which denote a different stratigraphical level. So, phase A3 is the third stratigraphical level from the surface. Additionally, an ‘a’ or ‘b’ is assigned where changes in ceramics were evident (Weeks et. al. 2009: 32).

²⁵ See §7.3.1.

²⁶ Petrie et al. 2009: 90.

²⁷ Petrie et al. 2009: 89.

of brown painted ceramics, which have parallels in Susa and the Kur river basin.²⁸ An inscription found at the site suggests that Shilhak-Inshushinak built a temple to the goddess Kilahshupir at the site, implying that the Mamasani region, or at the very least Tol-e Spid, was covered by the Elamite state during his reign.²⁹

The site is also connected to the Cheshma Gurab, whose waters empty into the Fahliyan river, connecting it to Kurangun by water.³⁰ Kurangun is less than 3km away from Tol-e Spid and faces away from the site, toward the river; though, behind and above the relief is a flat terrace area, which contains remnants of structures made from well-laid dry stone.³¹ Although the function of these structures is unknown, they do have an unobstructed line of sight to Tol-e Spid, which may have cultic or cultural implications that are not yet apparent. Regardless of our current lack of information, it is possible to state that there was a deliberate connection made between this terrace area and both Kurangun and Tol-e Spid, creating an enduring connection between the sites.

Inhabitancy at Tol-e Spid during later periods is less easy to determine. Although it is fairly certain the site was in use during the Old Elamite period, with a possible re-settlement in the late 2nd millennium BC, there is only tentative evidence for occupation during the Middle Elamite period.³² Further, Neo-Elamite occupation of Tol-e Spid may be insinuated by limited surface finds at the site, and additions made to the Kurangun relief in the same period, if we assume that the worshippers were living at Tol-e Spid, which is a suggestion that over-reaches the current archaeological data.

Regarding the nature of the communities settled at Tol-e Spid, it is necessary to note that caprids were the predominant faunal group consumed.³³ This is common at both Tol-e Nurabad and Tol-e Spid where they make up 65%-95% of the number of identifiable specimens, in mostly equal ratios.³⁴ This supports the idea that, although these people lived in sedentary settlements and relied on agriculture for plant-based food production, they still depended on pastoralism for their animal-based food production.³⁵

²⁸ Petrie et al. 2009: 178.

²⁹ Petrie et al. 2009: 89.

³⁰ Petrie et al. 2009: 89-90.

³¹ Petrie et al. 2009: 90.

³² Petrie et al. 2009: 179.

³³ Mashkour 2009: 136.

³⁴ Mashkour 2009: 136.

³⁵ Potts 2014: 41; There may also be rodent activity contemporary with occupation which may inform us more about agricultural activity, although it is yet to be further explored (Petrie et al. 2009: 138).

The archaeology informs us that the region was occupied in the Sukkalmah and Middle Elamite periods alongside the Kurangun I relief. There is not a great amount of evidence concerning Neo-Elamite activity at Tol-e Nurabad and Tol-e Spid; however, there are still many sites that are yet to be excavated. Previous studies have claimed that there were large movements of nomadic pastoralists during this period and that this accounts for the lack of Neo-Elamite material culture in highland sites.³⁶ Such theories have been recently refuted and it is more likely that people gradually stopped occupying these sites in favour of other, un-excavated, settlements.³⁷

³⁶ Such scholars include A. Alizadeh (2008; 2010) and Sumner (1986). Though they have greatly contributed to the field, until recently, their views largely went unchallenged (Potts 2014: 40).

³⁷ Potts 2014.

3. FRAMEWORK AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Framework

3.1.1 Socio-Political Context

The socio-political context of Elam has been one of the most researched areas of the field and exists mostly from Mesopotamian sources such as the Mari archive and the Babylonian Chronicles, with some Elamite material including the Acropole texts, some inscribed bricks, and other archaeological evidence. Understanding the context in which the Kurangun relief was constructed is critical as it allows for a comparison of the symbols and iconography on the rock relief to be compared with what was happening at the time. It enables a look into why certain iconography was utilised, as well as how these symbols were appropriated and manipulated to achieve the artist's or patron's purposes. The socio-political context forms the background of this study and is utilised alongside the framework of cognitive archaeology. This is so Kurangun's rock art can be accurately analysed, providing an understanding and background of the people who worshipped there.

3.1.2 Cognitive Archaeology

Cognitive archaeology utilises symbols in order to comprehend the lifeways and understanding of ancient people, as all thought and speech is believed to be based on symbols. In this case, symbols are representations of objects or concepts that are intentionally drawn, painted, carved, or made.³⁸ Symbols depicted in art or other types of material objects inform us of aspects of ritual, how the communities related to the environment and landscape, the social relationships people formed, in addition to the organisation and power structures present in that society. Fogelin has criticised some cognitive archaeologists, stating that the practice has downplayed the meaning of the symbol, whilst emphasising the creative and experiential aspects associated with symbols.³⁹ However, studying symbolic meaning alongside the act of creation and experience enables a fuller understanding of the mindsets and collective sentiments present in ancient societies.

³⁸ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 391; 395-400.

³⁹ Fogelin 2007: 64.

3.1.2.1 Ritual and Religion

Ritual is defined by Roy Rappaport as the performance of undeviating, formalised acts and words which may or may not be devised by the performers.⁴⁰ The organisation of the formalised acts and words imposes ritual form on the meaning within the acts and words that are performed. This is where ritual can become a symbolic medium and act as a method of communication, especially when we have artistic depictions of it.⁴¹ Religious ritual has the capacity to reaffirm, at regular intervals, the ideologies that defined the social group's unified identity and character.⁴² This is because, as according to Emile Durkheim, ritual and religious gathering acted as a way to further bind the community, as well as provide an avenue for participants to reassert their "common sentiments".⁴³ In the case of many ancient societies, including the Elamites, these collective ideas usually exist in the ways they understood the world. Additionally, this also extended into how the society understood their own self-image and political position.

Furthermore, it is necessary to note that religious and secular rituals are often not distinct, nor clearly identifiable.⁴⁴ In fact, I believe that when it comes to ancient societies, such rituals do not exist purely in the secular world. But, in terms of defining places where cultic activity occurred, Renfrew and Bahn list four main components that may distinguish a place of cultic activity from another. These are: the focusing of attention, where aspects of archaeology, the natural world, and others may emphasise the ritual experience; a boundary zone between the numinous and the outside world, which can consist of an archaeological feature or concepts of cleanliness and sacredness; the presence of the deity; and worship participation.⁴⁵

The Kurangun sanctuary demonstrates each of these aspects, where the natural landscape, of which the Fahliyan river is a major part, combines with imagery on the reliefs to emphasise ritual experience. Additionally, the sanctuary was a place for worship and ritual to occur, and has been conceived of as a place that housed the divine couple, separating the divine space and the outside world.⁴⁶ Concerning the final two criteria, in the Kurangun reliefs we see the deities represented in addition to worshippers from the Sukkalmah and Neo-Elamite periods.

⁴⁰ Rappaport 1999: 24.

⁴¹ Rappaport 1999: 27.

⁴² Durkheim (1912) 1961: 474-75.

⁴³ Cristi 2001: 32.

⁴⁴ Fogelin 2007: 60; Bradley 2005: 33.

⁴⁵ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 415-16.

⁴⁶ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 758; However, the boundary between the secular and religious space is blurred as the water motifs are present in both the Kurangun I relief and the natural environment. This may have been part of

The Kurangun sanctuary and its reliefs provides an opportunity to investigate the ritual practices and religious beliefs of the communities who worshipped there. In addition, this may also inform us of other socio-political aspects of their daily life. But we must be careful as according to Renfrew:

“The archaeologist...cannot observe beliefs: one can only work with material remains, the consequences of actions. In favourable cases...these remains are the result of actions which we can plausibly interpret as arising from religious belief.”⁴⁷

Since the Elamites depicted themselves, their ritual practice, and some expression of religious belief, we can begin to understand their common sentiments and compare this to what was happening politically in their world. This is because the intentional action of creation naturally holds a connection between the owner or artist and the art that was made, as well as the meaning intrinsic in the act of manufacture.⁴⁸

3.1.2.2 Establishment of Place

The establishment of place occurs when a type of centre is constructed, such as the burial place of ancestral dead in a house or collective tomb or cemetery, a meeting place or sacred centre.⁴⁹ This establishing of place is a deliberate symbolic construction which brings into the physical world the social and spiritual meaning attached to the landscape.⁵⁰ Tilley explains that ‘places’ and the landscapes that they reside in are inscribed on the day to day lives of individuals. This means that the land is ascribed meaning and memory defined by individual and cultural experiences that provide these places with powers.⁵¹ The locale acts dialectically in this way, ‘creating’ the people who reside there and shaping them through the powers of meaning and memory. This leads to feelings of belonging, a rootedness to place, and identity.⁵² In this way, rather than being a static part of the environment, ‘place’ is a dynamic and living concept.⁵³

Kurangun is an open-air sanctuary, carved into a cliffside. It is a place of worship that was constructed and embedded into the natural landscape. The role the sanctuary had as a ‘place’

Elamite conception of religiosity in which the world and their daily lives were inseparable from the gods who presided over the heavens and the earth (Quintana 2018: 730).

⁴⁷ Renfrew 1985: 12.

⁴⁸ Yalcin 2014: 16.

⁴⁹ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 403.

⁵⁰ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 404.

⁵¹ Tacon 1999: 122.

⁵² Tilley 1994: 26.

⁵³ Ullmann 2010: 25.

for the Elamite communities was unique due to the different periods of occupation construction of the reliefs.

Rosenfeld in 1997 explained that “the creation or maintenance of ancestral images is restricted to individuals according to their structurally determined identities” where the creation and renovation of rock art is an act of expressing their identity and relationship to place; thus rock art has the capacity to convey and mediate social relations.⁵⁴ Additionally, because the depiction of imagery occurs within the constructs of a formalised art system, it can be understood to primarily relate socially constructed identity-place relationships.⁵⁵ Acknowledging these relationships between identity and place allows us to understand how the sanctuary of Kurangun functioned and how it was viewed by the worshippers and local communities, seeing that the Kurangun reliefs were constructed in different times by different Elamite peoples. Furthermore, considering the making of place in the symbolic and ritual landscape permits an examination of how and why they were constructed and the way they were conceptualised and ideologically infused. This brings us to an addressing of the power structures embedded in the making of place.⁵⁶

3.1.2.3 Social Relationships

Depictions on flat surfaces has the possibility to show relationships between symbols.⁵⁷ When it comes to social relationships, the use of symbols often structures and regulates interpersonal behaviour.⁵⁸ Fundamentally, identity is founded on a sense of belonging where people see themselves as parts of certain groups.⁵⁹ These groups are reflected in the material world which depict social relations defined by the economic and social power that different groups could generate.⁶⁰ This is where we see interactions between different people and interactions between people and deities, including methods of representation such as scale, register, space, and orientation.

3.1.2.4 Organisation and Power

⁵⁴ Rosenfeld 1997: 296-7.

⁵⁵ Rosenfeld 1997: 297.

⁵⁶ Fleisher 2013: 9.

⁵⁷ Renfrew & Bahn 2005; 423.

⁵⁸ Renfrew & Zubrow 1994: 6.

⁵⁹ Yalcin 2014: 1.

⁶⁰ Yalcin 2014: 4.

Cognitive archaeology and the intrinsic social meaning entrenched in rock art also provides insight into the organisation and power structures of the society represented. The three reliefs of Kurangun depict an iconography of power that was able to be recognised across the wider Elamite and, likely, Mesopotamian regions. The utilising of symbols in monumental reliefs allowed those in power, or those represented, to command obedience and conformity from their subjects.⁶¹ At Kurangun we see rules and conventions that are followed, as well as some that are borrowed from Mesopotamia, and utilised in order to ensure that this iconography resonated with a wide audience.

3.2 Methodology

When first deciding on what methodology would fit this project best, I first divided each section of the Kurangun relief in a way which would allow me to consider the semiotic aspects, the art historical aspects, and socio-political context separately. However, upon conducting research and putting together my arguments and hypotheses, to consider these ideas separately would be a disservice to the project, limiting the work that has been done. Accordingly, the project has grown organically, leaning on the field of art history to allow a comprehensive analysis of Kurangun and the communities represented. In this, I have emphasised the semiotics and aesthetics of the site to inform my investigation against the contextual background.

The semiotic capacity of Kurangun refers to the way in which signs and symbols were transmitted at the site. Symbolic transmission allows for the communication of other accounts which can supplement personal experience.⁶² For Kurangun, the reliefs were vessels in which other accounts, in this case the elites' or artists' views, were transmitted. When this account is communicated, it has the potential to become part of public knowledge and be preserved into tradition.⁶³ Because this tradition and communal knowledge was physically attached to the sanctuary through the reliefs, Kurangun was imbued with increased meaning and significance as a place within the highland Elamite communities.

The aesthetic nature of Kurangun must be understood in the way that the sanctuary's aesthetic qualities and its practical functions are not, and were not, mutually exclusive.⁶⁴ Many

⁶¹ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 41.

⁶² Rappaport 1999: 5.

⁶³ Rappaport 1999: 5.

⁶⁴ Heyd 2017: 11.

aesthetically appreciable objects also occupy a day-to-day role, or a habitual role, within the communities the creators belong to.⁶⁵ This may be a small-scale family altar in the home, such as those in the houses of Pompeii and Herculaneum, or monumental reliefs such as Darius' relief and trilingual inscription at Bisotun. Kurangun occupies both aesthetic and functional spheres where it is an architectural structure with artistic relief that was used habitually. Additionally, when something is made aesthetically pleasing, there is an intention behind the act, some extra care taken in the depictions made. In saying this, considering the aesthetic nature of Kurangun serves to enhance the role the reliefs had in ritual experience at the sanctuary, in addition to the intention behind the monuments' creation.

Considering the historical context of the sanctuary helps to situate the depictions and iconography utilised. In this, a certain 'style' may be determined, allowing for a chronology to be cited, as well as an interpretation of the scenes. The socio-political context enables a background to the rock art's construction to be recognised, and a greater comprehension as to why certain symbols, iconography, and visual narratives were employed.

We must keep in mind, however, that an interpretation of iconography and the symbols applied rely on the effort of the researcher and is a subjective action at its core. Furthermore, there is no direct source that informs us of the Kurangun sanctuary and what occurred there, nor its significance through different periods of Elamite history. However, considering these aspects together enables the creation of a valid interpretative narrative of the reliefs.

⁶⁵ Heyd 2017: 11.

4. LIMITATIONS

Naturally this project faces a set of limitations. The primary issues that my research faces are the lack of archaeology and material culture that is available. We have plenty from lowland sites such as Susa, a limited amount of information from Tol-e Spid and Tal-e Malyan, as well as other sites. However, there is still much archaeology to be undertaken in other highland areas. This severely limits the information available pertaining to the communities represented at Kurangun. But we do have information from other ritual sites which inform us, at a base level, the ritual practices that were enacted as well as the self-representation of lowland and highland people. All other detail is mostly speculation that is enhanced by other fields such as cognitive archaeology, art history, and a consideration of the socio-political context of Elam and the rest of the Near East.

Though, I do believe that in order to gain an image of the societies of Elam, we must use techniques such as art history and cognitive archaeology. This is important when we try to understand how these people experienced their world and their own lives.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

This project sits in the small field of Elamite studies which, during this time, has a limited number of contributors when comparing this area to others. In order to understand where the research stands and to situate my research, we must contextualise the literature and outline how the field became what it is today.

Most of the excavations of Elamite and Achaemenid sites in Iran were undertaken by French archaeologists and excavation teams. The first surveys were performed by Marcel and Jane Dieulafoy who worked at Susa in two seasons between 1885 and 1886 while Jaques de Morgan explored Iran between 1889 and 1891. These surveys, especially the Dieulafoys', were met with some backlash especially with disturbances to the local communities and issues regarding the reporting of finds.⁶⁶ In 1895, the French made an agreement with the Persian government which gave French archaeologists the rights over all the excavations in Iran.⁶⁷ Following this, Elam would become a focus of French research, especially with the creation of the *Délégation Scientifique Française en Perse* in 1897, and excavations at Susa intensified until the first World War upon Susa's occupation by the British in 1916.⁶⁸

Donald E. McCown and Alexander Langsdorff co-directed the excavations at Tal-e Bakun under the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago in 1932. During this period, Ernst Herzfeld undertook surveys in Iran concentrating on Pasargadae and Persepolis (1931-34, followed by Erich F. Schmidt from 1934-39).⁶⁹ Herzfeld, earlier investigated the Mamasani region of Fars in 1924 and made the first European discovery of the Kurangun rock reliefs and other highland reliefs.⁷⁰ Schmidt also had a hand in the excavations in central Luristan in 1938 until Louis Vanden Berghe, from Ghent University in Belgium, made further progress in 1965 until 1979 when the Belgian Luristan Mission came to a close due to the Iranian Revolution in the same year.⁷¹

Prior to the Luristan Mission, Vanden Berghe undertook surveys in Fars from 1951-1964 (on eight separate occasions) performing excavations at several different sites such as Tal-e Teymuran and Kunar Siah. He was also one of the first to photograph some of the Elamite

⁶⁶ Chevalier 2018: 42.

⁶⁷ Chevalier 2018: 45.

⁶⁸ Chevalier 2018: 46, 53.

⁶⁹ Carter 1998.

⁷⁰ Potts 1990: 146.

⁷¹ Carter 1998.

rock reliefs such as Kurangun.⁷²

Tal-e Malyan, ancient Anshan, was excavated in June-July 1971 and October-November 1972, by John Alden, Elizabeth Carter, Frances Sumner and others.⁷³ This project was sponsored by the University Museum, University of Pennsylvania, alongside the Ohio State University the Metropolitan Museum of Art, and the Ford Foundation and seasons continued up to 1978.⁷⁴ Following this period of investigation, a sounding was performed at Tal-e Malyan in 1999 by Kamyar Abdi.⁷⁵ Later in 2004 further excavations proceeded by the Fars Archaeology Project between October 22 and November 26.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 catalysed a collapse in the field of Elamite archaeology both abroad and within Iran.⁷⁶ This significantly hindered the understanding of Elam until the re-invigoration of the field in recent years.

Because of the monopoly that the French had on excavations in Iran, the English works, until more recently, have been quite limited. George Cameron (1936) wrote one of the first works concerning the political history of Elam which was later followed by Matthew Stolper and Elizabeth Carter's work (1984) which provided a political and archaeological history that became a reliable overview of Elam during the time. Later in 1999, Daniel Potts published his comprehensive, archaeologically based study which sought to re-frame the study of Elam. Further, Potts also wrote one of the first substantive works regarding Kurangun which focused on the deities displayed on the reliefs.⁷⁷ Javier Álvarez-Mon, in response to his more recent travels to Kurangun, composed several works discussing the aesthetic nature of the sanctuary, especially pertaining to environmental aesthetics, and its relationship to the religious function of the site.⁷⁸ These works form the base of my understanding of Kurangun itself and has allowed me to expand my understanding of Elamite society.

Daniel Potts' 2004 study of Kurangun re-focused investigation on the deities, highlighting the iconography of water and the sanctuary's relationship to the Fahliyan river. Potts contextualises water in the wider Near East, utilising specific examples of how it was

⁷² Carter 1998.

⁷³ Sumner & Reiner 2017: 155.

⁷⁴ Sumner & Reiner 2017: 155.

⁷⁵ Abdi 2001; 2005.

⁷⁶ Álvarez-Mon 2012: 757.

⁷⁷ Potts 1999; 2004; 2012.

⁷⁸ Álvarez-Mon 2014; 2019.

conceptualised. Some of these examples include the Babylonian Epic of Creation, excerpts from the Code of Hammurabi, as well as imagery of Ea/Enki and his attributes as the god of wisdom.⁷⁹ According to Potts, these examples demonstrate the multiple personifications of water in the ancient Near East, from symbolic meanings of fertility and abundance, to the possession of judicial roles.⁸⁰ He states that there was an association between Inshushinak, Napirisha, and Ea due to Ea's water attributes and association with Inshushinak, and an apparent interchangeability between Inshushinak and Napirisha.⁸¹ This would indicate that there was a water cult at Kurangun, and through this lens, Potts identified the deities as Inshushinak/Napirisha and Kiririsha. The political nature of Kurangun's water iconography during the Sukkalmah period is discussed in §6.3.2. This investigates Mesopotamian influences on Elamite art, specifically regarding parallels between the imagery of Inshushinak and Ea/Enki. I expected Potts to evaluate what the water-based iconography and the representation of Ea/Inshushinak/Napirisha meant for Elamite society, but he did not elaborate on it; instead, he concluded with the deities' hybridised identifications. This appears to be an unsubstantiated claim, as he re-evaluates it during a later work stating that it is impossible to accurately identify the deities.⁸² However, if the discussion is re-framed it can contribute more to the understanding of Elamite society and artistic traditions. Rather than the focus being placed on the deities' identities, it may be more productive to address the iconography, Mesopotamian parallels, and the evidence of the gods' syncretism.

