

A New Attempt at Reconstructing Proto-Aramaic. I

Sergey Loesov

Russian State University for the Humanities, Moscow

0. Introduction: Non-Trivial Common Drifts

This study is an attempt of internal reconstruction of Proto-Aramaic.¹ It is meant as a prolegomenon to a future historical grammar of Aramaic and is based on two assumptions to be made plausible in what follows:

Proto-Eastern Aramaic (= PEA) left the Common Aramaic fold around 1000 B. C., producing the first known dialectal split in the history of Aramaic.²

¹ I thank Maria Bulakh, Claudia Ciancaglini, Eran Cohen, and Stephen Kaufman who have read an earlier version of this paper and pointed out to me numerous errors. I am also grateful to Otto Jastrow for discussing with me numerous questions of Aramaic philology.

I have to define the epochs (or periods) of Aramaic presupposed in this paper. From the point of view of this study, “Old Aramaic” ends with the emergence of those spoken Aramaic varieties that, with time, would become the vernacular foundations of the six “Middle Aramaic” literary idioms. Spoken “Middle Aramaic” ends with the appearance of a distinctly “neo-Aramaic” speech type. Linguistic features that justify this division will be discussed in the continuation of this study. No reliable absolute dating is now possible. Impressionistically, “neo-Aramaic” may turn out to have been the longest period in the documented history of Aramaic, while the classical “Middle Aramaic,” in reality, may have been (at least in the Eastern branch) a comparatively short transition period between the “Old” and the “New” epochs of the language.

Abbreviations of languages and corpora: BA = Biblical Aramaic; CPA = Christian Palestinian Aramaic; EA = Eastern Aramaic; ENA = Eastern Neo-Aramaic; IA = Imperial Aramaic; JBA = Jewish Babylonian Aramaic; MEA = Middle Eastern Aramaic; MWA = Middle Western Aramaic; NENA = North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic; PA = Proto-Aramaic; PEA = Proto-Eastern Aramaic; SA = Samaritan Aramaic; WA = Western Aramaic; WNA = Western Neo-Aramaic.

² This is to say that we have to part ways with the *communis opinio* of English-speaking scholarship reflected e. g. in the words of F. Rosenthal (1978:85), “all the later Aramaic dialects can be shown to go back basically to Official Aramaic,” or of J. Huehnergard (1995:274), “official Aramaic essentially wipes the preceding Aramaic slate clean.”

Aramaic languages in their entirety (= both the Western and the Eastern branch) have been experiencing non-trivial “common drift” not immediately anchored in Proto-Aramaic, i. e., this drift has not been building materially on *developments that may have been underway already in Proto-Aramaic*.³ The drift **speed** of Eastern Aramaic (= EA) has been higher than that of Western Aramaic (= WA), while the drift **direction** has always been the same for both branches. A future historical grammar of Aramaic has to explain the directions of changes (in so far as they are not typologically trivial) and the different development speeds in the two branches.

By way of introduction, let us now consider a few examples of what I believe to be “non-trivial common drifts” in the history of Aramaic, and perhaps their relevance to the reconstruction of Proto-Aramaic.

0.1. Resultative does its best to be morphologically sensitive to transitivity

Most of the modern ENA languages (Turoyo/Mlahsô and NENA, but not Neo-Mandaic), at a certain stage of their lives, had developed two morphological shapes of RESULTATIVE/PERFECT that later shifted to PRETERIT:

- (1) {pass. part. *qîl* + *l* + pers. possess. pron. as agent index} for transitive verbs:
nšiqāli ‘I [have] kissed her’; *nšiqāli* ‘I [have] kissed them’
- (2) {*qattil* part. + pers. subj. pron.} for intransitive verbs:
dammixnā ‘I_{masc.} [have] slept.’⁴

³ I use the term “common drift” roughly in the Sapirian sense, but perhaps not quite so, because Sapir has no stringent definition of this suggestive concept. Sapir says, in particular, “The momentum of the more fundamental, the pre-dialectic, drift is often such that languages long disconnected will pass through the same or strikingly similar phases. In many such cases it is perfectly clear that there could have been no dialectic interinfluencing” (Sapir 1921:172). For the purposes of my study, a *common drift* is neither a purely “typological” phenomenon (like disappearance of case endings in languages belonging to different linguistic families) nor *exclusively shared innovations* of the Stammbau genealogical classification. It is not simply an *independent parallel development* (i. e., shared by certain languages of a given genealogical subgroup) either, because this latter can be typologically trivial as well. My informal idea is that the pan-Aramaic drift to be discussed has to do with certain features of Proto-Aramaic. I hope this will become clearer as we proceed.

⁴ See Hopkins 1989 and the criticism of Goldenberg 1998:662, fn. 63. Cf. also Khan 2008a:106: “Vestiges of the original system in which the ergative inflection is restricted to transitive verbs has survived in a few Jewish dialects on the eastern

Given this evidence, one may want to know if there existed a feature in the immediate parent language of Turoyo/Mlahsô and NENA (i. e., in PEA, one of the two firstborns of PA) that is responsible for this development. And how did it come about that Mandaic escaped the common lot and preserved the PEA Preterit **qatal*? It may well be that such a feature did exist in PEA in an incipient way, given that periphrases of type (1) are well attested in all three middle EA literary corpora, including Mandaic (Nöldeke 2005:381ff. with references to JBA; Nöldeke 1966:210; Bar-Asher Siegal 2011).

By contrast, we do not know much about the *qṭl l-* periphrasis in the Middle Western Aramaic (= MWA) literary corpora. According to Kutschler 1969:137, it did not exist at all. In the first millennium B. C. North-West Semitic, *qatūl l-/qatīl l-* is attested as an “ergative” (= not-already-quite-passive) periphrasis that could sometimes be formed at will.⁵ Be this as it may, Western Neo-Aramaic (= WNA) has not developed the *l-* preterit, yet, most amazingly, it does have RESULTATIVE/PERFECT finite forms that are morphologically sensitive to the value of transitivity (Arnold 1990:76):

{*pers. subj. pron. + **qṭl*} for transitive verbs:
nīḥen 'I_{masc.} have ground/milled.'

{*pers. subj. pron. + **qattīl*} for intransitive verbs:
maḥḥeč 'I_{masc.} have descended/gone down.'

periphery of the NENA area (e. g. J. Sulemaniyya, J. Kerend and J. Sanandaj),” with references to earlier literature.

Thus **qattīl* may have been the productive resultative adjective formed for most intransitive roots in the whole of Middle Aramaic at a certain stage of its history, with the result that *dammīx-nā* appeared as a past-time form in the parent languages of Turoyo and of all of NENA, as well as in WNA (in the latter, with the proposed personal index, *n-dammīx*).

⁵ A BH example of a freely formed expression of this kind is *ʾiššā ʾāšūrā lānū* ‘the woman is closed for us’, i. e., ‘we have not been having sex’ (1 S 21:6); a formulaic example from BH is *berūkā ʾat l-yhwḥ bittī* ‘the LORD bless you, my daughter’ (Ruth 3:10, and often in BH). Cf. similar optative/injunctive formulas in IA: *brk PN l-ʾsry* ‘May Osiris bless PN’ (TAD D22.13); *ydyʿ yhwḥ lk* ‘let it be known to you’ (TAD A6.10:3), and see Muraoka–Porten 2003:202f. for more examples (all the grammatical interpretations in Muraoka–Porten 2003:202f. are different from mine). Odeberg 1939 II 103 offers an example from Galilean Aramaic (TY, Šqalim III₂ 11b), *ʾwlpny škyḥ ly* ‘I have forgotten what I have learned,’ but the context of the story shows that his translation is wrong (and cf. DJPA 550a ‘my learning is within me’, *škyḥ* being an adj. ‘frequent, at hand’).

The source of agreement in both cases is the grammatical subject only (there is no object agreement), the personal prefixes are etymologically “in the nominative,” the verb forms are inflected for gender and number via suffixes, but the bases are different depending on the value of transitivity.

Now, the split ergativity picture in Turoyo (identical to an earlier phase of all or most of NENA) could have emerged (and most probably did emerge) so to speak “of itself.” When the EA languages (with the exception of Mandaic)⁶ started working on an **active resultative** finite form, the natural point of departure for **intransitive** verbs was *qattīl*, because in MEA *qattīl* of dynamic intransitives tended to be resultative (*nappīq* ‘he has gone out’ as against *nāfeq* ‘he is going out/he will go out’). Thus, if one wants to understand the history of the Aramaic verb, one has to figure out if (and to what degree) *qattīl* was productive and semantically predictable in the spoken varieties of Middle Aramaic. For the moment, there are no relevant data available for any of the six literary languages. What Nöldeke said in 1880 about *qattīl* in his chapter on the nominal word-formation is lapidary but stimulating:

<according to the *qattīl* pattern,> “sind sehr viele Adjectiva gebildet, namentlich solche, welche als Verbaladjectiva, resp. **Part. perf. neben intransitiven Verben stehn** (zum Theil wohl **ziemlich junge Bildungen**)” (1966:71, boldface added).

Despite the “Part. perf.” label that invites one to include *qattīl* into the “system” of the Syriac verb, Nöldeke does not legalize *qattīl* in his Syntax: he limits his account of the regular predicative functions of verbal adjectives to the uses of *qātel* and *qīl* (§§ 269–280). Given the deplorable state of Classical Syriac philology (both grammar and lexicography, especially the non-availability of morphologically tagged corpora), my tentative exegesis of the above Nöldeke’s words in the context of his *Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik* is as follows: *qattīl* of intransitives is appreciably less frequent than their *qātel*, while *qattīl* is more prominent in the late part of the corpus (“ziemlich junge Bildungen”) than before the Arab conquest.

In the meantime, let me adduce a few illustrative Syriac examples that square well with our evidence on the Neo-Aramaic reflexes of *qattīl*. The

⁶ All of ENA save for Mandaic are/were located in what is now Kurdistan. This isogloss would be the only attractive argument *pro* the Iranian influence on the emergence of the *l*-preterit. Yet, for various reasons, this idea is hardly viable (Pennacchietti 1988). It emerges time and again in contemporary scholarship (see e. g. Khan 2008a:105f.), yet it is usually formulated in general terms as something self-evident (or already proven) and with no detailed argumentation.

examples are from the NT Pešitta, an admittedly early text⁷ with reliable vocalization. An important additional advantage is that we have at our disposal the Greek original, while the NT Pešitta is known to be a not-slavish translation that strives to be reasonably faithful to the sense rather than to the letter of the Greek text.⁸ Whether this selected evidence reflects a trend current in the spoken Edessan Aramaic around 300 A. D., we do not yet know. Consider the examples:

ʿbd ‘to perish’

qātel: paṣṣān ʿābdīn^b-nan

‘Rescue us! **We are perishing**’ (Mt 8:25, the Present Actual).

qattil: ʿetā gēr brēh d-ʿnāšā d-naḥḥē meddem da-ʿbbīd^b-wā

‘For the Son of Man came to restore to life those who **had perished**’ (Mt 18:11, the Resultative).

npq ‘to go out’

qātel: kaḏ nāp̄qitton men baytā

‘When **you are going forth out** of the house’ (Mt 10:14).

qattil: w-ʿezzāṭ l-baytāh w-ʿeškḥaṭ bartāh kaḏ ramyā b-sarsā w-nāp̄piq mennāh šē^ʿḏāh

‘And she went back home, and found her daughter lying in bed, and her demon **had gone out** from her’ (Mk 7:30).

