

BIAINIAN (URARTIAN)-ARMENIAN (The issue of linguistic identity)

Ayvazyan S. R.
Researcher in Linguistics

General Information. The first inscriptions of the Ararat (Urartu) Kingdom were written in Assyrian; later, following Išpuine I, mostly only in Biainian (Urtian). Unfortunately, there are very few bilingual inscriptions. In fact, to date, only two of them¹, which are in a damaged condition and one other, so-called quasi-bilingual inscription, partly in Assyrian and partly in Biainian, are known to us. Texts written in Biainian have reached us through the Biainian (Vannic) cuneiform inscriptions (hereafter: Biainian inscriptions)², which date to the second half of the 9th-7th centuries BC.

There are around 800 Biainian inscriptions known to us, of which a significant part, written on various objects, are mostly recurring one line texts with few words. The repetitions are also considerable in number. For that reason the attested lexicon in the Biainian inscriptions is limited to 650 word (550 word roots). Other than words of general usage, a considerable part of the Biainian vocabulary contains chiefly military, constructional and sacral-ritual words. At present, the meanings of only 230-250 are more or less clear to us. The meanings of nearly 100 words have been determined through the bilingual inscriptions and/or logograms present in the parallel texts. The meanings of the other words are presumed from the context and are known only by their broad, general meanings.

History of Research. The Father of Armenian historiography Movses Khorenatsi (the 5th century) was the first to mention the cuneiform inscriptions of the Van Kingdom³. In 1827 F.Schulz, commissioned by the French archaeological mission to Van, made copies of almost forty inscriptions⁴, launching the scientific investigation of the Van inscriptions. In the early stages, the scholars expressed contradictory opinions about their language. Thus, for example, A.Mordtmann⁵ considered their language to be Armenian, while L. De Robert considered their language Semitic⁶. At the end of the 19th century the famous Assyriologists S.Guyard and A.Sayce ascertained that the Van

¹ These are Kelishin [KUKN 30/CTU A 3-11] and Topzawa [KUKH 387/CTU A 10-5] inscriptions with parallel Assyrian and Biainian texts. Also – duplicates of the Topzawa inscription recently discovered in Movana [CTU A 10-3] and Mergeh Karvan [CTU A 10-4].

² Hieroglyphs were also used in the Van kingdom (Ararat-Urartu). See Ա.Մովսիսյան, Վանի թագավորության (Բիայնիլի, Ուրարտու, Արարատ) մեհենագրությունը, Երևան, 1998.

³ Մովսէս Խորենացի, Պատմութիւն Հայոց, Երևան, 1991, էջ 54:

⁴ Schulz F., Mémoires sur le lac de Van et ses environs, Journal asiatique (Paris), IX, 1840, pp. 257-323.

⁵ Mordtmann A., Entzifferung und Erklärung der armenischen Keilinschriften von Van und der Umgegend, ZDMG. XXVI, 1872, S. 465-696; Mordtmann A. D., Über die Keilinschriften von Armenien, ZDMG, XXXI, 1877, S. 406-438.

⁶ L. de Robert, Étude philologique sur les inscriptions cuneiformes de l'Arménie, Paris, 1876.

inscriptions were written using Assyrian cuneiform script. The latter by that time was sufficiently comprehensible. It became clear, that the language of a number of those inscriptions was Assyrian, and another significant portion was written in an unknown language which was subsequently called “Vannic” and later “Biainian/Urartian”. Based on the combination method of decipherment, S.Guyard set values for separate units of the unknown language and made approximate translation of some phrases⁷. A.Sayce, continuing Guyard’s work, translated and published the Van inscriptions known at that time⁸. The Assyrian-Biainian bilingual inscriptions discovered subsequently made the checking and modification of these translations possible⁹. In 1900 J.Sandalgjan attempted to tackle the inscriptions utilizing the Armenian language as a base. He published the most comprehensive collection of Van inscriptions of the time - with French and Armenian translations¹⁰. But A. Sayce and H. Acharyan denied his approach¹¹, and the opinion that Biainian is a separate language with no connection to Armenian became established in historiography and philology. At the same time, the opinion that Biainian is cognate to Hurrian, forming a so-called Hurrian-Urartian language family, became widely accepted¹².

