The Word for ‘mouth’ in Hittite and Proto-Indo-European

by H. Craig Melchert

No reconstruction of the PIE word for ‘mouth’ has yet been able to account satisfactorily for the Hittite reflex (thus correctly Kloekhorst 2008: 167). A convenient summary of the many attempts is now available in Wodtke et al. (2008: 387-90). Features of the Hittite word to be explained include: ablaut, mobile accent, descriptive i-vocalism, and a geminate *šš* in the weak stem: nom.-acc. sg. a-i-tš (OS)/a-a-tš, gen. sg. šššš (OS), abl. ššššš, inst. ššššš. Whether a-i-tš represents merely an alternate spelling for the long diphthong in a-a-tš /āy/s/ or an archaic not yet contracted disyllabic /āy/s/ cannot be determined. The frequent “scriptio plena” in the final syllable of the weak case forms (ii-hi-i, ii-ša-a, ii-ša-a-az) does argue for mobile accent: /-šš-/. Any derivation of the Hittite must also consider the evidence of Cuneiform Luviain, which attests nom.-acc. sg. a-a-al-tš (a-a-al plus the obligatory particle -šš) and nom.-acc. pl. a-a-al-tš-an-ta. The latter confirms that the Luviain stem also had a geminate *šš*. The “hyperplene” spelling a-a-al may or may not represent a disyllabic /a-al/, as assumed by Starke (1990: 101) and Rieken (1999: 185). We also find the word as first compound member in Palaic aš-kummuwa ‘ritually pure’ (of food), literally ‘mouth-

---

1 I am indebted to three anonymous IJDL referees for very helpful comments and criticism that helped me improve the formulation of what follows. I of course remain solely responsible for the contents.
2 One also finds such a spelling where a disyllabic reading with hiatus is excluded, as in a-a-an-tš-tš ‘carries out’ in KUB 35.88 ii 11. This CLuvian verb obviously is cognate with Hittite antyā ‘carry out’. While there is no consensus on the etymology of this verb (compare Oettinger 1979: 345, Puhvel 1984: 71, Melchert 1994: 85, Kloekhorst 2008: 180-81), what is clear is that CLuvian ann- reflects a single prehistoric syllable and can hardly represent a disyllabic sequence with hiatus.
H. Craig Melchert

56

The Word for ‘mouth’ in Hittite and Proto-Indo-European

matized stem *pódo- (cf. Skt. pāda-) beside the root noun *pód/-p(ə)d/- leaves the relevance of this word in doubt (see Rieken 1999: 19 but for another view also Kloekhorst 2008: 654).

Hittite does preserve ablaut in some nouns with monosyllabic stems, but not mobile accent. The word k(a)trut-t/k(a)ritis- ‘flood’ (reflecting a *-trstem *gṛit-i-r, *gṛi-t-ə) cited explicitly as a model for ‘mouth’ by Rieken (1999: 186) attests no weak case forms with plene spellings in the endings. Even more significantly, the two ablauting neuter nouns in Hittite with monosyllabic stems that might be expected to be the most immediate analogical models for neuter ‘mouth’ with monosyllabic stem likewise show no evidence of mobile accent. The root noun ker/khard- ‘heart’, which is quite well attested, never shows plene spelling in the allative kar-ta, kar-da, ŠA-ta (20+ times) or in the ablative kar-ta-az (5x). The only OS spelling of the dative-locative is kar-ti and kar-di, and the latter is also the standard later spelling (9x). In view of this evidence we may ignore the hapax kar-ti- in a late New Hittite manuscript. While it is not historically a root noun, it is worth noting that per/parn- ‘house’, likewise an ablauting neuter with monosyllabic stem, shows not a single plene spelling in the endings of its weak case forms. In sum, there simply is no credible model for secondary end-accent in Hittite /iʃ/- ‘mouth’. The very isolation of mobile accent in ‘mouth’ (reflected in the plene spellings iʃ-ti, iʃ-ta, iʃ-ta-az vs. nom.-acc. a-i-il/a-i-il) versus its absence in other comparable nouns argues that it is an archaism.

