

Elamite Kingdom

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Elamite Kingdom is an umbrella term used today to refer to the ancient polities that succeeded each other in ruling over a variable portion of southwestern Iran from the 3rd millennium to the 6th century BCE (i.e., from the beginning of history to the rise of the Achaemenid dynasty). They exerted their power mainly from the city of Susa (modern Shush, Khuzestan province) in the lowlands, extending it to the intermontane valleys in the highlands to the east and as far as the Persian Gulf to the south. A common Elamite civilization among these polities is acknowledged by modern scholars, confirmed by the inscriptions of Elamite kings (e.g., IRS 38) recording their predecessors as early as c.750 years before. Elam was characterized by its own language, customs, cults, monuments, and artistic expressions; notwithstanding these evolving components of Elamite identity, affinities with the Mesopotamian civilizations can be recognized in the cultural milieu.

The Elamite language (Stolper 2004) became pre-eminent only after c.1400 BCE. It is written in cuneiform characters, but it is not linguistically connected to Sumerian or Akkadian, remaining a language isolate. A relationship with the Dravidian language family is taken for granted by some scholars.

The area of Elamite political control included the fertile lowlands of Khuzestan (a southeastern extension of the Mesopotamian plain) and the highland Zagros range to the east (broadly the present-day provinces of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad and

western Fars with its capital Shiraz), touching the shores of the Persian Gulf to the south (Bushehr province). Susa, in the lowlands, is the most extensive site (c.250 hectares), while the best known urban centers in the highland and gulf areas are respectively Anshan (modern Tall-e Malyan, c.200 hectares encircled by a wall but not fully settled) and Liyan (modern Tol-e Peytul, close to Bushehr; not fully excavated). Like Malyan, which lies in the Marv Dasht plain (c.1600 m above sea level) where Persepolis was established in the 6th century BCE, the main settlements in the highlands were on fertile intermontane plains, along the main route connecting Susa to Anshan and, later, Persepolis. The widest plains are, rising from west to east, Ramhormoz (c.150 m above sea level), Behbahan (c.320 m), and Fahliyan (c.850 m). To the north of Ramhormoz, the plain around Izeh (c.820 m) lay probably along an alternative route; several Elamite rock reliefs and inscriptions were carved at its edges.

Elam is commonly used today as an umbrella term covering lowland Susiana and highland Anshan, whose exact borders, changing over time, are not well defined (Potts 2011). One of the main ancient centers lying in the middle was Huhnur, which in a year name (IS 9) of Ibbi-Sin (Ur III dynasty) is called “the bolt (i.e., the key access) of the land of Anshan”; a modeled stone found at Tappeh Bormi (RH-11) in the Ramhormoz plain celebrates the capture of Huhnur with a Sumerian inscription of the Ur III king Amar-Sin, but its place of discovery has been recently questioned. Both Susiana (with its great rivers Karkeh, Karun, Dez, and Marun) and the intermontane plains were exploited for agriculture and cattle breeding. Susa was also involved in the trade in resources coming

from the East (metals, especially tin, and semi-precious stones, especially lapis lazuli, both probably from Afghanistan), while the Elamite role in maritime trade is still to be investigated but seems to be assured by the importance of Liyan on the coast (Potts 2006).

The name for Elam in Elamite was *Hatamti*. Its linguistic connection (via the alternative spelling *Haltamti*) with the corresponding Akkadian word *Elam(tu)*, usually written logographically with the cuneiform sign *NIM* (meaning “high” in Sumerian), is disputed. From a Mesopotamian perspective, *NIM* (probably to be read *Elam*) represented originally the Iranian Plateau, having Susa as one of the main hubs leading to it. The only unbroken chain of knowledge linking ancient Elam to the modern Western world is the Old Testament, where the choronym ‘*Elam*’ is attested 16 times (e.g., Daniel 8:2: “the citadel of Susa in the province of Elam”). The mention of Jews from Elam at the Pentecost (Acts 2:9), if not derived from a (lost) earlier geographical list, can be understood as the persistence of Elam as a geographical entity. Even later, until the 14th century CE, an ecclesiastical province of the Nestorian Church was named after Elam and covered the area of Shush, Dezful, and Shushtar.

