

I-NU-MA-I-LU-A-WI-LUM*

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The first lines of OB Atramhāsis, BM 78941 + 78943 = CT 46. I (= tablet A) read as follows:¹

1. *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum*
2. *ub-lu du-ul-la iz-bi-lu šu-up-ši-[i]k-ka*
3. *šu-up-ši-ik i-li ra-bi-[m]a*
4. *du-ul-lu-um ka-bi-it ma-a-ad ša-ap-ša-qum*
5. *ra-bu-tum^d A-nun-na-ku si-bi-it-tam*
6. *du-ul-lam u₂-ša-az-ba-lu^d I-g[i-g]i*

1.

The very first line is famous for hot scholarly debates concerning its meaning.² The problems of its interpretation are as follows:

1) How is the [*um*] of *a-wi-lum* to be understood in terms of formal morphology and semantics?

2) What is the syntactic relationship of *i-lu* to *a-wi-lum* and that between the first and second lines?

I will start with the second question, which has so far received two answers in the Assyriological literature: (1) *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* is a subordinate temporal nominal clause (NC); (2) *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* is a part of a subordinate temporal verbal clause which occupies the first two lines of the text.

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¹ The text is quoted according to Lambert and Millard 1969. Von Soden 1978 has no deviations as far as the interpretation of signs is concerned.

² See especially the exchange of opinions between W. von Soden and W. G. Lambert: von Soden 1969, Lambert 1969, von Soden 1970, Lambert 1971, von Soden 1971. It is hardly necessary to mention here all interpretations and translations. For a bibliographic guidance, see Borger HKL II 157ff. and Shehata 2001.

The interpretation of *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* as a NC has won the day in the current literature. This reading is supported by most scholars, e.g. by von Soden 1969; Groneberg 1978/1979:20, followed by Kouwenberg 2000:41; Moran 1987:247; Bottéro–Kramer 1993:530; Streck 1999:97; Metzler 2002:308. It has received nuances depending on how one deals with the first question mentioned above, but if we disregard the reading of Jacobsen 1977 (same in Jacobsen 1976:117) “When Ilu (= Ellil.—*S. L.*) was the boss”,³ the interpretations as a NC can be presented—in a simplified way—as follows:

“When the gods were (like) man/humankind, they carried the toil, dragged the earth basket”.⁴

The reading of *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* as a part of a subordinate temporal verbal clause (i.e. as non-predication) appears mostly in earlier literature.⁵ This understanding is reflected in the following paraphrasis and translations:

“[D]ie nächste Zeile *ublū dulla izbilū šupšikka* ... zusammen mit der ersten so zu deuten ist, daß die Götter ursprünglich ‘(wie) ein Mensch’ die Arbeit verrichten mußten, weil noch niemand existierte, der für sie arbeitete.” (Matouš 1967:5);⁶

“Als die Götter (wie der) Mensch die Zwangsarbeit verrichteten, den Tragkorb schleppten war der Tragkorb der Götter gross und die Zwangsarbeit schwer; zahlreich war die Beschwerlichkeit.” (Pettinato 1968:176f.);

“When the gods like men Bore the work and suffered the toil— The toil of the gods was great, The work was heavy, the distress was much.” (Lambert–Millard 1969:42f.).

The scholarly labour was much, the debate was heated, still—surprisingly—neither of the interpretations has ever been supported by grammatical arguments other than W. von Soden’s occasional references to GAG in his polemic with W. G. Lambert. The only grammati-

³ For its criticism, see von Soden 1978:76.

⁴ Or “suffered forced labour”. On possible iconographic evidence for *šupšikkum*, see von Soden 1969:420, n. 1.

⁵ But see the reading of Wasserman 2003, discussed at the end of this paper.

⁶ See Matouš 1967:5 n. 29 for references to still earlier interpretations.

cally relevant point of this polemic (way back in late sixties and early seventies) was whether to consider *a-wi-lum* nominative case (W. von Soden) or locative (W. G. Lambert). I believe this problem is anyway of secondary importance for the understanding of the text under discussion.

On the majority reading, a subordinate temporal NC *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* sets the stage for the events that follow. The gods toiled and experienced hardships when they were in some way (like) human(s). I think this reading of *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* is impossible even if in Mesopotamian culture there existed a well-entrenched independent topos “gods once used to be (like) human(s)” — unfortunately we do not have sufficient data to judge about it.⁷ It is impossible because *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* does not fulfill the text-grammatical function accorded to it by the NC interpretation.⁸ As I will try to show, the sequence of Akkadian words *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* does not mean “when gods were (like) human(s)” and can hardly be an Akkadian temporal clause at all.

