

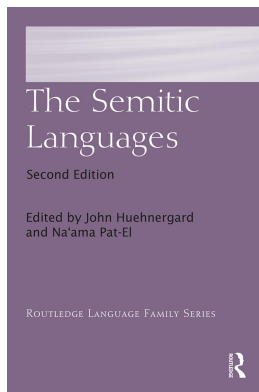
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MODERN WESTERN ARAMAIC

Steven E. Fassberg

I INTRODUCTION

Modern Western Aramaic developed from the preceding phase of Aramaic, Late Western Aramaic (200–700 CE), which is known from the surviving literary dialects of Jewish Palestinian, Christian Palestinian and Samaritan Aramaic (see Chapter 24). The study of Modern Western Aramaic began in 1863 with the publication by Julius Ferrette of transcribed words and texts from the village of Maṣlula, which is located 56 kilometers to the northeast of Damascus. Transcriptions of texts from the two closely related dialects of the nearby villages of Baxṣa and Jubḡadin were published by Jean Parisot in 1902 (Map 24.1). Before the current civil war in Syria, Maṣlula was the largest of the Modern Western Aramaic-speaking villages (5,000 inhabitants during the summer – it is a resort),



MAP 24.1 THE MODERN WESTERN ARAMAIC VILLAGES

followed by Jubbšadin (2000) and Baxša (1000–1500). Today Mašlula is primarily Christian; the two other villages have become entirely Muslim over the past centuries.

Mašlula has been studied by some of the most important Semitists, including Theodor Nöldeke (1867, 1917–1918). Three scholars in particular have shaped the field: Bergsträsser with the publication of a glossary (1921), a short grammatical description (1928, 1983) and scientific linguistic transcriptions of texts (1915), including intonational and suprasegmental markings (1933); Anton Spitaler with texts (1957, 1967) and a grammar (1938); and especially Werner Arnold with an unparalleled wealth of oral texts from Mašlula (1991), Baxša (1989) and Jubbšadin (1990), as well as a synchronic and comparative grammar of the three villages (1990). Moreover, Arnold is close to completing a comprehensive dictionary of Modern Western Aramaic. See also the articles of Arnold dealing with Arabic grammatical borrowing (2007), spirantization (2009a) and relative clauses (2009b). To date, the comparative notes in Spitaler's grammar remain the fullest historical treatment of Modern Western Aramaic. Several other scholars have also published texts and contributed grammatical analyses of linguistic phenomena, among them Parisot (1898, 1902), Reich (1938), Cantarino (1961), Cohen (1979) and Correll (1969, 1993). The last scholar is the only one to have written a syntactic investigation of Modern Western Aramaic (1978), in which he also examined the adstratal influences of spoken Arabic. On the mutual contact of Aramaic and Arabic in the Qalamun region of Syria, see Arnold and Behnstedt (1993). Recent general surveys of Modern Western Aramaic include Jastrow (1997) and Arnold (2011).

2 WRITING SYSTEM

The Modern Western Aramaic dialects of Mašlula, Baxša and Jubbšadin have been written down almost solely by scholars and in transcription. A few native speakers have also used modern transcription in writing letters (Arnold 1995–1997). One native speaker of Mašlula, Hanna Yousef Francis, wrote a grammar of Mašlula in Arabic, which was later translated into English (2003): he created a modified Old Aramaic alphabet with Classical Arabic vowel signs. A decade ago an institute was set up in Mašlula to teach the local dialect. The Jewish Aramaic square script was adopted but soon was scrapped for political reasons since it is in use today in Modern Hebrew.

3 PHONOLOGY

3.1 Consonantal phonemic inventory of Mašlula

The consonants in parentheses in Table 24.1, (*d*), (*g*) and (*ʔ*), are limited to loan words. In general the consonantal inventory of Mašlula is slightly less archaic than that of Baxša but less progressive than that of Jubbšadin (Arnold 1990 [“New Materials”]: 131). For example, in Baxša older Aramaic *t* has shifted to *ts* as opposed to *t* > *ʃ* in Mašlula and Jubbšadin; *ḏ* of Arabic loan words entered Mašlula and Jubbšadin as *z* according to the Damascene Arabic pronunciation of the affricate, whereas *ḏ* remained in Baxša as in the Arabic pronunciation of the surrounding villages. Older Aramaic *k* is a strongly palatalized *kʲ* in Mašlula, a slightly palatalized *kʲ* in Baxša and an affricate *tʃ* in Jubbšadin. The older Aramaic “emphatic” uvular plosive *q* is a slightly post-velar *k̠* in Mašlula, a strongly post-velar *k̠* in Baxša and has lost its pharyngealization and become a velar plosive *k* in Jubbšadin.

Older Aramaic had conditioned allophones of plosive and fricative realizations for the consonants *b/v*, *g/ɣ*, *d/ð*, *k/x*, *p/f*, *t/θ*; the fricatives occurred after vowels and the plosives

TABLE 24.1 CONSONANT INVENTORY

	BILABIAL	DENTAL	LATERAL	PALATAL	PALATAL – ALVEOL.	VELAR	PHARYNG.	GLOTTAL
Plosive	p b	t (d) tʰ				k, kʰ, ɡ (g)		(ʔ)
Nasal	m	n						
Affricate					tʃ			
Fricative		θ ð ðʰ		s z sʰ zʰ	ʃ ʒ	x ɣ	ħ ʕ	h
Approx.	w	r	l	j				

TABLE 24.2 VOWEL INVENTORY

LONG VOWELS		SHORT VOWELS	
i:	u:	i	u
e:	o:	e	o
	a:		a

after consonants. In Modern Western Aramaic (Arnold 2009a), the fricatives γ , δ , x , θ remain unchanged, but the voiced plosives bdg have become voiceless; voiceless t and k , as noted previously, were palatalized and then affricated in Maʕlula and Jubbʕadin: $t > tʰ > tʃ$, and $k > kʰ > ʃ$, whereas in Baxʕa $t > ts$ and $k > kʰ$. Under the influence of Arabic, which has neither ν nor p , the former merged with b and the latter with f .

3.2 Vocalic inventory

Long vowels (Table 24.2) bear the stress and occur only in ultimate or penultimate syllables. Two long vowels cannot coexist in a word. $e:$ and $o:$ are shortened to i and u when unstressed: 'xe:fa 'stone' vs. xi'fo: 'stones', 'yo:ma 'day' vs. yu'mo: 'days'. $a:$ > $o:$ in stressed syllables, but is shortened to a in unstressed syllables: cf. 'doda (< *da:da:) 'uncle' with da'do (< *da:dajja:) 'uncles'. Some speakers in Jubbʕadin, particularly women, add a reduced a to long vowels: $i:a$, $u:a$, $e:a$ and $o:a$: nfi:a'fa 'bulgur wheat', maʕfu:a'θa 'wedding feast', θlo:a'θa 'three', blo:a'ta 'village'. A non-phonemic helping vowel ∂ intrudes to break up non-initial consonantal clusters, e.g., iθr > iθr' 'two', taxlθa > tax'θa 'passage'.

