

# Longitude 45° East: New Evidence for one of the Oldest Political Frontiers in the Ancient World

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## Introduction: Longitude 45° East, One of the Oldest Political Frontiers in the Ancient World

The Zagros mountains, which constitute the defining topographic divider between Iraq and Iran, have over the course of history been witness to countless incursions and invasions launched from Mesopotamia into Iran and vice-versa. The rock reliefs, stelae, and *kudur-rus* discovered in the western foothills of this mountain range indicate that throughout history the region witnessed many major events and conflicts, with numerous monuments being erected to commemorate victories (see Fig. 1). In this context, this study focuses on two new rock reliefs discovered in late February 2019 on the southernmost part of Bamu mountain, overlooking the bank of the Hawasan river—monuments probably

made to commemorate a victory of Iddin-Sin, king of Simurru.<sup>1</sup> With these two rock reliefs, the number of stelae and rock reliefs around Bamu mountain reaches five. These are among the most ancient rock reliefs in the world, and reveal the importance of the surrounding region for eastern Mesopotamia. With the help of Akkadian texts from the time of the kingdom of Simurru, specifically the stele of Bitwata and the inscription of Haladiny (Qarachatan), together with consideration of the location of the rock reliefs of the rulers of Simurru, we are able to draw the state's eastern frontier along a line that connects the rock reliefs of Sar Pol-e Zahab, the Bamu mountains, and Darband-i Ramkan. This frontier, which delineates the eastern edge of Simurru from the polities of the high Zagros during the late third and early second millennium BC, must without doubt be one of the oldest surviving political boundaries in the world.

\* The rock reliefs of Darvan Duhol were discovered by local residents of the region, especially Yousef Karami. We would like thank him for showing these reliefs to the authors. We also thank Mohammad Amin Mirghaderi for providing some information for the present paper, and also Francois Dasset, Mohsen Zeinivand, and Obaid Sorkhabi for preparing the maps for this study. Finally, the authors would like to thank Shokouh Khosravi, who read this article and made constructive suggestions. Titles in Persian are written in Persian unless otherwise noted.

<sup>1</sup> While noting the reading of this name by Aaron Shaffer et al. as “Iddi(n)-Sin,” we normalize the name through this article simply as “Iddin-Sin”: see Aaron Shaffer, Nathan Wasserman, and Ursula Seidl, “Iddi(n)-Sin, King of Simurru: A New Rock-Relief Inscription and a Reverential Seal,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie & Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 93 (2003).



**Figure 1**—Map showing the location of rock reliefs and stelae (marked by \* symbols) of the late third and early second millennium BC in western Iran and Mesopotamia (courtesy of Dr. Francois Desset).

The Zagros mountains and their foothills in eastern Iraq were always considered by the peoples of the alluvial plains of Mesopotamia a source of important resources, with the result that gaining access to these resources was a recurring preoccupation throughout the ancient history of the region. The attempts at access were characterized by strategies of both peaceful interaction and aggressive hostility. This pattern was set as early as the fourth millennium BC, at which time it is already clear that the dynamics of the Uruk expansion were not entirely peaceful, with texts of that time attesting to the abduction of people from the highlands into slavery in Uruk.<sup>2</sup> From this point on, the vicissitudes in relations between the Zagros and the states of the Mesopotamian alluvium are documented by both archaeological evidence and data in cuneiform texts. The information in the texts bears more heavily on the southern reaches of this zone, i.e. on relations between Mesopotamia and Elam, with evidence for the central and northern Zagros being decidedly more patchy. In the Early Dynastic I–II periods, a continuation of trade links is in-

<sup>2</sup> Robert Englund, “The Smell of the Cage,” *Cuneiform Digital Library Journal* 2009/4; cf. Kathryn Kelley, *Gender, Age, and Labour Organization in the Earliest Texts from Mesopotamia and Iran (c. 3300–2900 BC)* (D. Phil. diss., University of Oxford, 2018).

dicated by, for example, the widespread occurrence of chlorite bowls at Mesopotamian sites,<sup>3</sup> but at the same time there are also indications of raids carried out by Mesopotamian polities into the Zagros.<sup>4</sup> By the Early Dynastic III period, the interests of the emerging states had resulted in further conflict, manifested in hostilities between Lagash and Elam. This in turn must nevertheless be set in the context of a flourishing trade between the two powers, much of it carried out by sea, with grain and textiles from Sumer exported in return for slaves, livestock, timber, and spices.

Under the Akkadian empire, Sargon’s subjugation of Elam and Susiana led to operations in the central Zagros carried out by all the major kings of the dynasty.<sup>5</sup> Together, these conquests paved the way for a domination in southwestern Iran up to the borders of Makkan and Marhashi which was maintained until the reign of

<sup>3</sup> For an overview of relations between Mesopotamia and Iran in the Early Dynastic period, see Piotr Steinkeller, “The Birth of Elam in History,” in *The Elamite World*, ed. Javier Álvarez-Mon, Gian Pietro Basello, and Yasmīna Wicks (London, 2018), 180–85.

<sup>4</sup> Kozad Ahmed, *The Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan (c. 2500–1500 BC): A Historical and Cultural Synthesis* (Ph.D. diss., Leiden University, 2012), 231–32, referring to omens associated with raids of Nanne of Nippur.

<sup>5</sup> Ahmed, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 232–36.

Shar-kali-sharri, reaching its apogee under Naram-Sin.<sup>6</sup> Following the retraction and then collapse of the Akkadian empire, its former dominions in Iran fragmented into a patchwork of petty kingdoms. It did not take long before these were united once more by Puzur-Inshushinak, whose empire encompassed territories in both the Zagros and the Iranian highlands, as well as portions of Babylonia.<sup>7</sup> The cycle continued with the defeat of Puzur-Inshushinak and the partition of his empire between Lagash, Ur, and Shimashki.

With the rise of its Third Dynasty, the kings of Ur incorporated Susiana and then a stretch of the western Zagros foothills as far north as Erbil within the empire, with alliances with Marhashi, Anshan, and Shimanum.<sup>8</sup> While the archaeological footprint of this rule is, to date, almost invisible, there is a certain amount of information from epigraphic sources, particularly year-names commemorating campaigns in the Zagros and texts recording the payment of booty, tribute, and taxes from the peripheral areas. When the Ur III empire in its turn began to weaken, the peripheral states one by one seized their chances to break away. This included both well-known polities such as Eshnunna, Lullubum, Simurrum, and Urbilum, and a host of other states for which we have only the most fragmentary indication of their existence (or none at all). It did not take long for these newly-emerged states to come into conflict.

The penetration of cuneiform literacy into the Western Zagros in the early second millennium was extensive. Two discoveries in particular highlight this fact. The archive from Choga Gavaneh, approximately 60 km west of Kermanshah, discovered in 1970, testifies to a functioning bureaucracy executed in Old Babylonian Akkadian cuneiform on the Iranian side of the *chaîne magistrale*.<sup>9</sup> From Shemshara (ancient Shusharra), on the Lower Zab in Iraqi Kurdistan, the archives of the local king Kuwari, excavated at the end of the 1950s,

<sup>6</sup> Walther Sallaberger, *Akkade-Zeit und Ur III-Zeit* (Göttingen, 1999), 90–93; Steinkeller, “The Birth of Elam in History,” 185–90.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 190–93.

<sup>8</sup> Douglas Frayne, “The Zagros campaigns of Šulgi and Amar-Suena,” in *Nuzi at Seventy-Five*, Studies on the Civilization and culture of Nuzi and the Hurrians 10, ed. D. Owen and G. Wilhelm (Bethesda, MD, 1999), 146; Douglas Frayne, “The Zagros campaigns of the Ur III kings,” *Canadian Society for Mesopotamian Studies Journal* 3 (2008): 38; Steinkeller, “Birth of Elam in History,” 193–96; Ahmed, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 237–42.

