

More Material on the Urartian Substratum in Armenian*

John A. C. Greppin
Cleveland State University

Accepting the views of Diakonoff and Starostin that Hurrian and Urartian are Daghestani languages, and further, using largely the Lezgian material collected by Starostin in his *North Caucasian Etymological Dictionary*, I show numerous Daghestani proto-forms that are quite similar in shape to the vocabulary of the oldest period of Armenian writing. As I have done for the letter *b* and *s* (forthcoming), I show that these Daghestani words are the equivalent of Urartian words (now lost) that once came into Armenian by loan from Urartian.

In 1940, Grigor Ghapantsyan did a groundbreaking work on the history of the relation of Urartu and ancient Armenia; he was greatly influenced by the early publications on Hittitology and the considerable advancements in Assyriology which became available between the two world wars. He also made, I believe, the first effort to find lexical parallels between Armenian and Urartian (1940:42-43).¹ Many of his proposed etymologies are now hard to understand, but certain of them remain solid and have been repeated by Igor Diakonoff, first in 1985, and then sporadically. In 1986 Diakonoff and Starostin made a major leap, linking Hurrian and Urartian² to the North-East Caucasian languages, and then by loan to Armenian. Hurrian, of course gave no vocabulary directly to Armenian. Rather, since Hurrian and Urartian

*This paper is a revised later version of an article that appeared in the Yerevan journal *Aramazd* 1, 2006:196-201.

¹Ghapantsyan also used evidence from proper names, but this is less interesting.

²Though it is clear that Hurrian and Urartian are two distinct languages from two different time periods, it is also clear that they are very similar, often sharing words of similar shape: Hurr. *tarmani*, Ur. *tarmanla* 'source' = Arm *tarma-jur* 'a spring.' From the Urartian text it is only likely the *tarmana/i* means 'source'; the Hurrian parallel, as noted by Salvini 1970, is more precise.

vocabulary can be very similar, the Hurrian loans to Armenian actually arrived in Armenian from the Urartian lexicon. When the Hurrians arrived in the southern Caspian area in perhaps the early third millennium, they did not turn north, as did the Urartians later, but rather continued west, leaving copious writing and eventually disappearing into the wilderness of eastern Anatolia. The Urartians, perhaps as early as the late second millennium but following the Hurrians, had established solid fortresses in such sites as Van, and Yerevan (Ur. Erebuni), whence they turned north along the west Caspian littoral.

Among those valid Urartian (and secondary Hurrian) parallels with Armenian which were proposed by Ghapantsyan are: Arm. *cov* ‘sea,’ Ur. *šue*³ (emphatic s-) ‘sea, lake’: [m]Ar-giš-ti-i-še a-l[i] / ^{URU}NA₄.ANŠU-ni-a a-su-ni-n[i] / [K]URQu-ri-i-a-ka-a-gi-e / KI^{MES} qu-ul-di-i-ni ma-a-nu / ú-i gi-e-i ab-si-e-[i] / [G]A10N G^{IS}.SAMŠE G^{IS}.GEŠTIN ša-a-r[i] / [i]š-ti-ni ma-u-nu ú-i P[A]₅ / [i]š-ti-ni- a-ga-a-ú-r[i] / [šú]-u-ki ^dḪal-di-še iz-du-n[i] / a-ru-me ^dḪal-di-še za-du-ú b[i] / [š]u-e- a-su-a-ḫi-i-na-[a].”Argišti said: There was just nothing, neither sown fields, nor vineyards, nor fruit orchards, there was nothing here, not even a canal. But the god Haldi gave an order to me, and through Haldi I made an artificial [?] lake.”

Arm. *san* ‘kettle,’ Ur. *šani*⁴ ‘id,’ and Arm. *pelem* ‘dig,’ Ur. *pilē*⁵ ‘canal.’ For a critical summary of those offerings, with bibliography, consult Greppin 1991 and 2007, and Zimanski 1998. One should also note that all these Urartian/Armenian parallels are of concrete nouns that are easily defined, and none are abstractions like ‘love’ or ‘hope,’ or ‘inspiration.’ These finite nouns are the type most commonly found in loan transactions. Note that the semantic tightness of the loans is almost absolute.