3.3 Diphthongs

The diphthongs aw and aj remain stable in Maʕlula and Jubbʕadin, e.g., pajθa 'house', jawna 'dove'. In Baxʕa, if the diphthong is followed by a syllable-closing consonant, $aw > o:$ and $aj > e:$. cf. Maʕlula and Jubbʕadin awy 'he drives' with Baxʕa o:y.

3.4 Stress

Stress is ultimate on words ending in a long vowel or doubly closed syllable: hu'no: 'brothers', ha:θinn 'those'; otherwise, it is penultimate: xo:θeb 'he writes', 'i:ða 'hand'.

It is on the antepenultima in loan words of the type CvCvCv, e.g., 'salat'a 'salad'. Penultimate stress has often led to the creation of stressed initial anaptyctic vowels before consonantal clusters, e.g., 'ebra (< bra) 'son', 'islek (< slek) 'he ascended'.

4 MORPHOLOGY

4.1 Pronouns

Personal pronouns are marked for person, gender and number. There are two sets: independent (Table 24.3) and suffixed (Table 24.4).

Independent pronouns mark the subject. In clauses with verbal predication, the independent pronoun (bold in the following examples) is used for emphasis, often contrastive, and it may appear before or after the verb:

ahref *amel-l-un* **hu:**
 answer.PRET.3MSG say.PRS.3MSG-to-3MPL 3MSG
 'He answered saying to them'

TABLE 24.3 INDEPENDENT PRONOUNS

	MAṢLULA	BAXṢA	JUBBṢADIN
1SG	<i>ana</i>	<i>ana</i>	<i>ana</i>
2MSG	<i>haʃf(i)</i>	<i>hats</i>	<i>ha:f</i>
2FSG	<i>haʃf(i)</i>	<i>haʃf</i>	<i>ha:f</i>
3MSG	<i>hu:</i>	<i>hu:</i>	<i>hu:(h)</i>
3FSG	<i>hi:</i>	<i>hi:</i>	<i>hi:(h)</i>
1PL	<i>anaḥ</i>	<i>anaḥ</i>	<i>anaḥ</i>
2MPL	<i>haʃxun</i>	<i>hatsxun</i>	<i>haʃx</i>
2FPL	<i>haʃxen</i>	<i>hatsxun</i>	<i>haʃxen</i>
3MPL	<i>hinn(un)</i>	<i>hinn</i>	<i>hi:n</i>
3FPL	<i>hinn(en)</i>	<i>hinn</i>	<i>hinnen</i>

TABLE 24.4 PRONOMINAL SUFFIXES

	MAṢLULA	BAXṢA	JUBBṢADIN
1SG	-ø/-i	-ø	-aj/-ø
2MSG	-(a)x	-(a)x	-(a)x
2FSG	-(i)f	-(i)f	-(i)f
3MSG	-e	-i/-e	-e/-i
3FSG	-a	-a/-ø	-a(h)
1PL	-(n)aḥ	-(n)aḥ	-(n)aḥ
2MPL	-xun	-xun	-x
2FPL	-xen	-xun	-xen
3MPL	-(h)un/-n	-(h)un	- ø/-un
3FPL	-(h)en/-n	-(h)un	-(h)en

w-ðo:b ana nzahi:-f
 but-COND 1SG win.PRS.1MSG-2FSG
 ‘but if I beat you’

On nouns, pronominal suffixes mark the possessor:

pajθ-ax hmo:r-if
 house-2MSG donkey-2FSG
 ‘your house’ ‘your donkey’

On verbs the pronominal suffixes mark the accusative object:

faklif-xun haml-a
 take.PRET.1SG-ACC.2MPL carry.PRET.3MSG-ACC.3FSG
 ‘I took you’ ‘he carried her’

Suffixes can mark the object of prepositions:

ʕlaj-naħ minnaj-hun
 to-1PL from-3MPL
 ‘to us’ ‘from them’

4.2 Demonstratives

There are two sets of demonstratives, proximal and distal (Table 24.5). They may modify a noun, in which case they agree with the head noun in gender and number and are positioned before their nominal head, or be freestanding. The *ð* of the proximals is a reflex of the older Aramaic demonstrative element **d* and the *θ* of the distals is from the older Aramaic accusative particle **ja:θ*. *ð* and *θ* sometimes assimilate to the initial consonant of the nominal head.

hanna kamħa ho:f funi:θa (< ho:θa funi:θa)
 DEM flour DEM woman
 ‘this flour’ ‘this/that woman’

TABLE 24.5 DEMONSTRATIVES

	PROXIMAL			DISTAL		
	MAʕLULA	BAXʕA	JUBBʕADIN	MAʕLULA	BAXʕA	JUBBʕADIN
MSG	<i>hanna</i>	<i>hanna</i>	<i>hanna</i>	<i>ho:θe</i>	<i>ho:θi</i>	<i>ho:θe</i>
FSG	<i>ho:ð(i)</i>	<i>ho:θ</i>	<i>ho:(ð)/ho:ðen</i>	<i>ho:θa</i>	<i>ho:θa</i>	<i>ho:θa</i>
MPL	<i>hann(un)</i>	<i>hann</i>	<i>ha:n</i>	<i>haθinn(un)</i>	<i>haθinn</i>	<i>haθi:n</i>
FPL	<i>hann(en)</i>	<i>hann</i>	<i>hannen/ha:n</i>	<i>haθinn(en)</i>	<i>haθinn</i>	<i>haθinnen</i>

The force of the proximal demonstratives has weakened frequently to that of a definite article (see §5.3). To ensure the demonstrative meaning, speakers may repeat the demonstrative after the nominal head:

<i>hanna</i>	<i>yabro:na</i>	<i>hanna</i>	vs.	<i>hanna</i>	<i>yabro:na</i>
DEM.MSG	man	DEM.MSG		DEM.MSG	man
‘this man’				‘this/the man’	

The PL proximal demonstrative *hann* occurs before a nominal head and before the relative *ti*. When the demonstrative functions as a substantive, one hears the longer forms *hannun*, *hannen*.

