

Diversity in convergence: Kurdish and Aramaic variation entangled¹ | PAUL NOORLANDER[▲]

Abstract

This article is about diverse types of convergence as well as a few examples of how diversity within Kurdish affects the modern Aramaic dialectal landscape in Kurdistan. Kurdish-Aramaic bilingualism has had a major impact on Eastern Neo-Aramaic languages. There are numerous challenges to a comprehensive study of contact between the two speech communities, whose far-reaching history is intriguing yet highly complicated. In so doing, the functional-communicative approach mainly developed by Yaron Matras will be helpful, which presupposes that bilingual discourse is the primary locus of contact-induced change. Different factors play a role: those that facilitate, that constrain and that motivate the borrowing. This approach makes a valuable distinction between the borrowing of linguistic matter (concrete word-forms and parts) and the borrowing of linguistic patterns (constructions and their usage). It will be observed that the Jewish Aramaic dialects to the east of the Greater Zab River in the sphere of Central Kurdish influence are less resistant to incorporating Kurdish material, whereas those to the west of it tend to adapt to patterns of Northern Kurdish while making use of native Aramaic material.

Keywords: Aramaic; bilingualism; borrowing; convergence; dialectology; language area; language contact; language diversity; language maintenance.

Cihêrengî di konverjansê de: Lêk-alîyana cudatîyên navxweyî yê Kurdî û Aramiyê

Ev meqale li ser awayên cihê yê konverjansê [levqelibîna zîmanan] û li ser wan nimûneyan e ku rola cudatîyên navxweyî yê zîmanê Kurdî nîşan didin di şiklgiirtina zaravayên Aramiya hevçerx de li Kurdistanê. Duzîmaniya Kurdî-Aramî tesîreke gelek mezin kiriyê li ser birê rojhilatî yê zîmanê Aramiya nû. Gelek asteng hene li ber vekolîneke berfireh a temasa zîmanî ya di navbera herdu cemaetên zîmanî de, ku tarîxa wan a pir qedîm hem tîkel e hem jî aloz e. Ji bo hevleke wisa, modêla fonksiyonel-komunikatîv [erki-ragihandinî], ku bi taybetî Yaron Matrasî pêş xistiyê, dê gelek kêrhatî be, lewre pêşferza vê modêlê ew e ku axîftina duzîmanî navenda guherîna zîmanî ya bi rêya temasa zîmanan e. Fakterên cuda xwedan rol in: hindek fakter rêxweşker in, hindek astengker û hindek jî handerên deynkirinê [ya peyv û amrazên rêzîmanî] ne. Ev modêl cudatîyêke binîrx dixê navbera deynkirina keresteyê zîmanî (peyv û form û parçeyên berçav) û deynkirina nimûne û mastereyên zîmanî (binyad û avanî û şiklê bikaranîna wan). Di vê meqaleyê de dê diyar bibe ku ew zaravayên Aramiya cihûyan yê li rojhilatê rûbarê Zêya Mezîna, ku li jêr tesîra Soraniyê ne, zêdetir keresteyê zîmanî yê Kurdîyê deyn dikin û dixîne nav sîstema zîmanê xwe, di demekê de ku zaravayên li rojavayê wî rûbarî bêtir nimûne û mastereyên kurmançiyê werdigirin lê heman keresteyê zîmanî yê Aramiyê bi kar tînin.

جۆریه‌جۆری له‌ئامۆ یه‌گه‌رتنه‌وه‌دا: تیکنا‌لای جی‌اوازی زمانی کوردی و نارامی

ئهم وتاره له‌سه‌ر شێوه جۆریه‌جۆرمانی یه‌گه‌رتنه‌وه‌یه و هه‌روه‌ها چهند نموونه‌یه‌ك له‌وه‌یه كه چۆن زمانی كوردی كاریگه‌ری له‌سه‌ر به‌سه‌ری هندی زاراوه‌یی نارامیی هه‌و چهره‌خ له‌ كوردستان داده‌نێت. دوو زمانیه‌تی كوردی - نارامیی كاریگه‌رییه‌كی زۆری له‌سه‌ر زمانه‌ نوێ - نارامییكانی رۆژه‌لآت هه‌بووه. چهندین ناسته‌نگ له‌سه‌ر رینگای توێژینه‌وه‌یه‌كی گه‌شتگر سه‌بارت به‌ په‌وه‌ندی نێوان كۆمه‌له‌ی ناخپه‌ره‌انی ئهم دوو زمانه‌ له‌ ئارا‌دایه. ئهم چاتانه‌یه‌ كه له‌گه‌ڵ ئهم‌دا مێژوویه‌كی هه‌و به‌شێبان هه‌یه به‌سه‌ر سوورمانه‌وه هه‌شتا به‌ ئالۆزی ماوه‌نه‌وه. له‌م هه‌له‌وه‌دا بۆچوونیه‌كی كاركرد - راگه‌یه‌اندن، كه زیاتر یارۆن مه‌ترس په‌ری پێداوه، كه‌لكی زۆری ده‌یت. چونه‌كه پێش‌گره‌مانه‌ی ئهم بۆچوونه‌ ئهم‌یه گوتاری دوو زمانیه‌تی، ناوه‌ندی سه‌ر كی گۆرانكاریه‌كه كه به‌ هۆی په‌وه‌ندییه‌وه چی ده‌یت. چهند هۆی جی‌اوازی له‌م باسه‌دا دور ده‌بین: ئهم‌انه‌ی رینگه‌خۆشكه‌رن؛ ئهم‌انه‌ی رینگه‌رن و یان هه‌نده‌ری ئهم‌ن كه له‌بهری زمانیه‌وه له‌ زمانیه‌كی تر قه‌رز بکریت. ئهم بۆچوونه‌ له‌ نێوان قه‌رزكردنی كه‌سه‌ی بێوه‌ستی زمانی (ئهم‌ به‌شانه‌ی زمان و شێوازه‌كانی وشه‌ كه به‌ر چا‌ون) له‌گه‌ڵ قه‌رزكردنی نموونه‌ زمانیه‌كمان (دارشته‌ ریزمانیه‌كمان و شێوازی به‌كاره‌ێنان) هه‌له‌وا‌ردیه‌كی به‌نرخ به‌ده‌سته‌وه ددات. لێ‌ر‌دا ده‌ره‌كه‌یه‌ت كه ئهم زاراوه‌ نارامیی جوله‌كه‌نه‌یه‌ كه ده‌كه‌ونه‌ رۆژه‌لآتی روه‌باری زینی گه‌وره و له‌ ده‌قه‌ری كاریگه‌ری زمانی كوردیی ناوه‌ندیان كه‌مه‌تر له‌ به‌رامبه‌ر به‌كاره‌ێنانی كوردیدا به‌رگه‌ری ده‌كهن، نهمه‌ له‌ كاتێكه‌دا ئهم زاراوه‌انه‌ی كه له‌ رۆژناوای روه‌باركه‌دان زیاتر ده‌یان‌وه‌یت نموونه‌كانی كوردیی باكو‌ر به‌كار به‌یێن و له‌ هه‌مان كاتدا كه‌سه‌كانی زمانی نارامیی رهنه‌ن ده‌كهن.

