The definite marker -ake in the Trans-Zab North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic: its origin and convergence with Iranian

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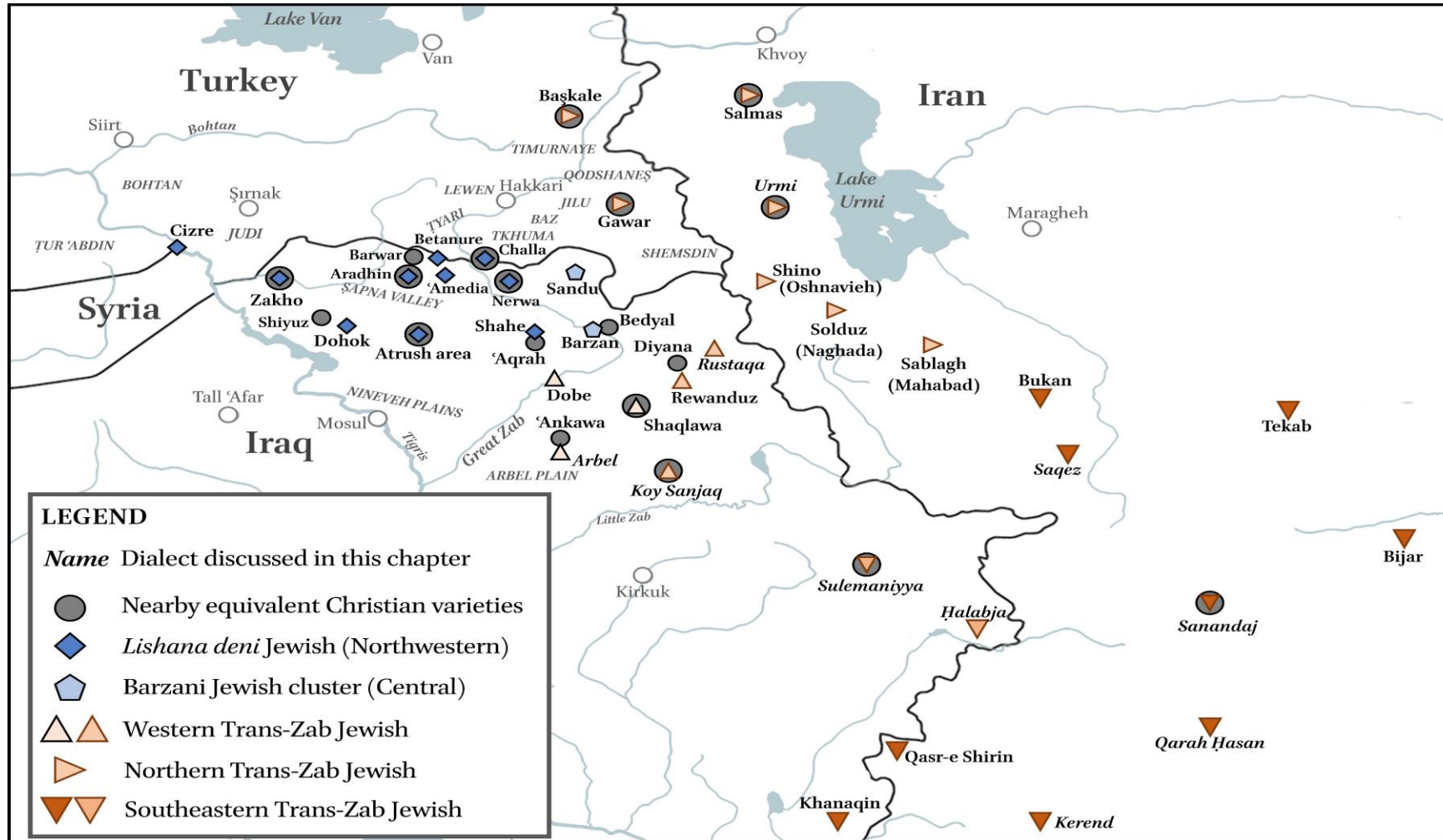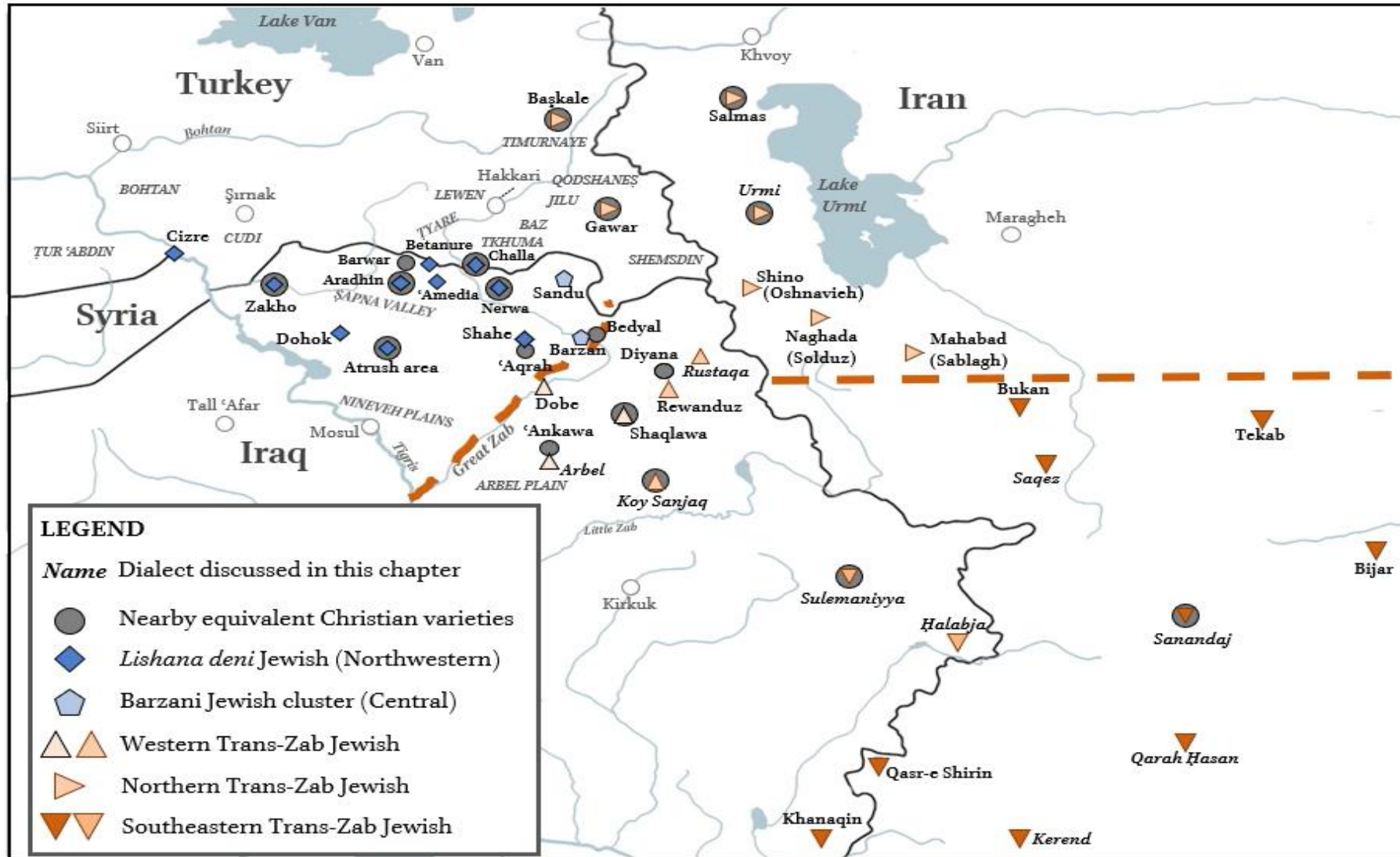
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Outline of the talk

