Alignment in eastern Neo-Aramaic languages from a typological perspective

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1. INTRODUCTION

"today's morphology is yesterday's syntax"
Talmy Givón (1971: 413)[1]

1.1. The Enigma of Ergativity in Aramaic

Although ergativity is a well-known cross-linguistic phenomenon attested in languages such as Eskimo-Aleut, Basque and Caucasian languages, it is extraodinary to find it in a Semitic language. In traditional terms (e.g. Dixon 1994), ergativity is defined as the arrangement where the subject (S) of an intransitive clause (such as *I* in *I died*) and the patient/object (P/O) of a transitive clause (such as *me* in *He killed me*) are treated in the same way yet differently from the agent (A) in the transitive construction (such as *He* in *He killed me*).

An example of ergative alignment can be found in the Aramaic dialect spoken by the Jews from Sulaymaniyah (Kurdish Silêmanî) in North-East Iraq (Khan 2007a:154). This is illustrated by (1) below. In this example, *baxtăke* 'the woman' is cross-referenced by means of the same suffixal person form *-a* in both clauses, but it does not have the same syntactic function. In (a), *baxtăke* is the subject of the intransitive verb *m-y-l* 'die', while, in (b), it is the object of the transitive verb *q-ṭ-l* 'kill'. Moreover, the subject of the transitive verb in (b) is marked with an entirely different suffix, i.e. *-le*. This is an ergative marking of subject and object contrary to the better known accusative (case) systems found in most widely studied European languages such as German and Latin but also in well-known Semitic languages such as Akkadian and Classical Arabic. In these languages, the verb would agree with the subject of both the transitive and intransitive and mark the noun in the nominative case. The object is singled out using the accusative case.

(1) **Jewish dialect of Sulaymaniyah** (NE Iraq; Khan 2007a:154)

a. ***baxtăké*** *mil-**a***
the.woman die$_{PFV}$-she
'**The woman** died.'

b. *gorăké* ***baxtăké*** *qiṭl-**a**-le*
the.man the.woman kill$_{PFV}$-her-he
'The man killed (**lit. her**) **the woman**.'

[1] Cf. Hoberman (1989:122).

The ergative alignment is encoded by means of verbal agreement (*-a*, *-le*) in Aramaic. Moreover, it is conditioned morphologically by the inflectional base *qṭil-* that is historically a resultative participle (cf. Khan 2007a). It is never manifested in the imperfective present (or past) constructions that do not have this basis.

Indeed, there is a particular transitive construction in the eastern varieties of Aramaic, known as the *qṭil l-* or *šmiʕ l-*construction, that has been puzzling Semitists for a long time. The example below from the Aramaic dialect spoken by the Jews from Amadiya (Kurdish Amêdî, NW Iraq) may illustrate this. The first suffixal person index *-i* agrees with the object (*ʔanna gure* 'these men'), while the suffixal index *-la* agrees with the agent.

(2) *ʔe* *baxta* *šmiʔ-i-la* *ʔanna* *gure*
DEM:FS woman:FS hear$_{PFV}$-3PL-3FS DEM:PL man:PL
'The woman heard these men.' (Hoberman 1983:132)

At face value, this appears to be nothing special. And yet, the same suffixes occur in the corresponding clause in the present tense marking the opposite syntactic function:

(3) *ʔanna* *gure* *k-šamʔ-i-la* *ʔe* *baxta*
DEM:PL man:PL IND-hear$_{IPFV}$-3PL-3FS DEM:FS woman:FS
'These men hear the woman.' (based on Hoberman 1983:132)

The first suffix *-i* expresses the agent (*ʔanna gure* 'these men') but the second suffix *-la* the object. Students of Semitic languages find this confusing, since the functions of the morphologically identical suffixes are inverted. The construction in example (2) typically expresses the perfective past, while example (3) represents the syntax of imperfective constructions. The main morphological difference between the two is the inflectional base *šmiʔ-* (perfective of *šmʕ* 'hear') against *šamʔ-* (imperfective of *šmʕ* 'hear').

This alternation and inversion of argument encoding is reminiscent of the active and passive voice. Indeed, early grammatical descriptions treat the perfective transitive construction as a passive form with an active sense (for example, Rhétoré 1912:83; Polotsky 1979:208). In a passive, the patient (or undergoer) becomes the subject, the verbal form is modified, and the agent (or actor) is not expressed as the subject. To quote Polotsky (ibid.):

> Since the inverse function of the identical suffixes concerns the roles of actor and undergoer and is contingent upon a formal difference between the bases … it is in these that the cause must be sought. The interchange between the suffixes must be the effect of the bases themselves contrasting with one another in respect of their Voice… we should have to infer that the bases … express the contrast of Active vs. Passive. The passive character … provides the key to the whole construction.

Despite this strong language ("we should have to infer", "the passive character" "provides the key"), recently, such explanations have been abandoned in favor of split ergativity[2]. In such a split, the subject (S) in an intransitive construction is treated the same as either the agent (A) or the patient (P) in the transitive construction depending on grammatical or semantic properties such as imperfective or perfective aspect. Yet, no other hitherto known Semitic language has been convincingly shown to evince ergativity (Waltisberg 2002; Hasselbach 2013:55-65) and most of Aramaic itself unmistakably records a nominative-accusative system for three millennia like many other Semitic languages. If ergative(-like) properties are claimed to have found their way into one of the most unlikely places, this raises fundamental questions. Yet, first we need to ask what are these properties, if they are are there at all, and how are we to characterize them? This is precisely what this thesis explores.

1.2. Subgrouping of Neo-Aramaic

Aramaic is a subbranch of the Semitic language family and is closely related to Hebrew and Arabic. It is generally known for being the language of Jesus and of parts of the Old Testament (sections in the books of Daniel and Ezra). It was the official *lingua franca* of ancient West Asia in antiquity. At its height, it encompassed an area stretching from Egypt into Afghanistan. Aramaic is also enshrined as a literary vehicle of Judaism and Christianity. Jewish Babylonian Aramaic, for instance, is a principle language of the Talmud and closely related to modern Aramaic. And most Aramaic literature comes to us through Syriac, the principle language of several Christian churches in the Middle East and beyond. Early translations of the Gospels and the Old Testament were written in Syriac—the standard Syriac Bible version is known as the *Pšiṭta*. The Aramaic spoken today, called Neo-Aramaic in this work (also known as 'Neo-Syriac', 'Sureth', 'Chalde-

[2] See Section 2.4 for a definition and detailed discussion.

an', or 'Assyrian'[3]), comprises pockets of an extremely endangered group of minority languages spoken by primarily Jewish and Christian communities originating in the Middle East. The vast majority of speakers are found dispersed around the globe.

Although the internal classification of Neo-Aramic languages is far from problematic and presumably a continuum (see Kim 2008, 2010), certain clusters, respectively, subgroups can be discerned. The dialectology of Neo-Aramaic is further complicated by the speaker's religious affinity (Christian, Jewish, Mandaean, Muslim), partly by register (written vs. spoken language), and by contact with neighboring non-Aramaic languages (see Noorlander 2014). Most speakers have left their traditional terrotiry for political and economical reasons in this or the previous century. Many of these dialects are endangered or have already gone extinct in the worldwide dispersion of speakers.

More complex and non-accusative alignment patterns are mainly found in North Eastern Neo-Aramaic in the western periphery of dialects with Christian affinity and in the eastern periphery of dialects with Jewish affinity. The Trans-Zab Jewish dialects also generally exhibit a predominantly OBJ-V word order (see §3.3.3).

1.2.1. Western and Eastern Neo-Aramaic

Scholars generally distinguish between two major groups of modern Aramaic languages (Hoberman 1989:5), namely:

Western Neo-Aramaic (Christian/Muslim, Anti-Lebanon Mountains SW Syria)

Eastern Neo-Aramaic:

Central Neo-Aramaic (Christian, Ṭurʿabdin, SE Turkey, NW Syria)

North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (Jewish/Christian, SE Turkey, N Iraq, NW Iran)

Neo-Mandaic or *South Eastern Neo-Aramaic* (Mandaean, SW Iran)

1.2.1.1. Western Neo-Aramaic

The Western group is confined to relatively small communities in Syria. At the end of the previous century, Arnold (1990) mentions a diminishing thousands of speakers that consist mainly of Christians belonging to the Greek Orthodox or

[3] This term is not to be confounded with the ancient, extinct Assyrian dialect of Akkadian, a distinct Semitic language.

Greek Catholic Church and for one-third of Muslims in the towns Maʕlula, Baxʕa and Jubbʕadin on the Anti-Lebanon mountain range in Syria near the Lebanon border 60 km north of Damascus. Unfortunately, much has changed since the Syrian Civil War and many have fled the area since. The Western Neo-Aramaic does have traits in common with Eastern Neo-Aramaic, especially Central Neo-Aramaic (see §1.2.2). Since it does not exhibit non-accusative alignment and is typologically closer to pre-modern Aramaic, it will not be discussed in this dissertation.

