Paronomastic Infinitives in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic: A Typological Approach

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Paronomastic Infinitives in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic. 
A Typological Approach

Abstract

The present paper aims to describe the distribution and functions of preposed and postposed paronomastic infinitives in literary and spoken varieties of North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA). In the first part the syntax and the function(s) of constructions involving a paronomastic infinitive will be described from a typological point of view. Syntactic and functional variation of NENA paronomastic infinitives largely corresponds to what we find in other Semitic languages as well as in many languages belonging to other families. In the second part of the paper we will address the rendering of Biblical Hebrew and Classical Syriac paronomastic infinitives in NENA Bible translations and offer a survey of various constructions found in spoken varieties and in the language of early Christian Neo-Aramaic poetry.

Keywords

Bible translations; North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic; paronomastic infinitives; typology

1 A Typological Sketch of Paronomastic Infinitives

Paronomastic (or tautological) infinitives have already been discussed in a typological framework, sometimes with a specific focus and extensive reference to Semitic languages. In relation to preposed paronomastic infinitives alone, Bernini has offered a typological and pragmatic overview. The sketch proposed in this section attempts to combine previous typological approaches in a constructional perspective. Meaning-form pairings will be given for each type of paronomastic infinitive, with a tentative formalization of the constructions at issue.

Paronomastic infinitives belong to the wider class of doubled verbs. Doubling is a syntactic process that involves repetition of phonological material beyond the boundaries of the word. Contrary to reduplication,

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1 Abbreviations: ABL = ablative; ACC = accusative; AOR = aorist; ARG = argument(s); CAUS = causative; Ch = Christian (Neo-Aramaic dialect of); Cl = clitic; COHORT = cohortative; COND = conditional; CONN = connective; COP = copula; DAT = dative; DEP = dependent; DET = determiner; EMPH = emphasis; FIN = finite; FOC = focus (marker); FUT = future; GEN = genitive; GER = gerundive; HAB = habitual; IMP = imperative; INF = infinitive; IPPV = imperative; J = Jewish (Neo-Aramaic dialect of); M = masculine; NEG = negative marker; OBJ = object; OP = operator; PERF = perfective; PL = plural; POSS = possessive; PPT = past participle; PREP = predicative particle; PREP = preposition; PRES = present participle; PRET = preterite; PROX = proximative; PRS = present; PST = past; PTCP = participle; RED = reduplication; REL = relative; SBJ = subject; SBJV = subjunctive; SG = singular; SoA = state of affair; SUB = subordinator; TOP = topic (marker); Vb = verb; VN = verbal noun.


adjacency of the doubled elements in the sentence is not mandatory. Moreover, doubling marks focus and intensification. More specifically, it marks predicate-centred focus, i.e., focus on the state of affairs or, alternatively, focus on truth-value of the utterance.

When verbal doubling comes into play, doublets including verbal nouns and non-finite forms – and, in the latter case, especially infinitives – are predominant in the languages of the world. This seems to be due to the ambiguous nature of forms such as infinitives and participles, which share properties with both nouns and verbs. As Ramat has said, ‘Infinitives can be understood as “assertion” as distinct from “prediction”’ and it may therefore be involved in left- and right-dislocations such as those dealt with in this paper.

1.1 Proposed Infinitives

As regards proposed paronomastic infinitives, ‘[m]any languages tend to resort to inflected forms with the least amount of specification with respect to the major variables of speech act form and topic time, such as the infinitive forms.’ There are also minor types that make use of irregular infinitives or special morphology on the left-dislocated phrase. These constructions can be represented as follows:

original VP

\[\text{original VP} \quad \text{doublet VP}\]

\[\left[\left(\text{PREP, CONN, RED} \right) \text{Vb X}_\text{inf} \right] (\text{special morphological marking})\] + \[\text{[Vb X}_\text{ins} \right]\]

Function: predicate-centred focus or intensification

The label ‘original’ and ‘doublet’ are assigned following Jacob. One of the reasons the second VP cannot be the original is that in some languages the second VP may display a light or support verb, and such a verb must be classified as a doublet, since it does not bear the lexical information.

\[\text{[Vb X}_\text{ins} \right]\]

---


6 T. Güldemann, ‘Present progressive vis-à-vis predication focus in Bantu: A verbal category between semantics and pragmatics’, Studies in Language 27 (2003), pp. 323-60. In a similar vein, as regards paronomastic infinitives in the Semitic languages, Y.-K. Kim, in The Function of the Tautological Infinitive in Classical Biblical Hebrew (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009) pp. 111 and 133, speaks of focus on ‘the factuality of the proposition’. Gzella speaks of “assertion” as “the speaker’s belief or conviction that the proposition is true” (H. Gzella, ‘Emphasis or Assertion? Remarks on the Paronomastic Infinitive in Hebrew’, BO 67/5-6, pp. 488-498 [492]).


9 Bernini, ‘Constructions with proposed infinitive’, p. 113.


11 See, e.g., in the following examples:


\[\text{babbia} \quad \text{fa}\]

\[\text{do.PRS.3SG}\]

‘He is only joking’

[contrary to co(n)textual expectations].’
The only blocks necessary to the construction are those containing the verbal forms (see 1). Adverbs and arguments may be added to the original and/or to the doublet VPs (2-6). The same argument may appear both in the original and in the doublet VPs as a clitic in the doublet VP (7) or in both VPs (8).

(1) Biblical Hebrew (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; Gen. 2.17)
Context: “but you must not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, for when you eat from it you will certainly die.” (NIV)

mot tāmut
die.INF die.FUT.2SG
‘you will certainly die.’

(2) Kabyle (Berber, Afro-Asiatic)12
‘– Tesned taqbaylit? – Afhám fehmey,
know.2SG the.Kabyle understand.VN understand.PRS.1SG
tiririt wer ttaray
answer.VN NEG answer.PRS.1SG

‘– Do you speak Kabyle? – As for understanding it, I understand; but as for speaking it, I cannot.’

(3) Swahili (Bantu, Niger-Congo)13
kufa tu-ta-kufa wote
die.INF 1PL-FUT-die all
‘We all shall die.’

