

CHAPTER THIRTY

THE SCULPTURAL ARTS OF ELAM

Javier Álvarez-Mon

INTRODUCTION

Sculpture brings together materials, skill and imagination to manufacture two and three-dimensional physical realities punctuating time and space with layers of culture. The dual highland-lowland geographical setting of Elam largely determined the personality of its multifaceted sculptural expressions, providing access to a range of materials as diverse as clay, stone, bitumen and metal. While Elamites excelled at transforming all of these materials, the bulk of the surviving sculpture has come to us from excavations conducted in the western lowland region of Khuzistan, particularly the cities of Susa, Haft Tappeh and Chogha Zanbil, where sculptural production was conditioned by streams of cultural interaction with Mesopotamia and by a mastery of the use of clay. Besides these urban-based traditions, a significant manifestation of Elamite sculptural arts can be found in monumental reliefs carved in open air sanctuaries located in the highlands.

The ensuing summary provides a chronological overview of sculptural art manufactured in Elam from stone, clay and bitumen (in this volume glazed mud-brick relief panels, glazed clay sculpture, metal sculpture, and glyptic are treated in Chapters 27, 28, 31 and 32 by F. Bridley, N. Daucé, E. Ascalone and M.B. Garrison, respectively). This multiplicity of Elamite sculpture is represented by both elaborate, often large-scale, elite-sponsored works and a rich and ubiquitous corpus of terracotta-made popular works of art.

ELAM BEFORE ELAM (CA. 4200–3000 BC)

The village of Susa was founded around 4200 BC atop two natural outcrops, ca. 10.5 to 7 m high, which overlooked the surrounding alluvial plain. At this time, as many as 2,000 people may have called Susa home. Their presence at the site was physically underscored by the construction of a massive wall, possibly enclosing the northern settlement, and a massif platform on the southern mound believed to have reached 10 m in height. This period was characterized by the production of original Ubaid-style painted ceramics whose palette of ornamental motifs is defined by abstract geometric forms and animal imagery, revealing influences from textiles and basketry, as

well as from the natural environment. This style is embodied in a sculptural tradition dominated by sober stylization and the abstraction of the human and animal form. The modelling characteristics of earlier so-called ophidian or cobra-like figurines are retained in this period for the representation of the human figure in clay [Figure 30.1a].

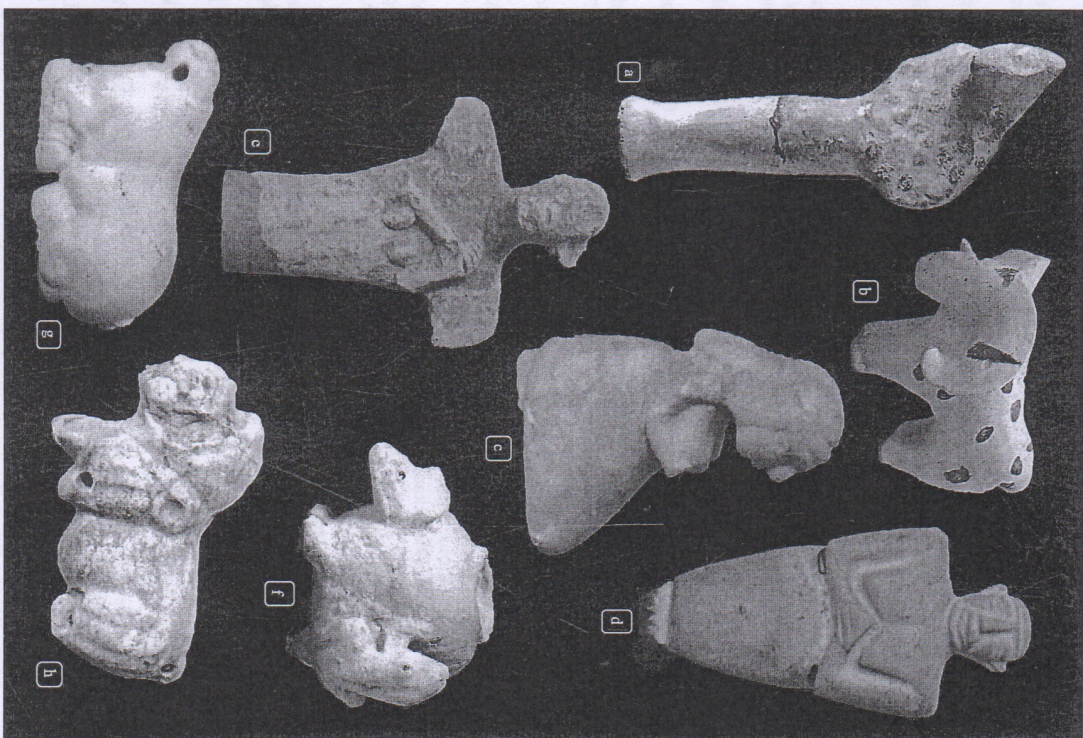


Figure 30.1 4th millennium and early 3rd millennium terracotta and stone miniature sculpture.

A minimalistic tubular body without arms or legs, is topped by a broad flat chest and an elongated head variously interpreted as a sign of cranial-modification, a special type of headgear or hairstyle, or the wearing of masks. Painted black dots covering the body are perceived as clothing, painting, tattooing, or even scars. The representation of sheep figures conveys a similar minimalist approach, underscoring the head and its massive horns as principal appendages. Only one example, whose face lacks eyes and a mouth, has preserved its large round horns, which contrast with the stocky body and legs [Figure 30.1b]. Both the body and horns of this animal were painted with brown dots and stripes. Many of these animal figurines are pierced by a hole and it has been suggested that they could have used as toys or ornaments.

Around 3800 BC, as a result of the rise of urbanism and the likely arrival of new settlers from the west, Susa became integrated into the Uruk-centred Mesopotamian network. The arts developed during the Susa II period (ca. 3800–3100) express new awareness of the dynamic sense of social complexity and actualization embodied in the domestic activities of the community. The latter part of this period (ca. 3300–3100) gave birth to an “archaic” three-dimensional sculpture defined by a new realism. Unique samples of this original style are small alabaster figurines of kneeling females in prayer position. They have distinctive almond-shaped eyes, long hair pulled back off the face by a band, and a long skirt covering the kneeling legs to create a triangular shaped lower half. In one example, the female appears to support her large breasts between her outstretched arms and below her skirt are visible small feet with detail of ten toes [Figure 30.1c; 6.2 cm high]. The hands of a much taller and possibly male (?) figure are held in front of the chin with the two little fingers crossed, the index and middle fingers touching, and the thumbs meeting under the chin [11.5 cm high].

The variety of sculptural production is expanded by the representation of a standing male found inside a miniature chapel who holds his hands in a worshipping position [Figure 30.1d]. The angular “cubist” stylization illustrates the manufacture of different versions of worshippers to stand before a divinity inside a temple or a chapel. Contemporary with these human statuettes is a small corpus of alabaster animals. Notable amongst these is a seated bear drinking from a vessel and a seated baboon, once fastened by pegs to a base, resting its hands on its knees. The theme of the animal holding a vessel assumes a functional expression in a series of captivating alabaster vessels, probably scent holders, in the shape of frogs, piglets and birds. One humorous rendering shows two frogs clinging to the sides of a piglet [Figure 30.1f].

THIRD MILLENNIUM ELAM

In the wake of the Uruk “world system” collapse, the so-called proto-Elamite or Susa III period (ca. 3100–2900) manifests new levels of interaction. The appearance of a writing system centred in the Susiana and adapted by a broad range of sites distributed throughout the Iranian highlands and plateau has given rise to the perception of a supra-cultural and economic enterprise referred to as the “Proto-Elamite civilization”. While the specific characteristics of such a network remain unknown, its strong reverberations can be discerned in the ceramic and glyptic repertoires of Susa. Two “archaic deposits” from the Susa Acropole contained well-modelled animal statuettes of an entirely new style that can be witnessed also in the glyptic arts.

