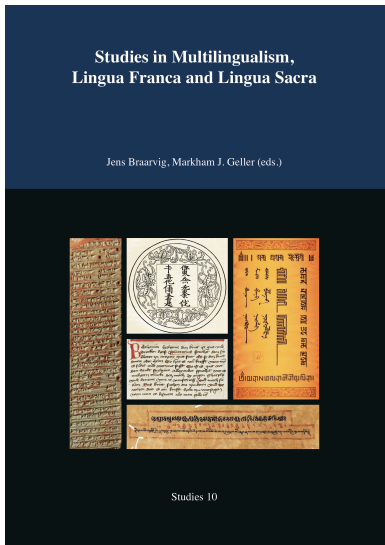


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Studies 10

Jan Tavernier:

Multilingualism in the Elamite Kingdoms and the Achaemenid Empire



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Chapter 10

Multilingualism in the Elamite Kingdoms and the Achaemenid Empire

Jan Tavernier

To every province in its own script and every people in its own
language (Esther 3,12)

10.1 Introduction

In 1989 Romaine noted that “there are about thirty times as many languages as there are countries.”¹ Having in mind the circumstances in countries such as Belgium (Dutch, French, German), South Africa (no less than eleven official languages) or Switzerland (French, German, Italian and Rhaeto-Romance), this should not surprise us.

This situation was not different in the ancient world, where people speaking different languages also came into contact with each other and had to find ways to communicate with each other. In this contribution, multilingualism in Elam on the one hand and in the Achaemenid Empire on the other hand will be discussed.

Multilingualism can be assessed using different approaches. Among modern linguists, two definitions circulate: a maximalist and a minimalist approach. According to the first definition,² someone is multilingual (or bilingual) when that person is as proficient in one language as in one or more other languages. Their level of proficiency is the same for all languages they master. The minimalist definition³ also considers people as multilingual who know some words and concepts in the other language, but who cannot communicate as fluently as in the first language. Finally, when Mackey⁴ described bilingualism as the “alternate use of two or more languages by the same individual,” he launched a definition that does not take position in this discussion and that has been adopted several times by other scholars.⁵ It is this approach which will be embraced by this article, for the simple reason that, due to a lack of sources, it is impossible to study the extent to which ancient near Eastern individuals mastered other languages than their mother tongue.

Taking into account another point of view, one can formulate another bipolarity regarding multilingualism. One could argue that multilingualism should be defined as the co-existence of various languages in one community (or political entity, such as a kingdom), whereas others may believe that multilingualism is always situated on the individual level.

¹Romaine (1989, 8).

²E.g. Bloomfield (1933, 56).

³E.g. Haugen (1969, 7); Diebold (1964); Weinreich (1968, 1).

⁴Mackey (1970, 555).

⁵E.g. Hoffmann (1991, 15–16).

The character of the available historical sources divides the current contribution in two chapters: For the Old through Neo-Elamite periods the emphasis will be put on the first definition, that is, the existence of various languages in one territorial entity (the Elamite kingdom). In the second chapter on the discussion of Achaemenid multilingualism, the central theme will be how the administration of the Achaemenid Empire, born in Elam but eventually controlling the entire Ancient Near East, would tackle possible communication problems caused by the existence of multiple languages within its territory. In this sense, the first section uses the first definition of multilingualism, whereas the second part uses both definitions.

10.2 Multilingualism in the Elamite Period

10.2.1 Old Elamite Period (c. 2300–1500 BCE)

Already in ancient times, bi- and multilingualism became very important in human communication, without, however, affecting more than half of the world's population, as it does in modern times.⁶ Contacts between Sumerian, Akkadian and Elamite already existed in the third millennium BCE. These contacts are reflected in (1) the oldest attestations of Elam in Mesopotamian inscriptions (displaying a rather hostile relation between the two regions)⁷ and in (2) the presence of Elamite, Akkadian and (few) Sumerian texts in the region around Susa. Nonetheless, during the Old Akkadian and Ur-III periods the Akkadian texts make up the majority. Two reasons may account for this:

1. Susa and its environment was part of the Akkadian Empire and was completely administered by an Akkadian-speaking governance.
2. The Mesopotamian inhabitants of Susa were perhaps more creative in writing.

