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The Hurro-Urartian Substratum in Armenian

Just before the Second World War, Armenian scholars were discovering that there appeared to be Hurro-Urartian words in oldest Armenian, put there by loan. Ghapantsyan gave such examples as Arm. *ult* ‘camel,’ Urartian *ultu* ‘id’; and Arm. *pelem* ‘dig, excavate,’ Hurrian *pili* ‘canal.’ There are a few dozen plausible examples of these correspondences. Later, Diakonoff and Starostin (1986) proposed, on lexical and morphological grounds, that Hurrian and Urartian were related to the Daghestani languages, a view embraced timidly, by many. However, following the publication of Nikolayev and Starostin’s *Etymological Dictionary of the North Caucasian Languages*, it was discovered that the languages of the Lezgian group corresponded closely with a reconstructed Urartian. Eight Lezgian words in /b/ correspondences corresponded with Armenian words in /b/ that could only have entered through Urartian loans. An abbreviated example would be Arm. *bag* ‘snout’ Kruz *pek* ‘id,’ etc; ten in proto-Lezgian /q/: Arm. *xacanel* ‘bite,’ Lezgi *qac* ‘bite,’ etc. There are ten correspondences in /s/: Arm. *sunk* ‘mushroom,’ Udi *suImk* ‘id’; etc.

The further tie-ins with Hurrian and the Early Trans-Caucasian Cultures are impressive. Arguments for the timing and origin in eastern Anatolia of the Hurrians, Urartians, and perhaps other cognate tribes, are discussed.