A Contribution to the Study of Interjections in Canaano-Akkadian

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Summary: This article offers a holistic corpus-driven analysis of the lexical class of interjections in Canaano-Akkadian. The authors demonstrate that the interjective category contains at least seven members (ia, alik, annu, ñme, annû, allû, and sulma) of varying semantic (emotive, conative and phatic) and formal (primary and secondary) properties. The observed properties generally corroborate the synchronic and diachronic tendencies associated with interjections in linguistic typology.

1 Introduction

The present paper studies the lexical class of interjections in Canaano-Akkadian (C-A) - the language of the approximately 280 Amarna letters (EA) that were sent from Canaan to Egypt in the 14th century BCE. By examining the semantic, phonetic, morphological, and syntactic properties exhibited by C-A interjections, we aim to design a holistic, theoretically principled account of the interjective category in that language. To achieve our objective, we will make use of a canonical, typologically-driven approach to interjections - the most prevalent in current linguistic studies.

The paper will be organized as follows: in Section 2, we will first familiarize the reader with the theoretical framework underlying our study; subsequently, we will present the standard views on interjections that can be found in C-A scholarship. In Section 3, which is dedicated to empirical evidence, we will analyze the meaning and form of interjections as attested in

1 The present article has been developed within the research project The typology of interjections in North-West Semitic languages: Canaano-Akkadian, Ugaritic, Biblical Hebrew, and Aramaic funded by Subcommittee A of Stellenbosch University.

2 Concerning the various views on the linguistic status of Canaano-Akkadian (e.g. hybrid language, mixed language, interlanguage, Akkadographic Canaanite, or a dynamic mixture of pidgin, koine, mixed-language, and jargon properties), see ANDRASON/VITA 2014, and the references therein.

the selected corpus. In Section 4, the results of this analysis will be evaluated within the adopted framework. Section 5 will conclude the article.

2 Background

2.1 A canonical approach to the category of interjections

The category of interjections is internally complex and encompasses a wide range of members. From a semantic perspective, fundamental in definitions of the interjective category, interjections constitute "vocal gestures" expressing mental states experienced by the speaker. Such mental states pertain to four different domains - these allow for the division of interjections into the following main types: (a) emotive interjections, which express emotions and perceptions; (b) cognitive interjections, which express mental processes of knowledge and thought; (c) conative interjections, which express volition and are used as commands or attention getters; and (d) phatic interjections, which express attitudes towards discourse, constitute signals establishing, disrupting, and sustaining communication, and form parts of routines, e.g. greeting, leave-taking, apologizing, and thanking.

The interjective category is also diversified from a formal perspective, containing primary interjections, secondary interjections, and exclamations. Primary interjections are words that are only - or principally - used as interjections. This categorial primacy stems from the origin of some interjections as reflexes or results from the profound interjectionalization of originally non-interjective lexemes or constructions. That is, due to the entrenchment of interjective uses, lexemes and constructions drawing on non-interjective lexical classes are grammaticalized into fully-fledged interjections to the extent that the original relationship with non-interjective lexical sources is lost. Some originally non-interjective elements are only conventionalized to a partial degree such that their semantic and formal relationship to non-interjective sources is still recoverable and relatively transparent. These are secondary interjections. Lastly, exclamations are in principle non-interjective elements (nouns, verbs, adpositions, adjectives, adverbs, phrases) that are spontaneously used in an interjective function without (or with minimal) traces of an even partial interjectionalization.

Primary and, to a lesser extent, secondary interjections tend to exhibit a number of formal properties. Phonologically, primary interjections are monosyllabic; are built around an open syllable; make use of vocalic rather than consonantal components; and contain aberrant sounds and sound combinations. Morphologically, primary interjections are mono-morphic; fail to exhibit inflections, derivations and compounding; and are lexically opaque and anomalous. Syntactically, primary as well as secondary interjections can be used holophrasically as independent non-elliptical utterances. When used in a sentence, interjections are only loosely integrated in its grammar; do not participate in the operations of negation and interrogation; do not enter into constructions with other elements (except for vocatives, certain particles, and interjections themselves), and occupy a peripheral, usually sentence-initial position.

The diversity of interjections and the internal complexity of the interjective category are successfully dealt with in a canonical approach to interjectionality. Semantically, the four types of interjections yield the scale of interjective canonicity from the most canonical, emotive type to the least canonical conative and phatic types, through the cognitive type. Formally,

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4 A similar approach was used by A. Andrason in his previous work on interjections in Semitic (Andrason forthcoming: Andrason/Horne/Joubert 2020) and African languages (Andrason/Dlali 2020). Without being repeated verbatim, section 2.1 overlaps, to a degree, with the theoretical sections of these papers.

5 AMEKA 1992; 2006; Stange/Nübling 2014; Stange 2016, pp. 9, 49-50.


7 AMEKA 1992; 2006; Wierzbicka 1992, 2003; Nübling 2004; AMEKA/WILKINS 2006; Stange/Nübling 2014; Stange 2016. Other meaning-related features (whether semantic or pragmatic) that tend to be associated with interjections are: extensibility and context dependency; semi-automaticity and reflex-like nature; monodramatization and non-referentiality (AMEKA 1992; 2006; Nübling 2004; AMEKA/WILKINS 2006; Stange/Nübling 2014; Stange 2016). Many of these properties are only typical of emotive interjections, being less patent in other types, especially in conative and phatic interjections.


11 AMEKA 1992, pp. 123, 108, 111; see also Minard 2015, pp. 151, 159-162. Exclamations are generally excluded from the category of interjections and viewed only as a functional class (AMEKA 1992; Minard 2015). The above demonstrates that the distinction between primary interjections, secondary interjections, and exclamations is gradual. It reflects a gradual increase in entrenchment and conventionalization of non-interjections to interjections. It should however be recalled that some primary interjection may emerge as such, without gradually increasing their interjective profile. Interjections (primary or secondary) may also be borrowed from other language systems.