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Introduction

Aramaic, like Hebrew and Arabic, is a Semitic language and was once the official *lingua franca* of ancient West Asia, encompassing, at its zenith, an area from Egypt into India during the Achaemenid Persian empire. Its long-lasting heritage of three millennia still lives on today in the Neo-Aramaic-speaking minorities in the Middle East and beyond. The increasing documentation of the highly diverse Neo-Aramaic dialects (also known as Assyrian or Chaldean) in the last few decades has given new impetus to comparative linguistic research and the study of contact between varieties of Iranian and Aramaic, of which the exceptional diachronic depth extends over 2500 years with considerable convergence² as the result (Khan, 2004b, 2007; Gzella, 2004:184-194, 2008; Ciancaglini, 2008). Indeed, the mutual influence between Western Neo-Iranian, especially Kurdish, and Eastern Neo-Aramaic, though more intense for some dialects than others, has been noted by many and has extended significantly beyond the mere borrowing of lexical items (Garbell, 1965a; Sabar, 1978; Stilo, 1981, 2004; Pennacchietti, 1988; Chyet, 1995, 1997; Kapeliuk, 1996, 2002, 2004, 2011; Khan, 1999:9-11, 2004b, 2007; Mengozzi, 2002:20-22, 42-49, 2005, 2006; Matras, 2000, 2009, 2010, 2011; Talay, 2006-2007; Josephson, 2012). On the other hand, studying contact between Kurdish and Aramaic is quite complicated and before we examine a few examples, we need to address some of the main challenges we face in dealing with such contact phenomena.

Jewish and Christian speakers of Eastern Neo-Aramaic are by and large Kurdish-Aramaic bilinguals and have remained so for centuries within an area of prolonged multilingualism. This Kurdish-Aramaic bilingualism that has prevailed among Neo-Aramaic speakers obviously facilitated the recruitment and deep and lasting integration of Kurdish elements into their Neo-Aramaic speech. Aramaic has been in continuous contact with Western Iranian for circa 2500 years. This historical depth of contact is not only fascinating, but also challenging. Needless to say, the Kurdish and Aramaic speech communities maintain highly complex historical relationships, of which much is still obscure and perhaps will remain forever so. The wide range of sociolinguistic factors involved obviously shifted and drifted over the course of time, yet it is safe to say contact between the two continued without interruption.

Moreover, after the Islamic conquest, most speakers forfeited their loyalty to Aramaic and mainly shifted to varieties of Arabic. The fact that these Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects have nonetheless survived to this day as a minority language of Kurdistan Jews and Christians demonstrates a resilient effort of language maintenance, presumably due to their social and geographical isolation. Although we do not know the exact circumstances of spoken Aramaic and Kurdish prior to the sixteenth century, both speech communities must

² Convergence is a form of contact-induced pattern borrowing that can lead languages to converge toward a common prototype (Matras, 2010: 73).

have held close and intertwining ties in Kurdistan long before that time, which, I believe to have been rather a hindrance to language shift. It is only through the massive migrations out of Kurdistan since the 1950s that Neo-Aramaic dialects have become highly endangered or even extinct.

Furthermore, as Neo-Aramaic speakers are daily confronted with the need of multilingualism, Kurdish-Aramaic contact constitutes an essential part of a wider complex sociolinguistic picture, where Persian, Azeri, Turkish, Arabic and many more neighbouring languages interact (see also Stilo and Noorlander, forthcoming 2014). Yet Kurdish is also in direct contact with these languages, so what could be attributed to contact with Kurdish may also be under the influence of some other language in the area.

However, wholly apart from *convergence* with neighbouring languages, these Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects also exhibit an enormous degree of *divergence*. The degree of diversity found among the modern dialects is staggering, but has been mapped out only partly during the last few decades. After all, speakers are more or less aware and attentive of even the most subtle regional and confessional distinctive features and the dialect-dependent choice of word-forms. Aramaic is generally divided into Western and Eastern dialect groups; the latter will obviously be the main concern of this article. As mentioned before, the Eastern Aramaic dialects themselves are somehow related to an exceptionally long and continuously documented heritage boasting over 3000 years. Since the direct ancestors of Neo-Aramaic are unattested, it is difficult to determine with confidence how Neo-Aramaic gradually took on its own unique shape. Classical Aramaic languages, such as Classical Syriac (henceforth CS, the liturgical language of the Syriac churches) and Jewish Babylonian Aramaic (the Aramaic language of the Talmud) can help us reconstruct the older situation to some degree.

Major dialect groups can be distinguished within the Eastern modern dialects, such as Central and North Eastern Neo-Aramaic. Central Neo-Aramaic is primarily Țuroyo spoken with slight dialectal variation by diminishing numbers of mostly Syriac Orthodox Christians in Țur ‘Abdin, which is the area east of Mardin from the Turkish-Syrian border (but including Qamishli in northern Syria) up to the river Tigris (roughly until Cizre). Since the 60s and 70s, most speakers have emigrated mainly to Europe and the United States of America. Closely related to Țuroyo, but by now extinct, is a dialect known as Mlaḥso (Lice, province of Diyarbakır), which we will discuss in some detail at the end of this article.

Yet, by far the largest and most diverse group is North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) with about 150 dialects (Khan, 2011) spoken by Jewish and Christian communities in and from Kurdistan. They are primarily named after the town, where they at least used to be spoken, with the additional specification of the religious affiliations of their speakers, since the Jewish (J.) and Christian (C.) varieties of NENA from the same town can be completely different. Indeed, they are extremely diverse, especially the Jewish dialects, where, as far as we know, there never has been any attempt to level out dialectal dif-

ferences. Although NENA exhibits a differentiation that is comparable to Romance or Germanic languages, it is common practice to speak in terms of dialects.

Certain clusters along the dialect continuum can be distinguished. For instance, the peripheral dialects in South East Turkey, such as Hertevin and Bohtan (both Christian), share a few traits with Turoyo, which is overall closer to Classical Syriac and, to some extent, Western Neo-Aramaic, spoken by diminishing thousands in Syria. The Greater Zab river functions as a natural border separating the north eastern Iraqi and western Iranian dialects from the other dialects, much like Northern from Central Kurdish³, as we will see. The Jewish dialects to the east of the Greater Zab are accordingly known as *Trans-Zab* Jewish (Mutzafi, 2008), a dialect group that is pertinent to this study. And further north, the dialects in North-West Iran or Iranian Azerbaijan, such as Urmi and Salmas, constitute a separate cluster (within *Trans-Zab* Jewish) as well.

Finally, comparisons with Kurdish (perhaps especially those made in this paper) are also tentative because often (good) descriptions of equivalent Kurdish dialects from the same town are unavailable. Thus, notwithstanding that many questions still remain open, as we await much needed fresh descriptions of certain Kurdish dialectal counterparts, I will review some remarkable examples of how Kurdish variation has plausibly influenced variation within Eastern Aramaic.

