

Late Neo-Elamite Kingdoms, the Rise of Cyrus the Great, the Fall of Babylon and the End of the Babylonian Captivity

Varying Notions of “Elam” in JerMT 49:34–39 // JerG 25:14–20 and JerMT 25:15–26 // JerG 32:1–12

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1 The Relevance of the “Oracle Against Elam” for Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies

The “oracle against Elam” in the Book of Jeremiah (JerMT 49:34–39 // JerG 25:14–20)¹ is remarkable in many ways. First, this is the only one of the so-called “Oracles Against the Nations” (hereafter: OAN) in the entire Bible, that appears to be explicitly directed *against* Elam.² Furthermore, Elam – in contrast to the other peoples dealt with in the OAN – was neither an immediate neighbour of Judah nor is there any indication that it was ever politically or economically significant for Judah before the Persian period:³ its relevance in

- 1 Due to the initial lack of clarity as to which version is the original (but see below section 4.3), and because both versions are important on their own, the relevant passages in this article are not only – as is usually the case – referred to according to the Masoretic Text (hereafter: JerMT), but also after the corresponding excerpts from the version handed down in the Septuagint (hereafter: JerG).
- 2 H.G.L. Peels, “God’s Throne in Elam. The Historical Background and Literary Context of Jeremiah 49:34–39”, in J.C. de Moor/H.F. van Rooij (ed.), *Past, Present, Future: the Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (OTS 44; Leiden: Brill, 2000) 216–29, on p. 216; R. Eichler, “An Ambiguous Oracle in the Prophecy against Elam (Jeremiah 49:34–39)”, *Vetus Testamentum* 72 (2022) 183–90, on p. 183. It should be noted, however, that this is not the only occurrence of Elam in the prophetic books. The downfall of Elam – which, in this case, is described as if it had already *taken place* – is also mentioned in Ezek 32:24–5 in a lament about the Pharaoh of Egypt as part of a vision of the underworld. Furthermore, Elam is also mentioned several times in Isaiah (Isa 11:11; Isa 21:2; Isa 22:6); in Isa 21:2 it is described as a power that – together with Media – is to rise up against Babylon (see below n. 57). For further Biblical references, see *Große Konkordanz zur Lutherbibel* (Stuttgart: Calwer, 1993), on p. 283.
- 3 B. Huwiler, *Jeremia und die Völker: Untersuchungen zu den Völkersprüchen in Jeremia 46–49* (FAT 20; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 257; Peels, “God’s Throne”, 216; H.-J. Stipp, *Jeremiah 25–52* (HAT I/12,2; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 745. Note, however, the episode in Gen 14, which postulates that an Elamite king named Kedor-laomer ruled for more than

the context of the book of Jeremiah is therefore in any case in need of explanation. In view of the fact that the “oracle against Elam” also differs significantly from the other OAN, due to its predominantly prosaic form, and lacks the hallmarks of Jeremianic authorship,⁴ it is indeed reasonable to suspect that it may have been included in the collection at a later date than those. In this context, it is interesting to note that the “oracle against Elam” occupies a different position in the Masoretic text than in the Septuagint,⁵ which has led to many hypotheses about the historical context of the origin of the different versions and thus also the question as to which of the two is actually the more original.⁶ Finally, in both the Masoretic text and the Septuagint, the oracle contains two extremely unusual paragraphs following the prophecy of the downfall of Elam: first, there is mention of the setting up of a throne of YHWH in Elam, – which, depending on which version one follows, could mean either the *extermination* (JerMT 49:38) or the *sending* (JerG 25:18) of (a) king and (several) magnates –,⁷ and then of a “turn” of the “captivity of Elam” “at the end of days” (JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19).⁸ Obviously, those sentences fulfilled a special function, which in turn suggests that the “oracle against Elam” is of extraordinary importance within the OAN and that its understanding is therefore essential for insights into the genesis of the Book of Jeremiah.⁹ This fact is also illustrated by the special emphasis on the divine self, which appears in all sentences of the “oracle against Elam” as the sole acting protagonist.¹⁰

a decade over Sodom, Gomorrah and several other cities. Since it can be assumed that this episode has no historical basis, but was possibly invented in post-exilic times in order to make Abraham appear more important to an audience living in Babylonia or Elam (see J. Álvarez-Mon, *The Arjān Tomb at the Crossroads between the Elamite and the Persian Empires* [Acta Iranica 49; Leuven: Peeters, 2010], 186–7 with earlier literature), it will not be considered below.

- 4 Huwylar, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 258; Stipp, *Jeremiah*, 745 and esp. 748. Note also that the oracle is kept extremely vague and does not refer to any Elamite place names or personal names (Huwylar, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 257).
- 5 JerG is certainly based on a Hebrew source text, too, which was, however, about 1/8 to 1/6 shorter than the Masoretic version. See A. Rofé, “The Double Text of Jeremiah Revisited”, in L. Stulman/E. Silver (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021), 114–28, p. 114 n. 2 with references to earlier literature.
- 6 For a summary of the debate, see E. Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon, or from Elam to Moab? Queries Concerning the Order of the Oracles against the Nations in the Book of Jeremiah”, in H. Bezzel/U. Becker/M. de Jong (ed.), *Prophecy and Foreign Nations. Aspects of the Role of the “Nations” in the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel* (FAT II 135; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022) 59–75, on pp. 59–60.
- 7 On the translation of רַשָׁא as “magnates”, see below n. 20.
- 8 For a discussion of the text passages, see sections 3–5.
- 9 Cf. Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 68 with an interpretation that differs from the one made here.
- 10 Huwylar, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 257; Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 68.

In addition to a number of grammatical and lexical difficulties, the fact that the term “Elam” is ambiguous and its exact historical meaning in this context is very difficult to grasp, due to the lack of precise information,¹¹ is particularly problematic for the interpretation of the oracle: although “Elam” can also be understood, in a broader sense, as a geographical *region* comprising a large number of smaller regional units in south-western Iran,¹² it is obvious that in the present context it refers to a *specific political power* that needs to be defined in more detail. Depending on the period in which one places the origin of the oracle or its inclusion in the collection, however, “Elam” could refer to very *different* political entities; moreover, it cannot be ruled out that in the course of the complicated editorial processes of the Book of Jeremiah, a (possibly ideologically motivated) *reinterpretation* of the original passage took place, which in turn may have caused the shift of the passage within the Book of Jeremiah.

However, the question of the historicity of the oracle and its dating is not only important for the Biblical exegesis of the text, but is also of considerable interest for research into the history of the ancient Near East: if concrete historical conclusions about the situation of Elam before the beginning of the Persian Empire could be drawn from this passage, JerMT 49:34–39 // JerG 25:14–20 would represent an important addition to the hitherto extremely sparse and problematic source material available concerning Neo-Elamite history after the fall of the Assyrian Empire, and in this way could contribute to gaining a clearer idea of the sequence of events that led to the emergence of the Persian Empire in the territory of modern Iran.¹³ Due to the complicated editorial history of the Book of Jeremiah, however, this is only possible if the individual *parts* of the text, which could have been written or modified in different epochs,¹⁴ are clearly separated and examined each on their own with regard to their credibility and historical information content. Such an attempt will be made in the following; as far as possible, the results will be harmonized

11 Huwlyer, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 257.

12 See the definition by R. Zadok, “The Peoples of Elam”, in J. Álvarez-Mon/G.-P. Basello/Y. Wicks (ed.), *The Elamite world* (London/New York: Routledge, 2018) 146–62, on pp. 147–9. Although this refers primarily to the Ur III period, it can also be applied to later periods of Iranian history. Note that “Gutium”, which is later associated with Median rule (see section 3.4 below), is not part of this area, but lies to the north of it.

13 On the Mesopotamian side, the direct transition from the Assyrian via the Neo-Babylonian Empire to the Persian Empire is well documented by a large number of sources. See, among others, M. Jursa, “The Neo-Babylonian Empire”, in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 5: *The Age of Persia* (Oxford/New York: Oxford University, 2023) pp. 91–173, esp. pp. 93–6.

14 Especially the last line (JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19) has raised suspicion that it could have been added later; cf., e.g., Huwlyer, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 258 and Peels, “God’s Throne in Elam”, 216 with n. 4.

with the current state of research on the history of “Elam” and southwest Iran in the period in question.

2 JerMT 49:34–39 and JerG 25:14–20 in Comparison

A fundamental problem in dealing with the “oracle against Elam” is that not all sections of the text are fully understood yet. The existing translations of JerMT 49:38–39 // JerG 25:18–19 are highly suggestive and deviate massively from one another, depending on which theses on the time of origin and intention of the two text versions (JerG and JerMT) the modern translator had in mind.¹⁵ Linked to this is a further problem, namely that the text is usually only quoted according to one version,¹⁶ whereby the differences between the two versions (especially with regard to the structure) are lost. In order to avoid circular reasoning, it is important to first establish exactly what the wording of the Elam oracle actually is in the two versions and what similarities and differences there are, before a more detailed analysis of the content is undertaken. Such an attempt will be made in the following passage.

2.1 Translation of JerMT 49:34–39 and JerG 25:14–20¹⁷

JerMT	JerG
25:13b ... against all nations.	25:14b Against the nations, (namely) those of Elam:
49:34 That what was the word of YHWH to Jeremiah the prophet regarding Elam at the beginning of the reign of Zedekia, the king of Judah (is):	

15 The website Bible Gateway (www.biblegateway.com), which provides easy access to a large number of Bible translations, offers a very good overview of the variety of translations.

16 A notable exception is the synoptic translation provided in K. Finsterbusch/N. Jacoby, *MT-Jeremiah and LXX-Jeremiah 25–52: Synoptische Übersetzung und Analyse der Kommunikationsstruktur* (WMANT 146; Göttingen/Bristol, CT, USA: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2017), 284–5.

17 Cf. also the synoptic translation in Finsterbusch/Jacoby, *MT-Jeremiah and LXX-Jeremiah 25–52*, 284–5.

(cont.)

JerMT		JerG	
49:35	Thus says YHWH Zebaoth: Behold, I am (herewith) breaking the bow of Elam, the beginning of their might.	25:15	Thus says (the) Lord: I break the bow of Elam, the beginning of their might.
49:36	And I will cause four winds to come upon Elam from the four corners of heaven. And I will scat- ter them for all these winds. And there will not be the nation that will not come there the expelled ones of Elam. ¹⁸	25:16	And I will cause four winds to come upon Elam from the four corners of heaven. And I will scat- ter them in all these winds. And there will not be a nation that will not come there the expelled ones of Elam.
49:37	And I will terrify Elam in front of their enemies and of those who seek their life. And I will bring evil upon them, the fierceness of my wrath. Utterance of YHWH. And I will send the sword after them until I have utterly destroyed them.	25:17	And I will terrify them in front of their enemies, who seek their life. And I will bring evil upon them according to the wrath of my mind. And I will send my sword after them until their dissolution.
49:38	And I will set up my throne in Elam. And I will <i>exterminate</i> king and magnates from there. Utterance of YHWH. ¹⁹	25:18	And I will set up my throne in Elam. And I will <i>send out/away</i> king and magnates from there.

18 Cf. G. Fischer, *Jeremia* 26–52 (HThKAT; Freiburg/Basel/Wien: Herder, 2005), 534 with explanations on the reading and grammar of the Hebrew passage. The Greek text likewise uses a singular verbal form, which has led Finsterbusch/Jacoby, *MT-Jeremia und LXX-Jeremia*, 284 to assume a vocative (“(ihr) Verstoßene Elams”) here. However, this is not easily reconciled with the definite article before the word that is present in the Greek text. Due to the existing uncertainties, the grammatically awkward wording is kept in this translation. Note also that “Elam” is read here (with JerG) against the actual spelling in the Masoretic text; cf. Finsterbusch/Jacoby, *MT-Jeremiah and LXX-Jeremiah* 25–52, 285 n. 9.

19 Another problem is the translation of the word מֶלֶךְ, which etymologically comes from the same root as akk. *šarru(m)* “king, prince”, but can be used both for officials and for the rulers of tribes in Hebrew; see W. Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch über das Alte Testament* (Heidelberg/Dordrecht/London/New York: Springer, 182013), 1297–8. Depending on how the word is translated, a completely different meaning

(cont.)

JerMT	JerG
49:39 And it shall come to pass at the end of the days (that) I will turn the captivity of Elam. ²⁰ Utterance of YHWH.	25:19 And it shall come to pass at the end of the days (that) I will turn the captivity of Elam, says (the) Lord. 25:20 At the beginning of the reign of Zedekiah the king, this word concerning Elam came into being.

2.2 Observations

When JerMT 49:34–39 and JerG 25:15–20 are compared in the secondary literature, the discussion usually focuses on the – quite significant – *differences* between the two versions (esp. the positioning of the OAN in the Book of Jeremiah, the position of the oracle against Elam within the OAN, and the positioning of the explanation on the dating before or after the oracle). In doing so, we lose sight of the fact that there also remarkable *similarities*. These include, first, the fact that the “oracle against Elam” is present both in the Masoretic text of Jeremiah and in the Septuagint version. Furthermore, it can be established that the basic agreement between the two versions – with the notable exception of the mention of the human recipient of YHWH’s message, Jeremiah, by name (only in JerMT 49:34) – covers all the essential parts of the text (that is, information on the time of the oracle and its source; the prophecy of the impending fall of Elam; the setting up of the divine throne and the resulting fate of king and magnates; the “turn” of the “captivity of Elam”), i.e. both those

emerges. In view of my own interpretation (see section 4), I have opted here for the rendering as “magnates”, which has the advantage that it fits the (very different) verbal forms of both versions. The use of the verb ἐξαποστελῶ “I will send out (or: away)” in JerG could perhaps be an indication that the word שׁר was actually understood in this way by the ancient translator into Greek, and that he reinterpreted the phrase as an imperial mission. Finsterbusch/Jacoby, *MT-Jeremiah and LXX-Jeremiah*, 284 n. 5, however, assume (with reference to the apparatus of the *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*) that there is a scribal error here and that the intended meaning of the verb was “I will utterly destroy”.
20 Some translators interpret the expression as “to turn fortune” (see, e.g., Fischer, *Jeremiah* 26–52, 533). Two possible etymologies of the word שׁבִּית are discussed in Gesenius, *Hebräisches und aramäisches Handwörterbuch*, 1313; but note the use of the verb שׁוּב (Hi.) in connection with the return of exiles (*ibid.*, 1329).

that definitely contain a negative fate for “Elam” and those that could possibly be interpreted positively for “Elam” (see below sections 3–5). Even more remarkable is the fact that the order of the individual elements within the oracle is also retained, and the wording of the sentences is more or less identical.²¹

Even if these observations may seem banal at first, they provide extremely important historical information: Firstly, at the point in time from which the two text versions diverged, the entire content of the oracle was already part of the collection; secondly, no intentional changes were apparently made to the wording of the actual oracle. Whatever the circumstances that explain the rearrangement of the oracles within the work may be, it must be assumed that the message it was intended to convey (and thus also the basic attitude towards “Elam”) is identical in both historical contexts. Therefore, the same sections of text cannot be interpreted as positive for “Elam” in one version and negative in the other, but the interpretation must fit both JerMT and JerG at the same time.

On the other hand, it can indeed be stated that the change in the position of the oracle within the Book of Jeremiah (see Table 11.1 in section 6.2), as well as the different positioning and wording of the explanation on the dating of the oracle, are quite significant and could possibly indicate that the “oracle against Elam” had a different *significance* for the redactors of the two text versions. This could perhaps be due to the personal circumstances and the political situation in which the redactor lived, at least if the change is not simply explained by purely dramaturgical reasons.²² In view of the observation described above that the wording and sequence of the actual oracle is the same in both versions, however, they must have a *common terminus post quem* with regard to the events described. If this could be determined more precisely (see section 3), it is hoped that this will allow concrete statements to be made regarding the historical context of the text passage and thus also an evaluation of the value of the statements made therein.

In this context, however, there is a third important point to consider, namely the observation that the prophecy concerning the fate of “Elam” is not

21 With the exception of the second verb in JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18, which is possibly a scribal error, but could also be based on a different interpretation of the text passage (see above n. 20), there are only a few minor deviations in the wording (e.g., “my sword” (JerG 25:17) versus “the sword” (JerMT 49:37); “them” (JerG 25:17) versus “Elam” (JerMT 49:37); frequent repetition of “utterance of JHWH” in JerMT), which, however, do not change the general message of the text. Cf. also Huwiler, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 259.

22 This scenario only works if JerG was the earlier version, and the original order of the oracles was adjusted in JerMT in order to achieve a more coherent narrative in JerMT. Note, however, the considerations in section 6.3.

exclusively negative, but apparently a change takes place within the oracle. The oracle is therefore not a uniform text, but it is composed of several different components that could well reflect different ideas about or attitudes towards “Elam” at different historical points in time. Consequently, this means that if one wants to approach the question of what “Elam” means in this context and to which historical phases the oracle refers, one should first and foremost not contrast the different *versions* of the text, but the individual *sections* of the text within it and examine them separately from one another, which will be undertaken below.

3 YHWH's Throne in Elam

The most promising starting point for placing the “oracle against Elam” in a concrete historical context is the statement in JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18, in which it is said that YHWH wants to set up his throne in “Elam” (which will have consequences for the king and magnates that will be discussed below; see section 4).²³ On the one hand, this passage has no parallel in the entire Bible;²⁴ on the other hand, it contains a reference to a drastic political event that is likely to have brought about fundamental changes in the history of both “Elam” and Judah. The existence of this passage can actually only be explained as a *vaticinium ex eventu*, that is, as a prophecy written after the event in question had already occurred (or was at least foreseeable), because in fact the localization of the event in “Elam” of all places makes no sense at all from a Judean perspective without a concrete historical background. In order to determine what event is being referred to here or how this event is to be evaluated, it must first be clarified what the setting up of YHWH's throne in Elam actually means in concrete terms.

3.1 Content-Related Problems

In texts from Mesopotamia – where a pantheistic world view with anthropomorphic concepts of the gods prevailed –²⁵ the change of location of a deity in connection with warlike events is a frequent motif: the theft of a statue of

23 In fact, JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18 does not consist of one, but of two sentences connected by 1, which, however, are usually regarded as a unit by modern (and obviously also ancient) scholars.

24 Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 68.

25 W. Sallaberger, “Pantheon. A. I. In Mesopotamien”, in D.O. Edzard/M.P. Streck (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, vol. 10: *Oannes – Priesterverkleidung* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2003–5) 294–308, esp. p. 294–5.

a god by the enemy is reinterpreted as the voluntary departure of a deity from its own temple to another city located in enemy territory; the involvement of the enemy is not mentioned or the enemy only serves as a tool of the deity. The departure is usually explained by the fact that the deity was dissatisfied with the population of the city in question. Likewise, the return of the deity (or the cult statue) to its temple is interpreted as a decision made by the deity itself.²⁶

At first glance, one might think that the passage in the Book of Jeremiah refers to such an event, because after all, it is described at length elsewhere in the book that YHWH was dissatisfied with the population of Judah and that the dispersion of the Judean people was the result of his righteous anger. Accordingly, as a historian of the ancient Near East, one's first immediate association is that the establishment of YHWH's throne in "Elam" must be a euphemism for the departure of YHWH from his temple, which meant that he could no longer act from his homeland, but only from afar. Of course, the Mesopotamian conditions cannot be transferred to Judah without further ado, as on the one hand there was no pantheistic but a monotheistic world view there and on the other hand the laws of Moses stipulate that people should not create an image of YHWH (Exod 20:4). However, it is conceivable that the idea here might be that YHWH dwells in objects from his temple inventory: that these, together with parts of the population of Judah, were transported away to Babylon by the Babylonians,²⁷ could satisfactorily explain the departure from his own temple. In fact, two visions are described in the Book of Ezekiel in which Ezekiel claims to have seen the throne of YHWH on the move in Chaldea (i.e., Babylonia).²⁸

Against the background of this interpretation, however, the statement that YHWH would re-establish his throne in "Elam" of all places is extremely strange: First of all, there is no indication that Judah was once defeated by a state called "Elam";²⁹ furthermore, there is a blatant contradiction with the immediately preceding passages, which speak precisely – in drastic terms – of the destruction of Elam by YHWH and not of a victory of Elam over Judah. In addition, the sentence in the same line is supplemented by further information

26 Cf., e.g., S. Zaia, "The Cosmic Front: War and its Impact on Official Religion in the Neo-Assyrian Empire (c. 1000–610 BCE)", in I. Polinskaya/A. James/I. Papadogiannakis (ed.), *Religion and War from Antiquity to Early Modernity* (London/New York/Oxford: Bloomsbury, 2024) 102–19, on p. 103.

