

ARTAK MOVSISYAN

# THE WRITING CULTURE OF PRE-CHRISTIAN ARMENIA



YEREVAN STATE UNIVERSITY

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**THE WRITING CULTURE  
OF  
PRE-CHRISTIAN ARMENIA**

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## PREFACE

The Armenian Highland - one of the main homelands of the world civilization - has already surprised and still has many surprises for the study of ancient civilizations including the world written culture.

Since the end of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the question of script and literary culture in pre-Christian Armenia has been a subject of special attention owing to discussions concerning creation of Armenian Christian literature. It's known that when St. Mesrop Mashtots and Armenian Catholicos St. Sahak Partev introduced their intention to the Armenian king Vramshapuh, the latter informed them that he was aware of old Armenian scripts preserved in the north of Mesopotamia<sup>1</sup>. However, these writing signs were not fit to express the whole phonetic richness of the Armenian language and Mesrop Mashtots started the invention of a new script system. Interest in pre-Christian script and literary culture was not extinguishing also in the next centuries, as follows from annalistic data. The question has reached our times remaining a subject of wide philological discussions and debates.

Unfortunately, despite the importance of the question, all written monuments and corresponding information about pre-Christian Armenia have not yet been summarized and studied completely. In 2003 we tried to make up for that deficiency by publication of books “Armenian Hieroglyphic Script (Mehenagir<sup>2</sup>)” (272 pages) and “The Writing Systems of pre-Mashtotsian<sup>3</sup> Armenia” (400 pages) (in Armenian). The present

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<sup>1</sup> Koryun, VI; Movses Khorenatsi, II, 66; Ghazar Parpetzi, I, 10.

<sup>2</sup> «Մեհեանիւն» (“*mehean*” = temple) and «գիր» (“*gir*” = script, writing), i.e. *mehenagir* or *temple writing* corresponds to hieroglyphic writing in pre-Christian Armenia.

<sup>3</sup> St. Mesrop Mashtots (361-440 AD) created the Armenian new script – alphabet and founded Armenian Christian literature, because of that in armenological literature the term “pre-Mashtotsian literature” sometimes is used as an equivalent of the term of the “pre-Christian literature”.

work is their brief English translation for the purpose of presentation to the world scientific circles of the Armenian Highland's ancient written culture.

During our work we did not pay special attention to the separate texts' peculiarities (writing material, dimensions and methods of their preparation, etc); we have focused our attention on the characteristics of writing systems which are presented in the following order:

1. The origin of script system.
2. The history of the script's system study.
3. Inscriptions' chronology and distribution.
4. The degree of acquaintance with the script and the language of inscriptions.
5. The existence of the given writing system in multilingual inscriptions.
6. The characteristics of monuments with writing signs,
7. The quantity and kinds of inscriptions (volume, structure and other features),
8. Group classification of inscriptions according to their content,
9. Direction of writing,
10. Style characteristics of writing marks,
11. The number of signs and the script system's type.
12. Classification of signs according to their outward appearance,
13. Determinatives and ligature,
14. The application of numbers and auxiliary signs,
15. The existence of auxiliary data assisting the decipherment, including information of synchronic written sources (in case of not deciphered systems or those in the process of deciphering),
16. Correlations with other script systems.

It's important to make more precise the geographical scope of the material analyzed in our book<sup>4</sup>. The term “pre-Christian Armenia” relates to the Armenian Highland<sup>5</sup> and those adjacent territories, which in the given period formed a part of the Armenian Kingdom.

I should like to express my gratitude to all those persons who directly or indirectly promoted to create and publish this book. I am thankful to all scientists (their names are mentioned in corresponding parts of the book) for consultations and providing me with literature about a series of special questions.

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This book is a concise English translation of the books “Armenian Hieroglyphic Script (Mehenagir)” and “The writing systems of pre-Mashtotsian Armenia” published in 2003. Thus it contains literature published before that year.

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<sup>4</sup> For this purpose inset maps are used in the book. I express my gratitude to the author of these maps Dr. Yervand Grekyan.

<sup>5</sup> About the borders of the Armenian Highland see Zograbyan, 1979, p. 12-16; Hakobyan, 1984, p. 5-29; Gabrielyan, 2000, p. 8-15 (and cited literature). In footnotes we give the name of the cited work's author and the year of publication (the works published by the same author during one year are singled out by the Latin letters in brackets next to the publishing year). We don't mention pages when the work is wholly cited. While citing the Bible and annalists' works, we mention not the publishing year, but their sections (book, chapter, number). The lists of used literature and abbreviations are placed at the end of the book.

**CHAPTER I**  
**THE HISTORIC EVIDENCE OF THE WRITING  
SYSTEMS AND LITERARY CULTURE  
IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA**

Armenian and foreign annalists preserved evidence of scripts in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia. Information may be divided into two groups:

a) evidence of literary culture in the Armenian language and script,

b) information about other languages and scripts used in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia.

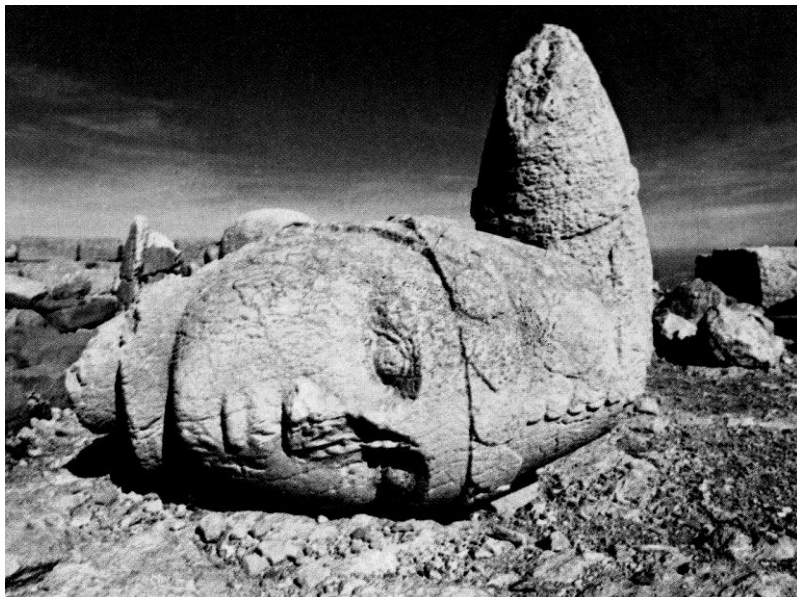
***1-1. EVIDENCE OF THE EXISTENCE OF LITERARY CULTURE  
IN THE ARMENIAN LANGUAGE AND THE ARMENIAN WRITING  
SYSTEM IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA***

The most eloquent evidence of the long-lasting tradition about the existence of script and literature in pre-Christian Armenia is preserved in “History of Armenia” by Agathangelos (Agathangeghos). It is about the god of literary culture Tir and a temple (*mehean*) dedicated to him: “Then with his whole army King (Trdat) himself moved from the city of Vagharshapat to the city of Artashat to destroy there the altar (*bagin*) of the goddess Anahit and the one which was within the sites called Erazamuyn. On their way they encountered first the worship site of the expounder and interpreter of dreams, the god Tir, the scribe of priestly knowledge. And first of all they began to destroy, fire and ravage (this worship site) called the Archives (*Divan*) of the scribe of Vormizd (Aramazd), the temple (*mehean*) of learned eloquence”<sup>6</sup>. The god Tir’s worship in the Armenian pre-

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<sup>6</sup> Agathangelos, 778 (translated into English by E.Danielyan).

Christian pantheon is the best proof of Armenian literary culture of that period. Without literary culture, naturally, no people could have the worship of the god of literary culture.



*Fig. 1 The sculpture of the god of literary culture Tir (Apollo)  
at the sacred place of Nemrut*

Agathangelos gives also an account of the use of a script in pre-Christian Armenia, which was for the Armenian language, according to the supporters of the opinion about the existences of the Armenian literary culture in pre-Christian epoch, and on the contrary, their opponents consider it belonging to a foreign language<sup>7</sup>...

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<sup>7</sup> Not discussing the existing opinions let us bring two testimonies of Agathangelos: “Now an order has reached me, an Agathangelos, who is from the city of Rome, trained in paternal arts. I have also learnt Roman and Greek literary culture, studied writing and not being left quite unaware of the art of letters...” (Agathangelos, 12) and “All this said Grigor hanging

Movses Khorenatsi's "History of Armenia" contains valuable data about the earliest period of the Armenian literary culture. In a chronological sequence the first is information about Tork Angegh (the son of the Armenians' eponym Haik's grandson Pasqam) who leveled the rocks, made tablets and "wrote on them eagles and other things"<sup>8</sup>. "To write eagles and other things" apparently is connected with a hieroglyphic tradition i.e., on the one hand, Tork is presented as a hero or deity connected with writing, on the other hand, he is related to the underworld of ancient Armenian mythological notions (his name "Angegh", i.e. "of Angegh" is derived from the expression "the House of Angegh")<sup>9</sup>. Proceeding from the fact that gods of literary culture in pantheons of other peoples of Ancient World were also connected with the underworld (e.g. Egyptian Tot, Babylonian Nabu, Greek Hermes, etc.), it is possible to conclude that Tork Angegh was deified as a deity related to the script and literary culture in the ancient Armenian pantheon and later transformed into ancestor-hero.

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upside-down, and the court scribes of letters wrote ... and gave it to the king..." (Agathangelos, 99).

<sup>8</sup> "They sang that he took in his fist hard stons in which there was no crack, and he would crunch them into large and small pieces at will, polish them with his nails, and form them into tablet shapes, and likewise with his nails inscribe eagls and other such [designs] on them" (Moses Khorenatsi. "History of the Armenians", transl. and commentary on the literary sources by R.W.Thomson, London, 1978 book II, 8). In new Armenian and Russian translations the expression "to write or inscribe" turned into "was drawing eagles" (Movses Khorenatsi, 1968, II, 8, p. 138; Мовсес Хоренаци, 1990, p. 64), which is diverting from the original meaning (cf. Tokhatyan, 2003, p. 47):

<sup>9</sup> In the Armenian translation of the Bible, "Angegh" substituted for the name of the Mesopotamian ruler of the underworld, Nergal (Kings 2:17, 30) and it shows that Tork Angegh held the same position in ancient Armenian mythology. As for Angegh's cult center, Angegh Tun ("Angegh's House") District is situated in the basin of the Western Tigris sources (in the region of Aghdznik).

The following information relates to the deeds of Patriarch Aram in the west. After the conquest of the area (previously seized by the Titans) between the Black and Mediterranean seas (“the land between the two great seas – the Pontus and the Ocean”), Aram ordered the local population “to learn the Armenian speech and language”<sup>10</sup>. Surely, teaching foreigners the Armenian language was possible only in case of the script’s existence...

Movses Khorenatsi introduces Vruyr, the son of the Armenian king, Artashes, as “a wise man and a poet”<sup>11</sup>.

Speaking about his original sources Movses Khorenatsi refers to priest of Ani, Olympius - the author of “The temple history”<sup>12</sup>. Movses Khorenatsi mentions also a historian, Bardatsan (the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD), who had come to Armenia to spread his teaching, but failed. Coming to the province of Daranaghyatz, Bardatsan entered the fortress of Ani and in the temple archives “read the temple history, which included the deeds of the kings. He added his own account of the events [that happened] in his own time and translated the whole into Syriac and which later was turned into Greek there”<sup>13</sup>. That work served as one of the main original sources of Movses Khorenatsi.

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<sup>10</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, I, 14.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, II, 53. Unfortunately, there is neither any account of his works, nor anything about the language in which they had been written.

<sup>12</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, II, 48.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, II, 66. G.Kh. Sargsyan and A.G. Abrahamyan find truly that the initial language of “the temple history” preserved in Ani was Armenian (Greek and Syriac are excluded as Bardatsan had translated it into these languages, see Sargsyan, 1969, p. 124; Abrahamyan, 1982, pp. 96-98). The criticism of this opinion by E.A. Pivazyan’s and L.G. Khacheryan’s is completely groundless. According to them, the language of “the temple history” could be Persian (Pivazyan, 1962, p. 158; Khacheryan, 2000, pp. 178-179). There is no archeological or literary evidence of the use of the Persian language neither during the Artashesid nor the Arshakid periods, i.e. before 360’s. It is proved also by Movses Khorenatsi’s notion about Meruzhan Artzruni who during the mentioned years banned Greek literary culture and obliged

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century it was well known that Armenian letters existed, and St. Mesrop Mashtots tried to find and use them before the creation of his alphabet. Koryun, Movses Khorenatsi and Ghazar Parpetsi prove this also.

From Koryun's work follows that the Armenian letters that earlier became out of use then had been found by the Syrian bishop, Daniel: "At that time King (Vramshapuh) told them about a man named Daniel, a noble Syrian bishop, who had quite accidentally found the letters of the alphabet of the Armenian language"<sup>14</sup>.

Touching the same episode Movses Khorenatsi mentions the letters of "the script found/ written down"<sup>15</sup> long ago"<sup>16</sup>. The same is attested in the work of Ghazar Parpetsi: "For a long time the blessed man, Mashtots was thinking about it and was crying by himself; indeed, there had to be the letters of the Armenian language with the help of which it would be possible to gain the hearts of men and women and, generally, all the people in the churches by one's own voice and not a borrowed language?"<sup>17</sup>. After making sure that the letters were not capable to render accurately the syllables of Armenian words<sup>18</sup> and reproduce correctly the whole richness of the phonology of the Armenian lan-

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to adopt only Persian (III, 36). The analysis of available facts shows that the Persian language was used in Armenia only after 389, moreover, only in Eastern Armenia which was under the Persian domination, where it should meet the governmental-official necessities (see about it below). So, it is groundless to suppose that the Armenian priests wrote in Persian, moreover, in the temple of the supreme god...

<sup>14</sup> Koryun, Chapter 6.

<sup>15</sup> Both variants - "գտաւ" ("found") and "գրաւ" ("written") have been preserved in manuscripts (see Movses Khorenatsi, "History of Armenia", 1913 (1991), p. 326, in Classical Armenian).

<sup>16</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, III, 52.

<sup>17</sup> Ghazar Parpetzi, I, 10.

<sup>18</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, III, 52.

guage Mashtots and his disciples went to Mesopotamia, to the same Daniel to find the missing letters, but in vain<sup>19</sup>...

Similar information is provided by Vardan Areveltsi (the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries), who thought that the Mashtotsian alphabet had been created by adding the early Armenian letters that were kept by Daniel: "... St. Mesrop created the Armenian writing finding twenty two letters preserved from ancient times and kept by Daniel, which could not reveal the richness of our language and thus had been ignored by our ancestors who had been satisfied with the Greek, Syriac and Persian letters. And even Mesrop using them could not translate the Bible into Armenian. That is why he devoted himself to praying with the help of St. Sahak, and God realized his request giving him fourteen letters... And the fact that our forefathers had Armenian letters was proved during the period of King Levon's reign because a coin was found in Cilicia on which the names of the Haikazunk heathen kings were engraved in Armenian letters"<sup>20</sup>...

Foreign authors testify also to the existence of Armenian script and literary culture in pre-Christian Armenia. One of the leading Greek sophists or orators of his day, who spent some years at the Roman imperial court, Philostratus (c.170-c.247) recounts the following story in his work "Life of Apollonius of Tyana": "It is also said that once in Pampylia a panther was caught, on its golden necklace the following was written in Armenian letters: "King Arshak to the god Nysia", that is, a gift to the god Nysia from King Arshak. This Arshak was the king of Armenia at that time and the panther that he had caught, because of its very big size he gifted to Dionysus. Dionysus was called Nysos by the Indians and other eastern peoples because of the

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<sup>19</sup> Ghazar Parpetzi, I, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Vardan Areveltsi, Chapter 15. The number of the letters found by Daniel is not mentioned by any historian of the 5<sup>th</sup> century. About information of later centuries and possible interpretation see Acharyan, 1984, pp. 441-460. Our interpretation concerning the coin with a writing in Armenian found in Cilicia see Movsisyan, 1996 (b), pp. 68-71.

Indian Nysia”<sup>21</sup>. It is about the Armenian king, Arshak I who reigned during 34-35 AD<sup>22</sup>.

Hippolitus in his “Chronology”, written in 234-235 AD, noted that the following peoples had their own literary culture: “...the Hebrews, the Latins, whose writing is used also by the Romans, Spaniards, Greeks, Medians and Armenians”<sup>23</sup>.

A remarkable fact is introduced by George the Syrian (mentioned as “the Arabs’ Bishop”) in his letter in Syriac as an answer to Joshua the Hermit’s letter of inquiry (714 AD). While writing the fifth chapter of the letter, which is about St.Gregory the Illuminator (Grigor Lusavoritch), George the Syrian refers to a biography of St.Gregory the Illuminator. From the viewpoint of our material it contains a very interesting passage: “... as it is known from the words of his biography, while he was a teenager he came to the land of Armenia either because of Diocletian’s persecutions against the Christians or some unknown to us reason. When he was brought up in the Armenians’ country and *learned their script and language* (underlined by us – A.M), his name became widespread and famous, and he became one of the intimates and attendants of King Trdat who at that time reigned in the land of Armenia”<sup>24</sup>.

These are the preserved annalistic facts about the pre-Mashtotsian Armenian literary culture.

## **I-2. ANNALISTIC EVIDENCE OF OTHER LANGUAGES AND WRITING SYSTEMS USED IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA**

The earliest information on this problem belongs to Movses Khorenatsi. It is about the cuneiform inscriptions of the

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<sup>21</sup> Harutyunyan, 1892, p. 252; CHAP, 1981, pp. 619-620 (trans. into Armenian by I. Harutyunyan).

<sup>22</sup> Cf. Abrahamyan, 1982, pp. 99-101.

<sup>23</sup> CHAP, 1981, p. 621 (trans. into Armenian by A.G. Abrahamyan).

<sup>24</sup> Tashian, 1891, p. 4 (transl. into English by E.D.).

Kingdom of Van which are ascribed to Shamiram: “And over the entire face of a rock, smoothing it like wax with a stylus, she inscribed many scripts<sup>25</sup>, the mere sight of which makes anyone marvel. And not only this, but also in many places in the land of Armenia she set up stelae and ordered memorials to herself to be written on them in the same script. And in many places she fixed the boundaries with the same writing”<sup>26</sup>.

Diodorus of Sicily, the Greek historian, the author of the *Library of World History* (book 19; 23, 3) has preserved the letter of King Yervand. It is generally considered to be the proof of the use of the Aramaic language in Armenia still in the period of the Achaemenids’ rule: “... The letter that was written in the Syriac script was sent by Orontes who ruled over the *satrapy* of Armenia and was a relative of Peukestes”<sup>27</sup>. Nevertheless, in the same work (book 2; 13,2) Diodorus of Sicily considers the Bagastana (Behistun) carving<sup>28</sup> to be written in the same scripts, which, as it is known, are cuneiforms. It is well known that the cuneiform writing was used as in the period of the Achaemenids, as well as later, that is why this account can in all probability be considered as evidence of the use of cuneiform and not of the Aramaic script in Armenia in the fifth and fourth centuries BC. Information, doubtlessly, can be evidence of the existence of the state archives in the satrapy of Armenia<sup>29</sup>.

Movses Khorenatsi’s description of the *Artashesian* boundary stones (markers for the borders), on which, however,

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<sup>25</sup> Armenian «գիրք» (“girs”= scripts, writings) R.Thomson translated “texts” (R.Thomson, 101), G.Kh. Sargsyan (1990, с. 31) - “письмена” which is more correct (E.D.).

<sup>26</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, I, 16.

<sup>27</sup> Diodorus of Sicily, 1985, p. 130; HAP, 1971, p. 908 (section author, G.A. Tiratsyan); Abrahamyan, 1982, p. 78, etc.

<sup>28</sup> Diodorus of Sicily, 1985, p. 28.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Tiratsyan, 1972, pp. 106-109.

no writings are mentioned by him, in Armenology is related to the use of the Aramaic script<sup>30</sup> ...

We have a number of annalistic facts which prove that the Greek script and literature were spread to a great extent in Armenia especially in the period of the Artashesid kings. Among them the most noteworthy is the *History* of Tigran the Great<sup>31</sup> written in the Armenian court by King of Kings Tigran's contemporary Greek philosopher and historiographer Metrodorus of Scepsis in Greek, which has not sustained to the present.

Amphicrates of Athens also worked in the court of Tigran the Great, where he composed his work "On great men," which, unfortunately, also has not sustained to the present<sup>32</sup>.

After unsuccessful invasion (69-68 BC) into Armenia the Roman general Lucullus took prisoner the Armenian grammarian and orator Tiranion (Tiran) who "owing to his erudition won great respect" in Rome and became one of the intimates of Cicero and headed the school founded by him<sup>33</sup>. The data about Tiranion testify for the high level of the Romano-Greek literary culture's study in Armenia. It is proved also by the following information. According to an account of Plutarch,<sup>34</sup> the Armenian king, Artavazd wrote tragedies, orations and historical works in Greek, some of which had also been known to the Romans at

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<sup>30</sup> See the subsection "Inscriptions of Aramaic script in Armenia" of chapter IV.

<sup>31</sup> Sargsyan, 1969, pp. 108-110 (as well as the sources cited therein). The Armenian translation of the same author's work "Alexander or on the existence of reason in speechless animals" was ascribed to Philo of Alexandria (b. about 20 BC.; d. about 42 AD). The translation, according to K.V. Trever, can be explained by the fact of being written in the Armenian court (Trever, 1953, p. 11). In historiography it is wrongly introduced as a notion of Philo of Alexandria - as if he tells that the work of Methrodorus was translated into Armenian (Abrahamyan, 1982, p. 80).

<sup>32</sup> Trever, 1953, p. 12 (and sources cited therein).

<sup>33</sup> Nalbandian, 1995, p. 152-153 (with cited sources).

<sup>34</sup> RHAP, 1981, p. 271 (transl. by P.H. Hovhannisyan); Sargsyan, 1969, pp. 110-112.

the beginning of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD. It is known that there were big theaters in Artashat and Tigranakert where the works of Greek playwrights were also staged, for instance Euripides' famous play "The Bacchae" (53 BC) during which the head of Crassus was brought<sup>35</sup>.

In the pre-Artashesian period, during the reign of the Armenian king, Sohemos-Tigran (the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD), the famous Roman orator, writer and annalist, Iamblichus of Babylon, was invited to Armenia. According to the patriarch Photius, Iamblichus wrote in Armenia his historical poem "Babylonica" in 35 volumes<sup>36</sup>.

The early medieval Armenian annalists provide much information about the use of Greek, Syriac and Persian in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia. Let us mention them in the chronological order.

According to an account of Agathangelos, Trdat III "sent an order to all places within the boundaries of Armenia to assemble children from the regions under his reign for the purpose of teaching them the art of literary culture, appointing over them trustful professors... They were divided into two groups; some were distributed for getting education in Syriac, others – in Greek"<sup>37</sup>.

Among reforms undertaken by Catholicos Nerses Pavstos Buzand mentions the foundation of "the schools teaching the Greek and Syriac languages in all the provinces of Armenia"<sup>38</sup>.

Movses Khorenatsi preserved a number of passages from Mar Abas Katina's book, one of his main sources written in pre-

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<sup>35</sup> About the theatrical life of Armenia during the Hellenistic period in details see Goyan, 1952, pp. 79-174.

<sup>36</sup> Manandyan, 1978, pp. 42-43 (see also sources cited therein).

<sup>37</sup> Agathangelos, 840.

<sup>38</sup> Pavstos Buzand, Litr. IV, chapter 4.

Christian Armenia<sup>39</sup>. He recounts the following about the activities of Mar Abas Katina: “(King Vagharshak) finding a certain Syrian Mar Abas Catina, a diligent man and versed in the Chaldaean and Greek, he sent him to his brother Arshak the Great with worthy gifts [asking him] to open for him the royal archives... [Mar Abas Catina] examining all the books, found one in Greek... This book which contains the authentic account of the ancients and ancestors was translated at the command of Alexander from the Chaldaean language into Greek ... From this book Mar Abas Catina extracted only the reliable history of our own nation and brought it to King Vagharshak in Nisibis (Mtsbin) in both Greek and Syriac. The personable, valiant and brave bowman, Vagharshak, eloquent, and intelligent, received it and esteeming it as the foremost of his treasures placed it in the palace, in safekeeping, with great care; and a part of it he ordered to be inscribed on a stele”<sup>40</sup>.

Movses Khorenatsi tells about the inscription left by Trdat the Great in “the Greek script” on the occasion of building of the Garni’s fortress and other constructions<sup>41</sup>.

According to a tradition preserved by Movses Khorenatsi, the Armenian king, Abgar, who had been in correspondence with Jesus Christ, built the city of Edessa and “transferred there his palace, which had been in Nisibis and all his idols, Nabog and Bel and Batnik‘al and T‘arat‘a, and the books of the temple

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<sup>39</sup> Movses Khorenatsi used Mar Abas Katina’s book as an original source in his “History of Armenia” from the chapter VIII of the book I to the chapter 10 of the book II.

<sup>40</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, I, 8, 9. Here is preserved the first meaning of the Armenian word «uqq» “nation,” which R.Thomson translated “race”. The Armenian word «բազաղաղանն» is translated by R.Thomson: “expert at the bow,” but its better to translate “brave bowman” (E.D.).

<sup>41</sup> Ibid, II, 90. In 1945 the Greek inscription of King Trdat was discovered in Garni. Since that time the question of its author (Trdat I, II or III?) has become an object of ongoing discussions (see in the section of the inscriptions of Greater Armenia).

gymnasium, and also the whole of the royal archives”<sup>42</sup>. Jesus’ portrait from life and the reply to Abgar’s letter together with the book of the scribe Leubna (Gheubna / Labubna), telling about these events, were kept exactly in that archive<sup>43</sup>. Then, it is told that after the decline of the Armenian rule and establishment of the Roman one in Mesopotamia the Roman officials “gathered there<sup>44</sup> all the archives and set up two schools: one in their proper Syriac and the other in Greek. They transferred there the archives of taxes and temple writings which were at Sinop in Pontus”<sup>45</sup>.

About his time Movses Khorenatsi recounts: “...the Persians and Greeks had scripts that today are used among us for books with innumerable accounts of villages and provinces and even private families and of controversies and pactts, and especially those that concern the succession of the noble families”<sup>46</sup>.

Movses Khorenatsi has a noteworthy account concerning the activities of Mehruzhan Artsruni which illustrates testifies for the importance of script and literary culture in the state politics also in ancient times: “Whatever books he found he burned and

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<sup>42</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, II, 27. Here is brought a more accurate thranslation (by E.Danielyan) of the Armenian expressions «զմատեանս վարժարանին, և միանգամայն զդիւանս թագաւորացն...» of the text, which R.Thomson translated: “the books of temple school, and also the royal archives.” (R.Thomson, p. 165).

<sup>43</sup> Ibid, II, 32, 36. The scribe’s name Gheubna (Labubna) has the form of Gherubna (which is an error, possibly through a scribes’ fault), in the History of Khorenatsi.

<sup>44</sup> That is to say Urha (Urfa) - Edessa, the Armeno-Syrian cultural centre turned into a Greek-Roman-Syrian centre. It is known, that in the course of the following centuries Urha (Urfa) - Edessa remained one of the important educational centres of the Armenians.

<sup>45</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, II, 38. The last prase of the translation (by E.Danielyan) in a literal sense corresponds to the Armenian text: «... մի՛ զբունն իրեանց զԱսորին, և միս ևս զՅոյնն», which R.Thomson translated: “... one for the native [tongue] of its inhabitants, Syriac, the other for Greek.” (R.Thomson, p. 181).

<sup>46</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, I, 3.

he ordered that Greek letters should not be studied but only Persian, and that no one should speak or translate Greek, on the pretext that it was to prevent the Armenians from having any acquaintance or friendly relations with the Greeks. But in reality it was to destroy the teaching of Christianity, for at that time the Armenians did not yet have a script and the church services were conducted in Greek<sup>47</sup>.

Movses Khorenatsi also testifies that in the period of the reign of King Vramshapuh in the court of Eastern Armenia, which appeared to be under the Persian control, the Persian language with its letters was used: “After Mesrop had left the royal court (King Vramshapuh) could find no skilled scribe there, since they used the Persian script<sup>48</sup>.”

Ghazar Parpetsi recounts that in the period preceding the creation of the alphabet by Mesrop Mashtots the royal correspondence was in Greek and Syriac, and the church ceremonies and the readings of the Bible, in Syriac: “Learning the Greek alphabet from his childhood, Mashtots was in military service in the court of the Armenian king, Khosrov and was enlisted in the group of the royal scribes as at that time the royal scribes wrote king’s orders and decrees in Syriac and Greek... Church ceremonies and readings of the Holy Bible in the monasteries and churches of Armenia had been done in Syriac, which was not comprehensible or useful to the inhabitants of such a big country... For a long time blessed man, Mashtots was thinking about it and crying by himself; indeed, there had to be the letters of the Armenian language.”<sup>49</sup>

Comparing the above-mentioned accounts of Agathangelos, Movses Khorenatsi and Ghazar Parpetsi it is possible to suppose that after adopting Christianity as the state religion the order of the use of Syriac and Greek in the royal corre-

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid, III, 36.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, III, 52.

<sup>49</sup> Ghazar Parpetsi, I, 10.

spondence set forth by King Trdat III, was interrupted after the dethronement of King Khosrov (389), and establishment the use of the Persian language.

In Hovhan Mamikonyan's "History of Taron" written down by Zenob Glak noteworthy information concerning our subject about adopting Christianity as the state religion in Armenia has been preserved. After the battle between the supporters of the last Armenian high priest Ardzan and the newly Christianized king and princes the funeral of all the perished was organized and a monument was erected in memory of the victims, on which the following was written "in Syriac and Hellene scripts, and Greek and Ismaelite signs": "The first war had been waged; here rests the truly courageous high priest Ardzan and with together with him one thousand and thirty eight men who waged the war [on the one] in the name of the Gisane idols and [on the other hand] in the name of Christ"<sup>50</sup>. If the existence of the Syriac and Greek scripts in Christian Armenia is a well known fact, evidence of the use of the "Ismaelite", i.e. the Arabian signs is a sudden surprise in this account. It was probably added later<sup>51</sup>, because, as it is well known, the Arabs appeared here only after several centuries...

The next account of "History of Taron" is about bringing the relics of St. John the Baptist by St. Gregory the Illuminator and placing them in the monastery bearing his name and forbidding women to enter into it. All this St. Gregory the Illuminator described on a copper plate which he put on the altar of the church<sup>52</sup>. There were also "wedge-shaped signs (Lat. *cuneus*)"

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<sup>50</sup> Hovhan Mamikonean, 1941, pp. 94-95; Hovhan Mamikonyan, 1989, pp. 42-43 (transl. into English by E. Danielyan).

<sup>51</sup> If the term "Ismaelite" is not used in another meaning (still unknown to us) in the original text.

<sup>52</sup> Hovhan Mamikonean, 1941, pp. 102-103; Hovhan Mamikonyan, 1989, p. 44.

(which can be interpreted in different ways) “in an inch from the angle of the door and a half inch above the ground”<sup>53</sup>...

In the work of the Anonymus, published with Sebeos' *History*, the author tells the following about his original sources on the history of the earlier period: “There, looking through the book of the philosopher Maraba Mtsurneatsi, that [inscription] he had found inscribed on a stele in the city of Mtsurn, in the palace of King Sanatruk, in front of the royal temple's door, covered under the ruins of the royal palace. Because the columns of that temple were demanded by the court of the Persian king, the ruins were opened for the columns sake and the inscription was discovered – the years and days of the Armenian and Parthian ancient kings - in Greek script carved on the pillar. Finding it at the possession of his disciples in Mesopotamia, I wished to tell you about it, as it had the following title: “I, the scribe, Agathangelos, wrote the years of the first Armenian kings by order of courageous Trdat on this stele”<sup>54</sup>.

These are the known testimonies of the foreign and early medieval Armenian historians about the scripts in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia. The comparison of these testimonies with the inscriptions found by the overground explorations and archeological excavations in the Armenian Highland completes our conceptions about the pre-Mashtotsian Armenia's rich writing culture.

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<sup>53</sup> This expression is obscurely interpreted, as an “pointer of signs” by V. Vardanyan, who translated “History of Taron” into modern Armenian (see Hovhan Mamikonyan, 1989, p. 44). The specialist in lapidary inscriptions, G. Grigoryan considers it to be a mentioning of “the signes of wedges” (i.e. “cuneiform”) still used in the period of St. Gregory the Illuminator (Grigoryan, 2000, p. 15).

<sup>54</sup> Abgaryan, 1965, pp. 31-33 (transl. into English by E.Danielyan).

**CHAPTER II**  
**THE ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT OF WRITING  
SYSTEMS IN THE ARMENIAN HIGHLAND.  
THE ARMENIAN HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING  
(MEHENAGIR) AND ITS PHASES**

**II-1. FORERUNNERS OF WRITING IN ARMENIA**

While speaking about numerous attainments of human civilization and the history of the origin and development of writing the Armenian Highland must be mentioned among its cradles. Writing originated and developed with distinctive manifestations in Armenia and passed some phases, which, unfortunately, haven't been completely investigated, yet.

**The “object writing» representations in the Armenian Highland.** The process of origin and development of writing in Armenia hasn't been sufficiently investigated. Judging from the writing's regular development, the “object writing” and early pictography originated in the primary period of the formation of thought writing.

Although there is enough excavated archaeological material, still the oldest samples of the “object writing” expressions in Armenia need to be an object of a special study. We mean statuettes found at Shengavit, Mokhrablur, Beshtashen, Karaz, Babadervish, Geoy-tepe, Tsopi, Arukhlo, Kyul-tepe, Harich, Jrahovit, Amasia, etc.<sup>55</sup>, dating from the 5<sup>th</sup> to the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC (some of them see fig. 2-3). Their linearization might give birth to many marks in early pictography, transferring them into the established writing system (tab. 1). It's difficult to say when the “object writing” originated in Armenia.

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<sup>55</sup> Sardaryan, 1967, p. 200, table LXX; Kuftin, 1941, table CXX; Kushnareva, Chubinishvili, 1970, pp. 28,31, 69, 80, 88, 90, 162; Abibulaev, 1959, p. 444; Khachatryan, 1975, pp. 77-82; Yesayan, 1992, pp. 144, 147, 150, 154, etc.

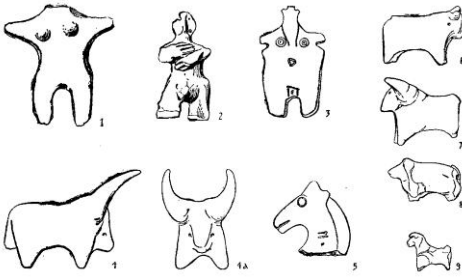


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

The meaning	"Object writing"	Rock-carvings	Linear script	Biainian hieroglyphs	"Writing-signs of meaning"
Human being					
Goat, ram					
Bull					
Horse					
Carriage					
Priest, worshiper					
Horn					

Tab. 1

*Armenia's rock-carvings - monuments of the early phase of pictography.* Rock-carvings are the pictorial views of the earliest times, made on the surfaces of rocks and stones, as well as the walls and ceilings of caves<sup>56</sup>. They are known almost in all parts of the earth - from the Paleolithic period down to the Middle Ages. There are pictorial representations of human figures and animals of the given place, hunt, war, ritual and cult on rock-carvings.

These oldest expressions of early pictography are located in high mountainous areas of Armenia. They are carved on black and dark-coloured stones and rocks, having extent thematic embracement and belonging to different chronological periods.

Rock-carvings in Armenia were engraved on the andezit-bazalt bright surfaces by help of instruments (little hammers made of hard kinds of stones) - striking or pounding. They are not deep (5-10 mm), and are of comparatively small size (25 to 35 sm)<sup>57</sup>.

Armenia's rock-carvings, because of abundance of "goat" drawings, according to the Armenian folk-etymology, from the 19<sup>th</sup> century have been mentioned as *itsagir* "goatography". From the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century they have become known to the scientific world and appeared in the centre of attention of researchers. The term *Itsagir* has also been put into scientific circulation synonymous with the term "rock-carving."

After the Second World War the systematized study of rock-carvings started; almost in all parts of the Armenian High-

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<sup>56</sup> About publications and studies of rock-carvings of the Armenian Highland with complete references see Karakhanyan, Safyan, 1970; Martirosyan, Israyelyan, 1971; Uyanik, 1974; Petrosyan, 2005; Tokhatyan, 2003, pp. 81-90.

<sup>57</sup> About the technique of rock-carvings see Karakhanyan, Safyan, 1970, p. 10; Martirosyan, Israyelyan, 1971, p. 7, Martirosyan, 1981, pp. 7-13.

land new-discovered rock-carvings were published one after another<sup>58</sup>.

*The problem of rock-carvings' dating.* Until the present the problem of rock-carvings' dating hasn't been solved. In the Soviet historiography the most accepted dating for the rock-carving art was the period from the Neolithic age (the 8/7<sup>th</sup> - the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium) to the beginning of the first millennium BC<sup>59</sup>.

The opinions of S.Sardaryan and B.B.Piotrovski differed from the mentioned dating. In some quite older rock-carvings S.Sardaryan traced engravings of mammoth, which disappeared in Armenia in the Paleolithic Age. As a result of it, the earliest rock-carvings S.Sardaryan dated to the last phase of the Paleolithic Age (the Upper Paleolithic Age - from the 40<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> millennia BC). They are simpler engravings of rather large size (in contrast with small engravings of the Neolithic period), they depict hunt, where man pursues wild sheep and chamoises with dogs' help. Animals' domestication took place in the Neolithic period, therefore, according to S.Sardaryan, these views can attest that the given group of rock-carvings had been made earlier than the Neolithic period<sup>60</sup>.

B.B.Piotrovski, observing that some rock-carving signs are met on the walls of medieval monuments, supposed the medieval origin of rock-carvings<sup>61</sup>.

If the former of these opinions may still be discussed at present, the latter simply is not acceptable, because the signs met on the walls of medieval monuments, cannot be considered to be rock-carvings. As rightly noticed the specialist in rock-carvings K.Tokhatyan, they are not old "classic" rock-carvings, but the

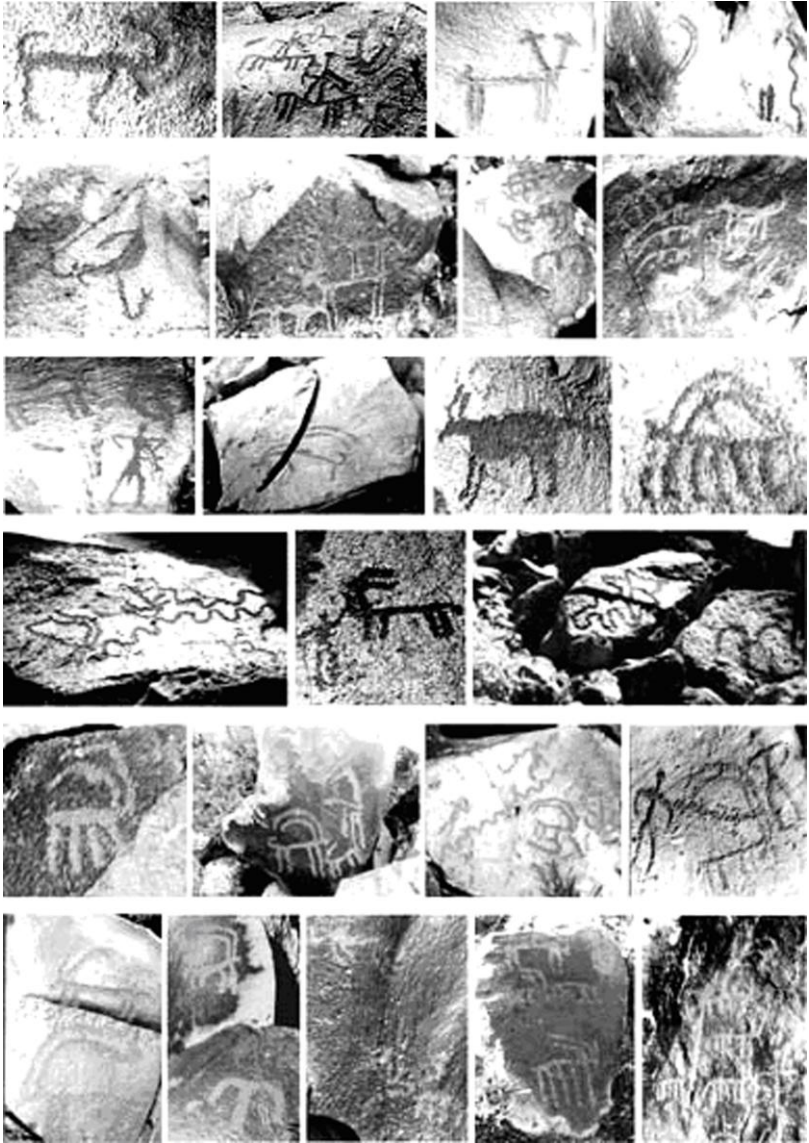
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<sup>58</sup> About geography of the rock-carvings of the Armenian Highland see thoroughly Tokhatyan, 2003, pp. 81-90, also the map – p. 90, fig. 33.

<sup>59</sup> Karakhanyan, Safyan, 1970, pp. 10-38; Martirosyan, Israyelyan, 1971, p. 26; Karakhanyan, 1978, p. 277, Martirosyan, 1981, p. 14-25.

<sup>60</sup> Sardaryan, 1971, p. 63-74.

<sup>61</sup> Piotrovski, 1949, p. 26-27.



*Fig. 4 Pictographs depicting simple pictures (photo K.Tokhatyan)*

testimony to the “longevity of rock-carving traditions in the Middle Ages”<sup>62</sup>.

Western researchers date Western Armenia’s rock-carvings back to the 13<sup>th</sup> -3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC – i.e. from the Mesolithic and Neolithic ages until the Early Bronze period<sup>63</sup>.

***The thematic coverage of rock-carvings***<sup>64</sup>. Rock-carvings cover thematically long period in Armenian history. They represent main characteristic features of life of the given epoch, so it’s not accidental, that rock-carvings are often called “stony encyclopedias”.

Rock-carvings depict numerous wild and domestic animals. Moreover, some kinds of animals existing in Armenia, as well as those that disappeared in early times are clearly differentiated. There are engravings of birds, the views of individual and group hunt, domesticating and breeding of animals, single combat of man with beast or among two beasts, trees, agricultural works on rock-carvings which allow to study vegetation and agriculture of the given epoch.

Some elements of dwelling-building and architecture are observed on rock-carvings. There are also engravings reminding maps, which helped to find sources of water (by the way, people have retained some beliefs, that the paths of hidden treasures are engraved on these map-like stones).

Another group of rock-carvings includes pictures surprising by their high quality, exactness, stylization and mobility. The roots of medieval Armenian miniature and some branches of modern art may be traced in them.

Rock-carvings of astronomical character constitute another important group. Their study shows that Armenia’s inhabitants

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<sup>62</sup> Tokhatyan, 2003, p. 82, n: 119.

<sup>63</sup> Uyanik, 1974, pp. 16-17, 62-64; Belli, 2001, pp. 266-270 (and the cited sources).

<sup>64</sup> About thematic coverage of rock-carvings in the Armenian Highland see completely Martirosyan, 1981, pp. 26-80, briefly – Tokhatyan, 1991, pp. 20-21.



*Fig. 5 Pictographs depicting symbols and signs resembling letter-like signs  
(photo K.Tokhatyan)*

had astronomical knowledge of high quality in primordial times. They used lunar, lunar-solar and solar calendars. There are also pictorial expressions of celestial luminaries on rock-carvings with mythological subject together with calendar, etc.

There are many ideograms on rock-carvings which are considered to be the prototypes of St. Mesrop Mashtots's letters by some researchers<sup>65</sup>.

**Rock-carvings as the subject of the study of writing** It's known from the writing's history that the first type of writing, which originated after passing from objects to writing materials, was simple picture writing - the early pictography.

In world literature two terms are used for drawings on rocks – petroglyph (if they are incised or carved), and pictograms (if they are drawn or painted). Overwhelming majority of early pictographic monuments, discovered in the Armenian Highland belong to the first group -petroglyphs. Monuments of the second group were discovered around Van<sup>66</sup>, and recently on the left bank of the Kasakh canyon, in the territory of the new built settlement of Geghamavan<sup>67</sup>.

It is possible to differentiate two communicative devices in pictographs of the early period (the proto-writing stage), when each symbol expressed a certain notion without distinguishing phonetic elements. They help to differentiate the stages of pictography's development in special literature<sup>68</sup>.

First is ***descriptive-representational device*** - drawings of human figure, animal or object together with information represented by positional changes of the additional pictorial lines or other means. This device was used in Armenia's rock-carvings

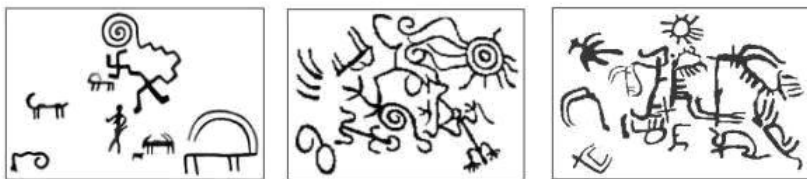
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<sup>65</sup> The complete presentation of the problem see Tokhatyan, 2003, pp. 91-99.

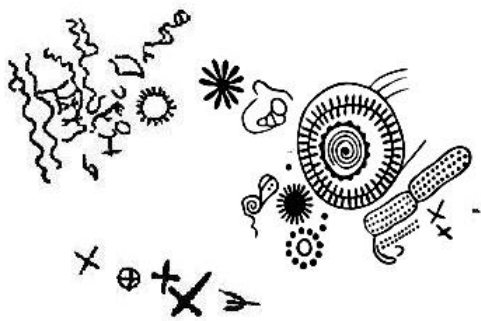
<sup>66</sup> The cave in special literature is known by the name "Maidens' cavern". The drawings are dated back to the 8<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> millennia BC (Belli, 2001, pp. 261-265; Tokhatyan, 2003, pp. 86-87 and the referred literature).

<sup>67</sup> Gasparyan, Sargsyan, 2003, pp. 5-12.

<sup>68</sup> This principle of classification is analyzed thoroughly by I. E. Gelb (Gelb, 1965, pp. 29-51; Gelb, 1982, pp. 38-58)



Rock-carvings depicting simple signs and ideograms



a



b

Calendar-rock-carvings



Ideograms met in  
rock-carvings  
(Abrahamyan, 1982, p. 41)

Fig. 6

of almost every period. Such drawings on rocks have been given numerous names in special literature – “thought writing,” “representational writing” and “content writing”. We accept I. E. Gelb’s definition – the descriptive-representational stage of proto-writing, which shows connections between making technique of the given phase with imitative arts and writing.

Second is *identifying-mnemonic device*, when a given object was presented by a conventional mark symbolizing its identity. By means of this device originated marks (which are numerous in Armenia) of artisan masters, blazons and other signs. This device allowed to identify the depicted individual by means of his totem or other symbols or showing the belonging of the given object to him. The use of symbol instead of picture became widespread in developed pictography. Phonetic writing had not yet appeared with the use of symbols, but it was important in writing’s development.

From the viewpoint of writing’s development rock-carvings in Armenia can be divided into two main groups. Rock-carvings of the first group have only descriptive-representational content. They are simple engravings when every object is depicted with its outer features.

The second group represents higher level of rock-carvings’ development, when symbols appear. This group can be divided into two subgroups – (a) simple pictures and (b) symbols. Symbols on rock-carvings dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC have numerous parallels on synchronic archaeological objects in Armenia<sup>69</sup>. Chronologically it’s not correct to put any limit between these two groups, because extending from that time these two groups existed simultaneously.

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<sup>69</sup> Comparison of rock-carvings with signs on synchronic archaeological objects, as well as the signs in the inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van and the medieval Armenian manuscripts see Martirosyan, 1973 (summary and conclusions – pp. 68-70, table XXIII), with popular scientific version – Martirosyan, 1978, works.

Signs on the proto-early-bronze age excavated objects.

Great number of materials from archaeological monuments of the Armenian Highland dating back to the 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> millennia BC allow to constate the high level of early pictography and the origin of ideography in the mentioned period.



Fig. 7

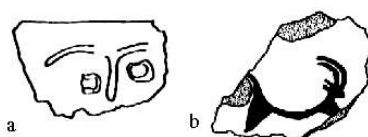


Fig. 8

The most important circumstance is the emergence of characteristic features of signs in this initial period which continued in the course of the following millennia. It is the proof of the hereditary succession of the writing thinking in the Armenian Highland. It follows from the Teghut ideogram-numbers (fig. 7)<sup>70</sup> (the dot expression of numbers is the peculiarity of the Armenian Highland in the ancient Near East<sup>71</sup>), and the ideograms on the ceramics from other archeological sites<sup>72</sup> and continuation of traditions (including ideography) in seal-making<sup>73</sup>.

So, it may be seen that from the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC took place the process of formation of developed pictography – ideography (which became widespread in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC) within the frames of early pictography in Armenia.

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<sup>70</sup> Torosyan, 1976, deck V-VII.

<sup>71</sup> See in “The hieroglyphic writing of the Kingdom of Van” section’s “Numbers” subsection.

<sup>72</sup> For example, marks on the Eneolithic period’s ceramics in Yanik-tepe (fig. 8, see Kushnareva, 1993, p. 48), their numerous duplicates we meet later.

<sup>73</sup> About it see Philiposyan, 1998.

**II-2. DEVELOPED PICTOGRAPHY (IDEOGRAPHY) IN ARMENIA.  
WRITING THOUGHT IN THE ARMENIAN HIGHLAND  
IN THE EARLY BRONZE PERIOD**

The material of this part is connected with certain difficulties. Monuments of writing symbols in pre-Biainian Armenia have not yet been studied systematically. Leaving aside probable explanations of some ideograms, not a single inscription has been deciphered and that makes difficult doing final conclusions. For that period it is even difficult to use the concept of “writing in complete/real meaning”. Most of investigators are inclined to attribute to such concept those sign systems, which impart not general concepts, views and subjects, but linguistic elements (words and grammatical particles, which connect them, and later - syllables and sounds)<sup>74</sup>. After decipherment, notwithstanding their belonging to proto-writing or developed phase, in order to complete the picture, we shall present pictographic (ideographic) systems created and spread in pre-Christian Armenia.

It's also difficult to decide whether chronologically following one another pictographic systems (developed pictography formed in the 5<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC, linear writing and Biainian hieroglyphic system – in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC) of Armenia must be considered as different phases of the same writing-system formed owing to its development or it is necessary to consider as different writing-systems derived from the same source<sup>75</sup>.

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<sup>74</sup> See in the first section.

<sup>75</sup> In our previous works we accepted the first hypothesis, to which we incline also now. Let note, however, that future studies (especially results, received from deciphering) can show also truthfulness of the second hypothesis.


Kerakian culture, in north – up to the North Caucasus), spread also ceramics with signs.

Though an enormous material of the Armenian Highland's EBA culture (including ceramics with signs) has been discovered and there are numerous publications, the engravings of signs of that period have not yet been collected and systematized. There were some attempts to sum up signs and picture-motifs. For example, S. Chubinishvili, mainly, using the material discovered in Javahk<sup>76</sup>, picked out 42 signs, A. G. Sagona, without singling out the marks compiled a "Corpus of motifs"<sup>77</sup>, including 324 units, K.

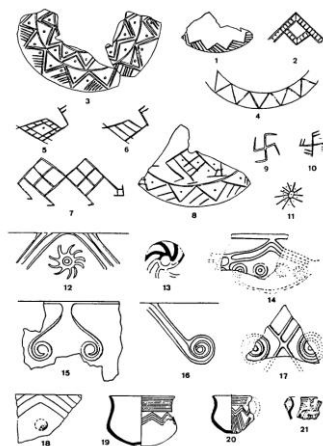


Fig. 9

Marro on the EBA 256 objects of the Euphrates' upper Basin picked out 108 signs and variety of signs (see table 2)<sup>78</sup>, P. de Miroschedji - 21 motifs<sup>79</sup> of the EBA Kirbet-Kerakian group's ceramics (fig. 9), etc. Complete collection and systematized study of the EBA ceramics' signs remains one of the unsolved problems of archaeology of Armenia<sup>80</sup>.

<sup>76</sup> Chubinishvili, 1971, table XXVII.

<sup>77</sup> Sagona, 1984, part III, picture 115-124.

<sup>78</sup> Marro, 1997, table 86-92 (the author regards them as the versions of 37 marks, which is not acceptable, because marks in several cases, completely different from each other, are considered versions of the same mark, therefore we show marks without K. Marro's numeration, see table 2).

<sup>79</sup> De Miroschedji, 2000, p. 275, fig. 4.

<sup>80</sup> "Corpus of motifs" by A.G.Sagona is the complete one among the published until the present (Sagona, 1984, part III, fig. 115-124). We should note that, though being the most voluminous one, the Corpus has not included the whole material published before 1984 (e.g. the ceramics with

There are many duplicates of the EBA ceramics' signs on rock-carvings and other monuments attributed to the same period. Comparative investigation in this field owes much to H.A. Martirosyan<sup>81</sup>, however, this work has not been continued after him.

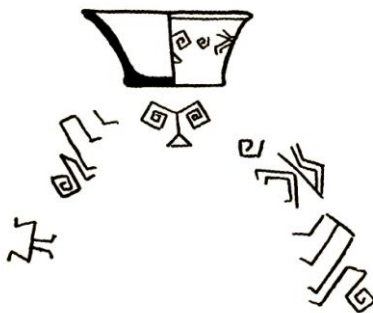


Fig. 10

Investigations done in the field of interpretation and decipherment of the EBA monuments' sign system may be divided into two main groups. The authors of the first group tried to interpret only single signs or complete pictures (compositions)<sup>82</sup>. While the second group is still represented by one sample: an attempt to decipher Ozni's inscription (fig. 10), which is far to be convincing<sup>83</sup>.

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signs from the Yanik-tepe archeological site at the vicinity of Lake Urmia, see Burney, 1961-1962).

<sup>81</sup> H.A.Martirosyan comparing similar pictographs of Armenia's rock-carvings and the EBA ceramics with Biaina-Urartian hieroglyphs and the signs attested in the Armenian medieval manuscripts, showed that they belonged to different phases of the hereditary development of Armenian pictography (Martirosyan, 1973, the main conclusions – pp. 68-70, table XXIII).

<sup>82</sup> This field again owes much to the investigations of H.A.Martirosyan (summed up – Martirosyan, 1973 and Martirosyan, 1978). See also Demirkhanyan, 1982, pp. 154-164; Frolova, 1984, pp. 54-66; Abrahamyan, Demirkhanyan, 1985, pp. 66-84; Demirkhanyan, Frolova, 1985, pp. 68-86, etc.

<sup>83</sup> The author (Shanshiaveli) identifying the signs of Ozni's inscriptions with the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs, offers to read it "The Supreme God's way to the temple" (Shanshiaveli, 1989, pp. 209-212). Following such logic, all the writings met on the EBA ceramics must be read according to the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system, but it has nothing to do with reality.

At the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC the availability of writing (developed pictography) in the Armenian Highland is proved not only by archaeological discoveries, but also foreign sources. The study of Sumerian original texts shows that in the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC Aratta (today known as the first state in the Armenian Highland) had its own writing<sup>84</sup>.

### II-3. *THE LINEAR SCRIPT OF ARMENIA (LSA)*

In the EBA sign system the linearization of picture-pictographs and their distancing from the proto-patterns' forms had already become evident. In the first half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC signs acquired more linear, than pictorial form<sup>85</sup>. From the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC the linear scripts' system came into larger use in Armenia. The use of the linear script-system ceased with widening of the power of the Kingdom of Van.

Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century more than 300 voluminous inscriptions have been discovered only in Eastern Armenia, which need thorough investigation<sup>86</sup>.

**The history of the script system's study.** In a brief enumeration of archaeological discoveries presented below in chronological sequence the objects with single signs or monograms (on

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<sup>84</sup> Movsisyan, 1992, pp. 60-62.

<sup>85</sup> The regularities known from the history of scripts' development show that pictographs lost their pictorial essence and became linear signs during centuries (sometimes in the course of millennia). Egyptian hieroglyphs, for example, in pictorial form had been in use since the 32<sup>nd</sup> century BC (hieratic writing – since the 30<sup>th</sup> century BC), and their simplified forms – demotic writing came into use only in the 8<sup>th</sup> century (Korostovcev, 1961, pp. 7-8, 19-20). It proves indirectly the correctness of those authors who dated back to the 5<sup>th</sup> millennium BC the origin of the script (ideography) in the Armenian Highland.

<sup>86</sup> The objects with monograms are not considered to be in this group. For our initial work in this field see Movsisyan, 1999, pp. 202-210.

different kinds of weaponry, various ceramic utensils, etc.) discovered in cultural layers of the Middle, Late Bronze and Early Iron periods will not be mentioned. Later, when a complete collection of inscriptions of Armenia's linear script is compiled, all the mentioned archaeological objects must be included in it; so below only voluminous original texts will be presented.

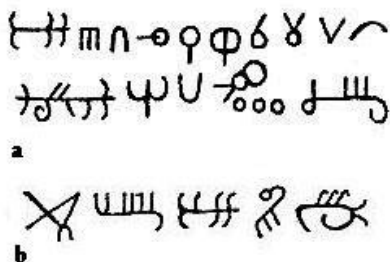


Fig. 11

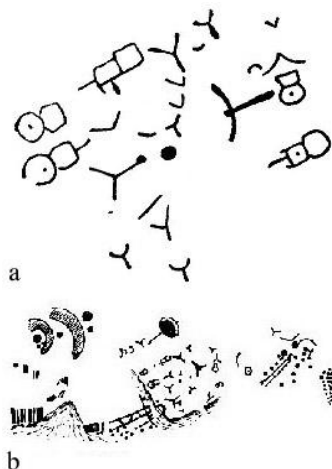


Fig. 12

In the initial stage of discovery, Armenia's linear scripts were qualified as "enigmatic". First two of the monuments, regarded as "enigmatic" (as far as it is known), were published in 1910 by Mesrop archbishop Smbatyan<sup>87</sup>. They were discovered at the vicinity of the Tsoiakert castle (fig.11) on the right bank of the Arax River. The next was the Armavir's inscription (in fig. 12a – inscription, fig. 12b – inscription is in the centre, around it – holes and other carvings)<sup>88</sup>. Unlike the former finds of uncer-

<sup>87</sup> See Smbatyan, 1910, pp. 574-576, Smbatyan, 1913, pp. 52-68.

<sup>88</sup> Kalantar, 1929, pp. 44-45; Meshchanunov, 1932, pp. 51-55; Meshchanunov, 1993, pp. 34-65, Ter-Avetisyan, 1941, pp. 51-64.

tain dating, the latter has an important argumentation for dating: the inscribed stone had been turned upside down and Greek inscriptions (the 3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC<sup>89</sup>) were engraved on reverse. Therefore, the time of the signs' carving had to precede the mentioned period; there are no other facts available for more precise dating.

I.I. Meshchaninov contributed greatly to the study of these inscriptions. He summed up known before those monuments.<sup>90</sup> For the first time were published marks of four objects (signs on three of them see in fig. 13) unearthed by E.Ryosler (in 1899-1901) and Y.Gummel (in 1930-1931) at Yelenendorf (near Gandzak) and two gravestones from one of Tandzatap's (Khodjalu's) mausoleums (fig. 14). On the basis of archeological analysis I.I. Meshchaninov dated back these materials to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC.

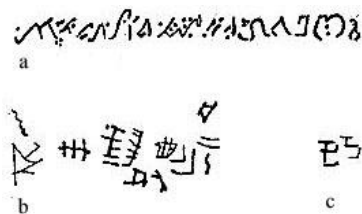


Fig. 13

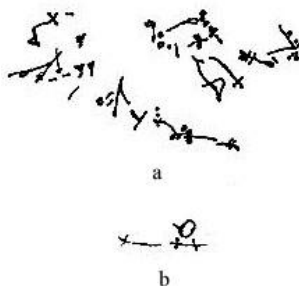


Fig. 14

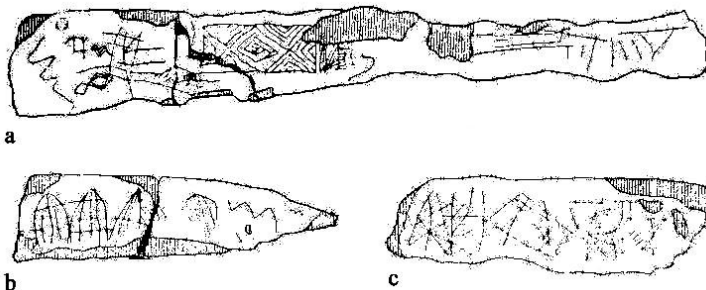
In the 1960-s were published some inscriptions (the first half of 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC) discovered in Javahk,<sup>91</sup> which were

<sup>89</sup> Viewpoints about inscriptions and their dating see Movsisyan, 2003 (b), pp. 124-138 (and the cited literature).

