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CARIANS AS SKILLED MASONS IN ISRAEL AND MERCENARIES IN JUDAH IN THE EARLY I MILLENNIUM B.C.E.

In recent studies the Carians of pre-Hellenistic times are described as sailors and mercenaries.¹ It is true that the inscriptions they made when serving as mercenaries in Egypt under the command of pharaoh Psammetichus I (664–610 B.C.E.) or II (595–589 B.C.E.) speak of that. We learn this also from Herodotus I.12 and 171. But now we know that the Carians in Egypt were not only men of military professions, but skilled stonecutters and masons. This most important discovery and explanation was made by Sh. L. Gosline.² The author identified 37 masons' marks, which came from buildings, or from quarries, with signs of the Carian alphabet. Most of them came from the terrace of the temple of Khnum at Elephantine,³ and they can be dated to the VII or VI centuries B.C.E. Such Carian signs – masons' marks – are also known from Persepolis and Pasargadae of the Achæmenid times.⁴ Taking the above given material into account, N.

Abbreviations

BDB = F. Brown, S. R. Driver, C. A. Briggs, *A Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament*, Oxford, 1906.

CAH = *Cambridge Ancient History*, 2nd ed., vol. III,2, Cambridge, 1991.

HAL = W. Baumgartner, *Hebräisches und Aramäisches Lexicon zum Alten Testament*, Leiden, 1974.

ICC = *International Critical Commentary*.

IMSA = *Israel Museum Studies in Archaeology*.

KAI = H. Donner, W. Röllig, *Kanaanäische und aramäische Inschriften*, Bd. I, Wiesbaden, 2002.

OTL = *Old Testament Library*.

¹ M. Mellink, *Caria*, CAH, III,2, 1991, pp. 661–664; O. Masson, *The Carian Language*, CAH, III,2, 1991, pp. 674–676.

² Sh. L. Gosline, *Carian Quarry Markings on Elephantine Island*, *Kadmos* 31, 1992, pp. 43–50.

³ Sh. L. Gosline, *Carian Quarry Markings*, p. 46, Fig. 1.

Franklin identified 17 masons' marks as Carian letters in the wall-stones of Samaria and Megiddo, cities of the Israeli kingdom at the levels of the IX century B.C.E.⁵

So this is the most ancient occurrence of Carian letters known today. N. Franklin receives support from the works of V. Ševoroškin, as, according to his theories, the Carian letters were borrowed from early North West Semitic scripts.⁶ Therefore, we can consider the Carian letters appearing as masons' marks of the IX century at Samaria and Megiddo as the most archaic Carian script known. We can also agree with Franklin that these stone masons were hired, though we do not agree – with Franklin – that they could have been “subjected to servitude as stone masons”.⁷ We know cases, where serfs (prisoners of war) had to do construction work. So, according to the inscription of the Moabite king Mesha' IX cent. B.C.E., he had his construction work done “by the prisoners of Israel”⁸ and according to a recently published Moabite royal inscription of the VIII cent. B.C.E., the king of Moab says that he had his building work carried out by the “captives of the Ammonites” (lit., “sons of Ammon”).⁹

The apparent origin of the Carians, or their connection with the “Sea Peoples” of the outgoing II millennium¹⁰ and their appearance as mercenaries, show us that they were not serfs, but hired masons. This brings us to another question – to the biblical evidence. Twice in II, Kings 11:4 and 19 *kāri* are mentioned. This chapter speaks about the *coup d'état* of the high priest Jehoiada, the murder of queen Athaliah and the enthronement of Joash¹¹ which took place in 835/834 B.C.E.¹² 11:4 “Jehoiada sent and brought the captains of the hundreds of the Carites and the guards” (*šālah yēhōyādā' wayyiqqah*

⁴ N. Franklin, *Masons' Marks from the Ninth Century B.C.E. Northern Kingdom of Israel. Evidence of the Nascent Carian Alphabet?*, *Kadmos* 40, 2001, pp. 107–116.

⁵ N. Franklin, *Masons' Marks*, p. 110–111, Fig. 1, where the Carian letters = masons' marks are given from Samaria and Megiddo and their occurrence at Elephantine, Pasargadae, Sardis and Labraunda.

⁶ N. Franklin, p. 112.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

⁸ KAI, p. 41, line 25 ... *b'sr*, 26 *yśr'l*.

