LINEAR ELAMITE WRITING

François Desset

CHAPTER TWENTY

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INTRODUCTION

Discovered at the beginning of the 20th century in the French excavations of Susa (Scheil 1905b), Linear Elamite writing had been for a long time associated with the Proto-Elamite tablets (de Mecquenem 1956: 200; Gelb 1963: 89) before being recognized by Hinz (1962) as an independent system ('elamische Strichschrift'). Since it is still undeciphered today, the current label implying its use to record the Elamite language is quite misleading. For this reason, the label "LE writing" will be used here, to avoid the use of the glottonym Elamite (see Desset 2012).

First labelled by Scheil in 1905 with Latin alphabet letters, 32 LE inscriptions are currently known (Tab. 20.1 and Fig. 20.1). Of these, 18 were found in the old excavations of Susa,[1] one in Shahdad, four (or three) in Konar Sandal[2] and nine are without any known provenience (inscription Q might have been found near Persepolis; see Hinz 1969) and consequently suspected to be forged (Figure 20.2) (see Dahl 2009: 27 and Moqaddam 2009: 54). Assertions that a sherd found on the surface of Gonur Depe (Klochkov 1998: 165–167) and artefacts from Ra's al Junayz in Oman (Glassner 2002a: 137–138 and 2002b: 363–368) are related to the LE writing are incorrect, and they will not be considered here. This chapter also includes the complete edition of the texts X, Y and Z, which were only partially published up to now (Mahboubian 2004: 50–55 and Desset 2012: 120–123), while the complete copies of W and A' are still missing.

DATING

As the first LE inscriptions found in Susa are related to the Susian leader Puzur-Inšušinak, contemporary with Ur-Nammu of Ur and Gudea of Lagaš and consequently dated around 2100 BC in Middle Chronology, LE writing is usually restricted to the end of the 3rd millennium BC. But only 10 Susian texts can be related with certainty to Puzur-Inšušinak (A, B, C, E, F, G, H, I, P and U). Except for these inscriptions, nothing associates necessarily the 22 other texts to the epoch of that ruler. The texts found in Shahdad and Konar Sandal (S, B', C', D' and E') come from archaeological contexts dated to the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, while the silver vessels with LE inscriptions X, Y, Z and F' and the Indus-related seal with the LE inscription

Table 20.1 List of the 32 Linear Elamite inscriptions.

Text	*Material*	*Description*	*Found in regular digs?*	*Discovery place*	*Bigraphic? (cuneiform or geometric text)*	*Puzur-Inshushinak's mention (dating) in akkadian?*	*First publication*	*Remark*
A	stone?	slab (fragmentary statue?)	yes	Susa (?)	yes	direct mention	Scheil 1905 MDP 6	
B	stone?	fragmentary votive boulder?	yes	Susa (?)	yes	indirect mention (joint by André and Salvini 1989)	Scheil 1905 MDP 6	
C	alabaster	fragmentary statue	yes	Susa (?)	yes	indirect mention	Scheil 1908 MDP 10	
D	sandstone	fragmentary votive boulder?	yes	Susa (?)	no	no	Scheil 1908 MDP 10	
E	sandstone	slab (?)	yes	Susa (?)	no	no	Scheil 1908 MDP 10	
F	sandstone	step (?)	yes	Susa (?)	no	direct mention (cf. André and Salvini 1989)	Scheil 1908 MDP 10	
G	sandstone	step (?)	yes	Susa (?)	no	direct mention (cf. André and Salvini 1989)	Scheil 1908 MDP 10	
H	sandstone	step (?)	yes	Susa (?)	no	direct mention (cf. André and Salvini 1989)	Scheil 1908 MDP 10	
I	limestone	female figure statue (goddess?)	yes	Susa (Acropolis, tr. 93)	yes	direct mention	Scheil 1913 MDP 14	
J	clay	cone	yes	Susa (Acropolis)	no	no	Scheil 1935 MDP 26	
K	clay	fragmentary cone	yes	Susa (Acropolis)	no	no	Scheil 1935 MDP 26	
L	clay	fragmentary cone (?)	yes	Susa (Acropolis)	no	no	Scheil 1935 MDP 26	
M	clay	fragmentary lens (?)	yes	Susa (Acropolis)	no	no	Scheil 1935 MDP 26	
N	clay	tablet	yes	Susa (Acropolis)	no	no	Scheil 1935 MDP 26	
O	clay	tablet	yes	Susa (Donjon)	no	no	Scheil 1935 MDP 26	**It is not linear Elamite !**

P	gypsum	?	yes	Susa (Acropolis, 'chantier 1')	no	no	de Mecquenem 1956	
Q	silver	vase	no	Persepolis (?)	no	no	Hinz 1969	
R	clay	tablet	yes	Susa (Louvre?)	no	no	Hinz 1969	
S	clay	ceramic pot	yes	Shahdad (cemetary A, gr. 30)	no	no	Hinz 1971	
T	limestone	?	yes	Susa (Louvre?)	no	no	André et Salvini 1989	
U	limestone	step (?)	yes	Susa (Louvre?)	no	direct mention (cf. André and Salvini 1989)	André et Salvini 1989	
V	stone?	'Indus' related seal	no	?	no	no	Winkelmann 1999	
W	silver	vase	no	?	no	no	cf. CDLI	
X	silver	vase	no	?	no	no	Mahboubian 2004	
Y	silver	vase	no	?	no	no	Mahboubian 2004	
Z	silver	vase	no	?	no	no	Mahboubian 2004	
A'	metal	vase	no	?	no	no	Phoenix Ancient Art catalog 2007 No. 1 item no. 47	
B'	clay	tablet	yes	Konar Sandal, tr. XV	yes	no	Madjidzadeh 2011	
C'	clay	tablet	yes	Konar Sandal, tr. XV	yes	no	Madjidzadeh 2011	
D'	clay	tablet	no	Konar Sandal, tr. XV (?)	yes	no	Madjidzadeh 2011	
E'	clay	tablet (brick?)	yes	Konar Sandal south	no	no	Madjidzadeh 2011	**linear Elamite uncertain**
F'	silver	vase	no	?	no	no	Vallat 2011	
G'	gold	seal	no	?	no	no	Christie's 2011, 14/04/2011, lot n° 321	