1.2.1.2. Eastern Neo-Aramaic

Eastern Neo-Aramaic (ENA) is an umbrella term for several language groups spoken by Jews, Christians and Mandaeans in the Middle East and beyond, generally subdivided into Central Neo-Aramaic, North Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Neo-Mandaic (or South Eastern Neo-Aramaic). Of these three, ***Neo-Mandaic*** is most poorly documented. It is mainly confined to middle-aged speakers adhering to the Mandaean religion in or from the cities Ahvaz (provincial capital) and Korramshahr in the Iranian province Khuzestan (Häberl 2009). Neo-Mandaic differs in many typological respects from the other Neo-Aramaic languages and, like Western Neo-Aramaic, it is much closer to pre-modern Aramaic. For this reason, it will not be discussed in this monograph.

By far the most diverse group of Eastern Neo-Aramaic, with about 150 dialects (Khan 2011), is ***North Eastern Neo-Aramaic*** (NENA), spoken by Jewish (J.) and Christian (C.) communities in West and North West Iran (Iranian Kurdistan and Iranian Azerbaijan), North Iraq (Iraqi Kurdistan) north of the river Tigris and in South East Turkey, many of whom have fled the area in the previous century. Although the internal differentiation of NENA is to some extent comparable to that of a language family, it is a common practice to speak of NENA in terms of dialects. They are primarily named after the town where they at least used to be spoken with the additional specification of the religious affiliations of the speakers, since the Jewish and Christian varieties from the same town can differ greatly. Christian speakers generally belong to either the Chaldean Catholic Church (in communion with Rome) or the (Assyrian) Church of the East (independent), both East Syriac traditions of Christianity. Their Neo-Aramaic dialects are also known as Chaldean or Assyrian.

Central Neo-Aramaic (= CNA) comprises Mlaḥsó, once spoken in Lice in the province of Diyarbakır (Jastrow 1994) but now extinct, and Ṭuroyo (Ṭur. also known as *Suryoyo* or *Surayt*), which exhibits slight dialectal variation and is spoken by Christians in or from the area known as Ṭurʕabdin in South East Tur-

key south of the Tigris and Qamishli in North West Syria. They practice mainly West Syriac traditions, primarily belonging to the Syriac Orthodox Church.

1.2.2. Geographic Distribution of North Eastern Neo-Aramaic

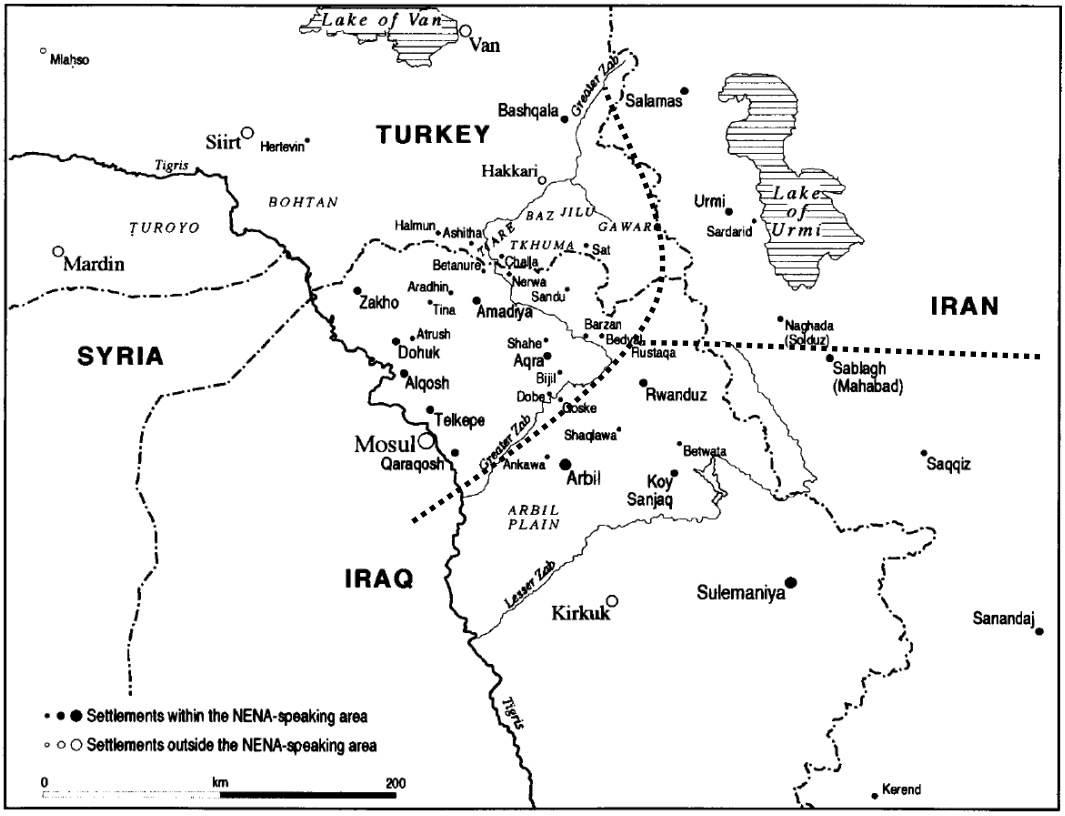
The internal subgrouping of North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (= NENA) is too complex to fully appreciate here but a few remarks are required. NENA is best approached in terms of a dialect continuum[4]. Figure 1 below presents a map of the area and several towns known to have (had) NENA-speaking communities in the previous century. Mainly the Christian varieties in Turkey (e.g. Bohtan, Hertevin) and the Jewish varieties east to the Greater Zab river and in North West Iran reveal complex alignment types not found in the core NENA area. The names of the towns are generally Aramaic and do not necessarily reflect the equivalent in other regional languages.

After the fall of the Ottoman empire, the emergence of new nations such as Iraq, Iran, Syria and Turkey and the beginning of Kurdish struggle for autonomy, the Aramaic speakers found themselves largely in the cross-fire between Kurds and central governments and left their traditional territory. Most of the Jewish community left the region in the 1950s and settled in the young state of Israel. During the First World War most Christians fled Turkey where an ethnic cleansing occured in 1915. Since the 1960s the Christian community has massively though gradually left for Europe, the US, Canada, Australia and South America. Following the American invasion and occupation of Iraq, the instability in the area reached a catastrophic climax in the turmoils of the Syrian Civil War and Islamic State's (*Daesh*'s) reign of terror in Syria and Iraq, until Islamic State was ultimately defeated in the battles of Mosul (July, 2017) and Raqqa (October, 2017). Many Christians chose to return and remain in Iraq, although the material damage is enormous.

Accordingly, NENA dialectology is for a large part a historical reconstruction of once vibrant variation in and before the previous century. Dialects display a staggering degree of diversity on every level. Certain major clusters along the dialect continuum can be distinguished. It is most convenient to approach this in terms of core and periphery. Christian dialects reach further into the west in southeastern Turkey, while Jewish varieties beyond the Greater Zab river scatter further into the east well into western Iran.

[4] See, for instance, Kim (2008) and Mutzafi (2008b).

Figure 1. *The NENA-speaking area*



Source: *Mutzafi 2004a:13. Dotted lines my addition.*

1.2.2.1. Christian Varieties: Core and Periphery

The core NENA-speaking area is roughly the area north of the Tigris in Northern Iraq, flowing in between the Greater Zab river, stretching into Turkey and Iran. This includes Iraqi towns such as Barwar (Khan 2008a; not indicated on the map), Nerwa, Zaxo, Alqosh, Arbil, and so forth. Turkish Hakkari used to consist of several dense tribe-related clusters including Baz (south to Kara Kuş; Mutzafi 2000) and Jilu (Fox 1997) and near to the Iraqi border the 'Ashirat' clan dialects, including Upper and Lower Ṭyare and Txuma, and the Mount Judi dialects like Bēṣpən (Sinha 2000) and Gaznax (Gutman 2015) (both not indicated on the map). The city Van and Bashqala (Başkale) are utmost northern outposts in Turkey directly south of which the Hakkari region. We can further discern the following clusters:

- **Western**: In the western periphery in South East Turkey, one finds a cluster of Christian dialects in and around Hertevin (Turkish Ekindüzü; Jastrow 1988) and Umra (not indicated on the map) in the Siirt province. These typically exhibit a uvular /ḥ/ where other dialects have velar /x/ (Talay 2009:44). Other dialects in the western periphery are those in the 'Bohtan' region, such as Bohtan (Fox 2009) and Ḥassane (Turkish Kösreli, not indi cated on the map; Jastrow 1997).
- **Iranian Azerbaijan**: Dialects in Northwest Iran form another cluster such as Salamas (Persian Salmas), Urmi (Persian Orumiya; Khan 2016) and neighboring villages (Younansardaroud 2001) west of lake Urmia.
- **Southern**: Christian communities in the Mosul plain such as Alqosh, Telkepe (Ar. Tall Kayf) and Qaraqosh (Ar. Bakhdida) constitute a southern periphery. Certain Christian varieties in the Iraqi province of Sulemaniyya (Kurdish Silêmanî, Arabic Sulaymaniyyah; Khan 2004a) and Iranian Kurdistan, such as Sanandaj (als known as Senaya, Kurdish Sine; Panoussi 1990), constitute a southeastern periphery.