12 When accompanying negative and interrogative clauses, interjections exhibit their own illocutionary force.


the three types reveal a grammaticalization cline from the non-canonical class of exclamations to the canonical class of primary interjections, through the semi-canonical class of secondary interjections. In compliance with the canonical approach to interjections adopted in this study— and in agreement with modern linguistic theory, more generally—the category of interjections will be understood as a “distinct lexical/grammatical class...” from that of particles, whether modal particles (topic, focal, scalar particles) or discourse particles (commonly referred to as discourse markers). Although this distinction is not usually made in Semitic studies, where interjections tend to be classified as a sub-class of broadly understood particles, we find it sensible. First, modal particles differ from interjections by exhibiting the following properties: modal particles communicate the speaker’s “perspectives towards a proposition”, they do not carry their own illocutionary force but alter the illocution of the sentence in which they appear; they are syntactically integrated in the grammar of the host clause, exhibiting a dependency relationship with core syntactic elements (e.g. by functioning as modifiers); as a result, they cannot be used holophrastically as independent utterances. Second, pragmatic particles (discourse markers) exhibit the following features distinguishing them from interjections: pragmatic particles constitute a functional category rather than a lexical class, being thus principally determined by their discourse function; they are “indexical elements” managing or organizing discourse; specifically, they relate one discourse segment to another and delimit the respective segments’ initial and/or final edges; given this relational nature, pragmatic particles cannot be used holophrastically, similar to modal particles described above.

Interjections are sometimes even excluded from the category altogether (Wierzbicka 1992, 2003; Meinard 2015, pp. 154–155). Nübling 2004; Strange 2016; see also Meinard 2015. Some interjections may be primary from the beginning of their grammatical life (see footnote 11 above). Ameka 1992, p. 107; Fischer 2006. The inclusion of interjections in the class of particles in Semitic studies stems from morphological similarities exhibited by both categories. Interjections and particles are usually monomorphic and do not contain inflections or derivations. Compare with a similar observation made by Ameka (1992, p. 106) regarding the common conflation of interjections and particles in the grammatical studies of many languages.

Ameka 1992, pp. 107; Degand/Cornillie/Petrandrea 2013, p. 5.
Degand/Cornillie/Petrandrea 2013, pp. 7, 3.

Diewald 2013, p. 25.
Diewald 2013, pp. 22–23.
Diewald 2013, pp. 22–25.

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2.2 The study of interjections in Cannoano-Akkadian

Interjections are probably the least researched lexical class in Cannoano-Akkadian. Grammars and dictionaries mention the interjective category rarely and, if so, pay minimal attention to this matter. Indeed, Rainey’s study, the only grammatical treatise that includes a chapter dedicated specifically to interjections, condenses its discussion to barely more than a page. No holistic treatment of the category is provided, the analysis being generally limited to a mere list.

According to the standard view, primary interjections are unattested in Cannoano-Akkadian. The only interjective lexemes attested are secondary interjections or exclamations. For Rainey (ibid.), Cannoano-Akkadian possesses two interjective imperatives, imluš ‘lit. go!’ and izšub ‘lit. leave him!’, used as “cohortatory exclamations” (ibid.). For Delaire, the imperatives used as interjections are annu ‘lit. look’, and sme ‘lit. listen’—both drawing the attention of the interlocutor and/or urging them to do something. The “interjection” or “interjunctive particle” it is in, which expresses “acceptance of an order” equivalent to “yes” and the only genuine primary interjection found in the Amarna letters is regarded as an Egyptian direct quote rather than a Cannoano-Akkadian lexeme or a foreign loanword borrowed into Cannoano-Akkadian. The term ‘interjection’ is also used by Knudtzon and Rainey with reference to the lexemes allu and or annu—forms that...

22 Rainey 1996b, p. 249.
24 Rainey 1996b, p. 249.
26 Rainey 1996b, p. 249.
27 CAD I/1, p. 321; see also Rainey 1988.
30 Knudtzon 1964, pp. 1276–1268.
31 Rainey 1996b, p. 155.
32 Rainey 1996b, p. 155 recognizes the relationship between annu, allu and amur on the one hand, and the category of interjections on the other hand, since those three lexemes not only introduce information but also draw attention to it (see also Albright, p. 37 where allu is translated as ‘weh6e’). Nevertheless, he classifies them as particles (see next footnote).
together with _amur_ mentioned above, are much more commonly classified as members of the category of particles.\(^{39}\)

3 Evidence

The examples discussed in this section have been extracted from the C-A corpus of the Amarna letters as edited by Rainey.\(^{40}\) We have thus far identified a set of seventeen examples in which seven different interjective lexemes are used: \(ia\) (3.1), \(alik\) (3.2), \(amur\) (3.3), \(time\) (3.4), \(annu\) (3.5), \(alih\) (3.6) and \(salma\) (3.7). In this section we will analyze each of these cases with respect to its meaning (semantics) and form (phonetics, morphology, and syntax).

3.1 IA

(1) ... e-re-ma-liq-bi LU GAL be-liri \(\nu\) ka-na-ta pa-ni ERIN MEŠ GAL \(\quad\) ibil DRu a be-li-ia \(\quad\) ia-ia-ia\(^{41}\)
When the king, my lord, said: "Be ready for the arrival of the great army!" then
the servant said to his lord: "IA-IA-IA"\(^{42}\)

As mentioned in Section 2.2, the interjection _ia_ used in the sequence _ia-ia-ia_ is interpreted in traditional scholarship in phatic terms as an expression of acceptance, affirmation, and approval.\(^{43}\) It is translated accordingly as 'aye, aye', 'yes, yes', 'aia', and 'yes, yes, yes'.\(^{44}\) We have also explained

\(^{39}\) Rainey 1988; 1996b; Izre'el 2005; Tropper/Vita 2010. Within the lexical class of particles, _alil_, _annu_, and _amur_ are usually defined as _presentation_(al) particles (Rainey 1988; 1996b, pp. 155–174; Izre'el 2005, pp. 48, 74, 68, 77) or as 'particles of siehe' (Tropper/Vita 2010, pp. 109–110). They are typically translated as 'behold' in English (AHW, pp. 41, 53–54; Rainey 1996b, pp. 156–174; 2015a, 2015b, pp. 1304; Moran 2003, pp. 19, 22, 31, 43, 108, 144–145; Izre'el 2005, p. 48), as well as, less commonly, 'look' (e.g. Rainey 2015a, p. 1304 for _annu_) and 'siehe' in German (Knutzon 1964, pp. 1367–1368, 1377).

