Edward Y. Odisho, Al-Mustansiriyah University, Baghdad, Iraq

As far as I can tell there is no mention in phonetic literature of a linguistic unit with the following description: a voiceless unaspirated emphatic alveolar affricate, to be transcribed, hereafter, as /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/. This paper reports the existence of /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/ in the Neo-Aramaic language spoken by the Assyrians in Iraq. It is pertinent to point out that the language has three other affricates namely /\textit{\textsc{ti}}\textsuperscript{\textsc{h}}/, /\textit{\textsc{ti}}/ and /\textit{\textsc{dz}}/ which represent aspirated, unaspirated and voiced palato-alveolar affricates, respectively.

It is worth mentioning that /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/ has no plain counterpart in Neo-Aramaic, therefore one wonders how we have ascribed the features 'emphatic' and 'unaspirated' to the sound concerned. Spectrographic evidence shows that with /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/, \textit{F\textsubscript{1}} and \textit{F\textsubscript{2}} behave exactly in the same manner as with other well-established emphatics both in Neo-Aramaic and Arabic, in that \textit{F\textsubscript{1}} is raised while \textit{F\textsubscript{2}} is lowered so as to achieve drastic approximation. In so far as the attribute 'unaspirated' is concerned, this is partly based on the auditory quality of /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/ when compared with the German /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/, and partly on a comparison with the Aramaic /\textit{\textsc{ti}}/ and /\textit{\textsc{ti}}\textsuperscript{\textsc{h}}/ (for which the term 'aspiration' is broadly used to embrace both frication and aspiration occurring consecutively). The latter comparison shows that the aspiration phase of /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/ is nearer in magnitude to that of /\textit{\textsc{ti}}/ than to that of /\textit{\textsc{ti}}\textsuperscript{\textsc{h}}/. This phonetic similarity tempts one to envisage that /\textit{\textsc{ts}}/ has possibly emerged in the system to function as the emphatic counterpart of /\textit{\textsc{ti}}/, the shift in place of articulation being attributed to the availability of better chances for anchoring the tip/blade at the alveolar zone rather than at the palato-alveolar zone. Such anchoring is required to counter the tendency to tamper with the primary articulation under the pressure of the backing gesture, a manoeuvre that is necessary for the execution of the secondary articulation, i.e. pharyngealization.

1) For the phonetic details on /\textit{\textsc{ti}}/ and /\textit{\textsc{ti}}\textsuperscript{\textsc{h}}/, see my paper in \textit{Journal of the International Phonetic Association} 7, 1977.