

# Body-part loans in North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects

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# Outline of the talk

- I. Body-parts and their borrowability
- II. Which body-part meanings are loaned the most across NENA dialects?
- III. Percentage of body-part loans per dialect
- IV. Body-part calques as indicators of convergence zone

## Body-parts and their borrowability cross-linguistically

- Quantitative cross-linguistic research has shown that body parts are one of the least borrowed semantic fields (Tadmor and Haspelmath, 2009a; 2009b; Tadmor, 2009)
- Body-part terms inhibit borrowing due to (cf. Vejdemo & Hörberg 2016):
  - their being basic vocabulary and therefore likely to be among the earliest items of the lexicon
  - high frequency
  - semantic factors such as mutual information, i.e. likelihood of co-occurrence with other words,
  - imageability, i.e. how easy it is to picture a lexical item in the mind, etc.

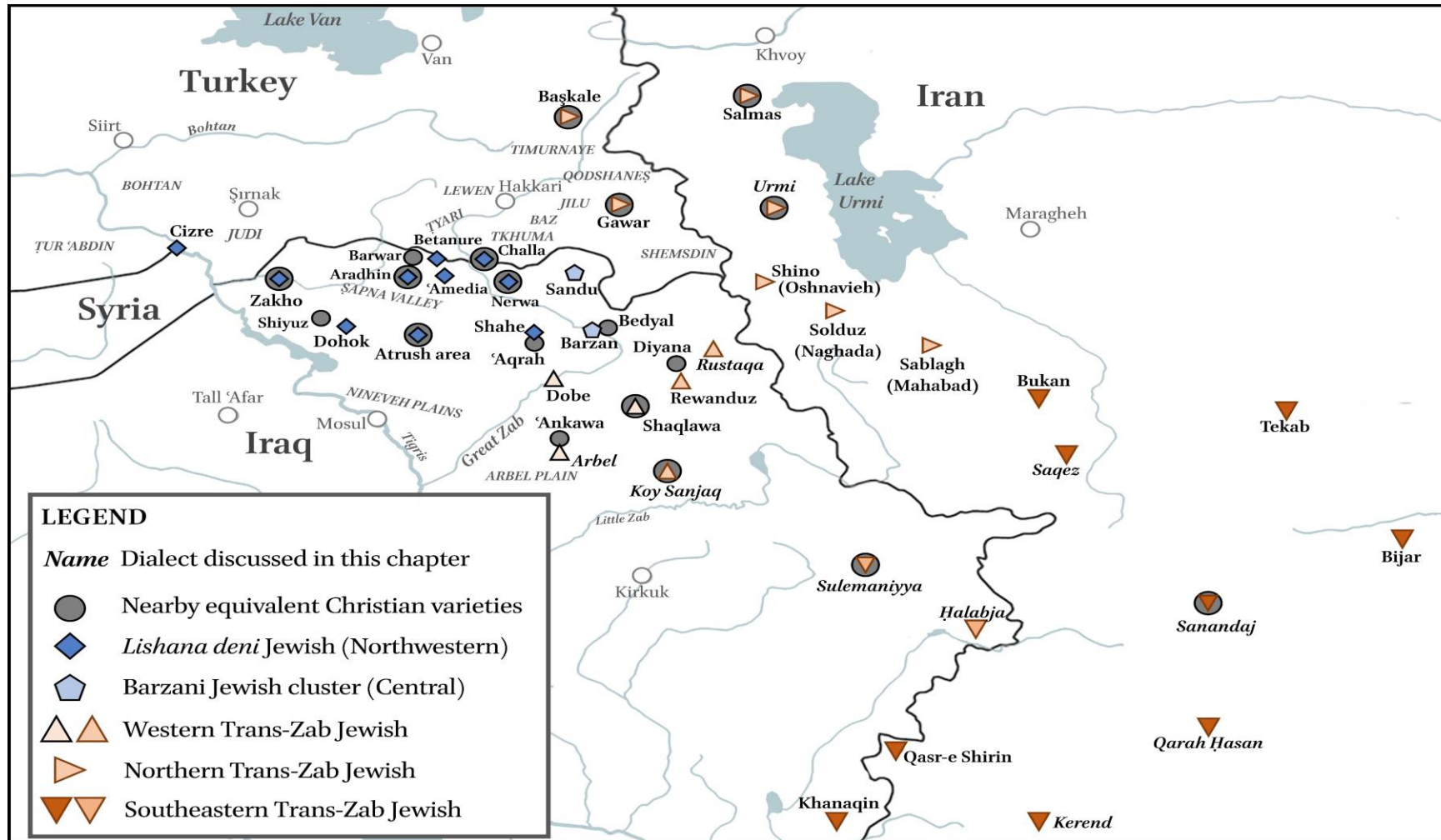
Nevertheless body-part terms are borrowed!

## Body-parts and their borrowability cross-linguistically

Factors motivating borrowing of body part terms (Pattillo 2021):

- Prestige of the donor language
- Taboo
- New concepts adopted from another culture
  - Cultural imports
    - science (medical terminology from Greek and Latin),
    - art (torso in English),
    - fashion (décolletage in English and German)
    - calques (e.g. the calque for 'knee' is 'head of leg' in meso-American languages)

