Against Cuneiform: The Dawn of Writing in Iran[1]

Parsa Daneshmand (Wolfson College, Oxford)

Abstract

This paper explores the concept of schismogenesis as a framework to understand the cultural differentiation between the ancient Elamite civilization and its Mesopotamian counterparts. It delves into schismogenesis within the Elamite civilization itself, examining the scarcity of cuneiform texts in ancient Iran despite awareness of Mesopotamian script and the existence of a native Iranian writing system (Proto-Elamite). Focusing on the Akkadian corpus found at Susa, this paper uses it as a case study to analyze deliberate deviations from standard Mesopotamian texts, revealing intentional cultural distinctiveness within the ancient Elamite context.

Keywords: Schismogenesis, Ancient Elam, Cuneiform texts in Susa, Deliberate deviations, Writing adoption, Cultural reluctance

1 I sincerely appreciate Jacob L. Dahl for his invaluable assistance, suggestions, and corrections throughout the writing process. I also thank Robert Biggs for his careful reading and insightful comments on the draft. Additionally, I am grateful to the anonymous reviewers for their constructive and helpful feedback. Any errors are my own responsibility.

This paper delves into the phenomenon of schismogenesis, a conceptual framework that may help elucidate the cultural differentiation and distinctiveness observed between the ancient Elamite civilization and its contemporary Mesopotamian counterparts. Moreover, it elaborates on schismogenesis within the ancient Elamite civilization itself. The paucity of cuneiform texts in the archaeological records of ancient Iran suggests a prevailing reluctance among communities surrounding Susa and neighboring regions to adopt writing. This hesitancy persisted despite their familiarity with the Mesopotamian cuneiform script and the presence of a native Iranian writing system, now labeled as Proto-Elamite.

This study specifically concentrates on the Akkadian corpus of texts found at Susa, utilizing it as a case study. Through an analysis of this corpus, the study aims to uncover deliberate deviations from the norms of standard Mesopotamian texts, thereby highlighting the intentional cultural distinctiveness that emerged within the ancient Elamite context. Indeed, a schismogenetic pattern emerges, both between Susa and other regions within ancient Iran, as well as between Susa and Mesopotamia. In other words, ‘intellectuals’ in Susa embraced the Mesopotamian cuneiform scripts albeit with intentional modifications introduced at different junctures. However, they refrained from writing their religious texts. Similarly, we can observe that writing never spread significantly beyond Susa, Haft-Tepe, and Anšan in ancient Iran.

Schismogenesis

This research draws extensively on anthropological works concerning the concept of cultural differentiation, including the contributions of David Graeber and David Wengrow (2022), David Graeber (2013), James Scott (2011), Marcel Mauss (c. 2006), and Gregory Bateson (1935). Marcel Mauss, in his essay on civilizations, observes that, “societies live by

borrowing from each other, but they define themselves more by the refusal of borrowing than by its acceptance" (Mauss c. 2006: 44).

In a brief note published in 1935, Gregory Bateson coined the term 'schismogenesis' to describe the tendency of social groups to exhibit differentiated behavior patterns rather than similarities (Bateson 1935). Marcel Mauss further expounds in his essay on civilization, stating "one of the grave lacunae in our studies of collective history, ethnological or other is that it is much too inclined to observe only coincidences" (Maus c. 2006: 68). He emphasized that "we need as well to observe non-borrowing, and the rejection of a borrowing, however useful" (Mauss 2006: 68; see also Graeber 2013: 2).

Graeber and Wengrow argue that "identity came to be seen as a value in itself, setting in motion processes of cultural schismogenesis" (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 504) and "people come to define themselves against their neighbours. Urbanites thus become more urbaine, as barbarians become more barbarous" (Graeber and Wengrow 2022: 57). In line with Mauss' perspective, "we can thus see how civilizations are circumscribed, by their capacity for borrowing and expansion, but also by the resistance of the societies which compose them" (Mauss c. 2006: 69).

From a modern perspective, the terms 'culture' and 'civilization' historically depict the contrast between French and English attitudes, and the German concept of their respective social characteristics. 'Civilization,' deriving from the French and English contexts, encompasses political, economic, religious, technical, moral, or social accomplishments. On the other hand, the German concept of 'Kultur' refers to intellectual, artistic, and religious facets (Elias, c. 1978: 4; Graeber 2007). As Norbert Elias pointed out, "the concept of civilization plays down the national differences between peoples, whereas in contrast, the German concept of Kultur places special stress on national differences and the particular

identity of groups" (Elias, c. 1978: 5). This research avoids an anachronistic understanding of the concept of culture but embraces its political sense and its relation to differences between groups. This approach acknowledges that the acceptance or refusal of writing in ancient Iran was a collective political and cultural action, aligning with Mauss' assertion that "all social phenomena are, to some degree, the work of collective will" (Mauss 2006: 67).

Why Writing?

It has been widely acknowledged that the development of writing was not primarily intended for the purpose of recording literary works (Nissen 1986; Nissen et al 1993; Friberg 2019, but see Glassner 2011). At least, the early forms of writing that emerged in ancient Mesopotamia did not arise in response to a literary need. Writing had its roots in economic imperatives, and according to Assyriologists specializing in early Mesopotamia, including Hans Nissen (Nissen 1986: 323-326), Robert Englund, Peter Damerow (Nissen et al 1993), Guillermo Algaze (2008: 127-139) and certain anthropologists such as James Scott and Claude Lévi-Strauss, it emerged as a byproduct of urbanization (Algaze 2008: 139), state formation, and imperial expansion. According to their perspective, writing fundamentally functioned as a tool to facilitate exploitation, rather than to promote the enlightenment and betterment of humanity (Scott 2017 location 21 of 5725 Kindle version).

While it is indisputable that writing was extensively employed within autocratic and bureaucratic systems (Stasavage 2020: 90-97), historical evidence points to the fact that writing in its Mesopotamian iteration initially appeared in ancient societies like Uruk during the fourth millennium BC, a period when centralized states had not yet fully developed (Ur 2020; Frangipane 2018; Wengrow 2015; Ur 2014). It can be asserted that the presence of a government is often linked to the use of writing, but it is not an absolute prerequisite for the emergence of writing. In other words, writing can also arise within a society that lacks a

formal government structure. On the other hand, societies with central power, like Mississippians to give only one example, can also lack the system of writing (Stasavage 2020: 92-93). Contrary to some theories suggesting a direct correlation between writing and the establishment of state systems or bureaucracies, it is important to note that the emergence of writing is not always contingent on bureaucratic structures. In fact, there are instances where writing has been devised in direct opposition to the state. In her work, "The Greatest Invention," Silvia Ferrara delves into the story of Sequoyah, a skilled silversmith and member of the Cherokee Nation from Tennessee. Sequoyah's remarkable achievement was the creation of a novel writing system, developed with the intent of "combating the white conqueror's abuse of power" (Ferrara 2022: 176-179; Quinn 2022).

