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THE LANGUAGE OF TROY

ALWIN KLOEKHORST

In the second millennium BC Troy was an extremely prosperous city, a bustling trading centre where traders from all corners of the world gathered and where a multitude of languages was to be heard on the street. However, the question which language the inhabitants of Troy themselves spoke during this period is not easy to answer. There is simply no conclusive evidence. No texts have been dug up in Troy itself, apart from a single seal with a Luwian inscription (see page 59), nor do the historical sources on Troy provide a clear answer. We will thus have to focus on indirect clues to the possible origins of the language of the Trojans.

WESTERN ANATOLIA IN THE SECOND MILLENNIUM BC

In the second millennium BC, Anatolia was dominated by the Hittite Kingdom (see 3.1). All the information we have available from this period about Troy and the rest of western Anatolia is derived from the royal archives of the Hittites. On the basis of these texts we know that around the 13th century BC, western Anatolia consisted of various small kingdoms or statelets. The most important of these, from north to south, were Maša, Wiluša, Sēha, Arzawa, Mirā and Lukkā.

The area where Troy lies belongs to the region referred to by the Hittites as Wiluša, and it is now generally accepted that this name corresponds to the Greek name for Troy, Ilios. The Hittite name Wiluša may be analysed linguistically as wilu-ša, in which -ša is a suffix used in many country names, while the -w- automatically becomes a -u- when placed between two consonants. And the Greek Ilios, with its older variant Wilios, may derive from the older *Wilwios. (The star indicates that we are dealing with a reconstructed form that has not been found as such, but which may be assumed to have existed on linguistic grounds.) Given that -ios is a well-known suffix in Greek for country names, *Wilwios may be analysed as wilu-ios. Clearly, both names have the same root wilu-.

A land called Triaša also comes up a few times in the Hittite texts. It lay close to Wiluša or was perhaps even part of Wiluša. It is now generally believed that this name corresponds to the Greek name Troë. In Hittite -ša is a suffix, which means that Triaša may be analysed as tru-ša, while the Greek word Troë presumably derives from the older *Trōe, which we may analyse as trō-ē. As Hittite did not have the ē sound, we may assume that the Hittite tru- and the Greek trō- are the same.

WILUŠA

The Hittite texts referring to Wiluša provide no convincing evidence for the language was spoken in Troy, although we may make a number of assumptions on the basis of indirect evidence.

Firstly, a treaty between the Hittite and Wilušan kings that has been found in the Hittite archives at Boghazköy (see page 45), indicates that Wiluša was a vassal state under Hittite suzerainty. As the Hittite king corresponded with his vassals in Hittite (the relevant treaty was drawn up in Hittite), there must at the very least have been scribes working at the Wiluša court who were competent in Hittite. We could even imagine that there must have been Hittite diplomatics living in Wiluša who discussed affairs with the Wiluša court in Hittite.

Secondly, we know the names of two Wilušan kings from the Hittite texts. It has not been possible thus far to convincingly link the name of one of these kings, Walmu, to any specific language. The name of the other king, with whom the treaty mentioned above was concluded, is Alakšandu, which has a much more familiar ring to it. In the 1920s, when the tablet that mentions it was dug up, Alakšandu was immediately linked to the Greek Aleksandros, the name used in Homer's Iliad for the Trojan prince Paris. The use of a Greek name by the royal family of Wiluša indicates that the Wilušans must at the very least have had close links to the Greeks, and possibly even that Greeks had married into the royal family (which could possibly be compared to the legend of the Greek Helen who fell in love with Paris and left Sparta for Troy, causing the Greeks to launch an attack on Troy to get her back).