1.2.2.2. Jewish Varieties: The Greater Zab River

With respect to the Jewish varieties, the current of the Greater Zab river in Iraq functions as a natural border separating western dialects such as Amidya (or Amadiya in Arabic, Amêdî in Kurdish) Zaxo and Dohuk/Dohok (Kurdish Dihok) in the Dohuk province of Iraq from the other dialects to the east[5]. These communities generally identify themselves as speakers of *lishana didan* or *d*(*id*)*eni* 'our own language'. The Jewish community in Barzan north to the Great Zab also belongs to this group (Mutzafi 2002a), so that the dividing line continues up northeast, even though the Great Zab flows in a curve to the northwest. Figure 2 below displays a map of mainly Iranian Jewish NENA dialects. Table 1 at the end of this subsection displays phonological and pronominal traits of Jewish varieties and illustrates a few Trans-Zab isoglosses (the shaded area).

The Jewish dialects to the east of the Greater Zab, including Arbel, Rustaqa and Rwanduz stretching up north to Urmi and Salamas, are accordingly known as Trans-Zab Jewish (Mutzafi 2008b) against Jewish communities that are to the west of the Greater Zab and the settlement Barzan. Mutzafi (2008b) discerns further clusters within this group:

[5] Much like Northern and Central Kurdish (Noorlander 2014).

- **Western Trans-Zab** cluster in the Arbil region, between the Greater and Lesser Zab rivers;
- **Northern Trans-Zab** cluster in Iranian Azer-baijan including Salamas (Duval 1883), Urmi (Garbel 1965a; Khan 2008b). and Naġada (or Naqadeh; Hopkins 1989b);
- **Southeastern Tras-Zab** subgroup in the Sulemaniyya region and Iranian Kurdistan with Bijar as the easternmost and Kerend as the southernmost Jewish outpost.

The Trans-Zab Jewish dialect bundle, especially the southeastern subgroup, are pertinent to this monograph, since they differ greatly from the core Jewish and Christian varieties, especially in terms of alignment patterns.

Figure 2. *Iranian Jewish NENA dialects.*

Source: *Khan 2009:6. Dotted lines my addition.*

Table 1. *Some hallmarks of Jewish NENA dialects*

	OPEN	HOUSE	HAND	FESTIVAL	HE, SHE	HIS	HER
Zaxo (NW Iraq)	*psx*	*besa*	*ʔiza*	*ʔeza*	*ʔāwa, ʔāya*	*-e*	*-a*
Dihok (NW Iraq)	*pθx*	*beθa*	*ʔiδa*	*ʔeδa*	*ʔāhu, ʔāhi*	*-e*	*-a*
Betanure (NW Iraq)	*pθx*	*beθa*	*ʔiδa*	*ʔeδa*	*ʔāwa, ʔāya*	*-e*	*-a*
Amidya (NW Iraq)	*pθx*	*beθa*	*ʔida*	*ʔeda*	*ʔāwa, ʔāya*	*-e*	*-a*
Aradhin (NW Iraq)	*pθx*	*beθa*	*ʔida*	*ʔeda*	*ʔāwa, ʔāya*	*-e*	*-a*
Challa (SE Turkey)	*ptx*	*besa*	*ʔida*	*ʔeda*	*ʔāya, ʔāya*	*-e*	*-a*
Nerwa (NW Iraq)	(-)	*besa*	*ʔida*	*ʔeda*	(-)	(-)	(-)
Barzan (NW Iraq)	(-)	*beya*	*ʔida*	(-)	*ʔāwa, ʔāya*	*-e*	*-a*
Urmi (NW Iran)	*plx*	*belá*	*ʔidá*	*ʔelá*	*ʔo*	*-éw*	*-áw*
Arbel (NE Iraq)	*plx*	*belá*	*ʔilá*	*ʔelá*	*ʔo*	*-éu*	*-áw*
Koy Sanjaq (NE Iraq)	*plx*	*belá*	*ʔilá*	*ʔelá*	*ʔo*	*-éw*	*-áw*
Sanandaj (W Iran)	*plx*	*belá*	*ʔilá*	*ʔelá*	*ʔo*	*-éw*	*-áw*
Sulemaniyya (NE Iraq)	*plx*	*belá*	*ʔilá*	*ʔelá*	*ʔaw*	*-éu, -éw*	*-áw*

Notes: *The shaded area indicates features belonging to most or all Trans-Zab dialects.* (-) *indicates not identified. For the sources see section 1.5.*

1.2.2.3. Written Neo-Aramaic

NENA dialects are mainly known to us through the documentation of spoken varieties. From the 16th century onwards, speakers across space and time have continually made efforts to commit Neo-Aramaic to writing. Both Jewish and Christian communities in Iraqi Kurdistan developed a written literary tradition during the Ottomon period. A manuscript culture emerged on the basis of of oral literature. This involves Jewish literature written in Hebrew script in Nerwa dated to at least the 16th century (Sabar 1976) and Christian literature, mainly poetry, written in Syriac script in Alqosh dated to at least the 17th century, some of which even earlier (Mengozzi 2002a, 2002b). These early written traditions primarily concern Bible translations and commentaries and other types of religious works.

Since the 19th century other written literary varieties have been passed down to us in different forms and under different circumstances. Literary Christian Urmi is a case in point. In the 19th century up to the First World War a written form based on the local dialect of Urmi florished among Christians inspired by missionary activities from various Christian denominations, producing printed publications of all sorts: not only Bible translations but also hagiography, folktales, school textbooks, periodicals etc. It became the basis for literary developments ever since in Urmi and other Christian communities (Odisho 1988; Murre-van den Berg 1999). In addition, a unique Latin alphabet (called *noviy alfavit*) was developed among Christian speakers of Urmi in the former Soviet

Union in the early 20th century (Polotsky 1961) and was intended to facilitate the publication of various texts, including translations of contemporary Russian literature, but it was never widely accepted. Literacy among speakers increased due to migrations to greater cities. A literary revival arose among educated Christian speakers in Iraqi cities such as Kirkuk, Baġdad and Baṣra between the 1920s and 1960s. These factors contributed to the koineization of urban Christian varieties, so that an Iraqi *koine* based on literary Urmi emerged (Odisho 1988) which now predominates (alongside the Urmi vernacular) among Assyrian speakers. Although publications among Iraqi and Iranian Jews were also to be found on a smaller scale during these periods, such supradialectal phenomena or levelling of dialectal differences up to koinezation are not known for Jewish communities.

1.2.3. Central Neo-Aramaic Dialect Traits

Central Neo-Aramaic (CNA) consists of Mlaḥso (Ml., Diyarbakır province, Jastrow 1994) which is extinct by now and Ṭuroyo also known as Ṣurayt[6] (Ṭur., Mardin province, Jastrow 1985; Ritter 1990[7]). Nowadays most speakers are to be found in Northern Europe (Sweden, Germany, the Netherlands). Contrary to NENA, a literary tradition did not develop among CNA speakers, although missionary activities did inspire writing on a small scale in the early 19th century (Heinrichs 1990). There have been only recent attempts to commit Ṭuroyo to writing on a larger scale by means of a Latin-based alphabet among communities in Sweden which has its beginnings in the 1980s.

Mlaḥso and Ṭuroyo share a few features that distinguish them from NENA (Jastrow 1985: xvii-xviii, xxi-xxiii; Kim 2008:507-508). A salient phonological feature, for example, is the vowel /o/ throughout where NENA would normally have /a/, as in Ṭur. *ḥmoro*, Ml. *ḥmoró* 'donkey' against NENA *xmara*[8].

NENA in turn has some features that sets it apart from Central Neo-Aramaic such as the first person plural E-suffix *-ax* (against Ṭur. and Ml. *-ina*). Apart from this, the relationship between Central Neo-Aramaic and the other subgroups is fairly complex. A case in point is the resolution of word initial consonant clusters in monosyllabic words that differs across individual Neo-Aramaic languages (see also Jastrow 1990: 92; Kim 2008: 532). Apart from retaining the cluster (as

[6] The term 'Ṭuroyo' is practically only found in scholarly literature and most speakers will identify their language with 'Ṣurayt' or 'Suryoyo'.

[7] See now also Waltisberg (2016).

[8] C. Bohtan is an interesting exception, e.g. *xmora* 'donkey'.

in Ml. *dmo* 'blood'), two strategies exist to resolve it: either to prepose a prothetic vowel, such as Ṭur. *admo* 'blood' or to insert an epenthetic vowel between the two consonants such as the NENA Christian dialect of Hertevin *demma* 'id.'. Both can be adopted for different nouns and found in one language (cf. C. Hertevin *ebra* 'son' and *demma* 'blood'). The overview below indicates that Central and Western Neo-Aramaic more often opt for the first strategy, while North Eastern Neo-Aramaic more often the second. Similarly, Western Neo-Aramaic and C. Bohtan are closer in their partial /o/-vocalism where NENA otherwise exhibits /a/.

