

# NEW READINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS IN THE RECENTLY DISCOVERED URARTIAN CUNEIFORM TEXT FROM AYANIS

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## 1. Etymology of the words *išerhini* and *ešinini*

The new inscription from Ayanis helps to establish that the word *išerhini* first was attested in one inscription of Menua still in 1880s which originates from Tsolakert (on the northern slope of Greater Ararat).<sup>1</sup> But due to the defective state of the inscription it remained unnoticed in the special literature.

It might seem that the extensive inscription of Rusa II from Karmir blur could have offer a clue for the establishment of the phonetic writing of *išerhini*. But this time also the sign *i* at the beginning of the word erroneously was attached to the previous word *LUGÁL-tuḫini* “kingly” and the imaginary word *\*šerhini* was put into relation with the word *šeri*.<sup>2</sup>

Finally, *išerhini* figures twice also in the newly found inscription of Rusa II from Ayanis, which makes possible to establish the phonetic writing of that word.<sup>3</sup> Remarkably, in both cases *išerhini* is attested at the beginning of the text and its phonetic form could not be doubted.

Now, after this preface let us analyze briefly the inscriptions of Menua and Rusa II and try to find out what could be said about this word *išerhini* on the textual materials of these identical inscriptions.

The passage of Tsolakert inscription of Menua:

1. [<sup>d</sup>Hal]-di-ni-ni uš-ma-ši-n[i]
2. [i]-ú <sup>m</sup>Me-nu-a-še <sup>m</sup>Er-ku-a-h[i]
3. [KUR-n]i i-ú <sup>URU</sup>Lu-ḫi-ú-ni-ni KUR-ni
4. [i]-še-er-ḫi-ni i-ni e-si
5. [<sup>m</sup>Me]-nu-a-še e-ši-ni-ni du-ni
6. [ši-d]i-iš-tú-a-li <sup>d</sup>Hal-di-ni-li KÁ
7. [É.GAL ba-du-[s]i-i-e<sup>4</sup>

Before discussing the word *išerhini* it would be appropriate to turn to all identical contexts of different Urartian inscriptions, and among them that of Tsolakert.

First, it is remarkable that at the beginning of Tsolakert inscription, due to the inaccuracy of the scribe, is absent the verb *ḫauni* “conquered”. Here the text describes

<sup>1</sup> Smbateanc 1886: inset between pages 500-501; Müller 1887: 216-219.

<sup>2</sup> Harutyunyan 1966: 38, text N.1, line 4; Melikishvili 1971: 267, line 4; Harutyunyan 2001: 348, 424, line 4 and n.5.

<sup>3</sup> Salvini 2001: 254, (I, 5), 258 (V, 55).

<sup>4</sup> Harutyunyan 2001, 48, lines 1-7.

the conquest of the country of Erikuah<sub>i</sub> and its administrative center of Luḫiuni. Instead, in the text twice is written the word *iu* “when”, in connection with Erikuah<sub>i</sub> and Luḫiuni.

By the way, despite the absence of the verb *ḥauni* and double usage of *iu*, is of considerable importance the passage which follows *išerḫini*, where it is said: *ini esi<sup>m</sup> Menuaše ešinini duni šidištuali<sup>d</sup> Ḥaldinili KÁ É.GAL badusie*. We shall mention that the general sense of the quoted passage is well-known to scholars. In this part the text tells about making that place (*ini esi*) as *ešinini* by Menua, that is the erection (*šidištuali*) of the Doors of Haldi (*<sup>d</sup>Ḥaldinili KÁ*), i.e. the temple and the magnificent (*badusie*) temple (*É.GAL*).

Therefore, in the quoted passage of Tsolakert still remains untranslated only the word *ešinini* since in the phrase *ešinini duni* the second word *duni* is safely interpreted as “has made” which in Urartian texts often is used in the sense *d(u)* “to do”, “to make” and in compound formations like *abili-d(u)*, *uedia-d(u)*, *ueli-d(u)*. As to *ešinini*, due to the scarcity of materials it remains unexplained. It was not discussed neither in the existing corpuses of Urartian texts, nor in other studies.