<sup>9</sup> Kamyar Abdi and Gary Beckman, “An Early Second-Millennium Cuneiform Archive from Chogha Gavaneh, Western Iran,” *JCS* 59 (2007): 39–91.

give us a fascinating snapshot into the geopolitics of the Zagros in the eighteenth century bc.<sup>10</sup> This provides our best insights into the Turukkeans, a people who inhabited a network of polities in the northern Zagros. Together, these two archives indicate that literacy in the Western Zagros was flourishing at this time. This is also the time frame in which Shamshi-Adad I of Assyria formed an alliance with Dadusha of Eshnunna aimed at hoovering up a succession of petty kingdoms—Arrapha, Qabra, Urbel, Nurrugum, Ahazum, and Nineveh—situated east of the Tigris. These events are known not just from the Shemshara archives, but also from stelae of both Shamshi-Adad and Dadusha, as well as data in the archives from Mari.<sup>11</sup>

Of greatest interest in the present context is the emergence of Simurrum, established as an independent kingdom by Iddin-Sin.<sup>12</sup> The exact location of Simurrum has not yet been established—earlier proposals ranged from Kirkuk to near the Lower Zab—but the consensus now is that it lay in the Diyala region: Douglas Frayne placed it at Shamiran, 14 km west of Halabja,<sup>13</sup> while Kozad Ahmed opts for Qalay Shirwana, on the southern edge of Kalar.<sup>14</sup> If the thesis of the current article is correct, the eastern border of Simurrum was located along the line of longitude 45° East. While the exact dates of Iddin-Sin, and his son Anzabazuna, are not known, it appears that Iddin-Sin was already king in the reign of Ibbi-Sin, the last king of the Ur III dynasty. The appearance of such kingdoms as the empire crumbled is indeed as expected. Iddin-Sin was clearly a remarkable leader, and under him Simurrum waged wars against Lullubum (the Shahrizor), Shikshabum (possibly Taqtaq<sup>15</sup>), Utuwe (the Rania plain), and Kulunnum

<sup>10</sup> Jesper Eidem and Jørgen Laessøe, *The Shemshāra Archives 1. The Letters* (Copenhagen, 2001); Jesper Eidem, *The Shemshāra Archives 2. The Administrative Texts* (Copenhagen, 1992); Jesper Eidem, “News from the Eastern Front: the Evidence from Tell Shemshara,” *Iraq* 47 (1985): 83–107.

<sup>11</sup> Wu Yuhong, *A Political History of Eshnunna, Mari and Assyria during the Early Old Babylonian Period* (Changchung, 1994), 181–85; Dominique Charpin, Dietrich Edzard, and Martin Stol, *Mesopotamien: Die Altbabylonische Zeit* (Göttingen, 2004), 166–69; John MacGinnis, “Qabra in the cuneiform sources,” *Subartu* (Journal of the Archaeological Syndicate of Kurdistan) 6–7 (2013): 1–10.

<sup>12</sup> For an overview of the history of Simurrum, see Douglas Frayne, “Simurrum,” *RIA* 12 (2009–2011): 508–11 and Ahmed, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 243–302.

<sup>13</sup> Frayne, “Simurrum”: 511.

<sup>14</sup> Ahmed, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 297–302.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, 399.

(Betwata)—the last two both part of the territory of Kakmum—and then Kakmum itself (location unidentified, possibly either Rowanduz or the Pishdar Plain<sup>16</sup>). Iddin-Sin also fought off incursions of Shimashki and the Amorites. After Anzabazuna, and by the later Old Babylonian period, Simurru disappears from history, and developments in this part of the Zagros become opaque once again.

In the Middle Babylonian period, evidence for relations between Mesopotamia and the Zagros is sketchy. The region continued to be made up of a patchwork of kingdoms, some of which (e.g., Namar) had roots going back to the third millennium,<sup>17</sup> while others (e.g., Bit-Habban, Bit Karziabku) were new. The Kassites themselves, who clearly originated in the Zagros, infiltrated into Mesopotamia by way of the Diyala. But accurately discerning the extent and duration of the sway of the Middle Babylonian kings in the central western Zagros is difficult.<sup>18</sup> There are snapshots from the time of Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104), who, as well as launching a major operation against Elam,<sup>19</sup> also campaigned along the Diyala.<sup>20</sup> The Zagros became an important source for meeting the army's growing need for horses, and the prominence of lapis lazuli in this period points to a flourishing long-distance trade. There was also a robust trade in goods made of bronze, notably luxury items such as ceremonial daggers, often inscribed, and beakers (*situlae*) with elaborate embossed decorations.<sup>21</sup> The later second millennium also saw stirrings in the north, with various Middle Assyrian kings conducting raids into the nearer lands of the northern Zagros.

With the first millennium, the political landscape was transformed yet again. The center of action shifted to the north, and the documentation at our disposal becomes much richer—which is not say there are not many difficulties for historians. The irregular incursions of the Middle Assyrian kings now gave way to the more

formalized campaigns of the Neo-Assyrian period, resulting in the subjugation one-by-one of the petty states of the western Zagros, and culminating in the creation of new provinces by Tiglath-pileser III and Sargon II.<sup>22</sup> The savagery with which the Assyrians imposed their rule on the vanquished territories cannot be underestimated. It was accompanied by a ruthless and systematic stripping of the land. This included the abduction of flocks and herds, the deportation of populations, and the seizure of metal resources. A particular Assyrian concern was the acquisition of horses, of critical importance for the army, carried out on a massive scale, whether through tribute, outright seizure, or trade. By the mid-seventh century, however, Assyrian control in the region was weakening. The exact process and chronology by which the Assyrians were expelled from the Zagros is imperfectly understood, but the turning of the tide led to not just indigenous populations forcing the Assyrians out, but in short order organizing the overthrow of Assyria itself. With Assyria's fall, the erstwhile provinces of the empire were divided between the victors. While the Medes took the greater part of the Zagros territories, Babylon assumed control of the areas east of the Tigris formed by the provinces of Arrapha, Der, and Lahiru.<sup>23</sup> As far as we know, this situation remained stable until the rise of Cyrus the Great and the creation of the Achaemenid empire, under which Mesopotamia and the Zagros were at last brought under a single rule.

The above history demonstrates how for millennia western Iran, including the western foothills of the Zagros and along the Great Khorasan Road, was the scene

<sup>16</sup> Ahmed, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 270–71.

<sup>17</sup> John Nielsen, *The Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I in History and Memory* (London, 2018), 58–59.

<sup>18</sup> Andreas Fuchs, “Die Kassiten, das mittelbabylonische Reich unter der Zagros,” in *Karduniash, Babylonia under the Kassites*, ed. A. Bartelmus and K. Sternitzke (Berlin, 2017), 123–65.

<sup>19</sup> Nielsen, *Reign of Nebuchadnezzar I*, 51–53, 61–64.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 52–53, 58–61.

<sup>21</sup> Peter Calmeyer, *Reliefbronzen in babylonischen Stil. Eine westiranische Werkstatt des 10. Jahrhunderts v. Chr.* (Munich, 1973); Ursula Seidl, “Tropfenbecher,” *RLA* 14 (2014): 146–49.

<sup>22</sup> Louis Levine, “Geographical Studies in the Neo-Assyrian Zagros I,” *Iran* 11 (1973): 1–27; Louis Levine, “Geographical Studies in the Neo-Assyrian Zagros II,” *Iran* 12 (1973): 99–124; John Curtis, “The evidence for Assyrian presence in Western Iran,” *Sumer* 51 (2001–2002): 32–37; Karen Radner, “An Assyrian view on the Medes,” in *Continuity of Empire (?) - Assyria, Media and Persia*, ed. G. Lanfranchi, M. Roaf, and R. Rollinger, *History of the Ancient Near East Monographs V* (Padova, 2003), 37–64; Karen Radner, “Assyria and the Medes,” in *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran*, ed. Daniel Potts (Oxford, 2013), 443–56; John MacGinnis, “The Archaeological Exploration of the Provinces of Assyria,” in *The Provincial Archaeology of the Assyrian Empire*, ed. J. MacGinnis, D. Wicke and T. Greenfield (Cambridge, 2016), 10–11.

<sup>23</sup> John MacGinnis, “Mobilisation and Militarisation in the Neo-Babylonian Empire,” in *Studies on Warfare in the Ancient Near East*, ed. Jordi Vidal, *AOAT* 372 (Münster, 2010), 154; the line of demarcation at the north end of this block is not known, but may have been formed by the Lower Zab.

of repeated conflicts. This impacted the residents of the region, who were severely affected by these incursions. These wars left their mark on the cultural landscape of the region, with the victorious rulers commissioning stelae and rock reliefs to celebrate their victories (see Fig. 1). In this paper, we concentrate on the stelae and rock reliefs of the late third and early second millennium BC. The rock reliefs and stelae of Anubanini, and of Iddin-Sin and his son Anzabazuna, as well as those of other rulers of polities in the foothills of the Zagros whom we cannot identify, bear witness to important events taking place in this region.

