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Kurunizurumeri as a Luwian name

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Abstract The Cilician name Kurunizurumeri attested in a Neo-Assyrian tablet from Tarsus is generally held to be a theophoric name based on the Anatolian theonym Kuruntiya. This paper argues that this is not formally possible and, instead, Kurunizurumeri is yet another case of a typical Luwian compound name with **kuwalaniya-* 'of the army, military' as its first member.

Keywords Cilician. Luwian. Anatolian religions. Neo-Hittite religions. Anatolian onomastics

Kurunizurumeri (^{I}*Kù-ru-ni-zu-ru-me-ri*) is an individual attested in a Neo-Assyrian tablet from Tarsus.[1] Although the tablet is not dated, a seventh-century BC date is assured by the palaeographic evidence;[2] more precisely, on historical grounds, it could have been produced any time after 715/709,[3] and there are arguments for a date between 708 and 658.[4] We are presumably dealing with a local, Cilician, i.e., linguistically speaking, Luwian name as it dates roughly to the period of the last known Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription *bis dato* (PORSUK, c. first half of the seventh c. BC,[5] at a site, which is, significantly, not far from Tarsus).[6] The following explanations have been proposed for this name.

According to Goetze, Kurunizurumeri is a compound name analogous to the Cilician compound theophoric name Pω(ν)ζρυμερις which has the theonym 'Pω(ν)–' as its first member: *zurumeri* is the regular Neo-Assyrian rendering of -ζρυμερις and Kuruni would then be an otherwise unknown deity.[7] Goetze drew attention to Koiranos, an alternative name of the local river Saros, which may have had this form due to Greek folk-etymology (cf. below).

Since later research identified 'Pω(ν)-' as the Cilician equivalent of the Anatolian deity Kuruntiya, Houwink ten Cate saw Kuruni as yet another variant; furthermore, he identified *zurumeri* / ζρυμερις with the deity Šarruma, and thus, assumed a double theophoric name.[8]

Unfortunately, neither of these explanations can be upheld. While double theophoric names are well-attested in Anatolia (type Arma-Tarḫunta), *zurumeri* / ζρυμερις cannot be identified with Šarruma

1 Goetze 1939, 7-9.

2 Goetze 1937, 288.

3 Adalı 2023, 1 n. 1.

4 Dalley 1999, 76-7.

5 Simon 2021, 679 with refs., cf. Hawkins 2024, 298.

6 That said, a name from any neighbouring or more distant language (e.g., Phrygian, Greek, other Luwic languages, etc.) cannot *a priori* be ruled out – it depends upon the etymology. However, an explanation from the local language should be the starting point, unless there is compelling evidence for the contrary, and no fitting comparandum has emerged from languages other than Luwian.

7 Goetze 1939, 9 with n. 20.

8 Houwink ten Cate 1961, 129, 131, 135-6 (followed by Laroche 1963, 301 and Adiego 2019, 156-7 [who consistently misspelt it as ^{I}*Ku-ru$_{3}$-ni-zu-ru-me-ri*], explaining Kuruni as a diminutive form). Although probably inspired by Houwink ten Cate's analysis, the translation 'Devotee of the Stag-god/Protective god Šarruma' given by Lipiński in the Neo-Assyrian prosopography (2000) is not comprehensible from either an Anatolian or a linguistic point of view.

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due to the obvious formal difference[9] (which led Adalı to describe this identification as 'not completely certain').[10] Šarruma was still Sarruma at that time (ÇİFTLİK §§6, 10, dated to mid-eighth c. by Hawkins),[11] and thus one would need a (currently) *ad hoc* local (sound) change (as assumed by Adiego)[12] to identify them.[13] This also entails that the meaning of the element *zurumeri* / ζρυμερις must remain open.