One white marble statuette represents a couchant bull or cow [Figure 30.1g]. A tendon in the neck indicates that a head, probably made from another material such as precious metal, had been added. On another humped quadruped of grey marble, tentons similarly suggest the addition of legs, tail and perhaps horns to the core of the body [Figure 30.1h]. Illustrating a new attitude to human representation is a fragmentary clay figurine of a female holding her hands above her breasts, originally painted with red body and black head [Figure 30.1e]. This female has been described as monkey-like in appearance. The tubular body, wide shoulders, and forward-extended head are reminiscent of the Susa I/Obed traditions, suggesting an underlying layer of continuity at the popular level in the manufacture of sculptures in clay.

At around 2675 BC the first unequivocal reference to Elam appears in the so-called *Sumerian King List*. This period brings about an era of “inter-Iranian exchange” and at the same time a new cycle of interaction between the Zagros piedmonts, the Iranian highlands and plateau, the Mesopotamian city-states and the Persian Gulf. In the eastern sector of the Susa Acropole, significant sculptural works dating to this period were found in connection with a temple probably initially belonging to the Elamite Great Goddess Narundi and dedicated in the Akkadian period to the Sumerian goddess Nin-hursag of Susa “lady of the mountain”, consort of Enki. This coherent corpus of sculptures incorporated no less than 33 statuettes, 12 votive plaques decorated in relief, animal protomes in stone and a collection of bitumen-compound objects without parallel elsewhere (Amiet 1976: 52).

Excavations at Susa produced a small corpus of square-shaped stone plaques characterised by a large central perforation and carved figural imagery. Such plaques are well-known from Mesopotamia where they were incorporated into gateways. Some of those found at Susa have little in common with the Mesopotamian examples in terms of manufacture, style and iconography, while others were clearly influenced by Mesopotamia (e.g. Figure 30.2a–b). One alabaster plaque [Figure 30.2b] has a horizontal band with a wavy line dividing the space in two registers: the upper register depicts a cultic banquet with two participants seated on low-backed chairs, holding cups and interacting with two possibly naked individuals; the lower exhibits a heroic scene of a naked, bearded male (perhaps one of the individuals shown in the register above?) who spears a lion in the act of attacking a bull. A fragmentary plaque found in the Nin-hursag temple was also divided in two registers, the lower exhibiting three males with a long pointed, triangular nose typical of this period, engaged in activities involving several types of vessels [Figure 30.2d]. The style and iconography of this plaque are comparable with Early Dynastic Mesopotamian examples.

Numerous objects were fashioned at Susa using a bitumen compound made by mixing bitumen with silica or ground calcite or quartz, which was first moulded or modelled into the desired shape and then hardened (perhaps by heat), polished and decorated with inlaid and engraved details. This compound was used to manufacture a range of objects, including plaques, vessels and animal protomes. Here again Susa took advantage of its privileged geographic position bridging west and east to generate a unique material product, finding close iconographic and stylistic parallels with chlorite vessels and figurines manufactured in eastern Iran, probably at Jiroft, the Halil Roud civilization of Kernan.

A damaged plaque found below the paving of the temple of Nin-hursag depicts two naked beardless male individuals framing a small calf (?) and two intertwined



Figure 30.2 3rd millennium relief plaques and sculpture in limestone and bitumen (author's own photographs).

serpents, each biting the tip of its own tail [Figure 30.2e]. Both of the males are rather muscular and have a strong square chest, long curly hair, large nose, and protruding lips. Their identification as priests may be proposed based on analogies with

contemporary votive plaques from Tello and Ur where bald naked priests are shown offering libations to divinities and temple facades. Their facial and hair features, however, bring them closer to imagery from Kerman where in addition to a diverse array of motifs dominated by serpents, lions, zebras, panthers, scorpions, date tree palms, building facades and water, we see individuals holding serpents with both hands (Madjidzadeh 2003: 12–17). Similar parallels can be established with a series of cylindrical vessel supports carved with registers. One example exhibits three plants with terminals in the shape of leaves [Figure 30.2c]; another has a single register occupied by four individuals with long hair and long skirt performing a worshiping gesture [Figure 30.2f].

It is through the manufacture of monumental, elite-sponsored sculpture that correspondences with Mesopotamia are best exhibited. A corpus of alabaster votive statues found under the Nim-hursag temple recall the Early Dynastic votive figures found beneath the floor of the temple of Abu at Tell Asmar and in the temple of Ishar at Mari. These free-standing sculptures are typified by their long, bulky, fleeced *kamnakes* garment which sometimes covers the left shoulder and arm. Their hands are joined together in front of the chest or waist in a worshiping gesture and their bare feet are represented in a niche carved in the lower frontal section of the skirt. Variations in the styles of these figures may indicate chronological variations: one example, possibly dated ca. 2500, represents an Elamite ruler holding a goat [Figure 30.3a]. The details of his face, the weighty *kamnakes* bulging over his back, and the tail of the goat over his right arm suggest a naturalistic approach.

From the beginning of the Akkadian period (ca. 2375) to the collapse of the Ur III (ca. 2004), except for the brief interval marked by the reign of Puzur Inshushinak, the last king of Awan (ca. 2112–2095), Susiana was integrated into the lower Mesopotamian socio-economic and political network. A sequence of Mesopotamian kings governed Susa as part of their political and economic agenda, which involved both dynastic marriages and military clashes with the eastern polities of highland Elam and Awan. Mesopotamian presence came to an end in 2004 when a coalition of Elamites and *Su*-people from the land of Shimashki captured Ur and its King Ibbi-Sin was taken prisoner to Anshan together with the statues of Nanna and other Sumerian divinities.

Some Akkadian and Sumerian rulers, as well as their governors, dedicated statues to the gods of various localities under their control, including Susa. Amongst these, Eshpum, “governor of Elam” and servant of Mannishtusu (2269–2255) at Susa, usurped an earlier (EDI or II period; ca. 2700) Elamite statue representing a worshiper in alabaster and dedicated it to the goddess Narundi at Susa [Figure 30.3b]. This practice of appropriating earlier works introduces inevitable difficulties into the attribution of an exceptional corpus of fragmentary sculptures found at Susa carved in olivine gabbro from Iran or Oman and, in lesser numbers, limestone. Some were clearly manufactured in Mesopotamia and judging by the inscriptions added later, had been brought to Susa in the 12th century by the Elamite king Shurruk Nahhunte. For those without inscriptions, scholars continue to deliberate over whether they too were usurped or were made locally. This particular problem has not yet been resolved for a number of works associated with Puzur-Inshushinak; one of the first Elamite kings to attack Mesopotamia. His kingdom is marked by the presence of a language known as linear-Elamite (sometimes also referred to as proto-Elamite