We know from archaeological and Hittite sources that from around 1400 BC, Greeks (that is to say Mycenaeans, referred to by the Hittites as the people of Ahhiyawa, or rather 'Achaeans'), settled at various points in western Anatolia, primarily in Millawanda (Miletus) and on the island Lazpa (Lesbos). A great deal of Mycenaean pottery has also been found in Troy, especially from phases of habitation in the 13th century BC, suggesting the presence of - or in any event acquaintance with - Greeks. This presence evidently left its mark on the Wilušan royal family. Nevertheless it is unlikely that the Wilušans were originally Greeks themselves. The Hittite texts reveal that Wiluša was certainly under the influence of Ahhiyawa, but not part of it.
OTHER WESTERN ANATOLIAN STATES 
AND THE LUWIAN HYPOTHESIS

The language or languages that were spoken in other western Anatolian states cannot be determined conclusively from sources dating back to the second millennium BC. There is certainly indirect evidence that some of these states must have used Luwian as their language. Luwian is an Indo-European language closely related to Hittite that we know from a number of texts contained in the royal archive of Hattusa, and more especially from later hieroglyphic inscriptions from south-eastern Anatolia and Syria that date to around 1100-700 BC. The most important indications that Luwian was used are the following:

1. Old Hittite texts dating to around 1600 BC refer to a land called Luwiya that may possibly be located in western Anatolia, and more specifically in the vicinity of the state Arzawa/Mirâ. If the language is called Luwian (luwili in Hittite) after the land of Luwiya, it is also probable that Luwian was spoken in this region, in any event around 1600 BC.

2. The names of various kings from western Anatolian states, in the form that we know them from Hittite texts, appear to be of Luwian origin.

3. The only texts found in western Anatolia itself are a number of rock inscriptions written in Luwian hieroglyphs. Some of these inscriptions consist solely of the names of people, which do not really have to be ‘in a specific language’. However, a recently found inscription includes several Luwian words, thus conclusively proving the use of Luwian. As may be seen on the language map, these inscriptions are found primarily in the region of Arzawa/Mirâ and the southern part of Šeha.

We may assume on the basis of these arguments that Luwian was spoken in any event in Arzawa/Mirâ and possibly also in part of Šeha in the second millennium BC. Some experts have for this reason argued that it is certainly possible that Troy also used Luwian as its language. One expert (Calvert Watkins) has even attempted to identify Luwian etymologies for Trojan names as they occur in Homer’s Iliad. For example, the name of the Trojan king, Priam, is analysed as *priya-muwaw-, which in Luwian would mean something like ‘pre-eminent in power’. The hypothesis that Luwian was spoken in Troy received support in 1995, with the discovery at Troy of a second millennium BC seal, bearing the name of a scribe and his wife written
in Luwian hieroglyphs (see chapter 4). Unfortunately, this seal does not conclusively prove that Luwian was used in Troy. The seal itself dates to the 15th century BC, but it was found in a layer of destruction from around a century and a half later. However, as many ‘foreign’ traders were present in second millennium BC Troy, the possibility that this seal belonged to a non-Trojan cannot be excluded.

The ‘Luwian analysis’ of names like Priam is also inconclusive, as it is simply impossible to prove that the Homeric names did indeed originate in second millennium BC Troy. And even if the name is authentic and should be interpreted as Luwian, this does not of itself say anything about the language situation in Troy. Just as in the case of Alakšandru/Aleksandros, it does not necessarily suggest more than the fact that the Trojan royal house had links with Luwian-speaking states (an extremely likely possibility given the proximity of Arzawa/Mirâ, which was as we have seen probably Luwian-speaking).

Taking everything into account, we may conclude that it is entirely possible that there were Luwian speakers in Troy, with the seal as evidence, but that it cannot be proven that the city as a whole was Luwian-speaking. It should be borne in mind that Luwian-speaking Arzawa/Mirâ and surroundings, despite its relative proximity still lies at the considerable distance from Troy of around 200 kilometres to the south. Moreover, the language situation in a single western Anatolian state cannot be projected across the whole of western Anatolia without further evidence. As we will see below, other languages must have been spoken alongside Luwian in the western Anatolia of the second millennium BC.

AROUND 1200 BC: CRISIS

Around 1200 BC, the entire eastern Mediterranean region descended into crisis: Mycenaean civilisation collapsed and Troy VIIa was destroyed, while the Hittite Kingdom also disappeared during this period. With the collapse of Hittite supremacy the cuneiform tradition disappears from Anatolia. We have no clear view of what happened in western Anatolia between ca. 1700 and 800 BC.