27 Cf. 2 Chr 36:7, 10, 18.

28 Eichler, "An Ambiguous Oracle", 187 with concrete references.

29 It is conceivable, however, that an Elamite contingent in the Babylonian army is meant here. See section 6.3.

(i.e., the fate of king and magnates), which suggests that YHWH is not only present in Elam, but also actively taking action from there.³⁰

In fact, the passage in question is usually interpreted in Biblical scholarship in precisely the opposite way, namely as the destruction of Elam by YHWH and the extermination of its kings.³¹ Most scholars and translators only see a positive turn for Elam in the following line, which speaks of a “turn” of the “captivity of Elam” in the distant future.³² From a historical perspective, however, this interpretation (i.e., first negative in JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18, then positive in JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19) hardly makes any more sense than the previous one: although JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18 (together with the previous negative prophecies) could certainly be interpreted as the pious hope of people dissatisfied with “Elamite” rule, the question then arises as to what function the threat of complete destruction is supposed to fulfil here if the fate of Elam is to be turned around positively in the end.

There is therefore a strong suspicion that essential information for the reconstruction of the course of historical events is omitted or even actively concealed in the oracle: only YHWH appears as an actor;³³ the time intervals between his actions, the course of the probably complex political developments in the meantime, and the human “tools” that are decisive for the course of events remain unnamed.

3.2 *Grammatical and Lexical Problems*

In fact, the interpretation of this passage is by no means unambiguous, as there are several grammatical and lexical problems here: Firstly, there is no formal contrast between the various oracles presented in JerMT 49:35–39 // JerG 25:15–19, even if most translations construct one (either at the beginning of v. 38 or v. 39), but the individual sentences are simply strung together consecutively in both the Hebrew and the Greek text. The interpretation of one or the other oracle as positive or negative therefore depends on where a translator replaces an “and” in the original text with a “but” in the translation; only the expression “at the end of the days” (Jer 49:39 // JerG 25:19) explicitly establishes a concrete relation between the sentences by indicating a relatively large temporal distance to the events of the previous line. Secondly, contrary to

30 See Eichler, “An Ambiguous Oracle”, whose hypothesis will be discussed in more detail in sections 3.2 and 4.1.

31 See Eichler, “An Ambiguous Oracle”, 184–5 with previous literature.

32 Huwylar, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 258 notes that this is the only oracle with a promise of “salvation” that occurs in both JerG and JerMT; cf. also Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 69 n. 37.

33 Cf. Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 68.

what many translations suggest, the text does not actually specify *whose* king and magnates are actually affected by YHWH's action: the passage is (probably deliberately) kept vague by omitting both possessive suffixes and definite articles.

Remarkable in this context is the thesis of R. Eichler, who argues that the passage could possibly refer not to the extermination of Elamite kings *from* "Elam", but to the dissolution of the other ancient Near Eastern kingdoms *through* the founding of the Persian Empire (aka "Elam") and their reorganization as provinces of the same.³⁴ Due to the exact wording, this solution is not entirely convincing (see section 4.1); however, the establishment of the throne of YHWH in "Elam" and his acting from there imply in any case an enormous shift of power, which should at least be read positively for the *new* "Elam" or the future rulers there. There is therefore no doubt that this passage has something to do with the rise of the Persian Empire.³⁵ As will be explained below, it may even be possible to date it more precisely, namely to the time around the conquest of Babylon (539 BCE).

3.3 *Cyrus of Persia, Savior of the Judeans?*

A first possible indication that the oracle against Elam may have something to do with the fall of Babylon is provided by 2 Chr 36:22–23 and Ezra 1:1–2. In these two books, the fulfilment of a prophecy of Jeremiah is explicitly attributed to the founder of the Achaemenid Empire, Cyrus II (ca. 559–530 BCE):

Ezra 1:1–2:³⁶

1 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

2 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. 3 Any of his people among

34 Eichler, "An Ambiguous Oracle", 186–8.

35 Note in this context the statement by M.J. de Jong, "Jeremiah 28:8–9 and the Oracles Against the Nations", in H. Bezzel/U. Becker/M.[J.] de Jong (ed.), *Prophecy and Foreign Nations: Aspects of the Role of the "Nations" in the Books of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel* (FAT II 135; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2022), 77–98, on p. 92 n. 90 that the "oracle against Elam" formed "a prelude to the Persian takeover of the Babylonian empire". As will be shown below, this is quite an appropriate description of the text.

36 Quoted after *Holy Bible, New International Version*; retrieved from www.biblegateway.com (last accessed: 25 February, 2025).

you may go up to Jerusalem in Judah and build the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem, and may their God be with them.⁴ And in any locality where survivors may now be living, the people are to provide them with silver and gold, with goods and livestock, and with freewill offerings for the temple of God in Jerusalem.”

The passages in question could, of course, also be read as a reference to Jer 30–33, where the return of the Judeans from exile in Babylon and the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem are prophesied; however, it is doubtful that these events actually already took place at this time.³⁷ In addition, it is possible to establish a concrete connection with JerMT 49:38 via the actors involved and the events described. If one equates “Elam” with the territory of Cyrus II (which, following the fall of Babylon, also included all former Babylonian possessions) and locates him at the centre of this new, “Elamite” empire (see below), the following action in both cases starts from the soil of “Elam”: YHWH, according to the text, personally “moved the heart of Cyrus” and commissioned him to build his temple in Jerusalem and send the Judeans back there. This is combined in 2 Chr 36:23 // Ezra 1:2 with the reference that YHWH had given him “all the kingdoms of the earth”, which can also be understood as an allusion to the OAN. If one reads this passage in the context of the Masoretic version, where the “oracle against Elam” (due to its positioning immediately before the “oracle against Babylon”) clearly marks a turning point in the fate of the Judeans, it is difficult not to see a direct connection here: YHWH in both narratives no longer acts from his temple in Jerusalem, but from “Elam” (or the new, temporary, centre of the Persian empire); unlike in Jer 49, however, in 2 Chr 36 and Ezra 1 his human instrument (i.e., Cyrus) is explicitly mentioned by name.

However, a difficulty with this interpretation arises from the royal title used in 2 Chr 36 and Ezra 1: Cyrus is not referred to there as “king of *Elam*”, but as “king of *Persia*”. Since Elamites and Persians are two different peoples with very different cultures, an equation is not possible without further ado but must

37 In any case, the 18-year delay in the start of temple reconstruction, which was only begun under Darius, needs to be explained; see P.R. Bedford, *Temple Restoration in Early Achaemenid Judah* (Leiden/Boston/Köln: Brill, 2001) with various explanations. J. Wiesehöfer, *Ancient Persia from 550 BC to 650 AD* (London/New York: Tauris, 2001), 49 points out that Ezra and 2 Chr are not “historical” sources in the strict sense, and notes that the attribution of the command to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and return the Judeans to their homeland could possibly be a (theological) back-projection of acts of later rulers onto Cyrus. Contrary to what is often postulated, the so-called “Cyrus Cylinder” does not constitute proof of a corresponding edict by Cyrus; but see section 5.3 below for a possible slightly different kind of connection.

be examined more closely (see sections 3.5–7). Although the royal title does not necessarily specify the ethnic affiliation of the king in question, the two terms nevertheless convey a different idea of the cultural context from which he came or the territory he ruled. In addition, the setting up of the throne of YHWH in JerMT 49:38 is preceded by several prophecies that announce the fall of Elam in drastic terms, and it cannot be ruled out from the outset that Cyrus may have had something to do with this.

To be able to interpret the passages correctly, it is therefore necessary to take a closer look at the rise of Cyrus in the hope of learning something about the previous fate of “Elam”. The Biblical passages discussed so far do not shed any light on this, but we must now turn to further source material.

3.4 *The Rise of Cyrus of Anšan*

3.4.1 The “Dynastic Prophecy”

In fact, one Babylonian source shows that Cyrus II could certainly be perceived as a “king of Elam”, at least in *retrospect*, namely the so-called “Dynastic Prophecy”.³⁸ This pseudo-prophetic text is comparable to JerMT 49:34–39 // JerG 25:14–20 in that it likewise presents events that have already taken place in the form of prophecies and that no king’s name is mentioned in connection with the events described.³⁹ Nevertheless, it contains enough historically clear information to determine with certainty that the title “king of Elam” here must refer to Cyrus II.⁴⁰ The end of the reign of the Babylonian king Nabonidus (556–539 BCE) is described in lines ii 17’–24’ of this text as follows:⁴¹

- ii 17’) A king of Elam will set out. The royal sceptre he will [take from him].
- ii 18’) From his throne he will remove him and
- ii 19’) he will seize the throne and the king whom he made rise (*ušetbû*) from the throne,
- ii 20’) the king of Elam will change his place.

38 BM 40623 (81–4-28, 168). Editions: A.K. Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts* (Toronto/Buffalo: University of Toronto, 1975), 24–37 no. 3; R.J. van der Spek, “Darius III, Alexander the Great and Babylonian Scholarship”, in W. Henkelman/A. Kuhrt (ed.), *A Persian Perspective. Essays in Memory of Heleen Sancisi-Weerdenburg* (Achaemenid History 13; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 2003) 289–346, on pp. 311–24.

39 The events described in the text extend far beyond the Persian period, possibly into the reign of Seleucus I; see van der Spek, “Darius III”, 329.

40 Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 25.

41 Quoted here from the translation by van der Spek, “Darius III”, 316.

- ii 21') In another land he will settle him.
- ii 22') That king will be stronger than the land and
- ii 23') all the lands [will bring to him] tribute.
- ii 24') During his reign Akkad [will live] in security.⁴²

Similar to 2 Chr 36:23 and Ezra 1:2, it is stated explicitly here that “all the lands” became subject to Cyrus (here as the anonymous “king of Elam”) after his victory (ii 23’); however, the god of the Judeans plays no role in this (or rather there are no references at all to any divine involvement). Instead, we learn a little bit more about the events that led to the fall of Babylon under its previous ruler Nabonidus and about the rise of the Persian Empire: according to the text, the Babylonian king was overthrown and taken to another country (ii 18’–21’);⁴³ his place was taken by Cyrus, who proved to be stronger than “the land” (KUR) (ii 22’) and to whom all (foreign) countries (KUR.KUR) subsequently brought tribute (ii 23’). If one follows the positive interpretation of the last line by R.J. van der Spek (see above), a state of security and stability was thus achieved in the land of Akkad (i.e., Babylonia) according to the text. What is particularly important for the issue under discussion here is the fact that this account does indeed explicitly state that the *king of Elam* removed the Babylonian king from his throne. However, it should be noted that this is a late text that does not necessarily reflect the perception of contemporaries of the events. Furthermore, the text does not provide any information about how Cyrus himself came to the Elamite throne in the first place. Fortunately, however, there are several other Babylonian sources that shed some light on the course of events described here only in very general terms and provide additional details.

3.4.2 The “Cyrus Cylinder”

From the famous “Cyrus Cylinder” – a building inscription that was probably composed by Babylonian scribes on Cyrus’ behalf –⁴⁴ we learn that Cyrus’

42 Note the divergent interpretation of ii 24’ by Grayson, *Babylonian Historical-Literary Texts*, 33.

43 The fate of Nabonidus is described similarly in Berossus (Jos., *Contra Apionem* 1.20–1; Eusebius, *Praep. Evang.* 9.41); cf. van der Spek, “Darius III”, 319. Xenophon instead claims in his novelistic *Cyropaedia* (Cyr. 7.5.29–33) that Nabonidus was killed. According to A. Kuhrt, *The Persian Empire: A Corpus of Sources from the Achaemenid Period* (London/New York: Routledge, 2010), 81 preference should be given to the two Babylonian sources.

44 Cf. H. Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids von Babylon und Kyros’ des Großen samt den in ihrem Umfeld entstandenen Tendenzschriften: Textausgabe und Grammatik* (Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2001), 551.

battle against Nabonidus (who is thoroughly defamed at the beginning of the text; ll. 1–8)⁴⁵ was preceded by a victory over the “land of the Gutī” (i.e., Gutium) or the Median troops (designated in the cuneiform text as “Umman-manda”)⁴⁶ (13), that he marched into Babylon without a fight (17) and was welcomed by the Babylonians with joy (18).⁴⁷

- 9) Enlil-of-the-gods became extremely angry at their complaints, and [...] their territory. The gods who lived within them left their shrines,
- 10) angry that he had made (them) enter into Shuanna (Babylon). Ex[alted Marduk, Enlil-of-the-Gods], relented. He changed his mind about all the settlements whose sanctuaries were in ruins,
- 11) and the population of the land of Sumer and Akkad who had become like corpses, and took pity on them. He inspected and checked all the countries,
- 12) seeking for the upright king of his choice. He took the hand of Cyrus, king of the city of Anshan, and called him by his name, proclaiming him aloud for the kingship over all of everything.
- 13) He made the land of Gutī and all the Median troops prostrate themselves at his feet, while he shepherded in justice and righteousness the black-headed people
- 14) whom he had put under his care. Marduk, the great lord, who nurtures his people, saw with pleasure his fine deeds and true heart,
- 15) and ordered that he should go to Babylon. He had him take the road to Tintir (Babylon), and, like a friend and companion, he walked at his side.

45 Although the beginning of the text is very fragmentary and no king's name is found in the surviving part, it can be safely assumed on the basis of other sources such as the so-called “Verse Account” (BM 38299), an invective poem on Nabonidus, that this ruler is held responsible for the catastrophic conditions in Babylonia described here. Editions of the “Verse Account” are provided by S. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts Relating to the Capture and Downfall of Babylon* (London: Methuen, 1924), 27–97 with copies on pls. 5–10 and Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 563–78; note also the divergent interpretation of v 2–27 by C. Waerzeggers, “Very Cordially Hated in Babylonia? Zēriya and Rēmūt in the Verse Account”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 39 (2012) 316–20.

46 Cf. Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 552, l. 13.

47 BM 90920. Translation quoted from I. Finkel, “The Cyrus Cylinder: The Babylonian Perspective”, in J. Curtis (ed.), *The Cyrus Cylinder and Ancient Persia: A New Beginning for the Middle East* (London: British Museum, 2013), on p. 5. Note that this is a rather free translation. Cf. also the edition by Schaudig, *Inschriften*, 550–6 and the translation of R.J. van der Spek, “Cyrus the Great, Exiles, and Foreign Gods: A Comparison of Assyrian and Persian Policies on Subject Nations”, in M. Kozuh/W.F.M. Henkelman/C.E. Jones/C. Woods (ed.), *Extraction & Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper* (Chicago, Illinois: The University of Chicago, 2014), 233–64, on pp. 261–3, both with references to earlier editions.

16) His vast troops whose number, like the water in a river, could not be counted, were marching fully armed at his side.

17) He had him enter without fighting or battle right into Shuanna; he saved his city Babylon from hardship. He handed over to him Nabonidus, the king who did not fear him.

18) All the people of Tintir, of all Sumer and Akkad, nobles and governors, bowed down before him and kissed his feet, rejoicing over his kingship and their faces shone.

19) The lord through whose help all were rescued from death and who saved them all from distress and hardship, they blessed him sweetly and praised his name.⁴⁸

It is interesting in this context that the Cyrus Cylinder claims that Cyrus received the order to go to Babylon and depose Nabonidus (14–15) from the supreme god of Babylonia himself, namely Marduk; the motive given for this – similar to the Book of Jeremiah – is divine anger (9–10), which in this case is said to have been caused by disturbed cult orders and the subjugation of his own people (1–8). After a thorough search, Marduk's choice reportedly had fallen on Cyrus, who – according to the text – was a righteous king (*malki išaru*) (11–12).

3.4.3 The “Nabonidus Chronicle”

While in the “Cyrus Cylinder” the focus is on the aspect of Cyrus' personal suitability as a good ruler and the resulting divine favour and not on his military successes (which are only vaguely hinted at in line 13 in the form of the victory over Gutium and the “Umman-manda”), at least some of them can be described somewhat more concretely on the basis of the so-called “Nabonidus Chronicle”.⁴⁹

48 In the following section, the narrative perspective changes from the 3rd to the 1st person; this part of the text will be discussed in detail in section 5.3.

49 BM 35382 (Sp II 964); quoted from the translation by A.K. Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles* (Texts from Cuneiform Sources 5; Locust Valley, New York: Augustin, 1975), 104–11 (here: pp. 109–10), with slight modification of the line numbering. Cf. also the edition by J.-J. Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles* (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2004; translation of the French original: *Chroniques Mésopotamiennes*, Paris 1993), 232–9. This Babylonian text was probably composed in the Persian period but is only known from a much more recent copy. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 98 dates the preserved manuscript to the Seleucid period; note also the considerations of C. Waerzeggers, “Facts, Propaganda, or History? Shaping Political Memory in the Nabonidus Chronicle”, in J.M. Silverman/C. Waerzeggers (ed.), *Political Memory in and after the Persian Empire*

iii 12–13) ... In the month Tishri when Cyrus (II) did battle at Opis on the [bank of] the Tigris against the army of Akkad, the people of Akkad
 iii 14) retreated. He carried off the plunder (and) slaughtered the people. On the fourteenth day Sippar was captured without a battle.

iii 15–16) Nabonidus fled. On the sixteenth day Ugbaru, governor of the Gutī, and the army of Cyrus (II) entered Babylon without a battle. Afterwards, after Nabonidus retreated, he was captured in Babylon. Until the end of the month the shield-(bearing troops)

iii 17–18) of the Gutī surrounded the gates of Esagil. (But) there was no interruption (of rites) in Esagil or the (other) temples and no date (for a performance) was missed. On the third day of the month Marchesvan Cyrus (II) entered Babylon.

iii 19–20) ... were filled before him. There was peace in the city while Cyrus (II) spoke (his) greeting to all of Babylon. Gubar, his district officer, appointed the district officers in Babylon.

Although the text is unfortunately only fragmentarily preserved in some important passages and not necessarily neutral (despite its factual style), it does contain very valuable information, as the events mentioned in it can be embedded in a chronological framework by assigning them to specific years of the reigns of Babylonian rulers.

The date given here for the entry of Cyrus' troops under the commander Ugbaru (who is described as the "governor of the Gutī"; iii 15–16) into Babylon is the 16th day of the month Tašritu ("Tishri" in Grayson's translation; month VII) (iii 12+15).⁵⁰ According to the text, this event was preceded by a very bloody victory by Cyrus himself at Opis (iii 12–14) and the capture of Sippar without a fight on day 14 (iii 14). Nabonidus, who had supposedly fled during the conquest of Sippar, was captured in Babylon (iii 15–16). Cyrus himself only arrived there on the third day of the month Araḫsamna ("Marchesvan" according to Grayson; month VIII) (iii 18) in order to address the inhabitants of Babylon in a speech (iii 19–20);⁵¹ until the end of the previous month, the "shield-bearing" troops of the Gutī kept watch around the Esangil, the main shrine of Marduk (iii 16–17). What is remarkable for the narrator of the "Nabonidus Chronicle"

(Atlanta, Georgia: Society of Biblical Literature, 2015), 95–124 (who even considers a Parthian dating to be possible; see p. 96) on the way that this text should be understood.