4.3 Adverbial Interrogatives

mo: (Table 24.6) may be joined to the copula *i:le*: Mašlula *mo:-le*, Baxša *mo:-li* ‘what he has’. *mo:n/man/mu:n* ‘who’ (Table 24.7) merges with the 3p independent personal pronouns.

4.4 Relative and genitive

ti derives from the older Aramaic relative and subordinating particle *dī*:

<i>hann</i>	<i>ti</i>	<i>ešel</i>	<i>app</i>	<i>xebra</i>	<i>l-ti</i>	<i>erraš</i>
DEM.PL	REL	above	give.PRET.3MPL	information	to-REL	below
‘Those who (were) above gave information to those who (were) below’						

TABLE 24.6 INTERROGATIVES

	MAŠLULA	BAXŠA	JUBBŠADIN
‘who’	<i>mo:n</i>	<i>man</i>	<i>mu:n</i>
‘what’	<i>mo:</i>	<i>ma:/ma</i>	<i>ma:(h)/ma(h)</i>
‘when’	<i>emmat</i>	<i>emmat</i>	<i>emmat</i>
‘how’	<i>ex(t)</i>	<i>ext</i>	<i>ext/i:xet</i>
‘how many’	<i>exma</i>	<i>exma</i>	<i>exma</i>
‘which’	<i>anu/i</i>	<i>anu/ana/ani</i>	<i>M anahu:(h), F anahi:(h), MPL anahi:n, FPL anahinnen</i>
‘where’	<i>(h)anik</i>	<i>hanik</i>	<i>ho:n</i>

TABLE 24.7 INFLECTION OF THE INTERROGATIVE MAN ‘WHO’

	MAŠLULA	BAXŠA	JUBBŠADIN
MSG	<i>mannu</i>	<i>mannu</i>	<i>mannu</i>
FSG	<i>mannu/manne</i>	<i>mannu</i>	<i>mannu/manne</i>
MPL	<i>maninn(un)/mannun</i>	<i>mannun</i>	<i>mu:n</i>
FPL	<i>maninn(en)/mannen</i>	<i>mannun</i>	<i>munnan</i>

TABLE 24.8 THE RELATIVE MARKER

MAṢLULA	BAXṢA	JUBBṢADIN
<i>ti/yfi</i>	<i>ṣi</i>	<i>ti/yfi</i>

TABLE 24.9 INDEPENDENT POSSESSIVE PRONOUNS

	MAṢLULA	BAXṢA	JUBBṢADIN
1SG	<i>ti:ḏ(i)</i>	<i>ṣi li:l</i>	<i>ti:ḏaj</i>
2MSG	<i>ti:ḏax</i>	<i>ṣi le:xi</i>	<i>ti:x</i>
2FSG	<i>ti:ḏif</i>	<i>ṣi li:f</i>	<i>ti:f</i>
3MSG	<i>ti:ḏe</i>	<i>ṣi le:li</i>	<i>ti:ḏe</i>
3FSG	<i>ti:ḏa</i>	<i>ṣi le:la</i>	<i>ti:ḏah/ti:h</i>
1PL	<i>ti:ḏaḥ</i>	<i>ṣi le:h</i>	<i>ti:h</i>
2MPL	<i>ti:ḏxun</i>	<i>ṣi le:lxun</i>	<i>tiḏ^ox</i>
2FPL	<i>ti:ḏxen</i>	<i>ṣi le:lxun</i>	<i>ti:ḏxen</i>
3MPL	<i>ti:ḏun</i>	<i>ṣi le:lun</i>	<i>ti:ḏun</i>
3FPL	<i>ti:ḏen</i>	<i>ṣi le:lun</i>	<i>ti:ḏen</i>

The variant *yfi* (Table 24.8) in Maṣlula and Jubbṣadin is used by only a few speakers. If the following noun begins with a vowel in Jubbṣadin, the preposition *l-* is suffixed to the relative particle: *ti-l*. *ti* functions as the genitive (GEN) marker only when bound by *ḏ* with pronominal suffixes in independent possessive pronouns (see later). The proclitic preposition *l-* has usually replaced the relative *ti* as the genitive particle (Hopkins 1997), e.g.,

loyθ *l-siryō:n*
 language.F GEN-Syriac
 ‘the language of Syriac’

The independent possessive pronouns (Table 24.9) are formed by the suffixation of the pronominal suffixes to the relative and genitive particle (*ti*). They add slight emphasis to the possessive relationship vis-à-vis the pronominal suffix attached to a noun:

pajθa *ti:ḏax* vs. *pajθ-ax*
 house GEN.2MSG house-2MSG
 ‘your house’ ‘your house’

The plural *tiḏo:* functions as the noun ‘relatives’.

4.5 Nominals

4.5.1 Inflection

Nouns and adjectives in Modern Western Aramaic may be masculine or feminine, singular or plural and definite (called “emphatic” by Aramaists) or indefinite (designated “absolute”) (see §5.3). The forms are distinguished by suffixes and by regular sound changes. See, e.g., the inflection of the adjective *ḥurwar* ‘white’ in Maṣlula in Table 24.10.

TABLE 24.10 INFLECTION OF ADJECTIVES

	INDEFINITE	DEFINITE
MSG	<i>ʕuwwar</i>	<i>ʕuwʕwo:r-a</i>
FSG	<i>ʕuwʕwo:r</i>	<i>ʕuwʕwo:r-ʕa</i>
MPL	<i>ʕuwʕwu:r-in</i>	<i>ʕuwwar-ʕo:</i>
FPL	<i>ʕuwʕwo:r-an</i>	<i>ʕuwwar-ʕ(j)o:θa</i>

As opposed to the morpheme *-in* on MPL adjectives, the MPL indefinite form of substantives ends in *-i/ø*. The definite forms contain the older enclitic Aramaic definite article and are the default form for nouns: singular **-a:ʔ > a*; plural **-ajja: > o:*; a variant *-o:i* was rare last century in Maʕlula but is no longer heard; *-o:ja* is infrequent today in Maʕlula but common in Jubbʕadin. The indefinite form is restricted to:

- 1 nouns following cardinal numerals: *eθlaθ ʕapt-an* (three slave-FPL.INDF) ‘three female slaves’, *o:lef δahb-i* (1000 gold.M-PL.INDF) ‘thousand pieces of gold’
- 2 Predicate adjectives:
ha:n raʕiso:j-in
 DEM.PL great-MPL
 ‘They are great’ (Jubbʕadin)
- 3 On the use of the indefinite form with attributive adjectives, see §5.3

There are only vestiges of the “construct” (annexed) form of older Aramaic: *be:* ‘house, family’ (*be: ho:l* ‘the family of my uncle’; cf. the definite form *pajθa* ‘house’), *ʕe:δ* ‘festival’ (*ʕe:δ yanna* ‘the garden festival’; cf. *ʕe:ða* ‘festival’). A neo-construct form *ebr* ‘son’ (*ebr fulʕo:na* ‘the son of the sultan’) is a backformation from the definite *ebra*.

