Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish Folklore from Northern Iraq

A Comparative Anthology with a Sample of Glossed Texts

VOLUME 1

**Geoffrey Khan, Masoud Mohammadirad,
Dorota Molin and Paul M. Noorlander**
In collaboration with Lourd Habeeb Hanna,
Aziz Emmanuel Eliya Al-Zebari and Salim Abraham

**UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE**
Faculty of Asian and Middle
Eastern Studies

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3. NARRATIVE STYLE AND DISCOURSE IN KURDISH AND NEO-ARAMAIC ORAL LITERATURE[1]

Paul M. Noorlander and Masoud Mohammadirad

Northern Iraq is the homeland of a wide range of linguistic minorities with closely intertwined traditions transmitted orally over numerous generations of bi- and multilinguals. The Neo-Aramaic speaking communities—both Jews and Christians—used to be an integral part of this once vibrant, multilingual oral culture, now disappearing rapidly. The resulting commonalities of their coexistence with the Kurdish speaking communities can be found in almost every aspect of linguistic structure (e.g. Noorlander 2014; Haig and Khan 2018), including their oral literature and its stylistic features.[2] Thus, the shared folkloristic traditions of the Kurds, Jews and Christians of Northern Iraq are also reflected in the parallel style of storytelling and use of idioms. This chapter provides a succinct overview of some of the stylistic and linguistic devices found across the Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic oral

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[1] We are grateful to Dorota Molin and Geoffrey Khan for their helpful comments on an earlier draft of this chapter.

[2] E.g. Garbell (1965), Chyet (1994), Coghill (2009, 2020a), Khan (2009). See also Molin, Chapter 2 in this volume.

narratives in this collection, and demonstrates how these devices can converge in genetically distinct languages.

The Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish stories were transmitted orally and thereby exhibit characteristic features of oral litera-ture. While the linguistic devices used by the storytellers are thus sometimes typical of orality in general, they are also indicative of shared traditions through areal diffusion, sometimes spanning the whole of West Asia and even extending beyond it. Among them are the shared opening and closing traditions (Section 1), including the insertion of the moral lesson before the concluding formula.

Various discourse connectors can be used in the organisa-tion of the narrative (Section 2), such as conjunctional adverbs as well as various other discourse markers are at the narrator's disposal to. The event linkage through the inchoative verb 'to rise', the additive particles and tail-head recapitulation demon-strate striking areal parallels. Storytellers also embed parallel songs, proverbs and idioms into their oral narrative (Section 3). Figurative language and symbolism are common literary and rhe-torical devices (Section 4), of which sound symbolism is typical of oral narratives *par excellence.*

Repetition (Section 5) in general is a stylistic device and/or discourse strategy found throughout stories and oral literature. It comes in different types and may involve individual lexical items as well as whole sentences. Some functions of repetition are also discussed under the relevant sections, notably clause linkage in narrative discourse (Section 2.4. and 7.1.1.), to serve as a figure

of speech (Section 4.1.3), as well as to express verbal aspect (Section 7.2.1). Deictic elements and characterise the narrative style and discourse structure (Section 6), and the same holds true for devices on a syntactic level, such as word order changes and verbal syntax (Section 7). Finally, we conclude with a few remarks on storytelling techniques (Section 8).

1.0. Opening and Closing Formulae

Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish speaking storytellers have similar introductory and concluding formulas.[3] In what follows we offer a few examples of such formulas found in our collection.

1.1. Opening Formulae

1.1.1. There Once Was / There Was One

Introductory formulas involving an existential construction and the numeral 'one' or an adverbial phrase 'once' are similar to the well-known opening expressions of fairy tales like Danish *der var engang* and Dutch *er was eens* conveying 'there was once'. This type occurs in both Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish texts, for instance in the Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect of Harmashe and the Central Kurdish dialect of Shaqlawa:

(1)   *ʾamriwa ʾəθwa xàʾa,¦ xa malka ʾə́θwale ṭḷaθà bnone.¦*
      They said there was one, a king who had three sons. (ChA.
      Harmashe, Text 33: *Mirza Muhammad and the Three
      Princesses*, §1)

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[3] See e.g. Chyet (1995, 237) and Coghill (2020a, 2020b, 394).

(2)   *got=ī zamānē xò=y| qašàk ha-bū,| aw qaša zəmān=ī galak pìs
      bū.|*

      It was said that there once was a Christian priest. He was a
      very foul-mouthed priest. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 38: *The Foul-
      Mouthed Priest*, §1)

1.1.3. There Was, There Was Not

The affirmative and negative past existential are generally used
together as opening formula typical of the region:[4]

(3)   *ʾətwa=w làtwa| xa mằm-telona ʾətwa.|*

      There was and there was not, there was an Uncle Fox. (ChA.
      Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox*, §1)

(4)   *a-rē ha-bū na-bū Mām Dzardàk ha-bū.|*

      It is said that once upon a time (lit. there was and there was
      not) there was [a man called] Uncle Jarda. (CK. Shaqlawa,
      Text 22: *A Talking Goat*, §2)

1.1.4. There was None Greater than God

The existential phrase 'there was there was not' can be expanded
by a phrase asserting the maximal greatness of the one God. For
example:

(5)   *aḷē ha-bo na-bò| kas la xwāy gawratər nà-bo.|*

      It is said that there was and once there was not, but there
      was no one greater than God. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 29: *Two
      Mullahs*, §3)

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[4] See §2.4.

In the Neo-Aramaic stories of this collection, this is only attested in the narrative of *Two Mullahs*, where the storyteller adds a distinctly Christian dimension:

(6) *ʾətwa=w lə̀twa| mən bāb ʾAlaha=w ʾoda Maryam bəš raba lətwa=w qàt=iš la k-awe.* |

There was, there was not, there was no one greater than Father God and Mother Mary and there never shall be. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 28: *Two Mullahs*, §2)

This formula can also be further extended in Kurdish with a phrase about humanity or sometimes the storyteller being a liar.[5]

(7) *ha-bū na-bū kas šə xudē maztə̀r na-bū| kas šə banīyā də̀rawīntə̀r na-bū.* |

Once there was, once there was not, there was no one greater than God, no bigger liar than man. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §2)

1.1.5. Impersonal Use of 'to say'

The above examples (1)–(2) and (4)–(5) also illustrate the impersonal use of the reporting verb 'to say' for story openings. The reporting structure suggests to the reader that the storyteller repeats a story as handed down to them without revealing the identity of the source.

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[5] See Chyet (1994, 237) for more examples, some taken from Mackenzie's (1962) collection.

1.1.6. Blessing of the Parents

Another common opening and closing formula[6] consists of a blessing on the listeners' parents, which presupposes a younger audience:

(8)   *jārakē əž jārā řahmat əl day bāv-ēt gohdārà*ˈ
        Once upon a time—blessings on the listeners' parents. (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard*, §2)

1.1.7. Sung Introduction

In one of the stories, the introduction consists of a rhyme that is sung by the storyteller, e.g.

(9)   *maṣitun ya xanwàta.*ˈ *maḥkənoxun da qəṣə̀tta,*ˈ *bər màlka,*ˈ
        *bronət ʾazùta,*ˈ *tiwa‿wewa l-kursi ʾət malkùta.*ˈ
        Listen, oh brothers. I am going to tell you the tale of a prince, a child of power, who sat on a kingdom's throne. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4: *Zambilfrosh by A. Sher*, §1)

1.2. Closing Formulae

1.2.1. It is finished

The originally Arabic verb خلص *xalaṣa* 'to be finished' or interjection خلاص *xalāṣ* 'enough; it is over' is generally used in concluding formulas:

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[6] See §1.2.3.

(10) *Dălale mə̀θla,*| *ʾu ʾayi qəṣṣa diyyaḥ xlə̀ṣla.*|

Dalale died, and her story ended. (ChA. Duhok, Text 9: *Bridge of Dalale*, §24)

(11) *babay məθle; xlə̀ṣla.*|

Their father died; the story is over. (ChA. Harmashe, Text 33: *Mirza Muhammad and the Three Princesses*, §47)

(12) *amn=ì̄š hātm-aw*| *hìts=əm pē na-bəřā.*| *xalās=ū řoy.*|

I came back, nothing was given to me. It is finished (lit. It is finished and gone.) (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 19: *A Ewe and a Wolf*, §22)

1.2.2. I have come back from there

A common closing formula, especially in the CK. Shaqlawa tales of our collection, has the narrator take part in the story, as if they returned from the events of the tale but were not given the opportunity to attain the protagonists' happy ending.

(13) *am gahə̀štīn=a dumāhì̄kā čīrokā xo*| *az hātm-ava čə̀ na-dā mən.*|

We have arrived at the end of our tale. I have come back, but they (i.e. the protagonists in the tale) gave me nothing. (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard*, §37)

(14) *amn=ī̄š gařām-awa=ū hìts=əm pē na-bəřā.*|

As for me, I have come back [from these events] and they [i.e. the characters of the story] have given me nothing. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 22: *A Talking Goat*, §10)

This formula occurs also in the ChA. Shaqlawa stories in the corpus:

(15) *ʾana=š ʾitèli˺ tsɜ̀ məndi la wəlu qati.˺*

I have come back, but they have given me nothing. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox,* §38)

This closing formula is also shared by the neighbouring community that speaks Gorani, spoken in the Iran-Iraq border east of Sulaymaniyah:

(16) *wa mən=īč āmānē, hīč=šā na-đānē.*

And I too have come, they gave me nothing. (Gorani Luhon; MacKenzie 1966, 78)

In one of the Neo-Aramaic texts, the storyteller receives three apples that belong to the storyteller and usually two members of the audience, a typical feature of Iraqi oral literature but also found in Kurdish and Azeri Turkish (Garbell 1965, 176) and Armenian (Surmelian 1968),[7] for example:

(17) *m-tama θèli,˺ məθeli ṭḷaθa xabùše,˺ xa ta Màdu,˺ xa ṭali ʾu xa tad mera ḥakkòθa.˺*

I have come from there with three apples, one for Madu,[8] one for myself and one for the storyteller. (ChA. Duhok, Text 24: *A Woman Builds Her Home,* §54)

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[7] See the discussion in §1.4.

[8] The narrator's name.

1.2.3. Blessing of the Parents

Another common closing formula is the blessing of the listeners' parents.[9] This is, for instance, attested at the end of both the Kurdish and Aramaic version of the Mirza Muhammad epic:

(18) *kut šmele raḥmaθa gawət yə̀mmeḥ.*|
   Mercy on the mother of whomsoever listened. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §235)

(19) *o řahmàt əl day bābēt gohdārā*|
   May blessing be on the audience's parents. (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures,* §113)

   This is also attested in the Kurdish tales collected by Mac-Kenzie (1962):

(20) *hazār řaḥmat la tū ū la dāy-bābē tū. xalās.*
   A thousand blessings on you and your mother and father. It is finished. (NK. Surchi, MacKenzie 1962, 238)

   The audience themselves may also be blessed, see line 12 of *A Dog, A Ewe and A Wolf* narrated in ChA. Duhok.

1.2.4. Ballad

The Neo-Aramaic versions of *The Bridge of Dalale* story end with a ballad:

   Text 8: *The Bridge of Zakho* (ChA. Dure)
   Text 9: *The Bridge of Dalale* (ChA. Duhok)

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[9] Blessings of listeners are also found in Azeri Turkish (see Garbell 1965, 176) and Arabic (e.g. Talmon 2001, 216).

1.3. Moral Lessons

The moral of the story is sometimes added at the end, occasionally in the form of a proverb.[10] Several stories convey moral lessons, including:

> Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox* (ChA. Shaqlawa)
> Text 14: *A Man and a Lion* (ChA. Duhok)
> Text 16: *A Man and a Wolf* (JA. Duhok)
> Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard* (NK. Duhok)
> Text 19: *A Ewe and a Wolf* (CK. Shaqlawa)
> Text 28: *Two Mullahs* (ChA. Shaqlawa)

For example, in the Neo-Aramaic narrative the *Two Mullahs* from Shaqlawa, the storyteller adds the following moral of the story before the closing formula:

(21) *ʾăya ḥŭčìta˺ k-əmrila qa daw našət rešu là hawe mara꞊w˺ rešu mamrèle.˺ ʾawdza ʿàbra mən de naša k-šaqlìla.˺ k-əmrila qa dàn naše˺ ʾaxtsa gu qŭsət naše là ate꞊w ʾazəl,˺ gu moxət jànu ʾawəd,˺ ʾaxtsa gu tănayatət naše la qayəm꞊u yàtu.˺*

This story is told about those who do not have a headache but cause themselves to have a headache, so that people will learn a lesson from the story of this man. The story tells people that one should not act[11] according to what other people say, but one should act using one's own wit, rather than stand and sit according to what other people say. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 28: *Two Mullahs*, §20)

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[10] See Section 3.3.

[11] Lit. come and go.