The archaeological discovery of Elam started with the first excavations at Susa in 1851–1854 by the British W. F. Williams (1800–1883) and W. K. Loftus (1820–1858), followed by the French M.-A. Dieulafoy (1844–1920) and his spouse, J. H. Magre (1851–1916), in 1885–1886. In 1897 it was established as the *Délégation archéologique française*, which, under the directions of J. de Morgan, R. de Mecquenem, R. Ghirshman, and J. Perrot, excavated Susa, Chogha Zanbil (see below), Liyan, and other sites, only suspending its activities with the 1979 Iranian revolution. Other major excavations were carried out by an Iranian team at Haft Tappeh (see below; 1965–1978) and by the University

of Pennsylvania at Malyan (1971–1978). In the last few decades, new excavations at Haft Tappeh, soundings at Malyan, surveys and soundings in the Fahliyan plain, and geophysical prospections and restoration works at Chogha Zanbil have been carried out by joint Iranian and international missions. Several Elamite antiquities, mainly found at Susa, are on display at the Louvre Museum, while the Middle Elamite ziggurat of Chogha Zanbil is acknowledged among the most impressive ancient Near Eastern architectural remains.

As in Assyrian and Babylonian studies, a tripartite periodization (Old, Middle, and Neo-) is applied to the Elamite Kingdom, using 1500 and 1000 BCE as conventional boundaries. The ultra-low chronology has been adopted here as a reference frame.

OLD ELAMITE KINGDOM

A Proto-Elamite phase, preceding the Old Elamite Kingdom and dated around 3000 BCE, is polarized around c.1560 administrative tablets attesting the development of a complex society based on agriculture and animal husbandry at Susa. These tablets, written in the so-called proto-Elamite writing, can be understood mainly by non-linguistic means, i.e., the formal features of the text, the numerical signs, and some signs used logographically that have comparisons in proto-cuneiform and later cuneiform writings. A hundred tablets with similar signs were found in sites to the east of Susa, as far as the Afghanistan border (including Malyan and Tepe Yahya), and to the north as far as the Tehran area (including Tepe Sialk, Tepe Ozbaki, and Tepe Sofalin). It is debated whether the diffusion of the proto-Elamite writing corresponded to a political control or a colonization by Susa (Desset 2012).

During the Early Dynastic period (Old Elamite I), Elam (*NIM*) is attested especially

in the written sources from Lagash, which is one of the Mesopotamian cities closer to Susa in relation to both military campaigns (inscriptions of Eannatum, first dynasty of Lagash, c.2460 BCE) and commerce (pre-Sargonic administrative tablets). A letter reports a failed plundering raid by 600 Elamites against Lagash. According to the literary composition known as the *Sumerian King List*, Enmebaragesi (c.2600 BCE) “broke the weapons of the land of Elam” (II:35–37, a passage culpably omitted in the recension of the *King List* found at Susa) when the kingship was in Kish; then the kingship was carried from Ur (first dynasty, founded around 2500 BCE by Mesanepada) to Awan (a geopolitical entity to the north or east of Susa, whose rulers were later attested in Susa), where three kings reigned for 356 years before the kingship passed again to Kish (IV:5–19). A later tablet, a royal list compiled in the *suk-kalmah* period (see below) and found at Susa, enumerates 12 kings of Awan and 12 Shimashkian kings who reigned in the second half of the 3rd millennium BCE; we know that some of them reigned over Susa and/or Elam thanks to other sources.

According to Old Akkadian royal inscriptions (e.g., FAOS7 Sargon C13 and Beischrift f-g, probably mentioning two Elamite kings known as kings of Awan in the above-mentioned royal list) and year names (Sargon 3), Elam was under the control of the Mesopotamian dynasty of Akkad already in Sargon’s reign (c.2200–2145 BCE). The king Manishtusu was the first to conquer the east as far as Anshan (FAOS7 Manishtusu C1), establishing what is today considered to be an empire. In his royal titulary, Naram-Sin (c.2120–2084) is the one who struck Elam (FAOS7 Naram-Sin B7). Elam seems to have been conquered several times: this could be proof of an unstable control, or simply a conceit suggested by the reiterated ideological boasts of the royal inscriptions. In Susa,

foreign dominion is confirmed by a brick inscription written in Akkadian in the name of the king Naram-Sin (IRS 1). A great tablet, being one of the oldest Elamite texts, has preserved a treaty between Naram-Sin and a lost king, maybe of Awan, but not necessarily reigning at Susa, where the tablet was found; the text opens with the invocation of c.40 divinities as witnesses, some of which are known from Old Akkadian royal inscriptions and some from later Elamite dedications, representing the two parties. Other documents provide the names of local governors (*ÉNSI* and *GĪR.NÍTA*) of Susa during the Akkadian period; at least one of them, Epir-mupi, bears a name that is linguistically Elamite. A group of Old Akkadian administrative tablets, similar to the ones from Mesopotamian cities like Eshnuna, was also found at Susa.