Besides Tsolakert, *ešini(ni)* is attested in another defective inscription of Menua from Güzak (modern Karatavuk), on the north-eastern shore of Lake Van. In some sense the inscription is similar to Tsolakert since here is also mentioned Luḫiuni, the administrative center of Erikuah<sub>i</sub>. Here is used the word *patari* “city” which replaces the word *É.GAL* “fortress” of Tsolakert.<sup>5</sup>

In the another identical and also defective inscription from Güzak is mentioned the same Luḫiuni, and *<sup>d</sup>Ḥaldinili KÁ<sup>MES</sup> badusi*, that is the erection of a magnificent temple.<sup>6</sup> And, finally, in regard to our problem is of interest also another inscription of the same Urartian king which is kept in the museum of Van, where also is mentioned the temple (*<sup>d</sup>Ḥaldinili KÁ*) and fortress (*É.GAL-ni*) built in Erikuah<sub>i</sub> (Menuah<sub>i</sub>nili).<sup>7</sup>

So, the textual data clearly show that all inscriptions quoted above tell about one and the same building undertakings of this Urartian king in the Ararat plain, carried out on its left bank. Hence, the word *ešinini* (or the phrase *ešinini duni*), probably, like in Tsolakert and Güzak, was used (or is expected to have been used) also in all other inscriptions. By the way, the inscription from the museum of Van (see below) which is almost complete, does not contain the phrase *ešinini duni*, but taking into account the fact that it actually repeats the event referred to in Tsolakert (the erection of a magnificent fortress Menuah<sub>i</sub>nili and the temple of Haldi), we think that in this case the existence of *ešinini duni* should be expected.

Taking into account what was said above, we are inclined to suggest for the word *ešinini* of Tsolakert and Güzak the meaning “habitable”, and for the phrase *ešinini duni* correspondingly “make habitable”. Probably, in all cases the king hints at his actions of making the uninhabited territories (which are mentioned many times in the Urartian

<sup>5</sup> Idem: 50, lines 2-4.

<sup>6</sup> Idem: 49, lines 1-3.

<sup>7</sup> Idem, 101, Obverse, lines 5-8, 21-25.

inscriptions) habitable, construction of irrigational system and activities in the field of agriculture, and building of fortified cities.

Above we have focused on the interpretation of *ešinini*, since in the inscription of Tsolakert only the meaning of this word along with *išerhini* needs further studies. Therefore, *ešinini* completes not only the interpretation of this inscription but also that of other identical Urartian inscriptions, particularly Güzak.

Now let us discuss again the word *išerhini* focusing on the inscription of Rusa II from Karmir blur<sup>8</sup> where in the lines 3-4 is written the next:

i-ú-me <sup>d</sup>Hal-di-še LUGÁL-tú-hi a-ru-ni na-ha-<di <sup>LÚ</sup>AD-si-ni> e-si-i LUGÁL-tú-hi-ni i-še-er-hi-ni i-ni-li <sup>d</sup>Hal-di-ni-li K[Á š]i-di-iš-tú-ú-li ba-du-si-e

“When the god Haldi granted me the kingdom (and I) sat on the paternal royal throne, *išerhini* these magnificent doors of Haldi (temple) I built”.

The comparison of the passages of the inscriptions of Tsolakert and Karmir blur shows that in both them it is spoken about the time of identical building activities of these kings in different places. In one case Menua makes habitable the right bank of the River Araxes (modern Tsolakert) and built there magnificent doors of Haldi (temple) and fortress at the time when by the might of Haldi he had conquered the country of Erikuah<sup>hi</sup> along with its center Lu<sup>hi</sup>iuni. In another case Rusa II had built magnificent doors of Haldi (temple) in Karmir blur when the supreme god Haldi granted him royal throne. The inscription from Karmir blur probably speaks in favor of the assumption that the temple at Teishebaini and the city-fortress itself coincided with the enthronement of Rusa II.

Regarding the new inscription of Rusa II from Ayanis, it should be stated that here the word *išerhini* is mentioned twice, and every time in different contexts. In one case it completely corresponds to the inscription from Karmir blur with one minor difference; while here the personal pronoun *-me* “to me” is attached to the word *iu* “when” (*iu-me* “when to me”), in Ayanis *me* is attached to the name of Haldi (<sup>d</sup>Haldiš-*me* “Haldi to me”). Therefore, here also, like in Karmir blur, *išerhini* shows that the erection of magnificent doors of Haldi (*išerhini inili <sup>d</sup>Haldinili KÁ šidištuli badusie*) chronologically follows directly the granting of the throne to the Urartian king by Haldi (*iu-me <sup>d</sup>Haldiše LUGÁL-tú<sup>hi</sup> aruni nahadi <sup>LÚ</sup>AD-sini esi LUGÁL-tu<sup>hi</sup>ni*).<sup>9</sup>

