

Role and status of druids (priests) in ancient Elam

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Abstract: Elam is an ancient land, full of integrations of beliefs, opinions and religious rituals under the influence of its neighboring countries including Mesopotamia and Sumer. Elam is like a signet remained since third millennium BC, located in southwestern of Iranian plateau. Rapid development of culture and civilization and establishing villages and also evolution of villages to cities led Elamite society to a hierarchical structure, administrative and religious hierarchies which druids were praised on top of this structure. Due to this power, druids abused common people and changed total structure of Elamite society in policy, economy and power divisions. This research tends to briefly investigate social hierarchies, role and status of druids and their wealth, trade and influence (or penetration) in governmental system and finding out that why their thoughts prevailed in Elamite society.

Key words: *Elam; Religion; Priests; Social Classes; Politics*

1. Introduction

Elamites represented religious and tribal society and stratification is a usual term for such society, because following conquering cities, the ruling class established its significant place as a wealthy and religious class of the society. Some of their exploitation terms include establishment of slavery system and unfair distribution of wealth in such hierarchies. On the other side, considering sacred place of druids and commons know them God-like people. Druids exploited people's beliefs to gain their extra agricultural crops and vows. It is to be noted that religious aristocracy (reign of clergies) is an obvious term for such people. Considering written documents and images sculpted in clay inscriptions and also cemeteries, we are able to find out hierarchies of druids, artisans, dealers and slaves.

2. Structure of clergies in social hierarchies

Our knowledge of Elamite clergy structure is limited. There were one or maybe more than one necromancer druids. The commander Ashpum had one of those druids, named "Agigi". We know nothing about working methods of necromancer druids. They may find out the truth by looking to blood of victims or finding some signs in it or they may tell the fortune through ecstasy. Also, druids had their control on vast endowed lands of Gods. In old Elamite era in Susa, there was a vast farming land belonging to a Goddess, named "Annie Notum" and druids rent parts of this land on the behalf of the Goddess. Elamite word for druids through Elamite history was "Shaten". Women druids (nuns) (in Akkadian language called "Shaten" which means girls

of temple) performed economic affairs. According to remained sources, they owned lands and traded lands. There is doubts about the truth about naked women appeared "as servants of Goddess the Great" beside a horned temple on a cylindrical seal belonging to the Elamite era (Majid Zadeh, 2007).

Note that discretion of social status mostly in structure and completion of different social effect for administrative staffs practically relate to administrative organization which to somehow implies total agreement with decisions of the system. It is expected to see the same discretion between significant commanders along with high exploitation of social sources by noble people which shows their status. Social discretion presents best data about the era in case of lack of finding information from graves, buildings and their artifacts. Also, in theocratic society of Elam administrative support activities include construction of temples and other general works which were constructed to legitimate status of social hierarchies (Frank Haul, 2003).

We have no accurate data to find out how these high rank clergies reached to political management through agricultural comorbidity and in what conditions these clergies changed from servants of the society to comorbid governor (Eskandari, 1998).

Discoveries related to second half of the fourth millennium BC (including a cylindrical seal which shows an archer clergy in entry of Susa's temple and a ring tablet belonging to religious rituals) show that Elamite aristocracy came from specialized origin of clergies which was one the most important tasks of "Zhenti" society.

Note that Elamite aristocracy divided into two branches including spiritual and pariance ones under the control of royal court.

Constitution of cities and governments on second half of the fourth millennium and particularly

* Corresponding Au thor.

establishment of the great Elamite government on the first half of the third millennium (2850 BC) shows decomposition of tribal society, start of stratification in it and its change to hierarchical society. There are some evidences and documents belonging to the middle of the fourth millennium showing existence of a noble class for druids of temples (Hints, 2009).

3. Economy and druids

It is to be noted that there were a number of druids and their staffs in the capital city (Susa). High druid was on top of this scope. Even in Elamite documents, his title is "Pashisho Rabo", based on Akkadian records. Common druids were called by their Elamite title as "Shaten". Undoubtedly, second high druid was called "Shatroro", which received sacrificed cows in places conquered by second Šutruk-Nehunte and he placed column like statue of Elamite king. Until middle of second millennium BC, November belonged to preparation of farm lands of Gods, December belonged to plowing and seeding operations of the lands. Elamites should prepare dedicated lands of temples at first (lands owned by druids) and then, they were allowed to plow and cultivate their own lands. In this order, April belonged to harvesting barely lands of temples and lands of common people of Elam should wait until May to be harvested.