⁵⁰ Based on the events described, the year can be identified as the last year of Nabonidus' reign (i.e., 539 BCE).

⁵¹ This important issue will be dealt with in more detail in section 5.3 below.

is that the cults in the Esangil continued without interruption, even though it was surrounded by these troops (iii 17–18).

An explanation of who the Gutian troops were and how Cyrus came to join them can be found a few passages further up in the Chronicle, namely in the account of Cyrus' victory over Astyages, which in any case must have taken place before year 7 of Nabonidus' reign (ii 1–4):⁵²

- ii 1) (Astyages) mustered (his army) and marched against Cyrus (II), king of Anshan, for conquest [...]
- ii 2) The army rebelled against Astyages and he was taken prisoner. Th[ey handed him over] to Cyrus (II). ([...])
- ii 3) Cyrus (II) <marched> to Ecbatana, the royal city. The silver, gold, goods, property, [...]
- ii 4) which he carried off as booty (from) Ecbatana he took to Anshan. The goods (and) property of the army of [...]

Although neither the term “Guti” (or “Gutium”) nor the term “Umman-manda” is explicitly mentioned here, it is clear from the comparison with the “Cyrus Cylinder” (where the battle against Gutium and the Umman-manda is the only warlike event worth reporting from Cyrus' career before the fall of Babylon; see above), as well as from geographical considerations, that the army under the command of the Median king Astyages that is described here must have consisted of these people.⁵³ Astyages had marched against Cyrus of Anšan (ii 1), but was then captured by his own rebellious army and handed over to Cyrus (ii 2). Cyrus subsequently marched against Ecbatana, the “royal city” of Astyages (ii 3), and brought back rich booty from there to Anšan (ii 3–4). The “Nabonidus Chronicle” also mentions some other goods in connection with

52 Quoted from the translation by Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 106, with slight modification of the line numbering.

53 It is interesting to note in this context that neither “Gutium” nor “Umman-manda” are ethnic designations. The former term refers to a region northeast of Mesopotamia (above Elam), inhabited by different peoples subsumed under the term “Gutians”; the latter is another term used pejoratively in sources of the 1st century BCE for several different peoples in this area. For more details see, e.g., W.W. Hallo, “Gutium (Qutium)”, in E. Weidner/W. von Soden (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, vol. 3: *Fabel – Gyges und Nachtrag* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 1957–71), 708–20, and M. Stol, “Umman-manda”, in M.P. Streck (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, vol. 14: *Tiergefäß – Waša/ezzil(i)* (Berlin/Boston: de Gruyter, 2014–16) 330–1; on the latter see also the detailed treatment by S.F. Adah, *The Scourge of God: The Umman-manda and Its Significance in the First Millennium BC* (State Archives of Assyria Studies 20; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2011).

troops (ii 4), but unfortunately the text breaks off at this point and we are not told what this is all about.

What is surprising about the episode is that the chronicle – which otherwise fits seamlessly into the corpus of the so-called “Babylonian Chronicles” and, like those, focuses mainly on the deeds of Babylonian rulers and their significance for the cults in Babylon – opens its view with this report far beyond the Babylonian territory, to the events in the Iranian highlands and central Zagros, already a few years *before* the entry of Cyrus into Babylon, through which the developments there actually become relevant for the history of Babylon. Since the “Nabonidus Chronicle” describes events that happened in the first year of Cyrus’ reign and in this respect represents a Persian-period compilation in the present form, one could assume that the earlier events concerning Cyrus were only added to an existing collection of records at this time, possibly with a propagandistic function. In fact, however, there are other indications that the victory of Cyrus over Astyages was already perceived as a significant event in Babylonia at the time of Nabonidus, which was relevant not only for Cyrus but also for the Babylonian ruler.

3.4.4 The “Eḫulḫul Cylinders” of Nabonidus

Some of the above information is also found in a building inscription of Nabonidus, which was recorded on numerous cylinders found in Sippar.⁵⁴

Following the description of a vision by means of which the god Marduk supposedly prophesied to him the dissolution of the land of the “Umman-manda” (here clearly in reference to the king of the Medes, Astyages) and the “kings who walk by his side” (i 21–5), Nabonidus writes the following here:⁵⁵

i 26–29) When (my) third year arrived, they had Cyrus (II), king of the land Anšan, a young servant of his (Astyages’), rise up against him (Astyages), and he (Cyrus) scattered the extensive barbarian horde (the Medes) with his small body of troops. He seized Astyages (Ištumegu), king of the barbarian horde (the Medes), and took him to his land as a captive.

54 Recent editions of the inscription known as the “Eḫulḫul Cylinder” can be found in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 409–40 and F. Weiershäuser/J. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Amēl-Marduk (561–560 BC), Neriglissar (559–556 BC), and Nabonidus (555–539 BC), Kings of Babylon* (The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Babylonian Empire, vol. 2; University Park, Pennsylvania: Eisenbrauns, 2020; hereafter: *RINBE* 2), on pp. 140–51 Nabonidus 28 and on pp. 152–7 Nabonidus 29 (a similar text); for the numbers of the individual objects and the latest joins see there pp. 141–4.

55 Quoted from the translation by Weiershäuser/Novotny, *Royal Inscriptions*, 147.

According to the text, the event is of interest to Nabonidus because the dissolution of the “Umman-manda” made it possible for him to rebuild the temple Eḫulḫul of the moon-god Sîn of Harran who was extremely important to him.⁵⁶ Apparently, they had been roaming in the vicinity of the city of Harran to the west of the river Balikh, in former Assyria, but were forced to withdraw from the region as a result of Cyrus’ victory over Astyages. Nabonidus therefore initially saw this event in a positive light; he does not yet seem to have recognized a threat in Cyrus, whom he describes as a “little servant” (of either Astyages/the Medes or Marduk; see below), at this point.

The political statements that Nabonidus makes are very interesting in the present context: according to the texts, parts of the former Assyrian territory were not, or at least not so firmly, in his hands that he could have afforded to rebuild the temple of the moon god there; the “Umman-manda hordes” that were lingering there were part of a larger political unit whose leader, Astyages, was apparently able to rule over several other kings.⁵⁷ With his victory over Astyages, Cyrus put an end to this unity.⁵⁸ Of considerable importance for the history of western Iran in the 6th century is the question of the position from which he did this: depending on who the possessive suffix in the description of Cyrus as “*his* little servant” refers to, he could be seen – with numerous earlier scholars – as a vassal or subject of the Medes or their ruler Astyages, or – with R. Rollinger – as merely a little servant of the god Marduk.⁵⁹ If one takes seri-

56 The building work is described in much detail in the following passages (i 30 – ii 25).

57 The existence of a “Median empire” is largely doubted in recent research; instead, most scholars prefer to think about the Medes as a rather loose, temporary tribal confederation. Summaries of the various positions can be found, for example, in R. Rollinger, “The Medes of the 7th and 6th c. BCE: A Short-Term Empire or Rather a Short-Term Confederacy?”, in R. Rollinger/J. Degen/M. Gehlen (ed.), *Short-Term Empires in World History* (Wiesbaden: Springer, 2020) 189–213, on pp. 189–91 and R. Rollinger, “The Median Dilemma”, in B. Jacobs/R. Rollinger (ed.), *A Companion to the Achaemenid Persian Empire* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2021) 337–50, on pp. 337–8. Cf. also A. Fuchs, “The Medes and the Kingdom of Mannea”, in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East 4: The Age of Assyria* (New York: Oxford University, 2023) 674–768, pp. 727–9.

58 It is possible that these events provided the background for the hope formulated in Isa 21:2 that there was now a new power (“Elam”) that, after having integrated the Median troops, was able to compete with Babylon and defeat it. Indeed, it finally did; therefore, the statement could also have been written in retrospective. In any case, there is no need to share Vanderhooft’s doubts whether the references to “Elam” and “Media” could refer to the conquering Persian empire. Cf. D.S. Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon in the Latter Prophets* (Harvard Semitic Museum Monographs 59; Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars, 1999), 133.

59 Cf. R. Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š) in der Fārs und zu einigen Fragen der frühen persischen Geschichte”, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische*

ously the (unfortunately not entirely certain) indication from the “Nabonidus Chronicle” that Astyages marched against Cyrus “in order to conquer” (*ana kaš[ādi]*; ii 1), the latter would be an attractive option.⁶⁰ The decisive factor is how one interprets the title with which Nabonidus refers to Cyrus in this context and which is also found in the “Cyrus Cylinder” (l. 12) as well as in at least one of the sections of the “Nabonidus Chronicle” concerning Cyrus (ii 1),⁶¹ namely “king of Anšan”, and how much importance one allows for its bearers (i.e., Cyrus and his ancestors; see “Cyrus Cylinder”, ll. 21–2) and the territory they ruled.

3.5 *Elam, Susa and Anšan*

With the exception of the “Dynastic Prophecy”, which as a much later source is not necessarily relevant and will be ignored below, the Babylonian sources remarkably all agree that Cyrus was “king of Anšan”.⁶² Of course, this title probably reflects a Babylonian perspective;⁶³ nevertheless, it is striking that it appears in very different sources and was apparently attributed to Cyrus independently of the respective author and his relationship to him. There is therefore no way around the assumption that the title “king of Anšan” reflects a *historical reality* and that Cyrus had indeed been king of Anšan before his rapid political rise.⁶⁴ However, it is unclear how much power and influence

Archäologie 89 (1999) 115–39, on pp. 127–32 with a detailed discussion of earlier statements in the secondary literature.

- 60 Cf. also Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š)”, 133–4, who points out that there seems to be no unequal balance of power between the two parties.
- 61 In a later section of this text (ii 15), Cyrus is designated as “king of Parsu”. According to Waerzeggers, “Facts, Propaganda or History?”, 104 and esp. 113 this was an anachronistic title that came into the chronicle by a “cut-and-paste adaptation from sources of different genres and from different times” in the redactional process; however, it seems also possible that the title refers to the same territory in other words (below section 3.6).
- 62 To the sources discussed above can be added yet another inscription by Cyrus on a brick from Ur, in which the title “king of Anšan” (with a different spelling: KUR.aš-ša-an) is used for him; see Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 549.
- 63 In other parts of the empire, Cyrus might have used a different titlature. See, e.g., A. Zournatzi, “Cyrus the Great as a ‘King of the City of Anshan’”, *Τεχμήρια* 14 (2019) 149–80, on pp. 154–5; W. Henkelman, “Cyrus the Persian and Darius the Elamite: a Case of Mistaken Identity”, in R. Rollinger/B. Truschnegg/R. Bichler (ed.), *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich / Herodotus and the Persian Empire: Akten des 3. Internationalen Kolloquiums zum Thema ‘Vorderasien im Spannungsfeld klassischer und altorientalischer Überlieferungen’*, Innsbruck, 24.–28. November 2008 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011) 577–634, on p. 610.
- 64 The hypothesis of A. Zournatzi, “Cyrus the Great”, esp. on pp. 163–4 that Cyrus as a foreign ruler required an illustrious lineage and urban origin for legitimacy and that therefore both he and his ancestors are described in the Cyrus Cylinder as kings of the city

this title implies: How large was Cyrus' sphere of influence as "king of Anšan"? Did it only include the area around the city of Anšan or a wider area? Did he rule it alone, together with other kings of equal rank or was he even subordinate to a great king? And did the conditions that applied to him already apply to his ancestors?

The relationship between "Anšan" and "Elam" is particularly important for answering these questions. While Anšan was one of several states in the 3rd millennium and early 2nd millennium BCE, which, from a *Mesopotamian perspective*,⁶⁵ formed the core of "Greater Elam",⁶⁶ "Susa" and "Anšan" were first united under the ruler Ebarat I of Šimaški (ca. end of the 3rd millennium BCE).⁶⁷ From around 1500–1100, the title "king Anšan and Susa" or "king of Susa and Anšan" was used continuously by the kings of the various Middle

of Anšan, is not very convincing in view of the fact that his predecessor Nabonidus was not of royal origin either (cf. Weiershäuser/Novotny, *RINBE* 2, 3), and that the founder of the Neo-Babylonian empire, Nabopolassar, could even describe himself as the "son of a nobody" (R. Da Riva, *The Inscriptions of Nabopolassar, Amēl-Marduk and Neriglissar* [Boston/Berlin: de Gruyter, 2013], on p. 5). However, it is conceivable that an urban origin may have played an important role in his *own* cultural context; cf. Herodotus' description of the various Persian tribes (Hdt. 1.125) which will be discussed in section 3.6.

- 65 D.T. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam: Formation and Transformation of an Ancient Iranian State* (New York: Cambridge University, 2016; second, revised edition), 1. The observation that the term "Elam" *does not reflect the self-perception* of the inhabitants of the various regions in southwest Iran, but is a *concept that was imposed on them from outside* is of enormous importance for the question addressed here. From a Mesopotamian perspective (and probably even more so for the peoples living west of Mesopotamia), "Elam" was for millennia a designation under which the inhabitants of eastern regions, from the area between Dēr and Susa onwards, were subsumed (Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 12).
- 66 Zadok, "Peoples of Elam", 147; P. de Miroschedji, "Susa and the Highlands: Major Trends in the History of Elamite Civilization", in N.F. Miller/K. Abdi (ed.), *Yeki bud, yeki nabud: Essays on the Archaeology of Iran in Honor of William M. Sumner* (Cotsen Institute of Archaeology Monograph 48; Los Angeles: The Cotsen Institute of Archaeology, 2003), pp. 17–38, on p. 36. Note that this does not inform us about the ethnic and/or linguistic identity of its inhabitants; see Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 4–5; P. Steinkeller, "The Birth of Elam in History", in J. Álvarez-Mon/G.P. Basello/Y. Wicks, *The Elamite World* (London/New York: Routledge, 2018) 177–202, on p. 177.
- 67 K. de Graef, "The Middle East After the Fall of Ur: From Ešnunna and the Zagros to Susa", in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 2: *From the End of the Third Millennium BC to the Fall of Babylon* (New York: Oxford University, 2022) 408–96, on p. 445–6 and 452; B. Mofidi-Nasrabadi, "Elam in the Late Bronze Age", in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3: *From the Hyksos to the Late Second Millennium BC* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2022) 869–941, on p. 869. In Elamite texts, Anšan usually appears as "Anzan"; this (possibly important) orthographic difference is not considered here for practical reasons.

Elamite dynasties (“Kidinuids”,⁶⁸ “Ighalkids” and “Shutrukids”) until the reign of Šilhak-Inšušinak (12th century BC).⁶⁹ However, researchers disagree on how this situation should be interpreted: while F. Vallat has assumed the centre of Elam to be in the vicinity of Anšan,⁷⁰ P. de Miroschedji has pointed out that Anšan was an essential part of “Greater Elam” only for about 6 centuries (from ca. 2400–1750 BCE), but thereafter only occasionally formed part of the “Elamite confederation”.⁷¹ It is actually possible that neither Anšan nor Susa were ever really the centre of “Elam”,⁷² as in Middle Elamite royal inscriptions the indigenous term for Elam, *ha(l)tamti*, is used in separate titles such as “keeper(?) (*katru*) of Elam” and “prince(?) (*halmenik*) of Elam”, which are added to the title “king of Anšan and Susa”.⁷³ Remarkably, the latter title is replaced in some of Šilhak-Inšušinak’s inscriptions by “prince(?) (*halmenik* or *menik*) of Elam and Susa”;⁷⁴ in the inscriptions of his successor Huteluduš-Inšušinak, it is no longer found at all, although it is known from one inscription,⁷⁵ that he

68 Mofidi-Nasrabadi, “Elam in the Late Bronze Age”, 872 argues in favor of abandoning this term.

69 Mofidi-Nasrabadi, “Elam in the Late Bronze Age”, 871. Note that the order of the cities in the title varies, probably due to the expected audience (D.T. Potts, “Cyrus the Great and the Kingdom of Anshan”, in V.S. Curtis/S. Stewart (ed.), *The Idea of Iran*, vol. 1: *Birth of the Persian Empire* [London: Tauris, 2005] 7–28, on p. 9); in Akkadian inscriptions, the title “king of Susa and Anšan” is used, in Elamite ones the title “king of Anšan and Susa” (F. Vallat, “La politesse élamite à l’époque des Ighalkides”, *Nouvelles Assyriologiques Brèves et Utilitaires* 1997/74, 73, on p. 73).

70 F. Vallat, *Suse et l’Elam* (Paris: ADPF, 1980); cf. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 11.

71 de Miroschedji, “Susa and the Highlands”, 18 and 36; M. Waters, “Parsumaš, Anšan, and Cyrus”, in J. Álvarez-Mon/M.B. Garrison (ed.), *Elam and Persia* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 285–96, on p. 288.

72 Cf. also the distinction made by later authors between the “Susiana” and “Elam” and the various mountain peoples who, according to their testimony, inhabited this region. See Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 11 for more details on this matter.

73 See, e.g., F.W. König, *Die elamischen Königsinschriften* (Archiv für Orient-Forschung Bh. 16; Graz: Selbstverlag des Herausgebers, 1965; hereafter: *EKI*) p. 76 no. 22 I, p. 97–102 no. 45 §2, p. 147–8 no. 72 I. The gods of these three regions are also mentioned separately in some royal inscriptions; cf. e.g. *EKI* no. 54 §18: “by the gods of Elam, the gods of Anšan, the gods of Susa”.

74 König, *EKI* no. 47, no. 54, and probably also no. 46.

75 Edition of the text: M. Lambert, “Hutélutush-Insushnak et le pays d’Anzan”, *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 66 (1972) 61–76; on the resulting identification of Anšan as Tall-e Malyan, see also the discussion of the text by E. Reiner, “The location of Anšan”, *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* 67 (1973) 57–62. Archaeological arguments for this identification have been provided earlier by J. Hansman, “Elamites, Achaemenians and Anshan”, *Iran* 10 (1972), 101–24, on pp. 111–24. There is also a corpus of administrative texts from Tall-e Malyan; those texts were dated by their editor, M.W. Stolper, *Texts from Tall-i Malyan 1: Elamite administrative texts (1972–1974)*

still did some building work in the city of Anšan.⁷⁶ This last known “Shutrukid” ruler is famous above all for the fact that he was defeated by the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar I (1125–1104 BCE).⁷⁷ Whether his defeat had a long-term impact on the political situation in the region cannot be established due to the extremely sparse sources.⁷⁸ It is only from the middle of the 8th century onwards that the names and succession of the kings of “Elam” (from a Mesopotamian perspective) again can be reliably reconstructed on the basis of two Babylonian chronicles and a large number of Neo-Assyrian letters and royal inscriptions (up to the year 645 BCE).⁷⁹ The chronicles do not reveal from where they ruled their empire or what the extent of their territory was. According to the Assyrian sources, the Elamite kings moved in an area that stretches roughly between Dēr (= Badrah; on the border with Babylonia) in the northwest and, possibly, Behbahan in the southeast; the exact extent of their movements depends on where the – as yet unidentified –⁸⁰ royal cities of Madaktu and Hidalu – of which the latter was ruled at least temporarily by a subordinate king –⁸¹ were located. However, two surprising findings are

(Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, 1984), on pp. 1 and 9 to ca. 1300–1000 BCE. For other dating suggestions see the discussion of earlier literature in Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 240–2 and A. Bartelmus, “Elam in the Late Bronze Age”, in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East 4: The Age of Assyria* (New York: Oxford University, 2023) 588–673, on pp. 605–7.

76 Huteluduš-Inšušinak is referred to only as “prince(?) (*menik*) of Elam and Susa” in all his inscriptions, including those found in Tall-e Malyan.

