The Kingdom of Elymais
(ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

A comprehensive analysis (archaeological, artistic, and textual) of one of the most important minor reigns in southern Iran.

Davide Salaris
PhD (Archaeology), Macquary University
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September 2017.
per Sophie…

…il tuo arrivo ci ha illuminato la vita…
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**PART IV: MAPS, TABLES and PLATES**
List of Abbreviation

AAASH: Acta Antiqua Academiae Scientiarum Hungaricae
ABC: Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles
AfO: Archiv für Orientforschung
AFP: L’archive des fortifications de Persépolis: État des questions et perspectives de recherches.
AH: Achaemenid History
AION: Annali dell’Istituto Universitario Orientale
AJA: American Journal of Archaeology
AJSL: American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures
AMI/AMIT: Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran (und Turan)
ANS: American Numismatic Society
AO: Der Alte Orient
AOAT: Alter Orient und Altes Testament
ARID: Analecta Romana Institut Danici
Athar-e Iran: Annales du Service Archéologique de l’Iran
BAI: Bulletin of the Asia Institute
BASOR: Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research
BEFAR: Bibliothèque des Écoles françaises d’Athènes et de Rome
BiOr: Bibliotheca Orientalis
BM: British Museum
BRM: Babylonian Records in the Library of J. Pierpont Morgan
BSOAS: Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies
BO: Bibliotheca Orientalis
CAD: The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago
CAH: Cambridge Ancient History
CDAFI: Cahiers de la Délégation archéologique Française en Iran
CHI: The Cambridge History of Iran
CRAIBL: Comptes rendus des séances de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres
DITAG: Dipartimento di Ingegneria del Territorio, dell’Ambiente e delle Geotecnologie del Politecnico di Torino
EnIr: Encyclopaedia Iranica
FGrH: Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker

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### The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)

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<td>ICAR</td>
<td>Iranian Center for Archaeological Research</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGIAC</td>
<td>Inscriptions Grecques d'Iran et d'Asie Centrale</td>
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<tr>
<td>IGSK</td>
<td>Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien</td>
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<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>Iran. Journal of the British Institute of Persian Studies</td>
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<td>Revista sobre Oriente Próximo y Egipto en la antigüedad</td>
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<td>Journal of the American Oriental Society</td>
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<td>JAS</td>
<td>Journal of Archaeological Science</td>
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<td>JCS</td>
<td>Journal of Cuneiform Studies</td>
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<td>JNES</td>
<td>Journal of Near East Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNG</td>
<td>Sylloge nummorum graecorum</td>
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*The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)*
Abstract

The Seleucid and Arsacid periods (ca. 301 BC – 224 AD), spanning the centuries from the end of the Achaemenid dynasty to the rise of the Sasanid empire with the arrival of Ardashir, long persisted as one of the most obscure hiatus in the history of southwestern Iran. Although less renowned than its neighbours in the lowlands of Susiana and Mesopotamia, the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland (now the mountainous part of the Khuzestan, and the Kohgiluyeh and Buyer Ahmad provinces) represents nonetheless a distinctive cultural lens through which the heterogeneous socio-political dynamics about one of the most vital regions of western Asia may find an explanation. In this context, the last survival of the Elamite civilization clearly emerges in that small kingdom which was widely know during the antiquity by the name of Elymais. In reality, while Classical sources speak of Elymais, Mesopotamian authors reproposed the long-established designation of Elam, suggesting that this kingdom – so often overlooked in the academic world – was probably heir to the millennial Elamite kingship and culture. During the last few decades, scholars have moderately progressed to disclose a clearer picture of the Elymaean culture and its material evidence, even though a comprehensive study has remained surprisingly absent. This work investigates the origin and development of Elymais through both epigraphic and archaeological data, and reassessed its relevance placing it in the perspective of the latest archaeological and historical scholarship. A thorough analysis with the aim to confront the topic of Elymais from all sides (textual, archaeological, cultural) is suggested then to provide for the first time in academic studies a complete vision of all the fragmentary material records so as to collate them as a corpus. I assume that my own efforts may adequately indicate the significance, and indeed the necessity, to enhance these artistic assets in order to remodel the Elymaean history and socio-cultural identity. Narrowing the gap in scholarship through the elaboration of a critical review, which is also refined by supplementary data from written sources and other prospects of the material attestation, a new general overview has been elaborated for this intriguing society.
Declaration

I, Davide Salaris, certify that this thesis is an original piece of research, written only by me. It has not previously been submitted for any degree, nor has it been submitted to any university or institution other than Macquarie University, Sydney, Australia.

I certify that all sources of information, published and unpublished, have been fully and accurately acknowledged. Any assistance that I have received in conducting this research, and any assistance received in the preparation of the thesis itself has also been fully and appropriately acknowledged.

Ethics approval was not required for this work.

Davide Salaris
08 September 2017.
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The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
Introduction

“Iran represents a cultural massif that, while never isolated from its neighbors, demands attention in its own right. The country’s history and monuments have been objects of wonder throughout the ages, exuding an aura that can be as difficult to explain to the uninitiated as it is palpable to all who have fallen under their spell.”

According to Daniel T. Potts, the above-mentioned description epitomises the sentiments of travellers who have visited Iran at least once. It is hardly surprising that the study of this country steeped in tradition and historical memories, is characterized by multifaceted issues and complexities.

Any reconstruction of the historical and religious traditions of ancient Iran must be largely dependent on philological and epigraphical studies, but given the limitations of these sources, many questions are inevitably left unanswered. One major research area has focused on the kingdoms that developed in southwestern Iran (current province of Khuzestan) along the Zagros mountain range, during the Achaemenid, Seleucid and Arsacid periods. Here, the complex geography of narrow gorges and incised valleys created refuge areas for marginalized populations and served to divide and isolate them, generating alternative socio-political frameworks which allowed for the accommodation of independent cultures. Within this unique geographic scenario, a minor kingdom known as Elymais was founded.

This dissertation will comprehensively record the fragmentary material evidence (textual, archaeological, artistic, and numismatic) currently available for ancient Elymais to provide a new and more encompassing perspective on its socio-political and cultural-historical background.

The first description of Elymais and its inhabitants is provided by Nearchus of Crete, the admiral of the fleet built by Alexander the Great (ca. 356-312 BC) in India. He describes the Elymaeans as one of four quarrelsome peoples living amidst the Bakhtiari mountains who, in the late Achaemenid period, were able to demand and obtain the payment of road tolls from the Persian kings when the royal court moved from Ecbatana to Babylonia. Indeed,

1 Potts 2013, p. XXVII.
2 Str., II.13.6.
he identifies the Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD) as a distinct political and socio-cultural entity located on the Iranian plateau. Within the Classical sources, the Elymaeans were renowned for their fierce resistance to Persian and Greco-Macedonian domination (ca. 537-331 BC).

Elymais emerged as a fully-fledged independent kingdom under the Seleucid and Parthian empires (ca. 331 BC-224 AD), alongside which it managed to coexist in alternating states of peace and belligerence, and the release of different series of coins is indicative of the continued independence of its rulers. The kingdom survived despite evident imperial aspirations of the Persians, the Greeks and the Arsacids, who sought control of this strategically and economically important region. Elymais was located at the crossroads of important terrestrial trade routes. Precisely, the Elymaean territory was crossed by the Royal Road, which starting in Sardis connected north-south Susa to Persepolis, and east-west Babylonia to the Zagros mountains via Ecbatana and by a second route, which linked the Persian plateau (east) via Esfahan and terminating at the Persian Gulf in the region of Bushire (south-west). In addition, the Elymaean control of goods arriving from India and Arabia journeying to Susa or Babylonia, contributed to making Elymais a very tempting target for its powerful trading neighbours. At any rate, outside powers regarded the Elymaeans as unruly and hostile mountaineers living between the incised valleys and isolated gorges of the Zagros/Bakhtiari mountains within a sheltered geomorphological context, which made any attempt to subdue this land and its people impracticable (§4.1.1).

During the research carried out while writing my MA thesis, I was only partly surprised to find out that after more than a hundred years of archaeological activity in Iran, our knowledge of Elymais and its material production is still far from being clarified. In the last few decades, scholars have shifted focus, and Elymais has been a source of increasing fascination for researchers of ancient Iran. This new wave of studies has, however, so far failed to assemble from the material record available on Elymais, a corpus of evidence to better understand what is clearly a stimulating and multi-faceted topic. Recognition of this void is the inspiration behind my attempt to reconstruct Elymaean society, with a particular focus on the various perceptible expressions of its culture.

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3 The main branch connected Sardis with Susa (and on to Persepolis). Ecbatana was on the“silk road” branch of the Royal Road going from Babylon into the Zagros. The Persian rulers had to cross the Zagros to go from summer capital Ecbatana to winter capital Susa.


This choice of subject matter has presented many challenges at the outset including the scarcity of archaeological and philological data available for pre-Islamic traditions and cultures in Elymais, and the combined highland-lowland geography of southwestern Iran. Due to the extremely rugged nature of the lower Zagros (Bakhtiari mountains), archaeological work has been heavily biased towards lowland areas while academic involvement in the mountainous regions of the Elymaean stronghold has been almost absent preventing the development of an overall view of the area. An important point to keep in mind in order to better comprehend the Elymaean world is that a more direct approach to the study of Elymaean archaeology should concern not so much the lowlands and their urban centres, Susiana and its principal city Susa, which were very receptive to Greek and Parthian influences, but rather the highland territories. These latter were characterized by desolate and rough wastelands, which are home to significant rock reliefs, such as those at Izeh-Malamir, Shimbar and Tang-e Sarvak, and the religious architecture of Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman and Shami (§4.2.2).

This dissertation aims to synthesize the findings and data from disparate studies on archaeological, historical, philological, numismatic, and religious themes concerning Elymais, to present them as a single body of information that will allow for a more cohesive discussion of Elymaean political and socio-cultural aspects. These considerations will enable a determination of Elymais within a precise historical context and an understanding of the artistic productions that were derived from a balanced combination of internal and external tendencies; to better appreciate the socio-political and religious influences that characterized its cultural environment and to clarify the numismatic dissemination which allows for greater accuracy in the dating.

In the expectation that more precise evidence will emerge in the future, including new data provided by further excavations, this study will make several suggestions for a reassessment of previously accepted hypotheses regarding Elymais. It is hoped that the present work will offer sufficient proof of the value of exploiting the available material data as thoroughly as possible, together with a range of other evidence to obtain a better understanding of the important aspects of Elymaean society. In exposing readers to the diversity and complexity of the cultural, archaeological, and linguistic record of the kingdom of Elymais, this study seeks to examine its historical context with a different set of studies.

By combining the available core material and peripheral information, this study seeks to expand our current understanding of the socio-political scenario in southwestern Iran from the end of the Achaemenid era to the Sasanid arrival, and to identify its relevance to the
dynamics of the period through an analysis of the historical and cultural dynamics, and the relationship with Syro-Mesopotamian, Persian and Greek environments, all of which markedly defined Elymais as heir of the thousand-year-old Elamite culture.
1. Literature Review

Despite the retrieval of a conspicuous amount of Elymaean material culture from very few archaeological contexts and the acceptance of Elymais being reminiscent of the more ancient Elam, the topic of Elymais as a distinct society within the broader Near Eastern panorama has been assigned remarkably little scholarly attention. Most of the historical, archaeological and philological literature, dedicated to Elymais and its culture takes the form of brief articles, targeting limited areas of study (sacred architecture, rock reliefs, inscriptions, coins). Even the most dedicated scholars of southwestern Iran appear to have avoided attempting to develop a comprehensive view of Elymaean material culture as a unicum, perhaps as a consequence of the dearth of relevant systematic surveys and excavations.

As has been recently pointed out by Daniel Potts, the existence of “scholarship on the ancient kingdom of Elymais is not a new phenomenon. Its origins go right back to the invention of printing and Renaissance humanist scholarship”⁶, facilitated by the phonetic similarity between Elymais and Biblical Elam which was already discerned in the mid-17th century by Samuel Bochart⁷. Working on the history of Elymais, I regularly encountered works of European travellers who visited the region, from the 14th-15th century onwards, and included Elymais in their texts referring to the Bible and the Classical sources. Among them, one of the earliest dated versions seems to be the study of the Italian scholar and poet Giglio Gregorio Giraldi (1479-1552 AD) who in his work De Deis Gentium Libri; Sive Syntagma XVII (Postrema Editio, 1565) briefly discusses Classical sources that recount the attempts of the Seleucid kings to plunder the Elymaean temple⁸. Certainly, the first printed Latin version of the Bible by Gutenberg (ca. 1454-1455), as well as the institution of the Subiaco printer in Italy (1464) facilitated the disclosure of Greco-Roman texts (e.g., Strabo, Pliny, Quintus Curtius Rufus) which contained direct or incidental data on ancient Elymais.

For centuries Elymais was vaguely considered as a seat of wealthy temples, but efforts to contextualize it from a geographical, historical and ethnographical perspective⁹ were never supported by objective data. It was not until the late-20th century that attempts were made to comment on Elymais from a more comprehensive point of view, encouraged by the

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⁷ Bochart 1651, p. 78; cf. Fürst 1867, p. 8; Nöldeke 1874, p. 189.
⁸ Giraldi 1565, p. 321.
availability of material evidence obtained through extensive surveys (McCown 1948; Wenke 1975; Wright 1979) and archaeological excavations (Stein 1940; Ghirshman 1976).

In 1996 Herman Hunger and Abraham Sachs published the third volume of the astronomical diaries from Babylonia (Sachs and Hunger 1996). This gargantuan work immediately provided an enormous body of previously unavailable information on Elymais (Seleucid and Parthian period). Although general overviews of Elymaean history had already been offered by Louis Vanden Berghe and Klaus Schippmann in 1985, John Hansman in 1998, and Edward Dabrowa again in the same year, the first extensive study of Elymais adequately substantiated by evidence was made by Daniel T. Potts in 1999. In his book The Archaeology of Elam, Potts dedicated approximately 55 pages to the task of comprehensively outlining ca. 400 years of Elymaean society. He would later expand the study of historical sources in a journal article Five episodes in the history of Elymais, 145-124 B.C.: new data from the astronomical diaries. Although his work includes Elymais in the broader framework of Elamite socio-historical development, assuring a definite location for Elymaean affairs, the nature of Potts’ main text referring to a comprehensive study of Elam from the 4th millennium BC to the pre-Islamic era deterred from a critical scrutiny of the Elymaean civilization. Indeed, his tenth chapter dedicated to Elymais is more an educated collation of information and considerations. Credit goes to Potts for competently assembling various data (historical, epigraphical, architectural, numismatic, artistic) to provide a pioneering outline of Elymaean culture and its multifaceted aspects. Similar efforts for a thorough historical review have rarely been undertaken. Amongst them, Rahim Shayegan in a 44-page section of Arsacids and Seleucids: Political Ideology in Post-Hellenistic and Late Antique Persia endeavours an historical approach combining numismatic and linguistic evidence. However, albeit thoroughly focused only on the first period of Elymaean history (ca. 147 to 124 BC), his reconsideration of epigraphical sources (mainly the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries) offers only occasional archaeological data to support his comments satisfactorily. He almost never refers to the artistic and cultural production of Elymais (the sole exception being the relief of Hung-e Azhdar). Even the simplistic association between numbers of coin series issued and the regnal year for a specific king often used by Shayegan to collocate the Elymaean rulers in a line of succession may be speculative. The process of monetary

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13 Shayegan 2011, pp. 77-121.
production was rarely as linear as it may seem and there was not always a direct correlation between a longer reign and the issue of a larger number coins.\(^{14}\)

As the first excavator of an Elymais-related monumental site at Kal-e Chendar (valley of Shami) in 1936, Sir Aurel Stein dedicated only a few days to the excavation, providing, however, an accurate description of material and structures.\(^{15}\) He never explicitly referred to Elymais but attributed the site to philhellenic local kings of Izeh-Malamir.\(^{16}\) Although Shami represents one of the most important religious places of Hellenistic and Parthian Elymais – as recently confirmed by the systematic field work of the *Iranian-Italian Joint Mission in Khuzestan* started in 2012\(^{17}\) – Stein seems to have discovered a peripheral area of the site.\(^{18}\)

Forty years later, the report provided by Roman Ghirshman in *Térrasses sacrées de Bard-è Néchandeh et Masjid-i Solaiman* remains the most valuable and comprehensive source of information for anyone with interest in the Elymaean religious complexes at Masjed-e Soleyman and Bard-e Neshandeh. At any rate, as I note in this study, his assumptions are often contradicted by the material data, in particular concerning their dating (ceramic), structural interpretation (plans and photographic apparatus), and ritual use (artistic evidence). Recent works\(^{19}\) have re-evaluated the topic defining the sacred architecture in Elymais as a local unicum with definite structural criteria to officiate native cults.\(^{20}\) After the process of cataloguing,\(^{21}\) the large volume of archaeological artefacts coming directly from the excavations have been widely neglected and their locations between various museums almost unknown.\(^{22}\)

Amongst the artistic *apparatus* of Elymais, the rupestrian art has been certainly subject to greatest attention. Developed along the Bakhtiari mountains with its great variety of rock reliefs still *in situ*, and associated inscriptions it drew the attention of the first European explorers in Iran from the mid-19th century.\(^{23}\) Although singularly approached in valuable

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\(^{14}\) An example is the II series of Vologases I which even though lasted eight years represents the least-documented one (Sinisi 2012a).

\(^{15}\) Stein 1940, pp. 140-159.

\(^{16}\) Ibid., p. 156.

\(^{17}\) Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a; Messina et al. 2016.

\(^{18}\) Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, p. 76.

\(^{19}\) Downey 1988; Kleiss 1998; Martinez-Sève 2014a; Messina 2015b; Salaris 2017.

\(^{20}\) Hansman 1985, pp. 239-246.

\(^{21}\) Stein 1940, Pls. IV-VI (Shami); Ghirshman 1976, Pls. XIII.3, XXIV-XLI (Bard-e Neshandeh); LXX-CXXIV (Masjed-e Soleyman).

\(^{22}\) Mostly, the Elymaean objects are divided between the National Museum of Iran (Tehran), the museum and castle of Susa in Iran, and the Louvre Museum in Paris.

\(^{23}\) Rawlinson 1939, p. 84; Layard 1894, pp. 106-114.
1. Literature Review

articles such as *The Monuments and Inscriptions of Tang-i Sarvak* by Henning\(^{24}\) and *The Inscriptions of Shimbar* by Bivar and Shaked\(^{25}\), which represent an estimable source of data, the Elymaean rock reliefs were meticulously catalogued for the first time in the monograph *Les reliefs rupestres d’Elymaïde (Iran) de l’ époque parthe*\(^{26}\) by Louis Vanden Berghe and Klaus Schippmann after their visit in 1975. The previous attempts of classification within a wider Iranian context as, for instance, in Neilson Debevoise (*Rock Reliefs of Ancient Iran*)\(^{27}\) and Malcolm Colledge (*Parthian Art*)\(^{28}\), only vaguely referred to the Elymaean carved panels in brief descriptions. On the contrary, the work of Vanden Berghe and Schippmann explores the use and conception of Elymaean rock art individually as a distinct group characterized by marked affinities. Despite the high-quality photographs not always accurately reflected in the traits of the line-drawings, the text tends to address the carvings discovered *in situ* in isolation from the sculptural material unearthed during the excavations, such as those at Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman\(^{29}\) or at Shami\(^{30}\), preventing an exhaustive overview and leaving plentiful relevant material largely ignored. A decisive amelioration to more competently allocate the Elymaean rupestrian artefacts to a place of prominence for the art scene in Iran during the Parthian era has been inspired by the books of Trudy Kawami, *Monumental Art of the Parthian Period in Iran*\(^{31}\), where precedence is given to the artistic and historical significance, with particular regard to any iconographic elements or inscriptions, and Hans Mathiesen, *Sculpture in the Parthian Empire*\(^{32}\). In particular, the latter two-volume publication currently represents the most integrated work regarding Parthian sculpted art. The Elymaean carvings are exhaustively discussed with detailed descriptions. Unfortunately, a significant number of reliefs was only recently discovered – by the valuable research work locally provided by Jafar Mehr Kian – and could not be part of the excellent work of Mathiesen. Although methodologically well-structured from a strictly artistic outlook, the study of Mathiesen lacks attention to a systematic analysis of other media sources (e.g., monetary imagery), excluding the investigation of Elymaean art from a more precise archaeological contextualization. The recent publication of Vito Messina and Mehr

\(^{24}\) Henning 1952.
\(^{25}\) Bivar and Shaked 1964.
\(^{26}\) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985.
\(^{27}\) Debevoise 1942, pp.
\(^{28}\) Colledge 1977.
\(^{29}\) Ghirshman 1976.
\(^{30}\) Stein 1940.
\(^{31}\) Kawami 1987.
\(^{32}\) Mathiesen 1992/1-2.
Kian\textsuperscript{33}, though focused only on the reliefs of Izeh-Malamir, has exploited in a masterly fashion the valuable opportunity to integrate the accurate examination of a rupestrian artefact within a systematic study of archaeological data produced through excavations of the area in front the relief where a multi-terraced structure was unearthed.

Productions of Elymaean coins have also attracted significant interest and suggest certain developments in the history of the region during the Seleuco-Parthian era, but methodical investigation of the material, largely unexploited, has not yet been proposed. Elymaean numismatics still represents a challenging area of study, in which the recurrent difficulties in the attribution of coins to one king or another go hand in hand with the impasse resulting from the relative paucity and fluency of published research that deals with the subject. The discovery and gathering of several different specimens during the excavation led by M. Dieulafoy and J. de Morgan at Susa, and the finding of a hoard of \textit{circa} 825 coins near Shiraz (1874)\textsuperscript{34} allowed the first evidence of the clear association between the coinage of Kamnaskires and the Elymaean monetary production to be reported. In 1888 Alfred von Gutschmid was the first to attribute the recently-discovered Kamnaskirid coins\textsuperscript{35} to the rulers of Elymais\textsuperscript{36}.

Starting from the first study \textit{Monnaies de l’Élûmaïde} of Allotte de la Fuÿe in 1905\textsuperscript{37}, Elymaean numismatic has been adequately addressed by the collaboration between Georges Le Rider, Christian Augé and Raoul Curiel (1979). However, if it is still a primary resource, their work is limited only to monetary material from Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. The Iranian numismatist Farhad Assar divulged in 2004 an important article about the chronology of early Elymaean coinage. Only three years later, in 2007, the Dutch scholar P.A. van’t Haaff published the first comprehensive catalogue of Elymaean coinage in over 77 years, after this was first attempted by de Morgan in \textit{Numismatique de la perse antique} (1930). While Assar devotes himself to relatively short historical periods, credit should be given to van’t Haaff, who made a new endeavour to compose a full \textit{corpus} of Elymaean coins by combining new and old material in one place. Van’t Haaff’s \textit{Catalogue of Elymaean Coinage} will probably become the reference book on the subject for years to come. He considers Le Rider (1965) and Augé (1979) as important sources of information and is very much aware of the recent chronologies of Vardanian (1986) and Assar (2004-2005), generally

\textsuperscript{33} Messina 2015a
\textsuperscript{34} Allotte de la Fuÿe 1905, pp. 177-178,
\textsuperscript{35} Bartholomaei 1852, p. 173,
\textsuperscript{36} Gutschmid 1888, p. 158.
\textsuperscript{37} The French numismatist revisited and corrected his first research in his article in 1919, \textit{Les Monnaies de l’Élymaïde. Modification au classment proposé en 1907}. 

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including them in his catalogue even if in some cases he distances himself from them. Although it is essential to finally have at disposal an updated collection for the Elymaean coins, the acceptance of its proposed chronology and iconographic should be approached cautiously. As asserted by Van’t Haaff himself\(^{38}\), this text is conceived more as a practical guide for collectors than a scientific and methodological work in lines with the parameters developed by the *Sylloge Nummorum Parthicorum* (SNP).

Linguistic studies, which specifically focus on the Elymaean texts (almost exclusively inscriptions associated with rock reliefs), have been lacking since the pioneering works of Henning (1952), Bivar and Shaked (1964), Sznycer (1965), and Harmatta (1976; 1979). Henning was the first to translate Elymaean texts (Tang-e Sarvak) and his interpretations were uncritically accepted, despite significant later corrections\(^{39}\). Similarly, Bivar and Shaked and Sznycer for the texts of Tang-e Botan, and – even though heavily reconstructed – Harmatta for the inscription of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman, are the only examples of syntactic and semantic lexical investigation related to Elymaic, up to the recent valuable article of Gzella\(^{40}\). For the first time, Gzella attempts a contextual and cross-sectional analysis of Elymaean inscriptions within the wider assortment of Middle-Aramaic local scripts. However, he omits several texts and only rarely integrates the inscriptions within the artistic context of the rupestrian scenes and/or monetary production. This situation could be justified by the argument that any such study would be frustrated by the insufficient knowledge of Elymaic, due to the bad state of preservation of the scripts (both rock inscriptions and numismatic legend), the isolated locations and the text brevity.

This literature review of previous publications shows that a comprehensive study dedicated to Elymais and its material evidence still remains to be accomplished. The goal here is to carefully examine the data currently available in the various fields (primarily architecture, sculpture, pottery and linguistic, numismatic) and present them as a single corpus, rather than as isolated fractions. Comparing and contrasting the various material evidence at disposal, when possible, I will propose cross-disciplinary connections between different sectors of studies, which involves comparison of cultural traits (or relationships between features) not just internal to Elymais, but also to other interconnected societies. The outcome will provide the necessary knowledge to define the socio-cultural and political

\(^{38}\) Van’t Haaff 2007, p. V

\(^{39}\) Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 287-290.

\(^{40}\) Gzella 2008, pp. 112-122.
1. Literature Review

identity of Elymais, trying to contextualize it within the broader superstratum of Near Eastern history.
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As recently stated by Daniel T. Potts in a brief note “scholarship on the ancient kingdom of Elymais is not a new phenomenon” and “our understanding of the chronology and history [...] are just the latest in a long line of inquiries stretching well back into the Renaissance”\(^{41}\), and yet a comprehensive study able to systematically approach the archaeological parameters through the use of a wide range of distinct lines of evidence (architectural, iconographic, textual), including the analysis of human remains through the methodical analysis of ethnographic data. These factors have largely determined my decision to focus on a coherent reorganization of archaeological evidence necessary for elevating the study of Elymaean evidence to the standard of other regional Iranian studies. In the knowledge that precise spatio-temporal limits, as well as material and textual analysis criteria, need to be well delineated in order to focus the scope of the research, the latter is represented by gathering, enlarging, challenging and reconfiguring what we know about the past of Elymais putting its material repertoire to work in the investigation of the different aspects of the Elymaean culture.

2.1 Space and Time

My choice of space and time is dictated by the region and period of Elymaean florescence as reported in the ancient sources: the southwestern of Iran (modern-day Khuzestan) from the period after the battle of Ipsus (301 BC) to the arrival of Ardashir (224 AD).

The territory occupied by the modern Khuzestan province has been inhabited for millennia and represents one of the most ancient centres of civilization. It is often referred to in Iran as the “birthplace of the nation,” as it is the area where Aryan tribes first settled, Southwestern Iran may be considered the place of origin for the modern Iranian nation as it was the home of the various Elamite entities during the Bronze and Iron Ages (ca. 2200–500 BC), and was also the heartland of the process of acculturation between the Iranian tribes and the native Elamite population, thus laying the foundation for the future reigns of Achaemenids and Elymaeans. The Persians identified Khuzestan as the satrapy of Uja\(^{42}\), and for the


\(^{42}\) Kent 1950, p. 175, s.v. \(^{b}\)Uvja.
Seleucid successors of Alexander the Great, it was the satrapy of Susiana with its capital at Susa. Some scholars translate the name of Khuzestan as “The Land of the Khuzi,” referring to the original non-Semitic inhabitants of the region, which some writers consider be the name given by the Iranians to the Elymaeans\textsuperscript{43}. Although difficult to delineate with precision, the borders of Elymais comprised only a part of the present province of Khuzestan. It lay in southwestern Iran at the head of the Persian Gulf and can be divided into two main regions, the alluvial plain of the so-called “lower” Khuzestan\textsuperscript{44} and the mountainous area of the Zagros-Bakhtiari ranges situated to the north and east of the province, which includes the plains around Dezful, Shushtar and Ram Hormoz and the incised valleys of Izeh-Malamir and Shimbar (Map 1).

This leads us to the extent of time being covered in the present study, which is inevitably restrained by the chronological limits of material evidence from Elymaean territories. Besides, given that the recorded data which has emerged in Iran as Elymaean is mainly from the Seleucid and Parthian era, it appears coherent to focus our investigation on the period when southwestern Iran was actually under Seleucid and Parthian authority (end-4\textsuperscript{th} century BC – early-3 century AD), even though some minor archaeological discoveries and textual sources might slightly backdate this analysis to the late Achaemenid period (5\textsuperscript{th}-4\textsuperscript{th} century BC). These dates belong to a period of significant urbanization as indicated by the intensification of agricultural production and demographic development from the lower Khuzestan\textsuperscript{45} to the intermontane valleys of the Zagros\textsuperscript{46}, which terminated during the Sasanid era (5\textsuperscript{th} century AD).

The accession of Ardashir I in 224 AD saw radical reforms across the Iranian territories, in particular, the Sasanid administration, which resulted in the absorption and consequently the end of the existence of the (semi-)independent political entities, as shown by the redenomination of the Sasanid currency and rupestrian art. 224 AD, therefore, seems the natural point for our study to terminate.

\section*{2.2 Note on Transliteration}

Before delving into the real corpus of this work, it is also worth considering concerns regarding the nomenclature used correctly for geographical places and archaeological sites.

\textsuperscript{43} Frye 1984, p. 273.
\textsuperscript{44} Walstra \textit{et al.} 2010.
\textsuperscript{45} Wenke 1981, pp. 310-313; Alizadeh 1985a, p. 185.
\textsuperscript{46} Wright 1979, p. 127.
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One of the difficulties encountered here relates to dealing competently with a large and, at the same time, varied series of names and transliterations, which make the identification and geographical location of many of the sites examined particularly challenging. I intend to provide exhaustive clarifications to simplify future studies. For this reason, the various toponyms are written using the most common forms in the academic community to facilitate an easier identification of places and monuments, and in some particular situations, where there are variances in the nomenclature of sites, a reasoning for this has been provided using as a single system of transliteration, that of the Encyclopaedia Iranica (EIr47). This study will stop short of delivering a full revision of the spelling of all Persian names and their relative uniformity into a single system of transliteration, which is clearly beyond its scope.

2.3 Methodology

This research seeks to bring together studies concerning the textual, archaeological and artistic records of Elymais, to provide a platform for their analysis as a corpus of Elymaean culture. To achieve this, a systematic review of all published archaeological materials will be offered from the limited number of available sources, which have mostly been in the form of short articles. The specific aspects of these texts are extremely inconsistent and occasionally contradictory. Where discrepancies exist between publications, these discordances are systematically highlighted and discussed. Each aspect will be then supplemented by observations, research, and analysis which I have undertaken during my investigations while concurrently providing explanations for any potential divergences.

In addition, in view of the difficulty of precisely defining the geographical limits of Elymais and the exact location of the Elymaean sites in Khuzestan, it will be necessary to provide through the development of geospatial data (GPS) – taken in detail directly on site – a complete and accurate mapping of the main sites known to date.

My primary data comprises all archaeological discoveries, rupestrian works, artefacts and numismatic sources approximately datable to the Seleucid and Parthian periods, with the rare tentative inclusion of late Achaemenid findings, published or partly-published in (mostly Western) publications, deriving from four main areas of interest: Masjed-e Soleyman (sanctuaries, inscriptions, artefacts); Behbahan (rock reliefs, inscriptions); Izeh-Malamir (rock reliefs, inscriptions, objects, architectural structures); and Shimbar (rock reliefs, architectural structures, inscriptions). In the course of the research, each of these areas will be examined

47 Online at: http://www.iranicaonline.org/pages/guidelines
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individually. Because the vast majority of my data derives from sites that lie in the highland and western foothill zones, this work is necessarily almost entirely biased towards populations who, even though apparently isolated by the geomorphological conditions of the Bakhtiari mountains, were in close contact with the Susiana plain, which they probably saw as an ‘international’ target market and a transmission channel towards the urbanized centres of the Mesopotamian lowland and the trade routes of the Persian Gulf.

In the initial stages, I attempted to create a useable data set from the Elymaean material evidence provided by the main four areas of interest. This has been since readjusted on the basis of typological aspects (architectural, epigraphical, artefactual, numismatic). During this undertaking, the primary limitations confronting this work were the scarcity of sources and the inadequate excavations, recordings and publications on southwestern Iran, especially along the mountainous heartland of Elymais during the Achaemenid, Seleucid and Parthian periods. To avoid creating inconsistent analysis issues, I endeavoured to correlate the documentation in scholarship as far as possible based on the reported location and description. More precisely, the data provided by the scholars who have personally visited the places and studied the data, when available, have been used in preference to those of secondary commentators, except when the field visitors have been proven incorrect. I faced much the same problem in organizing the ancient sources since their information was limited by their biased historical nature. The narrative data, whose authors present only selected periods or events connected in a causal nexus, do not always reflect the reality of the Elymaean situation. In this particular case, all known records used to document its history originated outside the country mainly during the Seleucid and Arsacid era and in languages of neighbouring peoples with whom Greeks and Parthians communicated. Explicit texts on Elymaeans prior to the Seleuco-Arsacid ages are not readily available. More than political inclinations, the problem with these types of sources is their spatial bias. In this case, it is a relatively-fortunate case to have indirect evidence from the better-documented eastern borders of the Roman Empire, which form namely the western borders of the Arsacid reign of which Elymais was a part.\textsuperscript{48} Unquestionably, the Greek and Latin texts are geographically confusing and the locations and name-forms given by Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy among others are considered unreliable. Many of the names that are recorded in Classical sources seem

\textsuperscript{48} Certainly, in this context, the new historical data provided by cuneiform texts of the Astronomical Diaries makes up a \textit{unicum} as an authentic source of their continuity and the exact dating of their entries. Thanks to the many fragments of those astronomical texts – which originated from the period of the Seleucid and Arsacid rulers in Mesopotamia – researchers gained an insight into events absent from other records (Sachs and Hunger 1996; Hackl, Jacobs and Weber 2010).
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erroneous. Places documented in cuneiform texts are more accurately identifiable, in some cases because inscribed bricks have been discovered on the sites. These, however, are totally absent in the textual inventory of Elymais where stones were generally preferred to baked bricks. Evidence of local inscriptions that might offer more useful geographical information concerning Elymais has not been found yet. As a result, the identification and localization of many important Elymaean settlements such as Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon/Soloke and Sostrate, mentioned in ancient texts, remains uncertain.

At the outset of this work, I had envisaged the opportunity to correlate the separate body of evidence provided by archaeological discoveries. Apart from excavations at specific sites (e.g., Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman, Shami, Hung-e Azhdar), this archaeological evidence is that of surface investigations. In a few areas, systematic and roughly comprehensive surveys have been carried out, however, these have been mostly focused on the lowlands\footnote{Adams 1981.}, ignoring the relevance of the mountainous regions along the Zagros, or the researchers concentrated only on earlier, supposedly more appealing periods. The absence of sites in certain areas should not be taken as proof that there were no settlements there. Unfortunately, the extended survey investigation led by Donald McCown in 1948 around Ahwaz and lower Khuzestan (regions of Rom Hormoz, Behbahan, Hendijan), which recorded 44 sites (out of 105) from Seleucid to pre-Islamic era, is still unpublished, even though Alizadeh long ago proposed its imminent disclosure\footnote{Alizadeh 1985a, p. 176, footnote 6. Only recently Alizadeh published the result of the excavation led by McCown at Tall-e Geser (Alizadeh et al. 2014).}. Forthcoming studies and new discoveries are sure to alter this impression\footnote{Messina 2015a.}. Excavations at Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman, Izeh-Malamir, and most recently Kaleh Chendar (Shami), which unearthed the remains of religious complexes, have enriched us with knowledge on the material and spiritual culture of the Elymaeans. Since I did not have direct access to the material, the artefactual \textit{apparatus} (pottery and metalworks) is presented on the basis of what has been previously published and limited to the finding on the sacred terraces (Haerinck 1983; Cellerino 2015) within the archaeological context where it was discovered. In this regard, a discussion on pottery, object and statuary findings – limited to the findings discovered on the main sacred sites – is articulated to facilitate the dating of the architectural structures and to provide an insight into the cultural identity of Elymais. The classification and categorization of the Elymaean artefacts are not the main scope of this work, rather it is intended to provide
an additional source for establishing Elymais within a wider picture of material production in ancient Iran.

Other aspects of the material culture in Elymais emerge from the analysis of the rupestrian art and epigraphy scattered throughout the territory, which generally serve as human-made marks of broader structured complexes. They are typically characterized by cult platforms, fortresses on strategic locations overlooking the valleys or gorges, presumably small centres with inhabitative functions, and additional rupestrian elements. From a chronological perspective, the situation is problematic since only a few monuments and sculptures are securely dated by epigraphic evidence. Due to the difficulties of securing chronological evidence, the adoption of established stylistic criteria and solid comparisons for dating became critical. In this context, the rock reliefs carved into mountain cliffs and monumental boulders, as well as the rupestrian works, present on scattered stones or slabs have been singularly addressed in a separate section, while the sculpted elements discovered during excavations are examined in relation to their archaeological context.

Another of the major challenges I faced in organizing the material data was producing a reasonably well-clarified consideration of the Elymaean coinage and its historical impact. The coins are the only material group of evidence able to cover the entire Elymaean period and datable with certainty, being extremely valuable in the chronological arrangements of sculptures and sites in Elymais. At a theoretical level, the methodological approach of monetary issues affects the preliminary field of analysis without addressing the real nature of the various disputes around it. In this context, the objective constraints play a crucial role as revealed by the absence of endorsed parameters and interchangeable terms of confrontation. The Elymaean numismatic therefore shows in the first instance a lack of a shareable sequence of coins, to be connected to the evidence of other sources (e.g., cuneiform texts, rock reliefs, Elymaic inscriptions). Only at a later stage, is one able to establish an accurate reconstruction of the events. However, a general absence of systematicity ensures an inadequacy of specific historical method towards the iconographical evolution. It must be noted, therefore, that there is an inclination to a certain determinism about the evaluation of what monetary documentation can ascribe to chronological data.

2.4 Thesis Outline

Once reorganized and contextualized, the body of data became more usable as a means of exploring the various aspects of the cultural identity of Elymais. Starting from this consideration, the dissertation is structured in three main parts sub-divided in sections that
separately analyze the key sources that have been identified as the basis for this extensive study of the Elymais culture. Part I (The Background) offers a general overview of Elymais, from the etymology of the name to its geography and climate. Then, before looking into more specific issues concerning the monuments, rock reliefs, inscriptions and numismatic evidence, the broader historical-cultural framework in which they were created and developed is described in Sections 4 and 5.

Moving into the core of the dissertation in Part II (Corpus of Evidence), Section 6 explores the extent of Elymaean religious architecture by examining the sanctuaries of Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman and Shami and includes the new discoveries made at Hung-e Azhdar (Izeh-Malamir) in recent years, thanks to the joint work of the Italian-Iranian mission led by the collaboration of Vito Messina and Jafar Mehr Khian in Khuzestan. These religious monuments identify a distinct Elymaean architectural design that was born and developed in the isolated areas of the Bakhtiari mountains. Specific attention is paid to the question of why these sacred structures are not in the lush and populated flatlands, but rather in the remote and untamed highlands. It cannot be simply by chance that such places of worship have traditionally lain along on shared routes taken by Zagros nomadic people. The temples of Elymais have been famous from the most ancient times for their richness. Study of cult architecture and analysis of items found in them allows a deeper understanding of the religious aspects of Elymaean culture.

Section 7 examines the most significant Elymaean rock reliefs currently known, which can be confidently considered as the dominant element in those lands defining local traditions originating from the earliest Elamite period. The importance of these carvings rests on the evidence that they provided a link between two cultures – Elamite and Elymaean – and allow for the consideration that one followed the other, revealing a continuity of artistic, cultural and religious references. The presence of inscriptions on the sculpted panels is contextually recorded in terms of identification purposes for the associated scene. The dating and interpretation of the Elymaean reliefs have varied considerably over the years and only recently has a comprehensive analysis of their style, iconography and chronology been achieved with Vanden Berghe and Schippmann (1985), Kawami (1987) and Mathiesen (1992), whose works provided the primary support for this chapter in order to delineate a clear outline of Elymaean rupestrian art.

The rock reliefs are in most cases associated with inscriptions, which often complete the carvings and provide information about the scope of their manufacture, and in particular consider the dedicatee of works. Section 8 will treat precisely this topic of study and try, through a linguistic approach to the Elymaean epigraphic evidence, to bring clarity to what is
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an otherwise thorny question, namely: what was the spoken language in Elymais, which some scholars refer to as Elymaic\textsuperscript{52}.

The following chapter, Section 9, deals with the issue of Elymaean coinage, which is an indispensable resource for understanding Elymais culture, art, religion, history and society. The Elymaean monetary evidence is an essential resource for comprehending historical developments in this remote region of southwest Iran and its study allows for a revised cataloguing not just of the coins but also the symbols they carry, making it possible to construct a king list and outline a plausible line of succession.

Within Part III (Discussions and Interpretations), preceding the Concluding Remarks, Part IV (Appendices) and Part V (Maps, Tables and Plates), a final chapter (Section 10) will define the key features of Elymaean identity based on the insights that emerge from the examination of the material data in this study. Culture, art, and religion will be defined to contextualize Elymais in the broader picture of Seleucid and Parthian Iran without overlooking its origin within an Elamite socio-cultural background and additional influences after the Sasanid arrival.

2.5 An Approach ‘Totale’

Despite the oft-cited lacunae in the data, taken together the existing evidence can shed light on the various aspects of Elymaean society. It is important to place the material data from Elymais back into its original context, and to emphasize that the evidence represents different manifestations of a unique and eclectic cultural background. Combined in order to overcome methodological barriers between disciplines, Elymaean material documentation enables some remarks recognizing certain patterns (or absence of patterns) and consequently it will present an interpretative discussion of cultural aspects in Elymais.

As a historical background, this work assumes that the Elymaean polity was reflected in a “confederate” image constituted by distinctive political entities, and characterized by a common linguistic and religious background. Unquestionably, Elymais was a variegated area, where Kissians, Uxians, Kossaeans, and peoples of other ethnographic names, which occasionally appear in the foreign sources, labelled the sub-categories of that entity on the eastern highlands which Babylonian scribes generally identify as “Elam” (i.e., Elymais). The latter term was likely intended as an all-embracing designation for the mountaineers east of Mesopotamia rather than a defined ethnic group, regardless of any uniformity in the cultural-

\textsuperscript{52} Gzella 2008.
linguistic matrix. Other abundant observations point to the dichotomical intercourse between the highlands and the lowlands of Elymais (as previously occurred in Elam) in a geo-political bipolarity, which has represented a crucial diachronic aspect in southwestern Iran evident to the present day. While Susiana was always under greater pressure from external powers (Mesopotamians, Achaemenids, Greeks, Parthians), the highlands maintained a certain degree of (semi-)independence from central authorities, as indicated by the distribution of coins and by the richness of their temples, shielded within the isolated valleys of the Bakhtiari mountains. In Neo-Assyrian annals, the highlands are repeatedly described as the retreat of the Elamite king, which had always been considered a place of refuge and therefore did not concern the powers of the lowlands or was still out of their reach. It is remarkable how the Elymaeans built such sanctuaries in hard to reach yet aesthetically and spiritually inspiring areas; likely the local nomadic tribes periodically crossing these territories had respected and protected these sites from outside contamination and their “relatives” on the plains.

It is necessary to realign the standard view to reflect the maintenance of a close relationship between these mosaic images of political entities and the vestiges of Elymais as described by foreign sources, which appear to exist mainly in the temple institutions and other artefactual varieties (rupestrian art, statuary). On the other hand, trying to recognize the different ethnic entities incorporated under the name Elymais only through their material evidence is impractical. In the first chapters, it has been shown that the geographical limits of Elymais are challenging to delineate, given the absence of local textual sources on Elymais and confusing references in the Classical sources. There is no easy way to understand whether a particular area was or was not included within the Elymaean territory by its material culture. The approach taken here has been a minimalist one. I have included only the material available on Khuzestan and the Bakhtiari mountain regions, which are broadly interpreted as “Elymaean”, without examining the possibility of investigating and, if attainable, incorporating more evidence from the areas of Lorestan, Kermanshah, Hamadan and even northern Fars and Bushehr.

In processing this material coherently, a scholarly consensus needs to be made to integrate the archaeological (architectural, artistic, monetary production) successfully and historical (epigraphic, literary) data. To contribute to a better understanding of the archaeology of Elymais, it is necessary to comprehensively address the material evidence with a constant referral to any documentation at our disposal (archaeological, artefactual, textual, environmental, numismatic) avoiding, on the contrary, a strictly historicist approach. I find myself in agreement with Potts’ assertion that to deal with a topic in its entirety one
must include all the elements of archaeological and historical attestations (*antiquité totale*). Understanding Elymais, as well as Elam, is a challenging enough assignment without further imposing rigid limits dictated by the scholarship. An approach that excludes the textual evidence and bases itself purely on the material evidence cannot exhaustively reconstruct the historical phases; and an approach making deductions from an artificial analysis, which mainly includes written sources, but scorns material documentation would be highly superficial. Elymais is the topic of this dissertation, and to better understand it in its multifaceted aspects it is crucial to utilize all sources at disposal; to identify their peculiarities and restrictions; to credit their contributions as they pertain to the history and archaeology of Elymais; to interpret them as a cohesive *corpus*.

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3. Elymais in Modern Historiography

Starting then from the 14th century many Europeans began to visit Iran providing their narratives. Although travels before the 17th century were caused by particular political circumstances of the time, at the beginning of the 16th century the advent of the Safavids brought stability and security in Persia through their trade openings towards the West. This situation encouraged the arrival of a growing number of European travellers and explorers in southwestern Iran, playing an important part in creating and disseminating information on both the present and past state of this region. However, it is only in the 18th century that these provide useful information about Khuzestan – and Elymais – thanks to the growth of interest in Persia by the European imperialist powers, especially Great Britain. All of this led the Elymais to be part – thanks to his quotes in the classical sources and especially biblical – of a series of works of both geographical and historical significance.

Information on Elymais is scattered through various other sources within publications and mentions in the literature on the surrounding areas, resulting in a very fragmented understanding. The overall goal of this chapter is to establish the general significance of this field of research, by collating all relevant sources and studies of Elymais and placing them in a chronological sequence in order to facilitate the historical contextualization of what was considered as a minor reign with a significant cultural impact in the region of southwestern Iran.

3.1 Travel Accounts

Over the centuries, few explorers have ventured into the arid and at times inaccessible lands of Khuzestan, and at first they were mostly adventurers of the noble class, telling their stories of quests for fame and glory. It should not be forgotten that while it is true that the 19th century brought scientific innovation to archaeology, due to the investigation and analysis regarding the impact of the uniformitarianism in stratigraphic method (e.g., the dating of the age of fossil remains by the stratum they occupy) by men such as William Smith, Georges Cuvier, and Charles Lyell (*Principles of Geology*, 1830-1833 AD); archaeological research in

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54 Grey 1873.
remote areas such as these in ancient Persia was still conducted mostly by wealthy aristocrats belonging to elite circles who were for the most part interested in making sensational finds.

This is the context, which accompanies the article of Major Rawlinson\textsuperscript{56}, \textit{Notes on a March from Zohab}\textsuperscript{57}, published in 1839 in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society (\textit{JRGS}). Here, the British officer makes us aware of stories he heard from the nomadic Bakhtiari tribe – during his stay in April 1836 at Qala-i Tul\textsuperscript{58} – which revealed the existence of inscriptions and rock reliefs at Izeh-Malamir\textsuperscript{59} and the ruins of the temple of Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{60}. Remarkably, Rawlinson never visited these places. A few years later, his stories pushed the most intrepid Austen Henry Layard\textsuperscript{61} towards Iran, eager to investigate the suggestion of the English officer concerning two cities which in ancient times were designated with the same name of “Susa”: the \textit{Greek Susa} at Shush on the Karkheh river, and the \textit{Biblical Shushan}, where Daniel had his vision, at Susan on the upper reaches of the Karun river\textsuperscript{62}. Layard described his travels in Khuzestan in a long article\textsuperscript{63}, receiving the gold medal of the Royal Geographical Society, with further elaborations in a much later memoir, titled \textit{Early Adventures in Persia, Susiana, and Babylonia} (1887). Copies of several inscriptions are included in his \textit{Inscriptions in the Cuneiform Character} (1851). In the course of his travel, Layard also met a number of European travellers, including the Russian diplomat Clement August baron de Bode, the first informant of the rock reliefs of Tang-e Sarvak and whom Layard saved from an attack by Mohammad Taqi Khan and his tribe\textsuperscript{64}. Layard also frequently

\begin{itemize}
\item Sir Henry Creswicke Rawlinson, 1\textsuperscript{st} Baronet (5 April 1810-5 March 1895). He was an officer and politician in a British East India Company army, with a predilection for the Orientalism. His first relevant activity was to copy the trilingual inscriptions of Darius I and Xerxes I at Mount Alvand (Elvend) near Hamadan in April 1835.

\item The complete title is Notes on a March from Zohab. At the Foot of Zagros, along with the Mountains to Khuzestan (Susiana), and from Thence Through the Province of Luristan to Kirmanshah, in the Year 1836.

\item About 15 km south of the modern city of Izeh.

\item Malamir, a diminutive of \textit{Mal-Amir} (Residence of the Emir). From the 8\textsuperscript{th} century, this name was transformed into \textit{Izeh or Izaj}, which means “capital”. This city located northeast of the province of Khuzestan represented the capital under the Atabegs (or Atabaks) dynasty of the Great Lurs. From 1935, during the Pahlavi era, it became Izeh officially, but the population continued to call it Malamir or Izeh-Malamir. The historical name of Izeh during the Neo-Elamite era was \textit{Ayapir}, evoking the inscription of Kul-e Farah.

\item Rawlinson 1839, p. 84.

\item Sir Austen Henry Layard (5 March 1817-5 July 1894). Descendant of French Huguenots, Layard excavated in northern Iraq (especially, at Nimrud and Nineveh) between 1845 and 1851. He worked mainly in the North-West Palace of Ashurnasirpal II (883-859 BC) and the South-West Palace of Sennacherib (704-681 BC).

\item Layard 1894, p. 164.

\item A Description of the Province of Khuzestan (1846).

\item Layard 1894, p. 210. Layard spent most of this time in Khuzestan and Lorestan, staying with members of the Bakhtiari tribe. He had a particularly good relationship with Mohammad Taqi Khan, the chief of their Chahar Lang division. Interestingly, he describes the Bakhtiari as great warriors, knights, rebels, and thieves in practically the same words used by Nearchus and reported by Strabo (XI.13.6; XV.3.12; XVI.1.18; see also Livy, XXXVII.40; Appian, LXVI.6.32) to describe the Elymaeans. Stressing their pride in considering

\end{itemize}
refers in his writings to desolate hills, ancient tepes, bridges ruins, ancient roads, destroyed fortresses, and the remains of settlements, many of which he incorrectly attributes to the Sasanian period (224-650 AD). Furthermore, his tales of escape, kidnapping, theft, lion hunting, duels and treasure hunts would seem the perfect script for a Hollywood movie. Of greatest interest are his descriptions of ancient rock reliefs in the plain of Izeh (Malamir) and the Shimbar valley (Šembār), since, as stressed in his memoir, he was the first European to have visited and described these places.\textsuperscript{65} Around the same time, the previously mentioned Baron de Bode went to the flatland of Malamir (7 February 1841) and later published his two-volume work \textit{Travels in Luristan and Arabistan}, including a description with abundant sketches of the reliefs at Shekaft-e Salman’s cave.\textsuperscript{66}

I mention in passing some of the 19th century travellers who crossed Izeh- Malamir, aided by the new trade route that led from Ahwaz to Esfahan across the Bakhtiari mountains, and who cited the reliefs and inscriptions: G. Haussknecht (1868), A. Houtum-Schindler (1877), H.L. Wells (1881), F. Houssay (1885), H.B. Lynch (1890) and G.N. Curzon (1890).

It should be pointed out that while these travellers mentioned the ruins, the study of them was not part of their missions, which were instead concentrated on political, military and economic affairs, often dominated in this century by the lure of oil exploration.

\subsection*{3.2 Archaeological Explorations}

In general terms, the history of archaeological research in Iran may be divided into four principal stages: the early explorations (1600-1800 AD); the first archaeological investigations in the second half of the 19th century and, subsequently, the period of the French monopoly at Susa (1884-1927); the third period covered the years from 1931 to 1979; and finally, the last time from the Islamic Revolution of 1979 to the present.\textsuperscript{67}

\textsuperscript{65} \textit{Ibid.}, 1887, I, pp. 342, 353. In this regard, Layard reported his discovery of two Parthian reliefs in the gorge called \textit{Tang-e Botan} (the name of the place where the bas-reliefs of the valley of Shimbar are), and his “disappointing” encounter with the ruins of the legendary \textit{Musjedi Solomon Bozurg}, i.e. Masjed-e Soleyman (Layard 1894, pp. 178, 340).

\textsuperscript{66} Bode 1845, pp. 30-34

\textsuperscript{67} Mousavi 2013, p. 3.
As regards Elymais, since the first period has been already addressed in the previous section, I concentrate here on the other three periods.

During the so-called French era (1884-1927), the situation in Iran was characterized by the beginning of French excavations at Susa, following a royal decree granting excavation permission for the engineer Marcel-Auguste Dieulafoy (1844-1920) and his wife, Jane Dieulafoy (1851-1916). Thereafter, in 1894, the minister of France in Tehran – René de Balloy – reached an agreement assigning France exclusive concession to excavate in Iran, obtaining, only five years later (1899), with the establishment of the Délégation en Perse, a total agreement on the monopoly for all archaeological field works in Iran for an indeterminate period. At this time, remarkably important was the work done by Jacques de Morgan, the French archaeologist, and prehistorian, who had a major role in the excavations of Susa (1897-1912) as director of the Délégation en Perse at the time of Naser-ed-Din Shah and Mozaffar-ed-din Shah of Qajar. Particularly of note are the descriptions made by the Egyptologist Gustave Jéquier, a member of the mission, who in 1898 visited the plain of Izeh-Malamir and reproduced the reliefs of Hung-e Azhdar – erroneously known also as Hung-e Nowruz – which he dated to the Sasanian period in agreement with what was proposed by Layard in 1841. Vincent Scheil subsequently studied these inscriptions. Post the French mission, the plain of Izeh-Malamir was visited by the linguist Oskar Mann in 1902, while he was conducting his research in Iran and central Asia.

The first decades of the 20th century were a period of significant socio-political innovation, which had a profound impact on the future of Iranian archaeology. In 1906, the Constitutional Revolution in Iran “promoted new ideas, including a greater consciousness of Iran’s cultural heritage and economic resources, as well as stimulating nationalistic feelings in defense of the historical heritage of the country”.

The International era began with abolition of the French exclusive control in archaeological field in 1927. This event was followed by the promulgation of the Antiquities

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68 Jéquier 1901, pp. 133-143.
69 See §7.3.2.1.
70 Scheil 1901, pp. 102-132
71 Mann 1910, p. 446.
72 Mousavi 2013, pp. 6-7.
73 After the stipulation of a new agreement between France and Iran, on one side the French exclusive control on archaeological field works in Iran was terminated; and, on the other hand, the creation of the first National Archaeological Museum (Iranian Bastan Museum) in Iran was supported by the collaboration of the French government. From this state of things, the young André Godard, was allocated to Tehran to accomplish the project. See Stronach 1988, pp. 88-94.
Law of 1930, which paved the way for international teams to carry out archaeological research in Iran. The first archaeologist to take advantage of the abrogation of the monopoly was the eminent German scholar, Ernst Herzfeld followed a few years later by Erich Friedrich Schmidt. The third – and in the case of Elymais most important – to benefit from this period of suddenly expanded activity was the doyen of Inner Asian exploration, Sir Aurel Stein. Already in his seventies by the time of his extended archaeological expeditions of the 1930s, Stein sought out, and briefly mentioned, numerous sites – including Masjed-e Soleyman, Bard-e Neshandeh, Tang-e Sarvak and in particular Shami – in different parts of southern and western Persia, published later in his *Old Routes of Western Iran* (1940).

The modern period can be subdivided into the “quiet phase” (1941-1959) and the “explosive phase” (1960-1978).

With the outbreak of World War II, archaeological activities throughout Iran declined considerably. As the only pre-war dig director - and now head of the French mission at Susa - to return to Persia after the interval of the war years, Roman Ghirshman opened separate excavations on the “Ville Royale” and the “Ville des Artisans” in 1946 and 1947 respectively. During 1947, he also visited the site of Bard-e Neshandeh while in 1948 he led surveys at Masjed-e Soleyman, from where he returned years later.

Over the same period in the so-called “Lower Khuzestan”, Donald McCown (a member of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago) carried out in 1948 the most extensive survey in the area, with 44 sites recorded in the vicinity of Ahvaz and Hawizeh. However, these were only the ones visible from roads he could drive along and his material has not yet been published.

Those were also the years during which the celebrated Iranist and linguist Walter Bruno Henning went to Tang-e Sarvak. To be precise, in the spring of 1950, while he was in Persepolis as a guest of the Iranian government, he decided to go to the relatively close Tang-

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74 Mousavi 2005, p. 454; *idem* 2013, p. 7.
75 The Persian government sponsored an extensive program of excavations at Persepolis and surroundings led by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. The work was initially directed by Herzfeld (1931-1934) and later by Erich F. Schmidt (1934-1939).
76 Between 1932 and 1936, Stein carried out four expeditions in Persia.
77 Site visited in the same year by Godard (1949, pp. 153-162).
78 *By Lower Khuzestan*, Alizadeh considers “the region south of Shushtar and west of the river Karun within the modern Iranian borders” (1985a, p. 175, footnote 2).
79 Alizadeh 1985a, p. 176, footnote 6. McCown discovered many more sites but he recorded only 105 of them in the region of Ram Hormoz, Hendijan, and Behbahan. Of these 105 sites, 44 were discovered in lower Khuzestan.
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

3. Elymais in Modern Historiography

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD) was in the district of Behbahan\(^{80}\) accompanied by his friend Rostami, photographer of the Iran Bastan Museum in Tehran over those years.

The period between 1960 and 1978 saw archaeology in Iran being regulated in the excavations through several necessary adjustments (e.g., prevention of clandestine digging). Significantly, the 1960s saw the development of almost two decades of successful international cooperation between international teams from America, Europe (in particular, Austria, Belgium, Great Britain, Denmark, France, Germany, Italy) and Japan, and local (Iranian) archaeologists\(^{81}\).

Concerning Elymais, this period was decidedly prolific. It is essential to mention the excavations of the so-called terrasses sacrées of Masjed-e Soleyman and Bard-e Neshandeh conducted by Roman Ghirshman. In 1964, he returned to Bard-e Neshandeh – seventeen years after his first brief visit – to begin a detailed study of the area in three excavations (1964-1966). Subsequently, retired from his task of directing the excavations of Susa in 1967, Ghirshman returned to Masjed-e Soleyman where he worked until 1972\(^{82}\).

Credit goes to Ghirshman, together with the Belgian archaeologist Louis Vanden Berghe, for launching the draft of the international journal, *Iranica Antiqua*, in 1961. This leading journal on mainly pre-Islamic Iranian art, archaeology, and culture, in general, is still published today. In those years, Vanden Berghe made important discoveries, especially regarding Elymaean rupestrian art. During his seventh survey in Iran, he went to Khuzestan (29 July-1 October 1962), and his stay at Izeh-Malamir proved particularly fruitful, since he was the first to photograph the Elamite and Elymaean rock carvings (Hung-e Azhdar) in that region. During his following campaign (14 May-30 August 1964), Vanden Berghe travelled on mule visiting the territories of the Bakhtiari mountains\(^{83}\).

80 The district of Behbahan was counted sometimes as part of Persis (Fars), sometimes of Elymais (Khuzestan). In Muslim times, it mostly belonged to Fars, although now it is part of Khuzestan. The name (Behbahan) was not mentioned in texts earlier than the 14th century.

81 The French Institute in Tehran was soon complemented by the both the German Archaeological Institute and the British Institute of Persian Studies, while in the mid-60s, the foundation at Shiraz of the Asia Institute and the American Institute of Iranian Studies was established. Moreover, in December 1972 the Iranian Centre for Archaeological Research (ICAR) was founded, under the direction of Firuz Baqerzada. The creation of ICAR and the continued field activities of the Department of Archaeology at Tehran University was crucial in the formation of a whole generation of young Persian archaeologists.

82 Ghirshman 1976.

83 Vanden Berghe published numerous articles and books on topics concerning ancient Iran. His fundamental book – *Archéologie de l’Iran ancien*\(^{83}\) – has for years been the core publication on pre-Islamic art and archaeology, for students and scholars alike, as well as for the more general public. Nowadays, this monumental work has been revised and corrected through new studies and research, but what is even more relevant – certainly for the drafting of this work – is his *Bibliographie analytique de l’archéologie de l’Iran Ancien*. Vanden Berghe 1979; followed in 1981 and 1987 by *Supplément 1*: 1978-1980 and *Supplément 2*: 1981-1985. This work was continued by Haerinck and Stevens, *Supplément 3*: 1986-1995, and *Supplément 4*: 1996-2003.
In 1975, Vanden Berghe, Ernie Haerinck and Erik Smekens, a photographer at Ghent University, travelled to Iran where they spent four months for the explicit purpose of visiting and photographing all the rock reliefs in the country. This exploration, which took them to remote places such as Shimbar or Tang-e Sarvak\(^{84}\), was shown in 1983 at an exhibition in Brussels titled *Reliefs rupestres de l’Iran ancien*. In 1985, also as a result of their 1975 visit, Vanden Berghe and Klaus Schippmann\(^{85}\) divulged the monograph *Les reliefs rupestres d’Elymâïd (Iran) de l’ époque parthe*, another work which occupies a prominent place in contemporary studies of Elymais.

Regarding Shimbar and Tang-e Sarvak, mention has to be made of the research led *in loco* by the Dutchman Jan Pieter Guépin and the Englishman Adrian David Hugh Bivar. The two scholars were in Iran in the spring of 1962 and together visited the site of Tang-e Sarvak as the guests of Muhammad Ali Khan Khalili, the chief of the local tribe of the Baha’i Lurs. After this first visit, Guépin returned to the site\(^{86}\) and more specifically the area above the ravine of Tang-e Sarvak where he discovered ruins, which he believed to be the Elymaean temple of Artemis-Nanaia (*ta Azara*)\(^{87}\). In the meantime, Bivar travelled towards Shimbar to view the inscriptions – many of them unrecorded – in the valley. Facilitated by the hospitality of Muhammad Muradi, headman of the small encampment there, he visited and documented the inscriptions and sculptures of the 1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) century AD at Tang-e Botan and ink *graffiti* at Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow. The account of the expedition, *The Inscription at Shîmbâr*, was published in 1964 along with Shaked in the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies* (London).

Finally, during these years the protracted efforts in southern Khuzestan of John Hansman cannot be overlooked. First in 1965 when searching for the sites of the major cities of Mesene, Charax, and Forat, he identified the ruins of Naysan with the ancient town of Charax Spasinou\(^{88}\). Then, in 1966 he sought to find the ruins of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon as he “followed the whole of the lower Jarrahi by boat and where possible by land”\(^{89}\), but only

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\(^{84}\) Site visited in the same decade by Eric De Waele (1972 and 1973) and Hubertus von Gall (1970).

\(^{85}\) The German archaeologist also took a keen interest in Elymais and not just concerning the rock reliefs. First, during his journey Klaus Schippmann visited the two sacred terraces of Masjed-e Soleyman (1968-1969) and Bard-e Neshandeh (spring 1968), reporting his experience of travelling there in his article *Notizen einer Reise in den Bachtiariberge* (1970). Furthermore, he surveyed Iranian fire-temples in 1971 and gave his interpretation of two sanctuaries (Schippmann 1971).

\(^{86}\) The opportunity to visit this impervious area was due to the assistance of the National Iranian Oil Company and the Iranian Oil Operating Companies in providing helicopter transport.

\(^{87}\) Str., XVI.1.18.

\(^{88}\) Hansman 1967, pp. 21-58. See Appendix 3

afterward, thanks to aerial photographs of the upper Jarrahi river\textsuperscript{90}, was he able to determine a large site shaped like an irregular parallelogram called Ja Nishin\textsuperscript{91}.

With the arrival of the Islamic Revolution of Iran in 1978/9, foreign archaeological teams working around Iran went back home, leaving their projects unfinished, even though the Iranian archaeologists resumed the field works after the end of the Persian Gulf War between Iran and Iraq (1990-1991). In the year 2000, after a gap of more than two decades, Iran now eager to revive its ancient sites and archaeological activities, reopened its doors to foreign experts.

3.3 Modern Research

The arrival of foreign experts reached its peak in this last decade, with more than fifty teams from all over the academic world taking part in excavations and studies of Iranian historical sites.

Related to Elymais, of great interest is the research conducted by the \textit{Iranian-Italian Joint Expedition in Khuzestan}\textsuperscript{92}, led by Vito Messina and Jafar Mehr Khian. Their conjunct work began with three campaigns in the plain of Izeh-Malamir, in particular at the sites of at Hung-e Azhdar, Hung-e Yaralivand, and Hung-e Kamalvand. The first campaign took place in February 2008, the second during February and March 2009, and the third in April and May 2010. From the valley of Izeh-Malamir, the Iranian-Italian joint mission moved the subject of study to the area of Kaleh Chendar in the valley of Shami (2012). This research is still ongoing in Khuzestan aiming to acquire new data with the use of both traditional survey methods and current modern technologies such as laser scanning.

\textsuperscript{90} The Jarrahi river in eastern Khuzestan has long been identified with the Hedyphon River mentioned in Classical sources (Str. XVI.1.18; Pliny VI.31.135).

\textsuperscript{91} See Appendix 3.

\textsuperscript{92} This project has been developed under a five-year Protocol (Memorandum of Understanding) signed by the Iranian Center for Archaeological Research (ICAR) and the Centro Ricerche Archeologiche e Scavi di Torino per il Medio Oriente e l’Asia (CST), with the involvement of other institutions such as the Dipartimento di Ingegneria del Territorio, dell’Ambiente e delle Geotecnologie del Politecnico di Torino (DITAG), the Dipartimento di Scienze Antropologiche, Archeologiche e Storico-Territoriali dell’Università di Torino (SAAST) and the Dipartimento di Scienze dei Materiali dell’Università di Milano Bicocca (DSM). The mission is co-financed in Italy by the Ministero degli Affari Esteri della Repubblica Italiana and by the Fondazione CRT di Torino.
4. Physical and Human Landscape in Elymais

Consideration of the origins and development of Elymais as a historical and cultural entity requires an understanding of its physical, climatic and natural characteristics. This chapter aims to describe the unique environmental features of the Zagros mountains and their influence on the formation, development, and characterization of the Elymaean society, while providing the essential conditions that cultivated a safe nest, which would ensure the preservation of local traditions over centuries with minimal foreign contamination.

4.1 Geography

Rephrasing Álvarez-Mon’s description for Elam, when considering the advent of Elymais as a socio-political and cultural concept, the “unique lowland/highland physical setting provided by the Iranian provinces of Khuzestan and Fars”93 played a crucial role in the consolidation process which occurred within this region. These circumstances outlined the politico-historical events that characterized Elymais as a (semi-)independent kingdom producing a buffer-zone, which favoured the recurrent expansionistic inclinations on adjacent polities, and a hasty retreat in the event of menace. Over centuries, however, the social perception of Elymais seems to have undergone significant adjustments which require a reassessment of its essential aspects (territorial, political, social, and cultural), despite its well-preserved deep rooted essence bounds to the environmental situation in southwestern Iran.

4.1.1 Physiographic Divisions

Although the physical frontiers of Elymais have transformed over the centuries, the Elymaean region at its maximum extension stretched from Kermanshah and Hamadan provinces in the northwest along the Bakhtiari mountains, flanking the western edge of the interior desert basin (the proper Iranian “plateau”) to the region of Mamasani (northern border of Fars) in the southeast. This theoretical southeastern boundary of Elymais was probably located further west in the Fahliyan region where a genuine cultural border seems to exist.

between Elymaeans and Persians, as attested in the Persepolis Fortification texts\(^94\). On the western side, Elymais probably extended further to the Hawizeh marshes, which still represent the modern confines between Iran and Iraq, including at alternate stages the lowlands of Khuzestan (ancient Susiana). Along the coast of the Persian Gulf, the Elymaean presence can be expected from the mouth of river Zohreh on the east to the Tigris river mouth on the west (Map 1-2).

Ancient Elymais (today’s location in the southwest of Iran) is defined by a pronounced antithesis between the dry, flat-plain of lower Khuzestan and the central-Zagros/Bakhtiari mountains, on the north and east of the province, with their southern range of extensive north-northwest to south-southeast running ridges (anticlinal axes) and deeply incised valleys, connected to each other by numerous transverse gorges\(^95\). The alluvial plain, for which the Zagros mountains are a major source of sediments, is dominated by major watercourses which reach their maximum capacity during autumn and winter due to the excessive rainfall in the Zagros, provoking the seasonal inundation of the marshes. Now, even after 2,000 years, the comment that “marshy” Elymais was “also greatly infested with serpents”\(^96\) does not seem so far-fetched.

When evaluating the modern environment, it is interesting to note how much it \textit{de facto} reflects the ancient conditions of the region. The geomorphologists of Iran have pointed out that “the areas of most active geomorphological change as the result of river action would seem to be confined to the outer flanks of the Zagros range”\(^97\). The study area of Elymais is within the limits of this region of dynamic geological structures, while the impact of the river action appears mainly evident along the alluvial plains of Khuzestan and between the intermontane valleys of the Zagros\(^98\). The varied landscapes of the natural environment of southwestern Iran are often cast in opposition to one another and become crucial to the understanding of the socio-cultural, political and economic development of the area. These environmental components are the basis for the networks through which the movement of people, materials, and ideas developed.

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\(^94\) Henkelman 2008a, p. 117; \textit{idem} 2008b; \textit{idem} 2011b; Potts 2008c.

\(^95\) Translated into Farsi with the term \textit{tang}.

\(^96\) Pliny, VI.31.

\(^97\) Scharlau 1968, p. 191.

\(^98\) See Brookes 1982; Kouchoukos 1998, pp. 95-104.
The plateau is significantly represented by the central zone of the Zagros mountain system, a series of deeply folded, roughly parallel mountain chains “which for the most part are aligned from north-west to south-east, and arranged in a distinctly regular pattern as a sequence of elevated domes or hogs’ backs”99. The Bakhtiari mountains100 represent the highest part of the whole Zagros range with several crests over 3,500 m and a few over 4,000 m, including Zard-Kuh which at 4,548 m is the highest peak. This area is also the most intensively folded section of the Zagros system, characterized by the most marked orography of any Iranian mountain range. It explains how the previous inaccessibility of the whole area – which only recently was penetrated by highways and railways – has endured, since ancient times101, and ensured the preservation of an extremely well-developed cultural identity in the highlands, which is today almost entirely inherited by the Bakhtiari nomads. The widest point of the Zagros mountains measures ca. 350 km in the southwest of the Qum region, while the narrowest point (southwest of Esfahan) is roughly 200 km wide102. Moving from the higher Zagros ranges to the lowland plain of Khuzestan is a zone of foothills and plains (approximately 60 km wide)103. Of those, Shimbar and Izeh-Malamir are undoubtedly amongst the most important submontane valleys.

On the northwestern border of Khuzestan, the Kabir Kuh range represents the last major ridge before the Mesopotamian lowlands become observable from the Iranian plateau. On the east side of the Kabir Kuh, is situated the Pish-i Kuh (“before the mountain”) valley, which covers the south part of Kermanshah. On the opposite side of the Saimarrah river (west of Kabir Kuh), there is the lower-lying area known as Pusht-i Kuh (“behind the mountain”),

100 The Bakhtiari mountains – roughly identical to the settlement area of the Bakhtiari nomads – form the central part of the vast chain of Zagros and begin just east of the Dez River between the 48th and 49th longitudes. They extend to Bakhtiar, although the region is often considered as including the plain around Dezful, Shushtar and Ram Hormoz (Ehmann 1975). The area of the Bakhtiari mountains is limited by the natural boundaries of the Sezar river (the northwestern tributary to the Dez river) against Lorestan a north, and the Karun, Kersan, and Marun which delineate the boundary between the Bakhtiari mountains and the Kohgiluyeh part of the Zagros in the south. It is also characterized by large chains oriented from northwest to southeast, with peaks reaching over 4,500 m between winding valleys that lie at an average height of 2,000-2,600 m. This is the source of the Karun, Dez and Zayandeh rivers and a place of summer quarters (sardsƯr or вaвlāq). The winter quarters (garmsƯr or qishlāq) occupy less elevated parts of the mountains, with plateaus, valleys, and plains having elevations up to about 1,800-2,000 m, including the level plain of Qala-i Tul. The garmsƯr extends to the flat plain of Khuzestan.
101 As far as we know, the development of a peculiar highland way of living may date back to prehistoric times (cf. Zagarell 1982).
103 Of the various schemes of dividing the region of Khuzestan, Robert H. Dyson Jr. compiled one of the most comprehensive (Dyson 1966).
situated between the Iranian provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam, and Khuzestan, and the Iran-Iraq border, which creates the backdrop of the Deh Luran plain in northwestern Khuzestan\(^{104}\).

From the southern area of Kermanshah, moving southeast across Lorestan, Ilam and Khuzestan towards the border of Fars, the altitude broadly drops, precipitation is low, and the rivers become more and more seasonal. *Per contra* – in physiographical terms – southern Khuzestan is mostly characterized by the lower plain (ancient Susiana) with the alluvial deposits and regions of swamps and marshes and their attendant problems of water logging and poor soil. Half of southern Khuzestan is also below the 200-millimetre isohyet, which appears to be the limit of dry farming\(^{105}\). Geologically speaking, Khuzestan is considered "an extension of the great Mesopotamian alluvial plain into southwestern Iran"\(^{106}\). If it is geomorphologically correct to interpret the lowlands of southwestern Iran as an extension of the Mesopotamian board, the significant difference in the soil composition of this rich alluvial plain, which is determined by its proximity to the highlands, and by numerous river courses must be emphasized. Placed between the plain and the highlands, the foothill corridor provided an ecological niche ideal for settlement and (agro-)pastoralism (§4.3).

The Persian Gulf represents along with the Zagros range, and the associated marshland and alluvial plain situated to the south-southwest of the Ahwaz anticline, the most pronounced physical edges of the region\(^{107}\). On more than one occasion during its history, the alluvial plain around Shush has been recognized as a border area. From a strictly physiographic point of view, the presence of natural elements such as the Hawizeh marshes (border Iran-Iraq) – where the Karkheh river flows into – create serious barriers which interrupt the environmental continuity of the flood plain.

Five main rivers – *Karkheh, Dez, Karun, Jarrahi-Marun* and *Zohreh/Hendijan* – water the plains of Khuzestan rising in the Zagros mountains, and drain between them an area of approximately 100,000 km\(^2\). Moving from west to east, the most westerly river is the

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\(^{104}\) The delineated boundary between the Mesopotamian plain and the Zagros highland has always provoked astonishment and consternation in the eyes of external visitors, and elicited a series of evocative names for these mountains. One of those as referred to in the passage mentioned above “the Ladder” is attributed by Diodorus Siculus to the western Zagros (XIX.21.2, “τῆς καλομέμνης Κλίμακος”). In the first half of 19\(^{th}\) century, William Francis Ainsworth, a British medical officer, Europeanized the name to “Persian Apennines” (Ainsworth 1838, p. 8), while some years later the English physician and ethnologist, James Cowles Prichard, gave more emphasis depicting them as the “true Alps” (Prichard 1844, p. 68). During World War I, the Naval Intelligence Division of Great Britain named them more simply, as the “Persian Front” (Admiralty Naval Staff, Intelligence Department 1918, pp. 29, 33).

\(^{105}\) Adams 1962, p. 110.

\(^{106}\) Ibid., p. 109.

\(^{107}\) Potts 1997; *idem* 1999a, pp. 10-42; Steve *et al.* 2002, pp. 359-361; Cole and Gasche 2007; Walstra *et al.* 2010.
Karkheh, which is located along the border with Iraq. Originating in the Zagros from watersheds of southeast Kermanshah, it is comprised at the junction of small sub-basins that incorporate the Gamasiab, Qarasu, Seymareh, and Kashkan. The Dez, located near the city of Borujerd on Silakhor plain – the largest agricultural land of Lorestan – is the main tributary of the Karun and the least saline of all Khuzestan’s rivers \(^\text{108}\); it also has, in turn, the Bakhtiari river and Kuhrang as tributaries which, together with the Karun, generate the largest (by volume) river in Iran. The Karun enters Khuzestan from the east rising in the Zard-Kuh mountains of the Bakhtiari district. It flows eastwards from Izeh and Masjed-e Soleyman in the direction of Dezful before bending and heading south towards Ahwaz and the Shatt al-Arab and then emptying into the Persian Gulf. From the conjunction from the rivers Marun and Ab-i Ala rivers, both along Zagros mountains, has instead origin the Jarrahi. Marun originates \(\text{ca. 51 km} \) northeast of Behbahan near the southwestern corner of Khuzestan, tending northwest from here in the direction of Ram-Hormuz before turning southwest again, joining the Jarrahi and draining into the Shadegan marshes. Finally, the Zohreh – or Hendijan – which, with its east-west extension, starts at Kazerun in Fars province, passes the southern part of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province, going toward the south-east of Khuzestan below Behbahan before turning south and running through the town of Hendijan to end up into the Persian Gulf at Chatleh.

The Khuzestan rivers are seasonal with their lowest levels in late summer and early autumn, and they are supplied by mountain aquifers which are recharged annually by the \(\text{ca. 400-800 mm} \) of rainfall collected in the Zagros \(^\text{109}\).

### 4.1.2 Geographic Contextualization in Classical Writings

From Classical texts, it appears that the borders of the Elymaean region are quite vague and the information provided is often conflicting and contradictory omitting a comprehensive and precise picture of the area in question. Furthermore, the boundaries of the Elymaean region have altered several times in the course of history given various events and their impact.

The following section will attempt to place the kingdom of Elymais in a geographical context more accurately than Franz Heinrich Weissbach defined in the *Real-Encyclopädie der*...

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\(^{108}\) Alizadeh 1992, p. 17.

\(^{109}\) The impact and relevance of these rivers has generated lots of confusion among both Classical writers and 19\(^{th}\)-century travellers (Rawlinson 1839; Long 1842; Loftus 1857) considering their identification and relation to the site of Susa and Elymais, and historical events such as Alexander's conquests. Steve W. Cole and Hermann Gasche – with a contribution by Carrie Hritz – have recently summarized and clarified much of the confusion, which was further intensified by the shifting nature of the watercourses in the lower alluvium (Cole and Gasche 2007).
As a region that occupied only a part of the wider territory of Elam, it is hard to delineate the frontiers of Elymais. This becomes more challenging considering that its territory should be sited in the border zone between three central districts, namely Media in the north, Susiana in the west and Persia to the southeast. These circumstances explain why the Classical writers speak of Elymaean geography for the most part with much ambiguity. Strabo is the first to provide a location for Elymais, placing it within a predominantly mountainous area to the north-east of Susiana. The same Greek geographer in the following excerpt further confirms this neighbourhood: Generally, it may be assumed that Strabo considered Elymais to extend considerably to the north and quite up to the southern boundary of Greater Media, likely including also the territories occupied between the 8th and 7th centuries BC by the ancient kingdom of Ellipi, between the modern provinces of Kermanshah and Lorestan (western Iran). Finding support in his words, Stephen of Byzantium later (ca. 6th cent. AD) considered Elymais a part of Assyria in the direction of Persia and near the province of Susiana.

Surprisingly, Ptolemy places a district by the name of Elymais even further north in Media, immediately after the so-called region of Choromithrene. Similarly, Polybius places a tribe, whom he calls Elymaei, roughly in the same mountain region to the north of Media. While not clear where it was situated, the existence of a second Elymais positioned nearby Media, as asserted by Ptolemy and Polybius, appears doubtful. According to some scholars, Elymais may be identified with the first attestations about the kingdom of

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110 This is the title of the greatest encyclopaedia of classical scholarship, known as the Pauly-Wissowa. It is an indispensable resource for ancient research. Started by A. A. Pauly (1837-1847) and continued by C. Walz and W. Teuffel (1848-51), then reworked under the direction of G. Wissowa (1893-1909) and subsequently by W. Kroll (1912-1939), K. Witte (1920-1923), K. Mittelhaus (1929-1948) and finally of K. Ziegler (1952), it was finally completed in 1972. Fifteen volumes of supplements and volume indices (1980) were also published, together with an abridged (5 vol., 1964-1975) and partly updated edition, entitled Der Kleine Pauly: Lexicon der Antike. Another updated version followed, Der Neue Pauly (18 vol. and a vol. of indices, 1996-2003), with further updates since 2004.

111 Weissbach 1905, V/2 col. 2458.

112 Str. XV.3.12

113 Ibid. XVI.1.17.


115 Steph. Byz., *Ethnica* (sub voce),

116 Ptol. VI.2.6.

117 Polyb. V.44.

118 Marquart 1901; Weissbach 1905; and Felix 1995.
Daylam, described by 10th-century Arab geographers along a territory, which spread from the mountains of Gilan toward the areas of Armenia and the Caucasus. In reality, evidence that the term Δελυμάις has corrupted to Ἑλυμαίς has not yet been proved; however, it might suggest a whole range of debatable hypotheses. For instance, that the Elymaeans were a fragmented group of peoples who, as the reminiscence of a cultural tradition originated in Elam several centuries before, were able to reunite in a single political entity to cope with external attacks. Amongst them, some of these people with a more accentuate (semi-)nomadic background may have migrated, at some period, even further north through Choromithrene towards the Alborz region. Similarly, as recently suggested by Henkelman, the presence of Elymaeans in two different areas may be the result of “copying of names in the formation of new tribal identities or the construction of shared ancestry”, which represents a well-recorded scheme in Iranian history of the tribal organization starting from the 11th century AD. Another explanation sees the Elymaean territory carelessly included by the ancient authors within the shifting confines of the greater country of Media. It is conceivable that these peoples, who were for the most part warlike mountain tribes, had control at different points in their history, of a widely different extent of territories, thus leading ancient geographers to describe their homeland with such a lack of precision.

Following these analyses, Elymais would include the rugged mountain tract formed by the middle and southern spurs of the Zagros highlands (present-day Kermanshah and Lorestan), through the south of Media as far as the north-east of Susiana. Pliny provides

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119 Deylaman (Daylaman), district and town in Gilan on the northern slope of the western Alborz (northwest of Tehran). Clandestine excavations in this region have brought to light material from the 2nd millennium BC, revealing the archaeological importance of the area, but much more relevant information has been provided by the scientific campaigns conducted from 1960 to 1964 by the Institute of Oriental Culture of the University of Tokyo at several sites (e.g., Ghalekuti and Hasani Mahalla). All the material and tombs so far excavated in the Deylaman territory have been tentatively allocated into two periods: from the late Bronze Age to the early Iron Age end of 2nd millennium BC) and from the late Achaemenid era until the Sasanian period. For bibliography, see Negahban 1995. According to some scholars, in effect, in this case, the Greek sources of Polybius and Ptolemy would be talking about the people of Daylamites or Δελυμάιοι (Weissbach 1905, V/2 col. 2467). Felix (1995, p. 342) assumes that in “the later 2nd century C.E. Ptolemy (6.2) listed *Delymais as a place in northern Choromithrene, which was located southeast of Ray and west of the Tapuroi (i.e., Ţabarastān). There, too, the toponym was corrupted to Elymais (Markwart, Ērānsahr, p. 126 n. 1)”. The Daylamites or Dailamites were a nomadic tribe inhabiting the mountainous regions of northern Iran on the southern shore of the Caspian Sea. As a warlike people, they were employed as soldiers from the time of the Sasanian Empire. In 551 AD, the Late Roman historian Procopius (De Bello Persico, VIII.14.6) defines the Dolomitai (Δολομίται) as mercenaries who fought in the service of Xosrow, while in 961 AD the Daylamites are considered “Kurds of Tabaristan” by Hamza al Isfahani (ca. 270-350 AD) in his work Ta’rikh sini muluk al-ard wa’l-anbiyā’ (Potts 2014, pp. 164-165).

120 Marquart 1901, p. 126, footnote 1; Weissbach 1905, V/2 col. 2467; and Felix 1995, p. 342.

121 Henkelman 2011b, p. 15.

122 Potts 2014, p. 96.

123 Str. XI.13.6b.
further elaboration about the borders of the Elymaean territory, extending it to the shores of the Persian Gulf\textsuperscript{124} – a view supported by Ptolemy who adds how “above Elymaeans is Kissia”\textsuperscript{125} – and placing its northern limit towards Susiana at the river Eulaios\textsuperscript{126}.

According to Pliny’s account\textsuperscript{127}, Elymais would cover the lands between the Eulaios, the Oroatis\textsuperscript{128} and the Persian Gulf (considering its ancient shorelines), and ensuring a pivotal point of access to the sea, which – if the geomorphological reconstruction of Cole and

\textsuperscript{124} Pliny, VI.31.135.

\textsuperscript{125} Ptol., VI.3 “𩢪בלים며nameof Bombay 여 회성”. Presumably, with the term Kissia – widely used by Herodotus – Ptolemy referred to the mountainous areas present in the north-west of the Elymaean territory (footnote 273).

\textsuperscript{126} The inscriptions of Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC) demonstrate that Susa lay on or very near the Ulaya (or Ula) river in the 7th century BC (Borger 1996). In a fragmentary Greek decree of five hundred years later (177/6 BC) found at Susa, the city was said to be placed on the Eulaios (de Morgan 1900). This discovery seems to demonstrate quite clearly that the Elamite Ulaya (or Ula), the Greek Eulaios and the Latin Eulaeus were all cognates likely referring to the modern Karkheh river (Steve et al. 2002, col. 372; Cole 2007, p. 25-26; contra Potts 1999b, pp. 32-33; idem 2005, pp. 165-167). There have been some difficulties in identifying the ancient Eulaios, caused chiefly by the confusion, which prevails in much of the ancient geographical writing about the rivers of Susiana. Herodotus (V.52.6) makes known that Susa “on the banks” of the Choaspes (ποταμῶν Χοασπῆς, ἑόντα καὶ τοῦτον νεφεκτεῖον: ἔτε ὣ Σοῦγεα πολίς πεπόλιστα) without mentioning the Eulaios, while Strabo (XV.3.4) – citing the geographer Polycleitus – used both names (Πολύκλειτος εἰς λίμνην τινά συμβάλλειν τόν τε Χοασπῆς καὶ τόν Ευλαίου). Potts (1999b, p. 35) – following the direction set by Dubeux (1841, p. 9) and Kirkby (1977) – considers being correct the equation Eulaios = Choaspes, identifying it with the Karun river (more likely the ancient Pastigris). He also suggests that Herodotus conserved the name used in the Achaemenid time (Choaspes from the Old Persian Həwaspas and Eulaios for the Elamite Ulaya or Ula). However, on the other hand, the available paleoenvironmental survey and archaeological data (Cole and Gasche 2007) reveal the ancient course of the Karkheh river bifurcated ca. 15 km below Susa during this period under analysis. Consequently, taking account of the data given, “there is a more likely explanation. If two principal branches of the ancient Karkheh existed south of Susa, as indicated by the geomorphological and archaeological survey data (one known as the Eulaios and the other as the Choaspes) then both names would have been used to refer to the river upstream north of its point of bifurcation, with the choice of names depending on downstream perspective” (Cole and Gasche 2007, p. 26).

\textsuperscript{127} Pliny. VI.31.135-136.

\textsuperscript{128} The modern Zohreh river, located in the southeastern corner of Khuzestan, flows into the Persian Gulf ca. 25 km southwest of the modern town of Hendijan (Cole and Gasche 2007, p. 36). The form of the name varies among different Greek and Roman authors who also names it as Oratis (Pliny, VI.28.111), Zarotis (Pliny, VI.26.99) and Oraotes (Amm. Marc. XIII.6.26). Strabo (XV.3.1) calls it Oraitis considering the limit of the Persian coast (καταστρέφουσα εἰς ποταμῶν μέγιστον τῶν ταύτης καλούμενον Ὀρατῶν) when arriving from Hormuz, along with the southeast of Carmania. Ptolemy (VI.3.1 and VI.4.1) explicitly describes the Oraitis as the border between Persia and Susiana while Pliny (VI.31.136), as can be seen in the text above, indicates the Oraitis separated Persia from Elymais. Also Arrian (Ind. XL.8-11) – relying on the now-lost account of Nearchus – states that the exploration of the Susiana coast led by Alexander’s admiral began at the mouth of a river considered the Persian border (ποταμοῦ τῶν ἐκβολέων, ἵνα περιήγησθαι ἐπὶ τοίχων οὐραίως τῆς Περσίδος). From these accounts, there is little doubt that the Zohreh was the ancient Oraitis. In the past, scholars had knowledge of the Zohreh river through the name which referred to the nearby city of Hendijan. Amongst whom, Rawlinson (1876, II, p.134) called it Tab or Hindyan, considering it a small stream flowing into the Persian Gulf which, according to Thompson (1973, p. 6), identified with the same river Hendijan-Zohreh. Bibliography taken from Potts (2011c, p. 5); Tab (von Hammer-Purgstall 1825, p. 318, Berghaus 1832, p. 38); Khairabad, or Ab-i Shirin of Timur’s route in modern Hindyan (Vincent 1807, p. 406, de Bode 1843a, p. 85; idem 1843b, p. 108); Tab or Endian/Hindian, “decidedly the most important stream that flows into the Persian Gulf on its eastern side” (Bunbury 1879, p. 539, cf. Tomasechk 1890, Herzfeld 1908, p. 8).
Gasche\textsuperscript{129} is correct– would encompass more than 200 km (1,100 stades) of coastline in the northern part of the Gulf as far as the port city of Charax Spasinu (modern Naysan\textsuperscript{130}).

This territorial extension provided essential crossroads for the control of trade, given the centrality of the Elymaean land, which was connected to both the mountainous and coastal stretches from Mesopotamia and Media towards Persia to the east. In particular, the jurisdiction over the trade routes, according to Alizadeh, seems to have regulated the flow of goods headed to the Persian Gulf\textsuperscript{131} from India and the Arabic peninsula like the eastern neighbour state of Characene\textsuperscript{132}, via the connection northwards to Ecbatana, the old route from Susa to Esfahan, the vital artery that from Esfahan passed through Izeh-Malamir, Qaleh Tall (Qal’eh-e Tol) and Bagh-e Malek running southwest to Rom Hormoz, and the main route which from Susa headed to Persepolis and Shiraz, and facilitated the development of a prosperous economy and the resulting accumulation of wealth in Elymais. These important itineraries – likely complemented by alternative passageways (e.g., Izeh-Malamir to the lowlands of Khuzestan via Shami/Kal-e Chendar to Shushtar\textsuperscript{133}) – traversed the extended intermontane valleys (Izeh-Malamir, Ram Hormoz, Fahliyan) and penetrated the immutable natural barrier of the Zagros range benefiting from the deep gorges that often naturally connected the secluded plains\textsuperscript{134}.

It is clear from these various accounts that, though the Elymaean heartland in a strict sense corresponds to the highland of the modern Iranian province of Khuzestan, its immediate cultural and historical context roughly comprises parts of the provinces of Kermanshah, Ilam,

\textsuperscript{129} Cole and Gasche 2007, fig. 73.
\textsuperscript{130} Hansman 1991. Also known as Jabal Khaybar and Naisan.
\textsuperscript{131} According to Le Strange (1905, pp. 242-244), and Boucharlat and Salles (1981, p. 71), currently no port settlements have been discovered in Khuzestan prior to the 9th century AD, probably due to the flat coastline not suitable for anchorage (Arr., Ind., XL). Also, not so much has been found out concerning the routes that from Susa run to the Gulf.
\textsuperscript{132} Alizadeh 1985a, p. 184. The assumption of Elymais in control at some point of the maritime trade headed to the Persian Gulf is mostly regarded to the monetary findings, which show southwestern Iran as a pivotal place in international commerce. In particular, a part of the Bactrian trade towards the west appeared to have been passed through the Indus valley and directed to the Persian Gulf. As shown by Le Rider (1965, p. 269), it is likely that the commercial exchanges between Characene, which controlled the Persian Gulf along with Elymais, and Mesopotamia was conveyed through Susa, where several Bactrian coins of the 2nd century BC have been discovered (Le Rider 1965, pp. 442-448; Mørkholm 1965, pp. 164-165; Strauss 1971, p. 120). At the same time, Hyspaosines (king of Characene), around the same period seems to have imitated the Bactrian mints demonstrating to have knowledge of their models (Le Rider 1965, p. 442). In addition, the fact to have found Susian coins in Failaka (Mørkholm 1960), and the “Arab” tetradrachms from the Gerrha mint in Susa (Le Rider 1965, hoard no. 5) similarly reveal how Characene and Elymais were engaged in trade with the Arabian peninsula.
\textsuperscript{133} Cf. Messina 2015b, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{134} Among others, Koch 1986; Boucharlat 1981; Speck 2002; Briant 2012.
4. Physical and Human Landscape in Elymais

Lorestan, Chahar Mahaal and Bakhtiari, Esfahan, Kohgiluyeh and Buyer Ahmad, and Fars. In physical terms, the area includes the central and southern Zagros range of the northwest-southeast-oriented valleys, ending at the larger intermontane plains of Shimbar and Izeh-Malamir; and the Khuzestan coastal and alluvial plains. A range of foothills considered a crucial transition zone (ca. 50-75 kilometres wide) intervenes between Khuzestan and the higher Zagros valleys, being approximately defined by the Masjed-e Soleyman, Ram Hormoz, and Behbahan plains. In all likelihood, it was in this mountainous territory that the Classical and Biblical authors recognized the ancient kingdom of Elymais, an independent cultural and political concept rooted between these remote valleys and gorges, intensely defined by the distinct geographic land of the Bakhtiari mountains (§4.3).

4.1.3 Administrative Geography of Elymais

The difficulties highlighted in trying to reconstruct the geographical boundaries of the Elymaean territory reappear when considering the organizational system of the kingdom.

In general, Elymais is perceived as a jurisdictional unit being part of the larger district of Susiana, but – given the scarcity of sources – it becomes difficult to define its administrative function precisely. In the hierarchical satrapal structure provided by Bruno Jacobs, Elymais would represent a Minor Satrapy, correctly identifying the mountain region within a broader Main Satrapy, called Uja/Susiana. The territory of the latter was in fact divided into two distinct areas: the Central Minor Satrapy of Uja/Susiana, which corresponded with the plain around the city of Susa, and the Minor Satrapy of Elymais, dominated by the Zagros mountains. The Elymaean plateau also formed the border area between the Central Main Satrapy of Parsa/Persis and the Main Satrapy of Uja/Susiana. More accurately, the point of contact between these two most important satrapies – both being part of the bigger Great Satrapy of Parsa/Persis – is located within the Uxians’ territories (Fahliyan valley, or Dasht-e Rostam-e Yek, and the surrounding mountains), which as reported by Q.Curtius “adjoins Susa and extends into the first part of Persia”. This may explain the reason why the area where Ariobarzanes, the satrap of Persis, tried to stop Alexander’s advance is called Persian Gates, as well as Susian Gates. Uxiana, after

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135 Regarding the Persian Gulf shores and the lowland of Susiana, it must be taken into consideration that the ancient coastline extended further north-westward than it does today (Cole and Gasche 2007).

136 Jacobs 2006.

137 Henkelman 2011b, p. 9, footnote 21 (for bibliography).

138 Curt., V.3.3, “Finitima Susis est et in primam Persidem excurrit”. See also Str. XV.3.6.

139 Str., XV.3.6; Arr., Anab. III.18.2. The pass known as Tang-e Meyran or Darvazeh-ye Fars in present-day Iran is located northeast of the modern city of Yasuj (Iran) on the road connecting this city with Sedeh, precisely near the modern village of Cheshmeh Chenar.

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The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
all, seems to have constituted a significant subdistrict of the *Minor Satrapy of Elymais* – and consequently of the *Main Satrapy of Uja/Susiana* – under the authority of a “regionis praefectus”\(^{141}\). Again, significant are the words of Curtius who affirmed that Alexander the Great “incorporated the subdue race of the Uxians in the satrapy of the Susians”\(^{142}\). In all likelihood, the Elymais’ jurisdictional unit incorporated autonomous and, at the same time, subordinated populations (e.g., Uxians), who were responsible for creating a large amount of confusion in the Classical sources (Map 1).

### 4.1.3.1 The “Επαρχίες” of Massabatice, Gabiane and Korbiane

This general picture of Elymais as a *Minor Satrapy* delineated with its internal division in subdistricts seems to be confirmed by Strabo, who describes the three most important access routes into Elymais. He reports the name of three sub-provinces, which, together with Uxiana, would constitute the Elymaean land: Massabatice, Gabiane and Korbiane\(^{143}\).

*Massabatice* (medieval Masabadhan\(^{144}\)) – also known as *Massabatene*\(^{145}\) – is a narrow district situated according to Pliny under Mount *Cambalidus*\(^{146}\) (presumably the modern Kermanshah mountains), to the north of the tribe of the Kossaeans and at the border with Media. Strabo states that it lay under the Zagros, being either a part of Media or “Elymaia”\(^{147}\). Ptolemy, who does not mention the district by its name, considers the *Messabatai* (*Μεσσαβαται*)\(^{148}\) the inhabitants of Paraetacene, which was itself a subdivision of Persis, adjoining Media.

The Massabatice’s territory was a mountainous zone, which probably represented the north-western frontier of Elymais. It constituted a corner in the modern territory of

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\(^{140}\) Diod. Sic., XVII.68.1; Curt., V.3.17.
\(^{141}\) Curt., V.3.4.
\(^{143}\) Str. XVI.1.18d.
\(^{144}\) Morony 1984, pp. 127, 142.
\(^{145}\) Pliny, VI.31.135.
\(^{146}\) *Ibid.*, VI.31.134. “Susianis ab oriente proximi sunt Cossiae, supra Cossiaeos ad septentriionem Massabatene sub monte Cambalido.”
\(^{147}\) Str., XI.13.6. Hoffmann, over a century ago, questionably suggested that the term *Elymaia* (*Ελυμαία*) was used by Strabo to indicate the Elamite kingdom of which Elymais was a province along with “*Gabiane, Massabatice, Susia*”\(^{147}\); however, there is no evidence to support that theory. In addition, Strabo seems to make use of the terms *Elymais and Elymaia* interchangeably.
\(^{148}\) Ptol., VI.4.3.
Kermanshah bordering to the north with Media, and specifically with the region of Kambadene; to the west with Sittacene/Apolloniatis’ plain (area of Seleucia-Ctesiphon); to south-west with Mesene/Characene; and possibly to the east with the territory of Paraetacene.\textsuperscript{149} Massabatice seemed therefore to occupy the territory where the ancient kingdom of Ellipi would have stationed during the 8\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} century BC, supporting the reports from some Classical sources of an Elymaean presence so far north.\textsuperscript{150}

The territory of Gabiane (or Gab(i)ene; also Gabae) was on the extreme eastern side of Elymais, within the Median-Persian border zone. According to Ptolemy, Gabene (Γαβηνη)\textsuperscript{151} was part of Media, yet even though he enumerates the Gabaeans (Γαβαιοι) amongst the peoples of Persia, precisely “above the Suzaei”\textsuperscript{152}, his writing shows some uncertainties typically inherent in the description of regions and peoples along border areas. Gabiane was surely adjacent to Paraetacene – the other zone on the edge between Persia and Media – as reported by Diodorus in relation to the conflicts for succession between Antigonus and Eumenes.\textsuperscript{153} In the passage quoted above, Strabo assumed that Gabiane was the entrance from Susa to Elymais, but this version is hard to reconcile with all the other evidence in the ancient sources. It may be the consequence of some data that Gabiane was on a route to Elymais, and highly unlikely it was on the one coming from Susa, rather it was one of the routes descending from Media.\textsuperscript{155} At the same time, Strabo refers to a royal

\textsuperscript{149} Regarding the region of Paraetacene, it may be rather accurately located between Elymais/Susiana on the (south-)west (Str., XVI.1.8) where its mountains adjoined those of Massabatice; Persis on south; the desert extending to Karmania (modern Kerman province) on south-east; Parthia on north-east (ibid., XV.2.14); and Media on north. Starting from the zone north of Persepolis (Arr., Anab., III.19.2), Paraetacene vertically stretched along the east side of the Zagros reaching Media in the area immediately south of Ecbatana, while Gabiane was placed in the region probably south of Esfahan (compare the reservations expressed by Schmitt 2000, and Henkelman 2008b, on the conventional Gabae-Esfahan identification), more precisely in the flat area between the modern towns of Shahreza and Abadeh (Bosworth 2002, pp. 127-129; Henkelman 2008b, p. 312). As suggested by Henkelman (ibid.) this geographic context would accord with the translation proposed by Henning (1957) of the terms *Gaba- as “valley”.

\textsuperscript{150} Polyb., V.44; Ptol., VI.2.6; Steph. Byz., s.v.

\textsuperscript{151} Ptol., VI.4.3, “ὑπὲρ δὲ τῶν Σουζαι Σύμμαχοι”. The Suzaei are an unknown people and unmentioned in other authors. They may be another tribe of the Bakhtiari mountains on par with the Uxians, possibly connected with the people of Susa. Their name was perhaps misunderstood by Ptolemy, and it might be interpreted as Uzaei for xuz-, the people of Khuzestan (Henkelman 2011b, p.11, footnote 26).

\textsuperscript{152} The ancient sources (Diod. Sic., XIX.34.7; idem XIX.26.2; Polyaen., IV.6.13) mentioned Gabiene with regard to the Battle of Paraetacene in 317 BC and the following battle of Gabiane in 316 BC.

\textsuperscript{154} Str. XVI.1.18.

\textsuperscript{155} Henkelman (2008b, pp. 310-312) suggests the identification of Greek Gabae with the toponym Kabash (Aṣkāba-iš) found in the Fortification Texts of Persepolis and placed at the crossroads between Media and Persepolis, indicating how the toponym may presumably have been first used for the region and only afterwards for the town situated in it. According to Henkelman (2008b, p. 311 and footnote 38), “Kabas and Tāfšā both render Old Persian *Gaba-, which occurs in Parthian as Gb and Middle Persian as Gay.”
residence present a “Gabae, somewhere in the upper parts of Persia”\textsuperscript{156}, which could be identified with the town of “Tabai in Persia” where Antiochus IV met his death after having tried to plunder the Elymaean temple of Artemis\textsuperscript{157}.

Excluding Strabo, there is no information at all about the territory of Korbiane (Κορβιανή; or Corbiana)\textsuperscript{158}. It can only be speculated that its location is at the frontier between Persia and Elymais, as Korbiane would seem a crossing point between the two regions\textsuperscript{159}, more precisely it could be hypothetically located surrounded by Uxiana and Gabiane in southeastern Elymais.

### 4.2 The Climatic and Environmental Factors

In regional archaeological and historical research, considerable importance should be given to the climate, the environmental factors, the natural resources of the area and the land use potential under study whose resulting impression should simplify an understanding of the interaction between the local physical geographical frame and its human history.

Many authors feel compelled to provide readers with basic data on climate alterations and consequently the precondition to address the issue of whether climate conditions have altered appreciably since prehistoric times. Although the period in terms of climate change between the present day and the historical chronology in question is relatively short, some assessments of the climatic and environmental factors is necessary. Specifically, it may be interesting to understand to what degree they influenced the formation and development of the Elymaean society. The reader is introduced to paleo-climatic evidence as well as paleozoological, paleobotanical and paleo-mineralogical data to understand the divergences

\textsuperscript{156} Str., XV.3.3. ἃν δὲ καὶ ἄλλα βασίλεια τὰ ἐν Γάβαις ἐν τοῖς ἀνωτέρω που μέρει τῆς Περσίδος […] (and there were also other palaces at Gabae, somewhere in the upper parts of Persis…).


\textsuperscript{158} See Weissbach (1922, p. 1382) who also reports the passage of Polybius (V.44.7) where amongst the “barbarian” tribes of the Zagros, next to the Κοσσαῖοι (Kossaeans), are named the Κορβηγήναι or Κορβηγήναι (Schweighäuser apud Weissbach), and considered as potential inhabitants of Korbiana. James Rennell (1830, p. 357), instead, identified Korbiana’s dwellers with the Orthocorybantes (Ορθοκορυβακτῶν) described by Herodotus (III.92.1), and localized in the modern Khorraramabad in Lorestan.

\textsuperscript{159} Str., XVI.1.18.
between the current and ancient climate, and the natural circumstances for anthropogenic changes to the Elymaean landscape.

4. Physical and Human Landscape in Elymais

4.2.1 Current Climate

Climate shifts are not the sole cause for a cultural transformation. However, examining them can assist with a better understanding of human settlement patterns, responses and adaptations. In particular, climatic variations have been proven to have a substantial impact on human life in mountain regions. Agriculture and animal husbandry are long-standing forms of land use in mountain areas, which have always had to cope with climate-change vulnerabilities of different kinds. Ecological mutation, in particular, climate effect, fully impacts social and economic adjustments of mountain societies (e.g., Elymaean), and vice versa\(^{160}\).

To place past changes in perspective and better understand possible controls on regional climate systems, it is important to consider the environmental and climatic conditions in present-day Khuzestan. In the southwestern Iranian province, the differences in weather among its various regions are determined primarily by its location within the middle-eastern hemisphere, locked between the Zagros highlands to the north and east, and the Persian Gulf to the south. In the elevated zones, a moderate summer and cold winter are experienced, while semi-desert-like conditions prevail in the margins of the mountains. In the plains and interior regions of south and southwest, a variable climate ranging from semi-desert to coastal desert predominates\(^{161}\). The hot and dry summers are in sharp contrast to the cold, wet winters, but even the coldest temperatures in January are quite a bit warmer than in the highland regions. July is the hottest month, with temperatures reaching an average of 40°C. Ganji classes Khuzestan climatically as part of “the Persian Gulf Zone”, which is generally characterized by higher temperatures than the rest of the country year round\(^ {162}\).

If it is to ascertain from the account of Strabo with regard to Susiana’s climate conditions, no important changes seem to have taken place; indeed, he defines the environment as “fiery and scorching”, emphasising how “the cause of the scorching heat is said to be high, overhanging mountains on the north, which intercept the northern winds”\(^ {163}\).

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\(^{160}\) Fort 2015.

\(^{161}\) More precisely, Alizadeh (1992, p. 16) divided the area into three different “climatic zones”, namely arid, semi-arid and dry zones following the designations of the lower, intermediate and upper plains.

\(^{162}\) Ganji 1968, pp. 212-249.

\(^{163}\) Str., XV.3.10.
Regarding the Bakhtiari area, it may be described as part of a comparatively humid and mesothermal climate. Its main features are a marked seasonality in annual precipitation and cold and snowy winters, with absolute minimal temperatures of less than -20°C (Shahr-e Kord). The reasons for significant rainfall in the area are a result of the average elevation and exposure to the moist west-winds of winter. It amounts almost everywhere to more than 1,000 mm, while in extremely exposed areas these may reach more than 2,000 mm. Certain gorges and narrow valleys in the shadow of the high mountains may receive substantially less. The pronounced wintry precipitation causes the existence of recent small cirque glaciers and numerous perennial firn patches, especially in the surroundings of the Zard-Kuh\textsuperscript{164}.

In a similar way to Strabo\textsuperscript{165} and Arrian\textsuperscript{166}, and later in the in Medieval Islamic sources, when describing the geo-climatic situation of this land, the modern tribal terminology uses a ‘vertical’ classification which distinguishes four different climate zones according to altitude. Among these areas the conditions may differ radically: dry and warm coastal lowlands and foothills well-suited for date culture (garmsir, literally “warm land”, up to 900-1,300 m); a fertile and populous moderate zone with grape, fruit, and vegetable cultivation (moʿtadel); higher and colder lands suited for summer pasture and cereal crop (sardsir, or “cold land”, starting at 2,000-2,200 m); and an alpine zone (sarhadd, or “land at the upper boundary”) with summits rising to 4,000 m, dedicated to summer pasture rather than cultivation\textsuperscript{167}.

Due to the excellent climatic position of the Bakhtiari mountains and their richness in perennial rivers, this area has always been agriculturally dynamic and the construction of irrigation works since ancient times has continued with the aim of increasing productivity. Classical sources, for their part, preserve reports of the scenery regarding this region. Significantly, it is known from Strabo that in Susiana wheat and barley crops were abundant, being able to “regularly produce one hundredfold and sometimes even two hundred”\textsuperscript{168}, while from Diodorus that sesame and dates were plentiful, and apparently that trade had popularised rice there before Parthian rule\textsuperscript{169}. Elsewhere Strabo also confirms the cultivation of rice in

\textsuperscript{164} Grunert et al. 1978, pp. 148-166; Ehlers 1988, pp. 551-553.
\textsuperscript{165} Str., XV.3.1.
\textsuperscript{166} Arr., Ind. XL.2-4.
\textsuperscript{167} Alizadeh 2006, pp. 30-31. For a detailed phytogeographical classification see Pabot (1960).
\textsuperscript{168} Str., XV.3.11.
\textsuperscript{169} Diod. Sic., XIX.13.6. The Greek historian, in fact, refers to the story of a conflict in 318-317 BC between Eumenes of Cardia and Seleucus, where Eumenes during his march through the Susiana “was completely without grain, but he distributed to his soldiers rice, sesame, and dates, since the land produced such fruits in abundance”.
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Susiana\textsuperscript{170}. However, Potts justifiably warns that it is hard to understand whether Strabo was referring to information of his day or from the late 4\textsuperscript{th} century BC when Eumenes would have been marching through Susiana\textsuperscript{171}. He also doubts Strabo’s reference that “the vine did not grow there (Susiana) before the Macedonians planted it”\textsuperscript{172}, since it is known that grapes were cultivated and wine was made in neighbouring southern Mesopotamia from early times\textsuperscript{173}.

4.2.2 \textit{Paleoclimate, Natural Resources, and Human Impact}

Past climate and environmental changes are of fundamental interest to archaeologists, as understanding their conditions and how closely they resemble today’s environment can help with a better perception of the settlement patterns and population trends. This is why a number of recent analyses have investigated the role of climate and environmental alterations in connection with human responses in the form of rising, spread, abandonment and, in some cases, collapse of early complex societies across southwestern Asia\textsuperscript{174}.

Climatic conditions in the past can be detected in different ways, which include the study of geomorphological evidence (i.e., fluvial deposits)\textsuperscript{175} and the palynological analysis (including the study of pollen cores\textsuperscript{176}, stable isotopes\textsuperscript{177}, and geochemical and charcoal analysis\textsuperscript{178}). The transformation processes of the landscape are partially induced by human and tectonic activity and can lead to critical information about environmental development in and around archaeological sites. In Khuzestan, Kirkby’s study\textsuperscript{179} on proposed ancient river courses shows how modifications of climate are reflected in the alternating pattern of aggradation and erosion for the local watercourses. In the words of Kirkby “most authors consider that in semi-arid areas, aggradation is associated with wetter periods, and down-cutting with drier periods”\textsuperscript{180}. He suggests that this process of aggradation began around

\textsuperscript{170} Str., XV.1.18. See Wenke 1975, pp. 158-163.
\textsuperscript{171} Potts 2016, p. 355.
\textsuperscript{172} Str., XV.3.11.
\textsuperscript{173} Potts 1997, pp. 69-70, 148-150; idem 1999a, p. 358.
\textsuperscript{175} Kehl \textit{et al.} 2009.
\textsuperscript{176} Van Zeist and Bottema 1977; idem 1982.
\textsuperscript{177} Stevens \textit{et al.} 2001.
\textsuperscript{178} Wick \textit{et al.} 2003.
\textsuperscript{179} Kirkby 1977.
\textsuperscript{180} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 283.
8,000 BC and did not terminate until *ca.* 2,000 BC, or at least before 500 BC\textsuperscript{181}. This phenomenon may be caused by various factors, but in this case, it seems due to climate variation and presumably the impact of grazing on the environment\textsuperscript{182}. Late Holocene sedimentation, after *ca.* 50 BC, is considered to correlate both with increased agriculture in the region and a more humid climate. Recent multidisciplinary studies in lower Khuzestan have indicated that it is likely that the Holocene changes were due to human impact, with the swift sediment of alluvial fans from *ca.* 550 BC, as a consequence of following avulsions and the development of extensive irrigation systems during the Elymaean\textsuperscript{183} and Sasanid era\textsuperscript{184}.

In the late-Holocene, by *ca.* 2,550 BC, the actual climate of the area, characterized by Zagros oak forest and high-level lakes, was primarily established\textsuperscript{185}. In the particular case of the Bakhtiari mountains – today covered by trees in limited areas (e.g., steep slopes and backward areas) with the predominance of brush, shrubs, and steppe – their original state of natural vegetation may be described as a “*semi-humid oak forest*”\textsuperscript{186} with *Quercus brantii* as the dominant tree, requiring a shorter dry period during the summer and more rainfall in the spring season\textsuperscript{187}. These forests survived relatively intact until the 13\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th} century, when growing demand for charcoal, caused by increased need due to an increment of population pressure, and improved accessibility, provoked their rapid destruction\textsuperscript{188}. Wood cutting by human population to provide the necessary requirements of fuel, construction, grazing and land clearance, altered both the composition of the forest and its extension and led to its rapid


\textsuperscript{182} Kirkby assumes that the warm and dry climate in the early Holocene – that began in the late Pleistocene – caused upstream erosion that “*led to an increase of sediment downstream, causing aggradation all over the plains*” (Kirkby 1977, p. 284). It stabilized with the possible help of a wetter climate since about 4,000 BC, by the more humid conditions of the mid-Holocene confirmed by oxygen isotope levels and the pollen data indicating oak forest from both Van and Zeribar lakes. Kirkby also considers grazing as a possible “*instigator of aggradation*” (*ibid.*), since it induces erosion, and therefore he suggested the beginning of aggradation at about 8,000 BC at a time when animal domestication would have been introduced so efficiently generating an environmental impact (*ibid.*, pp. 283-285).

\textsuperscript{183} Wenke 1981, pp. 310-313.

\textsuperscript{184} Walstra \textit{et al.} 2010, fig. 3; \textit{idem} 2011; Jones \textit{et al.} 2013, p. 30.

\textsuperscript{185} Stevens 2001, p. 753. Although it was affected by significant fluctuations between the last centuries of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} to the first quarter of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium BC (Issar and Zohar 2007, p. 137), Lake Zeribar’s pollen analysis on the Zagros indicates a maximum in the percentage of oak pollen during the 3rd millennium, suggestive of a more humid climate (*ibid.*, p. 105). The evidence for climate change in this period is quite evident. As early as 1966 the limnologist H.E. Wright documented that around 2,000 BC lakes in the Zagros mountains dried out (Wright 1966). In 1977 the palynologists W. Van Zeist and S. Bottema noted that the arboreal pollen records from the bottom of Lake Zeribar in the Zagros mountains notably decreased, likely marking a period of higher aridity (Van Zeist and Bottema 1977) – also stressed by L. Wick (Wick \textit{et al.} 2003, p. 670) – between 4,100 (2,150 BC) and 2,100 BP (150 BC) after which climatic conditions became similar to what is experienced today in the region (see also Lemcke and Sturm 1997).

\textsuperscript{186} Bobek, 1951; \textit{idem} 1968.

\textsuperscript{187} El-Moslimany 1986.

\textsuperscript{188} De Planhol 1969.
depletion as attested in earliest times. An example is represented by the deforestation of the *Pistacia-Amygdalus* bush during the 6th century BC. As a result of human impact in the form of an intensified grazing process at the beginning of the Achaemenid era, this event – integrated with natural phenomena (e.g., an enduring period of low relative humidity, possibly due to extended dry summers or general dropping of annual precipitation levels) – may reveal a straight shift to an agro-pastoral lifestyle and economy for the mountainous populations which persisted during the Elymaean period. In this regard, the apparent scarce human testimonies in the highlands during the Achaemenid period does not indicate a simplistic view of an uninhabited region, but rather the development of the agro-pastoralism which rarely leaves recognizable traces of passage in the archaeological evidence. From this perspective, local assemblages with highest values of Cerealia-type pollen recorded along the Zagros confirm an extensive practice of agro-pastoralism in a period spanning between the Persian to Islamic phases of occupation, since the pollen grains revealing cereal cultivations are generally interpreted as anthropogenic indicators of an economy based on (semi-)nomadism.

Although the Zagros area was undoubtedly a crucial point in the early cultivation of cereals, where hypothetically they could grow anywhere due to their extreme versatility,
it is important to bear in mind that the period of the appearance of fruit-growing trees (e.g., wild vine and olive trees)\textsuperscript{196} indicates a very significant moment in the cultural evolution of the ancient populations living on the Iranian plateau. It reveals the beginning of an advanced form of agriculture and an important change in the socio-economic structure. Agricultural success in southwestern Iran was likely due to local development within the narrow intermontane valleys of hydraulic devices (\textit{qanats}), whose invention has been placed by some scholars in the pre-Achaemenid era\textsuperscript{197}. Similarly, in the lowlands of Khuzestan, the irrigation system was applied to the alluvial fans\textsuperscript{198}. As indicated in the survey data recorded by Wenke in 1973, during the Elymaean period there was a massive increment of irrigation systems and farming production in Susiana\textsuperscript{199}, while the report provided by Wright in 1975 suggests a contemporaneous inclination towards the hydraulic investments, accompanied by a significant growth of the population density, also along the isolated valleys embedded within the Bakhtiari mountains\textsuperscript{200}. It was a situation (increased cultivation production, development of watering procedures, demographic growth) likely indicative of a particular socio-political stability in the region. The installation of \textit{qanats} system was a decisive innovation for water supply adding an extra element to the survivability of human society in the arid Iranian plateau, while in the vast plains of lower Khuzestan the agriculture economy was considerably incremented by the use of natural and artificial basins.

The invasive treatment of the arable soil due to the intensified agricultural activity starting from the Achaemenid period facilitated the prospering of domesticated plants as well as an incremented diffusion of the herb environment. The overuse of grazing lands during this time is indicated by the highest values of anthropogenic herb values (\textit{Plantago lanceolata}-type pollen)\textsuperscript{201}. Once the livestock was domesticated, it started to assume a more significant impact on the natural habitat which implied substantial modifications in the original flora of the pastureland\textsuperscript{202}. As regards animal life that was present, the Zagros mountains have traditionally supported, and still support, a rich variety of fauna which offers enormous

\textsuperscript{196} Zohary 1973.
\textsuperscript{197} Goblot 1979; Issar and Zohar 2007, pp. 202-203. In 209 BC during the campaign of Antiochus against Arsaces, in his visit at Ecbatana Polybius described as the \textit{qanats} were already attested as an essential element within the Persian landscape (Polyb., X.28). See also Vitruv., X.6.3.
\textsuperscript{198} Malekzadeh 2007.
\textsuperscript{199} Wenke 1975; \textit{idem} 1981, p. 313-314.
\textsuperscript{200} Wright 1979, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{201} Djamali \textit{et al.} 2009b, figs. 3,4 and 5.
\textsuperscript{202} Miller 2003, p. 12.
opportunities for subsistence. As incidentally documented in the ancient sources and reflected in the modern academic studies on animal husbandry in Iran, it is reasonable to suppose the presence of domesticated goats (*Capra hircus*), sheep (*Ovis aries*), zebu cattle (*Bos taurus indicus*), and horses (*Equus sp.*) in Elymais. If a number of species captured or domesticated must not be miscalculated, as might have had a limited impact on the daily diet, what is important is to understand that animals are essential not only for the meat they provide but also for those secondary products they can supply (milk, wool, traction).

According to archaeological surveys, the Iranian plateau is one of the earliest parts of the world in which metal was mined and utilized, while for some scholars it even hosts the most ancient mining activity in the history. Since the Mesopotamian, Khuzestan and Lorestan plains are almost entirely lacking in mineral resources, “the highlands” were commonly perceived as a unified supplier of raw materials to the ancient metallurgists of resource-poor lowlands.

According to Stöcklin and Nabavi, Iran has to be subdivided into ten major lithotectonic regions, whose boundaries of these zones are marked by faults or depressions. In the particular case of the Zagros mountains, the four tectonically related units which constitute their orogenic belt are the Zagros fold belt, the Zagros thrust, the Sanandaj-Sirjan zone and the Urmia-Dokhtar magmatic belt.

The list included above is more geographically inclusive than the former Elymaean region would have been, but it is meant to indicate the richness of mineral assortment in Iran. From a geological point of view, Elymais covered an area which included the Khuzestan plain (no metallic sources), and the Zagros fold and thrust belt (few metal resources including copper, lead, and iron), representing a zone very deficient in mineral resources. At the same

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203 For goats and sheep: *Persepolis Fortification Tables* (e.g., Henkelman 2011b, pp. 4, 7, footnote 14); Arr., III.17.6. For zebu cattle: Elamite (Kul-e Farah) and Elymaean (Shaivand) rock reliefs, Chinese sources (Appendix no. 2). For horses: Arr., III.17.6; idem *Ind.*, XL.

204 Hole *et al.* 1969; Redding 1981; Uerpmann 1987; and Potts 1999a, table 2.5.

205 Potts 1999a, p. 24.

206 Regarding the so-called “Secondary Products Revolution”, see Greenfield 2014.

207 Alipour 1993, Ghorbani 2013, p. 74ff. During the last century, extensive archaeological and geological research has revealed multiple pieces of evidence for ancient exploitation and extraction of mineral resources with the use of metallurgical operations along the Iranian Plateau.

208 For more specific information see Momenzadeh 2004; Stöllner 2005; Nezafati *et al.* 2008; and Ghorbani 2013.

209 Stöcklin 1968; *idem* 1977; Nabavi 1976. The ten area are Khuzestan plain, Zagros fold belt, Sanandaj-Sirjan zone, Urmia-Dokhtar magmatic belt, Central Iran block, Alborz-Azerbaijan mountains, Kopet Dagh, Lut block, Eastern Iran, and Makran, to which should be added the Zagros thrust (Nezafati 2015).

210 Nabavi 1976.
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time, however, it bordered and encroached into the Sanandaj-Sirjan and Urmia-Dokhtar zones, which, on the contrary, were among the richest metallogenic regions of ancient Iran. The panorama of the metallogenic resources in Iran certainly had a significant impact on the internal dynamics of the Zagros influencing the commercial exchanges and metalwork production available in Elymais and neighbouring regions.

To sum up, the climatic situation during the development period and expansion of agriculture was, and still is, much debated as it underpins the interpretation of the general interdependence between people’s attitude and the natural environment. As demonstrated by the inverse relationship between a consistent increment in human population growth and exhaustion of arboreal (e.g., *Quercus*) and shrub (e.g., *Pistacia-Amygdalus*) flora stretching from Achaemenid to early Islamic occupation period, a non-climatic reason for botany alterations must be sought in the human invasiveness suffered by the natural landscape. The geomorphological evidence and the pollen diagrams confirm the critical function that human actions played as a paleoenvironment agent able to induce environmental shifts which impacted on socio-cultural adjustments. As rural economies were set up, human impact on the landscape increased with developed irrigation systems which stabilized and facilitate the increment of harvests. As the grazing factor was established, it became an integral part of the agricultural structure. Whether achieved through the transhumance of a part of the sedentary population or the development of specialized nomadic pastoralism, an increment in the land for the sustainment of human and animal population was provided. At the same time, in archaeobotanical records evidence of a potential overuse was revealed by the traces of terrain degradation.

4.3 Interaction between People and Environment

People interact with the environment passively as they undergo and adapt to the adjustments of the surroundings while, at the same time, being agents of environmental change present and past. The balance of this relationship has evolved in time and space, and determining a turning point between them is subject to variable assumptions. In the course of this chapter, it will be reported that, starting from the late Holocene, the pollen records in Iran are regulated more by people than climate. Djamali reports on how variations in vegetation around Maharlou Lake in Fars mirror occupation changes through the last 5,000 years with

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cultivated species such as olive trees and wild vines appearing in the pollen record from around 2,350 BC\textsuperscript{213}. In addition, palynological analysis from Lake Almalou in northwestern Iran (south of Tabriz) reveals significant shifts in vegetation associated with historical events. Overall, there are two strongly expressed agricultural phases dated around 500-270 BC (i.e., Achaemenid and Seleucid period) and 1,720-1,920 AD (i.e., end of the Safavid Dynasty to the present). The pollen diagrams delineate more precisely that during the Achaemenid and Seleucid period there was the development in southwestern Iran of a dimorphic society. It was based on a highly productive fruit-tree cultivation and agro-pastoral activities\textsuperscript{214}. The first was facilitated by the creation of an advanced irrigation system and generally was indicative of a sedentary society in period of political and socio-economical stability; the latter was evident from the high value of \textit{Cerealia}-type pollen and anthropogenic herbs (indicating the overgrazed pasturelands) characterizing a community where the trade of surpluses in livestock, wool, and other animal products, perhaps, was thriving in exchanges with the agents of the sedentary zones.

The \textit{Persepolis Fortification} archives, as well as the Classical sources, provide detailed information concerning the presence of the distinctive Zagros blend of sedentary and pastoralist aspects in the border areas between the lowlands of Khuzestan and the highlands of the Bakhtiari region. It is likely that different tribal groups linked by a common socio-cultural and linguistic background were consolidated under the same dynamical structure in terms of ‘\textit{double morphologie sociale}’, even though perceiving themselves as being distinct entities\textsuperscript{215}. Surveys from the so-called \textit{Eastern Corridor}\textsuperscript{216} which running at the foot of the Zagros mountains connecting western (Susiana, Deh Luran and Mehran) and eastern (Ram Hormoz, Behbahan and Zohreh) plains – including relevant sites as Shushtar (ancient Sostrate), Masjed-e Soleyman, and Ja Nishin (ancient Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon)\textsuperscript{217} – have revealed that this extended strip of land was located at the edge of a dimorphic zone in eastern Khuzestan being able to produce an ideal meeting point between townsmen from the central plains, farmers from the sedentary zone at the eastern border, and highlanders from the Iranian plateau. This situation allowed the agro-pastoralist inhabitants to come into contact

\textsuperscript{213} Djamali \textit{et al.} 2009a, p. 130 and fig. 4-5.
\textsuperscript{214} \textit{Ibid.}, 2009b, pp. 1372-1373.
\textsuperscript{215} Henkelman 2011b, pp. 5-6.
\textsuperscript{216} Moghaddam and Miri 2007.
\textsuperscript{217} For a period extending from the Neo-Elamite to the Parthian era, see Hansman 1978 (Ja Nishin and surroundings); Wenke 1981 (Susiana and lowlands of Khuzestan); Alizadeh 1985a (McCown’s data; Ram Hormoz, Behbahan and Zohreh); Wright and Carter 2003 (Ram Hormoz and Behbahan); Moghaddam and Miri 2003 (Shushtar, Mianab plain and Susiana); Stronach 2004 (Behbahan); Wright and Neely 2010 (Deh Luran); Neely 2016 (Deh Luran).
with external socio-cultural entities without any need to travel towards the main cities (e.g., Susa) of central Susiana, since they could encounter the peripheral stations of the current centralized authority (Achaemenid, Seleucid, Parthian) right at their state borders\textsuperscript{218}.

The excavations in the area are scattered so that surveys are still the primary source of data at our disposal. From these, it appears that a dimorphic-structured polity developed starting from the Achaemenid era. During the Seleuco-Parthian era (in particular the first two centuries AD), the demographic growth, the intensified agricultural production and the massive investments in the irrigation systems indicate a solid political and economic stability as demonstrated by the radical changes in the settlements patterns. Rural unwalled villages and towns built on virgin soil replaced the consistently-reoccupied and overcrowded sites, enclosed by walls, of the previous periods\textsuperscript{219}. At the same time, this increment of general security in Susiana may have developed the commercial affairs system encouraging ‘international’ trade, as demonstrated by the voluminous interchange which involved Susa and Charax Spasinu\textsuperscript{220}, representing, therefore, an incentive to the agro-pastoral and the mountainous communities. In this way, the shift of focus towards the higher agriculture productivity of the lowlands may have diminished grazing pressures on highland areas and moderated the natural soil erosion\textsuperscript{221}.

Although the difficulties in locating similar local entities, partly due to their seasonal transhumant attitude which presented only minimal evidence in archaeological records, the Classical sources seem to reflect this social hybrid comprised of sedentary people, semi-nomadic pastoralists and highlanders along the Zagros-Bakhtiari territories.

In this context, Strabo\textsuperscript{222} reports Nearchus’ account of mountainous peoples – in particular, Elymaeans, Uxians, Kossaeeans and Mardians – who lived in a relatively homogeneous regional landscape with consolidated agro-environmental indicator sets and regard to natural conditions and human impact. It is an area affected by the relative abundance of rainfall (600mm/year on average today)\textsuperscript{223}, which created well-watered intermontane valleys often crossed by perennial streams and ideal for agro-pastoralist activities. Also, the entire mountain chain of the Zagros maintains a unity in vegetation, which today belongs to the zone of the semi-humid oak forest. In ancient times, the people of Elymais – likely

\textsuperscript{218} Henkelman 2008a, p. 43.
\textsuperscript{220} Le Rider 1965, p. 269.
\textsuperscript{221} Wenke 1975, pp. 155-156.
\textsuperscript{222} Str., XI.13.6.
\textsuperscript{223} Ganji 1968, pp. 233-245.
including the territories of the Kossaeans and the Uxians – possessed wood resources, a product that Susians and Babylonians were deficient in; while the grassy grazing lands were employed for pastoralism (nomadic or not) providing animal products (e.g. meat, milk, wool) to trade or exchange with the lowland communities. Strabo describes the Elymaean territory as fertile and lush, and inhabited by farmers committed to agriculture, even though the highlands were a “nursery” for unruly and belligerent tribes being part of a transhumant and semi-nomadic economy. This situation is also confirmed by anthropogenic indicators in pollen diagrams where barley is the most frequently attested sown cereal starting from the Achaemenid to the Elymaean period compared to wheat. In the cultivated area the emergence of shorter season necessary for barley to be grown allowed the terrain to develop an increased drought tolerance. Consequently, the higher amount of proteins (in proportion) and digestible quality made barley a better nutrition than wheat to feed the domesticated animals of the pastures.

A similar socio-economic formation is reported by Alexander's historians regarding the people of Uxiana (likely Fahliyan region). In particular, Arrian describes the opposition between two “Οὐξιοι” peoples not just concerning political dependence or autonomy from the central authority, but also from a geographical and socio-economic perspective. The “Uxians of the Plains”, who were represented as farmers of a fruitful and well-irrigated land, lived in fortified cities under the control of Persian authority being responsible for this critical intersection which ensured the security of communications on the main road that connected Susiana and Perside via the Uxiana plain. The “Uxians of the Mountains”, on the contrary, lived on herding and inhabited small villages with no arable land at higher altitude remaining outside the Persian administrative jurisdiction, likely governed by a local prefect as a semi-independent polity. Considering the impressive number of cattle (100 horses, 500 transport animals, 30,000 sheep) included in annual tribute demanded by Alexander, the availability of livestock of a mountainous society that mainly lived on pastoral resources is evident, even if it can rightly be assumed that a fraction of the population was engaged in subsistence cultivation and dry-farming. Being the counterpart of the lowlands “specialized” in agriculture, it is not unlikely that there was a staple exchange of marketable goods between the primary production sectors, namely rice, grain and fruits from the farmland and the whole

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224 Str., XVI.1.18.
228 Ibid.
range of animal products (meat, milk, wool, traction) from grazing in order to provide a more balanced daily diet for both the communities.

The Kossaeans were also presented as living in separate villages\textsuperscript{229}, although in case of necessity (risk of external attack) they retreated to the summits of the mountains sheltering themselves within caves, where they survived hunting (“smoked meat from wild beast”) and gathering (“eating acorns and mushrooms”)\textsuperscript{230}. Q.Curtius reports an identical organization for the Mardians whose untamed nature, could not conceal the fact that they were pastoralists since their meat supply was not only provided by hunting but also by breeding (pecorum aut ferarum carnis)\textsuperscript{231}. The Mardian caverns, to which Q.Curtius refers (Specus in montibus fodiunt)\textsuperscript{232}, appear to have the same nature as those used by the Kossaeans during the attack of Alexander\textsuperscript{233}.

From the analysis of the ancient sources, a rather complex picture emerges where the geographic determinism of the Classical authors and the omnipresent binary opposition between the rich educated lowlands and the impoverished barbarous highlands only represent a deformation of reality. The socio-economic situation was certainly more complicated. In effect, it is complicated enough to provide a clear distinction between the generalized agro-pastoral activity and the specialized (full-time) cultivators and pastoralists.

Natural conditions have apparently played a crucial role in the development of a local economy, however this separation of activities (agriculture and grazing) should not be applied to distinct peoples, but to different tasks within the same shared tribal (ethnic\textsuperscript{2}) identity (historical or artificial) where the products of primary consumptions were consistently swapped between sedentary agriculturists and semi-nomadic herdsmen within the same internal dimorphic structure\textsuperscript{234}. Each of these peoples possessed a territory of “jurisdiction,” the boundaries of which did not follow a precise contour, but intersected between themselves. Each region encompassed complementary areas of settled agricultural production and transhumant herds with the highland being essentially a refuge zone from external dangers.

\textsuperscript{229} Arr., Anab., VII.15.2.
\textsuperscript{230} Diod. Sic., XIX.19.3.
\textsuperscript{231} Curt., V.6.17. See also FGrH 90, F 66.3, 9, 30. 41.
\textsuperscript{232} Curt., V.6.17.
\textsuperscript{233} Diod. Sic., XIX.19.3.
\textsuperscript{234} Briant 1976, p. 177.
5. The Birth of Elymais and Chronological Characters

At the beginning of this chapter, a preliminary analysis of the origin of the name Elymais is given to provide an introduction to the topic of the “birth” of Elymais. After a brief historical insight of previous eras (from 5th millennium to 6th century BC) which, even though chronologically very distant, is present as a necessary clear-cut framework for the last survivals of the millennial Elamite culture within the Bakhtiari highlands. The Elymaeans appears a well-distinct ethno-linguistic group in ancient sources just from the period of the Achaemenid kings, although they could be tracked back from the fragmented political situation in the Neo-Elamite period. However, it was only after the local Kamnaskirid dynasty seized power in the 2nd century BC that Elymais showed its secessionist intents from the central authority (Seleucid, Parthian). The contemporary information provided by *Babylonian Astronomical Diaries*\(^{235}\), which mention raids in Seleucid Mesopotamia by Elamite troops, leave little doubts about the historical credibility of Elymais as a well-established entity within the political dynamics of the region.

The absence of local written sources is decisive in creating several lacunae, which affect the bases for a stable historical reconstruction. When possible, the blanks will be filled by multi-media data coming from different expressions of Elymaean material production (architectures, artefacts, inscriptions, rupestrian art, numismatics).

### 5.1 Etymology of the term Elymais

In order to fully understand the historical and cultural background of a country, the etymological analysis of its name must be considered. Although – as in the case of Elymais – the terminology behind a name more often represents an identifying designation given by a foreign community (Greek) than a claim to a distinctive socio-cultural component, it does nonetheless provide valuable insight into the topic.

At first glance, the phonemic similarity of *Elymais* and *Elam* appears immediately evident, with the term *Elymais* presumably revealing a Graecisation of the ancient name for the country. It has been suggested that a possible an origin of the term *Elymais* comes from

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\(^{235}\) Sachs and Hunger 1996; Del Monte 1997; Potts 2002.
the Hebrew אֵלָם236, represented by which may be a better conduit for the modern name Elam than for the Greek form. It is unlikely that the Greek authors read or even knew the texts canonized as part of the Bible. How the process took place is not entirely clear but what seems evident is that this phonemic similarity exists in ancient texts, where the term Αἰλαμηνή237 – present in the Greek inscriptions at the Agora of Palmyra (2nd cent. AD) to indicate Elymais238 – most likely refers to Αἰλάμυ, the Greek term describing the ancient Elam.

Reconstructed Declension of the term ‘Elymais’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>(ἡ) Ἐλυμαῖς (Thebais)</th>
<th>(ἡ) Θηβαῖς</th>
<th>Classical Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stem</td>
<td>Θηβαίδ-</td>
<td>Ελυμαίδ- (?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Singular</td>
<td>Θηβαίς-ς</td>
<td>Ελυμαίς-ς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nom.</td>
<td>Θηβαίδ -ος</td>
<td>Ελυμαίδ -ος</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen.</td>
<td>Θηβαίς-ς</td>
<td>Ελυμαίς-ς</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dat.</td>
<td>Θηβαίς -ι</td>
<td>Ελυμαίδ -ι</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

236 Elam is an artificial construct that attests to the importance of a prominent geographical feature, the Zagros mountains. In all probability coined by Sumerian scribes (i.e., from a Mesopotamian point of view), its etymology is very debatable. The term probably derives from a Sumerian word, elama (written with the logogram NIM, which means “high”, defined as a “country” by the postponed classifier KI), corresponding to Akkadian Elamtu (possibly related to elûm “to be high”), 'êlam of Biblical Hebrew and the Elamite word Haltamti or hal Ha(l)tamti (Herrenschmidt 1996; Weissbach 1905). Contra, see Poebel 1931.

237 Fox and Lieu 2011, p.15.


239 It is noteworthy that Strabo (XI.3.6; XVI.1.18) – to indicate Elymais – also uses another grammatical form, i.e. τῆς Ελυμαίας (gen. sing.) in all likelihood obtained from the nominative singular of Ελυμαίας present again in Aelian (XII.23) during the 3rd century AD.

240 Also in 1.Macc. 6:1 (Septuagint) and in PUG III 119. It is worth to be mentioned the presence of the term Ελυμαίας in a papyrus of the 3rd century BC (PUG III 119 originating from Arsinoites (modern Fayum) in Egypt. The text represents a contract of which one of the parties is a woman. The editor of the papyrus (Zingale 1991, pp. 70-72, footnote 9) considered the term Ελυμαίας as a feminine name, but there is no doubt that it indicates an ethnic referring to Elymais (as also demonstrated by the same spelling in Str., XI.13.6; XVI.1.18). As confirmed by the eminent Prof. Willy Clarysse (1992, p. 234), also the syntax suggests such an interpretation, following the regular pattern: name, patronymic, ethnic (Ελυμαίας), age, complexion. Undoubtedly, this attestation represents the first appearance of the people of Elymais in Egypt.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
Given this potential morphological reconstruction of the term *Elymais*, it would be intriguing to dwell on how the Graecisation of the word *Elam* occurred. Tracing the presumed root of the term *Elymais* to Ἰλαμαίδ-, the Greek word Ἰλαμαίς has the productive dental suffix -ις, gen. -ιδος, which among other things designates “territory,” as in Ἰλαμαίς (gen. Ἰλαμαίδος) “the territory of Thebes” (in Egypt), the Thebaid. In the same way, Ἰλαμαίς (gen. Ἰλαμαίδος) might indicate “the territory of Elam,” the Elymaid (i.e., Elymais).