The functional-communicative approach to language contact

In light of the aforementioned challenges, I believe Matras' functional-communicative approach to language contact (as set forth *inter alia* in Matras, 1994, 1998a, 1998b, 2009; Matras and Sakel, 2007) can be of great value in studying (possible) Kurdish-Aramaic contact phenomena. Its main assumption is that the primary locus and typical mechanism of contact-induced change is the innovation of linguistic expressions by bi- or multilingual speakers at the level of discourse (Matras, 2009; cf. Labov, 1994; Croft, 2000). Bilingual speakers can express themselves in the full range of available resources of both languages, which they have to manage efficiently in different language-specific circumstances. Drawing on previous literature, Matras and Sakel (2007), also make a useful distinction between contact phenomena affecting linguistic *matter*, i.e. the transfer of concrete and easily identifiable word-forms and morphemes, and those affecting linguistic *pattern*, i.e. the transfer of complex configurations of form and meaning and their functional distribution. We can expect that isolated material is adopted or borrowed⁴ easily. Loanwords are numerous in Turoyo and North Eastern Neo-Aramaic, but not equally distributed. A rough relative estimation of Kurdish and/or Turkish borrowings in J. Urmi and J. Suleimaniya is shown in Table 1. below:

³ I follow the dialectal division of Kurdish as set forth by Windfuhr (1989); see also Haig and Öpengin (forthcoming).

⁴ I will use the terms replication, copying and borrowing interchangeably.

Table 1. *Percentage of loanwords of Kurdish and/or Turkish origin in J. Urmi and J. Suleimaniya*

	Nouns	Particles	Adjectives	Verbs
J. Urmi (Garbell, 1965a, Khan 2008b: 383ff.)	69%	54%	24%	28%
J. Suleimaniya (Khan, 2004a: 443)	67%	53%	48%	15%

Among these loanwords are typically Kurdish and very basic lexical items, such as ⁺*daa*⁵ “mother” (or *daʔa* in other NENA dialects), *juwan* “young, beautiful, good”, *juwanqa* “young (unmarried) man”, *bas* “good, well”, *xos* “id.,” *naxos* (or in other dialects *naxwas*) “ill, sick” etc. Cross-linguistically, verbs tend to be morphologically more complex and less likely to be borrowed (Winford, 2003: 52), which is in basic agreement with these NENA data. However, we can expect that verbs can be replicated more easily from a closely related language such as Arabic, since the systems are more akin; though, further inquiry is needed to support this. More importantly, these percentages would not support a balanced type of Kurdish-Aramaic bilingualism but exposure to extensive matter replication. The relative degree of Kurdish lexical borrowings is very much less so in peripheral NENA dialects of Iraq around Mosul (see Khan, 2002 on Qaraqosh), where, as expected, Arabic influence is stronger. This demonstrates how the area affects the degree of bilingualism and, hence, contact between Kurdish and Aramaic.

Assuming this functional-communicative approach is correct, we would expect to find considerable convergence at the level of discourse. Bilingual speakers will generally struggle in keeping languages apart, when they qualify the communicative interaction using, for example, utterance modifiers (Matras, 1998a). This is exemplified by the numerous borrowed uninflected function words and particles, which serve as discourse markers, conjunctions, phasal adverbs and indefinites. They constitute important building-blocks to structure and qualify the discourse. Hence, many dialects share particles at least with Kurdish, often in a modified fashion, like *ya(n)* “or”, *ji* “too”, *hej* “still, even” (or Sorani *hešta*), *her* “just, still”, *belki* “maybe” and more. Similarly, most NENA dialects have borrowed *ju* “not any” from Badini, whereas South Eastern Turkish dialects, such as Hertevin (Jastrow, 1988) and Bohtan (Fox, 2002, 2009), exhibit *tu* and Turoyo *tə*, both from Kurmanji *tu* “not any”.

In pattern replication, however, the substance in form is kept intact but the grammatical meaning is altered on a more abstract, functional, usage-based level. A clear case of such pattern copying from Kurdish, which is widespread across NENA varieties, is the new preposition *reša* and its eroded variants (*reš*, *reš*, *š*, *š*) that has extended its function from a noun meaning “head” to also a preposition meaning “upon, on top, over, about” as in (1).

⁵ The + sign indicates that subsequent sounds are pronounced with retraction of the back of the tongue.

This is contrary to the inherited preposition *ʕal* “upon”, still used in Turoyo (see [2] below) and the Christian NENA dialects of North-West Iran, but conforms to the pattern of Kurdish *ser* “head”, which is also a preposition denoting “upon”.

- (1) **C. Barwar**
bar-m-ṛəṣ-gare
 still-from-on-roof
 ‘while still on the roof’ (Khan, 2008a: 1746, A6: 75)
- (2) **Ṭuroyo**
ʕal-í-goro
 on-the-roof
 ‘on the roof’ (Jastrow, 1992: 74)

This functional redistribution can also lead to new idioms, such as *reṣ reṣi* “lit. over my head” in J. Zakho (Sabar, 2002: 64) paralleling Kurmanji *ser serê min* “lit. over my head”, both conveying more or less the meaning of “(you’re) welcome, gladly, willingly”. Thus, here we have a clear case of a Kurdish pattern but Aramaic matter.

The distinction between matter and pattern is, however, not mutually exclusive. Matter can be borrowed along with a pattern and vice versa, but this distinction can suggest that the borrowing of a pattern implies a certain degree of avoiding direct material borrowing. We can illustrate this using the words for “tomato” and “aubergine”, which are distinguished by the colours “red” and “black” in Kurdish. In Neo-Aramaic, both will be expressed by means of the incorporated Kurdish equivalent noun but the native Aramaic colour. For instance, in J. Zakho, this yields *banjâne smōqe* “tomatoes, lit. red b.” and *banjâne kōme* “aubergines, lit. black b.” (Sabar 2002: 64) for Badini *bancané sor* respectively *bancané reṣ* (cf. Turoyo (Midyat) *bāḍinjāne semaqto* “tomato” and *bāḍinjāne kamto* “aubergine”; Ritter, 1979: 46). Likewise, the aforementioned particle *ʕu* “not any” is replicated along with a converging pattern. In (3a) and (3c), the indefinite article *xa-* in J. Zakho (derived from the numeral *xa* “one”) corresponds with the indefinite suffix *-ek* in Badini Kurdish (derived from *yek* “one”), which we will discuss in more detail below. Interestingly, the Kurdish-derived particle *ʕu* in (3b) and (3d) below neatly fits into this system found in NENA, as it precedes the noun not only as in Badini, but also as the existing indefinite article *xa-* “a”:

- | | | | | |
|-----|-----------------|---|-----------------|-------------------|
| (3) | J. Zakho | : | Badini | |
| | (Cohen, 2012) | | (Jardine, 1922) | |
| a. | <i>xa-nāša</i> | | <i>kes-ek</i> | ‘somebody’ |
| | INDF-person | | person-INDF | |
| b. | <i>ʕu-nāša</i> | | <i>ʕu kes</i> | ‘nobody, anybody’ |
| | any-person | | any person | |
| c. | <i>xa-məndi</i> | | <i>tīšt-ek</i> | ‘something’ |
| | INDF-thing | | thing-INDF | |

d.	<i>čū-məndi</i> any-thing	<i>ču tišt</i> any thing	‘nothing, anything’
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Similarly, we find *čə-məndi* “nothing” and *čə-nāš* “nobody” in Jewish Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 66) corresponding with Sorani *či* (cf. MacKenzie, 1961: 68) as well as *tu mendi* “nothing, anything” and *tu naša* “nobody, anything” in Hertevin (Jastrow, 1988) containing Kurmanji *tu* “not any” (cf. *tə-mede* respectively *tə-nošo* in Turoyo). This, however, does not necessarily rule out full material borrowing, cf. *flankas* “a certain (person), such-and-such” in J. Zakho (Sabar, 2002: 263a) and across Eastern Neo-Aramaic.