Similarly, in the Kurdish narrative *A Ewe and a Wolf* from Shaqlawa the narrator elaborates on Kurdish culture:

(22) *jā a-rē law hāḷatay dā ūdzāġ awanda pī̀ròz boa* la nāw ko-
      maḷgāy kurdī̀ ya‘nī sū̀nd⸗ī pē xorā⸗ya. *har loya⸗š a-bīnīn*
      haqāyata kurdīyakằn baw amānjay a-ban.

      It is said that the clan was so holy in Kurdish society that
      one took an oath on it. That is why we see that it has been
      referred to in Kurdish tales. (CK. Shaqalwa, Text 19: *A Ewe
      and a Wolf*, §22)

1.4. Discussion

Some of the formulas such as 'there once was' are found across
the world, and others such as 'there was, there was not' are part
of standardised story openings in Asian and Eastern European
folklore occurring in Persian as *yeki bud yeki nabud* 'there was
one, there was not one', in Turkish as *bir varmış bir yokmuş* 'there
was one, there was not one' (Zeyrek 1993, 169) and in Azeri as
bir varmış bir yoxmuş (Garbell 1965, 175), and in Armenian, Geor-
gian and Romani (Matras 2014) and languages of the Balkans
(Sandfield 1930), as well as Czech and Hungarian. The latter
opening also has a more elaborate version with an affirmation of
faith in the one God and his maximal greatness, as in the Arabic
Takbīr, i.e. اَللّٰهُ أَكْبَرُ *ʾallāhu ʾakbaru* 'God is greater', and the magni-
fications of Yahweh above all other gods found in the Hebrew
Scriptures.[12]

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[12] For example, מֵאֵין כָּמֹוךָ יְהוֶה גָּדֹול אַתֶּה 'There is none like you, O LORD,
you are great' (Jer. 10.6), גָּדֹול יְהוֶה מִכָּל־הָאֱלֹהֶים 'The LORD is greater than
all gods' (Ex. 18.11).

It is unclear where this formula originated. Sandfield (1930, 162), referring to an article by M. Östrup in 1925, considers it to be a calque from the Arabic *kān mā kān*[13], which could be rendered either '(there) was, (there) was not' or '(there) was what (there) was', rhyming with other common Arabic words ending in *-ān* such as *fī ʾawwal* or *qadīm z-zamān* 'in the past' (Ferguson and Rice 1960; Ingham 2005, 173). Asmussen (1968; Marzolch 2010, 220) also assumes it made its way into Persian folklore as *yeki būd yeki nabūd* 'there was one, there was not one' via Arabic. Incidentally, one finds the formula with the existential construction *fī* 'there is' typical of Colloquial Arabic also in Anatolian Arabic:

(23) *kə-fī mə-kə-fī* < **kān fīh mā kān fīh*

There was, there was not. (Anatolian Arabic; Akin, Jastrow and Talay 2020, 89)

Ingham (2005), however, traces this introductory phrase back to Sanskrit poetry found in the so-called *Hymn of Creation* in the Rigveda, which reads *nāsad āsīn no sad āsīt* conveying something in the vein of 'the nonbeing is not nor the being is'. The connection with this Sanskrit verse, however, seems questionable. Since the poem ponders the unknowable origin of the cosmos, and plays with a whole series of negations of antitheses,

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[13] See also Coghill (2020b, 394). Variants of this Arabic formula are *kān wa-mā kān* 'there was and there was not' with coordinator *wa* 'and' and *kān yā mā kān* 'there was or there was not' using the coordinator *yā* 'or' of ultimately Iranian origin. The latter would be identical to the vocative particle *yā*, which would often also follow the opening formula addressing the listeners *yā mustamiʿīn* 'Oh, listeners!'.

the style and genre cannot be equated with the aforementioned story openings. The structure of the formula is also different in that it involves double negation, i.e. *nāsad < na a-sat*[14] 'not non-being' vs. *no sad < na u sat* 'nor being'. Moreover, as far as we know, the formula is not common to Indo-Aryan folklore.

Be that is it may, the core commonality between Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic is the use of a dedicated existential construction involving an existential element and past tense marking derived from the past tense form of the verb 'to be' (Stilo and Noorlander 2015, 470).

The use of the existential 'there was' in the opening coincides with the general use of existential expressions to introduce new information, and thereby serve to introduce one of the main protagonists in the story (*There once was someone who* etc.). The formula 'there was, there was not' also signals to the audience the beginning of the oral narrative set in an alternative reality about to unfold, featuring someone somewhere sometime. The negated counterpart like the English phrases *in the middle of nowhere* and *Never Neverland* convey spatial, temporal and epistemic distance between this world and that of the story. The narrator remains noncommittal to the truth of their story (Zeyrek 1993, 169), i.e. the narrated events may or may not be fictional,, thus expressing the narrator's prerogative to guide the listeners' imagination and narrating events that are half true, half lie.[15]

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[14] The words *asat* 'nonbeing' and *sat* 'being' are related to Latin *absent-*.
[15] The same type of syntagm occurs with verbal predicates 'they did and did not do X', see §7.2.7, meaning 'whatever they did'. Thus, the opening formula could also be understood to mean 'whatever there was'.

The opening and closing formulas may also involve the blessing of the parents of the audience, suggesting this was once part of a widespread repertoire of blessings at the beginning and end of children's stories. These and other closing formulas are also presumably more widespread through Eurasia, being also attested at least in Armenian folklore (Mouse 2018), Iraqi Arabic children's rhymes (Ferguson and Rice 1960) as well as Italian (Beckwith 1987) and Serbo-Croatian folktales (Bošković-Stulli 1966). The use of the Arabic verbal root *xlṣ* 'to finish, to be over' in proclaiming the end of the narrative presumably betrays its Arabic source.

Finally, the mentioning of the storyteller's return with three apples—usually one for the storyteller—is one of the key elements of concluding formulas in Iraqi folktales (Ferguson and Rice 1960), but also occurs in Kurdish and Azeri (Garbell 1965, 176) and Armenian (Surmelian 1968). Beckwith (1987) mentions several closing rhymes in folktales collected by Italo Calvino that involve the phrase 'they gave me nothing', referring to the narrator not having been able to join in their happy ever after. This same phrase is part of closing formulas recorded in a collection of Serbo-Croatian folktales (Bošković-Stulli 1966, 312), where the narrator attended the festival at the end as a guest, but was given nothing. Thus, these concluding formulas add a relativising touch of humour and element of playfulness, sometimes also involving members of the audience.

2.0. Discourse Dependency and Clause Linkage

Narrative discourse can be organised into connected thematic units called paragraphs or episodes. As the narration progresses, the storyteller may draw attention to the shift from one scene to the next. While transitions generally need not be marked by specific formulas or discourse connectives, there are several linguistic expressions in particular that seem to be geared towards the organisation of narrative structure into interdependent parts while maintaining coherence.

2.1. The Verb 'to Rise'

The change of position verb conveying 'to rise, to stand up, to get up' is used in a type of serial verb construction where it functions as a subordinate verb conjoined with often an immediately following verb of motion, indicating the beginning of a new action, for example:

(1) **qəmle** *plɛ̀ṭle mən beta.*|
     He rose and left the house. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4: *Zambilfrosh by A. Sher,* §19)

(2) **řā-bī** *dàr-kat.*|
     He rose and left the house. (NK. Khizava, Text7: *Zanbilfirosh—The Basket Seller,* §15)

This initiation of a new action often coincides with a new scene in the chain of events, establishing event cohesion. The verb can thus be stripped of its original lexical meaning of a change of position and undergo semantic bleaching into a more

abstract discourse connective much like conjunctional adverbs such as English *then* and *thereupon*, for example:

(3)   **qəmle ʾay masəqθa kùlla šitale b-reše dànne ḥambušaye.**ǀ
       Then he threw the entire torch over the heads of these monsters. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §80)

(4)   **řā̀-ṭ-bən** awē žənē āzā̀d əṭ-kanǀ ū ət-gal xo əṭ-ban꞊a əškaftè̥.ǀ
       Then they freed the woman and took her with them to the cave. (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, Her Evil Stepmother and the Old Witch*, §83)

These constructions are found across our collection of tales, except for those narrated in the Kurdish of Shaqlawa.

The integration of the verb 'to get up' in a serial verb construction is widely attested across Semitic languages including Biblical Hebrew where it is said to express ingressive aspect (e.g. Dobbs-Allsopp 1995; Chrzanowski 2011, 356ff.)[16]. Whether this is motivated by a shift in event viewpoint thereby focusing on the beginning of the event, e.g. *He got up to go*, or by pragmatics to mark consequent action, e.g. *Then off he went*, the construction is characteristic of Semitic languages in general and a hallmark of oral narratives. The cognate of the Neo-Aramaic verb *qym* 'to rise' has the same function in several Arabic dialects, notably Egyptian, Levantine and Mesopotamian Arabic (e.g. Fischer and Jastrow 1980, 76; Lahdo 2009, 170), where this verb in the suffix conjugation—with dialect-specific variants such as *qām, ʾām, gām* etc.—precedes another verb as a preverbal modifier. It is also attested in Ṭuroyo, the Neo-Aramaic dialects of Ṭur ʿAbdin (e.g.

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[16] For example, וַיָּ֖קָם וַיֵּלֶךְ *wayyā́qom wayyélek* 'he arose and went'.

Jastrow and Talay 2019, 16), closely related to NENA. The use of this serial verb construction in Northern Kurdish is therefore likely ultimately of Semitic origin, possibly Aramaic and/or Arabic.

Furthermore, in both Arabic and Ṭuroyo, the same verb has further grammaticalised to an invariant particle based on its past form without agreement, often coinciding with the 3sg.m. form with a $\varnothing$ morpheme. This is also attested in our NENA corpus, where the subject agreement marked by the L-suffix of the past perfective of the verb *qym* 'to rise' is elided, e.g.

(5)   ***qəm*** *hàm aw zəlle dməxle.*ˈ
        Then he also went and fell asleep. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §37)

The Neo-Aramaic verb *qym* and its phonetically reduced variant can also indicate unexpectedness in NENA dialects such as ChA. Harbole (SE Turkey; Khan 2021, 169–72) as well as the progressive aspect in yet other dialects such as JA. Bəjil (NW Iraq; Mutzafi 2002, 70).

Finally, the same verb has been suggested as one of the possible etymologies of the preverbal TAM modifier *qam* and its dialectal variants—ranging from *qām, qəm, gəm, kəm* to *tam*— shared by the majority of NENA dialects to construct a transitive past perfective verbal form, e.g. *qam-šaql-a-le* 'she took him', which possibly first emerged on the Nineveh Plains partially due to Arabic influence.[17]

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[17] See Noorlander (2021, 211–14) for a discussion and further references.

2.2. Additive Particles (*ži / =š*)

The Kurdish particles *žī* (NK) and *=īš* (CK) generally placed after a (pro)nominal element, sometimes after a verbal element, have been fully integrated into NENA discourse. In her typological study of additive markers, Forker (2016) distinguishes between several prototypical functions, which also capture the use of the particles *ži* or *žī* and *=(ī)š* or *=ž* in Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic.

2.2.1. Additive Focus ('too')

(6)   *ʾiba ʾarbi ḥàmbušaye.| ʾu yə̀mmay **ži** ʾīθ tama,| yəmmət ḥambušàye.|*
       There were forty monsters inside. And their mother was there **too**—the mother of the monsters. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §76)

(7)   *aw āgəray la mārē tù bū| da mārē mə̀n=īš=ət bar-dā!|*
       The fire that existed in your house, you threw it at my house **too** (meaning: Your life was hell and you inflicted the same hell upon me!) (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 29: *Two Mullahs,* §12)

2.2.2. Scalar Additive ('even')

(8)   *tsə məndi lìtən.| ʾixalàne=š litən.*
       There was nothing. There was not **even** food. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox,* §5)

(9)   *gotī, 'awa bo ma hè̝ **žī** bāštər.'|*
       They said, 'It's **even** better for us. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain,* §145)

2.2.3. Concessive ('even if')

(10) *ʾu g-ə̀bət **ži,**ˈ ʾana hun ʾəθya m-majburùθiˈ d-máʿyəšən ʾăyàl diyi.*ˈ

Even if you want to eat me, know that I have come out of the need to feed my children. (ChA. Duhok, *Man and Lion*, §7)

(11) *agar az hatā hatāyè̀ **ži**ˈ ət kuḷkī-va bə-nəvə̀mˈ bo mən nà məškīla꞊yaˈ bo mən ʿādì꞊ya.*ˈ

Even if I live till the end of my life in the barn, it is no issue for me. It is fine by me. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §94)

2.2.4. Topicalisation

Contrastive:

(12) *ʾaniži qə́mlayˈ drelay ʾixala ṭḷaθá yomaθa ṭḷaθá lelawaθa l-xaṣət sùstay.ˈ ʾu bàbay **ži** gəm-markəwile xa xə̀rta,ˈ xa susta xə̀rta.*ˈ

So they put food for three days and three nights on the back of their mare, **but** their father they mounted on another mare. (ChA. Duhok, *Mirza*, §8)

(13) *amə̀n la mārē d-ēm꞊a darē꞊o ba āsānī꞊oˈ atò꞊š har la mārē꞊y꞊o taʾxɪ̀r a-bī.*ˈ

I'm already out of the house heading towards the mosque, but you keep being delayed. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 29: *Two Mullahs*, §6)

Switch of topic:

(14)   *aw pīražə̀na čū=a žorē,ˈ har dar-nà-hātˈ har dar-nà-hāt.ˈ zor=ī*
       pē čὺ.ˈ maṭrān=īš̌ tahamὺl=ī kərd.ˈ
       The old woman went inside. She did not come out of the
       house for a while (lit. she did not come out; she did not
       come out). It took her a lot of time (lit. a lot went to/with
       her). The bishop tolerated her delay. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text
       38: *The Foul-Mouthed Priest,* §8*)*

Topic reactivation:

(15)   *ʾila xaze hola tòta,ˈ yəmmət ḥambušáye **ži** hola tàma.ˈ*
       Look, he sees the old woman there, the mother of the
       monsters is there. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad
       and the Forty Monsters,* §136)

(16)   *wàxtakī sah tə-kat=ēˈ bərāyē wī hatā nīvaḵā šavē yē hằt=o čo.ˈ*
       *pəštī hīngē aw **ži** čὺ sar jəhē xoˈ ū nəvə̀st.ˈ*
       At one moment he realised that his brother had kept watch
       (lit. came and went) only until midnight, and after that had
       gone to bed and slept. (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza
       Muhammad's adventures,* §16)

2.2.5. Constituent Coordination

The additive particle can also function as a coordinator. It can
appear only once within the coordinating phrase (17), or sepa-
rately on each constituent (18).

