

CHAPTER I

ELAM

1. *The Emergence of the Elamite City-States*

The earliest part of present-day Iran to reach the level of urban and class civilization was the region which later was called Khūzistān and which in ancient history is usually designated by its Biblical name of Elam (Hebr. 'Ēlām). It lies outside what geographically is the Iranian Plateau properly speaking, and is a plain surrounded from three sides by mountains and crossed by rivers flowing from the highlands into the Persian Gulf – the Karkhah (or Saimarreh, the Assyrian Uqnû, the Greek Choaspēs) and the Kārūn (the Assyrian Ulāi, the Eulaeus of the Greeks),¹ as well as by the river Āb-i Diz (Coprātēs) running parallel to the Karkhah but halfway down the plain flowing into the Kārūn. Through the ages the courses of the Karkhah, the Kārūn and its affluents, and the Āb-i Diz, as they ran across the lowlands of Elam, changed many times, and many canals, later silted up, have at various times been led from them into the parched country around, or between the rivers as their connection. The part of the alluvial plain nearer to the sea was in ancient times covered by shallow freshwater lakes and salt or brackish lagoons, overgrown with reeds and gradually turning into marshland, and the coastline lay farther north than now. The winter on the plain of Elam is mild, the temperature but seldom falling below zero Centigrade, and the summer very hot indeed, the heat sometimes reaching 60° C. The precipitation is scarce, but the valley can be irrigated by the water of the rivers.

Thus, the climate and the general ecological conditions of Elam were very similar to those of neighbouring Sumer in the lower valley of the Euphrates (now in Iraq); the historical development of both countries was also typologically similar and more or less simultaneous. But the two countries were separated by a stretch of marshes and desert difficult to pass, and so the usual road connecting Elam with Sumer led either along the foot-hills towards the north-west, or in the same direction upwards into the mountains along the valley of the Karkhah and then

¹ The ancient Eulaeus (Ulāi) was apparently the modern Ša'ur plus the lower part of the Karun. [Differently John Hansman, "Charax and the Karkheh", *IA* VII (1967), 21–58.]

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over a mountain-pass towards present-day al-Badra at the same foothills; thence to the valley of the Tigris (more often than not via the Diyala valley near modern Baghdad), and from there to the Sumerian settlements along the lower Euphrates.

No important culture could develop in Elam until the first men who had descended to the plain from the highlands established communities in sufficient numbers and with techniques adequate to turn the waters of the rivers to their use and to develop an agricultural civilization based upon river irrigation. The first settlers are attested in a side valley (the site of Ali Kosh, early 7th millennium B.C.). They were goat-herds acquainted with some primitive agricultural processes; they were apparently related to the first herdsmen-agriculturists of the more northern regions of the Zagros mountains, but a change of burial customs in the 6th millennium B.C. may testify to the coming of a new population. The men of this later period (as also those at the sites of Jowi and of Ja^cfarābād) have in their material culture and burial customs much in common with the nearly contemporary inhabitants of Sumer; they already practised artificial irrigation and it is not improbable that these might have been the tribes who later sent out a part of their population to colonize the lower Euphrates valley – the colonists later becoming Sumerians. When, however, in the second half of the 4th millennium a considerable chalcolithic community of a semi-urban type emerged on the site of Susa by a river-bed or an artificial canal between the Karkhah and the Āb-i Diz (now the Sha^cūr), it was probably already inhabited by yet another ethnic group – probably the same people as dwelled on that site later, in historical times, from the 3rd to the 1st millennium B.C. – the Elamites proper, whose language was entirely unrelated to that of the Sumerians.

