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NEO-ARAMAIC STUDIES: A SURVEY OF RECENT PUBLICATIONS

Neo-Aramaic languages and literatures are a flourishing and promising field of research. Contributions on Neo-Aramaic (henceforth, NA) are included in a number of *Festschriften* published in the last few years[1] and in several issues of periodicals such as the *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, the *Journal of Assyrian Academic Studies*, the *Journal of the American Oriental Society*, *Le Muséon*, *Mediterranean Language Review*, and of course *Aramaic Studies*. The research group *ARAM* organized an international conference on NA literatures in Chicago (10-12 April 2007), whose proceedings have appeared in *ARAM* 21 (2009), and plans to host a series of symposia on NA dialectology. The first was held in Oxford, 6-8 July 2009. The *Neo-Aramaic Newsletter*, which used to be distributed by Otto Jastrow (Erlangen-Nürnberg, now Tallinn), is now published on-line by Geoffrey Khan (Cambridge), who proposed the foundation

[1] W. Arnold and H. Bobzin (eds.), *„Sprich doch mit deinen Knechten aramäisch, wir verstehen es!": 60 Beiträge zur Semitistik. Festschrift für Otto Jastrow zum 60. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002); G. Khan (ed.), *Semitic Studies in Honour of Edward Ullendorff* (Leiden: Brill, 2005); B. Burtea, J. Tropper und H. Younansardaroud, *Studia Semitica et Semitohamitica. Festschrift für Rainer Voigt* (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2005); P.G. Bobone, A. Mengozzi and M. Tosco (eds.), *Loquentes linguis. Linguistic and Oriental Studies in Honour of Fabrizio A. Pennacchietti* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2006); T. Bar and E. Cohen (eds.), *Studies in Semitic and General Linguistics in Honor of to Gideon Goldenberg* (Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2007); G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2008).

of an international Society for Neo-Aramaic Studies in the 2009-issue.[2] Helen Younansardaroud's on-line *Bibliographie zur neuaramäischen Dialekte*[3] includes such Assyrian or Turoyo scholars as Daniel D. Benjamin, Samuel Dinkha, Nemrod Simono, Yusuf Ishaq, Abrohom Nuro, and Zomaya S. Solomon.

Besides new publications, early works in or on NA are now easily available. Thanks to Atour Publications, e.g., the following items can be downloaded in PDF or printed on demand and are distributed by www.lulu.com at very reasonable prices: (American-) Assyrian periodicals such as *Sparzona*, *Kokhwa*, *Qala d-shrara*, *Kitavona*, *Izgedda*; Maclean's *Grammar* and *Dictionary* (orig. Oxford 1895 and 1901), *Grammaire de la langue Soureth ou Chaldéenne Vulgaire* by J. Rhétoré (Mosul 1912), *The first English-Assyrian Dictionary* by Sh. Dawid (Chicago 1924), *Dictionary of the Assyrian Language* by A.J. Oraham (Chicago 1943); Classical Syriac texts of the Eastern tradition and historical works, especially on the (American) missionary activities among the Assyrians. The catalogue of Gorgias Press includes or announces, among others, the following reprints: D.T. Stoddard, *Grammar of Modern Syriac Language* (London 1855); M.R. Duval, *Les Dialectes Néo-Araméens de Salamas* (Paris 1883); P. Bedjan, *Chaldean Christian Doctrine in the Urmia Dialect* (Leipzig 1886, erroneously 1986 in the copyright page of Gorgias' reprint); R. Macuch, *Geschichte der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur* (Berlin 1976).

In the present review article I intend to focus on recent publications and editorial projects: the newly-launched series *Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies*, new issues of *Semitica Viva*, and a number of publications of the Cambridge school of NA studies.

1. Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies 1-3

1.1. Geoffrey Khan (ed.), *Neo-Aramaic Dialect Studies. Proceedings of a Workshop on Neo-Aramaic held in Cambridge 2005*, Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies 1, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press. ISBN: 978-1-59333-423-9, 2008, Pages: 212, $115.00.

The first issue of the newly-launched series Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies brings together papers read at the Cambridge workshop mentioned in the subtitle and other contributions.

Samuel Ethan Fox (1-17) addresses important questions concerning the relationship of North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (henceforth, NENA) with Middle Aramaic dialects. The imperative pl. ending *-un* and the allomorph *'ax* ~ *'axwat̲-*

[2] Http://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/news/.

[3] Http://userpage.fu-berlin.de/~semiarab/neuaram_bibliographie.pdf (Last update: 04/07/2006).

of the preposition 'like' would bring NENA varieties closer to Syriac, but other features link NENA morphology more closely to Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (and Mandaic): 1st sg. suffix pronoun *-i*, pl. set of pl. suffix pronouns attached to sg and pl. nouns, *pa^{cc}el* passive participle *mpu^{cc}al*, the use of a present tense marker probably deriving from a form of the root *qwm*,[4] *tərwanté* 'the two of them' with an infixed *w*. In contrast with Middle-Aramaic, the *p^{c}al* infinitive *p^{c}ala* instead of *mep^{c}al* links NA first to Old Aramaic varieties of the first millennium BC and then perhaps to the 'Akkadian substratum' evoked by Fox (10). According to the commonly accepted rules of language comparison and reconstruction, only shared innovations such as the generalization of suffixes attached to plural nouns, the present tense marker and the *w*-infixed construction of the numeral 'two' should be regarded as diagnostic features, the others being common retentions.

A number of papers deal with specific linguistic issues: phonology in the Tiyari dialects spoken by Assyrians now settled in Syria (Shabo Talay, 39-63; see Semitica Viva 40-41, presented here below, 3.2-3), verbal system in the Ch. NA dialect of Karamlesh (Roberta Borghero, 75-89), final a-vowels in the Ch. dialect of Telkepe (Eleonor Coghill, 91-104), focus and cleft constructions in J. Zakho (Eran Cohen, 149-169), former *begadkephat* allophones fixed as phonemes in Western NA words and roots (Werner Arnold, 171-176).

Geoffrey Khan (105-130) examines the functions of preterit and perfect forms (*qṭille* and *qṭilɛle*) in the Christian dialect of Barwar and suggests that the use of *qṭilɛle* perfect to express sequential events in narratives may be related to the use of the present perfect as an evidential verbal form comparable with the Turkish *-miş* form. Olga Kapeliuk (131-147) surveys nominal forms (nouns of action, infinitives, agent adjectives in *-ana*, passive-perfect participles) more or less verbalized and integrated into the verbal systems of Chr. Urmi and J. Zakho.

Two papers present dialects not previously described. Hezy Mutzafi (19-37) lists the most salient features of phonology, morphology and lexicon of the Chr. dialect of Sat (Hakkari, Turkey). The village of Sat, today called İkiyaka, was ravaged in a Kurdish raid in 1915 and the Assyrians who survived the massacre took refuge in Iraq. Mutzafi worked with informants now living in Chicago. Steven E. Fassberg (65-74) publishes a short sketch of the J. NA dialect of Challa and a sample text recorded from the voice of the one remaining native speaker, now living in Israel (see 2.4, below).

In their contributions, Fox and Coghill use the concept of 'proto-NENA'. NENA stands for North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic, as opposed to Western (Ma'lula...),

[4] On the etymology of *qa-*, *k-* prefixes, see A.D. Rubin, *Studies in Semitic Grammaticalization*, Harvard Semitic Studies 57 (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2005), pp. 130-133, including further references.

Central (Turoyo, Mlaḥso...) and South-Eastern (Mandaic) NA, and is *per se* a useful geographical term to label a sub-group of NA dialects. Nevertheless, it should be treated more carefully as a reconstructive tool. The very idea of a proto-(North-Eastern) Neo-Aramaic language is highly questionable and the NA territory can be better described as a dialect *continuum*, where NENA varieties share common innovations with Central and even Western dialects, sometimes in contrast with other NENA varieties.[5]

Yona Sabar (177-195) publishes here a shortened English version of the introduction to his *Five Scrolls in Jewish Neo-Aramaic Translations*, Edah ve-Lashon 26 (Jerusalem: Magnes, 2006; in Hebrew), in which he collects 'almost all available manuscripts and recordings' of NA Targums to the Ketuvim, including the works by Avidani of Amedia, Elyahu of Dihok, Yishay of Urmi and other Zakho, Nerwa and Amedia translators. The Israeli publication and Sabar's remarks on translation technique will certainly be of interest to Biblical scholars. As the concluding paragraph explains: 'The JNA translations of the Five Scrolls are usually literal translations of the Masoretic Text [...] When the Hebrew text presented unusual difficulties, the translators would resort directly or indirectly to traditional commentaries and the old Targums, according to the degree of the learning of the translator. This may be compared to the way Christian translations derived help from the Septuagint or the Vulgate' (194).

1.2. Geoffrey Khan, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Urmi*, Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies 2, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press. ISBN: 978-1-59333-425-3, 2008, Pages: 644, $157.00[6]

On the basis of his original fieldwork on this dialect, Geoffrey Khan integrates with this publication Irene Garbell, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Persian Azerbaijan* (The Hague: Mouton, 1965), which is a complete and detailed description of the dialect cluster to which J. Urmi belongs. Where Garbell is highly formalized and difficult to read and consult, Khan's volume is much clearer and reader-friendly. Moreover the author adopts an up-dated descriptive approach especially as far as phonetics and syntax are concerned.

The J. NA dialect of Urmia differs from the Chr. NA dialect of the same town 'not only because of the social separation of the two religious communities but also on account of their different settlement history [...] most Christians moved to the town from the surrounding countryside in relatively recent times'

[5] R.I. Kim, 'Stammbaum or Continuum? The Sub-grouping of Modern Aramaic Dialects Reconsidered', *JAOS* 128.3 (2008), pp. 505-532.

[6] On the cover spine, font, font-size and positions of logo, series abbreviation and number differ from those used in Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies (GNAS) 1 and 3. The series abbreviation GNAS is doubly erroneous: GAAS.

(3). J. Urmi shares the characteristic features of the so-called 'Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic' dialects:[7] interdental *ṯ* and *ḏ* shift to *l*, although less extensively than in other Trans-Zab J. dialects (Urmi *bela* 'house' and *ela* 'festival', but Arbel *'ila* 'hand' and *hula'a* 'Jew' correspond to *ida* and *hudaa* in Urmi); the stress is usually in word final position, but it may be retracted in words in non-pausal position (46) and in other contexts; gender distinction collapses in the 3rd sg. independent pronoun in favour of the masculine form.

Instrumental tests form the basis for a precise description of the phonetic phenomenon called 'flatting' by Garbell and defined as 'velarization' by Khan. Velarization may affect an entire word or part of it. When only part of the word is velarized, this is usually an *a*, *o* or *u* vowel (realized with a back quality clearly distinct from the fronted realization in non velarized words) and/or a sonorant *r*, *n* or *l* (19). Historically, velarization derives from the presence of an emphatic *ṭ* or *ṣ* in the etymon of the word (*+metra* 'rain', *+mys* 'to suck'). The sonants *r*, *m*, *l*, the voiced labial *b*, the post-velar fricative *x* and the pharyngals *ḥ* and *ᶜ* may also yield velarization (*+raba* 'much', *+dmx* 'to sleep'). Velarization, however, is a lexically specific feature and is not systematically determined by the historical phonological structure of the word (37).

The impact of contact languages (Azeri Turkish and Kurdish) affects all levels of the linguistic structure. Khan reports Garbell's statistics on the lexicon (383-384: 68,96% of the nouns are of foreign origin, 28% of the verbal roots, 54,11% of the particles) and lists examples in various lexical groups (385-392: human body, kinship, natural phenomena, basic attributes, colours, basic verbs, verbs of movement and perception, etc.). For a Semitist, it is perhaps astonishing to discover that the conjunction *w-* virtually disappeared in J. Urmi, its use being confined as an enclitic *-w* to connect tens and units in numerals (185) and in the form *wa-* to mark a closing section in a discourse unit (346-347). A particle *ki* — an old friend in northwestern Semitic, but here in fact a borrowing of Iranian origin — replaces Aramaic *d-* in almost all of its uses as subordinator, introducing relative clauses, cleft sentences, and subordinated sentences of most kinds. Which shows the need to integrate internal historical reconstruction with contact linguistics.