In addition to A.Mordtmann and J.Sandalgjan, during different periods, many other scholars have studied the linguistic similarities between Armenian and Biainian. Let us just mention G.Ghapantsyan, H.Acharyan, G.Jahukyan, N.Harouthiounyan, M.Israelyan, I.Diakonoff, R.Ishkhanyan, V.Sarkisyan, H.Karagyozyan, M.Khachikyan and others who, on different occasions have returned in their works to the Armenian-Urartian (Biainian) connections. While pointing to many similarities between these two languages they basically remained within the bounds of the above mentioned conviction which regards Biainian (Urartian) as a separate language. Interpreting the existing similarities as merely loanwords, they set the emphasis on the probable impact of Biainian (Urartian) on the Armenian language. G.Ghapantsyan held a different position on this question. He argued that Armenian is a hybrid language with a Biainian (Urartian) substratum. He

⁷ Guyard S., *Les inscriptions de Van*, IA, XV, 1880, pp. 540-543, and later in 1883-1884; Guyard S., *Melanges d'Assyriologie*, X, 1883.

⁸ Sayce A., *The cuneiform inscriptions of Van*, *The Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland*, XIV, 1882, pp. 377-732 and later, XX, 1888, pp. 1-48; XXV, 1893, pp. 1-39; XXVI, 1894, pp. 691-732; XXXIII, 1901, pp. 645-660; XXXVIII, 1906, pp. 611-653; XLIV, 1912, pp. 107-112; LXI, 1929, pp. 297-336; LXIV, 1932, pp. 593-595.

⁹ For more detail about this see Пиотровский Б., *Ванское царство*, 1959, с. 7-22 (English translation by Hogarth J., *The Ancient Civilisation of Urartu*, London, 1969); Ջահուկյան Գ., In Բ.Առաքելյան, Գ Ջահուկյան. Գ.Սարգսյան, *Ուրարտու-Հայաստան*, 1988, էջ 127-131. About discovering and decipherment of the Van inscriptions see also, Ղափանցյան Գ., *Ուրարտուի պատմություն*, Երևան, 1940, էջ 5-10 and so on.

¹⁰ Sandalgjan J., *Les inscriptions conéifères urartiques*, Venise, 1900.

¹¹ See Աճառյան Հ., Հայոց լեզվի պատմություն, I, Երևան, 1940, էջ 172-190.

¹² See Speiser E., *Studies in Hurrian grammar*, *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, LIX, 3, 1939, pp. 99-128; Friedrich J., *Kleine Beiträge zur churritischen Grammatik*, 1939, S. 56-62. Дьяконов И., *Сравнительно-грамматический обзор хурритского и урартского языков*, *Преднеазиатский сборник*, 1961; Хуррито-урартский и восточнокавказские языки, *Древний Восток*, 3, 1978; Diakonoff I., *Hurisch und Urartäisch*, Munich, 1971, and other works; Хачикян М., *Хурритский и урартский языки*, Ереван, 1985.

made this argument coming from the point of view of the existence of the so-called “Asianic” language family¹³. R.Ishkhanyan tried to separate the language spoken by the inhabitants of Van Kingdom from that of the Van inscriptions. He called the latter “Neo-Hurrian” considering it already a dead language by the time of the Van Kingdom¹⁴. V.Sarkisyan proceeds from the point of view that the ancestors of the Basques, migrating from the Armenian Highland and/or adjacent areas, took the local language material with them which, in many cases, the Basque language has preserved without distortions, especially in proper names. Pointing out that, particularly in its grammar, Armenian is a rapidly developing language, for the reconstruction of the Armenian of the pre-written period he proposes the usage of the internal reconstruction method, collated it with data of Basque and Biainian (Uartian) languages. He considers these to be cognates, making the Biainian(Uartian)-Armenian-Basque trilingual comparison¹⁵. Returning to the investigation of Armenian-Uartian connections, G.Jahukyan examined the introductory formulae of the Biainian (Uartian) inscriptions and expressed an opinion about the probability that the Armenian language was the base of Biainian (Uartian) (at least in introductory formulas)¹⁶.

