

Elam and Persia

Edited by Javier Álvarez-Mon and Mark B. Garrison. Pp. xvii + 494, figs. 200. Eisenbrauns, Winona Lake, Ind. 2011. \$79.50. ISBN 978-1-57506-166-5 (cloth).

Long instrumental in shaping a modern perception of a substantial Median legacy to the phenomenon of the Persian empire, classical testimony about the half-Median royal descent of Cyrus the Great and a Median political supremacy in Asia at the time of the emergence of Persia as a “world” power (e.g., Hdt. 1.95–130) remains difficult to validate. In the meantime, documentation from archaeological explorations in Mesopotamia and Iran—such as the Babylonian Cylinder of Cyrus, positing the dynastic affiliation of the founder of the Persian empire with the venerable Elamite city of Anshan, and thousands of administrative tablets in Elamite from Persepolis—would appear to point primarily to the importance of the still inadequately understood (Neo-)Elamite milieu of western Iran with reference to both “Persian ethnogenesis” (for the concept, see P. de Miroschedji, “La fin du royaume d’Anšan et de Suse et la naissance de l’Empire perse,” *ZA* 75 [1985] 295) and the evolution of early Persian state ideology and practices.

Elam and Persia, a collective volume dedicated to Pierre Amiet, constitutes an important contribution to the ongoing scholarly efforts toward defining the culture of Neo-Elamite Elam and its interactions with Persian culture during the crucial period from the time of the Assyrian sack of Susa (ca. 647 B.C.E.), when the Persians had presumably already become settled in the highland region of Fars in western Iran, until the reign of Darius I (522/521–486 B.C.E.), when the entity of Elam had become fully absorbed into the Persian empire. The scholarly exchange represented began in part nine years ago. Five of the papers (Carter, Garrison, Potts, Root, Waters) are on subjects addressed initially in sessions dedicated to Iranian archaeology and culture at the Annual Meeting of the American Schools of Oriental Research held in Philadelphia in 2003.

Anticipating the wide-ranging archaeological, philological, linguistic, historical, and art historical analyses that materialize in the three parts (“Archaeology,” “Texts,” “Images”) of the volume, an introductory essay (Álvarez-Mon, Garrison, and Stronach) offers an

assessment of modern progress in (re)discovering the world of the Elamites, as well as a valuable overview of the complex Near Eastern background of, and sources on, Elamite-Persian interactions.

Under “Archaeology,” the papers by Carter and Potts focus, respectively, on Susiana and Anshan, the two main constituent domains of the Elamite world. As Carter argues, the different types of burials (inhumations, jar burials, funerary vaults) of second-millennium B.C.E. Susiana could represent stages into a protracted, multiphased burial rite, in which the moving of the remains of the deceased from one kind of burial to another “may well have reflected the journey of the deceased to the nether world” (49). Equally, the architectural remains and contents of important public buildings linked to underground vaulted tombs that have been discovered in the major Middle Elamite sites of Kabnak (Haft Tepe) and Al Untaş Napiriša (Chogha Zanbil) and possibly Susa (51) could be connected with royal Elamite funerary cults, which included funerary feasting (*kispum*). From the current lack of traces of occupation in much of Fars during the Neo-Elamite period, Potts infers, in turn, that references to Anshan in the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (wherein this toponym is designated by the ambiguous Elamite determinative AŠ, meaning both “city” and “country”/“land”) ought to be to a town, not a land—a town that “had been the home of Cyrus and his forebears and . . . continued to exist in the reign of Darius” (41).

Under “Texts,” six separate contributions mine the contents of extant first-millennium B.C.E. cuneiform texts for insights into the poorly attested early Persian history in Fars, Elamite-Iranian/Persian acculturation, and the relationship between Elamite and early Persian imperial scribal traditions and administrative practices.

Tavernier offers a hitherto lacking and most valuable systematic collection and linguistic analysis (complete with a glossary and index [244–55]) of Iranian proper names and loanwords attested in five separate groups of Neo-Elamite texts—the adminis-

trative and economic tablets from the Acropolis Mound at Susa; seven legal texts from the Apadana Mound at Susa; 26 “Neo-Elamite letters,” coming very largely from Nineveh; inscribed legends of late Neo-Elamite seals; and inscribed objects allegedly from the Kalmakarra cave in Luristan—most of them apparently datable to the first half of the sixth century B.C.E.

