From the middle of the third millennium BC until the coming of Cyrus the Great, southwestern Iran was referred to in Mesopotamian sources as the land of Elam. A heterogenous collection of regions, Elam was home to a variety of groups, alternately the object of Mesopotamian aggression, and aggressors themselves; an ethnic group seemingly swallowed up by the vast Achaemenid Persian empire, yet a force strong enough to attack Babylonia in the last centuries BC. The Elamite language is attested as late as the Medieval era, and the name Elam as late as 1300 in the records of the Nestorian church. This book examines the formation and transformation of Elam’s many identities through both archaeological and written evidence, and brings to life one of the most important regions of Western Asia, re-evaluates its significance, and places it in the context of the most recent archaeological and historical scholarship.

D. T. Potts is Edwin Cuthbert Hall Professor in Middle Eastern Archaeology at the University of Sydney. He is the author of The Arabian Gulf in Antiquity, 2 vols. (1990), Mesopotamian Civilization (1997), and numerous articles in scholarly journals.
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THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF ELAM

FORMATION AND TRANSFORMATION OF AN ANCIENT IRANIAN STATE

D. T. POTTS
For Hildy, Rowena, Morgan and Hallam, with much love
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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Of all the major constituents of the ancient Near East, Elam has surely proven one of the more difficult to come to grips with. For most students of antiquity Elam appears aloof, somewhat exotic – a place of hard-to-pronounce names, unfamiliar sites, a poorly understood language and a somewhat barbaric population to the east of Mesopotamia. Alternately subject to Mesopotamian domination or busily subverting it as best they could, the Elamites are present in the archaeological and written record for thousands of years, reacting to foreign aggression, forging local alliances of which we have few details, cropping up in the written record of their western neighbours, saying little of themselves in their own inscriptions. Archaeologists and historians have consciously or unconsciously regarded the brutal Assyrian campaigns against the Elamites in the seventh century BC as the final chapter in their troubled history, the rise of the Achaemenid Persians as a new dawn in Iranian antiquity which heralded the start of another era. Yet the Elamites and their language crop up in post-Elamite, ‘Persian’ Iran. Elamites appear in the histories of Alexander the Great and his Seleucid successors. In the guise of Elymaeans they fought for independence against the later Parthian dynasty. And in the early Medieval era ‘Elam’ became the name of an ecclesiastical province of one of the most important branches of eastern Christianity, the Nestorian church. Anyone interested in the creation of identity and ethnicity, in the past or the present, will find in the story of Elam a palimpsest of ever changing definitions of what it meant to be Elamite, glimpses of which are revealed in a patchwork of archaeological and epigraphic evidence as difficult to comprehend as any in the ancient Near East.

Numerous distinguished historians, sociologists, social theorists and anthropologists have recently explored the invention of national and ethnic consciousness and identity (e.g. Nash 1989; Hobsbawm and Ranger 1983; Hobsbawm 1990; Fullbrook 1993; Teich and Porter 1993; Gillis 1994; Pickett 1996; Ross 1996; Bischof and Pelinka 1997), leaving us in no doubt that these are socially constructed and highly mutable. By the time the reader has reached the end of this book I would hope that not merely the artificiality of the construct ‘Elam’, but the notion that many Elams were constructed over time, no two of which were probably coterminous culturally, politically or geographically with each other, will have become clear. Every period – each in itself an artificial construct of modern scholars – is characterised by an Elam of the external written sources (initially Sumerian and Akkadian, later Greek, Latin, Syriac, etc.), an Elam of the indigenous archaeological and epigraphic sources, and an Elam of 20th century historiography. Why I have chosen to speak of the formation and transformation of Elam in the title of this study is precisely because of the mutability of Elam.
through time, an entity which was constructed and recreated continuously by ancient participants in the Elamite cultural and linguistic community, ancient observers of the Elamites, and modern students of the subject.

