

Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic¹

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Abstract

The present article seeks to describe a major group of Jewish North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) dialects located across the Great Zab river in the eastern and south-eastern parts of the dialectological map of NENA, hence the term “Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic” (“Trans-Zab”, for short) chosen for this dialect group. A large set of phonological, morphophonological, morphological and lexical innovations, shared by all members of this group, is presented. Each of the Trans-Zab features is compared with contrastive parallel features in other, selected NENA varieties. Finally, an internal classification of Trans-Zab into three subdivisions is proposed, based on a comparison of three respective paradigms of the positive present copula.

I. Introduction

North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) is an extremely diverse group of Christian and Jewish Aramaic varieties exhibiting an intricate maze of crisscrossing isoglosses that render its subgrouping a very difficult task indeed. One major difficulty in this regard is distinguishing between shared innovations, which are the result of genetic inheritance from a common ancestor, and other common innovations which are irrelevant to genetic classification, being the result of parallel independent developments or areal diffusion across various dialect clusters.

An attempt at a comprehensive subgrouping of NENA would be, to my mind, premature at the present stage of imperfect knowledge of this group’s

- 1 Note the following abbreviations: Ar. = Arabic; C. = Christian dialect of... (e.g. C. Urmi); intr. = intransitive; J. = Jewish dialect of... (e.g. J. Urmi); JBA = Jewish Babylonian Aramaic; JKS = J. Koy Sanjaq; K = Kurdish; tr. = transitive. For abbreviations related to Neo-Aramaic dialects see note 2.
- 2 The comparative data offered in this paper are only a part of the data taken into consideration, and are mostly gleaned from my informants. The following Neo-Aramaic dialects are referred to in the present contribution:
 - Christian NENA dialects – in Turkey: Baz, B-Tyare = Belatha-Tyare, Beşpən, Bohtan, Dez, Hertevin, Jilu, K-Tyare = Ko-Tyare, Lgippa-Tyare, Lizən-Tyare, Marbishu, Marga, M-Tkhuma = Mazra-Tkhuma, Qurich (district of Bohtan), Rumta-Tyare, Sat, S-Tyare = Sarspidho-Tyare, Țal, Tyare dialect cluster (as a whole), Walto-Tyare; in Iraq: Alqosh, Ankawa, Aradhin, Barətle, Isnakh (district of Zakho), Koy Sanjaq, Nerwa, Qaraqosh, Shaqlawa, Telkepe; in Iran: Sanandaj = Senaya, Sardarid, Urmi.
 - Jewish NENA dialects – In Iraq: Aradhin, Arbel, Atrush, Barzan and the Barzani dialect cluster as a whole, Betanure, Bəjil-Barzani, Challa Dobe,

dialectological map. Nonetheless, the comparative data at my disposal² indicate that one major dialect cluster which will almost certainly have to be considered in any classificatory model of the NENA spectrum of dialects is the group of Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialects located to the east and south-east of the Great Zab river, a tributary of the Tigris. I have described elsewhere some of the characteristics of this dialectal group, which I call “Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic”, or “Trans-Zab”.³

The aim of this article is to elaborate on the hallmarks of the Trans-Zab group and to expand the knowledge of the bundle of innovations shared by its members vis-à-vis the limited number of features discussed in previous works. Of these innovations, the most pertinent for the establishment of Trans-Zab as a distinct group within NENA are related to morphology, which is commonly regarded as the most significant linguistic area for genetic classification.

The proposed Trans-Zab group comprises the Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialects that were, until the exodus of their speakers to Israel (mainly in the 1950s), spoken in the eastern and south-eastern peripheries of the NENA-speaking area, to be precise in the Iranian province of Western Azerbaijan and adjacent areas across the Turkish border, in Iranian Kurdistan and down to Kerend in the province of Kermanshah, in the Iraqi Kurdish provinces of Sulemaniyya and Arbel (Irbil) and, further south, in the area of Khanaqin, a town with both Arabic- and Aramaic-speaking Jews. With just one exception these dialects were located across the Great Zab – the exception is the dialect of Başkale in Turkey, situated just ten kilometres west of the river. In addition, the dialect of Dobe and nearby villages in the province of Arbel, around twenty kilometres south-east of ‘Aqra straddles both banks of the Great Zab.⁴

The Trans-Zab group can be clearly distinguished in many respects from all other NENA dialects, both Christian and Jewish. The non-Trans-Zab Jewish dialects were mostly spoken west of the Great Zab and include Lishana Deni dialects,⁵ the Barzani dialect-cluster⁶ and the dialect of Sandu, *c.* 30 km north-west of Barzan in Iraq.⁷

Halabja, Koy Sanjaq, Nerwa, Rustaqa, Rwanuz, Sandu, Shahe-Barzani, Shaqlawa, Sulemaniyya, Zakho; in Iran: Bijar, J.Az. = Jewish Azerbaijan dialect cluster, Kerend, Naghada-J.Az., Şablugh-J.Az., Sanandaj, Saqez, Şano-J.Az., Urmi-J.Az.

3 See Mutzafi (2000: 6–11; 2004a: 9–10).

4 Additionally, the map in Garbell (1965a: 12) includes within the boundaries of J.Az. a subgroup of Trans-Zab, the Turkish city of Van some 80 km west of the Great Zab. This city is not, however, included elsewhere in Garbell’s accounts of J.Az.-speaking communities, viz. in Garbell (1964: 86; 1965a: 13; 1965b: 159), nor is Van mentioned in Ben-Yaacob (1981). According to my informants there was no indigenous Neo-Aramaic-speaking Jewish community in Van, only a few Aramaic-speaking Jewish merchants who hailed from Başkale.

5 See Mutzafi (2002a: 480–81).

6 See Mutzafi (2002b; 2004c).

7 I intend to dedicate a separate article to a grammatical sketch of this dialect. For some features of Sandu see Mutzafi (2004b: 260–62).

It appears that the Jewish dialects of NENA evince a major split between Trans-Zab and Lishana Deni; the latter was spoken almost exclusively to the west of the Great Zab and can therefore be called Cis-Zab, whereas Barzani and Sandu, which might be classified together as a loose Central-Zab group, are transitional dialects sandwiched between the two major groups. Trans-Zab is the most innovative of these groups, Central-Zab is less progressive and Cis-Zab is the most conservative.

The distinctive bundle of innovations shared by the regional idioms included in the Trans-Zab group will be presented in section II below. It should be noted that a few of these innovations also occur in neighbouring and other dialects, but it is their unique co-occurrence which justifies the label “Trans-Zab”. In other words, not every innovation is unique, but the whole set of innovations is. Furthermore, the rather small number of Trans-Zab innovations found in other NENA varieties can be readily explained as parallel developments or cases of areal diffusion through dialect contact, as will be shown below. As for areal features, only those that are likely to have emerged in Trans-Zab and then spread to contiguous zones, as well as distinctive Trans-Zab innovations that have diffused exclusively within Trans-Zab boundaries, are included in the following outline. Innovations that spread from an unknown source across large NENA territories, including Trans-Zab, such as the III-y plural imperative suffix *-mun*⁸ (and its dialectal variants *-mən*, *-mu*, *-mux*) and the loss of the verbal stem derived from *pa[‘]el*,⁹ have been excluded from the following inventory of Trans-Zab features.

II. Trans-Zab innovations

1. **d*, **t* > *l*

Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic exhibits a shift of the Proto-NENA interdentalals **d* and **t* to the lateral consonant *l*, as in the case of **idātā* > **ilāla* > *'ilālē* “hands” in Arbel, Rustqa, Kerend and some other dialects of this group. There are, however, quite a few exceptions to this rule, as specified below. The fact that in J.Az., and to a lesser extent in Rustaqa and Rwanduz, there are instances of **d*, **t* > *d* with no apparent phonetic motivation, e.g. in *'-w-d* “to do” (in J.Az. only), *'-d-y* “to come”, in addition to conditioned cases (see §2 below), can be explained by postulating a Proto- or early Trans-Zab sound shift **t* > **d*,¹⁰ viz. a merger of the two interdentalals into a single phoneme *l*^{*}*d*, followed by a shift of the latter to *l*

8 Notes on transcription: the vowels *i*, *e*, *ε*, *o* and *ü* are as a rule half long to long in open syllables and short in closed syllables. Vowel length is marked only for long *ā* versus short *a* and long *ū* versus short *u* and for cases of long *e* and *o* in closed syllables. Stress is penultimate unless otherwise indicated. Superscript ⁺ preceding a word indicates word-emphasis. The transcription of words cited from bibliographical sources is adapted to the method used here.