I. What is the source of the definite suffix -ake in NENA dialects?

II. To what extent the borrowed definite suffix has converged with the equivalent suffix in contact

languages?

North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) Dialects (Noorlander 2021)

NENA Dialects

The definite suffix -ake in NENA

- Coghill (2019: 510):

Most NENA dialects do not consistently mark definiteness on a noun, although this function may be expressed by demonstratives (see Cohen 2012: 20-30), or (in the case of objects) by indexing on the verb (Coghill 2014). **Some eastern Jewish dialects, including Arbel, Koy Sanjaq, and SE Trans-Zab dialects, have borrowed a suffix marking definiteness from Sorani [i.e. Central Kurdish]**, **realized in NENA as –ake,** for example J. Sulemaniyya baruxa 'friend,' barux-ake 'the friend' (Khan 2007b: 201-202).

Central Kurdish dialects (Haig 2018)
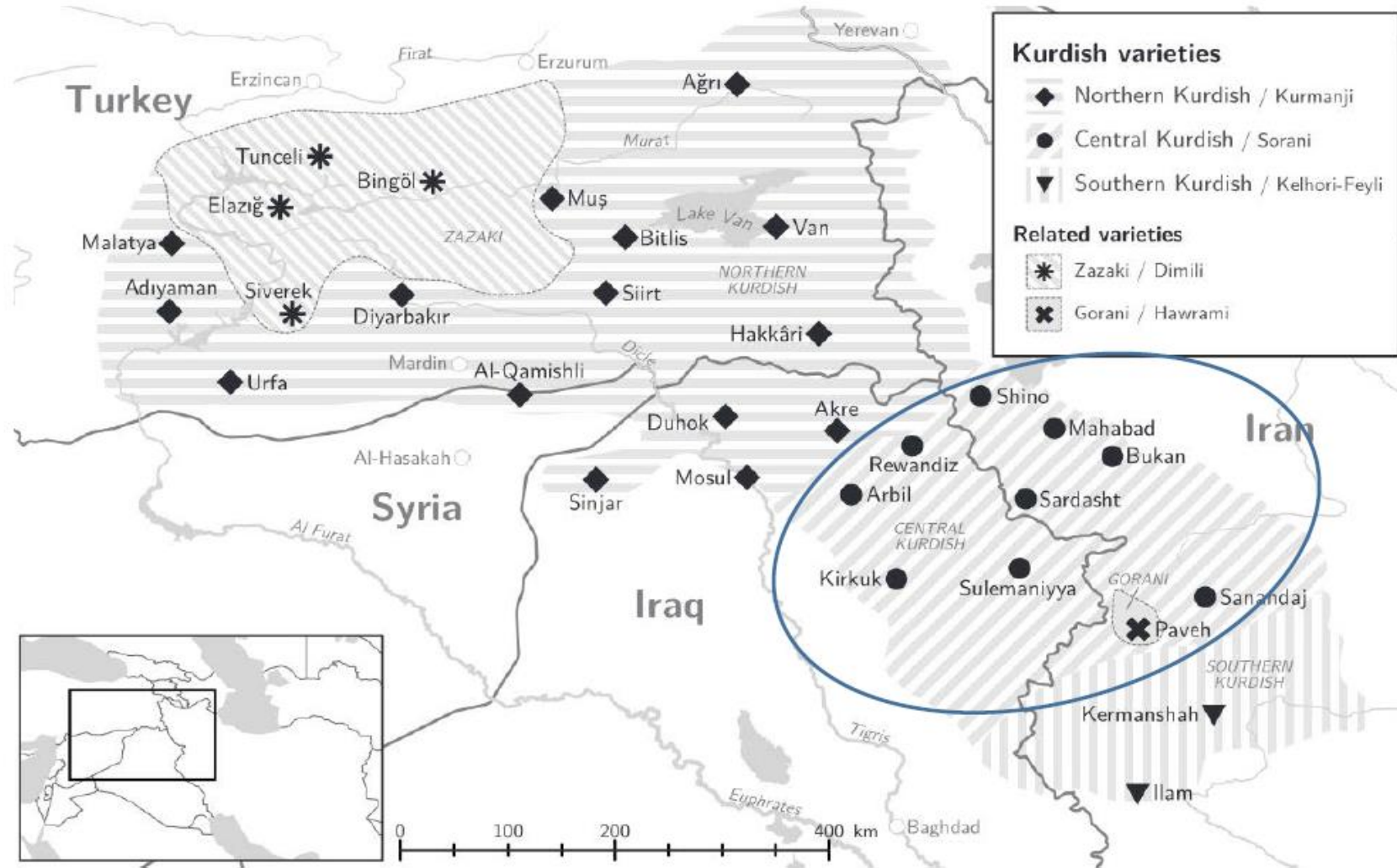
Gorani dialects (Bailey 2018:8)
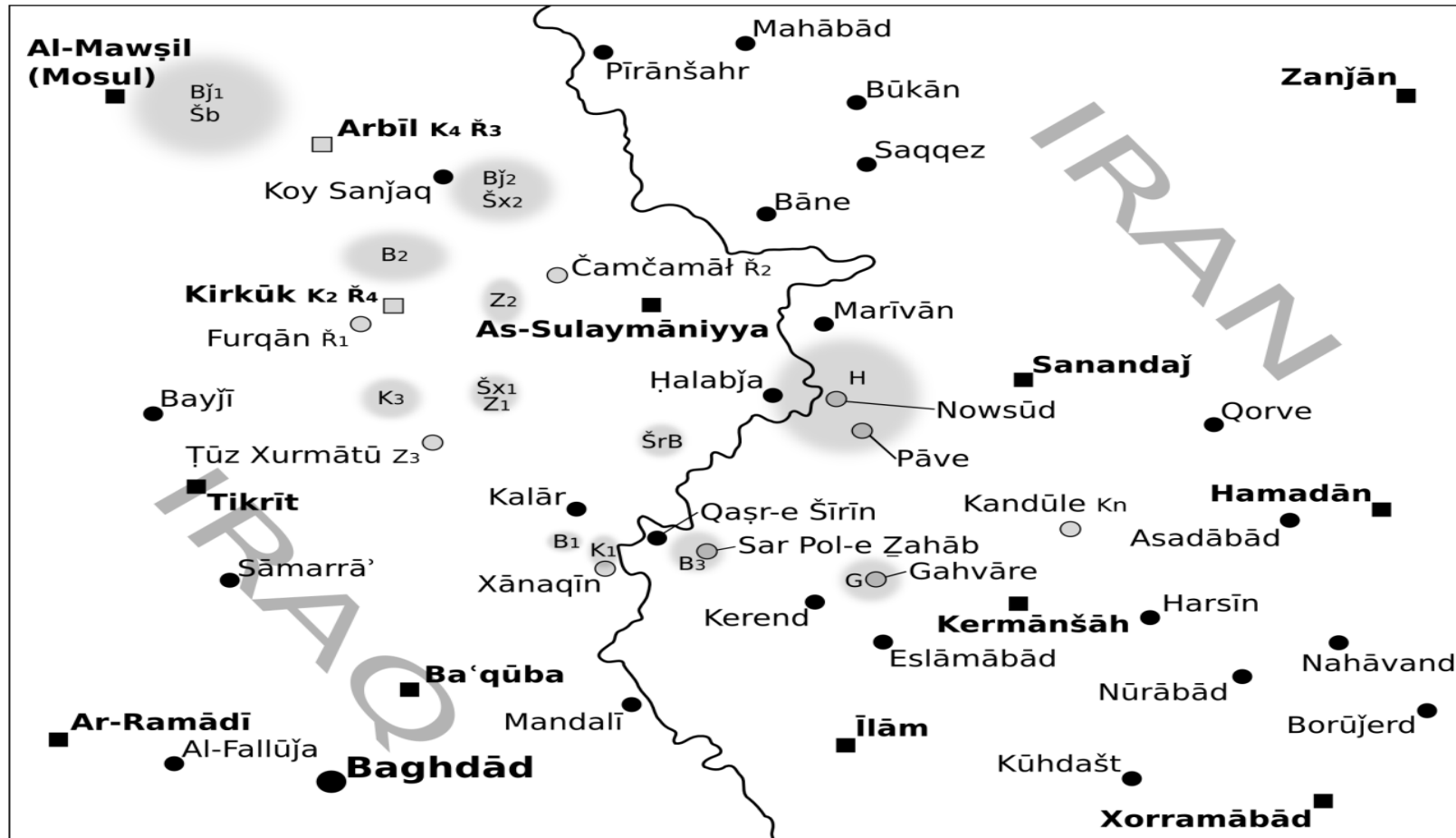
It is generally assumed that there is a Gorani substrate in Central Kurdistan (cf. Christensen and Benedictsen 1921; Minorsky 1943; MacKenzie 1961; Leezenberg 1992, among others)