4.5.2 Patterns

Reflexes of the older Aramaic nominal patterns are well attested in Modern Western Aramaic, e.g., the frequent Aramaic nominal patterns **kaʕl* (> Maʕlula *kaʕʕla*, *keʕʕla*), **kiʕl* (> *keʕʕla*), and **kuʕl* (> *koʕʕla*). **kaʕʕi:l* (>*kaʕʕiʕi:l*) continues to mark adjectives (and also functions as the base for the present in intransitive verbs; see §4.6.1); Arabic adjectives of the pattern *kaʕʕi:l* often assimilate to it. The Arabic elative *ʕaqʕal* (> *ʕaʕʕal*) is used freely for Arabic loans as well as native Aramaic adjectives. As in earlier periods of Aramaic, there are nominal patterns with prefixed *ma-* and *mi-*; the prefixes *t-* and *a-* are primarily restricted to Arabic loans.

Aramaic suffixes are:

- 1 **-a:n > -o:n*, which on adjectives and participles indicates an agent noun (*nomen agentis*). *-o:n* was also a diminutive suffix in earlier Aramaic and has been suffixed to a few frequently occurring nouns (synchronically it is semantically empty): *ho:na* ‘brother’, *yabro:na* ‘man’, *pso:na* ‘boy’
- 2 *-a:j*, the gentilic ending; on Arabic loans it replaces the native Arabic gentilic *-i*:
- 3 *-o:naj* (combination of the preceding two suffixes)
- 4 *-u:θa*, the suffix of abstract nouns
- 5 *-i:θa*, a feminine suffix

4.5.3 Numerals

4.5.3.1 Cardinal numerals

The numerals ‘two’ to ‘ten’ (Table 24.11) precede their head noun and agree with it in gender; the head noun takes the indefinite plural form: *eθlaθ bisniy-an* (three.F maid-en.F-INDF) ‘three girls’, *arpsa yu:m-i* (four.M day.M-INDF) ‘four days’. ‘One’ also precedes the head noun, which, however, takes the definite form: *aħħað pso:n-a* (one.M boy.M-DEF) ‘one boy’, *eħða bisni:-θa* (one.F girl.F-DEF) ‘one girl’.

The second decade (‘eleven’–‘nineteen’; Table 24.12) is not uniform in the three dialects. Maṣlula and Jubbṣadin distinguish between numerals that precede masculine nouns and numerals that precede feminine nouns. Baxṣa has preserved only one series of numerals.

Under the influence of Arabic, speakers of Jubbṣadin have also created a compound numeral (‘ten’ + ‘and’ + digit) that is used for masculine and feminine nouns (see Table 24.13).

There is no distinction between masculine and feminine in the decades, which are the indefinite plural forms of the first decade numerals (Table 24.14).

TABLE 24.11 CARDINAL NUMERALS: FIRST DECADE

	MAṢLULA		BAXṢA		JUBBṢADIN	
	M	F	M	F	M	F
1	<i>aħħað</i>	<i>eħða</i>	<i>aħħað</i>	<i>eħða</i>	<i>aħħa</i>	<i>eħða</i>
2	<i>iθʀʀ/iθri</i>	<i>θarʃ</i>	<i>iθθar</i>	<i>θarts</i>	<i>iθθer</i>	<i>θarʃ</i>
3	<i>eθlaθ</i>	<i>θlo:θa</i>	<i>eθlaθ</i>	<i>θlo:θa</i>	<i>eθlaθ</i>	<i>θlo:θa</i>
4	<i>arpaṣ</i>	<i>arpsa</i>	<i>arpaṣ</i>	<i>arpsa</i>	<i>arpaṣ</i>	<i>arpsa</i>
5	<i>ħammeʃ</i>	<i>ħamʃa</i>	<i>ħammeʃ</i>	<i>ħamʃa</i>	<i>ħammeʃ</i>	<i>ħamʃa</i>
6	<i>ʃeθθ</i>	<i>ʃeʃʃa</i>	<i>ʃeθθ</i>	<i>ʃeʃʃa</i>	<i>ʃe:θ</i>	<i>ʃeʃʃa</i>
7	<i>eʃbaṣ</i>	<i>ʃobʃa</i>	<i>eʃbaṣ</i>	<i>ʃobʃa</i>	<i>eʃbaṣ</i>	<i>ʃobʃa</i>
8	<i>θmo:n</i>	<i>θmo:nya</i>	<i>θmo:n</i>	<i>θmo:nya</i>	<i>θmu:n</i>	<i>θmu:nya</i>
9	<i>eʃʃaṣ</i>	<i>ʃeʃʃa</i>	<i>eʃʃaṣ</i>	<i>ʃeʃʃa</i>	<i>eʃʃaṣ</i>	<i>ʃeʃʃa</i>
10	<i>eʃsar</i>	<i>ʃasra</i>	<i>eʃsar</i>	<i>ʃasra</i>	<i>eʃsar</i>	<i>ʃasra</i>

TABLE 24.12 CARDINAL NUMERALS: SECOND DECADE

	MAṢLULA AND JUBBṢADIN		BAXṢA
	M	F	COMMON GENDER
11	<i>aħħaðaʃsar</i>	<i>eħðaʃasʔr</i>	<i>eħðaʃasʔr</i>
12	<i>θleʃsar</i>	<i>θarʃʃasʔr</i>	<i>θartsʃasʔr</i>
13	<i>θleʃʃaʃsar</i>	<i>eθlaθʃasʔr</i>	<i>eθlaθʃasʔr</i>
14	<i>arpaʃaʃʃaʃsar</i>	<i>arpaʃʃasʔr</i>	<i>arpaʃʃasʔr</i>
15	<i>ħammeʃʃaʃsar</i>	<i>ħammeʃʃasʔr</i>	<i>ħammetsʃasʔr</i>
16	<i>ʃeʃʃaʃsar</i>	<i>ʃeθʃasʔr</i>	<i>ʃeθʃasʔr</i>
17	<i>ʃobʃaʃʃaʃsar</i>	<i>eʃbaʃʃasʔr</i>	<i>eʃbaʃʃasʔr</i>
18	<i>θmo:nyaʃaʃsar</i> (M)	<i>θmo:nʃasʔr</i> (M)	<i>θmo:nʃasʔr</i>
	<i>θmu:nyaʃaʃsar</i> (J)	<i>θmu:nʃasʔr</i> (J)	
19	<i>ʃeʃʃaʃʃaʃsar</i>	<i>eʃʃaʃʃasʔr</i>	<i>eʃʃaʃʃasʔr</i>

