

Saho Islamic poetry and other literary genres in Ajami script

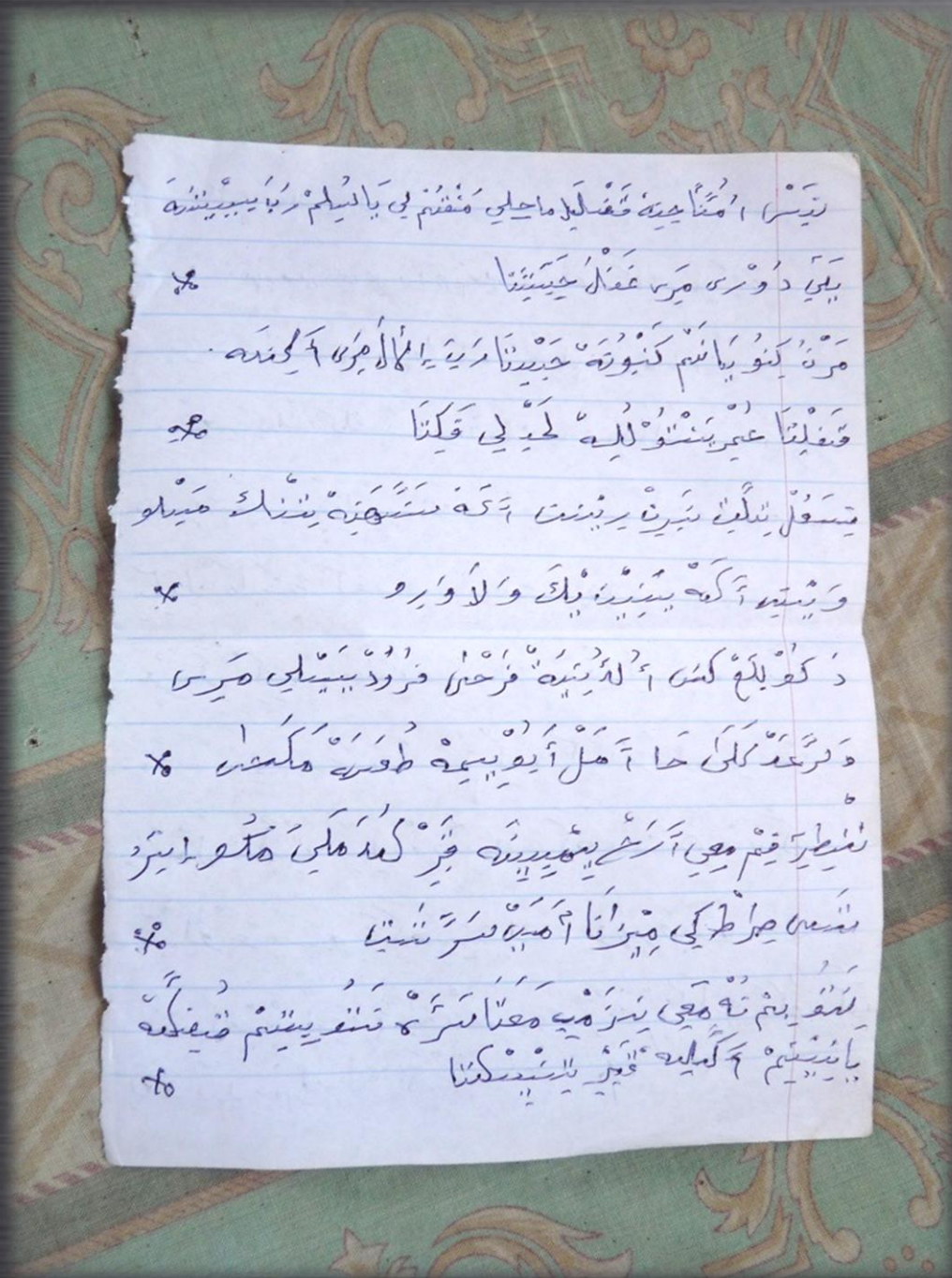
Axmadsacad M. Cumar
University of Gloucestershire

Giorgio Banti
University of Naples "L'Orientale"

