



**Jahukyan G. B.**  
*Academician of NAS RA*  
(1920- 2005)

## ON POSSIBLE ARMENIAN NATURE OF INTRODUCTORY FORMULAS IN URARTIAN INSCRIPTIONS\*

The following types of stereotyped formulas are given usually at the beginning of Urartian inscriptions and their separate parts:

1. <sup>D</sup>Haldini kuruni <sup>D</sup>Haldini <sup>Glš</sup>šurii(i) kuruni(e)...
2. <sup>D</sup>Haldinini ušmašini/alsuišini/baušini (someone) alie...
3. <sup>D</sup>Haldini uštabi masinie <sup>Glš</sup>šure...

These formulas are usually translated by Urartologists as follows:

1. God Haldi is mighty; God Haldi's weapon (sword) is mightier
2. By the power/the sublimity/the order of God Haldi (someone) says
3. God Haldi took the field with his weapon (sword)<sup>1</sup>

As a result of long-term study of Urartian inscriptions we have come to the conclusion that the vocabulary and the structure of the mentioned formulas have Armenian nature and they may in fact be regarded as the first written texts in the Armenian language.

The cuneiform expression of Armenian words and word forms certainly had its peculiarities. Particularly, frequent expression of the weakened final vowels by “*i*” or “*e*”, and the diphthong “*ia*” - by “*i*”, etc. is presumable<sup>2</sup>.

The words *kuruni* and “*šuri*” of the first formula are the initial forms of later *կըռնւն* [gen. - *կըռն*, pl. nom. - *կըռնւնք*] and *ունւր* [gen. *ւրն*] probably because of a situation when the stress was on penultimate syllable and there already was some weakening of

---

\* Զաւիուկյան Գ., Ուրարտական արձանագրությունների ներածական բանաձևերի հնարավոր հայկական բնույթի մասին, Պատմա-բանասիրական հանդես, 2000, 1, էջ 124-129:

<sup>1</sup> Cf. Меликишвили Г. А., Урартские клинообразные надписи, Москва, 1969, с. 94-95.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Хачикян М. Л., Хурритский и урартский языки, Ереван, 1985, с. 30.

the unstressed vowels of the last syllable. This circumstance has repeatedly been mentioned in the comparative studies of the Armenian language<sup>3</sup>. Thus, the reconstructed form of the word *hnlñ* should have been *\*hnl'nnlñ* [cf. pl. nom. *hnnlñp*, where *nl* has been preserved due to the stress], and that of the word *unlp* - *unl'pn* [cf. Georgian *γwino* “*qhñh*” (wine) which has quite probably been borrowed from Armenian before the drop of the nominative ending *-n* (-o)]. These two forms in the above-mentioned formula are expressed with the writings *kuruni* and “*šur*”.

Taking into consideration that the Armenian preposition *h* would not be written separately in cuneiform texts, the first formula mentioned above would look (D and GIŠ determinatives are omitted) in Old Armenian as follows:

*hwlqhñ (hwl hwlqhñ) hnlñ hwlqhñ (hwl hwlqhñ) unlp h hnlñ:*

It should be noted that both *hnlñ* and *unlp* are native Armenian words with quite reliable Indo-European (further IE) parallels<sup>4</sup>. Different usages of those two words in the Urartian cuneiform inscriptions coincide with different semantic manifestations of the Armenian words quite well.

The interchangeable word forms *ušmašini*, *alsuišini* and *baušini* of the second formula version are interpreted as the instrumental case forms of the words *ušmaše* - “might”, *alsu(i)še* - “greatness” and *baušē* - “word, order” in the Urartological works. Meanwhile, in fact, they can be regarded as the ablative forms of the Old Armenian *-ñ(-n)* declension nouns, especially if we assume that the preposition *h* (*i*) at that time had not yet become an inseparable part of the ablative case. Those words are rarely used without *-n* and we can say that there are forms similar to the ablative case of words like *wñđñ* - (*j*)*wñđñt* for which preforms like *\*(j)wñđñt* can be reconstructed (without a preposition in that period). Thus, the forms “*ušmašini*”, “*alsu(i)šini*” and “*baušini*” can be the canonical cuneiform reflections of ablative preforms. If we take into account that a lot of bases with *-ñ* in Old Armenian originate from bases not with *-ñ*, and that bases not ending with *-ñ* are also declined with the *ñ*-declension, it can be inferred that the process of formation of future bases with *-ñ* is expressed in the discussed formulas.

As far as it concerns the mentioned bases, it is possible to assert their IE origin, i.e. the probability of their being native Armenian.

The apparent common origin of Urartian *baušē* and Arm. words *բայ*, *բան*, *բան* has been denoted in the works devoted to Urartian-IE parallels (as well as in our works).