Since we have been shown by Diakonoff and Starostin that Urartian can be linked diachronically to the languages of

³This word is known from the inscriptions of Argišti II 406:35-45. N. V. Harutyunyan 2001:312. The word appears more than a dozen times.

⁴This word appears three times in the Kelyashinski bilingual as Sumerian [DUG]UTÚL = Assyrian *dīqāru* ‘pot’: *Išhpunin & Menua* 30 UR₁₀. N. V. Arutunyan 2001:26-27.

⁵This word appears multiple times, and is paralleled by Sumerian PA₅ = Assyrian *palgu* ‘canal’ (N. V. Harutyunyan 2001:458. It can be cited in the Inscription of Rusa II: p. 344, 421:14-15. pi-li ^{1D}Il-da-ru-ni-a-ni / a-gu-ú-bi Ú-me-šī-ni ti-ni. “The canal (flows) from the River Hrazdan; Umeshini is (its) name.

the North-East Caucasus, and since the publication of Starostin and Nikolayev's most valuable etymological dictionary of the North Caucasian Languages (1994.)⁶ further steps have been made to produce Urartian vocabulary by reconstruction. In 1996 I wrote a paper that reconstructed, from Starostin and Nikolayev's etymological handbook, Urartian vocabulary that could be related to Classical Armenian vocabulary. In that study I suggested six correspondences between Urartian and Armenian, which involved initial *b-*. They included PNEC **bekwe* 'front of the face,'⁷ Arm. *bag* 'snout'; PNEC **bertkV-* 'piece of cloth,' Arm. *burd* 'wool cloth.' The various dialect cognates pointed most closely to North-East Caucasian correspondences, and ultimately to the Lezgian group. Though in some cases, the Urartian-Armenian glosses are supported by PNWC: Arm. *bacin* 'fish,' Adhyge *pca*, Ubykh *psa* 'id,' the relation of PNEC and PNWC is far too curious to accept as a system. The use of PNWC is simply too controversial to consider and NWC parallels are not used in this paper. For a more recent attempt see S. A. Starostin 1995.

Some have suggested that the Urartian loans are in fact not ancient, but come directly to Armenian from the Lezgian dialects during the Middle Ages. This is highly doubtful. Most of Urartian vocabulary has been recorded in Armenian literature during the fifth century; the exceptions are often botanical terminology which continued to be used in Armenian outside literary texts. It would be difficult to imagine how this Lezgian vocabulary came directly to Armenian since there is no reference to any NEC contact during Armenia's golden age, nor in the later medieval period (George Bournoutian, *per lit.*); Armenia had strong contacts with the Christian Udi people, but the Udi left no detritus in the Armenian lexicon. Similarly, the Georgians, who since the Middle Ages when they arrived in the current easternly

⁶This lexicon has recently been reprinted in three volumes by Caravan books, nm320@columbia.edu.

⁷We can do this type of reconstruction with Romance vocabulary as well. We frequently find cognate words in the Romance languages which only go back to something called 'Late Latin' or Medieval Latin, yet for which no Classical Latin word exists in literature. But since we do have dispersal throughout the Romance languages the word must be reconstructible in Classical Latin. A solid example is Fr. *bronze* (> Eng. *bronze*), It. *bronzo*, Rom. *bronz*, Sp. *bronce*, MLat. *bronzium*; that the term is Indo-European is clear from Per. *birinž* 'brass.' The standard word for 'bronze' used by the Romans was *aes*.

Caucasus, show little if any lexical influence from the NEC tribes (Thomas Gamkrelidze, *per lit.*).

But in fact, the clearly reconstructed Lezgian languages are such an important supplier of Proto-Urartian vocabulary that one would find it tempting to propose that the Lezgian languages are descendents of ancient Urartian. We can propose a migratory route for the proto-Hurro-Urartian people as follows. In the dim undateable past a people flowed from western Asia to eastern Anatolia. Their migration route was kept to the north by the northwardly advancement of the East Semitic people. The earlier Hurrians were able to continue westward into eastern Anatolia, where they were absorbed by the other people there. The last group to come through this narrowing passage was the Urartians, who traveled west under the Caspian, and turned north, as had other PNEC tribes in the centuries or millennia before that. We can conjecture that the Lezgian group, the southernmost of these people, are the living remnants of the Urartians. This is strongly hinted at by the lexical parallels. Archaeology might confirm this, but I know of no efforts in that direction by specialists.