\(^{40}\) Rainey 1988, 1996b.

\(^{41}\) Rainey 2015a, 2015b.

\(^{42}\) Rainey 2015a, p. 745; similar Moran 1992, p. 233; Liverani 1998, p. 150. In the examples, the respective interjections will only be glossed. Their semantic analysis and possible translations will be offered in the body of the text of each section.

\(^{43}\) Albright 1937, p. 197; CAD I/1, p. 321; Rainey 1988.

\(^{44}\) Rainey 1996b, p. 219; 2015a, p. 745.


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that rather than a Canaanite lexeme, either native or borrowed, the element _ia_ is generally regarded as a direct Late Egyptian quote.\(^{46}\) The underlying Late Egyptian word would be _ia_ (also transliterated as _j?/a_) and/or its neo-Egyptian variant _ya_ (also transliterated as _y_) - itself, an interjection or particle rendered in English by 'aye, verily', truly, indeed, and 'ah' or 'oh'.\(^{47}\) The analysis of _ia_ as a foreign quote draws on two arguments: (a) the interjection exhibits a multiplicative pattern - a common mechanism in Late Egyptian, but allegedly 'unknown in ... Canaanite [...] or Biblical Hebrew'; (b) it is marked by a double gloss sign that indicates foreign material, possibly Late Egyptian in agreement with the presence of several other Egyptianisms in this text.\(^{48}\)

This standard interpretation of _ia_, which has remained unchallenged for nearly a century, can be contested. To begin with, its establishment as a prevalent view is not a result of a cumulative scientific enterprise, but rather emerges from "academic gossip" - grammatical studies referencing and echoing each other.\(^{49}\) Albright\(^{50}\), the father of the Egyptian-quote proposal, emphasized the doubts and problems associated with this interpretation, concluding that the context is nowhere sufficiently clear to permit of a convincing suggestion. His reinterpretation was however presented without nuancing in CAD I/6. When it was subsequently included by Moran\(^{51}\) and Rainey\(^{52}\) in their seminal works, it acquired the status of an unquestioned statement. Far from Albright's intentions, an initial timid hypothesis has been amplified to a seemingly authoritative "fact". We propose that the interpretation of _ia_ as a native Canaanite interjection is more plausible than its
analysis as insertional Egyptian code-switching. This can be substantiated by the following four arguments.

First, cognates of ia are widely attested in closely related Semitic languages. They are found in several languages of the North-West Semitic branch, as demonstrated by y yâ in Ugaritic, y /yâ/ in Aramaic, and yâ (and yây) in Syriac. They are also present in other languages of the Semitic family, e.g. yâ in Arabic and, possibly, Ethiopic. Second, contrary to Albright’s proposal, interjections can exhibit multiplicative patterns in North-West Semitic. This can be illustrated by Biblical Hebrew, where several interjections are used in pairs. Third, even though the text of letter EA 147 does contain Egyptian quotes, the two lexemes marked by glosses that are found in the immediate context of ia (line 38) — i.e. ku-na used before it in line 36 and si-ri-ia used after it in verse 39 — are most likely Canaanite material. The form ku-na is the imperative of the “purely Canaanite verb” 66 to kûn, “be ready, stand.” Similarly, si-ri-ia is a Canaanite noun with the 3rd person pronoun suffix, meaning ‘my back.’

Fourth, the author of the letter and the speaker of the utterance containing the interjection ia is Abi-Milku, the ruler of Tyre, a city where a north-west Semitic variety was in use. When expressing his own feelings and thoughts, he would more likely use Canaanite quotes rather than Egyptian ones.

We also propose that the interjection ia need not necessarily entertain a phatic function, expression acceptance, affirmation, and approval. In related languages such as Ugaritic, Syriac, and Arabic, the cognates of ia allow for conative (attention getter or expression of urge) and emotive uses. Given the context of the passage in question, the interpretation of ia in terms of an emotive interjection is highly plausible. The speaker experiences great joy upon the arrival of the pharaoh’s envoy, in particular the announcement of the royal army being dispatched to Tyre. Visibly excited, delighted, and relieved, Abi-Milku utters the interjection ia, repeating it three times for emphasis. The lexemes ‘yes’, ‘yeah’, and ‘aye’ could still be used in English renderings since these lexemes express not only a phatic but also a wide range of emotive functions.

From a formal perspective, ia exhibits several properties associated with primary interjections across languages (see Section 2.1). Phonetically, ia is monosyllabic and makes use of an open-syllabic structure. It is vocalic in essence, with both its nucleus and onset exploiting only vocalic material — either vowels or semi-vowels. Morphologically, ia is mono-morphemic. It is indivisible into basic meaningful elements, fails to contain inflections and derivations, and does not make use of compounding mechanisms. Syntactically, ia is used holophrastically as an autonomous non-elliptical utterance. It occurs in a construction with itself, thus yielding a multiplicative sequence. Given all such “primary” properties and the emotive function exhibited, ia — or more accurately its diachronic source whose successors are attested in the Semitic family — can be regarded as a primary interjection that has functioned as such since its origin. Instead, it did not reach its primary status through the process of interjectionization.