Henkelman addresses the issue of Elamite-Iranian religious acculturation in Fars with reference to a feast (*šip*) attested in Achaemenid documents in Elamite from Persepolis. These documents (presented in transliteration and translation and subject to extensive commentary in an appendix [134–56]) are cogently argued to refer to a “type of ideologically charged royal sacrificial festival” (90) that was aimed to “give expression to the king’s piety” (118) and to “reward services rendered and to reconfirm status and bonds of loyalty” (120). Henkelman traces antecedents to this feast in the Elamite milieu and testimony for its survival down to the first century B.C.E. (App. *Mith.* 66).

The contribution of Basello deals with select categories of words and administrative formulas that are recorded in the some 300 administrative tablets from the Acropolis Mound at Susa (the corpus is variously dated to some time between the late seventh century B.C.E. and the reign of Cyrus II) and in the Elamite Persepolis Fortification Tablets. According to Basello, transactions attested at the latter site show conformity with new standards, a more complex bureaucratic procedure, and possibly an evolution of the Elamite language within Persian imperial socioeconomic contexts (81). These results are subject to the visibly different nature of administrative texts that are represented by the two corpora examined (74).

The papers by Quintana, Vallat, and Waters return to the much-debated questions (also germane to Pott’s discourse on the limits of Anshan) of the history of early Persian settlement in Fars, the putative Anshanite background of the Teispid dynasty of Cyrus the Great, and its filial connection with the Achaemenid line of Darius I. Quintana offers a diachronic overview of references to Elamites, Persians, and Anshan in the Mesopotamian, Elamite, and Achaemenid written record. He concludes that there existed, in the first millennium B.C.E., a territory/kingdom of Anshan, which had come under the rule of Cyrus’ family—a family that Quintana holds to have been distinct from that of Darius.

From the combined testimony of the Behistun inscription of Darius I and a further small number of brief Old Persian or trilingual texts (CMA, CMB, CMC, ASH, AMH, all putatively authored in the reigns of Cyrus II and Darius’ grandfather and great-grandfather, Arsames and Ariaramnes), Vallat argues, in contrast, for an actual family relationship between the dynasties of Cyrus and Darius (280). (For the disputed authenticity of the CMA, CMB, CMC, ASH, and AMH texts, however,

see D. Stronach, “On the Interpretation of the Pasargadae Inscriptions,” in B. Magnusson et al., eds., *Ultra terminum Vagari: Scritti in onore di Carl Nylander* [Rome 1997] 323–29).

Waters’ judicious appraisal of questions of historical geography involving the toponyms Parsu(m)aš, Anšan, and Elam brings into full view the ambiguities that are inherent in the various strands of relevant testimony from Assyrian, Babylonian, Elamite, and Persian sources. Following his analysis, the cuneiform evidence would hardly substantiate “a distinct demarcation of separate polities (that is, contemporary kingdoms of Anšan and Parsu(m)aš)” —as might (inter alia) be ruled by a Cyrus and a Darius dynasty, respectively—“during the 7th and 6th centuries” (287); the toponyms Anšan and Parsumaš may well have become synonymous during that period for the same region and, thus, the same kingdom. The seemingly different domains of rule (and often presumed distinct historical identities) of the mid seventh-century “Kurash [i.e., Cyrus], king of the land of Parsumash” (mentioned in the annals of Ashurbanipal) and “Kurash [i.e., Cyrus] the Anshanite, son of Teispes” (in the Elamite legend of PFS 93*; see also Garrison below) might also be merely symptomatic of “different sources [that] cannot be reduced to a single standard of comparison” (292).

The five papers subsumed under “Images” cast a wide net across the repertory of iconography and artifacts from Assyria, Elam, the Zagros, and the Persian heartland. Álvarez-Mon provides, in the first place, a detailed analysis of the style and iconography of the heraldic scene of rampant, lion-headed griffins on the golden “ring” that formed a part of the rich assemblage of the Arjan tomb. Dated by this same scholar to the late seventh or early sixth century B.C.E., this splendid artifact is used to illustrate artistic interactions between Assyria and Elam, owed to the intense military-political relations between these two spheres at the time. The author also reflects on the artistic interconnections of the objects from the Arjan tomb with the still little-known artistic traditions of the adjacent Zagros highlands—interconnections that he visualizes in the context of a westward expansion of Susian rule following the deterioration of Assyrian power in western Elam.

Hassanzadeh and Mollasalehi discuss three of the best-preserved specimens of a group of some 450 complete and fragmentary glazed tiles recovered from Qalaichi Tappeh (identified as the Mannean capital, Izirtu). The tile motifs are said to offer insights into “a local Mannean artistic development best described as an adaptation of Assyrian art” and into a (still-elusive) “Zagros artistic style,” a koine that emerged in the late second millennium, reaching its apogee in the beginning of the first millennium B.C.E. (414).