Wouter Henkelman's 2008 work examined Elamite-Iranian acculturation based on the Persepolis Fortification Texts. This book is most pertinent to the Neo-Elamite reliefs of Kurangun and the understanding of their socio-political background and communities of the Elamite highlands. Henkelman establishes that in this period, Elam had continued to exist and prosper until the Persian Empire, contrary to the belief that the Neo-Elamite state collapsed as a result of Assyrian intervention.⁸³ Further, this meant that the Teispids and Achaemenids of Persia emerged from a region rife with the cultural and political presence of Elam, resulting in the preservation of Elamite tradition within that of Persia.⁸⁴ Henkelman paints the image of greater Elam during the Neo-Elamite period as being made up of the Susian state, and the non-Susian communities or tribal groups of the highlands who practiced sheep-based (agro-)

⁷⁹ Potts 2004: 150-151; Kramer 1963: 122.

⁸⁰ Potts 2004: 152.

⁸¹ Potts 2004: 153.

⁸² Potts 2004; 2012.

⁸³ Henkelman 2008: 8.

⁸⁴ Henkelman 2008: 8.

pastoralism.⁸⁵ Within the relationship between these two groups there was a bond between the king (or officials) and these polities regarding the exchange of commodities which acknowledged the king's authority while allowing the tribes' autonomy.⁸⁶ Henkelman emphasised that the number of non-Susian groups mentioned in the texts does not mean that the Susian state was weakened, just that the diversity of Elam was more visible due to the nature of the evidence and exchanges within them.⁸⁷ Regarding the acculturation of Iranians and Elamites, Henkelman specifies that the Ram Hormoz plain was an important border region between the lowlands and highlands, allowing for the contact between the sedentary populations and the Elamite and Iranian pastoralists who appeared to live alongside each other in the highlands.⁸⁸ Although Henkelman seems to separate the sedentary populations in Khuzestan from the highland, pastoralist communities, it must be noted that the highland tribes were not solely comprised of mobile pastoralists. Potts (2014) addressed misconceptions regarding nomadic pastoralists in Iran, postulating that the nomadic pastoralism became a wide-spread practice upon the influx of Bedouin Arab groups and Oghuz Türkmen tribes, especially into the thirteenth century.⁸⁹ He further stated that in the Neo-Elamite period, there appeared to be an increased number of transhumant pastoralists in the highlands, but their societies were likely of a dimorphic nature.⁹⁰ In this, the pastoralists would seasonally move their sheep and goat through the mountains, while the other half of their community would live in sedentary settlements and engage in agriculture.⁹¹

Álvarez-Mon's article from 2014 discussed the relationship between artistic manufacture and the aesthetics of the natural environment, as well as their function as intermediaries between culture and nature.⁹² This study introduced the natural landscape at Kurangun as a force that, in combination with the reliefs and positioning of Kurangun, created a sacred space where the worshippers would meet with the Elamite deities and subsequently enhance the ritual experience.⁹³ Although Álvarez-Mon characterised the experiences at Kurangun as "pulsing with vitality" and "awe-inspiring", which may appear to be a reliance on his own experience at the site, he does acknowledge personal bias and the affective response generated.⁹⁴ On one

⁸⁵ Henkelman 2008: 35.

⁸⁶ Henkelman 2008: 35.

⁸⁷ Henkelman 2008: 35; These texts are the Acropole Texts and the Persepolis Fortification Archive.

⁸⁸ Henkelman 2008: 41-43.

⁸⁹ Potts 2014: 186-7; Such scholars include Abbas Alizadeh who imposed modern Iranian pastoral lifestyles onto the ancient world (Potts 2014: 37).

⁹⁰ Potts 2014: 41.

⁹¹ Potts 2014: 3-4; 41; Mashkour 2009: 136.

⁹² Álvarez-Mon 2014: 743.

⁹³ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 765.

⁹⁴ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 765.

hand, this may be placing aesthetic responses on to the Elamite audiences, but on the other, one's own awe of the natural environment (an essentially human response) may suggest the awe felt by those of the past.⁹⁵ Álvarez-Mon's study emphasises the significance of visuality and aesthetics in Elamite artistic tradition. This is where the idea of looking and seeing as ways of 'meeting' the deities and participating in ritual is discussed. Examining the Kurangun sanctuary through the lens of cognitive archaeology and art history allows us to investigate how the worshippers may have conceptualised and experienced the site, as well as how they related to and interpreted its iconography.

Javier Álvarez-Mon's *The Monumental Reliefs of the Elamite Highlands* (2019) is the latest work that concerns the open-air sanctuary of Kurangun. It provided a detailed description of the location, state of preservation, and imagery of the rock reliefs and is the most descriptive and systematic overview of the site. He discussed the relief in light of environmental aesthetics, stating that Kurangun may have been conceived as a sacred space that housed the divine couple.⁹⁶ Despite being regarded as a sacred housing, the sanctuary was open to the natural environment and Fahliyan river and was not an actual enclosed structure unlike most Mesopotamian temples. According to Álvarez-Mon, this implies there was no physical separation between the cult-focused 'inside' and what lies 'outside' the sanctuary. Consequently, ritual practice was exposed and inherently influenced by the surrounding environment.⁹⁷ Álvarez-Mon concludes his commentary by noting that Kurangun indicates aspects of Elamite socio-political and religious life, which takes into account the subsequent additions to the reliefs.⁹⁸ These observations indicate that the site was specifically chosen to emphasise the environmental setting in which ritual would occur.⁹⁹ Álvarez-Mon's analysis is significant for understanding the function of Kurangun and provides insights which, when investigated further, reveals more about Elamite ritual practices, their communities in the highlands and lowlands, as well as the socio-political context to the reliefs.

⁹⁵ See Trigger (1996: 444-77) for a discussion on post-processualism, and Tilley on cognitive archaeology regarding landscape phenomenology (Tilley 1994). Furthermore, Winter notes that the beauty of an object, or in this case the natural environment, may be regarded as an expression of the divine (Winter 1995: 2573).

⁹⁶ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 21.

⁹⁷ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 21.

⁹⁸ These aspects include the communal ritual of pilgrimage to Kurangun, the visual interplay between the waters flowing from the divine figure's hands and the basin enclosing fish, the positioning of Kurangun as a parallel to shrines on top of Elamite ziggurats, and finally the symbolic role of water at the sanctuary existing alongside the physical water of the Fahliyan river (Álvarez-Mon 2019: 21).

⁹⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 21.

These major works on the study of Kurangun are all focused on disparate areas of analysis, such as the cultic nature of the site, the aesthetics and artistic components, and the nature of the Neo-Elamite communities; however, there is no comprehensive work that brings all of this information together. This project utilises the information provided to contextualise Kurangun, the ritual practices, and the purposes behind the reliefs in order to understand more of Elamite society and how people represented themselves. In doing so, it provides new hypotheses, theories, and questions into the field through a holistic approach to the information that is currently available.

6. KURANGUN I RELIEF

6.1 Formal Description

Kurangun I, the central panel (fig. 5a), depicts a scene of worship where elite figures bring an offering, or receive blessings, from a divine couple who dominate the image. The male deity is measured at 0.83m tall, oriented toward the staircase. He has a rectangular beard as well as possible side-locks. He wears a round, horned headdress with animal ears and a tail down his back, as well as an ankle-length garment.¹⁰⁰ The deity is depicted in profile, all except his chest and the horns and ears of his headdress. He is seated on a coiled, serpentine throne from which appears to spring two snakes gripped by the deity with his left hand. In his right hand he holds objects which are thought to be a ring and rod. From these items spurts two streams of water. The left is collected into a vessel held by a bearded elite worshipper fronting the group while the right stream of water is collected by a similarly depicted figure.

The female deity is seated behind (or beside) the male deity, oriented in the same direction, and similarly depicted in profile except for her chest and headdress. The female deity is seated on a four-legged animal or throne shaped as such.¹⁰¹ She wears a horned headdress with animal ears and a tail that extends down her back.¹⁰² Her hair is arranged in a bun at the nape of her neck and may wear side-locks like the male deity, although it may also be part of the headdress.¹⁰³ The deity also appears to hold two snakes in her left hand.¹⁰⁴

To the left of the deities is a trio of elite worshippers ranging from 0.95 metres to 1 metre high. The closest male worshipper is oriented toward the deities and receives the flowing water in his hands or most likely a vessel. He is accompanied by a female to his left, and behind her, another male worshipper. These attendants are similarly oriented to the right, toward the deities. They are also depicted in profile except for their chest. The males wear ankle-length garments and don a “visor” type of hairstyle or headdress. They may also be represented with a long braid extending from underneath.¹⁰⁵ The female worshipper wears a longer garment, a rounded hairstyle or headdress while her hair also extends from underneath

¹⁰⁰ According to Álvarez-Mon, the male deity’s hair is long and possibly collected in a braid at the back, instead of this being a part of the headdress itself (2019: 16).

¹⁰¹ Seidl states that she may have sat with crossed legs according to Iranian tradition, especially as her feet are not obviously represented (Seidl 1986: 9).

¹⁰² The tail of the headdress may also be either a pendant or braid (Álvarez-Mon 2019: 16).

¹⁰³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 16.

¹⁰⁴ Vanden Berghe 1986: 159. This has been debated by Seidl who suggests that the hands are both held outstretched, or the left rests on the lap while the right holds a vessel (1986: 9). However, my own observation leads me to believe that the female deity is represented holding two serpents.

¹⁰⁵ This is the most clearly exhibited by the front-most figures in each of the trios of worshippers.

this arrangement at the nape of her neck, possibly in a bun. Each of these figures, apart from the frontmost figure, hold their hands up while their arms are bent, in a form of worship.¹⁰⁶ The trio of worshippers on the right are similar to those on the left. They are in the same formation of male-female-male, and are oriented toward the deities, presented in profile excluding their chests. The woman in the centre of the trio appears to wear a similar visor headdress or hairstyle as the men, with her hair cropped at the back. Finally, in front of the male deity appears to be a stand of some sort with an object sprouting on the top but, this object's specification remains inconclusive.¹⁰⁷

The horizontal platform below this central relief measures five metres by two metres and has 26 fish carved into the surface which appear to swim in various directions (fig. 6).

Additionally, there are remains of a low border of three step-like protrusions.¹⁰⁸

6.2 Chronology

Kurangun I is dated the Sukkalmah period, around 1650 BCE.¹⁰⁹ This chronology is based on the studies of Vanden Berghe and Seidl, whose work led to the understanding that Kurangun I was created between the 19th and 17th centuries BC.¹¹⁰ In order to grasp Kurangun I's chronology iconography of the relief was compared to Elamite glyptic imagery of the same period, focusing on the serpentine throne, the deities' horned headdresses, and the garments worn by the figures.¹¹¹ Seidl specified similarities in the cylinder seals of kings Tan-Uli and Kik-Nasur II which suggests a 17th century BC date.¹¹²

¹⁰⁶ Similar expressions of worship are seen in other scenes throughout the Near East and other highland Elamite examples such as Kul-e Farah and Sekaft-e Salman (Álvarez-Mon: 2009).

¹⁰⁷ It has been suggested by Seidl and later by Garrison that this is a fire altar with flames on the top (Seidl 1986: 9). Interestingly, Álvarez-Mon draws attention to the stele of Ur-Nammu which depicts a deity holding a ring and rod toward a standing figure who pours water into a conical stand from which foliage has sprung (Álvarez-Mon 2019: 17).

¹⁰⁸ Potts states this depicts "fish in a stream" but does not mention the border along two sides of the platform (Potts 2004: 147).

¹⁰⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 741.

¹¹⁰ Vanden Berghe 1984: 1986; Seidl 1986: 11.

¹¹¹ Seidl 1986: 9; Potts 2004: 182.

¹¹² Seidl 1986: 12.

6.3 Who is Depicted?

6.3.1 Deities

The figures depicted on the Kurangun I relief are a centred male and female deity as well as the six elite attendants. There has been an abundance of research that has aimed to identify the divine couple, albeit with no consensus. Hinz in 1972 suggested that the divine couple represented Humban and Kiririsha, or Humban and Parti without explanation as to why.¹¹³ Hinz may have come to this conclusion because Humban was the supreme male deity and protector of kings in the Neo-Elamite period.¹¹⁴ Additionally, the male deity is placed within an investiture-style scene in which he is transferring symbolic power to the elite figures which, alongside Humban's relationship with Neo-Elamite kingship, may have also led Hinz to his conclusion.¹¹⁵ Hinz' allocation of the female deity the identity of Kiririsha or Parti may have rested in the idea of Kiririsha as the "great goddess" and "mistress of heaven" to Humban, and Parti as a mother goddess figure and wife of Humban.¹¹⁶ Contrastingly, Amiet later identified the male deity as Napirisha alongside his spouse Kiririsha as he stated that Napirisha was particularly honoured as the supreme god at Anshan.¹¹⁷ In this case, the location of Kurangun in the highland region, situated on the road that connected Anshan and Susa, closer to Anshan, led Amiet to his conclusion.¹¹⁸ Grillot and Vallat agreed with this idea, favouring the highland identification of the deities.¹¹⁹ de Miroschedji in 1981 preferred them to be Inshushinak and his spouse, but later in 2003 said that attempting to identify the deities at Kurangun is counterproductive as they are syncretic gods, especially as on the stela of Untash-Napirisha the same male deity is identified as Inshushinak.¹²⁰ The discussion of Kurangun's gods has the potential to take the entirety of this paper, so instead of extending this topic, this discussion will focus on the importance of water at Kurangun and the gods' symbolic syncretism.

¹¹³ Hinz 1973: 52.

¹¹⁴ Henkelman 2008: 9.

¹¹⁵ One example is the rock relief and inscription of Hanni at Shekaft-e Salman mentions the goddess Parti of Tarrisa (Schiel 1901: no. 64; Reiner 1953: 34).

¹¹⁶ Hinz 1973: 44; S. Alizadeh & Jabari 2017: 1183.

¹¹⁷ Amiet 1973: 17.

¹¹⁸ Amiet 1973: 17.

¹¹⁹ Grillot & Vallat 1984: 26-7.

¹²⁰ de Miroschedji 1981: 15; 2003: 27.

6.3.2 Water Cult and Symbolic Syncretism

The aspect of water should not be overlooked when discussing Kurangun, its gods, and the worship practice represented. Kurangun not only represents water in its reliefs, but the sanctuary is positioned overlooking the Fahliyan river which dominates the landscape.¹²¹

Álvarez-Mon suggests that three aspects were brought together at Kurangun: the supernatural, the socio-religious context, and the natural environment.¹²²

The Kurangun I relief depicts a seated male deity holding an object from which two streams of water spurt out and over to both groups of attendants (fig. 5b). This is the central image and focal point of the relief; the female deity, the Sukkalmah-dated attendees, and Neo-Elamite-dated panels all focus on the action performed by the male god. The importance of this action emphasises the iconography on the relief especially the flowing waters. Potts concentrated on this notion alongside the influences of the Mesopotamian pantheon, concluding that Napirisha was the male deity alongside his spouse Kiririsha.¹²³ In this context, Napirisha, being the head of the pantheon of Anshan, is interchangeable with Inshushinak, the head of the Susian pantheon. This is based on two pieces of evidence; Vallat suggested that a text from Susa appearing to honour Inshushinak, Ea, and Enzag, should instead be read in a way that regards Ea and Enzag as epithets of Inshushinak.¹²⁴ The second, is the *Surpu* incantation text which identifies Napirisha as “Ea of Elam” which, when coupled with the Susian text, not only implies the interchangeability of Inshushinak and Napirisha, but parallels these pantheon heads with the god Ea (Akkadian)/ Enki (Sumerian).¹²⁵ This is highlighted by the way in which these gods were represented.

Ea was the god in charge of the abyss or *Apzu*: ‘cosmic freshwater’, which was conceptualised as underground water representing fertility and abundance.¹²⁶ Ea was the god of wisdom who organised the earth according to Enlil’s plans. This is what provides Ea’s association with natural and cultural processes including aspects of fertility and creation of monuments and artistic expression.¹²⁷ Ea was often depicted with two streams of water

¹²¹ This aspect, including the significance of Kurangun’s natural environment is discussed in §5.3.3.

¹²² Álvarez-Mon 2014: 761.

¹²³ Potts 2004: 153.

¹²⁴ Vallat 1997a.

¹²⁵ de Miroschedji 1981: 24; Potts 2004: 152-3. From this point, the Akkadian Ea will be used in reference to both Akkadian and Sumerian gods.

¹²⁶ Potts 2004: 150-1.

¹²⁷ Kramer 1963: 122.

flowing out of his shoulders or from a vessel he was holding.¹²⁸ An Akkadian cylinder seal shows Enki wearing a horned headdress similar to those represented on the Kurangun I relief, in which waters flow from each shoulder (fig. 7).

Artistic parallels between Elam and Mesopotamia, such as the gods' streams of water and the horned headdresses, indicate that cross cultural contact between Elam and polities of Mesopotamia was not politically limited and that it extended to artistic and cultural spheres. Furthermore, the iconography of the streams of water on the Kurangun I relief is similar, but not identical to, those belonging to Ea. Ea's waters usually consist of two streams and often feature fish (fig. 7); in contrast, the Sukkalmah-dated cylinder seals display water made up of thinner, often jagged lines (fig. 8a-c). On the Kurangun I relief, the flowing waters being presented by Napirisha are thick and wobbly and appears to draw from both depictions of Ea and the waters present on the Sukkalmah seals. The way in which water is represented on Kurangun may have been defined by the limits of the material being used; however, it is more likely that the Elamite pantheon heads were being constructed in a way that was familiar in a broader Near-Eastern context and would communicate the gods' clear association with water.

The presence of a water cult at Kurangun is highlighted further by the low-stepped border along the perimeter of the sanctuary, as well as the depiction of swimming fish on the sanctuary floor. Álvarez-Mon suggests that this may be a symbolic ritual basin which would collect the life-giving waters that flowed from the god's outstretched hand into those of the worshippers.¹²⁹ The ritual basin, or *Apzu* basin, was a significant aspect of Mesopotamian and Elamite temples, that symbolised water's inherent qualities of fertility and creation (fig. 22). This idea is emphasised when we consider the structure and positioning of the sanctuary as a whole. The shape of the Kuh-e Pataweh, on which Kurangun is perched, is almost pyramidal in shape. However, the Kuh-e Pataweh is conceptually transformed due to the presence of the sanctuary. Elamite ziggurats, and even Mesopotamian examples, usually had top-most shrines (*kukunnum*) at many urban centres which were accessed by flights of stairs.¹³⁰ At Kurangun however, the stairs were positioned in a way that one would have to climb the Kuh-e Pataweh and then descend the stairs in order to access the sanctuary, in this way there is not an exact parallel to the ziggurat. But the symbol of a top-most shrine accessed by a staircase suggests

¹²⁸ Potts 2004: 151; These two streams are regarded as the Euphrates and Tigris rivers (Jacobsen 1976: 111). Also, see glyptic evidence of the late 3rd and early 2nd millennium (Braun-Holzinger 1996: 329).

¹²⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 20-21.

¹³⁰ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 760.

that the sanctuary and Kuh-e Pataweh may still be an outdoor reflection of the Elamite ziggurat, despite some structural differences.

