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## THE ETYMOLOGY OF GOLIATH IN THE LIGHT OF CARIAN PN *WLJAT/WLIAT*: A NEW PROPOSAL

### 1. Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Traditionally, for almost a century, scholars have interpreted the name of the famous giant Goliath as being Philistine, and also of non-Semitic origin. The communis opinio suggested that it could be related to Alyattes (Ἀλυάττης), the name given by Herodotus to the Lydian king who ruled 619–560 BCE. Besides this etymology, there have been other suggestions, but these are far from clear. However, although the etymology of Alyattes has been the most quoted and best-known proposal for Goliath, it seems that scholars have not given enough attention to the validity of this etymology.

The aim of this paper is both to review this traditional etymology and to propose a new one for Goliath in the light of Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat*.

### 2. The non-Semitic PN Goliath and the language of the Philistines

Goliath (Hebr. גִּלְיָת and גִּלְיָתָ) was the name of the famous Philistine giant of the Old Testament, who was defeated by young David, the future king of Israel (see below, § 2.1). Goliath came from Gath, one of the five city states of the Philistines, in the coastal strip of

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southwestern Canaan.<sup>2</sup> The PN Goliath is one of the few biblical PN that has no Semitic etymology. Traditionally, it has been claimed that it could be a Philistine PN. We know very little about the language of the Philistines, apart from a very small number of loan-words which survive in Hebrew, describing Philistine institutions, such as the title *padî* (which has been compared to Gr. πόσις, Lat. *potis*, Ved. *pati* ‘master, lord’, etc.), the term *sarānîm*, the lords of the Philistine Pentapolis, and the word *ʾargáz*, a receptacle that appears in the biblical passage of 1 Samuel 6 (Sapir 1936). No inscription written in the language of the Philistines has been found, apart from one forgery (Naveh 1982).<sup>3</sup> The oldest inscriptions from Philistia date from the ninth to seventh centuries BCE, towards the end of the local Iron Age. They are written in a Canaanite dialect similar to Phoenician, such as the Royal Dedictory Inscription from Ekron (KAI 286), which is the only one that contains full sentences (Gitin et al. 1997 and Schäfer-Lichtenberger 2000), and the brief inscriptions of Tell eš-Šāfi/Gath from Iron Age IIA–IIB (Maier et al. 2008 and 2012). There seem to be traces of non-Semitic onomastics and vocabulary in these Canaanite inscriptions from Philistia,<sup>4</sup> as well as in the substratum of the Hebrew language, as mentioned above. Some of these seem to be of Indo-European origin, presumably from a language of the Aegean or the Asia Minor coast, but which has yet to be identified. A number of seals with inscriptions have also been found in the area but they do not help to clarify the problem (Brooks 2005: 29 and Keel 1994: 21–34). In the Old Testament, there are also some Philistine words that have sometimes, albeit with caution, been traced back to Proto-Indo-European roots as

<sup>2</sup> In the Old Testament, Goliath frequently appears denominated as ‘the Philistine’, Hebr. גִּלְיָת הַפִּלִּשְׁתִּי (IS 17<sub>23</sub>, 21<sub>10</sub>, 22<sub>10</sub>; Sir 474) and also as ‘the Gethite’, Hebr. גִּתִּי (2S 21<sub>219</sub>) or the one ‘from Gath’, Hebr. מִגַּת (IS 17<sub>4</sub>).

<sup>3</sup> It has recently been suggested that the Philistines, on arrival in Canaan, originally used Aegean style scripts, such as Cypro-Minoan (Cross and Stager 2006; Singer 2009). But this affirmation, based on the Tell Deir ʿAlla inscriptions, should be taken with extreme caution for the moment and is far from being certain (Maier et al. 2008: 54).

<sup>4</sup> Words such as *pt(g/n)y* in the inscription of Ekron (KAI 286, line 3) should be related to Gr. πότνια ‘mistress, lady’ (Demsy 1997), in which case one should accept the reading *ptny*. Moreover, in my opinion, a reading with *n* is better than one with *g*, because we then have an exact parallelism consisting of a word written in the Philistine and Canaanite languages: *lpt(g/n)y.b.ʿdth* ‘to his Lady’. The word appears twice with the third person singular possessive suffix *b* in each word, confirming again the structure of the parallelism.

well.<sup>5</sup> Among scholars, several suggestions have been made regarding connections between the Philistines and the Sea Peoples (see Barnett 1975, Brug 1985, Noort 1994, Dothan 1995 and Ehrlich 1996), and also the Philistines (and the Sea Peoples) and the civilizations of Anatolia (Sandars 1985: 200–201; Singer 1988; 1994: 334–37; Zangger 1994; Vagnetti 2000: 319–20; Killebrew 2005: 197–245; Maeir et al. 2008: 57, note 35), but it is not my intention to discuss this interesting question here.