(4) Russian (Slavic, Indo-European)14
znat’ ne znaju
know.INF NEG know.PRS.1SG
‘I absolutely do not know.’

(5) Latin (Italic, Indo-European; Plauti Aulularia 181)
nunc domum properare propero
now house.ACC hasten.INF hasten.PRS.1SG
‘Now I’m making all haste to hasten home.’
(F. Leo’s 1895 translation)

(6) Vietnamese (Viet-Muong, Austroasiatic)15
doc thi no nen doc sach
read TOP he should read book
‘As for reading, he should read books.’

These constructions are not actually paronomastic, and will not be further discussed in the paper.

12 Goldenberg, ‘Tautological infinitive’, p. 60, our spelling modifications.
(7) Spanish (Ibero-Romance, Indo-European)

\[
\text{leer el libro Juan lo ha leído}
\]

read.INF the book Juan OBJ.CL.MSG has read

‘As for reading the book, Juan has indeed read it.

(8) Piedmontese (Gallo-Romance, Indo-European)

\[
\text{Scriv-je, i l’hai}
\]

write.INF-to.her/him SBJ.CL.MSG it.have.PRS.MSG

\[
\text{scrivù-je}
\]

written-to.her/him

‘I really wrote to her/him.

As for writing to her/him, I did it.’

The paronomastic infinitive may be introduced by a preposition (9-10), a connective (11), or be reduplicated (12).

(9) French (Gallo-Romance, Indo-European)

Context: “Somebody should read this article and take action, but who? And what should the action be?”

\[
\text{Oh! Pour être lu, ça serait lu}
\]

Oh for be.INF read.PPT this be.COND.MSG read.PPT

‘As for being read, it will be read.’

(10) Amharic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic)

\[
\text{əšši lä-madam mùt’-u ankw l-adamt’-əh}
\]

all.right for-listen.VN-DET PART PROX-1SG.listen.IPFV-2MSG.OBJ

[But listen to me Tiruneh.] ‘All right, I'm listening.’

(11) Spanish (Ibero-Romance, Indo-European)

– Tu tío José tiene mucho dinero.

your uncle José have.PRS.MSG a.lot.of money

– Como tener-lo, lo tiene; pero es muy tacaño

as have.INF-it it have.PRS.MSG but be.PRS.MSG very stingy

‘– Your uncle José has a lot of money.

– As for having it, he has, but he is very stingy.’

(12) Spanish (Ibero-Romance, Indo-European)

\[
\text{Comer comen no come mucho}
\]

RED eat.INF NEG eat.PRS.MSG much

‘He doesn’t really eat much.’

17 A. Aly-Belfadel, Grammatica piemontese (Noale: Guin, 1933) p. 288, his translations.
19 O. Kapeliuk, Nominalization in Amharic (Wiesbaden: Franz Steiner, 1988) p. 68.
The preposition *pour* in (9) and the connective *como* in (11), as well as *thi* in (6), function as topic markers.\(^{22}\)

In some languages, infinitives placed before the finite verb may exhibit special morphological marking, including focus marking (see 16-18 and, perhaps, 15):

(13) Lithuanian (Baltic, Indo-European)\(^{23}\)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{deg-tē dēgā} \\
\text{burn-INF burn.PRS.3SG}
\end{array}
\]

‘It burns brightly.’

(14) Turkish (Turkic)\(^{24}\)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{Ol-ma-sun-a ol-du, amma nası?} \\
\text{be-VN-3SG.POSS-DAT be-PAST but how}
\end{array}
\]

‘Yes, it’s done, but how?’

(15) Amharic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic)\(^{25}\)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{māmọt-Ass māttobbońń nābbār} \\
\text{come.INF-FOC(?) come.PST.3SG to.me}
\end{array}
\]

‘As to coming, he had come to me [but refusing I did send him back].’

(16) Tuki (Bantu, Niger-Congo)\(^{26}\)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{O-suwa owu Puta a-mu-suwa tsono raa} \\
\text{INF-wash FOC Puta SBJ-1SG-wash clothes her}
\end{array}
\]

‘Puta WASHES her clothes.’

(17) Ama (Nyimang, Nilo-Saharan?)\(^{27}\)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{lādā bā nē indī kā ládī} \\
\text{walk.INF EMPH FOC 3SG ? walk.IPFW}
\end{array}
\]

‘She is WALKING.’

(18) Ewe (Kwa, Niger-Congo)\(^{28}\)

\[
\begin{array}{l}
\text{ɸọ-ɸọ ē wọ ɸọ ē} \\
\text{RED-beat FOC 3SG beat 3SG}
\end{array}
\]

‘S/he BEAT her/him.’

\(^{22}\) *Pour* is arguably the reduction of the French topic marker *pour ce qui regarde/touche*, see B. Combettes, ‘Grammaticalisation des marqueurs de topicalisation en français : Les expressions du type *pour ce qui regarde*, Langue française 156/4 (2007), pp. 93-107.


\(^{24}\) Goldberg, ‘Tautological infinitive’, p. 60, his translation.

\(^{25}\) Goldberg, ‘Tautological infinitive’, p. 70.


Hungarian (Finno-Ugric, Uralic)\(^{39}\)

\[
\begin{array}{ll}
\text{vol-} & \text{vol-} \\
\text{be.PST-INF} & \text{be.PST-3SG}
\end{array}
\]

‘for being there, it was there’

(23) Hungarian (Finno-Ugric, Uralic)\(^{39}\)

\[
\begin{array}{llllllll}
\text{árulni} & \text{árultak,} & \text{de} & \text{venni} \\
\text{donate.INF} & \text{donate.PRS.SG} & \text{but} & \text{throw.away.INF}
\end{array}
\]

\[
\begin{array}{lll}
\text{nem} & \text{tho} & \text{throw.away.PRS.SG}
\end{array}
\]

‘I do make gifts, but I do not squander.’

