

## Etruscan is related to Hurro-Urartian

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### Abstract

Etruscan is a quite close relative of Hurro-Urartian languages. Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian have no prefixes, and all grammatical meanings are expressed by suffixes. The present active voice in Etruscan is often expressed by an unmarked root, and in Hurrian the present tense is morphologically unmarked. In some forms the present tense active in Etruscan is marked by the *-e* ending, that correlates with the Hurrian *-ēd-* / *-ed-* suffix that is sometimes considered as a marker of the imperfective aspect. The Etruscan jussive marker *-a* correlates with Hurrian markers of jussive *-en* / *-an*. “One” Etruscan *t<sup>h</sup>u* ~ Hurrian *šukko* / *šuki*; “two” Etruscan *tsal* ~ Hurrian *šini*; “three” Etruscan *ki* ~ Hurrian *kike*; “eight” Etruscan *ketsp* ~ Hurrian *kiri/kira*; “to be” Etruscan *am* ~ Hurrian *mann*; “to give” Etruscan *al* ~ Hurrian *ar*; “mother” Etruscan *ati* ~ Hurrian *ašte* “wife”, *ašti* “woman”; “daughter” Etruscan – *sek/sek<sup>h</sup>* ~ Hurrian *\*šala*.

**Keywords:** Etruscan language; Hurro-Urartian languages; comparative linguistics

### 1. Introduction to the problem

Some scholars pointed on some resemblance of Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian (Facchetti 2002; Orël, Starostin 2007).

V. E. Orel and S. A. Starostin tried to prove that Etruscan is not just a relative of Hurro-Urartian, but also a relative of East Caucasian.

I am to note that the idea of relatedness of Hurro-Urartian and East Caucasian is completely wrong, since the Caucasian languages have quite well elaborated prefixation, while the Hurro-Urartian languages have no prefixes.

Hurro-Urartian are supposed to be related to Elamite, which in its turn is a relative of Dravidian, which in their turn seems to be relatives of Altaic and Uralic languages, and probably also Eskimo and Aleut languages are supposed to belong to the Altaic stock. All these languages have no prefixes at all or demonstrate poorly elaborated prefixation, and in this aspect they differ seriously from Chukoto-Kamchatkan, Indo-European, Kartvelian, and Afro-Asiatic which have relatively well elaborated prefixation. As far as this new macrofamily has been created of languages that have been extracted from the classical Nostratic macrofamily, so it can be conventionally named Para-Nostratics (see Kitaev 2023: 39).

I suppose, however, that it would be more correct and more convenient to name this new macrofamily Eskimo-Tyrrhenian.

To resolve whether certain languages are related or not, one should compare the verb grammars of two languages using the Verb Grammar Correlation Index (VGCI).

VGCI can completely resolve whether two languages are related (i.e.: belong to the same stock). VGCI is a method of comparative linguistics that supposes direct comparison of really existing/existed languages and doesn't require reconstructions. The method is based on the idea that any language is determined by the set of grammatical meanings and by their positional distributions. According to VGCI the degree of correlation/resemblance of two

languages is a superposition (logical conjunction) of two indexes: the degree of correlation of sets of grammatical meanings, and the degree of correlation sets of positional distributions of common meanings. The method intentionally deals with pure structures only, i.e.: grammatical meanings and their positional distributions, and doesn't pay attention to material implementations. The more closely related are certain languages the higher is the corresponding index of correlation: two languages belong to the same family/stock if the value of their VGCI is about 0.4 or higher. If the value of VGCI is 0.3 and lower, then the compared languages are unrelated, i.e.: belong to different families/stocks (for more details about the method see Akulov 2015).

However, if a grammar of a certain language has many lacunes, then applying of this method is hardly possible. For successful use of this method, should be represented quite complete descriptions of the grammars of the compared languages without serious gaps, otherwise the method will give incorrect values.

At present there are still many blank spots in the Etruscan grammar, we know nothing about a whole series of tenses, moods, and modalities that should apparently be represented in Etruscan, but in fact they are not mentioned in grammars, for example, such as: future tense, desiderative, conditional, causative, and therefore it is not possible to apply VGCI to the Etruscan and Hurrian and Urartian grammars.

Therefore, in the case of Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian, I will simply compare/consider all available facts.

## 2. Comparison of Etruscan with Hurro-Urartian

As it has been noted above, Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian have no prefixes, and so all grammatical meanings are expressed by suffixes.

### 2.1. Correspondences of verb grammar

1) The present active voice in Etruscan can often be expressed by simple unmarked root<sup>1</sup>, and it correlates well with the fact that in Hurrian the present tense is morphologically unmarked<sup>2</sup>.

2) Also in some forms the present tense active in Etruscan is marked by the *-e*<sup>3</sup> ending that can be compared with the Hurrian marker of future *-ēd-* (also *-ed-*)<sup>4</sup>. In this interpretation it is supposed that this *-e* ending marks something alike present-future tense.

Wilhelm points on the fact that this *-ēd-* / *-ed-* suffix has sometimes been considered as an aspectual marker, namely as a marker of an imperfective aspect (Wilhelm 2008: 97), and in such case it is very close to the Etruscan marker of present tense *-e*.

3) The Etruscan jussive marker *-a*<sup>5</sup> ~ Hurrian jussive markers *-en* / *-an* (the final *-n* in could be a pronominal element)<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Rix 2008: 155.