## 2.1 Biblical references to Goliath

Before dealing with the etymology of *Goliath*, it is important to make a special mention of the places and contexts where this PN is quoted. The PN *Goliath* (consonantal masoretic Hebr. *Glyt*, Tiberian Hebr. גִּלְיָת and גִּלְיָת)<sup>6</sup> appears in the following passages of the Hebrew Bible: – 1 Samuel 17: where the famous episode of the challenge involving David and Goliath is narrated. Goliath is presented as a hero of the Philistine army, from the town of Gath.<sup>7</sup> – 1 Samuel 19<sub>1–8</sub>: where Saul tries to kill David.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> For instance, the word *seren*, pl. *sārānīm*, the lords of the Philistine Pentapolis (see above, §2) has been related to Neo-Hitt. *sarawanas/tarawanas* and Gr. *tyrannos* (itself probably a loan-word borrowed from one of the languages of Asia Minor) (Barnett 1975: 373). The word *kōbā* ‘helmet’ used for Goliath’s copper helmet (1 Samuel 17<sub>5</sub>) also seems to have an Indo-European etymology (Sapir 1937). Some Philistine PN such as *Achish* and *Pichol* have been interpreted as being of Indo-European origin as well (Ray 1986).

<sup>6</sup> The Masoretic text is the canonical Hebrew text of the *Tanakh*, the Jewish Bible. In origin, it was written only with consonants. Between 7<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> centuries, different schools of scribes, called Masoretes, created three different systems of vocalization in order to vocalize it: the Tiberian, Babylonian and Palestinian systems respectively. The Tiberian vocalization eclipsed the other two systems and it has become the dominant system for vocalizing Hebrew. According to this, Tiberian Hebrew is the language that shows the Tiberian vocalization. In this paper I will refer to PN *Glyt* in the sense of the consonantal masoretic Hebrew name for Goliath.

<sup>7</sup> Stuttgartensia (1 Samuel 17<sub>4</sub>): מִן־מַחֲנֵה הַפִּלִּשְׁתִּים גִּלְיָת שְׂמוֹ מִגֹּת. Septuagint (ed. Swete, *ibid.*): καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἀνὴρ δυνατὸς ἐκ τῆς παρατάξεως τῶν ἀλλοφύλων, Γολιάθ ὄνομα αὐτοῦ, ἐκ Γέθ: ‘and there went out a hero out of the camp of the Philistines, named Goliath, of Gath’ (my translation). Goliath was enormous in size, over nine feet tall, and wore a bronze helmet and armor. David, on the contrary, was a small shepherd boy, the youngest son of Jesse, from Bethlehem. David, who had no experience of battle, was wearing no armour and was armed with nothing but a sling. Nevertheless he confronted Goliath and used his shrewdness to kill Goliath by slinging a stone against his forehead.

<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless Jonathan, Saul’s son, reminds his father of David’s heroic deed in killing the Philistine. Because of that, Saul refuses to kill David.

- 1 Samuel 21<sub>1–11</sub>: where the priest Ahimelec helps David by giving him the sword that belonged to Goliath.
- 2 Samuel 21<sub>15–22</sub>: where David and his soldiers kill four Philistine descendants of the *Rephaim* of Gath.<sup>9</sup>
- 1 Chronicles 20<sub>4–8</sub>: where David and his soldiers kill four Philistine descendants of the *Rephaim* of Gath (see 2 Samuel 21<sub>15–22</sub>).<sup>10</sup>
- Sirach 47<sub>2–11</sub>: where David's victory over the giant Goliath, using only a sling and a stone, is remembered.

In the Septuagint (ed. Swete) the PN Glyt appears as Γολιάθ (see footnote 7). This is in fact the expected Greek transliteration of this biblical PN.

## 2.2 The traditional etymology of the PN Goliath: a new review

Traditionally, for almost a century, scholars have interpreted the PN *Goliath* as a Philistine name, and of non-Semitic origin. The *communis opinio* suggested that it could be related to Alyattes (Ἀλυάττης), the name given by Herodotus (1, 6. 16. 74. 92) to the Lydian king who ruled 619–560 BCE, and father of the legendary Croesus (Κροῖσος), the last king of Lydia.<sup>11</sup>

This etymology was suggested by Georg Hüsing, according to Ferdinand Bork (1939–1941: 227), and noted by G. A. Wainwright (1959: 79, note 3). Caspari (1926: 100) and Hempel (1927: 65) also agreed with this connection, and one of its major supporters was Albright (1975: 513). Since then, this etymology has become the best-known and commonly quoted: Willeson (1958: 330, note 2); Kitchen (1973: 67, 77, note 107); Klein (1983: 175); Singer (1994: 336–37); Brown (1995: 164) and Garbini (1997: 238), among others. But some scholars have expressed doubts when quoting it (Hertzberg 1964: 148), and more recently it has been questioned: Görg (1986, who prefers an Egyptian etymology, see below); Machinist (2000: 63); Koehler and Baumgartner (2004: 186); Maeir et al. (2008: 57 ff.).

In addition to this well-known etymology, other scholars have suggested other possibilities. Bossert (1927: 652) proposed that it should be related to the Lydian word *κοαλδδεν* 'king'. In Bosserts' opinion, the PN Goliath would be an "altes Wort für 'König'".

<sup>9</sup> In the 19<sup>th</sup> versicle, it is mentioned that a soldier named Elhanan killed Goliath of Gath. But according to 1 Chronicles 20<sub>3</sub>, it was Goliath's brother, Lahmi, whom Elhanan killed.

<sup>10</sup> In the 5<sup>th</sup> versicle, Elhanan, son of Jair, kills Lahmi, Goliath's brother (see 2 Samuel 21<sub>15–22</sub>).