Nevertheless, the oldest Elamite text dates back to the Old Akkadian period, namely, the so-called Naram-Sîn Treaty (c. 2250 BCE), a treaty concluded by the Akkadian king Naram-Sîn and a king of Awan,⁸ either Helu or Hita, Helu's successor. Most likely the Awanite king agreed that Susa was part of the Akkadian Empire, whereas Naram-Sîn promised to respect the independence of Awan.⁹ This text is written in Elamite for the sole reason that a treaty between Awan and Akkad is concerned here. Had it been a treaty between Susa and Akkad, it would have been certainly written in Akkadian. In that time Elamite was not yet a *lingua scriptura*,¹⁰ which explains the fact that the Mesopotamian cuneiform writing system was used to draft the treaty. The only texts¹¹ written in Elamite in those days (a religious text and a lexical text; both of which are dated to the time of Gudea, i.e. c. 2140 BCE) are probably intellectual games by Akkadian-speaking scribes.¹²

⁶Mackey (1967, 11); Grosjean (1982, vii).

⁷The Sumerian King List has three attestations of Elam: (1) ii 35–37: “Enmebaragesi of Kish attacked Elam” (c. 2675 BCE); (2) iv 5–6: “Ur was attacked and its kingship carried to Awan” and (3) iv 17–19: “Awan was attacked and its kingship carried to Kish;” cf. Potts (1999, 87).

⁸Awan is a region to the north of Susiana and underwent less Mesopotamian influence than its southern neighbor.

⁹Lambert (1979, 29).

¹⁰Not taking into account the problematic so-called Proto-Elamite texts, of which it is not certain that they denote the Elamite language. See, however, Irving Finkel's contribution in this volume.

¹¹Cf. Lambert (1974, 3–14).

¹²Malbran-Labat (1996, 36–37).

After the fall of the Akkadian Empire, Awan and Susiana were united in the kingdom of Puzur-Inšušinak, the first Elamite to create an Elamite kingdom. Although the new king was eager to give Elamite, his native tongue, a more important position within the kingdom, he did not instigate nationalist reactions against the Semitic component of his state. Instead, he put both languages on the same level and created some bilingual and digraphic inscriptions, whereby the Akkadian texts were written in cuneiform writing and the Elamite texts in a writing system called Linear Elamite, originating from the Iranian plateau.¹³ Unfortunately, this writing system is not yet completely deciphered.¹⁴

Conspicuously, Elamite appears only in inscriptions on statues of deities, whereas the monolingual Akkadian inscriptions appear on foundation cones or may have had a non-religious subject (e.g. his report on the submission of Šimaški). This implies that Elamite was used for religious inscriptions.¹⁵ In this sense, Elamite was a kind of *lingua sacra*, which is also visible in the Elamite formulas in some Akkadian incantations from Mesopotamia.

With the annexation of Susa by the Ur III-rulers, the Semitic as well as the Sumerian component of Susiana again became predominant. Both royal inscriptions and documentary texts are written in one of the two major Mesopotamian languages. Nevertheless, it is in this period that we encounter the oldest example of bilingualism on the individual level: in one of the Hymns to Šulgi, this king boasts that he knew “Elamite as well as Sumerian.”¹⁶

This superiority of Sumerian and Akkadian continues well into the following *sukkalmaḥ*-period (c. 1950–1500 BCE). Only a few royal inscriptions appear in Elamite¹⁷ (now written in Mesopotamian cuneiform) and no documentary texts are recorded in this language. Nonetheless, the presence of both Akkadian and Elamite names shows that both ethnic groups had some interaction, although one should not overestimate the degree of this interaction, as is shown by the link between personal names and professional categories.¹⁸ In any case, this interaction postulates the necessity of bilingual people, who could act as interpreters. Unfortunately these interpreters are not attested as such. Noteworthy is also the existence of an Akkadian-Sumerian bilingual inscription of Idaddu (IRS 6–7).