<sup>90</sup> Meshchaninov, 1932, pp. 52-55; Meshchaninov, 1933, pp. 34-65.

<sup>91</sup> Japaridze, 1964, pp. 117-120.

inscribed not on single objects, but on the walls of mausoleums (some of them see in fig. 15). 27 fragments of the petroglyph inscriptions (five of them see in fig. 16) of Metsamor (about which information appeared in press in 1913) were published only 60 years later<sup>92</sup>.



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K. H. Mkrtychyan notes: “The similarity of most of signs is distinctive, as well as identity of almost 17 marks with both the signs preserved in Armenian medieval manuscripts and those used simultaneously with cuneiform in the period of the Kingdom of Van. In this respect, Metsamor’s petroglyphs can become a subject of a special study”<sup>93</sup>. Unfortunately, these monuments, which are really of great importance, have not become a subject of thorough investigation until the present<sup>94</sup>.

<sup>92</sup> Khanzadyan, Mkrtychyan, Parsamyan, 1973, pp. 149-165, table XXXI-XXXIV.

<sup>93</sup> Ibid. (the author of the section – K.H.Mkrtychyan).

<sup>94</sup> Once about deciphering of Metsamor’s signs, S.Ayvazyan did a series of publications, considering them “Hayasian inscriptions”, which was strictly criticized by B.B.Piotrovski (HPR, 1971, N 3, pp. 302-303, where S.Ayvazyan’s publications of 1960s were cited). B.B.Piotrovski mentioned that many of them are scripts of Arabian alphabet “cuphi”. With the purpose to put simplicity in this question, we tried to compose signary of Metsamor’s petroglyphs, embracing only completely preserved signs and

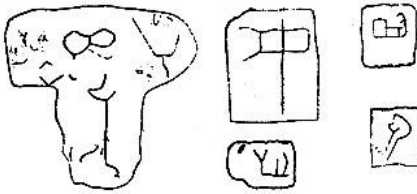


Fig. 16

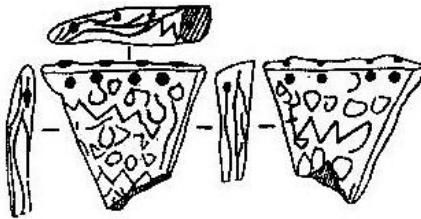


Fig. 17

Continuing and developing A.Kalantar's observations, M.Khachatryan considers the engravings of the fourth group<sup>95</sup> of Metsamor's rock-made cult constructions to be an engraved map of Aragatsotn's pre-Urartian irrigation system, noting that "there is an unread hieroglyph inscription on their northern and southern sides", then he adds that "one of the hieroglyphs is like Phoenician-Egyptian "mion" ideogram, which is read as "water"<sup>96</sup>.

Besides the petroglyph inscriptions, an inscribed clay tablet<sup>97</sup> was discovered (fig. 17) in the Metsamor cultural layers (the 2<sup>nd</sup> and beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC), which, probably, was used as an amulet.

For the first time together with Metsamor's materials K. H. Mkrtychyan put into scientific circulation a very remarkable monument devoted to the water's worship discovered at the village of Kakavadzor of the Talin's region. It was compared with similar engravings of Metsamor<sup>98</sup>. Unfortunately, this important monument also remains almost ignored.

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got more than sixty signs (table 3), while neither "cuphi", nor any other Arabian writing (script) has ever had such number of marks.

<sup>95</sup> Khanzadyan, Mkrtychyan, Parsamyan, 1973, pp. 155, fig. 154.

<sup>96</sup> Khachatryan, 1971, pp. 130, 136-137.

<sup>97</sup> Khanzadyan, Mkrtychyan, Parsamyan, 1973, pp. 151, table XXIX.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, pp. 151-153, fig. 151.

As far as we know, H. A. Martirosyan made last attempt to collect inscriptions (which are the subject of our problem) in his book.<sup>99</sup> He unified the above mentioned inscriptions of Javahk, the Lake Urmia's basin, Tsolakert and Armavir. The inscriptions from the last two sites he dated back to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC<sup>100</sup>. H.A.Martirosyan unified the mentioned original texts with rock-carvings in one common group calling it "prehistoric signs", but it is wrong, because, on the one hand, rock-carvings are monuments of proto-writing phase and, on the other hand, above mentioned inscriptions refer to the period of developed script.

1		2		3		4		5	
6		7		8		9		10	
11		12		13		14		15	
16		17		18		19		20	
21		22		23		24		25	
26		27		28		29		30	
31		32		33		34		35	
36		37		38		39		40	
41		42		43		44		45	
46		47		48		49		50	
51		52		53		54		55	
56		57		58		59		60	
61		62		63		64		65	

Tab. 3

Though materials discovered during recent decades could illuminate the problem of inscription's study, anyhow, after H. A.Martirosyan no attempt has been made to collect and to systematize them. It concerns particularly the monuments on the Aparan water reservoir's bank, located near the village of Ku-

<sup>99</sup> Martirosyan, 1973.

<sup>100</sup> Khanzadyan, Mkrtchyan, Parsamyan, 1973, pp. 151-153, fig. 151.

chak and dating back to the 18<sup>th</sup>-14<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. During the excavations in 1986-87 nearly fifty inscribed stones of this group were unearthed. On some of them marks have been engraved on two or three sides (in general, nearly 80 inscribed sides, some of them see fig. 18)<sup>101</sup>. The commonness of Kuchak's inscriptions with the tomb-stones (of more archaic character) of Tandzatap (Khodjalu) and Javahk is evident. Kuchak's marks have noticeable commonness with the marks of above mentioned monuments of Yelenendorf, Tsolakert, Armavir, the Lake Urmia's basin and Metsamor (table 4). With some of them typologically is connected an inscription incised on the bottom of a storage jar (the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC) unearthed at Aygeshat archeological site in 1990 by L.N.Biyagov and H.G.Avetisyan (fig. 19).

There is an interesting inscription on the grave-stone of a mausoleum (the Middle Bronze period) at the archaeological site of Verin (Upper) Naver. Information about it was published in 1982<sup>102</sup>.

Once an arch-form monument's upper fragment (photo and drawing, fig. 21) with linear writing marks was transported from the village of Tsughrut of the Akhaltskha region to Yerevan. At

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<sup>101</sup> Muradyan, 1987, pp. 20-21; Muradyan, 1992, pp. 103-105, table CIII-CXV (this very important material has already been published but in a very limited number, so we bring it completely in the supplement of this book).

<sup>102</sup> Simonyan, 1982, 17-18. A grave-stone with marks discovered during excavations in 1981-82, unfortunately, has disappeared (maybe, the inhabitants of the nearby villages used it as a building stone). Meanwhile, in the first half of the twenty century some engravings of Metsamor were destroyed and thus remained unknown for science (the local population used the territory of the monument as a quarry). Decades ago the same happened with one stone in Armavir with a hieroglyphic and three Greek inscriptions; another stone with four Greek inscriptions lies near dunghills without any protection. Kuchak's exclusive monuments appeared under the water and mud at the bottom of the Aparan water reservoir. With thanks we must note that archaeologist Hakob Simonyan gave us the photos of the monument's excavations, from which we've done the presented drawing.

the present time it is in the editorial board of “Science” newspaper (National Academy of Sciences of the Republic of Armenia). It’s planned to remove to the State Historical Museum of Armenia<sup>103</sup>. Such monuments were largely scattered in the ancient Orient, as well as ancient Armenia; a similar monument with linear scripts, was discovered at Yernjatap.

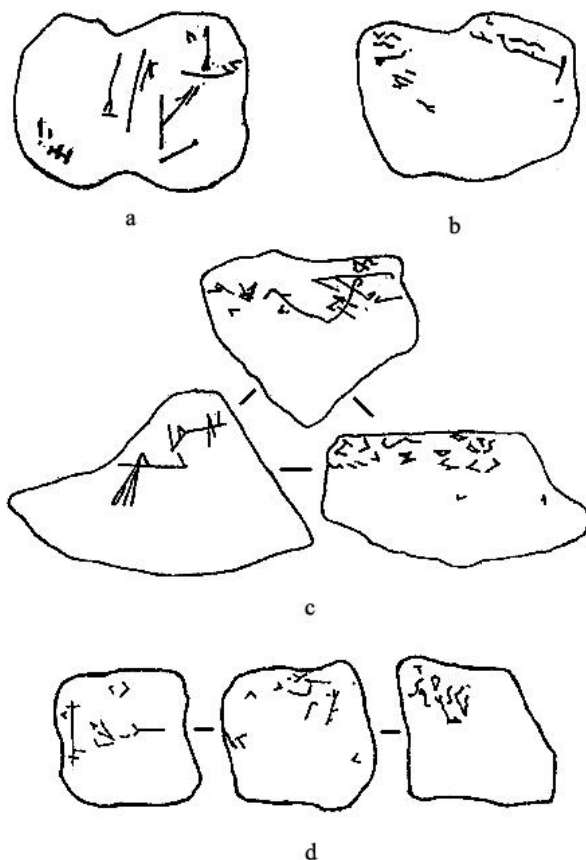


Fig. 18

<sup>103</sup> The inscription of the monument was published for the first time by us in the “Science” newspaper of RA NAS (1998, April, N 8-9).

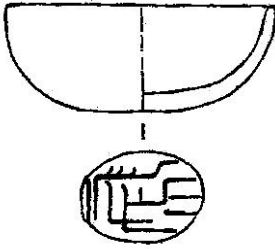


Fig. 19

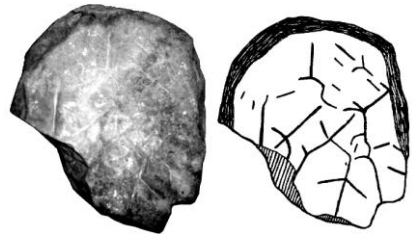


Fig. 20

The list of monuments with linear scripts, dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC is not limited by the enumerated ones. There are many discovered monuments, which have not yet been published. Among them numerous unexcavated tombs of Kuchak's necropolis with grave-stones bearing linear script signs might be mentioned. They are at the bottom of the Aparan reservoir being opened only in summer, during the lowering of the water-level<sup>104</sup>.

Greatly remarkable stelae discovered at the Yernjatap village have not been published yet<sup>105</sup>.

It's known from special literature that there are stelae with writing signs at the pre-Biainian archeological site<sup>106</sup> of the Spitak



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<sup>104</sup> F.Muradyan noted about them (Muradyan, 1992, p. 104). In the summer of 2001 was the unprecedented fall of the level of the reservoir because of drought. Visiting the territory of reservoir with H.Martirosyan we noticed dozens of unexcavated mausoleums with sign engraved stones.

<sup>105</sup> For amiable giving the material we thank Boris Gasparyan who discovered the monument-complex.

<sup>106</sup> See, for example, Muradyan, 1992, p. 105, where the author notes their characteristic differences from Kuchak's signs.

region's village of Gogaran, but I have not got a chance to study it.

In 1996 and 1997 the Armenian-Italian joint expedition discovered two stones, which for a long time have admittedly been considered to be lost fragments bearing hieroglyphic and Greek inscriptions<sup>107</sup>. There are also signs next to reliefs (including of the “deity’s” picture) on one of the stones (fig. 22).

Recently, in companionship of the archaeologist



*Fig. 22*

B.Gasparyan, visiting Mulki-4 Paleolithic site in the Aparan region, we noticed a large number of stones with analogous styled engravings on them in the neighbourhood. These stones were removed from their original places to open agricultural areas.

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<sup>107</sup> Karapetyan, Khachatryan, Kanecyan, Ghaphadaryan, 1998, pp. 35-36.

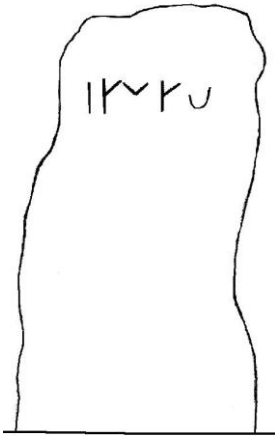


Fig. 23



Fig. 24

Kuchak	Metsamor	Armavir	Utik	Tsolakert

Tab. 4

While visiting Kaqavadzor<sup>108</sup> with K.Tokhatyan, besides above mentioned engravings we traced some others on the eastern side of the castle, where the ruins of cult buildings were located. On the one hand, they obviously relate to the pre-Biainian similar engravings of Metsamor and, on the other hand, - Karmir Berd's engravings<sup>109</sup>.

A *menhir* with marks in Shamiram is still a single monument in its kind (fig. 23)<sup>110</sup>. Besides, *menhir*'s marks are rather

<sup>108</sup> There is an alarming fact concerning this monument. Building stones have been brought nor far from the Kaqavadzor unique engravings, because, according to the villagers' information, something like a livestock farm has been planned to be built.

<sup>109</sup> Archaeologist Husik Melkonyan drew our attention to these unpublished engravings, for what we thank him.

<sup>110</sup> The information about *menhir* and its inscription has been published for the first time. Archaeologists who excavated the monument-complex in

similar with undeciphered inscription on a pot recovered from Van and published by C.F.Lehmann-Haupt in 1931 (fig. 24)<sup>111</sup>.

During conversations with Armenian archaeologists we have been informed, that besides the mentioned ones, there are similar monuments, which need a complete study and publication in coming years.

There are similar monuments also in Western Armenia. As is seen from photos marks of some stones from Kars and Hamshen obviously remind the linear script under discussion. Unfortunately the danger of annihilation threatens them. Together with the planned destruction of Armenian monuments by Turkish government, among the Turks and Kurds a myth is largely spread about hidden treasures of the Armenians since the years of Genocide. Thus, any stone with signs is perceived by them as a treasure-showing and, consequently, as these stones, as well as monuments sometimes buried under them are destroyed by “treasure searches”. This sad reality is a continuing manifestation of the Armenian Genocide, as well as its echo in the memory of Turkish and Kurdish peoples, which the Turkish falsifiers of history so eagerly continue to deny.

**The characterization of the writing system.** To begin with the study of any unknown language and its script system, first of all it's necessary to clear up a series of peculiarities, specifying the system, which beget favourable conditions for decipherment of the given script and language. They refer to the fame of the language and scripts under consideration and their connections with other languages and scripts (if there are such), inscriptions' chronology, extent and other characteristics (volume, types,

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Shamiram - Hakob Simonyan, Grigor Areshyan and others noticed the inscription. I express my gratitude to anthropologist Ruzan Mkrtchyan for information about the monument with script. The cromlech with the *menhir* in its centre has not been excavated yet, but having excavations of the similar neighbouring mausoleums as a basis, it can be dated back to the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC.

<sup>111</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1931, pp. 467-468.

structure, etc.), the script-system's type (according to the number of signs), the direction of writing and inner peculiarities (the style of script signs, the use of auxiliary marks, determinatives, signs denoting numbers, ligatures, etc.), the existence of the language and script under consideration and additional synchronic data of other sources assisting decipherment<sup>112</sup>.

**1. The degree of acquaintance with the script and the language of inscriptions.** Inscriptions written in LSA haven't been discovered in any other place of the world. On the one hand, not a single inscription with such script-system has yet been read and, on the other hand, interpretations about some marks are not enough for clarification of the used script's language.

**2. Inscriptions' chronology and distribution.** The archaeological sites, where the objects with scripts have been found, were briefly presented in the previous section. Their mapping shows the extension of writing system to Javahk in the north, the Basin of Lake Urmia in the south, the provinces of Artsakh and Utik of Great Armenia in

the east, but we do not have a clear borderline in the west, because of the lack of materials for the present.

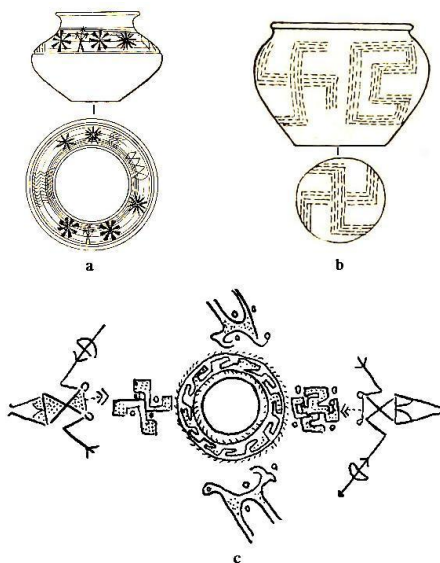


Fig. 25

<sup>112</sup> About methods of decipherment of unknown scripts and languages see Aalto, 1945; Fridrich, 1961, pp. 152-157; Diakonoff, 1976, pp. 11-29, etc.

The oldest inscriptions under consideration were dated back by specialists to the second half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC. The use of LSA ceased in the Armenian Highland with the widening of the power of the Kingdom of Van, which officialized three new script-systems<sup>113</sup>.

**3. The characteristics of the monuments bearing scripts.** Information about the characteristics, meaning, use,

as well as inscribing technique of the objects bearing signs and inscriptions, as a rule is useful in the process of the script-system investigation, sometimes also in decipherment. Let's present the main groups of the objects having signs with their peculiarities.

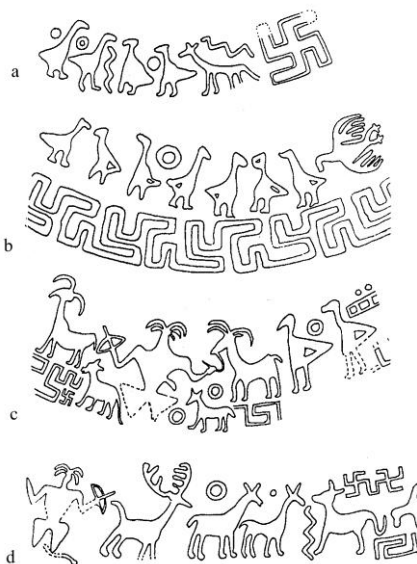


Fig. 26

a) *Inscriptions on menhir-like and other kinds of stelae.* Among such monuments are the *menhir* in Shamiram, stelae discovered at Tsughrut and Yernjatap.

b) *Inscriptions on tomb-stones.* This group includes tomb-stones in Tandzatap, Javaḥk, Kuchak, Verin Naver. Special attention must be paid to the mausoleums' tomb-slabs.

c) *Inscriptions on stones (rocks).* This group includes inscriptions in Tzolakert, Armavir, Metsamor, Agarak, Karavadzor (also a number of unpublished inscriptions).

d) *Sings on ceramic vessels.* This group may be divided into two subgroups - vessels bearing integral inscriptions and

<sup>113</sup> Movsisyan, 1999, pp. 207-208.

separate marks (sometimes, single-marks). The first subgroup includes ceramic vessels bearing signs discovered at Yelenendorf, Van and Aygshat. The second group, which has not been classified yet, is enormously large (some of them see fig. 25, pictures on ceramics<sup>114</sup>, discovered from Karashamb – fig. 26)

e) *Kinds of weaponry with signs*. This exceptionally interesting group includes sabers, quivers, girdles, war axes bearing separate marks, etc (some of them see fig. 27).

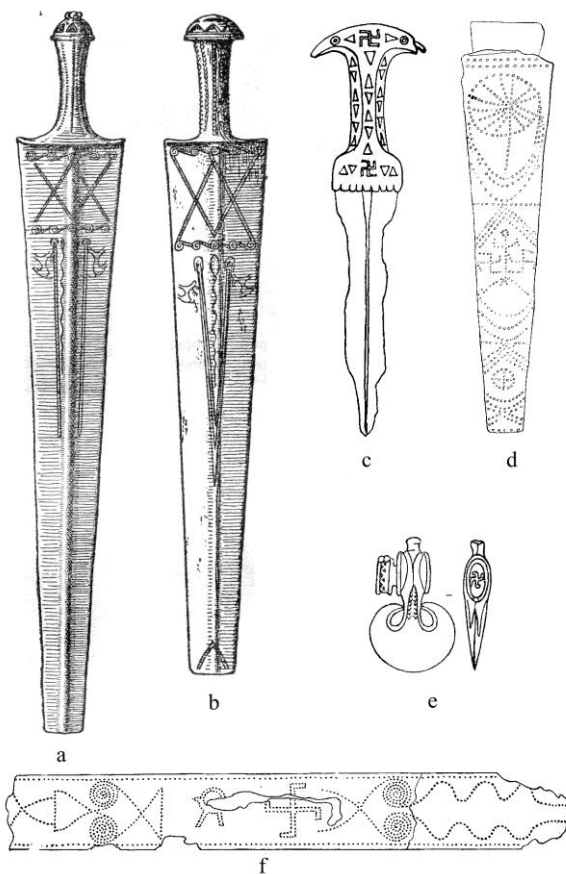


Fig. 27

<sup>114</sup> Piliposyan, Hovhannisyan, 2003, pp. 74, 81, table 3.

f) *Seals*. Weaponry and seals of the Middle, Late Bronze and Early Iron periods bear only single marks. Seals bearing integral inscriptions in linear scripts haven't been discovered yet.

g) *Phylacteries*. Until now one amulet with a script has been discovered at Metsamor. But with great probability we may suppose that numerous badges extended from the period under consideration, have also magic signification (fig. 28).

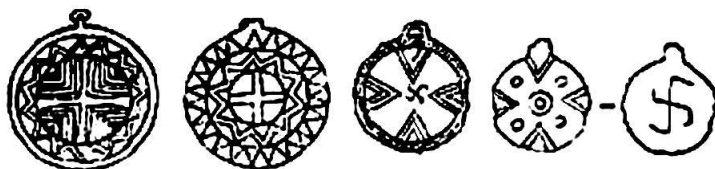


Fig. 28

**4. The quantity and kinds of inscriptions.** The inscriptions at our disposal can be classified according to the volume and meaning characteristics. An important criterion for classification is also the inscriptions' structure. While inscriptions are waiting for their decipherment we can apply to the first of these criteria. Thus available monuments bearing inscriptions can be divided into two large groups – objects with voluminous inscriptions and single marks.

According to our preliminary calculation, the inscriptions' number of the first group excels 300. Calculation of the objects bearing inscriptions belonging to the second group has not been done yet, because the corpus of the inscriptions and monograms has not yet been worked out.

**5. The problem of availability of multilingual inscriptions.** The decipherment of the Egyptian hieroglyphic system by J.-F.Champollion (1790-1832) showed particular significance of multilingual inscriptions with the same content in the sphere of decipherment of unknown scripts and languages.

Unfortunately, not a single monument written in LSA has been discovered with any other parallel script, consequently difficulties of decipherment of this system increase.

**6. *Direction of writing.*** In the history of the writing systems the direction of signs in writing varies greatly – from right-to-left or from left-to-right, from top to bottom, or alternately left-to-right and right-to-left in a boustrophedon pattern<sup>115</sup>, circular, etc.<sup>116</sup>. What was the direction of writing in the writing system under consideration?

In this question we are in complete vagueness: although thousands of inscriptions of this writing system have sustained to the present, however, their directions of writing remain obscure. In some cases we get an impression that we deal not with signs which have a definite direction, but with complete views which prompt general content.

**7. *The number of signs and accordingly – the type of the writing system.*** One of the most important characteristics of the writing system is the number of signs used in it. That, as a rule, indicates the type of the writing system we deal with. Usually, if the number of signs doesn't exceed 40-50 it means that we deal with alphabet. Systems with more than 50 or several hundred signs are syllabic or logo-syllabic. The writing systems with thousands of signs are logographic systems (ideographic) – without phonetic signs or with their sparse use.

For example, the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system consisted of nearly 500 signs of which 70 had phonetic use. In the 15<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC it was used also in the west of the Armenian Highland,

About 400-500 signs of LSA are known at present, but as far as they have not yet been deciphered, it is difficult to concre-

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<sup>115</sup> Gelb, 1965, p. 178; WWS, p. 120-121 (author of section H.Graig Melchert).

<sup>116</sup> The direction of writing is usually determined by the unwritten parts of unfinished lines.

tize, whether there are some of phonetic value. As regards the characteristics of the writing system, it's more probable, that here we deal with logo-syllabic system (it is possible to be exceptionally logographic).

**8. Ligatures.** Alike some modern languages, among old writing systems to modify any noun another one was put before it which became the attribute of the following one (as, for example, the rule of conversion in English). In cuneiform writing, for the same purpose were widely used determinant-ideograms (indicators, determinatives). Ligature is an expression of determinant-ideography; a composite character in which the components are recognizable<sup>117</sup>.

Numerous cases of ligatures are observed evidently in inscriptions written in LSA. Their study, however, requires more carefulness, sometimes it is difficult to decide whether it is a complex sign made by one stroke or it is a ligature of two or more signs.

**9. Relations with other writing systems and information from synchronic written sources.** Comparing our collected signs with a number of scripts of the ancient world, we

Rock-carvings	Linear scripts	Rock-carvings	Blainian hieroglyphs

<sup>117</sup> WWS, p. xlii.

Tab. 5

see considerable commonness, sometimes surprising similarity. For the present we refrain from publishing correlating lists compiled, because Armenia's linear scripts have not been deciphered yet. Therefore, without clarifying the meaning, outward appearance is not enough for correct conclusions.

Some of these script signs, being derived from petroglyphs, are a connecting link between petroglyphs and Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system (see table 5a and b). Such a presumption allows to investigate the development of pre-Ervandid Armenia's writing culture in chronological continuity. Anyhow, as in the case of the hieroglyphs on ceramics of the Early Bronze period, because of insufficient study we do not present some peculiarities of the writing system (group classification, according to outward appearance, the direction of writing, types of inscriptions, volume, structure, the application of numbers and auxiliary signs, and other qualities). Their study is also a matter of time.

### **The problem of decipherment.**

***1. The question of subsidiary data promoting decipherment.*** Decipherment of unknown languages and scripts is greatly promoted by information about spiritual and material values of the country and people, which used them. The history of script's study is rich with numerous cases when, without thorough information about the given country and its people and judging only from the analysis of script signs' outward appearance, have been made up quite wrong conclusions, and vice versa, when this information greatly contributed to decipherment. It must be said, that though the whole territory of the Armenian Highland (especially Western Armenia, where the native Armenian population was massacred during the Genocide committed by Turkey) has not been systematically studied, archaeological material known today allows to form a certain notion about the Armenian Highland and its people, state authorities, religion, traditions, economy, culture, daily life and other matters in that ancient period.

A large number of studies about them can be used in decipherment works.

**2. *The attempts of decipherment.*** Formerly Armenia's linear script was not considered to be a separate writing system; therefore, no steps have been undertaken leading to the decipherment of that system. Some attempts have been made to explain only some monuments.

The known research works in the sphere of interpretation and decipherment of the monuments of the Early Bronze Age hieroglyphic system and linear script can be divided into two main groups. The authors of the first group tried to interpret only single signs, and the authors of the second group – complete pictures (compositions)<sup>118</sup>. Therefore, not a single inscription may be considered to be deciphered, yet<sup>119</sup>.

#### **II-4. THE HIEROGLYPHIC WRITING OF THE KINGDOM OF VAN**

Writing culture of the period of the Kingdom of Van (Nairi, Biainili, Ararat-Urartu) is distinguished in the history of pre-Christian Armenia. During that period three writing systems were in use – the Mesopotamian cuneiform in Assyrian, a cuneiform of local type in the language of the Biainian cuneiform-

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<sup>118</sup> The most embracing work in this direction which has been summed up in Martirosyan, 1973, 1978. A considerable contribution to clarification of the problems on different concepts made H.R. Israyelyan (see Israyelyan, 1973).

<sup>119</sup> S. Ayvazyan's suggestions concerning the reading of Metsamor's inscriptions, are also groundless (see his publications with different authors in "Sciences about Earth" (Bulletin of Academy of Sciences of the Arm. SSR, 1964, NN 2 (pp. 69-74), 5 (pp. 59-64) and 6 (pp. 73-81)). The attempts of decipherment are doomed to failure if done without clarification of characteristics of the writing system (specification of the writing direction, etc.) and judged only on the basis of the explanations of hieroglyphs preserved in medieval manuscripts, which may be used only with some reservations (see in subsection of the next section "Relations with other writing systems").

system<sup>120</sup> and *mehenagir* (temple script, hieroglyphs) of the native Armenian origin. The problem of decipherment and language of *mehenagir* will be thoroughly analyzed in this work. As distinct from the former two ones, the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van has been less studied<sup>121</sup>.

Our goal is summarization of the results of the studies of the writing system under consideration on the basis of available materials and, as far as possible, presenting as the complete picture of that system and the present state of the decipherment work, as well as the place of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van in the general system of pictography in Armenia. A collection (corpus) of known hieroglyph inscriptions together with single signs was presented at the end of our work “Armenian Hieroglyphic Script (Mehenagir)”, as the Supplement<sup>122</sup> to favour the future process of the hieroglyphic system’s study.

During last decades heated discussions were stirred up on the problem of the ethnic character of the Kingdom of Van, during which those who denied that state to accept to be Armenian

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<sup>120</sup> Under Sarduri I (circ. 840-825 BC) not only the Mesopotamian cuneiform in Assyrian was used, which later appeared mainly in royal bilingual inscriptions. Since the time of Išpuini (about 825-810 BC.) cuneiforms of local type had appeared. Their language in scientific literature is more known as “Urartian”. As far as it is not derived from the selfname of the Kingdom of Van, we prefer to call it “the language of the Biainian cuneiform system”.

There is voluminous literature about cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van (König, 1955-57, Melikishvili 1960-1971; Arutyunyan, 2001). At present the Italian orientalist M.Salvini prepares for publication a complete collection of the known original texts - “Urartian cuneiform texts”.

<sup>121</sup> Until 1998 the most complete published work about this writing system was R.O.Barnet’s article (Barnett, 1974, pp. 43-55). In 1998 was published our work “The hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van (Biainili, Urartu, Ararat)” in which were summed up materials and results of the studies which had been published earlier. Materials and results of the studies published during last years are included in the present chapter and the supplement of the book.

<sup>122</sup> Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 189-269.

and their opponents, correspondingly, used the terms “Urartu, Urartian” and “Ararat, Araratian” putting them into ungrounded contraposition. Not accepting the disputing sides’ principles and taking into account that the kings of the Kingdom of Van called their country Biainili (in Assyrian parts - Nairi)<sup>123</sup> in their own inscriptions, while in contemporary Assyrian sources it was mentioned by the name of Urartu<sup>124</sup>, and in the Bible – Ararat<sup>125</sup>, in our work we shall equally use these three (and formed by their stems) varieties, giving preference to the self-appellation of that state.

## II-4-1. THE HISTORY OF STUDY

**1. Archaeological discoveries.** Unlike cuneiform inscriptions (many of which were found on the ground surface), the objects with hieroglyph inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van were unearthed during excavations, treasure searching and agricultural or constructive works. First discoveries were made in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1859 two objects with signs were found and sent to the State Hermitage from the mausoleum of Alishar plundered by Kurds<sup>126</sup>. In 1892 during the excavations of

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<sup>123</sup> The name of Biainili usually is replaced by the country-name of Nairi in the Assyrian sections of bilingual inscriptions as one of the pre-Biainian common geographic names given to the Armenian Highland. The inscription of Rusa I (near the village of Topuzava, to the south-west from Lake Urmia) is an exception, in which the equivalent of Biainili is Urartu (Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 323-327; Boehmer, 1979, pp. 50-51, table 12; Andre-Salvini, 1999, pp. 5-21, Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 289-294; Andre-Salvini, Salvini, 2002, pp. 5-66 and the cited literature).

<sup>124</sup> The collection of Assyrian data about the Armenian Highland (particularly the Kingdom of Van) see Santalchean, 1901 and Diakonoff, 1951.

<sup>125</sup> 4 Kings, 19, 37; Isaiah, 37, 38; Jeremiah, 51, 27; Tobit, 1, 24;

<sup>126</sup> Piotrovski, 1962, pp. 5-6; Piotrovski, 1967, pp. 82-83.

Armavir (Biainian Argishtihinili) N. Mar bought two seals from local inhabitants that were found there<sup>127</sup>.

Excavations in Toprak kale (near Van, Biainian Rusahinili) revealed numerous and various material. In 1879-80s the first systematized excavations were carried out; most part of unearthed materials of were removed to the British museum (London). They were published and entered into the scientific use only in 1950, owing to R.D.Barnet<sup>128</sup>. In the 1880s some figurines bearing inscriptions were discovered at this archaeological site and removed to the State Hermitage<sup>129</sup>. In the 1898-99s first serious and very effective scientific excavations were carried out by the German expedition (C.F.Lehmann-Haupt and V.Belk) in Toprak kale. The results of that expedition were published by C.F.Lehmann-Haupt at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century founding the studies of the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system<sup>130</sup>.

In the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century some materials were unearthed at Biainian archaeological sites. Particularly, in 1911-12 J.A.Orbeli carried out researches in the region of Van and he obtained from the local inhabitants some antiques, among which seals from Toprak kale and Haikaberd are important for the problem under consideration<sup>131</sup>. In 1914 a mausoleum and three

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<sup>127</sup> Kyftin, 1944, pp. 57, 59-60; Piotrovski, 1944, pp. 276, fig. 8-11; KB-1, p. 72.

<sup>128</sup> Barnett, 1950.

<sup>129</sup> Piotrovski, 1939, pp. 50-52.

<sup>130</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1907; 1910; 1926; 1931 (the citing of the pages concerning the mentioned works of C.F. Lehmann-Haupt see in the of Toprak kale section "The explanation of columns"). Later excavations were continued in Toprak kale. Metallic objects bearing hieroglyphs unearthed at that archaeological site were removed to the Berlin's Near-Eastern museum, see Wartke, 1990, pp. 71-74; 82-83, table XVIII – 1; XXII d.

<sup>131</sup> Orbeli, 1912, p. 923; Kuftin, 1944, pp. 57, 60; Piotrovski, 1944, pp. 276-277. Besides the mentioned ones, other objects with incised hieroglyphs were found in Haikaberd later (Yesayan, Kilimjyan, 1991), which we have not included in our list for lack of corresponding literature (especially, A. Erzen's

seals with incised signs were unearthed near Igdir<sup>132</sup>. In 1915 seals with incised hieroglyphs were found also at Tsovinar (Biainian “Teišeba god’s city”, in the Basin of Lake Sevan)<sup>133</sup>. In 1935 a damaged seal was discovered during excavations at a hill near the Yerevan station<sup>134</sup>.

In the history of the Biainian hieroglyphic system’s study, excavations carried out in Karmir Blur (Urartian Teišebaini) in 1939-41 and 1945-1958 were important<sup>135</sup>. The most numerous and various hieroglyphic materials (more than 400 objects) of Biaina’s monuments have been provided by the excavation in Karmir Blur.

From 1950 Arin Berd’s (in Biainian - Erebuni) study had been carried out by the expedition of Karmir Blur and since 1952 the archaeological site had been systematically excavated by the joint expedition of Academy of Sciences of the Arm. SSR, the Committee of the protection of Armenia’s monuments and the Museum of the applied arts named after Pushkin (Moscow)<sup>136</sup>. Before that, in 1931 two seals with hieroglyphic script were discovered at a mausoleum unearthed near the village of Hakko in

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work “Chaush-tepe”). Numerous fragments of hieroglyph-bearing ceramics found in Haikaberd, see Dinçol, 1978, pp. 110-111; Salvini, 1995, p. 205.

<sup>132</sup> Kufin, 1994, pp. 56-67; table VI, IX; Barnett, 1963, pp. 189-192.

<sup>133</sup> Ibid.

<sup>134</sup> Bayburdyan, 1937, p. 285; Piotrovski, 1940, p. 33, fig. 9. This monument we called conditionally Erevan A in our corpus. From the territory of the “Hastotznormal” factory in Yerevan some Biainian objects were found (they are kept in “Erebuni” Museum); this group we also conditionally called Yerevan B (Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 199-200, 237).

<sup>135</sup> The excavations were carried out by the expeditions of the Armenian Branch (from 1944 – AS of the Arm. SSR) of the AS of the USSR, the Committee of antiques’ protection and of the State Hermitage (the general leader – B.B. Piotrovski). Summary of the main results see Piotrovski, 1944, pp. 157-188, KB-1; KB-2; KB-3; Piotrovski, 1955, pp. 42-43; Martirosyan, 1961; Martirosyan, 1964, pp. 251-269; Djakonov, 1963, N 1-11; 1970, etc.

<sup>136</sup> About published objects bearing hieroglyphs found in Arin Berd see Khodjash, 1968; Demskaya, 1968; Israyelyan, 1972; Khodjash, 1976; Erebuni, 1979; Khodjash, 1981 and the cited literature.

the Talin district<sup>137</sup>. In 1957 a Biainian necropolis<sup>138</sup> was unearthed not far from Arin Berd in the quarter of New Aresh in Yerevan, where was Erebuni's graveyard, according to specialists.

Since 1959 the study of the monuments of the Kingdom of Van had been activated within the limits of the Republic of Armenia, when Institute of Archaeology and Ethnography of Soviet Armenia was opened. A remarkable seal-stamp was discovered at the town of Gavar<sup>139</sup>. From 1962 excavations in Armavir (Biainian Argishtihinili) recommenced and became systematic during which many objects bearing signs were discovered<sup>140</sup>.

From the 1970s till now numerous Biainian historic sites have been discovered and excavated (Oshakan<sup>141</sup>, Karchaghbyur<sup>142</sup>, Geghovit<sup>143</sup>, Biainian mausoleum of Yerevan<sup>144</sup>, Aragats<sup>145</sup>, Noratus<sup>146</sup>, Dovri<sup>147</sup>, Yeghegnadzor<sup>148</sup>, Sarukhan<sup>149</sup>,

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<sup>137</sup> KB-2, pp. 47, 53.

<sup>138</sup> Martirosyan, Mnatcakanyan, 1958, pp. 63-84; Barnett, 1963, pp. 194-198.

<sup>139</sup> Melikyan, 1968, pp. 18-20, table 14a. Now inhabitants call the castle-historic-place the Berdaglukh ("head of castle"). It's Biainian "Haldi god's city".

<sup>140</sup> Arakelyan, 1969; Tiratsyan, 1972; 1973, 1974a; 1974b; Martirosyan, 1974; Tiratsyan, 1978; Tiratsyan, Karapetyan, 1979, 1981, 1982; 1983; 1985; 1988; 1989; 1991; Martirosyan, 1981; Martirosyan, Torosyan, 1986; Karapetyan, Yengibaryan, 1996.

<sup>141</sup> Yesayan, Kalantaryan, 1988, pp. 68-81.

<sup>142</sup> From the village of Karchaghbyur of the Vardenis region some Biainian-Urartian objects (a seal bearing signs among these objects) were found and given to SMHA by H.H.Mnatsakanyan in 1971 (SMHA 2565-248).

<sup>143</sup> Piliposyan, Khachatryan, 1995, p. 83, table 11-13; Piliposyan, Mkrtychyan, 2001, pp. 29-34, tables 30-4, 30-7.

<sup>144</sup> Yesayan, Biyagov, Hmayakyan, Kanetcyan, 1991; Yesayan, Biyagov, Hmayakyan, Kanetcyan, 1995.

<sup>145</sup> Avetisyan, 1987; 1989; 1992; 2001; p. 74; table XVII-23, XIX-18, XXI-15, XXIX-9, LXXVI-3 (we thank Hayk Avetisyan for supplying the material's unpublished part).

Artashat<sup>150</sup>, Horom<sup>151</sup>, etc.), where monuments bearing hieroglyphs have been discovered.

In the territory of western part of Eastern Armenia and Western Armenia (which are occupied by Turkey) together with Toprak kale, Haikaberd and Igdir, important objects with hieroglyphs have been discovered (at Kayali dere (Nerkin Khndzor)<sup>152</sup>, Patnots<sup>153</sup>, Norshun-tepe, the Tigranakert district<sup>154</sup> and other places).

At the present treasure–robbery is widely spread in Turkey as a result of which valuable materials (because of their illegal sale) appear in various museums and collections of the world<sup>155</sup>.

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<sup>146</sup> Yengibaryan, 1991, pp. 66-69. Material discovered at the monument bearing hieroglyphic signs was provided by the courtesy of Nora Yengibaryan and Ashot Philiposyan.

<sup>147</sup> Hmayakyan, 1991, 58-60. Hieroglyphic signs were discovered on 19 objects of this archaeological site. For provision of their drawings and the right of publishing we thank Simon Hmayakyan.

<sup>148</sup> Yesayan, Khnkiyan, 1990, p. 41.

<sup>149</sup> The material has not been published yet. A seal bearing hieroglyph has been found for provision of which we thank A.Piliposyan and N.Yengibaruan.

<sup>150</sup> Manukyan, 1981, pp. 25-26.

<sup>151</sup> Badalyan, Kohe, Kroll, 1990, pp. 206-208.

<sup>152</sup> Burney, 1966; Yesayan, Abadjyan, 1991.

<sup>153</sup> It's known from special literature that in this archaeological site there are incised hieroglyphic signs on ceramics indicating their capacity (Klein, 1974, p. 93, introduction 61), publications about which we have not got.

<sup>154</sup> We have got also publications of the ceramics with incised hieroglyphic signs discovered at Norshun-tepe. Information about five Biainian seals found in this archaeological site we took from the work of Seidl, 1979 (a). Systematized excavations haven't been carried out in the region of Tigranakert. Treasure-robbery and sale of archaeological objects to foreign tourists is widespread among the population living there at present. In the same way some Biainian objects (including those bearing hieroglyphic signs) were gained and donated to SMHA by our compatriots from Diaspora.

<sup>155</sup> The most evident example of such crime was the sale and dispersion of more than 2000 samples of art [discovered in 1971 at the Hirkanis (Giyimli) archaeological site to the south-east from Van] in different countries of the world (Urartu, München, 1976, p. 53). About Bianian monuments found in

The study of the monuments of the Kingdom of Van from the territory of Iran was mainly executed by German archaeologists, who, since the 1960s had carried out excavations in Bastam (in Biainian “Rusa’s little city”)<sup>156</sup> and other archaeological sites (Livar, Ushnavie, Sekendel, etc.)<sup>157</sup>. The archaeological site Zivie<sup>158</sup> gave remarkable material in the territory of the country of Mana, which was under the influence of the Biainian power and sometimes was a part of it. R.D.Barnett published archaeological finds from the territory of Iran <sup>159</sup>.

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Western Armenia, we have got information from various catalogues and publications in which as places of discovery are mentioned “Eastern Turkey”, “Turkish Armenia”, “the Armenian Highland”, “the district of Lake Van”, etc. All objects with hieroglyphic signs discovered in Western Armenia, but without exact location, we put in the section of “Western Armenia - unknown” and bear Latin abbreviation WAu in our corpus (Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp.209-210, 266-268).

We were going to publish the book when the editor of “Agos” newspaper, Sargis Serobyan) sent a voluminous catalogue of the exhibition titled “Urartu: war and aesthetics” from Stambul. It contained materials discovered in Western Armenia (without pointing the exact place). Photos of the catalogue’s materials with hieroglyphs (Urartu, Istanbul, 2003, pp. 145-154) are rather obscure, therefore we preferred to use them in future, when will be available publications with more definite pictures.

Objects with writing signs from Iran (but without exact location) are put into the section of “Iran-unknown” of our corpus, see Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 210, 269).

<sup>156</sup> Objects with writing signs from Bastam see von Schuler, 1970; 1972; Klies, 1972; Seidl, 1979 (a, b).

<sup>157</sup> Besides Bastam, for the signs on ceramics of other Biainian monuments of the area near Urmia we referred to the works of *von Schuler*, 1972; Kroll, 1976.

<sup>158</sup> Ghirshman, 1954, pp. 108-109, Diakonoff, 1964, p. 367.

<sup>159</sup> Barnett, 1974, p. 48, table XIII. The author referring to P.Calmeyer, *Datierbare Bronzen aus Luristan and Kirmanshan*, Berlin, 1969 (fig. 89, 91), brings two hieroglyphs in his signary (number 52, 53) incised on the Biainian objects found in Iran.

In 1998 was published my book “The hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van (Biainili, Urartu, Ararat)”, summing up materials published earlier.

During the last five years materials with hieroglyphic signs were found at Horom<sup>160</sup>, Aragats<sup>161</sup>, Geghahovit<sup>162</sup>, Ayanis<sup>163</sup>, Kuchak<sup>164</sup> and Tsovak<sup>165</sup> and published (we should like to mention with thanks that the first three archaeological sites’ materials gave us archaeologists R.Badalyan, H. Avetisyan and A.Piliposyan before 1998). New materials bearing hieroglyphic signs were discovered during recent excavations in Erebuni, but have not been published, yet<sup>166</sup>.

The history of the archaeological discoveries and study of the Biainian-Urartian monuments bearing hieroglyphic signs is not limited by the enumerated monuments and cited literature. From literature we have learnt about a number of works dealing with recently found monuments bearing hieroglyphic signs (especially from Western Armenia), which for the time being remain inaccessible to us. We also know that there are still unpublished Biainian objects in many museums of the world, which can be of great interest for the study of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van. We think that our work will become a stimulus for publication of new materials.

**2. About the study of writing system.** The study of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van began with the publi-

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<sup>160</sup> Badalyan, Kohl, Kroll, 1997, pp. 191-229.

<sup>161</sup> Avetisyan, 2001, p. 74, table XVII-23, XIX-18, XXI-15, XXIX-9, LXXVI-3.

<sup>162</sup> Piliposyan, Mkrtchyan, 2001, pp. 29-34, table 30-4, 30-7.

<sup>163</sup> About 150 objects bearing hieroglyphic signs discovered at Ayanis, see Kozbe, Saglamtimur, 2001, pp. 115-153; Derin, Gilingiroglu, 2001, pp. 163-165, fig. 13 (59, 60); Salvini, 2001, pp. 279-319, Abay, 2001, pp. 321-353, Stone, Zimansky, 2001, pp. 359-361, 371.

<sup>164</sup> Yengibaryan, 2003, pp. 110-114, tables 1-6.

<sup>165</sup> Biscione, Hmayakyan, Parmegiani, Sayadyan, 2002, pp. 114-115, tables 13-8; Hmayakyan, 2002, pp. 291, 300, tab. 3-1.

<sup>166</sup> The information about it see Ter-Martirosov, 2002, pp. 54-57.

cations of C. F. Lehmann-Haupt. According to his opinion, cuneiforms were used in the state and hieroglyphs were used by the war-prisoners brought by the kings of Biainia during the western campaigns. Following C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, Leo, A. E. Cowley; H. T. Bosert, A. Chilingiroghlu attributed the Hittite origin<sup>167</sup> to the Biainian hieroglyphs, and T. Burton Brown considered them to be brought from Knossos (the island of Crete) and looking like Cretan-Mycenaen Linear B script<sup>168</sup>.

In the 1930-40s some researchers opposed the viewpoint of the western origin of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van. I. I. Meshchaninov supposed that cuneiform was the script used only by aristocracy while hieroglyphs were used by people having local origin<sup>169</sup>. Analyzing the materials published by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, I. I. Meschaninov, Mesrop archbishop Smbatyan<sup>170</sup> and collected by the committee of the protection of Armenia's monuments, Kh. Samvelyan came to a conclusion that in the Armenian Highland existed original hieroglyphic script<sup>171</sup>. B. B. Piotrovski also considered it to be of the local origin, for "limited economic and cult needs"<sup>172</sup>.

In respect of the study of the Biainian-Araratian hieroglyphic system especially effective was the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Alongside with publication of the materials of some archaeological sites, attempts were made to collect and systematize hieroglyphs, which became a new stimulus for the study of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van. The author of the first attempt was L. A. Barseghyan who summed up the materials of Toprak kale and Karmir Blur (except the signs on ceramics, indicating capacity, and seals), published 97 signs (61-

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<sup>167</sup> Leo, 1915, p. 335; Cowley, 1920, p. 33; Bosert, 1942, p. 92; Çilingiroğlu, 1997, p. 152.

<sup>168</sup> Burton Brown, 1946, p. 92 (according to Barseghyan, 1967, p. 86).

<sup>169</sup> Meschaninov, 1932, p. 55; 1933, pp. 60-62.

<sup>170</sup> Smbatyan, 1910, pp. 574-576.

<sup>171</sup> Samvelyan, 1941, pp. 183-190.

<sup>172</sup> Piotrovski, 1944, pp. 285-286.

from Toprak kale, 36 – Karmir Blur)<sup>173</sup>, noting that the number of his collected hieroglyphs reached 150<sup>174</sup>. The author of the second attempt was R. O. Barnett who did more voluminous work<sup>175</sup>. He collected about thirty inscriptions, compiled a signary, including 102 hieroglyphs, which he divided thematically, according to their form. The author drew attention to some questions characterizing the writing system, about which we shall speak further. In spite of shortcomings, lack of material (Arin Berd, Armavir, Bastam and other archeological sites were excavated earlier; their materials were published before 1974, but were not included) and obsolescence, R.O.Barnett's work (about the hieroglyphic script of Biainili-Urartu) before 1998 was the most complete among the published ones.

In the sphere of the hieroglyphic script's study, H. A. Martirosyan<sup>176</sup> did a remarkable work. Using the list of signs compiled by L. A. Barseghyan, he compared the hieroglyphs of Biaina-Urartu with similar pictographs on rock-carvings of Armenia and writing signs attested in the Armenian medieval manuscripts. He showed that the hieroglyphic script of the Kingdom of Van is a link between them and that petroglyphs, Urartian hieroglyphs and medieval writing signs were the phases of the hereditary development of pictography in Armenia<sup>177</sup>.

The discovered materials and studies done in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, proved finally the former point of view about

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<sup>173</sup> Barseghyan, 1967, pp. 86-87.

<sup>174</sup> In an article published in the magazine "Science and technique", L.A.Barseghyan brought a list of 134 signs (Barseghyan, 1964), where, however, versions of some hieroglyphs were presented as separate marks.

<sup>175</sup> Barnett, 1974. The collection of inscriptions and signary compiled by R.D.Barnett see pp. 66-67 and 69 of this book.

<sup>176</sup> Martirosyan, 1973; 1978.

<sup>177</sup> The summing up and conclusions of the study see Martirosyan, 1973, pp. 68-70, table XXIII (according to H.A.Martirosyan we compiled our table 1).

THE COLLECTION OF INSCRIPTIONS

Budin(A)




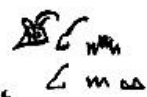
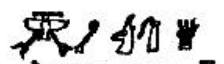


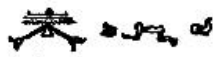






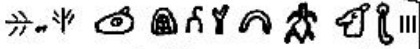
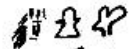

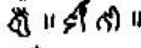
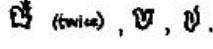





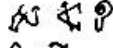

- » (B) ←
- » (C) →
- » (D) →
- » (E) ↓

Royal Inscriptions

1	bronze	KB II, fig. 27-32	= KHCI 1002, 1004	pl. Argisti S. of M.	ε = Π 9	
	helmet and shields etc	" fig. 33	" 112 B, 112 C	→ Argisti?		
2	"	" fig. 33	" 112 B	→ Argisti?		
3	cup	" fig. 27	" 104 B	pl. 17		
4	helmet		" 112 A	pl. Sarduri S. of A.		
5	shields	" fig. 30	" 112 A, 112 B	pl. Sarduri		
6	cups	" fig. 28	" 112 C, 104 B	pl. 17, pl. 106-8		
7	cup	" fig. 28	" 112 B	pl. 106		
8	"	" fig. 28	" 112 B	pl. 106		
9	"	"	" 100 B	pl. 107, 104/7	Rusa S. of A.	
10	"	" fig. 22	" 1000	pl. 107	"Rusa"	
11	helmet		" 112 A	pl. 106		

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Other texts

12	br. cup	LHMst. fig. 71		
13	clay st.	II <sup>2</sup> p. 379		
14	" "	" "		
15	seals	MVAG 1900 pl. 41, B		
16	"	L. H. II <sup>2</sup> , p. 133 = vl. fig. 20, F1		
17	"	L. H. I, p. 580 = " F2		
18	"	KB I, fig. 48		
19	"	KB II, fig. 22	→	  
20	stamp	" ", fig. 25	→	  
21	silver jug	" III, fig. 1	⇒	
22	clay tablet	UPD p. 135		 
23	bronze throne	TKE pl. III	DM 91241	
24	" "	" "	DM 91251	 (twice),  ,  .
25	" "	" "	DM 91244	
26	" "	" "	Herm. 497	 
27	" "	" "	" 498	
28	seal	" "	Pasp. 1103	

the local of the hieroglyphic script of the Kingdom of Van, which has been generally recognized<sup>178</sup>.

The hieroglyphic script of Biaina-Urartu found its place in some works devoted to the history of the world's scripts, being qualified as "pictorial writing of prehistoric Armenia"<sup>179</sup>, "proto-Armenian inscriptions", "Armenian pictography"<sup>180</sup>, etc. As a rule, insufficient study of scripts is emphasized in these works.

Along with cited works, it is worthy to mention the attempts of decipherment and interpretation of some signs in the field of the writing's investigation. These questions are analyzed in the section: "The state of decipherment".

**3. Our investigation.** Taking into account the great importance of the hieroglyphic script of the Kingdom of Van in respect of history and culture of Armenia and Western Asia and the study of world's scripts, and, at the same time, its bad state of investigation, in 1995 we began to collect the published inscriptions in order to compile a complete collection of originals. At the end of the same year, the first important results appeared; a key of decipherment was found owing to which three syllabic-written names were read and a number of ideograms explained. In 1996 we began and at the beginning of 1997 finished the second phase of compiling of the complete collection of inscriptions. We studied Biainian objects with hieroglyphic signs, kept in the museums of the Republic of Armenia<sup>181</sup>, many of them

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





















































































































<sup>178</sup> See, for example, Melikishvili, 1960, p. 33; Ghasabyan, 1960, p. 83; Barseghyan, 1967, pp. 86-87; Urartu, Gent, 1982-83, p. 36 (also the literature, cited in this section's intr. 37, 39, 40, 44), etc.

<sup>179</sup> Friedrich, 1966, p. 64; Friedrich, 1979, pp. 85-86.

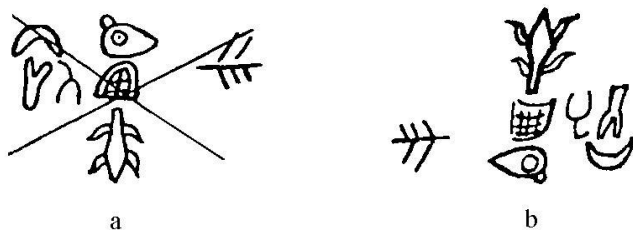
<sup>180</sup> Gelb, 1965, p. 60, Gelb, 1982, p. 67.

<sup>181</sup> We have studied the Biainian-Urartian materials of the State Historical Museum of Armenia (Yerevan), the State Ethnographical Museum of Armenia (Sardarapat) and "Erebuni" Museum. S. A. Yesayan published the catalogue of archaeological objects of the Museum of History of Yerevan (Yerevan I, 1964; Yerevan II, 1967; Yerevan III, 1972).

THE SIGNARY COMPILED BY R.D. BARNET

Vegetable	Astral	Human	Animal	Objects	Uncertain
1  16	7  7	7  7	7  7	7  7	7  7
2  21	8  21	8  21	8  21	8  21	8  21
3  27	9  27	9  27	9  27	9  27	9  27
4  28	10  28	10  28	10  28	10  28	10  28
5  29	11  29	11  29	11  29	11  29	11  29
6  30	12  30	12  30	12  30	12  30	12  30
	Architectural				
	13  31	13  31	13  31	13  31	13  31
	14  32	14  32	14  32	14  32	14  32
	15  33	15  33	15  33	15  33	15  33
	16  34	16  34	16  34	16  34	16  34
	17  35	17  35	17  35	17  35	17  35
	18  36	18  36	18  36	18  36	18  36
	19  37	19  37	19  37	19  37	19  37
	20  38	20  38	20  38	20  38	20  38
	21  39	21  39	21  39	21  39	21  39
	22  40	22  40	22  40	22  40	22  40
	23  41	23  41	23  41	23  41	23  41
	24  42	24  42	24  42	24  42	24  42
	25  43	25  43	25  43	25  43	25  43
	26  44	26  44	26  44	26  44	26  44
	27  45	27  45	27  45	27  45	27  45
	28  46	28  46	28  46	28  46	28  46
	29  47	29  47	29  47	29  47	29  47
	30  48	30  48	30  48	30  48	30  48
	31  49	31  49	31  49	31  49	31  49
	32  50	32  50	32  50	32  50	32  50
	33  51	33  51	33  51	33  51	33  51
	34  52	34  52	34  52	34  52	34  52
	35  53	35  53	35  53	35  53	35  53
	36  54	36  54	36  54	36  54	36  54
	37  55	37  55	37  55	37  55	37  55
	38  56	38  56	38  56	38  56	38  56
	39  57	39  57	39  57	39  57	39  57
	40  58	40  58	40  58	40  58	40  58
	41  59	41  59	41  59	41  59	41  59
	42  60	42  60	42  60	42  60	42  60
	43  61	43  61	43  61	43  61	43  61
	44  62	44  62	44  62	44  62	44  62
	45  63	45  63	45  63	45  63	45  63
	46  64	46  64	46  64	46  64	46  64
	47  65	47  65	47  65	47  65	47  65
	48  66	48  66	48  66	48  66	48  66
	49  67	49  67	49  67	49  67	49  67
	50  68	50  68	50  68	50  68	50  68
	51  69	51  69	51  69	51  69	51  69
	52  70	52  70	52  70	52  70	52  70
	53  71	53  71	53  71	53  71	53  71
	54  72	54  72	54  72	54  72	54  72
	55  73	55  73	55  73	55  73	55  73
	56  74	56  74	56  74	56  74	56  74
	57  75	57  75	57  75	57  75	57  75
	58  76	58  76	58  76	58  76	58  76
	59  77	59  77	59  77	59  77	59  77
	60  78	60  78	60		

(about 350 objects) for the first time were published in the Supplement of our book “The hieroglyphic script of the Kingdom of Van (Biainili, Urartu, Ararat)” (Yerevan, 1998). In the same period we made a number of reports in Yerevan and Moscow and published articles on the problem under consideration<sup>182</sup>. New results of decipherment came out in the spring of 1997, which we conditionally considered to be the second phase of our study. The results of our investigations (1995-1998) were summed up in our above cited book (1998).



*Fig. 29*

Together with decipherment and study of unpublished materials, investigations in museums helped us to make more precise some known inscriptions, which before that had entered into scientific circulation in wrong interpretation thus causing misunderstandings. It is necessary to investigate them more thoroughly.

The first inscription, which needs substantial correction is an inscription consisting of seven signs (fig. 29) on the bottom of a bronze bowl (with decomposed sides) from Karmir Blur. It was published upside-down<sup>183</sup> by B.B.Piotrovski and so entered into

<sup>182</sup> In 1996-1997 we made seven reports, published five articles and theses of reports (Movsisyan, 1996(a); 1996(b); 1996(c); 1996(d), 1997).

<sup>183</sup> KB-3, p. 10, fig. 3a.

scientific circulation. L. A. Barseghyan<sup>184</sup> tried to decipher it just in that position. Moreover, in R.O.Barnet's collection this initial mistake became more profound by adding to it two inscriptions consisting of three signs without any connection with each other<sup>185</sup>. The study of a preserved fragment of the bowl enabled to find out the right position (fig. 29b) of the inscription, owing to which all marks became recognizable by comparison also with hieroglyphs of other inscriptions<sup>186</sup>.

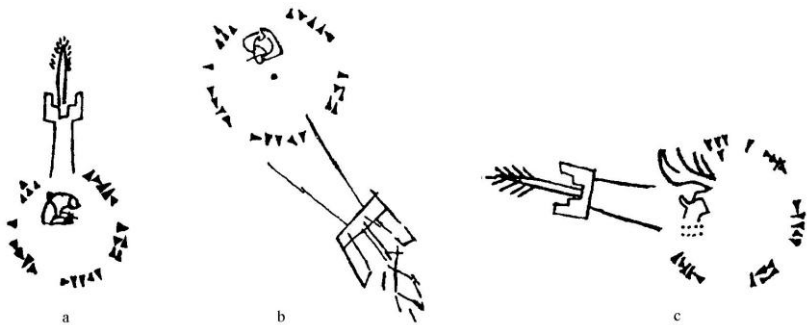


Fig. 30

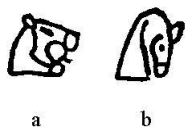
Lion's head and tower-like pictographs are found on most of the Karmir Blur's bronze bowls with cuneiform and hiero-

<sup>184</sup> Barseghyan, 1961, pp. 238-245.

<sup>185</sup> KB-3, p. 10, fig. 3. There are given the mentioned three inscriptions which were joined together by mistake, disregarding the explanation given under the picture.