Paradigm of definiteness marking in Trans-Zab NENA

SG	-*ake*
PL	-*ake*

Example: Jewish NENA Sanandaj

kalba	'dog'	*kalbăke*	'the dog'
kalbe	'dogs'	*kalbăke*	'the dogs'

Paradigm of definiteness marking in Central Kurdish

Northern Central Kurdish (Mukri, Erbil, Shaqlawa)

	Direct	Oblique
SG	*-aka*	*-akay*
PL	*-akān*	

Southern Central Kurdish (Sanandaj; Suleimaniya)

SG	*-aka*
PL	*-akān*

Paradigm of definiteness marking in Gorani

	Direct	Oblique
m.	*-aka*	*-akay*
f.	*-akē*	*-akē*
pl	*-akē*	*-akā*

Paradigm of definiteness marking in Gorani

	Direct	Oblique
m	*-aka*	*-akay*
f	*-akē*	*-akē*
pl	*-akē*	*-akā*

NENA *-ake* morphologically matches the *-akē* form in Gorani, used with both singular feminine nouns and noun in the plural direct.

NENA

SG	*-ake*
PL	*-ake*

What does the token frequency of -aka suffixes in contact languages tell us about the origin of *–ake* in NENA?

Frequency is the first step toward routinization and grammaticalization (Mithun 2021)

Central Kurdish *-akay*

The singular oblique form -akay is probably the best candidate for borrowing; thus –akay becoming –ake due to the monophthongisation of *-ay*

The frequency of *-akay* in running texts

CK. Erbil, two tales (MacKenzie 1962)

CK Rawanduz, 1 tale (MacKenzie 1962)

 CK. Shaqlawa, 7 tales (Mohammadirad *forthcoming)*

Total number of definite-marked NPs	*-aka*	*-akay*	*-akān*
146	63%	14%	23%

Possible candidates for the source of –ake in NENA

It is less likely that the source of NENA *-ake* is Kurdish *-akay*

total number of definite-marked NPs	*-aka*	*-akay*	*-akān*
146	63%	14%	23%

Possible candidates for the source of -ake in NENA

Gorani definite forms

Data: 7 narratives

(MacKenzie 1966; Mohammadirad 2020; Khan and Mohammadirad *forthcoming*)

| total number of definite-marked NPs	*-akē*	*-aka*	*-akay*	*-akā*
258	42%	28%	18%	12%

Frequency rate of different definite forms in Gorani

Data: 7 narratives

(MacKenzie 1966; Mohammadirad 2020)

total number of definite-marked NPs	*-akē*	*-aka*	*-akay*	*-akā*
258	42%	28%	18%	12%

