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Reading Between the Lines: Horse Brands in Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian Manuscripts[*]

Jasmine Dum-Tragut[**]

Abstract
The oldest surviving complete Armenian horse book from Armenian Cilicia in the late thirteenth century, the Codex M 10975, not only contains significant knowledge about equine medicine, breeding, appearance, and training, but also likely provides an overview of the most prevalent brands and their designations used in the medieval orient. This offers deeper insights into the sources of this manuscript, as well as its reproductions and translations, and also allows for conclusions about the transfer of knowledge. The general significance of these brands, whether as ownership marks, quality marks, or potentially breeding area marks, is also explored.

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Whether the Arabs branded their horses
to make the breed from which they descend identifiable
is not known with certainty.
Karl W. Ammon 1834:193[1]

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[1] Karl Ammon, *Nachrichten von der Pferdezucht der Araber und den arabischen Pferden.Von den Brandzeichen der arabischen Pferde* (Nürnberg, 1834), 193-196.

I. Introduction

When we discuss the transfer of knowledge about horse breeding and medicine between various more or less neighbouring, hostile or friendly tribes in the region roughly between Cilicia and Central Asia in the late Middle Ages, this transfer and the role of translators and compilers can be excellently illustrated through thematically selected examples.

In the following, I will attempt to compare the brands to be found in the Arabic, Armenian and Georgian traditions: starting from the oldest preserved Armenian version of the thirteenth century up to the oldest preserved Georgian version of the eighteenth century. In addition, the available textual material and the concordances and differences contained therein allow conclusions to be drawn about the distribution and actual significance of the brands in the thirteenth century. Furthermore, I will attempt to establish a typology of the brands and thus possible breeds of the region concerned at the end of the thirteenth century.

A. A short historical overview[2]

Based on archaeological and written sources, it appears that humans began marking their possessions and handmade objects at a very early stage. Some of the earliest documented examples of such markings include potter's marks or seals on household ceramics from the Early Bronze Age (2250-2000 BC) in the Indus Valley. Over the course of the Bronze Age, the practice of marking objects through stamps made of various materials and heated metal spread globally. According to research, the oldest known animal markings are from Bronze Age Egypt.[3] Fragments of removed wall paintings from the tomb of Nebamun, discovered in Thebes by Giovanni d'Athanasi in 1820 and now in the British Museum, depict the branding of cattle, dating to around 1400-1350 BCE during the reign, of Thutmosis IV or Amenhotep II in the 18th Dynasty (New Empire).[4]

[2] Karl Moore, Susan Reid, "The birth of brand: 4000 years of branding," *Business History* 50:4 (2008): 419-432.

[3] Wilson Bastos, Sidney Levis, "A history of the concept of branding: practice and theory," *Journal of Historical Research in Marketing* 4 (2012): 347-368.

[4] For more information see Richard Parkinson, *The Painted Tomb Chapel of Nebamun* (London: British Museum Press, 2008). *The Nebamun Wall Paintings. Conservation, Scientific Analysis and Display at the British Museum*, ed. Andrew Middleton, Ken Uprichard (London: Archetype. 2008).

Regarding the use of brands on horses, our knowledge stems primarily from the consolidated and powerful Middle Assyrian Empire in the Ancient Near East and Mesopotamia, which was one of the two Western Asian adversaries of the new Egyptian empire at around the same time. In particular, depictions from the era of the Neo-Assyrian Empire, the mightiest realm of the Iron Age Near East (911-609 BC), on the walls of the Northwest Palace of Kalchu (Nimrud)[5] of the Assyrian King Ashurnasirpal I (883-859 BC), show lion-like figures on the haunches of the royal chariot horses, as well as on the glazed bricks of the palace in Nineveh.[6] Further representations on the north wall of the Palace Reception Room XXIV in Tell Ahmar, dated to the eighth century BC, also display very similar markings on the haunches of horses.[7] These depictions are corroborated by the discovery of seals and branding irons at the also Neo-Assyrian site of Tell Hallaf,[8] suggesting that the use of brands on royal horses was a common practice in Iron Age Assyria.

A similar tradition can also be traced back to the Iranian tribes of Western Asia and the Late Iron Age Near East. The grave finds of the nomadic Scythians, particularly the kurgans of Pazyryk[9] in the eastern Altai region, demonstrate that this Iranian equestrian tribe knew how to mark their horses through various ear incisions. The practice of branding likely originated from the traditions of the Central Asian equestrian peoples, such as the Sarmatians, who would mark their horses with tribal symbols, known as *tamgha*.[10]

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[5] The gypsum wall panel reliefs are kept in the British Museum, see e.g. the brand on haunches BM 124540, https://www.britishmuseum.org/collection/image/1613002412

[6] Reginald Thompson, David Litt, Richard Hutchinson, "The Site of the Palace of Ashurnasirpal at Nineveh, excavated in 1929-30 on behalf of the British Museum," *Liverpool Annals of Archaeology and Anthropology* 18 (1931): 79-112.

[7] Figure 5 depicts a horse brand on the haunch, discovered on the north wall of reception hall XXIV at Tell Ahmar, dating to the eighth century BC. Elisabeth Katzy, "Brandeisen vom Tell Halaf. Zur Praxis des Brandzeichnens bei Pferden," *Mitteilungen der Deutschen Orient-Gesellschaft zu Berlin* 152 (2020): 82.

[8] Elisabeth Katzy, "Erste Nachweise von Brandmarkierung von Pferden," *Antike Welt* (2020): 2, 35-39. Katzy, *Brandeisen*, 2020.

[9] The Pazyryk Culture is one of the related Central Asian cultures of the Scythian time. On the large area of the Altai Mountains, it existed from the sixth to the second centuries BCE. This culture has left clear evidences which are presented by unique burial complexes, and famous for the developed horse culture. Patrick Wertmann, Maria Yibluyinmu, Mayke Wagner et al., "The earliest directly dated saddle for horse-riding from a mid-1st millennium BC female burial in Northwest China," *Archaeological Research in Asia* 35 (2023): 1-16.