The primary goal of the volume is descriptive and accordingly the bibliography (441-442) is rather limited. On specific domains, such as phonology, one wonders why the author includes K. Tsereteli, 'The velar spirant *ġ* in Modern East Aramaic dialects', in W. Heinrichs (ed.), *Studies in Neo-Aramaic*, Harvard Semitic Studies 36 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1990), pp. 35-42, while he does not mention H. Younansardaroud, *Der neuostaramäische Dialekt von Särdä:ryd* , Semitica Viva 26 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2001), with a long chapter on 'velarization' in Chr. Urmi and an insightful *status quaestionis*. The comparative

[7] H. Mutzafi, 'Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic', *BSOAS* 71.3 (2008), pp. 409-431.

excursus could have been a little broader in scope. For example, the survey on NA verbal systems which have two past tense bases, variously inflected for various categories of transitive and intransitive verbs and used to express a preterit or a resultative perfect (73-75) could have included the language of Chr. poetry of the Mosul region and Turoyo *neutrischen Verben*.[8]

The texts transcribed and translated on pp. 394-439 will be included in the web-site of the Cambridge project (see 4.2, below) and includes traditional stories and accounts on the life and history of the Jews in Urmia: weddings, festivals, schools, war-time, relations with the Christians. The glossary is organized in two sections: verbal roots (445-477) and general (479-624).

1.3. Margo Rees, *Lishan Didan, Targum Didan. Translation Language in a Neo-Aramaic Targum Tradition*, Gorgias Neo-Aramaic Studies 3, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press. ISBN: 978-1-59333-426-0, 2008, $98.00.

In this volume Margo publishes the results of the research carried out for her PhD at the University of Cambridge. It is an excellent, important study on translation technique and Biblical tradition.

In the introduction (1-17), the author presents the J. NA targum tradition and the extant manuscript witnesses. The study is based on the Barzani manuscript, attributed to the *metargem* Sason ben Zakay Barzani of Rewanduz, about 55 km northeast of Arbel near the Iranian border. The language is based primarily on the JNA dialect of the Arbel region, but it is distinct from the spoken language. The frequent insertion of shwa-like vowels, esp. in the orthography of verbal forms probably reflects a rhythmically intoned or chanted text. The dialectal position of the language is puzzling. It 'demonstrates significant similarities to the J. Urmia, Koy Sanjaq and Rustaqa dialects and, to a lesser extent, the J. Sulemaniyya dialect' (6). It does not contain the preverbial particle *la-* which is a vital component of the J. Arbel verbal system (10) and it might preserve older forms of a Trans-Zab dialect (11). The 1st pl. independent pronoun *ʾaxlan* (probably construed on the analogy of the oblique verbal ending *-lan*) is not attested in J. dialects and would link the language of this targum to the Chr. dialect of Harbole (22).

Part I (19-96) is a grammatical sketch. Some historical explanations are unsatisfactory. The derivation of *noša* 'soul' from **nabša* on p. 26, is questionable. The form *nawša*, hence *noša*, as correctly suggested by Khan,[9]

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[8] O. Jastrow, *Laut- und Formenlehre des neuaramäischen Dialekts von Mīdin in Ṭūr ʿAbdīn*, Semitica Viva 9 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993), pp. 71-76; A. Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language*, CSCO 590 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), p. 47. This is one of the isoglosses that suggests grouping Turoyo together with NENA.

[9] G. Khan, *A Grammar of Neo-Aramaic. The dialect of the Jews of Arbel*, HdO I 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), pp. 87-88, quoted by Rees.

has been known as customary East-Syriac pronunciation of the classical word *nafša* since Barhebraeus.[10] The explanation of the annexation ending *-it* as deriving from a combination of the Kurdish *ezafe* with the Aramaic particle *d-* (27 and 83) is not convincing.[11] It is true that in dialects such as J. Arbel *-it* is functionally equivalent to the Kurdish *ezafe* as a way to introduce a genitive modifier, an attribute or a relative clause. However, as I have tried to demonstrate elsewhere,[12] its origin can be understood as the outcome of a process of phonetic reduction and neutralization of late Aramaic morphologic oppositions: not only *status emphaticus* (*-ā* / *-ē*) + *d-*, as mentioned by Rees (83), but also proleptic pronouns + *d-*. From a structural point of view, the latter construction is a much more suitable ancestor of NA annexation endings, when these are suffixed to prepositions, as consistently happens in the language analyzed by Rees (*ibidem*).

The Hebrew relative particle *'ašer* is usually translated with *'ay*, which is formally identical with the 3rd-person feminine pronoun and recalls the demonstrative elements *ay* or *i* used in J. Azerbaijan and J. Urmia as genitive markers (27-29). In J. Arbel an *i* element is sporadically added to the annexation ending *-it*. Kurdish influence is probably at work in the reinforcement, preservation or reconstruction of a morphosyntactic device which belongs to the plurimillenary history of Aramaic,[13] but this is not sufficient evidence to speak of adoption or borrowing from Kurdish or Persian. Khan's comment is prudently nuanced on this point: 'It may be more than a coincidence, however, that *-i* is also the *ezafe* particle in the Kurdish dialects of the region (MacKenzie 1961: 61-64) and this may have had an influence on the Neo-Aramaic form.'[14]

In Part II the author describes the translation technique of the Barzani Targum, which follows the most traditional methodology, with a predominantly word for word rendering, and serves as a didactic tool for teaching Bible and Hebrew language in schools. Lexical elements such as the the relative particle *ʾašer* and the *nota objecti ʾet* are mechanically rendered with *ʾay* and *ʾellet*. Like in older Targums, the adverb 'now' is used to mark the presence of an imperative

[10] Th. Nöldeke, *Grammatik der neusyrischen Sprache am Urmia-See und in Kurdistan* (Leipzig: T.O. Weigel, 1868), p. 50; R. Duval, *Traité de grammaire syriaque* (Paris: F. Vieweg, 1881), pp. 29-30.

[11] The internal reference 'I.2.16' in n. 148 (83) should probably be corrected in 'I.1.6'.

[12] A. Mengozzi, 'Extended Prepositions in Neo-Aramaic, Kurdish and Italian', in Idem (ed.), *Studi afroasiatici. XI Incontro Italiano di Linguistica Camitosemitica*, Materiali linguistici 52 (Milano: FrancoAngeli), pp. 371-390 (380-382).

[13] See the 'determinative pronoun' in F.A. Pennacchietti, *Studi sui pronomi determinativi semitici*, Pubblicazioni del Seminario di Semitistica, Ricerche IV (Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1968), p. 11.

[14] G. Khan, *A Grammar of Neo-Aramaic. The dialect of the Jews of Arbel*, HdO I 47 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), p. 169.

or jussive in the Hebrew original text, *meʾeḥad* (Onqelos and Jonathan *laḥᵃdā*) to translate BH *mʾod*. Up-dating of cultural *realia* such as place names also occurs: Mosul for Aššur and Nineveh, Baghdad for Babylon, 'Persia, Cush and Put' in Ezekiel 38:5 are translated as 'Persia, Hindistan and Dagestan', keeping 'the geographical references focused on Kurdistan' (168, n. 259). Though with less frequency than in traditional Targums, anthropomorphism with reference to God tends to be avoided.

In part III the translation technique of the Barzani Targum is compared with other Jewish Bible translations,[15] including Urmi and Zakho NA, Judaeo-Arabic, Ladino, Onqelos. The Peshitta could have been profitably included in the comparative essay.[16] Septuagint scholarship is taken as a methodological guide in the study of the translation technique(s), but Rees also refers to Murre-van den Berg on Bible translation in Chr. literary Urmi Aramaic (197-198) and uses socio-linguistic terms such as diglossia and bilingualism in a critical and original way.

Rather than in describing the process of translation and the liturgical and pedagogical functioning of the Targum, Rees' study succeeds in pointing out the internal complexity and the multi-layer structure of its language, the result of the 'seemingly conflicting presence of three linguistic elements: 1) a (sometimes archaic) literary register of the language, 2) the vernacular or regional dialects and 3) Biblical Hebrew' (257). To what extent this may apply to earlier "classical" Targums is the open stimulating question that the author leaves to her readers: 'The study of msB [Barzani manuscript] and its history suggests the possibility that the language of TO/TJ [Targums Onqelos and Jonathan] is not representative of a single, standardized language (or even, of two distinct standardized languages). Rather it could be, more simply, that the language reflects the many layers (chronological and linguistic) of a gradually emended textual tradition that ultimately became indistinguishable because it was written down' (260).

The rich interdisciplinary bibliography (261-273) is followed by an essential glossary, divided into two sections: verbs (277-288) and general (289-306).

A description of the Chr. dialects of Haṣṣan by Alinda Damsma and of Telkepe by Eleanor Coghill are announced as forthcoming in the series, together with the much awaited reprint 12. Rudolf Macuch, *Geschichte*

[15] Rees raises the question of 'how the existence of Christian Neo-Aramaic may affect our understanding of Aramaic as a Jewish language' (185-186). In this connection many other varieties of Aramaic can be mentioned which are not Jewish, from Old Aramaic inscriptions to Classical Syriac, from Palmirene to Christian Palestinian Aramaic. The examples in Jewish languages quoted on pp. 191-192 should have been glossed and translated.

[16] On textual and linguistic variation in the Peshitta, see recently W. van Peursen, 'Language Variation, Language Development and the Textual History of the Peshitta', in H. Gzella and M.L. Folmer (eds), *Aramaic in its Historical and Linguistic Setting*, Akademie der Wissenschaften und der Literatur Mainz, Veröffentlichungen der Orientalischen Kommission 50 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008), pp. 231-256.

der spät- und neusyrischen Literatur, 9. Samuel E. Fox, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Bohtan* and 10. Geoffrey Khan, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Sanandaj*, 2011.

2. Brill

2.1. Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh*, Series: Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 36, 2002. ISBN: 978 90 04 12863 7, Number of pages: xxiv, 752 pp. List price: € 253.00 / US$ 377.00

Qaraqosh, Baghdeda in Aramaic, is a small town in the Mosul plain, about 20 km to the East of Mosul. Almost all its inhabitants are Christians, the majority belong to the Syrian Catholic, the remainder to the Syrian Orthodox Church. The dialect is spoken on the south-western border of the NENA group. The Christian communities thus speak a variety of *ā*-Aramaic, but congregate in churches in which the *ō*-reading tradition of Classical Syriac was reportedly introduced at the end of the 19th century.

The local dialect did not develop a literary form, although texts belonging to the folk and oral tradition (songs, popular dramas) are occasionally written down in Arabic script. Similarly, liturgical hymns composed in the prestigious Alqosh dialect are used in Qaraqosh, either learnt and preserved by heart or written down in Arabic script. Reading from what presumably is the Peshitta text, the ministering priests occasionally proclaim the Gospel in the vernacular. The resulting Targum, however, is not recorded in written form (8). This practice appears to be rather common among NA speaking Christians, even in the diaspora, and should be accurately described and investigated. Friends of the informants managed to record oral texts in Qaraqosh (a play by Ṭalāl Waḏīʿ, poems by Ṭalāl ʻAčam, a nursery rhyme, proverbs, and selections from the Gospel) and Geoffrey Khan transliterated and translated them (650-707) in addition to the customary corpus of spontaneous narratives of the informants on daily life, agriculture, professions, food, festivals, autobiographical stories, etc. (540-650).

Qaraqosh NA belongs to the dialect cluster of the Mosul region. Recent research on the dialects of Alqosh, Telkepe (by Eleonor Coghill, so far unpublished), Telesqof,[17] Zakho,[18] and Mangesh[19] have shown a great deal of

[17] J. Rubba, 'Forms derived from Verbal Roots in Tisqoopa Modern Aramaic', in R. Contini, F.A. Pennacchietti and M. Tosco (eds.), *Semitica: Serta philologica Constantino Tsereteli dicata* (Torino: Silvio Zamorani, 1993), pp. 273-287.

