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978-1-107-09469-7 - The Archaeology of Elam: Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State:  
Second Edition

D.T. Potts

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## THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF ELAM

*Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State*

Elam was an important state in southwestern Iran from the third millennium BC to the appearance of the Persian Empire and beyond. Less well-known than its neighbours in Mesopotamia, Anatolia, the Levant or Egypt, it was nonetheless a region of extraordinary cultural vitality. This book examines the formation and transformation of Elam's many identities through both archaeological and written evidence; it 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. This new edition includes material from more than 800 additional sources, reflecting the enormous amount of fieldwork and scholarship on Iran since 1999. Every chapter contains new insights and material that have been seamlessly integrated into the text in order to give the reader an up-to-date understanding of ancient Elam.

D.T. Potts is Professor of Ancient Near Eastern Archaeology and History at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University. He is the editor of *The Oxford Handbook of Ancient Iran* (2013) and the author of *Nomadism in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era* (2014), as well as numerous other books and articles in scholarly journals.

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*For Hildy, Rowena, Morgan and Hallam, with much love*

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## P R E F A C E T O T H E S E C O N D E D I T I O N

More than fifteen years have passed since the original publication of *The Archaeology of Elam* in 1999. Much of relevance to Elamite studies has occurred in the intervening years. In addition to the hundreds of new publications that have appeared (for compilations of bibliography see Haerinck and Stevens 2005; De Schacht and Haerinck 2013; Jahangirfar 2015; Mofidi-Nasrabadi 2015), many older works have been consulted here that were not incorporated into the original edition, amounting to an augmentation of the references list by more than 800 titles. Moreover, several important conferences on Elam and Iranian archaeology have taken place. But perhaps most importantly, fieldwork in Iran has been conducted by both Iranian teams and joint expeditions involving Iranian and American, Australian, British, French, German, Italian, Japanese, Polish and other scholars (see e.g. Azarnoush and Helwing 2005). These have investigated a wide range of topics touching on nearly all aspects of Elam's history and archaeology.

As a result of these developments, Asya Graf, Archaeology and Renaissance Studies editor at Cambridge University Press, and I decided, in the autumn of 2013, that a second, revised edition of *The Archaeology of Elam* was warranted. My thanks go to Cambridge University Press, and Asya Graf in particular, for facilitating this revision. While I have no wish to alter the dedication of this book to my family, I would like to acknowledge the large number of colleagues, particularly in Iran, who have shared their knowledge of Elam with me over the years, and furthered the study of this subject. Iranian history and archaeology are nothing if not diverse. I would not wish to suggest that Elam is more worthy of study than many other aspects of Iranian antiquity. Yet having embarked in earnest on the trail of the ancient Elamites many years ago, I am happy to travel down that path yet again, this time with considerably more data at hand than was previously the case.

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## P R E F A C E   A N D   A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

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 Arsacid 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 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

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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 twentieth-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 re-created 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* spurred Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch to found the journal *Annales d’Histoire Economique et Sociale* twenty-nine years later (Lyon 1987: 200). While not presuming to class the present work amongst the many influential studies in *Annaliste* history which have emerged since *Annales* began appearing, 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 or ethnographic. 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.

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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 important 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 laypersons, 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 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 more than 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

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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; maps showing the sites mentioned in the text; 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 taught Elam to Australian undergraduates, and revised at the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World, New York University. Initially, my bibliographical resources were those of Fisher Library, undoubtedly the best library for a study of this sort in Australia. By the time this revision was made, the world had changed and websites like the Internet Archive ([archive.org](http://archive.org)), Academia.edu, Google Scholar and Google Books, not to mention JSTOR and online journals, had made literature available which was simply not accessible to me in the 1990s. For their gracious help in sending me offprints and pdfs of useful literature, I would like to acknowledge with thanks the late A.B. Bosworth (Perth), P. Briant (Toulouse), J.A. Brinkman (Chicago), A. Caubet (Paris), J. Córdoba (Madrid), R.K. Englund (Los Angeles), E. Haerinck (Ghent), H. Hunger (Vienna), M. Jursa (Vienna), P. Kalensky (Paris), A. Kuhrt (London), P. Magee (Bryn Mawr), P. Michalowski (Ann Arbor), B. Mofidi-Nasrabadi (Mainz), the late P.R.S. Moorey (Oxford), H.J. Nissen (Berlin), D. Prechel (Mainz), the late H. Sancisi-Weerdenburg (Groningen), R. Schmitt (Plön), M.W. Stolper (Chicago), J. Teixidor (Paris) and the late J.G. Westenholz (Jerusalem).