77 Mofidi-Nasrabadi, “Elam in the Late Bronze Age”, 883.

78 A rough overview can be found in M.-J. Steve, *Syllabaire élamite: histoire et paléographie* (Neuchâtel: Recherches et Publications, 1992), on pp. 21–3; cf. also the table in A. Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 599 fig. 42.3. It should be noted, however, that some of the royal inscriptions grouped there in phase “N II” could possibly be dated earlier; see Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 608–26, and below in this section.

79 Cf. the table in Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 595 (with more detailed information on the sources used on p. 597).

80 See Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 263 with earlier literature. On the possible identification of Hidalu with Tol-e Homayun near the “Arjan Tomb” in the Behbahan plain, see W.F.M. Henkelman, “Imperial Signature and Imperial Paradigm: Achaemenid Administrative Structure and System Across and Beyond the Iranian Plateau”, in B. Jacobs/W.F.M. Henkelman/M.W. Stolper (ed.), *Die Verwaltung im Achämenidenreich: Imperiale Muster und Strukturen / Administration in the Achaemenid Empire: Tracing the Imperial Signature* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2017) 45–256, on pp. 97–8 and Y. Wicks/J. Álvarez-Mon, “An Elamite Duck Weight in the Susa Museum: New Evidence for the Behbahan Plain in the Late Seventh/Early Sixth century BCE”, *Arta* 2022.004 (2022) 1–22, on pp. 16–17.

81 The Neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal (669–631 BCE) claims that he installed Ummanigaš on the throne of Teumman (the previous “king of Elam”) and his younger brother

certain: firstly, Susa is only mentioned in Neo-Assyrian sources from the reign of Assurbanipal,⁸² and secondly, Anšan (written: Anzan) only appears as a toponym in some of Sennacherib's inscriptions (705–681 BCE), where it does not refer to a residence of the king of Elam, but to a region *allied* with Elam.⁸³ Who ruled Anšan and what the extent of its territory was is not revealed in this context; however, it is noteworthy that other polities (e.g., Parsuaš, Pašeru and Ellipi) are also mentioned as allies of the Elamite king Umman-menanu (692–689 BCE) at the Battle of Halule (691 BCE).

The – still popular – idea that the territory of at least some of the Neo-Elamite rulers known from the Babylonian chronicles must also have included Anšan is due to the fact that during the French excavations in Susa at the beginning of the 20th century, some royal inscriptions were found which contain the title “king of Anšan and Susa”, but which, based on palaeographic criteria, can certainly be dated later than the known Middle Elamite ones.⁸⁴ Until the 1990s, it was assumed that the names of all the kings mentioned therein could be reconciled with the rulers known from Mesopotamian sources.⁸⁵ Since F. Vallat radically questioned this assumption,⁸⁶ modern research has assumed – with very different justifications and resulting historical scenarios – that most of the rulers in question should be dated later and that “Elam” must have experienced a revival after the conquest and alleged destruction of Susa by Assurbanipal.⁸⁷ In fact, this theory hinges on a single, questionable equation

Tammaritu as “king of Hidalu”; see, e.g., J. Jeffers/J. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal* (668–631 BC), *Aššur-etel-ilāni* (630–627 BC), and *Sîn-šarra-iškun* (626–612 BC), *Kings of Assyria*, part 1 (The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 5/1; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2018; hereafter: *RINAP* 5/1), 158 Ashurbanipal 155 obv. 5'–8'. He also describes the decapitation of another “king of Hidalu”, Ištar-nandi, by the herald of Hidalu; see, e.g., Jeffers/Novotny, *RINAP* 5/1, 180–1 Ashurbanipal 163 obv. 4'–8'. Some scholars claim that the phenomenon of secondary king at Hidalu already existed earlier; see Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 260–1 for a short discussion with references.

82 Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 660 with references.

83 Cf. A.K. Grayson/J. Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Sennacherib, King of Assyria*, part 1 (The Royal Inscriptions of the Neo-Assyrian Period 3/1; Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2012; hereafter: *RINAP* 3/1), 182 Sennacherib 22 v 43–4.

84 König, *EKI*, nos. 71, 73, 77 (similar, but without “king of ...”), 86.

85 The order of the inscriptions in König, *EKI*, as well as the order of the entries in the palaeographic list of signs in Steve, *Syllabaire élamite*, are based on this; on the resulting problems, see Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 613 with n. 102 and p. 621.

86 F. Vallat, “Nouvelle analyse des inscriptions néo-élamites”, in H. Gasche/B. Hrouda (ed.), *Collectanea Orientalia – histoire, arts de l'espace et industrie de la terre: études offertes en hommage Agnes Spycket* (Neuchâtel: Recherches et Publications, 1996) 385–95.

87 An overview of recent chronological scenarios can be found in Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 617 fig. 42.4.

of names;⁸⁸ if one were to abandon this, it would be possible without further ado to place the reigns of the few New Elamite rulers who still claim the title “king of Anšan and Susa” in the first quarter of the 1st millennium BCE.⁸⁹ The dating of a group of administrative texts from Susa (the so-called “Acropolis Archive”)⁹⁰ and some letters found in Nineveh and a few other sites (the so-called “Nineveh Letters”),⁹¹ which can offer more detailed insights into the administrative structure of Elam and possibly even political processes, is also indirectly dependent on this, as long as no solid dating criteria are found; both text corpora have not yet been satisfactorily edited and are therefore difficult to interpret historically.⁹²

While the Assyrian letters and royal inscriptions provide a fairly clear picture of the conflicts in western Zagros and the parties involved at the time of the Sargonids (albeit from a rather one-sided perspective),⁹³ the further fate of this region after the conquest of Susa therefore remains largely in the dark. Apart from the few written sources from Elam itself, which cannot be

88 Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 608–12 und 621–2.

89 Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 621–6.

90 V. Scheil, *Textes élamites-anzanites, troisième série* (Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse 9; Paris: Leroux, 1907; hereafter: MDP 9) and V. Scheil, *Textes élamites-anzanites, quatrième série* (Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse 11; Paris: Leroux, 1911) no. 309; cf. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 291–4 and Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 636–9.

91 Copies of the cuneiform tablets: F.H. Weißbach, *Susische Thontäfelchen* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1902); partial editions: W. Hinz, “Zu den elamischen Briefen aus Ninive”, in L. De Meyer/H. Gasche/F. Vallat (ed.), *Fragmenta historiae Elamicae: mélanges offerts à M.-J. Stève* (Paris: Editions Recherche sur les Civilisations, 1986) 227–34; H. Koch, “Briefe aus Iran”, in B. Janowski/G. Wilhelm (ed.), *Briefe* (Texte aus der Umwelt des Alten Testaments, Neue Folge 3; Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2006) 349–56; F. Vallat, “Le royaume élamite de Zamin et les ‘Lettres de Ninive’”, *Iranica Antiqua* 33 (1998) 95–106; E. Gorris/R. Lebrun/J. Tavernier, J., “Syro-Asianica scripta minora IX”, *Le Muséon* 126 (2013) 1–20. See also Bartelmus, “Elam in the Iron Age”, 648–59 for a detailed discussion.

92 Note, in addition, also a bronze plaque with a lengthy Neo-Elamite inscription that was found in the so-called Treasury at Persepolis (G.P. Basello, “From Susa to Persepolis: the Pseudo-Sealing of the Persepolis Bronze Plaque”, in K. De Graef/J. Tavernier (ed.), *Susa and Elam: Archaeological, Philological and Geographical Perspectives. Proceedings of the International Congress Held at Ghent University, December 14–17, 2009* (Mémoires de la Délégation en Perse 58; Leiden/Boston: Brill, 2013) 249–264. This text can possibly be related to the administrative tablets from the “Acropolis Archive” via the names of the persons who occur in it (Vallat, “Nouvelle Analyse”, 388; cf. also Bartelmus, “Elam in the Late Bronze Age”, 639).

93 M.W. Waters, *A Survey of Neo-Elamite History* (State Archive of Assyria Studies 12; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2000); compare the reviews by W.F.M. Henkelman, “Defining Neo-Elamite History”, *Bibliotheca Orientalis* 60 (2003) 251–63 and A. Fuchs, “[Review of] Waters, Matthew W.: A Survey of Neo-Elamite History (...)”, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 93 (2003) 128–37.

dated with certainty, and a series of interesting but enigmatic archaeological finds,⁹⁴ there is some information available from Babylonian sources for the late period of Elam, which does indicate the continued existence of close contacts between Babylonia and Elam (including the presence of over 700 Elamite guards at the court of Nebuchadnezzar II [605–562 BCE]), but do not allow any clear conclusions to be drawn about the concrete political situation:

- 94 Of particular importance are two richly decorated tombs that were discovered in 1982 in the Behbahan Plain (“Arjan Tomb”) and in 2007 near Ram Hormoz (“Jubaji Tomb”). Some of the objects found there bear short Elamite inscriptions which, however, cannot be dated precisely. Detailed descriptions of the finds and their interpretation can be found in J. Álvarez-Mon, *The Arjān Tomb*, and A. Shishegar, *Tomb of the Two Elamite Princesses of the House of King Shutur-Nahunte Son of Indada: Neo-Elamite Period, Phase IIIB (ca. 585–539 BC)* (Tehran: Pazhuheshgah-e Sazman-e Miras-e Farhangi, 2015 [in Farsi]); a comparative study of burial customs in the Neo-Babylonian period is provided by Y. Wicks, *Profiling Death: Neo-Elamite Mortuary Practices, Afterlife Beliefs, and Entanglements with Ancestors* (Leiden: Brill, 2019). Like the inventory of the tombs, the finds from the so-called “Kalma-karra hoard” (W.F.M. Henkelman, “Persians, Medes, and Elamites: Acculturation in the Neo-Elamite Period”, in G.B. Lanfranchi/M. Roaf/R. Rollinger (ed.), *Continuity of Empire (?) : Assyria, Media, Persia* (Padua: s.a.r.g.o.n., 2003) 181–231, on pp. 214–27) also point to a strong Elamite-Iranian acculturation, whereas a small group of cylinder seals that can be attributed to the Neo-Elamite period (P. Amiet, “Glyptique élamite, à propos de nouveaux documents”, *Arts Asiatiques* 26 [1973], 3–64) shows not only “Elamo-Persian”, but also “Assyrianizing” and “Neo-Babylonianizing” influences (cf. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 290). Of particular interest is a seal that was impressed on tablets from the Persepolis Archives (R.T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* [The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 92; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1969]), which not only bears an unusual motif, but also carries a short Elamite inscription stating that it belonged to “Kuraš the Anzanite(?), son of Šešpeš” (PFS 93*); cf. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets*, 79 seal 93 and R.T. Hallock, “The Use of Seals on the Persepolis Fortification Tablets”, in M. Gibson/R. Biggs (ed.), *Seals and Sealings in the Ancient Near East* (Malibu: Undena, 1977), 127–33, p. 127 and fig. E-5. As this filiation is identical with part of the genealogy of Cyrus in the “Cyrus Cylinder” (l. 21), the question whether this seal could have originally belonged to one of the ancestors of Cyrus is much debated in the literature. Of particular importance is the detailed treatment by M.B. Garrison, “The Seal of ‘Kuraš the Anzanite, son of Šešpeš’” (Teispes), PFS 93*: Susa – Anšan – Persepolis”, in J. Álvarez-Mon/M.B. Garrison (ed.), *Elam and Persia* (Winona Lake, Indiana: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 375–405, who suggests to interpret it as an example of a “nascent ‘court style’ associated with the Teispid royal house” (*ibid.* on p. 400–1). The influences of Assyrian art that he recognizes in the motif (*ibid.* on pp. 390–400) are very intriguing regarding the question whether this Cyrus could even be identical with the king Cyrus of Parsumāš who sent his son Arukku with tribute to the Assyrian court (see below section 3.6). Note in this regard also the interesting observations by M.[W.] Waters, “Ashurbanipal’s Legacy: Cyrus the Great and the Achaemenid Empire”, in T. Daryaei/R. Rollinger (ed.), *Iran and its Histories: From the Beginnings through the Achaemenid Empire. Proceedings of the First and Second Payravi Lectures on Ancient Iranian History, UC Irvine, March 23rd, 2018 & March 11th–12th, 2019* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2021) 149–161, esp. on pp. 158–9.

it is still unclear whether the Babylonians “inherited” the territory from the Assyrians,⁹⁵ whether Nebuchadnezzar II ever moved against Elam and perhaps even brought Susa under his direct control,⁹⁶ whether the territory fell to the Medes at some point in time,⁹⁷ or whether an independent royal house was able to maintain itself in Susa until the beginning of the Achaemenid period (or shortly before).⁹⁸ What is certain, however, is that even at the height of the Elamite Empire, whose kings are attested in Mesopotamian sources from 743–645 BCE and who can be safely assigned to the Elamite culture on the basis of their names, there were already larger groups of another people in

- 95 The return of the statues of the gods carried off by the Assyrians to Susa under Nabopolassar (see Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 87–90 Chronicle 2: 16–17) is usually seen as a *sign of a re-established Elamite government in Susa*, which might have been regarded as a possible ally by the Babylonians (s. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 283–4 with earlier literature). However, in analogy with the return of divine statues described in the “Cyrus Cylinder” (l. 30; see below section 5.3), the passage could also be interpreted to mean that Susa was now regarded as the *Babylonians’ own territory* whose cults had to be taken care of.
- 96 This assertion by F.W. König, *Geschichte Elams* (Der Alte Orient 29/4; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1931), on p. 23 is also followed by E. Weidner, “Jojachin, König von Juda, in babylonischen Keilschrifttexten”, in *Mélanges syriens offerts à Monsieur René Dussaud, secrétaire perpétuel de l’Académie des inscriptions et belles-lettres*, vol. 2 (Paris: Geuthner, 1939) 923–35, on p. 929 and R. Zadok, “On the Connections Between Iran and Babylonia in the Sixth Century BC”, *Iran* 14 (1976), 61–78, on p. 61; cf. also R. Zadok, “The Babylonia – Elam Connections in the Chaldaean and Achaemenid Periods (Part One)”, *Tel Aviv* 38 (2011), 120–43, on p. 123. M.A. Dandamaev/V.G. Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1989), on p. 59 believe that the period could be narrowed down more precisely to 597/6–584 BCE on the basis of the prophecies in Jer 49:34–9 and Ezek 32:24. The only concrete indication of Nebuchadnezzar’s possible control over Elam, however, are some objects and bricks found in Susa with a Nebuchadnezzar label inscription (S. Langdon, “Les inscriptions de Nebuchadnezzar trouvées à Suse”, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und verwandte Gebiete* 29 [1905–6] 142–7; S. Langdon, *Die neubabylonischen Königsinschriften* [Vorderasiatische Bibliothek 4; Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1912], 44; F. Thureau-Dangin, “Notes assyriologiques”, *Revue d’Assyriologie et d’archéologie orientale* [1912] 21–5, on pp. 24–5), which, due to their generic content, could have come from anywhere (cf. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 287–8). In Nebuchadnezzar’s own inscriptions (which, however, hardly ever report on his campaigns, but predominantly on building activities), a victory over Elam has not yet been attested.
- 97 According to S. Zawadzki, *The Fall of Assyria and Median-Babylonian Relations in Light of the Nabopolassar Chronicle* (Seria Historia 149; Poznań/Delft: Adam Mickiewicz University/Eburon, 1988), p. 143 this could have taken place as early as 584 BCE; Dandamaev/Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions*, 61, however, assume that control over Elam was transferred from Babylonia to the Medes in the late reign of Astyages. Cf. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 289.
- 98 This view is held by most recent scholars on the history of Elam. However, if one accepts the earlier dating of the inscriptions containing the title “king of Anšan and Susa” proposed above, concrete evidence for this is extremely scarce.

the same region, who differed fundamentally from the Elamites in terms of language, way of life and probably also religious beliefs, but who were in active contact with them, namely the members of an ethnic group from which the leading class of the later Persian Empire was to emerge.

3.6 *The Persians, the Elamites and the Medes*

3.6.1 “Persians”

In the famous Bisotun inscription of Darius I (522–486 BCE), the core area of his reign is referred to as “Parsa” (Old Persian: *Pārsa*; Elamite: *parsin*, Akkadian: KUR.*parsu*) and the people who inhabit it as “Persians” (Old Persian: *Pārsa*; Elamite: *parsir* [pl.: *parsip*]; Akkadian: ¹⁴*parsāya*).⁹⁹ While the Akkadian term “KUR.*parsu*” for the land ruled by the Persians is previously only known from the “Nabonidus Chronicle” (ii 15) where it could possibly represent an anachronism,¹⁰⁰ persons referred to as “*parsip*” also appear in the Elamite tablets from the “Acropolis Archive” of Susa. The term is always followed there by a more precise specification: *parsip zampegirip* (“Zampegir-parsip”), *parsip hurip* (“Huri-parsip”) and *parsip dat(i)yanip* (Dat(i)yana-parsip) are distinguished.¹⁰¹

99 The only edition of the Bisotun inscription to date that includes all three versions of the main text (DB) is still F.H. Weissbach, *Die Keilinschriften der Achämeniden* (Leipzig: Hinrichs, 1911), pp. 8–75; a new edition by J. Hackl, W. Henkelman and J. Tavernier is in preparation. The Old Persian version was re-edited, *inter alia*, by R. Schmitt, *The Bisotun Inscriptions of Darius the Great: Old Persian Text* (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, part I: Inscriptions of Ancient Iran, vol. 1: The Old Persian Inscriptions: Texts I; London: Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum/School of Oriental and African Studies, 1991); cf. also R. Schmitt, *Die altpersischen Inschriften der Achämeniden: Editio minor mit deutscher Übersetzung* (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2009), on pp. 36–91. On the Babylonian version, see E.N. von Voigtlander, *The Bisotun Inscription of Darius the Great: Babylonian Version* (Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum, part I: Inscriptions of Ancient Iran vol. 2: The Babylonian Versions of the Achaemenian Inscriptions: Texts I; London: Humphries, 1978). The Elamite version was re-edited by F. Grillot-Susini/C. Herrenschildt/F. Malbran-Labat, “La version élamite de la trilingue de Behistun: une nouvelle lecture”, *Journal Asiatique* 282 (1993) 19–59; see also G.G. Cameron, “The Elamite Version of the Bisotun Inscriptions”, *Journal of Cuneiform Studies* 14 (1960) 59–68 and the German translation by W. Hinz, “Die Behistan-Inschrift des Darius in ihrer ursprünglichen Fassung”, *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan* NF 7 (1974) 121–34. Note further the studies on §70 (the interpretation of which is important for the debate whether the inscriptions in the name of Cyrus in Pasargadae calling him an “Achaemenid” were created by himself or by Darius I; see n. 148) by F. Vallat, “Darius, l’héritier légitime, et les premiers Achéménides”, in J. Álvarez-Mon/M.B. Garrison (ed.), *Elam and Persia* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2011) 263–84 and S.A. Parian/K. Mahmoudi, “A New Reading of the 70th Paragraph of the Behistun Inscription”, *Cuneiform Digital Library Bulletin* 2024:3, 1–29.

100 Waerzeggers, “Facts, Propaganda, or History?”, 96, 104 und 113; see n. 61 above.

101 E.g., Scheil, *MDP* 9, no. 94 rev. 13, no. 51 rev. 5 and no. 281: 29; for the reading *par-sip* instead of *par-šin* see Steve, *Syllabaire*, 157: 395. Cf. Henkelman, “Persians, Medes, and Elamites”, 211 with n. 105.