Jack Goody held the belief that the emergence of writing was more likely in societies with agricultural surpluses and the ability to store such surpluses. He contended that in African societies where products deteriorate rapidly, the significance and consequences of writing were diminished (Goody 1986: 103). In these societies, Goody posited that the focus was on transactions rather than storage. However, in cases where durability was a key factor, such as with valuable items like Asante gold, accounting and record-keeping became crucial (Goody 1986: 103, 104). While Goody's theory may offer valuable insights in certain contexts, it does not fully account for counterexamples like the Mississippians. As David Stasavage argues, the Mississippians relied on maize as a staple crop and did accumulate surpluses, which could be easily storable. However, they lacked a writing system despite having conditions that, according to Goody's theory, might suggest the emergence of writing (Stasavage 2020: 91). Additionally, their interactions with Mesoamerican societies, known for their writing systems, puts the lack of a writing system among the Mississippians even more in conflict with Goody’s theory. This highlights the complexity of the relationship between agriculture,

surplus, and the development of writing, which can vary across different societies and historical contexts.

An alternative explanation worth considering is the examination of various levels of exchange within human societies. The limitation of certain theories, like Goody's, may stem from an overemphasis on spot-trade-type relationships, where transactions are immediate and direct.

Hospitality (*Ta'ārof* in Iran) vs. Barter

Since the proposal of the concept of barter by Adam Smith in the early nineteenth century, numerous economists and anthropologists have engaged in debates, both in support of and against the actual existence of this mode of exchange throughout history (Polanyi 1957; Humphrey 1985; Graeber 2014). However, in the past two centuries, no indigenous society has been discovered where barter was genuinely employed as a primary means of trade (Graeber 2014: 21-41). The barter mechanism relies on the direct exchange of goods between two or more individuals without the involvement of money as an intermediary. As a classic example, consider Henry, who possesses potatoes and desires shoes, while Joshua possesses an extra pair of shoes and seeks potatoes as his desired item (Stiglitz and Driffil 2000: 521; Graeber 2014: 23-24). Bartering seems like an ideal solution for their exchange. However, as elucidated by Graeber, this scenario necessitates a "double coincidence of wants." (Graeber 2014: 22; Case et al 1996: 564). In other words, both parties must precisely desire what the other has to offer. If Henry were to have tomatoes instead of potatoes, barter would become impractical, and the exchange would come to an immediate halt. Graeber highlights that this theory overlooks the mechanism of reciprocity within societies that operate on a gift economy basis (Graeber 2014:36; Mauss 1924).

The concept of '*ta'ārof*' in Iran can serve as a prime example (Koutlaki 1997; Betteridge 1985). The term '*ta'ārof*' is derived from an Arabic root, signifying 'to get to know each other,' possibly indicating how people use this form of exchange to establish acquaintance. '*Ta'ārof*' exchange becomes evident when a customer wishes to inquire about the price of an item they intend to purchase. Instead of straightforwardly stating the item's price, the seller typically responds with, 'It's not too much. Take the item and go!' In our modern economy, this does not mean customers can simply take the item without paying. Instead, both parties engage in a polite dance of insisting on payment, and eventually, the price is settled. This situation reflects a fundamental aspect of human relationships often overlooked in modern economic theories: the reciprocity of kindness (Betteridge 1985). In this scenario, Arash, for example, finds himself in need of some cheese for his breakfast and decides to knock on his neighbor Atousa's door, asking for cheese, and Atousa willingly provides it without expecting anything in return. However, Arash is aware of the need to reciprocate her generosity, understanding the unspoken but powerful bond of reciprocity between them. At this level of reciprocity, formalities such as receipts or signatures are unnecessary. Instead, individuals naturally continue to exchange necessary items for their daily lives, guided by an unspoken understanding of mutual aid, to borrow a term from Peter Kropotkin (Kropotkin 1904). In this type of exchange, the exact price of the commodity does not matter to anyone, and no one anticipates immediate or early compensation.

However, there is a level of exchange where even something as seemingly simple as Arash receiving a piece of cheese results in a transaction being recorded and eternally remembered. In this scenario, that piece of cheese carries a precise value, for example £3.99, which can be equated to various commodities, such as salt, grain, silver, gold or labour hours. At this level of exchange, writing serves as a crucial tool for indefinitely recording human debts with exacting precision—every detail is accurate, leaving no room for compromise: £3.99, not

£3.98 or £4. Writing thus serves as a powerful tool for establishing and documenting legal agreements and status between people. As Walter Benjamin pointed out, a legal contract, no matter how peacefully it may have been entered into by the parties involved, ultimately introduces the potential for violence. It grants each party the right to use force or some form of coercion against the other should one party breach the agreement (Benjamin, c. 1996: 243). Thus, it can be argued that writing, in its early form, had an inherent connection to the potential for conflict and violence. It is quite expected that in societies where transactions were rooted in systems like '*ta'ārof*,' writing played no significant role in the daily lives of people. The *ta'ārof* system was prevalent in pre-modern Iran and continues to be observed in various Iranian societies (Koutlaki 1997; Betteridge 1985). The absence of a writing system in many regions of ancient Iran can be seen as an indicator of the absence of a centralized state and market system where everything needed to be meticulously recorded for future reference.

While direct evidence is scarce, the lack of written contracts or documented agreements in most archaeological sites from early Iran suggests the prevalence of such a reciprocity-based economic system. The archaeological record predominantly consists of artifacts related to daily life, such as pottery, tools, and architectural remains, with little to no evidence of written economic agreements. This absence of written contracts could indicate that economic exchanges were governed by a system of reciprocal obligations and trust-based relationships, rather than legally binding written contracts.

While the predominant writing medium in ancient Iran was cuneiform inscribed on clay tablets, which have a high potential for preservation, the use of perishable materials like papyrus, parchment, or even wood cannot be ruled out. In his paper, The Art of Not Being Legible", Piers Kelly underscores how the Leke script symbolizes a broader narrative of resilience and cultural preservation among the Karen people, highlighting their ongoing

efforts to maintain their linguistic and spiritual traditions amid external pressures and changes (Kelly 2018). In his 2014 book, *Nomadism in Iran*: *From Antiquity to the Modern Era*, Daniel Potts argues against the continuity of behavior between ancient nomadic groups and those observed in the 20th century, criticizing the extrapolation of modern observations into deep historical contexts (Potts 2014; see also Petrie 2018). It is important to emphasize that the absence of a specific type of writing does not necessarily imply that a society was nomadic or pastoralist. Moreover, this absence does not exclude the presence of other forms of literacy. For instance, as will be discussed later, in Susa, writing in cuneiform for economic transactions, contracts, and royal inscriptions was prevalent. However, Elamite texts containing incantations, myths, or even lexical lists have not been found. In the same vein, in a world where cuneiform writing was prevalent, one would expect to find at least some archives or collections of clay tablets documenting economic transactions or agreements in the major archaeological sites of early Iran. The consistent lack of written contracts across multiple sites and time periods lends credence to the hypothesis of a reciprocity-based exchange system in early Iran.

Tracing the origins of writing in human history is an exceedingly challenging endeavor. Pinpointing a specific natural or social phenomenon as the primary catalyst for the emergence of writing remains elusive. Research on the early civilizations of the ancient Near East and their writing systems often tends to attribute the appearance of writing systems and cylinder seals to environmental upheavals, including factors such as drought, dwindling water resources, famine, and economic conditions such as agricultural surpluses (Liverani 2006: 19-31). Although state-building endeavors often involve record-keeping and written archives, there is no conclusive theory to substantiate the claim that would-be state-makers intentionally devised writing systems from the outset. Nonetheless, it is important to highlight

that in numerous instances where states did come into existence, writing systems undeniably were used as both cultural markers and invaluable tools for record-keeping.