[10] Cf Vitalie Bârcă, "A Few Notes On The Tamgas From The Golden Plaque In The Sarmatian Grave At Dunaharaszti (Hungary)," *Journal of ancient history and archaeology* 5/4 (2018).

In the region under discussion, brands are partially known to have been used under the Achaemenids and are certainly attested among their Iranian successors, the Sassanids. This is evidenced by numerous depictions, such as those found at Naqsh-e Rostam,[11] as well as horse statuettes bearing distinct brand marks.[12] The tradition of horse branding continues in Iranian culture, as can be seen in the famous tale from the Shahnameh, in which the titular hero of the poet Abū ʾl-Qāsim Firdausī, Rostam, captures his horse, the colt Raxš, with a lasso, after having seen that this horse, other than the others, has no brand.[13] According to the account, there was a horse that bore no brands on its haunches. When asked about its owner, the shepherd replied: "Do not seek its brand, for this animal is the subject of much discussion. We do not know who its owner is."[14]

This Iranian tradition can also be traced eastward, particularly due to the lively trade relations along the Silk Road beginning in antiquity and the early Middle Ages, in the branding of horses during the Chinese Tang Dynasty. The Tang Huiyao, the official history of the Tang dynasty compiled in 961 by a certain Wang Pu for Emperor Taizu, provides interesting information regarding horse culture in general;[15] Volume 72 of the history discusses not only horses, tallies of horse supervisors, tallies of Tibetan horse trade, and as such gives names and appearances of the brands, but also 42 brands of "barbarians" living in the territory of the Tang Dynasty.[16]

Obviously, in the East, the branding of horses becomes truly intriguing in the Middle Ages, where various traditions collide, and the practice becomes institutionalised.

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[11] Naqsh-e Rostam is an archaeological site in the southern Iranian province of Fars, six kilometres north of Persepolis near Shiraz. Here are four rock-cut tombs of Achaemenid Great Kings as well as a series of Sassanid rock reliefs.

[12] See horse statues, Shinji Fukai, "The brand found on the Persian Silver horse stature of the Sassanian period," *Orient* 10 (1974):79-88.

[13] "Rostam was shown all the animals and the royal brand marks were also explained to him." *Abū'l-Qāsem Ferdausi. Shāhnāme. The Book of Kings* (Ditzingen: Reclam, 2021), 66.

[14] Ferdausi, *Shahname*, 67.

[15] The Tang Huiyao encompasses 100 volumes and 514 sections, providing a wealth of information for the period before 846 CE that is not as readily available in other historical works such as the Tongdian, Old Book of Tang, and New Book of Tang. http://www.china knowledge.de/ Literature/Historiography/tanghuiyao.html

[16] In ch. 31/31, there is information on chariots, carts, horse and head covers. In Chapter 72, the most detailed information on military horses can be read. http://www.chinaknowledge.de/History/Terms/fubing.html

In the West, the marking of animals with a branding iron has been sufficiently documented for the ancient period, both Greek and Roman times, and has also been studied and analysed in depth.[17] This includes, for example, the examination of reports by Roman[18] and Greek[19] authors on the practice of branding, up to illustrations and depictions in art. The marks applied or branded onto horses, known in Latin as *nota*, *signum*, *character*, or *cauterium*, commonly included letters, numerical symbols, and other graphic devices, as evidenced by numerous Roman mosaics depicting horses with such branding. Among the many Roman mosaics depicting horses with brands, the Hadrumet mosaic[20] and the Barcelona circus mosaic[21] are notable examples to be highlighted here.

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[17] The most important: Leopold Wenger, "XXIV. Über Stempel und Siegel," *Zeitschrift der Savigny-Stiftung für Rechtsgeschichte: Romanistische Abteilung* 42, no. 1 (1921): 611-638. Josef Dölger, "Brandmarkung der Tiere in der heidnischen Antike und im Christentum," in *Antike und Christentum: Kultur- und religionsgeschichtliche Studien*, ed. Josef Dölger, Theodor Klauser (1932), 3, 25-51. Hans Klumbach, "Pferde mit Brandmarken," in *Festschrift des Römisch-Germanischen Zentralmuseums in Mainz zur Feier seines hundertjährigen Bestehens*, vol.III, (1952), 1-12. Jutta Ronke, "Frühes 'Branding the cattle' – Brandmarken für Pferde. Zum character/ferrum caloratum aus Güglingen," in *Fundberichte aus Baden Württemberg,* 35 (2015), 371-387. Christoper Jones, "Stigma: Tattooing and Branding in Graeco-Roman Antiquity," *The Journal of Roman Studies* 77 (1987): 139-155.

[18] E.g., Vergil Georgicon. Vergil Georgics in English. Available at: https://www.gutenberg.org/ files/232/232-h/232-h.htm

[19] E.g. in "De genio Socratis," Plutarch describes the signs either as an indication of ownership (mostly abbreviated names) or to emphasise particularly valuable and beautiful animals. *On the Daimonion of Socrates: Human Liberation, Divine Guidance and Philosophy,* trans. Donald Russell, ed. Heinz-Güntzer Nesselrath. SAPERE. Scripta antiquitatis posterioris ad ethicam religionemque pertinentia, Vol 16 (Darmstadt: GMohr Siebeck, 2010). Dölger, *Brandmarkung*, 27.

[20] The Hadrumet mosaic depicts four medallions of winning racehorses from the stud farm of Sorothus, dating to the late second century CE. The medallion depicts two racehorses facing each other, with a victory palm in the centre. On the left site of the mosaic, the upper medallion shows two horses, by name as Adorandus and Crinitus. The lower one features two other horses, Amor and Dominator. The other two medallions on the right site are purely preserved, showing only the horses to the left of the victory palm; the upper one Ferox, the lower one Pegasus. The horses left of the palm are marked with brands on their right haunches with SORO and on their right shoulders THI, i.e., Sorothus. The graphic symbol of the farm is seen on the left haunch on the horses right of the palm. This archaeological artefact is currently preserved at the Sousse Archaeological Museum in Tunisia. See Jean-Piere Laporte, "Sousse. La domus de Sorothus et ses mosaïques," *Comptes rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 150/2 (2006): 1327-1392.