9 For these two areal features see Mutzafi (2004a: 12; 2004b: 259–60).

10 This shift has occurred independently in C.Nerwa – see §1.2 below.

alongside a rather marginal shift of the merged phoneme $/*d/$ to d . The shift to l seems to have occurred after the dialectal fragmentation of Trans-Zab, and to have spread as an areal feature across these dialects. It may have first evolved as an internal independent development in one of the areas where its effect is the most extensive, possibly in areas south of Rwanduz within the province of Arbel, whence it gradually spread all over Jewish Trans-Zab territory, yet petered out to some extent on its course northward, especially in Iranian Azerbaijan where $*d$ has shifted to d in more cases than anywhere else in Trans-Zab.¹¹

1.1. $*d > l$

The interdental d has generally shifted to l , e.g. in $*edā > 'elá$ “festival, holiday” and $*r-q-d > r-q-l$ “to dance”. Consider the following comparison of Trans-Zab to a number of selected other NENA varieties:

| | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|--------------|----------|
| Alqosh | Sat | J.Zakho | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
| ' <u>eda</u> | ' <u>eda</u> | ' <u>eza</u> | ' <u>elá</u> | festival |
| <u>r-q-d</u> | <u>r-q-d</u> | <u>r-q-z</u> | <u>r-q-l</u> | to dance |

1.2 $*t > l$

The interdental t has generally shifted to l , quite possibly through an intermediate $*d$ as suggested above. Compare the words for “village” ($*mātā$) and “house” ($*baytā$) in the following selected NENA varieties versus Trans-Zab:

| | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------------|-------------|---------|
| Halmun | B-Ṭyare | Sat | C.Nerwa ¹² | J.Nerwa | Shahe | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
| <u>māta</u> | <u>māta</u> | <u>māta</u> | <u>māda</u> | <u>māsa</u> | <u>mā(ha)</u> | <u>mālā</u> | village |
| <u>bayta</u> | <u>bayša</u> | <u>bayta</u> | <u>bedā</u> | <u>besa</u> | <u>beya</u> ¹³ | <u>belā</u> | house |

11 For a different explanation for the origin of the Trans-Zab shift of interdentals to l , namely the possibility that it occurred by the influence of the Kurdish dialect of Mukri in the southern parts of Iranian Azerbaijan, see Kapeliuk (1997: 541–2; 2004: 179–80). It is, rather, at least equally possible, if not more plausible, that the shift in question emerged somewhere outside Iranian Azerbaijan, a region which might have been the latest to be affected by this shift and where its diffusion was checked by the largest number of conditioned and unconditioned cases of $*d > d$ in Trans-Zab. Conversely, it could be that Mukri Kurdish was influenced by Trans-Zab (see Khan 1999: 32). Note, moreover, that a change of $*d$ to l has occurred independently, albeit as a singular, word-specific development, also in certain NENA dialects west of the Great Zab: in Baz, ³úgdāle “one another” and similar forms in closely related dialects such as Jilu ^(š)gdāla compared with Ṭyare ʔxdāde, Barətle gdāde, and in Telkepe majlāfa “oar” < Ar. mijdāf. Additional parallel cases in other languages include, e.g., the Pashto regular shifts $*d > *d > l$ and initial and intervocalic $*t > l$ (see Skjærvø 1989: 385–6, 403), as well as sporadic or singular cases in other languages, e.g. Jewish Baghdadi Ar. hākada > hekəd ~ hekəl (Blanc 1964: 140), Gk. ʔadamas > Ar. ʔalmās “diamond”.

12 See Talay (2002: 6).

13 The direct forerunner of the form beya is assumed to be *beha.

2. **d*, **t* > *d*

There are a few cases in Trans-Zab where **d* and **t* shifted to *d* rather than to *l*, chiefly in the vicinity of an alveolar sonorant *l*, *r* or *n*. This irregularity may have occurred either by partial assimilation of an interdental **d* or **t* to an alveolar *l*, *r* or *n*, yielding an alveolar *d*, or due to the dissimilatory impact of the sonorant consonant *l*, *r* or *n*, viz. avoidance of two adjacent alveolar sonorants – *l* as a reflex of **d* or **t* following or preceding another alveolar sonorant.

2.1. **d* > *d*

The following are selected instances of the conditioned shift **d* > *d* near *l*, *r* or *n* in Trans-Zab along with the precursors of the Trans-Zab forms represented by the Ko dialect of Țyare (K-Țyare):

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| K-Țyare | Trans-Zab ¹⁴ | Gloss |
| <i>g-d-l</i> | <i>g-d-l</i> | to intertwine, braid |
| <i>g-r-d</i> | <i>g-r-d</i> | to scrape, grate |
| <i>p-r-d̄</i> | <i>p-r-d</i> | to elude (sleep) ¹⁵ |
| <i>kodānta</i> | <i>kodāntá</i> | mule ¹⁶ |

In two other cases the reason for the aberrant shift **d* > *d* is possibly assimilation of *d* to an adjacent *d*: the genitive particle *did-* “of” in Trans-Zab (and in many other NENA dialects) compared with *did-* in some Țyare dialects and in Țuroyo; and *didwá* “fly” in Arbel, JKS, Rustaqa and Rwanduz, as well as J.Az. *dədwé* “flies” (sg. *dədweltá*), compared with Țyare *didwa*, Alqosh *dədwá*.

In addition, there are several cases where the shift **d* > *d* appears to be unconditioned: **hadyā* > *xədyá* “breast” in J.Az., Rustaqa and Rwanduz, **gadyā* > *gədyá* “kid” in literary JKS and literary J.Az.,¹⁷ and five more cases in J.Az. that are specified below with comparisons to other dialects:

- 14 Some Trans-Zab dialects have lost one or two of these lexemes; and in some of these dialects, mainly in Iranian Kurdistan, the consonant (**d* >) *d* in the verbs *g-r-d* and *p-r-d* and in *kodāntá* has been further retracted and became *z*, viz. *g-r-z*, *p-r-z*, *kozāntá* (cf. **guddā* > **gūdā* > *gūzā* “wall” in these dialects, among other cases of **d* > *z*).
- 15 As in JKS *šəndí pridla*, J.Sulemaniyya *šəndí prida* “sleep eluded me”, and similarly in other Trans-Zab dialects.
- 16 In Țyare *kodānta* “she-mule”, *kawədna* [sic] “he-mule”. Likewise as regards *kodāntá*, *kodná* in the Trans-Zab dialect of Rustaqa.
- 17 The irregular *d* in *xədyá* and *gədyá* might be related to contact with *y* (partial assimilation), but compare the parallels *xəlyá*, a euphemism for *mamoná* “breast”, in JKS and *gəlyá* “kid” in Bijar Trans-Zab, as well as **š-d-y* > Trans-Zab *š-l-y* “to throw at; sow; card (depending on dialect)” and **h-d-y* > Trans-Zab *x-l-y* “to rejoice” (literary J.Az. and literary Rwanduz; JKS in hendiadys with *p-š-x* “id.”), JKS *xəlyanūla* “happiness” (in hendiadys with *pəšxanūla* “id.”).

| | | | |
|-----------------------|--------|-------|----------------------|
| Betanure | J.Az. | Arbel | Gloss |
| '-w-d | '-w-d | '-w-l | to do |
| 'ida | 'idá | 'ilá | hand |
| hudāya | +hudāá | hulāá | Jew |
| d-'əxdē ¹⁸ | +dəğde | dəxle | one another |
| 'ədmā ¹⁹ | 'ədmá | 'ilmá | husband's brother |

2.2. **t* > *d*

This sound change, or rather **t* > **d* > *d*, has regularly occurred after *l*, *r* or *n*. In the following examples of this change the precursor forms of Trans-Zab words are represented by the dialect-cluster of Ṭyare:

| | | |
|----------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Ṭyare | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
| 'arməltá | 'arməldá | widow |
| r-t-x | r-d-x, +r-d-x | to boil (intr.) |
| 'aríá | 'ardá | co-wife |
| šəntá | šəndá ²⁰ | sleep (noun) |

Additionally, in J.Az., Rustaq and Rwanuz, the shift of **t* to *d* occurs before *y* in the verbal roots *'-*t*-*y* > '-*d*-*y* "to come" and **m*-*t*-*y* > *m*-*d*-*y* "to bring".

3. **t* > *h* and related cases

In a small number of lexical items *t* shifted to *h* in Trans-Zab, primarily preceding *r* or *r*. At a later stage *h* was elided in most cases, as in the following examples:

| | | |
|-----------------------|-------------|---------------------------------|
| Ṭyare | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
| l-batrá | bahra, bāra | back, backwards ²¹ |
| kamətrá | kamerá | pear (Ṭyare: wild pear) |
| kawətrá ²² | korá | lunch (Ṭyare), noon (Trans-Zab) |

In a few cases *h* resulting from *t* has become in at least some of the Trans-Zab dialects a pharyngeal *ħ* by partial assimilation to a following pharyngealized *l* or *r*:

18 < **d*-'*əxdāde*, as in Ṭyare.