The *kukunnum*, the upper temple atop of the ziggurat, was the residence of the Elamite pantheon head.¹³¹ At Susa, it was Inshushinak, the chief god of the city and the lowland pantheon, who was honoured at the *kukunnum*.¹³² This is further supported by one of his epithets: *Inshushinak tempti kukunnum lahakra* “Inshushinak who [is] the lord of death in the *kukunnum*”.¹³³ Kurangun I appears to focalise the meeting of the divine couple, by using the attendants to frame the scene and draw attention to the action performed by the male deity. Further, due to the presence of physical stairs and the seated position of the gods, it can be interpreted that it was the human worshippers who came to meet the gods, and not the other way around. In similar scenes observed in contemporary cylinder seals, the deity is always seated, while the Sukkalmah or elite individual stands and often receiving waters from them.¹³⁴ Considering stationary nature of the gods in these scenes, as well as the importance of the figures represented, it is suggested these presentation or investiture scenes may have been enacted in the *kukunnum*.¹³⁵

We must be careful not to impose Ea’s identity onto Inshushinak and Napirisha, especially as their identities within the Elamite pantheon were already established; such as Inshushinak, the chief god of Susa who presided over death, justice and law.¹³⁶ Rather than a religious syncretism where Inshushinak and Napirisha would be regarded as Elamite versions of Ea, it is more likely that there existed a symbolic syncretism. This is where Inshushinak and Napirisha were imbued with the visual trappings of Ea as a symbol of authority. During the Sukkalmah period, Ea was already a symbol of divine power and authority. This was in his capacity to institute the social and cultural order of Sumer and Akkad. Thus, he was able to

¹³¹ Potts 2010: 57.

¹³² Potts 1999: 213-15 Table 7.8.

¹³³ Vallat 1997a: 1; Potts 2010: 57. The translation of *lahak* may be questioned as there have been multiple translations proposed. Additionally, Tavernier suggests that “lord of the dead/death in the *kukunnum*” or “lord of the netherworld” may not be correct because the conjugation of *lahakra* does not convey a plural meaning or past participle; instead, *laha-* associated with a deity’s epithet usually emphasises their relationship to a place, providing meanings such as “live, reside”, “secret, hidden, invisible”. (Pézard 1914: 81; Grillot & Vallat 1984: 23; Tavernier 2009: 472). The secondary meaning “to disappear” may be applied which may imply notions of death being applied to Inshushinak’s epithets (Tavernier 2009: 473).

¹³⁴ Lambert 1971: 217; Carter 2014: 42-3; There is also at least one instance, dated to the Ur III period c.2125 BC, in which Gudea is being introduced to the seated Ea/Enki by Ningiszida, his personal deity (Black and Green 1992: 139, fig. 115; Jacobsen 1997: 386). Note the waters flowing from Ea/Enki’s shoulders and from the vessel being held. Vidale also touches on such Mesopotamian scenes (Vidale 2018: 293).

¹³⁵ Kramer 1963: 122; Jacobsen 1976: 95; 110. See Eck (1998) regarding the notion of seeing and meeting the divine within Hinduism.

¹³⁶ Vallat 1997b: 1; Quintana 2018: 730.

provide wisdom and knowledge to kings and was relied on to maintain the status-quo of the environment and community.¹³⁷

Ea's embodied wisdom was purveyed to various kings: In Ur-Namma D, Ea provided the king with the wisdom to dig a "canal of abundance" for Ur which flourished with fish, birds, and plants.¹³⁸ Another instance of Ea presenting his wisdom is where the god gave Abi-Sare, the king of Larsa, "the great intelligence" to construct a statue of silver and precious stone.¹³⁹ In a final example, Esarhaddon credited Ea with being the god "who shapes/creates appearance", suggesting the creative aspect within Ea's persona.¹⁴⁰ Ea's visual representation, in which fish swim in the waters flowing from his shoulders, suggests a natural abundance and life inherent in his role which would logically be coupled with his great wisdom as a creator and craftsman.¹⁴¹ Ea's roles were well known by the Sukkalmah period, thus attaching them to Inshushinak and Napirisha, in addition to their primary character, may have been beneficial for the Susian-based, elite. The investiture scenes in which the Sukkalmah or other elite figure receives divine power from a god with Ea's symbolic trappings attaches notions wisdom and fertility to their reign. This provides another visual avenue of legitimacy and appeals to their Elamite subjects.

A universal symbol of abundance and wisdom would have proved useful for the Sukkalmah to maintain his reign over the wider Elamite region and solidify a far-reaching power base.¹⁴²

6.3.3 The Natural Environment of Kurangun

The natural environment in which Kurangun is situated intensifies the presence of water and the role it may have had at the sanctuary (fig. 2). This is through the way in which the sanctuary is established as a 'place' which manipulates, and makes physical, the social and spiritual meaning attached to the natural environment. The architecture of Kurangun, where it is exposed to the natural landscape, contrasts standard religious architecture which utilises walls, gateways, and doors to enclose the sacred space. This means that the separation of the sacred and secular did not necessarily exist at Kurangun, where the sanctuary was deliberately

¹³⁷ Kramer 1963: 122; Jacobsen 1976: 95; 110.

¹³⁸ Winter 2009b: 212; Flückiger-Hawker 1999: D 21-22; 33-36.

¹³⁹ Winter 2009b: 275; Frayne 1990: 122, i 28-31; ii 1-3.

¹⁴⁰ Winter 2009a: 89.

¹⁴¹ Winter 2009b: 211.

¹⁴² Potts 1999: 186. This expression exertion of power may have been important for the state because the political union of Anshan and Susa, or highland and lowland Elam, was re-established by early Sukkalmahs and required strengthening (Stolper 1982: 57).

constructed to meld the aesthetic experience of the natural landscape and the artistic relief.¹⁴³ Álvarez-Mon states that waters of both the Fahliyan river and those depicted on the Kurangun I relief become a “life force” and linked the experience of divine encounter with the experience of the natural environment.¹⁴⁴ Thus, the role that the waters took inside the sanctuary was augmented and made physical through the presence of the Fahliyan river. In this way, the landscape in which Kurangun is situated was embedded with the semiotic message of the central relief and utilised the environment to propagate this.

From this point of view, the waters that flow from the hand of the male deity communicates the transmission of power within an investiture scene, as well as the associated characteristics of Ea/Enki: fertility, abundance, and wisdom. The physical environment in which the Fahliyan river dominates, is an external indicator of this. And so, the outside of the sanctuary reflects what occurs inside. In that the elite individuals can be perceived as receiving the power embedded in the natural landscape.

Additionally, we must take into account the significance of the Fahliyan river as a water source. The lives of both highland and lowland Elamites were dependant on abundant, fresh water to survive, and the rivers supplied water to all wildlife and livestock across the region. Highland pastoralists would have relied on such water sources as their sheep and goats were their main source of capital. Combining the imagery on the Kurangun reliefs with the physical imagery of the Fahliyan river would have communicated a greater, more realised message of abundance and fertility to these highland communities, and further bolstered the Sukkalmah elite’s claim to hegemony over the land.

6.3.4 Elite Attendants and Their Garments

On each side of the divine couple are two groups of individual attendants. It is generally thought that they are members of the elite based on royal glyptic iconography. However, the triads: two men and a woman, are not depicted in the glyptic or other chronologically contemporary sources. Furthermore, the presence of an elite female alongside other elite figures is something that is unique to Elam, pertaining to the role that women had in politics and their importance to the legitimacy of their heirs, discussed in §6.4.2. Before addressing the nature of elite depictions, it is necessary to discuss the garments worn by those depicted in

¹⁴³ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 761.

¹⁴⁴ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 761.

the Kurangun I relief as it will clarify their identities; were they elite figures, and can we say if they are of lowland or highland Elam?

Glyptic scenes from the 2nd millennium BC demonstrate a scene formula similar to that of the Kurangun I relief. In such scenes, a male divinity is seated on a serpentine throne and presents an object, usually a ring and rod, to an Elamite individual or ruler who stands in front of them.¹⁴⁵ There are additional examples which also picture streams of water flowing from the hands of the deity toward the other figure. This has been identified as an Elamite royal investiture ceremony or ‘presentation scene’.¹⁴⁶ Some examples include the cylinder seal of Tan-Uli ‘Sukkalmah, Sukkal of Elam and Shimashki, sister’s son of Shilhaha’ and that of the scribe Sirahupitir, servant of Addahushu, who was Sukkal of Susa (fig. 8a-b).¹⁴⁷ Later instances of this imagery also exist, including the cylinder seal of Middle Elamite king Tepti-ahar (fig. 9).¹⁴⁸ As these examples, and most other examples we have of this formula, are from the lowlands, the figures and scene typology of Kurangun I has been assumed to be of lowland origin; however, this is because there is very little evidence from the highlands of which we have only a few examples.¹⁴⁹ This is also an assumption based on the entire scene typology, yet the attendants themselves have not been addressed. By discussing the representation of the elite figures, we may be able to achieve further clarity concerning the context of Kurangun I.

The description of triads of attendees’ garments represented in Kurangun I characterise them as long, robe-like garbs, with flaring hems, and visor-like headdresses which are generally associated with Elamite rulers. This distinct dress style persisted into the Middle- to Neo-Elamite periods and was worn by both human and divine figures.¹⁵⁰ This garment adhered to gendered conventions where women’s feet were covered in contrast to the exposed feet of men, but unfortunately due to the erosion to the relief, details and decoration have been lost which prevents differences between the garments of the male and female attendants being identified. Further, the fashion of the worshippers within the scene at Kurangun, other contemporary imagery, and scenes of the same formula occur in a ceremonial or ritual context. Thus, even though we do not have a glimpse into the every-day garments of these

¹⁴⁵ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 19.

¹⁴⁶ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 761.

¹⁴⁷ de Miroschedji 1981: 2-3; Amiet 1972: no. 2330.

¹⁴⁸ Potts 1999: 182; Glassner 1991: 111. For examples see Seidl (1986: Plate 17d, e, g).

¹⁴⁹ Carter 2014: 42-43. This is due to the lack of excavations, but also in contrast to the wealth of evidence from Susa.

¹⁵⁰ Kawami 2018: 677; Daems 2018: 766.

individuals, the fact that they are positioned in such a scene and have access to a more prestigious type of dress, allows for the assumption that these people are of elite status.

The cylinder seal of Tan-Uli (c. 17th century BC), as previously discussed, is from the same period as Kurangun I and exhibits an iconographic lowland formula of an ‘investiture’ or ‘presentation’ scene that is subverted in the relief (fig. 8-9). The garments worn by Tan-Uli are similar to those worn by the Kurangun attendants.¹⁵¹ Tan-Uli’s garment is sashed at the waist with a string, hem, or pleat extending from the sash, and he wears a visor-like headdress or hair-style with a tail that trails down his neck. Tan-Uli’s feet are exposed, as typical of men’s ceremonial garments, and the shape is the same as depicted in Kurangun I.

Attesting to the style of ceremonial garments are Sukkalmah-dated terracotta figurines (fig. 10. b-e). One example depicts a musician or priest playing a small harp. The robe covers most of their upper arms, is sashed at the lower waist, and the skirt section inflects at knee-level and flares out at the feet. The figure is beardless and has a cap-like headdress, whilst their garment appears to cover their feet, suggesting that the figure is female (fig. 10 b).¹⁵² Another example from the corpus is of a man wearing a long robe with fringed cloak, carrying a staff and a male goat. The garment he wears has a similar flared shape but exposes the feet (fig. 11).¹⁵³ These figurines demonstrate the ceremonial wear during the Sukkalmah period especially when comparing them to those worn by Tan-Uli and the elites of the Kurangun I relief. This may be further implied by the manufacture of the figurines. Being cast-made, they may have been mass-produced and their imagery widely disseminated, meaning that the context of the garments and their representational conventions would have been broadly recognised.¹⁵⁴

Other glyptic imagery from the early to mid Sukkalmah period also depicts similar garments to those examples already discussed. Examples from Susa, coinciding with the early to mid Sukkalmah period (c.1800-1650 BC), emphasise the details of the fashions worn.¹⁵⁵ Like other examples, the robe-like garments have a flared shape and finished just above the feet. Figure 12a-b, a sealed tablet of Kidinu, depicts both the seated and standing individuals dressed in fringed garb, which is cinched at the waist.¹⁵⁶ An additional example (fig. 12c), a

¹⁵¹ Kawami 2018: 678.

¹⁵² Álvarez-Mon 2018b: 611-12, fig. 30.5b. See Mécquenem 1934.

¹⁵³ Álvarez-Mon 2018b: 611-12, fig. 30.5c.

¹⁵⁴ Álvarez-Mon 2018b: 611.

¹⁵⁵ Ascalone 2018: 634-5, fig. e-f.

¹⁵⁶ Amiet 1980: 139, no. 11.

seal of Kuknashur depicts a figure wearing a garment which flares above the feet.¹⁵⁷ He also wears a horned headdress with a side-lock or braid and is seated on a serpentine throne. Enrico Ascalone states that glyptic art becomes a form of royal propaganda developed by the Sukkalmah state, melding Mesopotamian figurative development with an encoded use of Elamite iconography.¹⁵⁸ As is discussed in §6.3.2, Kurangun also expresses Mesopotamian influences in its artistic style and some iconography which, in combination with glyptic imagery, informs us that the reliefs depicted iconography which had the purpose to propagate Sukkalmah-based ideology; likely pertaining to the power and authority of the Sukkalmah.

At Qal-e Tul, near Izeh in the highlands, there is a fragmentary relief dated to the Middle Elamite period that depicts the meeting of two groups, each containing three individuals (fig. 13). The left is headed by a man in a flared garment that finishes at the ankles, revealing his feet. The group on the right is headed by a woman in a longer garment that covers the feet.¹⁵⁹ The garments worn by the figures adhere to Elamite stylistic conventions and those that concerned gendered ceremonial attire as we see the woman's dress covering her feet, while the man's feet are exposed. Unfortunately, due to the wear on the relief, we cannot discern the decoration to the garments, as well as the headdresses, or hairstyles, of the figures.¹⁶⁰ Although this monumental relief is of highland origin, Kawami points out that the robes worn by the figures seem to be variants of those worn by Tan-uli and the deity on his cylinder seal; which comes from the Elamite state centre of Susa.¹⁶¹

Further illustrating the continuity of Elamite ceremonial dress and their iconographic conventions is the representation of Hanni son of Tahhi, "caretaker, protector, ruler" of Ayapir and vassal of Shutur-Nahhunte son of Indada, on the highland relief of Kul-e Farah I (fig. 14a-b).¹⁶² The relief is dated to the Neo-Elamite period and although it demonstrates clear stylistic differences, it incorporates aspects of elite, likely ceremonial, portrayal throughout wider Elam. Hanni is dressed in a robe-like garment with elaborate fringing across the shoulders in a 'v' shape which is believed to be the hem of the tunic or shawl of the garment.¹⁶³ The skirt section is similarly fringed along the hem which flares outwards and exposes his feet. This type of embellishment differs from what has been previously discussed

¹⁵⁷ Amiet 1973: 49; Roach 2008: no.2980.

¹⁵⁸ Ascalone 2018: 636.

¹⁵⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 40, Pl. 8a.

¹⁶⁰ Kawami 2018: 678.

¹⁶¹ Kawami 2018: 678.

¹⁶² Álvarez-Mon 2019: 85.

¹⁶³ Daems 2018: 766.

and may be regarded as a local or highland variation, as the crossed over fringe on the torso is exhibited elsewhere in Neo-Elamite and Persian period representation.¹⁶⁴ However, despite the differences in decoration, this does manage to preserve the conventions of Elamite ceremonial wear.

Each of our examples represent ceremonial garment styles that maintained standard shape and structural features with the addition of a fringe. This informs us of a tradition in dress that was slow-changing and only had regional variation to its embellishments. Pittman suggests that the representations of individuals were rendered according to conventions shared throughout both the highlands and lowlands of Elam.¹⁶⁵ This is especially pertinent as there was a high level of communication and exchange between these two communities. However, because there is limited variation to the garments in our Sukkalmah-dated examples, the dress cannot provide definitive answers as to who the elite worshippers were on the Kurangun I relief, especially as erosion has erased much of the garments' decoration. The prior discussion and stylisation of the Kurangun I relief leads me to believe that the figures are of lowland origin, but there are other aspects to explore that can further clarify this.

6.4 Sukkalmah Political Structure: Who are the Attendees?

6.4.1 Political Structure

When we bring into the equation the political structure during the Sukkalmah period, identifying the attendees on the Kurangun I becomes even more challenging.

During this period, power was divided into a pseudo-triumvirate. This is where the Sukkalmah was in the position of paramount authority, the Sukkal of Elam was next in authority, followed by the Sukkal of Susa. It is likely that the Sukkal of Elam would be the son of the Sukkalmah and succeed him, and the Sukkal of Susa was of some other relation to the Sukkalmah- perhaps a brother.¹⁶⁶ This formalised division of power appears to be an attempt to protect the royal family's hereditary power, as members of the royal family held differing degrees of control over the wider Elamite state.¹⁶⁷ In addition to this, other titulary was utilised alongside 'Sukkalmah' and 'Sukkal.' We have instances of figures being named

¹⁶⁴ This feature is observed in the platform bearers at Kul-e Farah III and IV. See Álvarez-Mon (2010a) for further discussion.

¹⁶⁵ Pittman 2003: 191.

¹⁶⁶ Potts 1999: 162-3.

¹⁶⁷ Carter 2014: 35.

Sukkal of Shimashki and king of Anshan, associating themselves with the wider Elamite region. This would make more sense as Shimashki and Anshan included parts of the middle plains within their control, just as the Susian-based Elamite state included parts of wider Khuzestan.¹⁶⁸ Thus, this would necessitate the importance of kinship-based governance to maintain a diverse and extensive territory.¹⁶⁹

Upon an immediate glance, the elite figures represented on Kurangun I do not adhere to the political structure during the Sukkalmah period. We would expect to see the Sukkalmah depicted in a larger stature, separate from the other figures, and likely the two Sukkals also represented. However, we have four men dressed similarly as well as two women.

6.4.2 Women in Elam

Women in Elam appeared to hold some form of power. This is seen in imagery where kings are depicted presenting flowing water or flowers to their wives: imagery of power and authority as seen in investiture scenes.¹⁷⁰ Carter describes Kurangun I in a way that focuses on the male and female couple standing behind the man receiving the streams of water from the deity.¹⁷¹ The individuals collecting the water may be priests or intermediaries for the groups, with a man standing behind his wife. However, this is unlikely as within the constructs of Elamite art, women are usually depicted standing behind their husbands and frequent political imagery; the deities already depict this, as do cylinder seals throughout Elamite history.¹⁷² The frequency of women present in Elamite art, and the subsequent authority they held, may be informed by a tradition which granted importance to matrilineal descent as a requirement of legitimate rule.¹⁷³ This is observed in the title “sister’s son” (*ruhushak*) which was utilised by Sukkalmah and Middle Elamite kings. The term “sister’s son of X” is proposed by Lambert and Vallat to indicate that there was only true legitimacy in the marriage of a royal brother and sister where the term would mean “son of the sister-wife of X”.¹⁷⁴ This may have been a reality in the time of Shilhaha, one of the earliest Sukkalmahs, but functionally

¹⁶⁸ Carter 2014: 35.

¹⁶⁹ Potts 1999: 220-21.

¹⁷⁰ Ebarat II appears to present divine waters to his seated wife (Carter 2014: 51, fig. 5.1a).

¹⁷¹ Carter 2014: 44.

¹⁷² Dated to the Sukkalmah period is a cylinder seal of an unknown person shows a woman standing behind the larger, seated male figure (Porada 1990: Plate 1,2, fig. 3). Additionally, on Untash-Napirisa’s stela dated to the Middle Elamite period, Napir-asu (c.1340), his wife, is depicted behind him in the second register (Carter 2014: 47, fig. 5.9a; Harper, Aruz, & Tallon 1992: 128-9).

¹⁷³ Carter 2014: 41.

¹⁷⁴ Lambert 1971: 217; Vallat 1995: 1028-29.

developed into royal titulary by the time of the Sukkalmah Atta-hushu.¹⁷⁵ Glassner however interpreted the term literally as “uterine nephew” i.e. the son of one’s sister, or as a general indicator of legitimacy.¹⁷⁶ Potts further extends on Glassner’s suggestion, utilising case studies from other times and cultures. He states that the succession to the throne (or high office) by the sister’s son allowed the succession of one whose blood-related legitimacy could not be questioned, as the king’s nephew had been born directly from his sister.¹⁷⁷ This practice presented an advantage for the Elamite state where there would have been a degree of stability in the kingship maintained by a single family. Further, utilising the term *ruhushak* in association with an ancestor, such as “sister’s son of Shilhaha”, adheres to a pattern in which the king in question gained benefit or legitimacy through this invocation.¹⁷⁸

Both the title and term *ruhushak* in addition to the Sukkalmah political structure indicates that society, at least in the centralised state of Elam, was kin-based. This kin-based system was not entirely matrilineal but attests to the visible and important role women had within the royal family. This may be why women were portrayed within the Sukkalmah relief and in other Elamite art, in addition to the presence of goddesses alongside their male counterparts.