As for dynamic transitives, the only deverbal adjective they could rely upon in the whole of EA for creating RESULTATIVE was the passive *qtīl* (as is well-known, its aspectual meaning was resultative).⁹ So, if these verbs needed to get an **active** RESULTATIVE, the language had to provide, within the new construction, a secure slot for the pronominal agent (in the

⁷ I. e., it was created in the epoch when the literary Syriac was still quite close to its vernacular basis, the Aramaic dialect spoken in Edessa in the early centuries A. D.

⁸ I thank my doctoral student Evgeny Barsky for allowing me to use these and other examples of Syriac deverbal adjectives from his dissertation in progress.

⁹ As follows from the above, the distribution of productive deverbal adjectives (= “participles”) *qātil*, *qattil* and *qtīl* depending on the root meaning has not yet been seriously studied even for Syriac, to say nothing about other middle Aramaic corpora. Obviously, this distribution has to be understood in detail first if we are to really follow the development of the Aramaic verb from the Middle to the New period. Goldenberg 1998:611 says that “no active *qtīl* forms can ever be derived in Syriac from intransitive verbs.” What is for Goldenberg “active *qtīl*” as far as *intransitive* verbs go, is not quite clear from his article (his suggestion to define certain adjectives in terms of “reference directly to the act itself” rather than to its participants is not really convincing). Note that intransitive (only unaccusative?) verbs do sometimes form *qtīl* adjectives: *d-men tešbuḥtā lā zīʿīn kaḏ mēgadpīn* ‘those who **are not afraid** of the Glory while they are blaspheming’ (2 Pet 2:10; *zaw* is ‘to move,’ ‘to tremble,’ ‘to be afraid,’; SL 364a).

oblique case), and then the language was supposed to reinterpret as soon as possible the “*qtīl l- + pronominal agent*” construction as a pragmatically non-passive predication, with the consequence that the split-ergativity picture would emerge out of a formally passive construction in a most natural way, “of itself,” only to switch to the accusative syntax as soon as possible.¹⁰

So far, so good. Yet what had come to pass between MWA and WNA is more difficult to interpret historically. The standard grammar of CPA, Müller-Kessler 1991, does not mention *qattīl* as a productive deverbal pattern at all. There is an obvious orthographic difficulty, since CPA has no means of rendering the gemination *-tt-* in *qattīl*, in particular no diacritic signs useful for this end. Yet the real hindrance is that Müller-Kessler 1991 has no syntax. We know for sure that the resultative *qattīl* was productive in the immediate Middle Aramaic ancestor of WNA, as well as in that of Turoyo, so it would have made sense to look for **qattīl* in CPA with the help of syntactic criteria, yet this did not happen. Another difficulty is Müller-Kessler’s phonological solution (probably inspired by her mentor R. Macuch): she has, as a result of stress retraction to the penult syllable, PA **qatl*, **qatal*, **qatil*, **qatīl* and **qātīl* shifted to *qātel*, while her **qattīl* shifted to *qāttīl*, with the outcome that the six morphological patterns are supposed to coincide orthographically in the extant corpus of CPA. In practice, Müller-Kessler allots the relevant orthographic tokens to this or that among the six etymological shapes randomly, i. e. she lets herself to be guided by intuitive semantic ideas; nowhere in the Grammar does she formulate them. Müller-Kessler’s CPA does not participate in the trivial Aramaic drift; e. g., it has no short vowel syncope (see Beyer 1995 for a detailed discussion). It does not reveal certain diagnostic features typologically anticipating WNA and leading to it. This means that we are probably in need of a new grammatical treatment of CPA in a historical perspective, a study that would supplement the achievement of Müller-Kessler.¹¹

In the meantime, we have to state that WA, whose verb in its main features is today similar to the EA verb of the mid-first millennium A. D.,¹²

¹⁰ A part of this diachronic path of historical Aramaic follows the common-sense prediction of Estival–Myhill 1988:441, “ergative constructions develop diachronically from passive constructions. This development ... consists in the pragmatic, syntactic, and morphological verbalization of a deverbal form.”

¹¹ It is understood that the spoken basis of CPA is probably not a direct ancestor of the WNA we know. Yet it is hard to believe that **qattīl*, so important for the WNA verb, had no say whatsoever in the grammar of CPA.

¹² In particular, in WNA the prefixing conjugation (i. e., the reflex of the PA **yaqtulu*) is JUSSIVE-SUBJUNCTIVE only. Same is partly true of MEA, where the pre-

at a certain point also felt that it was impossible to make do with **qatal* as the shared exponent of SIMPLE PAST, PERFECT, RESULTATIVE, etc., and set on creating a special deadjectival resultative form. This move is in itself trivial, it is a standard way to renew the past-time domain. The non-trivial common drift that requires an explanation is the fact that the new WA resultative is sensitive to the transitivity semantics of the root in the same way as the EA one is, though Middle WA missed the opportunity to develop the *qtīl lī* construction.

Correll 1978:75ff. tries to reduce the situation in Proto-Western Neo-Aramaic to the MEA one: *qtīl lī* = ‘mir ist getötet’ > ‘ich habe getötet’ = *anā qtīl* (p. 77). This putative WA replacement of *qtīl lī* with *anā qtīl*, i. e. a **paradigmatic levelling in favour of intransitive inflectional affixes** (the *nnahheč* type) is improbable, and this is for two reasons:

1) The transitive verb is a more prototypical member of the part of speech “verb” than the intransitive verb, so *qtīl lī* > *anā qtīl* replacement is not likely;

2) In accord with thesis (1), all individual NENA languages had experienced the opposite direction of replacement (or levelling): *qayyimmā* > *qīmlī* ‘I have stood up,’ with both the stem and inflection of the intransitive resultative adjusting to the transitive pattern (see Khan 2007 and Khan 2008a with references to earlier studies).¹³

D. Cohen 1979:238f. and 1984:491–499 provides a more sophisticated hypothesis. He suggests that the starting point of the development were the famous low-transitivity two-place verbs (in Middle WA?) whose *qtīl* could be used with the active value. His example is X *drīk* l-Y ‘X a suivi Y’ (Cohen 1979:239). In the course of time, **all lexical constraints on the active diathetic reading were lifted**, and as a result the $*R_1R_2\bar{R}_3$ base of transitives is now used to form the resultative/perfect for both diathetic values, e. g. *nešzem* ($\sqrt{\text{šzm}}$) ‘I have invited’ and ‘I have been invited’ (Cohen 1984:493), the distinction being the matter of syntax and semantics only. Consider an example of a high-transitivity root with the active diathetic reading of **qtīl*: *qšīma baṭṭixča* ‘sie hatte eine Melone zerteilt’ (Arnold 1999:4).

Typologically, a partial parallel to Cohen’s scenario is provided by the functions of the Akkadian “Stative” *paris* (a resultative verb form with a

fixing conjugation is used both as FUTURE and JUSSIVE-SUBJUNCTIVE, while the active predicative participles with future-time readings are also very common.

¹³ Although the *qayyimmā* “absolutive” type is only marginally attested in today’s NENA, there is hardly any doubt about the validity of this scenario.

transparent deadjectival etymology) in the early second millennium B. C.: the Stative of transitive verbs used to have either active or passive readings depending on the root meaning. There are two major differences between the resultative verb forms in Akkadian and WNA, however: 1) the Resultative in WNA has two base shapes in the G-stem (**qattīl* and *qtīl*), depending on the value of transitivity, while Akkadian has only one; 2) according to D. Cohen, in WNA, the inflected base **R₁R₂ṛR₃* is fully productive and can freely get both active and passive resultative readings,¹⁴ while for Akkadian transitive verbs the formation and the diathetic readings of *paris* (active or passive) are subject to severe lexical restrictions (Loesov 2011).

To make this solution really cogent, D. Cohen would have to explain **how** it had come to pass that in this case Marcel Cohen's *déponents internes* generalized for all transitive verbs and carried the day. Yet there seems to be **no explanation**, no more so than in the case of Correll's hypothesis.

Right now, I will not try to explain this remarkable isogloss between ENA and WNA. To explain it means to answer the question, "Why has it been important for Aramaic to create and maintain some kind of morphological distinction between transitive and intransitive verbs in the past-time domain?"¹⁵ For the moment, I am only trying to show the relevance of the "non-trivial common drift" notion for our understanding of the Aramaic linguistic history, and perhaps for the description of PA. E. g., the difference between the Spanish *he ido* and the Italian *sono andato* (m.)/*sono andata* (f.) shows that Spanish gave up the original transitivity-related variation still kept by the more conservative Italian. *Cantar de mio Cid* reveals the earlier Spanish picture, identical to that of today's written Italian: "Los mandados **son ydos** a todas partes; **Hydos son** los caualleros," etc. This tendency of Romance (and of NENA, as mentioned

¹⁴ For the active reading of *qtīl* in the dialect of Maʿlula, see especially Bergsträsser 1983:102. The reference works on WNA (including Correll 1978!) do not describe the expression of diathesis as a subject in its own right (no chapter on "the Voice" or something of the kind), yet the nature of collected examples and certain formulations allow one to believe that in WNA (or at least in Maʿlula, the only WNA dialect described by Bergsträsser and Spitaler) *qtīl* of transitives is productive for both diathetic readings, with no further lexical-semantic restrictions. Spitaler 1938:210 notes that "*qtīl* ist vollkommen lebendig in seiner passivischen Bedeutung"; according to Arnold 1990:76, "Das alte Partizip passiv erfüllt auch im NWA noch seine Funktion"; Arnold 1989:27: "Das Perfekt kann passive Bedeutung ausdrücken, da es historisch aus dem Partizip passiv hervorgegangen ist. In aktiver Bedeutung dient es zum Ausdruck von Vorzeitigkeit ..."

¹⁵ Note that most of NENA, as stated above, happened to lose this distinction.

above) to eliminate meaning-related morphosyntactic distinctions in favour of the transitive type and to switch from the split-ergative to the accusative alignment¹⁶ needs no special explanations, because it is trivial. In our case, on the contrary, both branches of Aramaic managed to create their transitive vs. intransitive distinctions in historical times, after the disintegration of PA. As we have seen, WA and EA have been striving for the same end, but EA started doing so earlier in its life, and it is probably because of this time gap that the two branches availed themselves of somewhat different means.

In view of these data, it is reasonable to ask if PA possessed at least the morphological hardware necessary for this development, i. e. the resultative adjective *qattīl* formed from intransitive verbs, which is a pattern more or less unknown in Akkadian and not really productive in BH. Thus, the data analysed in 0.1 may be relevant for the reconstruction of Proto-Aramaic.

By way of a telling individual example of how verbs' lexical meanings can influence grammar in Aramaic, note the semantically motivated instance of common drift of the (former) resultative form of *šm* 'hear' in WNA and Turoyo: *šamme* (Arnold 1990:76), *šamə* (Jastrow 2002:180).¹⁷ Given that *šmy* is our parade example of the new Aramaic ergative resultative in Imperial Aramaic (Muraoka–Porten 2003:202) and in Syriac (Nöldeke 1966:210), the non-*qtil* forms in WNA and Turoyo are doubtless innovations: for this low-transitivity root (as well as for several similar ones), both languages switched secondarily to the intransitive pattern **qattīl*.