In (13), the ‘second’, unusual Lithuanian -tė infinitive is found, while in (14) ‘the Turkish verbal noun in front position is also inflected for nominal categories, such as third person singular possessive and dative cases’.\(^{39}\) In (18), the preposed verbal form is reduplicated. In Hungarian, as in other languages, along with regular tautological-infinitive constructions (23), special lexical morphology might be used in the original VP: the regular infinitive of ‘be’ would be \(\text{lemni}\), but in (19) irregular vol-\(n\i\) is used in order to reduplicate the verbal stem of vol-\(t\).

Preposed paronomastic infinitives generally i) topocalize the lexical content of the verb and focus on the assertion contained in the second part of the sentence (i.e., the comment), which is given as true at the time of speaking, even contrary to co(n)textual expectation (see e.g., 2, 6, 7, 10-12).\(^{35}\) These constructions tend to be conventionally reanalysed as ii) truth-value focus constructions of the kind of [DOES Vb X]/[really Vb X] (see 1, 3, 5, 9), which, in turn, may take on iii) an intensifying reading, such as those displayed by (4) and (13). All three readings are proposed for (8) in Aly-Belfadell’s grammar of Piedmontese.

Goldenberg maintains that preposed infinitives are not ‘pan-glottic’,\(^{33}\) but they are, in fact, well attested in various language families. These constructions are likely to emerge via dialogical interactions\(^{34}\) and occur especially in colloquial registers. For Meyer-Lübke, on the other hand, ‘zweifle aber nicht daran, dass [die Erscheinung] auch noch anderswo sich nachweisen lässt, sofern es eben überhaupt bis zur Bildung eines wirklichen Infinitivs gekommen ist’.\(^{35}\) Recent typological research on different language families seems to support the latter claim.\(^{36}\)

The construction in (21) seems to be less common in the languages of the world. Here, the infinitive is fronted as in a cleft, or cleft-like, sentence, and repeated by a cognate finite form in the following sentence. In the present article, only constructions formed by the infinitive followed by a relative pronoun or a subordinator will be considered as cleft(-like) sentences. Furthermore, these constructions may, but need not, exhibit a pre- or post-verbal focus marker. Goldenberg says that these constructions are typical of Semitic languages, but one may also find them in other language families (see 23).\(^{37}\) Their function is linked, again, to focalization (on the state-of-

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\(^{35}\) Goldberg, ‘Tautological infinitive’, pp. 60-2; Bernini, ‘Constructions with preposed infinitive’, p. 113.

\(^{37}\) A change in prosody may be responsible for the reanalysis of constructions focussing on the state of affairs (i.e. [Vb X]\(_{\text{FOC}}\) + [Vb X(TAM)]\(_{\text{ROD}}\)) into truth-value focus constructions (i.e., [as for X]\(_{\text{ROD}}\) + [Vb X]\(_{\text{FOC}}\)). See Güldemann, ‘(Preposed) verb doubling’, p. 6; Jacob, Doubled verbs; cf. also Goldenberg, ‘Tautological infinitives’, p. 72.

\(^{35}\) Goldberg, ‘Tautological infinitives’, p. 58. Also Kim (The Function of the Tautological Infinitive, p. 112) is inclined to think that paronomastic infinitives are not frequently found outside the Semitic languages and, in the non-Semitic languages in which they do occur, such as the Romance languages they ‘do not seem to be as productive as in B[iblical]H[ebrew]’.


\(^{36}\) Meyer Lübke, ‘Der intensive Infinitiv’, p. 119.

\(^{35}\) Güldemann et al., ‘The verb in the preverbal domain’.

affairs and, apparently, never on the truth-values of the utterance, see 21) and emphasis (e.g., mirativity in 22 and intensification in 23).

(21) Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic)

Context: "If one intentionally took a false oath on a deposit and witnesses forewarned him..." should he be flogged, "as this is the standard punishment for an intentional transgression" or rather bring a guilt-offering?

Shebu. 37a-37b, The William Davidson Talmud.

milqē hu d-lā tīq ābāl qurbān mēti
flog.INF FOC SUB-NEG flog.PPT but offering bring.PRES

‘He is not indeed flogged, but rather brings an offering.’

Goldenberg, 'Tautological infinitive', p. 52, translates: ‘It is flogging that it is not flogged, but an offering he brings’.

39 M. Waltisberg, Syntax des Ṭuroyo (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2016) p. 90, his translation. Waltisberg describes this construction as a functional sub-category of the paronomastischer Relativsatz. It is in fact a cleft construction in which the fronted infinitive is usually preceded by the preposition b- or, less frequently, by other prepositions and always by the definite article. The infinitive is then followed by the subordinator d- and a finite verbal form of the same root. According to Waltisberg’s Syntax (p. 88), the first function of this construction is to specify the exact temporal state of affairs of an action:

i. b-u-māṭyo d-ṭiyō kiye-ste omīr
   in-DET-come.INF SUB-come.PRET he-also say.PRET
   ‘Bei ihrem Kommen sagte (ihr Mann)’

Counter-expectedness seems, in fact, to be at stake in Waltisberg’s (p. 93) description of the second main function of the paronomastischer Relativsatz, i.e., to point out a surprising or frightening situation. When used with this function (e.g., in 19), the infinitive is not preceded by prepositions and verba videndi are frequently involved.

40 Naït-Zerrad, Linguistique berbére, p. 134, his translation. D, a focus marker, is sometimes treated as a predicative particle.
[...] represents any (group of) phrase(s) that can be added between the first and second part of the construction. Additionally, these constructions are usually typical of colloquial, informal speech.

As regards pragmatics and information structure, postposed paronomastic infinitives may also focus on the truth-value of the utterance (24–26), as is the case for the parallel construction with a preposed infinitive (see, e.g., 3 and 14 above). In cases such as (27–29) the focus seems rather to on the state of affairs. In (30), the nuance of the utterance is that of unexpectedness and counter-expectation. The state-of-affairs conveyed by \([Vb X]_{\text{FIN}} [Vb X]_{\text{INF}}\) takes place contrary to co(n)textual expectations.

(24) North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; see 69, below)
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{men šmayyā } & \text{qrē-ā } \text{qrāyā} \\
\text{from heaven } & \text{call.PRET.3SG } \text{call.INF}
\end{align*}
\]
‘He did call him from Heaven/ He truly called him from Heaven.’