In 1900 the French historian Henri Berr’s ‘terrible craving for synthesis’ led him to establish the Revue de synthèse historique (Keylor 1975: 133; cf. Müller 1994: xvi-xvii), just as a desire for histoire totale eventually spurred Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch to found the journal Annales d’Histoire Économique et Sociale twenty-nine years later (Lyon 1987: 200). While presuming neither to class the present work amongst the many influential studies in Annaliste history which have emerged since Annales began appearing seventy years ago, nor wishing to join an avowedly Annaliste club of archaeologists (e.g. Bintliff 1991, Knapp 1992), I am nevertheless adamant in declaring that this is explicitly a work of synthesis which wholeheartedly embraces the tenets of histoire totale, and I am happy to be counted amongst those ‘rash souls who wish to move outside the limits of what they themselves have studied and aspire to a comprehensive view’ (trans. Keylor 1975: 133). Because I do not believe that one can arrive at a satisfactory understanding of Elam by chopping it into chronological bits or looking only at its art or texts, I have striven to cover all periods in Elamite history using all types of available evidence, whether architectural, ceramic, numismatic, radiometric, epigraphic, literary, environmental, religious, ethnographic, etc. In my view, we need the chronologically extended synthesis as much as the particular analytical focus sometimes referred to as microhistory (Egmond and Mason 1997). Without time depth and topical breadth we would be unable to chart the repeated restructuring of Elam through time. And because I can see no justification for terminating the story of the Elamites with the campaigns of Assyria and the emergence of the Achaemenid Persian empire, the present study ranges into the Seleucid, Parthian, Sasanian and early Islamic periods, eras which have traditionally been considered ‘post-Elamite’. If some readers have difficulty in this attenuation of Elamite archaeology and history, they need not bother with the final chapters. But I hope that others will see, perhaps for the first time, that the story of Elam and the Elamites does not end with Assurbanipal or the coming of Cyrus the Great.

The quantity of data presented here may suggest that I have succumbed to a kind of naive historicism and abandoned the traditional concern of archaeologists with long-term trends and societal morphology. I trust I have not fallen prey to the former, but I freely admit that I have eschewed the latter. The amount of detail which confronts readers of this book is vital to the arguments outlined in Chapter 12, however, for while I may embrace the idea of histoire totale in this study, I conclude by rejecting the notion of the longue durée. These more theoretical views, however, are largely confined to this Preface and the conclusion of this book, and readers should approach the intervening chapters without fear of suddenly finding themselves on the ideological battleground of historical method. That is not the raison d’être of this book. It is still a study of Elam in its many manifestations, even if that study seems to me to raise important questions about how we interpret the past.

But apart from wishing to create an histoire totale of Elam, there is another impor-
tant reason for writing a work of synthesis like this. If Elam today is not exactly a household word, then that is less a reflection of its role in antiquity than a by-product of two major linguistic problems. For on the one hand, the difficulties posed by the Elamite language have made Elamite texts much less amenable to translation and interpretation than those of Sumer, Assyria or Babylonia, not to mention Greece or Rome. On the other hand, the fact that perhaps two-thirds of the scholarship available on Elam is written in French and German has meant that Anglophone students and lay persons, in particular, have only had access to a very limited number of primary and secondary publications on Elam. This predicament is not unique to Elamite studies, but as I have taught the archaeology and early history of Elam off and on over the past seventeen years it has become increasingly clear to me that the subject is made inherently more difficult than, for example, North American or Australian archaeology, precisely because students ‘doing’ Elam will only ever get a very fractured view of the subject if they are limited to the literature available in English. I do not wish to imply, of course, that there are no good, accessible works in English on Elam already available. It is, nevertheless, true to say that those book-length, synthetic studies which already exist in English [e.g. Cameron 1936, Hinz 1972, Carter and Stolper 1984] have not nearly said the last word on the subject. None of them can be remotely considered up-to-date and each concludes with the rise of the Achaemenid empire, neglecting over a millennium of later Elamite history. In spite of the impossibility of conducting archaeological fieldwork in Iran today, journals each year continue to receive and publish numerous studies of a microhistorical type which are dedicated to Elam. But like Henri Berr, I cannot help but comment on the stubborn reluctance of many contemporary authors of Elamitica to stand up and demonstrate ‘how obscure, marginal, or unusual cases can be used to address crucial historical issues’ [Egmond and Mason 1997: 2–3]. The study of Elam may not be long for this world if cogent, readable syntheses are not available with which to teach the subject. I have attempted to write such a study here. In an effort to guide readers unfamiliar with Elam through the maze of material assembled, I have offered text boxes at the beginning of each chapter which briefly summarize the matter to be discussed; an introductory map showing the sites mentioned in each chapter; and a summary chart at the end of each chapter which highlights the main points of interest within the lowlands, highlands, Mesopotamia and the entity ‘Elam’ in each period, and adds relevant dates for chronological orientation.