In addition, it seems that the particle -id (ιδ-) – which is used in many other nouns of any gender, but mainly female (suffix: -ις, -ιδα) – may denote an origin or, more accurately, an “inheritance” from the borrowed word. If this assumption is correct, it could be that the borrowed word was the Akkadian form *Elamtu*, with an Akkadian feminine -t- infix (probably because mātum ‘land’ was a female name), which had, perhaps, the same function of the Greek suffix: -ις, -ιδα. Obviously, this is only a hypothesis, and in the absence of more data, the risk of falling into speculation is always present. By now, it is hard to ascertain through which language and source the Greek authors became aware of a land called *Elam*. Moreover, the “ν” in the Greek name Ἰλαμαίς has yet to be explained.

In this regard, it is significant that in the *Book of Daniel* (8:2), the two words Ἰλαμαίδι and Αἰλλὰμ are present in the same passage but in two different versions.

Certainly attractive, yet considered merely illusory, is the theory of William W. Tarn who recognizes in the Seleucid district terminology an indication of administrative local distinction, in particular stating that the “great satrapy almost always bore names ending in –ια, Persis being the only exception, unless Susis be reckoned; the eparchies most often bore names ending in –ηνι or after iota, -ανη (-ιανη)”\(^{244}\). Now, this assumption would allow the consideration of Ἰλαμαίς/ια as a great satrapy on par with Περσίς and Σουσίς, annexing...
the various eparchies of \( \Gamma \alpha \beta \eta \gamma \eta \)\(^245\), \( \mathrm{Ko} \sigma \beta \omega \alpha \nu \eta \)\(^246\) and probably \( \mathrm{Ou} \xi \omega \alpha \nu \eta \)\(^247\). However, Tarn's fairly rigid linguistic model of rural districts was fatally undermined by Bengtson, who explained how the sources adduced by Tarn can be considered inconsistent and hardly susceptible to such a strict etymological interpretations\(^248\).

Other interpretations may regard a derivation of the word *Elymais* directly from the Talmudical \( \text{לֶמַם} \) (Almin)\(^249\), or an Aryan origin from the term *Ailama*, a supposed corruption of *Airyama*\(^250\). In this latter case, and without dwelling on detailed ethno-linguistic discourse that is not relevant here, a possible Indo-European origin for the name given to this region could be taken to support the argument of those who – like Ghirshman – suggest a Persian origin for the Elymaeans.

In the *Diaries*\(^251\), the Mesopotamian use of the terms *Elam/Elamites* where the Greek sources speak of *Elymais/Elymaeans* indicated a relation of cultural continuity, at least in the form of cultural denomination. The absence of Elymaean sources, however, prevents the knowledge of how these people designated themselves, but as also previously happened with the term *Elam*\(^252\), this label of *Elymais* was in all probability an indigenous name used by Greek writers who essentially Hellenized a Mesopotamian designation for the highlands to the east, possibly with the meaning of “mountaineers.” Accordingly, the word *Elymais* encompasses *stricto sensu* the physical features occupied by a highland political entity, which at the same time interacted with a broad range of cultures in lowland Susiana (present-day Khuzestan in southwestern Iran), while maintaining its well-established roots within the Zagros mountains (precisely in modern Kohgiluyeh and Boyer-Ahmad province between Khuzestan and Fars).

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\(^{245}\) Diod. Sic. XIX.26.1; *idem* XIX.26.5; *idem* XIX.34.7; Str. XVI.1.18; Pol. IV.6.13; Ptol. VI.2.13.

\(^{246}\) Str. XVI.1.18.

\(^{247}\) Diod. Sic. XVII.67.5.

\(^{248}\) Bengtson 1964, pp. 30-38.

\(^{249}\) *Soncino Babylonian Talmud* (1935-1948), Sanhedrin, Folio 94a. See also Neubauer 1868. The *Talmud Bavli* (Babylonian Talmud) is represented by a series of documents compiled from the 3rd cent. to the 6th cent. AD.

\(^{250}\) See Müller, M. (1861).

\(^{251}\) Table no. 1.

\(^{252}\) The people of the Iranian highland were composed by distinct groups, which never used the word *Elam* to refer to themselves, and the Elamite scribes did not ever use logogram NIM when they wrote in Elamite. As Zadok has stressed, Mesopotamian scribes applied the designation *Elam* to “any highlander from the Iranian Plateau and its piedmont” (Zadok 1987, p. 3).

*The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)*
5.2 Chronological Aspects

Before approaching the debate which concerns the historical narrative of the events occurred in Elymais, a major digression should reflect upon whether there was or not an ethnic and cultural relationship between the Elamite people of the region and the Elymaeans who would populate the same territories “officially” in the Seleuco-Parthian period. In general, the development of this work – starting from the historical considerations in this section – would provide to the reader key elements to ponder the possibility of considering the Elymaeans as culturally, and likely biologically, related to the inhabitant of Elam during the Neo-Elamite period (ca. 1,100-539 BC). A situation that instead cannot be analytically demonstrated for the previous occupants of the region along the Zagros. For this reason, the cultures which preceded the birth of Elam (in the Mesopotamian cuneiform texts, ca. 2,600 BC254) in Khuzestan will not be addressed, and even the historical events too far to be possibly related to the rise of the Elymaeans society (Old/Middle Elamite) will be only approached partly.

5.2.1 Behind the Origins of Elymais

As an integrated political entity, the genesis and formation of the multi-centre Elamite state mostly depended on the innate duality between the highlands (Iranian plateau) and the lowlands (Susiana)255. The Assyrian documentation (Royal Annals) provides a view of Elam during the time of Ashurbanipal (668-627 BC), as well as late Neo-Elamite administrative documents and royal inscriptions (especially from the Acropole of Susa), and later Babylonian chronicles. From an Assyrian perspective, the sculpted reproductions of the renowned royal palace of Nineveh describe the Neo-Elamite era as tormented by a long series of conflicts, which concluded in the sack of Susa (647 BC).

After the battle of the Ulai river (ca. 1,120 BC), and the consequent victory of the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar I (1,125-1,104 BC) over the Elamite ruler Hutelutush-

\[253\] Scheil 1909, p. 534, quoting Scheil 1901.
\[254\] Álvarez-Mon 2012, p. 741; Potts 2016, pp. 80-81.
\[255\] De Miroshedji 2003, pp. 17-19.
Inshushinak (Shutrukid dynasty), the Middle Elamite period (ca. 1,500-1,100 BC) came to an end. The transition to the earliest phase of the Neo-Elamite period (ca.1,000-743 BC) is characterized by a lack in archaeological and epigraphic evidence, which may be associated with the debacle of lowland settlements and the resultant confinement of previous urban populations into the rural area of the Zagros, an increased territorial decentralization, and the increment of a pastoral economy. Despite the general uncertainty during this “dark age” in Elamite history (Neo-Elamite I), a new socio-political and cultural entity appears to have arisen along the Zagros-Bakhtiari plateau (modern Izeh-Malamir) around the 9th century BC, as evidenced by the artistic production of rupestrian panels at Shekaft-e Salman and Kul-e Farah (KF IV). After that, in the 8th and 7th centuries, BC Elam prominently appeared in the Assyrian sources as an ally of Babylonia against Assyria. This political scenario culminated in 647 BC when the Assyrian forces of Ashurbanipal breached Susa and devastated the city.

From this point, the late Neo-Elamite period (647-549 BC) gives the impression – shared by some scholars – of political multicentricity rather than unity, which probably accentuated a prior internal situation in Elam during the previous centuries, having Susa as one of the main centre being in the position to supervise other local entities, including the intermontane regions. As highlighted by the Acropole text, within this new jurisdictional framework, the local rulers in the highland, even though they seem to have achieved a certain measure of autonomy, maintained extensive economic relationships with the leading centre of Susa where the Elamite crown was located. Favoured by the imperviousness of the territory, the existence of semi-autonomous socio-political authorities such as Hanni of Ayapir is revealed by artistic and textual evidence, as shown to be deeply rooted in the territory around the turn of the 7th-6th century BC. In this context, the rock reliefs at Kul-e Farah (KF I) and Shekaft-e Salman (Izeh-Malamir), and Kurangun (Fars) reveal the cultic activity of local Elamite rulers in the Zagros.

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257 Álvarez-Mon 2012, p. 754; idem., 2013a, pp.218, 227-231; idem 2015a, p. 263; Potts 2016, pp. 251-253, 296-300.
259 Henkelman 2003b, p. 75-79; idem 2008a, pp. 20-28.
261 For an in-depth socio-cultural analysis of the Elamite communities of the highland, see (Henkelman 2008a, pp. 43-49; Álvarez-Mon 2013a; idem 2013c). In addition, the accidental discoveries of burials with elite grave objects in Jubaji near Rom Hormuz dated to ca. 585-539 BC (Shishehgar 2008); the Kalmakarra hoard (Boucharlat 2005, pp. 246-248; Henkelman 2008a, pp. 28-32); the tomb of Arjan (600-570 BC) (Álvarez-Mon 2010b); the Elamite rock reliefs from Izeh-Malamir (KF I, ca. 650-550 BC) and Naqsh-e Rustam (ca. 674-626 BC); and the results gathered by the Iranian-Australian surveys and excavations in the Mamasani.
5.2.2 Elam/Elymais under the Achaemenids

The ascent of the Persians began in Anshan at a time when numerous local kings held power in the diverse areas of southwestern Iran. These included Shutur-Nahhunte and his vassal Hanni around Izeh-Malamir, the kings of Samati near Khorraramabad (Lorestan), the royal family at Arjan (Behbahan), and perhaps Ummanunu in Susiana. The transition from the late Neo-Elamite (ca. 585–539 BC) to the Achaemenid period is still debated, and no evidence had emerged yet to indicate the end of the Elamite kingdom – conventionally dated to the year when Cyrus conquered Babylon (539 BC) – was drastic. There is no record of conquest in Elam, Susa, Samati, or Ayapir by the Persians similarly as was presented during the invasion of Media (ca. 550 BC). As it stands, this demonstrates that the Elamites/Elymaeans and Persians were more closely linked. At the same time, the fact that Kurash, son of Teispes, designated himself in Elamite as an Anshanite in the Elamite legend of the famous seal PFS 93, as well as indicating all of his ancestors (Cyrus Cylinder from Babylon) as “kings of Anshan”, is an intriguing implication that the Persian empire may have evolved from the Neo-Elamite social, cultural, linguistic and perhaps even political environment.

The Achaemenid presence along the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland is scarcely recorded within archaeological data. The geomorphological conditions of these isolated regions had effectively constituted a safe shelter against external dominations since more ancient times (Assyrian Royal Annals). However, the presence in Izeh-Malamir (ancient Ayapir) of Achaemenid sites covered with later occupational periods cannot be entirely excluded. Reasonably during the Persian period, the far-reaching monitoring that the Achaemenids had

region at Tol-e Spid and Tol-e Nurabad (Potts and Roustaei 2006; Potts, Roustaei et al. 2006; idem 2009) suggest the presence of a cultural and urban-political koine in the second half of the 7th and the 6th centuries BC in the corridor attested from the Lorestan region along the Deh Luran, Susiana and Rom Hormuz plains ending in the Mamasani area.

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262 Vallat 1996, p. 393.
264 For the PFS 93* attested on Persepolis Fortification Tablets 692-695, see Garrison 1991, pp. 3-7; Garrison and Root 1996, pp. 6-7 and fig. 2a-c; and the recent, wide-ranging study of this artifact by Garrison (2011). Regarding alternative interpretations of line 3 (on the significance of the reference to Anshan), see also Garrison 1991, p. 4; Henkelman 2003a, p. 85, footnote 39; idem 2008a, p. 55; and Waters 2011, p. 290.
265 For the Cyrus Cylinder, see Dandamaev 1976, p. 92; Schaudig 2001, p. 555; and Finkel 2013.
266 Henkelman 2008a; Álvarez-Mon 2010b; idem 2012.
267 Wright 1979, pp. 18, 31-32, 99-123. See also Boucharlat 2005, pp. 236-238.
on the main trade routes along the plains at the foot of the Zagros-Bakhtiai may have pushed further into highland areas the local agro-pastoral entities.\(^{268}\)

The ascent of Darius (522–486 BC) is narrated in first person in the king’s most famous trilingual (Elamite, Akkadian [Babylonian] and Old Persian) inscription at Bisotun, near Kermanshah.\(^{269}\) The king in his earlier years of domination (522-518 BC) suppressed a series of revolts, including three various insurrections in Elam,\(^{270}\) which indicates that the spatially-diffused entity with independence impulses was still actively rooted in the Elamite regions. As Briant observed, it is problematic to determine the relevance of the Elamite rebellions against Darius, although in each case, as the chief was handed over to the Achaemenid king by his Elamite companions, it would suggest that these revolts did not have wide-reaching support.\(^{271}\) However, this may be true for the lowlands where Persian authority was well-established and readily accepted, unlike within the Zagros highlands. Once the expansionistic designs of Darius and his son Xerxes I (r. 486-465 BC) moved radically to a more “international” perspective crossing the borders of Asia and reaching Europe up to the Black Sea, information about Elam and southwestern Iran can be tracked within the Greek sources (in particular Herodotus). Despite their minimal knowledge of the Persian territory, due probably to the absence of authentic sources at their disposal.\(^{272}\)

\(^{268}\) Miroshchiji 1990, pp. 62-65; Amiet 1992, pp. 86-88; Flannery 1999; Henkelman 2008a, p. 45. In support of this hypothesis, which consider likely the presence Achaemenid in the highland regions, there are the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (509-493 BC). They record intensive trade (or exchanges) in term of livestock for cultic purposes in the region at the border between Khuzestan and Fars, i.e., Fahliyan plain (Koch 1990; Henkelman 2005, pp. 159-164). This region was considered by Koch (1987, pp. 267-270) – who mentioned it as “Elymai” – predominantly Elamite in population and culture, while Henkelman (2008a, p. 117) assumed that the peoples in this area “may have been an important ‘outside’ party with whom the agents of the Persepolis administration could exchange or trade surpluses”. Again, the archaeology of the Achaemenid period in the Bakhtiari region is still in its infancy and the sources at disposal too limited to provide a more accurate overview.


\(^{270}\) The rebellion headed by Acina, son of Upadarma, at the end of 522 BC was put down without much difficulty (DB§I.16-17). The second revolt was led a few months later, contemporary with the Babylonian revolt of Nidintu-Bel, by the Elamite Martiya whose home is in Persia, he was captured and executed by the Elamites themselves (DB§II.22-23). During the 2nd or 3rd year of Darius’s reign (520 BC), the Elamites rebelled again against the Great King (DB§71) headed by Atamaita, “an Elamite.” The king sent an army against him and after engaging in battle, Atamaita was seized, brought before Darius and killed. Judging by names alone, Acina could be an Elamite name as suggested by Zadok (1976, p. 213), or an Indo-European considering that Upadarma, Acina’s father, bore an Iranian and not an Elamite name (Schmitt 1973, p. 290; Mayrhofer 1973, p. 157; Henkelman 2003a, p. 184, footnote 7). Certainly Persian is the name Martiya (Mayrhofer 1973, p. 193; Schmitt 1973, p. 290; idem 1998, p. 449; Lecoq 1997, p. 195), even though the chance to have Elamites carrying Old Persian names cannot be excluded (Potts 2016, p. 316). Atamaita, presumably a shorter form of the Elamite name Atta-hamiti-Inshushinak, may be considered Elamite (Mayrhofer 1973, p. 131).

\(^{271}\) Briant 2002, p. 132.

\(^{272}\) Jacobs 2006.
the Greek authors provide relevant information through a chaotic arrangement of names which are often in conflict with geographical realities. Within this scenario, Elam and Elamites seem often to be masked by other designations. This is the case of K**issia**, which was synonymous of *Elam* and distinguished from Susiana. Herodotus points out quite clearly that while Susa lay in K**issia**, K**issia** did not coincide with Susiana but started north of it in the mountains of Lorestan, which probably stretched over the Bakhtiari mountains covering the territory belonging, in the centuries prior to the Elymaeans and Kossaeans. This would explain the absence of Elam within the Xerxes’ army present at Doriscus (Thrace), although it was one of the three most important ‘satrapies’ of the empire (together with Persis and Media); as well as the presence of Kissians – equipped in a Persian fashion –

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273 See also Nöldeke 1874, p.175; Weissbach 1921, p. 520; Potts 2016, p. 333. As remarked by Weissbach (1921, p. 520), it is very likely that K**issia** may represent a generic name used mostly by Herodotus in order to give a name to this complex region of the Zagros mountains (i.e., ancient Elam) probably still characterized – due to its geographical composition – by diverse local entities about which the Classical sources in the 5th century had scarce knowledge. In a similar way as the Mesopotamian sources to in the 4th-3rd millennium BC, the Classical authors, in their early attestations of Elamites, used the standard rubric *Elam* (or, in this case, K**issia**) to probably grouped together all the populations of the disparate region of highlands which enclose to east the Suso-Mesopotamian plain without any particular geographical connotations. Indeed, this would explain the absence of any mention to Elamites/Elymaeans or Susians – who Strabo (XV.3.2.) “also called K**issians**” (Ἀγωνὴ ταῦτα δὲ καὶ Κ**ίσσιοι οἱ Σούσιοι**) – between the ranks of Xerxes’ army at Doriscus (on the parallelism between K**issia** and Elam, see Nöldeke 1874, p. 175), where the K**issians** were distinguished by wearing “equipment in other respects like that of the Persians, but instead of the felt caps they wore mitra” (Hdt., VII.62). Besides, as stressed by Briant (2002, pp. 63-64), it is reasonable to believe that the most extensive satrapies may have been sub-governed by local prefects maintaining the pre-existing political units which therefore did not disappear because of the creation of the satrapal organization of the empire. It is a fact that those people who were known two centuries later as Elymaeans were already included in the more large-scale designation of the population of K**issia** by Herodotus, since K**issia** probably absorbed a disparate collection of ethnic and linguistic groups who never identified themselves with the term K**issians**. A possible *replica* of what occurred 2,000 years before in the same area with the Mesopotamian definition of ELAM(MAKI), which was used to identify “any highlander from the Iranian plateau and its piedmont” (Zadok 1987, p. 3). Significantly, a similar situation had occurred previously in Elam, when the Elamite scribes refused to use the logogram N**I**M to describe themselves, and later in the Elamian inscriptions where the toponym Elymais is absent (footnotes 236, 252).

274 Hdt., III.91.4. “Susa and the other part of K**issia**” (Σούσιον δὲ καὶ τῆς ἄλλης Κ**ίσσιον χώρης**). Herodotus mentions the toponym K**issia** and K**issians** several more times in his Histories. He explicitly assigns Susa and the river Choaspes on which it lay to K**issian** territory (V.49), moreover, describing the Royal Road, he indicates that after penetrating into the K**issian** territory, “eleven stations and 42½ parasangs bring you to another navigable stream, the Choaspes, on the banks of which the city of Susa is built” (V.52).

275 Contra Rennell 1830, pp. 190-191.

276 Nöldeke 1874, p. 174.

277 It would justify the apparent disorientation in some later sources as Polybius and Ptolemy where evidence relating Elymaeans (Ἐλύμαιοις in Polybius V.44.9) and Elymais (Ἐλύμαιας in Ptolemy VI.2.6) can be found in the same geographical area north of Susiana (Lorestan), described by later sources as the country of the Kossaeans.

278 Already over a century ago, Nöldeke (1874, p. 175) had brought to the attention the possible parallelism between the first three ‘satrapies’ – Persis, Media and K**issia** – in the text of Herodotus concerning the army of Doriscus, and the Old Persian inscriptions where Elamites are always on the side of Persian and Medes (e.g. **DNa** 6; **DPe** 2; **DSac**; **XPh** 3). This correspondence proves that K**issia** was synonymous with *Elam* and more specifically that while Susa was situated in K**issia**, in all likelihood, K**issia** did not coincide with Susiana but originated much further north of it (Hdt. V.52) in the mountains of Lorestan (Nöldeke 1874, p. 174). In
immediately after the Persians and Medes in the list of nations which fought for the Achaemenid king. The same occurred at the Thermopylae where the Kissians fought alongside the Medes.

With the arrival of Alexander the Great and his historians, a broad variety of information was collected, and in the wake of the Macedonian campaign in Persia new knowledge regarding Elam/Elymais in the reign of the last Achaemenid king, Darius III, was provided. For instance, Arrian names Oxathres, son of Abulites, the satrap of Susiana under Darius III, as the commander of a unit of Susians and Uxians fighting against Alexander at Gaugamela in October 331 BC. After the battle, while Alexander marched towards Susa, Oxathres and his father, rode out to submit themselves and their city with its rich treasury, voluntarily to the Macedonian conqueror. The large sum of money reported by the sources, which was confiscated (likely exaggerated), reveals the considerable wealth of Susa and the satrapy of Elam. In Susa, Alexander received reinforcements to prepare the invasion of the Persian heartland. He left a force of 3,000 men stationed in the city under the command of Archelaos and Mazaros, with Abulites as governor of the region, before heading eastwards to Persepolis. Once crossing the Pasitigris river, Alexander and his army penetrated the territory of the Uxians. The accounts of Alexander’s campaign(s) against the Uxians have been investigated by some scholars. The no mention of Elymaeans – unlike

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279 Hdt., VII.86. For a general analysis, see Potts 2016, pp. 335-339.
280 Ibid., VII.62.
281 Ibid., VII.210; Diod. Sic., XI.7.2.
282 Arr., III.8.5; idem III.19.2; see also Plutarch, Alex., 68.7
283 For full evidence on Abulites and Oxathres, see Berve 1926/II, pp. 5, 291; Shayegan 2007, pp. 97-98.
284 See Seibert 1985, p. 97. Alexander’s entry to Susa occurred in mid-December of 331 BC. For sources, see Diod. Sic., XVII.65.5; Curt., V.2.8.
285 Plutarch (Alex., 36.1) and Diodorus Siculus (XVII.66.2) declare 49,000 talents, Arrian (III.16.7) and Q. Curtius Rufus (V.2.11-12) reported 50,000.
287 The location for the Uxians is still debated, however, an area which could adequately correspond to the descriptions provided by the Classical sources is represented by the plain of Fahliyan and the surrounding mountains (Stein 1940, pp. 40-43; Hansman 1972, pp. 117-119; Briant 1976, p. 220; Digard 1976, pp 266-267; Henkelman 2011b, p. 9; contra, De Bode 1843c, pp. 110-112) considered the valley of Izeh-Malamir more geographically appropriate; while Speck (2002, pp. 157-158) proposed a location of Uxiana eastern of Shushtar. For the origin of the term Ox(ζ)iai and it links with Ox(ζ)iai (i.e., the “modern” name for Susiana, Greek Σούσιανη) possible cognates of the Old Persian Ujiya used to indicate the inhabitants of Uvja (Elam), see Henkelman 2011b, p. 11, footnote 26.
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Uxians, Kossaeans and Paraetaceni – in Alexander’s sources between the 331-324 BC when the Macedonian conqueror repeatedly passed through the Elymaean country gives the impression that there is a gap on the map. The absence of Elymais from the accounts of Alexander’s historians may reflect the fact that the Macedonian king, though aware of an Elymaean presence (cf. Nearchus), never directly collided with them during his expedition towards Persepolis but skirted their territory. In reality, from a geo-administrative perspective, it is likely to consider Uxiana as a territorial entity forming part of a sub-district (Elymais) within the main satrapy of Elam/Susiana. Although (semi-)autonomous in a territory between Susiana and Persis, the Uxians appeared to be ruled by a local “prefect” (hyparch) named Madates, who was not a satrap but presumably a governor of a regional fraction below the level of the satrapy. While both Diodorus and Q.Curtius describe the campaign of Alexander against Madates, Arrian makes a further distinction between the Uxians “who inhabit the plains” and “those who are called the mountaineers.” He explicitly refers to a satrap of the Persians (σατράπης τῶν Πέρσων) to whom the Uxians were subjected, however the expression may be deceptive. It is unclear if the author was mentioning a satrap of Persis, or a Persian satrap of Elam/Susiana. Whoever had control of the “Uxians of the Plains,” the fact that Arrian describes them as subjugated to a foreign conqueror without even fighting, does not reflect the warrior culture produced by these unruly regions of “unconquered tribesmen,” which were described by Classical authors as a

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290 Str., XI.13.6; Diod. Sic., XVII.111.4-6; Curt., X.4.3; Plut., Alex., 72.4; Polyænus, IV.3.32; Arr., Anab., VII.15.1-3.
292 Str. XI.13.6a.
293 Briant 1976, pp. 194-209.
294 Jacobs 2006. Summarily, Jacobs describes the satrapal system as a hierarchical structure composed by Great Satrapies constituted by few Main Satrapies which, in their turn, were subdivided in several Minor Satrapies. See §4.1.2.
295 Curt., V.3.3
296 Ibid., V.3.4. Madates was a relative by marriage of Darius III (Diod. Sic., XVII.67.3; Curt., V.3.12). See also Tarn 1930, p. 134; Petit 1990, p. 212; Jacobs 1994, p. 204.
298 Curt., V.3.
299 Arr., III.17.
300 Ibid., III.17.1.
302 Potts 2016, p. 344.
303 Str., XV.3.4; Diod. Sic. XIX.17.3.
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“nursery of soldiers” (στρατιώτας τρέφει)\textsuperscript{304}. Therefore, the identification of the Uxians inhabiting the lowlands of southwestern Khuzestan with the ones deployed at Gaugamela alongside the Susians under the command of the Persian satrap Abulites appears highly possible. On the other hand, the “Uxians of the Highlands”, who opposed Alexander, can be more plausibly identified with the warlike people led by Madates of whom Diodorus and Curtius report. Significantly, the stronghold where it is said that they fled to from the Macedonians is tentatively recognized by Baron de Bode as being within the valley of Izeh-Malamir\textsuperscript{305}. Notably, those who should be part of an individual ethnic group (Uxian) were instead ruled by two different authorities: “local” for the highlands (Madates) and “external” for the lowlands (Abulites). Perhaps, this indicates an (satrapal?)\textsuperscript{306} internal division as confirmed by Q.Curtius, reporting that Alexander “incorporated the subdued race of the Uxians in the satrapy of the Susians,”\textsuperscript{307} or two different social component (farmers and pastoralists) of the same agro-pastoral community within the dimorphic zone at the foot of the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains (§4.3). Yet, it is hard to believe that the Uxians were in control of one of the most relevant – both politically and culturally – key places of Elymais, and previously of Elam (ancient Ayapir), if they are not identified as a part of the Elymaean people(s). Another clue in this regard can be found in the words of Arrian where Alexander “advancing by a route rough and difficult” to reach “the villages of the Uxians” marched “under the guidance of the Susians”\textsuperscript{308}.

\textsuperscript{304} Str., XVI.1.18. On the general model of “mountaineer” described by the Classical writers, see Acolat 2012. See also Potts 2016, p. 345. A slightly different point of view from Briant (1976, pp. 214-221) who interprets Alexander’s campaign to the lowland plains as directed against the Uxians led by Madates of what Curtius Rufus and Diodorus Siculus refer in their accounts, while that against the highlanders would be an exclusive version of Arrian. However, the Classical authors (Diod. Sic., XVII.67.1-5; Curt., V.3.1-16; Arr., III.17.1-6) clearly describe the territory where Alexander fought the Uxians (Diod. Sic., XVII.67.4-5; Arr., III.2.6), or laid siege to their fortress (Curt., V.5-8) as impervious and inaccessible which can more easily related to the intermontane valleys and gorges of the Zagros mountains (§4.3). Yet, it is hard to believe that the Uxians were in control of one of the most relevant – both politically and culturally – key places of Elymais, and previously of Elam (ancient Ayapir), if they are not identified as a part of the Elymaean people(s). Another clue in this regard can be found in the words of Arrian where Alexander “advancing by a route rough and difficult” to reach “the villages of the Uxians” marched “under the guidance of the Susians”\textsuperscript{308}.

\textsuperscript{305} De Bode 1843c, pp. 110-112. See also Spiegel 1971, p. 627; and Potts 2016, p. 345. The geographic position of Uxiana is still controversial. Although Izeh-Malamir valley could adequately satisfy the geo-morphological features described by the ancient authors, Henkelman (2011b, p. 9) prefers to suggest the fertile and well-watered plan of Fahliyan and the surrounding mountains as country of the Uxians, proposing the site of Tol-e Spid, uninterruptedly occupied from Achaemenid to post-Achaemenid periods (Petrie \textit{et al.} 2009; Asgari Chaverdi \textit{et al.} 2010, pp. 289-291), as the fortified city besieged by Alexander (Stein 1940, pp. 40-43; Hansman 1972, pp. 117-119; Briant 1976, p. 220; Digard 1976, pp 266-267). Similarly, Briant (1976, p. 220), based on the assumed identification of the plain of Uxiana with the basin of the Fahliyan river, recognizes the site conquered by the Macedonian king with the ruins (a stone wall) of Kotal-e Sangar in Fars (hypothesis also shared by Stein 1940, p.42) on the Royal road which passing through the modern town of Basht led to the Persian Gates.

\textsuperscript{306} Jacobs 2006. See more specifically §4.1.2.

\textsuperscript{307} Curt., V.3.16, “Uxiorum dein gentem subactam Susianorum satrapae”.

\textsuperscript{308} Arr., III.17
This aspect of the Susians as native guides for the Macedonians is of considerable significance since it would have been objectionable that the Susians led Alexander to the territories of those same Uxians with whom they fought side by side at Gaugamela (331 BC)\textsuperscript{309}. It would have been even more astonishing that the same “Uxian natives” were the ones to “betray” in favour of Alexander\textsuperscript{310}. Logically, this apparent confusion in the Classical sources authors could have been caused by the difficulty to distinguish within the same people from the lowlands (“Uxians of the Lowlands” and Susians) who battled together in a single deploy at Gaugamela under Oxathres against Alexander\textsuperscript{311}, renewing an old connection between the plains of Susiana and Uxiana already marked in the Persepolis tablets\textsuperscript{312}. The Susians/Uxians more likely led Alexander to the lands of mountainous Elymaeans (Izeh-Malamir\textsuperscript{5}) with whom they always had contentious relations within the cultural dualism between the highlands (Iranian plateau) and the lowlands (Susiana) characterized by distinct lifestyles and economies. This conveys a coherent image of Elymais as a prefecture, which included the Uxians\textsuperscript{313}.

Alexander left the plain of Uxiana exactly as found it\textsuperscript{314}. Here, the population lived concentrated in a well-built fortified town and were in control of one of the main route linking Susiana to Fars, and as their cooperation was necessary to keep this way safe, Alexander preferred to impose no regular tax-payments on them\textsuperscript{315}, as previously occurred under the domain of the Achaemenid administration of Persepolis. From the time of Darius I, the entire

\textsuperscript{309} Ibid., III.8.
\textsuperscript{310} A similar scenario was also reported by Diodorus Siculus; the only difference was that in this case, the guide who led the troops of Alexander behind the Uxian cities was an Uxian native. Diod. Sic., XVII.67.4.
\textsuperscript{311} Arr., III.8.
\textsuperscript{312} Henkelman 2011b, p. 10.
\textsuperscript{313} These various ethnical distinctions (e.g., Uxians; Elymaeans; Kossaeans) are only “labels” given by foreign writers to identify populations of whom they did not have almost any knowledge. In addition, at the current stage of research, the absence of local textual sources and archaeological data does not allow to have a clear overview of the situation in the region without exposing to the risk of falling in a mere speculation. The primary intent of the Greek-Roman authors supposedly was to mark the distinction between the lowlanders and the mountaineers within the core of the ancient Elamite territory. From the Classical text, it is possible to reconstruct the presence of the “Uxians of the Plains” who, indicated as farmers, lived in a fortified town surrounded by a fertile and well-watered region under the authority of the satrap of Persis. On the other hand, the (semi-)autonomous “Uxians of the Highlands,” who Arrian depicted as pastoralists, were governed by a local prefect and inhabited small villages (κοιναὶ) between the intermontane valley and narrow gorges typical of the Bakhtiari mountains. The two groups of Uxians represent an emblematic example of combination between sedentary farmers and semi-nomadic pastoralists within the same population, characteristic of southwestern Iran (Potts 2014). Interestingly, Strabo (XVI.1.18e) provides a very similar “tribal” dichotomy present within the same Elymaeans. However, whether this dualistic identity within the same ethnical society was historically real or it represented an artificial construction provided by the Classical authors, we can only guess.
\textsuperscript{314} Curt., V.3.15.
\textsuperscript{315} Ibid., V.3.1-15.
system of lowlands in southwestern Khuzestan appeared to be under the control of the Perseopolis’ administrative apparatus. Similarly, in the highlands, Alexander only extracted an animal tribute from natives (100 horses, 500 oxen, 30,000 sheep), which was confidently the same tribute reported in the exchange system with the Persian administration as documented in the Fortification archives.

After the conquest of the Uxians, the defeat of Ariobarzanes’ army at the Persian Gates removed the last military obstacle between Alexander and Persepolis where he entered during the spring 330 BC. After the conquering of Persepolis it was time to turn toward Pasargad, where Alexander visited and left intact the tomb of Cyrus to whom Alexander held high respect. Persis now became a Greek satrapy with a garrison stationed permanently (Masjed-e Soleyman).

Five years later, on his return from the India, Alexander encountered the ancient Bakhtiari populations once again, this time it was the Kossaeans. Due to Hephaestion’s death, as they refused to surrender to the Macedonian envoy, he attacked them in the winter of 324/3 BC devastating most of their land and raided uninterruptedly for more than a month, slaying and capturing a significant number of locals. A large amount of Kossaeans was included in the Persian army that Peucestas assembled in 323 BC, shortly before the death of Alexander. Although the Macedonian conqueror is said to have founded cities at crucial points throughout Kossaea, they apparently had no lasting impact in the region, and in fact, Antigonus I, Alexander’s former general, who passed through the area just four years later (317 BC), in pursuit of Eumenes, was exposed to significant risk and lost a considerable number of men fighting against the natives.

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316 Henkelman 2011b, p. 10.
317 Arr., III.17.6.
318 Henkelman 2011b, p. 9.
319 Arr., Anab., III.18.2; Str., XV.3.6.
320 Curt., V.3.17; Diod. Sic., XVII.68.1.
321 Koch (1987, Abb. I) questionably identified the site of Masjed-e Soleyman with the ancient Dasher, namely one of the westernmost major city under the jurisdictional control of the Persepolis administration on the Royal Road from Susa to Persepolis (Henkelman 2008a, p. 112, footnote 245). However, Koch’s assumption is not supported by any archaeological or literary evidence (more on Dasher and the Royal Road see Potts 2009a).
322 Str., XI.13.6; Diod. Sic., XVII.111.4-6; Arr., Anab., 7.15.1-3; cf. Plut., Alex., 72.4.
323 Arr., Anab., VII.23.1.
324 Diod. Sic., XVII.111.6; Arr., Ind., 40.8.
325 Diod. Sic., XIX.19.4-8.
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5.2.3 Rise of Elymais

The voyage of the admiral Nearchus, described in detail by Arrian and other ancient authors, and his arrival with the Greek fleet at Susa, enabled the long-awaited reunion with Alexander and his army. The Achaemenid empire was at its end; the campaigns of Alexander were over, and Macedonian domination in southwestern Iran, although nominal in some cases, was tangible.

While the region had a certain sense of political and cultural unity, Alexander's premature death in 323 BC and the resultant state of confusion led to further socio-political and cultural changes in Iran, which included the relative increase of separate political entities due to the lack of a centralizing force. Wars erupted between Alexander’s surviving generals – the so-called Diadochoi – who fought over the inheritance of his conquests. A major conflict occurred between Eumenes of Cardia and Antigonus the One-Eyed, who in 316 BC defeated and put to the sword both Eumenes and his troops, between Susiana and Media. According to Diodorus, Antigonus “advanced with his army and came to Susa, the capital” where he decided to establish Seleucus as “satrap of that country.” About a decade later in 301 BC, Seleucus prevailed over Antigonus in the battle of Ipsus (Phrygia, modern-day Turkey) and took complete control of Susiana and Media. From this moment in time, Seleucus and his descendants reigned over the region, known as Seleucids. During this period Susiana was entirely a Seleucid satrapy of which most likely Elymais continued to be a sub-district ruled by local aristocracies, perched eastern within the mountainous lands of the Zagros where Greek jurisdiction was presumably limited due to its geomorphological inaccessibility.

Seleucus I was responsible for renaming Susa as Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios where he also instituted a royal mint. After his assassination in 281 BC, his son Antiochus I (281-261 BC), who was credited with the founding or refounding of various cities in Asia (e.g.,

326 Arr., Ind., 37.1-42.9.
328 For the Nearchus’ itinerary along the Iranian coast, see Tomaszchek 1890; and Berthelot 1935.
330 According to Assar (2004-2005, p. 27, footnote 1), Elymais came under Seleucid jurisdiction in the spring of 311 BC at the return of Seleucus I Nikator of Egypt.
332 See Appendix 3, s.v. Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios.
Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon\textsuperscript{333}, succeeded to the Seleucid throne. His reign featured a relative time of peace in Iran, and this terminated with the ascent of his successors. It seems that Elymais was apparently calm during this period since the ancient texts do not report its separatist tendencies. A situation which was helped mostly by the accommodative policy of the first Seleucid rulers who established relations based on tolerance, especially religious, with the local peoples. This political climate – in addition to the flourishing local dynasties – ensured stability in the multi-ethnic Seleucid state which enabled the Elymaean clergy and their temples to enrich their assets. Certainly, the interruption of Seleucid power caused by a revolt in the Upper Satrapies, that lasted for some years, upset this productive environment. Seleucus II tried in vain to reconquer the satrapies. It was only after the brief reign of Seleucus III (226-223 BC) that the Seleucid power re-emerged with Antiochus III the Great (223-187 BC) on the political scene, as one of the most relevant of the Seleucid monarchs.

As soon as he seized power, Antiochus III had to confront the dangerous revolt in 222 BC led by Molon (the satrap of Media) who, in contrast to his brother Alexander (the satrap of Persis), succeeded in conquering a large part of Mesopotamia and Susiana with the exception of Susa\textsuperscript{334}. In this scenario could be tentatively inserted the excerpt of Strabo\textsuperscript{335}, which details a confrontation between a conjunct Elymaean and Kossaeans army against Suso-Babylonian forces. This passage could indicate an Elymaean attempt to revolt from the Seleucid yoke. Examining the account of Molon’s rebellion in Susiana\textsuperscript{336}, Strabo’s mention to the Susians was likely referred to Diogenes, military governor (strategos) of Susiana who was posted without success by Xenoetas (Antiochus III’s general) to counter the revolt. On the other hand, by the Babylonians, Strabo may have meant the Seleucid satrap of Babylonia (Zeuxis) and his forces\textsuperscript{337}. It took a couple of years for Antiochus to suppress the revolt (220 BC) with the “investiture” of Apollodoros as strategos of Susiana\textsuperscript{338}, and re-establishing the Seleucid control after his victorious campaigns in eastern lands against the Parthians and the Greco-Bactrian state.

\textsuperscript{333} Ibid., s.v. Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon.
\textsuperscript{334} Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, p. 189.
\textsuperscript{335} Str. XVI.1.18. The particular significance of this historical event is shown by the fact that Strabo reported it in a second passage (XI.13.6).
\textsuperscript{336} Polyb., V.48.
\textsuperscript{337} Nöldeke 1874, 190. Contra Weissbach (1922, coll. 1501), for his part, held an entirely different opinion, considering Strabo's report erroneous since he supposed Susa to be a part of Elam during that time, and consequently this conflict was assumed as highly improbable by the German Assyriologist. The absence of written data does not allow further verifications about this historical event.
\textsuperscript{338} Polyb., V.54.12.
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Soon, Antiochus III had to confront his downfall with the rise of Rome, now beginning to intervene in eastern Mediterranean affairs. In 190 BC, the Seleucid king and his army (more than 70,000 men) were crushed by 30,000 Romans and their allies in the battle of Magnesia, near Mount Sipylus on the plain of Lydia (modern eastern Turkey). It is notable that among the ranks of the enormous army of Antiochus III, there were Elymaean archers.

The political repercussions on Seleucid authority in Iran were devastating since the Greek defeat was likely perceived by the Seleucid vassals and allies, and taken as the first sign of a gradual but inexorable disruption of his authority. Ignoring the payment of tributes and the military support, local aristocracies could have forced the accomplishment of an increased independence with the formation of new political entities, as represented by the case of Elymais.

A number of scholars recognize the year 190 BC as a crucial year in the history of Elymais, since the loss of Magnesia with the following raid into Elymais led by Antiochus III in 187 BC could have represented the exact moment that resulted in an "official" Elymaean independence. It is very likely that while the plain of Susiana was under the Seleucid control, in the mountainous regions of Elymais the Greek authority was already almost entirely absent. It was one of the potentially decisive factors, which led first Antiochus III and then his son Antiochus IV to attempt the plunder of the Elymaean wealthiest temples.

At any rate, more than the defeat at Magnesia, it was the successive treaty of Apamea (188 BC) which caused the onset of collapse within the Seleucid dominion. It

339 Livy, XXVII.40; see also App. LXVI.6.32. See, Bar-Kochva 1976, p. 48.
341 Nöldeke (1874, p. 190) saw it as the turning point – a kind of terminus post quem – for Elymaean independence that was possible, according to the German scholar, only after the weakening of Seleucid power in the defeat at Magnesia. As proof, he offers the previously addressed obscure passage of Strabo (XVI.1.18), who describes Kossaeans and Elymaeans opposed to Babylonians and Susians. Alfred von Gutschmid seems to share the same opinion, and he sees in the failure at Magnesia and the following act of aggression by Antiochus III against an “old” ally in an attempt to sack the temple of Bel, the stage in which the Elymaeans began to detach themselves from Seleucid power and to establish their autonomy (von Gutschmid 1888, p. 39). Given that the Elymaeans did not try to attain independence from Seleucid authority before the defeat at Magnesia, this hypothesis gains strength.

342 According to other scholars (e.g. Sellwood 1983, p. 307; Wiesehöfer 1994, p. 124; Potts 1999a, p. 384), it was the death of Antiochus IV in 164 BC to provide the decisive impulse for the rise of Elymais as a distinct polity on the international panorama.

343 Apamea-on-the-Silhu has been located by most authorities near the modern Kut al-Amara, perhaps a synonym of the toponym Fam-as-Silh (Famiya or Fam of the as-Silah district which lay on the canal with the same name) of the Arab geographers, a town located above Wasit on the Tigris, visited by Yaqut in the 13th century (Le Strange 1905, p. 38). For a more detailed analysis see Potts (2002, p. 355, footnote 7) and Del Monte (1997, p. 107). For a comprehensive survey and comparison of sources pertinent to the location of the city of Apamea, as well as a discussion of literature, see Oppenheimer (1983, pp. 29-35). On Classical and Arabic

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brought severe impositions\(^{344}\), putting Antiochus III in a financially disastrous position, and possibly leading to his “suicidal” attempt to sack the Elymaean temple of Bel in 187 BC. In reality, this action may have been taken to demonstrate a reassertion of Seleucid authority after the humiliation at Magnesia\(^{345}\). As later demonstrated by Daphne’s procession under Antiochus IV where the royal reserves seemed very prosperous\(^{346}\), the Seleucid economic resources were more than sufficient to meet the Roman requirement without jeopardizing their finances\(^{347}\). If this was the case, it seems nonetheless strange that such an expression of force was carried out against those same Elymaeans who fought with the Seleucid army at Magnesia. Following the death of Antiochus III in Elymais, Seleucid jurisdiction in the east did not cease entirely, as revealed by the monetary production from Susa\(^{348}\) and Ecbatana\(^{349}\), which continued to issue coins until the loss of Susiana and Media to the Parthians.

After the brief reign of Seleucus IV (187-175 BC), Antiochus IV *Epiphanes* (a son of Antiochus III just as his predecessor was) came to the throne. Following his father's footsteps, he organized a no-less audacious military raid in the east twenty-three years after Antiochus III's debacle and death in Elymais. Again, on this occasion, the result was not positive. The Seleucid sovereign tried to invade Elymais, in what could be interpreted as a will of revenge\(^{350}\), but once more, the Elymaeans defended their sacred places and their land from the foreign threat, pushing back the invading king. Presumably, Antiochus IV was also in need of reasserting Seleucid authority to incorporate the important strategic area of Elymais, and subsumed it as Susiana and Characene\(^{351}\). Concerning Antiochus IV’s incursion in Elymais,

\(^{344}\) The Seleucid defeat at Magnesia (190 BC) brought with it the imposition of severe penalties. Not only Anatolia was lost, the Seleucid elephant corps impounded and naval movement restricted, but also reparations of 15,000 talents of silver were due. This was to be paid in a series of instalments: 500 talents immediately, 2,500 talents upon ratification of the *Treaty of Apamea*, and 12,000 talents thereafter in the form of annual tribute of 1,000 talents of silver per year for the next twelve years (Mørkholm 1966, pp. 22-37).

\(^{345}\) Mørkholm 1966, p. 29; Dabrowa 2004; Martinez-Sève 2014b, pp. 388-392.

\(^{346}\) Polyb., XXX.6.25-26.

\(^{347}\) Le Rider 1993, pp. 60-61. See also Martinez-Sève 2014a, pp. 388-392.


\(^{349}\) At Ecbatana in Media issues were minted by Seleucus IV, Antiochus IV, Antiochus V (164-162 BC), the satrap Timarchus (161 BC) who shortly claimed the title "king," Demetrius I, and Alexander I Balas (Houghton 1983, pp. 113-117).


\(^{351}\) Martinez-Sève 2014a, p. 391.
no battle was actually fought against the natives, but the Seleucid king died soon after in 164 BC (probably from an illness) at T/Gabae (Esfahan)\(^{352}\). Classical authors do not allude the rulers of Elymaeans who repelled the Seleucid enemy, however a poorly preserved Elymaic inscription (\textit{BN:insc.A}) unearthed during the excavation of Bard-e Neshandeh\(^353\), referred to ca. 171-151 BC\(^{354}\), has been tentatively read ['NH KBNŠ][K][Y]R MLK' (\textit{Kabnashkir the King}). Although the name \textit{Kabnashkir} is almost entirely reconstructed risking to be speculative, it is evident the presence of a king (MLK') during the time of Antiochus IV. Whether the king of Bard-e Neshandeh was the first member of the Kamnaskirid dynasty, and how long his reign may have been, is hard to assume\(^355\).

The desperate attempts led by the two Seleucid kings may appear in contrast with the politics of their predecessors, who paid considerable attention to local sensibilities, although it seems that the positive relationships between Seleucid kings and native priestly elites were in reality illusory. The Greek sovereigns preferred publically to show themselves as willing to negotiate and compromise with native people in a mutual collaboration revealing a courteous reverence for local deities\(^356\), even though their real aim had to fulfil political and economic gains\(^357\).

\(^{352}\) Henkelman 2008b, p. 311.
\(^{353}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXV.4.
\(^{354}\) See \textit{BN:insc.A} (§8.1.4.1). Harmatta (1976, p. 295) more generally located the inscription between 180-160 BC.
\(^{355}\) Potts (2016b, p. 383) proposed to identify the king of Bard-e Neshandeh with Kamnaskires \textit{Megas Soter}. However, if the dating provided by Harmatta (i.e., 180-160 BC) is correct, it is evident that the Kamnaskires named in the Elymaic text of \textit{BN:insc.A} cannot be associated with the Kamnaskires \textit{Megas Soter} represented on the coinage of ca. 147 BC, since the latter is depicted in a very youthful aspect on his inaugural coinage. In this case, it would be tempting to consider the Kamnaskires of Bard-e Neshandeh as the potential founder of the Kamnaskirid dynasty in Elymais.

\(^{356}\) Sherwin-White and Kuhr 1993. More specifically, for instance, in the early 3rd century BC, the crown prince Antiochus (the future Antiochus I) entered the city of Babylon with a great piety toward the moon god Sin. He visited Babylon repeatedly, and later as king, he rebuilt portions of the Ezida Temple of Marduk as well as the local Temple of Esagila at Borsippa. For the translation of the so-called Borsippa cylinder see Austin 2006, pp. 304-305, for the text follow Kuhr and Sherwin White 1991, (n. 6), pp. 75-76. On the benefactions to the temple of Nebo (Nabu) in Babylon, see Kuhr and Sherwin-White 1991, pp. 71-86; while for gifts to Zeus \textit{Baitokaike} in southern Syria, consult Welles 1934, pp. 280-288; and Rigsby 1980, pp. 248-254. To consider the ability of the Seleucid kings in manipulating the local traditions, see Strootman 2013, pp. 67-97. Useful editions of Babylonian records from the Hellenistic period include Grayson 1975, Sachs and Hungar; Finkle and Van der Spek.

\(^{357}\) The devoted public actions of the Seleucid kings to native religious practices were covered to obtain political legitimacy to facilitate tributary exploitation of the region (e.g., taxes, physical resources, administrative personnel, military recruits). They were certainly aware that ancient Elymaean temples managed and regulated local and even regional economic activities, administering significant monetary assets, as well as being the storehouses for considerable treasures. Antiochus and his successors could certainly take all by brute force, but it would have involved undesired impacts, such as the high costs of mobilizing and supplying the armies, which would have reduced the economic acquisition of the territories they wished to profit from. Benefaction and despoliation seem to be two sides of the same coin (Levi 1981, pp. 431-465; \textit{idem} 1988, pp. 10-40). It is
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5.2.3.1 The Early Kamnaskirids

At this stage, the Seleucids toppled into devastating civil wars, which were encouraged by Romans and Ptolemies, and if the death of Antiochus IV signalled a slide into the final collapse of Seleucid power in Iran and Mesopotamia, the Greek authority in Elymais – at least in the lowlands – does not seem to have ended immediately. A series of coins minted at Susa in the names of Demetrius I (162-150 BC) and Alexander Balas (150-145 BC) demonstrate that presumably until around 150 BC Susa was still in Seleucid hands. Alexander Balas’ usurpation against Demetrius I occurred in 150 BC, when he declared himself the son of Antiochus IV and therefore his direct successor after several battles have taken place in the same year. Through cuneiform records, it is attested that Alexander Balas defeated Demetrius I to the north of Syria, where the latter probably died, whether prior or after Alexander Balas took Susa is difficult to assume. It is widely agreed among scholars that the internal struggles in the Seleucid court (i.e., assassination of Antiochus V by Demetrius I; and subsequent arrival of Alexander Balas), inspired a man, named Kamnaskires, of a local
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aristocratic family to liberate Elymais in 149/7 BC\textsuperscript{362}. Per contra, if Harmatta’s reconstruction of BN:insc.A at Bard-e Neshandel is correct\textsuperscript{363}, this new king could be the son of the Kabnashkir the King attested between 171-151 BC, backdating few decades the beginning of the Kamnaskirid dynasty. Unfortunately, an interpretation only based on lacunose epigraphic evidence remains highly speculative\textsuperscript{364}.

The history of the Elymaean kingdom is much the same as the history of the region, although many details are obscure, as the origin and the first years of the Kamnaskirid dynasty. The first Elymaean rulers are known in the Diaries and more specifically through their coins. Attention should be given to the first two issues which bear the legends of KАМΝΙΣΚΕΙΡΟΥ [ΣΩ]ΤΗΡΟΣ ΒΑϹΙΛΕΩΣ ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ, “King Kamnaskires Megas Soter [Great Saviour]”, and the other ΒΑϹΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΙΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ, “King Kamnaskires Nikephoros [Bearer of Victory]”\textsuperscript{365}, and of which the chronology remains a matter of controversy\textsuperscript{366}. Being evidently imitations of Seleucid coinage (Pl. LV), the key point of this numismatic diatribe is the very distinct connection between the unique tetradrachm of Kamnaskires Megas Soter\textsuperscript{367} and the emissions of Alexander Balas from Susa\textsuperscript{368}, suggesting a possible continuity which, for some scholars, could pre-date the

texts from the modern Kirkuk province in northern Iraq associate the term “leather bag” to “treasury”; in CAD 8, p. 432), can be only suggested. Moreover, as Potts stated that “when Henning wrote his study of the Tang-e Sarvak inscriptions the Elamite onomasticon was largely unstudied. Today, as a result of Zadok’s publications (1984; 1991), it is much easier to isolate probable Elamite elements in Kammiskires which could be suggestive of alternative etymologies” (Potts 1999a, p. 386). As it read in Zadok (1991, p. 226) “The latest Elamite onomastic survivals are contained in Greek [...] and *Καμνασκηρος (Aram. Kbnškir, LB Qa-bi-na-š-ki-rî; 77 B.C. and later)”.  


\textsuperscript{363} Harmatta 1976, p. 294.

\textsuperscript{364} See 8.1.4.1. The appearance of a new political order in Elymais is indicated by two categories of data: coinage issued at Susa by one or more kings named “Kamnaskires”, and references to a “Kamnaskhir” in the Diaries of 146/5 BC. The monetary issue is addressed in Chapter 9. For overviews, see e.g., Allotte de la Fuÿe 1902, pp. 92ff; Codrington 1906. See also Potts 2016, pp. 379-382.

\textsuperscript{365} Assar 2004-2005, pp. 6-7, 11, 47-55.

\textsuperscript{366} See §9.2.5.1. The topic of the first Elymaean kings is also addressed, with different outcomes, in Bell 2002b; Assar 2004-2005; van’t Haaff 2007; Hoover 2008; Shayegan 2011.

\textsuperscript{367} Le Rider 1969, 18, no. 10; Strauss 1971, p. 119, no. 134; Fischer 1971.

\textsuperscript{368} Assar 2004-2005, pp. 33, 54.
emission of Kamnaskires Megas Soter concerning those of Kamnaskires Nikephoros (Pl. LVIII). Despite some contrary views, a close observation of numismatic evidence (i.e. the portraits of the first Kamnaskirid kings on their coins) unequivocally indicates the presence of two distinct personages.

Having assumed control of the Seleucids’ house, Demetrius II Nikator, son of the beaten king Demetrius I, was able with the Ptolemaic support to defeat Alexander Balas and to reclaim his father’s throne in the battle of Oinoparas river near Antiochia by the summer/autumn of 146 BC, where the last written record of Alexander Balas have been found. The first attestation of Demetrius II in the Diaries is in September 145 BC, when the nascent Elymaean power of Kamnaskires Megas Soter – whose name appears to be Elamite – was becoming increasingly real. Elymaean raids into Mesopotamia, and the danger of an imminent campaign in Seleucid territory must have induced the mobilization of royal Seleucid troops. However, in the following month (October 145 BC), the Demetrius military operations were not intended, as expected, against the insurgent Elymais but rather he “marched around in the city of Meluhha” (Ptolemaic Syria), where he defeated the Lagid

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369 Le Rider 1969, p. 21; Assar 2004-2005, p. 54; Potts 2016, p. 382. Contra Allotte de la Fujié 1919, p. 46; Fischer 1971, pp. 171-175; Strauss 1971, pp. 119, 137-140; Potts 2002, p. 351; Shayegan 2011, pp. 88-101. In particular, Shayegan (2011, p. 95) states that “in order to decide on the proper sequence of the reigns ascribed to Kamnaskires Soter and Nikephoros [...] however, we shall first determine the approximate date and duration of their respective rule”, arguing that “The six (or seven?) issues of tetradrachms, as well as the eight to ten issues of bronze, attributed to Kamnaskires Nikephoros, seem to accommodate the duration of the reign stipulated for Kamnaskiri the Elder, namely, some seven years, from mid 145 to mid 138 BCE. In the same vein, the scant issues of tetradrachms, namely, two (or three?), allotted to Kamnaskires Soter, seem to be an adequate gauge for the duration of Kamnaskiri the Younger’s rule, and, hence, consistent with a rule of few years, from early 132 to mid 130 BCE” (Shayegan 2011, p. 100; see also Le Rider 1965, p. 351). However, a historical approach, such as that of Shayegan, only based on the association between the number of issues and the years of reign cannot be considered so linear. For a numismatic analysis on the comparisons between the specimens of Kamnaskires Megas Soter and Kamnaskires Nikephoros, see §9.2.5.1.

370 See §9.2.5.1. Noticeable divergences between the first Elymaean issues can also be marked from an iconographic point of view where a younger man is represented on the obverse portrait of Megas Soter issue compared to a more adult figure in the Nikephoros coins. This evidence led to various hypothesis between the scholars, in particular while Hansman (cf. 1990, p. 2) and Assar (2004-2005, pp. 59-60) have suggested identifying the two Kamnaskires (i.e., Megas Soter and Nikephoros) with the same person in two different periods of the political career, it is generally accepted to recognize two distinct but homonymous individuals, defined in turn as Kamnaskires I and II (Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 47, 49), father and son (Dabrowa 2014, p. 61, n. 2), and “the Elder” and “the Younger” (Shayegan 2011, pp. 88-101).

371 Str., XVI.2.8.

372 Sachs and Hunger 2006, no. 88 'obv. 8'-10' (= 344-345).

373 Henning (1952, p. 165) has also suggested that the name Kamnaskires, of several kings of Elymais, could have been a dynastic title and not a personal name. This scholar thought that such a term might have been derived from a word whose pronunciation would have been approximately Kabnśkir – the legend, written in the form of Aramaic (i.e., Elymaic; see Chapter 8), was KBNŚKYR – a word derived from a more ancient Achaemenid-Elamite title, the kap-nu-ıš-ki-ra, namely the “treasurer” (see also Henkelman 2008a, p. 26). In any case, the only epigraphic evidence available concerning the kingdom of Kamnaskires is found on coins.

374 Sachs and Hunger 1996, no. -144 'obv. 35' (= 96-97).
forces of Ptolemy VI (180-145 BC)\textsuperscript{376}, leaving the defense of Babylonia to be carried out by his Iranian-named general Ardaya\textsuperscript{377}.

That month at the \textbf{command of Ardaya}, the \textbf{general of Babylonia}, they made a counting [...] of the Babylonians, the servants of the king [...] the citizens who were in Babylon and Seleucia\textsuperscript{378}.

It was precisely during this internecine war, when Alexander Balas was defeated and assassinated by Ptolemy VI, that Kamnaskires \textit{Megas Soter} took advantage of the absebce of authority in the region. Demetrius II moved troops to fight in Syria against Egyptian army, leaving to the new Elymaean forces the favourable circumstances with which to create an independent reign and issue inaugural coinage at Susa\textsuperscript{379}. According to a \textit{Diary} dating to September 145 BC, Kamnaskires – for the first time attested in the cuneiform texts – left Elymais and led his army for an opportunistnic sortie in Seleucid Mesopotamia.

\cite{Shayegan2011}

That month, the 17\textsuperscript{th}, a message of Demetrius, [...] was read [...] the commander of all the troops of the royal house\textsuperscript{380} [...] / That month, I heard as follows: Ari’abu ... [...] ... / entered Babylon and the other rivers. The auxiliary troops of ... [...] / \textbf{the king of Elam with his numerous troops [...] from this land} [...]\textsuperscript{381}.

\cite{Assar2004-2005,Shayegan2011,Shayegan2011}

A couple of months later, in November 145 BC, the Elymaean king and his troops “\textit{marched around victoriously among the cities and rivers of Babylonia},” seemingly with the intent of plundering and carrying off spoil rather than designing expansionistic ambitions\textsuperscript{382}, terrorizing the locals before being ousted by Ardaya or retreating on purpose\textsuperscript{383}.

\cite{Sachs1996,DelMonte1997,Shayegan2011}

\cite{Shayegan2011,Assar2004-2005,Shayegan2011}

\cite{Potts2002,Assar2004-2005,Shayegan2011}

\cite{Shayegan2011,Assar2004-2005,Shayegan2011}
plundered [... and] / carried off their spoil. The people [...] their animals [...] for fear of this Elamite to the house [...] There was panic and fear in the land\textsuperscript{384}.

The Elymaean army seems to have been sent back to its base at Susa in July- August 144 BC\textsuperscript{385}.

[th]at [month], I heard as follows: the troops which to Susa ... of Susa [...] / [...] many [...] which had ... to Elam, they made enter Susa [...]\textsuperscript{386}.

This Kamnaskirid audacious raid within the Seleucid territories in Mesopotamia must have incurred a punitive intervention by Demetrius II\textsuperscript{387}. Numismatic evidence shows a temporary Seleucid presence at Susa in 145/4 BC\textsuperscript{388}. This political scenario may have forced Kamnaskires to set up his court elsewhere, conceivably at Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon\textsuperscript{389}.

In the same period, the Seleucid authority was once again challenged by a new opponent. As indicated by Diodorus Siculus\textsuperscript{390}, Josephus\textsuperscript{391} and I.Maccabees\textsuperscript{392}, due to his acts of reprisal against past advocates for Alexander Balas in Antioch and the consequent violence used to subjugate the Antiochenes\textsuperscript{393}, the position of Demetrius II deteriorated and his popularity drastically diminished. The new claimant to the Seleucid throne was Antiochus VI (145/4-142/1 BC), the son of Alexander Balas, who was setting himself up as the rightful heir of the Seleucid kingdom along with the commander of the Antioch garrison, Diodotus Tryphon. It is highly possible that as a product of this internal warfare and dynastic conflicts in the west, the Seleucids weakened in the east losing their already ineffective control of the region, inducing once again an Elymaean secession led by Okkonapses “the Saviour.”

By July-August 144 BC, the Diaries contain information on king Antiochus VI about Elymais:

\textsuperscript{385} Del Monte 1997, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{386} Sachs and Hunger 1996, \textit{no. -143 A ‘Flake’ 18 ’19’} (= 104-105); Del Monte 1997, p. 100.
\textsuperscript{387} Del Monte (1997, p. 100) proposes Antiochus VI as regent in Mesopotamia.
\textsuperscript{388} Assar 2004-2005, pp. 57-59. See §9.2.5.1.
\textsuperscript{389} On the different mint in Elymais, see §9.2.2. On \textit{Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon}, see Appendix 3.
\textsuperscript{390} Diod. Sic XXXIII.4.
\textsuperscript{391} Jos. XIII.129-130, 135-143.
\textsuperscript{392} I.Macc. 11.44-50.
\textsuperscript{393} Diod. Sic. XXXIII.4.1-4; I.Macc. 11.47; Jos. XIII.135-143.
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[th]at [month], I heard as follows: the troops which to Susa ... of Susa [...] / [...] many [...] which had ... to Elam, they made enter Susa [...] / [...] the general of ... and the troops of Antiochus, son of Alexander, who retur[ned...] / [...] departed.

From this point until the end of 141 BC, Elymaean history fell into a "Dark Age," during which neither dated coins nor literature have come to light. It can only be supposed that Kamnaskires reigned without opposition in the interim. The following 10-15 years were instead chaotic, but gave the Elymaeans control over their own reign, even if a Parthian sovereign (Phraates II) and local tribal rulers (usurpers) of uncertain origin (Okkonapses, Tigraios and perhaps Dareios) took over at various times. As to who governed at Susa and for how long remains debatable.

The historical reconstruction provided combining multilevel sources (e.g., cuneiform texts, numismatic production, inscriptions, rupestrian art) reveals, for instance, how little is known regarding the chronological sequence of who (local rulers) likely usurped the throne from the Kamnaskirid family. Le Rider affirmed that Okkonapses reigned shortly before Mithridates I occupied Susa in ca. 140/138 BC. In this regard, Assar assumes that after his expulsion from Susa by the Seleucids between autumn 145 BC and summer 144 BC, Kamnaskires returned to Susa – regardless of whether he found or did not find Okkonapses – and began minting coins with the title of Nikephoros.

Logically, if this is the case, it would have to recognize as accurate the hypothesis that the first two Elymaean kings’ coin issues concerned the same person. Significantly diverging from this historical reconstruction, Shayegan – through his study of the Diaries and coins – questionably placed the reign of Kamnaskires “the Elder” (Nikephoros) between the 145 BC and 138 BC, dating the presence of Okkonapses immediately after the dominion of the first

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394 Sachs and Hunger 1996, no. -143 A ‘Flake’ 18’-21’ (= 104-105); Del Monte 1997, p. 100.
395 These so-called usurper were possible the representatives of other relevant agro-pastoral polities within the highland in contrast with the Kamnaskirid family. See §10.3.2.
396 Although information is scarce and circumstantial, an assumed chronology has been proposed in this work (§9.2.5.1) by the analysis and confrontation between numismatic and written evidence.
398 Le Rider (1978, p. 35) rectified what he previously proposed, namely a local sovereign named Hyknapses (ΤΩΝΑΨΟΥ) reigning at Susa in 162 BC (Le Rider 1965, p. 346). See also Sellwood 1983, p. 307. Contrarily, by the analysis of monetary evidence Assar (2004-2005, pp. 57-60) dates Okkonapses brief usurpation to 144/3 BC, while van’t Haaff (2007, pp. 4-5) prefers to share the opinion of Le Rider in placing Okkonapses occupation in 139 BC. In numismatic terms, Assar’s hypothesis is based on a stylistic and qualitative assessment of the images struck on the coins. Specifically he points out the similarities between the issues of this period with the presence of the monogram in the Series III of Kamnaskires minted before his removal due to the arrival of Demetrius II, its variants on the Susian tetradrachms, reverse of Demetrius II, again in its previous form in the obverse of Okkonapses' unique piece, and its absence in the earliest issues of Kamnaskires Nikephoros (Assar 2004-2005, p. 60). See §9.2.5.1.
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Kamnaskires (i.e., ca. mid 138/early 137 BC)\textsuperscript{401}. In addition, considering the amount of coin series\textsuperscript{402} attributed to Kamnaskires Nikephoros compared to the ephemeral production of Kamnaskires Megas Soter\textsuperscript{403}, Shayegan – paraphrasing Le Rider\textsuperscript{404} – feels confident in naming the latter as Kamnaskires “the Younger” and put him in charge of Elymais between 132-130 BC\textsuperscript{405}, reporting during the intermediate period between mid-138 BC and 133 BC the presence of Βασιλέως Ὀκκονάσπου Σωτήρος and Βασιλέως Τιγραίου\textsuperscript{406}. In reality, from a numismatic perspective, given the fact that an unbroken continuity between Alexander Balas and Kamnaskires Megas Soter appears to have a quite substantial evidence, it becomes hard to establish his coin emissions at Susa after the brief Seleucid interlude of Demetrius II in 145/4 BC. The hesitation occurs instead between the following emissions of Kamnaskires Nikephoros and Okkonapses. Although the assumption may be arguable, the one-of-a-kind specimen of Okkonapses could suggest a very short reign, while his monetary title of “Saviour” (Soter) would seem more suitable in order to extol a victory over a foreigner power (Seleucid), rather than indicating an internal coup d’état. According to this scenario, Okkonapses could have “saved” the Elymaeans from the Seleucid dominion before the

\textsuperscript{401} Ibid., p. 103. Regarding his chronological assumption, Shayegan evidently follows Georges Le Rider (1978). The latter, indeed, reporting two new tetrachadrms issued at Susa depicting Okkonapses and Tigraios, tries to demonstrate, from a numismatic point of view, that the series of the first Kamnaskires (Nikephoros) have been followed in chronological order firstly by Okkonapses and then by Tigraios (Le Rider 1978, pp. 34-35).

\textsuperscript{402} Le Rider (1965, p. 75, and Pl. VIII.D-H) reported five issues but, after a more recent research through several sale catalogues, Assar has increased the number of specimens to thirteen (Assar 2004-2005, p. 36, Pl. VI). Notably, Shayegan did not take in consideration this data from Assar and cited in this regard only the five (or six) samples of Kamnaskires Nikephoros reported by Le Rider (Shayegan 2011, p. 100).

\textsuperscript{403} Assar 2004-2005, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{404} Le Rider 1965, p. 351. The eminent French numismatist described the differences between Seleucids and Arsacids in the process of typological evolution within the framework of specific conventions into the same atelier at Susa. If the number of monetary emissions for the Hellenistic kings was very low comparing the regnal years (e.g., Antiochus III issued nine series in 35 years), the Parthian sovereigns preferred to mint on a yearly basis. According to Le Rider (1965, p. 351), “cette habitude de l’atelier susien à l’époque parthe semblerait avoir été établie par Kamniskirès, dont le sept émission certaines […] indiquerai qu’il a gardé Suse en son pouvoir au moins six ou sept ans.” However, an assumption only based on the number of coin series issued by a specific king may be speculative, since the association between regnal years and monetary production is not always as linear as it seems, and indeed, it is not always who reigned more years to have even issued a larger number coins (e.g., the II series of Vologases I, which even though lasted eight years represents the least-documented one, see Sinisi 2012).

\textsuperscript{405} Shayegan 2011, p. 100. At this moment of the research – awaiting further development in the area of Elymaean numismatic – I am more inclined to place Kamnaskires Megas Soter after Alexander Balas and therefore antecedent compared to Kamnaskires Nikephoros (§9.2.5.1). However, this considerations must be aware of the meagre amount of coins in support of the two first Kamnaskires’ issues. I personally saw the enormous amount of Elymaean coins which still need to be studied and catalogued in the Numismatic Department of the Tehran National Museum in Iran, and I may suppose a similar situation in other public or private institutions around the world (e.g., Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque Nationale at Paris), suggesting to treat with increased caution this topic. I also consider, through the analysis of the Diaries and numismatic production, as being very likely the hypothesis regarding the existence of two different Kamnaskires who used respectively the titles of Megas Soter and Nikephoros (contra Assar 2004-2005).

\textsuperscript{406} Shayegan 2011, pp. 101-102.
restoration of the legitimate Kamnaskirid house at Susa with Kamnaskires “who bore the victory” over a local contender (i.e. Okkonapses)\(^{407}\) (Pl. LVIII).

Going back to the historical facts, in April 141 BC Babylonia was already under the Arsacid authority as Mithridates I (r. 165-132 BC) seems to have taken part in the New Year (Akītu) festival of the city\(^{408}\). Between December 141 BC and January 140 BC, once Susa was recaptured – facilitated by the absence of Mithridates I – a second outbreak of hostilities by the Elymaeans on Mesopotamia is recorded in the Diaries. Immediately, the gravity of the events prompted the Arsacid king’s departure from Hyrkania, where he was, to Babylonia.

That month [ix] I heard as follows: king **Arsaces and his troops departed from Arqani’a (Hyrkania)** / I heard as follows: (on the) 6\(^{th}\) (= 10\(^{th}\) of December)\(^{409}\), the Elamite and his troops departed towards Apamea which is on the river Silhu for fighting. / That [month\(^{2}\)], the people who dwell in Apamea went out to Bit-Karkudi; they burned Apamea. / [...] **An(tiochus) the general who is above the 4 generals, who was representing king Arsaces, went out from Seleucia which is on] / the Tigris towards the Elamite for fighting; from the river Kabari**\(^{410}\) he departed, and the numerous troops [...] / went out for fighting. The people who were in Seleucia and the people who dwell in Babylon, [...] the belongings [...] / to guard (them) before the ... of the Elamite. I heard as follows: the troops who were in Bit-[Karkudi ...] / set up [...] of the troops of the Elamite. That month, the people [...] their children, their possessions, and their wives [...] / the nobles of the king who had entered Babylon and the few people they led to the sea [...] / of the brickwork of the Marduk Gate they tore down and the brickwork [...] / [...] on the Euphrates from [...]\(^{411}\).

Rephrasing the last passage, the Elymaeans under the command of Kamnaskires Nikephoros vehemently assaulted Apamea-on-the-Silhu\(^{412}\), whose citizens were compelled to find refuge in the city of Bit-Karkudi\(^{413}\) on the Tigris. After having presumably laid waste and burnt down Apamea, the Elymaeans moved to Bit-Karkudi to "finish the job." At the same time, the Arsacid general Antiochus was approaching from Seleucia-on-the-Tigris with his

\(^{407}\) See §9.2.5.1.


\(^{409}\) Del Monte 1997, p. 106.

\(^{410}\) Potts 2002, p. 355.

\(^{411}\) Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 146-147, *no. -140 C obv*, 34-44.

\(^{412}\) Assumably, *Apamea-in-Mesene* ("Apameam Mesenes oppidum" in Pliny, VI.31.129) or Gr. Σελάιας/Σέλαλας, a city “surrounded by the Tigris” in southernmost Babylonia (possibly nearby Mesene as stated by Del Monte 1997, p. 107), which, according to Pliny (VI.31.132 ), had been named by Antiochus I in honour of his mother (Apamea, cui nomen Antiochus matris suae inposuit). It was an important city also at the time of Antiochus III when, jointly with some cities in Elymais, Mesene, and Persis, seems to have signed the decree in tribute to Magnesia-on-the-Meander (Kern 1863, *I.Magnesia 61* [Dittenberger, OGIS 233]). See also footnote 343.

\(^{413}\) Precise location unidentified (absent in Zadok 1985).
Seleucian troops intent on engaging the Elymaean forces in battle to subvert their offensive. It is likely, he wanted to prevent the Elymaean raid spreading from Bit-Karkudi to Babylonia itself. The threat to which Babylonia was exposed generated great fear in inhabitants of both Seleucia and Babylonia\textsuperscript{414} and it might have induced Antiochus, “the general who is above the four generals\textsuperscript{415}, who was representing king Arsaces\textsuperscript{416},” to negotiate with the Elymaeans (or perhaps to betray his sovereign). This act of diplomacy was perceived as treason by the Seleucians who persecuted him, captured Antiochus, and when he escaped\textsuperscript{417}, they exacted their revenge by plundering those “possessions which he had left in the land.” This scenario did not deter the Elymaeans from launching a new offensive in the unknown city of Bit-Karkudi on the river Tigris.

That month, I heard as follows: on the 4\textsuperscript{th} day (= 6\textsuperscript{th} of January\textsuperscript{418}), the citizens who were in Seleucia which is on the Tigris set up a curse on Antiochus, the general who is above the four generals, because he made common cause with the Elamite; they had provided... for the general, and sent many troops with him towards the Elamite for fighting. They held back this Antiochus, but he escaped with a few troops, and the people of the land who were in Seleucia on the Tigris plundered his possessions which he had left in the land, and the troops of the king who were with him plundered the possessions which were in [...]. That month, the Elamite [went out ...] towards Bit-Karkudi which is on the Tigris for fighting...\textsuperscript{419}

Nevertheless, “panic of the enemy [...] this Elamite enemy [...]”\textsuperscript{420} was still present in these lands during the first months of 140 BC, suggesting that the Elymaean danger had not yet been eradicated.

The information derived from the Diaries is necessary for a more robust understanding of the tripartite relationship (Elymaeans, Seleucids and Parthians) between the late 140s and early 130s BC, contravening the credibility of the previous reconstructions of those affairs.

\textsuperscript{414} Sachs and Hunger 1996, -140.D.obv.11'-13'
\textsuperscript{415} With regard to the significance of this title see Mitsuma 2007: idem 2009; Potts 2007; Shayegan 2011, pp. 220-221.
\textsuperscript{416} Potts 2002, p. 350. It is interesting to see how a general with a Greek name took the place of Mithridates I. This general is absent in Grainger’s Seleucid prosopography (Grainger 1997), but we find him, once again in the Diaries (-140 A. rev 7’) with the name “Antiochus, son of king Ar’abuzana” (see Olbrycht 2010, p. 239; Potts 2002, pp. 355-356).
\textsuperscript{417} After his fleeing, Antiochus was eventually assassinated at the king’s (Mithridates I’s) command (Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 164-165, no. -137 B ‘rev. 19’-20’). See also Table 1.
\textsuperscript{418} Del Monte 1997, p. 108.
\textsuperscript{420} Sachs and Hunger 1996, -140.D.obv.11'-13.'
based on questionable evidence from the Classical sources. For instance, the Babylonian sources attest how between November 141 and January 140 BC no battle was fought between Arsacids and Elymaeans, and the latter were not defeated by Mithridates I near the Babylonia/Susiana frontier, although the Arsacid king perhaps succeeded where the preceding Seleucid attempts had failed in sacking one of the “legendary” Elymaean temples. In any case, Elymais was not yet under Arsacid jurisdiction in early 140 BC, and even though some numismatic material sustains the assumption that Mithridates I conquered Susa in 140/139 BC, this dating appears to be “not supported by the new evidence of the Diaries”.

The Diaries, instead, report how the Elymaeans (“Elamite enemy”) continued to be a heavy presence throughout Babylonia at least until June/July 138 BC. In August 138 BC king “Arsaces” (Mithridates I) on his route to Media seized Demetrius II and established his final victory entering Babylonia with his prisoner.

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421 An example is Justin who reports in his Epitome that Demetrius II was flanked by Persians, Elymaeans and Bactrians for his battle against Mithridates I in spring 141 BC (Just., XXXVI.1.4), while the Diaries clearly point out as the Elymaeans were undoubtedly on “bad terms” with the Parthians but at the same time also actively campaigning against the Seleucids.

422 Contra Justin XLI.6.8. Del Monte believes that in this passage Justin interpreted as one single personage the two figures of Mithridates I and II (Del Monte 1997, p. 107).


424 Contra Potts (2016, pp. 390-391) attributes this event (the looting of the Azara temple) to Orodes I, postponing the historical scenario described in the Strabo’s passage (XVI.1.18) to 77 BC.


426 Shayegan 2011, p. 97. See also Mørkholm 1965, pp. 151-152; cf. Strauss 1971, p. 128, nos. 119-121, 139. Related to the possible arrival of Mithridates I in Elymais, it has been suggested that the Arsacid king, in order to commemorate his victory on Elymais, commissioned the rock relief at Hung-e Azhdar (HA) near Izeh-Malamir, representing himself (HA:1) in the act of receiving homage from the conquered Elymaeans (HA:3) (Vanden Berghe 1963b, p. 167; cf. Assar 2004-2005, pp. 63-64). This assumption has been questioned by some scholars (Kawami 1987, pp. 119-124, 209-213; Mathiesen 1992/I, pp. 17-19; idem 1992/II, p. 120-121 with corresponding bibliography). In particular, the in-depth study of Vito Messina of the relief has interpreted the figure on the horseback as Kamnaskires III or IV (first half of the 1st century BC) with later additions and re-sculpting in the early 2nd century AD, perhaps by Kamnaskires-Orodes (Messina 2014, pp. 338-339; cf. Messina and Mehr Kian 2009; idem 2010; idem 2011; for additional possibilities, see the detailed discussion in Shayegan 2011, pp. 105-110). For the topic of the scene, Hung-e Azhdar and new interpretations, see § 7.3.2.1.

427 Shayegan 2007, p. 68, 72, 84-87.

428 Dabrowa 1998a; idem 1999.
6. Religious Architectures

[that month, the 28th day (= 4th of August), ...] / general who was above the 4 generals entered Babylon. That month, a fall of cattle ... [..] / [..] Uruk and the cities which are on the Kutha canal, the Piqudu canal and the canals ... / [..] ... their ... they took and brought (them) up to Elam. The people of these cities in fear of ... / ... and famine occurred in Susa and the cities of Elam. I heard as follows: the Urukeans ... [...] / [...] planned evil. That month, I heard as follows: king Demetrius who before [...] his troops from the cities of ... [...] / [...] made [...] of Babylonia, and this king Arsaces went from the cities of Media to Babylonia, and ... [...] / [...] brought about [the defeat] of his troops, and seized him and his nobles, saying: king Arsaces [...] good peace for your ... in plenty, happiness and good peace in the cities of Media next to king Arsaces ... [...].

Here the Diaries confirms that an epidemic, after having affected the livestock of Uruk and the neighbouring cities, had spread into Elymais, causing famine in Susa and other Elymaean towns. This life-threatening situation may have led the Elymaeans to seek alternative sources of livelihood to combat the hunger and provide some respite to the starvation-stricken population of Elymais. The outcome was an incursion into Mesopotamia in December 138 BC, presumably headed by Kamnaskires Nikephoros, which was eventually contained by the Arsacid general Philinus who, having crushed the Elymaean armies, was involuntarily responsible for paving the way for the nascent expansionism of Hyspaosines, ruler of Characene.

[that month, the 10th? Day (=12th of December), [...] / pitched his camp [in ...] on the Tigris. He [the general who is above the four generals] returned and mustered his troops [...] / [...] entered [...] Seleucia which is on] the Tigris and the king’s canal. That month, on an unknown day, the king’s troops who guarded Babylonia came and ... [...] / [...] ... dispersed their cohorts took captives of them ... they inflicted a defeat on them. They returned? [...] / [...] panic of the Elamite enemy was strong in the land, and panic of the enemy fell on the people, ... and reed marshes they dispersed? [...]

In this passage, the diarists report the emergence of a new power in the region, as attested with the first mentions of Hyspaosines, a former eparch of southern Babylonia under...
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Antiochus IV\textsuperscript{435}. He apparently took advantage of the state of general disorder into which the Elymaeans seem to have fallen as a direct result of the famine in their land and the defeat they suffered at the hands of the Arsacids, and launched an ambitious campaign of conquest invading eastwards the territories of the Gulf previously under Elymaean control generating great fear in Elymais and comfort in Babylonia. The increasingly grave situation, which did not last more than six months might have prompted a dynastic change in Elymais with the advent of Tigraios.

\textit{ [...] of the lower Sealand, the cities, and canals of the gulf [...]} ... lutra their names were (called\textsuperscript{7} ...) / [...] and made them obey to his command; he imposed tribute on them, and Aspasine, son of [...] / this [Aspas]ine searched for a sortie\textsuperscript{2} against the Elamite enemy, and turned the cities [and\textsuperscript{7} ca]nals\textsuperscript{7} of the lower Sealand over to his own side, and made [them obey] to his command [...] / [...] in order to complete [...] of the lower Sea(land) who did not obey his command, ... / [...] seized them in a revolt, took captives of them, plundered them [...] / [...] there was] panic in Elam, happiness, and agreement in Babylonia [...]\textsuperscript{436}

The reported \textit{“happiness and agreement in Babylonia”} give rise to doubts about whether Hyspaosines was an independent ruler fighting against the Elymaeans in his interest, or rather a Parthian vassal campaigning on behalf of the empire. On this point, the fact that Hyspaosines, later on, joined the Elymaeans against the Arsacid forces, may indicate that he was already acting independently\textsuperscript{437}.

The \textit{Diaries} in January 137 BC indicate that a few weeks after the Elymaeans were driven out by the Arsacid general Philinus, an unspecified enemy attacked the city of Nippur\textsuperscript{438}. According to numismatic evidence\textsuperscript{439}, this may have represented the last military action of the Elymaeans under the command of Kamnaskires Nikephoros. After the failure of his Mesopotamian campaign undertaken in an attempt to relieve the Elymaean plague, it is uncertain whether Kamnaskires Nikephoros voluntarily relinquished his power or he fell victim to \textit{a coup d'etat} instigated by the \textit{“usurper”} Tigraios. Historical events in the Babylonian texts became patchy between March 137 BC and October 133 BC, omitting any

\textsuperscript{435} The way the \textit{Diaries} introduce Hyspaosines through a series of detail may suggest that prior to December 138 BC he posed no real problem to the Babylonian priesthood of Esagila. Therefore, if Hyspaosines was actually appointed as satrap of the Erythraean Sea province by Antiochus IV, this event did not affect the Babylonian political interests. Pliny (VI.31.139) outright rejected this scenario.


\textsuperscript{437} Schuol 2000, p. 293.


\textsuperscript{439} See §9.2.5.1.
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allusions to Elymaean affairs. It is reasonable to suppose that Tigraios, instead of wasting resources and manpower in sorties across Babylonia, consolidated his authority in Elymais, although only five years later, he might have supported the former enemy Hyspaosines in the Characenean invasion of Parthian territories. The Elymo-Characenean raid occurred, according to the Diaries, in October-November 133 BC, as a consequence of the Arsacid threat to the growing secessionist wishes of the Characeneans.

... That month I heard as follows: the forces of Aspasine, / the enemy from the environs of Mesene, a friend of the Elamite enemy came and fell on the harbour of ships / in the Tigris and plundered this harbour of ships together with their possessions.

In the same excerpt, it is described how these circumstances (i.e., the conjunct Elymo-Characenean incursion within Arsacid Mesopotamia) prompted the removal of Philinus. The new Parthian commander Theodosius reacted vigorously against these joint forces by driving the war deep into the territory of Elymais in November-December 133 BC.

[t]hat month, I heard / [...] Susa they made, and killed many troops of the Elamite in fighting, and the ...

Admittedly, the diary for December-January of 133/2 BC is hard to follow, but it is clear that a battle took place near an unspecified river, involving the Elymaeans and Arsacid forces led into Elymais by an Elymaean prince exiled in Babylonia and probably accompanied in his military action by Theodosius himself.

...K]amnaškiri, the Elamite enemy, who had revolted against his father / [...] lived in Babylonia, organized against their troops and left / [...]arratas, the river of Elam, they

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441 The former Parthian commander Philinus was already convened few months before in Media to report to Bagayasha (brother and representative of king Phraates II, son of Mithridates I), replaced by a certain Theodosius, whom the Diaries previously mention on the occasion of Babylonian sacrificial rites being performed at the “Gate of the Son of the Prince” in the Esagila (Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 210-211, no. 132 A rev. 1-4'). This replacement was officially announced to the governor and citizens of Babylon in October.133 BC:
443 Del Monte (1997, p. 128), considering the historical context, suggests to interpret the reading “[j-x-ár-ra-ta-šš” present in the Diaries (Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 230-231, no. 132 D 1' rev. 16'-21') as “[j-šš]k’u’-ap-ra-ta-šš” indicating the ancient river Coprates (modern Dez river, cf. Hansman 1967, p. 32, fig. 1). The river which

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
crossed, for fighting [against] each other. In month VII, the 7th, the troops [...] they brought about the defeat of the troops of the enemy. Until sunset, the remainder [...] entered. Ur’a, the son of this Elamite enemy

Apparently trusted by the Arsacids, this Kamnaskires ("The Arsacid")446, who had revolted against his father and taken refuge in Babylonia under the patronage of the Parthian court, led his troops to victory in a battle which, lasting until sunset, seemingly ended with the capture of the Elymaean ruler. The Diaries mention neither the name of Kamnaskires’ father447, nor that of the Elymaean invader, following whose capture Kamnaskires likely assumed the power in Elymais under Arsacid aegis. According to the numismatic evidence, Tigraios seems to have ruled over Elymais at this juncture. He had therefore to bear the brunt of the Arsacid attack, being subsequently dethroned by the same Kamnaskires and conducted to Babylonia in guard in early 132 BC.

[...] the general of Babylonia [went out] from Babylon to Seleucia / [...] of Babylonia entered Babylon from Seleucia. / [...] the Elamite enemy in guard with them ... / [...] ... of the Babylonians ...

Hypothetically, the Arsacid favour toward Kamnaskires was due to their political designs to manipulate and utilize him to obtain a convenient dynastic change in Elymais449.

rises in Lorestan (west of Esfahan) and flows east of Susa, likely marked the border between Media and Elymais.  

444 Regarding the historical figure of Ur’a, Shayegan (2011, p. 100) questionably considers him the son of Kamnaskires Megas Soter. Contra Assar 2004-2005, p. 72. Ur’a, presumably like his father, found refuge in the Arsacid court when Susa and Elymais were taken by Antiochus VII (130-129 BC), and now, as the Arsacid king was in need of a local ally in these territories, the loyal service of Ur’a would be requested. Unfortunately, his premature death during the battle against Pittiti ruined the Arsacid plans. “King Arsaces ... of Susa departed to the area of Elam opposite Pittiti, the Elamite enemy, for? fighting. That month?, ... the son of [...] / ... / [...] ... Urri’a was killed in Surru” (Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 274-275, no. -124 B ‘obv.’ 19; 21’).


446 Shayegan calls him Kamnaskires “the Younger” (i.e. Kamnaskires Megas Soter), in contrast to Kamnaskires Nikephoros, his Kamnaskires “the Elder”; see the lengthy discussion in Shayegan 2011, pp. 88-101. The interpretation of Shayegan appears a bit of a stretch, and it is not supported by the numismatic analysis (Chapter 9). At the current state of research, it is more likely to identify the Kamnaskires present in this passage of the Diaries, as a different royal member whose no monetary evidence have been provided, reasonably because of his ephemeral power. The Arsacids had control of Elymais during these years (ca. 133-130), and for this reason I will conventionally label this king as Kamnaskires “The Arsacid.”

447 For some hypothesis about the identity of Kamnaskires’ father, see Shayegan 2011, p. 104.

As a consequence of this event, Arsacid supremacy with Phraates II appears to be established to the point that that Babylonian scribes began to use for the first time the appellative of shar matati (i.e., “king of the lands”) in reference to their Parthian king. If the date of Kamnaskires ascent to the Elymaean throne seems to coincide with Phraates II's invasion of Elymais in February/March 132 BC, the exact date for his demise is harder to establish. It is known, however, a terminus ante quem constituted by the short interruption in 130-129 BC when Mesopotamia and Elymais were occupied by the Greek army of Antiochus VII Sidetes, brother of Demetrius II, before falling back into Arsacid hands that Antiochus VII was killed by the militia of Phraates II. After the death of the Seleucid ruler, Phraates II reinstated Arsacid dominion over Susa, as demonstrated by his emissions in 129/8 and 128/7 BC. At the same time, both cuneiform records and numismatic data, evidence that the Arsacid control over Babylonia was a short term (129-
127 BC), since Hyspaosines briefly occupied the region in May/June 127 BC and issued tetradrachms in Seleucia-on-the-Tigris456.

Considering Babylonia under the authority of Hyspaosines, it is reasonable to expect a significant undermining of the Arsacid position over Elymais. Within this sequence of historical events, Assar contextualizes the undated and unique specimen (tetradrachm) of a certain Dareios minted at Susa with the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΔΑΡΕΙΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ *ΝΑΝΑΙΕΩΝ[Ν]457, even though the cataloguer for this coin placed it sometime before Arsacid arrival in the region under Phraates II in 129 BC458. The assumption that a new local ruler could have emerged in Susa around 130/129 BC when the historical situation indicated the occupation of Elymais and Mesopotamia by the Seleucid armies of Antiochus VII appears quite doubtful. In this regard, Assar considers more reliable a dating around September-October 127 BC459. Since this coin is virtually the only evidence of Dareios, any attempt of dating may represent mere speculation460.

Nevertheless, Hyspaosines probably needed to find a modus vivendi with the Arsacids and Babylonians after his “forced” expulsion from their territories. During November and December 125 BC, a son of Hyspaosines with the Greek name of Timotheos (Ti’mutusu) visited Babylonia where he was bearer of silver and gold gifts7, maybe as a symbol in recognition of Arsacid authority461. He possibly offered, on behalf of his father, Characenean loyalty in preparation for an extensive campaign deep into Elymais, starting from Susa, which he launched between December 125 BC and January 124 BC.

**king Arsaces ... of Susa departed to the area of Elam** opposite Pittiti, the Elamite enemy, for fighting462.

456 Ibid., 2004-2005, p. 80. Most likely, the Characenean king took advantage of Phraates II’ distraction along the northeastern confines and invaded Babylonia. The Diaries also reported the re-conquest of Babylonia in November 127 BC by the guard commander Timarchus, previously escaped from the city during Hyspaosines’ siege (Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 254-255, no. -126 A 'obv.' 6-9'). This event did not stop the Characeneans from devastating the territories of Babylonia in April 126 BC (ibid., pp. 260-261, no. -125 A obv.' 13-20).


458 Dr. Busso Peus, Nachfolger Münzhandlung, Katalog 368 (25-28 April 2001), p. 29; Bell 2002b, p. 36.


460 From a historico-artistic point of view, a thorough analysis of the only-issued coin of Dareios may raise some doubts regarding its authenticity (the question is better addressed in Chapter 9).


Later, in January 124 BC a message from Hyspaosines informed on the Arsacid victory over Pittit the Elymaean and was publicly read at Babylonia.\footnote{Ibid., pp. 278-279, no. -124 B ‘rev.’ 12’-13’.

\footnote{Del Monte 1997, p. 142.}


\footnote{Ibid., pp. 282-283, no. -123 A ‘obv. 18’-20’; Del Monte 1997, pp. 143-144.}

\footnote{Potts 2002, p. 359; Assar 2004-2005, pp. 82-85.}

That month, the 2\textsuperscript{nd} (= 8\textsuperscript{th} of January\footnote{Del Monte 1997, p. 143.}), \textit{a message of Aspasine, king of Mesene}\footnote{Ibid., pp. 278-279, no. -124 B ‘rev.’ 12’-13’; Del Monte 1997, pp. 141-143.}, which he had written to the general of Babylonia was brought near / [...] was read [to the cit]izens of Babylonia as follows: In this month, on the 15th\footnote{Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 278-279, no. -124 B ‘rev.’ 12’-13’; Del Monte 1997, pp. 141-143.}, \textit{king Arsaces and Pittit, the Elamite enemy, fought with each other. The king defeated the troops of Elam in battle. Pittit / [...] he seized}\footnote{Ibid., pp. 282-283, no. -123 A ‘obv. 18’-20’; Del Monte 1997, pp. 143-144.}

A few months later, in June 124 BC, Hyspaosines’ death due to disease is reported in the \textit{Diaries}, and his succession seems to be piloted by his wife towards a minor son of whom name and fate are ignored\footnote{Ibid., pp. 282-283, no. -123 A ‘obv. 18’-20’; Del Monte 1997, pp. 143-144.}. Characene is not mentioned further in the \textit{Diaries} acquired so far, and it is probable that it was of no material concern for Babylonia.

Returning more thoroughly to the Elymaean affairs, in the excerpt of the \textit{Diaries} previously reported, it is indicated that between December 125 BC and January 124 BC the situation between Elymais and Parthia was still tense. The Elymaean menace was so severe that an unspecified “king Arsaces” was in the act of departing from Susa – which had probably once fallen into Arsacid hands and became an operational base – for the decisive battle against the armies of Pittit\footnote{Interestingly, \textit{Pittit} the general of the Elymaean armies bore a clear Elamite name (Zadok 1984, p. 35; Stolper 2005) and he may unequivocally be identified with “\textit{Pithides}” present in Diodorus Siculus (XXXIV-XXXV.19; Πιθίδης) as pointed out by Potts 2002, p. 360; Boiy 2004, p. 178, footnote 170; Assar 2004-2005, p. 87; Van der Spek 2005, p. 405; and Shayegan 2011, pp 118-119. Both this latter (Shayegan 2011, pp. 118-119) and Quintana 2010 consider Pittit a king, rather than a general, but there would seem to be no evidence of this interpretation. Certainly, there are no coin issues attributed to him at the moment but the intricacy of the Elymaean numismatic is widely known and some of the emissions of the sovereigns, familiar under the name \textit{Kamnaskires}, may have been associated with him. Hypothetically, indeed, the term \textit{Kamnaskires} can represent a dynastic name just like \textit{Arsaces}, and if true, the \textit{Diaries} may have provided with \textit{Pittit} on of the rare example of names borne by an Elymaean king (Potts 2002, p. 360).}, which took place on an undetermined location of Elymais. The Arsacid sovereign has generally been recognized as Artabanus I (\textit{ca.} 127-124 BC) in relation with the numismatic evidence from Susa\footnote{Potts 2002, p. 359; Assar 2004-2005, pp. 82-85.}. Supported by a passage in the \textit{Diaries} in which at this time Artabanus I seemed to be already engaged in battle in the north against the Gutians, Shayegan considers his presence in Elymais highly improbable,
proposing instead his brother Mithridates II (ca. 122-88 BC)\(^{469}\). Whoever was the Arsacid king to lead the battle, he probably necessitated a broad deployment of forces to achieve the triumph over the 15,000 Elymaeans, as reported at Babylonia first by a letter of Hyspaosines and then by king’s herald:

**a messenger of the king** who carried a message entered Babylon. That day, the **message** of the king, which was written to the governor of Babylon and the citizens who were in Babylon, was read in the House of observation, as follows: Fighting / [...] **Pittit, the Elamite enemy, I made, and 15 thousand battle troops among his troops I [overth]rew in battle; among my troops no ... took place. Elam in its entirety I hit with weapons. Pittit / [...] ... I seized**\(^{470}\).

After that defeat, there are no accounts in the next few years of revolts challenging Parthian suzerainty, suggesting that “king Arsaces” may have appeased the Elymaean desire for independence likely through the establishment of a rigid administrative presence on the territory\(^{471}\). According to Dabrowa\(^{472}\), the form of vassalage imposed by the Arsacids was not the only reason behind their stable authority in Elymais. More efficient in this regard was probably the long-exerted reign of Mithridates II between 122 and 88 BC. The Arsacid ruler was able to introduce a stable centralized jurisdiction, which facilitated internal cohesion over these years. Furthermore, the fact that the Arsacid mint present at Susa remained almost uninterruptedly active – excluded certain brief brackets (e.g. Antiochus VII, Dareios\(^7\), and Kamnaskires IV\(^7\)) – from Phraates II (ca. 135/133-127 BC) to Gotarzes II (ca. 40-51 AD) suggests that the Elymaeans did not fully control Susa during this long period of almost two centuries\(^{473}\). During this time, the kings of Elymais presumably needed another mint for issuing their coin series, and the capital of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon\(^{474}\) may have represented the most appropriate location (a proposed reconstruction of the Early Kamnaskirid succession is in Table 2).

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\(^{469}\) Shaye 2011, p. 114-116, footnote 309; cf. Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 326-327, no. -118 'rev.' A20, “[... of the Gutians who killed my brother Artabana, and I set up (troops) opposite them, and fought with them; a great killing I performed under them”.


\(^{471}\) Dabrowa 2014, p. 63.

\(^{472}\) Ibid., p. 64.

\(^{473}\) Phraates II (ca. 135/133-127 BC), Artabanus I (ca. 127-124 BC), Mithridates II (ca. 123-88 BC), Gotarzes I (ca. 95-90 BC), Orodos I (ca. 90-80 BC), an unknown king (ca. 80-70 BC), Sinatruces (ca. 75 BC), Darius (?) -ca. 70 BC), Phraates III (ca. 70-57 BC), Mithridates III (ca. 57-54 BC), Orodos II (ca. 57-38 BC), Phraates IV (ca. 38-2 BC), Phraataces and his queen Musa (ca. 2 BC-AD), Artabanus II (10-38 AD), Vardanes I (ca. 40-45 AD) and Gotarzes II (ca. 40-51AD) (Sellwood 1980, pp. 55, 71, 76, 79-80, 83, 88, 92, 99-100, 104, 108-109, 116-118, 121, 125, 129-130, 145, 149, 165, 169, 174-175, 190, 201, 203, 210, 219).

\(^{474}\) On Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, see Appendix 3
5.2.3.2 The Late Kamnaskirids

Many years after the mention of Elymaean military activity in Babylonia, ancient sources reveal further evidence of Elymaean assertiveness. During an internal diatribe between the pretenders for the Arsacid throne following the death of Mithridates II, there was a reappearance of the separatist disposition in Elymais. After more than half a century of Arsacid dominion, the coins of an Elymaean ruler, accompanied by a local queen, were issued from the year 82/1 or 79/8 BC bearing the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΑΝΖΑΖΗΣ. Since Susa was under Parthian control at that time, Le Rider believed these coins could have been issued at Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon. Few years later, in the last months of 78 BC, the Diaries report instead of a battle between the Arsacid king Orodes I (ca. 90-80 BC) who “went [to] Elam and fought with Qabinashkiri, the king of Elam.” The defeated Elymaean king in question was undoubtedly Kamnaskires III. The figure of Anzaze is still obscure. Her presence could indicate the necessity of pointing out particular affiliations with a well-recognizable local figure within an established dynastic context (possibly an endogamy relationship), or the political inter-dynastic union with the member of a powerful agro-pastoral community present in the highlands. After a 50-year gap from the last Elymaean emission of Tigraios (133/2 BC), the exigency of a dynastic reaffirmation from an iconographical perspective would have probably represented a clear propagandistic obligation. These coins seem to demonstrate how the Elymaean king was in possession of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon from 82 to 81 BC, ruling before and after the Parthian campaign in 78 BC. Unfortunately, the Diaries do not provide detailed information of Orodes I’s invasion of Elymais, and there is no alternative historical data for this period is known apart from the coinage.

Specimens of Kamnaskires and queen Anzaze’s issues are mostly known from the sites of Bard-e Neshanbeh, Masjed-e Soleyman and various museum or private collections. More thoroughly on their coinage, see §9.2.5.2. Other sources: Alram 1986, pp.143-144, pl. 15, nos. 454-455; also Le Rider 1965, pp. 397-398, pl. 72, nos. 11-12; more recently, see van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 63-67.

Le Rider 1965, p. 190 ; Augé et al. 1979, pp. 55ff.

The identification of the Parthian Orodes I with “Arsaces” is made possible by comparing Diaries of the preceding years 80-78 BC and the following 76 BC where there are explicit references such as “Arsaces who is called King [Orodes and Isp[ubarza] [his sister] the Queen” (McEwan 1986, p. 93; Assar 2006b, p. 76).

For the Parthian campaign in Elymais, see McEwan 1986.

Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 15. See also Le Rider 1965, p. 190.

Assar 2006b, p. 79; van’t Haaff 2007, p. 16.

See §9.2.5.2.
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[...] went to Elam and fought Qabinaškiri, the king of Elam, and out [...] in it, and the cities [...] / [...] ... the few troops which were with him, turned away from him and went up to the mountains. I heard that towards the mountains when [...]482

According to the Diaries and apparently confirmed by the Parthian Orodes I’s coin emissions, at the latest in early 77 BC Susiana was once again under Arsacid control, though it appears that Kamnaskires maintained his authority over the eastern part of Elymais, as shown by numismatic evidence, until 76/5 BC when his last issues were minted483. In the following years, coins are virtually the only source available for dealing with Elymaean history. The analysis of some monetary series (e.g., Susian bronzes484) shows that shortly after pacifying Elymais in early 77 BC, Orodes I lost the region in favour of a new Arsacid claimant. The struggle for power within the Arsacid court brought the young Arsaces XVI – one of the sons of Mithridates II – to power establishing his authority at Susa in 77 BC. Whether Kamnaskires militarily contributed to Arsaces XVI's victory against Orodes I, plausibly to seek revenge for the humiliating defeat of some months earlier, cannot be confirmed with certainty but it may not be considered too remote. The presence of coins issued by the Elymaean king until 73/2 BC and the consequent coinage of Kamnaskires IV (ca. 63/2-56/5 BC) appear to demonstrate that Arsaces XVI had conceded independence (or semi-independence) to Elymais, perhaps in gratitude for the help he received against Orodes I485. Noteworthy, between the last coin issue of Kamnaskires III and the first of Kamnaskires IV, there was a gap of around ten years in which no mention of Elymaean affairs is provided, apart from correspondence in 65 BC between the Roman general Pompey and unidentified “kings of Elymais” reported by Plutarch486. In all likelihood, Kamnaskires III could be the king who sent ambassadors to the Roman general Pompey, momentarily located in Lesser Armenia. The same episode – but without explicit references – appears in the work of the Roman historian Dio Cassius487.

This political scenario shows that there was the necessity by the Elymaean ruler to find a potent ally (in this case Rome) to fight against the Arsacid domination of Phraates III (71-57

483 Alram 1986, p. 144; Assar 2006b, p. 79.
485 Assar 2006b, p. 82.
486 Plut., XXXVI.1.2. Interestingly, Among the list of name of foreign kings, reported by Appian (Mith. 116-119), whom Pompey had claimed to have conquered, the Elymaean kings are not mentioned.
487 Dio, XXXVII.5.1.
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BC), who also minted bronze coins at Susa. It is likely that Kamnaskires IV, once he rose to power after Kamnaskires III, recaptured Susa taking advantage of Phraates III’s complications in fighting Arsaces XVI in Parthia, thus putting an end to Arsacid issues in that city and starting to issue his coinage during 63/2-62/1 BC.

From a study of coin iconography in that period, van’t Haaff assumes that after the occupation of Susa by Kamnaskires IV between 63/2 and 56/5 BC, another war against the Parthians might have broken out. This event obliged the Elymaean king to strike his last dated issue (53/2 BC) at a travelling court mint before the first emission of his successor Kamnaskires V (53-35 BC). The absence of contemporaneously written sources prevents any possible historical reconstruction without the risk of speculation. Moreover, a figurative analysis of the coin production of Kamnaskires IV and V may suggest their attribution to a single king at a different stage of life.

5.2.3.3 The Orodids

After Kamnaskires IV/V and a transitional period of “uncertain” kings (ca. 32 BC-mid-1st century AD), the Arsacids seem to have placed members of their royal family upon the Elymaean throne, as demonstrated by onomastics of rulers, imagery present on material findings (coins, rock-reliefs, inscriptions) and official language, probably to consolidate their authority within the Iranian plateau. The employment of the proper secundogenitures as a political means to remove and replace native dynasties appears a common practice used by the Arsacid house (e.g., Media Atropatene, Armenia). The Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty ruled in Elymais presumably from the second half of 1st century AD to the arrival of Ardashir in 224 AD. The changeover between the two dynasties, the Late Kamnaskirid and the Elymaean-

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488 Bronze coins of Phraates are unique to the mint of Susa, and he may have ruled from there at times to menace the neighbouring Elymaeans. See Hansman 1998, p. 374; Assar 2006b, pp. 87-96.
489 Alram 1986, 144-145; Assar 2006b, p. 93.
490 Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 16.
491 An attempt to numismatically reconstruct the line of succession for the Early and Late Kamnaskireds is the synchronogram in Pl. LVIII.
492 See §9.2.5.3. According to van’t Haaff, a transitional period seems to begin in 33/2 BC until the early 1st century AD and involves various kings who have not been individually identified yet. However, a later dating for the beginning of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty (mid or late 1st AD) would seem more appropriate also considering the information from the Classical sources (i.e., Tac. VI.44).
493 In particular, see §10.1.3.3.
494 Van’t Haaff (2007, p. 3, 18) suggests an earlier beginning of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty to the 25 BC without providing any indisputable evidence. He considers the first Elymaean-Arsacid coins to be issued in a transitional period (33/2 BC – early 1st century AD) maintaining strong similarities with preceding coins (Late
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Arsacid, and more generally the succession of the Elymaean kings in the 1st and 2nd centuries AD, has been a pivotal point of much controversy and the subject of current research among many numismatists\textsuperscript{495}. However, the marked Parthian influence on monetary production and rupestrian art in Elymais and the use of Arsacid anthroponyms cannot be a mere coincidence, and fosters the assumption which establishes the presence of members of the Arsacid royal family in Elymais, ruling intermittently from Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon and Susa. As suggested by numismatic data, the founder of the \textit{Elymaean-Arsacid} reign was Orodes I\textsuperscript{496} who gave the name to the dynasty (Orodids). In a state of uncertainty due to the dearth of sources, it is almost impossible to assert when exactly the new royal house assumed power and within which political scenario this occurred.

In 36 AD, Tacitus incidentally reports that during the altercation between the Parthian usurper Tiridates III (who was placed on the throne by the Roman emperor Tiberius) and the rightful sovereign Artabanus III, the Elymaeans were allied with Tiridates III\textsuperscript{497}.

The revolt failed, and Artabanus III regained Mesopotamia in the same year\textsuperscript{498}. This event, often underestimated, may represent the cause-effect framework which led to the emergence of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty. Artabanus III may have wanted to punish the Elymaeans for supporting his rival Tiridates, and decided to send members of his family to seize power in Elymais. On the other hand, the \textit{Elymaean-Arsacid} dynasty, if established before Artabanus III, could have been linked to the royal lineage of Phraates IV and consequently to his grandson Tiridates III. Unfortunately, the absence of adequate texts and the poorly understood monetary information provided does not enable anything but speculation on these events. According to Dabrowa\textsuperscript{499}, the notable absence of internal conflicts may suggest that the Arsacid royal lineage found in Elymais developed the right compromise with the local aristocracy, presumably through arranged marriages. From this perspective, the name of \textit{Kamnaskires-Orodes} which was borne by one of the first kings of the new dynasty appears extremely meaningful, since it purposely solicits a blood tie with the

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{Kamnaskirid}, but at the same time, recalling an apparent Parthian influence. Other scholars (Alram 1987, pp. 120-121; Schuel 2000, p. 399; Sinisi 2012b, p.289) prefer instead a more plausible dating in the second half of the 1st century AD, as some iconographical analysis would confirm (§9.2.5.3).
\end{flushleft}

\textsuperscript{495} For bibliography up to 1979, see Augé \textit{et al.} 1979, pp. 43-45; to this add Alram 1986, pp. 148-153; Vardanian 1986; \textit{idem} 1999; Bell 2002; van’t Haaff 2007; Hoover 2008; Rezakhani 2011.

\textsuperscript{496} See §9.2.5.3.

\textsuperscript{497} Tac. VI.44.

\textsuperscript{498} Considering other possible political relations between Romans and Elymaeans, some scholars had suggested in the 2nd century AD an alliance with Trajan, together with the kingdom of Characene, when the Roman emperor was preparing to invade Mesopotamia (e.g., Nodelman 1960, p. 110).

\textsuperscript{499} Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
Elymaean tradition to facilitate royal propaganda. Local elites may have supported this legitimization process for the establishment of a cadet branch of the Arsacid royal house in Elymais, providing a time of stability on the political scene of these territories.

For the period between the 1st and 2nd century AD, apart from several rock reliefs and a few inscriptions, the study of numismatics appears to be the primary source at disposal for trying to reconstruct the historical events in Elymais. Le Rider, in his meticulous study of coins, theorized that several decades after the suffered Parthian invasion, the Elymaeans began to mint their series again but not from Susa. The geographic information provided by Pliny – relating to a political situation existing before 45 AD – would seem to confirm this assumption, since the Roman author placed the Elymaeans in control of a vast area, extending from Charax Spasinu to Sostrate and Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, which should exclude the main centre of Susa. On this point, Le Rider believed that the Elymaeans reoccupied Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon after a hypothetical conquest of Mithridates I, employing the city as their capital until the mid-1st century AD. As rightly pointed out by Dabrowa, this long-established theory of the French numismatist has not encountered any rejections by later scholars. In support of his assumption, Le Rider mentioned a bilingual inscription in Greek and Palmyran found at Palmyra in 138 AD, where a certain “Orodes king of Susa” appears to be cited. In this regard, the remaining fragments of the Palmyran text which reported the name “Orodes” (WRWD) with the appellative of “king” (MLK’) and the toponym of “Susa” (ŠWSN), have positively influenced Le Rider in considering that Susa was under Elymaean control during the same period covered by the inscription (terminus ante quem). Significantly, the Greek version of the same text avoided mentioning the city of Susa, and reported instead of an Orodes, king of Elymais, presumably to be identified with

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500 See Chapter 8.
503 Pliny, VI.135-136.
504 See §Appendix 3.
506 Dabrowa 2014, p. 66.
508 Cantineau 1939, pp. 277-278. See also Fox and Lieu 2011, pp. 14-15. The inscription commemorated the assistance given by a Susian citizen to a Palmyrene merchant colony, who was possibly established at Susa in this period (Seyrig 1941, pp. 253-255).
509 Fox and Lieu 2011, p. 15, lines: 7-8.
510 Ibid., p. 15, lines: 8-9. [...] Ορώδην τῶν βασιλέως Αἰλαμάμην.
Orodes II\textsuperscript{511}. Therefore, the inscription used by Le Rider in support of his assumption that Susa was stably occupied by the Elymaeans from 45 AD to the return of the Arsacid at the beginning of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century cannot be indicated as a compelling evidence\textsuperscript{512}. As also confirmed by the coin production\textsuperscript{513}, there is no accurate documentation so far indicating that the mint of Susa issued Elymaean coins as a consequential reaction to the fact that it no longer played a useful role in the monetary activities of the Arsacids\textsuperscript{514}. Although after 45 AD during the reign of Gotarzes II\textsuperscript{515}, the absence of any Parthian coinage at Susa, combined with the reappearance of Elymaean coins, may strongly suggest that the Elymaeans retook effective control of the city and turned its active monetary facility to their use\textsuperscript{516}, the fact that the Susian mint ceased to issue Arsacid coins may have to be attributed to other causes. For instance, it appears plausible to associate this event with the process of closing the different mints undertaken by the Parthian rulers from the mid-1\textsuperscript{st} century AD. The Elymaean series seem not to be issued at Susa until the 70/5 AD. A 30-year break in monetary production, which is still puzzling the scholars without having found a suitable answer yet\textsuperscript{517}. The arrival of a new “combined” Arsacid and Elymaean dynasty would explain a period of political stability indicated by the archaeological (§4.3) and numismatic evidence and the flourishing of the rupestrian art from mid-1\textsuperscript{st} to early-3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD.

In brief, therefore, around the mid/late-1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, a cadet branch of the Arsacid dynasty which may be called as the \textit{Orodids} from the eponym, and probable founder, Orodes I, began minting coins both at Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon and Susa. Without going into exhaustive detail on the succession of kings, which is still matter of debate for the numismatists\textsuperscript{518}, Orodes I was followed by Kamnaskires-Orodes and then Orodes II, Phraates, Orodes III. Information about the kings of Elymais after Orodes III is terse. Another king, a certain Osroes, could have been the same as Osroes I, the Arsacid sovereign knew to

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{511} For the numismatic analysis, see §9.2.5.3.
\item \textsuperscript{512} Dabrowa 2014, p. 66.
\item \textsuperscript{513} Cf. van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 26-28.
\item \textsuperscript{514} Dabrowa 2014, p. 66.
\item \textsuperscript{515} Gotarzes II (\textit{ca}. 40-51) and not Vardanes (\textit{ca}. 39-45) as previously thought (Le Rider 1965, p. 461; Potts 1999a, p. 397).
\item \textsuperscript{516} Le Rider 1965, p. 426.
\item \textsuperscript{517} Hansman 1998, p. 374; and Potts 1999a, p. 397. \textit{Contra} Vardanian 1986, p. 117; and Dabrowa 2014, pp. 66-67. Vardanian hypothesizes that a complete reunification of Susa and Elymais occurred later under the reign of Kamnaskires-Orodes, roughly in the second decade of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD. On the other hand, Dabrowa expresses his criticism regarding the association between the fact that the mint of Susa terminated to issue Parthian coins and the Elymaean recapture of the city in 45 AD.
\item \textsuperscript{518} Although the list of the Elymaean king during the 2\textsuperscript{nd}-3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD is far to be exhaustive, it will be better addressed in Chapter 9.
\end{itemize}
have temporarily used the Susa mint to issue bronze coins to pay his army\(^{519}\). The figure of another king, Orodes IV\(^{520}\), was then accompanied on the reverse of some of his coins by the bust of a woman (his consort?), identified through the name on the legend as Ulfan\(^{521}\).

The history of Elymais during the 2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) century AD is very challenging, even though monetary evidence is occasionally complemented by other data, such as a series of rock inscriptions located along the Bakhtiaric mountains (e.g., Tang-e Sarvak, Tang-e Botan, Izeh-Malamir) and written in a local branch of Aramaic (Elymaic) where the onomastics of important local rulers and personages are introduced\(^{522}\). At Tang-e Sarvak, for instance, two figures are mentioned in the act of having control over the throne, namely Orodes (WRWD), son of Beldosha, who may be the king identified on coins as Orodes II\(^{523}\), and Basi (B'SY)\(^{524}\). A square stone stele was also found at Susa\(^{525}\), showing a seated nobleman with a crown on his head and a standing figure wearing Parthian clothing. Both the personages are depicted while grasping a ring, and an inscription at the top states: “Artabanu, the king of kings, son of Walagaši [Volagese], the king of kings, built this ‘erection’ which [is that] of Khwasak, the satrap of Susa”\(^{526}\). The stele is dated to the 14\(^{th}\) of September 215 AD\(^{527}\) under the reign of

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\(^{520}\) Hansman (1998, p. 375) wrongly interpreted this Orodes as the king of Elymais at Susa identified in a fragmentary inscription from Palmyra in Syria dated 138 AD (i.e., Orodes III).

\(^{521}\) The Elymaean inscriptions present on some silver vessels ascertain that in 139 AD the king of Elymais was Kamnaskires-Orodes, while in 177 AD there was a certain king Kamnaskires Orodes-Phraates, whose attestations on monetary sources are currently absent, and who “came with the Parthian from Media to Elam, into the kingship” (Carter 2015, p. 288). The exact nature of this event is still unclear, however, it may represent the ascension of the Elymaean king with support (control?) of the Parthians, indicating a period during which Elymais was subjugated to the Parthian authority. However, the absence of an archaeological context within which these silver vessels may be located suggests treating this material very cautiously, since the risk of forgeries, which affects the Iranian artefacts, is unfortunately very substantial (e.g., Muscarella 2000). In addition, the fact that Kamnaskires-Orodes is placed in 139 AD appear conflicting with the Palmyrene inscription which reports a certain “King Orodes of Elymais” in 138 AD, since the latter may be confidently identified with Orodes II who from a numismatic perspective based on figurative analysis is used to chronologically follow Kamnaskires-Orodes and not being his predecessor (see §9.2.5.3).

\(^{522}\) See Chapter 8.

\(^{523}\) Vardanian 1997, p.159.

\(^{524}\) Henning (1952, p. 172) and Shaked (1964, p. 287) give a different read of the construct (‘)BR B’SY, as the personal name (A)Bar-Basi. For more details, see §8.1.1 (TS:insc.2, 5). The fact that at Tang-e Sarvak the unequivocal royal title of MLK’ (king) was paraphrased by expressions like “holder of the throne” may indicate that these local rulers were not officially declared “king”, presumably preventing to provoke the royal Arsacid house of which the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty was an affiliated branch. The term MLK’ was instead present on the Elymaean coins of the same period, probably indicating a local use which did not affect the Arsacid family. Contrarily, the extremely significant site of Tang-e Sarvak could have suggested more attention in official terminology, due to its high socio-political and religious impact.


\(^{526}\) Henning 1952, p. 176.

\(^{527}\) I.e., “Year 462, the month of Spandarmat, the day of Mihr” (Henning 1952, p. 176).
Artabanus IV (ca. 216-224 AD). The title “satrap of Susa” given to Khwasak who, as suggested by Potts\textsuperscript{528}, may have represented an Elymaean ruler with considerable authority in Susiana, since Artabanus IV is known to have minted coins only at Ecbatana and not at Susa\textsuperscript{529}. Some scholars differently consider it to reflect the return of Susa to the Arsacid sphere of influence after more than a century of Elymaean control\textsuperscript{530}, although there is no evidence capable of demonstrating that the Arsacids could not have regained control over Susa throughout this period\textsuperscript{531}.

Following the revolt against the Arsacid house of the vassal of Fars and future founder of the Sasanid dynasty, Artabanus IV asked another Orodes (V\textsuperscript{7}), the “king of Ahwaz”, likely the last king of Elymais, to contain the advances of Ardashir I around 221/2 AD. The attempt to block the Sasanid invader was ineffective, requiring Artabanus IV himself to intervene. After the defeat in 224 AD\textsuperscript{532}, Elymais, including Susiana, capitulated under the sway of Ardashir.

\section*{5.2.4 Elymaean Fall into Oblivion during the Sasanid Era}

With the defeat of Artabanus IV, the Arsacid empire came to an end due to the arrival of Ardashir I from Istakhr in Fars in 224 AD. After this point, the information concerning Elymais reduced drastically. The strict Sasanian policy did not favourably adopt the existence of socio-political (semi-)independent entities within the empire. This ideology has probably resulted in the suppression and isolation within the Zagros mountains of the minor reigns, including Elymais. Moreover, the absence so far of any archaeological data only makes the historical reconstruction even more complicated.

What can be rebuilt using later sources such as al-Tabari (ca. 839-923 AD) and Ibn al-Athir (1160-1233 AD)\textsuperscript{533} is that sometime soon after 218 AD (perhaps 221/2 AD), the Arsacid king Artabanus IV in a letter sent to Ardashir, warns the Sasanid ruler to have

\textsuperscript{528} Potts 1999a, p. 401.
\textsuperscript{529} Sellwood, 1980, p. 290; Rezakhani 2013, p. 774.
\textsuperscript{531} Dabrowa 2014, p. 66.
\textsuperscript{532} \textit{Battle of Hormizdaghan} (an area between Esfahan and Nahavand) fought by Ardashir and the Arsacid king Artabanus IV. The Parthian king was killed by Ardashir. The epic tradition adds that the latter broke the head of the great king with his foot (see Ferdowsi, \textit{The Epic of the Kings}, London 1973, pp. 252-282), a macabre detail more likely to be a legend originating from a relief of the investiture of Ardashir at Naqsh-e Rostam.
\textsuperscript{533} Christensen 1936, p. 82; Widengren 1971, p. 737; Schippmann 1990, p. 15.

\textit{The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)}
encouraged a “king of Ahwaz” against him to “bring back him [the Sasanid ruler] bound in chains”\textsuperscript{534}.

Once defeated the king of Ahwaz\textsuperscript{535}, Ardashir invaded the territory of Khuzestan itself. Having marched through Arjan (near Behbahan) and several other cities (e.g., Sambil and Tashan)\textsuperscript{536} near Tang-e Sarvak (district of Ram Hormuz)\textsuperscript{537}, he advanced and terminated his campaign in the region of Dawraq (ancient Surak/Sorraq), near the site of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon\textsuperscript{538}. As showed in the stele of Khwasak, Ardashir did not even come close to Susa (ruled by a satrap appointed by the Parthians), but rather, after the conquest of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, he returned to Fars and then set off again in the direction of Mesene\textsuperscript{539}. Intriguingly, Henning’s hypothesis suggests that Ardashir prior to taking over the Elymaean capital of Soloke would have destroyed the symbol of the kingship in Elymais, namely the sanctuary of Tang-e Sarvak\textsuperscript{540}.

While Elymais is not “officially” approached in the sources as a (semi-)independent political entity, the presence of an Elymaean substratum, which was the base of a rooted tie between the ancient past of Elam/Elymais and its Sasanian incarnation in Khuzestan going beyond the simple geographical location, clearly emerges. As late as the 10\textsuperscript{th} century AD\textsuperscript{541}, Arab authors (e.g., al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal) attest that a language other than Arabic,

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{534} Al-Tabari, V.1.817-818. Bosworth 1999, p. 12.
\item \textsuperscript{535} Henning 1952, p. 177; Widengren 1971, p. 738; Potts 1999a, pp. 412-415.
\item \textsuperscript{536} Appendix 3.
\item \textsuperscript{537} Henning 1952, pp. 177-178.
\item \textsuperscript{538} Appendix. 3. According to Potts (2016b, p. 409), Ardashir refounded the Elymaean capital as Hormizd-Ardashir (modern Ahwaz); contra Schwaigert (1989, p. 13) believes this city a foundation of Ardashir’s grandson Hormizd I. The city would, in turn, be destroyed during later Islamic conquest and rebuilt once more as Askar Mukram (also known as Band-e Qir; site KS 1622, see Moghaddam 2012, pp. 28, 55, and Map 4.9; Schwarz 1969, index 10; LeStrange 1905, pp. 236-237; Kennedy and Kennedy 1987, p. 5), possibly to act as a base camp between Shushtar and Ahwaz and used to capture Izeh and Ram Hormuz (De Goeje 1866, p. 383; Moghaddam and Mird 2007, p. 50). The anonymous Persian chronicle Mojmal al-Tawarikh (12\textsuperscript{th} century BC; Schwaigert 1989, p. 13) also gave credit to the Sasanid king for the re-foundation of the ancient city of Sostrate (Weissbach 1927, col. 1199), as reported in Pliny (VI.31.135).
\item \textsuperscript{539} Widengren 1971, p. 738.
\item \textsuperscript{540} Henning 1952, p. 178. Valentin Parisot identified Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon with the “modern” city of Camata (Ajasson de Grandsagne 1830, p. 337).
\item \textsuperscript{541} In addition to information provided by al-Istakhri and Ibn Hawqal, it should be mentioned the Fihrist of Ibn al-Nadim (ca. 987 AD) within which is written one of the oldest evidence of Islamic era on the linguistic situation in Iran, by the words of Ibn al-Muqaffa (757 AD) according to whom “la langue pârsi [comprend] le pahlavi, le dari, le pârsi, le xuzi et le soryâni. […] Le xuzi est la langue que parlaient les rois et les nobles dans le privé et dans les moments de jeu et de plaisirs, et avec leur entourage” (Lazard 1971, p. 361). Al-Muqaddasi gives a rather negative view of Khuzi, also reporting a comment attributed to Muhammad which asserts “the khuzi is the language of the devil” (Cameron 1948, p. 18, footnote 115). See also Basello 2004.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
6. Religious Architectures

Persian, Hebrew or Aramaic was still being spoken in the region and known as Khuzi\textsuperscript{542}, and there are not many choices that identify this local language, except to consider it a late form of Elymaic\textsuperscript{543}.

After Islamic conquest, the label “Elam” was used to identify the ecclesiastical province of the Nestorian Church, a relevant branch of eastern Christianity, which was well established in Khuzestan. Sources dating to between the 8\textsuperscript{th} and 14\textsuperscript{th} centuries AD make frequent allusion to the Nestorian ecclesiastical province of Elam, which gives the impression that it eventually capitulated around 1,400 AD when conquered by Timur, the Turco-Mongol conqueror and the founder of the Timurid Empire in Persia and central Asia.

5.3  Summary and Conclusions

Early in this chapter, it has been discussed the etymological origin of the term Elymais, which has been shown as an ‘external’ denomination – provided by the Classical sources strictly – tied to a particular population living along the Zagros mountains. It has become a common tendency among the scholars to take for granted the ethnicity and identity of the ancient culture investigated through the use of historical data and archaeological evidence, without exploring the possible existence of divergences between a label imposed by foreign sources and the self-definition of the peoples in question\textsuperscript{544}. In the case of Elymais, it is now evident that this only represents an approach dictated by Classical authors. The fact that Mesopotamian scribes continued to use the term Elam demonstrates that the notion Elam/Elymais was a foreign concept adopted to incorporate motley ethnic groups living to the east of the Mesopotamian alluvium along the Iranian plateau and was by no means a local attribution of ethnic and cultural traits. In addition, the difficulty highlighted in the previous Chapter (§4) of identifying the demarcation of the Elymaean geographical borders, due to the

\textsuperscript{542} Reference in Schwarz 1969, p. 406. See also Cameron 1948, p. 18, footnote 115; Spuler 1952, p. 243, footnotes 2 and 3; Diakonoff 1985, p. 24 and Potts 1999a, p. 415. The Professor Gian Pietro Basello in a personal communication suggests to derive this language from Greek, rightly pointing out as Susa – in many respects – became a “Greek” city.

\textsuperscript{543} Nöldeke 1874, p. 187; Fiey 1979a, p. 224. In this context, seem appropriate the words of the Russian orientalist Igor Mikhailovich Diakonoff (1985, p. 24) who states as “whether it was a peripheral Iranian dialect like Kurdish or Lür, or an Aramaic dialect like Mandaic of Southern Iraq, or a remnant of ancient Elamite, remains uncertain.”

\textsuperscript{544} After all, the use of an alien name borrowed from external scripts in order to designate a particular area or population marked by the absence, or late presence, in the local sources of a “native” term to indicate itself cannot be considered unexpected. Throughout the history, indeed, peoples and regions have been identified by the outsiders with labels different from those which they and their inhabitant used to name themselves, causing mass toponymic confusion (e.g., the term Sioux represents a partial name coming from Nadowessioux, a compound word of the Chippewa Nadowessi and the French ouch, which translated as “little serpents” was a pejorative adopted by the English in the 18\textsuperscript{th} century to indicate the Indian tribes who inhabited the Great Plains of the United States and Canada).
absence of local written sources increases the problem of delineating Elymais archaeologically and historically, as it may not be limited to one ethnic label but presumably has encompassed diverse heterogeneous (semi-)nomadic societies with a common cultural-linguistic background (§4.3). However, the capability to distinguish these groups regarding their material culture is almost impossible.

As the survival of the Elamites, it is tempting to interpret Elymais as evolved from one of the minor kingdoms which constituted the Neo-Elamite political milieu, in particular from a well-entrenched social, cultural and linguistic entity which developed along the Elamite Zagros-Bakhtiari highland at least from the 9th century BC in the region of the present-day Izeh-Malamir. Maintaining a certain autonomy during the Achaemenid period via a system of mutually beneficial arrangements with the royal administration at Persepolis, the emergence of the Elymaeans as a dominant power in southwestern Iran must have been assisted by the gradual demise of the Seleucid Empire in the east during the 3rd century BC. It is significant to point out that, notwithstanding the immediate entry of the Arsacids into the Iranian political arena the Elymaeans were neither eradicated nor reduced to a state of marginal importance, but rather they maintained, at alternate stages, a high level of (semi-)independence from the central authority. Assuredly, the consistent monetary production started with the series of Kamnaskires Megas Soter, in the 140s BC, is an unequivocal evidence of the political impact represented by Elymais. Although many aspects of Elymaean coinage still need to be adequately clarified, the contemporary Babylonian Astronomical Diaries played a key role in establishing a certain historical credibility.

In conclusion, from a particular point of view, the origin of the “Elymaeans” has to be found not in Elymais but rather in Mesopotamian and in the Classical world where it has been probably identified not just by name but as an artificial construct which over a period of at least 600 years (late-Achaemenid to early Sasanid), was able to adapt to the surrounding circumstances continually and steadily remodelling itself and be remodelled by its bystanders.\footnote{Cf. Potts 2016, p. 435.} An enduring mechanism which probably might have seen an end with the conquest of Iran by Timur.
PART II:

CORPUS of EVIDENCE
6. Religious Architectures

An overview of temple architecture in the Elymais before the Sasanid conquest is critical to appreciate that the Elymaeans were far more developed in their architectural models than has been realized. Despite observations that ancient Iranians worshipped in the open air, semi-closed structures of cultic significance discovered in some areas of southwestern Iran would indicate otherwise, and suggest that there is a long-established architectural inheritance from the Elymaeans.

Several places of worship are documented in Elymais, both by written sources and archaeological evidence, though some of this information is not confirmed\(^\text{546}\). The three sanctuaries examined in this work have been clearly identified as Elymaean through field studies, contrary, for instance, to the temple of Nanaia at Susa for which an Elymaean origin cannot be corroborated due to the lack of accurate excavation reports\(^\text{547}\). In specie, two of them were explored by Roman Ghirshman between 1964 and 1972 respectively in Bard-e Neshandeh (§5.1) and Masjed-e Soleyman (§5.2), while the shrine of Shami near Izeh-Malamir (§5.3) was firstly surveyed by Sir Aurel Stein in 1936. Based on a typology defined by Roman Ghirshman as terrasses sacrées, and also exemplified by the other monumental structure at Qal'ei-ye Bardi (§5.4)\(^\text{548}\), these places of worship, created in elevated areas, were shaped and confined by walls – mostly made up of irregularly cut blocks of stone, arranged with care – to create a flat ground for the building of platforms, altars, bases for statues and indeed closed temples.

6.1 Bard-e Neshandeh (BN: Pls. I-VIII)

Perched on the heights of the Zagros mountains of Khuzestan, in one of the tortuous valleys which characterize the complex geography of the region, embraced by the Bakhtiar mountains, arranged on artificial terraces set up through substructure walls of irregular stone

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\(^{546}\) Messina 2015a.

\(^{547}\) Martinez-Sève 2014b, pp. 253-256.

\(^{548}\) The site known today as Qal’ei-ye Bardi (or Tall-e Badr, or Qal’ei-ye Lit), located halfway between Kal-e Chendar and the sanctuaries already investigated by Ghirshman, about 18 km northeast of Bard-e Neshandeh. The site, composed of an ancient irregular square-shaped terrace to the south of which there are the remains of a relatively modern fortress (qala; qal’ei), is still rather unknown (the only documentation is provided by two panoramic imagines in Keall 1971, p. 58).
blocks, is the sanctuary of Bard-e Neshandeh (Pl. I.1) which represents a most significant archetype of sacred architecture in Elymais.

Since the beginning of the 20th century, some scholars have visited the Elymaean sanctuaries of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman, but systematic analysis began during the first excavation in 1964 with the arrival of the French team led by Roman Ghirshman, who subsequently completed his research with two other missions ending in 1966. The excavation report that he published in 1976 suggests an interpretation which—while relevant—is not entirely shared by this work, in light of newer discoveries and further research resulting from my personal visit to the area in November 2015.

6.1.1 General Aspects

The agglomerate of Bard-e Neshandeh is on a 675 m high plane looking eastward over the valley of the Karun river, which stretches north from a ridge of about 710 m (at an altitude of 680 m), and west of a low mountain range oriented from the north-west to south-east. Around 10 km south-southwest from Bard-e Neshandeh is the city of Masjed-e Soleyman, sited a little more than 90 km northeast of Ahwaz, the capital of Khuzestan (Maps 2-3). Nowadays, Bard-e Neshandeh appears to visitors as being home to a landscape that is hostile, arid and desolate, devoid of tall-growing vegetation and suffering a virtual absence of water despite the presence of seasonal watercourses and the Karun river (ca. 5 km eastward). A particular aura of rare severity surrounds the entire area, fostered by the proximity of the unique rock formations of the Bakhtiari mountains. The scenario is particularly impressive from an aesthetic perspective, and it might have played a major role in the conception of the religious structure. Today, the area is far from settled zones and primarily restricted to use by shepherds and their flocks, as well as being populated by packs of wild dogs. However, in

549 Ghirshman 1976, Terrasses sacrées de Bard-è Néchandeh et Masjid-i Solaiman: L'Iran du Sud-Ouest du VIIIe s. av. n. ère au Ve s. de n. Ère.
550 Archaeological evidence shows that the severe lack of water would have been a constant in this area since the early settlements: the ruin of the fortified construction north-west of the terraces was flanked by three large cisterns (Ghirshman 1976, p. 7, Pl. VIII.2-3), and even the small village had required at least one (ibid., Pl. VIII.5). A small pond, then, seems to have existed on the upper terrace (still in situ), between the north-west staircase and the podium (ibid., Pl. XIV.4), while another pool of brackish water was used continuously until the second half of the last century by the nomadic Bakhtiari tribe. As described by Ghirshman (1976, p. 7), twice a year the nomads stopped here to draw water during their traditional transhumance through the region, and recently, before the use of modern cars, also the caravans that connected Susiana, and the oasis of Esfahan stopped here for the same reason.
551 The importance of the aesthetic element of the natural environment in the creation of artistic-religious forms in Elam (and probably in Elymais) is thoroughly addressed in the article of Javier Álvarez-Mon 2014, Aesthetics of the Natural Environment in the Arts of the Ancient Near East: The Elamite Rock-Cut Sanctuary of Kurangun.
the past, the inhabitants of Bard-e Neshandeh had a most profitable position, since they lived along an obligatory stopping point on an important caravan route where it was possible to obtain water supplies, and to visit the renowned religious centre, which represented a destination for numerous pilgrims.552

6.1.2 Archaeological Context

The ancient ruins are still visible today on the ground south of the modern road, which leads to Masjed-e Soleyman, with an extension of approximately 17 ha for the archaeological site. The area of Bard-e Neshandeh covers an area of around 700 m long and 250 m wide, and it is composed of three distinct parts at some distance from each other starting at the “raised stone” (or “erected stone”) that names the site (Pl. II)553.

Considering the “erected stone” (a column of the temple) as a benchmark for the natives554 of a ca. 15-ha area, a palatial structure (maybe a fortress) is situated 150 m to the west, isolated on a small terrace. Moving southwest ca. 200 m from this last point, which is also accessible via a northbound roadway of ca. 150 m, two large terraces are revealed resting on a lower hill; while 100 m to the north of the fortress-like structure the remnants of a village (or “lower town”) including about one hundred houses and a large cistern for water storage, are reported by Ghirshman.555 Despite the extension of the area, the excavations concentrated solely in the area that the French archaeologists thought would be the most “archaeologically” interesting: the sanctuary of the “sacred terraces.”

552 These traditions remained intact in Iran until the end of the 19th century, namely before the proliferation of automobiles, and when people still moved in caravan groups and made pilgrimages to religious centres, along which markets and fairs were the only attractions for villagers and citizens.

553 The term Bard-e Neshandeh (برد نشانده) in the Bakhtiari dialect means “fixed stone” or “signal stone” where the word bard is a synonym of the Persian sang = “stone” and nešānde is the past participle of nešāndan = “to fix into the ground as a signal”, “to stick” (Mario Casari, personal communication. April 7, 2008). Bard-e Neshandeh owes its origin to a column of the nearby temple, taken by caravanners in the distant past and driven into the ground to act as a reference marker for the body of rainwater they used (Ghirshman 1976, p. 7).


555 The French archaeologists were not affected by the village’s remains, and only marginally interested in the “palatial” area, as evident in the plan which constructed only the most recent phase (dated around the early Islamic period), and was drawn without studying the older layers of the “castle” (or fortress) measures 29.80 m long and 18.60-19 m wide including a central courtyard or hall of 9.70×6.75 m, around which large chambers are symmetrically laid out. Ghirshman, who only devoted five days to the excavation of the “palatial” structure found evidence which suggested the subdivision in three phases of construction. In this evaluation, the first phase was contemporaneous with the beginning of the upper terrace’s construction, which Ghirshman tentatively placed in the pre-Achaemenid period, while the last phase extended into the early Islamic period. The dating of the latter was made possible by the discovery of some fragments of brown or grey glazed pottery, with decorations in black, from the 9th century AD. The construction of circular and semi-circular towers, instead, may be assumed as a terminus post quem for the Sasanid epoch, since these fortifications are not attested in the Arsacid period (Ghirshman 1976, pp. 10-11). About the village, a plan was published (ibid., fig. 2), but not a report.
Within this sanctuary, and relying on differences in the methods of construction, Ghirshman distinguished an “upper terrace” and a “lower terrace.” The sanctuary has a total length of approximately 157.20 m and is delineated by a dry-wall substructure of rectangular buttresses and recesses, and an articulation of the facades in deep niches which follow one another at regular intervals. The upper platform is the oldest structure in the complex for which the excavators determined two different constructional phases. A third phase involves the inclusion of a lower-level second terrace (Pl. IV).

During phase I, the upper terrace, rectangular in shape, measured 67.50 m long by 45.30 m wide on the southeast side and 42.50 m on the northeast side. The southeastern façade, against the rising slope of the hill, had seven rectangular overhangs, while the southwest side had eight and the north-east side nine. On the north-west façade, there was an access staircase (3×3.22 m) – now entirely destroyed – between the third and fourth overhang to the north. Another staircase (2.2×0.93 m), made up of five steps, opened on the north-east façade. It was also destroyed, most likely during the terrace’s enlargement in phase II. At the center of the terrace, a square podium (5×4.97 m) with an exterior facing of stone blocks with reduced dimensions was erected. The ensemble would surely have given an impression of precise homogeneity, although it was repeatedly destroyed, either as a result of the frequent earthquakes, or at the hand of man.

In phase II, the terrace was extended to reach a length of 106.50 m and a width ranging from 75.45 m in the southeast to 68.70 m in the northwest. The reasons behind this work of “reconstruction” may have been to represent: the increased importance of the local prince, the growing fame of Bard-e Neshandeh as a place of worship, and/or secular and religious authorities having more economic resources. The terrace continued to be delineated by dry-wall substructures in a rhythmical alternation of rectangular recesses and

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556 This, according to Ghirshman’s hypothesis (1976, p. 155), was the stairway that served as an exit for cult followers at the end of religious ceremonies. This interpretation is based on the idea that all the sacred terraces on which sanctuaries were provided with at least two stairways, one for arrivals and another for departures. According to him, visitors did not leave the shrine along the road that was used to come into it on the model of age-old traditions such as the Assyrian and Babylonian ones, particularly of the akštu’s feast of which, according to Ghirshman, there is evidence even among the Elamites (ibid., p. 61, referring to Ghirshman 1968a, pp. 109ff). This evidence has to be reassessed by now (see Mousavi 1990, pp. 143-145).

