Achtung!

Attention!
This is a special internet edition of the article „Old Armenian and Caucasian Calendar Systems [I]“ by Jost Gippert (1986).
It should not be quoted as such. For quotations, please refer to the original edition in Annual of Armenian Linguistics 8, 1987, 63-72.

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Jost Gippert, Frankfurt 2001–2011
The discussion of the Old Armenian month names has been re-opened by a recent article in this journal.¹ The author dealt mainly with the Iranian elements in the list, confronting it with a synoptical table of Middle Iranian calendar systems. In a paper read in Oslo, July 1986, I tried to show that such a confrontation hardly yields new insights with regard to the Old Armenian calendar:² It does not explain, e.g., why most of the “Iranian” month names etymologically are names not of months but of festivals, and how they were combined with perhaps autochthonous designations to give a twelve-month calendar. Instead I claimed that a different comparison should be more effective, i.e., with the calendar systems of the neighboring non-Iranian peoples. This holds for two such systems which had in fact been confronted with the Armenian calendar for the first time as early as 1832,³ but had been left out of the discussion again in more recent times.⁴

The results of my Oslo paper, in which I could deal with the Old Georgian calendar only, can be summarized as follows:

The Old Georgian month names, which were used until in the seventh or eighth century Latin designations were taken over, have come down to us in three branches of tradition. First, we have the list compiled by the Georgian lexicographer Sulxan-Saba Orbeliani (early eighteenth century) in his “Leksik’oni kartuli”, used by M. Brosset, through the Georgian prince Teimuraz, in his article in 1832. Second, a comparable list was preserved in Armenian tradition in the calendar
treatises of the authors Anania Širakac’i (seventh century) and Hovhannes Imastaser (twelfth century). The third and most important branch of tradition is the Old Georgian textual material itself, which reveals some 50 attestations within Bible translation and hagiography. These attestations, while largely agreeing with the lists for relative sequence, do not reestablish the chronological shape of the Old Georgian year compared with, e.g., the Julian year because there are contradictions with other parallel traditions. A tentative conclusion leads to the following equational table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Latin month</th>
<th>= Georgian month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>January</td>
<td>surc’q’nisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February</td>
<td>mhrak’nisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March</td>
<td>igrik’isay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April</td>
<td>vardobisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May</td>
<td>marialisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June</td>
<td>tibisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July</td>
<td>kueltobisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August</td>
<td>axale’lisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September</td>
<td>stulisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October</td>
<td>? t’irisk’nisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November</td>
<td>? t’irisdinisay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December</td>
<td>ap’nisay</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It can easily be shown that the basic structure of the Old Georgian and the Old Armenian month lists was the same. In word formation every month is in a genitive form (navasard-i, ara-c’ etc.), the Georgian forms being built on genitive -isa-; the structure is an attributive scheme “month of (the) x.” The etymological basis also agrees. If we start with the month axale’lisay, and confront the Georgian list with the Armenian starting with nawasardi, we can state agreements in at least five positions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Georgian month</th>
<th>Armenian month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. axale’l-isay</td>
<td>nawasard-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. stul-isay</td>
<td>hoř-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. t’irisk’n-isay</td>
<td>sahm-i</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. t’irisdin-isay</td>
<td>trē</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. ap’n-isay</td>
<td>k’alo-c’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. surc’q’n-isay</td>
<td>ara-c’</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Identity can be postulated for *mihrakan-* and *mehekan-* (7.), for *marer-* and *mareri-* (10.), from the Iranian preforms *mihrakana-* and *madyar-* > *marear.*\(^5\) We can connect *t’irisdinisay* and *trē* through the Iranian name of the god *Tir.*\(^6\) The Georgian *axal’*-*isay*, obviously built on *axal’-el-* ‘New Year’, represents a loan translation of the Iranian preserved in the Armenian *nawasardi.*\(^7\)

As a semantic concordance, the Georgian *tib-*-*isay* has long been interpreted as ‘month of mowing or haycrop’,\(^8\) which fits quite well with the Armenian *marga-c’* ‘month of the meadows’.