Until now, it has generally been believed that these operations targeted the region of Sar Pol-e Zahab. Cuneiform inscriptions referring to events in and around Halman and Namri support this interpretation, and four other rock reliefs from the late third and early second millennium BC have been taken to confirm this (see Fig. 2).<sup>24</sup> But the discovery of reliefs both in Bamu mountain at Darvan Duhol<sup>25</sup> and at Sarab-e Sey Khan, near Azgeleh,<sup>26</sup> together with the rock relief of Darband-i Belula (also known as the Darband-i Hurin or Sheikhan relief),<sup>27</sup> emphasizes the regional and strategic importance of Bamu mountain and its surroundings: clearly the presence of rival groups meant that domination over this region was vital for Mesopotamian rulers.

Another indication of the depth of the military penetration into the Zagros by Mesopotamian rulers dur-

ing the late third and early second millennium BC is given by the “Haladiny stele” (see Fig. 2), discovered in the village of Qarachatan (and now preserved in Sulaymaniyah Museum) which lists the many lands invaded by Iddin-Sin.<sup>28</sup> Of particular interest is the suggestion by Mohammed Amin Mirghaderi and Sajjad Alibaigi<sup>29</sup> that the “Land of Bel” and Sinu mentioned in the Haladiny stele should be equated with the Kani Bel spring located in present-day Paveh county, north of Sar Pol-e Zahab, and with modern Sina, the Kurdish name for Sanandaj in the Kurdistan province of Iran. In fact, if we identify the Sinu in the Haladiny inscription with modern Sina, the Kurdish name for Sanandaj, it appears that Sanandaj itself is actually mentioned in the inscription.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the potential importance of the texts discovered so far in helping with the identification of at least some of the places mentioned in these sources, the complex topography of the Zagros, with its intricate network of mountains, rivers, narrow valleys, and intermontane plains, and the rudimentary stage of our understanding of the historical geography, make most of these identifications tenuous at best. Furthermore, the fact that archaeologists have focused their investigations and given continual attention to a restricted number of regions, such as Sar Pol-e Zahab, and given a high level of attention to the finds from these areas, has resulted in a somewhat misleading impression that these were the setting of all of the important political events and military campaigns in the western Zagros during the late third and early second millennium BC, overshadowing other less-studied localities. The discovery of the new rock reliefs on the south side of Bamu mountain, 38 km north of the city of Sar Pol-e Zahab, alongside the previous finds in the same area (see Figs. 3–4),<sup>31</sup> demonstrates the importance of the western foothills of the Zagros, and specifically the mountainous area of western Kermanshah,

<sup>24</sup> Ahmed, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 255, 311, 317; Jutta Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen und Vergleichbaren Felsreliefs*, Baghdader Forschungen Band 4 (Mainz-am-Rhein, 1982), nos. 30–32 and 34; Louis Vanden Berghe, *Reliefs rupestres de l'Iraq* (Brussels, 1984), 19–21.

<sup>25</sup> M. Rād, “Eteleati ejmali dar morede chand mahal-e Tarikhi dar Maghreb-e Iran,” *Gozaresh-hay-e Bastanshenasi* 3 (1334/1965): 3–16, Fig. 8 (in Persian); Walter Hintz, “Nachlese Elamischer Denkmäler,” *Iranica Antiqua* VI (1966): 43–47 and Taf. XII; Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 273. According to the opinion of Mehrdad Malekzadeh in a paper presented at the National Museum of Iran (October 27, 2009), the Bamu stele may be a fragment of a Neo-Elamite stele.

<sup>26</sup> Aref Biglari, Sajjad Alibaigi, and Masoud Beyranvand, “The Stele of Sarab-e Sey Khan: A Recent Discovery of a Second-Millennium Stele on the Iranian–Mesopotamian Borderland in the Western Zagros Mountains,” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 70 (2018): 27–36.

<sup>27</sup> Cecil Edmonds, “Some Ancient Monuments on the Iraqi-Persian Boundary,” *Iraq* 28/2 (1966): 159–63; Nicholas Postgate and Michael Roaf, “The Shaikhan Relief,” *Al-Rafidan* XVIII (1997): 143–56; Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 33.

<sup>28</sup> See Osama S. M. Amin, “The Secret History of Iddi-Sin’s Stele,” at: <http://etc.ancient.eu/interviews/secret-history-iddi-sins-stela/> (accessed February 2020).

<sup>29</sup> Mohammed Amin Mirghaderi and Sajjad Alibaigi, “The Toponym ‘Land of Bel’ in the Haladiny Inscription,” *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 3 (2018): 106–108.

<sup>30</sup> Ahmad, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 76.

<sup>31</sup> The rock reliefs of Darvan Dohul are located 9 km southeast of Darband-i Belula and 6.7 km southwest of Sarab-e Sey Khan. Sey Khan and Darband-i Belula are only 7.6 km from each other.

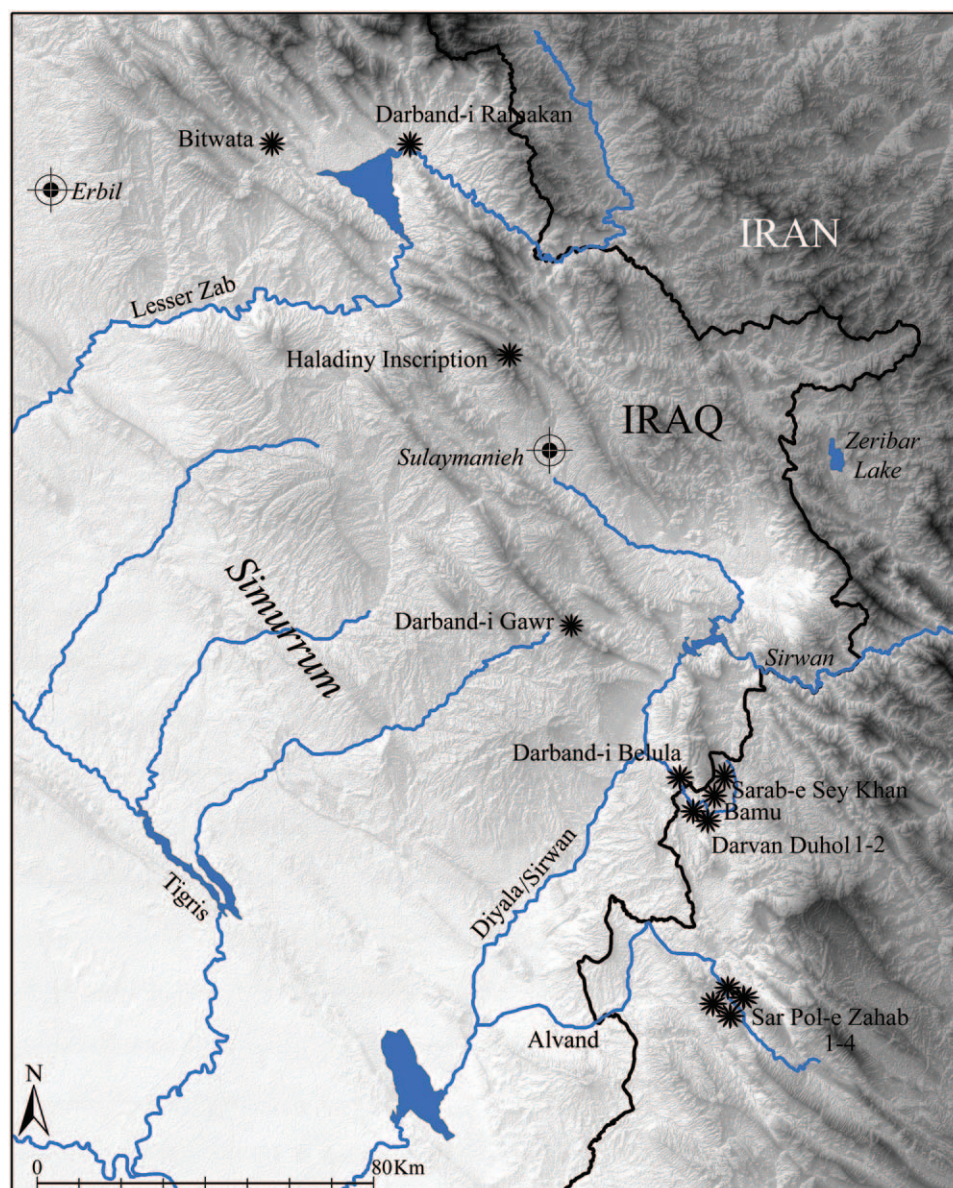


Figure 2—Map showing the location of rock reliefs and stelae of the late third and early second millennium bc in the western Zagros and Iraqi Kurdistan (courtesy of Obaid Sorkhabi).