The identification of Kuruni with Kuruntiya is not probable either. Kuruntiya was known in Iron Age Luwian as Runtiya and the change Kuruntiya > Runtiya is due to a sound law,[14] and thus, it simply could not have been Kuruntiya in the seventh c. BC (although Adalı was aware of this sound law, he did not rule out the preservation of the form Kuruntiya, but his only (cautiously presented) evidence is the name Kurti, which, in his view, could be based on Kuruntiya;[15] this is certainly wrong, on obvious formal grounds).[16] However, one could argue that theonyms, and thus, theophoric names, may keep their archaic form despite ongoing sound changes (as in the case of Kuruntiya itself, if the quoted sound change is indeed that early). Theoretically, this is a possibility, but when Runtiya was spelt syllabically in the Iron Age, then it was Runtiya (MARAŞ 1 §6 and ŞIRZI §1)[17] and never Kuruntiya; furthermore, Runtiya is the source of later Cilician forms as well[18] (cf. below). Finally, there is no sufficient evidence for the assumption of an irregular shorter form [kruni-] from Kuruntiya (an 'abbreviated form', as suggested by Adalı)[19] or an even more irregular diminutive form [kru-ni-] from Kuruntiya, as proposed by Adiego (not to mention his idea of 'simple graphical divergence' from 'Ρων-').[20] It must be noted that Cilician names containing Ρω- and Ρων- (Ροαρβασις, Ρωμναμις, Ρωσγητις, Ρωζαρμας and Ρουνις, Ρωνησις, Ρωμβιγρεμις, resp.) do not provide evidence for the existence of **Kruni*- from Kuruntiya, since their derivation from (Ku)Runtiya is more than doubtful:[21] while an explanation from (Ku)Runtiya is formally irregular, they can regularly be explained from the Anatolian name *Ruwa*[22] (it is not a theonym, but a so-called *Lallname*, type CV+*a*)[23] with regular contraction (cf. below, Ροαρβασις may even show the uncontracted form) and from its derivative **Ru-ni*- (<**Ruwa-anna/i*-, with a diminutive suffix).[24] All assured continuations of Kuruntiya in the Cilician material show the expected stem Ρωνδ- (Ρωνδας, Ρωνδβερρας, Ρωνδερβεμις, Ρωνδινασις, Ρωνδινεσις, Ρωνδβιης, Αρμαρωνζας). This also implies that the traditional explanation of Ρω(ν)ζρυμερις (as per above) is now doubtful: Ρωζρυμερις belongs to the former group based on Ruwa (and thus, not theophoric), while Ρω(ν)ζρυμερις is ambiguous: it may contain the theonym Ρωνδ-, but the form Ρων- is equally possible, and in this case, it would not be a theophoric name either. This means, in turn, that a compound name with *-zurumeri* is not necessarily a theophoric name, contrary to Goetze's analysis as a compound name with *-zurumeri* and a theonym 'Kuruni'. This is not unexpected on general grounds, either: consider, for instance, the compound names with *-muwa*-, several of which are indeed theophoric (*Sauska-muwa*), while others contain a toponym (*Mizra-muwa*) or an appellative (*Piha-muwa*).[25]

Most recently, following Goetze's analysis and leaving the connection with Kuruntiya open, Adalı attempted to identify the deity Kuruni.[26] He argued that we are probably dealing with a river, i.e., a

9 Simon 2020b, 194 n. 6; see already Zgusta 1964, 34.

10 Adalı 2023, 2 fn. 5.

11 Hawkins 2000, 448.

12 Adiego 2019, 156.

13 For a possible solution of the 'suffix' see esp. Yakubovich *apud* Adiego 2019, 157.

14 See, e.g., Melchert 1994, 256; for the possibility of a pre-*kārum* period date of this sound change, see Vertegaal 2021, 298. This date depends on the interpretation of the personal name *Ru-tí-a* in Old Assyrian transmission convincingly identified as Runtiya by Yakubovich 2010, 211-12 (and hesitatingly accepted by Kloekhorst 2019, 61). However, upon realising that this identification is at odds with his view that Hieroglyphic Luwian writing was created much later, Yakubovich now attributes this name to a different, otherwise completely unattested Luwian dialect (2022, 56, cf. already 2010, 211 fn. 6 ['perhaps']).