(25) Italian (Italo-Romance, Indo-European)\textsuperscript{a}
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Funziona, } & \text{ per funzionare} \\
\text{work.PRS.3SG for work.INF}
\end{align*}
\]
‘As for working, it does work.’
[but the point is another].’

(26) Turkish (Turkic)\textsuperscript{a}
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{Yet-er } & \text{yet-me-sin-e} \\
\text{be.enough-AOR.3SG } & \text{be.enough-INF.3SG-DAT}
\end{align*}
\]
‘Well they are enough, so far as being enough is the problem
(or: as to being enough they are enough), but how shall I get out of here?’

(27) Kenga (Bagirmi, Nilo-Saharan(?))\textsuperscript{a}
Context: – What are you doing? – Didn’t you see?
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{m-55c } & \text{k- ámb} \\
\text{1SG-sow INF-sow}
\end{align*}
\]
‘I’m SOWING.’

(28) Biblical Hebrew (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; Gen 19.9)
\[
\begin{align*}
\text{hā-ehād } & \text{bā } \text{lāgur wayyīśpōṭ } \text{sāfōt} \\
\text{this one came foreigner judge.PRET.3SG } & \text{judge.INF}
\end{align*}
\]
‘This fellow came here as a foreigner,
and now he wants to play the judge!’ (NIV)

\textsuperscript{a} http://forum.arduino.cc/index.php?topic=90344.3.
\textsuperscript{b} From Aziz Nezin, quoted by Goldenberg ‘Tautological infinitive’, p. 61, his translation.
\textsuperscript{c} L. Neukom, Description grammaticale du kenga – langue nilo-saharienne du Tchad (Köln: Köppe, 2010) p. 130.
Ancient Egyptian (Egyptian, Afro-Asiatic)\(^{44}\)

Context: “He shall not die, but he will live forever.”

\(\text{‘nh-l} \quad \text{‘nh} \quad \text{living} \)

‘It is (in) living that I shall live.’

North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; see 68 below)

\(mq\text{-}t\text{el-pret-3pl} \quad w\text{-}\text{bed-lay} \quad q\text{rābā} \)

fight.PRET-3PL and-do.PRET-3PL quarrel.INF

\(lā \quad q\text{ru-}\text{lay} \quad ell-āh \quad q\text{rābā} \)

NEG quarrel.PRET-3PL on-her quarrel.INF

‘They fought and they quarreled,
but against her, they did not quarrel’.

Focalization on the truth-value may also result in emphasis and intensification. Emphasis and intensification are the preferred reading when the first member of the construction is an imperative (31, 32) or a cohortative (33). In Biblical Hebrew ‘[t]he opposite sequence (infinitive – volitive) is unattested\(^{45}\)

North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; see 64 below)

\(w\text{-}šabhu \quad l\text{-}\text{semm-ēh} \quad šābohē \)

and-praise.IMP ACC-name-his praise.INF

‘And do praise His name!’

Biblical Hebrew (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; Job 13.17)

\(š\text{im-}u \quad š\text{āmo-}m \quad \text{millāt-}i \quad w\text{-}\text{ah-}wāt-\text{i} \)

listen.IMP.2PL listen.INF word-my and-declaration-my

\(b\text{-}\text{znē-}kem \quad \text{with-ears-your} \)

‘Listen carefully to what I say; let my words ring in your ears.’ (NIV)

Biblical Hebrew (Semitic, Afro-Asiatic; Zech. 8.21)

\(nēlāā \quad hāloš \quad l\text{-}\text{halloṭ} \quad \text{et-}pnē \text{a}dōnāy \)

go.COHORT.1PL go.INF to-entreat.INF before-the Lord

‘Let us go at once to entreat the Lord!’ (NIV)

While it is possible to speculate that such echo-constructions are widespread world-wide, Bernini argues that the restriction on the right position for dislocated infinitives ‘may be a matter of typological variation’ in the order of constituents.\(^{46}\)


\(^{46}\) Bernini, ‘Constructions with preposed infinitive’, p. 119.
Paronomastic Infinitives in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic

As Goldenberg observes,\textsuperscript{47} Stoddard was the first to notice the use of paronomastic infinitives in Neo-Aramaic and their functional correspondence to the Hebrew and Classical Syriac constructions: “The absolute infinitive, joined with the finite verb, is used in the Modern as well as in the Ancient Syriac, and the Hebrew, to give intensity to the idea”.\textsuperscript{48} The first example he gives is a literal Neo-Aramaic rendering (35) of the Peshīṭṭā of Jn 9:9\textsuperscript{34}, where the Classical Syriac translator introduced a paronomastic infinitive to emphasize a contrastive opposition in the Greek original. This example shows that in the Syriac of the Peshīṭṭā a paronomastic infinitive may idiomatically express intensification.

Jn 9:9 ἀλλοί ἔλεγον διτὶ Οὐτὸς ἔστιν: ἄλλοι ἔλεγον, Οὐχὶ, ἀλλὰ ἄμοιος αὐτῷ ἔστιν.

(34) Peshīṭṭā of Jn 9.9
\textit{it d-əmər (h)waw d-hu-yu w-it d-əmər (h)waw:}
‘There were some who said that it was he and there were some who said:
\textit{lā, əllā medmā dāmē lēh}
‘No, but resemble.
\textit{PTCP.3SG him}
‘No, but he truly resembles him.’

\textit{medmāyā bedmāyā-(y)lē}
resemble
\textit{GER-COP.3SG}
‘He is very much like, he strongly resembles.’
\textit{(Stoddard’s Eng. translation)\textsuperscript{49}}

Stoddard’s second example (36) is not scriptural and deliberately attempts to reproduce an actual conversation:

\textit{lā šme-lē?}
NEG hear.PRET-3SG
\textit{[Stoddard: “To this, the answer may be as follows:”]}
\textit{šma'yā šme-lē, inā (')tāyā lā (’)tē-lē!}
hear hear.PRET-3SG but come.PRET-3SG
‘– Did he not hear? – Hearing he heard, but coming he did not come.’

\textsuperscript{47} Goldenberg, ‘Tautological infinitive’, p. 58.