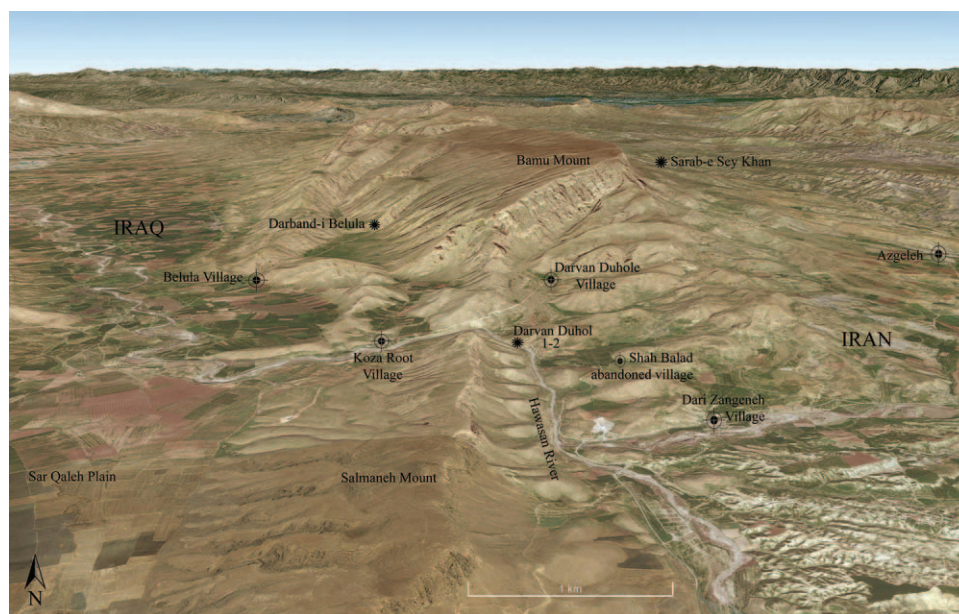
for Mesopotamian rulers. It points as well to their significance for historical studies regarding western Iran and eastern Mesopotamia in the late third and early second millennium bc. The implication of the discoveries around Bamu mountain is not only that Sar Pol-e Zahab was not the only strategic location in the western foothills of the Zagros of interest to Mesopotamian rulers, but that there were other places among these foothills witness to great events every bit as important as those at Sar Pol-e Zahab.<sup>32</sup>

<sup>32</sup> See Claudia Glatz and Jesse Casana, “Of highland-lowland borderlands: Local societies and foreign power in the Zagros-Mesopotamian

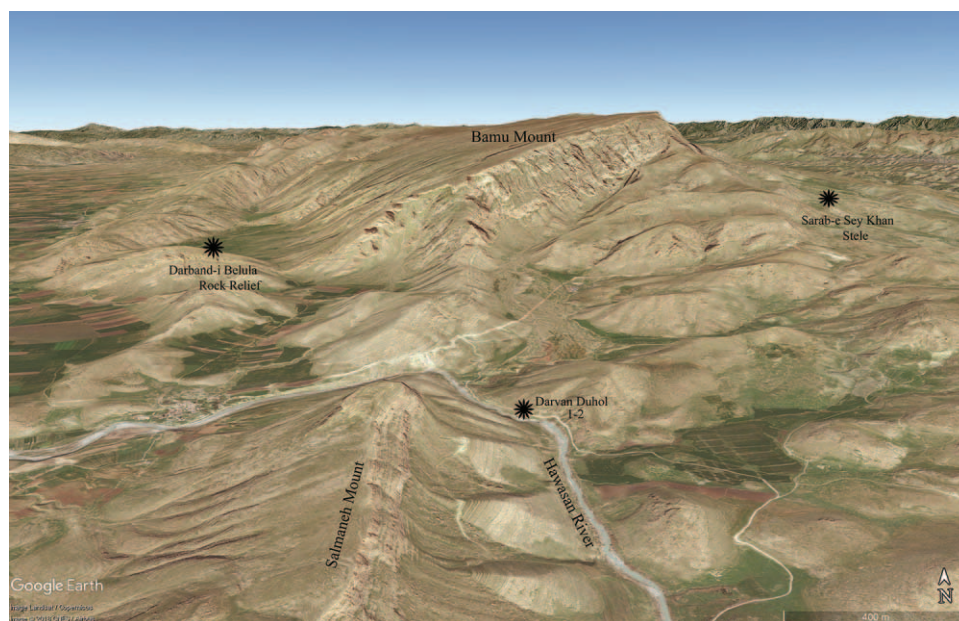
### Rock Reliefs: Recent Finds

Bamu mountain is one of the highest mountains in western Kermanshah province, and its peaks and ridges form the current political frontier between Iran and Iraq. Numerous rock reliefs have been found in the region, including the Darband-i Belula relief in the western foothills of Bamu mountain, mentioned by Henry Rawlinson in 1839, with the inscription published by Jean-Vincent Scheil in 1893, and visited by C. J. Edmonds in

interface,” *Journal of Anthropological Archaeology* 44 (2016): 127–47; Biglari, Alibaigi, and Beyranvand, “Stele of Sarab-e Sey Khan.”



**Figure 3**—Perspective map showing the location of the newly discovered Darvan Duhol reliefs Nos. 1–2 in the southern foothills of Mount Bamu (Google Earth 2018).



**Figure 4**—Perspective map showing the location of the Darvan Duhol Nos. 1–2, Sarab-e Sey Khan, and Darband-i Belula reliefs in relation to Mount Bamu (Google Earth 2018).

1926 and by Nicholas Postgate and Michael Roaf in 1979;<sup>33</sup> the stele found by Mahmoud Rād; and the stele of Sarab-e Shey Khan found during the survey of Aref Biglari in 2009 in its eastern foothills.

<sup>33</sup> Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, “March from Zohab to Khuizistan,” *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society of London* 9 (1839): 31; Jean-Vincent Scheil, “Les deux stèles de Zohâb, en collaboration

There is a narrow valley between the southern side of Bamu mountain and the northern side of Salmaneh mountain where the Hawasan river flows. The head of this river is in Malachieh mountain, 53 km southwest of

avec. J. de Morgan,” *RT* 14 (1893): 105f.; Edmonds, “Some Ancient Monuments”; Postgate and Roaf, “Shaikhan Relief.”

Paveh City. The upper stretch of the river is called the Ab-e Zhaleh, the name changing to Hawasan after the confluences with the Abdalan and Ab-e Lima rivers. After passing through the valley on the southern side of Bamu mountain, the river continues towards the north of the Sar Qaleh plain and then a further 18 km on into Iraq, where it finally flows into the Sirwan river. Two rock reliefs have recently been discovered in the southern foothills of Bamu mountain, between the abandoned village of Shahbalad Sheikh Hussein and the village of Darvan Duhol in Azgeleh district of Salas Babajani county.<sup>34</sup> These reliefs are located at 34°48'3.54"N, 45°46'30.84"E<sup>35</sup> at an elevation of 485 m above sea level. These rock reliefs were discovered on the northern bank of the Hawasan river (Figs. 5–6), 7.05 km southwest of Azgeleh, 2.6 km northwest of Dari Zangeneh, 1.1 km northwest of the abandoned village of Shah Balad, 1.4 km east of Kouzeh Kot village, and 1.5 km south of Darvan Duhol village. Access to these reliefs is by a dirt road that leads off to the west from the checkpoint of Dari Zangeneh village and reaches the site after two kilometers. The reliefs are carved on the southern side of a 20 m high rocky outcrop of a formation of Taleh Zang limestone which overlooks the river and slopes down steeply to the river bed. Two springs which flow into the river have their source under these reliefs. The reliefs themselves are hidden by the resulting dense cover of vegetation and wild fig trees which have grown up on the southern side of the outcrop. The limestone in this area is pitted and streaked, with many grooves and gaps. A 7.3 magnitude earthquake on 12<sup>th</sup> November 2017 and a 5.0 magnitude earthquake after that have severely damaged some parts of this rock. The consequent rock fall has smashed one of the reliefs and dislodged the other—it appears likely that another earthquake of this magnitude would have the potential to totally destroy what remains of these reliefs.

#### *Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1*

The first relief at Darvan Duhol is carved on the upper surface of the rock, 15 meters above the current level of the river, and faces east (Figs. 7–9). The image is

<sup>34</sup> On February 20, 2019, Shahram Aliyari was informed about the rock reliefs by a local resident, Yousef Karami. Three days later, on February 23, 2019, a team of archaeologists (i.e., the authors of the present study) visited the site.