19 < **yabmā*, as in Syriac.

20 In some Trans-Zab dialects of Iranian Kurdistan *šəndá > šəná or šna "sleep, dream", with elision of *d*.

21 In some Trans-Zab dialects also "afterwards, behind, the following (day, night, week, etc.)" or some of these meanings. The form *bahra* is found in literary Saqəz (see Brukhim 1985: 58/10), and in eighteenth- and late nineteenth-century J.Az. (see Sabar 2004: 106, no. 32; Duval 1883: 142/21). Additional Trans-Zab words related to the same etymon are *bātar > bār "after" (in literary Rwanuz still *bahrew* ~ *bārew* "after him", see Rivlīn 1958: part III: 5) and *batru (cf. 'Ankawa *batru*) > Trans-Zab dialects *bahru*, *bahro*, *bāro* "the day after tomorrow".

22 J.Az. and most Iraqi Trans-Zab dialects have lost the reflex of **kawətra*. For the etymology of this word cf. late Syriac *kuttārā* "midday meal" (Margoliouth 1927: 174b), in earlier Syriac denoting "awaiting, duration".

| Ṭyare | Trans-Zab ²³ | Gloss |
|---------------|---|-----------------------------------|
| <i>ṭlāta</i> | <i>ṭlāhá, *tāhá, ṭlahá, təlḥá</i> ²⁴ | three |
| <i>*at̄ra</i> | <i>*ahrá, 'ahrá</i> ²⁵ | country (Ṭyare), town (Trans-Zab) |
| <i>n-t-r</i> | <i>*n-ḥ-r > *n-x-r, n-x-r</i> | to fall off (leaves, fruit, hair) |

Another such case, restricted to the Trans-Zab dialects of Iranian Kurdistan and bordering Iraqi towns, is **lat̄mal > *lahmal > *lah̄mal > lah̄mal* “the day before yesterday”, cognate with *laləmmal* and *lahummal* in other Trans-Zab dialects.²⁶

4. Penultimate > ultimate stress

Unlike all other known NENA dialects, including the most archaizing among them, e.g. Qaraqosh, Alqosh and Ṭyare, where word stress is generally penultimate in nominal forms, Trans-Zab exhibits a shift of word stress from the penultimate to the ultimate syllable in the nominal system (with some exceptions, chiefly adverbs), most probably due to the influence of Kurdish and (in J.Az.) also of Azerbaijani.²⁷ It is plausible that this feature developed independently in various Trans-Zab dialects under adstratal influence, but a Proto-Trans-Zab legacy is equally possible.

That the stress in the nominal system was formerly penultimate is evident from the fact that in the Trans-Zab group pretonic vowels are as a rule long in nominal forms, retaining the length inherited from the period of penultimate stress, e.g. in the word *nāšá* “man, person”, where the length of the first vowel bears witness to its being formerly stressed. The historical changes of stress and vowel length in this word can be reconstructed as **nāšá >* retraction of stress and subsequent shortening of the final vowel: *nāša* reconstructible for Proto-NENA and occurring throughout NENA except Trans-Zab > shift of stress to the ultima: *nāšá* in Trans-Zab.

5. *w > f l__-ta*

In Trans-Zab the consonant *w* has shifted to *f* by partial assimilation to a following *t* of the feminine suffix *-ta*. This feature is manifested mostly in feminine nouns and adjectives synchronically derived from masculine forms, as in the following cases:

- 23 In most Trans-Zab dialects the *r* in **at̄ra* and **n-t-r* has been de-pharyngealized by dissimilation from the adjacent pharyngeal *ḥ*. Likewise, *l* has been de-pharyngealized in the dialectal form *təlḥá* by the same dissimilation.
- 24 It should be noted that the change **ṭlāta > ṭlāha* is found in various NENA dialects and dialect-clusters, as far from Trans-Zab as J.Zakho, and has apparently spread as an areal feature, possibly from several foci.
- 25 Most Iraqi Trans-Zab dialects have lost the reflex of **at̄ra*.
- 26 Cf. also Trans-Zab **nhātā > nḥāla* “ear” according to the process specified below (feature no. 19); and see features no. 7 and 8 below for further cases of **t > h*.
- 27 Cf. Garbell (1965b: 170).

| | | |
|----------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|
| Masculine form | Derived feminine form | Gloss |
| <i>ganāwá</i> | <i>ganaftá</i> | ‘thief’ |
| <i>šwāwá</i> | <i>šwaftá</i> | ‘neighbour’ |
| <i>qliwá</i> | <i>qliftá</i> , J.Az. <i>qləftá</i> | ‘clean’ |
| <i>xriwá</i> | <i>xriftá</i> , J.Az. <i>xrəftá</i> | ‘bad, ruined’ |

Thus *w* and *f* reflect a morphophonemic alternation between masculine and derived feminine forms. Related cases are Trans-Zab **ktiwwta* > *kliftá*, J.Az. *kləftá* ‘amulet’ (see the comparative table below), **quwat* (< K < Ar.) > **qəwta* > *qəftá* ‘strength’ in most Trans-Zab dialects and **nawta* > J.Sulemaniyya, J.Az. *naftá* ‘nit’ (pl. *nāwé*).

Note that the change *w* > *f* is manifested only before the feminine ending *-ta*. Furthermore, in Koy Sanjaq, Rustaqa and Dobe we find *nawtá* ‘nit’ rather than *naftá*, apparently since this word is synchronically not derived from **nāwá*. It follows that the change of *w* to *f* is not entirely predictable on the phonological level, for morphophonemic considerations are required for the formulation of the rule governing this change.²⁸

No such trait occurs in other Neo-Aramaic dialects, e.g. in the NENA dialects compared with Trans-Zab below:

| | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|-------------------------------|------------|
| B-Ṭyare | M-Tkhuma | J.Aradhin | J.Zakho | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
| <i>genawta</i> | <i>genota</i> | <i>ganawta</i> | <i>ganota</i> | <i>ganaftá</i> | thief (f.) |
| <i>ktiwwta</i> | <i>ktiwwta</i> | <i>ktūta</i> | <i>ksūta</i> | <i>kliftá</i> , <i>kləftá</i> | amulet |

6. III-y feminine participle pattern **CCitā* > *CCitá*

In Trans-Zab **t* that is part of a feminine suffix in the III-y participle form **CCitā* does not shift to *l* but to *t*, e.g. in *qritá* ‘having read’, *ksitá* ‘covered’ (versus the regular sound shift in the noun **kussitā* > *ksilá* ‘hat; skullcap’). The reason for this aberrancy is, in all likelihood, analogy with *t* in *III-^c feminine participle forms of the pattern **CCitā* > *CCitá*, e.g. *šmitá* ‘having heard’, *zritá* ‘sown’, *gritá* ‘shaven’. Compare the following feminine participle forms of historical III-y verbs as against original III-^c ones in Sarspidho Ṭyare (S-Ṭyare), where the distinction between *t* and *t* is retained:

28 It is, therefore, doubtful whether *f* in this position could be treated as a mere allophone of *w* and be ignored even in a broad phonemic transcription as, e.g., in Garbell (1965a: 306, 326) *ganawa*, *ganawta* ‘thief’, *qliwa*, f. *-wta* ‘clean’. I would opt for a narrower transcription and represent *ʃ* wherever it occurs, be it ‘original’ or stemming from *w*. Note, moreover, that in Trans-Zab liturgical and other native texts *f* stemming from *w* is usually rendered with the Hebrew letter פ, e.g. Saḅlagh קלפתה [*qləftá*] ‘clean’ (Idelsohn 1913: 324–5), Rwanduz כריפתה [*xəriftá*] ‘bad’ (Rivlin 1958: part B, Jonas 3: 10), Saqəz שוּפְתָה [*šwaftá*] ‘neighbour’ (Brukhim 2002: 260) and J.Az. קלפתה [*kləftá*] ‘amulet’ (Ben-Rahamim 2006: 130–5 et passim).

S-Ṭyare f. sg. participle forms:

| | | | | |
|--------------|---|----------------------------|-------------|-----------------------------|
| III-y | : | *III- ^ε | Gloss | |
| <i>blīta</i> | : | <i>blīta</i> | worn (out): | swallowed |
| <i>ṣwīta</i> | : | <i>ṣwīta</i> | stiff: | dyed |
| <i>xđīta</i> | : | <i>xđīta</i> ²⁹ | happy: | wrapped, bound |
| <i>xlīta</i> | : | <i>xlīta</i> ³⁰ | sweet: | dislocated (bone), sprained |

Thus the distinction between original III-y and III-^ε feminine participles, still retained *inter alia* in Ṭyare, is no longer in existence in Trans-Zab, where both historical categories uniformly end in *-ita*.