It should be noted that speakers can still creatively apply the borrowed material in their own linguistic way. A case in point is the formation of comparatives in Neo-Aramaic. Several dialects have borrowed the Kurdish or perhaps earlier Iranian comparative suffix *-tər* (note the final stress), as in Kurm. *dūr-tir* “further” comparative of *dūr* “far”. In Turoyo, the inherited elative construction still exists, the bare adjective⁶ followed by the preposition *me-* “from”, for example:

- (4) a. *basimo* ‘pleasant’
 b. *bəsəm me-* ‘more pleasant than (lit. form)’

As an alternative, the Kurdish-derived comparative suffix *-tər* can be attached to either the basic form (4a) or the inherited comparative (4b, see Jastrow, 1992: 147):

- c. *basimo-tər* ‘more pleasant’ (4a + *-tər*)
 d. *bəsəm-tər* ‘more pleasant’ (4b + *-tər*)

This demonstrates how speakers deal with such contact-induced elements creatively and confirms that comparative constructions are highly sensitive to convergence (Haig, 2001: 206).

An important implication of this distinction between matter and pattern replication is that bi- or multilingual speakers can choose constructions independently of the morphology and other language-specific elements. Here, constructions are taken in the broadest and most common sense as form-meaning combinations at all possible levels of abstraction, ranging from word formation patterns to contextual pragmatic inferences of word order. Speakers can adjust or expand the functions of constructions and reshape their form and structure, having the full potential of leading a life of their own within a speech community. If this standpoint is correct, then bilingual speak-

⁶ This form ultimately goes back to the so-called *absolute state*. This state is the independent form of a noun or adjective in contradistinction to the dependent form much like the *ezafe*, known as the *construct state* (*malkə ʔarʔa* “the king of the land”), and the definite form, known as the *emphatic state* (*malkā* “the king”).

ers can handle patterns or constructions with more flexibility and need not restrict them to one specific language but can generalise them throughout their multilingual repertoire. Accordingly, it is possible that patterns not only spread within the languages of an individual multilingual speaker, but also across languages within whole speech communities of a certain area. Such dynamics can lead to contact-induced innovations that pervade the grammatical structure of a language (cf. Heine and Kuteva, 2003, 2005).

The present indicative and subjunctive in Kurdish and Aramaic

A possible example of such profound structural assimilation is the shape of the present indicative progressive or habitual and its subjunctive counterpart in the verbal system of both Kurdish and Eastern Neo-Aramaic. Both speech communities employ a distinct finite verbal form known as the subjunctive in modal complements expressing desire, ability and obligation, respectively *bibînim* “(that) I may see” in Kurmanji as against the indicative present *dibînim* “I see”. The basic template begins with a marker of clause-level grammatical information (*di-*, *bi-*), in which are fused: the categories of tense (such as future, present and past), aspect (practically, completed or ongoing action) and mood (such as possibility, necessity etc.). In linguistic theory, these correlatives are often abbreviated to TAM. What follows these TAM-markers is the verbal base that encodes the core meaning of the verbal phrase (*bîn* “see”), to which the person agreement markers (PAMs) are added (*-im*, *-î*, *-e* etc.). This particular morphosyntax or structural template of *TAM-base-PAM* is also found in modern Aramaic:

Table 2. *The present indicative and subjunctive in Kurdish and Aramaic⁷*

	Present indicative			Present subjunctive		
	TAM	BASE	PAM	TAM	BASE	PAM
Ṭuroyo	<i>ko-</i>	<i>hoṣe</i>	<i>-no</i>	∅	<i>hoṣe</i>	<i>-no</i>
J. Zakho	<i>k-</i>	<i>xāṣ</i>	<i>-ən</i>	∅	<i>xāṣ</i>	<i>-ən</i>
Kurmanji	<i>di-</i>	<i>bîn</i>	<i>-im</i>	∅-/ <i>bi-</i>	<i>bîn</i>	<i>-im</i>
Sorani	<i>a-</i>	<i>bîn</i>	<i>-im</i>	<i>bi-</i>	<i>bîn</i>	<i>-im</i>
	‘I see’			‘(that) I may see’		

Note: TAM = tense-aspect-mood, PAM = person agreement marker, ∅ = zero

Like Kurdish *di-* and *-a*, the present indicative *kohoṣeno* or *kxāṣən* “I see” is marked by a prefix respectively *ko-* and *k-* (and its variants *g-*, *ke-*, *č-* and *y-* in other dialects), whereas its absence (∅) denotes the subjunctive, respectively *hoṣeno* or *xāṣən* “(that) I may see”. In this respect, Kurdish differs in having mainly *bi-* in marking the subjunctive, but the core configuration is strikingly

⁷ After Matras (2000: 5 7-7), who also includes Persian, Arabic and Western Armenian. Cf. Pennacchietti (1988, 1995); Chyet (1995); Matras (2009: 259-60, 2011: 75); Matras and Sakel (2007: 845).

the same: Mark TAM before the verbal base and PAM after it. Unquestionably, we cannot preclude language-specific motivations giving rise to this type of system, but I find it highly unlikely that the converging patterns are completely incidental. Indeed, in contrast to common Semitic (cf. Gensler, 2011), one of the most drastic changes to the Eastern Neo-Aramaic verbal system is that the person agreement has become entirely restricted to suffixes, i.e. all the PAMs follow the verbal stem, but it lies beyond the scope of this paper to go into the details here. Similarly, and interestingly, the indicative negator is incompatible with the future marker in most dialects of NENA as in the Badini varieties of Northern Kurdish (Haig and Öpengin, forthcoming), such that the negative present and the negative future coincide in the form of the negated indicative-habitual⁸. The primary negator is *la* in NENA and adding it as a prefix or proclitic to the indicative yields forms like *lá-k-xāzən* meaning “I do not see” or “I will not see”. This parallels Kurdish as follows:

- (5) a. *ež* *ná-yê-m* (Kurmanji)
 DIR:I NEG:IND-come-1S
 b. *žana* *lá-k-ēs-ən* (J. Zakho; cf. Cohen, 2012: 438)
 I NEG-IND-come-1MS
 ‘I am not coming’ or ‘I will not come’

The material borrowing of Kurdish preverbal TAM-markers is extremely rare. One example that comes to mind is the Central Kurdish indicative-progressive preverb *da-* (cf. MacKenzie, 1961: 90, 96), which occurs only in a few cases with a past (perfective) stem to mark a past progressive in the Jewish dialect of Koy Sanjaq and one in that of Arbel: *da-rxîşle* “he was walking” (Mutzafi, 2004: 189.15) and *da-fitlu* “they were passing” (Khan, 1999: 112), compare Central Kurdish: *da-žoyşt* “he was leaving”, or *da-bâtîm* “I was coming” (MacKenzie, 1961: 96).