Table 2. *NENA dialects close to Central and Western Neo-Aramaic*

	OPEN	DONKEY	HOUSE	HAND	SON	BLOOD	NAME	YESTERDAY
Western	*fθḥ*	*ḥmora*	*payθo*	*ʔiδa*	*ebra*	*eδma*	*ešma*	(-)
Ṭuroyo	*ftḥ*	*ḥmoro*	*bayto*	*ʔiδo*	*abro*	*admo*	*əšmo*	*aθməl*
Mlaḥso	*psḥ*	*ḥmoro*	*beysa*	*ʔizó*	*ebró*	*dmo*	*išmó*	*esmól*
C. Hertevin	*ptḥ*	*ḥmara*	*beta*	*ʔida*	*ebra*	*demma*	*šemma*	*etmal*
C. Bohtan	*ptx*	*xmora*	*bata*	*ʔida*	*abra*	*dəmma*	*šəmma*	*itmal*
C. Qaraqosh	*pθx*	*xmara*	*beθa*	*ʔiδa*	*əbra*	*dəmma*	*šəmma*	*təmmal*

Sources: *Western: Maʕlula (Arnold 1990), Ṭuroyo (Ritter 1979; Jastrow 1992), Mlaḥso (Jastrow 1992), Hertevin (Jastrow 1998)*, *Bohtan (Fox 2009); partly adapted from Kim 2008:523.* (-) *indicates not identified.*

Furthermore, there are features in the verbal system that unite Western and Central Neo-Aramaic against NENA. Examples are the use of a distinct inflectional base **qaṭṭīl*- and a morphologically richer voice system (Kim 2008: 532-533). One may compare, for instance, WNA *qayyima* 'She has risen' and *dammixa* 'She has slept' (Baxʕa, Arnold 1990:104, 74) with Ṭuroyo *qayimo* 'She rose' and *damixo* 'She slept' and Mlaḥso *qaymo* 'She has risen' and *damixo* 'She has slept' (against NENA *qim*- and *dmix*- throughout).

Within the dialectal variation of Ṭuroyo, the urban dialect of Midyat (Mt. *Məδyaδ*) is particularly divergent from the rural dialects, best-known of which is the dialect of Miden (Mn.) (Jastrow 1985, 1992). This may range from subtle differences in phonology to more drastic distinctions in morphology and morphosyntax. One relevant phonological feature of this urban dialect is the shortening and neutralization of pretonic vowels in open syllables (see Ritter 1990:60-61; Jastrow 1985:xvii-xviii; Kim 2010:236-237). The respective vowel reduction system has important repercussions for verbal inflection (see §3.1.3 and §6.2.1.1). Where Miden has long *i* [i:] and *e* [e:], respectively, *u* [u:] and *o* [o:], these are shortened and neutralized to *ə* [ɪ], respectively, *ŭ* [u] in Midyat in

an unstressed open syllable directly before the stressed syllable. Miden in turn has nearly completely merged the short vowel *ŭ* with *ə*. Compare the following lexemes:

(4)		‘red’	‘guard’	‘I_F went to sleep’	‘cow’
	Mn.	*s**e**moqo*	*n**o**ṭuro*	*dam**i**x-ono*	*t**ə**rto*
	Mt.	*s**ə**moqo*	*n**ŭ**ṭuro*	*dam**ə**x-ono*	*t**ŭ**rto*

1.2.4. Language Contact: Bi- and Multilingualism

A study of Neo-Aramaic cannot be completely disentangled from neighboring languages in the area. As a minority speech community, Eastern Neo-Aramaic speakers have been confronted with the daily need of multilingualism. They are by and large at least bilingual and thus, beside their local Aramaic dialects, some of them speak not only local varieties of Arabic (including Syria and Iranian Khuzistan) and Kurdish but also Armenian and Azeri Turkish (e.g. Garbell 1965a; Khan 2016). In addition, influence from offical languages can be expected such as Persian in the east, Turkish in the west along with Arabic permeating the area either indirectly as the cultural vehicle of Islam or more directly as the spoken language in the south (cf. Noorlander 2014). Particlarly, Kurdish-Aramaic bilingualism has prevailed among Eastern Neo-Aramaic speakers, facilitating the recruitment and deep and lasting integration of Kurdish elements into their Neo-Aramaic speech (Chyet 1995; Noorlander 2014). Despite this evident and complicating areal dimension, we will approach Neo-Aramaic somewhat artificially in isolation and mainly from a solely Aramaic perspective and postpone judgement on questions related to contact with contiguous non-Aramaic languages.

We will focus on the North Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Central Neo-Aramaic subgroups where we find considerable variation in alignment. Since contact with non-Aramaic speakers has been a daily practice for Neo-Aramaic speakers, this alignment variation is presumed also to be relavent for the relationship between Neo-Aramaic and neighboring languages for which further research is required.

1.3. Previous Approaches to Alignment in Eastern Neo-Aramaic

1.3.1. Early Scholarship: Passive or Possessive

Previous synchronic approaches to Eastern Neo-Aramaic alignment have been enveloped in origin debates (see Doron and Khan 2010). Scholars have approached the *qṭil l-* or *šmiʕ l-*construction as illustrated in (2) from the perspective of voice, i.e. a passive[9], such as *l-ʔemmāh* 'by her mother' (5a) below, or the perspective of possession, i.e. predicative possessors (e.g. 'There is to me a book' = 'I have a book'), such as *l-ḵōn* 'belonging to you' (5b) below. The latter has been considered parallel to the development of the auxiliary HAVE (e.g. *haben*, *hebben*, *avoir*, *avvere* etc.) combined with a perfect participle in well-known European languages such as Germanic and Romance (i.e. *I have a letter written* > *I have written a letter*)[10]. It was also brought in connection with the parallel *manā kartam* construction in Old Persian (e.g. Kutscher 1969).

(5) **Syriac** (Aramaic, Northwest Semitic)[11]

a. *meṭṭol* *d=mallp̄-ā=w-āṯ* ***l-ʔemm-āh***
because SUBR=taught-3FS=was-3FS DAT-mother:FS-her
'Because she was taught **by her mother**.' (5th c. Matthew 14:8, *Pšiṭta*, translating a Greek passive)

b. *kmā* *laḥm-īn* *ʔīṯ* ***l-ḵōn****?*
how.many bread-MPL EXST DAT-2MPL
'How many loaves do **you$_{PL}$ have**?' (5th c. Matthew 15:34, *Pšiṭta*)

Besides the dative preposition *l-*, there are two sets of person forms that are crucial. They occur at least in perfective past constructions similarly to the imperfective present. Their usage differs significantly across Neo-Aramaic languages. This variation is first and foremost morphologically conditioned by a verbal inflectional base *qṭil-* that is historically a resultative participle (Polotsky 1979:208[12]). The distinct prepositional marking patterns also hinge on the use of this verbal form. Historically, verbal inflection comprises the direct reflexes of

[9] See, for example, Nöldeke (1868:220, 317), Polotsky (1979, 1996), Khan (1999:94-95, 2002a:92), Mengozzi (2002b:43). Cf. Bar-Asher (2008, 2011), Loesov (2012).

[10] See, for example, Kutscher (1969), Hopkins (1989a), Goldenberg (1992), Rubin (2005:30-31); cf. Kirtchuk (2016).

[11] For the sake of a unfirom transcription of Syriac, I follow Beyer's transcription of the *Odes of Solomon* in Lattke (2005:XIII–XXXVII).

[12] Haig (2008:9) makes a similar remark regarding Iranian.

active and resultative participial predicates of the apophonic pattern C*ā*C*i*C,such as *kātib-* 'writing' and, respectively, C(*a*)C*ī*C such as *k*(*a*)*tīb-* 'written' in premodern Aramaic.

The two sets of person forms that encode agreement have distinct origins. The first set will be termed 'E-suffixes' in the present study. It continues diachronically both participial agreement in number and gender and enclitic personal pronouns. The second set, generally termed 'L-suffixes', continues diachronically enclitic dative person forms characterized by the originally dative preposition *l-*. We can still observe, to some extent, in Neo-Aramaic, that person markers were added to declined participles through enclitic pronouns. The enclitic pronouns used to be the unmarked dependent variants of pronouns. Being verbal adjectives, the participles used to inflect for gender and number. Comparing Mlaḥso, for example, with Classical Syriac below, we observe that the reflexes of original adjectival endings (ms. -Ø, fs. -*o*, pl. -*i*) are indicators of the third person but also feature in the morphological decomposition of the endings of the first person (ms. -Ø-*no*, fs. -*o*-*no*, pl. -*i*-*nā*).