<sup>11</sup> This king is, in fact, Alyattes II. Before him, there was also Alyattes I, who ruled in Lydia from 761–747 BCE.

But, as we have already seen in the previous paragraph, whereas the etymology of Lydian PN *Walwe-* is clear and unproblematic (< Anat. *walwa-* ‘lion’ < PIE *\*wlk<sup>w</sup>-o-* ‘wolf’), the old connection

Ἀλυάττης/Lyd. PN *Walwe-* has been rejected by scholars for phonetic and numismatic reasons (Jongkees 1938: 251; Gusmani 1964: 221 and 1980/86: 139; Wallace 1986, among others). As far as I know, the scholars that have rejected this connection have not proposed any new etymology for Ἀλυάττης.

Consequently, as I have explained, scholars defending the etymology *Glyt/Alyattes*, do so without having, for the moment, any clear etymology for *Alyattes*, making it even more difficult to explain the connection between both words. We could add that the initial phonemes /a/ and /g/ are indeed difficult to match from a phonetic point of view, even in the case of a loan-word, because they do not share any phonological feature: /a/ is an open frontal vowel, whereas /g/ is a voiced velar stop. If /a/ would have been substituted by /g/ (in the case of *Alyattes* → *Goliath*), one would expect that /g/ shared at least some phonological feature with /a/, but it seems not to be the case. Moreover, the ending -ης of Lydian PN Ἀλυάττης, which lacks in PN *Goliath*, is difficult to explain, when one deals with the etymology Ἀλυάττης/*Goliath*.

Instead of *Alyattes*, the Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat* seems, both from a phonetic and semantic point of view, a good candidate for the etymology of *Goliath* (see § 5). As far as I know, this connection has not been suggested before, partly because Carian was not correctly deciphered until Adiego 1992.

Before drawing any conclusion regarding the new etymology of *Goliath* presented here, I would like to explain a little more about this Carian PN and its etymology.

### 3. The Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat*

The Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat* is attested three times in the Carian inscriptions of Egypt:

- a) *Wliat* in an inscription from an uncertain location in Egypt (E.xx 2, see Adiego 2007: 125)
- b) *Wljat* in an inscription from Thebes (E.Th 7, see Adiego 2007: 98)
- c) *Wljatś* in an inscription from Murwāw (E.Mu 1, see Adiego 2007: 110)

This PN is attested in nominative (*Wliat/Wljat*) and genitive (*Wljatś*). It is the Carian name that appears in Greek sources as *Ολιατος/Yλιατος* (see § 3.1). In Carian, two compound names are attested to be related to this PN: *šar-wljat* and *šr-wliś*, which suggest *\*waliat*, *\*wali* forms (Adiego 2007: 428; for the PIE etymology, see

§ 3.2). Both appear in two inscriptions from Memphis, Egypt: E.Me 20 and E.Me 3 respectively (Adiego 2007: 36 and 51). The Carian PN OAAOAAON, which appears in the inscription of Halicarnassus (SGDI 5727.d30), should come from a reduplicated form *\*Walwala-* from the same root *\*wali-* ‘to be strong’ (Adiego 1993b: 173–174 and Adiego 1993a: 238).

It is known that the epigraphic material of Egypt is the most important part of the direct documentation of Carian. As far as the dating of this epigraphic material is concerned, the oldest Carian inscription from Egypt is dated to the second half of the 7<sup>th</sup> century, in the time of Psammetichus I. This chronology is very close to the arrival of Carian and Ionian mercenaries in Egypt, and that is important for the chronology of the etymology for Goliath (see § 5). As for the rest of the Carian documentation from Egypt, it is difficult to give a precise date, except for the graffiti from Abu-Simbel, inscribed during the campaign of Psammetichus II, dated to 591 BCE or 593/92 BCE. It is also possible that the Murwāw graffiti (one of which features the PN *Wljatś*) dates from the same period (Adiego 2007: 31).

### 3.1 Transcriptions of Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat* into other ancient languages

The Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat* appears in Greek sources as *Ολιατος/Υλιατος*. Before 1992, the corresponding Greek form *Υλιατος* was already known, but its origin was not considered to be Anatolian and was hence unknown (Zgusta 1964: § 1627). Moreover, some researchers attributed to *Υλιατος* a Greek origin and related it to *Οὐλιάδης*, a derivate of *Οὐλιος*, epithet of Apollo. Nevertheless, Ševoroškin (1984[86]) already related *Υλιατ-* to the Anatolian stem *-walali-* ‘to be strong’ (see below, § 3.2) and Masson (1988) correctly explained that, whereas *Οὐλιάδης* was of Greek origin, *Υλιατος* should be interpreted as a Carian name. Masson’s hypothesis was right and would be confirmed four years later, with the decipherment of Carian (Adiego 1992).

Until now, no evidence of this Carian name has been found in any other ancient language (but see, with caution, § 4).

According to the correspondences mentioned above, we can see that Car. <u>/<w> corresponds to Greek <v>, <o>. Moreover, other examples also suggest Gr. <ov>: *tñu-ś* = *Τοννους* (Adiego 2007: 237).

The Carian compounds *śar-wljat* and *śr-wliś* do not appear in Greek sources, or in any other ancient language.