Greek authors form an important source of information on western Anatolia in the first millennium BC. Following the fall of the Hittite Kingdom Greek peoples settled in this region in increasing numbers, and halfway through the first millennium the largest part of the western Anatolian littoral had become Greek-speaking. On the basis of works by Greek authors originating from that area (for example Herodotus, who was from Halicarnassus), we know a lot about the political situation in the region. We are able to make out the following small kingdoms: Mysia, Lydia, Caria, Lycia, Bithynia, Phrygia and Pisidia. The city of Troy and its surroundings fell under Mysia, which is also known as Phrygia-on-the-Hellespont.

From around 800 BC, alphabetic script came into use in the western Anatolian region, and most of the small kingdoms referred to above used their own variant of the alphabet to communicate in the local language. Texts written on perishable materials have unfortunately been lost, but we certainly have many rock inscriptions and inscriptions on stone monuments. On the basis of these texts we are able to draw up a language map of western Anatolia in the first millennium BC (Greek and Roman inscriptions have for the sake of convenience been ignored). Each dot indicates the spot where one or more inscriptions were found. On this basis we have a relatively good idea of the languages of Lydia, Caria, Lycia and Phrygia. We have only a single inscription from Mysia, and the inscriptions from Pisidia, in two differing languages, Pisidian and Sidetic, are also extremely scanty. We have no inscriptions at all from Bithynia.

POPULATION MOVEMENTS AROUND 1200 BC

Of course, one cannot simply project the language map of the first millennium BC backwards to the second millennium. The crisis that took place in 1200 BC was so extensive that it is likely that various population movements took place at this time. This is also what the Greek authors tell us. According to these authors, the Mysians, Phrygians and Bithynians originated from Thrace, the region to the north of the Sea of Marmara.

From a linguistic point of view these tales may well be true. The language of the Phrygians (of these three languages the one we know best) is certainly an Indo-European language, but it does not belong to the same branch as Hittite and Luwian, the Indo-European languages spoken in Anatolia in the second millennium. Phrygian appears rather to be closely related to Greek. Given that Phrygian could not have come from Greece itself, which was already Greek-speaking, it is extremely likely that it was originally spoken to the north-east of Greece, for example in modern Bulgaria. The Phrygians must have migrated to Anatolia at a certain point, as the Greek sources relate, taking their language with them. The fact that a memory of this Phrygian invasion continued to exist suggests that it could not have taken place too far in the past. A date around 1200 BC could well fit with these facts. It appears safe to assume that the Phrygians invaded Anatolia via Thrace following the collapse of the Hittite Kingdom, or more probably after indications of its pending collapse. The sole Mysian inscription that we know suggests an extremely close relationship with Phrygian, and we may perhaps assume that the Mysians and Phrygians spoke different dialects of one and the same language. (Compare also the alternative name for Mysia: Phrygia-on-the-Hellespont.)

We know nothing about Bithynian, but as the story about the Mysian and Phrygian invasion of Anatolia appears to be true, this may also apply to the Bithynians.
The other languages found in western Anatolia – Lydian, Carian, Lycian, Pisidian and Sidetic – are also Indo-European languages but belong to the same branch as Hittite and Luwian. They are so closely related to Luwian that we regard this group of languages as a sub-branch, the Luwian branch. It is thus very probable that these languages are completely indigenous, and it is generally assumed that they or their precursors were spoken in western Anatolia as early as the second millennium BC. However, this does not mean that at the time these languages were spoken in precisely the same places as in the first millennium. As we have noted, the collapse of the Hittite kingdom allowed various population groups to invade the region from northern Anatolia, and it is entirely possible that groups within Anatolia were also forced to move. For example a convincing case has been made (by the Leiden language expert Beeke) that the Lydians must have lived further to the north of Lydia in the second millennium BC, in the region called Maṣa during this period. They would then have been forced to migrate further to the south following the invasion of the Phrygians, Mysians and Bithynians.

THE LANGUAGE OF TROY: LYDIAN?
Whenever we zoom in on Troy and view its immediate surroundings, we observe the following situation. No inscriptions from the first millennium BC have been found in the vicinity of Troy itself. The closest languages are Phrygian, Mysian and Lydian. We have seen that the Phrygians and Mysians invaded Anatolia only after the fall of the Hittite kingdom. Thus, neither Phrygian nor Mysian could have been the original language spoken in Troy. However, this does not apply to Lydian. This language, which belongs to the same linguistic branch as Hittite and Luwian, which was very probably spoken in Anatolia in the second millennium BC, is the language found closest to Troy during the first millennium (in the Lydian capital at Daskyleion), and is thus a candidate for having been the language of Troy. A number of experts advocate this view, including the eminent linguist Günter Neumann, but there is another – and in my view better – candidate.