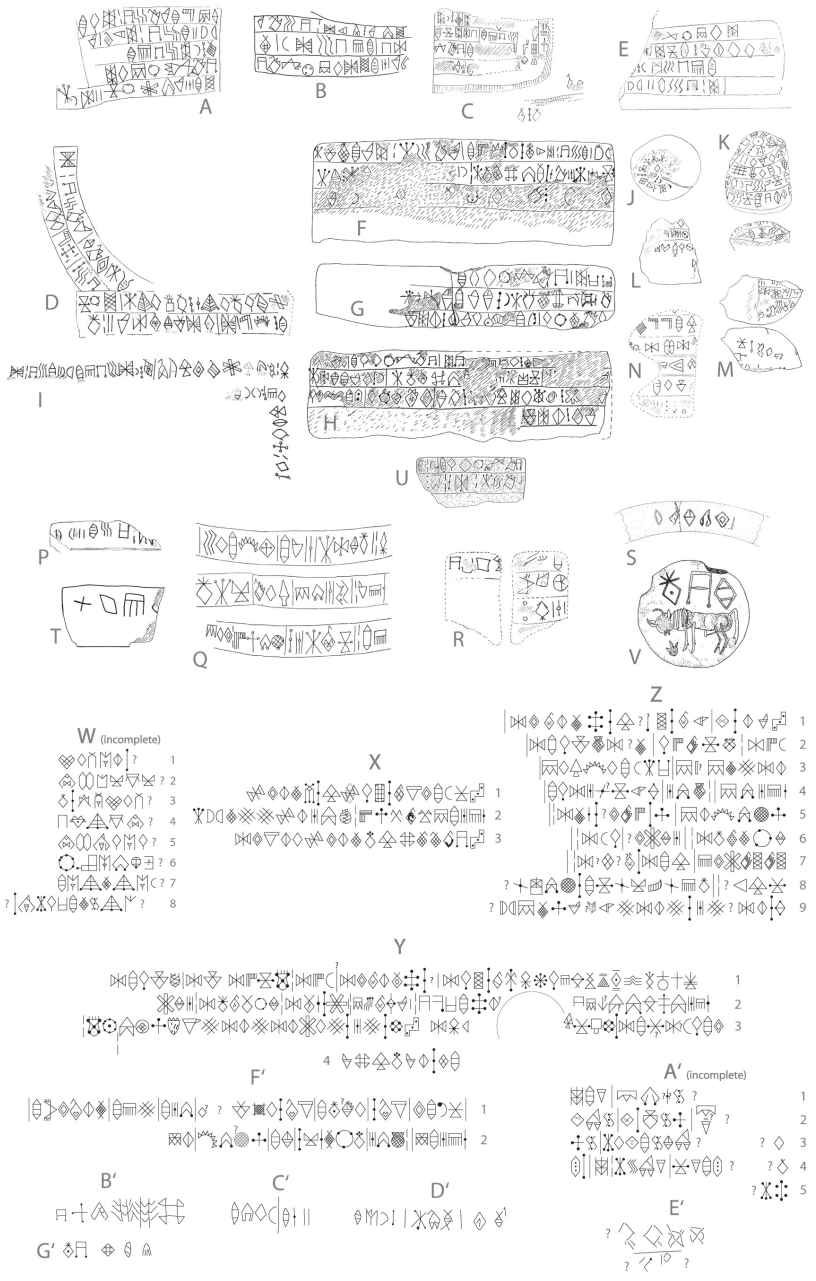

Figure 20.1 The 32 Linear Elamite inscriptions known in 2015 (with the drawings of Meriggi 1971, Pls. 1, 2, 3 and 4 for the inscriptions A to E and I to R, André and Salvini 1989, Figs. 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 for F, G, H, T and U, Hiebert and Lamberg-Karlovsky 1992, Fig. 4 for S, Winkelmann 1999, Figs. 1 and 2 for V; the other drawings, from W to G', are by the author). They are not represented with the same scale.

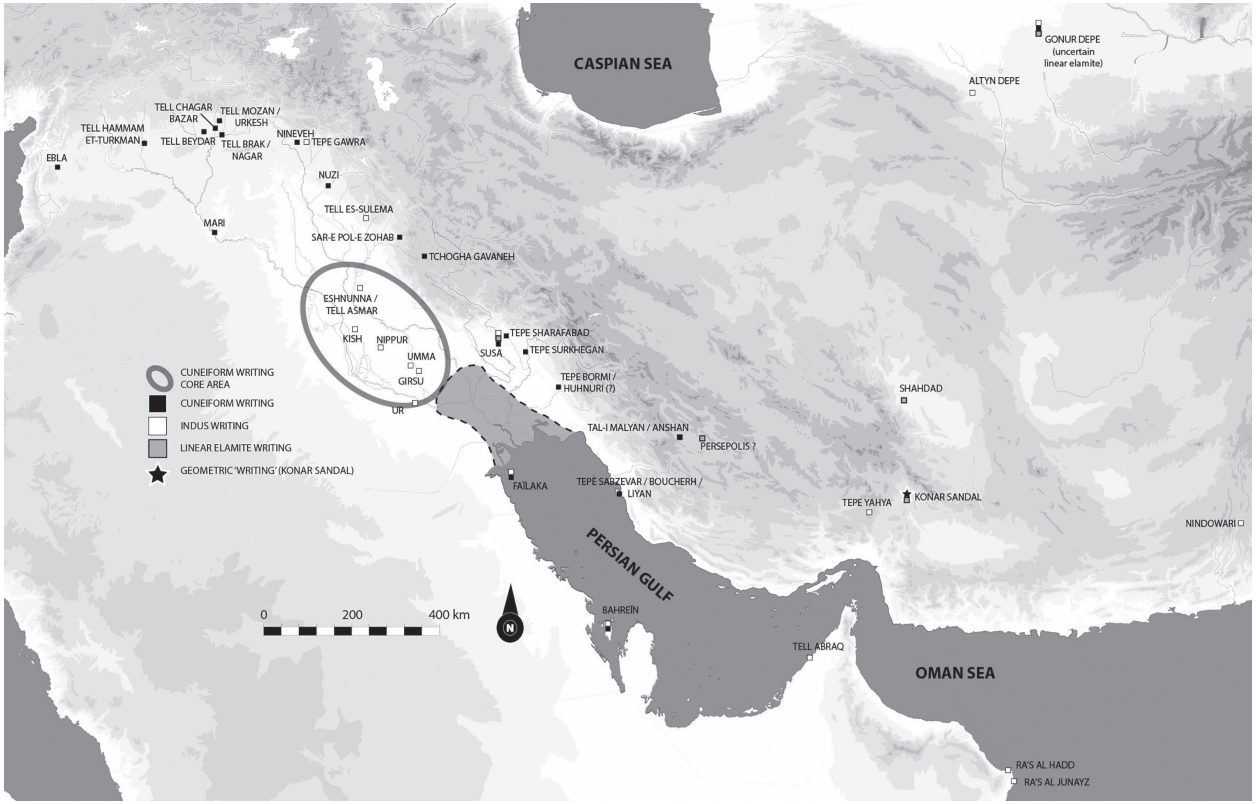

Figure 20.2 Near Eastern writing systems map showing between the second half of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC the sites where have been found cuneiform texts, Indus writing inscriptions (see Joshi and Parpola 1987), LE inscriptions and the recently discovered geometric writing.

