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The grammaticalization of manner expressions into complementizers: Insights from Semitic languages

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Complementization strategies in ancient and modern Semitic languages include the use of complementizers formed from a common element *k-* (Modern Hebrew *kī*, Akkadian *kīma*, Ugaritic *k(y)*, Ge'ez *kama*). These conjunctions, which typically cover a wider semantic range beyond complementation, are generally assumed to derive ultimately from a common Semitic comparative particle (Deutscher 2000).

Nevertheless, the steps involved in the eventual readaptation of a manner expression into a marker of sentential complementation are still not sufficiently clear. A reassessment of the documented evidence is necessary to address the following questions: What can the oldest record of Semitic languages inform us about this grammaticalization process? Can an examination of the distributional patterns of manner expressions in early Semitic languages reveal any semantic or syntactic footprint from source constructions?

Despite attempts to describe this process of grammaticalization, the issue remains unsettled. For the oldest substantial Semitic written record, Akkadian, it has been proposed that a causative meaning of *kīma* is the source of complementizer *kīma*, via reanalysis of pre-existing causal clauses (1) as factive complement constructions (2):

(1) He said/spoke to the governor because (*kīma*) the barley was not collected

(2) He said/spoke to the governor that (*kīma*) the barley was not collected. (Deutscher 2000)

The same idea permeates in Zuckermann's (2006) analysis of complementation in Hebrew. Streck (2002), on the other hand, argues that the comparative meaning is the direct source of Akkadian complementizer *kīma*, suggesting reanalysis from bridging context of the type:

(3) I told him how I had travelled to Egypt years ago

(4) I told him that I had travelled to Egypt years ago (Streck 2002)

I present the results of a quantitative and contextualized analysis of the oldest corpus of evidence of complementation in Semitic, to assess the type, frequency and functional distribution of complementation in a synchronic and diachronic perspective. The study of patterns of distribution of manner expressions and complementizers focuses on the Old Akkadian (OAKk), Old Babylonian (OB) and Old Assyrian varieties of Akkadian. The study was based on data completeness for OAKk (record published until 2018), and on data representativeness for the far more extensive OB documentation (ACCOB corpus). The findings are also contrasted against information from texts and grammars of other ancient

Semitic languages to provide a clearer picture of the cross-linguistic extension of the phenomenon.

The research data suggests that *k*-complementizers might have grammaticalized at an earlier date than previously claimed, without neither intermediate quotative nor causal stage. The latter claim is in line with cross-linguistic observations where adverbial causatives are not frequently proven to be the direct source of object complementation markers (Boye & Kehayov 2016; Kuteva et al. 2019; Schmidtke-Bode 2014). Moreover, the earliest distribution of complement *kīma*-clauses in Akkadian do not illustrate contexts where reanalysis like the above can be inferred, but reveals an early occurrence in noun-complement clauses and a significant association with verbs of knowledge in pragmatically marked utterances.

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