The reign of Puzur-Inshushinak stands out between the Old Akkadian and the Neo-Sumerian (Ur III) dominations: he is a king of Awan according to the above-mentioned royal list from Susa and the titulary of a couple (FAOS7 Puzurinšušinak 7–8) of his Akkadian inscriptions found at Susa; in another (FAOS7 Puzurinšušinak 1) of these inscriptions, he boasts of having conquered a great number of places probably located in the Iranian area rather than in Mesopotamia. Thanks to Mesopotamian sources, the so-called code of Ur-Namma and a later copy of a royal inscription of Ur-Namma himself, we know that Puzur-Inshushinak also conquered some parts of Diyala and Akkad, moving afterwards into Babylonia; Ur-Namma expelled Puzur-Inshushinak’s armies from Babylonia, calling him “king of Elam.” It is difficult to ascertain if the reign of Puzur-Inshushinak was a secondary state formation in response to the previous Akkadian hegemony.

The control of Ur III dynasty over Susa is attested from the reign of Shulgi

(2000–1953 BCE) onward (Old Elamite II, c.2015–1880 BCE). A Sumerian brick inscription with a dedication to Inshushinak, the god of Susa, by Shulgi, and an Akkadian brick inscription with Shu-Sin titulary were found at Susa. Other objects, maybe gifts from the king, were also found there bearing the name and titulary of Shulgi. Elam was integrated in the Ur III kingdom, being mentioned in several administrative texts from Puzrish-Dagan (not far from Nippur) recording expenditures for travelers and messengers. At least 48 Sumerian administrative tablets of Ur III period were found at Susa, 19 of which are dated, ranging between the fourth year of Amar-Sin (AS 4) and the third year of Ibbi-Sin (IS 3). The situation changed in the first years of the reign of Ibbi-Sin (1934–1911 BCE). The year names IS 9 and 14 indicate conflict with Anshan and victory over Susa and Awan, respectively. According to the Sumerian composition *The Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur*, which commemorates the fall of Ur and the end of the Ur III dynasty, the city was taken by *LÚ.SU* people and Elamites (line 33; see also the *Lament for Ur*, line 243) while Ibbi-Sin was taken to Elam in fetters (lines 34–35). This is confirmed by the 26th year name of Ishbi-Erra (1921–1889 BCE), founder of the first Isin dynasty, where the expulsion of Elamites from Ur is recorded eight years after their capture of the city. From a panegyric of Ishbi-Erra, we learn the name of the “man of Elam” who was expelled, Kindattu, listed in the king list from Susa as the sixth Shimashkian king. Scholars do not agree about *LÚ.SU*: according to P. Steinkeller it represents Shimashki, while F. Vallat considers it as an abbreviation for the people of Susiana, living in the mountainous fringes bordering the lowlands.

Most of the kings reigning in Susa in the first half of the 2nd millennium (Old Elamite III, c.1880–1450 BCE) were styled *sukkalmah*,

“grand regent,” a title already known in Mesopotamia, especially in the city of Lagash whose *sukkalmah* were perhaps regents of Susiana on behalf of the Ur III dynasty. Other titles (king, *sukkal*, etc.), mostly qualified by geographical place (of Susa, Elam, or Anshan), were used, leading scholars to speculate on a hypothetical *cursus honorum* toward kingship. The *sukkalmah* rulers are known thanks to a rich documentation found at Susa and written in a local variety of Akkadian: royal inscriptions on bricks (IRS 10–18), several hundred legal and accounting tablets (the king is mentioned in oaths and date formulae), and seal inscriptions. Several *sukkalmah* rulers are listed on a stela (EKI 48; see also EKI 48a–b) of the Middle Elamite king Shilhak-Inshushinak, commemorating the previous rulers who toiled on a building (*haštu*) dedicated to Inshushinak. The list dates back c.750 years starting with Idattu (I?), Kindattu, and Eparti (II), known as Shimashkian kings, and the subsequent rulers are in a special relationship with Shilhaha, the “eldest (or favorite) son (*šak hanik*) of Eparti (II).” On this basis Eparti II is considered the founder of the *sukkalmah* dynasty, removing power from the Shimashkian line, considered foreigners in Susa.

