

# GRAMMATICALIZATION OF ADNOMINAL DEMONSTRATIVES IN NEO-ARAMAIC

Towards the creation of a simple determiner

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**ABSTRACT** • This paper focuses on the grammaticalization of adnominal demonstratives towards simple determiners in Neo-Aramaic, a dialectal cluster belonging to the Semitic family. Scholars still do not agree about the presence of a definite article in NA and in Aramaic dialectology the systems of demonstratives and determiners have not yet received sufficient attention from a comparative point of view. New grammaticalized items seem not to act like traditional determiners since they encode, besides definiteness, a related though not totally overlapping feature: specificity.

**KEYWORDS** • Aramaic; Semitic; definiteness; specificity; grammaticalization

## 1. Introduction

Neo-Aramaic dialects gained the attention of the academic world since the 19th-century, but their systematic study and description has started quite recently, pushed by the increasing scholars' awareness of the facing extinction they risk. A complete description of the dialectal system has yet to come, since many dialects are by now still unknown or have simply disappeared. Furthermore, Neo-Aramaic can be described as a fragmented linguistic system characterized by such internal variation that often its dialects are mutually unintelligible. In-depth descriptive works of Neo-Aramaic as a dialectal system and its main typological features are lacking above all.

From a typological point of view a really interesting topic is definiteness, by which we mean an universal syntactic category encoded through syntax, semantics and/or pragmatics. Definite articles and demonstratives are the most common overt markers of definiteness. Since its late stage (2nd century BC- 2nd century AD), Aramaic does not possess proper definite articles, but there is evidence that some Neo-Aramaic varieties did develop it: this is the case of Ṭuroyo (Jastrow 2005). In other dialects the adnominal demonstrative is grammaticalizing into a new marker lacking deictic force that can therefore be considered as a real definite article. As it will be shown, this new grammaticalized item does not encode only definiteness, but also specificity, a particular kind of definiteness that helps explaining peculiar Neo-Aramaic uses of the new item.

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## 2. Neo-Aramaic dialects

Aramaic is a group of languages belonging to the North-Western branch of the Semitic family. By now a minority language spoken as a first language by various small and isolated communities in the Middle East, Aramaic used to have an extraordinary importance as a *lingua franca* of the Neo-Assyrian and Achaemenid Empires (I millennium BC) and served as language of poetry, religion and culture for most part of the I Millennium AD (Khan 2007: 3). Because of multiple events that took place during the last century, many speakers of NA dialects have become displaced from this area. As a result, a large number of dialects are no longer spoken in their homeland and are highly endangered, while several have become extinct over the last few decades (Khan 2005: 708).

### 2.1. Aramaic dialectal continuum

We can identify four different sub-branches of Aramaic as it is spoken today (Neo-Aramaic, henceforth NA). The sub-grouping is motivated by diatopic variation and geographical isolation of every branch to the others (Khan 2007: 6):

- 1) a Western group spoken mainly by Christians in Ma'lula, Bax'a and Jubb'adīn, in South-Western Syria, called North-Western Neo-Aramaic (henceforth Nwana);
- 2) a central group of dialects spoken around Ṭūr 'Abdīn, in South-Western Turkey, such as Ṭuroyo e Mlaḥsô;
- 3) Neo-Mandaic, spoken by Mandeans from Ahwaz, Iran, and in the surrounding regions;
- 4) North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (henceforth NENA), including all the dialects spoken from the East of Tigris to Western Iran.

Kim (2008) criticizes this view, saying that Aramaic dialects never went through real phases of mutual isolation. Historical evidence shows a wide net of connections inside Aramaic-speaking world through migrations, trading, culture. These dialectal systems share many typological traits and Kim prefers to talk about a *geographically discontinuous dialectal continuum* (ibid.: 9). Diatopic variation still remains fundamental in NA subgrouping, specially inside NENA dialects, as they are spoken in a wide area. Diastatic variation also occurs: “in certain parts of the oriental world confessional affiliation is of primary linguistic importance, for in addition to geographical origin, religion too will have a decisive influence on (a) which language a person speaks, and (b) how he speaks it” (Hopkins 1999: 321). Christian NENA dialects greatly differ from the Jewish varieties, sometimes even those spoken in the very same town, as can be seen from a couple of examples from the Christian and Jewish dialects of Sulemaniyya (Khan 2009: 3):