(6) **Mlaḥso compared with Classical Syriac**

	Mlaḥso[13] (Jastrow 1994:44)		**Classical Syriac**	
3MS	*doméx-Ø*	'He sleeps'	*damex̲-Ø*	'He is sleeping'
FS	*domx-ó*	'She sleeps'	*dāmx̲-ā*	'She is sleeping'
PL	*domx-í*	'They sleep'	*dāmx̲-īn*	'They are sleeping'
1MS	*domex-Ø-no*	'I$_M$ sleep'	*dāmex̲-Ø=nā*	'I$_M$ am sleeping'
FS	*domx-o-no*	'I$_F$ sleep'	*dāmx̲-ā=nā*	'I$_F$ am sleeping'
PL	*domx-i-nā*	'We sleep'	*dāmx̲-īn=nan*	'We are sleeping'

Yet, synchronically, forms like *doméx-Ø* have lost all characteristics of adjectives in Eastern Neo-Aramaic. A historically stronger link between the preposition *l-* and the L-suffixes as well as its usage as a dative may also be observed in Neo-Aramaic. Synchronically, the L-suffixes are not prepositional in nature and behave like verbal affixes, but they may still be characterized as a type of dative person forms as in other languages that display an alignment split conditioned by tense-aspect such as Georgian and Indo-Iranian (see, for example, Stilo 1981, 2010; Haig 2008).

[13] Gender distinction is neutralized in the plural of the pronominal system in Eastern Neo-Aramaic.

The historical situation can be briefly illustrated as follows. The active participles *ʔazel* 'going' of *ʔzl* 'go' in (7a) and *ʔāḵel-* 'eating' of *ʔkl* 'eat' in the Syriac example (7b) below inflect like predicative adjectives (e.g. ms. *šappir-∅*, fs. *šappir-ā*, mpl. *šappīr-īn* 'beautiful') and take agreement with the subject and agent. The ending *-īn* in (7b), for instance, expresses masculine plural agreement with the agent *kalbē* 'dogs'. The dative person form *l-hōn* 'them' in (7b) expresses the patient. Full nominal objects could also be differentially marked by this preposition *l-*.

(7) **Syriac** (Aramaic, Northwest Semitic)

a. *l-aykā* *ʔazel-**∅**=way-t* *mār-∅*
to-where going-3MS=were-2SG master.of:MS-my
'Where were you$_{SG}$ going to, my lord?' ' (3rd c. Wright 1871:289.23)

b. *ʔāḵl-**īn*** ***l-hōn*** *kalbē*
eating-3MPL DAT-3MPL dogs:MPL
'Dogs eat them.' (3rd c. Drijvers 1964:50.24-25)

Intransitive subject-oriented resultative constructions are treated indistinctly from this. The resultative participle *ʔazil-* of the verb *ʔzl* 'go' in example (7c) below takes feminine singular agreement *-ā* with the subject.

c. *l-aykā* ***ʔazīl-ā*** *māraṯ-ḵōn*
to-where gone-3FS mistress.of:FS-your$_{MPL}$
'Where **is** your$_{MPL}$ mistress **gone** to?' (3rd c. *Act. Thom.* 262.16)

One should note that several agent-oriented resultative constructions are also found in Syriac (and other Late Aramaic languages)[14]. In typology, they are also known as possessive resultatives because these verbs often have a connotation of someone holding an item in close proximity to themselves, a smenatic property of predicative possession (Sassen 2009:15, cf. Heine 1997:38-39)[15]. They follow the same morphosyntax as the active participle where the object person

[14] See, for instance, Nöldeke (1904:220, §280), Nöldeke (1875:379-380, §262), Goldenberg (1992:118).

[15] Although scholars widely recognize its primary resultative function, the traditional notion of 'passive participles with an active sense' persists in the literature. Such paradoxical circumlocutions rather show the participle is, in fact, not a passive participle but properly a resultative participle conforming to linguistic typology of resultatives, including the typology of agent-oriented resulatives in Nedjalkov and Jaxontov (1988:23), cf. Nedjalkov (2001:932). See also Kirtchuk (2016) who similarly emphasizes that aspect is primary, not voice.

form is marked in the dative. One finds examples like *šqil-īn l-eh kalbē* 'Dogs are carrying it' where *šqīl-in l-eh* effectively means 'they have it taken on'. This is the agent-oriented resultative that developed into a perfect in Western Neo-Aramaic[16], as illustrated below:

(8) **Western Neo-Aramaic** (Maʕlula)

a. *mōn* *šqīl-Ø* *l-ann* *δahb-ō*
who taken-3MS DOM-DEM:MPL gold-DEF:MPL
'Who has taken the money? (Bergsträsser 1915:13.31)

b. *šqil-il-le* (*< *šqil-in-le*)
taken-3MPL-3MS
'They$_M$ have taken it$_M$.' (see Arnold 1990:219-202, 223-225)

The original dative agent resultative construction found in Eastern Aramaic is similar to this but with inverted roles. Its emergence ultimately inaugurated completely new constructional splits within Aramaic. The possible breakthrough of non-accusative alignment in the perfective hinges on the development of a new type of perfect (later preterit), based on the resultative participle together with the dative marker *l-*, for example:

(9) **Jewish Babylonian Aramaic** (Talmud, *'Eruvin* 66b(3); Sokoloff 2002:1159a)

a. <lʾ šmyʿ ly hʾ šmʿtʾ>
lā *šmīʕ-ā* *l-ī* *hā* *šmaʕ-tā*
NEG heard-FS DAT-1SG DEM:FS hearing:FS-EMPH:FS
'I have not received[17] (lit. Me is not heard) this legal tradition.'

The resultative participle *šmīʕ* of the verb *šmʕ* takes feminine singular agreement with the patient-like argument, but while the dative person form *l-eh* denotes the agent-like argument. Since its first manifestations typically involve experiencer predicates such as *šmʕ* 'hear' (cf. Schlesinger 1928:45, § 30; Sokoloff 2002:327b), it seems that it did not mark typical agents from the outset but indirect affectees of which the coding was extended to agents (Bar-Asher 2014; Coghill 2016; cf. Haig 2008 on Iranian) and intransitive verbs (e.g. Van Rompay

[16] But, note, likely also Eastern varieties, see §5.4.

[17] *šmiʕ l-* typically expresses orally imparted information and, thus, what someone has rumors about, knows by report or understands from an authoritative religious tradition (cf. *šemʕā* 'hearing; sound, report', Sokoloff 2009:1574).

1999). Vestiges of such *šmiʕ l*-constructions already surface in Imperial Aramaic in the 5th century BC and its development into alignment splits is considerd by most scholars to be ultimately due to convergence with Iranian[18]. One should note that *l-* can also mark possessors, beneficiaries, goals, and recipients, such as *l-rāʕayā* 'for the shepherd' below:

b. <ʿyzy dmsyrn lrwʿh>
ʕizz-ē *di=msīr-īn* ***l-rāʕayā***
goat(F)-MPL SUBR=handed.over-3MPL DAT-shepherd:MS
'Goats which are handed over **to a shepherd**.' (*BB* 36a(33); Sokoloff 2002:692a-b)

Early grammatical descriptions of Neo-Aramaic can be taken as an example of the original passive analysis of the *šmiʕ l*-construction. Nöldeke (1868:317; English translation of original German mine), for instance, indicates that the "preterit is actually a passive expression whose grammatical subject is the apparent object". Maclean (1895:85) notes "When the object, as it would be in English, (which is really the subject), is feminine, we should expect the participle to agree with it". The patient-like argument *baxta* 'women' in Jewish Amidya clauses like *šmiʔ-a-li baxta* 'The woman was heard by me = I heard the woman', then, is only apparently an object in a logical sense, not in a grammatical sense. On this view, the E-set *-a* marks the agreement with the subject and L-suffix *-li* an agent complement. Although the sense is indistinct from the active, the grammatical structure is said to be that of a passive.

In the possessive analysis, however, the status of the E-set and L-set are completely different from the passive one. What denotes the agent-like argument is essentially a predicative possessor, and the patient-like argument a possessee. The L-set marks the possessor similarly to the auxiliary HAVE in Romance and Germanic langauges (cf. Hopkins 1989; Rubin 2005). The E-set expresses the agreement with the possessee. Just as English *I have written the book* goes back to *I have the book written*, so would Neo-Aramaic *kθiw-a-li masḥaf* meaning 'I wrote the book' essentially be composed of a possessive expression and a participle where *-li* is equivalent to the English HAVE-auxiliary *I have* and *kθiw-a* to the English participle *written* agreeing with the possessee *masḥaf* 'book'. Although the possessive meaning is no longer present, the grammatical structure is

[18] See among others Friedrich (1957), Kutscher (1969), Mengozzi (2002b:37-49), Gzella (2004:184-194, 2015:348), Khan (2004b).

said to be akin to that of the predicative possessor in expressions like *xa masḥaf ʔit-li* 'I have a book'.