The ethnic composition of the population of the whole of Iran during the early millennia of history can only be a matter of conjecture; most probably the tribes of the Iranian highlands (in the broadest meaning of that term) belonged to the North-East Caucasian linguistic family in the north-west of the plateau, and to the Proto-Dravidian in the south-east; there might well have also been peoples or tribes speaking archaic languages unconnected with any extant linguistic family, as was the case with Sumerian in the Near East in early antiquity, or with the typologically somewhat similar although unrelated Burušaski language still spoken in the mountains of the borderland between Pakistan and Afghanistan; other tribes may have spoken languages akin to Kassite

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(an idiom spoken at least since the 2nd millennium B.C. in present-day Luristān, not used for writing and very deficiently attested), or to Elamite. As mentioned above, this latter language was spoken in Elam (and probably in other parts of central and southern Iran) at least from the 3rd or even 4th millennium B.C. until the 1st millennium B.C., but possibly also later, throughout the 1st millennium A.D.¹ There are some grounds for believing that the Elamites, at least in the lowlands, were dark-skinned,² and their language seems to have been related to Proto-Dravidian, the ancestor of the Dravidian languages now spoken in southern India and in some parts of Baluchistān.³

We may be sure that no tribes of the Iranian Plateau in the very ancient period under discussion spoke Indo-European languages. Proto-Indo-European was spoken in the 4th and early 3rd millennium only by certain late neolithic, half-agricultural, half cattle-breeding tribes in the south-eastern part of Europe. The Indo-Iranian (so-called Aryan) languages, which had branched off from the earlier Proto-Indo-European, prevailed in northern India and on the Iranian Plateau only at a much later date.

Up to the time when the first wave of Indo-European languages reached Iran, the inhabitants of that country spoke languages of which we scarcely know anything. One of these, perhaps the most widespread, was Elamite. It had probably arrived at some earlier period from the east, superseding perhaps Sumerian on the plain of the Karkhah and the Kārūn; but we need not view the migration in question as ousting or destroying the earlier settlers; a merger is more likely to have taken place.

¹ On this, see below, p. 24.

² Some of the Elamite (?) warriors are represented as dark-skinned on the Achaemenian glazed tile reliefs of the 5th century B.C., and a rather dark-skinned anthropological type can be encountered in southern Khūzistān to the present day. See Hinz, *Das Reich Elam*, pp. 18ff.

³ The degree of possible affinity is not easy to define. The pronominal systems of Elamite and Proto-Dravidian are nearly identical; some of the most ancient features of the Dravidian verbal system and declensional system also connect Dravidian with Elamite. Unfortunately, we know very few Elamite words referring to the basic notions of human life and its surroundings, so that comparison with the Proto-Dravidian vocabulary is not very revealing; some of the similarities may be fortuitous. In any case, Elamite is not a Dravidian language. If the modern Dravidian languages (Tamil, Telugu, Malayalam, Gond, Brahui, etc.) were Romance languages, and Proto-Dravidian were Latin, then Elamite would occupy in relation to them the position of some very ancient language belonging to another branch of Indo-European, e.g. Slavic. The relationship between Slavic and Latin (let alone French, Italian etc.), though close enough, is not immediately apparent without penetrating philological analysis. This comparison is, however, not quite adequate, because a longer period of time must have separated Elamite and Proto-Dravidian from their supposed common ancestor than the period separating Latin and Slavic from Proto-Indo-European.

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The Elamite culture was originally one of the “painted ware” cultures, typical of the early chalcolithic periods in all the more developed parts of the ancient world. The “painted ware” is a characteristic product of the aesthetic creative need of early chalcolithic man, already trying to generalize his emotional impressions (which at that stage are blended with magical and mythical concepts) of the laws governing the external world in a systematic rhythmical pattern derived from human, animal, or vegetable life. But this creative work was part of everybody’s productive activity, not yet a monopoly of professional artists. This is why the main objects of art were painted pottery and, probably, woven fabrics, i.e. objects of everyday use, or at least objects with which the dead were supplied for *their* everyday use in the Land of Beyond.