<sup>186</sup> The upper sign of the inscription is an outline of sparkling spear, which reminds the upper component of the ligature, often met of bronze bowls. Thus it can be connected with the viewpoint, considering the spear to be the symbol of the god Haldi (Rilmschneider, 1966, from p. 46; Kalmeyer, 1983, pp. 179-189). The hieroglyph outlined under this sign as yet is known only on the given object and by its form reminds medieval Armenian hieroglyph "hell" (Acharyan, 1984, supplement, the mark number 143; Abrahamyan, 1959, p. 169). Other hieroglyphs are met also on other objects.

glyphic signs. Their thorough examination shows that lion's head always was marked at the cuneiform inscription's beginning and tower-like signs – no matter where, sometimes even in upside-down position, because tower-like signs were added later (fig. 30). It was noticed before us, but without any correction. It means that loin's head with tower-like mark must not be considered as one inscription and, comparing it with cuneiform writings to conclude that the Biainian cuneiforms and hieroglyphs are not met in bilingual inscriptions, translating each other. Moreover, as the inscription's position is not defined by the tower-like mark, it seems to us, that position of a hieroglyphic writing on one of the bowls must be corrected, reading it from top to bottom. For such supposition we have two reasons. According to the position offered by us, hieroglyphs are disposed at the beginning of the cuneiform inscription and in that position the central mark of the hieroglyphic inscription - bull's head gets its correct form. By the way, publishing the bull's head on-the-miter  $90^0$  it was not perceived correctly, and in R. D. Barnet's signary (number 49), the inscription was presented without eight dots as one mark, which also must be corrected.



*Fig. 31*



*Fig. 32*

The last necessary remark-correction concerns bronze bowls and relates to bowls bearing Rusa's name. Horse's head and not lion's head has been depicted on Rusa's bowl in contrast to others (cf. fig. 31). Moreover, unlike lion's head which usually is depicted at the beginning of cuneiform inscription, on the

flank side of a circle formed by cuneiforms, horse's head is depicted in the centre of cuneiform circle. This correction, as we shall see, has an important meaning in study of the hieroglyphic script and, particularly, its decipherment.

There is also another group of inscriptions (on seals) needing exactness. Three marks are reproduced on the bottom of a four-sided seal (fig. 32) discovered at Karmir Blur. They are copied from the seal (not from its stamp) in the publication of B. B. Piotrovski,<sup>187</sup> thus the marks entered into scientific circulation in a mirror representation. Signs and pictures from a large number of seals from Karmir Blur were published with defects<sup>188</sup>.

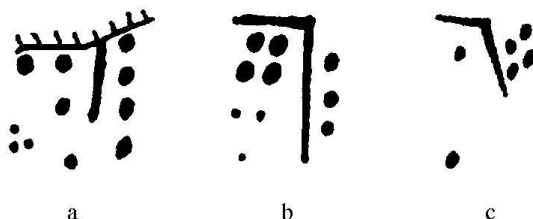


Fig. 33

Again referring to R.O.Barnet's collection, let's note that together with mentioned ones inscriptions NN 9, 18, 26 and 27 have also been published with defects and directions of signs proposed by him for some texts are disputable, which we shall touch while discussing the problem of the direction of writing.

Studying the signs indicating the capacity of Karmir Blur's bowls, we noticed that next to the marks composed of big dots of *aqarqi* and *tirusi* sizes, there are smaller dots (fig. 33), which, according to their disposition had to manifest a measure unit

<sup>187</sup> Piotrovski, 1962, p. 106, fig. 78; Piotrovski, 1967, p. 3, fig. 53; KB-3, from three marks in p. 56 the two are not mentioned.

<sup>188</sup> In explanations of our corpus mentioning previous publications we noted in parenthesis the kind of defects in them (see Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 189-210).

smaller than *tirusi*. In this respect *aharku* (*aqarqi*), *туруза* (*tirusi*) and *аруза* (in the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs) are remarkable indications of the Biainian capacities on storage jars discovered at the Altin Tepe archaeological site (the castle of Chrmes near Eriza-Erzinka, in historic Armenia)<sup>189</sup>. Until the present it has been considered that there are only *aqarqi* and *tirusi* marks on Karmir Blur's storage jars, while here we have the third one – a smaller unit. By the way, after *aqarqi* and *tirusi*, separately incised dots (to which B. B. Piotrovski supposedly attributed the meaning of “0, 5 (*tirusi*)”<sup>190</sup>) in these marks should mean “1 *aruza*” (fig. 33c).

Before finishing the brief presentation of our work, we should like to mention, that in this book we included the results of our investigations made in 1995-1998.

#### II-4-2. GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF WRITING SYSTEM

Studies of any unknown language and its writing system starts with finding out some characteristic peculiarities, creating favourable conditions for their decipherment.

The first phase of the study of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van has been conducted very insufficiently. The most complete work is R. D. Barnet's above-cited article, in which the author touched the problems of the direction of writing, stylistic type of signs, the use of one auxiliary sign and ideogram-attributives, and the origin of writing. According to the forms of signs, he divided them into eight groups. The work published in 1974, surely needs many additions and numerous corrections some of which we have already mentioned above.

Further, we shall present thoroughly general characteristics of the Biainian-Urartian-Araratian hieroglyphic system within the limits of available material, as far as possible,.

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<sup>189</sup> Laroche, 1971, pp. 55-61, table I-IV; Klein, 1974, pp. 77-94.

<sup>190</sup> KB-2, p. 66.

**1. The degree of acquaintance with the script and the inscribed language.** Before 1995 no original text with Biainian hieroglyphs was read (if we don't take into account the simple signs indicating capacity and remarks about separate marks). This writing system was peculiar only for the Kingdom of Van and out of the limits of its influence it had not been attested elsewhere.

Before the first results of the decipherment the hieroglyphic system's language had been quite unknown. Two candidates are possible for that language. The first is the language of the Biainian cuneiform inscriptions, the second – one of the languages more spread in the Kingdom of Van. It is necessary to note that scarcity of the Urartian lexicon (about 400 words in more than 600 inscriptions), the same grammar structure and conventional form of texts, inalterability in the course of almost three centuries of use, the absence of literary works (hymns, prayers, tragedies, love and novel songs and works of other genres) create an impression, that the language with its writing system was used in the narrow circle of the royal official correspondence and wasn't the spoken language of the broad masses of society<sup>191</sup>. There are also other facts, which show that the language (and its writing system) of the Biainian cuneiforms was not the native language of the founders of the Kingdom of Van. Particularly, I.M.Diakonoff's study is worthy of special notice. The author shows soundly, that Biainian cuneiforms were to be created as far back as the 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, originating from the script schools of Mitanni and the Hittite state. I.M.Diakonoff considers probable, that “excavations will still bring us Urartian-Hurrian cuneiform documents<sup>192</sup> of the 13<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC”. If “Biainian” (“Urartian”) with its cuneiform system were the native language of the kings of Van, having about 500-years-old writing tradition, it's quite incomprehensible why Sarduri I, the

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<sup>191</sup> Cf. Katvalyan, 1986, pp. 279-280; Khachatryan, 1991, pp. 36-56.

<sup>192</sup> Diakonoff, 1963, pp. 18-20.

first king who erected stelae with inscriptions, leaving aside his native language, used the language of the enemy country with its cuneiform system. It means that there had not been a cuneiform system adapted to the native language of the kings of Biainia. Moreover, Sarduri's successor Ishpuini, because of deepening confrontation with Assyria, adopted the traditions of one of the Hittite-Mitannian script-schools.

It's quite another matter in case of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van, which unlike cuneiform systems, had native Armenian origin and it might serve as means of intercourse for main spoken language (or one of languages) of the country.

The first results of the Biainian hieroglyphic system's decipherment allow to clarify to some extent the problem of the language.

**2. Chronology and distribution of inscriptions.** R.D. Barnett referring to R.Merhav's dating the throne bearing hieroglyphs to the period of King Menua (circ. 810-786 BC), considers it as the earliest dated inscription. Then, he, with substantial reservations, offers a point of view, according to which the origin of the Biainian-Araratian (Urartian) hieroglyphic system could be dated back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>193</sup>.

Owing to our decipherment of the inscription on Budin's bronze plaque published by R. D. Barnett, the names of two kings are read. It became clear that the inscription referred to the initial period of the enthronement of King Ishpuini, when Menua was still a young prince (see in the section "Our decipherment"), i.e., the Biainian-Araratian hieroglyphic system had already been a formed system, at least, in the period of Ishpuini.

Hieroglyphs were used until the end of the Kingdom of Van. It is seen from the Urartian objects with hieroglyphs on them and dating back to the end of 7<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the

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<sup>193</sup> Barnett, 1974, pp. 51-52.

6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC<sup>194</sup>. Thus, the Biainian hieroglyphic system was used from the last quarter of 9<sup>th</sup> century until the beginning of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC.

In the section “Archaeological discoveries” were briefly presented archaeological sites, where objects bearing hieroglyphs were discovered. Their mapping reveals the limits of the distribution of hieroglyphic inscriptions. They reached the district of Shirak and the Basin of Lake Sevan in the north, and the Basin of Lake Urmia (including the Kingdom of Mana (Zivie), which for some time was under the influence of the Kingdom of Van, even, for a while, constituting its part) in the south. The limits of the distribution of hieroglyphic inscriptions reached Norshun-tepe and Tigranakert in the west. The Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs were used further west, in the valley of the Euphrates, which there had been known from the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC<sup>195</sup>. The objects discovered at the archaeological site of Altin Tepe (Chrmes) are of great interest. The names of units indicating Biainian capacity are written in the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs on them<sup>196</sup>. It was a peculiar contact zone of two written cultures.

**3. *The characteristics of monuments with script.*** In respect of the written system’s study it is important to have detailed information as about objects bearing signs, as well as characteristics of inscriptions, their meaning, application and technique of reproduction.

Objects bearing hieroglyphs and inscriptions refer, essentially, to all main spheres of country’s life (the royal power, religion, military art, economy, culture and way of life). We shall

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<sup>194</sup> E.g. the materials of Oshakan of the late Biainian period have such dating (Yerevan, Kalantaryan, 1988, pp. 68-81).

<sup>195</sup> Bossert, 1942, pp. 67-70, 181-190, fig. 763-795; Güterbock, 1973, pp. 135-147, table 3-5; Meriggi, 1975 (a) and 1975 (b); NN 97-119; 124-131; Hawkins; 2000, pp. 282-329, 334-360.

<sup>196</sup> Laroche, 1971, pp. 55-61, table I-IV; Klein, 1974, pp. 77-94.

present main groups of objects (with their particularities) where hieroglyphs have been found.

*a) Seals.* Hieroglyph-bearing seals mainly refer to the circle of the royal and religious authorities. In respect of hieroglyphic system they are divided into two main groups<sup>197</sup>:

1) Seals on which (mainly at the bottom) are incised separate pictures (animals, griffons, etc.); they, probably, performed a function of symbols;

2) Seals bearing hieroglyphs which served mainly as attributive-indicatives, accompanying mythological creatures or similar pictures and views (fig. 34). These hieroglyphs represent a text (with great probability, proper names) in certain order on such seals (fig. 35).



*Fig. 34*

Various kinds of stones (including rocks), clay and clay-like mixtures and metals (mainly bronze) served as materials for making seals. As a rule, signs had been reproduced on seals in such a way that after stamping they appeared as a relief surface on the stamped object. Signs are found on side surfaces, as well as at the bottom of seals.

A large number of seals have not reached us, but their stamps are preserved. Seals and stamps were discovered almost at all big archaeological sites. From excavations at Karmir Blur, among others, a stamp was found, made of tar (bitum), inner sur-

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<sup>197</sup> Here we'll not apply to other characterizing features of Biainian seals, which concern the field of seal-making and give almost nothing to the solution of our problems.

face of which and traces of thread show that it was put on a soft packet-like writing material. B.B.Piotrovski considered it to be papyrus packet and thought that an archive of papyrus packets existed in Teišebani, and it's probable that they wrote in Aramaic on papyri<sup>198</sup>. Accepting the author's conclusion concerning the problem of the existence of an archive in another script (different from cuneiform), we approach to the problem of script and writing material with a proviso. The point is that there was no raw stuff of papyrus in the Armenian Highland and for soft writing material had to serve another stuff (e.g., parchment or other material).



*Fig. 35*

As far as it concerns Aramaic script, it is groundless to suppose that it was in use in the period of Biaina in Armenia. Hieroglyphs alongside with cuneiforms were used in the Kingdom of Van. Hieroglyphs were mainly used in monumental, and cuneiforms – in daily writing in the Hittite Empire. In the state of Biaina vice versa, cuneiforms appear on monumental inscriptions, and it is possible to suppose, that hieroglyphic script was

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<sup>198</sup> KB-1, pp. 76-77.

mostly used in daily correspondence for which soft writing material was demanded. The latter could not be used over a long period of time that's why packing archives have not been preserved till now (as Karmir Blur's stamp's packet).

**b) Metal bowls and jars.** There are many bowls among the Urartian metallic objects bearing hieroglyphs. They are divided into two groups: (1) with parallel cuneiform scripts, (2) only hieroglyphs on bowls.

The first group may be divided into three subgroups:

- bowls bearing only the picture of lion's head and cuneiform<sup>199</sup>,

- together with lion's head, a ligature composed of tower-like mark<sup>200</sup> (see in the subsection "Ligature")

- bowls<sup>201</sup> bearing other marks.

The second group may be divided into two subgroups

- bowls bearing one hieroglyph<sup>202</sup>

- bowls bearing several hieroglyphs<sup>203</sup>.

All available bowls bearing hieroglyphs are made of bronze. Hieroglyphs are encrusted: the hieroglyph's design was notched with a sharp instrument, then incrustation was made (it's evident from the bowls, on which ligature sign remained incomplete, bearing only nicked or half encrusted, half-nicked sign).

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<sup>199</sup> Such bowls are known only bearing the names of Inušpua and Sarduri (Urartu, Gent, 1982-83, p. 142, N 45; KB-2, pp. 56-57, SMHA 2010-32/40).

<sup>200</sup> Until now bowls bearing such writings have been found from Karmir Blur (KB-2, pp. 56-61; there are many unpublished ones; see in our corpus) and one sample – in a damaged state – from the city of Gavar (Gayseryan, 1984, pp. 101-102).

<sup>201</sup> KB-2, pp. 55-57, 61.

<sup>202</sup> Urartu, Gent, 1982-83, p. 189; Urartu, Jerusalem, 1991, p. 201; Yesayan, Khnkikyan, 1990, p. 37; table II – 7.

<sup>203</sup> Wartke, 1990, pp. 71-74; KB-3, p. 10, fig. 3a and b (fig. 3a is printed upside-down), SMHA 2010-55; Barnett, 1974, table XIII.



*Fig. 36*

Together with bowls (among metal dishes) a silver jar (on its neck bearing an engraved hieroglyphic inscription composed of three marks) is worth the special attention<sup>365</sup>. The same group of signs (with the second sign's mirror turning) is reproduced on one of the bronze bowls<sup>366</sup>.

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<sup>365</sup> KB-3, p. 10, fig. 36; Piotrovski 1969, fig. 71-73.

<sup>366</sup> KB-3, p. 10, fig. 36.

**c) *Figurines.*** This group (remarkable in respect of the Biainian art's study) includes mythological beings, manlike, animal-like statuettes, which had various functions (idols, elements of thrones, cult utensils, adornments, etc.). In respect of hieroglyphic system, this family of figurines is divided into three groups: figurines bearing (1) one or two hieroglyphs, denoting<sup>367</sup> their divine essence or function; (2) many hieroglyphs<sup>368</sup>, none of which has been read, yet; (3) symbolic single sign, as well as many signs<sup>369</sup>.

Figurines are made of various materials – gold, silver, bronze stone, etc. In all cases marks are incised.

**d) *Plates bearing cult pictures.*** Important sources of the study of the spiritual and material culture of the Kingdom of Van are bronze plates bearing reproduction of cult pictures. Two of the known plates bear hieroglyphs (fig. 36, 37)<sup>370</sup> and they have become the basis for finding out the first key of the Biainian hieroglyphic system's decipherment.

**e) *Medallions.*** Symbolic marks have been preserved on medallions, accompanying mainly the pictures of cult content. It is interesting that on two silver medallions found at Karmir Blur god's head is incised on the golden circlet forged on silver<sup>371</sup>. These the earliest cases of the halo's depicting, are not they?

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<sup>367</sup> Piotrovski, 1962, p. 82; Piotrovski, 1967, p. 51, fig. 33, table 12. The image of a boat or a half moon on the breast of some figurines is not a breast-plate or any kind of breast-ornament, it is an ideogram meaning "god" (see in the subsection "The state of decipherment").

<sup>368</sup> Barnett, 1950, pp. 6-7, table VII, Piotrovski, 1939, pp. 51-52, table IV-V.

<sup>369</sup> Piotrovski, 1939, pp. 50-51, table II-III.

<sup>370</sup> Barnett, 1974, pp. 43-46, table XI; Tašyurek, 1975, pp. 154-155, table XXXVI – a.

<sup>371</sup> KB-2, pp. 11, 18; KB, 1970, N 85, 86; Piotrovski, 1969, IV, 122, 123.



Fig. 37

*f) Elements of military equipment.* Parts of military equipment bearing hieroglyphic marks that are known to us, without exception, are made of bronze. This monument-group is presented by helmets, parts of armour, belts and horseman's equipment. The mentioned objects usually bear monograms, mainly of religious-war essence (heads of lion, bull, eagle, etc.). They are incised in the main.

*g) Ceramic dishes.* Under this common name, we have united groups of various ceramic jars, jugs, bowls, etc., each can be divided into some subgroups according to some peculiarities.



*Fig. 38*



*Fig. 39*



*Fig. 40*

But it's out of the questions under consideration and concerns ceramic making. For this big group of objects of everyday destination four main manifestations of hieroglyphs application are peculiar:

1. as a mark of master, to show the work's author (fig. 38);
2. as an imprint by which master initially mentions object's purpose and its belonging to this or that construction (fig. 39);
3. as means of indicating the capacity;
4. cases of use with unknown meaning for present.

Marks of masters were usually put on the inner part or at the bottom of the trunk of small vessels (before baking). Marks (of the master or others) were made on upper part of the trunk,

neck and lip of big capacity jugs, because the jugs were half-buried and only upper parts were seen in wine-cellar.

Imprints were not made on jugs, because their use was quite obvious. Imprints (all made before baking) on the middle- and small-sized vessels probably indicated their function. It may also be supposed that those objects, after encrustation, passed through a ceremony of consecration (especially those, which served for religious purposes).

Marks indicating capacity are made of dots serving as numbers and unit-marks on jugs and jars. Among them, hieroglyphs with graphic pictures of wineskin, jar, bowl-like, etc. have been found on these objects (fig. 40). In the main, they are notched on vessels, after baking. As a rule, marks indicating the jars' capacity are made on their handles.

Such hieroglyphic writing on ceramics had old traditions in the Armenian Highland being attested since the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC<sup>372</sup>.

Usually marks are made on external face of ceramic dishes. A remarkable exclusion is a ceramic vessel discovered at Karmir Blur, which bears two inside marks.

***h) Inscribed stones and clay tablets.*** If we don't take into account small stony objects (seals, etc.), then (as far as we known) until now three inscriptions reproduced on stones have been discovered: two are from Argishtihinili, and the third one – from the territory of Biainian mausoleum in Yerevan. The first stone is a circular weight in the centre of which is a hole surrounded asymmetrically by eight marks<sup>373</sup>. The second is one-linear inscription<sup>374</sup>, written on the upper surface of a pillar-base.

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<sup>372</sup> Torosyan, 1976, p. 84, table V-VII.

<sup>373</sup> Martirosyan, 1974, p. 171, fig. 107.

<sup>374</sup> Martirosyan, 1974, table III. Though signs in the photo are well seen, neither the author, nor anyone considered it as a hieroglyphic inscription; the stone was valued for a cuneiform inscription on its edge-side. Now the pillar-base is in the "Erebuni" museum, on the right of the entrance.

The third is a two-linear, incomplete inscription (fig. 41)<sup>375</sup>. All are incised inscriptions.



Fig. 41

Clay tablets constitute a small, but a very valuable group. First of them have been discovered at Toprak kale (fig. 42). It is a three-linear inscription<sup>376</sup>, perhaps of economic meaning. Another clay tablet discovered at Karmir Blur<sup>377</sup> has one-linear incomplete hieroglyphic inscription on its one side and on the other – a multi-linear cuneiform inscription and a stamp. Some other clay tablets<sup>378</sup> also bear stamps. Inscriptions and stamps were reproduced on wet clay.

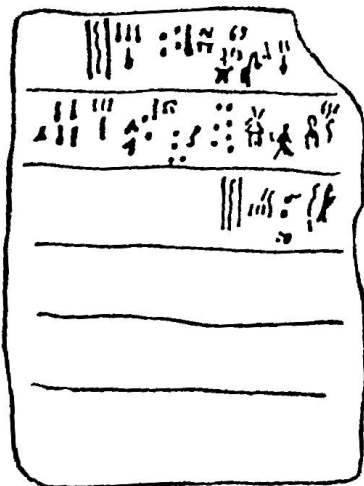


Fig. 42

*i) Other objects.* An amulet bearing double-sided writings and tab is the single specimen among small stony objects found at Karmir

<sup>375</sup> The inscription has been discovered at the Biainian tomb in Yerevan (at the “Avtoagregat” factory) and now is kept in the “Erebuni” museum of the History of Yerevan (inventory-number – 136-1).

<sup>376</sup> Lehmann-Haupt; 1907, p. 108, fig. 81.

<sup>377</sup> Harutyunyan, 1958; Diakonoff, 1963, pp. 32, 120-121, 135.

<sup>378</sup> Until today Biainian clay tablets have been discovered from five archaeological sites - Toprak kale, Karmir Blur (Diakonoff, 1963), Bastam (Salvini, 1979 (a) and 1979 (b), Ayanis (Salvini, 2001, pp. 312-315) and Haikaberd (Dinçol, Salvini, 2001), many of which are imprinted by hieroglyph-bearing seals.

Blur<sup>379</sup>. A small stony cruciform weight having a single mark<sup>380</sup> is kept in the museum of “Erebuni”.

**4. *Quantity and types of inscriptions.*** The number of small and big inscriptions (more exact - objects with scripts) is about 500. In the near future this number may change very quickly, because, as it has been mentioned, some studies connected with the problem under consideration have remained inaccessible. Besides, from day to day new objects appear and spread in different museums and collections all over the world as the result of treasure – robbery.

Available inscriptions can be classified according to volume and content of meaning. The structure of inscriptions is also an important criterion to classify, but as available originals are few in number and mainly indeciphered, the Bianian-Urartian hieroglyphic system’s characterization, according to that criterion, remains a matter of time. Inscriptions may be divided into two main groups, according to their volume: bearing a single mark (a mark of master) and many marks. Inscriptions bearing many marks also can be divided into two groups: one-linear and multi-linear. One-linear inscriptions constitute the majority, to which we attribute groups of marks consisting of the master’s mark or stamp on ceramics and signs indicating capacity. Some seals present certain difficulties in classification according to the number of lines, because of problem of the direction of writing.

As many of originals remain indeciphered and it’s impossible to classify them according to their content, we are still at the threshold of the solution of that problem. Classification is based on the characteristics of the original text connected with its context as well as purpose of the object’s function. According to the mentioned particularity, inscriptions under consideration are divided into following groups:

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<sup>379</sup> Piotrivskii, 1962, p. 105.

<sup>380</sup> EM, 13-67.

a) original inscriptions (relating to the royal power): some cuneiform inscriptions on seals (see in the section of decipherment), others on military equipment and other objects with the names of kings.

b) inscriptions on objects of religious meaning (bronze plates, medallions, a group of seals, etc.).

Meanwhile, not always it is possible to demarcate clearly these two groups, because the supreme spiritual power belonged also to the king of the Kingdom of Van<sup>381</sup>;

c) inscriptions on the objects for economic and everyday purpose, mainly ceramic dishes.

d) inscriptions of unknown content, because of the absence of additional information at present.

**5. *The problem of availability of multilingual inscriptions.*** Availability of multilingual inscriptions with the same meaning has an exceptional role in the decipherment of unknown scripts and languages, particularly, when the original text to be deciphered has parallel translation in other, already known script and language. Often new-discovered multilingual inscriptions become means for checking correctness of the reading of already deciphered script and language. Therefore, the problems of availability of parallel translations of Urartian hieroglyphic texts in any script and language known to us, their presence in multilingual inscriptions have great importance.

Up to now, the only known writing system synchronic with hieroglyphs of the Urartian period is represented by the cuneiforms of the Kingdom of Van. They are on bronze bowls, seals and stamps, on parts of military equipment, clay tablets and on other objects. Do these scripts translate one another or not?

R.D.Barnett, analyzing this problem, came to a negative conclusion, because the lion's head is depicted on the bowls bearing the names of Sarduri and Rusa and the eagle's head - by

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<sup>381</sup> Leo, 1915, p. 131; Hmayakyan, 1990, p. 73.

the names<sup>382</sup> of Argishti and Sarduri. This point of view, which is quite logical, we accepted and supported earlier. However, after compiling the collection and the signary of the Biainian hieroglyphic inscriptions we found out one of the secrets of the Urartian hieroglyphic system: a part of objects are bearing bilingual inscriptions. We shall touch this problem while presenting our work concerning the decipherment.

**6. Direction of writing.** The direction of writing usually is defined by unwritten parts of incomplete lines. The script of the first line of Toprak kale's clay tablet ends not reaching the left edge. The second is written completely and the third one, like the first, starts from the right and ends without reaching the left edge. A name is written on the upper side of WA<sub>1</sub> bronze plate (fig. 36) with a determinative denoting the sun's winged disc, which is bigger than other marks. It is in the right position, which also attests to the right-left writing direction. An attentive examination of the same bronze plate reveals the top to bottom disposition of marks in vertical writing (above the head of the third worshipping person).

Marks are disposed from top to bottom on a number of bronze bowls, some seals, handles of some jar, etc.; a kind of ligature was employed with the same disposition.

R.D.Barnett considers possible the use of a boustrophedon pattern for the Urartian hieroglyphic system and offers circular reading (counter-clockwise) for some texts<sup>383</sup>. As a result, some contradictions<sup>384</sup> appeared in the corpus compiled by him. In our

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<sup>382</sup> Cf. Barnett, 1974, p. 51.

<sup>383</sup> Barnett, 1974, p. 47.

<sup>384</sup> A quite irregular and unconvincing disposition is offered for N 21, which has two more serious mistakes. For the seals bearing the sun's winged disc, R.D.Barnett offers to read the disc as the first sign and those below it – from left to right (NN 15, 18) thus contradicting himself, as is seen in the case of N 28. The latter is presented incompletely, without the sign of the sun's winged disc, and the hieroglyphs below, in spite of his suggestion, have the right-left direction. The given seal (Porada, 1948, table CL XVIII,

opinion, there is no fundamental argument to suggest circular or boustrophedon style of writing in the Biainian hieroglyphic system. We must accept that two directions of writing were used in the Urartu-Araratian hieroglyphic system – from right to left (in the case of horizontal script) and from top to bottom (in the case of vertical disposition).

**7. *The number of signs and accordingly – the writing system's type.*** Biainian hieroglyphs contain about 300 marks. This number may be changed a little, as a result of discovery of new materials. Such quantity of marks shows that the writing system under consideration is logo-syllabic (ideo-phonographic) with the use of ideograms. The cuneiform system of the Kingdom of Van has almost the same number of marks and the writing system's same characteristics.

**8. *Group-classification of marks, according to their outward appearance.*** The first and hitherto the only attempt of the group-classification of Urartian hieroglyphs (according to their delineation) belongs to R.D.Barnett. He differentiates eight groups – vegetal, celestial, architectural, human, animal, subject, numerical and marks of unidentified design. Two more groups may be added to them – the pictures of mythological beings and auxiliary marks.

**9. *Numbers.*** Among the objects bearing hieroglyphs, there are numerous ceramic vessels bearing marks indicating their capacity: numerous varieties of dots as numbers, from one to nine. There are graphic pictures of some objects (wineskin, jar, cup, bowl, etc.), next to dots among the marks indicating capacity, which are hieroglyphs of units of capacity. There are four hieroglyphs (fig 15) together with pictographs depicting objects on storage jars, two of which (c, d), probably, could mean *aqarqi*

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N 1103) has the same three pointed hieroglyphic inscription as on its side surface (the top-bottom disposition), as well as at the bottom, below the disc-like sign, which makes obvious the incorrectness of reading such seals in boustrophedon (and circular) pattern.

Numbers	Biainian	Egyptian	Cuneiform	Hettite-Luvian
1	•, °		▼	
3	••, •••, ••••, •••••, ••••••, •••••••		𐎶	
5	••••, •••••, ••••••, •••••••, ••••••••, •••••••••	 	𐎶 𐎶	 
10	⊙, 7 (?)	∩	◀	—
100	×, ∪ (?)	∩	▼▶	⊗ (?)

Tab. 6

and others – *tirusi* (a, b). Three units of the liquids' capacity are indicated on jars, which according to the last and more precise calculations<sup>385</sup>, may be presented in the following way;

aqarqi (aharku) – 300 litres,  
 tirusi (turuza) – 30 litres,  
 aruza – 3 litres.

The use of a unit less than three liters would be senseless for huge storage jars. As aruza is considered to be the smallest unit, tirusi is equal to ten aruza, and aqarqi – hundred. Two marks (or one of each) of the last two units could also mean 10 and 100<sup>386</sup>.

<sup>385</sup> Vardanyan, Asatryan, 1980, pp. 166-178.

<sup>386</sup> The mark, like an inclined cross, for which we presumably offer the meaning “100” which is almost identical with Hittite-Luvian number “100” by outward appearance (Laroche, 1960, p. 213, N 399, Dunaevskaya, 1969, p. 105; 11 Geroglifico Anatolico, 1998, pp. 64, 115). In B.B.Piotrovski's opinion, it could mean “5 aqarqi” (KB-2, p. 66). On the basis of the materials discovered at Ayanis, M.Salvini supposes that together with *aqarqi*, *tirusi* and *aruza* existed one more unit - “1/2 tirusi”, moreover, *aruza* had to consist of 1/10 of the latter and 1/20 of terusa (Salvini, 2001, S. 293-295).

For numbers from 1 to 9 besides dots there are also marks of vertical short lines, which are met only at Toprak kale and Arin Berd. Being found only on two monuments, it's also obvious, that the marks were made very naively, i.e. they belonged to a lower class. On the other hand, their commonness with the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyph-numbers is evident. We can suppose that these marks were used by the war-prisoners removed from the Basin of the Euphrates by the kings of Biainia. There is a written account about them<sup>387</sup>.



Fig. 43

The use of dot marks as numbers in the region of ancient Western Asia was characteristic only to Armenia. In contrast to Egypt, Asia Minor, Mesopotamia and surrounding cuneiform using countries, numbers were indicated not by short, wedge-shaped signs or other symbolic marks, but - dot-and-circles in the Armenian Highland. Marking dots as numbers, being an Armenian phenomenon, derives from rock-carving system; extensive use of the latter in the Biainian hieroglyphic system is one of the proofs about the local origin of that writing system.

In R.D.Barnett's signary signs from number 1 to 4 are brought in vertical small lines and - from number 3 to 8 – as dots. Two of the mentioned marks are on the storage jars.

**10. The use of auxiliary marks.** The accumulated knowledge in the sphere of the decipherment of hieroglyphs allows us to speak about the use of three auxiliary marks in the Biainian-Araratian hieroglyphic system. The most commonly used of them is up-directed angle-shape mark which is put on other hieroglyphs. The exact meaning of this auxiliary mark is not clear. The same hieroglyph is written separately and without other mark on WAu-1 plate and in the name of the first line – with an-

<sup>387</sup> See Melikishvili, 1960, p. 216; Karagyozyan, 1981, p. 60, 67; Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 161-162.

gle-lake mark, thus it is possible to suppose that the role of the latter was to render the ideogram into a syllable. Such an explanation, however, can't be satisfactory because there are numerous ideograms, which are without the given mark in the writing of proper names [in principle, all marks can have both the word and syllabic (phonetic) use]. Without a final answer about the functional meaning of this auxiliary mark it is worthy to mention that more than ten cases of the use of the given hieroglyph are known at present.

The second auxiliary mark is depicted at the end of the first and second lines on the lined clay tablet from Toprak kale (fig. 41). Such position indicates that it was probably used as an end-mark. The two-linear inscription<sup>388</sup>, discovered at the Biainian tomb in Yerevan, ends with the same mark (fig. 41).

The third mark, which we presumably consider as an auxiliary one, appears only once (if it's not a ligature), is again reproduced on WAu-1 plate, above the head of the worshipping fourth person. The meaning of this hieroglyph also remains obscure. The data about auxiliary marks for present are limited within this circle.

**11. Attributes (indicators, determinatives).** In the earliest writing systems the principle of expression of one word or a phenomenon by one sign or an ideogram was a widespread phenomenon. Concomitant to the development of writing thinking, marks connected with their functional and notional variety acquired polysemantic quality. It rather extended the writing communication facilities and old scribes began to use attributes (indicators, determinatives) in order to regulate existing polysemy. The principle of their implementation was the following: while using a polysemantic sign, another mark was put before it, which made more exact and definite the meaning of that script-mark. Following the same principle, attribute, put before proper names,

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<sup>388</sup> Probably the latter was the syllabic-mark "nu", composed of 3 vertical short lines, though it more reminds the auxiliary mark under consideration.

indicated their personalized meaning (god, man, woman, king, country, city, etc.).

The determinatives' use was also widespread in hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van. The most used determinatives were "king" and "god". They will be thoroughly spoken about in the section of decipherment.

**12. Ligatures.** Ligature is a manifestation of attributive-ideography. The difference is that in the first case attribute and attributed marks are written separately, and in the second case they are ligatured and come out as a composite character.

In the Urartian hieroglyphic system the most of ligatures were composed of tower-like hieroglyphs. The latter, probably, meant "a large building, construction" and corresponded to the meaning of cuneiforms E. GAL ("a large house/building", also "castle, palace"). Today, at least five ligatures, composed of that mark are known (fig. 44). They denoted various kinds of buildings and constructions. Two of them will be spoken about in the section of decipherment, the explanation of other three is unknown for present.



Fig. 44



Fig. 45

We have a remarkable example of ligature in a five-sign inscription<sup>389</sup> on one of the figurines from Toprak kale, one of which is a profile of man's head (also known from other texts) with three lines added above.

It's possible that the first sign of the inscription on a bronze

plate kept in the Van museum (fig. 37) is a ligature depicting man's head in profile with two components above it, otherwise,

<sup>389</sup> Barnett, 1950, pp. 6-7, table VII, fig. 4-1.

it may be a graphic-picture of a head with a helmet or with a kind of frontlet (parhaps with a crown).

Very likely there are ligatures in the inscriptions (in our corpus – TK-31, 32)<sup>390</sup> on two statuettes, kept in the State Hermitage, but we refrain from commentaries because we are not familiar with the originals. The same may be said about a mark<sup>391</sup>, twice repeated on a detail of the throne at the British museum.

The ideogram “morning”<sup>392</sup> can also be perceived as a ligature - the internal component is interpreted as a graphic-picture of mountains, and the upper one – a disc of the sun.

There is an interesting group of ligatures on ceramic vessels (fig. 45). Their peculiarity is that components of ligature are not disposed above each other, but “enter” into one another. It is possible to expect increase of ligatures in coming investigations of the Biainian hieroglyphic system.

**13. The existence of auxiliary data favouring decipherment.** Decipherment of unknown languages and scripts is greatly favored by information about spiritual and material values of the country and people where they are used. The history of writing’s study is rich with numerous examples attesting to completely wrong conclusions about the given country and its people when they (without thorough information about them) were judged only according to the analysis of design of script signs and vice versa, there were cases when this kind of information greatly favoured the decipherment. It must be said that though the whole territory of the Kingdom of Van (especially, Western Armenia) hasn’t been studied systematically, anyhow archaeological mate-

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<sup>390</sup> Piotrovski, 1939, pp. 51-52. The upper particle (directed down diagonal) of three-component group of signs on the statuette under N 16002 (in our corpus - TK-33) in the State Hermitage may be a separate, moreover, auxiliary sign; in that case the number of auxiliary signs will become 4.

<sup>391</sup> Barnett, 1950, p. 6, table IV, fig. 4-2.

<sup>392</sup> This ideogram will be thoroughly spoken about during our decipherment’s second phase.

rial, known today, allows to form some concept about that ancient state and its people, state authorities, religion, traditions, economy, culture, everyday life and other questions. There are many special works on these problems which we shall cite further.

#### **14. Information from contemporary written sources.**

Written monuments of the period of the Kingdom of Van are of special importance for the solution of the same problem. They may be divided into four groups.

a) the Biainian cuneiform inscriptions, which had been used since the period of Ishpuini (about 825-810 BC);

b) Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions which, for their turn, are divided into two groups – those used in Assyria and Biainili<sup>393</sup>;

c) the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic inscriptions (until the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>394</sup>).

d) Old Testament, in which the Kingdom of Ararat is mentioned thrice, connected with events<sup>395</sup> of the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

Such information is especially important when there are no multilingual inscriptions. Until the April of 1997 bilingual inscriptions of Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphs had not been known. The first key (1995 year) of their decipherment was found owing to the use of information from cuneiform inscriptions. The names of all gods, kings, cities, regions, internal life of the

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<sup>393</sup> Information of Assyrian inscriptions about the Kingdom of Van see Santalchean, 1901 and Diakonoff, 1951, and Assyrian texts of Biainian kings – Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 117-118, 125-131, 323-327, Boekmer, 1979, pp. 50-51, Salvini, 1982, pp. 327-332; Dinçol, 1986, pp. 351-358; Andre-Salvini, Salvini, 1999, p. 21, Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 9-11, 12, 25-30, 137-139, Andre-Salvini, Salvini, 2002, pp. 5-66.

<sup>394</sup> Bossert, 1942, pp. 67-70, 181-190, fig. 763-795; Güterbock, 1979, pp. 135-147, table 3-5, Meriggi, 1975 (a) and 1975 (b), NN 97-119, 124-131; Hawkins, 2000, pp. 282-329, 334-360.

<sup>395</sup> 4 Kings, 19, 37; Isaiah, 37, 38; Jeremiah, 51, 27; Tobit, 1; 24.

Kingdom of Van we learn from Biainian cuneiform texts. This information is of great value in respect of the Araratian hieroglyphic system's investigation. The role of these inscriptions became more important during the second phase of decipherment, when we learned that cuneiform and hieroglyphic marks (on a number of objects) translate one another, i.e. they are bilingual inscriptions. It opened new perspectives in the field of the decipherment of hieroglyphic signs.

**15. Correlations with other script-systems.** From the very beginning of the discovery and study Biainian hieroglyphs were identified with Hittite-Luvian ones among contemporary writing systems, even were considered to be "pseudo-Hittite"<sup>396</sup>. Later, the studies became more precise, anyhow, the concept of resemblance of hieroglyphs used in two neighbouring countries remained irrefutable. In the 15<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system was used in the west of the Armenian Highland (in the Euphrates' valley<sup>397</sup>) parallel to the Hittite cuneiform in the Hittite Empire. On the one hand, cuneiforms were used in everyday correspondence and, on the other hand, hieroglyphs - in monumental inscriptions. There is no unified opinion about the origin of the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system. There are two most probable opinions: (a) it was derived from Cretan pictography, and the latter - from the Egyptian hieroglyphic system<sup>398</sup>; (b) it had local (Asia Minor) origin<sup>399</sup>. The direction of writing is boustrophedon; the number of signs - about 500, of which 70 are phonetic symbols<sup>400</sup>. Hieroglyphs are of pictorial character; a part of them has also simplified versions.

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<sup>396</sup> See, for example, Porada, 1948, p. 156.

<sup>397</sup> Bossert, 1942, pp. 67-70, 181-190, Abb. 763-795, Güterbock, 1973, pp. 135-147, table 3-5; Mariggi, 1975 (a) and 1975 (b), NN 97-119, 124-131; Kosyan, 1994, pp. 13-14, 17-28, Hawkins, 2000, pp. 282-329, 334-360.

<sup>398</sup> See, for example, Gelb, 1965, pp. 82-83, table 355, Meriggi, 1966, p. 9, § 2; Gelb, 1982, p. 87, the table of 355.

<sup>399</sup> Friedrich, 1966, p. 63; Friedrich, 1979, p. 85; Ivanov, 1980, p. 137.

<sup>400</sup> Kosyan, 1994, p. 8 (see also the cited literature).

The decipherment's results revealed also connection between the Hittite-Luvian and Biainian hieroglyphic systems, in some cases showing, that we deal with borrowings. Anyhow, there are principal differences between them. For example, the number of marks in Hittite-Luvian reaches 500, and in Urartian – about 300, in the first one the direction of writing is boustrophedon, in the second - from right to left or top to bottom, etc.

Nevertheless, in the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system, according to external characteristics, two groups are clearly differentiated:

- a) linear signs,
- b) picture–ideograms.

The source of the first group, most likely, is the Armenian linear script. It is possible to differentiate three subgroups in the second group:

a) pictographs of celestial bodies and mythological creatures, etc. (common for ancient Western Asia),

b) profile picture–ideograms for the heads of man and animal (perhaps connected with the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system),

c) pictorial signs of constructions, buildings and objects (probably of the local origin). The Biainian hieroglyphic system's pictorial character (the second group's peculiarity) attests to the influence of Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system<sup>401</sup>. Native Armenian script-marks overcame the pictorial phase and became linear many centuries before and the old style's recovery, probably, was conditioned by historical events of the epoch.

The analysis of the new discovered numerous materials proved H. A. Martirosyan's (whose contribution is great in the field of rock-carvings' study), theory's correctness about local developments of Armenia's writing system and revealed new links attesting to the hereditary connection between the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphs and the signs in the medieval Armenian

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<sup>401</sup> Cf. Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 82-84.

manuscripts. The results of decipherment proved that the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system was an important stage in the Armenian hieroglyphic system's development.

In Christian epoch the existence of the hieroglyphs' signaries in mediaeval Armenian manuscripts, where every mark is provided with an explanatory remark, is one of important expressions of Armenian hieroglyphic system's manifestation.<sup>402</sup> Signaries may be used as an auxiliary source in the Biainian-Araratian hieroglyphic system's decipherment, but we should have very circumspect approach towards them, taking into account some circumstances: (a) there are many simple and cipher-abbreviation-signs<sup>403</sup>, made on the basis of Mashtotsian alphabet, which give no solution to the problem under consideration; (b) it is necessary to take into account the fact that their meanings could undergo changes getting adjusted to a new way of thinking specific for Christian environment; (c) preserving its meaning, sign could be named after a borrowed word, thus the term used in the 9<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC could be forgotten. It is important in respect of the revelation of syllabic (sound) script, according to the acrophonic principle ("whereby a letter stands for the initial sound in the word for the object of which it is a picture"<sup>404</sup>). Therefore it's important to know exact sound of every word-

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<sup>402</sup> Until now the collection of hieroglyphs compiled by Hr. Acharyan was the largest one (Acharyan, 1984, the index is brought in the supplement added at end of the book). A.G.Abrahamyan also contributed greatly to their study (Abrahamyan, 1959, pp. 139-173; 1973, pp. 201-243).

<sup>403</sup> Hr. Acharyan considers 332 of his collected 509 signs to be derived from Mashtotsian letters (Acharyan, 1984, p. 425). The examination done by A.G.Abrahamyan, shows that manuscripts with lists of hieroglyphs, are clearly divided into two groups, which he conditionally called "Cilician" ("of Cilicia") and "Erznkian" ("of Erzuka"). The hieroglyphs' main part of the first group were derived from Mashtotsian letters, while the prevailing part of the second group (more than 180 ideograms) had no connection with Armenian alphabet expressing numerous parallels in a series of the ancient world's script-systems (Abrahamyan, 1959, pp. 144-165).

<sup>404</sup> WWS, p. 25 (author of section – Peter T. Daniels).

ideogram in the period of the Kingdom of Van. And finally, because of being copied during centuries, the signs' design could undergo considerable changes.

Only after taking into account all these circumstances, the list of hieroglyphs can be used as an auxiliary source. Other phases and manifestations of Armenian hieroglyphic system (not being deciphered and interpreted) do not render any help in the field of decipherment.

#### II-4-3. THE STATE OF DECIPHERMENT

Attempts of decipherment play an important role in the history of the study of writing. What is the state of decipherment of the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system? Which were the steps in that direction? How have we contributed to the problem's solution? For the purpose of the problem's clarification, we shall present the decipherment's previous attempts and interpretations and then our readings and conclusions.

***Previous attempts of decipherment.*** The works done in the field of decipherment can be divided into two main groups: (I) Explanations of some single signs; (II) attempts of decipherment of entire original texts.

***I-a)*** C.F.Lehmann-Haupt put the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van into extent scientific circulation and was the first who tried to explain some signs. The graphic-pictures of wineskin, jar and bowl he explained as signs indicating the liquid's capacity, at the same time, the first two, correspondingly, considering as signs for "aqarqi", "tirusi" (according to the author – "khirusi", which was the old reading) units known from cuneiform inscriptions, which had capacity of about 120-150 and 12-15 litres<sup>405</sup>.

***I-b)*** B.B.Piotrovski, drawing attention to the mentioned two objects from Karmir Blur, suggested that liquid measure

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<sup>405</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1931, pp. 474, 587.

should be précised: aqarqi – 240-250 litres, and tirusi – one ninth or tenth of the latter. In Karmir Blur aqarqi and tirusi are not presented by graphic-pictures of wineskin and jar, but as dots and two marks, one of which he considered to be tirusi and the other - a cross as “5 aqarqis” sign. B.B.Piotrovski mentioned also an oblong clay jug of a smaller capacity unit (from right to left are depicted a spike-like sign, a graphic-picture of jar-like object with a zigzag line springing from its lip, and seven dots, fig. 46) and concluded that it was provided for wheat, meanwhile the graphic-picture of the jar with zigzag line (which is also depicted on materials from Toprak kale) presented not the liquid measure, but the unit of wheat measure<sup>406</sup>.

B.B.Piotrovski drew attention also to other signs and noted that depicted on helmets “arched fourdent” symbolized Teišeba – the god<sup>407</sup> of thunder and of war.

*I-c)* Devoting a special article to the jar-like sign of the mentioned oblong clay jug, a member of the Karmir Blur’s excavations – Z.M.Ghasabyan (in his article – “The whirligig-like vessel’s sign”) had read it as “bear” and considered it to be derived from Sumerian and its offshoot Assyro-Babylonian synonymous hieroglyph<sup>408</sup>. This conclusion, based only on the sign’s external form, seems incredible to us. B.B.Piotrovski’s opinion concerning the same sign seems more probable, as is proved also by a graphic-picture of spike, next to that sign.

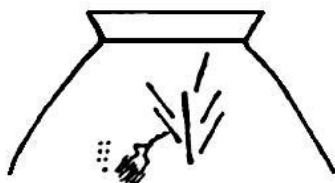


Fig. 46

<sup>406</sup> KB-2, pp. 66-67.

<sup>407</sup> KB-3, p. 25. Helmets bearing that sign were discovered also at Hirkanis, as well as sites unknown sites in Western Armenia and even in north-eastern parts of Iran and Northern Caucasus (Yesayan, 1986, pp. 29-32 and the cited literature).

<sup>408</sup> Ghasabyan, 1960, pp. 83-86.

**I-d)** Publishing signs of capacity on the ceramic vessels from Nerkin Khndzor (Kayali dere), Ch. Burney considered hieroglyphs, depicting wineskin and jar, to be signs of measure units (without defining their name and capacity), and interpreted a dot as the sign of unit or denary, and the circle with a dot in it – sign of denary or hundred (i.e. the second one is tenfold of the first)<sup>409</sup>.

**I-e)** Doing a similar examination of ceramic objects discovered at Bastam and Livar, A. von Shuler considered also the graphic-picture of wineskin to be “aqarqi”, and jar – “tirusi” capacity units<sup>410</sup>. The author presented also a signary, compiled of 26 hieroglyphs (six of which - numbers from 1 to 6) and their versions. A.A.Vayman studied also liquid measures and hieroglyphic signs, which we shall mention, while presenting general results of his attempt of decipherment. Signs of liquid measures have been studied also in other works (which contain mutually exclusive opinions) devoted or correlated to Biainian metrology. Opinions do not differ only in the question that “aqarqi” and “tirusi” measurement units were depicted as graphic-pictures of wineskin and jar in the Biainian hieroglyphic system.

**I-f)** The ligature of signs in the shape of “tree” (or “spear”) and “tower” were in the centre of special attention (fig. 16a). R.D.Barnett, first gave a negative answer to the supposition that ligature could be an Urartian hieroglyphic reproduction of the name of Karmir Blur, and as far as the same sign was observed also at Toprak kale site, he considered probable its meaning to be “arsenal” comparing it with the structure of cuneiforms “urišhi”<sup>411</sup>.

**I-g)** With regard to the same sign P.Calmayer in his interesting work about the god Haldi’s symbol noticed that lion’s head always had an initial position in cuneiform texts on bronze

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<sup>409</sup> Burney, 1966, pp. 88-90.

<sup>410</sup> Von Schuler, 1972, pp. 125-134.

<sup>411</sup> Barnett, 1974, p. 51.

bowls, and ligature sign had been added later, without any regular position relative to lion's head no matter where. Proceeding from this assumption, the author supposed that lion's head served for more preciseness of cuneiform inscription's meaning, and the added ligature showed the object's function. On the basis of the existence of imprints with the same sign on jars he concluded that ligatured hieroglyph served to show the given object's dedication to the "temple" or "Haldi's tree"<sup>412</sup> by king or his representatives.

**I-h)** In a small article devoted to interpretation of P.Calmeyer's mentioned work I.M.Diakonoff considered possible that the sign of a tree served as a syllabic (phonetic) indicator (determinative) for the tower-like ideogram, which probably meant "house, household economy", "palace" or "temple" and conjunction of two marks could mean "received in the palace" (in addition to it E.urišhi is supposed to mean "goods-furniture's house" but not "weapon's arsenal")<sup>413</sup>. We shall interpret this ligature while presenting our decipherment.

Mentioning these hieroglyphs, investigators referred to a series of astral marks in terms of religious meaning (mainly from Western Asia), which we shall not touch here.

**II-a)** L.A.Barseghyan, A.A.Vayman and H.H.Karagyozyan made attempts of complete inscriptions' decipherment.<sup>414</sup> L.A.Barseghyan offered a decipherment of an inscription with 7 signs (at that time the largest one) on one of bronze bowls discovered at Karmir Blur. It was unfortunately an unsuccessful attempt. He made a principal mistake while interpreting the very first hieroglyphic sign. The author considered that the cuneiform meaning "year" was created by turning upside-down that hiero-

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<sup>412</sup> Calmeyer, 1973, pp. 183-193; Calmeyer, 1983, pp. 179-189.

<sup>413</sup> Diakonoff, 1983, p. 194; The explanation of the ligature as "received in the palace" evidently is influenced by the attempt of A.A.Vayman's decipherment (see below), though the author doesn't refer to it.

<sup>414</sup> Barseghyan, 1961, pp. 238-245.

glyph and transforming to a cuneiform. Such an explanation is too unconvincing, because Biainian cuneiforms couldn't be derived from Urartian hieroglyphs. The Biainian cuneiforms were borrowed from Mesopotamia, where cuneiform writing was witnessed in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC being derived from Sumerian hieroglyphs<sup>415</sup>. The same mistake is repeated in connection with another hieroglyph of the inscription. About other marks the author made several remarks proceeding mainly from their design. Therefore this inscription's decipherment can't be correct, as it had been published upside-down by B. B. Piotrovski.

**II-b)** A.A.Vayman, a specialist famous for a series of successful works in the field of Sumerian hieroglyph's decipherment, tried to decipher one sign, which, according to him, could be a key to the reading of eight inscriptions (seven of which were signs of capacity measure)<sup>416</sup>. It is the upper component of ligature-hieroglyph, a graphic picture for "tree" (a branch) or "spear". According to his opinion, the given hieroglyph, graphic pictures for "spike" and an up-directed spear meant the cuneiform word "ištini", in different case-forms with meanings "in it", "there", "for", "from there". Such an approach is completely ungrounded, because upper components of the ligature are graphic pictures for "Tree of Life" or "spear" symbolizing Haldi. They are conventional elements in art monuments of the Kingdom of Van<sup>417</sup>, without transforming to the spike-form hieroglyph in

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<sup>415</sup> It's well known that cuneiforms originated in Mesopotamia (it was due to the use of clay as the main staff for writing) and from there spread in many countries of Western Asia. In order Biainian cuneiforms to be formed of the hieroglyphs of Armenia, the latter had to be used in the Armenian Highland in the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC and then borrowed by Mesopotamians and in the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC turned into cuneiforms, only after that they could be borrowed by the Kingdom of Van. L. A. Barseghyan doesn't indicate such a phenomenon.

<sup>416</sup> Vayman, 1978, pp. 100-105.

<sup>417</sup> Comparison, Reimschneider, 1966, pp. 46-48; Calmeyer, 1979, pp. 183-193; Calmeyer, 1983; pp. 179-189.

simplified versions (as is seen also in the examples brought by A.A.Vayman) they. For its turn, the spike-form hieroglyph has been found on clay vessels, denoting their function (keeping any kind of grain or food, e.g. bear). It is proved also by explaining more exactly the mentioned seven-sign inscription (fig. 29) on Karmir Blur's bronze bowl (there are a flashing spear-shaped hieroglyph and a spike-like-shaped mark in the same texts).

After unsuccessful decipherment of that mark (considered to be a key), the author tried to explain eight more marks found in the texts examined by him. The first is the lower component of the ligature-hieroglyph – a tower-like mark, which he explained as “castle, palace”, and considered to be possible its identification with É.GAL of cuneiforms. The tower-like hieroglyph's interpretation as “castle, palace” seems less probable, than its comparison with cuneiform's É.GAL, only in wider meaning - “a big house” or “construction”. The following four marks are pictographs of capacity units (wineskin, jar or jug, bowl, whirligig-like vessel bearing a zigzag line), which, before A. A. Vayman had been explained by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, B. B. Piotrovski and A. von. Shuler in the same meaning. The last three marks – a dot, a circlet with a dot and a half-circlet, correspondingly, are explained as “1 tirusi”, “1 aqarqi”, “1/2 tirusi”, of which the first two had been known before A. A. Vayman's decipherment; only the half-circlet's explanation belongs to him, which can't be accepted without reserve. The author's conclusions were made up on the basis of his own measurements, and the numbers the results strictly differed from other investigators' conclusions. Unlike investigators of Karmir Blur's jugs, who offered 208-300 for aqarqi and 23-30 litres<sup>418</sup> for tirusi, A.

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<sup>418</sup> B. B. Piotrovski considered *aqarqi* to be equal to 240-250 litres, and *tirusi* – to 1/9 and 1/10 of *aqarqi* (KB-2, p. 74), (Piotrovski, 1959, p. 145). I. B. Brashinski offered for *aqarqi* 208, 5 litres, emphasizing that 1 *aqarqi*=9 *tirusi* (Brashinski, 1978, pp. 141-150). According to R. O. Vardanyan's and D. G. Asatryan's calculations, 1 *aqarqi* is divided into 10 *tirusi*, which is equal to 300, 5 litres (Vardanyan, Asatryan, 1980, pp. 166-178).

A. Vayman offered, correspondingly, 90 and 100 litres<sup>419</sup> for the mentioned capacity measures

In conclusion it is possible to say that A. A. Vayman's attempt of decipherment was also unsuccessful, because he tended to decipher eight inscriptions using the nodal mark which had been explained incorrectly by him.

The other signs are hieroglyphs showing capacity measure units. All remarks and interpretations concerning them are far from being considered as "decipherment", otherwise it will follow that more than hundred inscriptions (here capacity marks) had already been "deciphered" before A.A.Vayman.

**II-c)** In the end of 1995 we succeeded to find a key to the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system's decipherment, which for the first time gave an opportunity to read some syllabic-written proper names. The second phase of our decipherment was the discovery of bilingual inscriptions (April, 1997). Although, for a long time they had already been known, but were not perceived and read as such ones. We shall present our decipherment in the next section.

**II-d)** After our reports about the decipherment's first phase H. H. Karagyozyan, a specialist in cuneiforms reading, informed us that years ago he succeeded to find a key to decipherment,

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<sup>419</sup> Vayman, 1978, pp. 104-105. For substantiation of the measurements presented by him, the author cited his unpublished report made in the State Hermitage in 1974 (Ibid, intr. 14), not being familiar with it, we withhold from commentaries. However, it must be noted, that the formula "1 *aqarqi* is equal to 9 *tirusi*" is not possible, because the decimal system of calculation was used in the Kingdom of Van (Petrosyan, 1945, pp. 55-72; Israyelyan, 1976, pp. 115-117). It is also proved by the presence of hieroglyphs denoting "9 *tirusi*" in the Toprak kale (according to C. F. Lehmann-Haupt's information) and Arin Berd materials (Yerevan, 1967, table XXI – 3; Khoddjash, 1981, table 4, N 323 and table 5, N 179), as well as cuneiform - "9,5 *tirusi*" on one of Karmir Blur's jugs (Piotrovski, 1956, p. 81, N 134, cf., Klein, 1974, p. 85, introduction 20). A. A. Vayman's suggestion is very close to J. Klein's viewpoint, published earlier (*aqarqi*= 100, *tirusi*=10 litres, Klein, 1974, p. 86), which he did not mention.

which had remained unpublished because of one unexplained mark. It was published in his monograph in 1998. H. H. Karagozyan attempt of decipherment, together with remarkable observations, was on the whole unsatisfactory, as follows, for example, from the reading of a seven-sign inscription on one of the Karmir Blur's bronze bowls: "Argište-Sardurihe". Thus the author tried to restore a king with the name of Argište III (625-620-s, BC.) who before it had been unknown in the king-list of the Kingdom of Van. But such an assumption ended in failure because the used inscription earlier was published 180<sup>0</sup> upside-down by B. B. Piotrovski<sup>420</sup>. In some cases the author read the text from right to left, in other – vice versa, because the writing's direction<sup>421</sup> was not precise.

**II-e)** In October of 1997 this work was presented as a dissertation for defence. During discussions of the work, S. G. Hmayakyan offered another version of the decipherment of three-syllabic names that we had read. By our request he especially for this work introduced his viewpoint. As far as S. G. Hmayakyan's attempt of decipherment proceeds from our proposed principles, so we shall present it together with our opinion after the subsection "Proper names with syllabic script".

**Our decipherment.** As it was noted, our work for decipherment passed 2 phases. The first one was in the end of 1995 with a series of reports which we made in Yerevan and Moscow, published articles and theses of reports and the second one – in spring of 1997, when we finished the inscriptions' corpus and compiled a signary presenting the frequency of the hieroglyphs' use. We shall present these phases of our work below and sum up results at the end.

### **The first phase.**

**a) Syllabic-written proper names.** The proper names reading is very important for decipherment of unknown scripts and

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<sup>420</sup> For correction see Movsisyan, 1998. p. 13-14, fig. 1.

<sup>421</sup> Karagozyan, 1998, pp. 51-75.

languages. In this respect two bronze plates are important, depicting persons with their names reproduced with hieroglyphs above their heads. Both plates were discovered in the basin of Lake Van.

Now the first plate is kept in Geneva in the collection of Budin. Teišeba, the second god (after Haldi) of the Biainian mythology is depicted sitting on his throne, placed on the back of a bull<sup>422</sup>. Four persons are standing in front of him, three of which wear divine garments, and the last one – a simple cloak, and each of them, probably, has his name written with hieroglyphs above his head. Moreover, a single sign is depicted in front of the god. The third of the four standing persons is the smallest one in his size and in spite of that, he stands before the fourth one, who, for his turn is smaller than the two before him and wears different garment. The name of the first standing person is written in the highest position and it begins with the picture-ideogram of the sun's winged disc, which is bigger than other signs. As a whole there are 18 hieroglyphs on the plate.

The second plate is kept in regional museum of Van. There are depicted the god Haldi standing on a lion and a kneeling woman (goddess), consecrating a young goat in front of him<sup>423</sup>. A goddess' picture offering a sacrifice to Haldi is frequent in monuments of Biainian art. As distinct from other cases, here,

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<sup>422</sup> The main gods of the mythology of the Kingdom of Van have their special pictography. Teišeba is depicted mainly on a bull (Hmayakyan, 1990, pp. 41-42), that makes his identity clear, and there was no need to note additionally (with cuneiform or hieroglyphs) his name. R.D.Barnet's opinion that Haldi is sitting on a throne (Barnett, 1974, p. 44), can not be considered grounded. The supreme god Haldi is depicted on the second plate, because the latter is presented standing on a lion in Biainian art (Hmayakyan, 1990, p. 35).

<sup>423</sup> The donation of a goat also attests that the god, standing on a lion, is Haldi, because, according to the inscription on the Door of Mher (Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 143-149; Karagyozyan, 1981, pp. 44-47; Hmayakyan, 1990, pp. 10-12, Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 44-52), goat was a sacrificial animal only for Haldi (cf. Hmayakyan, 1990, p. 35).

above the head of the offerer of sacrifice is written her four-sign (four-syllabic) name. The only commonness of the signs of two plates is identity of the second sign (syllable) in the names of the third standing person on WA<sub>u</sub>-1 plate and the heathen goddess on this plate, which will help us in finding out the key of decipherment (also to check truthfulness of the latter).