(17) *ṭlaha qupyàta=w| xa ʾawa=š qa de baxta xṣ̌ùṣi wədwale.|*
He made three baskets, **as well as** one special mat for the
woman. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 5: *Zambilfrosh by W. Toma*,
§18)

(18) *ū žənbābē wē **žī** ū kəčē wē **žī** čə jārā̀ əš wērē dar-nā-xītən.|*
Also, he decided not to set free **either** the stepmother **or**
her daughter from the prison at all. (NK. Duhok, Text 26:
Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain, §120)

2.2.6. Conjunctional Adverb

While their basic function is the expression of additive focus
equivalent to that of English *too* and *also,* one of the functions
most relevant for narrative style and discourse organisation is
that of a conjunctional adverb, linking one discourse unit with
the preceding. This is an optional effect of additive markers com-
mon to several languages across the world (Forker 2016), and
also characteristic of additive markers in the languages in the
area. This function, however, is not easily distinguished from
other pragmatic functions, such as topicalisation where the par-
ticles are added to a clause-initial noun phrase to indicate a con-
trastive topic, a switch of topic or to reactive a topical referent.

(19) *kamər: 'psu gawət batṛət ʾurxət duglana hàl xazəx l-eka g-
maṭpelux.'|ʾàmər.| kăḷăbāb=**iš** xa ʾaqla=w xa qàma bizale=le xa
ʾaqla bəd'are=le qa bàtṛa.|*
Uncle Fox said, 'Go down the road of the liar until we see
where he will lead you.' So he said. **Then** the rooster went
one step forwards and one step backwards. (ChA.
Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox*, §17–18)

(20) *k-ìmər,ˈ ‘yaba, ʾàtiˈ kăbira lè maḥkət.ˈ hayyu ʾàxxaˈ ʾu msàpuxla ʾana w-ati m-uxðaðe.ʾ ʾàwa ži zə̀lleˈ nxətle laxù gəra.ˈ*

He said, 'Fellow, don't talk so much. Come here and let's settle it, I and you together.' **So** he went down towards the bottom of the hill. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §26–27)

(21) *ət-bēžt=ē, ‘wara sarì!ˈ wara sarī hagar dē ta pərčē xəšĭnə̀mˈ ū dē ta ĭnm=a sarì!ʾˈ Dəndək Hənārē ži zīkā manjalokā xo ət-hāvēžĭt=a wērè.ˈ ū ət-k̲at=a ġārè̀ čĭt=a dafˈ*

She said, 'Come upstairs! Come upstairs, otherwise I will crumple your hair and bring you upstairs myself!' So Dindik Hinar immediately threw away her milk-pail, ran towards her. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain,* §45-46)

(22) *got=ī, ‘wā hēwāra dā hằtˈ aw jā waxtī nūstənì=ya.ˈ bas kas kas iz‘āj nà-kāˈ čŭnka řē=n dūr=a hatā gayn=a hadzè̀.ʾˈ karabāb=ū kotər=īš gotī=yān, ‘basar hàr dū čāwān!ʾˈ*

The fox said, 'It's getting near evening; it's time to sleep. But no one should disturb anyone since we've a long way ahead of us until we reach Mecca.' Then the rooster and dove said, 'All right! (lit. on both eyes)' (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 13: *A 'Pious' Fox,* §10)

The same generally holds for the additive particle *ham* in NENA—ultimately from Persian and found throughout the area, which precedes the focal referent:

(23) *ḥàrəs*⌐ *hole kəlya=w hole ṭwìʾa.*⌐ **ham** *ʾawa qəmle mə̀-wədle?*⌐
gəm-tayəpla xòrta.⌐

A guard was standing though asleep. **So**, he, then what did he do? He bent the poplar. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §122–123)

2.3. Other Adverbials and Discourse Conjunctions

Temporal adverbials can also serve as a device to structure the narrative and mark episode transitions. Their usage is pragmatically motivated to connect discourse units rather than grounded in the clause itself. Adverbials like 'once' and 'one day' are a case in point, where the start of a new day coincides with the start of a new thematic unit and thereby a type of opening formula, as illustrated in (24)–(25) below.

(24) ***xà yoma***⌐ *mălà xa ʾizəle l-xəlmət raʾisət dèra.*⌐
One day an angel appeared in a dream of the abbot of the monastery. (ChA. Shaqlawa,Text 35: *Mar Yohanan*, §14)

(25) ***řožak la řožằn***⌐ *malāy yakàm la malāy duam=ī pərsī,*⌐
One day, the first Mullah asked the second Mullah. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 29: *Two Mullahs*, §4)

Other conjunctional adverbs that may be used in NENA are *naqla, ʾənnaqla, ʾannǎqa* 'now, then', composed of the near deixis demonstrative **að* and dialectal Arabic *naqla* 'round, trip', and *žnu*, composed of originally Kurdish *žə* 'from' and *nū* 'now', e.g.

(26) *ʾay xona zora là maḥkele ču məndi,*⌐ *Mərzá Mḥàmmad.*⌐
ʾənnaqla pə̀šla yoma kulle.⌐ *mġudelay, mʿušelay, xənna pəšle θàni yom*⌐ *b-làyle.*

The youngest brother did not say anything—Mirza Muhammad. **Then** the whole day passed. They had dinner and had supper. It was the second night of holding watch. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §33–34)

(27) *qṭilili ṭlaθá ḥambušaye t-θelay l-qawrət bàbi,ˈ šaqlíwalan qawrət bàbi.ˀˈ žnu ðelay xʋnwaθeḥ Mərzá Mḥămad hole qṭilay ḥambušaye tàma.ˈ*

I killed the three monsters who came to my father's grave; they would take us to my father's grave. Mirza Muhammad's brothers **now** knew that he had killed the monsters there. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §224–225)

Both adverbials also occur in the Neo-Aramaic dialects of Ṭur ʿAbdin, but, as far as we are aware, are not found in Arabic or Kurdish as such.

The Kurdish conjunctional adverb *vējā, ījā* 'now, then' has the same linking function:

(28) *az=ē bə řēkē dā čəm dā b-čəm=a māḷā bābē xò.ˈ vējā hamā haga tu ži dē mə xòyˈ dē təštaḳī lə mə ḳày,ˈ hamā mən bə-xò!ˈ*

[The woman said,] 'I'm on the road to my father's house. Now, if you intend to eat me or do any harm to me, then go ahead eat me! (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard,* §11)

In addition, in the Kurdish Mirza Muhammad tale, the particle *īnā*,[18] is used to link the narrative unit with the preceding:

(29) *aw haspē xo dē bəlànd kət꞊o⌉ dē pəšt꞊o pəšt zəvəřàt.⌉ āvē nà̄-va-xot.⌉ **īnā** řožakē duā hàr av hāla bo.⌉ **īnā** suḷtānī aw ḥaspē suḷtānì̄꞊ya.⌉ **īnā** suḷtān ət-bēžt꞊ē, 'būčì̄ av ḥaspa yē lāwāz꞊a꞊w⌉ yē bē-xòlk꞊a꞊w?'⌉*

On seeing the hair, the horse rose to his feet and reared up; it did not drink the water. **Then** for one or two days it went on like this. **Then** the sultan—the one-eyed horse belonged to him—**then** the sultan said to him, 'Why is this horse weak and left without care?' (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures,* §63-64)

2.4. Tail-Head Linkage

In the unfolding story line, the final clause of the preceding chain can be partially or completely repeated as the first clause of the next chain to connect an unbroken series of events.[19] This is arguably a conventionalized technique of clause linage for the sake of thematic continuity and event cohesion.[20] For example:

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[18] This particle is presumably demonstrative in origin (cp. English *then* with the same historical base **tha-* as in *this* and *that*), the proximal demonstrative base *īn* being found in, for instance, *īnā* 'this' in the Gorani of Gawraju (Bailey 2018, 156, 559) and *īn* in Persian, or derived from the past form of the Kurdish verb *īnān* 'to bring'.

[19] See Thurman (1975) and de Vries (2005).

[20] See the discussions on repetition in Khan's grammars, e.g. C. Barwar (Khan 2008, 943–945). See also Coghill (2009, 277) and Molin and Noorlander (2022, 247).

(30) *qām-šaqəla꞊w matula baθrət xaṣeu꞊w **nàbəla ʾaya.**ˈ **nabəla,**
      *ḳum-darela gu xà ġurfa.*ˈ
      He lifted her, put her on the horseback and **took her along**.
      After he took her, he put her in a room. (ChA. Harmashe,
      Text 33: *Mirza Muhammad and the Three Princesses*, §10)

(31) *zə̀lle yoma*ˈ *θèle yoma*ˈ—*là g-əbən marxənna ʾəllawxun*ˈ—
      ḥakəm mà̀θle.ˈ **ḥakəm màtle,**ˈ *yale zòre*ˈ *k-əmri,*
      As the days passed by—I do not want to make it too long
      for you—**the ruler died**. **After the ruler died**, his little
      children said, (ChA. Duhok, *Mirza*, §6)

(32) *damē t-dan꞊a bar xanjarà̀*ˈ *P̂îrhavīr nà̀-mərītən.*ˈ **wakī həndak**
      pařēt qalařaškē ət nāv hawāyē dā barzà ṭ-bīt-ava.ˈ *ət nāv*
      *hawāyē dā barzà ṭ-bīt-ava.*ˈ *ṭə-bēžītən, 'o, ava čə̀ čē bū?'*ˈ
      They stabbed Pirhavir with daggers but she did not die. She
      disappeared into the sky in the form of something like
      feathers of a black raven. She disappeared into the sky.
      They (the brothers and Fatma) said, 'Oh, what has
      happened?' (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *A Girl, her Evil Stepmother,*
      and the Old Woman, §79)

(33) *pəštī bəhorīnā sē čār řožaḳà̀*ˈ *Hənār žī bə sar kà̀ft*ˈ *barē xo datē*
      māl yā čòl꞊a.ˈ **māl yā čòl꞊a**ˈ *bə tənè̀*ˈ *xəškàḳā wē yā ž qasr*
      *hāzər.*ˈ
      After three, four days, Hinar went upstairs, looked around
      and saw **the house was empty. The house was empty**.
      Only one of her sisters was home. (NK. Duhok, Text 26:
      Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain, §71)

3.0. Poetic and Formulaic Language

Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic share similar phraseology in other formulaic language and poetic techniques. After a discussion of a selection of idioms and fillers, this section offers a few examples of proverbs, end rhyme and parallelism and alliteration found in the corpus.

3.1. Idioms and Phraseology

Among the manifold idioms are:

There is Fire in Your House

The idiomatic expression 'there is fire in your house' describes that the person's life is hellish and that he has trouble in his house.

