Chapter 15

Neo-Aramaic in Iran and northeastern Iraq

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This chapter offers a brief overview of the word order typology of Neo-Aramaic dialects spoken by Jewish and Christian minorities of Iran and northeastern Iraq. A characteristic of the dialects in this region is the contact-induced shift from VO to OV word order under the influence of neighbouring Iranian and Turkic languages. In Iranian Azerbaijan, convergence with Azeri has resulted in an additional increase in Adjective-Noun order, and a different treatment of Addressees from Goals. In many respects, however, the constituent order remains consistent with that of so-called VO languages, such as prepositional marking and Noun-Genitive order.

1 Introduction

Aramaic[1] is a Semitic language that has been attested in writing since the first millennium BC and used to be spoken more widely in West Asia. The modern Aramaic vernaculars in Iran and northeastern Iraq mainly belong to the North Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) subgroup.[2] Another relevant Neo-Aramaic subgroup, known as Mandaic, spoken by the Mandaeans of southwestern Iran and southern Iraq (e.g. Häberl 2011) lies beyond the scope of this chapter.

[1]The orthography has been adapted slightly to normalize transcription across dialects. Khan's (2016) <c>, <ɟ>, <k̂> correspond to <k>, <g> and <q> here. Panoussi's (1990) <e> and Khan's (2004) <ĭ> both correspond to <ə> here. Garbell (1965b) and Khan's (2008b) <o> and <u> for /ø/ and /y/ in Jewish Urmi respectively correspond to <ö> and <ü> here. Superscript ˁ indicates the following word or syllable is pronounced with additional velarization or pharyngealization.

[2]For the closely related Central Neo-Aramaic group in Anatolia, see Noorlander (2024 [this volume]).

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NENA comprises a continuum of highly diverse and severely endangered dialects of Jewish (J.) and Christian (C.) communities that used to span an area from western Iran to southeastern Turkey. Most of the Jewish dialects are extinct or border extinction, and only a rapidly diminishing number of elderly speakers–generally known as *kurdim*–reside in Israel today. Apart from their regional identification, e.g. *sənaye* 'people from Səna, i.e. Sanandaj,' *ʾurməžnaye* 'people from Urmi, i.e. Urmia,' the Christian speakers self-identify as *suraye* 'Syrian Christian' and refer to their language as *surət* 'Syriac'. The Christians belong to various denominations, primarily the Chaldean Catholic Church and the Assyrian Church of the East, which may or may not coincide also with their linguistic and ethnic identification, respectively. Since more recent times, however, the self-identification among native speakers in both the homeland and diaspora as the Assyrian people, i.e. *ʾaturaye*, has extended beyond tribal, religious and geographic affiliations, and the same holds true for Chaldeans, albeit to a lesser extent. The havoc wreaked by the tumultuous 20th century and the recent atrocities in the name of Islamic State in the spread of the Syrian Civil War into Iraq has resulted in the massive displacement of Aramaic-speaking Christians and the destruction of entire villages. Consequently, the vast majority of speakers from Iran no longer reside in their original environment but as diaspora communities in Northern America (San Diego, California & Detroit, Michigan) and Australia (Sydney). Today, the largest Assyrian communities in Iran reside in Urmia and Tehran. The majority of Aramaic speakers in the Middle East, however, is found in Iraqi Kurdistan where the use of the literary *koine* based on the variety of the Urmia county (West Azerbaijan, Iran) has become increasingly widespread and accepted in education, media and sermons.

Figure 1 displays a selection of originally Neo-Aramaic speaking towns in Iran and northeastern Iraq. The Greater Zab River serves as an isogloss for both Jewish and Christian dialects, dividing the Jewish dialects into two major groups: *Lishana Deni*, e.g. Zakho and Duhok, in the west vs. the Trans-Zab Jewish subgroup in the east (Mutzafi 2008), such as Arbel (Erbil, Hewlêr), Urmi (Urmia, Orumiyeh) and Sanandaj (Sine). The dialects around the settlement Barzan represent a transition zone. The Trans-Zab cluster has been heavily influenced by contiguous Iranian languages (e.g. Kapeliuk 2004; Noorlander 2014; Khan 2020), in particular those dialects in the southeastern periphery, in Iranian Kurdistan and Kermanshah. The Trans-Zab Jewish dialects in the north also had outposts into southeastern Turkey, namely Başkale and Gawar (Yüksekova; Garbell 1965b). While the Christian dialects form a continuum from Turkey through Iraq to Iran, clusters can also be recognized in Iranian Azerbaijan and the Iraqi provinces of Erbil and Sulaymaniyah, with, however, only one easternmost outpost Sena

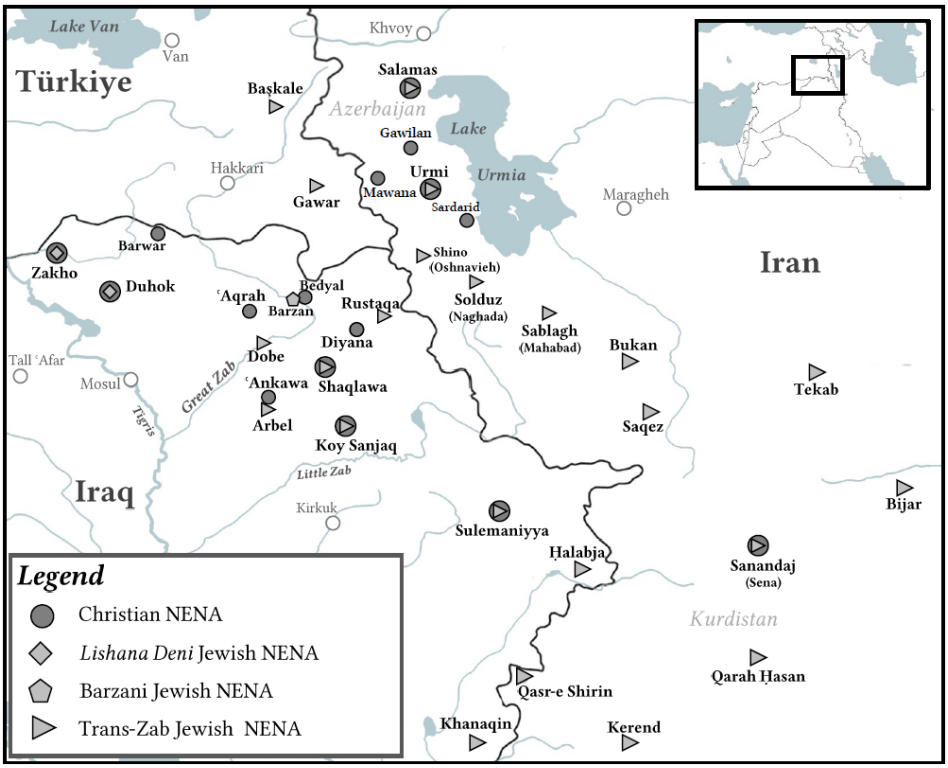

Figure 1: Location of the main Northeastern Neo-Aramaic dialects discussed in this chapter

(Sanandaj) in Iranian Kurdistan. The dialects near the Iraq-Iran-Turkey borders such as Diyana (Soran) constitute a transition zone.

In what follows, I shall focus on the NENA dialects in the eastern periphery whose statistically dominant ordering of subject, object and verb can be characterized as SOV, and where the post-predicate slot is reserved for Goals (for a definition, see §2.2.2), i.e. SVG. The object placement in these dialects is distinct from the typology of (Central) Semitic word order, as well as the majority of Neo-Aramaic dialects in modern-day Turkey and Iraq (see Noorlander 2024 [this volume]). This chapter will show, however, that the same basic, i.e. statistically dominant, word order does not hold to the same degree in every dialect for each argument type, in line with the general rationale of the WOWA project.