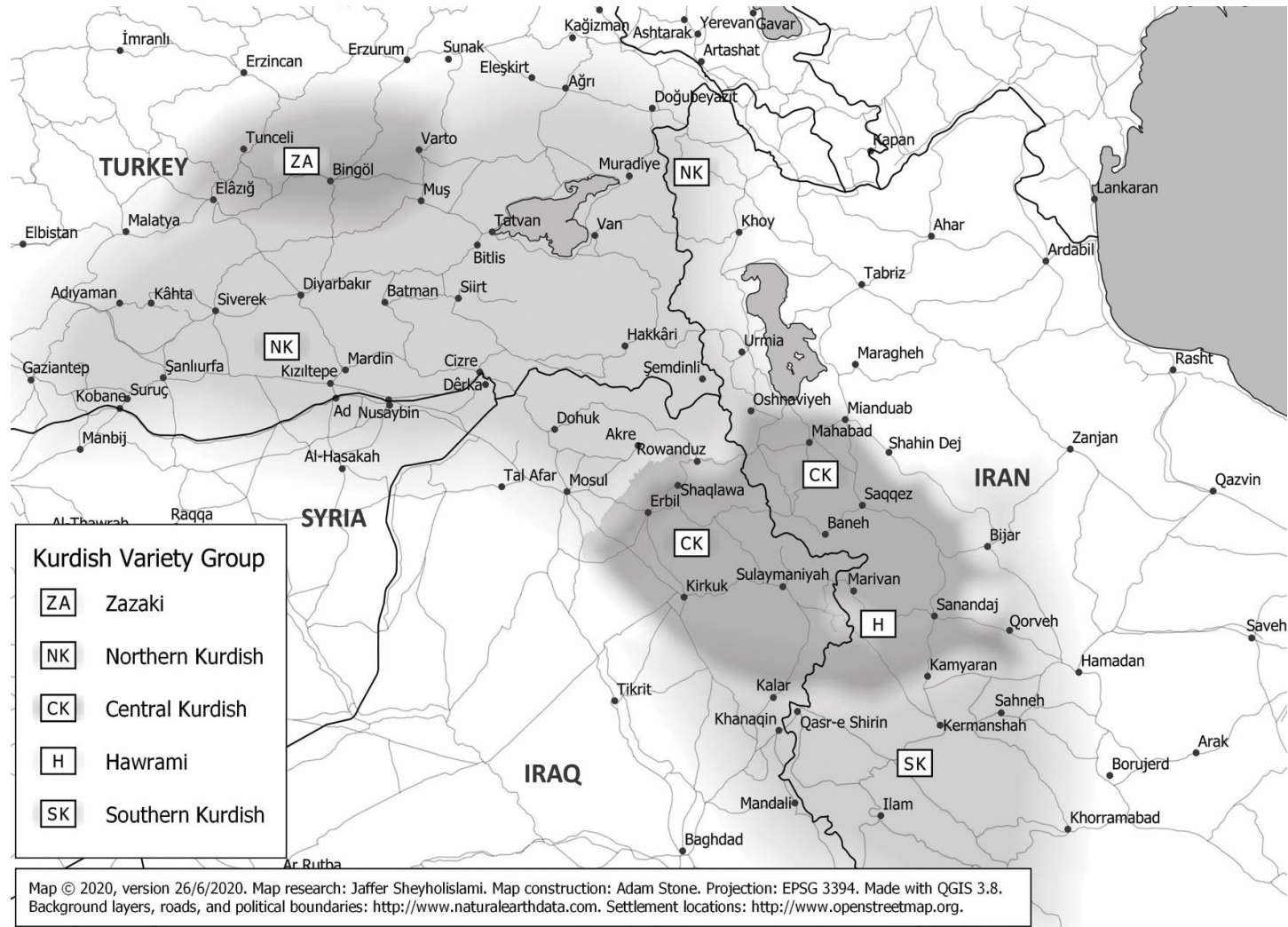
# North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic (NENA) Dialects (Noorlander 2021)



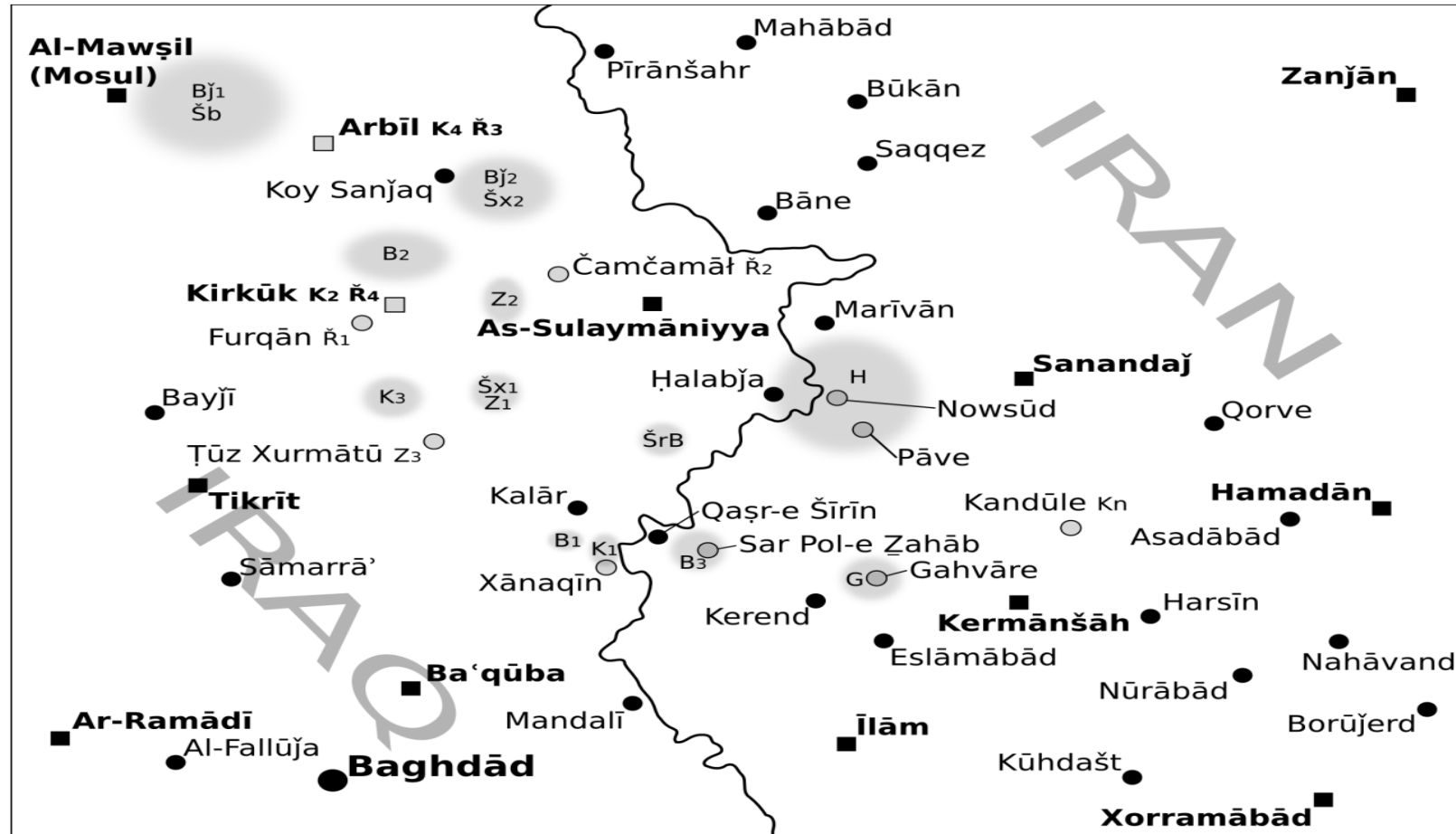
# NENA Dialects



# Kurdish dialects



## Gorani dialects (Bailey 2018:8)





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# The North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Database Project

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**This website gives access to recordings, transcribed texts and grammatical descriptions of the North Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects.**

**Most of these are now highly endangered and some of have recently become extinct.**

Find dialect...