The famous seal (PFS 93*) of “Kurash the Anshanite, son of Teispes,” attested on tablets of the Persepolis

Fortification Archive, is taken by most scholars today to refer to the grandfather of Cyrus the Great and is held to offer corroboration for the Anshanite (and, for some scholars, Anshanite/Elamite) background of the founder of the Persian empire. Initially classified by Amiet (“La glyptique de la fin de l’Élam,” *AAAs* 28 [1973] 3–32) as a part of a late seventh- to mid sixth-century “late Neo-Elamite” glyptic corpus expressive of contemporary trends in Susiana, PFS 93* is here moved by Garrison from a “Susa/Elam nexus” to an “Anshan/Fars nexus” and is considered to be (together with the stylistically close PFS 51) a remnant of a nascent “court style” associated with the Teispid royal house (400–1).

Root and Stronach each contemplate the testimony of the reliefs of the Apadana at Persepolis concerning the significance of the Elamites as one of the two peoples (the other, of course, was the Medes) that were “pivotal to the resolution of Persian encounter, acculturation, and self-definition on and along the north–south axis of the Zagros Mountains” (Root [426]). According to Stronach, the alternate representations of members of the Achaemenid court in the pleated, wide-sleeved robe (an Elamite court dress, worn only by Persians and Elamites in Achaemenid art) and the tight-fitting, trousered costume (a riding attire of the Medes par excellence and Iranians in general) “would underscore, at one and the same time, [the Persians’] unique appropriation of both the storied Elamite/Anshanite south . . . and the extensive Iranian and Iranian-related lands that stretched, in the main, to the north and the north-east.” This “dichotomous truth” would also document what Darius “saw to be the exceptional, dual inheritance of his line” (481–82).

In Root’s iconographic and iconological analysis of the Elamite delegation depicted on the Apadana reliefs, lions and weapons brought as gifts to the Persian king would represent an allegory of Elam in the imperial imagination of Achaemenid Persia. The whole would express “a reinvented Elam meant to subsume its now-fragmented past into the identity of Persia and the Persian royal house” (440). It might also allude to the house of Cyrus II (e.g., 461). The discussion further offers subtle insights into the partial reliance of Achaemenid representation in this instance on earlier models of imperial imagination in Assyria.

The rich materials and wide-ranging perspectives presented in the volume offer much food for thought. The present reviewer’s main concern centers on the validity of the tradition positing a dynastic connection of Cyrus and his family three generations back with the

ancient domain of Anshan—and, no less, with its capital city—which affects the interpretation in a number of the articles. As it is, undisputable references to Cyrus and his forebears as kings of Anshan date from the reign of Cyrus or later; and Anshan, the reported seat of rule of Cyrus’ family, appears (at least to date) to have been deserted from ca. 1000 B.C.E. until the Achaemenid period. Taken here (and elsewhere in the specialist literature) as more or less axiomatic, the “Anshanite” dynastic background of Cyrus—and the ambiguity it creates with reference to the origins of the emerging Persian state and the relationship of the two ruling dynasties of the Persian empire (cf. 490)—may be, in fact, no more than a reflection of Cyrus’ political rhetoric, turned into a historical fact by modern appraisals of the relative historical objectivity of the available conflicting traditions about the background of the founder of the Persian empire (see A. Zournatzi, “Early Cross-Cultural Political Encounters Along the Paths of the Silk Road: Cyrus the Great as a ‘King of the City of Anshan,’” in D. Akbarzadeh, ed., *Proceedings of the First International Conference “Iran and the Silk Road” (Tehran, 12–15 February 2011)* [Tehran (forthcoming)]; a pre-publication version is available at www.achemenet.com/document/ZOURNATZI_Cyrus_of_Anshan.pdf).

As the editors indicate in “Postscript: The Legacy of Elam,” key aspects of the encounters between the Persians and the Elamites that led over the course of two centuries to the emergence of Persian power remain unresolved. The varied specialist perspectives that materialize in *Elam and Persia* nonetheless make a forceful case—also valuable at least as a complement (cf. 489), if not a more viable alternative, to classical depictions of a monolithic Median imperial inheritance—for the importance of the broader Elamite/Mesopotamian legacy in shaping the early political, cultural, and ideological expressions of the Persian empire. This richly documented and well-edited volume is bound to be an important work of reference for scholars investigating the history and culture of the Iranian-Mesopotamian milieu of Neo-Elamite and early Persian existence.

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