



xšnaoθrahe ahurahe mazdā

Detail from above the entrance of Tehran's fire temple, 1286š/1917–18. Photo by © Shervin Farridnejad

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The Lands of the Balahute and Lallari

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Introduction

The few epigraphic references to the Balahute and Lallari have long been known, if never satisfactorily explained. The Middle Elamite ruler Šilhak-Inšušinak boasted that he brought back cult vessels that had been plundered by the Balahute (EKI 46 §19). Where some scholars have viewed this as a true ethnonym, others have viewed it as a descriptor. Maurice Lambert understood the phrase in question to say that Šilhak-Inšušinak had conquered the land of the highlanders or mountain dwellers (Lambert 1962: 93, ‘pays des montagnards’). Walter Hinz and Heidemarie Koch considered it a pejorative, ‘Bösewichter, Leute auf bösen Pfaden’ ((Hinz and Koch 1987: 130 s.v. *ba-la.hu-te-ip*; cf. Henkelman 2008: 9; 2013: 586). Both the Balahute and a second group, the Lallari, appear in two texts of the Neo-Elamite ruler Te(m)pti-Huban-Insušnak who claimed that he conquered their lands on the command of Inšušinak (EKI 79 VII; EKI 80 II-III). In the latter case the names are written *ba-la-hu-te-ip-pe* and *la-al-la-ri-ip-pe* using the common Neo-Elamite posposition *-ippe* to refer ‘to the people living on that specific land’ (Gorris 2014: 161). The locations of these two groups — presumably close to each other from the context in which they are mentioned together — have not been ascertained, although several suggestions have been advanced in the literature.

To begin with Lallar, it is clear that there were several homonymous places by this name in the ancient Near East. One, mentioned in the account of Tukultī-Ninurta I’s campaign against the Guti,

must have been close to the Lower Zab (Wilcke 2010: 412; Pappi 2012: 604, n. 54). Another, mentioned in the reign of Šalmaneser III, was in the Amanus mountains close to the Mediterranean (Grayson 1996: 17, A.o.102.6, l. 45; A.o.102.10, i 29; A.o.102.14, l. 31; A.o.102.16, l. 11; A.o.102.28, l. 23; A.o.102.2, ii 10, where it is called Atalur). Šalmaneser erected a stele on Mount Atalur/Lallar, beside one of Anum-ḫirbe, the early 18th century BC king of Ma'ama. The site, as yet unidentified, was thought by Olmstead to have been 'on a cliff by the seashore, where one day Antioch's seaport, Seleucia, was to be located' (Olmstead 1921: 352) but more recently Jared Miller has located it 'in the southern Kara Dağ' (Miller 2001: 92-93). Olmstead felt, however, that the inaccuracy of Šalmaneser's Black Obelisk 'should forever banish Lallar from topographical discussions' (Olmstead 1921: 352, n. 19) and its appearance, in place of Atalur, has been explained by Miller as 'an oft-copied scribal error,' as originally suggested over a century ago by Maximilian Streck (Streck 1906: 344-345). For no stated reason, George Cameron located the Balahute of Šilhak-Inšušnak's inscription in 'the central Zagros' (Cameron 1936: 120). René Labat and François Vallat pointed to a river Lallar in Zamua (Labat 1963: 493; Vallat 1993: 33, 155). Vallat also recalled the Lallari of Tukultī-Ninurta I (Röllig 1983: 438; cf. the discussion in Gorris 2014: 161). Similarly, Matt Waters, following Labat and Vallat, proposed that the Balahute and Lallari were to be located 'in the mountains regions below the Little Zab in modern Kurdištan' (Waters 2000: 48). As Andreas Fuchs pointed out, however, such a location is impossible given the extent of Assyrian control over the region during the reign of Te(m)pti-Huban-Insušnak. Moreover, given that five centuries separated the mention of Lallar in the reigns of Tukultī-Ninurta I and Te(m)pti-Huban-Insušnak, during which time the name is unattested, Fuchs suggested that an equivalence between the two toponyms was untenable (Fuchs 2003: 132). Hinz and Koch, on the other hand, without citing any reasons, suggested that the Balahute inhabited an area neighboring Susiana, probably in what is today Lurištan (Hinz and Koch 1987: 130).