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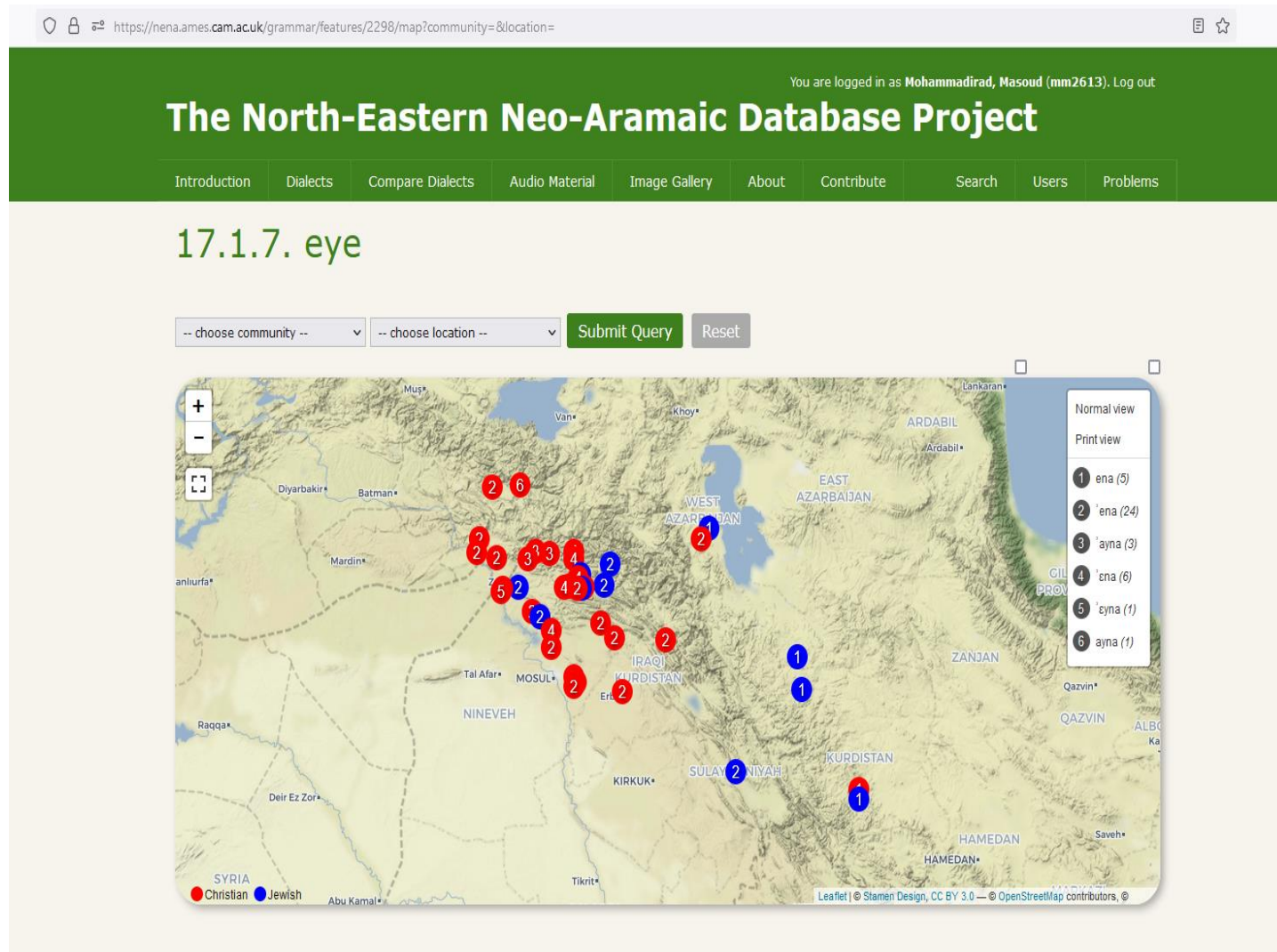
## About the North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects

The North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic dialects (also known as NENA for short) form a very diverse group of Aramaic dialects that were spoken until modern times in Northern Iraq, North West Iran and South Eastern Turkey by Christian and Jewish communities. These are among the

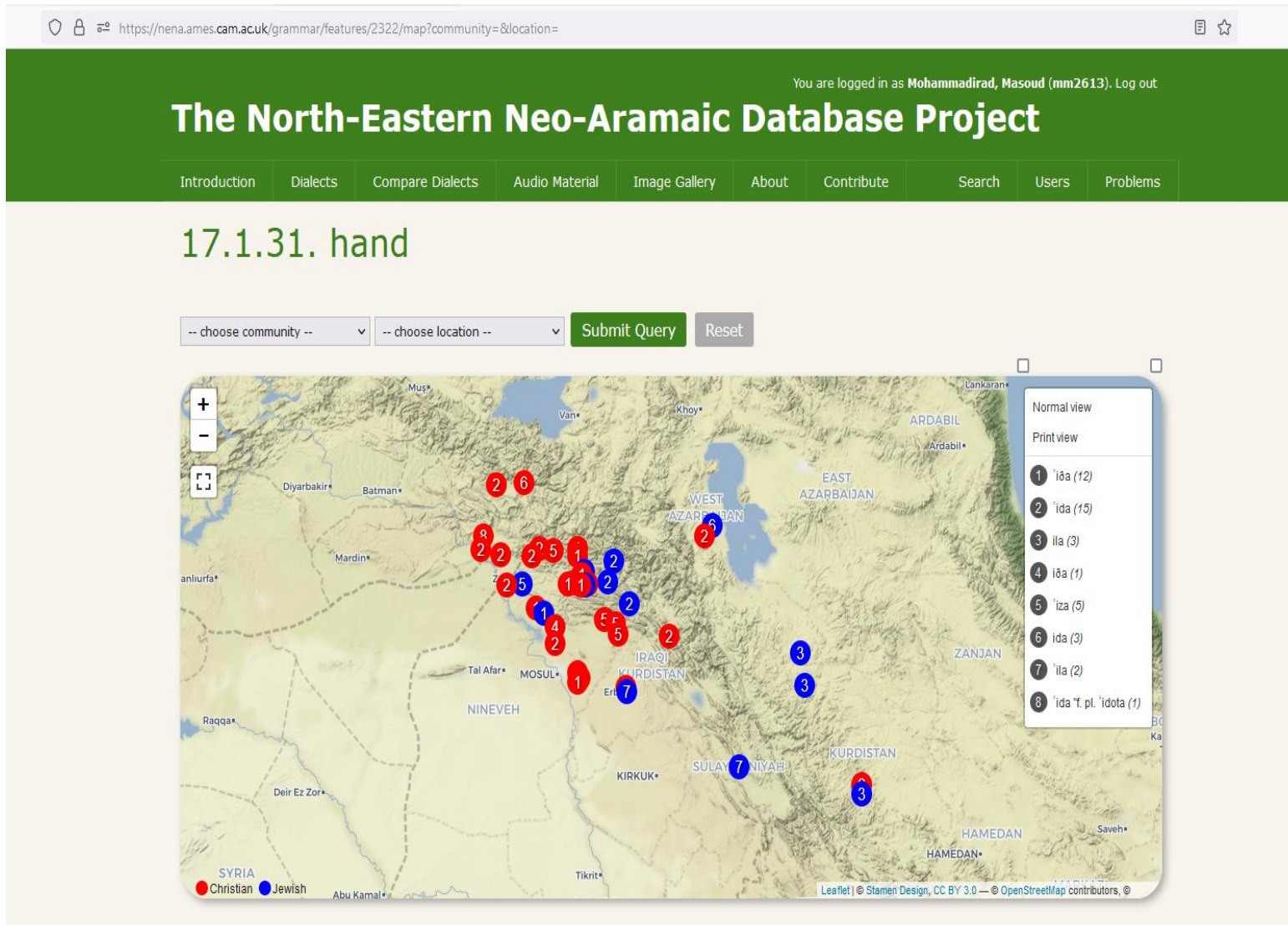
increasingly losing competence in these dialects and as a result most of the dialects are now in danger of extinction. The extinction of these ancient dialects will be an immeasurable loss for the communities whose ancestors spoke the dialects, since language is a core component of