Regardless of whether one wants to interpret *parsip* as a specific Iranian group or rather in general as inhabitants of Fars,¹⁰² it can be stated that Iranian names (with approx. 10%) are already quite widespread in the archive, and that the bearers of such names could act side by side with Elamites in the transactions attested by the texts and possibly even hold high positions.¹⁰³ A ration list from Nebuchadnezzar's palace archive (from the year 592/1 BCE) where people with probably Iranian names are referred to as "Elamites" can also be interpreted as a sign of mixing between the groups;¹⁰⁴ a strong mutual acculturation is further also suggested by the archaeological evidence.¹⁰⁵ Despite the lack of meaningful sources, researchers – due to the situation in the Achaemenid Empire, where the Fars with the magnificent palaces of Pasargadae and Persepolis constituted the heartland of the Persian rulers – agree that such a situation must also have prevailed on the south-eastern side of the Zagros and that this was the milieu from which Cyrus and his successors emerged. But from where, when and by what route did the ancestors of these kings arrive in the Fars and when did their specifically "Persian" identity develop?

There are two very different basic hypotheses regarding this question, which in turn have given rise to many different interpretations. While it was originally assumed that a more or less closed tribe associated with the ethnonym "Parsu(m)a(š)" – that could also be used as a toponym – migrated from the area around Lake Urmia through the Zagros mountains to the Fars,¹⁰⁶ more recent research has predominantly followed a theory by P. de Miroschedji,¹⁰⁷ according to which Parsua(š) in the Middle Zagros and Parsumaš represent two

102 Cf. Henkelman, "Persians, Medes, and Elamites", 211 who emphasizes in this context that *parsip* should not automatically be equated with the "Persians" in the Achaemenid period.

103 Henkelman, "Persians, Medes, and Elamites", 212 with earlier literature.

104 See, e.g., Zadok, "Connections", 62; P. Briant, "La Perse avant l'empire: (un état de la question)", *Iranica Antiqua* 19 (1984) 71–118, on p. 95; Henkelman, "Persians, Medes, and Elamites", 212.

105 See above n. 94.

106 See in detail, R. Rollinger, "Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(s) in der Färs und zu einigen Fragen der frühen persischen Geschichte", *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 89 (1999) 115–39, on pp. 115–7 with earlier literature.

107 Recently, however, archaeological arguments have been put forward which could possibly support the older theory; see M.T. Atayi/M. Roaf, "The Arrival of the Persians into Fars", in Y. Hassanzadeh/A.A. Vahdati/Z. Karimi (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Iron Age in Western Iran and Neighbouring Regions: 2–3 Nov. 2019 Kurdistan University, Sanandaj, Iran*, vol. 2 (Tehran/Sanandaj: RICHT/National Museum of Iran/Kurdistan ICHHTO, 2019) 175–90.

different state entities.¹⁰⁸ According to this theory, “Persian ethnicity” would have originated in the Fars, namely in contact with the Elamites who inhabited the region at the time.¹⁰⁹

The discussion is complicated by the fact that the terms Parsua(š) and Parsumaš cannot be clearly distinguished from one another.¹¹⁰ While the early occurrences of Parsua(š) from the reigns of the Assyrian kings Salmanassar III to Sargon II (possibly to be supplemented by Uartian sources)¹¹¹ refer in any case to the northern area (which is located in the Middle Zagros), and the term Parsumaš – which only appears from Sargon II (722–705 BCE) onwards – certainly refers to the southern area at the time when Assurbanipal reigned, there are some occurrences in sources from the reigns of Sargon and Sennacherib whose identification with one or the other area is disputed. For the early history of the Persians, the question of whether the two areas have anything to do with each other is of decisive importance, regardless of the direction of any migratory movements: if the northern area should indeed be related to the “Persians” as the people from whom Cyrus, Cambyses, Darius and the later Persian great kings emerged, then “Persians” would in any case have lived under Median rule, regardless of the fate of Anšan, which has yet to be clarified.

A major problem in this context is posed by the unresolved etymology of the word.¹¹² The first theory implicitly assumes that there was a connec-

108 P. de Miroschedji, “La fin du royaume d’Anšan et de Suse et la naissance de l’Empire perse”, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 75 (1985) 265–306, on pp. 268–78.

109 de Miroschedji, “La fin du royaume d’Anšan et de Suse”, esp. 295–305; de Miroschedji, “La fin de l’Elam: essai d’analyse et d’interprétation”, *Iranica Antiqua* 25 (1990) 47–95; cf. also Henkelman, “Cyrus the Persian”, 582 with additional literature and Atayi/Roaf, “The Arrival of the Persians”, 175.

110 A. Fuchs, “Parsuaš” in D.O. Edzard/M.P. Streck (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und vorderasiatischen Archäologie*, vol. 10: *Oannes – Priesterverkleidung* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2003–2005) 340–2 avoided this problem by treating both terms together under the lemma Parsuaš (A and B).

111 For example, this view is still accepted by M. Salvini, “Urartu”, in B. Jacobs/R. Rollinger (ed.), *A Companion to the Achaemenid Persian Empire* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2021), 351–63, on p. 355; on the problem, see Fuchs, “Parsuaš”, 342.

112 The interpretation as “borderland” (derived from Old Iranian *parsava* “rib, side, frontier” and referring to peoples who lived at the borders of Media; cf. R.N. Frye, *The History of Ancient Iran* [München: Beck, 1984], 66 for this claim that was made by I.M. Diakonoff; M.T. Atayi, “A Theory on the Formation of the Achaemenid Empire: from Parsua to Parsa”, in Y. Hassanzadeh/A.A. Vahdati/Z. Karimi (ed.), *Proceedings of the International Conference on the Iron Age in Western Iran and Neighbouring Regions: 2–3 Nov. 2019 Kurdistan University, Sanandaj, Iran*, vol. 1 [Tehran/Sanandaj: RICHT/National Museum

tion between the words Parsua(š), Parsumaš and the self-designation of the Persians (see above), i.e. that the toponyms explicitly refer to that people.¹¹³ The second theory also works without this assumption; however, the question then remains as to what Cyrus II and his ancestors actually understood themselves to be (see below). In any case, both words are exonyms; we do not know how the inhabitants of Parsua(š) and Parsumaš referred to themselves.

Influenced by the assumption that the development of a separate “Persian” identity could only have taken place *after* the fall of the Elamite Empire, de Miroschedji originally assumed a point in time after the conquest of Susa (647 BCE) for the Persian ethnogenesis he postulated.¹¹⁴ The idea that Persian ethnogenesis could not have taken place earlier than the time of Anšan’s independence from Elam, and that only from then on could one speak of “Persians” in the proper sense (i.e., in the sense of the word’s meaning in the Achaemenid Empire), still persists, although the time window for this has been greatly reduced by Vallat’s hypothesis of the possible revival of a Neo-Elamite state, which is said to have encompassed both Susa and Anšan.¹¹⁵ Robert Rollinger, on the other hand, has argued convincingly that the conditions for the process of ethnogenesis were best when Elam was still at least partially in control of Anšan and confronted Assyrian politics in Babylonia as an independent power,¹¹⁶ and associated the toponym Parsumaš with this process.

3.6.2 Cyrus of Parsumaš and Cyrus of Anšan

In fact, the ruler Cyrus of Parsumaš, who is mentioned in two inscriptions by Assurbanipal (669–631 BCE), is possibly a key figure.¹¹⁷ According to Assurbanipal, this ruler responded to the “fall of Elam” by submitting to Assurbanipal and sending his son – with tribute – to the Assyrian royal court:¹¹⁸

of Iran/Kurdistan ICHHTO, 2019; in Farsi] 522–93 on pp. 521 and 550) would actually negate any connection with the “Persians” as an ethnic group.

113 This is explicitly stated, for example, by Waters, “Parsumaš, Anšan, and Cyrus”, 286. Implicitly, such an interpretation is also assumed in some translations of Neo-Assyrian texts, where LÚ.par-šu-maš is translated as “Persian”; see, e.g., S. Parpola, *The Correspondence of Assurbanipal*, part 1: *Letters from Assyria, Babylonia, and Vassal States* (State Archives of Assyria 21; Helsinki: The Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2018), 102–3 no. 116 rev. 3.

114 de Miroschedji, “La fin de royaume d’Anšan et de Suse”, 295; Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š) in der Fars”, 125.

115 Vallat, “Nouvelle analyse des inscriptions néo-élamites”. See, however, section 3.5 above for doubts about the late dating of the texts which are relevant to this hypothesis.

116 Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š) in der Fars”, 125–6.

117 Jeffers/Novotny, *The Royal Inscriptions of Ashurbanipal*, p. 270 Ashurbanipal 12 vi 7’–13’ and p. 307 Ashurbanipal 23, 114–17.

118 The following passage is quoted from J. Jeffers/J. Novotny, *RINAP* 5/1, p. 270 Ashurbanipal 12 vi 7’–13’.

Cyrus, the king of the land Parsumaš, heard about the might[y] victories that, with the support of the gods Aššur, Bēl (Marduk), and Nabû – the great gods, my lords – I had achieved over the land Elam (and that) I had flattened the land Elam, all of it, like the Deluge, and he sent to Nineveh, my capital city, Arukku, his eldest son, with his payment, to do obeisance, and he made an appeal to my lordly majesty.

As Rollinger has convincingly demonstrated, the territory of the aforementioned Cyrus lies *beyond Elam* as seen from Assyria,¹¹⁹ the assumption that it is not (as claimed by de Miroshedji)¹²⁰ a further reference to Parsua(š) located in the Middle Zagros, but a region located in the Fars and thus, in a broader sense, in the vicinity of the city of Anšan,¹²¹ is therefore obvious. Remarkably, however, there is no mention of Anšan in this context. There are several possible explanations for this:

1. If one assumes that “Elam” still included both Susa and Anšan at this time,¹²² one could think that Assurbanipal’s scribes simply subsumed Anšan under this generic term. However, an actual conquest of this region – which from an Assyrian perspective was far away and separated from Assyria by the Zagros Mountains – would be astonishing given the scope of Assurbanipal’s campaigns against the Elamite king Ummanaldašu (Huban-haltaš III, 647–645 BCE) as it is described in his inscriptions.¹²³ It should also be noted that Anšan was already mentioned separately from Elam in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions from the time of Sennacherib (705–681 BCE).¹²⁴
2. In principle, it cannot be ruled out that Anšan was not mentioned by Assurbanipal precisely *because* it did not submit to him. In this case, however, Parsumaš and Ħudimeri must have been closer than Anšan from an Assyrian point of view: a voluntary submission of the ruler of Parsumaš only makes sense if the territory he ruled bordered more or less directly on Elam and was in danger of being conquered next.¹²⁵ In fact,

119 Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š) in der Fars”, 117–21. The basis for this assumption is the description of the geographical location of Parsumaš and another region called Ħudimeri in Assurbanipal’s second inscription mentioned above.

120 de Miroshedji, “La fin du royaume d’Anšan et de Suse”, 268–78.

121 Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š) in der Fars”, 119–21.

122 This was a popular view before Vallat’s radical reorganization of Elamite chronology; see above.

123 See, e.g., Jeffers/Novotny, *RINAP* 5/1, 200 Ashurbanipal 9 iv 17–v 2.

124 See, e.g., Grayson/Novotny, *RINAP* 1, p. 182 Sennacherib 22 v 43–4.

125 The equation of Parsumaš with northern Parsua(š) (as assumed by de Miroshedji, “La fin du royaume d’Anšan et de Suse”, 270), is ruled out because the latter had

the mention of “people from Parsumaš” (LÚ.*par-šu-maš*), who allegedly carried out raids in the region of Hidalu,¹²⁶ in a letter from the time of Assurbanipal could be interpreted to mean that vagabond groups were on the move in the border area between “Elam” and Anšan;¹²⁷ however, they too must have originally come from the direction of the Fars, where the ancestors of the later “Persians” would then have lived in the area of the still Elamite-dominated Anšan, without a concrete reference to their ethnicity. The question also arises as to when and under what circumstances Anšan should have fallen to the “Persians” at a later date: in fact, there are no sources that would provide concrete evidence of a later conquest. Cyrus’ ancestors are said to have already lived and ruled in the region as “great kings” (“Cyrus Cylinder”, l. 21); he himself does not boast of such a victory.

3. It therefore seems most attractive to consider a third possibility, namely that Parsumaš and Anšan are two different names for the same area and that Cyrus of Parsumaš actually controlled the entire region around the city of Anšan.¹²⁸ Should this be the case, then an equation with one of Cyrus’ ancestors, who according to the “Cyrus Cylinder” were supposed to have been kings there for generations, could by no means be ruled out. This theory is by no means new, but was very popular at the time when the “migration hypothesis” was still popular and it was assumed that after the reign of Teispes two different “lines” of the Persian royal house existed,¹²⁹ one of which (the ancestors of Darius I) would have ruled in Parsua(š), while the other (the ancestors of Cyrus II) would have ruled in

already been an Assyrian province since the time of Tiglat-pileser III (745–727 BCE). See K. Radner, “Provinz. C. Assyrien”, in M.P. Streck (ed.), *Reallexikon der Assyriologie und Vorderasiatischen Archäologie* vol. 11: *Prinz, Prinzessin – Samug* (Berlin/New York: de Gruyter, 2006–8) 42–68, on p. 57.

- 126 Parpola, SAA 21, 102–3 no. 116 obv. 4–9. Parsumaš also appears in two other letters (ABL 1309 und 1311); cf. M. Waters, “The Earliest Persians in Southwestern Iran: The Textual Evidence”, *Iranian Studies* 32 (1999) 99–107, p. 103–4.
- 127 However, since Hidalu cannot yet be located with certainty (see above), this assumption is quite speculative.
- 128 Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(š) in der Fars”, 137–8 does not want to commit himself in this respect. However, also the title “king of Parsu” used for Cyrus in the “Nabonidus Chronicle” (ii 15) (see n. 61) as well as the possibly Assyrian-art-inspired motif of PFS 93* (see n. 94) could support this view.
- 129 See the detailed description of the developments in scholarship in R. Rollinger, “Der Stammbaum des achaimenidischen Königshauses oder die Frage der Legitimität der Herrschaft des Dareios”, *Archäologische Mitteilungen aus Iran*, DAI Tehran 30 (1998) 155–209, on pp. 156–76.

Parsumaš.¹³⁰ However, since the former was replaced by the “ethnogenesis theory” and the latter by the hypothesis that Darius had only invented a connection between his ancestors and those of Cyrus in order to bolster his legitimacy,¹³¹ there has been a wide variation of different research opinions, depending on which assumptions the individual scholar still regards as given.

While some researchers continue to ascribe so much significance to the toponym that they locate Cyrus of Parsumaš in a “Persian” environment, while assigning the two known Cyruses of Anšan to the “Elamite” culture,¹³² others deny a direct connection between the toponym Parsu(m)a(š) and a specific ethnic group,¹³³ although they locate the development of a specifically Persian identity of Cyrus and his ancestors in precisely such a field of tension between the contact of Persian and Elamite culture, as would be suggested by the simultaneous use of two very different titles, one of which evokes memories of the “old” Elam and the other of which could possibly allude to a specific ethnic group in its name.

Indeed, the lifetimes and reigns of the individual kings would have to be very long to see Cyrus of Parsumaš as the grandfather of Cyrus and son of Teispes,¹³⁴ but the fact that Cyrus of Anšan and Cyrus of Parsumaš have the same name suggests in any case that they came from the *same cultural environment*;¹³⁵ also that they may have belonged to the same family,¹³⁶ seems quite plausible against this background.¹³⁷

¹³⁰ G.G. Cameron, *History of Early Iran* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 1936), 31 n. 28.

¹³¹ See in much detail Rollinger, “Der Stammbaum des achaimenidischen Königshauses”, esp. pp. 183–8.

¹³² Potts, “Cyrus the Great”, 13.

¹³³ Henkelman, “Persians, Medes, and Elamites”, 184 n. 9; cf. also K. Alizadeh, “The Earliest Persians in Iran: Toponyms and Persian Ethnicity”, *Digital Archive of Brief Notes & Iran Review* 7 (2020), 16–53, p. 18.

¹³⁴ See, e.g., Rollinger, “Zur Lokalisation von Parsu(m)a(sh)”, 136; Henkelman, “Cyrus the Persian”, 602 n. 71.

¹³⁵ Based on the form of the name (cf. Henkelman, “Persians, Medes, and Elamites”, 194–6 with a discussion of earlier literature) it can be assumed that it was of Elamite origin.

¹³⁶ M. Roaf suggests this in an unpublished manuscript, which he kindly made available to me in advance and which proved to be very helpful for the literature search on this section.

¹³⁷ It should be noted, however, that the name Cyrus does not appear to have been a very rare name (at least if one regards the occurrences with different spellings as representations of the same name); see Henkelman, “Persians, Medes, and Elamites”, 196 and Potts, “Cyrus the Great”, 12 with n. 61.

Political power in Fars *must* have passed from Anšanite rulers to “Persian” rulers at some point; in view of the fact that both the names of Cyrus’ ancestors are identical to those of later “Persian” rulers and that the territory ruled by Cyrus and his ancestors is uniformly given by Cyrus as “Anšan”, a peaceful take-over in the context of close contact and as a result of gradual mixing between the two peoples at the time of Cyrus’ ancestors seems much more likely than a violent conquest at the time of Cyrus which is, moreover, not documented by the sources.

3.6.3 Parsua(š)

However, the fact that Anšan and Parsua(š) are still listed separately in Sennacherib’s report (see above) is a weighty argument against equating Cyrus of Parsumaš and Cyrus of Anšan: Parsua(š) here cannot refer to the Parsua(š) in the Middle Zagros, as that region had already become an Assyrian province under Tiglath-pileser III (745–727 BCE).¹³⁸ However, if an etymological connection with the people of the “Persians” existed, it is also conceivable that the term was used for an *area of much wider extent*, which also and above all extended *beyond the Zagros*. A likely candidate for the localization of Parsua(š) (versus Parsumaš in the Fars) would then be the region north of Pasargadae, which lay between “Persia” and the Median core region.¹³⁹

First of all, this identification is attractive because the findings of the Persepolis Fortification Archive show that the administrative area of Persepolis, the administrative centre of the satrapy Pārsa/Persis,¹⁴⁰ not only extended from Ram Hormoz to Nīrīz but also refers to areas located south-west (Tamukkan, the later Taoke, at the coast of the Persian Gulf) or north-east (Kabaš, the later Gabae; probably north of Abadeh) of the main area.¹⁴¹

¹³⁸ Radner, “Provinz. C. Assyrien”, p. 57.

¹³⁹ For the localization see B. Jacobs, “Achaemenid Satrapies”, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition. Retrieved from <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/achaemenid-satrapies> (last accessed February 25, 2025).

¹⁴⁰ Note that Jacobs, “Achaemenid Satrapies”, locates the capital of the satrapy in Pasargadae. However, comprehensive administrative archives have so far only been found in Persepolis; see the editions by Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* and G. Cameron, *Persepolis Treasury Tablets* (The University of Chicago Oriental Institute Publications 65; Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 1948) and A. Azzoni/E.R.M. Dusinberre/M.B. Garrison/W.F.M. Henkelman/C.E. Jones/M.W. Stolper, “Persepolis Administrative Archives”, *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2017 (retrieved from <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/persepolis-admin-archive>; last accessed February 25, 2025) for a general overview.

¹⁴¹ W.F.M. Henkelman, “From Gabae to Taoce: the Geography of the Central Administrative Province”, in P. Briant/W.F.M. Henkelman/M.W. Stolper (ed.), *L'archive des Fortifications*

Although the Paraetacene region, to which Kabaš probably belonged,¹⁴² was later assigned to the Great Satrapy of Media,¹⁴³ there was probably a close connection with the Persian core area.