Although many of the Old Georgian (and some Old Armenian) month names remain unclear, the mass of concordances above can hardly be accidental. It suggests that both lists had a common skeleton in the Iranian calendar of festivals, filled in with names reflecting seasonal terms. Some further observations: The two remaining Armenian month names from Iranian festivals, *ahekani* and *hrotic’*,\(^9\) match the Georgian *vardobisay* and *kueltobisay*, both from a noun in -oba-, a suffix forming names of festivals (*vard-oba-* ‘rose feast’, from *vard-i* ‘rose’); *vardoba*– and *kueltoba*– seem to stand for the Iranian models of *ahekani* and *hrotic’, although *kueltoba*– is not yet clear.\(^10\)

I now want to examine some problems of the Old Armenian month names for which Old Georgian gives evidential support. The present part is devoted to the names that have an Iranian origin. In a second part, I shall deal with the etymology of the Armenian *hoṛi* and *sahmi*. A discussion of the ‘Albanian’ month names and of the chronological facts involved in the comparison of the Armenian and Caucasian calendars will finish the article.

An Iranian etymology has been claimed for six Armenian month names, only three of which fully agree with the rules for borrowings from Arsacid Middle Iranian (Parthian), viz. *nawasardi* (1.), *mareri* (10.) and *hrotic’* (12.). The first must be the genitive singular of an -a-stem *nawasard*, from a Parthian *naua-sard- ‘New Year’. *Mareri* is the genitive of *marear*, traceable to Avestan *maidāiiia*, the ‘fifth seasonal feast’, assuming a Parthian *maidiār*.\(^11\) The form *hrotic’,* genitive plural of an -i-stem *hrot(r)it-, exactly reflects the Iranian “immortal souls” and “protecting spirits” which through Avestan
frauwaši- must be an *i-stem frayuar-ti-\(^{12}\) for Western Iranian. Thus, hrotic’ is not identical with the Middle Persian festival name fravardigān, but rather with the first month, fravardin, in its turn derived from the festival, too.\(^{13}\) A special treatment, however, is required for the three remaining “Iranian” names, trē (4.), mehekani (7.), and ahekan (9.).

The *e- vowels in mehekani and ahekan cannot be motivated on the basis of the proposed Iranian preforms, *mihrakān- ‘festival of the god Mithra’ and *âhrakān ‘fire festival’.\(^{14}\) These forms if from Arsacid times, should have given m(r)hakan- (with syncope of the pretonic *i-) and a(r)hakan- as regular outcomes. In fact, both of these are attested in Armenian tradition: mhrkān-, an adjective ‘related to Mithra’, occurs in Agathangelos’s history,\(^ {15}\) while ahakani is a varia lectio of ahekan.\(^ {16}\) Since just the oldest manuscript preserves the “abnormal” form,\(^ {17}\) we must assume that the canonical ahekan reflects a later development. The same assumption can be made for mehekani, too, but here it is the Georgian evidence which is decisive.

Mihrak’nisay, the normal Georgian form, must be the nominative (in -y) of an hypostatical paradigm built on an underlying genitive (-isa).\(^ {18}\) Because Georgian syncope strikes the vowels a and e in certain syllables it is not clear by itself whether the basic stem here is mhrak’n-, mhrak’en- or mhrak’an-. From the Parthian *mihrakān- it is the stem mhrak’an- which becomes at once preferable.

Theoretically, a genitive like mhrak’nisa could belong to a vocalic stem in -a- or -e-; however, no Parthian words were borrowed into Georgian as stems in -a- or -e-, so that we can ignore this possibility. The nominative mhrak’ni\(^ {19}\) offers no counterevidence because it can be due to abbreviation or to false restitution from the genitive mhrak’nisa-. The reconstruction is in turn supported by forms like mirk’nisa-, e.g., in Bible translation.\(^ {20}\) These forms can be analogical levellings of different syncopations: Originally genitive mhrak’nisa and nominative *mhrk’ani both reflected underlying *mhrak’an-.

There is at least one more Old Georgian month name to be traced to an Iranian festival name, viz. marialisay.\(^ {21}\) The basic stem here is certainly *marial-; and a nominative marial-i is attested, too.\(^ {22}\) If we assume that marial- is due to regular Georgian dissimilation of two r-sounds, we reach *mariar- which exactly represents the state between Armenian marēri *marear- and Parthian maβiār-. Returning to mehekani, this form must surely share a common predecessor with Georgian mhrk’nisay, viz. *mihrakan- < Parthian *mihrakān-. We are forced to assume that mehekani- did develop within Armenian, from m(r)hakan- < *mihrakan- just as ahakan- became ahekan-.
To explain the development of -a- to -e- in the middle syllables of mehekani and ahekani, we must consider the third Iranian name that left traces in both the Armenian and the Georgian calendar: trê.