The second attestation of *išerhini* in Ayanis appears in other context with untranslatable words:

... aše TAG qutumenaue tanuli MÁŠ.TUR <sup>d</sup>Haldie nipsidulini UDU <sup>d</sup>Haldie TAG UDU <sup>d</sup>IM-a UDU <sup>d</sup>UTU-nie UDU <sup>d</sup>rArubainie UDU <sup>d</sup>Haldinaue BE.LI UDU <sup>d</sup>Haldinaue KÁ UDU <sup>d</sup>Ua UDU DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ue ... <sup>d</sup>Haldina KÁ *išerhini* haluli uilatini...<sup>10</sup>

A thorough study of this text show that while here is spoken about different matters, the presentation remains the same as in Tsolakert, Karmir blur, and Ayanis. But, as it should be argued below, for the determination of the sense of *išerhini* exactly

<sup>8</sup> Idem, 424.

<sup>9</sup> Salvini 2001, 254, (I, lines 4-6).

<sup>10</sup> Idem, 257-258 (V, lines 5-11).

the form of representation is most important. This could be demonstrated through the usage of the words *aše* and *išerh̄ini* with that of *iu* and *išerh̄ini* of the Tsolakert, Karmir blur and Ayanis inscriptions (see lines 4-5). Here to the variant *aše* “when” corresponds the word *iu* having the same meaning “when”. In other words, in one case are extant the words *aše* and *iu* having the same meaning, in the other case *išerh̄ini* in both variants.

Now let us see whether the suggested interpretation is correct in regard to the second variant of the Ayanis inscription where it is said the next. During the ritual of the sacrifices to the gods Haldi, Teisheba, Shiwini, Uarubani, the weapon of Haldi, the doors (temple) of Haldi, Ua, and other gods in the temple took place also the offering of vine (*išerh̄ini haluli uilatini*).

Therefore, when the words *iu* and *išerh̄ini* are used, while (*iu*) Urartian kings sat on the throne, during (*išerh̄ini*) that procedure they undertook building of temples and fortresses, and settling people in that place (*ini esi ešinini duni*). In the case of *aše* and *išerh̄ini*, when (*aše*) in the temple took place sacrifices of animals to honor the gods, weapons of Haldi etc., at that time (*išerh̄ini*), in the course of official cultic ceremonies was offered also vine (*haluli uilatini*).

In any case, in all contexts of the inscriptions discussed above the word *išerh̄ini* most probably expresses the idea of time. A crucial information for the treatment of *išerh̄ini* contains the inscription from Karataş of Sarduri II where it written:

<sup>md</sup>Sarduriše <sup>m</sup>Argištiḫiniše alie iu <sup>d</sup>Haldiš-me LUGÁL-tuḫi aruni naḫadi <sup>LÚ</sup>AD-sini esi LUGÁL-tuḫini ikukani MU terubi É.GAL badusie <sup>md</sup>Sarduriei URU tini<sup>11</sup>

“Sarduri, son of Argishti says: When the god Haldi granted me the kingship (and I) sat on paternal royal throne, in that same year I founded a magnificent fortress with the name ‘city of Sarduri’”.

In this regard a question might arise since the text mentioned above does not contain the word *išerh̄ini*. But it could be observed that here we deal with the duplicate of the text which mentions *išerh̄ini*. In both texts the same events are referred to, that is the building of new temples and fortresses which took place after the enthronement of kings – “in that time” (*išerh̄ini*) or “in that same year” (*ikukani MU*).

The word and the phrase *išerh̄ini* and *ikukani MU* in Urartian texts usually are used in those cases when the given text begins with *iu* “when”. The study of such contexts reveals that *išerh̄ini* or *ikukani MU* not always figure in texts but their meaning is expected. For such cases we shall quote three passages:

- 1) ...<sup>m</sup>Menuaše <sup>m</sup>Išpuinieḫe iu <sup>LÚ</sup>ateini esi naḫubi <sup>KUR</sup>Šatiruni durbaie manu<sup>12</sup>  
... Menua, son of Ishpuini, when ascended on the paternal place (throne), (the country of ) Shatiruni rebelled ...
- 2) <sup>m</sup>Menuaše <sup>m</sup>Išpuiniḫiniše ... iu <sup>d</sup>Haldinili KÁ šidištuali É.GAL šidištuni badusie teruni <sup>d</sup>Haldi patari tini ini <sup>GIŠ</sup>uldi teruni <sup>GIŠ</sup>ṣarie...<sup>13</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Idem, 274 (lines 2-6).