The maps were prepared by Dr. Thomas Urban (Dr. Urban & Partner, Archäologie und Denkmaldokumentation, Birkenwerder, Germany). Dr. Alex Stephens (Sydney Grammar School) prepared English translations of selected 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 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 for persevering with it when it appeared to be something other than what they originally expected from me. I am sincerely grateful to the readers of an earlier draft, Professor M.W. Stolper (Chicago), Professor E. Carter (Los Angeles), Professor N. Yoffee (Ann Arbor) and Dr. K. Abdi (Tehran), for their many detailed comments and suggestions for improving the text. I have appreciated all of their remarks and have made many changes accordingly. Further, I wish to express my sincere thanks to my original editor, Jessica Kuper, for her patience and goodwill, and Asya Graf, for encouraging me to undertake this revised edition. My family knows by the dedication of this book that I have appreciated their support more than words can say.



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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. The late 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, 1996 and 2001 I was able to return to Iran with my wife, children Rowena and Morgan, 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 Tehran made both trips enormously successful and reminded me why I have spent much of my adult life thinking about Iran's past. Subsequently, I was privileged to survey and excavate in the Mamasani region of Fars Province in collaboration with the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research and with funding from the Australian Research Council. Many Iranian and Australian colleagues and students took part in our expeditions between 2002 and 2010, but I would particularly like to thank Kourosch Alamdari, Karim Alizadeh, Sheler Amelirad, Alireza Askari Chaverdi, Amanda Dusting, Tom Ellicott, Jalil Golshan, Ardeshir Javanmardzadeh, Matthew Jones, Alireza Khosrowzadeh, Arash Lashkari, Bernadette McCall, Kat McRae, Hasan Fazeli Nashli, Cameron Petrie, my wife Hildreth Potts, Kourosch Roustaei, Alireza Sardari, Lloyd Weeks, Edna Wong, Afshin Yazdani and Mohsen Zeidi for making these seasons both memorable and successful. The late Massoud Azarnoush facilitated our work in many ways. My sons Morgan and Hallam were able to participate in the 2003 season as well, and it is safe to say that all who participated in this work had an unforgettable experience.

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In addition to my own photographs, I have been fortunate to be able to use images from a number of other sources. These include photographs taken by Erik Smekens for the Belgian Archaeological Mission in Iran, kindly supplied by Dr. Bruno Overlaet (Brussels); the late Baroness Marie-Thérèse Ullens de Schooten, courtesy of Special Collections, Fine Arts Library, Harvard University, through the kind assistance of Joanne Bloom Toplyn, Photographic Resources Librarian; and the late Professor Machteld Mellink, Bryn Mawr College, made available through the Artstor Digital Library. Several images of objects in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, available for academic use through Artstor, have also been used, as have more than a dozen images of Seleucid, Roman, Elymaean, Arsacid and Sasanian coins in the Yale University Art Gallery. A number of friends have allowed me to reproduce their own photographs or drawings, and for this assistance I would like to warmly thank Prof. Javier Álvarez-Mon (Sydney), Dr. Gian Pietro Basello (Naples), Prof. Mark Garrison (San Antonio), Dr. Wouter Henkelman (Paris/Berlin), Dr. Trudy Kawami (New York), Dr. Brian Krittr (Burtonsville) and Dr. Behzad Mofidi-Nasrabadi (Mainz).

