Javier Alvarez-Mon. "A Highland Elamite Archer from Kūl-e Farah IV, CI:4"

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Javier Alvarez-Mon. "A Highland Elamite Archer from Kūl-e Farah IV, CI:4", *Iranica Antiqua* 50, 2015, p. 251- 278.

- 1 Situated in areas of Elam that are still quite poorly known to us, the open-air Zagros highland sanctuaries carved with monumental rock reliefs offer a vital body of evidence to aid our appreciation of Elam's dual highland-lowland culture, even if we do not know who was responsible for commissioning most of them. In general, they are too poorly preserved to enable definition of the techniques used in their manufacture, making them difficult to comprehend within the overall artistic production of Elam and, more broadly, the Near East. One particularly salient exception is a relatively well-preserved panel of the ca. 9th/8th century Kul-e Farah IV (KF IV) relief in the Izeh valley, which covers about 100 square metres of a cliff face and depicts over 140 people participating in a ritual banquet centred on a seated ruling figure. Intricacies of costume, activities performed, and physical relationships including proximity to the ruler are used to construct a complex social hierarchy.
- 2 In this article, Álvarez-Mon homes in on a well-preserved archer designated as C1: 4; i.e., figure no. 4 on panel C1 (to the left of the central panel depicting the ruler), which has been somewhat protected from the weather thanks to its position just below a projection of rock. His study benefits from the unique opportunity to examine the relief in the negative using a latex cast of C1:4 onto which light could be projected at any angle in a studio setting. In combination with high-resolution photographs of the archer, the cast reveals unexpected variations in the modelling volumes to give a

natural plastic treatment of body parts and painstakingly engraved details including individual sections of braided hair and beard locks, knuckle lines on the fingers, and fingernails. Based on what appears to be a chalky-looking residue over sections of the relief surface, the author also argues that a reconstruction of the manufacture process should account for the possibility the relief was plastered and perhaps painted. An analysis of a sample of the surface material would, of course, be desirable in order to clarify the composition of the plaster (and to confirm that it was indeed plastered).

- 3 This meticulous examination of a single carved figure offers a window, however small, into the entire corpus of highland reliefs, the cultural background of which is probably to be sought in the string of artificial tells in the Zagros mountain valleys that still lie waiting to be excavated. In combination with textual evidence for the manufacture and distribution of archery paraphernalia, depictions of archers and bow-bearers such as archer CI:4 shed light on the "archery culture" of Elam and the role of archery (specifically the composite flexed bow) in the attempts of the Elamites to variously evade, threaten, and even dominate their neighbours, particularly on their western front.

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