The context of the four Elamite inscriptions is different. The inscription of Siruktuh is clearly related to the eastern, Elamite context of the *sukkalmaḥ*-kingdom, since it relates to a military campaign of the king on the Iranian plateau, far away from Mesopotamia.¹⁹ Although they remain difficult to discuss, the three other texts seem to have both religious and political purposes. They are not really attached to any geographical context. As a result of this, one could argue that the Elamite texts were perhaps intended for the kingdom’s Elamite population. This could be corroborated by the relatively monotone character of the Akkadian and Sumerian inscriptions of the Old Elamite rulers. Most of these inscriptions are building inscriptions (e.g. IRS 4,6–8,10–12,14–15,17–18; MDP 28 4–5). Four broken other texts (IRS 5,9,13,16) are most likely also building inscriptions, as they have the same introduction (“For DN, PN”: IRS 5,9,16) or are extremely similar to an existing building

¹³ Malbran-Labat (1996, 35).

¹⁴ Vallat (1986, 339–345); Salvini (1998, 331); Stolper (2004, 65).

¹⁵ Malbran-Labat (1996, 35).

¹⁶ Castellino (1972, 257 (C122)). Eme nim nig eme-ge-ra-gim_x ḫe-en-ga-zu-ām. In another text the king boasts about speaking five languages.

¹⁷ One of Siruktuh (c. 1800 BCE; ZA 64, 74–86), one of Siwe-palar-huhpak (second quarter of the eighteenth century BCE; EKI 3) and two of Temti-Agun (c. 1726–1710 BCE; EKI 67 and 70C; cf. Vallat (1990)).

¹⁸ Shepherds, for example, mostly have Elamite names, Amiet (1992, 75–94).

¹⁹ Farber (1975, 85).

inscription (IRS 13 to MDP 28 5). The four Elamite documents are clearly not building inscriptions and are written on other materials (i.e. no bricks): EKI 3 (clay tablet fragments), 67 (blue sandstone vase), 70C (limestone stela), ZA 64 (an alabaster stela).²⁰ This could suggest that the selection of the inscription's language could depend on the aim of the inscription: building (Sumerian-Akkadian) or not (Elamite). The building inscriptions are perfectly in line with the Mesopotamian tradition.

A common feature of both Sumerian-Akkadian and Elamite texts is the expression “for the life of” (Sumerian *nam.ti.la.ni.šè* [IRS 4,6,11,14–15,17–18], Akkadian *ana balašašu* [IRS 7], Elamite *takkime ...intikka* [EKI 3, 67]). Nevertheless, in the Elamite inscriptions the king acts for his life as well as for the life of others (a tradition continued in the Middle Elamite inscriptions), whereas in the Sumerian-Akkadian texts he only acts on behalf of himself.

Despite the preponderance of Akkadian in the written tradition, the Elamite component still enjoyed an important status in the *sukkalmah*-kingdom, as is clearly indicated by the Elamite character of the royal names and the four Elamite inscriptions. It seems, however, that this component was also expressed through images:

1. In the highlands southeast of Susa royal ideology was transmitted by means of rock reliefs, examples of which are still visible in Naqš-e Rostam, Kurangun and Shah Savar.²¹
2. The seal of Kuk-Simut, in which Idaddu II presents to him an axe (Elamite symbol). The accompanying inscription, however, is not in Elamite, but in Sumerian.²² Other examples of axes with inscriptions in Akkadian are two axes from the reign of At-tahušu and one from the reign of Šilhak-Inšušinak.²³

10.2.2 Middle Elamite Period (c. 1500–1000 BCE)

In the beginning of the Middle Elamite period too, Akkadian remained the main *lingua scriptura* in Elam. The contents, however, became more Elamite, as can be seen in an inscription of Tepti-ahar (IRS 20). This development ends in the renewed production of Elamite royal inscriptions by the king Humpan-umena (fourteenth century BCE), next to the continued production of Akkadian inscriptions. The literary production, however, is purely Akkadian.²⁴ Remarkably, the re-introduction of Elamite inscriptions was instigated by a person not originating from Susa, but rather from Liyan (near modern Bushehr), an area where Elamite was the most important language.

²⁰This does not work the other way round: building inscriptions could also be engraved on other materials, such as the edge of a basin (MDP 6 16–19), a lentil-shaped tablet (MDP 28 5) or a clay cylinder (MDP 28 4).

²¹Cf. Van den Berghe (1963, 37) and Seidl (1986).

²²Lambert (1971, 218–220); Malbran-Labat (1996, 40).

²³Dossin (1962, 156–157).