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## ABBREVIATIONS

A	Siglum of texts in the Louvre Museum
A <sup>1-3S</sup>	Artaxerxes I–III, Susa inscriptions
AAASH	<i>Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae</i>
AAM	Archives administratives de Mari
ABL	Harper, R.F. (1892–1914), <i>Assyrian and Babylonian letters belonging to the Kouyunjik Collection of the British Museum</i> , London and Chicago: University of Chicago.
AcIr	Acta Iranica
AfO	<i>Archiv für Orientforschung</i>
AFP	Briant, P. and Henkelman, W., eds. (2009), <i>L'archive des fortifications de Persépolis: État des questions et perspectives de recherches</i> , Paris: Persika 12.
AH	<i>Achaemenid History</i>
AIN	Petrie, C.A., ed. (2014), <i>Ancient Iran and its neighbours: Local developments and long-range interactions in the fourth millennium BC</i> , Oxford and Oakville: British Institute of Persian Studies.
AIO	De Meyer, L. and Haerinck, E., eds. (1989), <i>Archaeologia Iranica et Orientalia: Miscellanea in honorem Louis Vanden Berghe</i> , Leuven: Peeters.
AION	<i>Annali dell'Istituto Universitario Orientale di Napoli</i>
AIT	Archäologie in Iran und Turan
AJA	<i>American Journal of Archaeology</i>
AJPA	<i>American Journal of Physical Anthropology</i>
AMI/AMIT	<i>Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran (und Turan)</i>
Amorites	Buccellati, G. (1966), <i>The Amorites of the Ur III period</i> , Naples: Ricerche 1.
AO	<i>Der Alte Orient</i>
AOAT	Alter Orient und Altes Testament
AoF	<i>Altorientalische Forschungen</i>

AOS	American Oriental Series
ARM	Archives royales de Mari
<i>ArOr</i>	<i>Archiv Orientalní</i>
AS	Assyriological Studies
BA	<i>Beiträge zur Assyriologie und semitischen Sprachwissenschaft</i>
<i>Bab.</i> 8	Genouillac, H. de (1924), ‘Choix de textes économiques de la collection Pupil’, <i>Babyloniaca</i> 8 (1924), 37ff.
BAH	Institut Français d’Archéologie de Beyrouth, Bibliothèque Archéologique et Historique
<i>BAI</i>	<i>Bulletin of the Asia Institute</i>
<i>BaM</i>	<i>Baghdader Mitteilungen</i>
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
<i>BiOr</i>	<i>Bibliotheca Orientalis</i>
BM	British Museum
BSOAS	<i>Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies</i>
C	Cyrus
CAH	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i>
CANE	Sasson, J.M., ed. (1995), <i>Civilizations of the ancient Near East</i> , vols. I–IV, New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons.
CC	Sigrist, M. and Gomi, T. (1991), <i>The comprehensive catalogue of published Ur III tablets</i> , Bethesda: CDL Press.
<i>CDAFI</i>	<i>Cahiers de la Délégation archéologique Française en Iran</i>
CDLB	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Bulletin</i>
CDLJ	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Journal</i>
CDLN	<i>Cuneiform Digital Library Notes</i>
CDR	Gasche, H., Tanret, M., Janssen, C. and Degraeve, A., eds. (1994), <i>Cinquante-deux réflexions sur le Proche-Orient ancien offertes en hommages à Léon de Meyer</i> , Ghent: Peeters.
CHI	<i>Cambridge History of Iran</i>
CII	Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum
CII II/1	Rougemont, G. (2012), <i>Inscriptions grecques d’Iran et d’Asie centrale</i> , London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum II/1.
CNIP	Carsten Niebuhr Institute Publications
CNRS	Centre Nationale de la Recherche Scientifique
CO	Gasche, H. and Hrouda, B., eds. (1996), <i>Collectanea Orientalia: Histoire, arts de l’espace et industrie de la terra, études offertes en hommage à Agnès Spycket</i> , Neuchâtel/Paris: Civilisations du Proche-Orient Serie 1, Archéologie et environnement 3.
CRAIBL	<i>Comptes-rendus de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres</i>