<https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/>

# Salient body parts: eye (borrowability 0%)

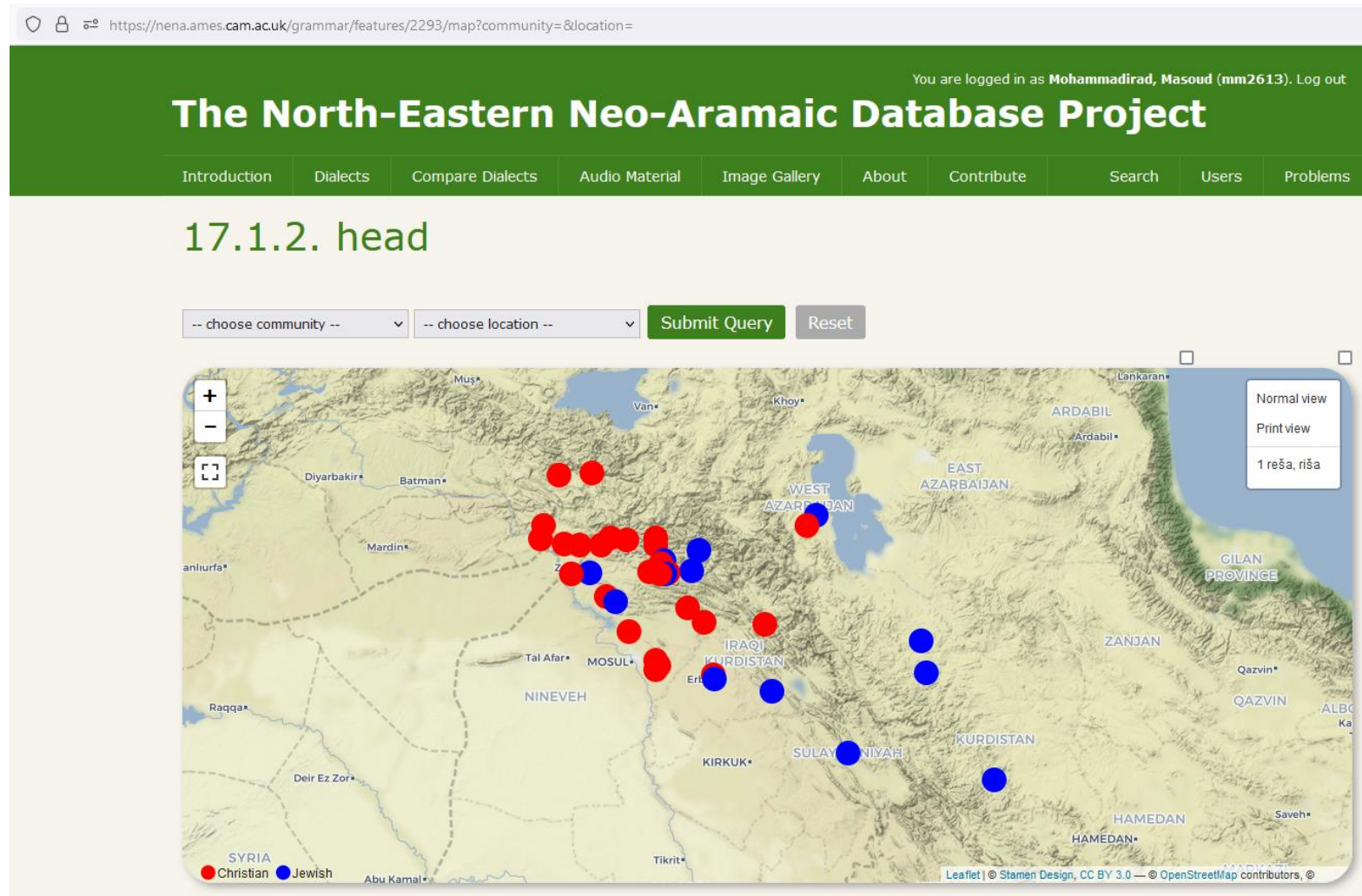


# Salient body parts: hand (borrowability 0%)

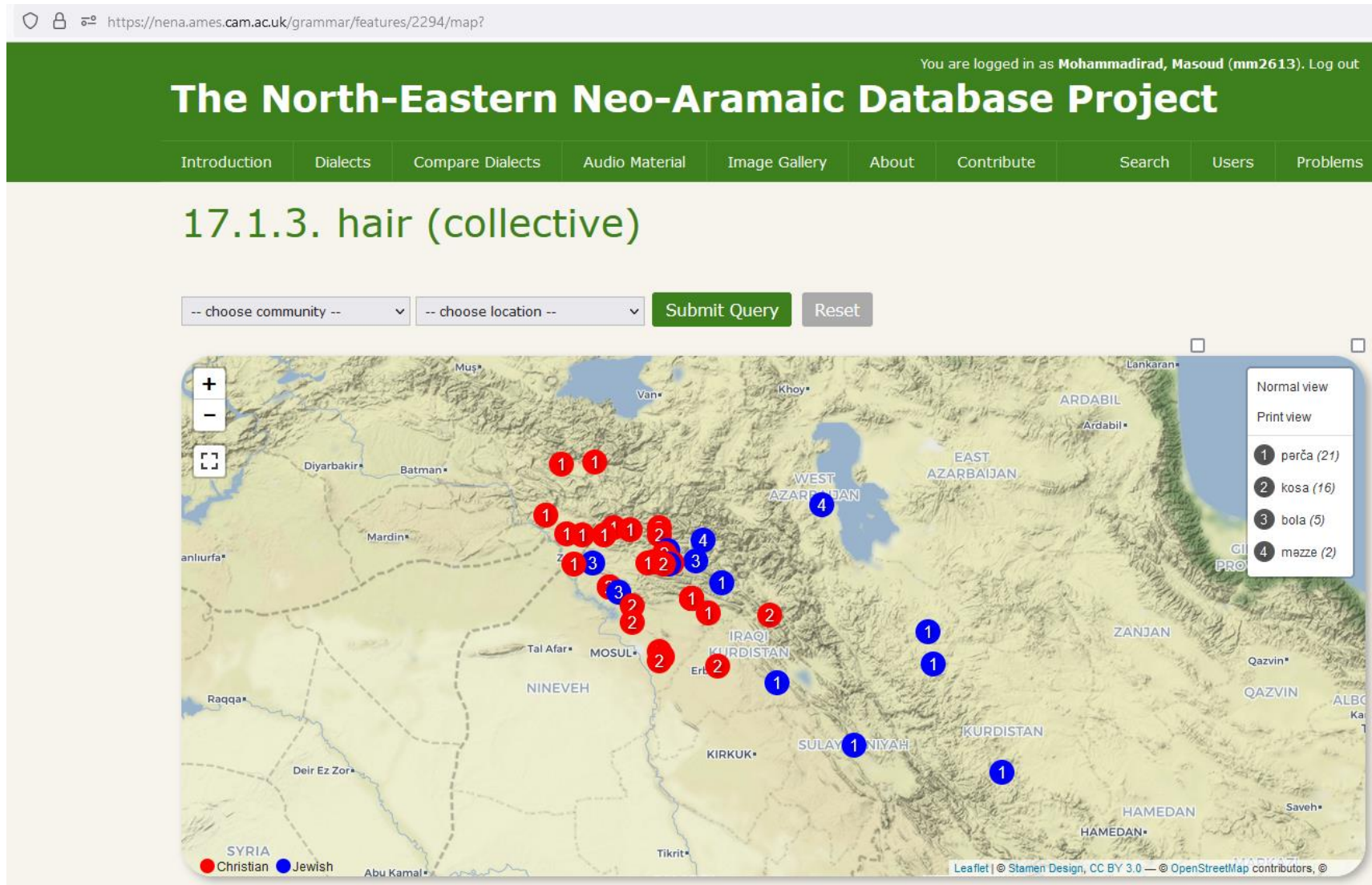




# Salient body parts: head (borrowability 