Furthermore, such a localization could also reconcile some statements in the various sources, namely the claim by Herodotus that the Persians had been ruled by the Medes (see, e.g., Hdt. 1.127), the – contradictory – statement in the “Nabonidus Chronicle” (ii 1) that Astyages was intent on conquest (see above), and the foundation of Pasargadae by Cyrus at the site of his victory over Astyages, as postulated by Strabo (Strab. 15.3.8). If the latter claim is taken at face value (which can of course be questioned), Cyrus and his army would have stood in the way of Astyages’ troops (who were advancing first behind the Zagros in a southerly and then in an easterly direction) at a narrow point, directly in front of the valley Tang-e Bolaghi,¹⁴⁴ before they could reach the Marv Dasht plain (where Persepolis was later founded by Darius I) and the region around Anšan (in the Beyza plain) behind it. Up to this point, both Cyrus’ and Astyages’ armies could have moved unmolested.

The idea that Cyrus could have ruled only over the “city” of Anšan at this time is absurd: Cyrus must have had enough manpower at his disposal to oppose Astyages’ troops. In fact, Herodotus writes that Cyrus – according to his

de Persépolis: État des questions et perspectives de recherches. Actes du colloque organisé au Collège de France par la “Chaire d’histoire et civilisation du monde achéménide et de l’empire d’Alexandre” et le “Réseau international d’études et de recherches achéménides” (GDR 2538 CNRS), 3–4 novembre 2006 (Persica 12; Paris: de Boccacard, 2008) 303–16, esp. 312–13.

142 Note that Henkelman, “From Gabae to Taoce”, 310–12 distinguishes between Paraetacene (immediately north of Pasargadae) and Gab(i)ene (adjacent to it even further north); however, since Gab(i)ene is located even north of Paraetacene, this does not change the interpretation. For the localization of Paraetacene immediately north of Pasargadae see. A.B. Bosworth, *A Historical Commentary on Arrian’s History of Alexander*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1980), 334.

143 Jacobs, “Achaemenid Satrapies”; cf. also G. Traina, “The Satrapies of the Persian Empire: Media and Armenia”, in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 5: *The Age of Persia* (New York: Oxford University, 2023) 556–91, on p. 568.

144 Recent surveys and limited excavations by Iranian scholars have revealed that the valley was occupied in the Achaemenid period; cf. R. Boucharlat, “Achaemenid Estate(s) Near Pasargadae?”, in M. Kozuh/W.F.M. Henkelman/C.E. Jones/C. Woods (ed.), *Extraction & Control: Studies in Honor of Matthew W. Stolper* (Chicago, Illinois: University of Chicago, 2014) 27–35. There are at least three Achaemenid sites (*ibid.*, p. 30) and a multi-roomed pavilion (*ibid.*, pp. 30–2), which seems to date from the early Achaemenid period (*ibid.*, p. 32) and could have been used as a “resting place or a hunting pavilion for the imperial elite” (*ibid.*, p. 33).

report the son of a “*Persian*” named Cambyses (Hdt. 1.107) –¹⁴⁵ had gathered the “*Persians*” and mobilized them against Astyages (Hdt. 1.125). In this context, he makes an explicit distinction between sedentary farmers and nomadic herds-men and claims that the main tribe, to which the “*Achaemenid*” royal house belonged, had been a tribe called *Pasargadae*.¹⁴⁶ Although the latter perception is possibly an anachronism and might go back to conditions in later times (i.e., the foundation of *Pasargadae* by Cyrus),¹⁴⁷ the phenomenon described above that the “*Persians*” (*parsip*) were specified by origin in the texts from the “*Acropolis archive*” suggests that there may indeed have been several Persian tribes.¹⁴⁸ It is quite conceivable that one part of these tribes was actually ruled by the Medes (Hdt. 1.127),¹⁴⁹ while another part lived under the suzerainty

145 According to Herodotus’ account of the origins of Cyrus, which contains many legendary elements as well as some possibly serious information, Astyages married his daughter Mandane to the Persian Cambyses (after the meaning of a disturbing dream had been explained to him), as he did not see him as a serious threat due to his low status, unlike those Medes who would have been worthy of marrying into his family (Hdt. 1.107).

146 Even though the meaning of the name has not been definitively clarified, there is probably no etymological connection with the Persians; see D. Stronach/H. Gopnik, “*Pasargadae*,” *Encyclopædia Iranica*, online edition, 2009 (retrieved from <http://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/pasargadae>; accessed on 25 February 2025). Cf. also Rollinger, “*Der Stammbaum des achaimenidischen Königshauses*”, 190 with n. 181 on doubts that Herodotus’ account could be used for historical analysis.

147 Several inscriptions have been found on buildings in *Pasargadae* in which Cyrus (in the first person) is referred to as “*Achaemenid*”. Many researchers nowadays assume that the inscriptions in question were produced by Darius I rather than Cyrus himself, and that the reference to Achaemenes was only made in order to feign a common ancestry with Cyrus (see esp. D. Stronach, “*Darius at Pasargadae: A Neglected Source for the History of Ancient Persia*,” *Topoi: Orient-Occident, Supplément* 1 (1997) 351–63, esp. 352–4). However, one should also note that there are still dissenting opinions; see esp. Vallat, “*Darius, l’héritier légitime*”, 277–9. Other scholars accept the view that Darius might indeed be responsible for the production of these inscriptions, but do not doubt that he was still a distant relative of Cyrus; see, e.g., B. Jacobs, “*Kyros, der große König, der Achämenide: Zum verwandtschaftlichen Verhältnis und zur politischen und kulturellen Kontinuität zwischen Kyros dem Großen und Dareios I.*”, in R. Rollinger/B. Truschnegg/R. Bichler (ed.), *Herodot und das Persische Weltreich / Herodotus and the Persian Empire: Akten des 3. Internationalen Kolloquiums zum Thema ‘Vorderasien im Spannungsfeld klassischer und altorientalischer Überlieferungen’*, Innsbruck, 24.–28. November 2008 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2011) 635–63, esp. 636–53 and M. Roaf, “*Was Cyrus an Achaemenid?*”, 9. Indeed, the idea that Darius could simply have made up an ancestor of his famous predecessor, especially in the Persian core region, is not very convincing, and I agree with M. Roaf’s position that a descent from Achaemenes would only have conferred legitimacy for Darius if both rulers were “*Achaemenids*”.

148 Cf. Henkelman, “*Cyrus the Persian*”, 605 with n. 83.

149 The rebellion within the Median army, which is reported by both Herodotus (Hdt. 1.127) and the “*Nabonidus Chronicle*” (ii 2; see section 3.4 above), could perhaps also have

of the – likewise “Persian” – “kings of Anšan”. The strict separation between different ethnic groups, as described by Herodotus, certainly does not correspond to reality, but it can be assumed that many mixed marriages took place and that the different groups were in active contact with each other and influenced each other. The Persian dynasty also emerged from such a multi-ethnic situation. It is possible that the Persians living in the Anšan region gained a new self-confidence after the fall of Susa and the associated Elamite territories in the west, which led to the development of a specifically “Persian” ethnicity. It cannot be ruled out that the sending of the son of Cyrus of Parsumaš, Arukku, to the Assyrian royal court could have had the consequence that at a later date the Assyrians could have given him supremacy over the conquered Elamite territories where petty kings still might have ruled.¹⁵⁰ In any case, in this context he would have gained an insight into the splendour of the Assyrian royal court, but also the practices necessary to run an empire, which in turn – at least, if he ever returned – could explain the cultural influences of the Assyrian Empire (which was not a direct predecessor) on the Persian Empire.¹⁵¹

3.7 *Cyrus II as a Ruler of “Elam”*

For the interpretation of the biblical passage examined here, the following findings can be summarized from this long excursus on the prehistory of the Persian Empire: Despite the certainly strong influences of the partly still Elamite environment, neither Cyrus II nor his ancestors can be described as “Elamites” in the strict sense. Nevertheless, the region in which his family was based was geographically located in “Elam” from a western perspective. The installation of YHWH’s throne in “Elam” can therefore certainly be linked not only to the later Persian Empire (when the Persian royal court actually

involved Persians who lived under Median rule and had to pay allegiance, but now saw their hour had come.

- 150 The reinstatement of members of foreign royal families as rulers of the region from which they originated after a certain period of residence at the Assyrian royal court, where they may have been indoctrinated accordingly, is well attested for the Sargonid period; cf. e.g. the installation of the sons of the Elamite king Urtaku (675–664 BCE), Ummanigaš (Huban-nikaš) and Tammartu, as king of Elam and king of Hidalu respectively, by Assurbanipal in 653 BCE (see e.g. Waters, *A Survey of Neo-Elamite History*, 47 and 56). Likewise, the exchange of royal children between courts does not seem to have been an uncommon phenomenon; cf. Waters, “Ashurbanipal’s Legacy”, 158 n. 28. Unfortunately, however, very little is known about the last years of the Assyrian empire.
- 151 Although Pasargadae and Persepolis each have their own, specific architecture, they both contain elements that are clearly inspired by the decoration of the Neo-Assyrian palaces (e.g., winged bulls and other protective figures). Cf. the detailed considerations by Waters, “Ashurbanipal’s Legacy” on this matter.

resided for a considerable period of the year in Susa, in the palaces built there by Darius I and his successors),¹⁵² but also to the person of Cyrus. In fact, this interpretation is most likely, as JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18 implies a radical event, namely a new world order in which the fate of the world was now determined from “Elam” according to divine command, and this idea is strongly reminiscent of the events surrounding the fall of Babylon and their propagandistic treatment in Persian sources, as will be explained in the following paragraphs.

4 The Fate of “King” and “Magnates”

The many uncertainties associated with the rise of Cyrus leave a number of different possible interpretations for the remainder of the text. If we take a closer look at what actually happens in the second part of the line Jer 49:38 // JerG 25:18, we see that this passage is also – probably deliberately – vaguely formulated: reference is made here to “(a) king” and “(several) magnates”, without specifying by the addition of an article or even a possessive suffix which king of which country is actually being referred to. It should further be noted that neither an abstract noun (such as “kingship”) nor a plural form (“kings”) is formed. The question arises as to what kind of process is being described here. The decisive factors are, firstly, how the verb used in this context is interpreted and, secondly, how the three episodes described in JerMT 49:38–39 // JerG 25:18–19 are positioned in relation to each other within (Judean) history. Since the sentences are simply strung together consecutively, the only clear indication of this is the time reference “at the end of the days” in Jer 49:39 // JerG 25:19, which suggests a *large temporal distance* between the events in JerMT 49:38 // JerG 25:18 and those in JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19.

4.1 *Hypothesis 1: The Extermination of Previous Elamite Rulers*

If one equates the establishment of the throne of God in Elam with the “divine” selection of Cyrus, which could have manifested itself, for example, in his own accession to the throne or his victory over Astyages, the later “turn” of the “captivity of Elam” could refer in some way to the fall of Babylon. However, so far

152 C. Tuplin, “The Seasonal Migration of Achaemenid Kings: A Report on Old and New Evidence”, in M. Brosius/A. Kuhrt (ed.), *Studies in Persian History: Essays in Memory of David M. Lewis* (Achaemenid History 11; Leiden: Nederlands Instituut voor het Nabije Oosten, 1998) 63–114, on pp. 75–6, 82–102; R. Zadok, “The Babylonia-Elam Connections”, 130.

there is no evidence that Cyrus' accession to the throne was in any way irregular: according to the "Cyrus Cylinder", his ancestors had already ruled Anšan for generations. In view of the fact that the only event he considered worth reporting before the fall of Babylon was his victory over Astyages, who ruled not in "Elam" (south-east) but in "Gutium" (north-east), and there are no other indications of a violent conquest of Elam by Cyrus, the idea that his accession to the throne should have been preceded by the destruction of Elam and the "extermination" of its kings is rather strange. It should also be noted that there were several kings in both Media and Elam,¹⁵³ who were probably subordinate to a great king but ruled simultaneously. Their extermination would therefore actually require a plural form. If, on the other hand, the institution of kingship in the regions incorporated into the Persian Empire was meant, as suggested by Eichler,¹⁵⁴ one would expect an abstract form. Moreover, the question arises as to why the magnates should have vanished together with the "king(dom)": historically speaking, this statement makes little sense in view of the Achaemenid practice of leaving officials and dignitaries below the highest level of leadership in their offices.¹⁵⁵ However, if in this context a specific king – in this case certainly the leader of the Median coalition, Astyages – was meant by the phrase, one would expect him to be specified more precisely as a great king and at least to be provided with a definite article. Since the place where the throne was set up ("Elam") and the place from where the king and the magnates were exterminated (Media) would not be identical in this case, it would also be necessary to specify the place in order to clarify the change of location.

4.2 *Hypothesis 2: King and Magnates Sent on a Mission from Elam*

The interpretation of the passage as an event that took place *before* the fall of Babylon therefore only makes sense if, instead of an "extermination", one were to assume a "*sending*" of king (absolute)¹⁵⁶ and magnates (i.e., Persian nobles, the later satraps) from Elam, who then at a later point in time drove forward the "turn" of the "captivity of Elam". However, this first of all presupposes a massive textual corruption in JerMT, which – unlike the secondary formation

153 See above sections 3.4–6.

154 Eichler, "An Ambiguous Oracle", 187.

155 See, e.g., M. Jursa, "The Transition of Babylonia from the Neo-Babylonian Empire to the Achaemenid Rule", *Proceedings of the British Academy* 136 (2007), 73–94; C. Waerzeggers, "Very Cordially Hated in Babylonia?", 317.

156 Cf. the use of *κύριος* (without an article) in the Greek text as a designation of God.

of the form ἐξαποστελῶ “I will send out” as a spelling mistake for ἐξαπολῶ or ἐξαπολέσω “I will utterly destroy” –¹⁵⁷ cannot easily be explained, as JerG is supposed to be based on a *Hebrew* original as well.¹⁵⁸ Furthermore, it is not clear what the “captivity” of Elam, in which YHWH placed his throne, should actually have consisted of: Although control of Susiana by Babylonia (at least temporarily) cannot be completely ruled out,¹⁵⁹ the region around Anšan, where Cyrus came from, could not have been affected by this in any case. At best, it is conceivable that this passage alludes to Median suzerainty.¹⁶⁰ Above all, however, the question arises as to what *relevance* the liberation of a distant territory from an equally distant overlord (as well as the previous developments in western Iran) should have had for the Judean author of the passage under discussion here, who obviously chose his words carefully.

4.3 Hypothesis 3: The Fate of the King of Babylon and His Magnates

Against this backdrop, we should now return to the question raised at the beginning as to how YHWH’s presence manifests itself (according to the author of the text) and where he was accordingly located. If the hypothesis put forward in section 3.1 that there could be a connection with the looted temple inventory is tenable, then the “setting up of the throne” could not refer to a place in the Iranian highlands but would have to be located in Babylonia. In this case, “Elam” would not refer to the Iranian territory from which Cyrus *came*, but to the Persian empire that he *ruled* after his victories. If this theory is correct, the logical conclusion would be that the passage does not refer to one or more kings in (from a Judean perspective) distant regions or the dissolution of any other kingdoms, but specifically to one particular king and his magnates, namely that of Babylon. In this case, one could stick with the – more convincing – verb “exterminate”. However, both the vagueness of the passage and the temporal distance between the extermination of the former king of Babylon and the “turn” of the “captivity of Elam” in JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19, as well as its meaning, still remain to be explained.

157 See Huwlyer, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 259 (with a misinterpretation of ἐκείθεν in n. 753); Finsterbusch/Jacoby, *MT-Jeremia und LXX-Jeremia* 25–52, 284 with n. 5.

158 Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 59 with n. 3.

159 See above section 3.5.

160 In this case, the passage JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19 could serve as a further indication that the region around Anšan also had to recognize the Medes’ supremacy.

5 The Captivity of Elam

JerMT 49:39 // JerG 25:19 causes the most difficulties in terms of content. However, this is not only due to the unclear historical situation regarding the fate of western “Elam” before the Persian Empire, which still largely eludes us; rather, it could be that ambiguities are being deliberately played with here.¹⁶¹

5.1 *A Reflection of a Historical Reality in the Fate of Elam?*

As has already been stated several times above, there is no evidence that Cyrus ever forcibly brought a larger territorial unit with the name “Elam” under his rule. In addition, “Elam” in the Book of Jeremiah, *when associated with Cyrus*, in all likelihood represents a *positive* entity for the Judeans; the later “turn” of a (passive) captivity of “Elam”, which was caused by him in the course of the extermination of the king and magnates therefore makes no sense at all in terms of content. Thus, if we assume that “Elam” itself was taken captive, this must have happened either before his own reign and/or by other rulers. If Cyrus and his ancestors, who ruled in Anšan, should indeed have been under Median suzerainty, or if some evidence confirms that Susa no longer belonged to Elam before his reign, but was occupied by Babylonia, the “captivity of Elam” could theoretically refer to a situation in which part or even all of former “Elam” had been occupied by one or more foreign powers. In this case, the “turn” of the captivity would mean that it was no longer those powers who were in control of Cyrus and his territory, but that, on the contrary, they now had to obey the Persian Great King. However, the word “captivity” seems surprisingly drastic in this context. There is hardly any evidence of an actual reversal of captivity: although Nabonidus was probably actually deported by Cyrus,¹⁶² it is not known that Cyrus had previously experienced the same fate. At the level of entire peoples, on the other hand, the assumption of “captivity” by the Persian rulers would even contradict the Achaemenid ideal that all peoples integrated into the empire would voluntarily contribute to its success.¹⁶³ Furthermore, the great temporal distance between the events seems strange. Above all,

161 Eichler, “An Ambiguous Oracle”, 183 and 188, also comes to this conclusion (for the whole oracle), albeit against the background of a different interpretation.

162 This is suggested by the testimony of the “Dynastic Prophecy” (ii 21') and the report of Berossus (see above section 3.4 with n. 43).

163 This is most clearly illustrated by the depiction of the peoples on the base of a statue of Darius found in Susa, which was probably originally intended to be erected in Egypt: although the names of the peoples belonging to Darius' empire are written in Egyptian hieroglyphics, the corresponding figures are not shown bound, but with their hands up, in contrast to Egyptian tradition. Cf. M. Wasmuth, *Ägypto-persische Herrscher und*

however, the question arises once again as to what extent such events should have been relevant at all for the authors of the passage in the Book of Jeremiah.

5.2 *A Cipher for the Future Fate of the Judeans?*

Perhaps the situation here is again much more complex than it appears. The phrase “in the last of the days”, which initially makes us think of the Last Judgement but does not necessarily refer to it, hints at an underlying ideological concept: although YHWH had already set up his throne in Elam and ensured that the king and magnates have been exterminated “from there”, his mission had not yet been fulfilled. Now it should be borne in mind that the author of the text was certainly not primarily interested in the fate of Elam, but in that of the Judean people. Could it therefore be that this passage does not refer to Elam as a state or geographical region, but that it is a cipher for the redemption of the Judeans from the Babylonian exile, the practical realization of which was possibly still only a hopeful vision at the time of the fall of Babylon?¹⁶⁴

At first glance, this hypothesis may seem absurd. However, it becomes much more plausible if we consider once again that after YHWH’s accession to the throne, “Elam” (if we associate it with the territory of Cyrus) was no longer just some political entity from the southern Zagros but a global empire that also encompassed all the former possessions of the former Babylonian empire. As part of the new, Persian, empire, Babylon and Babylonia were now formally located in “Elam”, just as YHWH’s throne was located there. This theory becomes even more plausible if we consider that the previous saying already omits a step that is actually quite essential for understanding, namely the explanation of how YHWH actually came to Elam (see section 3.1): After all, the Judeans and YHWH’s temple treasures were not deported by Cyrus, but by his political predecessors, the Babylonians; nevertheless, YHWH miraculously manifests himself in Elam. One could therefore argue that “Elam” is used here as a cipher to artfully reinterpret the role of the aggressor into a new positive function. Similarly, the phrase “captivity of Elam”¹⁶⁵ – yet to be realized in the future – could also have been used as a cipher for the transfer of responsibility for the release of the Judean captives from their exile from the

Herrschaftspräsentation in der Achämenidenzeit (Oriens et Occidens 27; Stuttgart: Steiner, 2017), 118 and 123–4.