Although it may be difficult to conclusively identify the roles of the attendees on the Kurangun I relief, it is necessary to do so in order to understand how Kurangun functioned during the Sukkalmah period. Accordingly, I will propose a few theories as to how the figures may be understood.

6.5 The Kurangun I Scene

6.5.1 Power and the Sukkalmah Family

The Kurangun I relief echoes investiture scenes in which kings or Sukkalmahs are provided with divine legitimacy, authority, and power given directly from a god. The imagery present on the relief suggests that these two men closest to the deities receive this divine authority. They are both likely the Sukkal of Elam and Sukkal of Susa, rather than the Sukkalmah simply because there is no single, elevated human figure used to represent him. I propose that the man on the left, in front of the male deity and altar, is the Sukkal of Elam as he is thought

¹⁷⁵ Potts 1999: 166.

¹⁷⁶ Glassner 1994: 223; 229.

¹⁷⁷ Potts 2018: 546.

¹⁷⁸ Potts 2018: 546.

to have had a greater amount of governance in comparison to the Sukkal of Susa.¹⁷⁹ Thus, the man on the right is the Sukkal of Susa, as he is not directly addressing or being addressed by the male deity, the most important figure in the scene. The women behind the first male attendants, I suggest, are the wives of the Sukkals, or their sisters; and the men behind these women are most likely their sons, based on their positioning.

We do have representations of family in Elamite art. The relief of Shekaft-e Salman I and II (Solomon's Cave) both depict what appears to be two Elamite families (fig. 15 a-b). Both reliefs are dated between the 12th and 11th centuries BC, in the Middle Elamite Period. In the Shekaft-e Salman I relief, there is a fire stand and male figure with hands raised and pointed fingers, and behind him is a male, followed by a child, and female figure.¹⁸⁰ Shekaft-e Salman II is to the left of the first relief and depicts a family in the same order: adult male, child, adult female.¹⁸¹ A later inscription was added to the relief by Hanni of Ayapir between the 7th and 6th centuries BC identifying this as his family; however, Álvarez-Mon proposes that the reliefs were constructed around the same time based on the imagery and parallels with moulded glazed bricks from Susa (12th-11th century BC), thus, rather than being contemporaneous with Hanni, the relief takes the Middle Elamite date.¹⁸² Interestingly, the female figure is described as Hanni's "sister-wife," but the inscription has also been read as "wife" or "daughter" of Hanni, calling to the notion of *ruhushak* previously discussed.¹⁸³ Being later, the relief attests to the continuity of family representation that Kurangun offers especially through the depiction of elite women. Although, in the Shekaft-e Salman reliefs, the female is the third figure rather than being centred in the trio like we see at Kurangun.

The family being represented on the Kurangun I relief is made more probable through the role of women discussed prior. The elevated role that women had in Elamite society, specifically as those who bore heirs to the throne, can be seen in their presence on reliefs and in inscriptions. This aspect, together with legitimation from the gods, are utilised together to justify one's ascent to power. Humbanumena's brick inscription from the Middle Elamite period (c. 1350-1340) states that not only is he the son of Attar-Kittah, but that "on account of the continuity with [my] mother, Napirisha c hose me and loved me...Inshushinak gave me

¹⁷⁹ Potts 1999: 163.

¹⁸⁰ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 27.

¹⁸¹ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 36.

¹⁸² Álvarez-Mon 2019: 29.

¹⁸³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 38; Carter 2014: 46.

the kingship...”¹⁸⁴ The emphasis of Humbanumena’s mother in his assent to the throne likely means that he likely gained the role being the nephew of the king. This blood-relation joined with Napirisha and Inshushinak blessing his kingship would have ensured that Humbanumena retained the Elamite throne.

Furthermore, Humbanumena utilised the titulary of “the king of Anshan and Susa”.¹⁸⁵ According to Malbran-Labat the king’s sisters and paternal nephews had rights to royal power particularly during periods of increased unity between highland and lowland Elam.¹⁸⁶ This also would have provided Humbanumena with authority over a much larger region as it encompassed both of these areas. Malbran-Labat expresses that that Humbanumena’s inscription had a new structure and formulation which was probably due to his power accumulating in Fars and shifting to the state centre in Susa. This is where we get a very specific legitimisation story invoking not only his role as a *ruhushak* but as one chosen by the gods as “king of Anshan and Susa”.¹⁸⁷ In Humbanumena’s inscription we see the importance of legitimisation provided by the gods as well as through his blood relation and titulary.

In these Middle Elamite examples, we see the importance of kinship as well as the invocation and blessing of the gods. These are both aspects that appear necessary to justify one’s kingship and power over Elam. This maintenance of tradition, especially when viewing the iconography of the Kurangun I relief, lends itself to the hypothesis suggested.

6.5.2 The ‘Unification’ of Lowland and Highland Elam

The secondary option that could explain the figures of the central panel is that the scene represents the unification of highland and lowland Elam. The left group would either depict the Sukkalmah, his wife, and the Sukkal of Elam, likely the son of the Sukkalmah; or show the Sukkalmah with his sister and nephew. Their positioning in front of the male deity implies a greater amount of power and authority as the group is being directly addressed by the god. The group on the right, in this case, represents the highland elite family in the same order. The male in the front of the group receives the waters that flow from the hands of the male god; however, as neither of the deities face them and their attention is instead directed to the group on the left, the imagery suggests a subordinate form of power and authority being given.

¹⁸⁴ Malbran-Labat 1995: 59 (IRS 21); 2018: 471.

¹⁸⁵ IRS 21; .Malbran-Labat 2018: 469.

¹⁸⁶ Malbran-Labat 2018: 466.

¹⁸⁷ Malbran-Labat 2018: 469.

This interpretation reflects the complex relationship between the Susian-based elites and the highland communities. They are both receiving divine right and power from the gods, but the Sukkalmah has the highest of authority. The relief thus acts as both an expression of Sukkalmah hegemony and acknowledgement of his position by the highland elites.

Henkelman, in discussion of the later Neo-Elamite and Persian periods, states that the contact between the crown and tribal groups (primarily the transhumant pastoralist groups) highlight the existence of a bond between the Elamite king, in this case the Sukkalmah, and the highland polities and elite.¹⁸⁸ Although these tribes may not have been under the direct control of the king, a recognition of his position may have been implied in the exchanges between the two groups.¹⁸⁹ While imposing later constructs on an earlier period is hazardous, the relationship between these communities in the Neo-Elamite period would have developed over time and based on prior interactions.

Emphasising efforts to unify greater Elam and its diverse peoples is the title “king of Anshan”. The title has generally been attached to figures who were likely, in the Sukkalmah period, to be from Susa or the wider region of Khuzestan and expresses the lowland-based dominance over the communities throughout Elam. The Mari texts name two rulers: Sheplarpak or Siwe-palar-huppak who was referred to as the Sukkal of Elam and king of Anshan, and Kutu-Zulush referred to as Sukkal of Susa; likely the brother of Siwe-palar-huppak.¹⁹⁰ This tradition came from earlier in the period of the Shimashkian kings. A tablet from Susa reads “Imazu, son of Kindadu, king of Anshan”, and later Ebarti II was referred to as king of Anshan and Susa.¹⁹¹ These kings did not hail from Anshan but held Susa between 2028 and 2004 BC. This suggests that although the seat of power remained at Susa, Anshan was the physical and ideological power in the highlands.

The positioning of Kurangun also allows for both suggested hypotheses. The centres of Susa and Anshan were over 400 kilometres apart with Kurangun positioned only slightly closer to Anshan, in the Mamasani region of Fars.¹⁹² Potts additionally specifies that Kurangun was located between the two poles of Anshanite and Susian cultural and political power, confirming both a highland and lowland presence in the Mamasani region during the 2nd and

¹⁸⁸ Henkelman 2008: 35.

¹⁸⁹ Henkelman 2008: 35.

¹⁹⁰ Peyronel 2018: 222; Vallat 1996: 314-15.

¹⁹¹ Amiet 1972: no. 1679; De Graef 2012: 539; Potts 1999: 146; Malbran-Labat 1995: 18.

¹⁹² Potts 2012: 135.

1st millennium BC.¹⁹³ This is further highlighted in the shared iconography observed on the Kurangun I relief that is present on other evidence from Susa and Anshan.¹⁹⁴

Kurangun may have acted as a dimorphic space for both groups of people to come together, or the sanctuary was a convenient position in which the Sukkalmah elite would be able to propagate their power. In the first case, the imagery communicates that the sanctuary acknowledged the hegemony of the Sukkalmah but also the powers of the highland authority, bringing the two communities under the umbrella of 'Elam'. In the second case, Kurangun would have ideologically and spatially linked Susa and Anshan for the Sukkalmah where the iconography shows his subordinates being presented with the authority to rule over both Khuzestan and Mamasani regions. Although it may be impossible to conclusively identify who is represented at Kurangun, offering some alternative theories may allow a better understanding of the socio-political context of the sanctuary.

¹⁹³ Potts 2012: 135.

¹⁹⁴ Potts 2012: 135.

7. KURANGUN II & III RELIEFS

7.1 Formal Description

The left panel, Kurangun II, depicts a processional scene in which forty male worshippers seem to descend a staircase (fig. 5b). Two rows of these worshippers are carved above the physical staircase while a third group is depicted below the staircase. They are pictured in profile, facing toward Kurangun I. The worshipper placed at the front of the group has the best-preserved features when comparing him to the rest of the figures. We are able to discern the smooth surface of the face, chest, his garment, and legs; as well as his features including his mouth, nose, and eye.¹⁹⁵ This figure is presented wearing a long, widening garment with a broad belt cinching the waist, his feet are exposed. He has a hairstyle or head covering that is cropped at the shoulders but does not have a braid. Additionally, he is represented with a short beard with his hands clasped at his waist.¹⁹⁶

The larger pair of worshippers positioned on the same plain as the central panel show the standard representation for all the other figures. They are oriented toward the deities in profile. They wear shorter tunics cut at the knee and have short hairstyles with a braid that trails behind their backs, finishing in a knob at elbow-length. These two worshippers also have their hands clasped at the waist in a worshipping position.

There are two other duos of worshippers above and behind the solo individual. The rest of the party are arranged on three implied or unpreserved staircases and are represented according to conventions with their hands clasped in the worshipping gesture.

The bottom row is comprised of 12 worshippers ranging from 0.68m to 0.90m high, there are 9 worshippers in the middle row between 0.85 and 0.88m high, and in the upper row there are 8 worshippers between 0.85 and 0.88 metres high.¹⁹⁷

The Kurangun III relief (fig. 4c, 6b) is on the right of the central panel (Kurangun I), it represents seven, possibly eight, figures standing on two registers. The two registers seem to represent a staircase similar to the Kurangun II relief. The upper register has at least three individuals all with their hands clasped at the waist, ascending a staircase. On the lower register four figures are represented in the same way, but because of erosion and the lack of

¹⁹⁵ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 17.

¹⁹⁶ Some line drawings depict this worshipper without a beard and with a shorter tunic-like garment.

¹⁹⁷ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 18.

presentation, only their outlines can be detected. The badly eroded figure at the front has been thought to hold a staff or spear.¹⁹⁸

7.2 Chronology

Kurangun II is one of two expansions that was made to the central Kurangun I panel. It is dated to the Neo-Elamite period between the 11th and 8th centuries BC.¹⁹⁹ A more specific date has been in contention however, with Vanden Berghe believing the worshippers to be an eighth century addition whilst Seidl, Carter, and Amiet all proposed a date at the end of the second millennium BC, based on parallels with similar depictions on the reliefs of Kul-e Farah, specifically Kul-e Farah IV.²⁰⁰ The Kul-e Farah IV relief was later dated in 2013 by Álvarez-Mon who placed them between the 9th and 8th century BC, which, I believe encourages a later date for Kurangun II i.e. between the 9th and 8th centuries.²⁰¹

Kurangun III is the final expansion to the sanctuary reliefs. Chronologically closer to the Kurangun II panel, it is dated to the Neo-Elamite period between the 7th and 6th centuries BC.²⁰² This is toward the end of the phase; which scholars associate with the beginning of Cyrus the Great's kingship around 559 BC. Unfortunately, because of the erosion to the relief a more precise date cannot be reached. But groups of individuals are represented at Kul-e Farah II and V in a similar way with their hands clasped at the waist. These reliefs are dated to the 7th and 6th centuries BC and may have been created at a similar time to the Kurangun III relief.²⁰³

7.3 Collective Ritual

7.3.1 Procession

The Kurangun II and III reliefs depicts a communal ritual which may have comprised of a procession or pilgrimage to the site.²⁰⁴ The figures represented have slight differences in size

¹⁹⁸ Henkelman & Khaksar 2014: 214.

¹⁹⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 756.

²⁰⁰ Álvarez-Mon 2014: 755-6; Seidl 1986: 12-13; Carter 1988: 146; Amiet 1992: 81.

²⁰¹ Álvarez-Mon 2013: 218.

²⁰² Álvarez-Mon 2014: 755; Vanden Berghe 1986; Seidl 1986: 12-13.

²⁰³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 19.

²⁰⁴ It may be useful to note that the purpose for religiously motivated voyages cannot be understood through archaeological investigation especially when there is no literary evidence to inform our understanding

and their positioning may suggest hierarchy and organisational structure within the ritual. The two figures on the lower register of Kurangun II, closest to the central panel, are represented larger than the other figures and have seemingly finished their descent down the staircase. These individuals may be of higher status than the others, but based on their congruent dress, it is unlikely they were set apart in a different role. Interestingly, the figure closest to the Kurangun I scene is represented smaller than the two aforementioned individuals but is dressed slightly differently with a longer garment and no distinct braid, thus the imagery may separate his role from the rest of the group's.

The notion of a processional ritual is implied by the movement of the figures down the staircase in the Kurangun II relief. Each individual in this panel faces right, toward Kurangun I and the central scene, and are standing on the stairs which have a downward position. Due to the physical stairs one would take to access the sanctuary reflecting those on the relief, we can assume that the figures are pictured descending down real stairs and visiting Kurangun.

A similar processional ritual is observed in the Kul-e Farah III relief (fig. 16). It represents a more complex ritual ceremony when comparing it to the Kurangun II relief. There is the collective, processional type of ritual expressed on all faces of the boulder, similar to Kurangun II and III, in addition to aspects of animal sacrifice. de Waele divided the boulder and its reliefs into five faces which Álvarez-Mon also utilised in order to describe the site.²⁰⁵ Panel S (south panel) displays eighty one figures; panel SW (southwest panel) has forty eight figures; panel W (west panel) has four figures; panel N (north panel) displays sixty three individuals; and panel E (east panel) has four individuals and twenty one animals, which comprised of three zebus and eighteen horned sheep.²⁰⁶

The iconography of Kul-e Farah III displays a procession and meeting of two groups. Centred in these groups is a large, male figure standing on a platform which is supported by four kneeling individuals. The surrounding processional attendants are depicted in the same way: most stand in rows with their hands clasped together at the waist, they are oriented in profile and share the same braided hairstyle with Elamite “visor” hairstyle.²⁰⁷ Such figures at Kul-e Farah III, based on this imagery, are linked with those at Kurangun II and III. And judging

(Luginbühl 2015: 54). However, this is where cognitive archaeology and an understanding of the connection the Neo-Elamite worshippers had to Kurangun and the Sukkalmah-dated reliefs as discussed in §7.5 and §7.6.

²⁰⁵ de Waele 1989: 31-2; Álvarez-Mon 2013; 2019: 60.

²⁰⁶ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 60.

²⁰⁷ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 60; 69.

from the sheer number of figures congruently depicted at both sites, there was an idealised, cultural identity that these Neo-Elamite communities had.

Álvarez-Mon specifies that the broader significance of this type of ritual is connected to other ceremonies including animal sacrifice, musical performance, and communal banquets (Álvarez-Mon 2010, 36). This is especially so as Kul-e Farah III and other reliefs at the site show some of these ritual activities happening together. Each of these types of worship practices have a collective quality to them and there may even be a highland character to these types of community-oriented activities.

7.3.2 Communal Banquets and the Preservation of Neo-Elamite Tradition

The Neo-Elamite peoples of the Zagros highlands often depicted themselves engaged in communal banquets. Feasting celebrations or ritual banquets were a common practice throughout the Near East, and Elamite examples these banquets were provided a ritual character and were framed around the king's authority.²⁰⁸ The examination of other collective ritual, other than the procession or pilgrimage, provides a more comprehensive picture of highland ritual practice and communal experience. Furthermore, such examples of shared activity express an idealised Elamite figure which served to characterise and define their social group.

This practice of feasting in Neo-Elamite examples is retained but further developed into the Persian period where the event often involved the king and occurred within a cultic context. This suggests that the practices during the Neo-Elamite period had enough cultural significance to persist into later tradition. In the context of Kurangun, this would inform us of the way in which the worshippers represented themselves and their practices and had socio-political significance in the region.

7.3.2.1 The Kul-e Farah IV Relief

The Kul-e Farah IV (9th-8th centuries BC) (fig. 17) relief depicts a banquet in which the participants engage the ritual consumption of food, likely meat procured from the depicted animal sacrifice, which was accompanied by harp music.²⁰⁹ The feast appears to be led by a

²⁰⁸ Schmandt-Besserat 2010: 391.

²⁰⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 47; See Vidale (2011: 447-48) who discusses the Royal Cemetery of Ur and the musicians co-interred. Bo Lawergren also addresses the harpists from Kul-e Farah (2010: 792-94).

king who sits on a throne surrounded by community leaders or dignitaries.²¹⁰ Within this context the king is regarded a part of the group as he is partaking in the meal alongside other figures.²¹¹ This may be further assumed because the sharing of a meal was a bonding custom and symbolised unity among the participants.²¹² Additionally, the figures participating in this ritual banquet are represented in a congruent 'ideal' image in which they wear their hair in the typical Elamite braid and are dressed in tunic-like garments that are cinched at the waist. The king is also depicted in this idealised style, enhancing his being part of the collective.

Álvarez-Mon states that this meal is an image of the society in which they defined their own self-image and identity similarly to how the worshippers depicted themselves at Kurangun II and III.²¹³

In the Kul-e Farah IV relief we are presented with a type of habitual communal ritual in which highland communities engaged in, similar to the processional ritual observed at the Kurangun sanctuary. The relief is an example of an artistic tradition which demonstrates a salient communal, ethnic identity that was prevalent throughout the Elamite highlands. Additionally, like at Kurangun II and III, the idealised imagery of Elamite individuals contained markers that would inform external viewers of their identity. This is especially pertinent because communal, ritual feasting observed in Elam, continued into later periods and attests to the prominence and political sway these highland groups held. We can see that these societies were influential even into the later Persian period due to continuation of the types of ritual tradition observed at Kurangun and other highland sites.

7.3.2.2 The Arjan Bowl

The Arjan bowl (fig. 18) was discovered in a Late Neo-Elamite tomb of the same name in the border region between Khuzestan and Fars, north of the modern city Behbahan and the ancient city of Arrajan.²¹⁴ The Arjan bowl is made of bronze with a diameter of 43.5 cm and depth of 8.5 cm and has incised decoration of a consecutive narrative.²¹⁵ The imagery is divided across five registers in which 112 human figures, 66 animals, foliage, and various artefacts are depicted.²¹⁶ The second register illustrates a scene of feasting and celebration,

²¹⁰ De Waele 1989: 29-33; Álvarez-Mon 2010: 170; 2019: 58.

²¹¹ Álvarez-Mon 2013: 210.

²¹² Álvarez-Mon 2019: 58.

²¹³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 58.

²¹⁴ Álvarez-Mon 2010b: 22.

²¹⁵ Álvarez-Mon 2010b: 152.