557 Ghirshman identifies Gaumata – the presumed usurper, evoked by Darius in the Behistun inscription for the destruction of worship places (ayadana- in Old Persian; DB §14) – as the destroyer of the sanctuary (Ghirshman 1976, p. 1750, even though, the discoveries suggest a later period, §6.1.6).

buttresses, which varied in number presumably due to structural needs\textsuperscript{559}. The entire enlargement was completed with the use of hundreds of rough unprocessed stone blocks of the same type employed for the walls of the nearby fortress\textsuperscript{560} which, once put in place, were probably smoothed and their corners rounded. The ceremonial criterion of approach to the terraces through two distinct access points was maintained with the construction of two new staircases, one of which appears of exceptional grandeur on the northwest, presumably assigned for receiving the worshippers on pilgrimage\textsuperscript{561}. At the corner between the socle of the staircase and the eastern wall there is a small chapel, located to the left of the staircase at the same level of the socle, and containing a niche (1.05×1.25 m) with the same thickness of the overhang, that Ghirshman interpreted as an \textit{atesh-gah}\textsuperscript{562}. To the left of the niche, a bas-relief representing a libation scene, most likely indicating a local ruler, was found still \textit{in situ}\textsuperscript{563}. In the course of this phase, the previously destroyed podium was rebuilt, increasing its dimensions (6.90×6.82 m)\textsuperscript{564}.

During \textit{phase III}, a lower-level second terrace (74.15×56.50 m) was joined to the upper terrace with an access staircase in line with the main one (NW) of the upper terrace. The difference in level between the two is \textit{ca.} 7.79 m\textsuperscript{565} and there is an access stairway on an axis connected to the main stairway (north-west) of the higher terrace. Access to the added platform from the valley was guaranteed by a new staircase (NW) in line with that of the main upper terrace. This small staircase, built because of the sloping terrain, was brought to light by

\textsuperscript{559} The number of the buttresses is varied in such a form that seven were built on the north-west side; nine in the south-west side; and ten in the northeast wall. This latter needed to be further reinforced as it overlooked a ravine.

\textsuperscript{560} This factor led Ghirshman (1976, pp. 10-11) to suppose that the most recent phase of such a palace had been built since the abandonment of the sacred terrace, almost inevitably in the early centuries of Islam.

\textsuperscript{561} Ghirshman 1976, p. 19. The other staircase was in deplorable conditions, and likely, much of its degradation comes from the fact that there is a steep slope towards it from the terrace, and this has acted as an outlet for rainwater. For these reasons Ghirshman asserts that this stairway would not have been present in the original plans but would have been added later

\textsuperscript{562} Ghirshman 1976, p. 21. \textit{Atesh-gah} means literally “place (gah) of fire (atesh)” (Huff 1975, pp. 243-254). It must be emphasized that the French excavations were made during the 1960s, when the theory of A. Godard (1938) and K. Erdmann (1941), regarding Iranian religious architecture, was still in vogue. This approach described fire temples as being characterized by only two buildings. The first was the \textit{chahar-taq (“four arches”) that represented the central area where a cult of fire was celebrated, with a planimetric definition by Godard that became synonymous with the term itself — fire temple — and this consisted of four pillars connected by arches which in turn were surmounted by a cupola. The building was frequently made of stone and for this reason remained relatively intact over time. The second was the \textit{atesh-gah}, where the fire itself was kept, a structure also of stone and surmounted by a cupola with all four sides closed.

\textsuperscript{563} Pl. I.2, and Appendix 4.

\textsuperscript{564} See Ghirshman 1976, pp. 26-28 concerning the podium and its different phases. At this stage, the new face of the podium was made up of much larger blocks than those used previously, but the work was less thorough than in the primitive podium, probably because the project was hurried by the need to re-establish religious services, which had been interrupted.

\textsuperscript{565} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 39.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
Ghirshman in an advanced state of destruction, probably caused by water erosion, so that the number of steps remains uncertain. On this new terrace – which took the sacred area of Bard-e Neshandeh to a total length of 157.20 m and moved it towards the southwest concerning the previous axis – a tetrastyle temple was built and connected to the main stairway by two paved paths. It takes this conventional attribute (i.e., tetrastyle) from an almost square four-columned area, which is surrounded by three elongated rooms with no direct communication between them and is preceded by a two-row columned portico. During this phase, the podium, destroyed by uncertain means, was reconstructed a third time, but at this time its original square shape was no longer retained (7×10.45 m). Leaning against the southwestern wall of the podium, a small building (perhaps a sacristy) was erected, with a room preceded by a covered atrium.

6.1.3 Monumental Architecture

As previously mentioned, during phase III a second and lower terrace was added onto the religious compound of Bard-e Neshandeh. This new extension of the sacred terrace was built orienting north-west, following the general slope of the mountain. It is 74.15 m in width and 50.70 m in length with its southern angle exceeding the western corner of the upper terrace of 21.15 m. The architectural style of its dry-wall substructure, articulated by the alternation of buttresses and recesses, replicated the structure of the top terrace.

The temple built on the new platform (Pl. IV) measures 22.20 m in front and 20.60 m on the rear wall with each of the side walls measuring 7.50 m long and it holds along the northeast façade a portico (no. 6) with its floor raised approximately 0.10-0.15 m above the ground level of the external area. In the French photographic records, this flooring appears to be made of beaten earth, at least with regard to the part in front of the four-columned hall (no. 5) and the entire eastern corner, delimited on all sides by a row of stone slabs, which were placed horizontally on the paved area in front of it. Such a low step allowed the floor of the portico – under cover of a roof supported by pillars – to remain dry when rain fell; therefore, since the facing area was paved, the portico in all probability did not need to have a complete paving in stone. Noteworthy, area no. 5 is elevated by a few centimetres with

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567 Pl. IV.a, d-e.
568 Pl. IV.d. This possibility diverges from the description of Ghirshman (1976, p. 41) who considers the floor paving in its entirety. After a personal inspection of the site in November 2015, I have to say that unfortunately, the degradation of the site does not make it possible to provide more certainty in this regard.
569 An analogous situation is found in several Buddhist monasteries in northwestern Pakistan, where the floors of the porticos, apparently similar to those in Elymaean temples, were not paved because they were protected by a roof and separated from the facing area by a low step elevated above the layer of the external space. The
respect to the pavement of the portico in a sort of low step\textsuperscript{570}. A superficial observation may have led Ghirshman to identify this difference in level as a presumed wall foundation, for which, however, there is no real structural evidence\textsuperscript{571}.

Examining the columns of the portico, some of them seem to rest on bases which were buried below the floor, to act in all likelihood as foundations, and rising up to the level of a moulded element like a \textit{torus} which was above the ground\textsuperscript{572}. In a presumable context of re-used material, the presence of a Hellenistic-type base (the third from the east in the outer row) characterized by a plinth of squared plan and a \textit{scotia} between two \textit{tori}\textsuperscript{573} is recognizable. Other pillars, like the historiated column in the east corner of the portico, seem to be based directly on the ground, however, in reality, would have required underground foundations to prevent them from sinking\textsuperscript{574}.

According to Ghirshman, the portico was made with two rows of eight columns each, with those in the second row leaning against the wall of the façade\textsuperscript{575}. However, upon close analysis of the photographic documentation, it seems that the columns (or the remains of them) number only fourteen and not sixteen. Two columns of the second row (the third and fourth starting from the east) were in effect not present in front of room no. 5, although at that point a wall against which the columns would have rested was elevated in plan\textsuperscript{576}. In reality, observing the structural proportions of the temple and the distances between the columns and the wall, the existence of the proposed wall elevation seems extremely questionable\textsuperscript{577}.

Moving into the temple, it can be noted that along the south, east and west sides of room no. 5 were placed long stone blocks that Ghirshman defined as “paved benches”\textsuperscript{578}.

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\textsuperscript{570} Pl. IV.f.

\textsuperscript{571} Salaris 2017, pp. 159-162.

\textsuperscript{572} Pl. IV.f. Excluding the hypotheses of expecting an earlier plan of occupation, in relation to which the column bases were raised, since the underground column bases are not all of the same typology, the circumstances tend to corroborate the second assumption. The column bases, most likely of re-use, were utilized as the foundation for the columns themselves to make the structure of the portico more resistant, especially during the seismic tremors to which Iran has been highly subjected. Various arrangements were employed against the seismic forces, typical in Iran, and one of them, as can be seen in the first two columns in the east against the wall, was the use of blocks of stone set against the columns, preventing them from collapsing in case of earthquake (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXI.2).

\textsuperscript{573} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XX.1-5.

\textsuperscript{574} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. XXI.2-3.

\textsuperscript{575} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 41.

\textsuperscript{576} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl XXIII.

\textsuperscript{577} Salaris 2017, pp. 159-162.

\textsuperscript{578} Ghirshman 1976, p. 40.
These stone elements were arranged as a sort of double step running along the wall to provide seats for the worshippers and officiants (Pl. IV.c). The sizes of the stone blocks are completely arbitrary in the map provided by Ghirshman and do not correspond to what is seen in the photographs. The height and alignment of the first row of blocks, the one closer to the room’s wall, are almost consistent. Unlike the upper row, the lower part seems to be composed of elements arranged with less accuracy and regularity.

Through the portico, there is access to the almost square-shaped area no. 5 (9.20×7.25 m), which includes four columns symmetrically arranged at the centre. As previously observed, this central hall is surrounded by three rooms of an elongated plan, independent of each other and elevated in comparison to it. They communicate with the central chamber through doorways, one per room. It is evident that the areas no. 1 (9×3.30 m) and no. 3 (10.70×3.10 m) were reached through three steps, while the inaccurate visual documentation does not allow verification of the number of steps for room no. 2 (10.60×2 m). Noteworthy, room no. 3 has a stone socle leaning against its southeastern wall. A fifth room (no. 4), much smaller than the others (2.40×3.30 m) and depicted as a sacristy is located on the north side of the temple and is accessible only from the outside (NW).

In line with this fifth room, there is another space a few metres to the northwest with a squared plan (no. 8), and to the north of this one, just a few metres further, a room with a probable rectangular plan (no. 7) has also been reported. These isolated structures, with paved thresholds and consisting of just one internal space each, are explained as possible quarters for temple personnel.

### 6.1.4 Pottery and Associated Artefacts

Materials discovered are varied, ranging from jewellery and small artefacts of metal and terracotta to coins and architectural finds (e.g., columns, capitals). To facilitate classification, these findings are subdivided by assemblages (pottery, stone artefacts, metalworks) according to the phases of construction which characterize this site to place them in an appropriate historical context.

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579 Salaris 2017, fig. 8.
580 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXI.1; Pl. XXIII; Salaris 2017, figs. 5, 8.
581 Ibid., p. 40. The measurements of these rooms are approximate because Ghirshman does not provide them, and those reported in this text have been acquired from the plan that he published (ibid., plan II).
582 Ibid., p. 39.
6. Religious Architectures

6.1.4.1 Pottery and Terracotta Objects (Pl. VI)

A number of ceramic findings at Bard-e Neshandeh is very modest. All discovered along the northeastern wall substructure of the upper terrace during phase I they included a small two-handled glazed earthenware perfume bottle, ceramic pilgrim flasks, a terracotta bowl, a two-handled glazed earthenware amphora, and two fragments of terracotta figurines.

The “common” ceramic (i.e., no painted and no glazed) is mostly composed by a local typology of clay. The very friable internal composition (for this reason it was also called “eggshell”) and the distinctive reddish-brown colour makes this material easily recognizable even in the absence of chemical analysis. At Bard-e Neshandeh this type is represented by a bowl à profil caréné with a concave rim and rounded base which appeared in Mesopotamia and Iran from the early 1st millennium BC but bequeathed from the Achaemenid period. The two small fragments tentatively interpreted as a male figure (perhaps a horseman) and an animal’s head.

The category of “painted” pottery only includes small ceramic shards of bowls and jars mainly decorated with parallel lines, festoons, triangles and pendant designs. This typology is poorly recorded in southwestern Iran, even though it appears exclusive of the sacred structures at Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-Soleyman representing a local variant of the “Festoon Ware” pottery typology which ceased to be produced in the 2nd century BC.

As regards the “glazed” ceramic, the clay composition is particularly evident if compared with the contemporaneous specimens from Susa. As mentioned above, the local clay of Elymais is more fragile and crumbly compared to the one from the plain, which may indicate the presence of a distinct local atelier on the highlands able to manufacture ceramic pots differently from the main centre of Susa. Modest vessels (10-15 cm) identifiable by

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583 Ibid., Pl. XL.1-2. A pilgrim flask is a typical form of liquid container widely distributed in Iran, with an ovoid body and a short neck of which there are often one or two handles. One of the sides was usually made flat so that it could be placed against a wall or tied to the flank of a pack animal.

584 Pl. XV.h.

585 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. 5 GBN 39, 56.


587 Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197.

588 Young 1965, fig. 1 no. 4, fig. 2 no. 6, fig. 3 no. 6, fig. 4 no. 6; Cattenat and Gardin 1977, p. 237, fig. 5.

589 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. 5 GBN 46. For comparison with Achaemenid types, see Schmidt 1957, Pl. 68.1.

590 Ibid., Pl. 5 GBN 39, 56.

591 Ibid, pp. 48-49, fig. 20; Pl. XL.1.

592 Haerinck 1983, p. 26, fig. 2.

593 Ibid., p. 239.

594 Ibid., pp. 19, 28; Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197.

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a ridged/grooved spherical-like body with two handles on the neck, or one on the neck and one on the shoulder, are difficult to interpret and may represent the work of a local production. A bigger model (similar to a panathenaic amphora) – possibly used for the libation ceremony – is the unique specimen of this typology found at Bard-e Neshandeh.

A second variety of “glazed” ceramic is the pilgrim flask, which is present here in both its models of “angulated” and “rounded” shoulder-neck junction (Pl. VI.2 and similar), where the first appeared in southwestern Iran from the 3rd century BC and was replaced by the “rounded” model in the 2nd century BC. This typology of vessel, which is also present in Mesopotamia, is only present in regions where a local production of “glazed” pottery is attested, indicating a ceramic standard distinctive of the Zagros/Bakhtiari regions (some exemplars were also discovered at Susa). These objects were used to carry liquid, although their purpose was ritual more than functional.

6.1.4.2 Sculpture Material (Pls. V, VII)

Since in recent times the terraces of Bard-e Neshandeh were transformed into a crop field, most of the sculpted elements were found scattered and piled up to allow the passage of ploughs, making it difficult to provide an accurate historical contextualization based on a stratigraphic analysis. An exception is represented by a rectangular stone block placed at the top step of the southwest staircase. It is decorated with a bas-relief depicting a frontally standing male figure wearing a belted tunic and holding a bow in his right hand. He has short hair, beard and mustache in a form somehow similar to a stone head found at Susa (1st century BC-1st century AD). It may have represented the first altar of the Parthian era in Iran within the typology of the historiated altar concurrently well attested at Palmyra. Another almost intact stone artefact is the five-figure bas-relief (BN:rel) found still in situ to the left of the

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596 Toll (1943, p. 79) and Haerinck (1983, pp. 33-34) trace back the origin of this pot shape from a Hellenistic model widespread in Ancient Near East. A similar typology is also recorded in Luristan during the Iron Age (Vanden Berghe 1972, fig. 10 nos. 28-31; idem 1973, Pls. XII-XIII.
597 Widengren 1965, p. 127.
598 Pl. VI.1.
600 Ibid., and Carte I (for regional distinction based on pottery characteristics).
601 Pl. VII.f.
602 For the stone head from Susa, see Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 169, cat no. 88. For the dating, see Du Ry 1969, p. 157 (1st century BC); Vanden Berghe 1959, p. 80, pl. 107a (Parthian period); Ghirshman 1962, fig. 109 (1st-3rd century AD); Kawami 1987, p. 137 (1st century AD).
603 Cumont 1926, pp. 104 (fig. 21), 128 (fig. 27), 132 (fig. 28); Dirven and Kaizer 2013.
niche in the upper terrace. The bas-relief is not in a good state of conservation. It is made up of five figures, among which the central figure (BN:rel.1), slightly to the left of the middle of the stone, is a ruler with an oval tiara holding in his right hand a container from which emerges a liquid (the object of the libation). The bas-relief, probably unfinished and appearing to be quite irregular, particularly in the placement of the figures, gives the impression of having been made a long time after the creation of the terrace of phase II (the tiara in Elymais appears only from the 2nd century AD) on a block of stone found in situ. Its placement gives it a particular significance: at the base of the main stairway on which pilgrims came up to reach the sacred terrace for religious ceremonies, its viewing came before the ritual up on the podium. In any case, religious scenes such as this one are widely known in western Asian art, with clear examples from Palmyra (e.g., the bas-relief from the “Tomb of the Three Brothers”) to Gandhara (Kushan art).

There were then further discoveries of numerous fragments of mutilated sculptures, reduced to small pieces, and between these were found: two human busts in the round, arms and feet of statues, and a half-bust bas-relief representing a bearded man with the face obliterated. His right hand was raised with the palm turned towards the observers in a gesture of adoration or worship. The presence of an animal head which is confidently interpreted as a Persian lion (or Panthera leo persica), with a collar indicating that it was presumably domesticated, may represent an inheritance of the Elamite culture where the lion was associated with the goddess Narundi. A similar association was present in Mesopotamia between the wild beast and the goddess Inanna/Ishtar and then reflected in the Achaemenid animal imagery. The Elamite lions were used as guards of the temple, a function which seems to be shared by the Elymaeans since ancient sources described the existence in Elymais of a temple dedicated to the goddess Anahita where lions were

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604 Pl. I.2 and Appendix 4.
605 See §9.2.3.
606 Ghirshman 1976, p. 23.
607 On the art of Palmyra, see Colledge 1976.
609 Ibid., Pls. XXX.1-2, 3-4.
610 Ibid., Pl. XXXV.5.
611 Ibid., Pl. XXXVI.
612 Pl. VII.b.
613 For a more precise discussion of the various meanings and implications of the "raised right hand, palm facing outward" (also known by the Sumerians as šu-gāl = “raise the hand”) in the Ancient Near East, see Potts 2008a, pp. 113-114.
614 Pl. VII.c.
616 Ibid., pp. 198-199.
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trained\(^{617}\). Discovered later, was the sculpture of a male figure frontally depicted in a ritual
gesture\(^{618}\) and adorned with a jewel composed of a long necklace supporting a circular
medallion set between two trilobate mounts\(^{619}\). This typology of tunics (possibly with an open
kaftan-like jacket similar to \(BN:rel.1-3\)) with finely-embroidered motifs is characteristic of the
statues from Hatra in the second half of 2\(^{nd}\) century AD\(^{620}\). On the north-west staircase,
numerous fragments have been found of statues’ heads in the round, many of which have
standard features such as short curly hair, prominent beard, and moustache, marked
eyebrows, and wide open eyes with pronounced irises and pupils\(^{621}\). Notably, this particular
eye treatment is not reflected in the fragments of statues at Masjed-e Soleyman. Among the
heads, one is characterized by long, straight hair with curls only present at ear level\(^{622}\), which
is considered by Ghirshman to be the only survivor of the statues existing before the Parthian
hairstyle fashion was adopted\(^{623}\) (late 1\(^{st}\) century AD). Other fragments of statues – associated
to the last phase (III) of the sanctuary – emerged from the ravine below the shrine, in all
probability thrown from the terrace at the time of the destruction and looting of the religious
complex\(^{624}\). A bas-relief showing the head of a young man with moustache and beard and a
Roman-style hairdo of the 3\(^{rd}\) century\(^{625}\), with a long single strand of hair, was found on the
road that leads to Bard-e Neshandeh.

Among the sculpted material, further considerations should be provided about the
architectural carved components, in particular the historiated column and capitals. The
historiated column (Pl. V.d), which seems to have been completed with the capital found
almost intact near the lower terrace, is a model at first unknown among westerners, but a
constant architectural element in the region of ancient Elymais (similar remains at Masjed-e
Soleyman\(^{626}\) and Izeh-Malamir\(^{627}\)). Nevertheless, the example from Bard-e Neshandeh is the

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\(^{617}\) Ael., XII.33.

\(^{618}\) His right arm bears a small branch as the stelae from Assur dated to the beginning of the 1\(^{st}\) century AD
(Mathiesen 1992/2, cat. nos. 158-159) and statues from Hatra (second half of the 2\(^{nd}\) century AD; see
Mathiesen 1992/2, cat. no 207, 215), while the left arm is bent at the elbow with the palm, now missing,
turned to the front. (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXV).

\(^{619}\) Pl. VII.e. This is a typical Parthian ornament with the only known example (statue of KNZYW) from Hatra

\(^{620}\) For statues from Hatra, see Mathiesen 1992/2, cat. nos. 201A (dated by an inscription to 162/3 AD), 205,
207, 215.

\(^{621}\) Pl VII.h. See also Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXVI.1-3, 4-5, Pl. XXIX.4-5.

\(^{622}\) Pl. VII.d.

\(^{623}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 34.

\(^{624}\) Ibid., pp. 48-49.

\(^{625}\) Pl. VII.a.

\(^{626}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXXIII.1.
only one so far found nearly intact in Iran. The column (5.09 m including the underground part) has an irregular octagonal shaft-section characterized by two wider opposite surfaces with one decorated with four standing figures represented frontally which are disposed in three tiers. All wearing tunics and trousers, the personages of the lower (BN:col.1-2) and central (BN:col.3) level have the arms folded across the chest while the figure in the upper tier (BN:col.4) seems to grasp with both hands an object (an axe?) in front of his abdomen, partially covering a sacrificial animal (a sheep?) behind him. While Colledge interprets the four figures as attendants, Ghirshman believed that BN:col.3, the larger one (h. 0.67 m), could represent a local prince (founder of the temple) while BN:col.1-2 would have been his children. From other comparanda from the sculpted reliefs in Elymais, the attitude to have the arms folded across the chest is more prevalent in secondary personages (e.g. HA:4-6, TS.II:Wa.4-7, BN:rel) than in local rulers as at Masjed-e Soleyman where, however, the personality wears an elongate tiara.

Capitals from the Parthian period showing human figures associated with the monument differed from Achaemenid models, where the imagery preferred the animal world (lions, bulls, giraffes), and also differed from Roman examples, where floral decorations were adopted. Each of the four sides of the capital carries an image of a personage enclosed by two scrolls. One of these figures is seated on a throne (BN:cap.1), seeming to grasp a spear in the right hand and holding a kind of cup in the left hand; Ghirshman identified this figure as female and in particular as the goddess Anahita. On the opposite face of the capital is depicted a male personality with moustache and beard, wearing a smooth cuirass on his chest over a tunic, with a spear held in the left hand and a shield in the right hand.

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628 Many historiated columns have been found in Asia Minor, particularly in Anatolia at Ephesus, and Charles Picard defines them as “colonnes historiées a la base” or “bomospirae” (Picard 1961, pp. 388-393). For Ghirshman, they are not to be confused with those found in Parthian temples, keeping in mind that the motifs of the subjects are entirely different (Ghirshman 1979, p. 44).  
630 Colledge 1977, p. 93.  
631 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXVIII.1.  
632 Ghirshman (1976, p. 45) suggested that the sanctuary of Bard-e Neshandeh showed human-form images of divinities, to whom the religious complex was dedicated, as well as the representations of the individuals who created it.  
633 Pl. V.b.1.  
634 *Ibid.*, p. 45. The interpretation may be theoretically appropriate, since the Anahita, who is well-attested as a water deity, element of procreation (symbolized in this case by the “probable” cup she holds in her left hand), at some point in 4th century BC was conflated with (an analogue of) Semitic Ishtar-Inanna (Boyce 1982, pp. 29-31, 202) from whom Anahita inherited the additional features of a divinity of war and the planet Venus, as narrated in the Avestan texts (Yašt V). However, an armed representation of Anahita is very unusual, suggesting to identify the enthroned goddess of the capital as a local Athena-like deity similar to the seated figure armed with a spear at Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Na relief, see §7.1.2).  
635 Pl. V.b.2..
hand. Ghirshman assumed that headgear with a tall central part which seems to flap at the back of the head was a Phrygian cap indicating the Persian god Mithra. However, in the Iranian tradition the solar deity was generally represented with rayed halos, rather than an adapted Phrygian-like cap typical of the Greco-Roman iconography (e.g., representation of Attis, the Cybele’s consort). The figures on the remaining sides (BN:cap.3-4) are both represented with long fully-pleated belted tunicas, and their right hands appear to be making a gesture of veneration. According to Ghirshman, the figures could be the connected with the founder of the temple and his ancestry without specifying who is who.

A second capital was found near the capital discussed above. The fact that it has only three decorated sides suggests that it was placed on one of the columns set against the wall of the sanctuary.

Among the finds worth emphasizing during phase III, is surely the discovery of an Elymaic inscription (BN:insc.A) on the face of the podium which carries the writing [KBNŠ] K[Y]R MLK’ translated by Harmatta as “Kabnashkir the king.”

6.1.4.3 Metalworks and Minor Goods (Pl. VIII)

In addition to a small gold plaque with rounded corners on which a male figure is represented, there is a piece of perforated gold foil with no decoration, a few silver coins, and a couple of iron elements (a fragment of a rod-like object and an arrowhead), which compose the entire assemblage of metalworks from Bard-e Neshandeh all manufactured by copper-base production. As for the Achaemenid period, the information

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636 Ibid., pp. 45-46.
637 Pl. V.b.3-4.
638 Ghirshman 1976, p. 46. As among the Parthian kings, the Elymaean rulers would have been a tendency to represent their image on one side of official art and the depiction of an ancestor on the other side, which, as occurred in the Roman world (ius imaginum), served to legitimise the holding of power or the occupation of an high-ranking position.
639 Pl. V.c.
640 Pl. LIII, BN:insc.A. Harmatta (1976, pp. 289-300) dates this inscription at ca. 180-160 BC. If the dating is correct, it may refer to the first member of Kamnaskired dynasty implying his control over the site.
641 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXIX.3, Pl. 1.33. According to Ghirshman (1976, p. 28), this small golden plaque could be from the pre-Achaemenid era (7th-6th cent. BC). Considerable numbers of this type of object are in the Oxus Treasure in Bactria, where they represent images of worshippers voicing supplications to their divinity. Ghirshman also found a similar plaque in around the podium of Masjed-e Soleyman (Pl. 79, GMIS 618).
642 Ghirshman 1976, Pl 15 GBN 178.
643 Augé et al. 1979, pp. 16-17.
644 Ibid., Pl 15 GBN 149.
about ore and the composition of bronze artefacts is limited \(^{645}\). Starting from phase II (no metalworks recorded from phase I) bronze was used in different ways, primarily for personal ornaments (jewellery) \(^{646}\), but also for statuette elements (e.g., a bronze leg \(^{647}\), a foot fitting a belt sandal \(^{648}\)), figurines, vessels, utensils, and coins of low denomination \(^{649}\). Some metal artefacts were found in the podium’s excavation, such as a bronze bracelet decorated with the head of a gazelle\(^{2}\) on one end \(^{650}\), apparently similar to an artefact found at Vani (present-day Georgia) in a tomb from the Achaemenid age in the Caucasus \(^{651}\); a bronze ring with the representation of a Winged Victory \(^{652}\); and a small bronze mirror adorned with concentric circles attributed to a nomad tradition in central Asia \(^{653}\).

The most significant discovery, which was able to provide – through an analytical study of the monetary data – a plausible dating for the temple (at least to the 2\(^{nd}\) century AD for its last restoration), is certainly the foundation deposit under the top step of the elongated room no. 1, which was unearthed during the 1966 excavation of the tetrastyle temple \(^{654}\). The

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\(^{645}\) Pigott 1990.

\(^{646}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXVIII.6.

\(^{647}\) Pl. VIII.c.

\(^{648}\) Pl. VIII.b

\(^{649}\) Colledge 1977, pp. 80, 103-109.

\(^{650}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. 1 GBN 9 (draft no very clear).

\(^{651}\) Bill 2003, p. 90, pl. 165.3-5. The animal motif is well attested in Anatolia under the Kingdom of Urartu (ca. mid-9\(^{th}\) to early-6\(^{th}\) century BC) along the highlands between the Caspian and the Black Sea. A similar object (bracelet with an animal-head terminal) in gold was found in the Karmir Blur palace in the Transcaucasian regions in modern-day Armenia (Chahin 2013, p. 58). This tradition of animal-style motifs seems to belong to a nomadic tradition originating in central Asia, but by the early-1\(^{st}\) millennium BC appears to stabilize in northern Iran before being developed by the Achaemenid art (Muscarella 1988, p. 36).

\(^{652}\) Pl. VIII.a.

\(^{653}\) Ibid., Pl. 1 GBN 6. This mirror is not unique. Another was found on the lower terrace, and another two at Masjed-e Soleyman, one of which was in the temple of Heracles (Pl. 29 GMIS 57) and a fragment to the west of this temple (Pl. 37 GMIS 189). Of these four mirrors attributed to central Asiatic and eastern nomads (north Caucasus, south Russia, and Danube region), Ghirshman believes the oldest are from Bard-e Neshandeh, and the more recent and less elaborate ones are from Masjed-e Soleyman (Ghirshman 1976, pp. 28-29).

\(^{654}\) Ibid., p. 40. For the coins at Bard-e Neshandeh, see Augé. et al. (1979). See also Chapter 9. The foundation deposit contained 4,735 coins, mostly Elymaean in bronze presumably from Susa, but also included 165 Elymaean tetradrachms in silvered bronze, four obols and some Parthian coins which offered accurate means of data. In particular, it should be mentioned that there was a Kushan coin of Kanishka (ca. 127-155 AD) and some Arsacid coins, six of which were issued by sovereigns Vologases III, IV, and V, covering a period ranging from 124/5 to 190/1 AD. On these last coins, dating is legible regarding the two in bronze of Vologases IV, the first refers to 173/4 AD or 174/5 AD and the second to 175/6 AD; a silvered bronze tetradrachm of Vologases III is from 124/5 AD, and a coin of Vologases V is datable to 190/1 AD. Amid the Elymaean series of this deposit, a very small number of coins was found, attributable to the last kings of Elymais, the so-called rois incertains. These kings were so named because, unlike their predecessors, their names did not appear on coins minted by them. Commonly, they are placed at the turn of the last quarter of the 2\(^{nd}\) century and the early 3\(^{rd}\) century (just behind the Sasanid conquest) without the certainty of a correct dating and succession. The issuing of small bronze coins was commonplace, and for this reason, it is of interest that only five examples were in the deposit of Bard-e Neshandeh. The "raruty" of these particular coins here is in stark contrast to the extraordinary abundance of previous issues. Accordingly, this suggests that the foundation deposit was made in a period, in which the first mintages of these rois incertains were not yet

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The situation outside the temple on the terrace area where numerous artefacts were found is radically different, showing votive objects which were thrown in front of the temple.661 Considering various findings located outside the sanctuary, the first object examined was a bronze statuette of a male character, deemed to be of high-born rank.662 The figure, characterized by hair made up of “boucles en colimaçon”663 falling on the forehead, had on the top of the head a woven crown tied with ribbons behind his head. It is also depicted with a big moustache and beard of a particular type, defined as “l’impériale”.664 He wears a tunic tightened at the waist by a belt with pendants, while a cloak is placed on the left shoulder falling in front and back to the lower end of the tunic. His right arm is raised and his fingers curved inward as if he held a stick, now lost. The peculiarity of this statuette, which attracts great interest, is that he holds in his left hand a horn of plenty.665 Near this statuette was found a lead figurine representing an aristocrat in Parthian warrior gear, identifiable by

widely distributed – certainly before the end of the 2nd century AD – and where the coins of their predecessors still circulated abundantly (Augé et al. 1979, p. 38).

655 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. 15 GBN 181, 182, 183, 184, 185.
656 Ibid., p. 40. Pl. 15 GBN 186.
657 Ibid., Pl. 15 GBN 128.a-b.
658 Ibid., p. 47.
659 Pl. VIII.d.
660 Cf. Muscarella 2013, pp. 689-702.
661 The explanation given by Ghirshman (1976, p. 47) of this difference between inside and outside is that while the temple, after its desecration, was primarily used as a dwelling-place, the terrace was transformed into a cultivated field, preserving the objects especially in zones that were not ploughed (east corner of the temple).
662 Pl. VIII.e.
663 Ghirshman 1976, p. 47.
664 Ibid.
665 Hansman, 1985, p. 243. With rare exceptions, abundance and power go together. The idea of authority attributed by the ancients to the horns of animals led them to regard these as symbols of good fortune. The Greeks connected the origin of the horn of plenty to the myth of the goat Amalthea, whose milk fed the infant god Zeus. The grateful god gave her horns the power to bring about an abundance of all the right things in the world (Charbonneau-Lassay 1994, pp. 401-402). Two bas-reliefs on this subject have been found on the site of Masjed-e Soleyman (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXIX.2-3).
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armour which, placed on the chest, covers the folds of the tunic beneath it\textsuperscript{666}. According to Ghirshman\textsuperscript{667}, his left hand is resting on the handle (in the shape of an animal head) of a long sword with a broken end\textsuperscript{6}. On top of the head is a headdress from which, at the sides of the head, protrude two considerable locks of hair. He also wears a moustache and a square beard. These bronze statuettes could be interpreted as \textit{ex-voto} offerings within the context of a ritual practice which was spread throughout the Middle East and Greece, since the 3\textsuperscript{rd} millennium BC\textsuperscript{668}.

6.1.5 Past Interpretations

After the first and brief mention of the site by Unvala\textsuperscript{669}, who reported how only the column near the pond was identified by the local term of \textit{Bot-neshandah} (or the “guiding idol”) while the two terraces were simply named \textit{Qala} (i.e., “castle”) by the natives, there was a succession of scholars and travellers who visited the location of Bard-e Neshandeh. The first visitors were not aware of the existence of the tetrastyle temple on the lower terrace, since it was still covered by earth and debris and used as a cultivated field for local inhabitants.

The first scholar to inspect and describe it, even if only incidentally, was Sir Aurel Stein\textsuperscript{670} who was in southwestern Iran in the late 1930s. Being much more attracted by Masjed-e Soleyman, as were other scholars and travellers such as Maxime Siroux\textsuperscript{671} and Kurt Erdmann\textsuperscript{672}, he dwelled summarily on the site of Bard-e Neshandeh, giving a brief and non-exhaustive description of the religious complex\textsuperscript{673}.

The French scholar André Godard visited the site in 1947 (the same year of the first inspection by Ghirshman) and was particularly impressed to the point of publishing an article on the site in 1949 for the influential periodical \textit{Athar-e Iran}\textsuperscript{674}. He dates with some certainty the religious complex of Bard-e Neshandeh to the Arsacid period, taking as his core view that the structure found on the higher terrace (the podium) was not a fire temple\textsuperscript{675}, for if it were,

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{666} Pl. VIII.f.
\item \textsuperscript{667} Ghirshman 1976, pp. 47-48.
\item \textsuperscript{668} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{669} Unvala 1928, p. 86.
\item \textsuperscript{670} Stein 1940, 160-161.
\item \textsuperscript{671} Siroux 1938, p. 160.
\item \textsuperscript{672} Erdmann 1941, p. 225.
\item \textsuperscript{673} Stein 1940, pp. 160-161.
\item \textsuperscript{674} Annales du Service Archéologique de l’Iran (Godard 1949, pp. 153-162).
\item \textsuperscript{675} The \textit{Fire Temple}, a religious building that is widely regarded as the Iranian temple \textit{par excellence}, came about as a response by Zoroastrian clerics to the diffusion, initiated by Artaxerxes II (404-359 BC) and continued in
\end{itemize}
it would have been dated to the Sasanid era. In those years, Godard and Erdmann defined the Zoroastrian temple as an articulated structure constituted by a baldachin-like open building for the exhibition of the sacred fire to the worshippers during the rites (chahar-taq) and by a small closed adjacent area for storage of fire (atesh-gah). The interpretation by Godard was suggested both by the absence of traces of fire (ashes, burnt soil, dust) and by the high location of Bard-e Neshandeh. He also considered the square-plan podium a closed building of the Parthian epoch, diverging considerably from the idea of an open construction characterized by four pillars that supported a cupola or a roof (i.e., chahar-taq). Regarding the lower terrace, Godard dwells briefly on what he defines as “une sorte d’estrare où ne subsiste aucun reste ou trace de construction.” This so-called “estrade” – with no apparent signs of construction – was in reality where the remains of the tetrastyle temple were hidden, not yet excavated at that time. Godard supposed that the lower terrace was a gathering place for worshippers, on which the officiating priest prepared the crowd for the ceremony that would have taken place on the higher terrace. Finally, he concluded that the bare site of Bard-e Neshandeh, in contrast to what Schippmann assumes later, could not be associated with the “extremely wealthy” Elymaean temple such as the one consecrated to Bel which Antiochus III tried to sack in 187 BC or the one dedicated to Nanaia which Antiochus IV the Seleucid and Parthian eras, of temples designed to hold religious images. These latter temples were defined as “dwellings of the dev (evil beings),” as the clerics regarded the depictions, especially those sculpted in the round, as being an empty form which evil could take over.

This theory did not have the benefit of a close reading of the Avesta, the Zoroastrian sacred text. If this text had been consulted, it would have been clear that the chahar-taq could not have been placed in the open air because the sacred fire could not be exposed to the rays of the sun. This theoretical framework was rebutted in the 1970s by the German archaeologist D. Huff (1975), who revisited and revised an old theory of E. Herzfeld (1941), which drew on textual evidence to suggest that the fire temple was made up of a closed building in which the chahar-taq was separated from the outside either by walls which closed in the arches or by domed corridors. Huff speaks of the chahar-taq not as a synonym for fire temple but as a fundamental structure of a much more extensive religious complex, and it could have been, as he defined it, a “Sanctuary of Fire.”. He maintains as a central point of his theory the idea that not all the chahar-taq could be linked to the structure of an Iranian temple, and that their dating should not be limited just to the Sasanid era (more specifically on the chahar-taq, see Boucharlat 1985). Indeed, in the Islamic period, the typology of the chahar-taq was taken up and used by the new religion as a sanctuary, a place of pilgrimage, situated over the tomb of a saint (Emam-Zadeh). Further, the German archaeologist has sought to highlight some common guidelines through which it could be possible to more coherently interpret the various historic buildings in Iran (Huff 1993).

The site on the top of the hill of Bard-e Neshandeh could identify the location as one of those places “hauts et purs” (Godard 1949, p. 155) described by Herodotus (I.131), where the ancient Persians, devoid of temples or worshippers’ statues, had the practice of offering sacrifices to their gods in the form of natural elements (sun, moon, fire, earth, wind, water, etc). In all likelihood, in this case, Herodotus referred to the religious buildings that he knew since they were scattered throughout Greece in the 5th century BC, but probably ignoring the real situation present in the Persian heartland.
had attempted to plunder a decade later, or the famous temple of Azara (τὰ Ἀζάρα) recorded in Strabo.\textsuperscript{684}

Roman Ghirshman went for the first time to Bard-e Neshandeh in 1947 accompanied by an engineer from an Anglo-Iranian petroleum company (H. Harmer), who was passionately fond of archaeology. This site, as well as Masjed-e Soleyman, took on great importance for Ghirshman, who after this brief initial encounter returned seventeen years later for a more thorough study that extended into three excavation campaigns (1964-1966).

As the years passed, other scholars took an interest in the site, such as Vanden Berghe, who saw in the ruins of the Elymaean temple “les restes des colonnes en pierre qui soutenaient le toit d’un triple ivân”\textsuperscript{685}, but limited himself to recording the discovery of a head from the Parthian era. However, the report of the French excavations\textsuperscript{686} represents the most important and comprehensive source of information for the Elymaean religious complex at Bard-e Neshandeh, even if in many instances this information may be imprecise. Ghirshman interpreted the higher terrace as a place destined for the worship of Mazdean divinities, in particular for the cult of Ahuramazda whose sacred fire, displayed during the rites at an altar on the podium, would have been initially kept in a niche within the chapel at the bottom of the northwest stairway (phase I e II)\textsuperscript{687} and later in the sacristy attached to the podium (phase III). This assumption provided by the French scholar would seem to be founded on the writings of Herodotus concerning the religion of the Persians\textsuperscript{688}. As regards the tetrastyle temple on the lower terrace, Ghirshman defined it as a temple dedicated to the divinities Anahita and Mithra\textsuperscript{689}, who along with Ahuramazda form the Divine Triad, fundamental to the Mazdean religion. This hypothesis was based on the interpretation\textsuperscript{690} of the two figures BN:capit.1-2 found near the portico as the two Mazdean deities (the goddess Anahita and the god Mithra). Also influenced by the finding of a paved path that connects the northwest stairway with the portico of the temple, Ghirshman theorized that a Mazdean worship would have been officiated on the sacred terraces at Bard-e Neshandeh. According to him, the ceremony took place in two distinct and consecutive stages: at first, the pilgrims

\textsuperscript{684} Str., XVI.1.18.
\textsuperscript{685} Vanden Berghe 1966, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{686} Ghirshman 1976.
\textsuperscript{687} Identified afterwards as an atesh-gah (Ghirshman 1964b, pp. 314-315). This hypothesis was refuted by Schippmann (1971, p. 257) because according to him an atesh-gah had to be closed on all sides, and not like the niche having one side open.
\textsuperscript{688} Hdr., I.131.
\textsuperscript{689} Ghirshman 1976, p. 50.
\textsuperscript{690} Ibid., pp. 45-46.
arrived on the lower terrace moving towards the temple of Anahita and Mithra. After leaving offers for the two deities, they probably followed the paved path that connects the portico of the temple with the northwest stairway walking up to the higher terrace. Once at this point, the worshippers finally reached the podium through another small stairway placed on axis with the previous one, and here the rites in honour of the principal god of the Mazdean Triad, i.e., Ahuramazda, have performed. It is, in any case, appropriate to state that many of the interpretations made by Ghirshman are not adequately supported by archaeological data.

Other distinguished scholars who have been interested in the analysis of the sacred terraces at Bard-e Neshandeh include Schippmann, Downey and Kleiss. Schippmann refuted the scenario proposed by Ghirshman and considered that the religious complex served as an Elymaean cult place unrelated to Zoroastrianism, was re-examining the Classical sources to relate them to the buildings on the terraces of the sacred complex at Bard-e Neshandeh. He identified the podium of the upper terrace as being a cult place of Bel (the Semitic equivalent of Ahuramazda) that Antiochus III tried in vain to sack in the year of his death in 187 BC. In addition, Schippmann provided a second interpretation recognizing in the sanctuary of Artemis-Nanaia that Antiochus IV (215-164 BC) had attempted to raid, the tetrastyle temple on the lower terrace, which Ghirshman dedicated to Mazdean gods Mithra and Anahita. The reference used by Schippmann to identify the sanctuary of Bard-e

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691 Ibid., p. 50.
692 Schippmann 1971.
693 Downey 1988.
694 Kleiss 1998.
696 Schippmann 1971, p. 498. On this point, it is relevant to point out how despite constant academic efforts, pre-Sasanid evidence concerning the Zoroastrian religion is still poorly known and the term “Zoroastrianism” itself should be used with caution as well as the description as “fire-temple” given to the Iranian places of cult. According to Shenkar (2011, p. 118), it appears more pertinent, and methodologically more adequate, to designate the general term of “Iranian temples” to distinguish the temples discovered within the Iranian tradition during the periods preceding the political ascent of the Sasanid dynasty. The literature on the history of Zoroaster is massive. See for instance: Gnoli (1980, 2000); P’yankov (1996); Kellens (2001); Shahbazi (2002); Stausberg (2002: 21–62); Dandamaev, Lukonin (2004: 320–29); Shaked (2005: 183–87).
697 Schippmann 1988, pp. 761-762. See also Schippmann and Vanden Berghe 1985, pp. 16ff, 20.
698 Schippmann and Vanden Berghe 1985, p. 17; and Schippmann 1988, p. 762.
699 Diod. Sic., XXVIII.3; idem XXIX.15; Str, XVI.I.18; Justin, Epitome, XXXII.2; Porph., II.260; Euseb., 253; St. Jerome, XI.17-19.
700 Several Ancient authors refer the tale of Antiochus IV’s expedition to the Elymaean temple respectively dedicated to Artemis (Polyb., XXX.I.9.1; Jos., XII.358-359) / Venus (App., 11.66) / Diana (Pliny, VI.31.135; Porph., II.260, F 53 and 56; St. Jerome, XL36; Zon., IV.20) / Nanaea-Nanaia (II.Maccabees 1.13-17) / Anahita (Ael., XII.23).
701 Schippmann 1988, p. 762.
Neshandeh is present both in Justin\textsuperscript{702} and Strabo\textsuperscript{703}, who report a temple dedicated to the goddess Artemis, which Strabo calls τὰ τὰ Ἀζάρα (\textit{ta Azara}), which was despoiled by a certain Arsaces (Mithridates I\textsuperscript{7}).

In the recent years, according to what assumed by Ghirshman, Susan B. Downey interprets the tetrastyle temple of Bard-e Neshandeh as an example reflecting a planimetric scheme which developed in Iran\textsuperscript{704} and, consequently, typical of the Iranian temple architecture with no influence from Mesopotamian schemes\textsuperscript{705}. This conclusion is derived from the conventional interpretation of room no. 5 on Ghirshman’s published plan\textsuperscript{706} as the main cella with a square scheme, having its roof supported by four columns placed in the centre, and flanked by three elongated rooms (nos. 1, 2, 3) considered to be of secondary importance. According to Schippmann\textsuperscript{707}, Downey sees this type of four-columned environment to be widespread in Iran and central Asia to the region of Hauran (southwestern Syria) and compared the ground-plan of Bard-e Neshandeh temple with a series of other religious complexes\textsuperscript{708}.

**6.1.6 Dating**

The tetrastyle temple was discovered during the 2\textsuperscript{nd} excavation campaign led by Ghirshman in 1965, when the first attempts at dating the site solely referred to the upper terrace with the podium. Sir Aurel Stein placed the complex within the Parthian era, basing his suggestion on a sculpted limestone head with Hellenistic traits found in a nearby field\textsuperscript{709}. An opinion echoed by Godard\textsuperscript{710}.

For the dating of the religious complex, Ghirshman – in light of certain findings of small artefacts\textsuperscript{711} – placed the commencement of the podium on the upper terrace in the 7\textsuperscript{th}-6\textsuperscript{th} century BC.

\textsuperscript{702} Justin, XLI.6.8.
\textsuperscript{703} Str., XVI.1.18.
\textsuperscript{704} Schippmann 1971, pp. 480-499.
\textsuperscript{705} Downey 1988, pp. 135-136.
\textsuperscript{706} Ghirshman 1976, plan II.
\textsuperscript{707} Schippmann 1971, pp. 480-499.
\textsuperscript{708} Downey 1988, pp. 135-136.
\textsuperscript{709} Stein 1940, p. 161.
\textsuperscript{710} Godard 1949, pp. 153-162.
\textsuperscript{711} Ghirshman 1964b, p. 313. In the soil between \textit{phase I} and \textit{phase II}, a small gold plaque (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXIX.3; Pl. 1 GBN 33) and part of a weapon (\textit{ibid.}, Pl. 1 GBN 10) were found near the podium. They may be dated to the 7\textsuperscript{th}-6\textsuperscript{th} century BC, while fragments of an Achaemenid-type bowl (\textit{ibid.}, Pl. 5 GBN 46), a bracelet in bronze (\textit{ibid.}, Pl 1 GBN 9) and some ceramic fragments on the lower terrace (\textit{ibid.}, p. 48, fig. 20) at the Achaemenid period (\textit{ibid.}, p. 28).
century BC \(^{712}\) (despite another context where he considered a dating to the 8\(^{th}\)-7\(^{th}\) century BC \(^{713}\)). At any rate, whether these findings constitute an appropriate evidence for such an early dating is still matter of discussion. The terrace of *phase I* was considered to be in existence during the Hellenistic period \(^{714}\) while the later enlargement of the upper terrace (*phase II*) was supposed to have occurred during the reign of the first Kamnaskirids (mid-2\(^{nd}\) century BC) \(^{715}\). Regarding the activity of the religious shrine, Ghirshman considered it to be regularly operative until the end of the 1\(^{st}\) century of Sasanid domination (*ca.* 4\(^{th}\) century AD), as substantiated, in his opinion, by the finding at Masjed-e Soleyman of some coins from the time of Shapur II (309-379 AD) \(^{716}\).

Dating the complex at the Seleuco-Parthian period was supported by Schippmann, who soon rejected an Achaemenid chronology for the first phase of the complex \(^{717}\). Although traceable back to the time of the Medes or Achaemenids, the three small objects (a votive plate, a part of a weapon and a jewel) \(^{718}\) considered by Ghirshman to confirm his assumption, were too modest to be able to convincingly push the time scale towards such an ancient date.

The analytical study of pottery found in the soil of the site between *phase I* and *phase II*, conducted by Ernie Haerinck, has permitted its dating from the beginning of the post-Achaemenid period (4\(^{th}\)-3\(^{rd}\) century BC) to 150 BC. Haerinck refuted Ghirshman’s dating as being based on such limited finds coming from the pre-Achaemenid era, suggesting a later date instead to the end of the Achaemenid epoch and the beginning of the post-Achaemenid phase \(^{719}\). This dating accorded with the coins (eight Hellenistic and two of Kamnaskires I) found at the base of the substructure wall of *phase III* \(^{720}\).

About the tetrastyle temple, unfortunately, it has not been possible to exactly date the first phase of construction. On the other end, the foundation deposit described above may deduce that the final restoration of the temple plausibly occurred during the 2\(^{nd}\) century AD \(^{721}\).

\(^{712}\) Ibid., p. 28.  
\(^{713}\) Ibid., p. 50.  
\(^{714}\) Ibid., p. 39.  
\(^{715}\) Ibid., pp. 36, 39.  
\(^{716}\) Ibid., p. 50.  
\(^{717}\) Schippmann 1971, pp. 256-259.  
\(^{718}\) Ghirshman 1964b, p. 313.  
\(^{719}\) Haerinck, 1983, p. 13; also referring to Schippmann 1971, pp. 243-251; and Stronach 1974, p. 246.  
\(^{720}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 175.  
\(^{721}\) Ibid., p. 40.
6. Religious Architectures

6.1.7 Final Considerations

Summing up the evidence newly emerged and outlined in the previous paragraphs, a revision of Ghirshman’s conjecture of Bard-e Neshandeh as a Zoroastrian place of worship can be confidently asserted. In particular, my recent reinterpretation of the tetrastyle temple on the lower terrace as a sacred place which proficiently integrated Mesopotamian, Elamite, Iranian and Greek architectural models may provide a well-established terminus ante quem for the dating of the entire complex. Precisely, what was initially considered a four-pillared cella (no. 5) of an Iranian temple surrounded by three rectangular-shaped service rooms (nos. 1-2-3), had been recently reinterpreted as an open vestibule722. Starting from the essential structural ascertainment that the northeastern wall of the tetrastyle chamber (no. 5) – reconstructed and reported in his plan by Ghirshman723 – did not exist in the first place, the roughly-squared room with four columns has to be considered as open to the portico providing a contemporaneous function of court and antecella724. It is surrounded by three elongated cellae placed at a higher elevation respect to the central room ground level for which the architectural reference is distinctly related to rectangular-shaped cult chambers of Mesopotamian standards. The interior design of the Elymaean temple reflects a planimetry that competently combined the centralized four-columned hall typical of Iranian architectures, generally originating from Parthian times onwards, and some planimetric features (e.g., rectangular ground- plan, pronaos, elongated shape for the cult chambers, tripartite naos), which instead evoke Babylonian architectural models, revitalised and promoted by the Seleucid kings725. Finally, the presence of a portico in front of the main entrance reveals Greek influence which was instead absent in the Mesopotamian religious structures of Seleucid Uruk726. From a planimetric perspective, the tetrastyle temple can be positively placed within the Seleucid structural tradition when the latter still provided adequate incentives for the ongoing evolving Parthian official architecture. A dating of phase III (temple and lower terrace), therefore, to a period datable from the 3rd century BC to the 1st century AD, when traces of persistent Seleucid artistic models which were combined with local traditions are attested – especially in relation to the religious sphere727 – may be proposed.

722 Salaris 2017, pp. 159-162, and fig. 8.
723 Ghirshman 1976, Plan II.
724 Salaris 2017, pp. 159-161.
725 Ibid., p. 172.
726 For the Mesopotamian sacred structures during the Seleucid and Parthian period, see Downey 1988.
727 Callieri 2015.
The study of the architecture and the material evidence from the site may confidently support the dating for the two phases of the upper terrace (phase I and II) between the late Achaemenid period (likely around the end of 4th century BC) – as suggested by the presence in Iran\textsuperscript{728} and central Asia\textsuperscript{729} of open-air spaces of cult, which were accomplished by the construction of monumental sacred terraces in the period antecedent to the arrival of Alexander the Great in Asia – and the first century of Seleucid dominion (3rd century BC)\textsuperscript{730}.

6.2 Masjed-e Soleyman (MS: Pls. IX-XVII)

Encased in the foothills of the Bakhtiar mountains, Masjed-e Soleyman (Mosque of Solomon) is situated within the large bend bordered to the south by the Karun river (Map 3). Approximately 2 km east of the site, there is a watercourse bed, which flows north-south following the natural slope of the land and appears to have received other streams, although drained today, which could have supplied the ancient settlement. For nearly half a century, the valley was an operational centre for the Anglo-Persian Oil Company (APOC), following the discovery of rich oil deposits at the end of the 19th century by Jacques de Morgan, the first director of the French Archaeological Mission to Susiana\textsuperscript{731}, in this almost unpopulated area, which until this time represented a space of seasonal grazing for the Bakhtiar nomads.

In the northeastern part of the valley, still in a dominant position from the rest of the modern city, a monumental structure based on artificial terraces – which, long ago, attracted the attention of archaeologists and explorers – is built on a hill (30-40 m), providing a high spot that seems to be a priority in the conception of religious architecture in Elymais (Pl. IX).

6.2.1 General Aspects

The vast sanctuary of Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{732}, whose ruins are located amidst active oil wells of the modern city, gives visitors an elusive sense of calm and great firmness.

\textsuperscript{728} Kleiss 1998.

\textsuperscript{729} In Uzbekistan have been discovered along the valley of Surkhan-darya the site of Pachmak-tepe (nearby Djanavat-tepe at ca. 8 km south-east of Sherabad-darya; Pidaev 1973; \textit{idem} 1974; Bernard 1976, p. 271; Sagdulaev and Khakimov 1976; Abdullaev 1994; Boyce and Grenet 1991, pp. 182-183), the platform of Pshak-tepe (near the confluence of the Surkhan-darya with the Amu-darya; see Duke 1974, Askarov 1982), and the religious structure of Kindyk-tepe (in the Bandikhan region; see Borofka 2009, pp. 138-140). In Tajikistan, instead, is situated the sacred terrace of Kok-tepe21 (in the middle of Zeravshan valley, ca. 30 km south-eastern of Samarkand; Rapin \textit{et al.} 2001; \textit{idem} 2010; Rapin 2007)


\textsuperscript{731} Ghirshman 1950a, p. 205.

\textsuperscript{732} Masjed-e Soleyman – also written in other ways such as \textit{Masjed Soleyman}, \textit{Masjed-e Solaymān}, \textit{Masjed Soleiman}, and \textit{Masjid-i-Sulaiman} – is known in the petroleum industry by the acronym \textit{M.I.S}. 

\textit{The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)}
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During the Middle Ages, it was called *Talghar* (or *Tolqor*), the name of a land in the vicinity of the Karun river. Later on, the city was named *Jahangiri*\(^733\), then *Naftun*\(^734\), and finally, after the visit of Reza Shah Pahlavi\(^735\), the name now bears *Masjed-e Soleyman*, which was assigned in 1926.

Masjed-e Soleyman became the Iranian oil industry's centre from 1908, and it was not visited by Western explorers until the late 1920s. The surrounding environment, characterized by gas leaks and oil spills, impressed the first European visitors. Pliny supported this conjecture in his description of “places which are always burning” and when reporting on the volcanoes he said that “likewise in Susa, at the White Tower, from fifteen apertures, the greatest of which also burns in the daytime”\(^736\). It is possible that when mentioning the fires of Susa he had in mind “petroleum-gas burning” from Masjed-e Soleyman\(^737\). Also, the area of Masjed-e Soleyman was a source of bitumen for the Mesopotamian urban centres from the 4\(^{th}\) millennium BC as demonstrated by the analysis of carbon isotopes in bitumen samples from Urukean context\(^738\). There is no doubt that this landscape is distinguishable from any other surrounding environments and well recognizable from miles away. The natural phenomena, labelled as "divine", must have had a profound impact on the choice of the location for the sanctuary\(^739\). Moreover, Unvala reported the presence of an underground passage leading to the south-west side of the hill, whose entrance was blocked by a massive boulder because of the accidental deaths of curious tourists, due to poisonous gas leakages\(^740\).

\(^{733}\) Nowadays, the name *Jahangiri* remains to indicate a rural district (*dehestan*) in the region of Masjed-e Soleyman.

\(^{734}\) This is a term with which the city was known before 1926 (Amerie 1925, p. 249; Nahai and Kimbell 1963, p. 109). Nowadays, the name *Naftun* is still used to designate the cemetery located southeast of the city.

\(^{735}\) The Shah (r. 1925-1941) visited the city and Sar-Masjed in 1926. Considering the “atashkade” on the terrace built by Solomon, he suggested to the Iranian parliament to change the city’s name from Maidan-e Naftun to Masjed-e Soleyman, a suggestion taken up within the year. The inhabitant of the town firmly believed that the ruins on the terrace represented the ancient "Temple of Salomon" and used to leave small oil lamp as *ex-voto* offerings (Ghirshman 1950, p. 217). This folkloristic practice, which is probably still performed nowadays (personal communication from Prof. Gian Pietro Basello), had deep roots and was not eradicated by the Islamic doctrine.

\(^{736}\) Pliny, II.110.237, “Susis quidem ad Turrim Albam XV caminis, maximo eorum et interdii, campus”.

\(^{737}\) In this regard, the description given by J.M. Unvala (1928, p. 85) appears very appropriate, defining the site of Masjed-e Soleyman he said that “to-day the sight of a number of jets of the petroleum-gas burning simultaneously day and night in different in the Maidan-i-Naft [...]. During the daytime, they burn with a livid red glow and throw up in the volumes of nasty-smelling smoke, and during the night they illuminate the rough, but gorgeous scenery of the Bakhtiari Mountains like big bonfires”.


\(^{739}\) On this point, it has been stressed by Maxime Siroux (1937, p. 157) how at Masjed-e Soleyman the “architecture, si l’on juge de ce qui en subsiste, devait parfaitement mettre en valeur les phénomènes d’origine souterraine attribués à la divinité” and still in 1937 “les habitants des maisons voisines aiment à conter la force des ‘dives’ dont les jeux démoniaques se déroulaient sur ces puissantes terrasses par euxconstruites”.

\(^{740}\) Unvala 1928, p. 85. See also Siroux 1938, pp. 158-159.
Sar-Masjed is the name attached to the sacred compound at Masjed-e Soleyman. The original pre-Islamic designation is unknown but its modern one has been derived from the location on top of a hillock overlooking a locality called “Sar-Masjed” (“the top of the mosque”). The original extension of the place is still unidentified since the presence of modern buildings (in particular on the southern and eastern sides) prevents any systematic investigation of further archaeological remains. The main complex of Sar-Masjed, which includes six terraces of different dimensions, is distinctly recognizable, covering a surface of almost 1.5 ha. It is possible to infer that the area provided a suitable surface for the edification of other structures not yet unearthed, and although similar ruins just as distinctly discernible are not present in loco, their existence cannot be ruled out (Pl. IX).

### 6.2.2 Archaeological Context

A massive stone structure 100 km east-southeast of the ancient city of Susa (Shush) is situated on the first spurs of the Zagros mountains which border the town of the same name. At an altitude of around 320 m, the sacred shrine of Masjed-e Soleyman unfolds across an extended trapezoidal surface (ca. 134×120 m) sustained by an artificial platform articulated in a cadenced alternation of buttresses and recesses, in a way more elaborate structure than is present at Bard-e Neshandeh (Pls. IX, XI). Composed of six terraces, different in dimensions and functions, the central area is neatly divided by a low wall (Pl. XII.e) in two broadly extended terraces (I and V). The other platforms are considerably more limited appearing as modest structural elements adjoined at different times during the history of the sacred structure. An imposing revetment wall, made from stone blocks of various shapes and sizes and with rectangular projections at uniform distances from one another, supports a broad

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741 According to Masud Soltani – the former director of the Masjed Soleiman Cultural Heritage and Tourism Organisation (MSCHTO) – the monument has been under 24-hour security watch to protect the ancient site from intruders, including looters. Furthermore, as it has not benefited from attention to maintenance – the same applies at Bard-e Neshandeh – the site is at a critical stage, and indeed Soltani rang the alarm bells three years ago, declaring: “The ancient monument requires urgent attention; its surface needs to be restored to protect it from further destruction and the whole structure is in need of strengthening”. He also affirmed: “Due to the importance of the Sar-Masjed Fire Temple […] we have asked the Khuzestan CHTO to pay more attention to the edifice” (Masud Soltani 2010, The Circle of Ancient Iranian Studies). My visit at the site in November 2015 allowed me to confirm this grave situation of risk present in the archaeological area of Masjed-e Soleyman.

742 These measurements are not in Ghirshman’s text and are approximate, as I have calculated them directly from his plans. The maximum distance north to south extends from the projection on which stairway B was built to the projection identified by Ghirshman as terrace III; for the east to west axis, this extends from the entry to stairway H until the so-called western sanctuary. It is striking that Ghirshman (1976, p. 55) reports only terrace measurements of the most ancient phase (terrace I, 54×91.5 m) but does not continue with more comprehensive measures, reporting only the fact of an extension of the platform that took place towards the north and the west due to the Macedonian installation at Masjed-e Soleyman (Ghirshman 1976, p. 72).

743 Pl. XII.
artificial terrace that is accessible by a main stairway on the northeast corner and by other smaller staircases on the north and south sides.

Roman Ghirshman identified four distinct occupation phases, which are reflected in the construction level of the complex. An initial archaic period or époque perse\(^{744}\) (subdivided into two periods) was characterized by a single terrace (I) of 91.4×54 m on whose southern sector would have been a podium for outdoor worship\(^{745}\). A rectangular-shaped room (2.70×1.15×2 m) with a roof composed of large slabs – one of which (1.60×1.15 m) discovered still \textit{in situ} – was placed into a section of the northern foundation wall (north-west corner)\(^{746}\). This closed space was erroneously interpreted as an \textit{atesh-gah}\(^{747}\) where the fire was kept for subsequent ritual exposure on the podium. Although no trace has so far been found in such a place (i.e., podium) during this phase, the structure must be identified with the rebuilding of the same podium (8.12×7 m)\(^{748}\), that occurred during \textit{phase II} of terrace I\(^{749}\). During \textit{phase II}, there was a widening of the terrace itself with the reconstruction of the southern substructure wall\(^{750}\).

At this stage, the terrace was accessible through four staircases (A\(^{751}\), B\(^{752}\), C\(^{753}\)-D), possibly connected to the ceremonial activities of the sanctuary as at Bard-e Neshandeh\(^{754}\).

\(^{744}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XLVI-XLVII. Ghirshman even refers to the presumed installation on this site of a Persian tribe towards the end of the 8\(^{th}\) and the beginning of the 7\(^{th}\) century BC. The site would have been chosen because it was located in a valley close to a small watercourse (a landscape typical of this region), as at the location of nearby Bard-e Neshandeh. The village would have been near a spring, nowadays dried up, which gave its name to a section of the modern city about 2 km from the sanctuary, \textit{Chashmen Ali} or “Spring of Ali.” This village extended to the east and moreover to the south where there was a bare hill that Ghirshman thought may have covered the remains of a chieftain’s dwelling (\textit{ibid.}, p. 55).

\(^{745}\) \textit{Ibid.}, p. 61.

\(^{746}\) Pl. X.2.

\(^{747}\) The hypothesis advanced by Ghirshman, (1976, \textit{Bard-e Neshandeh}, p. 21, \textit{Masjed-e Soleyman}, pp. 61-62) which identified the niches within the exterior facades of terraces at both Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman as fire-temples or \textit{atesh-gah}, appears to be scarcely credible. These niches, given that they are near access stairways and that they do not have flues, would seem “far more likely to have sheltered oratories for cult-image” (Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 47). For the same misguided interpretation provided by Ghirshman about the niche of Bard-e Neshandeh (§6.1.2).

\(^{748}\) Ghirshman 1976, Plan VI.

\(^{749}\) Ghirshman (1976, p. 62) also connected the disappearance of the podium with the confirmed destruction of the most ancient podium of Bard-e Neshandeh.

\(^{750}\) The south foundation wall, where the hill has a cliff of 20 m that falls straight down into the modern city, is indeed to be considered as the most vulnerable part of the terrace, due to the most exposure to environmental and climatic severity.

\(^{751}\) Pl. XII. Ghirshman 1976, Pls. XLVI, XLVII, LI.2-3, LIV.1. The principal stairway (A) is 24.40 × 4.50 m and made up of 20 steps with a height of 18-27 cm each (Pl. X.1).

\(^{752}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pls. XLVI, LI.1-2, LIV.2; fig. 25. This stairway (4.40/4.99 × 5.16 m; southeast corner) is composed of 29 steps.

\(^{753}\) \textit{Ibid.}, Pls. XLVI, LIV.3; fig. 26. The stairway (Pl. XII.c) is 4.90/4.55 × 5.16 (south side) and made up of 26 steps.
Whether it involved a Macedonian presence or not, a second construction phase (époque séleucide)\textsuperscript{755} connected to a Greek community (garrison\textsuperscript{7}) at Masjed-e Soleyman – suggested by the finding of some artefacts (e.g., Greek-style cavalry riders wearing the Macedonian kausia\textsuperscript{756} – was proposed\textsuperscript{757}. During this phase, a new construction asset brought an expansion of the terrace towards the north and west. Three new platforms (II, III, IV) were constructed, respectively flanking the north side of terrace I, (Pl. XII.g), where Ghirshman suggested the existence of a Greek garrison\textsuperscript{758}. They allowed a gradual ascent to the superior terrace (V) by three different levels\textsuperscript{759} through the use of five stairways, of which four (H\textsuperscript{760}, J\textsuperscript{761}, K\textsuperscript{762}, L\textsuperscript{763}) are placed one after the other, while the fifth (G\textsuperscript{764}) separately accessed terrace IV. This array of stairways, levels, and terraces could well be an indication of the significant influx of worshippers periodically visiting the sanctuary. A further three staircases (E\textsuperscript{765}, F\textsuperscript{1766}, F\textsuperscript{2767}) also provided direct entrance to the superior terrace (V)\textsuperscript{768}. This new terrace reveals more thorough work with the use of smaller material selected with higher accuracy, which

\textsuperscript{754} Ghirshman (1976, p. 61) suggested the possibility to propose the existence, during phase I, of a religious cult that would have followed the same process as on the superior terrace at Bard-e Neshandeh and attested in the Babylonian and Assyrian sources. During the ceremony, the worshippers most likely might have gone up on the northeast corner using the spacious stairway A, and then descending to leave the sanctuary by the minor stairways B (southeast corner) and C-D (south side). The ceremonies unfolded in all probability around a podium as at Bard-e Neshandeh (Ghirshman 1976, p. 50).

\textsuperscript{755} Ibid., p. 71; Plans III-IV; Pls. XLII, XLIII, XLIV, XLV.

\textsuperscript{756} Ibid., pp. 79-80; Martinez-Sève 2004.

\textsuperscript{757} According to Ghirshman (1976, p. 73) during the so-called époque séleucide of Masjed-e Soleyman, the sanctuary had a fundamental function in the politics of the Seleucid kings for the internal administration of Iran, in particular regarding the mountainous region of Elymais.

\textsuperscript{758} Ghirshman 1976, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{759} Ibid. There is a difference of around 5.30 m between lower ground level and the superior terrace.

\textsuperscript{760} Ibid, Plan V; Pl. LV; fig. 22. This one is made up of three steps around 18.35 m wide. Even with smaller steps than those on stairway A, it seems it would have been destined to receive large crowds.

\textsuperscript{761} Formed as stairway H with three steps, its dimensions of J were reduced (9.15 m). Interestingly, towards the top of stairway J, the doors of an underground chamber open surrounded by a corridor’ (1.75×2.70 m).

\textsuperscript{762} The stairway K is divided into two parts: the bottom has five steps 18.50 m wide and the higher part has two steps, 13.40 m for the first one and 12.40 m for the higher one.

\textsuperscript{763} This is 12.10 m wide and distributed over four steps.

\textsuperscript{764} The stairway G is made up of 14 steps set between a buttress (H) and the substructure wall of terrace III, having a lower part of four steps 9.90 m wide and a superior section of 10 steps 8.45 m wide.

\textsuperscript{765} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LV.5; fig. 30-31. The closest stairway to the mountain, it is made of four steps 5 m wide.

\textsuperscript{766} Ibid., Pl. LV.3; fig. 30-32. This is characterized by five steps 4.37 m wide.

\textsuperscript{767} Ibid., Pl. LV.4; fig. 32. According to Ghirshman (1976, p. 73), this is a later extension made of 14 steps 2.60 m wide.

\textsuperscript{768} Ghirshman proposed that ascent to the sanctuary would have been along the stairways H, J, K, and L, thus keeping the main access on the northeast corner (as occurred with stairway A of terrace I). At the same time, descent would have been made along the other four stairways (E, F\textsuperscript{1}, F\textsuperscript{2}, G), all on the north side, the area that for the French archaeologist would have been the Macedonian quarter (Ghirshman 1976, p. 73).
has assured a better conservation compared to the more ancient phase. Noteworthy, on terrace III, is a small building (*north-east construction*) which was found, including two rectangular rooms with different entries both posted on the north side and not directly connected to each other. They likely identified as a possible location for temple personnel of the same type as rooms nos. 7-8 in the lower terrace of Bard-e Neshandeh 769.

During this phase, the religious terrace had more than double its surface. On the west side, a low and long north-south wall 770, which flanks the western limit of the most ancient terrace (I), separated this latter from a new and broader extension. The new platform (V) was also slightly higher hosting two temple buildings with walls composed of irregular stone blocks and earth, and two other smaller buildings with secondary functions. On the southeastern corner stood the so-called *Grand Temple* that Ghirshman placed within the third structural phase of the sanctuary (*époque parthe*) 771. An older structure was subsequently unearthed beneath the initially visible surface of the temple, and tentatively dated to the Seleucid era (temple of Athena *Hippia*) 772. Approximately 30 m 773 northwest of the *Grand Temple* and connected to it by a paved path, there are the remains of a multi-room rectangular structure conventionally labelled as a *temple of Heracles*, basing on the finding of a Heracles statue strangling the Nemean lion. Given the absence of a proven link, which may indicate a cult of Heracles in this sanctuary or even that the sculpture belongs to it, a more generic approach with a designation as *Petit Temple* for the structure seems more appropriate.

Other structures discovered on terrace V included a further two-room *north-west construction*, whose use remains obscure due to the scarcity of items attributable to it, which were found here and on nearby stairway L on an axis with the portico of the *Grand Temple* 774.

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769 Ibid., p. 74.
770 Ibid., Pl. XLVI, XLVII. This wall has been defined as “symbolic” with the function of dividing the old terrace, along with the podium for Iranian fire worship, from the new area of worship used by the Macedonian community, in this way favouring the birth of Hellenistic-Parthian culture in the region (ibid., p. 76).
771 Ibid., p. 77.
772 The name *Hippeia* (Hippia) appeared to have its roots in the Mycenaean period and was always used in a context of cavalry and military power. It seems that from ancient times these functions were linked to Athena, who was often given the epithet, “of the Horses.” According to myth, Athena showed humanity how to tame horses, and she gave to Bellerophon – the conqueror of the Chimera – a golden bridle for his horse Pegasus (Burkert 1985, p. 221). Horses were a sign of nobility, an indicator of the cavalier class and their military capacity. *Athena Hippia* was probably the protecting goddess of this class. For this reason, statues of cavaliers were generally dedicated to this goddess and placed in their sanctuaries.
773 Ghirshman (1976, p. 90) reports the distance between the two temples as being 15 m, but the examination of the plan that he published seems to indicate a greater distance (*ibid.*, Plan III), data confirmed by my visit to the site in 2015.
774 Ghirshman (1976, p. 101) suggests a dating to the Seleucid era because of the existence of a head of the Egyptian deity Bes (*ibid.*, p. 101; Pl. CX.3; Pl. 68 GMIS 701) which is also well known from excavations at Susa.
About a dozen metres to the west of the latter, excavations revealed a small building – *southern construction*\(^\text{775}\) – with two rooms not connected to each other and with their entrances facing the side of the *Grand Temple*\(^\text{776}\).

At the time when Ardashir, founder of the Sasanid dynasty, seized control of Elymais in 224 AD, Masjed-e Soleyman represented one of the most important cult centres of the region\(^\text{777}\). According to monetary findings, the sanctuaries of Masjed-e Soleyman appears to have suffered destructive effects impacted by a period of religious intolerance during the reign of Shapur II (r. 309-379). This time did not cause the definitive cessation of the terrace, which remained in existence and underwent a further three new phases\(^\text{778}\). According to Ghirshman\(^\text{779}\), during the 1\(^{st}\) phase after its abandonment, a foundry was installed in the southern part of the *Petit Temple’s cella*. A tiled floor covered this area, while a low wall divided the *cella* into two halves with a small roughly-pierced door opening on the southern side. Its soil (ca. 50 cm above the level of the pavement) was littered with ashes and charcoal.

At any rate, this phase did not seem to have lasted long, and possibly stopped during the transformation undertaken in the western part of the terrace (2\(^{nd}\) phase), where it already leaned against the mountain. A new terrace VI (18×27 m) was then erected, which entirely covered the *Petit Temple*\(^\text{780}\). Its walls were composed of massive stones and fragments of columns, including three pieces of the Heracles statue (head, torso, and legs)\(^\text{781}\). Access was provided through a large door (1.15 m wide) on the northern side. The western area of the terrace presented a construction of which only the southern part of the rear remained, divided

\(^{775}\) Pl. XII.f.

\(^{776}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 118. It has been suggested by Ghirshman that the rooms of the “*southern construction*” were erected at different times: first, the smaller room (1.80×1.60 m) and then the larger (2.90×2.20 m), providing a Parthian date based on the relics found. Ghirshman offered this picture even if he also assumed that one of these spaces, identified as a possible habitation for temple guards, may have existed since the Seleucid era.

\(^{777}\) Ibid., p. 133. The political transition under the control of the Sasanid authority (224-651 AD) did not seem to have affected, at least at the beginning, the performance of the local religious practices, which included the concomitant cult of four Mazdean deities, i.e. Ahuramazda (podium), Anahita and Mithra (*Grand Temple*), and Heracles (temple). Referring to the inscriptions of Antiochus I of Commagene which presented a Greco-Iranian dynastic cult with gods who bore Greek and Iranian names, Ghirshman debatably tried to connect these four Iranian deities (Ahuramazda, Anahita, Mithra and Verethragna/Heracles) to the four aspect of Zurvan, the tetramorphic god whose cult Ghirshman confidently considered to be existing prior to the establishment of the Achaemenid empire (*ibid.*, pp. 133-134). In reality, although the details of the origin and development of Zurvanism remain debated (for a summary of the opposing opinions, see de Jong 2014), it is generally accepted that Zurvanism was a “hypothetical” religious movement in the history of Zoroastrianism which is well attested in Greek, Syriac, Armenian and Arabic sources but surprisingly absent in any Zoroastrian texts found so far (de Jong 2014).


\(^{779}\) Ibid.

\(^{780}\) Ibid., plans III-IV, IX.

\(^{781}\) Ibid., p. 136; Pl. LXX.
into two parts, with an access door opening on the south wall and a second one on the terrace\textsuperscript{782}. The wall \textit{apparatus} (high 0.82-1.28 m) was unrefined, the room partially cut into the mountain, and the rear wall directly covered with unworked stone slabs, placed and glued against the slope of the hill. The remains of four columns, which were constituted from reusing material supplied by the Grand Temple, were also found aligned along the primitive room of the construction\textsuperscript{783}. Regarding the podium instead and the Grand Temple, its fate is still obscure but what appears certain is that they were abandoned without undergoing any destructive actions.

The third (and last) phase described the existence of the sanctuary after the hostile activity led by Shapur II on the territory. As a replacement for the small columned structure of terrace VI, new construction was established. It was the first structure to be cleaned out and analyzed on the platform by the French mission, which interpreted it as a sanctuary (western sanctuary)\textsuperscript{784}.

### 6.2.3 Monumental Architecture

When Ghirshman began working at the Grand Temple – aiming to discover any prior constructions under the visible temple of the Arsacid period – he first had to enter into an agreement with the Archaeological Service of Iran, which crucially limited the aspect of the mission. This agreement permitted excavations but it did not allow walls to be touched and it did not authorize any work that could have compromised the state of the monument\textsuperscript{785}.

The sanctuary of Masjed-e Soleyman is dominated by two principal edifices built on stone foundations and delineated in rectangular environments: the major Grand Temple and the modest Petit Temple tentatively associate to Heracles. According to Ghirshman, the visible structures of the Grand Temple concealed under its ground-level (Parthian) the remains of an “anterior” temple attributed to Athena Hippia\textsuperscript{786}, whose planimetry would not have been much different from the Parthian one (phase II). Few permitted surveys showed how the two construction phases (Seleucid and Parthian) of the walls were overlapped in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{782} \textit{Ibid.}, plan IX, rooms nos. 3-4; Pls. XLV, XLVI, XLVII, XLVIII, XLVIX, LVIII.
\item \textsuperscript{783} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. LVIII. Ghirshman considered the building of this building modest assembled and the reusing of material from the Grand Temple inadequately executed, that prompted him to assume the laborious realization of terrace VI as an attempt to eliminate the Petit Temple and its statuary in the logic of religious intolerance which pervaded that historical period.
\item \textsuperscript{784} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 138.
\item \textsuperscript{785} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 77.
\item \textsuperscript{786} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 80.
\end{itemize}

\textit{The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)}
some areas. To be more precise, the surveys on the north corridor and on the southwestern section of the cella (no. 4), which passed through three different stratigraphic layers reaching a depth of around three m, were the more informative. The survey attained an accumulation of stones, which were dispersed in a bed of other pebbles to level the ground, derived from the demolition of a wall. It was possible to distinguish the walls of the most ancient parts, then covered with a layer of loose earth, and above which the two overlaid sections of the rear wall construction were raised. Remarkably, among that load of stones, a considerable number of votive objects from the “anterior temple” were unearthed in a quite clear stratigraphic context.

More systematic studies and excavations are needed to cast new light on the most ancient phases of the Grand Temple and more generally the entire complex, given that the last investigations in situ were conducted by the French team in the 1960s.

After the archaic phase (Seleucid), and during the Parthian period, Ghirshman recognized four successive structural phases (I, II, IIIa, and IIIb) of the Grand Temple, among which phase IIIa was regarded as the most complete in plan, despite the fact that a major proportion of the sanctuary was devastated by the digging of graves for a modern cemetery.

In phase I a line of stones evoked evidence of an initial wall structure even though the limited evidence left makes it impossible to define an overall plan, even only in part. At this stage, the Grand Temple seems to be constituted by a cella (no. 4) and antecella (no. 6) with the same plan of the Petit Temple and the western sanctuary. It suggests that the temple of Athena Hippia during this phase could have had a planimetry similar to other Hellenistic shrines in Near East and central Asia, especially in Mesopotamia (e.g., Anu-Antum temple and Irigal temple at Uruk).

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787 Ibid., Plan VII; Pl. LXIX.2.
788 Ibid.; Pl. LXXVII.1-2.
789 Ibid., p. 77.
790 Ibid., Pl. XIII.
791 Pl. XIV.1. The main problem for Ghirshman was that this cemetery covered most of the southern area of the terrace. He defined this obstacle as almost insurmountable, but it was overcome after a plea was made to the Shah. The Shiite religion in Iran permitted relocation of graves older than 30 years, and the Shah granted the request because he did not want to limit archaeological work that could bring prestige to all of Iran (Ghirshman 1969, p. 484).
792 Ibid. 1976, Plan IV and VII.
793 Ibid., Pl LXXVII.1-2.
794 Ibid., p. 103.
795 For planimetric comparisons, see Downey 1988; Shenkar 2011; Canepa 2015a; Salaris 2017.
6. Religious Architectures

The wall partitions during phase II were approximately the same as those in phase IIIa, except for room no. 7, with a surface apparently smaller compared to the plan of following phases, creating uncertainties in the definition of a plausible planimetry for the temple. As a result of some surveys (marked with an “S” on the plan), a certain number of walls and corners were identified, and tentatively combined to provide a consolidated plan despite knowing that other fractures could be interlayered between the partially revealed walls.\(^{996}\)

Phase IIIa\(^{997}\) is considered the most complex and articulated planimetry, despite the depredations, which has undergone because of graves dug across its entire surface\(^{998}\). The roughly-squared perimeter (31×33.08 m) has a corridor of varying width\(^{999}\) running along all four sides isolating the central block of the sanctuary from the outer wall. Four entrances lead into this exterior corridor: from the eastern corner, preceded by three steps (likely the main entry); on the northern corner another entrance on the same principal façade (much disturbed by the digging of graves); from the southeast corridor; and practically in line with the latter; and a fourth entrance on the northwest side. The northeast façade is especially elaborate. Ghirshman envisioned a portico (no. 14) of 34.52 m between the two doors of the main northeast wall, completely paved and having three lines of columns\(^{800}\) placed on bases, each composed of a thick torus then a scotia separated from another much thinner one. These were built on squared plinths (50.53 cm) that were still in place – as was the case at Bard-e Neshandeh – at the time of the French excavations. The principal entrance, located near the northeast corner, had a protruding threshold and a line of three steps (benches\(^{3}\)) that flanked the entire northeast external façade and framed the main door. In the northwest corner of this façade, there was a low podium (4.90×3.75 m) which was accessed by three steps on the east side. A second door on the north façade led from the podium into the isolating corridor. From the main door, through corridor no. 13, the way ahead was via a long narrow vestibule (no.

\(^{996}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 105.

\(^{997}\) Ibid., Plans III, IV, VII; fig. 36.

\(^{998}\) Ibid., Pl. XLIII, XLIV, XLV, XLVI.

\(^{999}\) The corridors on the NW (1-2), and NE (5-13) were larger, respectively 3.05 m and 2.40 m and built with a bench that ran along their interior walls. Corridors on the SW (no. 16) of 1.45 m and SE (no. 15) of 1.25 m were instead of smaller dimensions, and perhaps because of space restrictions and the need for ease of access they were not built with benches. All of this brought Ghirshman (1976, p. 105) to believe that the difference in dimensions indicated a difference in importance, supported by the fact that the NW and NE corridors framed the most important sectors of the temple, the facade with the main entrance and the most sacred area with its cela (no. 4) and antecella (no. 6).

\(^{800}\) The 21 columns were arranged in rows of eight, seven and six columns, as counted from outside moving inwards.
12) of 10.20×3.10 m and passing through a door in line with the other two\(^{801}\), which also provided access to a large court no. 11 (14.35×12.80 m) surrounded on all four sides by narrow benches\(^{802}\). The cella-antecella unit was on the western side of the court, occupying the breadth of the vestibule and the court. Access came through a set of two identical doors (1.80 m) placed on the same axis in the northwest wall of the court and opening into antecella no. 6 (16.92×4.28 m) and then cella no. 4 (15.80×2.58 m)\(^{903}\). The temple was thus characterized by a Mesopotamian bent-axis approach\(^{804}\). Under the paving of the antecella, in the northeast corner, excavators found a large water jar, and presumably a drain from outside the sanctuary which channelled water into it\(^{805}\). Two altars of different sizes (respectively: 2×1.10 m; and 1.40×0.90 m) rested against the rear wall of the cella in a direct line with the doors (Pl. XIII.b-d), while between the court and the isolating corridor (no. 16) on the south side, there was a long room of 13.68×4.05 m (no. 10), which could be entered only via the court (no. 11) through two doors of 1.70 m width\(^{806}\). Room no. 10 covered the length of the entire southwest side of the court (no. 11) and through a large door (2.20 m)\(^{807}\) communicated with room no. 9, which was equal in length to the two southwest short sides of cella and antecella. The intended purpose of these two elongated environments (nos. 9 and 10) is still not clear, but they could be considered another cella-antecella sacred space, or perhaps as sacristies\(^{808}\). At the north (northwest) corner of the temple, a rectangular podium (4.90×3.75 m; elevated 0.70 m) was reached by three steps, while a door opened into corridor no. 5. Interestingly, a drain pipe was present in the external north-western wall near the north corner.

In the next construction stage (phase IIIb)\(^{809}\), some structural adjustments appeared to have been made, such as the removal of almost all the benches of court no. 11 and corridors (nos. 1, 2, 5, 13), likely due to the elevation of the ground, or the installation of two doors on the short sides of the antecella no. 6, one opening into corridor no. 5 and the other communicating with room no. 9. Additionally, vestibule no. 12 accommodated a small socle (4.20×2 m) on the northeast rear wall, and the northern short-side wall of the cella no. 4 was

\(^{801}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl LXIV.1-2.
\(^{802}\) In this area, the modern tombs were numerous, and according to Ghirshman (1976, p. 106), cover stones for court no.11 were cleared to make way for them.
\(^{803}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXVI.1-2-5.
\(^{804}\) Salaris 2017, p. 164.
\(^{805}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXV.2-4.
\(^{806}\) Ibíd., Pl. LXIV.3-4.
\(^{807}\) Ibíd., Pl. LXVIII.4.
\(^{808}\) Ibíd., p 107.
\(^{809}\) Ibíd., fig. 37.
doubled in thickness. According to Ghirshman, towards the end of the temple's existence, the wall structures between court no. 11 and chamber no. 10, and those between the latter and room no. 9 could have been removed to create a large L-shaped court. Finally, the stone slabs of the *anteceilla* and *cella* were covered with new paving, separated by a 15-cm layer of earth. 

Contrary to the area where the main temple was erected, on its upper part the terrace was not affected by the cemetery’s invasiveness. Moving to the northwestern flank a modest sanctuary (possibly consecrated to Heracles) stood as a simplified version of the *Grand Temple*.

The rectangular-in-plan *Petit Temple* (17.08×8.03 m), which roughly faced east, consisted in a long *anteceilla* (no. 5) measuring 13.10×3.40 m, a *cella* (no. 6) of 17.05×2.50 m and an additional room (no. 13) that opened to the outside (Pl. XIV.2). This last room (perhaps a sacristy) was situated between the *anteceilla* and the northern wall of the temple, thus reducing the length of the *anteceilla*. As in the *Grand Temple*, access to the *anteceilla* involved two doors (respectively of 1.65 m and 1 m). Three steps, with the top level marked by some graffiti, were identified as low benches, which were made of large stone slabs running along the external wall of the *anteceilla*. A single entrance – in line with the larger one that opened into the *anteceilla* – provided access in its turn into the *cella*. Two bases, probably for statues, also flanked this door. The small room no. 13 (3.65×3.3 m) – north of the *cella* – may have been used as a sacristy, and it had the particularity of opening to the outside only on the southeast side like the *anteceilla* (similar to environment no. 4 at Bard-e Neshandeh). As reported by Ghirshman, the northwest wall of the *cella* seemed to have been

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810 Ibid., p. 108.
811 Ibid., Pl. LXVII.1-2. The paving of room no. 10 in front of the two doors was covered by a layer of gypsum (gesso), typically used in the Sasanid period.
812 The graves began from the southern corner (Ghirshman 1976, p. 119).
813 Ghirshman 1976, p. 90.
814 Ghirshman (1976, p. 91) compared these stone slabs with those present within the terraced rooms (*salles aux gradins*) at Dura-Europos in Syria, and as such these would have included benches for people attending sacred rites. Ghirshman (1976, p. 91) further suggested a similarity between these steps/seats and those present at the temple of Ai Khanoum in Afghanistan, where, however, the steps constitute the base of the temple, undermining the hypothesis that they could have been used as benches by spectators (Downey 1988, p. 132). The French archaeologist speculated that the steps of the Temple of Heracles might have been an addition in the Parthian era and so would not have been present in the original phase (Ghirshman 1976, p. 189). In reality, these stone blocks – likely used as benches for observers of the cult – are also visible not just within the court of the *Grand Temple*, but also in the temple structures at Bard-e Neshandeh and Dilberjin (northern Afghanistan). In these cases, they may likely be identified as a structural feature for distinguishing waiting spaces like courts and *antecellae* from the cult chamber (cf. Salaris 2017, p. 161).
adjacent to an older construction (no. 9) which was 17.10 m long and 2.95 m wide\textsuperscript{815}. In a subsequent phase, the temple had a further six rooms added, reasonably because of the major construction that became structurally inadequate to hold the increasing number of worshippers or votive statues\textsuperscript{816}. Two sets of two communicating rooms (nos. 14-15 and 16-17) were then located on the northeast side of the temple, where the section was composed of one short side of the \textit{cella} and one of room no. 13, and additional two chambers (nos. 12 and 18) which were adjoined at the southern corner of the \textit{antecella} (no. 5).

The dating for these changes is not known, but what appears evident is that the \textit{Petit Temple} of Masjed-e Soleyman was repeatedly modified during its prolonged existence. These structural adaptations were probably not caused by a protracted destructive action – as perhaps occurred in the \textit{Grand Temple} – but rather involved diverse restorations, which caused it to disappear in the Sasanid era under terrace VI, replaced by the more modest \textit{western sanctuary} characterised by an innovative vaulted roof\textsuperscript{817}.

### 6.2.4 Pottery and Associated Artefacts

Items found at Masjed-e Soleyman were quite numerous and were amassed primarily in and around the two temples. As was previously the case for Bard-e Neshandeh, the classification is provided for the most significant of them by typologies giving a general picture of the material evidence from the site.

#### 6.2.4.1 Pottery and Terracotta Objects (Pl. XV)

There is no doubt that objects considered as votive offerings and found along the podium or among the various rooms of the temples are among the most abundant and varied. Supposedly, most of this material was left by worshippers during their pilgrimages to the sanctuary.

As already noted for Bard-e Neshandeh, the unpainted and unglazed “common” ceramic typical of the first three centuries BC is composed of a unique mixture which makes the clay particularly brittle. About pots, it is the largest presence of vases for \textit{unguentaria}\textsuperscript{818}, distinctive of the Hellenistic establishments in Europe, Asia and Africa for the conservation of

\textsuperscript{815} Ghirshman 1976, p. 90-91; Pl. LXII.1-2, 5. As suggested by the finding of red earthenware of the same type found at Susa from the same period, this construction could be traced back to the Persian epoch, when the temple was supposed to rest against the hill.

\textsuperscript{816} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 119.

\textsuperscript{817} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 138-139; Pl. LVIII.1-2-3.

\textsuperscript{818} Pl. XV.1. More example in Ghirshman 1976, Pls. CXIX.5, 7; Pl. CXXI.8; Pl. 53 GMIS 446, 510, 518, 570.
perfume and fragrance oil starting from the 4th century BC, which could suggest a more explicit Greek attendance at the sanctuary (especially, the temple of Athena *Hippia*)\(^{819}\). The findings at Masjed-e Soleyman represent the easternmost production of these vessels and may be associated with the concomitant development in Mesopotamia of the same models during the 3rd-2nd century BC. Noteworthy, it is also the incense burner or basis whose shape is very similar to some models discovered at Seleucia-on-the-Tigris\(^{820}\) and Tell Halaf\(^{821}\).

While the “painted” pottery at Masjed-e Soleyman is only represented by a fragment (horse protome) of a theriomorphic jar (*rhyton*)\(^{822}\), which may be referred to the Achaemenid period, the “glazed” ceramic is quite abundant. The fact that they are made by a distinct clay composition typical of the area along the Zagros/Bakhtiari mountains implies the existence of local ateliers. In this regard, pyriform and elongated vessels are a unicum from the shrine of Masjed-e Soleyman\(^{823}\). Engraved on the body and based on a disk-like foot, these particular specimens are unknown in Susiana and Mesopotamia and likely held a specific function in the mountainous Elymais. As at Bard-e Neshandeh, several two-handle recipients of modest dimensions (10-15 cm) with a sphere- or pear-shaped body were also discovered at Masjed-e Soleyman\(^{824}\) similar to Syro-Mesopotamian examples during the Parthian period\(^{825}\). Particularly interesting is an amphora-like with two handle\(^{826}\)’s analogous to the ones found at Uruk as an inheritance of the Achaemenid period\(^{827}\). Finally, both the “angulated” and “rounded” shoulder-neck junction pilgrim’s flasks were unearthed during the French excavations\(^{828}\).

Concerning the finding of terracotta artefacts at Masjed-e Soleyman, around sixty figurines are attributed to this category\(^{829}\) and distributed into three main groups (naked females, cavaliers, and animals). They came almost exclusively from the stratigraphic context

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\(^{819}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 87.

\(^{820}\) Debevoise 1934, p. 113, no. 342.

\(^{821}\) Oppenheim 1962, p. 106, no. 96; pl. 73.

\(^{822}\) Pl. XV.f-g.

\(^{823}\) Pl. XV.e.

\(^{824}\) BN: Pl. VI.a.3. See Ghirshman 1976, Pls. CXX; CXXI.1-6; CXXII.6-8.

\(^{825}\) Haerinck 1983, p. 33, footnote 78 (bibliography).

\(^{826}\) Pl. XV.h.

\(^{827}\) Woolley 1962, Pl. 57 no. 218; Strommenger 1967, Pl. 27.13-15.

\(^{828}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pls. CXIX.1, 3, 9; CXXXIII.1.

\(^{829}\) Pl. XV.b-d. For a thorough study of the terracotta figurines at Masjed-e Soleyman, see Martinez-Sève 2004.
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relating to the “temple antérieur”\textsuperscript{830}, which provided essential elements for dating. The statuettes of Masjed-Soleyman are a relatively homogeneous collection comparable, both for iconographical and technical characteristics, to figurines produced in Susa and known in other regional centres (e.g., Kalgeh\textsuperscript{831}, Failaka\textsuperscript{832}, Uruk\textsuperscript{833}, Seleucia-on-the-Tigris\textsuperscript{834}) during the Hellenistic era. They are mostly manufactured with local clay, and identifiable by colour and composition, while other specimens produced with a diverse mixture are similar to the ones from Susa\textsuperscript{835}. There are horsemen wearing the \textit{kausia} headgear\textsuperscript{836}, some of which are made up of a single element\textsuperscript{837} while others are composed with one nude female figure between two horses’ heads\textsuperscript{838}. These constitute the most significant assemblage of material from the same deposit. Assuredly, the equestrians had a significant connection with the honorary deity of the “anterior” temple for whom they represented a distinctive offering\textsuperscript{839}. The composition of some statuettes with two-headed horses suggested Ghirshman\textsuperscript{840} to identify the horsemen as \textit{amphippoi}, who Diodorus reported within the army of Antigonus the One-Eyed (\textit{ca}. 382-301 BC)\textsuperscript{841} and the female figurine placed between the two heads of horses seems to indicate Athena \textit{Hippia} (their patroness deity). However, her nakedness may propose a different

\textsuperscript{830} Excluded: seven cavaliers with \textit{kausia} found in an imprecise location, nine in the \textit{Grand Temple}, five on the terrace and surroundings, and one near Heracles’ temple (Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 181).

\textsuperscript{831} Ghirshman 1976, p. 72.

\textsuperscript{832} Mathiesen 1982, pp. 20-21, nos. 25-39.

\textsuperscript{833} Ziegler 1962, nos. 133, 902; Pl. 41.524 (only heads).

\textsuperscript{834} Van Ingen 1939, no. 429.d; 143; Pl. XXX.214. As pointed out by Martinez-Sève, the horses seem different and the figurines only inspired by the statuette found at Masjed-e Soleyman and Susa (Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 192).

\textsuperscript{835} Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197. See also Haerinck (1983, pp. 19, 28) when he stresses how the dough of the Masjed-e Soleyman’ vases was more friable than the one from the vases from Susa.

\textsuperscript{836} “...a woollen hat resembling the pakol worn today by Afghans and Pakistanis from the northwestern part of Pakistan (Vogelsang 2006 ), originally introduced into Greece in the wake of Alexander’s Central Asian conquests (Kingsley 1981, 1991)” (Potts 2016, pp. 366-367).

\textsuperscript{837} Pl. XV.d. More specimens in Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CXII.2-3; CXIII.1-2, 6.

\textsuperscript{838} Pl. XV.b-c.

\textsuperscript{839} Due to the fact that these statuettes wore a \textit{kausia}, Ghirshman interpreted them as Greco-Macedonian soldiers who established a garrison a Masjed-e Soleyman in order to monitor the important trade route which passed through the region and linked Susa with Esfahan (Ghirshman 1976, pp. 1-72, 179-190), and to have easy access to the Karun river. After all, a similar situation with the installation of a Greek military outpost was present at the nearby site of Kalgeh, also known as Kal Gah (\textit{ibid}. p. 80) , \textit{ca}. 70 km to the southeast, half way between Rom Hormoz and Izeh-Malamir.

\textsuperscript{840} Ghirshman 1976, p. 79; contra Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 46, footnote 68. \textit{Amphippoi} (\textit{ἀμφιπποὶ}), i.e., two-horse cavalry, equestrians provided with a remount. They were archers who changed horses when their first mounts tired. They probably did not risk taking two horses side by side into battle, but would have likely taken them together when marching to battle. The \textit{amphippoi} would have ridden one horse during their advance, then changed to the fresher horse for the battle, and if necessary changed back to the first horse to continue in combat.

\textsuperscript{841} Diod. Sic. XIX.29.2, “ἔτι πάσι δὲ τούς τε ἀμφίππους ὀνομαζομένους” (and in addition to all these who are called the \textbf{two-horse men}).
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interpretation\(^{842}\). In addition, the presence amongst the terracotta statuettes of Masjed-e Soleyman of a naked female figurine with two ankle bracelets\(^{843}\) is certainly significant, since it recalls more ancient models from Susa from the 14\(^{th}\)-13\(^{th}\) centuries BC\(^{844}\). The votive offering of archaic figurines certainly provided the sanctuary of a particularly venerable nature.\(^{845}\)

6.2.4.2 Sculpture Material (Pl. XVI)

Absent in the first phase (i.e., époque perse), the only findings for the époque séleucide were discovered within the architectural structure beneath the Grand Temple, in the Athena Hippia temple. Among those, the most significant sculpted object is a white-alabaster female head in the round, perhaps of an aristocrat\(^{846}\), which seems to be a piece of a small statue as indicated by a tenon in her neck. Her marked Achaemenid appearance (cf. the Persian lapis-lazuli head from Persepolis)\(^{847}\) may be considered a terminus post quem in the construction process dating back to the 4\(^{th}\)-3\(^{rd}\) century BC.

It is instead during the époque parthe, in particular 1\(^{st}\)-2\(^{nd}\)-century AD, that most of the sculpture material of Masjed-e Soleyman emerged. In the Grand Temple, some of the sculptural components included two male heads in the rounds. The first\(^{848}\), made of local stone with some traces of orange colour, is characterized by a curly hair, big eyes, beard and moustache, and seems to represent a middle-aged man; the second one\(^{849}\) instead, shows a smooth-faced young man with the more detailed curly hair possibly associated with the art of Gandhara\(^{850}\). Other sculptural findings are a mutilated figure\(^{851}\), and in particular the lower part of a frontally standing figure preserved from the waist. As at Bard-e Neshandeh\(^{852}\), the

\(^{842}\) An entirely nude representation of Pallas Athena is quite misguided, as an imagery far removed from the Classical iconography of the virgin goddess accompanied by her chaste beauty. It would be more reasonable to identify the naked goddess in relation with Nanaia who symbolized the essential concept of fecundity. Besides, Nanaia’s representation through small nude figuirines and statuettes used in a cult context was very common at Susa during the Hellenistic age (Martinez-Sève 2008, pp. 365-366).

\(^{843}\) Pl. XV.i.

\(^{844}\) Curtis 1989, p. 15, fig. 14.

\(^{845}\) Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 196.

\(^{846}\) Pl. XVI.e.

\(^{847}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXIII.3.

\(^{848}\) Ibid., Pl. LXXX.1-3.

\(^{849}\) Ibid., Pl. LXXX.4-5.

\(^{850}\) Ingholt 1954, fig. 7.

\(^{851}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl LXXXIV.1-2.

\(^{852}\) Ibid., Pl XXV.
personage is dressed in a tunic richly decorated with lozenges and wide trouser on the model of the statues from Hatra (late 2nd century AD). Significantly, the left hand is at a rolled-up cloak on the left side, while it is holding an unspecified oval object; on the right hip is a dagger. This combination of elements (rolled-up cloak and dagger) casts doubt regarding the association between rolled-up cloak and clerical personage, at least at the end of the 2nd century AD. A further figure wearing a similar decorated tunic, trouser, and same footwear, with a dagger on the right hip is represented with an oval tiara and a torque, which on comparison with numismatic imagery confidently identifies the male figure as a local ruler of the 2nd century AD.

In 1920, Dr. M.Y. Young interpreted a sculptural stone slab, dated to late 2nd - early 3rd century AD, as Heracles, it might have been considered the first sculptural attestation of the Greek hero at Masjed-e Soleyman. In reality, upon a more thorough analysis of this sculpted element, the presence of wings on the ankles, a bag (perhaps with coins), and a staff-like object were revealed, is prompting the interpretation as being more accurately that of Hermes, or his local counterpart. This Hermes-like relief is represented entirely nude wearing a cloak draped over his shoulder and having a diadem around his head analogous to the local Heracles-shaped depictions at Tang-e Botan.

There is, however, a nude statue of standing male personage in the act of strangling a lion, which is the more likely reference to Heracles. In motif if not in style, the scene seems to reproduce the vestiges of Greco-Roman influence. The statue is composed of three distinct parts (head, torso, and legs) and was found by the French mission at the edge of terrace VI, assumably utilized as structural reinforcements. Measured in its entirety, the body is 2.40 m tall, including the base, and was carved in two different techniques: the above section was sculpted in the round, while the lower component in bas-relief. The quite completely flat rear side of the statue may suggest a placement against a wall at the entrance to the sanctuary as a facade element, however, the richly-defined head on all sides seems to clash with this hypothesis. The mutilated head allows recognition of some details as the presence of a diadem.
encircling short curly hair, a thick beard with moustache, and holes in the earlobes, indicating the use of earrings (symbol of regality or at least high-rank). As for the rest of the statue, the hero’s chest is grasped by the front paws of the Persian lion in a position that is quite unusual in classical iconography.

Among the list of objects and sculptural fragments provided by Ghirshman and tentatively associated with the worship of Heracles, only a modest amount is legitimated to be part of that cult. Among those, there are two bas-reliefs: one showing the “presumed” hero feasting semi-reclined on a kline with his right arm raised and holding a cup in his left hand; and the second represented by a fragment carving indicating the lower half of a naked male figure (similar to the imagery of Tang-e Botan) perhaps with a club along the left side (TS:BW at Tang-e Sarvak). A mutilated bas-relief with armour and cloak has also been associated with this semi-god due to analogies with the armour of the Heracles’ statue at Dura Europos. True or not, indeed the local craftsmen were not unfamiliar with the sculptural art of Hatra, Palmyra and Dura Europos.

Other discoveries include two very distinct heads, possibly a royal couple, found in the courtyard of the sanctuary as part of an unrecovered bas-relief. The king, in a forward position, wears a high oval tiara wrapped in two diadems (typical of Orodes II’s numismatic imagery), and marked by two symbols (one confidently indicating an anchor) which are unusually separated by a vertical bar. As regards the female personage, her hair style is of greater interest as it recalls more the Gandhara art trait rather than “la mode occidentale” as suggested by Ghirshman. Noteworthy, then, are two bas-reliefs of male figures – one of them found in the “western sanctuary” – characterized by a curly tripartite hairdo, beard

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862 As the earrings on male figures were extraneous to Greek culture, their presence on the Heracles could help to place the statues in the Arsacid period (ibid., p. 93).
863 Pl. XVI.f.
864 This figure immediately recalls the Heracles of Bisotun discovered by Ali Hakemi (1958) during road construction in the late 1950s, which carries a Greek inscription giving the date of 148 BC. A similar posture is also present in various Elymaean rock carvings (Chapter 7).
865 See §7.5.2.1.
866 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXXVI.2.
867 Pl. XVI.g.
868 Ghirshman 1976, p. 121.
869 Pl. XVI.j. For numismatic comparanda, see Chapter 9. The symbolism of the tiara may tentatively be interpreted as the unification of temporal and religious power in one figure, supposing that the Elymaean kings were also chief priests with the double diadem to simultaneously indicate secular and religious authority. More accurately on the tiara, see von Gall 1980.
870 Pl. XVI.k.
872 Ibid., Pl. LXXIX.3.
and moustache, represented with luxurious robes and cornucopias, quite similar to discoveries at Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{873}. Other fragments of statues were found within the Petit Temple in various rooms (nos. 13, 14-15), along with a large number of bas-reliefs and overall votive offering, which could imply great veneration for this shrine. A stone base with the hollowed shape of two feet\textsuperscript{874}, found in a new tomb of the cemetery, may also suggest the presence of a cult statue in bronze on the terrace.

Finally, as regards the architectural elements, various capitals of columns were attributed to the portico of the Grand Temple even if none of those was found \textit{in situ}. The first\textsuperscript{875} was discovered near the entrance to the temple and appears to reflect Achaemenid tradition since it consists of two addorsed protomes of animals with legs ending in hooves analogous to Persian examples. Due to the heads being missing, it is not very clear if the two protomes may be interpreted as sphinxes\textsuperscript{876} or as bulls similar to the capital from Persepolis, which was used to symbolized royal power\textsuperscript{877}. Although found in the Petit Temple, another capital\textsuperscript{878}, severely damaged, may be attributed to the Grand Temple since this latter was the only one provided of a colonnade\textsuperscript{879}. The subject of the capital is a feminine figure depicted on three faces with her hair tied with a band and a rich collier, the fourth face being left smooth perhaps because this side was placed against a wall, as in the case of the capital at Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{880}. The feminine image, which seems to hold a vase (possibly a rhyton) in her arms, is tentatively interpreted by Ghirshman as representing Anahita, to whom the archaeologist believes the temple was dedicated in the Parthian era\textsuperscript{881}. A third capital\textsuperscript{882} emerged further away in the “western sanctuary,” and carried a classic western decoration of acanthus leaves between two lyre volutes on each face. If the attribution of all three capitals to the “Grand Temple” is correct, this would be a case of a remarkably eclectic construction.

\textsuperscript{873} Pl. XVI.a.
\textsuperscript{874} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXXIX.2.
\textsuperscript{875} Pl. XVI.i.
\textsuperscript{876} Ghirshman 1976, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{877} Root 2002, p. 197.
\textsuperscript{878} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XC.2.
\textsuperscript{879} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 111.
\textsuperscript{880} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. XXXV.2-3.
\textsuperscript{881} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 112.
\textsuperscript{882} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. XCIII.5.
6.2.4.3 Metalworks and Minor Goods (Pl. XVII)

As with Bard-e Neshandeh, the goods associated to the *époque perse* are scarce. Excluding, therefore, a significant amount of material (e.g., jewellery and small artefacts in metal) correlated to the later periods (i.e., Seleucid, Parthian and Sasanid)\(^883\), there are only three objects found in the survey opened in the south-west section of the podium which may refer to an Achaemenid period. Amongst these are a scaraboid-shaped cachet in sapphirine chalcedony on which the engraved subject represents a male figure armed with a sword (possibly an *akinakes*)\(^884\), who takes a winged animal by the antlers\(^885\). A member of the *Consortium of Iranian Oil* also fortuitously discovered a second scaraboid-shaped object\(^886\), which carries the name of Thutmose III (*Men-kheper-re*) engraved on it\(^887\). This small votive cachet was presumably a sort of beneficial amulet of non-Egyptian (possibly local) craftsmanship, which, together with the discoveries of items in the shape of the Egyptian deity Bes found at Susa, and Masjed-e Soleyman, indicate the global trait characteristic of Persian art, in this case strongly influenced by Egyptian traditions. The third object is a cylinder in hematite\(^888\). Also of note is a small silver plaquette\(^889\) comparable to the one found near the podium at Bard-e Neshandeh\(^890\), even though the frontality of the figure engraved on it makes it difficult to date the object to the Achaemenid period.

The inventory of artefacts from the Seleuco-Parthian period is mostly composed of bronze objects with some rare exceptions in gold, silver or iron. Personal ornaments were found in large quantities all at the site indicating that both the *Grand Temple*\(^891\) and the *Petit

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\(^883\) *Ibid.*, Pl. 74, 75, 79, 80, 81, 82.

\(^884\) The *akinakes* (ἀκινάκες) is a short sword typically of 35-40 cm in length and double-edged (Tarassuk *et al.* 1982, p. 17), considered “Persian” by Herodotus (VII.54) but more likely originated in Central Asia (Barnett 1957, p. 95; Brentjes 1993, p. 17). See Potts 2014, pp. 70-71.

\(^885\) Pl. XVII.c. The engraved scene is compared by Ghirshman (1976, p. 67) with a similar stamp of pre-Achaemenid dating found at Qasr-e Abu Nasr near the modern city of Shiraz (Harper 1973, p. 40, footnote 8; Pl. IV.8) and with the subject of the Achaemenid bullae at Daskyleion, northwest of the modern Ergili in Turkey (Akurgal 1961, figs. 131-132; see also Kaptan 2003). I have found a similar scene in the seals of the *Fortification Archive* at Persepolis (*PFS* 7, in Garrison and Root 2001; see also Finn 2011, p. 239, fig. 4).


\(^887\) Pl. XVII.a. Although Thutmose III reigned in mid-2nd millennium BC, his deified cult is being also prolonged in the following eras.

\(^888\) Pl. XVII.b. Ghirshman considered this object to be similar to the cylinder used for sealing the treaty between Assarhaddon (king of Assyria, *ca.* 680-669 BC) and the Medes, and to an analogous example engraved with the name of Shamshi-Adad around 1,800 BC (Mallowan 1966, p. 246, fig. 6).

\(^889\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. 79 GMS 618.

\(^890\) *Ibid.*, Pl. 1 GBN 33.

\(^891\) Bronze (*Ibid* 1976, Pl. 55 GMIS 281.b-c), silver (*Ibid.*, Pl. 55 GMIS 281.a) and golden (*Ibid.*, Pl. XCV.1-2; pl. 39 GMIS 327) earrings; bracelets in bronze and iron (*Ibid.*, Pl. CIII.2; Pl. 40 GMIS 339,a-b-c; Pl. 54); bronze rings (*Ibid.*, Pl. CIII.1); bronze pendants including a lion-shaped head (*Ibid.*, Pl. 40 GMIS 333).

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Temple\textsuperscript{892} were frequently visited by women, which indirectly confirms the cult of a deity particularly attractive for female worshippers (e.g., Athena-like goddess\textsuperscript{893}). Among this assemblage, the discovery in the north-west construction of a pendant representing a head of Bes has a certain relevance, since the Egyptian half-lioness goddess whose other depictions have been discovered at Susa and in the “anterior temple”, may be dated back to the Persian period\textsuperscript{894}. As well as the scarab of Thutmose III, these objects, which were part of a local household religion, represented ex-voto offerings given to a particular god/goddess to fulfil a vow or in gratitude or devotion.

Although during this period external artistic inputs (Hellenistic overall) influenced the native metal craftsmanship, the bronze production was revised to satisfy the local needs. Western influence is most visible in a significant number of objects correlated to the religious cult. In this regard, references to Athena as the dedicatee of the “anterior temple” were found in a small bronze plaque of a female bust with aegis and spear (characterized by a most accentuated femininity)\textsuperscript{895}; in a bronze head with helmet (possibly Corinthian) discovered on the western exterior wall of the Grand Temple\textsuperscript{896}; and in a further small votive plaque from a later time found in the same temple showing Athena standing beside Artemis\textsuperscript{897}. Another small plaque, also in bronze, was unearthed finely incised with a representation of Pegasus, which in the Hellenistic era was often depicted on the helmet of the goddess\textsuperscript{898}. Similarly, in the Petit Temple a part of the cella was constituted by a stone-lined pit covered by stone slabs\textsuperscript{899}, which contained three objects in ivory of which two were acephalous\textsuperscript{900}, and most
importantly, a series of bronze items that Ghirshman tentatively associated with the twelve labours of Heracles\(^{901}\).

Another bronze plaque with a figural representation which may imply religious attitude was unearthed in the southwestern section of the *antecella* (no. 6). It is decorated with two personages: a man standing on the right holding a spear in his right hand and a shield in his left hand, and a female figure on the left side, but oxidation of the metal makes it difficult to delineate her shape, although her hairstyle seems similar to another bas-relief of Masjed-e Soleyman\(^{902}\).

The site also produced several small artefacts which not only comprise highly embellished functional objects but often purely decorated ones. The inventory included different lamps\(^{903}\), some being delineated with a human face\(^{904}\), a bronze base and candelabra\(^{905}\) similar to those found at Shami\(^{906}\) and in a rock-cut pit at Vani (Caucasus)\(^{907}\), and two “cyathes” (ladles with handle)\(^{908}\). Smaller bronze functional elements also tended to be elaborated as three decorated furniture feet in bronze including a torso of a “mermaid” with outstretched wings on a lion’s claw-shaped basis in support of a kline or casket\(^{909}\), which represents a clear example of Hellenistic art\(^{910}\). Additional unique small bronze finds include a belt plaque\(^{911}\) and a lion-headed door knocker\(^{912}\). Also, what may be interpreted as a

\(^{901}\) *Ibid.*, p. 97. This collection of Hercules’ bronzes includes a lion’s head (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CI.6) and a finger (*ibid.*, Pl. C.11), both connected with the victory of Hercules against the Nemean lion; five deer identified with the deer of Cerinea (*ibid.*, Pl. CI.4-5-6-12-13), a deer was also found engraved on stone bas-relief in the *antecella* (*ibid.*, Pl. XCVIII.4); a disk engraved with Symphalian Birds (*ibid.*, Pl. 29 GMIS 66); a plaquette which reproduced the guardian dragon of the golden apples in Hesperides’ garden (*ibid.*, Pl. XCVIII.2), possibly associated with the finding of a cornucopia (*ibid.*, Pl. 28 GMIS 65) in the same deposit; a pendant with two protomes linked to the mares of Diomedes (*ibid.*, Pl. CI.8, Pl. 27 GMIS 87); and the discovery of figures such as Silenus (*ibid.*, Pl. C.8), Maenads (*ibid.*, Pl. C.5) and Satyrs (*ibid.*, Pl. C.9) connected with the worship of Dionysus.

\(^{902}\) *Ibid.*, Pl. XCVII.1; Pl. 58 GMIS 301. For the bas-relief, *ibid.*, Pl. LXXVI.1-3.


\(^{905}\) Pl. XVII.f.

\(^{906}\) Pl. XIX.d.

\(^{907}\) [http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/vani/lamps_excavation.html](http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/vani/lamps_excavation.html)

\(^{908}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CI.3-4; Pl. 58 GMIS 262, 323.

\(^{909}\) *Ibid.*, Pl. XCIX.1-3. It was found in a chapel to the north of Heracles’ temple (Ghirshman 1976, p. 82) and result similar to another object found at Shami (Stein 1940, Pl. VI.11). Furniture decorated feet, mostly consisting in lion’s paws, were common during the Achaemenid period (Curtis and Tallis 2005, cat. nos. 91, 94). Thrones or kline with furniture legs are represented on relief at Persepolis (*ibid.*, cat. nos. 24, 38), and in Elymais (e.g., relief ANa at Tang-e Sarvak, see §7.1.2).

\(^{910}\) Similar siren was found at Nisa (Invernizzi 2011, pp. 199-200, fig. 13a).

\(^{911}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CI.6.

\(^{912}\) *Ibid.*, Pl. CI.14; CI.3.5-6; Pl. 60 GMIS 273, 274, 298, 343.
musical instrument in the shape of a bronze triangle was also discovered\textsuperscript{913} as well as bronze bells\textsuperscript{914} which, as at Bard-e Neshandeh and Hung-e Azhdar, may indicate a Transcaucasian (e.g., Urartu) influence\textsuperscript{915}. A bronze mirror adorned with concentric circles and with handles in the form of nude female figures emerge amongst the findings of Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{916} (likewise Susa and Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{917}) representing a linking to a widespread tradition which from Iran\textsuperscript{918} and across central Asia\textsuperscript{919} may be technologically interrelated to China\textsuperscript{920}.

Finally, there was numerous monetary material discovered on the site and likely connected with a period of massive religious fervour. Among those, 304 coins\textsuperscript{921} were found during the \textit{époque perse} at the southeast corner of the eastern substructure wall\textsuperscript{922}, and 425 coins, mostly from the Sasanid period\textsuperscript{923} at the corner of vestibule no. 12 of the \textit{Grand Temple}.

\textbf{6.2.5 Past Interpretations}

The Western scholar acknowledged as being the first to indicate the site of the Masjed-e Soleyman ruins was the British officer Henry Rawlinson, who did not go there in person, but rather “heard [...] of the ruins of a great building, upon the banks of the Kuran, a short distance below Súsan, which was named Masjidi-Suleîmáni-Buzurg\textsuperscript{924}: by the Bakhtiyárís it was usually likened to the superb remains at Kangáwer, and it doubtless, therefore, marks the site of another of the wealthy temples of Elymais”\textsuperscript{925}. He proposed an identification\textsuperscript{926} of the

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{913} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. XCV.3; Pl. 58 GMIS 267.
\item \textsuperscript{914} Pl. XVII.g.
\item \textsuperscript{915} Villing 2002, pp. 262-270; cf. Muscarella 2013, pp. 689-702. For bronze bells at Bard-e Neshandeh, see Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXVIII.1; at Hung-e Azhdar, see Messina 2015a, pp. 184-185, fig. 3 nos. 112, 114.
\item \textsuperscript{916} Pl. XVII.h.
\item \textsuperscript{917} Colledge 1977, p. 111.
\item \textsuperscript{918} Egami \textit{et al}. 1965-1965, II, p. 10, pl. XLIX.29.
\item \textsuperscript{919} Frumkin 1970, pp. 41, 69.
\item \textsuperscript{920} Pigott 1990.
\item \textsuperscript{921} Augé \textit{et al}. 1979, section II.
\item \textsuperscript{922} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LI.1.
\item \textsuperscript{923} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 116. In details: 186 Elymaean coins, 236 Sasanid coins of which 133 obols, and 103 drachmas, mainly issued by Shapur II. See also cf. Augé \textit{et al}. 1979, p. 42.
\item \textsuperscript{924} Also worthy of note is the not completely clear distinction that Rawlinson makes: “Masjidi-Suleîmán, or sometimes Masjidi-Suleîmáni-Kuchuk to distinguish it from another ruin, named Masjidi-Suleîmáni-Buzurg, which I shall hereafter speak of, and represent, without doubt, one of the ancient temples of Elymais” (Rawlinson 1839, p. 78). See Schippmann 1971, pp. 234-236 for further clarifications.
\item \textsuperscript{925} Rawlinson 1839, p. 84.
\item \textsuperscript{926} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 86.
\end{itemize}
sanctuary with the “Dianae templum augustissimum illis gentibus” recorded by Pliny.927

“The description of the ruins given by Major Rawlinson of these ruins [...] greatly excited my curiosity”928, was Layard’s initial reaction as he wrote in November 1941, which was only to be disappointed, on his later visits, to the extent of calling them “insignificant”929. His quite concise but approximate description led him to interpret the site as being a place for a fire temple from the Sasanid era930. Layard reported the presence of an artificial terrace and traces of foundations for a building, emphasizing the absence of columns and architectural ornaments or inscriptions on all types of materials931.

As occurred at Bard-e Neshandeh, and even more so at Masjed-e Soleyman, many explorers and scholars came over the years to offer diverging interpretations. A brief list of these visitors included: Unvala932, Godard933, and Erdmann934 who referred to Masjed-e Soleyman as a fire temple; Herzfeld, who interpreted it as a sanctuary; Vanden Berghe935, who catalogued Masjed-e Soleyman as an Achaemenid fortification; and Siroux936 and Stein937, who avoided using the attribute of “fire temple,” preferring to refer to “sanctuaries” for Zoroastrian worship.

Later, during the 1960s, Roman Ghirshman of the French Délégation Archéologique en Iran stipulated a “gentlemen’s agreement” with the Anglo-Persian Oil Company to carry out “une modeste mission archéologique” at Masjed-e Soleyman and the neighbouring Bard-e

927 Pliny, VI.31.135.
928 Layard 1846, p. 81.
929 Ibid., pp. 61-62.
930 Ibid., 1894, p. 340.
931 See also Schippmann 1971, p. 236. Layard reported how the Bakhtiari tribes had anticipated the finding of King Solomon’s hidden treasure in the palace, and describing their astonishment that this discovery had not been made, as well as their fear of having disturbed supernatural beings in the location. He also reported several legends relating to Masjed-e Soleyman, told to him by some of the Bakhtiari tribesmen (Layard 1894, pp. 341-342). It is to be noted that when he was informed that there was “sometimes called by the Lurs the Masjdi Suleiman” (Layard 1846, p. 62), this phrase led Hansman to believe that Layard had not heard the ruins described in this way but was simply going back over references made by Rawlinson (Schippmann 1971, p. 227). A discussion regarding places outlined by Rawlinson and Layard, and their related descriptions and interpretations, is developed in-depth by Schippmann in his book on the fire temples (1971, pp. 226-227, 234-236).
932 Unvala 1928, pp. 86-87.
933 Godard 1949, pp. 153-162.
934 Erdmann 1941, p. 29.
935 Vanden Berghe 1959, pp. 64-65.
936 Siroux 1938, pp. 157-159.
937 Stein 1940, pp. 162-163.
Neshandeh\textsuperscript{938}. Ghirshman suggested that a Persian tribe erected the sacred terraces after they came to this area of the Zagros mountains around the 8\textsuperscript{th}-7\textsuperscript{th} centuries BC\textsuperscript{939}. In general, he supposed that this Iranian community learned how to build the terraces when they were still living in northwest Iran under the control of Urartian rulers\textsuperscript{940} and used the terraces as places of Zoroastrian worship throughout the Achaemenid period\textsuperscript{941}. As discussed earlier, Ghirshman further assumed the possible presence of a Macedonian garrison – or rather, a Macedonian settlement – at Masjed-e Soleyman, emphasizing that underneath the \textit{Grand Temple} there would be an older structure, noted only through limited investigative digs, which was dated to the Seleucid period and dedicated to Athena \textit{Hippia}\textsuperscript{942}. He believed such a structure or structures would be like those described by Strabo as having been destroyed by a Parthian king\textsuperscript{943}, by the discovery inside and near the temple of two images of Athena and a series of votive terracotta of Macedonian horsemen. The use of limited findings to determine the deity to whom a temple was dedicated may be speculative, and for the moment it is probably better to leave the question open. At the same time, the absence of systematic surveys and excavations around the area of the site, in particular on southern and western sides, which cannot be adequately undertaken due to the presence of the modern city of Masjed-e Soleyman, ensure that the hypothesis of the presence of a Seleucid garrison at Masjed-e Soleyman proposed by Ghirshman cannot be entirely ruled out\textsuperscript{944}.

Ghirshman’s discovery, though, of a statue of Heracles and various other finds near a smaller temple structure led him to identify this construction as a sanctuary for the Greek semi-god\textsuperscript{945}. During the following Parthian period, Ghirshman argued that the \textit{Grand Temple}

\textsuperscript{938} Ghirshman 1976, \textit{Preface}.
\textsuperscript{939} Ibid., p. 55.
\textsuperscript{940} Urartu was one of the numerous kingdoms of the 1\textsuperscript{st} millennium BC that rose and flourished in Anatolia (now Turkey) after the devastation of the Hittite reign around 1200 BC. The kingdoms had their languages, ethnicity, religion and local cultural materials. In their inscriptions, the Assyrians of Mesopotamia referred to the Urartians as their northern enemies from the 11\textsuperscript{th} to 7\textsuperscript{th} century BC. The oldest Urartian written document, a stone inscription at Van (previously known as Tushpa), registers the first reference to their state. The Urartians moved east across the Zagros Mountains of northwest Iran, where many texts inscribed in stone at various sites, such as Hasanlu, Agrab Tepe, and Bastam, report their conquests and other local successes.
\textsuperscript{941} Ghirshman 1976, pp. 281-282. For Ghirshman, this would have been proved by the building methods used on the terraces, which were consistently made up of walls of rough stone (ibid. 1950, p. 215; Stronach 1974, p. 246). This hypothesis did not in the slightest convince the German scholar, Schippmann, who regarded them as \textit{“eine schlecht gelungene Nachahmung”} of the terraces of Pasargadae and Persepolis (Schippmann 1971, p. 248)
\textsuperscript{942} Ghirshman 1976, pp. 281-282.
\textsuperscript{943} Strabo XVI.1.18.
\textsuperscript{944} Ghirshman (1976, p. 72) also assumed that if there were an expectation of there being temples and chapels for Greek deities as well as homes, none of these were found. Moreover, Ghirshman even suggested that evidence of such a Greek religious cult could have been from the era of Antiochus I (280-261 BC), without offering any justification for such a proposition (ibid., p. 99).
\textsuperscript{945} Ibid., p. 191.
would have been used – given the discovery of an image on a bronze plaque in the antecella – as a place of worship for the Iranian deities Anahita and Mithra, as also indicated by the temple cella with two entrances and two altars. The modest structure was attributed as being dedicated to Verethragna, whom the Greeks identified as Heracles. As stressed by Ghirshman, if his theory were correct, this would be the first place of worship for a Greek deity in Iran.

Concerning Ghirshman’s assumptions of Masjed-e Soleyman as an Iranian sanctuary depository of the sacred fire, some scholars soon expressed reservations. An example is Schippmann in his complete study on “Die iranischen Feurheiligtümer,” where he affirmed without hesitation that on the terrace of Masjed-e Soleyman there were no structural remains or discoveries of any kind that could be linked with places of Zoroastrian worship. Schippmann further believed that these complexes were used as independent Elymaean sanctuaries not connected with Iranian cults.

### 6.2.6 Dating

The assumptions proposed by Ghirshman in the 1970s to present the terraces already in use during the Achaemenid period were based on the discovery of some modest materials, amongst which were the theriomorphic extremity of a rhyton analogous to those found at the “Village perse-achéménide” of Susa (6th century BC), and the white-alabaster head remarkably similar to the Achaemenid lapis-lazuli head from Persepolis (5th-4th century BC). Schippmann firmly showed that no Achaemenid or preceding discoveries had exhaustively been made during the excavations at Masjed-e Soleyman, suggesting instead a more practicable Hellenistic or Parthian dating for most of the items found on site. This

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946 *Ibid.*, pp. 195-196. As further pointed out by Potts (1999a, p. 373), it would be interesting to broaden the discussion regarding Greco-Iranian religious interactions with the aim of understanding if, for example, in this case, the representations of a Greek Heracles in an Iranian-Elymaean context could reflect the spontaneous worship of a Greek deity in Iran or an assimilation with the Zoroastrian god Verethragna or with a local deity. See also Bivar and Shaked 1964; Scarcia 1979; von Gall 1986, pp. 212-213; Potts 1993, pp. 352-353.
949 Schippmann 1971.
952 Ghirshman 1954.
953 Pl.XVI.e.
954 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXIII.3.
955 Schippmann 1971, pp. 248 and 257.
6. Religious Architectures

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

point was partly supported by successive publications regarding the study of ceramics discovered during the excavations. Haerinck suggested a dating between the 4th-3rd century BC and 150 BC, evaluating the arrival of Mithridates I in Susiana (ca 140-138 BC) as a reliable terminus ante quem for the sanctuary of Masjed-e Soleyman. In this regard, the high quantity of unguentaria-like recipients, suggests a particular activity of the site around the 3rd-2nd century BC. It is to this time of Greek presence that Ghirshman attributes the dating of the primitive phase of the Grand Temple (or “temple antérieur”), and the first phase of the smallest Petit Temple. The dating to the Seleucid period for the terrace extension and the first foundation of the two temples is largely based on small finds that came to light during the French missions, mainly votive offerings such as terracotta objects, bronze figurines, jewellery and pottery. The modest nature of this material implies a certain caution in the approach, which however does not exclude a dating to the Seleucid period. Unfortunately, the meagre numismatic data from this period offers inadequate support; in contrast, the architectural and ceramic evidence propose a date between the 4th-3rd and early 2nd century BC.

6.2.7 Final Considerations

As at Bard-e Neshandeh, Ghirshman proposes an analysis of occupation phase of the site more based on theoretical data than methodically developed. Although fundamental to understanding the chronology of the site and the architectural structures on it, nor surveys with the purpose of providing a meticulous stratigraphic study of the terraces, neither a study on the correlations between the different stratigraphic contexts have been conducted at Masjed-e Soleyman by the French mission. However, it is important to mention that Ghirshman’s excavations were relatively shallow limited by the agreement with the Archaeological Service of Iran. Through some surveys, it emerged that the stratigraphic layer of the 3rd century BC, where the terracotta figurines had been found, lay 3 m deep beneath the

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956 Haerinck 1983; Martinez-Sève 2004; idem 2014.
957 Haerinck 1983, pp. 14, 244. The pottery dating is generally proposed between 250 BC to 150 BC (ibid., p. 14), however during his study Haerinck shows how along “Zone I” (Elymais and Susiana) the production may have started some time before (e.g., glazed ceramic) between 4th and 3rd century BC (ibid., p. 244).
958 Pl. XV.a.
959 There is an interesting personal comment made by David Stronach, and reported by Susan B. Downey in her book “Mesopotamian Religious Architecture. Alexander through the Parthians” of 1988, where the Scottish archaeologist affirmed that during his many visits to Masjed-e Soleyman – while excavations were still under way – there was no pottery found that could be classified as Seleucid (Downey 1988, p. 131). However, this can be related to the fact that the surveys to deeper layers were very limited due to the accord with Archaeological Service of Iran (§6.2.3), and the site was mainly studied on its Parthian occupation level.
960 Augé et al. 1979, pp. 15-16.
6. Religious Architectures

Grand Temple\textsuperscript{962}. In the section of Petit Temple, instead, the excavations stopped at the “anterior” construction (no. 9) on the northwest of the cella where some red ceramic fragments were found, datable to the Achaemenid period\textsuperscript{963}, with no attempts to excavate deeper. As a result, the foundation plan in phase I for the walls of structure no. 9 – only 80 cm beneath the walls of Petit Temple’s cella (no. 4)\textsuperscript{964} – and the respective location of the occupational layers beneath the surface where the excavations stopped are missing, while the difference in strata is evidently slight compared with those, which have been observed for the Grand Temple. The measurements reported on the various topographic plans\textsuperscript{965} are those that correspond to the latest levels of occupation without providing any significant data for the earlier contexts.

In light of factors discussed up to this point, it appears that the foundation of the terrace to the pre-Achaemenid period is rather insubstantial. On the other hand, the ceramic findings, such as terracotta statuettes seem to demonstrate that the site was occupied between the post-Achaemenid era and 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC\textsuperscript{966}, but it is impossible to clarify the aspect of the terraces at the time. With this in mind, the Parthian era is responsible for most of the visible structures, while the last phase of the principal temple and the western sanctuary may be dated to the proto-Sasanid period as suggested by the monetary findings and the most recent constructional phases (§6.2.2).

I would not exclude a priori that further excavations on the site of Masjed-e Soleyman – primarily focused on structures beneath the two visible temples – could lead to possible new interpretations and dating. The archaeological works carried out in Khuzestan have shown how the Seleucid and Parthian eras represented a period of considerable activity in southwestern Iran\textsuperscript{967}, probably based on a certain socio-political stability. The valuable work led by the Iranian-Italian Joint Expedition in Khuzestan over the last ten years in the area of Izeh-Malamir and Kaleh Chendar is just the last example.

\begin{footnotes}
\footnote{Ghirshman 1976, p. 77.}
\footnote{Ibid., p. 90.}
\footnote{Ibid.}
\footnote{Ibid., Plan IV and VIII.}
\footnote{Martinez-Sève 2004.}
\footnote{Boucharlat 1985; Martinez-Sève 2002. It cannot be ignored that the last and so far only excavations of this site, as its “neighbouring” at Bard-e Neshandeh, were those conducted under Ghirshman in the 1960s (Ghirshman 1976).}
\end{footnotes}
6.3 Shami (Pls. XVIII-XXI)

As a mountainous locality forming part of the Izeh-Malamir district, the site of Shami takes a prominent position between cult places located in southwestern Iran.

The area is connected to the mountainous gorges that border the plains of Izeh-Malamir at northeast (ca. 25 km) where various rock reliefs are accompanied by inscriptions, and structures, which tangibly evoke ancient cultures, revealing how this sinuous valley was of critical importance within the scenario of the cultural and political dynamics along the Zagros-Bakhtiari plateau. The area represents a pivotal crossroad on the main route to Susa passing through the Zagros and reaching Esfahan and the territories further east, bordering the centres of Shushtar and Izeh-Malamir.

Some marble sculptures were accidentally found at Shami in 1935, mostly in fragments, with a well-preserved bronze statue portraying a nobleman (perhaps a king) in Parthian dress, and several bronze fragments. These facts considerably interested Sir Aurel Stein during his travels in 1936 when he investigated some of the surrounding areas. Despite the valuable discoveries and the recognized relevance of the archaeological location, Stein remained the only scholar to have excavated at Shami for more than seventy years.

6.3.1 General Aspects

On September 2012, the Iranian-Italian Joint Expedition in Khuzestan started a preliminary survey at Kaleh Chendar, in the valley of Shami, seventy-six years after the visit by Stein. The international mission is still unearthing the presence of a sanctuary in monumental terraces, built in undressed stones, and decayed structures dating back to over two thousand years ago, and guarded by a fortress and two forts. A 50-hectare area used as a funerary centre includes several graves containing precious objects and internal connections by a network of paths. Shami must have been one of the most important religious places of Elymais near the major area of Izeh-Malamir, but presumably not a pre-eminent administrative centre like Susa and Hamadan. The presence on the site of a significant amount of high-quality artefacts is still difficult to interpret.

Around 40 km east of Masjed-e Soleyman, the valley of Shami is now an easy drive from the modern city of Izeh-Malamir. In particular, the village of Kal-e Chendar, only 1 km

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968 Also known as Rah-e Sultan (“route of the Sultan”) or Rah-e Atabek (“route of Atabegs”) which although no longer used as a road, is still recognizable by impressive buildings and undoubtedly existed in part much earlier than the Kurdish Atabegs’ dynasty in medieval times (Layard 1887, pp. 423-424; Godard 1937, p. 285; Stein 1940, pp. 137-141; Ghirshman 1976, p. 179).
to the north of Shami’s hamlet, was the exact spot\textsuperscript{969} where six months before Stein’s visit in January 1936, locals brought to light a life-size bronze statue during the foundation works for a house on a crest at the northern end of the valley.

The identified site spreads across the west hillside of a narrow dejection-cone-shaped valley with its vertex to the west (elevation between 920 and 1,040 m), having a slight slope in its central area, where the modern road crosses the valley. This triangular zone is distinctly demarcated on its east side by a small river (Rud-e Shami) into which flow two stream beds that run west to east through the valley, delimiting the site on its north and south sides. To the south, a small ridge of \textit{ca.} 1,070 m reinforces the remains of a modest fortress (\textit{qala}) of about 210 m\textsuperscript{2}, while at the foot of the hill (1,010 m) mountain spring water flows into the southern stream bed. Compared with Masjed-e Soleyman, Kal-e Chendar is far from settled zones being primarily restricted to use by shepherds and their flocks and populated by a family of Bakhtiari. The landscape, once again seems to represent a critical parameter in the establishment of a sacred place, being particularly impressive from an aesthetic perspective\textsuperscript{970}.

\section*{6.3.2 Archaeological Context}

In mid-1935 some sculptures, for the most part, reduced to fragments, were accidentally identified at Shami. During the excavations which immediately followed this discovery, Stein and Karimi opened a trench in the area where the statues (dated from the Hellenistic to the Parthian period\textsuperscript{971}) were unearthed revealing the existence of additional fragments of sculptures in marble and bronze, and the remains of a rectangular enclosure built on stone foundations (Pl. XIX). At the centre of this structure, whose plan appears to be of Hellenistic derivation, a rectangular baked brick platform, and several carved stone bases, which likely constituted the pedestals for ancient statues, now missing, emerged\textsuperscript{972}. While the structures may be interpreted as the ruins of an ancient shrine built within an evocative landscape, the high quality of the sculpture fragments and statues\textsuperscript{973} seems to designate this place as one of the most renowned cult locations of ancient Elymais, at least during the Hellenistic and Parthian periods.

\textsuperscript{969} The location on the ground of the area investigated by Stein is hard to determine as his map of the site was not geo-referenced, while it can be recognized thanks to the pictures that Stein took during the excavation and accurately pinpointed by \textit{Iranian-Italian Joint Expedition in Khuzestan}. (Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, pp. 66-67).

\textsuperscript{970} Álvarez-Mon 2014.

\textsuperscript{971} The first study and chronology of the sculptures from Kal-e Chendar was published by F. Cumont (1939).

\textsuperscript{972} Stein 1940, pp. 143-149.

\textsuperscript{973} See Godard 1937; Kawami 1987a, pp. 59-64, 169-174; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 165-168; Curtis 1993.
6. Religious Architectures

The archaeological site covers a vast area of about 500,000 m² on the western slope of the cone-shaped valley of Shami. The area of Kal-e Chendar has revealed traces of extensive monumental terraces made of undressed stones and located close to each other at slightly different elevations following the natural valley slope. Cultivated fields cover the rest of the hill, being bounded by low enclosures of undressed irregular stones sometimes overlaid on more ancient walls, for the most part acting as retaining walls to demarcate the terraces.

The meticulous work of the Iranian-Italian joint team has currently identified at least three terraces, an ample necropolis, and the remains of further undefined structures (Pl. XVIII.a).

The most remarkable of which is the upper terrace, which covers an irregular quadrangular shape of about 6,000 m² overlooking the south stream (Pls. XVIII.d, XXI.a). The terrace, also called “Stein Terrace” (in honour of Sir Aurel Stein)974 is characterized by the most impressive ancient structure discovered so far at Shami, represented by a massive wall (more than 90 m long and up to 3 m high) on the southern flank of the terrace. Its façade probably fell in ancient times and its lower part, composed of a row of huge irregular stones, is still easily recognizable. Except for the eastern wall, the other structural borders of the terrace are still difficult to recognize. At the southeastern corner, two ancient column bases have been discovered, while old stone blocks of masonry have been reused to build modern houses. These remains might indicate the existence of a monumental construction(s) on the terrace975.