V might be dated by comparison around the end of the 3rd and the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC (Winkelmann 1999: 23).

The data currently available consequently show that this writing system was used at least between 2500–2400 and 1900–1800 BC in southern Iran. The hypothesis of a genetic link between Proto-Elamite writing, which disappeared around 2800 BC, and LE writing is furthermore far from being proven. It could be only accepted if similar-shaped signs in Proto-Elamite and LE writings had the same logogrammatic or phonetic value(s). As these writing systems are still not deciphered, a cautionary approach considers LE writing as a system created ad hoc in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC, without any known ancestor or heir.

WRITING SYSTEM

Based on the number of signs used, LE writing was probably a mixed system composed of many phonetic value signs (syllabograms) and few logogrammatic value ones (Salvini 1998). While Hinz (1969: 44) accounted for 56 signs + 5 variants and Meriggi (1971: 203–205 and 220; if we exclude the signs of the inscription O) 73 signs, including 19 variants and five logograms, the sign list presented in this chapter (Figure 20.3; updating the list published in Desset 2012: 102) includes 258 signs plus a dividing stroke. The signs are organized according to their shape and not to their hypothetical logogrammatic or phonetic value(s).

As this apparent high number of signs could undermine the supposed general phonetic aspect of the LE writing, it should be recalled that this list includes all the signs and their apparent and non-apparent graphical variants (see below) for chronological or geographical reasons (LE writing was used for at least several centuries and the distance from Susa to Konar Sandal is 1,000 km as the crow flies). Consequently, the real number of LE signs used in a given place at a given time was probably around 100–150 signs. This situation might be roughly compared to the 2nd millennium BC Mycenaean Linear B with its 87 syllabic signs and around 120 logograms.

A vertical stroke was sometimes used to separate words (such as in D, Q, Z, A', C', D' or F') or to separate clauses or sentences (in B, C, F, G, H, I), while in A, E and X, the main semantic elements were distinguished by a carriage return to the next line. Standing apart, Y displays a continuous unbroken sequence of signs. No numeral notation seems to have been recorded in the inscriptions known up to now (even in the more modest clay texts J, K, L, M, N, R, S, B', C', D' and E') since repetitions of the same sign are extremely rare, excluding any additive numeral notation (which was the system then used in the cuneiform and Proto-Elamite writings). LE writing was generally meant to be read from right to left (in rare cases it was, however, written from left to right, such as in the 4th line of Y, one of the rectilinear lines of D as well as probably inscriptions B and J) and from the top to the bottom.

DECIPHERMENT

LE writing has usually been considered undeciphered since Vallat's (1986: 345) criticism of previous decipherment attempts such as those by Hinz (1962 and 1969) and Meriggi (1971). These were mainly based on the bigraphical inscriptions of Puzur-Inšušinak found in Susa (cuneiform inscriptions written in Akkadian/LE inscriptions written in an unknown language). Among them, the complete LE text A is exceptional

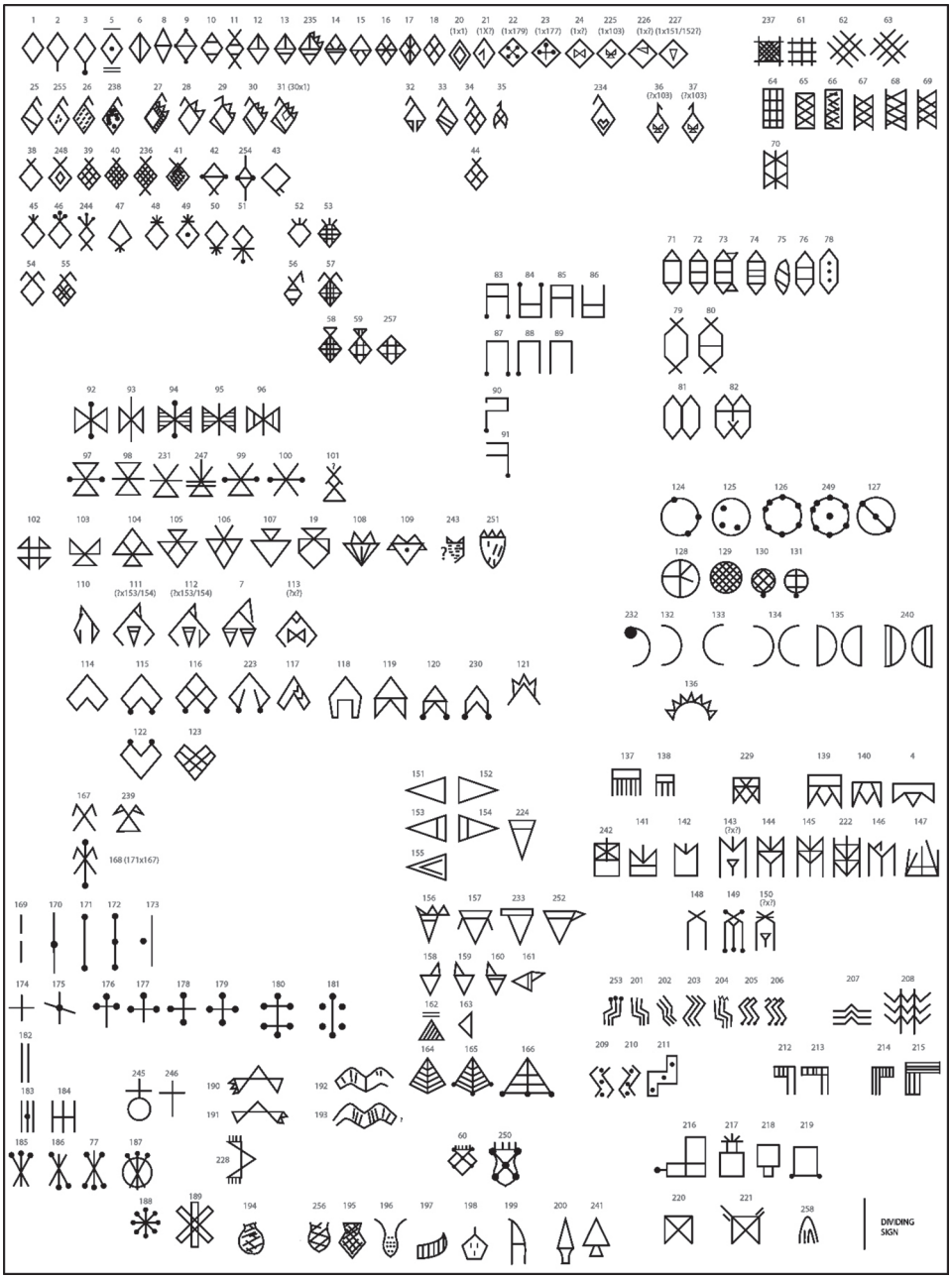

Figure 20.3 LE signs list.