²¹⁶ Álvarez-Mon 2010b: 153.

comprised of food preparation, musical performance, dance, and acrobatics. In this scene, the central figure is a king, approached from behind by a cupbearer pouring liquid into a bowl. Additionally, there are two individuals seated on the ground, in front of the king, wearing round-knobbed helmets.²¹⁷ According to Álvarez-Mon, sharing in the king's feast implied not only notions of fraternity, but allowed leaders to ally themselves with him.²¹⁸ This may have further significance as normally, the king would feast separately from the rest of the participants. The royal meal and the tribute provided from such leaders were thus part of the same socio-political status. In this sense, the leaders were provided with an opportunity to present the king with premium gifts, and in exchange, were invited to take part in its consumption.²¹⁹ Conversely, this may simply be recognised as a way of connecting and ideologically equalising the participants, as in some cases those invited to such meals drank from the same bowl as the king.²²⁰ This example presents a personally linked banquet scene which was contemporary or dated slightly later than the Kul-e Farah IV relief. As is discussed in §6.4.2, the owner of the Arjan tomb was likely of mixed Iranian and Elamite descent. In the context of preserved Elamite tradition, this suggests that collective, ritual feast was linked with the community comprised of people both ethnically Elamite and non-Elamite.

7.3.2.3 Communal Banquets in the Achaemenid Period

Henkelman argues that Neo-Elamite ritual practices were maintained and re-purposed in the Persian period. For instance, he utilises the imagery from Neo-Elamite examples of ritual banqueting and applies them onto the *šip* feasts mentioned in the Persepolis Fortification Texts, supposing that the Persian period *šip* feast would have occurred at the 'sacred precinct' of Pasargadae.²²¹ Henkelman imagines the king or his representative standing on a platform, calling for divine blessing and acceptance of offerings, as well as granting the sacrificial meat and other food and drink to the attendants gathered for the feast.²²² The *šip* feasts, the sacred precinct of Pasargadae, and the imagery conceived by Henkelman easily blends the two chronologically separated occurrences together, suggesting that there was continuity in Elamite tradition that persisted into Achaemenid practices.

²¹⁷ These helmets are likely Elamite, originating from the Sukkalmah period (Álvarez-Mon 2010: 170).

²¹⁸ Álvarez-Mon 2010b: 171.

²¹⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2010b: 170. Luginbühl also specifies that the representation of kings receiving offerings and processional gifts, in the Levant and Persian contexts, had an important role in the iconography of power and could be viewed as a form of taxation or as a way of meeting with the king (Luginbühl 2015: 46).

²²⁰ Álvarez-Mon 2010b: 171.

²²¹ Henkelman 2008: 391; Boyce 1982: 53-4. This sacred precinct is a large open space centred on two large stone plinths, which may have functioned as platforms.

²²² Henkelman 2008: 392.

This idea is supported by the presence of *šip* in Achaemenid Elamite names, in which they sometimes continue using older name forms with the suffix *šup*. For example, this can be seen in the Achaemenid Elamite name Sunki-šip compared with the Neo-Elamite form Sunki-šup.²²³ The Middle Elamite appearance of *šup* is in a votive inscription of Untash-Napirisha dated between 1340 and 1300 BC.²²⁴ In this text, the king mentions the construction of a temple dedicated to Inshushinak, Masti, and Tepti and states that he “renewed their *šup* and *likir*, night and day”.²²⁵ *Šup* is utilised in this context to denote a type of sacrifice that differs from *likir* which may be connected with Inshushinak as he was attached to Elamite kingship.²²⁶ An additional text from Tal-e Malyan dated between the late Middle Elamite or early Neo-Elamite periods mentions the issuing of items, potentially for the “gods of Elam”, 115 of which were given for three or four consecutive months, and 26 were for two individuals identified as king.²²⁷ The final lines of the tablet are fragmentary, but it is thought to contain the signs *šu-up* and may therefore relate to a *šup* feast, especially as the tablet mentions commodities alongside certain months and kings.²²⁸ Based on this information, *šup* was a specific type of offering performed by the king in the Middle Elamite period, and likely in the Neo-Elamite period as well. The fact that there was a degree of continuity between Elamite *šup* and Achaemenid *šip* suggests that there was an enduring ritual tradition. This reinforces theories of Elamite and Iranian acculturation that would eventually emerge in the Persian empire, and evidence the preservation of Elamite traditions, more specifically, those of the highlands.

7.3.3 The Role of Musical Performance

Unfortunately, the presence of music in Elamite culture and worship practices is not observed in textual examples, nor do we have musical instruments preserved in the archaeological record. Music is limited to the artistic realm, particularly in its depiction on monumental reliefs and on other, mostly ceremonial and decorative, items. From such evidence we have been able to determine that musical performance and dance were a part of collective ritual practice during the Neo-Elamite period and often occurred alongside feasting ceremonies.

²²³ Henkelman 2011: 122.

²²⁴ This votive inscription is known from six bricks found at Dayalam in southwestern Khuzestan. See (Vallat 1983: 11-12).

²²⁵ Henkelman 2011: 122; Vallat 1983: 11-12.

²²⁶ Henkelman 2011: 122.

²²⁷ M-603 uncovered in a level that postdates the administrative texts from the EDD building (Stolper 1984: 9; Henkelman 2011: 123).

²²⁸ Henkelman 2011: 123.

A seal from Susa (fig. 19) dated between 750 and 520 BC depicts an equid playing the harp, a lion that plays the drum, and two other animals; one playing a flute, and the second dancing.²²⁹ It is unknown whether they illustrate a mythological scene or if they have a cultic significance.²³⁰ Though from other instances, where music accompanies worship and ritual practice, musical accompaniment and performance takes on a religious character. The Arjan bowl (fig. 20) is one such example in which musicians play drums, cymbals, a lyre, two harps, a flute, and lute. This musical feature accompanies a banquet scene which also features dancing and acrobatics.²³¹

Three of the six reliefs at Kul-e Farah represent groups of musicians. Kul-e Farah I (fig. 20a) shows a vertical-harp player, a horizontal-harp player, and a drummer; Kul-e Farah III (fig. 20b) depicts three vertical-harp players; and on Kul-e Farah IV (fig. 20c) are two groups each led by a single individual, and behind this person is a horizontal-harp player and two vertical-harp players.²³² Each of these reliefs at Kul-e Farah are dated to slightly different times and occur within different contexts. Kul-e Farah I (c. 7-6th century BC) is associated with Hanni, based on an inscription, which describes his military victories as well as his vassalage to King Shutur-Nahhunte.²³³ The relief also represents animal sacrifice in which three beheaded rams are depicted in an upper register, whilst in the lower register, a bovine is depicted being pulled to an altar.²³⁴ Kul-e Farah III (c. 8-7th century BC) shows a processional ritual of 199 figures alongside 21 animals. On the north side of this relief is the king who stands at a height of 2.06m with figures in front and behind him, including the three musicians. At this ceremonial depiction, animal sacrifice is also shown. Kul-e Farah IV (c. 9th century BC) depicts a ritual banquet headed by the king. The king's meal is the central scene with all the other figures oriented toward this focal point.²³⁵

Of those reliefs showing music and dance, Kul-e Farah I and III are more contemporaneous to the Kurangun II and III reliefs and are the same type of artistic representation. Additionally, as Kul-e Farah III also features processional ritual together with music players, it is possible that the procession that occurred at Kurangun would have been accompanied by music.

²²⁹ Henkelman & Khaksar 2014: 213.

²³⁰ Lawergren 2018: 789.

²³¹ Henkelman & Khaksar 2014: 213.

²³² de Waele 1989: 29.

²³³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 91.

²³⁴ de Waele 1989: 30.

²³⁵ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 55.

However, between the two sites there is a fundamental difference in its acoustic capacity. Bo Lawergren states that Kul-e Farah is located in a deep gorge which has some nearly flat vertical walls made of solid rock with about 200m between them.²³⁶ In this space, sound would have bounced off the walls and produced echoes and a ringing effect. Lawergren posits that this may have produced an atmosphere which enhanced religious experience at the sanctuary.²³⁷ Kurangun contrastingly does not have an environment suited to musical acoustics, but this does not prevent the idea that musical performance may have accompanied worship at the site. In fact, the presence of musical performance at the open-air sanctuary of Kul-e Farah emphasises this notion. Perhaps the music may have resounded into the space in front of Kurangun whilst worshippers looked over the Fahliyan river, emphasising the mystical experience of the sanctuary.

The salient expression of collective identity together with communal-based ritual practice suggest that the people who worshipped at Kurangun during the Neo-Elamite period intentionally represented themselves. This is in a shared iconography and artistic convention throughout Neo-Elamite examples of shared ritual, which also served to demonstrate the types of practices which defined their community and the way they interacted with each other and the world around them. We can observe procession and possibly pilgrimage specifically depicted in the Kurangun II and III reliefs, animal sacrifice, and banqueting often accompanied by song and dance. Such practices may have been attached to the procession and worship at Kurangun but were not depicted. Conversely, they may have been types of ritual occurring on different occasions.

7.4 Social and Political Characteristics of the Worshipping Communities

The Kurangun II and III reliefs depict a community of highland origin which had purposefully represented themselves. We observe a changed way of life in the highlands, or at least a more fully articulated artistic tradition, which was enabled to flourish due to the Neo-Elamite political climate. In this period, the control of the Susian state withdrew into its centre and relinquished its hold on the diverse peoples of highland Fars. As Iranian peoples integrated and interwove through the communities in these areas, strong tribal groups began to emerge and solidify their own identities. Understanding the socio-political context of Kurangun

²³⁶ Lawergren 2018: 794.

²³⁷ Lawergren 2018: 794.

enables us to glimpse the purposes behind such monumental depiction and re-constitution of ancestral places of worship and political propagation.

7.4.1 Political Climate of the Neo-Elamite Period

The Acropole texts from Susa, dated between the late-seventh and mid-sixth centuries, attest to economic contacts between the local Susian state and various communities both within and outside of the Khuzestan plain.²³⁸ There also existed the ‘dimorphic’ zone between Fars and Khuzestan, as well as a decline in Susian-based control and influence of the Neo-Elamite rulers particularly in the highlands and areas of Mesopotamia.²³⁹ And so, we observe a changed way of life in the highlands. Álvarez-Mon suggests that because of the political climate of the Neo-Elamite state and its hinterlands, powerful, territorially bound groups emerged in the Zagros region.²⁴⁰ This is not to say that Elam was weakened, but that there was a shift in the political makeup of the state during the Neo-Elamite period. The Kurangun II and III reliefs suggest this, with their distinctive artistic and ritual tradition.

In the past, it was thought that in the Neo-Elamite period, Elam was in decline on account of Babylonian and Assyrian aggression which catalysed instability in the state. However, recent works by Waters and Henkelman identified that Elam was a power to be reckoned with and did not experience lasting damage until 653 BC.²⁴¹ From 653 up to 645 BC, Assurbanipal launched large scale campaigns against Elam which began to destabilise Elam’s political institutions and control over the region but did not entirely dismantle the state. The reigns of Neo-Elamite kings were short and often were usurped, contributing to the idea that Elam was in decline during this period; however, Henkelman highlights that this usurpation occurred within the same one or two royal families and would not have had significant impact on the state.²⁴² For example, the Babylonian Chronicle relates that Hallusu, likely the Elamite Hallutas-Inshushinak, “seized” his brother Sutruk-Nahhunte, and took the Elamite throne for himself.²⁴³ In addition, usurpation should not necessarily be taken as an indicator of political instability because either there was in-family hostility where the status-quo of governance would remain unchanged, or usurpation may have been used as a method of displacing an

²³⁸ Henkelman 2003: 75.

²³⁹ Henkelman 2003: 8.

²⁴⁰ Álvarez-Mon 2006: 263.

²⁴¹ Henkelman 2008: 14; Waters 2000.

²⁴² Henkelman 2008: 16.

²⁴³ Waters 2000: 40; ANET: 301, ii 23-iv 38.

inadequate monarch.²⁴⁴ So, although there were notions of temporariness and insecurity regarding the reigns of monarchs, the state of Elam's stability should only be questioned later in the period. Although, a major difference the Elamite state did experience was a decline in their regional control. The textual and archaeological record points towards a strong military presence as well as the cultural distinction between highland and lowland communities.²⁴⁵ It is attested in the Babylonian Chronicle, as well as other textual sources that Elam took part in the military engagements in Mesopotamia, and additionally felt the brunt of retaliation. In 814 BC, Elamite troops assisted the Babylonian king Marduk-balassu-iqbi against the Assyrian Samsi-Adad V, who ended up victorious at Dur-Papsukkal near Der.²⁴⁶ A century later, Sargon II of Assyria had possession of Der in 720 and campaigned along the Babylonian-Elamite frontier ten years later, during which it is reported that the Elamite Shutruk-Nahhunte fled to the mountains in anticipation for Sargon's attack.²⁴⁷ Waters specifies that by the late 8th century, much of Elam's external influence and control, specifically to the West, was hindered by Assyrian expansionist policies.²⁴⁸ However, this did not specify that the state of Elam was specifically weakened, only that it had to withdraw its own expansion and limit its borders. Naturally, as the urban centre of Khuzestan strengthened itself militarily and politically, attention was focused inwards and at their Mesopotamian aggressors, and there was less emphasis on holding the wider region previously under state control.

The periods of conflict experienced by the urban centres of Elam may have catalysed the disengagement of the pastoral communities from sedentary spaces and allowed for further articulation of cultural practice, especially when considering that there may have been a developing 'ethnic' group as Iranian migrants moved into the region.²⁴⁹

7.4.2 Elamite-Iranian Acculturation and Tribal Polities

Henkelman postulates that the strength of tribal groups during the Neo-Elamite period may have been the result of not only the decline of Susian regional control, but Elamite-Iranian acculturation. The region of Behbahan may have been considerably significant in this process and is thought by Henkelman to be the location of the cities of Hidali and Huhnur.²⁵⁰ Hidali

²⁴⁴ Henkelman 2008: 16.

²⁴⁵ Quintana 2018: 729-30.

²⁴⁶ Waters 2000: 16.

²⁴⁷ Waters 2000: 32.

²⁴⁸ Waters 2000: 34.

²⁴⁹ Álvarez-Mon 2006: 264; 267.

²⁵⁰ Henkelman 2003: 77.

and Huhnur were both strategic strongholds mentioned in Mesopotamian sources during this period, especially where Ashurbanipal specified them as fortified cities that he conquered.²⁵¹ Later during the Achaemenid period, Hidalī became a centre of administration and production as well as a frequent stop on the road from Persepolis to Susa.²⁵² Located just 10km north of Behbahan is the Neo-Elamite tomb at Arjan dated between 605 and 539 BC. It contained a plethora of funerary objects which demonstrate a mixture of stylistic traditions from not only Elamite and Iranian cultures, but that of Babylonia and Assyria.²⁵³ Three objects including a ceremonial “ring”, a bronze stand or lamp, and a large bowl with incised decoration are inscribed reading “Kidin-Hutran the son of Kurluš”.²⁵⁴ The name of Kidin-Hutran, likely the owner of the tomb, is Elamite in origin, alongside the script and language of the inscription. However, his father’s name, Kurluš, is rare and may be of non-Elamite background. This name has only occurred in two other contexts: in a Neo-Elamite seal inscription and in the Acropole texts in which a man named Kurluš is referred to as an “Unsakian”.²⁵⁵ Those with non-Elamite names in the lineage of individuals with Elamite names attests to the diversity of people living in the Iranian plateau. This transition from non-Elamite names to Elamite names over time suggests a slow process of movement and acculturation from the Middle- to Neo-Elamite period. This process may have happened in the opposite direction as well where we see that amongst the c. 2000 individuals named in the Persepolis Fortification Texts, around 90% had Iranian names and less than 10% had Elamite anthroponyms.²⁵⁶ Although this is at an incredibly advanced point i.e. the late Achaemenid period, forms of acculturation was certainly happening and likely also adhered to the power brokers of the time. The evidence of the Arjan tomb and its contents indicates the importance of the Behbahan region and role it had in this acculturation between communities north of Khuzestan and highland Elamite communities.²⁵⁷ Sumner proposes that Iranians settled in existing Elamite villages; however, at this point in time, there may have been more semi-pastoralist or transhumant pastoralist communities than those completely sedentary, specifically in the highlands.²⁵⁸ It is hypothesised that upon the arrival of Iranian peoples, mixed Elamite and

²⁵¹ Ashurbanipal 10, iv 47-48. Ashurbanipal’s inscription from Nineveh also recalls his placing of Tamarritu as king of Hidalī (Ashurbanipal 6, vii 3). Additionally, Huhnur and Hidalī are prominent in the stele of Atta-hamiti-Inshushinak “King of Anshan and Susa” (EKI 88.4; Gorris & Wicks 2018: 255-56).

²⁵² Henkelman 2003: 77. In prior periods the road went from Anshan to Susa.

²⁵³ Henkelman 2003: 78; Carter 1994: 76.

²⁵⁴ Henkelman 2003: 77-8; Steve 1986: 21.

²⁵⁵ Henkelman 2003: 78; See Amiet (1973: 29) and Boucharlat (1994: 222) for the Neo-Elamite seal inscription “Parsirra son of Kurluš”. The name *Kurluš* is also mentioned in six of the Acropole texts (S 7, 2; 16, 4; 50, 5; 127, 3; 191, 9; 276, 6). See Vallat (2002) for an overview of the Unsak people.

²⁵⁶ Zadok 2018: 157.

²⁵⁷ Henkelman 2003: 78.

²⁵⁸ Sumner 1994; Henkelman 2003: 79.

Iranian tribes and confederacies were formed, marking the shift in artistic tradition and culture that we see at the Kurangun sanctuary.

7.4.3 Tribal Communities in the Persian Period

This may be emphasised through the Graeco-Roman sources which suggest the existence of free “smallholders” during the Persian period. Semi-autonomous pastoralists such as the Elymaioi and the Ouxioi existed in the highlands and appeared to hold some sort of power.²⁵⁹ Strabo mentions that the Ouxioi lived in a “rugged and sheer mountainous region...between the Susians and Persis” and that they took some sort of levy from people, “even from the kings themselves” at the entrance into their territory.²⁶⁰ Additionally, several sources recount Alexander’s encounter with the Ouxians both of the plains and of the mountains. Several scholars such as Pierre Briant and A. B. Bosworth suggest that there were two different events in which this happened.²⁶¹ Alexander came into conflict with the Ouxioi of the Plain, when, after a siege of their fortified town, they surrendered and received pardon and exemption from taxation on their fields. In a potential second event, the Mountain Ouxioi blocked the road to Persepolis and demanded from Alexander the same payment the Persian kings would provide upon their arrival to Persepolis. Alexander, however, attacked the Ouxioi, offered his payment, and imposed an annual tribute of 100 horses, 500 transport animals, and 30 000 sheep and goats upon those who remained.²⁶² Arrian highlights the fact that most of the Ouxioi were herdsmen and had no money or land that could be included in the tribute.²⁶³ This particular case has been utilised to reinforce the conception of societal structure in southwestern Iran, pertaining to the Neo-Elamite period where tribal formations in this period and later comprised of both sedentary farmers and semi-nomadic, or transhumant, pastoralists.²⁶⁴ This is especially as the Ouxioi of the plains and of the mountains shared different lifestyles, but they also shared a common name (although this is only being transmitted through fragmented Graeco-Roman sources) and lived in the same area. So, these two communities may have been two parts, or two offshoots, of the same tribal identity.²⁶⁵ Conversely, Potts argues that the groups regarded as nomads by Herodotus, Arrian, and other writers, were of different communities than their sedentary neighbours and that they were the

²⁵⁹ Henkelman 2011: 8.

²⁶⁰ Henkelman 2011: 8; Strab. *Geo.* 15.3.4.

²⁶¹ Briant 1976: 214-21; Bosworth 1980: 321-24.

²⁶² Arr. *Anab.* 3.17.1-6; Q. Curt. *Hist. Alex.* 5.3.1-16; Diod. 17.67.1-5.

²⁶³ Henkelman 2011: 8; Arr. *Anab.* 3.17.6.

²⁶⁴ Henkelman 2011: 8.

²⁶⁵ Henkelman 2011: 8.

first actual ‘nomads’ that existed in Iran.²⁶⁶ However, it is impossible to tell whether they were separate to the sedentary societies, or if they formed a contingent of one single community.

The Elamite-Iranian origins of these tribal communities relies mostly on their location. The Ouxioi lived between eastern Khuzestan and western Fars, an area in which important Elamite centres and regions were located, including the region of Behbahan and its cities of Huhnur and Hidali; which, as already established, were prime areas in which Elamites and Iranians may have coexisted and integrated over time. Although these aspects occurred in a much later period, the development of the highland communities into politically autonomous entities would have begun much earlier, likely in the Middle- or Neo-Elamite periods.