[18] R.D. Hoberman, 'Chaldean Aramaic of Zakho', in R. Contini, F.A. Pennacchietti and M. Tosco (eds.), *Semitica: Serta philologica Constantino Tsereteli dicata* (Torino: Silvio Zamorani, 1993), pp. 115-126.

[19] S. Sara, *A Description of Modern Chaldean*, Janua Linguarum, Series Practica 213 (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

diversity in this group which was described as a kind of unified regional tongue in pioneering publications by Ignazio Guidi, Edward Sachau and Jacques Rhétoré, who mainly focused on the Alqosh-based literary language (19).

Qaraqosh is characterised by a number of conservative features, some of which are attested in the early Alqosh poetic language. Post-vocalic interdentals (e.g., *ʾiḏa* 'hand') and the glottal stop ʾ deriving from Aramaic *ᶜ or *ġ < *g* are preserved (10). Distinct sets of plural suffix pronouns are attached to the masculine nouns that take the plural ending *-e*: *kṯawan* 'our book' vs. *kṯawenan* 'our books', *kṯawxun* 'your book' vs. *kṯawexun* 'your books' (11). A process of levelling led most NA dialects, including Neo-Mandaic, to lose this distinction. In early Alqosh poetry distinct forms are attested only for the 3rd person pl.: *mārhin* ~ *mārhon* 'their Lord' vs. *paġrayhin* ~ *paġrayhon* 'their bodies', with no apparent gender opposition between *-(ay)hon* and *-(ay)hin*. However, the pl. form *-ayhin* is also occasionally attached to singular nouns (e.g., *yeṣrayhin gumdana* 'their bold inclination'), as an indication of the incipient process of levelling. The emergence of this levelling process may be traced back to Aramaic varieties of the Sasanian period.[20]

Qaraqosh has imperatives and infinitives of the derived stems without the prefix *m-* (11-13, 86), that other dialects have extended from the subjunctive and past-tense bases (deriving form active and perfect participles) to all other moods, as a marker of 'derivedness'. In early Alqosh poetry forms without *m-* are rather common (e.g., *šabḥu l-šemmēh šāboḥe* 'praise His name!', with tautological infinitive and alliteration), but forms with *m-* are also attested (*mšabḥu l-fallaha* 'praise God!', *mğarobe* 'to put to trial') and they do not necessarily reflect later up-dating in the manuscript transmission. The precarious phonetic position of the prefixed *m-* might account for its loss. This at least is the explanation suggested by Rhétoré,[21] who observed the 'suppression' of *m-* in all moods, not only in the infinitive and imperative, of stem II as a phenomenon regular in the dialects of the [Hakkari] mountains[22] and occasionally occurring in the dialects of the [Mosul] plain. As far as the infinitives of derived stems are concerned, the broader context of Aramaic dialectology offers a variegated picture. Like Qaraqosh NA, Jewish Babylonian Aramaic has forms without *m-*, whereas forms

[20] M. Moriggi, 'Syriac Incantation Bowls and Linguistic Interference in Sasanian Babylonia', in A. Mengozzi (ed.), *Studi afroasiatici. XI Incontro Italiano di Linguistica Camitosemitica*, Materiali linguistici 52 (Milano: FrancoAngeli), pp. 313-323 (319).

[21] J. Rhétoré, *Grammaire de la langue Soureth ou chaldéen vulgaire, selon le dialecte de la plaine de Mossoulet des pays adjacents* (Mosul: Imprimerie des Pères Dominicains,1912) pp. 113-114.

[22] Sh. Talay, *Die neuaramäischen Dialekte der Khabur-Assyrer in Nordostsyrien* (below, 3.2), p. 221, specifies in which dialects stem II can be conjugated without the *m*-prefix.

without or with *m-*, as in early Alqosh NA, are attested in Aramaic varieties of the Achaemenid period and Mandaic.[23]

The dialect of Qaraqosh and the language of Alqosh and Telkepe religious poetry also share the allomorph *l-* of the preposition *ʾel-* < **ᶜal* 'upon, on, over', when it precedes a nominal: *dāx d-rāxši l-ʾarʾa yvišta* 'as if they were walking on dry earth', *ṭrop l-ṣadrāx* 'beat on your breast!' (Peshitta of Luke 18:13: *ṭāref (h)wā ᶜal ḥaḏyēh*), *merre maṯla l-xarozuṯeh* 'he told a parable on his preaching'. In both varieties, the suffixed form is *fel-* and may yield the extended form *ʾelled*, also used before nominals. The poetic language preserves the historical form *ʼal*. Thus *l-* < **ᶜal* comes to merge with the functionally over-loaded preposition *l-*, that can introduce direct and indirect objects (patient, dative, benefactive...) and the agent in the split ergative construction. Similarly the allomorph *m-* < *ᶜam* '(comitative) with' (suffixed allomorph *ʾem-* and extended form *ʾemmed*) merges with *m-* < *men* 'from, by' in literary Alqosh and Telkepe.[24]

Another late Aramaic feature preserved in Qaraqosh and in early religious poems[25] is the causative form with *o* < *aw* of I-y verbs (< **ʾafᶜel*; see Classical Syriac *awteb* 'to set, make dwell, appoint'). Compare, e.g., Qaraqosh *gmoqeḏ* 'he kindles' (< *yqḏ*) with the 17th-cent. form *kmawrxi* 'they prolong' (< *yrx*).

Khan correctly suggests that 'archaisms may have been preserved in the Qaraqosh dialect on account of its location on the periphery of the NENA area' (17) and – I would add – the confessional border that separated them from the innovative centres of the Mosul plain, more or less like Syrian Orthodox Turoyo speakers in the northwestern periphery of the ENA area. The archaic features that the Qaraqosh dialect shares with the early religious poetry of the Mosul plain significantly weakens the second factor mentioned by Khan as a possible explanation of the conservative character of the dialect, i.e. the language of a large number of Orthodox Syrians who emigrated from Takrit to Qaraqosh in the

[23] D. Boyarin, 'An Inquiry into the Formation of Middle Aramaic Dialects', in Y.L. Arbeitman and A.R. Bomhard (eds.), *Bono Homini Donum. Essays in Historical Linguistics in Memory of J. Alexander Kerns*, Current Issues in Linguistic Theory 16 (Amsterdam: Benjamins, 1981), pp. 613-649 (619-622); M.L. Folmer, *The Aramaic Language of the Achaemenid Period. A Study in Linguistic Variation*, Orientalia Lovanensia Analecta 68 (Leuven: Peeters, 1995), pp. 191-198. From Th. Nöldeke, *Mandäische Grammatik* (Halle: Waisenhaus, 1875) and R. Macuch, *Handbook of Classical and Modern Mandaic* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 1965), it is not clear whether the distribution of forms with *m-* is lexically determined in Mandaic, i.e. by root, or they are optional variants or allomorphs of the infinitives without *m-*.

[24] See also H. Mutzafi, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Betanure* (below, 3.1), pp. 123-124.

[25] A. Mengozzi, 'Verba primae infirmae neoaramaice', in R. Voigt (Hrsg.), *"From Beyond the Mediterranean". Akten des 7. internationalen Semitohamitistenkongresses (VII. ISHaK). Berlin 13. bis 15. September 2004*, Semitica et Semitohamitica Berolinensia 5 (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2007), pp. 377-390 (387-389). Like literary J. NENA varieties, J. Sulemaniyya has /o/ only in the verbal root ymy 'to swear': momé 'he swears', muméle 'he swore'; see G. Khan, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Sulemaniyya and Ḥalabja* (below, 2.2), p. 119.

eleventh and early twelfth centuries (2-3, 17). The Takritis certainly reinforced the confessional specificity of Qaraqosh (and Barṭella), but their language, whether it was a form of Aramaic or Arabic, probably had little influence on an Aramaic *Sprachtypus* which since the 17th century is also attested in more northern East-Syrian villages, unaffected by their migration.

2.2. Geoffrey Khan, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Sulemaniyya and Ḥalabja*, 2004, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 44, ISBN: 978 90 04 13869 8, Number of pages: xxii, 626 pp. List price: € 183.00 / US$ 273.00

The linguistic profile of the Jewish community of Sulemaniyya reflects the history of the town and of the migration and settlement in it of Jews from the surrounding region, as well as the geographical position of the town in southeastern Iraqi Kurdistan close to the Iranian border. Founded in 1784, Sulemaniyya served as the capital of the Kurdish principality of Baban and became one of the most important economic and cultural centers of the ruling Sorani-speaking Kurds. It soon attracted Jews, Christians and Turkmens, who in 1825 were reported to represent around 80% of the population. The Chr. NA dialect has not as yet been studied, but it would appear to be entirely different from the J. dialect. The Jews increased from 100-200 households in the 19th and early 20th centuries to 500 households in 1950-52, when they all emigrated to Israel.

Geoffrey Khan describes here the J. NA dialect as spoken by informants interviewed in Israel. The texts published in transcription and translated contain autobiographical stories, some of them dealing with relations with Muslims, and accounts of every-day life: clothes, food, houses, festivals... (462-577) They have been recorded by 4 speakers of Sulemaniyya and one of Halabja, a smaller town located some 65 km to the south east of Sulemaniyya, closer to the Iranian border, whose dialect is practically the same as that of the capital (3).

Like J. Urmia, J. Sulemaniyya belongs to the Trans-Zab group. Perfectly reflecting the geographical position of Sulemaniyya, a number of features of the verbal system bring the dialect close to that of Kerend and other J. NENA varieties of Iranian Kurdistan:[26] 1. use of nominative-derived endings in the preterit of intransitive verbs (*qīmna* 'I stood up' vs. *qimli* in most NENA dialects, with dative-derived endings); 2. as in J. Azerbaijan and Iranian dialects, but also in

[26] S. Hopkins, 'Neo-Aramaic Dialects and the Formation of the Preterite', *JSS* 34 (1989), pp. 413-432, and 'Preterite and Perfect in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic of Kerend', in W. Arnold and H. Bobzin (eds.), *„Sprich doch mit deinen Knechten aramäisch, wir verstehen es!": 60 Beiträge zur Semitistik. Festschrift für Otto Jastrow zum 60. Geburtstag* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2002), pp. 281-98. On p. 6, the reference to Hopkins (2000) should probably be corrected to Hopkins (2002).

conservative Chr. Qaraqosh, the enclitic copula has *y/i* throughout the paradigm (-*yena*, -*ye* 'I am, he is' vs. Iraqi Kurdistan -*wena*, -*ile*); 3 as in J. Kerend, the perfect is construed on two different bases: *qṭila* for intransitive and *qiṭla* for transitive verbs. In other features of the verbal system, however, J. Sulemaniyya resembles NENA varieties of Iraqi rather than Iranian Kurdistan: 1. the agreement in the transitive perfect is agent-oriented, whereas in J. Kerend it is patient-oriented; 2. like the neighboring J. varieties of Iraqi Kurdistan, Sulemaniyya developed a present progressive consisting of infinitive[27] + copula (5-8).

Since the Jews of Sulemaniyya also spoke Kurdish, their bilingualism resulted in the expected levels of convergence and borrowing. The figures of lexical items borrowed from Kurdish are only slightly lower than those of J. Urmi: 67% of nouns, 53% of particles, 15% of verbs. The J. NA dialect shares with the local Sorani Kurdish dialect phonological features such as stress patterns (generally placed at the end of a word, but with an intriguing list of common exceptions in both languages) and the occasional shift /l/ > /r/ in women's speech of both languages. J. Sulemaniyya borrowed the Iranian *ezafe* ending, especially as a genitive marker after loan- words (*maktáb-i šilmane* 'school of the Muslims'),[28] and, more pervasively, an enclitic definite article -*ăke*, probably from Kurdish dialects spoken to the north and north east of Sulemaniyya rather than from the dialect of the capital, where -*ăka* is used. Other shared phenomena listed by Khan (9-11: loss of gender and/or number distinctions in the pronominal system, enclitic copula, split ergative past tenses) are less specific to Sulemaniyya, since they form part of the general influence of Kurdish as a contact language.