3.2 ALI K

Furthermore, when the pressure got too tough for me, then I thought to myself, "ALIK, let me make a treaty with him, namely 'Ammunira'."77

(2b) a ti-paš-su n i-kil-ta a-t-ti Bi-i-ri-da-āš-ku / a-nu-nu-bi-ta u ti-iq-bi-su / al-kā-am-3i nu-da-nāk 1Bir-ia-wa-zu/′a la-a ni-ia-3i-su-in a-na/(KUR Tālji-qi, SE)\(^8\)

... and they made war on me with Biridas, and they were saying, "ALIK, let’s (!) kill Biriyawaza and not let him get away to [the land of Tabsi]."77

The form alik is viewed in C-A scholarship as one of the co-hortatory exclamations\(^7\) or as an exhortatory particle\(^8\). Sporadically, it is defined as an adverb.\(^9\) It is rendered as 'come', 'come on', or 'go' in English.\(^10\) In our opinion, rather than an exclamation - and certainly not a particle\(^11\) or adverb - alik is a secondary interjection of a blended conative-emotive type.

Example (2a) is extracted from a letter written by Rib-Hadda of Byblos to the pharaoh. The passage that is relevant for the interpretation of alik concerns a treaty which Rib-Hadda made with 'Ammunira of Beirut. Rib-Hadda recalls the thoughts he had before going to 'Ammunira's house, in particular how he encouraged himself to enter into this new alliance. This encouragement is encoded by the verb īppuš, a present-future verbal form inflected in the 1st person singular and accompanied by the ventive marker -am, equivalent to a volitive expression 'let me make/I must make/I will make' in English. To express the idea of urge and exhortation even more explicitly, the speaker uses alik, which may additionally reveal a certain degree of excitement and emotional tension of the speaker. Similarly, in (2b), alik expresses encouragement or urge to kill Biriyawaza with whom the author of the letter wages war. As in the example discussed previously, the volitive cohortatory meaning is expressed overtly by the 1st person plural jussive nuḏišk 'let’s kill'.\(^12\) Additionally, alik gives insight into the emotional state of the speaker, suggesting his agitation, zeal, and excitement.

\(^7\) Rainey 2015a, p. 697; similar Moran 1992, p. 217.

\(^8\) EA 1973:14-17.


\(^10\) Rainey 1996b, p. 249.


\(^12\) Dellaire 2014, p. 176.

\(^13\) Rainey 2015a, p. 903.


\(^15\) Rainey 2015a, p. 903.

\(^16\) Rainey 1992b, p. 249; Dellaire 2014, p. 176. See also 'allez' in French (Moran 1987, pp. 356, 435).

\(^17\) That is, not a particle in the sense understood by modern linguistics, i.e. a modal particle or a pragmatic particle (discourse marker).

\(^18\) Rainey 2018b, p. 1538.

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From a formal perspective, the interjection alik is equivalent to the singular imperative of the verb alāki(m) 'go'.\(^49\) Although, to the best of our knowledge, only two instances of the interjection alik are attested and thus the frequency-related entrenchment of the interjective function of the underlying imperative cannot fully be assessed, certain properties allow us to view this lexeme as a fully-fledged secondary interjection. First, contrary to genuine imperatives that are directed to interlocutors (typically 2nd person singular or plural), alik lacks a directive function. Indeed, the sentence in (2a) that contains alik belongs to the speaker's internal monologue and thus is not aimed at any external addressee. Second, when used in a context that allows for dialogical exchanges, alik fails to exhibit agreement in number with the referent to which it could be directed. In (2b), instead of being inflected in the plural like the accompanying verb nuḏišk 'let’s kill', alik appears in the singular. The two properties demonstrate that the interjectionalization of the original expression is relatively advanced and, thus, that alik is no longer an exclamation - the second person singular imperative of the lexical verb alāki(m) 'go' used spontaneously in an interjective function.\(^50\)

Being a secondary interjection, alik fails to exhibit traces of phonological and morphological simplicity and aberrancy. Note, for instance, that conforming to its verbal character, alik can host the ventive morpheme -am\(^51\) (2b).\(^6\) With regard to syntax, however, it complies with the typical properties of interjections to a larger extent. When used as part of a larger sentence (which is attested in the two cases), the integration of alik into that sentence structure is loose: alik is not governed by the main verb or any other structural head, nor does it modify any element of that sentence. It also occupies a peripheral position, being located at the left edge of the sentence. In contrast, alik exhibits certain types of constructional combinatory as it enters into contraction with another element - the quotative particle -mi (2a-b).

\(^49\) Rainey 1996b, p. 249.

\(^50\) This complies with the common grammaticalization of motion verbs (especially their imperative forms) as secondary conative interjections, e.g. *go/come* in English, *venga/vamos* in Spanish, or *allez/allas* in French. It should be noted that the sequences of alik and the other verb in (2a-b) do not constitute examples of a serial verb construction (SVC). Contrary to what is typical of SVCs (Aikehnvald 2006, 2018), the person and number marking of alik and the second verb do not coincide, nor do their TAM markings. In contrast, the example EA 102:15, the only one of alik discussed by Dellaire (2014, p. 176), is a semi-canonical instantiation of an SVC and not an interjection.

\(^51\) Rainey 2015b, p. 1535.
As mentioned in Section 2.1, the lexeme amur is usually classified as some type of particle: a presentational particle or a pragmatic particle (discourse marker) used to logically structure thoughts. It can also be used as a particle similar to anumma ‘now’. The interrogative function of amur is recognized in scholarship only sporadically. Its most fervent proponent is DELLAIRE, who proposes a far exaggerated (see below) set of forty cases of the usual translation as ‘behold’ or, more literary, as ‘look’.

We propose that amur can be used as an interjection. However, this usage is much less common than the predominant function of a modal or pragmatic particle, in which the lexeme either modifies its sentence or structures the discourse. Indeed, among the attested instances, we have identified only three where amur acts as an interrogation (3a–c).