The same analogy has occurred in the Jewish Neo-Aramaic varieties of Barzani and Sandu, quite possibly due to the influence of neighbouring Trans-Zab. Thus, for instance, we find in these dialects the form *xlīta* “sweet” instead of expected (**xliha* >) *xliya* in Barzani and *xliṣa* in Sandu.

7. Plural ending *-awāé* and related forms

The plural ending *-awāta*, attested in conservative NENA dialects such as Ṭyare, Alqosh and Betanure, has changed to **-awāha* (cf. Baz *-awaha*) > **-awāhe* by analogy with the pl. ending *-e* > Iranian Kurdistan *-awāé* > J.Sulemaniyya and Ḥalabja *-awāyé*³¹ > *-awé*, *-āwé* in other Trans-Zab dialects (in J.Urmi *-āwé*). The Proto-Trans-Zab form can be reconstructed as **-awāhe* or **-awāé*. Compare the pl. forms of *lele* “night” in the following dialects:

| | | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|---------------|--------|
| | Trans-Zab representative dialects | | | | | |
| Betanure | Shahe | Bəjil | J.Sanandaj | Ḥalabja | Dobe | Gloss |
| <i>lelawāta</i> | <i>lelawā(h)e</i> | <i>lelawāé</i> | <i>lelawāé</i> | <i>lelawāyé</i> | <i>lelawé</i> | nights |

The occurrence of the forms *-awā(h)e* and *-awāé* in Shahe and Bəjil, respectively, may well be a result of an areal diffusion from neighbouring Trans-Zab.

8. Plural ending *-ye*

Trans-Zab exhibits a unique plural ending *-ye*, corresponding to nouns with the sg.f. ending *-ta*. This plural ending is the result of the following process: **-yāta* > **-yāha* > **-yāhe* by analogy with the pl. ending *-e* > **-yāe* > *-ye*. Compare the plural forms of *xmarta* “she-ass” in the following dialects:

| | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------|----------------|---------------|-----------|
| Betanure | Sat | Shahe | Bəjil | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
| <i>xmaryāta</i> | <i>xmaryāte</i> | <i>xmaryā(h)e</i> | <i>xmaryāe</i> | <i>xmaryé</i> | she-asses |

9. ʾo “he, she”

Contemporary Trans-Zab dialects have all lost gender distinction between the 3sg.m. and 3sg.f. independent pronouns, manifested in archaizing

29 < Proto-NENA **x-d-^ε*, reconstructed on the basis of cognates such as *x-d-^ε*, *x-d-^ε* and *x-z-^ε* in various descendent dialects. The etymology of **x-d-^ε* is unknown, yet the nature of the last two radicals points to a Semitic background, and the verbal root in question, not known to exist in any language but NENA, is most probably inherited from the lexis of earlier Aramaic layers.

30 < Arabic *x-l-^ε*.

31 See Khan (2004: 187).

NENA varieties (e.g. Qaraqosh, B-Ṭyare) by the forms *'āhu* and *'āhi*, respectively.³² Unlike all other NENA dialects, in Trans-Zab the 3sg.m. independent pronoun (**'āhu* >) *'o* has been generalized as a 3sg.c. pronoun, ousting the 3sg.f. form.³³ The latter survives as *'āhi*, *'āhin* or *'ay* in early and contemporary religious literature in some of the Trans-Zab dialects.³⁴ The following is a comparison of the 3sg. independent pronouns in contemporary Trans-Zab dialects and representative dialects of the rest of NENA:

| Hertevin | Alqosh | J.Zakho | Challa | C.Nerwa ³⁵ | Trans-Zab | Gloss |
|-------------|------------|-------------|-------------|---------------------------|-----------|-------|
| <i>'āhu</i> | <i>'āw</i> | <i>'āwa</i> | <i>'āya</i> | <i>'āw(u)</i> , <i>'o</i> | <i>'o</i> | he |
| <i>'āhi</i> | <i>'āy</i> | <i>'āya</i> | <i>'āya</i> | <i>'āy(i)</i> | <i>'o</i> | she |

It may well be that the collapse of gender distinction in the 3sg. independent pronoun was brought about by the influence of the parallel common gender in the neighbouring languages, in particular by the impact of the similar Kurdish 3sg.c. independent pronoun *aw* (written *ew*),³⁶ and in the case of J.Az. mainly by the impact of the strikingly identical Azerbaijani parallel *o*.

The vestiges of the 3sg.f. independent pronoun *'āhi* etc. in literary Trans-Zab indicate that the contemporary 3sg.c. pronoun *'o* might not be a shared innovation inherited from Proto-Trans-Zab but a result of an internal Trans-Zab areal diffusion of this feature that has spread to all dialects of the group.

10. *'oni* “they”

In Trans-Zab the 3pl. independent pronoun *'āni*, found in numerous NENA dialects,³⁷ has been modified by analogy with its 3sg. (erstwhile 3sg. m.) counterpart *'o*, thus: **'āni* > Arbel, Rustaqa, JKS, J.Sulemaniyya and other kindred dialects *'oni* “they”.³⁸ The latter form itself underwent further changes in some Trans-Zab dialects, especially in Iran, e.g. in Naghada **'oni* > *'oyné* “they, those” by analogy with *'ayné* “these”,³⁹ and in J.Urmi **'oyné* > *'ūné* “they, those” with a shift *oy* > *ū* typical of this dialect (cf. Naghada *hó-yle* “there he is” – J.Urmi *'ú-le* “id.”, Naghada *šatoyle* “he is drinking” – J.Urmi *šatūle* “id.”).⁴⁰

The form *'oni* occurs also in Bohtan (alongside *'anhan*),⁴¹ but this is an independent development related to the vowel shift **ā* > *o* in this dialect.

32 For these forms see Hoberman (1988: 569; 1990: 84–5).

33 As already pointed out in Khan (1999: 8, d., 81) concerning Arbel and J.Az.

34 Thus one finds *'āhi* and *'āhin* in literary J.Az. (see, *inter alia*, Garbell (1965a: 296a), Sabar (2004: 101, no. 17), *'āhi* in literary Saqaz (Brukhim 1985: 42/5, 47–8) and *'ay* in literary JKS (Mutzafi 2004: 213a).

35 See Talay (2001: 10).

36 See Garbell (1965b: 175a), Hopkins (1991: 790).

37 This form may well be related to Ṭuroyo *hāni* “these”, JBA הגני, האני “these, those” and Syriac *hānen* “these ones^f”.

38 Cf. Hoberman (1990: 85), Khan (1999: 8, e).

39 Cf. J.Zakho *'anya* “these” < ? **'āni hā*.

40 The phonetic mechanism of this shift is yet to be accounted for.

41 See Fox (2002: 168).

11. **nšiqāle* > *nəšqāle*

In triradical strong verbs the erstwhile NENA pattern of the past inflectional base, *CCiC*, has the allomorph *CəCC-* in Trans-Zab when followed by an overt intra-conjugational object marker, viz. an object marker other than the 3sg.m. *-ə-*, e.g. in the Jewish dialect of Koy Sanjaq (synchronic analysis of inflectional bases and affixes is given in parentheses):

| | | |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------------|------------------|
| Preterite | Preterite with object infix | |
| <i>nšiqle</i> (nšiq-le) “he kissed” | <i>nšiqle</i> (nšiq-ə-le) | “he kissed him” |
| | <i>nəšqāle</i> (nəšq-ā-le) | “he kissed her” |
| | <i>nəšqile</i> (nəšq-i-le) | “he kissed them” |

The allomorph *CəCC-* has developed by analogy with the III-y preterite inflection with a feminine object infix. Compare the following forms in the Trans-Zab dialect of Koy Sanjaq with their parallel forms in Ṭyare as a representative of the NENA dialects which do not evince the “*nəšqāle* syndrome”:

| | | | |
|--------------------|----------------|----------------|-----------------|
| | Ṭyare | JKS | |
| Triradical, strong | <i>nšiqāle</i> | <i>nəšqāle</i> | “he kissed her” |
| Triradical, III-y | <i>xəzyāle</i> | <i>xəzyāle</i> | “he saw her” |

Thus in JKS and Trans-Zab as a whole the restructuring of the form *nšiqāle* “he kissed her” as *nəšqāle* is by analogy with III-y forms such as *xəzyāle*. The restructuring of the form taking a 3pl. object infix – *nšiqile* > *nəšqile* “he kissed them” subsequently arose by analogy with *nəšqāle*.