Table 20.2 Distribution of the Linear Elamite signs in the 32 inscriptions

1: A, B, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, L, M, N, Q, R, T, U, X, Y, A', C', F'	2: A, D, G, H, L, U, W	3: X, Y, Z
4: A'	5: Y	6: E, G, H, I, K, W, X, Y, Z, F'
7: A'	8: A	9: Z
10: V	11: D'	12: D, S
13: D, F, G, H, Q, A', F'	14: Y, Z	15: H
16: H	17: F	18: H, Y, Z
19: A'	20: D, I, K, Q, S, X, Y, Z, F'	21: D'
22: Y	23: Q	24: Z
25: Y	26: Z	27: Z
28: A, B, G, H	29:D, F, G, H, U	30: Q
31: C	32: D'	33: D, I
34: F, J	35: B, I	36: Q, Y, Z
37: D	38: C	39: G, W, X, Z
40: A, C, Z	41: Z	42: Y
43: E'	44: I	45: W, A'
46: X, Y, F'	47: R	48: D, F, H, Q, Z
49: V, F', G'	50: I, Q, Y	51: Y
52: G, M	53: K	54: D
55: F, X, Z	56: D'	57: B
58: K	59: K	60: Z
61: K	62: X	63: Y, Z, F'
64: X	65: Y	66: Z
67: B	68: D, K	69: A
70: A, C, E, F, G, H, J	71: Q, Z	72: A, B, C, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, N, P, Q, U, W, X, Y, Z, A', F'
73: K	74: F, H	75: S, C', D', G'
76: K, N, W, Y, F'	77: A'	78: G, H, A'
79: D, K	80: F, G, L	81: W
82: N	83: A, B, C, D, F, G, H, I, K, P, R, U, V, X, B', G'	84: G, Z
85: Y	86: W, Y	87: A, C, I
88: B	89: C, E, W	90: K
91: Y	92: A, C, D, H, M, N, Q, U	93: Z
94: B	95: B, D, I	96: X, Y, Z
97: C, D, F, H, K, Q, Y, Z	98: A, E	99: M, Y, Z, A'
100: Y	101: Y	102: F, G, H, X, Y, B'
103: J, Q, W, Z, F'	104: H, I, N, X, Y, Z	105: G, H, Y, Z
106: D, F, F'	107: N	108: K
109: W	110: S	111: W
112: W	113: W	114: I
115: A, B, D, F, G, H, Q, W	116: N	117: B'
118: C'	119: X	120: Y, Z
121: W	122: L	123: W
124: A, D, E, G, H, U, Y, Z, F'	125: B, F	126: W
127: L	128: R	129: Z

130: Q
131: W
132: A, C, F, G, H, I, K, D'
133: B, E, G, J, U, X, Y, C'
134: I, M
135: A, E, F, I, P, X
136: D, F, Q, Z, F'
137: A, B, C, E, Q, Z, F'
138: I, T, X, Y
139: A, B, E, X, Y, Z
140: K, Q
141: F, H
142: W
143: W
144: W
145: W
146: D'
147: K
148: W
149: X
150: W
151: J
152: H
153: A, B, Y
154: F
155: N
156: K
157: W
158: A, B, C, D, F, G, H
159: Q
160: Y, Z
161: Z
162: Y
163: Y
164: D
165: D
166: W
167: X
168: Y
169: A, B, D, E, F, I, Q, U,
170: D, F, G, Q, X, Y, Z, C', F'
171: F, I, M, W, Y, Z, A', D' W, X, Y, Z, A', F'
172: A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, Q, U, W, X, Y, Z, F'
173: J
174: T
175: Z
176: Q, Z
177: X, F'
178: A', B'
179: I, Y
180: D, Y, Z
181: K, A'
182: A, D, E, K, M, P, C'
183: A, B, F, H, Q, R, X, Y, Z, F'
184: K
185: A, D, F, G, H, J, Q, U, W, X, Z
186: D'
187: H
188: Y
189: A, D, F, H, I, M, Y, Z
190: A, C, U
191: B, H
192: G
193: H
194: X
195: Z, F'
196: D
197: Z
198: G
199: I
200: Q
201: A, D, E, F, I, K, P, U, A'
202: B, F, H, I
203: C, E, Q
204: D
205: K
206: K, M
207: Y
208: B'
209: W, A'
210: I, M, Q
211: X, Y, Z
212: A, D
213: N
214: Q, Y, Z
215: X
216: W
217: D
218: Y
219: K
220: E'
221: E'
222: A'
223: A'
224: A'
225: A'
226: A'
227: A'
228: F'
229: F'
230: F'
231: X, F'
232: F'
233: X, F'
234: F'
235: F'
236: F'
237: F'
238: X
239: X
240: Z
241: Z
242: Z
243: Z
244: Y
245: Y
246: Y
247: Y
248: Y
249: Y
250: Y
251: Y
252: Y
253: Y
254: Y
255: Y
256: Y
257: G'
258: G'

Dividing sign: B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, Q, S, U, Y, Z, A', C', D', F'

since it is written on the same stone slab as a complete cuneiform Akkadian inscription recording notably the names of Inšušinak, Puzur-Inšušinak, Susa and Simb/pišhuk (as well as the theonyms INANA/Ištar, Narude, and Nergal), supposed to appear also in the LE text in a close phonetical form, whatever the language recorded might have been (Scheil 1905a: 8–10; Meriggi 1971: 186; Sollberger and Kupper 1971: 124–125).