Based on the above cases, we can see that many of the highland communities were organised into tribal structures that, in the sources, evidence a distinct social identity, at least from what is perceived by the writers. When we consider the fact that purely nomadic pastoralism did not appear in Iran until much later than the Persian and Hellenistic periods, it may be interpreted that the highland Elamites lived in dimorphic societies.²⁶⁷ In these contexts, both agriculture and mobile pastoralism were utilised as modes of food production. Furthermore, these highland tribes seem to also have held a degree of power and autonomy which existed in conjunction with the centralised Persian state.

Although we cannot tell whether the Ouxioi were descendants of the Neo-Elamite highlanders, based on their inhabitancy of the mountainous regions of Fars, their relative communities would have at least had limited contact. Thus, this interaction with the Persian state was likely an extension of the authority exerted by the community represented on the Kurangun II and III reliefs who, as is discussed in §7.5, utilised ritual practice, representation, and artistic tradition in order to re-establish their geographical hegemony within the Zagros region.

7.5 Place and the Re-Assertion of Identity

Kurangun II and III present the remarking of a monument by the Neo-Elamite worshippers and inhabitants of the region. The sanctuary, in this later period, has been repurposed, re-interpreted, and changed through the symbolic depiction of a new, distinct group and their ritual practice. Renfrew and Bahn state that symbols are used to describe the world through

²⁶⁶ Potts 2014: 420.

²⁶⁷ Potts 2014: 420.

the art of representation.²⁶⁸ So, this different society worshipping at Kurangun observed the Sukkalmah-dated symbols at Kurangun I in a particular way and thus had a purpose for their own depiction later in the Neo-Elamite period. The making of monuments, and monumental artwork is fuelled with purpose. This is because the landscape and its monuments intrinsically have a connection to place and reflect social structures and new perceptions about humanity's place in the world, at least according to that ancient culture.²⁶⁹

The concept of place is related to both identity and action. A locale acts dialectically in this way, 'creating' the people who reside there and shaping them through the powers of meaning and memory. This leads to feelings of belonging, a rootedness to place, and identity.²⁷⁰ In this way, rather than being a static part of the environment, 'place' is a dynamic and living concept.²⁷¹ For the Neo-Elamites who worshipped at Kurangun, a sense of place was already established through the presence of the Sukkalmah relief. The sanctuary was an established place of heritage and sacred ritual, but also functioned as a way for the Sukkalmah elite to perpetrate imagery of power and authority into the highland regions of Elam. The Neo-Elamite additions to rock relief reflects a re-establishment of place, their specific, communal identity, and appears to re-claim the site as their own. This is done through the ritual practice depicted and the iconography utilised.

The imagery represented in the Kurangun II and III depicts a processional type of ritual with the individuals proceeding down flights of stairs, which are represented both in the relief and physically, as one would descend a staircase to access the sanctuary. This reflects what is supposed to have occurred at Kurangun, where the Neo-Elamite worshippers would travel, descend the sanctuary's stairs, and meet the deities that command the central scene. This notion of the Neo-Elamite meeting with the Kurangun gods is suggested through the framing of the reliefs. In the Kurangun II relief, each of the figures are depicted facing the central panel in a typical worshipping position: their hands clasped at their waist. This is the same for the Kurangun III relief which, although it is on the right side of Kurangun, the figures are oriented to the left, directing their attention to the central scene. The Neo-Elamite additions to the primary relief seems to emphasise the ritual practice: the procession and meeting of the deity and focuses the attention on the deities themselves through the figures framing the scene. This adheres to one of the main components that define religious ritual, according to

²⁶⁸ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 400.

²⁶⁹ Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 405; Rappaport 1999: 27.

²⁷⁰ Tilley 1994: 26.

²⁷¹ Ullmann 2010: 25.

Renfrew and Bahn, in which devices such as a sacred location, architecture, and environmental aspects such as sound and light, are utilised in order to focalise and enhance the ritual acts that would occur.²⁷²

Interestingly, there is a disparity between the number of attendants depicted and the amount of people that would be able to fit on the sanctuary platform. The iconography of the processional ritual indicates a collective community who all came to worship at the Kurangun sanctuary. Álvarez-Mon states that these reliefs indicate a shared experience of communing with the divine, especially as the figures are represented in the same manner, in the same context, and as a large, communal group.²⁷³ This shared experience would not have occurred at the same time, based on the size of the sanctuary itself, but each of the worshippers would have likely taken part in the primary processional ritual. The meeting with the gods at Kurangun may have been allocated to a priest or specific people, but it is equally as possible that smaller groups would have taken their turn participating in this part of the ritual. Either way, the uniform depiction of this Neo-Elamite group of worshippers, when coupled with their large-scale, shared ritual experience, suggests that this is an experience that was experienced throughout most of the community; at least through the male demographic.²⁷⁴ Alternatively, the collective experience that was depicted in the Kurangun II and III reliefs was meant to depict the society as a whole, a united front who were re-asserting their presence.

This communal experience, as well as the carving of the Kurangun II and III reliefs would have reinforced the sense of place that the sanctuary had as it became embedded in social and individual memory through shared ritual. Through understanding how the Neo-Elamite communities related to the sanctuary, we can glimpse certain characteristics of their society, as personal and cultural identity is inherently linked with place.²⁷⁵ Considering the bonded nature of place, ritual, and identity, the dramatic shift in the artistic convention and ritual practice depicted at Kurangun was not simply a development of the Susian-based tradition. The Kurangun II and III reliefs were instead a reclamation of a site that represented divinely provisioned power over the highlands. Rather than adhering to the symbolic power present in

²⁷² Renfrew & Bahn 2005: 415.

²⁷³ Álvarez-Mon 2019: 21.

²⁷⁴ This demographic may also be those within a particular priesthood. Based on the number of worshippers, this priesthood may have been quite large. However, as there is no information to back up such a claim, it is more likely that just the men undertook this ritual procession.

²⁷⁵ Tilley 1994: 15.

the Kurangun I relief, the sanctuary was subverted with the addition of the Neo-Elamite reliefs, and its significance as a 'place' changed. In this subversion we see a society who framed themselves taking part of the ritual in the central panel but with a tradition that was visually delineated from the earlier Sukkalmah expression. In a secondary sense this community was claiming their political and geographical authority of the region.

7.6 The Neo-Elamite Worshippers and Preserving of Tradition

The Kurangun II and III reliefs depict a people with a specific communal identity and self-image which was concerned with their collective character and ritual practice. Immediately, this separates the people represented in the Kurangun II and III from those represented in the past on the Kurangun I relief. Yalcin expresses that objects not only reflect the social identity of an individual but communicate the character of the relationships which shaped them.²⁷⁶ This idea relies on the notion that art is intrinsically embedded with meaning in which social and individual aspects of the makers and patrons are encoded.²⁷⁷ In the case of Kurangun II and III, these reliefs show us how the community perceived themselves and their relationship with each-other, in addition to the practices and traditions that play a part in shaping their culture.

This group represented at the sanctuary during the Neo-Elamite period clearly envisaged themselves as a collective; a unified people. Fundamentally, the uniformity of the figures' depiction in their pose, their hairstyle, and dress, is the primary indicator of this. Additionally, being portrayed in this specific way allows their community to be distinctly identified. Further, within the Kurangun II and III reliefs there is an emphasis on collective ritual which serves to not only set-apart the worship practices from those observed on the Kurangun I relief, but it enables us to understand that these rituals were likely experienced throughout the whole society. The difference in the Sukkalmah and Neo-Elamite reliefs in terms of who is represented may lie in the identity that is constructed from the integration of Iranians into highland Zagros cultures. Because there is such a predominant shift in the cultural identity and communal-based practices when comparing it to the elite ritual in Kurangun I, it may be surmised that the people represented were of a mixed Elamite and Iranian heritage, forming a distinct self-image that specifically distinguishes itself against the lowland, Susian-based state.

²⁷⁶ Yalcin 2014: 3.

²⁷⁷ Yalcin 2014: 5.

As already established in §6.4.3, the Kurangun I relief was a politically charged place of worship that propagated Sukkalmah authority and power. The addition of the Kurangun II and III reliefs thus cannot be separated from the political and cultural meaning already embedded at the site. Since the significance of the sanctuary as a ‘place’ is emphasised, we can understand this depiction as a reclamation of political space, where the highland people are exerting their collective hegemony over the land. This notion is supported by the Elamite state’s engagement with external aggression; where the state focused inward, strengthening their military, as well as their Mesopotamian borders rather than their highland neighbours. In response, we see a further articulation of highland tribal identity which emphasised the self-authority and autonomy that these polities experienced.

There appears to have been a continuity of the power and autonomy held by the highland communities during this period, as discussed in §6.4.3, with the relationship between the Persepolitan state and the shepherds, as well as the Ouxioi from Graeco-Roman sources. Interestingly, pertaining to the importance of this highland culture and their re-assertion of identity and geographical power exists in conceptual design of Kurangun reflected in the Apadana at Persepolis (fig. 21). This is where the staircase was used to depict communal groups characterised by distinct cultural markers. Further, the notion of periodic pilgrimage or procession is reflected in the Apadana where the deities from Kurangun are replaced with the king. Additionally, the idea of ‘meeting’ the deities at the sanctuary have again been re-contextualised with the king being the focal-point of this ritual at the Apadana.²⁷⁸ Although the material has changed in the Persian period example, the subversion of conceptual design and artistic conventions in the Apadana processional relief attests to an enduring socio-political significance of Kurangun and the society who depicted themselves there between the 8th and 6th centuries BC.

²⁷⁸ Álvarez-Mon 2018a: 837.

8. WHAT CAN WE TELL OF THE PEOPLE WHO WORSHIPPED AT KURANGUN?

This project has intended to provide a glimpse into the lives of Elamites across the Sukkalmah and Neo-Elamite periods. The Elamite state has shifted over time and, at its peak, encompassed diverse people groups who did not all identify as ‘Elamites’ but had their own distinct cultural identities. The open-air sanctuary of Kurangun and its reliefs demonstrate the difference in how the lowland Susian state in the Sukkalmah period, and the highland communities of the Neo-Elamite period understood their communities, their authority, and their power. The difference in artistic tradition, the utilisation and conceptualisation of cult and ritual, and the self-image of those depicted were analysed in consultation with the socio-political context of the periods in which the reliefs were constructed. This allowed the production of new hypotheses, questions, and movements regarding Elamite societies and their identity.

Kurangun depicts the complex relationship between the Susian-based elite and the highland communities and tribes. During the Sukkalmah period, in which the state of Elam went through times of great political expansion, the sanctuary was utilised as not only a place of ritual, but as an expression of power pertaining to the political control the Sukkalmah had over the diaspora of greater Elam. Susa and Anshan were over 400 kilometres apart with Kurangun closer toward Anshan, specifically placed in the highlands close to Tol-e Spid, the sanctuary was firmly between the two spheres of Anshanite and Susian cultural and political power. The sanctuary was a convenient place and means for the Sukkalmah elite to propagate their power, and through the iconography observed on the Kurangun I relief, we can determine two probable hypotheses.

The first, is that the imagery acknowledged the Sukkalmah’s hegemony, as well as the highland authority, which left the people of Fars with some degree of autonomy whilst ensuring that they were politically and economically answerable to the Sukkalmah. In the second theory, the iconography of the relief ideologically and spatially linked Susa and Anshan under the Sukkalmah, in which his subordinates, the Sukkal of Susa and Sukkal of Elam, are pictorially depicted with the authority to rule over both Khuzestan and Mamasani regions.

As the Kurangun sanctuary was a politically charged place of worship, this study considered the Neo-Elamite expansions to the reliefs in terms of their socio-political context and what the iconography informs us of Kurangun's status during this time. The concept of place at Kurangun has also assisted the understanding of its function in the Neo-Elamite period where the significance of Kurangun as a 'place' for the Neo-Elamite communities was enhanced by the pre-existing ritual and political role the sanctuary had in the Sukkalmah period. Thus, the Kurangun II and III reliefs cannot be separated from the meaning already embedded at the site. This notion is highlighted through the representation of the worshippers on the Kurangun II and III reliefs. They clearly depicted themselves as a collective entity with distinct cultural and ritual practices, and a unique artistic tradition that separated themselves from the preceding elite portrayal. The Neo-Elamite reliefs, particularly Kurangun II, were a reply to the earlier relief. Specifically, it was a reclamation of political space, where the highland tribes exerted their hegemony over the land and reclaimed their autonomy, though perhaps only ideological, from the lowland Susian state.

However, this only partly explains the shift in artistic expression and suggests that there were additional aspects in the changing socio-political context. It is likely that the self-identity of the community that worshipped at Kurangun was not purely 'Elamite', but included influences from Iranian-speaking tribes who migrated into the region c.1000 BC. Naturally, when different groups of people merge together to become one, their respective artistic and cultural traditions, and identities transform alongside this process. This is where we see examples demonstrating different artistic influences such as the material in the Arjan tomb, as well as ethnic names like Kurluš and Parsirra. As such, the people who represented themselves at Neo-Elamite Kurangun may have been of mixed Iranian and Elamite heritage, actively forming a distinct self-image in contrast to the lowland Susian state.

Because of the nature of the Kurangun sanctuary and its reliefs, as well as the state of archaeology in southwestern Iran, there are several questions that cannot be answered by this study. The chronological gap between the Kurangun I and the Kurangun II & III reliefs has not been intensely pursued due to the lack of data available, though the site's re-use during the Neo-Elamite period may have been catalysed by the state's engagement with Assyrian aggression. Additionally, Tol-e Spid and Tol-e Nurabad, the most local, excavated, sites to Kurangun, do not demonstrate evidence for significant occupation during the Neo-Elamite period. This does not align with the Kurangun II and III reliefs, but if there was a major pilgrimage or processional element to the ritual associated with the sanctuary, we can expect

to see Neo-Elamite settlement at other sites that may be associated with the worshippers depicted. This, however, can only be answered through more archaeological intervention and study, which would also allow for further refinement of the hypotheses proposed by this study.

As this study proposes, it is evident that there was a complex political and social relationship amongst the different peoples living in lowland and highland Elam, which carried through into the representations of ritual shown at Kurangun. The early relief shows the overarching power of the Sukkalmah and the amassing of the Elamite peoples under his rule. In contrast, the later Neo-Elamite reliefs emphasise the communality of highland Elamite ritual practices where they intentionally distinguished themselves from the earlier, lowland-centred power structures. In this way, we can observe how these people conceptualised their communities and relationships with earlier hierarchies and religious practices.

9. FIGURES

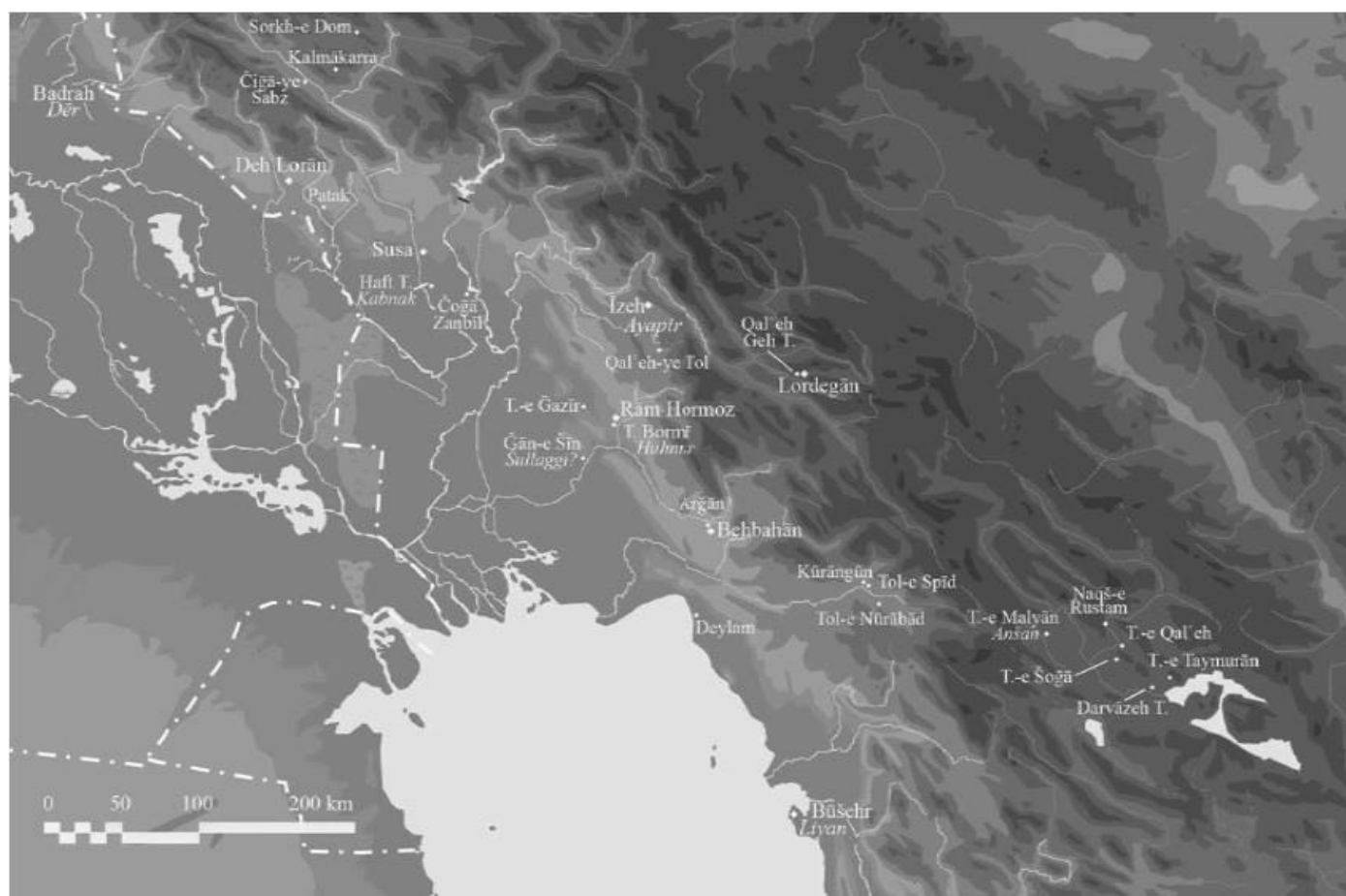


Fig. 1. Map of Elam

(Álvarez-Mon, Garrison, Stronach 2010: 2, fig. 1)