<sup>12</sup> Harutyunyan 2001: 148, lines 6-8.

<sup>13</sup> Idem: 49, lines 1-3.

Menua, son of Ishpuini, ... when built the doors of Haldi (temple), built a magnificent fortress, founded a city of Haldi, this garden of vine founded, garden of fruits ...

- 3) <sup>md</sup>Sarduriše <sup>m</sup>Argištiḫiniše alie iu <sup>KUR</sup>Uḫimeali ḥaubi biduiaše ikukani KASKAL ḥaubi <sup>URU</sup>Maqaltuni...<sup>14</sup>

... Sarduri, son of Argishti, says: When the country of Uḫimeali I conquered, by the return I conquered (also) the city of Maqaltuni ...

Therefore, it is easy to notice that in the texts quoted above *išerḫini* or *ikukani MU*, although unattested, are expected, used between the verb *naḥabe* and <sup>KUR</sup>Šatiruni, adverb *badusie* and verb *teruni*, and verb *ḥaubi* with the noun *biduiaše*.

Here it remains to add that M.Salvini, the editor of the new inscription from Ayanis, is right when he interprets *išerḫini* as adverb, that is secures for this word a possibility to be regarded as an adverb.<sup>15</sup> Taking into account the textual materials mentioned above, it appears that the word *išerḫini* is an adverb of time.

## 2. Etymology of the word *šišini*

This word is attested in Urartian cuneiform texts only twice. One of them is known still from the first editions of Khorkhor annals of Argishti I,<sup>16</sup> and the second figures in the inscription of Rusa II from Ayanis.<sup>17</sup>

The interpretation of *šišini*, as well as its reading had caused problems. G.A.Melikishvili, the author of the Corpus of Urartian inscriptions, for example, instead of *ši-ši-ni MU* suggests the combination of the logograms ŠI.ŠI.DÙ MU(?) and had translated only *MU* “year”.<sup>18</sup> As to the reading *ši-ši-ni*, it was established by A.Goetze.<sup>19</sup>

Later the reading of A.Goetze was accepted by F.W.König who also had left this word without translation.<sup>20</sup> In 1963 I.M.Diakonoff suggested an interpretation for this word which was based on its relationship with the reconstructed word *\*šišē* (= *III-še* “three”).<sup>21</sup>

During a quite long period we were inclined to accept the assumption of I.M.Diakonoff, particularly in our Corpus of Urartian inscriptions.<sup>22</sup> And M.Salvini suggested for the word *šišini* the translation “second time”, since to the goddess *Inua(ni)* twice was sacrificed a sheep - *UDU* <sup>d</sup>*Inuanie* ... *UDU* <sup>d</sup>*Inuanie* *šišinie* in one and the same inscription from Ayanis.<sup>23</sup>

<sup>14</sup> Idem: 248, lines 2-6.

<sup>15</sup> Salvini 2001: 259, (I, 5).

<sup>16</sup> Sayce 1882, inscription 20.

<sup>17</sup> Salvini 2001: 254, (II, 2).

<sup>18</sup> Melikishvili 1960, 128B1, line 34 and n. 13.

<sup>19</sup> Goetze 1936: 282.

<sup>20</sup> König 1957, 82, Rev., line 34.

<sup>21</sup> Diakonoff 1963: 76 (and n. 122), 91.

<sup>22</sup> Harutyunyan 2001: 174B1, line 34 and n. 14, also p. 464.

<sup>23</sup> Salvini 2001: 259 (II, 2).

But now the study of new material leads us to the assumption that the translation “three” and “second time” for *šišini* are not justified neither in the case of the Khorkhor annals, nor in Ayanis. Hence, we shall carefully look once more on the existing data.