Problems of the Comparison and Possible Solutions. Four main groups of difficulties are distinctly observed in comparative studies of the language of the Van cuneiform inscriptions and Armenian:

a) The Biainian script is incomplete. It as its Assyrian prototype distinguishes only a limited number of phonemes - 24, of which 4 are vowels (*a,i,e,u*), 18¹⁷ consonants and 2 semivowels. But for many signs, particularly in the case of consonants, the phonemic value they take is not obvious. That is why the accepted pronunciation of the Biainian words is strictly conditional. In fact, the availability of written texts is still insufficient for analysis of the phonemic systems of cuneiform languages. Therefore, parallel with the data of inscriptions, particular importance is attributed to the comparison of the given language with other cognate languages, either living, or with well known phonetic systems. The Hurrian language which, according to the accepted viewpoint is considered a Biainian (Uartian) cognate, is not useful in this case for various reasons. First, its connection to Biainian as a cognate language is not apparent, and second, the Hurrian phonemic system is equally not clearly elucidated, and besides, existing evidence shows that these two phonemic systems vary considerably. Under these circumstances the phonological comparison of Biainian and Classical Armenian - “grabar”

¹³ See Капанцян Г., К происхождению армянского языка. Историко-лингвистические работы, II, Ереван, 1975, с. 212-213.

¹⁴ See Իշխանյան Ռ., Հայ ժողովրդի ծագման ու հնագույն պատմության հարցեր, Երևան, 1994:

¹⁵ Սարգսյան Վ., Ուրարտական քաղաքակրթությունը և բասկերի նախահայրենիքի հարցը, Երևան, 1988:

¹⁶ Զահուկյան Գ., Ուրարտական արձանագրությունների ներածական բանաձևերի հնարավոր հայկական բնույթի մասին, ՊՐՀ, 2001, 1, էջ 124-129:

¹⁷ It is not clear how does Biainian distinguish the Assyrian *ś* voiceless fricative.

(hereafter: CArm.) parallel (common) words/roots and morphemes becomes crucial. The phonological examination of place names attested in different languages is no less important. The correspondence of the Biainian and CArm. phonemes received from the comparison of the Biainian words (common nouns, place names) and some morphemes which have the most reliable parallel forms in CArm. are represented in the Table below. As the Table demonstrates, the same Biainian signs often represent two or more CArm. phonemes. This phenomenon can be explained by the lack of specific signs in the cuneiform script for a considerable number of CArm. phonemes (36-37). Contrary to it each CArm. phoneme is rendered only by one or two (for semivowels - by three) Biainian signs. That is, reflection of the Armenian phonemes by Biainian signs is regular.¹⁸

The Armenian alphabet (phonemes) in parallel with the reflecting Biainian (Uartian) signs

CArm.		Biain. signs	CArm.		Biain. signs
Alphabet character	phonem		Alphabet character	phonem	
Ա-ա	a	a, e	Մ-մ	m	m
Բ-բ	b	b	ԅ-յ	y	i/y, g
Գ-գ	g	g, q	Ն-ն	n	n
Դ-դ	d	d, t	Ո-ո	o	u
Ե-ե	e	e	Չ-չ	č'	š, g
Զ-զ	z	z, s	Պ-պ	p	p, b
Է-է	ē	ei	Ջ-ջ	ǰ	z, g
Ը-ը	ə	a, e ?	Ռ-ռ	ř	r
Թ-թ	t'	t, d	Ս-ս	s	š
Ժ-ժ	ž	?	Վ-վ	v	b
Ի-ի	i	i	Տ-տ	t	t/d, t
Լ-լ	l	l	Ր-ր	r	r, l
Խ-խ	x	ħ	Ց-ց	c'	z, s
Ծ-ծ	c	š	Խ-ւ	w	u/w, b
Կ-կ	k	q, k	Փ-փ	p'	p
Հ-հ	h	ħ/Ø	Ք-ք	k'	k, g
Ձ-ձ	j	z, s	ՌԻ-ռի ^{a)}	u	u
Ղ-ղ	ł	l, r	-	*f ^{b)} (< *p)	b, p
Ճ-ճ	č	?	-	*θ ^{b)} (< *t)	d, t
Շ-շ	š	s	-	*v ^{b)} (< *u)	w/u