[21] The extant mosaic from the Circus of Barcelona, likely dating to the fourth century AD and presently housed at the Archaeological Museum of Catalonia in Spain, depicts four-

II. Some linguistic observations

There are, in fact, two lexical items, Dagh and Tamgha, that are frequently found in West Asia and the Middle East, and at the same time separate the region into two ethnic and socioeconomic domains

A. Dagh

Since the Middle Ages, we have known the lexeme *dāġ* from Persian and Arabic sources. Dāġ, derived from Avestan *daxša* and Sanskrit *daha* meaning "to burn," denotes a mark that is branded onto an animal using a heated iron. This distinctly Persian word may have made its way into India through translated literature, where we find texts from the Ghaznavid dynasty era[22] about military horses bearing the Sultan's brand ("Sultani-daghi"). It then entered Arabic and, through Arabic, into other languages as a technical term. In Persian, it was already used in this sense in the aforementioned Shahnameh by Firdusi (tenth-eleventh centuries).[23] Dagh is primarily used to refer to brands on noble horses and can be traced from the Indian realm in the east,[24] through the Iranian and Arabic spheres of influence, to Christian Cilicia and Mamluk Egypt in the south by the thirteenth century.

horse chariots (quadrigas) with the names of the horses and charioteers inscribed. The right horse of the first quadriga bears the inscription "NICETI" on its right haunch. Likewise, the two right horses of the second four-horse chariot display the brands "CONCO" on the right haunch and "RDI" on the right shoulder, which most probably represent the name "Concordius." Emil Hübner, "Mossaico di Barcellona raffigurante giuochi circensi," *Annali dell'Instituto di Corrispondenza Archeologica* (1863): 35, 135–172.

[22] The Ghaznavid dynasty was a Turkic-origin, Muslim ruling house that governed the eastern Iranian territories, extending as far as the Oxus River in the east and into northwestern India, from 977 to 1186. Contemporary sources describe the Ghaznavids as "Persianised": while the official and court language of the empire was contemporary Persian, Sanskrit and Arabic also served as lingua francas, and their administrative and military practices were derived from the Abbasids. Edmund Bosworth, "Ghaznavids," in *Encyclopedia Iranica* Vol. X, Fasc. 6 (2001), 578-583. https://www.iranicaonline.org/articles/ghaznavids. Katouzian notes that although the majority of the population and ruling dynasties spoke Turkic languages, Persian was the official language. Homa Katouzian, *Iranian history and politics: The Dialectic of State and Society* (New York: Routledge, 2007), 128.

[23] Fritz Wolff, *Glossar zu Firdosis Schahname* (Berlin: Reichsdruckerei, 1935), 360.

[24] The Ghaznavid dynasty is particularly renowned for the military reforms introduced by Alauddin Khili (1295-1316), who mandated the branding of cavalry horses.

B. Tamgha

Parallel to the dagh system for noble and valuable horses, the Tamgha developed in Central Asia originating from Turkic tribes. Tamgha means "brand" or "seal/stamp" in Old Turkic, a symbol used to mark one's possessions, such as horses, cattle, sheep, and various other items. Initially, the different Turkic tribes, clans, and families had their own often simply-designed Tamghas, which were later also adopted into heraldry and used as actual seals. The Tamghas were later adopted by the Mongols as well but had no impact on the system of recognised brands for noble horses in the region of Western Asia and the Near East, which was later dominated by the Mongols and Turkic peoples. Simple herd brands often became important seals and stamps of Turkic rulers on flags, as letter seals and coins, with the Mongolian Tamgha seals being particularly well-known for taxation and as letter seals.

The Turkic scholar Maḥmūd al-Kāshgarī documented various Tamghas (tribal insignia) and their names in his *Dīwān Luğāt al-turk*. i.e. "Compendium of Turkic Languages," produced between 1072 and 1074, identifying a total of 21 distinct Oghuz tribes.[25] The term Tamgha was later used in Arabic, Persian, and Armenian sources to refer to the distinctive seals and privileges of Mongol and Turkic rulers.[26]

It is significant to note that the word dagh/dał is exclusively used to denote branding marks, and not for the medical practice of cauterisation, which is also mentioned in Indian, Persian, Arabic, Armenian, and Georgian texts, where these "cauterisation marks" are also referenced.[27]

[25] English translation with commentary: *Maḥmūd al-Kāšgarī. Compendium of the Turkic dialects*. 3 volumes. Ed. Robert Dankoff, James Kelly (Harvard: Harvard University Printing press, 1982-5).

26 Samat Samashev, "Horse Branding tradition among the Turks," *Bulletin of History* 4, 103 (2021): 53-62.

[27] The Armenian text differentiates between the concepts of "dał/tał" (branding for identification purposes) and "xaran" (branding for medical reasons), whereas the Arabic translations from Armenian lack these specific terminological distinctions. Likewise, the Georgian treatise distinguishes between "daġi" and "šant'i," the latter of which is explicitly referenced in certain chapters of the Georgian compilation that are absent from the Armenian horse book of Smbat, as evidenced by the manuscript references H 2156, 33r-33v and S 3467, 28r-28v.

III. Brands in the Armenian tradition

The present work draws upon the Armenian tradition originating from the Cilician Kingdom of Armenia (1198-1347). Codex M 10967, Smbat's Horse Book, represents a unique compilation of contemporary knowledge, providing on folios 37v-39v a collection of brands which were collected by the Syrian veterinarian Faraǰ, probably derived from preceding Arabic or even Armenian treatises, covering the entire region of Western Asia including the Caucasus, the Levant, and classical Mesopotamia.