0%)



# Non-salient body parts: hair (collective) (borrowability 46%)



# Non-salient body parts (external organ): armpit (borrowability: 54%)

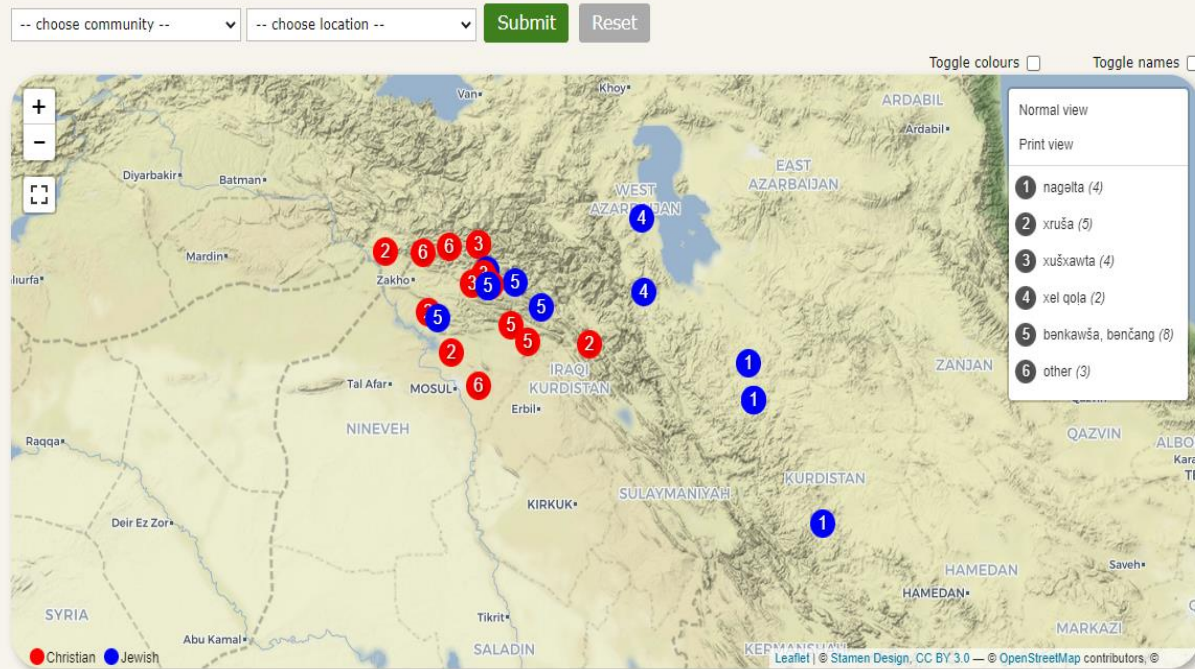
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## The North-Eastern Neo-Aramaic Database Project