\textsuperscript{49} Like the Greek original, other Neo-Aramaic translations do not have the paronomastic infinitive. See, e.g., the Translation of the Peshitta Version in the Suryoyo Language of Tur Abdin. Prepared in the Monastery of Mor Gabriel (Winfield, IL: Aramaic Bible Translation, 2013):
\textit{lo, elo kdomē le}
No, but resemble.
and both the Urmī Bible (New York 1893) and the “Assyrian” translation accessible online (Aramaic Bible Translation, 2014; www.aramaicbible.org/assyrian.html):
\textit{lā, əllā bedmāyā-yēlē ellēh}
No, but resemble.

The “Chaldean Neo-Aramaic” version expresses the contrastive opposition with another construction (Aramaic Bible Translation, 2015; www.aramaicbible.org/chaldean.html):
\textit{lā, əllā ilē ḥā de- kāmē ellēh}
No, but one REL-resemble.
‘No, but he is one who resembles him.’
Following in Stoddard’s footsteps, we will first check the idiomaticity of the Neo-Aramaic paronomastic infinitive in “that refuge of lazy linguists” – i.e., Bible translations – and then look for syntactic forms and functions of constructions involving a paronomastic infinitive in more or less spontaneous colloquial speech and written literary texts.

### 2.1 Paronomastic Infinitives in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Bible Translations

The following table shows three different Christian Neo-Aramaic translations of twentyseven constructions involving a paronomastic infinitive, as attested in the Hebrew text of Genesis. The transliteration reflects as faithfully as possible the orthographies of the manuscript and of the printed texts.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Genesis</th>
<th>Assyrian (2015)</th>
<th>Urmi Bible (New York 1893)</th>
<th>Trilingual Genesis Ms. DFM 4 (Plain of Mosul, 18th-19th cent.)</th>
<th>Eng. transl. of the Hebrew text, based on NIV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2:16</td>
<td>āklet mékulṭa ̣ ̣</td>
<td>mēkālā āklet</td>
<td>īkālā īkol</td>
<td>You may eat</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

54 The lists are based on the examples of Genesis, Joshua and Numbers discussed by Kim, *The Function of the Tautological Infinitive*, and may be incomplete. Nevertheless, they appear to be sufficient to show techniques and linguistic choices of the translators as far as paronomastic infinitives are concerned. Genesis and Joshua are the only books written in “Classical Biblical Hebrew” (as defined in Kim, *The Function of the Tautological Infinitive*) that are available online in the Assyrian version.


57 Noun used as a cognate object.
are concerned

The Urmi Bible faithfully reproduces the syntax of the Hebrew Bible and has the paronomastic infinitive of the source text even in verses such as Gen. 19.9, 27.30, 31.15 and 46.4, in which the Classical Syriac Pešštā does not. The Mosul text is clearly based on the Pešštā and accordingly does not use the paronomastic infinitives in these verses. The only other passage in which the Mosul text does not have the paronomastic infinitive of the Pešštā and the Hebrew text is Gen. 44.5, in which the translator opts for what appears to be a local idiom and uses a word of ultimate Arabic origin (‘tul ‘augury, divination’). Arabic-derived šarē for Syriac dînē in Gen. 19.9 and klesē for napaq in 27.30 reveal the same non-classicizing attitude of the author(s) of the Mosul translation as far as lexical choices are concerned.

55 The phonetic spelling of the manuscript, that reflects the assimilation of the future preverb bed- -- b- to the first consonant of the verbal root, is corrected with a pencil notation: bed möyêt.
56 Pencil notation: bed möyêtut.
57 Pešštā: hā da’en lan dinē (noun used as a cognate object).
58 Noun used as a cognate object.
59 In J Zakho myāsā mâyås, both infinitive and finite verbs are in the base form, with the intransitive meaning ‘to die’.
60 Pešštā: nfaq.
61 Pešštā: eglal kaspan; J Zakho: xalle ham ixâlā.
62 Pešštā: af mnaaḥḥāā mnaḥḥē bēh.
63 Pešštā: w-enâ esqâq; J Zakho: masqânnox ham masqê.
As in Hebrew, an infinitive of the base form can also be placed before a passive verbal form, as in Gen. 26:11, 37:33 and 44:28.\(^6\)

(37) Gen. 37:33 (Urmi Bible, 1893)

\[\text{meprātā}^6 \text{ pīšā (y)lē priṭā} \]

\[\text{tear.INF} \quad \text{remain.PERF.3SG} \quad \text{tear.PPT}\]

‘He has surely been torn to pieces.’

In 26:11, the Urmi Bible has the infinitive of the base form (intransitive meaning) joined with the passive future of the causative form (transitive meaning):

(38) Gen. 26:11 (Urmi Bible, 1893)

\[\text{myātā} \quad \text{bet pāyeš} \quad \text{munitā} \]

\[\text{die.INF} \quad \text{FUT} \quad \text{remain.SBJV.3SG} \quad \text{CAUS.die.PPT}\]

‘He shall surely be put to death.’