<sup>3</sup> See Meillet A., *Esquisse d'une grammaire compare de l'arménien classique*, Vienne, 1936, p. 19. According to our work «Հին հայերենի հոլովման սխտեմը և նրա ծագումը» (Երևան, 1959) (“The Declension System of Old Armenian and Its Origin”, Yerevan, 1959) this phenomenon had a special morphological conditionality: mainly the bases were stressed, and the endings were unstressed.

<sup>4</sup> Pokorny J., *Indogermanisches etymologisches Wörterbuch*. I. Bern und München, 1959, S. 397-398, 542; Զահուկյան Գ., Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն, Երևան, 1987, էջ 126, 131:

The Armenian words originate from the IE root *\*bha-* “speak” and for the forms *baušel/baušini* the preform *բաւսն բաւն` խոսք, հրաւան* (word, order) can also be suggested. After making this reconstruction we noticed that the root *զբաւս, զբոս* coincides with it and the forms *զբաւսնու, զբաւսանի* speak in favor of the initial *-ն (-n)* base. The initial meaning of this root should be considered “word, conversation”, from which originated the meaning “talk, converse, pass time speaking”, which can be found in some early usages of the word *զբաւսանք*. Here is what is said in Pilon’s work «Լիներութիւն խնդրոց և լուծմանց» (Questions and solutions on Genesis): «Ձերկայն խաւսս և զճառսն սովորեցանք կոչել զբաւսանս»<sup>5</sup>: It is very probable that the meanings “pastime doing something”, “ponder over something”, “be engaged in something”, “to have a good time” originated as a result of expansion of this meaning.

*Ջբաւս* apparently consists of the preposition-prefix *զ (z)* And the word *բաւս* probably originated from the root *\*bha-* (speak) compounded with an IE augment *\*-u* plus suffix *\*-ek/k*. The alteration *\*uk>us* in *\*bha-uk* is the peculiarity of the Armenian language and is found also in the verb *նւսանիլ* (from the IE. root *\*euk/uk*). If *բաւս* means “word, conversation”, *զբաւս* with the intensifying preposition-prefix *զ (z)* should have meant “a lot of conversation, a lot of words”, which completely corresponds to the old interpretations of the meaning of *զբաւս*.

In regard to the Armenian nature, the word *ušmaše (-šini)* “might, strength, power” is very typical. It is known that in its written period the Armenian language expressed those ideas with borrowed Iranian bases *նյժ, զաւրութիւն, հզաւրութիւն*. It is natural to assume that in the Urartian period the Armenian language probably had adequate native Armenian words. One of them could be the word originating from the IE root *\*aug-/ug-* “grow, raise, cultivate” which lies at the basis of the borrowed word *նյժ* and which is expressed in the Urartian inscriptions in the form of *ušmaše (-šini)*. To IE preforms *\*ug-mo-* or *\*ug-mn-* the Armenian language had to have a form like *\*usmas/-in* formed on the basis of *\*uc-mo->\*us-mo-* or *\*uc-man->\*us-man-*, which as we can see is rather closely expressed in Urartian inscriptions. Cf. Old Ind. *ojman* “strength”, Lat. *augmen(tum)*, Lith. *augumas* “growth, growing”<sup>6</sup>.

It is absolutely possible that the word *alsu(i)še (-šini)* is native Armenian as well. It could have originated from the IE root *\*al-* “grow, breed, feed” and the affix *\*sko-*, or perhaps, from the form *\*altio- > Arm., alco-* (with Urart. writing *alsu-*) that came up as a result of palatalization of that root’ augmentive *-t-*, cf. Lat. *altus* “high”. Thus it is more likely that the word *alsu(i)še (-šini)* had the meaning of “height” than “greatness”.

<sup>5</sup> Փիլոնի Եբրայեցոց, Մաացորդք ի Հայս, Ի. Բ. Վենետիկ, 1826:

<sup>6</sup> Iran. *ōž>Arm. նյժ* word originates from the above-mentioned form devoid of affixes.

In the third formula the word *šuri* (*unlp*) can be found in the form *šure*, which Urartologists interpret as a dative case form. However, in the given text line that interpretation does not justify itself. It would be more correct to regard -e- as a similar denotation of the weakened vowel, as -i-. *Uštabi* - one of the words of the formula, probably denoted the initial Armenian past perfect form with *unl*. In our Urartological works *ušta* has been compared with IE root *\*sta-* “stand, erect, put”. But in Armenian that root was preserved only in the affixed form and with a specific semantic transition *\*stə-na-mi* > *unuuuuu* and this form manifests itself in the past perfect only with g-base (with the element -g-) *unugui*, as all the verbs in *unl* conjugation. If *uštabi* presents a reflection of any verb of an Armenian origin, it could be the denotation of the past perfect form (*nuunkui*) of the verb *nuunuu*, meaning “jump, jump up, jump out, leave”. In a separate context this word has particularly the following meaning: “come out, go out, quickly leave, leave” and in the New Haykazyan Dictionary it is also explained as “go far away”<sup>7</sup>.