⁹ Sh. Ahi'uv, *A New Moabite Inscription*, *IMSA*, 2, 2003, pp. 3–10, line 3, *b'sry bny 'mn*.

¹⁰ N. Franklin, *Masons' Marks*, p. 113.

¹¹ We take the text in English, according to the translation of M. Cogan and H. Tadmor, *II Kings. The Anchor Bible*, 1988.

¹² Cf. the chronology in G. Galil, *The Chronology of the Kings of Israel and Judah*, Leiden, 1996, p. 71.

'et-šārēy hammē'ōt lakkārī w^elārāšīm). The purpose was to form an alliance with them. 11:19: (Jehoiada) “took the captains of the hundreds, the Carites and the guards¹³ (*wayyiqāḥ 'et-šārēy hammē'ōt w^eet-hakkārī w^eet hārāšīm*). Most interesting is the wording in verse 4 from where we see that the *kārī* were organized into “hundreds”, i.e., into military units.

Who were these *kārī*? The ancient translations of the Old Testament and also the Jewish commentators of the Middle Ages did not explain this term. Most scholarly commentators identify the *kārī* as *kerētī* (the Cretans) without entering the problem. Only H. Ewald in the 60s of the XIX-century identified them with the Carians mentioned in Herodotos¹⁴ and he was followed by such other scholars as Montgomery–Gehman and Gray,¹⁵ as also by some dictionaries to the Old Testament, including BDB¹⁶ and HAL¹⁷ and S. Loewenstamm in his encyclopedia article.¹⁸ At the same time Greenfield supposes in the year 1962 that the biblical Cheretites – *kereti* – were Cretans and that later their designation changed to *kārī*.¹⁹ Cogan and Tadmor also discuss the question of the possible identity of the Biblical *kārī* with the Carians, but they express their doubt¹⁹ about it.²⁰ But now, when we have clear Carian letters as masons' marks from Samaria and Megiddo, we can no longer doubt that, not only in the kingdom of Israel in the IX century B.C.E., there were Carians, who worked as skilled masons. And, it follows that the *kārī* in Judah, who were organized into “hundreds” (*mē'ōt*), were Carians. With their cooperation Jehoiada was able to dethrone Athaliah and enthrone Joash.

All that is said above allows us to reconsider the passage of II Sam. 20:23, which tells us that “Benaiah, the son of Yehoyada, was over all the Carians and over the Pelethites” (*ūb^enayā ben-Yehōyādā'*

¹³ *rāšīm* (lit., runners).

¹⁴ H. Ewald, *History of Israel* (English translation by R. M. Martison), 1886, p. 135.

¹⁵ J. A. Montgomery and H. S. Gehman, *The Book of the Kings*, ICC, Edinburgh, 1951, pp. 85–86 and 419; J. Gray, *I and II Kings*, OTL, London, 1964, p. 516, and some others.

¹⁶ BDB, 1907, p. 501.

¹⁷ HAL, II, 1974, p. 473.

¹⁸ S. Loewenstamm, *kārī*, in *Encyclopaedia Biblica* IV, Jerusalem, 1962, pp. 310–312 (Hebrew).

¹⁹ J. C. Greenfield, *The Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible*, I, 1962, p. 557.

²⁰ M. Cogan, H. Tadmor, *II Kings*, p. 126.

‘al-hakk^erēi w^eal happ^elēti).²¹ Despite the fact that *kārī* was later “corrected” to *krty* “Cretan” we see now that, at the time of King David (I half of the X century B.C.E.), the Carians were quite well known in the kingdom of Israel before its division into two kingdoms. Naturally, here remains a question – were these contacts a result of the invasion of the Sea Peoples in the XIII–XII centuries B.C.E., or were they perhaps wandering mercenaries, employed by states or other commanding structures? So we see that the Carians were known outside Anatolia quite well, at least at the beginning of the I millennium B.C.E. And this may also help us to understand the question of the origin of the Carian script.

²¹ *hakk^erēi* “the Carians” is written (k^etīb), but *q^erī* (read!) is corrected to *hkrty* “the Cretans” (sq. in the sense of plural). The correction, made in ancient times, possibly slightly A.D., is made, because in other texts the *krty* (Cretans) and *plti* (Philistines) appear together in some contexts – II Sam. 8:18, I Chr. 18:17.