Title: How Arabicized is the Modern Western Aramaic Lexicon?
Presenter 1:   Häberl, Charles G., Rutgers University, haberl@amesall.rutgers.edu
Presenter 2:   Loesov, Sergey,   HSE University,   sergeloesov@gmail.com

Modern Western Aramaic is presently spoken in two villages in the Syrian Arab Republic, as well as a small but growing diaspora. Residents of Maaloula today estimate that there are fewer than 500 speakers living within that village, out of a total year-round population of fewer than 1,000 residents (which doubles during the summer), and roughly 10,000 speakers in Ġuppaʕōḏ (*Jubbʕadīn*), out of a total population of 10–13,000 residents. More speakers formerly resided in these two villages, and in the village of Baxʕa (*Ṣarxah*), which was destroyed during the war and subsequently abandoned.

All its speakers are bilingual in Arabic, and its phonology, morphology, syntax, and lexicon bear the hallmarks of this longstanding contact situation. These characteristics distinguish Modern Western Aramaic from all other surviving Aramaic languages, most of which evolved to their present forms in a similarly bilingual situation with Iranian languages such as Kurdish and Persian, and Turkic languages such as Turkish and Azeri.

Since the language first came to their attention, scholars have characterized these hallmarks as "corrupt," "deep," and even so numerous as to be "pointless to list", but the degree of their influence has never truly been quantified. The question of the Arabic influence upon the Modern Western Aramaic lexicon comprises multiple questions, each of which yields a different answer. The absolute number and relative proportion of words of Arabic origin within a comprehensive Modern Western Aramaic dictionary (Arnold 2019) will naturally differ from those of a high-frequency wordlist (Bennett 2006), or for that matter from individual texts. By tallying the total number of words across a variety of such texts and dividing the number of Arabic words by that number, we can arrive at a more realistic understanding of the proportion between Arabic loans and words of other origins, including inherited vocabulary.

As a proof of concept, we subject four texts to such an analysis, extracting linguistic tokens rather than types, i.e., counting the number of total words in a text, rather than the total number of discrete words, so as not to skew the results towards low-frequency words. The first text is the first of those collected by Prym and Socin in the 1860s (Bergsträsser, Prym, and Socin 1915, 1–2), and the other three are those the Russian HSE Expedition to Qalamoun collected from speakers of Modern Western Aramaic resident in Maaloula, Ġuppaʕōḏ, and Damascus since December of 2020, and subsequently published as Duntsov, Häberl, & Loesov 2022, Burlakov, Cherkashina, Häberl, & Loesov Forth., and Bromirskaya, Häberl, & Loesov Forth.

In conclusion, we find that the Arabic proportion of the Modern Western Aramaic lexicon is equivalent to 12 out of 100 words selected for their high frequency, 40.7% (plus or minus 7.4%) of the roots in a comprehensive dictionary, and finally 23.4% (plus or minus 3.5%) of the tokens in the corpus, based on a sample of four texts.

References:
Arnold, Werner. 2019. *Das Neuwestaramäische. VI. Wörterbuch Neuwestaramäisch–Deutsch*. Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz.
Bennett, Patrick R. 1998. *Comparative Semitic Linguistics: A Manual*. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns.
Bergsträsser, Gotthelf, Prym, Eugen, and Socin, Albert. 1915. *Neuaramäische Märchen und andere Texte aus Maʕlūla*. Leipzig: F.A. Brockhaus.
Bromirskaya, Anna, Häberl, Charles G., & Loesov, Sergey. Forth. "The Western Aramaic Context of a Famous Lullaby." *Aramaic Studies* 21.2.
Burlakov, Philipp Yu., Cherkashina, Anna, Häberl, Charles G., & Loesov, Sergey. Forth. "The Church Militant." In forthcoming Festschrift edited by Aaron Hornkohl, Magdalen Connolly, Eleanor Coghill, Ben Outhwaite, Nadia Vidro, and Janet C. E. Watson. Cambridge: Open Book Publishers.
Duntsov, Alexey, Häberl, Charles G., & Loesov, Sergey. 2022. A Modern Western Aramaic Account of the Syrian Civil War. *WORD* 68:4, 359–394.