¹⁸ In more detail see Ayvazyan S., *Uartian-Armenian: Lexicon and Comparative-Historical Grammar* (hereafter: *UrAr*), 2011, pp. 23-32.

a) - digraph

b) - conventionally

b) The Biainian script as its Assyrian prototype is characterized by polymorphism and polyvalence, that is to say, each cuneiform sign may correspond to several syllabic values (for example, the sign *hi/e* also has the values of *tí/é* and *tí/é*, *gu - qú*, *ár - ub*, *ku - šù*, *tuš*, etc.) and vice-versa (*tú/tu*, *ar/ár*, *šu/šú/šù*, *he/ hé*, *te/te₉*, *u/ú*, etc.). Most of the cuneiform signs can be read as logograms (Sumerograms, Akkadograms) and/or determinatives as well. The Biainian inscriptions also have some rare intrinsic features which do not occur in the Akkadian script. For example, the sign TUR “small” also has the phonemic value *pu_x*, SIG₇ “green” - *q/kana_x*,^d IŠTAR “The Goddess Ishtar” (= Biain. “Goddess Sarde”) - *sar₅* which do not occur in any of the other languages.

c) Biainian grammar is not complete because the texts of the inscriptions that have reached us are similar in style and repetitive. This is tangible, in particular, when trying to clarify the verbal morphology.

d) The restoration of many grammatical forms of the primary state of the Armenian language (referring to the probable state during the creation of the Biainian cuneiform script) is impossible and/or unreliable. This is mostly due to the immense difference in time (1000-1300 years) between Biainian and the sources written in CArm. language that have reached us, the substantial changes in Armenian during that period - particularly in grammar - and the significant number of foreign elements introduced into the language. As a result, to-date, the origin of many Armenian grammatical forms and state(s) in the pre-written period remain obscure or debatable among Armenologists.

The Results of the Comparison. a) Lexicon: the summary of the identified (semantically) Biainian (Uartian) lexicon and the corresponding Armenian and Hurrian parallel word roots (not including those preserved in proper nouns and as well as doubtful words) in which the word roots verified through bilingual texts or corresponding logograms are mentioned separately, is presented in the table below..

Altogether the list containing approximately 122 Biainian - Armenian parallel word roots, represents 60% of the Biainian identified lexicon (202 word roots). Of 96 word roots present in the Biainian lexicon and verified via bilingual texts or logograms, 59 (61%) have Armenian parallels. From the indicated 122 parallels, 86 word roots - roughly 70 percent are native; 20 of them, approximately 16 percent are borrowings and 15 of the word roots (12 percent) are of unknown origin¹⁹.

¹⁹ For the Biainian and Armenian lexicon comparison, in more detail, see Ayvazyan S., UrAr, pp. 33-104; Այվազյան Ս., Ուրարտերեն, Երևան, 2013, էջ 77-116.

The number of identified Biainian (Uartian) word roots		Armenian parallel word roots				Hurrian parallel word roots	
		All	Native (IE)	Borrowed	Of unknown origin	All	Also have Armenian parallel
Total	202	122 (60%)	86 (42.5%)	20 (10%)	15 (7.5%)	44 (22%)	22 (11%)
Verified via bilingual texts or logograms	96	59 (61%)	42 (43%)	6-7 (7%)	9-10 (10%)	28 (29%)	14 (14.5%)

