The Proto-Aalyu Language

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October 10, 2020

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1 Preface

The Proto-Aalyu language is intended as a Protolanguage for a world building project. The origin of this language group comes from a people who are partially agricultural and partially pastoral in an era before the pottery neolithic. The people originate from near a river system fairly far inland. In the warmer months, they hunt and graze, while accumulating some stock, especially fish, for the winters. During the winters, the groups coallesce into semi-permanent camps and rely on stored fish, tubers, and mildly fermented goods. They also continue to fish some.

Proto-Aalyu derives much of its phonological system from Australian languages, but with a moraic system. It is strongly head marking and makes extensive use of verb derivation to express complex meanings. Nouns have an unmarked implicit hierarchy based on animacy, which is heavily influenced by religious perceptions.

2 Phonology

Proto-Aalyu has an abundance of consonants that fills their space rather thoroughly. The vowels, conversely, are less than a typical language, and contrast only in length. The syllable structure is fairly simple, with open syllables being preferred overall. There are no tonal distinctions, and the words are mora timed. For the charts in the vowel and consonant sections, the romanization is provided in angle brackets to the right of each phoneme. The methodology for deriving this scheme will be discussed in a later section within the phonology with the main justification being that internal consistency and ease of use dominated over matching with the IPA or favoring an Anglocentric use of the alphabet.

2.1 Vowels

	Front	Central	Back
High	i, iː<i, ii>		u, uː<u, uu>
Low		a, aː<a, aa>	

Proto-Aalyu features three vowel qualities at the extremes of the vowel space. Vowels arise both as long and short variants, but long vowels are far fewer since they rarely surface outside of the first syllable of stems, especially in nouns. The most significant departure from this is that all verbal stems in the plain form have a \aː\ of some kind at their end. The vowels a synchronically very stable with no notable changes in quality regardless of length or environment.

2.2 Consonants

	Labial	Dental	Retroflex	Palatal	Velar
Fortis	p <p>	t̪<t>	ʈ<th>	c <ky>	k <k>
Lenis	b <b>	d̪<d>	ɖ<dh>	ɟ<gy>	g <g>
Nasal	m <m>	n̪<n>	ɳ<nh>	ɲ<ny>	ŋ<gg>
Rhotic		r̪<r>	ɻ<rh>		
Lateral		l̪<l>	ɭ<lh>	ʎ<ly>	
Approximant				j <j>	w <w>

Proto-Aalyu makes use of five places of articulation, in which three manners are fully present. Being a proto-language, the difference between fortis and lenis stops is not necessarily one of voicing, but could have also been aspiration or another mechanism which caused consistent differences to be related in daughter languages; the choice of using tenuis and voiced graphemes here reflects only their ease of use. In daughter languages, regardless of how they surface, the lenis consonants are much more prone to diachronic changes than either the fortis or nasal consonants.

A further note is that the dental rhotic is expected to have been rendered as a tap consonant rather than a trill, but the two could have been interchangeable.

Furthermore, as presented in the syllable structure section, there exist 3 underspecified syllable coda consonants which shall be rendered as **N**, **L**, and **R**. These respectively are homorganic coda nasals, laterals, and rhotics.

2.3 Syllable Structure and Timing

The syllable structure is simply `(C)V(T)` where `T` is one of the homorganic coda consonants. Of these, the nasal **N** is more common than the other two.

This means that there are four distinct syllable types, where the content affects how long it is:

Syllable	No. Morae
`(C)V`	1
`(C)V:`	2
`(C)VT`	2
`(C)V:T`	3

This timing system is fairly direct. A short vowel presents a single mora, a long vowel two, and coda consonants add an extra onto the syllable. Though the coda consonants take a full mora, they never form the nucleus of any phonemic syllable; however, the use of such sounds when thinking of what to say is not uncommon. All that said, some speakers and regions seem to prefer making some word initial patterns like \um\ a syllablic nasal or \ar\ a syllabic rhotic, especially at the beginning of words. This is not universal, however, but the pattern is definitely evident in daughter languages.

2.4 Romanization Scheme

The Romanization scheme is meant to be as internally consistent as possible and as quick to learn as possible as well, so this section will primarily present this reasoning with justifications for the inconsistencies present. In the interest of ease of use, this scheme was chosen to prefer digraphs over diacritics. It is also largely a phonemic mapping, but there are exceptions allowed for ease.