Susa is famous in archaeology for some of the best samples of “painted ware” in a local variant, with geometrically stylized designs of water birds, hunting dogs, ears of corn and palm leaves – a hand-made pottery found in the burials of the so-called “Susa A” period (c. 3,500 B.C.). But it is only later, in the “Susa C” period (after 3,000 B.C.), roughly corresponding to the Sumerian Late Proto-Literate period, that certain finds seem to indicate the attainment of a level of “urban revolution” in Elam. This means that more could be produced by labour than was strictly necessary for the sustenance of the labourer; not only could the constant danger of starvation be kept from the door of the hut, but society could allow itself a division of labour into agriculturists and different kinds of handicraftsmen, and the luxury of freeing some of its members from drudgery in order to concentrate on priestly, military, judicial and administrative tasks. By the “Susa D” period (first half and middle of the 3rd millennium B.C.) a class civilization had emerged. This is shown indirectly by the appearance of numerous clay tablets inscribed in a local hieroglyphic script and apparently representing temple archives, administrative and economic; the finds also include cylinder seals,¹ probably serving as symbols or as magical protection of movable property. They are engraved with representations of whole rows of weavers or potters, as well as of mythological figures, half animal and half men. Unfortunately Susa was not always excavated scientifically, and therefore yields much less information than could otherwise have been expected. Moreover the earliest texts in Elamite hieroglyphics have not been deciphered.

¹ Button seals, which probably had a similar function, appear half a millennium earlier.

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Therefore the only data we have on the history and language of the first Elamite states of the 3rd millennium B.C. must be gleaned from the documents and inscriptions of neighbouring Sumer and Akkad, written in cuneiform, and from the proper names of the Elamite rulers whom they mention.

Apparently there existed several rather primitive city-states, each centred around its own water-supply and therefore occupying either the irrigation-area of one main canal dug by its citizens or, higher up in the hills, one river valley, or a given part of it. From the earliest time the most important community seems to have been Susa — *Sušen* (?), *Šušen*, or *Šusun* in the local language. As already mentioned, Susa was situated in the plain (but relatively near to the hills) between the Karkhah and the Āb-i Diz, and was supplied with water from a canal connecting the two rivers. Most of the city-states of Elam are so far known by name only; a number of hypotheses as to their localization have been put forward, some of them rather vague, others connecting the ancient city-names with actual archaeological sites; but none have as yet been proved. It is possible that Awan, War(a)hše,¹ and Huhunuri lay to the north and north-west of Susa, nearer to Mesopotamia (Awan, in particular, seems to have been closely connected with Dēr, present-day al-Badra on the road from Khūzistān to Baghdad), while Simaški lay probably to the north-east; according to W. Hinz, Huhunuri is modern Mālamīr (Iseh) to the east of Susa.

It is possible that Elam in the narrow sense (Elamite *Haltamti*, *Hatamti*, Sumerian *Adamdun*, Akkadian *Elamtu[m]*, also spelled ideographically NIM^{KI} or NIM.MA, “the high country”) was originally a city-state separate from Susa, situated perhaps higher up in the hills, although later the term was used for the country as a whole, including more especially the lowlands.

A very important centre was *Anshan* in the eastern mountains.² From the earliest times there almost certainly was an intimate connection between the Elamite lowlands, eminently suitable for irrigational agriculture, and the Elamite hill-lands suited for sheep- and cattle-breeding and in earlier times fairly rich in woods. The hill-lands could also serve as a refuge area for the inhabitants of the lowlands during

¹ Written, at different periods, *Barahše*, *Parahši*, *Marhāši*, etc.

² Written *An-za-an^{KI}* or *An-ša-an^{KI}*, and probably pronounced *Anfan*. But in modern works the spelling *Anshan* has become usual. [The site of Anshan was discovered after Dr Diakonoff wrote the present chapter, by John Hansman whose account of that city-state is printed below, as chapter 2.]

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times of disastrous inundation or excessive heat and drought. In no period was there in Elam such an opposition to hill-people as there was in the neighbouring land of Sumer, although at present it is very difficult to say how far to the north-west, north and east the area of Elamite civilization extended at different stages of its development.