As in the case of the definite article -*ăke*, other features might represent traces of past migrations of the Jews. The words *tata* 'father' and *lala* 'maternal uncle' do not occur in Sulemaniyya Kurdish, but in Iranian tongues spoken over the border in Iran (13). Being specific to child language, these terms should be

[27] In J. Sulemaniyya imperative (*pălix*) and infinitive (*paloxe*) of the I stem (deriving from former *pᶜal* and *paᶜᶜel*) are modelled according to the former *paᶜᶜel*. Only some weak and irregular verbs preserve the original *pᶜal* patterns *qtul* and *qtala* (80-82).

[28] The most common genitive construction in J. Sulemaniyya is formed by juxtaposing the nominal head in the former emphatic state and the modifier: *šimma brona* 'the name of the boy', *bela Šlomo* 'the house of Shlomo' (192). I presume this derives from late Aramaic analytic constructions by omission of the determinative *d*-, which is sporadically used in the dialect either as a proclitic (*mišxa d-zetùne* 'olive oil' < emphatic state + *d*-) or as enclitic particle (*bélid nòšew* 'his own house' < proleptic pronoun + *d*- ?). The attributive particle *d*- is also used after prepositions, especially when these are followed by a demonstrative (*min-d-ó gora* 'with that man', 192 and 211). Similarly, *d*- as a relative particle has been almost completely replaced by Kurdish *ga-*/*ka*- or by asyndeton, and fossilized in the indefinite relative pronouns *ʾot*, *manit* 'he who, anybody who, whoever', *mat* 'whatever' (414, 418-419). Further reduced compound-like constructions, such as *reš-yarxa* 'beginning of the month' or *be-Šalomó Laᶜazár* 'Sh. L.'s house/family' can be compared to those recorded in J. Betanure and felicitously labelled as 'neo-construct' derivations by H. Mutzafi, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Betanure* (below, 3.1), p. 92.

used sparingly for comparative purposes. The frequent labio-dental pronunciation [v] of the phoneme /w/ would also bring J. Sulemaniyya closer to Farsi and western Iran. The development of a progressive tense combining infinitive (or a gerund in other NA varieties) + copula has no parallel in Sulemaniyya Kurdish, whereas it is a rather common phenomenon in NENA. Khan observes that similar constructions are found in other languages spoken further north (14: Turkish, Eastern Armenian, Iranian dialects...), but they are too widely spread across languages to be necessarily contact-induced in NA.

2.3. Geoffrey Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Barwar*, 2008, Series: Handbook of Oriental Studies. Section 1 The Near and Middle East 96. ISBN: 978 90 04 16765 0. Number of pages: Vol.1: xxxviii, 1068 pp.; Vol. 2: viii, 1490 pp.; Vol. 3: x, 2175 pp. Number of volumes: 3. List price: € 495.00 / US$ 738.00

This is a monumental description of the Chr. NA dialect of Barwari Bala, such as any speaker would be pleased to have made for his own dialect. Barwari Bala or Upper Barwar is a relatively small district in the Iraqi province of Duhok, very close to the Turkish border. *Barwār* means 'slope (of a hill)' in Kurdish and the shortened form Barwar is commonly used by the Assyrian Christians to designate the Upper Barwar (1), which until the First World War comprised some 35 villages. In most of them there were Assyrians who returned in 1920 and stayed until the Iraqi campaign against the Kurds in the late 1970s and the 1980s. All the villages were then destroyed and all the churches were razed to the ground. The village of ʾEn Nune, the commercial and administrative hub of the district, was destroyed in 1988 (4-6).

Khan describes the dialect of ʾEn Nune and a number of villages along the river Be-Xelape, a western tributary of the Great Zab, on the basis of the fieldwork he conducted with elderly informants who emigrated from Barwar to the Iraqi towns during the Kurdish uprising in the 1960s and now live in Europe, North America and Australia (24). Chr. Urmi features, such as the omission of *m-* in stem-II verbs or the 3rd pl. ending *-lu(n)* instead of *-lɛ* / *-la*, occasionally occur in their speech, probably a heritage of the first half of the 20th century, when their families sought protection in Urmia or of their life in Iraqi towns, where they used a koine based on or influenced by Urmi literary Aramaic (17). Influence of the latter (standard Assyrian) may also have affected the Barwar speaking communities in the diaspora world-wide. Chr. Barwar is closely related to Tiyari Chr. dialects, spoken just over the Turkish border, whereas in the J. dialects spoken in and around the Barwar region and belonging to the *lishana deni* cluster, numerous differences from Chr. Barwar can be noted (14-16).

Several phonological and morphological features of Chr. Barwar are likely to have developed under Kurdish influence. The verbal system, in particular, seems to have been reshaped according to the Iranian model, as in all NENA varieties. In discussing the emergence of the ergative paradigm of the preterit (*nšiq l-*), Khan shares the opinion first formulated by Friedrich and Kutscher[29] that this type of construction must have entered the Aramaic verbal systems, from the Achaemenid period onwards, under Old-Persian influence (22). He observes, however, that in most NENA dialects the split ergative type of inflection has been extended from the past tense of transitive verbs, where it originated, to the past tense of the intransitive verbs, whereas 'this has not happened in Kurdish or any other Iranian language in the NENA area' (21). In this connection, Khan points out that intransitive verbs with *l-* already occur in Classical Syriac (*qīm lēh*), where they are 'presumably the result of interference from the vernacular' (22). In these cases, however, the use of *l-* to introduce the subject of intransitive verbs, on the analogy of the agent of transitive verbs, may have been favored by another traditional function of the preposition in Aramaic, i.e., the so-called coreferential dative, that explicitly marks the middle semantic value of a verbal form.[30]

The book is divided into three volumes. Volume 1 (Grammar) contains the general introduction (1-28)[31] and the various sections on phonology (27-138). morphology (139-446) and syntax, which occupies more than half of the volume (447-1027).

The 3rd pl. suffix pronoun, as it figures in various paradigms (142, 147, 153, 164), seems to have five allomorphs: *-ay*, *-εy*, *-ey*, *-ε*, *-a*. However, as far as I can see, these may be considered allophonic realizations of the same phoneme /ay/. The distribution of the various allophones is quite difficult to describe because /ε/ ([æ]) tends to be lowered to [*a*] in certain positions (78). Orthographic variants of the same morpheme in the manuscript tradition of the Mosul plain may reflect a similar allophonic spread, including *-a* in a few instances.[32]

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[29] J. Friedrich, 'Zur passivischen Ausdrucksweise im Aramäischen', *AfO* 18 (1957), pp.124-125; E.Y. Kutscher, Review of G.R. Driver (ed.): *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century BC* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1954), *JBL* 76 (1957), pp. 336-338.

[30] A. Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language*, CSCO 590 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), p. 44. On the coreferential dative as a middle voice marker in Classical Syriac, see M. Farina, *An Outline of Middle Voice in Syriac. Evidences of a Linguistic Category*, Perspectives on Syriac Linguistics (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, forthcoming).

[31] The book is well printed and carefully edited despite occasional mistakes or misprints, normal in such a voluminous work. E.g., in the introduction: Bawari for Barwari on the first page, 'rather coming' > 'rather than coming' (22), 'lexical knowledge the dialect' > 'lexical knowledge of the dialect' (26).

[32] A. Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language*, CSCO 590 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002), p. 29.

The treatment of the semantic and syntactic properties of the derived stems (255-280) is very interesting, especially with regard to the correlation form-meaning in quadrilateral roots: patterns $C_1C_2C_1C_2$, for instance, tend to refer to some kind of noise (e.g., *mhalhole* 'to ululate, celebrate', *mkafkofe* 'to hiss') whereas C_1wC_2y patterns are used specifically for animal noises (*mbawboye* 'to howl (wolf)', *menawnoye* 'to meow (cat)', *mqawqoye* 'to bark (fox), etc.).

Volume 2 (Lexicon) contains historical remarks (1029-1040) paying special attention to the semantic shifts that have occurred in comparison with earlier forms of Aramaic (e.g., *ʾarxe* 'water-mill' in Barwar corresponds to Syriac *raḥyā* 'mill' of any kind) and the loans from other NENA dialects, Kurdish and Arabic. Following Krotkoff,[33] Khan observes that NENA dialects are sometimes rather conservative. Especially technical terms referring to agriculture can be traced back to their pre-Aramaic Mesopotamian origins: e.g., *səkθa* 'ploughshare' (Akkadian *sikkatu*), *mara* 'spade' (Sumerian *mar*). In Chr. Barwar, *məššara* 'paddy field basin' appears to be cognate with Akkadian *mūšaru* 'flower, vegetable bed, garden plot' (1035).

Lexical items are then arranged according to various semantic fields: the human body, containers, agriculture, clothes, food, colours, and many others, including names of animals (1041-1098). Verb (1103-1212) and general (1213-1458) glossaries follow. The last section of the second volume (1459-1490) contains very good illustrations of instruments, containers, tools, and structures such as paddy fields, a cradle, frames for carrying various material on pack animals, a still to distill araq, etc. Accurate legends give the NA terms for all items and their components. The material culture of Barwar Assyrians and the associate vocabulary could not have been described more vividly.

Volume 3 contains texts arranged in four sections: A. stories, folktales, fables and the Qaṭina legend (1493-1879), B. texts on history and culture (1880-2109), C. *lɛliyana* or wedding songs, *rawe*, dirges, lullabies, churn songs, dance and other songs (2110-2157), D. riddles and proverbs (2158-2175). A number of poetic genres represented in this wonderful collection deserve specific, separate studies. The legend of the hero Qaṭina, a kind of popular epic particularly appreciated among Tiyari and Tkhuma Assyrians, could be studied more systematically, including the poetic versi on by William Daniel (Urmi 1903 - San Jose, CA 1988), in three volumes, part of them recorded in the author's own voice.[34] Khan transcribes and translates three episodes of this legend, told by two story-tellers in a mixed form of prose and sung verses. It is interesting to see how

[33] G. Krotkoff, 'Studies in Neo-Aramaic Lexicology', in A. Kort and S. Morschauser (eds.), *Biblical and Related Studies Presented to Samuel Iwry* (Winona Lake, Ind.: Eisenbrauns, 1985), pp. 123-134 (124-126).

[34] W. Warda and E. Odisho, 'Qateeni Gabbara: A William Daniel's Legacy', *JAAS* 14.1 (2000), pp. 6-22; see also the paper 'Gilgamesh's plant of rejuvenation and Qatine's Sisisambar', read by Nineb Lamassu at the *Melammu Symposium 6* (2008).

the same repertoire of topics (the family tradition of striking the adversary with a single blow and asking him/her to dance before the duel) is used to compose quite different stories, as is typical in oral traditions.

Various collections of *rawe* songs have appeared since Socin's pioneering publication, Pennacchietti being the first scholar who observed and described their actual *Sitz im Leben*.[35] The rev. Emanuel Youkhana collected and published in *Zmiratha d-rawe* (Södertälje-Chicago, 1998) the less embarrassing verses and arranged them in alphabetical order. Daniel D. Benjamin published 215 verses with ample commentary in *Zmiratha d-rawatha* (Chicago, 1998) and a collection of *lɛliyana* in *Men yartutan 'ammayta: zmiratha d-lilyana* (Arizona 2009). In the same year a collection of *rawe* was published in Iraq: O.M.G. Ashitha and S.Y. Qasrayta, *Bahare d-qinatha. Rawe* (Baghdad: Al-Maghreb, 1998). Furthermore, texts of the *lɛliyana*, *rawe* and other genres are recorded in the manuscripts of the London Sachau collection[36] and await publication. This kind of oral literature, in general, should be studied more systematically from the dialectological and literary points of view.[37]

2.4. Steven E. Fassberg, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Challa*, Studies in Semitic Languages and Linguistics 54, Leiden: Brill, 2009, 318 pages, ISBN: 978 90 04 17682 9, € 148,99 / US$ 176,00

The village of Challa is located in southeastern Turkey, very close to the Iraqi border. There is documented evidence of a Jewish presence in Challa since the 16th century and the *Kurdish Jewish Encyclopaedia* records a population of 30 Jews in 1933 (4). Muslim Kurds, too, and Assyrians from Lower Tiyari lived in and around Challa.