(1)   *aw āgəray la mārē tù būˈ da mārē mə̀n˸īš˸ət bar-dā!ˈ*
      Your life was hell and you inflicted the same hell upon me
      (lit. The fire that existed in your house, you threw it at my
      house too.) (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 29: *Two Mullahs*, §12)

(2)   *ʾāt betɯx nura ʾitən gu betɯx ʾarqətwa məne ʾăna šə̀ne,ˈ*
      Your home was like hell (lit. There is fire in your house)
      from which you fled all these years. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text
      28: *Two Mullahs*, §17)

A Day Came A Day Went

The idiomatic expression 'a day came and a day went' or the equivalent in the plural is found in both Kurdish and NENA to denote the passage of time:

(3)   *řož hàtən=o řūž čòn*ǀ

Several days passed by (lit. days came and days went). (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §16)

(4)   *zə̀lle yoma*ǀ *θèle yoma*ǀ

As the days passed by (lit. a day went a day came). (ChA. Dohok, *Mirza and the forty monsters*, §6)

Coming Going

Combinations of the verbs 'to come' and 'to go' provide background to the following foreground action, denoting preparation, both physical and mental, before doing an action. Interestingly, the order of the verbs 'go' and 'come' is reversed in the two languages, i.e. Kurdish *hāt=o čo* 'came and went' and NENA *zəle=w θele* 'went and came', compare:

(5)   *hāt=o čò*ǀ *hāt=o čò.*ǀ *nà-ẓānī dē čə ḳatən.*ǀ *bar-av xārè̄ va čū.*ǀ

She went back and forth. She did not know what to do. She went downstairs. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §74)

(6)   *zəle=w θèle*ǀ *zəle=w θèle=w*ǀ *šitàle ganeu l-aw bara xəna.*ǀ

He went back and forth, back and forth, and flung himself to the other side. (ChA. Harmesha, Mirza and the three Princess, §24)

It Is Not in My Hands

This formula expresses inability to do something in facing of an unpleasant situation.

(7)   *b-idati lèwa?*ˈ
         I cannot help it? (lit. It is not in my hands.) (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' fox*, §34)

(8)   *ma čə̀ dastē ma dā nī꞊na!*ˈ
         We—we cannot manage it! (lit. there is nothing in our hands.) (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures*, §109)

Fall in Love

Falling in love is rendered literally by the phrase 'one's heart fell' and/or 'something fell to one's heart'. Examples:

(9)   *jəhē dā vīyānā ḳuřkī kat dəlē ḳə̀čkè.*ˈ
         She was filled with love for the boy (lit. The longing for the boy fell into the girl's heart.) (NK. Khizava, Text 7: *Zanbilfirosh—The Basket Seller*, §19)

(10)   *har dzwān pešàwa*ˈ *har har ləbu pə̀le.*ˈ
         She grew more and more beautiful and he fell in love with her (lit. his heart fell.) (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 23: *The Poor Girl and her Horse*, §27)

3.2. Fillers

Narrators also have linguistic expressions that are used repetitively, often to signal hesitation or pause, or to mark salient points in the story. NENA and Kurdish speakers have a wide

range of fillers at their disposal, most of which ultimately go back to Arabic such as *ya'ni*, *yă'ăni* or *yani* from يعني *ya'nī* '(he/it) means', which fulfils a wide range of pragmatic functions, for instance indicating that the speaker seeks to offer clarifications, modifications or corrections equivalent to English *I mean, that is* or *in other words*. Also common are the connector *ʾəlla* from الا *ʾillā* for 'but, except', which introduces a contrast or exception, and the interjection *waḷḷa* or *waḷā* 'by God' fromوالله *wallāhi*, which generally adds assertive force or expresses surprise.

A frequent substitute for when a speaker cannot think of the word is *hənna* or *ʾənna* cognate with Arabic هن *han* (orهنة *hanah* 'thing'), which can be equivalent to English *thingy* or *what's-it-called*. It can be inflected like a noun and even be converted into a verb, i.e. *hnele* 'he Xed'.

(11)   *ʾaw hole qìma*ˈ *xəzya gu* **hə̀nna,**ˈ *ḥawš díyeḥ꞊ila.*ˈ **ʾə̀nna.**ˈ

He is already up and has seen what is in—**what's-it-called**—his garden. **The thing**.

The cognate *hno* occurs in the Neo-Aramaic of Ṭur ʿAbdin (Jastrow and Talay 2019, 15–16). The Kurdish narrator from Khizava uses *awādī* , which is most likely a combination of demonstrative *aw* + ezafe feminine form *_ā* + *dī* 'other', 'lit. the other one', as an equivalent to NENA *hənna*.

(12)   *əš bənamālā* **awādī** *bī ... Bahnīnè̄ bī.*ˈ *əš bənamālā Faq əbrāhīmì̄ bī.*ˈ

She was from that **so-and-so** family in Bahnin; she was from Faq Ibrahim's family. (NK. Khizava, Text 31: *Firyat and Khajija,* §6)

Furthermore, NENA and Kurdish dialects also have the particle *flān* or *flan* from Arabic فلان *fulān*,[21] which can serve as a noun substitute or nominal attribute when the referent is unknown.

(13) *ʾăna jŭlu šmə̀ṭṭe꞊wan mənu| **flan** dukta mtù tu꞊wan.|*

The clothes that I have taken from them, put them in **such-and-such** a place. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 35: *Mar Yohanan*, 33)

In the following Kurdish example, the particle *fəlān* has been combined with *kas* 'person' to substitute the nominal.

(14) *ềḵ šə wānā t-bēšt꞊ē,| ʿarē **fəlānkas** mā ta čə zārok nằ-bən?|*

One of them said, 'Hey **so-and-so**! Won't you have any children? (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §3)

A typical narrator-oriented discourse marker in Neo-Aramaic is the fossilised imperative form of the stem II verb of the root *hym* 'believe', which can occur as *mhaymən* or *mhemən* 'believe!'. It adds assertive force and emphasises salient events.

The particles *ʾe* in NENA and *a* in Kurdish, otherwise expressing affirmation, agreement or approval like English *yes*, may be used in the narrative to express assertiveness and thus intensification or rhetorical salience, especially when it occurs in its own intonation unit. The particle can also fulfil the function of a sentence connector and indicate the end of a paragraph, as for instance in the concluding sentence of the story given below.

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[21] Compare Syriac *plān*.

(15) *ʾe, qày,ǀ šawpa, šawpət saypa g-nàyəx.ǀ šawpət xabra là g-*
nayəx.ǀ xabra nàxwaš, nàxwaš⸗ile, ʾe.ǀ

Indeed, therefore, the impact of a sword heals, but the
impact of words does not heal. Words can be very evil,
indeed. (ChA. Duhok, Text 14: *A Man and a Lion*, §19)

(16) *xarək ba kārwānè̱ safar⸗ī kərdīya.ǀ dzā kārwānakān zīyātər ba*
payằn būwa,ǀ wa zəyātər⸗īš ba kàr būwa.ǀ à!ǀ

People would travel with caravans. The caravans were
mostly on foot, but also with donkeys. **Yes!** (CK. Shaqlawa,
Text 22: *A Talking Goat,* §3)

An impersonalised form of the narrative or reporting verb
'to say' literally conveying 'he says' can be used as a reportative
or quotative particle, which is usually added at the beginning of
a new clause but can also be placed at the end. The particle can
permeate an entire story between and across narrative units, and
arguably functions as a filler. There is a subtle difference from
the above fillers in that this seems to be particular to narrative
discourse rather than part of everyday use of language. It is pos-
sible this is an emergent evidential strategy, but this would re-
quire further investigation. Examples:

(17) *ʾamər xà yomaǀ ʾizəle ʾàwaǀ kàrta qam-ṭaʾəna l-xàṣu.ǀ*
mxuškunta ʾazəl zambilu mzabə̀nu.ǀ ʾamər bax màlkaǀ qam-xa-
zyàle.ǀ

It is said that one day one day he went off carrying a load
on his back. He went at dawn to sell his baskets. **It is said**
that a king's wife saw him. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4:
Zambilfrosh by A. Sher, §29)

(18) *a-rē řož hāt꞊ū řož řòy*ǀ *mař har pərsyārī a-kɜ̀rd, 'da-bī*ǀ *šāhēd-ī gurg*ʸ*ī k*ʸ*ḕ bī?'*ǀ

It is said that dawn broke [lit. the sun came and the sun went]. The ewe kept asking herself, 'Who is going to be the wolf's witness?' (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 19: *A Ewe and a Wolf*, §15)

The same filler occurs in Anatolian Arabic, where *qāl* literally 'he said' can permeate a story, for example in the text from Qarṭmin in Mardin (SE Turkey) recorded by Jastrow and Fischer (1989: 165–169).

3.3. Proverbs

(19) *šwirət xàbra*ǀ *là k-eθe nšaya.*ǀ
*šwirət ḍɜ̀rba*ǀ *naša g-našèle.*ǀ
*šwirət xàbraʾ ḥɜ̀l mòθa*ǀ *naša la g-našele.*ǀ
A wound caused by words is not forgotten.
A wound caused by a blow a man does forget.
But a wound caused by words—a man does not forget it until death. (JA. Duhok, Text 16: *A Man and a Wolf*, §24–27)

(20) *šawpət saypa g-nàyəx.*ǀ *šawpət xabra là g-nayəx.*ǀ
The impact of a sword heals, but the impact of words does not heal. (ChA. Duhok, Text 14: *A Man and a Lion*, §19)

(21) *žē ət-čət nīšā šīnā xanjarà̀*ǀ *bas žē nā-čətīn šīnā xabarà̀.*ǀ
The trace of grief caused by daggers will go away, but the grief caused by words will not go away. (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard*, §37)

3.4. End Rhyme

(22) *ʾurxət maṛya ta=t malpilè=w|*
      ʾurxət malkuta maxwilè=w|
      ʾadi ʿalma ta=t šawqilè.|

      to teach him the path to the Lord and
      to show him the path towards the heavenly kingdom and
      so that they may abandon this world.
      (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4: *Zambilfrosh by A. Sher*, §52)

(23) *Fāt Fātokè!*[22]|
      təl mēžūkè!|
      yān ži bərākožūkè! |

      O little Fatma!
      Your fingers to be sipped blood from!
      Or your brothers to be killed!
      (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Evil Stepmother and the
      Old Witch,* §61)

(24) *muhabtè ḳəč mubtalā ḳər.|*
      səř lə jārīyē āškərà ḳər,|
      ʿlāwaḳè qalb=əm jədā ḳər.|
      mən žə ʿašqằn xaw na-tēʾ|

      Love overtook the girl.
      She disclosed her story to her maid:
      'The boy broke my heart
      I cannot sleep because of [his] love.'
      (NK. Khizava, Text 7: *Zanbilfirosh—The Basket Seller*, §39)

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[22] The ending *-kē* consists of the diminutive suffix *-k* followed by the oblique affix *-ē*.

(25) *Atmān! sīyārē Dəndəlè!*⸢
     pāžo hara Müsəlè!⸢
     Atman! The rider on Dindil!
     Ride it, go to Mosul!
     (NK. Dure, Text 37: *The Prophet's Horse,* §9)

3.5. Alliteration

(26) *kma iwat **šar₌u šapàle** … xəmyani **kalba kòma**.*⸢
     How **weary and worn out** you are… My father-in-law is **a
     black dog**. (ChA. Duhok, Text 9: *The Bridge of Dalale*, §17,
     §21)

(27) *gundak yē bè̀-**dang₌a**⸢ nà **dang₌a**⸢ nà **dūr₌a**.*⸢
     It was a silent village. It was not full of sound, nor was it
     remote (from civilization). (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza
     Muhammad's Adventures*, §35)

4.0. Figurative Language

Certain figurative uses of language are common stylistic devices
of oral narratives, especially the mimicry of sounds. Narrators
can also transform ordinary sentences into questions as figures of
speech. This section lists examples of figures of speech typical of
the Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic oral literature found in our collec-
tion, starting with onomatopoeias and ideophones as well as the
use of repetition, lengthening and reduplication.

4.1 Sound Symbolism

4.1.1. Onomatopoeias

(1)   *θele xa xənna **mnahmòre.** kepət ṭura hole b-qale **mzarzòye,** làyt?*
‘Another came **blustering**. The rocks of the mountain were already **shaking** at the sound of his voice, weren’t they?’ (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §40)

(2)   *dītī=yān kotərak lasàr dārē bū **bərġa bə̀rġ=ī bū.***
They saw a dove was in the tree. He was **cooing**. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 13: *A ‘Pious’ Fox,* §7)

(3)   *řəp řəp*
‘clip-clop of horses’ (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad’s Adventures,* §71)

(4)   *qəṛ qəṛ*
‘cracking noise’ (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad’s Adventures,* §60)

4.1.2. Ideophones

(5)   *ṣŭpurta ʾàmra: **wəj wəj wə̀j!***
The sparrow said, **‘Chirp, chirp, chirp!’** (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A Pious Fox*, §35)

(6)   *xəre ʾəla xandaq xpə̀rta. zəle xðə̀re xa, tre čarxe xðə̀re, xðə̀re ʾu=**fiiiit** šitàle ganeu l-aw bara xəna. ḵum-šawə̀ra.*
He looked at the trench that had been dug. He went and walked round one, two times, walked round and round, and **woosh** he flung himself to the other side. He had jumped over it. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A Pious Fox*, §35)

(7) *mxèle,ˈ **taq, tàq.**ˈ wele dewa … hənna, ʾàrya k-šame qala g-nàxəθ ʾəlle.ˈ*

He started cutting, ***crack**, **crack***, and a wolf… I mean, lion heard the sound and came to him. (ChA. Duhok, Text 14: *A Man and a Lion,* §6)

(8) *ʾˈowà!ˈ mux məlxa g-əbatti bàs?!ˈ … ʾanya tre bnási=lu, ʾahat leat bràti,ˈ **wiii!**ˈ*

'**Oh!** You love me only as much as salt?!' … Those two are my daughters, you are not my daughter, **oh!**' (JA. Zakho, Text 25: *As Precious as Salt,* §7)

(9) *gāzē mərišk=ū barxàk,ˈ dū sē bàrx=ī ha-būn:ˈ **t͡p, t͡p, t͡p, t͡p, t͡p=ū,** ☉²³, ☉, āwā=y kərd: **t͡p, t͡p, t͡p,** 'warə̀n!'ˈ mərišk hātən àw lā.ˈ*

He called for the hens and sheep—he had two, three sheep: **Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Cluck! Ba! Ba!** He did this, **Cluck! Cluck!** 'Come!' The hens came to eat the berries. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 27: *The Indecent Neighbour,* §6)

(10) ***ns! ns!*** *bề̄hn ṭə-ḳatən.ˈ*

Sniff! Sniff! She smelled. (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Evil Stepmother and the Old Witch,* §53)

(11) *qomāšaka=y har-a-dāt-awa a-bīnī **tṳ̀f!**ˈ tṳ̀ wəḷāhī!ˈ ʿasabɩ̀ bū.ˈ*

She removed the cloth on the tray to show him what was in the tray. He said (lit. he saw), '**Wow!** Indeed the tray was full of berries!', he became furious. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 27: *Indecent Neighbour,* §4)

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²³ That is, a bilabial click.