Writing in Early Iran

The literature concerning the origins of writing in Iran, including Robert K. Englund (2004), Peter Damerow (2006), Jacob L. Dahl (2009), and Jöran Friberg (2019), contends that the proto-Elamite system was heavily influenced by Mesopotamian proto-cuneiform, implying that proto-Elamite evolved after proto-cuneiform.

In his 1936 publication, Falkenstein dismissed the notion of two distinct writing systems emerging simultaneously in adjacent regions. He posited the following:

> Ob die Entlehnung der Zeichen in die Entstehungszeit der protoelamischen Schrift fällt, ist nicht festzustellen. Ich halte es für möglich daß man in Susa, angeregt durch die babylonische Scrift, zur Ǧemdet-Naṣr-Zeit begonnen hat, ein eigenes Schriftsystem zu schaffen. Der Gedanke der Schrift ist jedoch in beiden benachbarten und in stetigem Austausch lebenden Ländern nicht zweimal gefunden worden. Wenn man der unter „gemeinsamem Ursprung der beiden Schriftarten'' versteht und nicht an einen von Haus aus geminsamen Zeichen bestand denkt, ist diese These gewiß richtig (Falkenstein 1936: 43).[2]

Writing in ancient Iran emerged somewhat later than in ancient Iraq (Damerow and Englund, 1989: 11-32). The scribal society of Susa, while adopting the writing system developed in Uruk, intentionally introduced significant modifications to the system they were borrowing

[2] "The determination of whether the adoption of symbols aligns with the genesis of the proto-Elamite script remains indeterminate. I posit the possibility that, influenced by the Babylonian script, the initiative to devise an independent writing system was undertaken in Susa during the Jemdet-Naṣr era. However, the concept of writing has not been duplicated in both neighboring and consistently interacting regions. If one interprets "common origin of the two scripts" as denoting a shared genesis of characters rather than an inherent common set of symbols, this hypothesis is indeed plausible" (My translation).

(Dahl 2009; Englund 2004). Despite their distinct visual styles, the ancient Iranian and Iraqi writing systems share commonalities in tablet layout, textual structure, and the core principles behind the written signs (Englund, 2004; Dahl, 2019). Nevertheless, the limited distribution and scarcity of Proto-Elamite tablets in places like Tepe Sofalin discovered beyond the confines of Susa and certain area in the Fars province, notably Anšan (Dahl 2019: 60-62) can be attributed to the absence of enthusiasm, or more accurately, the cultural reluctance of neighboring regions to embrace this writing system, or even the concept of writing as a whole (Lamberg-Karlovsky 2003). It is highly improbable that the limited number of Proto-Elamite tablets found outside Susa and Fars can be attributed to the presence of a well-developed educational network responsible for teaching Proto-Elamite across a broad geographical area. The fact that the discovery of written documents in the modern-day region of Iran has been less extensive compared to the western regions, particularly Mesopotamia, suggests a broader pattern of resistance to the adoption of writing in many societies across the Iranian plateau.

In his 2003 article, C. C. Lamberg-Karlovsky raises the question, "why did the indigenous communities that experienced the Uruk (i.e., Godin, Brak, Arsloantepe), Proto-Elamite (i.e., Malyan, Yahya, Sialk), and Egyptian (i.e., Nahal Tillah, En Besor) expansions cease to write?" (Lamberg-Karlovsky 2003: 63). Lamberg-Karlowsky asserts, "the invention of writing took place within an institutional context" (Lamberg-Karlowsky 2003: 66), and thus, "one must adopt the social context in which writing exists in order to adopt writing" (Lamberg-Karlowsky 2003: 67). He also highlights that "throughout the Bronze and Iron Ages, culture contact between literate and illiterate neighbors obstinately avoided the adoption of writing" (Lamberg-Karlowsky 2003: 67). Lamberg-Karlowsky's observations could be supplemented by proposing that all this evidence reveals a schismogenetic behavior against writing, portraying illiterate societies not merely as devoid of literacy but as actively opposed to it.

During the early third millennium BC, the use of proto-Elamite script disappeared, resulting in a hiatus in written documentation in Iran until the late third millennium BC. It is possible that the institutions which used proto-Elamite writing to record their transfers and transactions ceased to exist for unknown reasons. This situation is analogous to the decline of cuneiform writing following the collapse of the Achaemenid dynasty, which had been the patron of cuneiform writing in Iran for over two centuries. During the late third millennium BC, Puzur-Inšušinak from Awan rose to prominence and established dominance over Elam. The period of Puzur-Inšušinak left behind limited textual remains in Akkadian, Sumerian, and a script now identified as Linear Elamite (Stolper 2004: 61).

Linear Elamite, employed intermittently for royal and votive inscriptions in the Elamite language, attracted scholarly attention from the mid-twentieth century onward (Hinz 1962, 1969, 1971; Meriggi 1971). François Desset and his collaborators undertook one such effort, refining existing sign lists based on artifacts held by a private collector in London (Desset et al. 2022; see already Kervran 2019). However, the full corpus of Linear Elamite texts remains unpublished, leaving the specifics and scope of this recent decipherment subject to conjecture (for a comprehensive critique of one point of the proposals of Desset and his colleagues, namely their insistence on a connection between the Linear Elamite and proto-Elamite scripts see Dahl 2023).

Within the context of the present research, the Linear Elamite writing system emerges as an exemplar of divergent reactions to the writing conventions of western neighbors. It is plausible that this script was instigated by state mandate, aiming to rival Mesopotamian counterparts[3]—a phenomenon akin to Darius' decree to devise a novel script for recording

[3] Dahl 2023 has outlined how all excavated LE texts have a short Akkadian counterpart, often on the same monument, or originally placed adjacently to the LE inscription.

Old Persian (Dahl 2023). Intriguingly, both state-initiated writing systems endured for approximately two centuries before fading into obsolescence.

The question of why schismogenetic behavior persisted for nearly 3,000 years in early Iran invites several speculations, particularly given that neighboring civilizations like the Hittites and Ugarit exhibited minimal cultural resistance. The possible factors can be categorized into external and internal characteristics.

Firstly, the adaptation of Mesopotamian writing among the Hittites occurred during a period when central Anatolia was divided into competing kingdoms centered around large cities, with central economic units of temples and palaces, much like the setting of writing in ancient Mesopotamia. Secondly, early Hittite rulers frequently compared themselves to heroic kings of Mesopotamia and sought to surpass them. Thirdly, Hittite rulers participated in a political and economic system with other cultures using writing, such as Egypt and various Levantine cultures, including Ugarit. However, it should be noted that the extensive use of writing in the Hittite language, the invention of Luwian Hieroglyphics, and the invention of a specific cuneiform script exclusively for writing in Ugarit are examples of schismogenetic reactions in those societies.

On the other hand, external factors such as the persistence and traditionalism of writing in Mesopotamia, along with their antagonistic attitudes towards non-literate peoples, likely played a significant role in promoting a consistent reaction among communities on the Iranian plateau against the cultural characteristics of an antagonistic culture. Throughout the history of Mesopotamia, Elam was frequently mentioned as the enemy. Other western peoples, including Lulubians and Gutians, were also depicted as hostile to Mesopotamia. To this list can be added the epic references to western areas such as Aratta, considered the greatest rivals of Mesopotamian kingdoms. Thus, the antagonism between these two cultures,

which has no counterpart in relation to civilizations such as the Hittites, helped sustain this model of schismogenesis.

