PARONOMASTIC INFINITIVE IN OLD BABYLONIAN[1]

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0. Introduction and literature review[*]

This paper attempts to describe the paronomastic infinitive constructions in OB. The phenomenon is attested and has been dealt with linguistically in many languages. The problem is not so much understanding it (which is often reflected impeccably in translation) but rather explaining it syntactically. The semantic values are somewhat secondary in this case, although they are, of course, indispensable to the discussion

The phenomenon in question is the structure ***parāsum(–ma) iprus***, where both infinitive and finite form share the same stem and root. All other similar constructions such as the infinitive constructions with *ša*, *kīma* or *mala* (e.g., *ša parāsim iprus*) are excluded, as they differ in many respects. The few examples with an accusative paronomastic infinitive will be given consideration on another occasion, for they constitute another issue.

This phenomenon was treated, to various extents, in the following works: Meyer-Lübke 1903, Ebeling 1905, Havers 1926:219, Hofmann 1930:63-82 (chapter 3) for Indo-European languages; Ewald 1870:699-700; 782-784 in discussing Hebrew; Rapallo 1971 in general and finally Goldenberg 1971. As this last *opus* has an exhaustive literature review, only the immediately relevant literature, concerning Akkadian, is reviewed here.

Lewy 1946 discusses the construction, rendering it mainly by adverbs such as *certainly, surely* etc. Finet 1952:21 says "il s'agit de l'infinitif renforçant un verbe conjugué et donnant à l'expression une énergie accrue". His translations vary according to context, but no key is provided which would allow any consistency in interpretation. Both Lewy and Finet discuss mainly the nature of the ending of the infinitive to which we refer below, §4. GAG §150a mentions strengthening as the function of the construction. Aro 1961:111-115 has a gallery of examples, but hardly any comments at all. Solá-Solé 1961:177-179 merely cites other works. These constructions are also discussed in Buccellati 1996:385 (examples 1) and 387 (example 7, for which cf. example [1] below), but their exact function is not mentioned and the discussion is of a semantic, rather than syntactic nature.

Goldenberg 1971 is the only work which has been successful in producing an exhaustive solution for the problem, explaining it and exemplifying it in various Semitic languages and in other languages as well. This complex solution seems to apply to OB as well.

The material contains about 70 examples of the paronomastic infinitive. Some are unanalysable, for lack of context due to breaks and other texual reasons. The AbB corpus

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seems to have fewer examples than the ARM, but not substantially. The structure of the examples in OB is quite uniform, the formal differences between them being subtle. The classification is possible based upon Goldenberg's classification only if one resorts to syntagmatic properties, that is, to the linear flow of the text.

1. The first type of paronomastic infinitive: Topicalization of the verbal lexeme

The solution offered by Goldenberg discusses three essentially different constructions rather than one. The *verbal lexeme* (i.e., the lexical content of the verbal form, normally represented by the combination of root and stem) may syntactically be represented by the infinitive. The syntactic isolation of the verbal lexeme may reflect different functions. In Goldenberg's Type 1 of paronomastic infinitive (Goldenberg 1971:36-49) this isolated verbal lexeme functions as the *logical subject* of the clause. This function of the construction is rather common in various Semitic languages (Aramaic, Gəʿəz, Hebrew, Amharic, Tigrinya and Gurage) and in other groups as well (Romance, Germanic and Slavic). The *logical subject, or topic*, is a function whereby a unit serves as a discoursive anchor in order both to maintain the reference to previous parts of the text and to represent what is being discussed, about which predication occurs. The occurrence of topic is quite common, e.g., in the clause *anāku ša elqû appal–ma* ("*as for me*, I will pay back that which I took..." AbB 1, 10:18-19), *anāku* (functionally equivalent to "as for me...") serves as such. In Type 1 the topic is the semantic verbal content, or the verbal lexeme, which is represented by the infinitive form.