4.1.3. Repetition

Repetition stands in an iconic relationship to the extensive amount, size or distance of the activity or property:

(12) **psèle⌐ psù,⌐ psù,⌐ psù,⌐ psù,⌐ psù.⌐** ʾani ʾan qămàye ʾam-riwa, k-amri, l-Bàġdad.⌐

He **went off, on and on and on and on**—to Baghdad, as they, the old folks, used to say. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4: *Zambilfrosh by A. Sher*, §20)

(13) rkule l-xaṣət susa xwàra.⌐ ga ʾərta **zəle=w zəle=w zəle=w,** qam-šawə̀ra ga ʾərta xandaq.⌐

He rode on the back of a white horse. Once more **he went on and on** and then jumped over the trench again. (ChA. Harmashe, Text 33: *Mirza*, §14)

(14) har bənamã̀ḷakē⌐ hàṣpakē makənē,⌐ jəhēlḕ⌐ **galà gala gala gala** lāv ha-bū.⌐

Each family had a young, reliable horse that was **very very strong**. (NK. Dure, Text 20: *A Family Horse*, §2)

(15) **hēdī hēdī hēdī hēdì̄**⌐ qünāxā dārəstānē darbã̀s ḳər.⌐

Slowly, slowly, slowly, slowly, they crossed the wild forest. (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard*, §14)

(16) baḷã̀m⌐ kotər **zor zor zor zor** la řīwī zīraktə̀r bū.⌐

The dove, however, was **much much** cleverer than the fox. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 13: *A Pious Fox*, §14)

4.1.4. Lengthening

Similarly, the prolongation of the pronunciation of a consonant or vowel coincides with intensification and rhetorical salience, thus symbolising the larger extent to which the relevant semantic content applies.

(17) *ʾən ʾamruxle,* **bəššš** *b-àwux ʾàzat.*ˈ

If we tell him, we are going to be **far more** free. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §107)

(18) *gūtī,* **'harèēē**!*ˈ

She said, '**Come on**!' (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain,* §73).

Such lengthening can also be combined with repetition, as illustrated below, to build up suspense. Often the stressed vowel of the last element of the repeated word is lengthened.

(19) *kŭlay hune* **bizàla,**ˈ **bizàla˭w,**ˈ **bizàaala,**ˈ *lène biyara.*ˈ

Everybody **was going back and forth**, but they did not dare to jump. (ChA. Harmashe, Text 33: *Mirza Muhammad and the Three Princesses*, §5)

(20) *īnā aw pə̀rčā wē*ˈ *aw ā dārkē ālāndì̄*ˈ *āv* **ət-bat ət-bat ət-bàaat**ˈ **ət-bat** *ət-čət˭a bə̞rkā sultānakì̄ dā.*ˈ

Her (Gulizar's) hair—the one which was twisted onto the stick—the water **took it away and took it away, took it all the way** to the lake of a sultan in another city. (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures*, §61)

4.1.5. Reduplication

Reduplication is the repetition of a word or a part of a word in the formation of a lexeme or idiom. The full reduplication is typical of onomatopoeias consisting of closed syllables.. Complete and partial reduplication is thus a regular process in the lexicalisation of animal cries such as 'bleating' (of sheep) Kurdish *bāřabāř* and NENA *mbarbore* as well as 'wailing, barking' (of dogs) Kurdish *čalačal*[24] and NENA *mčalwole*. In the Kurdish examples, reduplication serves both to augment the quantity of a word, and to intensify the meaning expressed by it.

(21)   Total reduplication:

a.   *got-got*
'sayings' (lit. said-said) (NK. Zakho, Text 11: *The Bridge of Dalal,* §13)

b.   *pəšt≠o pəšt*
A continuous backward movement (lit. back and back) (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures,* §63)

In the partial reduplication, the word's initial consonant is replaced by another consonant, usually labial like /m/, to express the continuation of an indefinite number of the same set with a similar effect to English *and so forth, etcetera* or *whatever,* e.g. NENA *xabuše mabuše* 'apples and so forth'. This *m*-reduplication ultimately originated in Turkic languages, e.g. Turkish *gözüne mözüne* 'eyes and so forth', and spread to Persian, Kurdish, NENA,

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[24] See Chyet (2003, 103).

Ṭuroyo and local Anatolian Arabic dialects, e.g. Mardini Arabic *ṛās-māṣ* 'heads and other body parts' (Grigore 2007, 319–330).

(22)   Partial reduplication

a.   *hāl=o māl*

'(mental) state and such' (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures,* §41)

b.   *lat=ū pat*

'torn and destroyed' (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 19: *A Ewe and a Wolf*, §17)

In many NENA dialects total reduplication involves adding the particle *ma* between reduplicated forms. An equivalent construction with the particle *mā(n)* occurs in Kurdish:

c.   *xabuše ma xabuše*

'apples and so forth'

d.   *dūr mān dūr / dūr mā dūr*

'surroundings, all around' (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures*, §6, §82)

4.2. Use of Questions

Questions can be used for various literary effects and engagement with the audience without expecting an answer, often to express a character's state of mind.

4.2.1. Rhetorical Questions

A statement can be put in the form of a question to prompt a debate, for example:

(23) *ʾè,ʾ⌐ k-imər, "ắla kùllən, de qumu!⌐ ma fṭ̀arta ᴬhawnᴬ?⌐ xo là maṛəšə́nnawxun hḗš layle?ʾ⌐*

'Yes,' he said. 'Anyway, come on wake up! Isn't breakfast here? Should I not have woken you up while it was still night?' (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §30)

(24) *yaʿnī čūnko az žə̀nək=əm⌐ hīn mə bə čāvakī nērī̀nī̀ əl mə ət-fəkərən?ʾ⌐*

Just because I am a woman, do you have a false belief in me (lit. You think of me through a negative eye? (NK. Zakho, Text 11: *The Bridge of Dalal,* §18).

4.2.2. Question in the Narrative

The narrator can highlight an event by introducing it in the form of a question, as if to refresh the audience's memory, for example:

(25) **mì k-iwə́ðwala ta Dằlale?⌐** *g-nabə́lwala kùdyum laxma=w mìyya.*

What did he used to do for Dalale? He would bring her bread and water every day. (ChA. Duhok, Text 9: *The Bridge of Dalale*, §15)

(26) **bərāyē mazən čə̀ ṭ-bḗžt=ē?** *ə̀ṭ-bḗžt=ē, ʿna bərằ!⌐ bəlā àz avroka bə-mīnəm.ʾ⌐*

What did the elder brother say to him? He said, 'No, brother! Let me stay home today.' (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Stepmother, and the Old Witch,* §31)

The narrator of *The Bridge of Dalale* story in the Christian Neo-Aramaic of Zakho adopts this strategy several times to

switch to one of the leading characters, i.e. the prince, putting him in the spotlight and giving prominence to his actions, for instance:

(27) *ʾokey, ʾə́nnuhu b-zale꞊w ʾati꞊w šula palxi b-rəš jə̀sr,* | *fa-**mà wədle ʾamír?*** | *ḥatta ʾə́nnuhu ʾawedwa xa hădiya ṛabta ṭa ʾawwa muhàndəs,* | *Tòma,* | *mkarə̀mwale,* | ***mà wədle biyu?*** |
OK, then people were coming and going, working on the bridge. So, **what did the prince do?** Instead of giving this architect Toma a huge gift, in order to honour him, **what did he do to him**? **(**He summoned him to his side and cut off his right hand.) (ChA. Zakho, Text 10: *The Bridge of Dalale*, §12–13)

4.2.3. Expression of Doubt

A question can describe a character's state of mind, as if they were prompting for help.

(28) *mere **mà b-awðən?*** | *ma t̲-ile bədraya hole mpàla.* |
'What shall I do?', he thought. 'Whatever he puts there, it falls down.' (ChA. Duhok, Text 9: *The Bridge of Dalale*, §2)

(29) *žənəkē žī həzrā xo ḳər, ‘az čə̀ b-ḳam?* | *čə nà-ḳam?* | *kī-và bə-čəm?* | *az žənkaḵ꞊ā b tanè̀* | *ət vān čol꞊ū čīyà ṛā!* | ***dē bar꞊av kī-và čəm?*** |
The woman thought, **'What should I do? Where can I go?** I'm a lonely woman in this wilderness, in these mountains! **Where can I go?'** (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard*, §4)

5.0. Repetition

Repetition is a common stylistic device of oral literature as well as a common storytelling technique. Not only individual words, phrases and clauses can be repeated, but also entire sentences and even whole episodes that encapsulate the main theme or a recurrent theme as the so-called *Leitsätze* (Pinault 1992: 21; see §8.1.). This section provides a brief typology of repetition found in the NENA and Kurdish texts with illustrative examples. Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish narrative discourse can seem highly repetitive. The particular function of recapitulation can vary from one case to the next, and is sometimes chiefly a matter of style. Some of these are also mentioned in the relevant sections, see Section 2.4 on tail-head recapitulation, Section 4.1.3. on symbolism, Section 7.1.1. on inverted word order and 7.2.1. on aspect. As a discourse strategy, repetition can be used to recapitulate, to keep track of major themes in the story, to give the speaker time to think, and/or to establish a bridging linkage between core events for the sake of event cohesion.

5.1. Thematisation

The successive occurrence of the same word, as illustrated in (1)–(2) below, can be characterised as an instance of thematisation, the development of a thematic unit around a core and highly topical constituent.

(1)   *nīhàye,| **ṭămǎʿuθət** barnàša,| xzi hàtxa꞊yla.| yaʿni ʾawa kud yoma b-yawəllux tràylire| ʾu šwaqa labole qàysux.| ʾe, **ṭămǎʿùθa**| g-əbe, hənna, šaqəlwala xăzəntət hə̀nna, ʾe.| yaʿni ʾay **ṭămàʿhum** qaṭəllu,| dàx k-əmrila.|*

In the end, **the greed** of mankind, see what it is like. This is to say, he gives you two coins every day and even lets you take some wood. Indeed, **greed**: he wanted to take the whole treasure. That is, it is **their own greed** that kills people, as they say. (ChA. Duhok, Text 15: *A Man and a Snake,* §7)

(2) *bāb gala galak ᵓājə̀z bītən.*⸣ *Sorā Čavšīn žī husā xo dīyằr ət-katən*⸣ *ᵓalasās yā ᵓājə̀z=a.*⸣ *xuškēt wē žī husā xo dīyār ət-kan ᵓalasās yā ᵓājə̀z=ən.*⸣

The father was very **upset**. Sora Chavshin pretended to be innocent, as if she was **upset**. Her sisters too pretended to be innocent, as if they were **upset**. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain,* §146)

5.2. Stylistic Variation

The successive occurrence of the same word at the beginning of a sentence for stylistic variation is known as anaphora and at the end of a sentence as epiphora. Anaphora and epiphora can be combined, as in the follow case in Neo-Aramaic where the repetition seems to be a matter of style:

(3) *qam-darilu gu day ᵓàrxe.*⸣ ***kma d-qam-taxnìle*⸣ *là mətle,*⸣ *kma d-qam-mazwerile là mətle.*⸣

They put him in that mill. **No matter how hard** they made him grind, **he did not die. No matter how hard** they made him spin the millstone, **he did not die**. (ChA. Enishke, Text 36: *Mar Giwargis,* §6)

5.3. Event Cohesion

Recapitulation can also serve as a bridge between constituents for event cohesion. In the following example from Kurdish, for instance, the adverbials are added successively and the verb is repeated to maintain event cohesion, thus conveying 'They went secretly in a group to the bishop'.