In this paper I submit, in addition to this new theoretical geographical data, some further new etymologies, showing a relationship of PNEC (particularly Lezgian) lexical items that have a clear relationship with Urartian, based on the assumption that Proto-Urartian *q* = Arm. *k* (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994: 58). I propose eight examples: all but two terms are attestable in earliest Armenian literature. The others are obscure botanical terms, known from botanical handbooks.

1. Arm. **klklak** 'a prickly plant, the green briar, *smilax* L.' This term, with this meaning, is not found in Adjarian's *HAB*⁸ nor in the *Nor Bargirk*⁹; it is confirmed in Ghazarian 1981:50 #988. The final syllable is certainly the productive Armenian noun-forming suffix *-ak*, of Iranian

⁸Hratchya Ačařyan (1926-35). A monumental etymological dictionary in multiple volumes, it was greatly (and justly) praised by Meillet, but is otherwise little known to Western scholars.

⁹This greatest lexicon of Classical Armenian, published by the Mekhitarist Congregation in Venice, 1836-37 operates on the principles of the *Oxford English Dictionary*, with references to location in literature, accurately noting loan words from Greek, Syriac and Persian. Basic Indo-European etymologies are not given since Armenian's relation to Indo-European was not known until 1875 (and then imperfectly), and not polished up until 1897.

origin (Greppin 1975:31); see also Asatryan 1985.3:136-150 for use of *-ak* elsewhere. For this suffix in NEC see Tabasaran *qarqar-ak* (and #4 infra).

PNEC **qelegi* ‘a kind of bush’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:887-88), Ur **qelqel*. Avar (dial.) *qirqil*, Tsez **x:ōx:ə*, Bezhta *xōx*, Lak: *x:alax*: ‘thorn.’

2. Arm. **kaxard** ‘witch, wizard’ Bible *Ex* 7:11 = Gk *φάρμακος* ‘wizard.’

PNEC **qhwVrtV* ‘ghost, spirit, witch’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:890). Urartian **qaHart*, Avar *q:art*, Lak *x:urt:a-* ‘witch,’ Lezgian **qwar[t]* ‘house spirit,’ *qwarc* ‘id.’ Lak *x:urta:a-ma* ‘witch.’

3. **korak** ‘caper.’ Not listed in Adjarian 1926-35 nor in the *Nor Bargirk*; it is confirmed in Ghazarian 1981:52, and #546. The aspirated noun-forming suffix *-ak* ‘is productive in Armenian, an alternate of *-ag* (Greppin 1975:35, #36, cf. *papak*, *papag* ‘desire’).

PNEC **qor’a* ‘pea, bean’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:896); Ur **qora*, Dargwa **qara* ‘id,’ Chechen *que, qoe*, Ingush *qie*, ‘the seed part of any edible bean or seed’ (here following Johanna Nichols’s *Ingush – English Dictionary*, 2004), Dargwa *qara* ‘pea, bean,’ Lezgian *xara*, Lak. *quŕu* ‘id.’

4. Arm. **kokord** ‘throat.’ Bible *Job* 6:30. = Gk. *λάρυγξ* ‘id.’ The suffix *-d* is found in Arm. *span-anel* ‘to murder,’ *spand* ‘murder.’ This Armenian word for throat is often taken, though frivolously, as a reduplicated *-o-* grade of Arm. *ker* ‘food.’

PNEC **qaqari* ‘throat’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:909) Ur **qarqar*, Lak. *qaqari*, Proto-Lezgian **qarq*, **qarqar*, Lezgian *gargar*, Agul *qurq*, Rutul *qarqar-ak* ‘throat.’ Jaan Puhvel (per lit.) points out that body-part reduplication is common elsewhere: Hittite *pappassala-* ‘esophagus,’ *halhalzana* ‘shoulder.’