The book is organized according to the customary scheme: phonology (11-34), morphology and morphosyntax (35-164), texts and translation (165-247: stories of life in Kurdistan, told in a syncopated yet not artificial narrative style), verbal and general glossary (249-306), bibliography (307-314). Fassberg, who is well-known as a Hebrew and Targum scholar, describes the J. NA dialect of Challa in a complete, clear and synthetic way. The description is based on 'more

[35] A. Socin, *Die neu-aramäischen Dialekte von Urmia bis Mosul* (Tübingen: Laupp, 1882); F.A. Pennacchietti, 'Zmiryata-d rawe: "stornelli" degli Aramei kurdistani', in *Scritti in onore di Giuliano Bonfante* (Brescia: Paideia, 1976), pp. 639-663, translated and transcribed in *Journal of the Assyrian Academic Society* 1 (1985-1986), pp. 39-44 (English), 35-41 (NA).

[36] A. Mengozzi, 'The Neo-Aramaic Manuscripts of the British Library: Notes on the Study of the Durıkyāṯā as a Neo-Syriac Genre', *Le Muséon* 112.3-4 (1999), pp. 459-494.

[37] Nineb Lamassu read a paper entitled 'What can the songs of the Assyrian mountaineers tell us about their composers?' at the first International ARAM Conference on Neo-Aramaic dialects (Oxford, 6-8 July 2009) and published 'The female voice in rāwe: The strive for gender equality', *JAAS* 23.2 (2009), pp. 38-50.

than twenty hours of recordings made between 2001 and 2006 at the home of the one remaining competent native Jewish speaker from Challa, Shabbo Amrani' who, like all Jews from Challa, emigrated to Israel in 1951 (5).

The approach is prevalently synchronic, but the author enriches his description with a solid apparatus of comparative remarks, with punctual bibliographical references to studies on other NA dialects,[38] Classical Aramaic varieties, Kurdish, Arabic, etc. The dialect belongs to the *lishana deni* cluster, together with J. Amidya, Aradhin, Betanure (see, below, 3.1), Gzira, Dohok, Nerwa, Zakho, etc. Unlike most dialects of the same cluster, J. Challa does not have the *qam-* prefixed allomorph of the preterit with pronominal objects; it uses instead incorporated pronominal objects for all persons (8 and 124).

The Aramaic abstract ending may serve in J. Challa to designate a region and its inhabitants: *hekkaratūsa* 'residents/region of Hakkari', *karatūsa* 'residents/region of Kara', *pənčatūsa* 'residents/region of Pinianish', functioning as a gentilic plural (see also *qurdawūsa* 'Kurds'; 83). These forms are paralleled by abstract/plural forms such as *yuḏayuṯa*, *huḏayuṯa* 'the Jews' or *ǧwanquṯa* 'the young' in the 17th-century poems by Joseph of Telkepe.[39] Fassberg (83, n. 79) mentions traces of this use in Qaraqosh:[40] *xalyuṯa* 'syrup of cooked dates', *xwaruṯa* 'dairy products', and *yaltuṯa* 'group of youths' and, on the development from abstract through collective to plural, he quotes R. Hasselbach, 'External Plural Markers in Semitic: A New Assessment', in C.L. Miller (ed.), *Studies in Semitic and Afroasiatic Linguistics Presented to Gene B. Gragg*, Studies in Ancient Oriental Civilization 60 (Chicago: Oriental Institute, 2007), pp. 123-138 (130-131); Jared R. Greenblatt, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Amədia* has just appeared (2011) as no. 61 of the Brill series Studies in Semitic Lanquages and Linquistic.

3. Semitica Viva (Harrassowitz)

The contribution of the series Semitica Viva to NA dialectology is immense and does not need to be repeated here.[41] The monograph on the J. dialect of Betanure, the two volumes on the dialects of Khabur Assyrians, and the grammar of the Neo-Mandaic dialect of Khorramanshahr are yet other major achievements.

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[38] Bibliography on Neo-Aramaic is rich and generally up-dated. On the inventory of derived stems (94), besides A.J. Maclean, *Grammar of the Dialects of Vernacular Syriac* (Cambridge U. Press, 1895), pp. 90-105, one could quote O. Kapeliuk, 'From H. J. Polotsky's *Nachlass* on the verb in Urmi' in A. Mengozzi (ed.), *Studi afroasiatici. XI Incontro Italiano di Linguistica Camitosemitica*, Materiali linguistici 52 (Milano: FrancoAngeli), pp. 349-358.

[39] See. e.g., *On Parables* st. 163-165 in A. Mengozzi, *A Story in a Truthful Language*, CSCO 589-590 (Leuven: Peeters, 2002).

[40] G. Khan, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Qaraqosh* (above, 2.1), pp. 180-181.

[41] On Semitica Viva 24, 26, 28 and 32 (2000-2004), see my 'Studi neoaramaici tra ricerca sul campo e filologia', *Henoch* 26.3 (2004), pp. 338-364.

3.1. Hezy Mutzafi, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Betanure (Province of Dihok)*, Semitica Viva 43, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008. ISBN: 978-3-447-05710-3, 432 Seiten, 78,00 Euro

The village of Betanure, now in ruins, is located in a small valley of the Upper Barwari, in the province of Dihok in the Kurdish autonomous region of northern Iraq. Various 19th-century sources and informants report a population from about thirty to over a hundred Jewish families. They suffered raids from Kurdish and Tiyare-Christian tribes-men and the village was completely abandoned during World War I. In 1951 they sought refuge in Israel. The Jews of Betanure were skilled weavers, much appreciated in a region inhabited by Kurdish pastoralists and Christian peasants. The village hosted a famous synagogue and the shrine of the Prophet Elijah, a sacred place revered by Jews, Christians and Muslims alike (1-8).

Mutzafi (8-9) specifies that he focuses on the spoken register of the J. NA of Betanure, using data collected from five informants and abundant texts furnished by two of them, who 'spoke the dialect vigorously at home' (12). As is the case with other J. NA dialects, a literary register was also used for oral translations of the Bible and other liturgical purposes. It was transmitted orally from the rabbi to the boys of the community and, as far as the informants remember, it was never put in written form. It is characterized by archaic forms (*ʾahu*, *ʾahi* 'he, she' vs. colloquial *ʾāwa*, *ʾāya*) and lexicon (*məskenuṯa* 'poverty' vs. colloquial *faqiruṯa*).[42] A special sub-register of the spoken language was used as a cryptic jargon to prevent Muslims and, even more so, Christian neighbours from understanding. A whole text is devoted to this phenomenon (220-223), which is rather common in Jewish languages the world over, and is just one of a series of texts focusing on or playing with languages and meta-language: see, e.g., *A slight dialectal difference* and *The Assyrians* [*surāye*] *who kept saying 'if'* (278-281).

Betanure NA belongs to the cluster of dialects spoken by Jews in northwestern Iraqi Kurdistan and adjoining Turkish territories. Mutzafi labels it *Lishana Deni* 'Our language', according to the current self-designation of the dialect, and indicates two innovations that characterize the dialect group: the allomorphs *did-* ~ *d-* for the singular and plural forms respectively of the independent possessive pronoun (*didi* 'mine' vs. *dohun* 'theirs' and the imperative pl. ending *-wun* of final-weak verbs (compare J. Betanure *mqalwun* 'clean!' with Alqosh *mṣalhāw* 'pray!'). It displays a number of archaic features such as the 2nd person sg. pronouns with *h*: *ʾāhət* (masc.) and *ʾāhat* (fem.).

[42] See M. Rees, *Lishan Didan, Targum Didan* (above, 1.3) for written records of analogous oral Targums in other J. NA varieties.

Though confined to phonology and morphology, as is customary in the series, the grammatical description is complete and includes information on syntax and lexicon as well. Mutzafi's style, concise and to the point, concentrates in 129 pages all relevant data, arranged in clear tables and paradigms, and a careful analysis thereof. As is stated in the methodological introduction and illustrated in the very rich bibliography (12-14, 403-412), the dialect is presented using comparative material from all known NA varieties, Aramaic, Akkadian, Arabic, Azeri, Kurdish, Persian and Turkish.

The texts (131-323) cover a wide range of topics, from every-day life to Jewish festivals, from Biblical and para-Biblical stories (Adam and Eve, Abraham, King Salomon and Asmodeus), from folktales[43] to short amusing stories. It is remarkable how many Christians, and, to a lesser extent, Muslims, appear in these stories and, of course, they are usually depicted as a bit less clever than Jews. We learn too about monsters such as the head-eater Sarkərinke, the cyclopean giant Ḥambashaya, always hungry and eventually killed by a Christian, and Lilith the mother of demons.

The glossary (325-401) provides etymological and comparative material for each entry: Classical Syriac words and roots are written in East-Syriac script, Hebrew and Jewish Aramaic in Hebrew characters, Arabic in Arabic, which ensures a rapid retrieval of etymological information. In the 2008 issue of the *Neo-Aramaic Newsletter*, Mutzafi announced that he is currently working on a comprehensive etymological dictionary of the inherited Aramaic lexicon in the J. NA dialects, based on fieldwork data and on the manuscript tradition, thus complementing Sabar's dictionary published in Semitica Viva 28. J. NA lexicography could not be in better hands and we are anxious to see the results of this really daunting enterprise.

3.2. Shabo Talay, *Die neuaramäischen Dialekte der Khabur-Assyrer in Nordostsyrien. Einführung, Phonologie und Morphologie*, Semitica Viva 40, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2008. ISBN: 978-3-447-05702-8, 512 Seiten, 98,00 Euro

Khabur Assyrians are descendants of the East-Syrian Christians who before World War I inhabited the southeastern Turkish territory encompassed between the Iranian border to the east, the Tigris to the west, Lake Van to the north and the Iraq border to the south. They lived there organized in independent tribes (*aširatte*), ruled by a *mallək* and confederated with Kurdish tribes, or in tribes subjected (*raye*) to Kurdish or Assyrians of other tribes. They all belonged to the

[43] E.g., the ever-green, Juha-like narratives of the man who did not count the donkey he was riding, the moon in the well (288-295), the neighbour's golden cauldron that gave birth to a smaller copper cauldron and died (309).

Church of the East, whose Patriarchs had resided among them in the Hakkari region since the 17th century and since 1691, more specifically, in Qočanəṣ (11-12). The tribal organization and confederation, relatively independent of central Ottoman rule, for centuries ensured peaceful relations between the ethnic groups.

Things began to worsen with the first massacre of Christians perpetrated by Kurds in 1843. Peace and balanced relations collapsed totally during World War I, when Assyrians were persecuted by Turks and Kurds and involved in the war as allies of the Russians and British. After strenuous resistance, they had to abandon their original homeland and migrated first to Urmia and then, when Russian protection was withdrawn after the October Revolution (1917) and Urmia fell under Turkish control (1918), fled back to Iraq, some of them serving in the British army.[44] They were concentrated in the refugee camps of Ba,quba near Baghdad and Mandan to the north east of Mosul. Arabic and Kurdish nationalism made Iraq an inhospitable land for Christian minorities and tension culminated in the massacres of 1933. Continuous streams of migration started to flow from Iraq to France, UK, USA and Canada (16-18).

Between 1934 and 1937, under the French Mandate, around 10.000 Assyrians were given permission to settle in 34 villages along the Khabur river in north east Syria, where they managed to create a prosperous agricultural system through intensive use of the river and reached a reasonable level of economic and social wealth. Settlement in the various villages reflected and still reflects the original tribal and clanic structure of their society. Some 20.000 Assyrians are now living in Syria, 15.000 of them in the villages along the Khabur (18-19). They have good relationships with Syrian Christians of other denominations, such as the Chaldeans, Syrian Catholics, the Evangelical Church and especially the Syrian Orthodox Church. Unlike the latter, they do not have educational institutions such as private schools or organized Sunday schools. However, free summer courses of Classical Syriac organized by lay-men are well attended by children and young people (33).