Apart from that, these examples of (possible) pattern replication demonstrate an overall functional match between constructions in Kurdish and Aramaic. This is what Matras and Sakel (2007) have termed *pivot-matching*. Pivots are equivalent or near-equivalent features and combinations thereof that are specific to this (type of) construction and facilitate the optimal syncretisation

⁸ In the Jewish dialect of Urmi (Khan 2008b), the negation is infixed between the future marker *b-* and the inflected verb, e.g. *ana b-la goren* “I’m not going to marry” (Garbell, 1965b: 197). Interestingly, in the (Christian) dialect of Bohtan, there is one example of a contamination, possibly, influenced by Kurdish: the future particle (*bət*) is unexpectedly combined with the indicative negator (which is *le*; subjunctive would be *la*), e.g. *ona bət le xožəanne əl xawri* “I will not see my friend” (Fox, 2002: 174 nt. 10). The order of morphemes is similar to what we would expect for the Kurdish dialects that employ a future marker, f. ex. *ež ê neçim mala hevalê xwe* “I will not go to my friend’s house” (p.c. E. Öpengin). It may be relevant to note that several NENA dialects in Central Kurdistan, such as the Jewish dialect of Suleimaniya, do not exhibit a future marker, possibly under the influence of Central Kurdish, which does not have a distinct form for the future either (see Fox, forthcoming 2014).

and extensions of the functional range between the model or source construction and its replicated or recipient counterpart.

When we amass some more complex constructions, we will see that the same principle holds. For instance, in combining two clauses, both Kurdish and Aramaic apply a finite subjunctive (against a non-finite verbal form as in English *He wants to go*) in same-subject subordinate clauses linked to preceding modal verbs expressing desire, ability, and obligation. This is one of the hallmarks of languages in the Kurdish and Aramaic speech area. We observe this, first of all, with expressions of desire, as reflected in Table 3 below.

Table 3. *Pivot-matching in the phrase ‘I want to go home’ in Aramaic and Kurdish*

	PRESENT INDICATIVE				PRESENT SUBJUNCTIVE			‘home’
	‘I’	IND-PROG	BASE	PAM	SUBJ	BASE	PAM	
Kurmanji	<i>ež</i>	<i>dî-</i>	<i>xvax</i>	<i>-im</i>	∅	<i>ber</i>	<i>-im</i>	<i>malê</i>
Badini	<i>min</i>	<i>dî-</i>	<i>vê</i>	<i>-t</i>	<i>bi-</i>	<i>ç</i>	<i>-im</i>	= <i>e mal</i>
Sorani	(<i>min</i>)	<i>a=</i>		<i>m-awe</i>	<i>bi-</i>	<i>ç</i>	<i>-im</i>	= <i>à mâte</i>
Turoyo	<i>ono</i>	<i>k-</i>	<i>əbç</i>	<i>-ono</i>	(<i>d-</i>)	<i>əçç</i>	<i>-î(no)</i>	<i>l-î=bayθo</i>
J. Zakho	<i>ʔāna</i>	<i>g-</i>	<i>ib</i>	<i>-ən</i>	∅	<i>ʔaç</i>	<i>-in</i>	<i>l-besa</i>
J. Urmi	<i>ana</i>	<i>g-</i>	<i>bê</i>	<i>-n</i>	∅	<i>eç</i>	<i>-én</i>	<i>belá</i>
J. Arbel	<i>ʔana</i>	<i>g-</i>	<i>bê</i>	<i>-n</i>	∅	<i>eç</i>	<i>-én</i>	<i>belá</i>
J. Saqqiz	(<i>ʔana</i>)	<i>g-</i>	<i>ebê</i>	<i>-na</i>	∅	<i>biç</i>	<i>-na</i>	<i>bela</i>

‘I want to go home.’

Note: Kurmanji, J. Zakho and J. Saqqiz (Matras, 2002: 60, 2009: 248, adapted glossing mine), J. Urmi (Garbell, 1965b: 230), J. Arbel (Khan, 1999: 442.94), Badini (p.c. E. Öpengin), and Sorani (Thackston, 2006a: 33).

The columns in Table 3. clearly show how constituents and their order are near-identical in varieties of NENA and Kurdish. Mainly the Sorani pronominal enclitics behave differently, such as the mobile oblique clitic *m-* “me”, which follows the TAM-marker *a-* but precedes the verbal base *awe*, as well as the directive enclitic *=á* “toward” (cf. Badini *=e*). This is similar to the fronted oblique (i.e. non-canonical) subject in Badini: *min divêt* lit. “To me, it wants”. Such oblique subjects do not occur in NENA with verbs meaning “desire”, as far as I am aware. Furthermore, distinct patterns are also found in NENA, such as (6) and (7):

- (6) **C. Tiyari** (Talay, 2009: 34.11)
walla bay-ən t-∅-aç-in l-xa ʔumra
 by.God IND:want-1MS that-SUBJ-go-1MS to-a church
 ‘By God, I want to go to a church.’
- (7) **C. Aradhin** (Krotkoff, 1982: 112.129)
ʔana k-ib-ən d-∅-aç-in l-ʔeta
 I IND:want-1MS that-SUBJ-go-1MS to-church
 ‘I want to go to church.’

However, a one-to-one correspondence is not essential to communicatively driven convergence (Matras, 1998b and elsewhere). The only prerequisite are

the matching pivots or shared features of functional equivalence between the source or model and recipient or replica language. First, the (possible) full expression of the first person singular pronoun “I”. Then two finite verbal forms follow in its footsteps inflected according to the template discussed above, i.e. preverbal encoding of TAM-information and mainly suffixal subject agreement. The first is indicative, the second subjunctive. The goal of the movement, “home”, is placed after the motion verb: in Kurdish in the oblique (*malê*) with a directive clitic (or the preposition *bo*) in most Kurmanji dialects and in Sorani; (see also Haig and Öpengin, forthcoming), and in Aramaic (lacking such case distinctions for nouns) with or without a directional preposition *l-* “to”. In this respect, I believe, the general factors that facilitate the replication are still there. And this also applies to other modal environments such as ability, as in example (8), and obligation, in example (9), where the subjunctive is used in a comparable way.

- (8) a. *eç* *nê-şê-m* *bi-hê-m* (Amidya Kurdish)
 DIR:I NEG-can-1S SUBJ-come-1S
 ‘I cannot come.’ (Blau, 1975: 84)
- b. *çana* *lâ-mş-ən* \emptyset -*çax-ən* (J. Amidya Aramaic)
 I NEG-can-1MS SUBJ-go-1MS
 ‘I cannot go.’ (Greenblatt 2011:274.38)
- (9) a. *t-vê-t* *tu* *b-în-i* (Amidya Kurdish)
 IND-want-3S DIR:you SUBJ-bring-2S
 ‘You have to bring.’ (Blau, 1975: 71)
- b. *g-əbe- \emptyset* \emptyset -*çax-ax* (J. Amidya Aramaic)
 IND-want-3MS SUBJ-go-2FS
 ‘You (f.) have to go.’ (Greenblatt, 2011: 247)

As shown in (9), an impersonal construction containing the verb “want, need” (beside Arabic-derived *lazim*) expresses obligation. In Suleimaniya, the linguistic matter of the modal verb also coincides phonetically along with the pattern:

- (10) a. *abe* *bi-ê-în* (Suleimaniya Kurdish)
 must SUBJ-go-1PL
- b. *gbe* \emptyset -*hez-ex* (J. Suleimaniya Aramaic)
 must SUBJ-go-1PL
 ‘We must go.’ (Khan, 2007: 211)