Note that the general outline of our story of two Resultatives resembles the development of New (denominative) Presents in Aramaic. The EA (and probably the Proto-Eastern Aramaic) pattern of the New Present is "**qattīl* + subj. pronoun," cf. the evidence of the three literary MEA idioms and the whole of ENA. This pattern is identical to the order of elements in the Proto-Semitic nominal sentence with personal pronouns as subjects (cf. in particular Andersen 1970 and Huehnergard 1986: in OB, *šarrum anāku* is the natural way of saying 'I am a/the king'). This Pred_{noun}—Subj_{pers. pron.} order had been probably still preserved in PA, and was petrified within the MEA New Present.¹⁸ As it happens most of the time, WA started working

¹⁶ Cf. the Italian *li ho visti*, *le ho viste*, etc., as against the Spanish *les/las ho visto*.

¹⁷ The base of the two forms goes back to *šammī*, this happens fully in accord with the historical phonology of both idioms.

¹⁸ The Pred_{noun}—Subj_{pers. pron.} order is still predominant in Syriac. Otherwise, in the historical Syriac, the organization of nominal clauses is manifold and per-

seriously on its New Present later than EA,¹⁹ and by then the default word order in the WA noun clause was S—P with whatever subject. This is the linear order of constituents within the WA New Present as well.

Consider an example from CPA:

hʔ ʔnʔ mšlh mlʔky qwdm ʔpyk (Mk 1:2, CCPA IIA, p. 76)

as against the Pešitta:

hā mšaddar ʔnā malʔ akʔ qdām parṣōpāk

Both versions are translations of the following text:

ἰδοὺ ἀποστέλλω τὸν ἄγγελόν μου πρὸ προσώπου σου
‘I am sending my messenger ahead of you’ (NRSV).

As a result, now all of Aramaic has **qātil* as the imperfective verb base, with personal affixes at its right in the Eastern subgroup and at its left in the Western subgroup.

The *tertium comparationis* of the two stories is as follows: both the Resultative and the New Present appeared in each of the two subgroups independently, i. e. after the disintegration of PA. They emerged in the course of the common Aramaic drift, i. e. according to the same general plan but with different implementations, and not synchronically.

0.2. Aramaic infinitives and agent nouns

A second instance of the non-trivial common drift of EA and WA (once more with probable implications for our reconstruction of PA) is the shape of the productive action noun for the G-stem. As I will claim in the course of this study, the Proto-Aramaic G-infinitive is **maqtal*,²⁰ it replaced the PS infinitive **qatāl-*. *Maqtal* was inherited by both daughter-languages of Proto-Aramaic, i. e. Proto-WA and Proto-EA. Yet **qatāl*,

haps poorly understood (see van Peursen 2008:244ff. for the research history). It foreshadows the situation in ENA and Goldenberg’s syntactical revolution.

¹⁹ This follows from the fact that WNA has preserved the Prefixing Conjugation as Jussive/subjunctive, while the whole of ENA has no trace of it. Whether Palestinian Arabic adstratum did help conserve the Prefixing Conjugation of WNA, I cannot say now.

²⁰ Most probably, it is not **meqtal* or **miqtal*, as is often assumed, because in Egyptian Aramaic the G-inf. of *ybl* is written *mubl*, that of *yfb* is *mwb*, etc. (Muraoka–Porten 2003:122).

having lost its verbal syntax in favour of *maqtal*,²¹ had been never completely discontinued. This follows from the middle Aramaic evidence and can be plausibly corroborated by the data of the first millennium B. C. Aramaic as well. Consider some of the possible examples from Egyptian Aramaic: *ʾmr* ‘saying,’ *ʾsr* ‘oath,’ *bkw* ‘crying,’ *bky* ‘weeping,’ *ʾll* ‘protection,’ *pgʿ* ‘meeting,’ *qtl* ‘execution,’ *qrb* ‘battle’ (see Muraoka-Porten 2003:77ff.). Biblical Aramaic definitely has several semantically fitting examples, e. g. *zmār* ‘Spiel,’ *tqāḫ* ‘Stärke’ (see Bauer–Leander 1927:187). From the first millennium B. C. onwards, the syntax of this **qatāl* nomen actionis has been invariably nominal, i. e. the semantic object of *qatāl* derived from transitive verbs has been appearing as the dependent in respective noun phrases. The extant corpus of the first millennium B. C. Aramaic is too meagre to justify big claims of any kind, yet it is not to be excluded that in that epoch *qatāl* had been living through a period of temporary decline and search of new identity. One thing is certain: Middle Aramaic had the productive (**qatāl* >) *qātāl* shape for “zahllose Nomina actionis zu den Verben des einfachen Stamms” (Nöldeke 1966:68) at the side of the *meqtal* infinitive that used to be formed quite regularly as well. In Syriac (and, as it seems, in all of the Middle Aramaic) the major difference between the synonymous productive patterns *qātāl* and *meqtal* was the one already mentioned: *l-meqtal l-ḡabrā hānnā* ‘to kill this man’ vs. *qātāl d-ḡabrā hānnā* ‘killing of this man.’ Another difference is the consequence of this “more nominal” nature of *qātāl*: unlike *meqtal*, *qātāl*-nouns tended to develop all kinds of derived meanings. An example is *qyām*-: ‘standing’; ‘stability’; ‘garrison’; ‘covenant’; ‘vow of celibacy’; ‘monkish orders’ (CSD 504a).

With the advent of the Neo-Aramaic epoch, *meqtal* disappeared almost completely from the whole of Aramaic, Western and Eastern alike,²² which is a manifestation of the common drift. As for *qātāl*-, materially (in particular, syntactically) it remains where it used to be since the very beginnings of Aramaic (admittedly, in the second millennium B. C.): it keeps being a productive action noun with nominal rection. Yet functionally, it is now the only productive verbal action noun (or “infinitive”) in the whole of

²¹ I. e., the innovative PA *maqtal* of transitive verbs governed the syntactic accusative of the patient (*l-maqtal ʾiyyāt* PN), exactly as the Akkadian *qatāl*- used to behave when the direct object appeared to its left (*šipram epēšum* ‘to do work’).

²² The few *m*-“infinitives” of Turoyo adduced in Jastrow 2002:135 are not phonologically regular reflexes of the respective Western Syriac infinitives: *mazlo* ‘Gehen’ vs. WS *mīzal*, *matyo* ‘Kommen’ vs. WS *mīlō*, *mamro* ‘Sagen’ vs. WS *mīmar*, *mahwo* ‘Geben’ vs. WS *mettal*, *mūklo* ‘Essen’ vs. WS *mēkal*. I have not found more examples of *m*-forms in Turoyo.

contemporary Aramaic. Consider the examples from Turoyo: *u=dworo dah=heṭe* ‘das Unterpflügen des Weizens’ (Jastrow 2002:84; 10.11.1); *bû-nḥōto d-nāḥat* ‘als er heruntergestiegen war’ (Ritter 1990:641; lit. ‘in the descending with which he descended’).²³

Obviously, the question is if there exists a Proto-Aramaic “DNA” responsible for the short life of the “more verbal” **maqṭal* and survival of the “less verbal” **qatāl* throughout the history of Aramaic. In other words, how do we explain this trans-Aramaic common drift? I will try to answer this question in the course of the study.

We will now sketch, in a preliminary way, a history of Aramaic **agent nouns** derived from the G-stem verbs. The target of this section is a diachronic comparison (≈ “parallel lives”) of **qātīl-*, **qattāl-*, and **qātōl-* as Aramaic agent noun patterns.²⁴

The productive Proto-Semitic agent noun **qātīl-* (= the Active Participle of the traditional grammar) was still widely used in Middle Aramaic in the syntactic slots of substantives. At the advent of the Neo-Aramaic epoch, it was discontinued in the whole of Aramaic as a productive rule for deriving deverbal nouns or adjectives with whatever meanings. In Neo-Aramaic, **qātīl* has been completely verbalized and is now the inflected imperfective base (in ENA, it is Jussive/subjunctive as well).²⁵

Proto-Aramaic had the **qattāl-* pattern inherited ultimately from Proto-Semitic (cf. Bauer–Leander 1927:191 for examples in BA). Whether it was ever productive (= freely derivable from the G-stem agentive verbs) in the first millennium B. C. Aramaic, we do not know for sure, yet I believe that in the whole of ancient Semitic (starting from Proto-Semitic and including Old and Middle Aramaic), **qattāl-* was less frequent and less semantically predictable than **qātīl-* in the latter’s capacity of agent noun.²⁶ In Syriac, **qātīl-* in the construct state is freely used as an agent noun (mostly with dependent substantives, see presently): *dāḥlay šmāk* ‘those who revere your name,’

²³ I keep, with minor simplifications, impressionistic (non-phonological) transcriptions of Ritter and do not “normalize” them according to Jastrow’s phonology of the Midan dialect. This is in particular because the phonology of the town dialect (Midyat) is different from “Jastrow’s,” and it has not been described as yet. *Mundarten* of different villages may possess phonological differences as well.

²⁴ We will see that the story is unexpectedly similar to that of the action noun that can now be epitomized as follows: the innovative PA **maqṭal* had a short life and did not oust the inherited **qatāl* that has survived to the present day.

²⁵ We will deal with the history of **qātīl-* in more detail elsewhere.

²⁶ For the early life of *qattāl/qattāl* (including a comparison of phonological shapes in Akkadian and Hebrew), see Kouwenberg 1997:49–68.

*dāḥlaw*²⁷ ‘those who revere him = his followers, his faithful ones’ (Nöldeke 1966:212), while *qattāl-* is well-attested but probably not productive.²⁷

Let us now briefly mention the Syriac data on *qattāl-*. Nöldeke 1966:70 brings nine illustrative examples of *qattāl-* associated with the G-stem, followed by an “and so on.” He also has five tokens of *qattāl-* associated with the D-stem. Stephen Kaufman kindly created for me, on the basis of the Comprehensive Aramaic Lexicon (= CAL), a list of Syriac substantives and adjectives, of whatever origin, whose bases admittedly have the shape *CaCCāC-*. My doctoral student Maksim Kalinin has analyzed all these data using the available dictionaries and has isolated some seventy-five deverbial agentive nouns (including adjectives, such as e. g. *baṭṭāl-* ‘vain; lazy; idle’).²⁸ None of these has a specifically Christian meaning as its basic gloss, and many of them have parallels in other Middle Aramaic varieties. My zero-approximation hypothesis is that most of these seventy-five or so deverbial *qattāl-*s had been inherited by Syriac from its Old Aramaic parent language rather than freely formed by the speakers of Syriac. In other words, I suspect that Syriac was unable to derive *qattāl-* action nouns from verbal roots anymore. At this stage, a comparative study of all the pertinent Middle Aramaic material will be most helpful.