15 Adalı 2023, 2-3, following Demanuelli 2015, 87, 131.

16 On the name Kurti, see Simon 2017.

17 Hawkins 2024, 621, 327 with refs., resp.

18 Houwink ten Cate 1961, 128-31.

19 Adalı 2023, 3.

20 Adiego 2019, 156.

21 *Contra* Houwink ten Cate 1961, 128-31; Adalı 2023, 2.

22 For the attestations see Hawkins 2024, 657.

23 Laroche 1966, 244.

24 For its role in Anatolian onomastics see Zehnder 2010, 42-5 and Melchert 2013, 48-9.

25 Melchert 2013, 42-3, with several examples.

26 Adalı 2023, esp. 4-10 (the connection with Kuruntiya is 'obscure' [2021, 12], although 'possibly' [2021, 7]).

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river-god, whose name is preserved in Koiranos, the Hellenised name of the river Saros, and in 'BᶜL KR(N)', a locally attested Storm-god (thus, Kuruni would have the features of a Storm-god as well).[27] However, there is no evidence for this analysis either. First, while it is possible that Koiranos represents a Hellenised version of Kuruni via folk-etymology (there is a homonymous Greek word meaning 'ruler, leader, commander'), precisely this alleged distortion prevents us from conclusively identifying the original form of Koiranos (Adalı's claim that Kuruni and Koiranos may represent different variants of the same underlying Cilician name[28] requires a linguistic demonstration that he did not provide). Second, Adalı's BᶜL KR(N) is a blend of two different gods: BᶜL KR (attested in Çineköy and Cebelireis Dağı) and BᶜL KRNTRYŠ (attested in Karatepe). Leaving aside the fact that these are Storm-gods that is hardly reconcilable with a river-god (though one could argue that the identification with a Storm-god is the only correct option), the association of Kuruni with BᶜL KR and BᶜL KRNTRYŠ is not formally possible. Both gods are the Phoenician *translations* of a local, Luwian god, that of Tarhunza (ÇİNEKÖY §11[29] and KARATEPE §XLVII, XLIX, LI)[30] such as BᶜL ŠMM of Celestial Tarhunza in the same inscription (KARATEPE §LXXIII). Accordingly, they cannot underlie the Cilician / Luwian name of Kuruni (note that since Phoenician was only a written language in Hiyawa,[31] Phoenician terms could not replace Luwian names). There are two possibilities for any connection: the first is that the epithets KR and KRNTRYŠ are built on Luwian appellatives, but there is currently no evidence for this. BᶜL KR was explained from Kurra, a northern Syrian divinity by Younger[32] and there is a plethora of suggestions for the identification of BᶜL KRNTRYŠ, but none of them could prevail,[33] and it remains an object of ongoing discussion.[34] Second, if these epithets are built on local toponyms. I am not aware of any similar suggestion regarding KR, and in any event it would be highly problematic, as KR does not show any morphological expression of appurtenance. KRNTRYŠ was mainly connected with Kelenderis.[35] If it turns out to be correct,[36] it would exclude any connection with Kuruni. On a theoretical level, a connection of Kuruni with the assumed toponyms underlying KR and KRNTRYŠ would require a linguistic demonstration, but this is not possible in the case of KRNTRYŠ for obvious reasons.[37] A derivation of Kuruni from a toponym *KR faces not only the problem mentioned above that KR probably does not refer to a toponym but also a formal difficulty (**Kurawann(i)-* would have led to †*Kurauni*) and the lack of any fitting toponym (although Hiyawa's toponyms are known only partially, numerous Late Bronze Age toponyms are known from this region,[38] and thus, although not decisive, this absence is notable).[39]