Table 1 shows a list of the datasets from the WOWA corpus with their sources[3] and partial metadata used for the analysis of non-subject arguments and their

[3]Numbered texts and numbered segments are separated by colons, e.g. 25:§2 means Text 25, Paragraph 2, and page numbers and segments by periods, e.g. 101.§2, Page 101, Paragraph 2, page numbers and lines by dots, e.g. 101.1, Page 101, Line 1.

respective position before or after the predicate in accordance with the framework and coding guidelines of the WOWA databank.[4] A handful of additional data were taken from Panoussi (1990: 120–128) for Christian Sanandaj, which is not part of the WOWA corpus. Concerning the J. Urmi doculect based on Khan (2008b) and C. Urmi doculect based on Khan (2016), it is likely that these dialects cannot be taken as representatives of NENA of Iranian Azerbaijan as a whole. Even a cursory glance at the material collected by Garbell (1965b) and Hopkins (1989) suggests that there seems to be more variation, and the same holds true for the Jewish and Christian dialects of Salmas documented by Duval (2009) and Tsereteli (1976). The final results from other texts could, therefore, be different and approximate more closely the typology of the NENA varieties elsewhere.

Hopkins (1999), Khan (2012a, 2019a,b), and Noorlander (2021: 100–206) provide general overviews of the Trans-Zab Jewish NENA dialects, especially in Iran. Gutman (2018)[5] provides a comparative overview of Noun-Genitive orders, Noorlander & Molin (2022) an overview of Verb-Object and Verb-Oblique, Khan (2020: 398–401) that of Auxiliary-Verb and Verb-Object. Most grammatical descriptions do not discuss word order in detail, except for Khan's voluminous grammars (Khan 2008b, 2016) and Coghill (2018), though, apart from Molin (2021) and Noorlander & Molin (2022), no statistics are provided. Nevertheless, for virtually all NENA dialects considered here, which pattern constitutes the basic word order is largely unquestioned, except for Christian Urmi and Sardarid (see §2.2.1).

The following sections provide a general overview of word order for which a synopsis is offered in Table 2, where plus (+) corresponds to placement after the head, and minus (–) corresponds to placement before the head, respectively. Word order configurations in NENA, however, are sensitive to pragmatic effects not coded in the WOWA corpus, e.g. any argument can undergo focalization to the immediately pre-verbal position or topicalization to clause-initial position (e.g. Noorlander & Molin 2022: 243–245; the difference between definite and indefinite arguments is coded, however, see §2.2.1.). For our purpose, word order patterns of the clause will be identified on the basis of frequency, as discussed in Haig et al. (2024 [this volume]), in line with (Dryer 2007: 73–78). Finally, we use the basic surface-syntax-based parameters coded for the WOWA corpus rather than pragmatic or formal criteria of movement.

[4] See https://multicast.aspra.uni-bamberg.de/resources/wowa/data/_docs/guidelines/wowa_-coding-guidelines.pdf.

[5] See especially p. 143 for J. Zakho, pp. 220–230 for J. Urmi, pp. 232–234 for J. Sanandaj, p. 291 for Kurdish. Compare also Cohen (2012) on Jewish Zakho.

Table 1: NENA datasets from the WOWA corpus discussed in this chapter

Doculect	Speakers	Total tokens	Analysed tokens	Source
J. Sanandaj	4	2837	1184	Noorlander 2022c based on Khan 2009
J. Urmi	1	923	502	Noorlander & Stilo 2022 based on Khan 2008b: 398–439
C. Urmi	2	865	724	Noorlander 2022b based on Khan 2016: Texts A2, A39
C. Shaqlawa	3	524	444	Noorlander 2022a based on Khan et al. 2022: Texts 4, 23 and 35

Table 2: Overview of dominant configurations

Doculect	VO	VAddr	VGoal	NGen	NAdj	AdjSt	CopPred
C. Barwar	+	+	+	+	+	+	+/−
C. Shaqlawa	−	+	+	+	+	+/−	+/−
C. Urmi	−	−	+	+	+	+/−	+/−
C. Sanandaj	−	+	+	+	+	(?)	−
J. Sanandaj	−	+	+	+	+	+/−	−
J. Urmi	−	−	+	+	+/−	−	−

2 Word order profile

2.1 Noun phrases

2.1.1 Determiner/noun

Across all doculects of NENA considered here, Demonstrative-Numeral-Noun order predominates, e.g.

(1) Demonstrative-Numeral-Noun
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A55:§7)
ʾannə tré ʾojaxə
DEM.PL two clan.PL
'these two clans'

Noun-Demonstrative-Adjective order also occurs, particularly in the expressions of 'the elder' or 'the eldest':

(2) Noun-Adjective-Demonstrative-Adjective
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A1:§29)
kačala ʾasli ***ʾo*** *ʿgur-a*
bald.person.M.SG original DEM.M.SG big-M.SG
'**the** elder, original, baldhead'

2.1.2 Noun/attribute

Attributes, such as adjective phrases, follow the head noun they modify, e.g.

(3) Noun-Adjective
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: B:§58)
knəšta rab-ta
synagogue.SG.F big-SG.F
'a big synagogue'

(4) Noun-Adjective
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 125.§6)
ṣoma rab-a
fast.M.SG big-M.SG
'the great fast'

(5) Noun-Modifier-Adjective
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A42: §34)
brata ***ʾuxča*** *šaf̂ár-ta*
girl.SG.F such beautiful-SG.F
'**such a** beautiful girl'

Adjective-Noun order, e.g. (6), if tolerated, is pragmatically restricted–generally increasing the attribute's emotional significance–and its higher rate of occurrence is area-specific, namely specific to Iranian Azerbaijan, see §3.2.5 for discussion.

(6) Modifier-Adjective-Noun
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A3:§81)
ʾuxča ***šapir-a*** *qal-a*
such beautiful-M.SG voice-M.SG
'such a **beautiful** voice'

The primary adjectives denoting relative size, i.e. 'small' and 'big,' tend to remain closer to the head noun (cf. Khan 2016II: 44):

(7) J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 202.§26)
xa belá ***ruww-á*** *jwan*
a house.M.SG big-M.SG beautiful
'a beautiful, **large** house'

(8) J. Sulemaniyya (Khan 2004: R:§144)
bela ***ruww-á*** *hulaʾ-á*
house.M.SG big-M.SG Jewish-M.SG
'a **big** Jewish house'

Genitive constructions show Noun-Genitive order (see Gutman 2018, especially Chapter 4, for an overview and recent analysis of NENA genitive constructions). Prepositions similarly also serve as heads, e.g. J. Koy Sanjaq *qam-əd ʔod=belá* lit. front-of of=house 'in front of the house' (Mutzafi 2004: 175). Juxtaposition can also suffice, e.g. C. Diyana-Zariwaw *šəmma sawun-i* lit. name grandfather-my 'the name of my grandfather' (Napiorkowska 2015: 315).

(9) Noun-Genitive
C. Sardarid (Younansardaroud 2001: 13:§5)
šəmm-əd d-o naša
name-CSTR GEN-DEM.M.SG man.M.SG
'the name of that man'

(10) Noun-Genitive
J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 1B:§18)
šuḷṭan-əd ʾod=ḥaywan-é
king-CSTR LINK=animal-PL
'the king of the animals'

Genitive-Noun order is restricted, also known as the emotive genitive,[6] intensifying the speaker's emotional attitude, e.g.

(11) Genitive-Noun
C. Diyana (Napiorkowska 2015: 18.1:§35)
ala munix-əd xəmyan-i
God.M.SG give.rest.PTCP.M.SG-CSTR uncle.M.SG-my
'my late uncle'

Other constituents can intervene between head and genitive, as shown in (12a). Pronominal possessors are suffixed directly to the head or expressed by a following independent genitive, e.g. (12b).

(12) a. Coordination, Noun-Genitive
C. Diyana (Napiorkowska 2015: 18.7:§16)
šop-əd ʾaqle ʾu ʾəd=xzür-u
print.PL-CSTR foot.PL and LINK=pig.PL-their
'their (lit. the) footprints and also [those] of their piglets'

b. free pronoun, Noun-Genitive
C. Diyana (Napiorkowska 2015: 18.6:§7)
dost-əd ***did-i***
friend.M.SG-CSTR GEN-my
'a friend of **mine**'

2.2 Verbal complements

2.2.1 Object/verb

While Verb-Object predominates in NENA dialects, the dialects in Iran and northeastern Iraq generally show Object-Verb order. Earlier treatments of the Christian dialects in Iran identified no primary word order on the basis of frequency (Younansardaroud 2001: 209; Khan 2020: 398–401). As shown in Table 3, when

[6] See Hopkins (2009), Cohen (2012: 100–102), Gutman (2018: 143, 182,315).