Elam got increasingly involved in Mesopotamia, becoming one of the main players in the ancient Near Eastern international arena, together with the Old Babylonian kingdom of Hammurabi and the Mari kingdom of Zimri-Lim (in Middle Euphrates, Syria). Many individuals bearing Elamite names are attested in Larsa. In a letter sent by an official of the king Rim-Sin of Larsa, the king of Elam is referred to as “the great king.” In the epistolary archives of Mari, the “*sukkal* of Elam,” probably Siwepalarhupak, is called “father” of Zimri-Lim or Hammurabi, who considered themselves brothers. Mari texts attest the exchange of gifts and envoys between Elam and Mari, and for a period (ZL 7’–9’) Mari

had the opportunity of acquiring tin from Elam, dispersing it to the kingdoms of western Syria and Palestine. Considering the archaeological evidence for links between Susa and Bactria at this time, it is probable that Afghanistan was the source of Elam's tin. Elamite involvement with regions to the south and east, such as Dilmun (Bahrain) and Magan (Oman) in the Persian Gulf, is also documented during this period. The situation changed after Siwepalarhupak's capture of Eshnunna (1670–1668 BCE): Babylon and Mari became enemies, as proved by a tablet found in Mari providing the ritual formulae used in a treaty between Hammurabi and Zimri-Lim against Siwepalarhupak; and another tablet bears the report of the envoy who witnessed Hammurabi ratifying the treaty (with some perplexities). Siwepalarhupak's army was later defeated by Hammurabi, who, at last, also conquered Mari.

The military expansion and commercial role of Elam is reflected in the archaeological discoveries at Susa: the settlement expanded toward the east, occupying the vast area called Ville Royale. The Chantier A (levels XV–XII), excavated under Ghirshman, represents only a section of the ancient city, with small streets and houses abutting each other, with courtyards and fireplaces. Building activities of *sukkalmah* rulers are attested by brick inscriptions at Susa, Choga Pahan East, and Liyan.

Siwepalarhupak is known also from one of the few Elamite texts of this period, a royal inscription on clay tablets (EKI 3), which anticipates the formulae used in the great number of Middle Elamite inscribed bricks. Beyond Susa, only some fragmentary royal inscriptions in Akkadian from Malyan are known; in one of them the name of Siwepalarhupak can be recognized, showing the range of *sukkalmah* power. To this epigraphic evidence, the rock relief of Kurangun (Fahliyan plain, c.100 km to the west of Malyan as the

crow flies), depicting an adoration scene with close parallels on some seals from Susa, has to be added.

MIDDLE ELAMITE KINGDOM

The Middle Elamite Kingdom, in the second half of the 2nd millennium BCE, is characterized by huge building programs in Susiana and by close relationships with Babylonia, at first good then worsening toward the end of the Kassite dynasty, with a phase of Elamite military hegemony, and later with a Babylonian campaign that apparently put to an end the Middle Elamite Kingdom.

The transition from the *sukkalmah* dynasty is not clear. A first group of kings, conventionally named Kidinuids (Middle Elamite I, c.1450–1400 BCE), seems to be rather connected to the *sukkalmah* rulers, even if bearing the title of “king of Susa” (on bricks) and “of Susa and Anshan” (in Tepti-Ahar's sealing on clay tablets). Their inscriptions are still in Akkadian. The king Tepti-Ahar is known both from a brick inscription allegedly from Susa and from the royal center of Haft Tappeh, a site c.15 km from Susa apparently built from scratch and settled for a short period. A complex with two barrel-vaulted chambers with c.40 skeletons inside is considered to be the royal tomb of Tepti-Ahar; a stela mentioning his name and recording regular funerary offerings was found in a court of the same complex. Around 300 tablets in Akkadian attest to administrative activities, again with the name of king Tepti-Ahar. In recent years a great palace built around a great courtyard has been discovered to the south of the tomb complex, and more Akkadian tablets were found in excavations during 2005–2007.