TABLE 24.13 CARDINAL NUMERALS: SECOND DECADE IN JUBBĀDIN

11	<i>ʕasra w-aḥḥa</i>
12	<i>ʕasra w-iθθer</i>
13	<i>ʕasra w-θlo:θa</i>
14	<i>ʕasra w-arpʕa</i>
15	<i>ʕasra w-ḥamʕa</i>
16	<i>ʕasra w-fejʕfa</i>
17	<i>ʕasra w-ʕobʕa</i>
18	<i>ʕasra w-θmu:nya</i>
19	<i>ʕasra w-ʔešʕa</i>

TABLE 24.14 CARDINAL NUMERALS: TENS

	<i>MAṢLULA</i>	<i>BAXṢA</i>	<i>JUBBĀDIN</i>
20	<i>ʕisʔr/ʕisri</i>	<i>ʕisər</i>	<i>ʕisər</i>
30	<i>θle:θ(i)</i>	<i>θle:θ</i>	<i>θle:θ</i>
40	<i>irpiʕ/irpʕi</i>	<i>irpiʕ</i>	<i>irpiʕ</i>
50	<i>ḥimʔ/ḥimʕi</i>	<i>ḥmʔʕ</i>	<i>ḥmʔʕ</i>
60	<i>ʕiʕʕʕ(i)</i>	<i>ʕiʕʕʕ</i>	<i>ʕi:ʕʕ</i>
70	<i>ʕubʔʕ/ʕubʕi</i>	<i>ʕubʔʕ</i>	<i>ʕubʔʕ</i>
80	<i>θme:n(i)</i>	<i>θme:n</i>	<i>θme:n</i>
90	<i>ʔiʕʕʕ/ʔiʕʕi</i>	<i>ʔiʕʕʕ</i>	<i>ʔiʕʕʕ</i>

TABLE 24.15 ORDINAL NUMERALS

	<i>MAṢLULA, BAXṢA, AND JUBBĀDIN</i>
first	<i>awwal</i>
second	<i>θe:ni</i> (MASC also <i>θe:n</i>)
third	<i>θe:leθ</i>
fourth	<i>re:beʕ</i>
fifth	<i>xe:mes</i>
sixth	<i>se:des</i>
seventh	<i>se:beʕ</i>
eighth	<i>θe:men</i>
ninth	<i>ʔe:seʕ</i>
tenth	<i>ʕe:ʕer</i>

4.5.3.2 Ordinal numerals

The ordinal numerals ‘first’ to ‘tenth’ are borrowed from Arabic and exhibit the Arabic sound shift known as *imāla* (*a*: > *e*:) (Table 24.15).

The ordinals ‘eleventh’ and above are expressed by the relative *ti* and the cardinal numeral, e.g., *ti ḥammeʕʕaʕsar* ‘the fifteenth’.

4.6 Verbs

4.6.1 Tense/aspect

The tense system of Modern Western Aramaic (as exhibited by Maṣlula) consists of a

- 1 preterite (PRET) expressed by a suffixed conjugation (based on the older Aramaic suffix conjugation *kṭal-*), e.g., 3FSG *kāṭl-aθ*, 1SG *kāṭl-i-θ*
- 2 subjunctive (SBJV) expressed by a prefixed conjugation (based on the older Aramaic prefix conjugation *-kṭul*), e.g., 3MSG *ji-kṭul*, 1SG *ni-kṭul*
- 3 present (PRS; based on the older Aramaic active participle *kāṭil*) with prefixes, e.g., 2MSG *f-kō:ṭel*, 1MSG *n-kō:ṭel*
- 4 imperative (IMP; based on the older Aramaic imperative *kṭō/ūl*) with suffixes, e.g., MSG *kṭ'o:l-θ*, MPL *kut'l-o:n*
- 5 perfect (PRF; based on the older Aramaic passive participle *kṭīl*) with prefixes, e.g., 2MSG *fī-kṭel*, 1MSG *ni-kṭel*; intransitive verbs appear in the frequent Aramaic adjectival pattern *kāṭīl*: 2MSG *f-kāṭṭel*, 1MSG *n-kāṭṭel*

The future tense is expressed by the pseudo-verb *batt* (< Arabic *badd-*; Jubb'adin *be:l-*) + subjunctive:

batt-i *ni-fmut*
 want-1SG 1SG-flee.SBJV
 'I will flee'.

The present progressive (PRS.PROG) is expressed by the particle *ṣamma*, *ṣam-*, *ṣa-* (< Arabic *ṣammāl* [agent noun 'doer']) + present:

mo: *ṣam-fō:mar* *ja* *zalmθa*
 what PRS.PROG-say.PRS.2MSG VOC man
 'Hey fellow! What are you saying?'

Durative or habitual action in the past is expressed by the pseudo-verb *wo:b* (< *hwa:* 'was' + *jhi:b* 'given') + present:

wo:b *mzappen* *biṣ-o:*
 DUR.PST sell.PRS.3MSG egg.F-PL
 'He was selling eggs'.

There are also pseudo-verbs that express existence: *o:θ(i)* 'there is' (< *ha:we* 'is' + *i:θ* [existential particle]) and 'there was' (< *hwa:* + *i:θ*) (see also §5.4.1).

4.6.2 Gender/number/person inflection

The preterite and imperative are inflected with suffixes. The subjunctive, present and perfect are inflected with prefixes.

Preterite *-kṭal* (< $\sqrt{kṭl}$ 'beat, strike, kill') with an initial anaptyctic vowel (*i-kṭal*) is the base for 3 MSG, MPL and FPL. *kāṭl-* is the base for 1 and 2 persons. The inflection in Table 24.16 is according to the pronunciation in Maṣlula.