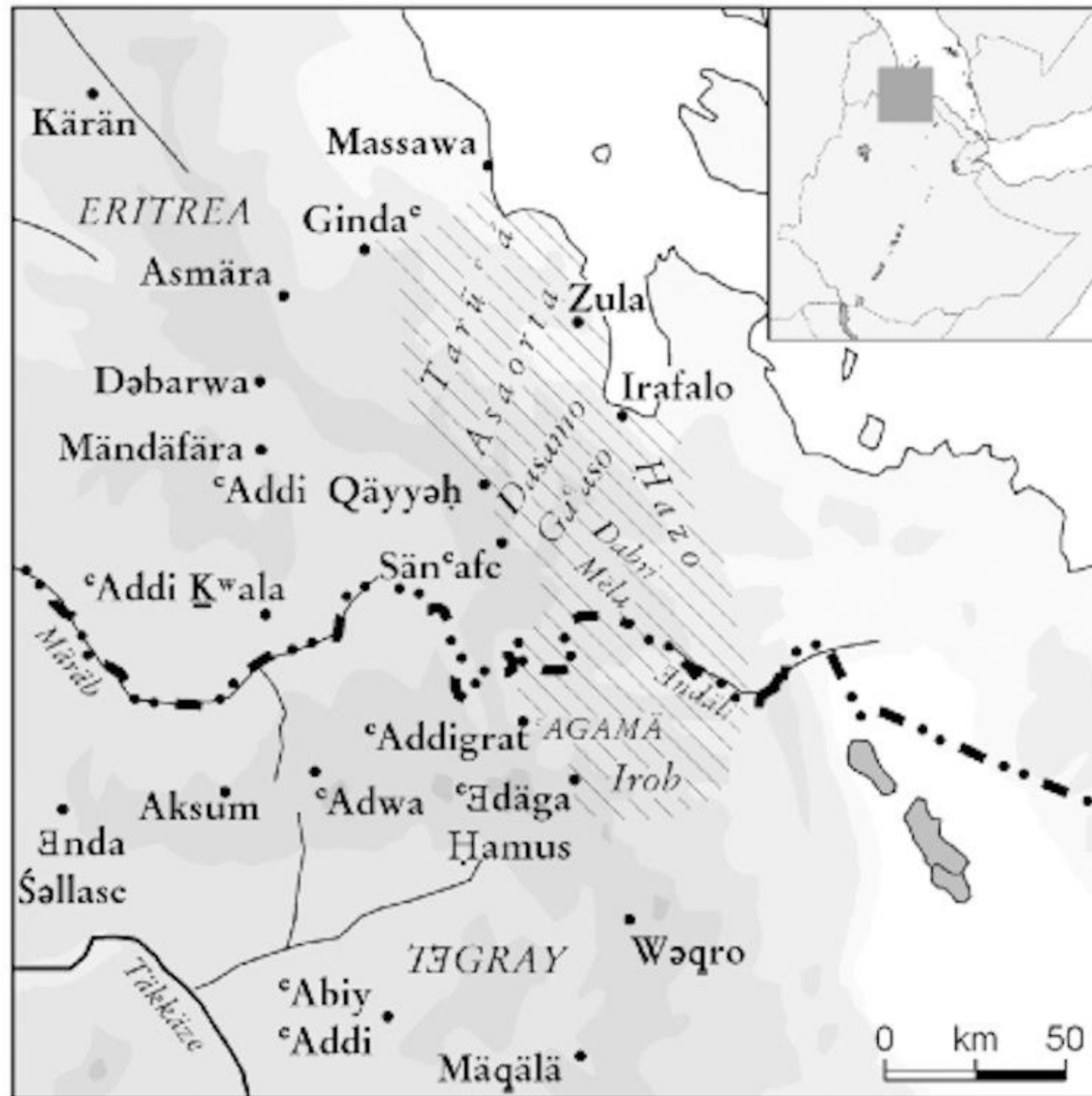
Moreno Vergari
Ethnorêma

Manuscripts &c. in the Horn of Africa
Asien-Afrika-Institut, Hamburg

17-19 July 2014



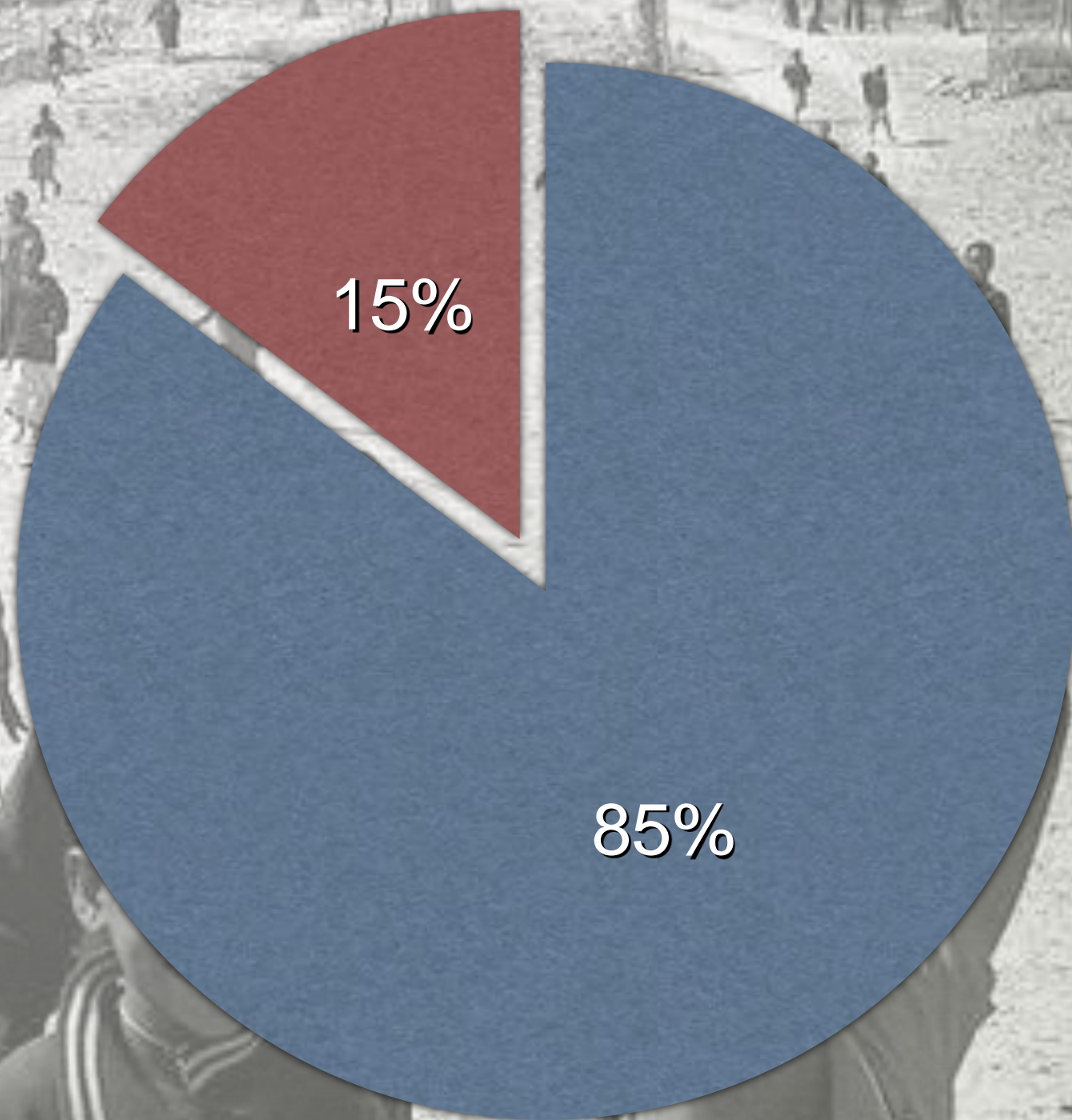
The Saho-speaking area (Eritrea and Ethiopia)



Saho is an East Cushitic language spoken in Eritrea (south-east of Asmara and Massawa down to the Afar depression), and in northern Ethiopia. Its most closely related language is ʿAfar.

