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Contents:

- Jan Ciopiński*, Emotion and its Measure in Ottoman Poetry
Henryk Jankowski, S a l a in Crimean Habitation Places
Barbara Podolak, Der Transkriptionstext von Michał Ignacy Wieczorkowski
 'Breve compendium fidei Catholicae Turcico textu ...' (1721)
Marzanna Pomorska, New-Persian Loanwords in Anatolian-Turkish Dialects (1)
Ewa Siemienieć-Golaś, Turkish Words in Smith's 'Epistolae Quatuor' (1674)
Ewa Siemienieć-Golaś, The Suffix ıc1 as one of the most Productive Formatives
 in the 17th Century Turkish Language
Marek Stachowski, Suffix- und Wortstammtypen in Jakutischen
Marek Stachowski, The Increasing of the Number of Syllables and the Chronol-
 ogy of Anaptyxis and Prosthesis in West European Loanwords of Ottoman-
 Turkish
Stanisław Stachowski, Studien zur türkischen Wortgeschichte (1)

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NOTE ON THE NAME OF KING NARMER OF
THE EGYPTIAN PREDYNASTIC PERIOD

by Gábor Takács

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 (Semitic-Hamitic) lexical material. First, we can also admit that the Eg. vocabulary does not clarify -mr, there is no Eg. word to fit in. 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. Kákossy 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. Somalm mallay, malalay, Jäbärti of Somali malläy "fish" (Reinisch 1904, 78), Sidamo mwoliyā "fish" ~ P^{Om}. *mol- "fish" (Cerulli 1951, 172; Mukarovskiy 1981, 208, #32; Lamberti 1994, 115) ~ WCh. S^{Bauchi} gr.: Guruntum mollaṇ, mwerrang "fish" (Jungraithmayr-Ibriszimow 1994, 140).

Note that Cohen (1997, #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.-S^{Bauchi} isogloss, but the Cop. reflexes (S) rame, raame, (B) rami "Nilbarsch" (Osing 1976, 929: < Eg. *rēm̃j̃ [j/w] and Vycichl 1983, 172: "original" rīmey, pl. *rimy-ū yielding later on *rēm, pl. *rame) make it clear that Eg. cannot be related. For the problem of true Afrasian cognates of Eg. rm "fish" see Takács 1995 and forthcoming.

There cannot be excluded an etymological relation between ECu.-S^{Bauchi}-?Eg. isogloss *m^wal- "fish" and Afrasian *mulh/- "lizard", which is attested in Berb. Qabyle of Jurjura a-mulab "Algerian lizard

(*Tropidosaura algrira*)", Beni Menacer mulab "lizard" (Basset 1885, 174; with a suffix *-b attested in several AA animal names, 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 etc.) ~ ECu. Sam gr. Rendille mulúh, Somali mula', mulu'a "lizard" (Heine 1978, 69: PSam *mul'); Afar mullu'it "lizard" ~ WCh. Ron gr. Bokkos mulúsús "grey lizard", cf. Hausa mulwa "short thick snake" ~ CCh. Kobochi malwá', Nzangi mālawá, Holma malwé "chameleon" (Strüpell 1922—1923, 135) ~ ?Eg.: cp. the second element in k3-mnh "Schildkröte" (Gr., Wb V 96, 9), k3- being < AA *kur- "turtle" (details in Takács 1996, #53). See Mukarovsky 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.).

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

The eventual semantic dispersion between "lizard" ~ "snake" ~ "fish" is not unique in AA, cp. Sem. Ug. dg "Fische" (coll.), dgi "Fischer", Hebr. dāg "Fische" (Aistleitner 1963, #725), dayyāg "Fischer" ~ ?Eg. dngngs "Bez. der Uraeusschlange" (Gr., Wb V 470, 8) ~ LECu. Oromo dangal-ée "tadpole" ~ NOm. *dingar- "snake": Kaffa dingaro, dingiroo (Bender 1975, 187: dīngérò), Gimirra dingar ~ WCh. Hausa ka-dangara; Bole-Tangale gr.: Karekare dānkarà, Ngamo dākùra "lizard" ~ CCh. Musgum diṇidiṇii "lizard" ~ ECh. Mubi danguda "Chamäleon" (Strümpell 1922—1923, 135). See Mukarovsky 1987, 244 (WCh., Musgum, Oromo, NOm.); Blažek 1989, 212 (Sem. + NOm.); HSED #716 (WCh., NOm.).

Abbreviations

AA: Afroasiatic (Hamito-Semitic), Akk.: Akkadian, (B): Bohairic dialect of Coptic, BD: Book of the Dead, Bed.: Bedawye, 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.: Medical Texts, Megr.: Megrelian, MK: Middle Kingdom, N: North, NK: New Kingdom, O: Old, OBab.: Old Babylonian, OGeorg.: Old Georgian, OInd.: Old Indic (Sanskrit), OK: Old Kingdom, Om.: Omotic, P: Proto-, S: South, (S): Sahidic dialect of Coptic, Sem.: Semitic, Ug.: Ugaritic, W: West.

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GÁBOR TAKÁCS

MATERIALS FOR THE SEMANTIC OPPOSITION IN EGYPTIAN AND AFRASIAN

The present paper pursues the aim to discuss in detail a dozen of reliable cases for the phenomenon of semantic opposition within the same root, the same cognate set in Afrasian. This phenomenon is challenging for a comparativist because these examples from various Afrasian languages show absolutely no trace of any kind of morphological distinction between the poles of semantics. Therefore, the purpose of my approach can be only to describe and not to explain the reasons of what we can clearly see in the following. The explanation should remain for those dealing with theoretic and general linguistic problems. A special attention should be paid to the opposite pairs expressing or connected with activities of the body parts, esp. the senses (seeing, hearing), see #7–14.

I. Some common examples

1. Sem. Hebr. $\sqrt{y}$ 'by „wünschen“ and $\sqrt{y}$ 'b „to long for sg.“, Syr. yi'eb „to wish, want, desire“, Aram. (Imperial) $\sqrt{y}$ 'b „to wish, want“, Ar. $\sqrt{bb}$ „to long for sg.“ ~ ?Eg. 3bj „to wish, desire“ (MK, Wb I 6–7).

This isogloss is to be opposed to that represented by Sem. Ug. 'ub „wieder (?)“, He. 'ōb „revenant“, Ar. $\sqrt{y}$ 'by and Geez 'abāya „nicht wollen, to refuse“, Ar. 'āba „wiederkehren“, Soqotri 'yb „to delay, be slow, hesitate“ (Aistleitner 1963, #9) ~ ?Eg. 3b „to avoid, cease“ (CT, FD 2; Wb I 6, 2: „aufhören, eine Pause machen“) ~ Berb. Ahaggar iba ($\sqrt{HbH}$) „cesser“.

See Erman 1892, 107; Ember 1930, #3.a.2; Cohen 1947, #6; Vycichl 1958, 371 (Sem.-Eg.); Prasse 1969, 27 (Eg.-Sem.-Tuar.); Zaborski 1971, 53, #1; Majzel'-Militarev 1983, 244 (Sem.-Eg.).