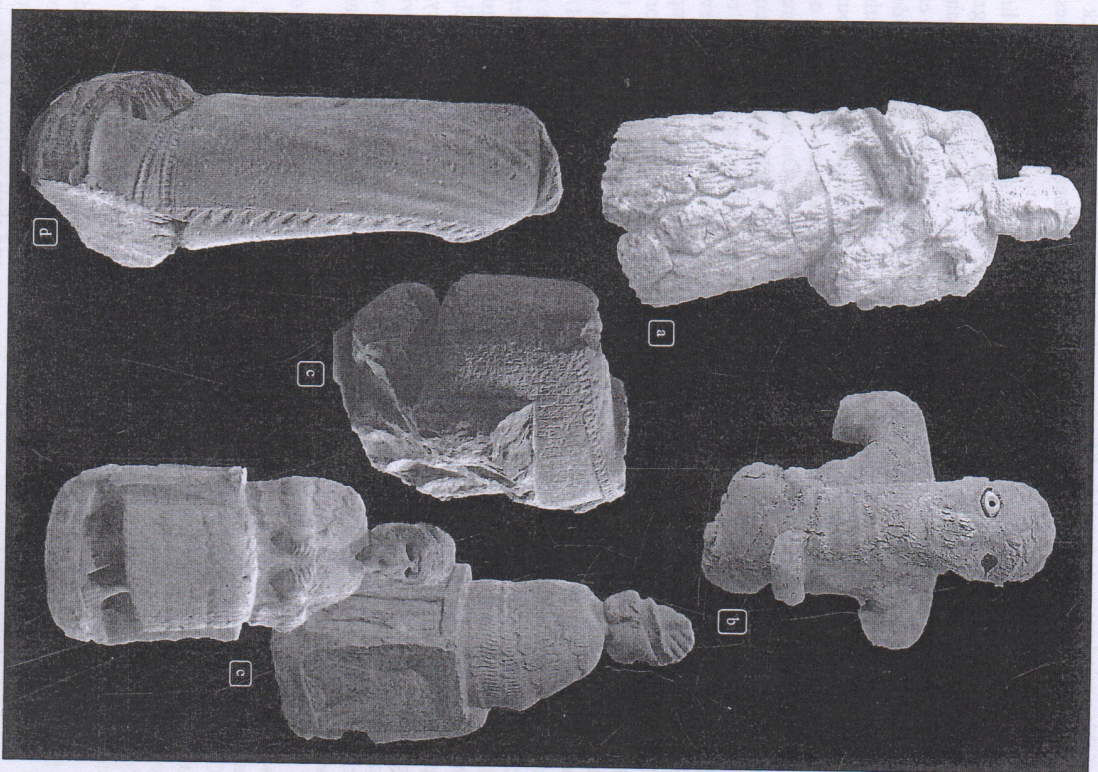


Figure 30-3 3rd millennium monumental sculpture (author's own photographs).

B), which appears side-by-side with the Akkadian language in bilingual inscriptions carved on the sculptures.

Whether locally made or seized from neighbouring Mesopotamia, these sculptures reveal a new approach to statuary manufacture characterized by life-size and large-scale

representations, clearly influenced by the imperial workshops of Akkad (Alvarez-Mon forthcoming b). The lower half of a limestone victory commemoration statue found under the paving of the temple of Inshushinak represents an individual wearing an elegantly modelled wraparound robe [Figure 30.3d]. Fringes knotted into distinctive tassels form an elegant sequence along the borders and the skirt is cut away at the front to show the bare feet atop a sculpture base preserving fragmentary captions and relief depictions of four floating human corpses. A similar garment is depicted on the preserved lower half of a sculpture representing a seated individual with sandalled feet [Figure 30.3c]. Covering the seat and skirt is an Akkadian inscription providing an account of Puzur-Inshushinak's conquering exploits. Both sculptures suggest that a significant change took place in the history of royal garments, with the abandonment of the heavy fleeced *kannakes* in favour of a lighter wraparound fringed robe. This development may have occurred early in the Akkadian period under Sargon or Manishtusu and seems to have influenced later ruling classes of Mesopotamia's neighbours, from Mari's *shakkanaku* rulers Iddi-Illum and Puzur-Ishtar to Susa's Puzur-Inshushinak.

A more traditional approach was taken in the representation of the exceptional statue of the Elamite goddess Narundi discovered inside a small shrine located to the south of the Nin-hursag temple [Figure 30.3e]. The enthroned goddess, who holds a vessel in one hand and a branch in the other, is dressed in a *kannakes* and a divine headdress with triple row of horns. A series of holes in the surface of her face, ears and possibly headdress suggest they were once embellished with incrustations or sheet metal. Her throne is positioned atop a platform decorated on the front with two lions facing a flower/rosette, on the sides with two roaring lions sitting on their haunches, and on the back with two roaring lions standing back-to-back, each holding a pole.

Further illustrating the diverse sculptural production of the time are a pair of couchant lions with a vertical hole through their midsection found near the Inshushinak temple; a votive boulder with lion head; and two inscribed boulders with coiled serpents. The largest of these (see Pitman, Chapter 29 in this volume) was vertically perforated and bears a fragmentary register depicting a massive roaring couchant lion facing a deity who kneels on one knee and holds an oversized foundation nail. Behind him stands a suppliant goddess with raised hands. Yet another variation in rendering showing close parallels with Akkadian sculpture is a series of fragmentary reliefs carved on the base of a diorite statue, representing individuals with long beard and long hair tied back in a bun-style arrangement. One clearly wears a cylinder seal strung around his neck [Figure 30.4a].

A small corpus of female figures displays a refined local approach to the depiction of garments and an assortment of hairstyles and headdresses: a small head in alabaster, a limestone relief representing a suppliant goddess, several small alabaster worshiper figurines [e.g. Figs. 4c-d]; and, from a burial context, an elegant gypsum figurine whose missing arms and head had probably been made from a different material and fitted into the tenons provided.

At the popular level, a multitude of terracotta female figurines testify to a continuous vernacular tradition of clay modelling. At around 2100 BC, the use of single-faced moulds for casting clay figurines virtually supplanted hand modelling. Initially the moulds were shallow and reproduced hand-modelled types to give the impression of sculpture in the round, but later the back was flattened and excess clay left around the figure's silhouette, forming a frame. Thus was born the figurine-plaque, which would become widespread during the second millennium.

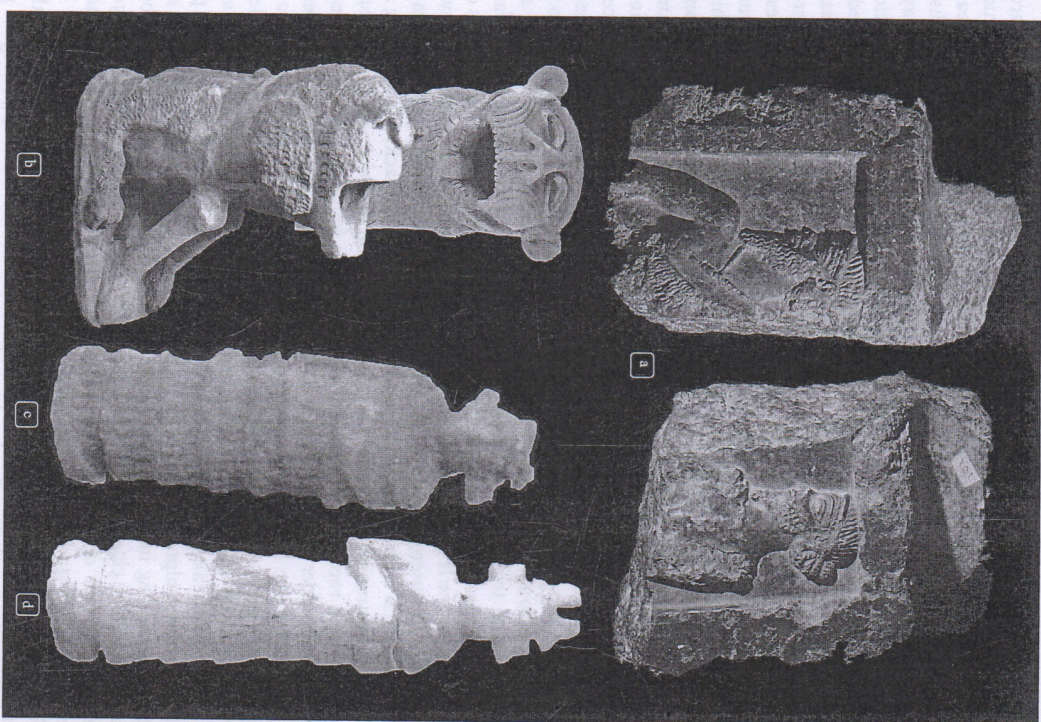


Figure 30.4 3rd millennium monumental stone sculpture (author's own photographs).