- It is probable that NENA *-ake* was borrowed from Gorani *–akē* rather than the Kurdish *-aka, -akay*, suggesting that there is a Gorani substrate across NENA and that NENA borrowed the most frequent form of the definite marker.
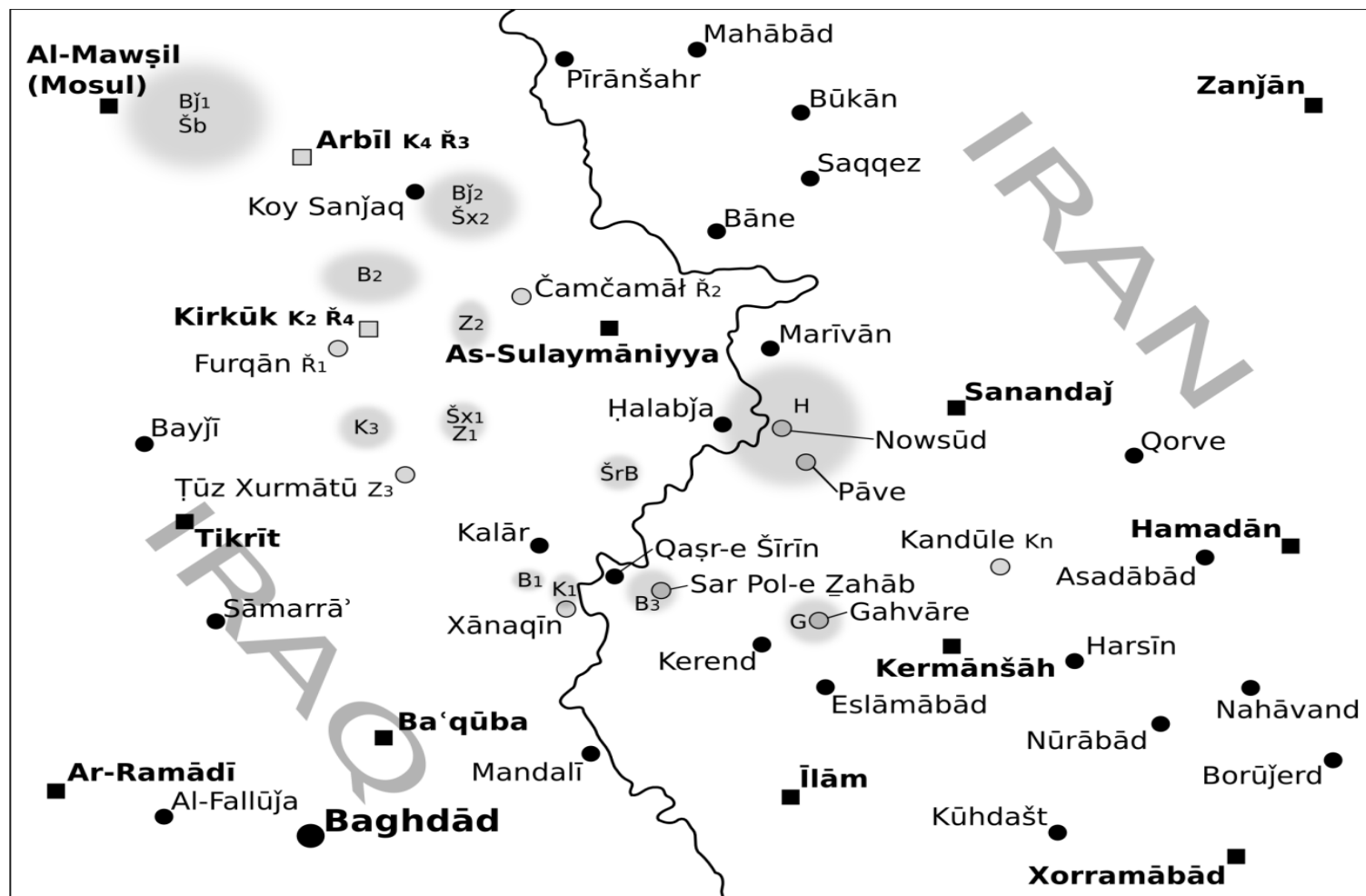
The distribution of -ake in NENA doesn't quite match the geographical distribution of Gorani!
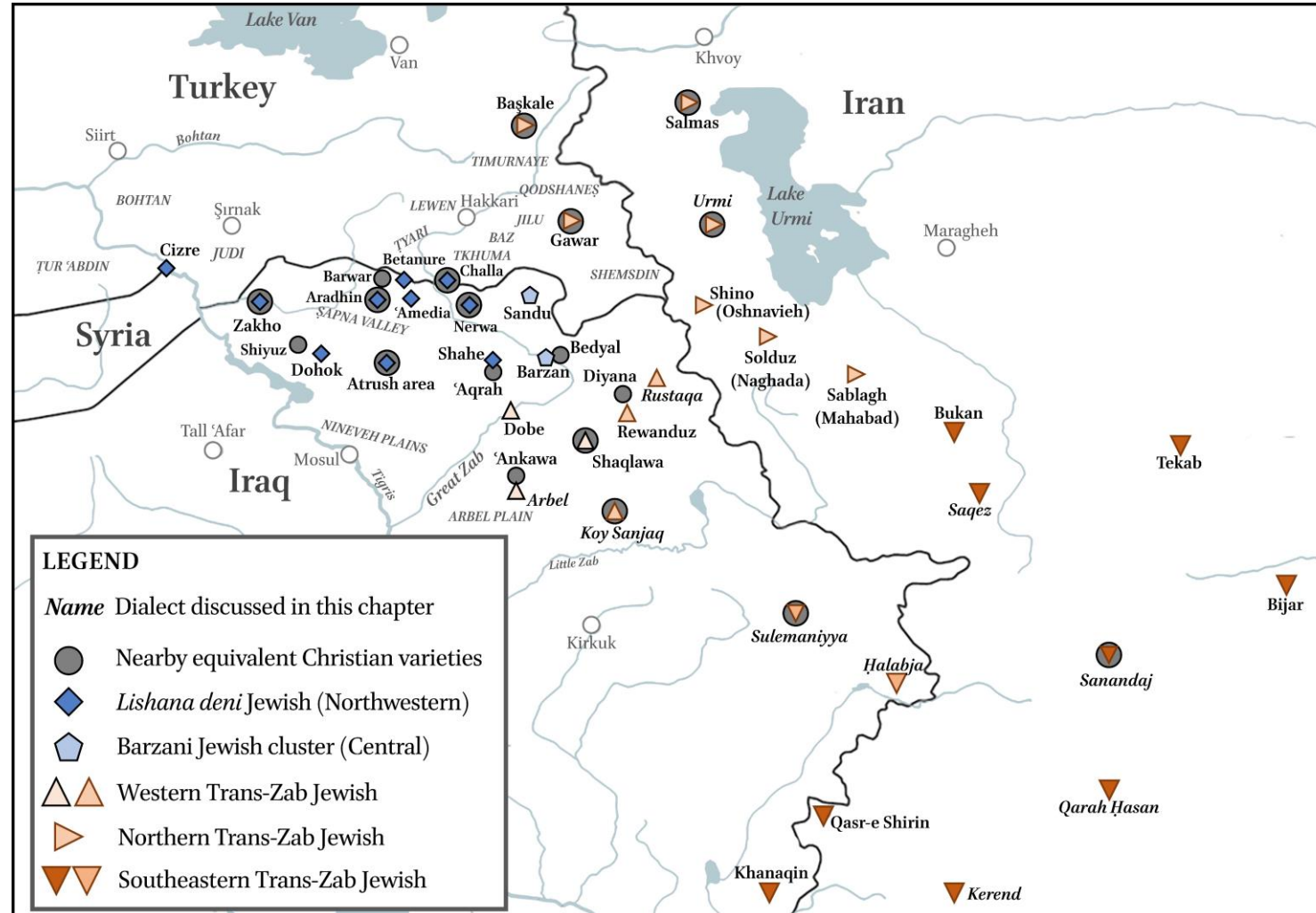
Morphosyntactic convergence of NENA *-ake* with definite suffixes in Iranian languages