¹⁶⁴ See section 3.3 with n. 37.

¹⁶⁵ In this case the “captivity of Elam” should be understood as a *genitivus objectivus*, not a *genitivus subjectivus*.

original wrongdoer Babylon to a new government that would now – thanks to YHWH – hopefully be well-disposed towards the Judean people.

5.3 *The “Liberation” of Babylon*

If we take a closer look at the sources that refer to Cyrus’ takeover of Babylon in this respect and bear in mind that the Judeans who were held captive in Babylon witnessed Cyrus’ entry into Babylon and the propagandistically staged “liberation” of Babylon live, many of the parallels already observed above between the Book of Jeremiah and the Babylonian sources (divine wrath, caused by human misconduct; mishandling of cults; divine selection of the new ruler based on his moral suitability) appear in a new light and the impression arises that the similarities cannot be a coincidence.¹⁶⁶ A possible connection between the texts becomes even clearer if, instead of focusing on the foreign policy and military successes that made Cyrus’ rise possible in the first place, we now turn our attention to the domestic political measures with which he attempted to consolidate his rule.

5.3.1 The “Cyrus Cylinder” (II)

If we continue reading in the second section of the “Cyrus Cylinder” after the self-introduction of Cyrus, which includes the title discussed above, where his actions are now no longer described in the third person but in the first person, we notice first of all that his former enemies, whose overpowering is also described in the first part only in a rather disguised manner, now play virtually no role: it is exclusively about benefits for the people of Babylonia and especially the city of Babylon.¹⁶⁷

22) ... When I went as harbinger of peace i[nt]o Babylon

23) I founded my sovereign residence within the palace amid celebration and rejoicing. Marduk, the great lord, bestowed on me as my destiny the great magnanimity of one who loves Babylon, and I every day sought him out in awe.

¹⁶⁶ The presence of Judean eye-witnesses at the fall of Babylon and a direct influence of the events on the composition of the Book of Jeremiah (in this case regarding the creation of the “oracle against Babylon”) is also suggested by Vanderhooft, *The Neo-Babylonian Empire and Babylon*, 193–202, however, with a focus on prophecies which describe war-like events (esp. Jer 51:32).

¹⁶⁷ The following text passage is quoted from the (rather free) translation of Finkel, “The Cyrus Cylinder”, 6; note also the more literal translation by Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 555–6 and the comments on individual passages.

- 24) My vast troops were marching peaceably in Babylon, and the whole of [Sumer] and Akkad had nothing to fear.
 25) I sought the safety of the city of Babylon and all its sanctuaries. As for the population of Babylon [..., w]ho as if without div[ine intention] had endured a yoke not decreed for them,
 26) I soothed their weariness; I freed them from their bonds(?).¹⁶⁸ Marduk, the great lord, rejoiced at [my good] deeds,
 27) and he pronounced a sweet blessing over me, Cyrus, the king who fears him, and over Cambyses, the son [my] issue, [and over] my all my troops,
 28) that we might live happily in his presence, in well-being. At his exalted command, all kings who sit on thrones,
 29) from every quarter, from the Upper Sea to the Lower Sea, those who inhabit [remote distric]ts (and) the kings of the land of Amurru who live in tents, all of them,
 30) brought their weighty tribute into Shuanna, and kissed my feet. ...

Particularly important for Cyrus in this context is the statement that his entry into Babylon (l. 22) and the presence of his troops there were peaceful and in accordance with the will of the supreme god Marduk, whose cults Cyrus now – unlike his predecessor Nabonidus – provided for on a daily basis (l. 23). It is then postulated that he freed the inhabitants of Babylon (DUMU.MEŠ TIN.TIR^{ki} “Sons of Babylon”)¹⁶⁹ from a yoke that was not appropriate for them (ll. 25–6),¹⁷⁰ that Marduk was pleased about this (l. 26), blessed Cyrus and his son Cambyses (ll. 27–8) and, as a consequence, had “all kings who sit on thrones” bring him tribute and kiss his feet (ll. 28–30).

In the next section, Cyrus describes how he sent a number of deities (i.e., their cult statues) back to their original places of worship, which had previously fallen into disrepair, and also allowed the people who came from those places to return there:¹⁷¹

- 168 Akkadian: *sarmašunu* (meaning uncertain); Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 556 translates this term with “yoke”.
 169 Compare the transliteration in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 553.
 170 Quoted after the interpretation by Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 556 (cf. n. 169); note the previous reference to the fact that the inhabitants of Babylon under Nabonidus had allegedly suffered under a yoke without rest (l. 8).
 171 Quoted from the translation by Finkel, “The Cyrus Cylinder”, 6–7.

30) ... From [Shuanna] I sent back to their places to the city of Ashur and Susa,¹⁷²

31) Akkad, the land of Eshnunna, the city of Zamban, the city of Meturnu, Der, as far as the border of the land of Gutī – the sanctuaries across the river Tigris – whose shrines had earlier become dilapidated,

32) the gods who lived therein, and made permanent sanctuaries for them. I collected together all of their people and returned them to their settlements

It is noteworthy that the places mentioned in this section are not in Babylonia proper, but in former Assyria, the northern and north-eastern outskirts of Babylonia and the Susiana. The significance of this finding is disputed: While some scholars see it as proof that the area in question remained under Babylonian rule until the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus,¹⁷³ others explain the presence of the Assyrian statues of gods in Babylon by the fact that Nabopolassar, who had been allied with the Medes, had taken some of the spoils of war back to Babylon after the fall of the Assyrian cities.¹⁷⁴ In the latter case, the mention of the gods of Susa would suggest that they had also come to Babylon in the course of a conquest before Cyrus sent them back from there after his takeover; if, on the other hand, Babylon was not the starting point for all the return shipments,¹⁷⁵ it would also be conceivable that they were brought there from other places that were now under Persian control.

Separately, the repatriation of divine statues from the “land of Sumer and Akkad” (i.e., Babylonia proper), which Nabonidus had brought to Babylon “to the fury of the lord of the gods”, is also described (ll. 33–4).¹⁷⁶

¹⁷² The emphasis is my own in order to indicate uncertainties involved in the translation. Finkel’s translation suggests that *Babylon* (here as “Šuanna”) was the *place from which* the gods were sent back to their places of origin. In earlier literature, the passage was usually read in such a way that all three places mentioned in l. 30, the first of which has unfortunately not survived, outline the geographical area to which the statues of the gods were sent back. If one follows the restoration of W. Eilers, “Der Keilschrifttext des Kyros-Zylinders”, in W. Eilers (ed.), *Festgabe deutscher Iranisten zur 2500-Jahrfeier Irans* (Stuttgart: Hochwacht Druck 1971) 156–6 as “[Ninive]” (see also S. Dalley, “Nineveh after 612 BC”, *Altorientalische Forschungen* 20 [1993], 134–47, on p. 137), this would refer to a strip north, northeast and east of Babylonia, which extended from the former core area of Assyria to Susa.

¹⁷³ See, e.g. R. Zadok, *Assyrians in Chaldean and Achaemenid Babylonia* (Assur 4/3; Malibu: Undena, 1984), 1–13 with n. 6.

¹⁷⁴ Zawadzki, *The Fall of Assyria*, 150.

¹⁷⁵ See n. 172.

¹⁷⁶ Quoted from the translation by Finkel, “The Cyrus Cylinder”, 7.

- 33) and the gods of the land of Sumer and Akkad which Nabonidus – to the fury of the lord of the gods – had brought into Shuanna, at the command of Marduk, the great lord,
 34) I returned them unharmed to their cells, in the sanctuaries that make them happy. May all the gods that I returned to their sanctuaries,
 35) every day before Bel and Nabu, ask for a long life for me, and mention my good deeds, and say to Marduk, my lord, this: ‘Cyrus, the king who fears you, and Cambyses his son,
 36) may they be the provisioners of our shrines until distant (?) days, and the population of Babylon call blessings on my kingship. I have enabled all the lands to live in peace.’
 37) Every day I increased by [... ge]ese, two ducks and ten pigeons the [former offerings] of geese, ducks and pigeons.

This part of the inscription concludes with the wish that the returned deities should bless the reign of Cyrus and his son Cambyses (also in the future) (ll. 34–6). At the end there is another unclear sentence, which apparently concerns the increase in sacrificial offerings (l. 37), before the third part of the cylinder (ll. 38–45) describes construction work on Imgur-Enlil, the inner-city wall of Babylon, in the context of which the cylinder probably belongs.¹⁷⁷

What is *not* found in the Cyrus Cylinder, however, – contrary to what is often postulated –, is a direct reference to the liberation of the Judeans from exile in Babylonia or to the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, there may be an indirect connection here: a group of high-ranking Judeans had already been taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar II in 597 BCE (2 Kings 24:11–16; Jer 52:28–30). As some of them can be identified in administrative texts from Babylon,¹⁷⁸ it can be assumed that they were present there at the time of Cyrus’ entry. It is well known that this event was accompanied by the creation of a series of texts by Babylonian scribes that were intended to cast Nabonidus’s reign in a very bad light and were certainly intended for oral

¹⁷⁷ Note that it is also mentioned that an inscription of Assurbanipal was found during the construction work (“Cyrus Cylinder”, l. 43).

¹⁷⁸ Weidner, “Jojachin, König von Juda”; but also note C. Wunsch’s observation that the common people did not enjoy the same privileges as the members of the upper class, but were distributed across the land. Cf. C. Wunsch, “Glimpses on the Lives of Deportees in Rural Babylonia”, in A. Berlejung/M.P. Streck (ed.), *Arameans, Chaldeans, and Arabs in Babylonia and Palestine in the First Millennium B.C.* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2013), 247–60, on pp. 248–9.

dissemination (including the so-called “Verse Account”).¹⁷⁹ However, there are also other indications that Cyrus’ entry into Babylon was staged to great effect. What is remarkable in this context is the rather brief reference in the “Cyrus Cylinder” to the fact that Cyrus had freed the inhabitants of Babylon from a “yoke” that was not appropriate for them (ll. 25–6).¹⁸⁰ Contrary to what is often assumed, this is not about a declaration of general “human rights”,¹⁸¹ but the statement explicitly refers to a specific population group, namely the “sons of Babylon” (DUMU.MEŠ TIN.TIR^{ki} “sons of Babylon”),¹⁸² i.e., the citizens of this city. Indeed, many Neo-Assyrian texts indicate that this population group – just like the citizens of some other ancient and prestigious cities in the Babylonian heartland – believed they could claim certain privileges for themselves, including a special protected status (*kidinnūtu*), exemption from taxes (*zakūtu*) and exemption from the obligation to perform so-called *ilku* and *tupšikku* (i.e., corvee labour) services. A foreign ruler of Babylonia, who might have had a legitimacy problem due to his foreign origins and therefore had to be on good terms with these important cities, would have done well to formally confirm the continuation of these privileges to them.¹⁸³

5.3.2 The “Just Judgements”

There is now a Neo-Babylonian clay tablet with a text in which – after a section on the fate of Hammurapi’s famous law code, the consequences resulting from its disappearance and the author’s own striving for just decisions – precisely these kind of privileges in relation to nine important Babylonian cities are addressed in col. ii:¹⁸⁴

- 13) ... [(And with regard to)]
- 14) the unencumber[ed] citizens of Babylon,
- 15) the pre-eminent citizens of Borsippa; the [...] citizens of Sippar[r];

179 BM 38299. Editions: S. Smith, *Babylonian Historical Texts*, 27–97 with copies on pls. 5–10; Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 563–78.

180 On the translation see above, n. 168.

181 On the strange blossoms to which this assumption has led, see van der Spek, “Cyrus the Great”, 234 with n. 4.

182 Compare the transliteration in Schaudig, *Die Inschriften Nabonids*, 553.

183 See van der Spek, “Cyrus the Great”, 245–6 with examples from Neo-Assyrian letters.

184 Quoted from the translation by M. Frazer/S.F. Adali, “‘The Just Judgements that Ḫammu-rāpi, a Former King, Rendered’: A New Royal Inscription in the Istanbul Archaeological Museums”, *Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und vorderasiatische Archäologie* 111 (2021) 231–62.

- 16) the citizens of Kutha, enjoyers of *kidinnu*-status; the [...] citizens of Kiš;
- 17) the citizens of Dilbat, “of the secret”; the [...] citizens of Ur;
- 18) the loyal citizens of Uruk; the [...] citizens of Larsa – [(the citizens of)]
- 19) the great cult centres, the cit[ies (...)]
- 20) of the land of Kar(an)duniaš [...],
- 21) who [are attentive/ bow down] to the god Bēl, lord of Babylon, to the god [...],
- 22) to the great gods [(of heaven and earth)],
- 23) to the goddess Zarpanītu, goddess of Babylon, and the god [...] –
- 24) I inscribed a tablet (recording) their tax-exempt status; [I promulgated] an ed[ict of freedom (anew)];
- 25) their *kidinnu*-status [I established];
- 26) *ilku-tupšikku*-tax, the digging of canal[s (and ...)]
- 27) at the herald’s proclamation [I did not impose on them.]

According to the wording of the text, it was intended to be affixed to a stele (ii 11), which, however, has not survived; the surviving copy is probably an archive copy.¹⁸⁵ Surprisingly, no ruler’s name is mentioned in the surviving section of the text; however, since such a text would be nonsensical without the attribution to a specific ruler, it can be assumed that the name was probably written somewhere in the destroyed passage between ll. i 36 and ii.¹⁸⁶

The editors of the text, which was found in Sippar as early as 1894 and briefly mentioned by V. Scheil in 1902,¹⁸⁷ but has been dormant in the collections of the Istanbul Archaeological Museum until recently, explain it – in accordance with Scheil’s original attribution that was probably based on linguistic criteria – as a possible proclamation by Nabonidus, who, in view of the imminent threat from Cyrus, which prompted him to return from his long stay in the oasis of Tayma, may have seen the need to make amends with the Babylonian cities.¹⁸⁸ This is indeed a conceivable historical scenario, but there is otherwise no evidence that Nabonidus granted privileges to Babylonian cities on a large scale. On the opposite, the accusation in the “Cyrus Cylinder” (ll. 25–6) that at least the inhabitants of Babylon suffered under an unlawfully imposed yoke could be interpreted as an indication that they had been deprived of their

185 Frazer/Adah, “The Just Judgements”, 255.

186 Frazer/Adah, “The Just Judgements”, 251.

187 V. Scheil, *Une saison de fouilles: Sippar (Abou Habba), Janvier-Avril 1894* (Le Caire: Institut Français d’Archéologie Orientale, 1902), 96; Frazer/Adah, “The Just Judgements”, 231–2.

188 Frazer/Adah, “The Just Judgements”, 259.

privileges. On the other hand, the explicit mention in the “Cyrus Cylinder” of the exemption of the citizens of Babylon from the duties imposed on them suggests that there must have been a corresponding proclamation, which was certainly also recorded in writing. It is obvious to connect the benevolent address (*šulmu* “well-being” + *qabû* “say”) to the citizens of Babylon mentioned both in the “Nabonidus Chronicle” (iii 19–20) and in the “Verse Account” (vi 2) with this.

Regardless of whether the text discussed here is connected to this, the sources show very clearly that the entry of Cyrus into Babylon was accompanied by public rallies with promises being made to the local population. The return of the statues of the gods to their places of worship will certainly not have gone unnoticed either but will have taken place in the form of large processions. It can be assumed that these were also accompanied by public announcements (in Babylonian and possibly other languages) that the return of the gods had been commissioned by Cyrus on the order of the supreme god.¹⁸⁹ For the Judeans being present in Babylon, too, the whole thing was probably a huge spectacle: A king from the southeast (“Elam” from a Judean perspective) marched into the city of Babylon where they were held captive, freed its citizens from the duties imposed on them, declared that he had subjugated the rulers of the entire known world including the previous king of Babylon on behalf of the Babylonian supreme god Marduk, and made the deities of Babylonia and the regions belonging to “Greater Babylonia” return to their homeland in large processions. What remained to be resolved, however, was the “turn” of their own captivity, consisting of their return to their homeland and the rebuilding of the temple of their own god, whom they could equate with Marduk in his function as supreme god.

If one accepts this scenario, there may indeed be a *highly complex theological concept* behind the few, vague words of JerMT 49:38–39 // JerG 25:18–19: YHWH (who, in the form of his temple goods, had previously been deported to Babylon, which is euphemistically interpreted as YHWH’s voluntary relocation as a result of human misbehaviour) would thus have set up his throne in (the new) “Elam” (i.e., former Babylonia), removed (its old) king and magnates (and replaced them with a new king who acted and gave orders in his place), and thus raised the (implicit or perhaps even explicitly articulated) hope that

189 It is quite conceivable that the information about what was happening was also translated into other languages (especially Aramaic), analogous to later Achaemenid practice; however, the Judeans should also have understood Babylonian after their long stay in Babylon.

the (originally Babylonian, now “Elamite”) captivity (of themselves) would also end sometime in the future.

6 The Fall of Elam

If we follow this line of reasoning and consider “Elam” in the context of the extermination of king and magnates and the “captivity of Elam” as a *cipher for Babylon*, it is clear why “Elam” in the logic of the text first had to fall by the sword of YHWH before the establishment of YHWH’s throne (which led to the new “Elam” aka Persian Empire). However, this does not yet clarify whether this passage was originally meant in this way: in view of the fact that the various versions of the Book of Jeremiah were created in many individual stages, it cannot be ruled out from the outset that the negative oracle may have already existed before further – positive – parts were added to it at a later date.¹⁹⁰ In this case, it would also be conceivable that this passage refers to a completely different “Elam”.

6.1 *The Alleged Dating of the Oracle*

In fact, the “oracle against Elam” is repeatedly used in the secondary literature to draw historical conclusions about the fate of “Elam” (understood either as the kingdom of the Elamite rulers of Susa and Anšan, or just as Susiana and neighbouring areas) after the conquest of Susa by Assurbanipal (647 BCE). The information on the dating of the prophecy, which is found in JerMT at the beginning (JerMT 49:34) and in JerG at the end of the “oracle against Elam” (JerG 25:20), is taken as a concrete reference point for statements in this regard.

Most scholars nowadays assume that Elam must have had recovered from the conquest of Susa by Assurbanipal at this time. The mention in a Babylonian chronicle that Nabopolassar had arranged for the return of divine statues from Uruk to Susa in his first year of reign¹⁹¹ is seen as an indication that an independent Elamite government must have ruled in Susa.¹⁹² However, the “Cyrus Cylinder”, which likewise speaks of the return of divine statues

190 But note the observation of Huwlyer, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 259 that the text seems to be from a single mould and the interpretation made below in section 6.3.

191 Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 88 Chronicle 2: 16–7; Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 283.