The etymology of the Middle Aramaic *qātōl-* is obscure. Nöldeke believes it was derived from *qātīl-* (2005:113; 1966:68). In Central Semitic, *qātōl-* is hardly known outside Aramaic²⁹ where it had not been really attested before the Middle Aramaic period (Bauer–Leander 1927:191). It is generally believed that in Syriac the agent noun *qātōl-* can be formed at will of any semantically appropriate verb (Nöldeke 1966:68).³⁰ Nöldeke

²⁷ The semantic description of the pattern in Nöldeke 1966:70 is as follows: “Steigerungsadjectiva, Nomina agentis und Berufsnamen.”

²⁸ Unexpectedly for the present writer, there showed up no less than ten agent nouns derived from Aramaic substantives, e. g. *ḥammārā* ‘donkey driver’ (SL 468, with parallels in JBA and Mandaic).

²⁹ By Semitic standards, a deverbial CVCVC- noun with both long vowels looks weird. The [ō] of *qātōl-* is also unexpected because the only regular source of [ō] in Eastern Syriac is [*aw] in closed syllable (*yōm* ~ *yawmā*).

³⁰ Stephen Kaufman informs me in a p. c. (May 10, 2011): “By contrast, there are currently 265 entries listed (in CAL.—S. L.) as *nomina agentis* of the G stem (i. e. *qātōl*). The only reason that these particular ones should have been listed as opposed to the remaining thousand or so potential ones (i. e. verbs occurring in the G stem in Syriac = 1223) is that they were thought to have special semantic development by earlier lexicographers. In fact not all do so.”

asks the question about distribution of the two productive patterns, *qātōl-* and *qātil-*, and answers it in terms of the surface syntax:

- *qātil-* normally has to have a dependent **substantive** encoding the semantic object, while bound possessive **pronouns** in this slot are rarer and “mehr auf bestimmte Wörter beschränkt” (p. 212).
- *qātōl-* is used elsewhere, i. e. (1) without exponents of the semantic object in respective noun phrases; (2) freely with bound possessive pronouns; (3) with the semantic object introduced via *d-* (p. 212ff.; the same distribution holds for active participles and *nomina agentis* of the derived stems).

Note Nöldeke’s words on p. 212f. that interpret the situation as a complementary distribution of the two (not the three!) nominal patterns, *qātil-* and *qātōl-*: “Für alle die Anwendungen, wo das Part. seltner wird, tritt das *Nomen agentis* ein.”

In Turoyo, an ENA language whose MA parent tongue was quite similar to the Syriac spoken in Edessa around 300 A. D., there remained virtually no deverbals **qātil-* nouns (Jastrow 1993:174f.).³¹ Deverbals **qātōl-* is marginal.³² By contrast, **qattāl-* is productive in its capacity of agent noun, unlike in Syriac and Akkadian. Jastrow 1993:184f. gives a list of some fifty tokens which is not meant to be exhaustive. Consider an example from the town dialect of Midyat with two tokens not listed in Jastrow’s grammar that describes the village dialect of Midən:

hā-mineye zāmōro u dāyōqo d-kamāna-we u galabe mašhūr-we

‘Einer von ihnen war ein Musiker und Geigenspieler und sehr berühmt’ (Ritter 1967:18/105).

³¹ In the dialect of Midən, nominal **qātil-* has to have the shape *qatto*. In Jastrow 1993:174f., the only good example of agentive deverbals **qātil-* is *rəʿyō* ‘shepherd,’ lexicalized probably already in Proto-Semitic. In text samples of the Midyat dialect, I have come across two more examples: *suhdo* ‘witness’ (Ritter 1979:455), probably a cultural loan from Syriac (with Ritter 1979, cf. SL 973), and *fuslo* ‘worker.’

³² Jastrow (1993:188) lists all eleven tokens known to him (= ‘belegt sind’) of *qotulo* of whatever (not only deverbals) origin. In this list, the only genuine agent noun with Aramaic etymology is *noturo* ‘watchman’ (see also Tezel 2003:25). There are a few lexicalized examples of Aramaic provenance, e. g. *noqušo* ‘church bell’ (cf. SL 945: ‘musician’; ‘bell clapper’; ‘sound,’ etc.) and *koruxo* ‘shroud’ (cf. SL 648: ‘band’; ‘weaver’s beam’). Jastrow 1993 brings two agent nouns derived from Turoyo verbs with roots borrowed from Arabic: *šohudo* ‘witness,’ *xodumo* ‘servant.’ In the actual speech activity, **qātōl-* (> *qotulo*) seems to be rare indeed. Thus the informants whose records were included in Jastrow’s Lehrbuch (Jastrow 2002) did not use it a single time, while **qattāl-* (> *qatolo*) is frequent in the glossary of the textbook.

The agent noun *zāmōro* is an old Aramaic word, it is attested in BA (Esr 7:24), while *dāyōqo* is formed of the verb root *dyq* (*doyəq—dəqle*) ‘klopfen (an Tür)’, ‘schlagen’, ‘spielen (Karten u. a.)’, ‘spielen (Musikinstrument)’ that is common in Turoyo (Ritter 1990:573ff.; Jastrow 2002:161 has ‘stampfen’). The Turoyo root *dyq* is the Aramaic adaptation of the Arabic root *dqq* ‘to strike,’ etc. In Anatolian Arabic, *dqq* is ‘anschlagen,’ ‘stampfen,’ ‘berühren, antasten,’ ‘spielen (Musik)’ (Jastrow 2005a:51).³³ To take another example, *ṭaboxo* ‘cook’ (Jastrow 1993:185) is no Arabic loan, it is derived from the regular Turoyo verb *ṭobəx—ṭbaxle* ‘to cook’ (Ritter 1990:68) that was formed of the root borrowed from Arabic.

Moreover, Ritter 1990:57 and Jastrow 2002:142 label **qattāl-* the *participle* of intransitive motion verbs.³⁴ It is small wonder that *azolo* and *atoyo* are used as action nouns ‘the one who goes/comes’ (Ritter 1990:764), but an important *vaticinium ex eventu* for our theme is that **qattāl-* of this group of verbs regularly appears as a predicate, i. e. a progressive verb form (accompanied by a copular element of some kind): this innovation is vividly reminiscent of the Old Aramaic **qātil-* that was both an agent noun and the New Present. Consider a couple of examples:

mälle “*k-obaʿno, d-məblatli ʿam rūḥux, lī-dukto d-izzūx!*” — “*ʿē*” *mälle*
“*ono u-dārbeidi rūḥūqo-yo nāḥōto-no lī-walāe d-Buḡdid.*”

‘[X said] “Ich wünsche, daß du mich mit dir nimmst an den Ort, wo **du hingehst.**” — [Y replied] “Ja, aber mein Weg ist weit, **ich ziehe hinab** nach der Stadt Bagdad”’ (Ritter 1969:30/273f.).

How the sense would change if the text read *ko-noḥatno* (i. e., the regular Present) instead of *nāḥōto-no*, I cannot tell. A speaker of the ʿIwardo village dialect granted me in a p. c. that the two sentences may say the same thing.

kile uw-abro dū-malko ʿatōyo, nfāqu qāmūte

‘Der Sohn des Königs kommt! Zieht aus, ihm entgegen!’ (Ritter 1967:152, 240).

³³ In Turoyo, all Semitic hollow and geminated roots (whether Aramaic or loans) are reflected as R₁R₃. Syriac has both *dwq* ‘to crush’ (SL 286) and *dqq* ‘to pound, crush’ (SL 318), which are cognates of the Arabic *dqq*, but the examples available in Ritter 1990 and in published texts prove at least the semantic influence of the Arabic root.

³⁴ Cf. Jastrow 1993:184, fn. 1: “Der Strukturtypus C₁aC₂óC₃o entspricht AWS (= Old Western Syriac.—S. L.) *qattōlō*. Wie im AWS umfasst er Berufsbezeichnungen, daneben jedoch auch die nomina agentis zum I. Stamm der dreiradikaligen Verben, die im AWS als *qōṭūlō* gebildet werden. Die Nomina agentis werden zum Teil adjektivisch verwendet. Bei einigen Verben in I.N (= intransitive G-stem verbs.—S. L.) dienen sie als Partizipien.”

In the context, the message can hardly be anything but ‘the prince **is coming**.’ Note the conjugated (3ms) presentative particle *kile* ‘le voici’ (Ritter 1990:38–42; Jastrow 2002:106) that probably renders the postpositive 3s copula *-yo* superfluous (i. e., either *kile aṭoyo* or *aṭoyo-yo*, cf. *raḥuqo-yo* and *naḥoto-no* in the previous example). This presentative particle serves, among other things, to actualize the *ka-našaq/ko-nošaq* ‘he is kissing’ Present of ENA (see Khan 2007a:115) that is itself an actualization of the Old Aramaic Present *nāšiq*.³⁵

Now, one has to ask why the *qātōl-* agent noun appeared in Middle Aramaic, how the above distribution of *qātīl-* and *qātōl-* had arisen in Syriac, and how it came about that *qātīl-* as a nominal derivation rule was short-lived in Aramaic. Finally, one has to understand why **qattāl-* was promoted to the “active participle” for intransitive motion verbs in Turoyo.³⁶

My explanation runs as follows. In the historical pre-modern Aramaic (as well as in Akkadian,³⁷ perhaps less so in Hebrew), *qātīl-* was not used as a productive attributive adjective.³⁸ Let us consider the vocalized BA corpus. According to the “BibleWorks 7” software, BA has 204 tokens of *qātīl-*.³⁹ **Seventeen** of them are **syntactic** substantives, all seventeen being semantically agent nouns. At least one noun (appearing more than once

³⁵ *Ko/a-* probably goes back to *kā* ‘here’ (cf. CSD 201a and the BH *kō*). The standard etymology relates this particle to *qāʾem* (Khan 2007a:115), cf. the modern Mandaic Present *qa-gāʾel* (Voigt 2007:163). The deictic function of the prepositive particle(s) remains the same, with whatever etymology.

³⁶ Note that in this language G-stem transitive verbs do not have an active participle.

³⁷ See Kouwenberg 2010:203–210.

³⁸ This is what “the Participle” is in the traditional understanding: it is a productive deverbal **adjective** that possesses certain voice and tense-aspect properties. Ideally, the Participle is related to individual tense-aspect and voice paradigms of the verb rather than to the verb root in general, a good example is Greek with its ten participles for a given transitive verb. One thing that follows from this definition is the ambivalent nature of the Participle: in order to be the Participle it has to be a genuine Adjective, i. e. to behave as the target of agreement in noun phrases in the same way as the other adjectives of the language. If it has tense/aspect and voice properties, it is likely to be a syntactic head governing the accusative case (in a more general way, “the non-genitive case”) of the dependent substantive, which is not a possibility for the garden-variety attributive adjective. A “normal” adjective, if substantivized, will govern the dependent noun in the genitive.

³⁹ I thank Maksim Kalinin who helped me process this material.

in the corpus) is definitely lexicalized: *gāzrā* ‘the diviner’;⁴⁰ *yāṣṭā* ‘the adviser/counselor’ is most probably a genuine substantive as well, since finite G-stem forms of the root are not attested in Aramaic. *Pālḥā* ‘the (temple) servant’ (Ezra 7:24) may also belong here, while *šāftā* ‘the judge’ (Ezra 7:25) is probably a *Berufsname* formed directly of the Hebrew root according to the then productive pattern. All the lexicalized items happen to appear in the plural (this may be due to the contents of the stories, with no grammatical reason whatsoever), the forms are either unbound (both “long” and “short”), bound with possessive pronouns or construct.