FROM REGIONAL POWER TO EMPIRE (CA. 2000–1500 BC)

The sculptural arts of the Old Elamite period reflect a time of increasing wealth. By now the power of the kingdom was concentrated in two major centres: the western lowland capital of Susa and the eastern capital of Anshan (Tal-e Malyan). Sculpture

of this period was produced in differing scales across three media: carved rock relief (a monumental relief at Kurangun), modelled clay (monumental lions, figurines, and funerary heads) and carved bitumen-compound (vessels).

The open air sanctuary of Kurangun is situated on the ancient highway linking Susa and Anshan. It features a rock relief carved on a cliff ca. 80 m above ground level atop an outcrop of the Kuh-e Paraweh [Figure 30.5a], overlooking the Fahliyan River as it flows through the panoramic Mammasani region. The relief offers an exceptional manifestation of Elamite art and religious ideology. The vertical cliffside was cut out to create a three-dimensional spatial unit oriented in a north-west/south-east direction. Three flights of rock-cut stairs descend from the summit of the outcrop down to a rectangular 5×2 m platform cut out to form a basin. Still visible on the horizontal basin floor are remnants of 26 relief-carved fish. On the vertical surface is a rectangular panel carved in low-relief illustrating an enthroned divine couple. The bearded male divinity sits on a coiled serpent throne holding a ring and rod in his right hand from which two arched streams of water emerge. One flows forwards and one backwards towards two groups of elite worshippers, most likely composed of two males and a female. This scene displays an iconic Elamite visual formula shared by Old and Middle Elamite seals, stelae and, most likely, replicated in three-dimensional sculptural form [see Figures 30.7a, b, d]. The central panel and stairs were carved sometime between the 19th and 17th centuries BC (Kurangun I). The relief was expanded between the 9th and 8th centuries with the addition of a series of worshippers, characterised by their short garments and long braided hair ending in a knob, along the staircases and on both sides of the central panel (Kurangun II). More worshippers were incorporated on the right side at the end of the Neo-Elamite period (Kurangun III). The reliefs are not visible from the bottom of the valley, suggesting that direct interaction with the sanctuary and its divinities took place via the pathway provided by the staircases leading to the intimate narrow platform, where the worshiper was graced with a dramatic natural setting pulsating with a numinous vitality (Álvarez-Mon 2014).

Also surviving in monumental scale are two painted terracotta guardian lion sculptures that guarded a temple in the southeast of Susa's Ville Royale [Figure 30.4b]. The best-preserved of these measures 86 cm high and 75 cm long. Cylindrical frames provide the body and forelegs, over which the head, rear legs and paws were added. The lion's mouth is wide open, revealing its teeth and small projecting tongue. The style of composition is reminiscent of two guardian lions (ca. 1800) from the Dagan temple of Shaduppum (Tell Harmal), a small provincial centre of the kingdom of Eshnunna.

The art of terracotta survived also in miniature figurines of *kamakes*-robed goddesses with arms raised in a gesture of salutation and worship. The presence of two holes in one of these sculptures suggests they may have been fixed to a wall. Further indication of the popularity of terracotta figurines and their variety of styles is provided by a corpus of single-faced moulded figurines representing a musician (a priest?) playing a small harp [Figure 30.5b] a man wearing a long robe with fringed cloak, carrying a staff and a male goat [Figure 30.5c], naked females clasping their hands in front [Figure 30.5d] and, most unusual, a woman laying on a bed (?) breastfeeding a child [Figure 30.5e]. Because these figurines were cast-made, one is tempted to contemplate a large-scale reproduction and dissemination of this unique imagery.

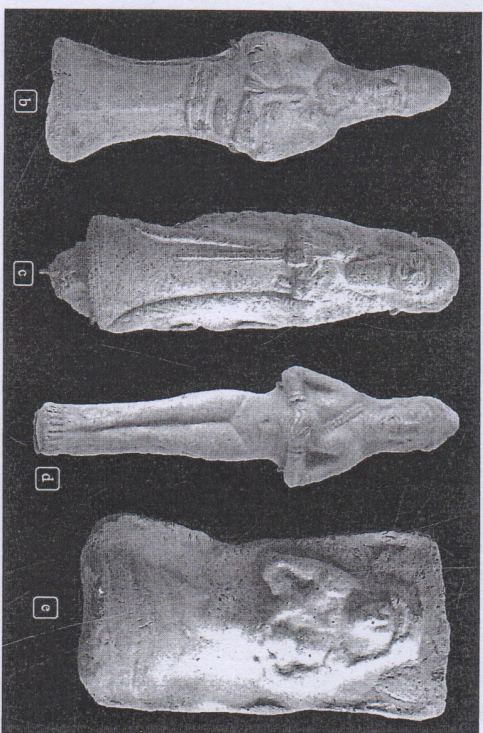
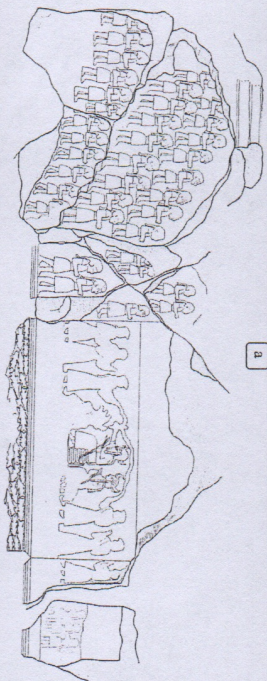


Figure 30.5 Old Elamite. Kurangun monumental rock relief and terracotta sculpture (author's own photographs; line drawing after L. Vanden Berghe 1984: 28, Figure 2).

Further exceptional examples of Elamite clay sculptural production are the modelled, life-size human heads deposited in funerary contexts. Since some were placed in association with the deceased's skull, their serene and contented facial features may

represent an idealized portrait of either the departed or their relatives. Most were modelled in clay around a central hollow cylindrical goblet with eyes made separately and placed inside the ocular openings. One remarkable female head is represented with either a headdress or a complex braided hairstyle. Her face is broad, with a thick mono-brow, large eyes and nose, rounded cheeks, and a slightly protruding chin. Some heads were evidently painted. For example, one male head with a characteristic “visor” hair-style, narrow bearded face, mono-brow and large almond-shaped eyes retains traces of its original polychrome decoration in white, red, blue and yellow colours (Alvarez-Mon 2005).

A rare surviving example of ivory-carved sculpture is a remarkable small, headless figurine, measuring 9.4 cm in height, representing a female (a queen?) clasping her hands together in front. Her elegantly modelled wraparound robe and long scarf with distinctive rasselled borders recall the robe of Puzur-Inshushinak. Further elaborating this costume are a pair of bracelets on each wrist and a choker-style necklace with a counterweight at the back.

Another unique Elamite sculptural corpus is a series of bitumen-compound vessels, mostly also found in burial contexts, whose function remains open to speculation. The manufacture of these vessels evolves into a new artistic tradition of remarkable longevity. Animals are now depicted either in relief or with their head or whole body emerging from the vessel in the form of a three dimensional sculpture. In the latter case, for example, a protruding couchant ibex turning its head to look backwards or a pair of standing suppliant goddesses wearing *kannakes* robes might have served as the vessel handle. In a further intricate composition, a round platter is supported by three legs carved separately and attached to the vessel with a mortise. The leg terminals are in the shape of ibex whose rear body and horns extend elegantly backwards to integrate into the leg of the vessel.