Convergence in the morphology of -ake

▪ In the Kurdish there seems to be a general constraint on the exclusion of using the definite suffix with a noun that is already modified by a demonstrative form.

(1) Kurdish

am	*žən=a /*	**am*	*žən-aka*
DEM.PROX	woman=DEM	DEM.PROX	woman-DEF

'This woman'

• This restriction is observed in NENA

(2) Jewish NENA Sanandaj

ʾay	*kalba*	*/ *ʾay*	*kalb-ake*
DEM.PROX	dog	DEM.PROX	dog-DEF

'this dog'

Convergence in the morphology of -ake

In the NP structure of CK and Gorani -*aka* is realized on the attribute rather than the head (cf. 1.b)

(3)   Gorani

         yāna   *gawra-ka*

         house   big-def

         'the big house'

This feature is matched in NENA:

(4)   Jewish Suleimaniya

         baxta   *rabt-ake*

         woman   old-def

         'The older wife'

Morphological constraints on borrowing the definite marker

In Kurdish, the form -akān can be analyzed as being composed of –aka (def) + -ān (pl), as a case of 'debonding' (Haig 2019):

(5)   Kurdish Erbil

žən-ān   *žən-**ak**-ān*

woman-pl   woman-**def-pl**

 'women'   'the women'

▪ In NENA, the definite affix follows the nouns which take plural suffixes other than -e

(6)   NENA Sanandaj

ʾăxon-ăwale   *ʾăxon-**ăwal-ăke***

brother-pl   brother-**pl-def**

'brothers'   'the brothers'

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- In NENA, the definite affix follows the nouns which take plural suffixes other than -e

(6)   NENA Sanandaj

        ʾăxon-ăwale   *ʾăxon-**ăwal-ăke***

        brother-pl   brother-**pl-def**

        'brothers'   'the brothers'

This reflects a lesser degree of morphological integration of the loaned suffix in the composition of the word than in Iranian.

Morphological constraints on borrowing the definite marker

- In Kurdish/ Gorani the definite suffix can be combined with a possessive suffix:

(7)   Kurdish

*kič-**aka**=**m***

girl-DEF=1SG

'My daughter'

(8)   Gorani

*kināč-**akē**=**m***

girl-DEF.F=1SG

'My daughter'

- In NENA, the definite suffix is not combined with possessive suffixes:

(9)   NENA

brat-i   */*brat-**ake-y***

girl-1SG   girl-DEF-1SG

'My daughter'

Convergence in the syntax of definite -ake in NENA

- Anaphoric contexts

(10)   Gorani

*īsà⌐ han **dawḷatman₌ā₌w** mən gađā̀₌nā⌐ mən řamì̀yā₌ū **dawḷatman-aka-y**⌐ mà-yā-ū₌š panē̄⌐*

Nowadays, there is a **rich fellow**, and as for me, I am poor. I run (i.e. work) like **the rich   (fellow)** but
I cannot reach him.'