5. Arm. ***kot, kotor** ‘bit, morsel.’ Note Arm. *kot-ak* ‘little.’ The Armenian root **kot* does not exist independently, though Arm. *kotor* is abundant in the scriptures (Bible *Mat* 14.20 = Gk. *κλάσμα* ‘fragment, crumb’). The Armenian noun-forming suffix *-or* is found in Arm. *togor* ‘absorption,’ *togil* ‘to imbibe, be saturated’ (Greppin 1975:116, #242).

PNEC **qatwVə* ‘splinter, chip’ (Starostin and Nikolayev

1994:915), Ur **got*, Lezgian *got* ‘chopped piece, remnant,’ Agul *qat*, Rutul *qat*, Kryz *qat* ‘id.’

6. Arm. *kund* ‘bald, hairless’ (Bible *Lev* 13:40 = Gk. *φαλάκρα* ‘baldness’). Armenian final *-d* is explained in #4 above.

PNEC **q(w)am’ə* ‘hair’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:931). **qum-*, Avar-Andi, Ur **q:amha* ‘hairdo,’ Andi *q:āw* ‘hairdo,’ Lak *q:unčū* ‘forelock,’ Rutul *qamčäl* ‘bald,’ Opposites are not uncommon developments. Note Lat. *dare* ‘to give,’ Hitt. *dā-* ‘take.’

7. Arm. *kaši* ‘leather’ (Bible *Lev* 8:17 = Gk *βύρσα* ‘hide, pelt’).

PNEC **qwečV* ‘leather sack’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:934). Ur **qača-*, Tsez (Dido) *qočV-*, Lak *qača* ‘id,’ Lezgian **qwäč(Vj)* ‘id,’ Khinalug *qalčeg* ‘id.’ The **č* here represents a lax, hushing, affricate.

8. Arm. *kem* ‘grass rope’ (Bible *vacat*; Magistros *Letters* 1910:231 = *karkotun kemnovk’n kaškandeał* ‘bound with mended grass rope’).

PNEC *qwəmV* 1 ‘fruit stone’; 2. ‘hemp.’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:937), Ur **qəm*, Dargwa *q:ama* ‘hemp,’ Akushi *q:ama* ‘hemp,’ Bezhta *qämä* ‘straw.’

I have a few unexplained examples of **q* >Arm *x*. They are as follows:

- A1. Arm. *xac(-anel)* ‘(to) bite’ (Bible *Micah* 3.5 = Gk. *δάκνω* ‘bite’). Arm. *xac* exists only in the phrase *ew xac* “to eat greedily.” Elsewhere it is a denominative verb.

PNEC **qaci* ‘bite’ (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:907), Ur **qaci* (*c* = lax, glottalized hissing affricate). Tsez *qece*. Lak *qac*, Dargwa *qac*, Lezgian *qac* ‘bite.’

- A2. Arm *xoxom* ‘ravine, valley’ (Bible *vacat*, Chrysostom’s commentaries on the Pauline Epistles I:874, Venice 1862: *ew aynu hetew yanhnarin ew yanbaw xoxomsn ankanic’i bann* “and from then on the word would fall into an impossible and infinite abyss”). The final noun forming **-m*, is found in the productive Indo-European noun-forming suffix *m/n*.

PNEC **qəq* ‘ravine, canyon, (Starostin and Nikolayev 1994:914), Tsezi *qoqo*, Lak *qaqa*, Dargwa *qaqa* ‘id.’

Because of the large accumulation of Urartian – Armenian correspondences, both from Urartian and reconstructed Urartian, we cannot dismiss these parallels as merely coincidental and random. And because of the North-Caucasian etymological dictionary of Starostin and Nikolayev, we can now begin to reconstruct Proto-Urartian, which can be used to reveal otherwise unknown Urartian - Armenian loan parallels. Yet North-East Caucasian historical phonology is in its infancy, similar to Indo-European historical phonology in the early nineteenth century as practiced by Bopp. The incredibly complex consonant system of the living North-East Caucasian languages is partly the product of prehistoric clusters merging into unit phonemes, and their protoforms are surely reducible to something close to what we have in Urartian, for which Starostin and Nikolayev give sixty-two consonants.¹⁰ We should note, though, that following Wilhelm 2004 and Hazenbos 2005, there are preliminary signs that the system is workable. Significantly, Lezgian contains only four vowels (*a, e, i, u*, both long and short) but no /o/. According to Wilhelm (2004: 122) and Hazenbos (2005: 138), Urartian is the same, an appealing typological parallel, but perhaps because Akkadian had no symbol for /o/ for Urartian to use.