Furthermore, the geminate -š- of the weak stem cannot reflect either *h₂b₁₁-əs̚- or *h₂b₁₁-ə-əs. There is no gemination of intervocalic *s after accented short vowel (see Melchert 1994: 152 and Kimball 1999: 435-9 contra Eichner 1980: 161-2). Nor is *š geminated before an accented vowel (contra Kimball 1999: 440-41 and Eichner loc. cit.). The -š- of the causative wasša- ‘to clothe’ is analogical after wasš- ‘to wear’, where the geminate is regular before another consonant in wasša (see Melchert 1994: 150-52). The stem širš- ‘liver’ may reflect *širš- (see Schindler 1966: 78). Hittite širšıra- ‘irrigate’ and related forms are based on a reduplication stem *h₂š₁₁-š₁₁- (Rieken 1999: 329-30) and show the regular assimilation of *h₂š₁₁- to -š₁₁-V- (Melchert 1994: 77-8).

Incontrovertible positive evidence for pretonic *s appearing as single Š is also scarce, since most examples appear in abluting paradigms. However, there is one compelling formally isolated example: wilštšıra- ‘to twist, press
The Word for 'mouht' in Hittite and Proto-Indo-European

As per Eichner (1973: 77) this verb is demonstrative to a stem *weisuro-* seen also in ORuss *víchäri* 'whirlwind' to the root *weis-* 'to turn'.

The verb is frequently spelled *u-ile-su-u-ri-ya-*, pointing to a Hittite accentuation *weisuro-*.

However we are to account for the fact, Anatolian consistently accepts the first vowel of the suffix in "complex" *ro*-stems (i.e. descriptively *-Ve-ro-*): compare likewise Hittite *tānāra-* 'kneading tray', Palala *tāšara-* 'sacrificial table', *bāšara-* ‘dagger’. The Hittite weak stem /iiss/- 'mouth' with a geminate -s- can only be explained by a sequence of *-VVoVV-.*

The combined i-vocalism, end-accent, and geminate -s- of the weak stem severely restrict the possibilities for its preform. Most significantly, it eliminates any reconstruction with *h₁* in the root! The geminate -s- compels a sequence *HVeV*- (NB not *HHVeV*-), which means that both a root-initial and root-final laryngeal would have been adjacent to the e and therefore an *h₁* in either position would have colored it to *[o]* throughout the paradigm. However, we need pretonic *e* in the weak stem in order to account for the attested Hittite i- (for pretonic *e > i* see Melchert 1994: 139). This in turn inexorably means that the attested o-vocalism of the *word* (e.g. Latin o) must continue an o-grade (see for this possibility already Eichner 1973: 84).* An o-grade is summarily rejected by Stüber (2002: 195), but the competing o- and a-vocalism in the PIE word for 'ear' (contrast Greek *oös* with Latin *auris*) is most easily explained from an acrostatic root noun or r-stem *b₂h₁w-w-(os), b₁h₁w-(es)-* (see Wodtko et al. 2008: 339-41 with references and citation of opposing views). There is no priori reason to exclude such a paradigm for 'mouth'.

The evidence of Vedic Sanskrit, taken at face value without preconceptions, leads in the same direction as Hittite. There we find ablative *ādās* (*ādā* d) and instrumental *ādā* never scanned disyllabically. The latter fact could be due to chance, and the end-accent could be analogical to other nouns with monosyllabic stems (see Stüber 2002: 195-6), but both could also be old. The Hittite and Sanskrit together point to an acrostatic *h₁b₁h₁*-*h₁b₁*-elos (thus also for the strong stem Matasović 2004: 110 without argumentation). The accent in the weak stem was shifted to the ending already in PIE, hence *h₁b₁h₁*-*h₁b₁*-elos (for which compare Skr. loc. sg. *padh* ‘foot’ and gen. sg. *nādasy* 'word' of the same type and see Schindler 1972: 33). This derivation accounts for both the consistent monosyllabic scansion of Vedic *ādā* and the accent of *ādās*, *ādā*.