Who are depicted on the first plaque in front of Teišeba. The fact that they wear divine garments and the sun's winged disk' sign is put before the name of the first person, had enabled to suppose, that gods were standing in front of Teišeba and the first of them was Šivini – the sun's god. The name of Šivini<sup>424</sup> is reproduced by Ši-i-ŭ-i-ni and Ši-ŭ-i-ni syllabic arrangement in cuneiform inscriptions<sup>425</sup>. The name written with hieroglyphs has five syllables (the upper angle-like component of the third sign is an auxiliary determinant, which has already been spoken about) and the first version can correspond to it. Anyhow it is doubtful, because a syllable repeated in one name is written with the same sign in the hieroglyphic system<sup>426</sup>, meanwhile the third and the fourth syllables are written with different signs here. The first standing could not be Šivini also proceeding from the principles of the Biainian pictography. First, Šivini is usually depicted as a youth, on a winged horse<sup>427</sup>, and then it's improbable that the third (Šivini) of the three main gods would be depicted in lower position in front of the second one in a petitioner's position with outstretched hands. Drawing on another bronze plate (discovered in West Armenia) can be a subject of comparison, where Haldi and Teišeba are standing in front of each other in equal position<sup>428</sup>: the first one – on a lion and the second one – on a bull. Moreover, if the first one is Šivini, the women behind him must

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<sup>424</sup> Barnett, 1974, pp. 45-46; Hmayakyan, 1990, pp. 45, 112 (introduction 97), 147 (the explanatory of table 25).

<sup>425</sup> Melikishvili, 1960, p. 442; Harutyunyan, 2001, p. 490.

<sup>426</sup> Friedrich, 1961; p. 154.

<sup>427</sup> Hmayakyan, 1990, p. 45.

<sup>428</sup> Urartu, München, 1976, p. 55, fig. 48; Hmayakyan, 1990, table 30.

be the goddess Tushpea whose five-syllable name doesn't correspond to two signs<sup>429</sup> above her head. If it is not Šivini, it is improbable to suppose, that before the name of other god could be put the ideogram of the sun god<sup>430</sup>.

Those standing before Teišeba do not belong to the same class as is obvious from their sizes and garments. The first three belong to the same class and the fourth one to the lower one. The latter is depicted with a brick or a parchment (anyhow an object connected with writing) in his hand and the first one has a crown on his head. Like the gods, the royal family could also be depicted wearing divine garments (which was the symbol of belief about heavenly origin of the king's power). Therefore, the most probable version is that the first three persons standing in front of Teišeba are representatives of the royal family (a king, a queen and a prince) and the one, standing at the end, is a high-ranking functionary, maybe the high priest, dealing with the cult of gods and script. In such interpretation both the crown on the

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<sup>429</sup> R. D. Barnett notes two hieroglyphs of the first line above the head of the fourth person before two marks above the woman's head, as a component of her name (Barnett, 1974, p. 45). Those two marks, probably, have no connection with the woman's name, but refer to the fourth person, otherwise, they would be written in one line with two marks above the woman's head.

<sup>430</sup> When I was on a short visit to the State Hermitage in Sanct-Peterburg (the end of August, 1996), I met A. A. Vayman there. Getting acquainted with our decipherment, he presented his viewpoint about the explanation of WAu-1 plate, according to which on the one hand, the one sitting on the throne is god Haldi, on the other hand, Teišeba, Šivini and, at the end, the king are standing in front of him. A. A. Vayman substantiated such an explanation by assuming that only Haldi and Teišeba were depicted with horned crown which was characteristic for the pictography of the Kingdom of Van. This viewpoint doesn't stand the criticism because the horned crown was not only the privilege of the mentioned two gods, but it appeared as figurines of different mythological gryphon-like creatures constituting an element of thrones. After all, it's impossible to read the names of worshippers by such explanation (it was confessed also by the author of the viewpoint).

head of the first standing person and the presence of the sun god's mark before the king's name become quite understandable. The sun was considered to be the patron of the royal family. At the same time, Tushpa, the capital of the country was the main centre of the worship of the sun god of the Kingdom of Van<sup>431</sup>. The sun symbolized royal power and could mean also "sun-king" or any equivalent title (e.g. the Hittite kings "solar" title and other similar cases). The position of the third and fourth persons becomes explainable; the third one, being a young prince, had to stand closer in front of the god, than the supposed high priest whose low position, in comparison with the king and queen, emphasizes their class difference.

The similar character has a sculptural design belonging to another epoch and discovered in Armenia. It depicts a worshipping king, queen and their six children<sup>432</sup> standing in front of a bull's head put on an altar. This likeness and subject community of the sculptural design and our first plate is distinctive (in both cases royal family worships the bull-deity).

As a result of decipherment we have got the hieroglyph – written names of a king and crown prince, the first of which is five-syllabic, the second one – three-syllabic. We know the names of all kings of the Kingdom of Van in their sequence, moreover - each one with same versions of syllabic transfer. The names of the queen and the fourth person cannot be useful in this initial phase of decipherment, because the names of Biainian queens and high priests are not known. The first requirement of our problem is to find five-syllabic and three-syllabic names of a king and crown prince, at the same time, the second syllable of

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<sup>431</sup> Comparison, Hmayakyan, 1990, p. 46.

<sup>432</sup> Levonyan, 1941, pp. 69-71. The crown of this sculpture's king reminds of diadems of Orontes-Yervand and Tiribaz (depicted on their coins) - satraps of Armenia in the Achaemenid epoch (HAP, 1971, pp. 453-454) and it's possible that the sculpture-picture was made in the 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

the prince's name must coincide with the second syllable of the name written on the other plate.

First of all it is necessary to clear up a question of the person depicted in front of Haldi: is she a goddess or a queen (as is on the first plate) on the Van's plate. If she is a queen (it is rather difficult to imagine that it could be another kind of a mortal in front of Haldi), then she would be in company of her husband-king and behind him. We do not know any sovereign queen of the Kingdom of Van, it means that it is a goddess in front of Haldi. This picture is often repeated in the Biainian art's monuments<sup>433</sup>. The worshiping goddess' position deserves special attention in some of these pictures the goddess is standing, in others she is kneeling. Gods and goddesses are divided into three groups, according to their significance in the mythology of the Kingdom of Van<sup>434</sup>. Logically, the kneeling goddesses (among them is also the one depicted on the plate under consideration) had to belong to the last group. In the end this circumstance can also become a method for checking our conclusions' correctness.

The second problem arises while explaining the content of this plate: to find such goddess of the pantheon of the Kingdom of Van, who had four-syllabic name, at the same time the second syllable of the goddess had to coincide with the second syllable of the prince's name (this is the third problem).

Goddesses of the Kingdom of Van are mentioned in the inscription on the Door of Mher. Their number is 35, but they carry 16 mythological names, because four goddesses are mentioned by name Aiaiini (Aini) in the second group and seventeen<sup>435</sup> - Inuani. In order to find out whose name is written on the second plate, we picked out from all mythological names five

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<sup>433</sup> See for example – KB-3, pp. 11, 18; Piotrovski, 1959, p. 226; Urartu, München, 1976, p. 55, fig. 47, 49; Tašyurek, 1975, table 36-b; Tašyurek, 1978, fig. 1-5; Urartu, Gent, 1982-83, pp. 172, 176, etc.

<sup>434</sup> Hmayakyan, 1990, pp. 26-27.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid.

four-syllabic ones – A-ru-ba-ni (there are also other versions), Bar-ši-i-a, A-di-i-a, A-a-i-ni and I-nu-a-ni. For the repeated syllable in the names of goddess and prince we had five possible candidates – ru, ši, si, a, nu.

On the other hand, we must find five-syllabic and three-syllabic names of two kings who succeeded each other. We examined the names of all kings and crown princes of Biainili-Urartu with all possible versions of writing, and the king-names<sup>436</sup> of Ishpuini (Iš-pu-u-i-ni) and Menua (Me-nu-a) satisfied our problem's requirements.

For the solution of the third problem, we compared five probable syllables of the goddesses' names with the second syllable<sup>437</sup> of each king-name. As a result of comparison we had only one coinciding version: the crown prince Menua and the goddess Inuani. Seventeen goddess known by the name Inuani are mentioned at the end of pantheon, which once more proves the correctness of our conclusions. It means that the first key to the Biainian hieroglyphic system's reading was found decipherment. As a result of it, the decipherment of three proper names (consisting of 11 syllabic signs, one of which is repeated) and one ideogram, symbolizing king's power, has been.

***S. G. HMAYAKYAN'S VERSION OF DECIPHERMENT.*** *A. Movsisyan proposed an interesting key to decipherment which opens perspectives to continue the work in this direc-*

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<sup>436</sup> Various versions of syllabic writing are possible in cuneiform system, particularly, vowels' repetitions are frequent but this regularity is not finally clarified (it might be a tendency to emphasize preceding syllable's vowel or a method to fill free space if division of word was impossible). The proper names read by us are written in cuneiforms within the largest spectrum of versions (Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 415-447; Hmayakyan, 2001, pp. 447-492).

<sup>437</sup> In order to exclude possibility of error, while making comparisons we took into account not only the possible versions of known script, but also not attested ones which, anyhow, are possible according to the regularities of Biainian cuneiform-system.

*tion. Accepting and estimating highly the author's offered principles for reading and understanding the text, we think, that the research for reading's versions can be continued.*

*As it is known, many cult plates, discovered in Turkey and put up for sale, were made in a workshop belonging to a temple located not far from Hirkanis (Giyimli), which was destroyed, perhaps, during the last period of the Biainian statehood's existence. There is little probability to say that the members of the royal family, which reigned in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, were depicted on the plate kept in Geneva. Bearing in mind this circumstance, perhaps it be sensible to continue the search to find conformity with the kings' names enthroned later. As a possible version we can mention the names Erimena and Rusa, and concerning the goddess – Varubani (if this is Armenian script, then in the name Rusa an additional syllable must be supposed before the syllable “ru”, for example “a”). In this case, the second common syllable of the names of the prince and the goddess will be “ru” and not “nu”.*

*A. Movsisyan, basing on opportunities rendered to him by investigations and rules of “principle of acrophony” and “phonetic transfer”, concludes that the language of Biainian hieroglyphs is Armenian. It's a viewpoint which is harmonious with ethnic-political situation in the Armenian Highland in the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. We emphasize the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries, because the most part of hieroglyph-carrying object collected by the author, derives from monuments of that period (Toprak kale, Karmir Blur, Dovri, etc.). And during this period the preponderance of Armenian element in the region does not rise suspicion among investigators.*

*On the other hand, as the author notes, the Biainian hieroglyphic system finds its closest parallels in the Hittite-Luvian world, and, according to one of the accepted viewpoints, we find data about ancient Armenian political formations, correlated just with that world.*

We find it necessary to express our opinion about this remarkable attempt of S.G.Hmayakyan's decipherment.

First, the exact discovery place of WAu – 1 plate is not known and donative plates were found not only at Hirkanis. Nevertheless, if the plate (dated by the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) were discovered at Hirkanis and, we think that kings who reigned in the 9<sup>th</sup> century BC undoubtedly had to be depicted on the latter being connected with a traditional subject (cf. pictures devoted to the subject about Christ's nativity from the early Middle-Ages up to the present).

Indeed, it's possible to suppose, that the name Rusa had a vowel at the beginning of the word, moreover, that royal name in Assyrian texts had the form of "Ursa". But that name neither in Biainian, nor in Assyrian sources has three-syllabic writing; we can suppose Arsa, Orsa, Ursa, Ersa, or some other versions of that name, but only in two-syllabic writing. It is also unlikely to suppose five-syllabic writing of the name Erimena; in cuneiforms it always appears in four-syllabic version (we must say again that our readings of hieroglyphs coincide with the forms of writings of those names widespread in cuneiform inscriptions). After all, if our observation (about the kneeling goddess) is correct, then it's impossible to imagine the supreme goddess in such a position.

At the same time, we think that the version of decipherment, offered by S. G. Hmayakyan, is worth special attention.

**b) Interpretation of some ideograms.** The fact that the sun's winged disc, meaning the "sun," had also the meaning of "king" ("royal power") connected with it, is seen from numerous seals. That mark is depicted on upper and central parts of their bottom's surface (fig. 47)<sup>438</sup>. It's known from the history of the

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<sup>438</sup> About spreading of the sign of the sun's winged disc in Biainili-Urartu, Assyria and neighbouring territories in the discussed period see Barnett, 1974, pp. 46-47 (and the cited literature). Once getting acquainted with one

Kingdom of Van that in the provinces of the state the royal power was realized through some functionaries, among which “the seal-keeper”<sup>439</sup> played an important role. Perhaps, the seals with sun’s disc were used for the approval of decisions, orders and other acts on behalf of royal power.



*Fig. 47*

A hieroglyph with the picture of a boat or a lying half moon appears frequently besides the sign for the “sun-king”. It is always in upper part of seals, at times as an object of worship at other times above the pictures of various mythological, supernatural creatures (fig. 6). Thus, it is probable that the sign had the meaning of “god” (a simple noun) or “divine, heavenly”<sup>440</sup>.

of our articles, G. Kh. Sargsyan expressed an opinion that the winged disc’s picture was not a script-sign, but simply a symbol of the royal power (as a possible version, was explained also in the article), and that, according to his opinion, follows from specific design and size of that mark above king and queen on WAu-1 plate. Accepting the possibility of such an explanation, we consider more probable that the mentioned symbol was used also as a script-sign, particularly, as an attributor-ideogram (indicator, determinative).

<sup>439</sup> Diakonoff, 1963, pp. 26, 33-35; comparison; HAP, 1971, p. 346.

<sup>440</sup> Such hieroglyphs are met also in other writing systems, e.g. a similar mark is used for the “sky” in Hittite-Luvian (Laroche, 1960, pp. 96-97, N 182; Dunaevskaya, 1969, p. 98; *Il Geroglifico Anatolico*, 1998, pp. 49, 98). Such hieroglyph means “day”, “time” and “right” in Sumerian (Labat, 1976, pp. 174-175, 178-179). Moreover, the cuneiform, meaning the “sun”, derived from that mark (cf. Biainian and other hieroglyphs, see table III). Seals with that ideogram and pictures of mythological creatures probably

The ideogram with the meaning of “divine, heavenly),” is found also on other objects<sup>441</sup> besides seals and bowls. It is present also on WAu-1 plate, in the first line above the head of a conjectural high priest (it’s one of two marks, which R.D.Barnett because of misunderstanding joined to the beginning of the queen’s name). The high priest’s name, undoubtedly, is written in the second line. And what is written before it? Before the king’s name stands the picture of sun’s winged disc, symbolizing the royal power, which characterizes the king’s family; therefore, before the high priest’s name is expected his class determination. The second mark is “god (divine)” ideogram familiar to us. We have the double of the first sign in the lists of Armenian hieroglyphs (what is more, also in Erznka’s group), the explanation of which is “idolater”<sup>442</sup>. In Christian environment, a priest, professing pre-Christian religion, could be called “idolater”. According to it, before the name of the second person can be read its attribute “priest (worshiper) of god”, which exactly coincides with the general context<sup>443</sup> of the picture.

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were used in temples for the approval of the “decisions” of the given deity. In this respect, information of Sargon II about Musasir’s plunder is interesting, from where, he, among other things, took “a golden ring with seal—to ratify decisions of Haldi’s wife, Bagmaštu” [Lucken bill, 1927, p. 97; Diakonoff, 1951, N 49, (367-405)].

<sup>441</sup> For example, on a wing of a half-round bronze amulet from Karmir Blur [while an eight-winged star is depicted on the other wing (KB-1, p. 77)] and breasts of some figurins (Piotrovski, 1967, p. 24, table 2-3, 12). It may be supposed that this mark has been depicted on some breastplates, which, according to the belief, might be perceived as a guaranty of the divine providence. Probably some breastplates were made especially in the shape of a hieroglyph for “god” (some of them see Urartu, Jerusalem, 1991, pp. 108, 168-170).

<sup>442</sup> Acharyan, 1984, supplement-list, N 224: Abrahamyan, 1989, p. 170.

<sup>443</sup> While working at the archival depository of SMHA (2784-79, in our corpus – KB-18) our attention was attracted by one of Karmir Blur’s unpublished seals on a side-surface of which is depicted a man worshipping the “Tree of Life” with sacrificial animals on either side of it, and between the man and the “Tree of Life” is depicted the ideogram of “god” above. There

Let's return to the previous decipherments. As it was mentioned, only the appearance may be deceptive, therefore, to understand the meaning of ideograms, all subjoined data must be taken into account, particularly, the purpose of the object bearing the given script. Karmir Blur's bronze script-bowls were not the daily use objects, they were consecrated to gods and temples devoted to them. Taking into account this circumstance, let's apply to the ligature composed of the pictures of a tree and a tower. Upper part of the ligature can be explained in two ways, it depicts either a tree (a branch) or a spear (with up-directed sharp edge) symbolizing Haldi.

The mark shaped as a tree or a branch was widespread picture of the "Tree of Life" in Biainian art, which symbolized life and immortality and was an object of adoration. On the one hand, it reminds the Hittite-Luvian "Tree of Life" hieroglyph and, on the other hand - the hieroglyph for "unfading" in Armenian manuscripts. Therefore, with great probability we can conclude that Biainian hieroglyph meant the "Tree of Life (immortality)". The hieroglyph for "tower" can correspond to the ideogram É.GAL<sup>444</sup> of cuneiforms, which means "a big house (building)" (it's also translated as "a castle", "a place"). Addition of the ideogram for "Life (immortality)" to the top of the hieroglyph for "a big house (building)" would be perceived as "the house of life (immortality)", i.e. "god's house", "a temple". In the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system, for example, addition of the sign meaning "god" to the ideogram for "house" gives the hieroglyph for "temple" and the sign meaning "big" – "palace"<sup>445</sup>. The ligature "temple" with a lion's head, symbolizing Haldi, can be read "the Haldian temple". Mutual addition of cu-

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is a mark at the bottom of the seal, reminding the ideogram "priest (worshipper)", which, being connected with the general scene depicted on the side-surface, helps to reinforce opinion.

<sup>444</sup> Comparison, Vayman, 1978, p. 103.

<sup>445</sup> Laroche, 1960, pp. 133-134, N 249, 250; Dunaevskaya, 1969, p. 100; II Geroglifico Anatolico, 1998, pp. 54, 103.

neiform and hieroglyphic signs on some bowls allows to read a donative inscription with the following formula – “(King) Sarduri’s (consecration, present) to the Haldian temple”, or “from Sarduri to the Haldian temple”.

If we consider the upper part of the ligature as a depiction of a spear, symbolizing Haldi, then, principally not much will be changed by such assumption. It can be explained as “Haldi’s house” or, in a wider meaning, “god’s house”, i.e. “the Haldian temple” or just a “temple” (generally).

Besides bowls for the purpose of worship, this ligature in ellipsis-like circlet on clay vessels found at Toprak-kale, Karmir Blur, Armavir, Horom<sup>446</sup>. On the daily use objects the imprint of the sign “the (Haldian) temple” in ellipsis-like circlet (which gives an impression of a craft-signature) had to show the purpose of vessel (from the moment of its making) for the temple, because ritual vessels were to pass through special ceremonies of consecration (a phenomenon, which exists also at present).

As the Haldi’s symbol - lion’s picture serves as his hieroglyph, as well as the bull’s head, probably, symbolized the god Teišeba or his function. Such an assumption is grounded by the fact that there are many hieroglyphs depicting bull’s head, especially on war-equipments being connected with Teišeba as the god of thunder and war. It’s remarkable that the Sumerian hieroglyph for bull’s head and its cuneiform derivation had the meaning of “hero”,<sup>447</sup>. The hieroglyph for Teišeba-bull is met in two versions; meanwhile, the second is simplified one, with the meaning of “bull” and in the same shape appears in Armenian medieval manuscripts<sup>448</sup>.

The results of the first phase of decipherment are limited by these observations. There are double hieroglyphs among de-

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<sup>446</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1931, p. 587; Vayman, 1978, p. 101; Martirosyan, 1974, pp. 124, 126, 130; Badaljan, Kohl, Kroll, 1997, pp. 191-228.

<sup>447</sup> Labat, 1976, pp. 208-209.

<sup>448</sup> Acharyan, 1984, supplement-list, N 430; Abrahamyan, 1989, p. 173.

ciphered syllable-signs corresponding to *a*, *i*, *ni* syllables. It doesn't contradict to the hieroglyphic system's principles<sup>449</sup>. The same syllable could be expressed by various hieroglyphs having the same initial sounds (e.g. syllable "a" could be expressed by the ideograms for "sun", "chair", "month", "summer" and others in Armenian). In order to differentiate them An accent was put on the second hieroglyph as is accepted in anagrams of the cuneiform and hieroglyphic systems (see in the List of deciphered and interpreted marks, page 136).

### **The second phase.**

*a) Reveaation of bilingual inscription.* The second way of the decipherment was found after summing up the collected material, also owing to making more accurate a series of questions, which have already been discussed.

As a rule, researchers, examining the problem of bilinguals' existence and giving a negative answer, refer to the bronze bowls discovered at Karmir Blur. On most of them next to different king's names written in cuneiform are reproduced the same sings - lion's head and tower-like ligature ("temple" mark). Indeed, different king's names couldn't be written with the same signs and negation of bilinguals' existence in this case was logical one and we also accepted that opinion till the April of 1997. Thorough examination of the material, however, shows that it's not right to consider the mentioned two hieroglyphs as one inscription, because the lion's head is always depicted at the beginning of a cuneiform inscription, and the tower-like mark no matter where, even in the opposite direction of the lion's head. This discrepancy of hieroglyphs' position was noticed before us but without further investigation. The lion's head symbolized the supreme god Haldi in pictography, because lion was the latter's sacred animal<sup>450</sup>. With the same logic, bull's head became a

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<sup>449</sup> About the manifestation of the mentioned phenomenon in the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyph system, for example, see Laroche, 1960, pp. 265-268.

<sup>450</sup> Cf. Diakonoff, 1983, p. 193.

symbol-ideogram for Teišeba – the god of thunder and war, and horse’s head (or a winged horse) – the sun’s god. Depiction of a lion’s head on bronze bowls shows their consecration to the worship of the god Haldi, and the name written with cuneiform denotes who consecrated them. Addition of the tower-like ligature only completed the donation’s content together with the lion’s head meaning: “to the temple of Haldi”. Therefore, it is senseless to look for identical bilingual inscriptions on the bowls with the mentioned hieroglyphs. Together with the bowls merely with the lion’s head or ligature of the lion’s head and tower-like signs, there are four bowls, constituting a group, which next to cuneiform inscriptions have completely different groups of hieroglyphs. Are these bilingual inscriptions?

While compiling the collection of hieroglyph inscriptions, we noticed that the first two of the three hieroglyphs on one of the bronze bowls (fig. 48) were repeated on a seal<sup>451</sup> found at Toprak kale (fig. 49). The bowl carries Ru-sa-a-ni URU. TUR-gi (“Rusa’s small city”) cuneiform inscription being dedicated to the mentioned city<sup>452</sup> (perhaps, connected with its foundation), which was near Khoy, now in the place of famous archaeological site Bastam (since 1960s it has been excavated by German archaeologists). The archaeological site of Toprak kale (where the seal was found) was Rusahinili – the capital of the



Fig. 48

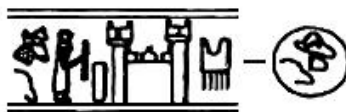


Fig. 49

<sup>451</sup> Wartke, 1990, pp. 82-83.

<sup>452</sup> KB-2, pp. 61, 63, Piotrovski, 1951, p. 112, fig. 8.

Kingdom of Van, which literally means “the Rusa’s city”. On the seal’s side surface are depicted a big tower, a castle, an indefinite object, a man with a staff (perhaps – a king) and a hieroglyph inscription with three signs. The latter is repeated also on the surface of the seal’s bottom. The first of three hieroglyphs (which isn’t read separately) is the most spread auxiliary sign known at present. Other two signs are identified with the first two hieroglyphs of the inscription on a bronze bowl. In the case of comparison of the bowl’s cuneiform with hieroglyph inscriptions (by the way, both are composed of three words) the repeated signs on each of them contain the following expression: “the Rusa’s city,” i.e. the seal carries the name of the city (Rusahinili), where it was discovered. Lateral pictures and being its metal stuff also prove that it was the capital’s seal. Therefore, the bowl’s second mark must have the meaning “small”. Bowl’s cuneiform and hieroglyph inscriptions have identical meaning, translate each other, showing that the given object was consecrated to “the Rusa’s small city”. So, the first *bilingua* is revealed.

During the first phase of decipherment the read proper names had syllabic (phonetic) writing. Decipherment of the inscriptions of bowl and seal opened a new perspective. In both cases for the name of Rusa we got a hieroglyph, a picture of the “horse head”. The examination of other five bowls with the Rusa’s name proves the correctness of such reading. The matter is that in contrast to others, the “horse head” and not that of lion is depicted on Rusa’s bowls. While the “lion head” is put at the beginning of a cuneiform inscription (to show the bowls consecration to the Haldi’s worship) and not in the centre of circlet formed of cuneiform signs; the “horse head” is always met in the centre of the cuneiform-signs-circlet. This circumstance makes our decipherment more convincing and confirms the possibility of Rusa’s name being depicted as the “horse head”. What is the reason of such “*phonetic transfer*”, writing, how should we understand that?

For a long time attention was paid to the fact that the king-name “Rusa/Ursa” has not got uniform script in cuneiform texts. It appears in the form of “Ursa”<sup>453</sup> in Assyrian sources (excluding one case) and in the form of “Rusa” - in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van,<sup>454</sup> i.e. the writing of the king-name’s first syllable is not the same; its pronunciation was difficult for its expression in cuneiform systems.

Some explanations were offered for the “Rusa” king-name in special literature. R. Aysler offered to interpret it in Greek, deriving it from the word stem Ρούσαζ “red”<sup>455</sup>. Gr. Ghapantsyan was inclined to connect it with the name “Eruaz”<sup>456</sup>, well known from the Ervandid period. During last decades, a viewpoint was offered to identify the discussed king-name with “Hrachya” (in form “Ruša” or “Hroša”)<sup>457</sup>. It was offered to derive the king-name either from Indo-European initial (\*rudhya “red metal, copper”) form<sup>458</sup>, or Persian “bright, radiant” root<sup>459</sup>, etc. As a rule, all these attempts were made proceeding only from phonetic likeness of the king-name with some words of the mentioned language.

The first results of the hieroglyph inscriptions’ decipherment of the Kingdom of Van made clear that the king-name

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<sup>453</sup> Diakonoff, 1951, NN 46, 49, 50, 76. Taking into consideration the fact that in the language of Biainian cuneiform-system non loan words do not begin with the sound “r”, a viewpoint was introduced, according to which the form of “Ursa” registered in Assyrian sources corresponds to the name’s correct pronunciation (Diakonoff, 1967, p. 128, Khachikyan, 1985, p. 143).

<sup>454</sup> Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 328-334, 341-353; Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 289-311; 330-359, 370-374, 375-377.

<sup>455</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1931, p. 902.

<sup>456</sup> Ghapantsyan, 1944, p. 98.

<sup>457</sup> See, for example, Ishkhanyan, 1990, pp. 75, 91; Hakobyan, 1992, pp. 78-81 (R. Badalyan, comparing the king-name under consideration with the Parthian “Arshak” and Sanskrit “Raja” names, supposed, that it could mean “king”).

<sup>458</sup> Petrosyan, 1997, p. 100.

<sup>459</sup> Gahukyan, 1987, p. 435.

“Rusa/Ursa” was reproduced by an ideogram depicting the “horse head”. It follows that the given king-name meant “horse” (it was widespread phenomenon calling people by sacred names in ancient world). Besides, in the native language of the Van’s rulers the name of that animal had two syllables, moreover, the second syllable was “-sa”, and the stem consonant of the first syllable was “r”. The search for that name (“horse”) leads us to the Indo-European world (in English – “horse”, in German – “Ross”, in Anglo-Saxon – “hros”, in Persian – res(a) “to reach”, in Greek – Ρώομαι – “to race, to gallop”, in Russian – рысак “trotter”, рысать “to trot”)<sup>460</sup>.

According to H. H. Karagyozyan, “horse” was to be called “(h)ors” in old Armenian, comparing it with the English word “horse”. The possible evidence of that assumption, in the author’s opinion, can be considered a passage from the Goghtan songs: “Եթէ դու յորս հեծցիս յԱզատն ի վեր ի Մասիս” (“If you ride your horse up to Azat Masis...”). The author offers to translate the word “horse” as “ձի”. At the same time H. H. Karagyozyan offers to explain some more Armenian words also proceeding from the mentioned possible interpretation<sup>461</sup>.

If this viewpoint is proved<sup>462</sup>, we can conclude that the king-name under consideration sounded “Hors(a)” in the meaning of “horse” connected with impetuous and sacred animal deicated to the sun’s cult. Such solution of the problem can make quite explainable the king-name’s manifold writing in the Assyrian and Biainian cuneiform inscriptions. It is really connected with incompleteness of the mentioned cuneiform systems. There is lack of sounds “h” and “o”; the former was usually

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<sup>460</sup> With the mentioned words can correlate also the Armenian word “horde”, which Hr. Acharyan did not etymologize. (Acharyan, 1977, pp. 136-137).

<sup>461</sup> Karagyozyan, 1998, pp. 60-62.

<sup>462</sup> Any viewpoint can be considered finally proved and acceptable, when it is possible to show that the root of Indo-European mother language, from which were derived the above cited words in daughter languages, as a result of conversion from the proto-language to Armenian could sound “(h)ors”.

omitted or reproduced by h “(kh)”, and the latter, as a rule, was presented by “u”<sup>463</sup>.

Irrespective of the mentioned viewpoint’s conformation, with great probability we can say, that the name under discussion meant “horse” and was connected with an animal<sup>464</sup> relating to the sun- worship. It had a primary role in military sphere bearing also totem notions.

It is known from the study of Biainian religion and art that main gods had their sacred animals, and they were symbolized in the hieroglyphic system. Horse and horse’s head (expressing the principle “part symbolizes the whole”) was similarly connected with the sun-god (let’s remember the tradition of consecrating horses to the sun among ancient Armenians, according to Xenophon)<sup>465</sup>.

Many bowls with inscriptions found at Karmir Blur bear the name of Sarduri. There are signs of the lion head and tower-like ligature on many of them. Two of the bowls stand out among them. One has been discussed above (fig. 30b) and on the other one besides the lion head is depicted an eagle above which is the ideogram of “god” (fig. 50). Only the name of “Sarduri” is inscribed in cuneiform there<sup>466</sup>. Once we supposed that the hieroglyph inscription on the bowl could be read – “to Haldi’s divine eagle”, and in the role of Haldi’s herald eagle was acceptable Artsibidi(ni) deity, the name of which in old Armenian

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<sup>463</sup> We tried to read “ru” syllable-mark “(h)ors” in all Biainian cuneiform inscriptions and didn’t find any contradiction.

<sup>464</sup> It’s also probable that under the image of horse could hide not just the word in the meaning of the “horse head”, but a word closely connected with the latter’s meaning.

<sup>465</sup> Xenophon, “Anabasis”, book IV, head 5, 35 (Fragments, concerning Armenia and the Armenians in Xenophon’s “Anabasis” and “Cyropaedia” see Manandyan, 1977, pp. 371-400, the mentioned part – p. 380).

<sup>466</sup> KB-2, pp. 56-57.



Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system)<sup>470</sup>. Therefore, with great probability the inscription is bilingual on the bowl; in both cases, ideograms for “god” and the goddess Sardi are expressed as the king-name Sarduri had been presented, and the lion head indicates the bowl’s consecration to Haldi’s worship by King (“Sarduri’s (consecration, present) to Haldi” or “from Sarduri to Haldi”).

We can see direct connection between the name, function and pictography of the goddess Sardi. The mythological name, perhaps, is dividable into two parts – Sar-di<sup>471</sup>, the second component of which, most likely, is the Armenian word di (<\*dhes “god”) (cf. – Hal-di, Artsibi-di(ni), etc.). The first part – sar, perhaps, is derived from the Indo-European proto-form \*ker, and has the meaning “summit height, top”<sup>472</sup>. The mythological name, with the meaning “the god of height(s) (of summits)” is connected with the goddess and eagle-like pictography, being allied with heaven and functions of was.

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<sup>470</sup> Laroche, 1960, pp. 76-78, N 128; Dunaevskaya, 1969, p. 96; II Geroglifico Anatolico, 1998, pp. 47, 94.

<sup>471</sup> There is an opinion that – *ardi* component must be singled out in the name (cf. Tcinuardi, Melardi, Ardi), and that according to G.A.Melikishvili (Melikishvili, 1954, p. 36; cf. Hmayakyan, 1990, p. 37) could mean “star” and in the opinion of G.B.Jahukyan, being derived from the Indo-European root \*art-, \*rt- meaning “god” (Jahukyan, 1963, p. 36; 1987, p. 434). The name’s decomposition (S-*ardi*) seems improbable. There are also suppositions to etymologize the name Sardi without its decomposition. Particularly, A.Seys, and following him, Gr.Ghapantsyan ascribe Indo-European origin to the goddess Sardi, comparing her name with the Lydian names of the sun god and the capital Sardis (which meant also “year”) and the word of the Iranian origin *sardi* (“year”) (Sayse, 1982, p. 487; Ghapantsyan, 1940, p. 49). During one of my reports (6.05.1997) made at the Institute of Oriental studies of RA NAS, Armen Petrosyan expressed his opinion, that the deity’s name could be connected with the Armenian word “zard” (adornment).

<sup>472</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 54, 132, 258.

Many seals with the ideogram for “god” and the eagle’s picture (which sometimes is depicted fighting with a snake or with pecked spray) were discovered in some archaeological sites (fig. 52), which can be connected both with Sardi’s cult and the name of Sarduri. Among the seals, allied with Sardi, especially one<sup>473</sup> is

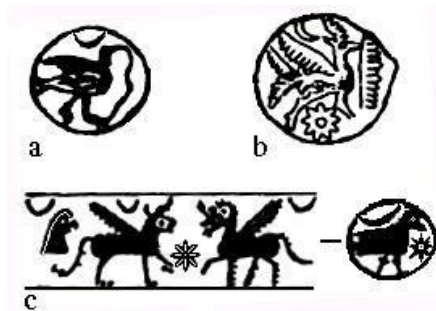


Fig. 52

remarkable discovered at Karmir Blur. The planet, symbolizing Sardi (Inanna-Ištar), is Lusaber (Arusyak, Venera)<sup>474</sup>, which from the oldest texts is known as “the star of sunrise”<sup>475</sup>. On the given seal’s side surface, to the left is depicted an eagle’s head with both the sign for “god” above it and an eight-winged star in the centre, which is guarded by two mythological creatures with the divinity sign. An eagle is reproduced on the surface of the bottom of the seal. There is the same star in front of the eagle and lying half moon above it, with a dot (or a circlet) at the top. The latter is identically met in Armenian signary and interpreted as “morning”<sup>476</sup>, which with the star represents Sardi’s characterization–epithet – “the sunrise star”. The eagle’s head (according

<sup>473</sup> SMHA 2784-147; in our corpus – KB-12 (fig. 53d).

<sup>474</sup> Speaking about Sardi-Ištar correspondence, B.B.Piotrovski considered Sardi’s planet to be Venera (Lusaber in Armenian), and the symbol-sign – “eight-winged star” (like Ištar) and that Karmir Blur’s horse-shoe-like bronze hanger (on its one end is “eight-winged star” and on the other – the ideogram for “god” – lying half moon) was connected with her worship, (Piotrovski, 1959, p. 226).

<sup>475</sup> PQE, 1982, p. 69.

<sup>476</sup> Acharyan, supplement-list, N 81; Abrahamyan, 1989, p. 168. The pre-samples of the mark in earlier monuments of the Armenian Highland see Martirosyan, 1993, p. 18, table II.

to the principle “part symbolizes the whole”) is ideogram for Sardi and is met also on other objects<sup>477</sup> and perhaps it’s connected with the function of the goddess’s war.

With great probability it possible to say that like other similar goddesses, Sardi also was the protector of royal power (the royal family). It is also seen from the pictures of “eagle” and “lion” on some seals<sup>478</sup>; “lion” was the symbol of the country’s supreme god and only the protector-deity of the king-family could have the honour of joining with him (fig. 53). On most of the seals with Sardi’s picture, the goddess comes out with “eight-winged star”, which, probably, was her symbol. “Eagle” and “eight-winged star”, which symbolized the mighty royal power, after many centuries were depicted on the crown of Tigran the Great indicating the hereditary character of the royal power in the Armenian Kingdom<sup>479</sup>.

Besides the mentioned ones, the written content of a seal, found at Karchaghbyur (the Lake Sevan basin), can be a bilingual inscription (fig. 54). At its bottom the hieroglyph for “god” and a mythological being are depicted. Recently, while working in the State Historical Museum of Armenia N.Yengibaryan discovered cuneiforms’ traces on its rather worn outside surface. They were restored as ideograms for “god” and “moon” (<sup>d</sup>SIN).

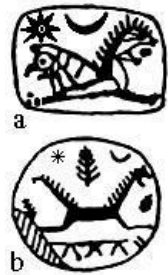


Fig. 53

<sup>477</sup> KB-2, pp. 62-64; the bronze bowl with that and another mark see KB-2, pp. 55-56.

<sup>478</sup> Karapetyan, Yengibaryan, 1996, p. 35. The simplified picture of double-headed eagle and lion is on one of Karmir Blur’s two-side-seals (KB-2, pp. 45-46; SMHA 2784-152; in our corpus – KB-46).

<sup>479</sup> After the loss of the state (at the end of the 14<sup>th</sup> century) centuries later, in 1918, when Republic of Armenia was founded, “eagle” (from the left) and “lion” (from the right) were depicted on the coat of arms of the Armenian state. At that time nothing was known about Biainian double-headed eagle-lion, whether it was a contingent coincidence or an expression of a mystery.

H. Karagyozyan who was present at that moment, after examining the seal, proposed his reading. Proceeding from the identity of cuneiform and hieroglyph scripts, we can suppose, that here also we deal with bilingua and the picture of mythological being on the bottom of the seal can be considered as an ideogram for the moon god – Melardi (as an expression of the latter’s zoomorphic picture)<sup>480</sup>.



Fig. 54



Fig. 55

Among the Biainian objects with inscriptions, a seal stands out (at present is kept in the museum of Yeghegnadzor where it was found, fig. 55). The name of Argišti is represented on the prism-like four-sided seal in peculiar manner. The *ar* and *ti* syllables of the name are written with cuneiform-signs, and the syllable *giš* – with pictograph, having the shape of a tree (the reading belongs to A.S.Piliposyan)<sup>481</sup>. In cuneiforms the ideogram for “tree, wood” had “*giš*” phonetic value (connected with the language of the creators of cuneiform - the Sumerians), which here is replaced by a hieroglyph-ideogram. We had a dedicatory inscription with half-cuneiform, half-hieroglyph script and here the same phenomenon is expressed in one name.

**b) Additional comments.** In the course of the second phase of the decipherment, the discovery of bilingual inscriptions directly or indirectly favoured to the explanation of some other originals.

<sup>480</sup> Movsisyan, 1998, pp. 41-42, in 2002 N.Yengibaryan reconsidered his reading and offered a version <sup>d</sup>Hal-[di-e] (“Khal(di) god”) (Yengibaryan, 2002, pp. 418, 434, table I-1).

<sup>481</sup> Piliposyan, 1997, p. 13, Piliposyan, 1998, pp. 68-70 (the differences between the signs of the seal and cuneiforms, the author explains by the worn out state of the seal).

One of Karmir Blur's weights-like seals<sup>482</sup> serves as a remarkable example of ideograms for proper name (fig. 56). The bottom's surface is mainly occupied by a bull's picture, which was the symbol of Teišeba. There are two marks above the picture, one of which is five-cornered and almost identical with the ideogram<sup>483</sup> for the god Tešub (identifies with Teišeba) of the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system (tab. 7). The second one looks like the ideogram for "god" in a little inclined position. This seal bearing script is parallel with the seals relating to the goddess Sardi on which next to the eagle-like picture and ideogram for "god", there is an eight-winged star, probably as the symbol-pictograph of that goddess.

Returning to the problem of the horse as the symbol of the sun god, we should add that the winged horse's picture, like the sun's winged disc, was the symbol of the royal power. It is also evident from the picture of "winged horse" in the centre of royal seals, imprinted on a clay tablet.



Fig. 56



































Fig. 57

An interesting group of signs (3 in number) can be allied with the idea of deity. First of them is an up-directed trident frequently met on the royal seals' side surfaces discovered at Bastam and Toprak kale and which was always an object of wor-

<sup>482</sup> SMHA 2010-127 (in our corpus – KB-74).

<sup>483</sup> Laroche, 1960, p. 163, N 318; Dunaevskaya, 1969, p. 102; *I1 Geroglifico Anatolico*, 1998, pp. 59, 108.

ship; a lion (Haldi's sacred animal) walks toward the trident, then the king, who is followed by a servant, keeping his umbrella. As a rule, a lion is depicted on the bottom of the mentioned seals (fig. 57). All this allows us to suppose that the up-directed trident was one of Haldi's symbols; not excepting that the sign

BIAINIAN	HITTITE-LUVIAN	SUMERIAN	EGYPTIAN	"WRITING-SIGNS OF MEANING"
 a; Sun	 su, su <sub>4</sub> (< siuni ?)		 Sun	 Sun
 nu	 nu < nuwa «9»			
 Sky, celestial, God, devine	 Sky, celestial	 Day, sun, time		
 <u>Haldi</u> ; God		 Lord, sovereign		
 <u>Haldi</u> ; Creator (?)	 Lord	 Great		 Beginning
 Morning(?)	 ?			 Morning
 <u>Teišeba</u> ; Bull	 Bull	 Hero	 Ferocious	 Bull
 <u>Teišeba</u> (?)	 Tešub			
 Priest, worshiper				 Idolater
 Ear			 Ear	
 Tree of Life, immortality	 Tree of Life			 Unfading

Tab. 7

expressed the idea of triunity, representing Haldi as founder of divine supreme triplet and father<sup>484</sup>.

<sup>484</sup> It is worthy to mention the beginning of the inscription on the Door of Mher: a special sacrifice is offered first of all to Haldi, then to the pantheon's three supreme gods – Haldi (for the second time), Teišeba and Šivini (moreover, for the first time kids (of goats) are sacrificed to Haldi, which is not met in the case of any other god). Such a ritual makes to think that in the first case Haldi was perceived as initially single, the creator of

The picture of up-directed spear was one of the Haldi's symbols. That hieroglyph, with angle-like auxiliary mark above, is met on one of figurines<sup>485</sup> discovered at Toprak kale (TK-31). The latter is a statuette of a bull in reclining position; upper part of the deity's body standing on it is broken. The sacred animal of the second main god Teišeba was bull, therefore we can suppose, that the statuette represented Teišeba. Two vertical short lines precede the spear-like mark in the figurine's writing. Is it possible to conclude that vertical short lines did mean not quantitative, but classic numbers in Biainian hieroglyphic system (as distinct from Hittite-Luvian)? In that case it'll be possible to read the figurine's writing as "the second Haldi" or "the second god", what quite corresponds to Teišeba's position in Biainian pantheon.

The second one represents the wineskin's mark above the winged horse on the bottom of the royal seals from Karmir Blur and Bastam. It seems to play the determinative's role. We shall analyze that hieroglyph in connection with the problem of "*pho-  
netic transfer*".

The fact of the widespread<sup>486</sup> subject about a hero looking for immortality in ancient Armenia and neighbouring countries also attests to the hereditary connection of Biainian and medieval Armenian manuscripts' hieroglyphs.

In the world-famous epic of ancient Mesopotamia is narrated that Gilgameš set off for the flower of immortality to the Armenian Highland and that the latter's border Mašu (cf. Armenia's southern Masius / Masion) mountains were watched by dreadful men–scorpions, who guarded also sunrise and sunset.

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everything, the father of all gods, in the second case – as the leader of the supreme triplet and the whole pantheon. The trident was a symbol of Haldi as is seen from script-carrying objects (in our corpus – Armavir-3, Bastam – 19-21, 37-95, 127-129, TK-1-2, 4, KB-2, see Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 189-269).

<sup>485</sup> Piotrovski, 1939, p. 51, table IV.

<sup>486</sup> Thoroughly see Movsisyan, 2004, pp. 42-45 (and the cited literature).

Gilgameš found the flower of immortality; however, he was thieved by a snake<sup>487</sup>. In the Bible (Genesis, 2, 8-14; 3, 22-24) the mystery of immortality is embodied in the Tree of Life placed in the Paradise (the Armenian Highland).

The same epic recounts that the way to the Tree of Life was guarded by cherubs (moreover, here also people were deprived of immortality, because of the snake's interference).

The same picture is depicted on side surfaces of hollow cylindrical-formed Biainian seals discovered at Karmir Blur and Armavir: a bowman kills with an arrow a mythological animal, reminding a dragon, above which is "divine" or "morning" hieroglyph. There is a radiating plant between them, which reminds the Mesopotamian immortality flower or the Tree of Life and the mythological animal – men-scorpions or cherubs (fig. 58a)<sup>488</sup>. And the most remarkable is that the simple picture of that animal we find in medieval Armenian manuscripts with "cherub" explanation (fig. 58b)<sup>489</sup>.

Summing up the results of the second phase of decipherment, we see that Biainian- Araratian hieroglyphs with cuneiforms in some cases appear in bilingual inscriptions translating each other. For the time being we have tree bilingual



Fig. 58

inscriptions, but we should take into account that some texts (which have parallel scripts with two systems) remain undeciphered and owing to their future study new bilinguas can be revealed. Besides, it becomes clear that not only syllabic

<sup>487</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1927, pp. 797-798; ANET, pp. 88-89; Lipinsky, 1971, pp. 49-50; 119; PAE, 1982; pp. 143, 163-164; MM, p. 96.

<sup>488</sup> See the seals in our corpus Armavir- 6, KB-24, 28, also KB-26, 27, 30, 31 (Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 191, 200, 218, 239).

<sup>489</sup> Abrahamyan, 1959, p. 173 (some versions of the sign were identified with the Armenian letter "q" by Hr. Acharyan and A.G. Abrahamyan; this version is the oldest one and originates, at least, from the Biainian period).

(phonetic), but also ideographic principle of the proper names' writing existed in the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van, which had the following structural manifestations:

- a) without a determinative, with one pictograph,
- b) by matching of a determinative and any god's pictogram,
- c) by synthesis of a determinative, the given king's symbol and a pictorial ideogram,
- d) by "*phonetic transfer*" of homonymous ideograms according to the principle of "phonetic rebus".

The results of this phase, once more certify the important role of the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system in the history of Armenian pictography which (among world writing-systems) correlated the most with the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system.

Altogether, we deciphered about fifty hieroglyphs, including word and syllabic hieroglyphs, numbers and one auxiliary sign. Three proper names (Išpuini, Menua, Inuani) have been read. 11 syllables were used in their writing. Six more proper names (Haldi, Teišeba, Šivini, Sardi, Rusa, Sarduri) were written with ideograms. Two city names (capitals) - "Rusahinili" and "Rusa's small city" have been deciphered with ideographic script. The read scripts and signs are of seven types by their characteristics:

- a) they show belonging to the object, above which they are marked,
- b) they point out the identity of the represented,
- c) they have dedicatory meaning ("to the Haldian temple", "Sarduri's (present) to Haldi", etc.),
- d) as a craft-signature,
- e) they characterize quantitative data of the object carrying signs (capacity signs, etc.),
- f) they are allied for the purpose of the given object,
- g) they are not clarified yet.



#### II-4-4. THE PROBLEM OF THE LANGUAGE OF THE HIEROGLYPHIC SYSTEM OF THE KINGDOM OF VAN

There are two candidates for the language of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van - the language of Bianian cuneiform or one of the spoken languages in the country. The results of decipherment still don't allow us to come to a final conclusion in the language's problem, but they clarify it.

1. According to the principle of acrophony largely used in hieroglyphic system, syllabic and alphabetic signs allegedly originated by using the first part of a longer word and casting off the rest<sup>490</sup>. Therefore, if the meaning and its syllabic value of that sign are known, by means of inverse logic it is possible to determine the language in which that word began with the given syllable (phoneme) and find out the people that created writing system and their language.

Among our deciphered hieroglyphs the one for the "sun" is the most reliable one, which we find in the center of the sun's winged disc. That sign with the same design and meaning exists both in Egyptian hieroglyphic system<sup>491</sup> and in Armenian signary<sup>492</sup>. It is represented as syllable "a" in the name of Menua. I.e. the sun's name had to begin with syllable "a" in the language of people which created the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van. What language is this?

In this case the candidature of the Biainian cuneiform's language falls out, because in its vocabulary the word sun is called Siúini<sup>493</sup> both as a mythological name and a simple noun. In Hurrian (which is considered kindred to the language of Biainian cuneiform's) the sun is called *Simige*<sup>494</sup>. As the writing

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<sup>490</sup> Gelb, 1965, p.251.

<sup>491</sup> Wallis Budge, 1978, p. CXXIV (IV8); Korostovtzev, 1961, p. 95, N 5.

<sup>492</sup> Abrahamyan, 1959, p. 169, Martirosyan, 1979, pp. 13-16.

<sup>493</sup> Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 195, 306-307; Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 124-125, 319-321.

<sup>494</sup> Khachikyan, 1985, p. 48.

systems of the Kingdom of Van were connected with the Assyrian and Hittite-Luvian worlds and the cases of borrowings were possible, so we checked also data of those languages. In Assyro-Babylonian, as it's known, the sun was called Samas, in the Hittite language - *Istanu* (which is derived from the Hattic *Estan*), and in earlier phases - Siuni, in Luvian – Tiwat, in Palaic - Tiat<sup>495</sup>.

Majority of the population of the Kingdom of Van constituted Indo-Europeans – mainly Armenians, as well as Iranian and Thracian tribe-groups<sup>496</sup>.

The only language is Armenian<sup>497</sup> (of the known Indo-European languages spoken in Biainili-Ararat and contiguous districts) in which the word “sun” begins with “a” phoneme (syllable). The Armenian word *uṗlu* (“sun”) is derived from the Indo-European root \*reu- (\*reu-)<sup>498</sup> and in the Biainian period had to have the form “*arev*”<sup>499</sup>, i.e. analysis of meaning and phonetic value of the most reliable hieroglyph (if the latter didn't mean another notion - “day”, “afternoon”, “time”, etc.- semantically connected with “sun”), in the light of the principle of acrophony and linguistic knowledge, shows that the probable candidate for the language of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van was ancient Armenian.

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<sup>495</sup> Ivanov, 1980, p. 136.

<sup>496</sup> Jahukyan, 1988, pp. 161-162.

<sup>497</sup> Buck, 1949, p. 43 (on this problem for supplying consultation and literature we thank G. B. Jahukyan).

<sup>498</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 145., 207, 258.

<sup>499</sup> The data of cuneiform inscriptions show that in the Biainian period in Armenian a word could not begin with the phoneme “p” (“r”) (the only exception is the name Rusa, the reading of which is suspicious, the same name in Assyrian sources is in the form “Ursa”). The name Aram (derived from the Indo-European root \*re-mo) can be considered as a classical example of adding of the pre-phoneme “u” (a) before “p” (“r”) – the beginning of the word (see Petrosyan, 1997, pp. 33-55, 167-168; Petrosyan, 2002, pp. 44-45).

We shall touch other cases of the application of the principle of acrophony below.

2. The other principle, which also had extent application in hieroglyphic systems was “phonetic transfer (principle of “phonetization”, “phonetic rebus”). The analysis of one case of this principle’s application also favors to the solution of not easy problem to clarify the language of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van. We mean the hieroglyph for “city”, which is presented by a simplified drawing of “head” in half face (on basis of this R. O. Barnet included it in the group of anthropomorphic signs in his signary). What connection can the idea of city have with such a drawing? The linguistic and Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic data again helped in this question.

The word “city” is borrowed from Assyrian into Armenian (Hr. Acharyan connects it with the name of Assyria’s capital *Kalak* which was founded in the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, which initially was a simple noun “city” with the meaning of “height or castle”<sup>500</sup>), i.e. ancient Armenian in the period of the Kingdom of Van had the word “city” in a phonetic form “Kal/łak”. Analyzing Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs and their simplified versions, the ideogram for “goat”<sup>501</sup> attracted our attention, which was exactly like our sign for “city” (fig. 59a). Biainian sign (which is very like Hittite-Luvian with the same meaning), depicting a goat, through simplification would be shaped as the same hieroglyph (fig. 59b). In ancient Armenian he-goat is called “*kagh*” (քաղ), which is derived from Indo-European proto-form \**kag-lo*<sup>502</sup>. The two names’ similarity allows to conclude, that here also is the

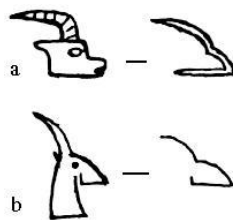


Fig. 59

<sup>500</sup> Acharyan, 1978, pp. 542-543

<sup>501</sup> Laroche, 1960, pp. 65-66, N 104; Dunaevskaya, 1969, pp. 95; I 1 Geroglifico Anatolico, 1998, pp. 44, 92.

<sup>502</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 130, 208.

case of “phonetic rebus”, enigmatic phonetic transfer when the word “*kaghak*” (քաղաք, city) was replaced with “*kagh*”. This case of phonetic transfer also was possible only in the case of ancient Armenian.

It is possible that we deal with the application of the same principle in the case of sign for “wineskin (տիկ)” depicted on the bottom of the royal seals, above “winged horse”. The word “տիկ” (wineskin) is of native Armenian origin and derives from the Indo-European root \*diga-<sup>503</sup>. The mark was depicted above “winged horse”, symbolizing the sun’s god, and perhaps, served as its determinative. With great probability we can conclude, that phonetic beginning of the sign (according to the principle of acrophony) replaced words տի <\*di- “օր” (day), տիվ <\*diu- “օր, ցերեկ, լույս” (day, afternoon, light) or maybe տի <\*dei “մեծ” (big, great), դի <\*dhes- “սուսկաժ” (God) connected with the sun’s god<sup>504</sup>.

3. The candidature of Armenian for the language of the hieroglyphic system (and most spread spoken) of the Kingdom of Van is probable also because of the output of the etymological analysis of place-names and theonymy. It’s enough to note that seven of eleven preserved place-names of the royal land of Armarili (Arмали) country (Armarili, Tsinišpala, Tsinunak, Ayali, Arna, Šarni, Ubianda), according to G. B. Jahukyan are etymologized in Armenian<sup>505</sup>. A large number of place-names<sup>506</sup> and mythological names<sup>507</sup> of the Armarili’s neighbouring regions and the whole kingdom are also etymologized in Armenian.

4. Taking into account the great probability of candidature of Armenian for the language of the hieroglyphic system of the

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<sup>503</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 118, 210.

<sup>504</sup> Jahukyan, 1988, pp. 72, 84, 117, 120, 216, 217, 222.

<sup>505</sup> Jahukyan, 1988, pp. 151-167.

<sup>506</sup> Jahukyan, 1988, pp. 151-167.

<sup>507</sup> Jahukyan, 1986, pp. 43-58.

Kingdom of Van and proceeding from regularities of the principle of acrophony for some of deciphered signs it is possible to offer some interpretations.

The Işpuni name's first and third signs (which were correctly put among pictures-hieroglyphs for parts of the male body by R. D. Barnett) symbolize "ear"<sup>508</sup> and "eye". The oldest Armenian has the word "նւնկն (unkn)" (for ear) which is derived by double suffixation (\*us-en-ko-m / \*us-on-kon) of the root \*us/-ous- - the root of the Indo-European proto-language<sup>509</sup>. It should be supposed that earliest Armenian and ancient Armenian initially had "\*us" form, without double suffixation or "\*usn" form<sup>510</sup>, comprised by the same root and n nasal, which was not retained later on. By the way, the word "նւշ" ["միտք" (thought), "խելք" (mind) "մտադրութիւն" (intention), "բանականութիւն" (intellect) from which- նւշ դնել, նւշի նւշով, ապուշ, նւշադիր, նւշիմ, նւշք etc.] has derived from the same root in Armenian, being considered to be a borrowing from Iranian form *us*<sup>511</sup>. For the first sign (depicting "ear") of the Işpuni name we have us/uš syllable in ancient Armenian, the consonant of which coincides with the name's cuneiform (iṣ), and the vowel - differs. This difference may hardly be the result of our wrong conclusion, because the king-name is Ušpina<sup>512</sup> in Assyrian version. The fact of coincidence of our etymologizing

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<sup>508</sup> In due time not having the plate's photo and judging only from the drawing's similarity, we supposed that it's a pictograph of an animal's head and tried to explain it (Mossisyan, 1996(d), p. 392). Thorough examination of the photos enabled to make precise that the sign is a depiction of a human being's ear and thus we rejected our previous explanation. By the way, a similar sign in Egyptian hieroglyphic system comes out with the meaning of "ear" (tablet, see Wallis Budge, 1978, p. CVI (N25); Korostovcev, 1961, p. 85, N 18; Abrahamyan, 1959, p. 168).

<sup>509</sup> Acharyan, 1977, pp. 603-604, Jahukyan, 1983, pp. 51, 142, 238.

<sup>510</sup> In the same place.

<sup>511</sup> Acharyan, 1977, pp. 605-606.

<sup>512</sup> Diakonoff, 1951, N34

with the name's Assyrian version, in any case, gives cause for deliberation.

There is an uncertainty connected with the writing of “o” phoneme in the Biainian cuneiform system. Mesopotamian cuneiform has only four vowels - a, i, e, u (each one with several marks), the sound “o” is not expressed, which is often replaced with “u” vowel in script. The second syllable of the name Išpuini is “pu”, which also could be read “po”. The latter seems more probable, as the sign is a picture of “tail” (with a belt-band in upper part), and the word “պոնչ”, “պոչոնիկ” (tail) has Indo-European origin and existed in ancient Armenian<sup>513</sup>. The existence of hieroglyph for “tail” can be seen strange from the first sight, but this phenomenon has very convincing and essential explanation. Since ancient times until the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC a magic tradition had been retained according to which rulers and soldiers, believing to get the strength of strong animals, used their horn, skin or a tail. Therefore, it's quite natural existence of hieroglyphs for “horn”, “skin” and “tale”.

This assumption makes clear the accepted pentasyllabic writing (Iš-pu-u-i-ni) of the name of Išpuini. Earlier it remained incomprehensible why “u” follows “pu” syllable, giving rise to vowel's unnecessary repetition. But, probably, there was no unnecessary repetition of vowel, as “u” followed the syllable “po”<sup>514</sup>.

The third sign of Išpuini name's writing, as it was said, is an hieroglyphic sign for “eye”, which expresses the phoneme “u” (“ni” – the second). It could mean as “eye”, as well as “to see”, “watch”, and other such functional words. In Indo-European proto-language the root of words “to see, learn, know” is \*ueid or \*uoid, from which in old Armenian (classical-grabar) we have

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<sup>513</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 115, 209.

<sup>514</sup> Because of repetition of “ni” (u) in the second and third syllables, “Isphuvini” version was also offered for reading of the name (see, for example, Diakonoff, 1936, p. 48, Diakonoff, 1988, p. 161, etc.).

the word “qłun” (qḥun-tū, I know), qḥun-nū (wise)<sup>515</sup>. Word-beginning\* u of proto-language regularly gives “q” in classical Armenian (\* uedeno-> qłunḥū (ground), \* ued=> qłun (river), \*uel-> qłn (village), \*ud-> qnḥ (thief), \*uero-> qḥn (writing), etc.)<sup>516</sup>, but in the Biainian period, the oldest Armenian’s \* u had not yet become “q”, as seen from cuneiform inscriptions. Let’s bring two examples. The province-name of Gegharkunik, “gegh” root of which derives from the Indo-European root \*uel, has Uelikuni/Uelikuhi versions<sup>517</sup>, and the district in the Lake Sevan basin of the Etiuni country, is called Ueduri Etiuni<sup>518</sup>, the first component of which is rightly explained as “water» (qłun<\*uedo (r)-)<sup>519</sup>. In the Biainian period proto-language's root \*ueid- or \*uiod- “to see, learn, know” had to sound *ued* or *uoid*, and the sign for “eye”, according to the principle of acrophony, had to show the first syllable of that root –u(v), as it was. We consider possible that the first particle of the nickname of Rusa I - Uedipri was not the word *uediani* (woman), but the root *ued* (to see, learn, know) (and the nickname could mean “cautious, educated, wise”).

At the same time the sign for “eye” is met also on the plate separately - between the signs for “god” and “king”, and that gives grounds to suppose that king requested and god granted “science and wisdom”. Such an interpretation becomes more probable if we take into account that on the plate, behind

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<sup>515</sup> Acharyan, 1971, p. 556; Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 155, 220, 222.

<sup>516</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 114, 155, 156.

<sup>517</sup> Ghapantsyan, 1931, p. 9; Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 286-287, 293-294, 328-329; Kargyozyan, 1978, pp. 57, 62-63; Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 243-245, 254-255, 295-296.

<sup>518</sup> Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 210-212, 280-282, 303; Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 156-157, 238-239, 264.

<sup>519</sup> The beginning of the place-name S. T. Yeremyan translated “near lake (near sea/ at maritime)” (Yeremyan, 1968, p. 81). H. H. Karagyozyan, making the reading more accurate, reads the toponym “Water Etiuni” (Karagyozyan, 1988, pp. 65-64).