In NENA dialects other than Trans-Zab the “*nəšqāle* syndrome” is known to occur in Barzani,⁴² Trans-Zab’s closest Jewish Neo-Aramaic neighbour, apparently as a contact-induced innovation, and in the far-off dialect of Beṣpən as an independent development.⁴³

12. II-w and II-y 3sg.m. present patterns *CōC* and *CēC*

In triradical II-w and II-y verbs the 3sg.m. forms of the present base *qāṭəl* have the patterns *CōC* and *CēC*, respectively, e.g. *lōš* “he wears”, *xēp* “he bathes, washes (himself or someone else)”. These monosyllabic patterns have arisen from the bisyllabic patterns *CāwəC* and *CāyəC*, e.g. *lāwəš*, *xāyəp*, preserved in the vast majority of NENA dialects, by analogy with the monosyllabic base in all the other forms of the paradigm, i.e. *lōš* by analogy with *lošét* (< **lawšet*) “you^{sg.m.} wear”, *lošéx* “we wear”, etc., *xēp* by analogy with *xepét* (< **xaypet*) “you^{sg.m.} bathe”, *xepéx* “we bathe”, etc. The restructuring of both patterns *CāwəC* and *CāyəC* according to the monosyllabic pattern in the rest of the paradigm is unique to Trans-Zab, as is shown in the following comparison of selected dialects:

42 See Mutzafi (2002b: 65).

43 See Sinha (2000: 142, 8.5.3), where the change *nšiqāle* > *nəšqāle* is explained as a result of metathesis. I would rather ascribe this change in Beṣpən to the same analogy that has occurred in Trans-Zab.

| | | | | | |
|--------------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|--|--------------------------|
| Atrush | Baz | Dez | C.Nerwa ⁴⁴ | Sardarid ⁴⁵ | Trans-Zab |
| <i>lāwəš</i> | <i>lāwəš</i> | <i>lāwəš</i> | <i>loše</i> | <i>lāwəš</i> ~ <i>lošə</i> | <i>lōš</i> |
| <i>xāyəp</i> | <i>xāp</i> | <i>xēp</i> | <i>xepə</i> | <i>xāyəp</i> ~ <i>xēpə</i> ~ <i>xāp</i> | <i>xēp</i> ⁴⁶ |

It should be stressed that the forms *lāwəš* and *xāyəp* are overwhelmingly retained in non-Trans-Zab NENA varieties, even though only one representative dialect (Atrush) evinces these forms in the foregoing table.

13. *hol* “give!”

Whereas in all other known NENA dialects the sg. imperative form of the verb “to give” is *hal* (< **habl-*), in Trans-Zab this form has changed to *hol* by analogy with the vowel *o* in the sg. imperative form of strong verbs and verbs with a strong final radical such as *groš* “pull!”, *xol* “eat!” and *koš* “go down!”.

In a considerable number of Trans-Zab dialects the vowel *o* of the imperative underwent a rising to *u* at some point after the innovation *hal* > *hol* had taken place, e.g. J.Az. *gruš*, *xul*, *kuš*, yet the form *hol* remains with the vowel *o* unaltered. A sole exception is the dialect of Rustaqa, where the form *hol* changed to *wul* by analogy with *u* in imperative forms such as *xul* “eat!” and with *w* as in the preterite *wəlle* “he gave”.

14. Restricted indicative prefix *k-*⁴⁷

In Trans-Zab the indicative prefix *k-* (and its allomorph *g-*, in some dialects also *č-*), which is attached to verbal forms that are derived from the Present base has been elided in all but a restricted class of triradical verbs with a weak first radical. Thus most inflections of the Present base have lost the distinction between jussive-subjunctive and indicative moods. Compare, for instance, J.Zakho *šāqəl* “that he take, he may take”, *kšāqəl* “he takes”, *šāqəlwa* “he may have taken”, *kšāqəlwa* “he used to take” with JKS *šaqəl* “that he take, he may take, he takes, he will take”, *šaqəlwa* “he may have taken; he used to take”.

All Trans-Zab dialects share a small set of nine *k*-prefix verbs: ^ʔ-*b-y* “to want”, ^ʔ-*l-y* (or a related form) “to come”, ^ʔ-*m-r* “to say”, ^ʔ-*x-l* “to eat”, ^ʔ-*w-l* or ^ʔ-*w-d* “to do”, ^ʔ-*z-l* “to go”, *h-w-l* “to give”, *h-w-y* “to be” and *y-ʔ-l* (or a related form) “to know”. Several Trans-Zab dialects also retain the prefix *k-* with the verbs ^ʔ-*m-y* “to bring” and ^ʔ-*w-r* “to enter”, or in one of these verbs.

The class of *k*-prefix verbs is demonstrated below by 3sg.m. jussive-subjunctive and indicative forms in two Trans-Zab dialects, JKS with a full range of eleven *k*-prefix verbs and J.Urmi with ten *k*-prefix verbs, its verb corresponding to JKS ^ʔ-*m-y* “to bring” being the non-*k*-prefix verb *m-d-y*:

44 See Talay (2001: 22). The final *e* may occasionally be elided, as in *pēš* (< *peše*) “he remains”, *ōd* (< *ode*) “he might do”; see Talay (2002: 131, no. 14; 137, no. 15).

45 See Younansardaroud (2001: 104–08). Some Sardarid II-*y* verbs have only one or two of the three alternating patterns (ibid.).

46 The verbal root *x-y-p* is absent from a few Trans-Zab dialects, but the pattern is unexceptionally *CēC* throughout Trans-Zab.

47 For a detailed discussion of this phenomenon see Heinrichs (2002: 243 ff.).

| | | | | |
|--------|--|---|--|---|
| | “to want” | “to come” | “to say” | “to bring” |
| JKS | ^ʾ <i>abé</i> , <i>gbe</i> | ^ʾ <i>alé</i> ~ ^ʾ <i>e</i> , <i>ke</i> | ^ʾ <i>amār</i> , <i>kmər</i> | ^ʾ <i>ame</i> , <i>kme</i> |
| J.Urmi | ^ʾ <i>ābē</i> , <i>gbe</i> | ^ʾ <i>ādē</i> , <i>gde</i> | ^ʾ <i>āmār</i> , <i>kmər</i> | (<i>mādē</i> , <i>mādē</i>) |
| | | | | |
| | “to enter” | “to eat” | “to do” | “to go” |
| JKS | ^ʾ <i>ōr</i> , <i>gōr</i> | ^ʾ <i>axəl</i> , <i>kxəl</i> | ^ʾ <i>ōl</i> , <i>gōl</i> | ^ʾ <i>ezəl</i> , <i>gezəl</i> |
| J.Urmi | ^ʾ <i>ōr</i> , ^ʾ <i>gōr</i> | ^ʾ <i>āxəl</i> , <i>kxəl</i> | ^ʾ <i>ōd</i> , <i>gōd</i> | ^ʾ <i>ezəl</i> , <i>gezəl</i> |
| | | | | |
| | “to give” | “to be” | “to know” | |
| JKS | <i>hawəl</i> , <i>kawəl</i> | <i>hawé</i> , <i>kawé</i> | <i>yāʾəl</i> , <i>čəl</i> | |
| J.Urmi | <i>hāvəl</i> , <i>kvəl</i> | <i>hāvé</i> , <i>kve</i> | <i>ʾayyəl</i> , <i>kyəl</i> | |

No other verb with an initial ^ʾ, *h* or *y* preserves the prefix *k-* (or its allomorph) in Trans-Zab. Thus, for instance, the verb ^ʾ-*s-r*, in J.Az. ^ʾ*y-s-r* (< ܣܪܫ) “to tie, bind” behaves like a strong verb and does not take a *k-* prefix.

The restriction of *k-* to certain weak first radical verbs occurs also in C. Sanandaj (Senaya),⁴⁸ a dialect so profoundly different from Trans-Zab in numerous respects that a common Trans-Zab-Senaya genetic background must be ruled out. The occurrence of restricted *k-* in both Trans-Zab and Senaya, a tiny Christian enclave in the midst of Jewish Trans-Zab territory is, rather, an areal feature probably radiating from a co-territorial Jewish dialect(s) to the Christian one. As is typical of diffusional features, Trans-Zab and Senaya share the general rule of *k-* restriction, but are set apart by many idiosyncratic details concerning this rule.⁴⁹

A more radical type of *k-* restriction, clearly unrelated to Trans-Zab, is attested in the north-western fringes of NENA. In the dialect of Hertevin and the nearby dialect of Bohtan the present-tense marker *ke-* is restricted to the verb “to want”, e.g. *kepʿe* “he wants” in Hertevin⁵⁰ and *kebe* (alongside *ʾibe*) “id.” in Bohtan.⁵¹

15. 1pl. “enclitic” verbal ending **-ax* > *-ex*

The 1pl. verbal inflectional ending *-ax*, which is in origin an enclitic derivative of ^ʾ*axnan* “we” and is preserved as such in many NENA dialects, has changed to *-ex* in Trans-Zab, as in **našqax* > *našqéx* “we kiss”.⁵² This

48 See *ibid.*

49 Compare, for instance, the common Trans-Zab forms of the verb “to want” ^ʾ*abé* (in some dialects *habé*), *gbe* with their Senaya parallels *bāye*, *kebe*, or compare Trans-Zab ^ʾ*ezəl* (in some dialects *hezəl*), *gezəl* with Senaya ^ʾ*āzel*, *kāzel*. (See the list of Senaya *k-* prefix verbs in Heinrichs 2002: 243.) There are some dissimilarities concerning *k-* prefix verbs within Trans-Zab itself, which may allude to an early diffusional spread of *k-* restriction within this group, but the disparities between Trans-Zab and Senaya are much more pronounced.

