## ARMENIAN LANGUAGE

Armenian is a single Indo-European language group, centered throughout its history in northeastern Asia Minor, in contemporary terms northeastern Turkey and the Armenian Republic. The Armenian people enter history on their Christianization in the first years of the fourth century AD, converted by missionaries from Cappadocia and Mesopo-

tamia. At first the written languages of the Armenian Church were Greek and Syriac but in the early fourth century one Mesrop Maštoc‘, a learned cleric (and later bishop), devised a special alphabet for Armenian and translated the Bible from Greek into Armenian. Thus inaugurated, the fifth century became the "golden century" of Armenian literature with numerous translations, besides that of the Bible, and original compositions. It is the language of that period which is Classical Armenian (in Armenian itself this kind of Armenian is called *Grabar*) and it remained the written norm of Armenian writers until the emergence of the modern literary language in the nineteenth century. The modern literary language comes in two variants, an eastern one based on the variety of Armenian spoken around Yerevan in the Armenian Republic, and a western one based on the variety of Armenian spoken in Istanbul.

It has been calculated that no more than 450, certainly no more than 500, Armenian words are directly inherited from Proto-Indo-European. The rest are from the unknown or very imperfectly known languages that were in northeastern Asia Minor when the ancestors of the Armenians arrived there, from Iranian, from Greek, from Syriac, etc. From the seventh century BC Armenia would seem to have been in the political and cultural "orbit" of the Iranian world, particularly from the time of the Parthian ascendancy in northwestern Iran. As a result the lexical influence of various Iranian languages, but especially Parthian, has been enormous. The Iranian lexical influx has been compared to the penetration of (Norman) French words into Middle English. However, the Iranian influence on Armenian lasted much longer than the Norman French influence on English and is consequently even more massive than the French influence on English. So great were the number of Iranian borrowings, including everyday words of all descriptions (e.g., *anapat* 'desert', *paštem* 'I worship', *ma(r)h* 'death'), that Armenian was long thought to be just another Iranian language. It was not until the 1870s that Armenian was generally recognized as an independent IE language, albeit one heavily disguised.

The early non-Iranian words, though much smaller in number, are not without their interest as well. The language that preceded Armenian in northeastern Asia Minor was Urartian, itself a close relative of the better-known Hurrian. Armenian words with Urartian or Hurrian antecedents include *xnjor* 'apple-tree' (cf. Hurrian *hinzuri*), *maxr* 'fir-tree' (cf. Hurrian *māhri* (a kind of tree), *ult* 'camel' (cf. Hurrian *ultu*), *cov* 'sea' (Urartian *suə*). The close agreement in shape of these Classical Armenian words and their presumed sources is remarkable, especially as the actual borrowing is likely to have taken place a millennium or millennium and a half before Armenian is first attested. The phonological shape of Armenian must have been substantially established before these borrowings occurred, though there may be evidence in these borrowings that original final syllables were lost only after this period of borrowing was complete (e.g., Hurrian *māhri* borrowed > pre-Armenian *\*maxri* > Arm *maxr*).

Classical Armenian shows no traces of dialectal divergence. All writers of Classical Armenian, no matter where they came from, wrote in essentially the same way. The testimony of the modern varieties of Armenian also suggests that Classical Armenian did not have dialect divergences since all modern varieties can be derived from Classical Armenian with little residue. However, there are certain discrepancies within the inherited word-stock of Classical Armenian. Thus some Armenian words descending from PIE forebears with initial *\*p-* have an initial *h-* and some have nothing (e.g., *hun* 'ford, channel' from *\*pontha-* 'way' or *het* 'footstep' from *\*pédom* but *otn* 'foot' from *\*pod-* 'foot') and others have *p‘* (e.g., *p‘etur* 'feather' from *\*pétetro-*); PIE *\*-rs-* sometimes appears as Armenian *-ř-* and sometimes as *-rš-* (e.g., *t‘aramim* 'I wither' and *t‘aršamim* 'I wither'). There are several other unexplained divergences such as these. These discrepancies suggest to some that Classical Armenian may originally have been a *koiné*, the amalgamation of more than one dialect, which eventually replaced all other dialects (much as the Hellenistic Greek *koiné* replaced [most of] the Greek dialects known in antiquity).