All in all, Kuruni has no solid explanation. Having no other evidence at our disposal, the only way to address the semantics of Kuruni is to establish which Luwian forms might be underlying the Neo-

27 He wants to add the river Kydnos (Tarsus Çayı) and even Kalykadnos (Göksu), identifying it with Kuruni via the Luwian sound change called rhotacism affecting, among other sounds, /d/ (Adalı 2023, 9; he did not address the formal problems of the connection with Kalykadnos). However, Luwian rhotacism is an intervocalic change, and thus, Kydnos and Kalykadnos cannot be connected to Kuruni (note that Neumann's etymology of Kalykadnos from Luwian **ḫalluwaḫḫatar*/*ḫalluwaḫḫatnaš* 'Eintiefung' referring to its geography [1978, 130-1] that would exclude this comparison [but not addressed by Adalı] has formal problems, see the discussion in Simon 2022 with refs.).

28 Adalı 2023, 4.

29 Cf. Tekoğlu, Lemaire 2000. On the reading problems see most recently Hawkins 2024, 113.

30 On Cebelireis Dağı (*editio princeps*: Mosca, Russell 1987) and the Phoenician translations in general, see Simon 2018, 324 with refs. and discussion; on Cebelireis Dağı and the deity see most recently Giusfredi 2024, esp. 39.

31 See the critical overview in Simon 2018, 321-6.

32 Younger 2099, 11-12.

33 See the overviews in Younger 2009, 13-16 and Simon 2018, 315.

34 See now Demir 2021; Matessi 2025, 238-40; Melchert 2025, 101-2.

35 First by Alt 1948, 124 fn. 15, for the supporters see the references in Vattioni 1968, 71 and Younger 2009, 13 fn. 79; add now Matessi 2025, 239-40.

36 But see its criticism in Younger 2019, 14; Melchert 2025, 101.

37 As for BᶜL KRN TRYŠ, Adalı 2023, 6-7 accepts Röllig's segmentation and interpretation of BᶜL KRN TRYŠ as containing *bēl kurinni*, the epithet of a Storm-god in Kaḫat mentioned in the treaty of Šuppiluliuma I with Šattiwaza of Mittani (Röllig 2001, 49). This theory can certainly be excluded since Kaḫat is a Northern Mesopotamian city and neither Röllig's nor Adalı's attempts to explain TRYŠ lead to a formally regular explanation: Röllig proposed 'Tarḫuiš 'Storm-god'', which is not only a non-existent form but also fails to explain the lack of the laryngeal and leads to an awkward equivalence showing two deities, 'Baᶜal KRN (und) Tarhuis' for a single Tarhunza (cf. already Younger 2009, 15). Adalı connected it with Tarsus, but this does not explain the lack of the sibilant – Adalı saw it in the last consonant, but this is not possible since the appurtenance must be expressed. Adalı's alternative that TRYŠ corresponds to the Luwian epithet *ARHA u-sa-nú-wa/i-ni-mi-sá* 'highly blessed' lacks any evidence.

38 Šelestin 2020; Kryszeń 2026.

39 Adalı's explanation of BᶜL KR from Kuruni that "[i]t is possible that the final *nun* was not written in Çineköy and Cebel İres" (2023, 8) is egregiously *ad hoc*.

