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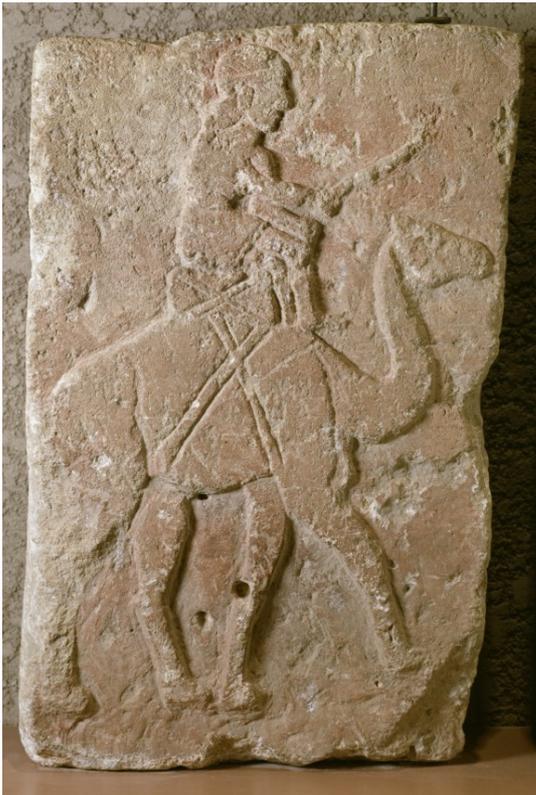
24) Assyrian camels and Luwian officials —

(1) **Luwian Camels.** In a 2016 paper on some specific verbal forms of Luwian, I. Yakubovich (2016) cursorily suggests that the twice attested Luwian sequence *ka-marali^{+radi}-* may represent the word for “camel”, resulting from a borrowing from Semitic. The word occurs in the ASSUR Letter F+G at lines §28 and §31, a letter sent by an Iron Age Luwian merchant named Taksalas, in a context that suggests that 4 *k.*'s were bought back (but for a different interpretation of the verb *isa-*, cf. Sasseville 2018, 161f., quoted

in eDiAnA, s.v. *ka-mara/i-*), and therefore any available *k.*'s were to be dispatched to the sender of the message (Hawkins 2000, 537; Giusfredi 2010, 226-230).

That camels and dromedaries were known to the Luwian peoples of the Iron Age Syro-Anatolian interface is certain: a Karkemish “camel-rider” relief was exposed already by Hogarth (1914, plate B 9b; 1952 plate B 16b), and the Tell Halaf reliefs of the palace of King Kapara also contain at least an example, now at the Walters Art Museum (which is here reproduced in Fig. 1).

Exactly how frequent the presence of the animal was in the Syro-Anatolian area is unclear. Given the modest number of representations, it is possible that camels and dromedaries were somewhat exotic and infrequent (nor would they represent the sole example of unusual animals at the courts of local rulers), and certainly they did not originate from the area. In general, camels and dromedaries were certainly diffused in Egypt already during the Middle and Late Bronze age, and they became more frequent in the Ancient



Near East with the intensive interactions with the Arab peoples during the 1st millennium BCE (cf. Aubaile 2012).

In order to try and evaluate the likelihood of camels being mentioned among the commodities quoted in the ASSUR Letters, however, we would need to ascertain the original provenance of the archive, which, to date, is not possible, as they were retrieved in a much later archaeological context (Giusfredi 2010, 208). A central Anatolian origin of the documents seems possible, based on the similarity with the KULULU LEAD STRIPS (cf. Giusfredi 2010, 208f., where, however, I presented this possibility as almost certain, a statement that is probably too optimistic). Still, the texts are not generous in terms of recognizable toponyms, with the few exceptions including a possible reference to Karkemish (*ka+rāli-mi-sā*, with an omitted KA sign, in Letter A, §6; Hawkins 2000, 534, Giusfredi 2010, 211), which would make the presence of camels far more likely.

Fig. 1. the dromedary rider relief from the Kapara palace in Tell Halaf, 10th-9th century BCE, Walters Art Museum, Creative Commons license.

As for the formal analysis, the Assyrian form is *gammalu* (or *gammālu*), attested from Neo-Assyrian onwards, and considered to be a loanword from a West Semitic language, possibly Aramaic (where the attestations are generally later, but the title “camel-rider” may occur already in the first Sefire Treaty (KAI 222, face B line 36). A Proto-Semitic etymology would send it back to **gml*, which regularly yields the Aramaic forms and the Standard Arabic ones (while the forms in the other and later languages would probably result from a rather complex net of lexical borrowings).

Yakubovich proposes the comparison basing on the well-known alternation of /l/- and /r/-signs in the graphemics of the Late Hieroglyphic Luwian texts. A writing *ka-mara^{+rāli-}* could conceal a reading /kamala/; furthermore, Yakubovich suggests that the presence of a /k/ instead of a voiced /g/ would make Luwian a possible intermediate language of diffusion for the Semitic **gamal*-words to eventually become the Greek κάμηλος. This final consideration is not very cogent, as the devoicing of an initial stop can easily happen in contexts of adaptation and requires no formal explanation in terms of sound change (which is expected to be regular and predictable only when it occurs over time within a single language). Furthermore, the path of diffusion of the words for “camel” in Semitic is not entirely clear: as already stated, they seem to be West Semitic loans into Late Akkadian, but the reconstruction of the triconsonantal stem **gml* is no help when one tries to identify the direction of the borrowings. Therefore, the details of the circulation of

this Wanderwort are probably best left untouched, as the “camel”-words may be themselves loans in most of the languages involved, and there is no way to establish which Semitic language acted as a medium for its circulation in the central and western areas of the Mediterranean world. Notwithstanding these methodological observations, though, the general idea that the Luwian *k.*'s quoted in the ASSUR Letters were in fact camels is a very solid one.