The present writer also feels that the majority reading has been shaped by a tacit and perhaps unconscious equating of *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* with the “(when) X was Y” identificatory/classificatory verbal clause of modern European languages, in which nominal identificatory clauses of this structure are virtually non-existent.

2.

Wilcke 1977 collected and analyzed opening lines of Akkadian epic texts. This evidence shows that if we put aside discursive portions — poets’ words directed to the public or a god — every epic narrative starts with a clause containing a finite verb with past time reference. Atr A I 1 would be the only exception.

Now I will quote the available epic incipits starting with *inūma*-clauses, following Wilcke 1977 as far as texts and translations go. After

⁷ Von Soden 1969:417 observes: “[M]uss das Prädikat *awilum* im Singular neben dem Subjekt *ilū* im Plural vollends schockieren, obwohl damit nicht gegen die Kongruenzregeln verstossen wird.” It is difficult to decide whether the beginning of the fable “The Tamarisk and the Palm” quoted below sheds additional light on this problem.

⁸ I do not discuss late versions of the first lines (quoted e.g. in von Soden 1978:54 and Streck 1999:97) as witnesses of the original text because they probably are “Folge des verlorengegangenen Verständnisses” of the latter (von Soden 1978:76).

a discussion I will introduce—for the sake of comparison—the incipit of Etana, an epic text opening with an independent clause, again following Wilcke 1977.⁹

- (1) *i-nu-ma i-lu iš-ku-nu qi₂-re-e-ta*
a-na a-ḥa-ti-šu-nu E-re-eš-ki-ga-a-al
iš-pu-u₂-ru ma-a-ar ši-i-ip-ri

Als die Götter ein Gastmahl veranstalteten,
 Schickten sie zu ihrer Schwester Ereškigal einen Boten.
 (‘Nergal und Ereškigal’, mittelbab., p. 159).

- (2) *e-nu-ma [e]-liš la na-bu-u₂ ša₂-ma-mu*
šap-liš a[m-ma]-tum šu-ma la zak-rat
 ZU.AB-ma r[e]š-tu-u₂ za-ru-šu-un
mu-um-mu Ti-amat mu-al-li-da-at gim-ri-šu₂-un

- 5 A.MEŠ-šu₂-nu iš-te-niš i-ḥi-qu-u₂-ma
gi-pa-ra la ki-iš-ṣu-ra ṣu-ṣa-a la še-’u
e-nu-ma DINGIR.MEŠ la šu-pu-u₂ ma-na-ma
šu-ma la zuk-ku-ru ši-ma-tu₂ [a ši-mu]
ḥ[ḫ]-ba-nu-ma DINGIR.DINGIR qi-rib-šu₂-un

Als man aufwärts die Himmel noch nicht benannt hatte,
 nach unten hin die Erde mit Namen nicht gerufen war,
 war (schon) Apsû, der erste, ihr Erzeuger,
 war (schon) Mummu-Tiamat ihrer aller Gebärerin
 5 wobei sich ihre Wasser miteinander vermischten.¹⁰

Das Röhrich⁷ hatten sie noch nicht zusammengefügt,
 das Sumpfgebiet (damit) noch nicht gefüllt.
 Als die Götter noch nicht hervorgebracht waren, kein
 einziger,
 sie mit Namen noch nicht gerufen waren, ihnen die
 Schicksale noch nicht bestimmt waren,
 da wurden die Götter in ihrem Innern geformt.
 (Weltschöpfungsepos, jungbab., p. 164ff.).¹¹

⁹ In his grammatical interpretation of the first lines of Atramḫasis C. Wilcke follows von Soden 1969. Wilcke’s translation is “Als Götter Mensch waren, leisteten sie (Fron)arbeit, trugen sie das Ziegelbrett” (see p. 161f. with comments in n. 12).

¹⁰ Wilcke 1977: 166 n. 16 explains that he takes *i-ḥi-qu-u₂* as a Present (with a “Zustand” meaning), because the manuscript C has *i-ḥi-iq-qu*. For the sake of argument, I accept this interpretation.