### 3.2 Etymology of Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat*

The Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat* seems to come from *\*walliyant-*, an extended *-ant* form (without the notation of the preconsonantal nasal) from an adjective stem *\*walli-* (Adiego 1992: 31) or *\*wala/i-* (with single *l*) ‘strong’ (Adiego 2007: 338). As Ševoroškin (1984[86]) already mentioned, it is probably the same root that appears in Hitt. *\*walli-*, *walliwalli* ‘stark, mighty’ and in CLuw. *wallant-* ‘fit, capable’. The Carian PN Οαλοαλος (see above, § 3) seems to have a direct counterpart with the reduplicated stem Hitt. *walliwalli* (Adiego 1993a: 238). All these forms came from the same PIE verbal root *\*uelH-* ‘stark sein, Gewalt haben’, which also appears in Lat. *ualeō* ‘kräftig sein’ (see also Osc. imperative *ḟaλε*), Goth. *waldan* ‘herrschen’, OIr. *follnadar* ‘herrscht’, etc. (LIV: 676; IEW: 1111-2). The substantive of the Toc. B *walo*, A *wäl* ‘king’ (← ‘the strong one, the one who dominates’) would come from the same root, probably from an old PIE participle (< *\*u̯l̥H-(o)nt-*) (EM: 712; WH: II 727–728; LIV: 676<sup>2</sup>; Vernet 2008: s.v. *ualeō*).

It is very likely that the same stem behind *Wljat/Wliat* appears in the Carian compound *šrwliś* (gen.), which has to be interpreted as *šr* (cfr. *šr-quq*) + *wli-*. The stem *wli-* can also be compared to the Isaurian name Ουαλις (Zgusta 1964: § 1134-3/4) and Pisidian Ολις and Ολλις (Zgusta 1964: § 1086-1; Adiego 1993a: 243 and Adiego 2007: 420).

Adiego (2007: 338–339) also notes that Car. PN *Wljat/Wliat* can be related to Hitt. *walliya-* ‘praise’, CLuw. *walli(ya)*, HLuw. *waliliya* ‘praise’ < ‘to exalt’ (Melchert 1993 s.v.), from PIE *\*uelh<sub>1</sub>-* ‘(aus)wählen’, which also appears in Ved. *av<sub>u</sub>ri* ‘habe gewählt’, Lat. *uult* ‘will’, Umbr. *veltu* ‘soll wählen’, Goth. *wili* ‘will’, OLith. *velmi* ‘wünsche, will’, etc. (LIV: 677), if we are not dealing with the same root.<sup>12</sup>

## 4. Non-biblical references to Goliath

Apart from the extra-biblical references to Goliath that appeared in later Jewish and Islamic tradition (and which for that reason are

<sup>12</sup> But, in my opinion, we are probably dealing with two different verbal roots if, according to Mc Cone (1991: 15–16), the *a*-flexion of the OIr. *follnadar* ‘dominates’ (*\*u̯ln̥ə* > *\*u̯al-na-* > *\*u̯alla-* → *\*u̯all-ā-* → *\*u̯all-nā*) speaks in favour of a *\*h<sub>2</sub>* (see also in this regard Schrijver 1991: 214 and Vernet 2008: s.v. *ualeō*). The two significantly different senses reconstructed of both roots, although not being a conclusive argument, also speak in favour of two different PIE verbal roots.



irrelevant to the purpose of this study), until 2005, no other ancient extra-biblical mention of Goliath was known.<sup>13</sup>

In the summer of 2005, an inscription from the late 10<sup>th</sup>/early 9<sup>th</sup> centuries BCE (early Iron IIA), apparently with two names, one of which was very similar to the Philistine PN *Glyt*, was found in the excavations at Tell eš-Šâfi/Gath. The inscription was studied in depth and published by Aren Maeir, Stefan Jakob Wimmer, Alexander Zukerman and Aaron Demsky (Maeir et al. 2008), and the results of the excavations were also recently published (Maeir 2012). The inscription was incised on a shard of a red-slipped and hand burnished bowl, which was found in a well-defined Philistine archeological context. According to these scholars, the inscription, written in sinistroverse (from right to left), is in an archaic Proto-Canaanite alphabetic script, and would be the earliest clear evidence of the beginning of the use of the alphabetic script by the Philistines. To Maeir et al., it should be read as *ʔlwt/wlt*[... These scholars interpreted it as two non-Semitic, Philistine PN, presumably of Indo-European origin, such as Mycenaean Greek, Iron Age Luwian, or possibly other origins (Maeir et al. 2008: 62 and Maeir 2012: 30). Moreover, Maeir et al. (2008: 57-58) compared the first name *ʔlwt* with two Mycenaean PN that are documented in Pylos and Crete (*a-ro-wo-ta* and *a-ro-to*), and even with the Lydian PN Alyattes. They also related the second name in the inscription, *wlt*, to other Mycenaean PN (*wa-ra-ti*, *we-ro-ta*, *wo-ro-ti-ja*, *wo-ro-ti-ja-o*, *wo-ro-to-qo-* and *wo-ro-to*) and early Anatolian PN, such as Hittite/Luwian *Walwaziti* and Carian PN *Wljat*, following a suggestion by Prof. Melchert (Maeir et al. 2008: 351, note 40; see also Zadok 2009: 672, following Maeir et al.), although without choosing any concrete or definitive proposal.