Thanks to LE text A, Bork (1905) could identify in 1905 the signs probably recording the sounds *šu* (signs 201–203), *ši* (signs 83–86), *na* (sign 169) and *a/ik* (sign 70), the sequence sometimes preceded by two signs interpreted by Frank (1912) in 1912 as a divine determinative (sign 158) and the sound *in* (signs 28–30), the whole sequence corresponding to the theonym ^{d}*In-šu-ši-na-a/ik*. Meriggi (1971: 207) noticed that sign 185 could be used sometimes in the place of signs 83–86 (inscriptions F, H and U) and attributed to it the phonetic value *(u)š*, implying that the name of the god of Susa could be spelled either ^{d}Inšušinak or ^{d}Inšušnak (Figure 20.4). Such an alternation was also observed between the sign 70 and the signs 94–95 (Figure 20.5), which are probably graphical variants of the same sign (since they exclude each other) and

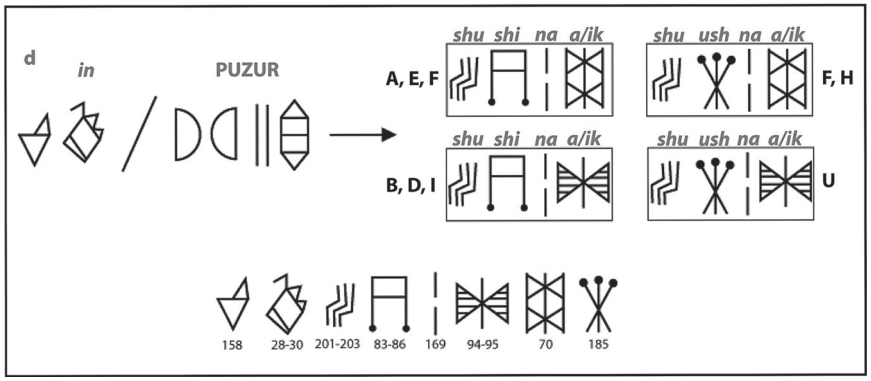

Figure 20.4 Different writings of ^{d}In/PUZUR šušinak and texts where they are displayed.

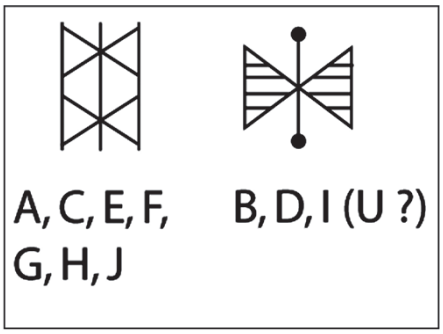

Figure 20.5 LE signs 70 (on the left) and 94–95 (on the right) and texts where they are displayed.

not two different signs. This would prove that, even in the chancellery of Puzur-Inšušinak in Susa, two variants were used for the same sign.

Thanks to the theonym Inšušinak, we can gain a better understanding of this graphical variation phenomenon. In inscription A', this theonym was probably also recorded. Comparing the way it was written here with its Susian counterpart, it notably reveals graphical variation in the shape of the sign recording the sound *in* (Figure 20.6). Once this variation is understood, it seems that a Susian/Western variant of this sign may be distinguished from a Kermanian/Eastern one, helping to estimate roughly the geographical origin of the unprovenienced inscriptions. As the signs probably used to write the sound *in* in the inscriptions Q and Z are closer to the Susian variants than to the Kermanian ones, it can be hypothesized that these inscriptions were probably written in south-western Iran; as the signs probably used to write the sound *in* in the inscriptions W and A' are closer to the Kermanian variants than to the Susian ones, it can be hypothesized that these inscriptions were probably written in south-eastern Iran (Fig 20.7). This regional variation phenomenon likely applies

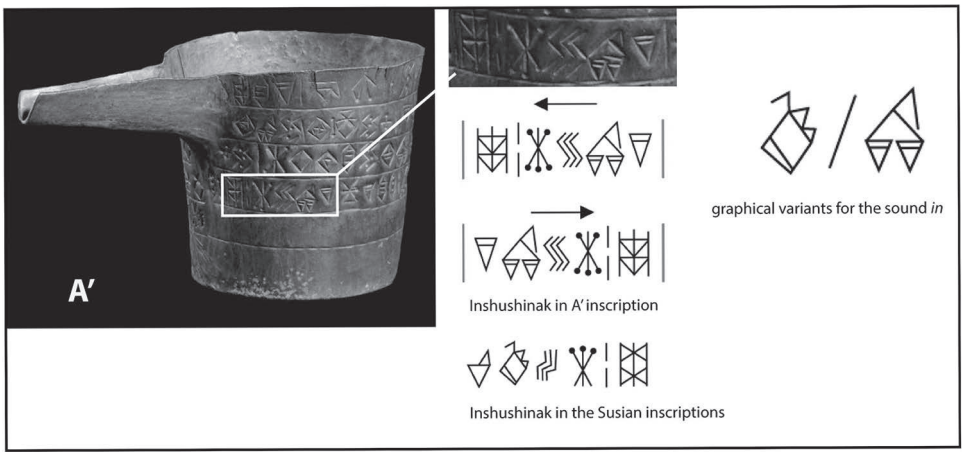

Figure 20.6 LE inscriptions A' and graphical variation of the LE sign in between Susian texts and inscription A'.

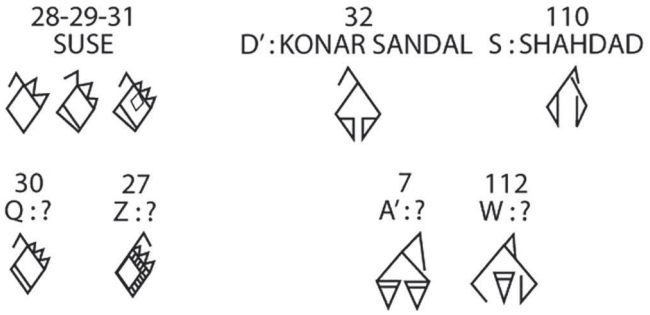

Figure 20.7 Graphical variants of the LE sign in.

to many other apparently different signs, reducing consequently the number of signs (258) identified so far.

With the few quite certain identifications mentioned above, the two main decipherment attempts by Hinz and Meriggi were based on the hypothesis that the LE inscriptions were written in the Elamite language,[3] the first author considering Puzur-Inšušinak texts as written in the 1st person singular (like Vallat 1986: 342), the second in the 3rd person singular. Hinz (1962: 10–16; 1969: 26, 29–43; 1971) even proposed translations for the LE texts A, B, C, D, E, F, G, H, I, J, K, P, Q and S, but his work is unfortunately flawed by many mistakes and imprecisions (Vallat 1986: 342–345; 2011: 188, Stève 2000: 76; Desset 2012: 107–108, n. 24). Considering the important geographical extension of this writing system, it is furthermore possible that the language(s) recorded in the Kermanian (Shahdad and Konar Sandal) inscriptions differed from the one written in the Susian texts (without saying that it was perhaps an unknown or unknowable language).