The first example is a typical occurrence of the infinitive functioning as topic:

[1] *sēkirī / ša ana šiprim epēšim / eshūn[i]kkum / mimma š[i]pram / lā tušeppessunūti / šūpušum–ma l[i]šēpišū*
"Do not direct (lit. cause) the canal workers, who are assigned to you to do the work, to do any work; *as to directing*[2], let them direct". AbB 5, 136:4-9

One of the most current characteristics of the topic is that it resumes ideas which have already been mentioned. In example [1] this idea (the underlined *lā tušeppessunūti*) is resumed by the infinitive *šūpušum*, which is the topic of the last clause. In example [2] the infinitive functioning as topic (*šuta[ss]uqum*) is resumptive as well:

[2] *u mīnum š[a] kīam tašpuram / umma atta–ma eqlam / ana pānīka uštanassaq / adi kīma inanna šuta[ss]uqum–ma / tuštanassaq*
"And what (is it) th[at] you wrote to me as follows: 'I will get the field ready for your arrival'? *As concerns getting* (it) [r]eady, you (will) get it ready *right now*". AbB 12, 30:6-10

These examples as well as most of the occurrences of the construction contain *-ma*. This probably happens through some kind of contamination with Type 2. *-ma* is not expected here since topic is normally not marked by *-ma*[3], nor does it help in classifying the constructions.

Resumption of the idea by the topic is not a rule: at times it is enough that the idea expressed by the infinitive be presupposed:

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[2] The translation of the examples is different at times from the editions, in order to reflect the present syntactic interpretation. Since not every language is equally capable of reflecting a given syntactic structure, some deviation from standard English will occur at times.

[3] Cf. AbB 9, 2:12-13 where the same clause contains, in addition to a Type 1 construction, a focal element (*ṭēmkunu–ma*).

[3] [*...ša*]*ḫî addiššum–ma uštamīssunūti–ma / īzibšunūti–*[*ma*] */ akālum–ma ul īkulšu[nūt]i*
"I gave it (= the lion) [pi]gs and it killed them and left them [but] *eat th[em]* it did not". ARM 14, 1:11-13

A lion is captured and the greatest concern of the writer is that it stay alive. Hence it is given some food. That this is food is to be inferred from the context. Yet, when the lion does not eat, the idea of eating is established enough for the writer to use it as topic, which relates the clause backwards.

Examples [3] and [4] feature a negated verbal form. Type 1 is the only one which allows negation:

[4] [*š*]*a ta[q]biam / ana* ᶠPN */ ana ešrīšu aqbīšim–ma / apālum–ma ul īpulanni*
"[Wh]at you to[l]d me I told ᶠPN ten times but *answer me* she did not". AbB 10, 8:16-19

Here too there is no explicit resumption. However, the idea of answering, when someone is addressed, is strongly implied (see also ARM 26, 295:14-15).

Type 1 is quite similar to other cases of topicalization in OB, except the obligatory proximity of the topical infinitive to the verbal form (between which only *-ma* and the negative particle can intervene), and there are no special constraints as regards the tense and mood of the finite form (in the AbB; in the ARM there are only past forms in Type 1 constructions).

2. The second type of paronomastic infinitive: Focussing of the verbal lexeme

In Goldenberg's Type 2 (Goldenberg 1971:50-59), exemplified in Aramaic and Hebrew, the verbal lexeme is marked as *logical predicate*, or as *focus*. This is another function: an element is marked as the most salient piece of information in a clause. Marking an element as focus is called *focussing*. In Aramaic it is a cleft construction where the focussed part is the infinitive (lit. "it is *to go* that he went"). Hebrew has no cleft but rather other means to focus the verbal lexeme (i.e., the semantic content of the finite form). In OB Type 2 is very similar externally to Type 1 (except there are no examples with negation). However, in context we see that the verbal lexeme, rather than being the topic, is the most salient point in the clause, usually for reasons of contrast, or exclusiveness. This type is quite rare in the AbB corpus, but more common in the ARM corpus. It is analogous to any focussing marked by *-ma* (or by pattern[4]): e.g., in *anāku–ma appal–ma* ("*I*'ll pay... /(it is) *I* (who) will pay..." AbB 1, 10:21) *anāku* is focussed. The difference in our case is first, that the verbal lexeme is here focussed and second, that it stands in obligatory proximity to the finite form.