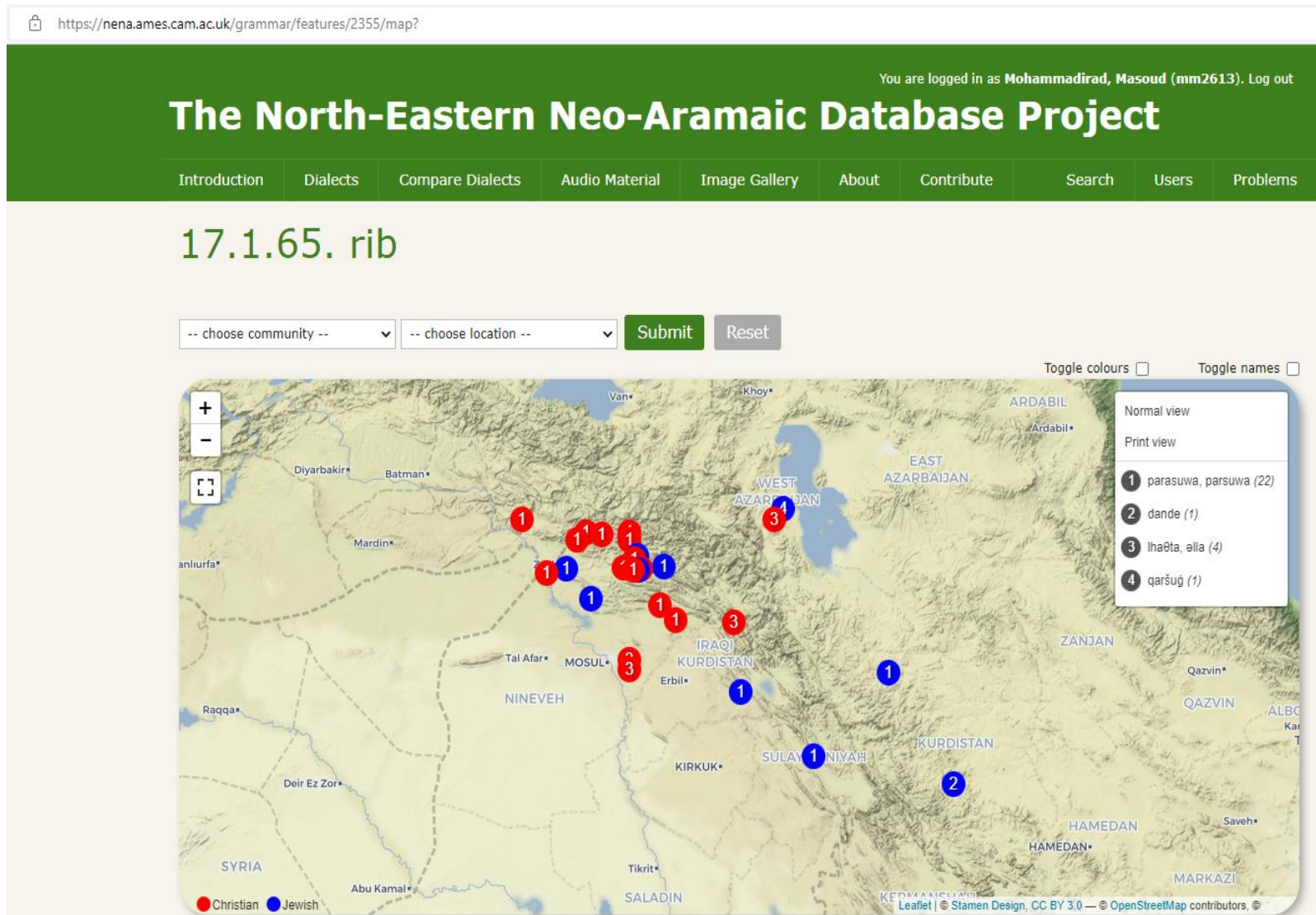
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### 17.1.36. armpit