In (3a), the author of the letter – Rib-Hadda, the ruler of Byblos – warns the pharaoh not to trust in the men of Byblos and their willingness to arrive in Beirut. He anxiously wants to depart from Beirut, where he has spent a year waiting for the Byblos men, and asks the king for permission to leave. The interrogation amur profiles the frustration and irritation experienced by the speaker towards the men who have never arrived. Example (3b) also occurs in the context of warning. Another ruler of Byblos, ‘Ilu-rapi’, laments the loss of many cities to Aziru and the inability to guard the city of Byblos. He then warns the pharaoh not to pay attention to the goods sent by Aziru, because Aziru is a traitor. The interrogation amur provides insight into the emotional state of the speaker, specifically his rage, anger, and fury towards Aziru. In (3c), ‘Ilu-rapi’ responds to the order of the pharaoh to prepare the local army and march in the vanguard of the Egyptian army. ‘Ilu-rapi’ declares his readiness and invites the pharaoh to defeat the enemy and bring recompense to himself (i.e. ‘Ilu-rapi’). The latter wish is headed by the interrogation amur that likely expresses excitement in regard to that foreseeable recompense.

As is evident from the above discussion, the interrogation amur serves emotive purposes – it gives insight into the feelings experienced by the speaker, whether positive or negative. Inversely, amur is not used in a conative function as an attention getter. Indeed, in the three examples analyzed in this section, the speaker need not draw attention of his interlocutor as they should already be paying attention to the letter. Therefore, instead of
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3.4 SIME

(4a) ... ši-mē‘(i)‘a‘-sii qa-la-ta 1ti-ul’-qā‘i KUR-ka ... SIME to me, why do you keep silent so that your territory is being taken?112

(4b) ... ša-tam ši-mē‘a‘-sii qa-la-ta 1ti-ul’-qā‘i KUR-ka ... SIME to me, why do you keep silent so that your territory is being taken?112

Furthermore, SIME to me, why do you keep silent so that your territory is being taken?112


113 This relative conventionalization of the interjection amur is paralleled by the frequent use of the same lexeme as a particle. Indeed, the particle amur is well advanced in its grammaticalization, most likely to a much larger extent than the interjection amur. It should be noted that the grammaticalization of visual-perception verbs as interjections is typologically common, being attested in other Semitic languages (e.g. Biblical Hebrew) and the contact variety - Egyptian (Cochrane-Rainey 1989, pp. 42-44; Rainey 1996b, pp. 167-169; Tropper/Vita 2010, p. 110; Dellaire 2014, p. 175).

114 EA 83:14-16.


118 EA 122:46-51.


120 Rainey 2015a, p. 175; cf. ‘Furthermore, don’t [de]lay coming’, adapted from Rainey 2015a, p. 547.

121 Rainey 2015a, p. 643; similar Moran 1992, p. 201.

122 See CAD S2; Rainey 1996b; Izre’el 2005; Tropper/Vita 2010.

123 Dellaire 2014, p. 176.

124 Ibid.

125 Moran 2013, pp. 157, 158, 167, 201; Rainey 2015a, pp. 491, 501, 531, 643; Baranowski 2016, p. 164.

126 Dellaire 2014, p. 176.

127 Ibid.

128 The analysis of the remaining cases of sime listed by Dellaire (2014, p. 170) as interjections is, in our view, problematic. In EA 95:21-22, the text is broken such that an accurate understanding of the role of sime and the intentions of the speaker cannot be determined. In EA 79:20, sime functions most likely as a discourse marker rather than an interjection.
Example (4a) involves a context of treat. The pharaoh does not answer the pleas of Rib-Hadda concerning the supplies of troops and horses. Rib-Hadda, the author of the letter, thus threatens to make a treaty with 'Abdi-Ashirta without the permission of the pharaoh.\footnote{Rainey 2015b, p. 1426.} He motivates this threat by two rhetorical questions, both implying the lack of response from the pharaoh: first in line 7: "Why do you not send back word to me" and next in line 15: "Why do you keep silent". The latter of these two nearly synonymous sentences is headed by \textit{sime} that profiles the annoyance, impatience, and frustration of Rib-Hadda given the pharaoh's silence. Example (4b) is uttered in a context of impatience explicitly marked by modal imperative forms. After being attacked three times in a year and robbed of his own supplies, Rib-Hadda informs the pharaoh that there is no more grain for the city's inhabitants to eat. He therefore pleads the pharaoh to send grain.\footnote{Rainey 2015b, p. 1421.} The interjection \textit{sime} is used to insists that the pharaoh convince Yanlamu, an Egyptian commissioner, to take silver in exchange for food, which would save the city. More than urging the pharaoh, \textit{sime} is used as an outlet of the strong emotions experienced by the speaker: exhaustion, frustration, perhaps even fear of the famine that threatens the inhabitants of Byblos. Example (4c) belongs to a letter in which the speaker's emotions of anger and rage play a prominent role.\footnote{Rainey 2015b, p. 1413.} These negative emotions are expressed overtly by \textit{u-a-ta-sa-as} 'I am angry/distressed' and \textit{n-a-aq-sa-ap-ti} 'I am angry/enraged'.\footnote{Rainey 2015b, p. 1438.} The author of the letter, again Rib-Hadda, is infuriated because Amunappa, an Egyptian official, has failed to fulfill his promise - he did not arrive with his soldiers. Rib-Hadda reiterates his petition, ordering Amunappa to speak to the king so that he would send the troops to restore the city which is now hostile. This reiteration is introduced by \textit{sime} that profiles the impatience, frustration, anger and disappointment experienced by the speaker. Example (4d) is extracted from another letter sent by Rib-Hadda to Yanhammu. This time, Rib-Hadda is not only angry with Yanhammu as this has failed to keep his promise and delayed coming forth. Rib-Hadda is also utterly fearful and distressed (see \textit{pa-l-la-kus} in line 28). As a result of Yanhammu's inactivity, Rib-Hadda's situation is dire - everything is finished and devastated.\footnote{Rainey 2015b, p. 1439.} The interjection \textit{sime} used almost immediately after \textit{pa-l-la-kus}, communicates the speaker's anger, despair, and fear, introducing his renewed plea to Yanhammu to arrive quickly. In (4e), Rib-Hadda reports that because of Pahura's action, the city of Byblos is on the verge of rebellion.\footnote{Rainey 2015b, p. 1446.} Rib-Hadda has no royal troops and provisions to protect himself and to prevent a possible insurrection. He pleads for the troops, threatening that otherwise the city will rebel. He reiterates his petition 'do not refuse!' by heading it by the interjection \textit{sime} that expresses impatience mixed with fear and despair.