A smaller squared terrace (Terrace 2) of ca. 56×60 m is located further to the north of the “Stein Terrace” and well visible either in the satellite image or directly in the field. Although its east border seems to differ by roughly 10 m compared to the east side of the upper terrace, the two platforms could constitute the same monumental complex as their surfaces are almost at the same elevation. Besides, it is unclear if they compose a single platform or their surfaces were divided by a wall running east-westward similar to that of Masjed-e Soleyman976.

Similarly to the construction method of the “Stein Terrace” (southern wall), the corner of a third terraced structure (Terrace 3) is recognizable from the present-day ground level.

974 Sir Aurel Stein in 1936 opened on this artificial platform a small trench (6×8 m) in the place where the bronze statue was accidentally found.
975 On the Stein Terrace, see Messina et al. 2016, p. 35.
976 Pl. XII.e.
approximately 110 m northeast of Terrace 2. Having its east façade still well preserved, Terrace 3 is oriented in a slightly different way compared to the other two platforms, and adapts to the natural conformation of the slope with its surface ca. 9 m lower than the other terraces. Since the southern and western borders are undefined, the terrace’s extension cannot be ascertained, and it has been suggested a possible westward enlargement of Terrace 3 to the foot of Terrace 2. The surface presents a significant number of baked brick fragments.

In the northernmost zone of the valley, ruins of other unspecified buildings have also been discovered. In particular, the ruins of two constructions are still identifiable near the point of confluence where the southern and the northern streams meet the main river; while, recognizable to the north of Terrace 3 is a corner in undressed stones, likely belonging to a further small construction (platform or building).

In addition to the Iranian-Italian expedition conducted in 2013, a further survey on the crest (Bileva peaks) dominating Kal-e Chendar contained archaeological remains which were found and mapped, at an elevation of about 1,709 m. In this area, impressive protective walls composed of undressed stones emerge from the ground surface. These structures seem to be part of a great fortress (qala), or possibly a complex of small qalas, controlling the important communication route which connected the valley of Shami with the Karun river and the area of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. The area is locally known as Char Qala (“the Four Fortresses”).

As also noted by Stein in mid-1930s, a necropolis composed by a significant number of different types of graves (32), extends east of the modern road. They mainly lean along the steep slope below the three main terraces and in some cases are also placed against rocky precipices or near the streams. In particular, burials at Shami are simple tombs in underground, or in some cases, saddle-roofed chambers built with undressed stones. Most of the discovery concerning the tombs in the area was made possible only recently when they had been replenished and covered by rocks and debris (often part of the collapsed roof) to conceal unauthorized excavation or to facilitate the work of local farmers. Despite their

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977 Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, p. 73.
978 Messina et al. 2016, p. 49.
979 Stein 1940, p. 157.
980 Messina 2015b, p. 200.
982 Stein 1940, pp. 157-158, plan 10. During the first survey led by Stein, several ancient tombs were found but not accurately recorded and located on the map.
983 Messina 2015b, p. 199 (updated to 2014, but it has been envisaged a much greater number).
inferior conservation status and the disturbing human activities, the hypogeal enclosures are still easily recognizable\textsuperscript{984}.

### 6.3.3 Monumental Architecture

The discoveries unearthed at Shami still lack evidence of impressive structures such as those which dominate the terraces at Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. Nevertheless, the presence of some architectural components would suggest the existence of massive constructions.

When Stein widened his first trench of 6×8 m in the mid-1930s at Kal-e Chendar, a small rectangular enclosure (ca. 12.5×23.5 m in its outside dimensions) emerged, composed of a mud-brick foundation wall about 1.4 m wide at the base (Pl. XXI.c). Inside the modest building, there was a brick platform (reasonably interpreted as an altar). The rectangular structure was covered by masses of ashes and burnt wood, possibly indicating violent destruction. Seven stone sockles (most likely pedestals for statues) were scattered inside and outside the structure, with three on the southern side of the building, as well as small altars and column bases\textsuperscript{985}. Although the building discovered by Stein appears to be extremely modest if compared with the number of high-quality sculptures found \textit{in situ}, the fact that it lay immediately under the surface may suggest that more ancient structures are beneath its foundations. Stein excavated down to a depth of only 1 m below ground level to reveal the rectangular enclosure foundations\textsuperscript{986}. More recently, the juxtaposition between the satellite image of the upper terrace and the Stein map distinctly revealed the architectural structures examined in 1936, even though the exact limits of Stein's trench cannot be easily determined as it was covered after his field work\textsuperscript{987}. As regards the southeastern corner of the upper terrace, this is now occupied by one of the eight modern houses that partially overlap the archaeological site. Composed by a row of irregular boulders on which smaller and more regular stones are arranged, the massive southern retaining wall (90×3 m) of the “Stein

\textsuperscript{984} \textit{Ibid}.  
\textsuperscript{985} Stein 1940, pp. 143-149.  
\textsuperscript{986} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 144. When examining this information, it must be considered that the present surface roughly corresponds to the ancient building pavement, as seems also confirmed by the fact, reported to Stein by the local inhabitants, that the discovery of the life-size bronze statue and sculpture fragments were found just below (“a few feet of earth”) the soil surface.  
\textsuperscript{987} After consulting Stein’s handwritten diaries, now kept in the Bodleian Library (Oxford) and the British Library (London), members of the \textit{Iranian-Italian Joint Expedition in Khuzestan} started their explorative surveys at Kal-e Chendar in September 2012 (Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a). Once the exact area investigated by Stein was identified, thanks to the well recognizable landscape of the valley and by comparing Stein’s map with satellite images of the area the international mission begun opening trial trenches and commenced extensive excavations.
Terrace” was built to level the natural step between the top of the terrace and the southern stream, and contributing to hold steady all the earth which filled the platform itself. The wall, furthermore, preserves the same filling on which the foundation settlement of the Stein’s building was placed, and this is the reason why it may be considered older than the building. It is more problematic to recognize the other retaining walls of the “Stein Terrace.” The only exception is the east wall, which can be observed at the southeast corner of the platform joining the southern wall.

This poorly understood situation encouraged the Iranian-Italian mission to open subsequently eight trenches of which four were on the upper terrace (campaigns 2013, 2014). Meticulous fieldwork dug up a large retaining wall of about 20 m in length and 1 m in width, perfectly oriented north-south and filled with rubble and stone. It demarcated the east side of a platform, and in modern times was reused as the foundation of a wall and a small enclosure (trench 1). In the southwestern corner of the “Stein Terrace”, instead, trench 2 (6×5 m) was opened discovering a massive structure composed of rubble masonry. Assembled in at least six rows which retain a filling of debris, this structure could be interpreted as a massive retaining wall in undressed roughly cut stones (remains of the west wall of the upper terrace) of a minimum of 3.8 m wide and more than 5 m long. East of it, the opening of trench 8 identified another wall which, having the same alignment, may be considered as a part of the same monumental complex placed on the “Stein Terrace.” An architectural structure made of baked bricks was then unearthed immediately below the ground level (trench 3) at ca. 137 m northeast of trench 1. This eastern-oriented construction (5×2 m) is preceded on its east side by a rectangular-shaped pavement (2.5×1.8 m) and a badly-preserved 5-step low staircase (2.5×3.1 m) both composed by baked bricks apparently of standard measures. The function of the entire construction is still not clear, but it may represent a sort of platform in support of another structure (likely one of the numerous altars which were included within site). East of the main structure, two paved brick area (d; e), measuring respectively 1×0.6 m and 2.61×1.83 m were unearthed by Stein. In particular, d was identified as a stone base for a statue. Another platform

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988 Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, p.71.
990 Bricks of two sizes have been found in their original position: the square brick measuring 36×36×8 cm, and some rectangular ones of 36×16×8 cm. Noteworthy, this baked-brick construction was discovered partially damaged, presumably as a result of unauthorized trenches dug in modern times.
992 Ibid., pp. 40-42.
993 Ibid., p. 46.
994 Stein 1940, pp. 147-148, fig 53, pl. 11.
(1.70×1.15×0.91 m) which joined d, was instead interpreted as an altar\textsuperscript{995}. Also, on the edge of Terrace 3 emerged undressed stones probably used for regularizing the terrain’s steepness (trench 7). Around the structure, two large strata of charcoal, ashes, and burned bricks were recorded, particularly to the south and west side, which may suggest a blaze or traces of a ritual practice\textsuperscript{996}.

While no structures were revealed through trenches 4 and 5, a remarkable burial architecture has instead been unearthed among the tombs such as T9 (trench 6)\textsuperscript{997}. This massive sepulchre roughly oriented to the east is composed of a hypogeal chamber of 4.5×2.4 m – partially disturbed by an illegal trench opened in modern times – assembled with undressed stones. Part of the collapsed roof has been displaced, and half of the space pillaged. The remaining section was excavated in 2013 by the Iranian-Italian mission, which removed the rest of the roof, as it was precarious and hazardous for the entire structure, reaching a pavement of cut and flat stones. A rectangular-shaped low bench, made in the same manner as the floor, was discovered against the northern wall of the chamber at about 20 cm above the pavement. The room is supposed to have been at least 2 m in height, giving rise to the speculation that its missing façade could likely emerge during excavations.

Among the graves, T17 is surprisingly characterized by a chamber whose perimeter walls and roof are still almost entirely preserved. Tombs T23 and T24 excavated in 2014 represent ample structured sepulchral complexes distinguished by monumental façades. Specifically, the impressive T24 includes a carved-stone door, discovered close to the eastern wall of the tomb. Even more impressive, T23 presents an access corridor preceded by a stone staircase, flanked at the entrance by ancillary spaces (e.g., small niche) used for funeral rites involving animal sacrifices\textsuperscript{998}. The principal saddle-roofed chamber, more than 2.5 m high, has three benches and a niche on the wall opposite the entrance. T23 and T24 appear to be part of a more articulated funerary structure, seemingly connected to other significant graves. Tombs T7 and T20 are instead modest underground saddle-roofed environments erected in undressed stone of which only T20 contained human bones of at least three individuals\textsuperscript{999}.

\textsuperscript{995} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{996} Messina et al. 2016, p. 46.
\textsuperscript{997} Ibid., p. 47-48.
\textsuperscript{998} Ibid. 2015b, p. 199.
\textsuperscript{999} Messina and Mehr Kian (forthcoming excavation reports).
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6.3.4 Pottery and Associated Artefacts

At the present state of research, almost all the material evidence from Shami has a sculptural origin and has been recorded by Stein\footnote{Stein 1940, Pls. IV-VII.}. There are only a few references regarding ceramic findings and minor objects of worked metal\footnote{Kawami 1987, p. 58.}. The ongoing excavation led by the Iranian-Italian joint mission at Kaleh Chendar is bringing to light new material discoveries but a collection inventory and analysis is still in an embryonic phase, and it has not been published yet.

6.3.4.1 Pottery and Terracotta objects

Although the entire area presents numerous examples of badly-fragmented and well-worn ceramic sherds mainly characterized by a light pinkish colour and vegetal elements in the clay composition\footnote{Ibid.}, the recent excavations have only revealed that compared with the brick fragments the potsherds in the form of small shattered pieces (trenches 1 and 3) are very rare. They are approximately dated to the Parthian period by their stratigraphy\footnote{Messina et al. 2016, pp. 40, 46.}. It would be of particular concern to compare the clay fabric of the Shami’s fragments with the pottery from Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman to understand whether they are made of the same local composition characterized by a high degree of friability\footnote{Haerinck 1983, pp. 19, 28; Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197.}.

According to Kawami, the most common typology was the “glazed” ceramic fragments (as at Masjed-e Soleyman) which composed a small bowl with a ring base (h. 8 cm; w. 14 cm), even though she also reports the presence of redware pottery\footnote{Kawami 1987, p. 58.}. Presently, the material is far too limited to allow any comparative study\footnote{Messina (2015b, p. 199) discloses the findings within T23 of well-preserved ceramic models suggesting a Susian or Mesopotamian manufacture but without providing additional information.}.

6.3.4.2 Sculpture Material (Pls. XIX-XX)

The best-known sculpture from the site is a standing man (1.94 m), which currently represents the only monumental Parthian bronze known to exist\footnote{Pl. XX.a. The bronze statue is currently preserved in the Iran Bastan Museum of Tehran.}. It is hard to say if this is the continuation of an Iranian bronze-casting tradition possibly dating back to the 2nd...
millennium BC in Khuzestan and Kurdestan\textsuperscript{1008}, or a Western revisiting under Greek influence. The figure stands on both feet, frontal in stance and gaze, and even though it appears to be equally supported by both legs, the left is slightly bent. The right arm, likely raised with the palm toward the observer, is entirely lost except for a small section of the shoulder; while the left arm, with the hand missing, is held down\textsuperscript{1009}. The sculptural style of the bronze represents a unique within the art scene of the region, although the proportions of the figure depart from naturalism, as the head is evidently too small about the rest of the body. A very short beard, a thick moustache and a slightly aquiline nose delineate his facial aspect as well as his short hair covering the ears (except for the lobes) and being tied by a broad ribbonless diadem-like band with seven narrow ridges passing over the forehead and a quadrangular fastener at the back. This sort of fillet or headband is certainly a sign of rank, although it was difficult to establish its significance and its hierarchical degree (e.g., priest, king, or vassal)\textsuperscript{1010}. His neck is considerably broad and encircled by a heavy torque characterized with a central medallion. Importantly, the head and neck with its jewelled ornaments form a single unit cast separately from the rest of the statue. This stylistic fact led some scholars to believe that the head of the bronze statue was not made at the same place and time as the body\textsuperscript{1011}. There is no evidence to support this supposition, but the presence at Shami – or more likely at Izeh-Malamir – of a local school of artisans or skilled craftsmen from Susa who may also have produced the marble heads is plausible, given the importance of the site\textsuperscript{1012}. The head betrays a Hellenistic influence in the modelling of the face through some precise naturalistic annotations, while its dominant Iranian character emerges from narrative details such as the intense stare, the stylized rendering of the hair, the beard, and the eyebrows. The body is clad in a rather peculiar Parthian dress characterized a short crossover tunic with a V-neck shaped up to the naked chest, decorated with ornamental bands on the edges is also know at Hatra\textsuperscript{1013} and Assur\textsuperscript{1014}, and represented a key determinant of the

\textsuperscript{1008} Porada 1965, p. 61.

\textsuperscript{1009} Frontal stance and the raised right hand in a gesture of greeting and veneration appropriate for deities, worshipper and even rulers (e.g. relief of Darius at Bisotun), was widely diffused throughout the Near East, in particular in Syria and Mesopotamia during the Parthian period with examples from Palmyra (Colledge 1976, pls. 35, 39,43, 49; see also Heyn 2010) and Hatra (Ghirshman 1962, pp. 89, 92-95, figs. 100, 103-106); see illustration also in Safar and Mustafa 1974, pp. 26, 60, 65, 70-73, 79-90, 220-223).

\textsuperscript{1010} The closest parallels for the ribbonless headband of the Shami bronze are dated to the late 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC. As already demonstrated by H. von Gall (1969/70, p. 303), this type of headband worn across the forehead makes its first appearance on coins of Orodes II (\textit{ca}. 57-38 BC) and continues on coins of Pacorus (\textit{ca}. 39 BC) and Phraates IV (\textit{ca}. 38-42 BC).

\textsuperscript{1011} Godard 1937, p. 295; Seyrig 1939, p. 177; Mathiesen 1989, p. 120. Contra Kawami 1987, pp. 62, 171.

\textsuperscript{1012} Schlumberger (1969, p. 167) deduced that the statue’s components were locally produced at Shami but by artisans from Susa.

\textsuperscript{1013} Ghirshman 1962, p. 86, fig. 98.

\textsuperscript{1014} Mathiesen 1992/2, fig. 43, cat. no. 160
Parthians in Roman iconography of the 1st century BC. The figure is severely damaged at waist level so that the manner in which the belt, adorned in squares with chased patterns, is fastened is unknown. Below the belt on the right side is a dagger with a narrow hilt, mostly passing under the U-folds of the baggy trousers (shalwars). The latter seem to serve as overtrousers which cover short leggings almost completely, leaving only a small section (upper thighs) visible. Most peculiarly, a cushion-like object, which perhaps served for protection and comfort while riding, appears at the back and is partly covered by the jacket. The armament, similar to that of Palmyrene notables, is reduced to two daggers attached to the robe and the thigh by two big buttons. From a general perspective, the statue seems to reflect the Palmyrene statuary in its rigid frontality, conventional facial demarcations, and distinctive clothing folds.

The bronze statue is interpreted as a prince, but dating is still disputed and varies from the 2nd century BC to the 2nd century AD. However, from a stylistic perspective, in the hypothetical case of a regal representation, the presence of the ribbonless headband and the absence of the tiara would provide strong terms of dating respectively between late-1st century BC and early-2nd century AD, as also supported by the monetary iconography and the Hellenistic-influenced artistic language. The Roman imagery of Parthian V-neck tunic with bands decorating the edges seems to narrow the timeframe to the 1st century BC and early-century AD, which remarkably indicates an earlier dating as compared with the development of the Palmyrene art.

Other bronze sculptural objects observed by Stein at Izeh-Malamir were the fragments of two right arms clothed in long wrinkled sleeves, one of those with a bracelet around the

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1015 Schneider 2007, pp. 56-57, fig. 5.
1016 Seyrig 1939a, pp. 177-181.
1017 Rostovtzeff 1941, p. 863, no later than the 1st century AD, from late Hellenistic to early Roman period; Ghirshman 1962, p. 89, fig. 99, dated to the 2nd century BC; Godard 1962, p. 183, 1st century AD; Vanden Berghe 1963b, pp. 166-167, not after than 140 BC; Rice 1965, p. 84, fig. 71, dated from the 2nd century AD; Collodge 1967, p. 156, pls. 47-48, located between 50 BC and 100 AD; Rosenfield 1967, p. 163, fig. 130, 1st century BC; Schlumberger 1970, pp. 88, 156, pl. 23, “aux environs de notre ère”; Schmidt 1970, p. 140, 2nd century AD; von Gall 1969-1970, pp. 304, 309, second half of the 1st century BC; Weidemann 1971, p. 156, pl. 52, placed during the 2nd century AD; Matheson 1973, p. 162, dated between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD; Ghirshman 1976, p. 237, in the 2nd century BC; Collodge 1977, p. 86, pl. 12a-b; idem 1986, pl. XVb; idem 1987, p. 162, pl. XIV, from 50 BC to 150 AD; Herrman 1977, p. 40, between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD; Kawami 1987a, pp. 62-63, dated between 50 BC to 50 AD; Smith 1988, pp. 101, 173, probably later 2nd century or 1st century BC; Mathiesen 1989, p. 120, the middle of the 2nd century AD; Curtis 1993, pp. 63-65, between mid-1st BC to beginning 1st AD.

1018 See §9.2.3.
1020 Schneider 2007, pp. 56-57.
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wrist. These arms indicate that the life-sized bronze statue discussed above was not the only one at Shami. At least two more large bronze statues have been there.

Once Stein started to work at Kal-e Chendar, a large heap of bronze fragments from statues thrown together in an utter confusion of pieces from differing figures was unearthed near the “Stein Terrace” northern wall. These findings indicate the violent fate of the cult shrine of Shami, as all the bronze fragments had been smashed, revealing marks of their brutal treatment. The most remarkable examples are two facial bronze pieces slightly larger than life-size. Interpreted as a mask by Stein\(^{1021}\) despite the presence of a prominent neck, it confidently represents the head of a statue. An additional bronze fragment showing the back of a head seems to confirm this assumption\(^{1022}\). The two main halves show a beardless man in his youth with eyes below a marked forehead partially covered by curly hair, and a severe mouth while the third fragment presents similar hair which is, however, less accurate than the part above the forehead. A pronounced Hellenistic influence is tangible, but as a result of brutal hammer blows, it is complicated to accurately match the two halves and decidedly ambitious to reconstruct the profile. Several varying identifications have been proposed from Alexander the Great to the Seleucid kings (Antiochus III, Antiochus IV) or Elymaean sovereigns of the 2nd century BC\(^{1023}\). The mask reveals a sensitive spirit in the interpretation of natural forms which better mirrors a Greek taste rather than a Parthian production. The presence of Hellenism in its realistic approach is perceptible in Elymais, as supported by the artistic preference of the local dynasty of the first Kamnaskirids who, seizing power from the Seleucids, adopted the Greek artistic language to enrich their craftsmanship\(^{1024}\).

Within the same heap of bronze fragments was a colossal left hand, possibly representing Zeus as shown on the Seleucid coins\(^{1025}\), as well as a slightly oversized right hand\(^{1026}\), two lower parts of human legs\(^{1027}\), a massive sleeve of a dress from a huge arm bent

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\(^{1021}\) Stein 1940, pp. 150-151.

\(^{1022}\) Callieri 2001, pp. 109-111. Pl. XIX.g

\(^{1023}\) Stein 1940, pp. 130-135, 141-149; Schippmann 1971, pp. 227-233; Kawami 1987 pp. 57-68; Boyce and Grenet, 1991, pp. 42-43; Callieri 2007, pp. 69-71. Boyce and Grenet (1991) provide the connection with the Elymaeans kings from the comparison with the monetary iconography of the first sovereigns in Elymais. These indeed represented the Hellenistic model by inscriptions of Greek origin (e.g., Le Rider, 1965, no. 85).


\(^{1025}\) Stein 1940, p. 151; Pl. V.4.

\(^{1026}\) Pl. XIX.b.

\(^{1027}\) Stein 1940, Pl. V.6.
at the elbow\textsuperscript{1028}, and a well-manufactured left foot and ankle covered with a sort of loosefitting sock or moccasin\textsuperscript{1029}.

In 1936 two white marble heads were also unearthed: a bearded male and a beardless figure of undetermined gender. The use of white marble for these artefacts (as well as for the female torso from Izh-Malamir\textsuperscript{1030} and the female head from Susa) is unique in Iran’s art scene during the Parthian period\textsuperscript{1031}. The naturalistic bearded head (10.5 cm) is an unmistakably Iranian male treated in competent Hellenistic style. His face is delineated by wide-opened eyes, a broad nose and long sloping moustache, while the hair is combed back from the forehead and held by a full diadem-like band. Below this finely-incised band, the locks fall in heavy masses to cover both ears but leaving the ear-lobes visible as in the case of the life-sized bronze statue. The sculptural and numismatic parallels for the hairstyle, the headband and the moustache reveal that the subject of this marble representation held an elevated hierarchical position. The other marble head (15 cm) is badly battered, in particular, the forehead, nose, mouth, right cheek and chin which are significantly damaged. As a result of being beardless, the head has been identified as female (possibly Aphrodite\textsuperscript{1032}) although there is no clear indication of gender. The top of the head also has a small circular hole while the neck is broken just below the head. These heads were evidently products of workshops originating during the period when Hellenistic influence was still considerably perceived, and it would be interesting to understand the dynamics of that transmission of style, and possibly iconography, to the isolated valley of Shami, and more generally within the Elymaean sphere. A well-trained local artisan, perhaps from an established centre of production such as Susa or Izh-Malamir could have manufactured artefacts in a highly Hellenistic style even without being Greek. Indeed, what counted was the training in that tradition\textsuperscript{1033}.

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1028] Pl. XIX.h.
\item[1029] Pl. XIX.e. Stein made it known that under the sole was attached “a quantity of red lead (?) which apparently served to fix the figure more securely in its socket on a base” (Stein 1940, p. 152).
\item[1030] Callieri 2015, p. 16, fig. 3.
\item[1031] The use of marble for statuary in Arsacid period is instead well reported in Mesopotamia, as at Hatra (Safar and Mustafa 1974, pp. 109: no. 82; 120-123:nos. 97-100, 300) and Palmyra (Colledge 1976, p. 110), and in Central Asia at Nisa (Koshelenko 1966, pp. 35-37; Colledge 1977, p. 82).
\item[1032] Stein compared the head of Shami with the Aphrodite that he discovered in 1934 at Tall-i Zohak in Fars (Stein 1936, pp. 137-142).
\item[1033] Callieri 2015, pp. 12-20.
\end{footnotes}
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6.3.4.3 Metalworks and Minor Goods (Pls. XIX-XX)

Other bronze fragments were discovered together with the various parts of statues above-mentioned. An example is the bronze furniture feet similar to the one found at Masjed-e Soleyman\(^{1034}\), which may represent an inheritance of the Achaemenid tradition, was a tripod part in the shape of a lion-clawed leg\(^{1035}\). Two bronze lamps or ceremonial braziers for incense (\textit{thymiateria})\(^{1036}\), analogous to the Masjed-e Soleyman’s findings\(^{1037}\) and a Transcaucasian tradition\(^{1038}\), were also discovered with some jewellery (e.g., silver, bronze and iron ribs\(^{1039}\) and bracelets\(^{1040}\)). Differently from sacred sanctuaries excavated by Ghirshman where the military equipment was not represented, other miscellaneous objects reported by Stein include two iron daggers\(^{1041}\) which are currently the only example from Elymais.

Chronological interest is instead attributed to a fragment of bronze sheet engraved with an Achaemenid-like rosette\(^{1042}\), a Greek coin dated to the 1\(^{st}\) century BC, and a silver coin showing Alexander’s head on the obverse and a seated Zeus on the reverse dated to 200-150 BC\(^{1043}\).

Among the stone findings documented were: a miniature altar of limestone\(^{1044}\), made up of a square-shaped base, similar to the altar depicted in the some reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak (e.g. \textit{TS.I:S.a}), circular moulding \textit{torus}, capital and \textit{abacus} (analogous to the Greek models), and several squared and rounded bases of columns and blocks of masonry. Much of this latter material was reused in the walls of modern houses on the upper terrace along with the cut stones from the terrace walls\(^{1045}\).

\(^{1034}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XCI.X; Pl. 58 GMIS 305.
\(^{1035}\) Pl. XIX.c. For the Achaemenid example, Curtis and Tallis 2005, cat. nos. 91, 94.
\(^{1036}\) Pl. XIX.d.
\(^{1037}\) Pl. XVII.f. Ghirshman 1976, p. 84; Pl. CV.5-8.
\(^{1038}\) http://www.getty.edu/art/exhibitions/vani/lamps_excavation.html
\(^{1039}\) Stein 1940, Pl. VI.5.
\(^{1040}\) \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. VI.10.
\(^{1041}\) Pl. XX.e.
\(^{1042}\) Pl. XX.g.
\(^{1043}\) Stein 1940, p. 154. The dating reported by Stein to the 1\(^{st}\) century BC was provided by J. Allan.
\(^{1044}\) \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. XXVII.21.
\(^{1045}\) In 2012, eighteen architectural elements were recognized on the ground of the “\textit{Stein Terrace}”, on the surface of the cultivated fields, or as reused material for walls of the modern houses (for a complete list, see Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, pp. 71-73). The likelihood that many other ancient elements were used during the rebuilding of houses and enclosures cannot be ignored, as they become impossible to distinguish when fragmented into small pieces. The presumed used of the ancient site as an open-air quarry of stone material during the ages is quite logical (Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, p. 73).
Finally, a later expedition led by André Godard recovered an elaborate box inlaid with mother-of-pearl figures, apparently from a tomb near the upper terrace. During the investigation of T23, which is considered to be a major tomb, sophisticated funerary gifts including Greek-influenced gold and bronze female items (e.g., mouthpiece) emerged revealing that this sepulchral complex belonged to a wealthy noble family of the Parthian period. A monumental carved stone door was also unearthed close to the eastern perimeter wall of tomb T24.

### 6.3.5 Past Interpretation

During his 6-day stay at Kal-e Chendar, Stein – specifically working in the area where the statuary fragments were found – brought to light the remains of a rectangular enclosure built on stone foundations, a rectangular baked brick platform, and several stone bases that he reasonably interpreted as pedestals for ancient statues, lost over the years. In this regard, Stein claimed the four “Iranian” bronzes observed at Izeh-Malamir, as corroborated or presumed Hellenistic elements. He also considered three other artefacts (a thymiaterion, a scaled-down altar, and a tripod) as being made for cult use and that the paraphernalia was unmistakably Greco-Roman influenced.

The presence of a thick layer of ashes and carbonized wood in the southwestern corner, and of charred earth mainly near the walls, led Stein to assume that cult statues could have been located on stone pedestals possibly placed within a veranda-like structure with a wooden roof inside and along the outer wall, while the central area was left open to the sky. Given the abundant evidence (e.g., a high quantity of ashes and burnt wood, marks of brutal treatment on statues, heaps of bronze and other material fragments placed together), the assumption of a violent destruction of the Shami compound became increasingly clear in the eyes of Stein. According to him, neither the structures nor findings seem to reveal what

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1047 Messina 2015b, p. 199.

1048 Messina and Mehr Kian (forthcoming excavation report).

1049 For instance, Stein (1940, p. 155) interpreted the personage depicted by bronze mask as Alexander the Great or a Seleucid ruler, while a part of statues varying from colossal to miniature was associated with Greek deities (e.g., Aphrodite, Dionysus, a gigantic Zeus, or other Olympians).

1050 Stein (1940, p. 149) also considered as a parallel for his interpretation of the religious environments at Shami the spatial disposition of the Buddhist sanctuary of Rawak Stupa located on the southern rim of the Taklamakan Desert in China, belonging to the ancient kingdom of Khotan. A similarity with the temple of Surkh Kotal peribolos south of Bactria in Afghanistan was also proposed (Rosenfield 1967, p. 164).

1051 Stein 1940, pp. 150, 154, 156
actually survived of an ancient sanctuary erected in an impressive mountain landscape. At the same time, the high quality of the statuary does appear to indicate the relevance of Shami within the Elymaean panorama to the point where Stein suggested this area be a sort of “hill station” to which the philhellenic kings of Izeh-Malamir would have retired to escape the heat of summer.\footnote{1052}

Many doubts emerge about the purpose of the site at Shami, in particular regarding the fundamental question on the dedicatory subject of the complex. Stein believed he could recognize the full implication of the architecture at Shami as a local shrine where native cults, partly related to the Near Eastern traditions, syncretically combined Hellenistic worships of Greek deities with the worship of venerated royal personages from Alexander the Great to Elymaean rulers\footnote{1053}. Rostovtzeff, instead, interpreted the site as a Seleucid establishment for a royal cult in a local sanctuary\footnote{1054}, in the hope of finally finding evidence of a Seleucid regal cult in the eastern satrapies. As further endorsed by Colledge, the sculptural findings of Shami may “act as commemorations of piety or dynastic cult objects”\footnote{1055}. Following all the material data provided including architectonic findings, statues, sculptural fragments, and even the presence of a necropolis, a standard view would seem to imply that the sanctuary was the home of a dynastic cult of local (Elymaean) kings during the Parthian period\footnote{1056}. In this regard, S.M. Sherwin-White also suggested that the assortment of above-average manufactures may in substance represent a temple treasure collected by local rulers with cosmopolitan tastes, typical of the artistic eclecticism in Elymais, or even Elymaean kings who like other Hellenistic rulers (e.g., Antiochus I of Commagene) may have enumerated Seleucid kings as fictive or symbolic progenoi (πρόγονοι, or “ancestors”)\footnote{1057}. Although Kawami considers credible the interpretation of Shami as a “dynastic shrine or mausoleum”\footnote{1058}, she suggests that the combined discovery of Achaemenid- (a bronze foil with a flower engraved), Hellenistic- (male mask in bronze), and Arsacid-like (statues which varied in style and dress) material evidence, the discovery of a Hellenistic (Seleucid?) bronze head indicates an artistic collection assembled during the Arsacid era with artefacts of

\footnote{1052} Ibid., p. 156.  
\footnote{1053} Ibid., p. 155-156.  
\footnote{1054} Rostovtzeff 1953., pp. 111, 437, 1428, footnote 237.  
\footnote{1055} Colledge 1977, p. 86. See also Schippmann, 1971, p. 232.  
\footnote{1058} Stein 1940, p. 155; Colledge 1977, p. 47.
different periods. Through a careful study of the three bronze fragments of Shami’s head, Callieri considers that the presence of dynastic statues within local religious complexes should be interpreted in key votive rather than cultual.

The fieldwork of the Iranian-Italian mission from 2012 has demonstrated, that a monumental structure was built on top of the “Stein Terrace”, mostly supporting the preliminary results provided by Aurel Stein’s research. From field analysis the presence of sculptural dedicatory elements in stone or bronze demonstrates that among the complex constructions supported by the terrace at least on the “Stein Terrace” there was a modest temple – limited in dimensions compared to the amount and quality of sculptures unearthed – which on the basis of the new evidence seems to represent only a tiny part of the cult ensemble, moreover, erected on a peripheral zone (southeastern part). The discovery of religious structures (e.g., baked brick altars), similar to the one found by Stein, confirmed the sacred function of some sections of the sanctuary. However, Messina and Mehr Kian also assumed that not all the identified platforms were constructed for cult functions, even though the characteristic function of sanctuary-cemetery and the extension of the site led Shami to compete with the sacred structures of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. According to the excavation outcome, the cessation of the sanctuary activities was due to a demolition indicating a local damnatio memoriae rather than a violent destruction of the site.

6.3.6 Dating

As addressed before, the cult character of the area investigated by Stein is recognized as being certain. Despite the difficulties caused by plunders, unauthorized excavations, and agricultural and quarrying operations, the structures unearthed, even if not extensively excavated, provided interesting information about the latest phase of occupation of the complex. The amount of ashes and burnt wood found everywhere on the “Stein Terrace”

1059 Kawami 1987, p. 58.
1060 Callieri 2001, p. 111.
1061 Messina and Mehr Kian (2014a, p. 76) proposed that the Stein’s assumption concerning the original location of the statues could be considered doubtful. From Stein’s account, it appears more plausible to suppose that the statuary elements were fortuitously found in unstratified layers, having been removed from their original place during the temple’s destruction or soon after (cf. Stein 1940, p. 149).
1062 Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, p. 76.
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The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD) is clear evidence of the fate of the compound of Shami, which was destroyed/demolished and burned before being abandoned in ancient times (probably at the end of the Parthian period).

The date of construction for the Shami complex is variously placed between the 2nd and the 1st century BC, even if Godard postpones the date to the 1st century AD\textsuperscript{1065}. At any rate, in the present state of research, the only definite chronological evidence of a period when the sanctuary was still extant is a single Greek copper coin of some undetermined Mesopotamian city, which dates to the 1st century BC\textsuperscript{1066}.

About the phase of abandonment of the site, firstly proposed by Stein\textsuperscript{1067}, and then almost generally accepted, the sanctuary of Shami is presumed to have been raided and devastated between the 1st and 2nd century AD. The establishment of a date for the destruction of the site would be crucial to chronologically locate the pieces of art discovered at Shami, only providing a \textit{terminus ante quem} of dating. Ghirshman proposed an earlier date for the site’s abandonment in the mid-2nd century BC presumably in connection with the Mithridates I’s invasion of Susiana around 140-138 BC, which has already been shown to be historically inaccurate\textsuperscript{1068}. If it were true, the artefacts of Shami should be dated before the mid-2nd century BC, a fact not supported by the evidence addressed in previous sections\textsuperscript{1069}, and in contradiction with the 1st-century Greek coin found by Stein\textsuperscript{1070}.

\subsection*{6.3.7 Final Considerations}

In the recent years, the valuable field work of the Iranian-Italian joint mission has provided a new picture of the site and its functions. It has now depicted the existence of a multi-terraced site which presents on top different functional models of constructions, and an enormous necropolis in the surrounding area, while any evidence of inhabited settlements is still absent. This overall situation suggested an interpretation of the site as sanctuary-cemetery where the upper-class families came to be inhumed in complex hypogeal structures\textsuperscript{1071}.

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{1065} Godard 1962, pp. 156-158.
\bibitem{1066} Stein 1940, p. 155.
\bibitem{1067} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 156.
\bibitem{1068} See §5.2.3.1.
\bibitem{1069} See §6.3.4.
\bibitem{1070} Stein 1940, p. 155.
\bibitem{1071} Messina 2015b, p. 200; Messina \textit{et al.} 2016, pp. 48-49. The impressive platforms of Kaleh Chendar appear to be raised to level out the slight slope of the valley where constructions made of cut stone and baked bricks are still standing and supported. Regarding the ancient buildings, little or nothing was left in place but instead was reused or scattered on the ground, such as column bases, stone blocks of masonry, and brick fragments. It follows that the decayed structures and fragmented sculptures studied in the last seventy-six years are what

\textit{The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)}
The approach identifying the structures on the “Stein Terrace” as a dynastic shrine may be accurate\textsuperscript{1072}. However, the presence of a Seleucid-like ruler worship in Elymais is hard to accept if isolated by a contemporary religious context. The presence of a royal cult in Shami can be explained only if the site hosted an important shrine for local worships of Elymaean deities. In these circumstances, the rulers could have brought some offerings and even been associated with the deity/ies. Compared with the Greek religious sphere, these local cults are conceivably not isolated or occasional, but rather there was an attempt to formalize them. The dynastic worships were possibly overlapped, placed together or opposed to the traditional religious calendar (e.g., annual; penteteric), aspiring to be an official and ritualized religious practice. Besides, it may be deceptive, and even speculative, to equate the very approximate nature of the sovereign-god axiom in the Greek world and the regal ascendancy in the Iranian plateau\textsuperscript{1073}.

All these elements raise the perplexing question of how a place so isolated and limited in resources as the remote valley of Shami could have been able to sustain a sanctuary so adequately furnished with the high quality of artistic offerings which reflected a Hellenistic-like local dynastic cult. Assuming the volume and dimensions of the sculpture production (e.g., the life-sized bronze sculpture), it is more plausible to propose a domestic production which would have avoided long and strenuous travels through rugged mountains. On the other hand, if it may be true that they were produced and assembled at Shami, this implies highly developed economic and artistic requirements for such a site and the presence of highly-trained local workshops\textsuperscript{1074}, presumably in the neighbouring centre of Izeh-Malamir. Of further interest, is the evidence that all around the terraces, there were no traces of settlement (or at least not yet discovered), only tombs, some of those with visible carved doors and facades, apparently belonging to very wealthy families. All this appears to reveal a kind of sanctuary-necropolis which represents a rarity in Hellenistic and Parthian times. In this context, it should be seriously taken into consideration that this was an uninhabited place of significant religious dimension where aristocratic families from all territories of Elymais

\textsuperscript{1072} For more detailed and reliable interpretation of the sanctuary of Shami, it has to wait for the final report of the Iranian-Italian joint mission in Khuzestan.

\textsuperscript{1073} On the Ruler cult during the Hellenistic era, see Muccioli 2011.

\textsuperscript{1074} Cf. Callieri 2015, p. 16. This author analyzes the Elymaean reliefs rather than the Shami bronze. However, the presence of highly-trained local ateliers around the area of Izeh-Malamir (including Shami) was reasonably expanded to cover all craft workforces (e.g., sculptors, metalworkers, ceramicists, coroplathes).
6. Religious Architectures

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD) desired to bury their members\textsuperscript{1075} under the protection of the deities inhabiting the sanctuary and near the king.

6.4 Remains of Other Potential Religious Structures

The scarcity of investigations and surveys in Khuzestan along the Zagros highlands, which only on rare occasions drew the attention of researchers and archaeologists, is the primary reason as to why knowledge of religious architecture in Elymais is so minimal, and the basis for understanding the cultural-historical heritage of these sites consequently remains broadly meagre.

Assuredly, the natural mountainous environment, in this case, produces a remarkably reduced and equivocal visibility for ancient sites and their remains. An unambiguous identification appears difficult without accurate research work, and in some cases, even this may not be sufficient. Repeated human interference has created a highly disturbed soil composition with an often-unclear stratigraphic context. Unlike the lowlands of Susiana and Mesopotamia where centuries-old human activity generated the progressive deposit of layers and architectural remains typical of mud-brick structures, giving rise to artificial and well-recognizable mounds known as \textit{tell} (or \textit{tepe}), the archaeological sites on the Bakhtiari mountains are characterized by a continuous use and re-use – with consequent obliteration – of the construction material (e.g., stone). The result is the formation of very low mounds with almost undetectable confines where the archaic level of occupation approximately corresponds to the modern surface (the example of Shami)\textsuperscript{1076}. Ancient sites can, therefore, be identified only by the presence of scarce pottery and cut stones, often reused in nearby modern structures, which show how antique structures were consistently plundered for building material.

Located midway between Kal-e Chendar and the sanctuaries of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman, are the remains of an ancient terraced construction arranged to incorporate a natural cliff and known today as \textit{Qal'\textup{e}-ye Bardi}\textsuperscript{1077}. The largely-unexplored

\textsuperscript{1075} Messina 2015b, p. 200. The finding of “Hellenistic gold artefacts of exquisite workmanship and glazed ceramics perhaps imported from Mesopotamia” (Prof. Vito Messina, co-director excavation at Shami, interview 27\textsuperscript{th} March 2016 at \textit{ItalyJournal}) can only confirm the perception regarding the presence of a sanctuary-necropolis for local aristocratic families at Shami.

\textsuperscript{1076} Messina 2015a, pp. 65-66.

\textsuperscript{1077} More precisely, the site is placed 19 km north-east of Bard-e Neshandeh and 23 km north-west of Kal-e Chendar. The area in question was the subject of two short surveys conducted by the Iranian-Italian mission in Khuzestan in 2009 and 2015.
site\textsuperscript{1078} rises on the north bank of a watercourse at \textit{ca}. 700 m (\textit{asl}), while \textit{ca}. 450 m south of it lay the ruins of a relatively modern fortress (\textit{qal’e}) located on a 20-metre natural plateau\textsuperscript{1079}. The irregular square-shaped terrace extends for more than 6,000 m\textsuperscript{2} along a north-west/south-east orientation. A staircase similar to those of Ghirshman’s sanctuaries was previously incorporated by the façade, but the intentional removal of the outer wall facing blocks to be reused caused the collapse of the structure over the centuries\textsuperscript{1080}. To regulate the natural slope, three retaining walls of undressed stone were built supporting a monumental front on the eastern, northern and southeastern flanks. Unlike Masjed-e Soleyman and Bard-e Neshandeh, the design of the Qal’e-ye Bardi platform is not based on rectangular buttresses articulated in overhangs and recesses. On the top of the terrace, the ruins of extended quadrangular constructions are still visible, even though only one of those can be assuredly considered ancient\textsuperscript{1081}.

Near the modern Izeh (\textit{ca}. 10 km north of it), in the gorge of \textbf{Hung-e Azhdar}, a modest religious architecture has been recently discovered by the Iranian-Italian mission at the modern Izeh\textsuperscript{1082}. The area of archaeological interest expands around a massive rock (\textit{ca}. 9×6×6.5 m), which present rock-reliefs on both sides, covering approximately 140 m\textsuperscript{2}. It is delimited on the south by the mountain cliff, on the north by the sculpted boulder, and separated from the rest of the valley by stones apparently placed \textit{in loco}. Encasing this area “artificially”, conferred on it a specific significance as a sort of open-air enclosure\textsuperscript{1083}. Three excavation campaigns (2008-2011) led by the Iranian-Italian team have unearthed, at the foot of the hidden face of the boulder – where Elymaean rock panel is sculpted – two structures in undressed stones developed through various phases of construction\textsuperscript{1084}. A low terrace (9 m

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{1078} Pl. XXIV.a, c. The only photographic documentation of the site – also known as Tall-e Badr, or Qal’e-ye Lit – is provided by two panoramic imagining in Keall (1971, p. 58). For a brief description, the site, see Messina 2015b, pp. 200-202.

\textsuperscript{1079} The fortress has a roughly triangular shape with a north-west oriented summit, and covers an area of at least 4,500 m\textsuperscript{2}. The analysis of its construction techniques and building materials, in some cases characterized by a stone masonry bound with the mortar and covered with plaster, proposes a dating of the more recent phase of Qajar age (18\textsuperscript{th}-19\textsuperscript{th} century). Besides, the accumulations visible inside the structure suggest the presence of the oldest phases of occupation (Messina 2015b, p. 201).

\textsuperscript{1080} As correctly pointed out by Messina (2015b, p. 201), the same typology of masonry and the consequent sliding of the inner blocks can be observed on the southern wall of the Steinn Terrace at Kal-e Chendar.

\textsuperscript{1081} Messina 2015b, p. 201. Only 3 km southern of Qal’e-ye Bardi, a small artificial terrace (probably built in recent times) of \textit{ca}. 510 m\textsuperscript{2}, delineated by the distinctive dry-wall substructures with rectangular buttresses (as at Sar-Masjed and Bard-e Neshandeh), is recognizable from the road which connects Masjed-e Soleyman to Shimbar indicating the structural use of this constructive pattern remained unchanged over the centuries. After my first quick sighting in November 2015, the site would require an adequate visit in the future.

\textsuperscript{1082} Messina 2015a, pp. 66-71.

\textsuperscript{1083} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 121 (fig. 41), 122 (fig. 42).

\textsuperscript{1084} Messina and Mehr Kian 2009; \textit{idem} 2011.
\end{flushleft}
long) oriented east-west was the dominant structure, while a second smaller rectangular platform located at the bottom of the sculpted boulder was rebuilt at least three times. The complex has been interpreted by Vito Messina\textsuperscript{1085} as a cult place, due to the typology of the structure (i.e., low terrace and platform), and the artefacts (e.g., arrowheads, bronze bells, terracotta figurines)\textsuperscript{1086}, mostly unearthed in non-relevant layers covering a period from the Middle-(or even Old-)Elamite to the Parthian era. Evaluation of the structures and material evidence as part of a modest Elymaean place of worship may correspond by comparison with the sacred terraces of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. The significant number of arrowheads (111, mostly in iron) – found in stratigraphic relation with the bronze bells\textsuperscript{1087} – in the proximity of the platforms indicates the presence of ritual practices probably connected to a military context\textsuperscript{1088}. The discovery of fifteen terracotta figures of the same clay of the pottery, primarily representing animals (horses and bovines) may represent votive offerings, or used as the substitution of real animals in a sacrificial milieu\textsuperscript{1089}. As for the terracotta figurines of Masjed-e Soleyman, the horses may be related to the offerings of the military and aristocratic class towards a particular deity\textsuperscript{1090}. The ceramic material was found in highly disturbed layers – probably due to the re-construction of the terraced structures – which do not allow a precise archaeological sequence\textsuperscript{1091}. In addition, complete vessel forms are absent, and the typological comparisons are only based on fragments. Remarkably, a small cave is

\textsuperscript{1085} Messina 2014b, p. 336
\textsuperscript{1086} Cellerino et al. 2015, pp. 177-194.
\textsuperscript{1087} Pl. XXXIII.d (arrow), e-f (bells). Cellerino et al. 2015, pp. 183-186, fig. 3. Similar bronze bells were found a Bard-e Neshandeh (Pl. VIII.d) and Masjed-e Soleyman (Pl. XVII.g) presumably associated to religious ceremonies as suggested by their discovery within votive context, i.e., room no. 2 at Bard-e Neshandeh (ibid., p. 47) and room no. 6 of the Petit Temple at Masjed-e Soleyman (ibid., p. 89).
\textsuperscript{1088} Ibid., pp. 177-183, figs. 1-3. Similar arrowheads were also found (much lower amount) at Masjed-Soleyman (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CIX.3) and Bard-e Neshandeh (ibid., pl 9 GBN 7).
\textsuperscript{1089} Pl. XXIII.a-c. Cellerino 2015, p. 188.
\textsuperscript{1090} Martinez-Sève 2004, pp. 198-199.
\textsuperscript{1091} Cellerino 2015, pp. 167-169. Regarding the ceramics (Cellerino 2015, pp. 124-176), during the three campaigns at Hung-e Azhdar (February 2008, February-March 2009, and April-May 2010) lead by the Iranian-Italian team in Khuzestan, the pottery found was catalogued according to the different clay composition in six classes: 1) Orange ware; 2) Brownish ware; 3) Buff ware; 4) Yellow ware; 5) Grey ware; 6) Dark core ware. Among these, class no. 7 apparently prevails for the number of specimens found – which indicate an incomplete firing of the organic components in the clay mixture – followed by class no. 3, while type no. 1 seems characteristic of the more superficial layers (Cellerino 2015, pp. 123-125). Although at Hung-e Azhdar have not been found clear elements to compare with the ceramic typologies at Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman (e.g. unguentaria, pilgrim’s flasks), the granulated clay mixture (sand and well-recognizable calcite), in addition to a certain fragility (only fragments have been found at Hung-e Azhdar) probably due to the friability of the clay composition, seems to indicate the use of the particular clay mixture produced by local ateliers of the highland as described by Haerinck (1983, pp. 19, 28; Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197). It is remarkable at Hung-e Azhdar the absence of a painted (“Festoon ware”) and glazed ware, which is instead very common at Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman.
placed south of the area on the rock face\textsuperscript{1092}. Being allegedly frequented since prehistoric times, the archaeological materials found inside appear very disturbed and incoherently mixed by human activities which make the context difficult to understand. As suggested by Messina, the cavern might have been connected to the cult practiced in the small open-air sanctuary at the bottom of the Elymaean relief, which along with the boulder one of the two extreme points of the \textit{temenos}\textsuperscript{1093}. In this context, the presence of the great Elymaean relief could be interpreted as a kind of dedication panel carved in order to oversee an ancient well-known natural open-air shrine, conceptually similar, even if smaller, to that of Kul-e Farah\textsuperscript{1094} (less than 9 km away). According to De Waele\textsuperscript{1095} and Kawami\textsuperscript{1096}, this conceptual framework seems to be confirmed by the presence, no longer \textit{in situ}, of other Elymaean dedicatory carvings near the main rock panel. As regards the chronology of the most recent structures, indications provided by the radiocarbon dating of charcoal found in superficial layers in contact with the upper platform reveal a range of time from the middle of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC to the last quarter of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD.

Facing towards the Miangharan wetland, covering 8,000 m\textsuperscript{2}, the ruins of a fortress (\textit{Qala-e Kazhdoum}) controlled the valley of Hung-e Azhdar and its sanctuary from the top of a cliff \textit{(ca. 940-960 m)}\textsuperscript{1097}. Although mostly fallen, its walls are still clearly recognizable (h. 2 m) in their typical structure of undressed stones which characterize Elymaean architectonical constructions (e.g., terraces), laying directly against the mountainous crest. Internally subdivided into small squared units, the planimetry and the functional utility of the different rooms are not quite clear. Some elongated environments with plastered walls may be considered as cisterns\textsuperscript{1098}, analogous to those at the Bard-e Neshandeh’s fortress\textsuperscript{1099}.

Also near the site of Tang-e Sarvak, on the edge of Behbahan plain in the province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad, there are vague indications reported by Guépin\textsuperscript{1100} of some structures, mostly reduced to the ground level, at \textit{Khoda Tsharan}. Through personal research – comparing the satellite imagines, local amateur pictures, and the text of Guepin – I would

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1092} The cave is located 11 m higher than the valley ground in front of the sculpted boulder, but easily reached by walking on the inclined surface generated by the deposit of debris and rocks detached and fallen from the cliff (personal visit in November 2015).
\textsuperscript{1093} Messina 2015a, p. 70.
\textsuperscript{1094} Álvarez-Mon 2010a; \textit{idem} 2013a; \textit{idem} 2015c.
\textsuperscript{1095} De Waele 1975, p. 62, fig. 3-4.
\textsuperscript{1096} Kawami 1987a, p. 174, pl. 16.
\textsuperscript{1097} Pl. XXIV.b, d. Messina 2015a, pp. 72-75.
\textsuperscript{1098} Messina 2015a, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{1099} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. VIII, 2-3, 5.
\textsuperscript{1100} Guépin 1965-1966, pp. 25-26; Potts 1993, p. 352.
\end{footnotesize}
assume that these structures could be identified with the Emamzadeh Mama Zeynab, located near the village of Mama Zeynab (called Zainab by Guépin), some 5-6 km northeast of Tang-e Sarvak in the Bakhtiari mountains, where it seems possible to recognize both “the walls [...] of dry-stone masonry” and perhaps also “the tumulus situated close to the hills” of which Guépin speaks\footnote{Guépin 1965-1966, pp. 25-26.}. It remains inexplicable that no thorough analysis, surveys or excavations have been undertaken in the area.

Around the area of Shimbar valley, there is further evidence and traces of a stone building, known as \textit{Qal’e-ye Dokhtar}, which were found nearby an extensive terracing and two water tunnels used for irrigation, dominating the large panelled rock-relief of Tang-e Botan.

Bivar and Shaked reported the ruins of construction on top of the mountain overlooking the Tang-e Botan valley. In particular, Bivar visited the site and described a modest building of dry-stone masonry that from his perspective was unlikely to have been a fortified place. About the reliefs at the bottom of the slope, he prefers interpreting this structure as a cult place, due to the presence of a pillar with a hollowed top, which Bivar considers to be a fire-altar as depicted in the rock-reliefs. However, he admits that there is scant evidence from the surface to determine the function of the building since the walls had fallen and the stones were already widely scattered at the time of his visit in 1962\footnote{Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 280; pl. VIII. See also Curtis 1996.}. Identification of the construction as a small fortress cannot be entirely ruled out since it was common for the Elymaeans to have a fortified building near sacred places.

During his archaeological investigation in 2012, Sardari surveyed the region of Masjed-e Soleyman and Andika estimating the discovery of sixty-two Elymaean sites. In particular, he briefly describes two terraced structures which may be possibly connected to the tradition of sacred terraces. The \textit{Sangar} platform (100×70 m) is localized 5 km northeast of Masjed-e Soleyman and made up of 2-3 m walls in undressed stones. Possibly stretched on two levels, the terrace has been looted, even though some potsherds have been recorded. Concerning the \textit{Botvand} platform (80×50 m), the structure – including a stair which allowed the entrance from south – is placed 13 km east of Masjed-e Soleyman. Six tepes and two rock-cut tombs are recorded around the terrace\footnote{Sardari \textit{et al.} 2012 (Farsi).}. 

\footnotesize
\textit{The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)}

\normalsize
6.5 Summary and Conclusion

The architectural evidence from the Bakhtiari mountain region between the modern provinces of eastern Khuzestan, Chaharmahal va Bakhtiari, and Kohgiluyeh va Buyer Ahmad suggests a complex picture of heterogeneous domestic religious practices. In this cultural context, the prevalent use of closed spaces in conjunction with open-air terraces represents an architectural hallmark of the Elymaean landscape. These so-called sanctuaries autochtones\textsuperscript{1104}, centres of local religious and cult activities, were erected on the highest point of the sites on artificial elevated platforms. In this structural concept, temples do not appear to be isolated architectural units, but they are frequently incorporated within monumental shrines, delineated by dry-wall substructures with rectangular buttresses, in an environment particularly significant from an aesthetic point of view\textsuperscript{1105}. The Elymaeans drew from and selectively integrated a variety of cultural, structural and religious traditions to forge new architectural vocabularies and ritual expressions. Elamite and Mesopotamian planimetric schemes, Iranian and Greek architectural elements, Hellenistic and Arsacid ritual paraphernalia were convincingly amalgamated to imprint a brand-new development in the local sacred architecture which satisfied the local needs of cult practices (§10.1.1).

In particular, sanctuaries in Elymais seem to have been built to be intimately assimilated within an environmental framework where the retaining walls of the terraces have been adapted to the natural rocky structure on which they were erected as if the artificial platforms were the optimal extension of the mountainous environment. Thus, one can even be encouraged to assume a conceptual bond\textsuperscript{1106} between the terraces and the mountains on which they arise with the latter that may have played a crucial role in the cult practices of the local people.

Unlike several Elamite and Achaemenid natural open-air sanctuaries, which ceased activities at the end of the Achaemenid era, the presence in Elymais of artificial sacred terraces – located in traditional places with a long-lasting religious value\textsuperscript{1107} – that were cultually “modernized” with the introduction of covered architectonical structures throughout the Seleuco-Parthian eras, fostered the evolution of new places of worship. They became the place where traditions were preserved and perpetuated.

\textsuperscript{1104} Martinez-Sève 2014b, pp. 252-272.
\textsuperscript{1105} Álvarez-Mon 2014.
\textsuperscript{1107} Recent field studies have started to demonstrate how the areas to which a certain numinous consideration was attributed, were frequented since Prehistoric times as the finding of several lithic objects in some Elymaean site (e.g. Hung-e Azhdar, Shami) may confirmed (Messina 2015a, pp. 81-88; Messina et. al. 2016, pp. 39, 49).
7. Rock Reliefs

Excluding the fragments of stone slabs with relief sculptures discovered at the sites of Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman and Shami, the rock art in Elymais is composed of a series of rupestrian reliefs scattered around the mountainous area of eastern Khuzestan between the Bakhtiari plateau and the central part of the Zagros, perpetuating more ancient Elamite traditions. Nevertheless, if they are isolated or hidden, the Elymaean rock reliefs may have reflected their religious and celebrative purpose for centuries, being the record of ancient sacred places today barely recognizable. Bearing the message of a millennial tradition, the rock reliefs still revive the memory of local people.

Attracting the attention of A.H. Layard, these rock artefacts – discovered over the past two centuries – have been subjected to a series of studies, which have provided a cataloguing based on iconographic and stylistic criteria and an initial chronological articulation of the carved scenes. However, some aspects remain to be better explained, even though the academic documentation, so far mainly constituted of photographic images and drawings made on site, is of excellent quality. On the other side, a detailed examination of the subject matter is not always attainable, due to the absence, in most cases, of systematic topographical and archaeological explorations of the area, which surrounded the places where these works were manufactured.

Given the difficulty of drawing the precise geographic confines of the Elymaean kingdom, it is not always a simple matter to classify a relief as being Elymaean rather than Parthian. At present, there is general agreement among scholars to consider as Elymaean

1109 Sir Austen Henry Layard represented the first explorer to discover an Elymaean rock relief in modern times. However, the first modern mention of the presence of inscriptions and rock reliefs in these territories was given by Rawlinson (1839, p. 84) reporting the cliffs and boulders of Izeh-Malamir and Shekaft-e Salman, sourced from information provided by Bakhtiari tribesmen. The English officer, as discussed earlier, did not visit the location in person. The first European known to have seen these reliefs was Layard, who in 1841-1842 discovered the relief of Tang-e Botan near Shimbar (Layard 1894, pp. 106-114). See also Mehr Kian 2000, pp. 57-59. The Belgian scholar L. Vanden Berghe and the German scholar W. Hinz were able to discover some other Elymaean reliefs before the Islamic revolution. The Iranian archaeologist Ali Akbar Sarfaraz also discovered the carving of Kalgeh (or Kal-e Geh, Zarin Kalgeh, or Kolegah in Luri dialect) in Masjed-e Soleyman in 1973-1974 (also in Curtis 1994 where the finding is a statue more than a relief), while J. Mehr Kian has found the greatest percentage of Elymaean reliefs presently known, publishing the most recent list of the monuments still in situ within the province of Khuzestan (Mehr Kian 2000, p. 67). Mehr Kian discovered six new rock reliefs between the Susan plain and the Izeh plateau, some of them still unpublished (ibid. 1996, pp. 64-61; idem 1997, pp. 67-72; idem 2001, pp. 293-298).
1110 See §4.1.1.
1111 Mathiesen 1992/1, p. 9.
the rock reliefs existing in the area bordered on the north by the Shimbar valley and on the south by the district of Behbahan\textsuperscript{1112}. This chapter, therefore, confronts and describes the dynamics and the problems involved in the main poles of development within which most of the important Elymaean reliefs have been realized, corresponding to the intermontane areas of Tang-e Sarvak (near Behbahan), Shimbar, and Izeh-Malamir, and including the scattered rupestrian works discovered in the vicinity.

7.1 *Tang-e Sarvak (TS: Pls. XXV-XXXII)*

Settled in a remote valley covered by a cypress woodland, Tang-e Sarvak\textsuperscript{1113} represents an open-air site comprising of four freestanding blocks delineated by several panels (13/14)\textsuperscript{1114} and inscriptions carved into stone (Pl. XXV). Two of these are placed on smaller rocks delimiting the lower and higher edges of the sacred area, while two more elaborate examples are located on two massive boulders surrounded by a flat open-space area. The rocky surfaces of the panels were cut and re-cut (especially *Rock II*) providing a visual composition of Parthian-like rupestrian art, which added further difficulties to the establishment of a reliable time path for the reliefs. They cover an extended period of time, spanning presumably from the late 1st century BC to the early 3rd century AD\textsuperscript{1115}.

Gently heading up to the cult space, a well-maintained path likely used for ritual actions passes through an impressive gorge reaching the foot of a monumental rock wall\textsuperscript{1116}. As rightly indicated by Henkelman\textsuperscript{1117}, the findings at Tang-e Sarvak need to be perceived as a unified entity, rather than as a series of isolated elements. The arduous narrow trail and the scenic views make the ascent/descent physically and visually unforgettable.

\textsuperscript{1112} Map 4. In this territory extending lengthwise through the Zagros mountains range, reliefs that can be certainly assumed as Elymaeans are the carved works from Tang-e Sarvak (4 boulders), Izeh-Malamir (Hung-e Azhdar, Hung-e Yaralivand and Hung-e Kamalvand), Shimbar (Tang-e Botan, Kuh-e Taraz, Bard-e Bot), namely the main artistic poles for the local sculptors. To these may be added – in the region of Shimbar – the most recent discoveries of Shirinow-Mowri (1988), Algi (1990-1991), Sarhani (2009), and Susan-Sorkhab (2012) (Mehr Kian 2000, p. 67).


\textsuperscript{1114} One of these reliefs (to be precise, TS.I:S) perhaps should be regarded as having two sections, thus creating 14 reliefs instead of 13 (Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 131).

\textsuperscript{1115} Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, pp. 59-88; Kawami 1987, pp. 88-110, pls. 35-48; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 130-149, nos. 9-22.

\textsuperscript{1116} Von Gall 2000, pp. 339-343.

\textsuperscript{1117} Henkelman 2014, p. 228.
7. Rock Reliefs

Tang-e Sarvak is undoubtedly one of the most impressive sacred places in all of Iran. Isolated and rarely frequented, it preserves an incredible spirituality and makes one reflect on the impact that a “breathtaking” natural framework would have had for an ancient society.

7.1.1 General Aspects

The corpus of rock reliefs present in the valley is distributed across four independent boulders, labelled I, II, III and IV.\(^{1118}\)

The few recognizable details still discernible on reliefs are in a general state of advanced deterioration concerning the personages. The sculpted figures have been mostly defaced, and the artistic quality of the rupestrian works is not particularly refined in a static style, which reproduce the figures in a rather crude, flattened and unnaturalistic (size and posture) manner.\(^{1119}\) Iconography is limited to standard themes also present in Parthian art, revolving around motifs as ritual offerings, divine investiture, sacred banqueting, courtiers’ homage, hunting and duelling on horseback, ceremonies, and scenes of worship and adoration. A certain sense of non-participation attitude permeates the absolute frontality of figures that seem to be placed on the stage as single isolated component alongside each other in a rhythmic repetition of gestures.

7.1.2 Archaeological Context

Two schools of thought are accepted in the cataloguing and description of these reliefs: one only based on the classification of single boulder considering the order in which

\(^{1118}\) Henning categorized the reliefs in Monument A which included ANa, ANb, ANW, AWa, AWba, AWbβ, and AWc; regarding Monument B, there are reliefs BW, BN and BS; on Monument C, there are carved CE and CN; while Monument D is only constituted by one scene (Henning 1952). De Waele (1974) offers a new enumeration of the reliefs (Monument B=Rock I, A=II, D=III and C=IV). This system is followed by Vanden Berghe and Schippmann (1985) while Mathiesen prefers the cataloguing of Henning in that he considers De Waele’s as being too complicated since based on the order in which one sees the reliefs while climbing the gorge. In my case the abbreviations used to indicate the various reliefs, the first roman numeral indicates the monument (I, II, III, IV), the second upper case letter refers to a cardinal compass point (North, South, East, West), and the lower case letters which follow indicate an upper or lower register (a=above; b=below). In the case of relief TS.II:Wb (rock II; direction West; lower register), where there are two reliefs in the same register the letter á is used for the one on the left and ß for the one on the right. For clarity reason, I will supplement my enumeration to the Henning’s.

\(^{1119}\) The current state of conservation leaves the way open for a divergence of opinion regarding the identities of some of the figures and how the scenes could be interpreted (e.g., the number of female personalities represented; in this regard, see the dispute between von Gall 2000, and Haerinck and Smekens 2003). There are also disagreements over how many deities are depicted and who they may be.
these are encountered when climbing the gorge\(^{1120}\); and a second which groups the reliefs in
time segments by detailed analysis of technical and stylistic peculiarities\(^{1121}\).

In this section, the reliefs are described in association to the single boulders on which
they are carved\(^{1122}\) with the aim of providing an easier understanding and localization of
the scenes. Entering the valley from the west\(^{1123}\), at ca. 1 km, the first monument encountered is
*Rock I*, in particular, *TS.I*:*W* and then *TS.I*:*S*, and is located close to a short section of ancient
canalization. *Rock II* and *III* are on a broad slope close to a massive rock with petroglyphs,
while *Rock IV*\(^{1124}\) is further up at the top of the path\(^{1125}\). Mathiesen pointed out that the
western face of the various rock surfaces was likely the most important and the first used\(^{1126}\).

### 7.1.2.1 Location

On the edge of the Behbahan plain in the province of Kohgiluyeh and Boyer Ahmad,
the archaeological site (locally Sawlek)\(^{1127}\) lies in a gorge in the mountainous area of the
Bakhtiar, approximately 60 km south-east of Rom Hormoz along a belt of villages occupied
by the sedentary members of the *Bahma`i e Garmsir* tribe.

A seasonal stream descends from the surrounding slopes through the narrow gorge in
winter and spring, while it is dry in the summer and autumn. At an altitude of ca. 1,200 m, the

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\(^{1121}\) Kawami 1987; Mathiesen 1992.

\(^{1122}\) For designating the rock blocks and reliefs in relation to compass points, I will seek to take into account both
ways of thinking, following the classification given by De Waele (1974) and by Vanden Berghe and
Schipmann (1985), which in some cases differs from what is provided by Henning (1952). For this reason,
both denominations will be assigned, when needed, to each block or relief, to allow for ease of comparison in
any future study. In the course of the description, if necessary, I will use the presumed order in which the
carvings were executed, in this case following the guidelines suggested by Kawami (1987, pp. 88-110) and
Mathiesen (1992/1-2).

\(^{1123}\) According to De Waele 1974, this approach from the west would be the natural way of entering the valley.

\(^{1124}\) Vanden Berghe and Schipmann (1985, p. 79) and Haerinck (2005) identify the third block with III (D), but
Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 130) instead identifies it with IV (C). See the general layout (De Waele 1974, p. 263,
and fig. 6.1).

\(^{1125}\) I express my sincere thanks to Pr. Gian Pietro Basello for the GIS data of the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak, his
personal observations and photographic documentation.

\(^{1126}\) Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 131) asserts that as time passed and once these western surfaces were entirely covered,
the other surfaces were used and decorated (cf. Debevoise 1942; and Henning 1952, p. 173). There would
seem to be an exception in monument C (IV), which because of the nature of the landscape is the first to be
seen from the north. Certainly, a study regarding the positioning of the reliefs cannot be considered in
isolation but must be combined with technical considerations and stylistic criteria.

\(^{1127}\) The official name of the valley is *Tang-e Sarvak*, i.e., “the gorge of the little cypresses.” *Soolak* or *Sawlek*
is a local dialect form. The name seems to have recent origins, probably referring to the gorge (*tang*) that leads
in from the west. The mountain including this gorge – next to Kuh-e Moshteh – is called Kuh-i Sarvak or “the
mountain of the little cypresses” (Henning 1952, p. 153). This mountain pass contains a forest of zarbin trees
(*Cupressus sempervirens var. horizontalis*) called Jangal-e Sulak/Sarvak covering an area of ca. 1,000
hectares (Alam 1993)
site is reached via a long climb along a tortuous path, which continues to the southeast part of
the gorge.\footnote{1128}

\subsection*{7.1.2.2 Discovery}

The site of Tang-e Sarvak was first discovered when Baron de Bode (First Secretary of
the Russian embassy in Tehran) passed through Behbahan on his tour across Fars and
Khuzestan in January 1841.\footnote{1129} His report attracted some attention, and Tang-e Sarvak was
visited on several occasions in 1853 by Ehtesham-al-Dawla, who published drawings of
the carvings and inscriptions.\footnote{1131} The reliefs were also mentioned briefly in handbooks, by
Friedrich Spiegel in his \textit{Eranische Altertumskunde}, and by Ferdinand Justi in a note in the
Grundriss der Iranischen Philologie – who accepted a superficial hypothesis of de Bode – and
affirmed that Tenk-i Saulek was without shadow of doubt the city of Seleucia/Soloke
mentioned by Strabo.\footnote{1135} Henning soon refuted this hypothesis.\footnote{1136}

In 1892/3 Forsat-od-Dowleh wrote a brief note on the rock reliefs, confirming the
presence of the \textit{“remains of ancient buildings on its top”}, while in 1917 Hassan Husaini
Fasayi made his preliminary drawings of the site.\footnote{1139} Although the reliefs belong to the
Parthian era of which they constitute the principal series, a learned scholar as Herzfeld wrote:
\textit{“there are no other Arsacid sculptures [than those at Mount Bisutun] of any importance
\footnote{1128} For a description of this track, see Stein 1940, pp. 103-113.
\footnote{1129} Baron de Bode followed a suggestion of the \textit{de facto} local governor Mirza Kúmo, who drew his attention to
the existence of rocks sculpted with inscriptions in a mountain gorge a few dozen kilometres north of
Behbahan. Being immediately aware that no information of these antiquities had so far reached the Western
World (De Bode 1845, pp. 363-364), he visited the beautiful and remote valley on the 29\textsuperscript{th} of January, spelling
its name as \textit{Tengi-Saúlek}. De Bode described the rupestrian scenes, making sketches of some of them, and
copying inscriptions – all of this in the course of an afternoon – and later publishing his discoveries in a book.
The Baron also brings to our attention the existence of a possible route from Tang-e Sarvak to Esfahan,
showed to him by one of his guides (de Bode 1845, p. 364). Such information is very intriguing and would be
connected with discussion regarding Elymaean control of commercial routes passing through the Zagros
mountains, which seems to have been the basis for its wealth and power. See \S 4.1.1.1.
\footnote{1130} His full name is Ehtesham-al-Dawla Solțan Oways Mirza (1839-1892). He was governor of Kohgiluya and
Behbahan in 1865.
\footnote{1131} Ehtesham-al-Dawla 1895, p. 263.
\footnote{1132} Spiegel 1878/III, p. 820. The name of the site is miswritten as \textit{Teng-i Salek}.
\footnote{1133} De Bode 1845, p. 365.
\footnote{1134} Justi 1896-1904/II, p. 486, footnote 5.
\footnote{1135} Str., XVI.1.18. On Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon/Soloke see Appendix 3.
\footnote{1136} Henning 1952, pp. 176-177.
\footnote{1137} Mirza Mohammad-Naṣîr (or Naṣîr-al-Din) Hosayni Shirazi better known by his pen name Forṣat-al-Dawla
(1854-1920) was a poet, scholar, and artist. He was among the first Persian scholars of modern times to take a
serious interest in the language and history of ancient Persia. In this field, his most well-known work is \textit{Atar-e ‘ajam}, a collection of more than fifty drawings of several historical sites in Iran, especially Fars (1935).
\footnote{1138} Forṣat-al-Dawla (1892-1893), \textit{Atar-e ‘ajam}, p. 411.
\footnote{1139} Forsat-od-Dowleh 1934.}
known in Iran”. In so doing, he made an important assumption implying that the Elymaean reliefs were not directly related to the official art of the Arsacid court. The first photographs were published by Sir Aurel Stein in 1936, taken during a journey that he made, despite unfavourable weather conditions, from Lindeh to Tang-e Sarvak, where he stayed from the 7th to 9th of January 1936.

7.1.2.2.1 ROCK I (= Monument B)

As first block (h. 3.70 m), it is encountered at the site after about 20 minutes on foot, coming from the entrance of the gorge in the west. It is carved on three sides (Pl. XXVI), and on the northwest flank (TS.I:S) there are two male figures sculpted in different places. Due to the poor state of preservation, it is unclear if the figure TS.I:S.1 on the left (1.50 m) is standing or seated on a throne, as it is only possible to recognize the right front leg and side, while the left front leg appears vaguely visible. On his left is a conical object (TS.I:S.a) with a stepped base, similar to the altar (or incense-burner?) found at Shami. The entire scene is resting on a platform or pedestal, which could confirm the presence of an enthroned figure as in TS.II:Wa.1-8 on Rock II, and at Shirinow-Mowri (SM:1). His head is turned in profile towards the altar, and apparently wears a headdress (capuchon). The face is entirely obliterated. He wears a long (belted?) tunic reaching his ankles, which appears as a typical garment worn by figures seated on thrones as TS.II:Wa.1-8, Bid Zard (BZ:1), SM:1, Algi (Al:2). On his left shoulder is a rolled-up cloak which the personage grasps with his left hand. His right arm stretches out over the altar giving the impression that a liquid substance, represented by wavy lines, is being poured on it.

The figure TS.I:S.2 on the right (1.95 m) is entirely frontal with his weight evenly distributed on both feet which are turned out in profile on each side. He seems to have a jacket and cloak fastened on his chest over his knee-length tunic and a tiara on his head.

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1140 Herzfeld 1935, p. 57. In the same way Erdmann 1943, p. 46.
1141 Stein 1940, pp. 103-113.
1143 Stein 1940, Pl. XXVII.21.
1145 As people of particular rank indicated on the sacrifice relief of Bard-e Neshandeh (Appendix 4). According to the De Waele (1974, p. 258), this personage wears a “tunique, manteau et une pèlerine”. See also Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 62; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 137.
His left arm hangs down beside his body while his right arm is lifted, perhaps directed towards TS.I:S.1. There is an inscription (TS.I:insc.1) to the left and above TS.I:S.2 head\textsuperscript{1146}.

On the north side (TS.I:W), the first relief to be seen when approaching from the west is a nude male character TS.I:W.1 posed entirely frontal, apart from his head, that seems slightly turned towards his right shoulder\textsuperscript{1147}. His hair is dressed in a halo shape. The upper right arm is held against the body, while his forearm extends outwards from the waist with his right hand, which appears to support a round object\textsuperscript{1148}. His left hand seems to hold a conical object, while descending from his left elbow there is a piece of cloth or perhaps a stylised animal skin.

Finally, on the available surface (TS.I:N) is the depiction of two male figures\textsuperscript{1149} (TS.I:N.1, 2.0 m on the right; TS.I:N.2, 1.90 m on the left) standing frontally and with their feet apparently in profile\textsuperscript{1150}. They are clad in belted\textsuperscript{2} tunics and trousers. The TS.I:N.2 extends his right arm towards the right section of the relief passing across his chest. His left lower arm stretches out horizontally from the body. Unlike TS.I:N.2, the personage TS.I:N.1 wears a cloak and has his right arm turned to the side and parallel, but above the left arm of TS.I:N.2. His left arm is held at the hip. Both wear tiaras, although the TS.I:N.1 seems to carry a mural crown\textsuperscript{1151}. Between the two personages stands a rounded-top column (TS.I:N.a).

7.1.2.2.2 ROCK II (=Monument A)

The second block of rock – around 1.3 km from the first boulder – is certainly the most imposing (8.6 m), the most representative and decidedly the most significant amongst the monuments at Tang-e Sarvak, given the complexity and quality of the reliefs (Pls. XVII-

\textsuperscript{1146} Henning 1952, p. 159, inscription no. 6; Vanden Berghe and Schipmann 1985, p. 62, inscription no. 1. The translation provided is: “this is the image of Orodes assuming the throne (or taking the stool)”. See §8.1.1, TS.I:insc.1.
\textsuperscript{1147} Henning 1952 p. 159; De Waele 1974, p. 257; Vanden Berghe and Schipmann 1985, p. 62-63, fig. 7; Kawami 1987, cat. no. 44; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{1148} Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 141.
\textsuperscript{1149} Henning (1952, p. 160, pl. XVIII; see also Hansman 1985, p. 239) reported the relief constituted of four elements, two large personages and two small. De Waele (1974, p. 258) and Vanden Berghe (Vanden Berghe and Schipmann 1985, 64) correctly indicated only two. See also Kawami 1987, ca. no. 33.
\textsuperscript{1150} Henning (1952, p. 160) and Hansman (1985, p. 239) seem to recognise four personalities, differing with De Waele (1974, p. 258), Vanden Berghe and Schipmann (1985, p. 64), Kawami (1987, cat. no 33) and Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 142) who indicate only two of them.
\textsuperscript{1151} Henning (1952, p. 160) and Hansman (1985, p. 238). This hypothesis is refuted by Mathiesen (1992/2, footnote 73).
XXX\textsuperscript{1152} and the presence of five inscriptions. It is decorated on two sides (NW and NE) and on the northern corner.

The northeast face has two registers, upper and lower. The registre supérieur\textsuperscript{1153} (TS.II:Na) includes four personages: a man resting on a kline (TS.II:Na.1) surrounded by two sitting figures (TS.II:Na.2 on the left; TS.II:Na.3 on the right) and one standing (TS.II:Na.4), all represented larger than life-size\textsuperscript{1154}. Lying on his left side on the kline – depicted with three legs in the form of an eagle\textsuperscript{1155} – and wearing a knee-length (belted?) tunic and trousers, TS.II:Na.1 rests his left elbow on a kind of cushion holding in his left hand what could be a drinking bowl. His right hand holds up a ring or wreath (TS.II:Na.a) that, significantly, appears to be located in the centre of the scene. His right leg is bent over his left leg. His hair is dressed in large bunches at the ears – a characteristic typical of all figures in the reliefs – while a headdress with a knob at the top is placed on his head\textsuperscript{1156}. The face is obliterated. On the right of the relief, TS.II:Na.4 holds a cornucopia in his left hand. These two figures are somewhat reminiscent of the Bard-e Bot scene (§7.5.2.3). On the left side TS.II:Na.2-3 are represented sitting on a double throne (or kline) of excellent manufacture including an elegant left leg similar to some small findings from Shami\textsuperscript{1157}. Both figures have the same posture with heads and chests represented frontally, the legs slightly turned to the right and the feet resting on footstools similar to TS.II:Wa.1-8 and TS.I:BS.1 of Tang-e Sarvak, and Shirinow-Mowri (SM:1). They are clad in long belted tunics. In the right hand of TS.II:Na.2, there is a sceptre-like element topped by a sphere, while TS.II:Na.3 holds in his right hand a spear with a ribbon beneath its point. Behind the shoulders of these personages there is a wavy line probably indicating the ends of a diadem. Both figures have bunches of hair at the ears and wear different headgears (a rayed helmet for TS.II:Na.2; a rounded top-pointed

\textsuperscript{1152} “These reliefs have been executed in the most characteristic and remarkable style of all Tang-e Sarvak [...] works showing exactly this style are found only in Elymais-Susiana”, Mathiesen (1992/2, 133) referring to some of the reliefs in this block (TS.II:Na; TS.II:NW; TS.II:Wbβ).

\textsuperscript{1153} Pl. XXVII. Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985.


\textsuperscript{1155} Compare with kline represent on a Sasanian bowl in Ghirshman 1962, fig. 242; von Gall 1970, fig. 3b.

\textsuperscript{1156} Mathiesen (1992, 2, 132) describes this typology of headdress as a “rounded, top-pointed helmet with a T-shaped decoration at the apex”. According to him (Mathiesen 1992/2, footnote 19), this headdress recalls the plaster reliefs of Dura-Europos (Downey 1977, cat. nos. 126).

\textsuperscript{1157} Stein 1940, pl. VI.13, 15.
headgear for *TS.II:Na.3*. Two inscriptions (*TS.II:insc.2-3*) are present above and to the left of the scene\(^{1158}\).

The lower register (*TS.II:Nb*) is composed of three figures, probably males (*TS.II:Nb.1*, 1.62 m, on the left; *TS.II:Nb.2*, 2 m, in the centre, *TS.II:Nb.3*, 2 m, on the right)\(^{1159}\). The scene is situated at ground-level and sculpted fairly deeply into the rock. The relief is quite eroded, but it seems to have remarkable similarities with *TS.IV:N*. Although the panel’s surface is damaged, the three depictions appear to be clad in belted tunics, wide trousers and shoes. *TS.II:Nb.1* seems to hold a long object in front of his body, perhaps a sword\(^{1160}\), while *TS.II:Nb.2-3* are too eroded to be described with certainty, on their left side may be what appears to be a “scroll”, identifiable as a scabbard or, more likely, a rolled-up cloak.

Carved into a niche, the northern corner (*TS.II:NW*) includes a significant standing male figure (*TS.II:NW.1*)\(^{1161}\), the tallest at Tang-e Sarvak (2.80 m), who is shown dressed in a knee-length belted tunic in front of a stepped altar with a beribboned conical object (*TS.II:NW.a*). The face is depicted entirely frontally with clearly visible large eyes having incised irises and pupils, moustache and beard. The hair is gathered at the ears in large bunches in the same manner as *TS.II:Na.1*. Earrings, a massive torque around his neck, and a conical headdress bearing vertical and horizontal lines and a knob at the top are also discernible. The right arm is elevated, while his left arm is bent to the chest as if holding an object. Over the tunic is a cloak that is held at the chest by a fastener appearing on both sides of his body, similar to the image at Bid Zard (*BZ:1*). On the left shoulder is an additional rolled-up cloak falling down the left side. To the left of *TS.II:NW.1*, within a carved alcove there is a stepped composition constituted of three stones, with the first two rectangular

\(^{1158}\) *TS.II:insc.2* = (Henning 1952, p. 156, *inscription no. 1*; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 68, or *inscription no. 2*) is found above the scene. There are the two different translations (Henning 1952, p. 169 vs Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 287):
- Henning’s translation: “This is the image of Orodas assuming the throne, son of Bel-duša ZY RB’NY, and the prisoners (captive) and...who are at the gate (court) (of) Abar-basi assuming the throne”.
- Shaked’s translation: “This is the image of Orodas taking the stool, son of Bel-doša who is rabbani, with Aserya (?) and Antiochus who are at the gate (i.e., court). Bar Basi taking the stool”

\(^{1159}\) Pl. XXVIII. Stein 1940, p. 106; Henning 1952, p. 157; De Waele 1974, p. 259; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 73; Kawami 1987, cat. no. 34; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 140-141.

\(^{1160}\) Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 141.

blocks which serve as a basis for rounded-top *TS.II:NW.a* marked by a floating ribbon, above and below two rows of circular decoration. Placed below the lowest stone of the baetyl-support element (*TS.II:NW.a*), on the left of the principal personage *TS.II:NW.1*, there is an inscription (*TS.II:insc.4*).\(^{1162}\)

The northwest face proposes three registers. The upper register (*TS.II:Wa*) introduces nine figures of which seven are standing, and two are seated on thrones (*TS.II:Wa.1*, the first; and *TS.II:Wa.8*, the eighth character starting from the left). The surface is severely eroded resulting in a severe loss of detail. However, *TS.II:Wa.1* seems to be represented frontally on a pedestal, clad in a long ankle-length tunic as at *TS.I:S.1; BZ:1, SM:1*, Algi (*Al:2\(^{?}\)*), with his legs slightly in profile to the left. Holding a sceptre in his right hand, he has the left arm bent to the chest with a drinking bowl or similar object in his hand. Diadem ribbons seem to be present at the shoulder. He has a beard and abundant hair as is the case with the following five figures (*TS.II:Wa.2-6*). Conceivably of a lower social order, they are all equally represented standing frontally, in a paratactic alignment, and wearing similar garments with a rolled-up cloak along the left side of the body. The standing *TS.II:Wa.2* (first figure next to *TS.II:Wa.1*) has a rolled-up cloak running down from his left shoulder. He has very abundant hair but no diadem. His lower right arm is extended horizontally to the side, while the right hand is held above an altar (incense burner\(^{3}\)) which is placed in a floating position, with no ground contact. His left hand is in front of his chest. Considering from *TS.II:Wa.3* to *TS.II:Wa.6*, the personages have similar postures, sizes, and dressing in belted tunics; *TS.II:Wa.7* instead is larger than them, standing on a lower ground-line. His facial details (eyes, nose, moustache, and beard) are vaguely recognizable. The enthroned *TS.II:Wa.8* is similar to *TS.II:Wa.1*, but at a lower level. His face has been broken off, but the original presence of a beard may be assumed. The ribbons of a diadem are present at his shoulder. He is clad in an ankle-length tunic, with his well-defined legs recalling the *TS.II:Na.2-3*’s legs. His right hand is in front of his chest and possibly once held a sceptre-like object, while the left lower arm stretches out from the body.\(^{1163}\) Finally, *TS.II:Wa.9* is the most damaged and the most difficult to describe in his long floor-length garments, which may indicate a seated figure similar to the relief at Bard-e Bot (*BB:2*).\(^{1164}\) Diadem fillet ends seem to fall down his right shoulder. Both his hands

\(^{1162}\) Henning 1952, p. 174, inscription no. 3; or Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 76, inscription no. 4. The inscription is translated as “They cut this image / MD’N’M and P / the son of BDQ (…) as / Orodes assuming the throne, marble? (alabaster?)” (Henning 1952, p. 174). See §8.1.1, TS.II:insc.4.

\(^{1163}\) Stein (1940, p. 107) considered the figure was holding a falcon.

\(^{1164}\) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 78.
hold a thin object, perhaps a spear or a sceptre\textsuperscript{1165}. Additionally, in a narrow section just below TS.II:Wa.9 has engraved an inscription (TS.II:insc.5)\textsuperscript{1166}.

The middle register (TS.II:Wb\textsuperscript{1167}) is divided into two reliefs\textsuperscript{1168}. The one on the left (TS.II:Wba\textsuperscript{1169}) has six personalities, four large (from left, grouped as TS.II:Wba:3a-d) and two small (from left TS.II:Wba.1-2), all presumably males\textsuperscript{1170}. The scene is highly eroded with many details indecipherable. The figures are placed on a rectangular surface that has an extension on the left side, containing TS.II:Wba.1-2. Above this, an area of rough rock has remained untouched. These last characters are quite severely damaged and are located on higher ground-level compared to TS.II:Wba.3. According to Henning, TS.II:Wba.1 had his head turned to the right, wore tunic and trousers, and had an indeterminable object in one of his hands, while TS.II:Wba.2 was frontally depicted with headgear and a shorter tunic.

The relief on the right (TS.II:Wbf\textsuperscript{1171}) is placed in the only space available on the northwest face, precisely at the right bottom\textsuperscript{1172}, and represents a male figure on horseback (TS.II:Wbf.1, 1.85 m) fighting a wild animal (TS.II:Wbf.a). The area where this scene is sculpted was probably not spacious enough leading the two personages to be slightly overlaid, with the tail of the horse in TS.II:Wbf touching the last figure on the right in TS.II:Wba.3(d). Frontally represented with his hair typically gathered into a large bunch on each side of his head TS.II:Wbf.1 wears a conical headdress similar to the one present on the head of TS.II:NW.1. He is clad in a belted tunic that reaches his knees. Close to his left shoulder is a bow-shaped object. In his right hand, TS.II:Wbf.1 holds a weapon, probably a long sword,

\textsuperscript{1165} Kawami (1987, p. 189) believes that this last figure was a later addition to the relief, conforming to her assumption of dividing the scene into four different groups created at various times. This hypothesis has been rejected by Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 149, footnote114).

\textsuperscript{1166} TS.II:insc.5 = (Henning 1952, pp. 171-172, inscription no. 2; or Vanden Bergh and Schippmann 1985, p. 79, inscription no. 6) has been corrected by Shaked (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 287).

- Henning’s translation: “Bel-duša RB’N’ and the prisoners and (…) who (are) at the gate/court of Abar-Basi assuming the throne (or taking the stool)”.
- Shaked’s translation: “Bel-duša, who is rabbani with Aserya and Antiochus who are at the Gate. Bar Basi taking the stool”.

See also Kawami 1987, p. 190; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 149, footnote 115. In particular, while Kawami (1987, p.190) retains that the inscription was made in two stages with the line mentioning Abar-Basi added later, Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 149, footnote 115) believes the opposite. For more details, see §8.1.1, TS.II:insc.5.

\textsuperscript{1167} Pl. XXIX.

\textsuperscript{1168} Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 146, footnote 3.

\textsuperscript{1169} Henning 1952.


\textsuperscript{1171} Henning 1952.

with which he pierces the throat of the bear-like *TS.II:*Wbβ.a represented in profile on its rear legs. The horse has a relatively small head compared to its body as at Hung-e Kamalvand (*HK:a*) and seems to carry a quiver on its right flank behind *TS.II:*Wbβ.1.

To complete the description of this panel, the lower register (*TS.II:*Wc) shows a man with a tiara (*TS.II:*Wc.1, 1.80 m) entirely frontal on the right, grasping on the left a lion (*TS.II:*Wc.a) with his hand at its neck. The man wears a tunic, trousers, and shoes and has a sheathed sword along the lower part of his right side. The lion’s head and body are depicted in profile, and it sits awkwardly on its hind legs as if it had been trained to gesticulate with its forelegs. Above the man’s head, an inscription (*TS.II:*insc.6) reports: “this is the image of [...] assuming the throne (or taking the stool)”\(^{1176}\). The name has been erased.\(^{1177}\)

### 7.1.2.2.3 ROCK III (=Monument D)

This block is about 30 m northeast of Rock II. At some point, the right side of the sculpture became detached and fell in front of the carved panel *TS.III* (Pl. XXXI), remaining unknown. The panel is 2.20 m high showing an equestrian combat involving three small figures and a horseman (*TS.III:*I)\(^{1178}\). The latter and his horse (*TS.III:*a), both protected by armour, are directed to the right, typical in the Elymaean equestrian reliefs as *TS.III:*Wbβ.1, at Hung-e Azhdar (*HA:*I-a), or *HK:*I-a. His head and chest are represented frontally, and his long legs shown in profile are covered with the same elegant sheet metal armour, which protects the horse. His hair is dressed in two almost squared bunches at the sides of his head. At his right shoulder is an object moving upwards, perhaps a diadem. *TS.III:*I grasps the reins with his left hand, while his right hand holds a long spear with which he seems to impale an enemy on the right of the relief. Behind the rider, on the right side of the horse, there are a bow case and a quiver. On the left side of the relief, above the hindquarters of *TS.III:*a, three men are represented in the smaller scale, with heads and legs shown in profile. The man on

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1173 Henning (1952, p. 158) interprets the animal like a lion while Vanden Berghe and Schippmann (1985, p. 78) and Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 136) speak of a bear hunt. My personal experience in Iran in 2015, in this particular case when I was at Kuh-e Taraz near Shimbar, informed me that the risk of a bear attack along the Zagros is still likely.

1174 Pl. XXX.


1176 Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 138; see the transcript in Henning (1952, p. 170).

1177 *TS.II:*insc.6 (Henning 1952, p. 173, inscription no. 5; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 79, or inscription no. 7). Henning (1952, pp. 158, 173) declares that the gap in the inscription is too large for the name Orodes (WRWD), but Abar-basi (‘BRB’SY) would fill it to perfection. Mathiesen is perplexed by this affirmation (Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 148, footnote 79). See §8.1.1, *TS.II:*insc.6.

the left \((TS.III:2)\) has a flying cape that may indicate he is moving at great speed to the right, while he is bending his bow towards the right, hanging a sword at his left side. On his right, \(TS.III:3\), who is armed with a sword, has both arms above his head, perhaps holding a stone or a similar blunt element. The spear of \(TS.III:1\) passes in front of \(TS.III:3\)’s legs. A third figure \((TS.III:4)\) lying beneath the others, with his head and arms hanging lifelessly, could be a cadaver.

As reported before, the right section of the relief is broken off, but some remnants of \(TS.III:1\)’s opponent are still recognizable along the fracture of the boulder. The perception is of a figure facing left, as assumed from the direction of his foot. A fragment, interpreted as part of a bowman \((TS.III:5)\), should belong to this relief\(^{1179}\). \(TS.III:5\) seems to show a left arm holding a bow ready to shoot the arrow towards \(TS.III:1\)\(^{1180}\).

7.1.2.2.4 ROCK IV (=Monument C)

The boulder is about 410 m from Rock III and is decorated on two sides (Pl. XXXII). The northern face \((TS.IV:N)\) includes two male figures \((TS.IV:N.1, 1.72\) m, on the left; \(TS.IV:N.2, 1.80\) m, on the right) standing frontally and wearing belted tunics and loose-fitting trousers\(^{1181}\). They each have their right arms bent to the chest, with the right hand perhaps holding something. On the left shoulder running down to the left side of each body is a rolled-up cloak, that the personages hold at waist level with their left hands. Both the left feet (in particular in \(TS.IV:N.1)\) point straight down. The two figures are located at ground-level being carved fairly deeply into an approximately rectangular niche.

The east face \((TS.IV:E)\)\(^{1182}\) represents a male figure \((TS.IV:E.1)\)\(^{1183}\) lying on the left side, presumably on a kline. The personage is frontally depicted wearing tunic and trousers with both legs are extended, one above the other. He seems to have a rolled-up cloak from the left shoulder to the right thigh. His right hand stretches along his body, while his left arm is bent with the left hand in front of his chest, perhaps holding a drinking bowl. There are similarities with the reclining personage at Shaivand \((SH:4)\). The relief is severely damaged.

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\(^{1179}\) De Waele 1975, pp. 67ff, fig. 10-11. See also Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 80.

\(^{1180}\) De Waele 1975, pp. 69-71.


\(^{1182}\) Henning 1952.

\(^{1183}\) Ibid., p. 161; De Waele 1974, p. 261; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 84; Kawami 1987, cat. no. 37; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 141.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.1.2.3 Ruins, Pottery and Associated Artefacts

Despite the relevance of the site, no significant finds have been made around the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak, because this area has not yet benefitted from systematic surveys or any excavations. Interestingly, Curtis makes mention of a fish-tailed bronze figure apparently found “near” Tang-e Sarvak which dated to the Middle or Neo-Elamite period without providing further details. No research or assembly and study of pottery or other items has yet been undertaken, neither has there been any attempt to produce a stratigraphic probe into the surface layers around the reliefs. All that is attested is based on vague indications of some building structures – mostly reduced to ground-level – at Khoda Tsharan, a paved path and small sections of ancient canalization.

It remains inexplicable that no in-depth study has been carried out in an area that appears to be so significant. At this point, we can only add our voices to the request made by Guépin in 1966 for "further exploration", and that “in particular a formal survey of the site is very desirable”.

7.1.2.4 Past Interpretations

De Bode soon realized that the location was of exceptional sacredness, adducing a possible cult of Anahita within the “holy groves” of Elymais. He also tentatively pointed out a particular phonetic similarity between Saulek (i.e., Sarvak) and Soloke, the Elymaean city mentioned by Strabo. This associative link was shared by Ferdinand Justi who in a note asserted that Tenk-i Saulek and the ancient Soloke (Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon) represented the same place. A century later, Henning refuted this affirmation since no archaeological data emerged in support of it from the valley and the surrounding areas. In

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1184 Curtis 1989, p. 16, fig. 9. The item is now stored in the British Museum (BM 132960).
1185 Guépin 1965-1966, pp. 25-26. Briefly mentioned in Potts 1993, p. 352. This location seems to be near the village of Mama Zeinab – called Zainab by Guépin (1965-1966, p. 25) – some 5-6 km northeast of Tang-e Sarvak in the Bakhtiari mountains. In particular, I believe that these structures could be identified with the Emamzadeh Mama Zeinab in that there seem evidently to be both “the walls [...] of dry-stone masonry” and perhaps also “the tumulus situated close to the hills” of which Guépin speaks (Guépin 1965-1966, p. 26). A visit in situ would be strongly required as the location has been obtained from the use of satellite images displayed on Google Earth and Google Maps.
1187 De Bode 1845, pp. 360-361
1188 Ibid., 365.
1189 Str., XVI.1.18. On Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon/Soloke, see Appendix no. 3.
addition, Soloke was supposed to lay on the banks of the Hedyphon river (present Jarrahi), which does not run in the vicinity (ca. 30-35 km westward). During his journey at Tang-e Sarvak, Stein recognized in some of the reliefs (e.g., TS.III:NW) acts of religious propaganda, but limited his assessment to interpreting the site as a seasonal retreat for Elymaean kings, a sort of “hill station”. The significant presence of royal members amongst the carved scenes of the valley is amply underlined by Debevoise who even interpreted TS.II:Wa as the “portrait” of the regnant family. According to Henning, Tang-e Sarvak represented an open-air sanctuary or a place where Elymaean kings were crowned and buried in the 2nd century AD. It was a sacred area of considerable importance for the people of Elymais, being dedicated to Bel or Nanaia worship associated with the local cult of kingship on the basis of TS.II:insc.2, which carry the name of Beldusha, namely – in Henning’s opinion – a priest officiating in the worship of Bel.

In the 1960s and 1970s, there was renewed interest in the site. Louis Vanden Berghe avoided to providing an overall interpretation, addressing the various panels singularly and extrapolating the main themes (e.g., adoration, investiture, hunting). He emphasized the secular nature of the reliefs and the almost total absence of deities and religious scenes. In the same years, Guépin (1962) interpreted Tang-e Sarvak as an important place for the enthronement and coronation of the local rulers as captured in the rupestrian depictions. More thoroughly, he analyzed a ceremony which took place in a mountainous sanctuary and then developed along the valley. The temple was identified with the near ruins of Khoda Tsharan and associated to ta Azara temple of which Strabo gave mention. The primary consideration of Tang-e Sarvak as a place of particular relevance for the kings was increasingly intensified by Ghirshman who explicated the entire western face of Rock II as a sort of royal cenotaph for a dynastic cult. The deceased king is the object of veneration in TS.II:NW, while the cult is attended by family and dignitaries in TS.II:Wa and TS.II: Wba. The deceased king is shown lion-hunting in TS.II:Wb.  

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1191 Henning 1952, pp. 176-177.  
1192 Stein 1938, p. 323.  
1193 Debevoise 1942, pp. 97-100.  
1194 Henning 1952, pp. 176-177.  
1195 Ibid., p. 173. On the inscription, see also §8.1.1, TS.II:insc.2.  
1196 Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, pp. 101-104.  
1197 Guépin 1966, p. 25.  
1198 Str., XVI.1.18.  
1199 Ghirshman 1974, p. 41; idem 1976, p. 284
In 1987, Trudy Kawami assumed that the impressive mountainous conformation of Tang-e Sarvak would have been conceptually optimal as a place for Zoroastrian worship. It was confirmed, in her opinion, by TS.II:Wba.1-2 who seemed to show a strong bond with some Achaemenid images. Kawami surmised that a later change in the nature of the sanctuary in the 3rd century AD could have redesigned it as a shrine of kingship in Elymais. Mathiesen considered the reliefs of TS.II:Wa and TS.II:Wba to be strongly connected, identifying the enthroned TS.II:Wa.1 as the object of homage, veneration, or worship for the personages in TS.II:Wba. The reliefs of TS.II:Wa and TS.II:Wba would be seen as two different parts of the same scene. Although Mathiesen’s assumptions appear solid and well formulated, the poor state of preservation for the scene, where no details of faces, hair or garments are indicated, makes any interpretation highly speculative. There is a minor dispute between Kawami and Mathiesen as to the dating of this relief. Finally, Mathiesen considered the valley of Tang-e Sarvak to be sacred, hypothesizing the possibility that coronations and burials of Elymaean kings could have been carried out here. Particularly attractive is Henkelman’s perspective, which considered Tang-e Sarvak as the principal, “awe-inspiring of all Iran’s numinous places”, taking into account the acoustic fingerprint of the site, and estimating how sound may have played a pivotal role even though the reliefs do not represent musicians. Astounding clear echoes are indeed created by the massive curving rock faces all around the valley as at Tang-e Botan (§7.5.2.1).

7.1.2.5 Dating

Dating of the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak is based on the inscriptions found in loco and still remains uncertain. However, they are commonly placed between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. According to Neilson Debevoise, it seems obvious from the position of the reliefs on Rock II that they were sculpted at different times. The scholar suggested a chronological

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1200 Kawami 1987, p. 90.
1201 Ibid., p. 89.
1202 Ibid., 105.
1203 Kawami 1987, p. 188; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 148, footnote 100.
1205 Henkelman 2014, p. 228.
sequence starting with *TS.II:Wba* as the oldest and dated to the 1st century BC, followed by *TS.II:Wa* (1st century AD), *TS.II:Wbβ* (end-2nd century AD) and *TS.II:Wc* (end of 2nd – beginning of 3rd century AD), continuing until the final point at *TS.II:NW* which is dated to the end of the Parthian period and the beginning of the Sasanid era. He assumed a dating of *TS.I:S* in the 3rd century AD\(^\text{1207}\).

Even Henning associated *Rock II* with two successive sovereigns, Abar-basi and Orodes, dating the monuments dedicated to the first king (*TS.II:Wa; TS.II:Wbβ*)\(^\text{1208}\) to ca. 150 AD, and those of Orodes (*TS.II:NW, TS.II:Na, TS.II:Nb, TS.I:S.1-2, TS.I:W, TS.I:N*)\(^\text{1209}\) to ca. 165-170 AD. Henning also provided alternative dates, such as interpreting Orodes as the last king of Elymais (*ca. 200 AD*), thus dating Abar-basi to 180 AD\(^\text{1210}\).

Colledge, instead, adopted the chronology suggested by Debevoise, defining the first relief to be *TS.II:Wba*, followed by *TS.II:Wa, TS.II:Wbβ, TS.II:Wc* and *TS.II:NW*. His analysis of *TS.II:Na* and *TS.II:Nb* provided a dating based on stylistic criteria of *ca. 150-225 AD*, together with *Rock III-IV*, while for *Rock I* he suggested a dating of the 2nd century BC\(^\text{1211}\).

Only in the last thirty years, thanks to the valuable works of Kawami and Marhiesen, a more comprehensive analysis of the Elymaean rock art has been provided, and the Elymaean reliefs have placed in a broader context of Parthian and Syrian-Mesopotamian models from the last centuries BC to the first centuries AD.

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**Mathiesen’s chronology and division of the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak\(^\text{1212}\).**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Classification</th>
<th>Reliefs</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Late Parthian Ia</strong>&lt;br&gt;(ca. 150-190 AD)</td>
<td>Group 1 (ca. 170-190 AD)</td>
<td><em>I.S.1; I.W; II:Nb; II.Wa; II.Wba; IV.E; IV.N</em></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Late Parthian Ib</strong>&lt;br&gt;(ca. 190-200 AD)</td>
<td>Group 2 (ca. 190-200 AD)</td>
<td><em>I.S.2; I.N; II.Wc</em></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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\(^{1207}\) Debevoise 1942, pp. 90, 97, 100.

\(^{1208}\) Henning 1952, p. 173.


\(^{1211}\) Colledge 1977, pp. 90, 92.

\(^{1212}\) Providing the most exhaustive study on the Elymaean art, Mathiesen (1992/1-2) divided the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak according to their style into four groups, which would presumably represent four successive phases in Parthian sculpture.

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The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
The division provided by Mathiesen is not considered as indicating absolute contemporaneity of works included in each group. Similarly, Kawami distributed the reliefs in four groups, suggesting some variations concerning the division drawn up by Mathiesen. Kawami’s Group One (TS.II:Wbα, TS.I:W) is dated to the 1st century BC and later; Group Two (TS.II:Wa, TS.I:S.1) between the 1st-2nd centuries AD; Group Three (TS.I:S.2, TS.I:N, TS.II:Nb, TS.II:Wc, TS.IV:N, TS.IV:E) dated to the 2nd century AD; and finally Group Four (TS.II:Na, TS.II:NW, TS.II:Wbβ, TS.III) to the beginning of the 3rd century AD.

In the absence of dated inscriptions, the identification of some Elymaean kings is fraught with risk, as is the dating, which continues to create much disagreement among experts. Comparing the Tang-e Sarvak rupestrian panels with other Elymaean reliefs or different media (e.g., numismatic portraits), the chronology provided by Mathiesen and Kawami appears in some cases too high. An example may be represented by TS.II:Na that Mathiesen placed in Late Parthian II together with the carving of Hung-e Azhdar (HA:3-6), but the latter has been recently assigned to the first decades of the 2nd century AD by the scientific work of Vito Messina at Izeh-Malamir. Besides, considering the pointed conical headgear of the recumbent TS.II:Na.1, the only cases in the numismatic portraits are in Kamnaskires-Orodes (ca. first decades of 2nd century AD), Orodes II (ca. mid-2nd century AD) and Orodes IV (late 2nd – early 3rd century AD). Starting from this point, it is possible to backdate within a few decades the rest of the carved scenes at Tang-e Sarvak. In response to the stylistic division into four groups provided by Mathiesen, I fully endorse the classification of Groups 2, 3 and 4; however, I would be inclined to further sub-divide Group

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1213 Kawami 1987, pp. 88-89.
1214 From a comparison between Kawami (1987) and Mathiesen (1992), it can be summarized that Kawami’s Group One and Two are composed by the reliefs of Mathiesen’s Group 1. Her modified dating enables Kawami to compare Tang-e Sarvak’s reliefs with Achaemenid, Post-Achaemenid and Hellenistic works. However, these parallels are firmly rejected by Mathiesen (1992/2, pp. 145-146). Kawami includes then in Group Three some reliefs of Mathiesen’s Group 1 (TS.II:Nb, TS.IV:N, TS.IV:E) and Group 2 (TS.I:S.2, TS.II:Wc, TS.I:N), while Kawami’s Group Four contains Group 3 and 4 of Mathiesen with the same dating.
1215 Messina 2014b, p. 339; idem 2015.
1216 Van’t Haaff 2007, type 12.1, subtypes 1-2.
1217 Ibid., type 13.1, in particular subtype 1-2.c.
1218 Ibid., type 17.3, subtype 1.1.
7. Rock Reliefs

1. In particular, a distinct group composed of \(TS.II:Nb\), \(TS.IV:E\) and \(TS.IV:N\) can clearly be isolated from the existing Group 1. This peculiar subset is characterized by large flat frontal marked surfaces and accentuated squared linearism. The scenes share similar traits to those found in \(TS.II:Wba\), particularly in relation to the outlines of the clothing (e.g., lower end of the knee-length tunic, trousers), when compared, for instance, with the relatively naturalistic expression of \(TS.I:W\). The placement of \(TS.I:S.1\), with his hand raised over an altar towards \(TS.I:W.1\), seems to create a connection between the officiant (\(TS.I:S.1\)) and the deity (\(TS.I:W.1\)), suggesting an almost concurrent execution for the two reliefs. Owing to apparent profile posture with the raised arm which evokes the Achaemenid rupestrian art (e.g., Eregli, Persepolis, Dukkan-e Daud), \(TS.II:Wba\) is confidently accepted as the most ancient among the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak and compared with the dated stelae at Assur can be confidently placed within the first quarter of the 1\(^{st}\) century AD\(^{1219}\). Despite this, \(TS.II:Wa\) may tentatively represent a transition from the strict schematism of \(TS.II:Nb\), \(TS.IV:E\) and \(TS.IV:N\) to the “softer” approach of \(TS.II:Wc\), \(TS.I:N\) and \(TS.I:S.2\) as shown in the hairstyle (rectangular halo shape) and the clothing (the lower end of the tunic starts hinting a bell-like model).

7.1.2.6 Final Considerations

The valley of Tang-e Sarvak represented a sacred area of great importance for the people of Elymais. It may be speculated that here existed an open-air sanctuary or a place where Elymaean kings were crowned and buried\(^{1220}\). Such conjecture is as much fascinating as it is currently not demonstrable, given that there have not yet been any tombs, or architectural discovery made in this area, except for the vague description of the structural ruin named \(Khoda Tsharan\) of which, however, there are no representations, plans or academic studies\(^{1221}\). Of course, this does not exclude the possibility that in the future more thorough archaeological investigations may bring to light hitherto unknown monuments.

The assumption proposed by Henning to interpret Tang-e Sarvak as an open-air sanctuary dedicated to local deities where the Elymaean kings were honoured\(^{1222}\), seems to reveal somehow the actual political situation of the 1\(^{st}\)-2\(^{nd}\) century AD, when a new dynasty (Orodids) of external origin (Arsacid), who was favoured by the local elites\(^{1223}\), tried to

\(^{1219}\) For the dated stelae from Assur (Gate I, Temple A), see Mathiesen 1992/2, cat. nos. 158-159.

\(^{1220}\) Henning 1952, pp. 176-178.

\(^{1221}\) Guépin 1966.

\(^{1222}\) Henning 1952, p. 176.

\(^{1223}\) Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
establish close ties with the native population through a proselytism which approached the cultural and religious spheres. Similarly to the situation of Shami, the presence of a kingship cult site is therefore justifiable only if located within a religious framework. Tang-e Sarvak was a long-established open-air shrine dedicated to local divine entities, along with the lines of the ancient Elamite sites (i.e., Kul-e Farah) in the northern side of Izeh-Malamir valley, where the figure of the king (e.g., Hanni of Ayapir) assumed considerable importance, and for this reason, it was used by a new dynasty to validate its power.

In this context, the two main panels of Rock II have a considerable importance. Also known as the “Orodes” relief (taking its name from the inscription above the scene), TS.II:Na undoubtedly refers to a ritual with king Orodes (TS.II:Na.1) as the subject. Although the representation is unique in its composition, the single elements are standard types, and their precise identity is still open for discussion. TS.II:Na.1 resting on the left elbow is well known in Parthian Iran, generally identifiable with a Heracles-like personage (e.g., Bisotun, Masjed-e Soleyman). However, the presence of reclining figures in Elymais as TS.II:Na.1 and TS.IV:E.1, Bard-e Bot (BB:1), and Susan-Sorkhab (SS:1), appear to represent Syro-Mesopotamian influences in a post-mortem outlook, as the funerary reliefs from Palmyra may evoke. In addition, analogous representations of heroized dead are sculpted in the south tomb of Kharg island. The Elymaean reliefs may be the point where the concept of the recumbent pose moved from being “the heroized dead to the heroic living”. Analysis of TS.II:insc:2 leaves little doubt about the interpretation of TS.II:Na.1 as Orodes.

Considering the other elements of the scene, the modest size of TS.II:Na.4, as well as his peripheral placing and role on the scene, prevents identifying him as a chief deity. I think he could better be interpreted as a Tyche-like minor deity associated with the new

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1224 Álvarez-Mon 2010; idem 2013a; idem 2014b; idem 2014c.
1225 Henkelman 2008a, pp. 8-10, 20-28.
1227 Ibid., Pl. LXXXVI.1.
1228 Heyn 2010. An example of recumbent personage accompanied by adjacent seated figures on the left, and personages standing behind the recumbent subject is shown by the tomb of Malku/Malko (Southwest Necropolis, late 2nd century AD).
1229 Kawami 1987, p. 98; idem 2013, p. 759; Haerinck 1975, pp. 134-167; Potts 2004b, Kharg Island.
1230 Ibid.
1231 Contra Hansman 1985. TS.II:Na:4 has been variously interpreted as an attendant figure (Stein 1940, p. 106); a prince (Debevoise 1942, p. 101); a warrior (Henning 1952, p. 156); a court official (Altheim and Stiehl 1965, pp. 150-151); the deity Zeus Belos/Ahuramazda/Bel (Seyrig 1970, pp. 114, 116; Hansman 1985, p. 237; Colledge 1986, p. 14, pl. XII.c); a genius fravashi (De Waele 1974, p. 259; von Gall 1970, p. 211; Kawami 1987, p. 99); an ancestor of the king (Ghirshman 1974, p. 41; idem 1976, p. 284); or a local god (Colledge 1977, p. 92).
Elymaean-Arsacid kingship. Tyche is a goddess of Greek origins adopted in Parthian iconography of monetary issues starting from Mithridates I (2nd century BC)\textsuperscript{1233}. As an image originated in Hellenistic art in Mesopotamia, Tyche was represented as a composite androgynous with beard\textsuperscript{1234} and often a polos crown on the head, revealing an artistic cult model widely distributed over the Elymaean territory, as demonstrated by the bronze statuette of Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{1235}, and the reliefs of Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{1236}, Shaivand (Sh:3) and Bard-e Bot (BB:2).

Finally, the identification of the two seated figures (TS.II:Na.2-3), made difficult by erosion of facial details, has given rise to controversy, especially regarding their gender. Their nature as humans (vassals, warriors) or divinities (males, females, a male and a female), remains highly contested\textsuperscript{1237}. An interpretation as vassal or warriors, however, is less probable due to some features, such as the radiating halo, the fluttering diadem ribbons, the tunic down to the feet and the pedestals, which instead suggest a divine nature for the personage. Also, the spear held by TS.II:Na.3 could distinguish a deity (a local Athena\textsuperscript{9}) similar to the armed goddess on BN:capit.1 at Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{1238} and on a couple of plaques at Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{1239}. Armed goddesses are unusual in Iran but very common in Mesopotamia and Syria, locally depicting the ancient goddess Ishtar/Astarte and Allath\textsuperscript{1240}. The radiated halo or nimbus of TS.II:Na.2 is also uncommon in Iran, while it is well attested for both male and female deities in northern Mesopotamia and Syria during the Arsacid period. It is best documented at Palmyra\textsuperscript{1241} and Hatra\textsuperscript{1242}, and later present in Sasanian art\textsuperscript{1243}. Compared with the monetary iconography of almost the same period\textsuperscript{1244}, a radiate personage (sometimes with bow and quiver) has often been identified as a local Nanaia/Artemis\textsuperscript{1245}, even though in the case of TS.II:Na.2 the presence of moustaches could reasonably raise some doubts among

\textsuperscript{1233} Invernizzi 2015, p. 56. See also Sinisi 2008. Ellerbrock (2013), instead, describes in detail the evolution of the iconography and meaning of Tyche on the coins from Mithridates I until the end of the Parthian empire.

\textsuperscript{1234} Invernizzi 2015.

\textsuperscript{1235} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXVII.1-4.

\textsuperscript{1236} Ibid., Pl. LXXIX.2-3.

\textsuperscript{1237} Haerinck 2003, p. 223 (tab).

\textsuperscript{1238} Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXIV.2.

\textsuperscript{1239} Ibid., Pl. XCVII.1, 3.

\textsuperscript{1240} Christides 2003, pp. 73-80.

\textsuperscript{1241} Colledge 1976, pp. 38, 41-43, 47, 212.

\textsuperscript{1242} Ghirshman 1962, figs. 1-2; Colledge 1977, pp. 107.

\textsuperscript{1243} Ibid., fig. 233.

\textsuperscript{1244} Van’t Haaaff 2007, types 14.1, 15.1, 16.1.

\textsuperscript{1245} Le Rider 1965, p. 296.
scholars. In reality, the divine bipolarity of genders in a symbolic primordial natural status is reported in other deities as Inanna/Ishtar and Tyche. This archaic coexistence between male and female within the same divine being could have been reproposed for Nanaia/Artemis and even for the Athena-like TS.II:Na.3. Considering the latter (TS.II:Na.3), it is remarkable the resemblances that are present in the equestrian (HK:1) about the headgear and the spear with ribbons. Finally, speaking of these two seated personages, they seem to represent a sun god (TS.II:Na.2) and a war goddess (TS.II:Na.3), but it remains speculative identifying them given the confines of our limited knowledge of the Elymaean pantheon.

While not conclusive, it may be suggested that the relief TS.II:Na reveals the investiture of Orodes (TS.II:Na.1) receiving the legitimacy of his authority in the presence of the major local deities (TS.II:Na.2-3) of the pantheon under the benevolent protection of a Tyche-like local representation (TS.II:Na.4).

The allied iconographical features between the recumbent TS.II:Na.1 (i.e., coiffure, headgear, beard) and the standing TS.II:NW.1, in addition to the fact that the respective inscriptions (TS.II:insc.2 and TS.II:insc.4) name the same WRWD (Orodes), seem to ensure that the two homonyms represent the same person, revealing that both depictions have a remarkable religious dimension. If TS.II:Na.1 impersonating the secular authority is immortalized while receiving the insignia of power from the gods, TS.II:NW.1 embodies a religious officiant in the act of performing cult practices. His right arm is elevated perhaps in a signe d’adoration towards TS.II:NW.a, indicating the sacredness of the scene. Marked by a floating ribbon, above and below two rows of circular decorations, TS.II:NW.a has been convincingly interpreted as a beribboned baetyl. However, the origin of a content where a

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1246 Vanden Berghe 1985, fig. 9; Haerinck 2003, p. 225, Pl. 10.
1249 On the possible interpretation of Orodes at Tang-e Sarvak TS.II:Na with Orodes II, see Vardanian 1997, p. 159.
1251 Stein 1940, p. 108; Altheim and Steihl 1952, pp. 32, 34; Henning 1952, p. 160; De Waele 1974, p. 262, footnote 21. Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 136; Kawami 2013. The word baetyl derives from the Greek βαύτηλος (baetylus), originating from bet el, the Semitic term for "the house of god." A baetyl was a sacred stone – ancient sources seem to speak of some as being meteorites – supposed to be animated by divine life. Such a sacred stone would have come to signify the god itself. The "baetyl", as a vertical stone indicating a non-anthropomorphic divine representation, is known as early as the Bronze Age in Syria and is documented in the Parthian period on the funerary reliefs at Edessa (Drijvers 1980, pp. 126, 135-137, pl. 33). TS.II:NW.a has also been identified as a stone with a ribbon identifying a diadem (De Waele 1974, p. 262, footnote 21); a tiara with diadem (Fukai 1960, p. 143); or the entire composition as an altar with diadem (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 76).
widely-known religious element such as the vertical *baetyl*-stone (a non-anthropomorphic image of a deity) has the fillet or diadem (emblem of kingship) tied around it remains unclear. Attaching the ribbon or diadem to a *baetyl*, rather than to a human being, may reflect some local cult belief or practice in Elymais (possibly imported by the Syrian or Palmyrene religious sphere), iconographically revisited in order to propitiate ritual requirements. In this cult, context could also be integrated *TS.II:Wa* panel where *TS.II:Wa.1* and *TS.II:Wa.8*, generally interpreted as local rulers, from an imagery perspective may be reconsidered differently. From parallels with other Elymaean reliefs (*BB:2*, *BZ:1*, *Al:2*, *SM:1*), frontal seated figures on footstools or pedestals, which wear diadem with floating ribbon ends over the shoulder (naked personages of Tang-e Botan) and long ankle-length tunic, are typical in the Syro-Mesopotamian imagery of deities (e.g., Hatra, Palmyra and Dura Europos). Moreover, the fact that between *TS.II:Wa.1* and *TS.II:Wa.2* is placed an altar only emphasizes the ritual context of the scene, where the bigger dimension of *TS.II:Wa.8* would suggest a certain importance possibly indicating a king. In a similar way, *TS.I:S.1* seems to be turned towards an altar (with his head and feet), the rolled-up cloak and his ritual gesture suggests interpreting this personage as a priest, or possibly of a local king wearing a ritual (sacred) garment to officiate the sacrifice. On the left, a conical object (perhaps a club of some sort), a round object, interpreted as the apple of the

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1253 Mathiesen 1992/1, pp. 67-68; *idem* 1992/2, p. 183, no. 136. Having no parallels in Iranian art, the closest example of beribboned *baetyl* is the one crowned by a Nike at Gali Zerdak in Iraqi Kurdistan dating to the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD (Kawami 2013, p. 760).

1254 Drijvers 1980, pp. 126, 135-137, pl. 33; Kawami 2013, p. 761.

1255 Debevoise 1942, p. 98f; Henning 1952, p. 157; Ghirshman 1962, p. 55. Tentatively, Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 149, footnote 117) based on the written evidence, interprets the scene as the investiture of Abar-Basi (for a different translation as “son of Basi”, see §8.1.1) who was recognized with *TS.I:Wa.1*. According to his reading of *TS.II:insc.5*, the other dignitaries mentioned by name (i.e., Beldosha, Aserya, and Antiochus) may be identified with the tallest *TS.II:Wa.7*, the enthroned figure (*TS.II:Wa.8*), and *TS.II:Wa:9*. Mathiesen tentatively considers the two figures on the right (*TS.II:Wa.8-9*) as women, recognizing a queen with *TS.II:Wa.8* (interpreted as Bel-dusha by Henning 1952, p. 173), and *TS.II:Wa.7* as Beldosha (Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 144).

1256 Kawami 1987, pp. 90-91, with related bibliography.

1257 Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 78.

1258 Stein 1940, p. 111; Henning 1952, p. 159; De Waele 1974, p. 258; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 60; contra Kawami (1987, p. 105) proposes a divine nature for *TS:BS.I*. There is partial disagreement within the opinion of Mathiesen (1992/2, pp. 144-145), who justly underlines that given the impossibility of understanding if such a figure is seated on a throne or standing, considering the first hypothesis correct then it would be at the least unusual to find this personality sitting on a throne and officiating at a sacrifice at the same time. He explains that the artist possibly wished to give the figure a double function, as priest and king. A connection could be drawn to this from the hypothesis with which Ghirshman identified the symbology of the high oval tiara on the head of the “king” in the bas-relief at Masjed-e Soleyman (Ghirshman 1976, p. 123, Pl. LXXV).

Hesperides, and a piece of cloth (likely a stylised lion skin), lead to identify TS.I:W.1 as a Heracles-like local deity, or even the chief god Bel. Within a broader picture of Rock I, the representation of a priest-king (TS.I:S.1) – and a second tiared ruler in adoration (TS.I:S.2) – and an altar directly adjacent to the figure of a deity (TS.I:W.1) on the ascending cult path of Tang-e Sarvak may have voluntarily given the perception of the mortal figures of the TS.I:S.1-2 relief as worshipping the Heracles-like god of TS.I:W.1.

If the religious nature of Tang-e Sarvak is assumed with sufficient certainty, as well as its importance in the transition and legitimacy towards a new dynasty (Orodids) which wanted to establish solid ties with the local culture, it may also have been acquired through some more secular aspects in specific stages of Elymaean history.

From this perspective, designated of the dual role of king and cult officiant, Orodes seems to appear for the third time in TS.II:Wbβ. Although no written evidence can demonstrate it with certainty, iconographical details such as the hair, headgear and facial elements support such juxtaposition. In this case, the scene is more centred on the figure of king representing a royal hunt, which has been a long-established tradition in the Near East since hunting on horseback gives an aura of nobility to the hunter. This symbolic milieu may represent an additional approach to the legitimacy process required by the new dynasty.

Similarly, the tiared ruler TS.II:Wc.1 who fights the lion (TS.II:Wc.a) symbolizes a show of physical force from the king in front of the chief of beasts. The scene immediately recalls the royal lion hunt scenes of the Assyrian reliefs, where at some points it has been established that the royal lion hunt was an exclusive prerogative of the kings. In Elymais the motif was popular during Parthian times – as already seen with the Heracles-like statue at Masjed-e Soleyman – even if the straight-out arm position may be reminiscent of the Achaemenid reliefs at Persepolis, and the engraved seals and stone, as at Masjed-e

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1260 According to Kawami (1987, p. 206; idem 2013, p. 757), the relief TS.I:W would represent the only image in Iran describing this aspect of Heracles, with the golden apple from the garden of the Hesperides related to his 11th Labour.


1262 See also Kawami 1987, p. 105.

1263 For the Assyrian art, see Barnett and Lorenzini 1976, pl. 127. Hunting scenes have a long tradition in the Near East and are often associated with royalty, even if non-royal hunters in equestrian scenes appear in Elamite and Achaemenid glyptics as well as in the reliefs at Pasargadae, Persepolis and Susa (Kawami 1987, p. 105). For Classical sources see Diod. Sic. II.1.

1264 Reade 1983, p. 72; Weissert 1997, p. 346, no. 18. The king who fights the lion was also represented in Mesopotamia (e.g., Lion Hunt Stele of Uruk from ca. 3,000 BC; see Breniquet 2002, p. 161). For an extensive study, Cassin 1981.

1265 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXX.

1266 Ibid. 1964, p. 269, fig. 331. See Kawami 1987, p. 96, footnote 40, with related bibliography.
Soleyman\textsuperscript{1267}. In the exaltation of the royal hunter into a hero, represented by the defeat of the lion in the form of single duel, may be included the conception of kingship, as the foundation of power or the definition of virtues. Considering also that \textit{TS.II:insc.6} could refer to \textit{TS.II:Wc.1} in “assuming the throne”, the relief may indicate a claim for the king’s leadership or its legitimization. Metaphorically, the lion fight scene also represents a conflict between two kings\textsuperscript{1268}, therefore, \textit{TS.II:Wc.1} could indicate a victorious king over the lionine depiction (\textit{TS.II:Wc.a}) of his rival. The obliteration of the name in \textit{TS.II:insc.6} would be significant in this context, indicating a shift in authority.

Finally, the most secular celebration of the king sculpted at Tang-e Sarvak is indeed displayed by \textit{TS.III} panel, where an unparalleled battle scene may denote specific events on the political scenario of those years (end-2\textsuperscript{nd}/early-3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD)\textsuperscript{1269}. This panel is certainly one of the most complex and sophisticated work at Tang-e Sarvak, due to its unusual composition. \textit{TS.III:1} reproduces heavily armoured warriors on horseback as attested in the Near Eastern tradition from the Assyrian reliefs of Assurbanipal (7\textsuperscript{th} century BC)\textsuperscript{1270}, and well-developed as an artistic motif during the Parthian era (\textit{cataphractarius})\textsuperscript{1271}. \textit{TS.III:3} lifting a rock as a weapon is certainly unusual in Iranian art, though it is often shown in scenes of battles and city sieges in Greek and Roman artistic production\textsuperscript{1272}. Possibly being the last relief at Tang-e Sarvak, \textit{TS.III} could represent Orodes (V\textsuperscript{3}) in his final skirmishes before the Sasanid conquest of Elymais. The scene of the relief seems to be vaguely similar to the Sasanid relief of Hormizd II (r. 302–309 AD) at Naqsh-e Rustam (\textit{NRu VII})\textsuperscript{1273}. The descriptive details (e.g., the absence of the helmet for the horseman) make the representation more ideal than real. Whether a symbolic commemoration of an actual event is depicted at \textit{TS.III} relief remains speculative.

\textsuperscript{1267} \textit{Ibid.} 1976, Pl. CVI.2.
\textsuperscript{1268} Breniquet 2002, p. 161
\textsuperscript{1269} The smaller-scale fragments in mother-of-pearl inlays discovered by Godard at Shami, if they belong to a single scene, may reproduce a further example of battle in the Elymaean art (Godard 1948, pp. 41\textit{ff}; \textit{idem} 1962).
\textsuperscript{1270} Reade 1983.
\textsuperscript{1271} The heavily armoured warrior on horseback of the Parthian army, known as \textit{cataphractarius}, is characterized by laminar armour for men and horses, and a spear, and had no Greco-Roman equivalents (notably different from the “Greek” horse of Hung-e Azhdaar). Even the equestrian at Hung-e Kamalvand (\textit{HK:1}) wears similar armour grasping a lance, but in this case, the horse (\textit{HK:a}) has no armour. Ghirshman (1962, p. 51, fig. 63C) showed an analogous horse depicted in the drawing at Dura Europos (3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD).
\textsuperscript{1272} Borchhardt 1970, p. 380, fig. 35; Charbonneaux \textit{et al.} 1972, p. 273, fig. 313; Childs 1978, pp. 74, 77, 297, fig. 16, 34, 37, pl. 14. Kawami (1987, p. 108; see also Toynbee 1972, pp. 106-110, pls. V-X) explains this image, apparently out of context, coming from the use of books where the artists could find elements to combine from different sources.
\textsuperscript{1273} Schmidt 1970, pl. 91.
To sum up, the blossoming of rupestrian artistry at Tang-e Sarvak appears to reflect a certain political stability between mid-1st and late-2nd century AD, likely due to the autonomy which Elymais may have pacifically achieved through close relationships and dynastic marriages established between the Arsacid secundogenitures with the members of local aristocracies. The mixed Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty of the Orodids included new local rulers who expanded their political propaganda exercising the patronage practices of the first Kamnaskirid rulers to whom they continuously referred (e.g., the combined name Kamnaskires-Orodes for the second dynast of the new royal family, the first associated to the term “king”). Within this political scenario, the choice of Tang-e Sarvak as a place to consolidate new relationships and obtain divine legitimacy to rule is not just accidental, rather it is represented as the instrument of the current regnant class to institutionalize the new kingship. The inscriptions which accompanied the reliefs confer a certain importance to the depicted scenes within a broader historical framework of the region.

### 7.2 Sarhani Relief (Sarh: Pl. XXXVIII) in the region of Ram Hormoz

#### 7.2.1 Location

Half way between Izeh and Tang-e Sarvak at ca. 40 km east of Ram Hormoz, a rock relief associated with an ossuary was found 3 km south-west of Sarhani, a small village south-west of Seydun. Situated on the western bank of the Zohre river, the site is only accessible on foot through narrow paths that penetrate a deep gorge, cut in half by a small mountain stream, locally called Runu.

#### 7.2.2 Discovery

The relief was discovered by Majid Soroushnia during the winter of 2009.

#### 7.2.3 Description

A relief, representing a single standing figure Sarh:1 (0.63×0.55 m) is depicted frontally wearing a long belted tunic that ends just below his knees. The hair seems to be dressed in a halo shape, and a headband (diadem?) is recognizable. The face has been entirely

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1274 A policy of inter-dynastic marriages in order to avoid warfare periods and facilitate trade exchanges was used along the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains at least from the 21st century BC (Potts 2016, pp. 112-117).

1275 See §9.2.5.3.

1276 Arab 2009.

obliterated and no details are visible. His left arm is bent, and his hand seems to hold the hilt of a sword (dagger?) which is delineated on his left side. His right arm is raised possibly as an adoration gesture while the potential object present in his right hand is impossible to distinguish. He wears a cape that is discernible along the left side of his body. His tunic is wider below the belt (like a skirt) while the presence of trousers is not clear. It seems that Sarh:1 also wears a pair of shoes/boots. His left foot is represented in profile; his right one has broken off. Below his right arm, there is an elongated object (Sarh:a) rounded at the top with a narrower squared base (h. 0.28 m). The quality of the stone work is not outstanding, but the artisan has tried to show some parts with more detail.

7.2.4 Ruins, Pottery, and Associated Artefacts

Two ossuaries were created on the rocky wall of the mountain with their entrances exposed south-west to reduce sunlight penetrating into their inner chambers. The distance between the two openings is 4.10 m, while the heights from the ground of the eastern (Sarh:ast.1) and western (Sarh:ast.2) astudans are 2.30 and 2.70 m respectively. The dimensions of Sarh:ast.1 are more significant and the internal structure more elaborate compared with Sarh:ast.2. The latter is smaller with an entrance measuring 0.65×0.45 m. The inside room is of moderate size (1.20×0.90 m) with a height of ca. 1 m. Since no evidence about the presence of a door was found (e.g., holes for hinges), it may suggest that Sarh:ast.2 could have been deliberately created with a transitional area about 0.5 m long between the external opening and the fully-fledged chamber, perhaps to reduce dust and sun exposure. Sarh:ast.1 is constituted by a not-squared plan (1.9/2.5×1 m), which is similar to the astudans found in the Gatvand region. Near the entrance, a hole was probably used for storing bones. The opening itself (0.70×0.41 m) presents some holes at the frame where door hinges may have been used to support a door that probably opened inwards.\footnote{Arab 2009, plan. 2}

The carved figure (Sarh:1) just on the left of the ossuary’s rectangular entrance, probably represents a later addition to Sarh:ast.1.

7.2.5 Past Interpretations

Arab considers the relief related to the fire cult interpreting Sarh:a as a bowl (at the bottom) with the flame rising to the right arm of Sarh:1. In this ritual context, an association with the libation scene of Bard-e Neshandeh (BN:rel) is proposed. Attesting the Elymaean origin for the relief, Arab compares Sarh:1 with a series of comparanda among the rupestrian
art focusing on stylistic aspects (e.g., clothing, in particular the presence of a cape), and proposing Tang-e Botan (TB) personages as the iconographic model for Sarh:1\textsuperscript{1279}.

### 7.2.6 Dating

The relief has been dated to the 2\textsuperscript{nd}-3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD\textsuperscript{1280}. The affinities detected with other Elymaean carvings confirm this dating for the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, in the expectation that a systematic analysis of the datable material within the ossuaries chambers may provide more accurate information.

### 7.2.7 Final Considerations

Iconographically, the relief belongs to Elymais. The frontality of the representation, the hair dressed in halo shape, the headband (diadem\textsuperscript{3}), the long belted tunic define an imagery typical of Elymaean rupestrian art. Furthermore, the cape on the left side as at Hung-e Azhdar (HA:7), and Bid Zard (BZ:1), the ritual position of the right arm, the presence of a possible cult object on the right of the rite officiant as TS.I:S.1, TS.II:NW.1, TS.II:Wa.2, TB:I.2, TB:III.2, TB:IV.2, Bard-e Neshandeh (BN:rel.4), Shaivand (Sh:1), the representation of the feet in profile, provide an additional characterization – identifiable as Elymaean – for the personage. Sarh:a is difficult to define. The interpretation as a flaming bowl may seem doubtful, especially because of the position of the Sarh:1’s arms, which in a scene of libation are generally held down, pouring with the right hand a liquid over a tiny flaming object (an altar, fire burner, a vessel), as depicted in the relief of Bard-e Neshandeh (BN:rel.1), Hung-e Kamalvand (HK:2), and at Bisotun (“Parthian Stone”). An exception is represented by TS.I:S.1. Indeed, although difficult to interpret, the similarities between Sarh:1 and TS.I:S.1 seem recognizable. The posture, with the raised right arm and the left hand on the left hip, the long belted tunic, the cape on the left side, may indicate an officiant of a cult (Sarh:1) through the use of ritual object (Sarh:a).

### 7.3 The Reliefs of Izeh-Malamir

Another cluster of rock carvings is located within the valley of Izeh-Malamir (ancient Ayapir) in northeast Khuzestan around 55 km east of the city of Masjed-e Soleyman. Inside this small almost oval-shaped valley surrounded by the Bakhtiari mountains are two small internally drained lakes (Bandun and Shatt) at an altitude of ca. 840 m. The Karun river is

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\textsuperscript{1279} Ibid., pp. 86-88.
\textsuperscript{1280} Ibid.
around 15-20 km away, flowing north and east of the valley. The seasonality, assured by autumn and winter rains, enhances the formation of subsidiary agriculture based on dry farming, and seasonal pasture, at risk of rapid degradation due to overgrazing. It is a framework that gave origin to the transhumance of part of the people living in the area, and settlements over the centuries, must have needed considerable storage facilities for water and food for humans and animals. The main site of the area seems to be the modern city of Izeh, which overlaps the ancient site of Malamir located between the two wetlands. The area is on a provisional list of UNESCO World Heritage sites.

7.3.1 General Aspects

Despite its relatively inaccessible position, the valley of Izeh is on the geographic borderline between the Khuzestan plains and the Zagros range, dominating one of the few key natural passages through the highlands. It established a key junction point for various ancient routes going north to the flatland of Shimbar and east in the direction of Esfahan. The well-watered and easily defended valley has numerous Elamite rock reliefs (20th-7th century BC) associated with open-air sanctuaries (e.g., Kul-e Farah) which mainly depicted religious themes and were placed in evocative natural sites, such as the great cave and waterfall of Shekaft-e Salman. The Elymaean-Parthian rupestrian panels at Izeh, on the other hand, provide a renewal or continuation of this tradition, even though they represent scenes more centred to the celebration of the figure of the sovereign (e.g., investiture or equestrian fighting). Remarkably, the three Elymaean reliefs examined here are located in remote areas, as if they were created to stay out of sight of potential visitors. In contrast to the boulders at Tang-e Sarvak, the Izeh-Malamir carvings are not oriented for approaching travellers, but instead, are placed on the hidden faces of massive rocks (Hung-e Azhdar) or on barely visible natural stone panels (Hung-e Kamalvand and Hung-e Yaralivand).

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1281 Wright 1979, pp. 33ff.
1282 Also reported under the different transliterations: Izaj, Iza, Iţţa, Iţţeh, Iţţaj, Ayţţaj. In the early 1st millennium BC, the region was part of a local state called Ayapir, which was subjugated by the Elamite Empire. The exact name of Izeh after the Elamite period until the advent of Islam is unclear. At the time of the Arab conquest in the 7th century, the territory was called Izeh, but under the Arabs, the Persian [h] was replaced with the Arabic "j," and as Arab speakers can't pronounce the Persian [z] they called this town Iţdaj (or Iţaj). After the local dynasty of the Atabegs of Great Lorestan (Lor-e Bozorg), it was called Malamir or Mal-e Mir (king's house or capital); this name was used until 1935, but after that and with the government's approval, it changed again to its present name of Izeh.
1284 Potts 1999a, pp. 253-256; Waters 2000, pp. 82-85, 116; Álvarez-Mon 2010a; idem 2013a; idem 2015c.
7.3.2 Archaeological Context

The valley of Izeh-Malamir was preliminary surveyed in 1976 by a joint mission of the University of Michigan and ICAR, led and published under the supervision of H.T. Wright. The expedition provided information spanning from the Epipaleolithic (ca. 18,000-8,500 BC) to the Timurid epoch (1,500 AD) with the identification of 180 sites archaeologically relevant in an area extending between the southern Bandun wetland and the northern village of Miangharan Olya.\footnote{Wright 1979. Regardless of the difficulties encountered in identifying the ancient sites, due to the repeated human intervention, six different periods of occupation have been delineated: an Epipaleolithic human presence still poorly understood in a time just before the invention of agriculture; a first cycle of growth and decline, named Archaic period or Susian period, dated between 6,500 and 4,000 BC, with a continuity in terms of ceramic models but having at its end (the beginning of the 4th millennium) a drastic drop in population; a resettlement of the area during the Uruk period (ca. 3,700-3,100 BC) in Mesopotamia, when the people of Izeh-Malamir again reached its maximum of ca. 2,500 people, facilitated probably by local circumstances or a deliberate settling of a peripheral area of Susiana encouraged by a power centred at Susa; after abandonment at the end of the Uruk period, during the so-called proto-Elamite period (ca. 3,100-2,800 BC) when the population rose again although settlements appear more dispersed; in the Elamite period (1,800-1,200 BC) an extended phase of growth seems to be indicated by the main site at Malamir; from the Achaemenid period onwards (400 BC to 700 AD), there was a progressive increment in settlements and inhabitants, approaching an estimated population of ca. 7,000 people at the end of the Sasanid era to more than 20,000 during the Timurid period.}

Going beyond problems related to the sculpting technique and the style of the figures, at Hung-e Azhdar several questions remain to be clarified, which include: determining the reason why the reliefs were sculpted as they were supposed to be hidden and therefore not visible from the valley. Furthermore, there is the prospect of considering the carvings as an isolated element or an integral part in one or more of the buildings placed in the vicinity. Although it is reasonable to assume the presence of temples or open-air cult places in the vicinity\footnote{Invernizzi 1998, p. 226.} – as has been supposed for Tang-e Sarvak and Tang-e Botan – only the recent campaigns (2008-2011) carried out by the Iranian-Italian joint team in Khuzestan have cast light on this issue.\footnote{Messina and Mehr Kian 2011; Messina 2014; idem 2015a; Messina et al. 2014.}
7. Rock Reliefs

7.3.2.1 Hung-e Azhdar (HA: Pls. XXXIV-XXXV)\textsuperscript{1288}

7.3.2.1.1 LOCATION

The valley of Hung-e Azhdar, where the massive carved boulder is located, extends for ca. 2.7 km\textsuperscript{2} along a quite flat area that has its entrance looking to the southwest (Pl. XXXIV.1), at the village of Miangharan Olya and is protected to the south by a hill, about 11 km north of the modern city of Izeh. The area has been accurately surveyed and studied by the international Iranian-Italian joint team in very recent times\textsuperscript{1289}. This gorge at the foot of the Bakhtiari mountains is at an elevation of 840 m where the cliffs sharply descend from ca. 1,400-1,600 m. Sites and structures of uncertain function have been identified near the area.