Table 3: Rate of post-predicate (PP) objects

Doculect	Object	
	n	**PP**
C. Urmi	258	16%
C. Shaqlawa	108	12%
J. Sanandaj	386	5%
C. Sanandaj	50	4%
J. Urmi	172	1%

lumping all types of direct objects together, the statistically dominant order overall in the NENA doculects considered here is OV. Table 3 gives the general numerical data for direct object placement in the NENA doculects in Iran as well as C. Shaqlawa (NE Iraq), excluding *wh*-elements.

Different types of objects, however, should be considered in their own right, drawing on the distinctions made in the WOWA data (also possessums, see §3.2.1). Table 4 gives the statistics for direct objects divided in accordance with the additional variables of definiteness and pronominal categories coded in the WOWA corpus, which are illustrated in (13–14). "Pronoun," here, includes personal and

Table 4: Rate of post-predicate (PP) objects divided by definiteness and argument type

Doculect	Indefinite nominal		Other		Definite nominal		Pronoun	
	n	**PP**	***n***	**PP**	***n***	**PP**	***n***	**PP**
C. Urmi	49	49%	19	16%	153	8%	37	8%
C. Shaqlawa	45	13%	7	29%	49	8%	7	29%
J. Urmi	65	0%	13b	8%	87	1%	13	0%
C. Sanandaj	32	3%	–	–	18	6%	(1	0%)
J. Sanandaj	244	3%	20[a]	5%	82[b]	7%	18	0%

[a]This also includes arguments bound as a possessor to the nominal element of light verb constructions.

[b]The four tokens with the idiomatic phrase 'May God give X rest' with VO order in J. Sanandaj have been excluded here (see Noorlander & Molin 2022).

demonstratives, both bare and prepositional, such as (13b) and (14b), but excludes indefinite and reflexive pronouns, which are subsumed under "Other," such as (13c) and (14c). The number of pronominal tokens is, however, relatively low, especially in the case of C. Shaqlawa and C. Sanandaj. It is thus not possible to draw any conclusions about these two dialects without more tokens. Moreover, bound pronominal objects are more common than their independent counterparts in NENA (see Noorlander & Molin 2022).

(13) a. Nominal definite (flagged), Object-Verb
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: A:§18)
ʾay broná ***həl-d-ay*** ***bratá*** *gbe-Ø*
DEM.SG boy.M.SG DOM-GEN-DEM.SG girl.SG.F IND.want-A.3SG.M
'The boy loves **the girl**.'

b. Pronominal, Object-Verb
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: C:§3)
ʾaná ***ʾea*** *šmi-li mən Bahrám*
I this heard.PFV-A.1SG from Bahram
'I heard **this** from Bahram.'

c. Other, Object-Verb
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: A:§48)
kŭl-e *kalw-ā́-wa-le*
all-of.it.SG.M write-A.3PL-PST-O.3SG.M
'They would write **everything** down.'

(14) a. Nominal indefinite, Verb-Object
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A39:§42)
Ø-mayy-ət ˁraba goz-ə
SBJV-bring-A.2SG.M many walnut-PL
'You should bring many walnuts.'

b. Pronominal (flagged), Object-Verb
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A2:§25)
ʾatən ***qa-diyyi*** *bət-ˁqaṭl-ət.'*
you.SG.M DOM-GEN.1SG FUT-kill-A.2SG.M
'You shall kill **me**.'

c. Other, Object-Verb
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A2:§35)
gan-o *ˁrupp-a-la ˁʾal-sepa*
REFL-3SG.F threw.PFV-O.3SG.F-A.3SG.F on-sword.SG.M
'She threw **herself** onto the sword.'

All else being equal, Table 4 demonstrates that OV order has grammaticalized completely in the Jewish doculects as well as Christian Sanandaj. J. Urmi, as represented in Khan (2008b), seems to have the most rigid kind of OV. It is possible, however, that Jewish NENA doculects of Iran collected by Garbell (1965b) and Hopkins (1989), although predominately OV, contain a higher rate of post-predicate Os than Khan (2008b). The higher rate of independent pronouns in Iranian Azerbaijan, namely J. and C. Urmi, may well be due to contact with Azeri. If OV order was completely grammaticalized in Christian Urmi, we would expect a rate similar to that in Jewish Urmi. Definiteness, however, is a major factor in object placement in C. Urmi. An overall decrease in the rate of post-predicate objects can be observed: the indefinite nominals and other pronouns are more likely to occur in pre-verbal position than, respectively, the definite nominals and personal and demonstrative pronouns. This also seems to hold true for C. Shaqlawa, but to a lesser extent still, i.e. only 13% of the indefinite objects are post-predicate.

2.2.2 Verb/goal

The endpoint of motion verbs and caused motion verbs, such as 'to come' and 'to bring' respectively, are subsumed under *Goal* (abbreviated G) here, while *Recipient* (R) refers to the human endpoint of a transfer like 'to give' and *Addressee* (Addr) to that of verbs of speech, e.g. 'to say,' 'to ask,' 'to talk'. *Beneficiaries* (Ben), i.e. indirect participants who are advantaged or disadvantaged by the action, have also been added here for completeness' sake. These argument classes are illustrated in (15–18) for C. Sanandaj. Table 5 displays the statistics resulting from the relevant datasets, which comprises all pronouns and full nominals. Here, the tokens from Younansardaroud (2001) for the dialect of Sardarid have also been added.

(15) a. Goal, motion verb
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 1:§4)
say ***arxe***
IMP.go.SG.M mill.PL
'Go **to the mill**!'

b. Goal, caused motion verb
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 2:§14)
tam-dāre-Ø-le ***gaw ṣanoq-aw***
PST.PFV-put-A.3SG.M-O.3SG.M in chest-his
'He placed him **in the wooden chest**.'

Table 5: Rate of post-predicate (PP) Goals, Recipients and Addressees (nominal and pronominal)

Doculect	G		R		Addr		Ben	
	n	**PP**	***n***	**PP**	***n***	**PP**	***n***	**PP**
J. Urmi	59	86%	19	11%	55	33%	19	32%
C. Urmi	129	92%	11	73%	37	24%	7	43%
C. Sardarid	—	—	11[a]	100%	5[b]	0%	—	—
C. Shaqlawa	44	91%	28	96%	31	97%	18	100%
C. Sanandaj	44	84%	4	75%	5	80%	11	55%
J. Sanandaj	207	91%	38	87%	32	72%	16	81%

[a]Younansardaroud 2001: 11:§5, 13:§1, 13:§2, 15:§3, 17:§1.
[b]Younansardaroud 2001: 9:§3, 15:§4, 16:§2, 2x 16:§3, 2x 16:§5, 2x 16:§6, 17:§8, 17:§10.

(16) Addressee
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 4:§13)
mere ***tlas-a*** *gor-əd* *baxta*
said.PFV.PST.3SG.M to-3SG.F husband.SG.M-CSTR woman.SG.F
'The woman's husband said **to her**...'

(17) Recipient
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 3:§16)
tm-ēw-ə́n-wa-lu ***tlas-ox***
PST.PFV-give-A.1SG.M-PST-O.3PL to-2SG.M
'I had given them **to you**.'

(18) Beneficiary
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 2:§2)
ayət ***ta kalba*** *hādax gī-wəd-lox*
you.SG.M for dog.SG.M such ANT-did-A.2SG.M
'You have done such a thing **for a dog**.'

These data are consistent with the findings in Noorlander & Molin (2022). The post-verbal position is preferred for Goals across all dialects, and the same holds true for Recipients and Addressees in Iranian Kurdistan, here represented by the Jewish and Christian dialects of Sanandaj. The handful of tokens in C. Sanandaj are relatively low, but suggest a typology similar to that of its Jewish counterpart,

except in the case of beneficiaries, which in general do not seem to betray a clear tendency. It is far more common for Addressees than for Recipients to be placed before the verb in the Christian NENA dialects of Urmi and Sardarid (see §3.2.3 for the areal significance of this Addressee/Recipient split), even though Recipients and Addressees are generally marked by the same preposition *qa-*, e.g.