The Puzur-Inšušinak LE inscriptions still remain our best track towards the decipherment of this writing system.[4] The 10 inscriptions which can be attributed to this ruler nevertheless constitute only three independent texts (inscription P is too fragmentary and is of no use here) consisting of several sign sequences sometimes included, sometimes omitted (Figure 20.8):

- A/B/C/E
- F/G/H (/U?)
- I

LE inscription A is written on the same stone slab as a cuneiform Akkadian inscription where Puzur-Inšušinak is said to be '*ensi* of Susa, KIŠ-NÍTA of the land of NIM, son of Simpišhuk' (Scheil 1905a: 8–10, Meriggi 1971: 186 and Sollberger and Kupper 1971: 124–125) while LE inscriptions F/G / H (and maybe U), according to the hypothesis of André and Salvini (1989: 63, 69), were probably written on a monument also displaying cuneiform Akkadian inscriptions stating that Puzur-Inšušinak was '*danum*, *lugal* of Awan, son of Simpišhuk' (Scheil 1908: 9–11; Sollberger and Kupper 1971: 125; André and Salvini 1989: 65–67). LE inscription I was written on the statue of a goddess bearing also a cuneiform Akkadian inscription declaring that Puzur-Inšušinak was only '*ensi* of Susa' (Scheil 1913: 17–19).[5]

Although LE inscriptions are probably not mere translations of the cuneiform Akkadian ones, the decipherment attempts of Hinz and Meriggi started with the hypothesis that the title used in the cuneiform Akkadian and in the LE texts were similar:

- A/B/C/E: *ensi* of Susa, KIŠ-NÍTA of the land of NIM, son of Simpišhuk
- F/G/H (/U?): *danum, lugal* of Awan, son of Simpišhuk
- I: *ensi* of Susa

Figure 20.9 displays the synthetized version of the LE texts A/B/ C/E, F/G / H and I. Six specific sign sequences can be identified.

The sequence 1 is the theonym Inšušinak (see above).

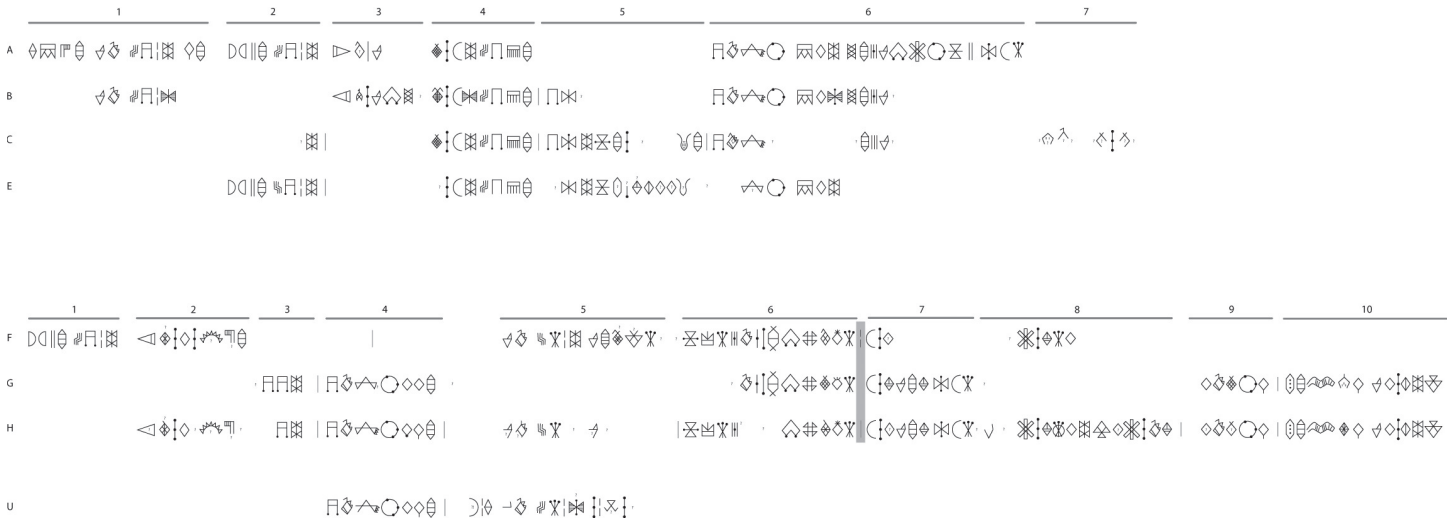

Figure 20.8 The Susian EL inscriptions A/B/C/E and F/G/H (and U?) and their semantic segments.

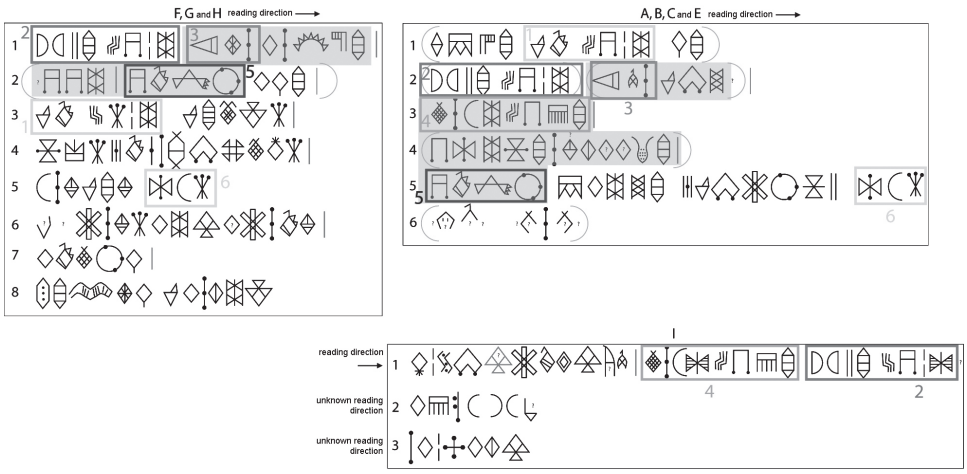

Figure 20.9 Susian EL texts A/B/C/E, F/G/H and I (the parentheses show the sequences which can be omitted) and the 6 specific signs sequences (Puzur-Inšušinak titles are shown in grey).