Examples [5] and [6], already adduced on different occasions, may serve as schoolbook examples for a focussed verbal lexeme for reasons of contrast:

[5] *mimma atta ana bēliya / ul tuḫaṭṭi... / atta ana bēliya dummuqum–ma tudammiq*
"You absolutely did not mistreat my lord... what you did was rather *to treat my lord kindly*" (lit. "(on the contrary, it is) *to treat my lord kindly* (that) you did"). ARM 26, 449:25-27

In [5] the idea of *dummuqum* is contrasted with the idea of *ḫuṭṭûm*, whose semantic value is the opposite. The same idea is implemented in the following example:

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[4] For a description of focus in OB see Cohen 2001.

[6] *ina pānītim ina aḫītiya ešme* / [*ummāmi*] *sukkal* GN *imtūt ana bēliya* / [*ašpur*] *inanna marū šiprī* GN / *ana ṣēr* RN *illikūnim–m*[*a*] / *umma šunu–ma* **marāṣum–ma** *imraṣ–ma*
"Formerly I heard in my entourage [as follows]: 'The minister of GN died'. [I wrote] to my lord. Now, the messengers of GN came to RN saying: 'He is *just sick* (rather than dead)'..." (lit. "(it is) *to be sick* (that) he is...")". ARM 26, 384:2''-6''

Here *being dead* is contrasted with *being sick*. In both examples -*ma* is expected, as it occurs with contrastive focus in OB. However, on a few occasions -*ma* is absent, which does not seem to detract from the analysis of the construction in any way:

[7] *lā taqabbi ummāmi* / *ṣābum ša ištu* GN / *illikam aniḫ kī ana birtim uššab* / **itnû** *lītenû* / *ištēn persum ištēn warḫam lišī liṣī–ma* / *persum šanûm līnīšu*
"Do not say as follows: 'The army which came from GN is tired, how can it serve as garrison?' Let them just *relieve each other* (lit. (it is) to *relieve each other* (that) they should relieve). Let one (army) section serve for one month, let it (then) leave and let another section replace it". ARM 1, 20:4'-9'

The exclusiveness here (they *only* have to relieve each other) is viewed as a type of contrast: one option as against all other options. Another issue which deserves comment is the absence of mimation, which occurs a few times (in III-weak verbal forms, but not exclusively: see **šūḫuzu** *šūḫuzāta* ARM 27, 128:5'). There seems to be no functional difference following the absence of mimation (see discussion in §4).

3. *The third type of paronomastic infinitive: Focussing of the predicative link*

Type 3 (Goldenberg 1971:69-72) is the most complicated both to explain and to grasp. Goldenberg describes it as "implying nothing but 'strengthening' or 'insistence' by being contrasted with their own negation", and views the construction, in sharp contrast to the other two types, as one indivisible syntagm and a special category. The contrast with their own negation is indeed a central issue to some of the examples, which remind one very much of the typical use of the asseverative forms in OB (e.g., *lū aprus*) as a contrastive response (not necessarily to a question, but also to something which is mentioned beforehand):

[8] [*ša i*]*štu ṣeḫrēku* *lā āmuru* / [*am*]*ārum–ma ātamar*
"[That whi]ch I have not seen [si]nce I was young I **have**[5] seen now". AbB 11, 34:5-6

This short example shows the basic nature of this type: insistence in response to the negative utterance *ša... lā āmuru* (underlined), thus creating a contrast which lies on the difference between negative and positive (expressed by [*am*]*ārum–ma ātamar*) – i.e., on the existence or non-existence of the *predicative link*, or the *nexus*. The nexus is the relationship found between the (logical) subject and the (logical) predicate, e.g., in the verbal form *ātamar* it exists between the first person and the verbal lexeme (the combination of the root √*amr* and the G stem), or in other words, between *I* and the idea of *seeing*. The function of insistence on the existence of the nexus is mentioned again in a more detailed framework (Goldenberg 1985:332 [= Goldenberg 1998:181]), and named *emphasis*, or *focussing, of the nexus*. The focus here lies then on the *predicative link*[6].