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[44] The bibliography on the "forgotten Holocaust" and the ethnic cleansing in the Hakkari region has recently been enriched by important contributions, clearly not keeping within the main focus of Talay's comparative grammar, but nevertheless worth mentioning, some of them, at least: S. de Courtois, *Le génocide oublié. Chrétiens d'Orient, les derniers araméens* (Paris: Ellipses, 2002; Engl.: *The Forgotten Genocide: Eastern Christians, The Last Arameans*, Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2004) ; J. Rhétoré, *« Les Chrétiens aux bêtes ». Souvenirs de la guerre sainte proclamée par les Turcs contre les chrétiens en 1915*, préf. par J.P. Péroncel-Hugoz, étude et presentation par J. Alichoran (Paris: Éditions du Cerf, 2005); F. Hellot, 'Les Assyro-Chaldéens de Perse et du Hakkari : des migrations à l'exil (1835-1935)', *Études kurdes* 7 (2005), 81-95 ; D. Gaunt, *Massacres, Resistance, Protectors: Muslim-Christian Relations in Eastern Anatolia during World War I* (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias Press, 2006) and the fascinating C. Weibel Yacoub, *Surma l'Assyro-chaldéenne (1883- 1975) : Dans la tourmente de Mésopotamie* (Paris : L'Harmmatan, 2007).

Talay surveys the denominations of the ethnic group and their language, as these are used by scholars and Assyrians themselves (5-10), as well as the tribes and villages they originally came from (19-30). Table 1 (31) gives an overview of the figures of the tribes in the various Khabur villages in 1940, 1973, 1981 and 1998. The last data were collected by Talay himself during his fieldwork in the region, which began in the summer of 1997, with a long, thorough questionnaire, and proceeded over the years 1999-2004. Interviews were conducted with native speakers of the dialects who had emigrated to Germany, USA (Chicago and Detroit), Sweden and Turkey. More than 100 hours of recordings were produced during fieldwork in Syria and abroad (3).

The dialects of Khabur-Assyrians may be sub-grouped into five clusters on linguistic and geographic grounds (47-53): A. Tiyari (Tall Tammər, Bnerumta, Walṭo and, with some specific features, Sarspido and Čāl), B. Txuma (Txuma Gawaya,[45] Mazra, Gundək, Gəssa, Berəğnaye and, with some specific features, Arbuš and Ṭāl), C. Hakkari (Barwar, Gawar, Qočanəṣ, Dīz, Bāz and Ğilu,[46] Sara, Timur), D. Šamməsdin (Nočiya, Iyyəl, Mabišo), and the dialects of Halmun and Lewən, which do not belong to the other clusters and, being spoken by neighbouring communities in the Khabur settlements, have influenced each other.

Notwithstanding the huge amount of data presented and the descriptive approach which is of necessity comparative and by choice broad, including references to a very rich bibliography (457-479), this volume appears to be much easier to handle and consult than the bulky volumes published by Brill. The format of Semitica Viva does not allow the subtlest details of syntax to be profusely exemplified and commented upon, but it is certainly more apt to describe phonology (55-174) and morphosyntax (175-455) and store retrievable information efficiently. In this connection, Talay's volume recalls one of Fattah's *Les dialects kurdes méridionaux*, Acta iranica 37 (Louvain: Peeters, 2000) or the wider in scope *Kurdish Dialect Studies* by Mackenzie (2 vols, Oxford 1961-62), which we are still using with gratitude and admiration.

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[45] H. Jacobi, *Grammatik des thumischen Neuaramäische (Nordostsyrien)*, Abhandlungen für die Kunde des Morgenlandes 40.3 (Wiesbaden: Kommissionsverlag Franz Steiner, 1973) mainly focuses on this dialect, but contains data from other dialects too (3, n.1).

[46] H. Mutzafi, 'The Neo-Aramaic dialect of Maha Khtaya d-Baz: Phonology, Morphology and Texts', *JSS* 45.2 (2000), pp. 293-322 and S.E. Fox, *The Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Jilu*, Semitica Viva 16 (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1997) describe other varieties of these dialects, with data collected from Iraqi informants who emigrated to Australia and the United States, respectively, and not to Syria (3, n. 1).

3.3. Shabo Talay, *Neuaramäische Texte in den Dialekten der Khabur-Assyrer in Nordostsyrien*, Semitica Viva 41, Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 2009. ISBN: 978-3.447-05701-1, 728 Seiten, 148,00 Euro

In this volume Shabo Talay publishes in transliteration and German translation a rich selection of the textual material he used in preparing the phonological and grammatical description of the dialects of Khabur Assyrians. 95 texts are arranged according to the 23 dialectal varieties which they represent. Audio-files of the texts are included and can be listened to in the *Semitische Spracharchiv des Lehrstuhls für Semitistik* of Heidelberg Univeristy (www. semarch.uni-hd.de). A comprehensive glossary of these texts and all the material collected in Talay's fieldwork in the Khabur region is in preparation (XIV).

An index of themes (677-680) groups texts according to their contents: 1. hagiographical and legendary texts; 2. stories on life in the villages; 3. biblical stories; 4. history of the Assyrians; 5. life and society; 6. short stories. Pages 681-687 give short biographical notes on informants and story-tellers. The literary quality of texts and narratives vary from plain and troublesome accounts to quite elaborate oral performances. The latter demonstrate the high cultural value of this collection, well beyond its possible uses as a source of linguistic and historical evidence. I shall give just a couple of examples.

Biblical and para-biblical accounts seem to trigger a shift from prose narrative to verse, as in the epic accounts and the erotic stanzas in Barwar (see, above, 2.3). This happens, for instance, in the story of Adam and Eve told by Mariam Nisan, one of the few female informants, and in the story of the Blessed Virgin Mary told by Awiqam Šakro. Mariam Nisan, in her retelling of the biblical story, slips into rhythm and stages a kind of minimalist *soghitha*, in which Adam, Eve and Satan sing in stanzas of three octosyllabic lines (210). Each stanza is introduced by a short narrative line. The story of Adam and Eve is the topic of another NA poem, a *dorektha* attributed to David of Barezan and published by the Dominicans of Mosul.[47] Awiqam Šakro shifts appropriately from prose to verse at the most dramatic point in the story of Mary and Joseph, when Joseph asks her about the pregnancy that had been announced to him in a dream. In defence of her honour as a virgin, the maiden answers in three rhyming stanzas, each composed of three lines of various lengths and introduced by the vocative-precative formula 'Oh Joseph, I swear to you...' (466).

Moreover, details such as the names of Mary's parents, Tzadok and Dinah (462), place Šakro's narrative in an old apocryphal tradition that links *The History of the Blessed Virgin Mary*, published by Budge in 1899, to an unpublished *dorektha On the Blessed Virgin Mary* by Haydeni of Gessa (1722/23

[47] *Recueil de chants religieux en langue chaldéenne vulgaire* (Mosul: Imprimerie des Pères Dominicains, 1896), pp. 325-342 (reprint Baghdad, 1990, pp. 344-251).

AD), probably passing through *The Book of the Bee*, also published by Budge in 1886.[48] Oral traditions are sometimes more faithful than academic bibliographies in preserving old material and pieces of information.

Two texts may be labelled as short novels. *Priest Ṣliwo's journey to Paradise* (538-561) tells the story of a priest who leaves his wife and reaches Heaven's seven doors riding on his she-donkey. He knocks at the first six doors and at each of them he tries to convince a character of the Old Testament (Adam, David, Daniel, Moses, Jonah, Jacob) that he deserves to enter Paradise, being a good priest and having fasted and prayed all his life. Showing an excellent knowledge of the Scriptures, he argues that they too had faults and committed sins. Nevertheless they do not let him in. Then he comes to the seventh door, where Christ himself orders him to go back to his place, be good and put into practice the teachings of the Bible, prophets and saints. Priest Sliwo and his she-donkey are said to be still flying around in space, since they have not yet succeeded in landing back home. In 2006 the same story was filmed in Turoyo by Georg Farag and shown in many theatres in Europe with the title *Ḥolo Malke bi Malkuṯo* 'Uncle Malke in Paradise' (539, n. 1).

Ruwwel Dənxa, a much appreciated blind story-teller, tells a fanciful story in which the main characters are a king, his brother Lazarus, a priest and his pious daughter Mary (564-615). It is a pleasant short novel, full with miracles and *coups de théâtre*, ambitious enough to touch upon such sensitive issues as the relationship between religious and secular powers.

3.4. Charles G. Häberl, *The Neo-Mandaic Dialect of Khorramshahr*, Semitica Viva 45. ISBN: 978-3-447-05874-2, xxxiv + 378 pages, 78,00 Euro

Mandaic is a 'much neglected Eastern Aramaic dialect'[49] and, one could add, research on Neo-Mandaic, in particular, seemingly came to a standstill with Drower's and Macuch's text collections and studies. This new grammar devoted to a modern variety of Mandaic is therefore doubly encouraging. It contains data collected by Charles G. Häberl in his fieldwork with one native speaker, now living in Flushing, New York, of the dialect of Khorramshahr, formerly called Muḥamarra, a river port city in the Iranian province of Khuzestān.

The introduction (1-44) is a mine of information, with detailed discussions on the names of the language, religion, social and kinship systems, demography, genetic affiliation of the language, previous research and the sociolinguistic situation. Among other things, we learn that Neo-Mandaic shares with a number

[48] A. Mengozzi, *Religious Poetry in Vernacular Syriac from Northern Iraq (17th-20th Centuries). An Anthology*, CSCO 628 (Leuven: Peeters, 2010), p.p x-xi.

[49] M. Morgenstern, 'The Present State of Mandaic Lexicography I: The Mandaic Dictionary', *AS* 7.2 (2009), pp. 113-130.

of Arabic (as also Italian, and possibly many other) dialects the use of bipolar kinship terms: elders will often address their juniors by their own kinship term, thus referring to a grandson as 'my grandfather' (7). Demographic figures from various sources are given. *Ethnologue* quotes Mutzafi who speaks of 23.000 Mandaeans in Iraq, none of them speaking Neo-Mandaic natively, and 5.000 Mandaeans in Iran, among whom only 800-1000 speak the language, a figure which has dropped to 500 by the last edition (8-11).[50] The survey on previous research is perhaps the most interesting part of the introduction (13-29), from the 17th-century Italian Carmelites,[51] to Lidzbarski, from Nöldeke to Drower and Macuch.

The 207 items of the Swadesh list, arranged in Table 5 according to the alphabetic order of the English translation, close the introductory chapter (39-44). In Table 5, tentative etymologies could have been added to the three different transcriptions given ('Neo-Mandaic', IPA and phonological? 'Transcription'), to confirm the figures of p. 35 (only 15% of the basic vocabulary derives from Arabic or Persian) and Häberl's conclusion: 'The loan words are not as pervasive as Drower and Macuch believed' (34).

Chapter 2 (45-108), on phonology, is extremely accurate and includes phonetics, syllabic structure, suprasegmental features, segmental and suprasegmental morphophonology and pecularities of the allegro speech. The author defines and exemplifies the various phenomena: assimilation, dissimilation, insertion, excrescence, anaptyxis, oral depletion, apocope, aphaeresis, syncope, paragoge, etc. Typical examples placed in brackets after the titles of the various paragraphs might have clarified the meaning of the technical terms – e.g '2.5.3.1 Excrescence (*əm-* + *r-* > *əmbr*)' or '2.5.4.2 Oral Depletion ($\theta > h$)' –, thus making text and table of contents a little more reader-friendly.

The section on morphosyntax is divided into three chapters: 3. The noun (109-154), 4. Pronouns (155-173) and 5. The verb (174-255). Examples are all glossed following a 'slightly modified version of the Leipzig Rules' (xxx, where Ch. Lehmann, 'Directions for Interlinear Morphemic Translations', *Folia Linguistica* 16 (1982), pp. 199-224, is quoted). Glossing according to a generally accepted system is a very good practice, which should be imitated in all publications on NA linguistics.

A number of features in Neo-Mandaic nominal morphology are innovative in the context of Aramaic dialectology and show the impact of Iranian influence. It is instructive to compare a few of them with analogous phenomena in NENA varieties.

