

Linguistics

The Urartian Substratum in Armenian¹

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(Presented by Academy Member Th. V. Gamkrelidze)

ABSTRACT. The paper analyses Urartian words that had leaked into Armenian in the early and middle first millennium B.C. © 2008 Bull. Georg. Natl. Acad. Sci.

Key words: *Urartian, substratum, Armenian.*

The concept that Urartian (and Hurrian) words had leaked into Armenian by loan in the early and middle first millennium B.C. was first noted by Lévon Msériantz (1904) who, in Paris in 1902, addressed a Congress of orientologists on “Les éléments ourartique dans la langue arménienne.” He cited the comparison of Urartian *šue* ‘sea,’ Arm. *cov* ‘id.’; and Urartian ^[GIŠ]*šari* ‘orchard,’ Arm. *cař* ‘tree.’ No major work was done until Grigor Ghapantsyan (1948) developed the theme with more etymologies. It was a most reasonable idea, in that the Armenians had certainly arrived in Urartian territory by the eighth century and that even the city-name Yerevan itself was a loan from Urartian Erebuni. Altogether, by a most conservative count, there are at least eight such words from Urartian. Examples are Arm. *ult* ‘camel,’ Urartian *ultu* ‘id.’; and Arm. *pelem* ‘to dig, excavate,’ Urartian *pili* ‘canal.’ The other examples have similar phonetic and semantic clarity.

At the same time it was suggested that Hurrian words also were embedded in the Armenian language: Arm. *xnjor* ‘apple,’ Hurrian *hinzuri* ‘apple tree, orchard’; Arm. *agarak* ‘field,’ Hurrian *awari* ‘id.’ Certainly these correspondences are clear, but it has been argued that they cannot come directly from Hurrian since the Hurrians considerably preceded the Armenians in the sub-Caucasus, and also were well south-west of the centers of Armenian culture. Rather the Hurrian words in Arme-

nian are, in reality, Urartian words that are not known in the surviving Urartian lexicon. Thus there are altogether at least sixteen sure loan words from Urartian, though half of these are known only in Hurrian (Diakonoff 1985, Greppin 1991). Two of these words are known in both Hurrian and Urartian: Arm. *art* ‘field, Hurrian *arde* ‘town,’ Urartian *ardi-ne* ‘id.’ and Arm. *tarma-fur* ‘spring water,’ Hurrian *tarmani* ‘source,’ Urartian *tarmen-li* ‘spring.’

Later Diakonoff and Starostin (1986) showed that it was quite likely, based on lexical and paradigmatic similarities, that both the Hurrian and Urartian languages were directly related to the languages of the North Caucasus. This information became valuable to those working on the Urartian substratum after Starostin and Nikolayev published their etymological dictionary of the North Caucasian languages (1994). This work met at first with a tepid response. The North-West Caucasian correspondences were especially viewed with deep distrust, and although there were some quite possible etymologies, nevertheless there were simply too many correspondences that were questionable. Most of the Daghestani material, however, as compiled by Starostin and Nikolayev, is quite intriguing. Though there is still phonological contention, we have at a minimum a carefully arranged list of homonymous vocabulary of the various Daghestani languages that appears to be related. Even if some of the phonological variations can-

¹ This paper is a brief reconstruction in essay style of earlier works that have led up to this hypothesis. Detailed footnotes, and heavy duty philology, can be found in the basic references found in the bibliography.

not be explained, it is clear that we have a highly coherent list of etymological similarities.

Next, with Starostin and Nikolayev's North Caucasian lexicon at hand, I have been able to show that we could form Urartian etymologies from Proto-North-East Caucasian. I first compared Armenian words (Greppin 1996) having initial *b-* with Proto-North-East Caucasian and got six correspondences even though *b* is a somewhat perplexing phoneme in Urartian. Two examples are Arm. *bag* 'snout,' PNEC **bekwə*, Kruz *pek* 'id,' etc., and Arm. *bak* 'spade, shovel,' Chechen *baha* 'id,' Chamalal *beʒum* 'id,' etc.

Later (2006, 2008) I compiled a list of eight PNEC words in *q* which corresponded with Arm. *k*. These included Arm. *kem* 'grass rope,' Dargwa *q:ama* 'hemp,' Akushi *q:ama* 'id,' Bezhta *qāmā* 'straw', and Arm. *kokord* 'throat,' Proto-Daghestani **qaqari*, Lezgi *gagari*, Agul *qurq*, Rutul *qarqar-ak* 'throat.' Two other PNEC words in *q* became *x* in Armenian: Arm. *xac(-anal)* '(to) bite,' Tesz *qece*, Lak *qac*, Dargwa *qac*, Lezgi *qac* 'bite'; Arm. *xoxom* 'ravine, abyss,' Tesz *qoqo*, Lak *qaqa*, Dargwa *qaqa* 'id.'

More recently, for the Urartian sibilants, I was able to show (2009) that there were no correspondences for Urartian /s/ in Armenian, but for Urartian /š/ there were ten correspondences in Armenian /s/ (none in Armenian with /š/). These included Arm. *sur* 'sword,' Urartian ^[GİŠ] *šuri* 'spear,' and Arm. *sunk* 'mushroom,' Udi *šalmk* 'id,' Godoberi *sekue* 'id.' For Urartian *š*, an emphatic stop, we have Arm. *c* (= [ts]), as noted by Mseriantz (above) in Urartian *šue* 'sea,' Arm. *cov* 'id,' and Urartian ^[GİŠ] *šari* 'fruit orchard,' Arm. *cař* 'tree.'

At this point it also became clear that Armenian seems to have its best fit with the Lezgian group of the Daghestani languages. The Daghestani languages are one of the two major subdivisions of the North-East Caucasian branch including, as well, the Proto-Nakh group.