7.3.2.1.2 DISCOVERY

The first traveller to write notes about the ancient reliefs at Izeh-Malamir defining it as “perhaps the most remarkable place in the whole of the Bakhtiyari Mountains” was the Englishman Layard\textsuperscript{1290}. When he visited the region in 1841-1842, Mohammad Taqi Khan was preparing a Bakhtiari revolt against the central powers in Tehran. However, Layard achieved his aims and was able to visit the rock reliefs of Kul-e-Farah, Shekaft-e Salman and Hung-e Azhdar\textsuperscript{1291}. Fifty years later the next to visit the sites was a member of the French archaeological mission in Persia, G. Jéquier, in October 1898\textsuperscript{1292}. Louis Vanden Berghe was the first to provide the photographic documentation of the relief in September 1962\textsuperscript{1293}.

7.3.2.1.3 DESCRIPTION

The relief of Hung-e Azhdar\textsuperscript{1294} often have been called Hung-e Naouruzi (or Nowruzı).


\textsuperscript{1289} Messina 2015a.

\textsuperscript{1290} Layard 1946, p. 74.

\textsuperscript{1291} In his work, Layard refers to Hung-e Azhdar only with the term Hong, which in his opinion at the time indicated the valley where the relief was found (Layard 1846, p. 79).

\textsuperscript{1292} Jéquier 1901, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{1293} Vanden Berge 1963b, pls. LIII-LVI.

\textsuperscript{1294} The inhabitants of these valleys, the nomadic Bakhtiari people, pronounce \textit{x} or \textit{kh} as the letter \textit{h}, and this is a reason why the word \textit{hung} is pronounced as \textit{khong} or \textit{xong} (Mehr Kian 2000, p. 57, footnote 3). This is why there is sometimes confusion when transliterating the name of the site, which in some cases is translated as...
In reality, *Nauruzi* does not indicate a place-name but is rather the name of a clan in the Bakhtiar tribe which had its winter encampment in the valley\textsuperscript{1295}.

The relief is *ca.* 5.4 m long and *ca.* 2.1 m high for a carved area of 11 m\textsuperscript{2}. It is found unexpectedly on the face of the boulder not directed towards the open valley but instead to the mountain slopes (hidden side), as if it was not meant to be seen (XXXV)\textsuperscript{1296}.

On the left of the scene it shows a bearded horseman (*HA:*1) proceeding in profile to the right, followed by an attendant on foot (*HA:*2), and on the right side are four frontal standing male figures (*HA:*3-6). *HA:*1 has at the nape of his neck a diadem with long floating tails and he seems to be wearing a tunic with a long cloak, fastened in front of the chest, at his shoulders. His left hand probably controls the reins, while an unidentified object is held in his right hand. The prancing horse (*HA:*a) is completely in profile with its four legs and hooves well distinguishable, and with the left foreleg raised. Its neck is arched with the short clipped mane following its curved outline. Eyes, nose, mouth and upper teeth are very marked. Its face is covered by bridle ornaments including a chamfrain, fluttering ribbons, and protrusions from its head that may be described as horns. Its tail is high-set and flowing. *HA:*1 sits in a saddle. Important to note, below the curve created by the horse’s raised foreleg there seems to be a human head (*HA:*b)\textsuperscript{1297} frontally carved within a niche. Even if facial details like eyes, nose and a squared beard, as well as bunches of hair at the sides of the head, are quite recognizable, the state of the carving is damaged to assume its representation with certainty.

*HA:*2 behind the horseman *HA:*1 is hard to decipher, perhaps because of the poor state of conservation of this section of the relief, or perhaps because the figure may not have been finished.

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\textit{Xong-e Azhdar} or \textit{Khong-e Azhdar} (also \textit{Khung-e Azhdar}). In this thesis, to facilitate a more rapid and straightforward identification, I have preferred to write the name of the relief in the form most well known at the academic level, that is, \textit{Hung-e Azhdar}.

\textsuperscript{1295} This information was gathered on site by W. Hinz (1963, p. 169) and then by De Waele (1975, p. 61, footnote 1).

\textsuperscript{1296} The choice of this side does not seem to derive from the condition of the surface on the more visible side, which has instead a large area suitable for carving, and where a modest carving, divided into two registers, was placed. The surface of the latter is heavily eroded, but on the lower register, seven figures in profile can be discerned advancing solemnly towards a personality seated at the left side of the scene. The imagery recurs in the reliefs (*HA:*elam) of the Elamite era, characterized by long processions of people, while comparison with glyptic items has opened the way for a proposed dating to the 20\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries BC. Vanden Berghe (1963a, pp. 38-39) suggests a first dating at the end of the 3\textsuperscript{rd} millennium and a reading of the scene as the homage to a king on his throne. Later, the same scholar suggests a chronology in the 20\textsuperscript{th}-18\textsuperscript{th} centuries BC and a re-reading of the seated figure as a deity (Vanden Berghe 1983, pp. 27, 103).

\textsuperscript{1297} Haruta 2003, p. 473.
The four frontal figures on the right are dressed in long belted tunics and loose-fitting trousers. The first two on the left (HA:3-4) have their hair arranged similarly with large bunches at their ears, while the other two figures on the right (HA:5-6) have their hair arranged in a **halo** shape. The central character (HA:3) has a cape and possibly once had a full beard and moustache. He is larger in size compared to his three standing companions, and the presence of a diadem with tails floating to the right of his face also seems to give leverage to his **status**. Both HA:3 and, next to the right, HA:4 have the left hand placed on the hilt of a long sword, and right hand raised and holding an object towards HA:1. On his left shoulder, HA:4 seems to have a rolled-up cloak.

HA:5-6 have their arms folded and a sword on their left hip. Two birds (HA:c-d) with outspread wings float towards the horseman and the central standing figure. More specifically, the bird flying toward the horseman is holding an object with its claws (HA:c), while the one flying toward the central figure holds a circular item in its beak (HA:d).

A 3D model of the Hung-e Azhdaṛ’s rock relief has revealed several anomalies in the depth of carving on the preliminary surface. HA:1-2 on the left side of the panel are in higher relief than the four standing figures (HA:3-6) to the right with a difference in depth varying between *ca.* 15 and 25 cm. In addition, the background on the left half is systematically higher than on the right side, as demonstrated by the false-colour image of the relief in which chromatic nuances correspond to different carving depths.¹²⁹⁸

### 7.3.2.1.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

Excavations at Hung-e Azhdar have revealed an area of archaeological interest around the boulder covering roughly 140 m². In particular, two structures in undressed stones from at least three different occupation phases emerged, prompting considerations of this complex as a cult place (§6.4).¹²⁹⁹ The outcomes of the Iranian-Italian joint mission in Khuzestan, however, show a complex archaeological situation (principally caused by the discovery of non-authorised excavations), but also the finding of pottery fragments¹³⁰⁰ and other small findings¹³⁰¹ which, even though found in a disturbed stratigraphic context, permit a dating of the site between the Neo-Elamite and the Parthian era¹³⁰². Furthermore, the stone structures,

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¹²⁹⁸ Messina *et al.* 2014, pp. 157-158.
¹³⁰¹ Cellerino *et al.* 2015, pp. 177-194.
¹³⁰² Messina and Mehr Kian 2009.
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which emerged reflect the architectural tradition of terraced structures present in Elymais, connecting the Hung-e Azhdar cul-de-sac directly to the major sacred platforms of Masjed-e Soleyman, Bard-e Neshandeh, and Shami.

7.3.2.1.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

As the years have passed, the peculiarities and inconsistencies of the relief have caused many scholars to question themselves about the rupestrian panel at Hung-e Azhdar through analysis of the scene based on historical and stylistic criteria.

Vanden Berghe was the first to provide a thorough study of the scene. He based his assumption on the comparisons of the horseman HA:1 with numismatic portraits on coins of Mithridates I (141-138 BC.), suggesting a possible identification of HA:1 with the Arsacid king, and the standing HA:3 with the bronze of Shami. According to Vanden Berghe, identification of HA:1 as Mithridates I and HA:3 with a local ruler would be reinforced by the fact that the Arsacid king conquered Elymais in 140-139 BC, suggesting the relief as a commemoration of Elymais annexed by the Parthian empire. If this last scenario were legitimate, the equestrian of Hung-e Azhdar would represent the most ancient Parthian relief in existence. In any case, this artistic interpretation is uncertain, as well as the presence of Mithridates in Elymais. Schlumberger was not convinced about Vanden Berghe’s identification of Mithridates I with HA:1, even if he believed Hung-e Azhdar to be the oldest amongst the Elymaean reliefs. He considered the diversities in styles between the left and right sides of the relief to be an expression of the Greek-influenced Iranian art during the Hellenistic era but excluded different dating for the creation of the two parts of the panel. Weidemann also interpreted the relief as a product of the Greco-Iranian eclectic art, but he was not certain whether the figure could be Mithridates I or II. Von Gall and De Waele,

1303 Vanden Berghe 1963b, pp. 165-167. For the numismatic portraits of Mithridates I, Vanden Berghe consulted: de Morgan 1933, pls. II.11-16, III.1-7; Pope 1938, pl. 140.E, F, H, J. The assumption of Mørkholm (1965, pp. 151-152) is noteworthy. He established that the three issues attributed to Mithridates I, as evidence of his conquest of Elymais, could be instead ascribed to other rulers (e.g., Phraates II). About Shami, Vanden Berghe’s assumption (also shared by Schmidt 1970, p. 139) is based on the presumed similarities between the standing figures on the right of the relief and the bronze statues at Shami. These sculptures could have come from one of the sanctuaries sacked by Mithridates I during his conquest of Elymais (Vanden Berghe 1963b, p. 166).

1304 Vanden Berghe 1963b, pp. 155-168; idem 1983, pp. 120-121; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 36.

1305 Vanden Berghe 1963b, p. 167.

1306 For the historical facts occurred in Elymais at the time of Mithridates I, see §5.2.3.1.


1309 Von Gall 1970, p. 308.

1310 De Waele 1975, p. 61, footnote 2.
on the other hand, retained that the discrepancies in styles could be attributed to the existence of two schools of sculptors, one local and entirely Iranian (right side), and a second of Hellenistic influence coming from outside the region, or locally trained\textsuperscript{1311} (left side). To note, Wolski mentioned the presence of an inscription of Mithridates I at Hung-e Azhdar\textsuperscript{1312}. According to other scholars, \textit{HA:1} could also be considered as a Seleucid king such as Demetrius II (1\textsuperscript{st} reign 146-139 BC; 2\textsuperscript{nd} reign 129-125 BC)\textsuperscript{1313}, or even identified as a type of ancestor portrayal\textsuperscript{1314}.

Although Vanden Berghe’s identification of the central \textit{HA:3} as a local ruler is not generally accepted – as stated by both Colledge and Lewit-Tawil who interpret it as a deity\textsuperscript{1315} – Kawami agrees in defining the scene as a homage given by a dynast of Elymais (\textit{HA:3})\textsuperscript{1316} and his entourage, lined up in a frontal position, to the Arsacid king (\textit{HA:1})\textsuperscript{1317}. She is convinced that \textit{HA:1} is an ancestor honoured by the four men on the right (\textit{HA:3-6}) interpreting \textit{HA:1} as Kamnaskires II Nikephoros. Kawami points out that the resemblance between the coin images of the Elymaean king and the portrayals on the relief is not strong enough to suggest support for such identification, but they clarify that if the relief is considerably later than the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC – the era of Kamnaskires II and Mithridates I – the features of \textit{HA:1}’s face would have been lost and substituted according to the artistic fashion of the time in which the relief may have been sculpted\textsuperscript{1318}. Mathiesen suggests that the right section (\textit{HA:3-6}) was an addition to a relief started by Mithridates I (\textit{HA:1}), but was then left unfinished by him\textsuperscript{1319}. The original concept of the relief would have been to represent a local ruler (\textit{HA:3}) honouring Mithridates I (\textit{HA:1}), with the Elymaean \textit{HA:3} to whom was given a

\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1311} Cf. Callieri 2015.
\textsuperscript{1312} According to him, Harmatta (1981, pp. 200-210) claims to have even made out an inscription in the area ahead of the front legs of the horse, proposing this reading: “Mithridates king of the kings.” There does not now seem to be any trace of this inscription on the surface of the relief, and if it was indeed present, it must have been completely eroded. (Messina and Mehr Khian 2011, p. 217).
\textsuperscript{1313} Invernizzi 1998, pp. 234-241, 256-258. Ibid. p. 250 “it is a fact that Demetrius and Kamnaskires shared the same attitude towards the assailant Mithridates, and in the eyes of an Elymaean king of the 2\textsuperscript{nd}-3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries AD, belonging to a dynasty the terms of whose royal legitimacy may have had to be defined on an ideological level at various moments in history, and the nature of whose Iranism did not coincide with the Persian tradition represented by the Achaemenids and Sasanids, this fact might have represented a valid reason for choosing Demetrius II as the guarantor of dynastic legitimacy”.
\textsuperscript{1314} Accordingly, Lewit-Tawil (1979, p. 95; \textit{idem} 1983, pp. 66, 76) interpreted the equestrian \textit{HA:1} as a divinized ancestor.
\textsuperscript{1315} Colledge 1977, p. 92; Lewit-Tawil 1979, p. 95.
\textsuperscript{1316} Kawami 1987, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{1317} Vanden Berghe 1963b, pp. 155-168; \textit{idem} 1983, pp. 120-121; Schlumberger 1970, pp. 40-41; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 36.
\textsuperscript{1318} Kawami 1987, p. 124; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 120. Significantly, Kawami suggests that the apparent unusual size of the head was out-of-scale and likely reproduced from another source (Kawami 1987, p. 124).
\textsuperscript{1319} Mathiesen 1982, p. 78, footnote 112; \textit{idem} 1992/2, p. 120.
\end{footnotesize}
stature suitable for a king on equal terms with the Parthian sovereign \(HA:1\), and not that of a respectful and obedient vassal\(^{1320}\).

After having questioned Invernizzi’s interpretation of \(HA:1\) as Demetrius II\(^{1321}\) as historically “unproven, and highly unlikely”\(^{1322}\), Shayegan suggests identifying \(HA:1\) as Phraates II (ca. 138-128 BC), successor of Mithridates I\(^{1323}\), sustaining the assumption of Vanden Berghe\(^{1324}\) of a relief at Hung-e Azhdar, which immortalized a scene of investiture (or homage) between a bearded Parthian king (\(HA:1\)) on a horse and a standing Elymaean sovereign (\(HA:3\)).

Lately, Vito Messina has demonstrated through the use of the most up-to-date reconnaissance techniques (particularly laser scanning) that the entire left half of the scene where \(HA:1\) is carved, is systematically in higher relief than the right half, which includes \(HA:3-6\) and two birds \(HA:c-d\), with the latter sculpted within two rectangular niches hollowed into a pre-existing background\(^{1325}\). Messina convincingly suggests that there may have been a re-sculpting of the entire right half, but if accepted, it is a matter of speculation whether the re-sculpting of \(HA:3-6\) and \(HA:c-d\) was performed over centuries after the left half’s carving of \(HA:1\), or whether they were created soon after. On the basis of historical and iconographical considerations regarding overall Elymaean issues, Messina proposes that both the sculpting and re-sculpting of the scene were related within a celebrative regional-scale context of Elymaean kingship, therefore excluding the involvement of Mithridates I in commissioning the relief. According to him, Kamnaskires III or IV (\(HA:1\)) could have dedicated the rupestrian work in an ancient local sanctuary (Hung-e Azhdar) in the first half of the 1\(^{st}\) century BC, probably to celebrate its most recent rebuilding\(^{1326}\). Subsequently, an

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\(^{1320}\) Ibid. 1987a, p. 196; idem 1988, p. 208; idem 1989, p. 124; idem 1992/2, p. 121.

\(^{1321}\) Invernizzi 1998, pp. 234-241, 256-258.

\(^{1322}\) Shayegan 2011, p. 108.

\(^{1323}\) Ibid., 108-110. Shayegan bases his theory on the fact that, according to the *Astronomical Babylonian Diaries*’ testimony (Sachs and Hunger 1996, pp. 230-231, no. -132 D, ’rev.’ 16’-21’; pp. 231-232, no. -132 D, ’rev. ’7-10’), Elymais was first conquered by the Arsacids under the reign of Phraates II at the end of 133 BC. The successor of Mithridates I then put his “loyal” Kamnaskires II as a vassal on the throne of subjugated Elymais (Shayegan 2011, pp. 97-98, 108). Moreover, Shayegan also pointed out the portrayal of Phraates II on numismatic issues, comparable to that of Mithridates I, is represented with a beard. Regarding the bearded effigies of Phraates II, see Sellwood 1980, pp. 43-54: for tetradrachms, nos. 15/1, 17/1, 17/2; for drachms, nos. 15/2, 16/1-16/19, 17/3; for obols, nos. 15/2,16/20; and for bronze coins, nos. 14/3-14/6, 15/4-15/6, 16/21-16/24. See also, Le Rider 1965, pp. 83-85, nos. 109, 111, 112; pl. II.

\(^{1324}\) Vanden Berghe 1963b, pp. 155-168; idem 1983, pp. 120-121; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 36.


\(^{1326}\) Messina (2014, pp. 337-338) noticed how the Hellenistic-influenced bearded equestrian with diadem (\(HA:1\)) distinctly follows a model typical of the Parthian coin portraits in 2\(^{nd}\) century BC, a version also successfully replicated in 1\(^{st}\) century BC Characenean issues (e.g. coin of Tigraios II struck in 78-77 BC as reported by Vardanian 1999, p. 122, fig. 2.1), while iconographic elements such as the cloak fastened on a shoulder and
Elymaean-Arsacid king (HA:3, namely Kamnaskires-Orodes) would have partially re-sculpted the original scene, adding HA:3-6 and HA:c-d in the first decades of the 2nd century AD\textsuperscript{1327}.

In November 1971, Eric De Waele reported the presence of a detached relief carved on the surface of a low rock centred at the bottom of the main panel (Pl. XXXIV.2)\textsuperscript{1328}. The figure is represented as a frontal standing male HA:7 (\textit{ca.} 1.20), dressed in a belted tunic, trousers and boots, with an oblong object on the left side of his body (rolled-up cloak?) that curves on the left side apparently following the contour of the stone. The face was severely eroded, but it was still possible to recognize hair in bunches at the side of the head. His lowered right hand was described as grasping a wreath\textsuperscript{1329} or a ring\textsuperscript{1330} (even if the stone was chipped at this point), while the left hand was placed on his left hip. According to Mathiesen, this figure may be a part of a larger scene with more elements\textsuperscript{1331}. De Waele suggested the presence of another person on the left, interpreting the carving as a scene of investiture composed by the king of Elymais who presented a ring (symbol of power) to a vassal, similar to the one depicted on the relief of Hung-e Yaralivand\textsuperscript{1332}. Kawami though, casts doubt on the

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\textsuperscript{1327} Messina 2014, p. 339. Regarding HA:3’s iconography, Messina identified similarities with coin portraits of Kamnaskires-Orodes issued more than 150 years later find the clear comparison and appear evident even though far from the chronological framework defined for the cult place of Hung-e Azhdar in its most recent rebuilding. On the several series issued in the first half of the 2nd century AD, Messina pointed out how the frontal bust of the king shows the same details such as the full beard, moustache, round curled hair bunches on each side, and even the same elaborated way of tying the long and fluttering diadem, which repeatedly encircles his head and has sometimes two knots at his temples recalling the small circles above the curled bunches on the rock relief, recently revealed by laser scanning of the relief's surface. If correct, Messina hypothesizes that the Elymaean sovereign “may have commissioned the addition of his figure and retinue on the tableau even celebrating the achievements of one of his predecessors” (Messina 2014, p. 339). See issues and chronology of Kamnaskires-Orodes in §9.2.5.3. More bibliography: Augé \textit{et al.} 1979, Pl. XVI.2370-2371; Hansman 1990, pl. 1.2; van’t Haaff 2007, p. 71, type 8.3). For a more detailed analysis of the Elymaean monetary production, see Chapter 9.

\textsuperscript{1328} De Waele 1975, pp. 61\textit{ff}; Kawami 1987, cat. no. 13, pl. 16; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{1329} De Waele 1975, p. 65, footnote 4.

\textsuperscript{1330} Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 121.

\textsuperscript{1331} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1332} De Waele 1975, p. 66.
presence of other people, while she agrees that the standing figure could have participated in a scene of investiture or sacrifice as in the example of the “Parthian Stone” at Bisotun.

7.3.2.1.6 DATING

The situation at Hung-e Azhdar opens up the debate as to whether the scene as it appears in its final composition was created by two different schools of sculptors working concurrently (a Hellenistic tradition influencing the left half; an Elymaean style elaborated for the right half); or whether it was carved at different times, perhaps started in Hellenistic-influenced times and then re-sculpted centuries later.

Based on similarities between HA:1’s facial details and coin portrayals of Elymaean kings, Colledge refuted the traditional dating at 2nd century BC, suggesting a period from 50 BC to 50 AD. Analogously, Hermann also ruled out the traditional interpretation of HA:1 as Mithridates I, proposing a 1st century AD dating of the relief due to the presence of both frontal and standing figures. This was contrary to Downey who interpreted the right half (HA:3-6) as a later addition, dating it to 50-150 AD after comparisons with the works from Dura Europos and Qasr el-Abiad. Kawami considers that the whole relief would have been manufactured at one time, interpreting the stylistic and iconographic differences as therefore irrelevant, and suggesting a dating for the entire panel to the 2nd century AD, if not to the beginning of the 3rd century AD. Invernizzi instead opted for a longer chronological span, between the 1st and 3rd centuries AD. Basing his assumption on comparanda with other Elymaean reliefs and sculptures from Hatra, Mathiesen proposed a dating for the right part (HA:3-6) to the beginning of the 3rd century AD. Previously, some scholars such as Debevoise even tried to propose a later dating in the Sasanid era. Similarly, Hüsing, Erdmann and Schmidt dated HA:3-6 to the 2nd century AD, but HA:1 to the Sasanid era.

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1334 Colledge 1977, p. 92.
1335 Herrmann 1977, pp. 65 ff.
1337 Kawami 1987, p. 124.
1339 Mathiesen 1982, p. 78, footnote 112.
1340 Debevoise 1942, p. 103.
1341 Hüsing 1908, p. 56.
1342 Erdmann 1969, p. 58.
1343 Schmidt 1970, 140.
7. Rock Reliefs

Only recently, through the excavation of the area in front of the Elymaean relief, Messina was able to delineate the archaeological context of the boulder and – even without direct stratigraphic relation between the structures unearthed at the bottom of the carved rock – to provide indirect data regarding the possible chronology of the two halves of the scene. The most recent structures have been dated by radiocarbon method applied on charcoals found in superficial layers onto the upper platform, which span from the mid-2nd century BC to the end-1st century AD. This result is, therefore, a highly reasonable dating for the dedication of the Elymaean relief, at least for the left section (HA:1-2 as being in the same period of the sanctuary’s most recent phase\textsuperscript{1344}. Messina further convincingly suggested that the creation of the right half (HA:3-6) occurred in the first two decades of the 2nd century AD, by comparisons between the central figure and monetary portraits of king Kamnaskires-Orodes\textsuperscript{1345}.

Unfortunately, the absence of inscriptions prevents a “safer” dating of the relief, but its relation with the sanctuary’s most recent phase appears to be the most plausible (1st-2nd century AD), in a period when Hellenistic heritage evidently persisted within local traditions\textsuperscript{1346}.

7.3.2.1.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The Hung-e Azhdar relief is the most significant example of the anomalies existing in the realization of Elymaean sculptures. It is a work of primary interest within the political and historico-artistic context of ancient Elymais, as the iconography and style are different from the norm. While the male figures on the right half of the scene (HA:3-6) are sculpted frontally, wear typical Iranian/Elymaean garments, and are paratactically aligned as similarly-ranked figures present at Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Wa, TS.II:Wba), Tang-e Botan, and BN:rel, the equestrian (HA:1) mounting his horse (HA:a) and his attendant (HA:2), which all face standing personages – as depicted at the Hung-e Kamalvand and Sar-e Pol-e Zohab\textsuperscript{1347} – are the only figures completely in profile. The latter characteristic does not currently seem to have parallels in Parthian/Elymaean art. In addition, this imagery demarcation is also evidenced by a difference in the carving depths (15-25 cm) between the two halves, with HA:1 more prominently in relief respecting HA:3-6\textsuperscript{1348}.

\textsuperscript{1344} Messina 2014, pp. 336-337.
\textsuperscript{1345} Ibid., p. 339.
\textsuperscript{1346} Callieri 2015, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{1347} Kawami 1987, cat. no. 4, Pl. 6.
\textsuperscript{1348} Messina and Mehr Kian 2010, p. 42; Messina et al. 2014, p. 158; Messina 2014, pp. 334-336.

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After this morphological and stylistic analysis, the debate leads to the understanding of whether the scene was sculpted and possibly re-sculpted centuries later with the addition of the four standing figures (HA:3-6) and the two flying birds (HA:c-d)\textsuperscript{1349}; or whether it was executed as it appears in its final composition at one time perhaps by different schools of craftsmen and sculptors as previously assumed for Shami\textsuperscript{1350}. To consider, the representations of HA:3-6 and HA:c-d are closely interrelated, since the birds, which endow HA:1 and HA:3 with royal insignias, give meaning to the final scene. Both the assumptions would explain the divergences in style and morphology regarding the different manufacture of the two carved sections.

According to the previously discussed interpretations regarding the depicted personages of the scene, HA:1 (Greek or not Greek) is clearly embellished with Seleucid victory motifs\textsuperscript{1351}, including the prancing horse with an arched neck (HA:a), which would represent an appropriate mount for an early Arsacid ruler victorious in Elymais\textsuperscript{1352} (Phraates II\textsuperscript{3}), or even for a Kamnaskirid member who achieved independence such as Kamnaskires II, or Kamnaskires III\textsuperscript{1353}. The HA:3-6 represent a local artistic tradition with HA:3, in particular, who is prominently delineated with his size, facial details, coiffure, belted tunic (i.e., bell-shaped lower part of tunic ending with three points, and trousers with semi-circular folds)\textsuperscript{1354}, weapons and gestures, may indicate a later Elymaean secular authority, (Kamnaskires-Orodes\textsuperscript{3})\textsuperscript{1355}. As already noted, there may be the presence of a human head (HA:b) with Parthian/Elymaean features (e.g., marked eyes, side-head bunches of hair, and squared beard) just beneath the horse’s raised foreleg, engraved in a small niche at a deeper

\textsuperscript{1349} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1350} §6.3.4.2. It can be expected that at the cultural centre of Izeh-Malamir there were well-trained native artists who produced artistic material in a purely Hellenistic style, in which the necessary technical expertise would have been directly transmitted from teacher to disciple. Indeed, some artefacts datable between the 3rd century BC and the 1st century AD emphasize a relatively marked and direct persistence of a Hellenistic heritage coming together with the local traditions. For the “movement” of Hellenistic art in Iran, see Callieri 2015, pp. 12-20.
\textsuperscript{1351} The fact that the Arsacids were represented in “Greek” appearance is not surprising as they often chose the naturalistic language of Hellenistic culture to celebrate their own lineage with the term \textit{philhellên} (friend of the Greeks), used as one of the epithets to describe the Arsacid sovereigns, at least until the 1st century BC (Callieri 2015, p. 14, cf. Invernizzi 1994; \textit{idem} 1999).
\textsuperscript{1352} Kawami 1987, pp. 121-122.
\textsuperscript{1353} Ibid., p. 124 (Kamnaskires II); Messina 2014b, pp. 337-339 (Kamnaskires III).
\textsuperscript{1354} Similar model is present in the dated statue of Abygyd at Hatra from the second half of the 2nd century AD (Mathiesen 1992/II, p. 207-208, cat. no. 201A).
\textsuperscript{1355} According to Messina (2014, pp. 338-339), after the comparisons between the monetary issues of Kamnaskires-Orodes and the facial outlines of the central figures at Hung-e Azhdar, there is little doubt in their interpretation as the same personage (see Chapter 9).
level considering \( HA:a \). It was standard practice to represent an enemy on the ground, trodden and crushed by the horse of the triumphant king, but here there was simply not enough room; or conversely, the scene was not finished. In any case, the similarities with later Sasanid reliefs (e.g., \( NRu IV \), \( NRu V \), and especially \( NRu I \) at Naqš-e Rustam), where the king is sometimes accompanied by an attendant, are evident. If my \( HA:b \) interpretation is correct, I believe the scene could, therefore, be a later evocative representation of a significant event in Elymaean history. According to the historical reconstruction provided by Shayegan, it may have immortalized the conjunct victory of Phraates II and Kamnaskires II over Tigraios in 133/2 BC. An early Arsacid ruler (\( HA:1 \), Phraates II) and his prancing horse (\( HA:a \)) depicted in Seleucid robes – therefore as a foreigner – could be stepping over the head of the defeated ruler of Elymais \( HA:b \) (Tigraios) and heading towards the new king \( HA:3 \) (Kamnaskires II), represented in later local Elymaean garments (2nd century AD). In this sense, the presence of the two wreath-carrying and palm-bearing birds (probably eagles) and flying towards the two principal personages, reiterates the theme of a “double” victory, or double regality. As suggested by Messina, on the basis of historical and iconographical considerations, the commission for the relief may have been related to a celebrative political context of the Elymaean kingship. If Messina considers the rupestrian scene as an occasion to celebrate the most recent rebuilding of an ancient local sanctuary (Hung-e Azhdar), I assume it may be integrated into wider circumstances, as suggested by its monumentality, presumably recalling the key role played by the Arsacid monarchy for the local royalty (i.e. Kamnaskirid dynasty). The relief appears to me to indicate an act of propaganda during a period when an Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty (Orodiids) was establishing its roots in Elymais, and therefore it was necessary to entrench a solid tie between the two royal houses (Arsacid

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1356 See also Haruta (2003, p. 473) who suggests that “something oval like a human head is depicted beneath the left foreleg of the horse just like in Awdaxšīr’s reliefs at Naqš-e Rostam”.

1357 Schmidt 1970, pl. 81 (\( NRu I \)), 89 (\( NRu IV-V \)).


1359 A bird (eagle?) with wreath and palm branch flying is present at Palmyra (Seyrig and Starcky 1949, Pl. XI) and among the Roman symbols of victory (Hölscher 1967, pp. 100f, pl. 12.2). A similar bird holding a wreath in its beak and another in its claws was found at Bard-e Neshandeh (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXX.2). The bird with the wreath in its beak is recognizable at Dura-Europos (Rostovtzeff 1934, pl. XXXVI.3; idem 1935, fig. 40). The motif of the victory bird holding a wreath in its beak or palm branch in its beak or claws is well represented in the numismatic evidence of Kamnaskires II (Le Rider, 1934, pl. 9, nos. 90.4-10). To note, on the same coin a youthful helmeted man is depicted, possibly indicating the presence of a warfare (Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 57, type 2.7).


1361 The finding of several arrowheads (111) – as well as some bronze bells – during the excavation in front of HA seems to support the assumption of a ritual practice within a military milieu at Hung-e Azhadar. (Cellerino et al. 2015, pp. 177-188).

and Elymaean) invoking the local traditions in order to facilitate the transfer of power and its legitimacy, as already revealed at Tang-e Sarvak (TS.lla:Na). In this political context, the incredible resemblances of HA:3 (i.e., Kamnaskires II) with Kamnaskires-Orodes may indicate the latter as patron of the rupestrian work at Hung-e Azhdar (2nd century AD). It cannot entirely rule out that the name Kamnaskires-Orodes may be somehow linked to the commissioning of this rock-relief, which is clearly evocative for the local memory of a fruitful collaboration between the two royal families (Kamnaskirids and Arsacids/Orodids).

Unfortunately, the area under the horse’s right foreleg is severely damaged, and the presence of a human head is only a guess, and despite some peripheral evidence, this personal hypothesis remains conjecture.

In conclusion, the Hung-e Azhdar carving embraces a tradition of two to three centuries of Iranian art, starting from the use of well-rooted Hellenistic heritage at Izeh-Malamir. The choice of this particular boulder, already bearing an Elamite relief, opens the possibility that this enclosed spot was not only a political locality, but might have had religious values for a dynastic cult which honoured the memory of the first Elymaean lineage.

7.3.2.2 Hung-e Yaralivand (HY: Pl. XXXVII)

7.3.2.2.1 LOCATION

At Hung-e Yaralivand, about 2.5 km north-west of Hung-e Azhdar, a badly corrupted relief is sculpted in a narrow cleft, hidden by a huge boulder that creates a kind of small natural cul-de-sac in some ways similar to Hung-e Azhdar (Pl. XXXVII.a). Due to the poor preservation of the relief, the personages sculpted in this context are difficult to identify.

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1363 The dating is confirmed by radiocarbon analysis of charcoals found in superficial layers onto the upper platform of Hung-e Azhdar, which span from the mid-2nd century BC to the end-1st century AD (Messina 2014. pp. 336-337).

1364 See also Kawami 1987, pp. 124-125; Messina 2014b, p. 339.


1366 Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 123-124
7.3.2.2.2 DISCOVERY

The rock-sculpture discovery at Hung-e Yaralivand was promptly published by W. Hinz in 1963.

7.3.2.2.3 DESCRIPTION

The approximately rectangular shallow panel of Hung-e Yaralivand is severely damaged. It shows two life-sized frontally standing figures facing the viewers (Pl. XXXVII.a-c). Each personage is dressed in a (belted?) tunic, bell-shaped in the lower part, with rather tight trousers, and carries a quiver on the right shoulder. The feet of both the personages are turned in profile, and no evidence of shoes, boots or sandals are recognizable because of the corrupted surface of the rock. The left figure (HY:1) is a smaller mirror image of the right one (HY:2) with his left hand is in front of his chest bearing an object of some sort. His right arm is bent and the hand at his hip holds perhaps an object (pilgrim’s flask)\(^\text{1367}\). The larger figure (HY:2) on the right seems to hold an object (ring or wreath) in his lowered right hand, while his left arm is bent with hand on hip. It has been suggested that this left hand could have grasped a sword hilt, but the level of deterioration makes it impossible to verify. Furthermore, HY:2 seems to have a rolled-up cloak along the left side of his body\(^\text{1368}\). The poor state of the surface of the relief makes it difficult to be more precise. It is almost impossible to recognize details, nothing of the faces can be seen, and even the hair is complicated to ascertain.

At Hung-e Yaralivand, the use of laser scanning with the creation of 3D models has also revealed traces of details invisible to the naked eye, such as the presence of a kind of halo surrounding the head of HY:2\(^\text{1369}\), and the existence of a previously unreported inscription on the upper part of the scene (HY:insc)\(^\text{1370}\).

7.3.2.2.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

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\(^\text{1367}\) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 41.

\(^\text{1368}\) Hinz 1963, p. 170. The bronze statuette of Shami (Kawami 1987, cat. no 10, pl. 13) seems to have the left arm in the same position with the left hand directly pressed against the roll of cloak which falls over the left shoulder.

\(^\text{1369}\) Messina \textit{et al.} 2014, p. 159.

\(^\text{1370}\) Moriggi 2011, p. 109. See §8.1.3.2.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.3.2.2.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

Despite the surface of the relief being badly weathered, with only the profiles of the two figures detectable, Hinz interpreted the representation as a scene of investiture, similar to the Khwasak stele, where an Elymaean prince on the left seems to be invested with the authority by the man on the right (a Parthian king)\(^{1371}\). Vanden Berghe instead considered this to be an Elymaean prince passing a diadem to a vassal\(^{1372}\). De Waele\(^{1373}\), Colledge\(^{1374}\) and Mathiesen\(^{1375}\) agreed with this panel as a scene of investiture, while Kawami\(^{1376}\) interpreted both the main figures to be Elymaeans. Kawami also suggested that the circular object without streaming ribbons – typical of diadems on Elymaean and Parthian reliefs – between HY:1 and HY:2 may be interpreted as a victory wreath (such as the example of the “Gotarzes” relief at Bisotun), or as a ring of authority that HY:2 was conferring to HY:1\(^{1377}\). In the latter case, the Hung-e Yaralivand relief would represent the earliest example in Iran of a motif that became popular during the Sasanian era\(^{1378}\). Harmatta expressed a different view. Guided by the study of the Kamnaskires dynasty’s coinage, he recognized in HY:2 the chief god of Elymais, symbolically associated with Jupiter, Ahuramazda and Bel\(^{1379}\), because according to his reconstruction of the scene HY:2 is unarmed, handing instead a diadem to the standing male on his right (HY:1). Considering the setting as a perpetuation of the moment in which HY:1 receives royal power, Harmatta identified the latter as an Elymaean king, through the analysis of the coiffure compared with coin portraits\(^{1380}\). He also assumed the presence of a bird (eagle\(^{1371}\)) between the heads of the two figures, flying toward HY:1 with a ring or diadem.

\(^{1371}\) Hinz 1963, p. 170.
\(^{1372}\) Vanden Berghe 1983, p. 48; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 41.
\(^{1373}\) De Waele 1975, p. 63.
\(^{1374}\) Colledge 1977, p. 92.
\(^{1375}\) Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 124.
\(^{1376}\) Kawami 1987, p. 127.
\(^{1377}\) Ibid.
\(^{1378}\) Ghirshman 1962, pp. 119f, 131-133.
\(^{1379}\) Harmatta 1982-1984, p. 172. Harmatta associated HY:2 with the Zeus Nikephoros present on the reverse of the coins issued initially by Kamnaskires III and his queen Anzaze in 82/81 BC followed by the other Kamnaskires until 66 AD (eventually 75 AD) and considered, by the author as the Hellenistic equivalent of Bel and Ahuramazda. According to Harmatta, the god’s monetary portrayal is almost identical over this range of time concerning his beard and “hat-coiffure” (see next note), iconographically connected with the appearance of kings in Elymais (ibid., pp. 172-173).
\(^{1380}\) Ibid., pp. 169-171. Harmatta named this particular hairstyle as “hat coiffure,” and it is characterized by two rows of spiral locks kept down by a diadem, and there are undulating ribbons above the shoulders. He considers this coiffure an identifying element of the Kamnaskired dynasty, observed not only in profile on Elymaean coins, but also in the small bronze statuette with cornucopia of Bard-e Neshandeh (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXVII.1-4), which Harmatta tentatively interprets as the representation of an Elymais king, namely Kamnaskires VI (Harmatta 1982-1984, pp. 170, 177).
in its beak\textsuperscript{1381}, and including an inscription below the scene\textsuperscript{1382}. Preliminary processing of data acquired in Hung-e Yaralivand by the Iranian-Italian team has revealed that there is no evidence of any letters below the two figures, and if this inscription once existed it has completely disappeared\textsuperscript{1383}. The same can also be said for the supposed bird that Harmatta reported between the two figures’ heads. However, state-of-art analysis has shown not only a previously unreported inscription (\textit{HY:insc}) on the upper part of the sculpted scene (invisible to the naked eye), but also a kind of \textit{halo} (presumably the remains of a crown of rays) surrounding \textit{HY:1}, which would identify him as a deity (Pl. XXXVII.c)\textsuperscript{1384}. Messina, therefore, suggests that the scene can be interpreted as an offering rather than an investiture\textsuperscript{1385}, as \textit{HY:2} holds an object in his right hand.

\subsection*{7.3.2.2.6 DATING}

Due to its highly damaged state of conservation, the rupestrian panel of Hung-e Yaralivand has been ascribed to a wide span of time. Initially, Hinz dated it to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC comparing the clothing of \textit{HY:1-2} to similar garments which appear on the Elymaean monetary issues\textsuperscript{1386}, and suggests at least a date after 50 BC\textsuperscript{1387}. Kawami proposed that the ring motif and the stylistic composition of the scene further suggest a later date to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD\textsuperscript{1388}, and even later to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\textsuperscript{1389}. As far as palaeography is concerned, according to the last analysis provide by Moriggi, particularly in regard to the shape of the letters \{b\} and \{r\}, there seem to be recognizable similarities with the script typologies featured at Hung-e Kamalvand. Following this evidence, a proposed dating for the inscription and the relief could be a little later than Hinz’s, placing them at least within the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD\textsuperscript{1390}.

\begin{flushright}
\textsuperscript{1381} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 170, fig. 1.
\textsuperscript{1382} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 174-175. Harmatta wrote about the presence of a two/three-line inscription which would have explained the historical background of the relief.
\textsuperscript{1383} Messina \textit{et al.} 2014, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{1384} Moriggi 2011; Messina \textit{et al.} 2014, p. 159. Moriggi classifies this highly-eroded inscription is highly eroded is listed by as linguistically part of the Aramaic present in the southern Mesopotamian group. It is translated as “[…] / son of […]” (Moriggi 2011, p.109). For more details, see §8.1.3.2.
\textsuperscript{1385} Messina \textit{et al.} 2014, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{1386} Hill 1922, pp. 247-249, pl. XXXVIII.5-12.
\textsuperscript{1387} Hinz 1963, p. 170.
\textsuperscript{1388} Kawami 1987, p. 127.
\textsuperscript{1389} Weidemann 1971, p. 157; Colledge 1977, p. 92; and Mathiesen (1988, p. 209) who more accurately placed the relief at the end of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD.
\textsuperscript{1390} Moriggi 2011, p. 109.
\end{flushright}
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7.3.2.2.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Regarding Hung-e Yaralivand, the scene represents local motifs with some garments which distinctly recall Elymaean traits (e.g., long tunics, tapering trousers, cloak roll over the left shoulder). Even though the scene has generally been interpreted as an investiture, in this case, introducing into the Iranian art culture the political theme of nomination with a ring of authority. The new data provide by Messina and the Iranian-Italian mission leave little doubt that HY:1 represents a crowded deity (a sun god) and HY:2 a pious devotee making an offer to the divinity.

7.3.2.3 Hung-e Kamalvand (HK: Pl. XXXVI)\(^{1391}\)

7.3.2.3.1 LOCATION

The inscribed relief is around 1.5 km north-west of Hung-e Yaralivand, hidden on the right side of a narrow ravine that ascends to the north towards the mountain. These last two locations (Hung-e Kamalvand and Hung-e Yaralivand) are in the same gorge but on opposite cliffs (Pl. XXXVI.a).

7.3.2.3.2 DISCOVERY

Hinz discovered another relief in March 1963.

7.3.2.3.3 DESCRIPTION

The relief has no defined area or borders, and its shallowly sculpted surface has two severely damaged figures, an equestrian (HK:1) on the left and a standing frontal character (HK:2) on the right (Pls. XXXVI.b-c).

HK:1, represented moving to the right, is sizable in comparison to his horse (HK:a). The head and the torso are depicted frontally, while the arms are placed at the sides suggesting a three-quarters view. HK:1 seems to wear a pointed headgear similar to the one on TS.II:Na.3 at Tang-e Sarvak. A diadem also appears to be bound around his head with two long ribbons falling along his right arm. His right hand holds a spear with ribbons while the reins are in his left hand. HK:1 is dressed in a tunic, which may have a V-shaped opening on

the front, and trousers apparently decorated with embroidery (or perhaps lightweight armour\(^7\) as *TS.III*:1). He may also be wearing a cloak. No details of footwear can be discerned even though his left foot seems to wear a boot. The figure is awkwardly executed as well as the horse, which appears grotesque with its massive body, sturdy legs, and tiny neck and head. The right foreleg is slightly raised.

To the right is a standing *HK*:2 who has the same height of *HK*:1 and *HK*:a. The head and the upper bust have been obliterated but frontal rounded shoulders and arms hanging at the side can be recognized. In particular, in his right arm, he seems to hold a small flask from which he may be pouring liquid\(^{1392}\), while his left hand is on his hip. *HK*:2 wears a long bell-shaped belted tunic that ends at the knees in a double arc. There may be a dagger along his right hip. The feet are equally turned to the sides and placed for even distribution of weight.

An Elymaic inscription (*HK*:insc) runs on the upper part of the scene, which Hinz, in collaboration with Henning, translates as “(Phraa) ’t(es) the priest, son of Kabniskir”\(^{1393}\).

7.3.2.3.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered\(^{1394}\).

7.3.2.3.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

The presence of a legible *HK*:insc between the two figures on the relief facilitated Hinz in his transcription of “[PRD]’T KWMR’ BR KBNŠKYR” as “(Phraa) ’t(es) the priest, son of Kabniskir”\(^{1395}\). According to him, the supposed personal name “’t” should be reconstructed as *Frahat* (i.e., Phraates). This enabled Hinz to identify Phraates of Hung-e Kamalvand as the son of the Elymaean king Orodes I, who ruled during the 1\(^{st}\) century AD\(^{1396}\), depicted as an equestrian (*HK*:1). For *HK*:2 Hinz prefers an interpretation as a

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\(^{1392}\) Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 122.

\(^{1393}\) Hinz 1963, p. 171. See §8.1.3.3.

\(^{1394}\) After the visit of the site in November 2015, it appeared evident that if the discovery of ancient ruins during future excavations could be expected at Hung-e Yaralivand, whose area at the bottom of the relief (directly carved on the cliff) could have provided enough space for the construction of cult structures, the same cannot be said for Hung-e Kamalvand. Here, indeed, the location of the relief on a cliff hidden within a tight and inaccessible gorge, sharply inclined to the mountains, would make the presence of significant constructions related to the relief highly improbable.


\(^{1396}\) Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 122. In reality, from a numismatic analysis on Elymaean emissions, king Phraates may be confidently considered the son of Orodes II, and not of Orodes I, postdating, therefore, this assumption to approximately the second quarter of the 2\(^{nd}\) century AD (see §9.2.5.3).
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vizier\textsuperscript{1397}. It is generally assumed that \textit{HK:insc} refers to \textit{HK:1}\textsuperscript{1398} claiming royal descent, while the \textit{HK:2} is interpreted as a vizier\textsuperscript{1399}, or a local representative\textsuperscript{1400}. Kawami – and later shared by Messina – assumed that the inscription \textit{HK:insc} could be associated to \textit{HK:2} rather than to \textit{HK:1} to indicate a Kamnaskirid king who retained some power\textsuperscript{1401}.

7.3.2.3.6 DATING

Based on palaeographical comparisons with the letters found in the Elymaic inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak, Hinz proposed dating \textit{HK:insc} to a \textit{ca}.100 AD\textsuperscript{1402}. Some scholars such as De Waele\textsuperscript{1403}, Vanden Berghe\textsuperscript{1404} and Kawami\textsuperscript{1405}, have accepted Hinz’s dating of the relief to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, others instead prefer a later collocation between the early and the late 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\textsuperscript{1406} which would be more appropriate considering the reference to Phraates (mid-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD)\textsuperscript{1407} and the clothing outlines (bell-shaped tunic). Harmatta alone assumed a dating of the relief to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC\textsuperscript{1408}.

7.3.2.3.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Associated to \textit{HK:insc}, the sculpted scene could be contemporaneous and therefore dating to 1\textsuperscript{st}-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD when the royal dynastic name Kamnaskires had almost entirely disappeared from Elymaean monetary issues\textsuperscript{1409}. The bell-shape lower part of the tunic ending with three points of \textit{HK:2} is very similar to garments of \textit{HA:3-6}, proposing a dating for mid-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\textsuperscript{1410}. On this basis, the relief could represent an attempt devised by Phraates.

\textsuperscript{1397} Hinz 1963, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{1398} Kawami 1987, pp. 72-73.
\textsuperscript{1399} Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 44; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{1400} Kawami 1987, p. 73.
\textsuperscript{1401} \textit{Ibid}., p. 73; Messina \textit{et al.} 2014, p. 159.
\textsuperscript{1402} Hinz 1963, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{1403} De Waele 1975, p. 75.
\textsuperscript{1404} Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 44.
\textsuperscript{1405} Kawami 1987, pp. 73, 178.
\textsuperscript{1406} Colledge (1977, p. 92) suggests the early 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD; Weidemann (1971, p. 151) generally speaks of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, while Mathiesen (1988, p. 209; \textit{idem} 1989, p. 121) proposes the late 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD.
\textsuperscript{1407} See §9.2.5.3. It must be emphasized that Phraates is not designated as a king, but rather as a priest, while his appellative as “son of Kamnaskires” could relate him to king Kamnaskires-Orodes (\textit{ca}. end-1\textsuperscript{st} – early-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD), since the latter bears so far the only attestation of the name \textit{Kamnaskires} during the Orodod period in Elymais.
\textsuperscript{1408} Harmatta 1976, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{1409} The last Elymaean king to use the term Kamnaskires on coin emissions was Kamnaskires-Orodes (end-1\textsuperscript{st}/early-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD). See Chapter 9.
\textsuperscript{1410} Comparison with the dated statue of Abygyd at Hatra (162/3 AD; in Mathiesen 199/2, cat. no. 201A).
(HK:2) to evoke his royal lineage during a period when it required to be legitimated\textsuperscript{1411}. I believe that examining the considerable resemblances between HK:1 and TS.II:Na.3 (headgear and spear with ribbons), HK:2 could be identified in the act of officiating a sacrifice to a local deity on horseback, or to a divinized king (Kamnaskires) – as possibly indicated by the fillet ends falling down along HK:1’s right arm (similar to the local ruler BN:rel.1) instead than floating as typical for the gods (e.g. TB:I.1, II.1, III.1, IV.1) – bearing the emblems of a god in the figure of HK:1.

7.4 Minor Reliefs in the Surroundings of Izeh-Malamir

In addition to the main rock-relief panels at Hung-e Azhdar, Hung-e Yaralivand and Hung-e Kamalvand, the relevance of Izeh-Malamir as a prominent artistic centre in the region has been enhanced by the discovery of other rupestrian material in the vicinity, namely the stone reliefs of Bid Zard and in the adjacent valley of Tisiyan (Mehernan), the free-standing carved boulder of Shaivand at the base of the Mongasht mountain, and the stone block of Murd-e Tang-e Zir currently located at the Department of Cultural Heritage and Tourism of Izeh. Among some relatively recent discoveries, Elymaean rock reliefs were identified at Jangeh, and Faleh in the area of Shiman, approximately 20 km northeast of the modern city of Izeh-Malamir, respectively in 1996 and 1999 as a result of the investigative work carried out by Jafar Mehr Kian in this region. Unfortunately, publications regarding the latter two carvings have still not been provided.

7.4.1 Bid Zard (BZ: Pl. XXXVIII)

7.4.1.1 Location

An archaeologically-decontextualized stone in high relief was found near the village of Bid Zard, ca. 15 km south-west of Hung-e Azhdar, in an isolated stream bed. At any rate, the presence of Elamite reliefs in the cave of Shekaft-e Salman only 2.5 km northeast of the village asserts the importance of this area.

\textsuperscript{1411} Kawami 1987, p. 73.
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7.4.1.2 Discovery

The sculpted stone was discovered by Vanden Berghe in 1963\textsuperscript{1412}, but already in autumn 1971, it had disappeared\textsuperscript{1413}. The discussion, therefore, can only be based on the photograph published by Vanden Berghe.

7.4.1.3 Description

The stone is apparently semi-circular in section showing two men, one (\textit{BZ:1}) larger than the other (\textit{BZ:2}). The surface is eroded, and some details obliterated, but the two figures appear carefully finished. This impression may be a consequence of their smaller size. An example, the bodies are accurately modelled with rounded and voluminous outlines, in contrast with the elongated and flatter figures of most of the Elymaean sculpted panels.

It is not completely clear if \textit{BZ:1} is seated\textsuperscript{1414} or standing\textsuperscript{1415}. Supposedly, he has the legs slightly bent at the knees, but his attitude is rather similar to a standing person\textsuperscript{1416}. His head extends above the edge of the stone, the upper part broke off and no details remain of the face. The depiction of bunches of hair at his ears and a relatively short beard are however detectable. Ribbons are at the sides of his head, possibly a simplified version of fillet ends, indicating the presence of a diadem tied around his head. \textit{BZ:1} is dressed in a belted tunic with trousers, cloak and shoes (or boots), presumably wearing a thick ring around the neck, which could also be considered a puffed neckline of the tunic. The cloak, held together asymmetrically on the right side of the chest through a round fastener, seems to fall over his back and appears on the left side of his body. Significantly, the vertical folds of the tunic in the section from the belt and the knees change their direction to become oblique, a feature that enhances the idea of a figure shown frontally seated. His right hand is raised, perhaps with the palm turned towards viewers, while his extended left hand grasps the bottom of a conical cup. Just above the vessel is a horned animal (deer, sheep, goat?) moving downwards, while below the arm of \textit{BZ:1}, two other animals seems to indicate the escape of prey

\textsuperscript{1412} Vanden Berghe 1963b, p. 168, pl. LVI.2.
\textsuperscript{1413} De Waele 1975, p. 75, footnote 3. Trudy Kawami tried to find out where the stone relief could have been located and she was told that it had been taken to a museum in Abadan. Unfortunately, her efforts to find the museum and the relief have been unsuccessful (Kawami 1987, p. 213, footnote 2). According to Mehr Kian who renamed it as Kal Razm, the carved stone should be located within the Emamzadeh Kal Zarm (Mehr Kian 2000, p. 67).
\textsuperscript{1414} Vanden Berghe (1963b, p. 168) retains the figure is enthroned since his legs appear to him to be bent.
\textsuperscript{1415} Kawami 1987, pp. 125, 213, ca. no. 50.
\textsuperscript{1416} Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 150) associates the posture of Bid Zard’s main figure with the “Heracles” of Masjed-e Soleyman.
(antelope?) pursued by its predator (a feline, perhaps a lion?). There is a raised area observable above and below the left arm of the man.

*BZ:2* is present to the left of *BZ:1*, almost above his right arm. He stands frontally and wears a belted tunic with a rolled-up cloak on the left side, trousers and boots. The head is badly damaged but eyes, moustache and ears may be distinguished, while his hair seems to be dressed in a *halo* shape. His right arm is held across his chest to his left side, perhaps gesturing to *BZ:1*\(^{1417}\), and the hand seems to hold an undetermined object\(^{1418}\). His left arm is along the left side of his body with the hand apparently grasping the rolled-up cloak.

### 7.4.1.4 Ruins, Pottery and Associated Artefacts

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered

### 7.4.1.5 Past Interpretations

Vanden Berghe considered the relief a scene of sacrifice on the model of the freestanding rock relief of “Vologases” at Bisotun\(^{1419}\), where, however, it is the main figure performing the act of sacrifice. Both Colledge\(^{1420}\) and Kawami\(^{1421}\) retain instead that *BZ:1* is a deity, and Kawami adds that *BZ:2* could represent a priest with the entire scene revealing a cult image.

### 7.4.1.6 Dating

For dating the relief, De Waele proposes the beginning of the 2\(^{nd}\) century AD\(^{1422}\), while Kawami assumes the 2\(^{nd}\) century AD based on comparison with the reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak and Tang-e Botan\(^{1423}\).

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\(^{1417}\) Kawami 1987, p. 214.
\(^{1418}\) Vanden Berghe 1963b, p. 168.
\(^{1419}\) *Ibid*.
\(^{1420}\) Colledge 1977, p. 99.
\(^{1421}\) Kawami 1987, p. 126.
\(^{1422}\) De Waele 1975, p. 75.
\(^{1423}\) Kawami 1987, p. 126.
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7.4.1.7 Final Considerations

Certainly, the identity of BZ:1 is hard to collocate, and if the floating fillet ties and the fluted cup have been recognized as attributes of the Heracles-like deity at Tang-e Botan, TS.II:Wa.1 and TS.II:Wa.8 at Tang-e Sarvak, these may outline a divine origin. The garment is not markedly different from that of BZ:2, except for the rolled-up cloak of this latter that may indicate a priestly function. The asymmetrical position of the round fastener on the right of BZ:1’s chest is identical to the model represented at Palmyra (divine triad panel of the Temple of Baalshamin)\textsuperscript{1424} and Dura-Europos (Iarhibol stele)\textsuperscript{1425} as a part of the deity clothes. The scene appears to have some similarities with the representation of the relief at Bard-e Neshandeh, including a clerical figure (BN:rel.4) recognizable by a rolled-up cloak on the left side of the body, gesturing towards a personage with diadem and fillets (BN:rel.1). At Bard-e Neshandeh this latter figure is presented with fillets descending onto the shoulder (a king), at Bid Zard the absence of weapons and the presence of gravity-defying ribbons may suggest the depiction of a deity, as at Tang-e Botan, Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Wa.1, 8), Palmyra\textsuperscript{1426} and in Bactria\textsuperscript{1427}. The unprecedented presence of small animals along the left side of the scene may reinforce the idea of performing a sacrifice to the deity, as occurred in Elamite representations (e.g., Kul-e Farah V). According to Kawami, the quality and the provenance (Izeh-Malamir) of the sculpted scene may confirm the sacredness of the depiction likely representing a local deity attended by a priest\textsuperscript{1428}.

7.4.2 Tisiyan-Mehernan (TM: Pl. XXXVIII)\textsuperscript{1429}

7.4.2.1 Location

The area of Susan is the next valley northeast of Izeh-Malamir, and it is connected by a track starting in Tang-e Rashid which runs all the way to Shami (ca. 13 km north-west)\textsuperscript{1430}. Some monumental remains made of huge cut stones have been found near the Dast Kortan village, ca. 11.5 km north of Hung-e Azhdar, in the vicinity of a natural spring on the rocky

\textsuperscript{1424} Image at: archeologie.culture.fr/palmyre/fr/temple-baalshamin
\textsuperscript{1425} Downey 1977, cat. no. 60.
\textsuperscript{1426} Colledge 1976, pp. 46, 139, fig. 27, pl. 35.
\textsuperscript{1427} Lukonin 1967, pl. 36.
\textsuperscript{1428} Kawami 1987, p. 126.
\textsuperscript{1429} Schippmann 1970, p. 233, pl. 110; idem 1971, p. 222, fig. 31; De Waele 1982; Kawami 1987, p. 187f. cat. no. 29; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 150-151, cat. no. 24.
\textsuperscript{1430} Stein 1940, pp. 137-141; Schippmann 1971, pp. 212ff; Wright 1979, p. 2, fig. 1.
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slope located to the west of the Karun river and the Susan plain\textsuperscript{1431}. Their utilization is still not clear.

7.4.2.2 Discovery

The architectural structures are named Tisiyan (or Tisiyun), and designate a relief slab showing a single standing figure discovered by Schippmann in August-September 1968\textsuperscript{1432}.

7.4.2.3 Description

A single life-sized figure (\textit{TM:1}) is carved on an oval slab (1.58×0.77 m), broken in two broad parts along an oblique line. The surface of the stone is badly weathered, and a third little piece has broken off on the right side along the fracture\textsuperscript{1433}.

The male figure stands in strict frontality, wearing a knee-length belted tunic ends with two arcs at the lower edge, trousers and boots. The facial details are obliterated, but there may have been a pointed beard. \textit{TM:1} has short full hair which appears to be dressed in a \textit{halo} shape. A heavy torque encircles the base of his neck. The tunic seems to have sleeves with horizontal folds and a V-shaped opening on the chest, but the fracturing of the slab has eliminated the some of the details. On the left shoulder, there may be a rolled-up cloak\textsuperscript{1434}. His right hand is placed in front of his chest and grasps an elongated item (banner\textsuperscript{?}, weapon\textsuperscript{?}) away from the body, while his left hand, which seems to hold an object (branch\textsuperscript{?})\textsuperscript{1435}, rests in front of his left thigh. The hilt of a sword or dagger seems to protrude at the figure’s right hip. The feet are turned out to the sides and downwards, connecting the figure with the sculptures of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman.

\textsuperscript{1431} Mehr Kian 2002, pp. 613-614.
\textsuperscript{1432} Schippmann 1970, p. 233. Mehr Kian correctly questions why Schippmann chose the name of Meherman. If he wanted to associate the relief with the nearest village, he should have picked Dast Kortan, as Meherman is located near the Karun river (Mehr Kian 2003a, pp. 614-615). The elliptical stone of Tisiyan is now preserved in the garden of the museum of Susa, near the entrance.
\textsuperscript{1433} Schippmann 1970, p. 233, pl. 110; idem 1971, p. 222, fig. 3; Kawami 1987, p. 87; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 150-151, cat. no. 24.
\textsuperscript{1434} Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 125. Kawami rejects the presence of a rolled-up cloak (Kawami 1987, p. 87).
\textsuperscript{1435} De Waele 1975, pp. 42ff.
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7.4.2.4 Ruins, Pottery, and Associated Artefacts

In addition to $TM:1$ found on the surface, the presence of two small tepes and a larger mound near the river is recorded, as well as traces of walls and several potsherds. In particular, the villages of Malviran and Gilan on the right bank of the Karun river indicate the presence of structures built in cut stones.

7.4.2.5 Past Interpretations

$TM:1$ has been differently identified by scholars: Schippmann proposed a warrior; De Waele assumed a tomb stone slab for a local prince; Colledge preferred an interpretation of $TM:1$ as a deity rather than a worshipper; Kawami instead pointed out a secular function, possibly a local ruler.

7.4.2.6 Dating

The relief is dated to the 2nd century AD. Based on his comparisons with the reliefs of Tang-e Sarvak ($TS.I:S:2; TS.I:N.1-2; TS.II:Wc.1$), Mathiesen prefers a dating to the last decade of the 2nd century AD.

7.4.2.7 Final Considerations

The absence of the rolled-up cloak on the left shoulder, an indicative element of clerical figures in Elymais, and the fact that $TM:1$ is armed suggest that Kawami’s assumption is more likely. The similarities in clothing with $HA:3-6$ and the stele of Abygyd (162/3 AD) from Hatra with regard to the bell-shaped lower tunic with a 3-point ending and the baggy folded trouser tight around the ankles, confirm the presence of a secular personage. From this last comparison, the mid-2nd century AD may represent a plausible dating for $TM:1$.

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1438 Schippmann 1971, fig. 31.
1439 De Waele 1975, pp. 47ff.
1441 Kawami 1987, p. 87.
1444 Potts 2008a, pp. 114-116.
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7.4.3 Shaivand (Sh: Pl. XXXIX)

7.4.3.1 Location

Shaivand\(^{1445}\) is ca. 36 km southeast of Izeh, near the village of Posht Asiab on the right bank of the Karun river. The area presents itself as a little valley with flourishing rice fields and orchards (e.g., figs and pomegranates)\(^{1446}\), surrounded on three sides by the snow-peaked Mongasht mountain and on the one hand (east) by the Karun. Shaivand is renowned for its natural beauty (e.g., waterfalls). The local population in the valley is still organized as an agro-pastoral community being dedicated both to agriculture and pastoralism\(^{1447}\).

7.4.3.2 Discovery

To the east of the Tuf waterfall, Mehr Kian accompanied by Mulla Ibrahim Kiani and Amir Mokhtari discovered (22\(^{nd}\) of March 1987) a free-standing sculpted panel (1.70×1.20 m), characterized by several carved elements\(^{1448}\).

7.4.3.3 Description

The relief contains seven human-like figures and two oxen (zebu) within a rectangular frame, marked by a vertical fracture that almost divides the scene\(^{1449}\). On the bottom right corner, there is a cult scene revealed by two figures and an altar. The main personage Sh:1 (ca. 0.58 m) frontally stands with his feet turned outwards, and he is dressed in a knee-length tunic, perhaps belted. His hair is in a halo shape, while his face appears to have beard and moustache. His left arm is bent in front of his chest with his hand possibly holding a bowl. His right arm is bent at the height of his hip, while the hand holds an indecipherable object (a jug\(^{3}\)) pointing toward a small tripod-base altar (Sh:a), or maybe a thymiaterion with a tripod base similar to the one found at Sham\(^{1450}\). On the opposite side, at the extreme right bottom corner, a smaller figure (Sh:2) is sculpted frontally dressed in a knee-length (belted?) tunic.

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\(^{1445}\) Shaivand (or Sheyvand) seems to be analogous to the term Shahvand, which in Bakhtiarî dialect can be translated as “placed by the kings” (Mehr Kian 1997, p. 71, footnote).

\(^{1446}\) Mehr Kian 1997, pp. 67-68.

\(^{1447}\) Ibid., p. 68, footnote 16.

\(^{1448}\) Ibid., p. 68.

\(^{1449}\) The only available photograph has been published by Mehr Kian accompanied by a drawing. The relief’s description presented here is entirely based on this documentation (Mehr Kian 1997, p. 69, fig. 2; idem 2001, p. 296, pl. 1).

\(^{1450}\) Stein 1940, Pl. VI.11.
that seems to have vertical folds on its lower part. He stands with his left arm in front of his chest possibly holding a bowl in his hand. His right arm is almost obliterated. Above these personages are three small frontally standing figures (Sh:3a-c) wearing long tunics with their arms bent and held at their chests. In their hands, they seem to hold long thin objects. Next to Sh:3a on the top left part of the relief, the most peculiar elements of the scene are recognizable in a recumbent male figure (Sh:4), two humped draught animals Sh:b (probably humpbacked oxen or zebu), two circular objects (wheels), and a third smaller personage (Sh:5). From the left, the tallest Sh:4 (0.62 m) is depicted in a reclined pose, seemingly resting on the backs of the two adjacent oxen. He has short hair, and his face reveals large eyes, eyebrows, and nose. He seems to wear a knee-length tunic. His right arm is bent at the elbow and appears to grasp a rectangular object. His left arm is also bent probably holding a bowl (or cup). His outstretched legs and his feet are shown in profile, similar to TS.IV:E at Tang-e Sarvak. Next to him, Sh:5 (ca. 0.25 m) is represented wearing a long tunic with both his arms stretched out, his right hand grasping a long thin object (possibly a stick or a whip), and his left hand holding the reins to the animal’s yoke. His feet apparently rest on one of the oxen’s humps. Finally, two circular elements (Sh:c) of no apparent meaning were carved between the recumbent figure and hind legs of the two animals.

7.4.3.4 Ruins, Pottery, and Associated Artefacts

Traces of an old stone building have been reported as still visible in the area, in particular, two small astudans (ossuary) in the vicinity of modern houses, a rock slab with an Aramaic inscription (locally named Bard-e Gowri)\(^\text{1451}\), and an ancient structure close to the Tuf-e Alchuk (a waterfall south of Shaivand) where stone columns and slabs have been found in addition to potshards scattered on the surface\(^\text{1452}\).

7.4.3.5 Past Interpretations

The surface of the rock is significantly weathered, but this did not prevent Mehr Kian proposing different carved processing. In particular, he assumed an execution of the relief in two phases\(^\text{1453}\). According to him\(^\text{1454}\), the relief indicates a scene of sacrifice including Sh:1

\(^{1451}\) Mehr Kian (1997, p. 71, footnote 15) suggests the presence of a subterranean chamber’s entrance near the stone slab, as in Bakhtiari dialect Bard-e Gowri can be translated as sang-i gur, which means “gravestone”. At the moment no evidence has been brought to light in this regard.

\(^{1452}\) Ibid., pp. 68-69.

\(^{1453}\) Ibid., p. 69.

\(^{1454}\) Ibid., pp. 70-71.
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next to an altar Sh:a that suggests association with the other Elymaean reliefs at Tang-e Sarvak (TS.I:S.1; TS.I:N; TS.II:Wb.1-2), Tang-e Botan and Bard-e Neshandeh. Mehr Kian also interpreted Sh:3 as holding stylized cornucopias and Sh:5 as a charioteer\footnote{Ibid., fig. 2; idem 2001, p. 296, pl. 1. Similar personages who hold cornucopia-like objects have been discovered at Bard-e Neshandeh (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXVII.1-4), Masjed-e Soleyman (ibid., Pl. LXXIX.2-3.), Tang-e Sarvak TS.II:Na and Bard-e Bot (BB:2), generally as a divine symbol for Bel (Hansman 1985, p. 237) or better a Tyche-like local deity (§5.5; 6.1.2).}. Similarly, Messina identifies Sh:1 as an priest with his assistant (Sh:2) who officiates the rite related to the use of Sh:a (altar, incenser\footnote{Messina 2015a, p. 21.}) in front of three personages (Sh:3a-c) of secondary importance and a dignitary (Sh:4) recumbent on a chariot led by a charioteer (Sh:5) and pulled by two humpbacked bulls (Sh:b-c)\footnote{Mehr Kian 1997, p. 71.}.

7.4.3.6 Dating

From a stylistic point of view, Mehr Kian suggests a dating in the late-1\textsuperscript{st} century AD\footnote{Kawami 1987, ca. no. 3, pls. 4-5.}. In the absence of inscriptions and without archaeological context, attempts to date the relief may be challenging. If considered the similarities in subject with the carving of TS.II:Na:1, and BB at Kuh-e Tina regarding the recumbent Sh:4, and with HK:2 at Hung-e Kamalvand and the “Parthian Stone” at Bisotun for the posture of the officiant Sh:1, a dating in the first half of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD could be recommended.

7.4.3.7 Final Considerations

Unfortunately, analysis and interpretation of the rock relief based on a single drawing can be highly speculative. On the other hand, the suggestion of a sacrificial scene represented at Shaivand seems plausible, in particular, the presence of the Sh:1-2 in the lower right side of the scene and Sh:a may confirm the performing of a cult act similar to the one depicted on the “Parthian Stone” at Bisotun\footnote{Dirven 1999, pp. 304-307.}. If Sh:3 were effectively holding a cornucopia each, an association with the secondary Tyche-like deities rather than the main local god Bel would seem more appropriate. Their almost accessory-like position and limited size do not justify the presence of the Elymaean pantheon’s chief god. On the other hand, from the relief of Palmyra and Dura-Europos, it has been known that Tyche-like deities were depicted during scenes of sacrifice\footnote{Kawami 1987, ca. no. 3, pls. 4-5.}. The presence of humped Sh:b-c which are completed with reins, and
presumably yoke, may be recognized as sacrificial offerings\textsuperscript{1460}. The tradition of carving animals to sacrifice is an integral component of the ancient Elamite art. At Kul-e Farah, in nearby Izeh-Malamir, scenes representing immolation of animals are depicted in three reliefs (\textit{KF I}, \textit{II}, and \textit{V}), and in two of them (\textit{KF I} and \textit{V}) an altar or incenser is also reported adjacent to the sacrificial animals. At the same time, the presence of \textit{Sh:5} who holds the reins and has a whip-like object in his right hand may justify the assumption of a charioteer who pulled \textit{Sh:4}\textsuperscript{1461}. The two circular objects on the left of the oxen’s hind legs could be identified with wheels. Finally, on the back of the humpbacked animal the representation of \textit{Sh:4} recumbent is quite common in Elymaean art (e.g., \textit{TS.II:N.1} and \textit{TS.IV:E.1}, \textit{BB:1}, Masjed-e Soleyman, \textit{SS:1}), except that the figure of Shaivand has his legs stretched out rather than one bent over the other (as at \textit{TS.IV:E}).

The left corner at the bottom was not used for any subjects and remained empty, possibly indicating that the relief was unfinished.

\textbf{7.4.4 Murd-e Tang-e Zir (MTZ: Pl. XL)}

\textbf{7.4.4.1 Location}

The so-called Murd-e Tang-e Zir is a bas-relief carved onto a stone block previously used as an architectonic element. This modest sculpted piece was accidentally discovered when digging for the construction of a gas pipeline near the village of Bajul-e Shalu, \textit{ca.} 25 km southeast of Izeh on the left bank of the Karun river (Murd-e Tang-e Zir region)\textsuperscript{1462}. The relief is now in the \textit{Department of Cultural Heritage and Tourism} of Izeh.

\textbf{7.4.4.2 Discovery}

Jafar Mehr Kian discovered the relief in 1988.

\textbf{7.4.4.3 Description}

Four personages represented frontally from the waist up and lying on their left side constitute the scene of the relief (1.25×0.45 m). They are depicted together with their left

\textsuperscript{1460} Sacrificial animals are also depicted on the stone relief of Bid Zard (§7.4.1), but they appear to be wild rather than domesticated with reins and yoke.

\textsuperscript{1461} Mehr Kian 1997, p. 70; Messina 2015a, p. 21.

\textsuperscript{1462} \textit{Ibid.} 2001, pp. 294-295.
arms bent in front of their chests, and their left hands hold a bowl. Each right arm is behind the next figure on the left. The stone is broken on the left corner, and it is impossible to comprehend if the first figure (MTZ:1) on the left had its right arm behind another figure now obliterated, or more likely raised, as the scene probably ended with the edge of the stone. The three male personages on the right (from left, MTZ:2-4) have long squared beards and handlebar moustaches, while MTZ:1 is beardless, perhaps indicating a female figure. All the facial details are prominent (e.g., eyes, eyebrows, noses, cheekbones), except for MTZ:2 (next to MTZ:1) who has half of the face obliterated. The hair is not visible, but a headgear (tiara?) is recognizable for MTZ:3-4. The upper part of MTZ:1-2 are almost deleted due to stone deterioration, however, it is plausible to suggest that MTZ:2 is wearing the same headgear of MTZ:3-4. The fact that the hair is not carved could be assumed to be a technical deficit or perhaps the latter were wearing headgears rather than headbands. The similarity with some sculptures of Bard-e Neshandeh\(^{1463}\) and Masjed-e Soleyman\(^{1464}\) is quite remarkable.

All the personages are dressed in tunics with possible horizontal folds analogous to the clothed figure at Tang-e Botan\(^{1465}\). Aramaic inscriptions on MTZ are claimed by Iranian sources which have translated a couple of words with the royal names “Kamnaskires” and “Anzaze”, queen of Kamnaskires III (reigned ca. 82/81-76/75 BC)\(^{1466}\).

7.4.4.4 Ruins, Pottery, and Associated Ruins

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

7.4.4.5 Past Interpretations

Paraphrasing the definition of Parthian art provided by Rostovtzeff, Mehr Kian deduces that the strict frontality of MTZ has to be included within this artistic sphere. On the other hand, the presence of other characteristics such as the abundant hair, the facial details and the clothing (long tunics with folds, baggy trousers tied at the ankles) indicates the relief as part of the Elymaean heritage. According to Mehr Kian, the importance of MTZ is in an

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\(^{1463}\) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXVI, XXVII, XXVIII.

\(^{1464}\) Ibid., Pl. LXXVIII.1.

\(^{1465}\) Also for the Murd-e Tang-e Zir relief, the only image available is one low-quality photograph published by Mehr Kian which makes it very difficult to provide an accurate description of the sculpted scene.

artistic principle of continuity starting from the Elamite to the Sasanid rupestrian art, via the Achaemenid imagery.\textsuperscript{1467}

7.4.4.6 Dating

No dating has been previously proposed for this sculpted block. From an iconographic perspective, the manifest presence of stylized (diademed?) tiaras on the head of at least MZT:3-4 and the absence of the typical trilobate coiffure indicate the first half of 2\textsuperscript{nd} century, when the tiara appears on the numismatic portraits of Orodes II, as a \textit{terminus post quem}. The extreme linearism similar to the diademed personage of Masjed Soleyman (end-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD)\textsuperscript{1468} and the Khwasak stele at Susa (215 AD)\textsuperscript{1469} may suggest a dating for the scene of MTZ to a late Parthian date, likely between the late-2\textsuperscript{nd} and early-3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD.

7.4.4.7 Final Considerations

The static repetition of the same model in the relief of MTZ may be associated with the main panel of Tang-e Botan and, therefore, as a ceremonial environment. Even the clothing of MTZ:1-4 and the dressed TB:I.2, , TB:II.2-3, TB:III.2, TB:IV.2, and TB:V (tunics with horizontal folds) is similar. On the other hand, the representation of recumbent figures lying on their left sides as at TS:II:Na:1, Kuh-e Tina (BB:1) and Sh:4 suggests the presence of secular personages. The interpretation is uncertain due to the lack of inscriptions and archaeological context within which this architectural carved stone element was placed, but it appears plausible to identify the scene as a banquet associated with either a secular or religious ceremony.

Stylized elements such as the beards, the curved mustaches, the headgear (simplified tiara?) and tunic decorations suggest a marked lack of naturalism. The inclination towards schematism and disproportion produce reticent images which are intense in their abstract representations. Similar to some sculpted heads from Bard-e Neshan\textsuperscript{1470} and Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{1471} and somehow recalling the frontal disc-head bronze pins from Lorestan (1\textsuperscript{st}

\textsuperscript{1467} Mehr Kian 2001, p. 295.
\textsuperscript{1468} Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 156, fig. 28, cat. no. 51.
\textsuperscript{1469} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 168, fig. 29, cat. no. 87.
\textsuperscript{1470} Ghirshman 1976, Pls. XXVI, XXVIII.2.
\textsuperscript{1471} \textit{Ibid.}, Pl. LXXXI.1-2

\textit{The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)}
millennium BC)\textsuperscript{1472}, the Elymaean relief seems to adopt the same linearistic approach as the late Elymaean-Arsacid kings.

7.5 Shimbar and Environs

The name Shimbar is a contraction used in the Bakhtiari dialect for the Persian term \textit{Shirin Bahar}, that literally means “Sweet Spring.” This title fully reflects the beauty of this verdant area, which is endowed with much vegetation and water resources as well as pastures for the migrating season.

The Shimbar appears in view between bare rocks and crags, and its vista is now violated by high-voltage towers and a recent highway coming from Masjed-e Soleyman and penetrating into the valley through a tunnel (\textit{Tunel-e Della}) that cuts through the mountain for \textit{ca.} 400 m. As one of the most \textit{inaccessible} parts in the already \textit{inaccessible} Elymais, Shimbar represents a classic mountain precinct surrounded by cliffs that guard the bucolic world at its core. Once again, the aesthetics of the environment and its artistic manufactures create a closely entwined association functioning as intermediaries between nature and culture\textsuperscript{1473}.

7.5.1 General Aspects

The concentration of ancient constructions, stone-paved roads, rock reliefs, \textit{graffiti} and inscriptions draws attention to the importance of Shimbar valley. Terracing on the hillsides attests the intensive agriculture in this region (Chahar Mahal va Bakhtiari)\textsuperscript{1474} reinforcing this assumption. As already mentioned for Tang-e Sarvak, even at Shimbar – despite indisputable evidence of its relevance in ancient times – comprehensive analysis of the territory, and systematic surveys/excavations have not yet been carried out.

Generally, in Elymais the discoveries of rock reliefs suggest the presence of an associated religious site (open-air or enclosed temple) in the immediate vicinity. Similarly, at Shimbar the sacred binomial association seems to be supported by archaeological and epigraphic evidence. The peculiarities of the location, its iconographic message including the combination of elements from Elamite, Semitic, Iranian, Greek and local imagery and

\textsuperscript{1472} Ayazi 2008.
\textsuperscript{1473} Álvarez-Mon 2014.
\textsuperscript{1474} Traces have been found of the cultivation of vines and pomegranates and other fruit trees (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 285), which now grow wild in an area that still seems productive and is well watered by springs and streams.
nomenclature, still today raise stimulating questions regarding interpretation and dating of the rupestrian scene.

### 7.5.2 Archaeological Context

The rock reliefs and inscriptions in and around the valley, *ca.* 62 km north of Izeh, constitute the third and a most provincial group of Elymaean reliefs in Khuzestan. The best-known panel is at Tang-e Botan, on the side of a rocky cliff, where the primary relief comprises five adjacent scenes, each representing two or three frontal figures in a paratactic alignment\(^{1475}\). A series of inscriptions furnishes unknown personal names and titles, but they have not yet been associated with any historical event. There seems to be no genealogical connection between the individuals mentioned in each inscription, so it may be assumed that the reliefs were executed over several generations\(^{1476}\).

Four roughly carved reliefs at Kuh-e Taraz, Bard-e Bot (Kuh-e Tina), Shirinow-Mowri, Susan-Sorkhab and Algi provide evidence for additional rupestrian production in the area. The relief of Kuh-e Taraz seems to depict three frontal figures, one seated and two standing, while the one at Kuh-e Tina and at Susan-Sorkhab\(^{1477}\) represent a reclining figure with an attendant\(^{1478}\). Shirinow-Mowri instead shows three personages of which one is sitting, and two are standing. Their highly damaged state of preservation and oversimplified execution, in addition to the absence of any inscriptions, preclude further analysis. About the Algi relief, no photographic documentation has been made, only a drawn reconstruction\(^{1479}\) that reveals two frontally-facing figures wearing diadems.


\(^{1476}\) Kawami 2013, p. 764.

\(^{1477}\) Sardari *et al.* 2012 (Farsi).

\(^{1478}\) Vanden Berghe 1983, no. 27, fig. 6; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, pp. 54-58, pls. 18-20; Kawami 1987, pp. 109-110, 204-205; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 124-125.

\(^{1479}\) Mehr Kian 2003b.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.1 Tang-e Botan (TB: Pls. XLI-XLII)

7.5.2.1.1 LOCATION

The archaeological site of Tang-e Botan (“The Gorge of the Idols”) is in a gorge set into the mountain of Kuh-e Della, on the south-west protrusion of the Shimbar valley, around 50-55 km northeast of Masjed-e Soleyman. The reliefs are located in two different positions carved into the lower part of the rocky cliff facing north (XLI.b). The first one at the entrance of the valley represents a single male figure (TB:1), the second is characterized by a large scene composed of twelve standing personages grouped in five different panels, which delineate the “idols” (also “faces of the mountains”) referred to in the location’s name (XLI.a).

7.5.2.1.2 DISCOVERY

The ancient relief and inscriptions at Tang-e Botan were discovered in 1841 by Sir Austen Henry Layard and reported for the first time in his study, A description of the province of Khuzestan. His visit to Shimbar and Tang-e Botan was hasty and arduous. Nonetheless, Layard was capable of providing an accurate hand-drawn copy of the Tang-e Botan inscriptions (interpreted as Pahlavi), as well as describing the carving panels. He also recorded the presence of ancient foundations that are assumed to be Sasanid. It is difficult to believe that Layard’s discovery did not attract much attention among academics, and only in 1930 was the first photographic documentation of the primary relief (Tang-e Botan) published by Herzfeld.

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“Faces of the Mountain” is how the relief of Tang-e Botan has been called by the Bakhtiari hunter from the village of Zavod Chelow who guided me and my translator Ms. Negar Montaz Jahromi around the rocky ridges of the mountains enclosing the valley of Shimbar, but without leading us to the site.

Layard 1846, p. 84.

Ibid., pp. 84-85.

Ibid., p. 86.

Herzfeld (1929-1930, p. 71) published a photograph taken by R.G. Monypenny, the British consul at Ahvaz, around the end of 1928 and the beginning of 1929. The famous Iranologist seemed to be aware of the inscriptions even if the passage in which he speaks of them is not entirely clear (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 266, footnote 8).
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.1.3 DESCRIPTION (Pl. XLII)

_TB:1_ at the gorge’s entrance depicts a single male frontally standing. His right arm is bent with his hand level with his shoulder, while the left hand seems to be at his hip. His hair appears to be dressed in the typical _halo_ shape. The erosion is so advanced that it is impossible to distinguish facial details, even if Mathiesen hypothesizes the presence of a beard. The figure wears a knee-length tunic with apparently a rolled-up cloak on the left side of his body.

At 25 m away from the first relief, entering further into the gorge, the main panel can be seen facing north, enclosed on all sides by the cliffs. Nine life-sized figures and three of smaller dimensions constitute the relief body of _ca._ 8.5 m length and 2 m high. At first sight, they appear to form a continuous group, but on closer inspection, they are revealed as five distinct scenes with repetition and variation of the same theme. Jumps in the surface of the panel mark this division between the single groups. Amongst the five groups, three are composed of two figures each (I, III, IV), and two of three characters each (II, V). All the personages, lined up in a fixed and absolute frontality typical of the Elymaean reliefs, were deliberately defaced, as were many other sculptures during the early centuries of Islam.

The two figures in _Group I_ are males. From the left, the first character (_TB:I.1_, 1.85 m) is represented nude. His right hand grasps a club, and his left hand is placed on his chest, perhaps holding a shallow cup. The figure curves slightly at the right hip as if the right leg carries the weight with its foot shown in profile. The left leg and foot are a little raised and turned outward in a natural posture which appears as a relic of Hellenistic influence. Facial details are missing, but the head is apparently crowned with a diadem. In the top left corner, there seems to be a small axe. The second personality _TB:I.2_ (1.80 m), dressed in a knee-length belted tunic and loose trousers, has his right hand placed on the left arm of the naked figure while his left hand seems to grab a rolled-up cloak hanging down from his left shoulder. No details of the face are discernible. A small altar-like structure (_TB:Ia_) is present between the figures as well as an inscription (_TB:I.ins.1_) between their heads. Both the

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1487 As mentioned for other rupestrian works in Elymais, the rolled-up cloak may be indicative sign for a distinct social class as likely the local clergy (Potts 2008a, pp. 114-116).
1490 _TB:I.insc.1_ states “_wky the Elder who is b’sybh, son of Swl_” (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 272). The more recent translation from Gzella (2008, p. 119), “_Oke, the priest (or: the elder), who is B’SYBH (or: of Bashiba’)_”. For the linguistic analysis, see §8.1.2.
figures have some naturalistic modelling and seem to be depicted with sufficient depth to be distinguished from the background.

*Group II* shows the same scene but with three human-like components instead of two, of which the first on the left (*TB:II.1*, 1.95 m) is represented nude, while the remaining two (*TB:II.2*, 1.95 m; *TB:II.3*, 2.0 m) are clothed\[1491\]. As in the previous scene, *TB:IIa* likely holds a club in his right hand and in his left hand a cup maintained at chest level. His enormous feet and legs are seen in profile with the body weight evenly distributed on both legs. The face is obliterated while his hair seems to be dressed in a *halo* shape. There is a diadem around his head tied at the back with an ample ribbon. On his right, *TB:II.2-3* are depicted standing. Both hairstyles are analogous to *TB:II.1* and even if their faces are mutilated, *TB:II.2* seems to show a short beard. They wear belted tunics and loose trousers covered with a regular linear pattern that indicates the fold of the garments (V-shaped on the upper part of the tunic, vertical under the belt). They also grab rolled-up cloaks on their left sides. *TB:II.2* holds his right hand close to the hip of *TB:II.1*, while the clothed *TB:II.3* holds his bent right arm touching the left arm of the man at his side (*TB:II.2*). Between *TB:II.1* and *TB:II.2* is a conical object (*TB:IIa*). An inscription (*TB:II.ins.2*) is engraved between their heads\[1492\], while two other inscriptions (*TB:II.ins.3-4*) are located between *TB:II.2-3*\[1493\].

*Group III* is composed of two personages (from the left, *TB:III.1*, 1.95 m; *TB:III.2*, 1.86 m)\[1494\]. The naked *TB:III.1* in his standing posture and position of the arms as well as the hair and the diadem with its ribbon at the back of the head are identical to the particulars of *TB:II.1*. Concerning *TB:III.2*, he is very similar in attitude and dress to *TB:II.2-3*. In addition, a rolled-up cloak is also depicted on his left side. His right arm is directed towards the upper arm of *TB:III.1*, while his left arm is at his side. At the bottom, between these figures is sculpted an altar (*TB:IIIa*) and at the top an inscription (*TB:III.ins.5*)\[1495\].


\[1492\] *TB:II.ins.2* reads as “Šrkw, who is b’šybh, son of Šnwmt” (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 272).

\[1493\] The one at the top is *TB:II.ins.3* and it has been translated as “Šptw stwr’`, who is (keeper of) the altar of Bel’, son of ‘wky’. The one at the bottom – *TB:II.ins.4* – states: “These are the images which Šptw prepared, son of Š’š, from ’yrsy” (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 272).


\[1495\] *TB:III.ins.5* is translated as “Orodos the Great, who is b’šybh” (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 272).
Group IV includes a nude figure (TB:IV.1, left, 1.95 m) and a clothed man (TB:IV.2, right, 1.75 m). TB:IV.1 seems identical to the TB:III.1. TB:IV.2 has his right arm lifted to the left shoulder of the nude male TB:IV.1, who looks rounder and fuller, with his left hand beside his left hip. TB:IV.2’s garments are the same as those of the other clothed men. As in the previous scenes, between these two figures is an altar (TB:IVa), which in this case seems to float in the air. There are no inscriptions.

The last group (Group V) is formed of three figures (TB:V.1-3, 1.10 m) all dressed in long belted tunics, not appearing to have trousers, and standing frontally. Differing from other Elymaean personages, these figures do not wear a rolled-up cloak on their left shoulders, confirming that this element represented a distinct social class insignia. Apparently, all these personages seem to hold their right arms up to touch the previous figure on the left, while the left arms are kept by their sides. TB:V.1-3 are placed on a panel lower than the previous group, but the ground-level position is similar.

7.5.2.1.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

Bivar and Shaked reported ancient ruins on top of the mountain overlooking the reliefs at Tang-e Botan. Bivar visited the site and described a modest building of dry-stone masonry that from his perspective was unlikely to have been a fortified place. In relation to the reliefs at the bottom of the slope, this structure was interpreted as a cult place, due to the presence of a pillar with a hollowed top (similar depicted in the carving scenes), which Bivar considered to be a fire-altar. However, an identification of the construction as a small fortress cannot be excluded, since it was common for the Elymaeans to have a fortified building close to sacred places, as previously observed for Bard-e Neshandeh, Shami, and Hung-e Azhdar. The site was familiar to the Bakhtiari tribes in the 1960s under the name Qal’eh-ye Dokhtar, which is a much-used designation of historical constructions in rural Iran. Additional structural remains were found around 45 m above the reliefs including two modest tunnels as

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1497 Ibid.
1498 Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 280. Bivar admitted that there is scant evidence from the surface to determine the function of the building, as the walls had fallen and the stones were already widely scattered at the time of his visit in 1962.
1499 Ibid. Qal’eh Dokhtar (or Qal’eh-yi Dokhtar, Qaleh Dokhtar) translated as “The Maiden Castle”, is commonly acquainted in Iran as a castle built by Ardashir I in 209 AD, which is located on a mountain slope near the Firozabad-Kerman road.
well as traces of channels which presumably irrigated the terraces to cultivate. Furnishing a perennial flow, these artificial irrigation systems would have replenished water contemporaneously for cultivation and the stone building. It was made otherwise complicated to transport the water supplies during the summer season for more than 1,000 m along the steep slopes of the mountain.

Bivar reported the presence of ancient paved roads at Tang-e Botan and Pol-e Negin, which appear to be similar to the procession path at Tang-e Sarvak.

### 7.5.2.1.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

In 1935, Mikhail Rostovtzeff briefly confronted the question of the Tang-e Botan relief, and, considering the nudity of the figures, he asserted the presence of a divine assembly and their worshippers. A different interpretation came from Debevoise, who hypothesized the existence of a “king, his court, attendant gods, and the royal children”, and in time he was the source of inspiration for the detailed study conducted by Bivar and Shaked, published in 1964 \( \text{(The Inscriptions at Shimbar)} \). The two scholars first suggested a division in groups of the panel, interpreting the entire scene as the act of taking an oath by a local dignitary in the presence of a deity, possibly belonging to an Iranian cult. Scarcia takes a different view and describes the scene as a “cartellone da cantastorie”, namely a photographic-style depiction of separate stages of the same story, where the first scene (\( \text{Group I} \)) represents the first oath to a fire-altar; following a double central scene (\( \text{Groups II-III} \)) where a sacred drink (\( \text{haoma} \)) is prepared, and an oath is taken by the officiants (\( \text{TB:II.2-3} \)); finally, Groups IV-V indicate two “simple” oaths similar to \( \text{Group I} \). Scarcia considers the focal point of the four scenes in the presence of a local Heracles-like deity. Vanden

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1500 Ibid.
1501 Ibid., pp. 267, 281.
1502 Henkelman 2014, fig. 8b.
1503 Rostovtzeff 1935, p. 258.
1504 Debevoise 1942, p. 102.
1505 Bivar stayed at Shimbar in 1962 and was courteously welcomed by Muhammad Muradi, chief of the small encampment at Tang-e Botan, who also acted as his guide in the gorges of Shimbar. Bivar reported the details of his journey (Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 266-268). Their article is primarily focused on the inscriptions, but without forgetting the importance of the context in which they have been found, such as the surrounding area and the nature of the monuments of which they are a part. In this attempt to write a comparative analysis, Bivar and Shaked – for palaeographic reasons – not only emphasize a similarity with the inscriptions at Tang-e Sarvak, but also identify them as transcriptions of a little-known Aramaic local language (Elymaic). See Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 271, 279-280; referring to Seyrig 1941, p. 256. Regarding the language spoken in Elymais, see Chapter 8.
1506 Bivar and Shaked (1964, p. 269) further suggest that the repetition of the same scene would be tied to the fact that it deals with separate events sculpted at intervals of several decades, with the oldest being on the left (Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 269-271).
1507 Scarcia 1979, pp. 264-265.
Berghe and Schippmann refuted the perception of the panel as a scene of investiture embraced by a sacred aura due to the absence of the diadem (symbol of investiture) for the dressed figures. Kawami considers the relief a product of subsequent stages which indicate the existence of a local cult dedicated to Heracles in Elymais. Finally, Mathiesen suggests that the precondition of a diademed personage exists only “in connection with secular appointments”, and therefore it is irrelevant in a religious context. In addition, if Henning’s translation of TB:II.ins.2 is correct and B`SYBH “is in oath or while taking an oath”, the rupetrian panels could refer to an oath taking at different times and connected with a sacrifice performed within a cult area.

7.5.2.1.6 DATING

The rock reliefs at Tang-e Botan are dated between the 1st century BC and the early-3rd century AD. Group I is considered to be the first created, between the 1st century BC and the 2nd century AD, apparently because the posture of the Heracles-like TB:I.1 seems more “Greek-influenced”. The other groups span a period of time from the end of the 2nd century AD to the beginning of the 3rd century AD. An absolute dating for the panels is still a matter of debate.

Debevoise attributed the reliefs at Tang-e Botan to the Parthian period, in particular suggesting that they must have been made before the 3rd century AD and, more precisely, starting from the 2nd century AD. Many researchers of Parthian art shared this hypothesis, among them Downey and Colledge. Bivar and Shaked, attesting the palaeographic similarities between the inscriptions at Tang-e Botan and Tang-e Sarvak, dated the reliefs to the 2nd century AD – a line of thought also shared by Sznycer and Guépin – with

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1508 Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 51.
1509 Kawami 1987, pp. 178-182.
1510 Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 130, footnote 19
1512 This idea is based on a traditional view of Parthian art, where the more a monument seems “Greek” the more it is regarded as ancient, while the more it seems primitive and straightforward the later it is taken to be (Ghirshman 1975, pp. 232-237; Kawami 1987, p. 182). The reality is that the question is still open as to whether this characteristic, taken on its own, could be a valid criterion for dating (Mathiesen 1992/1, p. 47).
1513 Debevoise 1942, p. 102.
1515 Colledge 1977, 92; idem 1986, pl. VIIIc.
1516 Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 271-272.
1517 Sznycer 1965, p. 3.


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Group I considered older by a generation in respect to the others. Ghirshman and Kawami, retain Group I as pertaining to the 1st century AD and the other reliefs to be later, from end-2nd to early-3rd century AD. Von Gall proposed for Tang-e Botan an analogous dating due to the concomitance of those at Tang-e Sarvak. Conversely, Harmatta suggested a chronology from the last decades BC for three successive generations until ca. 75 AD in accordance with Vanden Berghe (ca. 75 BC to 200 AD). A dating for the entire scene from end-2nd to early 3rd century AD is preferred by Mathiesen. In particular, following an in-depth analysis of the sculpting style, he maintains that Group IV and Group V were the first made – corresponding with Group I at Tang-e Sarvak (ca. 170/180-190 AD) – while Group I was realized at the beginning of the 3rd century AD and thus the last panel to be made. As occurred for Tang-e Sarvak, also in this case, the reliefs could be backdated by a few decades maintaining the classification proposed by Mathiesen. The only remaining doubt concerns Group I. If Mathiesen firmly placed it as the latest group assuming a Greco-Roman Heracles model, the posture of the TB:I.1 suggests an evident affinity with TS.I:W, while the TB:I.2 may be associated with TS.II:Nb and, in particular, to TS.IV:N.1. Indeed, the uncommon position of the left foot which points straight down is identical in TB:I.2 and TS.IV:Nb suggesting a precise coincidence in time between the two scenes around 1st-2nd century AD (table 3).

7.5.2.1.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

At Tang-e Botan, the paratactic repetition of a similar scene, slightly modified, likewise the coupling of personages within it produces a particular interest and included various perspectives. If the dressed personalities can be interpreted as local dignitaries, priests or worshippers, it seems natural to identify the naked figures – which may

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1519 Ghirshman 1975, p. 237. This interpretation is suggested – according to the French archaeologist – by the different head of hair that Hercules is shown with in Group I, compared with the other groups.
1520 Kawami 1987, pp. 178-182, ca. no. 20.
1521 Von Gall 1970, p. 305.
1523 Vanden Berghe 1983, pp. 50, 122. See also Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 52.
1524 Mathiesen 1992/1-2, pp. 45-47, 130.
1525 See Table 3
1526 Mathiesen 1988, p. 209. This hypothesis is based on a comparative analysis that includes Group I at Tang-e Botan, Group 3 at Tang-e Sarvak, the statue of Hercules at Masjed-e Soleyman and the stele of Artabanus V at Susa (Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 130).
1527 Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 269; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 51.
1528 Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 129.
1529 Kawami 1987, p. 74.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
represent the same divine entity in all four groups despite there being a few small stylistic and iconographic differences\(^{1530}\) – as a representation of a local deity whose outward form is that of the Heracles\(^{1531}\), imported from the Classical world\(^{1532}\).

The presence of *TB:II.insc.3*\(^{1533}\), which mentions “*the altar of Bel*” could lead to arguments that *TB:II.1* is to be interpreted as Bel\(^{1534}\), since the Elymaean pantheon and its deities, who had in Bel their chief god, seems to convincingly belong to the Semitic sphere more than to the Iranian traditions\(^{1535}\). Besides, the iconographic elements which are suggested as key to identifying the Elymaean Bel (e.g., cornucopia\(^{1536}\)) are absent from the scene of Tang-e Botan, while the similarities with the Heracles-like imagery are quite evident, as the nakedness, the diadem with floating ribbon ends, the clava (§10.2.4.4). Even the translation of BL’RW as “*keeper of the altar of Bel*” has been recently considered speculative\(^{1537}\). Despite the use of foreign figurative models, the Elymaean deities had their own authentic personality resulting from the cultural synthesis of different attributes that iconographically belonged to other religions (§10.2.4).

At Tang-e Botan, iconographic and artistic features suggest the presence of subsequent stages of a similar ritual act officiated by different personages in front of the same deity. The epigraphic information reveals the designation of local anthroponyms and official posts (probably related to the ritual sphere). The presence of Orodes in *TB:III.insc.5* may indicate an act of propaganda of the new Elymaean-Arsacid king to legitimize his position in front of a local deity through a ritual practice in a religiously-relevant site.

\(^{1530}\) On this point, see Downey (1969, p. 13) who, on the contrary, hypothesizes the presence of various deities on the relief, identified by their diverse hairstyles. In reality, if on the one hand there could be small differences in hairstyle – keeping in mind that the state of erosion is so advanced that it is problematic to be certain of the details – on the other hand, it does seem strange that various deities would have been represented with the same attributes (i.e., a club in their right hands and a cup in their left hands at chest level). See also Sznycer (1965, p. 2) who suggests a different deity only for Group II.

\(^{1531}\) Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 268.

\(^{1532}\) Ghirshman 1976, pp. 122, 204; Matheson 1976, p. 164; Scarcia 1979, pp. 261ff; Vanden Berghe 1983, p. 50; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 50; Kawami 1987, pp. 74, 179-181; Mathiesen 1988, p. 208. Vanden Berghe assisted by Haerinck (1981, p. 87) interprets him also as “*un roi defunt heroisé dans la personne d’Héraclès*”. It is to be emphasized that Vanden Berghe visited the site on several occasions (1962, 1964, 1968, 1975).

\(^{1533}\) Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 277; Hansman 1985, p. 237. See also §8.1.2.


\(^{1535}\) Hansman 1985.

\(^{1536}\) *Ibid*, pp. 237, 243-244. On Bel in Elymais, see §10.2.4.1.

\(^{1537}\) Gzella 2008, p. 120. More details, see §8.1.2.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.2 Kuh-e Taraz (KT: Pl. XLIII)\(^{1538}\)

7.5.2.2.1 LOCATION

A shallow and badly battered relief is located on the mountain of Kuh-e Taraz, a site east of Shimbar past Tang-e Chelow and the village of Zavod Chelow, at *ca*. 2,500 m high, well hidden within the vegetation along the northeastern mountainside.

7.5.2.2.2 DISCOVERY

The site of Kuh-e Taraz was discovered in June 1964 by Vanden Berghe\(^{1539}\), although Ehmann recorded the presence of a “*sassanidisches Relief nahe der Passhöhe des Kuh-i Taras*”\(^{1540}\). There is no confirmation that they both represent the same relief.

7.5.2.2.3 DESCRIPTION

The relief is heavily damaged but apparently represents three figures, a person frontally seated (*KT*:1), and to the right, two standing personages (*KT*:2, left; *KT*:3, right)\(^{1541}\). All three are probably males. *KT*:1, whose upper body is now completely missing, seems to wear a long robe and is attended by *KT*:2 in a belted tunic. The latter stands dressed in a tunic and possibly showing a rolled-up cloak on the left side\(^{1542}\). His left arm at his hip, and the right arm probably raised and extended towards *KT*:1. Finally, *KT*:3 is almost entirely obliterated, and all that is left is a conical projection on the rock.

7.5.2.2.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

Traces of artificial levelling and cobblestones related to ancient paths have been identified along the slopes of Kuh-e Taraz\(^{1543}\). No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

\(^{1538}\) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 57f, pl. 20; Kawami 1987, p. 205, cat. no. 43; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 124-125, cat. no. 6.
\(^{1539}\) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 57.
\(^{1540}\) Ehmann 1975, p. 39, footnote 36.
\(^{1542}\) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 57.
\(^{1543}\) Personal visit in November 2015.
7.5.2.2.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

The scene has been interpreted to show a homage or an investiture\textsuperscript{1544}, and Kawami tentatively compares it with the relief \textit{TS.II:Wa}\textsuperscript{1545}, composed of frontally enthroned figures (\textit{TS.II:Wa.1, 8}) in long tunics and standing personages (\textit{TS.II:Wa.2-7, 9}).

7.5.2.2.6 DATING

According to Vanden Berghe and Schippmann\textsuperscript{1546}, dating the relief is impossible due to its highly contaminated state of preservation. Regardless, Kawami proposed the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\textsuperscript{1547}.

7.5.2.2.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The dramatic situation in which the relief finds itself makes it almost impossible to provide a plausible interpretation of the scene.

7.5.2.3 Bard-e Bot (BB: Pl. XL)

7.5.2.3.1 LOCATION

Located at the entrance of a cave, the relief of Bard-e Bot ("stone of the idol") was found along mountain Tina, ca. 30 km to the west of Kuh-e Taraz and ca. 15 km northwest of Shimbar\textsuperscript{1548}.

7.5.2.3.2 DISCOVERY

The relief of Bar-e Bot is also known by the name Kuh-e Tina due to the place where Vanden Berghe found it in June 1964, after the discovery of Kuh-e Taraz\textsuperscript{1549}.

\textsuperscript{1544} Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 57; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 125.,
\textsuperscript{1545} Kawami 1987, pp. 110, 205.
\textsuperscript{1546} Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 58; Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 125.
\textsuperscript{1547} Kawami 1987, p. 110.
\textsuperscript{1548} Based on the map of Vanden Berghe and Schippmann (1985, Carte 2), the distances are approximate as I was not able to visit this place in 2015.
\textsuperscript{1549} Vanden Berghe 1968, p. 19; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 55. Kuh-e Taraz was discovered the 17\textsuperscript{th} of June (\textit{ibid.}, p. 57), Bard-e Both instead the 24\textsuperscript{th} of June (\textit{ibid.}, p. 55).
7.5.2.3.3 DESCRIPTION

The rock panel is composed of two figures: a frontal personage reclining on his left elbow (BB:1) with his left leg bent in under his right, and a shorter seated/standing figure (BB:2). BB:1 has a large head in a trilobate form, but it is impossible to determine whether the top lobe is rounded headgear or just represents hair. Traces of torque around his neck, and thin bands at the curving waist are observable in photograph, suggesting that he wears a (belted?) tunic. BB:1 possibly holds a drinking bowl in his left hand in front of the chest, while his right hand grasps a ring. His left elbow rests on a pillow, divided into layers, and the entire figure seems to recline on a “royal bed” (as for TS.II:Na:1), as on the kline both the mattress and the legs can be distinguished.

To the right of BB:1, there is a shorter BB:2 described as either seated or standing. BB:2 is not well-delineated from the available photographs, however, the interpretation as a seated personage is plausible, even though the sitting posture is uncertain. The head and the upper part of the body appear frontal, while the legs are turned in profile to the left. Around his head, there seems to be a circular nimbus, which would indicate a divine factor, or it could be merely his hair dressed in a halo shape. In his right hand, the figure seems to hold either a stylized cornucopia or a spear.

7.5.2.3.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

7.5.2.3.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

The iconographic theme here is generally compared with the relief TS.II:Na:1. Vanden Berghe and Schippmann more correctly named BB:1 as king Orodes, accompanied by a figure (BB:2) with a cornucopia on the model of Tang-e Sarvak. More generally, Kawami indicated BB:1 as a local ruler. Unfortunately, there are no inscriptions and even though the similarities in the composition of the scene with TS.II:Na are evident, especially considering BB:1 on the kline, BB:2 casts doubts because of its poor state of preservation.

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1551 Kawami 1987, p. 205.
1552 Ibid.
1554 Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 56.
1555 Kawami 1987, p. 205.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.3.6 DATING

Given Bard-e Bot associated with TS.II:Na, Vanden Berghe suggested a dating between the 1st century BC and 2nd century AD\textsuperscript{1556}, then partially reviewed the timeframe to narrow it down to between the 1st century BC and 1st century AD\textsuperscript{1557}. Kawami considered the relief parallel to the scene at Tang-e Sarvak, and provided a dating for both to early-3rd century AD, an opinion shared by Mathiesen\textsuperscript{1558}.

7.5.2.3.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The scene appears very similar to TS.II:Na,, however, BB:2 seems to hold a rayed banner (perhaps an emblem of a Sun deity) rather than a cornucopia (TS.I:Na.4). Although the previously proposed dating is based on reliable associations with other Elymaean reliefs, new archaeological data from Hung-e Azhdar\textsuperscript{1559} would suggest – through artistic comparanda already discussed for Tang-e Sarvak and Tang-e Botan – to adopt a lower chronology to the 2nd century AD.

7.5.2.4 Susan-Sorkhab (SS: Pl. XLIV)

7.5.2.4.1 LOCATION

Approximately 10 km south of Bard-e Bot following the deep gorge burrowed by a local tributary of the Karun, the relief of Susan-Sorkhab has been found \textit{ca}. 1 km. southwest of Sarbazar village in the region of Andika.

7.5.2.4.2 DISCOVERY

The relief was recently discovered during the surveys led by Abdollahi and Geravand (2008) firstly published by Alireza Sardari\textsuperscript{1560} after the archaeological investigations that he carried out in the region of Masjed-e Soleyman and Andika in 2012.

\textsuperscript{1556} Vanden Berghe 1983, p. 122.
\textsuperscript{1557} Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 56.
\textsuperscript{1558} Mathiesen 1987, p. 161; \textit{idem} 1988, p. 208; \textit{idem} 1989, p. 124.
\textsuperscript{1559} Messina 2015a.
\textsuperscript{1560} Sardari et al 2012 (Farsi).
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.4.3 DESCRIPTION

The relief is carved on a scattered stone showing a single recumbent personage (SS:1). Although the relief surface is poorly preserved, some details are still well recognizable. The figure is frontally represented lying on his left side on a two-leg kline possibly wearing a knee-length (belted?) tunic and trousers. The man rests his left elbow holding in his left hand what could be a drinking bowl while the right hand is not well definable. His right leg is bent over his left leg. His hair seems to be dressed in large bunches at the ears with a hypothetic knob at the top of his head. The face is obliterated.

7.5.2.4.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

7.5.2.4.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

Sardari considers the relief as a banquette scene[^1561].

7.5.2.4.6 DATING

The iconographic resemblances with Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Na) and Bard-e Bot may indicate a date within the first two centuries AD.

7.5.2.4.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The artistic affinities between SS:1 and the similar personages TS.II:Na:1 and BB:1 (e.g., recumbent attitude, frontality, arms and legs posture, hairstyle) prompt to a similar interpretation as being of a local ruler. The absence of engraved text leaves this assumption merely speculative.

7.5.2.5 Shirinow-Mowri (SM:XLIII)

7.5.2.5.1 LOCATION

The relief of Bota Shirinow (“the idols of Shirinow”) is located nearby the area of Bazoft. More precisely, moving east from the bottom of the slope where the relief of Kuh-e Taraz is placed, along a path locally used by the nomads (Zardeh path) – an ancient route that

[^1561]: Ibid.
leads from Shimbar to Bazoft – the carving is inside a gorge east of the nearby Bakhtiari village of Mowri, at the foot of the western face of the mountain.

7.5.2.5.2 DISCOVERY

Jafar Mehr Kian discovered the relief in 1988\textsuperscript{1562}.

7.5.2.5.3 DESCRIPTION

Unfortunately, the carving is severely damaged not just by the weathering but by human-made actions relating to local superstitions that believe the carved figures are demons to be stoned\textsuperscript{1563}. It was likely the same fate occurred to the majority of the obliterated figures on the Elymaean reliefs.

The scene consists of three personages, one enthroned (SM:1, left) and two standing (SM:2, right; SM:3, left). From the left, SM:1 is seated on a throne which is placed on a podium or footstool. The throne has two visible out-turned front legs but apparently no back. SM:1 (presumably a male) is represented frontally wearing a long tunic that reaches his ankles, with his right foot depicted in profile. The hair is dressed in a halo shape, while the face has been completely obliterated. His right hand grasps a very long thin object (a spear\textsuperscript{7}, a sceptre\textsuperscript{8}) and in his left hand, which is in front of his chest, there might be a drinking bowl or similar element. To the right of the enthroned personage, SM:2 stands frontally (1.53 m), clad in a long (belted\textsuperscript{9}) tunic; the presence of trousers is uncertain. The hair possibly shows a halo shape. No details of the face are recognizable. His right arm is raised towards SM:1 and bent at the elbow, and his right hand seems to hold an object that is impossible to decipher. His left arm is in front of his body, but no other detail is recognizable. SM:3 (1.46 m), on the right of SM:2, is depicted in the same fashion and wears the same costume. He is presented entirely frontally in a long, possibly belted, tunic with no clear evidence of trousers. His hair seemed shorter and gathered at the ears in two bunches. No facial evidence is present. The arms are folded across his chest.

7.5.2.5.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATE ARTEFACTS

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

\textsuperscript{1562} Mehr Kian 2000.
\textsuperscript{1563} Ibid., p. 62.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.5.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

Mehr Kian associates the relief of Shirinow with the representation at Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Wa) and Algi, interpreting it as a scene of investiture of an Elymaean prince (SM:2) in front of a deity (SM:1)\(^{1564}\).

7.5.2.5.6 DATING

As for Susan-Sorkhab, also at Shirinow-Mowri, the iconographic elements seem to evoke a scene of TS.II:Wa (in particular TS.II:Wa:1-3), which may suggest an analogous dating between the 1st and 3rd century AD. Mehr Kian more accurately placed the creation of the relief in the first two centuries AD\(^{1565}\).

7.5.2.5.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The imagery of the relief, such as the garments of the personages, the presence of an enthroned figure with a spear (sceptre)\(^{7}\) on a pedestal, the posture and the gestures of the three personalities, and their hairdressing, may confirm the presence of an investiture (or homage) scene including a deity (SM:1), a royal member (SM:2), and an attendant (SM:3). The analysis seems well founded on the fact that the enthroned figures with long tunics holding a spear or sceptre (e.g., TS.II:Na:2-3, TS.II:Wa:1, TS.II:Wa:8, BB:1, and Al:2) are generally interpreted as deities in Elymais.

7.5.2.6 Algi (Al: XLIV)

7.5.2.6.1 LOCATION

Approximately 20 km to the east of Mowri village, near the rural village of Algi-ye Olya in the region of Bazoft, the so-called relief of “Ya-showa” Algi (in Bakhtiari dialect translated as “one night residence) is placed within a gorge cut by a stream flowing directly into the Bazoft river just 3.6 km to the south of Algi-ye Olya\(^{1566}\).

\(^{1564}\) Ibid. 2000, p. 64; idem 2001, p. 294.

\(^{1565}\) Ibid, p. 64.

\(^{1566}\) The only source at disposal is an article published in Farsi by Mehr Kian in 2003, where no clear photographic evidence has been provided, only a drawn reconstruction that would represent the basis for analysis of the relief (Mehr Kian 2003b).
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.6.2 DISCOVERY

In 1990 Mehr Kian discovered the relief of Algi, deep in the region of Bazoft, \textit{ca.} 16 km further east of the Shirinow relief, during his several explorations within the ancient Elymaean territories\textsuperscript{1567}.

7.5.2.6.3 DESCRIPTION

Carved onto the mountain slope, two distinct personages constitute the scene of the relief. The figure on the left (\textit{Al:1}) stands frontally and is clad in a knee-length belted tunic. The face is elongated, and the details of the eyes and nose are discernible, while beard and moustache seem absent. A diadem apparently decorated with a pattern of lozenges ties the hair at the back of the head in a large bow with the ribbons spreading symmetrically on both sides. The hair is gathered at the ears in two big bunches with scale-shaped locks. There are visible ring-shaped earrings. The left arm of \textit{Al:1} is raised with elbow bent, and the left hand seems to vertically hold a branch of palm (or ear of wheat?), similar to the object held in the left hand of the relief \textit{BN:rel.4}\textsuperscript{1568}. The right arm, with a bracelet below the shoulder, is bent in front of the chest but it is not clear if the right hand holds an object. On the left shoulder, a rolled-up cloak runs down from the left side towards the centre of \textit{Al:1}’s body, and at the height of the belt its extremity shapes a curl. The cloak, however, seems to fall over the back, appearing on the left side of the personage’s body. The right foot is turned to the side in profile, while the stone of the left foot has flaked off.

The figure on the right (\textit{Al:2}), frontally sculpted, is larger compared to \textit{Al:1}. However, as present for \textit{BZ:1}, it is doubtful if the figure stays upright. The attitude suggests the presence of a standing personality, but the representation of a throne behind, the dressing of an ankle-length tunic, and the evidence of oblique folds under the waist from the right hip are more likely features of an enthroned figure. The face is elongated and apparently beardless; the eyes and nose are recognizable. The hair appears to be dressed in a halo shape with a diadem at the top bound behind the head in a bow, and the ribbons falling to the shoulders. Earrings are present. The right arm is bent, and the right hand grasps a long spear. The left arm is horizontally extended while the left hand is not clearly distinguishable. There are unclear carvings (a particular object?) on the right upper corner, close to the left ribbon of the diadem.

\textsuperscript{1567} Mehr Kian 2003b.
\textsuperscript{1568} Appendix no. 4.
7. Rock Reliefs

7.5.2.6.4 RUINS, POTTERY, and ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

No architectural evidence, pottery, or other findings have currently been discovered.

7.5.2.6.5 PAST INTERPRETATIONS

Mehr Kian provides the only source of information about this rupestrian artefact, considering the two distinct personages as relevant human beings\textsuperscript{1569}.

7.5.2.6.6 DATING

According to Mehr Kian, Algi was carved in the late 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\textsuperscript{1570}.

7.5.2.6.7 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The similarities encountered between \textit{BZ:1} (e.g., attitude of a standing person, attributes suggesting a frontally seated position, both arms extended outside the body), Tang-e Botan, particularly \textit{TB:III.1} (e.g., a diadem with a huge bow and floating ribbons, \textit{halo}-shaped hairdressing), and \textit{TS.II:Na:1-2} (e.g., presence of an enthroned figure holding a spear or sceptre), may indicate a divine nature for the Algi’s personages. \textit{Al:1} in his offering gestures towards the deity (\textit{Al:2}), with the hair gathered in bunches at the side of the ears, the diadem with the ribbons falling to the shoulder, and the rolled-up cloak on the left shoulder, may confidently be classified as a local pious dignitary or even king.

Considering, therefore, the iconographic association with the contemporaneous above-mentioned rock reliefs of Elymais, an acceptable dating can be proposed between the 1\textsuperscript{st} and the 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD.

7.6 Summary and Conclusions

During the Parthian era, rupestrian art was the product of the patronage provided by vassals, independent aristocrats, subjugated kings, or peripheral rulers outside the Parthian political jurisdiction. Considering the extended period (\textit{ca.} 248 BC–\textit{ca.} 224 AD) and the vast Parthian territory, even though an artistic block with different well-delineated aspects (frontal pose, hieratic representations, inert attitude, linearistic approach, veristic decorations) was established\textsuperscript{1571}, both the artistic elements and their functions across such a broad region were

\textsuperscript{1569} Mehr Kian 2003b

\textsuperscript{1570} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{1571} Rostovtzeff 1935, pp. 155-304; \textit{contra} Schlumberger 1960, pp. 253ff.
slightly modified from place to place; in many cases, due to the influence of pre-existing local traditions.

In Elymais, the political situation seems to have stimulated this combination of native and Parthian elements. The installation of a cadet branch of the Arsacid family (Orodids) in Elymais from the second half of the 1st century AD if on one side it pacifically stabilized the relationship between the Elymaean local authority and the Parthian centralized government, on the other hand, it would have required the establishment of strong ties with the native communities to legitimate the assumption of power avoiding the counterproductive use of force1572. In this regard, the contemporaneous flourishing of rupestrian works under the patronage of the new dynasty appears to have represented a widespread pervasive strategy of political propaganda via multi-media approach (e.g. onomastics, monetary production, rupestrian artistry, standardized chancellery language), which corroborated with the good offices provided by the local aristocracy were able to suggest locations with a renowned sacred relevance (local open-air sanctuary as Tang-e Sarvak, Hung-e Azhdar, Tang-e Botan).

From this political perspective, although the style of Elymaean rupestrian art reflects the key points of the Parthian imagery, figural representations, symbolization of religious activity, standards of royal iconography were adapted to local needs. In Elymais, rupestrian works developed around three main artistic poles (Tang-e Sarvak, Izeh-Malamir and Shimbar), often on large boulders rather than mountain faces. Among these, the site of Tang-e Sarvak clustered the primary amount of reliefs (14), and inscriptions (7)1573. The themes of these panels include scenes of investiture and legitimacy of power of the new dynasty (Orodids) by the local deities, offering sacrifice to a sacred stone (baetyl), act of homage to the local king or gods, hunting, equestrian fighting and banqueting scenes. Generally speaking, at Tang-e Sarvak, the key thematics of the Elymaean rock art are epitomized.

In the socio-political milieu of the late-1st century AD, the new dynasts of Arsacid origin felt the necessity to add their images through a local iconography and in sacred sites, which over the years became increasingly associated with both divine and royal spheres. The substance and themes of the sculpted scenes in Elymais propose the necessity of negotiation and integration of the relationships between the tradition of power present in new rulers and the local socio-political and cultural identity in the region.

1572 On the political situation in Elymais, see Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
1573 See §7.1 (reliefs); §8.1.1 (inscriptions).
Nearly every discussion considering the ancient language, which is spoken in Elymais, has to deal with the issue of the paucity of written evidence. A distinctive local form of Aramaic, generally known as *Elymaic*, is attested only in the shape of short coin legends and few scattered and weathered inscriptions carved onto some of the Elymaean rupestrian works (Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman, Tang-e Sarvak, Tang-e Botan, Izeh-Malamir).

During the dominion of the Arsacid dynasty, the ancient Near East was subjected to complex interactions between opposing political authorities and various local entities. This environment fostered the dynamics required for the coexistence of a number of native dialects (e.g. Nabatean, Palestinian, Palmyrene, Hatran, Characenean) – and included the *Elymaic* – which characterized the commonly-labelled “Middle Aramaic” (eastern and western) distinguishing it from the “Official” (Imperial) Aramaic. According to Fitzmyer, the evolution of the different local models of Aramaic may be categorized in two main group: Western Middle Aramaic (Arabia and Palestine), and Eastern Middle Aramaic (Syria and Mesopotamia). As a general designation for linguistic evidence within chronological boundaries which roughly coincide with those of the Parthian era (ca. 248 BC–ca. 224 AD), the significance of “Middle Aramaic” – also labelled as “Arsacid Aramaic” – emphasizes the unbroken connection between the dialects of the western and the eastern peripheries of the kingdom.

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1574 Fitzmyer 1979, p. 71. For a recent analysis, see Moriggi 2012.
1575 *Ibid*.
1576 Koehler and Baumgartner 1958, pp. XL-XLI; Fitzmyer 1979, p. 61. Middle Aramaic is the third element of the Fitzmyer’s chronological division of Aramaic: Old Aramaic (roughly 925-700 BC.); Official (Imperial) Aramaic (approx. 700-200 BC.); Middle Aramaic (200 BC – 200 AD); Late Aramaic (ca. 200-700 AD); Modern Aramaic. See also Fitzmyer 2004, pp. 30-32. Some scholars rejected such a categorical division, and in particular, Giovanni Garbini pointed out the controversy in suggesting a differentiation between the distinct phases of Aramaic, even though exclusively on chronological grounds. He suggested indeed that a west/east idiomatic distinction is more appropriate in the history of language, and it would be more pertinent analyzing the difference on historico-cultural bases, rather than trying to recognize the linguistic peculiarities, which are often indecipherable (Garbini and Durand 1994, pp. 48-49).
1578 Literally citing Gzella 2008, p. 127, “the value of ‘Middle Aramaic’ as a common designation for linguistic evidence during the first centuries of Post Achaemenid Aramaic is that it emphasizes the unbroken interaction of dialects from the eastern to the western periphery. However, it has to be supplemented by a more nuanced subclassification which adequately accounts for the difference between and the competition of forms of Aramaic directly related to the official Achaemenid idiom on the one hand and the emergence of decisively more innovative varieties on the other. The period ranging from ca. 200 B.C. and 200 or 300 A.D., then, is the time when the ancient diversity of Aramaic, which goes back right to the beginning of the textual record of this language, crystallized into more sharply distinguished branches”.

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Although the material from Elymais is scattered and scant, there are currently seven inscriptions at Tang-e Sarvak; five texts from Tang-e Botan; two inscriptions from Izeh-Malamir; two texts at Bard-e Neshandeh and one from Masjed-e Soleyman. In addition, a further collection of nine documents including an inscription from Murd-e Tang-e Zir’s relief, a cylinder seal’s two-line text, and seven texts engraved on four silver bowls could be included. Nevertheless, the absence of a definite archaeological context for this epigraphic evidence suggested a more cautious approach and I have decided not to incorporate them in this paper.1579 Despite the approximately 26-text heritage to which should be added the ink inscriptions of Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow, the Elymaean language has not received any comprehensive study. The most valuable contribution has been that recently provided by Holger Gzella, under which only a part of the linguistic material from Elymais (i.e., the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak, Tang-e Botan, HK:insc, and BN:insc.A) has been discussed.1580 The nature and the features of these written exhibits, such as their sometimes inaccessible location and their relatively short texts (from a maximum of six lines to a minimum of a few letters), may have conditioned the circumstances of disinterest. Several inscriptions are partially published (often lacking the original text), and their reading and interpretations are still the subjects of academic debate.

8.1 Elymaic’s Linguistic Background

The corpus of texts in Aramaic dating to the Parthian period provides a framework of the relations between the “Official” Aramaic and the local dialects. According to Gzella1581, a period of transition occurred with the materializing of regional Aramaic dialects in Palmyra, Hatra, and Edessa which steadily emerged and were fostered as written languages likely around the 2nd and 1st century BC, while in Elymais the first epigraphic attestations of a local Aramaic-like lexicon only appears during the first two centuries AD.

1579 With regard to the inscription of Murd-e Tang-e Zir, the only information is an article in Farsi (Bashbash 1994) also cited in Haruta (2003, p. 474) and Golshanirad (2014, p. 343). However, I was not able to collect the original paper, and the proposed inscriptions are not recognizable in few published images of the relief (Mehr Kian 2001, Pl. III). About the cylinder seal (Bivar 1990) and engraved silver vessels (Carter 2015), a precise archaeological context is not provided. Within this framework, the Elymaean inscriptions on silver containers, which have come to light in the last few years seem to be more than twenty. Apparently, the ones in the al-Sabah Collection (Carter 2015) represent only a small fraction (Prof. N. Sims-Williams, personal communication, August 23, 2016). However, the absence of an archaeological report, within which the silver vessels were unearthed and stratigraphically contextualized, recommend more attention to avoid the risk of speculation, due to the possibility to be dealing with forgeries (Muscarella 2000; idem 2013).

1580 Gzella 2008, pp. 112-122. See also Haruta 2003.

1581 Ibid., p. 109.
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Specific linguistic variations were amply attested at Hatra and Assur, where during the period of the post-Achaemenid Aramaic, the formation of local idioms developed. Similarly, in Elymais the contemporaneous attestation of the last remnants from the Achaemenid official lexicons and the use of innovations from the Arsacid Aramaic is symptomatic of a linguistic landscape with an accentuate dimorphic society (agro-pastoral), where a more conservative form of Aramaic (likely isolated on the highland) was enriched by the advanced Eastern Mesopotamian dialects channelled from the plains (Susiana), evincing the typical rapport on linguistic grounds between innovative central areas and conservative peripheries\(^{1582}\). The establishment of new dynasty composed of Arsacid secundogenitures and local aristocracies (Orodids) in mid-1\(^{st}\) century AD may have required the development of an official language and prompted the Elymaean chancellery to formulate its variety of local Aramaic script and alphabet. However, no evidence has been found to show that Elymaic was \textit{de facto} spoken in Elymais by local people. It cannot be coincidental that after Ardashir defeated the last ruler of the Orodids and subjugated the territories of Elymais in \textit{ca.} 221/2 AD, Elymaic disappeared from history, though it is considered to have been the foundation for the development of the later Mandaic script\(^{1583}\).

8.1.1 Inscriptions from Tang-e Sarvak (Pls. XLV-XLVIII)

8.1.1.1 General Aspects

The linguistic material from Tang-e Sarvak is composed of seven rock inscriptions, of which only six have been recorded and translated. The form is deficient and monotone, the style quite unrefined, and the content minimal though it gives some support to the interpretation of the visual scenes. In reality, no evidence has been provided that the inscriptions and the various reliefs were completed simultaneously, rather the texts could even represent later inclusions\(^{1584}\).

\(^{1582}\) \textit{Ibid.}, 112.

\(^{1583}\) Naveh 1970. \textit{Contra} Haeberl 2006. With regard to the coins, the Elymaic legends did not appear until the local dynasty had been overcome and were supplanted by a Parthian branch of the royal family (Rostovtzeff 1936, p. 118, was the first to advance this theory based on numismatic evidence) who were placed upon the Elymaean throne and gave birth to the so-called Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty, which started from the latter half of the 1\(^{st}\) century AD (§5.2.3.3; §9.2.5.3; Sellwood 1983, pp. 308-309; Dabrowa 2014, pp. 65ff). Before this point, the legends engraved on the coins of the Kamnaskireds were exclusively in Greek (§9.2.4).

\(^{1584}\) Kawami 2013, pp. 761-762. A previous example of a secondary addition is represented by the inscriptions of Shekaft-s Salman by Hanni (De Waele 1976; Stolper 1988).
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The alphabet and the syntax inscriptions that accompany some of the rupestrian panels present an onomastics combination of Iranian names (e.g., Orodes) with Semitic appellations of uncertain meaning (e.g., Beldosha). Also, when compared with the numismatic production (legends), they propose an approximative dating between the 1st and 3rd century AD. The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

8.1.1.2 Previous Studies

Henning was the first to translate and publish these texts, and his interpretations were repeatedly cited sans critical review for many years, despite significant later corrections by Shaked. Although Henning eminently regarded this epigraphic material, the recent progress in the study of Middle Aramaic, specifically in other areas of Eastern Aramaic, has enabled a better understanding of the linguistic context within which the Elymaic developed. In this regard, the study of Gzella represents a considerable contribution.

8.1.1.3 Descriptions

8.1.1.3.1 INSCRIPTION no. 1 (TS.I:insc.1)

The text represents the only carving directly onto Rock I, being located between TS.I:S.1-2, more precisely on the left of the tiara worn by TS.II:S.2 (Pl. XLV).

Henning noticed traces of further lines without being able to provide a transliteration within an inscription already highly damaged.

1585 Gzella 2008, p. 112.
1586 Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 287-290.
1587 Gzella 2008, pp. 112-119
1588 Henning 1952, pp. 159, 173, inscription no. 6; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 62, Inscription no. 1

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8.1.1.3.2 INSCRIPTION no. 2 (TS.II:insc.2)

Located above the scene of the relief TS.II:Na carved on Rock II, TS.II:insc.2\(^{1590}\) is accompanied to the left by another inscription (TS.II:insc.3), which has been destroyed (Pl. XLV).

TS.II:insc.2 was translated\(^{1591}\) by Henning as:

\[
\begin{align*}
1. \text{ṣlmʾ znh zy wrwd nʾsyb kwrṣy}^{1592} & \quad \text{Henning 1952 (inscription 1)} \\
2. \text{br blḥswʾ zy rbʾny}^{1593} & \\
3. \text{wʾṣryʾ wʾṭṭk}^{1594} zy bṭr\^{1595} br & \\
\end{align*}
\]

\(^{1590}\) Henning 1952, p. 156, inscription no. 1; Vanden Bergh and Schippmann 1985, p. 68, inscription no. 2.

\(^{1591}\) Critical apparatus: [] = one missing letter; [...] = three or more missing letters; (x) = reconstructed reading; x = uncertain letter; (x/y) = alternative readings; (…) = meaningless sequence; <x> = written spelling.

\(^{1592}\) The unusual phrase NʾSYB KWRSY\(^*\) appears in all the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak. Instead of a royal title (“holder the throne”) as interpreted by Gzella (2008, p. 113), Professor Henning (1952, p. 169) translated this expression as a present-tense proposition meaning “assuming the throne”, but he pointed out the difficulties that this analysis required (Henning 1952, pp. 172-173). Shaked (Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 287-289), on the other hand, compared the phrase with a Syriac inscription from Sumatar Harabesi, south-east of Şanlıurfa (Urla, formerly Edessa), in southeastern Turkey near the border with Syria. A series of Syriac inscriptions dating to the 2\(^{nd}\) and 3\(^{rd}\) centuries AD have been discovered in situ, in a currently deserted oasis characterized by ruins and tombs situated around the so-called Central Mount (ca. 50 meters in height and width), studied and published by J. B. Segal (1954, pp. 13-36; idem 2005). An inscription in particular (Segal 1954, XVI.1) seems to have close similarities with the texts at Tang-e Sarvak, prompting Shaked to translate NʾSYB KWRSY\(^*\) as “taking the stool” (Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 288ff).

\(^{1593}\) RBʾNY, also read RBʾN (Macuch 1965, p. 148). According to Gzella, this term could be interpreted as a simple historical name, like PSQW in TS.II:insc.4 (Gzella 2008, p. 113). Therefore, the absence of a first-person speaker in the inscription renders the presence of a first-person singular suffix quite strange, suggesting to decipher RBʾNY apparently as a particular title of dignity which seems to be composed by rabban (“lord, master”) with the possessive pronoun for the first person singular (Altheim and Stiehl 1957, p. 91; Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 287, footnote 75; Gzella 2008, p. 113). Its position after the name may be similar to ZY BʾSYBH at Shimbar. It is unclear whether this title has to be correlated to a secular position or a priestly establishment.

\(^{1594}\) For these two unattested terms, [W]ʾSYRY and [W]ʾTYṬK, have been proposed a comparison with personal names present in the inscriptions of Palmyra (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 287). If there are substantial evidence which can support the reading of ʾTYṬK (or ʾTYKN) in Macuch 1965, p. 148, due to the interactions with the Mandaic surprisingly as the Greek personal name Antiokhos (Ἀντιόχος), having parallels (form: ʾTYK) in the Palmyrene inscriptions translated in Greek (Brock 2005, pp.23-24), still ambiguous is the interpretation of the second name ʾSYRY). The latter, tentatively transcribed as Aserya, instead than the personal name ʾSYR (or ʾSDY) of Palmyrene inscriptions (Schlumberger 1951; see also Stark 1971, p. 71), could be translate with the plural form ʾassiraya (i.e. “the prisoners”) as already suggested by Henning (1952, p. 171), or based on the Syriac ʾasirata, namely “relatives of the king” (Rundgren apud Altheim and Stiehl 1965, pp. 569-570). According to Gzella (2008, p. 113), the masculine empathic plural ending of the Middle Aramaic -aya, as also noted in TB:II.insc.4).

\(^{1595}\) This uncertain epithet ZY BṬR\(^*\), “who is at the gate” (ba-tarʿa), may be an element of local nomenclature (like NʾSYB KWRSY\(^*\)) inserted within a traditional formulaic model which conventionally opens the text

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4. b’sy\textsuperscript{1596} n’syb kwrs<y>’

- basi assuming the throne

are at the gate (court of) Abar

Henning’s translation was not fully accepted by Shaked\textsuperscript{1597} in 1964, and Gzella\textsuperscript{1598} almost half a century later, both reported different versions considering an alternative interpretation of some elements within the text.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shaked 1964</th>
<th>Gzella 2008 (inscription 1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This is the image of Orodēs taking the stool</td>
<td>1. This image is the one of Worod, holder of the throne</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. son of Bel-doša who is rabbāni,</td>
<td>2. son of Beldoša’ who is (my) lord</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. with Aserya’ and Antiōchos who are at the gate (i.e., court). Bar-</td>
<td>3. with Asirya’ and Antiōchus, who is at the gate, the son</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. -Basi taking the stool</td>
<td>- of Basi, holder of the throne</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.1.3.3 INSCRIPTION no. 3 (TS.II:insc.3)

This text\textsuperscript{1599} is unfortunately mostly destroyed and consequently too fragmentary for a possible translation (Pl. XLVI). Being located on the left of the enthroned TS.II:Na.3, its style

\textsuperscript{1596} Interpreted by Henning (1952, p. 172) and Shaked (1964, p. 287) as the personal name (A)Bar-Basi, the construct (’)BR B’SY between the 3\textsuperscript{rd} and 4\textsuperscript{th} line may represent a compound name composed of BR (bar = “son of”), and B’SY (Basi). The reason why a single personal name was divided into two lines even if there was ample space at the beginning of the 4\textsuperscript{th} line is not clear. On the other hand, the translation “son of Basi” would make this separation somehow more plausible (Henning 1952, p. 172, footnote 3; Gzella 2008, p. 113). At the same time, such a translation would raise further questions about the figures of Basi and his son Antiōchus, if the word BR is related to ‘TYTK’, otherwise we would be confronted by an “unnamed” BR B’SY. In the two examples of Tang-e Sarvak, the word BR is followed by the proper name B’SY which Gzella (2008, p. 118) decomposes in two single morphemes, namely the Arabic name for “cat” (bass), also spelled at Palmyra as BS’ (Stark 1971, p. 77. s.v.), and the hypocoristic ending “-i” or possibly “-ay” (Lidzbarski 1903, pp. 12-17). However, as also affirmed by Gzella himself (2008, p. 118), at the moment, in the expectation for convincing parallels to have found out, there is no certain reasons why BR and B’SY could not actually form the single word BRB’SY, perhaps the personal name Bar-Basi’ proposed by Henning (1952, p. 172) and Shaked (1964, p. 287).

\textsuperscript{1597} Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 287-290.

\textsuperscript{1598} Gzella 2008, pp. 113-114.

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of writing appears slightly different from the other inscriptions with its engraving more accurately executed.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TS.II:insc.3</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. šp (?)</td>
<td>1.</td>
<td>N/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. ’ m’</td>
<td>2.</td>
<td>N/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. wbr</td>
<td>3.</td>
<td>N/P</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. ’šn (?)</td>
<td>4.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. zy bk (?)</td>
<td>5.</td>
<td>N/P</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.1.3.4 INSCRIPTION no. 4 (TS.II:insc.4)

Placed on the left of the main personage TS.II:NW:1, the inscription^{1600} is carved on Rock II, below the lowest stone of the baetyl-support element (TS.II:NW.a). It represents the least conventional text at Tang-e Sarvak with its interpretation marred by the debatable translation of many letters (Pl. XLVI).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TS.II:insc.4</th>
<th>Henning 1952 (inscription 3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. šlm’ znh psqw</td>
<td>1. They cut this image</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. md’n’m wp</td>
<td>2. MD’N’M and P’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. br bd’q mn b’n kz[y]</td>
<td>3. the son of BD’Q (...) as</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1599 Henning 1952, p. 174, inscription no. 4; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 68, inscription no. 2
1600 Henning 1952, p. 174, inscription no. 3; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 76, inscription no. 4
1601 The form PSQW, which seems to have a historical spelling in the Aramaic texts of Edessa, Palmyra and Hatra with a word-final long “-u” disappeared in the 1st century BC (Beyer 1984-2004, pp. 122-125), comes from the verb PSQ, “to cut, split, divide”, and according to Hoftijzer and Jongeling (1995, p. 923), is not commonly used for a visual representation (i.e., image). It may be interesting that Gzella has recently indicated the use of the similar form PSYQ’ (meaning unknown) in the architectural context of the Palmyrene inscriptions (Gzella 2007, p. 723).
1602 Except for Kawami’s interpretation (Kawami 1987, p. 199), the terms MD’N’M WP’ are generally considered two personal names MD’N’M and P’, as the verb of line no. 1 is plural and consequently two subjects linked by the particle wa- (“and”), would be highly assumed. According to Gzella (2008, p. 115), if this translation is correct, then only the second of the two personal name (i.e., P’, possibly a diminutive form of the name Pap[a] as attested at Hatra; see Beyer 1998, H 9c; cf. Justi 1895, p.241), compared with Inscription no. 1 and no. 2, has a following patronym and title.
The poor state of preservation of the engravings is perhaps primarily responsible for the problems encountered in the translation of this inscription.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Shaked 1964, p. 287</th>
<th>Kawami 1987(^{1606})</th>
<th>Gzella 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. N/P</td>
<td>1. They cut this image</td>
<td>1. This image have cut</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. N/P</td>
<td>2. MD’N’MWP’</td>
<td>2. MD’N’M and Pa(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. N/P</td>
<td>3. son of BD’Q from BN KZ [ ]</td>
<td>3. the son of BD’Q from Ban whe[n]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Orod{e}s, taking the stool, marble,</td>
<td>4. Orod{e}s assuming the throne</td>
<td>4. Worod, holder of the throne, Šesa(?)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. feeds, bowing upon Him.</td>
<td>5. [sustains (or does)</td>
<td>5. feeds, bowing over</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{1603}\) The reading of MN B’N is uncertain with Henning who also doubts if it is a single or double words proposing as a proper name MAZABBANAΣ (Seyrig and Starcky 1949, pl. XII, p. 236, footnote 1), re-establishing at the end of the 3\(^{rd}\) line KZ into KZ[Y] in order to provide conjunction (e.g. “as”) for the remaining text. Both Kawami and Gzella, instead, interpret MN B’N as a complement of provenance (origin), presumably indicating where “the son of BD’Q” comes from.