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[5] In translation the parallel English exponent of nexus focussing is used, i.e., stressing the auxiliary (which is marked by *italics* in written text).

[6] For a further elaboration of this function see Cohen 2001:98-102 (examples 15&16) and Cohen *forthcoming*.

The positive response may be not only to a negative utterance, but also to a positive one, but which implies some doubt:

[9] *marū* PN₁ / *kīam ulammidūninni* / *umma šunu–ma* / *išteat amtum ša bītini* / *qadum mārātiša* *udappir–ma* / *ina bīt* PN₂ / *ina* GN *ibašši* /... / *šumma amtum šī* / [*š*]*a mārī* PN₁–*ma* / [**dupp**]**urum–ma udappir** / [*amtam*] *šiāti* / [*qadum m*]*ārātiš*[*a*] / [*ana mā*]*rī* PN₁ [*t*]*ēr*
"The sons of PN₁ have brought the following to my attention, saying: 'A maid of our family has escaped with her daughters and is now at the house of PN₂ in GN'... If this maid, (the one) who [bel]ongs to the sons of PN₁ (and not to anyone else), **has** (indeed[7]) escaped, return this [maid with h]er daughters [to the s]ons of PN₁". AbB 13, 18:4-12; 22-28

The infinitive construction here refers back to the entire underlined clause *amtum... udappir*. The contrast here is not exactly polar (i.e., between *positive* and *negative*, for both finite verbs are affirmative) between the infinitive construction and its preceding co-text, but actually between the infinitive construction and the hanging doubt as to whether the report the sender had received is true. In syntactic terms, it is the equivalent of a *doubt* regarding the existence of the nexus, or predicative link, between the maid and her escaping, the response to which is the signal of nexus focussing. Such contrast or reaction to doubt as to the existence of the nexus are characteristic of occurrences of nexus focussing. The focus in the next example is on such doubt as well:

[10] [*aš*]*šum lā maḫāṣ nēšim šātu* / *kal ūmim* [*in*]*a* GN / [*w*]*aš*[*b*]*āku...* /... / *assurre–ma bēlī* / *kīam iqabbi ummāmi nēšam* [*šâ*]*tu* / **maḫāṣum–mi imḫaṣū**
"I [st]ayed [i]n GN all day [in or]der for (them) not to kill the lion... (now) it is to be feared lest my lord would say: 'They **did** kill [th]at lion!'". ARM 14, 1:7-9; 20-22 ("On n'a pas manqué de frapper le lion", LAPO 16:347)

This is the same lion encountered in example [3] above. What the king (=*bēlī*) might say resumes what is said at the beginning of the letter – that the writer had stayed in GN in order to ensure that nobody kill the lion. Since the lion after all dies (as a result of being old and sick), he fears lest the king, despite this, will think the opposite, i.e., that the lion *was* killed. The paronomastic construction in [10] exhibits the particle -*mi*. Note that -*mi* is many times an allo-form of the focal -*ma* within direct speech (as in fact already mentioned by Finet 1956 §§50g, 100h), and that marking the construction as direct speech is but secondary and occurs here the usual way, with the quotative exponent *ummāmi*.

The last example of this type shows another function, shared by the asseverative forms as well, expressing rhetoric concession[8] (i.e., of the type *I did* know, but could not come).