The five folios of M 10967 systematically depict these brands in tabular form, with the name of each sign in the upper section and the corresponding brand depiction below. In total, 105 brands are documented. However, this codex does not delve into detailed explanations or translations of the Armenian names associated with these brands, instead offering only graphical representations of the brands and their names in armenized Arabic and partially obscured, cryptic forms.

According to the table of contents, the brands are mentioned at the end of the 21st chapter on exterior description, in a section titled "On advice regarding how to recognise good and bad riding animals through all the senses. And on the brands, their breeds, and all horse breeds." The subchapter is introduced on folio 37r with the heading: "On the brands and their names. The brands and their names are written." Interestingly, the renowned Armenologist Hrač'ya Ačaryan, in his initial description of this manuscript in his 1910 catalogue of the Tabriz manuscripts,[28] interpreted this differently, associating the term *(t)ałer* with the Turkish/Ottoman term *eyer* meaning "saddle," and stated that a variety of different saddles were then depicted.

Folio 37v shows 19 brands in 6 rows:

1 *hayatał* (Armenian)	*iēt'mi* (unknown)	*tawuti* (David's race Palestine)
2 *šiēi* (Shiite)	*Snni* (Sunnite)	David
3 *hampali* (Hanbali)	*armeni* (Armenian)	David
4 Armenian	Armenian	Armenian
5 David	Armenian	
6 *Muslmam* (Muslim)	Muslim	Muslim *Hmtani* (Hamadan)

[28] When Ačaṛean described the codex, it was still in the possession of the Iranian tailor Shirmazani in Tabriz. Hrač'ya Ačaṛean, *C'uc'ak hayerēn jeṛagrac' T'avrizi* [Catalogue of Armenian Manuscripts in Tavriz] (Vienna: Mxit'arean tparan, 1910), 137-138.

f.38r (24 brands in 6 rows)

1 Hamadan	Hamadan	*mk'ēi* Mekka	Hamadan
2 Hamadan	*vrac'i* Georgian	David	*Amt'ayc'i* Amid
3 Amid	David	David	Amid
4 Amid	David	*atrumpčan* Atrapatakan	David
5 Amid	Mekka	Mekka	Mekka
6 Mekka	Mekka	Mekka	Mekka

f. 38v (18 brands in 5 rows)

1 Mekka	Mekka	Mekka	Mekka
2 Mekka	Mekka	*t'urk'i* Turkish	Turkish
3 Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	Turkish
4 Turkish	Turkish	Turkish	
5 Turkish	Mekka	Mekka	

f. 39r (23 brands in 6 rows)

1 *Xutami*	*praran* Praran	Turkish	Turkish
2 Praran	Praran	Turkish	Praran
3 Praran	*halpi* Aleppo	Turkish	Xutami
4 *młrpi* Maghreb	Maghreb	Maghreb	Maghreb
5 Aleppo	Aleppo	Aleppo	Aleppo
6 Maghreb	*msrc'i* Egypt	Egypt	

f. 39v (21 brands in 6 rows)

1 *šamc'i* Syria	Aleppo	Syria	
2 Egypt	Egypt/Syria	Syria	
3 Egypt	Syria	Maghreb	Maghreb
4 Mekka	no name	Georgian	Aleppo
5 Syria	Syria	Mekka	
6 Egypt	Turkish	Egypt	

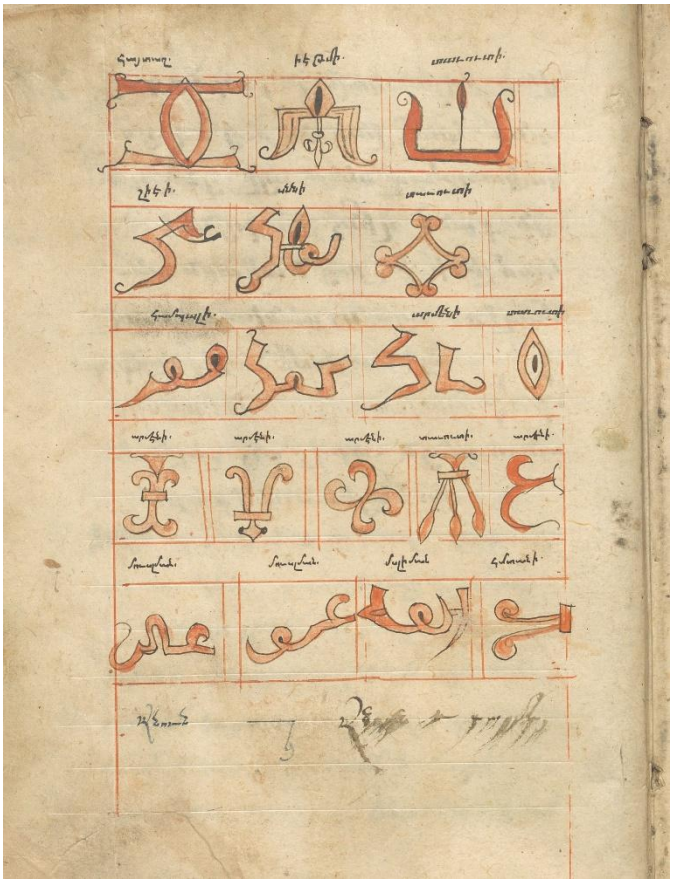

Fig. 1. Brands in Smbat's horse book, M 10975, f. 37v © Matenadaran

Interestingly, only a few designations are genuinely Armenian, such as *hayatał* "Armenian brand" and *vrac'i* "Georgian." Some geographical names were formed from Arabic place names and the Armenian demonym suffix -c'i and were indeed widespread in the Middle Armenian of the Cilician Kingdom, such as msr-c'i from Egypt/Egyptian < arab. Miṣr, misrī "Egypt/Egyptian", Amt'ayč'i from Amid < arab. Amid, amidī.