²⁴Tavernier (2010b, 208–215).

In particular Untaš-Napiriša (c. 1340–1300 BCE) has left us many inscriptions, some of which are bilingual construction texts. In his texts, the function of Akkadian is limited to the language of curses²⁵ and to technical language.²⁶

In the highlands Mesopotamian influence remained very limited. A late Middle Elamite administrative archive found in Tal-i Malyan (ancient Anshan) contains texts written in Elamite and not in Akkadian.

10.2.3 The Neo-Elamite Period

With regard to the history of multilingualism, the Neo-Elamite period should be divided in two periods, with the destruction of Susa by the Assyrians in 646 BCE as the dividing line.

After the Middle Elamite period, Elam's history was shrouded in darkness for three centuries until 743 BCE when historical sources again shed light on Elam's history. Mesopotamian sources report that in that year Humpan-nikaš I, of whom nothing further is known, became king of Elam. His successor, Šutruk-Nahhunte II (717–699 BCE), links himself with the Middle Elamite traditions by commissioning some royal inscriptions (EKI 71–73) recorded in Elamite. In one of these inscriptions, he even refers to some of the late Middle Elamite kings (EKI 72). Under his reign, Elamite thus remains the main language for the transmission of the royal ideology.

After the reign of Šutruk-Nahhunte II the heavy political instability in Elam may be one of the causes for the complete decline of the production of royal inscriptions. For more than half a century neither Elamite nor Elamite texts were written in Elam, which makes it impossible to study the multilingual situation of the region in this period.

Fortunately, after the Assyrian sack of Susa in 646 BCE, the situation changed in two ways:

1. Royal inscriptions are now without exception recorded in Elamite. Kings such as Hallutaš-Inšušinak (IRS 58; MDP 53 25), Šilhak-Inšušinak II (IRS 78), Tepti-Humpan-Inšušinak (EKI 85; IRS 59–62), Atta-hamiti-Inšušinak (EKI 86) stopped producing Akkadian royal inscriptions. The early Neo-Elamite phenomenon of officials who create their own inscriptions is continued by Hanni (EKI 75–76) and the Persepolis Bronze Tablet.
2. Elamite is no longer exclusively used for royal inscriptions. Furthermore, various documentary texts (the Acropole Texts from Susa [MDP 9 1–298; MDP 11 309] and some legal texts [MDP 11 301–308]), letters (the so-called Nineveh Letters [BA 4, 168–201]) and two literary texts have been discovered. Especially the latter are interesting for this study, since they show that apparently the Elamites tried to incorporate Mesopotamian wisdom in their own language by translating Mesopotamian works (the only example is an astrological text) or, as can be seen in the Elamite hemerology, by integrating Mesopotamian ideas into their own literary production.²⁷

²⁵One may wonder why curses appeared in Akkadian. Was this because it was a Mesopotamian issue? Or rather because the enemy to whom the curse was directed was most likely a Mesopotamian? Malbran-Labat (1996, 47–48).

²⁶The only monolingual Akkadian texts to deal with the construction of a canal and of a wall. In addition, many architectural expressions have an Akkadian origin, Malbran-Labat (1996, 48–49). Furthermore, the fact that Akkadian is also used for inscriptions on precious objects may be mentioned in this regard. Note also the Akkadian city gate names at Tchogha Zanbil, whereas the gate as temple entrance is indicated by its Elamite name *sip*.

²⁷Tavernier (2010b, 213–215).

This does not mean that Akkadian simply disappeared from Elam. There are a small number of documentary Akkadian texts,²⁸ drafted in a completely Babylonian environment (no Elamite names). In Luristan the tradition of inscribing objects in Akkadian continues.²⁹ In any case, the status of Akkadian in the Western Iranian lands decreased.

In addition, it seems as if the communities, contrary to earlier periods, had little contact with each other. This is made clear by the absence of Elamite names in the Babylonian texts and the absence of Babylonian names in Elamite texts.

Highly important is the appearance of a third ethnic element in the Elamite texts. In the so-called Acropole Texts, an archive of nearly 300 Elamite administrative texts dated to the first half of the sixth century BCE,³⁰ about 10 % of personal names are Iranian.³¹ In the Nineveh Letters and in the archive of seven legal texts, some Iranian names are also attested. This suggests an on-going infiltration and integration of Iranian speaking persons into Elamite society. The integration aspect is not only shown by the interaction in the Acropole Texts, but also by the inscriptions from the Kalkamkarra Cave, in which a royal dynasty having members with Elamite as well as with Iranian names is documented.