THE GOLDEN AGE (CA. 1500–1100 BC)

The second half of the second millennium was a dynamic period in the history of Elamite politics and sculptural production. The first part of this period is dominated by the figure of Untash-Napirisha (ca. 1340–1300), a ruler of Kassite maternal lineage. His reign is marked by an artistic golden age and a religious “revolution” evidenced in the foundation of a vast cultic complex known as Al Untash-Napirisha (Choga Zanbil). Other key players who appear later in this period are Shutruck-Nahunte and his two sons Kurir-Nahunte (1155–1150) and Shihak-Inshushinak (1150–1120). The cultural accomplishments of the Shutruckid dynasty are often obscured by their infamous actions in Mesopotamia, which continued a long-standing foreign policy of vindication whereby Elamite kings of combined Elamite-Kassite ancestry asserted their claim on the Babylonian throne. Elamite raids on Mesopotamian cities eventually ended with the collapse of the Kassite dynasty in 1155 BC, marked by the death of the Kassite king, the “retirement” to Elam of Babylon’s statue of Marduk and other deities and the removal to Susa of a substantial volume of “trophy”. By bringing numerous ancestral sculptural masterpieces to Susa as gifts to the Elamite gods – amongst the most celebrated being the Victory Stele of Naram-Sin and the Code of Hammurabi – these Middle-Elamite rulers positioned themselves as the legitimate inheritors of Mesopotamian heritage.

During this period, the arts of terracotta modelling continue to exhibit unique Elamite expressions of genuine creativity. Two exceptional human heads and a mask found in the same “artist’s workshop” at Haft Tappeh, and two funerary heads from Susa deliver insights into the individualised treatment of the face and adornment. Both Haft Tappeh heads were constructed around a hollow cylindrical core. One is described as the portrait of a male [Figure 30.6a] and has a smooth hairless face, almond-shaped inlaid eyes, a mono-brow, and elaborately braided hair. The hairstyle is complemented by a headdress comprising a pair of bands originally painted a brown-yellow colour and adorned with raised circular bosses painted at the centre to replicate incrustations. A sophisticated necklace made of four parallel rows of ivory-like beads surrounds the neck. The second head, described as the portrait of a female [Figure 30.6b], also has an elaborate braided hairstyle finished with a wide band painted blue with brown borders and decorated by raised circular bosses painted black and white. The two painted heads from Susa are both male and share similar characteristics. They are modelled around a hollow cylindrical core and like the Old Elamite examples, the eyes were made separately and inlaid into the ocular holes. The hairstyle is modelled in the typical Elamite “visor-style” and the beard demarcated using small squares with incised curls.

The Middle Elamite period brings forth a rich corpus of moulded terracotta sculpture, which evolves and diversifies to include bejewelled naked females with narrow or broad hips holding their breasts [e.g. Figures 30.6c-d]; naked couples lying on a bed [e.g. Figure 30.6f]; and naked, bow-legged elderly men playing a string instrument (the ancestor of the tar) and sometimes carrying a monkey on their shoulders [Figure 30.6e]. These popular artistic expressions do not seem to find parallels in round sculpture. Instead, except for animal representations which continue to be manufactured in terracotta and stone, a new durable artificial material known as faience – a glazed sintered quartz body with high siliceous content and low clay – began to dominate miniature sculptural representation. Examples found in a temple dedicated to the goddess Pinigir at Choga Zanbil include the head of a young individual (a female?) with short hair and mono-brow [Figure 30.6h]; the headless body of a female who holds her hands, one overlapping the other, in front of her waist and wears bracelets and a long garment with circle decoration and fringed borders [Figure 30.6g]; and a vessel in the form of a head with a smiling face [Figure 30.6i]. Three votive male figurines in faience, one holding a dove in his hands, were found in a funerary context near the temple of Inshushinak at Susa. Their visor hairstyle, lack of facial hair, mono-brow, large nose, and broad shoulders underline a general approach to male representation at this time.

An impressive body of royal-sponsored sculptural works dated to this period includes stone sculpture in the round, stelae and monumental low relief carved in stone and monumental moulded baked brick relief friezes. To the first group belongs a fragmentary throne made of three coiled serpents with a single-horned head that either sticks out its tongue or spits a flame [Figure 30.7b]. As mentioned above, this piece recalls the divine snake thrones represented on royal seals and in the Kurangan relief. A fragmentary sculpture of a male divinity with long beard, side hair locks and naked chest, holding a double serpent in his right hand, may have originally been associated with such a throne [Figure 30.7a]. The theme of the serpent as a protective guardian takes a further dimension as a transmuted “dragon head” door-lock

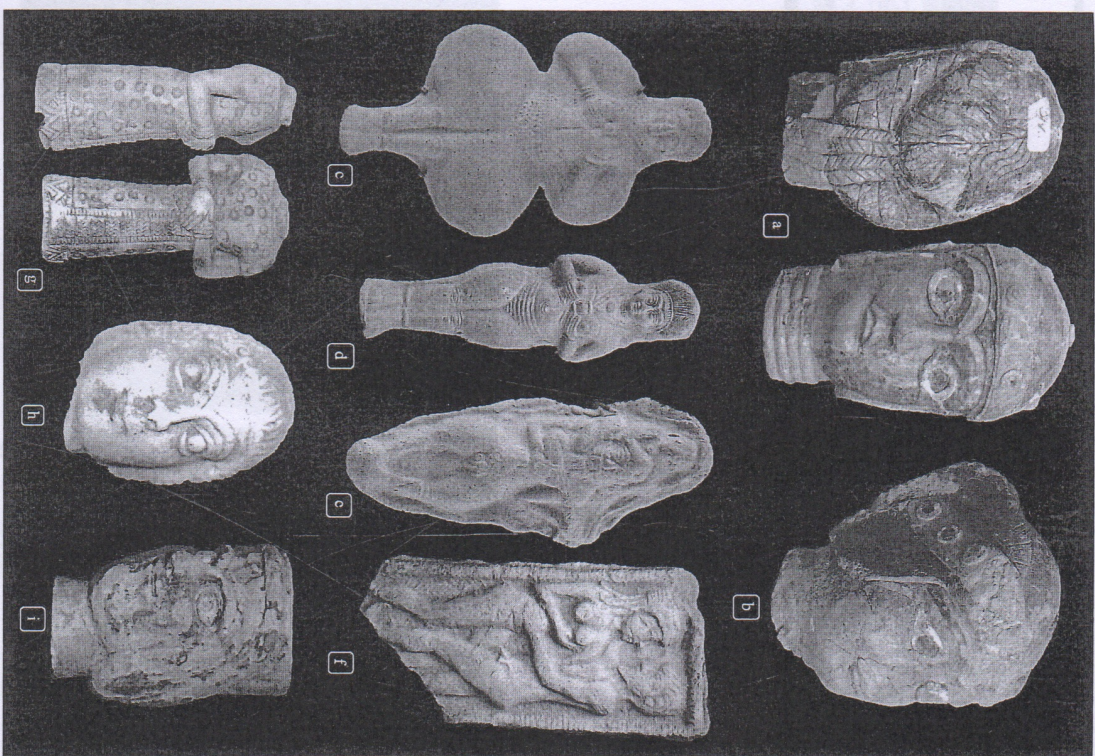


Figure 30.6 Middle Elamite. Terracotta and faience sculpture (author’s own photographs).

mechanism. The symbolism of the “serpent-dragon” in Elamite cosmology as a protective being that can permeate both physical and metaphysical realms becomes apparent in the fragmentary stela of Untrash Napurisha [Figure 30.7d]. This ca. 2.6 m