<sup>35</sup> 38 S 570913, 3851247.

carved in a rectangular frame with rounded corners. Unfortunately, half of the image is missing, having fallen off as a result of the earthquakes. As a consequence, we are not able to ascertain the original full height of the relief. It is 110 cm wide. On the right-hand side of the relief is a figure approximately 55 cm tall with neatly combed hair reaching down to the top of the neck (see Fig. 10). This person appears to wear a skirt or short trousers with a belt. The left arm is held behind the body, bent at the elbow, while the right hand is raised in front of the face in the traditional sign of respect. To the left of this figure, the head, shoulders, and hand of a second figure who lies horizontally at the base of the composition can be seen—the traditional position of vanquished enemies in the rock reliefs of this period. This person holds up his right hand, presumably in a gesture of surrender. The hair, eye, and nose of this individual are clearly rendered, but damage to the relief has obliterated any other details of his costume or other attributes. Three divine symbols are depicted in the space above this second figure: the lightning fork of the god Adad, the seven circles (orbs) of the Šibitti, and, at the top, the crescent of the moon god Sin.

Searches on the slopes below the outcrop led to the discovery of some broken and fallen parts of the rock face that are important for the reconstruction of the scene (see again Figs. 8 and 9). Although we have still not found the main part of the body of the individual being trampled underfoot (though we continue to search the area intensively), we did succeed in discovering a large stone of great importance. This piece measures 84 cm wide, 170 cm thick, and 230 cm high; it probably weighs around 8 tons. This stone was clearly also once part of the relief. The portion preserved on this second piece depicts the left side of a figure striding towards the right, wearing a hemmed skirt and holding an object—either a staff or possibly the handle of a weapon—in his right hand;<sup>36</sup> the head, body, left arm, and left leg of the figure are not preserved. Below and slightly to the right of the preserved left foot of this figure can be seen the remains of two smaller feet, one with toes pointing upwards, one resting flat: there can be no doubt that these are

<sup>36</sup> The object which the striding figure in Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 holds in his right hand is reminiscent of the silver vase from Marvdasht, near Persepolis, where a goddess holds a very similar object, which looks like a staff, in each hand: see Walter Hinz, *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen* (Berlin, 1969); Peter Calmeyer, “Beobachtungen an der Silbervase aus Persepolis,” *Iranica Antiqua* 24 (1989): 79–85, Abb. 1a). Conceivably this staff is derived from the “rod and ring” held by deities in Mesopotamian iconography.





Figure 5—View looking north of the location of the Darvan Duhol overlooking the Hawasan River (photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).



Figure 6—Close-up of the outcrop onto which the Darvan Duhol reliefs Nos. 1 and 2 are carved (view from the east; photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).

the feet of the individual who lies on the ground. It is virtually certain that the principal figure on the second piece originally trampled this captive with his left foot. Therefore, the scene can be reconstructed as in Figure 10: a person on the left side, who is probably the

king, holding a weapon in his right hand, and trampling with his left foot a fallen prisoner who has raised his hands in surrender. Based both on his small size and on the fact that his hairstyle is identical to that of the figure lying down, the standing figure on the right must



Figure 7—Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 (photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).



Figure 8—The broken part of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1, near the river bed (photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).



Figure 9—Reconstruction of how the fallen piece relates to the *in situ* part of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 (by S. Alibaigi).

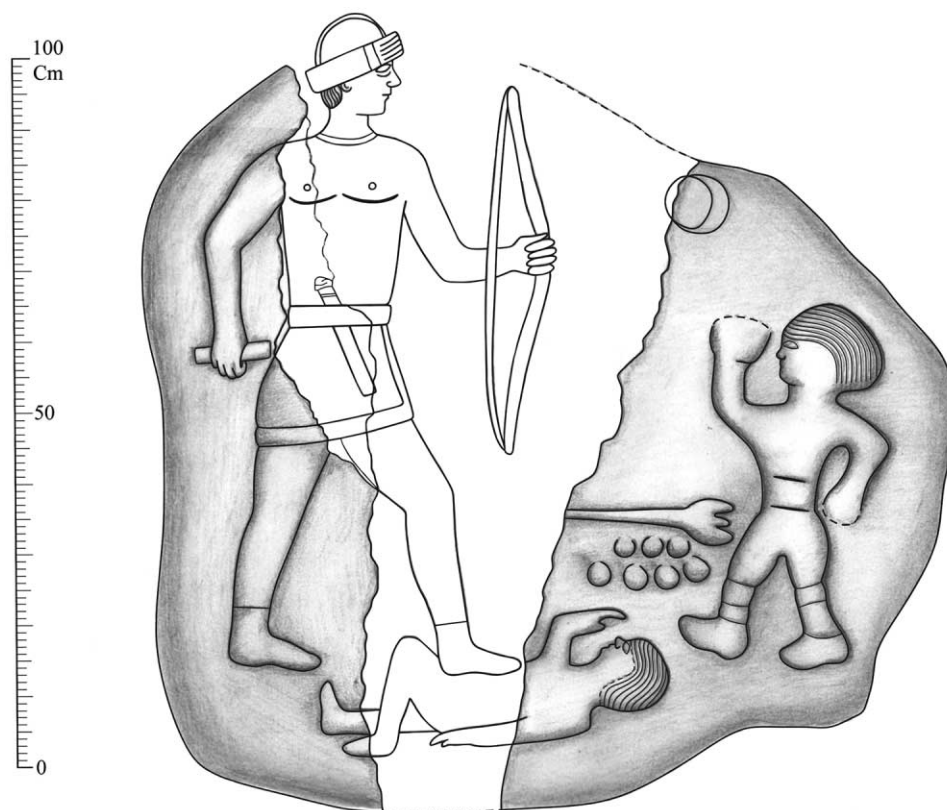


Figure 10—Drawing and partial reconstruction of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 (drawing by Naser Aminikhah).

represent a vanquished survivor. Divine symbols are placed mid-field: the lightning fork of Adad, the seven orbs of the Šibitti, and the crescent of Sin.

#### *Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2*

The second relief at Darvan Duhol is carved on the southern surface of the rock, at a height of 10 meters above the current level of the river and 5 meters below the first relief. This image is carved on a flat surface within an irregular frame which has straight sides at the bottom and a curved top. The bottom of the frame is delineated by a band approximately 5 cm wide. The overall height of the frame is 95 cm and its width is 130 cm (Figs. 11–12). An 80 cm-tall figure is depicted frontally, face turned to the right, wearing an ankle-length dress with a V-shaped collar and short sleeves, and possibly a further garment (or fold) draped over the right shoulder (Fig. 13). The figure has broad shoulders and a narrow waist. The hair on the head is neatly trimmed and there is no facial hair. He wears a plain headband, ring-shaped earring(s), and a tight, narrow neckband. The figure holds a pointed object, presumably a

blade, in his right hand. A second object, at waist height, would appear to be the long handle of another weapon (possibly a mace), which was probably tucked into a belt, though no traces of this survive. The lower part of the figure's left arm is lost to erosion, but given his stance and the overall composition of the relief, and in comparison to other rock reliefs such as that at Darband-i Belula, we can guess that he held a bow in his left hand. As with Relief No. 1 and other late third and early second-millennium BC reliefs and stelae, we anticipate that the figures of defeated and submitting enemies should be restored on the right-hand side of Relief No. 2. No inscription is preserved, but there are a number of parallel horizontal lines under the object in the right hand which may possibly have been rulings for an inscription; if so, the inscription was either never added or is now entirely eroded.

#### **Surveys, comparisons, and relative dating**

In the absence of any inscription, the only way to date these reliefs is to compare them stylistically to other reliefs known from the highlands of western Iran and



Figure 11—Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2 (photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).



Figure 12—Detail of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2 (photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).

eastern Iraq.<sup>37</sup> In some major cases, such as the memorial stele and the rock relief of Naram-Sin, and the rock reliefs of Simurru and Lullubum, the king is always

<sup>37</sup> For a stylistic analysis of rock reliefs of this period, see Eva Braun-Holzinger, *Das Herrscherbild in Mesopotamien und Elam. Spätes 4. bis frühes 2. Jt. v. Chr.* (Münster, 2007), 143ff.

placed on the left-hand side of the scene (Fig. 14 a–f).<sup>38</sup> This is also the case in Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1, where the king places his foot on the chest of a defeated person, with religious symbols in the field. The general motif of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 is very similar to the

<sup>38</sup> Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 26k, 30–34.