Not only druids, but women druids (nuns) were servants of Elamite Gods. These women druids like other men druids administered temple affairs. According to a record, nuns ordered high amounts of barley and received them from people.

Also, gifts of temple Gods given by people through religious rituals were mostly made of pottery, gold, silver and bronze made in form of containers and statues and scarifications included sheep, goats and the like. Most of demanders put the above gifts in alters of their own God or Gods as bribery and ransom in order to satisfy them and on the other side of the story, these gifts and endowments were collected by druids which owned treasury and revenues of temples and all these provided a noble life for druids, full of joys and riches.

On the other hand, maintenance and keeping all these revenues and also distribution of a share of it between staffs should have been performed based on their hierarchies and religious tasks and also based on their rank. Considering lack of information about hierarchies and administrative and religious tasks of staffs of temples but based on remaining records, governing temple of high druid named "Pashishugal" (apparently, he was responsible for scarification rituals) was the first of them. Other druids named "Shaten" performed other religious and administrative affairs under his supervision. Records show that temples owned vast range of movable properties including loans, agricultural crops and cash money and they used these properties in forms of usury capitals in private deals

and their business but they also added their properties through receiving properties of debtors and added them to their immovable properties.

4. Religion and policy

Upon foundation of reign or monarchy, Elamite aristocracy divided into two branches: military aristocracy and court aristocracy including king family, court and military high ranks, local kings or commanders, tribal chiefs and on the other hand, clergy aristocracy of each region under the supervision of the high druid named "Pashi Shu Rabu", and finally local temples which included other druids and administrative heads of temples. Actually each of these two Elamite aristocracies and nobles under the leadership of the king, they formed a unified class. There is no clarified reason to show how the government became more powerful than clergies. There are several possible reasons including independency of different religious temples in different parts of Elam and also independency of local temples and lack of possibility to unify them (in case of having different Gods) and also, the necessity to unify different cities and governments of Elam to conflict with powerful forces of Sumer and Akkad. All these were initially based on military requirements but led to superiority of the reign.

Also, considering changes in clergy government and its gradual variation to reign, their religious properties were enforced and changed to reign.

Considering that "Ishak" (religious and administrative head of temple) owned positions of religious leader, military commander and responsible for judicial affairs, he had no difference with a real king. There was no difference if military commander was independent from the temple or Ishak himself was the commander of the army at the same time.

During the times of the king "Nakhunte", two Gods were important in royal and administrative written documents. These two Gods include Huban and Inshushinak and some kings may praise these Gods in a higher rank of their own. They did this in order to attract people's beliefs and stabilize their own political government (Glen, 2008).

5. Conclusion

Curse was an effective weapon in Elam just like any other ancient eras. Power of a pray to a powerful God had the same value with it and considering that the king was representative of God on earth, it was a good and reasonable way for truth worthy of tribal heads, kings or a commander.

Meanwhile, some of Elamite kings took their own names from Gods in order to show peoples their mercies to Gods for example Kutik Inshushinak, Tebti Huban Inshushinak, Indatra Inshushinak, Halotush Inshushinak, Hutel Utush Inshushinak, Atahamiti Inshushinak, Tampet Humban Inshushinak, Indatunapir, Tan Ruh Uratir, Kutir

Nahhunte, first and second ŠutrukNahhunte and etc. even daughters of Elamite kings selected their names from Goddesses including Utu Hi Hi Pi Ni Kir which is daughter of Shilhak Inshushinak, king of Šutruk dynasty

Elamite kings asked Gods to protect their buildings and properties in a way that Kutik Inshushinak put curse on people who damage his buildings and properties and asked his Gods to protect them including Inshushinak, Narite, Narunte, Nati, Shamsh, Nergal, Ishtar, Siin, Anelil, EA and Ninhursag. Elamites believed that their Gods have a mysterious and supernatural power named "Kitin" and Elamite kings are representatives of "Kitin" and every one who dishonors them will die (Sarraf, 2012).

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