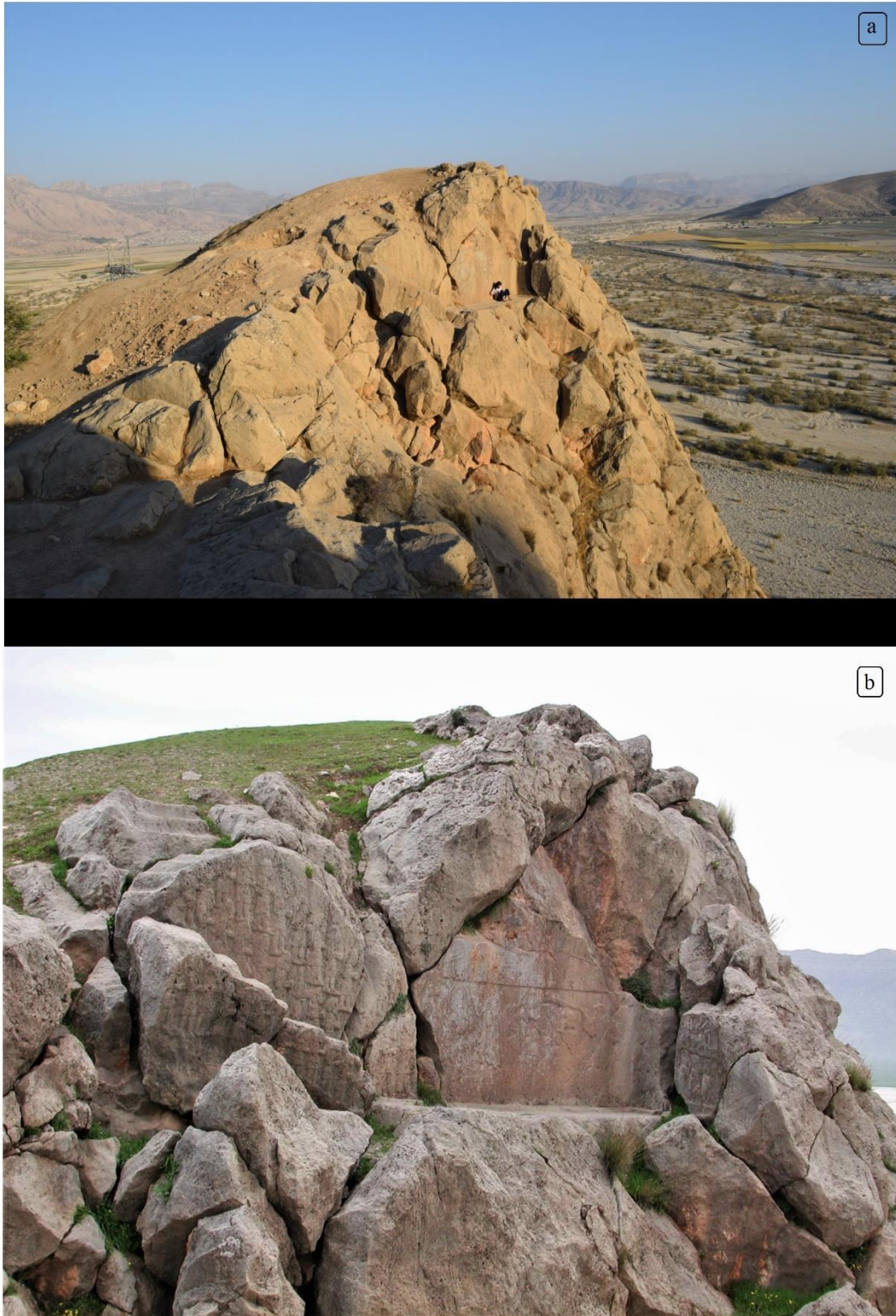


Fig. 2 The Kurangun Sanctuary and Reliefs

(Álvarez-Mon 2019: Pl. 10)

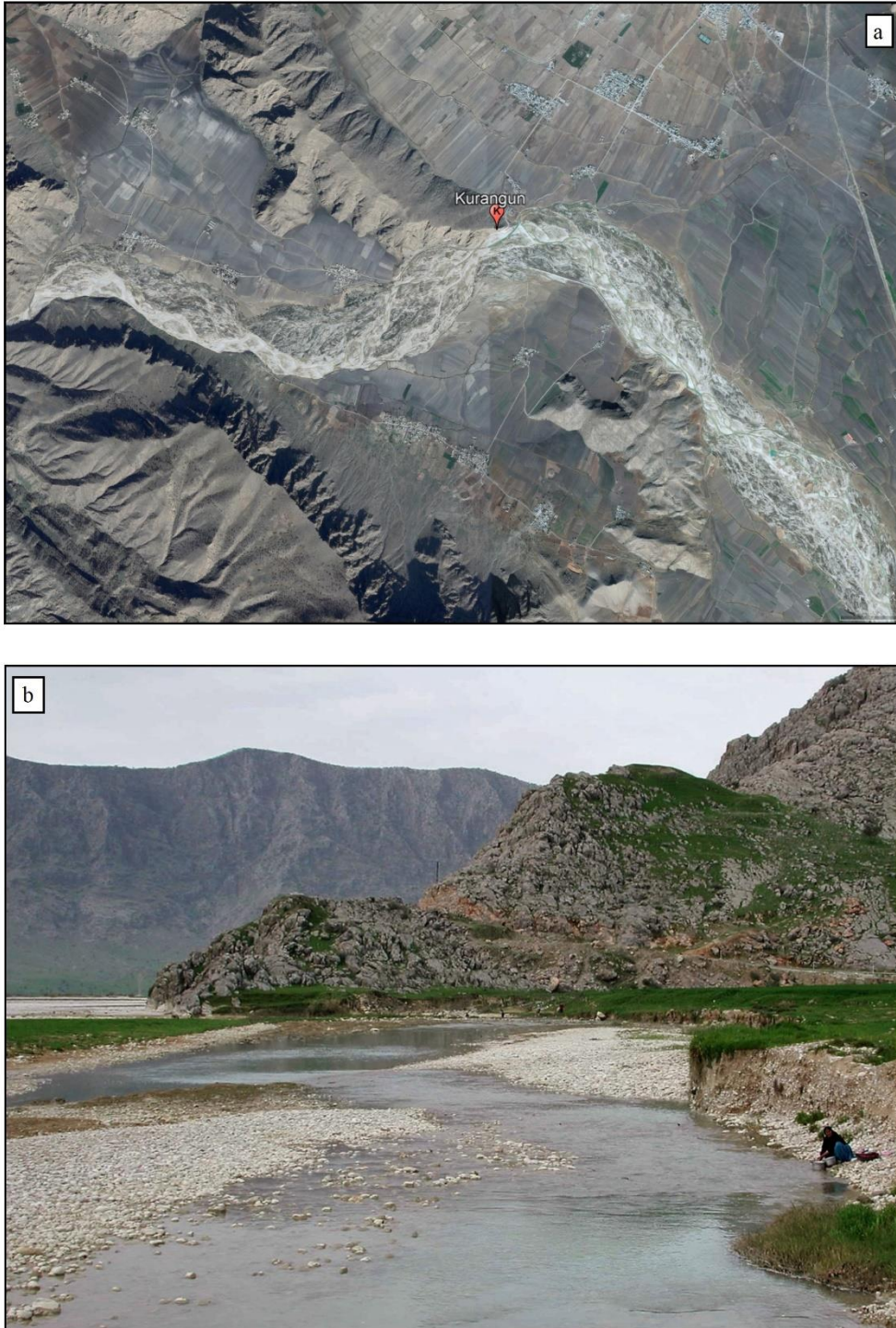


Fig. 3 The Kurangun Sanctuary in view with the Fahliyan River

(Álvarez-Mon 2019: Pl. 9)

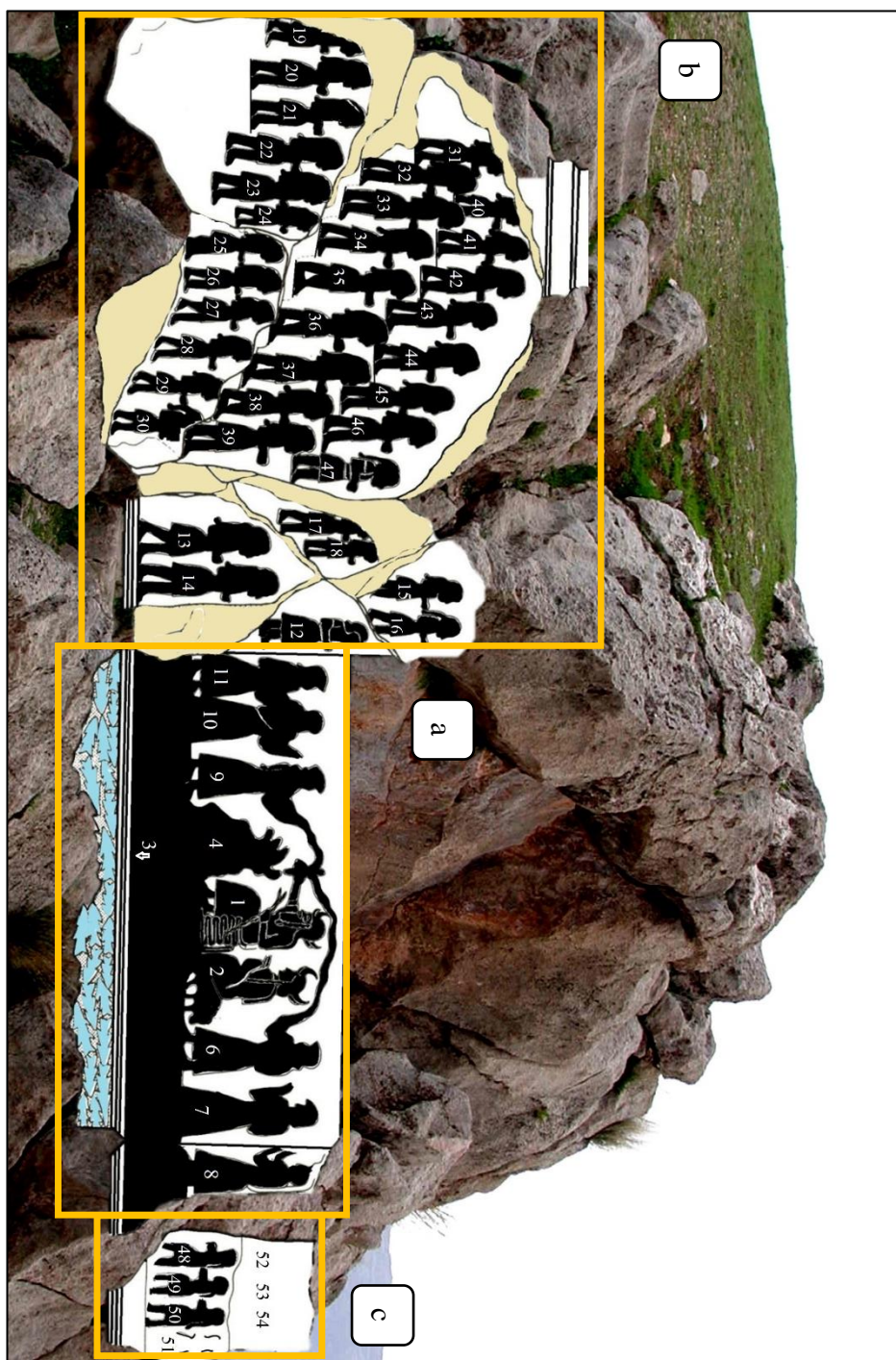


Fig. 4a The Kurangun I Relief

Fig. 4b The Kurangun II Relief

Fig. 4c The Kurangun III Relief

Line drawing by J. Álvarez-Mon, altered by author.

(Álvarez-Mon 2019: Pl. 11)



Fig. 5a Kurangun II relief

(Álvarez-Mon 2019: Pl. 13)



Fig. 5b Kurangun II line drawing by P. de Miroschedji

(de Miroschedji 1981: Pl. VI)



Fig. 6 Kurangun I and III reliefs, floor and low border.

(Álvarez-Mon 2019: Pl. 15: b)



Fig. 7 The Adda Seal: cylinder seal featuring Ea/Enki

(© The Trustees of the British Museum, 89115)

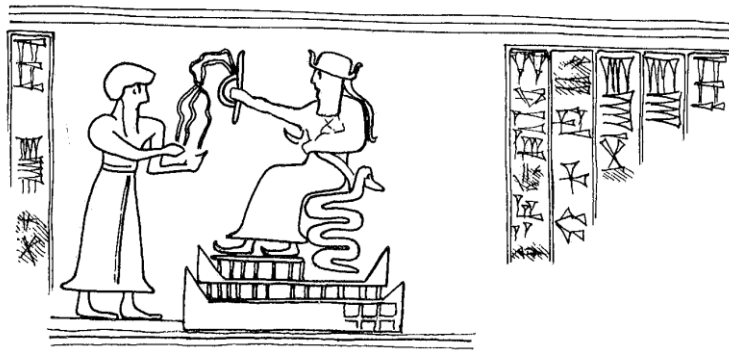


Fig. 8a Cylinder Seal line drawing of Sukkalmah Tan-Uli from Susa (c. 19th-17th centuries)

(de Miroschedji 1981: Pl.1: 5)



Fig. 8b Seal Impression of Sukkalmah Tan-Uli from Susa. (Louvre, acc. no. Sb 8748)

(Kawami 2018: fig. 33.2a)

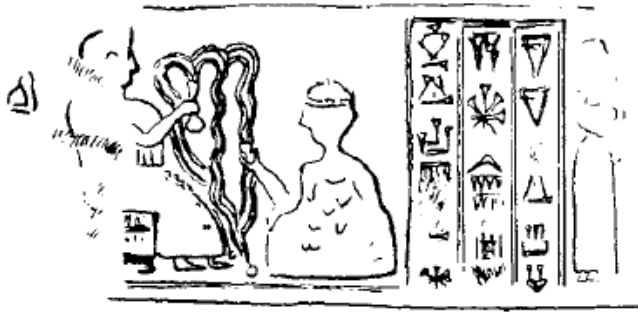


Fig. 8c Sealing of 'Illitiram, servant of Palla-Issan, Sukkalmah of Elam

(Carter 2014: fig. 5.1e)



Fig. 9 Cylinder Seal of Tepti-Ahar (Middle Elamite Period, c.1375)

(de Miroschedji 1981: Pl.7)



Fig. 10. b-e Figurines from the Old Elamite period (c.2000-1500)

Adapted from (Álvarez-Mon 2018b: 612, fig. 30.5 b-e)



Fig. 11 Offering figures of gold from Susa (Louvre, acc. no. Sb 2759, Sb 1758)

(Kawami 2018: fig. 33.2b)



Fig. 12a Sealing of Kidinu, Sukkalmah (line drawing)

(Roach 2009: 461, no. 2867)



Fig. 12b Sealing of Kidinu, Sukkalmah

(Roach 2009: 461, no. 2867)

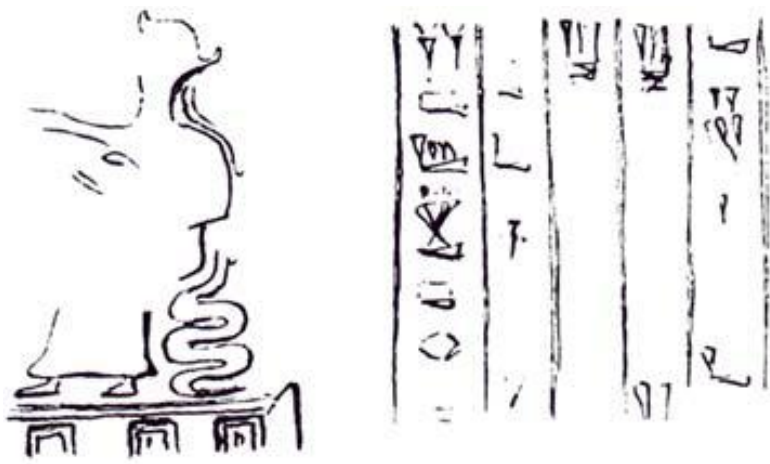


Fig. 12c Sealing of Kuknashur, Sukkalmah

(Roach 2009: 481, no. 2980)

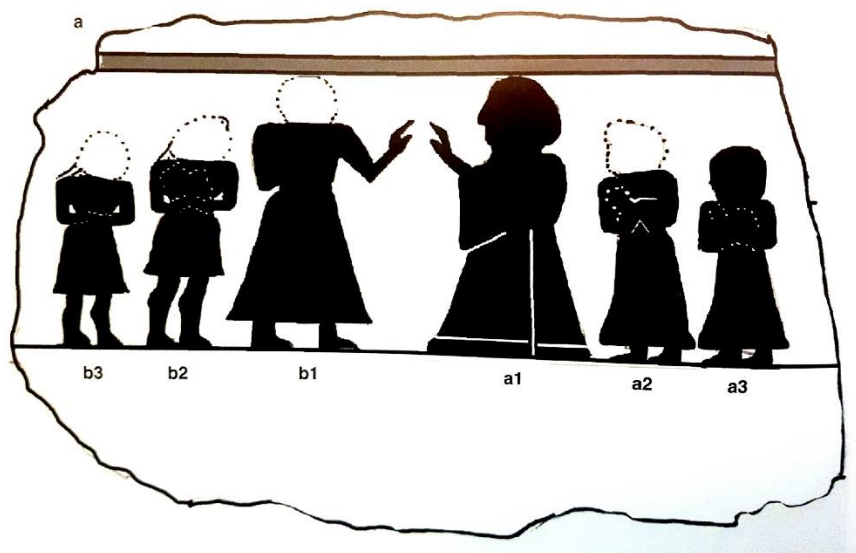


Fig. 13 Qal-e Tul line drawing

(Álvarez-Mon 2019, Pl. 8a)

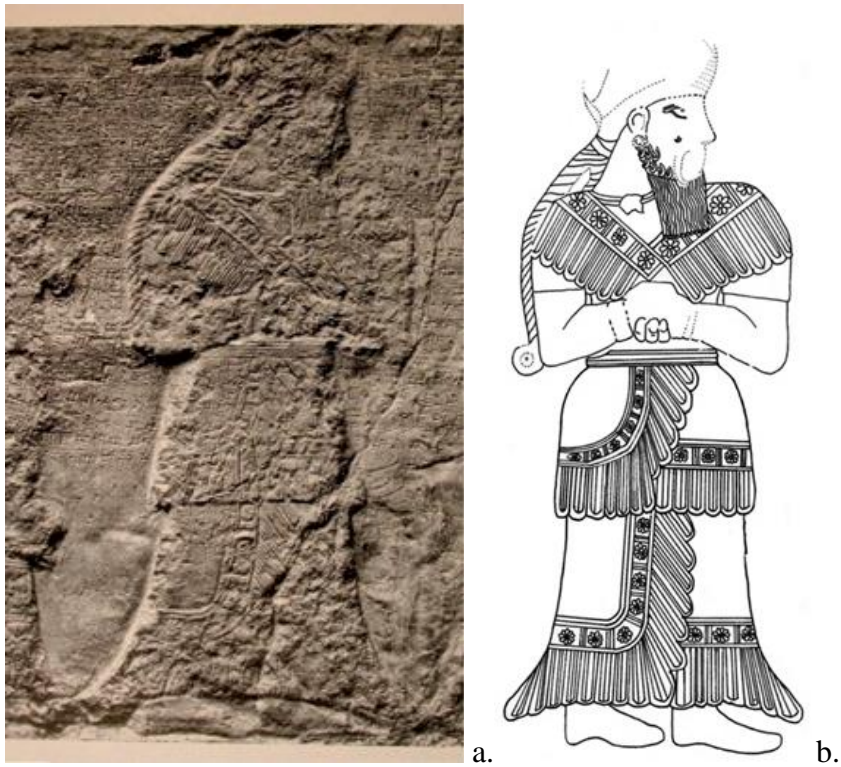


Fig. 14 a-b Relief and line drawing of Hanni at Kul-e Farah I

(Álvarez-Mon 2011, fig. 3, 6)

a. photograph taken by F. Houssay in 1885, published by Dieulafoy (1890, 33 fig. 28)

b. composite line drawing by J. Álvarez-Mon

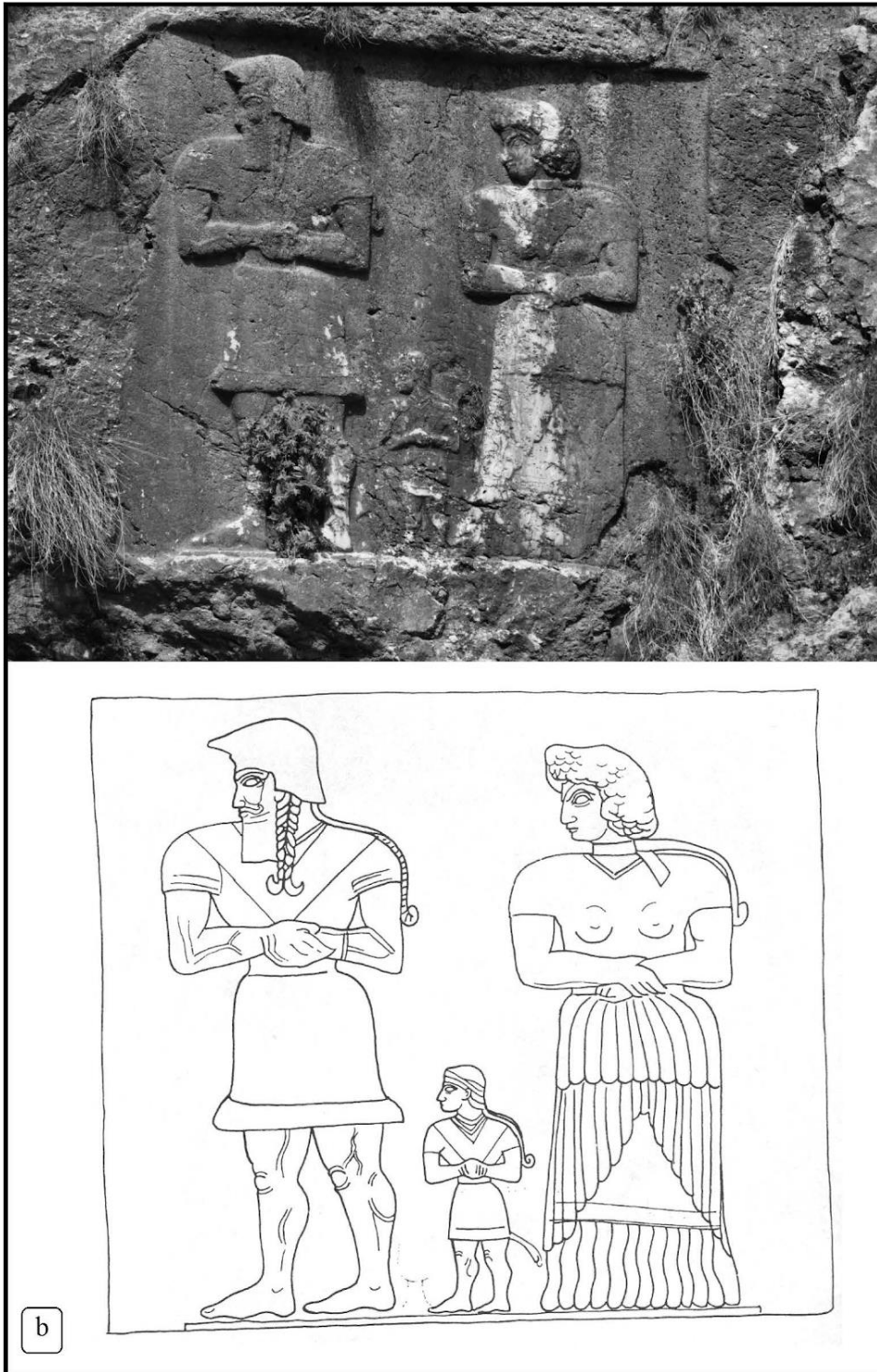


Fig. 15 a-b Royal Family in the Shekaft-e Salman II relief (photograph by J. Álvarez-Mon, line drawing by Erik Smekens)