(4)   ***čūn ba jamāʕàt,*** | ***čūn ba dəzì̀,*** | ***čūn꞊a kən maṭràn.*** |
       They went in a group, **they went** secretly, **they went** to
       the bishop. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 38: *The Foul-Mouthed
       Priest*, §2)

It is common for the narrator to repeat the last word or phrase at the beginning of the next sentence for the sake of event cohesion. This type of reiteration is a general strategy to organise narrative discourse and connect clausal chains through so-called tail-head linkage (see §2.4.).

5.4. Foregrounding

A duplicate can be placed both at the beginning and at the end creating, as it were, a frame around particular clause(s), as the head and tail clause are the same. This type of recapitulation seems to be used to return to the foreground after having switched to background information. For example:

(5)   *ʾəθwa xa ʾarya mṣíṭera wewa l-ṭùra.* | ***là qabəlwa čù barnašət***
       zə̀lwale l-ṭura, | *maxewa qàyse* | *ʾu ʾawəðwa xà məndi.* | *hàr*
       zə̀lwale, | *g-naxəθwale, k-ìxəlwale.* | ***là qabəlwa ču xa zawale.*** |
       There was a lion who controlled a mountain. **He did not**
       allow any humans to enter the mountain to cut wood or

to do anything else. If someone went there, he would come down on them and eat them. **He did not allow anyone to go there**. (ChA. Duhok, *Man and Lion*, §2)

(6)   *ră-bī čo got, 'tə-vēt hīn vē kəčè̄ bə-dən mən.*˥ *mən nāv꞊ū dangē wē gò lē bī.*˥ *kəčakā yā pēškēš꞊ū barkati̇̀꞊ya.*˥ ***tə-vēt hīn vè̄ kəčē bə-dən mən.***'˥

He rose and went to Khajija's family and said, '**You must give me this daughter of yours in marriage**. I have heard about her fame. I have heard that she is a beautiful and gifted girl. **You must give me this daughter of yours in marriage**.' (NK. Khizava, Text 31: *Firyat and Khajija,* §6)

5.5. Synonymous Repetition

In the NENA texts it is not uncommon for the multilingual speaker to repeat a Kurdish loanword with its Arabic equivalent. One could analyse this type of synonymous repetition as an instance of codeswitching, inserting a word from among the multilingual repertoire into the Neo-Aramaic frame for the sake of clarification. In (7) below, for instance, the speaker first says *dargǎvana* adapted from Kurdish *dargavān*, i.e. *dergevan* or دەرگەوان in Kurdish orthography, meaning 'gatekeeper, guard', then immediately repeats the same concept through the Arabic equivalent *ḥarəs*, i.e. حارس *ḥāris*, meaning 'guard, guardian'. The speaker does not do this only once, but several times in the story whenever he uses the word *dargǎvana*.

(7)   *man manxətle **dargǎvana**, ᴬḥarəsᴬ, mən š-xòrta?'*˥ *làybe manxətle,*˥ *ʾàyka manxətle?*˥

Who gets down **the gatekeeper**, **the guard**, from the poplar? He could not get him down. Where would he get him down? (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §193)

The NK Duhok example below reflects a similar phenomenon. The storyteller, a native speaker of Badini Northern Kurdish from Duhok, first uses the more prestigious Central Kurdish *dəḷnīya* 'sure, certain' then switches to the equivalent Northern Kurdish *pištr̆āst*.[25]

(8)   *bərāyē wē yē **dəḷnīā̰=ya**,¹ yē **pəštr̆ā̰st=a**¹ Fātmā sababī bo nà̰-bēžītən*¹

The brother was sure and certain that Fatma would not tell him the cause of her wounded hand (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, Her Evil Stepmother and the Old Witch*, §69).

Similarly, in (9) the bilingual speaker from Zakho repeats the Arabic loanword *ʿarrāf* 'fortune teller' with its Kurdish equivalent *xēvzānk*.

(9)   *got=ē, ʿhāl=ū masalēt ʿarāfī yēt xēxzānkī avà=na¹ ət-vēt az tà bə-kəm haykalē pərē dā.ʾ*¹

He said, 'The fortune-teller's saying is like this; I must put you into the construction of the bridge.' (NK. Zakho, Text 11: *The Bridge of Dalal,* §17)

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[25] See Haig & Mustafa (2019) for a sociolinguist study of Bahdini Kurdish in Duhok.

6.0. Demonstratives, Indefinites and Deictic Particles

6.1. Indefinite Suffixes and Particles

Indefiniteness is expressed by the prenominal *xa* derived from the numeral 'one' in NENA, e.g. *xa malka* 'a certain king', and the suffix *-ak* derived from *yak* 'one' in both Northern and Central Kurdish varieties, e.g. *sag-ak* 'a certain dog'. Indefinite marking tends to be associated with specific nominals that have a prominent role in the discourse structure, especially when first introduced in the narrative, e.g.

(1) *k-amər ʾətwa **xa malka** gu de màta.*|
     It is said there was **a king** in the village. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 5: *Zambilfrosh by W. Toma*, §2)

(2) *got˭ī zamānē xo˭y **qašàk** ha-bū.*| *aw qaša zəmān˭ī galak pìs bū.*|
     It was said that there once was a Christian priest. The priest was very foul-mouthed. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 38: *The Foul-Mouthed Priest*, §1)

The indefinite suffix tends to be absent on nominals which have an incidental role in the discourse, cf. Neo-Aramaic *ʾida* 'hand' in (3) and Kurdish *musalaḥà* 'police car' in (4).

(3) *ʾida wəṛe l-adya ʾələt ṣŭpurta gòrīn.*|
     He stretched out **a hand** to the sparrow. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox*, §18)

(4)   *suwārī **musalaḥà꞊yān** kərd꞊ū lo Hawlērē.*ˈ

They put him into a **police car**, and headed towards Erbil.
(CK. Shaqlawa, Text 21: *A Man and His Dog,* §4)

6.2. Near Deixis Demonstratives

Near deixis demonstratives can be used anaphorically to refer to
the main protagonist in the tale, in addition to the deictic func-
tion, i.e. pointing to referents in the extra-linguistic situation. The
forms are given in Table 10. below.

Table 10. Near demonstrative pronouns in NENA and Kurdish

	NENA		NK.		CK.
	NOM	GEN	DIR	OBL	
sg.m.	*ʾawwa*	*dawwa*		*vī*	*aw*
sg.f.	*ʾayya*	*dayya*	*av*	*vē*	
pl.	*ʾanna*	*danna*		*vān*	*(a)wān*

As anaphora, the near deixis demonstratives forms are used
for nominals whose referents are the centre of attention at a par-
ticular point in the discourse, for example *ʾăna* (<* *ʾanna*) in
ChA. Shaqlawa:

(5)   *ʾətwa trè malaye.*ˈ ***ʾăna** tre malàye,*ˈ *malayət xà mata꞊wənwa,*ˈ
*xa məzgaft꞊u xa màta.*ˈ ***ʾăna** tre malàye*ˈ *xəzmətət dè məzgaft*
*ʾudiwa*ˈ *gàwət*ˈ *maṩròxe*ˈ *qatət mṣalòye꞊w*ˈ *gu ḥdarət gu taziye꞊w*
*məndyàne.*ˈ

There were two mullahs. **These** two mullahs were mullahs
serving the same village, the same mosque and the same
village. **These** two mullahs served the mosque by calling to
prayer, attending funerals and so on. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text
28: *Two Mullahs,* §2–3)

(6) *āwān žī nà-vīyāt bə-də꞊yē,| dīyānatā wān nà ēḵ bī.| **av lə** Bahnīnē bəsəḷmằn bī.| **avē** dītərē —nə̀-zānəm—,| ijā ān ān masīhì bī| ān zaradaštì bī.|

They did not want to give her to him in marriage, since their religion was not the same. **The one** from Bahnīn was Muslim. As for **the other one**—I do not know [for sure]— he was either Christian or Zoroastrian. (NK. Khizava, Text 31: *Firyat and Khajija*, §7).

In CK. Shaqlawa the forms singular *aw* and plural *(a)wān* are used for both near and far demonstrative, thus having a similar function, as shown in (7) below, and contrasting with NK. *av* (near deixis) and *aw* (far deixis).

(7) *got꞊ī zamānē xo꞊y qašằk ha-bū.| **aw qaša** zəmān꞊ī galak pìs bū.|*

It was said that there once was a Christian priest. **This/that priest** was very foul-mouthed. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 38: *The Foul-Mouthed Priest*, §1)

6.3. Zero Anaphora

Throughout the Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic the main characters of the story and thus highly topical arguments are often reduced to zero anaphora, as they are presupposed to be easily retreived from the context. The majority of subject referents in the narratives, especially in dialogues, are only marked on the verb via person indexes and agreement, and thus verbal person marking is the core morphological device to construct referential coherence. This reflects universal bias against lexical NPs in A (transitive subject) function (Du Bois 1987), and their low

referential density (Bickel 2003). The verb with its generally obligatory subject inflection constitutes the core around which the discourse is organised, while the other arguments can be considered more or less optional.

The following passage from *A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain* narrated in the Kurdish dialect of Duhok contains a dialogue between an evil stepmother and her daughter, which illustrates the use of zero anaphora. The switch in referents, i.e. the stepmother and the daughter, is generally not indicated and zero anaphora are used instead. Only once the ambiguous independent pronoun *aw* is used in combination with the additive marker *ži*, but the pronoun itself is ambiguous.

(8)   *damē dā dad=a kừě xo| žənbābē dastē kəčā xo gə̀rt got=ē,| ʿhəstoyē ta bə-škētə̀n!| mā ava šūl bū tà kə̩rī?| mā ava ta čə̀ bə sarē ma īnā!| mā ava čə darmāna tà īnāy?| **gūt=a** kəčā xo yā žə řə̀st řā.| **gūt=ē,** ʿava har àw=a awē ta š| Hənārè sətāndī.ʾ| **gūt=ē,** ʿna na ava na àw=a!ʾ| **gūt=ē,** ʿbalē bāwar ka̩ àw=aʾ| **gūt=ē,** ʿawa čə̀ bū?ʾ|—hāšārē wa—**gūt=ē,** ʿpīsāti̩ bū.ʾ| **aw ži** galà gala ʾājəz bū.| har tə wē damī dā damē wa **gotī=ē**| wakī gēžbūnak̩è bū čēk **bū**| ū hè̩l əf ʾardī **kàt.**|*

When he gave the medicine to his son, the stepmother grabbed her daughter's hand and said, 'May your bones be broken! What have you done? Why did you do this to us? What is this medicine that you've brought?' **She said** these words to her real daughter. **She (i.e. the daughter) said**, 'This is exactly the one you took from Hinar.' **She (i.e. the stepmother) said**, 'No, this is not the one!' **She (i.e. the daughter) said**, 'Yes, believe me this is the one!' **She (i.e.**

the daughter) said, 'What was that then?'—May it be far from you the audience—**She (i.e. the stepmother) said**, 'It was animal's dirt.' Then **she** (i.e. the daughter) got very troubled. As soon as **she** (i.e. stepmother) **said** those words, **she** (i.e. her daughter) **experienced** some dizziness and **fell** to the ground. (NK. Duhok, Text 26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §63-64)

The same holds for the following dialogue between a father (the king) and his son (the prince) from the Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect of Shaqlawa, where the narrative verb is expressed by means of *ʾamər* lit. 'he says' and the only indication of a switch, e.g.

(9) *har yeksar mən tằ ṛa wəre,ˈ babu tele b-qàmu.ˈ mən rằw bitáye꞊le.ˈ ʾamər: yà babi,ˈ ʾaxtsi janux gu fằhì ma꞊wǀ ʾadya mutwe꞊wət.ˈ ʾamər: mà bəxdare꞊wət?ˈ ʾamər: madam baṛ naša gənsakŭ la mayù te꞊le,ˈ tsə̀ ṭəma lət gu de dùnye.ˈ xaye lə̀t gawaw.ˈ ʾamər: ya bròniˈ qamà ʾatxa səḥla lux?ˈ mdiwə̀ne?ˈ mà ꞊ile?ˈ bròniˈ ʾamər: ʾitù xur ʾằta.ˈ kursìyi čyawəna qàtux.ˈ malka k-udənux l-dùki.ˈ ʾàtxa k-udən qatux,ˈ ʾàtxa k-udən qatux.ˈ ʾamər:ˈ kŭle be fàyde꞊na ʾăna.ˈ là g-nafᶜili.ˈ ʾamər: matənux bàxta,ˈ mustàqbal.ˈ yàle k-awelux.ˈ gu yàle k-paṣxət,ˈ gu bèta k-paṣxət.ˈ*

The moment he entered through the door, his father came to meet him. He was coming back from hunting. **He said**, 'Father, you consider yourself to be a wise person.' **He (the king) said**, 'What are you wondering about?' **He said**, 'Since all the human race is mortal, this world has no longer any taste. There is no life in it.' **He (the king) said**, 'My

son, why has this feeling come over you? Has he gone mad? Or what?' 'My son,' **he said**, 'sit and look here. I shall give my throne to you. I shall make you a king in my place. I shall do such and such things for you.' **He said**, 'These things are all without benefit. They are no use'. **He (the king) said**, 'I shall bring you a woman and a future. You will have children. You will have joy in your children. You will have pleasure in a family.' (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4: *Zambilfrosh by A. Sher*, §12–15)

6.4. Deictic Particles and Copulas

The Neo-Aramaic dialects—as well as the *qəltu*-Arabic dialects of the region— have developed various presentative copulas out of presentative particles and/or deictic elements combined with the (pronominal) copula. The third person singular forms of such presentative copulas can, in turn, further grammaticalize into invariant particles. In the Neo-Aramaic texts in our collection, such presentative copulas can be used to express mirativity, for example in (10) below, and are often combined with verbs of perception either before the verb, as shown in (11), or after it, as shown in (12). The presentative copula and its related particles can thus be used by the narrator for the purpose of suspense sometimes through their identification with the surprise of the unsuspecting character, adding a sense of anticipation at crucial moments in the story.