### Description

The criterion that most clearly characterizes Armenian among the IE languages is phonological rather than morphological. The three series of stops that we can reconstruct for PIE, here represented by *\*t*, *\*d*, *\*dh*, underwent a shift, much like we see in Germanic (there called "Grimm's Law") and appear in Classical Armenian as *t‘* (voiceless and aspirated), *t*, and *d*. Evidence from contemporary Armenian dialects suggests that voiced series *d*, etc., may have been voiced aspirates in actuality and thus not very different, if at all, from the phonetic pattern classically reconstructed for this series in PIE. Recent suggestions concerning PIE stops would make Armenian even more archaic on this particular point than has usually been thought (cf. Gamkrelidze and Ivanov's reconstruction of *\*t$^h$*, *\*d‘*, and *\*d$^h$* which look much more like Armenian *t‘*, *t*, and *d* [especially if the latter is aspirated] than do the traditional *\*t*, *\*d*, and *\*dh*). Whether the phonetics of the Armenian stop system is archaic or innovative, it clearly sets it apart from other IE groups. Armenian is a satəm language, meaning that the dorso-palatals of PIE (e.g., *\*ḱ*) appear as affricates and sibilants (Armenian *s*) while the labio-velars (e.g., *\*k$^w$*) have lost all trace of labialization (Armenian *k‘*) and thus have fallen together with the non-labialized dorso-velars. Like Greek, Armenian preserves the distinction among PIE *\*e*, *\*a*, and *\*o* (though Armenian shows a number of instances of *a* where we might expect to find either *e* or *o*). Like Anatolian, with which Armenian does not seem to share any significant innovations, Armenian preserves word-initial *\*h₂-* (at least sometimes) and perhaps also *\*h₃-* as well. One of the more unusual phonological changes to be found in Armenian is known as Meillet's Law and refers to the shift from *\*du-* to Arm *erk-*, e.g., *\*duō* > Arm *erku* 'two', *\*duā-ró-* > Arm *erkar* 'long' (cf. Grk δηρόν).

*Proto-Indo-European and Armenian Phonological Correspondences*

| PIE | | Arm | PIE | Arm |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *p | > | h ~ ø ~ pʻ ~ y ~ w | *ponthₐ- 'way' | hun 'ford, channel' |
| | | | *pod- 'foot' | otn 'foot' |
| | | | *pétetro- 'feather' | pʻetur 'feather' |
| | | | *ph̥₂tr-ou- 'stepfather' | yawray 'stepfather' |
| | | | *h₁epi 'upon, also' | ev 'and, also' |
| *b | > | p | *stéibe/o- 'stamp, shove' | stipem 'I urge, compel' |
| *bh | > | b | *bhére/o- 'bring' | berem 'I bring' |
| *t | > | tʻ ~ d ~ y | *torsos 'drying place' | tʻaṙ 'stake for drying fruit' |
| | | | *mr̥tós 'mortal' | mard 'man' |
| | | | *ph̥₂tér- 'father' | hayr 'father' |
| *d | > | t | *dóh₃rom 'gift' | tur 'gift' |
| *dh | > | d | *dhur- 'door, gate' | durkʻ 'gate' |
| *k̑ | > | s | *dék̑m̥ 'ten' | tasn 'ten' |
| *g̑ | > | c ~ t | *g̑ónu 'knee' | cunr 'knee' |
| | | | *g̑l̥h₁- 'husband's sister' | tal 'husband's sister' |
| *g̑h | > | j | *g̑hesr- 'hand' | jeṙn 'hand' |
| *k | . | kʻ ~ g | *h₂erk- 'contain' | argel 'obstacle, prison' |
| *g | | k | *ger- 'crane' | kṙunk 'crane' |
| *kʷ | > | kʻ ~ h ~ g | *leikʷ- 'leave' | lkʻanem 'I leave' |
| | | | *kʷi- (interrogative pronoun) | him 'why' |
| | | | *pénkʷe 'five' | hing 'five' |
| *gʷ | > | k | *gʷéneh₂- 'woman' | kin 'woman, wife' |
| *gʷh | > | g ~ ǰ | *gʷhermos 'warm, hot' | ǰerm 'warm, hot' |
| *s | > | h ~ ø | *sénos 'old' | hin 'old' |
| | | | *sal- 'salt' | ał 'salt' |
| *i̯ | > | z ~ ø | *stérios 'sterile' | sterǰ 'sterile' |
| | | | *tréi̯es 'three' | erekʻ 'three' |
| *u̯ | > | g | *u̯ailos 'wolf' | gayl 'wolf' |
| *m | > | m | *médhi̯os 'middle' | mēǰ 'middle' |
| *n | > | n | *snusós 'daughter-in-law' | nu 'daughter-in-law' |
| *l | > | l | *leikʷ- 'leave' | lkʻanem 'I leave' |
| *r | > | r | *tréi̯es 'three' | erekʻ 'three' |
| *m̥ | > | am | *u̯i(d)km̥t 'twenty' | kʻsan 'twenty' |
| *l̥ | > | al | *g̑l̥h₁- 'husband's sister' | tal 'husband's sister' |
| *r̥ | > | ar | *mr̥tós 'mortal' | mard 'man' |
| *i | > | i | *bhidrós 'biting' | birt 'rigid, rude' |
| *ī | > | i | *kl̥i̯ōn 'column' | siwn 'column' |
| *e | > | e ~ i (~ a) | *médhi̯os 'middle' | meǰ 'middle' |
| | | | *sénos 'old' | hin 'old' |
| | | | *dék̑m̥ 'ten' | tasn 'ten' |
| *ē | > | i | *k̑érd 'heart' | sirt 'heart' |
| *a | > | a | *sal- 'salt' | ał 'salt' |
| *ā | > | a | *néh₂us 'boat' | naw 'boat' |
| *o | > | o ~ u (~ a) | *h₃orbhos 'heir, orphan' | orb 'orphan' |
| | | | *ponthₐ- 'way' | hun 'ford, channel' |
| | | | *h₃ókʷ 'eye' | akn 'eye' |
| *ō | > | u | *h₃onōri̯o- 'dream' | anurǰ 'dream' |
| *u | > | u | *srutis 'flowing' | aṙu 'brook' |
| *ū | > | u | *mūs 'mouse' | mukn 'mouse' |
| *h₁ | > | ø | *h₁ésmi 'I am' | em 'I am' |
| *h₂ | > | ø ~ h | *h₂r̥tk̑os 'bear' | arǰ 'bear' |
| | | | *h₂euh₂os 'grandfather' | haw 'grandfather' |
| *h₃ | > | ø ~ h | *h₃or- 'bird' | oror 'gull' |
| | | | *h₃od- 'smell' | hot 'odor' |
| *h₄ | > | ø | *h₄órg̑his 'testicle' | orjikʻ 'scrotum' |

