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MEDIAN *GANZA- AS LOANWORD

Keywords: ganzā/ginzā, ganzabāra, gizbār, upa-ganzabāra, gənīz, genizah, gänzāb, gəmğa, gizza

The history of the Iranian word **ganza-*, ‘store’, has been discussed extensively almost half a century ago by Otakar Klíma¹ in his review of Manfred Mayrhofer’s study aiming at a reconstruction of the Median language.² Klíma managed to show that Old Iranian **gažna-*, attested in Old Persian as *gašna-*, became **ganza-* in Median following a metathesis. This Median word, occurring in some personal names on Elamite tablets from Persepolis, viz. *Kan-da-ka-na* and *Kan-za-za*,³ spread in Western regions of Iranian-speaking areas, also in the dialectal form **ganda-*, as it seems,⁴ and it was borrowed by various languages, especially by Aramaic.⁵ The beginning of its spreading goes back to the time of the Persian Achaemenid Empire, when Aramaic was an official *lingua franca*, and it was soon adopted also by the Greek idiom spoken in the Middle East. Probably through Aramaic/Syriac it even reached South Arabia and Ethiopia. Its attested Sabaic form *gnwz*⁶ is a ‘broken’ plural of the late *fʷl* pattern, which may represent Himyarite influence.⁷ Through Greek γάζα, ‘treasure’, it even reached Latin, as shown by *gazum*, as the ‘treasury’ of a church was called, or *gazophylacium*, ‘treasury room’, a word employed by St. Jerome.⁸ Polybios used γάζα to designate a huge amount of money.⁹

¹ Bečka 1999.

² Mayrhofer 1968. Cf. Klíma 1970.

³ Mayrhofer 1973, 176, §8.741 and §8.748.

⁴ Mayrhofer 1968, 14–15; Hinz 1973, 31.

⁵ Altheim, Stiehl 1970, 547, 558; Hinz 1971, 261, 266; 1975, 102; Beyer 1984, 544; Hof-tijzer, Jongeling 1995, 229; Tavernier 2007, 422, §4.4.7.48–49; 443, §4.4.10.8; 553.

⁶ Müller 1972, 87–95, line 4; Lundin 1972, no. 21, line 4.

⁷ Beeston 1984, 26, §10:6 and n. 44.

⁸ Also Latin words are referred to by Klíma 1970.

⁹ Polybios, *History* 11.34.12; 22.26.21.

The Aramaic word *ginzā* was borrowed directly from Median **ganza-*, ‘store, treasure’, and it passed into Hebrew *gnzy h-mlk*, ‘the treasures of the king’.¹⁰ The change *a > i*, observed in Aramaic and in Hebrew, is probably due to a partial assimilation of the short vowel *a* to the frequent ending of *ginzē*, the plural construct state. It first appears in the mid-3rd century A.D. at Dura Europos. The *n* is often assimilated to the following *z*, as in Syriac *gazzā* next to *ganzā*, in Greek γάζα¹¹ and Ethiopic *gaza*, and in the derivatives *giddabār* (*Daniel* 3:2,3), *gizbār*, *gizzabār* (*Ezra* 1:8; 7:21), and *gizzabrā*’ (Syriac) < **ganza-bāra-*, ‘treasurer’ or ‘store-keeper’, but the *n* is preserved in Late Babylonian *gan-za-ba-ru*,¹² in Mandaic *ganzibrā*’, a priestly title,¹³ and in the Ethiopic word *gänzāb*, ‘treasure’, hence ‘money’, also in Tigre, Tigrinya, and Amharic, but *gänzābā* in Gafat. The word *gänzāb* is a probable derivative of **ganza-bāra-*, borrowed through Syriac.

The original Aramaic form of the loanwords certainly had the vowel *a* in the first syllable and the *n* was not assimilated. The vowel *a* is preserved in *ganzak* (1 *Chronicles* 28:11), likewise ‘store’ or ‘treasure’, which presents the same word **ganza-* with the very common Old Persian suffix *-ka-*. Contrary to Hebrew *hag-gizbār* in *Ezra* 1:8, also the *Septuagint* γασβαρηνου preserves a plural form **gazbarīn*, ‘treasurers’, anterior to the vocalization in *i*, which is not ascertained before the inscription from the synagogue of Dura Europos, dated in 245 A.D., where the title of *gynzbrh* is borne by the ‘treasurer’.¹⁴ As for the *n*, it is never assimilated in the Aramaic documents dating from the Persian period, neither in *gnz*’ nor in its derivatives *gnzbr*’ and *’pgnzbr*’ < **upa-ganza-bāra-*, ‘sub-treasurer’. In fact, the assimilation of the *n* is not attested before the use of γάζα by Theophrastos of Eresos (ca. 370–288/5 B.C.) in *Hist. plant.* 8.11.5.

