SOUND LAW AND ANALOGY

Papers in honor of Robert S.P. Beckes on the occasion of his 60th birthday

Edited by Alexander Lubotsky
Syncope and anaptyxis in Hittite

H. Craig Melchert
(University of North Carolina)

Syncope and anaptyxis are undeniably genuine and widespread synchronic and diachronic processes. However, it is often difficult to determine the precise conditioning of their occurrence in ancient languages available only in written records. This task is especially challenging in the case of Hittite, where the syllabic script makes it hard to discriminate between alternate spellings of consonant clusters (involving “empty” vowels) and real anaptyxis or syncope. In my recent monograph I was able to offer little that was new on this topic. I also took what I still believe is a properly minimalist stance (Melchert 1994: 29ff): spelling variants should be taken as merely graphic unless compelling evidence is presented for their linguistic reality. As I indicated then, all claims about specific cases are subject to revision at any time. Reexamination of certain data that I had overlooked now leads me to reconsider some aspects of the problem.

We find in the Ritual of Zuwi (CTH 412) a dialogue passage (unfortunately in a partially broken context) which involves among other things a certain bull. In connection with this bull we find two hapax legomena as epithets. I cite after the main manuscript KUB XII 63 + XXXVI 70 Ro 9 & 16, with restorations from the duplicate KBo XXII 118 ii 2 & 16: nu=za=apa KASKAL-ši kūn GU₄.MAH-an taryandan wa[(rkantan)...] (seven lines) ... [(GU₄.M)AH ...] UL tarpasıšsip malulit etaryandan šahišis ‘And on the path for the journey [...] this taryant-, fat bull (acc. sg.)’ ... ‘The bull [...] is not a ritual substitute. You sought(?) one etaryant- with soft flesh.’

Much in this episode remains obscure, at least to me, but it seems clear that certain men seize a robust bull, who protests that he is not the one they want and suggests someone else with the right qualities instead. As noted by Hoffner (1976: 337), the contextually already unlikely interpretation of taryandan in Ro 9 as the participle of tariya- ‘exert oneself, become exhausted/tired’ is now totally excluded by the evidence of the duplicate for the companion epithet warkantan ‘fat’. Hoffner himself suggests ‘healthy, sleek, robust’, and Eichner

---

1 In citing Hittite texts I use the standard sigla as found in Emmanuel Laroche, Catalogue des textes hititiques (CTH). Paris: Klincksieck, 1971.
2 Since the noun (ḪH)pḫḫḥ- makes no sense in the context, I tentatively take šahiš as preterite second singular of šašḫḫḫḫḫḫ- ‘seek’. Such a form could in fact have been the (more or less) regular outcome of a pre-Hittite *šanḫš-s (< PIE *šen-h₂-s): loss of -n-, probably with compensatory lengthening, seen elsewhere in this root (cf. Melchert 1994: 126, with refs.) and anaptyxis of an unaccented vowel in a word-final cluster of obstructant plus s (Melchert 1994: 174). We would expect the vowel to have been colored to a by the š, but in cases with stops the vowel regularly appears as -i (cf. akkiš ‘died’), whence by analogy šahiš. That this synchronically very irregular form was in turn analogically replaced by šanḫš or šanḫša is hardly surprising. I concede that I would have expected second plural in the context, not singular, but it is by no means clear just who all the participants in the dialogue are.
(1978: 65 & 1988: 14264) explicitly takes taryant- as ‘powerful’, from a stem tariya- < *tɑɾj.ye- to the same root as Hitite tarb- ‘be strong; conquer’ and tarra- ‘be strong, able’. The derivation is impeccable phonologically, but there is to my knowledge no other evidence anywhere in Hitite for the putative stem *tariye/a/- ‘be strong’. It also seems suspect to separate the hapax taryananda from the equally unique and even more obscure etaryananda of a few lines later. The latter clearly is the lectio difficilior.

I am not aware of any explanation advanced for etaryananda. The evidence of the duplicate for warkantam ‘fat’ as one epithet of the bull suggests to me the following solution: etaryananda is a by-form of the known stem étiye/a- ‘to feed, fatten’. A participle étiyandam (‘well-fed, fattened’ would be a virtual synonym of warkantam. The instrumental malulut ‘with soft flesh’ is not the means by which the person/animal was fattened, but rather an instrumental of quality: using Hoffner’s pet English rendering for the adjective we have ‘robust/sleek with soft flesh’. Justifying this proposal requires me to explain several formal details.