Jewish dialect	Christian dialect	
<i>belá</i>	<i>bésa</i>	“home”
<i>'ilá</i>	<i>'ída</i>	“hand”
<i>'at</i>	<i>'ayit</i>	“you (m.)”
<i>'at</i>	<i>'ayat</i>	“you (f.)”
<i>qiṭla-le</i>	<i>tam-qaṭilla</i>	“he killed her”

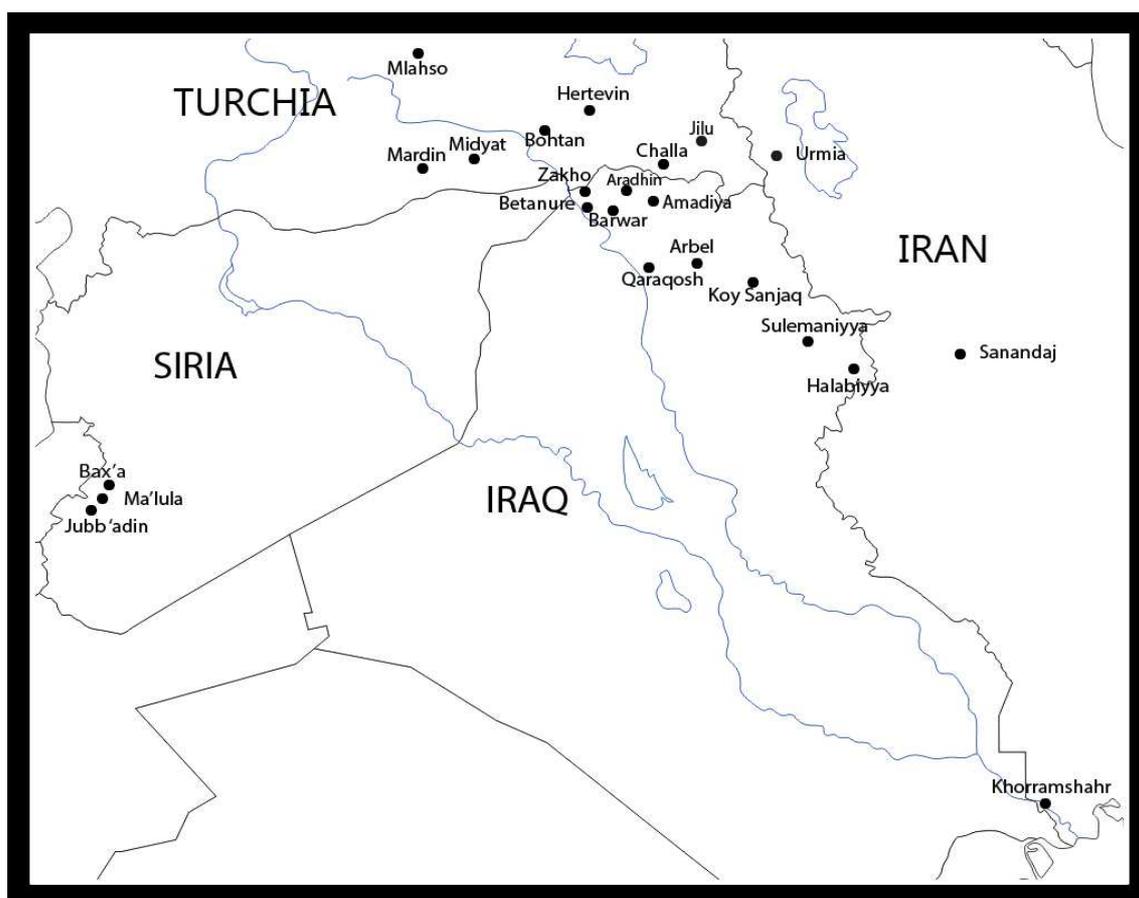
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-ye	-ile	3m.s. copula
-ya	-ila	3f.s. copula
-yen	-ilu	3pl. copula
ke	k-ase	“he comes”

## 2.2. Data

The status of endangerment in which Neo-Aramaic dialects fell in modern times caused many troubles to scholars interested in defining and describing them. The diaspora to which Aramaic speakers were forced is a further obstacle to a thorough analysis of the NA continuum.