The name trê was treated by R. Schmitt in his article mentioned above. He considers it to be the genitive of a noun *Tri < Proto-Armen. *Tiri, exactly matching a Parthian *tûrî. Trê would be from a preform *Tårey = /hâray/, with a sound change as in têr 'master, lord' < *ti-ayr.23 Schmitt’s argument, however, offers several problems with respect to relative chronology. The equation of ê in trê and in têr is crucial, because the element *ti- in the preform of the latter word has to be traced back to pretonic té- itself, as the maintenance of the first i in ti-kin 'lady' shows; in view of words like asteay, genitive astêî ‘spear’, one wonders which period of Armenian sound history to assign the change *-eay to -ê to. Second, a Proto-Armenian *Tiri would lead to *Tir, not *Tri, because apocopy of final syllables is prior to syncopy. The central problem is one of stem class chronology when positing a nominative *tiri.24

A connection between Georgian t‘irisdinisay and Armenian trê became probable as soon as the latter was traced back to the name of the Iranian god Tîr.25 This, however, leaves the second element of the Georgian t‘irisdinisay unexplained, as it does the name of the third Georgian month, t‘irisk‘nisay. It is just this element, t‘iri-, which bears the clue of the problem.

In my Oslo paper I concluded that the material available does not suffice to decide which is the true order of the two months in the table above (and in Saba Orbeliani’s lexicon). Both cases fail to reveal the exact names of the months.26 With due caution, I proposed that t‘irisk‘nisay and t‘irisdinisay could be two different names of the one (fourth) month matching Armenian trê. This was suggested by the fact that for Armenian trê, too, there existed a parallel form which can be etymologically cognate: trekani, which occurs at least once in the Girk‘ t‘ît’oc’.27 Given the identification of mehe-kani and mihra-k‘nisay with the Iranian “Mithra-festival” *mihrakân-, tre-kani should be equated with t‘iris-k‘nisay and an Iranian festival name, too. The festival can only be that of the god Tîr, the 13th day of the month of Tîr, and called tîragân in Middle Persian.28

Neither trekâni nor t‘irisk‘nisay can however match exactly tîragân, which points to a Parthian *tîrakân-. The Armenian -e- of the central syllable, again, fails to agree with the Parthian -a-. But in this case, we may assume that the name should be reconstructed as *tīr(i)jakân- > *tireakan-, regularly yielding trekâni in Armenian. The Georgian t‘irisk‘nisay, of course, seems to disagree, since we
would expect *t’iriak’nisay. We seek, then, some evidence for the -s- of t’irisk’n- being a secondary linguistic or graphical phenomenon. In the 1956 edition of the Armenian author Hovhannes Imastaser a list of Georgian month names as part of a calendar treatise is reproduced after four different Erevan manuscripts.\(^2\) In three of them the third and fourth month names occur in nearly identical forms, viz. tirisdi/tirisdini, tirisl/tirisdnini and tirisdn/tirisdini; further agreeing with the forms tirisn/tirisdnini and tirisdn/tirisdini attested in the treatise of Anania Sirakac’i.\(^3\) The fourth manuscript, however, offers a very divergent reading which must be taken seriously: trisidisos and treakan (in this order!).\(^\) Although there might be an Armenian influence, the latter form seems to conceal just the postulated *t’iriak’an-.

The -s- of t’irisk’n- can be motivated as an analogical levelling from the neighbouring name, t’irisdinisay. Equating t’irisk’nisay with Armenian trekani and assuming that t’irisdinisay originally meant the same month, the latter form should converge semantically with Armenian trê as the synonym of trekani. We should thus postulate the meaning "month of (the god) Tir" for t’irisdinisay, too. This form cannot be a genitive of the god’s name alone: it can, however, come from a borrowing from Armenian, indeed attested in the genitive form Tri dic’.\(^3\) The plurale tantum di-k’ ‘deity’ contained in this figure, taken over into Georgian, yields *di-ni, which might have been reinterpreted as a singular *din-i in the appositive construction with the single deity Tir. T’irisdinisay is seen to be built upon the Georgian rendering of the apposition Tri dic’, *t’iris dinisa,\(^3\) "the (month) of Tir, (of) the deity"; the -s- of t’iris- spread into the synonymous t’irisk’nisay after both names lost their transparency,\(^3\) doubtlessly, more easily if the original form of t’irisk’nisay was *t’irak’nisay, not *t’irak’nisay.\(^3\)