In fifteen of the twenty-seven occurrences of the paronomastic infinitives listed above and in four of the five paronomastic infinitives attested in the book of Joshua (see here below), the recent Assyrian version opts for other constructions: the infinitive is usually dropped altogether or, in two verses, replaced by a noun used as a cognate object (Gen. 2:16 and 26:11). This does not necessarily mean that the translator(s) of the American project perceive the paronomastic infinitive as non-idiomatic in Neo-Aramaic. They deliberately try to update the text to new standards and, as far as paronomastic infinitives are concerned, some choices rather seem to comply to Western speech habits and translation techniques: see, e.g., the use of ‘to want’ in Gen. 19:9 and adverbs and adverbial complements corresponding to ‘truly, certainly, clearly’ in Gen. 18:18, Josh. 9:24 and 23:13.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7:7(^7)</td>
<td>gām ma’beret</td>
<td>ma’burē mul’erruk</td>
<td>(Why) did you ever bring (this people) across (the Jordan)...?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9:24</td>
<td>pīš lēh mude’ā galē’it</td>
<td>ma’duwe pēlē mude’yā</td>
<td>They were clearly told (how the Lord...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:12</td>
<td>en hāwyā d-dāyritun</td>
<td>en medārā dayriton</td>
<td>But if you turn away</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:33</td>
<td>b-šārirutā yād ‘itōn</td>
<td>medāyā ya’d’itōn</td>
<td>You may be sure (that...)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24:3(^8)</td>
<td>barukē burek lēh elawkōn</td>
<td>mbarokē burkēlē elawkōn</td>
<td>He blessed you again and again</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The references to verses in which the Hebrew Bible has the less common word order ([\(Vb X_{in}\) + [\(Vb X_{sa}\)]] are marked with an arrow ← in the tables of examples. In these cases, the Urmi Bible usually normalizes the word order to the more common construction, in which the paronomastic infinitive is placed before the finite verbal form. This happens, e.g., in Gen. 19:9, 31:15, 46:4, and Josh. 7:7, where the Pešiṭṭā does not have paronomastic infinitives, as well as in Josh. 24:10, Num. 23:11 and 24:13, where the Pešiṭṭā also has the infinitive placed before the verb. In Num. 11:15 and 16:13, however, where the Pešiṭṭā closely follows the exceptional syntax of the Hebrew ([\(Vb X_{in}\) + [\(Vb X_{sa}\)]], the Urmi Bible does not have paronomastic infinitives at all. The postposed paronomastic infinitive would appear to be deemed ungrammatical by the author(s) of the Urmi Bible, who normalize the word

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\(^6\) Kim, *The Function of the Tautological Infinitive*, pp. 32, 39, 93.

\(^7\) An anonymous reviewer suggests that the infinitive with prefixed me- may be a Syriacism for prātā.
order or suppress the postposed infinitive. At any rate, translators – including those of the Pešitta and the NIV\(^66\) – appear to be aware of and react to the different syntactic constructions of the source text.\(^67\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Numbers</th>
<th>Urmi Bible (New York 1893)</th>
<th>Pešitta</th>
<th>Eng. transl. of the Hebrew text, based on NIV</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>11:25</td>
<td>qtol li</td>
<td>qtolayn(y) meqatal</td>
<td>Go ahead and kill me!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16:13</td>
<td>‘abdēt gānuḵ rēšā ‘alan</td>
<td>ellā metrāwṛḥin (’)atton ‘layn metrāvrābu</td>
<td>And now you also want to lord it over us!</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23:11</td>
<td>barōḵe burekluk</td>
<td>mbarrāku mbarēḵ att lhon</td>
<td>... but you have done nothing but bless them!</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The idiomatic status of paronomastic infinitives in literary Urmi Aramaic is confirmed by its use in the Neo-Aramaic works by Paul Bedjan (Khosrowa 1838 – Cologne 1920). Goldenberg\(^68\) informs us that Professor Polotsky had collected various examples in the writings of the Persian Lazarist, the self-proclaimed author of "the most beautiful model of Neo-Aramaic style".\(^69\)

### 2.2 Paronomastic Infinitives in spoken North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic

As in Stoddard’s examples and in the Bible translations, paronomastic infinitives usually precede the finite verbal form of the same root ([Vb X] + [Vb X]) in the dialects described by Khan, who for paronomastic infinitive uses the term cognate infinitive.\(^70\)

In J Urmia (39) the paronomastic infinitive gives focal prominence to the action in a typical contrastive construction, involving a negation.

(39) J Urmia\(^71\)

\[ \text{'palote 'massen ... 'palten,} \]

\[ \text{take_out.INF I can take_out.PRS.1SG} \]

\[ \text{madore la 'massen madr-\text{on-nu}.} \]

\[ \text{return.INF NEG I can return.PRS-1SG-them} \]

'I can take them out, but I cannot return them.'

In Ch Urmia (40) a paronomastic infinitive may reinforce a positive polar question, expressing "a desiderative bias, i.e. the speaker wants the answer to be 'yes'".\(^72\)

---

\(^{66}\) The NIV translator(s) too would seem to seek more emphatic, perhaps idiomatic, English equivalents to the Hebrew marked construction (finite verbal form + infinitive).

\(^{67}\) Gzella, ‘Emphasis or Assertion?’, p. 491, discusses the treatment of postposed paronomastic infinitives in Kim, *The Function of the Tautological Infinitive*, pp. 43-57. Joosten, ‘Infinitival paronomasia’, pp. 105-9, shows that the postposed infinitive “is but a conditioned variant of the normal sequence with a prepositive infinitive. The basic identity of the two variants is confirmed by their function. The postpositive infinitive has the same, or nearly the same, emphasizing effect as its prepositive counterpart”, whereas “with the pre-positive infinitive, there is often an element of contrast”.

\(^{68}\) Goldenberg, ‘Tautological infinitive’, p. 58.


\(^{70}\) Khan's transcription systems have been simplified in minor details, especially as regards phonetic and suprasegmental features. Although prosody, intonation and pausing are relevant in the analysis of paronomastic infinitives and reduplication in general, a slightly simplified transliteration may suffice in the comparison of syntactic constructions as attested in actual speech and in written sources, where prosodic features are poorly represented or not recorded at all.


In J Sulemaniyya (41), the construction may connote the action as thoroughly completed, thus functioning as a telicity marker.

(41) J Sulemaniyya73

'o zal-a-zil 'He went away.'

Discussing an occurrence of the same construction in J Arbel (42), Khan points out the nominal nature of the infinitive, in that it may refer to a concrete entity (bšāla is both 'stew' and, at least formally, 'to cook')74 and it syntactically behaves like a noun used as a cognate object ('to pray a prayer' in 43).

(42) J Arbel75

bšāla bb-eu bašli-wa
cook.INF/stew with-it cook.3PL-HAB.PST
'They used to cook with it / The stew, they cooked with it.'

(43) sūla sūle-lan
prayer pray.PRET-1PL
'We prayed.'

Khan calls this construction in J Sanandaj 'heavy coding' (44-45).

(44) J Sanandaj76

šātoe šātena
drink.INF drink.PRS.1SG
'I am drinking.'