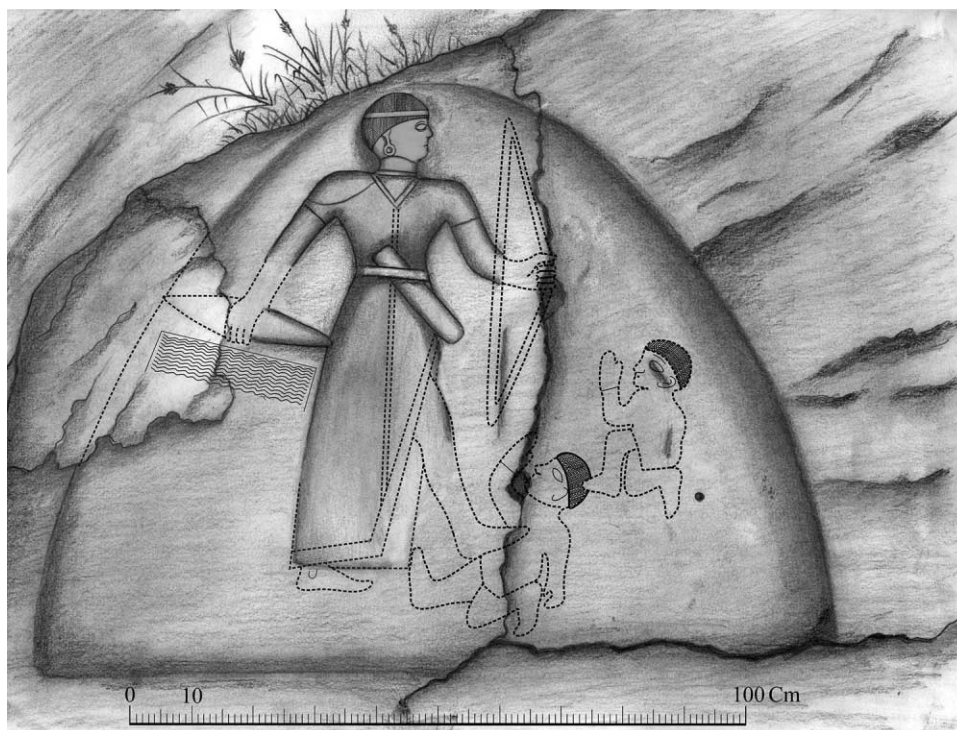


Figure 13—Drawing of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2, with reconstruction of the tight-hand part of relief (by Naser Aminikhah).

motifs on the relief at Darband-i Belula and on the memorial stele of Dadusha, king of Eshnunna (Figs. 14f and 15).<sup>39</sup> However, this general theme, of a king trampling on the chest or belly of a fallen captive, can also be seen in the four rock reliefs at Sar Pol-e Zahab and in the stele from Bitwata (Fig. 14e).<sup>40</sup> The figure of the king holding a weapon, usually an axe, in his right hand, and a bow in his left hand, is also common in the rock reliefs of this period, such as in the reliefs of Anubanini and Iddin-Sin at Sar Pol-e Zahab,<sup>41</sup> the memorial stele of Iddin-Sin from Bitwata, and the relief at Darband-i

Gawra.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, in both the rock reliefs of Darvan Duhol the king holds an object of some sort, though different in each case—a staff or the handle of a weapon in the case of Relief No. 1, and a blade in the case of Relief No. 2—and it is not unlikely that he had a bow on his left shoulder. The depiction of a figure holding a dagger is very similar to the depiction in the Darband-i Belula relief on the west of Bamu mountain, and evidently represents a victory in a war. The hairstyle of the prisoner in Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 is very similar to the hairstyle of the prisoners in the relief of Anubanini at Sar Pol-e Zahab and the Bitwata stele. There are also some similarities between these prisoners and those depicted on the stele of Dadusha.<sup>43</sup> With regard to the divine symbols, since Darvan Duhol Relief No. 1 is partially broken, we cannot say for sure whether or not there were originally any other symbols in addition to the crescent, the lightning fork, and the seven orbs. We might, for example, imagine that the star of Ishtar, which is found on many rock reliefs of this period, was also present. It is worth noting that the seven orbs are also depicted in the stele of Naram-Sin.<sup>44</sup> Although the lightning fork

<sup>39</sup> Peter Miglus, “Die Siegesstele des Königs Dāduša von Ešnunna und ihre Stellung in der Kunst Mesopotamiens und der Nachbargebiete,” in *Altertumswissenschaften im Dialog, Festschrift für Wolfram Nagel*, ed. R. Dittmann, C. Eder, and B. Jacobs, AOAT 306 (Münster, 2003), 415, Abb. 9. The problems and history of research on the stele of Dadusha are reviewed in two recent studies: Robert Rollinger, “Dāduša’s Stele and the vexed question of identifying the main actors on the relief,” *Iraq* 79 (2017): 203–212, where Rollinger identifies the left-hand figure in the stele of Dadusha as the god Adad, and the right-hand figure as Dadusha himself; and Claudia Suter, “The Victory Stele of Dadusha of Eshnunna: A New Look at its Unusual Culminating Scene,” *Ash-sharq: Bulletin of the Ancient Near East* 2/2 (2018): 1–29.

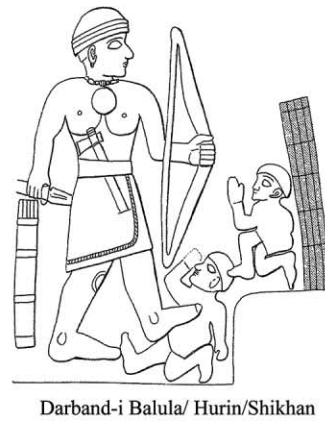
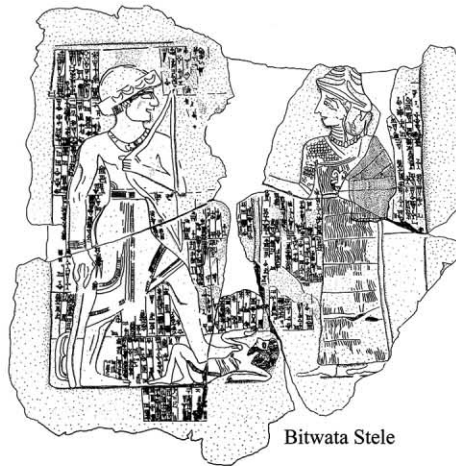
<sup>40</sup> Shaffer, Wasserman, and Seidl, “Iddi(n)-Sîn”: 2, Fig. 1.

<sup>41</sup> Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 30; Postgate and Roaf, “Shaikhan Relief,” Fig. 6.

<sup>42</sup> Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 29.

<sup>43</sup> Miglus, “Die Siegesstele des Königs Dāduša,” 415, Abb. 9.

<sup>44</sup> Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 26k.



**Figure 14**—Comparable rock reliefs and stelae of the late third and early second millennium bc from western Iran and eastern Mesopotamia: (a) Sar Pol-e Zahab 1 (Vanden Berghe, 1984: Fig. 1); (b) Sar Pol-e Zahab 2 (Börker-Klähn, *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen*: no. 32); (c) Sar Pol-e Zahab 3 (Börker-Klähn, *Altvorderasiatische Bildstelen*: no. 34); (d) Sar Pol-e Zahab 4 (Postgate and Roaf, “Shikhan Relief”: Fig. 6); (e) the Bitwata Stele (Shaffer, Wasserman and Seidl, “Iddi(n)-Sin: 4–5, Fig. 1); (f) the Darband-i Belula relief (Postgate and Roaf, “Shikhan Relief”: Fig. 4).