Proto-North-East Caucasian

Proto-Daghestani Proto-Nakh

There are derived from Proto-Daghestani at least three more groups: Proto-Avar-Andi-Tsez, Proto-Lak-Dargwa, Proto-Lezgian, and perhaps Khinalug, a language isolate.

Proto-Daghestani

Proto-Avar-Andi-Tsez (Khinalug) Proto-Lak-Dargwa
Proto-Lezgian

From Proto-Lezgian are derived nine closely related living languages, and it is perhaps here we might add Urartian.

Proto-Lezgian

Agul Archi Budukh Kruz Lezgi Rutul
Tabasaran Tsakhur Udi Urartian

One wonders how Hurrian fits in here. It appears that the Hurrians, first known in Syria, pressed westward (from Central Asia, as some hint [Burney and Lang 1971]) south of the Caspian Sea in the later third millennium, eventually being stopped by the Hittite nation in central Anatolia. The Urartians, a millennium later, were not able to press farther westward because of the pressure from the northward pushing Assyrian culture. Accordingly, the Urartians, having established major cities and fortresses in the south-Caspian region, turned northwest and came into the sub-Caucasus, where they eventually founded major citadels from Van to Erebuni. Apparently the Urartians were pushed farther northward by the Armenians after the eighth-sixth centuries, and found their permanent home in Daghestan. There their language seems closest to the Lezgian branch of the Daghestani group. Yet the Daghestani group was already in place certainly by the early fourth millennium and Urkesh was settled by 2400 (Steinkeller 1998:96, Salvini 1998), and Urartian could not be a part of the Daghestani group, and in fact it seems closest to the Lezgian group within proto-Daghestani. The Lezgian group was already well-formed by the time Urartians intruded, and Urartian became a separate Lezgian language along with the already established nine other languages in the Proto-Lezgian group. It seems unlikely that these Urartians came south into the sub-Caucasus forming this culture stretching from Yerevan to Van and further. Rather, it seems to be the opposite of that: Lezgian was part of a larger group (coming from central Asia?) certainly by the fifth millennium into the Caucasus and the sub-Caucasus, a time when the first hints of a permanent culture were forming there. The Urartians established a colony in the sub-Caucasus and the rest of that proto-Daghestani group passed under the Caspian Sea on its way into the Caucasus, where they remained in the area now called Daghestan.

Because it seems clear that there is a relationship between Hurrian, Urartian and languages of Daghestan, we can accept the views of many that the Hurrians and Urartians were affiliated with the Early-Trans-Caucasian culture which was in place as early as 5000 BC. Obviously, the ETC culture was not original in the Caucasus and had to come from somewhere. Considering the west-

ward direction the people at Urkesh were going, a Central Asia origin is quite reasonable.

Following Buccellati's discoveries at Urkesh (2007), which showed, as always suspected, that it was a city related to the Hurrian culture as known in central Anatolia, we can make further hypotheses. Buccellati suggests that great Urkesh was destroyed sometime around 2300, though the site was inhabited under Akkadian suzerainty until 1300. But somehow it revived itself a few hundred years after its near total destruction in 2300 and then rolled dramatically into central Anatolia at the very end of the third millennium or the beginning of the second millennium. These are the Hurrians whom we know from a cuneiform literature who in the late third millennium extended themselves well into Hittite territory and further developed their writing under the influence of the Hittite and Akkadian civilizations that surrounded these westward invading Hurrians. That the Hurrians came from the East has been suggested at least since Burney and Lang (1971). It is hard to imagine that a people in Syria (the 'Hurrians' of Urkesh), having a large and prosperous culture, could have been destroyed and then revived themselves a few centuries later and stormed successfully into central Anatolia. It is likely that the people of Urkesh and the later known Hurrians, were two separate but related peoples, but of similar (Central Asian?) origin. Indeed, the title of the kings at Urkesh was *enda* (see Ivanov 2002 and Wegner 2007:232-33), a term not used among the Hurrians of central

Anatolia, who, only a few centuries later, used the more common word *ewri*.

There is cause to think that there were at least three Hurro-Urartian invasions into eastern Anatolia and Daghestan in the third millennium or earlier. One was the invasion by the Hurrian-like people of Urkesh, perhaps as early as the late fifth millennium. They were routed in the mid third millennium and moved north into the Caucasus, becoming one of the North-East Caucasian peoples, bearing a language, quite similar to Anatolian-Hurrian and at least a part of the Daghestani group (but I think more precisely the Lezgian group). The actual Hurrians who penetrated central Anatolia seem not to have reached the Caucasus, but were absorbed in central Anatolia, not to be heard of again and, because of their south central location, had only a doubtful effect on the Armenians. That Urkesh is secondarily related to the Hurrian people of central Anatolia is sure, and that can imply that the Urkesh people are also related to Daghestani Early Trans Caucasian culture certainly appears likely. Considering that the people who populated Urkesh came as early as the fifth millennium, as suggested by Buccellati, there are enough millennia open for a later non-Urkesh Hurrian population to come in to Central Anatolia, and then the later arrival of the Urartians, who seem clearly to be a form of our existing Lezgian group, and whose vocabulary appears in Armenian as reconstructed loan words.

ენათმეცნიერება

ურარტული სუბსტრატი სომხურში

ჯ. გრეპინი

კლევენდის უნივერსიტეტი, კლევენდი, ოჰაიო, აშშ

(წარმოდგენილია აკადემიკოს თ. გამყრელიძის მიერ)

სტატიაში მოცემულია სომხურის იმ ლექსიკურ ერთეულთა ანალიზი, რომლებიც შესულია სომხურში ურარტული ენიდან ჩვენ წელთაღრიცხვამდე პირველი ათასწლეულის პირველ ნახევარში.

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