“Substantivized participles,” i. e. agent noun *qātil-* forms that do not deviate from lexical meanings of the respective verb roots, are represented by **nine** tokens (out of the total of **seventeen** syntactic substantives).⁴¹ All of them but one are in the construct or bound with possessive pronouns (i. e., in agreement with the Syriac usage), e. g. *yāḏvē dātē rēlāhāk* ‘those who know the laws of your God’ (Ezra 7:25), and see Dan 2:21, 28, 29, 47; 4:16, 32bis; the only free-standing example is Dan 7:16 (*ḥad min qāṣṣamayyā* ‘one of those standing’), and see Bauer–Leander 1927:296.

I have found only **two** impeccable attributive examples of *qātil-* in the BA corpus: *nūr dāliq* ‘burning fire’ (Dan 7:7 and six more times in this chapter), *nūrā yāqīdā* ‘flaming fire’ (Dan 3:15).⁴²

The rest of *qātil-* forms in BA (i. e., some 180 out of 204) are predicative in different kinds of constructions: either “naked” (encoding Present Actual, or roughly synonymous to the past-time “Perfect,” or to the future-time “Imperfect”), or in conjunction with the finite forms of the verb ‘to be,’ or with the existential word ‘there is’ (see also Bauer–Leander 1927:290–296). Thus non-predicative syntax of *qātil-* is marginal in BA.

At this point, I am not ready to discuss the nature of the above partial isogloss between Akkadian and pre-modern Aramaic: on the one hand, the **nominal** *qātil-* in both languages is agent noun rather than attributive adjective; on the other hand, in the historical Aramaic *qātil-* is predominantly the base of the New Present, while in OB and OA letters the predicative use of the Active Participle is virtually unknown (it is rare even in literary texts). The productive predicative use of the PS **qātil-* in Central Semitic is doubtless innovative vis-à-vis the PS situation. Whether the PS

⁴⁰ I use long forms as lemmata and do not write the Biblical *šwa mobile* to make this material easily compatible with the Syriac one.

⁴¹ The division in two groups is in borderline cases uncertain and subjective.

⁴² I do not count instances of the double accusative construction to “pure” attributive usages; cf. Dan 4:20; 6:12.

the PS **qātil-* was primarily an agent noun or a deverbal adjective we do not know. Yet it is the attributive (and not the agent noun) usage that has to be the source of *qātil-* as the emerging New Present. “I am writing” can develop from “I am a writer,” but non-agentive verbs with non-volitional subjects (e. g., ‘to burn,’ ‘to decay’) can hardly have regular agent nouns at their side, while the *qātil-* Present can be formed of almost any Syriac G-stem verb. So it is simpler to posit the same source of the Present for all verbs rather than to conjecture an analogical development for non-agentives.

This makes me suggest that (regardless of the interpretation of the Akkadian evidence) in Aramaic the attributive use of *qātil-* was discontinued early because it was “absorbed” almost completely by the predicative one. The predominantly verbal identity of *qātil-* lead to the above syntactic restriction on its use as an action noun: its appearance in the construct had to safeguard its substantival nature. The *qātōl-* agent noun⁴³ was probably derived from *qātil-* as its renewal in the changed situation (with Nöldeke), though I cannot explain why this happened via the [i] > [ō] replacement implied in Nöldeke’s words. All this means that we must understand the BA and Syriac evidence on *qātil-* as stages in the common drift towards Neo-Aramaic where the substantival deverbal *qātil-* would not survive, having being replaced by other agent nouns.⁴⁴

Now, since *qātōl-* appears in both Eastern and Western branches of Middle Aramaic,⁴⁵ it must have been a feature of the immediate MA ancestor of Turoyo as well,⁴⁶ though as we saw **qātōl-* is only marginally attested in Turoyo. At this stage, the only thing we can do is to state that *qātōl-* as a

⁴³ It is attested in the whole of Middle Aramaic, see in particular Nöldeke 2005:113, Dalman 1905:154, Müller-Kessler 1991:90, 161. Strange as this sounds, *qātōl-* may itself have been an instance of common drift, since it cannot be traced down to a proto-language.

⁴⁴ I thank Aleksey Lyavdansky for checking the data of various NENA idioms, in particular those of Tkhuma, Challa, Mangesh, and Sardarid.

⁴⁵ Unfortunately, the post-Nöldeke descriptions of MA corpora do not usually ask various questions that Nöldeke had in mind when he was working on his *Kurzgefasste Syrische Grammatik*. Note that his Syntax (conceived practically and informally, i. e., meant to describe what is special and worth thinking about) occupies more than a half of his Syriac Grammar, while subsequent generations of standard MA grammars usually do not have Syntax at all. Why?—These words are my excuse for not pursuing the story of agent nouns across all of MA in detail. I hope to deal with this theme later.

⁴⁶ I. e., of an EA dialect close to Edessan but not identical to it.

productive agent noun⁴⁷ was very short-lived and (at least in Turoyo) for some reason replaced by *qattāl-*, which became productive (probably for the first time in the history of Semitic languages) and, in its turn, shifted to the Participle/Present of a semantically delineated group of verbs, by way of a partial *Wiederkehr des Gleichen*. At the moment, I cannot explain the reason.

0.3. Grammaticalization of Definiteness

Another type of evidence that invites attention is that Aramaic keeps re-incarnating into grammar certain semantic values that are not generally speaking the most obvious candidates for grammaticalization. An example is definiteness/referentiality. As is well-known, PA possessed *status*, i. e. inflection of nouns and adjectives⁴⁸ for definiteness, partly cumulative with inflectional markers of number (and of gender, in the adjectival paradigm). Below is the reconstructed PA definiteness paradigm of the adjective *ṭāb-* ‘good’.⁴⁹

Table 1

gender	status	Sing.	Plur.
Masc.	indefinite	<i>ṭāb-∅</i>	<i>ṭāb-īm</i>
	definite	<i>ṭāb-āʔ</i>	<i>ṭāb-ay-āʔ</i>
Fem.	indefinite	<i>ṭāb-ā</i>	<i>ṭāb-ān</i>
	definite	<i>ṭāb-at-āʔ</i>	<i>ṭāb-ā-t-āʔ</i>

⁴⁷ Curiously, *qātōl-* is supposed to have been an active participle somewhere in MA as well (Macuch 1982:248). Note that according to Müller-Kessler, the participial **qātōl-* had verbal usage in SA and CPA, “alternierend mit *qātel*” (Müller-Kessler 1991:161). From the point of view of the present study, all this looks highly significant and provocative, but the lack of syntax and semantics in both reference grammars does not allow one to exploit these hints. A new study of the respective corpora is necessary.

⁴⁸ Attributive adjectives agree with their heads for number, gender, and state. In what follows I inflect a PA adjective rather than two substantives to save space and because the suffixes of adjectival inflection are completely predictable.

⁴⁹ I posit the proper PA marker of definiteness to be **-āʔ* rather than **-aʔ* because in Syriac [**aʔ*] often yields [*ē*]. Yet choosing **-aʔ* would not affect the gist of the argumentation. The reconstructed paradigm follows the scholarly consensus, it is supported even by the reductionist judgment J. Huehnergard voiced in the last lines of his essay “What is Aramaic?”, “Aramaic in my view is thus considered to begin with the presence of the following three features: a definite article represented by final *-ʔ*; and the loss of the N stem; and feminine pl. forms in *-ān*; it is these features that may be said to characterize Proto-Aramaic” (Huehnergard 1995:282).

Among the eight members of this paradigm there are no two identical forms, whether we reconstruct fs. indef. as **tāb-ā* or **tāb-at* (which is less likely), and this situation is cross-linguistically rare for nominal declensions.⁵⁰ This means that the PA adjective from the very start was designed to track down the grammatical values of its head noun. The evidence contradicts the suggestion of Huehnergard 1995:270, “the occurrence of the article is to a large extent syntactically determined, rather than semantically ... Given the limited distribution of the article in the earliest Aramaic inscriptions, one may extrapolate backwards and suggest that this seemingly most characteristic of all Aramaic features was, in Proto-Aramaic, merely a distinctive phonological reflex of a common Central Semitic phenomenon.” Independently of our judgment about the language of 9th–8th centuries Aramaic inscriptions and its value for the PA reconstruction, the postpositive article was deeply entrenched in the PA nominal declension, as witnesses e. g. the fem. plur. opposition *tāb-ān* (indef.) vs. *tāb-ā-t-āʔ* (def.), while, after the pre-Aramaic fall of inflection for case in both sg. and pl. of the noun, the pre-Aramaic all-purposes fp base **tāb-āt-* survived only as the head of noun phrases with dependent substantives.

The common drift of Aramaic languages led them to lose the PA definiteness paradigm, i. e., the original morphosyntactic exponent of definiteness. In none of the Neo-Aramaic languages has it been preserved as a meaningful whole. The main reason was the increasing overuse by speakers of the “full” (i. e., definite) forms to the detriment of the short ones. In response, individual Aramaic varieties created new methods of encoding definiteness, including cataphoric pronouns in MEA and prepositive articles in Turoyo and part of NENA (Jastrow 2005; Jastrow 2008, Khan 2008).⁵¹ The example of Turoyo/Mlaḥṣô is the most telling one for

⁵⁰ Construct forms of PA nouns have nothing to do with this definiteness paradigm, because their appearance is called for by a purely syntactic context: if you are going to expand your noun phrase by a dependent substantive (including pronoun), you have to select the appropriate “prepositive” shape of your head noun, whatever its definiteness value. Morphologically, construct auslauts are frozen structures of pre-Aramaic origin: ms cs = ms indet (*tāb*), mp cs *tāb-ay* is not derivable from a productive PA nominal inflected form, fs cs *tābat* is most probably pre-Aramaic, as well as fp cs *tābāt* (it would be illogical to derive it synchronically from the fp **det** *tābāt-āʔ*, and it is impossible to derive it from the fp indet *tāb-ān*).

⁵¹ While finishing this paper, I came across an abstract of an unpublished talk by Na’ama Pat-El from 2009 (“Cyclic changes and the development of the article in

our theme: in the singular, there are two prepositive articles (not copied onto attributive adjectives), agreeing with the head substantive in gender (masculine or feminine); in the plural there is only one article, since both the substantive and the verb in Turoyo (as in most of Neo-Aramaic) do not have gender in the plural. All three prepositive articles go back to MEA cataphoric/proleptic pronouns that used to be lexical and analytical devices to render definiteness: *hū* ‘he,’ *hī* ‘she,’ *hānnon* (or, more likely, *hānnēn*) ‘these.’⁵² Consider the Turoyo examples: *u*=*kalbo*=*rabo* ‘the big dog,’ *i*=*qrito*=*rabto* ‘the big village,’ *ak*=*kalbe*=*rabe* ‘the big dogs,’ *a*=*qriyawole*=*rabe* ‘the big villages,’ *ann*=*abne* ‘the sons’; i. e., the etymologically basic form of the plural article *ann-* gets three different shapes depending on the substantive anlaut.