(3) Cf. also more incipits with *enūma* as indicated in CAD I/J 160 (no translations are provided):

e-nu-ma ilū ina puḫrišunu ibnū [...] CT 13 34 D.T. 41:1;
e-nu-ma Anu ibnū šamē RAcc. 46:24.¹²

These texts remind one of the narrative element in the CH Prologue:

(4) *i₃-nu AN ṣi-ru-um LUGAL dA-nu-na-ki dEN.LIL₂ ... a-na dAMAR.UTU ... dEN.LIL₂-ut KIŠ ni-š₃ i-š₃-mu-šum ... i-nu-mi-šu ... AN u₃ EN.LIL₂ ... šu-mi ib-bu-u₂*

When the exalted Anu, king of Annunaki, (and) Ellil ... granted supreme power over all peoples to Marduk, ... Anu and Ellil called me CH I:1–49.¹³

The beginning of the OB version of “The Tamarisk and the Palm” fable found in Tell Harmal is also worth quoting here:

(5) [*i-n*]a u₂-mi-*{im}* ul-lu-tim i-na ša-na-tim ru-qa-tim i-nu-ma
 [d]¹I¹-g¹-gu₅ u₃-ki-nu ma-tam i-ta-an-ḫu u¹I¹-lu a-na a¹a-w¹-lu-tim
 [pu-u]^ḫ-rum ip-ša-ḫu u₃-re-du-š₃-im nu-u^ḫ-ša-am

[I]n jenen Tagen, in fernen Jahren, als die Igigi das Land eingerichtet hatten,

Die Götter sich anstelle der (oder: für die) Menschheit bemüht hatten,

Kühlten sie sich in [einer Versam]mlung ab, fügten ihr Reichtum hinzu.

IM 53946, reading and translation as in Metzler 2002:410.

The reading of this text is not quite certain, its interpretation in terms of underlying mythological ideas presents difficulties, the question of its inter-textual relation to the first lines of OB Atramḫasis is not

¹¹ See p. 163 n. 14 for the survey of the extant manuscripts, p. 166f. n. 15ff. for C. Wilcke’s justifications of his translation.

¹² CAD I/J 160 comments: “both creation stories”.

¹³ The CH prologue stands in the tradition of royal inscriptions. For more examples of *inu/inūma/inūmī* introducing narrative portions of OB royal inscriptions, see Zadok 1998, and cf. Metzler 2002:346–358. In all the relevant cases, finite verbs are used in the temporal clauses.

settled.¹⁴ Still, on this reading the expected shape of the narrative incipit is beyond doubt: *inūma ... ukīnū* “when ... established”.

All these beginnings represent the standard case of a narrative introduction, correctly described by Dahl 1985:113: “[T]he normal function of the first sentence of a narrative discourse is quite different from that of the others: it has to provide the temporal anchoring for the rest of the discourse by e.g. an explicit time adverbial (one day last week, once upon a time, etc.)”. In (1), *i-nu-ma i-lu iš-ku-nu qī₂-re-e-ta* does supply this time adverbial by using a preterite *iškunū* in the context of temporal conjunction *inūma*: the combination of these linguistic features suggests unequivocally that the text has to be interpreted in the narrative register.¹⁵ A sentence *i-lu iš-ku-nu qī₂-re-e-ta* would also do as the beginning of a narrative, v. the beginning of OB Etana quoted below. Cf. a well-known observation in Mayenowa 1974/1978:428: “There are clauses that are possible only at the beginning of discourse, and there are clauses that are possible only in the middle of it”.

Let us now turn to the beginning of *Enuma eliš* (2). Does the subordinate temporal clause *e-nu-ma [e]-liš la na-bu-u₂ ša₂-ma-mu šap-liš a[m-ma]-tum šu-ma la zak-rat* provide the temporal orientation for what follows, if—as I claim—*i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* does not and cannot?

To answer this question we have to take into account two facts. First, the basic meaning of the Akkadian Stative is that of the cross-linguistic resultative (with Kouwenberg 2000): the verbal Stative denotes a state resulting from a previous fact and holding at the moment of observation. Second, the temporal conjunction *inūma/enūma* reflects a holistic view of a situation: it is a “perfective” temporal word, while e.g. *ištu* “since” may distinguish several phases of a situation.

In OB letters, *inūma* in past time contexts is collocated mostly with the Preterite, sometimes with the Present or Stative, in the latter case durative/iterative sense or that of a temporary state is expressed:

pa-na i-nu-ma a-na AGA.UŠ-ka *a-al-la-ku* BUR₃.2.IKU
 A.ŠA₃ *a-ab-ta-ku*
 Earlier, when I was your soldier, I used to hold a two-*bur*
 field. AbB 4, 132:8–10

¹⁴ For a discussion, see Metzler 2002:410f.