G. Melikishvili regards the third formula's *masinie* as a form of the pronoun *masi* (“his/her, his/her own”) with *ni(e)* -. But other Urartologists give totally different interpretations<sup>8</sup>.

J. Friedrich sees no basis to regard *masini(e)* as a pronoun and considers the likeness of *masi* and *masini* a coincidence. M. Tsereteli regards it as a noun and translates it as “might”. I. I. Meshchaninov thinks that the meaning of the word continues to remain obscure, especially because it is also found in the form *masinili* in an untranslatable text.

We are inclined to translate *masini* as “mighty” and connect it with the IE form *\*magh-ti-* “might” (from the stem *\*magh-* “can, be able, be capable, help”) through Armenian. For the IE *\*magh-ti-no->mac<sup>o</sup>ino-* (in Urart. form *masini*) transition cf. *\*pok<sup>u</sup>-ti->huq*, though a preform of the type of *\*magh-tio-* was also possible. The Urartian form *masini* etymologically is totally equivalent to the Russian form *мощный*. The Armenian word *մարթաւք* (*\*magh-thro- + ułp*) - “հնարք” (“medium”) is considered to be formed of the same root with the affix *\*-thro-*.

On the basis of the analysis of the introductory formulas of the inscriptions called *Urartian*, we can arrive at the following essential conclusions:

1. The Armenian nature of those formulas is rather convincingly proved: their vocabulary is mainly Armenian; the grammatical peculiarities can be explained by the grammatical characteristics of the pre-grabar period.

<sup>7</sup> cf. «Ոսրեար ի բաց ի գրկացն հայրենեաց», «Ի կոռցն ի բաց ոսրուցեալք՝ դարձան և պաշտէին զԱսորուած», «Ո՞ր կարէ լսել դմա... կամեցան ի բաց ոսրնուլ», «Յորժամ ի րեսիլ այսց իրաց ասորուածայնոց ածցէ ոք զքեզ, ի բաց ոսրնուս» (Նոր Բառգիրք Հայկազեան Լեզուի, Կ. Բ, Վենետիկ, 1837, էջ 523):

<sup>8</sup> Мещанинов И.И., Аннотированный словарь урартского (биайнского) языка, Ленинград, 1978, с. 204.

2. These formulas give an opportunity to make lexical reconstructions<sup>9</sup> of the Armenian of the period preceding the *grabar* (Classical Armenian) in order to ascertain the proper Armenian equivalents of the future borrowings (especially of Iranian origin) on the basis of comparison of the IE preforms and forms in the inscriptions called *Urartian*.

3. The vulnerable point of our interpretation is that the linguistic proper relation of those formulas and the texts called “Urartian” remains open. It is known that the words in the formulas mentioned by us are found also in other inscriptions, thus the verification of relevant contexts (text lines) and comprehensive comparison of their language and the language of the analyzed word forms are strictly necessary. It is true that the meanings of some words denoted by us are in some cases better interpreted (cf. *kuruni*), but their further detailed study still remains an important problem for Urartologists and Armenologists.

4. With combined efforts of Urartologists a certain standard has been marked out of the versions of the cuneiform characters’ reading and it has been used for the available texts. Further examination of those versions, comparison and more precise definition of the reconstructed standard, as well as the skilled analysis of the extralinguistic trend of the cuneiform texts connected with it, along with great contribution, can actually have a revolutionary significance.

***Translated from Armenian by  
S.E. Chraghyan***

---

<sup>9</sup> So far we refrain from some daring restorations and comparisons. For example, it can be assumed that the theonym *Haldi* is a similar formation with *h̥h-* base of the word *h̥h̥p-*, as the theonym *Aršibedini* (*Aršibi*>the further *uṣṣuṣi* (eagle) and *di*, as it is interpreted in our article «Հայկական շերտը ուրարտական դիցարանում» “The Armenian Layer of Urartu pantheon”). In this case the component *h̥al-* could be identified with Arm. *haw* (“*uṣṣuṣi*” “time”) which originally was a consonant base word. And it could be the native Armenian denotation of that idea [cf. Eng. time (*Ժամանակ*) and times (*սկզբնական*)] before borrowing the Iranian word *Ժամանակ* (time). In other words, according to this interpretation the proper Armenian form *Հաղի* of *Haldi-* had to mean “the God of time”.