The vowels are simply echoes of the IPA in quality, and length is noted by doubling the vowel. This doubling provides a dual convenience. It clearly indicates the underlying moraic system that would be less transparent with something like macrons. It also is fairly intuitive since many languages, both natural and constructed, already use such a scheme.

The consonants probably require a little more effort to internalize. First, as the consonant section notes, the distinction between the fortis and lenis stops is not necessarily one of voicing, but the dividing line between voiced and unvoiced consonants in the Latin alphabet has been leveraged to this effect, which is not to far a cry from Hanyu Pinyin which uses it for aspiration. The retroflex series of consonants follows a simple pattern of appending a <h> to the associated dental sound. This was primarily done because <h> is not used elsewhere in Proto-Aalyu because of the lack of fricatives, so it is fairly clear that a digraph is indicated and syllable boundaries are not ambiguous. The palatal series follows a similar pattern of appending an otherwise unused graph, but is a bit less organized given the nature of the Latin alphabet and how palatal consonants are seemingly rendered in ad hoc manners in it. The graph <y> is appended to either the associated velar or dental consonant, with the exception of \j\ which is simply rendered as <j>. This latter choice was made so that coda nasals and laterals followed by \j\ could be easily distinguished from the palatal nasal and lateral without needing to resort to options like apostrophes to indicate syllable boundaries. The <ly> and <ny> digraphs were chosen both for familiarity and because appending to a velar series graph would either be impossible or cumbersome. The fortis and lenis palatal stops, however, append to the velar series. This is mainly done as an aesthetic measure so that <t> and <d> won't appear to be in abundance and in hopes it may be more intuitive than <ty> or <dy> digraphs may be.

The velar nasal, \ŋ\, is represented as <gg>. This is admittedly quite inelegant and rather non-intuitive. Had <g> not been taken by the lenis velar stop and <ng> not possible at a syllable

boundary, both would have been preferred. However, since neither of those two were easy to use and other options like <q> and <g̃> were either less intuitive or more cumbersome to input, <gg> has been selected for clarity and some degree of internal consistency.

Finally, the coda consonants are almost always represented by the dental graph of their associated type, thus <n, l, r> for the nasal, lateral, and rhotic, respectively. An inconsistency with the nasal is tolerated. When it occurs before the labial consonants \p, b, m\, it may be written as <m>; however this is not mandatory. This document will strive to use <n> in all these cases.

3 Grammatical Overview

Proto-Aalyu

4 Nouns

Nouns in Proto-Aalyu are clearly an inflectional category of words, however the degree of morphology attached to nouns is fairly light. All nouns have an implicit animacy that fits into a loose hierarchy which has some minor effects on how nouns may be inflected. As will be seen, this animacy hierarchy has some importance in the verbal morphology as well. Furthermore, third person nouns are marked for obviation for various reasons ranging from sentence level distinctions, to thematic roles, to the general flow of discourse.

4.1 The Animacy Hierarchy

Proto-Aalyu displays a three level animacy hierarchy. Though mostly the same throughout, the different levels are treated differently in minor ways through the language, and the animacy system plays a significant role in verbal morphology. The 3 classes distinguish percieved inanimacy, animacy, and sentience, they are listed here with some examples.

Class	Examples
Agentive	Humans, Spirits, dogs, horses, hawks
Animate	Small birds, reptiles, insects, plants
Inanimate	Rocks, water, tools, housing, ideas

This table gives a rough illustration of how agency typically functions in Proto-Aalyu . That said, certain things may end up higher or lower depending on general or particular perceptions of agency. For example, if a reptile of some sort is seen as threatening or scheming it may be sporadically elevated to the agentive class. Lowering animacy can happen, but is exceedingly rare. Though one might think it would be useful for a rude insult, that too is very very rare. The culture of insults works rather differently.

4.2 Common Nominal Particles and Patterns

There a handful of general use particles and patterns in Proto-Aalyu . With the exception of a couple, they always join at the end on the noun stem, and several may stack on top of each other.

4.2.1 True Plurals

Plurals can be denoted on all nouns, but are only mandatory on agentive nouns and personal pronouns. The plural suffixes are **-l(u)**, **-na**, and **-thi** for the agentive, animate, and inanimate noun classes respectively. For agentive nouns, this surfaces as **-l** after vowels and as **-lu** after consonants. Some simple examples follow:

`ramaal`
spirit.PL
spirits