Borrowed directly from Arabic, even without an Armenian suffix but adapted to the Cilician-Armenian phonetic system, are forms like młrpi < arab. Maġribi, halepi < arab. Ḥalabi, hmtani < pers./arab. Hamadān, Tawuti < arab. Dāwud; mk'k'ēi < arab. Makka, makkī, and t'urk'i < arab./pers. Turkī, perhaps not denoting Turkish but rather Turcoman breeds.

Similarly, via Persian, we find šam-c'i < Persian Šāmi "Syrian, from Damascus."

Surprisingly some terms were also literary taken from Arabic, such as armeni < Arabic 'armanī.

Altogether unknown in Armenian are the designations Praran, Xutami, and particularly iet'mi.

Summing up, the following brands are mentioned in Smbat's horse book:

a) Armenian (1 new, 5 old)
b) David's (9)
c) Georgian (1)
d) Hamadan (5)
e) Mecca (18)
f) Amid (5)
g) Maghreb (7)
h) Egypt (7)
i) Aleppo 87)
j) Syrian/Damascus (8)
k) Turkish (15)
l) Shi'ite (1)
m) Sunni (1)
n) Hanbalī (1)
o) Muslim (3)
p) Atropatene/Azerbaijan (Northern Iran) (1)

As well as those of unknown origin:

- Ietmi (1)
- Khutami (2)
- Praran (5)

When examining the brands of the Cilician text more closely, we see that the compilers have made an effort to bring the brands into a certain order and system by primarily grouping the brands according to their origin. However, the list begins with the compilers' own and new brand: with a genuinely Armenian designation, it is an Armenian brand that presumably refers to a local Cilician breed. On the same folio, there are five additional Armenian brands, but these have been adopted with the Arabic designation "armanī."

The Cilician text highlights several notable features of the brands:

- It notes the presence of branding marks associated with the Davidic tradition from Palestine, as well as marks indicating religious affiliations such as Shi'a, Sunni, and three instances of "Muslim," as well as one

instance of "Hanbali," likely referring to the Ḥanbali school of Islamic jurisprudence.
- The text mentions a cryptic brand designated as "Iet'mi," whose etymology remains unclear, but its prominent positioning as the second mark suggests it held particular significance.
- Furthermore, the text observes the absence of any Western branding marks, whether from the Greco-Byzantine tradition of antiquity or the more recent Frankish variety. This is surprising, given the close contact between Cilician Armenia and the Crusader states, as well as the active horse trade between Cilicia and the European military orders.

This list of horse brands, which appears to be organised according to certain principles, yet fails to reflect the linguistic and cultural realities of the political-cultural landscape within the Cilician Kingdom under King Smbat towards the end of the thirteenth century. This raises several important questions regarding the origin and sources of the horse brands described.

Firstly, what source did the Syrian Faraǰ use as the basis for these brands, and which specific brands did he, potentially in his role as royal (horse) doctor at the Cilician court, consider relevant for his king? Alternatively, were these brands simply copied without reflection from another Armenian or Arabic source by the Armenian scribe T'oros, as appears to have been the case in later copies and translations? Finally, and perhaps most challenging to determine, can we infer from this list of brands any insights into the variety of horses that were popular in this region at the time?

To determine the underlying sources used by Faraǰ and/or T'oros, it can be assumed that Smbat's horse treatise M10965 draws primarily from the traditions of Aḫī Ḥizam, the Indian scholar Čaṇakya Kauṭiliya, and potentially an earlier Armenian treatise familiar to the Syrian doctor. It would therefore be prudent to initially examine some of the available copies of ibn Aḫī Ḥizam's work, particularly the relevant chapter *bāb fī ʾaškāl al-šiyāt wa-ṣuwar al-dāġāt* (i.e., chapter on the shape of (horse) markings and on images of brands).

1. Chester Beatty Library (CBL) Ar. 3220.2[29], here 104r, 104v
2. Chester Beatty Library (CBL) Ar. 4161, Naskh, 160 f.), here 27r, 27v[30]
3. BNF 2815 here 22r, 22v[31]
4. Chester Beatty Library (CBL) AR 3319, here 49r-v and 50r[32]
5. Fatih 3510[33] (here 10v)
6. Bodleian MS Pococke 360[34] (here 36r-41r)
7. Ṭibb 155[35] And for comparison, an undated Arabic manuscript, likely a translation from Persian, here 156rv.

The earliest available copy, CBL AR 4161, folios 27r and 27v, is particularly interesting. Essentially, the following names are given for a range of brands:

1. Maġribī (Maghreb)
2. Misrī (Egypt)
3. Ḥalabī (Aleppo)
4. Šāmī (Syrian)

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[29] *Al furūsīya wa-l-baiṭara* by Ibn Akhī Ḥizām, undated, perhaps eighteenth century. Arthur Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library, a Handlist of Arabic manuscripts*, I (Dublin: Walker, 1955), 90.

[30] *Al-khail wa-l-baiṭara*, by Ibn Akhī Ḥizām. 160 Folios, dated 8 Sha'bān 654 (August 31, 1256). Arthur Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library, a Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts,* V (Dublin: Walker, 1962), 53.

[31] BnF Paris Ms. Arabe 2815, according to Yavrumyan's research, this is also a copy of *ibn Aḫī Ḥizām*. According to catalogue entry: Treatise on how to raise horses, train them, ride them and care for them in case of illness. A fifteenth-century manuscript. The title and author of the work remain unknown, as the first and last leaves of the ms. are missing. https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/btv1b11002030t/f24.item. Yavrumyan states that these two missing leaves are listed under the reference Ms. Arabe 2823 (dated 1063/1653) in the BnF Paris catalogue.

[32] *Ak-hhail wa-l-baiṭara* by Ibn Akhī Ḥizām, dated 10 Muḥarram 659, (12 September 1464). Arthur Arberry, *The Chester Beatty Library, a handlist of the Arabic manuscripts*. *Handlist of Arabic Manuscripts*, Vol. II (Dublin: Walker, 1965), 34.

