

# Ivory and Elephant in Hittite

Jaán Puhvel - Encino, California

'Ivory' came to light as Hittite *lahpa-* in Ludingirra's trilingual poem from Ugarit (RS 25.421 Recto 28-29), where the Sumerian *dīm.ma zú til.la* "(she is a) pillar (of) ivory, perfect" is rendered by Akkadian *makut KA×UD quttutu*, and by Hittite *lahpas-ma-as kurakkis māt zinnanza* "she (is) like an ivory pillar, perfect". Beside this genitive case, an accusative may be present in *la-]ah-pa-an dās* 'took ivory' (Teddy Kollek's tablet, line 12, ed. A. Kempinski, *Tel Aviv* 2: 92 [1975]), and a gloss-wedged *lahpas* (presumably also genitive) in KUB XXXVI 25 i 2-4 [*as*]anna-wa[-ssi<sup>GIŠ</sup>ŠÚ.A-ki] *handandu nu-[ssi ...]* "*lahpas unuwandu* "for sitting let them prepare a chair for him, let them adorn ... of ivory for him".

That *lahma-* is a variant of *lahpa-* (cf. Lat. *elementa* beside *elephant-*) is clear from such comparisons as KBo XXI 87 ii 4 <sup>GIŠ</sup>G].A.ZUM.ḪI.A *lahmas* "combs of ivory" besides KUB XLII 12, 7 1 GA.ZUM KA×UD "one comb of ivory". In setting up his entry *lahma-* as "Nomen u(nbekanntes). B(edeutung)." (*HEG* L-M 14 [1990]), J. Tischler adduced the Old Hittite passage KBo XVII 43 iv 5-6: *pí-e-ri-iš uizzi [...]* *peran šìr-RU lahmas paizzi* "*peris* comes,... in front they sing, *lahmas* goes", to claim that *lahma-* was "offenbar belebt" and hence could hardly be ivory. For *pí-e-ri-iš* Tischler supported I. Singer's interpretation "bird" (*StBoT* 27: 95-97 [1983]), hesitantly echoed by E. Neu (*StBoT* 26: 147 [1983]) but rightly doubted by *CHD* (P 312-313). That inert cult objects, iconic replicas of animals and deities, and live participants alike could "come" (i.e. be brought on) as part of a kind of ritual circus is amply attested, e.g. in Old Hittite KBo XXII 195 "iii" 12-15 + KBo XXII 224 Vs. 1-4, emended from duplicates KBo XXV 12 ii 15-18 and KBo XX 5 Rs. 3-6:

[*īSTU É* <sup>D</sup>].na[r] *suppistuwares uenzi* [*huid*]ār sa[menzi] *pí-e-ri-eš uizzi*  
 INA UD.2.KAM [*pí-e-r*]i-iš *huidā*[rr-a] NU.GÁL UGULA <sup>LÚ.MEŠ</sup>ALAM.ZÚ  
<sup>GIŠ</sup>marāul[i ēs]zi *kursas É-irza* DINGIR.MEŠ *uenzi*

"from Inar's temple the cultic paraphernalia come, the menagerie [animal replicas in precious materials] parade, the *peris* comes; on day two (there is) no *peris* or menagerie; the head clown sits on the *m.*; from the House of the Bag the deities come."

Or again the Old Hittite KBo XX 33 Vs. 15-16:

[*hu*]itar *saminuanzi pí-e-ri-in saminuanzi* [<sup>LÚ.M</sup>]EŠ<sup>ALAM.ZÚ</sup> *saminuanzi*  
*kursas É-irza* DINGIR.MEŠ *uanzi*

"they parade the menagerie, they parade the *peris*, they parade the clowns; the deities come from the House of the Bag."

The term *suppisduwara-* or *suppisduwari-* (also KUB XLII 26 i 6 *šu-up-pi-eš-du-an-za*), here rendered as "cultic paraphernalia", is an animate gender nominalized adjective meaning literally "pure-looking, visibly holy" (*suppi-* + *isduwa-*; cf. E. Neu, StBoT 12: 67-69 [1970], 32: 176 [1996]; cf. Gk. καθαρώδης "pure-looking"). As icons and live performers alike are paraded in review, it is not immediately obvious whether *pí-e-ri-iš* is "belebt" or not. It is grouped with *huidār* and is probably also some sort of animal, one that stands out from the "collective" of cervines, boars, and the like. Probably iconic like these, made of metals and other precious materials including ivory, *pí-e-ri-* perhaps denotes "elephant", like Akkadian *pīru*, and conceivably also "ivory", like Old Persian *piru-* (cf. Akk. *šinni pīri* "tooth of elephant"). Such a possibility was once suggested by V.V. Ivanov (in *Etnogenez narodov Balkan i severnogo Pričernomor'ja* 68-69 [1984]) but has quite escaped the attention of hittitology. We would thus have in *pí-e-ri-* a near synonym of *laḥma-*, *laḥpa-*. An elephant image made of precious metal and ivory might well be described on pagental entry as *peri-* and on exit by stylistic variation as *laḥma-*. Other animals could also be made largely of ivory, as in KUB XII 1 iv 6 1-EN Á<sup>MUŠEN</sup> KA×UD AM.SI 2 AŠRA GUŠKIN GAR.RA "one eagle of ivory, two spots overlaid with gold". Conversely, metal icons could be inlaid with ivory, as in KUB XXXVIII 3 ii 12-13 Á<sup>MUŠEN</sup> KA×UD AM.SI UR.MAḤ KA×UD AM.SI SI "an eagle inlaid with ivory, a lion inlaid with ivory". New Hittite KUB XLII 69 Vs. 10 *ar]amnis pí-e-ri-iš* 12 ZIḤPU GUŠKIN *anda* apparently means "falcon (of) ivory, twelve gold bands in(laid)", comparable to e.g. Bo 7081, 6 *aramnies šA SI KÙ.B[ABBAR* "falcons of horn ... silver" (*HED* 1-2:127).

To summarize, *peri-* in Old Hittite seemingly meant "elephant" (at least the iconic variety, perhaps partly or wholly made of ivory). In the later language *peri-* (also?) denoted "ivory". "Ivory" (*laḥma-/laḥpa-*) is usually written sumerographically KA×UD (= ZÚ) (AM.SI) "tooth (of elephant)"; at least in Old Hittite *laḥma-* could (perhaps metonymically) co-occur in stylistic alternation with *peri-* as "elephant".