To avoid environmental determinism, this refusal to adopt writing can be seen as an internal characteristic of the people who shared a more or less common cultural cluster. In other words, the rejection of writing was a political and cultural decision rooted in the intrinsic characteristics of societies that sought to define themselves by not being like their neighbors.

Oral Tradition

"*Writing has done much harm to writers. We must return to the voice***"-***Oscar Wilde***

Considering that writing in Mesopotamia and Iran initially evolved for economic and administrative functions, the majority of texts predominantly comprise numerals and logograms denoting objects. Both proto-cuneiform and proto-Elamite are believed to have lacked a full inventory of phonological sound-signs used to write grammatical elements. Even in the third millennium BC, when the cuneiform writing system developed a full set of syllabic signs, it still struggled to convey and represent vowels accurately, for example.

It is well-known that literature followed a distinct path from written language. Even the earliest Sanskrit grammars emerged before the advent of writing. For instance, *Pāṇin*"s grammar was crafted to be memorized and recited (Kelley 2006: 19). All verses of the Vedas and Avesta were preserved orally for hundreds of years, without being written down. This reluctance bears a resemblance, for example, to the doubts of traditional Iranian musicians about transcribing the corpus of Iranian musical modes. They believed that no symbol could capture the intricate nuances of their performances (Khaleghi 1956: 46). In ancient Greece, oral tradition remained prevalent at least until the 4th century BCE. As the scholar Rosalind Thomas has noted, the Greeks placed significant confidence in oral contracts witnessed by others. Thomas states, "As a non-written means of security, they [oral contracts] were

probably the most important and trusted part of the contract, to which writing was only an additional safeguard" (Thomas 1992: 89).

Oscar Wilde pointed out that Greeks “regarded writing simply as a method of chronicling. Their test was always the spoken word in its musical and metrical relations. The voice was the medium, and the ear the critic” (Wilde c. 2001: 223).

The narrative of Middle-Persian texts asserts the oral tradition among Mazdayasnian priests. A section of Dinkerd 4 reads (Madan 1911: 412):

Walaxš ī Aškānān Abestāg Zand čiyōn abēzagīhā andar āmad estād hamōg-iz ī aziš har čē az wizend ud āšōbtagkārīh ī Aleksandar ud ēwār ud rōb ī Hrōmāyān andar Ērān-šahr pargandagīhā abar nibištag tā čē uzwān-abēspārišnīg pad dastwar mānd estād andar šahr čiyōn frāz mad estād nigāh dāštan ō šahrīhā ī ayādgār kardan framūd

Walaxš son of Aškān ordered to treasure and save the Avesta and Zand (Pahlavi interpretation and translation of the Avesta) as purely appeared and also whatever that survived and scattered in Iran-šahr, and exist from the hurt and turmoil of Alexander and the destruction and robbery of Romans, be it in the written form or through oral tradition by the dastwar, as they (first) appeared.

Oktor Skjærvø suggested that the Avestan texts were composed in the 2nd and 1st millennium BC, with evidence suggesting that they were transcribed into written form approximately 1500-200 years after their original composition (Skjærvø 2005-6: 10-11; Kreyenbroek 2022: 199-200). The Avestan alphabet was developed around 500 CE, encompassing 37 consonants and 16 vowels. This extensive alphabet reflects the meticulous care of Mazdayasnian scholars in preserving the accuracy of their sacred verses. Contrary to the traditional narrative found in Middle Persian texts, there is no archaeological or historical evidence to substantiate the claim that the Avesta was transcribed during the Achaemenid period (Daneshmand 2020). It

appears that for centuries, there was a significant deliberation against transcribing divine verses into symbols and characters.

The scarcity of cuneiform texts from regions outside Susa on the Iranian plateau prior to the Achaemenid period suggests a reluctance among those societies to embrace written script and a writing culture. There existed a fundamental cultural and political aversion to cuneiform script and writing in general. Furthermore, the lack of written religious texts, myths, and fairytales before and during the Achaemenid period indicates a prohibition against recording the sacred. As will be discussed in the next section, despite extensive use of writing for royal, administrative, and economic purposes in Susa and its surrounding societies, no mythological texts have ever been found in Elamite language from those regions.

The Akkadian Corpora of Susa and Haft-Tepe

The history of Elam reveals a distinct lack of significant literary and religious texts. While thousands of cuneiform texts in Elamite and Akkadian languages have been discovered in various regions of ancient Elam, none of these tablets contain stories, fairy tales, wisdom literature, mythology, religious verses, or incantations dedicated to Elamite gods.

A striking example can be found in the absence of an epic of creation within the existing corpus of Elamite texts. Conversely, the Hittites and the people of Ugarit, who also adopted cuneiform writing, have left us texts that depict their distinctive narratives of creation and primordial deities, each in alignment with their own cultural traditions. Our knowledge of Elamite gods is primarily derived from the Elamite royal inscriptions, which include passing references to the deities to whom offerings and temples were dedicated. It is highly unlikely that the Elamites lacked a comprehensive narrative regarding their understanding of creation and the origins of their gods.

The absence of Elamite incantations written and discovered in Susa, as opposed to their exclusive presence in Mesopotamia, is indeed a perplexing observation. Only three instances of Elamite incantations have been unearthed through excavations in Mesopotamia. Among these, two tablets are currently housed at Yale, while the third tablet resides in the Ashmolean Museum (OECT 11 5, YOS 11 5, 18, also referenced in Dijk 1982 and Stolper 2004: 62). These three examples comprise the same text with minor variations, primarily containing incantations related to childbirth.

Translating the Elamite passages of these texts presents significant challenges due to the absence of comprehensive Elamite lexical texts and an insufficient number of bilingual documents. However, the presence of the names of Elamite goddesses Kiririša and Narundi within these passages, alongside the Sumerian rubric "inim-inim munus u_3-tu-da-kam," meaning "incantation for the woman who gives birth" (YOS 11 18 13), leaves no ambiguity that these Elamite passages address incantations aimed at facilitating a smooth childbirth (Dijk et al 1985: 25 = YOS 11, Veldhuis 1991: 14-15). Perhaps it is prudent to investigate the rationale behind the composition of these distinctive Elamite incantations in the presence of Elamite elites in Mesopotamia during the early second millennium BC. This possibility is particularly relevant considering the contemporaneous alliance between the sukkal of Elam, Siwe-palar-huppak, and Mesopotamian monarchs, including Hammurpi and Zimri-Lim, against the ruler of Ešnunna. These incantations may have been composed to ensure the safe delivery of a child belonging to an esteemed Elamite elite family, whether residing temporarily or permanently in Mesopotamia. It is also possible that the texts are composed in Elamite because the Mesopotamians believed that Lamashtu was Elamite and, therefore, best addressed in Elamite.

It would be incorrect to attribute this lack of Elamite literary and religious texts to the lack of literary skills or interest among Elamite scribes, who were responsible for writing numerous

royal inscriptions and administrative texts. Instead, it is reasonable to assume that there existed a religious and cultural decision deeply rooted in the traditions of Elamite priests, which prevented them from committing Elamite sacred verses to writing. In other words, there was a deliberate refusal to write down sacred texts.