“prince” is standing a person having connection with writing culture (probably the prince's educator- priest). Therefore, the sign for “eye” can be translated as “to see, learn, know”, as well as “sight (in the priestly sense), science, wisdom”.

The fourth is a sign for “animal’s head”. From R. D. Barnett’s published signary it’s not clear, what is that animal. After all, the last sign (stressed by crooked beak) of the name of Išpuini, probably, is for “vulture’s head” and expresses a syllable equivalent to the cuneiform’s “ni” syllable. Relying on the above mentioned hypothesis about Armenian as the language of the hieroglyphic system and inserting the first syllable of the word “vulture” (also of Indo- European origin<sup>520</sup>) into the king-name, we shall have a new, transformed king-name - Us/š-po-u-i-an (Us/špovian). “Išpuini” means “happy”<sup>521</sup> and according to G. B. Jahukyan’s convincing etymology, it derived from the Indo- European basis-per-form \*sp(h)oi-. Old Indian *sphiti* (“success”), Latin *prosper* (us) (“prospective, lucky”), old English spowan (“to prosper, blossom, succeed”), Russian *успех*, *успевать* and other words have been derived from the same root<sup>522</sup>.

What can be said about other syllabic signs? The first sign of the name Menua is also a picture of an animal head, but it’s incomprehensible. The second hieroglyph is repeated on two plates (Me-nu-a and I-nu-a-ni), it’s comprised of three vertical equal lines and expresses the syllable “nu”. The first impression that it can be a sign for the number “three”, is deceptive, because neither in Armenian, nor in the language of Biainian cuneiforms and Hittite-Luvian languages the word meaning number “three” begins with the syllable “nu”. In the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system the syllable “nu” is expressed by two signs. One of them is the picture of nine horizontal short lines in three lines - the

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<sup>520</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, p. 412

<sup>521</sup> From the word “happiness” Ispuise (Melikishvili, 1960, p. 69)

<sup>522</sup> Jahukyan, 1936, p. 100

sign of the number “nine”<sup>523</sup>. In the Hittite language the word “nine” was translated *nuwa* the first syllable of which was expressed in phonetic writing. It is possible that the scribes of the Kingdom of Van borrowed, simplified and rendered this sign as three vertical lines, which have no connection with its previous meaning “nine”.

It has already been spoken about the sign for “sun” (concerning syllable “a”).

The meanings of the third and fourth signs of the name of Inuani are still unknown. The first sign “i” is a picture of a man’s face in profile, with two additional components above. It can be both a ligature and a picture of a man with helmet (or with other kerchief).

Summing up, we get the following picture. Five of eleven syllable-signs remain undeciphered. One sign (“sun”) is explained in Armenian. For five signs can be offered assumptive, but probable explanations. Moreover, considering one as a borrowing from Hittite-Luvian texts and the rest – interpreting as native Armenian, on the Indo-European basis. Three of deciphered ideograms can be etymologized on the same basis. The results of etymology of the place-names of the royal central districts and god-names, as well as the Indo-European characteristics<sup>524</sup> of the pantheon’s structure and other facts speak in favour of the Armenian as the language of the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphics. The problem of language will finally be resolved after the discovery and reading of big originals. Anyhow, at the present time the study of known data shows that the most probable candidate for the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system’s language is Armenian. Moreover, this hieroglyphic system belongs to the third phase of the Armenian pictography and had been

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<sup>523</sup> Laroche, 1960, p. 212, N 395; Dunaevskaya, 1969, pp. 31, 105; I I Aeroglifico Anatolico, 1998, p. 115.

<sup>524</sup> Petrosyan, 1988, pp. 57-60; Petrosyan, 1983, pp. 60-63; Petrosyan, 2002, pp. 125-127.

used since the ninth century BC (if not earlier). And this means that with great probability we can speak about Armenian being a written language, at least, fourteen centuries before the monumental discovery of Mashtots.

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The hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van was spread within the state and subordinate regions, out of which it was not attested in any other place. Known inscriptions were dated back by specialists to the 9<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, without excepting that the mentioned writing system could be created in pre-Biainian period. They embrace all main circles of life (royal power, spiritual world, military service, economy, culture, daily life, etc.). Their number is more than 1500. Inscriptions are too and that makes Decipherment is more difficult because of the small size of the text of inscriptions. There is good reason to suppose that more voluminous originals were written on parchments or soft materials like papyrus which haven't been discovered for the present. In the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system directions of writing from right to left and from top to bottom were accepted. About 300 hieroglyphs were used, it means that the writing system, under consideration, was word-syllabic (ideo-phonography). Hieroglyph's, according to their design, can be divided into ten semantic groups. There are numbers and auxiliary signs. Ligatures and attributors (determinatives) were largely used.

Until 1995 the attempts of decipherment did not give a touchable result. Only some signs were explained. At the first phase of our decipherment (1995) three-syllabic names were read, ideographic and auxiliary signs were explained. At the second phase (1997), which was realized during compiling the collection of inscriptions, bilingual inscriptions were revealed, and the general number of deciphered and explained signs reached fifty.

The results got for the problem's solution of the origin and language of the hieroglyphic system of the Kingdom of Van are worth of special attention. There are all grounds to conclude that it derived from the local pictography, which originated in 5<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> millennia BC and in 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC transferred into the system of linear writing, being influenced by the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system used in the west of the Armenian Highland. Manifestation of connection between hieroglyphs of the Kingdom of Van and Armenian hieroglyphic system in Christian period is evident, which speaks about their common origin and hereditary continuity.

The problem of the Biainian-Urartian hieroglyphic system's language will be finally solved after discovering and decipherment of big texts. But the level of today's study allows to speak with great probability about that language to be Armenian (according to the analysis of the cases of using the principles acrophony and phonetic transfer). It also follows from the fact that the most part of the country's place-names (especially of the royal district) and many god-names are etymologized in Armenian, Indo-European characteristics of the structure of pantheon, etc.

Until now, there is no complete collection of the Biainian hieroglyphic inscriptions. The one that we have compiled<sup>525</sup>, in spite of its unprecedented great embracement (more than 1500 units), is also incomplete because we do not have any opportunity to use some other works related to the problem. Besides, still undeciphered sign-objects are kept in many museums and collections of the world. We think that this work can stimulate to publish and complete summing-up of the Biainian-Urartian-Arartian hieroglyphic inscriptions spread all over the world. The compiling of hieroglyphic inscriptions' complete corpus and signary is on agenda.

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<sup>525</sup> See Movsisyan, 2003 (a), pp. 189-269.

The whole material concerning the Armenian hieroglyphic system has not been collected and systematized yet, in context of which Biainian hieroglyphic system, being a phase of it, must be examined.

In our work, only some of Biainian hieroglyphs have been compared with Sumerian, Egyptian and Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs for the purpose of decipherment. Comparison of Biainian-Araratian hieroglyphic system with the mentioned, as well as other hieroglyphic systems of the ancient world remains a problem of future, owing to which many problems will be cleared up. Phonetic value of the deciphered syllabic signs can't be considered finally determined, an omission, which is observed also in the study of the cuneiform system of the Kingdom of Van. Much is to be done also in this direction.

## II-5. THE USE OF THE ARMENIAN HIEROGLYPHIC SYSTEM FROM THE FALL OF THE KINGDOM OF VAN UNTIL PROCLAMATION OF CHRISTIANITY AS THE STATE RELIGION IN ARMENIA

The Biainian-Urartian phase of the Armenian hieroglyphic system refers to the period of the Kingdom of Van. The problem of the Armenian hieroglyphic system's destiny in the period from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC until proclamation of Christianity as the state religion has not been studied yet. According to H. A. Martirosyan "It did not satisfy demands of the developing young statehood and corresponding ideology. That is why foreign phonetic scripts were used in heathen Armenia... Ideography continued to exist, particularly in temples, as a form of religious-magic script<sup>526</sup>.

Proceeding from information in manuscripts, however, we can conclude, that Armenian hieroglyphs had larger use in pre-

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<sup>526</sup> Martirosyan, 1973, p. 69

Christian Armenia. It follows also as from Hippolitus' "Chronology", according to which Armenians were among peoples having their own literature, as well as Agatangelos' information about the worship of the literary culture's god Tir and the use of hieroglyphic system in pre-Christian Armenia, and Movses Khorenatsi's information about the archives of temple historiography in the castle of Ani (in the province of Daranaghi) in the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD, from which the Syrian annalist Bardatsan did translations into Syriac and Greek languages, etc.<sup>527</sup>.

Moreover, we can also show material evidence about the use of hieroglyphic system in the mentioned period. A stone with hieroglyphs discovered at the Baghaberd archeological site and dated back to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries AD is one of them (fig. 60)<sup>528</sup>. There are many monuments with undeciphered writings (which are not clearly dated) a part of which can refer to the epoch under discussion.

The analysis of literary information and other facts allows to conclude that after the fall of the Kingdom of Van till proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia, the Armenian hieroglyphic system, i.e. the Armenian original writing system continued to be used in Armenia. As a result of the use of foreign alphabets it had not been forced out of use, but continued to be used in temples by the power of sacred tradition and, perhaps, because of that in Christian period the hieroglyphs were perceived as magic-signs, endowed with supernatural properties.



*Fig. 60*

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<sup>527</sup> See Chapter I.

<sup>528</sup> Grigoryan, Hakhverdyan, 2001, pp. 42

II-6. THE USE OF THE ARMENIAN HIEROGLYPHIC SYSTEM  
 AFTER PROCLAMATION OF CHRISTIANITY  
 AS THE OFFICIAL RELIGION IN ARMENIA

Conversion to Christianity was catastrophic for the Armenian hieroglyphic system, which was perceived as the main follower of pre-Christian cult, and it was not accidental that the first to be destroyed by Christians was the temple of the literary culture's god Tir<sup>529</sup>. However, hieroglyphs had not entirely become out of use. After proclamation of Christianity as the state religion, a new, secret phase of the hieroglyph system's history begins, which continues until now with different manifestations, among which the following ones are especially worth to be mentioned.

a) *Magic signs*. They are met on ribbon-like and book amulets, which include prayers with bewitching and magic significance, formulas and hieroglyphs of divination, fortune-telling enchantment (fig. 61). They derive from pre-Christian times and it's not occasional that the Armenian church periodically struggled against omens and the use of magic-signs<sup>530</sup> until now<sup>531</sup>. Magic signs

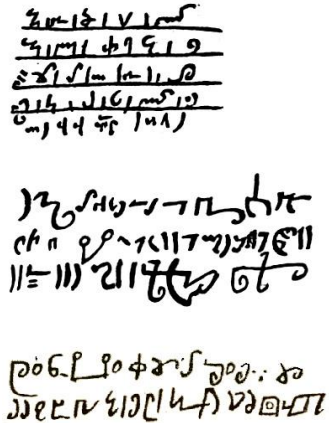


Fig. 61 Details of three  
 Letters from amulets kept in  
 Matenadaran

<sup>529</sup> Agatangeghos, 778

<sup>530</sup> Annalistic information about it see Khachikyan, 1995 (a), pp. 16-18

<sup>531</sup> There is manifold ethnographic literature about the existence of magic literature in Armenia in the past and at present. We visited two persons who practiced "sorcery" by means of magic writings and witnessed believers in supernatural power of magic writings, which, for different purposes, were copied with great fear and trepidation, although no one could understand those signs.

haven't been thoroughly studied yet, but the study of their signary (although compiled on the basis of eight manuscripts, their number is incomparably large), published by L. Khachikyan, shows their connection with the Armenian hieroglyphic system<sup>532</sup> (comparison of phylactery signs with the signs of Armenian hieroglyphic system's other phases see tab. 10). Magic signs have not been deciphered yet, but their explanation is realized with the help of prayers and explanatories, written in parallel with Armenian Mesropian-letters, from which the content of the given omen becomes known. According to it, no attempt for magic- signs' semantic explanation, as it's known to us, has been made yet.

**b) "Writing-signs of meaning".**

In Christian epoch signaries (in which every sign is explained) in Armenian manuscripts are important manifestations of the Armenian hieroglyphic system<sup>533</sup>. Signaries can be used during the decipherment of hieroglyphic system as an auxiliary source, but we should have careful approach concerning them, taking into account some circumstances. First, there are many simple abbreviation-marks<sup>534</sup>, arisen

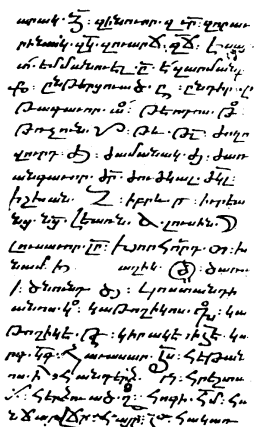


Fig. 62 A page of medieval books containing "Writing-signs of meaning"

<sup>532</sup> Knachikyan, 1995 (a), pp. 22-27, (we have compiled our fig. 9 on the basis of materials referred by L. Khachukyan)

<sup>533</sup> The largest collection of hieroglyphs was compiled by Hr. Acharyan (Acharyan, 1984, the signary is brought in the supplement, added at the end of the book). A.A. Abrahamyan also contributed to their study (Abrahamyan, 1959, pp. 139-173; Abrahamyan, 1973, pp. 201-243).

<sup>534</sup> Hr. Acharyan considered 332 signs (of 509 hieroglyphs collected by him) to be derived from Mashtotsian letters (Acharyan, 1984, p. 425). A.A. Abrahamyan's examination showed that manuscripts with hieroglyphs could be divided into two groups which he correspondingly called "Cilici-

MAGIC SIGNS			

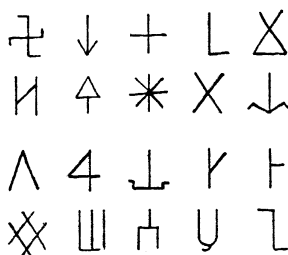
Tab.9 Table is compiled according to L.Khachikyan. Some of magic-signs are presented as variants, but they may be also separate signs

an” (“of Cilicia”) and “Erznkyan” (“of Erzka”). The first group’s hieroglyphs originated mainly from Mashtotsian letters, while more than 180 hieroglyphs of the second group had no connection with Armenian alphabet and had numerous parallels in a series of script-systems of the ancient world (Abrahamyan, 1959, pp. 144-165).

on the basis of Mashtotsian alphabet, which are not helpful in hieroglyphic system's decipherment. Second, we must take into account that their meanings could be changed in accordance with new thinking in Christian environment. Third, conserving the meaning, the mark could be called by a new loan word from a foreign language, and the term, used in the past, could be forgotten. This circumstance is very important from the viewpoint of revealing of syllable-writings (phonography), because, according to the principle of acrophony, any mark, expressing a word, in syllabic writing shows the first syllable (part) of that word, therefore, it is important to know the exact phonetization of each logogram. After all, because of being copied for centuries, the design of sign could be rather changed. Only taking into account all these circumstances, signaries can be used as an auxiliary source for decipherment.

*c) Craft-signatures.* One of manifestations of the developed phase of pictography - ideography was the origination of stamps or family-signs. They were painted, carved and engraved on the walls of the houses. Their existence on any object or goods showed their belonging to the member of the given house or family. So, originated the craft-signatures which for centuries belonged to the members of the same family invariably (in ancient times and the Middle Ages crafts were also hereditary). In the Middle Ages a large number of craft-signatures preserved on the walls of the Armenian architectural monuments<sup>535</sup>, a part of which in the same form existed in the period of the Kingdom of Van (tab. 10).

*d) Hieroglyphs on the walls of Christian temples.* In Christian e-



*Fig. 63 Marks of artisan masters from the constructions of the 9<sup>th</sup> -10<sup>th</sup> cc.*

<sup>535</sup> Signs of Western Armenia's monuments we took from Gelb, 1982, p. 45, and of Eastern Armenia - from Mnacakanyan, 1958, pp. 101-104.

poch a remarkable phenomenon is noticed in the pre-Christian hieroglyphs' fate. Those hieroglyphs appeared on the walls of Christian temples. From their study it's evident that during construction of churches the stones with initially carved hieroglyphs were not used and they were carved after construction, i.e. we deal with the fact of the use of pre-Christian hieroglyphs during Christian period.



a



b

Fig. 64



Fig. 65

According to the latest data, that phenomenon is noticed on the walls of churches [Yereruyk (5<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>536</sup>, Ptghnavank (6<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>537</sup>, St. Hripsime (7<sup>th</sup> c.), St. Gayane (7<sup>th</sup> c.), Aruch (7<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>538</sup>, Bjni's St. Astvatsatsin (11<sup>th</sup> c.)<sup>539</sup>, as well as Selim's

<sup>536</sup> A picture of a chamois is engraved on the western wall of the fifth century's basilica temple (Lisitsyan, 1972, p. 56).

<sup>537</sup> Signs on Ptghnavank's walls are visible and have been noticed by many people (who qualified them as "sun-signs"), but these marks haven't become a subject of special examination. We shall try fill up the gap, taking into account that among the discussed monuments it is the one, having the largest number of signs.

<sup>538</sup> With some surprise we must fix that the marks on the most studied St. Hripsime and St. Gayane temples' walls were not taken into consideration. We noticed them and put into scientific use.

<sup>539</sup> St. Astvatcatsin temple, built in 1031 at the request of Grigor Magistros, later was walled in with local stones, as a result of which old hewed stones appeared in the rampart (including a grave-stone). There are old engravings on the right and left walls of the church's entrance (fig. 64), which also can

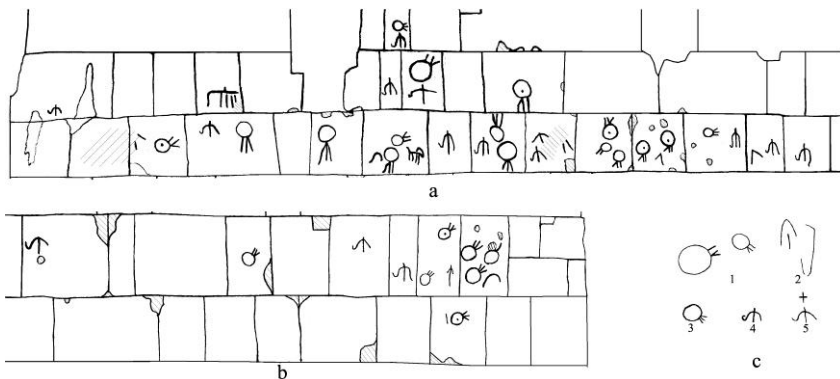


Fig. 66

caravanserai and one<sup>540</sup> of the churches in Dilijan<sup>541</sup>] within the territory of the Republic of Armenia.

This phenomenon is remarkable, because signs familiar from the pre-Christian period are repeated on the walls of different churches.

In connection with Yereruyk, Ptghnavank and Bjni churches, referring to the signs, reminding rock-carvings, K. Tokhatyan notes that “they are not old, “classic” rock-carvings,

be considered as continuation of rock-carving’s traditions in the Middle Ages.

<sup>540</sup> The information about the last two ones see Piotrovski, 1949, pp. 26-27.

<sup>541</sup> To the mentioned ones, with some reserve, we can add the stone (fig. 65) with a mysterious image (or maybe with ligatured images), placed on the left of the arched entrance of the church of Geghard (Geghardavank, Ayrivank). Karen Tokhatyan drew our attention to it, who in his turn, was informed about the stone by geologist Hakob Tonakanyan (he noticed it in 1991). To make more exact the origin of the stone, we applied to Geghardavank’s abbot Yeghishe priest Sargsyan, who told us that it appeared in the church yard after an earthquake in 1980s, dashing down from the slopes’ rock-dugged and adjacent constructions. As there are ruins of pre-Christian residences around the temple, it’s also possible that the stone’s carving was done in the mentioned period.

but bear witness to continuity of rock-carving's traditions in the early Middle Ages<sup>542</sup>.

We studied especially the signs of Ptghni, St. Hripsime, St. Gayane, Aruch temples. Ptghnavank has the largest number of signs, which cover mainly the external side of the northern wall (fig. 66a and 66b). There are also separate marks on both sides of the southern wall (fig. 66c).

All marks in St. Hripsime church are in its interior (signs are not preserved on external walls maybe as a consequence of restorations). As a result of attentive observation we have succeeded to find eleven marks (fig. 67).

There are signs preserved on the oldest stones as of the above mentioned two churches, as well as St. Gayane. Signs preserved on the stones of the external right side of the latter's northern walls leave an impression of a hieroglyphic inscription (fig. 68a). Besides, there are single signs as in the centre and on the left side of the same wall, as well as on the facade of the eastern wall (fig. 68b and 68c). It's obvious, that many of the signs have not been preserved.

There are four pictographs on a wall of Aruch's temple and a sign ("ram") on the palace's wall<sup>543</sup> not far from the church (fig. 69e).

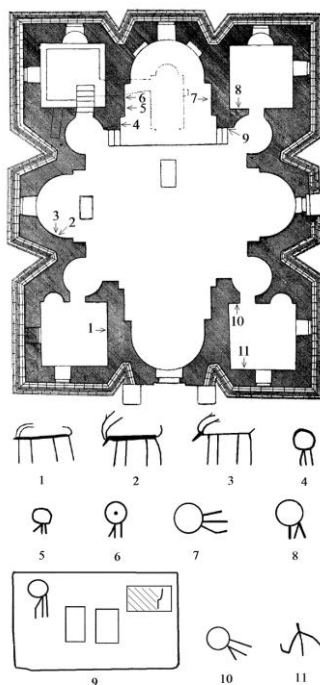


Fig. 67

<sup>542</sup> Tokhatyan, 2003, p. 82.

<sup>543</sup>-Matevosyan, 1987, p. 72.

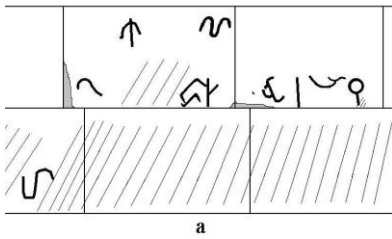


Fig. 68

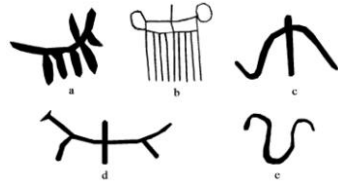


Fig. 69

Classification and correlation of the signs of Ptghni, St. Hripsime, St. Gayane, Aruch churches show, that the most were used “sun-signs” (in several versions), chamois-like signs and a sign bearing likeness of an updirected bow and arrow. Pre-Christian character of these signs, as well as their “rock-carving” style don’t leave any doubt that their authors had been the bearers of Weltanschauung continuing from pre-Christian times.

How can this phenomenon be explained? It’s known that during official conversion of the Armenians to Christianity adherents of pre-Christian faith showed great resistance and during civil war “high-priest brave Ardzan” perished<sup>544</sup>. Even after proclamation of Christianity as the state religion adherents of pre-Christian faith periodically rebelled<sup>545</sup>. The widely spread ideological principles of the previous religion were embodied also in sectarian movements. The matter concerns, particularly, the movements of “the Sun’s Sons” and “Tondrakids”,<sup>546</sup>. Proba-

<sup>544</sup> Yovhan Mamikonean, 1941, pp. 102-103, Hovhan Mamikonyan, 1989, p. 44.

<sup>545</sup> Pavstos Buzand (Litr. III, chapter 13) informs about the first of such ones, about the restoration of pre-Christian belief and traditions under Tiran king (338-350s). Annalistic information about old believers, using omens, see Khachikyan, 1995 (a), pp. 16-19 (and the ated sources).

<sup>546</sup> About “The Sun’s Sons” see Bartikyan, 1967, pp. 102-112. It’s distinctive that characterizing Tondrakids Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni wrote: “So, it is known that they are determinate and roaming without bishops and priests

bly, they or other followers of Armenian pre-Christian belief were just carvers of these signs.

e) **Signs on coins.** Information about native writing and literature in Armenia before the Mashtots' invention belongs to Vardan Areveltsi (of east) (the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc.), according to which in the period of King Levon the Great (1187-1219) a coin with Armenian scripts of heathen Armenian kings was discovered in Cilician Armenia<sup>547</sup>. The study of Cilician coins brought out a remarkable phenomenon: since the period of Levon the Great, on Cilician-Armenian coins appeared signs, which were not connected with Armenian, European or any other alphabet used in Asia during that period. We collected signs of about forty coins known till today and compared them with the writing units of all phases and expressions of the Armenian hieroglyphic system<sup>548</sup>. The results of comparison show the hereditary connection of Armenian hieroglyphic system and the coins of Cilician Armenia, which is explained by Vardan Areveltsi. Coins or coin-like objects (double-sided seals, medallions, etc.) from pre-Christian period could reach the 12<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cc. owing to communities<sup>549</sup>, which remained faithful to pre-Christian faith and traditions in Armenia, and their signs had to be depicted on Cilician coins with the tendency to emphasize the hereditary links of the first Armenian kings and Armenian sovereigns of Cilicia.

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and they say: "We are from Aram's regiment and by our belief are close to them" (Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni, paper 67).

<sup>547</sup> Vardan Areveltsi, chapter 25. Michael Chamchyan, examining this information of Vardan Areveltsi, supposed that those scripts could be word-showing hieroglyphs, which, being registered in ancient manuscripts, were in use also during his time - in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Chamchyanc, 1985, p. 760).

<sup>548</sup> Movsisyan, 1996(b), pp. 68-71. Marks on coins of Cilician Armenia we took from their most complete collection (Bedukian, 1979).

<sup>549</sup> At the time of Patriarch Nerses Shnorhal the "Sun's Sons" community preserved in the city of Samosat in south-western Armenia. Pre-Christian belief and traditions remained viable in that community (see Bartikyan, 1967, pp. 102-112).

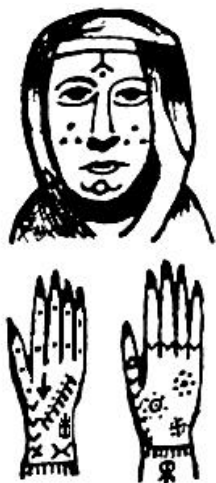


Fig. 70

f) **Magical marks tattooed** on body. According to information written down by the famous specialist in folklore and ethnographer Garegin Srvandztyan, until the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many traditions, coming from pre-Christian period, were preserved in the south-western Armenia (in the district of Tigranakert), one of which was the magical marks' tattooing<sup>550</sup> on different parts of body (fig. 70). Their connection with hieroglyphic system is obvious. This field of hieroglyphic signs' use that has preserved until now can be considered as a form of magic writing's display.

g) **Longevity of pre-Christian hieroglyphic system in Armenian decorative art.** Ornaments, originating in the earliest times, besides aesthetic had also semantic and ideological significance. In ancient times and the Middle Ages crafts, as a rule, passed on from generation to generation, and ornaments continued their existence in the same way. And not by chance a series of symbols, which were used in hieroglyphic system, continue to exist in Armenian decorative art.

The study of the meaning, origin and other problems of ideograms used in Armenian decorative art, certainly, can become a material of numerous volumes of research. Connection of semantics of ornaments and Armenian hieroglyphs must become a subject of special study and only initial steps have been taken in that direction.

A special attention has been paid to semantics of ornaments applied in Armenian carpet-art and their genealogic con-

<sup>550</sup> Srvandztyan, 1982, pp. 438-439.

nection with Armenia's rock-carvings, excavated archaeological objects (the oldest dated back to the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium BC) and monuments' signs of medieval applied arts became obvious<sup>551</sup>.

Attention was also drawn to the ornaments of half-hoses and gaiters; as a result their coincidence with signs on ceramics of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC was established<sup>552</sup>.

Connection of semantic ornaments and Armenian hieroglyphs in Armenian applied art undoubtedly isn't limited by the mentioned ones and that will become a subject of serious study henceforth. Probably new manifestations of Armenian hieroglyphic system of the Christian period will become known later on<sup>553</sup>.

## II-7. MONUMENTS WITHOUT CLEAR DATING

Monuments of this group are quite diverse. In this group we have conditionally included dragon-stones bearing signs (dating back to the period of the Kingdom of Van), rock-carved huge marks, which can be theoretically dated to any period of pre-Christian epoch, and snake-depicted gravestones, which perhaps, are medieval products, but according to their pictographic design they have obviously pre-Christian character.

***Hieroglyphs on dragon-stones (vishaps).*** Dragon-stones are usually dated back to the pre-Biainian epoch (the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC); therefore we can not clearly say whether their signs belong to pictography or linear scripts EBA.

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<sup>551</sup> Avanesyan, 2003, pp. 12-14; Stepanyan, 2003 pp. 302-308.

<sup>552</sup> Avagyan, 1967, pp. 250-257.

<sup>553</sup> In 1987 iron swords and daggers were discovered in the region of Martakert of Mountainous Karabagh. There were noticed numerous marks on three of them. These finds had to be given to the State Historical Museum of Armenia. Now we do not know their place. Such finds may become known also later on.

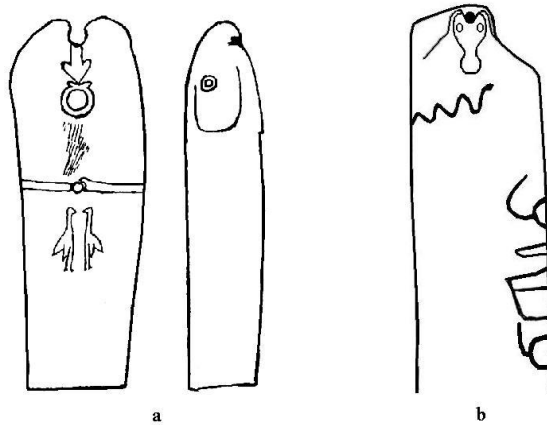


Fig. 71

There are only iconic sculptures on a large number of dragon-stones. But there are also dragon-obelisks with hieroglyphs. Among them are worthy of mentioning the dragon-stones of Gandza in Javahk (fig. 71a)<sup>554</sup> and those removed from the Geghama mountains to the yard of National Museum-Institute of Architecture in Yerevan (fig. 71b)<sup>555</sup>.

H. A. Martirosyan paid attention to the commonality of the marks preserved on dragon-stones, archaeological objects of the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> millennia BC and in medieval manuscripts. Complete signary of dragon-stones pictures and hieroglyphs hasn't been published yet, that would greatly favour both to our problem and complete perceiving of those obelisks' semantics<sup>556</sup>.

**Snake-carved gravestones.** The honour of this monuments' discovery which is worthy of special attention belongs to

<sup>554</sup> Sanosyan, 2001, pp. 159-163 (and the cited literature).

<sup>555</sup> The dragon-obelisk's photo hasn't been published anywhere. About its removal from the Geghama mountains we were informed by the director of National Museum-Institute of Architecture, Ashot Grigoryan.

<sup>556</sup> Emma Khanzadyan prepares for publication her study of complete collection of Armenia's dragon-obelisks which will be an important contribution to the solution of the above mentioned problems.

architect Ashot Grigoryan. In 1990 he published photos of two tombstones with marks (fig. 72)<sup>557</sup> discovered at Balahovit village of the Abovyan region, and recently he informed us that in Avan's cemetery, near the monument in commemoration of the victims of the Second World War, similar gravestones were discovered and he gave us their photo (fig. 73). Being in the mentioned place with K. Tokhatyan, we found 7 snake-imaged gravestones. So, nine similar monuments became known to us.

Being medieval monuments they have obviously pre-Christian character by their pictographic motivation. One can notice the coincidence of those pictures on stone-stelae with the marks on pre-Biainian rock-dugged monuments of Metsamor, Kakavadzor, Karmir Blur.

Whom did these tombstones belong to? Did they belong to the offshoots of pre-Christian priestly families, or medieval sectarians, or quite unknown ones? Unfortunately, many of gravestones have been removed as a result of construction works in the neighbourhood, otherwise their excavation would give answers to some questions.

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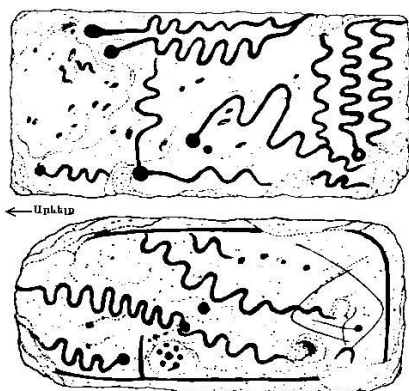


Fig. 72



Fig. 73

<sup>557</sup> Grigoryan, 1990, p. 99.



Fig. 74

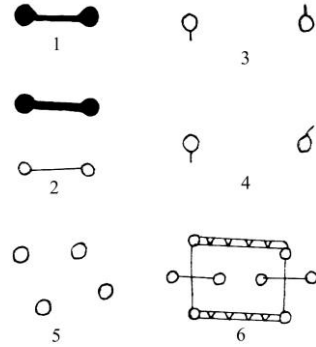


Fig. 75

The list of monuments without clear dating is not completed yet. We can also mention, for example, a single-sign engraved on a splinter of a big stone on the way from “Karmir Karandzav” (“Red Cave”) to Geghamavan (fig. 74)<sup>558</sup>. We are not precise also about the date of Agarak’s rock-carved signs (fig. 75)<sup>559</sup>. Besides, although we have mentioned engravings on rocks in Metsamor, Kakavadzor and Karmir Berd among linear inscriptions, anyhow we are not precise also about their dates.

Future thorough study of the Armenian hieroglyphic system, we think, together with other problems, will give final solution to the problems of chronology.

<sup>558</sup> Boris Gasparyan drew our attention to it.

<sup>559</sup> Hovhannisyan, 1990, p. 70-77.

CHAPTER III  
**WRITTEN MONUMENTS OF MYSTERIOUS ORIGIN  
AND UNKNOWN MEANING**

Written monuments of mysterious origin and unknown purpose found in the Armenian Highland can be divided into two groups. The first group is constituted of an immense number of pictographic monuments. The second cuneiform system of Armenia, which, proceeding from the number of symbols, might probably be an alphabet, belongs to this group. The second group is composed of enigmatic monumental rock signs which were found in about 20 sites of the Armenian Highland. Monuments having unique pictograms can be included in the second group; nevertheless, it is possible that future studies will help in their classification.

III-1. ENIGMATIC MONUMENTAL ROCK-SIGNS

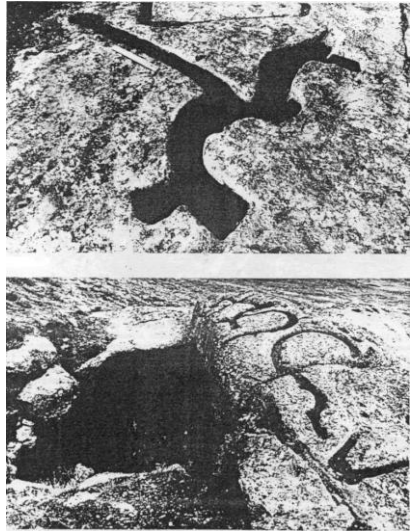
In contrast to the above mentioned monuments, the writing meaning of which is beyond doubt, the purposefulness of the signs that will be presented in this section remains unknown and incomprehensible.

Still at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century attention was drawn to the monumental rock signs<sup>560</sup>. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as a result of studies, similar monumental rock signs were discovered in fifteen archeological sites

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<sup>560</sup> As far as we know the monumental rock signs of Artamet (Edremit in distorted Turkish) and Horom were the first monumental rock signs to be mentioned in the scientific literature (Lehmann-Haupt, 1926, p. 105; Lalayan, 1931, p. 203, the picture, which the author considers to be the picture of phallus, is on page 206; Toramanyan, 1942, pp. 18-19).

of Armenia – near the village of Atabindi (fig. 76)<sup>561</sup>, Andzav (Anzaf in distorted Turkish, fig. 77), Artamet, Arpacha, Bagarich (Pekerich in distorted Turkish), Bahchejik, Bastam (“the small town of Rusa” in Biainian cuneiform), Delicha, Kharberd (Harput in distorted Turkish), Kuh-e Zambil, Haikaberd (Sarduruḫinili in Biainian, presently – the archaeological site Chavush tepe), Horom (fig. 78), Maghara tepe, Chelebibaghi and the fortress of Van (see Map 5)<sup>562</sup>.



*Fig. 76*

O. Belli contributed greatly to the collection and study of the monumental rock signs, collecting material from thirteen archeological sites (besides Horom and Arpachay; O. Belli mentions the latter without speaking about signs). He divided 93 symbols into 8 groups: circles (28), streamlets or furrows (7), sickle-like symbols (4), cane-like symbols (3), “V” (16), “U” (11), “C” (3) and symbols of indefinite appearance (21). The size of symbols is impressive. They are engraved on

<sup>561</sup> The richest site in monumental rock signs (more than 30 signs) is in the region of the sources of the Aratsani (Belli, 1989, pp. 92-93, table II-IV; Başgelen, 1990, pp. 24-26, fig. 1-12).

<sup>562</sup> For the rock signs found from all the mentioned archeological sites besides Horom see Belli, 1989, pp. 89-105, table I-XVI. For the material from Bahchejik see also Sevin, 1989, pp. 50-51, table IV-2, V-1. Besides the signs found in Horom, that were mentioned by T. Toramanyan, during recent excavations new ones were found; however these signs have not been published yet (we would like to express our gratitude to archeologist Ruben Badalyan for information about finds).



*Fig. 77*



*Fig. 78*

rocks, 4-30 centimeters deep, 6-30 centimeters width and 0,7-3 meters length. O. Belli dates them back to the period of the Kingdom of Van, considering these monuments in relation to the worship of water, probably also the underworld<sup>563</sup>.

Accepting the opinion about the worship meaning of the monumental rock signs let us mention that the problem of their

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<sup>563</sup> Belli, 1989, pp. 100-103.

dating can not be considered to be solved yet proceeding only from the presumption that they were near Biainian fortresses. Besides, for the study and understanding of symbols' meaning (except their distinction and classification) it is necessary to study their group scenes by means of observation from a certain distance and height, which, as far as we know, has not been done yet.

We would like to add that such monumental rock signs are typical only of the Armenian Highland.

### III-2. THE SECOND CUNEIFORM SYSTEM OF ARMENIA

As a part of the Ancient Near East, Armenia has already surprised and still has many surprises for the researchers of ancient civilizations. Such a surprise can become the decipherment of a new mysterious cuneiform system discovered in Armenia.

#### *The mysterious cuneiform inscription of Karmir Berd*<sup>564</sup>.

On the way from Yerevan to Eghvard, in the neighborhood of the village of Zovuni, on the right bank of the Hrazdan River, ruins of a cyclopean (pre-Urartian) fortress with several hundred tombs, below which is situated a half-ruined early medieval fortress leaned towards the Hrazdan canyon. It shows that life in this archaeological site continued also in the medieval period. The latter was studied by P. Charkovski, M. Zakaryan, E. Rössler, B. Piotrovski, H. Martirosyan, S. Yesayan, K. Kushnaryova and others. The materials (pottery, metal weapons, objects of luxury, etc.) discovered from tombs were dated back by specialists to the Middle and Late Bronze, as well as Early Iron Ages (the 24<sup>th</sup>-9/8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). Meanwhile, the cyclope-

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<sup>564</sup> For the preliminary publication of the inscription see Movsisyan, 2001, pp. 221-226.

an fortress was considered to be of the Early Iron Age (the 12<sup>th</sup>-9/8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC)<sup>565</sup>.

The first publication of the mysterious cuneiform inscription at this archaeological site was made in 1976 in the “Journal of History and Philology” of NAS of RA by geologist Hayk Azizyan. He drew attention to the cuneiform inscription, pointing out that “the inscribed stone is put not on the medieval wall, but on the older cyclopean one”<sup>566</sup>.

Unfortunately, in the course of time specialists did not pay attention to the inscription. Without any reliable argument it was labeled verbally as a “fake”, probably only for the reason that such kind of cuneiform has been unknown in any other place in the world. This approach is so groundless and unjustified that there is no need to touch it. With such logic all newly discovered writing systems anywhere in the world could be regarded as „fakes“.

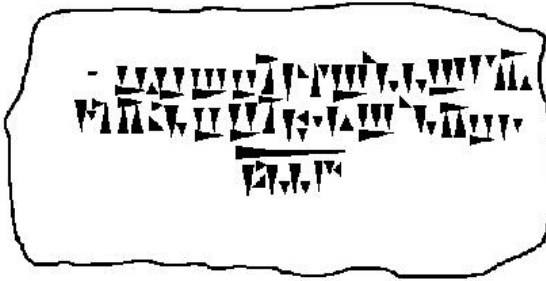
In 2000-2001 we visited the site to study the inscription. As it was described by H. Azizyan in 1976, the only thing which distinguishes the inscribed stone of the entrance from other stones is that it bears an inscription (see the photo and the drawing on fig. 79).

The inscription is carved on a grey tuff stone (155 cm in width and 79 cm in height, thickness - 75-88 cm). It consists of three horizontal lines: the first two are written almost along the whole width. The third short line (10 cuneiform signs) is separated from the upper two by one long horizontal cuneiform line

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<sup>565</sup> For the study of the archaeological site (especially the cyclopean fortress) see Kushnaryova, 1960, pp. 137-147; Martirosyan, 1964, pp. 47-56; Philiposyan, p. 331; Yesayan, 1992, pp. 173-174; Kushnaryova, 1993, pp. 134-151 and others. Unfortunately, the historical name of the fortress was not preserved. People know it as “Karmir Berd” (in Armenian – “Red fortress”). In literature the tombs are known also by the name of the nearest village *Tazakend* (“New Village”), although it is not related to the historical name of the fortress.























<sup>566</sup> Azizyan, 1976, p. 276.



*Fig. 79*

in the centre of the stone. The first line is 122 cm in length, the second - 131 cm and the third - 30 cm. The total height of the lines is 37 cm.

The cuneiform signs are much bigger than Urartian ones. Among them vertical downward cuneiform signs dominate. They look like not the nail-like signs of Mesopotamia but the Urartian sharp angle-triangle-like cuneiform signs which for the first time were attested in the Kingdom of Van (Biainili, Urartu, Ararat) and after its fall in the Achaemenid Empire.

LIST OF SINGS		
Simple signs	12. 	
1. 	13. 	
2. 	14. 	
3. 	15. 	
4. 	Possible combinations	
5. 		
6. 		
7. 		
8. 		
9. 		
10. 		
11. 		
		
		
		
		
		
		
		

Tab. 11

90 big and small cuneiform signs are carved on the stone. Thorough study of the inscription and a compilation of the signary show that there are about twenty inscribed signs, several of which are repeated six times (see the signary on tab. 11). We don't mention exactly the number of signs because some possible combinations are repeated several times and it is difficult to say whether we deal with one compound sign or with several simple signs (see the second part of the signary).

The principle of the signs' structure is quite clear: from simple signs to more complex. The signary is compiled according to this principle. The most complex sign contains four components.

Before carving the inscription no lines had been drawn. Small signs are in the upper, middle and lower parts, and some signs are above the lines. Judging from the position of the long horizontal signs, the writing is directed from left to right (as all known kinds of cuneiform inscriptions).

The grammatological analysis of the inscription (the direction of writing, frequency of the repetition of signs, their number, position, the principle of formation and the clarification of other aspects) shows that it completely corresponds to the principles of the writing thinking - the admitted principle of the cuneiform systems of the Ancient Near East. That is to say, there is no basis to qualify the inscription as a "fake".

The application of nearly twenty signs in the three-line inscription allows to suppose that we deal with *cuneiform alphabet*. Up to now two cuneiform alphabets (quasi-alphabets) are known which are the result of simplifying of the logographic-syllabic cuneiform systems, that is Ugaritic (XIV-XIII centuries

BC)<sup>567</sup> and Achaemenid (VI-IV centuries BC)<sup>568</sup>. The cuneiform system of the Kingdom of Van is the result of simplifying of the Mesopotamian cuneiform (the logo-syllabic system consisting of about 600 signs) but it was not transformed into an alphabet. It is difficult to say why the written alphabet discovered in Armenia was not widely applied?

Dating of the inscription is also problematic one. The place of the inscription's discovery, the cyclopean castle, was dated to the 12<sup>th</sup>-9/8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. Meanwhile, dating to the Middle Ages is hardly probable, because from the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC the cuneiform ceased to be used in Armenia. Before the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD Aramaic, Greek, Syriac and Pahlavi (Middle Persian) alphabets were used, and from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century AD - the Armenian alphabet (created by St. Mesrop Mashtots). Thus, the most probable dating criteria for the creation of the cuneiform alphabet is its correlation with the time of the cyclopean fortress. The place of the inscription among the stones of the entrance wall prompts the idea that it is the record of the fortress. In this case the cuneiform alphabet under discussion will be dated to the period between the Ugaritic and the Achaemenid cuneiform alphabets.

If our conclusion (about the record of the foundation of the fortress) is right, other suppositions can be presumed which may be confirmed or rejected subsequently. Two lines are separated from the third (a brief record) by a long cuneiform horizontal line. The separated part can be the name of the fortress. Unfortunately, the old name of Karmir Berd was not preserved in extant historical sources, that would be useful in the course of the decipherment. As a help may serve a possible combination of signs (at the end of the signary) repeated both in the first and third lines. If we suppose that it was the name of the fortress, named

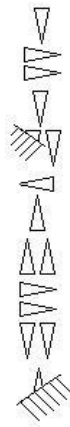
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<sup>567</sup> See the details in Gordon, 1940.

<sup>568</sup> See the details in Kent, 1953; WWS, pp. 134-137 (author of section David D. Testen).

after its founder, the repeated part in the first and the third lines can just denote his name.

**The identical inscriptions from Hrazdan and Nakhijevan.** The idea that the inscription of Karmir Berd is a “fake” has lost its strength when we were informed by H. Karagyozyan that from the territory of the church Makravank which is in the neighbourhood of the town of Hrazdan (see Map 5), an identical fragment of cuneiform inscription was found by the late writer Souren Shtikyan. H. Karagyozyan gave us the copy (made by Souren Shtikyan, see fig. 80) of the same size of the inscription which directly reminded the inscription of Karmir Berd, especially by the size and forms of signs.



*Fig. 80*

The third identical cuneiform inscription was found in Ferhat Evi (“House of Joy”) near the border of the Republic of Armenia and Nakhijevan Autonomous Republic (see Map 5). The inscription is inscribed outside of the cave on the other side of which there is an Urartian tomb. Three-linear inscription is 3,4 meters in length and 60 cm in height. The height of lines is 15 cm and the distance between them - 5 cm. The height of signs is 11-11,5 cm., meanwhile, long vertical signs prevail. There are carvings of the late period with not clear letters of Slavic (Cyrillic) alphabet in damaged parts of the inscription (fig. 81)<sup>569</sup>.

There was no possibility to study this remarkable inscription (available photos do not give such an opportunity) which we think is a solvable problem.

From this preliminary study we come to the following conclusions :

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<sup>569</sup> Belli, Sevin, 1999, pp. 31-34, 61-64, plates XVI-XVII, fig. 34-37.



*Fig. 81*

a) A new cuneiform system is available in Armenia, which differs completely from other known systems<sup>570</sup>.

b) It is quite possible that we deal with a cuneiform alphabet.

c) The writing system could be created in the 12<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, though another dating is possible.

d) The Karmir Berd inscription can be related to the foundation of the fortress and the repeated group of signs in the first and third lines can be the name of the founder.

The location of the far from each other three identical inscriptions impels to think of the existence of a new writing system or an attempt to create such one. Further studies can result in the decipherment of the writing system, which will be valuable not only for the history of the Ancient Near East, but also for grammatology in general, pointing to one of the first attempts of passing to the alphabet (to the most perfect of the writing forms) in the world.

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<sup>570</sup> Without doubt, the signs of this cuneiform system do not repeat the Mesopotamian ones. It is worth to mention that there are plenty of cuneiform-like motives among the finds from Karmir Berd. The creation of the mentioned cuneiform system, probably, was the result of local writing thinking and not a Mesopotamian influence.

### III-3. UNIQUE MONUMENTS

The second group of monuments of mysterious origin and unknown purpose is represented by a sculptural scene of the worship of bull<sup>571</sup>, a stone monument bearing hieroglyphs (found in the village of Nerkin (Inner) Sasnashen of the region of Aragatzotn<sup>572</sup>), a stone bearing hieroglyphs (dating back to the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries), which was discovered as a result of excavations in Baghaberd (fig. 60)<sup>573</sup>.

Although, according to our present knowledge, these inscriptions have no parallels, it is possible that further studies would show their belonging to any (perhaps even partially known) system.

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<sup>571</sup> Levonyan, 1941, pp. 69-70. There is a two-line inscription on the lower part of the sculpture, but because of poor printing quality it is impossible to imagine the signs clearly (the quality is the same in fig. 7 in the Appendix of Ghapantsyan, 1944, and p. 23 of Abrahamyan, 1973). Neither G. Levonyan, nor the publishers following him, mention the original source. Resembling some symbols to the Armenian, and others – to the Georgian letters, G. Ghapantsyan characterizes it as an “old Armenian and Georgian two-line” inscription (see Ghapantsyan, 1944, the explanatory note to the fig. 7 in the Appendix). A.G. Abrahamyan, proceeding from the existence of the symbols similar to the letters “A”, “M”, “S” in the two-line inscription, concluded that it is a forgery (Abrahamyan, 1959, p. 42-43; Abrahamyan, 1973, pp. 22-23). Such an approach is not acceptable, it is not correct to take out separate symbols from the inscription and compare them with symbols of other writing systems and make conclusions. The study of the inscription on the sculpture can not be considered finished...

<sup>572</sup> Yeritzyan, Gasparyan, 2000, pp. 13-14. The author thinks that it was a cult monument of a pre-Christian temple and should be dated back to the post-cuneiform period (that is the 6<sup>th</sup> c. BC – the 3<sup>rd</sup> c AD).

We are grateful to the discoverers B. Gasparyan and M. Gfoeller for giving the monument's photo and granting the right to publish it.

<sup>573</sup> Grigoryan, Hakhverdyan, 2001, p. 42.

**CHAPTER IV.**  
**THE WRITING SYSTEMS CREATED**  
**IN OTHER COUNTRIES**  
**AND USED IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA**

The writing systems created in other countries and used in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia are divided into two groups: ideophonographical (logo-syllabic) and alphabetical (in letters). The Hittite-Luvian<sup>574</sup> hieroglyphs, Assyro-Babylonian and Biainian cuneiform systems belong to the first group. The second group is comprised of Greek, Aramaic alphabets and coming from the latter - the Pahlavi (Middle Persian) and Syriac alphabets.

**IV-1. THE USE OF THE HITTITE-LUVIAN HIEROGLYPHIC SCRIPT IN**  
**THE ARMENIAN HIGHLAND**

The Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic script was used during the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC in the west of the Armenian Highland, in the valley of the Euphrates. The first inscriptions belonging to this writing system came to be known in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, thus the study of the writing system began<sup>575</sup>. During the first period an opinion emerged about the language of the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs that it might be ancient Armenian (the German scientist H. Yensen even tried to read them in Ar-

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<sup>574</sup> Before 1970's this writing system was mostly known under the name of "Hittite" in scientific literature. Since 1970's it has rather been known under the name of "Luvian". To avoid any confusion we use the compound form of the name - "Hittite-Luvian".

<sup>575</sup> For the history of writing system and its study with corresponding cited works see Yensen, 1958, pp. 133-141; Diringer, 1962, pp. 66-69; Diringer, 1963, pp.118-123; Gelb, 1982, pp. 86-88; Fridrich, 1979, pp. 83-85; Kosyan, 1994, pp. 6-7, pp.106-107 (as well as the sources cited therein).



*Fig. 82 Seals bearing Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs from archaeological site of Koruju tepe*

menian)<sup>576</sup>. However, several years later, it turned out that they were written not in Armenian but in Luvian, one of the Indo-European kindred languages, close to Armenian. Although, nowadays a considerable work in the field of decipherment is carried out, many questions remain and their solution could contribute to Armenology.

The Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic writing was used during the 16<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC in Asia Minor, the Armenian Highland and Northern Syria. It was used parallel to the Hittite cuneiform in the New-Hittite Kingdom (the 15<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC). The latter being used in everyday writing, meanwhile, hieroglyphs were used in monumental inscriptions<sup>577</sup>. The seals found in the Armenian district of Tzopkh (Sophene, in the cuneiform sources Tzupa(ni), Isuva) are dated back to this period<sup>578</sup>. In the 12<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs became widespread in the so-called post-Hittite or Luvian states (including Melid-Tegarama and Kummuh in the valley of the Euphrates, in the west of the Armenian Highland)<sup>579</sup>.

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<sup>576</sup> See Yensen, 1898. The author summed up only 92 hieroglyphs known at that time. Though later the question was solved in other way, we think outstanding scientist's opinion is worthy to be referred once more.

<sup>577</sup> Kosyan, 1994, p. 8 (as well as the sources cited therein).

<sup>578</sup> These were found in the archeological places of Tzopkh: Tepejik, Norshun tepe and Koruju tepe (Güretbock, 1973, pp. 135-147, table 3-5).

<sup>579</sup> For the inscriptions found in the area of Melid-Tegarama see Bossert, 1942, pp. 67-70, 181-190, fig. 763-795; Meriggi, 1975 (a) and (b), NN 97-119; Hawkins, 2000, pp. 282-329, table 133-164; for the originals found in

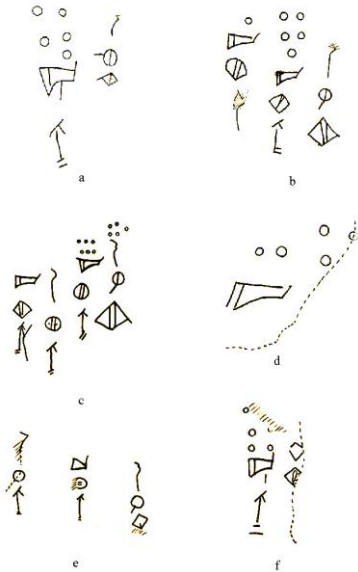


Fig. 83



Fig. 84

Inscriptions in the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs were discovered in about twenty archeological sites of the Armenian Highland (see Map 1). They belong mainly to the sphere of royal government. Inscriptions on bas-reliefs and other monuments were found in Malatia, Aslantash, Shirzi, Gürün, Darende, Palanga, Ishpekchur, Kyotyukale, Izgin, Karahyuyuk, Samosat, Boybeypinari, Anjoz, Karakuyu and Adiyaman. Royal seals were found at Koroju tepe, Norshun tepe and Tepejik (some of them see fig. 82).

Objects found at the archeological site of Altin tepe (Chrmes) are very notable. Biainian measure units are written on them in Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs (fig. 83)<sup>580</sup>. It was a specific

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Kummuh see Meriggi, 1975 (a) and (b), NN 124-131; Hawkins, 2000, pp. 334-360.

<sup>580</sup> Laroche, 1971, pp. 55-61, table I-IV; Klein, 1974, pp. 77-95. It is also interesting that the numbers are written not in Hittite-Luvian line-signs but in Armenian dot-signs.

contact zone in the period of spreading of Hittite-Luvian and Biainian written culture.

A royal scepter was found rather far from the valley of Euphrates, at the archeological site of Kalakend in the north-east of the Armenian Highland. There are two hieroglyphs for “master” and “city” on the upper part of the scepter (see fig. 84)<sup>581</sup>. If the sceptre had not been brought the area of archeological site later, this territory could be considered the eastern frontier of the spread of the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic system in the Armenian Highland.

The hieroglyphic inscriptions found in the Armenian Highland are chronologically divided into three groups:

a) Inscribed seals of the 15<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (from Koruju tepe, Norshun tepe and Tepejik),

b) Inscriptions of the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (which comprise a small group, and were discovered at the territory of Melid),

c) Inscriptions of the 10<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC (from the area of Melid and Kumukh, from the archeological site Chrmes).

***Groups of inscriptions according to their content and structure.*** Inscriptions found in the Armenian Highland can be divided into four groups according to their content and structure:

1) Seals only with the king’s (ruler) name,

2) Dedicatory inscriptions connected with construction of buildings and offerings to the gods,

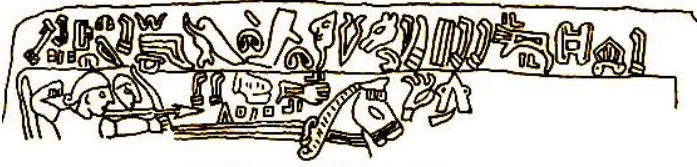
3) Brief inscriptions on bas-reliefs with only king’s name and some titles,

4) The scepter of Kalakend, having only the title of “the city’s lord”, is a single sample.

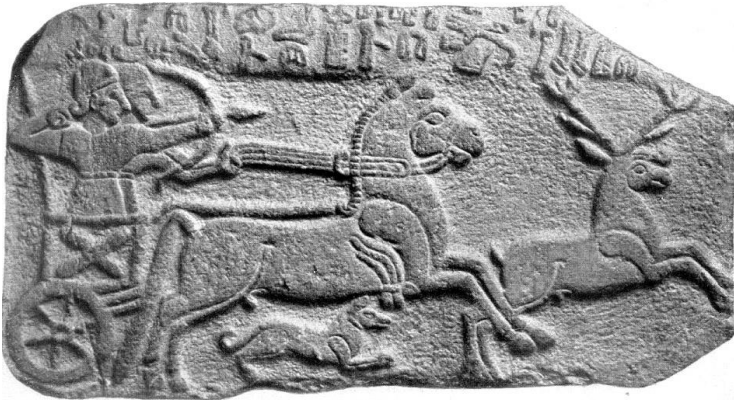
Speaking about the structure, only the texts of the above mentioned second group, which have three-part structure, may become an object of examination:

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<sup>581</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1931, p. 593.



Malatia I (Meriggi, 1975 (a) and (b), N 97;  
Hawkins, 2000, pp. 295-299, pl. 135-138)



Malatia III (Meriggi, 1975 (a) and (b), N 107;  
Hawkins, 2000, pp. 321-322, pl. 156)

*Fig. 85 Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic inscriptions from Melid (Malatia)*

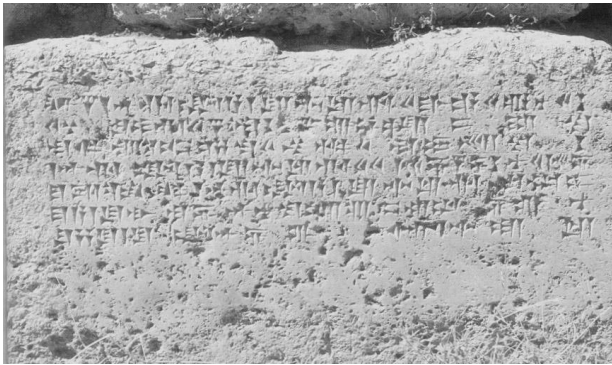
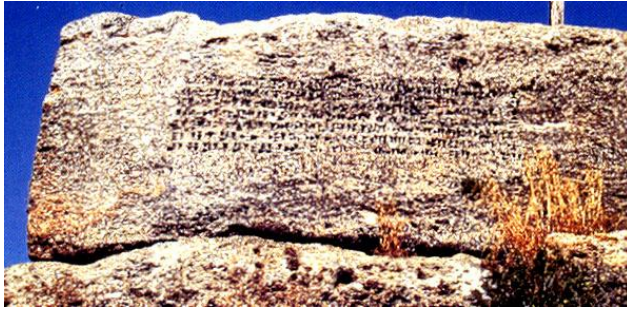
- a) A foreword, where the king-author gives his name, title and genealogy,
- b) The proper material of information,
- c) The formula of curse addressed to the destroyers and defilers of construction or monument.

*The present-day state of decipherment.* Together with considerable work, a lot of questions concerning the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic script still remain unsolved. Until now hieroglyphs with unknown meaning constitute an immense number. The most complicated is the group of inscriptions of Melid-Tegarama dating back to the 12<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> centuries BC to which is characteristic the archaism of symbols with predominance of ideograms.

The Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic inscriptions have three-fold importance for Armenology. First of all, being monuments of kindred languages close to Armenian, they are important primary sources for the study of ancient Armenian. There is also valuable evidence from the viewpoint of restoring the history of Armenia of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> millennia BC, and, eventually, being used also in the Armenian Highland, they have promoted the development of writing thinking in pre-Christian Armenia.

#### IV-2. THE USE OF ASSYRO-BABYLONIAN CUNEIFORM WRITING IN ARMENIA

The monuments bearing Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform writings found in Armenia are divided into two groups: monuments left by foreigners and monuments, the authors of which are the native inhabitants. The first group will be referred to in the next chapter. The monuments of the second group are dated only to the period of the Kingdom of Van. During the reign of King Sarduri I (835-825 BC.) the Assyrian cuneiform in the Assyrian language began to be used in Urartu, as follows from inscriptions about the foundation of the capital-city of Tushpa (Van; 3 of them see fig. 86). They have the following content:



*Fig. 86*

“Inscription of Sarduri, the son of Lutipri, the great king, the powerful king, the king of universe, the king of Nairi, to whom no one is equal, the wonderful shepherd, who is not afraid of fighting, the king, who subjugates disobedient people. Sarduri, the son of Lutupri, (is) the king of kings, who collected taxes from all kings. Sarduri, the son of Lutipri, says the following: “I brought these stones from (the city of) Alniunu and built this castle-wall”.