50 See Jastrow (1988: 39, 54, 206).

51 I am grateful to S. E. Fox for these data.

52 In certain Trans-Zab dialects the form *-ex* has a longer free allomorph: *-exən* in JKS (*našqéx* ~ *našqexən*), *-exin* in Iranian Kurdistan (*našqéx* ~ *našqexin*) and *-exa* in J. Az. (*našqéx* ~ *našqexa*). The augmentative elements *-ən*, *-in* are of obscure origin, whereas the *a* in the longer form *-exa* has arisen by analogy with other forms in the paradigm with a longer allomorph ending in *a*, such as the 1sg.m. present suffix *-ena*; see the paradigm in Garbell (1965a: 59).

change has in all likelihood arisen by analogy with the vowel *e* of the 1sg. m., 2sg. m. and 2pl. “enclitic” endings *-en(a)*, *-et* and *-etun*, which originally belonged to III-y verbs, as in *xazén(a)* “I^m. see”, *xazét* “you^{sg.m.} see”, *xazetun* “you^{pl.} see”, and later spread to all other verbs (in some Trans-Zab dialects still *našəqna* “I^m. kiss” vs. *xazena* “I^m. see”).

The same ending *-ex* is characteristic also of the dialect-cluster of Țyare (at least as regards the dialects of Walṭo, Rumta, Belatha, Ko, Lgəppa and Lizən), no doubt as an independent innovation. This Țyare ending was probably spawned by analogy with the 1sg. m. “enclitic” ending *-ena*.⁵³

16. 3pl. “enclitic” ending *-eni* in III-y verbs

Contrary to all other known NENA dialects, the Trans-Zab group preserves the consonant *n* of the “enclitic” 3pl inflectional ending of III-y verbs. The most primitive form of this ending in Trans-Zab is still preserved as *-en* in certain dialects, e.g. J.Sanandaj *maṭén* “they arrive”, *mṭen* “they arrived”, and reflects the form **-ayn* as is evident from classical Aramaic 3pl. m. participial forms such as Biblical Aramaic 𐤍𐤏𐤍 “(they) see” and 𐤍𐤏𐤍 “loose”.

The oldest Trans-Zab reflex of **-ayn*, the form *-en*, has expanded to *-eni* by analogy with the parallel ending *-i* of strong and other verbs such as *palxí* “they open”, *ganwí* “they steal”. In some Trans-Zab dialects, mostly in Iranian Kurdistan, the innovation *-eni* is an allomorph of the erstwhile form *-en*, for instance J.Sanandaj exhibits *-eni* preceding an *l*-suffix, e.g. in *šténile* “he drank them” and *-en* elsewhere, e.g. in *šátén* “they drink”, *šténwale* “he had drunk them”. In addition, J.Urmi exhibits the freely interchangeable allomorphs *-eni* ~ *-e*, and an allomorph *-i* as an object infix in past base inflections (see the table below). The distribution of *-eni* and the nature of its allomorphs are, therefore, dialectally-conditioned, as is illustrated by inflections of *q-l-y* “to fry; roast seeds (tr., intr.)” in four selected Trans-Zab varieties preceded by reconstructed pre-Trans-Zab forms:

| | Sanandaj | Ḥalabja | JKS | Urmi | Gloss |
|--------------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| * <i>qālayn</i> | <i>qalén</i> | <i>qalén(i)</i> | <i>qaleni</i> | <i>qālén(ni)</i> | they fried |
| * <i>qlayn</i> | <i>qlen</i> | <i>qlén(i)</i> | <i>qǎleni</i> | <i>qlén(ni)</i> | they became fried ⁵⁴ |
| * <i>qlayn-leh</i> | <i>qlénile</i> | <i>qlénile</i> | <i>qlénile</i> | <i>qǎlyile</i> ⁵⁵ | he fried them |

The variegated distribution of the innovation *-eni* across Trans-Zab dialects points to its being an areal feature rather than a shared inheritance from a common ancestor. The form *-en* was possibly augmented with *i* first in the Inter-Zab region, viz. between the Great

53 The common 1sg. m. “enclitic” ending in Țyare is *-in*, yet in at least one of these dialects, S-Țyare, it has an alternant *-ena*, which is the earliest reconstructible Țyare form of the 1sg. m. “enclitic” ending (originally an III-y form as in *xāzena* “I see”), and is attested in Maclean (1895: 81). Similar to the ending *-ex* is the parallel form *-əx* in some NENA dialects, e.g. Bohtan (Fox (2002: 173) and Alqosh, yet this change of **-ax* to *-əx* is probably phonetic and has nothing to do with the analogy that occurred in Trans-Zab.

54 In JKS and J.Urmi: “they have become fried”.

55 By analogy with *qǎlyǎle* “he fried it^{f.}” and strong verbs such as *nəšqile* “he kissed them”.

and Little Zab, where *-en* has been completely replaced by *-eni* in all dialects (Arbel, Koy Sanjaq, Rwanduz, etc.). Thence *-eni* spread to the rest of Trans-Zab, but did not supplant *-en* in a considerable number of dialects, primarily in Iran, where *-en*, or its reduced J.Urmi form *-e*, is preserved alongside the allomorph *-eni*.

Contrary to the above Trans-Zab forms, in all other NENA varieties the parallel ending has either undergone an elision of *n*, mostly coupled with monophthongization, or – in many dialects – has been replaced by the ending *-i* or *-iy* of strong verbs. Compare the 3pl. present-base inflection of the verb *š-t-y* “to drink” between Trans-Zab and a few other selected NENA varieties:

| | | | | | | |
|--------------|-------------|-------------|---|-------------|--------------|--|
| Ṭal | Alqosh | Atrush | C.Aradhin | Sat | C.Urmi | Trans-Zab |
| <i>šāṭay</i> | <i>šāṭe</i> | <i>šāṭe</i> | <i>šāṭe</i> ~ <i>šāṭi</i> ⁵⁶ | <i>šāṭi</i> | <i>šāṭiy</i> | <i>šāṭeni</i> , <i>šāṭén(i)</i> , <i>šāṭé(ni)</i> |

17. Infix *-mn-* (and variants) in numerals

In Trans-Zab cardinal numerals with pronominal suffixes meaning “the *x* number of us, you, them” or “all of us, you, them” take an infix originating from the preposition *mən* “from, of”: *-mn-* in J.Az., *-mn-* in Iraqi Trans-Zab dialects and *-n-* in Iranian Kurdistan. The numeral *tre* “two” has the allomorph *tur-*, *tər-* or *tun-* according to dialect and the infix in question is reduced to *-n-*. In addition, in Trans-Zab dialects of Iranian Kurdistan the forms *tərnan* “both of us”, *tərnaxun* “both of you” and *tərnu* “both of them” occasionally take a prefix *har*, of Kurdish origin, and the base changes to *tn-*, e.g. J.Sanandaj *tərnu* ~ *hartnu*.