¹⁵ See Loesov 2004: 107ff.

i-nu-ma i-na KA₂.DINGIR.RA.KI *wa-aš-ba-ta a-wa-tu-[š]u-nu u₂-ul in-nam-ra*

When you stayed in Babylon, their matters were not investigated. AbB 7, 78:8–10

i-nu-ma a-na KA₂.DINGIR.RA.KI [*š*]e-li-a-am-ma a-na-ku u₃ ka-ta nu-uš-ta-tu-u₂ 20 GIN₂ KU₃.BABBAR *tu-ki-il-la-am-ma u₂-ul [a]m-g[u]-ur-ka*

When you came to Babylon and we met, you offered me 20 shekel of silver but I did not accept (it). AbB 3, 100:4’–8’

Verbal tenses, when used with the past time *inūma*, denote “discontinuous past”,¹⁶ i.e. “past with no present relevance”, “disconnected” from the temporal zero-point.¹⁷ On the contrary, *ištu* controls (at least in some of its usages) both the beginning and the resultative phase of a situation (the result obtains at the moment of observation).

[*š*]š-tu a-na KA₂.DINGIR.RA.KI *ta-al-li-kam-ma* AMAR MU 3.ĤI.A *ta-am-ĥi u-ru u₂-ul ta-tu-ur-ma u₂-ul ta-li-am*

Since you went to Babylon and took three-year-old bulls, you have not returned. AbB 7, 178:1–3

Both the incipient stage and the resulting state of affairs (the addressee is still not “here”) are captured in the *ištu*-clause. For *ištu* + the Stative, see e.g. AbB 10, 37:32; 5, 10:6; 11, 133:6.

It follows from these observations that *e-nu-ma [e]-liš la na-bu-u₂ ša₂-ma-mu šap-liš a[m-ma]-tum šu-ma la zak-rat* does denote “discontinuous past”.¹⁸ This meaning is unambiguously expressed by *enūma* + the Stative, cf. *i-nu-ma i-na* KA₂.DINGIR.RA.KI *wa-aš-ba-ta* above. Past time subordinate temporal clauses always background respective information (with Loesov 2004:135–6). The negated Stative *la na-bu-u₂* expresses the “not yet” (or pluperfect) sense. Thus, in narrative texts the negated Stative may have the force of the pluperfect.

We have shown that in the Epic of Creation prologue *enūma* combined with a negated stative establishes the temporal greed for the narrative: this predication—and the other negated statives in the quoted

¹⁶ The term “discontinuous past” is coined by Plungian and Auwera 2003.

¹⁷ In OB, the Perfect is not used in this context.

¹⁸ The verbal usage in the Prologue of this epic work follows classical OB rules, as is clear from a comparison of this text with the extant beginning of OB Etana epic.

text—create the effect of suspense and tension that is resolved in l. 9 by appearance of the first preterite, *ī[b]-ba-nu-ma* DINGIR.DINGIR “da wurden die Götter geformt”.

On Wilcke’s interpretation, the identificatory NC ZU.AB-*ma r[e]š-tu-u₂ za-ru-šu-un* is a main clause, unlike Atr A i 1. One may want to play with the idea of an alternative syntactic division: *enūma* in line 1 introduces a long temporal “umbrella” clause with coordinated verbal and nominal predicates (ll. 1–6), *enūma* in line 7 introduces a second temporal clause (ll. 7–8),¹⁹ while the main clause makes its appearance—after a breathtaking suspense—only in line 9. This interpretation sounds perhaps anachronistic (i.e. too “modern”), but I cannot completely exclude it on grammatical grounds. It also yields an acceptable, if a bit clumsy, first clause, in which two negated statives temporalize two nominal predications that follow.

Let us now consider the beginning of OB Etana, as quoted and translated in Wilcke 1977:156ff.:²⁰

ra-bu-tum ^d*A-nun-na ša-i-mu šī-im-tim*
uš-bu im-li-ku mi-li-ik-ša ma-a-ta-am
ba-nu ki-ib-ra-tim ša-ki-nu šī-ki-it-tim
⁵ *šī-ru a-na ni-ši i-lu I-gi₄-gu*
i-si₂-nam a-na ni-ši i-ši-mu
šar-ra-am la iš-ku-nu ka-lu ni-ši e-pi₂-a-tim
i-na šī-a₃-tim la ka-aš-ra-at ku-ub-šum me-a-nu
¹⁰ *u₃ [l]a-a[]u₃-um uq-ni-a-am la ša-ap-ra-at*
la ba-nu-u₂ iš-ti-ni-iš pa-ra-ak-ku
si-bi-ta ba-bu ud-du-lu e-lu da-ap-nim
[l]a-a[]u₃-um me-a-nu-um ku-ub-šum u₃ šī-bi-ir-ru
qu₂-ud-mi-iš a-ni-im i-na ša-ma-i ša-ak-nu
u₂-ul i-ba-aš-ši mi-it-lu-ku ni-ši-ša
[šā]r-[r]u-tum i-na ša-ma-i ur-da-am

Die großen Anunna, die Bestimmer der Geschicke,
 setzten sich, hielten Rat über es, das Land.