This phonetic resemblance and independence as an invariable modal auxiliary presumably even amounted to fully-fledged copying of the Central Kurdish form *dabê* as *dabi* besides the inherited *gbe* (cf. [9b] and [10b] above) in the Jewish dialects of Arbel and Koy Sanjaq, compare:

- (11) a. *dabê* *bi-ê-im* (Bingird Kurdish; MacKenzie, 1961: 106)
 must SUBJ-go-1S
- b. *dabi* \emptyset -*çax-en* (J. Arbel Aramaic; Khan, 1999: 255)

- must SUBJ-go-1MS
 ‘I (ms.) must go.’
- (12) *dabi* Ø-ʔeʔ-ex-wa *Itām* (J. Koy Sanjaq Aramaic)
 must SUBJ-go-1PL-PAST there
 ‘We should have gone there.’ (Mutzafi, 2004: 111)

The convergence of the Kurdish and Aramaic clause linking strategies is not exclusive to same subject complements. Although there isn’t the space for a detailed discussion, it will be evident that non-coreferential subjects embedded in a subordinate clause can also be used in a similar fashion. Consider the following sentence in varieties of Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Kurmanji:

- (13) Matras (2002: 61, adapted glossing, added parentheses)
 a. (ʔana) g-ib-ən (ʔābəd) ʔon-ad laxma (J. Zakho)
 I IND-want-1MS you buy:SUBJ-2MS bread
 b. (ʔana) g-ebē-na (ʔad) laxma ʕaql-ēt (J. Saqqiz)
 I IND-want-1MS you bread buy:SUBJ-2MS
- (14) (ono) k-əbf-ono (bat) d-šūql-at lahmo (Turoyo)
 I IND-want-1FS you SUBJ-buy-2FS bread
- (15) eʔ di-xwaʔ-im ku tu nan bi-kir-ī (Kurmanji)
 DIR:1S IND-want-1S that DIR:you bread SUBJ-buy-2S
 ‘I (m./f.) want you (ms./fs.) to buy bread.’

The change in subject is explicitly included by means of an independent subject pronoun (Aramaic *ʔābəd*, *ʔad*, *bat*; Kurdish *tu*, all meaning “you”) in the embedded clause containing the subjunctive. The noteworthy word order in the J. dialect of Saqqiz is presumably under the influence of Central Kurdish. Note, however, that the embedded subject can be sensitive to focus in Neo-Aramaic and is regularly dropped.

Another correspondence in usage of the subjunctive is the expression of the so-called proximative aspect using *wext* in Kurdish. The proximative refers to a state of affairs just prior to the beginning of an event, much like English *be about to happen* and *on the verge of* and *on the point of happening* (Noorlander, 2013). The Kurdish word *wext* meaning “time” is itself derived from Arabic *waqt* denoting “time” or “when”. In combination with the copula and the main verb in the subjunctive, it constitutes a proximative construction, as in *wext=e bikerūt* “He is about to fall” in (16a) below. We could identify this construction according to the pattern of *wext* + BE + SUBJUNCTIVE. The word *wext* “time” has been borrowed into varieties of Eastern Neo-Aramaic as *waxt*, along with the accompanying function of a marker of proximative aspect. In the exact same pattern with a copula (*ile*) and the subjunctive, we find examples such as (16c) in Aramaic.

- (16) a. *wext=e* *bi-kew-ūt* (Badini)
 time= COP:3S SUBJ-fall-3S
 ‘He is about to fall.’ (p.c. E. Öpengin)
- b. *waxt=a* *bi-kew-ē* (Sorani)
 time= COP:3S SUBJ-fall-3S

- ‘He is about to fall.’ (p.c. E. Öpengin)
 c. *waxt=ile* *pel-∅* (J. Koy Sanjaq Aramaic)
 time=COP:3MS SUBJ:fall-3MS
 ‘He is about to fall.’ (Mutzafi, 2004: 249)

In this construction, it is the copula that changes a bare noun *waxt* meaning “time” into a proximative marker, qualifying the verb in the subjunctive. This is a clear example of pattern replication, showing how the Aramaic enclitic copula (=ile) is functionally equivalent to the Kurdish copula (=e, =a). In the Jewish dialect of Zakho, however, we find a possible case of matter replication in the same construction, e.g. *waxta ∅-māyəs* “he may die any moment” (Sabar, 2002: 154). Here, there is no Aramaic copula, but it is the final -a that makes *waxt* a proximative marker. Possibly, this final -a of *waxta* reflects the Badini copula =e in *wext=e / waxt=a/* “lit. time it is”, which was replicated as a fixed expression *waxta* “almost” into Neo-Aramaic. Moreover, the adverb *waxti* (from Kurdish *wextî* “soon”) related to this has been copied in a similar way:

- (17) a. *šiv* *wextî amade* *bi-b-e* Kurmanji (Rizgar, 1993: 218)
 dinner soon ready SUBJ-be-3S
 ‘Dinner is almost ready.’
 b. *waxti* *d-qijl-an-wo* Turoyo (Midyat; Ritter, 1979: 551)
 soon SUBJ-freeze-1FS-PAST
 ‘I (f.) almost froze.’
 c. *waxti* *parx-an-wa* J. Sanandaj (Khan, 2009: 621)
 soon SUBJ:fly-1FS-PAST
 ‘I (f.) almost flew.’

Kurdish variation within Eastern Neo-Aramaic

The Kurdish dialectal landscape is in several ways profoundly responsible for the diversification of Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects. This shows how entangled Kurdish and Aramaic varieties are dialectologically speaking. A typical case is the numeral system. In the formation of ordinals, dialects of Kurdish behave differently and the Jewish dialects of NENA accordingly. In the Kurdish variety of Zakho, ordinals are created on the basis of cardinals by annexing them to the nominal head in the oblique case, as in *hayv-ā çār-ê* “fourth month” (MacKenzie, 1962: 364). This genitive or possessive relationship is otherwise known as *ezafe*. The pattern of ordinals is very similar in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialect of Zakho (see Sabar, 2002), compare (18a) and (18b) below.

- (18) a. *hayv-ā* *çār-ê* ‘fourth month’ (Zakho Kurdish)
 month-EZ:FS four-FS:OBL
 b. *yarxa-d* *çarba* ‘id.’ (J. Zakho Aramaic)
 month-of four

The functional parallel to the *ezafe* is the linking enclitic -d. The converging structure is that the ordinal is formed by annexing the cardinal (*çār, çarba*) to the quantified noun (*hayv, yarxa*) that is characteristic of a general process of

combining nouns into one phrase through a linker (*ezafe*, genitive *-ā*). Note that Aramaic lacks any case marking on nouns (like the Kurdish oblique *-ē* in *šār-ē*), which precludes a potential correspondence in this respect. Moreover, the J. Zakho system more or less already existed in earlier Aramaic with a chronological sense (i.e. **yārḥā d-ṯarbaš* “month number four”), but it was extended and ultimately replaced the originally productive ordinal adjectives (cf. CS *rvšāyā* “fourth”, *ḥmšāyā* “fifth” etc.) most likely due to contact with Kurdish.