Overall, the interjection \textit{sime} tends to be employed in an emotive function rather than drawing attention to the message. The feelings expressed by \textit{sime} are typically negative. However, a conative nuance of urge - certainly related to the impatience experienced by the speaker - is also possible (pace Dellaire 2014, p. 176). Most of the interjective uses of \textit{sime} (4b–e) occur in cases where this lexeme is accompanied by another imperative or directive form.\footnote{See also Dellaire 2014, p. 176.}

Like \textit{alik} and \textit{aman}, \textit{sime} is a secondary interjection that derives from the 2\textsuperscript{nd} person singular imperative of, in this case, the verb \textit{simu} 'listen, hear'. The literal usage of the imperative \textit{sime} is still patent in Canaanite-Akkadian. Probably, the interjectionalization of \textit{sime} is less advanced than was the case with \textit{aman} and \textit{alik}. This may be inferred from the regular co-occurrence of \textit{sime} with its object - the dative 1\textsuperscript{st} person pronoun \textit{la-si} (to me). The semantic bleaching of the lexical meaning 'listen, hear' seems also to be lower than with \textit{aman} or \textit{alik} since \textit{sime} is often followed by speech verbs (4b–c), reflecting a fully motivated, nearly iconic causal relationship: first listening to a message and next transmitting it.

Given its secondary status, the phonological, morphological and syntactic properties of \textit{sime} are also comparable to those exhibited by \textit{alik} and \textit{aman}. First, \textit{sime} does not comply with the simplicity and extra-systematicity attributed to primary interjections in the realm of phonology and morphology. In contrast, as far as syntax is concerned, \textit{sime} exhibits certain extra-systematic features characteristic of interjections. Specifically, in its sentential uses, \textit{sime} is only loosely integrated into the sentence grammar, failing to be governed by other elements and to modify any other core element of the sentence. It also resists the operations of negation and interrogation. When introducing negative (4e) or interrogative (4a) clauses, \textit{sime} entertains its own illocutionary force, independent from the force exhibited by the rest of the sentence. Lastly, contrary to \textit{alik} and \textit{aman}, \textit{sime} enters into construction with pronouns: as explained above, it is invariably accompanied by the 1\textsuperscript{st} person singular dative \textit{la-si} (to me).
ANNU

(5a) an-nu-ú û-pa-ur IR-la a-na be-li-ša-e-nu-ma iš-me DUMU KIN-ri SIG/ša LUGAL ša iš-ša-ad a-na IR-la ša-šu DUGGA ša iš-ta-ta-ti-ti UGU/ša LUGAL be-li-ta-a-na IR-ša ū i-sa-hur ī-še-ši146

ANNÚ, the servant has written to his lord since he has heard the gracious envoj of the king who comes to his servant and the sweet breath which has come forth from the mouth of the king, my lord, to his servant—and his breath returns.147

(5b) an-nu-ú û-na-an-sár URU LUGAL/ša ip-qi-id i-na qa-ti-ša ma-gal/pa-nu-ša a-na a-la-ki148

ANNÚ, I am guarding very diligently the city of the king that he entrusted to me.149

The lexeme ANNÚ is usually viewed as a presentational particle, a modal particle, a pragmatic particle (discourse marker) structuring discourse and linking the narrated events and situations, and an adverb or adjective used adverbially. It is translated as 'behold', 'indeed', 'now', and 'herewith'.150 Even though the use of ANNÚ in the quality of a particle, either modal or pragmatic, predominates,151 the lexeme sporadically functions as an interjection. We have identified two possible instances of this (5a-b).152 Example (5a) comes from a letter whose fragment was discussed in Section 3.1. Abi-Milku, the author of that letter, has just received the news that the pharaoh is about to send forth his army. He is excited, if not delighted, hearing this news from the mouth of the envoy. ANNÚ is most likely employed to profile this excitement and delight experienced by Abi-Milku. Example (5b) comes from another letter sent by Abi-Milku. In this letter, the ruler of Tyre provides information previously requested by the pharaoh, concerning the situation in cities located outside Canaan.153 In the passage relevant for the interpretation of ANNÚ, Abi-Milku assures the pharaoh that he has diligently been guarding the city as ordered. The interjection ANNÚ appears immediately after the opening formula and is probably used to draw the attention of the recipient of the letter as well as to express the feelings of pride and satisfaction with the successful fulfillment of the pharaoh's commandments.

The two examples above demonstrate that in its interjective uses, ANNÚ may entertain both an emotive and a conative function. In such cases, inherently interjective translations (e.g. 'oh', 'ah') seem more suitable than the presentative 'behold, herewith' or the modal 'indeed'. As aik, anur, and ñime analyzed in Sections 3.2 and 3.3, ANNÚ is an example of a secondary interjection. However, contrary to aik, anur, and ñime which all draw on verbs, ANNÚ derives from either a particle or a pronoun. According to one hypothesis, the interjective ANNÚ derives from a particle (fully patent in Canaan-Akkadian), cognate to BH bn.n, Ugartic bn, and Arabic 'inn-hu'.154 According to the other, perhaps less likely theory, the interjective ANNÚ (as well as the particle ANNÚ) derives from the masculine singular of an Akkadian-based demonstrative pronoun,155 which was still widely used in Canaan-Akkadian.156 In any case, the grammaticalization of ANNÚ in its interjective function seems to expand beyond a mere exclamation use. This is evident within the 'pronominal theory' of the origin of the interjective ANNÚ, where the relationship between the input construction and its interjective extension is unrecoverable. If the 'particle theory' of the origin of the interjection ANNÚ is correct, the entrenched and conventionalization of this interjective usage would however be less visible – the interjection ANNÚ being a relatively transparent meaning extension from the particle ANNÚ.
The interjection annū exhibits similar properties to those associated with the other secondary interjections that have been described in this study. One the one hand, annū fails to exhibit any relevant trace of phonological, or morphological simplicity and extra-systematicity. On the other hand, certain extra-systematic syntactic features can be noted. In its non-holophrastic uses — the only ones attested — annū is only loosely integrated in the grammar of the sentence to which it belongs. It is not governed by structural heads, does not modify the core components of that sentence, and does not form constructions with any other element. It is also placed in the left periphery, occupying a sentence-initial position.