To sum up: in the case of Turoyo, Aramaic managed to break through and to build a grammatical expression of definiteness that is structurally similar to the PA one (in particular, there is no obligatory indefinite article). PA happened to employ to this end an **enclitic** demonstrative particle, unlike Hebrew and Arabic. When the PA definiteness paradigm had worn out and collapsed, individual Aramaic idioms started putting **proclitic** pronouns to the service of encoding definiteness (consider the Syriac example in the last footnote). The **proclitic** strategy was a step enforced by the mess created in the **suffixing** nominal inflection after the PA paradigm (Table 1) had disintegrated (for details, see e. g. Nöldeke 1966:144–154). At least in the case of Turoyo, the proclitic method was a success: it culminated in a full-fledged definite article, opposed to the zero grammatical expression of indefiniteness.

Neo-Aramaic,” <http://utexas.academia.edu/NaamaPatEl/Talks>). It is germane to my theme: “This paper attempts to point to another connection between Neo-Aramaic innovations and processes which are attested in much earlier dialects of Aramaic. Aramaic shows a cyclic change of Demonstrative order, from the common Semitic post-position in Old Aramaic (Sefire: *b-spr^r znh* ‘in this inscription’), to pre-position in Late Aramaic (Mandaic: *halin nišmata* ‘these people’) and back to post-position in Central Neo-Aramaic (Turoyo: *u-bayt-āno* ‘this house’). Aramaic <...> seems to have done so as a result of internal pressure, and not contact. In this paper, I will argue that the word order change is related to the growing use of anticipatory pronouns to mark definite nouns in all dialects since Official Aramaic. <...> Eventually, the preposed demonstrative was used as a definite article in some Neo-Aramaic dialects.” Compare especially Pat-El’s “cyclic” with Jastrow’s (2008) “circular” developments, while both writers refer to the marking of definiteness throughout the history of Aramaic. It looks like the idea of Aramaic common drifts is now “in the air.”

⁵² Cf. the *ʔemar hū malkā* construction (lit. ‘said **he**-the-king’) that is frequent in Syriac. *Hū malkā* is an immediate source of the ms article of Turoyo.

1. Reconstructing Proto-Eastern-Aramaic

In order to gain a glimpse of Proto-Aramaic, it is best to start with the more “progressive” of its two firstborns, i. e. PEA. I suggest that the genealogically relevant features of PEA are as follows:

1.1. At the separation of PEA, *l-* replaced *y-* in the Jussive (= the short form of the prefixing conjugation).

In the course of early Eastern Aramaic history, *l-* replaced *y-* in the respective forms of the indicative (3ms, 3mp, 3 fp), in order to prevent the threatening homonymy of the 1cs and the 3ms indicative forms (with Rubin 2007). Finally, some of the daughter-languages of PEA swapped *l-* for *n-*.⁵³ As for the Jussive, EA lost it very early due to the morphosyntactic developments that will be mentioned in the second part of this paper.

The whole story looks as follows. The PA paradigm of the two varieties of the prefixing conjugation has to be reconstructed as in Table 2 (cf. Degen 1969:65; Muraoka–Porten 2003:104ff.; Huehnergard 1987).⁵⁴

Table 2

	Indicative		Jussive	
	sing.	plur.	sing.	plur.
3m	<i>yaqtul(u)</i>	<i>yaqtulūn</i>	<i>yaqtul</i>	<i>yaqtulū</i>
3f	<i>taqtul(u)</i>	<i>yaqtulān</i>	<i>taqtul</i>	<i>yaqtulna</i>
2m	<i>taqtul(u)</i>	<i>taqtulūn</i>	<i>taqtul</i>	<i>taqtulū</i>
2f	<i>taqtulīn</i>	<i>taqtulān</i>	<i>taqtulī</i>	<i>taqtulna</i>
1c	<i>aqtul(u)</i>	<i>naqtul(u)</i>	<i>aqtul</i>	<i>naqtul</i>

My thesis (1.1) means that the Proto-Eastern Aramaic paradigm of the prefixing conjugation is different from the Proto-Aramaic paradigm only due to **laqtul*, **laqtulū* and **laqtulna* in the Jussive.

⁵³ Semitic languages demonstrate a few more cases of *l > n* in affixes, but I cannot explain the reason of our particular shift.

⁵⁴ As is well known, both Early and Achaemenid Aramaic (the most ancient witnesses of WA) opposed orthographically *yḥzh* ‘he will see’ to *yḥzy* ‘let him see.’ This fact can be construed in the sense that Proto-Aramaic had *yaqtulu* rather than *yaqtul* in the indicative, though this interpretation is not obligatory. The post-positive article of the Proto-Aramaic noun was created after the short case vowels had been lost, so the short vowel apocope may have been a part-of-speech independent shift characteristic of Proto-Aramaic *in statu nascendi*. According to the latter scenario, **yahz-ē* ‘he will see’ as against **yahz-ī/yahz-ay* ‘let him see’ were inherited by Proto-Aramaic as unanalysable “endings” of IIIy verbs. In this paper, I sometimes use **yaqtulūn* etc. rather than **yaqtulūna* etc. as a PA form, but for most of my purposes whichever notation is good.

In Aramaic texts, the *l*-Jussive is attested but in TF;⁵⁵ within the first millennium NWS, the *l*-Jussive of TF forms an isogloss only with KAI 214 (Samalian). In TF, all three third-person forms (**laqtul*, **laqtulū*, and **laqtulna*) are attested (Abou-Assaf et al. 1982:49f.).

TF has yet more linguistic traits otherwise unusual for the first millennium Aramaic (we will address some of them in due course):

- (1) Samek to render the PS **t* (e. g. *hds* ‘new,’ TF 11). This fact has received no cogent explanation. The most popular guess is that the reason is orthographical (a partial disambiguation of the polyphonic *ṣ*) rather than phonological, though of course there is no knowing.
- (2) There is the consistent syncope of [h] in the bound adnominal pronouns of the 3 pl.: *l-mt klm* ‘to all the lands’ (TF 3); *l’lthyn klm* ‘to all the gods,’ *nhr klm* ‘all rivers’ (TF 4).⁵⁶ This feature reminds BH (3mp: *klm*, *kwlm*, along with *klhm*; 3fp: *klnh*, *klhnh*; see also Garr 1985:54–58 for an analysis of the epigraphic evidence). Against the Aramaic background (including Syriac), this is an unusual morphological trait.
- (3) *ʔl ygtzr* ‘let it not be cut off’ (TF 23): *t*-infixation, as in Ugaritic and the Mesha inscription (this is the only token of a *t*-stem in TF).
- (4) The verb forms written as *knn* in TF 10 (‘he erected’), and *lknnh* TF 11 (‘let him erect it’) are supposed to belong to the D-stem of \sqrt{kwn} . For the 1st millennium NWS, this kind of orthography is a Canaanite feature (cf. Garr 1985:133f.).
- (5) There is no *nota accusativi*, unlike in KAI 202 (Zkr king of Hamat), KAI 222–224 (Sefire),⁵⁷ KAI 320 (Bukan).⁵⁸

As a counterpart to the five above “non-Aramaic” features, TF has at least two important traits that first surfaced as the standard ones in IA and are present throughout the Middle Aramaic varieties: the productive G-infinitive **maqtal*, and *zy* to introduce both dependent substantives of noun

⁵⁵ In this paper, I will not use the evidence of admittedly Aramaic and semantically Jussive *l*-forms within personal names preserved in cuneiform sources. I hope to analyze this material later in my study.

⁵⁶ On the assumed broken plurals in TF, Sefire and the rest of early Aramaic, see most recently Lipiński 2008.

⁵⁷ See DNWSI 48 for references to discussions of paleographic and philological problems.

⁵⁸ In Aramaic inscriptions from the 9th and 8th centuries, *ʔt* does not occur in KAI 310 (Tell Dan), where it is probably not needed in the extant fragments. It is not attested in the Aramaic texts from Zincirli. In these texts, there seems to be at least two contexts where *ʔt* would be appropriate (see Tropper 1993:233, his sentences Nos. 226 and 233).

phrases and relative clauses (*dmwtʔ zy PN zy šm qdm GN* ‘the statue of PN that he set before GN,’ TF 1). The G-infinitive **maqtal* and **dī* as *nota genitivi* have no first millennium B. C. NWS parallels outside genuine Aramaic, and they are virtually unknown in the early epigraphic texts in Aramaic outside TF.⁵⁹ From the point of view adopted in this study, at least **maqtal* may well have been present in PA, yet this hypothesis does not explain why *zy* and **maqtal* should appear in TF and be absent from the other earliest witnesses of Aramaic (they use “annexation” and **qatāl-*, respectively).⁶⁰

Thus I believe TF is the earliest available textual witness of Eastern Aramaic. The **-ayyāʔ* of *mʔnyʔ zy bt hdd* ‘the vessels of the temple of Hadad’ (TF 16f.) does not really stay in the way, in particular because short nominal bases can preserve this PA ending even in Syriac (Nöldeke 1966:49).

We will now shortly review the evidence of Samalian. The *l*-prefix with Jussive force is attested six times (counting reliable restorations) in KAI 214, e. g. *p-lktš-h b-ʔbny* ‘and then let them_{mas.} stone him,’⁶¹ i. e. probably *lak-tašū-hu* (line 31); *p-lktšn-h b-ʔbny* ‘and then let them_{fem.} stone her,’ i. e. probably *laktašna-hā* (ibid.), *lḡmrw ... zkrw* ‘let all the males come together’ (lines 30–31), *hdd hrʔ lytkh* ‘let Hadad pour (K-stem of \sqrt{ntk}) heat [of wrath] over him’ (line 23).⁶² In KAI 214, *y*-forms seem to be used with the same force, e. g. *w-yqm wth* ‘and let him put him’ (line 28; note the syncope of *h* in the K-stem). In Samalian, the 2mp and 3mp forms of the prefixing conjugation with indicative readings had no final *-n*: *thrgw* ‘you will kill’ (KAI 215:5), *yʔbdw ʔrq* ‘they used to cultivate the land’ (KAI 214:7). This means that in Samalian (unlike in PA and in Old [Western] Aramaic) there was no *y*-Jussive opposed to the *y*-indicative inflectionally, i. e. via suffixes. Two synonymous Jussive forms in the same language (*yaqem* and *laqem* ‘let him

⁵⁹ The only alleged **maqtal* infinitive in Sefire is *l-mšlh yd* ‘to raise a hand’ (KAI 222B:34). This reading is supported in Fitzmyer 1995:50. Degen 1969:68 works with a different paleographical reading, *l-yšlh*, which would give the same sense. The passage is badly damaged and syntactically difficult, so it is hardly useful in this kind of research. Outside TF, the only reliable early-epigraphic token of *zy* in a noun phrase is *kl mlkyʔ zy šlṛty* ‘all the kings of my vicinity’ (KAI 224:7f.). *Zy* as a relative particle is well-attested in Sefire (Fitzmyer 1995:201), it is known in Samalian as well (Tropper 1993:193).

⁶⁰ Note that the TF lexicon seems to be impeccably Aramaic (Kogan 2005, in particular 540–543).

⁶¹ On the verb *ktš* ‘to beat, strike’ in Aramaic, see SL 663b; for the Semitic data, see HALOT *sub voce*.