On the other hand some administrative temple (?) records written in Elamite hieroglyphics from the beginning of the 3rd millennium B.C. have been found at Tepe Sialk near Kāshān in the centre of Iran and at other points in the highlands; similar documents, written at Tepe Yahya where they were found, probably date from the same period; and Elamite cuneiform inscriptions of the 13th century B.C. are available from the region of Bandar Bushire on the Persian Gulf. The discovery of the urban settlement of Tepe Yahya, dating from the 4th and 3rd millennia B.C., is due to C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky. The site is situated 156 miles south of Kirmān and 80 miles east of the Kirmān–Bandar ʿAbbās road, half-way between Elam and the cities of the Indus civilization. It is contemporary with Susa if not older, and may well have been the legendary Aratta of the Sumerian epics, separated from Elam by “seven mountain ranges”.¹ According to these epics Aratta was a strong and influential city-state enjoying a civilization similar to the Sumerian and connected with it by trade relations, but distinct from the Proto-Indus civilization which apparently was known in Sumer under the name of *Melubha* (the reading is conventional; the cuneiform signs in question are more likely to be read *Melaha*). But we are at the mercy of guesswork; the Elamite city-states (or colonies, or whatever they may have been) which lay to the north and east of Elam proper are not mentioned, or at least cannot be identified, in the Sumerian, Akkadian, and Elamite official inscriptions. Therefore, in attempting to trace the history of Elam through the scanty sources made available by chance finds, we shall have to speak mostly of Susa and its immediate neighbours.

Both warlike and commercial contacts between Sumer and Elam are attested in written sources from the first half of the 3rd millennium B.C. According to the legendary history of Sumer as recorded in the so-called “Sumerian King List”, a composition dating from the 21st century B.C. but including some older traditions, the first invasion of Elam by

¹ [A different location of Aratta has meanwhile been suggested by John Hansman, “Elamites, Achaemenians and Anshan”, *Iran* x (1972), 118, n.92.]

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Sumerians is ascribed to the reign of En-Menbaragesi, or the *en* Mebaragesi.¹ This was a historical personage, also known from a short inscription of his own, a king of the First Dynasty of Kiš in the northern part of Sumer flourishing in the 27th century B.C.

Subsequently wars between the Sumerian and the Elamite city-states, waged for the sake of plunder, became frequent. A dynasty from the Elamite city of Awan is recognized as a legitimate Sumerian dynasty by the “King List” which dates it to the period corresponding apparently to the 25th century B.C. according to present reckoning; at some time soon after 2500 B.C. Eanatum, a ruler of Lagaš in south-eastern Sumer, made a raid into Elam; no doubt, many other raids on both sides remain unknown to us. Temple records from Lagaš in the 24th century speak of a raid into Sumerian territory by a small detachment of Elamites, and later of temple merchants from Lagaš going to Elam.

About 1900 B.C. or so, the Elamites imitated the Sumerians by composing their own “King List”, based on some of their local traditions; a fragment listing the kings of a Dynasty of Awan (probably the Second of that city) and those of the Dynasty of Simaški has survived. Both dynasties include twelve names each, but not all the names of the kings of Awan can be read with certainty. The kings of the “List” were apparently rulers of all Elam, the (Second?) Dynasty of Awan reigning from the 24th (?) to the 22nd (?) century B.C. The last king of that dynasty is PUZŪR-Inšušinak (or, according to W. Hinz, Kutik-Inšušinak), also known from his own inscriptions. Of course the correctness of the Elamite historical tradition as written down several centuries after the events is open to doubt.

From contemporary Akkadian and Sumerian records it appears that simultaneously with kings originating from Awan and Simaški (but extending their hegemony over all Elam and probably in actual fact reigning in Susa) there also existed “kings” (Akkad. *šarrum*), “governors” (Akkad. *šakkanakkum*), “priest-princes” (Akkad. *išši'akkum*) and “judges” of the individual city-states, e.g. of Huhunuri, of Elam (= Adamdun), of Zahara etc.; there were also some city-states that had both a “king” and a “governor” (Warahše), or a “king” and a “priest-prince” at the same time (Elam) – beside the “king” of Awan, who exercised some sort of authority over the whole country. The royal

¹ An *en* was a priest-prince in early Sumerian city-states; in the later tradition the title *en* often formed part of personal names.