The contacts between both population groups again postulate people who knew both languages. Unfortunately, we do not have any traces of these interpreters.

10.3 Multilingualism in the Achaemenid Period

When in 331 Darius III faced Alexander in the battle at Gaugamela, one of his greatest fears concerning this battle may very well have come true. Just before the battle, the Achaemenid king “was most concerned lest some confusion should arise in the battle from the numerous people assembled that differed in speech.”³²

This story is an extremely beautiful example of one of the principal characteristics of the Achaemenid Empire: Due to its large extent, it was a “*Vielvölkerstaat*.” Already the early Achaemenid kings, such as Darius I (521–486) and Xerxes (486–464) themselves realized this, when they used the expression *vispazana*- “of all kinds” to describe their realm.³³

The linguistic problems faced by the Achaemenid kings were indeed not few; they had to keep together and organize a vast empire, where languages such as Egyptian, Lycian, Lydian, Phrygian, Carian, Pisidian, Aramaic, Akkadian, Elamite, Old Persian and various Iranian dialects were spoken. Surely the kings and their elite spoke Old Persian, but how could commands and directives be communicated to all parts of the empire and be made comprehensible for all inhabitants, who did not speak a word Old Persian?

One can assume that multilingualism was a main aspect of Achaemenid rule and that many interpreters were active in various administrative centres. It is therefore interesting to study multilingualism at the individual level.

In contrast to the older periods the Achaemenid source material is more informative concerning this issue. Various administrative formulas at the end of, for example, letter-orders give us some information on the multilingualism of the Achaemenid Empire. These

²⁸Cf. Stolper (1986).

²⁹Malbran-Labat (1996, 55).

³⁰Tavernier (2004, 30–32).

³¹Hinz (1987, 128); Henkelman 2003, 212); Tavernier (2010a, 241).

³²Diodorus Siculus 17.53.4; translation by Bradford Welles (1963, 273).

³³*vispa*- “all” (Av. *vispa*-), followed by *zana*- “kind; man” (OInd. *jāna*-, Av. *zana*-). Cf. Kent (1953, 208) and Brandenstein and Mayrhofer (1964, 153).

formulas are attested in three languages: Aramaic, Egyptian (as rendered by the Demotic writing system) and Elamite. Naturally, Old Persian also played its role, since it may be safely assumed that the high Persian officials uttered their commands in their vernacular, Old Persian.

Name	Aramaic	Demotic	Elamite
P	(1) PN ₁ yd' t' m znh (2) PN ₁ b' l t' m	PN ₁ i.rḥ p3y w3ḥ	(1) hi tupaka PN ₁ turnaš (2) *patigāma PN ₁ lišta
D	PN ₂ spr'	PN ₂ p3r i.ir sš t3y š' .t	tumme PN ₂ -mar tušta
T	PN ₃ ktb (only once)	sš PN ₃	PN ₃ talliš(ta)

Table 1: Achaemenid administrative formulas

Name	Aramaic	Demotic	Elamite
P	(1) PN ₁ knows this command (2) PN ₁ is the master of the command	PN ₁ knows this command	(1) PN ₁ knew about this (2) PN ₁ delivered the command
D	PN ₂ is the <i>sēpiru</i> (scribe)	PN ₂ is he who wrote this letter	PN ₃ received the draft from PN ₂
T	PN _x wrote (only once)	PN ₃ wrote	PN ₃ wrote

Table 2: Achaemenid administrative formulas (English translation)

The formulas can be found in five archives. The first one, the Fortification Archive,³⁴ is by far the largest. It consists of the remains of about 15,000–18,000 Elamite documents,³⁵ remains of about 500–1,000 original Aramaic documents,³⁶ tablets with no text, but carrying seal impressions (remains of about 5,000–6,000 original documents) and some oddities (one Greek text,³⁷ one Phrygian text,³⁸ one Old Persian text³⁹ and some tablets marked with

³⁴A good introduction to this archive can be found in Henkelman (2008, 65–179).