TABLE 24.16 PRETERITE

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	<i>kaf^l-iθ</i>	<i>kaf^l-in-nah</i>
2M	<i>kaf^l-if</i>	<i>kaf^l-if-xun</i>
2F	<i>kaf^l-if</i>	<i>kaf^l-if-xen</i>
3M	<i>ikt^lal-ø</i>	<i>ikt^lal-ø</i>
3F	<i>kaf^l-aθ</i>	<i>ikt^lal-ø</i>

TABLE 24.17 IMPERATIVE

	MAṢLULA	BAXṢA	JUBBṢADIN
MSG	<i>ikt^lul/k^lo:l</i>	<i>ukt^lul/k^lol</i>	<i>k^lo:l</i>
FSG	<i>ikt^lul/k^lu:l</i>	<i>ukt^lul/k^lul</i>	<i>k^lu:l</i>
MPL	<i>kut^ll-un/kut^ll-o:n</i>	<i>kut^ll-un/kut^ll-ün</i>	<i>kut^ll-o:n</i>
FPL	<i>kut^ll-en/kut^ll-e:n</i>		<i>kut^ll-e:n</i>

TABLE 24.18 SUBJUNCTIVE

	SINGULAR	PLURAL
1	<i>ni-k^lul</i>	<i>ni-k^lul</i>
2M	<i>fi-k^lul</i>	<i>fi-kut^ll-un</i>
2F	<i>fi-k^lul</i>	<i>fi-kut^ll-an</i>
3M	<i>yi-k^lul</i>	<i>y-kut^ll-un</i>
3F	<i>fi-k^lul</i>	<i>y-kut^ll-an</i>

Imperative – the forms are differentiated by suffixes and ablaut (Table 24.17).

Subjunctive – all forms have prefixes; the 2 and 3 plural forms also have suffixes. The base forms as realized in Maṣlula are *-k^lul/-kut^ll-* (Table 24.18).

4.6.3 Verbal stems

The old Aramaic system of nine verbal stems (three active, three reflexive/passive with prefixed *hiθ-/ʔiθ-* and three internal passive [ablaut]) has been reduced in Modern Western Aramaic to three: a basic stem *pʕal* (for transitive verbs; *pʕel* for intransitive verbs), an intensive stem *paʕʕel* and a causative stem *aʕʕel*. Only the latter two stems are productive. The internal passive stems have disappeared. Of the older reflexive stems with prefixed *hiθ-/ʔiθ-*, only three verbs have survived, which have been reduced to forms of the basic stem: *iftaʕ < iftaʕi* (ʕʕʕy) ‘play’, *ifxal < ittkel* (ʕtkl) ‘trust’, *ifneh < itni:h* (ʕnwh) ‘rest’.

Verbs borrowed from Arabic stems assimilate to the corresponding Aramaic stems. When there are not parallel Aramaic stems, the Arabic forms are borrowed and follow Modern Western Aramaic phonology and inflection, e.g., the Arabic stem III *qātala* > Modern Western Aramaic *ko:ʕel*, Arabic stem VI *taqātala* > *ʔko:ʕel*, Arabic stem VII *inqatala* > *in^ok^lal*; Arabic stem VIII *iqtatata* > *ik^oʔʕ^lal*, Arabic stem X *istaqtala* > *sʔak^lel*.

4.6.4 Non-finite forms

The older Aramaic active participle and passive participle are fully assimilated into the verbal system and inflected for person, gender and number. The active participle functions as the present tense and the passive participle as the perfect (see §4.6.1). A third non-finite form is the old Aramaic infinitive, which now serves as a verbal noun. With verbs related to the basic stem, speakers form a verbal noun according to the pattern *kʔo:la* (with verbs of motion *me:kʔla*), with the intensive stem *kuʔʔol:a* (Jubʕaddin *kaʔʔol:a*) and with the causative stem *maʔʔo:lθa*. The complement function of the infinitive has been taken over by the subjunctive (see §5.5).

4.7 Prepositions/adverbs

4.7.1 Position

Prepositions may precede their nominal object or they may be bound by a pronominal suffix. The preposition *l-* ‘to’ is enclitic to the verb when marking an object (see §5.3).

4.7.2 Derivation

Modern Western Aramaic has inherited monosyllabic prepositions from earlier Aramaic. The monoconsonantal prepositions *b-* ‘in’, *l-* ‘to, of’ are proclitic. Two frequent biconsonantal prepositions are often clipped and are now also proclitic: *ʕal-/ʕa-* (< *ʕal*) ‘on, upon’, *mn-/m-* (< *min*) ‘from’. Other prepositions are grammaticalized nouns, e.g., *yapp* (< *gabb* ‘side, back’) ‘with’, *ħasʕsʕ* ‘on’ (< ‘loin’). Sometimes the preposition *l-* is suffixed to prepositional phrases (see §5.5), e.g., *b-ðukk-l* ‘instead of’ (< ‘in-place-of’), *b-rajf-l* ‘on’ (< ‘in-head-of’). Arabic prepositions have also been borrowed into Modern Western Aramaic, e.g., *fihʕf* ‘under’, *min du:n* ‘without’.

There is no productive strategy for the formation of adverbs (cf. the Syriac suffix *-āʔi:θ*). Some adverbs are inherited from earlier Aramaic and were originally (a) nouns (*rumʕ[i]* ‘yesterday’ < *ramʕa:* ‘evening’), (b) noun and adjective (*ʕiffʔo:ð[i]* ‘this year’ < *ʕatta: ha:ðe:*) or (c) prepositional phrases (*l-bar* ‘outside’ < ‘to field’). Others are borrowed lexemes from Arabic (*abatan* ‘never’, *awwalʕa* ‘before’). And yet others are new formations: *kaʕles* ‘little’ (< adjective *kaʕl* ‘little’ + diminutive *-i:s*).

5 SYNTAX

5.1 Sentential and phrasal word order

In verbal clauses the default word order is Verb-Subject (marked in bold), e.g.:

ko:maθ *emm* *l-ħanne*
 arise.PRET.3FSG mother.F GEN-Hanne
 ‘The mother of Hanne arose’.

aʕreb *le-ʕl-a* ***ifmaʕ*** ***ði:b-o:***
 approach.PRET.3MSG to-on-3FSG flee.PRET.3MPL wolf-MPL

imf *l-hmo:r-fa:* *fjeh-n-a*
 reach.PRET.3MSG to-donkey-F find.PRET.3MSG-OBJ-3FSG

fziril-l-a ***di:b-o:***
 tear.PRF.3MPL-TO-3FSG wolf-MPL

‘He approached her (the jenny), the wolves fled, he reached the jenny, he found her, wolves had torn her apart’.

Subjects, objects and adverbs may be moved to the front of the clause for pragmatic reasons. Cf. the word order (the forms are in bold – the first at the end of the clause and the second at the beginning of the clause) in the following two examples:

ajθ-n-ø ***l-hmo:r-fj***
 bring.PRET.3MSG-OBJ-3FSG to-donkey-F
 ‘He brought the jenny.’

w-hmo:r-fja *axl-un-n-a* *di:b-o:*
 and-donkey-F eat.PRET-3MPL-OBJ-3FSG wolf-MPL
 ‘And as for the jenny, wolves ate her’.