¹⁹ Or, more precisely, it would resume and carry forward the force of the first *enūma*.

²⁰ For discussions of philological problems of this text, see *ibid.* and the literature referred to in Metzler 2002: 500, 620f.

- Die Bildner der Weltufer, die alles setzen,—
 erhaben sind für die Menschen die Götter, die Igiḡ—
 5 bestimmten für die Menschen ein Fest.²¹
 Einen König setzten sie nicht ein unter all den
 zahlreichen Menschen.
 Bei diesen ist die Kopfbinde nicht geknüpft, die
 Kappe,²²
 und das Szepter mit Lapislazulli nicht besetzt.
 10 Nicht sind die Hochsitze allesamt erbaut.
 Siebenfach sind die Tore verschlossen vor einem
 Mächtigen.
 Szepter, Kappe Stirnband und Hirtenstab
 sind vor An im Himmel niedergelegt;
 nicht gibt es Beratung für ihr Volk.
 [Das König]tum stieg vom Himmel herab.

The text starts with a verbal sentence containing two asyndetically coordinated preterites *uṣbū* and *imlikū*, which aptly perform the function of the narrative incipit. After insertion of a parenthetical sentence whose predicate is the stative *ṣīrū*, the narrative continues with the preterite *iṣimū*.

The next step in the narrative proper is expressed by the preterite *urdam* in l. 14, while the predications in ll. 6–13 build the domain of anteriority relative to the time point in the narrative reached with *urdam* (so it is typically “pluperfect” semantics). The main-clause predicates negated by *lā* (the preterite *lā iṣkunū* and three negated statives) are an expression of the “not yet” sense in OB narrative literature (see GAG § 122*, Stol 1976:53 n. 30 for more references), but this device is hardly used in letters, where *adīni ul* serves to render this meaning

²¹ See Wilcke 1977:157 n. 7 for alternative sentence-divisions. Metzler 2000: 620 translates: “Die Schöpfer der (Welt-)Ufer, die Festleger der Form/ Erhaben gegenüber den Menschen waren (damals) die Götter, die Igiḡ./ Ein Fest bestimmten sie den Menschen”. For the sake of the present argument, I accept the latter division.

²² Metzler 2002:620 (with reference to Haul 2000:120f., unavailable to me) translates: “Daher war die Kopfbinde, (i.e.) die Tiara, nicht gebunden”. This interpretation looks appealing because *ina ṣiātīm* can hardly refer to the f. pl. *ni-ṣī e-pi₂-a-tīm*.

lexically.²³ The non-negated statives in this passage describe situations that were superseded with the descent of the kingship, i.e. they express the cancelled result.

One wonders whether *lā* + finite verb is a grammaticalized expression of “not yet” (pluperfect) sense in OB. This predication type is clearly opposed to all other main clauses predications in terms of both form and meaning,²⁴ but it seems to be limited to literary narratives and the number of attestations is not really considerable.

u₂-ul i-ba-aš-ši also has the “not yet” meaning, the use of the negation *ul* rather than *lā* probably has something to do with the defective paradigm of this verb (no Perfect, the Preterite is rare) and with its special semantic properties, as one can infer (or rather guess) from a comparison of our text with the following one, where both predicates also possess the “not yet” meaning:

u₂-ul i-di^dEN.KI.DU₁₀ NINDA *a-na a-ka-lim*
 KAŠ *a-na ša-te-e-em la-a lum-mu-ud*
 Enkidu did not know how to eat bread
 He had not been taught to drink beer.
 Gilg. P. 86–89.

We may conclude that *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* as an epic incipit would radically deviate from all the narrative beginnings attested in Akkadian literature. To show that this sequence of words *cannot* fulfill this function we have to introduce into this discussion the problem of verbless sentence in Akkadian.

3.

²³ Goetze 1958: no. 11:21–22 (mentioned in Stol 1976:53 n. 30) does not belong here because it is a kind of question word question (GAG §§ 122, 151); YOS 2, 149:19 (mentioned *ibid.*) is, *pace* Stol, a subordinate clause.

²⁴ Thus e.g. the negated Stative in legal *šumma*-clauses does not denote “not yet”, cf. LE A III 14–17: *šum-ma* LU₂ *bu-še-šu a-na na-ap-₃ri a-na ma-₃a-ar-tim id-di-in-ma* E₂ *la pa-li-iš si-ip-pu la ₁a-li-iš a-ap-tum la na-as₂-₁a-at bu-še-e ma-₃a-ar-tim ša id-di-nu-šum u₁-ta-li-iq bu-še-e-šu i-ri-a-ab*: “If a man gave his goods to a *n.* for safekeeping, and then—(provided) the house is not broken into, the door-jamb is not scraped, the window is not forced—the *n.* has allowed the goods which the man gave to him for safekeeping to become lost, he (= *n.*) shall/will replace his goods for him”.

