New insights on infixed *-an*(*n*)- in Iraqi Arabic dialects

Qasim Hassan

In the few studies conducted so far on infixed *-an*(*n*)- in Iraqi Arabic, only a small area in southern Iraq was explored. Ingham, in his pioneer research on south Iraqi Arabic, considers it a characteristic feature of the dialects spoken by the dwellers of the marshy and rural areas in southern Iraq. This point of view has been widely adopted in subsequent research dealing with this infix. However, much is yet to be investigated concerning its possible presence in dialect areas other than the southern one. In this paper, I will first argue that infixed *-an*(*n*)- is not exclusive for the so-called *southern continuum*, to follow Ingham's terminology, but is a regular idiosyncrasy throughout the *šrūgi*-dialectal area; second, I will show that this infix has crept into the remote *qəltu*- and *gələt*-dialects outside the *šrūgi*-area.

1. Introduction

To date, there exists little research on infixed *-an*(*n*)- in Iraqi Arabic (INF, henceforth), and if existent, then, most often, only in connection with the geographic origin and distribution of the participial infix in Eastern Arabia (Wilmsen and Al Muhairi 2020; Holes 2016, 2011; Ingham 2000, among others). As regards its geographic distribution in Iraq, INF is characteristic for the *šrūgi*-dialectal area, with the majority of population following the Shiʿi faith of Islam, and thereby being an isogloss separating their dialects from the other *gələt*-dialects spoken overwhelmingly by Sunni-Muslims in the non-*šrūgi*-dialectal area.[1]

Although there is no certainty about the origin of INF in *šrūgi*-Arabic (Wilmsen and Al Muhairi 2020: 287; Holes 2016: 22-23), the sectarian-based split of the *gələt*-dialects just introduced may tell us

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[1] The *šrūgi*-dialectal area refers to all *gələt*-dialects spoken in southern Iraq and the Middle Euphrates area, whereas the non-*šrūgi* one includes only the *gələt*-dialects in the northern and western parts of the country. For more details on the split of the *gələt*-dialects into *šrūgi*- and non-*šrūgi*, see Hassan (2020; 2021).

something about it. One would consequently assume that INF may be a vestige of a long-standing historical and religious ties of the Shiʿi population in Iraq with that in Baḥrain and in the eastern province in Saudi Arabia. It should also borne in mind the frequent migratory movements of the tribes from Eastern Arabia to southern Iraq (Holes 2016: 6; 2011: 86, 92). Nowadays, some whole Shiʿi tribes and families in the *šrūgi*-area claim descent from Baḥrain, and some others claim to be indigenous Iraqis who previously settled in Baḥrain and returned to the *šrūgi*-area some centuries later, but some remained.

Putting aside the demographic and sectarian aspects, Ingham (2007: 575; 2000: 127) considers it a contraction of the first person pronoun typical for south Iraqi Arabic. Since then, this kind of infixes has been considered an exclusive characteristic feature of the dialects spoken in southern Iraq (Wilmsen and Al Muhairi 2020: 287; Holes 2016: 23, etc.) and nothing has been hazarded on its possible presence in the other parts of the *šrūgi*-dialectal area, and possibly elsewhere in Iraq. The present paper gives a contribution in this direction by providing new insights on its geographic distribution within the *šrūgi*-dialectal area; light will also be thrown on its introduction into dialects outside the *šrūgi*-area. The material used throughout this paper is mainly based on the author's knowledge of his own speech communities in both *šrūgi*- and non-*šrūgi*-dialectal areas.

2. Characteristic features of INF in Iraqi Arabic

INF exhibits certain characteristic features that merit particular consideration. Below, I will briefly demonstrate these features through examples from the colloquial speech in the *šrūgi*-dialectal area. One of its most distinctive features is its occurrence with only imperfective hollow and geminated verbs:

1. *mā-šūf-an   šī*
   NEG-I_see-INF thing
   'I do not see anything.'

2. *aḥibb-an-hum   killiš*
   I_love-INF-3PL.M   a_lot
   'I love them a lot.'

3. *arīd-an   ākil*
   I_want-INF I_eat

'I want to eat.'

4. *abūs-ann-ič*   *ib-ḥalg-ič*
   I_kiss-INF-2SG.F   in_mouth-2SG.F
   'I kiss you on your mouth.'

However, there is no complete paradigm of INF in Iraqi Arabic and it thereby occurs solely in the first person singular. It is also worthy of note that INF is not obligatory in 1.-4. and can be omitted without changing the semantic value of the sentences:

5. *mā-šūf-an*   *šī*   ~   *mā-šūf*   *šī*
    NEG-I_see-INF   thing   NEG-I_see   thing
    'I do not see anything.'