Other Iranian alternatives: Lalar, Lalari and pseudo-Balahut

Two toponyms in the mountainous area of southwestern Iran above Susa and Shushtar, previously overlooked in discussions of the Balahute and Lallari, are of relevance to the present discussion. In the autumn-winter of 1841/2 Aušten Henry Layard explored the Bakhtiyari mountains, noting, 'To the N. of Shimbār is *Lalar Kotek*, a lofty mountain, where there is a village, near which, I am informed, a sculpture was found about two years ago' (Layard 1846: 86). In the mid-20th century, according to the French anthropologist Jean-Pierre Digard, the village of *Lalar*, in the mountains northeast of Masjed Soleyman, almost directly due north of Izeh-Malamir, was a place at which taxes were paid by Bakhtiyari tribesmen (Digard 1976: 268; 1987: 32). A second toponym further west noted C.J. Edmonds is '*Lalari* (a permanent village of houses in stone and mud inhabited by Papi, gardens, streams,' in southern Lurištan, on the route leading from Dizful to Khorramabad (Edmonds 1922: 337). Both of these merit consideration as candidates for the ancient land of the Lallari.

Turning to Balahut, in his monograph on traditional and modern agriculture in northern Khuzeštan, Eckart Ehlers noted that at Karim Khan, c. 12 miles (19.3 kms) west-southwest of Dizful, a settlement of Dinarvand and Sagvand Lurs, Kurds and some Arabs, the fields were irrigated with the waters of the Karkhar and *Balahut* river (Ehlers 1975: 33, 'Der Flur wird bewässert durch Ableitungen vom Karkhar- und Balahut-Fluß'). The names Karkhar and Balahut here are, of course, intriguing. One is immediately reminded of the Median town Harhar which Karen Radner (2013: 446) and, hesitantly Ran Zadok (2002: 124), have identified with Tepe Giyan, just as Herzfeld had, many years earlier, equated it more

broadly with the Nehavand region (Herzfeld 1968: 50). The ‘Balahut’ river, of course, would be a revelation — if it is correct. Unfortunately, an examination of the area discussed by Ehlers quickly reveals that *Balahut* is unquestionably a misrepresentation of *Bālārūd*, a common enough hydronym composed of New Persian *bālā*, meaning ‘above, upper,’ and *rūd*, ‘river’ (Eilers 1954: 297). While the name is hardly unique — another Balarud river separates Taleš and the Dasht-e Moghan in northwestern Iran (Ritter 1840: 796; Wagner 1856: 131; Hübschmann 1904: 351) — a river by this name is indeed located where Ehler’s Balahut should be. As Layard noted, ‘About 5 miles above Dizful it [the Diz river] is joined by the Balád-rúd, or more correctly the Bálá-Rúd, “the upper river,” an insignificant stream in the summer months, but a most impetuous and dangerous torrent in spring’ (Layard 1846: 56; cf. Spiegel 1863: 4). More significantly, J.G. Lorimer’s *Gazetteer* entry ‘Balarūd or Bilārūi’ confirms that it is indeed Ehlers’ *Balahut* for there we read that the ‘village of ’Amleh Karīm Khān is partly irrigated from the Balarūd’ (Lorimer 1908: 258), just as Ehlers found when doing his research many decades later.

Conclusion

It is, of course, a great disappointment that the ‘Balahut’ river near Dizful has turned out to be a chimera. Perhaps the only way of rehabilitating it would be to speculate that Balarud was an assimilation in New Persian of a somewhat similar sounding, pre-Iranian hydronym Balahut. Nevertheless, the identification of Lalar and Lalari in the Bakhtiyari mountains and southern Luristān, respectively, while not conclusive, does provide alternatives to the improbable option of locating the targets of Te(m)pti-Huban-Insušnak’s campaign in Kurdištan.

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