According to Maeir et al. (2008: 57-58), the initial and appealing connection they and other scholars made between the biblical name Goliath and the two PN that appear in the inscription, on the commonly quoted *Alyattes* = *Goliath* etymology, should be rejected. In the first case, because *ʔlwt* and *Glyt* only share two consonants, *l* and *t*, and in the case of *wlt* and *Glyt*, because as "... ancient Hebrew does have a *w*, ... it is therefore hard to see why a *w* sound would

<sup>13</sup> In later Jewish tradition, Goliath appears in the Babylonian Talmud (Sotah 42b) and in Pseudo-Philo (Charlesworth 1983: 374). This PN is also quoted by Islamic tradition in chapter 2 of the Qur'an (II: 247-252).

have been substituted by a *gimel* in the Hebrew name *Golyat*".<sup>14</sup> According to this author, the exact etymology of Goliath has yet to be determined.<sup>15</sup>

Although there seems to be no doubt of the correct dating and antiquity of this inscription by Maeir et al. (2008) and their interpretation is very well argued and extremely appealing (even for the purpose of this article, because it would fit very well with the new etymology proposed here), I do have objections, some of which have already been made by Maeir et al., and which seem to me important when validating the interpretation made by these scholars (Maeir et al. 2008).

My first objection is that in this inscription there are two PNs and not only one, which is uncommon in an inscription of this nature. This peculiarity was already noted by Maeir et al. (2008: 59), who alleged a patronymic relationship as a possible explanation for these two names.

The second objection is that the second word could also be interpreted as being incomplete, because it appears at the end of the fragment of the bowl. This interpretation would agree the first objection, in the sense that it may also be possible to interpret the first word as a PN, while the second is not, and is instead another kind of word, presumably a verb, but incomplete. For the moment, we do not know what this word is, but at least we know that it is not of Semitic origin, because the main line of the inscription (*?lwt/wlt*[...]) makes no sense in any Semitic language (Maeir et al. 2008: 56).

My third objection is that the reading of the letters given by Maeir et al. (2008), although very well argued, is not one hundred per cent reliable, because some of them only appear in this inscription and could be interpreted in other ways. This occurs, for instance, with the letter *waw*, which has been interpreted as a *yod* by Cross and Stager (2006: 151–52).

For the abovementioned reasons, I believe that this inscription should be read with caution until others dating from the same time

<sup>14</sup> But they do not seem to have in mind the fact that in Ancient Hebrew, with very few exceptions, one does not find words beginning with /w/, because Proto-Semitic \*w became \*j in this language. To my opinion, it would be one possible explanation of why /w/ would had been substituted by /g/ in the case of Goliath (for more details, see § 5).

<sup>15</sup> These scholars also mention a possible parallel for *wlt* attested in a Sea Peoples' context, namely in the story of Wenamun (Maeir et al. 2008: 351), but this connection is far from certain and, in any case, is not relevant to the aim of this paper.

and place are found and can corroborate the reading of the letters and provide more information about the Philistine writing system and language. In any case, it is important to mention that the validity of this inscription does not substantially affect the conclusions of this paper, i.e., the etymology of Goliath. If its validity were to be verified in the future, it would evidently be very good and welcome proof of the etymology I am suggesting, but if not, it supposes no major inconvenience.

#### 5. The etymology of Goliath in the light of Carian PN *Wljat*/*Wliat*: a new proposal

In my opinion and in the light of the above, the Carian PN *Wljat*/*Wliat* seems to be a good candidate for the etymology of Goliath. At least, it suggests a valuable connection between the PN Goliath and a Carian (or Luwian) etymology, for the following reasons:<sup>16</sup>

a) The phonetic similarity of both Carian PN *Wljat* and Philistine PN *Goliath*, which the traditional etymology Alyattes/Goliath lacks, as do the other etymologies proposed in the past such as Lydian *κοαλδδεν* or Egyptian *qnȳt* (see above, § 2.2). In the case of *Wljat* and *Goliath*, both PNs almost match, the only difference being the initial *W* and *G*.<sup>17</sup>

This phonetic change could be explained by the fact that, with the exception of some few words,<sup>18</sup> one does not find words beginning with /w/ in Ancient Hebrew, because in this language, as well as in the rest of the Northwest Semitic languages (such as Ugaritic, Phoenician and Aramaic), Proto-Sem. \*/w/ became regularly \*/j/ at the beginning of a word (Meyer 1996: 97–98; Lipiński 2001<sup>2</sup>: 121; Kienast 2001: 31; Juön-Muraoka 2006: 85): Ug. *jld*, Hebr. גִּלְדִּי *jālad*, Syr. *ilad* but Akk. *walādum*, Ar. *walada* ‘to give birth’. To my opinion, the fact that /w/ was an unusual phoneme in initial position

<sup>16</sup> For the details of the chronology, see below.

<sup>17</sup> Carian PN *Wljat* shows probably a defective notation of the vowel between *w* and *l* (which is a characteristic phenomenon of the Carian writing system, see Adiego 2007: 238 ff.). In the case of the names *wljat*, *wliat*, *šarwljat-š* and *šr-wliš*, the etymological connections proposed point to original \**waliat-*, \**wali-* forms (Adiego 2007: 242), also with \**a* between *w* and *l*. The Greek translation Ολιατος/Υλιατος could indicate a possible roundedness of the vowel. The same tendency seems to show Ancient Hebr. גִּלְדִּי, Sept. Γολιάθ ‘Goliath’.