⁶² The readings and interpretations are as in Tropper 1993:82, 94f.

establish,' as against *yaqīm* 'he will establish') are not a likely possibility. This is *pace* Tropper 1993:237, "In den Texten von Zincirli sind die volitivischen Modi Jussiv (= Präfixkonj.-Kurzform) und Prekativ (*lū* + Jussiv) bezeugt, wobei der Prekativ als verstärkter, emphatischer Jussiv fungiert." (As the examples *ibid.* reveal, Tropper counts *w-yqm wth* 'and let him put him' and other semantically volitive prefixing forms in KAI 214 to **morphological** Jussives). As Tropper proposes (p. 83f.), the *l-* of the Samalian "precativ" is no modal particle, but a genuine prefix, even in the unique and much-discussed K-stem example *lytkh* 'let him pour over him,'⁶³ where according to Tropper (1993:84) /y/ serves as the secondary K-stem marker, given the syncope of the causative affix /h/ in Samalian.⁶⁴

This picture makes the existence of Tropper's "emphatischer Jussiv" (i. e., to a certain extent an analytical form) unlikely. It is no incident that "emphatic" forms are attested for 3ms, 3mp, 3fp (all three have *y-* in the indicative), but not for the 3fs, for which only "non-emphatic" occurrences are attested, e. g. *tšty* 'let her drink' (KAI 214:22).⁶⁵ Note that in Old Assyrian the relevant Jussive form is *lū* *taḫrus*, e. g. *amtum išti* PN *lu ta-ta-al-kam* 'let the slave-girl come together with PN' (CCT 3, 14:21). Structurally, there seems to be no reason why the "emphatic" **lū* should not appear before consonantal prefixes of the Central Semitic Jussive as well. Thus in Classical Arabic, as our reference grammars explicitly state, the apocopate of all persons normally needs the particle *li-/l-* to get the positive Jussive force: *fa-l-na'ḥyud* 'so laßt uns nehmen!' (Fischer 1987:96), *fa-l-tubaʿ* '[if anything happens to me,] then let it be sold!'⁶⁶ (Wright 1862:24).⁶⁶

Rubin 2007:17 seeks to explain the EA picture (the one whose origins I am trying to trace back to PEA) roughly at the time level of Middle

⁶³ Cf. in particular Testen 1998:108.

⁶⁴ I suspect, as probably Tropper does, that **lū* in *lytk* (*IVyattik*) may be less morphologised than etymologically selfsame element in *lktš* */laktāš/* 'let him stone' (the vocalization *la-* or *la-/li-* in compliance with Barth's law is strongly suggested by cuneiform renderings cited in Beyer 1984:109f., cf. Testen 1998:109). Phonetically, the syncope of /-h-/ is not related to the presence or absence of /l-/ , since the trigger of the syncope is the /y-/ , i. e. *yattik* < **yVhantik* (Tropper 1993:83), in contrast to the Old Aramaic verb form *lhynqn* (probably *lahayniqna*) 'let them suckle' (TF 20f., bis), where the syncopated element is /y/ (< **luyahayniqna* or the like).

⁶⁵ In Samalian orthography, the relevant semantically indicative IIIy forms ended in *-y* as well, unlike in Old Aramaic (Tropper 1993:213f., 224ff.).

⁶⁶ Wright *ibid.* notes that '*li...* is very rarely omitted, except perhaps in poetry.' Cf. also Huehnergard 1983:578.

Aramaic. For him, the trigger of the $y- > l-$ change in the 3ms form is the shift $yi- > i-/#_$ that took place “before the first attestation of Syriac in the first century CE.” This change was fraught with the coalescence of the 1cs and 3ms in the common form *iqtul*, and this “intolerable” homonymy was overcome in the following way:

“In the third person, there existed a rare Jussive form, identical with the imperfect but for the addition of a prefixed *l-*. Since any imperfect could also serve as a Jussive, this special Jussive form *liqtul* must have come to be thought of as a bi-form of *yiqtul*. Therefore when *iqtul* (< *yiqtul*) was no longer an acceptable 3ms form, *liqtul* was the logical alternative. The third person plural forms were always generated from the 3ms form, and therefore the *l-* prefix replaced *y-* there as well” (Rubin 2007:17).

I accept Rubin’s disambiguation thesis as the reason of *l-*’s appearance in the indicative paradigm, yet his “rare Jussive form” comes into play a little bit like a *deus ex machina*.⁶⁷ His typological parallel with Tigré is felicitous,⁶⁸ except that Tigré has a full-fledged Jussive paradigm with *l-* in the 3ms, 3mp and 3fp forms, while Rubin’s source of *l-/n-* in the whole of the MEA Imperfect is a “rare” and optional 3ms Jussive *liqtul*, somehow available relatively shortly (?) “before the first attestation of Syriac in the first century CE.”⁶⁹

If one is to understand the MEA evidence, one has to ask first about the emergence and the subsequent life of the *l*-Jussive in Aramaic.

Let us compare the *l*-Jussives in Aramaic and Akkadian. Akkadian created its precativ (= the *l*-Jussive) paradigm in order to disambiguate the prefixing conjugation. At a pre-Akkadian stage of Eastern Semitic

⁶⁷ Rubin 2007:13–15 surveys the data on the *l*-prefix in Central Semitic and Old Aramaic, but he does not embark on the task of justifying its appearance in Aramaic nor enter the ensuing problems of genealogical classification of Aramaic varieties.

⁶⁸ A. Rubin believes that in Tigré, the Jussive prefix *l-* appeared in the Imperfect paradigm “to make the third person masculine unambiguous,” i. e. to prevent its coalescence with the 1cs form (Rubin 2007:18). This approach to the Imperfect (or “Present”) paradigms in Tigré has received a detailed development in Bulakh 2011.

⁶⁹ Rubin does not propose a *terminus a quo*, yet we do not expect the shift $yi- > i-/#_$ to be an early development, since the “attenuation” $yaC > yiC$ in the non-stressed syllable had to occur first. Besides, at the turn of the Christian era there was hardly a morphological Jussive left in Aramaic (Beyer 1984:152). In spoken Aramaic varieties, the Jussive must have been lost a few centuries earlier (Muraoka–Porten 2003:200, and see a discussion presently). It is understood that EA lost the Jussive earlier than WA.

(and probably in Proto-Akkadian as well), the inherited PS prefixing conjugation used to have both PRETERIT and JUSSIVE readings, and this non-trivial homonymy (or polysemy) came to be felt as unsatisfactory.⁷⁰ The rest of sufficiently known ancient Semitic languages disambiguated the prefixing conjugation by creating a new PRETERIT *qatala*⁷¹ while keeping the Jussive paradigm without serious morphological and semantic changes for more or less long time.⁷² As for Akkadian, on the one hand it did not renew its PRETERIT before the end of OB and OA periods;⁷³ on

⁷⁰ I. e., if we do not buy wholesale into the hypothesis of Hetzron 1969 about the PS Preterit (or “Perfect,” apud Hetzron) *yáqtul* vs. Jussive *yaqtúl*. For the Akkadian we know, this hypothesis is irrelevant anyway. As R. Hetzron (1969:5) admits, there is no synchronic Akkadian evidence to support the stress opposition *íprus* vs. *líprus*. Pace Hetzron, we do not need this hypothesis for the proto-Akkadian either, i. e. it is not necessary “to explain contraction in the optative and non-contraction in the asseverative” (ibid.), because the contraction of **lū* and **yíprus* into *líprus* is not explainable by any synchronic rules we know of (especially since there is no vowel contraction in OA), it is simply the formal expression of the diachronic shift which led to the new paradigm. By the same token, the non-contraction in the asseverative *lū íprus* (e. g. *lū išām* ‘er hat (es) gekauft!’, VAB 5, 287:22) is readily explainable by the fact that the asseverative *lū* is optional for the kind of meaning expressed with its help, it is a real particle rather than a prefix, and cf. GAG 292. See also Kouwenberg 2010:130f. for a detailed criticism of Hetzron 1969.

⁷¹ Kouwenberg (2010:126) points in the same direction, if I understand him correctly: “In the historical period, the irrealis use (of **yíprus*.—S. L.) was not grammaticalized as a result of the loss of the past tense function, as in West Semitic, but because the particle (*l-*.—S. L.) became obligatory. From that moment, the irrealis function resided in the particle.”

⁷² As is well-known, distinct reflexes of the PS Jussive survive in MSA and in modern Ethiosemitic languages. Most importantly for us, in certain individual idioms of both groups *l-* appears as a prefix of the Jussive (for MSA, see the comparative tables in Simeone-Senelle 1997:405ff.). As we have mentioned above, in Tigré the *l-* prefix is a feature of 3ms, 3mp and 3fp forms of both the Jussive and the Imperfect. It is always present in these forms of the Jussive, while in the Imperfect *l-* is in complementary distribution with the zero prefix depending on (morpho)phonological conditioning, see Raz 1983:55f., Voigt 2009, Bulakh 2011. For our theme, there are two differences between Tigré and the attested EA: 1) unlike Tigré, EA preserved an unambiguous reflex of the PS Jussive but in TF; 2) in EA, *l-/n-* always appears in the three finite forms of the Imperfect. It is a commonplace that the languages with the **yaqattal* Imperfective tend to preserve distinct and semantically loaded reflexes of the PS Jussive, while Central Semitic, in the course of its history, lost modal oppositions in the prefixing conjugation.

⁷³ It looks like in spoken varieties *íprus* was replaced by *iptaras* in (at least) main clauses towards 1500 B. C.

the other hand, all known dialects of Akkadian set out to renew the whole of their Jussive paradigm with the help of the *l*-prefix early, most probably no later than 2500 B. C., as the joint testimony of Sargonic, OA and OB indicates.⁷⁴

The Aramaic development must have possessed a different motivation, since PA had **qatala* for PRETERIT. Further, unlike in the case of Akkadian, the *l*-prefixation in 3ms, 3mp and 3fp Jussive was not pan-Aramaic, it affected the whole of EA, while the historical WA had never had the *l*-prefix and was keeping the PA Jussive paradigm after it had parted ways with EA.⁷⁵ According to the consensus view,⁷⁶ the EA prefix *n-* < **l-*.⁷⁷ This leaves us with three speculatively thinkable accounts of **the path** along which the MEA evidence came into being (**the etymology** of *l*- and **the motivation** of the development are another two questions, to be discussed below):

- 1) *l*- was a feature of the PEA Jussive, as the present writer believes;
- 2) *l*-Jussive arose in the course of the common drift of various Eastern Aramaic idioms: they had not inherited this *l*- from a mother-tongue but developed it independently (or via interdialectal loans, which I believe are impossible to explain);
- 3) *l*-Jussive was a feature of PA lost in historical WA idioms.

As we have already seen, possibility (3) is improbable because early WA still possessed the essentially PS Jussive (unlike the PS one, with *-na* rather than *-ā* as the fp suffix). Possibility (2) cannot be ruled out, but if there is choice it is safer to explain a shared innovation as stemming from a proto-language, because, other things being equal, it is alternative (and more sophisticated) explanations that have to bear the burden of proof.