The strong stem *h₁b₁h₁*-elos contained a word-final sequence of obstruent plus *s*. Other such sequences were subject to a regular prehistoric anaptyctic rule in Hittite, most prominently in preterite third singulars of the *h₁*-conjugation (Oettinger 1979: 41, Melchert 1994: 174): hence *a*xs > *akšis, *h₂wwiąpphi* 'hurled', *mānįyąpphi* 'managed', etc. (the i-vocalism after *h₁*- is analogical). Nothing precludes preservation of *h₁* into pre-Hittite

5 The meaning 'twist' is clear in the example in KUB 9.6 + 35.39 iii 20-23, where the practitioner and ritual client grasp two reed baskets from opposite ends and twist them by twisting in opposite directions. Likewise in the opening of the Telipinu Myth (KUB 17.10 i 6-8), animals, burning logs and the altars of the gods are not 'stirled' (contrary to the popular interpretation), but rather put aske, into disorder, as shown by the fact that when Telipinu returns they are put back in proper order (KUB 17.10 iv 22 *hanyuanni*). That neatly stacked burning logs in a fireplace become twisted as they burn is commonplace.

6 The objection of Kloekhorst (2008: 1014) to this derivation on semantic grounds is unfounded, since a change from *yurm* to 'twist, press, squeeze' is quite easy. Compare English *to wring*.

7 An anonymous reviewer justifiably raises doubts about the direct comparison with the Slavic cognate and suggests that the Hittite verb is derived from a verbal noun. I agree that a verbal noun *weis-aug* (in my view 'wringing, wringing') is a very viable source for the Hittite verb. However, by whatever means we account for it (most likely by columnarization of accent after the original weak stem in *u-wu-*, Hittite verbal nouns in *ur* (properly /wur/, as per Kloekhorst 2008: 55-56) descriptively show ple and accent on the suffix: cf. *a-ni-u-ur* 'ritual'. Therefore the *s* of *weisuriy-ye* was pretonic also by this derivation.

8 I stress that this conclusion is entirely independent of one's views regarding the fate of word-initial *h₁* in Anatolian. I continue to regard *h₁* as the regular result in Hittite,
long enough to trigger the rule: thus *(b₃)₂db₁(-s)-h₁ > *ōbes (*[ōbes] or [ōʔes]) > *ō₂es > *ō₂-es > all (with contraction to a diphthong or possibly glide insertion and at first [aʔi]), if this is the reading of OS a-i-d). I know of no evidence for or against assuming that the anaptyxis rule was shared by Luvi-an. If it was, then we may suppose likewise *ō₂es > CLuvian a-a-al-/*/a-as-/, or with Starke and Ricken perhaps still /a-as-/. Additional Hitte words that might corroborate or refute the above scenario are difficult to find, and our very limited evidence for Anatolian beyond Hitte leaves the relative chronology of the assumed changes frustratingly indeterminate. Since I have invoked for the anaptyxis in the nom.-acc. singular the parallel of the preterite third singular in the hi-conjugation, I should note explicitly that if one follows Oettinger (1979: 405 and passim) and Jasanoff (2003: 178 and passim) in assuming that the attested ending */-s/ reflects */-t/, then the word-final anaptyxic rule obviously must follow the loss of final */-t after */-s-/. The CLuvian root noun hāl ‘bone’ < Prot-Hitt. *h₂lu₂ty₂ < Oettinger (1995: 218) or *h₂tē(t₂) < Kloeckhorst (2008: 326) shows that Luvi-an shared the latter change, so as per above the anaptyxis in a word-final sequence of obstruent plus */s may also be relatively old within Anatolian. An anonymous referee raises the matter of Hitte preterite third singular dāt ‘took’ putatively from *dē₂bs₁(-t) with no evident anaptyxis. However, Hitte arəya₂(a) (which by the consistent spelling a-ra-ah-za and non-existence of *ar-ab-za must be disyllabic /araHts/) from *(b₂)₂tr(o)b₂-ti shows that at least *b₂ colored the Hitte anaptyxic vowel. If this was likewise true for *b₁, then a virtual *dē₂bst₁ would lead to attested dāt. In any case, *dē₂b₁t₁(-t) is in all likelihood an entirely anachronistic construct. The prehistory of the Hitte hi-conjugation, including its preterite, is notoriously controversial, but by all scenarios known to me the preterite third singular with ending */-t/ is intrusive into a paradigm where the third singular was */(d)₁db₁t₁/, whether one regards this as an unduplicated /b₁se/-conjugation root aorist (Jasanoff 2003: 151), a dereduplicated “proto-intensive” (Oettinger 2006: 44), or a dereduplicated perfect (Kloeckhorst 2008: 137). It is not only possible, but indeed likely, that by the time of the intrusion of the */-t/ into the paradigm, it was added to what was already a form */dā/ (thus explicitly Jasanoff loc. cit.).