(10) *qam-šarela mən ʿaqə̀le,* **wela** *trə̀sta.*
      He untied it from its bandages and **look, it has** healed! (JA. Duhok, Text 16: *A Man and a Wolf*, §21)

(11) **wele k**-*xaze b-ʾaynət ʾə̀nna,*| *ʾaynət kàlba*| *mbalboṣe gawət kèpa*
(So he went to tap the rock with his hand) and **look,** he
saw the dog's eyes glinting under the rock (ChA. Duhok,
Text 18: *A Dog, a Ewe and a Wolf*, §12)

(12) *xəre ʾila xa ʾaqə̀rwa*| *hola bənxata kùmta,*| *ʾəš-malka dəd-*
nasàle.
He looked and—**lo and behold!**—a scorpion was coming
down—black—onto the king to bite him. (ChA. Duhok,
Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §124)

In Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect of Shaqlawa, the deictic
copula based on *wəl-* or *wăl-*, targeting the addressee in a dia-
logue, can express impatience and irritation:

(13) **wə̀lux** *yəmu!*| *bratət mà ʾəl ʾurxət ʾalaha?*|
Come on, my son! What girl for God's sake?! (ChA.
Shaqlawa, Text 23: *The Poor Girl and her Horse*, §19)

In Kurdish tales the presentative particles *ā*, and *ahā* are
used to express mirativity. They convey the speaker's surprise
upon experiencing an unexpected situation. In the tales these par-
ticles also serve as an attention-drawing strategy.

(14) *barē xo dat꞊ē wērī galakā bē-sar-ū-bàr꞊a.*| **ahā**, *bərāyak̭ì̄ t̤-*
bīnītən,| *sar ēk̭ šə wān taxtā yē nəvəstì̄꞊ya.*|
She looked around the cave and saw that it was very messy.
Lo, she saw a brother sleeping on one of the beds. (NK.
Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Evil Stepmother and the Old*
Witch, §14)

(15) *bərāyē maẓə̀n jo ṯ-kavītən.| əṯ-bẽžt=ē, ‘ā́ ava čan təštaḳī sàyr꞊a čē boy!|*

The eldest brother bludgeoned his way through his brothers and said to them, '**Oh**, what has been happening here is indeed surprising!' (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Evil Stepmother and the Old Witch*, §19)

7.0. Syntactic Stylistics

7.1. Word Order

7.1.1. Repetition and Inversion

As a stylistic device, an entire clause or part of the clause can be repeated in the reverse order. One of its effects is to draw attention to a certain event in the narrative and establish event cohesion with the preceding clause through tail-head linkage.[26]

(1) *băle **šqulle năra dìdox**!| **năra dìdox šqùlle**,| g-emər, mxìle go reši,| kmà ʾibox!| ʾu tùrre reši bət năra.|*

'But **take your axe! Take your axe**,' he says, 'and hit my head with it as hard as you can. And crack my head with the axe.' (JA. Duhok, Text 16: *A Man and a Wolf*, §17)

(2) *fa-**mà wədle ʾamír?| ʾămír mà wədle?**| ʾamər…|*

So, **what did the prince do? What did the prince do?** He said… (ChA. Zakho, Text 10: *The Bridge of Dalale*, §19)

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[26] See §2.4.

(3) **babay màθle.**ˈ babət Mərzá Mḥə̆́mad=u ʾAḥmád Čắlă̆bi=w
Mḥə̆mad Čắlă̆bi,ˈ **məθle bàbay.**ˈ malka **màθle.**ˈ
Their father died. The father of Mirza Muhammad, Ahmad
Chalabi and Muhammad Chalabi—**their father died**. The
king **died**. (ChA. Harmashe, Text 33: *Mirza*, §17)

(4) *šīr=o matāḷēt xo ř̆ā-t-kan=o*ˈ *t-hēn=a šařē xo t-kàn.*ˈ *tə-hēn=a šař̆ì*
*ət-kan=o*ˈ *šařē xo t-kàn=o.*ˈ *... ət wī šař̆ì dā*ˈ *... xə̀škēt wī*ˈ *... **t-**
ēn=a koštə̀n,ˈ **t-ēn=a koštə̀n xə̆škēt wì.**ˈ *hatā də-zəvř̆ət=a qasrè*ˈ
*aw yē dargàhē pəštē ř̆ā čoyn.*ˈ
They picked up their swords and shields and went (lit.
came) to fight. They went and fought. They fought their
fight. In that battle **his sisters were killed**. **His sisters
were killed**. By the time he came back to the palace, the
ones from the back gate had gone away. (NK. Duhok, Text
34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures,* §78-79)

7.1.2. Word Order in Kurdish

In Kurdish the word order is by default SOV. In the following
example, the direct object moves from its default position to the
post-verbal slot to create a link with the following relative clause
of which it is the head:

(5) *kāfərā̀ gərt **av payxambara=w,**ˈ awē lə sīyà̆rē Dəndəlī=ya.*ˈ
The villains waylaid **the prophet**, the one who was riding
Dindil. (NK. Dure, Text 37: *The Prophet's Horse*, §6)

A change in the position of O relative to S is triggered by
factors such as topicalisation. In the following example, the SOV
order is observed in the first clause. In the second clause though,

the order changes to OSV due to the topicalisation of the direct object, marked by the additive particle *ž́ī*.

(6)   *tu dē īšāra darmānì bēž́ī꞊ya ma⌐ ʾardìž́ī tē bū mà dastnīšān ḵay⌐*
        You shall tell us about the whereabouts of the medicine. In addition, you shall show us the exact place in which you have hidden the medicine. (NK. Duhok, Text26: *Dindik Hinar—A Girl Called Pomegranate Grain*, §106)

7.1.3. Word Order in NENA

In the majority of NENA dialects of northwestern Iraq and southeastern Turkey,[27] word order is relatively more flexible and more sensitive to pragmatics than word order in Kurdish. The clause-initial slot or left periphery is generally used for topicalisation. Thus, the most frequent position of independent personal pronouns is clause-initial, which coincides with their high topicality. In (7) below, however, rather than occurring in its more frequent clause-initial position, the independent personal pronoun *ʾana* is postposed to clause-final position, as a stylistic variant to show event cohesion with the preceding and draw the listener's attention to it.

(7)   *ʾàmər:⌐ ʾana măḥammàd꞊iwən.⌐ ʾe gət məre măḥammád꞊iwən, kəmu ptə̀xle⌐ ṣŭpurta ʿərə̀qla.⌐ ʾawhù!⌐ ʾana qa mà məri măḥammadi?⌐ hawənwa mira jə́rjəs꞊iwən ʾàna…⌐*
        He said, 'I am Muḥammad.' When he said, 'I am Muḥammad', he opened his mouth and the sparrow fled away. 'Oh! Why did I say I was Muḥammad? If I only had

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[27] See Noorlander and Molin (2022) for a comparison of word order typology in NENA dialects.

said **I** was George…' (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 12: *A 'Pious' Fox*, §37)

Since the most common order is topic-comment, SVO order is characteristic of these NENA dialects. There is, however, a tendency for discourse-new subjects to follow the predicate, especially in thetic sentences, e.g.

(8) *qəmle θele xà qala.| mère,|*
     'Then a voice came and said,' (ChA. Duhok, Text 9: *The Bridge of Dalale*, §3)

In NENA dialects where indefinite objects are generally postverbal, preverbal position, i.e. OV, is an optional stylistic variant of definite object placement. In the example below, for instance, the object *xanjart ʾaqərwa* 'the dagger of the scorpion' is placed before the verb *gəm-garəšle*, which takes the L-suffix *-le* and indexes the object. Fronting as such serves to provide event cohesion with the preceding and draws attention to the fronted object.

(9) *ham ʾawa gəm-mapə̀qle xanjar diye.| malka gəm-yawəlle ṭàleḥ,| ʾu **xanjart ʾaqərwa** gəm-garə̀šle.| ʾaqərwa npəlla tàma məθta.|*
     So he drew his dagger. The king gave it to him and he pulled off **the dagger of the scorpion**. The scorpion fell down dead right there. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §216)

There is a far stronger tendency for OV word order in the Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect of Shaqlawa (NE Iraq), however, which converges with the word order in the local Kurdish variety. Even discourse-new arguments, such as indefinite objects and

newly introduced protagonists in the story, will tend to be placed before the predicate, e.g.

(10) *m-xúška qădamta qə̀mle.*ˈ **xa karta** *wədwale qàtu.*ˈ *ṭlaha qupyàta=w*ˈ **xa ʾawa=š qa de baxta xṣùṣi** *wədwale.*ˈ

He woke up early next morning. He made **a load of baskets** for himself. He made **three baskets and a special mat for the woman**. (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 5: *Zambilfrosh by W. Toma*, §18)

7.2. Verbal Syntax

7.2.1. The Narrative Function of Verb forms

As will be seen in this section, the following table shows the convergence between NENA and Kurdish in the functions the verb forms express. The 3sg. form of the verb 'to go' in Kurdish and the verb 'to take' in NENA has been given for ease of comparison:

Table 11. Main discourse functions of verbal forms in Kurdish and NENA

	NK	CK	NENA	Function
Present	*ət-čə-t*	*a-čē-t*	*k-šaqəl* or *y-šaqəl*	Narrative present
Past Perfective	*čū*	*čū*	*šqəlle*	Narrative past
			qam-šaqəlle	Transitive narrative past (NENA only)
Present Perfect	*čūy*	*čū-a*	*šqíla=yle*	Evidential (Kurdish only); Anterior
Imperative	*hař-a*	*bə-řo*	*šqūl*	Narrative imperative (NENA only)

7.2.2. Narrative Present

Narrative (or historical) present is the use of present tense forms to refer to past events. It is a common device in oral narratives, and its use is linked with making past events vivid and increasing the dramatic impact of the story (Schiffrin 1981). The narrative present has the same referential function in Kurdish and Aramaic narratives. In so doing, it can alternate with the past tense, mainly to foreground special events with respect to other events. In the following example from Neo-Aramaic, for instance, a surprise triggers the use of present tense forms:

(11) *nxə̀tle ʾəl darta.*⌐ *ʾila xàze*⌐ *darga bằra;*⌐ ***hole kəlya*** *qam-tằra,*⌐
      yaʿni ḥàrəs.⌐ ***hole kəlya=w*** *hole ṭwì ʾa.*⌐
      He went down into the garden. Look! He **saw** (lit. he sees) a front door; he **was** (lit. is) **standing** at the gate, I mean, a guard. He **was** (lit. is) **standing** though asleep. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters*, §122)

In the Kurdish excerpt below, the narrative present expresses new information. In other words, it foregrounds the events expressed earlier by the narrative past:

(12) *Mīrzằ Məhamadī šīr=ū matāḷēt xo **īnān=a darē.**⌐ o əš … pičakē
      š wān **dɨ̀r kat=o** lə wārā har **hằt=o čo.**⌐ **dīt** du sề sīyārakē t-
      ēn=o.⌐ yē b-sar **t-ền.**⌐*
      Mirza Muhammad **took out** his sword and shield. He **went some distance** from them and kept walking around (lit. He **came** and **went**) there. He **saw** that two or three riders

came (lit. come). They **came** (lit. come) to him. (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures,* §17-18)

In NENA, the indicative present form, i.e. *k-šaqəl* or *y-šaqəl*, and occasionally also the unmarked form, i.e. *šaqəl*, can be used instead of the past perfective, i.e. *šqəlle* and *qam-šaqəlle*, to express the narrative past (Khan 2009, 171–172). This is especially common with the reporting or narrative verb 'to say', e.g. *ʾamər, k-imər* or *y-amər* for 'he said', where generally the form that would express the imperfective present in conversational speech is used in the narrative to denote a punctual event completed in the past.

Likewise, the narrative present in Kurdish is common with reporting and narrative verbs. The use of the narrative present is excluded from subordinate clauses, which typically express background events.

