

Teppir

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SPELLINGS AND ETYMOLOGY

With two exceptions, the Elamite lexeme *teppir* occurs exclusively in texts from Elam itself. The various spellings are (cf. Tavernier 2007: 58–9):

1. Old Elamite
 - a. Elamite: dè-pi-ir.
 - b. Akkadian: de-bi-ir, te-eb-bi-ir, te-ep-pi-ir, te-ep-pír, te-pír.
2. Middle Elamite
 - a. Elamite: te-ep-pír, ti-pi-ir.
 - b. Akkadian: te-ep-pír.
3. Neo-Elamite: te-ep-pír, ti-pi-ir, ti-pi-ra.
4. Achaemenid Elamite: te-ep-pír, ti-pi-ra, tup-pi-ra.

The lexeme appears once in a documentary text from Mari in the spelling zi-bi-ir (Durand 1986: 120–1). This spelling, showing a variation *z/t* for the initial consonant, suggests that in reality the Elamite word was pronounced /čepir/ (Tavernier 2010: 1076). Note also the proper name Zi-bi-ir-na-šir in another text from Mari (ARM 24 236 i 15).

The lexeme *teppir* is most likely a *nomen agens* in -*r* of the root *tep(i)*- “to shape, to form” and should not be confused with the Akkadian lexeme *tuppu*, which entered Elamite as *tuppu* “inscription, tablet.” It is possible, however, that the meaning “scribe” for *teppir* was influenced by the Akkadian loanword, an allegation seemingly corroborated by the Achaemenid Elamite spelling tup-pi-ra (Tavernier 2007: 67).

HISTORY AND ROLE

Teppirs appear in documents from all periods in Elamite documented history. The oldest attestation is in the so-called Naram-Sin Treaty, the oldest text drafted in Elamite. This text has a

reference to the “treaty of the *teppir* of Akkad”: [d]è-pi-ir [A-kà-dè]^{ki}. This text confirms that, from the start, the lexeme *teppir* was used to indicate a high-ranking official, a kind of prime minister of a state, as Hinz (1971: 651) calls him.

In the Old Elamite Akkadian texts from Susa, the *teppir* is more active in the juridical world. The occurrence of a “gate of the *teppir*” in MDP 23 327 confirms this. In addition, three *teppirs* are witnesses in legal texts and another is one of the parties in a litigation. In three texts (MDP 22 161; MDP 23 320, 321/22 (cf. Tavernier 2007: 59–60; De Graef 2018)), a *teppir*, together with a judge, is responsible for the legal judgment. These texts demonstrate that the *teppir* must have been a member of the juridical and even political elite of the kingdom. He probably possessed a higher rank than ordinary judges and appears only as an adjudicator in cases that were apparently important enough, other cases being handled by ordinary judges only (Tavernier 2007: 60; Scheil 1932: 161 translates *teppir* as “grand judge”).

The high-ranked position of the *teppir* in Old Babylonian Susa is also visible in two inscriptions on objects (a *kunaki*-vessel and a seal), revealing the close contacts between *teppirs* and the Elamite king. The mention of a field of a *teppir* in another text proves that they could own plots of land (Tavernier 2007: 59).

The mention of Zibir Anshan in a Mari text is also interesting. It is clear that this is not a personal name, but an expression referring to the *teppir* of Anshan (Vallat 1996: 315; Durand 2013: 335). The text itself mentions that the *teppir* receives some presents.

In the Middle Elamite period, the word probably retained the same meaning, although sources are very sparse (there are only three attestations, one of which may be a personal name; see Herrero and Glassner 1990: 31). In a royal inscription of Shilhak-Inshushinak I, a divinity (Tirumithir) is called “*teppir*” (EKI 54 i 9). Finally, a man named Assizah appears as

teppir in the administrative texts from Anshan (Tavernier 2007: 62).

Although the *teppir* continued to hold an important position in Neo-Elamite society (he was at one time called “the one of the lord” and he may also have enjoyed some religious importance), the accent of his activities shifted to the scribal field, an evolution which the Achaemenids would complete. In the Achaemenid Elamite texts, the word *teppir* refers to a scribe working in non-cuneiform writing systems. He became identical to the *sēpiru*, attested in Akkadian texts (Tavernier 2007: 62–4). As such, he played an important role in the translation process of royal and satrapal orders (cf. Tavernier 2017) and received relatively high rations.

SEE ALSO: Persepolis; Persepolis Fortification tablets; Sukkalmah regime.

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