[33] *Kitāb al-baiṭara*, Fatih-Süleymaniye Library, Istanbul. Ms. 3510.

[34] According to Yavrumyan's analysis, this is another, very beautifully written but undated copy of *ibn aḫī Ḥizām*, containing wonderful sketches of brands. This is Bodlein Library of Oxford, Pococke M 360. https://www.fihrist.org.uk/catalog/manuscript_1540

[35] According to Yavrumyan's analysis, Ṭibb 155 is another anonymous *Kitāb fī al-bayṭara* from Cairo (ENL). The place, date, and scribe are unknown. The work consists of two parts. The first part discusses equine diseases, while the second part provides a general description of horses. Chapter 24 of the second part describes horse breeds that closely resemble those in two manuscripts from the Chester Beatty Library (Ar. 3319 and Ar. 4146). The work begins: "Persian scholars who are well-versed in horse diseases say..." It is most likely a translation from Persian to Arabic.

5. Qatāṃī (?Qatām)

This corresponds both to groups of brands in BNF Arabe 2815, f. 22r:
1. Maġribī (Maghreb)
2. Misṛ̣ (Egypt)
3. Halabī (Aleppo)
4. Šāmi (Syrian)
5. Qatāmī (?Qatām)

And b) Ṭibb 155, f. 156v:
1. Šāmī (Syrian)
2. Ḥalabī (Aleppo)
3. Magribī (Maghreb)
4. Maḥmudī (Mahmud)
5. Qatāṃī (?Qatām)
6. Brārānī (?Braran)

The version of CBL 3319 shows the largest number of brands, according to our count about 140-1 individual brands on folios 49r-v and 50r. Some of these are not given names, others are possibly names that could be recognised from the Arabic lettering.

f. 49r
1. Maġribī (Maghreb)
2. Ḥalabī (Aleppo)
3. Misṛi (Egypt)
4. As(š)rūsī (?)
5. Ḥamādanī (Hamadan)

f. 49v
1. Misṛi (Egypt)
2. Šāmī (Syrian)
3. Ḥalabī (Aleppo)
4. Dimašqī (Damascus)
5. Brāranī (Braran)
6. Maḥmūdī(?) (of Mahmud)
7. Ḥanbalī (Hanbali)
8. Rūmī (Greek)

f. 50r

1. Ḥamādanī (Hamadan)
2. Amidī (Amid)
3. Armanī (Armenian)
4. Samarqandī (Samarkand)
5. Buḫārī (Bukhara)

CBL 3319-2 is difficult: it contains many brandings, 12+72+58, again without designation, as some could be interpreted as names. Fatih 3510 and Ṭibb give several clearly drawn brands, but without indication of names, which makes it difficult to compare the brandings.[36]

Regardless of the difficulties in graphically comparing the brandings, we observe that a significant portion of the horse brands known from Aḫī Ḥizam are present in M 10975. Furthermore, the Arabic lexemes Brāranī and Qaṭāmī provide plausible etymological origins for the Armenian terms *praran* and *xutami*, but unfortunately no explanation which country or tribe/clan is actually designated. Considering also the later, significant work of Abū-Bakr Ibn-Badr Ibn-al-Munḏir al-Baiṭār, better known as Naceri (drafted about the year 1333), which also draws on Aḫī Hizam and Indian sages, we find in Chapter 22 a total of 76 brand marks – divided into eight groups according to their origin or owner:[37]

1. David (5)
2. Egypt (9)
3. Greek (6)
4. Indian (15)
5. Syrian (12)
6. Aleppo (7 + 1 from Caliph Abu Bakr)
7. Maghreb (9)
8. Frank (European) 12

[36] A comparison of the graphic design of all given brands is a logistic challenge.

[37] M. Perron, *Le Naceri. Deuxieme partie. Hippologie* (Paris: Bouchard-Huzard 1859), 276-279. Mohammed Hakimi, *Abû Bakr ibn Badr, Le Nâçerî. Hippologie et médecine du cheval en terre d'Islam au XIV^e siècle. Le traité des deux arts en médecine vétérinaire* (Paris: Errance, 2006).

Table 1: Brands in Aḫī Hizam's Arabic manuscripts

Brand names	Arabic manuscrip s				
	CBL AR 4161 27r, 27v	*BNF Arabe 2815, 22r*	*CBL 3319 49r, 49v*	*CBL 3319 50r*	Ṭibb *155, 156r, 156v:*
Maghreb	Maġribī	Maġribī	Maġribī		Maġribī
Egypt	Misrī	Misrī	Misrī		-
Syria	Šāmī	Šāmī	Šāmī		Šāmī
Aleppo	Ḥalabī	Ḥalabī	Halabī		Ḥalabī
Qatami?	Qatāmī	Qatāmī			Qaṭāmī
Maḥmud			Maḥmūdī		Maḥmūdī
Brārān?			Brāranī		Brārānī
Damascos			Dimašqī		
Hanbali			Ḥanbalī		
Hamadan			Hamadanī	Ḥamādanī	
Amid			Amidī	Amidī	
Byzantine			Rumī		
Samarkand			Samarqandī	Samarqandī	
Armenian				Armanī [38]/	
Bukhara?				Buḫārī	
As(š)rušī			As(š)rušī		

Interestingly, we have more Western brands as well as specific Indian and David's ones that are not mentioned in Aḫī Ḥizam's various versions. The challenge lies in determining the precise brands represented, given the abundance of options comparable to those in 3319-2. This variability complicates the identification of their group or provenance.

The most impressive and beautiful copy of Aḫī Ḥizam's horse treatise is, without doubt, Oxford Bodleian manuscript Pococke 360, which displays brands tabularly in beautifully engraved and clear form in three columns. On folio 36r, the headings of the three columns can be read: the first column shows the medical brands, the second column the illustrations of the brands, and the third column the "old copied" ones. Thereafter, the brands follow in

[38] Line 7, 11-15.

these three columns in three rows on folio 36r, and then in four rows on folios 36v, 37r, 37v, 38r, 38v, 39r, 39v, 40r, 40v, 41r. Unfortunately, no names are present.