The use of *gizzabravyā*’ in *Ezra* 7:21 after the *bēt ginzē malkā*’ in *Ezra* 7:20 is particularly striking and confirms the results of the exegetical analysis, which dates *Ezra* 7:21–26 from a later period or ascribes it to another hand. The word is translated correctly in 3 *Ezra* 2:8, by γάζοφύλαξ,¹⁵ a Greek derivative of γάζα attested already by a quotation from Phylarchos of Athens (3rd century B.C.) in Athenaios’ *Deipnosophistai* 261b, and written γάζζοφύ(λαξ) with a double *zz* < *nz* at Dura Europos.¹⁶ The second element **-bāra-* of the Persian title designates

¹⁰ *Esther* 3:9; 4:7. Cf. Wagner 1966, 41–42.

¹¹ Diodoros of Sicily, *Library of History* 17.35. The word occurs also in the *Septuagint*: *Isaiah* 39:2; 2 *Ezra* 5:17; 6:1; 7:21.

¹² von Soden 1965, 281a.

¹³ It is often translated by ‘archpriest’ or ‘bishop’. Cf. Lipiński 2014, 211.

¹⁴ Naveh 1978, no. 88:6–7.

¹⁵ The word occurs also in 1 *Ezra* 2:10.

¹⁶ Cumont 1926, 405–406. The word is used also by Josephus Flavius, *The Jewish Antiquities* 11.1.3.

the one ‘who carries’, ‘who keeps’.¹⁷ In Greek, we also find γαζοφυλάκιον, ‘treasury’, used in the Septuagint¹⁸ and by Strabo,¹⁹ as well as the verb γαζοφυλακέω, ‘to be the guardian of a treasure’.²⁰

Besides mentioning the biblical use of *bêt ginzayyā* (*Ezra* 5:17; 6:1), ‘treasury’, ‘store-house’, also ‘archive’, of *bêt ginzē malkā* (*Ezra* 7:20), ‘royal treasury’, of *gizzabravyā* (*Ezra* 7:21) or *gəḏabravyā* (*Daniel* 3:2,3), ‘treasurers’ or ‘store-keepers’, one should refer here to the Jewish Aramaic and Mishnaic Hebrew verb *gnz*, ‘to store up’, ‘to hoard’, hence ‘to hide’,²¹ like in Syriac,²² which created new derivatives, like the adverb *gnīzā ’īt*, ‘by stealth’, and the substantive *gnīzūtā*, ‘hiding’ or ‘mysterious nature’. The verb was developed from **ganzā* and it is already attested in the *Mishnah* (*Shabbath* 9:6) and in the *Tosefta*. From its Aramaic passive participle *gənīz*, ‘stored up’, was further formed a verbal noun *gənīzāh*, ‘storage’ of removed sacred objects. This noun is likewise attested in the *Mishnah* (*Shabbath* 16:1), where the sacred books no longer usable are said to be *ṭ’wnym gnyzh*, ‘requiring storage’. The phrase *bêt gənīzāh* is then used in the *Talmud*²³ to designate the ‘store-room’ serving that purpose. *Ginzā*, ‘Treasure’, is instead the name of the main Mandaean treatise conserving the religious traditions of the sect.²⁴

Ethio-Semitic borrowings raise a few questions. In an Old Amharic royal poem, in palatial chronicles, and in some other texts one finds a *gəmḡa bet*, ‘treasury’.²⁵ The same appellation occurs in the name of a church of St. Mary in the former royal residence of Gondar: *Gamḡa bet Maryam*, ‘Treasury of Mary’.²⁶ The change *n > m* is quite common, but the spelling with *ḡ* implies a palatalization difficult to explain. There was even an unsuccessful attempt in Amharic at replacing the modern loanword ‘bank’ by *gəmḡa*.²⁷ Besides, *gəzzā* in Gafat and *gizi* in Argobba occur with the meaning ‘money’ or ‘cattle’. They are certainly related to the Soqotri noun *ginz*, ‘arsenal’, which reveals a semantic development of the loanword *ginzā*, ‘storeroom’, borrowed from a Middle Aramaic dialect.²⁸ W. Leslau was nevertheless inclined to regard Gafat *gəzzā* and Argobba *gizi* as derivatives of the Ethio-Semitic root *gāzza*, ‘to possess, to own’. These words

¹⁷ Horn 1893, no. 1073.

¹⁸ 1 *Ezra* 5:44; 8:18; 4 *Maccabees* 4:3, 6.

¹⁹ Strabo, *Geography* 7.6.1.

²⁰ Diodoros of Sicily, *Library of History* 17.74.

²¹ Sokoloff 1990, 133; 2002, 295.

²² Payne Smith 1979–1901, 750–751.

²³ Babylonian *Talmud*, *Pesahim* 118b.

²⁴ Norberg 1815–16; Petermann 1867 and 2008.