⁷⁴ The precativizing paradigms of OB and OA can hardly be traced down to a single-parent paradigm in Proto-Akkadian, the shapes of precativizing in OB and OA may be due to a common drift (= parallel developments in the daughter idioms of Proto-Akkadian). In this case, we can safely pinpoint the trigger, i. e. the PRETERIT-JUSSIVE homonymy in PS and Proto-Akkadian. Cf. Kouwenberg 2010: 215: "Since the outcome of this grammaticalization process is different for Babylonian and Assyrian, it must have started after the Proto-Akkadian period."

⁷⁵ The *y*-Jussive is attested in all known varieties of the first millennium B. C. Western Aramaic (cf. in particular Sefire and IA). This is part of the reason to consider TF a manifestation of Eastern Aramaic.

⁷⁶ Cf. Huehnergard 1983 and Rubin 2007, with references to previous studies.

⁷⁷ The Semitic parallels (if not actual causes) for this shift will be discussed in due course in this study.

At this point, the etymology of *l-* has to be considered. I will divide the problem into two questions: (1) whence did PEA get the *l-* prefix? (2) Why is it limited to 3ms, 3mp, and 3fp?

I will start with question (2), the one about reasons of paradigm-internal constraints on the *l-* form. Aramaic had probably never had analytical *lV-* Jussives for the finite forms with *t-* and *n-* prefixes *along with* synthetic formations for 3ms etc. This means that Aramaic proved unable to obviate the phonological constraint of the word-initial “real” consonant and to form something like *lV-taqtul* ‘she shall kill/let her kill!’ This sounds strange, especially in view of OA or Classical Arabic with their full-fledged Jussive paradigms, analytical as the case may be (cf. the OA 3fs *lū taprus*, 1cp *lū niprus*).

Did PEA have **lVqtul* for the 1cs, like Akkadian and unlike Tigré? In this case, a phonological obstacle is not very likely: since *lV + yaqtul* contracted to *lVqtul* at an early stage in Aramaic, *lV + raqtul* could probably have done the same. My answer is we have no data to judge about this, since we have no semantically volitive 1cs forms in TF. Yet it is probable that PEA, like Tigré, did not build the 1cs *l-* Jussive to avoid the homonymy with the 3ms form (in the spirit of Rubin 2007 and Bulakh 2011).

As for question (1), the one about the origin of *l-* in PEA, we know that the volitive *l(V)-* was ubiquitous in the linguistic milieu from which PEA emerged. In Samalian, I believe that the *l-* Jussive was giving way to a “normal” form of the Imperfect (in this case, the latter’s inflectional morphology was similar to that of the Central Semitic Jussive, i. e. **yaqtulū* rather than **yaqtulūna*): the Imperfect was thereby acquiring one more reading.⁷⁸ This is a progressive feature of Samalian: KAI 214 was probably written shortly before 750 B. C. (Troppe 1993:55), while WA seems to have lost the morphological opposition “indicative vs. Jussive” in the prefixing conjugation no less than a quarter of a millennium later, during the Achaemenid period, i. e. after 500 B. C. This follows from the fact that this opposition became part of the Imperial Aramaic norm, yet it

⁷⁸ Other things being equal, I do not believe that texts written in ancient literary languages (and *a fortiori* a royal votive inscription like KAI 214) can easily reflect changes **under way** in the spoken idioms of their authors. Yet this possibility is not 100% excluded, if what is at stake is verbal morphology rather than orthography/phonology. E. g., in Peshitta, a standard corpus of classical Syriac, both the Imperfect and the predicative participle can render the “indicative” future: the former option is the PA inheritance, the latter one adumbrates the Neo-Aramaic, i. e. the contemporary stage of Syriac speech. If there is a distribution, the choice will depend on syntactic and semantic nuances that have never been studied so far.

“was not consistently observed” in the Egyptian corpus (Muraoka–Porten 2003:200).⁷⁹

Note also *lw yqh mn hyl krm znn* ‘let him take from the best (produce) of this vine(yard)’ in Pardee 2009:53, l. 8f. This example is unique in our “Aramoid” corpus and without parallel in Aramaic. The nominal morphology of this inscription from Zincirli is different from the Samalian one (see the discussion in Pardee 2009). In view of the rest of the data, a natural solution is to admit that in this previously unknown NWS language, the precativ particle *lū* had not (yet) undergone crasis with the prefixing 3ms form.⁸⁰

Finally, there is the TF inscription with its *l*-Jussives and no *y*-forms in the injunctive slots of the text.⁸¹ And add *l*-forms of *hwy* in BA and epigraphic Aramaic texts found (and probably written) in Palestine (Beyer 1984:560f., see the detailed literature overview in Rubin 2007). In addition, there are personal names written in cuneiform which contain verbal *l*-forms of specifically Aramaic roots, e. g. *-la-ah-zi*, allegedly ‘let [the DN] see!’ (Beyer 1984:109f., 148).

The main reason to think through these data is the presence of *l*-forms in more voluminous and “regular” Eastern Aramaic corpora, the most ancient of them being Hatran (44 B. C.—238 A. D.).⁸² With this in

⁷⁹ In other words, *l*-Jussive was the only morphological Jussive in Samalian for 3ms, 3mp and 3fp forms. This Jussive was an obsolescent paradigm giving way to the “normal” Samalian imperfect. The development is in itself trivial, it will occur in Aramaic (roughly, in the second half of the first millennium B. C.) and in various spoken Arabic varieties. The interesting thing is its early date.

⁸⁰ This evidence contradicts an important claim of Huehnergard 1983, the one about the historical path of two PS modal particles, the hypothetical **law* and the asseverative **la*: Huehnergard suggests that prefixing *l*-forms of both Akkadian and Aramaic verb go back to **la* rather than **law*, though (as he admits) this **la* is otherwise unknown in both languages (cf. p. 590, fn. 187 for Huehnergard’s plausible explanation of a rare *lʔ* in Nabatean and Hatran as a loan from Arabic). From the Assyriological perspective, Huehnergard’s claim about the etymology of the precativ was rejected in particular by A. Rainey (1996 III 195f.). Most recently see Kouwenberg 2010:216, where Huehnergard’s view on the destiny of **la* and **law* in Akkadian is evaluated as “unnecessary complicated.” D. Testen’s (1998) discussion of the problem is marred by his desire to establish a syllabic allophone of **l* (**l̥*) in Proto-Semitic.

⁸¹ Huehnergard 1983:589 notes that in TF “no non-Jussive plural forms occur, and we are unable to state whether they would be **yaqtulū* or **yaqtulūna*.” This silence of TF is unfortunate but probably not critical since everybody agrees that its language is a variety of genuine Aramaic.

⁸² All 3ms Imperfect forms in this corpus have *l-*, 3fs forms have *t-*, while other forms of the Imperfect are not attested (Beyer 1998:137f.).

mind, I will attempt once more⁸³ to make sense of the above evidence, though it is perhaps impossible to have all the pieces of the puzzle fall together in a gratifying way and without doing violence to these pieces.⁸⁴

The PS optative particle **law* (less likely, its contracted variant **lū*)⁸⁵ was doubtless present in PA, but its only productive continuation in the grammatically describable Aramaic corpora (i. e., from 500 B. C. on) obtains within the frequent particle of counterfactual condition *illū/ellū* ‘would that’ < *hin* ‘if’ + *lū*, the compound is structurally identical to the Russian ‘если бы’ (Beyer 1984:564;⁸⁶ SL 48a).⁸⁷ In IA, its etymology was probably still transparent to the speakers of Aramaic, since it was usually written *hn lw* without assimilation *nl > ll* and with a space, and had a variant *hnw lw* (< **hin-hū lū?*), see DNWSI 1:567 and Huehnergard 1983: 571f. Thus, our recorded Aramaic has not preserved a single token of a clear-cut proclitic *lū* with whatever independent force of its own. In Pardee 2009:53, l. 8, *lw yqh* ‘let him take’ is written with no word-divider,⁸⁸ yet Pardee 2009:57 is most probably right that *lw* provides an example of a word-**final** *mater lectionis*, since internal *matres* are not attested in this text. (Or is it **law?*) Be it as it may, the *lw* of Pardee 2009:53 is a reflex of the very same PS counterfactual/optative particle **law* that in this text is surprised “on the verge of grammaticalization,”—the grammaticalization whose results we witness in OA and OB, in Samalian (KAI 214), in TF and in the whole of Middle Eastern Aramaic.

Thus Samalian and PEA felt a need to strengthen their Jussives with the **law* particle, and each of them did so on its own, by way of common drift. Why did this happen? The TF—KAI 214 *l*-isogloss makes the influence of the Akkadian precative on PEA unlikely, because *l*-Jussive in KAI

⁸³ Cf. Huehnergard 1983, Testen 1998, and Rubin 2007, all of whom ask questions different from mine.

⁸⁴ The reason may well be that something is missing from our kit.

⁸⁵ R. Steiner in a witty short note (1987) showed that in Aramaic *aw > ū* after *l-*, therefore we do not have to posit for PS two allomorphs of this particle, **law* and **lū*, *pace* Huehnergard.

⁸⁶ Beyer 1984:617 believes that this **lū* is a presentative ‘siche,’ but this is hardly correct (cf. Huehnergard 1983:571, fn. 23). Beyer 2004:386 notes that **lū* is not a contraction of **law*, ‘das syr. erhalten wäre!’, but Steiner 1987 probably takes care of this objection as well.

⁸⁷ *Lw* is attested in both relatively long Samalian texts (KAI 214:13, 31; KAI 215:11bis), its functions there are not clear, as Tropper 1993:74 notes. J. Tropper tentatively renders *lw* as ‘wahrlich’ (p. 74), ‘gewiß’ (p. 118).

⁸⁸ In this text, the word-divider was used 52 times on 13 lines that contain 202 letters (Pardee 2009:53).

214 cannot be explained as Akkadian influence anyway. The motivation I am going to propose is less transparent than the above suggestion about the *raison d'être* of the Akkadian precative, and it has to do with the subsequent history of the prefixing conjugation in Aramaic rather than with its prehistory.

The inherited PS Jussive had a shorter life in Aramaic than in Arabic, in terms of absolute chronology. As for Aramaic, EA has been always developing more rapidly than WA. It is almost certain that the reflexes of 3ms forms **yaqtulu* and *yaqtul* merged early in Aramaic (see p. 445 above). The Imperfect **yaqtulūna* lost the PRESENT ACTUAL reading in favour of the conjugated **qātil* and started acquiring modal usages early in the historical life of Aramaic, as we will see in the course of this study. My speculative suggestion is that both PEA and Samalian once attempted to save what could be saved of the Jussive and added a reflex of **law* to the apocopate forms with vocalic anlaut as a new Jussive prefix.⁸⁹ Yet they were unable to counter the historical progress, the Jussive was doomed to die out. As I proposed above, KAI 214 provides a chain missing in Aramaic, i. e. a transition period where **yaqtulū* (< **yaqtulūna*) is used in all the canonical slots of the Imperfect (e. g., future indicative and habitual situations in the past) *and* as a volitive form, while **laqtulū* (< *law* + *yaqtulū*) is *still* used as a volitive.

To conclude this section: the *l*-form is a shared innovation of Eastern Aramaic that goes back to PEA and antedates the emergence of IA, the main written language of the Achaemenid Empire.

The next part of this study is supposed to see the completion of the Proto-EA reconstruction.

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⁸⁹ This means that analytical forms of the *lw yqlh* type had been the immediate predecessor of the stage witnessed by TF.

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