These constructions are unknown in other NENA dialects except for forms such as *turnu* and *hatru* “both of them”, which are areally shared with a few Christian enclaves located in Trans-Zab territory, e.g. in C.Shaqlawa and C.Sanandaj. Consider the following forms of the cardinals *tre* “two” and *xamša* “five” with pronominal suffixes in selected NENA dialects:

| | | |
|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Trans-Zab: | | |
| J.Shaqlawa | J.Sanandaj | J.Urmi |
| <i>turnu</i> | <i>tərnu</i> ~ <i>hartnu</i> | <i>tunnú</i> ⁵⁷ |
| <i>xamšənnu</i> | <i>xamšanu</i> | <i>xamšəmmu</i> ⁵⁸ |

Other, selected, dialects:

| | | | | |
|-----------------|--------------------------|--------------------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| C.Shaqlawa | C.Sanandaj ⁵⁹ | C.Urmi | M-Tkhuma | Barzani |
| <i>tərnu</i> | <i>hatru</i> | <i>tərve</i> ~ <i>tərvənte</i> | <i>tərwε</i> | <i>kutru</i> |
| <i>xámšəntu</i> | <i>hárxamšāyu</i> | <i>xámšənte</i> | <i>xámšəntε</i> | <i>xamšəntu</i> |

56 See Krotkoff (1982: 26–7).

57 The forerunner of this form, *turnu*, occurs in an eighteenth-century J.Az. text; see Sabar (2004: 103, no. 23).

58 Also *xamšá mənnú*.

59 Professor Estipan Panoussi, personal communication.

18. *xesár* “eleven”

In Trans-Zab the consonant *d* is elided in the word for “eleven”: **xadesar* (with *e* by analogy with *tresar* “twelve”)⁶⁰ > **xdesar* (with further analogy to *tresar*) > Trans-Zab *xesár*. The loss of *d* in this numeral has occurred also in Jilu and Sat **xāsər*, undoubtedly as a parallel development unrelated to Trans-Zab. Compare:

| | | | | | |
|-------------------|----------------|----------------------|---------------|----------------|--------------|
| Betanure | Telkepe | Beşpən ⁶¹ | Shahe | Jilu, Sat | Trans-Zab |
| <i>xadē’əssar</i> | <i>xadesar</i> | <i>xdeşsar</i> | <i>xdesar</i> | * <i>xāsər</i> | <i>xesár</i> |

19. *nḥālā* “ear”

The Trans-Zab word for “ear” has the unique form *nḥālā*, e.g. in JKS, and dialectal offshoots of this form. The etymology of this word and its NENA dialectal cognates are discussed *in extenso* in Mutzafi (2005). Suffice it here to summarize the major historical processes that spawned the Trans-Zab form under consideration:

Pre-modern Aramaic **ednāhātā* (attested in Syriac as a pl. of **ednā*) > **ənnahātā* > Proto-NĒNA **nhātā* (attested in seventeenth-century NENA texts) > Trans-Zab: **nhāla* > pharyngealization: **nhāla* > assimilation: **nḥālā* > dissimilation: *nḥālā*.⁶²

Thus the Trans-Zab form has drifted considerably from its Proto-NĒNA forebear **nhātā* through a series of far-reaching phonological changes. The form *nḥālā* is the prototype of dialectal variants such as Shəno **nahalta*, which exhibits a phonemicized epenthetic *a*, a feminine suffix, word-emphasis and a change of *ḥ* to *h*.

The Trans-Zab reflex of **nhātā* is markedly different from cognate forms in other NĒNA dialects, as is demonstrated below by a number of selected NĒNA varieties:

| | | | | | |
|-------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|
| Betanure | Sandu | Barzani | Dez | Qaraqosh | Trans-Zab |
| <i>nāta</i> | <i>nasisa</i> | <i>naniya</i> | <i>nawiya</i> | <i>natyatta</i> | <i>nḥālā</i> , etc. |

20. **ilhá* “God”

In Trans-Zab the vowel *ā* in the form **ilāha* “God”, attested in most other Jewish NĒNA dialects, was elided, and the initial vowel *i* was subsequently shortened and centralized with the closure of the syllable: **ilāha* > **ilhá* > **ilhá*.

21. *bqatta* “morning”

The Trans-Zab group of dialects evinces a unique word for “morning”, namely *bqatta*, historically derived from **bqadamta* < **b-qaddamtā*⁶³

60 Cf. JBA סדיר (Sokoloff 2002: 431b), Mandaic סדיר (Drower and Macuch 1963: 116b).

61 See Sinha (2000: 166).

62 Cf. **laṣmal* > **lahmal* > **lahmal* > *lahmal* “the day before yesterday” (feature no. 3 above).

63 Gemination is proven by the occurrence of a plosive *bgdkpt* consonant *d* in NĒNA rather than *ḏ* or a reflex thereof.

(compare JBA בקדמתא “at dawn”, Mandaic קאדמתא “early morning” and Telkepe *qadamta* “id.”). The form *bqatta* denoting “morning” is retained as such in most Iraqi Trans-Zab dialects, while in other dialects the word changed in form or content, e.g. J.Urmi *baqattá*, with a phonemicization of epenthetic *a* and a change in meaning to “tomorrow”.⁶⁴

Compare the word *bqatta* with the words for “morning” in several other NENA dialects:

Marbishu C.Nerwa Sandu Atrush Marga C.Zakho Bohtan Trans-Zab
*qedamta gummita*⁶⁵ *bənhē*⁶⁶ *m̄xəška m̄əllayle bəspāre hāyūndā*⁶⁷ *bqatta*, etc.

22. *magón* “like, similar to”

The Trans-Zab word for “like, similar to” is a compound of *ma* “what” and obsolete *gon* “colour”, yielding *magón*. This form is still preserved in several dialects, e.g. in Naghada and Shəno; in Arbel and JKS alongside various by-forms;⁶⁸ and in J.Urmi alongside the reduced by-form *mon*. In some other Trans-Zab dialects the form *magón* underwent phonetic changes, e.g. *mangól* in J.Sanandaj and *məngán* in Rustaqa. Compare the Trans-Zab word in question with some parallels in other NENA dialects:

| | | | | | | |
|------------|------------|------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|------------|---------------------|
| Qaraqosh | Marga | Atrush | Sandu | J.Nerwa | Qurich | Trans-Zab |
| <i>ʿax</i> | <i>max</i> | <i>dax</i> | <i>kudax</i> ⁶⁹ | <i>xur</i> ⁷⁰ | <i>xən</i> | <i>magón</i> , etc. |

23. *barūxá* “friend”

The Trans-Zab dialects have the unique word *barūxá*, in J.Az ⁺*barūxá*, for “friend”. This lexical innovation has superseded the reflex of the inherited Aramaic word תְּבָרָא “id.”, which is still very common in NENA dialects as *xawra*, *xora*, *xūra* or *xūra*. The etymology of *barūxa* is likely to be the NENA root *brx* (< ברך) “to bless, be blessed” combined with the NENA adjectival pattern *CaCūCa* which is quite common in Trans-Zab (as in *qalūlá* “light, easy”, *pašūxá* “happy” and *gaxūká* “cheerful” in various dialects). Hence the original denotation of *barūxá* appears to have been “blessed”, although the semantic connection between “blessed” and “friend” is not transparent.

24. *x-d-r* “to become, turn into; to happen”

In Trans-Zab the verbal root *x-d-r* and dialectal offshoots such as *ġ-d-r* have the unique denotations “to become, turn into; to happen”. Additionally, the Trans-Zab dialects exhibit a unique passive construction

64 The J.Urmi word for “morning” is *baqatyó(m)*, a blend of *baqatta* and *yoma* “day”.

65 < **gu n'ita* < **gu n'ih̄tā* < **gu n̄ġih̄tā* “at dawn”; see Talay (2002: 126, n. 7).

66 < **b-nə'he* < **b-niġhe* “at daybreak”, cf. JBA נגהי “daybreak”, בנגהי “at daybreak” (Sokoloff 2002: 728–9), Mandaic בניגהא “id.” (Drower and Macuch 1963: 297a).

67 Probably < **hāya yoma* “early (in the) day”.

68 See Khan (1999: 574a), Mutzafī (2004a: 177, no. 4, 178, no. 4).

69 < **kul d'ax*.

70 A neo-construct (innovative construct) form of the word *xūra* “friend”.

based on a passive participle followed by the auxiliary *x-d-r*, e.g. *q̄tilá xdire* “he was killed” in JKS.

The Trans-Zab verbal root *x-d-r* is a reflex of *ḥ-d-r*, attested in Syriac in the meanings “to go around, about; to surround; to beg” (and, similarly as regards JBA *h-d-r* ~ *ḥ-d-r*, Mandaic *h-d-r*). Non-Trans-Zab NENA dialects preserve denotations closely related to the classical ones, e.g. Telkepe *x-d-r* “to turn around”, Barzani *x-d-r* “to go about, roam” and J.Zakho *x-z-r* ~ *ḡ-z-r* “to peddle” (among other meanings).⁷¹

III. Internal classification of Trans-Zab

Further research on the complex network of isoglosses within Trans-Zab is required in order to establish an internal classification of this diverse group, yet one major dialectal difference, the forms of the positive present copula, suggests a division of Trans-Zab into three principal subgroups:

- 1) Western (W) Trans-Zab or the Inter-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic dialect-cluster of the Iraqi province of Arbel (Irbil), chiefly in the area between the Great Zab and the Little Zab rivers.
- 2) North-Eastern (NE) Trans-Zab or the Iranian Azerbaijan Neo-Aramaic dialect cluster (J.Az.), in Urmi and adjacent areas in Iran and Turkey.
- 3) South-Eastern (SE) Trans-Zab in Iranian Kurdistan (Sanandaj, Saqəz and other places) and areas to the south and in the bordering Iraqi towns (Sulemaniyya, Ḥalabja, Penjwin and Khanaqin).

Paradigms of the positive present copula in these three postulated subgroups are presented below by forms pertaining to the dialects of Arbel, Urmi and Sanandaj.