(11)   Jewish NENA Sanandaj

*bàr-d-o⌐ gbéwa hezíwa **zărá** šaqlì,⌐ **zărăké** hămènwale-o⌐ ga-béla dána dána găbènwale,⌐ tămíz   holìwale.⌐*

'Afterwards they had to go and buy **wheat**, bring **the wheat** back, sort it grain by grain in the
house, clean it.'

Convergence in the syntax of definite -ake in NENA

- Associative contexts

(12)   Gorani

*a č-ì̀ Bana-na│ **zamāwə̀nà** bē│, **zamā-(a)ka** nāmē̆š ʿAlī Guḷā̀ḷà bē.│*

'In this village of Bana there was a **wedding ceremony**. **The bridegroom**'s name was Ali Gulala.'

(13)   Jewish NENA Sanandaj

*ʾərqála zíla tíwa **ga-xa-ʾotằq**.│ ta-nóšaf **tằrăké** mə́zra ba-réša-nòšaf.│ tằra mə́zra ba-réša nòšaf│ zílawa tíwa ga-dokà.│*

'She fled and sat **in a room**. She closed **the door** behind her (lit-erally: upon her). She closed the door behind her and went and sat there.'

Convergence in the syntax of definite *-ake* in NENA

- In some CK dialects, e.g., Sanandaj, the definite-marked NP can be combined with a demonstrative as a marker of end-weight of the discourse unit.

(14)   Kurdish of Sanandaj region

mən=īš	*wət=m=a*		***aw***	***maytàr-aka-y***	***tər*[⌐]
1SG=ADD	say.PST=1SG=DRCT		DEM.DIST	stable.man-DEF-EZ	other

‘I said to the other stable man.’

(15)   Jewish NENA Sanandaj

kmə́r mà honá?⌐ *míri ʾə̀t*⌐ *ba-ʾaqlè*⌐ *sé réša* ***ʾáy jəlè****.*⌐ *ba-ʾaqlé* ***ʾáy jəlé*** *ʿùčlu*⌐ *ʿúčlu* ***e-jəlăkè****⌐* *ʾaná-č ʾasrə̀nanu.*⌐

He says, 'What should I do?' I said 'You go onto **the clothes** with your feet. Trample **the clothes** with your feet. Trample **the clothes** and I shall wring them out. (Khan 2009: 476)

A case of non-convergence in the functional extension of the definite suffix

- In Central Kurdish, the definite marker can be used with a subset of kin terms when they are used vocatively. These terms express endearment.

CK. Suleimaniya *pīyāw-aka*   'husband!' (MacKenzie 1962: 50)

CK. Sanandaj   *žən-aka*   'wife!'

CK.   *dəḷ-aka=m*   'Darling!' (lit. my heart)

The definite marker has preserved its original diminutive function in these expressions.

A case of non-convergence in the syntax of definite -ake in NENA

The use of definite marker with kin term address forms is not replicated it NENA:

Jewish NENA Sanandaj   *báxta!*   'Wife!'

Jewish NENA Arbel   góra   'Husband!'

NENA frequently uses inherited Aramaic diminutive suffixes to express endearment in parallel constructions with kinship terms, e.g.

Jewish Sanandaj:

brona 'son' (< *br* + diminutive *-ona*),

ʾăxona 'brother' (< *ʾax* + diminutive *-ona*)

Summary

- NENA *-ake* is most probably borrowed from Gorani

- The borrowing of *-ake* among competing forms reflects that language contact is sensitive to linguistic items' frequency of occurrence in actual speech, and possibly their syntactic function.

- Morphologically, in NENA *-ake* occurs at the periphery of the noun.

- NENA borrowed *-ake* only in its definiteness function; *-ake* was not borrowed in its diminutive function. "highly congruent structures" favor transfer because a highly bound morpheme is "useless in an alien system unless there is a ready function for it" (Weinreich1953:33)

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