The sequence 2 displays the signs writing the name of the ruler, Puzur-Inšušinak. This name is problematic since its first part is written in the cuneiform text with the sign $PUZUR_4$, which might be read *puzrum* in Akkadian (meaning 'secret', 'shelter', 'protection') while the LE texts use three signs with very likely phonetic values. According to Zadok (1984: 25 and 55–56), $PUZUR_4$ could be read in Akkadian *Puzur/Puzru*, maybe written *pu-zu-ur/ru* in the LE version. If an Elamite reading of the sign $PUZUR_4$ is chosen, then the strict Elamite equivalent *kuk/kuku* could not correspond to the three different signs in the EL version and only the form *kute-ir* (verbal base + 3rd singular person nominal suffix; Grillot 1987: 35; 2008: 80), proposed by Meriggi (1971: 206) and well attested in the onomastics,[6] could then be accepted. Consequently, if the reading of the sign $PUZUR_4$, either Akkadian (*puzur/puzru*) or Elamite (*kute/ir*), is decomposed into three syllables, *pu/ku*, *zu/uz/te/ti*, and *ur/ru/er/ir*, it seems that the final syllable very probably recorded the sound *r*, which is consequently the probable phonetic value of the LE sign 72.

The sequence 5 only appears in the texts A/B/C/E and F/G/H. As the phonetic value of the first two signs is known, *ši-in*, it has been proposed to read in this sequence the name of the father of Puzur-Inšušinak, Simpišhuk, which would make this sequence the end of the title of Puzur-Inšušinak (son of Simpišhuk; the probable complete title of Puzur-Inšušinak is represented in grey in Figure 20.9).[7] The identification of this sequence with the name of Simpišhuk is nevertheless problematic. According to Hinz, these four signs should be read *ši-in-pi-hi* to which should be added the next six signs in text A/B/C/E to be read *-iš-hu-ik ša-ki-ri* (*Šinpihišhuk šak-ri*, 'son of Šinpihišhuk').[8] According to Meriggi, these four signs were to be read *ši-in-bi-'* to which were to be added the next five signs in text A/B/C/E to be read *iš-hu-ik ŠAK-ri* (*Šinbi'išhuk ŠAK-ri*).[9] Finally, Vallat proposed to read these four signs *ši-in-piš-hu*, to which should be added the next three signs in text A/B/C/E to be read *-uk ŠAK-ik* (*Šinpišhuk ŠAK-ik*) (Vallat 1986: 343). These are problematic hypotheses since none of them take into account the text F/G/H/U. If we do so, the name of the father of Puzur-Inšušinak

was maybe written only with the four signs of the sequence 5 (*ši-in-piš-huk*) and the filiation (son of) expressed after differently in A/B/C/E and in F/G/H/U.

Whatever the correct hypothesis might be, the filiation of Puzur-Inšušinak probably closed his title, like in his cuneiform Akkadian inscriptions. Consequently, sequences 3 and 4 were included in the title of Puzur-Inšušinak (in grey in Figure 20.9). Sequence 4 was only used in texts AB/C/E and I. These LE inscriptions are related to cuneiform Akkadian texts where Puzur-Inšušinak is notably said to be '*ensi* of Susa' (see above). The sequence 4, composed of eight signs, probably reflects this title where the toponym Susa should consequently appear. Hinz and Meriggi, respectively, interpreted these 8 signs *hal me-ni-ik šu-si-im-ki* (because Hinz thought Puzur-Inšušinak's inscriptions were written in Elamite language with the 1st person singular) and *hal me-ni-ik šu-še-en-ri* (according to Meriggi, Puzur-Inšušinak's inscriptions were written in the Elamite language with the 3rd person singular). Since the 5th sign of this sequence is the sign meaning *šu*, this is probably the 1st sign of the toponym which was spelled phonetically *Śušim/Šušim* in the Akkadian period and *Šušum* in the Ur III period (while the logogrammatic notation MÙŠ.EREN was also used at that time, as for example in the cuneiform Akkadian inscriptions of Puzur-Inšušinak).[10] While the 5th, 6th and 7th signs of the sequence 4 could be read *šu-ši-im*, the first four signs of this sequence probably wrote the title corresponding to *ensi* in the Akkadian inscriptions.

The signs sequence 3 written just after the name of Puzur-Inšušinak in inscriptions A/B/C/E and F/G/H is probably a title (this sign sequence is also written in inscription J). As the title used in cuneiform Akkadian texts related to LE text A/B/C/E ('*ensi* of Susa, KIŠ-NÍTA of the land of NIM') and in the cuneiform Akkadian texts related to LE text F/G/H ('*danum*, *lugal* of Awan') are different, and as this sequence is similar in both LE texts A/B/C/E and F/G/H, this is proof that the LE texts are not a mere reflection of the cuneiform Akkadian texts. Both Hinz and Meriggi interpreted this three sign sequence as SUNKI *hal-me* (*ki/ri*), with a logogrammatic meaning (SUNKI 'king') for the sign 153–154. If the hypothesis that the Elamite language is behind the LE inscriptions of Puzur-Inšušinak is correct, it must be recalled that the title *sunki* only appeared in the Medio-Elamite period while the few Elamite titles known for the simaškian kings and the sukkalmahs describe the first as *temti* and the second as *likawe/me rišaki* and *menik Hatamtik*.[11] From a chronological point of view, the title *temti* seems therefore to be the closest for Puzur-Inšušinak (if his LE inscriptions were written in Elamite), written perhaps phonetically with the three signs of the sequence 3 (*te-em-ti*?) or only with the first of them, in a logogrammatic way (sign 153–154; TEMTI?).

The three-sign sequence 6 probably has a verbal meaning since it is notably written at the end of LE inscription A and probably at the end of a clause in text F/G/H. As the last sign of this sequence (sign 185) was supposed to have the phonetic value (*u*)*š* (see above), it should be recalled here that the 3rd person singular of the verbal conjugation in Elamite is written with *-š*.[12]

Based on the Puzur-Inšušinak LE inscriptions, Hinz and Meriggi could propose logogrammatic and phonetic values for several signs (Hinz 1969: 44 and Meriggi 1971: 193–203, 219–220). However, only seven phonetic values, *in*, (*a/i*)*k*, *ši*, (*u*)*š*, *šu*, *na* and (*i*)*r* and one logogrammatic value (the divine determinative) currently seem acceptable, while the phonetic values *pu/ku* (?), *uz/zu/te/ti* (?), and the logogrammatic value TEMTI remain plausible (see Figure 20.10, previously published in Desset 2012: 127, Figure 46).