The present investigation has been made on available descriptive grammars and includes data from NENA dialects that are diatopically and diastratically different. Furthermore, the scope has been widened as to include other sub-branches, with data taken from ʿTuroyo and Mlaḥsô (North-Western Neo-Aramaic) and the Neo-Mandaic dialect of Khorramshahr. The demonstrative systems of the dialects under investigation have been described from a phonomorphological and a semantic-pragmatic point of view (Gasparini 2014). Here, the focus will be on adnominal demonstratives as a source of grammaticalization.



An account of considered dialects is reported together with the sources.

NENA dialects:

- Dialects of Bothan (Bo; Fox 2009), Hertevin (He; Jastrow 1988), Jilu (Fox 1997), Arbel (A; Khan 1999);
- Christian dialects of Barwar (CB; Khan 2008), Aradhin (Ar; Krotkoff 1982), Qaraqosh (CQ; Khan 2002);
- Jewish dialects of Zakho (JZ; Cohen 2012), Betanure (JB; Mutzafi 2008), ‘Amədyā (JA; Greenblatt 2011), Challa (JC; Fassberg 2010), Urmia (JU; Khan 2008b), Koy Sanjaq (JKS; Mutzafi 2004), Sulemaniyya and Ḥalabiyya (JSH; Khan 2004), Sanandaj (JS; Khan 2009).
- Ṭuroyo (T; Jastrow 1992) and Mlaḥsô (ML; Jastrow 1994); NWN – Ma‘lula (M), Bax‘a (B), Jubb‘adīn (Ĝ) (Arnold 1990); Neo-Mandaic dialect of Khorramshahr (Kh; Häberl 2009).

### 3. Definiteness and specificity

An impressive amount of studies about definiteness has been produced in the history of linguistics<sup>1</sup>. According to these studies, the semantic category that most closely corresponds to the central function of grammatical definiteness is *identifiability*, i.e. the expression of whether or not a referent is familiar or already mentioned and identifiable in the discourse by the addressee (Kibort 2008). As Lyons (1999: 278) says, “in languages where identifiability is represented grammatically, this representation is definiteness; and definiteness is likely to express identifiability prototypically”. There are some uses of definiteness that do not match this point though: this is the case of *inclusiveness* (Hawkins 1978), that concerns non-referential uses of definiteness with plural and mass noun phrases. Here reference is made to the totality of the objects or mass in the context which satisfy the description (Lyons 1999: 11).

Definiteness signals that a given noun is definite, that is the speaker believes that the listener has enough information to identify the referent. The linguistic codification of definiteness mainly comes through the use of simple determiners, such as the definite articles, or complex determiners, such as determinatives and pronouns. Let us consider the following English sentences:

- (1) Open the door!
- (2) The sun today is really hot.
- (3) A man with a woman walked in. I knew the man, but I’d never seen that woman before.
- (4) I don’t know where I put the milk I’ve just bought.

In (1) we have a *situational* use of the article, conditioned by the situation in which speakers are; in (2) *the sun* is definite because it is a *general knowledge*; (3) is an example of the *anaphoric* use of the article (*the man* and *the woman* are known because of the linguistic context, in which the two have already been mentioned); in (4) the relative clause puts a limitation to the possible referents of *the milk*, justifying the presence of the article.

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<sup>1</sup> See Lyons (1999) for a general review.

Specificity<sup>2</sup> is closely connected to definiteness, but it is a somewhat wider concept, as described by Givón (1978: 273):

referentiality [= specificity] is a semantic property of nominals. It involves, roughly, the speaker's intent to "refer to" or "mean" a nominal expression to have non-empty references – i.e. to "exist" – within a particular universe of discourse. Conversely, if a nominal is "non-referential" or "generic" the speaker does not have a commitment to its existence with the relevant universe of discourse. Rather, in the latter case the speaker is engaged in discussing the genus or its properties, but does not commit him/herself to the existence of any specific individual member of that genus.

There is no unambiguous and shared definition of what specificity really is. A number of languages have articles marking this feature rather than simple definiteness and their use is not based on the type of reference of their head (as to say, definite or indefinite) but on the level of specification that the speaker wants to give to the referent of the defined noun.