Georgian thus supports Armenian trekani as *tiriakan- < Iranian *tir(i)ya-kân- as opposed to, e.g., Middle Persian tiragân; and throws new light on the origin of trê, which should reflect a stem in -ya-, namely *tiriya-.\(^3\) As *tiriya, this would have led to an Armenian nominative Trî (by apocope, and syncopy of the first syllable -i-),\(^3\) which persists in Trî dic’ if we assume that only the final member of the group was inflected.\(^3\) Trê would be an archaic genitive of Trî < *tiriya-, retained instead of a regular *trwoy (from the stems in *

Returning to mehekani and ahekani, we can now propose that the vowel -e- is due to influence of trekani, where the -e- was justified, a development that must have taken place within Armenian.\(^3\)

One problem remains with regard to mehekani: the vowel -e- of the first syllable, which cannot continue Iranian *-i-, cp. the adjective
mrhakan. A secondary assimilation of the reduced vowel resulting from syncope to the -e- of the following syllable, which was secondary itself, would match, e.g., the result in mehaan ‘shrine’ if this really is connected with the name of Mithra, too, the preform being something like *mihr(i)yan; cp. the genitive meheni. There are, however, other forms (the personal names Mehružan/Merhužan/Mehužan for which such an assimilation cannot be presumed. Together with some other similar cases, such as the name Meherdates met with in Tacit., they point to a different suggestion: There might have existed an Arsacid pronunciation with the -i- lowered to -e- by which the Armenian forms were influenced. As we have no authentic testimony of the pronunciation of short vowels in Western Iranian of that time, we must leave this problem open.

NOTES


2 An extended version of my Oslo paper “Die altgeorgischen Monatsnamen” (“Monatsnamen”) will be published in the “Proceedings” of the “3rd Caucasian Colloquium” (to appear Oslo, 1987).


The first etymology was proposed by P. de Lagarde as early as 1866 (cf. his "Gesammelte Abhandlungen", Leipzig, p. 9), the second by J. Marquart in 1907 (cf. his "Untersuchungen zur Geschichte von Eran" 2, Leipzig, p. 205). Cp. Schmitt, op. cit., p. 94 sq.

Cf. de Lagarde, l.cit. and now Schmitt, l.cit.

The equation was proposed for the first time by the Georgian prince Teimuraz who prepared the material used by Brosset in his article in 1832; cf. Journal asiatique ... p. 171.

For the presumed Iranian etymologies cf. de Lagarde, op.cit., p. 9 and 163, resp. and Schmitt, op.cit., p. 95.

The proposal of K’ek’elije (op.cit., p. 102), kue- ‘downward, below’ > *kueletoba- ‘those being below, in the underworld’, has much in its favour. This could be a calque on the Iranian fravardigan, rendered vêuxova in Greek by the Byzantine author Menander (cf. de Lagarde, op.cit., p. 161). - For details see “Monatsnamen”.

Cf. Schmitt, op.cit., p. 94 sq. In answer to Schmitt’s question on nawasardi, “wie es bei den Armeniern zu dieser Namengebung gekommen sein mag”, we must consider that it is not the Iranian month names but the festival calendar which is the main basis of the Armenian month name list.


That fravardin is the first month while Armenian hrotic’ is the twelfth is explained by the fact that the festival was located between the old and new year; cf. also Schmitt, op.cit., p. 95 sq.

Cf. Schmitt, l.c., who notes the anomaly but does not offer any solution.

Cf. § 790 of Thomson’s edition (Albany 1976, p. 328): Gayr hasanêr i Mrhakan meheann anowande ordwoyn Aramazday ... ‘He came to the temple of Mihr, called the son of Aramazd’.


A Vienna manuscript of the X.-XI. century (noted as A), cf. Inglisian, op.cit., p. 2.

This type of word formation is a well known feature of Old Georgian.
19 In the martyrology of St. Philectimon.

20 E.g., 2 Mos. 40, 2 in the freshly edited “Mcxeta” bible. - The loss of word internal -h- is well known in Old Georgian.

21 Loan translations are not at issue here.

22 Again the martyrology of St. Philectimon.

23 Cf. Schmitt, op.cit., p. 94.

24 Schmitt refers to ti-kin himself (l.cit.). As for the relative chronology of apocopy and syncopy, cf., e.g., the same author’s “Grammatik des Klassisch-Armenischen mit sprachvergleichenden Erläuterungen”, Innsbruck 1981, p. 37sq. (§ II.2.7.8.).