If *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* is a subordinate temporal NC “When (the) gods–human(s)”,²⁵ it has to be the result of a “backgrounding” transformation of an identificatory non-subordinate NC *??i-lu a-wi-lum* “gods–(hu)man”.

Akkadian nominal clauses of the N_S — N_P structure (N_S is a nominal subject, N_P is a nominal predicate) ascribe to the subject a certain quality or characteristic, predicate its inclusion in a group, etc. They often express “sapiential” general statements, sometimes involving comparisons (see examples in Kraus 1984:47, Groneberg 1978/79:20, Kouwenberg 2000:41f.). I believe these semantic nuances do not affect the grammatical properties of the structure I discuss here. N_S — N_P clauses do not have temporal paradigm: they cannot “temporalize” the predication, i.e. relate it to a reference time. Still they have modal paradigm (cf. GAG § 127):

AB₂ *bu-ur-tum ša be-li₂ at-ta tu-ša-ab-ba-lam lu-u₂ ta-ak-la-at-ma i-na a-li URU Ba-ṣu KI lu-u₂ šu-mu-um da-am-qu₂ ša be-li₂-ia ka-ta*

Let the cow that you, my lord, is going to send me be of the best kind (lit. “reliable”) and (~ so that) let the reputation of my lord, of yours, be good in the town of Baṣu.

AbB 2, 86:31–34

an-nu-u₂ lu-u₂ gi-mil-lum

Dies sei eine Gunst!

AbB 1, 46:21, as translated in the Edition.

These clauses are compatible with *šumma* “if”:

šumma awīlum šinnāšu tu-ul-tum

²⁵ Scholars who accept this reading usually interpret *a-wi-lum* as nom. sg., probably with collective (~ *awīlūtum*) or attributive meaning, some of them believe that here the nominative case is a linguistic vehicle of comparison (B. Groneberg) or metaphor (W. Moran, M. P. Streck). As for the attributive reading, Metzler 2002:308 n. 32 thinks that *awīlum* here is not “human” but rather Funktionsbezeichnung for “Sklave, Arbeiter, Diener” because he feels that to attribute to gods human condition as such in the first line of a story about creation of humans would be strange.

If a man's teeth are (infested by) a (tooth-ache-)worm (i.e., if he has a tooth-ache).

BAM 4, 393:8, as quoted and translated in Kouwenberg 2000:42.

The statement made through a N_s — N_p nominal clause is temporalized “from outside”, i.e. by external “time-containing” (“zeithaltig”) co-text, cf. e.g. AbB 1,46:23f. quoted below. If a time-containing co-text is lacking, N_s — N_p nominal clause remains completely atemporal, as is the case of wisdom sayings.²⁶ To make this last point more visible, I will quote two more examples of identificatory NC from different genres of OB literature:

a-wi-lum ša DUB-pa-šu u₂-ša-bi-la-kum su-u₂-tum

Der Mann, der dir <<s>>einen Brief geschickt hat, ist ein Sutäer.

AbB 6, 140:9f., text and translation as in Kraus 1984:47.

^d[*Hu-wa*]-*wa ri-ig-ma-šu a-bu-bu*

Huwawa, his cry is the Deluge.

Gilg. Y. 110

The fact that non-subordinate N_s — N_p clauses do not by themselves express temporal relationships makes one suspect that they can hardly admit temporal conjunctions into their tenseless world, because temporal conjunctions are more grammatical operators than lexical words.

As far as I can see, N_s — N_p clauses with the temporal conjunctions *inū(ma)* “when”, *ištu* “when, after, since”, *kīma* “as soon as, when”, *adi* “while, until”, *lāma* “before”, *ūm* “am Tage, als” (GAG §174a), *warka* “after”, *itti* “while” are not attested in OB. I have found only one such case mentioned in the scholarly literature:

inūma šūšī kippatum perkum minūm: “wenn der Umfang 60 ist, ist der Durchmesser was?”

TMB 48, 9 as quoted and translated in GAG § 170c.