<sup>18</sup> Initial /w/ is preserved only in the conjunction ו ‘and’, in the name of the letter ‘wāw’ meaning ‘hook’, and in a few loanwords (Lipiński 2001<sup>2</sup>: 121).

in Ancient Hebrew could be a possible explanation of why /w/ was replaced by /g/ in the case of PN *Wljat* → Goliath. Since this PN is a loan-word (and therefore did not follow the expected historical phonetic change Proto-Sem. \*/w/ > Northwest Sem. \*/j/), the substitution /w/ → /g/ should be considered as one of the possible expectable sound change for the following reasons. The phoneme /w/ is a voiced labio-velar approximant (Lipiński 2001<sup>2</sup>: 104; for Carian /w/, see Adiego 2007: 234 ff.). Its place of articulation is labialized velar, which means it is articulated with the back part of the tongue raised toward the soft palate while rounding the lips. Accordingly, /w/ and /g/ share two features: they are velar and voiced, the only difference being the mode of articulation ((labialized) approximant vs. plosive). Since in Hebrew /w/ was a quite unusual phoneme in initial position, it is reasonable to think that when the loan-word was introduced, /w/ could have been replaced by another phoneme similar to /w/ and that would share the most possible features with it. Since /w/ and /g/ are both voiced and velar phonemes, it could be reasonable to suppose that /w/ could have been replaced by /g/ in the case of the PN Goliath. From a typological point of view, it is worth mentioning that this sound substitution is not an isolated phenomenon. It is attested in other languages as well, where *w* is substituted by *g* in loan-words, as can be seen, for instance (as Maeir et al. (2008: 351) suggest), in the case of Engl. *William* and Fr. *Guillaume*. The same occurs in some Spanish river names, whose first member *guad-* is an Arabic loan-word that comes from Ar. *wād-* ‘valley, river-bed’: Guadiana < Ar. *wādi-Ana* (the Roman name) ‘The Ana-River’, Guadalquivir < Ar. *wādi al-kabīr* ‘The Great River’, as well as in other common words (see Corriente 1999: 336 ff.).<sup>19</sup>

b) The semantic suitability: the name of the enormous giant Goliath would fit very well with the semantic of the PIE verbal root *\*uelH-* ‘to be stark’, from which the Carian PN *Wljat* probably comes (see § 3.2). If my etymology is right, both names, Car. *Wljat* and Phil. Goliath would etymologically mean something like ‘the strong one’. The traditional etymology of Alyattes, if scholars are right (see above § 2.2), is, however, still unclear, and hence offers no favorable (or unfavorable) argument in this sense.

<sup>19</sup> Such as Sp. *guájara* ‘anfractuosidad’ < Ar. *waʿrah* ‘terreno escabroso’; Sp. *guasa* ‘sosería, chanza’ < Ar. *wasʿ* ‘anchura, laxitud’; Sp. *gualá* ‘pardiez!’ < Ar. *wallāh* ‘por Dios’, etc. (Corriente, *ibid.*).

Apart from these two arguments, which *per se* would be enough to support this hypothesis, there are other interesting facts that, although they should be taken with caution, are at least worth mentioning because they are all so supportive of the etymology for Goliath proposed here.

c) Biblical evidence: the Ancient Testament (2 Kings 11<sup>4</sup> and 19) mentions twice the presence of *kārī* (Hebr. כָּרִי) in Philistia:

וּבִשְׁנָה הַשְּׁבִיעִית שָׁלַח יְהוֹיָדָע וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שָׂרֵי הַמַּאֲוִת לְכָרִי וּלְרָצִים וַיָּבֵא אֹתָם אֵלָיו בֵּית  
יְהוָה וַיִּכְרֹת לָהֶם בְּרִית וַיִּשָּׁבַע אֹתָם בְּבֵית יְהוָה וַיֵּרָא אֹתָם אֶת־בְּנוֹ הַמֶּלֶךְ  
(2 Kings 11<sub>4</sub>)

“And in the seventh year, Jehoiada sent and fetched the rulers over hundreds, with the *kārī* and the guardians. He brought them to him at the house of the Lord and made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the Lord and showed them the king’s son” (my translation).

וַיִּקַּח אֶת־שָׂרֵי הַמַּאֲוִת וְאֶת־הַכָּרִי וְאֶת־הַרָצִים וְאֶת כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ  
(2 Kings 11<sub>19</sub>)

“And took the rulers over hundreds, the *kārī*, the guardians and all the people of the land” (my translation).

This chapter speaks of the revolt of the high priest Jehoiada, the killer of queen Athaliah and the enthronement of Joash, which took place in 835/834 BCE (for the chronology, see Galil 1996: 71). According to both passages quoted above, Jehoiada’s intention was to form an alliance with ‘the rulers over hundreds, the *kārī* and the guardians’ and in 2 Kings 11<sub>19</sub> also with ‘all the people of the land’. Both passages are important because they feature the *kārī* who, according to scholars, were probably mercenaries hired to serve as royal bodyguards.