This book was written at the University of Sydney, where I have taught Elam to Australian undergraduates. For the most part, my bibliographical resources have been those of Fisher Library. While this is undoubtedly the best library for a study of this sort in Australia, it cannot compare with major libraries in Europe or the United States. Though I might sometimes agree with Aly Warburg’s motto that ‘God is in the detail’ [Egmond and Mason 1997: 2], I have had to learn to do without and not to regret it. Nevertheless, I have not been completely averse to e-mailing and faxing colleagues with long distance requests for bibliographical aid. For their gracious help with such matters, and for sending me offprints of useful literature, I would like to express my warmest thanks to A.B. Bosworth [Perth], P. Briant [Toulouse], J.A. Brinkman [Chicago],
A. Caubet (Paris), J. Córdoba (Madrid), R.K. Englund (Los Angeles), E. Haerinck (Gent), H. Hunger (Vienna), M. Jursa (Vienna), P. Kalensky (Paris), A. Kuhrt (London), P. Magee (Sydney), P. Michalowski (Ann Arbor), P.R.S. Moorey (Oxford), H.J. Nissen (Berlin), H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Groningen), R. Schmitt (Saarbrücken), M.W. Stolper (Chicago), J. Teixidor (Paris), and J. Westenholz (Jerusalem). In the end, there remain publications I would have liked to consult but which remained inaccessible. In this I take comfort from Henri Berr’s observation on scholars ‘who cannot think of science except in terms of detailed research, and who, since detail is infinite, push forward this research of theirs only to see the goal recede before them’ (trans. Keylor 1975: 133). Perhaps it is just as well that I cannot consult everything I might wish to on the subject of Elam.

The maps illustrating site distributions which accompany each of the substantive chapters were prepared by Ms Michele Ziolkowski, a PhD candidate in Near Eastern archaeology at the University of Sydney, and I would like to express my sincerest thanks to her for the long hours of digitizing contour lines which went into their creation. If sites have been misplaced, the fault is my own. Likewise, I would like to express my sincere thanks to Mr Alex Stephens, a PhD candidate in Classics at the University of Sydney, whom I employed to prepare accurate English translations of Greek texts from Susa (Table 10.1).

To write a book is one thing, to publish it quite another. I would like to thank Professor Norman Yoffee (Ann Arbor) and the other members of the board of the Cambridge World Archaeology series for accepting this book for publication when it was only a rough outline with a bit of bibliography, and who, since detail is infinite, push forward this research of theirs only to see the goal recede before them’ (trans. Keylor 1975: 133). Perhaps it is just as well that I cannot consult everything I might wish to on the subject of Elam.

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Finally, I would like to say a word about Iran, as opposed to Elam. To begin with, I must thank two of my professors at Harvard whose influence may be expressed only indirectly in the pages of this book, but who in very different ways sowed the seeds of a lifelong interest in Iran in me as a student. C.C. Lamberg-Karlovsky introduced me to both Iran and Iranian archaeology. Two memorable seasons of excavation at Tepe Yahya in 1973 and 1975 kindled an abiding interest in Iranian archaeology. Richard N. Frye introduced me to the pre-Islamic religions of Iran and first fostered my awareness of the incredibly rich historical, linguistic and spiritual heritage of Iran. The Iranian Revolution meant the interruption of my active involvement with the subject, but in 1995 and 1996 I was able to return to Iran with my wife and a group from the Near Eastern Archaeology Foundation of the University of Sydney. Those visits gave me the opportunity to visit Susa, Choga Zanbil, Haft Tepe, Kul-e Farah and numerous other
sites of Elamite history for the first time. Parvaneh Sattari and the staff of Pasargad Tour in Teheran made both trips enormously successful and reminded me why I have spent so much of my adult life thinking about Iran's past.