This is a metaphorical use of a temporal conjunction with atemporal force, it has nothing to do with temporal relationships and is equivalent

²⁶ GAG § 126a: “Die Zeitstufe kann im Nominalsatz nur aus dem Zusammenhang oder durch temporale Adverbien bestimmt werden”. Actually I have found no examples of identificatory clauses with temporal adverbs—they are hardly frequent, if only because of semantic properties of these verbless sentences.

to “given the circumference is X, what is the diameter?” or “let the circumference be X ...”, or “provided the circumference is X ...” etc. Cf. an English sentence “Wolves are intelligent when they have blue eyes,” that can be paraphrased as “Wolves that have blue eyes are intelligent” (the example is taken from Carlson 1979), or probably as “If wolves have blue eyes, they are intelligent”. The “when” of the first sentence is not properly speaking a temporal conjunction, and this is also the case with *inūma* in the above OB mathematical problem. Von Soden 1969:417 mentions that “temporale Nominalsätze an sich schon wenig gebräuchlich <sind>” and refers to GAG § 170ff., i.e. to the only example with *inūma* quoted above. As we have just seen, this text cannot justify W. von Soden’s translation of *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* as “als die Götter Mensch waren”.

Lambert 1969:535, in his polemic against the above translation of W. von Soden, actually failed to see the most important argument:

“The difficulties of this (translation—*S. L.*) are three: first, an introductory *inūma* clause consisting of that particle and two other words is incredibly short... Secondly, this construction can only mean that the gods were men, which is nugatory... Thirdly, the grammar of the proposed construction is open to question. A nominal sentence in an *inūma* clause would be expected to have a subjunctive (*awīlu*)²⁷ or *-ma* (*awīlumma*), but since few examples of this construction are known there is possibility of doubt. While the first and third objections could be overlooked, the second cannot. *inūma ilū awīlum* as a complete clause can only mean, ‘When the gods were mankind’. It is agreed on all sides that this is nonsense and cannot be right.”

Nominal clauses of course have nothing to do with clauses whose predicates are statives or the verbs *bašû* “to be” and *nabšû* “to become”, because these latter clauses are verbal. The comparison of the following two examples shows that even denominative statives (which can be synchronically described as verbs with defective tense paradigm) are time-sensitive:

ḫar-ra-an il-li-kam u₂-ul ku-ši-rum ma-di-iš šu-zu-uq

Die Geschäftsreise, von der er kam, war kein Erfolg; er war sehr verärgert.

AbB 1, 46:23f. as translated in the Edition.

²⁷ Did W. G. Lambert mean a denominative Stative?

The NC is temporalized through co-text, in particular by the preterite *illikam* in the relative clause.

wa-at-ru-um [š]u-ur-ku-bu u₂-ul ne-me-el

Shipping an extra amount is not profitable.

AbB 8, 78:24f. as translated in Kouwenberg 2000:39.

The stative successfully does the temporalizing of this utterance by referring it to the moment of speaking.

Thus, a nominal clause *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum* would seem to be a hapax legomenon in terms of grammar, meaning, and narrative technique. By contrast, *i-nu-ma i-lu a-wi-lum ub-lu du-ul-la iz-bi-lu šu-up-ši-[i]k-ka šu-up-ši-ik i-li ra-bi*, “when (the) gods *a-wi-lum* [whatever it might mean] carried the work (and) dragged the earth basket—the earth basket/forced labour of the gods was big/great”, is a blameless incipit of a mythical narrative, quite independently of the unresolved question of what expectations the target hearers might have had.²⁸

Cf. the beginning of an etiological myth (on the domestication of fire) of Nez Perce American Indians quoted by Lévi-Strauss: “In those times when animals and trees knew to speak, only conifer trees possessed fire. Conifer trees did not give fire to anybody except for their own kinsfolk. Once there came a very cold winter, and all living beings were going to perish because of hard frost.”²⁹

In conclusion: a temporal clause **inūma ilū awilum* is impossible at the beginning of a narrative text and can hardly be an Akkadian temporal clause at all.

4.

Now I will briefly discuss the problems of *a-wi-lum*. In this context *a-wi-lum*—independently of its grammatical nature—most likely means something like “in a human way”. One is tempted to simply assume (with Moran 1987:247 and Streck 1999:96) that *a-wi-lum* is a nom. sg. possessing contextually conditioned collective meaning³⁰ and used

²⁸ For a discussion of this problem and some daring suggestions about the hearers’ theology, see von Soden 1969.

²⁹ My translation, based on a Russian collection of Lévi-Strauss’s works. Lévi-Strauss refers to Packard, R. L. “Notes on the Mythology of the Nez Perce”. *Journal of American Folklore*. 1891, No. 4, p. 327–329, unavailable to me.