(19) a. Verb-Recipient
C. Sardarid (Younansardaroud 2001: 17:§10)
ʾaxnan xa ton čapač jarāy Ø-yav-ax ***qa darʿbar***
we a ton sawdust must SBJV-give-1PL to court
'We must give a ton of sawdust **to the court**.'

b. Addressee-Verb
C. Sardarid (Younansardaroud 2001: 15:§3)
ʿŠāh ʿʾAbbās ***qa vazir*** *mār=ələ*
Shah Abbas to vizier GRD.say=COP.3SG.M
'Shah Abbas says **to the vizier**...'

In comparison to objects, the placement of the aforementioned endpoint roles turns out to be more flexible overall. In the rare occasion that a ditransitive clause contains two full nominal objects, each argument class typically occurs at either side of the verb: the Theme, like the O, before the verb, but the Recipient, like Goals, after it, and thus OVR as illustrated in (19a). The same order, i.e. OVR, is also common in most Kurdish varieties (Haig 2022). This constituent order is cross-linguistically rare, as most languages reflect a preference to place both arguments at either side (Haspelmath 2015).

In the Jewish Urmi doculect (Khan 2008a), the pre-verbal position of O and R as well as Addressees is apparently the norm. The relative position of the Theme (O) and the Recipient (R) in a ditransitive clause is not entirely fixed, e.g.

(20) a. Recipient-Theme-Verb
J. Urmi (Khan 2008a: §122)
ba-ʿyal-i ʿruzi fərya höl-Ø
to-children-my provision abundant IMP.give-SG

b. Theme-Recipient-Verb
J. Urmi (Khan 2008a: §113)
ʿruzi fərya ba-ʿyal-i höl-Ø
provision abundant to-children-my IMP.give-SG
'Give abundant provision to my children.'

The most common order for the J. Urmi dialect described in Khan (2008a), however, is ROV, especially for pronominal Recipients. A contrastive or topical O may precede the R, and immediately pre-verbal placement may add narrow focus to the Recipient (see also Noorlander & Molin 2022: 244–246).

This notwithstanding, the dominant order in the majority of Trans-Zab Jewish dialects is OVR. Statistics based on others doculects of Jewish NENA in Iran approximate more closely the typology of that of Jewish varieties in Iranian Kurdistan. Texts in Garbell (1965b) and Hopkins (1989) contain far more cases of post-verbal Recipients and Addresseees than our J. Urmi doculect here (Khan 2008a),[7] as illustrated in (21) below, which suggests VR and VAddr are the more frequent position among Trans-Zab Jewish NENA dialects as a whole.

(21) a. Theme-Verb-Recipient
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 149.18)
əsrá dehwé hwəl-le ***ba d-ö*** ***mar***
ten gold.PL gave.PFV-A.3SG.M to GEN-DEM.SG owner.CSTR
xmará
donkey.SG.M
'He gave ten pieces of gold **to the donkey owner**.'

b. Verb-Addressee
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 149.20)
mər-a ***ba d-ö*** ***görá***
said.PFV-A.3SFG to GEN-DEM.SG man.SG.M
'He said **to that man**...'

2.2.3 Become/complement

In contradistinction to direct objects but similarly to Goals, the final state of change-of-state verbs, such as 'to become,' 'to turn into,' typically follows the predicate (e.g. Khan 2008a: 323), as shown in (22). Under this class one may also subsume the complements of 'to name' and 'to fill,' although, here, the object complement does not represent the final outcome of the primary object, but rather specifies the content of the verb. Neverthless, the pre-verbal position seems to be more frequent due to language contact (see §3.1.1). The complement can also be treated as a Recipient in J. Urmi and J. Sanandaj and flagged as such (see Noorlander & Molin 2022: 251–252).

[7] Khan's (2008a) texts are based on one male speaker, as the number of speakers available was much smaller than at the time of Garbell (1965b), who was able to consult more speakers.

(22) a. Become-Complement
J. Solduz (Garbell 1965b: 209)
pra *xdər-e* ***dehwé***
earth.SG.M became.PFV-S.3SG.M gold.PL
'The earth turned **into pieces of gold**.'

b. Object-Verb-Complement
J. Solduz (Garbell 1965b: 231)
tunnú xurjine *⁺məly-i-la* ***dehwé***
both saddle.bag.PL filled.PFV-O.3PL-A.3SG.F gold.PL
'She filled both saddle bags **with pieces of gold**.'

With the verbs 'to say' and 'to make,' the double object construction shifts the semantics to that of 'to name X Y' and 'to make X into Y'. Thus, with the ambivalent verb (C.) *(h)wd* or (J.) *(h)wl* 'to make,' the post-verbal placement of the object correlates with its two-argument valence and the semantics of the resulting condition, i.e. 'to turn into,' rather than the effect of a single argument verb, i.e. 'to make' (Noorlander & Molin 2022: 252–253); contrast *kăbắb* (23a) with (23b) below.

(23) a. Object-Verb
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: B:§35)
kăbắb *kol-i-wa*
kebab.SG.M make-A.3PL-PST
'They made **kebab**.'

b. Verb-Complement
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: B:§35)
kol-í-wa-le ***kăbắb***
make-A.3PL-PST-O.3SG.M kebab.SG.M
'They made it into **kebab**.'

2.2.4 Other obliques

Here, obliques are confined to constituents related to *Place*, such as the locative complement of position verbs like 'to sit,' e.g. (24), and the *Source* of motion, e.g. (25). They are more likely post-predicate than objects, as given in Table 6 for the same datasets, which comprises both lexical and pronominal arguments. In Table 6, we observe that the rate of post-predicate locatives is higher in the Christian varieties overall and in Christian Urmi especially, whereas the Jewish varieties show a stronger verb-final preference. Thus, even in C. Sanandaj, the

rate of post-predicate Oblique is high, while the dialect otherwise patterns almost exactly like its Jewish counterpart. The relatively high rates of post-predicate Obliques suggests a general tendency for local case relations (Source, Place, Goal) to occur after the predicate, at least more frequently than objects. This is matched by similar findings from Balochi, see Nourzaei & Haig (2024 [this volume]).

(24) Place/Locative
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 4:§11)
ay *xōr-e* ***gāw mezgəd*** *ītīw-a* *=le*
DEM.SG friend.SG.M-his in mosque seated.PTCP-SG.M =COP.3SG.M
'That friend of his is sitting **in the mosque**.'

(25) Source/Ablative
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 3:§11)
kod *yōma* *gaz* *m-šāqə́l-Ø-wa-le* ***mən šūqa***
each day honey.SG.M FUT-take-A.3SG.M-PST-O.3SG.M from market
'Every day he bought Turkish honey **from the market**.'

Table 6: Rate of post-predicate (PP) place and source constituents (both nominal and pronominal)

Doculect	Place		Source	
	n	**PP**	***n***	**PP**
C. Urmi	64	81%	39	44%
C. Sanandaj	11	64%	11	100%
C. Shaqlawa	12	58%	7	57%
J. Urmi	40	40%	19	21%
J. Sanandaj	64	39%	28	14%

2.3 Other predicate types

2.3.1 Copulas

Post-predicate copula placement correlates with verb-final syntax (e.g. Dryer 2007: 91; see §2.4.2, for the use of the copula in verbal clauses), and constitutes a typological trait of the languages in the area (e.g. Matras 2009: 270; Haig 2017: 404–405). The syntax of the copula in main clauses in the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects differs from that in the Christian dialects in the same region (Khan 2012b).

Post-predicate placement is almost categorical in these Jewish dialects, with the only exception being certain modal contexts, consistent with an overall higher rate of OV in these Jewish dialects. The post-predicate position is favoured but less fixed in the Christian dialects.

NENA dialects generally distinguish between two copula bases:

(a) pronominal copulas, e.g. C. Urmi *ʾina* 'they are,' J. Urmi *ʾilu* 'they are';

(b) verbal copulas, i.e. *(h)wy* or *(h)vy* 'to be,' e.g. C. Urmi *ʾavi* 'they may be,' J. Urmi *haweni* 'they are'.