In one of the duplicates of the Khorkhor annals we find the next passage:

[<sup>m</sup>A]r-gi-iš-ti-še a-li-e a-li-e-li LUGÁL<sup>MEŠ</sup> [a]r-nu-i-a-li <sup>m</sup>Di-a-ú-hi-ni-e ši-ši-ni MU [ha]-ú-bi <sup>KUR</sup>Lu-šá-e KUR-ni-e <sup>KUR</sup>Ka-tar-za-e KUR-ni-e [<sup>m</sup>E-ri-a-hi KUR-ni-e <sup>KUR</sup>Gu-lu-ta-hi...<sup>24</sup>

This text reminds those passages of Urartian annals where during consecutive yearly campaigns the conquest of hostile countries are preceded by the phrases *ikukani MU haubi* “I conquered at the same year”, *ikukani MU šištini* (or *šišuhani, tarani*) *haubi* “I conquered at the *šišini* of the same year (or *šišuhani, tarani*)”. Indeed, until now the words *šišini*, *šišuhani*, and *tarani* does not have well-founded translations and some scholars had tried to hypothesize that they merely mean names of the seasons of the year or the order of campaigns. But for the treatment of *šišini* is more important that since long it was established that the phrase *šišini MU* is the variant of *ikukani MU (šāli)* “at that same year”.

Therefore, we can assume that *šišini* could be the equivalent of *ikukani*, and suggest the translation “in that year” for *šišini MU*. Such translation is justified for the next passage of the Khorkhor annals:

“Argishti says: (those) kings who came to the aid of Diauhi, in that year I conquered the countries Lusha, Katarza, Eriahi, Gulutahi ... “.

Here we shall add that the main undertaking of Argishti I, probably, was the conquest of the tribal union of Etiuni, which is mentioned only at the beginning of the text which serves as the summary of his dealings.<sup>25</sup> As to the conquest of allied countries who came to the aid of Diauhi, which took place “in the same year” (*šišini MU*), probably, they were the subjects or allies of Etiuni.

Now let us see if the proposed translation “same, mentioned” for *šišini* is justified in the case of Ayanis which deals with the goddess Inuani:

... UDU <sup>d</sup>E-i-du-ru UDU <sup>d</sup>Ba-ba-a UDU <sup>d</sup>A-di-a UDU <sup>d</sup>Sar-di-e UDU <sup>d</sup>I-nu-a-ni-i-e UDU <sup>d</sup>A-ia-a UDU <sup>d</sup>Ṭu-uš-pu-ni-a UDU <sup>d</sup>I-nu-a-ni-e ši-ši-ni-e...<sup>26</sup>

As it is evident, during the rituals accompanied by animal sacrifices in the Doors of Haldi (*<sup>d</sup>Haldinili KÁ-li*), for the goddess *Inuani* is reserved a special place, that is double sacrifice of sheep. And that this action took place not simultaneously but successively, first “a sheep for Inuani”, then “a sheep to the *šišini* of Inuani”.

On the other side, it is remarkable that for Uarubani, the spouse of the supreme god Haldi was sacrificed only a cow. The double sacrifice of sheeps was assigned for all other gods who were not mentioned by name (*DINGIR<sup>MEŠ</sup>* “gods” and *<sup>d</sup>NIN<sup>MEŠ</sup>* “goddesses”).

<sup>24</sup> Harutyunyan 2001: 174B1, lines 33-36.

<sup>25</sup> Idem, 174B1, lines 27-29.

<sup>26</sup> Salvini 2001: 259, (II, 1-2).

It is remarkable that the text clearly distinguishes from each other two sacrifices performed for Inuani, with interval. This might be an evidence that in the duplicate of Khorkhor annals the translation “mentioned” is equally justified also for the Ayanis inscription. In one case is written *šišini MU ḥaubi* “I conquered in the mentioned year” (cf. *ikukani MU ḥaubi* “I conquered in the same year”), in another *UDU <sup>d</sup>Inuanie šišinie* “a sheep to the mentioned Inuani”.

Taking into account our argumentation presented above, we suggest the next translation for the passage of the Ayanis inscription as follows:

“... a sheep to the goddess Euduru, a sheep to the goddess Baba, a sheep to the goddess Adia, a sheep to the goddess Sardi, a sheep to the goddess Inuani, a sheep to the goddess Aia, a sheep to the goddess Tushpunia, a sheep to the mentioned goddess Inuani”.

Concluding the article we shall add that the name *<sup>d</sup>Inuani* means “goddess” in Urartian, and *<sup>d</sup>inuanaue* which is attested in the inscription of Mheri dur and Çelebibağrı is well known since long.<sup>27</sup> And now we have its logographic form in Ayanis as *<sup>d</sup>NIN<sup>MEŠ</sup>-ue*.<sup>28</sup>

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*Translated from the Armenian by Aram Kosyan*

<sup>27</sup> Idem: 449.

<sup>28</sup> Salvini 2001: 254, (II, 2).