\(^{1604}\) Henning reports that the word ŠYS\(^{\prime}\) with traces of a subscript alef between Š and Y may originate a dissimilated form (ŠYS\(^{\prime}\)) of the term shaisha for “marble, alabaster” (Henning 1952, p. 174). Most of the authors who commented this passage agree with Henning, whose translation appears to be corroborated by a previous Aramaic text from Palmyra (PAT 1561:1-2, W’S TW’ DY ŠYS’, “and a marble portico”). For example, Shaked (1964, p. 290) wants to correct the text to ZY-ŠYS’ suggesting an alternative translation of lines no. 4-5 as “He feeds, bows to, and worships the marble (pillar)”, also reporting the suggestion of Dr. S. Morag for a derivation of the word ŠYS’ from the Aramaic verb *ŠWS/ŠYS’ “to lead.” Macuch (1965, p. 148) instead, proposes the reading D-ŠYS’, and similarly, Stiehl (Altheim and Stiehl 1965, p. 570) translates B-ŠYS’ (cf. Hoftijzer and Jongeling 1995, p. 1196, s.v. ŠŠ). According to Gzella, ŠYS’ could be interpreted as a divine name (Shesa\({ }^{(‘)}\)), but it would raise a problem of ordo verborum as generally the direct object follows the verb on which it depends (Gzella 2008, p. 115). Nature and interpretations of this word are still obscure.

\(^{1605}\) Gzella (2008, p. 115) reports the form GHN ‘LYH, as a compound of the verb GHN ‘L, “to bend down over”, and the third-person singular masculine suffix –YH (“him”), which is particularly used in Easter Aramaic (PAT 0334:3, see BNYH, translated as “his son”, in Beyer 1984-2004, pp. 150-151). Although it appears uncommon, this form is attested in Babylonian Aramaic (cf. Sokoloff 2002, p. 277). Since if GHN (gāhen) confirmed to be a participle, its defective spelling contrasts from the conventional NSYB (naseb), as pointed out by Shaked (Bivra and Shaked 1964, p. 288, footnote 80) and Gzella (2008, p. 115, note 5). An alternative translation has been proposed by the latter, postulating a noun as the direct object of Y’BD, and reading “feeds [...] performs a rite of bowing down over him/on him”.

\(^{1606}\) Kawami (1987, p. 199, footnote 3) reported that in a personal communication (May 13, 1981), Prof. Shaked speculated that the inscription could have separated into two parts, i.e., lines 1-3, and 4-5.
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>worships</th>
<th>nourishes</th>
<th>obeisance to</th>
<th>him, performs (the ritual)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

8.1.1.3.5 INSCRIPTION no. 5 (TS.II:insc.5)

This text\textsuperscript{1607} was found in a narrow space beneath the ninth personage (TS.II:Wa.9) of relief TS.II:Wa on Rock II (Pl. XLVII). It is very similar to TS.II:insc.2, excluding line no. 1 and the name of “Orodes son of”\textsuperscript{1608}.

\begin{tabular}{l|l}
[TS.II:insc.5] & Henning 1952 (inscription 2) \\
1. bldwš’ zy rb’ny & 1. Bel-duša ZY RB’NY \\
2. w’syry’ w’tyk’ & 2. and the prisoner and (…) \\
3. zy btr ‘> ’ br & 3. who are at the gate (court of) Abar- \\
4. b’sy n’syb kwrsy’ & 4. -basi assuming the throne \\
\end{tabular}

Even in this case, the translations of Henning, Shaked and Gzella are slightly different.

\begin{tabular}{l|l}
Shaked 1964 & Gzella 2008 \\
1. Bel-doša who is rabbani & 1. ’Beldoša’ who is (my) lord \\
2. with Aserya’ and Antiochos & 2. and Asiryā’ and Antiochus \\
3. who are at the Gate. Bar- & 3. who is at the gate, the son \\
4. -Basi taking the stool & 4. of Basi, holder of the throne \\
\end{tabular}

The TS.II:Wa relief includes nine figures, and it seems plausible that some of them may be mentioned in the inscription present on the scene. However, there is no evidence in

\textsuperscript{1607} Henning 1952, pp. 171-172, inscription 2; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 79, inscription 6.

\textsuperscript{1608} Kawami (1987, p. 190) retains that the inscription was made in two stages with the line mentioning the presumed Abar-Basi added later; however, Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 149, footnote 115) rejects this assumption suggesting that hardly the letter types would have been the same in later times.
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support of this association, and considering *TS.II:insc.5* as being related to relief *TS.II:Wa* may well be speculative.

8.1.1.3.6 INSCRIPTION no. 6 (*TS.II:insc.6*)

*TS.II:insc.6*\(^{1609}\) starts just below the hind legs of the horse *TS.II:Wbβ.a* and runs in a single line to the left towards the head of *TS.II:Wc.1*, who is supposed to be the object of the inscription\(^{1610}\), under the last two standing *TS.II:Wba.3c-d* (Pl. XLVII).

The name of the subject has been erased. Henning declared that the gap in text is too large for the name Orodes (WRWD), but Abar-basi ("BRB"SY) would fill it to perfection\(^{1611}\). Mathiesen was perplexed by this assertion\(^{1612}\), and considered it quite speculative to give weight to assumptions, which rely on such a flimsy argument.

![TS.II:insc.6]

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Gzella 2008 (inscription 6)

1. ṣlm[….z]nh zy [ ….n"s]yb
    kw[rsy’]

8.1.1.3.7 INSCRIPTION no. 7 (*TS.II:insc.7*)

A seventh inscription\(^{1613}\) in two lines above the right hand of *TS.II:NW:1* was unnoticed by Henning, and reported by De Waele, who provides no copy or translation of the text (Pl. XLVIII)\(^{1614}\).

8.1.1.4 Considerations

Regarding the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak, it is preferable to understand the significance of the site and the possible association with the rock reliefs to have a better-defined framework before dealing with the linguistic matter of the inscriptions, which due to their brevity provide little information.

\(^{1609}\) Henning, 1952, p. 173, *inscription no. 5*; Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 79, *inscription no. 7*

\(^{1610}\) Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 137.

\(^{1611}\) Henning 1952, p. 173.

\(^{1612}\) Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 148, footnote 79.

\(^{1613}\) *Inscription no. 5* in Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, p. 76.

\(^{1614}\) De Waele 1974, p. 262, footnote 20.

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In this perspective, it is notable the divergence regards line no. 3 of *TS.II:insc.2* where the translation provided by Henning is convincingly reviewed by Shaked and Gzella, who present evidence in support of the reading [W]’SYRY’ and [W]’TYṬK’ respectively as *Aserya* and *Antiochus*[^1615], as well as the word KQRSY’ as *throne* or *stool*. If interpreted as *throne*, the scene would undoubtedly represent a royal investiture; alternatively, translating KQRSY’ as *stool*, would suggest an installation in a religious establishment. In the latter case, considering the ritual context of *TS.II:insc.4*, Shaked suggests that the cultic action of “taking the stool” (*naseb korsiya*), which was used in reference to king Orodes[^1616], may symbolize a priestly title, integrating a double function (secular and religious) for the Elymaean kings. In contrast, the attribute *naseb korsiya*, which accompanies in *TS.II:insc.6*, the hunting scene of *TS.I:Wc*, cannot be associated with the religious sphere. It is rather a reference to royal legitimacy as proof of the strength of the king. The relief *TS.II:Na*, above which *TS.II:insc.2* was engraved, represents a legitimated investiture of the reclining ruler (*TS.II:Na:1*) with the insignia of kingship in the presence of three local deities (*TS.II:Na:2-4*)[^1617]. Although some scholars rejected the connection between relief *TS.II:Na* and *TS.II:insc.2*[^1618], the latter would seem to reveal a continuity in the kingship of Elymais with the establishment of the “Arsacid” Orodes who, in claiming to be the son of Beldosha (likely a relevant Elymaean personage[^1619], or local deity), probably wanted to evoke a local ancestry to justify his royal authority on the region. At the end of the 1st century AD, the *Elymaean-Arsacid* house of the Orodids appears to have carried out a program of political promulgation through visual imagery (e.g., numismatic, onomastics, rupestrian art), which deliberately recalled a local tradition to validate the transition of power between these two conjunct royal dynasties.

Although the secular scenes which immortalize royal members are numerous, the word for “king” (MLK’) is absent at Tang-e Sarvak. Henning explains this honorific lapse

[^1615]: See footnote 1594. Henning (1952, p. 158) also proposed that the second part of the inscription, namely lines no. 3-4, which respectively concern the “Aserya/prisoners” and “Antiochus, the son of Basi (or Abar-Basi)?”, must have been duplicated from *TS.II:insc.5*, related to relief *TS.II:Wa*, and for this reason of less importance. However, according to Mathiesen (1992/2, p. 135), it should be rather unlikely that a mere duplication of a different inscription could have taken place, and its words carelessly incorporated within the text of *TS.II:insc.2*.


[^1617]: For comparison see the stele of Khwasak at Susa, where there are no doubts about the secular significance or the relief (Mathiesen 1992/2, 168, cat. no. 87).


[^1619]: Henning considers BLDWSŠ a personal name, possibly a compound of the term Bel with another word, identifying the personality in accordance to his name as a priest of Bel (Henning 1952, pp. 172-173).
due to the personages depicted who were represented in the act of “assuming” a royal status. In contrast, Harmatta considers as inadmissible Henning’s assumption since the Elymaean coins attested that the term MLK’ was well-known in association with the kings of Elymais, and consequently presumed that the sculpted personages could not be elements of the royal family. According to the recent translation of N’SYB KWRSY’ as “holder of the throne” provided by Gzella, this title attributed to the Elymaean rulers, in this case Orodes, could indicate a local paraphrase of the term king (MLK’). It served maybe to replace a royal title to which these kings were not officially entitled, a mediation that may have been designed to minimize irritating the major branch of the Arsacid royal family. A period of evident political reassessment and peaceful coexistence between the new Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty and the Parthians was probably based on finely-tuned balances. Significantly, in the second half of the 1st century AD, the monetary production of Orodes I (commonly considered the founder of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty) was issued without the term MLK’ on the legends.

An analogous situation indicating the correlation between inscription (TS.II:insc.4) and sculpted scene is present in TS.II:NW. The position below the baetyl (TS.II:NW.a) and the content of the text evidently propose a ritual significance for TS.II:insc.4. Comparing this inscription of Tang-e Sarvak to a contemporaneous Syrian document (Sumatar Harabesi), Shaked proposes that the presence of the verb YZWN (“to feed”) could indicate a ritual meal where the subject of “feeding” was the same Orodes (TS.II:NW.1) who previously “takes the stool” (TS.II:Na.1), while the object of the action (TS.II:NW.a) must refer to a deity. The ritual use of a stool appears to be a recurring theme on the Tang-e Sarvak’s cult function officiated by a priestly ruler. Recurrent in ancient Near Eastern iconography, the interpretation of KWRSY’ for stool is not accepted unquestionably, and often generally translated with the word throne. However, the particular context of TS.II:NW with the depiction of a beribboned baetyl-stone (TS.II:NW.a) bodes the presence of a cult scenery where epigraphical evidence confirms the previous iconographical analysis, which identifies two homonyms (Orodes) in TS.II:Na.1 and TS.II:NW.1. The actions of the king to “feed” a

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1622 Gzella 2008, p. 113, notes 1. See also footnote 1592.
1623 See §9.2.5.3.
1624 Segal 1954, pp. 26ff. See also footnote 1592.
1625 Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 288-289.
1626 See Barnett 1935, pp. 209-210; Frankfort 1939, pp. 159-160.
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deity (reasonably TS.II:NW.a) “while bowing” 1628, once again may mark the double function of Elymaean rulers as a secular authority, and religious officiant 1629.

Linguistically speaking, TS.II:insc.4 is relevant for various reasons. Primarily, it shows how the Elymaean court seems to have utilized a conservative classicizing idiom as reflected from the demonstrative pronoun ZNH and the relative particle D, which present a linguistic standard typical of the Old Aramaic, spelling with the etymological interdental {d} and the sign for {z} 1630. According to Gzella, also similar to older Aramaic and Syriac texts is the use of the verb forms YZWN and YBD, respectively “he feeds” and “he performs” (a ritual), which instead diverge from the later Eastern Aramaic 1631. Despite these indications, Elymaic shows a more progressive taste through the use of the recent form ‘LYH translated as “over him” 1632, and the peculiar transcription of some vowels 1633. Systematically present at Tang-e Sarvak is the ‘{’ indicating a long “a,” as in some examples provided by the Western Aramaic 1634, which is even more recent than the orthographical forms of Hatra. In this regard, Gzella proposed that Elymaic was swayed by Iranian and/or Greek influence 1635. However,

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1628 Syntactically, line no. 4 of TS.II:insc.4 consolidates the view which considers Elymaic not just a language stuck in conservative construction, but also a bearer of more continuous innovations. An instance is the asyndetic participle GHN (“bowing”) which is evidently subordinated to the previous YZWN in the “imperfect form”, indicating two different actions contemporaneously carried out that might be translated as “he feeds while bowing” (Gzella 2008, p. 118). This syntactic structure is absent in pre-Achaemenid and Achaemenid period (ibid. 2004, pp. 124-125, 149-150), while recalls Syriac forms composed by an asyndetic participle which follows a precedent imperative (Nöldeke 1898, p. 205), or by temporal propositions indicating parallel actions in the past (ibid., pp. 206-207). Significantly, this Elymaic construction with the use of “imperfect” form of the verb is unknown in later Eastern Aramaic (Gzella 2004, pp. 200-203; idem 2008, p. 119).

1629 De Waele (1974, p. 262, footnote 20) argues that this unreported inscription would represent evidence according to which TS.II:insc.4 has to be dissociated with the standing man of the relief. It appears, however, hard to concur with this comment, since no duplication of the text has been provided to date. In addition, the suggestion of disconnecting TS.II:insc.4 from the relief TS.II:NW appears highly unlikely. Epigraphical evidence from TS:insc.1 (TS.II:Na) and TS:insc.3 (TS.II:NW) seem to refer to two personages having the same name, “Orodes”.

1630 Gzella 2008, pp. 116-117. Contrarily, the more modernized alternative expression of Aramaic in Palmyra adopted the grapheme {d} starting from the Achaemenid Aramaic onwards, unlike the Aramaic variant from Hatra and Edessa, which were more oriented to Eastern Aramaic forms, as the prefix “ḪÄ-” (Nebe 2006, pp. 253-256).

1631 Gzella 2008, pp. 117. Apparently, the scripts from the engraved jar Qal‘at al-Bahrain reveals a more traditional nature in the linguistic affinities between Elymaic and with the earliest evidence of Aramaic in the Persian Gulf (ibid.).

1632 Ibid., p. 115, note 5.

1633 For instance, the sign {y} which specifies the short “e” (typical of the Hatran Aramaic; see Beyer 1998, pp. 123, 125), and {w} indicating the short “o”, that although scarcely used in Achaemenid Aramaic emerged during the first centuries of the Common Era (Gzella 2008, p. 117).


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while in some cases the translation of ‘{’ with a long “a” seems clear as in N’SYB KWRSY’ (naseb korsiya), in B’SY (Basî) it designates instead a short “a”\textsuperscript{1636}.

In conclusion, it should be noted that at least three (TS.I:insc.1; TS.II:insc.2, TS.II:insc.6,) of the six inscriptions at Tang-e Sarvak utilize the opening quote ŞLM’ ZNH ZY (“this image is the one of”) which is indeed a well-attested pattern for dedicatory texts in the Eastern Aramaic between the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD\textsuperscript{1637}. The different linguistic status between the inscriptions from Tang-e Sarvak and the Eastern-Aramaic texts can be defined by geographical grounds, considering environmental modifications made with the same central formula.

8.1.1.5 Conclusions

To identify and accurately locate these fragmented texts inside the wider landscape of the Middle-Aramaic period, some decisive elements to consider are the grammatical forms, the choice of specific terms, the spelling of particular words, and the use of exclusive patterns (e.g., opening quotes). As a result of an adequate orthographical and morphological analysis of the texts, a more appropriate linguistic milieu to contextualize the Middle Aramaic native variant identified by the Elymaic can be provided.

The modest material from Tang-e Sarvak brought to light interesting parallels with epigraphical evidence of Official Aramaic and later Eastern Aramaic, revealing a relation between archaic Achaemenid idioms and progressive Eastern Mesopotamian dialectal

\textsuperscript{1636} Different is the readings of GHN, i.e. “to bend down over”, where the ‘{’ is absent but the transliteration given by Gzella (see footnote 1605) reports a long “a” (gaheni), or the uncertain interpretation of ŞYS’ (marble?, alabaster?) presumably transcribed as shaisha (Henning 1952, p. 174) or Shesa’ (Gzella 2008, p. 114). In this case, the ‘{’ does not identify a long “a”, but it is worth noting that the alef ‘{’ is subscripted between the Ş and Y, as if it was a later insertion (Henning 1952, p. 174), and besides, in the Palmyrene inscription the word for “marble” is ŞYS? (PAT 1561:1-2). See also footnote 1604.

\textsuperscript{1637} Gzella 2008, p. 116; cf. Beyer 1996, p. 40. The closest parallel has been providing the examples, dating from the 44 BC to the 279/280 AD, from Palmyra where most of the dedicatory texts have the same opening phrase (Gzella 2005, p. 447). During the same range of time, similar expressions in Old Syriac were found at Hatra (reference in Beyer 1998, p. 183, s.v. şâmâ), and, in particular, at Edessa in Osroene presenting local alternatives in the form of HN’ ŞLM’ (“this image”; Drijvers and Healey 1999, nos. As 6 feminine, As 23, As 29, As 40, As 43, As 47 plural, As 51, As 52, As 61) and the more uncommon ŞLM’ D (“image of”; ibid., As 60, Cs 1, Cs 3).
forms. Although aware of limited amount of valuable linguistic data, Gzella proposes to place Elymaic in an intermediate position between the two linguistic forms.

### 8.1.2 Shimbar’s texts (Pls. XLIX-LI)

#### 8.1.2.1 General Aspects

During the English mission led by Adrian Bivar in agreement with the Iranian authorities, two expeditions (1962 and 1963) were undertaken within the valley of Shimbar, where five inscriptions were found along the horizontal rocky carved panel at Tang-e Botan. Starting from the left of the relief, the first text (TB:I.insc.1) is located between the heads of the two personages of Group I (TB:II.1-2); within the following group (Group II) is engraved a second inscription (TB:II.insc.2) between the deity (TB.II.1) and the first clothed figure (TB:II.2); the third engraving (TB:insc.3) is depicted between the heads of TB:II.2-3, with the fourth inscription (TB:II.insc.4) below it; finally, the last inscription (TB:III.insc.5) is visible between the heads of the two personages of Group III (i.e., TB:III.1-2).

The inscriptions are paleographically similar providing local personal name and titles, but the content is minimal and does not provide relevant historical and chronological data or relations with the sculpted panel. As for those at Tang-e Sarvak, the script and spelling suggest a dating to the 2nd century AD. At Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow, the presence of ink graffiti and sketches similar to the carvings at Tang-e Botan was reported together with local information about other inscribed stones in the vicinity.

#### 8.1.2.2 Previous Studies

The Elymaic texts from Tang-e Botan, were meticulously published with transcriptions, translations and commentaries by Bivar and Shaked, including the ink graffiti of the nearby Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow. This linguistic analysis reveals a similar script, including only a few palaeographical variations possibly due to local

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1639 Ibid., pp. 116-119.
1640 See §7.5.2.1.
1641 Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 271-272; Sznycer 1965, p. 3; Colledge 1986, p. 22; Kawami 1987, pp. 73-74; Gzella 2008, p. 119.
1643 Ibid.
alternatives, to the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak. These similarities prompt the assignation of the same dating between mid-1st and late-2nd century AD to the Shimbar texts. In 1965, Maurice Sznycer published a second in-depth study of the inscription at Tang-e Botan, while only recently, Gzella has provided brief remarks on the texts.

The site of Pol-e Negin was described by Layard who tried in vain to find the inscriptions. Bivar discovered both the ink scripts of Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow in 1962 under the guidance of Muhammad Murati. Typically, graffiti are rarely reported due to the limited value ascribed to them and the difficulties in recording and deciphering their small-sized and poorly-preserved characters. Post the report provided by Bivar (1964), no scholars have addressed and published anything about the ink graffiti at Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow except for the recent visit to the site by Alireza Sardari in 2012, which handled the task of the reappraisal of the two locations.

8.1.2.2.1 INSCRIPTION no. 1 (TB:I insn.1)

Starting from the left of the relief, the first inscription (TB:I.insc.1) is located between the heads of the two personages of Group I, namely TB:I.1-2 (Pl. XLIX).

[TB:I.insc.1]

I. 'wky\textsuperscript{1649} q\šyš\textsuperscript{1650} zy b'\šybh\textsuperscript{1651}

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\textsuperscript{1644} Gzella 2008, pp.119-121.
\textsuperscript{1645} Layard 1846, p. 86.
\textsuperscript{1646} Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 281.
\textsuperscript{1647} With regard to the scripts of Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow, photographic apparatus is scant, and the only sources available have been for a long time the only five photographs published by Bivar and Shaked in 1964 (pls. IX-XIII). Only recently, Sardari investigated the area providing newfound images (Sardari 2012, figs. 20-23).
\textsuperscript{1648} Sardari 2012.
\textsuperscript{1649} 'WKY is a personal name which seems to have Iranian parallels, as confirmed in al-Tabari (\textit{Annales}, I.813.1.12). See Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 278.
\textsuperscript{1650} The transliteration Q\SY\textsuperscript{1} was firstly reported by Sznycer (1965, p. 5) and supported by Naveh (1970, p. 36), even though Bivar and Shaked (1964, p. 275) were convinced to read the first letter as a {g} which in Elymaic replaced the {q}, apparently in a quite common phenomenon for Babylonian (Brockelmann 1908, p. 128; cf. Nöldeke 1868, pp. 39f) and Arabic (Brockelmann 1908, p. 121) dialects. Bivar and Shaked, therefore, considered the word G\SY\textsuperscript{1} a local version of the common Aramaic term \textit{qashshisha}, which if in Palmyrene inscriptions is translated as “elder, senior, chief”, in most of the Aramaic dialects and in Syriac is generally used as a title for priests (Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 274-276). Sznycer (1965, p. 5) also proposed an interpretation of the word Q\SY\textsuperscript{1} as “senator” (Clermont-Ganneau 1900, pp. 107-109) or “chef de quartier” (i.e., "Bezirksältester" in Lidzbarski 1902a, pp. 87-89).
\textsuperscript{1651} B'\ŠYBH is likely the “official” title which represented the main personage 'WKY, identifiable with a high-profile local personality (a ruler; see Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 272). It is hard, however, to provide its exact
2. br SingleOrDefault

The inscription, firstly translated by Bivar and Shaked, has been slightly adjusted by Sznycer and later by Gzella.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bivar and Shaked 1964</th>
<th>Sznycer 1965</th>
<th>Gzella 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. ‘wky, the Elder’ who is BŠYBH</td>
<td>1. ‘WKY, the QŠYŠ’ (title), who is in ‘ŠYBH (name of the place)</td>
<td>1. ‘Oke, the priest (or: the elder), who is BŠYBH (or: of Bashiba)’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. son of Šwl</td>
<td>2. son of ŠWL</td>
<td>2. the son of Šol</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A second block of inscriptions composed of Inscriptions nos. 2, 3, and 4, characterizes the same scene (Group II) by a deity and two standing clothed figures, revealing apparent palaeographical affinities to each other and some notable differences with TB:I.insc.1.

8.1.2.2.2 INSCRIPTION no. 2 (TB:II.insc.2)

This inscription is placed between the heads of the Heracles-like deity (TB:II.1) and the TB:II.2 (Pl. XLIX).

[TB:II.insc.2]

1. šrwkwz

meaning. If initially Bivar and Shaked tried to explain it as a compound term including the name of the god Bel, Henning suggested the translation “who (is) in oath” with the word ‘ŠYBH as a dialect and vulgar form of the Aramaic form of ŠB’ for “to swear” (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 273). Sznycer considers, however, Henning’s assumption “vraiment trop fragile”, considering BŠYBH constituted by the preposition B (“in”) plus the toponym ‘ŠYBH (Sznycer 1965, p. 4). Differently, Lipinski (1990, p. 112) prefers a periphrastic genitive with a personal name, namely “of Bashiba”, which also seems linguistically very pertinent.

规章制度 is a well-attested personal name, presumably the same known at Palmyra under the different spelling of ŠRYKW, transcribed in Greek as the gen. Σοράκιος (Lidzbarski 1902b, p. 293) or acc. 1656

\[\text{规章制度 is a well-attested personal name, presumably the same known at Palmyra under the different spelling of ŠRYKW, transcribed in Greek as the gen. Σοράκιος (Lidzbarski 1902b, p. 293) or acc.}\]

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

8. Language

2. bʾšyb br ṣmw

It has been translated as:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bivar and Shaked 1964</th>
<th>Sznycer 1965</th>
<th>Gzella 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Šrwkw who is</td>
<td>1. ŠRWKW, who is</td>
<td>1. Shorayku, who is</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. BʾSYBH, son of Šmwm</td>
<td>2. in ’SYBH, son of ŠMWM</td>
<td>2. BʾSYBH (or: of Bashiba’), son of Shem’on</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.2.2.3 INSCRIPTION no. 3 (TB:II.insc.3)

Above the scene, between the heads of TB:II.2-3 is found TB:II.insc.3, mentioning (Pl. L):

[TB:II.insc.3]

1. ſptw1658 ſwr’1659 zy

2. bl’rw1660 br ’wky

The name ŠMWM is suggested to be read as Shim’on by Bivar and Shaked (1964, p. 279), a Semitic proper name Simon also found in different inscriptions without the laryngeal under the form ŠMWN. Gzella (2008, p. 119) considers this translation uncertain, inferring that occasional passages from ‘’ to ‘’ or even to “zero” might have occurred in Eastern Aramaic different types, principally in the middle of personal name (Drijvers and Healey 1999, p. 24).

1657 The name ŠMWM is suggested to be read as Shim’on by Bivar and Shaked (1964, p. 279), a Semitic proper name Simon also found in different inscriptions without the laryngeal under the form ŠMWN. Gzella (2008, p. 119) considers this translation uncertain, inferring that occasional passages from ‘’ to ‘’ or even to “zero” might have occurred in Eastern Aramaic different types, principally in the middle of personal name (Drijvers and Healey 1999, p. 24).

1658 ŠPTW is a name unknown from other sources. See Sznycer 1965, p. 5, s.v.

1659 The meaning of ŠTWWR’ is unfortunately unknown (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 276, footnote 31). Shaked in a later personal discussion reported by Kawami (1987, p. 181, footnote 8) translated this term as “the younger.” Harmatta considers quite common in Elymaic the phonetic change (q)>{š}, suggesting that the term ŠTWWR’ was probably a clerical office derived from the primitive form QTWWR’ attributing to the subject ŠPTW the meaning of “sacrificer” (Harmatta 1976, pp. 291-292).

1660 The term BL’RW was interpreted by Bivar and Shaked (1964, pp. 276-277) as a compound name bel-ʾaro, composed by the word BL for the main divinity Bel, and ’RW, which in Phoenician seems to mean “altar” (Cooke 1903, p. 56; cf. Jean and Hoftijzer 1960, p. 24, with further references). The term Bel-ʾaro was therefore translated by the first editors as “the altar of Bel”, or considering it as the title of an officiant “the keeper of the altar of Bel.” The appellation of BL’RW is somewhat reminiscent of the proper name BLDWS’ found in TS.II:insc.2, TS.II:insc.5 at Tang-e Sarvak, which Henning interpreted as a compound of the name Bel with an additional word (Henning 1952, p. 172). However, this assumption provided by Bivar and Shaked
8. Language

Translated as:

Bivar and Shaked 1964 | Sznycer 1965 | Gzella 2008
---|---|---
1. Šptw the ŠTWR’, who is | 1. ŠPTW, the ŠTWR’ (title), who is | 1. ŠPTW, the ŠTWR’, who is
2. (keeper of) the altar of Bel’, son of ‘wky | 2. in L’RW (name of place), son of ‘WKY | 2. (keeper of) the altar Bel’, the son of Oke

8.1.2.2.4 INSCRIPTION no. 4 (TB:II.insc.4)


[TB:II.insc.4]

1. šlm[my’
2. ’lh zy ‘tyd
3. šptw br šš mn
4. ’yrsy

of BL’RW as the “keeper of the altar of Bel” is highly speculative and cannot be considered more than mere conjecture. Sznycer (1965, pp. 6-7) rejected this hypothesis as too fragile and opted for a locative expression composed of the preposition B plus the name of the place (“in L’RW”). Interpretation also confirmed by Shaked in 1981 (Personal Comment in Kawami 1987, p. 181). Also, Altheim and Stiehl (1965, p. 66) deny that Bel is mentioned. Harmatta, instead, considered the term Belaro as the name of a deity (Harmatta 1976, p. 292), translating TB:II.insc.3 as:

ŠPTW, sacrificer of
Belaro, son of ‘WKY

1661 ‘TYD is interpreted as a D-stem “perfect” of ‘TD with the short vowel “e” in the second syllable of ‘atted, which may be compared to the formulaic expression of N’SYB at Tang-e Sarvak (Gzella 2008, p. 120; cf. Sznycer 1965, p. 7). Bivar and Shaked noted that the verb had the appearance of a passive participle, although an active action was required. Therefore, Gzella (2008, p. 120) suggests that it would be more appropriate a translation with a verb denoting the action “to prepare, to make.” Sznycer (1965, p. 7), instead, proposes a verb with the meaning “to install, to put, to place” as commonly used in the Judean Aramaic.

1662 Unknown toponym, ‘YRSY has been transliterated as Irse” (Gzella 2008, p.120).
8. Language

Translated as

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Bivar and Shaked 1964</th>
<th>Sznycer 1965</th>
<th>Gzella 2008</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. This are the images</td>
<td>1. These images</td>
<td>1. These images</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. which <strong>prepared</strong></td>
<td>2. which are placed</td>
<td>2. are the ones which <strong>has prepared</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Šptw, son of Šš, from</td>
<td>3. ŠPTW, son of Šš, from</td>
<td>3. ŠPTW the son of Shash from</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Ŷrsy</td>
<td>4. YRSY</td>
<td>4. 'Irse'</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.2.2.5 INSCRIPTION no. 5 (*TB:III.insc.5*)

In the third panel (*Group III*), the last text of Tang-e Botan (*TB:III.insc.5*) is carved between the head of the two *TB:III.1-2*. On palaeographical grounds, the variations here compared with the three inscriptions of *Group II* (*TB:II.insc.2-4*) are fairly evident (Pl. LI).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. wrwd rb'</td>
<td>1. <strong>Orodes the Great</strong></td>
<td>1. <strong>Orodes the Great</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. zy b’šybha</td>
<td>2. who is B’ŠYBH (or: of Bashiba)</td>
<td>2. who is in ‘ŠYBH</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.1.2.2.6 INK GRAFFITI (*PN:ink; TC:ink*)

The nearby ink graffiti of Pol-e Negin (*PN:ink*) and Tang-e Chelow (*TC:ink*) constitute a further example of Elymaic script in the area of Shimbar (Pl. LI). Although it initially represented an artificial channel\(^{1663}\), Pol-e Negin is identified with a rock located along a gorge cut by a stream in the southeastern end of the valley connecting Shimbar with the Karun river. Tang-e Chelow is a village located on the present road which goes up from

\(^{1663}\) Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 281.
the valley toward the Taraz mountains, ca. 3 km southeast of Baba Zahed village. The boulder, facing north, is on the eastern ridge, which encloses the valley. In the zone an ancient construction (fortress\textsuperscript{3}) and a possible path have been noticed, in particular around the site of Pol-e Negin.\textsuperscript{1664}.

If at PN:\textit{ink} the state of preservation in 1963\textsuperscript{1665} was profoundly damaged and only scattered elements of either Parthian or Persian Aramaic, and Pahlavi, especially from pre-Sasanid periods\textsuperscript{1666}, could be recognized, at TC:\textit{ink} (ca 7 km north of Pol-e Negin) the situation presented a greater variety of better-preserved \textit{graffiti}. In particular, Elymaic textual elements similar to those of Tang-e Botan were markedly evident. According to Bivar and Shaked, the \textit{graffiti} of TC:\textit{ink} revealed the transition from Aramaic to Elymaic with a possible dating to the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC or even earlier\textsuperscript{1667}. A standard formula of these texts is to identify with the term ZKYR translated as “\textit{may (he) be remembered}”\textsuperscript{1668} followed by a personal name or a title, an example is the sentence ZKYR ‘WKY (SW\textsuperscript{3})\textsuperscript{1669} translated as “\textit{may ’Oke be remembered [...]}”, where this ’Oke (’WKY) may likely be considered with the homonymous personage of TB:I:\textit{insc.1} and TB:II:\textit{insc.3}, even if the words following (unreported by Bivar and Shaked) then appear puzzling. A photograph by John Hansman, provided to Bivar and Shaked, seems to report distinctly the graphemes ZKYR MN KBNŠKYR, which immediately merit attention since it presents the Elymaean dynastic name of \textit{Kamnaskires} (KBNŠKYR)\textsuperscript{1670}. An additional text is transcribed as “BR ŞWLW […] MN B’MN? […]” and translated as “son of Şwlw [...] from B’mn [...]”, regardless several dubieties\textsuperscript{1671}.

\textbf{8.1.2.3 Considerations}

Analogously to Tang-e Sarvak, the inscription of Tang-e Botan record few scattered data, especially regarding the onomastics. Local personal names, unknown titles, and unidentified expressions make up this modest epigraphic legacy which are likely best viewed in relation to the rupestrian panels where they are located.

\textsuperscript{1664} Ibid., pp. 281-282.
\textsuperscript{1665} Ibid., pp. 281-282.
\textsuperscript{1666} Personal Comment of Henning reported in Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 282, footnote 64.
\textsuperscript{1667} Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 283.
\textsuperscript{1668} Ibid., p. 284.
\textsuperscript{1669} Ibid., Pl. XI.
\textsuperscript{1670} Ibid., p. 284, Pl. XII.
\textsuperscript{1671} Ibid.
For instance, the significance of the *Group I* scene may be explained by the reading given to QŠYŠ’ and BŠYBH of *TB:1.insc.1*. The first term can confidently be interpreted as a title bestowed on 'WKY. Analyzing the representation of a Heracles-like deity on the left, the assignment of purely chieftainship entitlement as in Palmyra, or the nomination to a recognizable sacerdotal apppellative typical in Syriac and Aramaic dialects to *TB:I.2* is equally appropriate. The scene depicts a ritual due to the presence of a deity and an altar between the two personages, however, the completion of a rite in Elymais could be officiated by a clergyman or by the king (perhaps even a royal dignitary) endowed with priestly functions. In this regard, the cryptic BŠYBH, which, according to Henning, is translated as “*while taking an oath*”1672, would perfectly fit with the religious atmosphere that accompanies the relief1673.

Moving to *Group II*, it is likely to consider the *TB:II.2* in the act of claiming with the deity the same title of BŠYBH of the figure in *Group I*, although there is no evidence to prove that they are blood-related. Excluding the deity (*TB:II.1*), the scene shows two personages (*TB:II.2-3*) and the engraving of three names amongst which two are homonyms, respectively “ŠPTW […], the son of 'Oke ('WKY)” in *TB:II.insc.3*, and “ŠPTW, the son of Shash (ŠŠ)” on *TB:II.insc.4*. On this point – according to Bivar and Shaked1674 – if the personage named 'Oke ('WKY) indicated the homonym figure in *TB:1.insc 1* (also recorded at *TC:ink*), and if BŠYBH constituted a title (or “office”1675), then it could be suggested that the function of BŠYBH was not transmissible among the members of the same family, rather it was obtained in particular political or religious conditions, since it differed from his father 'Oke (entitled of BŠYBH), the son ŠPTW, was assigned to the different office of ŠTW.".

It is evident from a palaeographical point of view that the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak and the texts at Tang-e Botan are very close, or even identical. Linguistically, the two scripts have several aspects in common. For instance, the conservative spelling of the relative indicator ZY (“who is/are”), or the noun BR in connection with the different patronymics. It is then syntactically remarkable the common use of a personal name generally (but not always) specified with an attribute followed by the relative marker ZY, which introduces an

1672 *Personal Comment* in Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 273.
1673 *Contra* Henning’s translation, see Sznycer 1965, pp. 4-5.
1674 Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 279.
adjunct relative clause or a title, and by BR ("son of") which precedes the patronymic (these last two subordinates are sometimes inverted in the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak).

\[TB:II\text{-}insc.4\] once again uses the well-attested model present at Tang-e Sarvak (\[TS.I\text{-}insc.1; TS.II\text{-}insc.4; TS.II\text{-}insc.5-6\]) with ŞLM’ (here in its plural form ŞLMY’) followed by a demonstrative pronoun (‘LH) and a relative marker (ZY). Even morphologically speaking, the old Aramaic plural masculine empathic state which terminates in “-ayya” (long “e” in the Eastern Aramaic dialects) is attested both at Tang-e Sarvak\(^{1676}\) and Tang-e Botan.

### 8.1.2.4 Conclusions

Considering the script’s table of Bivar and Shaked\(^{1677}\), epigraphic evidence significantly differentiates the inscriptions concerning the singular relief scenes where they were carved. \[TB:I\text{-}insc.1\], for instance, engraved on the first scene starting from the left (\textit{Group I}), seems to have its graphemes smaller with forms more gentle and elongated. \[TB:II\text{-}insc.2-4\] present on \textit{Group II} are very similar to each other, with their larger and coarser characters compared with those of \[TB:I\text{-}insc.1\]. This is particularly true of \[TB:II\text{-}insc.2-3\], since \[TB:II\text{-}insc.4\] appears to be graphically closer to \[TB:III\text{-}insc.5\] introducing significant palaeographical variations such as a cursive script which is more advanced if compared with the patterns of the previous models. \[TB:II\text{-}insc.4\], therefore, could be considered a later insertion (or correction?) on \textit{Group II}\(^{1678}\), significantly mentioning a personage, homonym of the man reported in the right above \[TB:II\text{-}insc.3\], but with different patronymic.

Analogously to the Official Aramaic, the inscriptions of Tang-e Botan seem to represent a formal script connected with relevant personages of the Elymaean political scene from mid-1\textsuperscript{st} to late-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\(^{1679}\), with the depiction of a Heracles-like local deity in every panel which provided the sacredness necessary for enshrining these commemorations.

The dating for the ink \textit{graffiti} at Pol-e Negin and Tang-e Chelow has been proposed within the first two centuries AD based on linguistic affinities with the other Elymaean

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\(^{1676}\) Gzella 2008, p. 120.

\(^{1677}\) Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 270-271.

\(^{1678}\) \textit{Ibid.}, pp.270-273.

\(^{1679}\) \textit{Contra}, Harmatta (1976, pp. 302-303) defines from a palaeographical point of view the inscriptions of Tang-e Botan and Tang-e Sarvak significantly different, preventing from dating them to the same historical period.
rupestrian works, even though the general contextualization was obtained from very limited documentation\textsuperscript{1680}.

\section*{8.1.3 Scripts of Izeh-Malamir and Environs}

During the 2\textsuperscript{nd} campaign (2009) led by the Iranian-Italian joint team of Vito Messina and Jafar Mehr Kian in Khuzestan, the entire surface of the rock reliefs present at Hung-e Azhdar, Hung-e Kamalvand and Hung-e Yaralivand were meticulously examined through the use of a high precision laser scanner, which identified data subsequently elaborated (approximation \textit{ca.} 0.2 mm). The consequential analysis ensured the production of digital orthoimages\textsuperscript{1681} able to clarify the presence or absence of engraved inscriptions carved onto these rocky panels, silencing the various conjectures proposed in the previous century.

\subsection*{8.1.3.1 Hung-e Azhdar}

\subsubsection*{8.1.3.1.1 GENERAL ASPECTS}

The existence of two inscriptions on the Elymaean sculpted panel of Hung-e Azhdar, in an open-air sanctuary only 11 km north of the modern city of Izeh-Malamir have been tentatively recorded in the past. A situation which has been recently clarified with the accurate surveys and studies led by the international Iranian-Italian joint team\textsuperscript{1682}.

\subsubsection*{8.1.3.1.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES}

During his first visit to the site in 1962, Vanden Berghe reported that “\textit{sous la patte avancée du cheval se trouvait peut-être une courte inscription, mais qui serait aujourd’hui totalement détériorée}”\textsuperscript{1683}. According to Vanden Berghe, Harmatta claimed the presence of “\textit{traces of the inscription [...] clearly discernible on the stone surface under the left foreleg of the horse}”\textsuperscript{1684}, proposing through the analysis of the published photographs the transliteration of a 2-line Parthian text (\textit{HA:insc. I}).

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1680} Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 282-284.
\item \textsuperscript{1681} Messina and Mehr Kian 2009.
\item \textsuperscript{1682} Messina 2015a.
\item \textsuperscript{1683} Vanden Berghe 1963b, p. 160, footnote 1. This notation is significantly absent in his later work when he described the relief of Hung-e Azhdar (Vanden Berghe and Schipmann 1983, pp. 32-37).
\item \textsuperscript{1684} Harmatta 1981, p. 200.
\end{itemize}
8. Language

8.1.3.1.3 DESCRIPTION


1. m(t)rdt
2. ml(kyn mlk)’

Harmatta also proposed the existence of another similar text (HA:insc.2) in a much better state of preservation between the head of the horse and the first standing figure.\(^{1685}\)


1. Kbnškr
2. Šwš
3. pḫt

1. Kamnaskires
2. Susa

8.1.3.1.4 CONSIDERATIONS

Considering the title of “King of Kings” apparently attributed to Mithridates I, Harmatta assumed the date of the inscription (HA:insc.1), and consequently the relief, around 140 BC.\(^ {1686}\)

Some philologists\(^ {1687}\) of the Iranian language accepted the dating and interpretation proposed by Harmatta regarding the two inscriptions, while some art scholars as Mathiesen\(^ {1688}\) and Invernizzi\(^ {1689}\) questioned the real existence of these engravings.\(^ {1690}\) Haruta during his visit to the place in 2000, affirmed recognizing “the traces of a heavily damaged

\(^ {1685}\) Ibid., p. 201.
\(^ {1686}\) Ibid., p. 202. This year (140 BC) is indicated by Harmatta as the period when Mithridates had most effective political control over the Elymaean territories. Contra a possible a battle and military conquest of Elymais by Mithridates I in 140-139 BC, as attested by Justin (XXXVI.1.4), see §5.2.3.1. Also, Shayegan 2011, p. 97; Potts 2016, p. 385.
\(^ {1689}\) Invernizzi 1998, p. 231, footnote 37.
\(^ {1690}\) During my personal visit to the site in November 2015, I was not able to recognize any trace of the inscription.
8. Language

"inscription" under the foreleg of the horse (Inscription I) but rejected the interpretation by Harmatta 1691.

8.1.3.1.5 CONCLUSIONS

In 2009, the scanner analysis provided by the Iranian-Italian joint team revealed that there is no evidence of any inscriptions carved onto the rocky panel of the Hung-e Azhdar’s boulder, and if this was indeed present, it must now be completely eroded 1692.

8.1.3.2 Hung-e Yaralivand (XY: Pl. LII)

8.1.3.2.1 GENERAL ASPECTS

At Hung-e Yaralivand, about 2.5 km north-west of Hung-e Azhdar, is located a badly corrupted relief showing two standing figures in Parthian/Elymaean garments with their hands grasping different objects. The poor preservation of the relief makes it difficult to any attempt identification.

8.1.3.2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

At the moment of his discovery at Hung-e Yaralivand in 1963, Hinz describing the relief asserted that “leider weist unser Relief in Ḫong-e Yār-ʿAlivand keine Inschrift auf” 1693. Subsequently, Harmatta identified the presence of a two/three-line inscription, which would have explained the historical background of the relief, ca. 2 cm below the sole of the left personage’s left foot. It “can easily be observed” through the lens of a camera, adding that “contrary to the earlier opinion it seems to be doubtless that the highly damaged relief also had an inscription” 1694.

8.1.3.2.3 DESCRIPTION

Harmatta considered the inscription (HY:insc.1), obtained only from the photographs, an example of Elymaic script, transliterated as follows:

1691 Haruta 2003, p. 473.
8. Language

In the highly damaged rock relief of Hung-e Yaralivand, the 3D model enables to read a text (HY:insc.2) of at least two lines between the heads of the two standing HY:1-2. From right to left:

[HY:insc.2]  
1. \([\ldots]s(m)b(\ldots)n(k)[\ldots]\)  
2. \(br\ k[\ldots]n(k)[\ldots]k[\ldots]\)  

Moriggi 2011
1. \([\ldots]\)  
2. \(son\ of\ \ldots\)  

8.1.3.2.4 CONSIDERATIONS

Syntactically, this hypothetical text (HY:insc.1) is almost identical to the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak (TB.I:insc.1; TB.II:insc.2; TB.II:insc.6) composed by the opening phrase ŞLM’ ZNH ZY (“this image is the one of”) followed by the name of the ruler, his attribute and the term BR (“son of”) introducing the patronymic. *Per contra*, the presence of this inscription mentioned by Harmatta\hspace{1em}[1695] is not confirmed by other scholars\hspace{1em}[1696]. Although linguistically accurate enough to diffuse speculation, there is no textual evidence detected even after the laser scanning carried out by the Iranian-Italian team\hspace{1em}[1697]. The preliminary processing in the acquisition of data from Hung-Yaralivand allowed the archaeologists to reveal the presence of an inscription (HY:insc.2) in the upper part of the sculpted surface, which is not visible to the naked eye and was not noticed during the previous reconnaissance. This highly-damaged text has been almost entirely eroded, and only little traces of some letters have survived the degradation\hspace{1em}[1698].

The state of preservation of the text prevents a more precise transliteration. It is, however, quite possible to affirm that this inscription was accomplished using the local

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\[1697\] Messina 2014a, p. 159.

\[1698\] Messina and Mehr Kian 2011, p. 221.
8. Language

Elymaic idiom. The clearly-recognized graphemes are epigraphically similar to those identified at Hung-e Kamalvand (HK: insc. 1), indicating a plausible dating for the 1st-2nd century AD\textsuperscript{1699}. In the presence of a better reading for some letters, an identification for one or both the personages of the relief may have been proposed. In this regard, according to Moriggi\textsuperscript{1700}, it would be tempting to reconstruct lines no. 2 with the reading KBNŠKYR in the light of the text of Hung-e Kamalvand. Nevertheless, the considerable deterioration of the script suggests approaching an eventual translation with many reservations.

8.1.3.2.5 CONCLUSIONS

In the current state, the inscription does not provide any information with which to better understand the depicted scene at Hung-e Yaralivand, though it is generally interpreted as a scene of investiture for an Elymaean ruler\textsuperscript{1701}.

8.1.3.3 Hung-e Kamalvand (HK: Pl. LII)

8.1.3.3.1 GENERAL ASPECTS

Nearby Hung-e Yaralivand, at ca. 1.5 km further north, a shallow relief - featuring a frontal male on a small-headed horse together with a frontal standing figure - is carved on the right cliff of a small canyon ascending the mountain locally known as Hung-e Kamalvand.

8.1.3.3.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

Hinz in March 1963 discovered another rock sculpture at Hung-e Kamalvand. A more readable inscription between the two figures present on the relief facilitates Hinz’s analysis, which received some personal comments from Henning.

8.1.3.3.3 DESCRIPTION

\begin{table}[h]
\centering
\begin{tabular}{|l|}
\hline
HK:insc.2 \\
\hline
1. [prd]’t kwmr\textsuperscript{1702} br kbnškyr\textsuperscript{1703} \\
\hline
\end{tabular}
\end{table}

Hinz 1963

1. Phraates the priest, son of Kabniskires

\textsuperscript{1699} Moriggi (2011, p. 109) proposes a dating within the 1st century AD. Based on historico-artistic evaluations, I prefer the mid-2nd century AD (see §7.3.2.2, §7.3.2.3).

\textsuperscript{1700} Moriggi 2011, p. 109.

\textsuperscript{1701} See §7.3.4.
8.1.3.3.4 CONSIDERATIONS

It is agreed that the subject of the inscription is identified with the horseman (HK:1) as claiming a royal descent, while the standing figure (HK:2) remains unidentified (possibly a high-rank personage, or a local representative\textsuperscript{1704}). It is equally correct to affirm that the inscription is related to the HK:2 rather than to HK:1 to indicate a member of the Kamnaskirid dynasty who retained some authority over the important crossroads of Izeh-Malamir\textsuperscript{1705}. Given the similarities with TS.II:Na.3, an identification of HK:1 with a deity or a divinized king with sacred regalia (e.g. specific headgear, ribbon around the spear) appears credible. In this context, the meaning of HK:insc becomes clearer as describing a new dynast (Phraates) in the act of officiating a rite on ancestry, as revealed by the presence of a divinized ruler (Kamnaskires).

8.1.3.3.5 CONCLUSIONS

The inscription of Hung-e Kamalvand is the best-preserved attestation of Elymaic script around Izeh-Malamir. It seems to indicate the necessity of a new Orodid king to validate the transmission of power from a local personage (divine or divinized) of considerable valence, as a member of ancient royalty (HK:1).

On the basis of the iconographic parallels and some of the more archaic grapheme-forms compared with the letters of Tang-e Sarvak and Tang-e Botan, the text may be assigned to around the first half of 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, which would be almost contemporaneous to the monetary issues of Phraates in Elymais (§9.2.5.3).

\textsuperscript{1702} The term KW\textit{MR}' contains in its spelling the same short “o” which is etymologically similar to the word KW\textit{RSY}' present in the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak, and, surprisingly, being in accordance with the regular orthography showed in Classical Syriac inscriptions and in some later Eastern variants, but absent in Old Syriac (Gzella 2008, p. 121). In Achaemenid, Hatran and Palmyrene Aramaic, the same word is transcribed with no \{w\}, while in some parchment contracts from Dura Europos the substantive KMRWT’ for “priesthood” is defectively spelled (Drijvers and Healey 1999, P.1:4 and 3:4, both datings ca. 240 AD).

\textsuperscript{1703} Considering the transcription of the personal name K\textit{BNSKYR} with certainty, it is clear that in Elymaic (or at least at Hung-e Kamalvand) the short “a” is not represented with a vowel-grapheme.

\textsuperscript{1704} Kawami 1987, p. 73.

\textsuperscript{1705} \textit{Ibid.} 1987, p. 73; Messina 2014a, p. 159.
8. Language

8.1.4 Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman’s Inscriptions

The excavations carried out at Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman by Ghirshman and the French mission in the mid-60s of the last century determined the identification of another three very fragmented texts to include within the linguistic group of Elymaic scripts, revealing a different variant of the same alphabet.

An inscription apparently dating to the 2nd century BC was discovered at Bard-e Neshandeh (Inscription A) and, together with a second tiny and severely damaged text (Inscription B), were heavily reconstructed by Harmatta. Masjed-e Soleyman provided an epigraphic example as well, although very shattered.

8.1.4.1 Bard-e Neshandeh (Pl. LIII)

8.1.4.1.1 GENERAL ASPECTS

The irregular trapezoid-shape stone on which Inscription A (BN:insc.A) is engraved probably represents a small part of a longer and more complicated text, which unfortunately has been lost over centuries of occupation of the site. Observing the inscribed surface of the fragment, it is possible to recognize a 5-line text clearly. No photographic or material evidence exists, but there is a hand-drawn image, which has been provided by a second fairly scratched Inscription B (BN:insc.B) in Elymaic. The text was scattered and not incised on the rough surface of the north-western stair’s side wall. The engraved stone bearing BN:insc.B was broken into two parts causing further loss of some of the already unidentifiable letters on the perpendicular fracture.

8.1.4.1.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

A photograph of BN:insc.A was displayed by Roman Ghirshman in September 1966 at the 1st International Congress of Iranian Studies which took place in Tehran. The location of the discovery, according to Ghirshman, was the podium of the upper terrace unearthed in 1964. Altheim and Stiehl in collaboration with Henning provided the first publication of its text in 1968, followed circa a decade later by the more accurate study by Harmatta.

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1706 Harmatta 1976, pp. 289-300. See also Altheim and Stiehl 1964-1968, pp. 77-78; Gzella 2008, p. 121.
1710 Altheim and Stiehl 1964-1968, pp. 77-78.
BN:insc.B was discovered by the French expedition “sur la paroi du grand escalier Nord qui mène sur la terrasse, au milieu de laquelle se trouve e temple”\textsuperscript{1712}.

Harmatta is the only scholar to have provided a transliteration and transcription of this 3-line text on the basis of handwriting prepared by Ms. T. Ghirshman, who did not know the script and therefore could not accurately observe the graphemes and their forms; and a photograph, which Roman Ghirshman gave to Harmatta in 1973 during the colloquium for “La Collection des sources pour l’histoire de l’Asie Centrale préislamique” held in Budapest. Accordingly below are the observations of Ghirshman reported by Harmatta.

8.1.4.1.3 DESCRIPTIONS

Inscription A (BN:insc.A)

\[
\begin{align*}
1. & \quad \ldots(k)[y]r \text{ mlk} \ ‘\text{ṣṭb • •} \ldots \\
2. & \quad \ldots\text{šm’n n’tr ’}d\text{n}’\text{1713} \ldots \\
3. & \quad \ldots(\text{m)} ‘\text{lh’ w’ m}r ‘ \ldots \\
4. & \quad \ldots\text{zyl zy mn (‘)} \ldots \\
5. & \quad \ldots \text{C XX XX}’\text{1714} \ldots
\end{align*}
\]

The \textit{BN:insc.A} is highly damaged and the translation consequently difficult, however, Harmatta laboriously reconstructed the text, often risking speculation.

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\textsuperscript{1711} Harmatta 1976, pp. 289-297.
\textsuperscript{1712} \textit{Ibid.} 1989, p. 11.
\textsuperscript{1713} Gzella (2008, p. 121) slightly changed the transliteration in \textit{N’T}Y’\textit{R} trying to reconstruct the particle “nāṭer” which, if correct, would use the same spelling of N’S\textit{YB} (“naseb”) present in the inscription of Tang-e Sarvak. However, as also Gzella affirmed, the grapheme \{y\} is uncertain, and it is absent in both the translation of Altheim and Stiehl (1964-1968, pp. 77-78) and Harmatta (1976, p. 289). The latter proposed a reading of N’T\textit{R} with the Mandaean form N’T\textit{R’}, namely “guard, sentinel” (Harmatta 1976, p. 292), associating with next term ‘DN’ confidently interpreted with the word ‘DN (“lord”) as well known in Phoenician, Punic, Hebrew and Palmyrene texts (Harmatta 1976, p. 292).
\textsuperscript{1714} The \textit{BN:insc.A} at Bard-e Neshandeh probably reveals for the first time Elymaean numeral signs, which occurs here in the \textit{formulae} for dates but that could also be used for weight as in the silver inscribed vessels of the \textit{al-Sabah Collection} in Kuwait. Probably the system is standardized and after the sign indicating the amount of necessary 100-sign (C) brings together the 10-signs (X) in groups of two (e.g., 4-100-20-20-10 for 450, in Carter 2015, p. 288, \textit{cat. no.} 80). There should be no doubt to calculate the dating in accordance with the Seleucid era beginning in 311 BC.
8. Language

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

[BN:insc.A + Harmatta’s reconstruction]  
Harmatta 1976

1. ['nh kbnš][k](y)r mlk 'šṭb • •  

2. [zy bm]šm ‘n nṭr ‘dn’ [zk]  

3. [yṣṭ](r) ‘lh’ w’ mr’ (’) [dyn]  

4. [y’h d kl] zyl zy mn (’) [mr’…]  

5. [bšnt] C XX XX (XX) [yrḥ…]  

To note, the last line may indicate the dating of the inscriptions.

Inscription B (BN:insc.B)

Contrary to what is represented in line no. 5 of BN:insc.A, no dating is contained in the text of Incription B.

[BN:insc.B]  
Harmatta 1989

1. kbnškyr (m)[l]k’ r(b’)  

2. pw[š]r  

1715 Harmatta 1976, p. 294. “Moi, le roi Kabnaškir j’ordonne / qui dans le sanctuaires est la garde du Seigneur / que celui-ci sacrifice du feuillage et de l’agneau tendre, ensuite / qu’il (se) prenne tout ce qu’il (reste) de peu précieux de l’agneau / en l’anne 160 (+ × ?), au mois”.

1716 Harmatta restored the distinctive royal name KBNŠKYR where the only ascertained letter is the last R, while even the K could be differently read as P or N, only because is followed by the term MLK’, even if, differently from the monetary legends and the inscribed silver bowls, there are currently no rock carved inscriptions in Elymais which report the sentence KBNŠKYR MLK’.

1717 The title MLK’ RB’ (“the Great King”) is not attested in the Elymaean stone inscriptions so far, while it is reported both the term MLK’ (BN:insc.A) and the attribute RB’ (TB:III.insc.5 associated to the kings of Elymais.

1718 This word is the only element of line no. 2. It is scratched in the middle of the line denoting that it may be an oversight of the author who inserted it later. In this way, the line no. 3 in the transliteration could originally have been the line no. 2. Harmatta reconstructed the term PW[Š]R, the letter Š disappeared within the stone’s fracture, trying to tentatively correlate the Elymaic verb PŠR to the Talmudic Aramaic equivalent PŠR for “liberate, exempt (of tax of debt)” (Harmatta 1976, p. 163). The only query is to explain the grapheme {w}. Harmatta took into account the apparent linguistic affinities between Elymaic and Mandaic, approaching the Elymaic verbal form PWŠR about the equivalent verbal forms NWQR and YWQR from the Mandaean roots NQR and YQR. Considering that PŠR appears as a root ending in {r} as well as NQR and YQR, it seems reasonable to assume a similar conjugation for the three verbal forms.
3. (g)n¹⁷¹⁹ g ’w wr(by) mn(ht) 

the sanctuary area and increased the sacrificial gift

8.1.4.1.4 CONSIDERATIONS

Harmatta considered BN:insc.A an official decree of Kamnaskires engraved on the stone at the sacred area of Bard-e Neshandeh, basing his interpretation entirely on the preserved expression N’T R ’DN’, namely “the guard of the Lord.” The context appears purely ritual concerning the presumed reconstruction of lines nos. 3-4 proposed by Harmatta, including vegetal and animal sacrifices as well as the term ’DN’ (“lord”) which could be ascribed to the main deity of Bard-e Neshandeh¹⁷²⁰. Understanding such a heavily fragmented text is fairly limited, and the clauses as reconstructed by Harmatta are too abstruse to consider the translation as a reliable historical document inherent to the first activities of the Elymaean kings.

A morphological analysis suggests that even if previously considered more ancient compared with the other examined Elymaic texts¹⁷²¹, the alphabet of BN:insc.A may only represent a different variation of the same characters used a Tang-e Sarvak¹⁷²². It is true, however, that the inscriptions from Tang-e Sarvak, Tang-e Botan and Izeh-Malamir seem for their forms, contents and realizations, significantly distinct from the text at Bard-e Neshandeh. The rock-relief inscriptions are carved onto irregular and disturbed rocky panels generally to specify the depiction to which they are related. Their lines are unequal with the graphemes clumsily engraved in various sizes in a narrow-lettered writing. Contrarily, at Bard-e Neshandeh the text is inscribed on a stone table thoroughly polished, in parallel lines placed at the same distance with well-engraved letters of the same size, and with the presence of the accent¹⁷²³.

¹⁷¹⁹ Harmatta interpreted GN’ as the Elymaic variation of the renowned word for “garden” present in the different spelling of GN (Hebrew, Official Aramaic), GNY’ (Nabatean, Palmyrene, Talmudic Aramaic), or GYNT’ (Mandaic, Talmudic Aramaic). Proposing that in this case, the author of Inscription B wanted to give the idea of a “sacred garden” intended as the cult area, represented by the sacred terraces at Bard-e Neshandeh (Harmatta 1989, p. 164). This interpretation is suggestive, however, all the third line, which interestingly is placed right below line no. 1, has several doubtful graphemes, and even the reconstruction of GN’ is questionable since for the presumed G is possible to recognize only a horizontal scratch considered by Harmatta as the upper part of the letter.

¹⁷²¹ Ibid., p. 295.
¹⁷²² Gzella 2008, p. 121.
¹⁷²³ On the presence of the accent, see Harmatta 1976, p. 294.
The chronological limits of the text are provided by the numerical signs present on line no. 5. The two alternative readings of Harmatta, namely C XX XX or C XX XX XX (due to the presumed presence of a third XX) led the scholar to place the inscription between the years 160 and 180 BC\(^{1724}\). To propose a historical framework, it should be mentioned that in the 1\(^{st}\) century BC the Elymaeans continued to engrave on their monetary issues dating related to the Seleucid era, which officially started in 312/1 BC. Transposed on the base of the Seleucid era, the temporal limits of the \(BN:\text{insc}.A\) cover a range of time spanning from 171 to 151 BC.

From an epigraphic point of view, the graphemes used for \(BN:\text{insc}.B\) – once compared with the other Elymaean inscriptions and monetary legends – are not dissimilar to the characters shown at Tang-e Sarvak, and Tang-e Botan. This analysis of the Elymaic alphabet may suggest a dating of the inscription at the mid-1\(^{st}\) and 2\(^{nd}\) century AD\(^{1725}\).

The fact that \(BN:\text{insc}.B\) was only scratched on a side and not engraved suggests that it did not merit much attention. The attestation of the dynastic name Kamnaskires followed by the attribute MLK’ RB’ (“Great King”) appears relevant. It is attested in the numismatic sources that the presence of the single name Kamnaskires was borne by the Elymaean rulers from the 147 BC to the mid-2\(^{nd}\) century AD, after that the appellative Kamnaskires does not appear alone anymore\(^{1726}\). The use of the attribute “Great King” in also significant, since such evidence is absent in the several rupestrian works of the first two centuries AD. The only certain attestation of the title “Great King” referred to a member of the Kamnaskirid house is present on the Greek coin inscription of Kamnaskires I (\(\beta\alpha\sigmaι\lambda\acute{\epsilon}ως \muεγ\acute{\alpha}λου\))\(^{1727}\), datable to 147/5 BC, approximately the years when the founder of the Kamnaskirid dynasty conquered Susa. To explain a 2\(^{nd}\)-century-AD inscription as referring to an eminent Elymaean personality of the 2\(^{nd}\) century BC, Harmatta\(^{1728}\) asserted that \(BN:\text{insc}.B\) be interpreted as a revival of historical significance used to ensure the privileges of the sanctuary at Bard-e

\(^{1724}\) Harmatta 1976, pp. 294-295.
\(^{1726}\) The first attestations was the monetary series of Kamnaskires Megas Soter (\(ca\). mid-1\(^{st}\) century BC), the last was the production of Kamnaskires-Orodos (\(ca\). mid 2\(^{nd}\) century AD). For the analysis and chronology of coins (with all the references), see Chapter 9.
\(^{1727}\) See §9.2.4.
\(^{1728}\) Harmatta 1989, p. 166.
8. Language

Neshandeh, similar to the letter which Darius I sent to Gadatas regarding the fiscal immunity of the sanctuary of Apollo at Aulai (near Magnesia-on-the-Meander).\footnote{Briot 2002, pp. 491-492. This text, written by Darius I, is important as it defines the gardeners of the temple as "sacred." The script was a Greek re-engraving dated to the 2nd century AD during the Roman Empire of a document which originally dated back to the 6th century BC during the reign of Darius I, since the features of the epistolary inscription are similar to the standard style of the Achaemenid chancellery.}

The assumption of the inscription of Bard-e Neshandeh as the reminiscent of an edict of Kamnaskires I on the regulation of the cult in one of the most renowned religious spaces in Elymais, is questionable. Given the fragmentary state of the text and the extent of reconstruction provided by Harmatta, the message of BN:insc.A could be purely conjectural. On the other hand, BN:insc.B may represent another “official” act of propaganda provided by the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty to validate their authority.

8.1.4.1.5 CONCLUSIONS

Although BN:insc.A-B are fragmented, heavily damaged, and mostly artificially reconstructed, the quite ascertained presence of the term “king” possibly associated with a reconstructed “Kamnaskires” may be reminiscent of an ancient tradition. In particular, BN:insc.A seems to assert the presence of a king in Elymais before the coin emission of Kamnaskires Megas Soter (147/6 BC). If he was a member of the Kamnaskires family is hard to demonstrate, but he was probably reigning in the early 2nd century BC.

Considering the alphabet and the presumed messages that they carried, the texts of Bard-e Neshandeh appears to be part of the political promulgation process, which was widespread in the territory in the late 1st century AD to facilitate the transition of power to the new Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty of the Orodids.

8.1.4.2 Masjed-e Soleyman (Pl. LIV)

8.1.4.2.1 GENERAL ASPECTS

At Masjed-e Soleyman, a highly fragmented 4-line Elymaic text (MS:insc.1)\footnote{Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXI.4, fig. 35.} was engraved on a rather gnawed surface of stone bench, unearthed during the excavation in front of the Heracles temple\footnote{Harmatta 1976, p. 300.}.
8. Language

8.1.4.2.2 PREVIOUS STUDIES

As at Bard-e Neshandeh, Harmatta proposed a translation for MS:insc.1 only relying on photographic documentation\(^{1732}\).

8.1.4.2.3 DESCRIPTION

\[
\begin{align*}
\text{[MS:insc]} & \quad \text{Harmatta 1976} \\
1. 'ry\(^{1733}\) & \quad 1. \text{Ari} \\
2. Zy & \quad 2. \text{the collector} \\
3. (g)n' g'w wr(by) mn(ht) & \quad 3. \text{who} \\
4. 'ry\(^{1734}\) nz(r)\(^{1735}\) & \quad 4. \text{the grain store has devoted}
\end{align*}
\]

8.1.4.2.4 CONSIDERATIONS

Conversely, the text of Masjed Soleyman is palaeographically similar to the inscription of Tang-e Sarvak, and suggests a dating between the first two centuries AD. Harmatta assumed that the scripts of Masjed-e Soleyman and Tang-e Sarvak belonged to an era within which the linguistically Parthian influences were still absent\(^{1736}\).

8.1.4.2.5 CONCLUSIONS

The inscription, for the most part, is barely readable and as for TS:insc.4, its very fragmented state dissuades any attempt to provide a translation as the likelihood of this being merely conjectural is high.

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\(^{1732}\) Ibid, pp. 300-303.

\(^{1733}\) Despite the same spelling used in the Hebrew for “lion” and Parthian for “noble”, the word ‘RY has been interpreted by Harmatta as a personal name, however unattested in other sources (Harmatta 1976, p. 301).

\(^{1734}\) Harmatta (1976, p. 301) considers the term 'RY as an Elymaean variant of the Modern Hebrew 'WRY’ or Ancient Hebrew 'RYH’ for “manger, granary.” The term is present in Aramaic with the same spelling and the meaning of “manger”.

\(^{1735}\) The term NZ(R) is being associated with the Aramaic verb NZR, namely “to devote”, possibly in the context of this clause it could indicate the 3rd person singular of the perfect (Harmatta 1976, p. 301).

\(^{1736}\) Harmatta 1976, p. 303.
8.2 Summary and Conclusions

The epigraphic material examined in the course of this chapter demonstrates the peculiarities of Elymaic within the local Aramaic dialects developed during the Parthian period, which is further complicated by the sparse or total lack of evidence concerning an Elymaean language as being in existence during the Greek period. Even though the evidence is scattered, and the contents are minimal and difficult to interpret, when integrated with comparative analysis and with other local scripts of Aramaic derivation (e.g., Nabatean, Palmyrene, Hatran, Characenean), the Elymaean texts share similar characteristics to confirm that they are all part of the same branch of Aramaic language. The script was used to write Aramaic and despite some orthographical innovations, it maintained some elements from the Achaemenid Aramaic standard script\textsuperscript{1737}.

Elymaic did not flourish independently but was probably introduced at the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD by the new Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty of the Orodids as part of the process of relentless “Parthianization” which occurred in Elymais and manifestly touched other local media such as rupestrian art and monetary imagery. An Aramaic-like language present in Elymais would have allowed therefore official communication between the central court of the Arsacid and the Elymaean chancellery, facilitating the circulation of shared linguistic adjustments and evolutions.

\textsuperscript{1737} Gzella 2008, pp. 127.
9. Coinage

Although coins constitute the only available category of objects attested throughout the entire Elymaean period, also able to adduce some evidence within the debate on Elymaean history (in particular providing hints about its internal affairs, as the succession of kings), monetary species have never been methodically studied to obtain specific and concrete evidence. This dichotomy is caused by a combination of objective aspects and a level of bias present in the scholarly approach to the numismatic material. The intrinsic deficiencies of Elymaean coinage within the context of such historical dismissions introduce an additional complexity, insofar as the consideration that coinage is a phenomenon of mass production, where it is necessary to deal with massive numbers to develop substantial assessments, and in Elymais this cannot be achieved due to the dearth of monetary evidence present in academic publications.

The limited and mostly contradictory nature of ancient sources for the Elymaean affairs combined with the insufficiency of contextualized findings (e.g., foundation deposit of Bard-e Neshandeh) make it difficult to achieve what represents a priority in the numismatic field, namely, providing an accepted monetary sequence to associate with the historical reconstruction of the events. In this chapter, the main theatics of Elymaean numismatic have been addressed to provide a general and overall view of the topic. A list of Elymaean kings based on their series has also been proposed, even if attributions are in several circumstances considered debatable, and the historical correlations among chronological conditions and numismatic productions continue to be an unresolved question.

9.1 Past Studies

Most of the information on the coinage of Elymais is scattered and only available in a limited number of specialized publications which starting from the first and by now antiquated study Monnaies de l’Élymaïde of Allotte de la Fuÿe in 1905\textsuperscript{1738}, include articles in out-of-print academic journals, passages in books dedicated to the coins production of various ancient cultures, and websites for antiques collectors. Essential data are reported in Hill (1922), de Morgan (1923-1936), Le Rider (1965), Augé, Curiel and Le Rider (1979), Sear (1982), Alram (1986), and recently van’t Haaff (2007). The first two authors cover the range

\textsuperscript{1738} The French numismatist revisited and corrected his first research in his article in 1919, Les Monnaies de l’Élymaïde. Modification au classment proposé en 1907.
9. History through the Coins

of Elymaean coinage known at the time, but are incomplete and outdated, while Le Rider and his combined study with Augé and Curiel although still being a primary source in field, only reported the specimens from the excavations of Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. On the other hand, Alram was specifically interested in coins with a name inscribed on them. In 2007, the Classical Numismatic Group published the Catalogue of Elymaean Coinage by Pieter Ann van’t Haaff, which has by now mostly gained acceptance as the primary reference for the monetary production in Elymais.


9.2 Corpus of Evidence

The main corpus of coins, which underpin the numismatic studies already mentioned, includes the hoard found at Susa in 19001739 and the findings of Masjed-e Soleyman and Bard-e Neshandeh (in particular the foundation deposit of the tetrastyle temple)1740, in addition to specimens recorded in the catalogues of museum institutions and private collectors1741. By the available published sources, the analysis of coin metals and denominations provides a physical view of the material whose changing could be related to the political scenario1742. At this stage, specific attention is paid to the mechanism and production of the mint facilities and its geographical distribution across the kingdom to better understand some apparent dissimilarities in production. A typological classification is then required for more practical review of the information, which through comparative analyses (physical and typological) provide the necessary condition for a historical transformation of types to chronologically associate with the royal succession in Elymais.

9.2.1 Metals and Denominations

There is no production of gold coins attested in Elymais but, exclusively silver and bronze. Concerning the main coin denominations, the drachms, which constitute the principal weight standard based on a modified Attic weight of circa 4 g. Tetradrachms were regularly struck from the establishment of Kamnaskires I (ca. 147 BC) to the production of Orodes III

1739 Allotte de la Fuaye 1919.
1740 Augé et al. 1979. This material does not include the huge amount of coins present in the museums’ warehouses (e.g., Tehran) and still almost untouched.
1741 Van’t Haaff 2007.
1742 Data was mostly obtained from Augé et al. (1979) and van’t Haaff (2007).
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(ca. beginning of 2nd century AD). Smaller fractions like hemidrachms, obols and hemiobols were mainly issued during the 1st century BC (Late Kamnaskirid period). An important distinction must be made in advance between the coinage of the Kamnaskirid dynasty (147–33/2 BC) and the Elymaean-Arsacid house of the Orodids (ca. mid/late 1st century–ca. 224 AD). The Kamnaskirids used good silver for their monetary production with only few AE units of lesser quality, versus the exclusive metal for all denomination during the Elymaean-Arsacid period, which was bronze with silver coins apparently no longer produced. A possible scenario is that this manufacturing transition might have indicated a change in the nature of the Elymaean trade with the small bronze coinage, the latter probably used to facilitate the everyday commerce of limited amounts of goods and services in local circulation.

Considering the weight and the silver content, the standard of the Elymaean tetradrachms at the beginning of the Kamnaskirid dynasty was very close to the Greek model of the last Seleucid sovereigns who controlled the mint of Susa, namely Demetrius I (162-150 BC) and Alexander Balas (150-145 BC), with an average weight of ca. 16.16 g. Later, with the second Kamnaskirid dynasty (Late Kamnaskirids), there was a gradual decrease in weight shown to be associated with a similar debasement that occurred to the Parthian silver tetradrachms during the same era and ending with the appearance of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty at mid/late 1st century AD. From this period on, the silver production ultimately disappeared in Elymais and drastically deteriorated in Parthia with a silver content (tetradrachms) below 50%. The silver drachms and fractions of the Kamnaskirid dynasties are likewise relatively infrequent and absent during the Elymaean-Arsacid period. With regard to the bronze production, starting from Orodes I to Orodes III, the remarkable quantity of drachms available (2,282 coins) indicates an unbroken uniformity of the average weight spanning from 3.4 to 4 g, with the only exception provided by series II of Kamnaskires-Orodes (3.06 g). In contrast, after Orodes III, the coinage of succeeding kings shows once again the gradual trend of reduction of weight reaching its final stage in late 2nd – early 3rd century AD, with the chalkous nominally issued at an average of 2.2 g.

\[\text{Sellwood 1980, p. 6.}\]
\[\text{Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 32, table 13.}\]
\[\text{Cf. Sinisi 2012b, p. 276.}\]
\[\text{Primary data provided in van't Haaff 2007, p. 33, table 17.}\]
\[\text{Ibid., table 18.}\]
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9.2.2 Mints

The organizational arrangements of the Elymaean monetary policy, such as its geographical production, are still poorly understood. It is generally accepted\(^{1748}\) that in Elymais two different mints (Susa and Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon) were in operation, presumably producing for various markets which may have revealed the dichotomical discrepancy between lowlands and highlands. On the other hand, duality has always been a characteristic of these lands\(^{1749}\), and since the bipolarity of Elam firmly resurfaced during the Achaemenid and was evidenced until the Parthian era in Elymais, it is hardly a surprise that this dualistic perception materialized through the monetary production. While the primary position may be officially assigned to the long-established “international” mint of Susa, which was often disputed with the Arsacid house of Ctesiphon, the atelier of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon is considered the leading producer of the Elymaean coins locally circulating among the cities of the highland. Although the presence of a second (and even a third\(^{1750}\)) mint in Elymais is indisputable, since contemporaneously to Parthian issues at Susa the Elymaean kings struck their own series, its attribution to Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon has to be regarded as a “scholarly license” as provided by Georges Le Rider. It was based on the arbitrary interpretation of a Classical source where a particular town named Seleucia “πόρος τῷ Ἡδυρφῶντι ποταμῷ” was described as a “μεγάλη πόλις”\(^{1751}\), as well as by the presence of symbols as mintmarks despite having rather dubious validity\(^{1752}\). Presumably of Seleucid foundation, this town was identified as the capital of the kingdom and seat for the royal mint of Elymais. Although Le Rider's assumption is accepted without reservation by many scholars, no more evidence has been provided in its support. Only the discovery of the site (perhaps at Ja Nishin\(^{1753}\)) would clarify this matter, but until then, Selucia-on-the-Hedyphon conventionally continues to be delineated as the main mint of the Elymaean reign.

The picture of coinage factory production in Elymais reveals the occurrence of particular historical circumstances in the territory. Elymaean coin issues initially commenced in Susa as an evidence of the first attested attempt of separatism from the Seleucid reign in ca.

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\(^{1748}\) Le Rider 1965, pp. 428-429; Hansman 1990, pp. 1-10; van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 11-12.

\(^{1749}\) Regarding the ethno-linguistic duality between the lowlands and the highlands in the territory of ancient Elam, see Amiet (1979), Vallat (1980), and Nissen (2004). Regarding the use of two varieties of scripts in the Elymaean monetary productions, see Allotte de la Fuÿe 1919, p. 69; Henning 1952, pp. 165-166.

\(^{1750}\) Renaud 1999, p. 4.

\(^{1751}\) Str. XVI.1.18.

\(^{1752}\) Le Rider 1965, pp. 40ff. On Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, see Appendix no. 3.

\(^{1753}\) Hansman 1978.
147 BC. In this case, the monetary series was markedly similar to the Greek coin models. As confirmed by the emissions of coins\textsuperscript{1754}, starting from 128/7, Susa was firmly in Arsacid hands until the reign of Gotarzes II (\textit{ca.} 40–51 AD)\textsuperscript{1755}, and during this extended period the Elymaean kings established the royal mint at Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, striking tetradrachms, drachms and fraction at least from \textit{ca.} 82/1 BC (\textit{terminus post quem})\textsuperscript{1756}.

It has generally been proposed to assign the Kamnaskirid coin production to the principal mints of Susa and Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon on the basis of specific symbols, respectively an anchor and a horse head\textsuperscript{1757}, interpreted as mintmarks, rather than on a systematic study of the evidence, which could more safely reconstruct the circulating pattern of the two cities. Although mintmarks are generally indicated by monograms\textsuperscript{1758} more than by symbols, it is proposed that the Kamnaskirid coins bearing a horse head/protome (Pl. LV.2) were issued at Susa as a link to its Hellenistic background imported by the Seleucids (perhaps indicating \textit{Bucephalus}, the horse of Alexander the Great\textsuperscript{1759}), while emissions with an anchor (Pl. LVI) were produced at Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, since Seleucus I, the possible founder of Seleucia, had adopted the anchor as his personal emblem\textsuperscript{1760}. However, the assumption being considered is debatable, and the evidence provided weakly. The horse head (horned in the Greek emissions) was present and issued by early Seleucid kings farther east (e.g., Ecbatana) rather than at Susa, while the anchor had never been used as a mintmark in Hellenistic times\textsuperscript{1761}. As highlighted by Hoover, the general impression is that, after the comparisons with the seals from Uruk and Seleucia-on-the-Tigris, both the horse head and the anchor should be interpreted as royal insignias of the Seleucid authority distinctly from a particular geographic location\textsuperscript{1762}. In Elymais, during the first Kamnaskirid dynasty, no silver coins with Seleucid symbols as mintmarks have been discovered. At any rate, some rare bronze drachms reveal the presence of an anchor or a horse head on the reverse. Within the Later Kamnaskirid emissions, the anchor, which originated as a natural replica of the Seleucid model, began to appear as a predominant symbol on the coin obverses, gradually

\textsuperscript{1754} Assar 2004-2005, p. 79.
\textsuperscript{1755} See footnote 473.
\textsuperscript{1756} Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 63-64.
\textsuperscript{1757} Le Rider 1965, pp. 349-357, 428-429; Hansman 1990, pp. 1-5; van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 11-12.
\textsuperscript{1758} Monograms are typical on the Elymaean drachms, usually on the reverse, presumably showing a mint magistrate’s signature. In addition, monograms are also engraved on the obverse of the tetradrachms issued by Kamnaskires \textit{Nikephoros}, Okkonapses and Tigrais. In this regard, see van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 6, 10, tables 1, 3.
\textsuperscript{1759} Van’t Haaff p. 11. \textit{Contra} the identification of the horned animal represented on the monetary iconography as \textit{Bucephalus}, see Miller and Walters 2004, pp. 45-54.
\textsuperscript{1760} Van’t Haaff 2007, pp.12-13.
\textsuperscript{1761} Hansman 1990, pp. 1-5; Cohen 2005, pp. 13f; Hoover 2008.
\textsuperscript{1762} Cf. Doty 1979, pp. 195-197; Hoover 2008.
becoming a peculiar local element which likely indicated the Elymaean royal house\textsuperscript{1763}. This process of transformation of the anchor mark reached its final step in the Elymaean-Arsacid period when the anchor is identified as a royal badge rather than a simple mintmark, which is displayed by the variations in the crossbars at the top of the anchor (Pl. LVI)\textsuperscript{1764}. Based on Auge’s study of 2,716 Elymaean coins from Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman’s excavations in 1960s\textsuperscript{1765}, Hansman deduced that one crossbar was attributable to Susa, two crossbars to Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon and three crossbars to another hypothetical mint\textsuperscript{1766}. He further admitted that the diversification of the anchor symbol due to the number of crossbars – although hardly coincidental – and its correlation were a discriminating feature of the different mints in Elymais, is still speculative, even though it is more applicable compared to the diversification proposed by the presence of the anchor and the horse head\textsuperscript{1767}. It could indeed reveal a picture of mint working at the same time in the Elymaean territory, especially during the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 2\textsuperscript{nd} centuries AD.

If the mechanisms of the mint organization are still poorly understood for the Arsacids\textsuperscript{1768}, they are even more obscure for Elymaeans. It may be assumed the unique position occupied by Susa as a cosmopolitan centre for international trades, in correlation to the “local” Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, which presumably played a more significant role in the rural economies of the Iranian plateau. Accordingly, the analysis of coins from certain mints may describe the evolution of its specific legacy in the treatment of particular canonized elements using stylistic attributes ascribable to the skills of different engravers. The presence of several specialized artisans who distinctively approached standardized features suggests the establishment of separate internal schools within the same monetary manufacturing process\textsuperscript{1769}. It is plausible to assert that the monetary engravers, who likely used to remain in the same place of production, were employed on a temporary basis by the new mint administration to satisfy the most recent political requirements\textsuperscript{1770}.

\textsuperscript{1763} On the evolution of the anchor type, see van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 12-13, table 4.
\textsuperscript{1764} Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 26.
\textsuperscript{1765} Augé \textit{et al.} 1979, p. 37.
\textsuperscript{1767} Hansman 1990, p. 9.
\textsuperscript{1768} Sinisi 2012b, p. 277.
\textsuperscript{1769} Cf. Sinisi 2014, pp. 17-22.
\textsuperscript{1770} Cf. Weiskopf 1981, p. 141.


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9.2.3 Stylistic and Typological Aspects

The categorization proposed by van’t Haaff, which subdivides the history of Elymaean coinage into three distinct periods, the Early Kamnaskirid, the Later Kamnaskirid, and the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty, makes sense not only in terms of what is known of the Elymaean political history, but also for providing some necessary guidelines that ensure a coherent time frame for the different monetary emissions. The political adjustments are therefore paralleled in Elymais with stylistic variations in the royal coinage. Replicating the concomitant transformations in Arsacid coin production, the Hellenistic naturalism of early Elymaean series gives way over the Parthian time to a simplified linearism, well set up in the 1st century AD. Starting from the 1st century BC, Elymaean royal portraits progressively moved from canons of naturalistic imagery towards a pronounced figurative uniformity. At the beginning of 1st century AD, the representations characterized by mere lines entirely replaced the modelled volumetric forms, fully establishing the criterions for a linearistic conception of the royal portraits. This stylistic shift appears discernible by increasingly stylized elements as beard, hairstyles, torques or tunic decorations, and successively (2nd century AD) the introduction of the tiara 

During the Early Kamnaskirid period, the silver tetradrachms and drachms have on their obverse the king’s Seleucid-like diademed head facing right (a manifest imitation of the Demetrias II and Alexander Balas’ coinage), while on the reverse – except for the conventional Apollo on omphalos – another Hellenistic-influenced type of particular interest is represented by a seated Zeus Nikephoros on the coinage of Kamnaskires Megas Soter

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1772 Sinisi 2012b, p. 277.
1773 Van’t Haaff (2007, p. 6) also named an unparalleled silver drachma of Kamnaskires Nikephoros (type 2.2) with an Artemis/Ishtar-like goddess on the reverse. However, from a stylistic comparison with the other issues of the same ruler this coins appears somewhat suspicious, in particular the diademed head on the obverse does
All coins over this time are undated. They present letters on some drachms (control marks more than dates) and monograms on the tetradrachms obverse of Kamnaskires Nikephoros, Okkonapses and Tigraios (Pl. LVII.2)\textsuperscript{1774}, whose practical value is still unclear (mint magistrate’s signature\textsuperscript{3}). The bronze denominations generally have the same obverse motif as the silver, but a larger and more varied iconographical repertoire for the reverse types. Analyzing the monetary material discovered by the French mission at Susa, Le Rider was the first to propose that the various reverse types could evidence a regular annual production with the same type indicating the same year, starting from Kamnaskires I in 147 BC\textsuperscript{1775}.

If at the very beginning of the Elymaean coinage the Seleucid model, solidly entrenched at Susa, affected the conceptual image of the royal diademed head/bust, the regal imagery from the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC (Late Kamnaskirids) reported a marked Parthian influence on the obverse with the introduction of new iconographical elements. On the coins, the Elymaean rulers, starting with Kamnaskires III and Anzaze, have a left facing bust, mostly bearded (e.g., Kamnaskires IV in his early emissions appeared as a fresh-faced beardless boy who progressively evolved into a bearded mature man in his later issues) and long haired in elaborate hairstyles, wearing jewels (e.g., earrings and torques) and heavily decorated clothing similar to the Arsacid dress, which probably originated in the central Asian cultures (horseman costume\textsuperscript{1776}). On the other hand, the reverse presents a marked Seleucid influence with the depiction of a bearded, left facing, deity enthroned holding a sceptre in his left hand and a Nike grasping a ring (perhaps a diadem or a wreath) in his right. A four-line Greek legend frames the seated god, who can be confidently interpreted as a local Bel. Unlike the Early Kamnaskirids, the monetary series of these rulers frequently carry on the reverse, below the squared frame-shaped legend, two/three Greek letters indicating the date of issue.

### Table 8.1 – Greek Alpha-Numeric Table

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Letter</th>
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<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

not present any other similar specimens between the royal portraits of Elymaean sovereigns. The fact that is a unique example only raises further doubts about its authenticity.

\textsuperscript{1774} Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 6-7, table 1. Assar (2004-2005, p. 60) suggests a connection between the monogram\textsuperscript{E} on the Elymaean kings emissions and the similar variant\textsuperscript{E} on the Demetrius II issues. On the other hand, Le Rider (1978, pp. 34-35) proposes his chronological order of the three Elymaean rulers by the monograms on their obverse, indicating as Kamnaskires Nikephoros was respectively followed by Okkonapses and Tigraios.

\textsuperscript{1775} Le Rider 1965, p. 351. On this theory, Assar (2004-2005), as well as Shayegan (2011), developed their historical study of the Elymaean/Susian region for the period spanning from 150/149 to 122/1 BC.

Although the alpha-numeric transliteration of the Greek characters in numerals is clear, the dating system of reference is still debated among the scholars. The Macedonian/Alexandrian Era (starting in 333/1 BC with Alexander’s occupation of Babylon) and the Seleucid Era (commencing in 312 BC when Seleucus I conquered Babylon) are certainly the most accredited references for the Elymaean monetary emissions\textsuperscript{1777}.

With the beginning of the Elymaean-Arsacid coin production, affinities with the Parthian coinage of that time became more pronounced in the standardization of linearism, especially for the royal portraits on the obverse where a different perception of naturalism was rendered by the increasing accent given to single identifying elements at the expense of facial proportions. If during the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, naturalistic accuracy was still adopted through its new stylized form, then starting from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD the linearistic tendency entirely overshadowed modelling approaches\textsuperscript{1778}. The crescent abstraction enhanced by the flattening of images and their consequent distortions in proportions was a stylistic break from the stereotypical regal imagery (as depicted for some Arsacid kings) within the Elymaean series, as was the limited fully-frontal representation of some kings (in particular Kamnaskires-Orodes, Orodes II, Phraates, and Orodes IV)\textsuperscript{1779}. In an artistic context where the abstractism

\textsuperscript{1777} Generally the scholars are inclined to a Seleucid dating (SE) for the Elymaean coinage (e.g. van’t Haaff 2007, p. 9). Contra Bell 2002, p. 36.

\textsuperscript{1778} Cf. Sinisi 2014, pp. 28-29.

\textsuperscript{1779} Pl. LVII.3. Van’t Haaff 2007, e.g. types 12.1, 12.2 (Kamnaskires-Orodes); 13.1, 13.2 (Orodes II); 14.1 (Phraates); 17.3 (Orodes IV).
prevailed, royal paraphernalia played a key role in identifying the various sovereigns. Among those, the headgear represents an element of particular interest within a multi-level media approach of the artistic lexicon in Elymais as evidenced by the ribbonless headband of the Shami bronze statue\footnote{Pl. XX.a.}, the diademed tiaras of Bard-e Neshandeh\footnote{Appendix 4.} and Masjed-e Soleyman reliefs\footnote{Pls. XXVI.c, j.}, and rock-reliefs (e.g. \textit{TS.I:B.2; TS.I:N; MTZ:2-4}). The tiara made its local appearance on Elymaean monetary production with the \textit{AE} tetradrachms and drachms of Orodes II (\textit{ca.} mid-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD) in the shape of a rigid vertical headdress with the round top (similar to a \textit{baetyl-stone}\footnote{Regarding the \textit{baetyl}, Pl. XXVIII (\textit{TS.II:NW.a}).}) often enriched with fillets and beads, and decorated with accessory components like horns, dots, crescent and stars in order to differentiate the various headgears of different kings (as at Masjed-e Soleyman)\footnote{Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 28, table 11. For the tiara of the king at Masjed-e Soleyman, see Pl. XXVI.j.}.

In this process of increasing “Parthianization” in the Elymaean emissions, the Greek legend, which framed the primary element on the reverse (e.g., archer, bearded man) during the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD, deteriorated to a point where the inscription became a mere decorative element. It was a sort of unreadable pseudo-legend only remotely shaped on Greek original scripts, and therefore no longer accomplished the task of delivering content to be actually recognized. At the end of the \textit{Elymaean-Arsacid} dynasty, these meaningless Greek letter-shaped elements turned into mere dashes with no apparent significance\footnote{Sinisi 2014, pp. 23-24.}. During this period the reverse suffered a gradual deterioration while the obverse maintained an acceptable quality in the engraving. This artistic choice was possibly the product of a lack of skills from the mint manufactory, or the intentional reflection of a temporary transition in the political scenario (the establishment of a new dynasty\footnote{Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 19.})\footnote{Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 19.}.

Alongside the main subjects of both coin sides, an entire range of minor details (e.g., stars, crescent, pellets, monograms) accompany the anchor symbol, and are utilized singularly or in progressively complex combinations probably to better individualize the different Elymaean kings’ issues.
9.2.4 Legends

The adoption of the Greek language in all coin denominations of the first two Kamnaskirid dynasties reveals a linear sense of continuity with the Seleucid emissions. In accordance with the material discovered so far, the conventional arrangement started from the Early Kamnaskirid dynasty where the legends were composed by one or two lines on the left and respectively on the right of the central image with occasionally a third word beneath the exergual line (e.g. Kamnaskires Nikephoros). Almost exclusively reported in genitive case, these inscriptions mention the dynastic name ΚΑΜΝΙΣΚΕΙΡΟΥ (often with evident spelling mistakes), a fact which does not favour in the allocation of the series to different kings, excepting when the legends contain specific king’s titles (e.g., ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ, ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ), or an exact Greek-letter date. The Late Kamnaskireds are also characterized by a squared form framing the reverse object.

A process of gradual degeneration of the Greek characters on the reverse, had already begun as early as the 1st century AD, and led the change before the end of the century to symbols, which only resembled Greek letters and therefore did not transmit any understandable meaning. In parallel with the Arsacid monetary production, the appearance of the first Aramaic-like characters took place between mid-1st and early 2nd century AD with some rudimental letters, i.e. [W]RWD, indicating Orodes I of Elymais, presumably the ancestor of the Elymaean-Arsacid house (Orodids). Although later Kamnaskires-Orodes introduced the first fully-fledged Elymaic legend ΚΒΝŚKYR WRWD MLK’ BR WRWD MLK’ (King Kamnaskires Orodes son of King Kamnaskires) – circularly disposed around the main subject of the reverse starting with Orodes II in mid-2nd century AD – the Greek legends were still employed in some series of Orodes II and Phraates. To note, the texts

1787 In reality, when the Kamnaskired family took the power, it came from an agro-pastoral context in the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland where probably no written communication system was available. Once Kamnaskired Megas Soter took power in Susa, it was probably logical for him to maintain the skilled personnel working for the previous monetary facility during the Seleucid and just re-adapted the legends for the new royal requirements. There were probably no other choices than Greek for Kamnaskires Megas Soter to quickly issued his inaugural series.


1791 Van’t Haaff 2007, type 11.1.

1792 For a palaeographic analysis of this legend compared with the reliefs of Tang-e Sarvak, see Henning 1952, pp. 164-165. Noteworthy, the Elymaean coin issues reveal the presence of the term ΚΒΝŚKYR MLK’ which is instead absent in the rock reliefs’ inscriptions (see §8.1.1).

1793 Van’t Haaff 2007, type 14.1, subtype 1-1A.
Elymaean coin production does provide some analytic insight within the development of the region. Some numismatists have associated the Greek-inscribed coins to be more ordinary and likely from the mint of Susa, which preserved some of its Hellenistic legacy, while the Aramaic/Elymaic legends could have been produced in Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon. Allotte de la Füye was the first to suggest that the utilization of two distinct languages (i.e. Greek and Aramaic/Elymaic) on the Elymaean reverses depended on local policies and indicated the presence of at least two different mints. Based on this theory, Le Rider opined that the Aramaic/Elymaic-engraved tetradrachms were issued in the “provincial” city of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon and the drachms with Greek inscriptions in the “cosmopolitan” centre of Susa, indicating another identifying mark that might differentiate the Elymaean mints. Although the French numismatist was acquainted with Henning’s comparative study of the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak and the coin legends, he ruled out the highland/lowland relationships and placed emphasis only on the plains’ dynamics. Henning observed that while the Elymaean-Arsacid tetradrachms emissions were inscribed in Aramaic, the drachms bore legends in another language within which the scholar recognized a local dialect or a surviving form of Elamite expressed through Aramaic-like graphemes. In reality, as primarily assumed by Bivar and Shaked, the language on the drachms (and on the rock reliefs’ inscriptions) is a local form of Middle Aramaic, which is here labelled as Elymaic. Therefore, Henning concluded that Aramaic was spoken on the plains, for a longer period subject to foreign influences, and the highlands maintained their language (i.e., a local dialect), and for this reason the Elymaean mints, in order to accommodate both groups and facilitate the local trade, issued legends in both the official Middle Aramaic and the local version. Hansman agreed with the previous theory, however, he advocated a more flexible position asserting, for instance, that it is restrictive and impractical to consider Le

1794 Three kings (Kamnaskires-Orodes, Orodes II and Phraates), especially, referred to themselves as “sons” of a certain king Orodes, who has probably to be identified with the father of Kamnaskires-Orodes, likely Orodes I.
1795 Hoover 2008, p. 3.
1796 Allotte de la Füye 1905, pp. 107-108.
1797 Le Rider 1965, p. 428. See also Vardanian 1986.
1798 Henning 1952, pp. 165-166.
1799 See Chapter 8.
1800 Henning 1952, p. 166.
Rider’s assumption too rigidly. As confirmed by more recent evidence, it is plausible to expect Greek-inscribed drachms occasionally issued in Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon, and Aramaic/Elymaic legends in Susa, and therefore a simultaneous use of both the mints.

### 9.2.5 Monetary History

An introductory remark is essential to better perceive the material in question. It is methodologically decisive to require a correct historical attitude when addressing material incidence as provided by coin emissions over a *circa* 370-year period of Elymaean monetary production (for Early and Late Kamnaskireds, see Pl. LVIII). It can, therefore, be expected that analytical issues and significant aspects within the Elymaean coinage may be considerably dissimilar if considering parallels between the first emissions of the Early Kamnaskirids (2nd century BC) and those of the Elymaean-Arsacids (2nd century AD).

#### 9.2.5.1 Early Kamnaskirids (ca. 147-125 BC)

Coins from this period are rare and undated. Even the ancient written sources are scattered, although the discovery of the *Babylonian Astronomical Diaries* incidentally provides some crucial points for better clarifying the political dynamics of this period in Elymaean history, which was influenced by threats both from Seleucids and Arsacids, as well as by presumed internal disputes. According to exclusively the numismatic findings, the Elymaean kings belonging to this 1st dynasty are to be identified with Kamnaskires I *Megas Soter*, Kamnaskires II *Nikephoros*, Okkonapses and Tigraios.

Two rulers named *Kamnaskires* with different titles ruled in Elymais over a short period. Nevertheless, it is generally accepted that the first Elymaean coins are to be considered the silver tetradrachms attributed to Kamnaskires *Megas Soter*, who therefore may be indicated as the founder of the Kamnaskirid dynasty in Elymais. Numismatic evidence

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1801 Hansman 1990, p. 9.
1802 Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 27.
1803 It is generally included in this list the unparalleled and unique specimen of a certain Dareios ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ ΝΑΝΑΙΕΝΩ[Δ]. Some reservations could be expressed from a pure artistic point of view, as for instance the extremely stylization and lack of proportionality on the reverse imagery which has no parallels in the Early Elymaean coinage, except for one-of-a-kind drachm attributed of Kamnaskires II *Nikephoros*, the authenticity of which also gives rise to many doubts (van’t Haaff 2007, type 2.2), or the unusual absence of naturalism on his facial details, as well as the atypical representation of the diadem fillets. I am grateful to Dr. Fabrizio Sinisi for his support and advice concerning the numismatic questions.
1804 Kamnaskires *Nikephoros* was long regarded the founder of Elymaean dynasty, but the purchase in 1967 by the *Cabinet des Médailles de la Bibliothèque Nationale* at Paris of two AR tetradrachms from a hoard found at Susa, which was published in 1966 by Houghton and Le Rider (1966, pp.111-127), and the successive
shows that his emissions – currently consisting of only three specimens—reveal substantial influence from the coinage of Demetrius II and, in particular, Alexander Balas, supporting the assumption that his gaining of the power has to be post-dated in relation to the two Seleucid rulers. According to the Babylonian Diaries, a dating between 149 and 145 BC appears to be the most practicable for the beginning of Kamnaskires I’s authority on the territory. At any rate, as already addressed (§5.2.3.1), the question regarding the two Kamnaskires-named kings is still cause of controversy among the scholars, due to the different epithets of Megas Soter (ΜΕΓΑΛΟΥ ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ) and Nikephoros (ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΥ). Except for Hansman and Assar who suppose these two titles belong to the same ruler, the majority of the numismatists recognize two distinct personages. In particular, while Le Rider, Augé and Alram opine that Megas Soter preceded Nikephoros, Fisher, Strauss, and Shayegan assume the opposite. Regardless, the evident differences in the portraits with the attribution of distinct appellative on the obverse leave little doubt that we are dealing with two distinct personalities.

From a numismatic point of view, Kamnaskires I Megas Soter shows in his inaugural issue clear affinities with the Seleucid series of Alexander Balas (e.g., the hairstyle), which may strongly suggest they were contiguous emissions. It is plausible that Kamnaskires employed the same engravers, who previously worked in the Seleucid mint at Susa, in order to create his first dies. Considering that the last information regarding Alexander Balas dated to 146 BC and the first evidence of Kamnaskires I raiding Mesopotamia was already in Sept/Nov 145 BC, it appears reasonable to place Kamnaskires I’s first emission around 147

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1807 Shayegan 2011, p. 98.
1811 Augé et al. 1979, p. 53.
1812 Alram 198.
1813 Fisher 1971, pp. 169-175.
1814 Strauss 1971, pp. 137-140.
1815 Shayegan 2011, p. 99.
1816 van’t Haaff 2007, type 1.1.
1818 For the cuneiform texts, see Sachs and Hunger 2006, no. 88 ‘obv. 8′-10’ (= 344-345); for the monetary evidence, Assar 2004-2005, p. 55 with bibliography.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)
9. History through the Coins

BC. After the inaugural coinage at Susa (likely 147/6 BC), Kamnaskires I’s honorary representation with the title of “Great Saviour” and the seated Zeus on the reverse terminated, and his subsequent series used the conventional Seleucid prototype which, according to Le Rider1819, was established in the mint of Susa and consisted of removing the prolonged commemorative titles (i.e., Megas Soter) from the royal emissions. Hence, the second series (146/5 BC) of Kamnaskires I only reported on the reverse the underlying legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΙΣΚΕΙΠΟΥ with a seated archer (Apollo?) on omphalos1820 which was immediately reminiscent of a similar subject on Alexander Balas’ issues1821. According to the Diaries1822, in late-145 BC Demetrius II intervened probably to punish the audacious sortie of Kamnaskires I in Babylonia and took control of Susa, but his break-in appeared very short since in 144 BC the Elymaean seemed to be back in Susa1823. This brief Seleucid intrusion (late-145 – early-144 BC) may be numismatically explained by the assumed third series of Kamnaskires I.1824 The apparent iconographical and qualitative discontinuity between the second and third emission of Kamnaskires I, and the simultaneous Demetrius II’s issues1825 struck at Susa, may imply that the presence of Demetrius II at Susa prompted Kamnaskires I to move his court and to issue his series in another mint (Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon?). At this point, after the brief Seleucid coinage, the monetary evidence reveals the return to a high artistic quality level of coin production which may indicate the Elymaeans taking over of Susa again (144 BC).

Due to the scarcity of material, it is difficult to establish who came first in the coinage between Kamnaskires II Nikephoros and Okkonapses. As can be observed, the obverse monogram ΕΑ (probably a mint magistrate’s signature) was introduced on the left side of the royal head in both the series of Kamnaskires II and Okkonapses, a fact that suggests continuity in the issuing process. It may also be proposed there was a derivation from the similar signature ΞΑ present on Demetrius II’s Susian emissions1826, since there are instead no monograms on the series of Kamnaskires I. Taking into account that the unique specimen of Okkonapses available suggests a very short reign and his title ΣΩΤΗΡΟΣ present on the

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1819 Le Rider 1969, p. 21, footnote 2.
1820 Van’t Haaff 2007, type 1.2.
1822 See §5.2.3.1.
1823 Sachs and Hunger 1996, no. -143 A ‘Flake’ 18’-21’ (= 104-105); Del Monte 1997, p. 100.
1824 Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 48, type 1A.1.
1825 Assar 2004-2005, pp. 42-43, pl. IX.
1826 Ibid., p. 60. Cf. Le Rider 1978, p. 34.
reverse appears more suitable to indicate a victory against a foreign authority (Seleucid), it is reasonable to assume Okkonapses as the Saviour of the Elymaeans people against the Seleucid force, who controlled the mint for possibly one/two years before the restoration of the Kamnaskirid family at Susa. In this context, Kamnaskires II could have used the title of Bearer of Victory (ΝΙΚΗΦΟΡΟΣ) to announce in his inaugural emissions the victory against an Elymaean rival rather than a Seleucid ruler. Numismatically speaking, an uninterrupted line in the AE series of drachms, typified by a helmeted head, between Kamnaskires II and Tigraios would support the assumption of the coinage of Kamnaskires II placed after that of Okkonapses. In the absence of dated coins, the Diaries suggest that a dynastic change might have occurred in Elymais during 138 BC due to a terrible famine and the defeat the Elymaeans suffered against Hyspaosines of Characene, which likely brought a new ruler named Tigraios to power. According to the monetary evidence provided by Assar, the inaugural emissions (silver tetradrachm and bronze drachm) of Tigraios have dated between 138 and 137 BC. Similarly to the series of Okkonapses and Kamnaskires II, even the silver tetradrachms of Tigraios bear on the obverse a similar monogram on the left side of the right-facing head of the king, while the reverse shows the typical seated Apollo-like deity on the omphalos with an arrow on the right hand and the bow on the left. Starting from March 137 to October 133 BC, the cuneiform texts are inconsistent, regardless, it is reasonable to suppose that Tigraios, instead of wasting economic and human resources in sorties across Babylonia, consolidated his authority in Elymais until 133 BC. At this point, according to the Diaries, he was defeated and presumably replaced by a political coup led by a third Kamnaskires (“the Arsacid”) under Parthian aegis. Still following numismatic sources, Mithridates I’ son Phraates II could have been the responsible behind this attack on Elymais, as revealed by his inaugural emission (silver tetradrachm) issued at Susa in 133/2

1828 Van’t Haaff 2007, types 2.7, 2.9-2.10.
1829 Ibid., types 5.5-5.6.
1830 Hoover 2008, p. 3.
1832 Assar 2004-2005, p. 70, table 1, pls. XIII-XIV. See also Le Rider 1978, p. 35.
1834 Ibid., pp. 72-75.
1835 Shayegan 2011, pp. 76, 98; cf. Hoover 2008. Contra Assar (2006a, pp. 96-98) proposes Mithridates as the subjugator of Elymais, since he interpreted the appellative “King of Lands” (LUGAL KUR.KURMES) – attested in a cuneiform omen text inscribed on a colophon dated 133/2 BC (BM 45715, SH 1881.0706.122) – more appropriate to the Great King Mithridates rather than to a youthful Phraates II, who was still a co-ruler with his mother Rinnu in mid-132 BC (Clay 1913, BMR II, 53:48; Minns 1915, p. 34, texts d-e). No coins of this co-reign have ever been found, but it may become explicable by the fact that the regency did not need to
BC, which shows a young sovereign on the obverse accompanied by the legend ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΣΑΚΟΥ, and a left-seated archer (Apollo) on an omphalos on the reverse. The Seleucids with Antiochus VII Sidetes retook Susa concise period of time, as shown by the quasi-annual coin emission of the Greek king (130-129 BC), but the Arsacid army quickly removed the Seleucid resistance and restored the authority of Phraates II in Elymais. From this point for the next 50 years at least (ca. 133-82/2 BC), no more Elymaean coins were issued (excluding the suspicious coin of Dareios) after the tetradrachm of Tigraios which effectively put an end to the coin issues of Early Kamnaskires.

9.2.5.2 Late Kamnaskirids

The Elymaeans were apparently precluded from issuing their coinage for about a half century after the initial Early Kamnaskirids’ monetary emissions. While from 133 to ca. 83 BC no domestic coins were minted in Elymais, Arsacid coinage was employed instead (in particular from Phraates II, Artabanes I, and Mithridates II). Around 82/1 BC Elymais appears to have recouped its political and monetary independence (at least in the mountainous eastern part of the kingdom ruled from Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon), as coin issues started to be produced again under Kamnaskires III concomitantly with the so-called Dark Age of Arsacid coinage attested in Parthian Ctesiphon. According to van’t Haaff, the Late Kamnaskirid dynasty dates from 82/1 to 33/2 BC, and it was governed by rulers who only bear the name Kamnaskires, suggesting its probable transition from a personal name to the honorific dynastic term which evoked the founder of the Elymaean kingdom, similar to the term Arsaces in the Parthian tradition. The designation of this second Kamnaskirid dynasty, which strongly relied on monetary data, is still being debated but the chronology appears less contentious, since the coin emissions are mostly dated. This paper generally agrees with van’t Haaff’s classification, which includes the different reigns of Kamnaskires III and queen Anzaze (82/1-74/3 BC), Kamnaskires IV (63/2-54/3 BC), and Kamnaskires V (54/3-33/2

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1836 Sellwood 14.3-4; Van’t Haaff 2007, type 4.1.
1837 Le Rider 1965, no. 110.
1839 Footnote 1803.
1840 Assar 2006a, table 1.
1841 Sellwood 1976, pp. 2-25; Assar 2006b; Simonetta 2009.
1842 Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 7-18.
1843 For references on the various numbers of identification, and confrontation, for the Late Kamnaskirid issues, see van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 8, 17-18.
BC\textsuperscript{1844}, even though from an iconographical point of view I am tempted to consider Kamnaskires IV and V as the same king in different stages of life, a question examined in more detail below.

After the long-established reign of Mithridates II (\textit{ca.} 122-91 BC), the Partho-Armenian conflicts in the late 80s BC created a lack of sufficient control over Elymais by the central Arsacid authority. This political scenario likely facilitated the appearance of new Elymaean series issued by the first ruler of the Late Kamnaskirid dynasty, known under the name of Kamnaskires III, in ΑΛΣ (SE 231 = 82/1 BC). His peculiar monetary production is characterized on the obverse by left-facing conjoined busts of himself with queen Anzaze (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΚΑΙ ΒΑΣΙΛΙΣΣΗΣ ΑΝΖΑΖΗΣ), including an anchor-symbol on the right of the king. The reverses were also subjected to another particular revise consisting in the depiction of a bearded god (Zeus, local Bel, Tyche\textsuperscript{1845}) seated left on throne holding a sceptre in his left hand and a small Nike, who crown him, on his outstretched right arm\textsuperscript{1846}. The resurgence of the Elymaean secessionist aspirations with Kamnaskires III must have been a critical issue for the Parthians, prompting the Arsacid king to intervene directly in 78/7 BC, as confirmed by the \textit{Diaries}\textsuperscript{1847}. According to Dabrowa\textsuperscript{1848}, the feasibility that this urgent action directly led by the Arsacid king was due to the recapture of Susa by Kamnaskires III (as supported by the coin finds of one of his emissions presumably issued at Susa\textsuperscript{1849}) is reasonable. To note, an anchor which may have alluded to the Elymaean royal symbol was engraved on the obverse of some drachms minted at Ecbatana and Rhagae (but not at Susa) by Orodes I (or Sinatruces\textsuperscript{1850}) of Parthia, possibly indicating a tribute to the Arsacid victory over Elymais in 77 BC\textsuperscript{1851}. Despite the defeat, Kamnaskires III maintained control of eastern Elymais as demonstrated by later issues in ΜΣ (SE 240 =72/1 BC) probably from Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[1844] Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 8.
\item[1845] On the bearded representation of Tyche in Parthian context, see Sinisi 2008; and Invernizzi 2015.
\item[1846] Interestingly, a similar transformation occurred within the Parthian coinage during the reign of Phraates III (70-58 BC) almost concomitantly (cf. Simisi 2014, p. 15).
\item[1848] Dabrowa 2014, p. 64.
\item[1849] Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 67, type 4.2.
\item[1850] Although Sellwood (1980) placed Sinatruces’ issues at Susa during those years, the Arsacid ruler responsible for the victory on Elymaean forces in 77 BC may be confidently identified with Orodes I through parallel records present in the \textit{Diaries} dating to 80 BC, 78 BC and 76 BC, within which explicit allusion is made to “Arscaces, who is called Orodes, the king” and “Ispubarza, his sister, the queen” (McEwan 1986, p. 93).
\item[1851] Sellwood 34.4. See Assar 2006b, pp. 77-78, figs. 15-17.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
The Elymaean king seems to have been followed on the throne by at least two sovereigns bearing the same dynastic name (i.e., Kamnaskires), who are known only thanks to their monetary emissions. Kamnaskires IV’s first issues appear ten years later in ΝΣ (SE 250 = 62/1 BC) depicting on the obverse a beardless youthful king who had probably to publicly assert his blood connection to his grandfather Kamnaskires with the legend on the reverse ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΓ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΙΣΚΙΡΟΥ. It is plausible that after ten years away from the throne a young king had to affirm his high-born lineage within the Kamnaskirid house mentioning the parentage with a prominent member of the royal family. However, in the contemporaneous absence of written sources, no adequate clarification can be provided about the 10-year gap between Kamnaskires III and IV. The next dated series of Kamnaskires IV (62/1 or 59/8 BC)\(^{1852}\) present a more mature king depicted with a short beard on the obverse, and maintaining the conventional reverse which includes the dedicatory legend framing a left throne-seated bearded deity with a small Nike in the right and a sceptre in the left hand. This issue was countermarked on the obverse by a Nike, possibly indicating a significant “victory” obtained by the Elymaean forces, such as the recapture of Susa\(^{1853}\). Van’t Haaff suggests that Kamnaskires IV occupied Susa for a concise period of time, since his next series (dated 53/2 BC) were issued by a travelling mint since no mintmarks (or what van’t Haaff considers as mintmarks) were represented on the coins. At any rate, this assumption is only based on the presence or absence of certain symbols (i.e., anchor, horse head), which are considered by some numismatists as mintmarks of different Elymaean mints\(^{1854}\), and appears open to questions (§9.2.2). In his presumed last issues an older Kamnaskires IV is represented on the obverse with a long pointy beard, longer hair, a thicker torque around his neck (almost four lines), a more elaborate tunic design, an anchor with a star above on his right, which stylistically seems to be closely connected to Kamnaskires V’s imagery, as they were the same person at different ages. The latter compared with his presumed predecessor maintains very similar facial details, but with a longer pointy beard and hair\(^{1855}\), a same torque and tunic decorations, a star above the anchor on the right of the royal bust, and the same dedicatory legend referring to his grandfather (ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΣΚΙΡΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΓ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΙΣ ΚΑΜΝΑΙΣΚΙΡΟΥ). The similarities between Kamnaskires IV and V were also recognized by van’t Haaff who

\(^{1852}\) Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 16.  
\(^{1853}\) Ibid., pp. 16, 71-73 (type 8.3: subtypes 1.1, 2.1, 2.2, 3.1).  
\(^{1854}\) Le Rider 1965; Hansman 1990; Van’t Haaff 2007.  
\(^{1855}\) A similar distinction related to age and based on the increased length of beard and hair is also used in Parthian issues, as those of and Pacorus II (Sinisi 2012a).
considered the two rulers as brothers. In reality, the emissions of 57/6 and 53/2 BC (Kamnaskires IV), and those of 47/6 and 36/5 BC (Kamnaskires V) could be confidently attributed to the same historical personage. The only significant iconographical differences are a horse protome (instead of the anchor) on the right of some Kamnaskires IV’s obverse, and the reverse subject in the coinage of Kamnaskires V. This latter bears the image of a left-facing bearded bust with diadem, possibly identifiable as a local deity or a form of ancestry cult. Whatever the case, in the absence of more informative data an assumption, which recognizes the two rulers as the same personage on the base of the tentative iconographical interpretation, may only be found on controversial stylistic parallels of few coins, and may lack completeness and historical accuracy.

The entire coinage of the Late Kamnaskirids reveals the desire to mark a dynastic emphasis, an example of genealogical transposition inaugurated with Kamnaskires III. The juxtaposition of the latter with the female figure of Anzaze may indicate a necessary connection with an important personage within a dynastic context, maybe related to an endogamy relationship, a form of royal legitimacy possibly inherited by the ancient Elamite culture. The same necessity to legitimize their royal line appears to be confirmed by the presence on the reverse of Kamnaskires IV/V of legends evoking the “grandfather” Kamnaskires, or the bearded bust possibly indicating a locally well-known progenitor. If this is not a religious figure, the reasons behind this exigency of dynastic reaffirmation are currently unclear, but they may be likely related to the 50-year period gap between the issues of Tigraios (ca. 133 BC) and Kamnaskires III (82/1 BC) within which no Elymaean series had been issued.

1856 Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 74.
1857 Ibid., pp. 72-73, subtypes 2.2-2.4.
1858 Ibid., pp. 74-76, subtypes 1.3-1.7.
1859 Contra van’t Haaff 2007, p. 18. Van’t Haaff differentiates the two kings concerning the only evidence of the nose representation, describing Kamnaskires IV with a turned-up nose and Kamnaskires V with a straight one. However, the scholar only takes in consideration two types (subtype 2.3 for Kamnaskires IV; and subtype 1.1 for Kamnaskires V). In fact, a wider analysis can reveal a turned-up nose also for Kamnaskires V (subtype 1.5B) and a straight one for Kamnaskires IV (subtypes 2.1, 3.1).
1860 Van’t Haaff 2007, subtypes 1.1, 2.1-2.2.
1861 In the rupestrian imagery, the bearded personage engraved on the reverse of Kamnaskires V iconographically resembles some sculpture at Masjed-e Soleyman as the Heracles-like figures of strangling the Nemean lion (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXX), and the local Hermes (British Museum, no. 127335, registration no. 1920, 1120.1).
1862 A similar ideology related to the cult of the ancestor may be expressed by a fragmented bas-relief of Masjed-e Soleyman (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXVIII.2).
1863 Vallat 1998a.
9.2.5.3 Elymaean-Arsacid Dynasty (Orodids)

From the mid/late-1st century AD a cadet branch of the Arsacid royal lineage installed its authority in Elymais probably establishing blood ties with the local elite through dynastic marriage\(^{1864}\). The Arsacid onomastics of the rulers in Elymais and the marked similarities between the Elymaean portraits and the Parthian imagery, characterized by an increasing stylization of the images, could appear to be more than mere coincidence. In this context, the situation in Elymais between the end of the 1st century BC up to the 1st century AD is still poorly understood. Van’t Haaff considers the initial series of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty (currently over a dozen specimens) as a “transitional” monetary production, which intensified the iconographical evolution started with the Late Kamnaskirid moving towards the abstract linearism of the later coinage\(^{1865}\). The so-called “Uncertain Early Arsacid Kings” were unnamed rulers who seem to have issued coin series between the end of the 1st century BC and the mid/late-1st century AD maintaining in general well-executed portrait busts on the obverse which iconographically refer to the Late Kamnaskirid coinage, as well as a progressive linearistic style accentuated by a gradual absence of naturalism explicitly ascribed to the Arsacid imagery. In contrast, the reverses reveal a continuous degeneration starting from the bearded head framed by a Greek legend and ending with regular or irregular patterns of dashes. It has been proposed that the dashes, which are much more evident starting from the Elymaean-Arsacid monetary production (end-1st century AD), should not be indicated as residue of a progressively degenerated imagery but, rather, as intentional – and perhaps symbolic – design elements (e.g. palm leaves, corn kernels, laurel wreath)\(^{1866}\). In practical terms, the dashes could have also represented “a design recognizable by touch”\(^{1867}\) in order to facilitate quick transaction and exchange of coins. Since the chronology of the Uncertain Kings is still much debated amongst numismatic experts, it can only be argued in this context that it is hard to provide a correct timeline to categorize their coin series, which figuratively imitate the emissions of Late Kamnaskirids and stylistically refer to the Elymaean-Arsacid issues.

In a period of considerable uncertainty due to the lack of systematic written sources and the issues of undated coins, the emissions of Orodes I (presumably second half of 1st century AD) represent the turning point for the passage towards an Arsacid coin production in

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\(^{1864}\) Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
\(^{1865}\) Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 18-19, 83ff.
\(^{1866}\) Cf. Van’t Haaff 2007, p. 19.
Elymais. It is by comparing the two coinages (i.e. Elymaean-Arsacid, and Arsacid-Parthian) iconographically that an approximate chronological time frame for the *Elymaean-Arsacid* kings may be tentatively proposed. The numismatists indubitably have a difficult task adjusting for the lack of specific assigned dates to the duration of the reigns for the various rulers in Elymais during this time. Therefore, wide date ranges, which conventionally cover half-century periods, have been suggested for these kings and their coin productions that, according to van’t Haaff (on the basis of Vardanian’s sequence\textsuperscript{1868}) include Orodes I, Kamnaskires-Orodes, Orodes II, Phraates, Orodes III, Osroes\textsuperscript{7}, Orodes IV, and Orodes V.

Despite commendable efforts made by scholars over the years, a mutual agreement with regard to the sequence of the Elymaean-Arsacid kings has yet to be achieved. The chronology provided by van’t Haaff on the first three rulers of the new dynasty (Orodes I, Kamnaskires-Orodes, Orodes II) appears quite reliable from a time-related perspective considering the typological affinities with the Parthian coinage, some features shared between the three reigns, and their Aramaic-like legend. Although they all bear the same legend [W]RWD on the reverse, *Orodes I*'s monetary emissions are iconographically different from one another. From a stylistic perspective, his series continue to coherently approach a naturalistic vision\textsuperscript{1869}, regardless of the gradual change in the individualization of the subject (royal portraits) on the obverse. A significant loss of proportion is delineated by some typological elements (hairstyle, beard shape, diadem arrangements) in a constant process toward the linearism similar to the Parthian coinage which started with Orodes II (1\textsuperscript{st} century BC)\textsuperscript{1870} and reached its final stage in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD\textsuperscript{1871}. Hardly to be accidental then are the marked stylistic differences between some subtypes of Orodes, which are indicated by the number of anchor crossbars on the left of the king’s bust: one crossbar for the more naturalistic specimen\textsuperscript{1872}, two for the quite linearistic type\textsuperscript{1873}. Moreover, the fact that Orodes I is only diademed up (no tiara), and his reverse still shows a left-facing bearded head in a very crude style framed by a square-shaped highly degraded legend (a reminiscent of the Late Kamnaskirid reproposed in the *Uncertain Kings* series) may suggest a dating in the second half of the 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD. The absence of the term MLK’ (king) associated to Orodes I seems to reveal an uncertain power structure in Elymais at the beginning of the Arsacid dynasty,

\textsuperscript{1868} Vardanian 1986, pp. 99-117.
\textsuperscript{1869} Van’t Haaff 2007, type 11.1, subtype 1-2.
\textsuperscript{1870} Sinisi 2014, figs. 22.a-b (Orodes II).
\textsuperscript{1871} Cf. Sinisi 2014, p. 29-30, figs. 24.a-d.
\textsuperscript{1872} Van’t Haaff 2007, subtype 1-2.
\textsuperscript{1873} *Ibid.*., subtype 1-1.
although it cannot be ascertained whether this refers to hostilities with local elites or relationships with the main Parthian lineage\textsuperscript{1874}. In this regard, the choice of the name \textit{Kamnaskires-Orodes} for the second ruler in Elymais after Orodes I suggests the necessity to establish a solid tie between the two royal houses in a propagandistic program, which deliberately invokes the local tradition as exemplified by the Kamnaskirid dynasty, to validate the transition of authority\textsuperscript{1875}. At the same time, the legend indicating “King Kamnaskires-Orodes” as “the son of King Orodes” on the obverse (first example) can only confirm the blood tie with the accredited founder of the “Orodes” dynasty in Elymais. On the obverse, the Kamnaskires-Orodes’ series introduce a typological feature, displaying a royal facing bust, which breaks with both the precedent issues of the previous Elymaean sovereigns, and the Parthian emissions where frontal representations for the kings are used rather infrequently (e.g. Phraates III, Artabanus II, Vardanes, Vologases IV)\textsuperscript{1876}. Analogously to the conceptual perspective of the rupestrian art (§10.1.3), a frontal approach may have a significant reciprocal and mutual relationship to establish through a direct connection between the new dynasty (regal imagery) and the local observers\textsuperscript{1877}. Also, the obverse bears a typical Elymaic legend (on coins of Orodes I only the king’s name is visible) running semi-circularly counter clockwise from above. The reverse type is instead composed of an irregular pattern of dashes, except for the reverses of some drachms which introduced a circular-shaped legend embracing a not-well-defined image identified as the radiate bust of Belos\textsuperscript{1878}. The aspect of the bust, in particular, the long curly hair tufts on each side of the face, ensures that king Kamnaskires-Orodes had a certain iconographic recognizability, which is apposite to the central standing personage at Hung-e Azhdar (HA:3) prompting an identification with the same person. In addition, the absence of the tiara in favour of the diadem may suggest a dating for his reign between the end of the 1\textsuperscript{st} and the beginning of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD. It is surely important to note that in some emissions the king seems to wear a sort of rayed headgear\textsuperscript{1879} recognizable by the absence of the ribbon, typical of the diadem, behind his head\textsuperscript{1880}.

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1874} Cf. Bell 2002, p. 37.
\item \textsuperscript{1875} Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
\item \textsuperscript{1876} Sinisi 2014, p. 37, fig 34. Some scholar (Will 1959, pp. 127-128; Le Rider 1965, pp. 358-360; \textit{idem} 1990) pointed out the fact that frontal facing busts may represent a repertoire of Greek derivation, since this typology, in general, was common for kings and deities within the Seleucid emission issued at the mint of Susa.
\item \textsuperscript{1877} Cf. Sinisi 2014, p. 38.
\item \textsuperscript{1878} Van’t Haaff 2007, type 12.2.
\item \textsuperscript{1879} \textit{Ibid.}, e.g., type 12.1, subtypes 1-2, 1-3A, 1-3F.
\item \textsuperscript{1880} \textit{Ibid.}, e.g., type 12.1, subtypes 1-1A-C, type 12.1, subtype 1-1A.
\end{itemize}
The following king, namely Orodes II, avoided breaking continuity with the predecessor in his first emission roughly maintaining the same style in the obverse and reverse with the only modification concerning the legend (King Orodes, son of Orodes). Also noteworthy in this case is the absence of the term MLK’ (king) referring to Orodes I (the founder of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty did not use the title of “king” in his coinage). It would be therefore tempting to have Orodes II (“Son of Orodes”) precede Kamnaskires-Orodes (“Son of King Orodes”), if not for the fact that Orodes II wears a tiara in his later issues. Orodes II is the first Elymaean king with a tiara, a feature which became canonized in Parthian coinage in the 2nd century AD when different kings commenced to distinguish themselves displaying their own variants in the decoration of the royal headgear. This identified status was reproposed later by the Sasanid system of distinctive crown. In the specimen of Orodes II, there is the introduction of the “hooked” tiara very similar to the one worn by Meherdates of Characene suggesting a dating in the second quarter of the 2nd century AD for the coinage of the last series of the Elymaean king, as possibly confirmed by a bilingual inscription (dating 138 AD) found at Palmyra. This emission seems to reintroduce the reverse composed of dashes in a sort of regular pattern and the legend “King Orodes”, which may indicate that the well-established sovereign no longer needed to claim a royal lineage as “Son of King Orodes” to validate his authority.

The emissions of the successors of Orodes II, i.e., Phraates I and Orodes III, flanked the coin emissions with Elymaic inscriptions with issues bearing the royal names in Greek (ΦΡΑΑȉΉΣ and ΥΡΩΔΗΣ). It is interesting to note that while the coin series with the Elymaic legends on the obverse present a reverse composed of patterns of dashes, the Greek-inscribed issues bear the legend on the reverse, circularly framing a standing figure with bow and arrow or a bust, both facing right and generally interpreted as an Artemis-like deity, possibly wearing a kalathus (vase-shaped headgear). The reasons behind this dissimilarity on both obverse and reverse may be explained by the use of two mints in Elymais (Susa and Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon) in a period characterized by the process of closing the various

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1881 Ibid., type 13.1.
1882 Ibid., types 13.2, 13.3.
1883 Sinisi 2012b, pp. 288-289.
1884 Ibid. 2014, pp. 46-47.
1885 Van’t Haaff 2007, type 13.3.
1886 See §5.2.3.3.
1887 E.g. Van’t Haaff 2007, type 14.1, subtype 1-1A.

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mints undertaken by the Parthian kings during the 1st century AD (only the facilities of Seleucia-on-the-Tigris and Ecbatana remained open until the end of the Arsacid dynasty)\textsuperscript{1889}.

The first emissions of \textit{Phraates} still represent on the obverse a frontal facing bust, which provides a direct continuity with the series of Orodes II, wearing a tiara specifically ornamented for this ruler with two dotted crescent, and on the reverse a standing archer (\textit{Artemis}) within a circular Greek legend\textsuperscript{1890}. In his following series, Phraates reintroduced the profile bust of the sovereign facing right, the inscription in Elymaic PR’’T MLK’ BR WRWD MLK’ (\textit{King Phraates, Son of King Orodes}), and the reverse composed by patterns of dashes. The diademed tiara with dotted crescent typical of these rulers, including on the right the conventional one/two-crossbar anchor and star (or pellet) inside the crescent, as well as the facial details of the king, became part of the final stage of that linearistic process, which definitely eclipsed any form of figurative volume suggesting a date to the mid-2nd century AD\textsuperscript{1891}. Despite being iconographically analogous, the issues of \textit{Orodes III} can be distinguished from those of his predecessor through a few typological details, such as the decoration of the tiara (anchor and dotted rim), the reverse with a right-facing bust presumably wearing a \textit{kalathus} (series with Greek legends)\textsuperscript{1892}, and the introduction of an anchor within patterns of dashes on the reverse (Elymaic-inscribed issues on the obverse)\textsuperscript{1893}. Van’t Haaff divided the monetary productions of Phraates and Orodes III introducing three \textit{AE} emissions of Osroes\textsuperscript{1894}, which display on the obverse a diademed left-facing bust with a long beard and a typical Parthian trilobate coiffure composed of a large tuft on the top his head bound by the fillets of the diadem. The reverse bears a Greek legend framing a standing archer. The comparisons with the portrayals of Osroes I of Parthia (109-129 AD) issued at Ecbatana and Seleucia-on-the-Tigris (\textit{AE} chalkous and tetrachalkous)\textsuperscript{1895}, as well as the modified royal iconography (e.g., absence of the typical star/pellet inside a crescent above the anchor-symbol) convincingly suggest a coin production of the Parthian king rather than the existence of a homonymous ruler in Elymais\textsuperscript{1896}, placing these series in the first quarter of the 2nd century AD.

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\textsuperscript{1889} Cf. Sinisi 2012b, p. 277.
\textsuperscript{1890} Van’t Haaff 2007, e.g., type 14.1.
\textsuperscript{1891} Ibid., type 14.7 subtype 1-1B, 14.8.
\textsuperscript{1892} Ibid., e.g. type 16.1.
\textsuperscript{1893} Ibid., type 16.3.
\textsuperscript{1894} Ibid. types 15.1-15.3.
\textsuperscript{1895} Tetrachalkous from Seleucia (e.g., Sellwood 80.8-9, 80.11); Chalkous from Ecbatana (e.g., Sellwood 80.29).
\textsuperscript{1896} Hoover 2008. It has been suggested that the Parthian king Osroes I temporarily used the mint of Susa (bronze emissions) to pay his troops (Le Rider 1965, p. 431).
The following coinage of **Orodes IV** displays on the obverse the abandoning of the tiara and a return to the diademed busts (both left-facing profile and frontal) markedly characterized by large tufts of hair at the side and on top of the head as well as flying diadem ends which appear to be modelled on the Parthian coinage of Vologases V (ca. 191-208 AD). It suggests that the dating for the emissions of Orodes IV straddle the 2\textsuperscript{nd} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} century AD. A distinctive feature in his first emissions, which show on the obverse the left facing profile of the king and the Elymaic inscription WRWD MLK’ (*King Orodes*) on the left, is to display on the reverse a female left-facing bust with the hair tied in a long ponytail falling behind and on the left the legend WLP’N (*Ulfan*)\textsuperscript{1897}. She may be identified as his consort. Her presence on the reverse rather than on the obverse with the king seems reminiscent of the coin emissions of Phraataces and Musa (ca. 2 BC–4 AD)\textsuperscript{1898}. Shortly afterward, the frontal facing series Ulfan’s profile has already been replaced with a more conventional one-crossbar anchor symbol presenting dot-in-crescent on both sides, all within wreath or crossed cornucopias\textsuperscript{1899}. It creates an entirely new composition in the Elymaean coinage, which was reminiscent of the more simplified example on the reverse of Orodes III\textsuperscript{1900}.

The coins attributed to **Orodes V**\textsuperscript{1901} are strongly related to those of Orodes IV, in particular the royal bust of Orodes V is connected with the representation of his predecessor\textsuperscript{1902}. Both the portraits present a left-facing diademed head with beard and a prominent tuft of hair on top, on the other hand, the side-head tufts so pronounced in Orodes IV’s depictions are absent in the representations of Orodes V delineating a marked difference in the figurative imagery of the two rulers. At the same time, the reverse in Orodes V’s monetary production shared the same bust of an Artemis-like deity, wearing a kind of low tiara with a crest composed of dots and an anchor on the right side, engraved on the reverse of a different emission of Orodes IV\textsuperscript{1903}. A legend, apparently incomplete, appears on the obverse in the form of WRWD [MLK’].

\textsuperscript{1897} Van’t Haaff 2007, type 17.1.
\textsuperscript{1898} Sellwood 1980, type 58.
\textsuperscript{1899} *Ibid.*, type 17.3.
\textsuperscript{1900} *Ibid.*, type 16.3. Hoover (2008) considers this series of Orodes IV (Van’t Haaff 2007, type 17.3) to be allocated to Kamnaskires-Orodes due to stylistic similarities in the facial details, assuming then the reverse with the anchor of this series as a model for the reverse of Orodes III (*ibid.*, type 16.3). However, although he had made some strong arguments, the iconographic association proposed in this case by Hoover appears a little contrived. For instance, it is evident how the tufts on the side of the head are much longer and abundant in Kamnaskires-Orodes (*ibid.*, type 12.1) compared to those of Orodes IV (*ibid.*, type 17.3). In addition, also a comparison of the legends in the two sovereigns’ series would seem to exclude the assumption that they identified the same king.
\textsuperscript{1901} *Ibid.*, type 18.1.
\textsuperscript{1902} *Ibid.*, type 17.1.
\textsuperscript{1903} *Ibid.*, type 17.2.
Persian accounts of the 9th century AD (e.g., al-Tabari)\textsuperscript{1904} report that at his arrival in Elymais Ardashir I, founder of the Sasanid dynasty, seems to have faced another Orodes (V?) entitled as “King of Khuzestan”, apparently instructed by Artabanus IV (the last king of Parthia) to prevent the Sasanid advance shortly after 218 AD (perhaps 222 AD). At any rate, the failure of the defensive mission and the consequent final defeat of Artabanus IV opened the gates of Iran to Ardashir I who first took control of Khuzestan in 224 AD. The capitulation of Elymais under the Sasanian sway seems to have led to a suppression of the autonomous polities, and consequently the authority to issue coins.

9.3 Summary and Conclusions

Although attempts have been made to chronologically reconstruct the sequence of the Elymaean kings, often just on the basis of scattered iconographic and stylistic parallels with the Babylonian Diaries and Parthian coinage, a systematic and solid evaluation cannot yet be developed. As mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, coinage represents a phenomenon of mass production, which requires the reflection on massive numbers of coins as a key prerogative if it is to be a functional element of methodical research work. Unfortunately, this fundamental precondition is currently absent in the numismatic studies of Elymais, where frequently experts have no option but to work with few specimens and one-of-a-kind pieces. This raises a greater concern that many connections are still unknown or unintelligible, and create gaps in research that should be considered rather than being just omitted in a bid to formulate numismatic reconstructions.

At a theoretical level, the methodological approach to monetary issues affects the preliminary field of analysis without addressing the precise nature of the various disputes around it. In this context, the objective constraints play a crucial role as revealed by the absence of endorsed parameters and interchangeable terms of confrontation. The Elymaean numismatics, therefore, shows in the first instance a lack of a shareable sequence of coins, to be connected to the evidence of other sources (e.g., cuneiform texts, rock reliefs, Elymaic inscriptions) only at a later stage, is it possible to establish an accurate reconstruction of the historical events. However, a general absence of systematicity ensues an inadequacy of reliable historical method towards the iconographical evolution. It must be noted, therefore, that there is an inclination to a certain determinism concerning the evaluation of what


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monetary documentation can ascribe to chronological data to establish a well-founded series of historical circumstances. According to Sinisi\textsuperscript{1905}, in a similar situation, the establishment of adequately checked data becomes crucial, since from a typological level they can be framed within a functional perspective, which considers their particular disposition and dynamic development, as, the mint operation and the internal practices. A detailed analysis of the figurative elements is therefore crucial for the creation of royal iconography in Elymais, and in particular of the sovereign portraits.

\textsuperscript{1905} Sinisi 2015, p. 365.
PART III:

DISCUSSIONS and INTERPRETATIONS
After the analysis of the material evidence, this chapter introduces the major aspects of the study of Elymaean culture and society. Given that the limited amount of materials found to make it difficult to determine what is Elymaean as opposed to Parthian, it is fundamental to clarify the critical knowledge needed to interpret Elymais as the final product of that historico-political *koine* typical of the Zagros/Bakhtiari region.

The standard Elymaean cultural repertoire (architectures, rupestrian works, numismatic production) was a reflection of local influences in conversation with other art languages. Categorized visual references of different, often earlier (e.g., Elamite, Mesopotamian, Iranian), artistic traditions figured prominently. Ordinary individuals used these references to visually provide their positions in the social order, and by examining these models, it becomes possible to reassemble some of the historical and social circumstances in which they were selected and materialized. In this analytic and comparative process, my research also seeks to define Elymaean art in a manner that includes the artistic material produced within the Elymaean political ambit, regardless of its outward appearance.

The picture emerging from this chapter is therefore multifaceted, showing that the art/society binomial is intercorrelated in many mutual and reciprocal connotations. Precisely this multiplicity of factors, which are elements of evolving reality and far from being static components, constitute the numerous levels of reading and the various fields of inquiry that I wanted to examine.

**10.1 Architecture, Art and Identity**

Elymais was shaped as much by a repertoire of sacred constructions, rupestrian works and ceramic objects, as by cultural influences, ideas and interactions between forms and practices entangled in identity formations. This section is articulated on the perception and designation of the architectural-artistic identity of Elymais, and its characteristics as manifested and synthesized in conceptual models. Research and analysis of Elymaean discoveries in the previous chapters have indicated that the architectural and artistic traditions did not limit themselves to passively following the guidelines of more extended and established traditions in the region, but gave new life to an independent and thriving style which was subject to developments and changes and able to satisfy local needs. In general,
Elymaean architecture and visual art is outlined by eclecticism, a willingness to borrow style and motifs from outside cultures and to recombine them to create new forms.

10.1.1 Sacred Architectures

Monumental art and in particular the architectural terraces have played a prominent role in Iran. Given its geographical position at a crucial intersection between important trade routes, its geomorphological situation of incisive gorges and impenetrable valleys isolated by the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains, and the semi-nomadic attitude of its people, Elymais proved to be very receptive to the assortment of external traditions, which facilitated an eclectic, yet coherent, repertoire of cultural production. It is based on the synthesis of Mesopotamian, Elamite, Iranian and Greek architectural models, which encompasses Elymaean religious structures and ritual practices. In particular, the structural dichotomy between built temples and open-air shrines, typical of the Elamite religious places, is sharply marked and was amply exceeded in the artistic and cultural eclecticism of Elymais.

10.1.1.1 Terraced Platforms

The construction of artificial platforms consisting in terraced mountain ridgeline with multilevel stairways leading up the mountain’s slope, may be associated with similar structures discovered in Iran and Bactria, and could be associated with open-air places of worship as described by Classical authors. Despite the presence of local architectural temple traditions, the numinous desire for open-air spaces during the Elamite and the existence of cult buildings along the Iranian plateau before the arrival of the Iranian-speaking people is proven by the notable religious complexes dating back to the 4th millennium BC, emerged in southwestern Turkmenistan (Anau, Geoksyur, Ilginli-depe; see Hiebert et al. 2003, p. 167; Bonora and Vidale 2013, pp. 151ff), while already between end-3rd and early-2nd millennium BC begun the tradition of the first monumental structures or precincts of Mesopotamian influence (so called “high terraces”; see Deshayes 1977, pp. 95-111), where terrace-like substructures supported large representative buildings (religious function not always attested), between Turkmenistan in Alty-depe (Masson 1988) and Ulug-depe (MAFTur 2015); Afghanistan at Mundigak (Casal 1961); Afghan Sistan at Nad-i Ali (Francfort 2005, p. 334.); and central and northwestern Iran at Turang Tepe (Deshayes 1975, pp. 522-530.) via Susa (Acropole high terrace; see Canal 1978).