(45) kalba nwaxa nox
dog bark.INF bark.PRS.3SG
'The dog is barking.'

When the verbal form has the realis preverb k- ~ g- (46), this is also attached to the infinitive, as the first consonantal slot of I-weak verbal roots.

(46) kxo-e kxo-nu 'I am eating'

gzala gezna 'I am going'

74 Formally infinitives bšāla 'cooked food', 'xţāla 'to eat, food', 'food' and štēa 'to drink, a drink' are nouns also in other dialects, as J Koy Sanjaq: see H. Mutzafi, The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Koy Sanjaq (Iraqi Kurdistan) (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2004) p.119. In Ch Urmi the infinitive may be used as a cognate object, preceded by the indefinite article, to express intensity: e.g., xa-boxya boxyola 'He wept bitterly' (lit. 'a weeping he wept'): see Khan The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of the Assyrian Christians of Urmī, vol. 2, pp. 239-43. The use of the indefinite article confirms the nominal nature of the infinitive in this construction.
The heavy coding usually marks the progressive aspect of a verbal form. This is probably the highest level of grammaticalization that the construction with a paronomastic infinitive has reached in Neo-Aramaic (and Semitic?), from the pragmatic level of discourse prominence to a verbal paradigm with a specific aspectual connotation. It competes with other, more common explicit markers of progressive aspect such as the infinitive or gerund inflected with the copula and particles as la- or là.77

The same construction may also be used “to express some kind of discourse prominence” with a verbal form that has habitual aspect. In (47) it expresses the surprise and merriment of the speaker about the fact that her neighbors dance around a little piece of bread and cheese.

(47)  
\[
g-\text{ay-pút dāēl naqôle naqlí baqf} \\
\text{‘He drums on the tin and they dance to it.’}
\]

An extensive description of the meanings and functions of the cognate infinitive construction is found in Khan’s grammar of Ch Barwar. As for general functions, in this dialect paronomastic infinitives appear to operate on the discourse level and give prominence to the action expressed by the finite verbal forms or specify its characteristics. Khan further analyses prominence as: contrastive opposition (typically following a negation and a disjunctive conjunction: 48 and 55); a contrastive answer to a preceding question or, better, focus on the truth-value of the predicate (49), as in Stoddard’s second example (36); an unexpected situation (50 and 56); the particular importance of an action in a narrative flow (with repetition of a verb used in the adjacent preceding context: 51); and predicate-centred focus, the “focus on the descriptive content of an action” in Khan’s own terms: (52) focuses on the truth-value of the action, whereas (57) focuses on the state of affairs of the predicate ‘we would just say’ (our emphasis).78 Furthermore, a cognate infinitive may characterize the action as extensive and far-reaching, thus functioning as an intensifier (53 and 58), or as a slow action (54).

(48)  
\[
b-\text{qeta la mṣax doqoxel;’illa-qtala qaṭlwa naše} \\
\text{‘In summer we could not catch them, but rather people would kill them.’}
\]

(49)  
\[
\text{zaqrituwa? zqara }’i-\text{zaqroξwa }’\text{axni, he.} \\
\text{‘Did you knit? We indeed used to knit, yes.’}
\]

(50)  
\[
\text{praxla prixel?} \\
\text{‘Has he [really] flown away?’}
\]

(51)  
\[
tre-\text{šabbaθa qam-dana }\text{čeđi y-azi maθwâša, čyâđa čeđiwa} \\
\text{‘Two weeks beforehand they would invite (people). They would go to the villages and give invitations.’}
\]

(52)  
\[
‘\text{ay lεwa zwana zwana }\text{zwanalla.} \\
\text{‘They were not really buying it.’}
\]

(53)  
\[
\text{‘ana zala har-zilen biya ‘I have absolutely gone with it! (i.e. I am finished!’)}
\]

(54)  
\[
\text{šqīlta reše matteyo mtutòlle l-âra} \\
\text{‘She took his head and slowly put it on the ground.’}
\]

In Ch Barwar the infinite may also be placed after the finite verb (55-58). As we shall see shortly, [Vb Xins] + [Vb Xins] is the only word order that we find in Ch Qaraqosh and early Neo-Aramaic poetry.

(55)  
\[
\text{‘ina brona lela xìltolle. har-nobaltolle mutṭeʃolle matteyo} \\
\text{‘But she did not eat the boy. She had just taken him and put him down.’}
\]

(56)  
\[
\text{‘ega lanwa bṛiša ‘ana braya.} \\
\text{‘At that time I was not even born.’}
\]

77 See, e.g., Khan, The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Sanandaj, pp. 89-90.
We were having fun. It was like that on that day, we would just say such things (but not really mean it).

‘We were having fun. It was like that on that day, we would just say such things (but not really mean it).’

‘He was riding hard.’

In Ch Qaraqosh only postposed cognate infinitives are found. Khan describes them as adverbial constructions, “used by speakers to draw particular attention to the activity expressed by a verb and signal that it has informational importance in the discourse”. In the narrative of the material culture of the speakers, postposed infinitives seem to express repetition and continuity of a manual activity (60 and 61). In other cases (62 and 63), intensification and focus on the truth-value of the action may be involved.

‘And so, the weaver would weave.’

2.3 Paronomastic Infinitives in early Christian Neo-Aramaic Poetry

Ch Qaraqosh and the language of early Christian Neo-Aramaic share a number of archaic morpho-syntactic features. It is also tempting to see the construction with a postposed paronomastic infinitive as a syntactic

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isogloss in the southernmost cluster of Iraqi Christian Neo-Aramaic dialects. As in Ch Qaraqosh, in early Christian Neo-Aramaic poetry (17th century), we indeed find only the construction with a paronomastic infinitive placed after the finite verbal form as a resuming echo of the action expressed by the verb in sentence – and verse line – final position.

In six of the nine occurrences of this construction, a prepositional object separates the finite verb and the infinitive. The prepositional object is either a pronoun or a noun with suffix pronoun.