Figure 15—The stele of Dadusha, king of Eshnunna (Miglus, “Die Siegesstele des Königs Dāduša von Ešnunna,” 415, Abb. 9).

was not depicted in the reliefs of the late third and early second millennium BC, it is frequently seen in the iconography of the Neo-Assyrian and -Babylonian periods.<sup>45</sup>

The second relief at Darvan Duhol is carved on a curved surface and its base is delineated by a narrow band, exactly the same sort of framing that can be seen in the rock reliefs of Anubanini and Relief No. 3 at Sar Pol-e Zahab and the relief of Darband-i Ramkan.<sup>46</sup> The imagery of this relief is somewhat different from that of most of the other rock reliefs and stelae of the region, but there is a parallel with the stele from Bamu (Fig. 16),<sup>47</sup> not so far away, which Walter Hintz re-

garded as Elamite.<sup>48</sup> In terms of iconography and characteristics, the face and hairstyle of the Bamu stele are very close to the rendition in the rock relief of Iddin-Sin in Sar Pol-e Zahab.<sup>49</sup> This observation can in fact help us to better understand and reconstruct the iconography of the fragmentary Bamu stele, in which only the head and the right hand of the king are preserved. Moreover, based on Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2, we can modify the dating proposed by Hintz and Jutta Börker-Klähn who, as noted, classified this relief as Elamite. Based on a comparison with the rock relief of Bitwata, Aaron Shaffer and his colleagues believe that reliefs No. 3 and 4 at Sar Pol-e Zahab are both of Iddin-Sin.<sup>50</sup> If we accept this

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., nos. 136, 137b, 161, 164, 165, 171, 211–6b.

<sup>46</sup> Peter Miglus, “Ein Felsrelief in der Schlucht Darband-i Ramkan nahe Rania und die Geschichte seiner Erforschung,” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie & Vorderasiatische Archäologie* 106/1 (2016): 91–99.

<sup>47</sup> Rād, “Eteleati ejmali”: Fig. 8.

<sup>48</sup> Hintz, “Nachlese Elamischer Denkmäler”: 44.

<sup>49</sup> Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 30.

<sup>50</sup> Shaffer, Wasserman and Seidl, “Iddi(n)-Sin”: 49–50; Claudia Glatz, “Monuments and Landscape, Exploring Issues of Place, Distance and Scale in Early Political Contest,” in *Approaching*

proposition, there would now be four rock reliefs and two stelae of Iddin-Sin in the region: the Sar Pole Zahab Reliefs nos. 2, 3, and 4, Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2, the Bitwata stele, and the Bamu stele.

Due to the extensive damage, it is not clear whether or not there were originally other figures carved on the flat section of Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2. However, based on the king's position, the relief's frame and other surviving traces, together with a comparison with the Darband-i Belula relief, it seems probable that two captives could have been depicted in the damaged part. In the rock reliefs of the late third and early second millennium BC, the figure of the king was usually depicted in front of the goddess Ishtar (e.g., in the Anubanini relief, Bitwata stele, and Sar Pol-e Zahab reliefs 1–4). In Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2, however, no religious symbols are preserved: we are unable to say whether this is because of erosion or because they were simply absent. The details of the face and the headband in Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2 are very similar to those in Relief No. 4 at Sar Pol-e Zahab and the Bamu stele. Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2 shares with the Bamu stele the clean-shaven (beardless) face of the person. As we know from its inscription that the beardless person depicted in the stele of Bitwata is Iddin-Sin, it is possible, but not certain, that the figure depicted in Darvan Duhol Relief No. 2 is likewise to be identified as Iddin-Sin.

However, due to the high degree of erosion and the effacing of any inscription which might once have been there, the true identity of this person will remain unknown; nor can we know what were the wars or conflicts in this region, and between which groups. Another thing concerning the Darvan Duhol reliefs that we do not know is whether the principal figures depicted in the two reliefs are the same person (although undoubtedly the two reliefs commemorate two different events). An interesting observation is that in most of the monuments made in the late third and early second millennium BC, the king was depicted facing towards the mountains, not towards the plain, almost certainly indicating that these monuments commemorate invasions from west to east, that is from plain to mountains. Another point to mention is that the Darvan Duhol, Sar Pol-e Zahab, and Darband-i Ramkan reliefs are all located overlooking rivers (the Hawasan, Alvand, and Lower Zab respectively), while the reliefs at Sarab-e Sey Khan,

Bitwata and Darband-i Belula are located nearby water sources, whether rivers or springs.

We believe that these rock reliefs were carved on strategic routes which were also the location of important events. Based on cuneiform texts, the core territory of Simurrum was the Shahrizor plain, that is the area bounded by the Baranand Dagh mountains to the west and the Avroman mountains to the east,<sup>51</sup> with natural limits also presented by the Lower Zab to the north and the Diyala to the south.<sup>52</sup> Based on the Haladiny (Qarachatan) inscription, the southernmost part of Simurrum during the late third and early second millennium BC was Halman (present day Sar Pol-e Zahab).<sup>53</sup> The inscription and rock relief of Iddin-Sin overlooking the banks of the Alvand river in the Kal Ga Re mountain in Sar Pol-e Zahab corroborate this and make it clear that control of the strategic route through Sar Pol-e Zahab was vital for the kingdom of Simurrum. But this also raises the question: where was the eastern frontier of Simurrum? The Bitwata and Haladiny (Qarachatan) inscriptions suggest that the ultimate limit of Iddin-Sin's control was around the Great Khorasan Road, something also indicated by the location of his rock relief at Sar Pol-e Zahab.<sup>54</sup> Mark Altaweel and his colleagues believe that these rock reliefs and stelae mark the frontiers of Simurrum,<sup>55</sup> while Claudia Glatz is of the opinion that, whereas Assyrian rock reliefs and stelae were commissioned to commemorate the limit of their military expeditions into the Zagros, the rock reliefs of the kings of Simurrum were made both to commemorate military campaigns and to mark their political borders.<sup>56</sup>

## Conclusion

Archeological evidence shows that the borderlands between Iran and Mesopotamia underwent a continuous

<sup>51</sup> Levine, "Geographical Studies I": 11.

<sup>52</sup> See the following works by Douglas Frayne: "On the location of Simurrum," in *Crossing Boundaries and Linking Horizons: Studies in Honor of Michael C. Astour*, ed. G. Young, M. Chavalas, and R. Averbeck (Bethesda, MD, 1997), 104; *Ur III Period (2112–2004 BC)*, The Royal Inscriptions of Mesopotamia: Early Periods 3/2, (Toronto, 1997), 264–66; "Zagros campaigns of Šulgi and Amar-Suena," 151; and "Simurrum": 511. See also Joan Goodnick Westenholz, *Legends of the Kings of Akkade: The Texts*, Mesopotamian Civilizations 7 (Winona Lake, IN, 1997).

<sup>53</sup> Ahmad, *Beginnings of Ancient Kurdistan*, 264.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 258, 286–93.

<sup>55</sup> Mark Altaweel et al., "New Investigations in the Environment, History, and Archaeology of the Iraqi Hilly Flanks: Shahrizor Survey Project, 2009–2011," *Iraq* 74 (2012): 1–35.

<sup>56</sup> Glatz, "Monuments and Landscape," 130.





Figure 16—The Bamu Stele (Börker-Klähn, *Alt Vorderasiatische Bildstelen*, no. 273).

evolution, both culturally and politically, through the course of antiquity, and we cannot think in terms of a settled, established cultural and geo-political configuration, especially in the prehistoric, proto-historic, or early historical periods. That said, information in cuneiform texts indicates that during the late third and early second millennium BC, the political border(s) between the polities in Iran and Mesopotamia lay in the foothills of the western of Zagros, and not in either the plains or the high mountains.<sup>57</sup> The location of the rock reliefs of Sar Pol-e Zahab, where four reliefs of this period were carved on either side of the Alvand river, strongly supports this thesis. The discovery of the *kudurru* of Marduk-apal-iddin in the Beshiveh plain, just a few hundred meters beyond these reliefs, indicates that this region remained a political-military border into the Middle Babylonian period.<sup>58</sup> Other monuments on the same geographical longitude, though a little further north, show that the western foothills of the Zagros were the location of major wars and conflicts between Akkadians, Lullubians, Simurrians, Kassites, and the indigenous residents of the Zagros mountains, at least during the late third and early second millennium BC.

<sup>57</sup> Biglari, Alibaigi, and Beyranvand, “The Stele of Sarab-e Sey Khan.”

<sup>58</sup> See Rykle Borger, “Vier Grenzsteinurkunden Merodachbaladans I. von Babylonien. Der Teheran-Kudurru, SB 33, SB 169 und SB 26,” *Archiv für Orientforschung*, 23 (1970): 4 and 7; Ali Hakemi, “Sang nebeshte-ye marbot be zaman-e Marduk-apal-iddin (1117–1129 BC) makshof-e dar Pol-e Zahab, Kudurru,” *Bastan Chenasi va Honar-e Iran* 1 (1347/1969): 68–71 (in Persian); Ursula Seidl, *Die Babylonischen Kudurru-Reliefs, Orbis Biblicus et Orientalis* 87, (Freiburg, 1989), 222, pl. 33.