Thus, there has been a strong emphasis on the diachronic origins of the preterit in analyzing the synchronic Eastern Neo-Aramaic data. The passive, possessive and experiencer source constructions have been presented as being mutually exclusive, but I believe this need not be the case. Precisely because of the ambiguous orientations and versatility of resultative participles (Hapslemath 1994; Nedjalkov 2001; cf. Kirtchuck 2016) and the semantics typically subsumed under a dative case (cf. Næss 2007), they can be used in different constructions (as the variation in Eastern Neo-Aramaic clause structure demonstrates). Leaving the origin debates aside, later approaches to Neo-Aramaic alignment are more synchronic, grounded in contemporary person marking and case-marking typology. This is not to deny that the typology of alignment in Neo-Aramaic is a problem that is entrenched in the evolution of the Aramaic verbal system. The inflection of the modern Aramaic verb as given in the beginning has no diachronic basis in the prefix- or suffix-conjugation (e.g. *ta-ktob* 'She writes', respectively, *katab-at* 'She wrote') as in closely related Semitic languages such as Hebrew and Arabic. Indeed, the essential ingredients of the West Semitic verbal system have been completely replaced by originally non-finite constructions with a concomitant constructional shift at least historically conditioned by aspect and diathesis. This pervasive, rigorous restructuring is without parallel among the modern Semitic languages (Hopkins 2005; Gzella 2015:45). Periphrastic constructions already undergoing increasing grammaticalization in pre-modern Aramaic gave rise to entirely new inflectional paradigms (cf. Noorlander and Stilo 2015). Yet, it is debatable whether ergativity in itself is the decisive trait that makes these Eastern Neo-Aramaic so different from its Semitic relatives.

1.3.2. Recent Typological Approaches

In more recent typological approaches, some question the validity of typological terminology like 'ergative' (Hemmauer and Waltisberg 2006) or adopt it only for practical reasons (Jastrow 1996:52-53). Mengozzi (2002b:37-49), Khan (2007a) and Barotto (2015) compare ergative and accusative alignment properties typologically. Hoberman (1989:95-122) gives a generative morphological account of the inverted relationship between (2) and (3). Doron and Khan (2010, 2012) a generative syntactic explanation. While other scholars hesitated to accept a split-ergative analysis, Doron and Khan (2010, 2012) assume the

opposite extreme position and practically analyze all of Eastern Neo-Aramaic (excluding Neo-Mandaic) as a type of split-ergative. Recently, Coghill (2016) and Waltisberg (2016, on Ṭuroyo) studied alignment in Eastern Neo-Aramaic. Their approach is comparable to mine but reached me too late to consider in full detail. I will mention briefly the main differences between my analysis and theirs where relevant.

Mengozzi (2002b:49, 2005) and partly also Barotto (2015) concentrate on fascinating variation in early written sources. The phenemona in Neo-Aramaic are studied in light of a so-called "decay of ergativity". This is a gradual departure from an originally coherent ergative type to various accusative constructions. The ergative construction in the Eastern varieties is presented as the type that is contrary to its close and distant relatives and has been or is being replaced by accusative constructions. The decay of the ergative type is viewed as a symptom and the deviations from the ergative as antidotes. This finds an echo in Coghill (2016)'s recent work which is even entitled *The rise and fall of ergativity in Aramaic*. My own research, however, will demonstrate that some of the discussed patterns (such as the *qam-qaṭəl*-construction and the system in Hertevin) have been wrongly analyzed as being accusative. Moreover, we should be cautious to extrapolate that a coherent ergative pattern used to be the norm for all of Eastern Neo-Aramic. The synchronic data by itself does not compel us to such a conclusion. Nevertheless, Mengozzi (2002b:46 fn. 147), without going into detail, suggests a few factors that are key to the alignment variation: system-internal pressure from the main inflectional system, morphological disambiguation, the order of A and P ("actant order"), tense-aspect distinctions, and pragmatics. My own more detailed research effectively shows that his apt suggestions are, indeed, important factors, but they do not necessarily promote accusative alignment.

Mengozzi (2002b, 2005) also draws on interesting parallels with developments in Kurdish. For this reason, he uses 'direct' for E-suffixes and 'oblique' for L-suffixes (cf. Ritter 1990; Pennacchetti 1994; Murre-van den Berg 1999; Noorlander 2017) inspired by Iranian studies. These will not be used in this study, because they may be confused with terms such as oblique arguments (which the L-suffixes need not express at all).

Doron and Khan (2010, 2012) make a major contribution to the study of alignment in NENA. They are the first to present an alignment typology of documentation data aimed to counter generalizations made in generative theory (regarding the functional head of little v mostly associated with transitivity). They introduce the helpful concept of agreement inversion (see §3.2.1) and con-

vincingly show that the overall syntax of the Neo-Aramaic dialects is, at least synchronically, accusative and, therefore, incompatible with a passive analysis. They distinguish three subgroups of Neo-Aramaic based on their major morphological alignment pattern in the perfective past: split-S dialects, extended ergative dialects, and dynamic-stative dialects.

The Jewish dialects such as Sulemaniyya that display the ergative pattern exemplified in (1) are called split-S dialects, because the A-like marking of the S is still possible in a few classes of intransitive verbs (e.g. *nwəx-la* 'It$_F$ barked' vs. *twir-a* 'It$_F$ broke'). The coding of S is split based on lexical verbal semantics.

In the dynamic-stative type, the marking of the S differs depending on grammatical aspect. The S is treated similarly to the A in the dynamic aspect but similarly to the P in (result-)stative aspect. Example (10) below illustrates this. The Jewish dialect of Urmi distinguishes between the E-set and L-set in the marking of the S for the same verb: ˁ*dmix-a* 'She has gone to sleep' (stative) as opposed to ˁ*dməx-la* 'She went to sleep' (dynamic). The first treats the S like the P, but the latter the S like the A. Khan (2008b:74) argues that this grammatical split is ultimately derived from the lexical split displayed by the split-S dialects.

(10) **J. Urmi** (NW Iran; Khan 2008b)[19]
a. (transitive perfective)
*xəzy-**a**-le* 'He saw **her**.'
see$_{PFV}$-P:3FS-A:3MS
b. (intransitive stative)
ˁ*dmix-**a*** '**She** has gone to sleep.'
sleep$_{PFV}$-S:3FS
c. (transitive perfective)
*xəzy-a-**le*** 'He saw **her**.'
see$_{PFV}$-P:3FS-A:3MS
d. (intransitive dynamic)
ˁ*dməx-**la*** '**She** went to sleep.'
sleep$_{PFV}$-S:3FS

In the extended ergative, the L-suffixes are used to express both the S and the P, such as *-le* in (11a) and (11b) below contrary to *-a* 'her'. Doron and Khan's (2012; cf. Mengozzi 2002b:45, fn. 144) use extended ergative to describe this pattern, primarily because the object-marking E-suffixes are morphologically

[19] The symbol ˁ indicates suprasegmental pharyngealization of the following word.

less marked, the agent-marking L-suffixes may also be dropped (see §4.3), and they believe the agent-marking L-suffixes spread to all intransitive verbs (replacing the original E-set to mark the S, Khan 2008b:74). This has been analyzed as marked nominative by Barotto (2015), a system that will be discussed in §2.2.6.

(11) **J. Amidya** (NW Iraq; Hoberman 1989, Greenblatt 2011)

a. (intransitive)
*dmix-**le*** 'He went to sleep.'
sleep$_{PFV}$-S:3FS

b. (transitive)
*qṭil-a-**le*** 'He killed her.'
kill$_{PFV}$-P:3FS-A:3MS

These dialectal distinctions are taken over by Barotto (2015). Yet, Doron and Khan (2012) consider all dialects to display a type of ergativity. The present study will show that is problematic in some respects, especially where the S and A are treated the same as in (11) above (see §4.2.1). A major disadvantage in Doron and Khan (2010, 2012) and Barotto (2015) is the use of case labels such as ERG and ACC for what is called L-suffixes here and NOM and ABS for what corresponds with the E-suffixes in the analysis and glossing of person markers. This leads to confusing and cumbersome combinations of ERG-ACC and even ERG:NOM in verbal forms. In my approach, however, I keep case-marking and agreement separate (see §2.2.3) and only use such designations for nominal morphology. What will be indicated is the grammatical function (S, A, P) the person markers express.

Coghill (2016) is an ambitious treatment of both important historical and contemporary data. Her approach to the synchronic data in both North Eastern and Central Neo-Aramaic is comparable to mine in several respects. She provides an important and detailed study of split subject marking from both a typological and areal perspective. Coghill (2016:73-81) also shows inconclusive tests of syntactic ergativity in NENA. The use of S-suffixes instead of E-suffixes (in Khan's and similar works by other authors) is unhelpful, because the S-suffixes may be confounded with the S argument (which they need not express at all). An important point of disagreement between Coghill (2016) in some respects and mine, however, is that, although I acknowledge its relevance for argument discrimination, I do not consider affix order determinant for alignment, unless it involves a clear distinction between prefixes and suffixes (see §2.2.3.3). This

inevitably leads to rather divergent analyses. Like Mengozzi (2002b, 2005) and Barotto (2015), she also erroneously subsumes several constructional patterns such as the complex agreement system in the Christian dialect of Hertevin under accusative alignment, while I identify several distinct alignment patterns in different contexts, including ergative.

Khan's (2017) most recent treatment of ergativity in NENA differs from Doron and Khan (2012) and Coghill (2016) and closely resembles my own appraoch. His article reached me after my manuscript was finished and I have reached similar conclusions in my own research indepependently.