³⁵Partly published, inter alia in Hallock (1969, 1978). See also Jones and Stolper (2008, 29–33).

³⁶Cf. Azzoni (2008).

³⁷Cf. Tavernier (2008, 63).

³⁸Recently studied by Brixhe (2004, 118–126), who in addition to the already known month name *anamaka*, recognizes some numbers, two forms of the noun *kna*- “woman, wife” and a nom. pl. *makerses*, which he does not translate, but which is considered a proper name by Orel (1997, 442) and which is translated to “workers” (El. *kurtas*) by D’jakonov and Neroznak (1985, 121). In any case, the administrative character of this text is clear.

³⁹Cf. Stolper and Tavernier (2007).

Greek or Persian coins instead of seals).⁴⁰ The text dates range from 509 to 494 BCE, that is, years 13–28 of Darius I. Documents containing such formulas are mainly letter orders (Hallock's category T) and receipts by officials (Hallock's category H), but such formulas occur also in other types of texts.⁴¹

The second archive, called the Persepolis Treasury Archive, is composed of various Elamite texts and one Babylonian text. The documents date from 492–457 BCE, that is, year 30 of Darius I to the seventh year of Artaxerxes I and deal mainly with payments of silver from the Persepolis treasury.

The third one is the so-called Arsames Correspondence, a group of various Aramaic letters dealing with the activities of Arsames, satrap of Egypt in the latter quarter of the fifth century BCE. The archive is dated to approximately 428–408 BCE.⁴² They were probably sent from Babylonia to Egypt and cannot be considered as drafts, since they were found in a bag, possibly used for transporting official documents, and were sealed (one with the seal of Arsames himself, as can be read from its legend "Seal of [Arsames], the p[rin]ce").⁴³

The fourth archive is an Aramaic archive from Bactria (48 texts), the documents of which are written on leather or wood and date from 353 to 324, except for one text which should paleographically be dated to the fifth century BCE. Part of the texts studied by Shaked is a group of 8 letters from *Axvamazda-, most likely the satrap of Bactria, to his subordinate *Bagavanta-.⁴⁴ It is in these letters that the formulas are attested.

Finally the fifth one is also the smallest one: three letters dealing with the appointment of a new priest in the Chnum-Temple. On the one hand, the correspondents are the priests of this temple and on the other, Pherendates, satrap of Egypt. The archive dates from the 30th year of Darius I, that is, 492 BCE.⁴⁵

It is interesting to note that the formulas are only attested in letters written by the satrapal administration, not in letters directed to this administration. Immediately, however, this reduces the scope of this study, as one can only study multilingualism in an administrative context and only in some regions. Anatolia, for example, or the Eastern Iranian districts have yielded no information at all to study this topic.

In the Elamite texts some variant formulas, clearly equivalents of formula P, are attested: in five Treasury texts the king plays an active role, as is shown by formulas such as **Dārayauš sunkir ap šeraš* "the king commanded (it) to them" (PT 4), **Dārayauš šerašta* "Darius commanded (it)" (PT 5), *sunkir šerašta* "The king commanded (it)" (PT 6–8).⁴⁶ PT 6–8 mention Dātavahyah- as scribe. PT 4–5 do not name a scribe, but the contextual and structural similarities between both groups of texts (e.g. the role of the *unsak* "administrator," the king's commands) suggest that all texts were written by Dātavahyah-. A second alternative phrase is only attested once (PF 1790: 27–28; Dar 19) and must replace formula P, as the same text also contains formula D:⁴⁷ *hi tupaka PN turnaš*, "PN knew about this."

⁴⁰The archive also contains a Babylonian text, but the contents of this one are completely different to the contents of the archive, which concern the functioning of a single administrative organization in the region of Persepolis.

⁴¹Tavernier (2008, 65).

⁴²Driver (1965, 9); Porten and Yardeni (1985, 93).

⁴³Kahle (1949, 207).

⁴⁴Shaked (2004, 13–14); Naveh and Shaked (2012).

⁴⁵Hughes (1984).

⁴⁶Cf. Cameron (1948, 91).

⁴⁷Lewis (1977, 10–11, n. 38).

In addition, this phrase corresponds very well with the formulas attested in Aramaic and Egyptian.