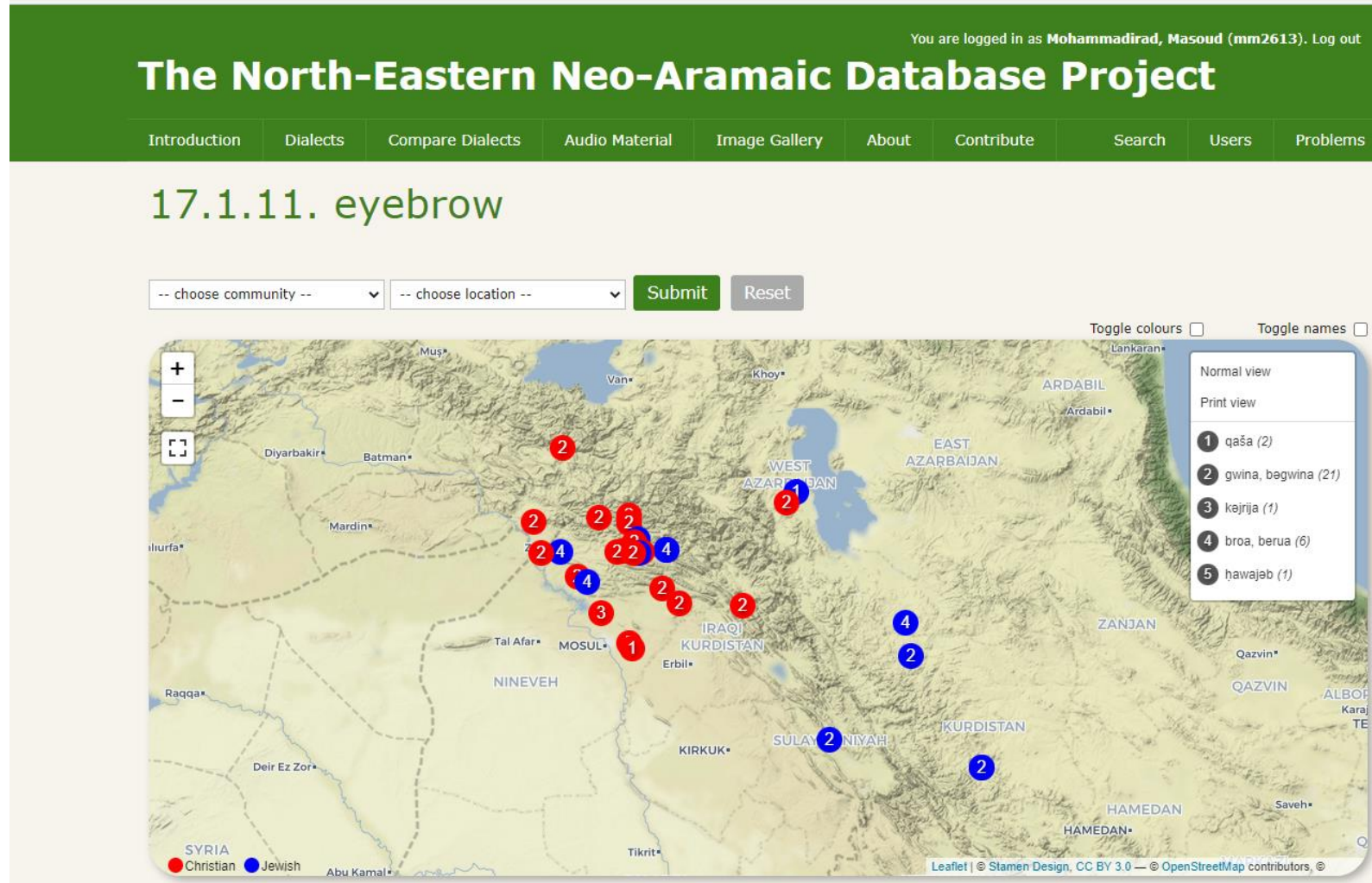


# Non-salient body parts (internal organ): rib (borrowability 78%)



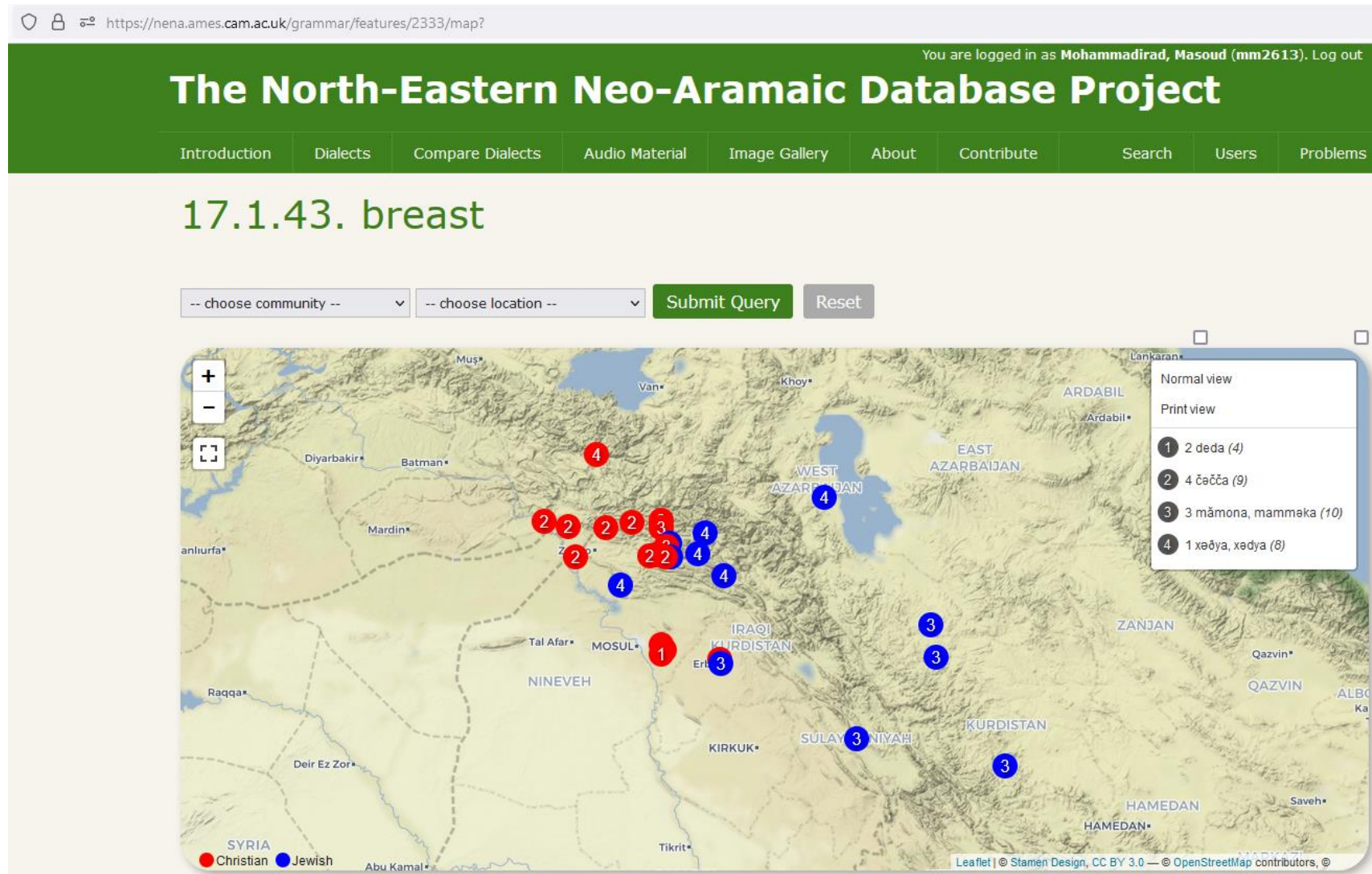
# Non-salient body parts (external organ): eyebrow (borrowability: 25%)

<https://nena.ames.cam.ac.uk/grammar/features/2302/map?>





body parts: breast (borrowability 61%)



# Borrowing of body part meanings summary

word meaning	Frequency of borrowing	word meaning	Frequency of borrowing
rib	78%	eyebrow	25%
upper arm	71%	thigh	21%
ankle	67%	chest	15%
breast	61%	chin	15%
body	54%	cheek	15%
hair (collective)	46%	knee	11%
armpit	44%	vein	11%
arm	35%	spittle	10%
		head, eye, hand, brain, heart, blood, fingernail, mouth, leg/foot	0%