A noun is [+ Spec] if it is referential. The speaker presupposes that the referent exists at some level of reality and he wants to point out that exact referent.

A non-specific noun can be at the same time definite, and *vice versa*. The latter point is of quite hard understanding for English and European-languages speakers in general, since these languages do not have any morphological marking of this particular trait. Here specificity is expressed through syntax or pragmatics instead. Consider the following (Lawler 1976: 21):

- (5) I'm looking for a policeman, but I can't find him.
- (6) I'm looking for a policeman, but I can't find one.

In (5), the indefinite signals that the speaker does not expect the addressee to be able to identify the policeman he knows and is looking for, signaled by the personal pronoun *him*. In (6) instead, the speaker signals that he shares the same lack of information of the listener with the indefinite pronoun *one*. There is a big difference in the reference of *a policeman* in the two sentences: the first recalls a referent well known by the speaker, while the second is not. Still, *a policeman* remains indefinite ([- Def]), but in (5) it is specific ([+ Spec]), while in (6) it is unspecified ([- Spec]).

#### 4. Grammaticalization

Grammaticalization<sup>3</sup> is a process of language change by which lexical items transform to become grammatical markers. This definition is a really blurry one, since it is not so easy to define the multiple processes involved in grammaticalization, namely: desemantization, decategorialization, phonetic erosion and obbligatorification (Heine 1993).

- 1) desemantization (or semantic bleaching): loss of all (or most) of lexical content in favour of grammatical content;
- 2) decategorialization: loss of morphosyntactic features;

<sup>2</sup> With "Specificity" Von Heusinger (2002) means only specificity of an indefinite, while he prefers to call "referentiality" specificity of a definite, but scholars still do not agree about this terminology (see Lyons 1999). In this paper "specificity" is used for the referential use of both definite and indefinite.

<sup>3</sup> Much has been written about this topic. Classical works are Traugott & Heine (1991), Hopper & Traugott (1993) and Heine (1993).

- 3) phonetic erosion: “the phonological substance is likely to be reduced in some way and to become more dependent on surrounding phonetic material” (Heine 1993: 106);
- 4) obbligatorification: reduction of transparadigmatic variability.

These epiphenomena are the guidelines for any kind of analysis based on the concept of grammaticalization.

#### **4.1. Grammaticalization of demonstratives**

Demonstratives are cross-linguistically widely used as a source of grammaticalization. They can develop into many different elements such as simple determiners, relative pronouns, copulas and so on. The development of multiple grammatical markers from the same source is called *poligrammaticalization* (Craig 1991). This happens when the same lexeme undergoes grammaticalization under different syntactic (i. e. pronominal, adnominal, adverbial or identificational) contexts<sup>4</sup>.

Depending on its syntactic status, the demonstrative will be able to produce four different sets of grammatical markers in which some of the syntactic properties of the source construction endure. Demonstrative pronouns usually develop into other pronominal elements; adnominals can transform into operators of nominal constituents; adverbials become verbal (phrase) operators; finally, identificationals develop into grammatical markers interacting with nominal constituents derived from predicative nominals. There is a clear correspondence between the syntactic function of the demonstrative in its source construction and the grammatical function of the resulting grammaticalized form (Diessel 1991).

The loss of deictic feature is the first step for any process of grammaticalization of demonstratives, while other phono-morphological and syntactic changes may happen depending on the channel of grammaticalization, the features of the source and the level of grammaticalization reached by the new marker (Lehmann 2002: 33).

#### **4.2. Grammaticalization of adnominal demonstratives**

Adnominal demonstratives are a common source to the creation of simple determiners<sup>5</sup>. As Greenberg (1978: 61) says, “definite articles develop from a purely deictic element expanded to identify an element as previously mentioned in the discourse” thus individuating the “cycle of the article”. If grammaticalization goes further, the simple determiner can turn into a gender or nominal class marker before its disappearance.

Anaphoric demonstratives are usually used when their antecedent is not topical and somehow unexpected, contrastive or emphatic. When an anaphoric demonstrative grammaticalizes into a simple determiner its use is gradually extended from non-topical antecedents to all kinds of referents.

During this process, the deictic feature is lost. At the same time, there are other formal changes like the loss of phonetic substance, flexional properties and prosodical autonomy by cliticization (Plank & Moravcsik 1996).