Although Jastrow (1996:52-53) believes no ergative inflection is found in Neo-Aramaic languages, he (1985:120) uses "ergative Flexion" for the L-set against "prädikative Flexion" for the E-set in describing Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥsó. Hemmauer and Waltisberg (2006) argue that the perfective past in Ṭuroyo is only superficially ergative, since they believe certain constructional splits point to an underlying accusative pattern similar to the (imperfective) present. They rightly show that the agreement operates on a similar basis throughout the verbal system. In this thesis, however, I do not differentiate between deep and superficial alignment, although, clearly, alignment is manifested in different ways in syntax and/or morphology. some properties they discuss belong to what I refer to as 'trigger potential' which is explained in §2.2.3.2. The result is that no alignment pattern is subsumed under another in my approach, as one being more superficial than the other. Waltisberg (2016)'s recent detailed study of the syntax of Ṭuroyo makes an impressive advance in research. Yet, Waltisberg (2016:20, 176) even denies any manifestation of ergativity whatsoever in Ṭuroyo. This is not the conclusion I have reached in my own research (see §6.1.1 and §6.1.3). Waltisberg points out that the inflectional base of certain intransitive verbs (C*a*C*i*C- as in *damix-o* 'She fell a sleep') differs from that of transitive verbs (CC*i*C- as in *ftiḥ-o-la* 'She opened it$_F$'). Yet, as will become evident, this does not alter the facts about the use sets of person markers that I consider more pertinent to alignment.

1.4. Goals and Scope of This Work

Despite the aforementioned literature on alignment in Eastern Neo-Aramaic, a detailed, systematic overview that takes into account more fine-grained microvariation is still needed. Rather than seeking to explain this in terms of an accusative-ergative dichotomy, this study takes a more sophisticated approach making nuances where appropriate. A comprehensive typological approach also

includes alignment patterns that are less common. The main aim of this thesis, therefore, is to compare the typological microvariation in subject, agent and object coding in intransitive and transitive constructions across and within Eastern Neo-Aramaic languages concentrating on North Eastern Neo-Aramaic and Central Neo-Aramaic. Ditransitive constructions have been been studied mostly independently[20]. In my thesis, I will combine these with the intransitive/transitive alignment patterns and highlight possible correlations.

In addressing this central issue within one language family, a more general goal is to contribute to the typology of argument marking across languages of the world and make Neo-Aramaic not only accessible to Aramaicists or Semitists but also linguists in general. A split between accusative and ergative alignment conditioned by tense and/or aspect is not altogether uncommon in languages of the world. In fact, a similar tense-sensitive alignment split occurs in Iranian languages with which Aramaic has been in contact for at least two millennia[21], and similar constructional splits occur in Caucasian, Classical Armenian, and Indo-Aryan languages. Notwhithstanding its overall contribution to wider research projects, I should emphasize that this study is not intended to investigate linguistic universals or language area features.

A synchronic viewpoint is not completely isolated from language evolution and is also relevant to diachronic studies. Aramaic has been documented for a remarkably long period but little is known about spoken Aramaic before the 16th century. Thus, the modern vernaculars are indispensable for the study of the linguistic evolution of Aramaic (Beyer 1986:54; Hopkins 1989a:413; Jastrow 2008:1). A second significant goal of this synchronic study is to serve as a fruitful starting point for further historical research. As we will see, each dialect may do its own thing and sometimes in the very opposite way of the other. This is a fascinating fact about a language where alignment has otherwise been stable for millennia. The present study argues that much of the variation is independent of ergativity and that the alignment patterns in Eastern Neo-Aramaic need not have sprung from a coherently ergative source construction contrary to what has been widely accepted (but see now also Khan 2017). It analyzes recent documentation data (see next subsection) from both NENA and Central Neo-

[20] See Givón (1976), Polotsky (1979), Hoberman (1989:106-110), Murre-van den Berg (1999:211-212), Coghill (2010), and Cohen (2012:144-146). Recently, Waltisberg (2016) for Ṭuroyo.

[21] See, for instance, Stilo (1981, 2004a), Haig (2001, 2008), Kapeliuk (2004), Khan (2004b, 2007b), Noorlander (2014, 2017), Noorlander and Stilo (2015), Stilo and Noorlander (2015).

Aramaic in a typological perspective to reveal important microvariation and shed light on its history.

By the same token, this dissertation aims to highlight the value of typological linguistics for the study of Semitic languages and attempts to bridge a gap between traditional Semitistic and general descriptive approaches. Chapter 2 comprises a general overview of alignment typology. It presents numerous examples from various languages, including a few illustrative Semitic languages in order to make this chapter as accessible and valuable to Semitists and students of Semitic languages. The incidental benefit of this is that one can easily compare Neo-Aramaic typologically with a few related languages. In this fashion, we can place the phenemona that we will find in a broader typological context. The subsequent chapters deal with the alignment variation and will address the following research questions. These questions direct us through the variation in Eastern Neo-Aramaic and are answered comprehensively by Chapters 2 up to 7.

Firstly, what major alignment types can be discovered and how are they expressed? Chapter 3 is intended as a general introduction to how agreement and prepositional marking are expressed across Neo-Aramaic languages. It concentrates on features shared by all or most variaties by using the imperfective as a frame of reference. Chapter 4 and 5 discuss different alignment types and variations and combinations thereof in North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA). This is compared with Central Neo-Aramaic, another major subgroup belonging to Eastern Neo-Aramaic in Chapter 6. Since Central Neo-Aramaic is much less diverse and NENA displays a diversity reminiscent of a language family, two chapters are devoted to NENA divided by general alignment splits in the perfective past based on argument properties (Chapter 4) and alignment plits based on verb or clause-related properties found in the perfective past, the perfect, and compound verbal forms (Chapter 5).

Secondly, in what way do different coding properties interact? Chapter 3 presents the main verbal morphology, the pronominal inventory and prepositional marking of arguments. Prepositional and verbal argument coding closely correlate in morphological identity and it is interesting to investigate to what extent this also influences coding strategies. Chapter 4 to 6 include sections on the interaction between prepositional marking and agreement. Related to this are the conditions for when arguments, if any, are marked prepositionally and/or marked by verbal agreement. What conditioning factors can be identified relating to grammatical categories such as tense, aspect, mood and referential properties such as animacy, definiteness and persons? These observations

contribute to the cross-linguistic study of such phenomena and our understanding of argument encoding in general.

The last but not less imporant subquestion is, more generally, in what respect are the alignment types different and similar from one another within Eastern Neo-Aramaic? In approaching this question, it should be remarked that, although this study of the Eastern Neo-Aramaic data contributes to Neo-Aramaic dialectology, the focus is on how alignment patterns can be distinguished in terms of types, not in terms of isoglosses pertaining to dialect groups. This study, therefore, is not intended to be exhaustive in including as many dialects as possible but intends to include as many types of alignment as possible. This also addresses to what extent the alignment patterns could be said to be typical. In other words, how typically ergative is the ergative alignment? How does it differ from or resemble other types?

1.5. Sources and Conventions

In the last few decades, the study of the Neo-Aramaic dialects underwent an explosion in descriptive research. Under Geoffrey Khan's direction, various research teams associated with Cambridge University have carried out fieldwork to describe individual dialects[22]. Khan himself has written seminal, voluminous grammars (1999, 2002a, 2004a, 2008a, 2008b, 2009) with more still forthcoming. In addition, apart from individual projects[23] and other synoptical descriptions in pertinent articles, the Semitica Viva monograph series edited by Otto Jastrow have made significant contributions to the Neo-Aramaic corpus[24]. Given the decreasing number of speakers of individual dialects, the synchronic description of Neo-Aramaic has been repeatedly considered to be one of "the most urgent tasks of Semitic philology as a whole" (Hopkins 1989a:414; similarly, Khan 2007c:19). Strong appeals of this kind heralded the arrival of the aforementioned grammar sketches and geared up Neo-Aramaic Studies. The increasing documentation of Neo-Aramaic is arguably a milestone in Semitic philology, facilitating access to invaluable linguistic data.

[22] Such as Coghill (2003, forthcoming), Greenblatt (2011), Borghero (forthcoming), and Damsma (forthcoming). Note also Rees (2008).

[23] Such as Krotkoff (1982), Hoberman (1989), Rubba (1993), Mengozzi (2002a, 2002b), and Fassberg (2011).

[24] Such as Odisho (1988), Jastrow (1988, 1994), Arnold (1990), Macuch (1993), Sinha (2000), Younansardaroud (2000), Sabar (2002), Mutzafi (2004a, 2008a), Talay (2008, 2009), and Häberl (2009).

The various existing grammars, texts, and studies serve as a basis for the data that will be used in this monograph. Since the most typical splits occur in Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, I will draw much on the work by Khan[25] whose grammars and especially comparative excursuses offer valuable data and cross-dialectal comparisons (Khan 2008b:2-7, 73-75, 146-148; 2009:5-9, 77-78, 327-329). Native speakers were consulted only in very few cases[26]. Khan (2011) estimates there are about a 150 dialects. Several of these dialects are still poorly documented. A large number of them are listed in the Online NENA Database (nena.ames.cam.ac.uk) at the University of Cambridge (to which currently still access restrictions apply to scholars outside Cambridge). Some recordings can also be found in the Semitic Sound Archive (SemArch, www.semarch.uni-hd.de) archived by the University of Heidelberg. Table 3 at the end of this section shows which sources were consulted for the concerning dialect.

