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Gian Pietro Basello. “Like a Thunderstorm: Storm-  
Gods “Sibitti” Warriors from Highland Elam”

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## REFERENCES

Javier Álvarez-Mon, with contributions by Gian Pietro Basello. “Like a Thunderstorm: Storm-Gods “Sibitti” Warriors from Highland Elam”, *Annali [dell’Università degli Studi di Napoli “L’Orientale”]*, vol. 74, 2014, p. 1-30. pls. I-VII.

- <sup>1</sup> In the early years of excavation at the Elamite lowland capital of Susa, the French archaeological mission headed by Jacques de Morgan uncovered a large decorated and inscribed bronze fragment (Sb 133, Musée du Louvre) in the Acropole mound, which is considered to have been the traditional religious zone of the site. This fragment, sometimes referred to as a “plaque”, preserves two registers of imagery in relief. The upper register depicts a row of (at least) seven near-identical armed male figures, generally regarded as warriors or “divine” warriors. Just above them are preserved the lower legs and feet of a human figure in a long garment and a quadruped animal. The lower register depicts an orchard with birds. Studies of the inscription by Vincent Scheil and the iconography by Pierre Amiet concurred that the object was made during the late second millennium BC Shutrukid era, and this date has been largely accepted.
- <sup>2</sup> In “*Like a Thunderstorm*”, Javier Álvarez-Mon redates the imagery of Sb 133 to the 9th/8th century and places the warriors within a tradition of ancient Near Eastern storm god iconography. His arguments are supported by wide-ranging comparisons for their

“smiting” pose, paraphernalia (daggers and small composite bows), and costume (short garment with two appendages at the hemline, upturned-toe shoes, and assimilated horned tiara/visor-style helmet; though the latter is not distinguished well enough from the range of horned headdresses of earlier periods to be a useful chronological marker). A highland milieu is proposed for the iconography based on the depiction of physical features, paraphernalia, and costume typically attested in the Elamite highland reliefs, particularly Kul-e Farah IV. The author’s conclusion that the repeated storm god-type divinities could be identified as the seven similarly represented apotropaic “Sibitti” gods known from Mesopotamia (perhaps Elamite in origin) is interesting, especially because the figures show no obvious connection to the male and female deities mentioned in the text, but the relief has been broken off on both sides and it cannot be ruled out that additional gods were once present. In any case, the religious context of the piece is well-supported by its findspot, its imagery, and its text, which lists sacrifices made by a ruler to various Elamite divinities.

- 3 Unfortunately, the vertically engraved registers of text are in a fragmentary state and do not preserve a ruler’s name that might prove or disprove the dating of the imagery, and a comparative analysis of the palaeography is hindered by a lack of any documents securely dated to the first quarter of the first millennium. The best comparisons identified by Gian Pietro Basello in his epigraphic notes are Middle Elamite in date, the closest occurring in the inscription on the ca. 14<sup>th</sup> century bronze statue of Napirasu, but he cautions that these observations rely on photographs and on a published illustration by Scheil, who was known to sometimes draw back from transliterations of texts. Basello also adds that we could be looking at an archaizing inscription harking back to the time of the powerful Shutrukid dynasty; an observation echoed by Álvarez-Mon with respect to aspects of the iconography. This hypothesis would fit the picture we already have of Neo-Elamite regents seeking to link themselves with the Shutrukids as a means of legitimising their position.
- 4 This article offers a thorough treatment of what appears to be a rare and tantalising object left to us from one of the most enigmatic periods of Elamite history, even if at its conclusion it has little choice but to leave us pondering the object’s function.

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