According to Henkelman, the Fortification Archive of Persepolis reveals how Persian mountain and river sacrifices were carried out at many different open-air locations. One, in particular, was performed in honour of Humban, a formerly Elamite god, at the Betir river (region of Fahliyan), indicating cultual continuity (Henkelman 2008a, pp. 223-224, 377-380, 536-539).

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1907 Alvérez-Mon 2014a, p. 765.

1908 Greek sources (Hrd., I.131, Str., XV.3.13-14). See also De Jong 1997, pp. 96-98, 127-129, 138-142. According to Henkelman, the Fortification Archive of Persepolis reveals how Persian mountain and river sacrifices were carried out at many different open-air locations. One, in particular, was performed in honour of Humban, a formerly Elamite god, at the Betir river (region of Fahliyan), indicating cultual continuity (Henkelman 2008a, pp. 223-224, 377-380, 536-539).

1909 A broad assortment of sacred temple architectures is available in Elam dating to before the Macedon conquest, but the vast majority is known only by the epigraphic evidence on the bricks that once made part of them where a rich typological variety of temples, shrines, and chapels was recorded (Potts 2010a). Although most of the Elamite religious structures are lost, Mesopotamian architectural influence may be recognized in the terraced constructions of Haft Tepe (16th-14th century BC; see Negahban 1991; Mofidi Nasrabadi 2003-2004; Potts 2016, pp. 184-197) and, in particular, Choga Zanbil (13th century BC; see Ghirshman 1968a, pp. 9–41; Mofidi Nasrabadi 2007). Since the religious function of Building II of Hasanlu (1,000-800 BC) is not...
Achaemenid period was achieved in the establishment of monumental artificial terraces, also typical in central Asia\textsuperscript{1911}.

Erected with undressed stones, at least in the first stage, the cult practices were performed with the use of a podium reached by the multitude of worshippers who ascended and descended from the platforms through different staircases. The use of the undressed stones, generally limestone, is the primary construction material for the terraced architectures and has identified the Zagros cultures since the Bronze Age. The rough stone usage was widely employed in Urartian monumental structures and for the substructure wall of the Achaemenid constructions\textsuperscript{1912}, and it was evidently distinguished from the baked bricks, which was used at Choga Zanbil, Haft Tepe and Susa, indicating constructive models typical of the highlands\textsuperscript{1913}.

certain (Roaf 2012, p. 9), the first buildings discovered on the Iranian plateau with clear temple aspects are the two temples of Tepe Nush-i Jan (Roaf and Stronach 1973; \textit{idem} 1978), built around 750 BC and abandoned between 650-600 BC. The \textit{western temple} has a vestibule, which is open to the east, leading to the \textit{cella}, where an altar is decentralized to the south of the axis. Both environments have the largest axis in terms of width, according to a pattern typical of Babylon (Callieri 2002). In addition to Shenkar (2007, pp. 170-171) also proposed similar pre-Achaemenid enclosed constructions as sacred architectures, even though their interpretation is not securely associated to ancient Iranians. Probably, the earliest is the temple of Jarkutan in northern Bactria dated around 1,400-1,000 BC (Askarov and Shirinov 1994, p. 17). Better known are instead the “temple” of Togolok-1, Togolok-21, and Gonur, which were excavated in Margiana in Turkmenistan and dated around 1000 BC (Sarianidi 1998; \textit{idem} 2002, pp. 162-214; Shenkar 2007, pp. 170-171).

In Elam, religious cult practices along the mountainous territories of the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains were often celebrated in outdoor sanctuaries from at least the (neo-)Elamite period (ca. 1,100-539 BC), as demonstrated by the presence of a number of Elam’s open-air cultic places located within the valley of Izeh-Malamir (ancient Ayapir), e.g. Kul-e Farah (cf. Álvarez-Mon 2013a, p. 229). Another open-air cultic place was at Kurangun in the Fahlilian plain (Potts 2004a; Álvarez-Mon 2014a).

In Uzbekistan have been discovered along the valley of Surkhan-dary the site of Pachmak-tepe (nearby Djandavlat-tepe at ca. 8 km south-east of Sherabad-darya; Pidaev 1973; \textit{idem} 1974; Bernard 1976, p. 271; Sagdullaev and Khakimov 1976; Abdullaev 1994; Boyce and Grenet 1991, pp. 182-183), the platform of Pshak-tepe (near the confluence of the Surkhan-darya with the Amu-darya; see Duke 1974, Askarov 1982), and the religious structure of Kindyk-tepe (in the Bandikhan region; see Boroffka 2009, pp. 138-140). In Tajikistan, instead, is situated the sacred terrace of Kok-tepe21 (in the middle of Zeravshan valley, ca. 30 km south-eastern of Samarkand; Rapin \textit{et al.} 2001; \textit{idem} 2010; Rapin 2007).

Boucharlat 2002. It has been proposed the influence of the Urartian tradition for the Elymaean terraces (Ghirshman 1950, 215; Stronach 1974, 246) but probably Roberto Dan’s considerations on the alleged Urartian influences on Achaemenid architecture could apply here as well (Dan 2015, online at: \texttt{http://www.scienzelettere.it/book/49250.html}). It could be possible, as well as a similar central Asian nomadic origin (Shenkar 2007, p. 178), however, as a personal reflection, I want to emphasize that in most cases presumed cultural influences or associations are created more by the history of study than by real historical phenomena. So then, instead of an ‘Urartian tradition’ would be more appropriate to speak of ‘construction techniques documented in Urartu’ where stone, as in Elymais, was a readily obtainable building material – contrary to what occurred, for instance, in Mesopotamia – favouring construction techniques which have been revealed as quite similar.

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\textsuperscript{1913}Boucharlat 2002.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

10.1.1.2 Enclosed Temples

As a reflection of a long-established architectural tradition\textsuperscript{1914}, the cultic terraced structures in Elymais may be dated to the end of the Achaemenid period (4\textsuperscript{th} century BC) according to parallels with similar constructions in central Asia. They survived during the Hellenistic period and were enriched by Mesopotamian-influenced temples\textsuperscript{1915}. It is particularly significant that the Elymaean temples do not slavishly replicate the ground-plan of the Mesopotamian sanctuaries, but transform and reorganize it. If for instance the Grand Temple of Masjed-e Soleyman (Pl. XIII) is characterized by a structural nucleus on the basis of the Mesopotamian L-shaped bent-axis scheme with the antecella-cell\textae unit of the same dimension and having the longest axis in width on the right side of a roughly squared court\textsuperscript{1916}, the presence of two doorways into the main antecella-cell\textae block with two altars against the back wall of the cella represents an innovative feature absent in the Babylonian temples. In all likelihood, it has to do with the needs of the local cult. Further, the corridor, which runs without interruption around the central worship unit (court-antecella-cell\textae) isolating it from the external environment, is typical of the Iranian architecture and seems to originate in eastern Iran (e.g., Bactria)\textsuperscript{1917}. Similarly, the tetrastyle temple of Bard-e Neshandeh (Pl. IV) incorporates the elongated cellae of Mesopotamian origin around the central four-columned environment typical of Iranian architectures from Parthian time. The Elymaean structure diverges considerably from Mesopotamian and Iranian sacred constructions in several key features, including its axial and symmetrical design, its number and arrangement of cult chambers, not to mention the predominance of Greek architectural ornament (i.e., portico) on its exterior façade\textsuperscript{1918}. The presence of porticos was characteristic in Elymais as also demonstrated by the several architectonic findings at Shami\textsuperscript{1919}. In addition to the employ of undressed stones for the terraces, it is remarkable at Shami the presence of roughly squared baked bricks (36-37 cm), which have the same dimension of the ones used at Choga Zanbil, Susa and Haft Tepe in the 2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium BC for the construction of altar platforms (Pl. XXI)\textsuperscript{1920}. The utilization of more valuable masonry techniques at Shami, unlike

\textsuperscript{1914} Kleiss 1998; Shenkar 2007, p. 177.
\textsuperscript{1915} Salaris 2017.
\textsuperscript{1916} The presence of an antecella and cella of the same width is a hallmark of Mesopotamian architecture clearly distinguishable, for instance, from Assyrian temple type (e.g. the Sin-Shamash temple of Assurnirari I and the Anu-Hadad temple at Assur; see respectively Haller and Andrae 1956; Andrae 1909) where a wide antecella preceded a deep narrow cella behind it.
\textsuperscript{1918} See Salaris 2017.
\textsuperscript{1919} Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, pp. 71-73.
\textsuperscript{1920} For the baked bricks measures of Choga Zanbil, Haft Tepe and Susa (Boucharlat 2002); for the baked brick dimension of Shami (Messina et al. 2016, pp. 40, 48, fig. 8).
Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman where the baked brick is absent, may be interrelated to the different function of the structures at Kal-e Chendar. The presence of at least three extensive terraces, the existence of an enormous necropolis around the platforms including tombs of the high local aristocracy, the finding of statues and artefacts of excellent craftsmanship (Pls. XIX-XX), can lead to the logical conclusion that Shami had a more relevant religious function (possibly linked to a local dynastic cult) during the Hellenistic and Parthian eras, which would explain the use of the most valuable baked bricks for the construction of enclosed structures.\footnote{Cf. Sherwin-White 1984, p. 161. See §6.3.5, §6.3.7.}

Engaging Elamite, Mesopotamian and Iranian templates, temple structures in Elymais were initially combined with Greek architectural ornament imprinting a brand-new development in the locally sacred constructions. The ground-plans and structural elements of the Elymaean temples do not reproduce any heritage of architecture devotedly, but rather convincingly amalgamate Mesopotamian, Iranian and Western architectural aspects. The reason why Elymaean rulers or the local clergy financed the development of temples, whose plans were entirely based on Mesopotamian and Iranian models, is still not quite clear. They were probably acquainted with Greek temple architecture, since the local religious iconography in Elymais was mostly influenced by Hellenistic figurative language, but for some reason, they preferred “Oriental” prototypes. The stronger Mesopotamian and Elamite impact may suggest a local traditional background still vivid in the highland. The presence of baked bricks at Shami and Choga Zanbil having the same dimensions appears emblematic in this regard. A further possible explanation is in the passage of idea and traditions between schools of native and foreign architects during the Seleucid and Parthian periods. As a Mesopotamian appendix in “Iranian” territory, Susiana and the city of Susa may have represented a terra franca between the Iranian plateau, the Mesopotamian plain, and the Greek community in Susiana.

Whatever the nature of the local cults was, ancient sources and modern knowledge suggest that these endemic architectures played a crucial role in the socio-political history of Elymais, as demonstrated by the attitude that the Seleucid and Parthian kings had in this regard. Being repositories of millennial-long traditions, the sanctuaries were large-scale gathering places where the clerical class performed an important social function, and which was drawn from elite families. The religious authorities in Elymais were able to administer considerable wealth, and their influence was such that they were capable of swiftly mobilizing
the masses against potential threats. As noted by Classical sources (§10.2.2), their significance ensured they were “very coveted” by foreign powers. It is worth underlining another fact often stated by Greco-Roman authors, namely that major cult places in ancient Elymais (e.g., Bard-e Neshandeh, Shami, Tang-e Botan) always featured fortresses or fortified palaces which indicated the wealth around the Elymaean sanctuaries (§10.2.2).

10.1.2 Pottery and Terracotta Objects

Ceramic production in Elymais has been neglected and generally unpublished probably due to its limited aesthetic value. From the study of the material at Bard-e Neshandeh (Pl. VI) and Masjed-e Soleyman (Pl. XV), it has been revealed that the Elymaean pottery can be subdivided into three broad categories: common (no painted and no glazed), painted, and glazed. The very distinguishable composition of the material indicates the presence of an local variety of clay fabric, which is defined by a considerable friability and a reddish-brown colour. It was the product of local ateliers as also confirmed by the terracotta figurines of Masjed-e Soleyman, which were mostly produced with the same common clay composition typical of the Elymaean Zagros highlands. As a local variant of the Achaemenid “Festoon Ware” introduced in southwestern Iran during the 6th-5th century BC the distinguishable typology of painted ceramic was also an exclusive of this region. By the 3rd century painted pottery becomes rare, and by the 2nd century BC, it disappears altogether, by which time it is replaced by locally-produced glazed ceramics. Regarding typological profiles, local production features some specific genres as the pilgrim flasks with “angulated” shoulder-neck junction, little containers with ridged/grooved spherical-like body, and the pyriform/elongated vessels. Being an exclusive production of Elymais – likely connected to local ritual necessities – the latter vessels are engraved on the body and based on a disk-like foot. The largest presence at Masjed-e Soleyman of vases for unguentaria, typical of Greek communities during the 4th century BC and diffused in Mesopotamia in the 3rd-2nd century BC, suggests Greek participation to the cults officiated at Masjed-e Soleyman.

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1922 The only comprehensive publication on the Parthian pottery is Haerinck 1983. For the study of the terracotta figurines from Masjed-e Soleyman, see Martinez-Sève 2004.
1924 Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197.
1925 According to Haerinck (1983, pp. 98-100), the “Festoon Ware” has a buff-orange colour and it is with both brown and black designs which represent festoons, triangles and pendant/horizontal pictures.
1926 Haerinck 1983, pp. 244.
1927 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CXIX.10-12.
1929 Ibid. 1976, Pl. CXIX.5; Pl. CXXI.7, 8, 9; Pl. 53 GMIS 446, 510, 518, 570.
maybe at the temple of Athena Hippia. The discovery of the terracotta figurines dated to the same period in a layer beneath the visible structure appears to support this assumption. Mostly produced with the local terracotta, some of the statuettes at Masjed-e Soleyman were also assembled with more resistant Susa-like clay. These circumstances, beyond confirming the active presence of native workshops in Elymais, may indicate the arrival of artisans from the main centres of Susiana during planned periods of the years, presumably connected with trade affairs, as local exhibitions where the merchants could sell their products. Being this study limited to the pottery exclusively from sacred sites, the specific typology of the ceramic material (e.g., fabric, shape, compactness) can be assumed to be related to the religious function of the places which the pottery was produced for. If in urban centres such as Susa the ceramic material was used for everyday purposes, which possibly implied an increased solidity, in the remote and religious areas of Elymais the wares were sought after as votives and temporarily used during religious events.

Historically speaking, ceramic manufacturing in Elymais was characterized by a certain autonomy in material, composition, and typological profiles. Painted pottery during the 5th-4th centuries BC shows a pronounced affinity with Achaemenid ceramic through a local variant of the “Festoon Ware” type, which includes a bluff-orange colour, either brown and black designs composed of festoons, triangles, horizontal and pendant patterns. This scenario may suggest an external control on the ceramic production or a shared evolution along the same highland territory. In contrast, for the Seleuco-Parthian era, Elymaean pottery assemblages reveal an independent direction in physical composition and shapes with exclusive ware typologies only produced in the Zagros-Bakhtiari plateau. At the same time, the concomitant existence of similar models in southern Mesopotamia denoted commercial traffic through the territorial bridge of Susiana, which – due to its geographical position – dominated communications and cultural transmissions between the Iranian highlands, the Greek communities of Susa and the Mesopotamian plan.

10.1.3 Sculpture Art

At the end of the 1st century BC and during the first two centuries AD, Elymais took part in a phase of unprecedented expansion in urbanization and handcraft production that
featured throughout the region. Archaeological surveys in the lowlands and in highlands point out considerable demographic growth, massive investment in irrigation systems and intensified agricultural production, in addition to the constructions on virgin land of unwalled urban settlements which indicated an adaptation to new political factors (§4.3). The contemporaneous artistic flourishing was a clear signal of this stability, and appears intercorrelated with the onset of a new Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty in power.

Elymaean monumental art, and in particular the celebrative rupestrian relief, played a prominent role in the socio-cultural development through the formulation of an original and coherent artistic language, as heir to the millennial traditions of Bronze Age (Elam and Mesopotamia), together with the expression of the new trends of Iron Age (Achaemenid, Seleucid and Parthian). This art, with its ritual and propagandistic images, made possible the transmission of ideological values and themes of the Oriental iconographic heritage, offering later vivifying stimuli to the first monumental Sasanid art.  

10.1.3.1 An Eclectic Approach

In Elymais the sculptural art was marked by a heterogeneous assortment of artistic backgrounds which included the skillful harmonization of influences from preceding local traditions (Elamite), western motifs (Hellenistic), and elements from long-established Near Eastern cultures (Syro-Mesopotamia), that together formed a coherent combination of a new artistic language.

The use and manipulation of other artistic traditions, which appears in highland regions, could only have resulted from an Elymaean royal directive. The semi-nomadic Elymaean people (§4.3) had ample opportunities for exposure to the arts of Mesopotamia, Persia and even central Asia in the course of their annual transhumance. It had been the case during the Achaemenid period when trade exchanges with the Persepolis administration (PFT) and the control over the principal Zagros mountain passes connecting Persepolis, Susa, Esfahan, and Ecbatana, exposed Elymais to peoples of different cultures. Later, political events as the campaigns of Alexander the Great in his journey towards Persepolis (Uxians and likely Kossaeans were sub-tribes of a wider Elymaean satrapy) may have facilitated a

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1936 Wright 1979, p. 127.
1937 Cf. Harper 1981, p. 96, where the rock reliefs of Elymais were considered "the most probable source for the early Sasanian artisans."
1938 Henkelman 2008a, pp. 43-49.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
cultural confrontation as recounted by Classical sources. The Hellenistic period might also have ensured that Elymaean soldiers continued to discover the wider world. Many, for example, who served in the Antiochus III’s campaigns against Rome (battle of Magnesia) – which took them deep into the Greek territory – could have possibly encountered many different artistic traditions to bear witness to once back in Elymais. When the Seleucid authority declined in southwestern Iran, the military campaigns in Susiana and in Mesopotamia further enriched the Elymaean cultural background of external artistic models. In the following years, then, the Elymaeans took control of a system of roads and way stations that facilitated the easy movement of people, objects, and ideas between the centres of the lowlands and the furthest region along the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland.

Of course, Elymaeans remained under the influence of Elamite traditions, given that some of the most significant reliefs of Elymais, such as those at Izeh-Malamir, are sited in concomitance with more ancient Elamite rock works (e.g., Shekaft-e Salman, Kul-e Farah and Shah-Savar). At Hung-e Azhdar the same massive boulder one face was sculpted by an Elamite relief (HA:elam), and the opposite side with an Elymaean relief (HA). Even Achaemenid art contains various elements of Elamite artistic heritage which are becoming more evident as research continues, but it would be challenging to establish whether the Elymaeans inherited these creative forms directly from the Elamites or through the mediation of Achaemenid art repertoire. These connections are highly suggestive of Elymaean identity – that included the development of cultural and linguistic aspects – within the wider process of Elamite-Iranian acculturation at the end of the Neo-Elamite period, and involving, as a result, the ethnogenesis of Persian culture.

According to Vanden Berghe and Schippmann, the limiting of iconographic themes, where immobility and monotony of subjects dominated, the predilection to secular scenes, and the absence of appropriately sacred representations (e.g., mythological narratives) are key factors, which took shape in the Elymaean art from Elamite and Achaemenid traditions. Whereas Elamite rupestrian panels mostly promoted religious themes, especially indicating adoration or offering, and the Achaemenid art scenes had more hieratic and official court topics, appropriate for the glorification of kings, the Elymaean rupestrian scenarios independently developed a noticeable heterogeneity. Even themes of hunting (TS.II:Whβ,}

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1940 For the Uxians: Arr., III.17; Curt., V.3.1-11; Diod. Sic., 67.1-4. For the Kossaens: Curt., V.3.17; Diod. Sic., XVII.68.1
1941 Livy, XXVII.40; see also App. LXVI.6.32.
1942 Álvarez-Mon 2010a, pp. 36-40.
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TS.II:Wc) represented in Elymais seem to be depictions which are closely linked to Achaemenid and Near Eastern artistic models intended to ennable the figure of the sovereign (§7.1.2.6). Perception of religious value, even if not comparable with the sacred atmosphere present in the Elamite ritual scenes (e.g., Kurangun and Kul-e Farah)\(^{1945}\) and later in the Syro-Mesopotamian reliefs at Hatra, Palmyra and Dura-Europos, is corroborated at Tang-e Sarvak by the divine presence in the reliefs of TS.II:Na and TS.II:NW. The first scene indicates a recumbent king Orodes (TS.II:Na:1) while he is invested with a legitimated authority (a wreath) in front of two local divinities (TS.II:Na:2-3) and assisted by a local tutelary deity (TS.II:Na.4). Although the scene is reminiscent of a Syro-Mesopotamian funerary tradition (e.g., Palmyra)\(^{1946}\), the presence of a ring in an investiture scene seems to be part of the Elamite rupestrian repertoire\(^{1947}\). The right section of the relief (TS.II:Na.1-a and TS.II:Na.4) is replicated at Kuh-e Tina (BB:1-2), and partly a Susan-Sorkhab. A second panel, TS.II:NW, instead shows king Orodes (TS.II:NW.1) while he officiates the sacrifice to a local deity impersonated by a beribboned baetyl or bet-El (TS.II:NW.a)\(^{1948}\). This sacred stone is a distinctly non-Iranian element, typical of northern Mesopotamia and Syria\(^{1949}\). Its presence, however, confers to the scene a religious character in the presence of a deity. The diadem circling the baetyl may locally signify that the divinity residing in the bet-El (or “house of god”) was the king of the gods or another deity who concedes the royalty. A sacred scene, then, may also materialize by the conceptual marriage between the rulers officiating the sacrifice (TS.I:S.1-2) and the venerated god (TS.I:W). A similar situation could be considered at Hung-e Kamalvand where HK:2 seems to officiate a sacrifice towards a deity on horseback or a divinized king carrying divine emblems (HK:1). The representation of nine personalities with at least four Heracles-like deities (TB:I.1, II.1, III.1, IV.1) is depicted at Tang-e Botan. This sculpted panel – along with some at Tang-e Sarvak (e.g. TS.II:Wa), Hung-e Azhdar (HA:3-6), and Bard-e Neshandeh (BN:rel) – applies a characteristic of both Elamite and Achaemenid rock art representing a paratactic alignment of personages (kings and dignitaries) on the models, respectively, of Kul-e Farah\(^{1950}\) and Kurangun\(^{1951}\).

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\(^{1945}\) At Kurangun, the central panel describes an enthroned divine couple with horned headgears. The bearded god holds the ring and rod from which streams of water flow and reach the outstretched hands of a prominent figure (probably an Elamite ruler) and the group of worshippers on the left (Álvarez-Mon 2014a, figs. 4a-c). Kul-e Farah I-II and V represent ritual scenes (e.g., animal sacrifices), while KF III and VI indicate religious ceremonies where kneeling individuals carry a large platform with a deity (or king) on top (Álvarez-Mon 2010a, pp. 33-36; idem 2014c, p. 26).

\(^{1946}\) Heyn 2010. On the personage at TS.II:Na, see §7.1.2.6.

\(^{1947}\) At Kurangun (central panel) the bearded god seated on a throne presents a ring and a rod possibly towards an Elamite ruler. Although this scene could represent an Elamite investiture indicated by the acting of receiving the ring from the god (let) to the king (right), its interpretation is still enigmatic (Álvarez-Mon 2014a, p. 761).

\(^{1948}\) See §7.1.2.6.

\(^{1949}\) Hansman (1985, p. 239) defines Syria as “the homeland of the baetyl”.

\(^{1950}\) Álvarez-Mon 2013a.
The impact of Parthian art on the Elymaean iconographic details as the hairstyle, regalia and elaborately-decorated clothing is also considerable. Elymais was able to maintain its native traditions, but at the same time it incorporated figurative and stylistic aspects of Parthian imagery, as shown with the coiffure arranged in two large round bunches with spiral curls at the ears (typical of whoever had a diadem or headwear); the classic halo shape, with hair in concentric curves indicating curl; and the introduction of the tiara used to individualize the various sovereigns. Elymaean kings also remodelled specific elements of previous imagery used by the Arsacids, for instance, the Achaemenid baggy trouser-suit. The veristic attention to detail of costume decorations and on the depiction of adornments perhaps reflected a desire to emphasize a particular rank (affinities with the statues from Hatra). In this case, the rolled-up cloak (similar to a twisted sash) which hangs over the left shoulder of some distinct personages, may have represented a distinct social status, likely as a member of the Elymaean clerical class. On the other hand, the heavily armed TS:D.1 (Pl. XXXI) seems to be identically dressed like an eques cataphractarii of the Parthian army, even though the tradition of armed equestrians can be dated back to the Assyrian reliefs of Assurbanipal (7th century BC).

Typologically similar in motif and realization to the Elymaean rock-reliefs, are several votive images of worshipers, both in relief and in the round, which decorated the terraces of the sanctuary at Bard e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman. The images from the two Elymaean sacred platforms represent for the most part devotees who, dressed in rather poorly-decorated models of Parthian apparel, were standing with a posture that often expressed an adoring attitude (cult hand gesture) in front a fire-burner to officiating a rite. There is also the presence of local king wearing oval tiaras – one of those tiaras is double diademed as TS.II:NW.a – and high-born personages dressed in finely-embroidered tunics, adorned with Parthian jewellery (e.g., torque), on the model of the sculpture from Hatra (2nd century AD). Similarly to Syro-Mesopotamian artistic repertoire, almost all the

1951 Ibid., 2014a.
1952 For a similar system during the Sasanid period, see Sinisi 2014, pp. 46-47.
1954 For the statues from Hatra, see Mathiesen 1992/2, cat. nos. 201A, 205, 207.
1955 Ghirshman 1962, p. 51, fig. 63C.
1956 Reade 1983.
1957 Pl. XVI.c., j.
1958 Pl. XVI.j.
1959 E.g., BN: Pl. VII.e; MS: Pls. XVI.b. See also Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXXIX.1-2.
figures are rigidly frontal. The artistry is mostly simpler in Elymais, a fact which may indicate a local production far from the centres of the Parthian court\textsuperscript{1960}. In this context, similarly to the naked personages at \textit{TB}, the presence of a round statue depicting Heracles who strangles the Nemean lion at Masjed-Soleyman\textsuperscript{1961} reveals a Classical (Greek-Roman) influence, even if more in motif than in style.

The discovery of Hellenistic-influenced sculpture of excellent quality and the use of white marble at Shami seems to reveal the presence of local ateliers with a high level of specialization (§6.3.7), as also shown by the depiction \textit{HA:1}, and adequately trained by Greek craftsmen. Since the Hellenistic art only maintained a high artistic level if directly transmitted, which made the Iranian-Hellenism more a “royal affair”\textsuperscript{1962}, this implied the presence of the court or religious environments in place\textsuperscript{1963}. The absence of an inhabited centre around Shami\textsuperscript{1964} makes it reasonable to assume the presence of relevant urban settlements in neighbouring Izeh-Malamir\textsuperscript{1965}, including possibly a royal residence, which may have been related to the sacred function of the sanctuary at Shami. From this perspective, the life-size bronze statue (Pl. XX.a) appears to exhibit a naturalistic vision typical of the Hellenistic language combined with the strict hieratism of the Parthian/Palmyrene statuary\textsuperscript{1966}.

Similarly, as part of Elymaean art, the monetary motifs reveal origins from the Hellenistic culture of the Seleucid era (e.g. series of the Early Kamnaskirids). Being presumably bequeathed to the successive epochs from artisans and engravers, the coin manufacture became a decisive component of that eclecticism, which permeates the Elymaean culture throughout its artistic aspects (religious architectures, rupestrian art, linguistic elements). All the formal agreements, figurative features, and stylistic processes were subject to a certain degree of revising during the Elymaean-Arsacid period, even though Elymais unquestionably showed its local individuality in an innovative style, which was able to absorb the naturalism and symbology from the Greeks and the linearism and royal iconography from the Parthians. Principally, starting from the 2nd century AD (Orodes II), the tiara was introduces as royal paraphernalia in order to distinguish the Elymaean kings. Its \textit{baetyl}-like shape may suggest an origin in the Syro-Mesopotamian region (e.g., Hatra).

\textsuperscript{1960} Downey 1986.
\textsuperscript{1961} Pl. XVI.h.
\textsuperscript{1962} Melikian-Chirvani 1998, p. 179.
\textsuperscript{1963} Callieri 2015, p. 15.
\textsuperscript{1964} Messina 2015b, p. 200.
\textsuperscript{1965} Wright 1979, p. 116.
\textsuperscript{1966} Seyrig 1939a, pp. 177-181; Mathiesen 1989, p. 120.
Accordingly, the royal imagery was adapted from the beginning, and religious figurative language was readjusted to represent local deities.

The continual research in the sculpted scene (both rock-reliefs of singular statues) and numismatic royal portraits (in particular, Kamnaskires-Orodes, Orodes II and Phraates) of frontality had the function to guarantee some level of solemnity even to the relatively modest artistry (Pl. LVII.3). More than from an Iranian tradition, or developed by Greek workshops, the frontal representation appears the innovative invention of a Syro-Mesopotamian milieu during the Parthian era. As already suggested, it seems to materialize the requirement of sentimental synergy between the sculptural subject (divine or human) and the observers.

In making selective reference to different artistic traditions, the Elymaean art was not accidental but in accordance with the context of its production and decisions made by the artists and patrons responsible for its creation. The result of this creative work provides the necessary knowledge to investigate and better understand the social conditions behind the production and deployment process at a determined time and space.

10.1.3.2 Experience of Space

Elymaean rupestrian works represent the most valuable artistic production during the Parthian era, but to better understand their impact on society and significance, as a vehicular and propagandistic function in kingship, it is important to spatially locate them within the surrounding environmental context. From this perspective, the rock-reliefs may demarcate an area already considered for some archaic reason as religiously relevant, or could be the agent which transmutes a natural environment into a sacred space through the value of imagery. The trait d’union between the culture and nature was intermediated by the rupestrian manufacture.

The recent study of Álvarez-Mon and Canepa has shown the importance of the topographical location in relation to the conception of open-air sanctuaries and rock-reliefs during the Elamite (e.g. Kurangun) and Achaemenid period (e.g., Bisotun). Within its inherent nature a sculpted panel is the bearer of a message, but when contextualized within a

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1972 Canepa 2014.
meaningful natural location it becomes the bearer of a cultural identity. A dynastic memorial or an anciantly sacred place approaches and emphasizes with their symbolic contents the implication of the visual communication, which suddenly materializes to the observer the significance (religious, historical, political) correlated to the site\textsuperscript{1973}. In combination with the sculpted scenes, the associated epigraphic texts offer a connection between the cultural meaning of the representations and the real historical situation of their patrons, permanently affecting the visual impact and message of a rupestrian scene and its location\textsuperscript{1974}, which implicate, among several purposes, a propagandistic content. In Elymais, the rupestrian art seems to play a major role in the transmission and validation of royal power by adopting figurative references to local traditions within long-established influential sites.

Despite the political program often aimed to present the legacy of a new power, the ultimate significance of the reliefs was their permanent relationship with the sacredness of the mountains. Noteworthy, the Elymaeans seem to have followed the Achaemenid tradition to combine the rock carvings with the Iranian religious practice of using \textit{astudans} to enclose human remains (\textit{Sarh:ast.1-2})\textsuperscript{1975}. As previously described for the sacred architecture, the presence of cult sites (open-air sanctuaries) within a natural location with a symbolic and not casual aesthetic significance was common in ancient Iran. In particular, in Elam, the rock-reliefs designated a religious space illustrating cultic scenes or ritual performances since the early 2\textsuperscript{nd} to the first half of the 1\textsuperscript{st} millennium BC\textsuperscript{1976}. The contents of the sculpted scenes as the product of a calibrated decision between the patrons and the artisans responsible for its artistic creation – permitted delineating the ritual interaction between the visual subject and the worship activity officiate at the site often through the construction of small-scale architectural structures. In Elymais, this is the case of Hung-e Azhdar where recent excavations in front of the Elymaean panel have revealed two small terraces (radiocarbon dated from \textit{ca.} 150 BC to 75 AD)\textsuperscript{1977} in undressed stones with offerings, such as bronze arrows, bells, and terracotta figurines\textsuperscript{1978}. On the mountain cliff immediately south of the reliefs, a small cave seems to be connected to ritual practices of the small open-air sanctuary ($\S6.4$)\textsuperscript{1979}. The archaeological evidence, therefore, indicates that the site was occupied since prehistoric (cave) and, in addition to hosting a sacred area, Elamite times (\textit{HA:elam}),

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{1973} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 63.
\item \textsuperscript{1974} \textit{Ibid.} 2015c, pp. 28-30.
\item \textsuperscript{1975} See $\S7.2.4$.
\item \textsuperscript{1976} Rock reliefs in the Izh-Malamir region: Kul-e Farah (6); Shekaff-e Salman (4); Hung-e Azhdar (1); Shah-Savar (1). Rock reliefs in Fars province: Kurangun (1) and Naqsh-e Rustam (1). For a comprehensive survey, see Vanden Berghe 1983.
\item \textsuperscript{1977} Messina 2014, p. 336.
\item \textsuperscript{1978} \textit{Ibid.} 2015a.
\item \textsuperscript{1979} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 70.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
outlining the antiquity of the place and the preservation of its religious function\textsuperscript{1980}. Finally, the fact that a later king (Kamnaskires-Orodes) may have added his relief (\textit{HA:3-6}) re-sculpting a pre-existing scene which only survived on the left side (\textit{HA:1-2}) indicates the manipulation in the significance of a popular and ancient sanctuary to satisfy new political requirements (the establishment of a new dynasty). The choice of the relief (Pls. XXXIV-XXXV) and the section to re-sculpt by the new dynasty was not accidental but carefully assessed in association with the personage \textit{HA:1}, likely a Kamnaskirid (II\textsuperscript{?}), which could even be considered an explanation for his name designation as Kamnaskires-Orodes\textsuperscript{1981}. It can be proposed that the name Kamnaskires-Orodes may be somehow associated with the patron of the artistic renovation, depicted in the right side of the scene (\textit{HA:3-6}), with the local memory of an evocative king visualizing on the panel the result of a beneficial collaboration or inherited blood ties between the two royal families (Kamnaskirids and Arsacids/Orodids).

In a broader perspective, the rock reliefs developed accordingly and autonomously from the ritual context. It means that the addition or removal of a scene and inscriptions may modify the message of the reliefs and the significance of the site\textsuperscript{1982}.

\textbf{10.1.3.3 Art and Power}

To better understand the development of the monumental art in Elymais, in particular the rupestrian works, it is important to historically frame the first two centuries AD within which rock-reliefs were instrumental in creating regional topographies of power. It is indispensable to remember that the Elymaean sculptural art emerged at the stage when a new political force assumed control over the region that was trying to maintain a substantial ideological and cultural continuity with the previous dynasty in order to legitimize its legacy of power. As revealed by archaeological data\textsuperscript{1983}, a period of unprecedented stability and economic progress was experienced in the lowland and highland regions of Elymais during this time, likely indicating a change in the political chessboard of southwestern Iran. The numismatic evidence then shows how Elymaean royal coinage was marked by Parthian artistic influences, including the onomastics, which was reported on the coin legend with a new Aramaic-like writing system\textsuperscript{1984}. The situation presents a new dynasty of Elymaean rulers with Arsacid names written in an Arsacid-like language under whose control Elymais

\textsuperscript{1980} \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 81-88.
\textsuperscript{1981} See §7.3.2.1. Final Considerations.
\textsuperscript{1982} Canepa 2014, p. 65.
\textsuperscript{1984} Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 18-19, 83ff. See §9.1.5.3.
had a period of political tranquillity – as demonstrated by the new construction of unwalled villages – considerably increasing its population and agricultural productivity. This ruling elite guaranteed, therefore, a stabilization of the relationship with the Parthian central authority of Ctesiphon and, at the same time, promoted closer blood ties with the Elymaean aristocracy (dynastic marriage) invoking local traditions. An example is the case mentioned above of a king assuming the name Kamnaskires-Orodes, which immediately recalls a direct connection with the first attested dynasty in Elymais (i.e., Kamnaskirids) for one of the first Elymaean- dynast of the new Orodid royal family in Elymais.

Within this socio-political scenario, the simultaneously flourishing of rupestrian art – which would be tempted to label as Orodid art due to the similarities in themes, messages and artistic realizations – focused on defining the royal identity, may suggest that the new sovereigns fervently promoted the development of rock art to legitimize their power. However, the mere presence of a sculpted scene would have been ineffectual if it was not placed within an appropriate location. A sacred space that had a evocative significant to the ordinary people (e.g., Tang-e Sarvak, Bard-e Neshandeh) or a commemorative site of previous dynasties (e.g., Hung-e Azhdar) became vital from this point of view. As a matter of fact, the vicinity of the rock reliefs to devoted places is critical to interpreting the associated ritual practices performed. The decisions in the process of production to this new artistic movement to make these visual references were not taken in isolation but in the expectation of inevitable outcome. The Orodids manipulated cult contents connected to the kingship (e.g., investiture, sacrifices in front of altars, victory celebrations, royal hunting) from earlier traditions (Elamite, Achaemenid, Syro-Mesopotamian) in order to provide foundation for their authority and to persuade people to perform ritual reverence to the new dynasty. The site where the rites are officiated enables to seal this ideology, this covenant between worshippers and sovereigns, and to give a visible and formal legitimacy to royalty. Sculpted scenes are an explicit visual reference that symbolically strengthens the space of ritual activities: the reliefs are not only a stagecraft or the backdrop of the ritual space within the natural landscape. Instead, they are integrated illustrations of a commemorative journey. In agreement with Henkelman, this may be explicated by the procession path of Tang-e

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1987 See §9.1.5.3
1988 Canepa 2014, p. 64.
Sarvak where the fourteen rock-reliefs should be interpreted as a single entity rather than a series of distinct narrative scenes.

In the stylistic variety, a substantially formative process and common development documents a work of conscious recapturing and reworking of a repertoire of pre-existing images and symbolic meanings. This nucleus is re-elaborated in the various artisanal centres and is further re-generated, enriching it, at different times, with inputs from several exogenous and endogenous contexts, from political or trade contacts. It is important to note how at this stage certain regional trends are stated and how art schools express different levels of adherence to the same repertoire. This may be the case to explain some differences in quality between the Hellenistic-influenced statuary from the main centre of Izeh-Malamir (e.g., Shami statues; \textit{HA:1-2}) or the other more peripheral cult places in Elymais. The stylistic divergences also reflect ideological distinction in purpose. If the sculptural works at Shami, for example, gave preference to royal representations where the highest quality was probably required, the isolated centres as Bard-e Neshandeh mostly provide votive productions (e.g., \textit{ex-voto} offerings, worshippers portrayals) being probably used only during certain times of the year concomitantly with important religious festivities as indicated by the temporary production of pottery\textsuperscript{1990}. Similarly, even the discrepancies in scripts between Tang-e Sarvak and Tang-e Botan\textsuperscript{1991} or between coin legends and rock-reliefs\textsuperscript{1992} may be considered as the result of these regional variations.

Besides, despite its innovative formal aspects, and in some non-canonical traits, which intended to satisfy the requirements of local elites, the Elymaean art lies within the sculptural Parthian tradition\textsuperscript{1993}.

In this association of artistic material as royal assets used to promulgate a new identity of power, the monetary production represents the first step to be directly connected with the formal artistic expressions of the dynasty. Coins have the advantage of circulating in time and space through a chronological span of \textit{ca.} 400 years in Elymaean history, which they cover in a most representative way. They have also the disadvantage of being produced with a particular destination of use, and have a limited number of iconographical and iconological

\textsuperscript{1990}Cf. Martinez-Sève 2004, p. 197. Ghirshman proposed the presence of a village (“lower town”) ca. 200 m west of the sacred terraces at Bard-e Neshandeh without providing a precise documentation (Ghirshman 1976, pp. 9-10). Similarly, he reported the existence of an urban agglomerate south-eastern of Masjed-e Soleyman (\textit{ibid.} 1950, p. 209; \textit{idem} 1969, p. 482; \textit{idem} 1976, pp. 55, 61,72-73, 190).
\textsuperscript{1991}Bivar and Shaked 1964, fig. 1.
\textsuperscript{1992}Henning 1952, pp. 165-166.
\textsuperscript{1993}Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, pp. 94-98.
patterns, because of their nature and size. The coin issues brought to light in Elymais (Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman, Susa), were created in consequence of royal commissions, and are by contrast informative at various levels. Elymaean coinage employs a visual lexicon (including onomastics) whose regal portrayals – even though maintaining some distinctive local elements – are depicted like Parthian kings. The new *Elymaean-Arsacid* dynasty of the Orodids presents itself immediately through a royal numismatic imagery that they were more familiar with, reinforcing the supposition of their arrival as possible *secundogenitures* of the Arsacid house of Ctesiphon. The emission of a new monetary typology is the first element to indicate the desire to reflect the pattern of a new authority on the territory. The simultaneous appearance of Aramaic-like legends recording Arsacid names, which replaced the previous Greek characters, confirms the new political circumstances. The expression “son of Orodes” engraved onto the legends may just indicate a genealogical bond or even the identification as a member of the royal family (i.e., Orodids). It is assumable that the new Orodid kings in Elymais, starting with Orodes I, in their multi-media activity of propaganda adopted the traditional divine symbology (sun, crescent, star) used in Mesopotamia and Elam more than two millennia before, often in the more stylized form of crescent and pellet. Being associated to the Kamnaskirid traditional anchor-like emblem, the new royal symbology conveyed to the native population the concept that the power of new *Elymaean-Arsacid* dynasty was legitimate through the authority of long-established local deities. A similar strategic promulgation was used by the Parthian kings starting with Mithridates I after his conquest of Mesopotamia (ca. 148 BC).

In short, as a result of an Arsacid policy, the presence of a cadet branch of the royal house at Ctesiphon allowed a certain degree of self-expression and autonomy. The Orodid kings were able to conceive on their coinage an new iconography from an evident mixture of Hellenistic, Syro-Mesopotamian and Parthian elements which, without being slavishly replicated, were used to express local traditions through a creative process of transformation and reorganization of their forms.

The affirmation of power through art takes place at different levels, with verbal and visual communication. Power, in fact, manifests itself through tangible components, such as the patronage of architectural and artistic works, the repertoire of handicraft productions that, while linked to market demands, express and divulge the pre-identified values and, of course,
the monetization. This material is nevertheless required to complete the ideological transmission in order to be a legitimated power and needs to vehiculate “immaterial” elements such as the formulation of symbolic and visual pathways, repeated gestures, sensory involvement, the spread and appropriation of archaic images, visual formulas and common traditions that constitute local collective memory that the power intends to define.

10.2 Elymaean Religion: an Insight

As depositary of the millennial Elamite tradition, Elymais was on the trade crossroads of the main passages across the Zagros mountains, as well as bordering – and often annexing – Susiana. The latter provided an ideal meeting place able to introduce to different cultural poles of influences. Also facilitated by a semi-nomadic attitude of its people, Elymais might have offered a suitable environment where various religious beliefs expressed in many artistic forms were interwoven, or more likely only their visual imagery. In general, external religious representations were not arbitrarily chosen but reflected a system of actual convictions. This faith was not imposed on the local population, but selectively preferred by it and mixed with local rituals.

10.2.1 Historico-Religious Digression

Starting from the mid-3rd millennium BC, the area of southwestern Iran (Khuzestan) was dominated by the Elamites, even though the Mesopotamian cultural ascendancy channelled through the Susiana was considerable. The fact that most of the material evidence came from Susa and its lowland surroundings (e.g., Choga Zanbil and Haft Tepe), which includes territories under a strong Mesopotamian impact, makes it harder to extrapolate Elamite aspects distinctively. The first names of deities in the region appear in a Sumerian list from Abu Salabikh where the term "lugal-NIM, literally “god king (of) Elam” and “nin-shushinak, literally “god lord (of) Susa”, were recorded. Elamite religion was polytheistic as indicated by Sumerian, Akkadian and later Elamite texts which contain the names of over 200 deities. The situation in Susiana revealed that the divinities honoured at Susa were mainly of Syro-Mesopotamian origin (e.g., En, Enki, Ishtar, Shamash, Sin), which seems to reflect general socio-political circumstances of strong Mesopotamian influence over Susa during the 3rd millennium BC. After a timid appearance of Elamite gods at the beginning of Middle

2000 Ibid.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

Elamite period (15th century BC)\(^{2001}\), the construction of the religious compound of Choga Zanbil by Untash-Napirisha (ca. 1,340-1,300) provoked a significant shift with the introduction of Elamite gods within the Susian pantheon. Inscribed bricks from the site show that half of the twenty-six gods mentioned belonged to the Suso-Mesopotamian cult; the other half was Elamite\(^{2002}\). From this point, the “Elamization” of the Susian pantheon had a similar trend until the arrival of Assurbanipal (646 BC), who removed nineteen statues of deities with apparently Susian-Elamite names (e.g., Inshushinak, Pinikir, Hutran)\(^{2003}\).

By the time of the Achaemenids (6th century BC), evidence of new cult practices, unrelated to any traditions present before in Iran, were attested in connection with the Indo-Iranian main god Ahuramazda, joined by his divine companions Anahita and Mithra\(^{2004}\). In particular, the latter was employed as a theophoric name for common people at Persepolis in Elamite and Aramaic texts\(^{2005}\). Following Alexander the Great’s conquest of the Achaemenid Empire, Greek deities or conflations of Greek and Iranian gods were introduced\(^{2006}\), as archaeologically documented by, for instance, Bisotun (reclining Heracles relief and Greek inscription); the Frataraka temple at Persepolis, with inscribed dedications to Zeus Megistos, Athena Basileia, Apollo, Artemis and Helios\(^{2007}\); and in Elymais, at Masjed-e Soleyman (Heracles fighting the Nemean lion), Tang-e Botan (TB:I.1, II.1, III.1, IV.1) and Tang-e Sarvak (TS.I:W). The Greeks had a pragmatic attitude towards religious matters adopting foreign cultic practices without hesitation and incorporating them in their doctrinal life. In reality, this formation process was not only a Greek peculiarity, but it appeared more as a tendency of all the Near-Eastern or ancient religiosity in general, since the religions were centred on the cult more than the belief, and the worship itself was not exclusive but could be attributed to more deities, even through identification processes. Piety consisted of complying with a set of formerly established rules and behaviours that aimed to honour the gods and respect their prerogatives and the place they occupied in the world\(^{2008}\).


\(^{2002}\) Steve 1967.

\(^{2003}\) Aynard 1957, pp. 54-55.

\(^{2004}\) According to the PFT tablets, where offerings to Ahuramazda – and other gods traditionally considered Elamite – are reported (Henkelman 2008a), unlike Mitra and Anahita who, instead, are not attested, the chief Mazdean god appears to be treated like other deities, as if there was no element of diversity or novelty. However, it is important to emphasize the administrative nature of the documents: equal treatment does not necessarily correspond to an ideological point of view, as evidenced by the real Achaemenid inscriptions (Basello 2016). See also, inscriptions of Artaxerxes II (404-359 BC) at Hamadan (A²Ha) and Susa (A²Sa) in Lecoq 1997, p. 269.


\(^{2006}\) For example, Boyce 1975, pp. 100-101; Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 44.


\(^{2008}\) Bruit Zaidman 2001, p. 212.
10.2.2 Contribution of Ancient Sources

The Classical texts and the Bible are the only written sources to mention the presence and the names of some Elymaean deities in relation to the temples where they were worshipped. The Greco-Roman sources record the existence of three temples in Elymais. The first episode is the attempted raid on the sanctuary of Belos/Bel/Zeus by Antiochus III in 187 BC\textsuperscript{2009}, where the Seleucid king lost his life. The temple is described as “a large store of silver and gold”\textsuperscript{2010} which may have indicated the importance of the god within the Elymaean religious culture. Being designated as Belos\textsuperscript{2011}/Bel-Zeus\textsuperscript{2012}/Elymaean Jupiter\textsuperscript{2013}, it seems to imply that the Classical author saw a close relationship between the western (Zeus/Jupiter) and eastern (Bel/Belos) god, as probably unintentionally outlined by Diodorus Siculus. The Greek historian in two places refers to the same Elymaean temple, first associating it to Zeus\textsuperscript{2014} and then to Bel\textsuperscript{2015} indicating that early in the 1\textsuperscript{st} century BC the interrelation between these two gods was renowned. Indeed, a syncretism between Zeus and Bel (under the name of Zeus-Belos) was a well-known phenomenon even in Mesopotamia and Syria\textsuperscript{2016}.

It has often been proposed the inscription \textit{TB:II.insc.3} at Shimbar as evidence for a cult of Bel in Elymais. The term BL’RW was interpreted by Bivar and Shaked as a compound name translatable as “the altar of Bel”\textsuperscript{2017}. Although commonly accepted, this translation could be mere conjecture\textsuperscript{2018} It would be probably safer to consider BL’RW a compound proper name in the lines of BLDWS’ (i.e., Bel-dusha in \textit{TS:insc.2-5} at Tang-e Sarvak)\textsuperscript{2019}, which would imply the practice of using the particle BL (i.e., Bel) as a distinctive theophoric term for relevant personages (priest’).

In two decades Antiochus IV undertook a second raid towards an Elymaean sanctuary with a similar unsuccessful outcome. The temple is recorded as respectively dedicated to Artemis\textsuperscript{2020}/Venus\textsuperscript{2021}/Diana\textsuperscript{2022}/Nanaia\textsuperscript{2023}/Anahita\textsuperscript{2024}. All these goddesses are associated

\textsuperscript{2009} Diod. Sic., XXVIII.3; Str., XVI.1.18; Justin, XXXII.2; Porph. \textit{FGrH}, II, no. 260; Euseb., 253; St. Jerome, XI.17-19
\textsuperscript{2010} Diod. Sic., XXIX.15.
\textsuperscript{2011} Str., XVI.1.18.
\textsuperscript{2012} Diod. Sic., XXIX.15; XXVIII.3.
\textsuperscript{2013} Justin, XXXII.2.
\textsuperscript{2014} Diod. Sic. XXVIII.3.
\textsuperscript{2015} Ibid., XXIX.15.
\textsuperscript{2016} Downey 2004.
\textsuperscript{2017} Bivar and Shaked 1964, pp. 276-277.
\textsuperscript{2019} For Bel-dusha as a compound name, see Henning 1952, p. 172.
\textsuperscript{2020} Polyb., XXXI.9.1; Jos., XII.358-359
\textsuperscript{2021} App., 11.66.
with the fecundity and procreation, and are patronesses of war, which seems to lead to an identification with Nanaia. The cult of Nanaia, goddess of Mesopotamian origin—it was worshipped alongside Ishtar especially at Uruk—was introduced in Elam probably in the 3rd millennium BC and by the Achaemenid time she became the main goddess of Susa, being probably associated with Anahita (river-goddess connected with fertility). Concerning the Elymaean episode, Holleaux stated that the Iranian Anahita might have been represented in both Greek and Roman sources with either Aphrodite or Artemis. If this were the case, it would be curious that Classical writers such as Polybius and Arrian, who were well informed about the cult of Anaitis (Anahita), would still have chosen to refer to Artemis or Aphrodite as the deity assigned to the Elymaean temple in question. On the other hand, Hoffmann, referring to Biblical texts, identified that the Semitic goddess Nana/Nanaia would have been most credited for this episode. Nanaia is the most attested deity in Greek inscriptions of Susa which probably were originally affixed in her main temple in the city.

The last mention of Elymaean deities appears in a passage of Strabo when a Parthian king succeeded where both of the Antiochi—father and son—had failed, namely in pillaging temples in Elymais. One sanctuary was consecrated to Athena and the other to Artemis. Many scholars have attributed these actions to Mithridates I and his presumed invasion of Susiana around 140/139 BC, of which Justin also reports. However, there is
the possibility that such an event occurred much later, as indicated by Nöldeke more than a century ago.\footnote{Nöldeke 1874, p. 192. See also Potts 1999a, pp. 394-395.}

While the temple of Athena curiously has not attracted the attention of many scholars,\footnote{Harmatta (1981, p. 207) briefly mentioned the temple of Athena in Elymais hazarding an association with the sanctuary of Masjed-e Soleyman.} there has been considerable interest in the temple of Artemis (also called τά Ἀζάρας\footnote{Hare and Thirlwall 1833, 192. The link is made between τά Ἀζάρας (τα Azara) and τά Ζάρας (Zara). This hypothesis has been proposed for the first time by Isaac Casaubon (1559-1614 AD) who – using as reported by Hesychius (5th cent. AD) in his lexicon under the heating Ζάρας – corrected the name Azara in Zara (in notis p. 744), the term used by the Persians to indicate the goddess Diana.}, possibly the same involved in the failure of Antiochus IV. There is an apparent connection between the names ta Azara and Zaratis, with the latter being considered a different attestation of Anahita.\footnote{Rawlinson 1839, p. 86. More precisely, Rawlinson identifies this sanctuary with “the great fire-temple of Marin, upon the confines of Fars and Khuzistan that is described in the eleventh century as one of the most famous of the Magian place of worship.” The “fire temple of Marin” may be identified with the fire temple of Esfahan. It is a Sasanid archaeological complex located on a hill about 9 km west of city centre of Esfahan (Iran), called by the Arab geographers as Marabin or Maras. According to local tradition, instead, the temple went back to the time of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes (5th cent. BC).} In contrast, Rawlinson identified the name Azara as a simple derivation of the Persian word for “fire” (azar), assuming this temple to be “the holy refuges\footnote{More precisely, Rawlinson identifies this sanctuary with “the great fire-temple of Marin, upon the confines of Fars and Khuzistan that is described in the eleventh century as one of the most famous of the Magian place of worship.” The “fire temple of Marin” may be identified with the fire temple of Esfahan. It is a Sasanid archaeological complex located on a hill about 9 km west of city centre of Esfahan (Iran), called by the Arab geographers as Marabin or Maras. According to local tradition, instead, the temple went back to the time of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes (5th cent. BC).},” the “Asylum Persarum,” which is described by Pliny on the river Hedyphon.\footnote{Pliny XVI.31.135.}

Probably most of the scholars have neglected – unlike Hoffmann – the testimonies of Arab geographers such as al-Muqaddasi (10th cent. AD) and Yaqut al-Hamawi (12th cent. AD), who mention the existence of a town called Azar near Ram-Hormuz on the route to Ahwaz.\footnote{Sprenger 1864, p. 65; Hoffmann 1880, p. 133.} Al-Muqqadasi also reports of a town called Hazar or Azar Sabur near Shiraz.\footnote{Le Strange 1905, p. 280.} Finally, among the different districts of Shimashki mentioned in the historical inscription of Shu-Sin (end 3rd - beginning 2nd millennium BC), is the attested area in the central Zagros as a political unit named Azahar (A-za-ha-ar\footnote{Regarding the text of the inscription, see Steinkeller 2007, p. 216, footnote 8.}).

In conclusion, this information is neither sufficient, nor precise enough to establish a connection between the temples mentioned in the sources and the remains of the Elymaean sacred structures at Masjed-e Soleyman, Bard-e Neshandeh and Shami, even though the...
material evidence gathered during the excavations demonstrates their importance and renown. It is likely that at least some of the sanctuaries mentioned in the sources correspond to those identified in the field.

### 10.2.3 Support in Material Evidence

In the absence of local inscriptions or written texts, the most specific religious records in Elymais are sculpted panels. Regarding the imagery of Elymaean deities, they are generally depicted as enthroned on a pedestal or podium (TS.II:Na.2-3; TS.II:Wa.1, 8; BB:2; SM:1; Al:2) wearing diadem with floating ribbon ends over the shoulders (naked personages of Tang-e Botan), distinctive headgears (e.g. polos crown) sometimes with a protrusion on top (TS.II:Na.3-4), or rayed halo (TS.II:Na:2), and long ankle-length tunic (also in the depictions of Elamite gods\(^{2046}\)), which is distinctive for the Syro-Mesopotamian imagery of deities from Hatra, Palmyra, and Dura Europos\(^{2047}\). The seated divinities hold in the right hand something like a long thin object similar either to a rayed banner (possibly indicating a sun divinity) like in BB:2, a stylized cornucopia (TS.II:Na.4; Sh:3), or a spear (TS.II:Na.3; SM:1; Al:2; BN:capit.1; Masjed-e Soleyman’s plaquettes\(^{2048}\)). From an iconographical perspective, the figure BZ:1 exemplifies the asymmetrical position of a round fastener on the right of his chest is identical to the model represented at Palmyra (divine triad panel of the Temple of Baalshamin)\(^{2049}\) and Dura-Europos (Iarhibol stele)\(^{2050}\) where it is a component of the deity apparel. In addition, the absence of weapons and the presence of gravity-defying ribbons may suggest the divine depiction, as at Tang-e Botan (TB:I.1, II.1, III.1, IV.1), Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Wa.1, 8), Palmyra\(^{2051}\) and in Bactria\(^{2052}\). Indicated as a non-anthropomorphic sacred image, the baetyl-stone (TS.II:WN.a) with a double diadem (emblem of kingship)\(^{2053}\) may reflect some local cult belief or practice – possibly imported by the Syrian or Palmyrene religious sphere\(^{2054}\) – iconographically revisited to locally satisfy ritual requirements. The naked representation is also a hint for a supernatural being either male (TB:I.1, II.1, III.1,

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2046 For Kurangun (central scene) and other example, see Álvarez-Mon 2014a, figs. 4a-c, 5b, 6c-e.
2047 Kawami 1987, pp. 90-91, with related bibliography.
2048 Pl. XVII.i, j.
2049 Image at: archeologie.culture.fr/palmyre/fr/temple-baalshamin
2050 Downey 1977, cat. no. 60.
2051 Colledge 1976, pp. 46, 139, fig. 27, pl. 35.
2052 Lukonin 1967, pl. 36.
2053 Mathiesen 1992/1, pp. 67-68; idem 1992/2, p. 183, no. 136. Having no parallels in Iranian art, the closest example of beribboned baetyl is the one crowned by a Nike at Gali Zerdak in Iraqi Kurdistan dating to the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD (Kawami 2013, p. 760).
2054 Kawami 2013, p. 761.
IV.1, TS.I:W, Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{2055} or female (terracotta figurines\textsuperscript{2056}). In this case, they were often enriched with element borrowed by the Hellenistic (club, winged-ankles, lion skin, strangled lion) or Oriental (bracelets around the wrists)\textsuperscript{2057}.

A further corpus of evidence is constituted by coins. An enthroned bearded god with a sceptre (or spear)\textsuperscript{2058}, and a beardless deity seated on omphalos (Pl. LV.1)\textsuperscript{2059} are the main divine representations, which follow the conventions elaborated by the Hellenistic art, on the silver tetrodrachms (reverse) of the Early and Late Kamnaskirids. Starting with the Late Kamnaskirids, however, and prevalently diffuse during the Orodid dynasty, sun, moon crescent, star symbols appear on several Elymaean monetary issues (bronze drachmas), even combining each other. Engraved on the coin obverse and/or reverse, these motifs could have had religious connotation associated with the Semitic cultures of Mesopotamia\textsuperscript{2060}. With the coins of Kamnaskires V, a star is engraved on the king’s portrayal above the anchor (Pl. LV.1)\textsuperscript{2061}. The Assyrian seals often represented with a star the planet Venus, symbol of the war and love Semitic goddess Ishtar\textsuperscript{2062}. According to Hansman, who considered as probably the presence of an Ishtar cult at Susa, the depiction of a star in the Elamite Susa would have variously identified Ishtar, Inanna\textsuperscript{2063} and Pinikir\textsuperscript{2064}.

In the monetary production of Orodes I, a small solar disc with/without rays, and a crescent moon below, are present on the obverse above the anchor-like symbol. The same combination of emblems (sun and moon) is typical of the Mesopotamian cylinder seals of the 3\textsuperscript{rd}-2\textsuperscript{nd} millennium BC\textsuperscript{2065}. The Semitic solar (rayed) disc is usually identified with Shamash, patron to justice\textsuperscript{2066}. In Elam the deity of law is impersonated by the local sun-god Nahhunte\textsuperscript{2067} and apparently shared with the main god of Susa Inshushinak\textsuperscript{2068}. The crescent moon may instead have identified as the Semitic moon-divinity Sin\textsuperscript{2069} or his Elamite version.

\textsuperscript{2055} Pl. XVI.h. See Ghirshman 1976, Pls. LXX.1-2, LXXXVI.2, CXXX.3 (archaeological context unknown); Curtis 1989, p. 59, fig. 69.
\textsuperscript{2056} Pl. XV.c. See Ghirshman 1976, Pls. CXI.1-3; CXII. 1; CXIV.1-2; CXV.3-5.
\textsuperscript{2057} Curtis 1989, p. 15, fig. 14.
\textsuperscript{2058} Van’t Haaff 2007: Kamnaskires I (type 1.1); Kamnaskires III (e.g., type 2.1); Kamnaskires IV (e.g., types 8.1-8.2).
\textsuperscript{2059} \textit{Ibid.}: Kamnaskires I/II (type 1A.1); Kamnaskires II (type 2.1).
\textsuperscript{2060} Hansman 1985.
\textsuperscript{2061} Van’t Haaff 2007, type 9.
\textsuperscript{2062} Frankfort 1939, Pls. XXXIV.h, j; XXXV.a.
\textsuperscript{2063} For Inanna-Ishtar, see Saggs 1963, pp. 332-334; Harris 1991.
\textsuperscript{2064} For Pinikir as “Commander of Heaven”, see Hinz 1950, p. 287, no. 12.
\textsuperscript{2065} Frankfort 1939, Pl. XXV.e.
\textsuperscript{2066} Tallqvist 1938, pp. 456-457.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

From Orodes I onwards, the *Elymaean-Arsacid* kings complemented the anchor-like symbol emblematic of the Kamnaskirid dynasty with the Mesopotamian and Elamite crescent and pellet, used in cases where the sun or star is simplified to a single dot\(^{2070}\).

10.2.4 Pantheon

Elymaean religion was polytheistic and autochthonous. The deities honoured in Elymais were native, likely inherited from the Elamite culture (in turn, often influenced by the Mesopotamian tradition)\(^{2071}\) present and rooted in the region for millennia\(^{2072}\). These were named out of necessity with Greek and Roman denominations probably due to the absence of local sources and by the inadequate knowledge of the Classical authors. The Elymaean pantheon was composed of distinct divine personalities, which resulted from different syntheses depicted on the basis of imagery elements belonging to external cultures (Elamite, Greek and Syro-Mesopotamian), *syncretically* revisited in a well-defined local style\(^{2073}\). The factors of plurality and versatility, between the various components of the complex divine sphere, endorsed and favoured the development of a broad cultural interpenetration. Especially in the arts, this could mostly be performed on an iconographic level, with consequently superficial effects, and occasionally with more weighty connotations and theological significance.

\(^{2068}\) Hansman 1985, p. 231.
\(^{2069}\) Finkel and Geller 1997, p. 71.
\(^{2070}\) Van’t Haaff 2007, pp. 13-14, table 4.
\(^{2072}\) Vallat 1998.
\(^{2073}\) Although readers – and often academics – have no reservations about employing the term *syncretism*, an increased awareness of cultural interpretations has been involved in the criticism of the standardized usage of the phenomenon, limited to the domain of religion and often associated with concept as *hybridization* and *creolization* within the dynamics of social developments (Stewart 1999). Such uncertainty indicates primary concerns about the conceptualization of cultural mixture. Paraphrasing the words of the anthropologist Herskovits (1958), *syncretism* should be considered a beneficial approach for establishing the degree to which different cultures had assimilated, representing a phase towards the concept of cultural assimilation and integration, instead than being a platform leading to religious relapse. Indeed, a process of acculturation (or assimilation) of distinct realities would eliminate the primary differences to adopt an endorsed standard, but permitting the persistence in some degree of original elements even in the final stage of acculturation. In agreement with the premise that “pure” cultures do not exist as well as “pure” religious traditions, it may be accepted that syncretism can be used within a theoretical framework, which embraces the culture as a result of socio-historical mechanisms that may distort or corroborate original “format”, rather than a stable apparatus opportunely channelled over generations. Precisely, focus should be steered to the process of acquisition, adaptation, allocation, adjustment, and revalidation of dynamic intracultural and intercultural movements. The syncretism may, therefore, be considered a negotiation at a local level of composite structures which continuously generate, cultivate and inaugurate original hybrid patterns. For a more detailed analysis of subject matter, see Stewart 1999.
Despite the use of stereotypical names, the Elymaean pantheon had a marked Semitic component\(^{2074}\). Bel (Zeus/Jupiter), Nanaia (Artemis/Ishtar), a local Heracles, and a goddess represented with features analogous to Athena, personify the main deities as indicated either by Classical sources, coins, or local rock-reliefs including inscriptions. These were adapted to convey ideological and cultural contents which can be assumed originated in a local background, through the use of external iconographic lexicons relevant to the anthropomorphic and symbolic depiction of religious figures. Even the spread of a local Aramaic-like language undoubtedly contributed to standardizing the theonyms\(^{2075}\).

The diffusion of Hellenism iconography in southwestern Iran positively influenced the Elymaean imagery which started designating the local deities through names and attributes used along the Hellenized Near East (e.g., Bel, Heracles). In the field of sacred iconography, the diffusion of foreign stereotypes tended to be locally altered by the stylistic language of the various areas of reception, even if maintaining full awareness of the original significance. Despite the use of outward figurative models, the Elymaean deities had their own syncretic personality resulting from the combination of different attributes which iconographically belonged to others\(^{2076}\).

10.2.4.1 Bel/Zeus with Tyche’s attributes

A local version of the Semitic Bel, explicitly mentioned in Classical texts\(^{2077}\) and used as a theophoric particle in the personal names of distinguished personages\(^{2078}\), was likely the most important god in the Elymaean pantheon\(^{2079}\). Present in the inaugural coin issue of Kamnaskires Megas Soter as an enthroned bearded male divinity with spear or sceptre in the

\(^{2074}\) Hansman 1985. *Contra*, Roman Ghirshman considered the shrines of Bard-e Neshandeh as a Zoroastrian place of veneration with a tetrastyte temple dedicated to Mithra and Anahita present on the lower, in addition to the podium on the upper terrace, while at Masjed-e Soleyman he identified a Greek establishment where temple cults were introduced there for Athena (Ghirshman 1976, pp. 281-282) and Heracles (*ibid.*, p. 191.) – possibly developed as Verethragna during the Parthian period (*ibid.*, pp. 195-196; *contra* Scarcia 1979) – beside a traditional Zoroastrian worship practiced on the podium of *terrace I* (see §6.2.5). However, as previously demonstrated, the architecture and artistic material evidence (e.g., §6.1.7; §6.5) suggest a more likely interpretation as Elymaean places of cult dedicated to local divinities, rather than Zoroastrian sites (see also footnotes 675, 695.

\(^{2075}\) Martinez-Sève 2014b, p. 271.

\(^{2076}\) An example is provided among the terracotta figurine of Masjed-e Soleyman where a naked female figure (similar to the representation of Nanaia found at Susa during the Hellenistic age; see Martinez-Sève 2008, pp. 365-366) was likely recognized with Athena *Hippia* since it was carried between two horse’s heads by a cavalier with *kausia* (*§6.2.4.1*). Regarding the terracotta figurines of Masjed-e Soleyman, see Martinez-Sève 2004.

\(^{2077}\) Str., XVI.1.18; Diod. Sic., XXIX.15.

\(^{2078}\) For the presence of the particle Bel, see Chapter 8, *TS:insc.1-2*; *TB:II.insc.3*.

\(^{2079}\) Kawami 1987, pp. 97-102.
left hand and Nike in the right hand\textsuperscript{2080}, he may represent a local cultural integration between Zeus and Bel (under the name of Zeus-Belos)\textsuperscript{2081} which was a common phenomenon even in Mesopotamia and Syria\textsuperscript{2082}. In the 1\textsuperscript{st} millennium Bel was also associated with the chief Babylonian god Marduk in the western Semitic cults\textsuperscript{2083}. It was said that Bel was depicted in the form of a bearded god wearing different headgears (headband\textsuperscript{7}, diadem-like band\textsuperscript{8}, polos\textsuperscript{9}) carrying a cornucopia\textsuperscript{2084} and eventually a patera, and being associated with the material evidence of Masjed-e Soleyman and Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{2085}, in the rock reliefs of Tang-e Sarvak (\textit{TS.II:Na.4})\textsuperscript{2086} and, likely, \textit{BB:2}. In reality, these iconographic attributes – even the beard\textsuperscript{2087} – would be more suitable to the Hellenistic outline of a local Tyche, who enjoyed extraordinary favour in Hellenistic Mesopotamia and in Parthian Iran as divine protection for the kingship\textsuperscript{2088}. This tutelary deity was considered particularly engaging \textit{in virtue} of her main qualities, which were decidedly appropriate for the celebration of royalty, as mainly being a donor of favours and wealth iconographically represented by the cornucopia. Tyche’s presence granted divine protection, so could have acquired an emblematic value for the new Elymaean royal dynasty (Orodids). According to this interpretation, it would better explain the scenery of \textit{TS.II:Na} (Pl. XXVII), where modest-sized \textit{TS.II:Na.4} is represented next to the king (\textit{TS.II:Na.1}), likely behind him, but secondary concerning the main deities (\textit{TS.II:Na.2-3}). A bearded Tyche\textsuperscript{2089} seated on the throne with the cornucopia in the left hand and a high \textit{polos} on the head was represented on Arsacid monetary issues (e.g., Phraates II)\textsuperscript{2090}. In consideration of her peculiarities and relations with the royal institution, the Tyche of the early Arsacid tetradrachms has also been identified with Nana/Nanaia\textsuperscript{2091}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{2080} Pl. LV.1.d. \textsuperscript{2007}, type 1.1. This representation seems to recall the depiction of Zeus \textit{Nikephoros} at Olympia as reported on the coins of Seleucus I.
\item \textsuperscript{2081} Diod. Sic., XXIX.15; XXVIII.3.; Justin, XXXII.2.
\item \textsuperscript{2082} For example, Downey 2004. Van der Spek (2009, pp. 110-111) argues that in the absence of a temple dedicated to Zeus in Babylonian, the Greek community could have used the temple of Bel, as their main cult space.
\item \textsuperscript{2083} Drijvers 1976, pp. 9-10. For the association Bel-Marduk during the Achaemenid period, see Shaked 2004, pp. 45-46; Naveh and Shaked 2012, p. 36, 261; Martinez-Sève 2014a, p. 271.
\item \textsuperscript{2084} Hansman 1985, pp. 237, 243-244. Henning (1952, pp. 160, 176) tentatively identified Bel with the \textit{baetyl}-stone \textit{TS.II:NW.a}, since the diadem would have indicated the “King of Gods” (i.e., Bel).
\item \textsuperscript{2085} Ghirshman 1976, pp. 47, 124; Pl. (BN) XXXVII.1-4; (MS) LXXIX.2; pl.13 GBN 123, 32 GMI 35.
\item \textsuperscript{2086} Hansman 1985.
\item \textsuperscript{2087} Invernizzi 2015.
\item \textsuperscript{2088} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 56.
\item \textsuperscript{2089} On the “androgynous” representation of Tyche, see Invernizzi 2015.
\item \textsuperscript{2090} Sellwood 1980, p. 52; Sinisi 2008, p. 235, fig. 2; \textit{idem} 2012a, p. 46; \textit{idem} 2012b, p. 282, fig. 15.4; Ellerbrock 2013, p. 268, fig. 4.
\item \textsuperscript{2091} Sinisi 2008, pp. 236, 243; \textit{idem} 2012a, pp. 44-48; \textit{contra} Ellerbrock 2013.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
10.2.4.2 Nanaia/Artemis

Nanaia has a long well-established tradition being associated with the Elamite goddess Pinikir, who was already included among the major deities of the Neo-Elamite pantheon, interfering in her same spheres of competence (e.g., fertility, nature life). The most notable indication regarding the longevity of Nanaia’s worship at Susa emerges from the inscriptions of Assurbanipal, and persisted during the Hellenistic period when the importance of the goddess was well-attested by the Classical sources. Debating Nanaia, scholarly literature abounds in allusions to syncretism; she is frequently identified with the Iranian divinity Anahita, even though the assimilation between Nanaia and the Greek Artemis/Diana seems more coherent. A fact of interest is that Nanaia was often iconographically represented armed and accompanied with lions, material attributes which could be possibly associated with the lion-paws tripods found at Shami and Masjed-e Soleyman. On the Elymaean bronze drachms of some Orodid kings (e.g., Phraates, Orodes III), a Nanaia/Artemis is represented with a radiate halo or polos, or as a complete huntress figure dressed in Greek fashion with or without the radiate halo. A huntress Artemis dressed in Hellenistic clothes and associated to Nanaia was discovered on a tessera from Palmyra. Although generally interpreted as a sun deity, even the radiate personage of Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:Na.2) has also

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2092 Martinez-Sève 2014a, p. 271.

2093 See Luckenbill 1927, p. 311, §812; Odorico 1995, p. 66; Borger 1996, pp. 57-58, Prism A VI:107-124; Potts 2001; Martinez-Sève 2014a, pp. 253-256. In reporting (Annals A and F; summary text T; and K.3101) his last of five campaigns against Elam, Assurbanipal refers that 1635 (Annal A, Prism T), 1630 or 1830 (Annal F), or 1535 (K.3101, K.2664, K.2628) years before his destruction of Elam, Nanaia had grown angry and left Uruk to live in Elam, but then Nana and the gods her fathers. “ordained that Assurbanipal would become king of the lands and that he would return her to her beloved city” (Gerardi 1987, p.198; cf. Potts 1999a, p. 285; cf. the discussion in Cogan, 1974, pp. 14-15). Accordingly, the return of Nanaia to Uruk constituted an event of vital importance, an episode immortalized in various Assyrian hymns, probably composed soon after this fact. Assurbanipal’s numbers of years should be considered as an indication of the vast antiquity of Nanaia’s veneration at Susa, which preceded by nearly two millennia the earliest of the Greek inscriptions from the site in which Nanaia is mentioned (Potts 2001, pp. 28-29).

2094 The presence of a temple dedicate to Nanaia is confirmed by a papyrus from Oxyrhynchus (P. Oxy., XI, 1380, l. 106), which indicates how the name for Isis at Susa was Nanaia (Rougemont 2012a, p. 79, footnotes 226-227). Also, a passage of Pliny the Elder mentioned a temple of Diana, and said that it was one of the most venerable of the region, present at Susa (Pliny, VI.31.135, “circumit arcem Susorum ac Dianae templum augustissimum illis gentibus”). Regarding Nanaia at Susa, see also Le Rider 1965, pp. 292-293; Martinez-Sève 2014a, pp. 253-256.

2095 Potts 2001, p. 26. As for assimilation with Anahita, while it is true that Aelian (XII.23) cites a shrine of Anahita located in Elymais (ἐν τῇ Ἐλυμαίᾳ χώρᾳ νεώς ἔστιν Ἀναίτιδας), there is no reason to equate this with the temple of Nanaia mentioned in II.Maccabees 1.13 (in templo Naneae).

2096 Pl. XIX.c.

2097 Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XCIX.3; Pl. 58 GMIS 305.

2098 Le Rider 1965, Pls. (Nanaia/Artemis bust) 75.15-17, 20-21, 23-24, 36; 74.4-6; (Nanaia/Artemis entire figure), p. 428.

been suggested as a depiction of Nanaia/Artemis\textsuperscript{2100}, The ascendency of the goddess and her predominant role within the local pantheon is also attested in a freedom paper dated to 142/1 BC\textsuperscript{2101} of a sanctuary devoted to her at Susa during the Hellenistic period\textsuperscript{2102}.

10.2.4.3 Athena

As depicted in the scene of Tang-e Sarvak (\textit{TS.II:Na}), a plaquette at Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{2103}, and possibly the historiated capital at Bard-e Neshandeh\textsuperscript{2104}, next to a solar deity is generally located a warlike helmeted deity with a spear whose traits may impersonate a local Athena with some borrowed elements of the Syrian goddess Allath\textsuperscript{2105}. The best Elymaean reference is a small bronze plaque of a female bust with aegis and spear (characterized by a most accentuated femininity)\textsuperscript{2106}. From the relief of Khirbet Wadi Swane\textsuperscript{2107} and a historiated altar from Palmyra\textsuperscript{2108}, an Athena-Allath Promachos is placed next to a radiate sun-god deity identified as Shams indicating the importance of the goddess at Palmyra. An analogous situation could have been depicted in Elymais where the local imagery shows a frontally depicted deity, martial in aspect and dressed in a long tunic, who brandishes a spear in her raised right hand.


\textsuperscript{2101} The document records how the owner of the freed slave, a certain Straton, would have had to pay 3,000 drachms to the sanctuary of Nanaia (\textit{Θὸ ἱعقود ΘϛΖ ̐΅Α΅ί΅ζ}) in order to claim possession of the slave (Rougemont 2012, no. 15: \textit{SEG} 7, 22; see also Darmezin 1999, no. 200; Canali De Rossi 2004, no. 197; Merkelbach and Stauber 2005, no. 418). The goddess is also attested in other freedom papers, but the one above-mentioned is the only one that explicitly cites her sanctuary. See Rougemont 2012, nos. 13-27; Darmezin 1999, nos. 199-204; Canali De Rossi 2004, nos. 189-206; Merkelbach and Stauber, nos. 417-420.

\textsuperscript{2102} The temple was located in the southern part of the \textit{Ville Royale}, in the area called \textit{Donjon} where some of the most important texts belonging to the \textit{corpus} of inscriptions from Susa (e.g., freedom acts) have been found. An example is the royal letters sent by Artabanus II to the city of Susa (Rougemont 2012, no. 3; \textit{SEG} 7, 1; Canali De Rossi 2004, nos. 218-220; Merkelbach and Stauber, no. 407). From the time of discovery, it was assumed that all the texts were affixed inside the Nanaia sanctuary, which constituted the \textit{epiphaneistaatos topos} of the city. The \textit{epiphaneistaatos topos} represented a site of high visibility in the city, often identified with a sacred site where decrees and the most important acts were customarily exposed and made public (Cumont 1931, pp. 278-279; Martinez-Sève 2002, p. 49; \textit{idem} 2014a, p. 254; with some reservations, Rougemont 2012, p. 41, footnote 106). The \textit{Donjon} was investigated between 1928 and 1933 under the direction of R. de Mecquenem (de Mecquenem and Scheil 1934, pp. 222-226; de Mecquenem and Contenau 1943, pp. 70-76). Although the excavations were not so systematic, a tentative plan was provided and reveals the presence of a palace as well as of a building that appears to have been organized around a rectangular room (5×2.80 m) with four central pillars surrounded by narrow corridors, somehow similar to the tetrastyle temple of Bard-e Neshandeh and well spread in Iran and Central Asia (for the columned area, see Gopnik 2010; specifically on Elymais, see Salaris 2017).

\textsuperscript{2103} Pl. XVII.j.

\textsuperscript{2104} Pl. V.b.1.

\textsuperscript{2105} Starcky 1981; Boyce and Grenet 1991, p. 47; Christides 2003.

\textsuperscript{2106} Pl. XVII.i.

\textsuperscript{2107} Christides 2003, p. 76. For other reliefs depicting standing Athena-Allath, see Schlumberger 1951.

\textsuperscript{2108} Dirven and Kaizer 2013.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

10.2.4.4 Heracles

A broad popularity in Elymais towards the figure of a local Heracles is evident in the material evidence. The statue of Masjed-e Soleyman, the sculpted panel at Tang-e Botan, the relief of Tang-e Sarvak (TS.I:W), and some sculptural fragments impersonate a naked personage, muscularly prominent, who only wears a diadem with floating ribbons and wrist bracelets, generally carrying the western symbol of the semi-god, namely a club and a lion skin. The statue of Masjed-Soleyman even reproposes the theme of the fight against the Nemean lion.

In the late antiquity Heracles was largely adopted in western Semitic cult, as he was introduced – at least iconographically – at Hatra, Dura-Europos (more than 30 sculptures)\textsuperscript{2109} and less so in Palmyrene reliefs (temple of Bel, Heracles with club and lion skin)\textsuperscript{2110}. Despite the resemblances in the imagery, the Heracles-like personage in Elymais – as at Hatra and Palmyra\textsuperscript{2111} – represents a local deity.

Assuredly, the presence of a Hellenistic outline does not necessarily imply that this Heracles-like local deity has to be seen as the Iranian counterpart of the Greek semi-god, namely Verethragna\textsuperscript{2112}. If Heracles may have reminded the Iranians of their Verethragna, it may not automatically have been absorbed \textit{ipso facto} into their art imagery. Contrarily, the more common and familiar the physiognomy of a foreign deity appeared, the more likely it maintained its figurative depiction, possibly readjusted but certainly not distorted, as demonstrated by the Eastern “mystery” cults popular in the Roman empire (e.g., Mithra). It is consequently crucial in Iran, and specifically in Elymais, to distinguish correctly between the \textit{iconographic} subject and the \textit{ideal}, or better \textit{real}, protagonist of the scene, as representation does not necessarily imply identification\textsuperscript{2113}.

\textbf{10.2.5 Places of Worship and Rituals}

A clear picture is difficult to determine considering the lack of relevant texts. Bel, Nanaia, Athena and Heracles were often worshipped in cult places developed on broad artificial platforms built of rough stone and provided of a podium where the rites were also officiated in the open air. Presumably made at the end of the Achaemenid period, these

\textsuperscript{2109} Downey 1969; Perkins 1973; Mathiesen 1992/2, cat. nos. 168-169.
\textsuperscript{2110} Colledge 1976, pp. 45-46, Pl. 36. For the figure of Heracles at Hatra and Palmyra, see Kaizer 2000.
\textsuperscript{2111} Kaizer 2000, p. 230.
\textsuperscript{2112} Scarcia 1979. In particular, Scarcia (1979, pp. 258f) sharply criticizes the identification of a Heracles “only” as Verethragna, proposed by Bivar and Shaked, who seemed to cut ties with Heracles” evident Western origins (Bivar and Shaked 1964, p. 268). This may be an Iranian misunderstanding of a more intimate prototype.
\textsuperscript{2113} On the cult of Heracles in Iran, see also Bernard 1980.
terraced structures were enriched with the addition of closed temple during the Seleucid and Parthian eras, which introduced new ritual practices to be integrated with the previous cults or to be officiated separately.

The sacred terraces were furnished of monumental access stairs and secondary stairs to enable the movement between the different levels. This communal movement of ascent and descent could have reflected an allegorical act of approaching the divine sphere\(^{2114}\), as reminiscent of the religious practice represented in the Elamite rupestrian art (e.g., Kurangun), where the ritual processions of worshippers ascending to open-air sanctuaries on the top natural summit (hill\(^{1}\)) and descending to the pure water (river basin\(^{2}\)), abode of gods, were ideologically illustrated\(^{2115}\). The monumentality of the access terraces (e.g., Bard-e Neshandeh and Masjed-e Soleyman) suggests the attendance of large groups of worshippers who followed a predefined ritual journey as indicated by paved paths present along the platforms. As applies to the Elamite sacred open-air sites (e.g., Kurangun and Shekaft-e Salman)\(^{2116}\), the relevance of the landscape’s aesthetic value in the context of Elymaean sanctuaries has long been ignored. Álvarez-Mon pointed out how the aesthetic experience of the natural environment could lead to a mystical religious experience\(^{2117}\). This could justify de facto a belief system where the perception and experience of the metaphysical establishes a connection with landscapes of extraordinary natural properties. The artificial platform, therefore, did not “create” a sacred space (temenos) but only “entrap” it. This “entrapment” is particularly relevant when religious area is manifested by nature itself. The instinctive preference for such locations as springs, hills, and mountain peaks, represents the natural human inclination to establish a sacral space, where a divine phenomenon is better perceived\(^ {2118}\).

The construction of temples on top of artificial sacred platforms accompanies an inclination to maintain the local sacred traditions and to integrate them with enclosed structures which may have assisted the emergence of new ritual practices during the Seleucid and Parthian period. At the same time, the ancient rites continued to be officiated along with the stone podium. It is also reasonable to imagine integration between old and new religious elements in the development of a new cultural identity established with the Kamnaskirid

\(^{2115}\) For the cult practice at Kurangun and importance of water basin (Abzu/Apsu) in Elamite religion, see Potts 2004; Álvarez-Mon 2014a, pp. 756-765.
\(^{2116}\) Potts 2004; Álvarez-Mon 2014a.
\(^{2117}\) Álvarez-Mon 2014a, p. 762.
\(^{2118}\) Cf. Wasilewska 2009, p. 397.
dynasty. There is no information about the ritual practices in the Elymaean temples – except for the libation scenes at Bard-e Neshandeh (Appendix 4) and Hung-e Kamalvand (Pl. XXXVI) – but a dedication to local deities may be confidently proposed. In particular, BN:rel and HK show the practice of pouring a liquid as an offering in honour of a god or in memory of an ancestor. This ritual theme was particularly well-attested through various visual media (coins, rock-reliefs, drawings) during the Parthian era. The inscription of Tang-e Sarvak (TS.II:insc.4), instead, describe the action of “feeding” the god.

From an architectural point of view, the construction of sacred buildings which amalgamated structural elements from different traditions (Elamite, Syro-Mesopotamian, Iranian, Greek) suggests that the Elymaean architects selectively combined external structural elements to develop a coherent repertoire to satisfy the local necessity of the ritual sphere. For instance, the presence at Masjed-e Soleyman of two doorways into the antecella-cella block with two altars against the back wall of the cella (Pl. XIII.b-d) is an innovative feature absent in the arrangements from the Babylonian temples. It was probably due to local needs of cult which required the worship of two different deities within the same votive space. In Elymais, a divine binomial association between a radiated solar deity (and/or Nanaia- Artemis) and a helmeted and armed Athena-like goddess is quite attested in the material evidence (in particular, TS.II:Na.2-3) and may represent a potential cult option for the Grand Temple of Masjed-e Soleyman. If Ghirshman’s assumption is confirmed and the Parthian Grand Temple is an accurate reconstruction of a former Seleucid temple, the proposed association, at least in part, to a local Athena or a divine duo (Athena and sun-god/Nanaia-Artemis) may represent an option.

In general, the Elymaean artistic proficiency lies in its competence to choose from artistic models developed by external cultures the features best suited to its intentions, and to establish from these diverse elements a delineated artistic language that accomplished the varying demands of the rulers in Elymais.

As already suggested for the Elamite places of worship, also in Elymais the open-air sanctuaries could have represented the ritual sites for the general population, which would explain the use of the podium also after the construction of the temples in Seleucid and

\[2119\] Siniš (forthcoming), pp. 47-48, figs. 26a-d (coins), 27b (drawing), 27a, c-e, 28-a-c (rupestrian scenes).
\[2120\] Downey 1988, pp. 7-50.
\[2121\] Ghirshman 1976, p. 80.
\[2122\] The findings of a large quantity of female personal ornaments (§6.2.4.3) and naked terracotta figurines (§6.2.4.1) could support a cult associated with a temple for a female deity (ies), or particularly attractive for women worshippers (for importance of women in the cult of Athena, see Palagia 2008).
\[2123\] Vallat 1998

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
Parthian eras. In contrast, the enclosed buildings – at least during the first constructive phase—must have been accessible only to the clergy and the royal family, which would be translated into the relatively modest dimensions of some temples (e.g., *Petit Temple* of Masjed-e Soleyman, tetrastyle temple at Bard-e Neshandeh).

### 10.3 Politics and Society

The Elymaeans had a reputation for being unruly and hostile mountaineers living between the incised valley and isolated gorges of the Zagros mountains who were attested in the late Achaemenid period as being able to exact tribute (gifts) from the Persian kings when the royal court moved from Ecbatana to Babylonia\(^\text{2124}\), and to continually threaten the people of the plains (i.e., Susians). In the Seleucid period, the Elymaeans were then strong enough to defend, twice, their sacred places from the raids of the Greek kings, in one case leading to the death of the invading ruler (§10.2.1). This picture, however, which was mainly the product of an inaccurate Greco-Roman perception, is far too schematic.

#### 10.3.1 Sources

The history of the various minor states under Seleuco-Parthian control in Iran presents a standard critical problem, namely that the sources on which research is based are mostly fragmentary and external. Of the fifty Greek lapidary inscriptions recovered at Susa\(^\text{2125}\), nine may be safely assigned to the *Diadochi* (Seleucid epoch), which provide some insight into the political and social status of the Greek settlers in the region, but there is nothing regarding the native inhabitants or the neighbouring mountaineers\(^\text{2126}\). On the other hand, the Mesopotamian cuneiform records (i.e., the *Babylonian Astronomical Diaries*) contain incomplete references to *Kamniskires King of Elam* (Elymais) in 145 BC, and to intense fighting between Parthians and Elymaeans in 140-138 BC\(^\text{2127}\). In their detached attitude to narrate historical events, the Mesopotamian scribes presented themselves as witnesses more than participants. In contrast, there is a scarcity of authentic local texts and the most numerous records are attributed to surviving Greek and Latin sources, which captured experiences and eyewitness accounts as well as hearsay and popular lore, and preserve part of

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\(^{2124}\) Str., XI.13.6.

\(^{2125}\) Rougemont 2012a-b.

\(^{2126}\) Published in *SEG* 17; see also Potts 1999a, Table 10.1.

\(^{2127}\) The primary interest of the Babylonian scribes was astrological and astronomical; for this reason, the historical information appears only incidentally. Regarding Elymais in the *Babylonian Diaries*, see also Potts 2002.
the wealth of knowledge accumulated during the campaigns of Alexander the Great and his successors in Iran.\footnote{2128}

\section*{10.3.2 Origins between Nomads and Sedentary}

As thoroughly discussed in §4.3, the underlying basis of what it is described as Elymais during the Seleucid and Parthian periods is an hybrid-type structure which was developed by the productive encounter of urban centres, sedentary communities and nomadic tribes.\footnote{2129} In the territory of eastern Khuzestan, the border between Susiana and the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains provided the socio-political framework within which the dimorphic structure may have defined the genesis for the Elymaean kingdom of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC starting from this double process of interaction between agro-pastoral and sedentary people and between peripheral communities and central authority. An autonomous semi-nomadic component was centred on a main settlement within the unruly highland territory,\footnote{2130} which was not presumably placed at any great distance from the towns of the lowlands. In this case, a local dynasty (tribal clan?), as the Kamnaskirids, could have facilitated the integration of indigenous agro-pastoral groups and sedentary communities in the countryside. They both lived in the same region developing the formation of a confederation, which shared a new collective identity based on a similar cultural and linguistic background including tribal and non-tribal elements.\footnote{2131} As a result, their expansionist designs waited for the authority (Seleucid, Parthian) in the flourishing sedentary and lowland regions (especially Susiana) to be undermined by external/internal factors. When this happened, the autonomous kings of the Elymaean confederation may have expanded their dominion to include the main cities (e.g. Susa) within their sphere of control, which then allowed them to regulate the trade routes and consequently to increase their economic affluence, as shown by the oft-referred to wealth of the Elymaean temples (§10.2.2) and by a series of fortresses on strategic locations in their vicinity (e.g. Shami, Bard-e Neshandeh, Hung-e Azhdar). The Kamnaskirid family was able to pacify and control the various chieftains of the agro-pastoral communities of the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland (likely including Uxians and Kossaeans), however it is possible that, at least at the beginning of the monarchy, other representatives of local “clans” tried to usurp the

\footnote{2128} Cf. Dabrowa 2012, pp. 21-25.  
\footnote{2129} Cf. Rowton 1973, p. 201.  
\footnote{2130} A perfect example could be represented by Izeh-Malamir which was uninterruptedly occupied from the Neo-Elamite period when it was the seat of the local king Hanni of Ayapir to the Seleuco-Parthian period (Wright 1979, pp. 102, 114-116). In this regard, the high central mound (now mostly destroyed) present within the valley, east of the modern city of Izeh, might have indicated an important junction point for the agro-pastoral and mountainous peoples of Elymais. This site was still clearly recognizable in the mid-19th century (Layard 1846, pp. 74-75).  
Kamnaskirid authority (e.g., Okkonapses, Tigrais). Certain political stability was only guaranteed for the arrival in Elymais of a cadet branch of the Arsacid family and the “artificial” creation of the Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty of the Orodids.

### 10.3.3 Monarchy

With the first attestation of Kamnaskires, the Elymaean kingdom was an absolute inherited monarchy. From the Kamnaskires of Bard-e Neshandeh (ca. 171-151 BC) to Kamnaskires “the Arsacid” (ca. 132 BC), all the kings of Elymais, excluding some usurpations from local and external rulers, used the attestation Kamnaskires (table 2). If it was the personal name or an honorific dynastic designation to evoke the belonging to the founder family of the kingdom, similar to the term Arsaces, is hard to assume. The evocative value of the name Kamnaskires was certainly assured in the affiliation of one of the first Orodid kings, Kamnaskires-Orodes, who referred to the ancient royal family in the act of legitimacy of the new Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty invoking blood ties with the local regality.

As in ancient Elam, the principle of succession was probably strictly adhered to the member of the same family, and a ruler could name as his successor his brother (possibly Kamnaskires Megas Soter and Kamnaskires Nikephoros), bypassing his offspring. The necessity to re-affirm a genealogical connection with the first Kamnaskires rulers appears a dominant theme for the Late Kamnaskires (1st century BC). Iconographically, the representation of Kamnaskires III and Anzaze may indicate the association with a major dynastic personage (possibly an endogamy relationship), or the political union with the member of a powerful agro-pastoral polity present in the highlands. In this context, the evocation of “grandfather” Kamnaskires by the successive king(s) – i.e., Kamnaskires IV/V (possibly the same person) – may indicate the preoccupation of legitimizing their royal lineage in a particular scenario of socio-political instability for which a reference to their father (Kamnaskires III) was probably not dynastically sufficient (Pl. LVIII).

At least as early as mid-1st century AD, the assumption of authority of a combined Arsacid-Elymaean dynasty brought stability not only in the relationship between Elymais and Ctesiphon, but also a pacification of the internal diatribes, in particular among the highland polities, through an ideological propaganda, which involved several different approaches (e.g., onomastics, imagery, monetary production, language). In their dynastic

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2132 See footnote 361.
2133 Vallat 1998a.
2134 For my assumption of Kamnaskires IV and V as the same personage at a different stage of life, see §9.1.5.3.
2135 Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
proselytism, the new rulers showed clear signs of the desire to tie their bonds with the ancient local traditions. Unquestionably, the “neo-traditionalism” transmitted by the Oroids stemmed from a need to legitimize their authority and was an important tool in the ideological integration with the local agro-pastoral communities of the Zagros-Bakhtiari plateau. (§10.1.3.3). The outcomes for the society were evident and included the demographic growth, increasing trades, intensified agricultural production, construction of new unwalled villages\textsuperscript{2136}. Intimately connected to this program of political stabilization, a more linear principle of succession also appears to be established from father to son on the model of the Arsacid dynasty at Ctesiphon.

An important attribute of Elymaean monarchs’ authority was their royal headgear. Kamnaskirid and Orodid dynasts wore a diadem, fashioned after the Seleucid rulers as the symbol of royal authority. From Orodes II (first half of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD), the \textit{Elymaean-Arsacid} kings began using a tiara as the Parthian kings. An important political symbol of Elymaean kingship represented on coins was an anchor typified by the addition of several minor details, like stars, crescent, pellets, monograms (§9.2.2; Pl. LVI).

\textbf{10.3.4 Army}

Although the Classical sources outline the mountainous area of Elymais as a “nursery of soldiers” (στρατιωτάς τρέφει)\textsuperscript{2137} and its unruly people with the reputation of “unconquered tribesmen”\textsuperscript{2138}, knowledge of the Elymaean army is still highly limited, as there are no detailed records of its numbers and organization.

Like the Elamites of earlier centuries who were noted for their prowess as archers, it is scarcely surprising that in Elymaean archery techniques and equipment\textsuperscript{2139}, both bows and quivers, may have survived. Elymaeans were also noted for their ability in archery\textsuperscript{2140} and had a reputation for being great warriors. Similarly, the Kossaean bowmen were renowned in Classical sources\textsuperscript{2141}. A unit of Elymaean archers\textsuperscript{2142} fought among the ranks of the enormous army of Antiochus III stationed at Magnesia against the Romans (190 BC).

\textsuperscript{2137} Str., XVI.1.18. On the general model of “mountaineer” described by the Classical authors, see Acolat 2012.
\textsuperscript{2138} Str., XV.3.4; Diod. Sic. XIX.17.3.
\textsuperscript{2139} Bittner 1987, pp. 135ff. for ‘Susian quivers’
\textsuperscript{2140} App., LXVI.6.32.
\textsuperscript{2141} Str., XVI.1.18.
During the Seleucid period, the Elymaean troops were strong and highly-effective as evidenced by the preparedness by which it repulsed two attempts of plunders led by Seleucid kings (§10.2.2). The local tradition of archery and slingling was also well adapted for an optimal guerrilla resistance between the inaccessible Zagros-Bakhtiari territory\textsuperscript{2143}.

During the Orodid period, the Elymaean army was probably implemented with the heavy cavalry of the Arsacid military force as indicated by the relief of Tang-e Sarvak were the king\textsuperscript{7} is depicted as a Parthian \textit{cataphractarius} (\textit{TS:D.1}). During this last period (end-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD), the Elymaean archers were probably similar to the one depicted in the same scene (\textit{TS:D.2}). The presence instead of \textit{TS.III:3} in the act of throwing a rock seems to indicate the maintenance of a slingling tradition in the military organization.

\textbf{10.3.5 Society}

The Elymaean society was outwardly recorded in the Classical sources as inhabited by a turbulent group of marauders in the neighbourhood of Susians\textsuperscript{2144}. Strabo also applies Nearchus’ terms of “\textit{mountain-dwelling and predatory tribes}” (ὀἶκειὸν καὶ λήμνος ὦ μοιχὴ \textit{ἡ θύμη})\textsuperscript{2145} for describing Elymais as a mostly rugged country bordering on \textit{Susis} inhabited by bellicose brigands particularly prone to violent conflicts\textsuperscript{2146}. The Elymaean territory was divided into three sub-districts (Massabatice, Gabiane and Korbiane) to which should be also added Uxiana, Kossaea and, at alternate stages, Susiana and Characene\textsuperscript{2147}.

In a territory, as the Zagros-Bakhtiari, where the physiographic features were peculiarly favourable to the isolation and marginalization in several socio-political entities, at the beginning of the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC a particularly powerful group (the Kamnaskirids) could have had the knowledge and the skills to act as the best mediator with the local agro-pastoralist tribes settled in the surrounding lands, actually supervising effective control over them\textsuperscript{2148}. In this way, once the authority (Seleucid) in lowland of Susiana weakened (e.g. the

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\textsuperscript{2142} Livy, XXVII.40; see also App. LXVI.6.32. Bar-Kochva catalogued the archers from Elymais as the “auxiliaries from subject or semi-independent nations or tribes”, adding that they were not “mercenaries” as dubbed by Weissbach (1905, coll. 2464). Bar-Kochva also noted how “various national contingents mentioned in the great campaigns included mercenaries, allies, allied-mercenaries, and subject-vassals, but the status of very few units can be established with certainty” (Bar-Kochva 1976, p. 48).
\textsuperscript{2143} Diod. Sic., XIX.19.4.
\textsuperscript{2144} The main study of these tribes remain Pierre Briant 1982. See also Potts 2014.
\textsuperscript{2145} Str., XVI.1.17.
\textsuperscript{2146} \textit{Ibid.}, XV.3.12.
\textsuperscript{2147} For the sub-districts of Massabatice, Gabiane and Korbiane, see §4.1.2.1.
\textsuperscript{2148} A similar situation is described along the Caucasus mountains, see Gregoratti 2013.
defeat of Magnesia), the new united confederation of the highland was able to expand, taking cities under its jurisdiction. When this happened, an agro-pastoral polity became a proper sovereign state which was able to establish its own chieftain as a king (Kamnaskires Megas Soter) in the main capital of Susa as shown by the monetary production (149/7 BC). Once settled a confederation formed by several tribal subjects along the mountain areas, the kings of Elymais could exert an effective control on the whole Zagros-Bakhtiari sector. It is plausible the existence of some sort of bond between the Elymaean crown and the other agro-pastoral groups, which in all likelihood were not directly subject to the Kamnaskirid kings, but probably only required for a formal recognition of his authority. This fragile balance was often compromised by the emergence of tribal diatribes, which could have lead different local exponents to power – an example could be the “usurpations” of Okkonapses and Tigraios – or required dynastic marriage (e.g. Kamnaskires III and Anzaze).

This precarious situation of instability was only overcome with the institution of a solid and capillary authority such as the one introduced by the Orodids, which was based on the structural organization of power provided by the Arsacid house of Ctesiphon locally intermediated by native aristocracies.

Analyzing the Classical text and the material evidence, it is discernible that there was a certain level of prosperity and wealth which may be explained at different levels. Firstly, the role of interagent played by the Elymaean kings between townsmen, sedentary farmers and (semi-)nomadic agro-pastoralist allowed the control on a peculiar territorial conformation articulated on mountain passing, outlets to the Persian Gulf and associated trade routes, which provided complete control in the flow of men and the exchange of goods. Secondly, this high level of economic welfare may have facilitated the enrichment of some social classes and the resultant development of powerful and extremely rich aristocratic clans, including the local clergy. As emerged in the Greco-Roman sources, the clerical class had an eminent social position, probably belonging to an elite rank, which was able to administrate considerable wealth and its influence was such that they were capable of swiftly mobilising the masses against potential foreign threat (§10.2.2).

Of other groups in the Elymaean society, their composition, rights and obligations, there is practically no official information. It is assumed that the native inhabitants were organized around the two main activities of an agro-pastoral community, namely farming and herding (§4.3). While pastoral exchanges providing animal products (e.g., meat, milk, wool)

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2149 Cf. Henkelman 2008a, p. 35.
needed transhumant herdsmen as attested in the Achaemenid period\textsuperscript{2150}, the agricultural activity undertaken by sedentary farmers – as recorded in the Classical sources – appears to be confirmed by the creation of an advanced irrigation system (*qanats*) both in the lowlands and the highlands\textsuperscript{2151}.

It is likely that in Elymais the subjects’ legal status defined the type of military formation in which they served, however, there is no information to describe with which degree members of different social orders joined the army.

In conclusion, it would be reasonable to assume that at the height of its powers between the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century BC and 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, Elymais had unified under its dominion all the various nomadic clans of the Zagros present within its territories, establishing a confederacy of peoples, which would explain the unequivocal references to Elam/Elamites (i.e. Elymais/Elymaeans) in the *Astronomical Diaries* without any internal distinction. When the name *Elymais*, however, emerged and this term came to all-embrace the various Zagros polities, eventually incorporating the Susiana plain, is not yet entirely traceable in the archaeological and textual sources.

### 10.4 Language

Developed probably with the Orodid dynasty, Elymaic is a distinct language identifiable in terms of character repertoire and letterforms. Considering that there are variations in graphemes across the *corpus*, the script may be classified into two groups: epigraphical and numismatic.

As a form of Middle Aramaic script – closely related to that used in Southern Mesopotamia between the 1\textsuperscript{st} and 3\textsuperscript{rd} centuries AD\textsuperscript{2152} – it was utilized within the Elymaean territories during the Parthian period. Elymaic is shown as an abjad script written right-to-left and utilized approximately between the mid-1\textsuperscript{st} to the late-2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, namely when a cadet branch of the Arsacid family wielded power in Elymais. Likely in agreement with members of the local aristocracy\textsuperscript{2153}, the new Elymaean-Arsacid chancellery need an official language. The development of an Arsacid Aramaic-like language could, therefore, belong to that part of the process of relentless “Parthianization” which occurred in Elymais and

\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{2150} Henkelman 2008a, pp. 43-49.
\item\textsuperscript{2151} Wright 1979, p. 127; Wenke 1981, pp. 310-313.
\item\textsuperscript{2152} Other members of this group are the Characenean and the Mandaic scripts. See Naveh 1982, pp. 133-137. Klugkist 1986, p. 166.
\item\textsuperscript{2153} Dabrowa 2014, p. 65.
\end{itemize}
manifestly involved other local media such as rupestrian art and monetary imagery. Although Aramaic became the official idiom during the Arsacid reign, the local language forms continued to be used in a vast multilingual empire\textsuperscript{2154}. Within this general political context, the establishment of Elymaic may have consolidated trade networks and social connections across its territory and beyond.

Credit should be given to Walter Bruno Henning who was the first to decipher and interpret some of the Elymaic texts on coins and rupestrian reliefs (Tang-e Sarvak)\textsuperscript{2155} in Khuzestan, proving the language to be a local form of Aramaic, or better yet, an indigenous language (Elamite\textsuperscript{3}) which was expressed with Aramaic phonemes\textsuperscript{2156}. The famed Iranist deduced the employment of two distinct languages – Aramaic in the low-lying areas and Elamite in mountainous regions – and their placement likely due to geographic conditions. If correct, this assumption would validate once again the image of Elymais as composed by a well-rooted ethno-linguistic duality which delineated a bequest of the ancient Elamite society\textsuperscript{2157}. Henning’s supposition is certainly tempting, however, based on objective evidence, there is currently no proof that a derivation of Elamite language was written in Elymais through an Aramaic-like script, though it may be plausible.

10.5 Elam and Elymais: Continuity and Change

“Ελυμος μέν γάρ Ἑλυμαίους Περσῶν ὄντας ἀρχηγέτας κατέλιπεν” [Jos., I.6.4]

\textsuperscript{2154} Schmitt 1998b, pp. 164-165.
\textsuperscript{2155} Henning 1952.
\textsuperscript{2156} In particular, according to Allotte de la Fuÿe (the father of Elymaean numismatics), Henning comparing the monetary legends and the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak assumed the presence of “an Iranian dialect or it may have been a surviving form of Elamite [...] Perhaps the lowlands of Khuzistan were peopled by speakers of Aramaic while in the highlands to the north an Iranian (or Elamite?) language was spoken; and the mints of the Kammaskires dynasty, to accommodate both national groups, issued coins with legends in both languages for local circulation” adding that “at least in its lowlands, the ancient indigenous language became submerged and gradually replaced by the all-powerful Aramaic language” (Henning 1952, p. 166).
\textsuperscript{2157} See Amiet 1979; and Vallat 1980. Regarding the ethno-linguistic duality between the lowlands and the highlands in the territory of ancient Elam, see scholars such as Amiet (1979), Nissen (2004) and Vallat (1980). With specific regard to Elymais, see also Potts (1999a; 2016). In particular, Amiet (1979, p. 195-204) speaks explicitly of ethnic dualism but perhaps it would be more appropriate to follow Potts and apply the term cultural diversity, as suggested by reading Franz Boas (1940) who “explicitly warned of the dangers of conflating what he referred to as ‘race, language and culture’, which we might nowadays prefer to call biological, linguistic and cultural diversity” (Potts 2005, p. 2).
At this point, after having addressed the culture of Elymais from different angles in order to understand the appearance and development of its multifaceted identity within a context of much vaster traditions, a question should arise: *where have the Elymaeans exactly sprung from?*

In order to find an answer for this question, it becomes crucial to perceive Elymais as the final product of that historico-political *koine* typical of the Zagros area, and had probably its origin in the Neo-Elamite period (ca. 1,100-539 BC) during that process of *Elamite-Iranian* acculturation behind the genesis of the Achaemenid culture and power\(^{2158}\). Within the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland (agro-)pastoral communities of native (Elamites) and newcomers (Iranians) had been coexisting together for at least 500/1,000 years in a progressive and almost natural process of integration through new tribal affiliations resulting in the creation of original shared identities\(^{2159}\). If on one side this socio-cultural scenario may have constituted the prelude of the Persian culture, on the other hand, it may have had the same effect for the ethnogenesis of Elymais.

Noteworthy, although it cannot be said for certain whether the Elamites always inhabited the Zagros mountains as an autochthonous population, the fact that the physiographic nature of the territory divided them and fostered the development of a multi-centric system is highly credible. The existence of a common Elamite society being capable of bringing together, at alternate phases, these various political unities is generally accepted\(^{2160}\). From this perspective, Elam was markedly defined by its own royal ideology, political structure, customs, religious practices, language, and artistic expressions. In addition, a common inclination toward Mesopotamian models can be perceived in both ancient Elam, and again replicated several centuries later, in the Elymaean milieu\(^{2161}\), where the “Suso-Mesopotamian” affairs certainly played a pivotal role. In many ways, Susiana can be viewed not only as a gateway between various populations, but also as a transmission channel between the lowlands and the Iranian plateau.


\(^{2159}\) *Ibid.*; Henkelman 2008a, p. 48. For the arrival of the Iranian-speaking people, see Henkelman 2008a, p. 47, footnote 125 (bibliography).

\(^{2160}\) Miroschedji 1985; Henkelman 2008a, pp. 49-57.

\(^{2161}\) Cf. Basello 2016.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

10.5.1 Historical Digression

After the recent new discoveries from the Neo-Elamite archaeological data\textsuperscript{2162}, the existence of a cultural and urban-political koinē during the second half of the 7\textsuperscript{th} and the 6\textsuperscript{th} centuries BC is attested in the corridor from the Lorestan region along the Deh Luran, Susiana and Rom Hormuz plains ending in the Mamasani area\textsuperscript{2163}. It provides evidence of the survival of Elamite political entities, culture, and traditions after the Assyrian incursions. The picture given by the sources is not unitary, however, the paradigm of fragmentation for the late Neo-Elamite period, especially after the sack of Susa, is widely recognized by scholars (646 BC)\textsuperscript{2164}.

Recently, through a reassessment of ancient sources (e.g., the royal titulatures, Assyrian sources)\textsuperscript{2165}, and art, historical and archaeological evidence\textsuperscript{2166}, a new model for the immediate pre-Persian period has been proposed to present Elam in the late-7\textsuperscript{th} and 6\textsuperscript{th} century as a relatively stable and prosperous political entity rather than a dismembered territory controlled by minor independent rulers. The fact that the Assyrian sources still present Elam as equal-rank state after the disastrous events of 640s BC onwards\textsuperscript{2167}, the blood relations between the various Neo-Elamite local kings\textsuperscript{2168}, and the Acropole texts’ claim of a centralized authority placed at Susa, but related with the agro-pastoral groups living east of the Susiana plain along the Bakhtiari mountains (a precursor of the Elymaean dynasties\textsuperscript{2})\textsuperscript{2169}, seems to corroborate Henkelman and Álvarez-Mon’s interpretation of a well-established Neo-Elamite state which survived to the dramatic circumstances of the years 653-643 BC and returned to the routine activities once the Assyrian pressure waned\textsuperscript{2170}.

10.5.2 Izeh-Malamir: a Point of Contact between Elam and Elymais

The importance and the power of these local rulers in the political dynamics of the period should not been either overestimated, or even underestimated, as they probably controlled most of the trade routes from the Persian Gulf and Susiana to the Iranian plateau. In addition, it is reasonable to consider them at the origin of those highlands peoples who

\textsuperscript{2162} See footnote 261.
\textsuperscript{2163} Álvarez-Mon 2012, p. 755.
\textsuperscript{2164} Henkelman 2008a, pp. 20-28.
\textsuperscript{2165} Ibid., pp. 20-28, §1.4.4.
\textsuperscript{2166} Álvarez-Mon 2010b.
\textsuperscript{2167} Cf. Lanfranchi 2003, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{2168} Cf., most recently, Waters 2006a; idem 2006b; Henkelman 2008a, p. 16.
\textsuperscript{2169} In particular, Henkelman (2008a, p. 17, footnote 29) points out the relationships between Susa and the cities of Huhnur, Hidali, Bupila and Shulaggi, all located in eastern and central Khuzestan. See Potts 2009a.
\textsuperscript{2170} Henkelman 2008a, pp. 14-35.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
were attested in the late Achaemenid era as being able to exact tribute from the Persian kings and to receive “gift” when the royal court moved from Ecbatana to Babylonia.2171. Being part of one of these local polities, the reign of Ayapir (Izeh-Malamir) played a role of critical importance for the ethnogenesis of Elymais. It was where the cultural epicentre of the Elamite artistic production (rock-reliefs) of the highlands emerged. The Ayapiran sculpted panels, which visually identify a self-distinct social group (physical traits, hairstyle, clothing) within a specified background of cultural traditions (customs, ritual, worships), forged the foundations of a well-delineated culture and socio-political ideology present in the Elamite highland.2172. Izeh-Malamir may represent a legitimate point in the socio-political cultural tie of continuity in the formation of the Elymaean identity as indicated by the transition from the Elamite (Kul-e Farah and Shekaft-e Salman) to the Elymaean (Hung-e Azhdar, Hung-e Yaralivand and Hung-e Kamalvand) rock reliefs (Map 5).

In addition to the importance of the Ayapiran culture and its relevance to Persia, there are contextualized elements to date back to the Achaemenid era at Izeh-Malamir.2173 A prudent approach should at any rate be maintained – since the region is largely unexplored – and it cannot be excluded that Achaemenid layers are covered with later occupational periods.2174 The apparent lack of the Achaemenid authority in the Zagros-Bakhtiari region seems to indicate that within the complex and tapestry of relationships which dominated this region the Persian kings established some bonds of mutual obligation and non-aggression with the local agro-pastoral communities. It is possible that the local chieftains of the highlands did not need to be subjugated by the royal authority and they only had to formally recognize the position of the Achaemenid kings through an annual gift-giving ceremony when the Persian king met the tribal leaders in order to seal their loyalty as gift-recipients to the gift-giver (the Persian king).2175 In support of this hypothesis, there are the Persepolis Fortification Tablets (509-493 BC) which record intensive trade (or exchanges) in term of livestock for cultic purposes in the region of ancient Uxiana (i.e. Fahliyan) at the border between Khuzestan and Fars.2176

2171 Str. XI.13.6b.
2172 Álvarez-Mon 2013a; idem 2013c.
2173 For the importance of the Elamite rupestrian art of Izeh-Malamir and surrounding as artistic and ideological precursors of Persian sculptural and socio-religious traditions, see Calmeyer 1973; idem 1975; idem 1980; Henkelman 2008a; Álvarez-Mon 2010; idem 2012, p. 755; idem 2015b, p. 254.
2174 Wright 1979, p. 114.
2175 Boucharlat 2005.
2176 Wright 1979, pp. 18, 31-32, 99-123). See also Boucharlat 2005, pp. 236-238.
2178 Koch 1990; Henkelman 2005, pp. 159-164.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

10.5.3 Elamite-Iranian Acculturation of Elymais

In a political scenario of articulated interactions between the highland local polities, and between Suso-Mesopotamian lowlands and Zagros-Bakhtiari plateau during the Neo-Elamite period, distinctive elements of cultural integrity may have been produced in the formation of a new Elamite-Iranian culture. This process of acculturation and integration occurred along the transitional dimorphic area east of Susiana where people from the near main towns, farmers from the sedentary areas at the border between the lowland of Susiana and the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains, and the agro-pastoralists from the highland had an ideal meeting point ($\S$4.3). These mutual relationships gave birth to the Persian empire and, in parallel, laid the foundations for the Elymaean society, or better, for a common socio-cultural and linguistic background which characterized the various regional tribal entities (e.g. Uxian, Kossaeeans) unified under the Elymaean kingdom of the Kamnaskirid family.

However, the linearity in the process of cultural ethnogenesis is rarely assured since the peoples from the highlands cannot be considered a unified model of cultural and ethnic homogeneity, but quite the opposite. They present intricate dynamics between peoples who had their own ancestral culture (Elamite highlanders and Iranians) and may want to preserve or reinforce a perception of cultural distinctiveness$^{2179}$. Important to outline, cultural integration occurs in various degrees by the reaction of populations who are faced with the irruption of an external societies$^{2180}$, and the responses may occur at different time and with different outcomes while maintaining a common cultural background. The various resulting tribal polities may still consider themselves as individual entities and, at the same time, being aware of belonging to a similar ethnogenetic development. According to Henkelman, the socio-cultural similarities between the Elamites and Indo-Iranian traditions from the highlands and the Persians living in the main centres of the Achaemenid empire are not surprising. Similarly, the fact that Persepolis administration hired Elamite-named external herdsmen from the mountainous region at the border between Fars and Khuzestan is indicative of some bonds established with this Elamite/Elymaean pastoral groups$^{2181}$. Even from the point of the ceramic production this cultural link may be pictured. The manufacture within the territory of ancient Elymais during the 6th-5th century BC of typologies similar to Achaemenid models (“Festoon Ware”)$^{2182}$, in fact, could imply a common evolution along the highlands. In this context, more than a political of “controlled hostility” necessary to secure the Royal Roads

$^{2179}$ Henkelman 2008a, pp. 48-49; idem 2011a, pp. 4-5.
$^{2180}$ Martinez-Sève 2003.
$^{2181}$ Henkelman 2011b, pp. 6-11.
$^{2182}$ Haerinck 1983, p. 60.
from Susa to Persepolis and Susa to Ecbatana\textsuperscript{2183}, the above-mentioned gift-giving ceremony may have represented an effective formalization of long-established trade relationships within the same indigenous dimorphic structure, which occurred between agriculturists under the Achaemenid jurisdiction (e.g. Uxians of the Plains) and (semi-)autonomous agro-pastoralist communities of the highlands (Elamite/Elymaean) (§4.3)\textsuperscript{2184}. The physiographic dichotomy acts as a mirror of the innate duality between the Iranian plateau and flatlands of Susiana, which followed the time of integration when Susa begun to assume for the people of the Zagros-Bakhtiari highland the role of gateway to the flourishing trade networks of the Persian Gulf, providing a connection to the developed urban centres of Mesopotamia, and representing a meeting point of different cultures\textsuperscript{2185}. This state of things protracted cyclically throughout the history of the region, and produced a tangible \textit{replica} during the reign of Elymais\textsuperscript{2186}. As a matter of fact, it is significant that all the circumscribed regions which were considered as bases of Elamite culture for the ethnogenesis of Persia (e.g. Rom Hormuz plain, Behbahan, Izeh-Malamir and Fahlivan valleys)\textsuperscript{2187} represent also critical areas for the parallel development of the cultural ideology in Elymais.

\textbf{10.5.4 Elymais: the Last Survival of Elam}

After the arrival of Alexander the Great who ended the Achaemenid empire (324 BC), the Seleucid kings officially introduced Hellenism on the Iranian plateau. The political elites which belonged to a new Greek culture changed the circumstances and what was previously the culture of the people subjected to the Achaemenid authority, now became the ideology supported by the ruling class as symbolically evidenced in architecture and art\textsuperscript{2188}.

At the beginning of the Seleucid era, Elymais appears as a calm region within the Zagros-Bakhtiari plateau during this period and ancient texts do not speak of separatist tendencies, helped most by the accommodative policy of the first Seleucid rulers who established relations based on the tolerance, especially cultural and religious, with the local peoples\textsuperscript{2189}. The material production (coroplathes of Masjed-e Soleyman, sculptures from Shami, rock relies at Izeh-Malamir) suggests that local ateliers, able to produce an art object in Hellenistic style, were functional in the highland\textsuperscript{2190}. It is difficult to evaluate the impact of

\textsuperscript{2183} Briant 2002, p. 731.  
\textsuperscript{2184} Henkelman 2011b, p. 10.  
\textsuperscript{2185} Álvarez-Mon 2012, pp. 741-742.  
\textsuperscript{2186} Amiet 1979, pp. 197-198; Vallat 1980.  
\textsuperscript{2187} \textit{Ibid.} 2008a, pp. 41-49.  
\textsuperscript{2188} Martinez-Sève 2003.  
\textsuperscript{2189} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{2190} Cf. Callieri 2015, p. 16.
Hellenism on the native populations and their lifestyle. Cultural assimilation takes place at several levels and depends on the reaction of the populations who encountered the intrusion of an external entity\textsuperscript{2191}. Plausibly, the responses of the isolated highlanders and the foreign-influenced lowlanders (e.g. Susians) were most likely antithetical, as it has always been throughout the history of the territory. In an artistic context, the importance of defining forms constitutes a domain that belongs to the elite but needs to meet the requirements for a social and cultural harmony among populations of different origins which have to share the same geographic space. A new society is therefore developed by the inevitable contacts and the compulsory juxtaposition of populations with different socio-cultural backgrounds\textsuperscript{2192}. These factors would explain the appearance of common artistic aspects born from the meeting between their cultures. In the case of Elymais, this process of integration was more pronounced in the lowlands (e.g. city of Susa) and more circumstantial in mountainous areas outside of Seleucid institutional control. However, the emergence of local power (Kamnaskirids) was able to unify and pacify the various tribal entities of the highlands and to consolidate its power on the lowlands with the conquest of Susa and the raids in Mesopotamia. Here the Hellenistic presence seems to have been limited to the artistic workshops where Greek artisans trained native pupils. This second period of cultural integration would have mainly occurred at an artistic level, and permitted to enrich a millennial cultural background (Elamite), which had already been further developed by Indo-Iranian influences, with selectively-chosen elements provided by the widespread Hellenistic culture.

This deeply-rooted identity of Elymais was amply taken into account by the new Arsacid dynasty of the Orodids. As thoroughly discussed above (e.g. §10.1.3.3), the new dynasts claimed ancient local traditions in their propagandistic program of power legitimacy. Apparently, this ideological model seems to have worked effectively as demonstrated by the general status of prosperity along the entire territory of Elymais during the first two centuries AD (§4.3). Although the new Elymaean-Arsacid kings represent themselves as Parthian rulers (hairstyles, onomastics, regalia, customs), they showed a certain anxiety to maintain the local character of the monarchy. The collaboration and union with the local aristocracies, which probably mediated in the choice of location, themes and symbols for the new royal propaganda, had certainly facilitated the acceptance of the new rulers among the native substratum of the population. The maintenance of endemic traditions, the respect to religious open-air space (Tang-e Sarvak, Tang-e Botan), the construction and/renovation of ancient

\textsuperscript{2191} Martinez-Sève 2003.
\textsuperscript{2192} Ibid.
10. Elymais in a Broader Picture

cult places (Masjed-e Soleyman, Bard-e Neshandeh, Shami, Hung-e Azhdar), the introduction of a written language (Elymaic), indicate – at least at the level of royal educated entourages – the creation of a well-defined formal identity. How much this artificial construct effectively impacted real life and reflected the socio-cultural situation is hard to be quantified.

To sum up, the assimilation and integration of Elamites/Elymaeans and their interactions with outsider societies represents one of the most interesting instances of ethnogenesis and acculturation in Iranian history and can be studied on a variety of different levels (linguistic, religious and material). The Elamite identity and culture did not simply vanish in the wake of the Assyrian conquest and the Persian ascent to political supremacy, but it seems increasingly indistinct and elusive moving from the city to the highlands, in the core of ancient Elam. Here, the minor satrapy of Elymais (as supposed by Jacobs\textsuperscript{2193}) might have represented a jurisdictional unit within which other agro-pastoral polities, contemporaneously autonomous but subjected to a local prefect (e.g. Uxians\textsuperscript{2194}), were present in a sort of confederacy replicating the millennial legacy of these territories\textsuperscript{2195}.

The history and archaeology of Elymais had not evidently a linear evolution, but on the contrary, appeared to be intermittently reconfigurated in a series of transformations and disjunctures. The Elamite/Elymaean society was able to adapt itself to the socio-political external factors and likewise to the internal dynamics of the region without losing its identity but only sapiently renewing it through aspects selectively embraced from external cultures.

The resulting model did not formalize the origin of a new ethnic, linguistic or cultural homogeneity, but the formation and growing success of a new identity where older traditions would have remained well recognisable in the new culture..

\textsuperscript{2193} Jacobs 2006.
\textsuperscript{2194} Henkelman 2011b.
\textsuperscript{2195} Miroschedji 2003.
Concluding Remarks

Although the deficiency of a methodical and exhaustive study on Elymais covering all its facets has often been pointed out, this work has shown that enough data can be collected from textual and material evidence to provide an embracive picture of Elymais. Taken together with earlier Elamite cultural and artistic expressions, a recognition of the process of acculturation at the origin of Achaemenid society, and the historical records of southwestern Iran during the Seleucid and Arsacid era, my exploration of the Elymaeaean data set has enabled me to associate cross-disciplinary sectors in order to recognize certain patterns (or absence of patterns) in artistry, and present an interpretative discussion of the socio-cultural identity of Elymais. To bridge the limitations of the poorly recorded and published data at the core of the work, I have drawn in a range of case studies that might be regarded as incidental or only indirectly related, but which are necessary to comprehend the material as fully as possible. The overall approach has been primarily focused on Elymaean culture (politics, society, religion, economy) as can be gleaned through a careful analysis of the Elymaean material culture (architecture, artefacts, rupestrian art, coins). This work identifies many excellent potential further studies that could contribute to a larger body of published and archived data to include preceding periods which generally were not indicated as Elymaeans.

In the first place, I recognize in the history and archaeology of Elymais a certain alternation of renewals and breakings which appears to be reflected in the artistic eclecticism of the region. The history of Elymais was indeed marked by periods of political fragmentation and uncertainty which were propitious to cultural realignments. I hope to have shown that the history of Elymais does not start with the words of Nearchus during the 4th century BC, but rather it has a long tradition behind it, undergoing several significant transformations. It may be traced back to the multicentred Neo-Elamite organization of the territory when there was developed a well-delineated ideology originating within the highland milieu. Being probably a parallel ethnogenetic “product” of the process of Elamite-Iranian acculturation which likely generated the Persian empire, the Elymaeans maintained a proper distinct identity. The arrival of Alexander the Great, and the takeover of the Seleucids, all failed to subjugate and absorb Elymais, and just when the Arsacids engaged a pacific policy of stabilization in the region, the Elymaeans manifestly re-emerged in the historical record.

Chronological trajectories have been considered in light of discussions of the material evidence, which likely impact Elymaean studies and topics for future research. In this regard, a host of accurate information beginning with the first historiography referring to Elymais, to
Concluding Remarks

a general survey of the geo-climatic and historical landscape of the territory were evaluated in Part I (Chapters 3 to 5), while the more salient data was exposed in Part II (Chapters 6 to 9), and the final discussion described the formation of a well-defined local identity in Part III (Chapter 10).

Providing Elymais with a coherent historical and archaeological framework must necessarily take into account its culturally and linguistically heterogeneous background. This knowledge is reflected in the artistic material which, despite following general guidelines, was the product of local schools of artisans with marked regional variations, as can be observed, for instance, in the palaeographic peculiarities in the inscriptions of Tang-e Sarvak, Shimbar, Izeh-Malaimir, and in the coin legends. The Elymais artisans creatively reimagined and manipulated important elements from different cultures and skillfully updated and assimilated them. Concerning the temple structures, the Elymaeans selectively combined Mesopotamian, Iranian and Greek architectural traditions and developed an eclectic, yet coherent, repertoire that constituted the basis for their religious architecture. The construction on top of artificial platforms, consisting of artificial terraces which shape the mountain ridgeline with multilevel structures and staircases in undressed stones, can be associated with similar structures discovered in other areas of Iran and Bactria, and can also be connected with the open-air places of worship described by Classical authors2196. In the rupestrian art, the ability of the Elymaean sculptors was to adopt from figurative schemes elaborated by external cultures (Achaemenid, Greek, Arsacid) those elements which best suited local intentions, and to establish from these diverse aspects a delineated artistic lexicon that accomplished the varying demands of ruling class in Elymais. In particular, with regard the religious scenes, it has been shown that local deities were often sculpted with western outlines (Greek), albeit maintaining a distinct autochthonous identity. The sacred figures cannot be labelled sic et simpliciter, even though their divine functions in terms of content are generally well-defined. The rupestrian inscriptions reveal that the Elymaean chancellery during the Arsacid period established its own variety of Aramaic script (Elymaic) and alphabet maintaining several aspects of the Achaemenid standardized writing – with some orthographical innovations – and combining elements with other local characters derived from Aramaic during the same period, such as Nabatean, Palmyrene, Hatran, and Characenean. Although the presence of a surviving form of Elamite language expressed by Aramaic-like graphemes (Elymaic), along the Elymaean highlands has been proposed, no evidence exists in support of such an assumption as well as the fact it was de facto spoken in

2196 Hdt., I.131; Str., XV.3.13-14.
Elymais or only represented the official lexicon of an educated court. As a part of Elymaean art, the monetary motifs reveal a recalibration of original Greek elements and a figurative review during the Parthian era, although Elymais unquestionably showed its local aspects in an innovative design which competently assimilated the naturalism and symbology from the Greeks and the linearism and royal imagery from the Arsacids. The creation of a unique royal iconography capable of immediately distinguishing an Elymaean king from an educated re-manipulation of external elements is an additional indication of the eclecticism that featured in the artistic productions of Elymais.

In conclusion, while the present study has aimed to comprehensively present the material evidence from Elymais as a corpus, I must reiterate that to fully delve into the Elymaean culture, a study of the historically more resilient Elymaean highland stronghold zones is required. Here a distinct artistic scenario may have evolved along the rugged territory of the Zagros-Bakhtiari mountains where the several important sites developed such as the sacred constructions of Bard-e Neshandeh, Masjed-e Soleyman and Shami, or the rupestrian scenes in religious places at Izeh-Malamir, Shimbar, Tang-e Sarvak and surroundings. It is of little surprise that even if protected by geomorphological circumstances which would suggest a fostered marginalization and cultural isolation, the Elymaean society intimately assimilated external stimuli from foreign cultures to create a more unique Elymaean artistic lexicon. The materiality of this educated culture, which only “materially” emerged in the late-Achaemenid era, carries echoes of a world in which the Elamite confederation thrived, yet maintained that channel of cultural transmission, identifiable within the city of Susa and its surrounding flat area, between the Iranian plateau and the Mesopotamian plan, not to mention the significant presence of Greeks in Susiana. This situation would have created the peculiarity of the local culture of Elymais – reflected in the artistry – of being capable of moving freely from a Mesopotamian cultural orbit into the Elamite and Iranian traditions, passing through the Greek artistic language. The clearest archaeological indications of this Elymaeans society have been found along the dimorphic zone of the foothill further east of Susiana along important communication routes. As indicated by the distribution of coins and by the richness of their temples, the Elymaeans seem to have prospered by controlling commercial ports in lower and upper Khuzestan and regulating the flow of goods. Undoubtedly, as systematic excavations are starting to be carried out and more material evidence uncovered in these areas and deeper into the highlands, the inscrutability of Elymaean culture, and its pertinence to the history of the surrounding regions will continue to be revealed.
Appendix 1

A List of Classical Authors

The following list indicates texts which relate directly or indirectly to Elymais and its people\textsuperscript{2197}. They are given here in approximate chronological order, along with any abbreviations or short reference forms that will be used for titles and authors’ names:

- **Aeschylus (Aesch.)** 525-456 BC, \textit{Πέρσαι} (the Persians);
- **Herodotus (Hdt.),** after 450 BC, \textit{Historiae};
- **Polybius (Polyb.),** 2\textsuperscript{nd} cent. BC, \textit{Historiae};
- **Diodorus Siculus (Diod. Sic.),** mid-1\textsuperscript{st} cent. BC, \textit{Bibliotheca Historica} (Historical Library);
- **Trogus Pompeius**, early 1\textsuperscript{st} cent. BC, \textit{Historiae Philippicae} (as later summarized in the \textit{Epitome} by a certain Marcus Junianus Justinus [Justin])\textsuperscript{2198};
- **Strabo (Str.),** early 1\textsuperscript{st} cent. BC, \textit{Geographia};
- **Livy**, at the turn of the 1\textsuperscript{st} cent. BC and 1\textsuperscript{st} cent. AD, \textit{Ab Urbe condita} (History of Rome);
- **Quintus Curtius Rufus (Curt.),** mid-1\textsuperscript{st} cent. AD, \textit{Historiae Alexandri Magni};
- **Pliny the Elder (Pliny),** mid-1\textsuperscript{st} cent. AD, \textit{Historia naturalis};
- **Titus Flavius Josephus (Jos.),** second half 1\textsuperscript{st} cent. AD, \textit{Antiquitates Judaicae} (Jewish Antiquities);
- **Plutarch (Plut.),** ca. 46-120 AD, various of the \textit{Βιοι Παράλληλοι} (Parallel Lives);
- **Lucian (Luc.),** ca. 125-180 AD, \textit{Macrobi};
- **Tacitus (Tac.),** second half of 1\textsuperscript{st} cent.-early 2\textsuperscript{nd} cent., \textit{Annales};
- **Appian (App.),** 2\textsuperscript{nd} cent., \textit{Syriaca} (The Syrian Wars);
- **Polyaenus (Pol.),** 2\textsuperscript{nd} cent., \textit{Στρατηγήματα} (Stratagems);

\textsuperscript{2197} Presentations of all authors writing on the Parthians and collection of fragments from their works are now available in a very useful 3-volume work (Hackl/Jacobs/Weber 2010).

\textsuperscript{2198} Tarn (1951, pp. 44-45) believed that the detailed account of Parthian history contained in books XLI and XLII of the lost \textit{Historiae Philippicae} of Pompeius Trogus derived from a second Greek author, distinct from Apollodorus. Much of their content survives – though greatly abbreviated – in the \textit{Epitome} of Justin, a work therefore indispensable for historians of Parthia, even though the failings of the epitomator are frequently blamed.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
Appendix 1

- Claudius Ptolemaeus (Ptol.), mid-2nd cent., Geographia;
- Arrian (Arr.), mid-2nd cent., Indica and Anabasis of Alexander;
- Cassius Dio (Dio), end 2nd cent.-early 3rd cent., Historia Romana (Roman History);
- Aelian (Ael.), early 3rd cent., De Natura Animalium (On the nature of animals);
- Philostratus (Phil.), mid-3rd cent., Vita Apollonii (Life of Apollonius of Tyana);
- Porphyrius of Tyre (Porph.), second half of 3rd cent., Adversus Christianos (Against the Christians) 2199;
- Eusebius of Caesarea (Euseb.), end 3rd cent.-early 4th cent., Chronicon (Chronicle);
- Marcian of Heraclea (Marc.) 2200, ca. 4th cent., Περίπλοιος της Έξω Θάλασσης (Periplus Maris Externi, or Periplus of the Outer Sea);
- Ammianus Marcellinus (Amm. Marc.), 4th century, Rerum gestarum libri;
- Philostorgius (Phil.), 4th-5th century, Εκκλησιαστική ιστορία (Church History);
- St. Jerome, 4th-5th cent., Commentary on Daniel;
- Sulpicius Severus (Sulp. Sev.), ca. 363-420, Chronica;
- Stephen of Byzantium (Stephanus Byzantinus), ca. 6th cent., Εθνικά (Ethnica) 2201;
- Zonaras (Zon.) 2202 end of 11th cent.-first half of 12th cent., Annales and Epitome Historiarum (Extracts of History) 2203.

2199 The whole work was banned when the Roman Empire became officially Christian, and all remaining copies were publicly burnt in 448 AD. Some passages about the historical basis of the Book of Daniel have survived, because they were quoted in St. Jerome’s commentary on Daniel (4th cent. AD). See Jacoby, F. (1923-1958), Die Fragmente der Griechischen Historiker (FGrH), II (260). Online at: http://referenceworks.brillonline.com/browse/brill-s-new-jacoby.

2200 Greek geographer, age is not well specified. In any case, a reference to the division of Pontus in two provinces, which occurred in the period from Constantine to Justinian, places him among these emperors (4th-5th cent. AD). He represents that kind of geography – based on the mere compilation of data – that came after Ptolemy, when the narrowing of the trade and the lack of interest for geographical exploration, offered no more new material in this field.

2201 An important geographical dictionary also known as Περίπλοιον (Peri poleon) or De Urbibus (“On the Cities”)

2202 A Byzantine chronicler and canonist, under Emperor Alexis Comnenus, he was commander of the imperial bodyguard and first secretary of the imperial chancery. Later he became a monk at the Turkish church of Hagia Glykeria (one of the Princes’ Islands now known as Tavşan Adası or Neandros, south of the main island of Büyükada in the Marmara Sea).

2203 In his work Zonaras clearly followed Cassius Dio.
Appendix 2

Additional Sources

Our approach of Elymaean study has been often limited in various aspects of its political, social, religious, and cultural life by the nature of historical sources. To overcome, therefore, to this concern due to the general inadequacy of the information provided by the Classical authors, it is worth at least mentioning two additional groups of documentation: the Holy Bible and the Chinese texts.

Elymais in the Bible

From a narrative perspective, the Biblical authors took vivid the memory of Elymais over the centuries maintaining uninterruptedly the association with ancient Elam as emerges from texts.

First, it should be noted that unlike the Classical sources where Elam can be recognized in the term Elymais, throughout the Bible both these terms were adopted, sometimes interchangeably, starting from Genesis (10.22) and ending with the Acts of the Apostles (2.9). To be clear, the Bible is the only ancient source in which it is possible to find specific references both to Elam and Elymais in a chronological linear order.

Positively, this appendix is not concerned with the complex branch of Biblical exegesis, but it is of interest when analyzing specific Biblical passages, to note that these may be considered among the first written records of Elymais. Particular relevance is focused on the Septuagint version of the Bible. This ancient manuscript seems to date around the 3rd

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2204 “Septuagint, abbreviation Lxx, the earliest extant Greek translation of the Old Testament from the original Hebrew, presumably made for the use of the Jewish community in Egypt when Greek was the lingua franca throughout the region. Analysis of the language has established that the Torah, or Pentateuch (the first five books of the Old Testament), was translated near the middle of the 3rd century bc and that the rest of the Old Testament was resulted in the 2nd century bc. The name Septuagint (from the Latin septuaginta, “70”) was
century BC and represents the oldest translation of the Old Testament handed down to present
time in the Greek language of which the original text in Hebrew – presumably much earlier –
has been lost in the course of history.

The oldest Biblical record would seem to trace back to *The Book of Tobit* (Τωβίτ),
which presumably dates to sometime in the 3rd or possibly early 2nd century BC\(^{2205}\). Notably,
if the chronology is correct, the verses under consideration may be the first known evidence
of the term *Elymais* in its Greek version\(^ {2206}\).

[**Tob. 2:10**]

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καὶ οὐκ ἦδεν ὅτι στρογγύλα ἐν τῷ ποτίῳ ἔστιν καὶ τῶν ὁρφαλμάτων μου ἀνεμυγγότων ἀφώδευσαν ἡ στρογγύλα θερίζων εἰς τοὺς ὁρφαλμάτως μου καὶ ἐγένηθη λευκώματα εἰς τοὺς ὁρφαλμάτως μου καὶ ἐπορεύθην πρὸς ἰατροὺς καὶ οὐκ ἁρέλεσαν με Ἀχιαχαρίῳ δὲ ἔτρεψεν μὲ ἐως οὗ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὴν Ἐλυμαίδα”
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and I did not know that there were sparrows in the wall. And, since my eyes were open, the
sparrows emitted warm dung into my eyes, and
a whiteness fell into my eyes. And I went to the
physicians, but they did not help me. Moreover,
Achiacharus had to nourish me, until I went
into Elymais”.
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Another intriguing but in some ways enigmatic excerpt is that recorded in *The Book of Daniel* (Δανιήλ)\(^ {2207}\), where the translation of the passage analyzed differs within the same
*Septuagint*. Indeed, within the most ancient copies of the Bible, which contain the *Septuagint*
version of the Old Testament, there are two different variants of *The Book of Daniel*: one is

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\(^{2205}\) Coogan 2010, p. 1368.