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title apparently did not descend from father to son,¹ and the “kings” were perhaps elected from among the lesser dignitaries; these probably belonged as a rule to the nearest kin of former kings.

After the creation in Mesopotamia of the first centralized despotic monarchy by the Dynasty of Akkad, Elam became the target of a number of Akkadian campaigns aimed at subjecting the country. Already Sargon of Akkad (c. 2300 B.C.) captured five Elamite princes, among them Luh-Hiššan, son of Hišep-rašer; later he fought with the next all-Elamite king Hišep-rašer II (Hišep-ratep of the Elamite “King List”). It seems that Sargon took possession – at least temporarily – of Elam (= Adamdun) and Warahše, Susa and Awan. A war against Awan, Warahše, Elam and Zahara was waged also by Sargon’s son Rimuš. Under the next Akkadian king, Man-ištušu, Elam remained under Akkadian hegemony, and Ešpum, the priest-prince of Elam (= Adamdun) and apparently also of Susa, consecrated a statue of the Akkadian king to the Elamite goddess Narunte in the latter city. One of the next Elamite kings – or a coalition of Elamite princes – concluded a treaty with King Narām-Su’en of Akkad, the earliest written document of diplomatic contents in world history. It is written in Old Elamite in the Eastern Semitic (Akkadian) cuneiform script. Unfortunately, it has come down to us in a poor state of preservation; besides, our state of knowledge of Elamite is still such that a coherent translation of the document is not possible. However, one clause is clear, namely the statement of the Elamite party: “The enemy of Narām-Su’en will be mine enemy, the friend of Narām-Su’en will be my friend!” A list of deities invoked to punish him who would break the treaty gives an insight into the Elamite pantheon of the 3rd millennium B.C.

This was a period of strong cultural influence of Mesopotamia on Elam. It can be observed in art – the “Akkadian Realistic” school prevailing in Elam from then on for many centuries – and in religion. It was probably from this time that Mesopotamian deities began to be included in the Elamite pantheon. We encounter in Elam, at different periods of its history, mostly indigenous Elamite gods: Humpan the Great God² and his son Hutran, the mother-goddesses Pinenkir,

¹ Thus Luh-hiššan of Awan was son of one Hišep-rašer I and not of his own predecessor Kukku-sime-temti, and PUZŪR-Inšušinak was son of one Šimpi-išhuk, and not of the preceding king Hita. Cf. the later system of promotion to kingship in 2nd millennium Elam.

² It was perhaps Humpan who was associated with, and perhaps even worshipped under the form of, the Great human-headed Serpent. However, it is possible that also Inšušinak and other deities assumed for Elamite believers the same aspect, thus perhaps being remote precursors of the King-Serpent Aži Dahāka of ancient Iranian lore.

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Kiririša and Parti and the warlike Narunte, the Sun-god Nanhunte (Nahhunte), Inšušinak the city-god of Susa¹ and others, but also some Mesopotamian deities: the two female participants in the judgement over the newly dead, Išme-karāb and Lā-gamāl (Elamite: Išnikarap and Lakamar),² Ištar, the goddess of love and strife, Nanna the Sumerian Moon-god, and several others.

The ancient Elamite hieroglyphic writing had apparently been introduced as a developed system in the early 3rd millennium B.C., i.e. at a time when in Sumer the local hieroglyphic system was already being replaced by its offspring, the cuneiform writing; this means probably that the Elamite hieroglyphic system was not the direct descendant of its Sumerian counterpart. But it is most probable that the inventors of the Elamite script were influenced by the idea of using a semiotic system consisting of ideographic or syllabo-logographic signs – an idea developed probably somewhat earlier in Sumer.