<sup>4</sup> For a general overview of all the possible paths of grammaticalization of adnominal and independent demonstratives in Neo-Aramaic see Gasparini (2014).

<sup>5</sup> Many scholars coped with this specific subject. The most important and interesting studies are those of Christophersen (1939), Greenberg (1978, 1991), Lehmann (1995) and Himmelmann (1997, 1998).

Aramaic underwent the complete cycle of rise and fall of the article: as Rubin (2005) says, from an original Protosemitic demonstrative root *\*han* developed in Biblical Aramaic the definite suffix *-ā*: *kalbV-han* > *kalb-an* > *kalb-ā*. Classical Syriac reanalyzes the definite article as marker of emphatic status (*kalb-ā*, the/a dog).

In modern dialects the morpheme loses its semantic value and becomes part of the lexeme. Jastrow (2005: 357) notes that “Ṭuroyo has developed a full-fledged definite article with different forms for sg. m., sg. f. and pl. c. probably coming from shortened forms of the independent personal pronouns”, while “in some ENA languages there is a tendency to use the demonstratives, often in their shortened forms [...] also for definiteness”.

In fact, adnominal demonstratives in NENA show clear signs of an ongoing process of grammaticalization, like their presence in non-deictical contexts, phonetic erosion and cliticization.

### 5. Adnominal demonstratives in NA

	sm	sf	pl	suffix
Bo	<i>o~aw NP</i>	<i>ay~e NP</i>	<i>an NP</i>	-
He	<i>'o NP</i>	<i>'e NP</i>	<i>'an NP</i>	-
JZ	<i>aw~ō NP</i>	<i>ay~ē NP</i>	<i>an NP</i>	-
JB	<i>'o NP</i>	<i>'e NP</i>	<i>'an NP</i>	-
CB	<i>'o NP</i>	<i>'ey~'ε~'a NP</i>	<i>'án NP</i>	-
Ar	<i>Aw NP</i>	<i>ay NP</i>	<i>an NP</i>	-
JA	<i>'o NP</i>	<i>'e NP</i>	<i>'an NP</i>	-
JC		<i>('o NP)</i>	<i>('an NP)</i>	-
CQ	-	-	-	-
J	<i>o NP</i>	<i>e NP</i>	<i>en NP</i>	-
JU		<i>o NP</i>	<i>une NP</i>	-
A		<i>('o NP)</i>	-	<i>NP-ake</i>
JKS		-	-	<i>NP-ake</i>
JSH		-	-	<i>NP-ake</i>
JS		-	-	<i>NP-ake</i>
T	<i>'ū-</i>	<i>'ī-</i>	<i>'a(C)-</i>	-
MI		<i>ə-</i>	<i>a-</i>	-
M	<i>(hanna NP)</i>	<i>(hōd(i) NP)</i>	-	-
B	<i>(hanna NP)</i>	<i>(hōt NP)</i>	-	-
Ĝ	<i>(hanna NP)</i>	<i>(hō(d)/hōden NP)</i>	-	-
Kh		-	-	-

NENA, Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥsô dialects show a process of grammaticalization of the definite article, by now fully achieved in Ṭuroyo and still *in fieri* in NENA. In NWNA the adnominal

demonstrative can be interpreted either as a deictic element or as a simple determiner (i. e. *M hanna ġabrōna* “this/ the man”); the deictic function is expressed through double (both pre- and post-nominal) marking of the noun (i. e. *hanna ġabrōna hanna* “this man”). Neo-Mandaic isn’t involved in this process at all.

In all NENA dialects considered in the present study the grammaticalization source is the far-deixis adnominal demonstrative ’o, ’e, ’an, with really little phonetical variation between them: Bo and JZ show the uncontracted forms ’aw, ’ay, while Ar uses these forms both as independent and adnominal demonstratives. In JU and JC the feminine singular form ’e is lost. JC shows a marginal use of the adnominal demonstrative as a simple determiner due to the strict contact with JZ. Finally, CQ is the only dialect in the corpus that shows no process of grammaticalization, according to its conservative character.