Acknowledgements for photographic reproduction

It is with great pleasure that I acknowledge the kind permission of Annie Caubet, Conservateur général in charge of the Department of Oriental Antiquities at the Louvre Museum to reproduce the twenty-five plates marked © Musée du Louvre, Antiquités Orientales. The remainder of the photographs published here were taken by the author during visits to Iran in 1995 and 1996.
ABBREVIATIONS

A  Siglum of texts in the Louvre Museum
A1–3S  Artaxerxes I–III, Susa inscriptions
AAASH  Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
AAM  Archives administratives de Mari
AfO  Archiv für Orientforschung
AH  Achaemenid History
AcIr  Acta Iranica
AIO  De Meyer, L. and Haerinck, E., eds. (1989), Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalia: Miscellanea in honorem Louis Vanden Berghe, Louvain: Peeters
AION  Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli
AJA  American Journal of Archaeology
AMI  Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran
Amorites  Buccellati, G. (1966), The Amorites of the Ur III Period, Naples: Ricerche 1
AO  Der Alte Orient
AoF  Altorientalische Forschungen
AOAT  Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AOS  American Oriental Series
ARM  Archives royales de Mari
ArOr  Archiv Orientální
AS  Assyriological Studies
BAI  Bulletin of the Asia Institute
BAH  Institut Français d’Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique
BaM  Baghdader Mitteilungen
BAR  British Archaeological Reports
BBVO  Berliner Beiträge zum Vorderen Orient
BiMes  Bibliotheca Mesopotamica
BIN  Babylonian Inscriptions in the Collection of J. B. Nies, Yale University
# List of abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BiOr</td>
<td>Bibliotheca Orientalis</td>
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<tr>
<td>BM</td>
<td>British Museum</td>
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<td>BSOAS</td>
<td>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</td>
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<td>C</td>
<td>Cyrus</td>
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<td>CAH</td>
<td>Cambridge Ancient History</td>
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<td>CHI</td>
<td>Cambridge History of Iran</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNIP</td>
<td>Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNRS</td>
<td>Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique</td>
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<tr>
<td>CRAIBL</td>
<td>Comptes-rendus de l'Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSCO</td>
<td>Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium</td>
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<td>CST</td>
<td>Fish, T. (1932), <em>Catalogue of Sumerian Tablets in the John Rylands Library</em>, Manchester</td>
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<tr>
<td>CT</td>
<td>Cuneiform texts from Babylonian tablets . . . in the British Museum</td>
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<td>DB</td>
<td>Darius, Behistun inscription</td>
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<td>DAFI</td>
<td>Délégation archéologique Française en Iran</td>
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<td>DN</td>
<td>Darius, Naqsh-i Rustam inscriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>DP</td>
<td>Darius, Persepolis inscriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>DS</td>
<td>Darius, Susa inscriptions</td>
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<tr>
<td>DV</td>
<td>Drevnosti Vostocnyja, Moscow.</td>
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<tr>
<td>EnIr</td>
<td>Encyclopaedia Iranica</td>
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<tr>
<td>EW</td>
<td>East and West</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAOS</td>
<td>Freiburger Altorientalische Studien</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGH</td>
<td>Jacoby, F. (1923–), <em>Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</em>, Berlin: Weidmann</td>
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<tr>
<td>FHE</td>
<td>De Meyer, L., Gasche, H. and Vallat, F., eds. (1986), <em>Fragmenta</em></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
### List of Abbreviations


**HdO** Handbuch der Orientalistik

**HSAO** Heidelberger Studien zum Alten Orient

**HSS** Harvard Semitic Studies

**H.T.** Haft Tepe text

**IrAnt** *Irana Antiqua*


**JA** *Journal Asiatique*

**JAOS** *Journal of the American Oriental Society*

**JEOL** *Jaarbericht Ex Oriente Lux*

**JRGS** *Journal of the Royal Geographical Society*

**KP** *Der Kleine Pauly*

**KZ** Ka'ba-i Zardosht inscription of Shapur I at Naqsh-i Rustam

**M** unpublished Mari text

**MAD** Materials for the Assyrian Dictionary

**MCS** Manchester Cuneiform Studies

**MDP** *Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse, Mémoires de la Mission Archéologique de Susiane, Mémoires de la Mission archéologique de Perse, Mémoires de la Délégation Archéologique en Iran* (for specific text refs. acc. to vol. number see in general under Scheil 1900–39 below)


**MSKH** Brinkman, J.A. [1976], *Materials and Studies for Kassite History I: A Catalogue of Cuneiform Sources Pertaining to Specific Monarchs of the Kassite Dynasty*, Chicago: The Oriental Institute