Of course, one may argue that other explanations may exist, but after a survey of similar segments in the languages of the area, they all appear to be less convincing. The Luwian lexicon offers no solid *comparandum* (the Hittite word *kammara-*, “fog”, seems semantically unfit, as also observed in eDiAna, s.v.). As for other Akkadian candidate model words, a Late Babylonian designation for “net”, *kamāru*, is attested (Von Soden, AHw. s.v.), which would theoretically represent an alternative possibility. Still, “hunting nets” seem to be way too common an item to occur in the context of requests for commodities to be sent via traveling agents. Therefore, the “camel” hypothesis still seems preferable to me, especially in light of the onomastic evidence I will present in the next paragraph.

(2) “Mr. Camel rider”. There is a further point that requires explanation and that was left untouched by Yakubovich. The Karkemish inscription on the CEKKE stela is a contract written under the supervision of DOMINUS-tiwaras, a high official, discussing the purchase of a town by king Kamanis; the town - or village - is purchased in exchange for mules and silver, and since the text is written after the transaction was completed, the toponym employed is Kamana, evidently a new designation derived from the personal name of the aforementioned ruler. The text mentions a number of people (listed as a seires of couple, each composed by a father and a son) who were probably officials from neighboring centres that had been summoned, very possibly having the function of witnesses. One of them (§17e; Hawkins 2000, 146) is named Kamari- (*ka-mara^{rali}-sa*), which is exactly the same word as *k.*, used here as a personal name. The official comes from a town that was perhaps called Ladapa or Ludapa (*la^{li}u-tà^l-pa-*) and has a son who bears a teophoric compound Luwian name Kwanza-Iarris (REL-*za-ia+rali-sa*). Since the fact that a son bears a Luwian name does not imply that the name of the father had to be also Luwian, and given the apparent perfect match with the name of the Luwian “camel”, it is necessary to evaluate whether a derivation of the personal name from the name of the animal is formally and semantically acceptable.

The first issue one encounters is semantic. If the name Kamaris of CEKKE is in fact connected to *kamari-* “camel”, it is unlikely that we are dealing with a primitive name (“Mr. Camel”). More likely, the name may feature the typical contraction of the *-iya-* derivational morpheme producing genitival adjectives into a (probably long) /i/: the name would then be Kamari(ya)-, “of the camel(s)” > “camel rider”. A personal name deriving from a title or an occupation is typologically more acceptable than a name coinciding with the designation of an animal. Still, if we are in fact dealing with a contracted genitival adjective and with a professional designation becoming a personal name, then it is necessary to stress that the second occurrence of the *k.* in the ASSUR Letter F+G §31, the one in which the dispatchment of *k.*'s is requested, could also indicate camel-riders instead of camels, as traveling agents are certainly involved in the trading procedures described in the ASSUR Letters.

(3) *187(-)ka-pa+rali- Before the recognition of the value /mara/i/, the sign *462 was tentatively transcribed as a sign for /pa/ (PÁ³). This would imply the necessity to discuss, here, the possibility of comparing the name of a commodity quoted in the KIRŞEHİR Letter §20 (Giusfredi 2010, 237-238) as *187(-)ka-pa+rali-. If this were to be identified with our putative camel-words, the analysis would become problematic (I thank Ilya Yakubovich, *personal communication*, for making me aware of this issue). However, nothing indicates that the forms are related: the hypothesis of a value /pa/ for §462 is no longer founded, and the logogram/determinative *187 never appears with the *ka-mara/i*-words. The form in the KIRŞEHİR Letter, a common gender noun inflected in the accusative, is probably to be read *kappari-*, and may be compared, instead, with other forms, as for instance the name of the Hittite fine garment ^{TUG}*kappari-* (on which cf. HED K, s.v., and which in Giusfredi 2010, 230, I indicated as a *comparandum* also for the *ka-mara/i*-words, a statement that I now wish to retract).

(4) Conclusion. While some details of the analysis I presented can only remain speculative, Yakubovich's proposal to connect the *k.*-word(s) of Luwian with Assyrian “camels” appears very convincing, and no serious objections can be raised either from a historical or from a philological point of

view. As the documents that contain the word are probably to be connected with the area of Karkemish and with the Syro-Anatolian interface regions, the presence of camels during the Iron Age is unsurprising and testified also by iconographic materials.

Of the two occurrences in the ASSUR Letters, the first one refers to “camels” being bought, while the second one requires some of them to be sent. As the personal name Kamari- in the CEKKE stela is best analysed as Kamari(ya)-, a hypostasized gentival adjective meaning “camel-rider”, there is a chance that also the second occurrence in the letters may have represented riders rather than animals (which constitutes an undecidable but marginal point).

Caution should, on the other hand, be exerted as regards the hypothesis that Luwian would have acted as the medium of diffusion of the Semitic word for “camel” to Greece and to the Greek language. Not only there is no need to invoke the Luwian devoicing of the initial velar stop to explain the adaptation κάμηλος of Greek: geography would definitely pose problems, because, to the best of our knowledge, the only areas in which the presence of the word emerges with certainty is the Syro-Anatolian interface, while no occurrence comes from the central and peninsular portions of the Luwian speaking regions.

Note

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