During the transitional period from the Old Elamite to what is known as the Middle Elamite period, there exists several omen texts from Susa written in the Akkadian language. When Assyriologists first attempted to decipher those texts, they initially assumed that these texts were written in an unknown language (personal communication from Robert Biggs). But further research and analysis revealed that these texts were, in fact, omen lists written in the Akkadian language (MDP 57). Antoine Cavigneaux has published additional texts in Sumerian and Akkadian from Susa, which exhibit similarly challenging characteristics (Cavigneaux, 2003; 2020). Cavigneux notes the division of Sumerian-Akkadian texts from Susa into two categories: those that are Babylonian in style, and those that reflect a distinct local Susian culture. He highlights how the latter group shows unique developments in script techniques and content, indicating an increasing cultural independence (Cavigneaux 2020: 69). As Cavigneaux underscores, these texts show distinct local characteristics, particularly in script techniques and content, indicating a degree of cultural autonomy in Susian literature (Cavigneaux 2020: 68-69).

The difficulties Assyriologists faced in reading these texts stemmed from the unusual use of logograms and the different values of cuneiform signs compared to the standard forms in ancient Mesopotamian texts. However, the content was more or less traceable in the Mesopotamian omen corpora. Parallels of the omens in the Susa corpus can be found, with some minor differences, in the Old Babylonian omen corpora. The Susa divinatory texts mention the names of Mesopotamian gods, including Šamaš, Adad, and Enlil, who were likely of less importance to Elamite kings. One intriguing feature of this corpus is that Elam

is mentioned negatively as an enemy, highlighting the Mesopotamian origin of these texts (e.g., MDP VI iv 1, 2, 5, 7). The reason why Elamite scribes did not remove the passages depicting Elam in a hostile tone remains a matter for further investigation. It is plausible that the oral traditions and texts in question were not subject to significant political supervision or censorship.

Because the Susa texts utilized new values for many Sumerian logograms, it is unlikely that contemporary Mesopotamian scribes could read and interpret the Susa texts (for an example see below). This raises the question of why the scribes in Susa refused to adopt the readily available Mesopotamian script for writing their Akkadian texts. Their approach was significantly different from that of Hittite scribes, for example, who adopted the Mesopotamian cuneiform script with minimal changes.

Apart from the omen texts discovered in Susa, there is also an omen tablet found at Haft-Tepe (Daneshmand 2004) and another at Chogha Pahn (Biggs and Stolper 1983), both in the vicinity of Susa. These texts also exhibit numerous idiosyncrasies and distinctive features that are shared with the Susa texts, but sets them apart from the comparable Mesopotamian texts. It is worth noting that omen texts primarily served as instructional manuals for diviners and do not fall into the categories of religious or literary texts. These texts can be tentatively dated to the end of the Sukkalmah era or the transitional period from Old Elamite to Middle Elamite, which is estimated to be around the 17th and 16th centuries BC (Labat 1974: 1-2; Cavigneaux 2020: 68). This historical context helps us understand the unique linguistic and script variations present in the texts, which deviate from the standard forms found in contemporary Mesopotamian texts. Most of these idiosyncrasies had already been noted by Rene Labat who struggled for many years to understand the meaning those texts (Labat 1974). The following supplementary notes and comparisons with the Akkadian versions of

the Hittite omens aim to provide additional examples of schismogenetic behaviors in the Akkadian texts from Elam.

As a case study, MDP 57 III is an extispicy text focused on the observation of *ubānāt haši qablāti*. The second line of this text reads as follows: DIŠ 2 A.ŠI MUR MURU$_2$-*ma* GI.NA-*tu*$_x$ GAL-*ma* NU GI.NA-*tu*$_x$ TUR-*ir u*$_3$ SAG NU GI.NA-*ti* BAR-*ma* TUH (If there are two *ubānāt-haši-qablāt*i, one of them is larger and appears to be normal, but the smaller one is not normal; it is split in two).

The first noteworthy aspect pertains to the extensive utilization of logograms. This feature stands out as unconventional for the time of their creation, which corresponds to the late Old Babylonian period (Labat 1974: 1-2). During this era, syllabic writing was the prevailing norm in Mesopotamia (YOS 10; Jeyes 1989). In the Hittite omen corpus, apart from astrological texts, while the use of logograms for technical terms in the protases is notable, syllabic writing remains predominant (Riemschneider 2004). For instance, in the Susa omen texts, the sign GIN$_7$ is used for *kīma* (e.g., MDP 57 III 17; IV 9; IV 30), whereas in the Hittite omen corpus, it is always written syllabically as *ki-ma* (Riemschneider, 2004: 21, 60).

Apart from this general characteristic, the logogram for *ubānu* (finger) is written as "A.ŠI" instead of "ŠU.SI." As Labat pointed out, this particular form is found only in a lexical text from Ugarit, where "A.ŠI" is equivalent to "*u*$_2$-*ba-nu*" (Labat 1974: 75; Nougayrol 1965: 35). Examining the Ugarit lexical text reveals an additional equivalence, namely A.ŠI.ŠI for KI.GUB DINGIR (*mazzāz ili*), representing another segment of the liver. Hence, it is reasonable to propose that A.ŠI was not a general logogram for *ubānu* but only a technical term specifically referring to the *ubānu* located on the liver of a scarified animal. In contrast, the Hittite omen texts consistently employ the standard logogram ŠU.SI to represent the term *ubānu*, as exemplified by the following instance: "2 ŠU.SI GAR-*ma* ZAG *ka-ya-an-ti*"

(Riemschneider, 2004, p. 139 = KUB 38 223), which translates to "there are two *ubānu*, the right one is normal."

The sequence "SAG NU GI.NA" and "SAG GI.NA" found in lines 1 and 2 corresponds to the Ka$_2$-gal list, providing the Akkadian equivalents of these logograms as "*kīnu*" and "*lā kīnu*," respectively (MSL 13 236). Consequently, it is plausible that Labat's interpretation of "*rēšu*" for "SAG" and his translation may require revision throughout the text. Instead of "if the head of the one that is not normal,"[4] a more accurate rendering might be: "If there are two *ubānāt haši qablāti*, the one that is not normal."

The sign DU$_3$ is used for a sound like *tu*, as a phonetic compliment, which is quite unusual, and thus, it receives index "x" due to the lack of a standard number in modern Mesopotamian sign lists. However, this unconventional choice of writing 'tu' syllabically is exclusive to this particular omen text, as other omen texts from Susa employed the standard logographic representation for 'tu.' For additional examples of rare syllabic values utilized in these texts, see Labat (1974: 5).

In line 3, the apodosis is as follows: ERIN$_2$ KUR$_2$.MEŠ ŠE$_3$ KUR-*a ih-ha-ba-tam-ma a-li$_2$* ERIN$_2$ KUR$_2$ *i*-MAN-*ma* (the army of the enemy will raid my land and capture my city). The phrase "*ummān nakri ana mātīya ihabbat*" adheres to the conventional form, such as ^{LU_2}·KUR$_2$ *a-na* ŠA$_3$ *ma-ti-ka i-ha-ba-tam-ma* (Scheil 1930 142: 10). However, in Susa texts, the verb "*habātu*" consistently appears as "*ih-ha-ba-tam-ma*," seemingly in the N-stem, whereas an expected G-stem (durative) is absent.