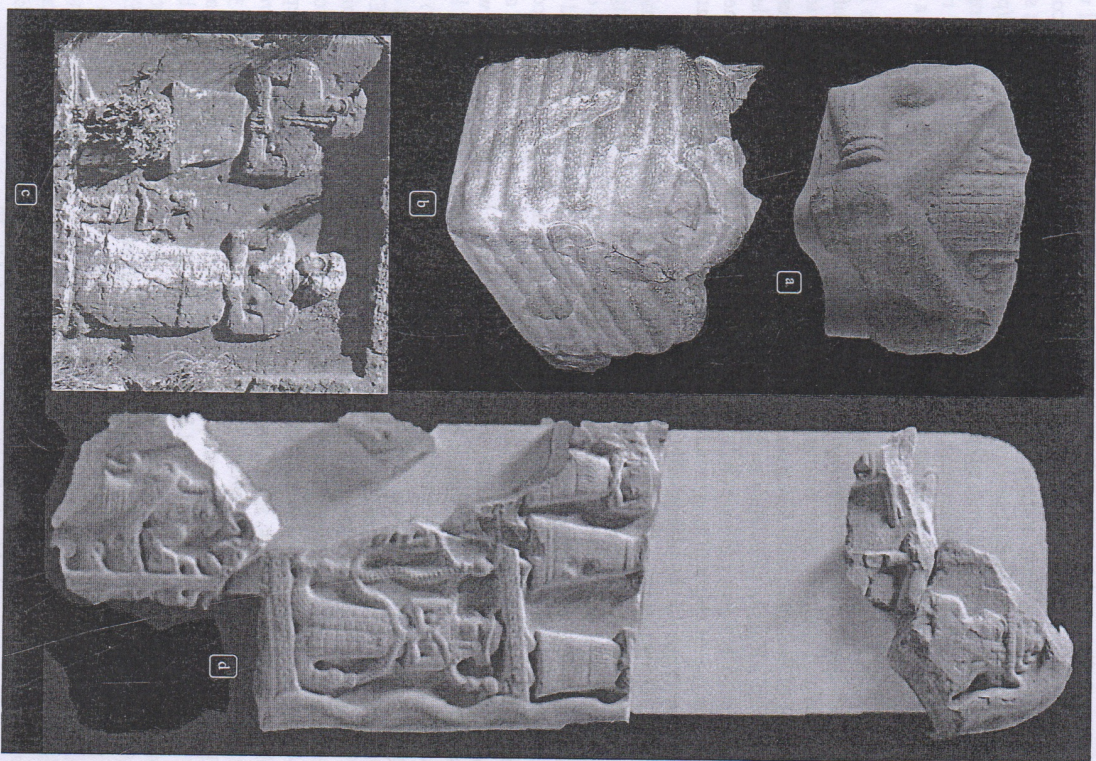


Figure 30.7 Middle Elamite. Monumental stone sculpture and highland rock relief (author's own photographs).

high monument is divided into four registers by guilloches. The top register – the celestial realm – depicts a divinity, probably Inshushinak, sitting on a serpent throne holding a staff and a serpent. The register below – the earthly realm – depicts the king

facing a female priestess named *Utik* (perhaps the king's mother) and behind him stands his wife *Napir-Asu*. In the register below – the sweet flowing water realm – two fish goddesses covered with scales hold cordlike streams of water that flow between vessels at the tips of their tails and at the top of the register. The remaining portion of the bottom register – the undergrowth realm – depicts a goat-man who stands facing a tree, grasping its branches. It is usually presumed that a mirror image of a second goat-man can be reconstructed for the missing portion. The entire composition, from bottom to top register, is vertically framed by two serpents whose bodies penetrate all four layers.

Providing evidence for sculptural art of the Shutrukid dynasty is a relief panel from Shekari-e Salman in the valley of Izeh/Malamir depicting a king, prince and queen of the Shutrukid royal family [Figure 30.7c]. The relief is elevated 8.5 m high, to the right of a large natural cave with a water source and a seasonal waterfall. All three figures are oriented towards the cave and make a worshiping gesture. The king is portrayed with the “visor” hairstyle, long beard, long pair of side braids and back braid; the queen wears a well-fitted spherical bonnet, hair pulled up in a bun and a broad collar around the neck with an extension at the back. These physical attributes are idealized signatures of Elamite royalty, which is contrasted with the non-official imagery of the monarch found, for example, in a “family portrait” of Shilhak-Inshushinak engraved on a Jasper pebble. Here the king hands a gift to his daughter, the princess Bar-Uli. He wears a short-sleeved, long garment ending in a fringe and a pair of bracelets on each wrist; the right arm and hand rest over his lap with extended fingers; the left hand is raised and holds a small rounded object, maybe a self-reference to the Jasper pebble. The princess, who wears a distinctive long robe with wide sleeves, extends a hand towards her father. This same king was responsible for a monumental moulded baked brick wall frieze, probably part of the *kunpunn kidna* (exterior sanctuary) of Inshushinak in the Apadana. No less than 20 heads of the bull-man divinity belonging to this composition were found. Their association with a series of what must have been at least 20 pairs of alternating palm trees and suppliant goddesses points to a temple façade of remarkable dimensions.

THE FIRST MILLENNIUM

The first millennium saw an outburst of faience production distinguished by a mastery of technological skills, the use of playful, vibrant colours and the adaptation into various formats of a vivid numinous world populated by winged griffins and horses, bearded sphinxes, horned geniuses, bovine gods and goddesses, as well as horses, lions, bulls and human worshipers. These themes are manifested in a variety of objects: plaques, pugs, figurines and knobs and pyxides with protomes. One example of the latter is a finely carved square container with two female heads projecting from opposite sides. Underneath each head is a relief depiction of a bird-headed griffin flanking a tree; on the other two opposing sides are bearded androcephalic sphinxes in relief.

The dominance of faience may in part explain the visible reduction of traditional bitumen production. A 9.3 × 13 cm relief plaque provides a rare and celebrated example of the use of bitumen compound at this time. It depicts an elite Elamite woman seated on a chair with her legs crossed spinning yarn [Figure 30.8a]. One of her

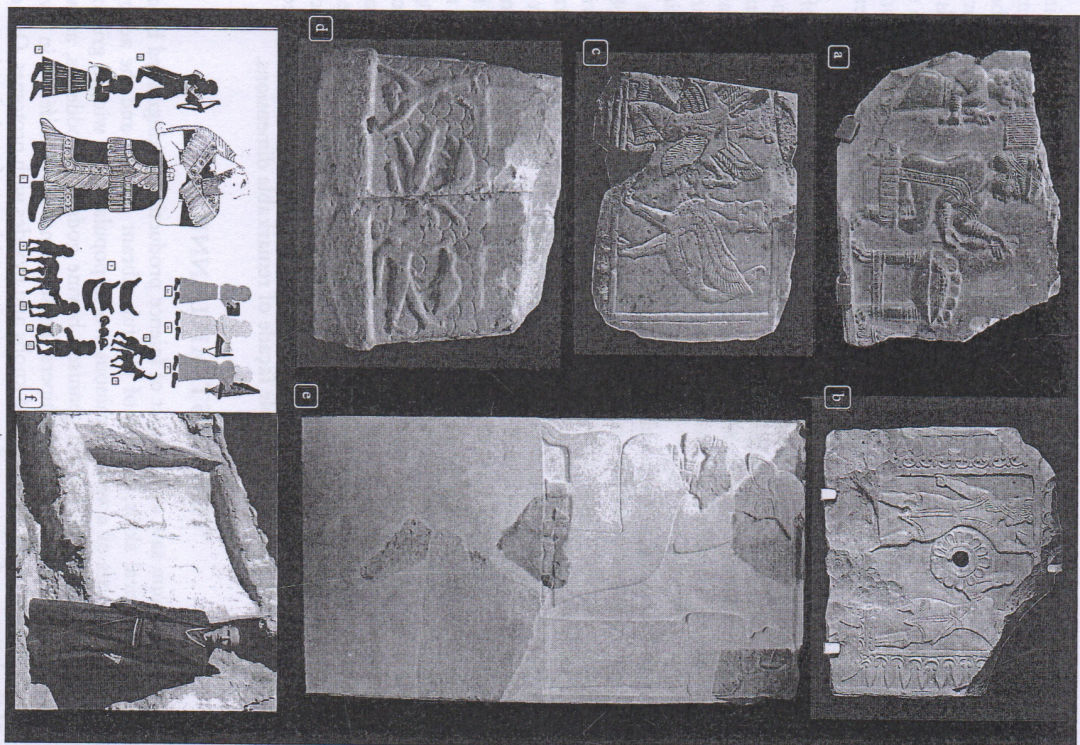


Figure 30.8 Neo-Elamite sculpture. [a, b, c] relief plaques; [d] base of sculpture; [e] stela of Atta-Hamiti Inshushnak; and [f] Neo-Elamite monumental rock relief from Kul-e Farah (KFI) (author's own photographs and line-drawings).

most distinctive features is her voluminous mass of long hair sectioned and collected into an elegant arrangement on top of her head. The hairstyle is completed by three further sections of hair circling below the ear and a single narrow band encircling

the head. She carries six bracelets on each arm and wears a mantle or shawl with a ladder-style border decorated with disks. Of much interest to note is that in contrast to other contemporary and earlier depictions of elite clothing, fringes are not shown along the borders. This absence recalls the Assyrian *galpu* garment (stripped/peeled/divested of fringes). Her unusual garment, elaborate hair, and gesture of holding (and turning?) a spindle, together with the table in front her laden with a fish and round-shaped cakes (?) and the servant fanning her from behind are suggestive of a ritual context.

