

A Study of the Livestock Community of Susa in Proto-Elamite Period

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Abstract

Proto Elamite period in the second half of the "fourth millennium B.C.". between "3300 and 3000 B.C.", was formed which can be considered as a revolution in political and civil life. Shush in southwestern Iran is one of the most prominent areas, representing all the important indicators of Proto Elamite. Investigating and analyzing the livelihood, society and social classes of the people of Proto Elamite period living in Susa and why the society of Susa simultaneously with the formation of urban communities and the emergence of writing in the plateau of Iran and Khuzestan with the reduction of the size of the settlements is one of the most important goals of this article. Existence of special data indicates the specific administrative system and management technique, type of livelihood and class life and the emergence of social and political distinctions. The special architecture of this period indicates the existence of a bureaucratic system among the Khans of Proto Elamite period in Susa. In the present study, the authors try to review and finally analyze the political and living structure of this particular area by using descriptive analytical method and collecting information by documentary method from the excavations of Susa. Indeed, the seals and impressions and tablets, which before this period were merely counting and in this period became ideograms and writing, are a clear indication of the change in life and type of livelihood and life of the people of Susa in Proto Elamite period, In some of the tablets obtained, the textual contents of the wages paid by more than a thousand workers for doing work have been recorded, and on the written texts based on the counting, herds with a very large number of livestock have been remembered, which represents a large class or perhaps governmental society and represents a society with urban complexities.

Key Words: Susa archeology, Proto-Elamite period, Livelihood, Susa findings

Introduction

Susa is an important region with many ancient values in the southwestern part of Iran, where archeological excavations began in the late nineteenth century. But the word "Proto Elamite" was first named after the discovery of certain management data from the excavations of the Acropolis hill of Susa in 1905 (Scheil 1905: 60). Supplying economic needs is one of the most important issues that human have been dependent on throughout history, and with the spread of societies' culture, this dependence became more intertwined and complex, culminating in prehistoric society in the late millennium. It is related to the "fourth century B.C.". Because human beings in this period more than before realized the importance of economics in their lives and by making more use of the environment and climate, they achieved tremendous progress, among which some with economic distinction to class and social distinction. According to Jacobs, social differentiation is rooted in economic differentiation, and social development and urban growth both ultimately depend on economic development (Jacobs 2000: 18-22).

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Objectives of the research

The main objective of this research is to investigate and analyze the livelihood, society and social classes of the people of the Proto Elamite period living in Susa, and why, at the same time as the formation of urban communities and the appearance of the Khat in the plateau of Iran and Khuzestan, the size of the settlements is decreasing.

Research question: What livelihood changes have been achieved in the lives of the people living in the Sush plain with the emergence of writing? And can the reason for this change in livelihood be related to the change in their lifestyle?

Hypothesis

According to the findings obtained from the Proto Elamite period, Sush indicates a society that has achieved significant progress in terms of management techniques and Sush society has reached a great class level.

Research method

In this research, the aim is to reconstruct the livelihood of the people of Susa in the Proto Elamite period, but because the excavations and findings of the Susa were conducted classically and practically lack scientific research, similar findings were found in sites such as Melian and Yahya, which were important sites in the Proto Elamite period, has also been used and in some way the findings of these two sites have been cited to propose the hypothesis of livelihood and politics in the Susa site.

Proto Elamite

The term Proto Elamite was coined in the early twentieth century for a writing system and then used to name a cultural identity based on the same archaeological data. In general, the term has several meanings. For example, some sometimes use the term to refer to civilization, and sometimes cautiously to use the term to refer to a particular phenomenon. The only common definition between them is based on a kind of structure of administrative organization and includes a special type of stamps and counting writing tablets, which are sometimes accompanied by signs (Holving 1383: 150). After John Alden surveys the Susa Plain during the Susa III period, he shows that Susa is the only large area, and there are two small areas to the east, KS-308 and KS-396. The other 29 sites are all very small, with an area of less than one hectare, and are often marked by one or two pieces of pottery from the Susa III period, indicating that it may have been established occasionally or for a short time. The distribution area of Susa III pottery was less than 0.2 hectares from the hill surface and KS-49 area was a relatively larger settlement, with about half a hectare or more. Thus, the sum of small areas probably contains a little more than one hectare of the total permanent habitat, indicating that the majority of the population of the Susa plain is concentrated only in Susa hill, which is also the size of a small town. Compared to previous periods, Shush hill has had a severe population decline (Alden 2011: 322).

Analytical study of Proto Elamite inscriptions

Examining Proto Elamite texts, we find that a complex society has been formed and the main textual contents of Proto Elamite inscriptions are related to the production, storage and distribution of food (Dahl 2015) and then the management of human labor and animal herds is included. The food issues recorded in the texts are mostly limited to cereals, plant products and dairy products.

Conclusion

The workable point in the Susa area and of course other areas of Proto Elamite period is that they all used a single management system, including the unique impression seals that did not exist before and probably native to the Iranian plateau, and also they all used the same system, writing with the same signs; They used the same collection system and the same type of writing, which is the most similar to the tablets Proto Elamite sites related to livestock signs, which are actually the main expression of livelihood in Susa; Which really depicts the cattle breeding of the people of this period. Among the other findings of this architectural period are large buildings, inside most of them, seal, impression seal, tablets of Proto Elamite and other management technique data have been obtained. All these available data and documents show the type of politics governing Susa and livelihood in Proto Elamite period. Because large buildings and memorial structures along with administrative findings are proof

of the existence of rulers who had administrative systems and were established in those buildings, and it is based on having a specific and bureaucratic policy.

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