7.2.3. Narrative Imperative

The so-called Narrative Imperative is only attested in the NENA texts of the present collection. The narrator, as it were, commands the character in the story and typically adopts this technique with verbs of motion (Khan 2009, 172).[28] This notwithstanding, verbs of motion are also the more frequent ones to occur in the imperative in general.

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[28] The narrative imperative also occurs in Arabic folktales, e.g. Talmon (2001, 224–225).

(13) *psèle⸾ psù,⸾ psù,⸾ psù,⸾ psù,⸾ psù,⸾ psù!⸾*

He went off. Off you go and on and on and on! (ChA. Shaqlawa, Text 4: *Zambilfrosh by A. Sher,* §20)

7.2.4. Evidentiality

In the Kurdish dialect of Shaqlawa, the perfect can also express a habitual situation in the past which the speaker knows about through hearsay, i.e. the speaker has not witnessed the event themselves, for example:

(14) *aw jā xarkakà **dā-nīštī⸗na**.⸾ šaw⸗īš dəřə̀ž **būa**.⸾ ba tāybatī šaw-ē hāwĭn-ằn.⸾ **dā-nīštī⸗na** hatā dawrī saˤầt da⸗ū yāzday.⸾ la īš⸗ū kārī **hātī⸗na-wabàw**⸾ aw jā sawzà⸗w mĭwà⸗w masalan⸾ qaysī⸗ū məšməša⸗w aw xwārnằnay ka **ha-būa**.⸾ **dằ⸗yān-nāy-aw** haqāyat⸗yān **gēřāy⸗n-awa**⸾ hatā **řoyĭštì⸗ya**.⸾*

Back then, people **would sit together**. The nights **were** long. They **would sit around**, especially during summer nights until 10 p.m., 11 p.m. People **would come back** home from their daily work. It **was** the custom that vegetables and fruit, such as dried apricot, apricot, and such **would be put** in front of the guests while they **would narrate** the tales until they **would leave** the party. (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 19: *A Ewe and a Wolf,* §6)

This evidential function of the perfect is also attested in NENA (Khan 2012, 2020) and other languages in the region such as Turkish, Persian and West Armenian (e.g. Lazrad 1999).

7.2.5. Repetition of Motion Verbs

Individual motion verbs can be repeated to indicate that the action denoted by the verb reiterated or continued for some time.

(15)   *ga ʾərta **zəle꞊w zəle꞊w zəle꞊w**, qam-šawə̀ra ga ʾərta xandaq.*|
Once more he **kept going** (lit. he went and went and went) and then he jumped over the trench again (ChA. Harmashe, Text 33: *Mirza*, §14)

(16)   *ū **hāt꞊ū hāt꞊ū** mantaqa hatā hātī kalhā šà̄bānīyē.*|
He **kept coming** (lit. he came and he came) until he arrived at the gate of the Shabani citadel. (NK. Khizava, Text 7: *Zanbilfirosh—The Basket Seller,* §16)

The following examples with the repetition of the motion verb have the same durative function.

(17)   *dì̀v dā čītən bərāyē wē.*| ***dīv dā ṭ-čī, dīv dā ṭ-čī, dīv dā ṭ-čī,** barē xo dat꞊ē p̂īražə̀nàk̠ ā lə wērē.*|
Her brother followed her. He **kept following her** all the way and noticed that an old woman was there. (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Evil Stepmother and the Old Witch*, §70–71)

(18)   *aw p̂īražə̀na čū꞊a žorē,*| ***har dar-nà-hāt**| **har dar-nà-hāt.**| zor꞊ī pē čù̠.*|
'The old woman went inside. **She did not come out of the house for a while** (lit. She did not come out; she did not come out.) (CK. Shaqlawa, Text 38: *The Foul-Mouthed Priest*, §8)

7.2.6. Negation of the Predicate

Both Neo-Aramaic and Kurdish make use of a construction that conjoins an affirmative and negative polarity of the same predicate, literally meaning 'he did and did not do X'. The context in which this idiom is generally used is that of a failed attempt or uncertain outcome.[29]

In Kurdish this idiom indicates incomplete action equivalent to English *not yet*, as in the following case:

(19) ***nānē xo ḳar ḳə̀r ḳar na-ḳar***| *sībaràḳ꞊ā gala galak꞊ā ṃazən p̂əž dīyār ḳər*|

She had not completely cut the bread into pieces yet (lit. **she cut her bread into pieces; she did not cut her bread into pieces**), when a very big shadow appeared from behind. (NK. Duhok, Text 17: *A Woman and a Leopard*, §8)

In NENA, the same idiom expresses an indefinite series of events without delivering the desired results,[30] for example:

(20) ***mà θele*| *ʾu là θele*| *là wədla b-xabreḥ.*|

Whatever happened (lit. **what came and did not come**), she did not listen to him. (ChA. Duhok, Text 32: *Mirza Muhammad and the Forty Monsters,* §72)

This feature also occurs in narratives recorded in the Neo-Aramaic dialects of Ṭur ʿAbdin (e.g. Jastrow and Talay 2019, 24).

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[29] This syntagm also occurs in Arabic where it expresses dilemma (Talmon 2001, 222).

[30] This function of a similar construction is a typical trait of the languages of the Balkans (Joseph 1992).

7.2.7. Modal Particle *de*

Both Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic can use the particle *dā, da, de* or *də* to intensify an imperative verb, for example:

(21) *b-kèpux,|* ***də sì!***
      As you wish, go **then**! (ChA. Duhok, Text 18: *A Dog, a Ewe and a Wolf*, §5)

(22) ***dā̀*** *řā-bīn žə vē rē bə-čīn!|*
      Let us rise and leave this place! (NK. Duhok, Text 34: *Mirza Muhammad's Adventures*, §30)

8.0. Notes on Storytelling Techniques[31]

8.1. Repetition as Storytelling

Thus far we have observed that recapitulation is both a stylistic device and a discourse strategy. Repetition can also be a storytelling technique, for instance to create a pattern within the tale, as in a repetitive tale like the *The Three Little Pigs*. Consider for instance the Mirza story in the Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect of Harmashe (Text 33). Once upon a time there were three princes and three princesses. This already establishes a base for the pattern that the narrator will develop in his short tale. Mirza, the youngest of the princes, claims the three princesses for himself and his brothers by meeting the challenge set forth by their father, the king. The overall plot of the story is thus based on the reiteration of the same event for each princess, with only slight variation, such as the colour of Mirza Muhammad's horse (black,

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[31] On thematic patterning, see Molin, Chapter 2, this volume.

white, red) and the fact that Mirza, the youngest brother, gets to marry the youngest princess.

Repetition, however, can also serve to designate objects or characters which appear insignificant when first mentioned but reappear frequently and or intrude suddenly in the narrative (Pinault 1992: 16). To illustrate, in the Kurdish Mirza tale (Text 34), Gulizar, Mirza Muhammad's wife, has beautiful golden hair. The old woman who hosts Mirza Muhammad's family, advices Gulizar to tie her hair strands, which fall out while taking a bath in the river, to a stick. The recurring statements about her hair create a background for its later significance in the tale, where the rain washes away Gulizar's hair strands to a lake in a neighbouring region, and the hair strands make the lake golden. Upon seeing the golden hair strands, the sultan of that region orders the owner of the hair to be found in order to marry her to his son. This triggers later events in the narrative, including the sultan's men attacking the old woman's castle, Gulizar's abduction by sultan's men, Mirza Muhammad's bid to bring back his wife, who has been married to the sultan's son, etc.

Another example comes from the Mirza epic narrated in the Christian Neo-Aramaic dialect of Duhok (Text 32). Every time Mirza killed a monster, he took their ears and put them in his pocket. At first, this recurring event seems random and insignificant, but later it turns out that this is the one piece of evidence he could show to the king as well as his brothers to prove that he was the one who had killed them and saved everyone.

The principle of *Leitworstil*, i.e. intentional repetition of a core word or word root key to unlock the meaning of the story,

which has been applied in Biblical studies, can also be applied to other narratives such as *The Arabian Nights* (Pinault 1992: 18). By extension, the principle of *Leitsätze* involves the repetition of entire phrases, clauses or sentences for a similar purpose (Pinault ibid. 21). In introducing the Mirza story, the narrator announces he will tell a story from the time when people used to be *mar ğirətta*,[32] where *mar* goes back to the construct state of the Aramaic word *mare* 'master, owner' and *ğirətta* to Arabic غيرة *ğayra* from the root *ğyr* 'to be jealous'. The phrase *mar ğirətta* can be rendered as 'possessor of zeal', which captures the hero prototype. The hero is brave, virtuous, fearless, and devoted to the cause. The phrase *mar ğirətta* recurs with respect to Mirza and provides the rationale for his actions. He is not simply a hero who is powerful and clever enough to overcome all challenges, but he also acts with dignity. For instance, carrying out his father's last wishes was a matter of honour. When it was his turn to keep watch, there was no more fire and he could not get the fire started again. He was afraid to wake his brothers and asked them for help, as this would make him, the youngest, come across as the weakling. At the same time, when he wanted to take the fire from the monsters' cave, his dignity did not allow him to steal the fire stealthily, since stealing is wrong. He also did not want to leave the old woman, the goddess Time, tied up, but intended to untie her as soon as he got the fire, as this would not be honourable etc. etc. His heroic qualities are a recurring theme and the repetition of the word *ğirətta* thus epitomises this.

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[32] The cultural significance of this term was pointed out to me by Lourd Hanna.

8.2. Dramatic Visualisation

Dramatic visualisation is one of the devices used in folktales through which an object or a character is described in detail in order to make the scene 'visual' and tangible to the audience (cf. Pinault 1992, 25–29), for example:

(1)   *barē xo dat=ȅ.| barē xo dat=ē čə̀ t̠-bīnītən?| p̂ɨražə̀nàk̠=a.| pəštā*
      wē yā xȁr.| dəfnā wē yā mażə̀n.| xəzēmak̠ ət dəfnā wē dȁ=ya,|
      kū həndī təblak̠ā mərūvȉ tēdā=ya.| həndī təblakā mərovī yā va-
      k̠ərȉ=ya xəzēm.| ū gala galak yā k̠ərȅt=a.| yā zaʕȉf=a.| nūkēt wē
      dərȅž=ən.|

      She looked around. She looked around; what did she see? There was an old woman there. She was a hunchback. Her nose was big. A nose-ring was on her nose, on which there were some human fingers. The nose-ring was the size of a human finger. She was very ugly. She was very thin. Her fingernails were long. (NK. Duhok, Text 30: *The Girl, her Evil Stepmother and the Old Witch*, §51)

9.0. Conclusion

In this chapter we have presented an overview of the common features of the oral narrative style found in the texts in this collection, the main ones listed in Table 12. below. Our primary aim has been to show that this collection of Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic narratives proves a fruitful starting point for further investigation of the convergence between the languages not only in terms of shared linguistic structures, but also in terms of common traits of oral narratives, including stylistic devices, discourse strategies and storytelling techniques. Some of these features we have seen

are common to many other communities in the world, such as the opening formulas, some of which are paralleled by introductory formulas in the Balkans, the Caucasus and beyond. A number of features, such as repetition, the use of fillers and sound symbolism can be considered typical of oral narratives in general. Tail-head linkage—for instance, an areal pragmatic feature of New Guinea (de Vries 2005)—may be a more common trait of oral literature throughout the world, e.g. it is also found in Amazonian languages (Guillaume 2011). Other features tend to group Kurdish and Neo-Aramaic with immediately neighbouring languages such as Arabic, Azeri and Armenian. Some of these are typical of Semitic oral traditions, such as the use of the verb 'to rise' in discourse linkage, which spread into the Kurdish narrative style. Many fillers, idioms and phrases ultimately come from Arabic. The concluding formula involving the three apples is a typical trait of Iraqi Arabic narratives, but also occurs in Kurdish, Aramaic, Azeri and Armenian.

Table 12. Overview of some shared narrative hallmarks

	Feature	Section
Formulas	There was there was not	§1.1.1.
	There was none greater than God	§1.1.4.
	Impersonal use of 'to say'	§1.1.5.
	Blessing of parents	§1.1.6.
	It is finished	§1.2.1.
	I came back from there	§1.2.2.
	They gave me nothing	§1.2.2.
	They gave me three apples	§1.2.2.
Repetition	Recapitulation and tail-head linkage	§2.4.
	Repetition and inversion	§7.1.
	Repeated motion	§7.2.5.
Sound symbolism	Reduplication in onomato-poeia	§4.1.5
	m-Reduplication	§4.1.5
Discourse markers	The verb 'to rise'	§2.1.
	Additive particles *ži* and *=š*	§2.2.
	ʾe / a 'yes'	§3.2.
	yaʿni 'it means'	§3.2.
	waḷḷā 'by God'	§3.2.
Verbal syntax	Narrative Present	§7.2.2.
	Narrative Imperative	§7.2.4.
	Modal particle *de/ dā*	§7.2.7.
	V not-V	§7.2.6.
	Evidentiality	§7.2.4.