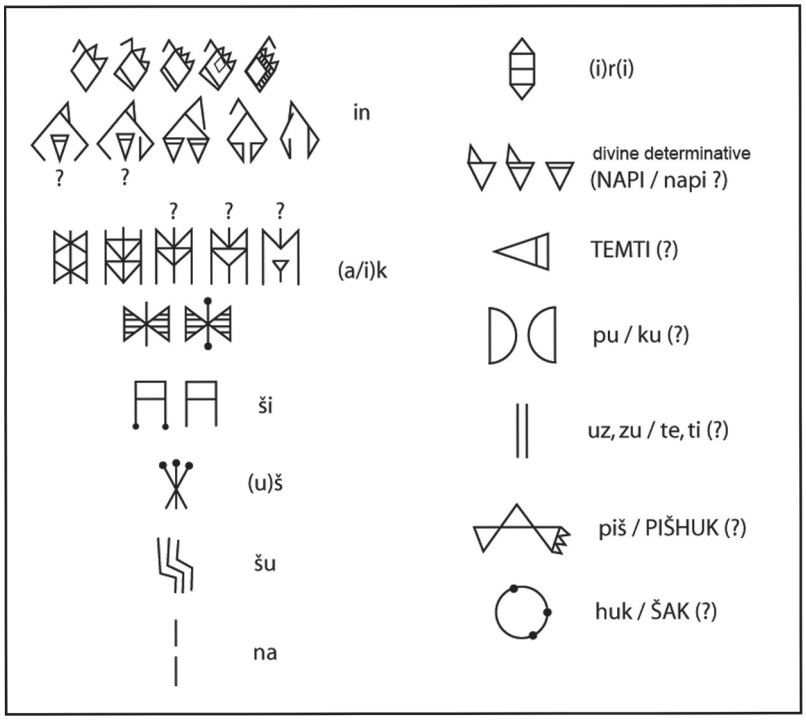

Figure 20.10 List of the accepted values for LE signs (5 identifications in the right column are uncertain).

CONCLUSION

Created several centuries after the disappearance of the Proto-Elamite tablets, LE writing was until recently considered as a phenomenon mainly restricted to Susa in general and Puzur-Inšušinak's epoch (ca. 2100 BC) in particular. The discoveries, particularly in the Kerman province (Konar Sandal and Shahdad), show that this writing system was probably created in the second half of the 3rd millennium BC in southern Iran (along with the newly discovered geometric writing system), independently from the cuneiform writing system which would be only imported into south-western Iran from ca. 2200 BC with the Akkadian annexation of Susa (Legrain 1913). While the urban occupation completely collapsed in south-eastern Iran in the beginning of the 2nd millennium BC, the cuneiform writing system probably played an important role at that time in the abandonment of the LE system in south-western Iran. Reducing the range of possibilities, it established itself as the only conceivable system, initiating the long series of western imported writing systems used on the Iranian plateau (cuneiform system/Aramaic derived alphabet/modified Arabic alphabet/modified Latin alphabet).

Although our knowledge is still very restricted, it must be admitted that the LE writing system was probably limited to a small community of users (at least much smaller than the cuneiform one) and preferentially used for royal inscriptions on

stone monuments or silver vessels, while a few clay (and more daily) documents were also found in Susa, Shahdad and Konar Sandal. We still cannot understand the reasons why a leader such as Puzur-Inšušinak felt the need to write, only in some of his inscriptions, LE texts alongside cuneiform ones. Also remaining elusive is the relation between LE and geometric writings in the Halil Rud valley, where LE signs could have been used to write only anthroponyms, as a kind of signature (see Desset 2014: 89–90). Understanding the bigraphical context of the use of LE writing will be of no help in deciphering it, but it could enable us to apprehend the symbolic meaning granted to these signs, referring perhaps to a specific identity that needed to be displayed.[13]

NOTES

1 Inscription O is not written with LE signs. See Dahl (2013: 257) for the hypothetical discovery context of the LE texts in Susa.

2 LE texts B', C' and D' were written on baked clay tablets also written with another graphic system (see Madjidzadeh 2011 and Desset 2014). The exact nature of text E' is still uncertain.

3 Most of the scholars proposed this hypothesis, except Salvini (1998) who, carefully, considers this point as uncertain. In Susa, LE inscriptions might also have been used to record the Akkadian language.

4 Another track is represented by several inscribed silver vessels, including X, Y, Z, F' and other vessels from the Mahboubian collection I should publish soon.

5 Hinz (1962: 15–16) read the theonym Narunte in the LE inscription I. This point is, however, very far from certain and this statue should consequently not be attributed to the goddess Narunte.

6 Contrary to the form *kute/ik* (passive perfective participle) advocated by Hinz (1962: 8 and Hinz and Koch 1987: 547).

7 Interestingly, this sequence is absent in the LE inscription I, which is written on the same support as a cuneiform Akkadian inscription of Puzur-Inšušinak where the ruler does not qualify himself as 'son of Simpišhuk'.

8 But according to this interpretation, Hinz (1969: 37) could not read 'Simpišhuk' in the inscription F/G/H, which invalidates his work.

9 Meriggi (1971: 209) recognized that this reading was problematic for the case of the text F/G/H.

10 For the toponym Susa, see Edzard, Farber and Sollberger 1977: 154–155; Edzard and Farber 1974: 175–176 and 187–191; Groneberg 1980: 230; Vallat 1993: 265–271; and Krebernik 2006: 67–72.

11 Kindatu is *temti* (Mahboubian 2004: 46–47), Ebarat (II) is *temti* (Mahboubian 2004: 48–49), Sirukduh or Siwe-palar-hupak is *lika*[*w/me rišaki*], *meni*[*k Hatamtik*] and *ruhu-š*[*ak* of ?] (Farber 1974, while Inšušinak is *temti* [. . .]), Siwe-palar-hupak is *likaw/me rišaki, menik Hatamtik* and *ruhu-šak* of Šilhaha (Rutten 1949 and Mahboubian 2004: 44–45; Gian Pietro Basello's (pers. comm.) reading of Mahboubian 2004: 44–45 made clear that Siwe-palar-hupak is not the *ruhu-šak* of Sirukduh; while Inšušinak is said to be *temti alim eliri* and *temti rišari*, '*temti* of the Upper City' and 'great *temti*', and Napiriša *temti* and 'leader of the army' [?]). It seems that the title *temti*, used for men at the time of Kindatu and Ebarat II, was only used for gods at the time of the sukkalmahs.

12 Meriggi (1971: 207–209) interpreted this three-sign sequence as *du-ni-*(*u*)*š* / *duniš*, 'he/she gave' in Elamite.

13 The information available through Puzur-Inšušinak's inscriptions was presented here. As previously stated, a coherent corpus of silver vessels recently discovered in the Mahboubian collection in London and soon to be published might constitute another track and could play an important role in the decipherment of the LE writing.

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