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Assyrian spelling and check if there is any appellative or onomastic material that coincides formally. While *Kuruni-* may simply reflect **kuruni-*, several other forms are regularly possible due to ongoing Luwian sound changes: on Luwian side, both ‹u›-s can reflect a contraction of *-(u)wa-* and *-(u)wi-*, both of them including [kʷa/i-].[40] A Luwian intervocalic ‹r› can reflect not only /r/ but also /l/, /d/, and even /n/ due to the so-called rhotacism producing a sound that is conventionally called 'flap *r*' (therefore, strictly speaking, ‹n› may reflect a hypercorrect pronunciation or spelling of an underlying /r/, /l/, or /d/, even though this is less probable). Finally, there is a certain amount of evidence for a variation of *a/i ~ u* after the 'flap *r*'.[41] All these possible sources imply an underlying form *Ku/(u)wa/(u)wir/l/d/na/i/u/(u)wa/(u)win/l/r/di-*. Since theonyms are richly attested in both Hittite and Neo-Hittite Anatolia,[42] it is significant that the only theonym that would fit, Kūdūili, refers not only to an unimportant deity (attested altogether four times)[43] but also to a Hattian one,[44] and thus, we would hardly expect to find it in seventh c. Cilicia. Therefore, we can be fairly sure that we are not dealing with a theophoric name, *contra* the general assumption (assuming an otherwise unattested deity based only on the possibility that Kuruni-zurumeri might be a theophoric name is methodologically obviously inferior). The lexicon of Luwian is, however, attested in a far more limited way, and thus, it would not be surprising if no lexical connection could be detected. Fortunately, this is not the case: formally speaking, several Luwian words could underlie this name element:[45] *:kuruta-* 'pointed crown (or similar)', **kuwalan-* 'army' (attested in Hieroglyphic Luwian *n*-stem EXERCITUS.*LA/I/U-*[46] and in its derivative, *kuwalanalliya/i-* 'of an army, military'),[47] and *kuwaluti-* 'ring (?)' (the first two words require an ubiquitous appurtenance adjectival form with the suffix *-iya-* > *-i-*). *:kuruta-* and *kuwaluti-* are less probable, on both formal and semantic grounds: both require a hypercorrect spelling and their meaning does not really fit that of a proper name, and, accordingly, they are not (yet) attested as such. Unlike **kuwalan-*, which is well-attested as a first member of compound proper names (*Kuwalanamuwa*, *Kuwalana(ku)runtiya*, *Kuwalanaziti*),[48] and, moreover, its *-iya-*derivative, **kuwalaniya-* regularly leads to *kuruni-* with the above mentioned sound changes (according to Melchert, **kuwalaniya-* is attested,[49] but this is only Melchert's emendation of the attested *kulawani-* ['metathetic writing or genuine metathesis'], attested twice [KUB 19.55+ rev. 43', 44'], and, accordingly, a completely different meaning is generally assumed).[50]

To sum up, Kuruni-zurumeri is not a theophoric name, but consists of two Luwian words, **kuwalaniya-* 'of the army, military', a well-known element of Luwian onomastics, and *zurumeri-*, a word that requires further research.

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40 On the former rule see, e.g., Yakubovich 2015, §5.2.1; on the latter Simon 2016 and now, in more detail, Simon 2024a, 436-7.

41 Iron Age Luwian *ala/ini-* vs. *aruni-* 'enemy'; *ala/i* vs. *aru* 'in high measure' (Rieken, Yakubovich 2010, 204-5, 213-14; *Hil/rika-* → Neo-Assyrian *Hili/a/ukku* (Simon 2024b); *tura/pi-* 'bread' vs. Hitt. *turuppa-* ' sort of bread' (Simon 2026); [tarusa] 'tree' (nom.-acc. sg. n.) spelt as ‹tara/i-sà› (İVRİZ 1 §3) and as ‹tara/i-sa› (NİĞDE 1) (Melchert *apud* Rieken, Yakubovich 2010, 217 fn. 16); for the phonetic explanation see Blevins *apud* Yakubovich 2008, 14.

42 Cf. the theonym catalogues of van Gessel 1998; Hawkins 2024, 628-38.

43 Van Gessel 1998, 275.

44 Laroche 1946-47, 29; Kammenhuber 1969, 462; Otten 1980-83.

45 Cf. Melchert 2024, 121-3.

46 Bauer 2020.

47 Busse 2020.

48 For the attestations see, e.g., Laroche 1966, 102; Herbordt 2005, 147-8; Hawkins 2024, 649.

49 Melchert 2024, 123.

50 See the critical discussion already in Simon 2020a with refs.

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