b) Word Formation: 1) The nominal derivational affixes attested in the Biainian inscriptions - except for one or two - have their obvious parallels in CArm. (they often appear in their primary forms and functions in Biainian texts). As: CArm. *-oyt'*, *-i* < **-eu-ti* - Biain. *-ibte*, *-ibti* / *-iwt(i-)* /, CArm. *-k(n)*, *-ka(n)*, *-kow(n)* < **-kō-n/ko-n* - Biain. *-ka(=n)/-ku=n*, CArm. *-(ow)ac* < **ag'* - Biain. *-(u)aše* / *-(u)ac* /, CArm. *-ord* < **ordh* - Biain. *-urde* / *ord* /, CArm. *-oc'* - Biain. *-use*, *-usi* / *-oc'(i-)* /, etc. They are mainly native affixes and have Indo-European origin. 2) A great number of native nominal affixes representing the ancient strata of Armenian are attested in the Biainian texts. 3) The verbal suffixes attested in Biainian also have their parallels in CArm., sometimes with distinct differences in usage from the Biainian. Here the main difference is the absence in Biainian of the CArm. *c'-al* (formed with *c'* affricate) verbal suffixes. Instead, forms with *c'* with their initial - derivational values are attested. 4) Some Biainian suffixes have their parallels in other languages as well, particularly, in Hurrian²⁰.

c) Nominal Morphology. As is clear from the above analysis, despite some differences which are basically conditioned by the presence in Biainian of the ergative system, the CArm. and Biainian systems of declension have considerable similarities²¹.

²⁰ About Biainian word formation in comparison with Armenian in more detail, see in Ayvazyan S., UrAr, pp. 105-130.

²¹ The most recent investigations demonstrate that, as a result of independent development, the split-ergative case is present in Hittite (A.Garrett. The origin of NP split ergativity, *Language*, 66, 1990, pp. 261-96; also Watkins C., 2006, pp. 560, 564, etc.) and certain other IE. languages (see Dixon R.. *Ergativity*, Cambridge, 1998 (first

This refers especially to the singular of the nominative and genitive. They practically duplicate each other. This is also partly true for the dative, but only if we agree that, prior to the genitive ending extending over it, the Armenian primary dative marker had been the genitive-dative/ablative *-j* of several words. The other distinction in the Biainian and CArm. systems of declension is the absence of a separate instrumental case in Biainian: the ablative and instrumental have joint representation. But, in reality, it cannot be ruled out that in Biainian two distinct cases - the ablative and the instrumental (for which we have the case markers *-n/Ø/* and *-n/* respectively) exist. As regards the ablative, CArm. in general duplicates the forms of the genitive-dative, except in words of *i-* and *ow-*declension which are formed by the marker *ē* (< *ey). As to the Biainian ablative marker *-n*, it, as G.Jahukyan believes, has been preserved in a few CArm. words of *n*-declension²². In that case, as the *-n/Ø/* alternation of the Biainian ablative marker shows, the loss of this *-n* must have already begun in the Van Kingdom period. The fact that in Biainian the case marker *-n* of the ablative alternates with *-Ø/*, namely, the ablative undergoes break up, ascertains the belief that as a result of this process the ablative might finally have lost its primary form. Indeed, the CArm. linguistic material confirms that the genitive ending extended over the ablative. The nominative plural marker */-r/* (*l* in script) of Biainian is most probably preserved in the CArm. collective suffixes with */r/*. (the nominative plural marker in modern Armenian). In contrast to CArm., the plural of oblique cases in Biainian for all declensions has a standard pattern with the *-(n)a-* marker. Traces of this are clearly seen in CArm. where the *-a-* component endings of the oblique cases are obviously prevalent. Thus, if we put aside the presence of the Biainian ergative structure and the absence of the separate instrumental case, and consider the spread out of the genitive ending to the dative and ablative in CArm., then we can assert that the declension systems of CArm. and Biainian (Uratian) are for the considerable part identical²³.

d) Verbal Morphology: 1) There are only a few, unreliable attestations of the Biainian indicative present; therefore, any comparison with CArm. becomes impossible. 2) Indicative past perfect (aorist): the past perfect is the most familiar and commonly occurring form in the Biainian texts. It has two types of conjugation, one for the intransitive and second - for the transitive verbs. The intransitive past perfect endings

published 1994), pp. 2-5, 14; Comrie B., The languages of the Soviet Union, Cambridge, 1981, pp. 173-4, 177, 181; Payne J., The decay of ergativity in Pamir languages, *Lingua*, 51/2-3, 1980, pp. 147-186; Miltner V., Ergative Constructions in Indo-Aryan, *Archiv Orientalni*, 59, 1991, pp. 225-33; Kachru Y., Ergativity, subjecthood and topicality in Hindi-Urdu, *Lingua*, 71, 1987, pp. 223-38; Korn A., The Ergative System in Balochi from a Typological Perspective, *Iranian Journal of Applied Language Studies*, 1/1, 2009, pp. 43-75, etc.). It means that in the Biainian period, Armenian also might have had the ergative.