**Armenian** The territory of the Armenian language appears to have been roughly coincidental with that of the earlier non-IE Hurrian and closely related Urartian (with dark shading). The poorly known and presumably related non-IE Etio language was to its north. Many of these languages occupied partially or wholly the earlier territory of the Kuro-Araxes culture (light shading). The nearest IE neighbors of the Armenians were the Hittites (and related Luvians and Palaic-speaking populations) who were not closely related to Armenian. Assyrian and Gutian are non IE languages. Burials with wheeled vehicles have been uncovered at Trialeti and Lchashen.

Though historically attested Armenian has changed rather slowly (though the modern verbal system shows a radical restructuring of the classical system), prehistoric Armenian underwent a good deal of change and thus Classical Armenian already presents a rather "modern" appearance when compared to its contemporary cousins. In nouns gender and the dual are lost, though there is still a maximum of five different case shapes. Though there are some conservative features of the Armenian verb, for instance the retention of the "augment" (a prefix denoting past time) in monosyllabic verbs (*e-ber* 'he brought', *e-git* 'he found'), in general it would seem that the verb has been very thoroughly rebuilt in the interim between PIE and the emergence of Classical Armenian. The verb is inflected for both person and number (singular and plural) but of the several tenses and moods that the Armenian verb indicates only present and aorist (itself a combination of the PIE imperfect and aorist) among the tenses and the imperative among the non-indicative moods can be traced back directly to PIE antecedents.

Herodotus (7.73) reported that the Armenians were in origin Phrygian emigrants or colonists. Thus, there has been a continuing assumption that Armenian is linguistically closely related to Phrygian. From the point of view of geographical propinquity as well as the tradition recorded by Herodotus such an assumption makes sense. However, the linguistic remains of Phrygian are so scant that they afford no confirmation (or disconfirmation). What does seem to be certain is that Armenian is a member of a "southeast" group of IE languages that includes Greek and Indo-Iranian as well. For instance, only Armenian, Greek, and Indo-Iranian show clear traces of the reconstructed PIE imperfect tense. Likewise they, and Phrygian, are the only IE languages to show the "augment" in past tense formations. Within this smaller group Armenian appears to be most closely allied with Greek showing a number of shared lexical items with it (e.g., Arm *awelum* 'I increase' and Grk ὀφέλλω 'I increase' from *$h_3bhel$-, or Arm *siwn* 'column' and Grk κῑων 'column' from something like *$k̑iion$).

### Armenian Origins

The starting point for any discussion of Armenian origins must emphasize that the territory in which the Armenian language has been historically attested, the contemporary Republic of Armenia and eastern Turkey, was occupied during the Bronze Age by speakers of Hurrian and the closely related Urartian. The earliest Hurrian inscriptions are dated to the mid third millennium BC and these run into the second millennium BC. The southern border of the Hurrians extended to Syria and southeast into the area inhabited in modern times by Kurds along the Iran/Iraq frontier. To the south of the Hurrians, even overlapping with them, were the lands of Semitic-speaking peoples. It has been suggested that the Hurrian language is related to the modern Northeastern Caucasian language group (Nakh-Daghestani). By the first millennium BC the Hurrians had disappeared. They were replaced in the southeastern portion of their former territory by the Urartians who spoke a language closely related to Hurrian. North of the Urartians, in the northern part of the formerly Hurrian area, were the Etio or Etiuni, who extended as far north as central Transcaucasia (i.e., the modern Republic of Armenia). Though the linguistic remains of the Etio are very meager, it is usually assumed that their language too was related to Hurrian. To the east of the Hurrian-Urartian-Etio complex were the Gutians (or Qutians), known only from personal and place-names that suggest a different and unrelated language grouping, who occupied the territory south of Lake Urmia in what is now Iran. To the west of the Hurrian-Urartian-Etio complex were various members of the (Indo-European) Anatolian group: Luvians in southern Anatolia and Hittites (who had replaced the non-IE Hatti and taken their name) and Palaic-speakers in central Anatolia. To the northwest were the non-IE Kaskians.