When we cross the Greater Zab, we move into the area of Sorani or Central Kurdish influence. These dialects typically construct the ordinals by adding the morpheme *-am* to the cardinal possibly extended with the superlative *-in*, e.g. *pēnj-am-in* “fifth” in the variety of Suleimaniya (MacKenzie, 1961: 72-63). This salient morpheme has been borrowed as *-min* in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialect of Suleimaniya (Khan, 2004a: 206), yielding the following correspondence:

- | | | | |
|------|----|--|--------------------------------|
| (19) | a. | <i>pēnj-am-in</i>
five- <i>am</i> -SUPL | ‘fifth’ (Suleimaniya Kurdish) |
| | b. | <i>xamšā-min</i>
five- <i>min</i> | ‘id.’ (J. Suleimaniya Aramaic) |

The overall structure is again the same, which we could describe as follows: an ORDINAL is composed of the CARDINAL + *-am* + *in*, reinterpreted by Aramaic speakers as CARDINAL+*-a* + *-min*.

Another trait distinguishing Kurdish varieties is the system of marking definiteness (more or less equivalent to English *the*). In Aramaic, nouns used to be declined for definiteness based on a post-positive article (cf. *malk* “(a) king”, *malk-ā* “the king”), but these forms gradually supplanted the entire nominal system in the Eastern varieties (*malkā* “king”). Unlike Turoyo, which developed a new system based on demonstratives (cf. Jastrow, 2005), and atypical of other Semitic languages, many NENA dialects parallel the Kurmanji (and Turkish) pattern (Kapeliuk, 2002, 2011):

(20)			C. Barwar	:	Kurmanji
			(Khan, 2008a)		(Thackston, 2006b)
DEF	FS	‘the girl’	<i>brata</i>		<i>keç</i>
	MS	‘the man’	<i>gawra</i>		<i>mirov</i>
INDF	FS	‘a (particular) girl’	<i>(ḏa/)xa-brata</i>		<i>keç-ek(-ê)</i>
	MS	‘a (particular) man’	<i>xa-gawra</i>		<i>mirov-ek(-î)</i>

Indefinite nouns are morphologically marked by an indefinite article based on the cardinal “one” (NENA *xa*, (*g*)*ḏa*; K. (*y*)*ek*, cf. Turk. *bir*), whereas definite nouns are unmarked. However, it should be pointed out that certain functional properties of anaphoric demonstratives in NENA dialects amount to the same properties attributed to a definite article (Khan, 2008c), i.e. *ṯe-brata*

“that/the girl” respectively *ʔo-gawra* “that/the man” (cf. Turoyo *i-barθo* “the girl” respectively *ú-gawro* “the man”).⁹

Like Kurdish (MacKenzie, 1961: 152), nouns modified by an indefinite qualifier also take the indefinite article, cf. the Christian dialect of Barwar below in (21). The gradual loss of gender distinction between *xa* (masculine) and *gða* (feminine) is probably under Kurdish influence.

(21)	C. Barwar	:	Kurmanji
	(Khan, 2008a:19, 534)		(MacKenzie, 1961: 152, 161)
a.	<i>xa ʔarba xamsa gay-e</i>		<i>čār pēnj darʔa-k-ā</i>
	INDF four five time-PL		four five time-INDF-pl
	‘four or five times’		
b.	<i>xa-kma yom-e</i>		<i>čand rōž-ak-ā</i>
	INDF-some day-PL		some day-INDF-PL
	‘some days’		
c.	<i>kul-xa-naša</i>		<i>hami keas-ak</i>
	every-INDF-person		each person-INDF
	‘each person’		
d.	<i>xa-ga xeta</i>		<i>jar-ak di</i>
	INDF-time:FS other:FS		time:FS-INDF other
	‘another time, again’		

Moreover, again certain Jewish dialects beyond the Greater Zab in Central Kurdistan have borrowed the definite article from Sorani:

(22)		J. Sul.	:	Sorani
		(Khan, 2004a)		(Thackston, 2006a)
DEF	FS	‘the girl’	<i>brat-āké</i>	<i>kiç-aká</i>
	MS	‘the man’	<i>gor-āké</i>	<i>pyan-aká</i>
INDF	FS	‘a (particular) girl’	<i>xa bratá</i>	<i>kiç-ék</i>
	MS	‘a (particular) man’	<i>xa gorá</i>	<i>pyan-ék</i>

The definite suffix *-aké* is a dialectal hallmark of Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic in North-East Iraq and West Iran.¹⁰ The final *-é* is somewhat puzzling and could be derived through contraction from the Sorani singular oblique form *-aka-y*¹¹ or alternatively the feminine counterpart *-aké* found in Akre (MacKenzie, 1961: 154). It should be noted that this morpheme also occurs in Gurani-Hawramani (MacKenzie, 1966: 16) as *-aké* for both feminine

⁹ NENA dialects also show different strategies of marking definiteness. A definite object, for example, is generally morphologically marked as such by means of object agreement on the verb. The absence of agreement would qualify the object as indefinite. Compare *haç-et-te korrona* “you (ms.) see the boy” (lit. see-you-him boy) and *haçet (ha) korrona* “you (ms.) see (a) boy” (Hertevin; Jastrow, 1988: 33).

¹⁰ Including at least Arbel (Khan, 1999), Koy Sanjaq (Mutzañi, 2004), Saqqiz (Israeli, 1998) and Sanandaj (Khan, 2009).

¹¹ Extant in Piždar and Mukri dialects of Central Kurdish, northeast of Sulemaniyya, see MacKenzie (1961: 57-9), Khan (1999: 173) and elsewhere.

singular and masculine plural. The same definite article has been borrowed by Sonqor Turkic in a comparable fashion (Bulut, 2005: 254).

This is a highly exceptional case of borrowing; not only for the reason that the concrete borrowing of definite and indefinite articles is said to be rare (Matras and Sakel, 2007: 845; Matras, 2009: 216), but also for the reason that bound morphemes are assumed to be less prone to borrowing (Aikhenvald, 2006: 36). However, the latter factor is more subtle, since the morpheme also shows clitic-like or semi-bound behaviour in Kurdish (p.c. G. Haig)¹², although, we must note that, once incorporated, it does behave as a suffix in Aramaic.

