Javier Álvarez-Mon. *The Monumental Reliefs of the Elamite Highlands. A Complete Inventory and Analysis (from the Seventeenth to the Sixth Century BC)*

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Javier Álvarez-Mon. *The Monumental Reliefs of the Elamite Highlands. A Complete Inventory and Analysis (from the Seventeenth to the Sixth Century BC)*. Pennsylvania: State University Press & Eisenbrauns, 2019, 287 p., 224 colour/110 b&w ill. (Mesopotamian Civilizations 22)

- 1 A product of years of research, both on and off-site, this volume provides a much-needed documentation of a corpus of eighteen monumental rock reliefs carved between the seventeenth and sixth centuries BC in Elamite highland open-air sanctuaries in the Izeh valley and its surrounds (Xong-e Azdhar, Shah Savar, Shekaft-e Salman, Kul-e Farah, Qal-e Tul), the Mamasani river district (Kurangun), and the Marvdasht plain (Naqsh-e Rostam).
- 2 Following introductory remarks on the settings of the reliefs, a summary of their prior documentation and study going back to the early 18th century, and notes on methods, Part I dedicates a separate chapter to each relief progressing from oldest to newest according to the proposed chronological order of their production. A systematic treatment ensures that each relief is given a short introduction, an assessment on its state of preservation, a detailed description of its iconography, composition and style, and a probable manufacture date. Part II explores the social, political and religious

dimensions of the reliefs, raising questions about identity and belonging, and contemplates the open-air sanctuaries more broadly as places of communal spiritual experience in spectacular natural settings.

- 3 Around half of the reliefs are dated to within the last few centuries of Elam: Shekaft-e Salman III (eleventh–seventh century BC); Kurangun II and III (ninth–sixth century BC); Kul-e Farah IV (ninth–eighth century BC); Naqsh-e Rostam II (eighth–seventh century BC); Kul-e Farah III (eighth–seventh century BC); and Kul-e Farah VI, II, V and I, the latter of which carries a long inscription of the local ruler Hanni of Aiapir (all seventh–sixth century BC). As the author notes, the legacy of the later reliefs to Persian art in terms of their composition and motifs is at times striking, reminding us that we cannot fully comprehend Persian arts and culture without incorporating Elam into the “intellectual equation”.
- 4 Since the reliefs have been examined from every angle in every possible light to generate minutely detailed line-drawings, which are supported by a rich selection of colour photographs, the book is as much an exercise in cultural heritage preservation as it is an artistic and cultural analysis. Above all, it highlights the immense heritage value of the reliefs and the imperative of immediate action to ensure their preservation.

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