

# 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,<sup>1</sup> *bīt karê*.<sup>2</sup>

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.<sup>3</sup>

*Dar.* 551 has been discussed by Peiser who read the crucial word *am-ma<sup>4</sup>-ru* and judging from the context translated it “Speicher.”<sup>5</sup> *BE* 9, 55 has been treated by Augapfel who, however, read the word under consideration *ka-ra-am-ma-tal-li-na<sup>6</sup>*. 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*.”<sup>7</sup>

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”)<sup>8</sup> 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 Cambyes respectively.

2 See *CAD* K:226 s.v. *karû*—“pile of barley (prepared for storage)”; p. 228 s.v. *bīt 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 *Īambāra* is referred to. See *BE* 9, 7a:3; *PBS* 2/I, 48:5 (URU <sup>m</sup>*Īa-am-ba-ri*—“Estate of Īambaru”); 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*.<sup>9</sup> 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*.<sub>6</sub>

Stolper has published a legal document from the Murashû archive containing the phrase *ka-<sup>f</sup>al<sup>l</sup>-am-ma-ri* [*š*]á LUGAL which is translated by him "the royal registry."<sup>10</sup> The text records a lawsuit concerning a house. It was brought before the assembly (*puḫru*) 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-<sup>f</sup>al<sup>l</sup>-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 *kalammarī* with *karri ambaru*, the first part of which is the Akkadian *karû*.

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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.