<sup>2</sup> Wilhelm 2008: 97

<sup>3</sup> Rix 2008: 155.

<sup>4</sup> Wilhelm 2008: 97.

<sup>5</sup> Wallace 2016

<sup>6</sup> Wilhelm 2008: 99.

4) The Etruscan past / preterite /perfect marker *-Vke*<sup>7</sup> ~ the Hurrian preterite marker *-ož*<sup>8</sup>. However, this correspondence actually seems to be quite doubtful.

## 2.2. Some lexical correspondences

Quite a representative list of lexical correspondences between Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian is represented in Orël, Starostin 2007, but some of those correspondences are at least doubtful, so in the current paper I pay attention only to the most evident lexical correspondences.

### 2.2.1. Numerals

“one” Etruscan *t<sup>h</sup>u*<sup>9</sup> ~ Hurrian *šukko / šuki*<sup>10</sup>, this correspondence also has been noticed by Orel and Starostin (Orël, Starostin 2007: 473);

“two” Etruscan *tsal*<sup>11</sup> ~ Hurrian *šini*<sup>12</sup>, this correspondence also has been noticed by Orel and Starostin (Orël, Starostin 2007: 472);

“three” Etruscan *ki*<sup>13</sup> ~ Hurrian *kike*<sup>14</sup>; this correspondence also has been noticed by Orel and Starostin (Orël, Starostin 2007: 472);

“eight” Etruscan *ketsp*<sup>15</sup> ~ Hurrian *kiri / kira*<sup>16</sup>.

### 2.2.2. Kinship terms and words denoting people

“daughter” Etruscan – *sek / sek*<sup>17</sup> ~ Hurrian *\*šala*<sup>18</sup>;

“maid” / “companion” – Etruscan – *snenat*<sup>19</sup> ~ Hurrian *šēna* – “brother”<sup>20</sup>;

“mother” Etruscan *ati*<sup>21</sup> ~ Hurrian – *ašte* – “wife”, *ašti* – “woman”<sup>22</sup>.

### 2.2.3 Verbal roots

“to be” Etruscan – *am* ~ Hurrian *mann*, Urartian *man* (Orël, Starostin 2007: 472);

“to give” Etruscan – *al* ~ Hurrian – *ar* (Orël, Starostin 2007: 472);

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<sup>7</sup> Rix 2008: 155.

<sup>8</sup> Wilhelm 2008: 97.

<sup>9</sup> Bonfante, Bonfante 2002: 96

<sup>10</sup> Wikipedia 2024b.

<sup>11</sup> Bonfante, Bonfante 2002: 96

<sup>12</sup> Wikipedia 2024b.

<sup>13</sup> Bonfante, Bonfante 2002: 96

<sup>14</sup> Wikipedia 2024b.

<sup>15</sup> Bonfante, Bonfante 2002: 96

<sup>16</sup> Wikipedia 2024b.

<sup>17</sup> Bonfante, Bonfante 2002: 111

<sup>18</sup> Palaeolexicon 2024.

<sup>19</sup> Wikipedia 2024a

<sup>20</sup> Palaeolexicon 2024.

<sup>21</sup> Bonfante, Bonfante 2002: 111

<sup>22</sup> Palaeolexicon 2024.

“to pray” Etruscan – *elu / ilu* ~ Hurrian – *el(a)-m* (Orël, Starostin 2007: 474);

“to put” Etruscan – *hek* ~ Hurrian *keb / geb / hew / kew / gew* (Orël, Starostin 2007: 473).

#### 2.2.4. Other words

“deity” / “god” Etruscan *ais / eis* (plural form: *aisoi, eiser*)<sup>23</sup> ~ Hurrian *eni* (plural: *en-žari*)<sup>24</sup>. The correspondence of Etruscan and Hurrian words for “deity”, also has been noticed by Orel and Starostin (Orel, Starostin 2007: 472);

“kind of magistrate” Etruscan *maru* ~ Hurrian *mari(j)-annə* “charioteer”, Urartian *marə* “a rather highly placed group of the palace personnel” (Orël, Starostin 2007: 473);

“water” Etruscan *t<sup>h</sup>ik*<sup>25</sup> ~ Hurrian *šije* – “water”, “river”<sup>26</sup>

“worship site” Etruscan *fanu* ~ Hurrian *fâvanə* – “hill” (Orël, Starostin 2007: 474)

“year” Etruscan *avil*<sup>27</sup> ~ Hurrian *šawali*<sup>28</sup>, this correspondence has been noticed by Orel and Starostin (see Orel, Starostin 2007: 472).

### 3. Some preliminary conclusions

The situation with Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian is very much alike the situation with Minoan/Keftiw and Hattic: there is no a complete grammar of the Minoan/Keftiw language, but there are some facts that allow us to see that Minoan/Keftiw is a dialect of Hattic (see for instance Akulov 2017, 2021).

In the case of Etruscan and Hurro-Urartian the situation is even better than that of Minoan and Hattic, since Etruscan is described much more fully than Minoan and Hurro-Urartian are described much better than Hattic.

Thus, it is possible to say that the facts presented above, quite convincingly show that Etruscan is related to the Hurro-Urartian languages, and that Etruscan is closer to Hurrian than to Urartian.

It is possible to suppose that some groups of the Hurrians moved to the Mediterranean region and reached Italian peninsula during the Late Bronze Age collapse that took place in the 12<sup>th</sup> century BCE.

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