In Trans-Zab dialects JS, JKS, A and JSH adnominal demonstratives apparently keep deictic value. The presence of the definite suffix marker *-ake*, borrowed from local Kurdish dialects, likely deterred the start of any process of grammaticalization of the adnominal demonstrative into simple determiner, which would have resulted redundant.

Ṭuroyo and Mlaḥṣō completed the whole process of grammaticalization of the adnominal demonstrative into a simple determiner always prefixed to its head. In both dialects this form clearly differs from that of the demonstrative one. The attributive demonstrative seems to lose the [+ Def] trait, for it compulsorily requires the determination coming from the simple determiner (Jastrow 1990: 98):

Ṭuroyo		
’ū-malko	’ū-malk-āno	’ū-malk-āwo
DET.SG.M-king	DET.SG.M-king-this.M	DET.SG.M-king-that.M
“The king”	“This king”	“That king”

The simple determiner in these two dialects works quite differently from NENA adnominal demonstratives. Anyway, these forms are phonetically close enough to let us consider the hypothesis of a common origin, namely some late archaic forms like Classical Syriac *haw, hāy, hānō/ hānēn* (Nöldeke 1881: 226). Jastrow (1990: 99) questions Nöldeke’s proposal, arguing that personal pronouns *hū, hī, \*hennōn/hennēn* or *\*hānnōn/hānnēn* more likely are the source. Thinking about traditional grammaticalization paths, demonstratives are the most obvious and common source to the creation of a simple determiner. We can thus look at Nöldeke’s observation as the most appropriate.

### 5.1. Use of the NENA adnominal demonstrative as a simple determiner

Most NENA dialects at least show a simple determiner on its way towards grammaticalization. The source of this new grammatical marker is the adnominal demonstrative, as we saw in the last paragraph. The loss of deictic value is crucial to prove the grammaticalized status of a demonstrative. Since this is still an ongoing process in NENA, deixis can still be found in many occurrences. Usually, the context can clearly tell us whether this feature is present or not.

Here are some occurrences of the adnominal demonstrative with eso- or endophoric meaning:

- (7) (Ar) *m=awa*                      *sabab*  
 from=this.M                      reason  
 “for this reason”
- (8) (JC) *’āya*                      *qtəl-lu=Ø*                      *Spindarnāy-e*  
 that.M                      kill.PFV-3PL=3SG.M                      citizens\_of\_Spindar-PL  
 “That one, the citizens of Spindar killed him”
- (9) (JU) *ráb-ta*                      *knəš-tá [...]*                      *šéx Abdullà [...]*  
 big-SG.F                      synagogue-SG.F                      Sheikh Abdullà  
 “the big synagogue of Sheikh Abdullà [...]
- jwān*                      *knəš-tà=wel-a*                      / *àtta=š*                      *ó*                      *knəš-tá*  
 beautiful                      synagogue-SG.F=COP.PFV-3SG.F                      now=too                      that                      synagogue-SG.F  
 was a beautiful synagogou. Even now that synagogou
- lóka*                      *pišté=la*  
 there                      remain.PFV.PART.SG.F=COP.3SG.F  
 is still there”

Let’s see now some instances of grammaticalization:

- (10) (JZ) *ē*                      *bax*                      *wazīra*                      *bax-ta*                      *rāba*                      *spahin*                      *wēl-a.*  
 DET.SG.F                      wife                      vizir                      woman-SG.F                      much                      beautiful                      COP.PFV-3SG.F  
 “the wife of the vizir was a really beautiful woman”
- (11) (Bo) *aṭṭor*                      *xa*                      *bax-ta*                      *átwo-la*                      *xa*                      *abra*                      *u*                      *xa*                      *bro-ta. [...]*  
 then                      a                      woman-SG.F                      have.PFV-3SG.F                      a                      son                      and                      a                      daughter-SG.F  
 “then a woman had a son and a daughter [...]
- ’aw*                      *abra*                      *yora-le [...]*  
 DET.SG.M                      son                      say.PFV-3SG.M  
 the boy said [...]”
- (12) (JZ) *sē-le*                      *aw*                      *gōra*                      *’il*                      *bēsa.*  
 go.PFV-3SG.M                      DET.SG.M                      man                      to                      house  
 “the man came home”

As we can see, in the examples from (7) to (9) the adnominal demonstrative preserves the deictic feature inside the speech context. In (10), (11) and (12) we have clear loss of the deictic feature. Here the demonstratives have no other function than signaling definiteness and referentiality.

