Payne, Annick

_Hieroglyphic Luwian: An Introduction with Original Texts_

Subsidia et Instrumenta Linguarum Orientis 2

2nd edition


Robert Holmstedt
University of Toronto
Toronto, Ontario, Canada

With this volume Annick Payne presents her revised introduction to Hieroglyphic Luwian (henceforth HLuwian), which was first published in 2004 (in the now-defunct Elementa Linguarum Orientis [ELO] series). Before receiving the review copy, I had consulted the first edition of Payne’s textbook, although as an orientation to specific features of the language rather than as a self-learning resource. As a researcher with a vested interest in acquiring a working knowledge of HLuwian for various future projects relating to texts from Iron Age Anatolia, I began working through this volume with great interest and as it was intended, “to equip a beginner with the necessary knowledge to pursue autodidactic study … to familiarize the reader with the reference tools and secondary literature, to introduce some common problems and to build up a basic understanding of the signs, grammar, and vocabulary” (ix).

My comments on this revised textbook are from two perspectives: as a language student outside of Hittitology or Indo-European linguistics and as a fellow language textbook author (I am contracted to co-author a volume for the same series in which Payne’s textbook appears). Given the constraints of my perspective, I encourage the reader to consult reviews of the first edition, some of which reflect, among other strengths, an expertise in Hittite and Luwian (see Dillo 2009; Gee 2005; and especially Melchert 2005).
First, a few general comments are customary. The second edition of this textbook has not changed in structure from the first. In fact, I can see no difference even in pagination, excepting the addition of a preface and single page of humor at the end of the book. After a brief preface (which is new and in which Payne acknowledges some revision and updating but does not provide specific examples), there are nine substantive sections (1. Introduction [to the study of HLuwian], 2. Phonology, 3. Morphology, 4. Syntax, 5. Texts [twelve selections with interlinear parsing and translation, followed by limited commentary], 6. Vocabulary, 7. Sign List, 8. Index to Sign List, 9. Bibliography) and one new, light-hearted addition: Payne’s 2008 entry into the annual Eisenbraun’s Valentine’s Day poetry contest. One significant change is, however, that Payne paid attention to reviewers and corrected a variety of errors in the presentation of grammar, primary being the consistent presentation of the i-mutation (see Melchert 2005 for discussion).

Some errors that were detailed in reviews do remain, though they could easily have been fixed. For example, absent in the new edition are the bibliographic omissions identified by Melchert—cases where Payne cites a resource in the text and does not list it in the bibliography (e.g., “Meriggi 1953” cited on 12; see Melchert 2005, 535 n. 2). Similarly, Gee notes the bewildering use of “cursive capitals” throughout the text to describe the convention of transcribing some logograms with their Luwian equivalent (e.g., ARHA for Luwian “arha,” 6), when clearly what are used are “italicized capitals.” (For this reader, such oddities can be very distracting, and I only wish I had read Gee’s review before working through the book myself! I would have saved myself a good twenty minutes of head-scratching.)

From the perspective of a student who does not bring a working knowledge of Hittite to this task, I give Payne’s textbook a solid pass. If the reader pays careful attention to the grammatical description, noting especially the complexities of the writing system, it would be difficult not to learn the basics of HLuwian. Although the ability to compare grammatical features between HLuwian and Hittite would no doubt be useful to the learner, Payne should be commended for successfully writing this textbook so that HLuwian can be learned in isolation. I have only a few quibbles as a student, and they all fit into the category of wanting just a bit more explanation about conventions. For example, it seems to me that the attentive student will note disparities between transcription and translation, such as with forms of the storm-god Tarhunzas’s name. In the first text, 5.1 (46, line 3), the name is rendered with both the deity determinative (DEUS), the logogram for the god, TONITRUS, and partial phonetic writing, -hu-ti, producing the dative singular tarhunti (note that preconsonantal /n/ is rarely written; 15). One may wonder (as I did) why the transcription has a /t/ at the end of the name’s stem (tarhunt-), whereas the translation has a /z/ (Tarnhunzas). The answer that Payne might have mentioned in the notes to text 5.1 is that the logogram TONITRUS is followed by
phonetic /z/ in other texts, such as in text 5.8 (95, §7), where we find (DEUS)TONITRUS-hu-za-sa, tarhunzas (nominative singular). Apparently this latter form is how the god is more commonly named. Such simple explanations, though, go a long way in removing distractions and frustrations from the student, especially in an auto-didactic context where the expert answer cannot be gained by simply walking down the hall to ask.

As a fellow textbook author, I respect the challenge of writing a volume for a language such as HLuwian, for which there remain numerous outstanding questions about the language and its writing system. For the most part, Payne’s grammatical descriptions and textual notes are a model of concision and clarity, and I again give Payne’s textbook a solid pass. The sign list and its index in the back is an immensely useful tool, since it is the most complete list that yet exists. Yet, I really do not care for the well-worn grammar-chrestomathy structure. Even if the chrestomathy were kept as is, I prefer to see (and strongly encourage future textbook authors to include) brief, focused exercises sets within the context of the grammatical description. For example, given the complexity of the writing system, a set of ten or fifteen transcription exercises after §1.2 (“The Script”) would begin to embed the range of options (e.g., is a given word just a logogram, just phonetic, or a combination?) and familiarize the learner with the sign list and vocabulary. Similarly, exercises—even taken right from the sample texts—could easily have been added to the sections on phonology, morphology, and syntax. Indeed, forcing the student to identify and even form examples of the i-Mutation (described in §3.1.2.3 on 22) would be perhaps the only effective way for the beginner to conquer this morpho-phonological feature. Additionally, I consider it a mistake to bow to the convention of using Latin terms for transcribing logograms. A simple word list as an appendix would give the student enough to continue further study. Though the Latin is not itself difficult, it is simply one more barrier between the learner and the language.

In conclusion, this is a strong textbook for a difficult language. My experience with HLuwian was (and continues to be) both exhilarating and frustrating. Learning a new language is always exhilarating, and Payne has made learning HLuwian as painless as can be expected. It is also often frustrating, mostly due to our gaps in understanding the language. Payne can hardly be blamed for this, though! Rather, she is to be commended for taking a difficult language, for which there is not scholarly consensus about many features, and making it generally accessible to the student.

References
