

NOTE ON THE NAME OF KING NARMER

The name of Narmer (n'r-mr), king of Upper Egypt in the late predynastic period (ab. 3000 B. C.), has remained a mystery for long millennia. The first component of the name is clearly identical with n'r "Wels (catfish)" (OK, Med., Gr., Wb II 209, 2–6). But the second element -mr has so far been lacking a reliable and convincing etymological explanation on the Egyptian lexical material. In this brief paper we attempt to give a solution for the second component of the name in the Common Afrasian (Semito-Hamitic) lexical material. First, we can also admit that the Egyptian vocabulary does not help too much to clarify -mr, as there is no Egyptian word to fit in the name.

1. One could expect -mr to mean among others "fish". In this case the whole name could have meant "Catfish". This kind of name of the rapacious Nile fish fits well with the names of the previous kings from the "0. Dynasty", probable ancestors of Narmer (predynastic period): k3 "Bull", srq "Scorpion" (cf. e. g. Kákosy 1993, 40). Just this kind of reasoning seems confirmed if the 2nd component -mr phonologically reflects an earlier *ml, because this purely hypothetically reconstructed Eg. *mr "fish" would be a perfect match of the Common Afrasian noun *m^wal- "fish", having its traces in ECu. Somali-Hawiya mallay, Somali-Digil malalay, Jäbärti of Somali malläy "fish" (Reinisch 1904, 78), Boni melelé'i "fish" (Heine 1977, 287), Sidamo mwoliyā "fish" (Cohen 1947, #466) | | | **NOM.** Chara mulā Wolamo mole, Zala muoliyā, Gofa molā, molo, Badditu malalā "fish", Gamu, Dache, Zayse, Zergulla mole, Dorze mollé, mole, Oyda mollo, molo, Dawro molya, Kullo mōliya. Malo, Kachama molo, Basketo mola, mola, Haruro molo, Gidicho mollo, Koyra malala | | **SOM.** Ari mol-ta, Galila mola. Cf. Cerulli 1951, 172; Mukarowsky 1981, 208, #32; Lamberti 1994, 115 (NOM.-Somali < "Old Cushitic" *mol-) | | | **WCh.** Sbauchi gr.: Guruntum mollaṅ, mwerrang "fish" (JI 1994, 140). It is not excluded that the ECu. forms represent a borrowing from various NOM. sources (Lamberti, pers. comm. on 6 January 1997).

Our hypothetically reconstructed Eg. word *mr, maybe, is not fully unattested within Egyptian, compare the obscure mr.t glossed by Erman and Grapow as "ein Tier (zwischen Fischen genannt)" (XVIII. Mag., Wb II 105, 17).

Note that Cohen (1947, #466) has mistakenly equated the ECu. data with Eg. rm "fish" (OK, Wb II 416, 12). In theory, Eg. rm could represent a metathetical cognate (from *lam-) to the ECu.-Sbauchi isogloss, but the Cop. reflexes (S) rame, raame, (B) rami "Nilbarsch" (Osing 1976, 429: < Eg. *rémjV[j/w] and Vycichl 1983, 172:

"original" *rīmey, pl. *rimy-ū yielding later on *rēm, pl. *rame) make it clear that Eg. rm cannot be related. For the problem of true Afrasian cognates of Eg. rm "fish" see Takács 1995 and forthcoming.

2. The eventual further affiliation of the Omotic-East Cushitic-SBauchi (- ?Egyptian) isogloss *m[u]l- "fish" deserves a discussion here. Judging by some typological parallels (below, #2.1), we cannot exclude that this form has preserved ultimately the same root as AA *mulḥ/- "lizard", which is attested in **Berb.** Qabyle of Jurjura a-mulab "Algerian lizard (*Tropidosaura algira*)", Beni Menacer mulab "lizard" (Basset 1885, 174) | | | **ECu.** Sam gr. Rendille mulūḥ, Somali mula', mulu'a "lizard" (Heine 1978, 69: PSam *mul'); Afar mullu'it "lizard" | | | **WCh.** Ron gr. Bokkos mulúsūs "grey lizard", cf. Hausa mulwa "short thick snake" | | | **CCh.** Kobochi malwā', Nzangi mālawá, Holma malwé "chameleon" (Strümpell 1922–1923, 135) | | | **?Eg.:** compare the second component -mnḥ in k3-mnḥ "Schildkröte" (Gr., Wb V 96, 9), k3-being probably "turtle" from AA *kur- "turtle" (details in Takács 1996, #53).

See Mukarowsky 1987, 245 (Bokkos-ECu.); Blažek 1992, 137 (AA *mul-: Ecu., WCh., CCh., Berb.); Orel-Stolbova 1992, 208 (ECu., WCh); Orel 1993, 39 (WCh., ECu.); HSED #1792 (Bokkos-Hausa, ECu.).

The Berb. *-mulab should be analyzed as *-mul-ab with the suffix *-b, which is attested in many Afrasian animal names, cf. Diakonoff 1965, 28, note 40, 52, note 2; 1967, 210; 1970, 461, note 23; 1975, 140; 1986, 47; 1988, 57; Fronzaroli 1969, 307, note 113, ; Illič-Svityč 1971, 192–193; Eilers 1978, 129; 1987, 516, 523.