Another anonymous referee has reminded me of the analysis by Ricken (1999: 189-90), who (revising Oettinger 1979: 476) interprets the Hitte hi-verb tātīt- ‘to load’ as a univerbation of a neuter s-stem tātī and dāt- ‘put’. While the s-stem could continue a */dē₂b₁t₁/, the unusual o-grade of the root leads her to suggest an acrostic */dē₂b₁t₁,-/ */dē₂b₁t₁(-s)/ of the same structure as I have proposed for ‘mouth’ above. While the two analyses mutually support each other, it is obvious that neither is nearly transparent enough to count as evidence. The derivation just presented does have the merit of accounting for the attested shape of the Hitte word for ‘mouth’ starting from the same preform as for all other reflexes, including those in Anatolian, while relying only on already independently established sound changes. Its one cost is the need to assume a PIE paradigm with unusual ablaut, but as mentioned above the word for ‘ear’ appears to require the same acrostic */dē/ type. It is likely that we may add a third body-part term, *dē₂w(-t), *dē₂w(-d)– ‘arm’ in Sanskrit dās and Avestan daṭ. The root vocalism cannot be strictly determined, but the consistent full grade again suggests an acrostic paradigm. I deliberately leave open the question of whether we are dealing in all three cases (‘ear’, ‘mouth’, and ‘arm’) with derived s-stems or root nouns to “enlarged” roots.

---

10 In the case of ēl- ‘be’ and infinitives in -ēl- one may assume restoration or maintenance of the final stop by analogy to other mi-verbs. In the hi-conjugation where the ending was consistently */-t/ there would have been no basis for restoring */-t/.

11 The source of the intrusive ending is irrelevant to the question at hand. The older derivation of the stem dā- ‘take’ from a medio-passive */dē₂w(-t)/ (Eichner 1975: 93-4, Oettinger 1979: 500-01, Melchert 1984: 24) would likewise leave no place for a genuine preform */dē₂w(-t)/.

12 Since *ēw > əu in Celtic, Old Irish dō, dō (gen. pl.) < *dēus- (V)m- unfortunately does not prove o-grade, despite the implication in Pokorny 1959: 226.

13 The analysis just cited of Hitte tātīt– to load’ as containing a reflex of a neuter s-stem */dē₂b₁t₁* ‘load’ to the root */dē₂b₁/ obviously would point to derived s-stems.
H. Craig Melchert

Department of Linguistics / Program in Indo-European Studies
University of California, Los Angeles
P.O. Box 951543
Los Angeles CA 90095-1543

References