Thus, it seems, that the only way to determine their origins would be to compare the graphical forms of the brands given in Aḫī Ḥizam's copy and the Armenian horse book M 10975, but this is extremely tiresome and difficult, also due to the variations or rather the inexperienced or often less talented hand of the scribes.

IV. The brands in the copies and translations of Smbat's horse book

A. Nazli's Medical Book M 11161

With these illustrations and names of the brands in mind, we now turn our attention to those texts that were copied or translated from Smbat's horse book of 1298-1298.

The further extant complete manuscript, which stands in the focus of the discussed project, the medical compilation M 11161, Nazli's Medical Book, obviously containing a copy of the Sivas 1504 apograph of Smbat's horse book.

On folio 226r, one can read, "Concerning the brands and their names. The brands and their names were written," but not a single illustration is given. It means that, while the chapter heading on the brands is preserved in the seventeenth/eighteenth century transcript from Sivas, the brands themselves were not copied.

B. The Georgian translation

The subsequent text in the chronological sequence is the Georgian treatise, which is founded upon a compilation comprising the translation of Smbat's Horse Book from a copy dated 1504 from Sivas, the Qarabadins of Vaxtang, as well as supplementary material provided by the Batonashvilis.[39] Surprisingly, the two Georgian versions display the identical brands, arranged in the same order and designation as documented in Smbat's horse book.

The Georgian versions, both in H 2156, 20r-22r and the slightly newer S 3467, 17r-19r, have essentially adopted the Arabic designations written in Armenian into their Georgian pronunciations, and thus we also have here

[39] See Sakvarelidze in this issue, 126 et passim.

David's brands called Tauti and the older Armenian brands as *armeni* and not as it should be in Georgian as *somxuri*.

Table 2. Comparison of brand names in three traditions

Brands	**Brand names in three traditions**		
	Arabic/Persian	***Armenian M10975, 37v-39v***	***Georgian H 2156, 20r-22r***
Brand "dagh"	dāġ	tał	daġi
New Armenian	-	hayatał	Somxis dagi
Unknown	-	Iēt'mi	Xetmi
David	Dāwud	Tawuti	Tauti
Shiit	-	šiēi	Šiēisa
Sunnite	-	Snni	Snnisa
Hanbali	Ḥanbalī	Hampali	Hampalisa
Old Armenian	Armanī	armeni	Armenisi
Muslim	-	Muslman	Musulmanisa
Hamdan	Hamadān	Hmtani	Hamtanisi
Mecca	Makka, makkī	Mk'k'ēi	Mk'eisa
Georgian	-	Vrac'i	K'art'velisa
Amid	Amid, amidī	Amt'ac'i	Amt'aelisa
Atrapakan	-	Atrumpčan	Atropač'anisa
Turkish/Turcoman	Turkī	T'urk'i	T'urk'isa
Khutami?	Qaṭāmī	Xutami	Xoromi
Praran	Brāranī	Praran	Prarunisa
Aleppo	Ḥalab, ḥalabī	Halpi	Halabisa/halpisa
Maghreb	Maġribī	Młrpi	Maġripisa
Egypt	Miṣrī	Msrc'i	Misrisa
Syrian/Damascos	Šāmī	Šamc'i	Šamisa

As can be observed, where the Armenian original had "iēt'mi," the Georgian text has "xet'mi," and where the Armenian had "xutami," the Georgian has "xoromi," which can only be explained as scribal errors.

Interestingly, no corrections or further additions were made in the Georgian versions more than 250 years after the Sivas manuscript, despite the translators and compilers being keen to update the work with the more recent

hippological and hippiatric treatises of Vaxtang and Batonašvili. No newer Georgian brands have been added.

Furthermore, a comparison of the meticulous copy of the Georgian chapter on brands with the Smbat manuscript M 10976 reveals that the Armenian source described in the Georgian version, namely the medical book for Horses and Pack Animals from Sivas 1504, did indeed contain this chapter with all brands, as an identical copy of M 10975. Our manuscript M 11161, which was assumed to contain THE copy of Sivas 1504 before its scientific analysis but can now be dated to the seventeenth or eighteenth century, closely follows M 10975, but, as mentioned above, contains only the chapter heading yet – for reasons unknown – no longer the brands themselves.

C. The translation into Arabic before Smbat's horse book

What can we infer about horse brands from the Arabic translation of an Armenian horse treatise predating Smbat's work? The Arabic translation(s) of the pre-Smbat horse treatise contain(s) a single chapter that synthesises the material found in chapters 20 and 21 of Smbat's horse book,[40] but it lacks any information about horse brands. Specifically, there are no dedicated chapters, illustrations, titles, or even references to horse brands within this translated text. This could suggest that the no longer extant pre-Smbat horse book, likely based on Het'um's horse book or the recension under his oldest son and successor King Levon III. (1269-1289), during whose reign the translation(s) from Armenian into Arabic were undertaken,[41] probably did not contain a dedicated chapter on brands. Thus, this would suggest that Faraǰ and T'oros compiled this chapter based on a version of Aḫī Hizam's work and – perhaps - their own knowledge.

V. Conclusions

An analysis of the brands found in the various versions of Smbat's horse treatise, its translations but also its sources provide a fascinating insight into the cultural and historical contexts in which these texts were produced.

[40] These two chapters on coat colours, whorls, and markings of horses evidently draw on both Arabic and Indian sources. Ch. 20 "Whorls. The colour of a horse. Which of them are valued by the Arab and which are not valued." Ch. 21 "Things that the Indian sages have said about the colours and markings that should be good and bad in the animals." Dum-Tragut, *Kilikisches Heilbuch*, 64, 69-70.

[41] See Yavrumyan in this issue, 104 et passim.

What we can conclude from the chapter on brands is that not only was artistic skill in depicting the brands a determining factor, with some brands bearing perhaps little resemblance to the original, but also that the translators and foreign compilers were often far less knowledgeable about equine science, equestrian studies, and the languages they were translating than might be assumed.