[11] [*aš*]*šum siliḫti*[*k*]*a ša libbaka* / [*imr*]*aṣu–ma ta*[*špu*]*ram* / *adi ṭēm si*[*l*]*iḫtika* / PN *ištu* GN / *išpuram anāk*[*u* **id**]**ûm īdē**[9]**–ma** / [*an*]*a šu*[*lm*]*ik*[*a*] *u*[*l*] *ašapparam* / [*kīm*]*a* PN / [*išp*]*ura*[*m*]... / [*ana šul*]*mika aštapram*
"[As t]o yo[ur] sickness (about) which you be[came] annoyed and w[rot]e me, until PN had written me (about) the matter of your sic[k]ness from GN — (you thought) I [**d**]**id** know but have not been writing to (inquire about) you[r he]alth? — [As so]on as PN wr[ote m]e, I have written [to] (inquire about) your [he]alth". AbB 3, 27:5-12

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[7] The use of adverbs such as *indeed, really* etc. in similar expressions in other languages has nothing to do with the truth. The overall framework of condition (expressing a mere possibility) testifies to that. Type 3 is attested after *midde* as well (AbB 10, 16:16-18).

[8] For examples, see Cohen *forthcoming*.

[9] The underline of *e* represents plene writing, which here marks a question.

The infinitive construction tells us that the issue is about whether or not the writer knew of the illness of the addressee. When denoting rhetoric concession, the construction (or the verbal form, in case of asseverative forms) shows some logical incompatibility (and hence contrast) with the consequent clause (in this case *not writing to* [*inquire about*] *the addressee's health*).

Type 3 is the only one attested inside subordinate clauses (after *inūma*: ARM 2, 101:14-18; 26, 154b:28-30).

By now we have shown all three types as proposed in Goldenberg 1971. It seems that this partition works well in OB, despite the difficulty in differentiation based on external form only, which is somewhat easier in Aramaic or Hebrew.

4. The nature of the infinitive ending: Nominative or locative-adverbial?

A point much discussed is the nature of the the ending of the infinitive form in these constructions. Lewy (1946:413-414) believes that this *-um* is *locative-adverbial*, claiming it to still be productive in Old Assyrian. GAG 66b follows Lewy. Finet (1952) thinks it is *nominativus pendens*, i.e., an isolated *nominative*. Aro (1961) classifies the phenomenon as having a *locative-adverbial* ending. Goldenberg (1971:75) claims that both possibilities are acceptable on syntactic grounds: The topic does not have to be marked by the nominative (cf. the [adverbial] topical expressions such as Akkadian *aššum*, English *as to*, etc.) and the focus could lie on anything (compare the analogous predicate function, where we could find almost any category).

There are two additional arguments in favor of interpreting the ending as locative-adverbial. First, there is one example of a paronomastic infinitive with *ana*, which behaves just like Type 1 seen above:

[12] *ana awīlim* **ana qabêm**–*ma* / *ul aqbi umma anāku*–*ma* / *ana abīya lušpur*–*ma* / *ṭēm awātim lišpuram*–*ma* / *ana awīlim luqbi*
"*As to telling*, I did not tell the man and I (thought to myself) 'let me write to my father so that he send me a decision regarding the matters so I can tell the man'". AbB 2, 115:17-21

Here we have a construction which, despite its appearance, is not focal but rather topical, that is, functions like Type 1. The structure is generally analogous to the locative adverbial *-um*, showing that adverbial entities do function as topics[10].

Second, the fact that 4 or 5 times, in OB, *-u* occurs on the infinitive instead of expected *-um* (see, e.g., example [7]), in a period where mimation is fully operative.

Arguments in favor of interpreting the ending as nominative would be that if the locative-adverbial ending has to do with length (i.e., long *u*) as some scholars claim, no length is ever indicated (except when it is a III-weak radical with no mimation, where length is expected), and that the locative-adverbial ending is no longer productive in OB.

The problem could also be approached from a linguistic angle. It would involve verifying whether there is any choice at all regarding this *-um*. Since there is no real choice, one must state that this *-um* has no synchronic value of its own (as value is determined by the extant set of oppositions), and therefore is regarded neither as nominative nor as locative-adverbial.