An object of great interest thought to have been originally manufactured in Mesopotamia during the Kassite period is a stela depicting an enthroned divinity offering the rod and ring to a ruler who stands facing him on the opposite side of an incense burner or fire-stand with triangular-head. The stela was recut to replace the presumed image of a Kassite ruler with an Elamite one. The king has a “visor” hair-style complemented by a pair of long side braids ending in a loop and a small braid at the back. The dating of this addition remains unresolved; at present only a broad 12th–8th century range can be offered (Alvarez-Mon 2015b:19).

Belonging to a period of renewal at Susa after 625 BC is a small corpus of limestone plaques and stelae embellished with relief. One limestone plaque that had originally belonged to a monumental construction, perhaps of religious character, was carved with an image of a divine being striding with a dagger raised in the left hand and a fantastic hybrid following behind [Figure 30.8b]. A lotus border frames the composition and at its center is a pierced rosette. Another limestone plaque depicts a four-winged beardless genius kneeling on one knee, followed by a human-headed winged scorpion with lion paws [Figure 30.8c]. The genius wears an Elamite-style helmet with a rounded protuberance on top and perhaps a frontal visor. Together they attest to an urban-based sculptural production of an Elamo-Assyrian style, reflecting both a history of interaction with Assyria and a post-Assyrian political and cultural Elamite “renaissance”. This period may have incorporated the kingdom of Atta-hamiti Inshushnak, whose reign has been dated variously between ca. 650 and 520. From the Acropole at Susa was recovered a fragmentary stela with a low relief panel depicting Atta-hamiti-Inshushnak, son of Hutran-tepi, “king of Anshan and Susa, expander of the realm, master of Elam, sovereign of Elam, together with his queen [Figure 30.8e]. The king wears a composite hemispherical helmet decorated with rosettes and a heavily ornamented garment bordered by typical Neo-Elamite ladder bands with brackets and fringes. His beard is comprised of rows of short locks and long straight locks, and there is a distinct absence of hair over the tip of his chin. Facing him is the Elamite queen dressed in a well-fitted spherical bonnet and a robe ornamented with broad fringes and ladder bands with nested circles. She wears a necklace linked at the back by a knob-shaped clasp. From the clasp emerges a long hatched extension that runs along the shoulder. Though fragmentary, the representation of this late Neo-Elamite queen bears remarkable similarities to the late Middle-Elamite Elamite queens (12th century) at Shekafte-Salmān (Tzeh/Māliamīr), further emphasizing artistic continuity in the representation of female royal accoutrements and perhaps garments.

Another exceptional, though damaged, example of late Elamite sculptural art is a square basalt pedestal (59 × 59 cm) sculpted in relief on three of its four faces. One side (Face A; shown in Figure 30.8d) depicts two wounded or dead individuals – one with dislocated arms and legs – being consumed by vultures. Another is falling head

first, about to crash against the rocks below. A second side (Face B) depicts a naked bearded individual whose hands are tied behind his back. A third side (Face C) may represent a family followed by a smirking conqueror who grasps the hair of the man in front. The scene takes place at the base of a walled town and can be considered one of the last Near Eastern visual expressions in a long tradition of representing the aftermath of the conquest of a city (Álvarez-Mon forthcoming a).

At Kule-Farah (henceforth also KF) in the highland valley of Izeh/Malamir, six rock reliefs (KFI-VI) dating to the Neo-Elamite period survive today in various states of preservation. They were carved in a natural “amphitheatre”, which is surrounded by cliffs on three sides and has a seasonal creek whose source is located at the southern end of the gorge. These reliefs underline the significance of the natural landscape (caves, waterfalls, water sources) in determining locations for the enactment of religious rituals and the placement of monumental reliefs without parallel in the artistic record of the ancient Near East. Except for the relief of KFI, which can be dated to ca. 650–575 after its inscription by Hanni, ruler of Aiapiir, the other reliefs must be dated on stylistic grounds.

KFIV (9th–8th centuries) expands along the vertical surface of the rock cliff (ca. 17.70 m long and 6 m high). It depicts a communal banquet with no less than 141 participants whose position in the social hierarchy is determined by their placement inside parallel registers, the activities they perform and their type of garment [Figure 30.9a]. Presiding over the ceremony is a king seated on a long-backed throne framed by two tables set with food and vessels. He is accompanied by attendants; a group of individuals wearing long garments; a weapon-bearer/chief archer (carrying a bow, quiver and sword); archers; six harp players and a conductor. The remainder of the group comprises more than 100 similarly represented individuals in short kilted garments. The best preserved of these is depicted with one hand positioned directly in front of his mouth holding a morsel of food, most likely a piece of meat. He is represented in profile, except for his chest, which is shown frontally. He has broad shoulders, narrow waist, short kilted garment and hair collected into a distinctive long braid. In his left hand he holds a short bow. Sections of the hair, neck, back and right shoulder have preserved evidence of the plaster, engraving and possibly pigmentation originally added to the surface of the relief. While much of the volume of the relief has been lost through surface erosion, it is still possible to appreciate the “natural” plastic treatment of body parts achieved by combining a relatively shallow depth of carving with smooth plastering of the surfaces (Álvarez-Mon 2013, 2015a, forthcoming a).

The vertical surfaces of boulder KFIII (8th–7th centuries) were entirely carved with a procession of about 200 participants and herds of domestic animals. At the head of the procession, a large male figure, perhaps a king or a deity, stands atop a platform supported by four kneeling male individuals who wear long fringed garments and head caps. Behind follow two flocks of 18 rams and three zebus, groups of naked (?) individuals and more groups in long and short garments. Three harp players face another oversized figure followed by large numbers of worshippers arranged in parallel registers. Individual N180 is one of the best preserved of the group; he makes a “clasped hands” gesture and his hair style combines a short braid at the back and a protruding “visor” hairstyle at the front (Álvarez-Mon forthcoming a).

The reliefs of KFII and VI (7th–6th centuries) were also carved on boulders. KFII is characterised by the presence of four individuals inside a well-defined rectangular

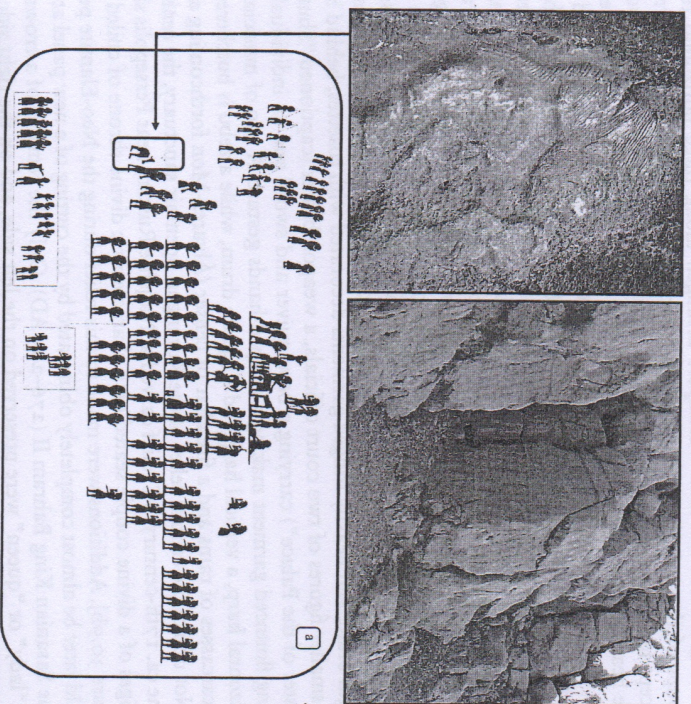


Figure 30.9 Neo-Elamite highland reliefs from [a] Kule-Farah (KFIV); and [b] Naqsh-e Rostam (author's own photographs and line-drawings).

panel; one large-scale individual, and a sacrificial scene showing two naked individuals. One stands making a gesture in a backward direction; the other is bent over butchering a zebu. Below are the carcasses of six sheep with large rounded horns. KFVI was carved over the northwest face of a rock boulder and shows another large-scale individual standing on a podium carried atop a platform by four platform bearers.