3.6 ALLÙ

(6a) allu-ḫa-zi-na-li-šu da-kul/qi-da-a-ḫa-ri-ti-ia allù DUMU.MES.ii(SE)\footnote{EA 89:20–21.}

ALLÙ, they killed their city ruler with my sister and her children\footnote{RAINEY 1995b, p. 166.}

(6b) sa-ni-tam GÌ.S.MÀ.MES ša ma-ši-zi-an UGU-iaall/LU.MES/URU Arwa-balù allù-šu is-na-al/is-ti-ta ša-bat GÌ.S.MÀ.MES/LU.MES/URU Arwa-balù\footnote{AHw, p. 37.}

Moreover, whose ships have been hostile to me, is it not the men of the city of Arwad? ALLÙ, they are with you now; seize the ships of the men of the city of Arwad\footnote{ALBRIGHT/MORAN 1950, p. 164; RAINEY 1996b, pp. 159–163; RAINEY 2015a, pp. 515, 555, 707, 929; MORAN 1992, p. 222; see also ‘siche’ in German, TRONNER/VITA 2010, p. 109.}

(6c) ša ti-ši-ig-ba ‘a-na ša al-li-a allu-ši ma BA/OŠ/bet-ši-ru \footnote{RAINEY 1992, p. 162.}

... and they said to him, “ALLÙ, dead is our lord”\footnote{AHw, p. 37. As mentioned in section 2.2, the proposal that allù is an interrogative particle is not correct (cf. RAINÉ 1996b, pp. 159–163).}

(6d) allù-ta-ši ‘a-na ša-ta ša al-li-a allù-ši ma BA/OŠ/bet-ši-ru \footnote{RAINEY 1992, p. 162.}

... and they said to him, “ALLÙ, dead is our lord.”\footnote{AHw, p. 37. As mentioned in section 2.2, the proposal that allù is an interrogative particle is not correct (cf. RAINÉ 1996b, pp. 159–163).}

In C-A scholarship, the lexeme allū is classified as a particle — a presentational particle\footnote{ANDRASON/VITA in progress.}, an assertive particle\footnote{PACE RAINEY 1996b and TRONNER/VITA 2010.}, or an “opening particle” introducing
marker *mi* ‘you say’; ibid.) ‘our lord is dead’ is introduced by *allá*. The interjection likely articulates the sadness, despair and grief of the speaker. In (6d), Ipte, the author of the letter, expresses his grievances to the pharaoh. At the end of the letter, Ipte laments that Puhr, an Egyptian commissioner, did not protect him. This lament is introduced by the interjection with other elements. As illustrated in (6c-d), the interjection *allá* marks the end of the declarative sentence. It is not governed by any structural heads nor does it modify any other element.

There is no agreement as for the primary or secondary status of *allá* – the origin of *allá* remains an unresolved issue. On the one hand, *allá* can be a primary interjection related to BH *adasḷay* – an interjection of intimidation translated by *woe* and *alas*, which is also found in Ugaritic (Ug.). This BH and Ug. interjection most likely has an onomatopoeic origin, mimicking wailing. On the other hand, *allá* may be a secondary interjection of pronominal origin. Within this view, it would derive from the distal demonstrative *allá* ‘that’ by analogy to the proximate demonstrative *annu* ‘this’ (pronoun and interjection) modifying its initial vowel to *a*, ultimately adopting the form *allá* (ibid.).

Neither phonologically nor morphologically does *allá* exhibit significant degrees of simplicity and extra-systematicity. In contrast, its syntactic extra-systematicity is more evident. In its non-holophrastic uses, which are the only ones attested, *allá* resists any integration in the core structure of the sentence. It is not governed by any structural heads nor does it modify any component of the sentence. However, *allá* is able to enter into constructions with other elements. As illustrated in (6c-d), *allá* can be combined with the quotative marker *mi*.  

181 Ibid.; RAINEY 2015a, p. 925.
182 RAINEY 1996b, p. 160.
184 JODON-MURAOKA 2006, p. 322.
187 TROPPER 2012, p. 750.
188 KLEIN 1987, p. 31; see also BDB 1906, p. 47; ANDERSON/HORNEA/JOTHERET 2020.
189 AHw, p. 37; RAINEY 1996b, p. 160.
190 See RAINEY 1996b, pp. 166-167.

3.7 ŠULMA

(7) a-na na-ha-ja-ku-ku le-ua šul-ma/lib-ba-ku-ku la ta-li-ma-ra \ sa-nim/ia mi-im-ma i-na ŠA-ku-ku la ta-ša-kán \ nu-nim / ...ś a-nu 'A-ni-ti šul-ma qi-ba'

May it be well with you. Do not make your hearts sick and don't take anything to heart. (...) And say ‘ŠULMA’ to 'Anatu.'

The lexeme šulma constitutes an example of a secondary interjection of a phatic type. As its meaning is concerned, šulma can be translated by the idiomatic ‘hello’ in English or, less commonly, by a more elaborated expression ‘wish well’. From a formal perspective, šulma derives from the accusative of the noun šulma ‘health, well-being’ – a common source of phatic interjections in the Semitic family. The C-A šulma is relatively advanced in its interjection-elicitation. This may be deduced from the presence of a frozen accusative ending -ša used in a form that is not governed by any syntactic head that would request this type of case marking. Given its secondary status, šulma does not exhibit phonological or morphological simplicity and extra-systematicity. Its syntactic extra-systematic nature is more evident. Like ia discussed in section 3.1, šulma is used holophrastically, thereby functioning as an autonomous non-elliptical utterance.