6. *aḥibb-an-hum*   *killiš*   ~   *aḥibb-hum*   *killiš*
    I_love-INF-3.PL.M   a_lot   I_love-3.PL.M   a_lot
    'I love them a lot.'

7. *arīd-an*   *ākil*   ~   *arīd*   *ākil*
    I_want-INF I_eat   I_want I_eat
    'I want to eat.'

8. *abūs-ann-ič*   *ib-ḥalg-ič*   ~   *abūs-ič*   *ib-ḥalg-ič*
    I_kiss-INF-2SG.F. in_mouth-2SG.F   I_kiss-2SG.F in_mouth-2SG.F
    'I kiss you on your mouth.'

Interestingly, INF may also occur in imperfective non-hollow and non-geminated verbs, but only if an object suffix comes directly afterward:

9. *aširb-*(an)*   *aširb-ann-ah*
                           I_drink-INF-3SG.M
                           'I drink it.'

10. *asimʿ-*(an)*   *asimʿ-an-ha*

         I_hear-INF-3SG.F

         'I hear her.'

11. *akitl-*(an)*   *akitl-ann-ah*

         I_kill-INF-3SG.M

         'I kill him.'

12. *ašikr-*(an)*   *ašikr-ann-ah*

         I_thank-INF-3SG.M

         'I thank him.'

Moreover, INF in 9.-12. is omitted in imperfective non-hollow and non-geminated verbs when the verb is negated by the circumfix *mā-…-š*, as in 13.-16. respectively, but it is allowed in negated geminated and hollow verbs, as in 17.-20. below:

13. *mā-šrab-*(an)-hā-š*

  NEG-I_drink-INF-3SG.F-NEG

  'I do not drink it.'

14. *mā-smaʿ-*(an)-hū-š*

  NEG-I_hear-INF-3SG.M-NEG

  'I do not hear it/him.'

15. *mā-ktil-*(an)-hū-š*

  NEG-I_kill-INF-3SG.M-NEG

  'I do not kill him.'

16. *mā-šikr-*(an)-hū-š*

  NEG-I_thank-INF-3SG.M-NEG

  'I thank him.'

17. *mā-ḏiḷḷ-ann-īš*

NEG-I_stay-INF-NEG

'I do not stay.'

18. *mā-šūf-an-hū-š*

NEG-I_see-INF-3SG.M-NEG

'I do not see it/him.'

19. *mā-ridd-an-hū-š*

NEG-I_send back-INF-3SG.M-NEG

'I do not send it/him back.'

20. *mā-zūr-an-hū-š*

NEG-I_visit-INF-3SG.M-NEG

'I do not visit it/him.'

Notably, INF can also occur with or without an object suffix on more than one verb in a sentence (21., 22.):

21. *arīd-an   agūl-an*

I_want-INF   I_say-INF

'I would like to say.'

22. *arīd-an   arūḥ-an   aǧīb-an   il-ḥalāl*

I_want-INF   I_go-INF   I_bring-INF ART-cattle

'I want to go to bring the cattle.'

3. The geographic distribution of INF in the *šrūgi* dialectal area

This section seeks to show that INF is an inherent feature in the *šrūgi*-dialectal area (Map 1.), and can therefore be easily observed in the everyday speech of everyone in rural and urban areas alike. However, before an attempt is made to explain this, it should be noted that INF is generally considered a rural feature, but nevertheless still common in the speech of urban dwellers with rural backgrounds. Being rural and being thereby stigmatized as being a low and old-fashioned variety of speech, people