The number of dialects included in my research is not exhaustive. Apart from the sources mentioned in the table, I also refer to Talay (2008; 2009). This includes a vast amount of data on a dense dialect bundle in SE Turkey and NW Iraq of which the speakers took up residence along the Khabur Valley in Syria. Special attention will be given to representatives of Jewish Trans-Zab varieties in the eastern periphery and Christian dialects in the western periphery. It should be noted that grammatical treatments of Neo-Aramaic dialects generally do not include discussions on alignment typology. Intransitive and transitive constructions are identified, compared and analyzed according to the principles outlined in Chapter 2. The material is also generally presented without morpheme-by-morpheme glossing in the respective source. I have added these to the cited examples following the Leipzig Glossing Rules[27]. The glossing in examples from non-Semitic languages is taken from the respective source unless indicated otherwise.

The sources also have different conventions for transcriptions and sometimes authors change them through time. For convenience's sake, examples from Neo-Aramaic dialects are made unfirom as follows. The variable practices of represent ing the reduced centralized vowel by means of the letters <ɪ>, <ɨ>,

[25] But also, occasionally, Hopkins (1989a), Israeli (1998), Golbenberg (1992), Pennacchietti (1994), and Mengozzi (2002b:36-49).

[26] I consulted three adult native speakers of Ṭuroyo, all of them women who immigrated to the Netherlands. One speaker comes from Mzizah (Doğançay, SE Turkey) and also speaks Kurdish, Turkish and Dutch, and two Arabic-Aramaic bilinguals from Qamishli (NE Syria), only one of whom speaks Dutch.

[27] www.eva.mpg.de/lingua/resources/glossing-rules.php

<ĭ>, or <ə> are all unified in the single grapheme <ə> ranging in pronunciation between [ɪ] ~ [ə] (~ [ɯ]).The voiceless and voiced interdental fricatives are marked by <θ> and <ð>, respectively, (as against <t̲>, respectively, <d̲> in some sources), and the pharyngeal and glottal stop by their symbols of the International Phonetic Alphabet <ʕ> and <ʔ>, respectively, (as against half rings <ʿ> and <ʾ> or single quotation marks). Long vowels, if indicated, are distinguished by a macron, e.g. *ā* (instead of a colon, e.g. *a:*). Moreover, I have taken the liberty to adapt Ritter's (1967-71, 1979, 1990) detailed transcription of Ṭuroyo to the phonological transcription of Jastrow (1992).

The symbol ˠ indicates suprasegmental pharyngealization of the following word or syllable. I have taken the liberty to simplify the detailed transcription of Younansardaroud (2001). Following Khan (2016), the threeway system of emphasis is reduced to a binary one with the symbol ˠ indicating the pharyngealization and a circumflex ◌̭ below or above the segment indicating unaspirated/glottalized articulation (e.g. *ṱ* [t] and *p̂* [p] against *t* [tʰ] and *p* [pʰ]).

Without further specification, stress is on the penultimate syllable. Intonation group boundaries and secondary stress are omitted in citation.

Finally, throughout this dissertation, when a word or phrase is emphasized in quoted examples, the emphasis is always mine unless indicated otherwise.

1.6. Outline

This book is organized as follows. Chapter 2 explains the theoretical preliminaries of alignment and offers a cross-linguistic, comparative basis from which we draw expectations for alignment types and their manifestations.

Chapter 3 shifts the theme to Neo-Aramaic and gruadually build up to the complexity of alignment variation treated in the subsequent chapters. It provides a brief overview of the coding properties in NENA and Central Neo-Aramaic. It concentrates on several issues pertaining to the functions and status of the so-called L-suffixes and attempts to provide a uniform account. A considerable part is devoted to the expression of pronouns and agreement (or rather person forms) in transitive and ditransitive constructions of the imperfective aspect. The imperfective constructions are taken as point of departure for the study of argument encoding in other constructions.

Chapter 4 and 5 constitute the lion's share of this dissertation. The form and function of person forms or agreement markers are the central theme, showing constructional splits based on properties of the argument (Chapter 4) or properties of the verb or clause (Chapter 5).

Table 3. *Sample of dialects that has been studied for this research (alphabetical order)*

J./C.	DIALECTS	LOCATION	SOURCES
C.	**Alqosh**	NW Iraq	(Coghill 2003)
J.	**Amidya**	NW Iraq	(Hoberman 1989, Greenblatt 2011)
C.	**Aradhin**	NW Iraq	(Krotkoff 1982)
J.	**Aradhin**	NW Iraq	(Mutzafi 2002b)
J.	**Arbel**	NE Iraq	(Khan 1999)
C.	**Ashitha**	SE Turkey	(Borghero 2006)
C.	**Barwar**	NW Iraq	(Khan 2008a)
J.	**Barzan**	NW Iraq	(Mutzafi 2004c)
C.	**Baz**	SE Turkey	(Mutzafi 2000)
J.	**Betanure**	NW Iraq	(Mutzafi 2008a)
C.	**Bohtan**	SE Turkey	(Fox 2009)
J.	**Challa**	SE Turkey	(Fassberg 2011)
J.	**Dihok**	NW Iraq	(Sabar 1997, 2002)
C.	**Hertevin**	SE Turkey	(Jastrow 1988)
C.	**Jilu**	SE Turkey	(Fox 1997)
C.	**Karəmlesh**	NW Iraq	(Borghero 2008)
J.	**Kerend**	W Iran	(Hopkins 1989a, 2002)
C.	**Koy Sanjaq**	NW Iraq	(Mutzafi 2004b)
J.	**Koy Sanjaq**	NE Iraq	(Mutzafi 2004a)
C.	**Mangesh**	NW Iraq	(Sara 1974)
C.	**Mlaḥso**	SE Turkey	(Jastrow 1994, 1996)
C.	**Nerwa**	NW Iraq	(Talay 2001)
J.	**Nerwa**	NW Iraq	(Sabar 1976)
C.	**Qaraqosh**	NW Iraq	(Khan 2002a)
C.	**Salamas**	NW Iran	(Polotsky 1991; see now Khan 2016)
C.	**Sanandaj**	W Iran	(Panoussi 1990; Khan 2009)
J.	**Sanandaj**	W Iran	(Khan 2009)
J.	**Saqqiz**	W Iran	(Israeli 1998)
C.	**Sardarid**	NW Iran	(Younansardaroud 2001)
C.	**Sat**	SE Turkey	(Mutzafi 2008c)
C.	**Sulemaniyya**	W Iran	(Khan 2004a)
J.	**Sulemaniyya**	NE Iraq	(Khan 2004a; including Ḥalabja)
C.	**Telkepe**	NW Iraq	(Coghill 2010, 2014)
C.	**Tisqopa**	NW Iraq	(Rubba 1993)
C.	**Ṭiyare**	SE Turkey	(Talay 2008)

Table. 3. (continued)

J./C.	DIALECTS	LOCATION	SOURCES
C.	**Ṭuroyo**	SE Turkey	(Jastrow 1985, 1992; Ritter 1967-71, 1990)
C.	**Urmi**	NW Iran	(Marogulov 1976; Murre-van den Berg 1999; but see now Khan 2016)
J.	**Urmi**	NW Iran	(Garbell 1965a; Khan 2008b)
C.	**Zaxo**	NW Iraq	(Hoberman 1993)
J.	**Zaxo**	NW Iraq	(Sabar 2002, Cohen 2012)

It will be argued that, although accusative alignment prevails in the majority of the NENA dialects, the expression of the perfective past (Chapter 4) and perfect and/or resultative (Chapter 5) presents several cases of extraordinary complex agreement patterns in several dialects. Indeed, such transitive constructions will be shown to increase the complexity and possible form variants with respect to the imperfective in virtually all dialects that are discussed. I will demonstrate that all known major alignment patterns are represented in the NENA dialects in some domain of their grammar and some of them in unexpected ways. Nevertheless, since transitive clauses can be expressed so differently, it will not always prove to be easy to capture an alignment type in traditional terms. I will advance arguments for a few possible instances of ergative alignment that were hitherto not analyzed as such[28]. It should be pointed out that several dialects are selected as representative of a certain type and that generalizations regarding such types remain incomplete until further, more exhaustive dialectal studies.

Chapter 6 compares the findings for NENA with Central Neo-Aramaic. Central Neo-Aramaic closely resembles NENA in many ways but also shows noteworthy differences, particularly in the combinations of agreement and prepositional marking. The richer voice system is an important difference not only with NENA but also within the Central Neo-Aramaic dialects.

Finally, in Chapter 7, the general conclusions are presented in an overview of alignment types in Eastern Neo-Aramaic. The alignment types and related phenemona described for both NENA and Central Neo-Aramaic are compared and placed in their broader typological context.

[28] Recently, however, Khan (2017) independently came to a similar conclusion for some of these.