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[50] www.ethonologue.com.

[51] R. Borghero, 'A 17th Century Glossary of Mandaic', *ARAM* 11-12 (1999-2000), pp. 311-319.

Probably in order to differentiate their functions in the modern tongue from the inherited states of the noun, Häberl distinguishes among 'contextual' (< construct state) and 'lexical' (< emphatic state) forms of the noun. The construct state appears to be still vital as a morpho-syntactic device to express the genitive (*riš yum šeršan* 'the start of our religion'),[52] in contrast with its marginal or null use in NENA varieties, and takes over another function of the Persian *ezafe*, i.e., to introduce an attribute (*sidder raft əl-Mandayān* 'the great book of the Mandaeans'; 132-133). The tendency of the genitive modifier to cohalesce with the attributive adjective as far as morphological marking is concerned shows the deep functional affinity between the two syntactic categories (Tesniere's A, together with the relative clause) and is not uncommon as a possibly, though not necessarily, contact-induced phenomenon in Neo-Semitic languages that have the determinative pronoun.[53] In Neo-Mandaic, the Persian *ezafe* is borrowed not only as a syntactic category, but also as a morpheme, rarely in the dialect of Khorramshahr (*kol dukkān-e Amrikān* 'all the American stores'), but seemingly in a more pervasive way in the Ahvāz texts collected and studied by Macuch (133-134). As we have seen, in the J. NA dialect of Sulemaniyya (2.2, above) the Iranian *ezafe* is also attested as a genitive marker in constructions that may be described as cases of lexico-morphological code-switching.[54]

Borrowing from Persian is not limited to the *ezafe* suffix. Neo-Mandaic also borrows the plural endings *-ān* and *-hā́* ~ *-ā́*, the indefinite morphemes[55]

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[52] Although genitive is not a fully satisfactory term, since it refers to a case system which in fact does not exist in Neo-Aramaic, I would avoid the term 'possession' to describe the genitive relationship (151). Among the five ways of expressing the genitive listed by Häberl (construct chain, dative prepositions, determinative –not relative! – pronoun *d-*, and the Iraqi Arabic-derived *māl-*), only the last one is a true marker of possession, being confined by its semantic nature to alienable possession (151).

[53] In the J. NA of Arbel (G. Khan, *A Grammar of Neo-Aramaic. The dialect of the Jews of Arbel*, HdO I 47, Leiden: Brill, 1999), the annexation form (noun + determinative *-it*) is functionally equivalent to the Kurdish *ezafe* as a way of introducing a genitive modifier, an attribute or a relative clause. Amharic *yä-* has more or less the same functional range: see F.A. Pennacchietti, *Studi sui pronomi determinativi semitici*, Pubblicazioni del Seminario di Semitistica, Ricerche IV (Istituto Orientale di Napoli, 1968), pp. 49-50 and G. Goldenberg, 'Nominalization in Amharic and Harari: Adjectivization', in S. Segert and A.J.E. Bodrogligeti (eds.), *Ethiopian Studies Dedicated to Wolf Leslau on the Occasion of his Seventy-Fifth Birthday* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1983), pp. 170-193. On the structural contiguity of relative clause, genitive modifier, and attributive adjective, see, e.g., Ch. Lehmann, *Der Relativsatz. Typologie seiner Strukturen, Theorie seiner Funktionen, Kompendium seiner Grammatik*, Language Universals Series 2 (Tübingen: Narr, 1984), p. 208.

[54] For sporadic occurrences of the Kurdish *ezafe* in J. Challa, see S. Fassberg, *The Jewish Neo-Aramaic Dialect of Challa* (above, 2.4), p. 56.

[55] 'Indefinite Markers' would be a much better title for 3.6.3 than 'Marking of Identifiability'. Häberl correctly defines (in-)definiteness in terms of identifiability and referentiality (139), but it is not always clear when the distinction is relevant in describing Neo-Mandaic morphosyntax. Speaking of the antecedents of relative clauses, e.g., he uses the traditional comprehensive terms

ya and *-i* (144), the marker of restrictive clause antecedent *-i*, the comparative suffix *-tar* (148), the whole series of cardinal numbers (although the Aramaic-derived set is still available as learned obsolete lexical resource; 149-150), the quantifiers *doṯā* 'both' and *geš* 'all' (159). Two relative particles are borrowed from neighbouring languages to substitute Aramaic *d-* and specialized to introduce restrictive (Persian *ke*) and non-restrictive relative clauses (Arabic *illi*) respectively. The distinction was not present in Classical Mandaic (263) and resembles very much the English system (which/that, with/without comma).[56]

Like Aramaic *d-*, *ke* is also used as a subordinating conjunction, introducing an objective clause (O class of syntactic categories in Tesnière's terminology). It is perhaps misleading to call this *ke* 'relativizer' (166-167) and to try to describe the subordinate sentence rather obscurely as 'a relative clause that refers back to an entire clause or verb phrase rather than a nominal antecedent' (164). The relative is an A (adjective-like) clause, whereas an objective is an O (noun-like) clause and in many languages they can be introduced by exactly the same subordinating morpheme.

The preposition *əl-* marks the definite (specific, referential) object of a verb (141). Häberl correctly contests Macuch's identification of the definite object marker with the Arabic article *al-* (136). Definite objects are marked with a dative/allative preposition in many languages of the area (Iranian, Aramaic; 259) and beyond. It is indeed quite a common feature in cross-linguistic perspective.[57] In this case, however, it seems to be part of a morphosyntactic calque of the whole Persian system for marking (in-)definiteness.

Such a heavy impact of Persian and Arabic on the morphology and syntax of Neo-Mandaic is comparable to what we know about NENA, especially as regards the impact of Kurdish on Jewish varieties spoken in north-eastern Iraq and in Iran. Generally speaking, however, the Iranian model appears to have

'(in-)definite' (164). Possibly inspired by the manual Th.E. Payne, *Describing Morphosyntax: A Guide for Field Linguists*, Cambridge – once is enough! (139) – 1997, quoted in a couple of footnotes, Häberl uses elaborate (sufformative, contextual form) or traditional terms (e.g., suffix, construct state), sometimes without giving sufficient explanation, and tends to bring together universal and language-specific remarks. So, it is unclear which properties are characteristic of Neo-Mandaic nouns among those listed on p. 108 and which characterize the noun as a more or less universal category. Remarks such as 'Numerals fall into two broad categories in Neo-Mandaic: cardinal ... and ordinal numbers' (149) or 'Tense and aspect are closely related in Neo-Mandaic' (239) are certainly to the point in describing a great many languages. A reminiscence of formal linguistics appears unnecessarily as an erratic stone on p. 171, where the syntax of interrogative pronouns is explained in terms of wh-movement, without mentioning it, and the silent trace of the moved object is marked as Ø.

[56] One wonders whether English interference may be responsible for the transposition of the system in the idiolect of an American-naturalized Mandaean.

[57] The author does not use the term *differentielle Objektmarkierung* and does not refer to Bossong's studies.

influenced the verbal systems of NENA more deeply than Neo-Mandaic, which preserves the suffix conjugation and more significant traces of the *t*-stems (260-261).[58] In this connection, Häberl's remark on the relatively scarce presence of loan-words in the basic vocabulary of Neo-Mandaic is puzzling. In the J. Iranian NA dialects, the influence of Kurdish is proportionally distributed in the grammatical system and in the lexicon. It might be that the only Neo-Mandaic informant, who 'has an unusual gift for coining [Mandaic-based] neologisms' (265), resorts to a somewhat classicizing vocabulary.

In dealing with loan-words, Neo-Mandaic exhibits cases of allomorphic variation that are very interesting from a typological point of view (259). 'Most loan words which have not yet been assimilated into the lexicon are marked not with the default plural morpheme *-ān-* but with the plural morpheme *-hā́* (*-ā́* after consonants...)' (130). Even more regularly, and curiously, suffix pronouns are not attached directly to words of foreign origin – including the quantifiers *doṯā* 'both' and *geš* 'all' –, but the genitive marker *-d-* is inserted: Mandaic *babb-e* 'my grandfather', but Arabic-derived *ʿumər-d-e* 'my age' (157-158).

Texts (267-292), an essential glossary with etymological information (293-366), bibliography (367-371), and an index (373-378) complete a grammar that will hopefully represent a new start in (Neo-)Mandaic dialectology. A full treatment of the syntax, a comprehensive dictionary, a broader comparative description of the language in historical and dialectological perspectives are among the desiderata of the author, which we all share as general linguists, Semitic and NA scholars.[59]

4. Other Projects and Publications

4.1. Bruno Poizat, *Manuel de soureth - Initiation à l'araméen d'aujourd'hui, parlé et écrit*, avec la collaboration de Yawsep Alichoran et de Yohanan Binouissa, Préface par David Cohen, Geuthner (Paul) Collection: manuels, Paris 2008. ISBN : 978-2-7053-3804-6, Nb. de pages : 271. 42.- Euro

Side by side with the urgency of describing endangered dialects, in the *Neo-Aramaic Newsletter 2008* Geoffrey Khan correctly sets as a priority the

[58] Häberl correctly recognizes the *t*-stems as expressions of the middle voice (251), but he maintains the traditional terminology 'reflexive stems' elsewhere (e.g., 221).

[59] Style and lay-out are generally clear, as is customary in the series. However, in 2.5.2 there seems to be some confusion between phonologic and phonetic transcriptions of /y/ and [j]. On p. 96 it is not clear why the same verbal paradigm is called 'perfective form' and 'preterite form' in two consecutive lines, where only gender opposition is relevant: *nəfaq* 'he came out' vs. *nəfqat* 'she came out'. Something went wrong in the spacing before 2.5.3 (85) and a number of paragraphs were left unjustified (115 and 127). References to the examples on p. 145 should be corrected: 3. 474, 3.475, 3.476 > 3.454, 3.455, 3.346.

need to promote university teaching of the language: 'Of equal importance is the survival of research on the Neo-Aramaic dialects and to this end it is essential that students are attracted into our field'. To this end, Poizat's *Manuel* offers French-speaking students a good practical opportunity and the academic community a most valuable service.

As a method of learning NA this handbook definitely has some advantages:

1. Students learn basic forms of Christian Iraqi varieties (Sureth), but are led to deal with the rich dialectal variation in northern Iraq and in the neighbouring regions. This is perhaps the most surprising result achieved. In such a relatively small book, the author has avoided the dialectological dogmatism that would have led him to ascribe every single form to a specific village, and has succeeded in presenting the most common variants attested in a complex dialect cluster that, extending as it does from Mosul to Urmia, is characterized by internal variation; but which he demonstrates can be handled in a unitary way, at least for didactical purposes, 'tout en ayant conscience que la langue de partout est en fait la langue de nulle part' (23). These premises would probably not satisfy scientific and didactical preferences in Heidelberg or Cambridge, but they have good chances of proving effective with beginners.[60]

2. Units and lessons are well-organized from a pedagogical point of view, dealing with progressively more difficult topics, with lucid explanations, word lists and exercises. It is clear that they derive from the successful teaching experience, mainly with students of Arabic, which is approaching its fifth year at the INALCO (Asnieres, near Paris).

3. Students learn to write and read Sureth in the Syriac script and this allows them to access a wide range of literary texts, as the rich anthology shows. The selected texts include 17th-century verse, 19th-century letters, Bible translations, contemporary letters, a poem, historical narratives, excerpts from a grammatical essay, answers to a sociological interview... The texts are all accompanied by information on authors and contents and followed by useful linguistic notes. They are given in transliteration, French translation and, when available, in the original Syriac script (164-195, 203-220, I-XLIV). A text in the Jewish dialect of Zakho is transliterated, translated and commented upon (193-195). Finally (197-201), students are confronted with a couple of Roman transliteration systems (Novyj Alfavìt from the Soviet Union and a Latin transcription used by Rev. Jacob Yasso for a Bible translation published in 1994 in northern Iraq), different from that invented by Poizat and adopted throughout the hand-book.