In the 23rd and 22nd centuries B.C. the local Elamite hieroglyphic writing seems already to have become too primitive for the demands of a now more developed and sophisticated class civilization. There were three ways of reforming the writing in accordance with the new demands: one could modify the native hieroglyphics, e.g. by developing a system in which more stress was laid on the syllabic values of the signs: the number of signs could thus be limited, and their forms simplified; one could apply the ready-made Sumerian or Akkadian cuneiform system to the Elamite language; or one could simply import Sumerian and Akkadian cuneiform along with the corresponding literary languages.

Actually all three ways were tried. Some of PUZŪR-Inšušinak's inscriptions – if we are to accept Hinz's decipherment – are written in a simplified syllabic variant of Elamite hieroglyphics; the treaty with Narām-Su'en is written in the Elamite language but in the Akkadian script; however, it was the third way which proved to be the most viable. Already PUZŪR-Inšušinak ordered to make inscriptions in

¹ The structure of this name suggests that it might have originally been Sumerian, and meant "lord of Šušen (Susa)"; perhaps the worship of this Susan god goes back to the times before the Elamite-speaking tribes settled on the plain of the Karkah and the Kārūn. Inšušinak was also the supreme judge of the dead, the goddesses Išnikarap and Lakamar acting as counsels for defence and prosecution respectively. The Akkadian *Enunakī* were, apparently, a kind of jury over which Inšušinak presided.

² In Akkadian, the names mean "She has heard the supplication", and "No mercy". Curiously enough, there are few signs of a worship of these goddesses in Mesopotamia, and the image of the Nether World seems there to have been quite different from the Elamite.

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Akkadian, and for several centuries very few texts were written in Elamite in Susa – or, at least, very few have come down to us. The reason was probably that many more well qualified Akkadian scribes were available than Elamite ones, the more so as Susa became in time very much Akkadianized, and Semitic personal names prevailed there for centuries over Elamite ones; even prayers to Elamite gods were written in Akkadian, although the country as a whole retained its Elamite linguistic and cultural character.

2. *The Old Elamite Kingdom*

However, the political hegemony established in Elam by the Akkadian kings between 2300 and 2200 B.C. did not last long. After 2200 B.C. there began an invasion of the Qutium tribes from north-western Iran into Mesopotamia, and a king of Elam seized the opportunity to create his own empire. Whether this was PUZŪR-Inšušinak I (or, according to Hinz, Kutik-Inšušinak) whom we have already mentioned, or whether it was already one of his predecessors of the Dynasty of Awan, is unknown. In his Akkadian inscription PUZŪR-Inšušinak imitates Narām-Su'en's title of "King of the Four Quarters of the Earth", and states that he conquered about sixty different places or regions, among them Huhunuri and Qutium, and that the king of Simaški had embraced his knees.

But it was precisely the kings of Simaški who after some time seem to have gained hegemony over the country.¹ They must have risen to power soon after (?) the time when Gudea, the priest-prince of Lagaš in Sumer (c. 2130 B.C.), boasted that Elamite workers were being called up to help in the construction of the chief temple of that city; at least some of the Simaškite kings of Elam were contemporaries of the kings of the Third Dynasty of Ur in Southern Mesopotamia, or the "Kingdom of Sumer and Akkad" as it was called officially (c. 2111-2003 B.C.). The kingdom of Ur was a strongly unified despotic monarchy which had reduced a considerable percentage of the Mesopotamian population to virtual slavery, and which in Elam pursued a high-handed policy of intervention. Already the second and mightiest king of Ur, Šulgi (2093-2046 B.C.), could undertake the construction of some temples in

¹ The Elamite "King List" must be partly erroneous, because king Kirnamme, appearing in the list as the first king of the dynasty of Simaški, is mentioned in a Sumerian administrative document only a few years before Enpi-luhhan who is the fifth on the list; there are also other discrepancies between the list and the data of the documents.