Other particles can be added to either base to express negation, past tense, subordination, and deixis, depending on the dialect. Importantly, the latter is excluded from this discussion, since the deictic (or presentative) copula has a fixed pre-predicate position throughout (e.g. Molin 2021: 227–247).

When the copula is placed after a constituent, there is a strong tendency for the copula to undergo cliticization and attachment to the immediately preceding element, for which reason I shall distinguish between bound, i.e. enclitic, and unbound copulas.

Post-predicate, thus often bound, copulas are used in present and/or past tense affirmative clauses, e.g.

(26) a. Predicate-Copula, present (bound)
J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 1A:§1)
ʾoni=š *beʿeṛəx* *tremma* *nafar-e* ***=lu***
they=ADD approximately two.hundred person-PL =COP.3PL
'They **are** about two hundred people.'

b. Predicate-Copula, past
J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 1A:§1)
kullú *ʾoni* *xet* *mšəlmān-é* ***we-lū***
all.of.them those others Muslim-PL COP.PST-3PL
'All those others **were** Muslims.'

(27) a. Predicate-Copula, present (bound)
C. Koy Sanjaq (Askar 2021: 215.§10)
šm-ew *šúmʿŭn* ***=ile*** *ba ăṣəl*
name.SG.M-his Simon =COP.3SG.M in origin
'His name **is** actually Simon.'

b. Predicate-Copula, past
C. Koy Sanjaq (Askar 2021: 220.§25)
ana dkan-əd osta akram ***yən-wa***
I shop-of artisan Akram COP.1SG.M-PST
'I **was** in the artisan shop Akram.'

In deontic contexts, especially in idiomatic wishes, Copula-Predicate order is used in all dialects, e.g.

(28) Copula-Predicate
J. Shino (Garbell 1965b: 231.7)
ˁšultaná ***Ø-hawe-Ø*** *basim-a*
king.SG.M SBJV-be-3SG.M healthy-SG.M
'May the king **be** blessed!'

(29) Copula-Predicate
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A2:§4)
malka ***Ø-ʾav-ət*** *basim-a*
king.SG.M SBJV-be-2SG.M healthy-SG.M
'May the king **be** well!'

All copula forms, whether bound or unbound, follow the predicate in all Jewish dialects of Iran and most Jewish dialects of northeastern Iraq, except in these deontic contexts.

The copula placement is more free in the Christian varieties, and the Jewish dialects in the Erbil region. Moreover, the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects in Iraq differ in negative copula placement. It can either follow or precede the predicate in J. Arbel (Khan 1999: 320), while the negative copula follows the nominal predicate in J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 107) and J. Sulemaniyya (Khan 2004: 254), as it does in the Jewish dialects of Iran. Copula syntax is summarized in Table 7 by contrasting Christian and Jewish Urmi.

The unbound copula freely occurs before the predicate in the dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan, and similarly also other dialects in Iraq such as C. Diyana (Napiorkowska 2015), as illustrated in (30a), instead of being cliticized to the predicate, e.g. (30b). The cliticization of the copula to the *subject* constituent, such as *garda* 'net' in *ˁham gárdə=la ˁallo* 'also a net is on her' (Khan 2016: II: 289), is rare. The complement occurs after the copula in 16/96 (17%) cases in the C. Urmi doculect and 11/86 (13%) cases in the C. Shaqlawa doculect, which, as expected, occurs more frequently than in the J. Sanandaj doculect, which only has 5/215 (2%) cases. Copula-Predicate order with a lexical subject, as shown in (30a), can

Table 7: Copula placement in Jewish and Christian Urmi

	C. Urmi	J. Urmi
'My son is hungry.'	*bruni kpắnə=**lə***	*brönắ kpiná=**ile***
'He is hungry.'	*kpắnə=**lə***	*kpiná=**ile***
'I am a king.'	*ʾana xa malk=**ən***	*ʾaná xa ⁺šültane=**len***
'Who is your friend?'	*xorux máni=**lə***	*⁺barüxőx mắni=**le***
'My son is not hungry.'	*bruni **lelə** kpina*	*brönắ kpiná **lewe***
'He is/IS hungry.'	*ʾ**ilə** kpina*	—
'I am/AM a king.'	*ʾana ʾ**ivən** xa malka*	—

be analysed as a cleft sentence, i.e. 'I am (the one who is) the vizir of your father,' which is used in contexts of identification and specification and the expression of properties that are permanent or contra-presuppositional (Khan 2016: II: 158–162).

(30) a. Copula-Predicate
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A2:§25)
*ʾana ʾ**īn-va** vazzir-ət bab-ət diyy-ux*
I COP.1SG-PST vizier-CSTR father-CSTR GEN-2SG.M
'I **was** the vizier of your father.'

b. Predicate-Copula
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A2:§25)
*ʾana ʾatxa naš=**ən-va***
I such man.SG.M=COP.1SG-PST
'I **was** such a **man**.'

As compared in (31) and (32), while the affirmative copula tends to be post-predicate, the negative copula is generally pre-predicate in Christian dialects, contrast *=la* 'she is' and *lewa* 'she is not' in (31) and *=ən* 'I am' and *lēn* 'I am not' in (32).

(31) a. Copula-Predicate
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 23:§28)
*har máre-wən bráte **=la***
every.time say.INF-1SG.M girl.SG.F =COP.3SG
'I keep saying **it is** a girl.'

b. Predicate-Copula
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 23:§28)
har *máre-wat* ***lewa*** *brata*
every.time say.INF-2SG.F NEG.COP.3SG.F girl.SG.F
'You keep saying **it is not** a girl.'

(32) a. Copula-Predicate
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A43:§15)
ʾána=da ***lēn*** *tliqa yala*
I=ADD NEG.COP.1SG lost child
'I **am not** a lost child.'

b. Predicate-Copula
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A43:§15)
ána=da brūn-malk ***=ən***
I=ADD son-king =COP.1SG
'I **am** the son of a king.'

Finally, the Christian dialects may have a special copula that fuses the relativizer *d* with the copula, e.g. *d* 'that/which/who' + *ʾile* 'is' > *ṯ-ile* 'that/which/who is,' e.g.

(33) Copula-Predicate
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 4:§42)
ṣăṭáne *=le* ***ṯ-ile*** *xor-a*
devil.SG.M =COP.3SG REL-COP.3SG.M friend.SG.M-her
'It is the devil **who is** her friend.'

2.3.2 Auxiliaries

The combination of Verb-Auxiliary and Object-Verb ordering is considered to be a form of harmonic word order (e.g. Dryer 1992: 100), since both are considered head-final in the standard assumption that the auxiliary constitutes the head of auxiliary in content verb pairings, since it bears verbal inflectional properties pertinent to the clause. The copula can serve as an auxiliary in NENA dialects, expressing several TAM properties as well as negation together with the non-finite verb. The syntax of the copula as an auxiliary in a verbal predicate can sometimes differ from its syntax in a non-verbal predicate.

First of all, as expected, the Object-Verb-Auxiliary pattern of the copula is what we find in the Jewish Trans-Zab dialects, as illustrated in (34a). Future and modal

auxiliaries, such as ⁺*msy* 'be able' in (34b), show Auxiliary-Object-Verb order in–at least historically–same subject modal complements.

(34) a. Object-Verb-Auxiliary
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 194)
balki xa danká mən-nu əl-d-o araqčə́n
maybe a CLF from-3PL DOM-GEN-DEM.SG cap.SG.M
xəzy-á Ø-hawe-la
seen.PTCP-O.SG.M SBJV-be-A.3SG.F
'Maybe one of them **would have seen** that cap.'

b. Auxiliary-Object-Verb
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 194)
⁺məssé *⁺maé m-mešá* ***⁺palə́t-Ø***
can.3SG.M water.PL in-forest.SG.F take.out.SBJV-A.3SG.M
'He **would be able to find** water in the forest.'

In northeastern Iraq, however, the negative copula, which functions as a negative auxiliary with certain verbal forms, always precedes the content verb in J. Koy Sanjaq, such as *lewan* in (35), and contrasts with its post-predicate placement as a copula (Mutzafi 2004: 108) in §2.3.1. Other Trans-Zab Jewish dialects do not make use of this, but place a negator (*la*) before the verb phrase, such as Neg-V-Aux in (36).