Although the status of “Sievers’ Law” in Hitite remains debatable (see Melchert 1994: 57f, with refs.), it seems likely on typological grounds that the stem étiye/a- was trisyllabic, with a real vowel [-i-]: [e.dri(y)ant]-. Syncope of the [-i-] would have produced a difficult sequence [e.dryant]-. One solution to this would be syllabification of the [-], leading to Hitite [a-r-], or direct anaptyxis to [a-r-]: [edaryant-]. There is at least one other example suggesting that such a scenario may be real (cited by Oettinger 1982: 164): ku-tar-ú-ni-eš ‘witnesses,’ to the stem kuturune(n)- (usually ku-ut-ru-(u)-e+.). In Melchert (1994: 29) I followed Oettinger in treating this as a mere case of alternate spelling, but I now suspect that I paid too little attention to the particulars of the phonotactics, which match those of étiyant-.

One question which I cannot fully answer is why the original high vowels in these two examples would have been syncopated in the first place. In other examples with what appear to be very similar sequences it is usually the vowel following the glide which is (sporadically) syncopated: tûnzi beside tiyani ‘they step’ or šaañunzi beside šaañuwani ‘they roast’ (see Melchert 1984: 52f & 58f, for further examples). I can offer only as a tentative suggestion for this contrast a difference in accent: loss of the [a-] in the latter examples argues that the accent was on the first syllable, while in étiyant- and kuturune(n)- it is possible (though by no means provable) that the accent was on the third syllable.6

SYNCOPE AND ANAPTYXIS IN HITTITE

In any case, the parallel of kutarwe(n)- makes a prima facie case that etaryant- is a linguistically real alternate of étiyant-. The verb étiye/a- ‘feed’ is a transparent derivative of étri- ‘food’, and analogical restoration of the trisyllabic stem [e.driye/a-] would be trivial, including in the participle. I submit, in fact, that the stem etaryant- with syncope and anaptyxis owes its survival to its having been lexicalized as an adjective ‘(well-)fed, sleek, robust’, as the context of its occurrence had already suggested. Preservation of the older, but synchronically irregular form in a secondary function would be, of course, yet another example of Kurylowycz’s “fourth law” of analogy. One may compare famous examples like English ‘sadden’ beside ‘seethe’d.

Despite its transparent relationship to edri-, the verb édriye/a- is quite rare (see Friedrich Kammenhuber 1988: 140, or Puhvel 1984: 39). It is attested to my knowledge only of animals, and it may have been a term largely the province of those charged with caring for livestock. It does not seem to me far-fetched to suppose the same of its lexicalized variant etaryant-. The latter might then have been quite opaque to the copyist of the Zuwi text (as opposed to the more common warkant- ‘fat’), and in its first occurrence he “corrected” etaryananda into the more familiar taryananda, despite the inappropriateness of the latter in the context. I would emend to òt̡ar-unanda ‘sleek and fat’ in the first occurrence, with the not uncommon pairing of near synonyms as epithets. The later malulut etaryananda ‘sleek with soft flesh’ then becomes an appropriate stylistic variant to the paired adjectives: the noun malulit- ‘soft flesh’, the major constituent of being warkant- ‘fat’, stands in for the latter.

Further confirmatory evidence for the successive syncope and anaptyxis assumed here for etaryant- and kutarwe(n)- obviously would be welcome. Experience suggests, however, that we will have to look for it in isolated places. If my interpretation and derivation of etaryant- are correct, this case illustrates once again the pervasive effects of analogy in eliminating or at least obscuring the effects of sound change. It is no wonder that we historical linguists place such high value on fossilized relics which appear to others to be mere curiosities!

5 Cf. Hitite suniye- ‘im immersive’ < *sun-h₁-yo- vs. sunna- ‘fill’ < *su-n-h₁+y and see Melchert (1994: 73).

6 Despite Eichner’s contention, there is no reason why a stem *tariye/a- ‘be strong’ should have been replaced by attested tarra-. Nothing excludes there having been a *ye/o-stem *tæye/a- in Hitite, but its existence remains purely hypothetical.

The long first [e] of étiye/a- is not a compelling argument for accent on the first syllable, since it may easily be due to analogy with the base noun étri-.

CB #3155, Dey Hall
University of North Carolina
Chapel Hill, NC 27599-3155
USA

H. Craig Melchert
References