26 t’irisk’nisa- occurs in two martyrologies, one of which has the variant reading t’iris k’ninisa- (the martyrology of St. Thalele contained in the Georgian ms. of the Bodleian library, f. 118v, cf. P. Peeters, Analecta Bollandiana 31, 1912, p. 308). For *t’irisdinisay we have only one attestation in Old Georgian reading t’irisiliki and one attestation in an XVIII. century manuscript colophon reading t’irisdeni. The lexicon of Sulxan-Saba Orbeliani presents the forms t’irisk’nisa and t’irisdeni. For the Armenian tradition cf. below.


28 For this festival cf., e.g., M. Boyce, “On the calendar of Zoroastrian feasts”, BSOAS 33, 1970, p. 534 sqq.


31 This is f. 56 of the Matenadaran ms. no. 1999, which shows some further peculiarities, too. E.g., it is the only ms. to give the correct first letter of both the names surc’q’nisay and tibisay.

32 Cf. § 778 of Agathangelos’s history in Thomson’s edition. According to Thomson (p. 483), the form Tiur found in other editions “has no manuscript authority”; for the god’s actual name in Armenian cf. below.

33 The reinterpretation of *dini as a singular form is clear because the plural genitive would have been *di-ia, not *dinisa.

34 The variant readings quoted above show how both names influenced each other: t’irisiliki contains didi ‘great’; and t’irisk’ninisai, k’nini ‘small’. Note that in 1932 P’. Ingoroq’va still maintained the proposal of Brosset a hundred years before, that t’irisdeni (sic) means “the running of water” and is to be connected with t’irili
"weeping" (op cit., 2, p. 331 sq.).

35 The reconstruction of -ría-seems to be supported by the Jewish Talmud, too, where a "Median" feast is mentioned under the name of Tryraskai or Triaski; cf. S.H. Taqizadeh, "The Iranian Festivals Adopted by the Christians and Condemned by the Jews", BSOAS 10, 1939-42, p. 637. The -s-, however, might rather be due to a mutilation; cp. the form of the mihrakan feast given as Muharneki or Moharneki (ib.).

36 This assumption would well fit with the Middle Iranian attestations of the god’s name as a first member of compounds with the regular spelling styr-; cf. the examples offered by W.B. Henning in A.D.H. Bivar, "A Rosette phiale Inscribed in Aramaic", BSOAS 24, 1961, p. 191. The original name of the god was supposed as "Tryr" oder etwa Tria-" by Th. Nödeke, "Persische Studien I", Wien (SBAW, 116) 1888, p. 420.

37 For the borrowing of Iranian -iya- stems into Armenian words in -i cf. E. Benveniste, "Les nominatifs armeniens en -i", REA 10. 1930, p. 82 sq. with examples such as ari-k’ from ariya-.

38 This would be the normal construction of Old Armenian; cf. H. Jensen, Altarmenische Grammatik. Heidelberg 1959, § 427. Note the difference in Georgian 't’iris dinisa; perhaps the form tri was reinterpreted as a genitive (-i) at the time of the borrowing into Georgian. The same reinterpretation might have led to the restitution of a form Tiur as a nominative in the older editions of Agathangelos’s history; cf. note 32 above.

39 The analogical influence might have struck mehekani more thoroughly than ahekani as the later forms meheki and ahki show, the latter of which seems to represent the Middle Armenian development of *ahaka-ni, not ahekani.

40 I do not see why Hübschmann (AG. p. 194) regards mrhakan as a “spätere Neubildung” as well as mihrakan. The metathesis of *-hr- to -rh- points to a borrowing in Arsacid times, cp. Hübschmann’s own doublet asxarh/sahr (op.cit., p. 13).

41 Cf. Hübschmann, op.cit., p. 194.
42 Cf. the collection in Hübschmann. op.cit., p.52 sq.
43 Annales, 12, 10.
44 Cp. the variant reading mehrak’nisa- appearing in Georgian as, e.g., 1 Esra 6, 15 in the so called Ošk’i-Bible (dated AD 978). These readings are not decisive, however, because there may be an influence of an Armenian model containing mehekani itself.

45 My thanks are due to G. Klingenschmitt for a thorough discussion of the problems dealt with above.