**MSVO** Materialien zu den frühen Schriftzeugnissen des Vorderen Orients

**MNV** Materiali per il vocabolario neo-sumerico

**NABU** Nouvelles Assyrologiques Brèves et Utilitaires

**NH** Pliny's *Natural History*

**Nik.** Nikolskij, M.V. [1908], *Dokumenty chozjajstvennoj otctenosti drevnejsej epochi Chaldei iz sobranija N.P. Lichaceva*, St Petersburg

**OECT** *Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts*

**Or** *Orientalia*
List of abbreviations

**OrAnt**  Orients Antiquus
**OSP 1**  Westenholz, A. (1975), *Old Sumerian and Old Akkadian Texts in Philadelphia Chiefly from Nippur*, Malibu: BiMes 1
**PBS**  Publications of the Babylonian Section, University of Pennsylvania.
**P**  Persepolis [used for seals]
**PF**  Persepolis fortification text
**RA**  *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie Orientale*
**RA 8**  Delaporte, L., ‘Tablettes de Dréhem’, RA 8 (1911), 183–98
**RCU**  Royal Cemetery of Ur
**RE**  Pauly’s *Real-Encyclopädie der klassischen Altertumswissenschaften*
**RGTC**  Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes
**RIA**  *Reallexikon der Assyriologie*
**RN**  *Revue Numismatique*
**RTC**  Thureau-Dangin, F. (1903), *Recueil de tablettes chaldéennes*, Paris: E. Leroux
**SAAB**  *State Archives of Assyria Bulletin*
**SAOC**  Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization
**SEG**  *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*
**SEL**  *Studi Epigrafici e Linguistici sul Vicino Oriente*
**SH**  Tell Shemshara text
**STH**  Hussey, M.I. [1912], *Sumerian Tablets of the Harvard Semitic Museum*, Cambridge: HSS 3
**StIr**  *Studia Iranica*
**Susa**  Anonymous, (no date), *Susa, site et musée*, Teheran: Ministry of Culture and Arts
**TAVO**  Tübinger Atlas des Vorderen Orients
**TAD**  Langdon, S.H. [1911], *Tables from the Archives of Drehem*, Paris: Geuthner
**TEN**  Sigrist, M. [1983], *Textes économiques néo-sumériens de l’Université de Syracuse*, Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations
**TMO**  *Travaux de la Maison de l’Orient* (Lyons)
**TrD**  Genouillac, H. de, [1911], *La trouvaille de Dréhem*, Paris: Geuthner
**TRU**  Legrain, L. [1912], *Le temps des rois d’Ur, recherches sur la société*
xxviii  LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

antique, d’après des textes nouveaux, Paris: Bibliothèque de l’École des
Hautes Études 199

TS  Tablette [de] Suse

TuM 5  Pohl, A. (1935), Vorsargonische und sargonische Wirtschaftstexte,
Leipzig: Texte und Materialien der Frau Professor Hilprecht Collection
5

UET  Ur Excavation Texts

VAB  Vorderasiatische Bibliothek

VDI  Vestnik Drevnej Istori

VR  Ville Royale [of Susa]

XP  Xerxes, Persepolis inscriptions

XS  Xerxes, Susa inscriptions

YOS 4  Keiser, C.E. (1919), Selected Temple Documents of the Ur Dynasty,
New Haven: Yale Oriental Series 4

ZA  Zeitschrift für Assyriologie

Note: Articles in NABU are cited by their article, not their page number, e.g. NABU
NOTE ON TRANSLITERATION AND DATING SYSTEMS

As this book is aimed primarily at archaeologists and students of archaeology, rather than Assyriologists, I thought it simplest to forego the use of diacritical marks in the transliteration of Sumerian, Akkadian, Elamite, Aramaic, Syriac, Persian and Arabic words (principally personal names and placenames). I have not sought to impose a single, uniform system of transliteration but have used those forms most current in the archaeological and Assyriological literature today. Where I have cited Elamite and Akkadian terms, these are italicized. Sumerian words and phrases are given in bold.

As for the stipulation of dates, radiocarbon dates when cited are always given in their calibrated form. Absolute dates when cited for individual Mesopotamian rulers conform to the so-called ‘Middle chronology’ and follow Brinkman 1977.