What can be deduced from these formulas?

1. In the Aramaic texts only two persons are involved,⁴⁸ whereas in the Demotic and Elamite texts three persons act as officials in the process of issuing an administrative command. Consequently, the third person only appears when a third language (next to Old Persian and Aramaic) is needed, as is the case in Persepolis and Egypt.
2. A research of the ethnic affiliation of the names of the officials who are the actors in these formulas has led to interesting results:⁴⁹ the people who are in charge of the command nearly all have Old Iranian names. Exceptions are Anani (West-Semitic) in an Aramaic text (TAD A 6.2), Humpanunu (Elamite) and Ribaya (Babylonian) in three Elamite texts (PFNN 0698, 1507 and 2425).

In the Elamite Fortification texts the people mentioned in formula D have Iranian and Semitic names (Babylonian as well as West-Semitic), but the latter are clearly more frequently attested than the former ones (78 vs. 32 times).

Concerning formula D, a shift is visible in the Elamite Treasury texts: there are more Iranian names (6 vs. 2 Babylonian names) and they are attested more frequently (16 vs. 2). Perhaps the Iranian names belong to Babylonians who adopted them in the hope of an administrative career.

The Aramaic texts do not seem to make a distinction between the *sēpiru* and the actual scribe. A formula PN *spr* may as well mean “PN is the *sēpiru*” as “PN is the scribe” and it is possible that one person incorporated both functions, as the final product was written in Aramaic and not, for example, in Elamite. Only in TAD A 6.2 three roles are involved, with Nabû-‘aqab’s role being the equivalent of Elamite PN *talliš*.

In the Aramaic texts the names of formula P are predominantly Iranian (*Bagasravā [two times], *Rtavahyā [three times], *Rtaxaya-). One person with a West-Semitic name (Anani) is also attested in this function. The *sēpiru* have Old Iranian, West-Semitic or Egyptian names. Three names are attested, but whereas Aḥpepi and Anani/Nabû-‘aqab are attested once, the Iranian name *Rāšta- is attested in five texts as scribe.

In the Egyptian text the *sēpiru* bears an Egyptian name, which could point to a knowledge of Egyptian by this person.

3. The people who actually “wrote” the documents have Iranian and Elamite names in the Elamite documents and an Egyptian name in the Egyptian document.

As formula D is the level where many Semitic names occur in the Elamite documents, it is probable that the contacts between various graphic systems (cuneiform and alphabetic writing systems) are situated at this level. It seems quite certain that they were bigraphianical, that is, that they knew the Aramaic as well as the cuneiform writing system. That puts them in the transition from Aramaic to Elamite. In all likelihood they also translated the Old Persian version into the Aramaic one. That means that they were likely to be multilingual and that, as a consequence, they make up some kind of interpreters bureau.

⁴⁸In one text (TAD A 6.2) three persons are involved (Anani in formulas P and D, Nabû-‘aqab in formula T; Sasobek in a Demotic formula T), but the third person is an Egyptian scribe, who apparently drafted a lost Demotic version of this document, Tavernier (2008, 71).

⁴⁹Tavernier (2008, 67–69).

One can immediately connect this with the Elamite expression *teppir*, an appellative the bearers of which are described as “(writing) on parchment” or as “Babylonian.”⁵⁰

The other class of scribes, called *tupšarru* in Akkadian and probably **tallir* in Elamite, only made use of the cuneiform script. They only made copies of the texts. Reference can be made here to the occurrence of *puhu Paršipe tuppime sapi(man)pa* “Persian boys who are copying texts” (PF 871: 4–5, 1135: 6–7 and PFNN 1485: 5–6, 1588: 4). The mostly Persian names of these scribes correspond with this.

In the Bactrian Aramaic texts the actions behind formulas P and D are mostly carried out by one person, which is an evolution compared to the earlier Aramaic texts. The formulas themselves, however, are comparable to the earlier ones and this indicates that the administrative linguistic system was really imperially imposed by the Achaemenids on all areas of their realm. They are:

1. PN spr' yd' t' m' znh “PN the *sēpiru* is in charge of the command”: A1:12, A3:3–4, A4:6, A5:3, A6:11, A7:2.
2. PN₁ spr' wPN₂ b' l' t' m “PN₁ is the *sēpiru* and PN₂ is in charge of the command”: A2:7.