(Kawami 2018, fig. 33.4b)

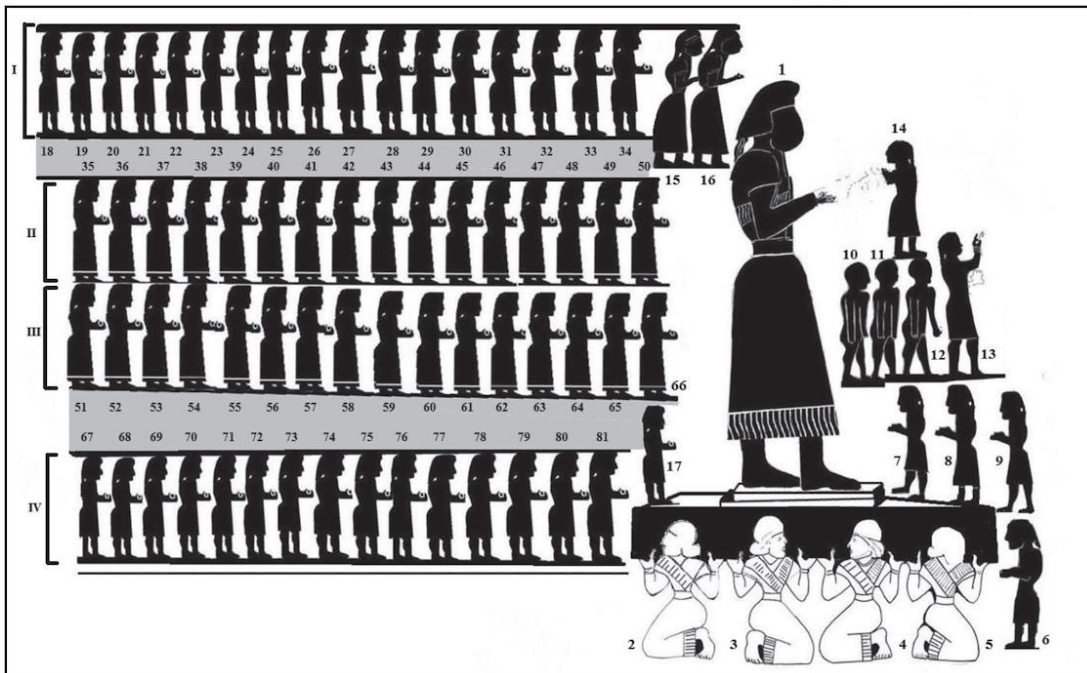


Fig. 16 Relief of Kul-e Farah III, Southern Face

(Álvarez-Mon 2018a, 840, fig. 40.8)

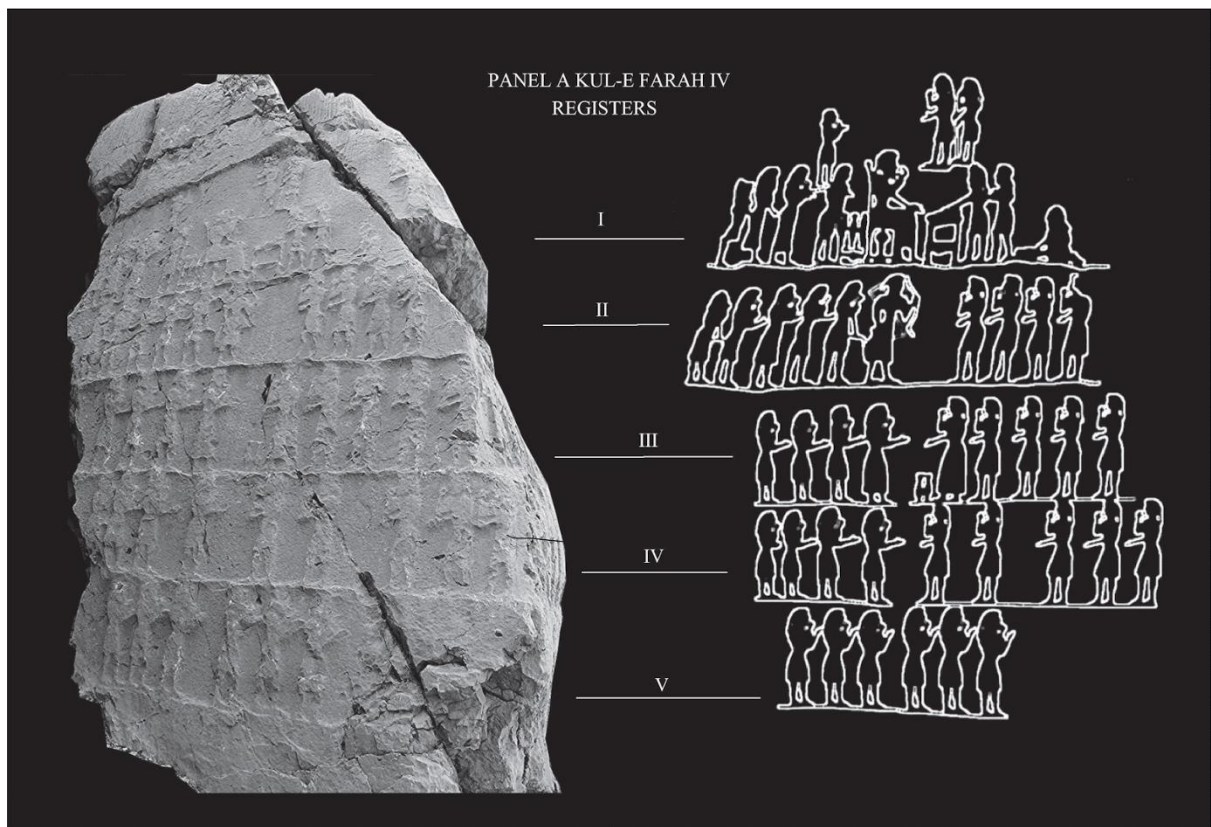


Fig. 17 Kul-e Farah IV relief, Panel A

(Álvarez-Mon 2018a, 839, fig. 40.7)

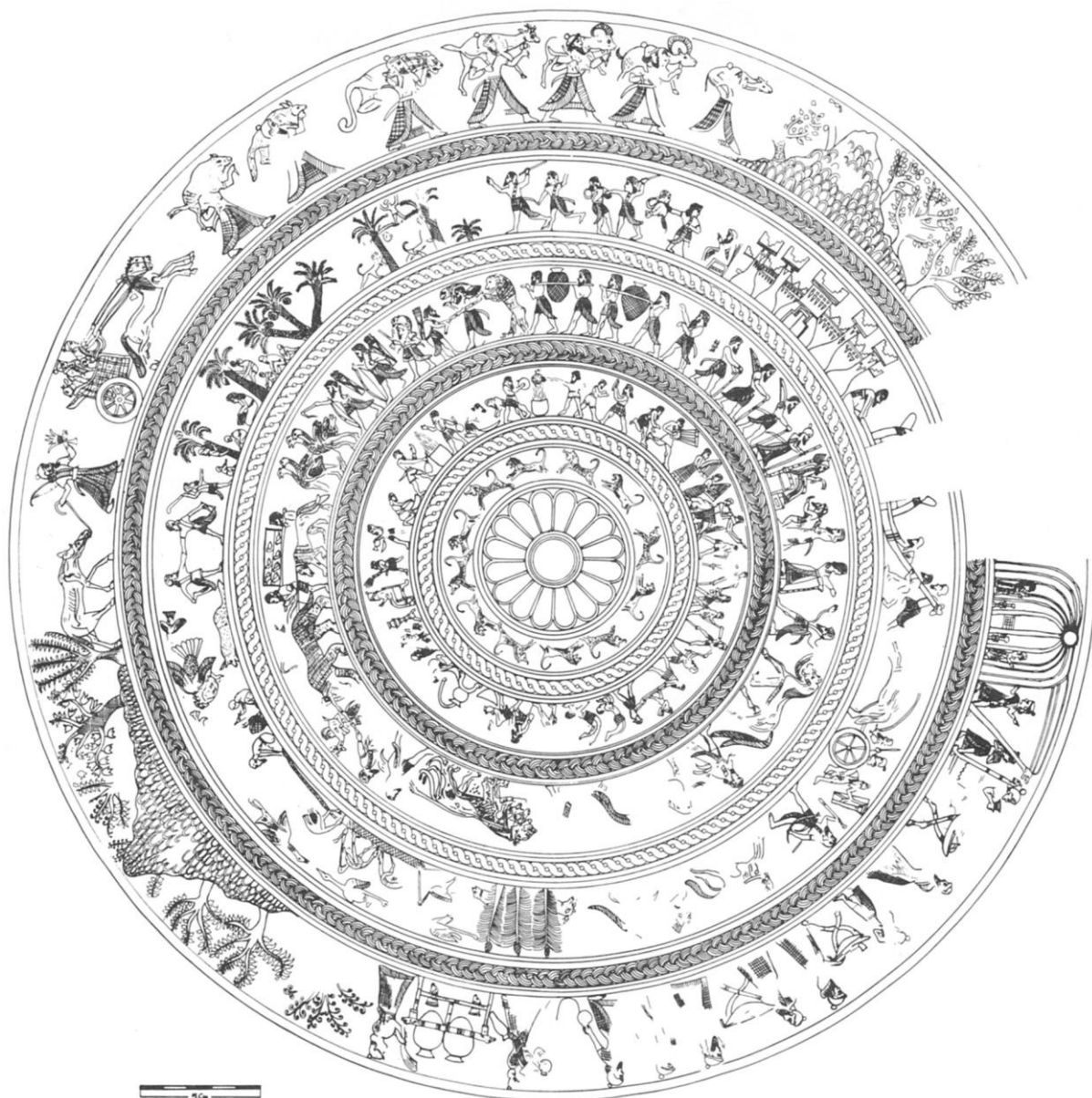


Fig. 18 The Arjan Bowl (drawing by R. Vatandust)

(Majidzadeh 1992, fig. 1)



Fig. 19 Modern impression of cylinder seal (Louvre, Sb 6281)

(Henkelman & Khaksar 2014, 212, fig. 2)

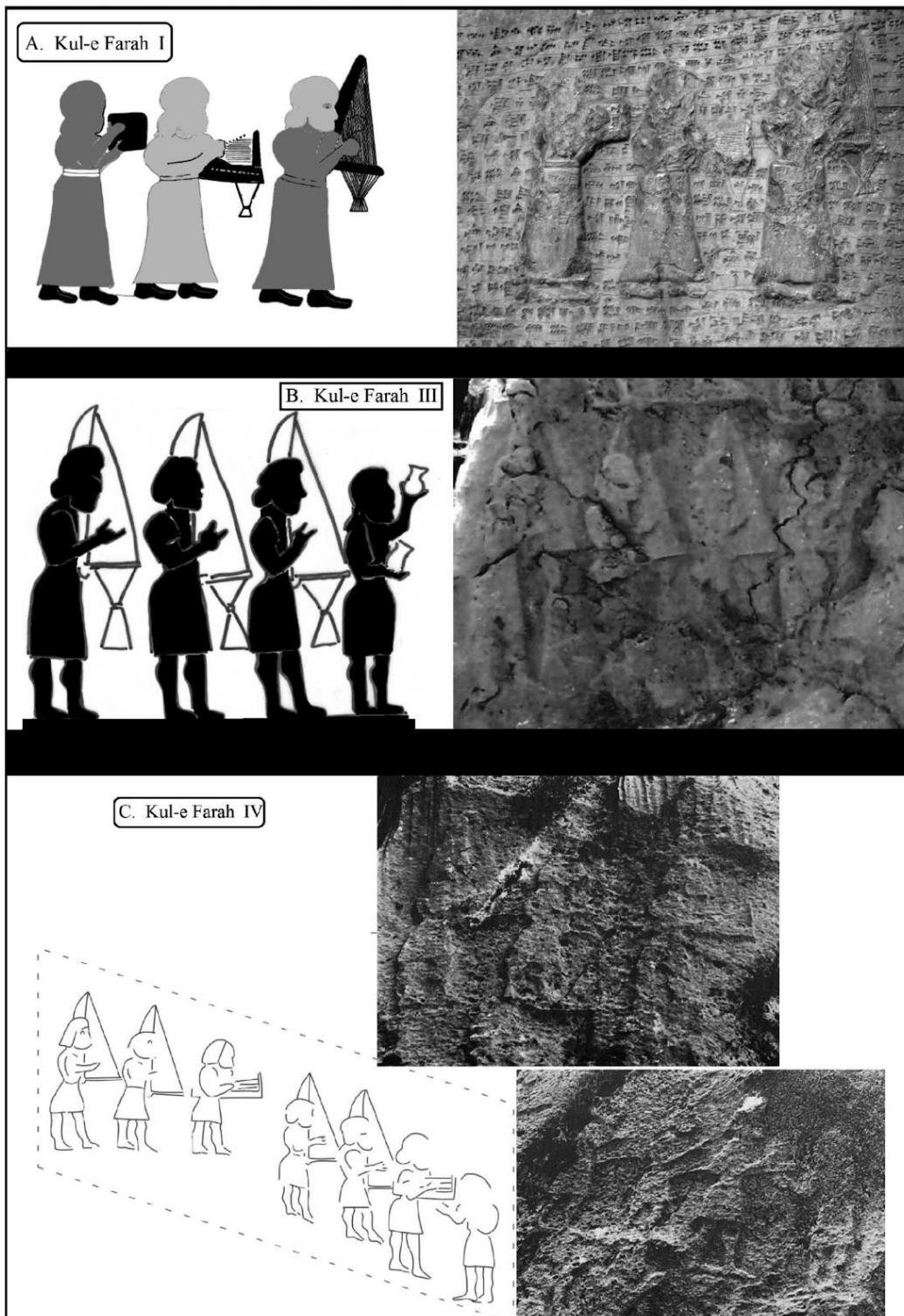


Fig. 20 Musicians at Kul-e Farah

(Lawergren 2018, 793, fig. 38.6)

Drawings and photographs of a. (Kul-e Farah I) and b. (Kul-e Farah III) by J. Álvarez-Mon, line drawing and photographs of c. (Kul-e Farah IV) from de Waele 1989.

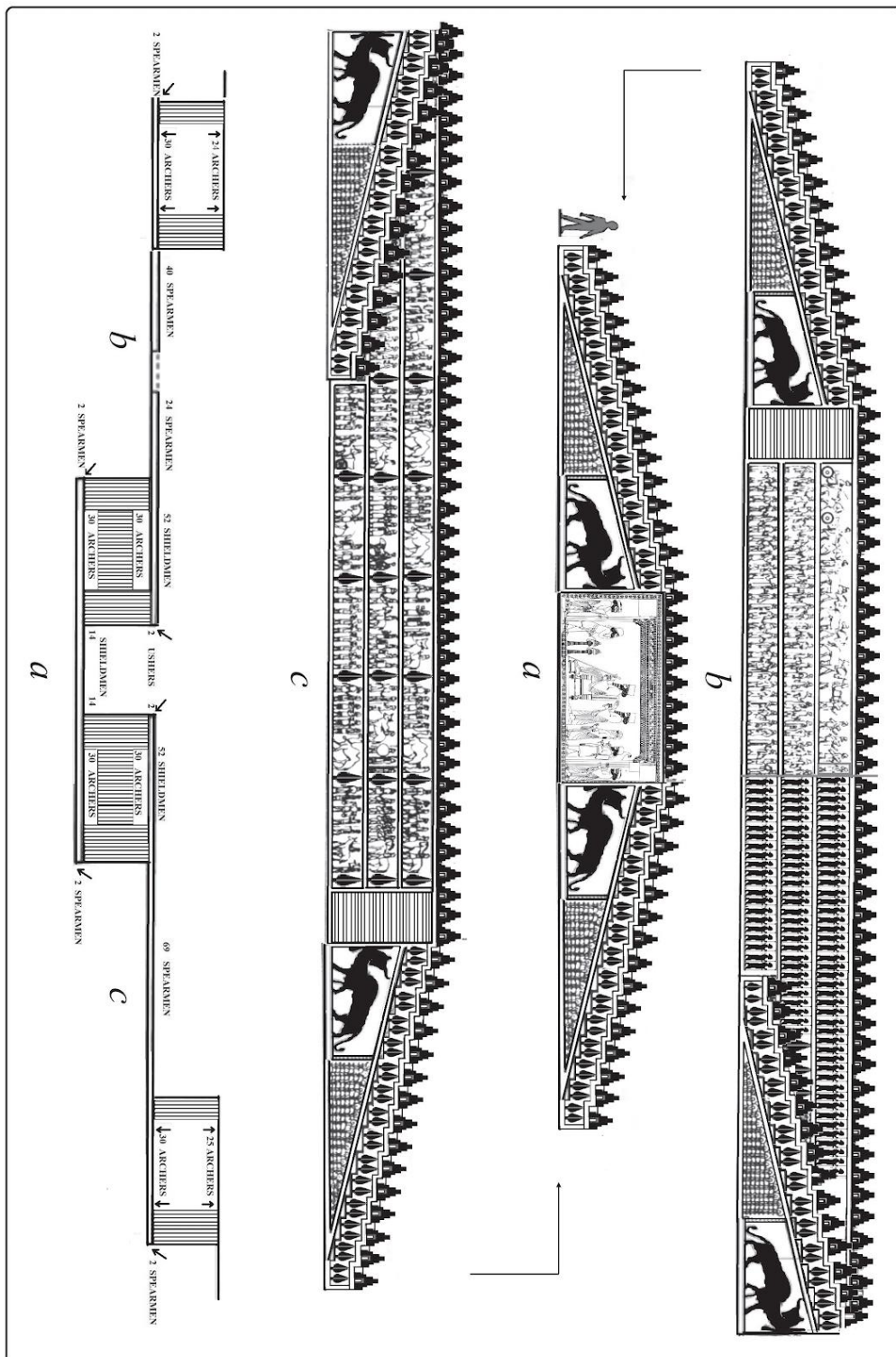


Fig. 21 Composite line drawings of the Apadana staircase reliefs at Persepolis

(Álvarez-Mon 2018a, fig. 40.4)



Fig. 22 Ritual basin (*Apzu* basin) decorated with goatfish figures. From Susa c. 13th-12th century BC (Middle Elamite Period)

(© RMN, Musée du Louvre, Sb 19)

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