(35) Object-Negative Auxiliary-Verb
J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 2A:§4)
ʾixalá ***le-wan*** *xəl-tá*
food.SG.M NEG-COP.A.1SG.F eaten.PTCP-A.SG.F
'**I have not** eaten any food.'

(36) Object-Negator-Verb-Auxiliary
J. Sulemaniyya (hypothetical example based on Khan 2004)
xalá ***la****-xəlte* ***=yan***
food.SG.M NEG-eaten.PTCP-A.SG.F =COP.A.1SG.F
'**I have not** eaten any food.'

The Christian NENA varieties, in turn, favour Auxiliary-Verb order throughout, as illustrated in (37), without affecting the Object-Verb order. C. Urmi could be characterised as 'VO' in light of the pre-verbal auxiliary placement in contrast

to the Verb-Auxiliary order in others dialects where OV predominates throughout (Khan 2020: 399). There is no a priori reason, however, to consider the position of the auxiliary more 'basic' than that of the object in the manifestation of Aux-OV order, cf. also Dutch and German, which also exhibit Aux-OV order in main clauses and are generally considered V-final in formal approaches to word order. See also Stilo (2015: 345) on Aux-OV in same subject 'want' complements in Colloquial Armenian and Azeri; Aux-OV is also the norm for Kurdish (see Mohammadirad 2024 [this volume]).

(37) a. Auxiliary-Object-Verb
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: B17L§4)
ʾaxnan ***k-av-ax-va*** *makkə praxa*
we IND-be-1PL-PST maize.PL hull.INF
'while we **were hulling** the maize'

b. Auxiliary-Object-Verb
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A16:§3)
lá-ʿʾams-ən *ʾid-i* ***yavv-ən-na***
NEG-can-S.1SG.M hand.SG.F-my give-A.1SG.M-O.3SG.F
'I **cannot give** my hand.'

2.3.3 Complement of non-finite verbs

Finally, the complement of non-finite verb follows the syntax of the complement of finite verbs. Thus, phasal verbs like 'to begin' can combine with a nominal or non-finite form of the verb, such as an infinitive or gerund, respectively. If the nominal/non-finite form of the verb had followed the common pattern of Noun-Attribute, the order would have been Verb-Complement, as would be expected for the majority of NENA dialects. However, in the Trans-Zab Jewish dialects, if the complement corresponds with an object, it also betrays the same syntax, and is thus placed before the non-finite verb, as shown in (38a). The placement of the prefixal preposition *b-* before the complement *ʔərbe* 'sheep' of the infinitive *zwana* 'to sell' suggests a type of compounding or noun incorporation strategy, i.e. 'He began sheep-selling'. Interestingly, the same order occurs in C. Urmi, as shown in (38b), although here the preposition *b-* always attaches to the verbal form. How common this is among the other NENA dialects in the region requires further investigation.

(38) a. Object-Verb(Non-finite)
J. Arbel (Khan 1999: S:§72)
bde-le *bə-ʔərbe* *zwana*
begin.PFV-A.3MSG at-sheep.PL selling.INF
'He began selling sheep.'

b. Object-Verb(Non-finite)
C. Urmi
ˁšuri-lun *ʔərbə* *bə-zvana*
begin.PFV-A.3PL sheep.PL at-selling.INF
'They began selling sheep.'

3 Areal issues

In the NENA-speaking area, predicate-final order becomes more prevalent in the east, where, today, varieties of Central Kurdish are dominant.[8] The convergence towards OV in the Christian NENA varieties of Iranian Azerbaijan, however, is incomplete, as it still maintains a greater degree of flexibility for object placement and betrays features of predicate-initial typology (§3.2) in its ordering of indefinite objects and possessums (§3.2.1), and that of light verb complements (§3.2.2, see also §2.3.2 on auxiliaries). Thus, although Christian Urmi is by sheer frequency characterizable as predicate-final, it is, on closer examination, typologically more mixed than the Tran-Zab Jewish group.

The areal convergence in word order can be merely incidental, such as in the case of Noun-Genitive, Demonstrative-Noun-Adjective, and the prevalence of Verb-Goal and Become-Complement, which are common to Semitic and Iranian. The higher rates of OV in the main dialects discussed in this chapter, however, are doubtless due to influence from neighbouring OV languages, and yet the outcome differs per region and community. For example, the word order profile of the Jewish and Christian dialects of Sanandaj as representative of the dialects of Iranian Kurdistan matches in many ways that of the local Iranian varieties, i.e. Central Kurdish and Gorani (see Mohammadirad 2024 [this volume]). The fact that they show a similar general tendency towards Object-Verb and Predicate-Copula order is most likely due to contact with Iranian. However, many configurations are still liable to language-internal developments, such as the syntax of objects, which is sensitive to definiteness in dialects like C. Urmi. Moreover, the same syntactic structure is attested where contact with neighbouring OV languages presumably played no direct role, such as Aux-OV order

[8]This corresponds to Stilo's (2005) Buffer Zone 1, bordering a low OV and high OV zone.

and the pre-verbal placement of the object before non-finite verbal forms (see 2.3.3). The syntax of copulas and auxiliaries (see 2.3.2 and 2.3.2) also exhibits language-internal peculiarities. Convergence in word order can thus be partly understood as contact-induced reinforcement of pre-existing parallel patterns (e.g. Silva-Corvalán 1994, 2008[9]; Heine 2008: 42–43, 48–49), which presupposes that syntactic OV presumably goes back to an original situation of more fluid order driven by pragmatic configurations.

Areal features are present in all Trans-Zab Jewish varieties, but the effect of contact on Christian varieties seems to be more varied. Doubtless, speakers' attitudes play a crucial role in susceptibility to contact-induced change in NENA dialects (Noorlander 2014) and thus word order shifts. One may think that Christian NENA varieties show considerably higher rates of VO than their Jewish peers. This seems to hold true for the Christian dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan, but it does not seem to apply to the southeasterly located dialects such as Christian Shaqlawa, Koy Sanjaq, Sulemaniyya and Sanandaj, where OV seems to be as rigid as it can be in Trans-Zab Jewish dialects.

Regional effects, in turn, may also cut across communal differences. Both Jewish and Christian NENA dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan, for instance, show a higher rate of Addressee-Verb order for verbs of speech, which parallels the northernmost dialects of Kurdish (Haig 2022), and Adjective-Noun order for evaluative adjectives, which parallels Azeri. On the other hand, other features are completely insensitive to word order shifts: flagging, for instance, remains prepositional in all NENA dialects, and none of the Neo-Aramaic varieties discussed here have developed a system of postpositions, despite having undergone a shift from VO to OV.

Further research is required on the embedding of the shift from VO to OV in other internally and externally caused developments, as well as on the social-historical circumstances. Moreover, it is possible that the shift documented for NENA, especially in the east, is ultimately rooted in the spoken varieties of Mesopotamia during the Achaemenid period.[10]

3.1 Iraqi and Iranian Kurdistan

3.1.1 Complement/become

Similarly to Kurdish, a general post-predicate proclivity becomes apparent in object complements (see §2.2.3) of verbs of naming and turning something into

[9] I am indebted to G. Haig for directing my attention to this reference.

[10] See Haig et al. (In press) for a discussion of this from a wider areal and typological perspective.

something else in the Jewish varieties of northeastern Iraq and Iranian Kurdistan. The Iranian preposition *ba-* (see Mohammadirad 2024 [this volume]) has been transferred into these Jewish varieties along with the pattern, e.g.

(39) a. Verb-Complement
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: D:§1)
xir-Ø ***ba**-xá* *broná*
became.PFV-S.3SG.M to-INDEF boy.SG.M
'He became a boy.'

b. Verb-Complement
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: B:§41)
kol-i-wa-le ***ba**-lešá*
make-A.3PL-PST-O.3MS to-dough.MS
'They made it into dough.'

This tendency for post-predicate placement is, however, not supported by the statistics, as the pre-verbal position, for example in (40) below, occurs far more often than in the NENA dialects outside of the relevant area. The rate of post-predicate final states is 22% (4/18) in C. Shaqlawa, 27% (3/11) in J. Urmi, 30% (12/41) in J. Sanandaj, and 62% (8/13) in C. Urmi, which can be contrasted with 90% (18/20) in C. Barwar.