4 Results and discussion

The empirical research demonstrates that the category of interjections consisted in Canaanite-Akkadian of at least seven members: *ia*, *alik*, *amur*, *šime*, *annu*, *allá* and šulma. As far as their meaning is concerned, the C-A interjections may entertain an emotive (*ia*, *alik*, *amur*, *šime*, *annu*, *allá*), a conative (*ia*, *alik*, *šime*, *annu*, *allá*), and a phatic function (šulma). Emotive uses predominate. The feelings associated with the C-A emotive interjections tend to be negative although the use of interjections to convey positive feelings is also attested. Only two interjections are primary (*ia* and possibly *allá*). The remaining four (or five if *allá* is included) are secondary interjections deriving...
from other lexical classes, specifically verbs (ali, amur, sim) and nouns (silma), as well as possibly pronouns (annu and alli) and/or particles (annu). Even though the extent of their interjectionalization is uneven — being, for instance, higher for ali, amur and lower for sim — ali, amur, sim, annu, sim, and perhaps alli (if it indeed derives from a pronoun) are sufficiently entrenched and grammaticalized to be regarded as secondary interjections rather than mere exclamations.

Our study also demonstrates that C-A interjections comply with several properties associated with interjections in linguistic typology:

1. With respect to phonology, primary interjections may exhibit a simple (ia) or a complex (alli) structure. They can be mono-syllabic built around an open syllable, or pluri-syllabic containing closed syllables. If pluri-syllabic, harmonious patterns may be reconstructed (for example, alli that, according to one theory, originally had a reduplicative structure). Harmonious patterns are also visible at a syntactic level where a primary interjection can be repeated (see ia ia ia). One of the primary interjections (ia) is vocalic in nature. In contrast, secondary interjections generally have a more complex phonological structure. They are uniformly bisyllabic and allow for both open and closed syllables. Contrary to what is typical of interjections across languages, C-A interjective lexemes do not contain sounds or sound combinations that would be anomalous from the perspective of the language's phonology. This is most likely related to the nature of the C-A evidence. Canaanite-Akkadian is available to us exclusively in a written, relatively official form (letters from Canaanite rulers to the Egyptian pharaoh) where extra-systematic sounds (especially non-speech sounds) would have to be adapted to standard orthography or omitted entirely. Furthermore, since the majority of the interjective lexemes are secondary interjections drawing from fully systematic lexical classes, the likelihood of exhibiting extra-systematic phonological or phonotactic properties is minimal. It should however be noted that five interjections (ia, alli, ali, amur and annu) begin with a vocalic element, while only two have a fully-fledged consonantal word-initial onset (sim and silma).

2. With respect to morphology, primary interjections are mono-morphemic and do not exhibit inflections, derivations, or compounding. They are also morphologically anomalous and lexically opaque. In contrast, secondary interjections exhibit various morphemes typical of the lexical classes from which they derive. They also exploit a root-pattern structure typical of Semitic languages, again related to their verbal, nominal, or pronominal origin.

3. With respect to syntax, two interjections (ia and silma) are used holophrastically, the remaining ones forming instead parts of larger sentences. In such non-holophrastic uses, C-A interjections are loosely integrated in the sentence grammar. They are not governed by the verb or any other structural head present in the hosting sentences, nor do they modify the verb and its dependents, whether arguments or adjuncts. Interjections do not participate in the syntactic operations of negation and interrogation. Interjections may certainly belong to sentences whose core clauses are interrogative (sim) or negative (sim and alli). However, in such instances, interjections cannot themselves be negated or questioned – they rather exhibit their own illocutionary force, independent from that of the rest of the sentence. Overall, C-A interjections tend to occur with affirmative sentences, either indicative or modal (imperative and jussive). Interjections do not form constructions with other elements, e.g. verbs, nouns, adjectives, and adverbs. The noticeable exceptions are the quotative marker m1 (found with ali, and alli); the declarative the 1st person pronoun ili (used as the indirect object of sim); and an interjection itself (as demonstrated by the multiplicative chain ia ia ia). Interjections that form parts of sentences generally occupy a sentence-initial position, being thus found in the left periphery of the sentence.

4. Lastly, with respect to their diachrony, the category of interjections in Canaanite-Akkadian is an open and renewable lexical class. Its members arise either as bodily reflexes (ia), onomatopoeic imitations (possibly ali, whose diacritical input probably mimicked wailing), or due to the process of interjectionalization (all i, amur, sim, annu, and sima). The most common — originally non-interjective — elements that were interjectionalized in Canaanite-Akkadian are imperatives (ali, amur, and sim).

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Note: The page contains references and footnotes, which are not transcribed here for brevity.}

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Our study also demonstrates that the lexeme ezibu included by RAINEY (1996b, p. 49) in his chapter on interjections is not an interjection. It rather constitutes an imperative form of the verb ezibu 'leave' used in its lexical sense. That is, ezibu implies the actual action of abandoning someone; the patient of the action is identified by the direct object 'him' co-indexed with a specific referent — the king; and the verb is inflected in the plural referring to the actual semantic subject, the agent performing the action of abandoning (see that ezibu agrees in person and number with the subsequent verb ni-te-pa-as-na 'let us make (alliance)').
5 Conclusion

This article studied the lexical class of interjections in Canaanite-Akkadian. The evidence shows that the interjective category contains at least seven members (ia, alik, amur, sima, anna, alii and simu) of varying semantic (emotive, conative and phatic) and formal (primary and secondary) properties. The research corroborates various typological tendencies associated with interjections with respect to their phonology, morphology and syntax, as well as their diachrony.

References

— in progress: “Discourse Markers in Canaan-Akkadian.”
A Contribution to the Study of Interjections in Canaanite-Akkadian


TLA = Thesaurus Linguae Aegyptiae.