²² Ջահուկյան Գ., Ուրարտական արձանագրությունների ներածական բանաձևերի հնարավոր հայկական բնույթի մասին, 2001, 1, էջ 124-129:

²³ The Comparison of the Biainian and Armenian nominal morphologies see S. Ayvazyan, *UrAr*, pp. 166-172.

are divided into two parts (components) as in CArm.. In fact, for the first components [-i/e-, -a- and -ea- (<*ia)] of the CArm. past perfect endings in Biainian we have respectively, -i-, -a- and -ia-. And for the Biainian I-person singular -/t/, III-person singular -/w/ and plural -/r/ (l in script) person-number markers (second components) in CArm. we have respectively -y (<*t ? - the state before the Armenian *t>y/w/- development²⁴), w and n. The origin of Biainian III-person plural -/r/ person-number is linked to the nominative plural marker -/r/ (l in script) which, certainly, is reflected in the -r element of the CArm. collective suffixes -(n)ear, -er, -or(e)ay. And it must be compared with the III-person plural marker -r of several IE languages (Hittite, Latin, etc.). The Biainian past perfect of verbs is also characterized by another - type II conjugation, by which the transitive verbs are conjugated. All these type II verbs are conjugated in one way - by the -u(-) marker of transitivity, which is added to the verbal stem in place of the thematic vowel (if the stem is not monosyllabic). This Biainian marker of transitivity -u(-) is preserved in the -ow-/oy- component of the CArm. -ow-c'-/oy-c' suffix, which forms the CArm. causative and active verbs. E.g. Biain. intr. aš=a- /as=a-/ 'to come, to enter, to arrive' and tr. aš=u- /as=u-/ 'to bring' - CArm. h-as-(an)-em (h-as-a-) 'to come, to arrive at, to reach, etc.' and h-as-owc'-an-em /h-as-u-c'-/ 'to cause to arrive, reach; to bring, etc.', Biain. intr. ušt=a- /ost=a-/ 'to go, to raid, to march' and tr. ušt=u- /ost=u-/ 'to send, to dispatch, to donate' - CArm. ost-an-im (ost-ea-) 'to burst forth, to escape from, to go out of, to rush forward, etc.' and ost-owc'-an-im /ost-u-c'-/ etc.' and so on), etc. 3) The imperative: the CArm. aorist imperative singular -Ø ending (marker) coincides with the Biainian marker -e of the analogous form. It should be noted, that in Biainian the word-final -e may also be pronounced /Ø/ or /ə/²⁵. 4) Prohibitive forms of verbs: a special form of prohibitive-imperative exists in CArm., which is formed by the addition of the corresponding markers (sg. -r and pl. -yk') to the present verbal stem, with the collocation of the preceding *mi* 'no, not' negative particle. In Biainian a prohibitive form of verb which was formed with the ending -i=a=ne (maybe also: -(a)ure) with the collocation of the preceding negative particle *mi* 'no, not' or *ui* 'id' exists. And in its syntax it, of course, resembles the CArm. prohibitive-imperative²⁶.

Conclusion

A comparison of the Biainian (Urtian) and Armenian languages shows that the larger part of the Biainian lexicon that has reached us and is comprehensible has its

²⁴ See also the Hurr./Biain. verb *did-* 'to distribute, to allot' - CArm. *ti* 'age; period, time' < PIE. *dī-ti (expanded form from *dī, *dāi, *dē 'to distribute, to allot; to divide into pieces'), in which the aforementioned development has not yet occurred.

²⁵ See, for instance, Wilhelm G., The Cambridge Encyclopedia of the World's Ancient Languages, (Urtian, chapter 5), 2004, p. 131.