The following group of kings (Middle Elamite II, c.1500–1050 BCE) styled themselves “king of Anshan and Susa” in Elamite, reversing the order in the few surviving

Akkadian inscriptions. The majority of Middle Elamite royal inscriptions were written in Elamite, usually on bricks (in clay, the same material used to mold tablets, the usual text carrier for cuneiform writings), attesting the building activities promoted and funded by the king, but also on stone stelae and, rarely, other stone and bronze artifacts. The sites where such inscriptions were found can be used to delimit, at least approximately, the extent of the kingdom: first of all, Susa and Chogha Zanbil with thousands of bricks; then Tappeh Horreye, Tappeh Pomp, Deh-e Now, Deylam (KS-47), Chogha Pahn West (KS-3) and East (KS-102), Tappeh Gotvand, and Bard-e Kargar (KS-1625) in Susiana; in the highlands we have only one brick inscription from Tol-e Spid (a small mound in the Fahliyan plain) and some brick fragments from Malyan; in the middle, just one fragment from Tappeh Bormi (RH-11-1) near Ramhormoz; in the coastal area, Tol-e Peytul, ancient Liyan, to the south of the modern city of Bushehr, approximately 2 km from the current Persian Gulf coastline.

The king Untash-Napirisha (c.1340–1300 BCE) started the construction of a ritual and celebrative complex at Chogha Zanbil, calling it Al-Untash-Napirisha, i.e., his own city. The complex comprised several temples (*siyan*, dedicated to different gods, whose names we know through the thousand exemplars of dedicatory inscriptions, always mentioning the king) and ritual installations protected by three surrounding walls on an anticline facing onto the fertile plain of the Dez River. In the middle is one of the best preserved ziggurats, still standing to a height of c.25 m from an estimated original height of 53 m. To the east of the ziggurat is a palatial area with three buildings, in one of which five groups of underground chambers were found with remains of incinerated bodies and one female skeleton. The chambers were probably royal burials, even if lacking lavish grave goods.

The political relationships with the Kassite dynasty included some interdynastic marriages of Elamite kings with Kassite princesses mentioned in two later Akkadian documents. The first of these, the so-called letter of Berlin, is a Neo-Babylonian copy of a (fictional?) letter of an Elamite king whose name is lost, probably Shutruk-Nahunte (c.1190–1155 BCE), to Babylonia, claiming for himself the Babylonian throne on the basis of blood ties. The other is a literary text of the Achaemenid period, one of a group of three documents known as Kedor-Laomer texts (because of the supposed affinity between the name of the Elamite king and Kedor-Laomer of Genesis 14), recounting the epistolary exchange between the Babylonians and Kutir-Nahunte, son of Shutruk-Nahunte according to his own royal inscriptions in Elamite (e.g., IRS 35–37), who claimed to be “the son of a king’s daughter who sat upon the [Babylonian] royal throne” (Foster 1996: 284, III.11.a).

If we trust these documents, we have to surmise that the Babylonian refusal of these claims led to a worsening of the political relationship. According to a fragmentary Neo-Assyrian copy (Foster 1996: 295–297, III.12. b) of the royal inscription of a king whose name is not preserved but supposed to be Nebuchadnezzar I, the last two kings of the Kassite dynasty, Zababa-shuma-iddina (1153 BCE) and Enlil-nadin-ahi (1152–1150 BCE), were ousted by two Elamite kings, father and son, respectively. The name of the first Elamite king is not preserved, but the latter is Kutir-Nahunte, suggesting that the father was Shutruk-Nahunte. This document, which is a literary composition with an ideological aim, is somewhat substantiated by the royal inscriptions of Shutruk-Nahunte and by the Mesopotamian trophies found in Susa, some bearing an Elamite inscription of the same king indicating the provenance and celebrating the re-dedication (e.g., EKI 22 on the stela of Naram-Sin from Sippar). The code of

Hammurabi, found at Susa but not inscribed with a secondary Elamite inscription, was probably looted at the same time. The conquests of Shutruk-Nahunte thus extended “from the highlands on the Great Khorasan Road across the Diyala region and the isthmus of Mesopotamia as far as the Euphrates” (Stolper, in Carter and Stolper 1984: 40). An Elamite stela fragment of Shutruk-Nahunte records the capture of hundreds of towns (EKI 28 C2); another fragment seems to list tributes taken from northern Babylonian cities including Dur-Kurigalzu, Sip[par], Opis, and perhaps Ak[kad?] and Eshnunna (EKI 28 C1).