The question now is to identify who these *kārī* were. The ancient translations of the Hebrew Bible and also the Jewish tradition of the Middle Ages did not explain this word. In the Septuagint, this term appears as *Xoqqéi* in both passages. Most modern scholars and translators identify the *kārī* with the *kerētī* ‘the Cheretites’ (Cre-tans) but do not explore the problem. Nevertheless, some scholars have observed that this term could be referring to the Carians. The first person to make this connection was H. Ewald, who in 1886 (p. 135) identified the *kārī* with the Carians mentioned in Herodo-

tus. This observation was also defended by such other scholars as Montgomery–Gehman (1951: 85–86) and Gray (1964: 516), and also in some dictionaries of the Old Testament and encyclopedia articles (for the history of the research, see Avishur–Heltzer 2003: 89, with bibliography). It would take at least another whole article to explore this interesting question, so for the moment I shall merely make an observation. In my opinion, the modern identification of *kārī* with the *kerētī* ‘the Cheretites’ (Cretans) is curiously reminiscent of the *lectio facilior* made back in ancient times, where in II Sam. 20<sub>23</sub> (which tells us that “Benaiah, Yehoyada’s son, was over the *kārī* and over the Pelethites”), *hakkerēi* ‘the Carians’ (Hebr. הַכְרִי) is written (*k<sup>e</sup>tīb*) in the Biblical text, but in the Masora Parva, this word is corrected to *hkrty* ‘the Cretans’ (Hebr. הַכְרִתִּי) as a *q<sup>e</sup>rī* (read!)-note. I believe that this correction made in ancient times should be interpreted as a hypercorrection made by the scribes, because in other passages (II Sam. 8<sub>18</sub>, I Chr. 18<sub>17</sub>) the *krty* (Cretans) and *plti* (Philistines) appear together. In the Septuagint, this hypercorrection appears directly in the text in the term Χελεθθεί (or Χερεθθει A), also ‘the Cheretites, ‘Cretans’. This hypercorrection should also be understood in modern philological terms as a *lectio facilior* made in ancient times, because the term *kārī* appeared only twice in the Old Testament and was probably not sufficiently known or identified by the Jewish scribes. Curiously, modern scholars who translate the term *kārī* as ‘the Cretans’ seem to be following the same ancient hypercorrection. In my opinion and following on from the above, the biblical term *kārī* should be considered the *lectio difficilior* and, for this reason, it should not be mistaken for the term *kerētī*. The *kerētī* (Hebr. הַכְרִתִּי) ‘the Cretans’ and the *kārī* (Hebr. הַכְרִי) ‘the Carians’ are two different terms in the Bible. That’s why, without entering now into the problem, I should stress that this brief mention of the Carians in the Old Testament should not go unnoticed by scholars. On the contrary, it should be taken very seriously, and needs further investigation. If my observation is right, the presence of Carians in the Old Testament would fit very well with the etymology of Goliath proposed here, because it would relate the PN Goliath with a Carian PN.

d) Another different question (and in my opinion much more problematic and unclear) are the masons’ marks found in Samaria and Megiddo dated as far back as the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE, which Franklin (2001) interpreted as an early variant of the Carian alphabet, which

consequently supports a Carian presence in North Israel. I am not over-convinced by this, as the claim has not been studied in much depth and needs further investigation. For the moment, it should be taken with extreme caution. Moreover, the dangerous circular argumentation by Avishur–Heltzer (2003), that the *kārī* of the Bible should be interpreted as Carians precisely because the masons' marks are in a Carian alphabet should be rejected as dangerously circular (see also in this sense Adiego 2007: 26, footnote 5). But this obviously does not contradict the abovementioned affirmation that the biblical evidence should be taken into serious consideration.

e) Other Carian etymologies for Philistine terms have also been proposed. In 1986, Ray suggested two possible etymologies for the place name *Ziklag* and the personal name *Phicol*, which appear in the Old Testament. This is not the moment to discuss these two etymologies that, especially *Phicol*, seem likely to be of Carian or Luwian origin, but nevertheless, they are worth mentioning because of their relevance for the etymology of Goliath, as they show that this is not the only Carian etymology proposed for a Philistine term.

f) Presence of Philistines in Aleppo. Watkins (2009) recently demonstrated the presence of a Philistine kingdom on the Amuq Plain during the period ca. 1100–1000 BCE, which controlled from this power base a territory including Aleppo and the environs of Hama, and the Iron Age states of Unqi, Arpad and Hamath. This verification is based on a new reading of the Hieroglyphic Luwian sign TA<sub>4</sub> and TA<sub>5</sub>, which in the post-Hittite Empire came together as *la/i*. According to Watkins, the term Philistines, *Palisatini*, appears in some inscriptions of King Taita, such as the Aleppo 6 inscription. This is important for this article because it testifies an important presence of Philistines somewhere other than the traditional Philistia, not on the coast, but in the inland zone of Aleppo, in a very early period of time, ca. 1100–1000 BCE.

g) The inscription of Tell eṣ-Şâfi/Gath commented above (§ 4). All these five extra arguments, despite some of them needing further investigation and extreme caution, show that a new etymology of Goliath in the light of Carian PN *Wlġat/Wliat* seems plausible. I should stress here that the Carian PN should be interpreted as the missing link that has made this new etymology possible, but that does not necessarily mean that PN *Glyt* is of directly Carian origin.