This linguistic picture really leaves no room for indigenous Armenians and forces one to conclude that they migrated to their historical seats from elsewhere. That they share a series of isoglosses, both morphological and lexical, with Greek has suggested that it is more likely that they originated to the west of their historical territory; to reverse the direction of movement and presume that it was the Greeks who moved off to the west raises serious chronological problems, e.g., the late attestation of Armenian in eastern Anatolia would suggest that the Greeks should not have arrived in their own

historical territory until long after we actually have evidence for the Greek language in the fourteenth century BC Linear B inscriptions.

In the period immediately prior to the emergence of the Hurrians, the northern area of their distribution was occupied by the Kuro-Araxes culture (c 3400–2500 BC). The distribution of Kuro-Araxes sites would encompass the territory of the Etio and Urartians as well as the northern part of the Hurrians. It is often presumed that the Kuro-Araxes culture is an archaeological reflection of the Hurrians. Its successors boast sites such as Lchashen and Trialeti with their abundant evidence for wheeled vehicles placed in tombs, a useful reminder that wheeled vehicles need not be a particular marker of IE cultural identity in western Eurasia (wheeled vehicles were also buried in the Sumerian tombs at Ur and in the royal burials of the Shang dynasty in China).

The emergence of the Armenians has proven, so far at least, invisible from an archaeological standpoint. Historical texts tell us of the Hurrians and their successors in the various Urartian states, detailing their incessant wars with their Hittite, Luvian and Assyrian neighbors and the later penetration of their territory by Kimmerians and Scythians (Iranian-speaking or at least Iranian-lead groups originally from north of the Black Sea). By the seventh century BC the Urartian state was collapsing, ultimately in the face of the (Semitic) Babylonians and the Medes (Iranians of what is now northwestern Iran). By c 590, the Urartian kingdom no longer existed. By this time we find the rise of the first Armenian kingdom and by the reign of Darius I (525–485 BC), the Persians, who were the heirs of the Medes, had organized two satrapies in Armenia (or, in Persian, Armina).

Armenian presence in their historical seats should then be sought at some time before c 600 BC; how much earlier it is very difficult to imagine and the historical evidence for the Armenian highlands does not provide any reliable candidates although Igor Diakonoff has made an extensive case for seeking Armenian origins among a people known to the ancient world as the Muški. The Muški were first recorded about 1165 BC when they crossed the upper Euphrates from the west and by 1115 some 20,000 of them under their five chieftains are recorded as advancing on the upper Tigris. Diakonoff has suggested that the Muški entered Anatolia from the Balkans about the twelfth century and represented one of the peoples who contributed to the collapse of the Hittite empire and who are repeatedly mentioned in early texts. The term was certainly applied to the Phrygians who occupied central Anatolia and Diakonoff, accepting some form of relationship between Phrygian and Armenian, identifies the eastern Muški as Proto-Armenians. Hence as we find Muški in the historical seats of the Armenians by about the twelfth century and we know the same name was applied to IE Phrygians to their west, then at least a case can be made for presuming that the Muški reflected an intrusive IE-speaking population. Diakonoff suggests that the Armenian name for themselves, Hayk', derives from *Hāttiyos, the name applied

by the Urartians to all the peoples from west of the Euphrates, i.e., the Hittite (or better, Hattic) lands.

The Armenians, according to Diakonoff, are then an amalgam of the Hurrians (and Urartians), Luvians and the Proto-Armenian Muški who carried their IE language eastwards across Anatolia. After arriving in its historical territory, Proto-Armenian would appear to have undergone massive influence on the part of the languages it eventually replaced. Armenian phonology, for instance, appears to have been greatly affected by Urartian, which may suggest a long period of bilingualism. Loanwords from Luvian can be identified (and perhaps from Hittite also) as can loanwords from Aramaic, though these strata are dwarfed by the massive influx of Iranian words, mainly from the neighboring Parthian in northwestern Iran. In this process not only was the Armenian lexicon affected but also the grammar.

See also INDO-EUROPEAN LANGUAGES. [D.Q.A., J.P.M.]

### Further Readings

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