I think the vowel system is more of a problem. Starostin lists essentially five vowels, but their true nature is disguised by ablauting systems, and positional variants. But Starostin and Nikolayev have given us a beginning system upon which we can build.

References

Adjarian, H. (Ačařyan Hr.)

1926-35 *Hayeren Armatakan Bařaran*. Yerevan: Yerevan University Press.
Reprint 1971-79. Yerevan: Yerevan University Press.

Asatryan, G. S., G. A. Muradyan

1985 Grabari –*ak* anvanakan virřacanc‘ə. (“The Suffix –*ak* in Classical Armenian”) *Patma-banasirakan Handes* 3:136-150.

¹⁰The number of phonemes in Hurrian and Urartian is unclear. In the earliest grammars the number was somewhat more than thirty; later scholars (Diaknoff 1958) suggested considerably more and it is impossible, now, to give an accurate number. The true number will be hard to reach since Hurrian and Urartian use the Akkadian symbols which might have represented multiple Hurrian or Urartian phonemes.

- Diakonoff, I. M.
 1958 Materiali k fonetiki urartskogoazyka. In *Voprosy gramatiki i istorii vostočnyx jazykov*. Pp. 27-35. Moscow: Press of the Soviet Academy of Sciences.
 1985 Hurro-Urartian borrowings in Old Armenian. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 105:597-603.
- Diakonoff, I. M., and Sergei A. Starostin
 1986 *Hurro-Urartian as an Eastern Caucasian Language*. Munich: R. Kitzinger.
- Ghapantsyan, Grigor
 1940 *Urart'ui patmut'yunə.* ("The History of Urartu") *Gitakan ašxatut'yunner*. Vol. 14. Yerevan: Press of the State University.
- Ghazarian, R. A.
 1981 *Busanunneri hayeren-latineren-ruseren-angleren-franserengermaneren ba aran*, ("A Dictionary of Plant Names in Armenian-Latin-Russian, English-French-German"). Yerevan: Yerevan University Press.
- Greppin, John A. C.
 1975 *Classical Armenian Nominal Suffixes*. Vienna: Mechitharisten-Buchdruckerei.
 1991 Some effects of the Hurro-Urartian people and their languages upon the earliest Armenian. *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 111.4:720-730.
 1996 New data on the Hurro-Urartian substratum in Armenian. *Historisch Sprachforschung* 109: 40-44.
 2007 Hurrian and Urartian loan words in Armenian. *Ethnic and Religious Communities in the Caucasus*. Leiden: Brill forthcoming.
- Harutyunyan, Nikolaj V. (Arutyunyan, N. V)
 2001 *Korpus urartskix koinoobraznyx nadpisej*. Yerevan: Yerevan University Press.
- Hazenbos, Jos.
 2005 Hurritisch und Urartisch. In Michael P. Streck (ed.) *Sprachen des alten Orients*, 135-158. Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft.
- Nichols, Johanna
 2004 *Ingush-English and English-Ingush Dictionary*. London: Routledge-Curzon.
- Salvini, Marijo
 1970 Einige neue urartäische-hurritische Wortgleichungen. *Orientalia* 39/3:171-174.

Starostin, Sergei. A.

1995 Neskol'ko novyx xurritskix etimologij. *Vestnik drevnij istorii*. 2:133-136.

Starostin, Sergei A. and Sergei L. Nikolayev

1994 *A North Caucasian Etymological Dictionary*. Moscow: Asterisk Publishers. Reprinted in three volumes, 2007, by Caravan Books. (nm320@columbia.edu).

Wilhelm, Gernot

2004 Urartian. In Roger D. Woodward (ed.) *The World's Ancient Languages*, 119-137. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press.

Zimanski, Paul E.

1998 *Ancient Ararat: A Handbook of Urartian Studies*. Delmar, New York: Caravan Books.