192 See P. Amiet, “La glyptique de la fin de l’Elam”, *Arts Asiatiques* 28 (1973) 3–45, on p. 24, de Miroschedji, “Notes sur la glyptique de la fin de l’Elam”, *Revue d’Assyriologie* 76 (1982) 51–63, on p. 62, Henkelman, “Persians, Medes, and Elamites”, 183 n. 6; Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 283–4.

to Susa (ll. 30–3), shows very clearly that such a process does not necessarily presuppose an independent Elamite government in Susa, but can also be interpreted in exactly the opposite way. It is therefore also conceivable that the Babylonians could have inherited the rule over Elam – which in this case would have previously been an Assyrian province – from the Assyrians. Indeed, Ezek 32:24–25 provides an indication that “Elam” may already have been politically “dead” at the time to which the “oracle against Elam” is supposedly dated: in the context of a vision to the Pharaoh of Egypt, Elam is described as lying in the underworld together with Assyria, whose successive fall in the years 614–609/8 BCE is certain.¹⁹³ However, it is precisely this passage that some scholars take as an argument that Elam must have become politically dependent in the years between the accession of Zedekiah (597 BCE), shortly after which the “oracle against Elam” is dated, and Ezekiel’s prophecy, which those scholars put at 584 BCE.¹⁹⁴ Opinions diverge as to whether it fell to the Babylonians or the Medes: While S. Zawadzki suggests that Elam was incorporated into Media as early as 584 BCE,¹⁹⁵ R. Zadok rules out the idea of Median control over Elam.¹⁹⁶ An unclear passage in a Babylonian chronicle, which speaks of a confrontation between the Babylonian king and a foreign ruler (possibly that of Elam),¹⁹⁷ is seen as an indication of a possible invasion of Elam by Nebuchadnezzar II: although it only states that the foreign ruler afterwards withdrew out of fear, some objects found in Susa with inscriptions by Neo-Babylonian rulers have been interpreted as evidence of a subsequent major campaign by Nebuchadnezzar.¹⁹⁸

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- 193 On the fall of Assyria, see, e.g., H.D. Baker, “The Assyrian Empire: A View from Within”, in K. Radner/N. Moeller/D.T. Potts (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 4: *The Age of Assyria* (New York: Oxford University, 2023) 257–351, on pp. 330–3.
- 194 Dandamaev/Lukonin, *The Culture and Social Institutions of Ancient Iran*, 59; see n. 86.
- 195 Zawadzki, *The Fall of Assyria*, 143.
- 196 Zadok, “The Babylonia – Elam Connections”, 124; cf. also Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 289.
- 197 D.J. Wiseman, *Chronicles of Chaldean Kings (626–556 B.C.) in the British Museum* (London: The Trustees of the British Museum, 1956), 72: rev. 20; Grayson, *Assyrian and Babylonian Chronicles*, 102 Chronicle 5 rev. 20. For doubts regarding the addition “king of Elam”, see D.J. Wiseman, *Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon* (Oxford: Oxford University, 1984) 34 and D.J. Wiseman, “Babylonia 605–539 B.C.”, in J. Boardman/I.E.S. Edwards/N.G.L. Hammond/E. Sollberger/C.B.F. Walker (ed.), *Cambridge Ancient History*, vol. 3, part 2: *The Assyrian and Babylonian Empires and other States of the Near East, from the Eighth to the Sixth Centuries B.C.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1991) 229–51, on p. 233; Glassner, *Mesopotamian Chronicles*, 231 rev. 20 reads “king of Elam” without indicating the damage of the relevant line.
- 198 König, “Geschichte Elams”, 23; Weidner, “Jojachin, König von Juda”, 929; Zadok, “On the Connections Between Iran and Babylonia”, 61; cf. Potts, *The Archaeology of Elam*, 285–8 for doubts on the interpretation described above.

In fact, however, it is questionable whether the dating of the “oracle against Elam” can be used for historical conclusions at all, as it is suspected that the information – just like the actual oracle text – was only invented at a later date and with a specific intention.¹⁹⁹ If one compares the (few) existing dating formulae within the OAN with each other, it is noticeable that the information in the “oracle against Elam” differs from the oracles against Egypt, Kedar (and Hazor) and (in JerMT) the Philistines: The latter are each dated to a point in time before the occurrence of a later event, which effectively confirms the prediction made. In contrast, there is no such reference in the “oracle against Elam” or the “oracle against Babylon”; what both have in common, however, is an explicit reference to the reign of Zedekiah, who is accused in 2 Chr 36:11–16 of not having listened to Jeremiah and of having provoked YHWH’s wrath through his iniquities (including apostasy from king Nebuchadnezzar, to whom he had sworn an oath to YHWH). Since Jeremiah had always warned against the formation of an anti-Babylonian coalition,²⁰⁰ the explanation that is added to the “oracle against Babylon” at the end is highly unusual: according to the text (JerMT 51:59–64 // JerG 28:59–64), Jeremiah is said to have predicted the fall of Babylon in Zedekiah’s fourth year. It is therefore obvious that the oracle in question was not written by him but was added later. In JerMT, where the “oracle against Babylon” is at the very end of the OAN, the passage in question could be read as referring to all the preceding oracles. In JerG, on the other hand, where the “oracle against Elam” forms the beginning of the collection, the situation is different: since the “oracle against Babylon” only comes third there, the statement initially seems to refer only to the predictions against Babylon. In both versions, however, importance is obviously attached to using a separate dating formula to show that the prophecy concerning the fate of Elam took place somewhat earlier than the one concerning the fall of Babylon. Unlike the dating of the “oracle against Babylon” in JerMT, the dating of the “oracle against Elam” in JerG cannot be read as referring to all prophecies. However, in this version a concrete reference to all subsequent oracles is established by other means, namely by the fact that the actual oracle in JerG 25:14b is preceded by a heading (“Against the nations, (namely) those of Elam”), which combines two different – in JerMT widely separated – elements, namely the end of the sentence preceding the so-called “Cup-of-Wrath” (hereafter:

199 Note also the considerations by Huwylar, *Jeremia und die Völker*, 265–6 on a possible occasion for the oracle; he also comes to the conclusion that the “oracle against Elam” must stem from exilic or post-exilic times.

200 Zawadzki, *The Fall of Assyria*, 137, Stipp, *Jeremia 25–52*, 759.

CoW) passage (JerMT 25:13b) and the end of the heading to the “oracle against Elam” (JerMT 49:34).²⁰¹

6.2 *The Nations of Elam*

This in turn shows that the CoW passage should not be entirely ignored when interpreting the OAN. However, the fact that the research literature is mostly based on JerMT means that this connection is easily lost, at least in the presentation. For a better overview, the structure of the two versions with regard to the relationship between OAN and CoW is therefore presented here first before an analysis of the contents follows:

TABLE 11.1 Position of the OAN and the CoW in JerMT and JerG

JerMT		JerG	
25:15–38	CoW	25:14b–31:44	OAN (beginning with “Against the nations, (namely) those of Elam”)
26–45	(other contents)		
46–51	OAN (ending with an instruction from Jeremiah to Seraiah, supposedly dated to the 4th year of Zedekiah’s reign [i.e., 594 BCE], to read the scroll with his prophecies to the latter and thus prophesy the fall of Babylon to him)	32:1–24	CoW

A different focus in the narrative is clearly recognizable: while in JerMT everything boils down to the fall of Babylon, the heading in JerG emphasizes that what follows is about the fate of the nations of “Elam”. Nevertheless, both versions also contain the “oracle against Babylon” among the OAN, although the mention of Babylon is surprisingly missing in the CoW passage of JerG and is only hinted at in JerMT by means of an Atbash cryptoscript (see Table 11.2).

201 Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 59.

TABLE 11.2 Order of the “nations” mentioned in the OAN and the CoW (JerMT and JerG)

JerMT		JerG	
CoW:		OAN:	“Against the nations, (namely) those of Elam”
25:18	Jerusalem and Judah	25:14–19	<i>Elam</i>
25:19	Egypt	26	Egypt
25:20	Uz; Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod)	27–8	<i>Babylon</i>
25:21	Edom, Moab and Ammon	29:1–6	Philistines
25:22	Tyrus, Sidon and coast beyond the Sea	29:8–23	Edom
25:23	Dedan, Teman, Buz and those whose hair is cut off at the temples	30:1–5	Ammon
25:24	Arabia and mixed peoples in the desert	30:6–11	Kedar/Hazor
25:25	Zimri, <i>Elam</i> and Media	30:12–16	Damascus
25:26	kings of the North all kingdoms on earth <i>Scheschach (Babylon)</i> (other contents)	31	Moab
OAN:		CoW:	
46	Egypt	32:4	Jerusalem and Judah
47	Philistea	32:5	Egypt
48	Moab	32:6	Philistines (Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron and Ashdod)
49:1–6	Ammon	32:7	Edom, Moabitis, Ammon
49:7–22	Edom	32:8	Tyrus, Sidon, beyond the Sea
49:23–7	Damascus	32:9	Dedan, Teman, Ros and those who are shaven (in the area) of their faces
		32:10	mixed peoples in the desert
49:28–33	Kedar/Hazor	32:11	<i>Elam</i> and Persians
49:34–9	<i>Elam</i>	32:12	kings of the East
50–51	<i>Babylon</i>		all kingdoms on earth

Regarding the general structure, by and large there is a clear correspondence between the two CoW sections in JerMT and JerG and the OAN in JerMT; only the order of the OAN in JerG differs significantly.²⁰² However, this should not obscure the fact that there are *fundamental differences* between the two versions that contain *historically relevant* information. These only become apparent when one takes a closer look at the wording of JerMT 25:15–26 and JerG 32:1–12 with regard to the nations that are mentioned:

6.2.1 JerMT 25:15–26 // JerG 32:1–12²⁰³

JerMT	JerG
25:15 “Indeed, thus said YHWH, the God of Israel, to me: ‘Take this cup of wine of wrath from my hand, and give it to drink to all nations to whom I am sending you (now)!’	32:1 “Thus says (the) Lord, the God of Israel: ‘Take the cup of this unadulterated wine from my hand, and you shall give drink to all the nations to whom I send you!’
25:16 And they shall drink, and tumble, and be driven mad, because of the sword that I will send among them.’	32:2 And they shall vomit up and shall race madly in the face of the sword that I, I am sending among them!’
25:17 And I took the cup out of the hand of YHWH, and gave (it) to drink to all nations, to whom YHWH had sent me:	32:3 And I took the cup out of (the) Lord’s hand and gave (it) to drink to the nations to whom (the) Lord had sent me:
25:18 to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and its kings and its magnates, to give them over to desolation, to wasteland/a horrifying paralysis, to hissing and to cursing – as (it is) on this day,	32:4 to Jerusalem and the cities of Judah and its kings and its leaders, to make them a desolation and an uninhabitable (land) and a hissing, –

202 Compare also the tables in Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 61, and H.-J. Stipp, “Two Ancient Editions of the Book of Jeremiah”, in L. Stulman/E. Silver (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Jeremiah* (New York: Oxford University, 2021), 93–113, on p. 99, where, however, the two versions of the CoW (JerG and JerMT) are combined in a single column, which makes it difficult to assign the information to one or the other version.

203 The English translation given here is largely based on the synoptic German translation by Finsterbusch/Jacoby, *MT-Jeremia und LXX-Jeremia* 25–52, 70–3. I have highlighted the passages relevant for the following interpretation by cursive writing.

25:19 to Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants, his magnates and all his people,

25:20 and to all the mixed (peoples) and to all the kings of the land of Uz and to all the kings of the land of the Philistines, and to Ashkelon and Gaza and Ekron and the rest of Ashdod,

25:21 and to Edom and Moab and to the children of Ammon,

25:22 and to all the kings of Tyre and to all the kings of Sidon and to the kings of the coast beyond the sea,

25:23 and to Dedan and Tema and Buz and to all those whose hair is cut off at the temples,

25:24 and to all the kings of Arabia, and to all the kings of the mixed peoples who live in the desert,

25:25 and to all the kings of *Zimri* and to all the kings of Elam and to all the kings of *Media*,

25:26 and to all the kings *of the north*, both near and far, one after another, and to all the kingdoms of the earth that are on the face of the earth.

And the king of Sheshach (i.e. Babylon) will drink after them."

32:5 and to Pharaoh king of Egypt, his servants and his magnates

32:6 and to all his people, and to all mixed (peoples/troops), and to all the kings of the Philistines, (namely) Ashkelon and Gaza and Ekron and the rest of Ashdod,

32:7 and to Edom and Moabitis and to the children of Ammon,

32:8 and to the kings of Tyre and to the kings of Sidon and to the kings beyond the sea,

32:9 and to Dedan and Teman and Ros and to every shaven one (in the area) of his face,

32:10 and to all the mixed (peoples) who live in the desert,

32:11 and to all the kings of Elam and to all the kings of the *Persians*,

32:12 and to all the kings *of the east*, far and near, one after the other, and to all the kingdoms on the face of the earth."

6.2.2 Observations

As mentioned above, it is striking that despite the fact that both JerG and JerMT contain the “oracle against Babylon”, Babylon does not appear in JerG in the list of countries that will fall victim to YHWH’s wrath according to the CoW. Even if in JerG the main emphasis is not on Babylonia, but on “Elam” (which in the latter context must undoubtedly refer to the later Persian Empire), the absence of Babylon in the list as well as the rendering as an Atbash cryptoscript in JerMT require an explanation: after all, Babylonia was a – even very significant – part of the countries that were integrated into the Persian Empire. The fact that Babylonia of all places should have been spared YHWH’s wrath makes no sense from a later historical perspective and is in blatant contradiction to the Book of Jeremiah as a whole, which is also and above all about the liberation of the Judeans from the Babylonian exile. The obvious solution is therefore that the list in question must date from an early stage in the history of composition. If we also take a closer look at the statements about “Elam” in this light, it is immediately apparent that “Elam” in this context cannot possibly mean the later Persian Empire. Not only would the statement that it would fall victim to the wrath of YHWH contradict the above interpretation that YHWH’s rule in the future should come from there, but in this context – in both versions – a clear distinction is also made between different ethnic and political entities. It is not “Elam” that is to be destroyed, but “all the kings of Zimri”, “all the kings of Elam” and “all the kings of Media” (JerMT) or “all the kings of Elam” and “all the kings of Persia” (JerG). This clearly shows that the CoW does not refer to the conditions in the Persian Empire, but to an earlier historical situation. It therefore seems as if an already existing list, which originally only included countries that were conquered by Babylon or possibly threatened to be conquered soon, was subsequently expanded or modified (in both versions!) to also include regions that were only added later to the territory described by the Achaemenid Empire.

6.3 *Some Thoughts on the Development of the Two Different Versions*

Based on the above considerations, the history of the manuscripts can be reconstructed as follows: The list of countries in the CoW in JerMT probably dates from an early period in time,²⁰⁴ as the “Persians” are not yet mentioned here; instead, the immediately neighbouring areas of Babylonia (Zimri,²⁰⁵

²⁰⁴ Cf. Peels’ doubts (Peels, “From Egypt to Babylon”, 64–73) about the now popular idea that JerG should be dated earlier than JerMT.

²⁰⁵ Stipp’s suggestion to read Zimri as an (even misspelled!) Atbash cryptoscript for Elam (Stipp, *Jeremiah* 25–52, 71; see also Stipp, “Two Ancient Editions”, 99) is not very

Elam and Media), which were each ruled by several rulers according to the text, play a role here. Also, not the east, but the north is important in this version. Whether or to what extent the statement that these nations would fall because of divine wrath somehow reflect a historical reality (i.e., events that actually happened or at least impending developments) cannot be determined for all the areas mentioned based on current knowledge. In any case, it seems conceivable that a large part of the CoW list of countries in JerMT could go back to Jeremiah himself. However, it seems highly unlikely that he would have prophesied the downfall of the king of Babylon as well. The Atbash cryptoscript “Sheshach” was therefore probably added to the list in JerMT – possibly due to wishful thinking – by later redactors.²⁰⁶ Based on the experience of the Babylonian exile, the prophecies against Babylon were added to the OAN and marked with the note that these too had already been made by Jeremiah himself at the beginning of the reign of the doomed Zedekiah. The “oracle against Elam” was added to the collection only after the conquest of Babylon by Cyrus, when it became clear that a fundamental – and by that ruler with divine legitimation justified – shift of the centre of power to the east had taken place. The author obviously considered it important to link the text to the prophecies regarding the fall of Babylon, which was done in the form of a corresponding dating. In accordance with the list of nations in the CoW (and in the tradition of the other Jeremiah oracles), the *fall* of Elam had to be predicted first; however, the text’s main focus was not on the negative prophecy regarding the former state of Elam (although it might indeed have referred to Elamite contingents fighting in the Babylonian army),²⁰⁷ but rather on a theological explanation of a world-changing transformation that had actually

convincing, since Elam is explicitly mentioned immediately afterwards. Perhaps Zimri could be identified with Zamru, which is mentioned in Neo-Assyrian sources as a royal city in the region of Zamua (A.M. Bagg, *Répertoire Géographique des Textes Cunéiformes*, vol. 7/3–2: *Die Orts- und Gewässernamen der neuassyrischen Zeit, Teil 3: Babylonien, Urartu und die östlichen Gebiete*, Heft 2 (Wiesbaden: Reichert, 2020), 617); note also Scheil’s idea (Scheil, *MDP* 9, 65) that this could be the area of origin of the Zari people who occur in the “Acropolis Archive” of Susa. (Currently the latter are thought to be West Semitic semi-nomads on the Babylonian-Elamite border; see Henkelman, “Defining Neo-Elamite History”, 257; Zadok, “The Babylonia-Elam Connections”, 124).

²⁰⁶ The fact that Babylon does not appear in the CoW passage in JerG indirectly confirms this interpretation: when the author of JerG redacted the original list from a shared previous version, he only “updated” the existing entries; the fact that Babylonia should also have been part of the nations listed here that found their way into the Persian Empire was apparently overlooked.

²⁰⁷ Perhaps the possessive suffix in “the bow of Elam, the beginning of their might” does not refer to Elam at all, but (implicitly) to Babylon; for the presence of Elamite guards at the court of Nebuchadnezzar, see above section 3.5.

taken place as a divinely ordained destiny that also provided for the liberation of the peoples held captive by Babylon. Likewise under the impression of the real-life events (i.e., the rise of the Persian Empire instead of a continued domination by Babylonia), “Zimri”, “Elam” and “Media” in the list of nations in the CoW were replaced in JerG by “Elam” and the “Persians”, who, although they were not really “destroyed” by the sword of YHWH, were nevertheless – like all the other peoples – absorbed into the empire founded by Cyrus. In order to match with the actual historical situation, the kings of the “North” were replaced in this version by the kings of the “East”, a region that (at least from a Western perspective) had not played a significant role in the history of the Near and Middle East before. With the addition of the heading “Against the nations of Elam” and the rearrangement of the OAN in JerG, the focus of the prophecies was finally reinterpreted from Babylonia away to the emergence of the new empire that now ruled over “all nations on the face of the earth” (according to the prophecies by divine will) and was in this function supposed to determine the future of the Judean people.

7 Conclusion

The present paper has shown that the difficulties which the “oracle against Elam” presents to modern interpreters are caused by the fact that “Elam” is not a particularly well-defined term. From a Western perspective, “Elam” could be used as a term for specific polities in the southeastern Zagros, but also for a larger regional unit. If one follows the argumentation presented above, the “oracle against Elam” intentionally plays with the ambiguity of the term, creating a new meaning in every single verse.

Thus, “Elam” in the “oracle against Elam” designates

1. a concrete *Neo-Elamite polity* whose territory reached approximately from the Behbahan plain up to Dēr in the Western Zagros, and/or a *contingent of troops* stemming from this area in the Neo-Babylonian army,
2. a region even further east (*former Anšan*) where Persians and Elamites lived side by side and from which the founder of the Persian Empire, *Cyrus the Great*, stemmed,
3. the *centre of his newly founded empire*,²⁰⁸ from which God acted after he had (euphemistically) “moved his throne” there and then gotten rid of its former king and his nobles (i.e., *Babylon*), and

208 At least from the perspective of the Judeans who witnessed the fall of Babylon; the real center of his empire was probably Pasargadae where Cyrus had some palaces built within a large garden complex and where he was finally buried. For a general overview on the

4. *the Persian Empire* as the polity that – in the eyes of the Judean redactor of the Book of Jeremiah who added the oracle to the text – was responsible to fulfil YHWH's "prediction" and free the Judeans from the Babylonian exile.

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importance of Pasargadae in ancient and modern times, see, e.g., Stronach/Gopnik, "Pasargadae" and the studies collected in A. Mozaffari, *World Heritage in Iran: Perspectives on Pasargadae* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2014).

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