This political border can be said to follow the line of longitude 45° East. This hard delineation is the exact opposite of the cultural situation of the region in this period. The ceramics of the central Zagros clearly betray the influence of Mesopotamia on the material culture of western Iran for a protracted period, at least from the Ubaid period until the early Iron Age. This influence extends right into the central Zagros and the intermontane plains, along the Great Khorasan Road, and even into very remote valleys. Let us stress once again the significance of the rock reliefs around Bamu mountain and on the banks of the Hawasan river. They are testimony to the scene of countless conflicts. Moreover, we believe that they mark the political border between the kingdom of Simurru and the Zagros polities to its east.<sup>59</sup> As such, they constitute some of the oldest surviving evidence for a political frontier from anywhere in the ancient world. This hypothesis is supported both by information in the Akkadian cuneiform texts deriving from the kingdom of Simurru, especially the Haladiny (Qarachatan) stele and the inscription of Bitwata, and by the the location of the rock reliefs of these kings, which run in a line from Sar Pol-e Zahab, up through Bamu mountain and on at least as far as Darband-i Ramkan.

This political frontier follows the natural topography. It not only indicates the presence of indigenous inhabitants of the Zagros and their resistance against the kingdom of Simurru, but also clearly shows that the topography of the region was an important element in forming the border between these polities. In 2016, the remains of a monumental stone wall were discovered on the western mountains of Sar Pol-e Zahab running north-south for a distance of more than 115 km, from the north of Bamu mountain to the village of Zhaw Marg in Gilan-e Gharb county (Figs. 17–19).<sup>60</sup> Named the “Gawri Wall” or “Gawri Chen Wall,” traces can be seen just 500 m west of Darvan Duhol. The wall is made of native materials such as cobbles and boulders, and in some places it has gypsum mortar. Owing to the destruction and dilapidation of large parts of the wall, it has not

<sup>59</sup> See Frayne, “Simurru”: 511.

<sup>60</sup> Sajjad Alibaigi, *Gozaresb-e Barresiy-e Bastanshenasi Mantaghey-e Sar Pol-e Zahab*, unpublished report of the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research, Tehran (1394/2016, in Persian); Sajjad Alibaigi, “The Gawri Wall: a possible Partho-Sasanian structure in the western foothills of the Zagros Mountains,” *Antiquity, Project Gallery* 93/370 (2019):1–8 (<https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2019.97>).



Figure 17—The Gawri Chen Wall. This stretch is located near the village of Tahmāsb (photograph by F. Fatahi 2016).

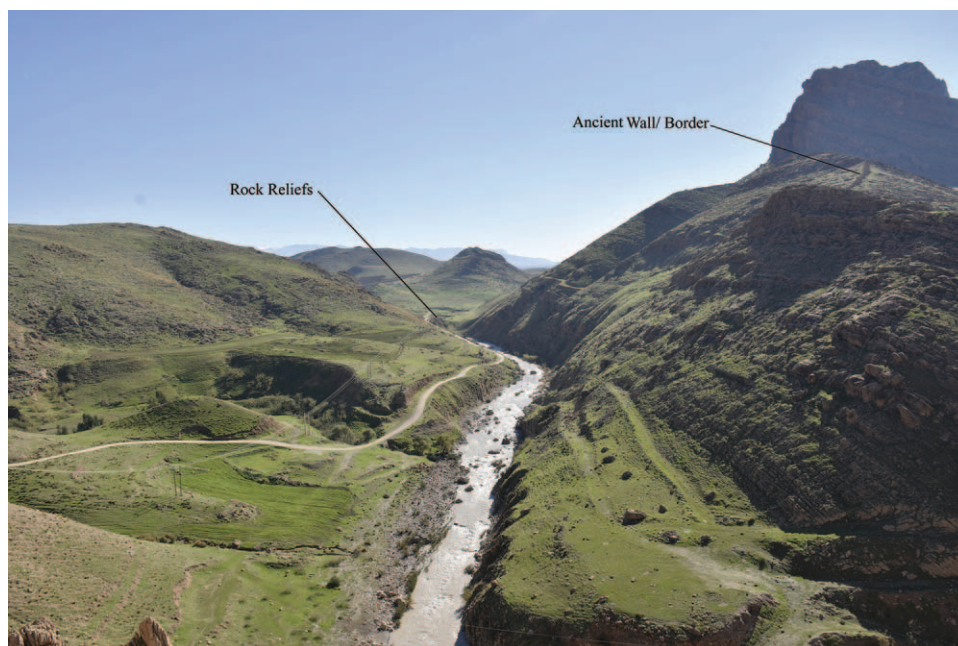


Figure 18—View of the Hawasan valley showing the juxtaposition of the Darvan Duhol rock reliefs and the Gawri Chen Wall, 500 m to the west (photograph by S. Alibaigi 2019).

so far been possible to ascertain its exact width, but it appears to have been about four meters wide; it should be possible to confirm this through excavation. The wall is in places preserved up to three meters high. In a number of locations, there are the remains of additional structures built inside the wall, presumably administrative of-

fices, storage rooms, barracks, and the like—once again, excavation might be able to shed light on this. The wall as a whole closely follows the local topography, running along the ridges and high points of the mountainous terrain. Establishing when the wall was first constructed is difficult. The limited number of sherds recovered



Figure 19—Map showing the line of the Gawri Chen Wall (Alibaigi, “Gawri Wall”: Fig. 2).

might suggest a Parthian or Sasanian date, and certainly a work on this scale must have been undertaken by a state in command of major resources. However, even if the current wall is of Parthian or Sasanian origin, the presence of the sequence of reliefs from Sar Pol-e Zahab up to Darband-i Ramkan suggests that this is a political boundary rooted in deep antiquity, and specifically at least as far back as the late third and early second millennium BC.

It appears highly likely that this line went on to demarcate a frontier repeatedly through history. To consider the Ottoman period, for example, historical sources indicate that the border ran along this line. A contract

dated to AD 1639 indicates that for the early Ottoman period, the border between Iran and Mesopotamia ran through Sar Pol-e Zahab,<sup>61</sup> while the second treaty of Erzurum of 1847 indicates that in the nineteenth century the border was the line between the plain and the

<sup>61</sup> Mohammad Masoum Isfahani, *Kholasatolsiyar* (Tehran, 1989 [1368]), 268–271 (in Persian); Mirza Seyed Jafar Khan Moshir al-Dowleh Mohandesbashi, *Resaley-e Tahghighat-e Sarhadieh*, ed. Mohammad Moshiri, (Tehran, 1969 [1348], in Persian), 44; Mohammad Yousef Valeh Qazvini, *Khold-e Barin*, ed. Mohammad Reza Nasiri, (Tehran, 1998 [1377], in Persian), 257.

mountains, a little further to the west.<sup>62</sup> At the very end of the Ottoman period, both the Istanbul Protocol of 1913 and the Iran-Ottoman agreement of 1914 specify

that Sar Pol-e,<sup>63</sup> Sheikhan,<sup>64</sup> and Bamu mountain as far as Darbandikhan<sup>65</sup> were part of the territory of Zahab. The Iran-Ottoman Agreement of 1937 and the Algiers agreement of 1975 likewise fix the border at this location.

<sup>62</sup> Mohammad Hassan Khan Etemad al-Saltaneh, *Tarikh-e Montazam-e Naseri*, Vol. 3, ed. Mohammad Esmail Rezvani, (Tehran, n.d., in Persian), 1681; Reza Qoli Khan Hedayat, *Tarikh-e Rozatalsafay-e Naseri*, ed. Jamshid Kiyānfar, (Tehran, 2001 [1380], in Persian), 8334; Mirza Mohammad Taghi Khan Lisan al-Molk Sepehr, *Nasekholtavarikh*, ed. Jahangir Ghaemmaghami (Tehran, 1998 [1377], in Persian), 191.

<sup>63</sup> Ahmad Ibn-e Mohammad Ali Behbahani Āle-Āqa, *Meratolahval-e Jahan Nama* (Qom, 1994 [1373], in Persian) 196; Mirza Fazlollah Khavari Shirazi, *Tarikh-e Zolgharnain*, ed. N. Afsharfār (Tehran, 2001 [1380], in Persian), 252.

<sup>64</sup> Mirza Shokrollah Sanandaji, *Tolofey-e Naseri*, ed. Heshmatollah Habibi (Tehran, 1996 [1375], in Persian), 110.

<sup>65</sup> al-Dowleh Mohandesbashi, *Resaley-e Tahghighat-e Sarhadīyeh*, 110.