The military achievements of Kutir-Nahunte left no record in his own inscriptions (IRS 35–37), while the memory of his sacrilegious deeds against the Mesopotamian cult centers and their gods, encapsulated in the carrying off to Elam of the cult statue of Marduk, is recounted by some Babylonian literary texts called *Nebuchadnezzar and Marduk* (Foster 1996: 299, III.12.d:17), *Marduk prophecy* (Foster 1996: 303–304, III.13), and the Kedor-Laomer texts (Foster 1996: 283–289, III.11).

A long stela inscription (EKI 54) of king Shilhak-Inshushinak (c.1150–1120 BCE), successor of Kutir-Nahunte and son of the same father according to his own Elamite inscriptions (IRS 38–50, EKI 32–59), is one of the few providing annalistic data and records c.250 places, perhaps grouped according to the military campaigns leading to their conquest. Most of these places are hard to locate, but some seem to lie as far as central and northern Babylonia, the Diyala region, and the Assyrian heartland (Arrapha, Nuzi). These data, while remaining scant, indicate an imperial attitude, both in the field and in the royal ideology (especially shown by documents like the letter of Berlin, be it true or fictional), consistent with the attitude of the period, i.e., without implying a stable control of the territory but looting its resources.

Hutelutush-Inshushinak, qualifying himself as “favorite son” (*šak hanik*, probably a title) of both Kutir-Nahunte and Shilhak-Inshushinak, is the last king of this dynasty whose inscriptions survive. While the Elamite documentation is represented by the usual dedicatory inscriptions, both from Susa (IRS 51–53, EKI 60–65) and Malyan, a royal grant of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar (1125–1104 BCE) mentions him as beaten in a battle and then “taking refuge in his mountains” (Foster 1996: 297–298, III.12c). In other contexts, this expression has clearly to be intended as a euphemism for “to die” (probably with a reference to the mountains of the Netherworld); in this case, the mention of the mountains has been taken literally, since some fragments of a brick dedicatory inscription in Hutelutush-Inshushinak’s name were found at Malyan, i.e., in the mountainous area. At Malyan, the archaeological excavations partially unearthed a building with a courtyard and several storerooms, probably with administrative functions, confirmed by the discovery of c.200 administrative tablets dealing mainly with metals and dated to the end of the Middle Elamite period or the beginning of the Neo-Elamite one (c.1000 BCE). After a burned level, the building was abandoned and this evidence is usually generalized to the whole site during the 1st millennium BCE (when Cyrus the Great is styled “king of the city of Anshan” in his famous cylinder from Babylon), but more extensive excavations are needed.

NEO-ELAMITE KINGDOM

After a couple of centuries without written documentation (Neo-Elamite I, c.1050–770 BCE), the Neo-Elamite Kingdom (Neo-Elamite II, c.770–585 BCE) is characterized by a long series of wars and battles against the Neo-Assyrian Kingdom, some depicted in the famous reliefs of the Assyrian palaces

of Nineveh, and culminating in the sack of Susa (646 BCE) celebrated in the annals of the Assyrian king Ashurbanipal.

Only five kings are known through royal inscriptions from Susa; several others, together with details on their royal families and the political and military events in which they were involved, are known from Mesopotamian sources, namely Neo-Assyrian royal annals and state correspondence, and later Babylonian chronicles. The picture given by the sources is not unitary: the Elamite kingdom seems to be broken into a pro-Assyrian and an anti-Assyrian party; “royal cities” like Madaktu and Hidali, still unidentified, are often mentioned as places where the king dwelt beyond Susa; and apparently new chiefdoms, like Zari, Samati, and Zamin, are attested. The paradigm of a fragmentation of the Neo-Elamite Kingdom, especially after the sack of Susa, is widely recognized by scholars. The sources seem to provide, instead, a more detailed view of a federate system that also probably characterized Elam in previous centuries, having Susa as one of the main centers controlling other local polities, including the intermontane plains, which finally, during the 1st millennium BCE, emerged in the textual record. However, the federate system should not be considered an Elamite peculiarity, but one of the easiest ways to protect and develop civil society at that time.