(40) a. Complement-Verb
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 35:§33)
ʾen-aw ***kor*** *pəš-lu*
eye.PL-his blind became.PFV-S.3SG.M
'His eyes became **blind**.'

b. Complement-Verb
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 28:§19)
ʾāt *bet-i* ***nura*** *qam-ʾawd-ət-e*
you.SG house.SG.M-my fire.SG.F PST.PFV-make-A.2SG.M-O.3SG.M
'You have turned my home **into a hell**.'

3.1.2 Light-verb complements

Light verb constructions are also consistent with their usage in neighbouring languages, the non-referential nominal element preceding the light verb. The object NP, as expected, occurs before the complex verb, e.g. (41). In Christian dialects of northeastern Iraq, recent Arabic loans are also incorporated into this strategy (Hakeem 2021: 474–475), e.g. (42).

(41) Noun-Light Verb
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 126:§16)
xay-u *ləbas-i* ***ḥazər k-od-i-lu***
one-of.them clothes-my ready IND-make-A.3PL-O.3PL
'One of them **prepares** my clothes.'

(42) Noun-Light Verb
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 12:§28)
dăbi ʾana ***ʾistəraḥat Ø-ʾawd-ən***
must I rest SBJV-do-1SG.M
'I must **rest**.'

3.1.3 Attribute/noun

The NENA dialects in this area have, in general, not changed the placement of attributes, contrary to the dialects in Iranian Azerbaijan (§3.2.5). Attribute-Noun order is infrequent in the majority of NENA dialects, drawing attention to the listener with additional emotional weight from the speaker's perspective. This position thus rarely occurs with more objective statements, except when two or more attributes are contrasted.[11] In several cases, however, the lexical item or morpheme is transferred along with the pattern. In (43a) below, for instance, the Persian loan-adjective *behtarīn* 'best' precedes the noun, and thus follows the expected Iranian order for superlatives. Interestingly, in (43b) below, the originally Kurdish adjective *zirej* precedes the head, presumably for pragmatic reasons, even though Noun-Adjective order is also the convention in Kurdish.

(43) a. Adjective-Noun
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 122:§9)
behtarîn ixale
best food.SG.M
'the best kinds of food'

b. Adjective-Noun
C. Diyana (Napiorkowska 2015: 301)
rɒba zirej *naš-e*
much clever.INVAR person-PL
'very clever people'

[11]See Gutman (2018: 143, 224, 232–233, 246–247, 250, 255).

The adjective *xoš* is another case in point: it is a Persian *Wanderwort* in the NENA speaking area – also found in Turkish and Iraqi Arabic – and seems to be equally compatible with Adjective-Noun order in virtually all NENA dialects, in particular in combination with the noun *naša* 'man':

(44) Adjective-Noun
C. Shaqlawa (Khan et al. 2022: Text 17:§12)
xoš naša
good man.SG.M
'a good man'

(45) Adjective-Noun
J. Arbel (Khan 1999: 462.§326)
xoš naše=le
good man=COP.3SG.M
'He is a good man.'

Furthermore, ordinal numbers in the Jewish NENA dialects of northeastern Iraq and Iranian Kurdistan all add the Iranian suffix *-(a)min* to the native Aramaic numeral, e.g. *tmanyamắn* 'eighth' from *tmanya* 'eight' + *min*. Ordinals follow their heads as attributes as they do in the majority of NENA dialects, and this order incidentally convergences with Kurdish. In J. Sanandaj, however, the ordinal can also precede the noun as it does in Gorani (MacKenzie 1966: 24), e.g.

(46) Ordinal-Noun
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: 213)
arba-mắn gorá
four-ORD man.SG.F
'fourth man'

3.2 Iranian Azerbaijan

3.2.1 Object/verb and possessum/existential

There is a direct correlation between object and possesum placement in NENA dialects. In locative-exisential possessor constructions, exemplified in (47–48), the possessum can be considered the object-like argument, and hence, not surprisingly, it occupies the same position as object NPs in verbal clauses in the majority of NENA dialects. Figure 2 shows the post-predicate possessum placement and the corresponding figures for definite objects. The VO dialects of NENA,

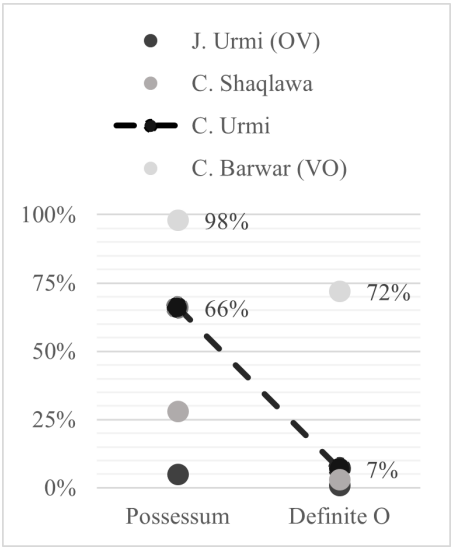

Figure 2: Rate of post-predicate (PP) possessums and definite objects

represented here by Barwar (northwestern Iraq) in the top, and the OV dialects of NENA, represented by J. Urmi in the bottom, are largely consistent throughout, although definiteness is a factor of preverbal object placement in C. Barwar. The possessum (25 out of 38), however, occurs post-verbally far more often than definite objects in C. Urmi, and is comparable to *in*definite objects (24 out of 49, see §2.2.1). It is conceivable that discourse organisation also plays a role in possessum-possessor constructions. Since possessums are generally indefinite, we would expect to observe the same distribution. The post-predicate possessums occur more frequently still, although not in a statistically significant way. This higher rate of post-predicate possessums might be due to formulaic language, e.g. opening formulas introducing discourse-new arguments, as illustrated in (47), which would favour post-predicate placement.

(47) Existential-Possessum
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A39:§1)
ʾət-va ***xa-malka.*** *ʾaha* *malka* *ʾát-va-le* ***ʿṭla***
EXIST-PST one-king.SG.M DEM.SG.M king.SG.M EXIST-PST-3SG.M three
bnunə
son.PL
'There was **a king**. This king had **three sons**.'

(48) Possessum-Existential
C. Sanandaj (Panoussi 1990: 3:§1–2)
xa gora *k-awe… ay gora məšulman-a* ***tre išənyase***
one man.SG.M IND-be DEM.SG man.SG.M muslim-SG.M two woman.PL
k-āwe-le
IND-be-POSS.3SG.M
'There was (lit. is) **a man**… This Muslim man had (lit. has) **two wives**.'

3.2.2 Light-verb complements

Moreover, similarly to indefinite objects and to possessums, the nominal element of light verb constructions from Kurdish, Persian and Azeri can occur after the light verb in C. Urmi, e.g. *kullə ʾodilun* ***⁺hazər*** 'they should prepare everything' (Khan 2016: A3:§70). By contrast, such non-referential nominal elements precede the light verb in J. Urmi as do all types of objects and possessums (Garbell 1965a: 173), e.g. *ixalé* ***⁺hazər*** *wudun* 'prepare food!' (J. Urmi, Garbell 1965b: 156).

3.2.3 Addressee/verb & verb/goal

Addressees, in turn, seem to have shifted in the same predicate-final direction as objects in Iranian Azerbaijan (§2.2.2), which is more prevalent in the northeast. Here, the syntactic organisation is role-specific and area-specific. The pre-verbal Addresseee but post-verbal Goal and Recipient split in C. Urmi and Sardarid Azerbaijan matches the findings for some varieties of Central Kurdish and northernmost dialects of Northern Kurdish (Haig 2022: 358–359; Mohammadirad 2024 [this volume]). Influence from especially Azeri and Persian but also Armenian, however, cannot be ruled out either. A higher rate of Verb-Goal order, for example, also occurs in local Azeri dialects due to Colloquial Persian influence (Kıral 2001: 75–77).