Standing behind are nine worshippers arranged along three horizontal registers in groups of three. A single worshiper is located to the right of the platform bearers. Except for two of the platform bearers, all individuals are oriented towards the left. The heavily eroded KfV (7th–6th centuries) is carved near KfIV on the vertical cliff face of a rocky outcrop on the left bank of the creek. Its iconography and compositional structure are similar to KfII, with a large-scale human figure facing the sacrifice of animals and four worshippers arranged behind him on a vertical register. A novel element is the inclusion of a fire altar (Alvarez-Mon 2010a, 2015, forthcoming a).

The most recent is KfI (650–575); a multifaceted artwork assimilating aspects of the earlier Kul-e Farah and Shekaf-e Salman reliefs [Figure 30.8f]. A large Elamite cuneiform inscription occupying the upper half of the relief identifies the large figure as Hanni, son of Tahhi, “prince” or “chief” (kudur) of Aiapir and vassal of the Elamite king Shuttur-Nahunte, son of Indada. Hanni wears a bulbous cap, waist-length braid, and heavily fringed garments decorated with rosettes; behind him stand the smaller figures of two court officials, a weapon bearer (captioned “Shuturu, the Master of the Palace”) carrying a bow, quiver and sword and an individual wearing a long flounced garment making a clasped-hands gesture. A trio of musicians play a horizontal harp, a vertical harp and a square drum, while a zebu is butchered next to the carcasses of rams and a fire altar or censer (Alvarez-Mon forthcoming a).

Not unlike the central relief of the Kurangun open-air sanctuary, the central panel of the ca. 17th-century-BC relief carved at Naqsh-e Rostam near Persepolis shows the vestiges of a divine couple seated on a characteristic divine throne of coiled serpents [Figure 30.9b]. Additions were made to this relief during the Neo-Elamite period but would later be almost completely obliterated by the cutting of a new panel at the time of the Sasanian King Bahram II (276–293 AD). Only the remains of a crowned head of a “lady” or “queen” were preserved on the left side, and on the right side, around the corner, a standing individual sometimes identified as a king. This series of reliefs manifests a continuity of cultic practices for around two millennia at this important religious center. Besides their religious dimensions, the late Neo-Elamite additions have significant political implications. In this region of Fars associated with the eastern capital of Anshan, the incorporation of a crowned queen sometime in the second half of the 7th or the early 6th century BC assumes all the appearance of an official claim and a statement of political control (Alvarez-Mon 2010b).

REFERENCES

- Alvarez-Mon, J. 2005. Elamite Funerary Clay Heads. *Near Eastern Archaeology* 68/3: 114–122.
 ———. 2010a. Platform Bearers from Kul-e Farah III and VI. *Iran (Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies)* 48: 27–41.
 ———. 2010b. *The Aryan Tomb: at the Crossroads of the Elamite and Persian Empires*. Leuven: Peeters.
 ———. 2013. Braids of Glory, Elamite Sculptural Reliefs from the Highlands. Kul-e Farah IV. In: De Graef, K. and Tavernier, J. (eds.) *Susa and Elam. Archaeological, Philological, Historical and Geographical Perspectives*. Ghent: Peeters, 207–248.
 ———. 2014. Aesthetics of the Natural Environment in the Ancient Near East: the Elamite Rock-cut Sanctuary of Kurangun. In: Feldman, M. and Brown, B. (eds.) *Critical Approaches to Ancient Near Eastern Art*. Berlin: De Gruyter, 741–771.
 ———. 2015a. A Highland Elamite Archer from Kul-e Farah IV, Cl.4. *Iranica Antiqua* 50: 251–278.

- . 2015b. Platforms of Exaltation, Elamite Sculptural Reliefs from the Highlands: Kul-e Farah VI. *Elamica* 4: 1–50.
 ———. forthcoming a. *Monumental Reliefs of the Elamite Highlands*. Eisenbrauns.
 ———. forthcoming b. Puzur-Inshushinak, last king of Akkad? Text, Image and Context Reconsidered. In: *Elam and its Neighbours*. Proceedings of the 2016 International Congress Held at Johannes Gutenberg University of Mainz (Germany).
 Amiet, P. 1966. *Elam*. Auvers sur Oise: Archée Éditeur.
 ———. 1970. *L'art d'Agadé au Musée du Louvre*. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
 ———. 1976. Contributions à l'histoire de la sculpture archaïque. *Cahiers de la Délégation archéologique française en Iran* 6: 47–82.
 ———. 1986. L'âge des échanges inter-iraniens 3500–1700 avant J.-C. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
 ———. 1988. *Suse 6000 ans d'histoire*. Paris: Monographies des musées de France.
 Bötter-Klähn, J. 1982. *Alteordensasiatische Bildstellen und vergleichbare Felsreliefs*, 2 Vols. Mainz am Rhein: Philipp von Zabern.
 Conann, J. and Deschesne, O. 1996. *Le bitume à Suse: Collection du Musée du Louvre*. Paris: Réunion des Musées Nationaux.
 Harper, P. O., Aruz, J. and Tallon, F. 1992. *The Royal City of Susa: Ancient Near Eastern Treasures in the Louvre*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art.
 Madjidzadeh, Y. 2003. *Jiroft, the Earliest Oriental Civilization*. Tehran: ICHO.
 Miroschedji, P. de. 1973. Vases et objets en stéatite suseiens du Musée du Louvre. *Cahiers de la Délégation archéologique française en Iran* 3: 9–78.
 ———. 1981. Le dieu Elamite au serpent et aux eaux jaillissantes. *Iranica Antiqua* 16: 1–25.
 Seidl, U. 1986. *Die Elamischen Felsreliefs von Kurangun und Naqsh-e Rostam*. Iranische Denkmäler 12/III/4. Berlin: Deutsches Archäologisches Institut.
 Spycket, A. 1981. *La Statuaire Du Proche-Orient Ancien*. Leiden: Brill.
 ———. 1992. *Les figurines de Suse 1: Les figurines humaines; IV-II millénaires av. J.C.* Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse 52. Paris: Gabalda.
 Vanden Berghe, L. 1984. *Reliefs rupestres de l'Iran ancien*. Bruxelles: Musées royaux d'art et d'histoire.

FURTHER READING

While a comprehensive study of Elamite sculpture is still wanting, the present summary has profited from the important contributions made to this area of studies by Pierre Amiet (1966, 1970, 1976, 1986 and 1988), Pierre de Miroschedji (1973, 1981), Jutta Bötter-Klähn (1982), numerous entries dedicated to sculpture in *The Royal City of Susa* (1992) and, most particularly, the work of Agnès Spycket (1981 and 1992). An excellent resource for Elamite bitumen sculpture is provided by Jacques Conann and Odile Deschesne (1996). The present author has also contributed with various publications treating Elamite sculptural art and highland reliefs (Alvarez-Mon 2005, 2010a, 2010b, 2013, 2014, 2015a, 2015b, forthcoming a).