Present copula in Trans-Zab dialects:

| | Proto-Trans-Zab | Arbel (W) | Urmi (NE) | Sanandaj (SE) ⁷² |
|---|-------------------------------------|---------------|----------------|-----------------------------|
| 3 | sg ^m . * <i>-ile</i> | <i>-ile</i> | <i>-ile</i> | <i>-ye, -y</i> |
| | sg ^f . * <i>-ila</i> | <i>-ila</i> | <i>-ila</i> | <i>-ya</i> |
| | pl. * <i>-ilu</i> | <i>-ilu</i> | <i>-ilu</i> | <i>-yen</i> |
| 2 | sg ^m . * <i>-iwet</i> | <i>-wet</i> | <i>-ilet</i> | <i>-yet</i> |
| | sg ^f . * <i>-iwat</i> | <i>-wat</i> | <i>-ilat</i> | <i>-yat</i> |
| | pl. * <i>-iwetun</i> | <i>-wetun</i> | <i>-iletun</i> | <i>-yetun</i> |
| 1 | sg ^m . * <i>-iwen(a)</i> | <i>-wen</i> | <i>-ilen</i> | <i>-yen(a)</i> |
| | sg ^f . * <i>-iwan(a)</i> | <i>-wan</i> | <i>-ilan</i> | <i>-yan(a)</i> |
| | pl. * <i>-iwex</i> | <i>-wex</i> | <i>-ilex</i> | <i>-yex(in)</i> |

71 See Sabar (2002: 192b) s.v. *x-d-r*, *ḡ-d-r*.

72 The 3sg.m. short allomorph *y* follows the vowel *a*, as in *kpíná-y* “he is hungry”, whilst the allomorph *ye* occurs elsewhere, e.g. *šét-ye* “he is insane”, *gorí-ye* “he is my husband”. All non-feminine present copular forms are reduced following the vowel *a*, which changes to *e*, as in *kpína + yena* > *kpíné-na* ‘I^m. am hungry’; *kpíné-t* “you^{sg.m.} are hungry”, *kpíné-x* “we are hungry”, *kpíné-tun* “you^{pl.} are hungry”, *kpíné-n* “they are hungry”. The feminine copular forms remain intact, and the preceding vowel *a* changes to *e*, as in *kpínta + -yana* > *kpínté-yana* “I^f. am hungry”; *kpíné-yat* “you^{sg.f.} are hungry”, *kpíné-ya* “she is hungry”.

There can hardly be any doubt that the heterogeneous paradigm with an element *l* in the 3rd person forms and an element *w* elsewhere, found in subgroup W, is the most conservative one, whereas the uniform paradigms in NE and SE are more progressive.⁷³ The paradigm of subgroup W and similar forms in other, more conservative, NENA dialects (e.g. Betanure),⁷⁴ are the basis for the reconstructed paradigm in Proto-Trans-Zab. Subgroups NE (J.Az.) and SE exhibit two different types of levelling: in NE the element *l* has been generalized throughout the paradigm,⁷⁵ whilst as regards subgroup SE I postulate a process where the element *w* shifted to *y* by partial assimilation to the preceding vowel *i* before its elision, e.g. in **-iwex* > **-iyex*⁷⁶ > *-yex* “we are”, and in the final phase the element *y* of the 1st and 2nd person forms was generalized throughout the paradigm. In addition, in the SE subgroup the 3pl. form **-ilu* was replaced by the form *-yen* (in some dialects ~ *-yeni*) by analogy with the 3pl. “enclitic” ending of III-y verbs *-en* (or *-eni* – see feature no. 16 above).

The change **w* > *y* in SE Trans-Zab (J.Sanandaj and closely related dialects) has likewise occurred in C.Sanandaj and a few other Christian dialects in Trans-Zab territory (C.Koy Sanjaq, ‘Ankawa) and beyond (Qaraqosh, Barəṭle). This isogloss can best be explained as an areal feature, although the source of diffusion is unknown. At any rate, while in the aforementioned Christian dialects the heterogeneous type of paradigm with *l* in the 3rd person forms and *y* (< **w*) elsewhere is retained, SE Trans-Zab is more innovative in this respect, exhibiting a levelling of the element *y*, as illustrated by the following comparison between the two NENA dialects of Sanandaj:

| | | C. Sanandaj ⁷⁷ | J.Sanandaj |
|---|-------------------|---------------------------|-----------------|
| 3 | sg ^m | <i>-ile</i> | <i>-ye, -y</i> |
| | sg ^f . | <i>-ila</i> | <i>-ya</i> |
| | pl. | <i>-ilu</i> | <i>-yen</i> |
| 2 | sg ^m . | <i>-yet</i> | <i>-yet</i> |
| | sg ^f . | <i>-yat</i> | <i>-yat</i> |
| | pl. | <i>-iton</i> | <i>-yetun</i> |
| 1 | sg ^m | <i>-yen</i> | <i>-yena</i> |
| | sg ^f . | <i>-yan</i> | <i>-yana</i> |
| | pl. | <i>-yox</i> | <i>-yex(in)</i> |

73 In accordance with Hetzron’s principle of archaic heterogeneity: “When cognate systems (i.e. paradigms) in related languages are compared, the system that exhibits the most inner heterogeneity is likely to be the closest to the ancestor-system” (Hetzron 1976: 89, and see in detail 92–5). The initial vowel *i* in the reconstructed 1st and 2nd persons is based on negated copular forms such as **-iwen* > **laywen* > *lewen* “I am not” and on a broader scope of dialectal comparison, where we find copular forms such as Isnax *-iwən* “I am”, negated form: *laywən*. For a different view concerning the earliest type of the positive present copula in NENA see Khan (2002: 13–5; 2006: 158–62).

74 See Hoberman (1989: 198), Mutzafi (2008: 50).

75 The opposite direction of levelling occurred in NE Trans-Zab (J.Az.) in the negated present copula, where the element *w* of the 1st and 2nd persons has been generalized throughout the paradigm, e.g. *lewen* “I am not”, *léwetun* “you^{pl.} are not”, *lewe* “he is not”.

76 Compare, for instance, colloquial J.Nerwa **biwāda* > **biyāda* > *byāda* “doing”.

77 According to Panoussi (1990: 112) and Panoussi, personal communication.

IV. Conclusion

The twenty-four Trans-Zab features discussed above can be readily regarded as shared innovations that date back to an early stage in the history of this dialect group. Some of these innovations are quite possibly inherited from Proto-Trans-Zab, while others appear to be old internal areal features that have spread throughout all dialects of this group.

Features inherited from a common Proto-Trans-Zab Jewish Neo-Aramaic ancestor may well be the postulated merger of the interdentalals to **d*, the conditioned shift of **t* to *h* (> *ø*, *ħ*), the process *w* > *f*/__-*ta*, the feminine participle **CCiṭā* > *ĀCīṭá*, the plural endings *-awāé* and *-ye*, the “*nəšqāle* syndrome”, the verbal patterns *CōC* and *CēC*, the form *hol* “give!”, the restricted *k*- prefix, the verbal “enclitic” ending *-ex* and the numeral infix *-mm-* (> *-nm-*, *-n-*). Several innovations related to words that were shaped by specific phonological or morphophonological processes may also have been inherited from Proto-Trans-Zab. These include *xesár* “eleven”, *nhālá* “ear” and *’əlhá* “God”. Other shared innovations that may hark back to Proto-Trans-Zab are the lexical innovations *bqatta* “morning”, *magón* “as, like” and *barūxá* “friend”, and the semantic shift “to go around” > “to become, turn into; to happen” related to the verb *x-d-r*.

Internal areal features that spread throughout Trans-Zab early in its history appear to be the shift of the interdentalals **d* and **t* to *l*, the 3sg.c. independent pronoun *’o* “he, she” (occurring side-by-side with a vestigial retention of the 3sg.f. form in Trans-Zab religious texts), **’āni* > *’oni* “they” by analogy with the pronoun *’o*, the 3pl. “enclitic” ending *-eni* in III-y verbal inflections, and the shift of word stress from the penultima to the ultima. Furthermore, some of the features ascribed to Proto-Trans-Zab above may have, rather, emerged early in a specific Trans-Zab dialect and diffused throughout the group.

The very diverse Trans-Zab family of dialects can provisionally be divided into a western (W) or Inter-Zab dialect cluster, retaining an archaic type of the paradigm of the positive present copula, a north-eastern (NE) subgroup of Jewish Azerbaijan, with a generalization of *l* throughout the same paradigm, and a south-eastern (SE) subgroup, mainly in Iranian Kurdistan, with a generalization of *y* (< **w*) throughout the paradigm of the present copula. This proposed trifurcate division awaits enhancement by further distinguishing features.

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