3.2.4 Complement/become

The Complement, i.e. a resulting condition, is generally placed before the verb in the NENA dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan studied here, which may even be fronted before the object, as can be observed in (49). This pre-predicate placement matches the word order in Turkic and Persian, rather than what is expected in Kurdish. The same holds true for Recipient-Theme-Verb order in the Jewish Urmi material in Khan (2008b), as exemplified by (20) in §2.2.2.

(49) Complement-Object-Verb
C. Sardarid (Younansardaroud 2001: 15:§1)
trə ʾaxunvatə ʿtla d-ani vəd-li
two brother.PL three GEN-DEM.PL made.PFV-1SG
'Into two brothers I turned three of them.'

3.2.5 Attribute/noun

Adjective-Noun and Genitive-Noun, alongside Object-Verb, are the dominant orders in Turkic languages that NENA dialects in Iranian Azerbaijan have been in contact with,[12] which could be considered parallel to the shift from VO to OV (Gutman 2018: 222, 233, 250–251). The complement of nominal forms of the verb, such as agent nominalisations or participles ending in *-ana*, precedes the verb in compound-like attributes across Trans-Zab Jewish NENA dialects, similarly to their OV typology, contrast (50a) with (50b) and (50c). In C. Urmi, the attribute generally follows the head, as given in (51a), but sporadically the opposite order does occur, as illustrated in (51b). Also, when the adjective constitutes the head of a compound, J. Urmi patterns in a head-final fashion but C. Urmi head-initial, cf. J. Urmi *dəqná-xwará* lit. 'beard-white' and C. Urmi lit. *xvār-dəqna* 'white-beard' for 'grey-bearded'.

(50) a. Noun-Genitive
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965a)
gör-ət ***xalünt-xun***
husband.SG.M-CSTR sister.SG.F-your.2PL
'the husband of **your sister**'

b. Genitive-Noun
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 212)
xalünt-xun *gör-an-a*
sister.SG.F-your.2PL marry-AGN-SG.M
'**your sister's** husband'

c. Genitive-Noun (compound-like)
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 86)
masy-e *döq-an-a*
fish-PL catch-AGN-SG.M
'fisherman, lit. **fish** catcher'

[12] See also Garbell (1965b: 171–172), Khan (2016: 39), Gutman (2018: 220–224, 332–334).

(51) a. Noun-Genitive
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: III:44)
doq-an-əd ***nuyn-e***
catch-AGN-CSTR fish-PL
'fisherman, lit. catcher of **fish**'

b. Genitive-Noun
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A48:§32)
ʾo ***prəzla*** ***ʿtaptəpp-án-a*** *damurči*
DEM.SG iron.SG.M bash-AGN-SG.M blacksmith.SG.M
'the **iron hammerer** blacksmith'

Similarly, ordinal numbers formed out of the fusion of the Iranian suffix *-amin* and Turkic suffix *-inji* (-IncI) also precede the noun in J. Urmi as they do in the source language of this morphological transfer, e.g. *xa tre-minji baxtá* 'a second woman' (Garbell 1965b: 206).

Finally, more frequent Adjective-Noun order due to Azeri occurs among NENA speakers in Iranian Azerbaijan. Contrast the following two near-identical descriptions in J. Sanandaj (W Iran) and J. Urmi (NW Iran):

(52) Noun-Adjective
J. Sanandaj (Khan 2009: B:§158)
kništa ***rab-ta***=*w* *kništa* ***zor-ta***
synagogue.SG.F big-SG.F=and synagogue.SG.F small-SG.F
'a **big** synagogue and a **small** synagogue'

(53) Adjective-Noun
J. Urmi (Khan 2008b: §156)
xa ***rab-ta*** *knəšta* *xa* ***zör-ta*** *knəšta*
a big-SG.F synagogue.SG.F a small-SG.F synagogue.SG.F
'a **big** synagogue and a **small** synagogue'

Table 8 contrasts corpus-based frequencies of Adjective-Noun order for the adjectives 'small, young' and 'red' in Jewish and Christian Urmi. This is consistent with a dominant Noun-Adjective order in C. Urmi (Khan 2016: II:39). There is a greater degree of flexibility in J. Urmi,[13] however, and a dominant order cannot be identified for more evaluative adjectives like *zora* 'small, young' in this dialect.

[13]See Garbell (1965b: 82–84), Khan (2008a: 216–219); Gutman (2018).

Table 8: Rate of AdjN in NENA dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan

	J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b[a]; Khan 2008b)		C. Urmi (Khan 2016)	
	n	**ADJ-N**	***n***	**ADJ-N**
small, young	33	49%	81[b]	6%
red	20	0%	18	0

[a]including Jewish Shino.
[b]excluding the high frequency idiom *yala sura* 'baby.'

When two adjectives modify the noun, they can also be placed at either side, cf. (54c). When the adjective modifies a noun that is part of a nominal annexation construction, however, it tends to follow the noun phrase, as illustrated in (54d).

(54) a. Adjective-Noun
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 83)
zür-ta *xalünt-u*
small-SG.F sister.SG.F-their
'their **youngest** sister'

b. Noun-Adjective
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 172)
brata ***zür-ta***
girl.SG.F small-SG.F
'the **youngest** daughter'

c. Adjective-Noun-Adjective
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 192)
xa ***zür-ta*** *tkana* ***šüšaband***
a small-SG.F shop.SG.F glass.covered
'a **small glass-covered** shop'

d. Noun-Genitive-Adjective
J. Urmi (Garbell 1965b: 86)
brat-ət *ⁱšültana* ***zür-ta***
girl.SG.F king.SG.M small-SG.F
'the king's **youngest** daughter'

Adjective/Noun configurations are said not to correlate with other configurations (e.g. Dryer 1992: 95–96), but the above finding for Jewish Urmi warrants

further research into this understudied area. For example, is the syntax of adjectives more likely to be affected by contact than other nominal attributes or not?

Furthermore, sporadically, the attribute can consist of a gerundial verb phrase preceding the head noun, reminiscent of the Relative-Noun order in Turkic (Garbell 1965a: 173), e.g. (55–56).

(55) Numeral-Adjective-Gerund-Noun
C. Urmi (Khan 2016: A56:§1)
xa šaβər-ta max ⁺šrá bəllaya brata
a beautiful-SG.F like lantern shine.GRND girl.SG.F
'a beautiful girl shining like a lantern'

(56) Gerund-Noun
J. Shino/Solduz (Garbell 1965b: 84)
ba-šatoe xriw-e ⁺mae
for-drink.GRND bad-PL water.PL
'water bad for drinking'

3.2.6 Standard/adjective

Finally, in the Jewish dialects of Iranian Azerbaijan, all instances of the standard of comparison seem to occur consistently before the adjective rather than after it, compare (57) with (58). A stronger preference for the position before the predicate converges with the typology of local OV languages.

(57) Standard-Adjective
J. Solduz (Garbell 1965b: 211.19)
mənn-áw *⁺raba ⁺raba bis-sqil-é ita g-d-ay ⁺ahrá*
from-her very very more-beautiful-PL EXIST in-GEN-DEM.SG.F city.SG.F
'There are far, far more beautiful women **than she** in this city.'

(58) Adjective-Standard
J. Koy Sanjaq (Mutzafi 2004: 1B:§24)
ʾo bā́š-faqir Ø-hawé-Ø ***mənn-éw***
he more-poor SBJV-be-3SG.M from-3SG.M
'Even if he is poorer **than him**.'

Abbreviations

1	1st person	IMP	Imperative
2	2nd person	J.	Jewish (linguistic variety)
3	3rd person	LINK	linker
A	agent	M	masculine
ADD	additive	n	total number of tokens
Addr	addresseee	NENA	Northeastern Neo-Aramaic
ADJ	adjective	NP	Noun phrase
AGN	agent nominalization	O	object
ANT	anterior	PL	plural
AUX	auxiliary	PP	post-predicate
BEN	beneficiary	PRED	predicate
C.	Christian (linguistic variety)	PST	past
COP	copula	PTCP	participle
CSTR	construct	R	recipient
DEM	demonstrative	REFL	Reflexive
DOM	Diffrential Object Marking	S	subject (intransitive)
EXIST	existential	SG	singular
F	feminine	St	standard of comparison
G	Goal	V	verb
GEN	genitive	WOWA	= Haig et al. (2022)
GRD	gerund		

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