\(^{2206}\) What has been reported from Nearchus (4th century BC) and known through Strabo indeed missed the
original text of Alexander’s admiral. At disposal, there is only the version reported by the Greek historian
around the 1st century BC. Contemporaneous of the Book of Tobit, if not even more ancient, would seem the
Greek papyrus (*PUG III 119*) from Arsinotes (modern Fayum) in the 3rd century BC (footnote 240).

\(^{2207}\) *The Book of Daniel* (Δανιήλ) is named for its primary character, a noble Jew exiled from Judea to
Babylonia who became a counsellor and dream interpreter in the courts of the Babylonian, Median and
Persian kings (chapt. 1-6), and who himself is a recipient of mysterious revelations (chapt. 7-12). The first six
chapters – also called “courts tales” (Coogan 2010, p. 1233) – are placed at the time of the Babylonian exile
and immediately following the fall of Babylonia by Cyrus (539 BC), but it is more probable that they were
composed either in the late Persian (450–333 BC) or early Hellenistic (333–170 BC) periods. About the other
chapters (7-12) – defined as “apocalyptic” materials (Coogan 2010, p. 1233) – seem to be composed between
167 and 164 BC during the Maccabean revolt against Antiochus IV.
the original Septuagint version in Old Greek (OG), while the other one is a more recent copy of Theodotion’s (Th) translation from the Hebrew. The latter more closely resembles the Masoretic text (OG). In this Th version, for instance, the Biblical verse in question (Daniele 8:2) reveals clear references to Elam but apparently nothing regarding Elymais:

Au contraire, in the oldest version of the Septuagint (OG), Elam is not cited, and what appears in the Biblical excerpt is, instead, the Greek transliteration of the word Elymais:

2208 Although the common tradition suggests that Theodotion (Θεόδωτος) was a translator perhaps working at Ephesus and living in the late 2nd or early 3rd century AD, the evidence of the version suggests the early 1st century AD, if not before (for a more detailed bibliography see Salvesen 2012, p. 4, footnote 12). It may be more plausible that Theodotion’s work was correlated with a pre-Christian movement of revision which tried to “develop” the older Septuagint by conforming it more closely to the Hebrew text of that time.

2209 Coogan 2010, pp. 2188-2189. The Masoretic text, (from Hebrew masoreth, “tradition”) represents the traditional Hebrew text of the Jewish Bible, universally accepted as the authentic Hebrew Bible. It was meticulously assembled and codified, and supplied with diacritical marks to enable correct pronunciation. This monumental work was initiated around the 6th century AD and completed in the 10th by Talmudic scholars in the academies of Babylonia and Palestine. They intended to reproduce – as far as possible – the original text of the Hebrew Old Testament.

2210 The term “πῶλη Αιλαμ” has always been commonly translated as “river Ulai” or “Ulai gate”, being the subject of numerous comments from Biblical scholars (see Potts 1999b, p. 37, footnotes 22-23).
Unfortunately, the earliest original text is lost, so it is hard to say whether there was a proper Hebrew term to indicate the territory of Elymais. What appears clearly from this passage is that the translators of the *Septuagint* who were very familiar with the Greek term for Elam (Ἄιλάμι) – present countless references in the Holy Scriptures – and in the 2nd century BC explicitly used the word *Elymais* (Ἐλυμαίδι) to indicate the region around Susa. Also evident is the fact that a few centuries later Theodotion in his amendments to the *LXX* replaced the term Ἐλυμαίδι with Αἰλάμι which seems to indicate that the two socio-political entities – respectively Elymais and Elam – were unmistakably associated also within the Biblical context.

Lastly, there is the passage 1:6 of *The Book of Judith* (Ἰουδίθ). In this case, due to the novelistic and deliberately anachronistic2211 value of the text, the verse in question is still a puzzle for Biblical scholars.

![SEPTUAGINT (OG)](image)

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καὶ ἐποίησεν πόλεμοιν ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἐκεῖναις ὁ βασιλεὺς Ναβουχοδόννωσος πρὸς βασιλέα Ἀρφαξάδ ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ τῷ μεγάλῳ τούτῳ ἐστὶν πεδίον ἐν τοῖς ὀρίοις Ῥαγαυ καὶ συνήγησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικούντες τὴν ὅρειν καὶ πάντες οἱ κατοικούντες τὸν Εὐφράτην καὶ τὸν Τίγριν καὶ τὸν Ἰδάστην καὶ πεδία Ἀρμοχ βασιλέως Ἐλυμαίων καὶ συνήλθον ἐθνεῖ πολλὰ σφόδρα εἰς παρατάξειν ἦπον Χελεοῦ"
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"in those very days, king Nebuchadnezzar made war with king Arphaxad on the great plain, which is the plain on the borders of Ragau. And all those who lived in the hill country came to him there; and all who lived by the Euphrates and the Tigris and the Hydaspes, and on the plain of Arioch the king of the Elymaeans, and very many nations of the sons of Chelod assembled themselves for the battle."
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The fictional nature of *The Book of Judith* is generally accepted, as well as its low historical credibility2212. Without going into further details of an authentic context, which at

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2211 Modern scholars argue in favour of a 2nd-1st century context for *The Book of Judith* (Coogan 2010, p. 1389), understanding the fictional novella behind the story where presumably the characters hide some real historical figure, in all likelihood contemporary to the author. It was likely composed in Hebrew in the aftermath of the *Maccabean Revolt* (167-160 BC), which it appears to idealize. Unfortunately, there are no Hebrew manuscript survives, reasonably because the book was not accorded canonical status in Judaism, but then it has been preserved in the Christian tradition in Greek, Latin, and other translations. Historical inaccuracies here begin from the first verse (*Judith* 1:1) and are too prevalent after that to be considered minor mistakes. This motive has engaged the imagination for centuries; for this reason there have been various attempts by scholars to comprehend the characters and events in the *Book* as allegorical representations of actual personages and historical events.
this time could be misleading, it is important to emphasize not only the first evidence of the *Elymaeans* in a Biblical passage, but more especially the fact that they are not described as a pure mountain tribe – as occurred in the contemporary Classical sources of the 2nd-1st century BC. Rather, they are represented as a proper kingdom subject to a sovereign. Also, there is a different translation of the same passage as reported in the Vulgata, where the unknown people of *Elicians* replace *Elymaeans*.

[Dan. 8:2]

**VULGATA**

“in campo magno qui appellatur Ragau circa Eufraten et Tigrin et Hyadas in campo Erioch regis Elicorum”.

“In the great plain which is called Ragua, about the Euphrates, and the Tigris, and the Jadason, in the plain of Erioch the king of the Elicians.”

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**Elymais and China**

In the discussion that has been made about the ancient sources, a prominent place may be filled by the still little used Classical sources of the Far East, in particular from China. Historically, it is known that between the 2nd and 1st century BC China was under the expansionist policy of one of the most ambitious of the Han sovereigns, the emperor Wudi (141-87 BC), who fostered direct contacts with his western neighbours, establishing a Chinese presence in the “Western Regions” and collecting information on these regions during the Parthian period. These early historical records provide interesting data about the Arsacid kingdom and the Iranian highland.

The three primary texts regarding the Parthian era, which are essentially utilized in Chinese sources, include: the *Shiji* of Sima Qian (ca. 145-86 BC), the *Hanshu* of Ban Gu (32-92 AD), and the *Hou Hanshu* of Fan Ye (389-445 AD).

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2212 Coogan 2010, pp. 1389-1390.
2213 The Major Rawlinson (1839, p. 47), in a rather risky way, speculates about the capital of the realm of Arioch by identifying it with the city of Zarnah (the modern town of Zarneh – also known as Kāni Zarnah, Kani Razneh, and Zarrineh – is a city in and capital of Zarneh District, in Ilam Province of Iran).
2214 The Latin Vulgata is an early 5th century version of the Bible in Latin which during the 16th century became the Catholic Church’s officially promulgated Latin version of the Bible.
2215 Territories west of the fertile region are commonly known as Gansu (or Hexi) corridor. For an analysis of the various names attribute to this area, see Wang 2004, p. 3.
2216 As can be seen these three documents cover a period of about 500 years, bringing issues that occupy both Western and Chinese historians as the political climate, the motivations of the ancient authors, the corruptions of the text and the errors by the copyists in the transmission of the books, but above all the identification of many places (Wang 2007, pp. 87-104). Opportunely, they are all available in translations of one or more foreign language to encourage even the scholars who have no knowledge of Chinese language. The most
To avoid opening a Pandora’s Box, a thorough analysis of the Chinese classical sources is left to the experts, as these are still a major point of discussion among scholars as to the determination of the various kingdoms and geographical locations. The focus in our case is specifically directed to the lands of Tiaozhi and Sibin. Determining the geographic location of these two kingdoms is one of the problems in which the historians involved in this area have taken the most interest. This discussion has been going on for more than a century. The core of the problem is the location of the “Western Sea” (Xihai) which over the years has been identified as the Caspian Sea, the Mediterranean Sea or the Persian Gulf, respectively changing the littoral locations of the kingdoms of Tiaozhi and Sibin2217.

Since the scholars’ opinions vary widely regarding this topic, one cannot analyze them individually in a single section. At any rate, according to Hill2218, the chance to identify the “Western Sea” with the Persian Gulf2219 – as almost all recent scholars agree2220 – appears relatively plausible, representing the pivotal point to determine the region of Susiana. It was first mentioned in the Shiji (ch.123), where, starting from a general assimilation of the term Anxi with Parthia, is reported that:

Tiaozhi 塔枝 is at a distance of several thousand li west of Anxi 安息. The state is situated on the Western Sea; it is warm and damp. The fields are worked and sown with rice, there are large birds, and birds’ eggs as [large as water] jars. The population is very numerous, and in many places, there are minor overlords or chiefs. Anxi 安息 subjugated it and treated it as an outer state; the people are expert at conjuring. It is said: The elders of Anxi 安息 have learned by hearsay that in Tiaozhi 塡枝 there is the Weak Water and the Queen Mother of the West; but they have all the same never seen them2221.

Analogously, a comparable description appears in Tiaozhi “Xiyu Zhuan” of Hanshu (ch.96), and in effect, this text can easily be interpreted as an increment of the related records in the Shiji.

After travelling for some hundred days, one then reaches Tiaozhi 塡枝. The state is situated on the Western Sea; it is warm and damp, and the fields are sown with rice; there are birds’ eggs as large as [water] jars. The population is very numerous, and in many places, there are minor overlords or chiefs. Anxi 安息 subjugated it and treated it as an outer state; the people are expert at conjuring.

important translations that I have consulted are Chavannes 1907, Hirth 1917, Hulsewe 1979, Hill 2009, and Yu 2013.
2217 Yu 2013, p. 2.
2218 Especially Hill 2009.
2219 In this case, the Persian Gulf is considered as a part of the Indian Ocean. See Leslie and Gardiner 1996, p. 146.
2220 Hill 2009; contra Yu 2013.
2221 Translation in Yu 2013, p. 6.
The elders of Anxi have learned by hearsay that in Tiaozhi there is the Weak Water and the Queen Mother of the West; but they have all the same never seen them. If you travel by water westward from Tiaozhi for more than a hundred days you draw near the place where the sun sets.

These statements are very relevant to the identification of Tiaozhi with Susiana, particularly in relation to the conditions for growing rice. As is well known, from the ancient sources – principally Diodorus Siculus – that starting from the 4th century BC rice was certainly cultivated in the warm and well-watered Susiana.

[Diod. Sic. XIX.13.6]

"Εὐμενῆς δὲ διαβὰς τὸν Τίγριν καὶ παραγενόμενος εἰς τὴν Σουσιανὴν εἰς τρία μέση διέλε τὴν δύναμιν διὰ τὴν σιτού σπάνιν. ἐπιπορευόμενος δὲ τὴν χώραν κατὰ μέρος σίτου μὲν παντελῶς ἐστάνειν, ὅρων δὲ καὶ σήσαμον καὶ φρονίκα διέδωκε τοὺς στρατιώτας, δαφνῶς ἱεύσεις τῆς χώρας τοὺς τοιοῦτοις καρπούς."

"Eumenes, however, after crossing the Tigris and arriving in Susiana, divided his army into three parts because of the dearth of food. Marching through the country in separate columns, he was completely without grain, but he distributed rice, sesame, and dates to his soldiers, since the land produced such fruits as these in plenty".

Furthermore, Hill suggests that Tiaozhi has to be primarily indicated as the Seleucid territories in the lower Tigris, and only after conquest by the Parthians should it be considered as a region with "many places" where "there are minor overlords or chiefs", rather than a distinct reign. Noteworthy is the so-called "outer state" in these excerpts of the texts, which may indicate a vassal state. For this reason, it must not be assumed that Tiaozhi had been incorporated by Anxi. Furthermore, in the late 2nd century BC – when it appears likely the first Chinese delegation visited Parthia – the only kingdoms of significance in the neighbouring region of the Persian Gulf were Characene and Elymais (including Susiana).

At this point, of particular interest is the information taken from the enriched version of the "Xiyu Zhuan" in the Hou Hanshu which shows the description of a city, probably the most important of Tiaozhi.

2222 Ibid., pp. 8-9.
2225 Hill 2009, p. 217. Many hypotheses have been presented over the years with the aim of understanding the meaning of the name Tiaozhi, but up to the present day, the origin of the name remains mostly unresolved. For a more detailed analysis, see Hill 2003, pp. 217-220.
2226 Shiji, ch. 123; Hanshu, ch. 96.
2227 See Chavannes 1907, p. 176, footnote 3.
The state of Tiaozhi 條支: It has its town situated on a hill. The town is more than 40 li in circumference. The town borders the Western Sea. The seawater curves around it from the south to northeast, so that access is cut off on three sides. Only in the northwest corner is there communication with the land route. The land is hot and damp. It produces lions, rhinoceros, humped buffalo (zebu), peacocks, and ostriches, whose eggs are as large as pots. If one turns to the north and then east, and again goes on horseback for more than sixty days, one reaches Anxi 安息, which later subjugated [was subjugated by] Tiaozhi 條支, appointing a military governor with control over all the small towns in it.

In general, there seems to be a mutual agreement in recognizing the major urban centre of Tiaozhi as the renowned port of Charax Spasinu. On the contrary, Hill – in line with a previous theory of Soma – identifies this city with Susa. Based on an analysis of the dimensions reported in the sources, it may be asserted that while Charax Spasinu has a circumference of only 2 Roman miles (around 3 km), approximately 7 li, the city of Susa seems to perfectly fit the size of “more than 40 li” (ca. 26 km) given by the Hou Hanshu.

[Pliny VI.31.138]

“Charaz, oppidum Persici sinus intimum, a quo Arabia Eudaemon cognominata excurrit, habitatur in colle manu facto inter confluentes dextra Tigrim, laeva Eulaeum, II laxitate”.

“Charax is a city [situated] in the inner part of the Persian Gulf, from which the country called Arabia Felix, it is built on an artificial elevation, at the confluence of the Tigris on the right, and the Eulaios on the left, and lies on a piece of ground two miles in extent”.

If Yu firmly rejects this hypothesis as it “is disqualified by ‘is situated on the Western Sea’ no matter how much more deeply the Persian Gulf extended into the land than it does today”; Hill “circumvents this obstacle” by saying that during this period – that is, when the Chinese military ambassador Gang Ying was sent on a mission with the intent to reach Rome (1st AD) – “Susa used Charax Spasinou as its port”, that the text (Hou Hanshu)

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2228 This passage is rather ambiguous, and it is still a source of great debate among scholars of Chinese sources. According to some of them (e.g. Wang 2007, p. 97), the passive form of verb in the sentence “Anxi was subjugated by Tiaozhi” may be explained by the fact that the text of the Hou Hanshu compiled by Fan Ye in the 5th century AD – so when the Parthian kingdom was long over – could have been influenced by historical facts (e.g. the conquests of Roma del 2nd century AD), which led to a modification of what was previously written in the Chinese ancient texts. Others (Hill 2009, p. 89; Yu 2013, p. 14), instead, consider it simply a transcriptional error from the precedent texts of Shiji and Hanshu. There seems to be no evidence which might indicate that Tiaozhi subjected Anxi although the region lived moments of independence and expansion (Elymais). In addition, usually, the Chinese historical texts are used to follow their predecessors to report events of foreign origin – in this case, Shiji and Hanshu – and there is no reason why the Hou Hanshu makes exceptions (Yu 2013, p. 14).

2229 Hulsewé 1979, p. 113, footnote 253. In particular, about Charax Spasinou, see Appendix 3

2230 Soma 1978, pp. 11-12.

2231 Pliny, VI.31.138.


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subsequently identifies the respective names of the two cities, namely Sibin\textsuperscript{2234} for Susa and Yuluo\textsuperscript{2235} for Charax Spasinu.

If Hill’s theory is correct, it would be the very evidence to indicate that the Chinese envoy came into contact and somehow described the territory of Elymais, since both Susa and Charax Spasinu in the second half of the 1\textsuperscript{st} AD were under the orbit of the Elymaean kingdom\textsuperscript{2236}.

In any case, this approach by Hill in identifying Tiaozhi with Characene and Susiana\textsuperscript{2237} is not entirely accepted in scholarship even if it is probably the one that “fits more readily with the orientations and distances described in the Hou Hanshu account”\textsuperscript{2238}. An example is the accurate – and in some ways original – study and analysis of the sources made by Taishan Yu, who acknowledges Tiaozhi as being the Seleucid Syrian kingdom\textsuperscript{2239}.

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{2234} Ibid., pp. 220-222. \\
\textsuperscript{2235} Ibid., pp. 246-251. \\
\textsuperscript{2236} Potts 1999a, p. 397. \\
\textsuperscript{2237} Hill 2009, pp. 217-226. \\
\textsuperscript{2238} Wang 2007, p. 99. \\
\textsuperscript{2239} Yu 2013, p. 5.
\end{flushleft}
Appendix 3

A Digression on the Main Cities of Elymais

Archaeological researchers in Khuzestan have demonstrated that the occupation of this territory was remarkably denser and more widespread during the Elymaean/Parthian period than was the case in any of the immediately preceding years (§4.3)\textsuperscript{2240}. Strabo states that a part of the Elymaean land was fertile and inhabited by farmers\textsuperscript{2241}, but an expanding agricultural population on the plains is not enough to justify the economic and cultural flourishing of Elymais which was for the most part deeply rooted into the Bakhtiari mountains. It is reasonable to guess that the proximity of Elymais to the trading cities in the lowlands of Susiana and control over the commercial routes, which passed through its territory, gave to the Elymaeans an essential advantage\textsuperscript{2242}.

There is little evidence about Elymaean cities, due to the dearth of sources, and to this day, no in-depth study has been undertaken yet in this direction. Henkelman pointed out, that the Achaemenid administration of Persepolis was very active in the highland region, mentioning a few places (e.g., Pumu\textsuperscript{2243} and Gisat\textsuperscript{2244}) within the \textit{Persepolis Fortification Texts}. Henkelman further asserted through the study of prosopography and seals, that names of other possible inhabitant centres may be deduced\textsuperscript{2245}, and several other written text could be connected to Elymais\textsuperscript{2246}. Similarly, in the Seleucid/Parthian period many settlements in the plain and along the Bakhtiari mountains seem to belong to the Elymaean kingdom\textsuperscript{2247}.

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Str., XVI.1.18.
\item Le Rider 1965, p. 261.
\item \textit{PFT} 363.
\item \textit{PFT} 352.
\item See Henkelman 2005, p. 160, footnote 50.
\item Henkelman 2005, p. 160. For some scholars saying that the inhabitants of this region during the Achaemenid period could already be considered as \textit{Elymaeans} may be speculative and possibly anachronistic (Henkelman 2008a, p.243), as in the case of Heidemarie Koch (1987; \textit{idem} 1990) who seems to be confident that this territory was predominantly Elamite in population and culture. In reality, the misconception represents more a scholarship necessity to provide a tribal “label” for the people of this region, rather than an ascertained ethnological division. It is in fact very likely that who was artificially categorized as Elamite during the Achaemenid period would be identified as Elymaeans over the Seleuco-Parthian era.
\item Boucharlat and Salles 1981, p. 72.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In ancient texts, sometimes explicitly, others incidentally, there are only occasional references to urban settlements “officially” localized within the Elymaean territory. Among those, particular importance is given to the three Seleucias: Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios\textsuperscript{2248}, Seleucia-in-Elymais\textsuperscript{2249} and possibly Seleucia-on-the-Erythraean-Sea\textsuperscript{2250} (or Red Sea\textsuperscript{2251}).

**Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios (Susa)**

Approximately dating to the 205 BC, the existence of a decree from Antioch-in-Persis\textsuperscript{2252} – documented on a Greek epigraph from Magnesia-on-the-Meander (Aydın Province, Turkey)\textsuperscript{2253} – reported information about the festival of Artemis Leukophryene at Magnesia\textsuperscript{2254}. A list of other cities in the region around the Persian Gulf was annexed at the decree indicating similar practices, which observed the games of the goddess celebrated at Magnesia-on-the-Meander. Among these was ΣΕΛΕΥΚΕΥΣΙΝ τοίς πρός τω Εὐλαίωι (Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios)\textsuperscript{2255}.

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\textsuperscript{2248} Ancient city of Susa. See Le Rider 1965; and Fraser 1996, p. 33.

\textsuperscript{2249} Also known as Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon. See Hansman1978; Fraser 1996, p.32.

\textsuperscript{2250} Location unknown. In reality, Seleucid-on-the-Erythraean-Sea, identified as native home of the Chaldean astronomer Seleucus (Str., III.5.9, “ΣΕΛΕΥΚΟΝ τῶν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἑρυθραίας θαλασσίως”, translated “Seleucus from the region of the Erythraean Sea”; idem I.1.9; idem XVI.1.16), would seem more presumably to belong to the Mesene region, although associated to Elymais by some scholars as Tarn (1997, p. 17; see also Lukonin 1983, p.713; Colpe 1983, p. 823) , who suggested an approximate location “on the north-east shore of the Persian Gulf somewhere between Charax Spasina at the mouth of the Tigris and Antioch in Persis on the Gulf of Bushire” (Tarn 1997, p. 43). Polybius (V.46.7, 48.13, 54.12), describing the revolt of Molon against Antiochus III in 222 BC mentions the eparchy and region of the “Erythraean Sea” (Ἑρυθραίας θαλασσίως) where he refers to Mesene (Shayegan 2011, p. 158). Interestingly, Giuseppe F. Del Monte proposed that the “Seleucia” present in the Astronomical Diaries of 150 BC (Hunger and Sachs 1996, p. 87, no. 149 A ’rev. ’6’) was apparently referring to Seleucia-on-the-Erythraean-Sea and not to Seleucia-in-Pieria (Del Monte 1997, pp. 91-94, footnote 178). Seleucia-in-Pieria, also known as Seleucia-by-the-Sea, is located in Turkey (modern city of Samandag), 6 km north of the mouth of the Orontes River. With Antioch, Apamea, and Laodicea it formed the Syrian tetrapolis.

\textsuperscript{2251} Sherwin-White and Kuhrt 1993, p. 20.

\textsuperscript{2252} Antioch-in-Persis is a settlement founded or refounded in Persis (Fars) – possibly on the coastal plain – by king Antiochus I in the 3rd century BC. It may correspond to either modern Bushire on the Persian Gulf or inland Taoke in current Borazjan (Herzfeld 1908, p. 14; Hansom 1986, p. 125; Fraser 1996, p. 31, no. 68; Rougemont 2012a, no. 53). The city is attested in two Greek inscriptions from Magnesia-on-the-Maeander, the first of which related to Antiochus I and the second one to Antiochus III.

\textsuperscript{2253} Rigsby 1996, pp. 257-259, no. 111.

\textsuperscript{2254} More specifically for the Decree of Antioch-in-Persis see Kern (1863) I.Magnesia 61 [Dittenberger, OGIS 233]; Rigsby 1996, no. 111; Canali De Rossi 2004, no. 252; Merkelbach and Stauber 2005, no. 306; Rougemont 2012a, no. 53.

\textsuperscript{2255} Rigsby (1996, pp. 257-259), Inscription no. 111, lines 108-109. The discovery of a later fragmentary inscription at Susa by Jacques de Morgan in 1900, and dated 177/6 BC with explicit mention of Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios (SEG 7.2, lines3-4, “ἐν ΣΕΛΕΥΚΕΥΣΙΑΙ ἐν τῇ Εὐλαίῳ”), enabled Bernard Haussoullier to consider both the cities as the same urban centre. See Haussoullier 1903, pp. 155-158; idem 1923, pp. 187-193. Fraser (1996, p. 33) has also identified Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios with the city of Ἀλέξανδρεια ἐν Σούσσοις (Alexandria of Susa) in the *Alexander Romance*. 

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Susa underwent a major transformation becoming a Greek city and changing its name to *Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios*[^2256], which presumably derives from the ancient designation given to the present-day Karkheh river that ran close by. Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios lost its rank of imperial capital and became one of the regional chief centres, which constituted the framework of the Seleucid kingdom, in particular heading the satrapy of Susiana[^2257]. It is hard to evaluate the real status of this city, which housed an important mint, during the Hellenistic period, but it presumably remained a focal point under Seleucid dominion[^2258]. Significantly, it represented a prosperous and attractive regional centre at the heart of the expansionist ambitions and secessionist tendencies of the Kamnaskirid dynasty in Elymais.

Kamnaskires I took Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios for the first time in mid-2nd century BC to inaugurate a new dynasty, but the Elymaean dominion did not prevail long, and the city passed soon into the hands of the Parthians. Although the Elymaeans kept control of the region to the east, around the town of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon and along the Zagros, it can be assumed that for socio-political reasons Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios always remained in their conquest ambitions. It would not have been separated too long from the areas under the control of Elymais, as confirmed by the close relationships between Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios and Masjed-e Soleyman, including exchanges of products and artisans[^2259]. From an Elymaean point of view, Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios constituted a pivotal point of expansionism over the lowlands of Susiana, areas of enormous importance for the control of increasing trade from the Persian Gulf. The political situation of the city during the Parthian period does not appear to have undergone much change and – at least until the beginning of the 1st century AD – Susa maintained the institutions of a Greek city[^2260], even though its name “Seleucia-of-the-Eulaios” was substituted with “Phraata-in-Susa” by king Phraates IV in 31/30 BC, who also continued to mint coins in the city for several years[^2261]. As demonstrated by this act of refoundation, the Parthian rulers appeared attracted in the development of the

[^2256]: The date of refounding from Susa to Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios by the Seleucid kings is not known with certainty. It is thought that this “rebirth” took place at the beginning of the Seleucid period, undertaken by Seleucus I (Le Rider 1965, p. 280) or Antiochus I (Capdetrey 2007, p. 365). As Martinez-Sève (2015) has rightly pointed out, it would be curious if Seleucus I had judged it wise to modify the name of one of the chief Achaemenid capitals, as he did not do it for Ecbatana, Persepolis, Pasargadae, or Babylon. This refoundation – accompanied by the settling of a Greco-Macedonian population – might date to the reign of Antiochus III (Tarn 1985, p. 27) or another of the Seleucids who was active in the 3rd century (Martinez-Sève 2010; *idem* 2015).


[^2260]: Martinez-Sève 2015. An interesting illustration about the continued veneration of Greek deities at Parthian Susa in provided by Franz Cumont (1928, p. 89). On an engraved paving stone were found the fragments of a text (hymn) of 1st century AD in Apollo’s honor by one Herodoros, son of Artemon, of Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios.

city, which remained a major provincial center and its prosperity increased during this time in comparison with the Seleucid period\textsuperscript{2262}.

An important point to stress is that Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios was never a proper Elymaean capital for culture and traditions. As the cultural epicenter of the region and key access to the southwestern Iran’s political dynamics, it was a theatre of confrontation and collision between different civilizations. In particular, the pronounced Hellenistic influence at Susa/Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios – which was likely a result of the arrival of the Greco-Macedonian newcomers after Alexander’s conquest – is indicated by the several Greek inscriptions which included the mentions to people with Macedonian and Greek anthroponyms, even during the Parthian period\textsuperscript{2263}.

To sum up, a Hellenistic diffusion did not result in the manifestation of an artificial and extraneous culture in the city. The local traditions remained latent but dynamic in promoting the emergence of a new distinctive culture, which arose from the confrontation of Greek and native civilizations\textsuperscript{2264}.

\textbf{Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon (Soloke)}

According to Strabo, Seleucia “πρὸς τῷ Ἑδυφύοντι ποταμῷ” (\textit{near the Hedyphon river}) was a “μεγάλη πόλις” (\textit{a large city}), formerly called Σολόκη (Soloke)\textsuperscript{2265}. The mention of Seleucia/Soloke unequivocally refers to the same settlement known to Pliny as Seleucia-in-Elymais\textsuperscript{2266}. As in the same passage by Pliny, the Hedyphon river (Hedypnus) appears to be a tributary of the Eulaios\textsuperscript{2267}. Tscherikower proposed an identification of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon with Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios present in the above-mentioned

\textsuperscript{2262} Wenke 1981, p. 310.
\textsuperscript{2263} Potts 2016, table 10.1.
\textsuperscript{2264} Martinez-Sève 2003, pp. 159-160. An example may be recognized in many divine images which represented Greek gods or Greek-like deities with native connotations (§10.2.4). In the numismatic production, the legends on the Elymaean coins continued to use Greek-shaped letters until the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD (an example, some series issued by Phraates and Orodes III, see §9.2.4) demonstrating a well-established tradition. It was, however, an exception and, more generally, this tradition weakened and gradually disappeared during the Parthian era (stele of Khwasak, see Ghirshman 1950b; Kawami 1987, pp. 164-167; Mathiesen 1992/2, pp. 168-169). See §9.2.5.3.
\textsuperscript{2265} Str., XV:1.1.18. “ἡρέθη δὲ καὶ πρὸς τῷ Ἑδυφύοντι ποταμῷ Σελεύκεια, μεγάλη πόλις: Σολόκη δ’ ἐκαλεῖτο πρῶτον”. Zadok assumes that Soloke was “probably identical” with the ancient Šullaggi (Zadok 1985, p. 285). Hypothesis shared by Henkelman who in turn identifies the term Šullaggi present in the tablets of Persepolis with Šullaki in the Neo-Elamite Acropole texts and the Šallukku in some Neo-Babylonian letters (Henkelman 2008a, p. 426, footnote 981). Compare also Old Elamite Šalgu (Farber 1975, pp. 83-84) and the Sasanian Surak (Henning 1952, p. 177; Hansman 1978, p. 155).
\textsuperscript{2266} Pliny, VI:31.135.
\textsuperscript{2267} Weissbach 1944, p. 2594. See footnote 126.
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 301 BC-224 AD)

inscription of Magnesia-on-the-Meander. In contrast, however, if the restoration of lines 110-111 of the same inscription (Decree of Antioch-in-Persis) proposed by Haussoullier is correct, then it can reasonably be argued that Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios and Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon were two distinct settlements with two different names, respectively ΣΕΛΕΥΚΕΥΣΙΝ ΤΟΪΣΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΙ ΕΥΛΑΙΟΙ and ΣΕΛΕΥΚΕΥΣΙΝ ΤΟΪΣΠΡΟΣ ΤΟΙ ΗΔΥΦΩΝΤΙ. Very questionable, Peter Fraser attempts to identify Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon with the Alexandria ἐπί Βασιλείους recorded in the Alexander list.

Since the identification of Hedyphon river with the modern Jarrahi in eastern Khuzestan has generally been accepted, Hansman tentatively recognized the city of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon with a large “unequal sided parallelogram”-shaped fortified site called Ja Nishin (or Jan-i Sheen). The area is located ca. 80 km south-east of Ahwaz, a few hundred meters south of the village of Moshrageh, on the “west bank of Jarrahi 13 km, north of Khalafabad (modern Ramshir) and just 1 km below the point where a road connecting Ahwaz with south-eastern Khuzestan crossed the river”. The discovery on the surface of pottery dating to Seleuco-Parthian, Sasanian and Early Islamic periods – still present today – suggests an occupation of the site until the 10th-11th century AD proposing an identification of Ja Nishin even with the Sasanian and Early Islamic capital of Dawraq. As pointed out by Hansman, it is plausible to suppose the existence of earlier

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2268 Tscherikower (1927, p. 98) follows in this association Dittenberger (OGIS 233, no. 41).
2269 Haussoullier 1923, p. 188; see also SEG 4:504.
2270 Fraser 1996, pp. 32-33.
2272 Hansman (1978, p. 156). Hansman hypothesized that this kind of parallelogram fortification was characteristic of Greek period as the same type of construction was also observed in the site of Spasinu Charax (modern Naysan), which was founded by Alexander as Alexandria-on-the-Tigris and refounded as an Antiochia (ibid 1967, pp. 21-45).
2273 Hansman (1978, p. 156) visited the site on the 2nd of November 1967. The bridge he was referring to is the one that is now under water a couple of meters south of the modern highway bridge.
2274 I personally visited the site in November 2015, and I may assure that the description given by Hansman almost forty years ago remains just as pertinent today. I saw all the surface of this large parallelogram-shaped site cover by a considerable amount of pottery possibly dated back to the Seleuco-Parthian, Sasanid and Early Islamic era. There is the possibility, ignored by Hansman, that the site also extended on the other river of the Jarrahi where apparently there is the same situation of ceramics. I have been told from the only farmer who knew the site and the denomination of Ja Nishin a local legend regarding “a big city cut through by the river and split by two kings”.
2275 Hansman 1978, p. 158.
2276 Fiey 1979b; Gyselen 1989. Dawraq, also known as Sorraq, capital of the same district, was probably situated at Ja Nishin where pottery from Sasanian and Early Islamic period were discovered (Hansman 1978, p. 158).
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material “sealed in the 4 m depth of cultural deposit with the embankment lines”\textsuperscript{2277}, which could pre-date the site to the Hellenistic period given the topographical similarity with the area of Spasinu Charax (modern Naysan in Iraq). Systematic surveys and archaeological excavations would be necessary to provide a full chronological sequence of material evidence at Ja Nishin, and therefore support a credible association of the site with ancient Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon.

Approximately 17 km south-southwest of the site of Ja Nishin, on the east side of the Jarrahi river, is the archaeological area of Tell Tendy. Placed along traces of a large canal on an abandoned alluvial ridge deposited by the Jarrahi river when it flowed southwards\textsuperscript{2278}, this vast mounded site indicates an occupational phase extending from the Achaemenid to the Parthian period since no Sasanian or Early Islamic pottery found on the surface\textsuperscript{2279}. Considering its high mounding up to 10 m, it is reasonable to suggests an antedate foundation back to earlier periods. The abandonment of the site may be related to alteration in the natural course of the Jarrahi river and its subsequent incisions\textsuperscript{2280}.

Due to its size, Tell Tendy may be tentatively considered as the main centre in Elymais at the time Susiana was under the sway of the Seleucid and Arsacid authority, and the Elymaeans were confined to eastern Khuzestan. However, the fact that the settlement is placed along a canal rather than a river, and has no trace of defensive walls decreases this possibility drastically, since it would not satisfy the necessary requirements to be identified as Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon\textsuperscript{2281}. Firstly, as mentioned before, the main centre of Seleucia/Soloke is described as being located near the Hedyphon river\textsuperscript{2282} and not a simple canal.  Then, considering that the city was presumably refounded under this appellation by one

\textsuperscript{2277} Hansman 1978, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{2278} Hansman reported the presence of pottery attributable to the Achaemenid period as "shards of carinated bowls showing a red or black slips (Fig 11, 4) and also bowls of burnished redware with broadly flaring rims (Fig 11, 3)" and "some bowls with incurving rims" which may “suggest Greek manufacture” Hansman (1978, pp. 158-159). To these findings must be added the discovery of Elymaean coins ascribed to kings Orodes II and Phraates, both questionably dated by Hansman (1978, p. 158) to 1\textsuperscript{st} century AD (on coins of Orodes II and Phraates dated to the 2\textsuperscript{nd} century AD, see §9.2.5.3).

\textsuperscript{2279} Hansman 1978, p. 159.

\textsuperscript{2280} Walstra 2010b, p. 278.

\textsuperscript{2281} The construction of brand-new unwalled settlements was a common construction practice during the first two century AD (Wenke 1981, pp. 310-313).

\textsuperscript{2282} Str., XVI.1.18. See also Pliny, VI.31.135.
of the Seleucid kings who bore this name within a hostile territory conquered by an external authority, it is reasonable to expect a fortified settlement, given the example of Seleucia-in-the-Tigris. These reasons prompted Hansman to prefer the (possibly) fortified Ja Nishin on the Jarrahi river as a better option in reference to the location of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon\textsuperscript{2283}.

Another assumption is the association of Seleucia/Soloke with the ancient ruins of Manjanik\textsuperscript{2284} in the plain of the modern city Bagh-e Malek (approximately 35 km south of Izeh and 73 km north-east of Ja Nishin) at the western foot of the Kuh-e Mongasht mountain. This area is crossed by a small stream, which rises near the village of Mal Agha, and it is a tributary of the Jarrahi river, called Ab-i Zard (presumably the modern Rudkhaneh-ye Bagh-e Malek\textsuperscript{2285}) by Rawlinson\textsuperscript{2286}, who controversially recognized in this stream the ancient Hedyphon.

Henning recognized in Seleucia/Soloke the capital of Elymais, bringing in support for his claim the route taken by Ardashir into the Elymaean territory. The first Sasanian king – according to al-Tabari\textsuperscript{2287} – after having defeated the king of Ahwaz (Elymais?)\textsuperscript{2288} shortly after 218 AD, marched through Arjan (near Behbahan), and many other cities including Sambil\textsuperscript{2289} and Tashan which belonged to the district of Ram Hormoz (near Tang-e Sarvak\textsuperscript{2290}), and then moving forward, terminated his raid at Surak (Arabicized as Sorraq)\textsuperscript{2291}, the later Dawraq. Presumably, Surak/Sorraq was the ancient Seleucia/Soloke near the site of Ja Nishin.

\textsuperscript{2283} Hansman 1978, p. 159. At the same time, Hansman also stressed that his interpretations of the sites at Ja Nishin and Tell Tendy could only be verified through appropriate excavation works, which have not happened to this day. Remarkably, no further archaeological surveys have been conducted in this area since the 1970s.

\textsuperscript{2284} Rawlinson 1839, p. 81.

\textsuperscript{2285} Leaving the Bagh-e Malek plain, this small stream flows into a lake (called in Persian: دریاچه سد جره), then it goes out and joins the Ab-e `Ala river tributary to the Rud-e Zard in the drainage of Marun continuing west-southwest as the Jarrahi river and emptying in the Persian Gulf.

\textsuperscript{2286} Rawlinson (1839, p. 86), once identified Seleucia/Soloke with the ruins of Manjanik, added that “the high mound which preserves the tradition of Nimrod and Abraham\textsuperscript{2286} will mark the site of the fire-temple that fell into the hands of the Parthian king (*Mithridates). The temple is named Azara, in Strabo […]]”. The etymology relating the name of this area with the word manjanik (Rawlinson 1839, p. 81; Stein 1940, p. 124), derivation of the word used by the Arab historians to describe their catapults (mandjanik) which come from the Byzantine manikanon (itself derived from the early Greek manganon). Manganon was a device, particularly lifting devices like cranes, which also used levers and fulcrums; it was also used to cover siege engines, but the more technical term manganikon emerged in the 7th century.

\textsuperscript{2287} Al Tabari, V.1.818. Bosworth 1999, p. 12.

\textsuperscript{2288} Henning 1952, p. 177; Widengren 1971, p. 738; Potts 1999a, pp. 412-415.

\textsuperscript{2289} The exact location of the site is not sure, Nödeke suggested that Sambil was not too far from Arjan (Nödeke 1879, p. 13).

\textsuperscript{2290} See Henning 1952, p. 178, footnote 1. Tang-e Sarvak is located circa 20 km north-north-west of the modern city of Tashan.

\textsuperscript{2291} \textit{Ibid.}, p. 177.
**Sostrate**

[Pliny VI.31.136]

“infra Eulaeum Elymais est in ora iuncta Persidi, a flumine Orati ad Characem CCXL p. oppida eius Seleucia et Sostrate, adposita monti Chasiro. oram, quae praevacet, minorum Syrtium vice diximus inaccessam caeno, plurimum limi deferentibus Brixia et Ortacia amnibus, madente et ipsa Elymaide in tantum, ut nullus sit nisi circuitu eius ad Persidem aditus”.

“Below the Eulaios is Elymais, upon the coast adjoining to Persis, and extending from the river Orates to Charax, a distance of 240 miles. Its towns are Seleucia and Sostrate, close to the Mount Casyrus. The shore, which lies in front of, in the place of Lesser Syrtis, as we stated, is rendered inaccessible by mud, the rivers Brixia and Ortacea bringing down vast quantities of slime. Elymais itself being so marshy that it is impossible to reach Persis, unless by going round”.

Pliny, along with the Ravenna Cosmography, are the only source at disposal which mentioned the paleonym *Sostrate* (also *Sostra* or *Sosirate*).

Information on the location of Sostrate is regrettably insufficient, since the precise location of Mount Casyrus is unknown. The most accepted assumption is to identify Sostrate with the ancient Shushtar. This association has reasonably been favoured by the etymological similarity of the two terms (*Sostrate* and *Shushtar*) as well as by the fact that Shushtar stands on a ridge at the foot of the Zagros mountains just like “Sostrate, adposita monti Chasiro”. Moreover, the city is cited in another passage of Pliny wherein “ultra Pasitigrim finibus oppidi Sostratae”.

[Pliny XII.39.78]

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2092 Pliny, VI.31.135.
2093 Rav. Cosm., p. 44.20, in *India maior, quae Thermantica atque Ela[m]tis* (così dopo in p. 45.8) *appellatur; idem* p. 52.17, under *Persarum civitates*. The Ravenna Cosmography (Latin: *Ravennatis Anonymi Cosmographia*, lit. “The Cosmography of the Unknown Ravennese”) is a list of place-names covering the world from India to Ireland, compiled presumably by an anonymous monk in Ravenna around the early 8th century AD.
2094 Weissbach 1927, col. 1199.
2095 Pliny, VI.31.135.
2096 Marquart 1901, p. 144; Weissbach 1927, col. 1199; Oppenheimer 1983, pp. 435.; Potts 1999a, p. 412; Kramers and Bosworth 2015. On the contrary, Rawlinson (1839, p. 86) identified the site of *Sosirate* with Shushan, while Layard (1846, p. 94) and Lynch (1890, p. 540) with the plain of Izeh-Malamir.
2097 Nöldeke (1893, p. 42, footnote 3) suggested a Greek origin of the name (*Σωστρά τε*). See also Marquart 1901, p. 144; and Weissbach 1927, col. 1199.
2098 Pliny, XII.39.78.
“Consequently they went find between the Elymaeans the wood of the bratus²²⁹⁹, which resembling a spreading cypress, with whitish branches, giving an agreeable scent when burnt and remembered with wonder in the Histories of Claudius Caesar. He states that the Parthians sprinkle its leaves into their drinks, and that it has a scent very like cedar, and its smoke is an antidote against the effects of other woods. It grows beyond the Pasitigris on Mount Scanchrus in the territory of the city of Sostrate²³⁰⁰.”

Assuming that the Classical authors knew the ancient Karun river under the name of Pasitigris (or Tigris)²³⁰⁰, the identification of modern Shushtar with the Elymaean Sostrate appears entirely apposite. Curzon also noticed how its position would enable the city to have control of both the nomads of the mountains and the inhabitants of the lowlands²³⁰¹, as well as being a strategic point for trade since antiquity, ensuring a natural hub for the passage of goods between the Persian Gulf and the inland thanks to the navigability of the Karun river, which runs through the city. It seems very likely that an old caravan route linked Susa with Esfahan via Shushtar and Izeh²³⁰².

Charax Spasinou

A separate mention should be made for Charax Spasinu, the chief city of Characene’s kingdom. As the ancient port at the head of the Persian Gulf, by the 1st century BC, Charax was a major commercial centre for the transit of goods from the Gulf and Mesopotamia and further to Palmyra and Bactria²³⁰³. There is no evidence of a passage of Charax under the Elymaean orbit, but it certainly marked a geopolitical and commercial boundary for the western expansionist ambitions of Elymais.

²²⁹⁹ The bratus can be identified with the Juniperus excelsa, a conifer found in the Zagros, due to the recognition that the Latin bratus is cognate with Syrian brota and Biblical berosh (Hansman 1976, pp. 28-29 with earlier bibliography).

²³⁰⁰ Cole and Gashe 2007, p. 26. The Karun river was known in ancient times as either the Pasitigris or the Tigris. According to Q.Curtius (V.3.1), which described the journey of Alexander from Susa to Persepolis: “…rex quartis castris pervenit ad Tigrim fluviun. Pasitigrim incolae vacant” (the king came at his fourth camp to the river Tigris, called Pasitigris by the natives).

²³⁰¹ Curzon 1892, p. 370.

²³⁰² Vanden Berghe 1959, p. 63.

²³⁰³ Footnote 132.
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The name Charax, probably from Greek Χάραξ, literally means "palisaded fort," and was applied to several fortified Seleucid towns. It was formerly known as Alexandria-on-the-Tigris, after Alexander the Great (perhaps) founded it on an artificial mound to protect the site from the flood caused by the nearby confluence of the Eulaios and Tigris rivers\textsuperscript{2304}. He probably intended the new centre to serve as a major commercial port for his eastern capital of Babylon to handle the rich sea trade from the newly conquered India and the Arabian peninsula\textsuperscript{2305}. After Charax was destroyed by floods, Antiochus IV (175-164 BC) restored it by 166/5 BC, calling it Antiochia, and put Hyspaosines, son of Sagodonacus (king of the neighbouring Arabs), in charge of it and its territory\textsuperscript{2306}. Hyspaosines became independent between 141-139 BC\textsuperscript{2307}, and in 129 BC built new embankments to secure the flood-damaged city. Pliny notes that these artificial structures extended in length to a distance of ca. 2 miles (3.2 km)\textsuperscript{2308}. Due to this impressive rebuilding, Josephus and other writers of the late Classical period refer to it as Charax Spasinou, literally “Palisade of Spasines or Hyspaosine”\textsuperscript{2309}. In the Palmyrene inscriptions, Charax was usually given the Aramaic form Kark Ispasina\textsuperscript{2310}.

According to Pliny, the exact location of Charax is unknown:

\begin{quote}
Charaz, oppidum Persici sinus intimum, a quo Arabia Eudaemon cognominata excurrit, habitatur in colle manu facto inter confluentes dextra Tigrim, laeva
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{2304} Pliny, VI.31.138.
\textsuperscript{2305} Hansman 1967, pp. 21-23; idem 1991, p. 363.
\textsuperscript{2306} Pliny, VI.31.139-140.
\textsuperscript{2307} Nodelman 1960, p. 87.
\textsuperscript{2308} Pliny, 6.31.139.
\textsuperscript{2310} Corpus Inscr. Semit. II, no. 3928.
Eulaeum, II p. laxitae. conditum est primum ab Alexandro Magno, colonis ex urbe regia Durine... Alexandriam appellari iusserat... prius fuit a litore stadiis X... Iuba vero prodente L p.; nunc abesse a litore CX legati Arabum nostrique negotiatores, qui inde venere, adfirmant. nec uilla in parte plus aut celerius profecere terrae fluminibus invectae”.

Charax’s identification with the modern site of Jabal Khaybar (Iraq) – also known as Naysan\(^{2311}\) – has been convincingly attested by Hansman\(^{2312}\). The ruins of the town are located approximately 45-50 km north-northwest of Basra and \(ca\) 5 km east of the Shatt al-Arab river close to the point of confluence between two fossil river channels, respectively an old channel of the Tigris and one of the Karun river\(^{2313}\). The site is enclosed by a trapezoidal embankment – similar to Ja Nishin – of which the northern and southern walls measure respectively \(ca\) 2.8 km and 2.94 km in length\(^{2314}\), almost identical to the dimensions given by Pliny for the wall of ancient Charax\(^{2315}\). The urban map recalls a Hellenistic model, but because of the frequent floods of the Tigris, no Greek elements and only a few modest shards of the Parthian age have been found on the surface\(^{2316}\).

Moving south-southeast, \(ca\) 18 km from Jabal Khaybar, the ruins of another archaeological site (i.e., Maghlub) are recognizable. Located just a little to the east of the same disused Tigris’ channel near to where Naysan is placed, it presents on the ground the same typology of pottery\(^{2317}\). Taking into consideration also the nearby ruins of Nahr Umar (opposite bank of the Shatt al-Arab), roughly at the same latitude of Maghlub, they constitute the only pre-Islamic sites currently ascertained in the entire region surrounding the lower

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\(^{2311}\) Naysan (or Naisan) is the name that the local people give to this area, presumably a later modification of the early Islamic name for Charax, i.e., Maysan (Hansman 1967, p. 42).

\(^{2312}\) Hansman 1967, p. 42; idem 1978, p. 156; idem, pp. 161-166.

\(^{2313}\) Cole and Gasche 2007, p. 9. Hansman instead identified it as a channel of the Karkheh (Hansman 1967, p. 37ff.).

\(^{2314}\) Hansman 1967, p. 41.

\(^{2315}\) Pliny (VI.31.138) states that the walls of the town measured “II p. (i.e., milia passuum) laxitae”\(^{2315}\), approximately 2.9 km. One milia passus (pl. milia passuum) is equivalent to 1.482 km.

\(^{2316}\) Hansman 1967, pp. 43-44. As for Ja Nishin, also the site of Naysan/Jabal Khaybar would require extensive investigations on the fields, systematic excavation works and planned surveys of the surrounding area. Even in this case, no archaeological research and analytical activities on the field have been undertaken so far.

\(^{2317}\) Hansman 1967, pp. 52-53.
reaches of the old Tigris.\textsuperscript{2318} Pliny also reports\textsuperscript{2319} that there was a settlement situated south of Charax, on the same river, known as Forat, at a distance of 12 miles (17.8 km).

\begin{quote}
[Pliny VI.32.145]

``deinde est oppidum quod Characenorum regi paret in Pasitigris ripa, Forat nomine, in quod a Petra conveniunt, Characenque inde XII p. secundo aestu navigant, e Parthico autem regno navigantibus vicus Teredon''.
\end{quote}

``Then a city is situated on the banks of the Pasitigris, Forat by name, and subject to the king of Charax: to this place people resort on their road from Petra, and sail thence to Charax, twelve miles distant by water, using the tide. Proceeding by water from the Parthian territories, there is a village known as Teredon''.

In light of the above evidence, the identification given by Hansman of Jabal Khaybar/Naysan with the ancient town of Charax Spasinu is almost certain, proving its fundamental importance for the reconstruction of the historical geography of southwestern Iran.

\begin{flushleft}
\footnotesize
\textsuperscript{2318} Cole and Gasche 2007, p. 12.
\textsuperscript{2319} Pliny, VI.32.145.
\end{flushleft}
Main Relief of Bard-e Neshandeh (BN:rel)

As addressed in Chapter 6, Bard-e Neshandeh represents one of the primary religious complexes currently brought to light in ancient Elymais, with their broad terraces occupied by temple structures and connected through monumental stairs.

Several findings have emerged during the excavation of the sites led by Roman Ghirshman during the 1960s, including numerous examples of rupestrian reliefs associated with the religious function of these places. The most iconographically-significant stone carvings appear to be the cult scene depicted in a rectangular limestone block.

Location

Now displayed at the National Museum of Tehran (Iran-e Bastan), the relief of Bard-e Neshandeh was located in situ between the upper and the lower terrace, on the left of a small niche at the corner between the socle of the staircase and the eastern wall.

Discovery

Ghirshman announced the discovery of the relief of Bard-e Neshandeh in his first preliminary report for the excavation of 1964.\(^{2320}\)

Description

The carved limestone block (1.07×0.55×0.39 m), possibly used as an architectonic element like the Murd-e Tang-e Zir relief, shows five standing frontal male figures\(^ {2321}\). The panel has been voluntarily damaged, with the heads of the three central personages obliterated and the hands of the two most prominent figures mutilated, while the rest of the scene was not affected by any act of vandalism.

In general, except for the last personage on the right (BN:rel.5) that is compressed into the right angle of the stone, the personalities are placed uniformly across the sculpted scene. They are all frontally depicted and dressed in tunics and trousers, which are evidently different between the figures on the left (BN:rel.1-3) and the couple on the right (BN:rel.4-5)

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\(^{2320}\) Ghirshman 1964a, pp. 187-188.

\(^{2321}\) Ibid.; idem 1964b, 307-308; idem. 1976, pp. 21-23, Pl. XIII.
with the scene symbolically divided into two by the presence of an altar (BN:rel.a). The two figures on the left (BN:rel.2-3) and BN:rel.5 stand with their arms folded as in HA:5-6, while the two remaining personages flanking a small fire burner (BN:rel.a) constitute the central scene of the relief. The central man (BN:rel.1), who seems to represent the main personage, is depicted in the act of libation on the left of BN:rel.a with his right hand pouring a liquid over the tiny flaming altar. His left hand instead grasps a sword hilt. Although his head is completely obliterated, the contour of a tiara\textsuperscript{2322} or headdress\textsuperscript{2323} is still recognizable. A diadem identifiable by a bow issuing only on one side, and a long wrinkled ribbon at the back of the head falling across the right shoulder may indicate that the head was partly in profile. Traces are preserved of a square beard and a torque around his neck. The lozenge-decorated tunic with belt, an open kaftan-like sleeved coat with ornamental edges, trousers and shoes complete the costume.

Behind this personage, on the left of the relief, BN:rel.2-3 are dressed in similar garb even if less richly decorated. It is not clear if they both wear tall round hats, tiaras, or have high coiffures. The figure next to the king (BN:rel.3) seems to have a pointed beard, while the man on the extreme left (BN:rel.2) has a moustache. Each has a torque (string of pearls\textsuperscript{3}) around the neck and arms folded across the chest.

The central figure on the right (BN:rel.4) of the altar wears a knee-length tunic with deep horizontal folds in the upper part, secured at the waist by a thin belt, lower than that of the king and ending with two curves, and no coat. A short square beard is all that remains of the mutilated head. He also wears a rolled-up cloak on his left shoulder, running beside the left side of his body. His right arm is raised with the hand holding an indeterminate object. The left arm is in front of his body with his left hand holding a branch\textsuperscript{3} beneath the abdomen.

The last man on the right (BN:rel.5) is similarly clad but without the rolled-up cloak. He seems to have a pointed beard and moustache, and a necklace around his neck. His arms are crossed over his chest.

**Ruins, Pottery and Associated Artefacts**

The relief is located within the sacred terraced space of the sanctuary of Bard-e Neshandeh (§6.1) with associated pottery (§6.1.4.1), sculptures (§6.1.4.2), and metal artefacts (§6.1.4.3).

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\textsuperscript{2322} Mathiesen 1992/2, p. 151.
\textsuperscript{2323} Kawami 1987, p. 183.
Past Interpretations

Since the discovery Ghirshman, there have been few doubts about his understanding of the relief as a royal libation scene\(^{2324}\). What instead has always questioned the scholars was the identity of BN:rel.1 and the function of the relief. Because he is wearing a diademed tiara, Ghirshman suggested to consider BN:rel.1 as a king with his attendants (BN:rel.2-3) and the priestly representatives (BN:rel.4-5) to attend the rite\(^{2325}\). The hypothesis, which avoids providing a historical identification of the king, has generally been accepted in scholarship\(^{2326}\). Kawami tried to be more specific and suggested – on the basis of numismatic comparanda – the Parthian kings Gotarzes II (ca. 95-90 BC) and Vardanes I (ca. 40-45 AD), as possible impersonations of BN:rel.1\(^{2327}\). Apropos of the significance of the scene, Ghirshman stated that “main gauche tient le «rameau rituel» qui, sur les monuments de Palmyre, semble être un signe distinctif d'un monument funéraire et indique qu'il s'agit de l'image d'un défunt”\(^{2328}\), suggesting, therefore, a funerary function similar to some Palmyrene rupestrian works\(^{2329}\). Ghirshman also realized immediately the importance of the physical location of the sculpted stone block at the base of the main stairway on which pilgrims came up to reach the sacred terrace for religious ceremonies, its viewing came before the ritual up on the podium\(^{2330}\). A religious more than political propaganda was instead proposed by Kawami as a purpose of the relief. She assumed the scene had to be a public act of religious piety towards the local cult by the Arsacid king of Ctesiphon interpreting its incompleteness as a consequence of the decrease of Arsacid power in southwestern Iran during the 1\(^{st}\) century AD\(^{2331}\).

Dating

The relief is not inscribed, and although it was found directly \textit{in situ}, it can be approximately dated by its context. The wall where the carved stone relief was located belongs to \textit{Phase II} of the site\(^{2332}\), but this does not imply that the relief was created during the same constructive phase. It could be a later addition. The carving has been diversely dated

\(^{2325}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 23.
\(^{2327}\) Kawami 1987, p. 78.
\(^{2328}\) Ghirshman 1965, p. 302.
\(^{2329}\) On the rupestrian art of Palmyra, see Colledge 1976.
\(^{2330}\) Ghirshman 1976, p. 23.
\(^{2331}\) Kawami 1987, p. 78.
\(^{2332}\) For the dating of the terraces’ phases §6.1.6.
Appendix 4

to the 1st century AD\textsuperscript{2333}, to the 2nd century AD\textsuperscript{2334}, to the beginning of the 3rd century AD\textsuperscript{2335}, and with Mathiesen\textsuperscript{2336} suggesting a parallel with Group 3 at Tang-e Sarvak. The presence of the oval tiara for the king confidently recommend the first half of the 2nd century AD as a \textit{terminus post quem} for the relief manufacturing. Similarly, the ritual gesture of \textit{BN:rel.4} possibly holding a palm branch in the left hand having the right arm raised was a predominant feature of the Hatran statues of king Sanatruq and relatives dated between mid-2nd to mid-3rd century AD\textsuperscript{2337}.

**Final Considerations**

The representation can be confidently considered as a scene of libation\textsuperscript{2338}, but identifying the personages carved on it in the absence of inscriptions is instead very complicated. The five figures can be easily distinguished in two groups: the three personalities on the left (\textit{BN:rel.1-3}) with oval tiara and high coiffures/headgear, not very long tunics, long-sleeved coats, trousers fastened at the ankles, shoes; and the two figures (\textit{BN:rel.4-5}) on the right with short hair, knee-length belted tunics, trousers, and boots. The role of the \textit{BN:rel.1} and \textit{BN:rel.4} flanking the altar (\textit{BN:rel.a}) is revealed by their garments. On the left, there is a king (\textit{BN:rel.1}) with his oval beribboned tiara similar to the ones depicted on the reliefs of Masjed-e Soleyman\textsuperscript{2339}, while on the right there is a priest (\textit{BN:rel.4}) characterized by the typical rolled-up cloak from the left shoulder down the left side of the body. The remaining three personages (\textit{BN:rel.2-3} and \textit{BN:rel.5}) are attendants of the respective leading figures and are represented with the classical posture of arms folded in front of the chest to indicate respect for authority, as at Hung-e Azhdar (\textit{HA:3-6}) and Tang-e Sarvak (\textit{TS.II:Wa}). The depiction of \textit{BN:rel.1} possibly of the same beribboned tiara at Masjed-e Soleyman may be indicative of a distinct personage, or of a ritual headgear for a particular ceremony maybe dedicate to a well-defined deity. Wearing the beribboned tiara could be somehow related to the cult of the decorated \textit{baetyl} of Tang-e Sarvak (\textit{TS.II:NW}). Considering the ritual perspective of the scene, a principal personage of pouring a liquid as offering on a small fire burner was a practice artistically well-represented during the first two century AD with examples from different kind of visual media as coins, rock-reliefs, and

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2333} Kawami 1987, pp. 77-78, 183.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2334} Weidemann 1971, p. 156, pl. 51.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2335} Colledge (1971, p. 99, pl. 31b) proposes a dating to \textit{ca}. 220-225 AD; De Waele (1982, p. 44) to the beginning of the 3rd century.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2336} Mathiesen 1987, p. 163; \textit{idem} 1988, p. 210; \textit{idem} 1989, p. 124.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2337} \textit{Ibid}. 1992/2, cat. nos. 207, 215.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2338} Ghirshman 1976, p. 23;}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{2339} \textit{Ibid.}, Pls. LXXV; LXXVIII.1; see also von Gall 1980.}
Appendix 4

More specifically, these artistic traditions became more and more widespread from different places which Elymais had well-developed socio-cultural interactions with as Hatra, Dura Europos, Palmyra, and in a lower impact Assur.

Being partly in agreement with Kawami, the relief of Bard-e Neshandeh was a propagandistic act, but not from an Arsacid king of Ctesiphon as proposed by the scholar, rather from a new dynast of Elymais with Arsacid origin. It has been addressed in many occasions the value of art for the new Elymaean-Arsacid dynasty of the Orodids to legitimize their assumption of power in Elymais in the second half of the 1st century AD. Similar to Hung-e Azhdar and Tang-e Sarvak, BN:rel may represent a clear example of negotiation of power through the ritual practice within a religiously-relevant cult scenario. Within this context, its placement adopted an explicit significance, being at the bottom of the main stairway (north-western), which was reached by pilgrims in order to ascend to the sacred terrace for religious ceremonies. Its viewing appeared before the performance of ritual higher up on the podium and promoted, as an incentive for legitimacy, the pious respect of the new kings towards the local traditions. By comparing BN:rel.1 to the numismatic imagery, the presence of the diademed tiara with the falling ribbons would suggest one of three Elymaean-Arsacid kings between Orodes II, Phraates and Orodes II and a dating at the mid/late-2nd century AD (§9.2.5.3). From an iconographic point of view, I am tempted to suggest an identification with Orodes III, due to the more accentuated undulation of the ribbons, the single torque and, apparently, the lozenge-decorated tunic2341, even though such an interpretation based on the paragon with a single coin sub-type2342 the risk to be speculative.

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2340 Sinisi 2017, pp. 47-48, figs. 26a-d (coins), 27b (drawing), 27a, c-e, 28-a-c (rupestrian scenes).
2341 Van’t Haaff 2007, type 16.3, sub-type 1.1.
2342 Ibid.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
Aelian

[XII.23]  
"ἐν τῇ Ἑλμαῖᾳ χώρᾳ νεῶς ἐστὶν Ἀναίτιδος, καὶ εἰς ἐνταύθω τιθασί λέοντες, καὶ τοὺς ἐς τὸν νεῶν παριόντας ἀσπάζονται τε καὶ σαίνουσι. καὶ εἰ καλοίς ἐσθίων, οἰ δὲ ἡς κλητοὶ δαιτυμόνες ἔχονται, καὶ ὅσα ἀν ὀρέξες λαβόντες εἴτα ἄπιασι σωφρόνως τε καὶ κεκοσιμημένως.".

Appian

[LXVI.6.32]  
"ἱπποτοξόται τε ἐπὶ τοίοιο ἑτεροι, Δᾶαι καὶ Μυσικ καὶ Ἐλμαίοι καὶ Ἀραβες, οἱ καμήλους ὀξυτάς ἐπικαθήμενοι τοξεύοντοι τε εὐμαρώς ἄρῃ ψηλοῦ, καὶ μαχαίραις, ὅτε πλησιάζουσι, ἐπιμήκεσι καὶ στεναῖς χρώνται."

Arrian

ANABASIS

[III.8.5]  
"Οὐξιοὶ δὲ καὶ Σουσιαιοὶ ἡγεμόνα παρεῖχοντο Ὀξάθρην τὸν Ἀβουλίτον. Βουτάρης δὲ Βαβυλωνίων ἦγετο. οἱ δὲ Ἰουανίου καὶ Σουσιαιοί ἠξερός τὰ τῆς Ἱσραήλ."
Boupares. The Carians who had been deported into central Asia, and the Sitaceni had been placed in the same ranks as the Babylonians.

“Ibid.

“Leaving Susa, and, crossing the river Pasisigris, he [Alexander] invaded the country of the Uxians. Those of the Uxians who inhabit the plains obeyed to the satrap of the Persians, and now surrendered to Alexander: but the so-called Uxian hillmen were not in subjugation to the Persians, and at this time sent word to Alexander that he would not be able to take the road into Persia with his military forces, unless they received what they usually received from the Persian king whenever he moved along that way”.

“Ibid.

“He then took the royal body-guards, the hypaspists, and 8000 men from the rest of his army, and marched by night away from the obvious road with Susian guides. He moved along a rough and difficult route, in one day and fell upon the villages of the Uxians”.

“Ibid.

“[…]. Ptolemy, son of Lagus, says that the mother of Darius, on their behalf, entreated Alexander to grant them the privilege of inhabiting the land. The tribute agreed upon was a hundred horses, five hundred oxen, and 30,000 sheep a year; for the Uxians had no
money, nor was their country fit for tillage; but most of them were shepherds and herdsmen”.

INDICA


“The Persians dwell up to this point and the Susians next to them. Above the Susians lives another independent tribe; these are called Uxians, and in my earlier history I have described them as brigands. The length of the voyage along the Persian coast was four thousand four hundred stades. The Persian land is divided, they say, into three climatic zones. The part which lies by the Red Sea is sandy and sterile, owing to the heat. Then the next zone, northward, has a temperate climate; the country is grassy and has lush meadows and many vines and all other fruits except the olive; it is rich with all sorts of gardens, has pure rivers running through, and also lakes, and is good both for all sorts of birds which frequent rivers and lakes, and for horses, and also pastures the other domestic animals, and is well wooded, and has plenty of game. The next zone, still going northward, is wintry and snowy, Nearchus. tells us of some envoys from the Black Sea who after quite a short journey met Alexander traversing Persia and caused him no small astonishment; and they explained to Alexander how short the journey was. I have explained that the Uxians are neighbours to the Susians, as the Mardians they also are brigands, live next the Persians, and the Cossaeans come next to the Medes. All these tribes Alexander reduced, coming upon them in winter-time, when they thought their country unapproachable. He also founded cities so that they should no longer be nomads but cultivators, and tillers of the ground, and so
Daniel (the Book of)

[8:2] 
Pietersma and Wright 2007

SEPTUAGINT (OG)

“καὶ εἶδον ἐν τῷ ὀράματι τοῦ ἐνυπνίου μου ἐν Ὀλύμπῳ τῇ πόλει, ἡτὶς ἐστὶν ἐν Ἐλυμάτῳ χώρᾳ, ἐτὶ ὄντος μου πρὸς τῇ πύλῃ Αιλάμ”.

THEODOTION (TH)

“Ἰς ἦμην ἐν Σοῦσίᾳ τῇ βάσει, ἡ ἐστιν ἐν χώρᾳ Αιλάμ, καὶ εἶδον ἐν ὀράματι καὶ ἦμην ἐτι τοῦ Οὐβαλ”.  

[Dan. 8:2] 

SEPTUAGINT (OG)

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THEODOTION (TH)

“Καὶ ἦμην ἐν Σοῦσιῳ τῇ βάσει, ἡ ἐστιν ἐν χώρᾳ Αιλάμ, καὶ εἶδον ἐν ὀράματι καὶ ἦμην ἐτι τοῦ Οὐβαλ”.  

2343 The term “πύλῃ Αιλάμ” has always been commonly translated as “river Ulai” or “Ulai gate”, being the subject of numerous comments from Biblical scholars (see Potts 1999b, p. 37, footnotes 22-23).
VULGATA

“in campo magno qui appellatur Ragau circa Eufraten et Tigrin et Hyadas in campo Erioch regis Elicorum”.

“In the great plain which is called Ragua, about the Euphrates, and the Tigris, and the Jadason, in the plain of Erioch the king of the Elicians”.

Dio Cassius

[XXXVII.5.1] Cary 1914-1927

“πράξας δὲ ταῦθ᾽ ὁ Πομπήιος, καὶ τὴν χώραν ἐπιδραμὼν, τοῖς Αἰλαννοῖς εἰρήηγεν ἔδωκε, καὶ ἄλλους τοὺς τῶν παρὰ τὸν Καύκασον μέχρι τῆς Κασπίας θαλάσσης, ἐς ἣν ἀπὸ τοῦ Πόντου τὸ ὄρος ἀρξάμενον τελευτᾷ, κατοικούντων ἐπικηρυκευμένους ἐσπείσατο”.

“After accomplishing this and overrunning the country, Pompey granted peace to the Albanians, and on the arrival of heralds concluded a truce with some of the tribes that dwell along the Caucasus as far as Caspian Sea, where the mountains, which begin at Pontus, come to an end”.

Diodorus Siculus


“[…] ἀπαρθενεύτων δ’ ὄντων κρημνῶν τῶν ἐγχυρίων τις ἄνχη, Οὐδέιος μὲν τὸ γένος, ἐμπείριος δὲ τῶν τόπων, ἐπιγγειλάτῳ τῶ βασιλείᾳ διὰ τινος στενῆς ἀτραποῦ καὶ παραβόλου ἄξειν τοὺς στρατιῶτας, ὥστε ὑπερθέξιος γενέσθαι τῶν πολεμίων”.

“[…] The sheer cliffs offered no passage, but an Uxian native who knew the country, said to the king about a narrow and hazardous path, offered to lead soldiers to a position above the enemy”.

[XVII.68.1] Ibid..
“Εὐμενῆς δὲ διαβὰς τὸν Τίγριν καὶ παραγενόμενος εἰς τὴν Σουσιανήν εἰς τρία μέρη διειλή τὴν δύναμιν διὰ τὴν τοῦ σιτοῦ σπάνιν. ἐπιπορευόμενος δὲ τὴν χώραν κατὰ μέρος σιτοῦ μὲν παντελῶς ἔστάνυζε, ὁρυζάν δὲ καὶ σήμαν καὶ φρονίκα διέδωκε τοῖς στρατιώταις, δασφυλῶς ἔχουσης τῆς χώρας τοὺς τοιούτους καρποὺς”.

Eumenes, however, after crossing the Tigris and arriving in Susiana, divided his army into three parts because of the dearth of food. Marching through the country in separate columns, he was completely without grain, but he distributed to his soldiers rice, sesame, and dates, since the land produced such fruits as these in plenty.”

“[…]
a march of twenty-four days. The first part of the road as far as the so-called Ladder was through an enclosed valley, torrid and lacking in provisions, but the rest was over high land, blessed with a very healthy climate and full of the fruits appropriate to the season […]”.

“[Gabenê], as this place, distant about three days’ march, was unplundered and filled with grain, fodder, and in general with that which could amply supply the provisions for a great army”.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
“When Eumenes had completed the burial of the dead, he moved the army from among the Paraetaceni into Gabenê, which was unplundered and capable of supplying everything in abundance for the armies.”

“ARSACES, KING OF THE PARTHIANS, WAS ANGRY AGAINST THE SELUCEIANS AND CANNOT FORGIVE THEM FOR THE CRUEL PUNISHMENT THEY HAD INFlicting ON His GENERAL ENIUS. THE SELUCEIANS THEREFORE SENT ENVOYS TO HIM, TO BEG FORGIVENESS FOR WHAT HAD HAPPENED. WHEN THE ENVOYS REQUESTED AN ANSWER, ARSACES LED THEM TO WHERE PITTHIDES SAT, BLINDED AND LYING ON THE GROUND; HE ORDERED THEM TO REPORT TO THE SELUCEIANS THAT THEY SHOULD ALL SUFFER THE SAME FATE.”

“They say that the sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Aram and Lud. Porro ab Elam originem duxerunt Elamitae, prima gens Persarum; a quibus Elamais quoque urbs condita fuit.”

“They say that the sons of Shem were Elam, Asshur, Arphaxad, Aram and Lud. Elam was the ancestor of the Elamites, the most ancient tribe of the Persians, who founded the city of Elymais.”
"et veniet' inquit 'usque ad summitem
ipsius montis' in Elimaide provincia, quae
est ultima Persarum ad oriente regio;
ibique volens templum Dianae spoliare,
quod infinta donaria habebat, fugatus a
barbaris est, qui mira veneratione fanum
illud suspiciebant, et mortuus est moerore
consumptus in Tabes oppido Persidis".

“he says 'and he will come to the summit of
this mountain' in the province of Elymais,
which is the most easterly region of Persia.
There he tried to plunder the temple of Diana,
which contained innumerable offerings, but he
was routed by the barbarians, who regarded
the temple with remarkable veneration. He was
consumed with remorse, and died at Tabae, a
town in Persia”.

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was routed by the barbarians, who regarded
the temple with remarkable veneration. He was
consumed with remorse, and died at Tabae, a
town in Persia”.

Whence one may wonder at Polybius of
Megalopolis, who, though otherwise a good
man, yet saith that ‘Antiochus died because he
had a purpose to plunder the temple of Diana
in Persia'; for the purposing to do a thing, I
but not actually doing it, is not worthy of
punishment. But if Polybius could think that
Antiochus thus lost his life on that account, it is
Ἀντίσχον οὖτως, πολὺ πιθανότερον διὰ τὴν ἱεροσυλίαν τοῦ ἐν ἱεροσολύμοις ναοῦ τελευτήσαι τὸν βασιλέα. ἀλλὰ περὶ μὲν τούτου οὐ διαφέρομαι τὴν ὑπὸ τοῦ Μεγαλοπολίτου λεγομένην αἰτίαν ταύτην ψφ. ἡμῶν ἀληθὴ νομίζοντων”.

much more probable that this king died on account of his sacrilegious plundering of the temple at Jerusalem. But we will not contend about this matter with those who may think that the cause assigned by this Polybius of Megalopolis is nearer the truth than that assigned by us”.

Herodotus

[I.131.2]

“ἐχεται δὲ τούτων γῆ ἤδε Κισσία, ἐν τῇ δή παρὰ ποταμὸν τόνδε Χοασπῆν κείμενα ἐστὶ τὰ Σοῦσα ταῦτα, ἐνθα βασιλεὺς τε μέγας διαίταν ποιεῖται, καὶ τῶν χρημάτων οἱ θησαυροὶ ἐνθάδα εἰσὶν ἐλόντες δὲ ταύτην τὴν πόλιν θαρσέωντες ἢδη τῷ Διῷ πλουτὸν πέρι ἑρίζετε”.

Rawlison 1859

“and next to them is the land of Kissia in which land by the banks of this river Choaspes is situated that city of Susa where the great king has his residence, where the Great King holds his court, and where the treasuries are in which his wealth is stored. Take that city, and you need not fear to challenge Zeus for riches”.

[V.49.7]

“ἐχεται δὲ τούτων γῆ ἤδε Κισσία, ἐν τῇ δή παρὰ ποταμὸν τόνδε Χοασπῆν κείμενα ἐστὶ τὰ Σοῦσα ταῦτα, ἐνθα βασιλεὺς τε μέγας διαίταν ποιεῖται, καὶ τῶν χρημάτων οἱ θησαυροὶ ἐνθάδα εἰσὶν ἐλόντες δὲ ταύτην τὴν πόλιν θαρσέωντες ἢδη τῷ Διῷ πλουτὸν πέρι ἑρίζετε”.

Ibid.

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[VII.62.2]

“Κίσσιοι δὲ στρατευόμενοι τὰ μὲν ἄλλα κατὰ πέραν Πέρσαι ἐσκευάσατο, ἀντι δὲ τῶν πίλων μυτηρόφοροι ἦσαν. Κίσσιοι δὲ ἤρχεν Ανάφης ὁ Οτάνεω”.

Ibid.

“The Kissians in the army were equipped like the Persians, but instead of the felt caps they wore fillets. Anaphes the son of Otanes was commander of the Kissians”.

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
Judith (the Book of)

[1:6]

SEPTUAGINT (OG)

“καὶ ἐποίησεν πόλεμον ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις ἑκείναις ὁ βασιλεὺς Ναβοχοδονώσιρ πρὸς βασιλέα Αρφαξαδ ἐν τῷ πεδίῳ τῷ μεγάλῳ τούτῳ ἐστὶν πεδίον ἐν τοῖς ὀρίοις Ραγαῦ καὶ συνήντησαν πρὸς αὐτὸν πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὴν ὀχεῖνην καὶ πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες τὸν Ἑφραίμην καὶ τὸν Τίγριν καὶ τὸν Ύδάσην καὶ πεδία Ἀρίωχ βασιλέως Ἐλυμαίων καὶ συνήθαν ἑθνὴ πολλὰ σφόδρα εἰς παράταξιν υἱῶν Χελεοῦν”.

“in those very days, king Nebuchadnezzar made war with king Arphaxad on the great plain, which is the plain on the borders of Ragau. And all those who lived in the hill country came to him there; and all who lived by the Euphrates and the Tigris and the Hydaspes, and on the plain of Arioch the king of the Elymaeans, and very many nations of the sons of Chelod assembled themselves for the battle”.

Justin

[XXXVI.1.4]

“Itaque cum et Persarum et Elymaeorum Bactrianorumque auxiliis iuuaretur, multis proelii Parthos fudit”.

“Being assisted, accordingly, by auxiliary troops from the Persians, Elymaeans, and Bactrians, he routed the Persians in several pitched battles.”

[XLI.6.8]

“Vnde reuersus bellum cum Elymaeorum rege gessit, quo uicto hanc quoque gentem regno adiecit imperiumque Parthorum a monte Caucaso multis populis in dicionem redactis usque flumen Euphraten protulit”.

“Ibid.

“One his return from thence, he went to war with the king of the Elymaeans, and having conquered him, added this nation also to his dominions, and extended the Parthian empire, by reducing many other tribes under his yoke, from Mount Caucasus to the river Euphrates.”
Maccabees (the Book of)

[I.Macc. 6:1-2]

### SEPTUAGINT

“καὶ ὁ βασιλεὺς Ἀντίοχος διεπορεύετο τὰς ἐπάνω χώρας καὶ ἤκουσεν ὅτι ἐστὶν Ἑλυμαῖς ἐν τῇ Περσίδι πόλις ἐνδοξὸς πλούτω ἀργυρῷ καὶ χρυσῷ καὶ τὸ ἱερὸν τὸ ἐν αὐτῇ πλοῦσιον σφόδρα καὶ ἐκεί καλύμματα χρυσά καὶ θώρακες καὶ ὅπλα ἁμά κατέλιπεν ἐκεί Ἀλέξανδρος ὁ τοῦ Φιλιπποῦ ὁ βασιλεὺς ὁ Μακεδῶν ὃς ἐβασιλεύσει πρῶτος ἐν τοῖς Ἑλληνσὶν.”

### VULGATA

“et rex Antiochus perambulavit superiores regiones et audivit esse civitatem Elymaidem in Perside nobilissimam et copiosam in argento et auro templumque in ea locuples valde et illic velamina aurea et loricae et scuta quae reliquit Alexander Philippi rex Macedo qui regnavit primus in Graecia”.

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### Marcian of Heraclea

[I.21]

“καὶ τοὺς περὶ αὐτῶν τόπους Ἐλυμαιοῖς, τῆς Σουσιανῆς όντες χώρας”.

### Miller 1939

“the neighbouring district dwell the Elymaeans, who are the region of Susiana”.

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### Pliny

[VI.28.111]

2344 The text should therefore be corrected to read as in the Revised Version (British and American), “in Elymais in Persia there was a city”.

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The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
“[..] inde Persidis initium ad flumen Oratim, quo dividitur ab Elymaide. contra Persidem insulae Psilos, Cassandra, Aracha cum monte praealtto Neptuno sacra. [..]”

“[..] Here Persis begins, at the river Oratis, which separates it from Elymais. Opposite to the coast of Persis, are the islands of Psilos, Cassandra, and Aracia, the last sacred to Neptune, and containing a mountain of great height. [..]”

“supra eos parent Parthis Mardi et Saitæ ii qui praetenduntur supra Elymaida, quam Persidi in ora iunximus. Susa a Persico mari absunt CCL p. qua subit ad eam classis Alexandri Pasitigri, vicus ad lacum Chaldaicum vocatur Aple, unde Susa navigatone LXII-D p. absunt. Susianis ab oriente proximi sunt Cossiaeï, supra Cossiaeos ad septentrionem Massabatene sub monte Cambalido, qui est Caucasi ramus, inde mollissimo transitu in Bactros”.

“Above these are the Mardi and the Saitæ, subject to Parthia: they extend above the district of Elymais, which we have already mentioned as joining up to the coast of Persis. Susa is distant two hundred and fifty miles from the Persian Sea. Near the spot where the fleet of Alexander came up the Pasitigris to Susa, there is a village situate on the Chaldean Lake, Aple by name, from which to Susa is a distance of sixty miles and a half. Adjoining to the people of Susiane, on the east, are the Cossiæi; and above them, to the north, is Mesabatene, lying at the foot of Mount Cambalidis, a branch of the Caucasian chain: from this point the country of the Bactri is most accessible”.

“Susianen ab Elymaide distterminat amnis Eulaeus, ortus in Medis modicoque spatio cuniculo conditus ac rursus exortus et per Massabatenen lapsus. circumit arcem Susorum ac Dianæ templum augustissimum illis gentibus, et ipse in magna caerimoniam, siquidem reges non ex alio bibunt et ob id in longinquæ portant. recipit amnes Hedyphon praeter Asylum Persarum venientem, Adunam ex Susianis. oppidum iuxta eum Magoa, a Charace XV p.; quidam hoc in extrema Susiane ponunt solitudinibus proximum”.

“Susiane is separated from Elymais by the river Eulaeus, which rises in Media, and, after concealing itself in the earth for a short distance, rises again and flows through Mesabatene. It then flows round the citadel of Susa and the temple of Diana, which is held in the highest veneration by all these peoples; and this [the rive] in the pompous ceremonials; the kings, indeed, will drink of no other water, and for this reason carry it to distant regions. [This river] receives the waters of the Hedyphon in front of Asylum of the Persians, and those of the Aduna in Susiana. Magoa is a town situate near it, from Charax 15 miles; this
city was placed here at the very extremity of Susiana, close to the deserts.”

“infra Eulaeum Elymais est in ora iuncta Persidi, a flumine Orati ad Characem CCXL p. oppida eius Seleucia et Sostrate, adposita monti Chasiro. oram, quae praeiacet, minorum Syrtium vice diximus inaccessam caeno, plurimum limi deferentibus Brixia et Ortacia amnibus, madente et ipsa Elymaide in tantum, ut nullus sit nisi circuitu eius ad Persidem aditus. infestatur et serpentibus, quos flumina deportant”.

“Below the Eulaios is Elymais, upon the coast adjoining to Persis, and extending from the river Orates to Charax, a distance of 240 miles. Its towns are Seleucia and Sostrate, upon Mount Casyrus. The shore, which lies in front of, in the place of Lesser Syrtis, as we stated, is rendered inaccessible by mud, the rivers Brixia and Ortacea bringing down vast quantities of slime, Elymais itself being so marshy that it is impossible to reach Persis, unless going around. It is also infested with serpents, which are brought down by these rivers”.

“Charaz, oppidum Persici sinus intimum, a quo Arabia Eudaemon cognominata excurrit, habitatur in colle manu facto inter confluentes dextra Tigrim, laeva Eulaeum, II laxitate”.

“Charax is a city [situated] in the inner part of the Persian Gulf, from which the country called Arabia Felix, it is built on an artificial elevation, between the confluence of the Tigris on the right, and the Eulaios on the left, and lies on a piece of ground two miles in extent”.

Spaosines Sagdodonaci filius, rex finitimorum Arabum, quem Iuba satrapen Antiochi fuisse falso tradit” (Hyspaosines, the son of Saggonadacus, and king of the neighbouring Arabians, whom Juba has incorrectly described as a satrap of king Antiochus).

Plutarch

[XXXVI.1-2]  

Perrin 1917

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
“ὁ Εἰή Η΅Ζ Έὲ ἩΘὰ ΘΗ Α ΐάΛ΋Α ὁ ΕίΔήϊΓΖ ἐΏ΅ύΑΉ΍Α ἐΔὶ ΘΗ Α ὙΕΎ΅Αί΅Α Ὕ΅ἰ ΖΐΔΗΪΓΖ ἀΔΉΘΕάΔ΋ ΘΕ΍ῶ Α ὁΈὸΑ ἡΐΉΕῶΑ ἀΔΓΗΛώΑ, ΉἰΖ Έὲ ΘΗ Α ΐάΛ΋Α Ὕ΅ἰ ΖΐΔΗΪΓΖ ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ Θῷ Έὲ ΖΕάΑ ΑΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ύ΅ἰ ΘΓΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έὲ ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ.  Ύ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ሔΑΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έὲ ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έὲ ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έὲ ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έ驿 ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έ驿 ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έ驿 ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έ驿 ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕΪΉΑί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. Ὕ΅ἰ ΘΓίΖ ἀΑ΍΅ΕάΎ΅΍Ζ, σΘ΍ Έ驿 ΖΙΕί΅Α ሒΘΗΪΕάΤΛΓΓΖ ὁ ᾲΕΑΘΙΓΛΓΖ ἀΔΈΕ΍εΛΉΘ΅΍ ΐὲ Α ΕΕIan Αί΅Α ἀΑΉΛώΕ΋ΗΉ. “After the battle, Pompey set out to march to the Hyrcanian and Caspian Sea, but was turned back by a multitude of deadly reptiles when he was only three days march distant, and withdrew into Lesser Armenia. Here the kings of the Elymaeans and the Medes sent ambassadors to him, and he wrote them a friendly answer”.

**Polybius**

[P.V.44]

“τὰ δ’ ἐπὶ τὰς ἁρκτους αὐτῆς τετραμένα μέρη περιέχεται μὲν Ἕλυμαῖοι καὶ τοῖς Ἀνιαράκαις, ἐτὶ δὲ Καδουσίσι καὶ Ματιανοῖς”.

Paton 1922-1927

“Its northern frontier is fringed by Elymaeans, Aniarace, Cadusii, and Matiants”.

[XXXI.9.1]

“ὅτι κατὰ τὴν Συρίαν Ἀντίοχος ὁ βασιλεὺς βουλόμενος εὐπορήσαι χρημάτων προέθετο στρατεύειν ἐπὶ τὸ τῆς Ἀρτέμιδος ἱερὸν εἰς τὴν Ἕλυμαίδα. παραγενόμενος δ’ ἐπὶ τοὺς τόπους καὶ διαψευδοθείς τῆς ἔλπιδος διὰ τὸ μὴ συνχωρεῖν τῇ παρανομίᾳ τοὺς βαρβάρους τοὺς οἰκοῦντας περὶ τὸν τόπον, ἀναχωρῶν ἐν Τάβαις τῆς Περσίδος ἔξηλπτε τὸν βίον, δαιμονήσας, ὡς ἐνιοῖ φασὶ, διὰ τὸ γενέσθαι τινὰς ἐπιστημασίας τοῦ δαιμονίου κατὰ τὴν περὶ τὸ προειρημένον ἱερὸν παρανομίαν”.

Ibid.

“In Syria King Antiochus, wishing to provide himself with money, decided to make an expedition against the sanctuary of Artemis in Elymais. On reaching the spot he was foiled in his hopes, as the barbarian tribes who dwelt in the neighbourhood would not permit the outrage, and on his retreat he died at Tabae in Persia, smitten with madness, as some people say, owing to certain manifestations of divine displeasure when he was attempting this outrage on the above sanctuary”.

**Ptolemy**

[VI.2.6] Stevenson 1932

“The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
“ἡ Χωρομιδρηνή ἀρκτικωτέραν ἔχουσα τὴν Ἑλυμαῖδα”.

“Choromithrene on the north of which is Elymais”.

[VI.3]

“Κατέχουσι δὲ τῆς Σουσιανῆς τὰ μὲν ἐπὶ θαλάσση Ἑλυμαίου, τὰ δὲ πρὸς τῇ Ἀσσυρίᾳ Κόσσια. [...] υπέρ μὲν τοὺς Ἑλυμαίους ἡ Κυσσία”.

“Ibid.

“The Elymaeans dwell on the maritime coast of Susiana, the Kossaeans in the country on the border of Assyria. [...] above the Elymaeans is Kissia”.

Quintus Curtius Rufus (Curt)

[V.3.1-16]


Kuhrt 2013

“After soothing her (sc. Sisigambis') feelings, Alexander arrived after a four-day march at the Tigris river (the local people call it Pasitigris). It rises in the mountains of the Uxii and for fifty stadia it tumbles at speed among rocks and between wooded banks. [2] Then it enters the plains, through which it passes more gently and is suitable for boats. For six hundred stadia it flows smoothly through a gentle tract of land until it reaches the Persian Sea. [3] After crossing the river with nine thousand infantry and Agrianian archers, as well as three thousand Greek mercenaries plus a thousand Thracians, he arrived in the country of the Uxians. It adjoins Susa and extends to the first part of Persia, leaving a narrow gorge between itself and the Susians. [4] Medates was the governor of the region and certainly no time-server, he had determined to endure the utmost to the best of his loyalty. But some familiar with the place pointed out to Alexander a secret path leading over the mountains and away from the city. [6] If he were to send a few light-armed troops, they would emerge above the enemy. As Alexander was in favour of the plan, these men acted as guides along the
occasum iter ingredi iussi. [7] Ipse tertia vigilia castris motis circa lucis ortum superat angustias caesaque materia cratibus et pluteis faciundis, ut, qui turres admoveant, extra teli iactum essent, urbem obsidere coepit. [8] Praerupta erant omnia saxis et cotibus inpedita. Multis ergo vulneribus depulsi, [9] ut quibus non cum hoste solum, sed etiam cum loco dimicandum essebat, subibant tamen, quia rex inter primos constiterat interrogans, tot urbi victores an erubescerent haerere in obsidione castelli exigui et ignobilis, simul admonens Taunonem mox auxilium esse laturum. Inter haec eminus petebatur: quem testudine obiecta milites ȯ ut recederet, erpellere nequierant ȯ [10] tuebantur. Tandem Taunon super arcem urbis se cum suo agmine ostendit. Ad cuius conspectum et hostium animi labare et Macedones acrius proelium inire coeperunt. [11] Anceps oppidanos malum urguebat, nec sisti vis hostium poterat. Paucis ad moriendum, pluribus ad fugam animus fuit, magna pars in arcem concessit. Inde XXX oratoribus missis ad deprecandum triste responsum a rege redditur, non esse veniae locum. [12] Itaque suppliciorum quoque metu perculsi ad Sisigambim, Darei matrem, occulto itinere ignotoque hostibus mittunt, qui peterent, ut ipsa regem mitigaret, haud ignari, parentis eam loco diligi colique. Et Medates sororis eius filiam secum matrimonio iunxerat, Dareum propinquaque cognatione contingens. [13] Diu Sisigambis supplicum repugnavit abnuens deprecationem pro illis non convenire fortunae, in qua esset, adiecitque metuere sese, ne victor indigentiam fatigaret, saepiusque cogitare, captivam esse quam reginam suisse. [14] Ad ultimum victa litteris Alexandrum ita deprecata est, ut ipsum excusaret, quod deprecaretur: petere se, ut illis quoque, si minus, sibi ignoreret: pro necessario ac propinquuo suo, iam non hoste, sed supplice, tantum paths. Fifteen hundred mercenaries and almost a thousand Agriani were given to his commander Tauron, who was ordered to set out on the march after sunset. [7] He himself left camp in the third watch and passed through the defile around daybreak. Then he cut timber to make wickerwork covers and shelters to provide protection from missiles to the men bringing up the siege-towers, and then laid siege to the town. [8] The whole place was precipitous, impeded by rocks and crags. As a result they suffered many wounds and were repelled, [9] given that they had to contend not only with the enemy but also with the location. However, they came forward again, as the king had placed himself in the vanguard and asked them whether the victors of so many cities did not blush to falter in the siege of so small and insignificant a fort. And he reminded them that Tauron would soon arrive with help. As he said this he was being attacked at long range. As his men could not make him withdraw, they were protecting him with a tortoise-formation of their shields. [10] At last Tauron appeared with his detachment above the citadel of the town. At sight of him, the enemy's spirit flagged while the Macedonians began to enter the fight with more enthusiasm. [11] The two-pronged attack was a blow to the townspeople and stopping the enemy's force was impossible. A few were ready to die, more were inclined to flee, while the majority withdrew into the citadel. From there they sent thirty spokesmen to plead, but the discouraging answer was returned by the king that there was no room for pardon. [12] So then, with the additional terror of torture, they sent, via a secret path unknown to the enemy, to Sisigambis, Darius' mother. They pleaded that she herself might mollify the king because they knew that she was respected and honoured by him like mother. Further, Medates was married to her sister's daughter and thus a close relative of Darius. [13] For a long time Sisigambis resisted the suppliants' pleas. She claimed that to intervene on their behalf was inappropriate given her situation. She added that she was afraid to wear out the victor's

Stephen of Byzantium

[Ethnica, s.v.]

“Ἔλυμαι, χώρα Ασσυριώνπαρός τή Περσική, τής Σουσίδος ἐγγύς. οἱ οἰκουντες Ἐλυμαιοί”.

Westermann 1939

“Elymais, land of the Assyrians, next to Persia near the Susiana. The inhabitants, the Elymaeans”.

Strabo

[Str. XI.13.6a]

“[…] Νέαρχους δὲ φησὶ τεττάρων ὀντῶν ληστρικῶν ἔθνων, ὧν Μάρδοι μὲν Πέρσαις προσεχεῖς ἦσαν, Οὐδέιοι δὲ καὶ Ἐλυμαιοὶ τοῦτοι τε καὶ Σουσίδοις, Κοσσαῖοι δὲ Μάρδοις, πάντας μὲν φόρους πράττοντας τοὺς βασιλέας, Κοσσαίοις δὲ καὶ δώρα λαμβάνειν, ἣνικα ὁ βασιλεὺς θερίσας ἐν kindness, and that she thought more often of herself as a captive than as a former queen.

[14] But eventually she was persuaded and begged Alexander in a letter to excuse her presumption in asking a favour. She begged that he would also pardon them and, if not, to pardon her: she was simply pleading for the life of a friend and relative, who was no longer an enemy but a suppliant. [15] This act alone serves to show the king’s moderation and mercy at that time. He pardoned not just Medates, but granted all - those who had surrendered as well as those who had been taken prisoner - freedom and immunity. He left the city intact and allowed it to cultivate the fields free of tribute. Had Darius been the victor, his mother could not have obtained more. The subdued people of the Uxians were incorporated within the satrapy of Susiana […]”.

“[…] Nearchus says that there were four predatory tribes and that of these the Mardi were situated next to the Persians; the Uxians and Elymaei next to the Mardi and the Susians; and the Kossaeans next to the Medians; and that whereas all [four] exacted tribute from the kings, the Kossaeans also received gifts at the times when the king, after spending the summer

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)

in Ecbatana, went down into Babylonia [...]”.

“[...] went down into Babylonia”. [XI.13.6b]

“[...] (Greater) Media is bounded on the east by these tribes, and also by the Paraetaceni, who border on the Persians and are themselves likewise mountaineers and predatory; on the north by the Cadusii who live above the Hyrcanian Sea, and by the other tribes which I have just described; on the south by Apolloniatis, which the ancients called Sitacenê, and by the Zagros, along which Massabatice is situated, which belongs to Media, though some say to Elymaia; and on the west by the Atropatii and certain of the Armenians [...].” [XV.3.4]

“There are many other narrow defiles in Media [...] and has its sources (Choaspes river) in the territory of the Uxii; for a rugged and precipitous range of mountains lies between the Susians and Persis, with narrow defiles, difficult to pass; they were inhabited by robbers, who constantly exacted payment even from the kings themselves, at their entrance into Persis from Ssis [...]”. [XV.3.6]

“[...] (Greater) Media is bounded on the east by these tribes, and also by the Paraetaceni, who border on the Persians and are themselves likewise mountaineers and predatory; on the north by the Cadusii who live above the Hyrcanian Sea, and by the other tribes which I have just described; on the south by Apolloniatis, which the ancients called Sitacenê, and by the Zagros, along which Massabatice is situated, which belongs to Media, though some say to Elymaia; and on the west by the Atropatii and certain of the Armenians [...].”

2345 Named by Strabo (XI.13.1) “μεγάλημ” in order to differentiate it from the smaller and more northern region of Ατροπάτης Μήδεια (Media Atropatene), so-called by Greek authors after Atropates, the satrap of Alexander who governed this region before becoming an independent ruler. The current name Azerbaijan derives from Atropatene. To the north, it was separated from Armenia by the river Araxes, while to the east, it reached the mountains along the Caspian Sea, and to the west up to the Lake Urmia and the mountains of modern Kurdistan. The river Amardos may have been the southern border (Kroll 1994, p. 1292).
“Although Susis is fertile, it has a hot and scorching atmosphere, and particularly in the neighbourhood of the city, according to that writer. At any rate, he says that when the sun is hottest, at noon, the lizards and the snakes could not cross the streets in the city quickly enough to prevent their being burnt to death in the middle of the streets. He says that this is the case nowhere in Persis, although Persis lies more to the south; and that cold water for baths is put out in the sun and immediately heated, and that barley spread out in the sun bounces like parched barley in ovens [...] It is said that the cause of the heat is the fact that lofty mountains lie above the country on the north and that these mountains intercept all the northern winds. Accordingly, these winds, blowing aloft from the tops of the mountains and high above the plains, do not touch the plains, although they blow on the more southerly parts of Susis. But calm prevails here, particularly at the time when the Etesian winds cool the rest of the land that is scorched by heat”.

[XV.3.10]

“Ibid.

“Although Susis is fertile, it has a hot and scorching atmosphere, and particularly in the neighbourhood of the city, according to that writer. At any rate, he says that when the sun is hottest, at noon, the lizards and the snakes could not cross the streets in the city quickly enough to prevent their being burnt to death in the middle of the streets. He says that this is the case nowhere in Persis, although Persis lies more to the south; and that cold water for baths is put out in the sun and immediately heated, and that barley spread out in the sun bounces like parched barley in ovens [...] It is said that the cause of the heat is the fact that lofty mountains lie above the country on the north and that these mountains intercept all the northern winds. Accordingly, these winds, blowing aloft from the tops of the mountains and high above the plains, do not touch the plains, although they blow on the more southerly parts of Susis. But calm prevails here, particularly at the time when the Etesian winds cool the rest of the land that is scorched by heat”.

[XV.3.11]

“Ibid.

“[Susis] is so fertile in grain, that barley and wheat produce, generally, one hundred, and sometimes two hundred fold [...] the vine did not grow there before the Macedonians planted it, both there and at Babylon”.

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“Neighbouring Susis is the part of Babylonia which was formerly called Sitacenê, but is now called Apolloniatis. Above both, on the north and towards the east, lie the countries of the Elymaei and the Paraetaceni, who are predatory peoples and rely on the ruggedness of their mountains. But the Paraetaceni are situated closer to the Apolloniatae, and therefore treat them worse.”

“Now Carmania in encircled on the north by Persis, which is a large country; and adjoining Paraetacene and Kossaea as far as the Caspian Gates, which is inhabited by mountainous and predatory tribes. Contiguous to Susiana is Elymais, a great part of which is rugged, and inhabited by robbers. To Elymais adjoin the country about the Zagros and Media

“Now the Kossaeans, like the neighbouring mountaineers, are for the most part bowmen, and are always out on foraging expeditions; for they have a country that is small and barren, so that they must needs live at the expense of the other tribes. And they are of necessity a powerful people, for they are all fighters; at any rate, thirteen thousand Kossaeans [who] joined the Elymaeans in battle, when the latter were warring against both the Babylonians and the Susians [...]”.

“The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)

“[...] The Elymaeans possess a larger and more diversified country than the Paraetaceni. Now all of it that is fertile is inhabited by farmers, whereas the mountainous part of it is a nursery of soldiers, mostly bowmen; and since the latter part is extensive, it can furnish so large a military force that their king, since he possesses great power, refuses to be subject to the king of the Parthians like the other tribes [...]”.

“[...] Now when Antiochus the Great attempted to rob the temple of Belus, the neighbouring barbarians, all by themselves, attacked and slew him. In after-times the king of Parthia heard that the temples in their country contained great wealth, but knowing that the people would not submit, and admonished by the fate of Antiochus, made an invasion with a great force; he took the temple of Minerva, and that of Diana, called Azara, and carried away treasure to the amount of 10,000 talents. And Seleucia also, a large city on the river Hedyphon, was taken. In earlier times (Seleuceia) a was called Soloke”.

“There are three entrances into the country that have been supplied by nature: one from Media...”

2346 Besides, there is a second version of the episode by the Roman historian Sextus Aurelius Victor (4th cent. AD), who reports that Antiochus was assassinated by some of his own people, whom he had punished for being drunk at a feast. In De Viris Illustribus (LIX.4) the author affirm that “Antiochus spreto consilio apud Sipylum montem cum L. Scipione conflixit. Victus et ultra Taurum montem relegatus a sodalibus, quos temulentus in convivio pulsarat, occisus est” (Having spurned advice, Antiochus began the battle with Scipio near Mount Sipylus. Defeated and pushed back beyond the Taurus, he was killed by his companions who he had beaten up during banquet, being drunk).
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)

and the region of the Zagros through Massabatice; another from Susis through Gabiane (these, both Gabiane and Massabatice, are provinces of Elymaia), and the third from Persis. And Korbiane is also a province of Elymais. And the countries of the Sagapeni and the Silaceni, small domains, border on that of these people [...].”

Tacitus

[Tac. VI.44]

“[...] Iamque multa manu propinqua Seleuciae adventabat, cum Tiridates simul fama atque ipso Artabano perculsus distrahi consiliis, iret contra an bellum cunctatione tractaret. quibus proelium et festinati casus placebant, disiectos et longinquitate itineris fessos ne animo quidem satis ad obsequium coaluisse disserunt, proditores nuper hostesque eius quem rursus foveant. verum Abdagaeses regrediendum in Mesopotamiam censebat, ut amne obiecto, Armeniis interim Elymaeisque et ceteris a tergo excitis, aucti copiis socialibus et quas dux Romanus misisset fortunam temptarent. ea sententia valuit, quia plurima auctoritas penes Abdagaesen et Tiridates ignavus ad pericula erat [...]”

Tobit (the Book of)

[2:10]

“καὶ οὐκ ἦδειν ὅτι στροφεῖα ἐν τῷ τοίχῳ ἔστιν καὶ τῶν ὀρνθαλμῶν μου ἀνεργοτον ἀναβέβαιν τὰ στροφεῖα θερμὸν εἰς τοὺς ὀρνθαλμοὺς μου καὶ ἐγενήθη λευκόματα and I did not know that there were sparrows in the wall. And, since my eyes were open, the sparrows emitted warm dung into my eyes, and a whiteness fell into my eyes. And I went to the

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
physicians, but they did not help me. Moreover, Achiacharus had to nourish me, until I went into Elymais”.

εἰς τοὺς ὀφθαλμοὺς μου καὶ ἐπορεύθην πρὸς ἱατροὺς καὶ οὐκ ὤφελησάν με Αχιαχαρὸς δὲ ἐτρεψέν με ἐώς οὗ ἐπορεύθη εἰς τὴν Ἑλυμαίδα”.

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PART IV:

MAPS, TABLES and PLATES
Map 1 – Approximate extension of Elymais
Map 3 - Sacred Architectures
Map 4 – Rock Reliefs

Legend
- Elymaean rock reliefs
- Elamite rock reliefs
Map 5 – Rock Reliefs (Area Izeh and Shimbar)

Legend
- Elymaean rock reliefs
- Elamite rock reliefs
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
### Table 1 – Elymais in the Babylonian Astronomical Diaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sachs-Hunger III</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Historical events regarding Elymais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-144. obv. 16'-18'</td>
<td>Aug-Sept 145 BC</td>
<td>16. That month, I heard as follows: Ari'bu ... [...] ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17. entered Babylon and the other rivers. The auxiliary troops of ... [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18. the king of Elam with his numerous troops [...] from this land [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-144. rev. 20-22</td>
<td>Nov 145 BC</td>
<td>20. this general of Babylonia [...] from Babylon to fight with Kammashkiri [...] from the king' [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21. Kammashkiri, king of Elam, marched around victoriously among the cities and rivers of Babylonia; they plundered [...] and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22. carried off their spoil. The people [...] their animals [...] for fear of this Elamite to the house' [...] There was panic and fear in the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-143. Blaze. 18'-21'</td>
<td>June-July 144 BC</td>
<td>18. [...] that [month], I heard as follows: the troops which to Susa ... of Susa [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19. [...] many' [...] which had ... to Elam, they made enter Susa [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20. [...] the general of ... and the troops of Antiochus, son of Alexander, who retur[ned] [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21. [...] departed. That month, redness occurred again and again in the east and west. That month, there was simmu-disease, scabies and scurf in the land</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-140. C. obv. 34-44</td>
<td>Nov-Dec 141 BC</td>
<td>34. ... That month I heard as follows: king Arsaces and his troops departed from Arqani'a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35. I heard as follows: (on the) 6th, the Elamite and his troops departed towards Apamea which is on the river Silhu for fighting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>36. That [month'], the people who dwell in Apamea went out to Bit-Karkudi; they burned Apamea.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>37. [...] An(tiochus) the general who is above the 4 generals, who was representing king Arsaces, went out from Seleucia which is on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>38. the Tigris towards the Elamite for fighting; from the river Kabari he departed, and the numerous troops ... [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>39. went out for fighting. The people who were in Seleucia and the people who dwell in Babylon, [...] the belongings [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>40. to guard (them) before the ... of the Elamite. I heard as follows: the troops who were in Bit-Karkudi ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>41. set up [...] of the troops of the Elamite. That month, the people [...] their children, their possessions, and their wives [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>42. the nobles of the king who had entered Babylon and the few people they led to the sea [...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sachs-Hunger III</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Historical events regarding Elymais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>140.C.obv.34-44</td>
<td>Nov-Dec</td>
<td>43. [...] of the brickwork of the Marduk Gate they tore down and the brickwork [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>141 BC</td>
<td>44. [...] on’ the Euphrates from ... [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-140.C.rev.29'-35'</td>
<td>Dec-Jan 141/0 BC</td>
<td>29. ... That month, I heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>30. as follows: on the 4th day, the citizens who were in Seleucia which is on the Tigris set up a curse on Antiochus,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>31. the general who is above the 4 generals, because’ he made common cause with the Elamite; they had provided’ ... for the general,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>32. and sent many troops with him towards the Elamite for fighting,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>33. They held back this Antiochus, but he escaped with a few troops, and the people of the land who were in Seleucia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>34. on the Tigris plundered his possessions which he had left in the land, and the troops of the king who were with him plundered the possessions which were in [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>35. That month, the Elamite [went out ...] towards Bit-Karkudi which is on the Tigris for fighting [...]</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| -140.D.obv.11'-13' | Jan-Feb 141(0) BC | 11. [...] ... panic of the enemy occurred in the land. This Elamite enemy ... [...] ... [...] ...
|                 |         | 12. [...] ... big’ And small’ Inside this city ... [...] the [...] of Seleucia [...] |
|                 |         | 13. [...] ..., son of Antiochus’ the general’ [...] ... [...] |
| -137.A.rev.3'-8' | June-July 138 BC | 3. ... That month, the 28th day, ... [...] |
|                 |         | 4. general who was above the 4 generals entered Babylon. That month, a fall of cattle ... [...] |
|                 |         | 5. [...] Uruk and the cities which are on the Kutha canal, the Suru canal, the Piqudu canal and the canals [...] |
|                 |         | 6. [...] ... their ... they took and brought (them) up to Elam. The people of these cities in fear of ... [...] |
|                 |         | 7. ... and famine occurred in Susa and the cities of Elam. I heard as follows: the Urukeans ... [...] |
|                 |         | 8. [...] planned evil ... |
| -137.B.rev.19'-21' | May-June 138 BC | 19. [...] ... departed, I heard that on the 18th day the general [...] |
|                 |         | 20. [...] a mess]age’ From king Arsaces to kill the general [...] |
|                 |         | 21. [...] the province of Elam ... [...] |
| -137.D.obv.8'-rev.3 | Nov-Dec 138 BC | 8. That month, the 10th day, [...] |
|                 |         | 9. pitched his camp [in ...] on the Tigris. He [the general who is above the 4 generals] returned and mustered his troops [...] |
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sachs-Hunger III</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Historical events regarding Elymais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-137.D.obv.8'-rev.3</td>
<td>Nov-Dec 138 BC</td>
<td>10. [...] entered [...] Seleucia which is on] the Tigris and the king’s canal. That month, on an unknown day, the king's troops who guarded Babylonia came and [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>11. [...] ... dispersed their cohorts, took captives of them ... they inflicted a defeat on them. They returned [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12. [...] panic of the Elamite enemy was strong in the land, and panic of the enemy fell on the people, ... and reed marshes they dispersed [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13. [...] of the lower Sealand, the cities and canals of the gulf [...] ... lutra their names were called [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>14. [...] and made them obey to his command; he imposed tribute on them, and Aspasine, son of [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1. this [Aspasi]ne searched for a sortie against the Elamite enemy, and turned the cities [and] canals of the lower Sealand over to his own side, and made [them obey] to his command [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2. [...] in order to complete [...] of the lower Sea(land) who did not obey his command, ... [...] seized them in a revolt, took captives of them, plundered them [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3. [...] there was] panic in Elam, happiness and agreement in Babylonia [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-132.B.rev.18-20</td>
<td>Sept-Oct 133 BC</td>
<td>18. ... That month, I heard as follows: the forces of Aspasine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19. the enemy from the environs of Mesene, a friend of the Elamite enemy, came and fell on the harbour ships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20. in the Tigris and plundered this harbour of ships together with their possession.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-132.D₂.obv.8'-10'</td>
<td>Oct-Nov 133 BC</td>
<td>8. [...] entered Seleucia which is on the Tigris. That month, I heard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>9. [...] Susa they made, and killed many troop of the Elamite in fighting, and the ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>10. [...] they ...</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-132.D₂. rev.16'-23'</td>
<td>Dec-Jan 133/2 BC</td>
<td>16. [...] K]amnaskiri, the Elamite enemy, who had revolted against his father</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17. [...] lived in Babylonia, organized against their troops and left [...]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18. [...]arrataš, the river of Elam, they crossed, for one beru distance they pitche camp</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>19. [...] departed [...] many [troops] for fighting [against] each other. In month VIII, the 7th, the troops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>20. [...] the troops [...] they brought about the defeat of the troops of the enemy [...] Until sunset, the remainder</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>21. [...] entered. Ur’a the son of this Elamite enemy,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>22. [...] one bull and 5 (sheep) sacrifices opposite this messenger</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>23. [...] ... and performed (it) for his life</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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<table>
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<tr>
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</thead>
</table>
| -132.D, rev. 7'-11' | Jan-Feb 133(2) BC | 7. [...] the general of Babylonia [went out] from Babylon to Seleucia  
|                  |             | 8. [...] of Babylonia entered Babylon from Seleucia  
|                  |             | 9. [...] the Elamite enemy in guard with them ...  
|                  |             | 10. [...] ... of Babylions ...  
|                  |             | [...] Seleucia to ... [...] |
| -129.A₂, obv. 19' | April-May 130 BC | 19. ... That [mo]nth, the 17th, a mess[enger] of the general ... the harvest’ of Elam [...] |
| -124.B, obv. 19' | Nov-Dec 125 BC | 19. [...] king Arsaces ... of Susa departed to the area of Elam opposite Pittiti, the Elamite enemy, for’ fighting. |
| -124.B, rev. 12'-19' | Dec-Jan 125/4 BC | 12. That month, the 2nd, ... a message of Aspasine, king of Mesene’, which he had written to the general of Babylonia was brought near  
|                  |             | 13. ... [...] was read [to the citizens of Babylonia as follows: In this month, on the 15th], king Arsaces and Pittit, the Elamite enemy, fought with each other. The king defeated the troops of Elam in battle. Pittit  
|                  |             | 14. [...] he seized. That month, the 15th, the king’s throne which like the drawing of a man [...] of wood [...] Pittit  
|                  |             | 15. [...] whose name (was) ... manayaturunus which before [kin]g Aspasine had taken from the king’s palace in Babylon, they gave as an honorific present to Bel. The governor of Babylon and the citizens who were in Babylon  
|                  |             | 16. [...] and ... the doors of the Akitu Temple they opened and ... [...] ... made; they did not enter. That throne of the king, an honorific present to Bel, they brought out from the Akitu Temple; they took it next to them.  
|                  |             | 17. [...] a messenger of the king who carried a message entered Babylon. That day, the message of the king, which was written to the governor of Babylon and the citizens who were in Babylon, was read in the House of observation, as follows: Fighting  
|                  |             | 18. [...] Pittit, the Elamite enemy, I made, and 15 thousand battle troops among his troops I [overth]rew in battle; among my troops no ... took place. Elam in its entirety I hit with weapons. Pittit  
|                  |             | 19. [...] ... I seized.  
| -90.rev. 1-2     | Dec-Jan 91/0 BC | 1. [...] departed? [...] surrounding of Susa. A reduction of the equivalent happened in this city Susa. That day I heard  
|                  |             | 2. [...] (blank)  

The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
Table 1 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sachs-Hunger III</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Historical events regarding Elymais</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| -77.B.rev.13′-14′| Jan-Feb 78(7) BC | 13. [...] went [to] Elam and fought with Qabinashkiri, the king of Elam, and put [...] in it, and the cities [...]  
14. [...] ... the few troops which were with him, turned away from him and went up to the mountains. I heard that towards the mountains when ... |
### Table 2 – The First Kings of Elymais

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rulers of Elymais</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kamnaskires</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of Bard-e Neshandeh</td>
<td>187 BC</td>
<td>Antiochus III’s attempt to plunder the temple of Bel and murder of the Seleucid king (?)</td>
<td>Inscription of Bard-e Neshandeh (ca. 171-151 BC)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. first half of 2nd cent. BC)</td>
<td>164 BC</td>
<td>Antiochus IV’s attempt to plunder the temple of Artemis/Nanaia</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kamnaskires I</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Megas Soter</strong></td>
<td>Sept. 145 BC</td>
<td>First Elymaean incursion in Mesopotamia</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. 149/7- 144 BC)</td>
<td>Aug. 144 BC</td>
<td>Elymaeans at Susa</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>144 BC</td>
<td>Seleucid presence at Susa.</td>
<td>Numismatic evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>ca. 144-142 BC</td>
<td>Dispute for the Seleucid throne between Demetrius II and Antiochus VI</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Okkonapses Soter</strong></td>
<td>ca. 144-143</td>
<td>Recapture of Susa</td>
<td>Numismatic evidence</td>
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<tr>
<td>(ca. 144-143 BC)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kamnaskires II</strong></td>
<td>141 BC</td>
<td>Arsacid control of Mesopotamia</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Nikephoros</strong></td>
<td>Dec./Jan. 141/0 BC</td>
<td>Second Elymaean incursion in Mesopotamia</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. 142-137 BC)</td>
<td>Aug. 138 BC</td>
<td>Mithridates I defeated Demetrius II on his route from Babylonia to Media.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dec. 138</td>
<td>The Arsacid general Philinus contained and fended off the Elymaean raid into Mesopotamia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Chaos in Elymais facilitated the rise of Characenean</td>
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*The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)*
Table 2 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rulers of Elymais</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Sources</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kamnaskires II</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nikephoros</strong></td>
<td>Dec. 138</td>
<td>expansionism led by Hyspaosines</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. 142-137 BC)</td>
<td>Jan. 137 BC</td>
<td>Looting of Nippur, possibly by the Elymaeans</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Tigraios</strong></td>
<td>Oct.-Nov. 133 BC</td>
<td><em>Fourth Elymaean incursion</em> in Mesopotamia by combined Elymaean and Characenean forces</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. early 137-early 132 BC)</td>
<td>Dec.-Jan. 133/2 BC</td>
<td>Parthian army led by the new commander Theodosius and Kamnaskires “the Arsacid” defeated the Elymo-Characenean forces</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Early 132 BC</td>
<td>Capture of Tigraios who was conducted to Babylonia in guard.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Kamnaskires “the Arsacid”</strong></td>
<td>Feb.-March 132 BC</td>
<td>Arscid king Phraates II placed Kamnaskires “the Arsacid” on the throne of Elymais</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. early 132-late 130 BC)</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Antiochus VII Sidetes</strong></td>
<td>130-129 BC</td>
<td>Antiochus VII’s ephemeral control over Mesopotamia and Elymais</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries, numismatic evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. late 130-late 129 BC)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Phraates II</strong></td>
<td>129-127 BC</td>
<td>First member of the Arsacid family to directly reign in Elymais</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. late 129-late 127 BC)</td>
<td>mid-127 BC</td>
<td>Characenean forces led by Hyspaosines ruling in Mesopotamia</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>late-127 BC</td>
<td>The Arsacid commander Timarchus recaptured the territories of Babylonia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Artabanus I</strong></td>
<td>127-124 BC</td>
<td>Artabanus maintained authority over Elymais</td>
<td>Numismatic evidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(ca. late 127-124 BC)</td>
<td>Dec./Jan. 125/4 BC</td>
<td>Decisive victory against the Elymaean leader Pittit</td>
<td>Babylonian Diaries</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 3 – Historical Timelines

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Mesopotamia</th>
<th>Susiana</th>
<th>Elymais</th>
<th>Highlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>335-324/3 BC</td>
<td>Territories conquered by Alexander the Great and installation of Macedonian authority.</td>
<td>Darius III’s army (including Uxians and Susians) defeated at Gaugamela by Alexander.</td>
<td>Uxians and Kossaeans could have represented “confederated” populations within the Elymaean territory.</td>
<td>Alexander subjugated the highlands en route to Persepolis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Susa taken by Alexander.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Possible Macedonian garrison stationed at Masjed-e Soleyman</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>323-301 BC</td>
<td>Scene of fighting between the successors of Alexander the Great for the control of Babylonia</td>
<td>Wars erupted between Alexander’s surviving generals (<em>Diadochoi</em>).</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>301-222 BC</td>
<td>Confrontation between the Seleucid empire and the Ptolemaic kingdom of Ptolemy III.</td>
<td>Seleucus I seized power in Susiana, started minting coins, founded and renamed cities, including, likely, Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon.</td>
<td>Elymais was a semi-independent sub-district of Susian ruled by local aristocracies.</td>
<td>Seleucus I’s dominion over Fars. Independent <em>Frataraka</em> dynasty in Persis after Seleucus I’s death.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Susa (Seleucia-on-the-Eulaios) was heavily Hellenized and transformed in a Greek <em>polis</em> with Greek institutions.</td>
<td>Possible foundation of the sacred structures at Masjed-e Soleyman and Bard-e Neshandeh</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>222-187 BC</td>
<td>Seleucid authority in Mesopotamia</td>
<td>Susiana under the control of Antiochus III.</td>
<td>Elymaeans archers present in the army of Antiochus III at Magnesia</td>
<td>Revolt of Molon (satrap of Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Conjurct Elymaeans and Kossaeans army against Suso-Babylonian forces.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt of Antiochus II I to plunder the temple of Bel. Killed by the,</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)*
Table 3 (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Mesopotamia</th>
<th>Susiana</th>
<th>Elymais</th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>222-187 BC</td>
<td>Seleucid authority in Mesopotamia</td>
<td>Susiana under the control of</td>
<td>Elymaeans</td>
<td>Revolt of Molon (satrap of Media)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Antiochus III.</td>
<td>After Antiochus III’s death, Elymais became “officially” independent.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Elymais and Elymaeans started to appear in the Classical sources as a</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>well-defined socio-political entity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>187-147 BC</td>
<td>Seleucid civil wars, in particular</td>
<td>Numismatic evidence showed Susa</td>
<td>Antiochus IV tried in vain to loot the Elymaeian temple of Artemis/Nanaia</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>between Demetrius I and Alexander</td>
<td>still under the Seleucid authority.</td>
<td>Kamnaskires of Bard-e Neshandeh.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Balas</td>
<td>Alexander Balas usurped the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Seleucid throne of Demetrius I</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>147-124 BC</td>
<td>Four Elymaean raids into the</td>
<td>Confrontation between Elymaeans</td>
<td>Elymaean control.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Babylonian territory.</td>
<td>Seleucids, and Arsacids for the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Attempt by the last Seleucids to</td>
<td>control of Susa.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>reassert their authority.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rise of Hyspaosines and the</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kingdom of Characene.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Famine in Mesopotamia, especially</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>at Uruk.</td>
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<tr>
<td>124-35 BC</td>
<td>Parthian control</td>
<td>Susa and Susiana under the</td>
<td>Elymaeans moved to Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>dominion of the Arsacids</td>
<td></td>
<td>Limited Arsacid authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>(numismatic evidence).</td>
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</table>

*The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)*
**Table 3 (cont.)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Mesopotamia</th>
<th>Susiana</th>
<th>Elymais</th>
<th>Highlands</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>124-35 BC</strong></td>
<td>Parthian control</td>
<td>Susa and Susiana under the dominion of the Arsacids (numismatic evidence).</td>
<td>Roman general Pompey in order to obtain support against the Arsacids. Foundation of Shami</td>
<td>Limited Arsacid authority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>35 BC-205/6 AD</strong></td>
<td>Alternating control over Susa and Susiana by Elymaeans and Arsacids. Persistence of Greek institutions. Investments of agricultural practices and techniques.</td>
<td>Parthian dominion</td>
<td>Period of “uncertain kings” followed by the rise of the <em>Elymaean-Arsacid</em> dynasty. Development of <em>Elymaic</em> as official language for the local elite. Main series of rock reliefs and inscriptions. Repeated shifting of the Elymaean seat of power between Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon and Susa.</td>
<td>Elymaean/Arsacid rivalry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>205/6-226 BC</strong></td>
<td>Ardashir subdues Ctesiphon in 226 AD. Mesopotamia under Sasanid authority.</td>
<td>Ardashir defeated the last Arsacid king, Artabanus IV, and Orodes (V?), king of Ahwaz. Susian under the control of Sasanid, who the right to issue local coins.</td>
<td>Authority provided by Artabanus IV to the Khwasak “the satrap of Susa” (Stele of Khwasak). The “Kingdom of Ahwaz” probably represent the last testimonial of the semi-autonomous reign of Elymais. Ardashir conquest of Seleucia-on-the-Hedyphon.</td>
<td>Rise of Ardashir, ‘king’ of Istakhr. Sasanid revolt against the Arsacid dominion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Period (approx data)</td>
<td>II-I century BC</td>
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<td>I-II century AD</td>
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<td>Rock Reliefs</td>
<td>II BC</td>
<td>I BC</td>
<td>1(^{st}) half</td>
<td>2(^{nd}) half</td>
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<td>AWβα</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>II:Nb</td>
<td>II:Wa</td>
<td>II:Na,</td>
<td>II:NW,</td>
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<td>Tang-e Sarvak</td>
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<td>II:Wc</td>
<td>=</td>
<td>III</td>
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<td>Sarhani</td>
<td>I:S.1 =, I:W</td>
<td>I:N,</td>
<td>I:S.2 =</td>
<td>Sarh</td>
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<td>Hung-e Azhdar</td>
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<td>Hung-e Yaralivand</td>
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<td>Hung-e Kamalvand</td>
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Table 4 (cont.)

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<th>I-II century AD</th>
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<th>II-III century AD</th>
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<td>Bard-e Bot</td>
<td>BB</td>
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<tr>
<td>Susan-Sorkhab</td>
<td>SS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bota Shirinow</td>
<td>BT</td>
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Table 5 – *Unlocated Toponyms in Elymais*\(^{2340}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Probable Location</th>
<th>Reference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agarra</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>East of Elymais</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agra</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Western part of Susiana on the Tigris (Mesene)</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.4; RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anuchtha</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Southern Susiana</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aracha</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Elymais/Susiana</td>
<td>Amm. Marc., XXVI.6.26; RE Suppl. I, 'Arakka'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arakka</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Western Susiana</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.4; RE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Araerikkha</td>
<td>C</td>
<td>Kissia, 40 km north of Susa (Kir-Ab³)</td>
<td>Hdt., VI.119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arsiana</td>
<td>L</td>
<td>Elymais (Susiana)</td>
<td>Amm. Marc., XXVI.6.26; RE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Western part of Susiana, near Charax Spasinou (Mesene)</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.4; RE (6)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bergan</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Elymais, above Susa, near the Eulaicos river.</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Chaltapitis</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>District in north-east of Elymais</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.3; RE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Deera</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>North-eastern Elymais, area between Chaltapitis and Kissia</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.3; RE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Dera</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Susiana (inland)</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</td>
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<td>Graan</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Southwestern Elymais</td>
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<td>Palinza</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Elymais (inland), north of Susa</td>
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<td>Sakrone</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Elymais (inland), north-west of Susa</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</td>
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<tr>
<td>Saura</td>
<td>H²R</td>
<td>Elymais, east of Susa</td>
<td>Ptol., VI.3.5; Re</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sele</td>
<td>H²RL</td>
<td>Elymais, east of Susa</td>
<td>Amm. Marc., XXVI.6.26; Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</td>
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\(^{2340}\) Data extracted and revised from the *Barrington Atlas of the Greek and Roman World* (pp. 1326-1333). The time period covered is roughly from 1000 BC up to ca. AD 640, categorized as Archaic period (A; pre-550 BC), Classical period (C; 550-330 BC), Hellenistic period/Middle to Late Republican period at Rome (H; 330 BC - 30 BC), Early Roman Empire (R; 30 BC - AD 300), and Late Antique (L; 300 - 640).
<table>
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<th>Name</th>
<th>Period</th>
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<td>Urzan</td>
<td>H'R</td>
<td>South of Elymais</td>
<td><em>Ptol., VI.3.5; RE</em></td>
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</table>
The Kingdom of Elymais (ca. 300 BC-224 AD)
(1) Bard-e Neshandeh. General view (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. IV).

(2) a) Bard-e Neshandeh. Stairway NW (Author 2015); b) Relief (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XIII.2)
Satellite map of the area at Bard-e Neshandeh (Google Earth); Pictures (Author 2015)
Plan of Bard-e Neshandeh (Ghirshman 1976, Plan 1)
Bard-e Neshandeh. Tetrastyle Temple:

a) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXIII; b) Ibid., Plan II; c) Author; d) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XX.5; e) Ibid., Pl. XXI.2; f) Author
a) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXI.3; b-c) Author (Museum of Susa); d) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXIV.5
PLATE VI

a) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XL.2

b) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XL.1

Bard-e Neshandeh. Pottery
PLATE VII

a) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXVII.1
b) *Ibid.*, Pl. XXVIII.1
c) *Ibid.*, Pl. XXXIV.1
d) *Ibid.*, Pl. XXVII.2
e) Author (Tehran Museum)
f) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXX.1
g) *Ibid.*, Pl. XXX.2
h) Author (Tehran Museum)

Bard-e Neshandeh. Sculpture Artefacts.
Bard-e Neshandeh. Metalworks.
PLATE X

(1)
a) Masjed-e Soleyman. Stairway A (Author 2015); b) Statue of Heracles (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LII.1)

(2)
a) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LII.3; b) Ibid., Pl. LIII.4; c) Ibid., Pl. LIII.3
PLATE XI


b) Masjed-e Soleyman. Aerial View (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LI.)3
a) Grand Temple (Author 2015)
b) Petit Temple (Author 2015)
c) Stairway C (Author 2015)
d) Podium (Author 2015)
e) Low Wall between Terraces I and V (Basello 2014)
f) Ghirshman 1976, plan III

g) Terraces II and III, and stairways H and K (Author 2015)
Masjed-e Soleyman. Grand Temple.
(1) Masjed-e Soleyman. Cemetery (Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XLV)

(2) Masjed-e Soleyman. Map of the Petit Temple (Ghirshman 1976, plan VIII)
Masjed-e Soleyman. Pottery
Masjed-e Soleyman. Sculpture Artefacts.
PLATE XVII

a) Ghirshman 1976, Pl. CVI.3

b) Ibid., Pl. CVI.1

c) Ibid., Pl. CVI.2

d) Ibid., Pl. C.1-2

e) Ibid., Pl. CX.3

f) Ibid., Pl. CV.5

h) Ibid., Pl. CIV.5-7

i) Ibid., Pl. XCVII.3

j) Ibid., Pl. XCVII.1

k) Author (Museum of Tehran)
a) Messina et al 2016, fig. 5 (Modified and overlapped by the author); b) Ibid., fig 20; c) Ibid., fig. 18; d) Messina and Mehr Kian 2014a, fig. 6.
PLATE XIX

II. SKETCH PLAN OF RUINED SHRINE, SHAMI

a) Stein 1940, p. 145. Digitalized by the author.

Shami. Material from Stein's excavation
PLATE XX

a) Author (Tehran Museum)

b) Ibid.

c) Stein 1940, fig. 49

d) Author (Tehran Museum)
e) Stein 1940, Pl. VI.6

f) Author (Tehran Museum)

g) Stein 1940, Pl. VI.17

Shami. Artefacts.
a) Shami. Stein Terrace (Author 2015); b) Messina et al. 2016, fig. 14; c) Stein 1940, fig. 53

Shami. Excavations
a) Messina 2015, fig. 40; b) Ibid., fig. 41; c) Ibid., fig. 42.

Hung-e Azhdar. Excavations.
Hung-e Azhdar. Artefacts
a-c) Qal’e-ye Bardi (Ghirshman 1976, Pls. CXXXI-CXXXII); b-d) Qala-e Kazhdoum (Messina 2015, figs. 13-14)
PLATE XXV

TS.II:

Line-drawings (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985); Photographs (Basello 2014)
PLATE XXVI

TS.I:

Line-drawings (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985); Photographs (Basello 2014)
PLATE XXVII

TS.II:

Photographs: sculpted scene (Mathiesen 1992/2, fig. 17); particulars (Haerinck 2003)
PLATE XXVIII

TS.II:

Photographs (Basello 2014)
PLATE XXIX

TS.II:

Photographs (Basello 2014)
PLATE XXX

TS.II:

Photograph (Mathiesen 1992/2, fig. 21)
PLATE XXXI

TS.III

a-b-d) Basello 2014; c) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, fig. 12; e-f) De Waele 1975, figs. 10-11
PLATE XXXII

TS.IV

Line-drawings (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, figs 13-14); Photographs (Basello 2014)
PLATE XXXIII

Sarh:

Line-drawings and photographs (Sardari 2012)
PLATE XXXIV

HA:

(1) General view and elamite relief (Author 2015)

(2) a-c) De Waele 1975, figs. 3, 5; b) Nobari et al. 2013, fig. 1.
PLATE XXXV

HA:

Line-drawing (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, fig. 1); Photograph (Author 2015)
PLATE XXXVI

HK:

a) Author 2015; b) Mathiesen 1992/2, fig 2; c) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, fig. 3
HY:

a) Author 2015; b) Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, fig. 2; c) Messina et al. 2014, fig. 10
PLATE XXXVIII

BZ:

Photograph (Kawami 1987, Pl. 61)

TM:

Photograph (Author 2015, Museum of Susa)
Photographs and line-drawing (Mehr Kian 1997)
PLATE XL

MTZ:

Mehr Kian 2001, Pl. 3

BB:

Photograph (Mathiesen 1992/2, fig. 4); line-drawing (Vanden-Berghe and Schippmann 1985, fig. 5)
a) Mathiesen 1992/2, fig. 7; b) Sardari 2012
Plate XLII

I.1
I.2
Ia

II.1
II.2
II.3
IIa
II.insc.2
II.insc.3
II.insc.4

III.1
III.insc.5
III.2

IV.1
IVa

V.1
V.2
V.3

24.5 m

Line-drawing (Vanden Berghe and Schippmann 1985, fig. 4)
Photographs (Mathiesen 1992/2, figs. 7-12)
PLATE XLIII

KT:

Photograph (Author 2015)

SM:

Photographs and line-drawing (Mehr Kian 2000, Pl. 2)
PLATE XLIV

SS:

Sardari 2012

Al:

1

2

Line-drawings (Mehr Kian 2003b)
PLATE XLV

TS.I: insc. 1

Photograph (Basello 2014); Text (Henning 1972, p. 170, insc. 6); Script (Pandey 2017, fig. 13)

TS.II: insc. 2

Photograph (Basello 2014); Text (Henning 1952, p. 170, insc. 1); Script (Pandey 2017, fig. 8)
PLATE XLVI

TS.II: insc. 3

Photograph (Basello 2014); Text (Henning 1952, p. 170, insc. 4); Script (Pandey 2017, fig. 11)

TS.II: insc. 4

Photograph (Basello 2014); Text (Henning 1952, p. 170, insc. 3); Script (Pandey 2017, fig. 10)
PLATE XLVII

TS.II:insc.5

Photograph (Basello 2014); Text (Henning 1952, p. 170, insc. 2); Script (Pandey 2017, fig. 9)

TS.II:insc.6

Photograph (Basello 2014); Text (Henning 1952, p. 170, insc. 5); Script (Pandey 2017, fig. 12)
PLATE XLVIII

TS.II:insc.7

Photograph (Basello 2014)
PLATE XLIX

TB: I.insc. 1

Bivar and Shaked 1964, Pl. III

TB: II.insc. 2

Bivar and Shaked 1964, Pl. IV
PLATE L

TB:II.insc.3

Bivar and Shaked 1964, Pl. V

TB:II.insc.4

Bivar and Shaked 1964, Pl. VI
PLATE LI

TB:II.insc.5

Bivar and Shaked 1964, Pl. VII

TC:ink

Bivar and Shaked 1964, Pl. XI (a), XII (b), XIII (c)
PLATE LII

HY:inscription 2

Moriggi 2011, fig. 2

HK:inscription 1

Photograph (Kawami 1987, Pl. 23); Hinz 1963, p. 171
PLATE LIII

BN: insc. A

Ghirshman 1976, Pl. XXXV.4

BN: insc. B

a)

Harmatta 1989, figs. 1 (a), 2 (b)
MS:insc

Ghirshman 1976, Pl. LXXI.4
PLATE LV

(1)

Seleucid reverses of Alexander Balas (a-b) and Demetrius II (c)

a) SNG Spaer 1394  
b) Houghton 1079  
c) Ibid. 220

Early Kamnaskired reverses of Kamnaskires I (a-b) and Kamnaskires II (c)

d) Van’t Haaff 2007, type 1.1  
e) Ibid., type 1.2  
f) Ex Peus 343 (04-1995), lot 215

(2)

b) Kamnaskires II Nikephoros (reverse). AE. Δ. Susa. Van’t Haaff 2007, type 2.3, sub. 1-1  
c) Kamnaskires IV (obverse). AR.4Δ. Ibid., type 8.3, sub. 1-1  
d) Kamnaskires IV (obverse). AR. 4Δ. Ibid., type 8.3, sub. 2-1
a) Seleucus I Nikator (reverse). AE. 4Δ. online at: cngcoins.

b) Kamnaskires II (reverse). AE Unit. Van’t Haaff 2007, type 2.4.

c) Orodes I/Sinatruces of Parthia (obverse). AR. Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #78652

d) Kamnaskires III and Anzaze (obverse). AR. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #133212


f) Kamnaskires V (obverse). AR. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #133213.

g) Uncertain kings (obverse). AE. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23320.

h) Uncertain kings (obverse). Billon. Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23326.

i) Uncertain kings (obverse). AE. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #121371.

j) Orodes I (obverse). Billon. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23321.


l) Orodes II (obverse). AE. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23316.

m) Phraates (obverse). AE. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23331.

n) Orodes III (obverse). AE. 4Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23327.

o) Orodes IV (reverse). AE. Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #23329.

p) Orodes V (obverse). AE. Δ. Zeno online catalogue, #166801.
PLATE LVII

(1)

a) Kamnaskires *Megas Soter*
b) Kamnaskires *Nikephoros*
c) Kamnaskires and Anzaze
d) Orodes I
e) Kamnaskires-Orodes
f) Phraates

(2)

a) Kamnaskires *Nikephoros*
b) Okkonapses
c) Tigraios

(3)

b) Kamnaskires-Orodes
b) Orodes II
c) Phraates
d) Orodes IV
PLATE LVIII

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SELEUCIDS</th>
<th>ELYMAIS</th>
<th>ARSACIDS</th>
<th>DATING</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Demetrius II (Houghton 223)</td>
<td>Alexander Balas (Houghton 1079)</td>
<td>(SNG Spaer 1394)</td>
<td>AR 4Δ</td>
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<tr>
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<td>148-147 BC</td>
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<td>AR 4Δ</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>145 BC</td>
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<td>AR 4Δ</td>
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<td>144 BC</td>
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**Kamnaskires Megas Soter**

**Kamnaskires (Van’t Haaff 2007, type 1.2)**

**Kamnaskires (ibid., type 1A.1)**

Demetrius II (Houghton 0576)
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<td><img src="image" alt="Tigraios" /> (ibid., type 5.1)</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Phraates II" /> (Sellwood 14.3)</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Antiochus VII Sidetes" /> (Le Rider 1965, no. 110)</td>
<td><img src="image" alt="Dareios ?" /> (Van’t Haaff 2007, type 6,1) – suspicious</td>
<td>130 BC</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Phraates II" /> (Sellwood 14.5)</td>
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<td><img src="image" alt="Artabanus I" /> (Sellwood 18.2)</td>
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<td>![Mithridates II](fig. 30)</td>
<td>122 BC</td>
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<td>![Gotarzes I](Sellwood 33.17-19)</td>
<td>AR 4Δ</td>
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<td>![Kamnaskires and Anzaze](Van't Haaff_2007_type 7.1_sub 1-1)</td>
<td>![Orodes I Parthia](Rhagae; Sellwood 31.6)</td>
<td>82/1 BC</td>
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<td>![Orodes I](Rhagae; Sellwood 34.4)</td>
<td>![Orodes I](Rhagae; Sellwood 34.4)</td>
<td>77 BC</td>
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<td>![Kamnaskires and Anzaze](Zeno, #23334)</td>
<td>![Arsaces XVI](Assar 2006b, fig.28)</td>
<td>72/1 BC</td>
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<td>![Orodes I](Rhagae; Sellwood 34.4)</td>
<td>AR 4Δ / AR Δ</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

- Mithridates II (Assar 2006a, fig. 30)
- Gotarzes I (Sellwood 33.17-19)
- Orodes I Parthia (Rhagae; Sellwood 31.6)
- Orodes I (Rhagae; Sellwood 34.4)
- Kamnaskires and Anzaze (Zeno, #23334)
- Arsaces XVI (Assar 2006b, fig.28)
<table>
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<td><img src="image2" alt="Phraates III" /></td>
<td><strong>62/1 BC</strong></td>
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<td><img src="image3" alt="Kamnaskires IVb" /></td>
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<td><strong>62/1 – 59/8 BC</strong></td>
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<td>AR 4Δ</td>
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<td><img src="image4" alt="Kamnaskires IV" /></td>
<td><img src="image5" alt="Mithridates III" /></td>
<td><strong>57/6 BC</strong></td>
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<td>Kamnaskires IV (ibid., type 8.3, sub. 2-1.b)</td>
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<td><strong>54/3 BC</strong></td>
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<td>AR 4Δ / AR 4Δ</td>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image7" alt="Kamnaskires IV/V" /></td>
<td><img src="image8" alt="Kamnaskires IV/V" /></td>
<td><strong>46/5 BC</strong></td>
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<td>Kamnaskires IV/V (ibid., type 9.1, sub. 1.1)</td>
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ELYMAIS | ARSACID | DATING
---|---|---
Kamnaskires IV/V (*ibid.*, type 9.1, sub 1.3) | Orodes II (Sellwood 45.16) | 46/5 BC
Kamnaskires IV/V (*ibid.*, type 9.1, sub 1.3) | Phraates IV (Ecbatana; Sellwood 52.10) | 36/5 BC
Kamnaskires IV/V (*ibid.*, type 9.1, sub 1.3) |  | Undated

Uncertain Kings

Late 1st century BC