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[10] *ana* occasionally marks the topic: **ana alpim ṭarādim** *kīam taqbiam* "*As to sending* the oxen you told me thus..." (AbB 7, 132:12-13).

Note that after all it is the function of the construction which should have been at the center of this investigation, rather than anything else.

5. Recapitulation and conclusions

- The infinitives generally end with *-um–ma*, but the absence of *-ma* (and rarely of mimation) reveals no special distribution.
- None of the constructions found have appended suffix pronouns.
- There are no special restrictions on the tense or mood of the finite verb (although the perfect form is quite rare).
- All types may occur in modal environmment — after modal particles (*tuša, midde, šumman*) and inside a *šumma* condition as well.

Three distinct types are described:

Type 1 is found when the infinitive, representing the verbal lexeme, serves as topic. In this type we meet lexemic resumption, or in other words, the root of the infinitive construction repeats an earlier occurrence. This is the only type where we encounter negation.

Type 2 occurs where the infinitive is in focus, for reasons of contrast with another verbal lexeme, or for exclusiveness.

Type 3 serves as general insistence, in a similar manner to asseverative forms (however, it does not denote oath), many times in response to a negative, or doubtful, utterance. In syntactic terms this is referred to as *nexus focussing*. Here too one finds some lexematic resumption, but some contrast is to be found as well (in contra-distinction to the Type 1). This type sometimes seems to have evolved further semantically to denote notions such as *definitely, totally*[11] etc.

It is to be hoped that, with this syntactic solution, as formulated by Goldenberg 1971 and shown to work in OB, interpretations of the paronomastic infinitive constructions could become somewhat easier and the mechanism behind these constructions would be better understood.

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[11] See ARM 27, 162:30-35; 28, 70:6-8.

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Abstract

This paper examines the occurrences of the paronomastic infinitive constructions (*alākum-ma illik*) in the Old Babylonian letters. These constructions are classified, along the lines of G. Goldenberg's model, according to their function: In the first type the infinitive, representing the lexical content of the verb, functions as topic, whereas in the second type it is the focus. In the third type the whole construction functions as an emphatic response, or in syntactic terms, as nexus focussing exponent.

'FEAR NOT, O KING!'
THE ASSYRIAN PROPHECIES AS A CASE FOR A COMPARATIVE APPROACH

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This contribution discusses several prophecies from seventh-century Assyria, especially those that deal with the role of Babylon in the turbulent events of 681 BCE, the year of Sennacherib's murder and his succession by Esarhaddon. It aims to shed light from the prophecies on Esarhaddon's relationship with Babylon. It will be argued that Babylon played a role in the struggle for power between Esarhaddon and his brothers, and that this may help to explain Esarhaddon's favourable attitude towards Babylon. The case is intended to illustrate the usefulness of the Assyrian prophecies as a historical source. Since the connection between the prophecies on the one hand, and the historical events to which they refer on the other, can be reconstructed with some plausibility, the Assyrian prophecies can be regarded as an important source for the comparative study of Old Testament prophecy.

The prophetic oracles from seventh-century Assyria were, for a great part, known already by the end of the nineteenth century. However, it took almost a hundred years before they received the attention they deserve[2]. Parpola's edition of 1997 has finally made them widely accessible[3]. Recently, scholars have pointed at the increasing evidence of prophetic oracles and references to prophetic figures, and argued that prophecy was at home in the ancient Near East as one of the common forms of divination, in the West-Semitic areas as well as in Mesopotamia[4]. If this is correct, the issue of the position of prophets and prophecy in Israel, Assyria and the rest of the Near East can be approached afresh.

The Babylonian role in the events of 681-680 BCE

It is commonly accepted that Esarhaddon by the end of 681 ascended the throne of Assyria after having defeated his elder brothers who had murdered Sennacherib and had rebelled

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[2] Manfred Weippert in particular has made an important contribution to the study of the Assyrian prophecies.
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