5.2 Types of predication

Predication may be nominal or verbal. In the case of the former, the predicate is a noun, pronoun, adverb or prepositional phrase:

efm-a ***fes^ss^a***
 name-3FSG clover.F
 ‘Its name is “clover”’.

w-anah ***n-kury-o:jin***
 but-1PL 1PL-Christian-MPL
 ‘But we are Christians’.

fju ***yappaj-xun*** *habl-o:ja* *elsel*
 NEG with-2MPL rope-MPL above
 ‘Don’t you have ropes above?’

Verbal predication contains a finite verb:

nf^aapiθ *ʕaskraj ejn* *l-ef^aʕ* *emʕa* *w-efbaʕʕas^or*
 draft.PRET.1SG soldier year GEN-nine hundred and-seventeen
 ‘I was drafted as a soldier in the year 1917’.

w-θalla *tunja* *ʕaro:ba* ***θo:lun***
 and-come.PRET.3FSG world.FSG evening come.PRET.3MPL

bn-o:j-a m-foyl
 son-MPL-3FSG from-work
 ‘Evening fell. Her sons came back from work.’

5.3 Definiteness

The definite form with the suffixes MSG *-a*, FSG *-fa*; MPL *-o*; FPL *-[j]ōθa* is the default form for nouns and no longer marks definiteness. Context alone determines whether or not a noun is definite in meaning. On attributive adjectives, however, the definite suffixes still mark definiteness: if the head noun is not semantically definite, the attributive adjective does not take the definite article. When the noun is semantically definite, the attributive adjective takes a definite suffix.

cf. *yabro:na rabb* with *yabro:n-a rapp-a*
 man.DEF big.INDF man-DEF big-DEF
 ‘a big man’ ‘the big man’

To ensure the definiteness of a noun that does not have a modifying adjective, speakers place the proximal demonstrative pronoun before the noun:

hanna yabro:na
 DEM.MSG man.MSG
 ‘this/the man’

ho:f funi:-θa
 DEM.FSG woman-FSG
 ‘this/the woman’

hann xfur-o:
 DEM.MPL old_man-MPL
 ‘these/the old men’

The definite direct object is obligatorily marked with the preposition *l-*, in which case it is suffixed to the verb (*-il* after CC).

cf. *ajθ lehma* with *ajθ-il lehma*
 bring.PRET.3MSG bread.M bring.PRET.3MSG-OBJ bread.M
 ‘He brought bread’ ‘He brought the bread’.

When the definite direct object is preceded by an indirect object (also introduced by the preposition *l-*), the definite direct object marker *l-* is inserted into the verb with a proclitic pronominal suffix before the enclitic indirect object.

Contrast

ajθe:-l-e xil^hθa
 bring.PRET.3MSG-to-3MSG robe_of_honor
 ‘He brought him a robe of honor’.

with

<i>ajθ-l-a:-l-e</i>	<i>xil'θa</i>
bring.PRET.3FSG-to(DIROBJ)-3MSG-to(INDIROBJ)-3MSG	robe_of_honor
'He brought the robe of honor to him'.	

5.4 Synthetic/analytic

5.4.1 Analytic constructions in the verbal system

See §4.6.1 on the use of the pseudo-verbs *batt-/be:l-* 'want, wish' + subjunctive to express the future, *wo:b* + present to express durative or habitual past, and *ʕamm-/ʕam-/ʕa-* + present to express the present progressive.

Object pronouns, direct and indirect, are suffixed to the verb. Depending on the verbal tense, the pronouns are either (a) suffixed directly to the verb; or (b) follow a suffixed preposition *l-* 'to' or *n-* (in earlier Aramaic the nasal element mediated between verbs inflected in the prefix conjugation and object suffixes). See, e.g., the verb $\sqrt{f\theta h} < *p\theta h$ 'open':

preterite – *ifθah* 'he opened', *faθh-e* 'he opened it (MSG)', *fθah-l-a* 'he opened for her',
faθəh-l-e:-l-a 'he opened it (MSG) for her'
 subjunctive – *jifθuh* 'that he opens', *jfuθh-enn-e* 'that he opens it (MSG)', *yifθoh-l-e*
 'that he opens for him', *jfuθəh-l-e:-l-a* 'that he opens it (MSG) for her'

The pronominal suffixes suffixed to the present and perfect tenses following *l-* may be accusative or dative:

fōθah + l-e > faθah-l-e 'he opens it (MSG)' or 'he opens for him'
ifθeh + l-a > fθih-l-a 'he had opened it (FSG)' or 'he had opened for her'

5.4.2 Analytic constructions in the nominal system

The dependent relationship between two nouns, known as "construct" or "annexation," was marked morphologically in earlier Aramaic on the first of the two nouns (the bound form is traditionally referred to as *nomen regens*). For traces of this, see §4.5.1. The construct relationship in Modern Western Aramaic is usually expressed by an analytic construction with the preposition *l-* 'to' (see §4.4). The preposition is suffixed on the bare form of the noun:

<i>so:b-lʔ</i>	<i>blo:ta</i>
mayor-to(GEN)	village
'The mayor of the village'	

<i>berf-il</i>	<i>yabro:na</i>
daughter-to(GEN)	man
'The daughter of the man'.	

l- has largely replaced the older relative *di*- (> *ti*), which is still in use, however:

so:ba ti blo:ta
 mayor REL village
 ‘The mayor of the village’.

5.5 Subordination

The older Aramaic relative and subordinating particle *dī* has survived (see §4.4) in the forms *ti* and *fi* (*tsi* in Baxṣa). It is used to introduce relative clauses only when the antecedent is definite; when the antecedent is indefinite, the relative clause is unmarked (Correll 1978: 117).

wo:θ ro:ʃja ʕam-raʕe:-l ʕizz-o:j-e
 be.PRET.3MSG shepherd PRS.PROG-herd.PRS.3MSG-to goat.f-MPL-3MSG
 ‘There was a shepherd, (who was) herding his goats’.

hanna yamla ti tʕil-l-e
 DEM.MSG camel REL carry.PRF.3MSG-to-3MSG
 ‘This camel, which has carried him’

A relic of *di* is preserved in the conditional particle that introduces the protasis, *δ-o:b* (also *n-δ-o:b*), but as often occurs elsewhere, *l* tends to replace the relative/genitive *δ*: *l-o:b*.

One finds the subordination of the preposition *l* (replacing early Aramaic *d*-; see §4.7) to other prepositions and nouns, e.g., *δokk-l* (< *dukk:a d*-) ‘place where’, *exm-il* (< *ax + ma: + d*) ‘just as’, *ʕemm-l ʕaskra* ‘with the army’, *yapp-l ʕali* ‘by Ali’.