From an Assyrian inscription preserved on a silver caldron we learn that King Ishpuini gifted the caldron to his grandson Inushpua: “Ishpuini, the son of Sarduri, gave to Inushpua, because (he) is kind to his grandfather”.

Texts in Assyrian are found in bilingual monuments of the kings of Van written after Urartian texts as their translations. Such an inscription was made by King Ishpuini and prince Minua in Kelishin (to the southwest from Lake Urmia, near the town of Revanduz, fig. 87) telling about their construction works and cult ceremonies in Ardini-Musasir, the main centre of the worship of the god Haldi.

There are inscriptions in Assyrian and Biainian made side by side on one of the monuments left by Minua in Sushants (near Van), which do not translate one another. In the Biainian text the god Haldi and the Haldian Gates are expected to grant grandeur and power to Ishpuini and Menua, and in the Assyrian inscription it is told about the construction of buildings for worshipping of the god Haldi carried out only by Minua in the city Artzuniuni.

A badly damaged inscription in Assyrian was found in the citadel of Tushpa-Van, which, according to the reading of several preserved words, C. F. Lehmann-Haupt considered to be a sacrificial text. In 1982 publishing the text's preserved parts, M. Salvini expressed the opinion that it could be written during the period from the reign of Sarduri I to the reign of Minua (the second half of the 9<sup>th</sup> c. - the 80's of the 7<sup>th</sup> c. BC).



*Fig. 87*



*Fig. 88*

Referring to the study of the preserved parts of the texts, I. M. Diakonoff interpreted it as a passage from a recorded legislation about a compensation (10 bulls and 5 caws) as a punishment for one crime, and lifelong working service – for another crime.

The bilingual inscription of Rusa I from Topuzava (to the southwest of Lake Urmia, on the way from Revanduz to Ushnu, fig. 88) informs also about the state-cult rituals and ceremonies and construction works in Ardini-Musasir. It is noteworthy that the ruler of Van calls himself “the servant of the god Haldi, people’s faithful shepherd...” in that text

It should also be mentioned that two copies of Topuzava’s bilingual inscription have been found in the territory of Armenia (in Mergeh Karvan and Movana).

One of the characteristic features of the Biainian bilingual inscriptions is that the Biainian and Assyrian passages are not each other's literal and precise translations.

The seal with an Assyrian inscription of Urzana, the king of Ardini-Musasir, has reached us (fig. 89). The inscription on the seal is translated in two versions: “The seal of Urzana, the king of Musasir, the city of crow (?), which has opened its jaws like a snake in the mountains of the enemies” and “The seal of Urzana, the king of Musasir, the Urartian city (?), which has opened its jaws like a dragon-snake in the mountains of the enemy”. The letters of the same king written in Assyrian that were found in Assyria have also been preserved<sup>582</sup>.

These are the Assyrian inscriptions left by the sovereigns of Armenia that reached us. They are dated back to the 9<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. They were found in two regions – in the capital city of Tushpa and surrounding areas, and in Ardini-Musasir, the main centre of worship of the god Haldi, being related to the state-official and worship events.



*Fig. 89*

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<sup>582</sup> An opinion has been expressed that Barzanes, the king of Armenia, mentioned by Diodorus of Sicily, was the king Urzana of Musasir, who in alliance with Assyria attacked Media.

#### IV-3. CUNEIFORM INSCRIPTIONS OF THE KINGDOM OF VAN

##### *History of the writing system's study and its language.*

In 1827 began the study of cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van by F. E. Shultz's official journey to Western Armenia on behalf of the Asian Company of France following the information by Movses Khorenatsi<sup>583</sup> concerning a number of cuneiform inscriptions in Armenia. In 1829 the young investigator was killed by semi-barbarian Kurds in the mountains of Julamerk. His copies of cuneiforms were published in 1840 after which the attempts of decipherment began. Before 1880 there were attempts to interpret in Armenian (E. Hincks 1848, A. D. Mordtmann 1872), Georgian (F. Lenormant) and a kindred Semitic language close to Assyrian (L. de Rober), the inscriptions read with the help of the knowledge got from Assyrian cuneiforms. These attempts, however, were not accepted. In 1880 S. Guyard offered to use the curse formula repeated at the end of the inscriptions as a key to decipherment, and comparing the Assyrian equivalents with them, he restored and interpreted some words and grammatical particles of a language<sup>584</sup> unknown before. Using S. Guyard's key to decipherment two years later A. H. Sayce, reading complete texts, published the first collection of cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van.

In 1900 H. Sandalgyan published the second collection of the Biainian cuneiforms in which inscriptions were read and interpreted in Armenian (this attempt was criticized by a number of linguists, including Hr. Acharyan, as there was lack of conformity with the grammar of ancient Armenian. However it is worth mentioning that Sandalgyan succeeded in showing a lot of common and identical traits between Armenian and the language

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<sup>583</sup> Book I, chapter 16 (see chapter 5)

<sup>584</sup> That language was conditionally called "Haldian", "Urartian", "Biainian". The last two names are used in this work also with the same conditional character.

of cuneiforms). In the 20<sup>th</sup> century new attempts were made to interpret Biainian in Georgian (M. G. Janashvili), Caucasian languages (A. K. Gleye), “Udian” (A. Payazat), Armenian (A. Safrastyan, S. Ayvazyan, Y. Baduntz), which could not stand the criticism.

Guyard-Sayce’ theory about Biainian as a separate language was commonly accepted. A great contribution to the study of the Biainian language was made by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, N.Y. Mar, I.I. Meshchaninov, M. Tzereteli, G.A. Ghapantsyan, I. Friedrich, A. Gyottze, G.V. Tzereteli, F.V. König, G.B. Jahukyan, G.A. Melekishvili, I.M. Diakonoff, M. Israyelyan, V. Benedikt, T.V. Gamkrelidze, N.V. Harutyunyan, A.M. Dinçhol, V.A. Gvakharia, H.H. Karagyozyan, M. Salvini, F. Haaz, V. Sevin, G. Vilhelm, M.L. Khachikyan, and others<sup>585</sup>.

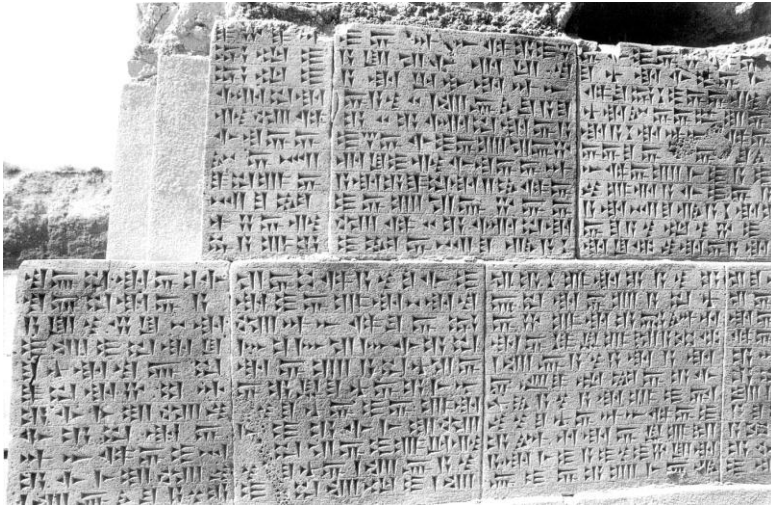
During last decades there were attempts to consider the Hurri-Urartian languages as East-Caucasian<sup>586</sup>. Denying that viewpoint G. B. Jahukyan supposed that distant linguistic affinity between Hurri-Urartian and Nakhian-Daghestanian would be possible to show only within the frames of nostratic common-

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<sup>585</sup> History of the cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van with the detailed reference see Piotrovski, 1959, pp. 7-26; Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 417-445; Khachikyan, 1985, pp. 10-14, 135-137; Salvini, 1995, pp. 5-14, the bibliographical list pp. 211-238; Karagyozyan, 1998, pp. 7-10 and, especially in the published collections of the inscriptions – Sayce, 1882 (additions were published in “Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain and Ireland” during 1888-1932); Sandalgian, 1900 (for additions see “Handes Amsorea” (“Հանդես Ամսօրեայ”), 1913); CICH, 1928-1935 (which was left unfinished because of the death of Lehmann-Haupt), König, 1955-1957; Melikishvili, 1960 (additions Melikishvili, 1971); Harutyunyan, 2001.

A new collection under the title of “Urartian Cuneiform Text” is going to publish the Italian specialist in Oriental studies M. Salvini. We shall refer mainly to the last two collections, where the previous published literature is mentioned in details.

<sup>586</sup> Diakonoff, 1971, pp. 161-171. Diakonoff, 1978, pp. 25-38; Diakonoff, Starostin, 1986 (as well as the sources cited therein).



*Fig. 90 A cuneiform inscription from the Ayanis archaeological site  
(to the east of Lake Van)*

ness if it were possible to ground that the East-Caucasian languages belonged to nostratic commonness<sup>587</sup>.

A number of relationships between the Biainian and Indo-European languages were referred to by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt, H. Sandaljyan, G. A. Ghapantsyan, P. Krechmer, R. Eisler, and others. This question most concisely was studied by G. B. Jahukyan<sup>588</sup>.

Recently an attempt was made to read in Armenian three of the introductory formulas of the cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van<sup>589</sup>. This attempt is rather convincing not only from the linguistic but also the cuneiform writing aspect. So, continuation of that kind of work with the joint efforts of lin-

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<sup>587</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 419-422.

<sup>588</sup> Jahukyan, 1963; Jahukyan, 1967; Jahukyan, 1968; Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 417-445; Jahukyan, 1988, pp. 127-168.

<sup>589</sup> Jahukyan, 2000, pp. 124-129

guists and specialists in cuneiform writing may bring new, even unexpected results.

***The chronology and distribution of inscriptions.*** Beginning with the reign of King Ishpuini (circa 825-810 BC.) and up to the fall of the state the Biainian cuneiforms were used. More than 600 inscriptions (which are known today) were found in about 130 places (see Map 2), moreover, there are many cuneiform inscriptions which are kept in different museums, but the exact place of their discovery is not known.

***The origin of the writing system.*** There were three styles of sign-writing in the cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van:

- a) new Assyrian,
- b) Biainian monumental,
- c) Biainian cursive writing.

After the Assyrian (written in new Assyrian style) inscriptions of Sarduri I, the Assyrian style gradually yielded to the Biainian style which became dominant only during the reign of Menua, though later many Biainian inscriptions were also written in the Mesopotamian style of cuneiforms.

During the reign of King Ishpuini the local (Biainian or Urartian) cuneiform was created by means of reforming the Mesopotamian cuneiform. It was the greatest reformation of writing by its comprehension and quality in the Armenian reality of the pre-Christian period. The gist of the reform was the following. The Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform consisted of about 600 signs each having sometimes ten and more versions. On the whole it expressed about 3000 syllables and words. The Biainian

Assyrian	Biainian
↑	↑
→↑	→↑
≡≡	≡≡
↑	↑
←↑	←↑
→≡↑	→≡↑

Tab. 12

cuneiform took only about 200 signs, which had mainly one version of reading and could seldom have two or three meanings. The cuneiform signs of the Biainian monumental style were almost identical with the Assyrian signs by their structure. This fact allows to consider that style as borrowed from Mesopotamia in the New Assyrian period. The difference was mainly in the design of signs. The cuneiforms in the Assyrian style reminded nails, whereas in the Biainian monumental style they were triangles, and if in the Mesopotamian style the signs had crossings, in our system the crossing sign was replaced by two new cuneiforms (see tab. 12). In some cases the inclined little cuneiforms became horizontal and vice versa. Several signs appear in the Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform system without testified meaning.

The Biainian shorthand style was used in the inscriptions on clay tablets (also on bullas), the presently known examples of which are dated back to the period between the second half of the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC to the end of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC (the first samples appear during the reign of Rusa I)<sup>590</sup>. Paleography of tablets was studied by I. M. Diakonoff who showed that several signs in their archaic forms appeared in Akkadian cuneiform (the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC), but disappeared in old Babylonian (the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC). Therefore, their existence in the Biainian short-

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<sup>590</sup> The clay tablets found in Toprak kale (the Biainian capital “Rusaḥinili”) and Karmir Blur (Biainian “Teišebaini”) before 1963 were summed up by Diakonoff (1963) (with the corresponding cited works therein). After that M. Salvini [Salvini, 1979(a); Salvini, 1979 (b)] published the clay tablets found in the archeological site of Bastam (Biainian “the small town of Rusa”). About all tablets published before 2000 see Arutyunyan, 2001, pp. 305-309, 330-334, 360-369, 375-381, 390, 393-401 (with sources cited therein). For the clay tablets being ascribed to Erimena by mistake see Movsisyan, 2000, pp. 133-139. In 2001 two fragments of tablets found in Ayanis (Biainian “Rusaḥinili in front of Eiduru”), one of which, according to M. Salvini, is a school (educational) text (see Salvini, 2001, pp. 312-315). In the same year another two cuneiform tablets from Haikaberd were published (Dinçol, Salvini, 2001). Thus up to now cuneiform tablets have been found from five archeological sites of the Kingdom of Van.

hand style can be explained by the influence of Akkadian and derived from it the Mitannian and Hittite script schools of the earlier period. On the basis of paleographic observations he concluded that the Biainian shorthand style had to be created at the latest the 14<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, coming from the Mitannian and Hittite states' script schools<sup>591</sup>.

Thus, of three styles the New Assyrian one was borrowed from the script centres of Assyria in the 10<sup>th</sup>-9<sup>th</sup> centuries BC, the Biainian monumental one, having the same origin, underwent a basic reformation and had local peculiarities, and the shorthand style is considered to be connected with the Mitannian and Hittite script centres of the 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> centuries BC. This circumstance allows to conclude that they are related to the problem of the Biainian cuneiform language, especially, whether it had been the spoken language of common people and the native language of the country rulers.

The cursive shorthand style of the Biainian cuneiform had to be created still in the 14<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> cent. BC. If the Biainian (Uartian) language were the native language of the kings of Van adapted to the cuneiform system having about 500-year-old writing tradition it would be quite incomprehensible why Sarduri I, not using his native language, used the language of his enemies, with its cuneiform system. It means that there was no cuneiform system adapted to the native language of the Bianian kings, in other words the Biainian language was not the mother tongue of the rulers of Van.



Fig. 91 A cuneiform clay tablet from Bastam

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<sup>591</sup> The author even hopes that “excavations will reveal the Uartian-Hurrian cuneiform documents of the 13<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.” (Diakonoff, 1963, pp. 19-20).

King Sarduri I was succeeded by King Ishpuini, proceeding from deepening confrontation with Assyria, adopted the traditions of one of the regional script schools. Meanwhile, the poverty of the Urartian vocabulary (about 500 words in more than 600 inscriptions), the same grammatical structure, pattern texts, absence both of changes during about three centuries of use and literary works (hymns, prayers, tragedies, lyrical and epical poems and other genres) leave an impression that that language with its writing system was used in a narrow circle of the official correspondence of the court. It was not the spoken language of common people and large sections of the public<sup>592</sup>.

The most possible candidate for the native language of the rulers of Van which was the spoken language of the people was the Biainian hieroglyphic language, first results of its decipherment, as we have already mentioned, speak in favour of the latter to be the oldest Armenian<sup>593</sup> ...

*Number and types of monuments having writings.* The majority of 600 cuneiform inscriptions have been written on stone. Rocks and stelae with engraved inscriptions constitute the largest group. There are also writings on clay, metal and gold objects (clay tablets, parts of military equipment [shields, helmets, parts of armour, arrows, parts of horses arming; etc), metal dishes (plates, cauldrons), seals and stamps, ceramic vessels, pieces of furniture and jewellery].

It is supposed that there were writings on parchment (or other soft material for writing), which can be seen from the seal on the package found at Karmir Blur (see the part about hieroglyphs of the Kingdom of Van).

*The size and structure of the inscriptions.* According to their size the texts are extremely various. The most voluminous inscription is the Khorkhorian chronicle about the period of the reign of King Argishti I. It is engraved on the south-western side

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<sup>592</sup> Compare Katvalyan, 1986, pp. 279-280; Khachatryan, 1991, pp. 36-56.

<sup>593</sup> For details see Movsisyan, 1998, pp. 31-51.

of the Van cliff. Its partially preserved parts written in eight columns, constitute 380 lines<sup>594</sup>. The smallest inscriptions consist only of one line indicating capacity, belonging, etc.

Inscriptions have mainly pattern structure. Three-part structure is a characteristic feature of voluminous texts: introduction, main body and conclusion. All the three parts are written in typical pattern-expressions; moreover, they are different depending on the content of the texts. The inscriptions' beginnings are usually devoted to the supreme god Haldi to whom events are related to. The course of events (foundation, building, making gifts, offering sacrifices, mobilization, invasions, victories, trophies, tax collections, etc.) is described in the main body. Inscriptions end in the titles indicating the power of the king-victor, the praising (or blessing) of king-builder, the curse in the address of the person who would spoil the monument...

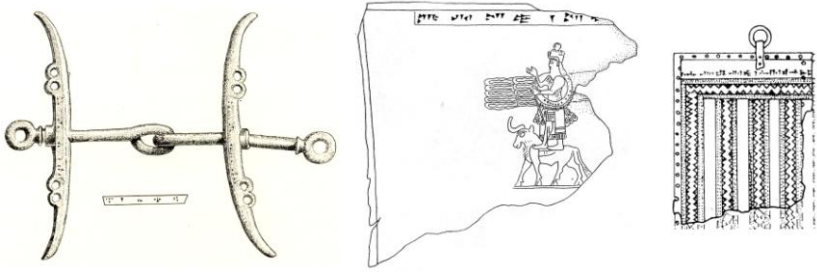
One may come across some inscriptions which are composed only of the main body without introduction or conclusion.



*Fig. 92 The stele of Rusa II in Zvartnots*

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<sup>594</sup> Two fragments of the Khorkhorian chronicle's duplicate found in the church of St. Sahak of Van contain 138 lines which were not preserved on the cliff. So the primary text of the chronicle had to exceed 500 lines. About restoration of the chronicle made with the help of duplicates due to the efforts of V. Belck, G.A. Melikishvili, N.V. Harutyunyan, and others see Melikishvili, 1960, pp. 210-256; Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 155-199 (as well as the sources cited therein).



*Fig. 93 Details of military equipment with inscriptions*

The pattern structure is also typical to small texts (“the property of...”, “the garrison of...”, “the son of...”, etc.). The “... aqarqi, ...tírussi” structure (aqarqi is ten times bigger than tírussi) is typical for the capacity indications.

The commonness of structure and typical expressions of the Biainian inscriptions may serve as an evidence of the Assyrian and Hittite literary-cultural systems’ influence on the Urartian, also of the Urartian influence on the Old Persian literary-cultural system.

The most typical features of the Biainian cuneiforms structurally are their conventionality and laconism.

***The classification of the inscriptions on the basis of their contents.*** Inscriptions are mainly devoted to the history of invasions, new constructions (cities, castles, temples, channels and other buildings), religious and administrative-economic spheres of country’s life; they show also the belonging and content of the object on which they are engraved.

***In multilingual inscriptions*** the writing system under consideration appears only with the hieroglyphs of the Kingdom of Van and the Assyrian cuneiforms, which have already been referred to in corresponding parts of the present work.

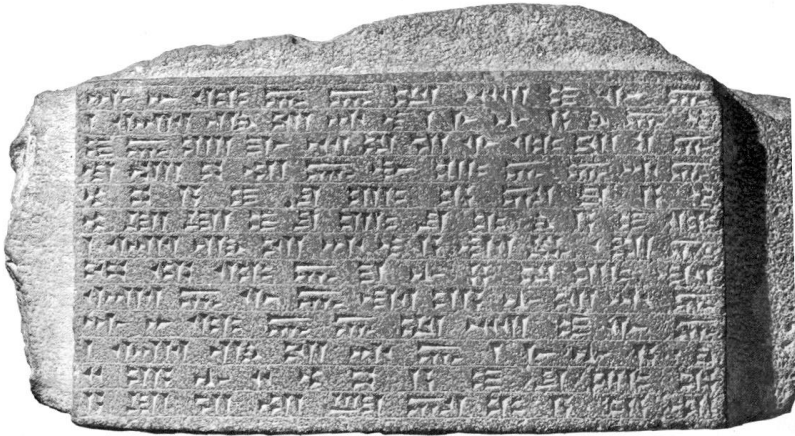


Fig. 94 The inscription of the foundation of Erebuni-Yerevan

**The direction of writing and some principles.** The direction of writing of inscriptions was from left to right. Separators between the words were used only in the cuneiform tablets. The word's partition was not allowed in inscriptions; probably, word was considered to be a sacred concept and it could not be divided. If the line remained unfinished the principles of extra-vowel writing was applied, for instance, the name Minua could be written Mi-nu-ú-a, Mi-i-nu-a (it is possible that the repetition showed the long pronunciation of the vowel). If there had not been enough place instead of syllabic writing an ideogram was used; e.g. the Urartian word for “city” is pa-ta-ri (the stem of this word is the Armenian word “pat” “պատ” – “wall”); the three-syllabic writing was replaced by the monosyllabic URU ideogram, which also means “city”.

There are cases of word shortening in the Biainian cuneiform writing (e.g. <sup>lu</sup>taršuanī meaning “a man” could be written <sup>lu</sup>ta or <sup>lu</sup>ta ú; in the notes made on clay cauldrons *aqarqi* and *tírussi* could be written *a* and *tī*).

**The number of symbols and type of the writing system according to it.** The system of the Urartian cuneiform writing is

logo-syllabic. Vowels, syllables, ideograms and attributes (indicatives, determinatives) were expressed by separate signs. Four vowels a, e, i, u and two diphthongs *ia* and *ue* are attested. In order to write a consonant one of the syllables containing that consonant was used (e.g. la, li/e, lu, al, el, ul for consonant “l”). Majority constitute open syllables. There are also tri-vocal closed syllables (bar, din, hal, kur, man, sar; etc.)

One-semantic signs were typical for the Biainian cuneiform writing, however, there could also be two- or sometimes even three-semantic cases (e.g. is = giš, ti = sar, dè = ne = t<sub>e</sub>, h<sub>i</sub> = t<sub>i</sub> = d<sub>i</sub>, etc.). There is also opposite phenomenon when the same syllable was written by means of different signs.

The principle of acrophony was widely used (by which syllabic and alphabetic signs allegedly originated by using the first part of a longer word and casting off the rest<sup>595</sup>). The phenomenon of phonetic attachment or “phonetic complement” (a sign expressing a phonetic but non-semantic element attached to the basic sign<sup>596</sup>) was also widespread.

**Numbers** were written in two ways in the Biainian cuneiform system: with special cuneiform-numbers and writing their names by syllable-signs. The first variant was more widespread in cuneiform writing. The cuneiform numbers are presented in table 12<sup>597</sup>. The smallest sign was used for a half (0,5), the largest - for 1000. The system allowed to write infinitively large numbers; e.g. putting next to each other two cuneiform signs

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<sup>595</sup> Gelb, 1965, p. 251.

<sup>596</sup> Ibid.

<sup>597</sup> In order to avoid misunderstanding we find it necessary to give an interpretation. The basis of the Biainian arithmetic is the decimal system of counting (see Petrosyan, 1945, pp. 55-72; Israelyan, 1976, pp. 115-117; Vardanyan, Asatryan, 1980, pp. 166-178), which is also seen from the given table, with one exception. It is “60”, which is expressed by a new sign, and “70” is introduced by the formula “60+10” (instead of “7 x 10”). This is remote resonance of a 6-scale counting system spread in Mesopotamia.

meaning “1000” one could have one million (1000 x 1000 = 1 000 000)...

**Determinatives** (attributes, indicators). Some of word-ideograms were also used as attributes (determinatives) which being put before other words characterized them, denoting their kind, character, whether they were animate or non-animate, kind, nature and other qualities.

0.5	𐎶	10	𐎶	100	𐎶 (𐎶 𐎶)
1	𐎶	11	𐎶𐎶	200	𐎶𐎶 𐎶
2	𐎶𐎶	12	𐎶𐎶𐎶	300	𐎶𐎶𐎶 𐎶
3	𐎶𐎶𐎶	20	𐎶𐎶	1000	𐎶𐎶
4	𐎶𐎶𐎶	30	𐎶𐎶𐎶	2000	𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶
5	𐎶𐎶𐎶	50	𐎶𐎶𐎶 (𐎶𐎶𐎶)	10000	𐎶 𐎶𐎶
6	𐎶𐎶𐎶	60	𐎶𐎶𐎶	14000	𐎶 𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶
7	𐎶𐎶𐎶	70	𐎶𐎶	22 000	𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶
8	𐎶𐎶𐎶	80	𐎶𐎶	1000000	𐎶𐎶 𐎶𐎶
9	𐎶	90	𐎶𐎶𐎶	...	

Tab. 13

**Information received from synchronic written sources.** The following synchronic written sources help greatly to understand the cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van and solve many questions concerning the history of the country:

a) The Assyro-Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions which are divided into groups: cuneiform inscriptions used in Assyria and Biainili.

b) The Biainian hieroglyphic inscriptions which were used since the reign of Ishpuini (circa 825-810 BC.).

c) The Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphic inscriptions which were used before the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC.

d) The books of the Old Testament in which the Ararat Kingdom is mentioned in relation with the events of the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

d) The books of the Old Testament in which the Ararat Kingdom is mentioned in relation with the events of the 7<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries BC.

***Relationships with other writing systems.*** The cuneiform system of the Kingdom of Van was connected with the cuneiform systems of the Mesopotamian origin. The Biainian cuneiform system, in part, exerted influence on the old Persian cuneiform system<sup>598</sup>.

***The present-day state of decipherment and further problems.*** The work of decipherment of Biainian cuneiform cannot be considered to be finished. There are still many texts (particularly non-pattern texts) that have not been deciphered yet<sup>599</sup>.

Phonetic aspect of the decipherment of the Biainian cuneiforms needs final specification. Up to now inscriptions have been read according to phonetics of the Assyrian cuneiforms, which would be similar to reading today English in Latin letters. We have already mentioned the basic writing reformation in Armenia as a result of which it would be logical for the writing system to adopt the local language's material. The meanings of several deciphered signs already differ from those used in Assyria. On the other hand it is obvious that the specification should be continued. Let us bring an example. According to present-day readings the sounds "o" and "v", which are often replaced by "u" (besides, "v" also appears as "b"), are absent in the Biainian cuneiforms. "U" as a separate sound has two cuneiform signs and appears in many other syllabic signs. It is not précised in what syllable we should read on the one hand "u" as "o" and on the other hand "u" as "u" or "v". Examples may be continued...

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<sup>598</sup> Compare Melikishvili, 1960, p. 114. About the Biainian civilization's influence on Achaemenid Iran in the sphere of architecture and constructional engineering, metallurgy, ceramics, spiritual-ritual pictography, see Ghirshman; 1962, the brief Armenian translation see Ghirshman, 1993, pp. 16-17; Tiratsyan, 1964, pp. 149-163 (as well as the sources cited therein).

<sup>599</sup> See, for instance, Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 299-305, 338-339, 418-419, etc.

#### IV-4. INSCRIPTIONS OF ARAMAIC SCRIPT IN ARMENIA

**The Aramaic script's origin.** The Arameans migrated from their native land – the Arabian Peninsula – to Syria and the south of Mesopotamia in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC, during the so-called third Semitic immigration. At the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC in the mentioned areas were formed Aramaic principalities. At the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC Arameans created their own alphabet on the basis of some changes in the Phoenician alphabet. After the conquest of the Aramaic principalities the kings of Assyria deported many Arameans from their lands, and forcibly settled them in different parts of the Assyrian Empire. Since the 8<sup>th</sup> century BC the Aramaic language and its written system had become international means of communication in Assyria as a result of both their dispersion all over Western Asia and involvement in the sphere of trade. In the 6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> cc. BC the Aramaic language and its writing system became one of the official languages of the Achaemenid Persia as well as the language of trade in from Asia Minor and Egypt to India.

One of the peculiarities of the history of Aramaic inscriptions is that they spread after the fall of the Aramaic principalities and are few in number in their former territories, on the other hand, their number is rather great far away from the place of their settlements (Assyria, Persia, Asia Minor, Egypt, Northern Arabia, Afghanistan, India, Greece, Armenia, etc.).

Aramaic is a consonantal script and consists of 22 letters. Due to its simple consonant-only script and practicality, it spread widely in the Near East and became basis for some new scripts



Fig. 95

(Hebrew, Nabatean, Palmyran, Pahlavi, Syriac, Manichean, etc.)<sup>600</sup>.

**The history of discoveries and studies of the Aramaic inscriptions in Armenia.** The first object bearing Aramaic letters – a two-sided sardonic seal (which was found in Western Armenia, in the region of Karin-Erzrum) became known to the scientific world in 1864. This object is kept in the State Hermitage (St. Petersburg) under the number 6434. On the one side of a goat and a lion are depicted, on the other one - a rushing wild boar, above and lower of which is a two-linear note<sup>601</sup> (fig. 95).

In 1864, 1883 and 1889 a number of attempts were made to read the inscription on the seal. The same writing was read in three variants. The last and most acceptable attempt of reading known to us was made in 1965, as a result of it the reading is as follows:

“This seal belongs to Mithrichitr(a) / Mihtichih(r)”<sup>602</sup>.

The only bilingual inscription with the Aramaic section was found in 1900 in the archeological site of Aghjakale or

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<sup>600</sup> About Aramean and Aramaic script see Schiffer, 1911; Dupont-Sommer, 1949; O’Callaghan, 1948, pp. 93-144; Jensen, 1958, pp. 281-285; Diringer, 1962, pp. 133-140; Diringer, 1962, pp. 133-149; Lipinski, 1975; Lipinski, 2000, etc,

<sup>601</sup> Vinnikov, 1965, pp. 18-19; Tiratsyan, 1988, p. 66, pl. XVI-9.

<sup>602</sup> Vinnikov, 1965, pp. 18-19 (and the sources cited therein).

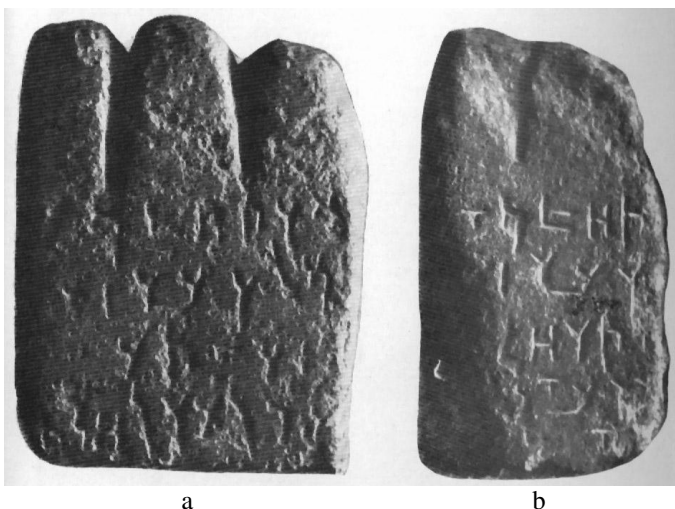


Fig. 96

Aghache kale (which means “fortress of forest”) in the territory of Armenia Minor. The second language of the inscription is Greek. The Aramaic and Greek variants do not repeat each other word by word. The following is the Aramaic part’s translation (the rest will be given in the section of Greek inscriptions).

1. Inside (these) walls was founded the mausoleum
2. of Oromana, the son of Ariayu-
3. ka. As [eternal memory] he built that
4. Ariayuka [the son of Oromana,]
5. the sat[rap of Ar]menia<sup>603</sup>:

The paleographic analysis of the inscriptions and comparison of the input data with information of other sources shows that it was erected in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC.

Among inscriptions in the Aramaic script found in Armenia, according to the accepted viewpoint, are boundary stones related to the period of the reign of Artashes I.

The first monument that was considered to be a boundary stone was found in 1906 in the village Karmirgyugh of the Gavar

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<sup>603</sup> Lipinski, 1975, т2 199-200:

region (fig. 96 a). According to the report of Lalayan, the discoverer and publisher of the inscription, it was found in a sepulcher which was opened quite accidentally during building works<sup>604</sup>. The copies of the inscription were sent to Europe by Y. Lalayan, but, probably, no definite answer was received.

In 1932 a similar inscription was found in the stone-work of a wall of a house in Kznut village of the Martuni region (fig. 96 b). Its origin is still unknown<sup>605</sup>. In spite of the fact that the two mentioned inscriptions were damaged and incomplete, it was obvious that both repeated the same inscription. S. Barkhudaryan sent the copies of the inscriptions first to Leningrad to the academician and specialist in Aramaic P. Kokovtzev, and then with the help of H. Acharyan - to Paris to H. Berberyan. Both answered that letters were Aramaic but not the language. H. Berberyan also mentioned that in the first line the name "Artaxerxes" could be read<sup>606</sup>.

In 1935 A. Payazat suggested the reading of the text in "the Uidian language" but his reading was not accepted by other researchers<sup>607</sup>.

In 1941 A. Borisov suggested the reading of the first part of the inscription as "King Artashes, the son of Zariadr (Zareh)". Drawing attention to the absence of the title of "king" after the father's name, he concluded that the mentioned Artashes might have been the founding-king of the dynasty, which was Artashes I (189-160 BC.) in Armenia. The continuation, according to him, could not be translated into Aramaic, and the words read in Aramaic were only ideograms, which replaced in the inscription non-Semitic words, probably, Armenian, Persian etc. A. Borisov distinguished two words RWNDKN and HLT in the last line of the first inscription, and supposing that the first word meant

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<sup>604</sup> Lalayan, 1931, pp. 97-98.

<sup>605</sup> Barkhudaryan, 1935, pp. 205-214.

<sup>606</sup> Barkhudaryan, 1935, pp. 213; Borisov, 1946, p. 98.

<sup>607</sup> Payazat, 1935, pp. 215-219.

“outgoings, passers-by” in the Pahlavi language he expressed the opinion that the stones could be milestones, boundary stones or some other monuments built as a sign of some events. Earlier he supposed that RWND could be the name of King Yervand (who was defeated by Artashes) but then he considered it improbable as “this name had to begin with one vowel which in Aramaic script was marked by “aleph”<sup>608</sup>.

J. Orbely, interpreting the decipherment of A. Borisov and taking as a basis Movses Khorenatsi’s description of the boundary stone of King Artashes, in his interview given to the “Izvestia”, expressed an opinion that the monuments bearing writings were boundary stones, and inscriptions in Semitic script on them should be read in the Armenian language<sup>609</sup>.

In 1946 the French semiologist and paleographer A. Dupont-Sommer suggested a complete reading of the inscription:

*(the text found in 1906)*

1. Artakhshasay
2. King, the son
3. (of) Zariatri
4. was (fishing) angling here.

*(the text found in 1932)*

1. Artakhshasay
2. King, the son
3. of Zariatri, was angling
4. here cru-
5. cians<sup>610</sup>.

Paying attention to this attempt of the decipherment C. V. Trever considered it improbable, supposing that Aramaic, which differed greatly from Armenian, could hardly be used in Arme-

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<sup>608</sup> Borisov, 1941; Borisov, 1946, pp. 97-107.

<sup>609</sup> “Известия” (“Izvestia”, Moscow), 31. 01. 1941.

<sup>610</sup> Dupont-Sommer, 1946-1948, pp. 53-66.

nia, thus defending the viewpoint expressed before her about the Armenian language in Aramaic letters<sup>611</sup>.

In 1950 a new inscription in Aramaic script was found (in the Basin of Lake Sevan in the neighborhood of the church in the village of Dzoragyugh of the Martuni region) which was in worse state than the previous ones. Studying this I. Diakonoff and K. Starkova did not manage even to translate or interpret it, and only mentioned that from the paleographic studies of the monument it was possible to suppose that it dated back to a later period<sup>612</sup>.

Meanwhile, refuting the last part of the decipherment offered by A. Dupont-Sommer (who connected it with fishery) and accepting J.Orbely's opinion concerning the boundary stones, they interpreted the texts found in 1906 and 1932 in Aramaic, giving two possible explanations and comments.

*(the text found in 1906)*

1. Artaxiy	Atraxiy
2. King, the son	King, the son
3. of Zariatr	of Ziatr
4. (lot) RWNDKN divided	(put borders) lot RWNDKN (or RWNDKN land)

*(the text found in 1932)*

1. Artaxiy	Atraxiy
2. King, the son	King, the son
3. of Zariatr, divided	of Zariatr. The lot
4. [...] ... between [...]	[...] ... between [...]
5. ....	..... <sup>613</sup>

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<sup>611</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 162-174.

<sup>612</sup> Diakonoff, Starkova, 1955, pp. 163-174.

<sup>613</sup> Diakonoff, Starkova, 1955, pp. 161-174.

They considered the word RWNDKN (picked out and translated supposedly in Pahlavi by A. Borisov as “outgoings, passers-by”) as the name of King Yervand-Orontas, but then they objected to that opinion as, according to them, the name of the Persian origin in that period had to have the form of Arvant(a) being written with “d” and not “t”. Finally, they concluded that RWNDKN was the name of the lot (land)<sup>614</sup>.

A.M. Danielyan made an attempt to “reconcile” the opinions of A. Dupont-Sommer, I.M. Diakonoff and K.B. Starkova by explaining the meaning of the inscriptions found in the basin of Lake Sevan as documents showing the borders of the royal fishing area. Being a lawyer and taking into consideration the existence of use of border stones in other countries (especially in Babylon), he found that the texts on the border stones had to differ from each other, at least, in the names of the owners of demarcated lands<sup>615</sup>.

In 1957 another monument



*Fig. 97*



*Fig. 98*

<sup>614</sup> Diakonoff, Starkova, 1955, pp. 168-169.

<sup>615</sup> Danielyan, 1977, pp. 235-244.

was discovered in the neighborhood of the village of Tsakkar of the Martuni region (fig. 97). It was also considered to be a boundary stone which was in much better state than the previous ones. The decipherment of the was published by G.A. Tiratsyan who considered RWNDKN to be the name of the family of King Artashes.

1. King Artashes,
2. the son of Zareh,
3. Yervandakan divided
4. the land (into)
5. parts (sections)<sup>616</sup>.

In 1961 during the archeological excavations of the temple of Garni in the stone-work of a wall dating back to the late Middle Ages one more inscription written in Aramaic script was found, the upper and the left edges of which were damaged (fig. 98). Publishing the deciphered text of the inscription A.G. Perikhanyan expressed an opinion that its author could be the Armenian king Khosrov I, the son of Vagharsh (Vologes) who reigned at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. and the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c.. The preserved part of the inscription is deciphered:

1. ....
2. the king of Great Arm[enia]
3. the son of Vologes,
4. of the king<sup>617</sup>.

In 1964 at the foot of Mt. Ishkhanasar in the region of Zangezur, in the vicinity of the road from Sisian to Goris an inscription was found consisting of five lines again in Aramaic script (fig. 99). In 1965 A.G. Perikhanyan presented the following decipherment:

1. ....
2. the village [ ]

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<sup>616</sup> Tiratsyan, 1957, pp. 105-107; Tiratsyan, 1959, pp. 88-90.

<sup>617</sup> Perikhanyan, 1964, pp. 123-137

3. Artashes
4. King Yervandakan,
5. the Kind, the son
6. of Zareh,
7. and Nekpar,
8. the crowning, the son
9. of Akhsharasart<sup>618</sup>.

But six years later the same scientist deciphered and interpreted the same inscription quite differently:

1. Divided the land
2. among villages
3. Artashes
4. King, Yervandakan,
5. the Kind, the son
6. of Zareh
7. the winner of everything that encourages the evil,
8. the sovereign
9. the ally of Khshatra<sup>619</sup>.

Such a great difference, to put it mildly, does not lend credence to the trustworthiness of the readings...

Another inscription in Aramaic letters was found in 1970 in an excavated mausoleum in the vicinity of the Sevan region where among some objects made of precious metals the coins dating to the latest period bearing the name of



*Fig. 99*



*Fig. 100*

<sup>618</sup> Perikhanyan, 1965, pp. 107-128; Perikhanyan, 1966, pp. 17-29.

<sup>619</sup> Perikhanyan, 1971 (b), pp. 1969-1974.

the Parthian king Orodes II (57 – 37 BC) on them. The dots- incrust- ed inscription on a silver pot (fig. 100) was translated by A. Perikhanayan: “This pot belongs to Abakhsat; the weight of silver is 100 drakhmas”<sup>620</sup>.

Nevertheless, it should be mentioned that the first sign of the writing on the pot is not met in the Aramaic alphabet (or any other alphabet originated from it), which is also mentioned by the author, who gives a very unconvincing explanation, according to which the first sign, probably, indicates the beginning of the inscription...

In 1971 two boundary stones were found in the village of Teghut of the Ijevan region (fig. 101-102), one of which was unbroken, the other was damaged, but both of them had similar inscriptions, which were interpreted by A. Perikhanayan as follows:

1. Of the king Artashes Yervandakan

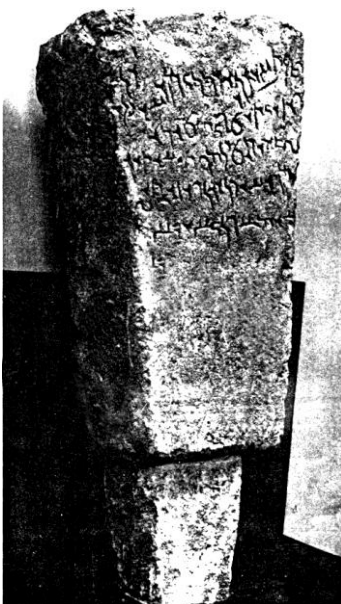
2. of the son of Zareh, of the Kind, of the sovereign,

3. of the ally of Khshatra, of the winner of everything

that encourages the evil, in the 10<sup>th</sup> year. Artashes



*Fig. 101*



*Fig. 102*

<sup>620</sup> Perikhanayan, 1971, pp. 78-82; Perikhanayan, 1971 (b), pp. 5-11, pl. I-II.

4. the son of Zareh, divided

5. the land between the villages<sup>621</sup>.

In 1977 a new monument considered to be a new boundary stone was found in the neighborhood of Spitak, which was read by G.A. Tiratsyan as follows:

1. Artashes
2. King Yervandakan
3. the great, the son
4. of Zareh, the divider
5. of land here
6. in the village (of)<sup>622</sup>...

During the excavations in Artashat in 1970-1977 three objects bearing Aramaic letters on them were found: a lazulitic pot (fig. 103), a spoon, and a fragment of jewelry box<sup>623</sup>. As far as we know no attempts of decipherment or interpreting the writings on them have been made.

In 1979-80 during the excavations at the fifth hill in Artashat nearly 8000 seal stamps were found<sup>624</sup>. According to



Fig. 103



Fig. 104

<sup>621</sup> Karakhanyan, 1971, pp. 274-276; Perikhanyan, 1971 (b), pp. 169-174.

<sup>622</sup> Kalantaryan, Sargsyan, Gharibyan, 1977; Tiratsyan, 1977, pp. 254-259; Tiratsyan, 1980, pp. 99-104.

<sup>623</sup> Arakelyan, 1982, p. 33, pl. XLI.

<sup>624</sup> Arakelyan, 1982, pp. 19-20; Khachatryan, 1981, pp. 20-22.

Zh.G. Khachatryan's oral report there are many seal stamps with writings in Aramaic letters among them, and they are stamped by about thirty seals (there are several stamps of the same seal).

In the summer of 2001 near the town of Gavar an Armenian-Italian expedition discovered the ninth "boundary stone" from Sarukhan village bearing the same writing<sup>625</sup> (fig. 104).

It is noteworthy that there are two or three signs above and under the mentioned five lines, in the central part of the stone, which probably, are not written in Aramaic letters.

In the same year N. Hazeyan, the head of the service of preservation of the historical environment of the Gegharkunik region, discovered another two stone monuments bearing Aramaic letters, which were in the wall of the church of the village of Vardenik. One of the inscriptions contained five lines, the other – six lines<sup>626</sup>.

Summing up and classifying the peculiarities of the stone monuments found till 2002 and having Aramaic letters, S. Hmayakyan made some noteworthy observations. Taking as a basis the arguments of S.G. Petrosyan and S.B. Harutyunyan about the name of "Yervand", which, according to their opinion, was the mythological name of the Indo-European god of storm, he considers it possible that the translation of the word "Yervandakan" is "divine", thus the title of the king should be the following: "King Artashes, the divine son of Zareh"<sup>627</sup> ...

Among the Aramaic inscriptions from the surrounding areas are of particular interest the texts found in Georgia (one of them is bilingual - Greek-Aramaic)<sup>628</sup>.

The oldest Aramaic inscription discovered in the vicinity of the Armenian Highland was found in 1985 in the archeologi-

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<sup>625</sup> Bishione, Hakobyan, Hmayakyan, Parmejiani, 2001, pp. 79-82.

<sup>626</sup> Hazeyan, Hakobyan, Hmayakyan, 2002, pp. 76-77.

<sup>627</sup> Hmayakyan, 2002, pp. 72-76:

<sup>628</sup> Tzereteli, 1941, pp. 1-72; Tzereteli, 1948, pp. 49-57; Tzereteli, 1990, pp. 3-76.

cal site of Bukan<sup>629</sup> (historically connected with the Armenian Highland), in the south-eastern part of Lake Urmia (fig. 105). It is a text of a cult character containing a curse formula, in which the names of gods Haldi and Hadad (i.e. Adad, Teišeba, the second main god of the Kingdom of Van) are mentioned.

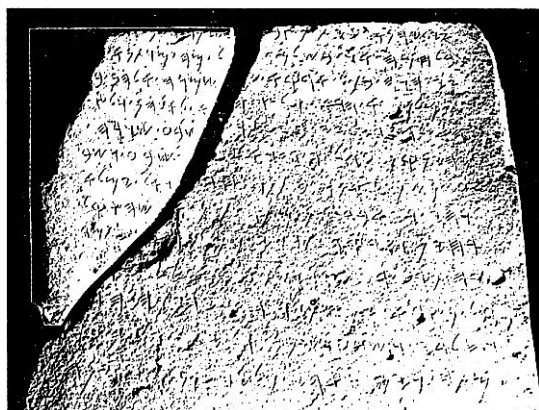
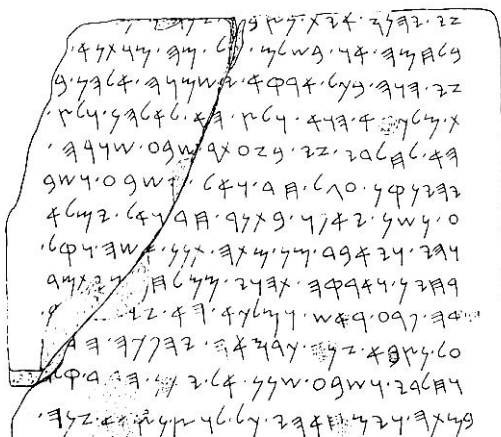


Fig. 105

<sup>629</sup> Lemaire, 1998, pp. 15-30; Sokoloff, 1999, pp. 105-121.

**Coins with Aramaic letters found in Armenia.** Recently a coin (fig. 106, now it is kept in a private English collection) found in the area of Lake Van entered into scientific circulation, and the piece of writing in Aramaic letters on it was suggested to be read as “Mihrdat (Mithradates), the king of Tosp”<sup>630</sup>.

At present three similar coins are kept in the Museum of the History of Armenia, the two of which were found in Artashat, the origin of the third find is unknown. There have not been any publications about the reading of writings on them.

In 1998-1999 during the archeological excavations in Artashat a copper coin (with Aramaic writing of four or five lines on it) of an unknown king was found; up to now the writing is undeciphered or published yet<sup>631</sup>.

In the Museum of the History of Armenia 5 coins of the kings of Artashesian dynasty bearing Aramaic writings on them are kept; they have been found lately and are going to be published by Ruben Vardanyan, the managing director of the coin department of the Museum.



*Fig. 106*

In fact, up to 2003 eleven coins bearing Aramaic letters are known to us, the detailed study of which is a problem to be solved in future.

**Observations for further studies.** The decipherment of inscriptions in Aramaic letters found in Armenia cannot be considered exact, thus researches in the field of this important subject should be continued. Not being a specialist in the Aramaic language but having some knowledge in the field of decipher-

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<sup>630</sup> Khurshudian, 1998, p. 8; Khurshudian, 1998 (a), pp. 167-174.

<sup>631</sup> About the coin see Khachatryan, Karapetyan, Vardanyan, Kanetzyan, 2002, pp. 51-54.

ment and studying the oldest scripts, we consider it important to make a few remarks on this problem.

1. The efforts of decipherment of the inscriptions on the monuments considered to be “boundary stones” were made according to a pattern determined beforehand which is unacceptable from the scientific point of view. A. Dupont-Sommer connected their meaning with fishing as they had been found from the basin of Lake Sevan, but I.M. Diakonoff and K.B. Starkova (later also other scientists) interpreted them as boundary stones demarcating the land, basing their opinion on J. Orbely’s comparison of these monuments with Movses Khorenatsi’s description of the Artashesian boundary stones. Nevertheless, in both variants of decipherment the same biased method exists.

As for considering them boundary stones on the basis of Movses Khorenatsi’s information and reading in corresponding content it should be said that our investigators hurried a little. The cuneiform inscriptions of the Kingdom of Van, which are spread all over Armenia, are also regarded as boundary stones by Movses Khorenatsi, whereas none of them is a boundary stone.

Two more noteworthy facts. Movses Khorenatsi, who mentioned the existing writing systems with great exactness, describing Artashesian boundary stones did not mention about any letters written on them. Even if we accept that the stone monuments under discussion are the same boundary stones described by Movses Khorenatsi, then there should be mentioned the settlements of different nations, which do not exist in the readings accepted nowadays. The names of the owners of the divided lands, as A.M. Diakonoff noticed proceeding from the experience of the use of the boundary stones in other countries, the texts on the boundary stones had to differ from each other.

2. Very little attention was paid to the fact of arrangement of the monuments called boundary stones on one line and their absence from that line. If they are expressions of the land reform how is it possible to explain that the reform took place only in

the north-eastern part of Armenia, moreover along one line? This line begins from Spitak region in the north-west and along the northern foot of the Pambak mountain range reaches Teghut, and from there along the western and southern shores of Lake Sevan stretches to the south and at its southernmost point reaching Mt. Ishkhanasar of Zangezur. It is tempting to think that the mentioned line coincides with caravan roads.

Thus it will not be senseless to refer to other possible interpretations once more (such as milestones, monuments built in memory of a particular event, etc.).

3. It is known that in the Aramaic alphabet letters R and D have the same form. A. Borisov, suggesting the reading of the name Zariatr (Zareh), also spoke about the fact that the reading was not certain as it could be read in four different ways: ZDYTD, ZDYTR, ZRYTD, and ZRYTR. The fourth variant was chosen because of its being similar to the name of Zariadres<sup>632</sup>. Later this fact was forgotten and the name Zareh, which was not mentioned anywhere, as a paternal name, was ascribed to Artashes I, and conclusions were made proceeding from it.

4. The fact of variety of writing of the name of King Artashes (three variants 'RTHŠŠ; 'RTSRKS; 'RTRKSRKSS) is amazing, moreover in one of the inscriptions (discovered at Teghut) the name of the king is met in two different variants.

5. There are signs which do not exist in the Aramaic alphabet (the first sign of the pot found in Sisian, and the upper and lower signs of the monument of Sarukhan). This makes us think that, importing the Aramaic alphabet, the scribes could adjust it to the language material of the Armenian Highland, thus, adding some new signs or changing the previous meaning of the letters. That is why it is important to make a new signary clearing out the frequency of the repetition of the letters which can bring fourth new discoveries.

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<sup>632</sup> Borisov, 1946, p. 102.

Thus, we think it would be better to revise all attempts of the decipherment of the inscriptions in Aramaic letters that were found in Armenia even if they are considered to be acceptable nowadays.

#### IV-5. THE USE OF THE GREEK LANGUAGE IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA

The first Greek texts in Armenia appeared since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC as a result of the spread of the Hellenic culture in the East after the invasions of Alexander the Great. The study of the texts has, at least, double importance for science; as for the history and culture of Armenia, as well as for clearing out the peculiarities of one of the territories of the spread of Hellenism.

As during the period under consideration Armenia was divided into several state units (Great Armenia, Armenia Minor, Tzopk and Commagene) we find it expedient to introduce the use of Greek according to the kingdoms (see Map 3).

***The Kingdom of Great Armenia.*** In new times the first Greek text known in science is the inscription of Bakur III (161-163), the king of Great Armenia, in Rome, which is written on marble altar in memory of his brother (the graphic picture see fig. 107). Proceeding from the primary sources, Bakur III had to be in Rome at the end of 164 (or in 164)<sup>633</sup>. The following is written in the text.

“To the gods of the underworld: Aurelius Pakor (Bakur), the king of Great Armenia, bought a sarcophagus for Aurelius Meritat, beloved brother who lived with me fifty six years and two months”<sup>634</sup>.

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<sup>633</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 237-242

<sup>634</sup> For the history of the publication of the inscription, the indication of the literature and the subjoined questions in details see Trever, 1953, pp. 224-242. King Bakur, already dethroned, together with his brother Mihrdat (in

There is also another inscription of the same king. It was found in the Northern Caucasus (in Dukhovskaia station near Maikop). On the skillfully made pot There are depictions of celebrations and theatrical plays with an inscription on: “From Pakor (Bakur) king” (fig. 108)<sup>635</sup>. When and how did it reach the Northern Caucasus or whom it was devoted to? Only assumptions may be made...

Among the inscriptions of the Armenian kings discovered out of Armenia is worth mentioning the helmet-like mask with a Greek inscription found in 1891 in the Caesarea district of Cappadocia<sup>636</sup>. Inscription is composed of two parts in the first part of which is written the following: “Tigran(’s), the king of Armenia”. The written monument was sent to Constantinople, after which there was no information about it.

The first (and probably the only) publication was in 1908; however, it was not studied in Armenology. This information has escaped attention of the specialists in Armenology, perhaps as a result of its publication in non-famous collection<sup>637</sup>.

Θ            Κ  
 ΑΥΡΗΛΙΟΣ  
 ΠΑΚΟΡΟΣΒΑΣΙ  
 ΛΕΥΣΜΕΓΑΛΗΣΑΡ  
 ΜΕΝΙΑΣΗΓΟΡΑΣΑΣΑΡ  
 ΚΟΦΑΓΟΝΑΥΡΜΕΡΙΘΑ  
 ΤΙΑΔΕΛΦΩΓΛΥΚΥ  
 ΤΑΤΩΖΗΣΑΝΤΙ  
 ΣΥΝΕΜΟΙΕΤΗ  
 ΝΣ.ΜΗ.Β

*Fig. 107*



*Fig. 108*

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the text Meritat) were received into the Imperial Aurelius kinship in Rome that is why they had the title “Aurelius” in this inscription.

<sup>635</sup> Lunin, 1939, pp. 220-223; Goyan, 1952, pp. 377-388; Trever, 1953, pp. 242-245.

<sup>636</sup> Jerphanion, Jalabert, 1908, p. 470 (N 59).

<sup>637</sup> Pages 437-478 of the volume in the same form) was published also with reprint consisting of 42 pages.

Two parts of the inscription have the following appearance:

a)  
TEK  
PAN BA  
ΣΕΛΕΑ  
ΣΑΡΜΑΝ

b)  
ΑΠΟΚΤΗΣΕΟΣ.ΚΟΣΜΟΥ.ΕΦΘΑΣΑΕΟΥΤΕΣΑΡΑΙΣ.ΧΙΛΙΑΔΑΙΣ.ΠΕΝΤΑΚ  
ΟΣΙΑΣ ΑΡΑΝΤΑΡΙΟ

The parts of the inscription are written in illiterate Greek and in spite of its small size while reading complications appear. With corresponding corrections these parts were also translated from Greek by academician Hrach Bartikyan. Expressing our gratitude to him we introduce these translation below:

a) ΤΙΓΡΑΝΟΥ ΒΑΣΙΛΕΩΣ ΑΡΜΕΝΙΑΣ – “Tigran(‘s) (of) King of Armenia”

b) ΑΠΟΚΤΙΣΕΩΣ ΚΟΣΜΟΥ ,ΕΦΘΑ’ ΣΑΕΟΥ (?) ΤΕΣΣΑΡΕΣ ΧΙΛΙΑΔΕΣ ΠΕΝΤΑΚΟΣΙΑ ΣΑΡΑΝΤΑ ΔΥΟ – “Since the creation of the world 5571(or 5509)<sup>638</sup> (?) four thousand five hundred forty two”<sup>639</sup> ...

The use of the death-masks was widespread in the Ancient World (Egypt, Mycenae, Iran, Assyria, also Mexico, etc.) and was thought to be related to the religious beliefs of the under-

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<sup>638</sup> The correction ΕΦΘΑ (= 5571) is made by Hr. Bartikyan, who corrected Θ (=9) to Ο (70), taking into consideration that Α (=1) following the latter is a unit and can follow a decimal number. Nevertheless, there is ΕΦΘΑ in the text. It is quite possible that the last Α has no connection with the number. In that case the following incomprehensible word is ΑΣΑΕΟΥ, and the numerical meaning of ΕΦΘ is 5509, that is the year of the creation mentioned in the text.

<sup>639</sup> The correction ΔΥΟ (“two”) is made also by Hr. Bartikyan. In the text it is ΡΙΟ. As the text is not finished, it may be possible that the last three letters are the first part of the passage, which has not reached us, and have no connection with the number “two”.

world. However, that ritual was absent in Armenia which may allow considering that the person being buried was not Armenian but one of the foreign military leaders who was on service of the Armenian king. From the spelling mistakes and illiterate Greek it is possible to think that the author of writing was neither Greek nor Armenian (otherwise the name of the king would be correctly written).

Who could be mentioned in the inscription Armenian King Tigran? The first king known from the history of Armenia having that name was Tigran Yervandakan, who reigned in the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC. His candidature is out of question simply because the Greek language was not used in Armenia during his reign. We have no information about Tiran-Tigran I, father of Tigran II, whether he had been in Cappadocia or not?

The monument written in Greek might be dated back to the period of the reign of Tigran II, to be more precise, to his Cappadocian campaigns in alliance with Mithradates VI Eupator (93 and 91 BC.)<sup>640</sup>. The monument written in Greek can be considered the only material evidence of the mentioned invasions.

Nevertheless, it is also possible that the monument written in Greek is connected with Tigran III, who had been sent by Rome to Armenia<sup>641</sup> in 20 BC., or with Roman protégés Tigran V (about 6 AD)<sup>642</sup> and Tigran VI (about 60-61 AD)<sup>643</sup>, who claimed the throne and passed through Cappadocia.

The second part of the inscription, where the year (dating back to “the creation of world”) is mentioned, is worth special

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<sup>640</sup> There is a voluminous literature about the Cappadocian campaigns of Tigran II; see, e.g., Manandyan, 1977, pp. 145-146, 430-436; HAP, 1971, pp. 558-561 (the section author, G.Kh. Sargsyan), etc.

<sup>641</sup> Manandyan, pp. 285-287; HAP, 1971, pp. 630-632 (section author, G.Kh. Sargsyan); Khachikyan, 1999, E., 1999, pp. 24-27.

<sup>642</sup> Manandyan, 1977, pp. 295-297; HAP, 1971, pp. 709-710 (section author, S.T. Yeremyan); Khachikyan, 1999, pp. 46-49.

<sup>643</sup> Manandyan, 1977, pp. 332-336; HAP, 1971, vol. I, pp. 740-749 (section author, S.T. Yeremyan).

attention. The problem is that the system of chronology, known to us, dating back to “the creation of world” appeared in the Middle Age<sup>644</sup>. So in this case it should be supposed that the second part of the inscription was added in the Middle Ages, or during the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC - 1<sup>st</sup> cent. AD when existed a system of chronology dating from “the creation of world”. Let us also mention that because of the absence of evidence no one of possible suppositions can be proved or denied completely...

In Western Armenia a monument was found with the sculpture portrait of Tigran II the Great and a voluminous Greek inscription, which was sent by the English consul of Trapizon to the British Museum in 1869. Whether it reached London or not it is not known; however, it has not been published up to now<sup>645</sup>.

A noteworthy Greek inscription was found in 1819 from a construction built in a rock on the Mt. Karaftu, to the south of Lake Urmia. Judging from the peculiarities of the building and two-line Greek inscription (fig. 109) it was the ritual centre dedi-

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<sup>644</sup> See Bickerman, 1967, pp. 65-72; Prontshtein, Kiyashko, 1981, pp. 78-82, etc.

<sup>645</sup> The report was published in “Augsburgian newspaper”, from which it was reprinted in the newspaper “Birzhevie vedomosti” (the 25<sup>th</sup> of April, 1869). It is told that in response to the Russian consul (in Constantinople) General Ignatiev’s inquiry why did the Turkish government impede the transportation of the monument, the grand vizier answered: “It is not done according to the new law about antiquities, but because the government intended to destroy it in order not to let the slumbering nationalism of Armenians stir up again”. It is also mentioned that several years earlier the local authorities in Western Armenia had been ordered to destroy all the monuments which could remind the Armenians about their glorious past. According to the newspaper the result of carrying out the order was that many cuneiform inscriptions still unread and unknown to the science were destroyed (see Nercessian, 2002, pp. 402-403. This information is from Mser Mseryan’s archive kept in Matenadaran (193, 196). Our attention to this noteworthy message was drawn by Dr. Sc. of History Paruyr Muradyan).

cated to Vahagn-Herakles (whose name is mentioned in the text)<sup>646</sup>.