²⁶ The comparison of the Biainian and Armenian verbal morphologies, in more detail, see in Ayvazyan S., UrAr, pp. 206-211.

parallel in Armenian. Moreover, the majority of those common words (roots) are native to Armenian, being of IE origin. Many of these words are presented in their older sense and/or form. What's more, not only the roots, but also most of the derivational affixes are common with CArm.. They are also, on the whole, native and of IE origin. On the other hand, the greater part of the derivational affixes forming the older layer and basis of Armenian has its parallel in Biainian. It is noteworthy, that in all the material certain phonetic differences observed are strictly regular and are, on the whole, consistent with the Pre-classical Armenian reconstructed by the comparative, or other methods. If we take into account the above mentioned normal changes in Armenian and possible dialectal differences, our calculations show that 61% of roots and 85-90% of derivational affixes of the comprehensible Biainian (Uratian) lexicon are common with Armenian. That is, they, of course, within the framework of the known stereotyped texts, consist of common roots and derivational affixes.

These commonalities are notable not only in the quantitative, but also in the qualitative sense, because they refer to basic and usually not-borrowed elements of every language, such as pronouns²⁷, main verbs, conjunctions and subsidiary words²⁸ (Biainian numerals are only indicated in the form of logograms which make it impossible to compare them with Armenian). The differences are more notable in the case of the inflexional suffixes (case, verbal endings) but in these instances also, the commonalities are substantial, especially in the reliably defined grammatical forms. Moreover, this refers not only to the general typical similarities in nominal and verbal morphology, but to the actual morphemes as well, for example, nominative and genitive markers, the markers of the past perfect indicative verbs (particularly intransitive) and imperative verbs, and so on (there is no reliable evidence for Biainian present tense verb forms). More tangible differences are due to the ergative structure of Biainian, as opposed to CArm. (in this sense Biainian is similar to Hurrian)²⁹, and consequentially, certain differences in the nominal and verbal morphology.

Despite these differences, not only particular words and phrases, but whole sentences in Biainian are read in comprehensible Armenian and understood with no difficulty and without special clarifications.

At the same time, if we speak about the divergence of the Armenian language (as a separate branch of the IE language family) from the Common Proto-Indo-European language 7-6 thousand years ago³⁰, then Armenian in the 9th -7th centuries BC should

²⁷ See Ayvazyan S., *UrAr*, pp. 175-191.

²⁸ See Ayvazyan S., *UrAr*, pp. 222-223, 239-237. For the comparison of the Biainian and Armenian adpositions see Ayvazyan S., *UrAr*, pp. 224-235.

²⁹ For possible IE origin of the Hurrian and Biainian ergativity see Fournet A., Bomhard A., *The Indo-European Elements in Hurrian*, La Garenne Colombes/Charleston, 2010, pp. 154-155.

³⁰ It is noted that "the Hittite lineage diverging from Proto-Indo-European around 8,700 years BP..., Tocharian, and the Greco-Armenian lineages - by 7,000 years BP... the early divergence of Greek and Armenian lineages, and the

be distinguished from CArm and ought to be closer to the PIE language. It is also noticeable that in the common part of Biainian and Armenian, just those IE elements are prevalent. Thus, summarizing all the above-mentioned facts, we come to the following core conclusions:

a) In its volume and linguistic value, the Armenian constituent represents the base of Biainian and it cannot be the result of borrowings and interactions.

b) At the same time, the position between Biainian and CArm. is not clear. Most likely, the differences between them are conditioned not only by the temporal factor (Biainian cuneiform texts are 1000-1300 years older than early CArm. texts), but also by the dialect factor.

c) A certain stratum of Hurrian exists both in the Biainian lexicon and some grammatical elements which, nevertheless, concedes both quantitatively and qualitatively to the Armenian language. Most of these commonalities, many of which have IE origin, are also present in Armenian. Taking all these facts into consideration, although it cannot be ruled out, it is less likely that Biainian (Uartian) and Hurrian are cognate. It is more plausible, that commonalities between Hurrian and Biainian are the result of interactions and the distant relationship of these two languages. It is also not excluded that, to some extent, they have an areal nature. A comprehensive research of Hurrian-Armenian linguistic commonalities which, as has been pointed out, are not few and not limited only to word roots, would be useful for the clarification of this issue.