of rural origin avoid using it in towns. However, there are still numerous cases where INF is clearly recognizable in the speech of urban dwellers of rural origin despite every effort to switch to urban features.
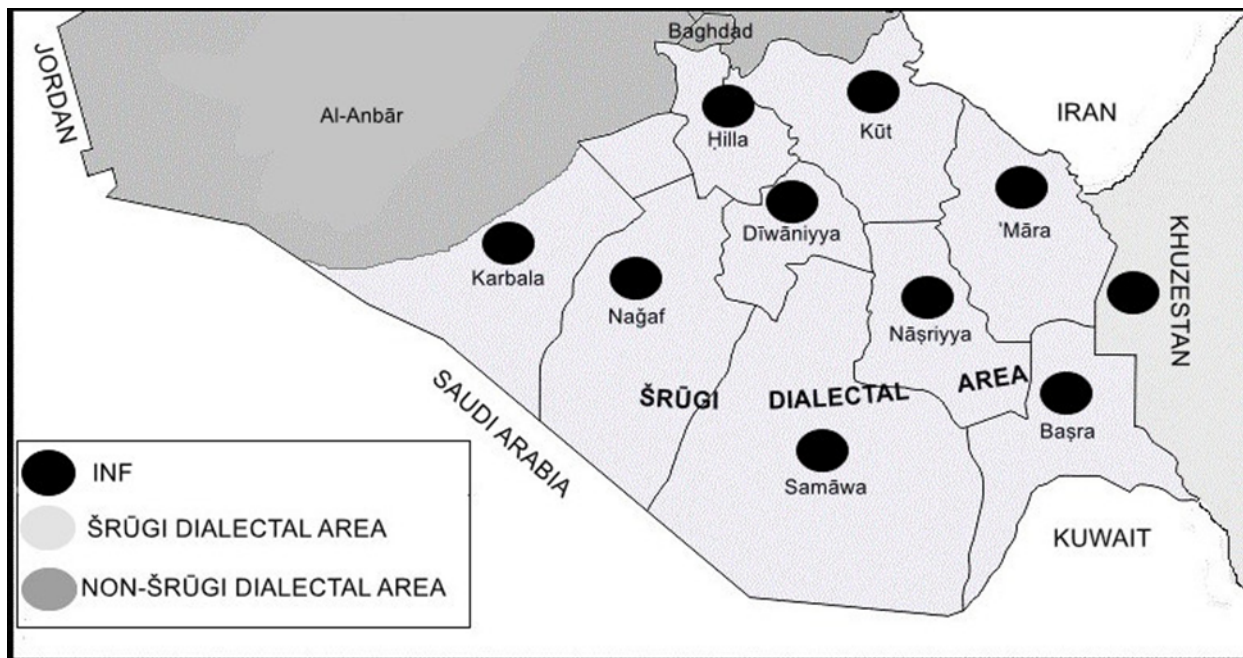
Map 1. The distribution of INF in the šrūgi*-dialectal area*

Below are some selected lines of colloquial poems from different parts of the *šrūgi*-dialectal area, particularly from outside the southern continuum,[2] in which the use of INF is easily observable. It must be emphasized once again, however, that the use of INF in the lines below is not to add a 'southern color' to the poem, but a common practice throughout the entire *šrūgi*-dialectal area. The first three examples (23.-25.) are taken from orally transmitted poetry from the western part of the *šrūgi*-dialectal area beyond Samāwa and Kūt, particularly from the Middle Euphrates area. The other five (26.-30.), on the other hand, from the very southern part of the area:

23. *xāf   imn-agūl-an   āh   tiššammat   iˤdā-y*
     maybe when-I_say-INF   ouch   rejoice   enemy-1SG
     'My enemy may rejoice my misfortune when I groan.'

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[2] According to Ingham (1994: 93), the so-called southern continuum ends by Kūt on the Tigris and Samāwa on the Euphrates. Hassan (2020, 2021) extended this continuum to include the *šrūgi*-dialects beyond Samāwa and Kūt as far as Baghdad.

24. *ǧēt   ašūf-an   salwit-i   wi-tšūf   ǧarḥ-i   wēn-ah*

I_came I_see-INF   beloved-1SG and-she_sees wound-1SG   where-3SG.M

'I came to see my beloved and she sees where my wound is.'

25. *aṣḥa   w-amūt-an   w-antišir*

I_wake_up and-I_die-INF   and-I_get up

'I wake up, die, and get up again.'

26. *gaḷb-i   mā-ʾafiṭ-ann-ah*

heart-1SG   NEG-I_open-INF-3SG.M

'I do not open my heart.'

27. *aṣīḥ-an   b-ī   wa-ṭird-ann-ah*

I_shout-INF at-3SG.M   and-I_threw out-INF-3SG.M

'I shout at him and threw him out.'

28. *xifit   askit   wa-ṭamʿ-ann-ah*

I_feared I_keep_silent   and-make_greedy-INF-3SG.M

'I thought I make him greedy when I keep silent.'

29. *ṣāḥib   čān   il-i   wa-ḥibb-ann-ah*

friend he_was to-1SG   and-I_love-INF-3SG.M

'He was my friend and I liked him.'