THE LANGUAGE OF TROY: LEMNIAN/ETRUSCAN?
Alongside Phrygian, Mysian and Lydian, there is yet another language found in the vicinity of Troy, namely Lemnian. This language is named for Lemnos, the Aegean island that lies immediately west of Troy. Two stelae and a few pottery shards with inscriptions in Lemnian have been found on the island. An interesting point is that Lemnian reveals extensive similarities with Etruscan. These similarities are so significant that
may regard the two languages as closely related dialects. How are these facts to be interpreted historically?

The origin of the Etruscans has long been one of history’s great unsolved puzzles. As already in antiquity the Etruscans were thought not to be native to Italy, but to have originated elsewhere, namely in Lydia. This was long dismissed as a myth with little historical basis, but the realization that the Etruscan language is closely related to the language of Lemnos has again sparked the debate. Professor Beekes of Leiden University recently published a lengthy article in which he listed 24 arguments that provide strong evidence that the Etruscans did in fact come from Lydia. However, according to Beekes, this does not refer to classical Lydia (as per Herodotus), but rather to the region the Lydians inhabited in the second millennium BC, that is to say the region that was then called Māša. The Etruscans are thought to have left there by ship in response to the crisis of 1200 BC and ended up in Italy.

I almost completely share Beekes’ conclusion that the Etruscans must have originated in western Anatolia. I propose to alter his hypothesis in just one respect. Classical sources mention various locations in western Anatolia and the northern Aegean region where Etruscans, referred to in Greek as Tursenois, lived at the time or had previously lived. In his article Beekes provides a summary of these locations. We see that some of these locations do in fact lie in the region where Māša was situated, but the majority of them are in the region around Troy/Wiluša and on islands to the west. I would like to conclude on the basis of this information that the Etruscans/Tursenois inhabited Troy/Wiluša and the islands to the west as their core territory with an offshoot to the southern coast of the Sea of Marmara. To the east this region overlaps the region where the Lydians lived in the second millennium BC, and that could very well be the reason why in classical antiquity it was believed that the Etruscans originated in Lydia.

Apart from Beekes’ 24 arguments in favour of why the origins of the Etruscans must have lain in this region, two additional arguments may be adduced to support the link between the Etruscans and Troy. Firstly, the root of the name Troy in Hittite, trū- (Trūša), and in Greek, *tré- (Troie), appears to be identical to that in the name for the Etruscans, which is *tr-. (The e- in ‘Etrusc’ is a vowel prefixed to facilitate articulating the initial consonant cluster tr-.) Compare the e-less variant tur- in the Greek word Tursenoi, and the Latin Tuscia derived from the earlier *Turskia.) Secondly, the myth that Aeneas, a Trojan prince, ends up in Italy by way of extended wandering after the fall of Troy, and settles down after fighting a battle with the indigenous people there, as described in Virgil’s Aeneid, may have its origins in a migration from the region of Troy to central Italy. Without doubt many names and events have been added to this tale over the course of time, just as with the Iliad, but the ‘core’ of this tale may well relate to real (Bronze Age) events.

All in all, it appears to me entirely possible that the original language of Troy was a precursor of Etruscan. It should be emphasized, however, that in the absence of clear textual evidence from Late Bronze Age Troy itself, the language of Troy remains subject of conjecture.

A stele from the 6th century BC. This funerary monument was found on Lemnos in 1885. The Lemnian language was possibly related to that of the Etruscans. After the conquest of Lemnos by Athens in 510 BC, it was replaced by Attic Greek and Lemnian died out.
Additional maps that did not make it to the final publication:

Map of West Anatolia in the 2nd millennium BC (borders by approximation). Legenda:

- **WILUŠA** = kingdom / state
- ● **Apaša** = important city
- ○ **Saratkaya** = find spot of Hieroglyphic Luwian inscription(s)

● = location where according to sources from antiquity Etruscans lived (map taken over and adapted from Beekes).