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BRIEF COMMUNICATIONS

Lulav *versus* *lu/law: *A note on the conditioning of* *aw > ū *in Hebrew and Aramaic*

In a valuable study of "Asseverative **la* and Hypothetical **lu/law* in Semitic,"[1] J. Huehnergard concludes that both **lū* and **law* must have coexisted as doublets in Proto-Semitic. Huehnergard's justification for that reconstruction is as follows:[2]

> Given the evidence of Hebrew, Aramaic (*ʾillū*), and Šḥeri, we must posit an independent particle **lū* for PS. On the basis of usage, Arabic *law* is identical with this particle, as is usually assumed; but the two forms cannot be reconciled phonologically, in that Hebrew and Aramaic *ū* and Šḥeri *ŭ* are not the normal reflexes of PS **aw*, while PS **ū* is not normally diphthongized to *aw* in Arabic. . . . Despite this unresolvable discrepancy, these particles obviously reflect one PS form.

Now, it is generally advisable to think twice before reconstructing doublets for a proto-language, unless, as sometimes happens,[3] the doublets are attested together in one or more of the daughter languages. Our example is a case in point. Huehnergard's argument for reconstructing PS **lū* does not stand up to careful scrutiny.

First of all, it must be said that Huehnergard is mistaken about Šḥeri. It simply is not true that "Šḥeri *ŭ* [is] not the normal reflex . . . of PS **aw*." In Bittner's material, we find three examples of *u* < **aw* (*qum* "Trupp, Leute" < **qawm*, *lum* "Tadel" < **lawm*, and *yum* "Tag, Sonne" < **yawm*) vs. only one example of *o* < **aw* (*ḫor* "Bucht, Flussmundung" < **ḫawr*).[4] In Thomas' material, we find one or two examples of *u* < **aw* (*yūm* "day" and *eyum*, *yūhm* "sun") but no examples of *o* < **aw*.[5] And in Johnstone's material, we find four or five examples of *u* < **aw* (*yum, yuhm* "day," *yum* "sun; light, sunlight," *lum* "blame," *lun* "kind" < **lawn*, and *ṣuhm* "fast, fasting" < **ṣawm*") with no examples of *o* < **aw*.[6] The Šḥeri form, then, can be derived from **law* just as easily as it can from **lū*.

Huehnergard is on firmer ground when he states that "Hebrew and Aramaic *ū* . . . are not the normal reflexes of PS **aw*"; but, to mind, this is only part of the story. There is one environment in which Hebrew and Aramaic *ū* ARE the normal reflexes of PS **aw*, viz., following *l*. Thus, we find four cases of Arabic *aw* corresponding to Hebrew and Aramaic *ū* in that environment (*lawḥ* = *lūʾḥ*[7] "tablet, board," *lawz*[8] = *lūz* "almond tree," *lawlab* "spiral" = *lūlāḇ*[9] "sprout,

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[1] *JAOS* 103 (1983): 569-93.

[2] Ibid., p. 573.

[3] Cf. R.C. Steiner, *The Case for Fricative-Laterals in Proto-Semitic*, American Oriental Series, vol. 59 (New Haven: 1977), pp. 111ff. and J. Blau, *On Polyphony in Biblical Hebrew*, Proceedings of the Israel Academy of Sciences and Humanities, vol. 6 (Jerusalem, 1982), p. 4 (108).

[4] M. Bittner, *Studien zur Šḫauri-Sprache in der Bergen von Ḍofâr am Persischen Meerbusen*, 4 vols., Sitzungsberichte der Phil.-hist. Klasse der Kaiserl. Akademie der Wissenschaften in Wien, vols. 179/2, 4, 5; 183/5 (Vienna, 1916-17), 1:23-24, 4:s.v.

[5] B. Thomas, "Four Strange Tongues from South Arabia", *Proceedings of the British Academy*, vol. 23 (London, 1937), p. 292, s.v. day and p. 322, s.v. sun.

[6] T. M. Johnstone, *Jibbāli Lexicon* (Oxford, 1981), s.v. *ywm*, *lwm*, *lwn*, *ṣwm*.

[7] The *ū* of this form and the next is attributed to dialect mixture by H. Bauer-P. Leander, *Historische Grammatik der hebräischen Sprache* (Halle, 1922), p. 452, fn. 1; but this solution loses its appeal once *lū* and *lūlāḇ* are brought into the picture and the regular distribution of the phenomenon becomes apparent.

[8] It is true that this form, attested in Arabic and Ethiopian Semitic, is generally considered to be a borrowing from Aramaic (cf. S. Fraenkel, *Die aramäischen Fremdwörter im Arabischen* (Leiden, 1886), p. 145; Th. Nöldeke, *Neue Beiträge zur semitischen Sprachwissenschaft* (Strassburg, 1910), p. 43), but the explanation offered by Nöldeke (loc. cit.) for the alteration of the vowel is not convincing.

[9] This word is sometimes cited with *ō* in the first syllable, rather than *ū*, e.g., C. Brockelmann, *Grundriss der vergleichenden Grammatik der semitischen Sprachen*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1908), 1:247; K. Beyer, *Die aramäischen Texte vom Toten Meer* (Gottingen, 1983), pp. 117, 616. Such a vocalization is, indeed, attested in the Babylonian tradition and in its offshoot, the Yemenite tradition, but it is decidedly marginal. Even within the Babylonian tradition, it occurs only in the inflected form *lōlibb-*, which competes with *lūlabb-*; the uninflected form is always vocalized *lūlāb* (I. Yevin, *Masoret halašon*

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palm branch," and, of course, *law* = *lū, illū* "if") but no cases of Arabic *aw* corresponding to Hebrew and Aramaic *ō* there.

The form *lūlaḇ* is particularly significant because its reduplicated form leaves no room for doubt about the diphthongal origin of *ū*. Clearly we have **lablab* > **lawlab* > *lūlāḇ* marching side by side with **kabkab* > **kawkab* > *kōkāḇ* "star" until the last stage, when the influence of *l* is felt in the former but not the latter.

How are we to explain this influence? Did Hebrew and Aramaic—or their common ancestor—have a velarized *l*, at least in initial position? We will probably never know for sure. The fact remains that *ū* is the regular reflex of **aw* following *l* in Hebrew and Aramaic. There is no reason to reconstruct a PS **lū*.

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haʿivrit hamištakefet baniḳud habavli, The Academy of the Hebrew Language Texts and Studies, vol. 12 (Jerusalem, 1985), pp. 949–50). And outside of the Babylonian and Yemenite traditions, only the vocalization with *u* is known (I. Eldar, *Masoret hakeriʾah haḳedam-ʾaškenazit*, 2 vols., *ʿEdah welašon*, vols. 4–5 (Jerusalem, 1979), 2:254).

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