

The head in Akkadian

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Akkadian is the oldest attested Semitic language and also one of the oldest languages written down. In the first half of the second millennium BCE several large corpora of correspondence were written in Akkadian and its three dialects, Old Assyrian, Old Babylonian and the dialect from the city-state of Mari. Of those the oldest are the letters of the Assyrian merchants from their trading outposts in Cappadocia (late 20th and 19th centuries BCE). The next group consists of the correspondence received by the king of Mari, Zimri-Lim, in his palace in the first half of the 18th century BCE, and the slightly earlier letters of the king Shamshi-Adad. Third corpus - letters of Babylonian officials

to their king, the famous Hammurabi, is only a few years later or concurrent with the former group from Mari.

The words for “head” in Akkadian are *qaqqādu(m)* and *rēšu(m)*. Both denote also metonymically “beginning”, “top”, and “a person”, as well as refer to leaders of larger groups of people. They show, however, a slightly different number of attestations in the texts (the Archibab corpus gives the

total of 184 occurrences for *rēšu(m)* and 123 for *qaqqādu(m)*). They also form different collocations and appear in different idioms. Interestingly enough, both nouns also feature as technical terms in economical transactions. The following paper will present a typology of the attestations of both nouns and their meanings, with a focus on the conceptualisations of the human body part, “head”, extended to other semantic domains. The use of the text corpora described above will facilitate obtaining a full range of attestations of both nouns across dialects as well as in different sociolinguistic contexts (letters to a king versus letters between merchants of the same status or members of the same family).

Archibab

<http://www.archibab.fr/>

CAD, Chicago Assyrian Dictionary

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