

Lycian Conditional Constructions in the Light of Typology: A Cognate of Greek εἰ + ἄν in a Minor Anatolian Language?

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Abstract

In this paper, I will discuss conditional constructions in Lycian, an ancient Anatolian language with a small corpus. The syntax of Lycian has puzzled scholars since its decipherment. Issues yet to be solved include the marking of conditionality and the interpretation of semantically ambiguous enclitic *=i*.

It has long been believed that Lycian has a conditional marker *ẽ*, but the majority of clauses that are semantically conditional are formed *without* this marker.

(1) text 57 (Antiphellos)

hrppi=(i)je mei tadi tike m=ene tubeiti m̃h̃ai huwedri se itlehi tr̃m̃mili

‘(If) one puts someone on it, all gods and Lycian *itlehi*-s will strike him/her down.’

Laroche (1958) suggested that, in this type of clauses, *mei*, standardly analysed as a sentence connective *me* followed by pronominal *=i* ‘3SG.DAT; adv. therein’ (*eDiAna*; Melchert 1992, 2004), is in fact a single word meaning ‘if’.

Melchert (1992: 49), rejecting this view for phonological and semantic reasons, proposes that what marks the conditionality in these cases is the particular word order: *mei* appears in a non-initial position.

This latter analysis, however, poses two problems. First, such a way of marking conditionality is, as far as I am aware, typologically unparalleled (cf. Traugott 1985 on cross-linguistically common ways of marking conditionality). Secondly, and more importantly, we find a number of counterexamples, namely clauses in which a constituent is moved to a position to the left of *mei* but which are semantically clearly *not* conditional, as well as those that *are* conditional but have *mei* in the absolute initial position.

Given these problems, I will propose a new analysis: *mei* consists of the connective *me*, followed by a previously unrecognised conditional marker *=i*, which I consider to be a cognate of Gk. εἰ ‘if’. This analysis is unproblematic from a phonological point of view (Gk. εἰ is believed to go back to PIE **ej* [Dunkel 2014], which would regularly have become /i/ in Lycian [Melchert 1994: 56, 311]), and has two major advantages. It makes it unnecessary to assume any typologically unlikely way of forming conditionals, and it also provides a clear explanation of *=i* in conditional sentences in which neither a 3SG.DAT pronoun nor an adverb ‘therein’ seems to fit the semantic context. Possible counterexamples to this analysis will also be discussed.

Lastly, I will explore the likely origin of *ẽ*, which I now regard, following Torp (1901: 22; cf. Neumann 2007: 80), as a particle optionally employed in conditionals. In a few conditional clauses, *me=i* is immediately followed by *ẽ*, which leads one to wonder if *=i + ẽ* is an exact parallel of Gk. εἰ + ἄν > ἐάν, Att. ἄν, Io. ἤν (Colvin 2016: 75). I will therefore explore the possibility of etymologically connecting Lyc. *ẽ* and Gk. ἄν.

Keywords: Anatolian, Lycian, Greek, conditionality, typology

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