Sound Law and Analogy in the Development of Luwic Vocalism

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The Luwic languages are understood here as a sub-family of the Anatolian branch of Indo-European, which comprises Luwian dialects, Lycian A and Lycian B (Milyan). Although its genetic unity is acknowledged since the pioneering works of Laroche (1958, 1960) and Morpurgo-Davies (1982/1983), little has been done to formalize the Proto-Luwic reconstruction, as opposed to the reconstruction at the Proto-Anatolian or Proto-Indo-European level. This problem can be illustrated by Melchert 1992, an influential paper that strives to derive the Lycian A vocalism directly from the reconstructed Indo-European vocalic inventory. A likely reason for this state of affairs is the imperfect rendering of Luwian phonology by the cuneiform and hieroglyphic writing systems.

A new discovery that facilitates the interpretation of the Proto-Luwic vowel system comes from the study of Luwian hieroglyphic texts. I submit that the distribution between the vocalic graphemes <a> and <á> in this corpus matches that between the Lycian graphemes <e>/<ẽ> and <a>/<ã>. This correspondence concerns the hieroglyphic texts dated before ca. 850 BCE, after which the Luwian vowels began to merge (Melchert 2010, Burgin 2016). The reason why we cannot trace the same correspondence in other positions is the syllabic structure of the Anatolian hieroglyphic script, yet there is enough evidence to believe that the Luwian phonological system also featured the relevant contrast word-internally. It turns out that the Lycian palatal umlaut finds its counterpart in Luwian: for example, the Hieroglyphic Luwian contrast between *a-mi-sa* /æmmi:s/ 'my (nom.sg.c)' and *á-ma* /ɑmmɑ/ 'my (nom-acc.pl.n)' mirrors the Lycian A contrast between *ẽmi* 'my (nom.sg.c)' and *ãma* 'my (nom-acc.pl.n)'.

The combined pool of the Lycian and Luwian forms displaying the contrastive phonemes is conducive to reaching their simple historical interpretation. In a nutshell, Lyc. <e>/<ẽ> and Luw. <a> continue Proto-Anatolian short non-high vowels, whereas Lyc. <a>/<ã> and Luw. <á> continue Proto-Anatolian *ā and *ō, and *ǣ. While the same conclusion had already been reached in a nutshell in Starke 1997–1999 with regard to Lycian A, the lack of the supportive Luwian evidence prevented this idea from gaining recognition. In addition, Lyc. <a>/<ã> and Luw. <á> may secondarily emerge by umlaut (see above) or next to a Proto-Luwic "laryngeal" (uvular) fricative. The last change in Proto-Luwic represents an iteration of the Proto-Indo-European "laryngeal colouring" next to *h_2, for its phonologically natural character see Sylak-Glassman 2014: 8.

At the same time, the proposed phonological reconstruction must be sensitive to the secondary differences between Luwian and Lycian, which arose through analogical levelling. For example, Luw. *á-ma-za* 'my (nom-.acc.sg.n.)' features anticipatory backing, while the matching Lycian A forms do not (see, e.g., nom.-acc.sg.n. *hrzzẽ* derived from *hrzze/i-* 'upper'). This discrepancy is unlikely to have anything to do with the Late Luwian extension *-sa/-za*, which is usually reconstructed as the possessive clitic *-sod* (Jasanoff 2010) and must accordingly have featured a front vowel in Luwian. It stands to reason that the nominative-accusative neuter plural forms in /-ɑ/ exercised influence on their singular counterparts following their fusion with the possessive clitics, which led to analogical levelling.

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