30. *yinām   ib-nōmt-i   wa-gʿid   wa-gaʿd-ann-ah*

he_sleeps in-sleep-1SG   and-I_wake_up and-I_wake_up-INF-3SG.M

'He sleeps when I sleep, and I wake him up, when I wake up.'

Often enough, INF is used to an extent that it occurs repeatedly at the end of each line of a rhymed poem. The poem below[3] is an example:

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[3] The poem is available (first 32 seconds) at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=P1-fxnWO_Tc.

31. *mā-ṭašr*   *il-ḥači*   *w-bi-čfūf-i*   *alimm-ann-ah*

       NEG-I_scatter   ART-speech   and-in-hands-1SG   I_collect-INF-3SG.M

       '… I do not scatter words, but I collect them with my hands.'

       w-ṣidīǧ-i   *aʿātb-a*   *w-marrāt*   *aḏimm-ann-ah*

       and-friend-1SG   I_grumble-3SG.M   and-sometimes   I_criticize-INF-3SG.M

       '… and I grumble my friend, and sometimes I criticize him.'

       mūš   *ib-bātil*   *ib-maʿrūf*   *awalm-ann-ah*

       NEG   in-untruth   in-favor   I_agree-INF-3SG.M

       '… I agree with him in good things, not in bad things.'

       kūn-ah   *bi-l-xašim*   *ʿanbar*   *wa-šimm-ann-ah*

       to_be-3SG.M   in-ART-nose   odor   and-I_smell-INF-3SG.M

       '… May he be amber in the nose, so I can smell it.'

       giddām   *iʿrub-ah*   *w-ṣidgān-ah*   *ašaym-ann-ah*

       in_front_of   relatives-3SG.M   and-friends-3SG.M   I_praise-INF-3SG.M

       '… I praise him in presence of his relatives and friends.'

In the light of the above, it seems that INF is a regular idiosyncrasy in everyday and poetic speech throughout the entire *šrūgi*-dialectal area, and that its use outside the so-called southern continuum is not an imitation of the poetic conventions of the *šrūgi* poetry.

4. The geographic distribution of INF outside the *šrūgi*-dialectal area

It is worthwhile to point out at the outset that the use of INF outside the *šrūgi*-dialectal area is not new at all. However, unlike the case with the *šrūgi*-area, its use in the non-*šrūgi* one is exclusively limited to oral colloquial poetry.[4] It is in general rather hard to find a colloquial poem without a 'southern poetic

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[4] An exception to this is Wādi Ḥaǧar, a residential quarter on the right bank of the Tigris in Mosul. This quarter has been found in the seventies of the last century to be home to, among others, *šrūgi*-soldiers at a nearby army-training center. Most soldiers and their families preserved their *šrūgi*-features, including INF, and they choose to settle permanently in the quarter, forming

color' outside the *šrūgi*-dialectal area, including the adoption of INF. The first four lines below are from Mosul, a *qəltu*-dialectal area in northern Iraq, the other two are from the non-*šrūgi*-dialectal area in Al-Anbār in western Iraq (Map 2.):

32. *w-agil-l-ak   bi-l-'aḥiss-an   w-inta   hamm   gil-l-i*
    and-I_say-to-2SG.M in-ART-I_feel-INF and-you.M too   say-to-1SG
    '...and I tell you what I am feeling, and you tell me too.'

33. *w-iḏā   b-galb-ak   a'īš-an   faqaṭ   ya-l-maḥbūb*
    and-if in-heart-2SG.M I_live-INF only   oh-ART-beloved
    '...and if only I live in your heart, oh my beloved.'

34. *w-yiḏḏāhar   arīd-ann-ah   'la-rūḥ-ah*
    and-he_protests I_want-INF-3SG.M   against-soul-3SG.M
   '...and I want him to protest against himself.'

35. *gilit-l-ak   rāḥ   arūḥ-an*
    I_said-to-2SG.M he_went   I_leave-INF
    '...I said to you that I am leaving.'

36. *w-'al   gāʿ   aḏill-an   činit*
    and-on ground I_remain-INF I_was
    '...and I remained on the ground.'

37. *amūt-an   lō   šifit   diǧla   bilā   māy*
    I_die-INF   when I_saw Tigris   without water
    '...and I die when I see the Tigris without water.'