In 1898-1899 C. F. Lehmann-Haupt made a series of studies at the ruins of the fortress of archeological site Farkin, considering them to be the ruins of Tigranakert<sup>647</sup>. He paid a special attention to the fragments of Greek inscription (fig. 110-111)<sup>648</sup> made on the wall at the entrance of the fortress. These fragments had already been noticed by B. Tailor in 1865 and the Portuguese traveler A. Tenreiro (still) in 1560. Unfortunately it cannot be restored by preserved eight stones of the inscription (according to C. F. Lehmann-Haupt they were originally arranged in five lines, the first of which, where the name of the king had to be written, has not preserved). Together with C. F. Lehmann-Haupt the famous specialists in epigraphy of that time F. H. von Gaertringen, T. Nöldeken, U. von Villamovitz-Möllendorf and V. Ditenberger made great efforts to read the text but it was impossible to restore a complete and interconnected text. The epigraphic analysis of the inscription shows that it might be written in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> cc.; an immense number of ligatures (two-four letters are combined) and abbreviations are the evidence of it. It is possible to understand from the analysis of the preserved parts that it was a message<sup>649</sup> of the Armenian king

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<sup>646</sup> For the description of the monument in details and the existing literature about it see Trever, 1953, pp. 156-162.

<sup>647</sup> The location of Tigranakert lately again became a subject of a special discussion, according to the results of which the fortress of the archeological site of Farkin was not Tigranakert but Nprkert (Harutyunyan, 2001, pp. 177-199, where the previous opinions of the location of Tigranakert are also being discussed).

<sup>648</sup> For the preserved passages of the inscription see Lehmann-Haupt, 1908, pp. 497-520; Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, pp. 410-421; Trever, 1953, pp. 283-288, table 88-90; Sarksyian, 1960, pp. 76-86; Martirosyan, 1975, p. 192 (the translation from Greek text is made by H. Bartikyan).

<sup>649</sup> G Kh. Sarksyian draws noteworthy parallel between the manifest of Trdat III preserved in the Greek variant of Agathangelos' "History of Armenians"

ΗΡΑΚΛΗ ΔΕΚΥΓΓΕΙ  
 ΜΗΦΕΝ ΙΣΠΛΑΘΟΙΚΑΚΩΝ

Fig. 109

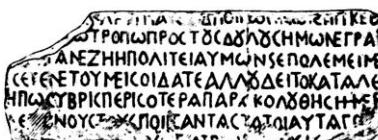
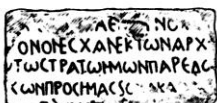
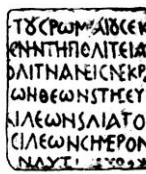
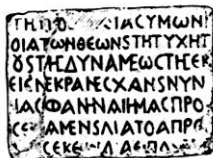
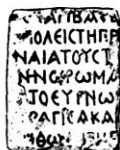
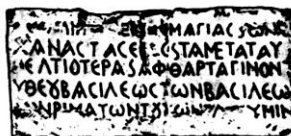


Fig 110

and the first parts of the inscription of Tigranakert (Sarksyan, 1969, pp. 112-113).



Fig. 111

to the population of the city. The king, as C. F. Lehmann-Haupt mentioned (and other investigators agreed with him), was the Armenian king because the Persian king and the Romans were mentioned in the third person. The king appeals to the population of the city with the expressions “your community”, “you”, which is the evidence of the existence of civil self-government in ancient Armenia. The king reproached the community of the city for the revolt, which was followed by his military interference:

“Your community rose in revolt [... ] with ... . That is why we have handed the city to the troops, so to prevent further impudence and not to allow any part of it to revolt against us again. And who was to be blamed for the malice that you suffered, you know”.

In another passage the king tells: “ ... I have ordered to fasten it ... near the gates, and as is written in the order to carve in and fasten. I have also ordered to carve in [similar inscriptions] near the gates of all the other towns that are being ruled by us with Gods’ providence and goodwill”.

From several expressions preserved in the inscription (“destiny of forefathers”, “overthrow of enemies”, “gods’ goodwill”, “destiny of a king”) C. F. Lehmann-Haupt concluded that the king-author after banishment and some discord returned and ascended the throne. In his opinion the author of the inscription is King Pap who erected it after the battle of Dzirav.

This opinion was not shared by J. Markwart, H. Manandyan, G. Kh. Sargsyan, A. Martirosyan. There are mentioned several “gods” in the Armenian king’s inscription, and the Persian king is honored by the title of “god, King of Kings”. So, judging from this, the above-mentioned authors exclude the candidature of Pap or any other Christian king<sup>650</sup>. Pap’s candidature

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<sup>650</sup> Markwart noticed that there might be a turn away from Christianity during the period of Pap’s reign, on the basis of which the Armenian Church ascribed devilish qualities to him, but a return to polytheism did not take place.

is denied also because Tigranakert was destroyed during the period of the reign of his father, Arshak II, and the district of Aghdznik with the city of Tigranakert occupied the Persians. Y. Markwart and his followers think that Trdat III was the author of the inscription, attributing the creation of the text the first period of his reign, i.e. before the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion<sup>651</sup>.

Nevertheless, the problem of the inscription's author cannot be considered to be solved<sup>652</sup>.

The inscription (fig. 112)<sup>653</sup> of King Trdat of Great Armenia, written in Greek and found in 1908 in Aparan, is a royal document of reward, which tells the following: "Tiridates the Great,



*Fig. 112*

<sup>651</sup> Markwart, 1930, pp. 133-135; Manandyan, 1978, pp. 124-126; Sarksyian, 1960, pp. 85-86; Martirosyan, 1975, pp. 160-169.

<sup>652</sup> On the whole, K. V. Trever supported C. F. Lehmann-Haupt's interpretation, considering the inscription as a document of the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Trever, 1953, pp. 283-288). Later the chronology suggested by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt was supported by Yelnitzki who was severely criticized by G. Kh. Sargsyan (Sargsyan, 1960, pp. 226-231). In 1960's the mentioned authors continued the discussion, repeating mainly the previous arguments and conclusions (Sargsyan, 1966, p. 66, where is criticized L. A. Yelnitzki's article published in 1965).

<sup>653</sup> The inscription was discovered by the specialist in Armenology G. Hovsepyan. It had been initially found nearby of the ruins of a fortress. First it was published by M. I. Rostovtzev with the support of V.V. Latishev, N.Y. Mar, Y.I. Smirnov and V.V. Bartold (Rostovtzev, 1911, pp. 1-32, with picture in Appendix). The study of the inscription was done by H.H. Manandyan, K.V. Trever, B. Arakelyan, Y.A. Yelnitzki, S.M. Krkyasharyan and others. The text is given in the translation of S. Krkyasharyan (RHAP, 1981, pp. 362-363).

the king of Great Armenia, , gave to Hrodomithr's<sup>654</sup> son of Gntuni's (family), the newly built city Nig so that he could provide his living there... on February..."<sup>655</sup> There was a serious discussion about the identity of the author: whether he was Trdat (Tiridates) I, II, or III<sup>656</sup>. Up to now the problem has not been cleared out.

In 1911 a big stone bearing three Greek inscriptions (fig. 113-115) was found at the foot of the southern slope of the hill of Armavir<sup>657</sup>. The first steps to decipher that inscription were made by Y. I. Smirnov. The study had not been finished because of the author's death, and his notes were given to A. I. Boltunova so that she could continue the study<sup>658</sup>.

In 1927 a new stone with four Greek inscriptions (fig. 116-118) was found in Armavir (10-12 m. far from the one found in 1911). It is worth mentioning that all seven inscriptions were not lapidary-monumental, but in a style widespread in writings on

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<sup>654</sup> According to S. Krkyasharyan it is the Greek translation of the Armenian name Vard-Mihr (RHAP, 1981, p. 363).

<sup>655</sup> There had to be the date before the name of the month, but it has been damaged by erosion. According to V.V. Latishev, traces of signs must be read K (20) or I (10) and X (600) i.e. the year 620 or 610, which according to the Seleucid calendar corresponds to 298 or 308 AD, M.I. Rostovtzev concluded that the author of the inscription was Trdat III (Rostovtzev, 1911, pp. 14-15).

<sup>656</sup> Following M.I. Rostovtzev H.H. Manandyan and L. A. Yelnitzki considered Trdat III to be the author of the text (Manandyan, 1978, p. 126; Yelnitzki, 1958, pp. 148-150), K. V. Trever thought that it was Trdat II, who reigned from 217 to 222 (Trever, 1953, pp. 271-283), S.M. Krkyasharyan, G.S. Muradyan suggested that it was Trdat I (Krkyasharyan, 1971, p. 202; Muradyan, 1981, p. 84), and according to B.N. Arakelyan, the author of the text could be both Trdat I and Trdat III equally (Arakelyan, 1940, p. 78)...

<sup>657</sup> The stone was known still in 1908 but it had become a subject of study since 1911 (Ter-Avetisyan, 1941, p. 61; Boltunova, 1942, pp. 35-37; Trever, 1953, pp. 114-117).

<sup>658</sup> Y.I. Smirnov's notes were published by K.V. Trever after about four decades (Trever, 1953, pp. 148-156).

parchment or ceramic objects. S.Ter-Hakobyan was the first to interpret four<sup>659</sup>. According to him, the first passage is “a friendly speech of welcome to Mithra and Oront kings”<sup>660</sup>. Reading the Seleucid names of months in the second passage, he thought that it was a formal recording of the decision to adopt the Seleucid calendar. Considering the letters (“l” and “a”) of the inscription’s second line to be the number 31 and calculating from the beginning of the Seleucid era (313-31 BC = 282 BC), he restored, the period of the texts and mentioned events and persons<sup>661</sup>. This tempting explanation was later denied by K.V. Trever, as these letters were simply left out from the name of the second month and later were added again (instead of “Apellaios” “Apelios” is written)<sup>662</sup>. In the same inscription the name of the third month is omitted, which was added opposite of the margin’s corresponding line. It speaks about poor knowledge of the scribe.

In 1927 S.V. Ter-Avetisyan introduced a summarizing publication of the results of the excavations in Armavir. Together with the inscriptions’ measurements he described briefly the content of four texts (according to the previous report of A.I. Boltunova-Amiranishvili), which were dated back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC. The first of these inscriptions is the letter of one of the Armenian kings to the other, the second - is the letter of best wishes for twelve months to King Pharnakes of Pontus, which was probably written by the Armenian king Artashes (the reason for this supposition is the preserved first two letters of the king’s name – “Ar”), the third is a welcome-speech to Numenius, the fourth is a passage of a poem about the invasion of a Seleucid king into Armenia<sup>663</sup>.

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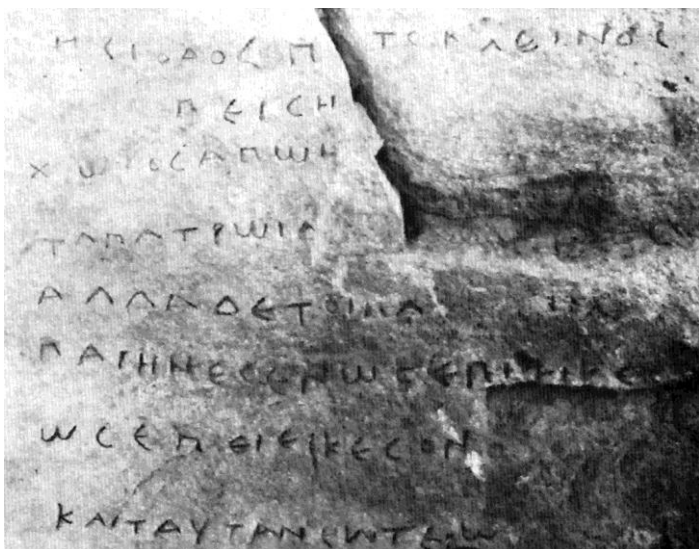
<sup>659</sup> Ter-Hakobyan, 1935, pp. 143-150.

<sup>660</sup> Ibid, p. 148.

<sup>661</sup> Ter-Hakobyan, 1935, pp. 148-149. Written copies made by the author (p. 149) suffer shortcomings.

<sup>662</sup> Trever, 1953, p. 137.

<sup>663</sup> Ter-Avetisyan, 1941, pp. 61-62.



Η ΚΙΘΑΟΣ Π ΤΕΚΛΕΙΝΟΣ  
ΕΠΕΙ ΠΕΡΧΗ  
ΧΩΡΟΣΑΡΩΙ  
ΤΑΡΑΤΡΩΙΑ  
ΑΛΛΑΔΕΤΟΙΙΑ  
ΠΑΡΗΝΕΚΕΝΩΣΕΠΡΙΚΙΒΕΕ  
ΩΣΕ Π ΕΙΕΚΕΣΟΝ  
ΚΑΙΤΑΥΤΑΝΕΩΤΚΙ

Fig. 113

In 1947 A.I. Boltunova, continuing Y.I. Smirnov's works, introduced pilot reading<sup>664</sup> of all the seven texts found in Armavir, about which B.Grakov<sup>665</sup>, H.H Manandyan<sup>666</sup>, G.I. Goyan<sup>667</sup>, K.V. Trever<sup>668</sup> and others expressed their observations. Damages on the inscription caused disagreements among investigators relating to the interpretation as separate words and passages, as well entire inscriptions.

The first text is a poem consisting of eight lines (fig. 113), in the first line of which Y.I. Smirnov, with the help of S. A. Zhebelov, read the name of Hesiod, the author of a didactic poem "Works and Days", and in the second line - the name of his brother Perses. The inscription is rather damaged, anyhow it is obvious that it is a six-iambic poem<sup>669</sup>. According to A.I. Boltunova general meaning of the inscription reflects contrasts between old and new<sup>670</sup>. Accepting A. I. Bolunova's reading and the didacticism of the general meaning and calling to attention the biographical information about Hesiod and his brother preserved in old sources, H. H. Manandyan supposed that it condemned the unfair distribution of property and instructed close relatives to live in peace and help each other<sup>671</sup>. K. V. Trever, also mentioning that it was a work of literature with didactic meaning, spoke about ascribing to Hesiod abilities to predict the future, thus explaining his name's mentioning in a place, which was, according to her theory, the platan forest of predictions dedicated to Aramanyak<sup>672</sup> ...

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<sup>664</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 35-61.

<sup>665</sup> Grakov, 1946, pp. 166-168. The author generally accepts the readings of A.I. Boltunova, at the same time making several additions and corrections.

<sup>666</sup> Manandyan, 1946 (in Armenian and Russian)

<sup>667</sup> Goyan, 1952, pp. 138-161.

<sup>668</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 104-147.

<sup>669</sup> Ibid, 1953, pp. 149-151

<sup>670</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 37-38.

<sup>671</sup> Manandyan, 1946, pp. 5-6

<sup>672</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 120-122.

ΔΙΚΤΙΔΗΩ

ΠΥΚΣΤΙΔΟΥ: ΑΥΠΟΛΕΜΙΚΩΤΕΡΑΘΕΟΣ  
 ΑΥΤΗΓΙΛΑ ΚΩΛΥΣΙΑΥΤΗΔΕΙΜΑΤΑ  
 ΑΛΛΟΥΤΕΜΕΙΣΩΚΟΜΠΟΝΕΞΟΙΚΩΛΟΓΩΝ  
 ΟΥΤΕΝΔΕΟΝΤΑΤΗΚΑΛΗΘΕΙΑΣΕΓΩ  
 ΕΠΕΙΓΑΡΕΞΩΑΓΛΟΛΟΥΣΚΗΝΩΜΑΤΩΝ  
 ΑΥΣΤΙΔΗΚΙΒΔΗΛΟΝΑΝΘΙΩΠΟΙΚΑΚΟΝ  
 ΓΩΚΑΦΑΥ ΚΛΙΦΟΟΝΟΤΟΥΜΗΦΟΟΝ  
 ΙΔΙΚΑΙΩΣΜΗΚΑΛΩΣΦΡΙΚΜΕΝΟΣ  
 ΥΤΟΝΚΑΘΑΥΤΟΝΤΥΜΒΟΝ ΕΥΝΕΙΔΟΜΟΣ  
 ΔΗΡΕΩΝΑΚΟΦΥΝΑΛΛΑΤΟΔΕΞΩ  
 ΤΕΡΑ ΕΤΕ ΦΟΡΑΘΕΗΛΑΤΟΝ

Fig 114

The second part (carved to the right of the first one) is also a poem written in iambic metre. It consists of 12 lines (fig. 114), the first of which (preserved in extremely bad state) is, possibly, its title. The line following the title can be read in the following way: “A more bellicose Goddess can be found nowhere”. The latter is identified with the Armenian goddess Anahit<sup>673</sup>. The following lines are said on behalf of the goddess herself. She threatened to punish the people for their evil deeds. A. I. Boltunava supposed that there was a threatening against “the unfair and evil principles” in the words of the goddess<sup>674</sup>, whereas H. H. Manandyan thought that it was against “the unfair distribution of estates”<sup>675</sup>. K. V. Trever read the expression “[prediction] sent by the blowing (breath) of wind” at the end of this passage and

<sup>673</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 38-41; Manandyan, 1946, pp. 6-8.

<sup>674</sup> Boltunova, 1942, p. 40.

<sup>675</sup> Manandyan, 1946, pp. 7-8. This opinion is based on his translation of lines 9 and 10 of the text: “the house that is separated badly and unfairly, digs a grave for itself”.

in the following one, considering it as a proof of her theory. Moreover, she considered the last three (ΔΗΩ) of the preserved seven letters in the damaged first line (which had to be the title) to be one of the variants of the name of Demetra, the goddess of the earth, fertility and legislation<sup>676</sup>.

From the analysis of versification, content and idioms of the two passages Y.A. Smirnov and A.I. Boltunova conclude that these are passages of an unknown tragedy, the author of

which knew perfectly well the works of Hesiod, Sophocles, Euripides and Menander. They consider it possible that it is a work of a local poet, and they think that he probably was the Armenian king Artavazd II. The reason for such a conclusion is the performance of “Bacchants” by Euripides in the court of Artavazd II and Plutarch’s information about tragedies and other works of the same king written in Greek, some of which were preserved and were known at that time even out of Armenia<sup>677</sup>.

The third text (fig. 115) on the stone found in 1911 is an inscription of donation composed of five lines, which A.I. Boltunova deciphered in the following way: “four horses, one coach gifted by Yevtikharmidas, and a small picture by Pelanides”. Following S.D. Lisitzyan’s instructions A.I. Boltunova was inclined to see a direct connection between presenting four horses

Τ Ε Τ Τ Α Ρ Ε Σ  
 Ι Π Π Ο Ι Τ Ο Ι Ε Υ Γ Ο Σ  
 Ε Υ Θ Υ Χ Α Ρ Μ Ι  
 Π Ι Ν Α Κ Ι Ο Ν Ε Ι  
 Π Η Λ Α Μ Υ Δ Ο

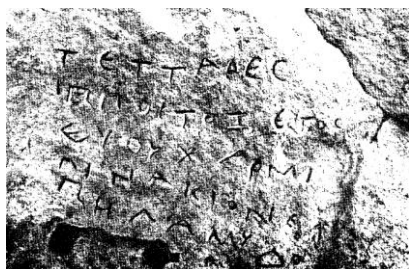


Fig. 115

<sup>676</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 122-128.

<sup>677</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 40-42; Trever, 1953, pp. 127-128.

and a coach and the four-horse carriage depicted on the coins of Artavazd II<sup>678</sup>. Agreeing with her, H.H. Manandyan supposed the existence of a Greek colony and temple in Armavir in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries BC.<sup>679</sup>, which was justly criticized by K.V. Trever<sup>680</sup>. During the first attempt of reading Y.I. Smirnov considered it possible that the first name was dismembered, and in the second part of the third line of the text read the name of “Kharmi” considering it to be the name of Patriarch Harma<sup>681</sup>. K.V. Trever, sharing Y.I. Smirnov’s opinion, found mentioning of the name of Harma here to be proper (according to the Armenian national tradition after Harma’s birth his father Gegham left him in Armavir and went to the north-east), especially because according to Movses Khorenatsi, together with the gods of the sun and the moon the ancestors of the Armenian kings were also worshipped in Aramvir<sup>682</sup>. So she offered the following reading of the text: “Four horses and a coach (presented to) Harma; (it is) the slate of Pelamides”. Besides, K.V. Trever paid a special attention to the expression “prediction, sent by the blowing (breath) of the wind”, written to the right of the text, in the direction of the third line, which is also in the second text<sup>683</sup>.

Agreeing with Y. S. Smirnov and A. I. Boltunova, that the author of the tragedy in first two texts was Artavazd II, G. I. Goyan, tries to ground that opinion by a valuable theater-critical study. He considers it to be quite possible that the third text is a similar passage, which is not a separate inscription of donation but one of the parts of the same work, which according to the

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<sup>678</sup> Boltunova. 1942, pp. 42-43.

<sup>679</sup> Manandyan, 1964, pp. 8-10.

<sup>680</sup> Trever, 1953, p. 130.

<sup>681</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 154-155.

<sup>682</sup> Movses Khorenatsi, I, XII and II, 167.

<sup>683</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 128-133. A.I. Boltunova does not have the last expression. K.V. Trever refers to the archival documents of the members of the expedition of 1911.

first line of the first passage he conventionally calls “The Belli-  
cose goddess”<sup>684</sup>.

Ο ΒΑΚΙΛΕΥΚΑΡ  
 ΜΑΔΟΚΙΡΩΝ  
 ΜΙΟΡΑΚΕΡΟΝΤΗ  
 ΒΑΚΙΛΕΙΧΑΙΡΕΙΝ  
 ΙΕΡΡΩΚΕΥΑΝΕΧΟΙ  
 ΥΓΙΑΙΝΕΙΝ ΔΕΚΑΙΤΑ ΕΓ  
 ΓΟΝΑΑΥΤΟΥ ΥΓΙΑΙ  
 ΝΩΝ ΤΗΝ ΒΑΚΙΛΕΙ  
 ΑΝ ΔΕ ΑΤΕΛΕΚΕΙΣ.  
 ΤΕ ΚΙΒΙΟΥ  
 Δ



Fig. 116

<sup>684</sup> Goyan, 1952, pp. 138-161.

According to S. Ter-Hakobyan the fourth text (found in 1927), which is the first one consisting of 11 lines, (fig. 116) is “a friendly speech of welcome to Mithra and Oront kings”<sup>685</sup>. A.I. Boltunava considers it as the address of Artashes I to King Ebront and gives the following translation: “King Ar[tashes] Madoeiron Mithras greets king Ebront. If you are safe and sound, it would be good that his descendants also were safe and sound. Being safe and sound you will reign over your kingdom...” She restores the name “Artashes” thinking that the last two letters of the first line - “a” and “r”, are the abbreviations of the king’s name. The next two words are titles in his opinion<sup>686</sup>. Denying such interpretation H.H. Manandyan offers to connect the last two letters of the first line with the second line and, changing one letter, to read four lines in the following way: “Mithras, the king of the Armavirian people, greets King Yervand”. He identifies Mithras with the supreme priest Yervaz, the brother of King Yervand, mentioned by Movses Khorenatsi<sup>687</sup>. Agreeing on the whole with A. I. Boltunova’s reading and H.H. Manandyan’s corrections, K.V. Trever also relates the goal of this text, containing prediction about successful reign and wishes for health, to the prediction of the priest<sup>688</sup>.

S. Ter-Hakobyan truly considered the second text found in 1927 (the fifth in succession, 13 lines, fig. 117) to be the names of months of the Seleucid calendar, but he did not notice the continuation following the name “Parnak” in the last line, which, according to A.I. Boltunova, is a speech of welcome to Parnak, the king of Pontus (190-169 BC)<sup>689</sup>. H.H. Manandyan objected also to this, considering the name written at the beginning of the thirteenth line not as the name of the king but the name of the

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<sup>685</sup> Ter-Hakobyan, 1935, p. 148.

<sup>686</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 43-44.

<sup>687</sup> Manandyan, 1946, pp. 18-22.

<sup>688</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 134-137.

<sup>689</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 44-45.

ΔΙΟΣ  
 ΛΑ  
 ΑΠΕΛΙΟΣ ΛΥΑ  
 ΠΕΡΙΤΙΟΣ ΟΝΙ  
 ΔΥΚΤΙΟΣ ΟΣ  
 ΞΑΝΔΙΚΟΣ  
 ΑΙΤΕΜΕΪΚΙΟΣ  
 ΔΑΙΚΙΟΣ  
 ΠΑΝΗΜΟΣ  
 ΛΩΙΟΣ  
 ΓΟΡΠΙΑΙΟΣ  
 ΥΠΕΡΒΕΡΕΤΑΙΟΣ  
 † ΑΙΝΑΚΗΥΓΙΗΝΕΥΑΝΕΧΟΥ

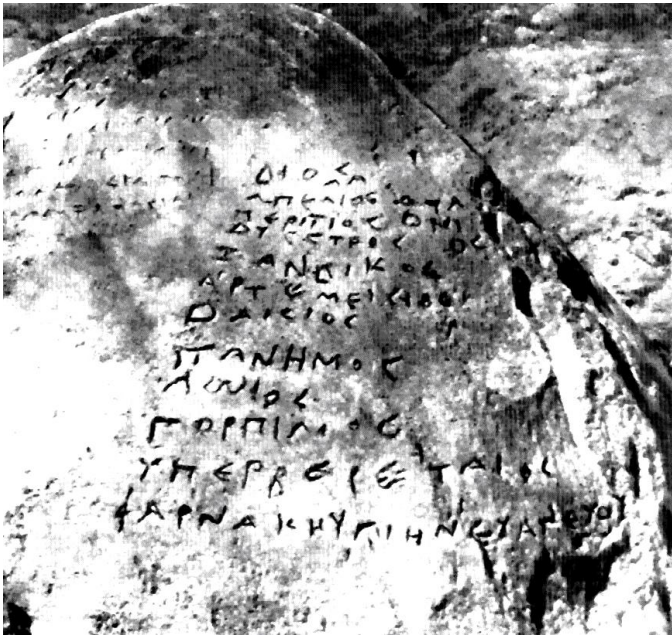


Fig. 117

thirteenth extra-month (epagomenia), named after the nick-name of the moon “Parnak”, and the wish for health is from the high priest of Armavir Mithras to King Yervand<sup>690</sup>. K.V. Trever denying interpretations of both A.I. Boltunova and H.H. Manandyan insisted on Parnak’s name as one of the names of the god of the moon, and considered Parnak to be the patron god of months again reviewing it in the context of her theory (although she did not exclude its being also a personal name)<sup>691</sup>.

Under the calendar-inscription is carved the sixth text (the third found in 1927, fig. 118), on which only five badly preserved lines can be seen, where “Hellen Numenios” is mentioned. A.I. Boltunova was inclined to identify him with a historian having the same name who lived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC<sup>692</sup>. H.H. Manandyan and K.V. Trever abstained from making conclusions<sup>693</sup>.

The seventh text (the fourth found in 1927, 11 lines) is under the sixth one and is a poem. A.I. Boltunova gives only the transcription of this text (without a picture and a drawing). The investigators following her, being dissatisfied, anyhow, did not try to fill this gap. According to A.I. Boltunova’s supposition, preserved parts describes events that took place in the 160s BC., about which Numenios, already known from the previous texts, speaks to Laodica, the sister of the Seleucid king Antiochus IV Epiphanes. In the text she is not called by her name but under the honorary name of “Philadelphus” given to queens. He tells her the sad news mentioning that “there is nothing inglorious”, and informs that her husband, who had conquered “the beautiful country of Armenia”, was killed by his soldiers “breathing his last with the weapon in his hand”. A.I. Boltunova tries to ground

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<sup>690</sup> Manandyan, 1946, pp. 22-24.

<sup>691</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 137-140.

<sup>692</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 45-46.

<sup>693</sup> Manandyan, 1946, pp. 24-25; Trever, 1953, pp. 140-142.

ΑΙΡΕΙΝΝΟΥΜΗΝΙΩΙΚΑΛΛΗΝΙ  
 ΤΩΠΑΡΑΓΕΝΟΜΕΝΩΙ  
 ΕΤΜ ΝΟΥΜΕΝΙΩΙ  
 ΒΑΣΙΛΕΥΚΥΡΓΙΗΝ

Fig. 118

this interpretation by the study of the historical events of that period<sup>694</sup>.

Accepting A.I. Boltunova's reading, H.H. Manandyan does not agree with her interpretation. He truly mentions that, first of all, the story of Antioch IV's death logically had to be recorded not in Armavir but in one of the Seleucid central residences. Moreover, it is known from sources that the king was not killed but died of a serious illness in Elam. He thinks that the matter concerns events of the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC: the king killed by his soldiers with the weapon in his hand was the last king of Great Armenia Yervand the Last, who, according to Movses Khorenatsi, was killed in Yervandashat during the attacks of the army of Artashes by one of his soldiers. Afterwards Artashes ordered to bury him and set up a monument to him. H.H. Manandyan supposes that Numenius tells the sad news about the death of King Yervand to the sister of the king, being mentioned only by the honorary title "Philadelphos". The body of King

<sup>694</sup> Boltunova, 1942, pp. 46-54.

Yervand was taken to Armavir. The stone found in 1927 was probably a part of the monument dedicated to him<sup>695</sup>. K.V. Trever, accepting H.H. Manandyan's criticism of A.I. Boltunova's interpretation, for her turn criticizes H.H. Manandyan (especially his opinion that the stone bearing four inscriptions was the monument dedicated to King Yervand). She supposes that the text could be a part of a poem, which tells not about Antiochus IV or Yervand the Last, but concerns the tragic death of Artashes the Conqueror, who was killed by one of his soldiers (Khorenatsi, II. 13). Considering possible the existence of some mistakes in the reading, K.V. Trever highly appreciates the historiographical and literal value of the text, mentioning that according to the historical content it is a part of a poem or tragedy of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> centuries BC, whereas in Rome historical characters appear in the works of literature only in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD<sup>696</sup> ...

Here we paid our attention mainly to the works of Y.I. Smirnov, S.Ter-Hakobyan, A.I. Boltunova, B.N. Grakov, H.H. Manandyan, G.I. Goyan and K.V. Trever. Let us also mention that the Greek inscriptions in Armavir were also referred to by many other investigators (G.Kh. Sargsyan<sup>697</sup>, S.M. Krkyasharyan<sup>698</sup>, G.A. Tiratsyan<sup>699</sup>, Zh.G. Elchibekyan<sup>700</sup> and others), but referring to the works of all of them is out of our purpose. We would like to stress once more the importance of the inscriptions found in Armavir (during last decades no attention was

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<sup>695</sup> Manandyan, 1946, pp. 25-30.

<sup>696</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 142-147.

<sup>697</sup> Sarkysyan, 1960, pp. 33-41.

<sup>698</sup> Krkyasharyan, 1970, pp. 134-139, 145-148.

<sup>699</sup> Citing the studies of Y.A. Smirnov, Kh. Habicht (Habicht, 1953, pp. 251-256) and Y.L. Rober (Rober, 1954, pp. 179-180) G.A. Tiratsyan agrees with the opinion of Kh. Habicht, according to which "a collection, anthology, which might have didactic goal and could be used in schools" was composed of lines of different tragedies (mainly of Euripides) in Armavir (HAP, 1971, pp. 912-913).

<sup>700</sup> Elichbekyan, 1979, p. 52, 63.



*Fig. 119*

paid to them) for the study of the political and cultural history of Armenia<sup>701</sup> ...

From the viewpoint of the study of the history and culture of ancient Armenia the Greek inscription of King Trdat (fig. 119) found in Garni in 1945 is valuable, and it is not accidental that it became the subject of study of many investigators<sup>702</sup>. The inscription reports:

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<sup>701</sup> As a result of that inattention must be considered disappearance of one hieroglyphic and three Greek inscriptions from Armavir and also the bad state of the preserved ones; they are near by the piles of rubbish, without preservation and we witnessed that visiting the monument recently.

<sup>702</sup> The first reports about the inscription, based on the reading of the text, were published by S. Lisitsyan (Lisitsyan, 1945; see Zamechatelnaia nakhodka, "Kommunist", 30.09. 1945). Later it became a subject of discussions in the following works: Manandyan, 1946 (a); Abrahamyan, 1947, pp. 61-72; Trever, 1949; Manandyan, 1951, pp. 9-35; Arakelyan, 1951, pp. 59-68; Trever, 1953, pp. 174-211; Moretti, 1955, pp. 46-47; Sargsyan, 1956, pp. 45-46; Yelnitzki, 1958, pp. 146-148; Bartikyan, 1965, pp. 229-234; Krkyasharyan, 1965, pp. 234-238; Feydit, 1969, pp. 184-189; Krkyasharyan, 1981, pp. 359-362; Muradyan, 1981, pp. 81-94; Krkyasharyan, 1997, p. 11, etc.

- 1) Helios Tiridates, the king
- 2) of Great Armenia, ruling
- 3) as a despot (sovereign), built for the graceful
- 4) queen an insurmountable fortress
- 5) in the 11<sup>th</sup> year of his reign...
- 6) Menneas with the permission of lord [as]
- 7) *liturgos* of the great general
- 8) showing gratitude
- 9) in the presence of the witness Mate [bought]<sup>703</sup>.

Different opinions and interpretations concerning separate words, names and conceptions of the inscription which will not be referred to here. Let us also mention that there is a disagreement about the identity of Trdat as the builder of the temple and monument (as in the case of the inscription of Aparan)...

The Greek writings of the mosaic picture in the cloak-room of the bath-house (found in 1953) of Garni have mythological content and are worth of special attention (fig. 120). Sea gods, mermaids, ichthyocentaurs (mythological creatures in the form of man, the body of horse and the lower extremities of fish), fishermen, fish, etc. are depicted on the mosaic picture. In the centre of the mosaic picture the Oceanus (the ancestor of all gods, according to the concepts of the Homeric period, and according to Hesiodos, the son of Uranus and Gaea, the brother of Chronus and three thousand river god-sons and the same quantity daughters of Oceanus; in later period conceptions he was repelled by Poseidon. The Ocean was also considered as a river surrounding the earth from which all the waters spring) and the Sea (from which the goddess Aphrodite was born) are depicted as a horned man and a woman. There is an inscription: "We worked but have got nothing" in the central part, above the Oceanus and the Sea. This remarkable passage written in iambic trimeter (which is not known in any Greek work) is spoken on behalf of the above-mentioned two principal characters, symbol-

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<sup>703</sup> The translated by S.M. Krkyasharyan (Krkyasharyan, 1981, pp. 359-362).



*Fig. 120*

izing their everlasting, tireless and disinterested work in the name of the existence of life on the Earth<sup>704</sup>. Along the upper edge line (along the northern wall) from left to right near the corresponding pictures (in the preserved parts) there are the following writings: “depth of sea”, “calmness of sea”, Glaukus (a fisherman and Argonaut, turned into sea deity by Oceanus and Tethys), father and mother of Achilles – Peleus (the king of the

<sup>704</sup> In Soviet historiography this passage was sometimes rather groundlessly cited as the evidence of class contradictions and pressure.

Myrmidons in Thessaly) and Tethys (the sea goddess), “shore of sea”. At the beginning of the right edge line, above the winged fisherman the word “Beauty” is inscribed, on the continuation there have been preserved only several letters, and a part of another name. The lower edge line is seriously damaged; on the right side only one of the nick-names of Apollo and Dionysus (which in this case probably refers to Dionysus) and the word “Desire” can be restored. The analysis of the fragments of writings and pictures along the edge line of the western wall makes possible to restore pictures and the names of Eros (god of love), Pithys (a nymph loved by Pan) and Pithos (the god of desire). In damaged places, possibly, there were the pictures and names of Aphrodite and Hymenaeus (the god of marriage), accepted in such scenes. Thus, “the mosaic picture of Garni presents a vital scene, which, according to Greek conceptions, symbolizes the beginning of life from the Ocean and the Sea, and its eternity through love and marriage”<sup>705</sup>.

On one of the damaged clay statuettes (dating back to the antique period) found during the excavations in 1971-1977, in the archeological site of Artashat, there was a two-linear Greek inscription, made before the statuette was fired. In the first line the word PHOYHNA is written, on the second – IA. It is supposed that in the first line is written the name of the owner of the statuette, in the second - the year, 11<sup>706</sup>.

Besides the big inscriptions, hieroglyphic signs and writings of separate words, written in Greek single signs on seals and ceramic fragments were found in Armavir, Artashat and Garni.

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<sup>705</sup>HAP, 1971, pp. 876-878 (section author, B.N. Arakelyan); Arakelyan, 1976, pp. 89-100 (as well as detailed analysis and the sources cited therein). B.N. Arakelyan, dating the mosaic picture back to the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century, focuses our attention upon the fact, that the mosaic’s writings have the same peculiarities as the other Greek monuments of the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> centuries in Armenia (Arakelyan, 1976, p. 98).

<sup>706</sup>Khachatryan, 1981(a), p. 169, board XXVII-3.

ΕΝΘΑ ΔΕ ΚΕΙΤΑΙ ΑΝΑΣΣΑ ΑΘΗΝΑΙΣ ΗΝ ΠΟΤΕ ΓΩ ΓΕ  
 ΗΓΑΓΟΜΗΝ ΕΥΝΟΥΝ ΠΡΟΣ ΓΑΜΟΝ ΗΜΕΤΕΡΟΝ  
 ΤΑΥΤΗΝ ΟΣ ΠΑΡΤΩΝΤΕΙΣΙΡΩΔΩ ΗΤΙΑΛΛΩ  
 ΑΝΘΕΙΧΟΙΕΡΑΥΕΩΠΑΝΤΑΙΣΕΠΟΥΡΑΝΙΟΥΣ  
 ΕΙΔΑΛΛΟΣΕΛΘΟΙΤΙΣΑΤΑΣΘΑΛΑΜΕΡΜΗΡΙΖΩΝ  
 ΤΟΥΤΟΝ ΕΧΕΙΝ ΔΥΣΝΟΥΣ ΠΑΝΤΑΣ ΥΠΟΧΡΗΝΙΟΥΣ  
 ΟΓΡΑΥΑΣΑΕΙΜΑΡΤΗΣ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΜΩΝΙΟΥΣ  
 ΖΩΣΑΝΕΡΙΣΤΕΡΓΩΝΣΥΝΓΑΜΟΝ ΗΜΕΡΙΟΝ  
 ΚΑΥΤΩ ΗΝ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΕΟΥΣ ΑΝΟΜΩΝ ΥΜΟΥ ΠΑΤΡΟΣ ΕΜΕ  
 ΜΗΤΡΟΣ ΤΑΝΤΩΝ ΗΝ ΣΛΟΥΚΙΟΥ ΘΥΓΑΤΕΡΟΣ

Fig. 121

These writings have not become subject for a special study yet<sup>707</sup>.

**The Kingdom of Armenia Minor.** During 1898-1899 one of numerous discoveries made by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt and V. Belck in Western Armenia was the inscription on the rock near the village of Vank (95 km to the north of Malatia, where the ruins of old fortress with constructions carved in rocks were preserved). It is an epitaph, consisting of 10 lines and written in elegiac verse, the paleographic study allowed to date it back to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century (fig. 121). The text was read by C. F. Lehmann-Haupt with the help of A. Momzen and F.H. von Gaertringen. The interlinear (not verse) translation of the epitaph is given below:

- 1) Here lies the queen Athenais, to whom in time
- 2) I married because of mutual attraction.

<sup>707</sup> About the seals with Greek monograms found from Artashat see Arakelyan, Khachatryan., 1983, p. 20. Ceramic fragments with Greek monograms and writings of separate words found in Armavir (according to a report of the archaeologist I. Karapetyan), Artashat and Garni, and have not been published yet. According to a report of the archeologist Khachatryan, the number of those found from Artashat reaches 30-40.

- 3) Let the passer-by who would give [her] a rose or other flower
- 4) be pleasant for all in the Heavens.
- 5) If any one comes thinking evil things
- 6) let him be punished by all gods of the underworld.
- 7) This wrote Aeymarit (Deymarit<sup>708</sup>), [the son] of the father of the same name,
- 8) for whom she was a beloved wife during her short life.
- 9) Her father had the same name of my father,
- 10) Her mother Antonia, was the daughter of Lukios<sup>709</sup>.

This Greek inscription, carved in the rock and written in elegiac verse, is not only a literal monument but also a noteworthy historical source concerning the Armenian nobility of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century<sup>710</sup>

Another Greek epitaph written in verse was found near the city of Nicople of Armenia Minor<sup>711</sup>.

About a Greek-Aramaic bilingual inscription found from the archeological site Aghjakale (Aghacha kale) of Lesser Armenia in 1900 was spoken in the previous chapter, where the translation of the Aramaic part was brought. As the Greek and Aramaic passages of the inscription do not completely coincide with each other, here we introduce the Greek section:

“Among the legal satraps there will be undying memory for Oromanes, (the son) of Arioukes, and for Arioukes, his be-

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<sup>708</sup> C. F. Lehmann-Haupt reads the name “Aeymarit”, denoting that it is not met in other sources (Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, p. 493). C.V. Trever offers to read it as “Deymarit”, mentioning the similiar name of an Armenian clergyman met in “History of Armenia” by Hovhan Mamikonyan (the 6<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries) (Trever, 1953, pp. 248-249).

<sup>709</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, pp. 488-493; cf. Trever, 1953, pp. 245-250.

<sup>710</sup> Analyzing the inscriptions’ texts and comparing them with known corresponding data, C. F. Lehmann-Haupt supposed that Athenais was the great-granddaughter of the grand duke Kotis, who ruled in Great Armenia. (Lehmann-Haupt, 190, pp. 492-493; see also Trever, 1953, pp. 248-250).

<sup>711</sup> Trever, 1953, p. 248 (cited to Cumont Fr. et Cumont E., *Studia Pontica*, t. II, Bruxelles, 1906, N 363, p. 307).

loved son, for Aranda (Andomon), as he built the luxurious walls of the beautiful settlement in a desert places<sup>712</sup>.

Greek inscriptions [of the period of the Pontic Kingdom (302/1-64 BC.)] found from the territory of Armenia Minor (the cities of Trapizon and Sebastia) are of great interest for Armenology<sup>713</sup>.

Besides the lapidary inscriptions, the Greek language was also used in the sphere of coinage in Armenia Minor, which will be referred to when speaking about coins.

**The Kingdom of Commagene**<sup>714</sup>. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century one of the most remarkable groups of monuments (fig. 122) [which had been preserved on Mt. Nemrut on the right bank of the Euphrates (do not confuse it with Nemrut rising to the north of Lake Van)] of Armenian pre-Christian culture came to be known to the scientific world. A group of monuments was built by the descendant of the Armenian family of Yervandakan, the king of Commagene Antiochus I (69-34 BC.), leaving many Greek inscriptions, which are invaluable source for the history of Armenia, especially for the study of spiritual and material culture. The sacred place of Nemrut was subjected to a systematized study in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century by German archaeologists, and German and American expeditions in the 1950's. Besides the texts discovered at the sacred site of Mt. Nemrut in

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<sup>712</sup> Lipinski, 1975, pp. 197-208.

<sup>713</sup> Olshausen, Biller, 1984, pp. 98, 101 (see sources cited therein).

Speaking about Mithradates VI Eupator, we often mention only his alliance with Tigran the Great, forgetting about his first important relationship with the Armenian reality. In 112 BC Mithradates Eupator adopted the king of Armenia Minor Antipatros who bequeathed him his Kingdom (Strabo, XII 3, 28-29, E., 1940, p. 75; Harutyunyan, 1986, p. 373). Thus, Mithradates Eupator can be regarded as the king of Armenia Minor, too.

<sup>714</sup> From the period of the united Kingdom of Tzopk and Commagene (the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC) coins only with Greek writings (which will be referred to later) have reached us. The inscriptions introduced in this subsection refer only to the Kingdom of Commagene, because Tzopk was one of the provinces of Great Armenia.



*Fig. 122*

the area of Commagene, some Greek inscriptions were also found in the capital Samosat, “Arsamea (situated) on the Euphrates” (presently Gerger or Gyargyar), “Arsamea (situated) on the Nymphaius” (presently Kyahta), from the archeological sites of Adiyama, Semsida, Karakush, Selik, Anjoz, Chaputlu, Aghach, Dolikhe, Direk kale etc. On the whole, the number of the pre-Christian inscriptions found from the area of Commagene is more than fifty<sup>715</sup>.

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<sup>715</sup> About the sacred places of Commagene and the study of Greek inscriptions see Humann, Puschtein, 1890, pp. 232-352; Jalabert, Mounterde, 1929, pp. 9-60 (more than 46 Greek inscription from the above-mentioned archeological places are gathered here: NN 1-37, 45-52, 54, 56); Goell,

The author of the majority of mentioned inscriptions is Antiochus I, who usually appears with the titles “Antiochus, the Great King, God, Impartial, Revealed (god), Romanophile and Hellenophile, Derived from the family of Mithradates Callinicus and Queen Laodicia, the Philadelphos goddess...”<sup>716</sup>. Inscriptions bear titles followed by proper reports, which refer to the worship of gods, forefathers of kings, the deification of kings and their forefathers, the founding and developing cities and constructions (especially sacred places), the establishment of new laws and orders, etc.

An immense number of the reports of Antiochus I are about his forefathers. For instance, in the 256-linear inscription of Arsamea on the Nymphaius it is said that the city was founded by Arsames (Arsham, the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC), where his father Mithradates Callinicus built a sacred place, which was later embellished by him<sup>717</sup>. From the inscriptions<sup>718</sup> of the sacred places

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1961, pp. 390-405; Dörner, Goell, 1963; Tiratsyan, 1956, pp. 69-74; Sargsyan, 1966, pp. 28-33; Margaryan, 1992, (as well as source cited therein).

<sup>716</sup> It is strange that the coins of a king having such titles are inscribed in an incomparably plain way as “of King Antiochus”.

<sup>717</sup> This inscription is mainly about the establishment of the worship of the king and his father, the establishment of laws and orders connected with it, and has a number of parallels with the texts of the same meaning found from Commagene and other sacred places (the comparative publication of the inscription by F.K. Dörner see Dörner, Goell, 1963, pp. 36-59).

<sup>718</sup> Two similar complexes are situated on the eastern and western sides of Mt. Nemrut. In both of them the principal parts are five man-like statues (in sitting position), with the supreme god Oromazdes-Zeus-Aramazd (9 m) in the centre, and mother-goddess, Artagnes-Heracles-Vahagn, Mihr-Apollo-Helios-Hermes and Antiochus I (all 8 m) on each side. There is an immense inscription is carved on the back of the statues. It is devoted to the establishment of the worship of king and his father, proclamation as holydays the days of their birth and enthronement, and the establishment of a number of new laws and rules. On each side there were 30 stone slabs (in two rows, 3 m), on which the forefathers of the king (fifteen from the father’s side and fifteen from the mother’s side) were carved in (some of them are completely destroyed, others are partially or fully preserved). On the back side

of Nemrut we learn that his father descended from Yervandakan family. In the preserved incomplete line of names of the forefathers are mentioned the satrap of Armenia Aroandes (Yervand, and also Orontas in the “Anabasis” of Xenophon, the 5<sup>th</sup> -4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC), who was the son-in-law of the Achaemenid king Artaxerxes Mnemon (405-359 BC), and another Aroandes (Yervand), who, in contrast to the previous one, had the title “king”<sup>719</sup>, as well as Sames and Arsames (Arsham), the first kings of the united Kingdom of Tzopk and Commagene, who ruled during the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC<sup>720</sup>. Let us also add that Antiochus I wore the Armenian (Tigranyan) crown, which before the fall of the kingdom (72 AD) had symbolized the Armenian statehood on the Commagenian coins (see the section about coins). We suppose what has already been said is enough for imagining the importance of the study of Commagenian monuments for Armenology<sup>721</sup> ...

The importance of the study of Commagene’s history for us can be emphasized once more by two boundary stones (kept in the museum of Adiyaman; the photo of one of them see fig. 74) with inscriptions found recently there. God Hayk-Orion is mentioned in the texts of those inscriptions<sup>722</sup> ...

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of each stone slab is an inscription (presenting the depicted forefather), which begins with the above-mentioned titles. It is interesting that on one of the slabs of the sacred place the king’s future-telling calendar is recorded with the depiction of the position of heavenly bodies...

<sup>719</sup> Most probably, this is King Yervand, who regained independence of Armenia after the battle at Gaugamela (HAP, 1971, pp. 504-505, section author, G.A. Tiratsyan).

<sup>720</sup> Humann, Puschtein, 1890, pp. 308-309; Tiratsyan, 1956, pp. 70-74; Sargsyan, 1966, pp. 30-32.

<sup>721</sup> In spite of this, up to now only separate fragments of the Commagenian texts have been translated into Armenian and the full history of the Armenian Kingdom of Commagene has not been written by any specialist in Armenology...

<sup>722</sup> Blaylock, French, Summers, 1990, pp. 119-122.

It is necessary to mention two Greek sculptures preserved in the stone-work of the northern wall of the Etchmiadzin's Cathedral. On the first of them two persons and their names are carved in, Tekli and Paul (ΘΕΚΛΑ, ΠΑΥΛΟΣ), on the other - there are an equiside cross in a circle and two birds (pigeon?) on both sides, a Greek prayer and the names ΔΑΝΙΗΛ, ΤΙΠΕΡ, ΓΑΡΙΚΙΝΙΣ. The investigators date these sculptures back to the 4<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>723</sup>, but it is not possible to make it more precise whether they were carved in before or after the invention of St. Mesrop Mashtots...



Fig. 123

***The Armenian coins with Greek writings.*** One of the most important spheres where the Greek language was used in the Armenian Highland was currency. Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC coins had been minted in the Armenian Highland, the majority of which had Greek writings on them. Coins with Greek writings were struck by the kings of both Great Armenia and Armenia Minor, as well as Tzopk and Commagene<sup>724</sup>. Among the legends of the coins four groups of notes can be singled out: names, titles, dates, monograms<sup>725</sup>.

<sup>723</sup> Arakelyan, 1949, pp. 41-42.

<sup>724</sup> There are coins bearing Greek letters of the satrap of Armenia Orontas-Yervand, and coins with Greek and Aramaic letters of Tiribaz, another satrap of Armenia of the Achaemenid period. These coins were not struck in Armenia, but in Mysia and Cilicia correspondingly, during the reign of the above-mentioned satraps (see Musheghyan, 1983, pp. 16-25).

<sup>725</sup> Movsisyan, 2003 (b), 149-163 (and sources cited therein).



*Fig. 124 Some of the coins of Tigran the Great and Artavazd II with Greek writings*

The Armenian coins were dated also in Greek – according to the numbers equivalent to the letters. In the presently known writings of the coins at least three principles of dating were used:

a) according to the Seleucid calendar, the beginning of which is dated back to 312 BC (the silver coins of Tigran II struck in Damascus have the following dates: AMZ=241, BMZ=242, ΓMZ=243, which correspond to 71-69 BC, when the Armenian king ruled also in the former Seleucids lands)<sup>726</sup>. The months of the Seleucid calendar were recorded in Armavir.

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<sup>726</sup> Musheghyan, 1987, pp. 105-124; Nercessian, 2000 (a), pp. 101-102; Nercessian, 2000, pp. 25, 48-49 (as well as sources cited therein).

b) according to the Phoenician calendar, the beginning of which is 111 BC. (a number of Tigran II's coins are dated back from 34 (ΔΛ) to 39(ΘΛ); thus we get 77-72 BC)<sup>727</sup>.

MONOGRAMS						
a	Α	Δ	Θ	Η	Ι	ΕΚ
b	Σ	Π	Α	Φ	Ρ	Τ
c	+	∩	⊕	∇	⊗	*

*Fig. 125*

c) Accepting the beginning of the king's reign as the basis for chronology (e.g. the years S (6) and Z (7) of Artavazd II's coins)<sup>728</sup>.

There is an opinion that the first ten letters of the Greek alphabet, appearing as monograms on the coins, are the notes of months when they were struck; nevertheless, not all the investigators agree with this opinion<sup>729</sup>.

The monograms on the Armenian coins can be divided into three groups (fig. 125):

a) Letters of Greek alphabet (some of which are notes of chronology).

b) Ligatures created on the basis of Greek letters (e.g. noting of the capitals Artashat and Tigranakert by ligatures composed of Greek letters ΠΤΕ and ΤΡΡ see fig. 125-b, the first two signs of the line "b"), not all of them were semantically interpreted.

c) Pictographs that are not connected with any alphabet (fig. 125-c) and still remain uninterpreted.

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There is much annalistic information about wide use of Greek writing and literature in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia.

<sup>727</sup> Ibid.

<sup>728</sup> Bedoukian, 1978, p. 26; Musheghyan, 1983, p. 56.

<sup>729</sup> Misheghyan, 1983, p. 46; Musheghyan, 1987, pp. 105-124; Nercessian, 2000 (a), p. 102; Nercessian, 2000, pp. 25, 48-49.

Summing up inscriptions found in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia we can suggest the following group classification:

- 1) Royal inscriptions devoted to the worship of gods,
- 2) Inscriptions devoted to the kings' forefathers,
- 3) Inscriptions about the royal power and the king's deification,
- 4) Royal records about foundation and accomplishment of cities and towns (especially sacred places),
- 5) Inscriptions establishing new laws and orders,
- 6) Royal beneficent inscriptions,
- 7) Legends on royal coins,
- 8) Records of kings' correspondence,
- 9) Texts of cult nature,
- 10) Chronological-calendar inscriptions,
- 11) Dedicatory inscriptions,
- 12) Parts of didactic poems (tragedies?),
- 13) Parts of historical poems (tragedies?),
- 14) Epitaphs (among them elegiac poems),
- 15) Monograms.

#### IV-6. THE USE OF THE SYRIAC LANGUAGE AND ALPHABET IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA

Syriac is one of the dialects of the eastern Aramaic languages, which beginning from the 2<sup>nd</sup> c. BC became a literary language. The initial Syriac alphabet (“estrangelo”) is one of the branches of the Aramaic alphabet and the earliest preserved inscriptions in that alphabet are dated back to the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. Like Aramaic alphabet, it is composed of 22 consonants (the use of vowels began from the 7<sup>th</sup> century AD), which had also numerical meaning (see the early Syriac alphabet in the Appendix). There difference between the names of the Syriac letters and those of the Aramaic (aleph-alaph, gimel-gamal, dalet-dalat/d,

lamed-lamad, mem-mim, etc.) is not great. The direction of the writing was from right to left.

In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, in relation to the nature of Jesus Christ, the Syriac Church divided and as a result two versions of the Syriac alphabet - Nestorian (eastern) and Jacobite (western) - appeared. The literature in the Syriac language and alphabet, mainly Christian, flourished in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries<sup>730</sup>.

Edessa (Urha, presently Urfa), which, beginning from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC till the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD, was the capital city of the Osroyene Kingdom and had Syrian-Armenian population [the kings of which had the honorary title Abgar (“powerful”)], starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> century became one of the most important world centers of Christianity. During the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries a number of books (among them the Holy Bible) were translated into Syriac (this translation is known as “Peshitta”), also works of apocryphal and didactic nature were created (one of them was the legend about Akhikar the Wise written still in the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC in old Aramaic and in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD it was translated from Syriac into Armenian). In the 3<sup>rd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries rich Syriac literature was created, the prominent representatives of which were Bar-Daisan (the 2<sup>nd</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> cc., according to Movses Khorenatsi, Bardatsan preached unsuccessfully in Armenia and then translated the Armenian temple history into Syriac and Greek in the city of Ani, the main centre of worship of the god Aramazd), Ephrem the Syrian (the 4<sup>th</sup> century), and others.

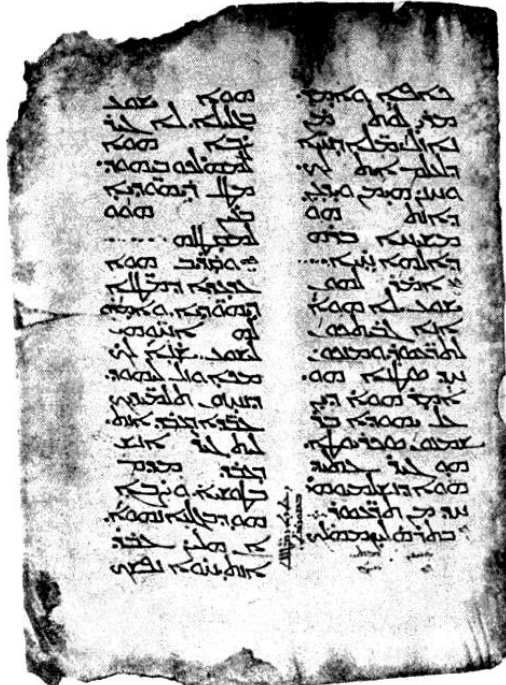
After the proclamation of Christianity as the state religion in Armenia Greek and Syriac with their alphabetical systems became the languages of the state correspondence, spiritual preaching and teaching by order of King Tiridates III. During that period Syriac widely spread in Armenia, as it is attested by the

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<sup>730</sup> About Syrian and Syriac alphabets see Jensen, 1958, pp. 295-301; Brockelmann, 1962, pp. 4-12, 150-184; Tzereteli, 1979, pp. 10-19, 155-157; WWS, pp. 499-514 (section author Peter T. Daniels), etc.



*Fig. 126 A Syriac inscription (IV-Vcc.) from Edessa*



*Fig. 127 A fragment of the New Testament's Syrian written parchment manuscript (Kharberd, 411-435)*

Armenian authors and the study of the Armenian-Syriac historical-cultural and literary relations<sup>731</sup>, as well as the vocabulary borrowed from the Syriac by the Armenian language<sup>732</sup>. Edessa became also one of the most important Armenian educational centers.

The earliest Syriac texts written in Syriac letters which have reached us were found in Edessa and its neighbouring areas [the grave stone of one of the members of king Manu's family (the Abgarian dynasty), on which an inscription is engraved dating back to 73 AD, the stele erected in honor of the princess, the gravestone of the queen Amash-Shamsha, the wife of Shardu, the ruler of the same dynasty, dating back to about the same period, the trade contract written on parchment dating back to 243 AD] and Samosat (the letter of Mar Bar-Serapion, which is an important monument of Syriac pre-Christian literature)<sup>733</sup>.

Despite the great number of bibliographical material, it should be mentioned that till now the Syriac texts written in Syriac letters and dating back to pre-Mashtotsian period have been discovered only in the southwestern outskirts of the Armenian Highland and neighbouring areas (Samosat, Edessa and surrounding places).

#### IV-7. THE USE OF THE PERSIAN LANGUAGE AND SCRIPT IN PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA

The Persian language belongs to the southwestern branch of the Iranian group of the Indo-European linguistic family. It passed through three stages of development with different alphabetical system during each of them.

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<sup>731</sup> Melkonyan, 1970, pp. 72-197.

<sup>732</sup> Jahukyan, 1987, pp. 474-485.

<sup>733</sup> Tzereteli, 1979, pp. 10-11, 155-157 (and cited literature).

- a. Old Persian (6<sup>th</sup>-4<sup>th</sup> centuries BC), which was written in Achaemenid or Old Persian cuneiforms<sup>734</sup>,
- b. Middle Persian or Pahlavi (4<sup>th</sup> century BC – 10<sup>th</sup> century AD), for which the Aramaic alphabet (Pahlavi script) was adjusted<sup>735</sup>,
- c. New Persian (beginning from the 10<sup>th</sup> century AD), literature created using it is in Arabic letters.

Although it is possible to suppose that in the period of the Achaemenid conquest the Achaemenid or Old Persian cuneiforms might be used in Armenia (especially in the sphere of the state correspondence), anyhow, we do not have any evidence of the use of that writing system. Neither the trilingual inscriptions made by the Achaemenid king Xerxes, nor information of Diodorus of Sicily serve as a basis for coming to such a conclusion.

We do not have any material evidence about the use of the Middle Persian or Pahlavi language and alphabet in Armenia. The only object with Persian writing that is related to Armenia and dates back to pre-Mashtotsian period is a Parthian seal, which was sent from Yerevan to the State Hermitage (where it remains up to now); however, the site of its discovery is unknown. Nevertheless, annalistical sources witness about the use of the Persian language in the 4<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries, before the invention of the Armenian alphabet by Mashtots, which is dated to the period following the division of Armenia.

Manichean alphabet also came into use on the basis of the Aramaic alphabet (in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century), but we have neither bibliographical nor archeological facts concerning its use in Armenia. Thus, the viewpoint of the use of Manichean alphabet in Armenia<sup>736</sup>, moreover, its representation as “Danielian” alphabet and

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<sup>734</sup> Kent, 1953; Oranski, 1960, pp. 95-135, 406-408; Jensen, 1958, pp. 95-106; Diringer, 1962, pp. 111-112; WWS, pp. 134-138 (section author David D. Testen), etc.