(64)  w-šabhu l-šemm-ēh šābohē
and-praise.IMP.PL ACC-name-his praise.INF
'And do praise His name!' (I1 4b)

(65)  w-k-māxsā tarp l-sadr-āk trāpā
and-like-publican beat.IMP.SG ACC-breast-your beat.INF

(66)  d- māwētā mētē ell-āk mṭāyā
because death come.PERF.3SG on-you (f.) come.INF

(67)  māran bed dāyen-nē dyānā
Our Lord FUT judge.SBJV.3SG-him judge.INF
'Our Lord will certainly judge him.' (J6 139d)

(68)  mquṭṭel-lay w-ṭēd-lay qṛābā
fight.PRET-3PL and-do.PRET-3PL quarrel.INF

lā qru-lay ellāh qṛābā
NEG quarrel.PRET-3PL on.her quarrel.INF

'They fought and they quarreled,
but against her, they did not quarrel.' (I2 71b-c)

In (69) the object is represented by the Ø marking of a 3rd singular masculine object that is required by the cotext and thus in the English translation: "Jesus Christ the Nazarene | called [him, i.e., St Paul] from heaven | and made [him] the first of His apostles".

(69)  men šmayyā qre-lē qruyā
from heaven call.PRET-him-3SG call.INF
'He truly called him from heaven.' (I2 21b)

---


82 Mquṭṭel- is written with tāw and quššāyā in the manuscript. The verbal root is represented as qṭl, as in Arabic orthography.

83 The pronoun refers to the soul of the good: "Every soul that they [evil ones and devils] see | they run towards and examine her. | If she is from among them, they take her away. | The soul of a good one was brought. They fought and quarreled, but they did not quarrel against her. | The soul of a bad one was brought. | As soon as she bowed before the Lord, | she was taken away and cast into their hands".
In three occurrences of paronomastic infinitives, we do not find a prepositional object between the finite verbal form and the infinitive. In (70) the paronomastic infinitive seems to intensify the contrast between “those who are truly believers” and “produce fruit” – first two lines of the quatrain – and “he who does not endure Our Lord’s words and does even fall in apostasy” – second half of the quatrain:

(70) Those who are truly believers produce fruit
and bear hardship because of faith in Our Lord.
He who does not endure Our Lord’s words and falls in apostasy
his seed is without fruit even if it smells good.

In all the examples discussed so far, the infinitives are at the end of the verse line, where they serve as metrical fillers and sustain the end rhyme. They add two or three syllables to sentences that are complete in themselves and syntactically sound: šabku l-šemmēh! ‘Praise His name!’, men šmayya qrēlē ‘He called him from heaven’, etc. In (65-66) they form a nice parallelism in two consecutive lines.

Although the poetic nature of the text makes it rather difficult to grasp the nuances that the paronomastic infinitives actually add to these sentences, their functions appear to be similar to those found in the dialects discussed above. Used in combination with imperatives, in (64) and (65) the infinitives seem to be intensifiers, while (67) and (69) may exemplify the focus on the truth-content of the action expressed by the finite verb. In (66), the infinitive would appear to mark the action as thoroughly completed. In (68) the infinitive is used in a contrastive construction to stress the negation on the prepositional object of the verb and therefore a denial of what may be expected from the immediately preceding context, in which the same verbal root occurs. Two occurrences of the verbal root ‘āmdē (71-72) are the only examples of paronomastic infinitives that are not placed at the end of a verse line. The finite verbal forms immediately precede the infinitival form ‘māḏā ‘to be baptized’, that may also be interpreted as a noun (‘baptism’) and therefore as a cognate object rather than a cognate infinitive. The formally infinitive ‘māḏā is not preceded by a prepositional object, but followed by an attributive phrase, which confirms the interpretation of ‘māḏā as a noun and of the whole construction as a verb followed by a cognate object.

(71) d-... ‘āmdē ‘māḏā
REL be baptized.SBJV.3PL be baptized.INF
b-šemmā d-āḥā wa-brā w-ruḥā
in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus
‘Those who receive the baptism
in nomine Patris et Filii et Spiritus.’ (J6 9b)

(72) we-‘med-lan ‘māḏā da-mšîḥā
and-be baptized.PRET-1PL be baptized.INF GEN-Christ
‘And we were baptized in the baptism of Christ.’ (J6 10b)

The cognate object typically functions as a syntactical support for an attribute, which in these cases specifies that it is a Christian baptism. Together with the attribute, it functions as an adverbial modifier: ‘to receive a Christian baptism’ ~ ‘to be baptized the Christian way’, like ‘to live a happy life’ ~ ‘to live happily’.

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84 Both the infinitive of the base form ‘māḏā “to be baptized, receive the baptism” and the noun ma’modiṭā, that derives from the causative form ma’mōdē “to baptize, give the baptism”, mean “baptism” and can be used as nouns.
3 Provisional Conclusions

In most NENA dialects preposed paronomastic infinitives may be used to express the functions that are commonly associated with this type of construction across languages, namely focus on the state of affairs (e.g., 19, 57) and the truth-value (e.g., 10, 25, 52) of the proposition – often in contrast with what might be expected from the context –, intensification or emphasis (e.g., 3, 9) and continuity/repetition of an action. In the latter meaning, it is even grammaticalized in a Sanandaj verbal paradigm that expresses progressive aspect (44-46).

In most NENA varieties, including the language of the Urmi Bible, only preposed paronomastic infinitives are found. Typological research on the paronomastic infinitives and our data suggest that this is a general tendency: Languages that display \([Vb \ X_{\text{fin}}] + [Vb \ X_{\text{inf}}]\) may (but do not have to) display \([Vb \ X_{\text{inf}}] + [Vb \ X_{\text{fin}}]\). As a matter of fact, however, only in Ch Barwar do we find both preposed and postposed paronomastic infinitives, with similar functions.

There seem to be fewer varieties that display only \([Vb \ X_{\text{fin}}] + [Vb \ X_{\text{inf}}]\) constructions. In Ch Qaraqosh and in the language of early Christian Neo-Aramaic poetry, only postposed paronomastic infinitives occur. In NENA varieties in which paronomastic infinitives are allowed or even mandatorily placed after the finite verb, they seem to be preferred to express intensification rather than predicate-centered focalization. As in Biblical Hebrew, only postposed infinitives are attested with imperatives.