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a *Sprachinsel* surrounded by *qəltu*-communities. However, over time, INF has almost disappeared in this area for being socially stigmatized as a *šrūgi*-feature.
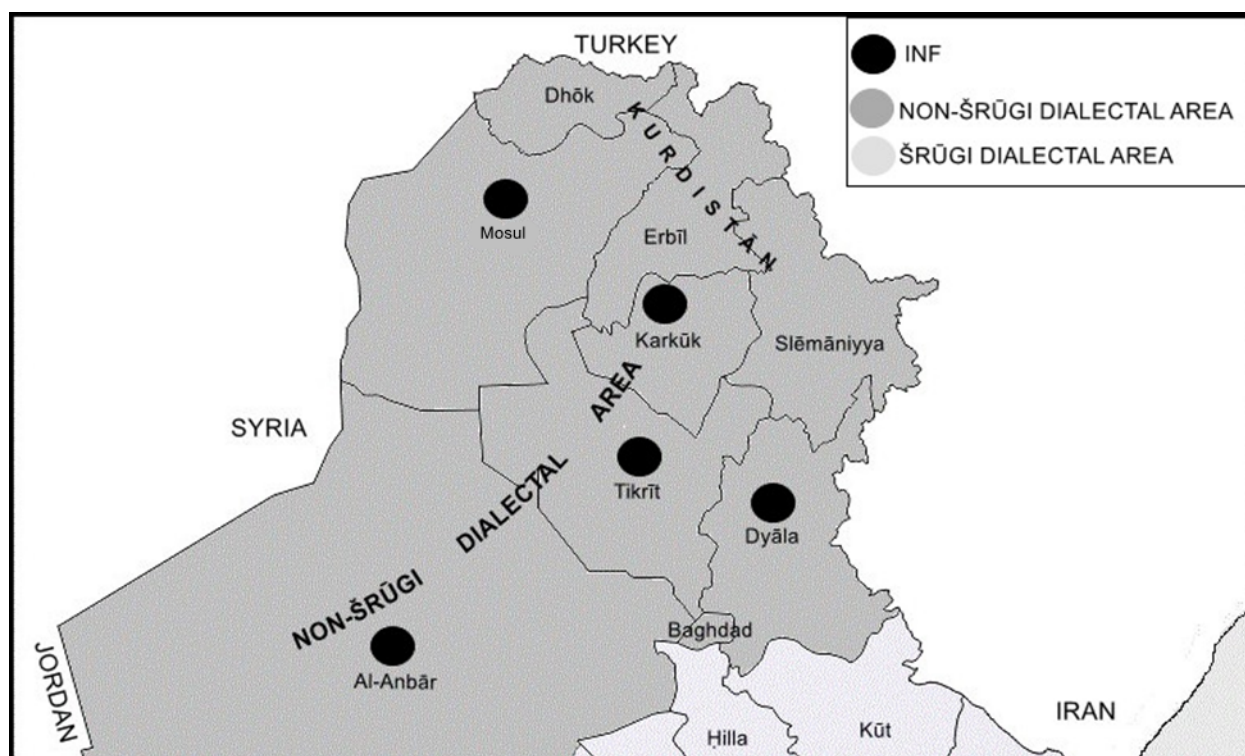
*Map 2. The distribution of INF in the non-*šrūgi *dialectal area.*

More than this, colloquial poets in the non-*šrūgi* dialectal area, be they *gələt-* or *qəltu-*speakers, have adopted the native *šrūgi*-poetic recitation forms and body movements, which are usually central to oral performance.

5. Conclusion

One purpose of this paper is to provide a clear picture of the geographic distribution of INF in Iraqi Arabic. As shown by the examples given in this paper, INF is not exclusive to the southern part of the *šrūgi*-dialectal area, as supposed by Ingham, but also to all areas where *šrūgi*-Arabic is spoken. A further purpose is to ascertain the use of this infix outside the *šrūgi*-dialectal area, namely in *qəltu-* and *gələt-*colloquial poetry in western and northern Iraq. It is in this regard worthwhile to note that, beside INF, a number of other *šrūgi*-features have recently been entered into the colloquial poetry outside the *šrūgi*-dialectal area. Among these features are the use of the discontinuous negation with *mā-...-š*, such as in *mā-šifithū-š* 'I did not see him' and the employment of the palatal approximant /y/, which is usually pronounced as the voiced affricate /ǧ/ in this area.

Abbreviations

ART	Article
F	Feminine
INF	Infix
M	Masculine
NEG	Negative
PL	Plural
SG	Singular

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Qasim Hassan holds PhD in General Linguistics from the University of Wuppertal/Germany. He is currently member of the College of Arts, University of Basra, Iraq. His major interests lay in Arabic linguistics and Iraqi Arabic dialectology. He published numerous papers in journals and conference proceedings.
He can be reached at: q558288@gmail.com