<sup>735</sup> Jensen, 1958, pp. 405-411; Oranski, 1960, pp. 154-211, 412-416; WWS, pp. 515-530.

<sup>736</sup> Russel, 1994, pp. 320-333.

derivation of some of the Mashtotsian letter-forms from Manichean alphabet is completely groundless.

\* \* \*

The problem of the Armenian literary culture in foreign scripts (Aramaic, Greek, Syriac, Persian) has often been discussed in Armenology. Without detailing the problem and citing the facts and the expressed opinions<sup>737</sup> on that matter, let us only mention that although theoretically the existence of the Armenian writing system in foreign scripts in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia is quite possible, presently we do not have any material evidence about it.

Summing up the whole material of this chapter we see that in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia during almost two thousand years seven foreign languages with their writing systems were being borrowed and used parallel to the local hieroglyphic system (beginning from 15<sup>th</sup> century BC till the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD). This is an eloquent evidence of Armenians' love and respect towards literature (the striking evidence of which is the worship of Tir, the god of culture, science and art), as well as the explanations of the existence of developed writing thought in the period of origination of Mashtots's alphabet...

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<sup>737</sup> See Acharyan, 1984, pp. 460-673 (the author considers groundless the viewpoints on the Armenian literary culture in foreign scripts); Abrahamyan, 1982, pp. 81-93 (the author thinks that in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia communication with external world was carried out in foreign languages, but for internal affairs the Armenian language was used; in both cases foreign scripts were used).

**CHAPTER V.**  
**WRITTEN MONUMENTS LEFT IN**  
**PRE-CHRISTIAN ARMENIA BY FOREIGNERS**

Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC different objects and sculptures written in foreign languages and writings, the authors of which were not natives, appeared in the Armenian Highland<sup>738</sup>. Naturally, they do not constitute part of Armenian culture and literature. Nevertheless, having the aim to introduce the whole variety of the written monuments that existed in pre-Christian Armenia, we shall refer to them in this work, without detailing and evaluation. Both the original texts existing in sole examples and the inscription groups in the same writing and languages will be introduced below.

*Information about the pictographic, Sumerian and Old Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions on the slopes of Great Masis.* As distinct from the whole introduced material, here we shall refer not inscriptions proper, but information about them. The question is about pictographic, Sumerian and Old Babylonian cuneiform inscriptions engraved on one of the rocks on the slopes of Great Masis (from the side of Little Masis), which were noticed and copied by the Russian colonel Alexander Koor during the military events of 1915. The latter was a specialist in linguistics and possessed vast knowledge about the Old Mesopotamian civilizations. After the War being persecuted by Bolsheviks he eventually emigrated to the USA. He handed in his notes with interpretations and translations to the manager of “Bureau of Biblical studies” F.V. Kinnaman, who published them in 1946 in the journal “Biblical Archaeological Digest” edited by him<sup>739</sup>.

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<sup>738</sup> For the geography of their spreading see the Map 4.

<sup>739</sup> Kinnaman, 1946, pp. 46-49. Let us mention with gratitude, that it was Lyudvig Khachatryan that attracted our attention to the information; the cited article (that does not exist in the libraries of Armenia) was copied (at New-York’s Public Library) and sent to us by the Armenian Armenologist from Diaspora, Dr. Vardan Matteosyan.

Unfortunately, there is no photo or drawing of any inscription in the publication. F.V. Kinnaman believes that they had the same content, and the primary pictograph<sup>740</sup> was translated first into Sumerian and then - Old Babylonian. Reading a number of words and expressions with the help of Sumerian and Old Babylonian cuneiforms [“arise” or “the seed of waters (flood)”, “word of god”, or “by god’s word”, “to rest (on the summit of) mountains”, “to the flooded country”, “the flood, the night fell”), Al. Koor offers to restore the following: “Deserted by god, they, sailing through waters, rested on the mountains, when the night and the waters (flood) fell on the earth”<sup>741</sup>. Later N.M. Kammings offered to read the same writings in the following way: “God filled the waters with the seeds of the word ... the waters, coming from heavens, filled (covered) the earth ... his sons rested on the mountain (or on the summit)”<sup>742</sup> ...

With the help of the map drawn by colonel Al. Koor, in 1969 E. Kammings and L.B. Hyuit found one of the archeological sites described by him. There were some ruins of old, round buildings with attached square rooms<sup>743</sup>, which are characteristic to the EBA (from the second half of the 4<sup>th</sup> millennium to the 24<sup>th</sup> century BC). We can only hope that soon there will be more precise and trustworthy information about these inscriptions and that will help to study them in details.

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<sup>740</sup> By saying “pictograph” we mean not the Sumerian hieroglyphs but simple picture-writing, though rich with ideographs but without phonograms. In other words, the history of the Flood should be depicted by means of ideograms that can be “read” and understood by each person independent on his/her mother language.

<sup>741</sup> Kinnaman, 1946, pp. 48-49.

<sup>742</sup> Kammings, 2001, pp. 63-70.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 202-206. In the same book (p. 68-69 and p. 204-205) is a reference to the letter (or report) (November 2, 1945) of the director of the Oriental Institute of the Chicago State University John William addressed to Benjamin Franklin Allen, about an immense material concerning ancient inscriptions found on the slopes of Mount Ararat, for the study of which a highly-qualified expedition had been needed.



*Fig. 128*

*The stele of Naram-Suen in the area of Diarbekir.* The oldest inscription left by foreigners in the Armenian Highland relates to an important event in the history of Armenia of the 23<sup>rd</sup> century BC, when the king of Akkad, Naram-Suen (Naram-Sin) invaded the Armenian Highland. A number of original texts found from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor witness about the war that he waged against the country of Arman(i/um)<sup>744</sup>, and the

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<sup>744</sup> For the first substantiations of the exact location of the country of Arman(i/um) in Armenia see Garanfilean, 1929, pp. 287-288; Rigg, 1937, pp. 416-418. For the further works done in this direction see Matteosean,

stele with Naram-Suen's inscription found from the archeological site of Pir-Husein near Diarbekir (ig. 128) is quite truly considered as a material evidence of it. From four half-preserved columns of the inscription follows:

“I. Divine Naram-Suen, the mighty. (*Lacuna*)

II, 1-6) Tha god Enki (Haya, Ea) [ga]v[e him no] rival in the four quarters. (*Lacuna*)

II, 1' - III, 4) He *an[nihilated ...]* and heaped up a burial mound.

III, 5-12) As for the one who removes this inscription, may the goddess Inanna (Ishtar) [and the gods ... and ...] (*Lacuna*)

III, 1' - IV, 4) tear out [his foundations] and destroy his progeny.

IV, 5-8) [May they not gr]ant [him] a ma[le] (heir) or offspring.

IV, 9-11) [May he not walk before his (personal) deity]. (*Lacuna*)<sup>745</sup>.

***The oldest Hurrian inscriptions from Urkeš.*** The oldest Hurrian inscription, written in Akkadian cuneiform (erected between the 23<sup>rd</sup>-21<sup>st</sup> centuries BC), known up till now is connected with the city of Urkeš (in Armenian Mesopotamia), which was situated on the southern slops of the Masius/Masion mountains, near today's Turkish-Syrian border, to the south from the city of Mardin (the archeological site of Mozan). It is related to the building of the temple devoted to the worship of the underworld's god Nergal and, like such kind of inscriptions, ends in the curse formula expected from gods addressed to the destroyers of the building:

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1994, pp. 255-268; Movsisyan, 2005, pp. 32-43, 51-55 (as well as sources cited therein).

<sup>745</sup> Barton, 1929, pp. 140-141 (as well as references of the first publications of the original text); for the circumstances under which the stele was discovered and characterizing details see Naab, Unger, 1934, pp. 5-48, table I-IV. The inscription was published several times.

“Tišari<sup>746</sup> is the king of Urkeš. He built the temple of Nergal, let that temple be preserved by Lubadaga. Whoever destroys it, let him be destroyed by Lubadaga, let An not hear his prayers, whoever really destroys it, let him <sup>d</sup>NIN.NA.GAR<sup>ki</sup>, let Šimige and Tešub Gods curse him many times”<sup>747</sup>.

From the standpoint of the study of Armenia’s history the inscription has double importance. First of all it is an important evidence of the spiritual-ritual situation in south-western regions of Armenia during the last centuries of the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC.

During recent years three copies of the inscription were found (today two of them are kept in Louver, the third – in the New-York’s Metropolitan Museum)<sup>748</sup>.

During the excavations of the same archeological site several seals, with another king’s signature (“Tupkish, the king of Urkish”) were found<sup>749</sup>.

The above-mentioned inscriptions are the oldest Hurrian original texts known till now.

***A sword from Diarbekir having an old Assyrian writing on it.*** A 1, 09 m. long bronze sword in the centre of which there is an old Assyrian cuneiform inscription (“To lord of Khubshalum<sup>750</sup>, its sovereign Luluanum, the son of Azizum, gave a sword of 12 mina<sup>751</sup> weight as a present for his life and

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<sup>746</sup> The name was read Tishari, but recently it has been reviewed, and the variant “Tishatal” was considered more acceptable (Wilhelm, 1998, pp. 120-121).

<sup>747</sup> Diakonoff, 1967, pp. 443-445; Diakonoff, 1971, p. 110; Wilhelm, 1982, pp. 15-16; Wilhelm, 1998, pp. 119-120.

<sup>748</sup> Ivanov, 2002, p. 92 (as well as sources cited therein).

<sup>749</sup> Ibid.

<sup>750</sup> It is also possible to read the name of the country as “Khuteshalum”. According to the publisher, the lord of Khuteshalum (or Bel) should be identified with Nergal-Khubshal, known from the library of Ashurbanapal, who is considered to be a God of the Underworld.

<sup>751</sup> 12 minas are equal to 6 kilos; being decomposed during centuries, now it weights about 5 kilos (Güterbock, 1965, pp. 197).

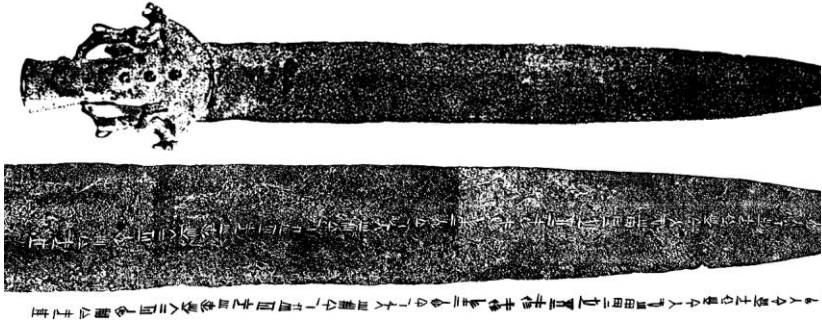


Fig. 129

the life of his son<sup>752</sup>) dated to the 19<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries BC was found in the district of Diarbekir (fig. 129). Now it is kept in one of the private collections of Europe.

This bronze sword with cuneiform inscription, which was a unique finding of that time, may throw light on some unsolved questions of the history of the 19<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> centuries BC of Armenia (especially of its south-western regions)<sup>753</sup>.

**Old Babylonian seals bearing cuneiform inscriptions.** In 1981 publishing the inscription on the cornelian cylindrical seal with Egyptian hieroglyphs (found during the excavations in Metzamor), B.B. Piotrovski put in the scientific circulation an old Babylonian seal (18<sup>th</sup>-17<sup>th</sup> centuries BC) found in the region of Nakhijevan, the photo of which was given to him by a famous archaeologist A.A. Iessen (fig. 130). On the seal there is a pic-

<sup>752</sup> Güterbock, 1965, pp. 197-198, table XIII-XV.

<sup>753</sup> Particularly, interesting information may be obtained from the analysis of proper nouns. The name Khubshal(um) or Khuteshal(um), as the publisher mentions (Güterbock, 1965, p. 197), apparently, reminds us of the land-name Apishalum, which was situated in the western regions of the Armenian Highland [for the information about Apishal see Gelb, 1938, pp. 70-72 (and sources cited therein)]. Finally, if it were possible to show that Luluan(um) was a native, the sword with a writing could be considered one of the original texts left by the Armenian natives written in foreign languages and letters.



Fig. 130

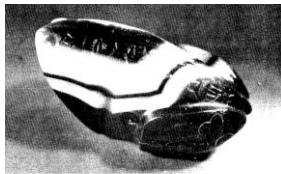


Fig. 131

ture of a man sacrificing a kid to a God, near whom is a badly damaged cuneiform inscription<sup>754</sup>.

Recently another seal was also found in the territory of the Republic of Armenia. Judging from the well-preserved signs, it should be dated to the Old Babylonian period. Today it is being prepared for the publication by F. Ter-Martirosov.

***The frog-weight found in Metzamor.*** Among the archeological objects dated to the first half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC is the frog-weight found from Metzamor. There are the names of the Kassite kings of Babylon on it (see fig. 131). It is made of agate and has a brief inscription in cuneiforms: “1 shekel: of Ulam-Buriash, the son of Burna-Buriash”<sup>755</sup>.

The Kassite dynasty ruled during the 16<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> centuries BC in Babylon. Before that, in the 18<sup>th</sup> century BC the Kassites had invaded into Babylon from the south-western regions of the Armenian Highland; a number of facts show that the motherland of the Kassites was the south (or the south-west) of the Armeni-

<sup>754</sup> Khanzadyan, Piotrovski, 1984, p. 65; Piliposyan, 1998, p. 54, table 50-1.

<sup>755</sup> Khanzadyan, Sarkisyan, Diakonoff, 1983, pp. 113-122.

an Highland, from where their domains began<sup>756</sup>. Possibly this is the reason of close relationship between the Armenian Highland and Kassite Babylon in the 16<sup>th</sup>-13<sup>th</sup> century BC, separate manifestation of which are found in archeological monuments<sup>757</sup> ...

**Objects bearing Egyptian hieroglyphs.** Objects with Egyptian hieroglyphs constitute an interesting group among the objects with foreign writings found from Armenia. Until now five seals and two beads with Egyptian hieroglyphs have been found in Armenia. The oldest is a cylindrical seal made of serdolic stone, having Egyptian hieroglyphs on it. It was found during the excavations in Metzamor in 1981. It has the name of King Kurigalzu I of the Kassite dynasty, who reigned in the 15<sup>th</sup> century BC. During the Kassite period Babylon had also the name “the Great Sangar” which is mentioned in the writing on the seal: “Kurigalzu, the leader of the country of Great Sangar”<sup>758</sup>.

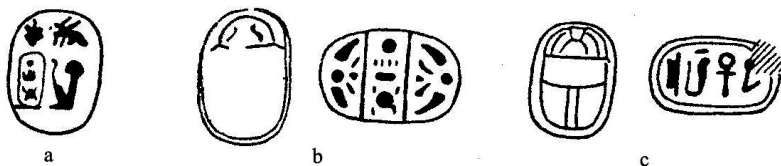


Fig. 132

Other four seals (found in Van, Ani, Armavir and Lori) are beetle-form. The beetle-form seals found in Van and Armavir bear the throne-name “Menheperia” of Tutmos III (the 16<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> cent. BC), the pharaoh of the Egyptian XVIII dynasty. The seals with this throne-name, which possibly had some symbolic meaning, had been in use before the 25<sup>th</sup> and 26<sup>th</sup> dynasties (the 8<sup>th</sup>-6<sup>th</sup>

<sup>756</sup> Our initial observations about this were published in mass media (see Movsisyan, 1995; Movsisyan, 1996 (d)).

<sup>757</sup> Compare Piliposyan, 1998, pp. 101-102.

<sup>758</sup> The seal was found by E.V. Khanzadyan, B.B. Piotrovski read the inscription with the help of O.D. Berlev (Khanzadyan, Piotrovski, 1984, pp. 59-65; Piliposyan, 1998, pp. 54-56, table 50-2).

centuries BC)<sup>759</sup>. According to B.B. Piotrovski both the three beetle-form seals (fig. 132, except the one found from Lori) and the two beads (found in Karmir Blur) should be dated back to the period of the Kingdom of Van<sup>760</sup>. According to S.H. Devejyan, one of the three beetle-like seals found from the fortress of Lori has one Egyptian hieroglyphic sign on it (though hieroglyphic sign is not specified)<sup>761</sup>.

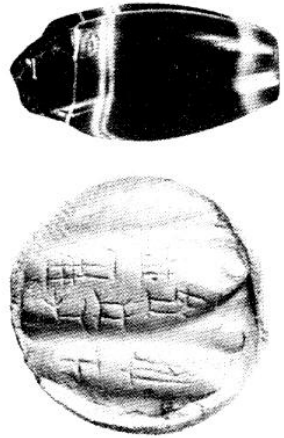


Fig. 133

***The inscriptions of the Assyrian kings found in Armenia.*** The written monuments of the kings of Assyria are noteworthy among the original texts left by foreigners in pre-Christian Armenia. These monuments are an important source of the history of the Armenian Highland of the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium and the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC.

An agate bean, found in one of the tombs of Khojallu, has an Assyrian inscription on it: “The palace of Adad-Nerari, the lord of universe” (fig. 133). There were several kings with the name of Adad-Nerari in Assyria. The material found from this tomb of Khojallu is dated back to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC, but judging from the epigraphic peculiarities of the cuneiform inscription it is a product of the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC, so, it should be referred to King Adad-Nerari I, who reigned during that period. When and how it reached Artsakh is not known;

<sup>759</sup> Piotrovski, 1958, pp. 20-22.

<sup>760</sup> Ibid., pp. 20-22; KB-1, p. 84; KB-3, p. 54.

<sup>761</sup> Devejyan, 1998, p. 3.

anyway, the tomb is dated back to the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC.<sup>762</sup>

Tiglatpalasar I's (1115-1077 BC.) inscriptions found in the area of Assyria inform about his invasions into the Armenian Highland<sup>763</sup>. These are proved also by the inscriptions preserved in the area of "Tunnel of Tigris"<sup>764</sup> and Manazkert. The inscription of "Tunnel of Tigris" reads the following:

"With the help of the great gods Ashur, Shamash and Adad, my lords, I, King Tukultiapal-Esharra of Assyria, the son of King Ashurreshish of Assyria, who is the son of King Mutakil-Nusku of Assyria, the conqueror of the West from the Great Sea and the Sea of Nairi, campaigned to Nairi for the third time"<sup>765</sup>.

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<sup>762</sup> Meščaninov, Weidner, 1931-1932, pp. 266-268; Meščaninov, 1933, pp. 52-53; Kunsharev, 1970, pp. 114-115; ABSHU, N 36. The invasions of the kings of Assyria did not reach the area of Artsakh, consequently, the object having letters on it, should have appeared there in another way.

<sup>763</sup> About Tiglatpalasar I's invasions into the Armenian Highlands see Adontz, 1972, pp. 54-66; Piotrovski, 1959, pp. 44-46; Harutyunyan, 1970, pp. 29-52.

<sup>764</sup> A certain part of Subnat (presently Zebene-su), the left tributary of the upper Tigris, flows by the lower part of the rock. The inhabitants of Mesopotamia considered the place, where the tributary flows out, that is the "Tunnel of Tigris", as the source of the sacred river Tigris; that is why reaching there was a courageous deed having almost worship significance for Mesopotamian heroes. Five inscriptions (the drawing of the two see fig. 134) of the Assyrian kings Tiglatpalasar I and Salmanasar III are carved on the rock near the exit of the "Tunnel of Tigris". At first two badly preserved inscriptions had been attributed to Tukulti-Ninurta II and Ashurnasirapal II, but later the identity of their author was corrected [Schrader, 1885, pp. 3-31; Santalchean, 1901, pp. 106-108, 131, 151-152; specification by Lehmann-Haupt, 1907, pp. 16-18, 31-44; Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, pp. 430-462 (in the cited works Salmanasar III) (according to the dating of the previous period) is considered to be Salmanasar II); ABSHU, NN 16, 32, 33].

<sup>765</sup> Schrader, 1885, pp. 7-8, 27; Santalchean, 1901, pp. 106-107; Lehmann-Haupt, 1907, pp. 16-18; ABSHU, N 16.



from Tummi to Daian, the conqueror of the country Khabkhi up to the Upper Sea”<sup>766</sup>.

The next king of Assyria, whose inscription was found in the Armenian Highland, was Ashurnasirapal II (884/3-859 BC). The inscriptions of this king and his successor, King Salmanasar III (859-824) have been carved on a monument discovered in Karkh (Kurkh)<sup>767</sup>. Ashurnasirapal II tells about his invasions into the south-western regions of the Armenian Highland in 879 BC., and Salmanasar III tells about invasions into the southern regions of the Armenian Highland during the first years of his reign<sup>768</sup>.

The next four inscriptions<sup>769</sup> of the “Tunnel of Tigris” were carved by order of Salmanasar III. The two badly preserved inscriptions read only the beginning of the writing about the god’s goodwill towards the king, his titles and some fragments telling about his invasions from east to west. In the other two inscriptions (consisting of 27 and 17 lines), besides the beginning of the writing about god’s goodwill and titles, interesting information is given about the military-political situation in Armenia of that time<sup>770</sup>.

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<sup>766</sup> Santalchean, 1901, p. 106 (the site near Manazkert where the inscriptions were found is called “Kochanlu” here, in other works it is called Yunjalu); Lehmann-Haupt, 1907, pp. 15-16; Adontz, 1972, pp. 59-60; ABSHU, N 17.

<sup>767</sup> Karkh (Kurkh) is a place on the right bank of Tigris, about 30 km (about 20 English miles) to the south-east from Diarbekir, which corresponds to the country Tushkhan in the cuneiform sources (Harutyunyan, 1985, pp. 191-192). The recorded stone found from here still in the 19<sup>th</sup> century was taken to the British Museum (London); in special literature it generally appears by the name of “Stone of Tushkhan or Karkh”. It had several publications (see for example Santalchean, 1901, pp. 140-143; ABSHU, N 26 and 27).

<sup>768</sup> See the detailed analysis of the direction of these invasions in Adontz, 1972, pp. 70-76; Piotrovski, 1959, pp. 52-60; Arutyunyan, 1970, pp. 66-99.

<sup>769</sup> Schrader, 1885, pp. 9-31; Santalchean, 1901, pp. 108, 131, 151-152; specification made by Lehmann-Haupt, 1907, pp. 31-44; Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, pp. 430-462; ABSHU, NN 32, 33).

<sup>770</sup> Schrader, 1885, pp. 13, 18, 28, 19; Santalchean, 1901, pp. 108, 131; Lehmann-Haupt, 1907, pp. 31-38; ABSHU, N 32-33.



Fig. 135

Another inscription of Salmanasar III was discovered in Kenk, in the Armenian Highland. It tells about the invasions of the Assyrian king into the Armenian Highland during the third and fourth years of his reign (the drawing of the inscription see fig. 135). This inscription contains data known from any other inscription of the same king<sup>771</sup>.

The last Assyrian king who left an inscription in pre-Christian Armenia was Sinaherb (Senekerim) (705-681 BC.), whose inscription is on Mount Djudi<sup>772</sup>. It is dated back to the

<sup>771</sup> Kenk (Kenk Gorge or Kenk Boghazi) is situated on the western bank of the Euphrates, about 60 km to the north-east from Ayntap (Gaziantep). The portrait of the king and the inscription are carved on the cliff, about 50 m higher of the river (Taşyürek, 1979, pp. 47-50, table XV-XVI, fig. 1).

<sup>772</sup> Mt. Judi is situated in the area of the Korduk Mountains and is known as Nibur in the cuneiform inscriptions (see Hmayakyan, 1992, pp. 125-131 and sources cited therein). In some legends which can also be found in the Koran (11, 38-46) it is considered the mountain of salvation after the Flood.

fifth year of the king's reign (701 BC.)<sup>773</sup>. According to it the king of Assyria invaded into the area of the settlements of Tumurra, Sharim, Khalbuda, Kipsha, Ezama, Kua and Kana near the border of the region of Kutmukhu (house of Kadmea), which "were situated in the heights of Mount Nibur like nests of eagles" and in old times during the reign of the king's forefathers "were powerful and proud and the horror of domination had been alien to them". After heavy invasion (which, according to the inscription, ended with the Assyrians' victory) the army of the king moved in the direction of the settlement Ukku of the neighbouring country of Dayae, occupied it together with other 33 settlements, fired, destroyed and plundered. Then is mentioned erection of a monument with an inscription by the king which ends in the curse formula addressed to its destroyers<sup>774</sup>.

*Assyrian inscriptions found in the area of the Kingdom of Mana*<sup>775</sup>. Six of the seven inscriptions of this group have been found in the archeological site of Hasanlu situated to the southwest of Lake Urmia<sup>776</sup>. One of them is a disc-like chalice or tray of stone found in 1964 (see fig. 136) which contains Assyrian inscriptions. Specialists expressed different opinions concerning the transcription and translation of the latter. The following readings have been suggested:

"The palace of Bauri of the country of Idi, Shamash-ushish(?)"<sup>777</sup>,

"The palace of Bauri of the king of the country Idi, dedicated to Ushishi, the god of the sun"<sup>778</sup>,

"The palace of Bauri, the mountain shelter of Ushi-shi"<sup>779</sup>.

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<sup>773</sup> This information is received from the chronology of Sennacherib carved on the "hexahedral prism of Taylor" (ABSHU, N 57).

<sup>774</sup> ABSHU, N 58.

<sup>775</sup> We would like to express our gratitude to Cand. of Histor. Sc. Yervand Grekyan for materials of this subsection.

<sup>776</sup> Dyson, 1968, pp. 49, fig. 8-9.

<sup>777</sup> Medvedskaya, 1988, p. 1.

<sup>778</sup> Muscarella, 1971, pp. 263-266, table 63.

“[Belongs] to the palace of Kauri, king of the country Idi, dedicated to the god of the sun”<sup>780</sup>.

Anyway, the inscription dates back to the period extending from the beginning of the Middle Assyrian era to 800 BC.<sup>781</sup> It is noteworthy that in relation to his invasions into the country Zamua Salmanasar III mentions a country and a city with the name Idi<sup>782</sup>, the relation of which to this inscription is difficult to determine.

The next two inscriptions are preserved both on a stone cup and a stone rod or crook, the first of which has the name of King Kadashmin-Enlil I (the 14<sup>th</sup> century BC) or II (the 13<sup>th</sup> century BC.) of Kassite Babylon, the second inscription is an expression: “the palace of Ashur-Uballit”<sup>783</sup>. Probably, it is about the Assyrian king with the same name, who reigned during 1365/3-1330/1328 BC.

Among 15 stone scepters (or cups) of another group of objects found in the same archeological site the three of them have inscriptions on them. The first two scepters have the name of the Elamite king Tan-rukhrater (2036-1850 BC.), on the third scepter only the first part of the name, Sin..., is preserved<sup>784</sup>.

The seventh inscription found in the sub-Urmian basin and deriving probably from the Assyrian town of Arbail is carved on a bronze statuette. The twelve-linear inscription is a letter of best



Fig. 136

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<sup>779</sup> Dyson, 1977, pp. 548-552.

<sup>780</sup> Salvini, Pecorella, 1984, pp. 55.

<sup>781</sup> Dyson, 1965, pp. 202; Dyson, Muscarella, 1989, pp. 1-26: Medvedskaya, 1988, pp. 12.

<sup>782</sup> Grayson, 1996, pp. 65, 75, 104.

<sup>783</sup> Dyason, Muscarella, 1989, pp. 23.

<sup>784</sup> Medvedskaya, 2000, pp. 436.

wishes dedicated to the goddess Ish-tar of Arbaili in the name of the Assyrian king Ashur-dan I (12<sup>th</sup> century BC); the author of the original text was Shamshi-Bel, the son of Nergal-nadinakhe and the script of the town of Arbail<sup>785</sup>.

As to the origin of these objects with inscriptions, in all probability they were imported, which can be evidence of active interrelationship of the given region with Elam, Assyria and Babylon.

***Three cuneiform slabs found in Armavir.*** Among the inscriptions in foreign writings there are also three fragments of cuneiform slabs (fig. 137) found in Armavir at the beginning of the 1980's. They were fragments of clay slabs, the biggest and best preserved of which had 28 lines on both sides. The second fragment had 16 lines (also on both sides) and on one side of the third fragment only 9 lines were preserved. I.M. Diakonoff and N.B. Jankowska deciphered the first one as a dramatized passage from the epic "Gilgamesh", written in the Elamite language, trying to consider some deciphered words of the other two fragments in the same context (supposedly they belonged to the

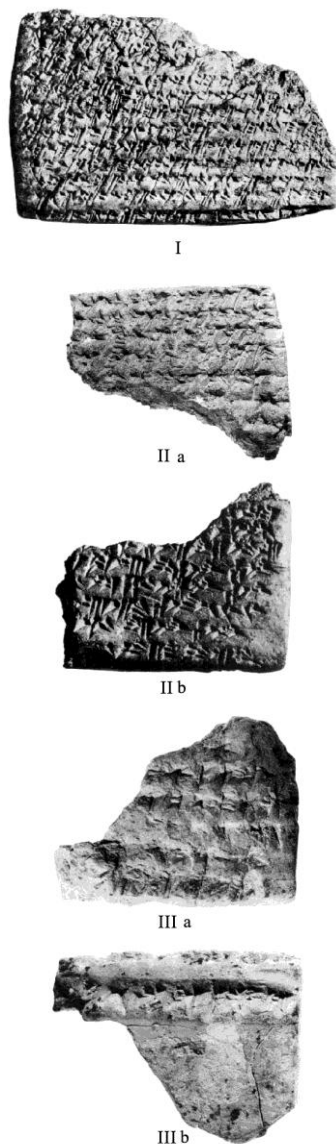


Fig. 137

<sup>785</sup> Grayson, 1987, p. 308.



Fig 138

members of the company of actors). The original texts were dated back to the 8<sup>th</sup> cent. BC and the existence of the scenario of the passage of the “Gilgamesh” epic in Argishtikhinili-Armavir was supposedly related to the “Elamite-Urartian union”, which could be consolidated by the marriage of Sardury II (764-735) and the princess of Elam. The ceremony of marriage could coincide with the ceremony of the king’s crowning during which the dramatization might be performed by the Elamite company of actors<sup>786</sup>.

In a short time their decipherment was reconsidered, and it was suggested that the three original texts found in Armavir should be read in Elamite, although they had to be interpreted as passages of letters of the economic content, which should be dated back to the second half of the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC or the first half of the 5<sup>th</sup> century BC<sup>787</sup>. If the Elamite reading of the passages is

<sup>786</sup> Diakonoff, Jankowska, 1989, pp. 55-62; Diakonoff, Jankowska, 1990, pp. 102-123.

<sup>787</sup> Koch, 1993, pp. 219-236; Vallat, 1995.

finally proved we shall have four Elamite inscriptions (together with the Elamite section of Xerxes' inscription) in pre-Christian Armenia.

*The trilingual inscription of Xerxes in Van.* King Xerxes, the son of the Achaemenid king Darius I, became famous for his religious reform dedicated to the worship of Ahuramazda. One of numerous inscriptions about his activity (fig. 138) was inscribed in three languages (Persian, Babylonian and Elamite) on the southern side of the rock of Van (at the height of about 18 m). There is no substantial difference between the three sections; only personal nouns differ in spelling. Accordingly, Ahura-Mazda is called Auramazda, Akhuramazda, Oramazda, Xerxes - Khshayarsha, Khishi'arsha, Ixerissa, Darius - Darayavaush, Dari'amush and Dariyavaos in the Persian, Babylonian and Elamite sections<sup>788</sup>. The translation of the main, Persian section is given below (in the name-forms widespread in science)<sup>789</sup>.

“The great god Ahura-Mazda, the greatest of all gods who created this world, created this heaven, created man, created pleasures for human beings, who made Xerxes King, the only King for all, the only commander for all. I am Xerxes, the great King, King of Kings, the king of this great world, the king of the countries of many peoples and the son of King Darius, the Achaemenid. King Xerxes says: “King Darius who is my father, owing to Ahura-Mazda did many decencies and ordered to sculpture here; but did not order to inscribe an inscription: I ordered to inscribe the following: “Let Ahura-Mazda with (other) gods protect me, my kingdom and everything founded by me”<sup>790</sup>.

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<sup>788</sup> The comparative publication of the sections in three languages with corresponding references see Santalchean, 1901, pp. 224-226 (the author called the Elamite section “Median edition”).

<sup>789</sup> The translation of the Persian section is given according to H. Santalchean and R.G. Kent (Santalchean, 1901, pp. 224-226; Kent, 1953, pp. 152-153).

<sup>790</sup> The end of the inscription is given according to R.G. Kent. H. Santalchean has an addition to it: “...and my deeds”.

The inscription is an important evidence of the history of Armenia of the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> centuries BC; it can also be an indirect evidence of Armenia's inclusion into the sphere of religious reform dedicated to the worship of Ahura-Mazda. Moreover, together with historical significance, it is the only trilingual inscription discovered in pre-Christian Armenia.

***The Greek inscriptions left by foreigners.*** The inscriptions in the Armenian Highland written in Greek are divided into two groups:

- a) written by local inhabitants,
- b) left by foreigners.

The first group has already been referred to in the corresponding section, and the original texts of the second group (like the Latin inscriptions) are related to the eastern policy of Rome.

There are also Greek epitaphs among the inscriptions left in Armenia by the Roman commanders. One of them (fig. 139) was discovered in Vagharshapat in 1914. The epitaphic inscription was erected in the second half of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century. The author was the military tribune of the XV Apollinaris legion, which is already known from the Latin inscriptions left in Vagharshapat in 173-176 and 185. The epitaph reads: "In memory of Eli Maxim, the wife, who lived 35 years, and Eli Valentine's daughter, who lived 13 years, Eli Valent, the military tribune of the XV Apollinaris legion and their husband and father, dedicated to (the Gods)"<sup>791</sup>.

Several Greek epitaphs have been found in Kenk [on the western bank of the Euphrates (about 60 km to the north-east of Aintap (Gaziantep)], not far from the above-mentioned inscription of Salmanasar III<sup>792</sup>.

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<sup>791</sup> Zhebelev, 1935, pp. 75-83 (in Armenian and Russian).

<sup>792</sup> Taşyürek, 1979, p. 47. The original texts of these epitaphs are not known to us. They are included in this section (and not in the chapter II) conventionally, as in the report these original texts are mentioned in relation to the Roman sepulchers.



Fig. 139

In 1978 during the road-construction works a stone altar was discovered near the village of Areni in the district of Yeghegnadzor, with following inscription: “Emilios Vales; to the Mother-Earth, Goddess-Queen Olyupri”. The analysis of the peculiarities of the inscription, as well as historic-political events of that period allow to date it back to 163-164 AD<sup>793</sup>.

The number of Greek inscriptions left by foreigners in pre-Christian Armenia is not limited by the mentioned ones. We know about some more inscriptions (particularly found in the areas of Armenia Minor and Commagene) that are not referred to in this work as we do not have the corresponding literature at our disposal.

*Latin inscriptions of pre-Christian Armenia.* Latin inscriptions being erected only by foreigners have an important place among the written monuments of pre-Christian Armenia

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<sup>793</sup> Ter-Martirosov, 1989, pp. 177-189. The inscription was read with the help of Y. Vinogradov. The writer of the article considers it possible that the author of this inscription also served in the XV Apollonian legion.

were dated back by specialists to the period of invasions of the Roman armies into Armenia. That is why, the thesis spread in Armenology about the Latin, Greek and Aramaic alphabets, as



Fig 140

the scripts used in pre-Christian Armenia should be rejected.

The Latin inscriptions of pre-Christian Armenia are connected with the Eastern policy of the Roman Empire being discovered in the territories of the three Armenian kingdoms (Great Armenia, Armenia Minor and Commagene).

The Latin inscriptions of Great Armenia were discovered in three regions: Vagharshapat, Artashat and Kharberd. The first was found in Vagharshapat in 1863 (fig. 140). It was inscribed in 185 AD by the commanders of the Roman XV Apollinaris legion, in the reign of the Emperor Commodus<sup>794</sup>. The name of Commodus was erased from the inscription. It was probably connected with the act of the Roman senate (193), according to which his name had to fall into oblivion as he was a worthless Emperor. Thus, Commodus' name was wiped out and obliterated

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<sup>794</sup> Alishan, 1880, p. 206; Trever, 1953, pp. 267-270 (and cited sources).



Fig. 141



Fig. 142

from all the written records. It means that until that time the Roman legion had been stationed in Armenia<sup>795</sup>.

The next Latin inscription was found in Vagharshapat in 1907. It was dated back to the reign of the Emperor Marcus Aurelius<sup>796</sup> (fig. 141). Judging from the king's title-list in the inscription, it might be inscribed between 173 and 176 AD, when the Roman interests in Armenia were defended by two Roman legions - XV Apollinaris and XII Fulminata.

In 1967 during the excavations in Vagharshap (Etchmiadzin), a Latin inscription ("IV Scythian legion") was discovered on a clay cover of a jug burial in one of the tombs<sup>797</sup>. It is connected with the inscription of the Emperor Trajan which was found in the same year (see below): both inscriptions were dated back by specialists to the historical events of 114-116 AD.

In 1879 and 1883 three Latin inscriptions were found in the region of Kharberd. They have the same content (but not repeating each other word by word), and they all were found in the masonry of the churches in Armenian villages. The first two well

<sup>795</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 269-270.

<sup>796</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 262-267.

<sup>797</sup> Torosyan, Krkyasharyan, 1971, pp. 287-290.

preserved inscriptions were discovered in 1879 in the village of Kezrik, which is situated about 2-3 km to the south-east from Kharberd (one of them fig. 142). The third one was found in 1883 in the Kovank village (to the south-east from Kezrik); centuries later a large cross was carved on this inscription, as a result of which the Latin original text was damaged greatly, but the preserved parts show that it is the duplicate of the two previous ones. The coinciding translation of the original text is the following: “Neron Claudius, Caesar Augustus, Germanicus, Emperor, high priest, in the eleventh year of his tribune reign, at his 4<sup>th</sup> consulate, the ninth time (proclaimed) as the Emperor, and the father of the Motherland. In the period of Gneius Domitius Corbulo, the legate and pro-praetor of Augustus, and Titus Aurelius Fulvus, the legate of August, III Gallic legion”<sup>798</sup>.

The inscriptions were erected in 64 AD, in the period, when the military operations (started in 52 AD) for the throne of Great Armenia finished with the Roman legions’ infamous defeat by the Armenian-Parthian forces in Hrandea (62) and in 64 AD a piece treaty was signed in the same place. It resulted in the enthronement of the dynasty of Arshakids in Great Armenia.

The inscriptions are placed in square frames on the stone plates. They were probably put in the wall of the building (a bridge or castle) built by Corbulo, the General of the armies of the East, who represented Rome in negotiations<sup>799</sup>.

In 1884 Garegin Srvandztyants in his work “With taste and smell,” published in Constantinople, mentioned a Latin inscription in the region of Baghesh, between the villages of Kamakh and Tsvar<sup>800</sup>. Later, this inscription was neglected by researchers. The words “legion” and “Scythian” are read, thus it is possible to suppose, that this inscription might be connected with the events that took place in 114-116. Several Latin inscriptions

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<sup>798</sup> Lehmann-Haupt, 1910, pp. 477-478; Trever, 1953, pp. 212-213.

<sup>799</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 222-223.

<sup>800</sup> Srvandztyants, 1978, p. 414.

were found in Armenia which mention about the Scythian legion.

Three more Latin inscriptions were found in the villages of Aletlu and Little Vedi of the region of Artashat. A fragment of a column made of white stone was discovered in Aletlu, on which the words "emperor", "Caesar", "divine" (in abbreviations) are read. Aletlu is situated on the opposite side of Old Artashat (presently Khor Virap), on the bank of the Arax River, that is why the fragment of the inscription should be considered as a material evidence of one of the Roman Emperors' businesses connected with the capital of Armenia<sup>801</sup>.



*Fig. 143*

In 1967, during the construction works in the south-eastern part of Little Vedi village within the north-eastern limits of the historical capital of Artashat, two Latin inscriptions were found at the depth of 1, 4 m<sup>802</sup>. The first of them has three lines and is rather big (8, 5 m length and 0, 8 m height, the first line letters' height is 20 centimetre, and those of the second and third – 16sm) and has the name of the Roman Emperor Trajan. The second is a gravestone of a soldier with an epitaph written in comparatively smaller letters. The texts are related to the Emperor Trajan's invasion into Armenia in the second half of 116 AD. It is possible to restore the damaged parts of the big inscription (fig. 144): "The divine Emperor Caesar, Nerva Trajan, the son of Nerva, Optimus (the best), August (his holiness), Germanikus (German), Dacicus (Dacian), Parthicus (Parthian), the High Priest, Maximus (the greatest) granted power of tribune twenty times and thirteen times (proclaimed) Caesar, consul – six times [father of the motherland ?], Scythian legion made (erected)".

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<sup>801</sup> Trever, 1953, pp. 223-224.

<sup>802</sup> Arakelyan, 1964, pp. 302-311.



Fig. 144

The first four lines of ten-line text of the epitaph have been preserved: “To the gods of the underworld” Kaius Val(erius) Kre..., the soldier of the first legion of Italics, served ... the monument was erected (?)”.Of the other lines only single letters preserved.

Summing up it is possible to note that nine Latin inscriptions found in Great Armenia are important original sources of three periods of Armenian history of the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> centuries –

- a) the 60’s, when the Arshakid dynasty came to the throne of Great Armenia,
- b) 114-116 and
- c) the 160’s-190’s.

They complete our knowledge about that period according to the literary evidence.

The Latin inscriptions found in Great Armenia and Armenia Minor, as well as Commagene are mainly related to the eastern campaigns of the Roman army<sup>803</sup>. These inscriptions may be divided into two groups: (a) inscriptions witnessing for the stationing of the Roman legions, which contain information about the Roman Emperors and generals, (b) the epitaphs of soldiers.

***Coins of foreign origin found in Armenia.*** Being true to our principle, after the inscriptions of the foreign origin, coins

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<sup>803</sup> Inscriptions from Commagene see Jalabert, Mouterde, 1929, pp. 42-46, 59-61; from Armenia Minor - Olshausen, Biller, 1984, p. 101.

with legends of the same origin will be introduced here. Though neither inscriptions nor coins of the foreign origin can be regarded as constituent parts of Armenia's literary culture, we will introduce in the chronological sequence groups of coins of the foreign origin found in the Armenian Highland.

The earliest coins found in Armenia (the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cc. BC) are without legends; they are silver coins of the so-called "Milesian" type with the head of a lion depicted on the one side and a plant-like design (or a stylized equiside cross) on the other. Two coins of this type have been found near the altar in the palace temple of Erebuni<sup>804</sup>. The Athenian and Achaemenid coins found in Armenia are also dated back to the 6<sup>th</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> cc. BC<sup>805</sup>.

In the 4<sup>th</sup> c. BC Macedonian coins (bearing the names of Alexander the Great and his son Philip III) were widespread in Armenia; one Rhodian coin dated back to the end of the same century has been found in Armavir<sup>806</sup>. The foreign coins with Greek legends of the Seleucid, Phoenician, Parthian (the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> cc. BC), Cappadocian, Pontic (the 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> cc. BC), as well as from the cities of Pergamon and Ephesus of Asia Minor circulated in the 3<sup>rd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> cc. BC in Armenia<sup>807</sup>.

From the 1<sup>st</sup> century BC to the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> c. AD Roman coins with Latin legends became widespread in the monetary circulation of Armenia; later their use decreased<sup>808</sup>.

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<sup>804</sup> Israelyan, 1971, pp. 104-105, table XI. Kh. A. Musheghyan supposes that these coins might be minted not in Miletus, but the product of the local coinage (as in Bosphorus in 5<sup>th</sup> c. BC) copying from Milesian coins (Musheghyan, 1983, pp. 12-14).

<sup>805</sup> Musheghyan, 1983, pp. 11-12, 14-15.

<sup>806</sup> Ibid, pp. 29-30.

<sup>807</sup> Musheghyan, 1973, pp. 22-27, 33-35, 63-78, 82-84; Musheghyan, 1983, pp. 31-35.

<sup>808</sup> Musheghyan, 1973, pp. 35-46, 84-123; Musheghyan, 1983, pp. 35-38, 82-89, 113-114.

From the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century AD till the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century the Sasanid coins with Pahlavi legends prevailed in commerce, in Armenia<sup>809</sup>.

This is the general picture of the monetary circulation in Armenia; the main groups of widespread coins have Greek, Latin and Pahlavi legends on them. Naturally, the coins of the foreign origin can not be related to the Armenian literary culture, but their extent use in the country shows that some strata of society knew (though partially) the language of these legends. Moreover, the groups of foreign coins found in the Armenian Highland emphasize the important role of Armenia at the crossroads of the Ancient World's civilization once again.

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<sup>809</sup> Musheghyan, 1983, pp. 110-115; Khurshudian, Zohrabian, 2002, pp. 39-56, table I-XV.

## INSTEAD OF EPILOGUE

### *EPIC TRADITION AS MEANS OF REPLACEMENT OF WRITING*

Monuments created in pre-Christian Armenia are essentially various and according to their content can be divided into 20 groups. Meanwhile, it must be noted that they lack for some kinds of works, which were expected to be available in the literature of people, having their own scripts and letters. Particularly, literary works are almost absent among them: we do not find written songs about military spirit, work, daily-life, wedding mourning, love, novel-legends, historic and mythological novels, hymns, etc. Meanwhile “Hayk and Bel”, “Aram and Barsham”, “Aram and Nyukar Makes”, “Aram and Payapis Kaaghea”, “Ara Geghetsik (Ara the Beautiful) and Shamiram”, “Tigran and Ajdahak”, ”Yervand and Artashes”, “Artashes and Satenik”, “Artashes and Artavazd” and other epics remained vital also in the period of Movses Khorenatsi (V c. AD) and Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni (XI c. AD)<sup>810</sup>.

We shall try to give two probable answers to this phenomenon. First, there was a notion: “... worthy to be mentioned by script” (Movses Khorenatsi , I, 3), i.e, it was not allowed to write down everything, as writing was sacred sphere. Therefore, we can conclude that notions concerning daily life (bridal, military, labour, mourning songs, etc.) were not written down because of not being “worthy to be mentioned by script”. But in this case, it is not comprehensible why were not written down historic-mythological narrations a part of which Movses Khorenatsi heard from Goghtan epic-tellers and recorded in his monumental work. We could suppose, that they were written down but had been destroyed in the period of proclamation Christianity as

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<sup>810</sup> Grigor Magistros Pahlavuni in the 11<sup>th</sup> century wrote the fragment of folk-story about the king Artashes the Mighty (Grigor Magistros, Paper 33).

the state religion, which is improbable. Otherwise they would not be used in the Armenian medieval annalists' works.

There may also be another question: why from the 5<sup>th</sup> century up to Garegin Srvanztyants' time (second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> c.) the heroic epic "Sasna Tsrer" ("Daredevils of Sassoun", "Davit of Sassoun") or its extracts had not been written down by any Armenian author? The epic "Sasna Tsrer" contains mythological notions, originating from prehistoric times, as well as historic events of ancient epoch and Middle Ages. After all, the epic could be written down by Mashtots's alphabet.

According to the available data about epic-tellers, primarily, the epic was much more voluminous<sup>811</sup>. It's noteworthy that when ethnographers applied to ordinary peasants to tell some episodes from the epic, they often refused pointing out the epic-tellers. It means that there was a special category of epic-tellers among the Armenians whose privilege and duty was to preserve epic traditions and transfer them to the next generations.

Still in pre-Christian times the existence of epic tradition is proved by annalistic data. Among them is noteworthy Pavstos Busand's information about the period of King Tiran Arshakuni (338-350 AD) concerning the restoration of pre-Christian beliefs and morals. "They liked their songs, myths, epics, they adhered to them, they believed and subsisted in them"<sup>812</sup>; i.e. epic-tellers were narrating not ordinary, but sacred stories about their gods and ancestors. It becomes obvious when we get acquainted with the fragments preserved by Movses Khorenatsi.

In conclusion we can say that in pre-Christian Armenia epic tradition served as means of replacement of writing. Therefore, sacred narrations were transferred accordingly. Why did they prefer to transfer sacred stories verbally and not to inscribe? As we do not have exact explanations about it in ancient and medieval sources, we refrain from suppositions.

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<sup>811</sup> See, for example, Srvandztyanc, 1978, pp. 84-85

<sup>812</sup> Pavstos Pusand, III, 13.

## *ON GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WRITING CULTURE OF PRE-MASHTOTSIAN ARMENIA*

Writing as means of communication, preservation of memory and accumulation of knowledge originated in the initial stage of civilization, then it became a bearer of values of civilization. The origin of writing is related to a certain level of society's organization, i.e. the emergence of statehood, and it is not occasional that the data about the first state formation and the use of script in Armenia belong to the beginning of the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC<sup>813</sup>.

The development of written culture is a process lasting centuries and millennia, during which writing thinking took roots among people. As its proof is the Armenian Golden Age literature (the 5<sup>th</sup> c. which commenced with the Mashtotsian scripts' invention) - a product of writing thinking which reached its high level in this. Written culture had long history in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia. In order this notion not to sound as a theoretic speculation, we shall try to elucidate the problem of the use of scripts and development of written culture in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia.

During the first stages (in the Stone Age) of the writing system's development ("object writing", early pictography) simple and earliest ways of ideas transmission were used. The origin of pictography in Armenia reflected in rock-carvings, as well as various objects dated back by specialists to the 5<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> millennia BC.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> millennium BC a system of linear scripts (LSA) was elaborated (containing over 400 signs) through the development and simplifying of pictography. LSA was used till the beginning of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC. About 300 inscriptions of this system were found in more than 10 archaeological sites in Republic of Armenia. These inscriptions still remain undeciphered, the same may be said about their writing direction.

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<sup>813</sup> Movsisyan, 1992, pp. 60-62.

In the 15<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> centuries BC the Hittite-Luvian hieroglyphs were used (written in Luvian - an Indo-European language) in the west of the Armenian Highland, in the Euphrates' valley. The writing system contained about 500 hieroglyphs which had boustrophedon pattern of writing.

In the Kingdom of Van the cuneiform systems were widely used. At the time of King Sarduri I inscriptions in the Assyrian cuneiforms (about 600 signs, with the direction from left-to-right) and language were written. After him inscriptions in Assyrian were used in bilingual monuments of kings of Urartu (Ishpuini, Menua and Rusa I). There are also inscriptions in Assyrian inscribed by the king of Ardini-Musasir, Urzana.

At the time of King Ishpuini the local cuneiform system was created (about 200 signs, with the direction from left-to-right) of which more than 600 big and small inscriptions have been preserved. This writing system was deciphered in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Three writing systems were used in the kingdom of Van, one of which is of local origin. It is hieroglyphic writing containing about 300 hieroglyphs, which were written from right-to-left and from head-to-bottom. The key to the decipherment of this system was found in 1995. About 60 hieroglyphs have already been deciphered and interpreted, therefore we can assume that the language of the hieroglyphic writing of the Kingdom of Van was the ancient Armenian.

The fortune of the Armenian hieroglyphic script (Mehenagir) used from the 6<sup>th</sup> century BC to the times of adoption of Christianity still remains undetermined. But as follows from ancient and medieval author's information (see Chapter I), one can conclude that in the state correspondence foreign alphabets were used in that period and the usage of the Armenian hieroglyphic script was limited to temples.

By proclaiming Christianity as the state religion the Armenian hieroglyphic writing (mehenagir) was banned along with

previous religion. Anyhow until the present hieroglyphs continue to be used in Armenia as forms of magic script, as marks of artisan masters in the form of a single ideogram. They appear on walls of Christian temples, on coins of Cilician Armenia and as separate signaries attested in Armenian medieval manuscripts, being used also in applied art, etc.

After the fall of the Kingdom of Van the alphabetic writing systems had been used (in contrast with previously used logographic systems) until the period of conversion to Christianity as the state religion in Armenia.

Since the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BC had been used Greek alphabet (24 letters, direction of writing from left-to-right), which became widely used after conversion to Christianity as the state religion, especially in church life.

From the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BC to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD inscriptions in Aramaic alphabet were in use (right- to-left direction, 22 letters); the problem of their language is not finally solved yet.

After conversion to Christianity according to the order of King Trdat (Tiridates) III Syriac was used along with Greek for writing at court, during religious sermons and in education. This order was interrupted after the dethronement of King Khosrov IV (389), when in Eastern Armenia Middle Persian (Pahlavi) was used at court writing. The Aramaic alphabet became the basis of both Syrian and Middle Persian alphabets (22 letters, direction of writing from right-to-left).

There is an important group of inscribed monuments of unknown origin and mysterious purpose, among which two exceptionally new writing systems found only in Armenia are clearly distinguished. One of them is a new cuneiform writing system probably created in pre-Urartian period. Today we have three inscriptions belonging to that system. The other one is a system of mysterious huge characters (size of a character ranges from 70sm to 3m). Such writings were found in about 20 ar-

chaeological sites of the Armenian Highland. There are also some examples of enigmatic inscriptions.

Another group of inscriptions is represented by writings left in different sites of the Armenian Highland by the foreigners. They appeared here as a result of wars, trade, economic, cultural and other relations. They do not constitute a part of Armenian writing culture, anyhow, they are important in elucidation of Armenian history before Mashtots.

\* \* \*

The *high level of the development of the Armenian Golden Age literary language* (the 5<sup>th</sup> c. AD) attests to deep roots of written culture and writing thought in pre-Mashtotsian Armenia..

It's comprehensible that during millennia of the statehood's existence in Armenia, official communicative language (used as means of communication in the royal court, during mobilizations, in judicial courts, during the assemblies of secular and spiritual classes, etc.) existed, which had to be understandable in the whole country. It's improbable to suppose that common communicative language (which probably was the dialect of the country's central district) existed and developed only on the colloquial level, and, without being a written language, immediately became the basis of the literal one. As mentions G. B. Jahukyan, the lexicon of literal language, even indefinitely small, excels greatly the lexicon of every dialect. "The average dialect lexicon is usually counted 7-8 thousand; the lexicon, adopted in the classical Armenian (*grabar*), even not completely known, excels 60 thousand words"<sup>814</sup>. I.e., the lexicon of the classical Armenian also is evidence of Armenian being elaborated in written form in pre-Mashtotsian period.

These theoretical explanations can be grounded with factual material. As it has been mentioned, the first results of the

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<sup>814</sup> Jahukyan, 1992, pp. 77-78.

deipherment of the hieroglyphic system of the kingdom of Van are in favour of the latter's Armenian origin<sup>815</sup>. Moreover, along with voluminous Armenian lexicon in the language of the cuneiforms of the kingdom of Van<sup>816</sup>, recently it became possible to read separate sentences<sup>817</sup>. Therefore, within the circle of our knowledge, we can ascertain that Armenian was a written language, at least fourteen centuries before the great invention of St. Mesrop Mashtots...

\* \* \*

Pre-Mashtotsian Armenia's written monuments can be divided into several groups according to different characteristics.

***a. According to the origin and belonging:***

1. Pictographic monuments created in Armenia [Armenian hieroglyphic writing (*mehenagir*) and its phases];
2. Written monuments of enigmatic origin and unknown meaning;
3. Inscriptions of the writing system of foreign origin but used by the natives of Armenia;
4. Inscribed monuments discovered in the territory of Armenia, but created by foreigners.

***b. According to the characteristics of the writing systems:***

1. Logographic,
2. Logo-syllabic,
3. Alphabetic.

***c. According to the outer characteristics of writing signs:***

1. Pictographic (including hieroglyphic),
2. Linear,
3. Cuneiform,
4. Letters.

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<sup>815</sup> Movsisyan, 1998, pp. 46-50.

<sup>816</sup> About it thoroughly see Jahukyan, 1963.

<sup>817</sup> Jahukyan, 2000, pp. 124-129.

***d. According to the content of inscriptions:***

1. Royal inscriptions devoted to the worship of gods,
2. Descriptions of campaigns,
3. Inscriptions devoted to the kings' forefathers,
4. Inscriptions about the royal power and the king's deification,
5. Royal records about foundation and accomplishment of cities and towns (especially sacred places),
6. Inscriptions about different ceremonies and rites, as well as competitions,
7. Inscriptions establishing new laws and orders,
8. Royal beneficent inscriptions,
9. Legends on royal coins,
10. Records of kings' correspondence,
11. Texts of cult nature,
12. Chronological-calendar inscription,
13. Dedicatory inscriptions,
14. Parts of didactic poems (tragedies?),
15. Parts of historical poems (tragedies?),
16. Epitaphs (including elegiac poems),
17. Inscriptions of belonging,
18. Signs of capacity,
19. Monograms,
20. Monuments of unknown content<sup>818</sup>.

The written culture of pre-Mashtotsian Armenia may be classified also according to other characteristics (writing-material, direction of writing, etc.).

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<sup>818</sup> Some of the above mentioned groups are presented only by one or two texts. This classification is based mainly on the deciphered inscriptions in foreign language (see Movsisyan, 2003, pp. 229-230). The forthcoming decipherment of all known inscriptions will bring changes in the list.

\* \* \*

The literary culture created during millennia in the Armenian Highland had not disappeared without leaving a trace, therefore a high degree of perfection of Armenian Golden Age literature had also been conditioned by the writing thought rooted in pre-Mashtotsian period.

The results of research of pre-Mashtotsian written culture elucidate ancient history and culture of the Armenian Highland and, generally, Ancient East, allowing to estimate its place in the world civilization.

## THE LIST OF THE ABBREVIATIONS

### In West-European Languages

- AfO – “Archiv für Orientforschung”  
AJA – “American Journal of Archaeology”  
AMI – “Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran”  
AMIT – “Archaeologische Mitteilungen aus Iran und Turan”  
ANET - Ancient Near Eastern Texts Related to the Old Testament (ed. by J. B. Pritchard),  
New Jersey, 1969  
AnAr – “Anadolu Araştırmaları”  
AS – “Anatolian Studies”  
Ayanis I, 2001 – Ayanis I, Ten Years’ Excavations at Rusaḫinili Eiduru-kai (ed. by A.  
Çilingiroğlu and M. Salvini), Roma, 2001  
BM – “Baghdader Mitteilungen”  
CICH, 1928-1935 – Corpus Inscriptionum Chaldicarum (In Verbindung mit F. Bagel und F.  
Schachermeyr herausgegeben von C. F. Lehmann-Haupt), I-II, Berlin und Leipzig,  
1928-1935  
JAOS – “Journal of American Oriental Society”  
JNES – “Journal of Near Eastern Studies”  
KB – Karmir blur  
MM – Myths from Mesopotamia, Creation, The Flood, Gilgamesh and Others (a new  
translation by St. Dalley), London, 1989  
NEF..., Roma, 2002 – The North-Eastern Frontier Uartians and non-Uartians in the Sevan  
Lake Basin, I. The Soutern Shores (ed. by R. Biscione, S. Hmayakyan and N.  
Parmegiani), Roma, 2002  
REA – “Revue des Etudes Armeniennes”  
SMEA – “Studi Micenei ed Egeo-Anatolici”  
TK – Toprak-kale  
TTKB – “Türk tarih kurumu Beleten”  
WAu – Western Armenia – unknown (Արևմտյան Հայաստան - անհայտ)  
ZA – “Zeitschrift für Assyriologie und Vorderasiatische Archäologie”

### In Armenian and Russian

- AE - “Ancient East”  
ASE - Armenian Soviet Encyclopedia  
CE - “Culture of East” (“Культура Востока”)  
CHAP - Chrestomathy of history of Armenian people, I, Yerevan, 1981 (Հայ ժողովրդի  
պատմության քրեստոմատիա, հ. 1, Ե., 1981)  
EE - “Epigraphy of East” (“Эпиграфика Востока”)  
EM - “Erebuni” Museum  
HA - “Handes Amsorea: Zeitschrift für armenische Philologie”  
HAP - History of Armenian people (Academy of Sciences of the Arm.SSR), I, Yerevan,  
1971 (Հայ ժողովրդի պատմություն (ՀԽՍՀ ԳԱ հրատ.), I, Ե., 1981)  
HSS - “Herald of Social Sciences” («Լրաբեր հասարակական գիտությունների»)  
HAH - Herald of Ancient History (“Вестник древней истории”)  
HPJ - “Historical-Philological Journal” («Պատմա-փյունաբանական հանդես»)  
HYERU - Herald of Yerevan University («Բանբեր Երևանի համալսարանի»)

PAO - Poetry of Ancient Orient, Yerevan, 1982 (Հին Արևելքի պոեզիա, Ե., 1982)  
 RSS - "Records of Social Sciences" («Տեղեկագիր հասարակական գիտությունների»)»  
 R19<sup>th</sup> SSYO - The Republican 19<sup>th</sup> Scientific Session of Young Orientalists  
 SAHMC - State Academy of the History of Material Culture  
 SHMA - State Historical Museum of Armenia  
 SMIAP - State Museum of Imitative Arts named after Pushkin  
 SSDFEW - Scientific Session Devoted to Field Exploration Works  
 TR - Theses of Reports  
 SA - "Soviet Archaeology" ("Советская Археология")

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**Artak Movsisyan**

**THE WRITING CULTURE  
OF  
PRE-CHRISTIAN ARMENIA**

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