In place of the infinitive, subordination is expressed by the use of subjunctive verbal forms:

θe:lun fekra jnoḥfun
 come.PRS.3MPL idea go_down.SBJV.3MPL
 ‘The idea comes to them to go down.’

sulko:n l-o:xa nehm
 come_up.IMP.MPL to-here see.SBJV.1PL
 ‘Come up here so that we may see.’

5.6 Negation

The main negator is *la/la:* with variants *laʔ* and *laʔa*. It typically precedes the element negated. The particle negates the preterite and subjunctive:

la θo:le
 NEG came.PRET.3MSG
 ‘He did not come.’

la jizbun
 NEG buy.SBJV.3MSG
 ‘He should not buy’

The particle *la* fuses with verbs to create other negators: (a) ‘but not’ – *lo.mar* (*la*: + $\sqrt{\text{?mr}}$ ‘say’; Maṣlula), *lamar* (Baxṣ) and *lasa/lo.sa/losa* (*la*: + *issa* ‘now’ [\langle Arabic *as-saʿa* ‘the hour’]?; Jubbṣadin); (2) ‘not again, never again’ – *lo.rkʿaš/lorkʿaš* (*la*: + $\sqrt{\text{rkʿ}}$ [\langle Arabic $\sqrt{\text{rdʿ}}$] ‘do again’; Maṣlula), *lo.rʿfaš/lorʿfaš* (Jubbṣadin) and *lōfaš/lafaš* (*la* + *afaš*, $\sqrt{\text{ʿff}}$ \langle **pyf* ‘remain’). In Maṣlula and Jubbṣadin *la* occasionally merges into a single segment with the following verb, as in the following example from Maṣlula:

lo:-ʃkal *kirf-o:*
NEG-take.PRET.3MSG money-MPL
‘He did not take piasters’

The negator *ʃu(:)* (Baxṣa *ʃu(:)*) negates the present and perfect. Though many view it as a loan from Kurdish, it has also been argued that it is a reflex of the Aramaic negator *la*: + existential particle $\text{ʾi}\theta(a)$ + independent 3MSG pronoun *hu:* (Correll 1974).

ʃu *ʃo:θaḥ*
NEG open.PRS.3MSG
‘He does not open’

ʃu *iʿʃen*
NEG carry.PRF.3MSG
‘He did not carry’

ʃu merges with the pseudo-verbs *i:θ* ‘there is’ and *o:b* ‘he is/was’: *ʃu:θ(i)* ‘there is not’, *ʃu:b(i)* ‘there is/was not’.

6 LEXICON

On the one hand, the vocabulary of Modern Western Aramaic has retained much of the older general Aramaic stock; on the other, it has been heavily influenced by its long contact with the Arabic vernacular of the Qalamun region in Syriac (Arnold and Behnstedt 1993). Persian, Turkish and European elements have entered the lexicon mainly through the medium of Arabic. Early nominal loans have been thoroughly Aramaized: they have participated in Modern Western Aramaic sound changes and acquired the Aramaic determined suffix, e.g., *tarba* ‘way’ (\langle Arabic *darb*); however, newer loans have not been fully Aramaized, e.g., *babbo:r* ‘locomotive’ (Arabic *ba:bu:r* \langle French *vapeur*, Italian *vapore*). Originally Arabic verbs have also become Aramaized and inflected according to the patterns of Aramaic stems.

7 SAMPLE TEXT

The text, which describes the village of Maṣlula, was first published in Spitaler (1957: 314) and republished in Spitaler (1967: II/1).

Maṣlu:la *blo:ta* *mn-blat-o:j* *l-su:ri:ja* *mabʃda*
Maṣlula village.F from-village-MPL GEN-Syria be.distant.PRS.3MSG

kim-ʃf *l-ḥimf* *w-ʃobʃa* *ki:lome:tr* *mʃa* *ḍemseḳ*,
distance-F GEN-fifty and-seventy kilometer from Damascus

<i>mas^si:fa</i>	<i>m-ʔaḥsan</i>	<i>mas^sif-o:j</i>	<i>l-mant^ʔak^s-θ</i>		
summer_residence.F	from-best	summer_residence-MPL	GEN-region-F		
<i>l-su:ri:ja.</i>	<i>blo:ta</i>	<i>θakkina</i>	<i>b-we:tja</i>	<i>mo:het^ʔ</i>	
GEN-Syria	village.F	be.PRS.3FSG	in-valley	SURFOUND.PRS.MSG	
<i>b-a:</i>	<i>su:ra</i>	<i>m-fenna</i>	<i>ʕalja irʔifo:ʕ-e</i>	<i>ʔfu</i>	<i>mo:k^lel</i>
in-3FSG	wall.M	from-rock.F	high.F height-3MSG	NEG	be_less.PRS.3MSG
<i>mʕa-ʔemʕa</i>	<i>w-himʕ</i>	<i>miʔr</i>	<i>sakkan-o:j-a</i>	<i>no:ʔk^l-in</i>	
with-hundred	and-fifty	meter	inhabitant-MPL-3FSG	number.PRS-MPL	
<i>eθlaθ</i>	<i>o:lef</i>	<i>nasm-an</i>	<i>maḥkj-in</i>	<i>loʔθ</i>	<i>l-sirjo:n.</i>
three	thousand	soul-FPL	speak.PRS-3MPL	language.F	GEN-Syriac
<i>lajjif-il-l-a</i>	<i>mʕa</i>	<i>tið-aʒhun.</i>	<i>ʔfu</i>	<i>ko:rj-in</i>	
learn.PRF-MPL-to-3FSG	with	GEN-3MPL	NEG	read.PRS-3MPL	
<i>w-xo:θp-in</i>	<i>b-a:</i>	<i>la:kin</i>	<i>maḥkj-il-l-a</i>		
and-write.PRS-3MPL	in-3FSG	but	speak.PRS-3MPL-to-3FSG		
<i>zʕur-o:</i>	<i>exm-il</i>	<i>maḥkj-il-l-a</i>	<i>rapp-o:.</i>		
young-MPL	like-REL	speak.PRS-3MPL-to-3FSG	adult-MPL		

‘Maʕlula is one of the villages of Syria. It is a distance of 57 kilometers from Damascus, one of the best summer residences of the region of Syria. The village happens to be in a valley surrounded by a wall of high rock whose height is not less than 150 meters. Its inhabitants number three thousand. They speak the Syriac language, which they have learned from their relatives. They do not read or write in it, but they speak it, young and old alike.’

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