To the Neo-Elamite period are dated several texts in Elamite: beside the royal inscriptions, we know inscriptions engraved in the name of high officials like Shutruru (stela EKI 74), high priest (*pašišu GAL*, from Akkadian *pašišu rabû*) under the king Shutruk-Nahunte (II), and Hani (rock inscription EKI 75), the head (*kutur*) of Ayapir (probably modern Izeh) under the king Shutruk-Nahunte son of Intata. One of the few Elamite literary texts, a tablet with omens partially translating a Mesopotamian original, is also dated to this period. Several tablets from Susa,

among which a corpus of c.300 administrative documents known as the Susa Acropole tablets and dated to c.600 BCE or even later, stand out. The Acropole tablets record deliveries of (military?) clothing and weapons to a number of people and groups often identified by an anthroponym (their leader?) or a toponym (probably small towns in the region of Susa but also centers further into the highlands to the north and east). Among the receivers of goods, we find some Persians qualified with unknown toponyms like Zampekir, Huri, and Datiyana, thus attesting their presence in the area and their relationships with the royal administration.

Unfortunately, the Neo-Elamite period is badly represented in the archaeological record of Susa. Two elite burials are dated to the 6th century, one in the plain of Behbahan (close to the medieval city of Arjan) and the other in the plain of Ramhormoz (close to the modern Jubaji village), both with luxurious grave goods showing a mix of features and motifs that are considered to be forerunners of Achaemenid art. Both burials are on the left bank of a river. In the Ramhormoz burial, discovered in 2007, a golden clamp with the Elamite inscription “Shutruk-Nahunte son of Intata” was found.

TRANSITION

The transition to the Achaemenid Kingdom is debated (Neo-Elamite III, c.585–539 BCE). Three revolts in Elam are mentioned in the Bisotun inscription during the first three years of Darius the Great’s reign (521–486 BCE), but there is no proof that the end of the Elamite Kingdom, conventionally dated to the same year as the well-documented conquest of Babylon (539 BCE) by Cyrus the Great, was violent. In recent scholarship, the ethnogenesis of the Achaemenid Persians has been conceived as a shared identity uniting Elamite and Iranian

traditions. Even if it was on the brink of disappearing, the Elamite language had an important role in the Achaemenid administration and chancellery: most of the Persepolis (Fortification and Treasury) tablets (510–494 and 492–459 BCE respectively) are written in Elamite, and the trilingual Achaemenid royal inscriptions used Elamite beside Old Persian and Babylonian, thus attesting to the ideological importance of Elamite as the language of a long and revered tradition of kingship. Finally, the Fortification tablets record offerings to Iranian gods like Aurmazda and gods known from previous Elamite sources like Humpān, suggesting again the vitality of an Elamite component in the new political and cultural environment. These Elamite components seem to have disappeared in the later Persian traditions, even if late Babylonian diaries and classical authors mention the presence of semi-independent kingdoms in the lowland–highland interface area during the Parthian period, and one of these is known as Elymais, a name clearly connected to ancient Elam. Perhaps it was this long chain of traditions that produced definitions like “the Elymaeans ancestors of the Persians” in Josephus (37–c.100 CE), *Jewish Antiquities* (1.6.4), and “Elamitae principes Persidis” in Isidore of Seville (d.636 CE), *Etymologies* (9.2.3).

SEE ALSO: Achaemenid Empire; Akkadian Empire; Assyrian Empire; Diplomacy and empire; Neo-Assyrian Empire; Neo-Babylonian (Chaldean) Empire; Neo-Sumerian (Ur III) Kingdom; Old Babylonian period; Parthian Empire

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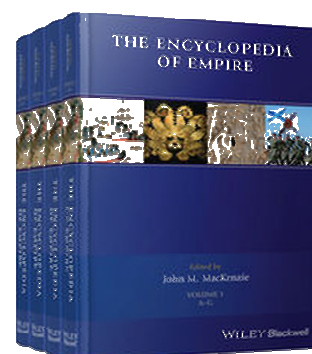
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