The overall pattern can appear strikingly similar, such that adjectives are marked for definiteness, when they modify a definite noun:

- | | | | | | |
|------|----|----------------|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|
| (23) | a. | <i>xahusta</i> | <i>rabt-āké</i> | ‘the elder sister’ | (J. Suleimaniya Aramaic) |
| | | sister:FS | big:FS-DEF | | (Khan, 2004a: 232, 2007: 202) |
| | b. | <i>birā</i> | <i>ganr-aká</i> | ‘the elder brother’ | (Central Kurdish) |
| | | brother:MS | big-DEF | | (MacKenzie, 1961: 64) |

Yet the morphosyntax is rather different. In Aramaic, the plural noun takes the same definite suffix, as in *gur-āké* ‘the men’ from indefinite *gur-e* ‘men’ vs. *gor-āké* ‘the man’ from indefinite *gora* ‘(a) man’, whereas in Kurdish the plurality is expressed on the article by *-ān*, compare Sorani *pyāw-ak-ān* ‘the men’ from *pyāw-ān*. One can easily combine possessive pronominals with the definite article in Kurdish, but this is impossible in Aramaic, compare ‘my brother’ and ‘my brothers’:

- | | | | | | |
|------|----|------------------|--------------------|--|--------------------------|
| (24) | a. | <i>axon-i</i> | <i>axon-awal-i</i> | | (J. Suleimaniya Aramaic) |
| | | brother-my | brother-PL-my | | (Khan, 2004a: 195) |
| | b. | <i>birā-ka-m</i> | <i>birā-kan-im</i> | | (Central Kurdish) |
| | | brother-DEF-my | brother-PL:DEF-my | | (MacKenzie, 1961: 57-60) |

On the other hand, it should not be combinable with demonstratives in Kurdish, though it is freely so in Aramaic (as is typical of Central Semitic), cf. Sorani *aw dawlāmand-ān-á* ‘those rich people’ (cf. Thackston, 2006a:8-10) vs. Aramaic *?o dawlāmand-aké* (Khan, 2004a: 232). All of this indicates how a Central Kurdish morpheme has been integrated into the NENA morphosyntax. In more extreme cases of borrowing, we even find sporadic transfers of the Central Kurdish indefinite state in the Jewish dialect of Sanandaj and Kerend. Here there are basically three strategies to indicate indefiniteness (Khan, 2009: 233-4): most often the Aramaic article *xa*, e.g. *xa broná* ‘a boy’, but also the Kurdish suffix *-ék*, e.g. *bron-ék* ‘idem’, besides a combination of the two, e.g. *xa jwab-é* ‘an answer’ (cf. more clitic-like: J. Kerend *xa gorá-e* besides *xa gorá-ék*

¹² The suffix *-aká* can follow, for instance, complex or compound noun phrases constructed with a particular linker *-a*, e.g. [*hotel-a bash*]-*aká* ‘the good hotel’ (Thackston, 2006a: 11). This could have facilitated the replication of the definite article into Aramaic, since nouns in NENA typically end in *-a*.

“a man”, Jastrow, 1997: 357). Moreover, it is noteworthy that the accompanying pattern can be the same:

- | | | |
|------|------------------|--------------------------|
| (25) | Central Kurdish | (Suleimaniya) |
| | <i>har-ê</i> | <i>kas-êk</i> |
| | every-what | person-INDF |
| | ‘whosoever’ | (MacKenzie, 1962: 36.87) |
| (26) | Neo-Aramaic | (J. Sanandaj) |
| | <i>ga-harî</i> | <i>bel-ê</i> |
| | in-whatever | house-INDF |
| | ‘in every house’ | (Khan, 2009: 234) |

In the eastern periphery of the Neo-Aramaic speech area, a similar construction is used in the dialect of Mlahso. This is not a dialect of NENA, but closely related to Turoyo (i.e. Central Neo-Aramaic). The same Kurmanji suffix is replicated as *-(e)ki* without altering the stress (Jastrow, 1994:60 and elsewhere) and is added to nouns to mark their indefiniteness. It appears to be fully integrated into the language, although there is an alternative strategy to use *ha* “one” as in Turoyo (and *xa* in NENA). When combined with inherited nouns, the *-e* assimilates fully to the preceding *-ó*, as in *lilyó* “night” : *lilyó-ki* “a certain night, once upon a night” and *yomó* “day” : *yomó-ki* “a certain day”. It can be added to loanwords, such as *kára* “(a) time” (< Arabic *karrá*) : *káráki* “once, a time” (cf. Kurm. *cárekê*), *borabór* “clamor” (< Kurm. *borebor*) : *borabór-eki* “a clamor” and *čekk-eki* “a check” (< English *check*). It is noteworthy that this borrowed morpheme also contains the Kurdish masculine oblique ending *-î* (of Kurmanji), as possibly in the definite suffix *-aké* discussed above.

Conclusion

We have explored a few examples of how Kurdish and Aramaic diversity is entangled through replicated matter and converging patterns. Without doubt, dialectal variation within speech communities is an important factor to consider when studying contact between them. While we may find mostly (though not exclusively) pattern replication in the Jewish NENA dialects to the west of the Greater Zab river, we find more often (though not exclusively) matter replication in those to the east of it, i.e. in the Jewish dialects in North-East Iraq and West Iran belonging to the Trans-Zab Jewish cluster. This geographical variation of the Jewish NENA dialects coincides well with major Kurdish dialect groups and gives clues to (the perception of) salient Kurdish dialectal hallmarks. It is noteworthy that, in borrowing Kurdish material, much of the structural integrity of the Aramaic system is kept intact, whereas this is, as expected, rather the other way around in cases of structural borrowing. This could support claims generally made in contact linguistics (Weinreich, 1953; Silva-Corvalán, 1994; Matras, 2009) that language maintenance plays an important role in the convergence of patterns in contexts such as the Kurdish-Aramaic bilingualism that prevails among the Neo-Aramaic-speaking communities in Kurdistan. As a strategic compromise, speakers

maintain loyalty to their Neo-Aramaic dialect by selecting typically Aramaic *matter*, but permitting non-Aramaic *patterns* to converge in order to optimally syncretise communicative tasks and gain maximal linguistic adaptability in bilingual interaction. There is, nonetheless, no precise way to predict how the variation in the model or source language, i.e. Kurdish, would affect the replicating or receiving language, i.e. Aramaic, since bilingual speakers can still creatively manipulate the pattern according to their own needs. The results can be completely idiosyncratic. Each dialect or dialect cluster may, as it were, “fiddle” or “tinker” with the borrowed matter or pattern in its own particular system, yielding an independent contact-induced innovation. However, the differences in types of replication would suggest that the sociolinguistic profile of the Trans-Zab Jewish speech community is significantly distinct from that of the Jewish speakers in North-West Iraq. (Whether this also applies to the Christian community is a question for future research). Central Kurdish (respectively Sorani) presumably had a different social status for Trans-Zab Jewish speakers of NENA than Northern Kurdish (respectively Badini and Kurmanji). They could represent two distinct strategies (and/or perhaps even types of language attitudes) of bilingual societies in improving the communicative efficiency. We may tentatively infer, then, that Jewish Neo-Aramaic speakers west to the Greater Zab largely avoided copying linguistic matter from Northern Kurdish due to language maintenance. By contrast, those to the east rather complied with the Aramaic structural constraints by integrating the linguistic matter from Central Kurdish, i.e. the dominant and prestigious language.

There are numerous other Kurdish-Aramaic contact phenomena of the kind mentioned only briefly here that could change these tentative conclusions, but they lie outside the scope of this article and belong to a future endeavour. It is expected that the same functional-communicative approach taken in this paper will yield fruitful results in further studies of Kurdish-Aramaic contact.

Abbreviations and symbols

1	first person	J.	Jewish
2	second person	Kurm.	Kurmanji
3	third person	M	masculine
>	developed into	NEG	negation
<	is derived from	NENA	North Eastern Neo-Aramaic
C.	Christian	PAM	person agreement marker
COP	copula	PL	plural
DEF	definite	S	singular
EZ	<i>ezafe</i>	SUBJ	subjunctive
F	feminine	Sul.	Suleimaniya
IND	indicative	TAM	tense aspect mood
INDF	indefinite		

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¹³ Uncited data are from the author's field notes consulting with informants.

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