

The Late Babylonian *ambaru*

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The document *Dar. 551*, written at Babylon in the 22nd year of Darius I (500 B.C.), which records the division of a family estate mentions a slave-woman locked "in the royal storehouse": *i-na kar-ri am-ba-ru šá LUGAL* (see line 11). In all probability, she was a runaway slave-woman confined there after having been caught. As seen from the text, her owner was the chief of the place where she was confined: *LÚ.GAL kar-ri* (see line 33). There are also known some other cases when slaves were locked in storehouses,¹ *būt karê*.²

The document *BE 9, 55* coming from the Murashû archive and dated to the 37th year of Artaxerxes I (428 B.C.) contains the words *ka-ra am-ba-ri* (see line 4). According to the text, Enlil-shum-iddin, a member of the famous business house of Murashû, told two tenants of land to reinforce the sluices of canals and regulate the flow of water of the Sin canal in *ka-ra am-ba-ri* so that there should be no diverting of water into his fields.³

Dar. 551 has been discussed by Peiser who read the crucial word *am-ma⁴-ru* and judging from the context translated it "Speicher."⁵ *BE 9, 55* has been treated by Augapfel who, however, read the word under consideration *ka-ra-am-ma-tal-li-na-⁶*. Neither *CAD* nor *AHw* list the word *ambaru* or refer in this connection to *Dar. 551*. *CAD (A/II:70)*, with reference to *BE 9, 55*, says: "*ka-ra-am-ma-ri* or *ka-ra-am(-)ba-ri* is most likely to be divided as *karam* and *m/|bari*, see *karammu*."⁷

Thus, the word *ambaru* has so far not been satisfactorily explained. It seems to the present author that it is a loan word from Old Persian **hambāra* ("storehouse")⁸ which is frequently attested in the Achaemenid Elamite tablets from Persepolis in the form

1 See, e.g., *Cyr. 281* and *TCL 13, 154* dated to the reigns of Cyrus and Cambyses respectively.

2 See *CAD K:226 s.v. karû*—"pile of barley (prepared for storage)"; p. 228 s.v. *būt karê*—"storehouse"; *AHw:452 s.v. karû I*—"Getreidehaufen, Speicher."

3 Cf. *CAD M/II:259*.

4 In the Neo- and Late Babylonian periods the signs *ma* and *ba* were written practically the same way.

5 J. Kohler and F. E. Peiser, *Aus dem babylonischen Rechtsleben* (Leipzig, 1891), 26.

6 J. Augapfel, *Babylonische Rechtsurkunden aus der Regierungszeit Artaxerxes I. und Darius II.* (Wien, 1917), 96.

7 In *CAD K:200 karammu* is translated "storage area." Cf., however, *CAD M/II:259* where the word is rendered "in the *karammari* (district)."

8 See W. Hinz, *Altiranisches Sprachgut der Nebenüberlieferungen* (Wiesbaden, 1975), 112f. (with previous literature). The same author notes that in a number of documents from the Murashû archive a geographical name *Ĥambāra* is referred to. See *BE 9, 7a:3*; *PBS 2/I, 48:5* (URU ^m*Ĥa-am-ba-ri*—"Estate of *Ĥambaru*"); cf. *BE 9, 48:12, 44:11*; *BE 10, 61:7, 9*; *PBS 2/I, 48:11* where the same geographical name is written without the determinative preceding the personal names.

am-ba-raš.⁹ It is also noteworthy that *ambaru* is attested in the Babylonian texts only in the Achaemenid period. The meaning “storehouse” fits well for *karri ambaru* both in *Dar.* 551 and *BE* 9, 55 where the words are used as a synonym of the Akkadian *būt karê*. The usual spelling of *karê* is *kar-ri*, though it can also be written as logogram *kara*₆.

Stolper has published a legal document from the Murashû archive containing the phrase *ka-^ra^l-am-ma-ri* [*š*]á LUGAL which is translated by him “the royal registry.”¹⁰ The text records a lawsuit concerning a house. It was brought before the assembly (*puhru*) of Nippur in the 20th year of Artaxerxes I (445 B.C.). The claimant declared that the house belonged to him: “it was written down in my name in the royal registry in the twenty-second year of Darius.” Stolper assumes that *ka-^ra^l-am-ma-ri* is a loan word from Old Persian **kārahmāra*- reconstructed from Achaemenid Elamite *karamaraš* (*kāra*- “people” or the homophonous *kāra*- “work” and **hmāra*- “numbering”). The same author has noted that “Babylonian reflex” of this word occurs in the spellings *ka-ra-am-ma-ri* and *kar-ri-am-ma-ru* in the documents which have been considered above. However, it is hardly possible to connect *kalamari* with *karri ambaru*, the first part of which is the Akkadian *karû*.

9 See for references R. T. Hallock, *Persepolis Fortification Tablets* (Chicago, 1969), 666 s.v. *ambaraš*.

10 M. W. Stolper, “The Genealogy of the Murašû Family,” *JCS* 28 (1976), 192ff.