For AA *mulḥ/- "lizard" an areal parallel may be found in NMande *muluku "lizard" (Mukarowsky, loci cit.).

2.1. The eventual semantic dispersion between "lizard" ~ "snake" ~ "fish" is not unique in AA, cp. the following two Common Afrasian words:

2.1.1. AA *dV(n)g-ar, attested in: **Wsem.** Ug. dg "Fische" (coll.), dgy "Fischer", Hebr. dāg "Fische", dayyāg "Fischer" (WUS #725) | | | **?Eg.** dngngs "Bez. der Uraeusschlange" (Gr., Wb V 470, 8) | | | **LECu.** Oromo dangal-ée "tadpole" | | | **NOM.** *dingar- "snake": Kaffa dingaro, dingiroo (Bender 1975, 187: díngrè), Gimirra dingar | | | **WCh.** Hausa k'a-dangara "lizard" (Kraft: ka-dangarèè) | Chip dǫgos "lizard" | Bole-Tangale gr.: Karekare dənkarà, Ngamo dəkùra "lizard" | | **CCh.** Musgum diṇidiṇi "lizard" | | **CCh.** *(ka-)dVgVI- "lizard": Ngwahi tǫxula, Higi-Nkafa xà-digàla, Fali-Kiriya (w)nǫǫxàla, Masa ho-dǫṇola, Banana hwǫ-dèngwǫlǫ | | **ECh.** Mubi danguda "Chamäleon" (Strümpell 1922–1923, 135).

See also Kraft 1981; Mukarowsky 1987, 244; Blažek 1989, 212; HSED #716.

2.1.2. The Eg. word 'š3 "lizard" (Pap. Ram. V, 21 [written 'š]; Gardiner 1927, 465: I1; FD 49) is also most probably a reflex of AA *'a[č]- "fish", preserved in **Bed.** aša, aše, Ammar'ar 'áašu "fish" | | **Agaw** *'a[s]-: Bilin 'asa, Hamir xasa, Qemant asa, Awngi asi "fish" (Appleyard 1984, 44, 57; Agaw > Eth.-Sem.: Geez 'āsā, 'ása, Tigre, Tigrinya 'asa, Amhara asa "fish", Leslau 1988, 85) | | **LECu.** Saho 'ása "fish"

(borrowed < Agaw?) ||| NOm. Kafa hāšō, āšō "Fische (coll.)", cf. eš "pescare", Gofa áso "Fisch(e)" (Reinisch 1888, 265), Mocha, Anfillo hāšo, Bworo aso, Nao aša "fish" ~ ECh. Kera ačo "sardine" (HSED #1085).

There have been recorded also some variant forms with voiced sibilants in Cushitic and Omotic: **Agaw** Bilin 'azā, Hamir xazā, Qemant, Qwara azā "fish" (Reinisch 1885, 33; 1887, 654) || **SCu.** Asa azā "fish" ||| **NOm.** Kaffa āžō, hāžō (Reinisch 1888, 265).

See Cohen 1947, #48, Hintze 1951, 76; Dolgopopol'skij 1973, 293; Bender 1975, 163; Appleyard 1977, 42/84; Zaborski 1989, 581; Orel-Stolbova 1992, 167.

Abbreviations and special signs

AA: Afroasiatic (Hamito-Semitic), Akk.: Akkadian, (B): Bohairic dialect of Coptic, BD: Book of the Dead, Bed.: Bed'awye, Berb.: Berber-Guanche, C: Central, Ch. Chadic, Cop.: Coptic, CT: Coffin Texts, Cu.: Cushitic, Drav.: Dravidian, E: East, Eg.: Egyptian, Eth.-Sem.: Ethio-Semitic, Gr.: Greek and Roman Period, H: Highland, Hebr.: Hebrew, IE: Indo-European, Kartv.: Kartvelian, L: Lowland, LP: Late Period, Med.: Mediacal Texts, Megr.: Megrelian, MK: Middle Kingdom, N: North, NK: New Kingdom, O: Old, OK: Old Kingdom, Om.: Omotic, P: Proto-, S: South, (S): Sahidic dialect of Coptic, Sem.: Semitic, Ug.: Ugaritic, W: West.

The vertical signs ||| indicate the closeness of relationship between the various Afrasian forms under discussion. Thus ||| separates two different branches (e. g. Cushitic and Chadic); || stands between sub-branches within the same branch (e. g. West Chadic and East Chadic); | marks the limit between groups within the same sub-branch (e. g. Kotoko group and Tera group in Central Chadic).

[] brackets indicate uncertain reconstruction, while () mark a proto-phoneme omittable in the proto-form in question.

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Povzetek

O IMENU KRALJA NARMERJA

Pisec vidi v imenu egiptovskega kralja Narmerja zloženko, katere prva sestavina je že prepoznana kot n'r 'som'. V drugi sestavini mr prepozna neko slovarsko enoto s pomenom 'riba', ki je v egiptovščini slabo izpričana, zato pa toliko bolj v semio-hamitskem in drugem afrazijskem besednem zakladu.