## 5.2. [+Spec] feature

Khan (1999: 208-219, 2002: 252-270, 2008: 468-492) deeply analyzes syntactic and semantic values of demonstratives in some NENA dialects. His remarks on the relationship between definiteness and demonstratives are crucial in evaluating specificity as a key-feature in the system of NENA determiners.

Khan stresses the fact that the speaker uses the adnominal demonstrative in a definite NP depending on his own will to give special attention to that given NP. Aramaic, being a pro-drop language, does not require pronominal subject, object and agent to be necessarily expressed as

they are usually expressed through verbal morphology. The use of a referentially marked element entails giving major importance to a referent as the following salience scale shows (Khan 2002: 265):

unexpressed pronoun → (ii) independent personal pronoun → (iii) far-deixis independent demonstrative → (iv) near-deixis independent demonstrative

Similarly, DP structure does not require the DET position to be necessarily filled by any overt marker. If so, it means that there's referentiality. Khan (2002: 263) shows the following salience scale:

no demonstrative → (ii) far-deixis adnominal demonstrative → (iii) near-deixis adnominal demonstrative

where the choice between (ii) and (iii) depends on speech structure and speaker's intentions.

For Khan adnominal demonstratives can indeed be used as simple determiners, but the previous salience scale does not give a fully satisfying explanation to this use. As Khan's view satisfactorily shows, the use of demonstratives (and of all proforms<sup>6</sup>) depends on semantic referentiality: their referent has to be fixed at a certain level of referentiality implying the presence of enough information to identify it. It follows that the demonstrative applies only if it is necessary to enlighten the referent's referentiality, thus marking it as specific. This feature affects the grammaticalization of the simple determiner, which seems to encode the [+ Spec] feature in addition to [+ Def]. The distribution of the indefinite article and of the unmarked noun provides further evidence for this assumption.

### 5.2.1 The indefinite article

All Neo-Aramaic dialects developed an indefinite article from the grammaticalization of the cardinal meaning "one" (NENA m. *xa*, f. *da*<sup>7</sup>; Turoyo m. *ha*-NP, f. *hdo*-NP; NWNA *ahhad*, f. *ehda*; Neo-Mandaic *ya*, NP-*i* (Gasparini 2014)). This article encodes primarily the cardinality [+ Sg] feature and only indirectly [- Def] feature - we should talk more properly of a *quasi-indefinite article*.

Khan (1999: 195-203, 2002: 245-251, 2008: 450-462), shows that there are recurring patterns in the use of the indefinite, though there are not straight rules in this. Usually, the indefinite article occurs with a noun that is indefinite [- Def], countable and salient (as to say, specific), while when the latter feature is absent the noun is likely to be left unmarked. When used with an uncountable noun, the indefinite marker signals a part of it (JB *xa-məšxa* "a bit of oil").

We can clearly see that the indefinite article expresses specificity since it can be found in opposition with the definite article with a specific noun. In its first occurrence, a noun appears unmarked or, if specific, with the indefinite article; in the latter case, in its second occurrence the noun will be marked by the adnominal demonstrative, that can preserve its demonstrative semantic meaning or turn into a simple determiner:

<sup>6</sup> Proforms are all those pronouns that can assume the function of (i) demonstratives, (ii) indefinite-interrogative *ve* or (iii) anaphoric-relative. See Bath (2004) for more details about proforms.

<sup>7</sup> Many dialects generalize the masculine form.



What is striking in NENA is how the ongoing grammaticalized determiner works: they behave quite differently from standard simple determiners, since a [+ Def] noun can appear indifferently marked or unmarked. The referentiality of the noun seems to matter instead, according to speaker's intentions and to the context. This feature is encoded by the grammaticalized simple determiner, so that we can call it a *specificity-marked simple determiner*. The distribution of the simple determiner compared to that of the indefinite article and of the unmarked noun in presence of a [ $\pm$  Def], [ $\pm$  Spec] noun seems to be as follows:

Noun	[+ Spec]	[- Spec]
[+ Def]	<i>Simple determiner + Noun</i>	<i>No marking</i>
[- Def]	<i>Indefinite article + Noun</i>	<i>No Marking</i>

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