The utilization of the personal prefix '*i*' before the logogram preceding the verb is also infrequent in Mesopotamian texts. In a solar omen text from Mesopotamia, which is heavily influenced by the Susian tradition, the verb *u$_2$*-MAN-*na* is used for *ušanna* (Rutz 2006: 78,

[4] "Si la tête de celui qui n'est pas normal" (Labat 1974 : 69).

89). In the Akkadian omen texts originating from Hittite sources, the verbal prefix typically does not precede the logogram, with the exception of one or two instances, such as "*i*-GAZ" (Riemschneider, 2004, p. 135 = KUB 37 196 3'). The rationale behind this convention was likely to assist the reader in recognizing the correct reading of the verb. For example, "*a*-GAZ" was employed to indicate the first-person form (MDP 57 III r. 21), while "u_2-DUR_2-*eb*" represented "*ušēšeb*" (MDP 57 III r. 22). It is plausible that this practice of writing Akkadian verbs originated from an Elamite scribal tradition, which subsequently disseminated to Mesopotamia and Anatolia.

It is noteworthy that the logogram $ŠE_3$, representing *ana* is used instead of the more common DIŠ. The utilization of $ŠE_3$ for *ana* is derived from the Sumerian language, wherein this suffix signifies the terminative case. As Borger pointed out, this usage is also evidenced in a few Mesopotamian omen texts in later periods (Borger 1971: 65 = BiOr 28, Borger 1953: 193 = BiOr 14), likely indicating an influence from the Susian tradition, exemplified by instances like *aš-šum* TA $^{GIŠ.}$TUKUL BUR_3 u_3 DU_8 ŠEŠ $ŠE_3$ ŠEŠ HA.LA-*mi* (CT 31 pl. 5 iii 48 = Koch 2005: 532, see also Rutz 2006: 71). The use of $ŠE_3$ for *ana* is attested in omen texts from Hittites (KUB 4 63 and 66). For example: *šumma* $ŠE_3$ ITI.ŠU.NUMUN.ʿNAʾ AN.TA.LU_3 “If within the month of Tammuz, there is an eclipse” (KUB 4 63 iii 6). $ŠE_3$ is also used for *ana* in the tablet 22 of the series Enūma-Anu-Enlil (Farber 1993: 256; EAE 22 VII 5; see also Rutz 2006: 73). Additionally, *a-*li_2 is employed for writing *ālī* instead of URU-*i*, and *i*-MAN-*ma* is utilized in place of the standard *ikaššad-ma* or MAN-ma (he will reach/he will capture). These variations are distinct from the standard forms found in Mesopotamian texts of the same period, where DIŠ is used for *ana* or syllabically *a-na*, URU-*i* for *ālī*, and KUR for *kašādu*, or any combination of syllabic signs for writing *ikaššad* (Labat 1974: 75 = MDP 57).

In line 5, we find: $ERIN_2$ KUR_2 $ŠE_2$ KUR-*a ih-ha-ba-tam-ma* URU.KI-*li i*-DAB_2 (the army of the enemy will raid my land and capture my city). DAB_2 for *ṣabātu* (seize), instead of the

Sumerian logogram DIB, is another distinctive feature specific to this text, which has no counterpart in the Hittite omen corpus (Riemschneider, 2004; Labat 1974: 75 = MDP 57).

In the apodosis of line 6, it is written as: "2.30 TA AN.DUL$_3$-*šu i*-GAM" ("the king will be bound in his palace"). As Labat noted, the usage of AN.AN.DUL$_3$ for E$_2$.GAL (palace) is distinctive to this text. In other Susa omen texts, the standard form of E$_2$.GAL has been attested. In Akkadian texts, AN.DUL$_3$ is usually used for *ṣillu* (“shade”). However, there is a unique syllabary text from the Old Babylonian period in which AN.AN.DUL$_3$ is written as an equivalent to E$_2$.GAL (Solleberger, 1965: 23). Outside of this, there is no attestation of AN.AN.DUL$_3$ for E$_2$.GAL or *ēkallu* in all Mesopotamian texts.[5]

In various lines of this text, the value *ša$_4$* of the sign DU is employed to represent *ša* as the relative pronoun. The value *ša$_4$* is also attested for writing the name of a temple in a Middle-Babylonian letter edited by Biggs: e$_2$-šu-me-ša$_4$ (Biggs 1965: 97). This usage deviates from the norms observed in standard texts (e.g., lines 9, 10, 29; for more examples of rare syllabic values in these texts see Labat 1974: 5).

The two extispicy texts from Haft-Tepe and Chogha-Pahn also exhibit shared features with the Susa omen texts. Orthographically, these similarities encompass the use of TA for "*ina*" (in), KUR for "*tebû*" (get up, arise), ŠE$_3$ for "*ana*" (to), DU as *ša$_4$* for "*ša*" (the relative pronoun), and KALA.MUNUS for "*dannatu*" (fortified place), contrasting with MUNUS.KALA (Daneshmand 2004 and Biggs and Stolper 1983: 155).

Matthew Rutz's examination of the orthographic traits within Susian texts found in Mesopotamian omens illuminates the intriguing connection where specific Susa omen texts

[5] These peculiarities might indicate that, in addition to exhibiting schismogenetic behaviour, the Susa scribes were attempting to demonstrate exceptional cleverness by incorporating unusual elements while still adhering closely to Mesopotamian lexical texts. Additionally, it is also possible that some of these peculiarities in the Old Babylonian lexical texts attested in the Susian texts originally came from Elam.

appear to have impacted subsequent Mesopotamian writings. This suggests a potential transfer of knowledge from Elam to Mesopotamia during distinct periods (Rutz 2006). It is noteworthy that the most common features, specifically the use of Susian non-standard logograms, are found in Mesopotamian and Hittite astrological omen texts, despite the absence of astrological texts from Susa. It is particularly interesting that the Susian logograms used in extispicy texts were incorporated into the astrological texts of neighboring cultures.

All of these distinctive features demonstrate a purposeful and deliberate departure from the typical Mesopotamian texts, serving as a clear illustration of schismogenesis, or cultural differentiation. In terms of context, these texts share numerous similarities with their Mesopotamian counterparts. However, the distinctive utilization of logograms and different phonetic complements signifies a unique linguistic approach adopted by the scribes, setting them apart from the concurrent writing conventions in Mesopotamia.

Conclusion

The scarcity of cuneiform texts unearthed in ancient Iran suggests a reluctance among numerous communities on the Iranian plateau to fully adopt writing, despite their awareness of existing writing systems. In fact, societies without writing were really societies against writing. This reluctance created a distinct division, evident both between Susa and other regions within ancient Iran and between Susa and Mesopotamia. Essentially, scribes in Susa did adopt the Mesopotamian cuneiform script, albeit with deliberate alterations made at various points. However, notably, they abstained from employing it for their religious texts.

The absence of Elamite incantations discovered in Susa, juxtaposed with their appearance in Mesopotamia, might indeed suggest the possibility that writing such texts within Elamite territories could have been subject to a taboo or cultural restriction. This discrepancy in findings could imply a deliberate choice or cultural practice that hindered the documentation

or preservation of certain rituals or incantations within Elamite boundaries. The societal norms or religious beliefs prevalent in Elam might have influenced the transmission and inscription of these texts, leading to their scarcity or potential absence in Susian excavations.