³⁰ It is attested elsewhere, see Streck 1999:98; for this meaning of *awilum* in OB Atramḫasīs, see Lambert 1969:535.

metaphorically, but—against these authors—in the syntactic role of apposition rather than predicate. The translation would be “when gods—humans—carried the toil...” The explication of this metaphor would be “gods carried the toil—one would say they were not gods but rather humans”.

I think the fact that humanity was created only at a later stage in the story does not stay in the way of this interpretation. The serious difficulty is that all the appositional metaphors found by M. P. Streck in his corpus of Akkadian epic texts (Streck 1999:105f.)³¹ are conventional epithets of gods and heroes, as shown by M. P. Streck. The only exception—Gilg XI 130—does not seriously change the picture because, as M. P. Streck shows, it is the conventional description of the Flood.

This evidence makes one look for an alternative explanation of *a-wi-lum*. This—no doubt in some way equating—juxtaposition of *i-lu* and *a-wi-lum* seems to be unique in OB literature, therefore an ad hoc solution might be admissible. I propose to return to the locative theory (Lambert–Millard 1969:146) but not to its “comparative” version (ibid.), since comparative *-um* is not attested in Akkadian (GAG § 66b*). According to GAG § 66h, “der L.-A. wird aAK, aB und aA nie von Personenbezeichnungen gebildet (auch später nur selten)”. If we admit the locative marker for *awilum* in a late OB mythological narrative, which perhaps does not sound very weird, the reading will be straightforward: “When gods—in place of Man³²—carried the toil...” On this reading, *awilum* is understood functionally (with K. A. Metzler): his “place” is his Sitz im Leben, his social function. The post factum creation of humanity does not contradict this interpretation. On the contrary, the meaning gained through this reading points proleptically to the very essence of events narrated in the first part of the epic (“the first myth”, according to W. Moran) and foreshadows its etiological purpose.

Wasserman 2003:93 (with n. 138) offers a correct translation of the first line: “[W]hen gods (instead) of man...” and explains *inūma ilū awilum* as a case of “deliberate” or “poetic” incongruence of number, still the evidence for this stylistic feature in OB literature is insufficient. Wasserman 2003 does not explain his understanding of syntactic relationships in Atr A I 1f., but the inclusion of this text in the list of similes (by Wasserman’s definition, simile has to have an explicit

³¹ They are located in Ee and SB Gilg.

³² With the same semantic shift as in English.

linguistic simile marker, most often *kīma*) suggests that *a-wi-lum* is probably analyzed by N. Wasserman (with W. G. Lambert) as locative with comparative force (p.105), which I believe is wrong (with von Soden 1969).

Thus, my translation of the first four lines is not radically different from that proposed in Lambert–Millard 1969:42:

When gods—in place of Man—
Carried the toil (and) dragged the earth basket,
The forced labour of the gods was great and
The toil was heavy, much was the distress.

When the time-frame is established, the author can use a present *u₂-ša-az-ba-lu* (l. 6) to express habitual action, which seems to be a frequent meaning of the Present in narrative texts.³³

Appendix

The much-discussed *si-bi-it-tam* in l. 5 (see Metzler 2002:510 n. 715 for references) is not clear to me. The solution of Metzler 2002:509: “siebenfach”, i.e. “Annunaku made Igigi perform the work seven times”—is strained and hardly suits the context, and the assumed parallel *si-bi-ta ba-bu ud-du-lu e-lu da-ap-nim* (Etana A Vs. I 10), quoted above, does not seem to shed much light on our text.

Perhaps it is not impossible to posit here a first millennium reading of the UD sign as *tu₂*. Mimation is not obligatory in OB Atramuḫsis.³⁴ My evidence for *tu₂* in OB is dubious but possibly not nil. Cf. *li-il-qu₂-tu₂* as read in RIME 4 p. 70 II 11, *am-UD ša a-na šu-bi-lim a-na š₂-ri-ka im-tu-ta-an-ni* (AbB 2,87:10f.), the reading of A.3206:17 *dam-qa-tum_x(UD)*, as suggested by D. Charpin and quoted in *MARI* 7, p. 43, n. 10. ARM 10, 80:19 has *šu-ul-pu-tam u₂-ša-al-p[a-a]t*, “I shall destroy”, *tu₂* would give locative, as expected, the absence of mimation in Mari presents no problem.

³³ With Metzler 2002:509ff. Still I think one has to choose between habitual and iterative sense as the reason to use the Present in this line.

³⁴ Metzler 1994:370. The observations of this paper do not favour the solution suggested below.

If one is allowed to build on this rather shaky foundation, the translation of l. 5f. will be again as in the Edition, but with a different justification:

The seven great Annunaki
Were making the Igigi to carry the toil.

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