## body part borrowing: summary

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hair (collective) > head

upper arm > arm

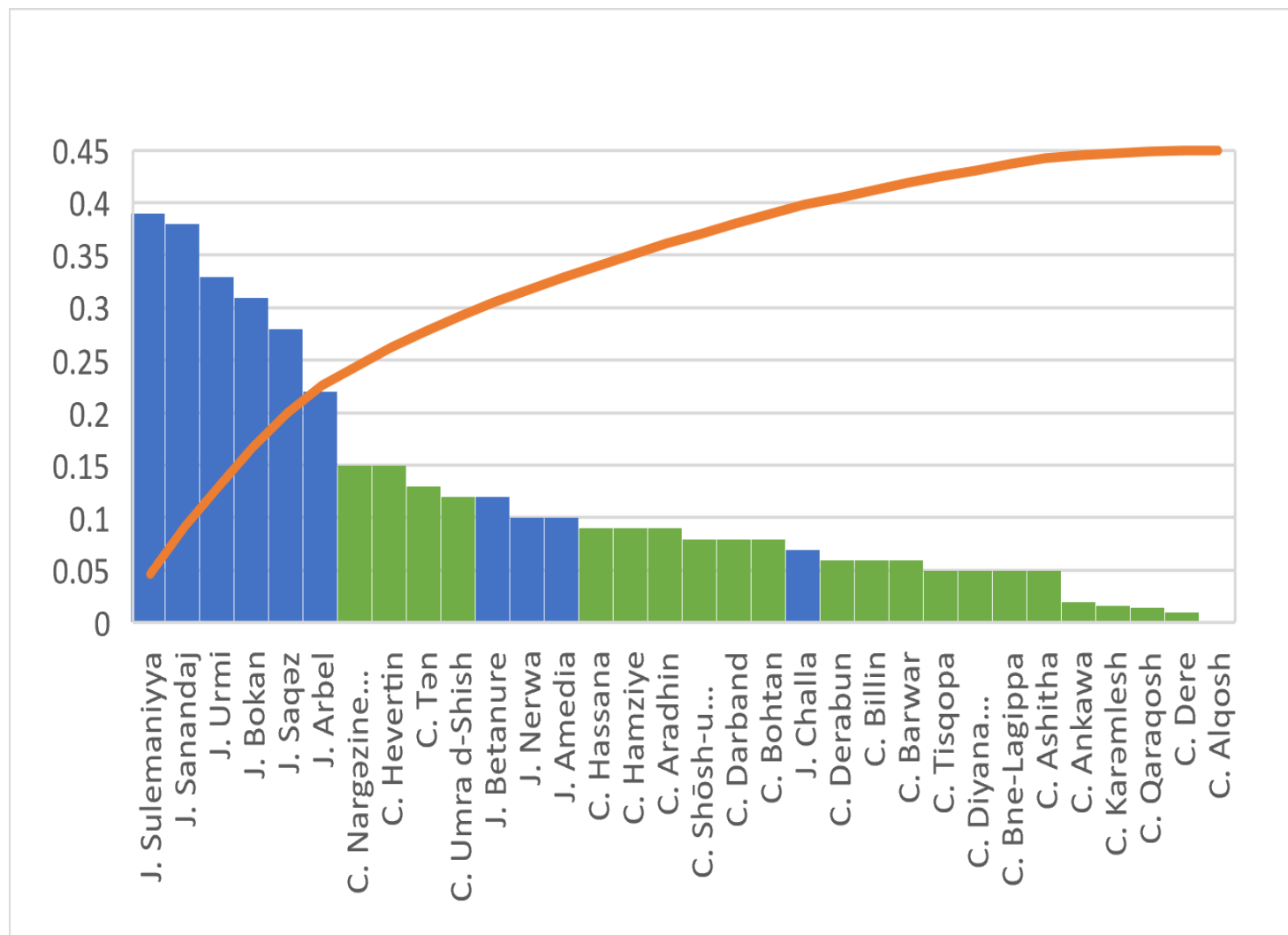
rib > chest

Percentage of body-part loans per dialect

Only dialects which had more than 30 entries were counted.

32 dialects in total

## Percentage of body-part loans per dialect



# NENA Dialects



# Lexical borrowing of body part terms in J. Suleimaniya

body	lāša
hair (collective)	pərče
hair (individual item)	pərča ~ məsta M
eyelid	pəlwe (pl.)
cheek	qulma
lip	ləčča
jaw	čanage (pl.)
spittle	təffe
chin	čanakta
elbow	jiga 'ila ~ jiga qoḷa M
arm	qoḷa
lower arm	bāška 'ila
finger	zbota 'finger, toe' ~ panja
chest	sənga
thigh	səmta
ankle	jiga 'aqla
skin	məška
sweat	'araqa
rib	parāswa

## Body-part calques as indicators of convergence zone

Body part calques can be indicative of linguistic areas, as suggested by Campbell et al. (1986: 553-555) for Meso-America

### Frequent Calques from Meso-American Languages

head of leg	'knee'
neck of hand	'wrist'
belly of leg	'calf'
fruit/seed/bean of face	'eye'
child of hand	'finger'
mother of hand	'thumb'
house (of) urine	'bladder'
road (of blood)	'vein'
grindstone (metate)	'molar'
dog tooth, snake tooth	'canine tooth'
bottle gourd (tecomate)	'head'

(Campbell et al., 1986: 553)



## Body-part calques in the Kurdish-NENA convergence zone

### womb

word meaning	literal meaning	Example from Kurdish-NENA area	control languages outside the area
womb	place of child; house of child	CA. Urmī. <i>šopet yala</i> CK. <i>mənāḷ-dān</i> NK. <i>mālzārok</i>	Pers./Turk.: <i>rahem</i> . Arm. <i>argand</i>

## Body-part calques in the Kurdish-NENA convergence zone

### bladder

bladder	place of urine	CA. Urmi <i>bra=jurta</i> CA. Barwar <i>bla-jurta</i> CK. <i>mēzaḷ-dān</i> NK. <i>mīz-dān</i>	Pers. <i>masāne</i> Arm./Turk. ‘bag of urine’
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## Body-part calques in the Kurdish-NENA convergence zone

### earlobe

earlobe	leaf of ear	NA. Duhok <i>ṭarpəd nata</i> CK. <i>baḷga-y göčka</i>	Pers. <i>lālē-ye guš</i> (lit. petal of ear)
	breast/ nipple of ear	NA. <i>čəččət-naθa</i> NK. <i>čəčəka guhē</i>	

## Body-part calques in the Kurdish-NENA convergence zone

shin

shin	nose of leg	NA. <i>naxird-əd 'aqla</i> CK. <i>pūza-y pē</i>	Turk. <i>incik</i>
	log of leg	NA., Pers. <i>sāq</i>	

## Body-part calques in the Kurdish-NENA convergence zone

### eyelid

(upper) eyelid	back of eye	Ch. NA. <i>xaṣəd- 'éna</i> NK. <i>pəšta čāw</i>	Turk. <i>göz kapağı</i> Pers. <i>pelke češm</i>
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## Conclusions

less salient body > more salient

derivative > non-derivative

internal > external

Across NENA dialects:

- Trans-Zab Jewish dialects borrow body-part loans at a far greater rate than NENA dialects to the west of Great Zab river.
- NENA dialects to the west of Great Zab river exhibit more or less the same level of lexical borrowing in the body part domain.
- Overall, Jewish dialects tend to borrow more body-part terms than Christian ones.

Some Body-part calques are indicators of Kurdish-NENA zone of convergence.

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