The Akkadian omen texts discovered in Susa exhibit a purposeful divergence from Mesopotamian orthographic norms. This intentional departure is evident through the extensive use of logograms, alterations in the syllabic values of cuneiform signs, and the creation of new logograms. These deliberate modifications were employed to establish a distinct and unique writing system that differed significantly from its Mesopotamian counterpart.

All in all, the scarcity of written documents throughout the ancient history of Iran, in contrast to the almost half-million cuneiform texts from Mesopotamia, suggests a significant cultural resistance. This resistance indicates that Iranian societies consciously organized their lives around a policy of differentiation from their neighbors: societies against writing.

Bibliography

Algaze, Guillermo. 2008. *Ancient Mesopotamia at the Dawn of Civilization*: *The Evolution of an Urban Landscape*. Chicago, Ill.; University of Chicago Press.

Bateson, Gregory. 1935. “Culture Contact and Schismogenesis.” *MAN*, Vol. 35, 178-183.

Benjamin, Walter. C.1996. *Selected Writings*. Edited by Marcus Bullock and Michael W. Jennings. Cambridge, Massachusetts, London: The Belknap Press Harvard University Press.

Betteridge, Anne. H. 1985. “Gift Exchange in Iran: The Locus of Self-Identity in Social Interaction.” *Anthropological Quarterly*, Vol. 58, No. 4, 190-202.

Biggs, Robert. 1965. “A Letter from Kassite Nippur.” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 19, No. 4, 95-102.

Biggs, Robert and Matthew W. Stolper. 1983. “A Babylonian Omen Text from Susiana.” *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*, Vol. 77, No. 2, 155-162.

Borger, Rykle. 1957. “niṣirti bārûti, Geheimlehre der Haruspizin (Zu Neugebauer-Sachs, MCT, V und W, und eingen verwandten Texten).” *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 14 190-195.

Borger, Rykle. 1971. “The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.” *Bibliotheca Orientalis*, 28 65-67.

Case, Karl. E., Ray. C. Fair, Manfred Gärtner, and Ken Heather. 1996. *Economics*. London: Prentice Hall.

Cavigneaux, Antoine. 2003. “Frsgments littéraires susiens.” In *Literatur, Politik und Recht in Mesopotamien*: *Festschrift für Claus Wilcke*, edited by Claus Wilcke, Walter Sallaberger, Konrad Volk, Annette Zgoll, 53-62. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.

Cavigneaux, Antoine. 2020. “Les traditions littéraires suméro-akkadiennes à suse. fragments littéraires susiens (suite).” *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie Orientale*, 114, 63–102.

Dahl, Jacob, L. 2009. “Early Writing in Iran.” *IRAN*, 47 (1), 23-31.

Dahl, Jacob L. 2019. *Tablettes et fragments proto-élamites = Proto-elamite tablets and fragments*. Paris: Éditions Khéops.

Dahl, Jacob, L. 2023. “Proto-Elamite and linear Elamite, a Misunderstanding Relationship?” *Akkadica*, 144, 107-126.

Damerow, Peter, Robert K Englund. 1989. *The Proto-Elamite Texts from Tepe Yahya*. Cambridge, Mass: Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University.

Damerow, Peter. 2006. “The Origins of Writing as a Problem of Historical Epistemology.” *CDLJ*. https://cdli.mpiwg-berlin.mpg.de/articles/cdlj/2006-1.pdf.

Daneshmand, Parsa. 2004. “An Extispicy from Haft-Tappe.” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 56, 13-17.

Daneshmand, Parsa. 2020. “Assyriology in Iran?”. In *Following the Footsteps of Our Predecessors: Glimpses on the Historiography of Assyriology*. Edited by Agnès Garcia-Ventura and Lorenzo Verderame, 266-282. University Park, PA: Eisenbrauns.

Desset François, Kambiz Tabibzadeh, Matthieu Kervran, Gian Pietro Basello, and Gianni Marchesi. 2022. “The Decipherment of Linear Elamite Writing.” *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie*, 112(1) 11–60.

Dijk, J. Van. 1982: “Fremdsprachige Beschwörungstexte in der südmesöpotamischen literarischen Überlieferung.” *In Mesopotamien Und Seine Nachbarn* : *Politische Und Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen Im Alten Vorderasien*, edited by Nissen, Hans Jörg., and Johannes. Renger, 97-110. Vom 4. Bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.” Berlin: D. Reimer.

Dijk, J. Van. 1982: “Fremdsprachige Beschwörungstexte in der südmesöpotamischen literarischen Überlieferung.” *In Mesopotamien Und Seine Nachbarn* : *Politische Und Kulturelle Wechselbeziehungen Im Alten Vorderasien*, edited by Nissen, Hans Jörg., and Johannes. Renger, 97-110. Vom 4. Bis 1. Jahrtausend v. Chr.” Berlin: D. Reimer.

Dijk, J. J. A. van., Albrecht Götze, and M. I. (Mary Inda) Hussey. 1985. *Early Mesopotamian Incantations and Rituals. New Haven*: Yale University Press = YOS 11

Elias, Norbert. 1978. *The History of Manners*. New York: Pantheon Books.

Englund, Robert. K. 2004."The State of Decipherment of Proto-Elamite," In *The First Writing*: *Script Invention as History and Process*, edited by Stephen Houston, 100-149. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Falkenstein, Adam. 1936. *Archaische texte aus Uruk*. Berlin: Deutsche forschungsgemeinschaft.

Farber, Walter. 1993. "Zur Orthographie von EAE 22: Neue Lesungen und Versuch einer Deutung." In *Die Rolle der Astronomie in den Kulturen mesopotamiens*: *Beiträge zum 3. Grazer morgenländischen Symposion* (*23.-27. September* 1991), edited by Galter, Hannes D, 247-257. Graz: RM - Druck- & Verlagsgesellschaft,

Ferrara, Silvia. 2022. *The Greatest Invention*: *A History of the World in Nine Mysterious Scripts*. Trans. Todd Portnowitz. London: Picador.

Frangipane, Marcella. 2018. "Different Trajectories in State Formation in Greater Mesopotamia: A View from Arslantepe (Turkey)." *Journal of Archaeological Research*, 26(1), 1-63.

Friberg, Jörgen. 2019. "Three Thousand Years of Sexagesimal Numbers in Mesopotamian Mathematical Text." *Archive for History of Exact Sciences*, 73: 183-216.

Glassner, Jean-Jacques. 2011. "L'invention de l'écriture." In *L'archéologie cognitive*, edited by René Treuil, Éditions de la Maison des sciences de l'homme. https://doi.org/10.4000/books.editionsmsh.14548.

Goetze, Albrecht. 1947. *Old Babylonian Omen Texts*. New Haven: Yale University Press = YOS 10.

Goody, Jack. 1986. *The Logic of Writing and the Organization of Society*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Graeber, David. 2007. "Manners, Difference, and Private Property: Or, Elements for a General Theory of Hierarchy." In *Possibilities*, *Essays on Hierarchy*, *Rebellion*, *and Desire*, David Graeber, 13-55. AK Press.

Graeber, David. 2013. "Culture as Creative Refusal." *The Cambridge Journal of Anthropology*, Vol. 31, No. 2, 1-19.