[60] See also Poizat's comment on a simplified transcription of the text in the J. NA dialect of Zakho (194): 'Nous nous permettons ce vandalisme car notre manuel n'a pour but que d'enseigner les bases du soureth, sans rendre compte de la richesse des travaux des linguistes consacrés à la description précise de ses dialectes.'

Poizat's transliteration system is one of the weak points of his *Manuel*. In the first place, we do not really need yet another transliteration system. Especially students of Arabic or other Semitic languages, who are supposed to be or become familiar with works such as the *Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Wehr's *Dictionary* or Jouon's *Grammaire*, will be surprised to discover that ʿ is transliterated **&** (commercial *et*/and), ʾ > **#** (*sic*, as on telephones and bank checks), kh, x or ḫ > **k°**, v/w or b̲ > **b°**, f > **p°**, ṭ > **T**, ṣ > **S**, š or sh > **c**, ǧ > **g^**, etc., all in thick bold font. Neither an alleged loyalty towards the Syriac writing system nor technical reasons justify this disregard for academic and typographic conventions.

French speakers and scholars will evaluate relevance and correctness of the excursus on French grammar (see, e.g., on the pronominal and verbal systems on pp. 56-57 and 89-91).[61] A few points on NA language, however, should be checked or corrected. The geographical distribution and the range of uses of the demonstrative *ʾad* ~ *ʾadi* (see, e.g., the very common *ʾədyom* 'today') make it unlikely, and certainly questionable, that it is 'd'origine arabe' (59).[62] The genitive particle is attached to the head noun not only in the Jewish scribal tradition of NA, as Poizat observes (61), but also in particular cases in the Christian manuscript transmission of Sureth texts (e.g., *berd allaha* 'God's son'). The glossing of *grišat wa* as 'on m'avait tiré' (96) should actually be 'on t'avait tiré'.

The statement 'la conjugaison avec *qàm* a seulement un sens de parfait, et jamais un sens de prétérite' (99) should be clarified. In most Sureth varieties the *qam*-prefixed conjugation is in fact the allomorph of the preterit *grəšle*, when an object pronoun is attached (*grəšle* 'he pulled' + *la* 'her' > *qam-garəš-la* 'he pulled her'),[63] and the preterit tense, serving as a narrative past tense in both allomorphic paradigms, can indeed and usually does convey a perfective meaning. However, its aspectual value is dialect- and context-specific and the preterit should be presented as part of the verbal systems of the various dialects, where, in various contexts (direct speech, narratives...), it interacts with and is opposed to other tenses such as the imperfects *garəš-wa* or *b-graša we-wa* and the perfect *griša-yle*.

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[61] I am not very conversant with French terminology, but in describing a case like *ʾo ktava diyi ilēh* ' this book is mine', I would have preferred 'l'adjectif possessif peut-être employé comme prédicat' rather than 'comme attribut' (64).

[62] O. Jastrow, 'Personal and demonstrative pronouns in Central Neo-Aramaic: A comparative and diachronic discussion based on Ṭūrōyo and the Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialect of Hertevin', in W. Heinrichs (ed.), *Studies in Neo-Aramaic*, Harvard Semitic Studies 36 (Atlanta, GA: Scholars, 1990), pp. 89-103 (101): the 'prefix *ʾad-* may be interpreted as going back to *hāḏ-ā-, that is, the same combination of two old demonstrative elements which is also at the basis of Old Syriac hānā (< *hā + dənā), hādē'. See also G. Khan, *Barwar* (above, 2.3), p. 150.

[63] F.A. Pennacchietti, 'Il preterito neoaramaico con pronome oggetto', *ZDMG* 144.2 (1994), pp. 259-283.

The volume is enriched by very nice illustrations of people, places and texts, though, presumably to keep the price of the book within reasonable limits, they are only printed in a poor black and white version. The author is also preparing a short version of his introduction to Sureth and an edition of the so far unpublished work by Jacques Rhétoré, *La versification en Soureth.*[64]

4.2. *The North Eastern Neo-Aramaic Database Project*

Geoffrey Khan, heading a team of Cambridge researchers (Alinda Damsma, Eleanor Coghill, Roberta Borghero) and IT developers (Mariko Brittain and Mark Wilding), have launched an ambitious project to build and publish on-line a database on NENA dialects. 'At the moment..., access to the data is still restricted by password to the local researchers and the contributors, but it is hoped that it will become more widely accessible in the near future' (http://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/index-new.php).

The original project – the last issue of the *Neo-Aramaic Newsletter* reports that its objectives have been readjusted – was meant to offer information on the following dialects, grouped according to their geographical positions:

Southeastern Turkey (all of them spoken by Christians, except J. Challa): Arbuš, Ashitha, Barwar of Qochanəṣ, Bāz (Aghgab, Aruntus, Khabur, Maha Xtaya, Shwawa), Baznaye, Bēṣpən, Billin, Bne-Lagippa, Bnerumta (Upper Tiyari), Bohtan, Dīz, Gargarnaye, Gawar, Gaznax, Halana, Halmun, Harbole, Hassana, Hertevin, Išši, Jilu (Khabur), Jilu, Lewən, Lower Tiyari Sarspido, Marbišo (Šamməsdin), Mēr, Mne Belatha, Mne Matha, Qochanəṣ, Šamməsdin Iyyəl, Šamməsdin Nochiya, Sara (Khabur), Sarspido, Sāt, Tal, Tel Tammər (Upper Tiyari), Timur, Txuma (Bərəjnaye, Gawaya, Gəssa, Gudəktha, Mazra), Van, Walṭo (Upper Tiyari), Zawitha

Northeast Iraq: Chr. Ankawa, J. Arbel, Chr. Bədyə, Chr. Darbandoke, Chr. Diyana, J. Halabja, J. Khanaqin, Chr. and J. Koy Sanjaq, J. Qaladeze, J. Rustaqa, J. Ruwanduz, Chr. Shaqlawa, Chr. and J. Sulemaniyya;

Northwest Iraq: Chr. Alqosh, J. Amedia, Chr. Aqra, Chr. Aradhin, Chr. Baqopa, Chr. Bartille, Chr. Barwar, J. Barzan, Chr. Baṭnaye, Chr. Bebede, Chr. Bersive, J. Betanure, Chr. Bidaro, Chr. Challək, Chr. Derabun, Chr. Dere, Chr. Derəgni, J. Dobe, J. Dohok, Chr. Enəške, Chr. Hamziye, Chr. Iṣṣin, Chr. Karəmlesh, Chr. Komane, Chr. Mangesh, Chr. Marga, Chr. Mar-Yaqo, Chr. Meze, Chr. Nargəzine-Xarjawa (nr. Aqra), Chr. and J. Nerwa, Chr. Peshabur, Chr. Qaraqosh, Chr. Qarawilla, J. Salamas, Chr. Sharanish, Chr. Shiyuz, Chr. ShǦsh-u-Sharmən (nr. Aqra), Chr. Telkepe, Chr. Təlla, Chr. Tən, Chr. Tisqopa, Chr. Umra d-Shish, Chr. Xarjawa, Chr. Xərpa (nr. Aqra), Chr. and J. Zakho;

[64] Personal communication and B. Poizat, 'Un manuscrit retrouvé du P. Jacques Rhétoré', in A. Mengozzi (ed.), *Studi afroasiatici. XI Incontro Italiano di Linguistica Camitosemitica*, Materiali linguistici 52 (Milano: FrancoAngeli), pp. 413-423.

Northwest Iran: Chr. Darband, Chr. Gawilan, Chr. Mawana, Chr. Salamas, Chr. Sardarid, J. Shənno, J. Solduz, Chr. and J. Urmi;
Western Iran (all of them spoken by Jews, except Chr. Sanandaj): Bijar, Bokan, Kerend, Qarah, Ḥasan, Qasr Shirin, Sablagh, Sanandaj, Saqəz, Tikab
Armenia: Chr. Sara

A typical entry describing a dialect would contain name of the dialect, religion of the speakers, location, images, audio recordings and transcripts, a grammatical sketch and bibliographic information. Interactive maps and the function 'Compare dialects' promise a rich harvest of data and answers to specific queries. When available for open consultancy, the Cambridge data-base will thus integrate the meritorious *Semitische Spracharchiv* of Heidelberg.

Indeed, if we consider the number of research projects devoted to them, the number of scholars engaged on them, the variety and richness of instruments at their disposal, this is clearly a very propitious time for NA studies, which are in a much better position than, e.g., Arabic, Ethio-Semitic or, outside the Semitic family but still in the same region, Kurdish dialectology. There are various reasons for this. Firstly, linguists rightly stress the risk of extinction of most NA tongues, which makes fieldwork research and the process of recording the last surviving witnesses extremely urgent. As this review article clearly demonstrates, Geoffrey Khan can be considered the leading scholar in this research field and it is principally thanks to him that NA is one of the sub-groups of the Semitic languages studied to best purpose. Secondly, being represented by spoken languages, literary and oral traditions, NA lends itself to a variety of approaches and methodologies, from typological linguistics to text criticism, from experimental phonology to literary criticism. Research on NA has proven to be useful to shed light on particular features of Classical Semitic literary traditions, in sub-fields such as Biblical Hebrew phonology or Targumic translation technique. Thirdly, it is probably easier to find scholars trained in Biblical studies or Comparative Semitics who devote part or most of their efforts to (Neo-) Aramaic, than, e.g., (Neo-) Ethio-Semitic, with the praiseworthy exceptions of Polotsky's school in Israel and Hetzron's in the US. The competence and enthusiasm of NA speakers and scholars who are themselves NA speakers close the ranks of NA scholarship, traditionally and increasingly enriched by the internal points of view of NA communities active in the preservation and study of their cultural heritage.

Lexicography is one of the fields in which the international Society for Neo-Aramaic Studies envisaged by Khan will probably have to promote a common project to collect data from the scholars who have already prepared glossaries of the single dialects they studied or intend to study. A standard format in presenting lexicographical data —including a harmonized system of transcription — would very much benefit such a project and favour its compatibility with other

lexicographic enterprises, such as the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon, which is programmatically confined to pre-modern varieties of Aramaic.

As the present survey has tried to show, given the quantity and quality of descriptions of NA varieties, the time is now ripe to develop comparative research projects, with dialectology, historical and contact linguistics and linguistic typology as their methodological background.[65] Kim's essay is exemplary in this connection.[66] Systematic comparative studies on various aspects of NA phonology, morphology, and syntax will provide a straightforward and solid contribution to Aramaic dialectology and general Semitics.

Finally, I share Khan's view that 'Neo-Aramaic Studies' and not merely 'Linguistics' or 'Dialectology' should be established as the scope of the international association he proposes to set up, since the study of NA cultures and literatures appears to be at least as intriguing and promising as NA linguistics. The monograph by Rees (1.2, above) and Sabar on NA Targum technique, many texts published as sources of linguistic evidence in the various dialects, recent publications on Assyrian and Chaldean NA poetry – be it of epic, erotic or religious content – all these demonstrate the historical interest and literary value of cultural production in NA and its relevance for disciplines such as Biblical, Jewish and Eastern Christian studies, oral tradition and folk literature.

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[65] A. Rubin, Review of R. Voigt (Hrsg.), *"From Beyond the Mediterranean". Akten des 7. internationalen Semitohamitistenkongresses* (Aachen: Shaker Verlag, 2007), *JSS* 55.1 (2010), pp. 263-265: 'Neo-Aramaic studies has had a boom in the last few decades, with the appearance of a surprising number of excellent descriptive grammars. Comparative and historical work on Neo-Aramaic dialects is less well represented, though there have been a few very good studies on dialect comparison and historical grammar.'

[66] R.I. Kim, 'Stammbaum or Continuum? The Sub-grouping of Modern Aramaic Dialects Reconsidered', *JAOS* 128.3 (2008), pp. 505-532. By the same author, see also 'Towards a Historical Phonology of Modern Aramaic: The Relative Chronology of Ṭuroyo Sound Changes', in F.M. Fales and G.F. Grassi (eds.), *CAMSEMUD 2007. Proceedings of the 13th Italian Meeting of Afro-Asiatic Linguistics* (Padova: SARGON, 2010), pp. 229-238