

A Note on the Allative Ventive in Connection with N. J. C. Kouwenberg's Contribution¹

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The ventive is primarily a means of spatial and not “personal” deixis (with K. *passim*), but it is different from deictic words of *this* ~ *that*, *here* ~ *there* type: the latter point to (the location of) the *participants* of a situation vis-à-vis the speaker, whereas the (+/-) ventive localizes (or, rather, orients) the *situation* or “*fact*” (action, process or state) itself—primarily also vis-à-vis the speaker. That is why the ventive does not agree with personal arguments.

Thus, in German the spatial deixis has two elements: *dieser/hier* vs. *jener/dort*, while the verb's spatial orientation includes three grammemes denoted by verbal prefixes: ‘hither’ (*her-*) ~ ‘whither’ (*hin-*) ~ \emptyset . Thus, *heraufsteigen* ~ *hinaufsteigen* ~ *steigen*.

In Akkadian, the category of orientation comprises two elements: + ventive \approx *her-*, - ventive \approx *hin-/* \emptyset : *ilûnim* = ‘sie sind heraufgestiegen’, *ilû* = ‘sie sind hinaufgestiegen’ or ‘sie sind gestiegen’. The collocation “verb of motion + ventive” is no less productive than the collocation of *hin-/her-* orientation prefixes with verbs of motion in German.

I believe K. is right in claiming that the ventive is originally no 1st p. sg. dative but rather ‘basically expresses motion towards the location of the speech event (p. 200 Abstract *et passim*).² In particular, the incompatibility of the *-am* morpheme with the subordination marker (*ša išpur-am* vs. *ša išpur-u-šum*)³ suggests that *-am* might be a “foreign” element in the set of dative pronominal suffixes. Cross-linguistically,

¹ N. J. C. Kouwenberg. “Ventive, Dative and Allative in Old Babylonian”. *ZA* 92 (2002), 201–240.

² Or, I would say, + ventive orients the situation as spatially related to the speaker, - ventive otherwise, see below.

³ It can hardly be accounted for by contraction since respective plene-writings are not prominent.

the “personalizing” shift “here” → “to me” is well attested (Plungian 2002).

Now “speech event” is just another term for “speech act”, which includes the speaker (the 1st person), the addressee (the 2nd person), the localization of the speaker in space (the deictic centre) and in time (the moment of speaking).⁴

The central point of K.’s article is that motion towards the location of the speech event (SE) somehow aims at the location itself rather than at the interlocutors. That is to say, K. understands both the SE and the orientation towards it in non-shifter terms, i.e. as motion towards a certain *place* where both the speaker *and* the addressee are situated, and only “as an implicature it (= the Ventive) may also refer to speaker(s) and addressee(s) individually, i.e. to first and second person” (p. 200, Abstract). His SE is non-deictic because it does not take into account the respective speaker as the only canonical (= “normal”) deictic center in the language, but is thought of as an “I—Thou” relation, i.e. as something fixed, having spatial extension of its own, independent of the speaker: SE = [I ⇔ Thou].

But both the localization of and orientation towards the SE in its canonical form is in most (perhaps in all) languages of the world localization of (/orientation towards) the speaker, not towards the (“*place*” of) interaction embracing both interlocutors—simply because the *here* (like the *now* and the *I*) shifts in the course of communication to the respective speaker.

As in most languages of the world, in Akkadian there are no demonstratives pointing to speaker + addressee, so it is unlikely that the category of orientation in this language should primarily oppose the [I ⇔ Thou] location (“to me *and* you”, “near me *and* you” K. *passim*) and the “outside world” to the detriment of the speaker.

K. has provided no text in which the ventive had this basic meaning, but only contexts in which the ventive means

- “to me/us”: 3.3.1. motion towards the speaker(s);
- “to you”: 3.3.2. motion towards the addressee(s);
- 3.3.3. motion towards the third person.

⁴ Some linguists use “the deictic center” also as a synonym for “the moment of speaking”/“the present moment”.

He does not claim that this meaning could be plausibly implicit in any of the examples in 3.1 (unspecified goal) or 3.2 (specific locational goal).

Since Kouwenberg's corpus consists of OB letters, this comes as no surprise. The speaker and the addressee simply did not share location, so the ventive could not point to both of them. Theoretically, the [I ⇔ Thou] direction could be sought for verbs with 3rd p. subject of the *illikam* and *išpuram* type, but for the same reason a letter is no good place to look for this kind of orientation. Of course we do not know what used to happen in spoken OB medium in the situation of face-to-face interaction, for which the Akkadian had developed the ventive, but—as mentioned above—the [I ⇔ Thou] direction is typologically very unlikely.⁵

I believe that the ventive as a directional element primarily relates the situation to the speaker: *alkam* = “come here!” This interpretation, first proposed by Benno Landsberger, still holds.