Graeber, David. 2014. *Debt*: *The First 5,000 Years*. Updated and expanded edition. Brooklyn: Melville House.

Graeber, David, and David. Wengrow. 2022. *The Dawn of Everything*: *A New History of Humanity*. London: Allen Lane.

Hinz, Walter. 1962. "Zur Entzifferung der elamischen Strichschrift." *Iranica Antiqua*. 2, 1–21.

Hinz, Walter. 1969. "Eine neugefundene altelamische Silbervase." In: *Altiranische Funde und Forschungen*, Walter Hinz: 11-44. Berlin.

Hinz, Walter. 1971. "Eine altelamische Tonkrug-Auschrift vom Rande der Lut." *AMI*, 4, 21–24

Humphrey, Caroline. 1985. Barter and Disintegration." *MAN* Vol. 20, 48-72.

Jeyes, Ulla. 1989. *Old Babylonian Extispicy*: *Omen Texts in the British Museum*. Istanbul: Nederlands Historisch-Archaeologisch Instituut te Istanbul.

Kelly, John. 2006. "Writing and the State: China, India, and General Definitions." In *Margins of Writing*, *Origins of Culture*, edited by Seth. L. Sanders, 15-32. Chicago: The Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

Kelly, Piers. 2018. "The Art of Not Being Legible." *Terrain* 70. https://doi.org/10.4000/terrain.17103.

Kervran, Matthieu. 2019. "Proposition Pour Le Déchiffrement De L'élamite Linéaire." *SocArXiv*. December 6. doi:10.31235/osf.io/jc4xs.

Khaleghi, Rouhollah. 1956. *Sargozasht-e-musighi-ye Iran*. Tehran: Safialishah Publication.

Koch, Susanne, Ulla. 2005. *Secrets of Extispicy*. Münster: Ugarit – Verlag.

Koutlaki, Sofia. 1997. *The Persian System of Politeness and Concept of Face, with some Reference to EFL Teaching to Iranian Native Speakers*. Thesis for: PhD. Advisor: Dr Adam Jaworski.

Kreyenbroek, Philip, G. 2022. "Early Zoroastrianism and Orality." *Oral Tradition*, 35/2, 199-210.

Kropotkin, Petr Alekseevich. 1904. *Mutual Aid*: *A Factor of Evolution*. London: Heinemann.

Labat, René. 1974. *Textes littéraires de Suse*. Paris: P. Geuthner = MDP

Lamberg-Karlowsky, C. C. 2003. "To Write or Not to Write?" In *Culture Through Objects*. *Ancient Near Eastern Studies* in Honour of P. R. S. Moorey, edited by Timothy Potts, Michael Roaf and Diana Stein, 59-75. Oxford: Griffith Institute.

Liverani, Mario. 2006. *Uruk*: *The First City*. London: Equinox.

Madan, Dhanjishah, M. 1911. *The Complete Text of the Pahlavi Dinkard* (Part I, Books III - V). Bombay: The Society for the Promotion of Researches into the Zoroastrian Religion.

Mauss, Marcel. 1924. " Essai sur le don. Forme et raison de l'échange dans les sociétés archaïques." *L'Année sociologique*, 2nd series, 1: 30-186.

Mauss, Marcel, and Nathan. Schlanger (translator). 2006. *Techniques, Technology and Civilization*. New York; Durkheim Press/Berghahn.

Meriggi, P. 1971. *La scrittura proto-elamica*, *parte* 1: *la scrittura e il contenuto dei testi*. Rome.

Nissen, Hans, J. 1986. "The Archaic Texts from Uruk." *World Archaeology*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 317-334.

Nissen, Hans Jörg., Peter. Damerow, and Robert K. Englund. 1993. *Archaic Bookkeeping*: *Early Writing and Techniques of the Economic Administration in the Ancient Near East*. Chicago; University of Chicago Press.

Nougayrol, Jean. 1965. " "Vocalises" et "syllables en liberté" à Ugarit". In *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, April 21, 1965. Edited by Hans, G. Güterbock and Throkild Jacobsen, 29-39. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Petrie, Cameron. A. 2018. “Review of Nomadism in Iran: From Antiquity to the Modern Era by Daniel T. Potts.” *Pastoralism* 8(1):10.

Polanyi, Karl. 1957. “Aristotle Discovers the Economy.” In *Trade and Market in the Early Empires*, edited by Karl. Polanyi, C. Arensberg, and H. Pearsons, 64-94. Glencoe: The Free Press.

Potts, Daniel T. 2016. *Nomadism in Iran*: *From Antiquity to the Modern Era*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Quinn, Josephine. 2023. “Alphabetic Politics. What Prompted the Development of Systems of Writing.” *The New York Review*. https://www.nybooks.com/articles/2023/01/19/alphabet-politics-the-greatest-invention-silvia-ferrara/

Riemschneider, Kaspar K. 2004. *Die akkadischen und hethitischen Omentexte aus Bogazköy*. Dresden: Technische Universität.

Rutz, Matthew, T. 2006. “Textual Transmission Between Babylonia and Susa: A New Solar Omen Compendium.” *Journal of Cuneiform Studies*, Vol. 58, 63-96.

Scheil, Vincent. 1930. “Nouveaux présages tirés du foie.” *Revue d'Assyriologie et d'archéologie orientale*, Vol 27, No 3 141-154.

Scott, James C. 2011. *The Art of Not Being Governed*: *An Anarchist History of Upland Southeast Asia*. New Haven; Yale University Press.

Scott, James C. 2017. *Against the Grain*: *A Deep History of the Earliest States*. New Haven: Yale University Press. Kindle Version.

Skjærvø, Prods, Oktor. 2005. “The Achaemenids and the *Avesta*.” In *Birth of the Persian Life*, edited by Vesta Sarkhosh Curtis and Sarah Stewart, 52-84. I.B. Tauris.

Sollberger, Edmond. 1965. “A Three Column Silbenvobular A.” In *Studies in Honor of Benno Landsberger on His Seventy-Fifth Birthday*, April 21, 1965, edited by Hans, G. Güterbock and Throkild Jacobsen, 21-28. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Stasavage, David. 2020. *The Decline and Rise of Democracy*: *A Global History from Antiquity to Today*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Stiglitz, Joseph, and John Driffill. 2000. *Economics*. New York. W. W. Norton.

Stolper, Matthew, W. 2004. “Elamite.” In *The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World’s Ancient Languages*, edited by Roger D. Woodard, 60-94.

Thomas, Rosalind. 1992. *Literacy and Orality in Ancient Greece*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ur, Jason. 2014. “Households and the Emergence of Cities in Ancient Mesopotamia.” *Cambridge Archaeological Journal* 24 (2): 249-268.

Ur, Jason. 2020. “Space and Structure in Early Mesopotamian Cities.” In *Landscape of Preindustrial Urbanism*, edited by Georges Farhat, 37-59. Washington, DC: Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.

Veldhuis, Niek. 1991. *A Cow of Sîn*. Groningen: Styx Publications.

Wengrow, David. 2015. “Cities before the States in Early Eurasia.” Goody Lecture 2015: Max-Planck-Gesellschaft, https://www.eth.mpg.de/4091237/Goody_Lecture_2015.pdf

Wilde, Oscar. 2001. *The Soul of Man Under Socialism & Selected Critical Prose*. Penguin Classics.