PN b' l' t' m: A5:5.

These formulas are similar to the Aramaic ones attested in Egypt. This really shows the imperial character of this system, which was applied throughout the Empire.

The names of the persons concerned (three scribes, named **Daizaka-*, **Hašavaxšu-* and **Nurafrata-*, and one person, **Āθviya-* in charge of the command) are all Iranian,⁵¹ so the ethnicity of the people or the origins of the names does not play a role here. As Vaxšu is the name of a Bactrian deity, the person named **Hašavaxšu* is in all likelihood of Bactrian origin.⁵²

The administrative pattern corresponds completely with the one discussed above. As there are only two languages involved, one could expect two officials, but in most letters only one name is mentioned. Probably the person in charge of the command was also the *sēpiru*. Only once (in the letter A2) two persons are mentioned: the *sēpiru* and the one who is in charge of the command.

In conclusion, two patterns can be distinguished: one where only two languages are involved and one where three languages are involved:

1. Two languages (Old Persian and Aramaic): An Iranian high official dictates an order (**patigāma-*) in Old Persian to PN₁ (*b' l' t' m*), who is responsible for the correct effectuation of it (“he knows about it”).
PN₁ delivers the order to PN₂ (formula P), a *sēpiru/teppir* who makes an Aramaic translation, which could be recopied if circumstances required this (e.g. in case of TAD A 6.2, copied by Nabû-‘aqab).
2. Three languages (Old Persian, Aramaic, Egyptian/Elamite): An Iranian high official dictates an order (**patigāma-*) in Old Persian to PN₁ (*b' l' t' m*), who is responsible for the correct effectuation of it (“he knows about it”). This corresponds to the formula P.

⁵⁰Tavernier (2008, 64).

⁵¹Shaked (2004, 23–24).

⁵²Shaked (2004, 24).

PN₁ delivers the order to PN₂ (formula P), a *sēpiru/teppir* who makes an Aramaic version as well as a version in the local vernacular, the draft (*tumme*) to PN₃. It is this draft that he hands over to a local scribe (formula D).

PN₃, a local scribe who was only familiar with the local cuneiform or Egyptian writing system, writes an Elamite or an Egyptian copy of the *tumme* (formula T).

10.4 Concluding Remarks

Generally, an evolution can be seen from the pre-Achaemenid period, where multilingualism exists but is somehow uncontrolled and not systematically dealt with, to the Achaemenid period, where an imperial administration attempts to manipulate the existing multitude of languages and turn it into an administrative system.

In the Suso-Elamite state, a dichotomy between Akkadian-speaking people and Elamite-speaking people is clearly visible. This dichotomy was present in the Old, Middle and Neo-Elamite periods, though the position of Akkadian seems to have become weaker in the latter period. Moreover, this period has also witnessed the emergence of Persian as a spoken language in what is now the province of Fārs in Iran.

Elamite as a written language was rather exceptional in the Old Elamite period. But in the second part of the Middle Elamite period, when power came into the hands of Humpanumena, a king originating from a region less influenced by Mesopotamian culture and language, starts to produce Elamite royal inscriptions anew. From then on, Elamite becomes the major written language in Susa, an evolution continued in the Neo-Elamite period when the sources became even more varied than before.

The arrival of Persian-speaking people and the rise to power of the Achaemenids has modified this situation. It seems that the Achaemenids, due to the extent and the character of their state, were obliged to systematize multilingualism within their administration in order to be able to create and maintain a smooth and agile state apparatus.

In order to tackle this multilingualism and to convert it into an administrative advantage, the Achaemenids put Aramaic on a high administrative level throughout the empire. This situation is comparable to what the Dutch did in Indonesia when they did not use the local Indonesian vernaculars, but instead used Malay to issue their administrative orders.⁵³

One should be conscious of the fact that the study conducted here covers only a small part of multilingualism within the Achaemenid Empire, both geographically (only a few regions are studied here) and with respect to the content (multilingualism occurred not only in the administration, but also in other areas of society, e.g. the military). Nevertheless the lack of source material is a heavy burden for this study and new findings may very well modify the ideas presented here.

⁵³See the contribution by Salverda to this volume.

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