All the other directional uses of the ventive derive from this one by way of spatial deictic projection (this is again basically the theory of Benno Landsberger > GAG § 82a). The use of the ventive for the 2nd p. goal is the deictic projection in its “first remove”, its use for the 3rd p. goal is its “second remove”. The deictic centre (i.e. the spatial point of view) moves from the speaker to the addressee and sometimes goes on to the “third person”. The first remove became strongly entrenched in the language, as convincingly shown by K.: “neither **ana maḥrika*§*ērika ašpur* nor **ašpurkum* are grammatically correct Akkadian for *I wrote to you*” (p. 213), but the second remove (the ventive for the 3rd p. goal) remained context-conditioned.

The difference in the directional use of the ventive for the 1st and 2nd person noted by K., i.e. “a strong tendency ... to make a 2nd p. goal explicit by means of an additional pronoun” (p. 210ff.) seems to support the derived use for the 2nd person goal, *pace* K. As regards the 3rd p. goal, to explain the ventive in *ana PN allakam* as basically “I will

⁵ Cf. (and contrast) Kouwenberg's observations on p. 234f., especially the following one (re: *illikam* and *išpuram*): “The ambiguity *only* arose when the ventive *also* came to refer to speaker and addressee individually” (p. 235, italics added). I conjecture that Kouwenberg's view has partly evolved as an answer to the question: “Why did they always write *ašpurakkum* and could not write *ašpurkum*?” and perhaps: “Why did the ventive degenerate into a mere linking morpheme between verb and pronoun?”

come to PN *there near you*" (K. p. 234 and 3.3.3.), i.e. somehow to reduce this use to that directed to the 2nd p. goal, is not a strong point at all since the texts examined in the study do not always support this interpretation.

I would suggest that the use of the ventive for the 2nd p. goal is analogous to the temporal point of view shift known as "epistolary perfect", which is best known for the verbs of sending and writing but is not limited to them in Akkadian.⁶ Thus, in ubiquitous epistolary utterances of *aštaprakkum/aštapram* kind the Perfect indicates the retrospective temporal viewpoint of the addressee and not the synchronous viewpoint of the author (the moment of speaking/writing).⁷ In the same way the ventive for the 2nd p. goal is the vehicle of the spatial deictic projection. Conspicuously, both features are fairly regular, since in OB letters addressee-directional verbs in the Present are rather uncommon.

As for the *ana* PN *uš(ṭ)ābilam* type "I (have) sent to PN", here I believe the ventive introduces a third party as an observer, i.e. as the spatial observation point. This explanation is to my mind more satisfactory than K.'s assumption (impenetrable to falsification as it is) that "the speaker takes the goal as his vantage point, so that he describes the motion as directed towards himself" (p. 214).

This development is not unexpected, since in the non-canonical speech settings the *Zeigfeld* of both absolute time and spatial deixis (including orientation) can be "alienated" from the speaker and transferred to the addressee or to the third party. The latter possibility is especially appropriate for narrative contexts where the meanings of deictic categories are "relativized to text" (see Loesov 2004a:400).⁸

⁶ See Loesov 2004:132.

⁷ For obvious reason (temporal separation of participants of communication) this usage is current in letter-writing if a given language employs temporal deictic projection at all, but there is nothing specifically epistolary or exclusively conventional about it. Cf. the words of Henry V in Shakespeare: "And gentlemen in England, now a bed, Shall thinke themselves accurst they *were not here*, And hold their manhoods cheape, whiles any speakes, that *fought* with vs vpon Saint Crispines day" (IV.3.64, quoted by Jespersen in his *The Philosophy of Grammar*). The past tense in the subordinate clauses expresses the future retrospective viewpoint of the "gentlemen" (i.e. non-participants in the speech event), while *here* and the future tense in the main clause presupposes the moment of speaking as the deictic centre.

⁸ Cf. C. J. Fillmore's observations on "coming and going" in Fillmore 1997.

Spatial deictic elements are of course less susceptible to projection than verbal tenses, but still I believe that the traditional explanation of the basic meaning of the allative ventive is more plausible than a radical break with the normal structure of the spatial orientation proposed by K.

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