The first two signs of the modern sign list show a figure pointing at himself:¹ No. *1 (head and pointing arm) and *2 (full figure and pointing arm), transliterated respectively as EGO and EGO₂.

The differentiation between these two sign shapes as separate signs is in all likelihood a purely modern one, reflecting the need to identify signs with a high degree of specification, whereas the original scribe may have understood both as permissible graphic variations of one sign, one the extension or abbreviation of the other.² This seems to be confirmed by use of both signs in interchangeable position and context by the same author.³ EGO and EGO₂ are logographic signs for the Luwian word amu, ‘I’, and occur as an alternative

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² Similarly, animal shapes are frequently known in two variants, either full figure or face only. Likewise the depiction of a seal from two different perspectives (signs sa₄ and sa₅) may represent permissible variants of just one sign. In the following, EGO and EGO₂ are therefore understood as two variants of one sign.

³ Cf. e.g. the Katuwas inscriptions karkamiš A1a, karkamiš A1b+c, karkamiš A2+3, karkamiš A12, karkamiš A23 with karkamiš A13d.

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¹ Less frequently herself, cf. karkamiš A1b.
² Similarly, animal shapes are frequently known in two variants, either full figure or face only. Likewise the depiction of a seal from two different perspectives (signs sa₄ and sa₅) may represent permissible variants of just one sign. In the following, EGO and EGO₂ are therefore understood as two variants of one sign.
³ Cf. e.g. the Katuwas inscriptions karkamiš A1a, karkamiš A1b+c, karkamiš A2+3, karkamiš A12, karkamiš A23 with karkamiš A13d.
writing to phonetically written á-mu. The signs serve several functions: primarily, they are logographic signs of the hieroglyphic writing system, yet they also act as part of the visual display of the inscription in which they occur.

Although the majority of occurrences of this sign requires a translation “I (am)”, it must be stressed that the sign value is without doubt simply ‘I’. The translation of many EGO clauses supplements a verb of being which, however, cannot be contained in the sign EGO. It is lacking because Luwian frequently omits the verb “to be” in nominal clauses. There is no basis for reading the sign EGO “I (am)” or even “I am”, as proven by a nominal clause of the past tense, which writes the verb (KULULU 4 § 1), and the use of this sign in sentences with other verbs. These attestations would be problematic if the sign already contained the verb “to be”.

1 Attestations

Apart from two surprising attestations, the sign EGO is not attested on seals, as indeed, an ‘I’ deixis would not be expected with a record of names and titles. The sign’s earliest attestation dates to the 13th century BC, to the EMİRGAZİ altar inscriptions of Tudhaliya IV, where it represents the pronoun amu in the dative.

EMİRGAZİ 1, § 33
EGO-pa-wa/i SOL₂ MAGNUS.REX IUDEX+la To me, My Sun, Great King,
MONS+tu IUDEX+la MAGNUS.REX x[... ] Labarna Tudhaliya, let him give
*502-mi-li LOCUS-ti DARE-tu a ri[tual] in an undefiled spot!

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4 For the distribution of EGO vs. amu, see below, note 15.
6 See below.
7 However, the frequent use of EGO in nominal clauses does seem to imbue it at least in the mind of the modern reader (and possibly the ancient one, too?) with a connotation of ‘being’, the iconic sign standing in the shadow of the phrase “I am”.
9 Thus already Aro 2013: 243.
10 For DARE with dative cf. e.g. the inscription CKEKE.