For example, when the Armenians used the Arabic designation "tawuti" for "Davit'," or consciously preferred "armeni" over "hay," as mentioned earlier, or adopted other Arabicized place names, it is understandable that the Georgians, centuries later, often struggled to comprehend these Armenianized Arabic names and simply transposed them into Georgian.

This chapter suggests that the unpreserved 1504 Sebastia apograph of Smbat's horse manual was likely a complete version, which served as the basis for the Georgian translation – unlike our extant copy contained in M 11161, which lacks the section on brands. Interestingly, the Arabic translations of the Armenian source material also omit this chapter on branding, hinting that the versions of Het'um's horse treatises texts may not have included branding details.

The Armenian text of M 10975 provides no description of where the branding marks were applied or the proper timing of branding.

However, the Georgian compilations, drawing on Vaxtang's Qarabadin (in H 2156 and S 3467), indicate that the branding was done on the shoulder of one-year-old foals. Later, at one and a half years old, the royal brand was placed on the right side and the princely brand on the left, serving as identification marks. This suggests that the Oriental tradition predominantly branded the shoulder, while European practices favoured branding the thigh, with distinct marks on the left and right sides.[42]

The hippologically more significant point is: assuming the Cilician compilers at the end of the thirteenth century documented the horse landraces known to them through external sources or direct observation, this provides a glimpse into the horse breeding practices across the region extending from the western boundaries of Cilicia and the Maghreb, to the eastern limits of Central Asia, and potentially even India.

Moreover, it is evident that, in the thirteenth century, horses from the Arab region were predominantly known in Cilicia and were especially popular as military and royal horses, as well as a large number of horses from Central Asia, horses from the Persian region, but also horses of the ancient Davidic breeds from Palestine, and horses from the Armenian highlands and the

[42] H 2156, 7v. S 3467, 7v which is an excerpt taken from Vaxtang's Qarabadin Q 28, 616.

neighbouring Georgia. Some brand names, however, can be attributed more to persons or large regions than to breeding areas and thus potentially to specific landraces or types of horses. The religious-themed brand names continue to be puzzling.

The question that is most difficult to answer is the semantic motivation behind the names of the brands. At first glance, there are highly symbolic ones derived from graphic patterns, with some resembling Arabic names or letters, but only a few of them can still be recognised as names. We also cannot definitively determine whether the branding marks in the thirteenth century were primarily used as ownership marks or whether they predominantly indicated the origin, as could be inferred from the names. And the fact that there were different branding marks for one region is again due to different breeders. This means that a great number of the mentioned brands should be valued far more than just as an ownership mark – but rather as breeding and perhaps increasingly as identification marks for specific horse types. This applies above all to types of horses, e.g., for the military sector, for the remounts. In any case, the branding mark also served as a quality seal – because it did not only clarify the origin and affiliation of the horse but also guaranteed certain quality.

The precise timing of the shift from branding marks serving as ownership indicators to denoting affiliation with a breeding region or potential breed is currently difficult to determine based on the available textual sources.

How and by whom was the knowledge about these brands disseminated? The Dagh system not only helped to identify the legitimate owner but also created a suitable benchmark for evaluating the value of a horse in medieval society. A steady transition can be observed from a utilitarian provision of information about the origin and quality of horses towards the addition of more compelling characteristics of breeding over time. These were strongly associated with status, level, and value, and ultimately encompassed the development of stud farms and distinct breed characteristics. In return, those engaged in the trade and procurement of horses for the military and the nobility had to be extremely well-versed in these brands and developments.

In summary, medieval horse brands conveyed not only information about a horse's origin, but also inherent insights into its quality: knowing the horse's provenance and breeding helped eliminate any uncertainties. This contrasts with the aforementioned *tamghas*, which primarily served to mark ownership and provided less indication of the animals' quality.

Postscriptum

In 1877, Carl Bräuer compiled a collection of known stud brands of his time, including a range of Oriental and Turkoman brands.[43] Some of the brands found in our medieval sources can be identified among Bräuer's examples, as he likely drew upon previously published works. Bräuer distinguished brands of the breeds[44] from Syria in Asia Minor, the Haleb, i.e., Aleppo breed in Syria, brands of the occidental breeds in Syria, brands of the David breeds in Palestine, brands of European breeds in the Orient, the Egyptian breeds in the Orient, Bengali brands, and a number of Circassian and Turkoman brands. However, Bräuer's main focus was on the vast range of "modern" European brands.[45] And it is likely that Armenian or Georgian brands had fallen into obscurity by the early modern period…[46]

[43] Carl Bräuer, *Sammlung von Gestütsbrandzeichen der Staats- und Privatgestüte Europas und des Orients* (Dresden, G. Schönfeld: 1877).

[44] It is important to note that Bräuer's use of the term "breed" lacks critical historical reflection, and rather aligns with a European tradition characterized by studbook records, concepts of breed purity, and controlled integration of external bloodlines. This perspective diverges significantly from the understanding of medieval terms for "breeds," which do not correspond to the modern European concept of horse breeds. A more detailed examination of the varying cultural interpretations and understandings of "breed" during the medieval period will be addressed in another, separate discussion.

[45] Otger Wedekind's monograph on horse brands, almost a hundred years later, also illustrates Bräuer's knowledge and concentrates even more on European, especially "modern" brands. Otger Wedekind, *Brandzeichen bei Pferden* (Hannover, Verlag M.&.H. Schäfer: 1975).

[46] The appearance of "Armenius," an Armenian horse, in the portrait series of 43 horses from the stables of the famous Don Juan of Austria (1547-1578), son of Charles V, created by the Flemish court painter Johannes Stradanus (1523-1605) after Philips Galle (1537-1612), provides a notable example of the esteem in which Armenian horses were held at European courts. Unfortunately, this appears to be the last official reference to an Armenian horse in European historical records.

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