²⁵ Littmann 1944, 497; Guidi 1901, 719; Baeteman 1929, 1042.

²⁶ Jäger 1965, 56–57.

²⁷ Guidi 1940, 208.

²⁸ Müller 1907, 91:25; Müller 1972, 95.

could eventually be related to Cushitic (Kambata) *gizza* and Omotic (Kaffa) *giġġo*, ‘cattle’.²⁹ However, the parallelism with Mishnaic Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic *gnz*, ‘to hoard’, suggests deriving these words from **ganza-* and to consider Cushitic *gizza* and Omotic *giġġo* to be nouns borrowed from Ethio-Semitic. The use of the same word for ‘money’ and ‘cattle’ in societies regarding cattle as their ‘treasure’ is quite understandable and the meaning ‘cattle’ could be older than ‘money’.

The word *gnz*’ occurs on the ostraca of Nisa, all dating from the mid-2nd to the late 1st century B.C. The problem was whether these inscriptions were written in Aramaic with many Middle Iranian loanwords or were full of Aramaic heterograms that ought to be read in Parthian. The question – now resolved – did not concern *gnz*’ in particular, because the Middle Iranian noun should be written alphabetically in the same way, but the ‘royal treasury’ is regularly called *gnz*’ *mlk*’,³⁰ without using the determinative pronoun *zy*. This shows that the construction is not Semitic, that the phrase is Parthian, and that *mlk*’ ought to be read *šāh*. The same question could be raised regarding the derivative ‘treasurer’, *gnzbr* at Nisa and in a Parthian ostrakon from Dura Europos or *gnzbr* with metathesis at Nisa.³¹

A problematic case occurs in *Ezekiel* 27:24, where *ginzē bəromīm* is usually translated ‘treasures of coloured fabrics’ or the like, as *brmym* is rightly related to Akkadian *birmu*, ‘coloured’ fabric,³² often referring to clothes. The phrase is somewhat strange and the Hebrew use of *gnz*, ‘treasure’, in a text based on 7th-century information and probably written in the 7th century is surprising indeed. The mention of Ashur and of Kullimeri³³ supports a 7th-century dating and *brm*, a *hapax legomenon* in Hebrew, should be considered an Akkadian loanword. Even *ginzē* could be borrowed from Akkadian *gizzu*, ‘fleece’,³⁴ with the quite common dissimilation *zz* > *nz*, but this word occurs also in Hebrew³⁵ and Hebrew *gizzē* can be dissimilated into *ginzē* as well. In consequence, the *ginzē bəromīm* can be ‘wool coats of coloured fabrics’ with no relation to Median **ganza-*. The dissimilation occurs also in Aramaic, in Targum *Esther* 1:3, where *gnzy mylt*’ designates ‘wool coats of fine wool’, not ‘treasures of fine wool’.

²⁹ Leslau 1956, 205; 1997, 203.

³⁰ For instance, Nov. 100+97, 2 in Diakonov, Livshitz 1966 and 1977–2001.

³¹ Sznycer 1963, 34.

³² von Soden 1965, 129a.

³³ The similarity and frequent confusion of *d* and *r* in foreign place names and personal names explains the spelling *Klmd* instead of *Klmr* in *Ezekiel* 27:23. Therefore, the reading *Klmr* should not be regarded as a correction, but as an improved reading of the text. For Kullimeri, a major city of Shubria, north of Assyria, see Röllig 1980–83 and Kessler 2011–13, 240b. For arbitrary corrections of *Klmd*, see Zimmerli 1969, 632.

³⁴ von Soden 1965, 295a.

³⁵ *Deuteronomy* 18:4; *Job* 31:20. See also *Amos* 7:1 and *Psalms* 72:6, as well as the term *gizzā*.

The widespread use of the Median loanword *ganza-, ‘store’ and finally ‘money’, reveals the importance of trade relations in the Levant, the eastern part of the Mediterranean Sea, and the Horn of Africa. This information, albeit very general, shows an aspect of ancient history, hardly recorded in historiographic writings.

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Abstract

The Iranian word **ganza-*, 'store, treasure', and some of its derivatives have been adopted at the time of the Persian Achaemenid Empire by several Semitic languages, especially by Aramaic and then by Ethio-Semitic and the Greek idiom spoken in the Middle East. The article offers an overview of these loanwords and their variants, sometimes implying linguistic changes caused by the assimilation *nz > zz*, a partial assimilation of the short *a* to the plural ending *-ē* of the Aramaic and Hebrew construct state or the palatalization of *z* in Amharic. The word *Ginza* designates the main Mandaean holy book and 'genizah' became the name of the storage place of sacred books and other writings in Jewish tradition. The word *ginzē* has sometimes been confused with *gizzē*, dissimilated into *ginzē* 'wool coats', especially in the *Book of Ezekiel* 27:23, referring to Phoenician trade in wool fabrics from 7th-century Assyria and Shubria.