On the contrary, it could be interpreted as an old version of Carian PN (because it is documented before the oldest Carian inscriptions, see below, in this paragraph) or, more generically, a Luwian PN for chronological reasons. Since the presence of Philistines in Philistia is older than the first mentions of Carians and although the first mentions of Carians should not necessarily indicate that they did not exist before that, it is reasonable to presume that the source of Goliath is older than the Carian PN *Wljat* (but very similar, if not identical, from a phonetic point of view). As we have seen, the oldest Carian inscriptions, which come from Egypt, date from the second half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, and the oldest Philistine inscriptions date from the 9<sup>th</sup> century BCE. This would agree with the chronology of the passage of the Bible where the *kārī* appear, to be situated during the revolt of the high priest Jehoiada that took place in 835/834 BCE (see above, § 5c). According to this, there is at least a difference of two and a half centuries between both attestations, so Goliath appears two and a half centuries before the first Carian inscriptions where Carian PN *Wljat* appears. Therefore, and as pointed out (§ 3.2), since no other Anatolian language apart from Carian PN *Wljat* has documented this PN, it should be presumed that an old version of Carian seems to be the best candidate for the etymology of Goliath.

## 6. Conclusions

In this paper I have reviewed what for almost a century has been the most quoted and best-known etymology of Alyattes/Goliath because it seemed that the *communis opinio* has not paid enough attention to its validity. It has been observed that the old connection between Ἀλῳάττης (the name of the Lydian King that appears in Herodotus) and the Lydian PN *Walwe-* (related etymologically with the common Anatolian word *walwa-* ‘lion’) has been rejected by scholars for phonetic and numismatic reasons and that, for the moment, Alyattes has no etymology. This makes it even more difficult to explain the traditional etymology of Alyattes/Goliath, because, as Alyattes has no clear etymology, the connection between both words becomes even less clear. Moreover, initial A and G, but also final -ης and Ø of both names are indeed difficult to compare from a phonetic point of view, even in the case of a loan-word. As I have also argued, the other possible etymologies for Goliath should also be rejected because of their insurmountable phonetic incompatibilities.

I have shown that another explanation for the etymology of Goliath is therefore required, and I have proposed the Carian PN *Wljat/Wliat*, because this Carian PN seems, both phonetically and semantically, a good candidate for the etymology of Goliath. Certainly, both names almost match, with the exception of the initial *W* and *G*. I have argued that it could be explained because in Ancient Hebr. /w/ was a very unusual phoneme in initial position, due to the fact that Proto-Sem. \*w became Northwest Sem. \*j. The sound substitution /w/ → /g/ (in the case of *Wljat* → Goliath) could have been motivated by the impossibility that Hebr. /w/ could appear in initial position. The replacement of /w/ by /g/ in a loan-word could be considered as one of the expected possible sound substitutions, because both phonemes are phonetically similar, sharing two phonological features: they are velar and voiced. I have also mentioned that this sound substitution is not an isolated phenomenon from a typological point of view, because it appears in loan-words of other languages, such as French (Engl. *William* → Fr. *Guillaume*) and Spanish (Ar. *wādī al-kabīr* → Sp. *Guadiana*, etc.). I have also mentioned the semantic suitability of this etymology because Carian PN *Wljat* comes from a PIE verbal root which means ‘to be strong’ (\*uelH-) and this sense would fit very well with the name of the giant Goliath. According to my hypothesis, both PN Car. *Wljat* and Phil. Goliath would mean something like ‘the strong one’.

Moreover, I have given another five arguments that, although they should be taken with caution, were worth mentioning because they support this new etymology: a) the presence of *kārī* (possibly ‘the Carians’) in the Old Testament; b) the mason’s marks found in Samaria and Meguido, which some scholars have interpreted to be of Carian origin; c) the fact that other Carian etymologies for Philistine terms have also been proposed; d) the presence of Philistines in Aleppo; and e) the inscription of Tell eṣ-Ṣāfi/Gath, which could contain the Philistine PN *Wlt*.

Finally, I have argued that, for chronological reasons, Goliath is probably an old version of the Carian PN *Wljat*, because Goliath appears at least two and a half centuries before Carian *Wljat* and because no Anatolian language other than Carian has preserved this PN.

For all these reasons, I believe that this new etymology for Goliath should be taken into consideration.

## Abbreviations

Akk.: Akkadian  
 Anat.: Anatolian  
 Ar.: Arabic  
 Car.: Carian  
 CLuw.: Cuneiform Luwian  
 Engl.: English  
 Fr.: French  
 Goth.: Gothic  
 Gr.: Greek  
 Hebr.: Hebrew  
 Hitt.: Hittite  
 HLuw.: Hieroglyphic Luwian  
 IE: Indo-European  
 Lat.: Latin  
 Luw.: Luwian  
 LXX: Septuagint (ed. Swete)  
 Lyd.: Lydian  
 OIr.: Old Irish  
 OLith.: Old Lithuanian  
 Osc.: Oscan  
 Phil.: Philistine  
 PIE: Proto-Indo-European  
 PN: Personal Name  
 Proto-Sem.: Proto-Semitic  
 Sem.: Semitic  
 Syr.: Syriac  
 Toc.: Tocarian  
 Sp.: Spanish  
 Ug. Ugaritic  
 Umbr.: Umbrian  
 Ved.: Vedic

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