The Saho in Eritrea and Ethiopia

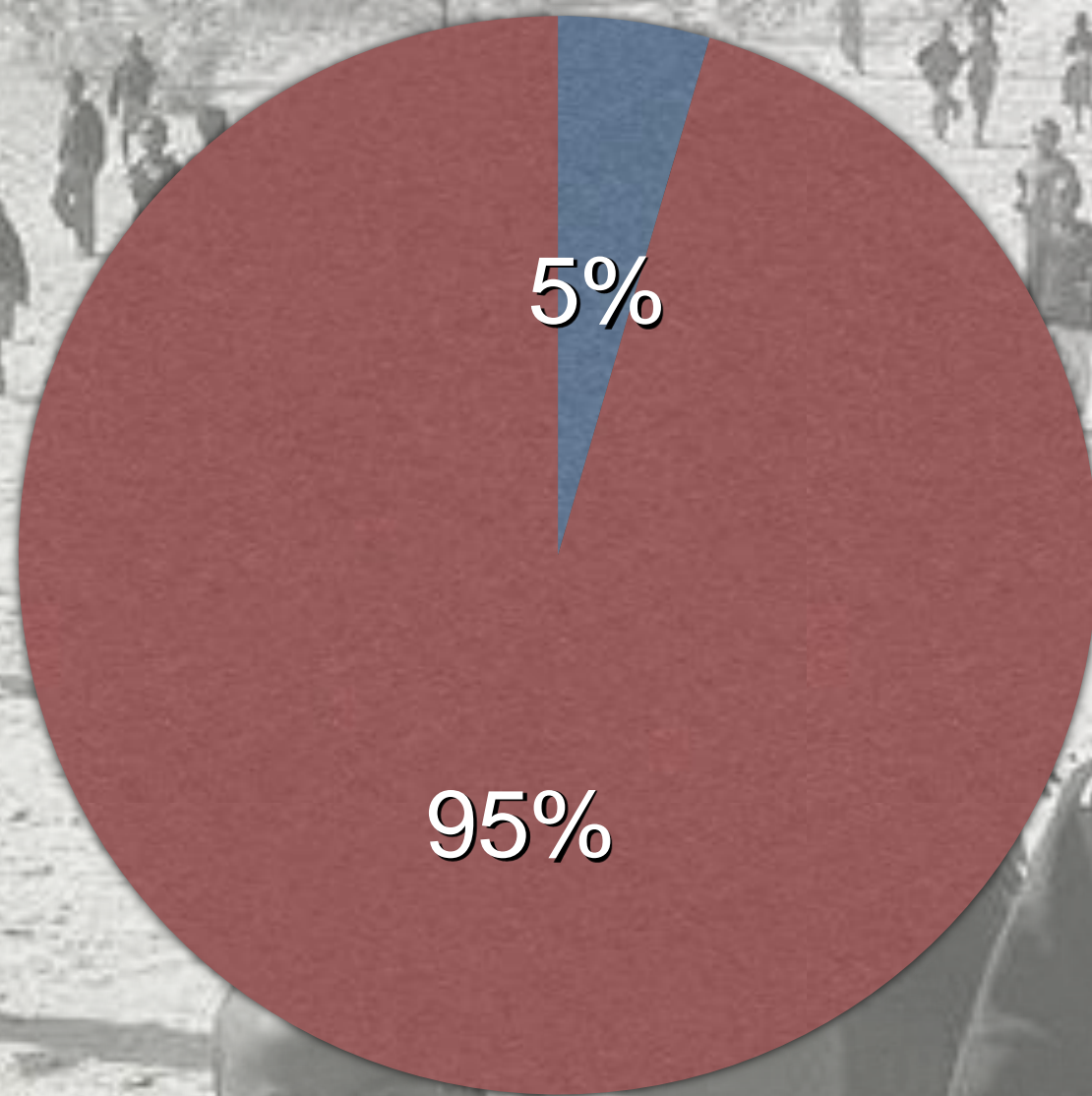
ca. 191,000 in Eritrea
ca. 33.000 in Ethiopia
(*Ethnologue*, 2014)



■ ERITREA

■ ETHIOPIA

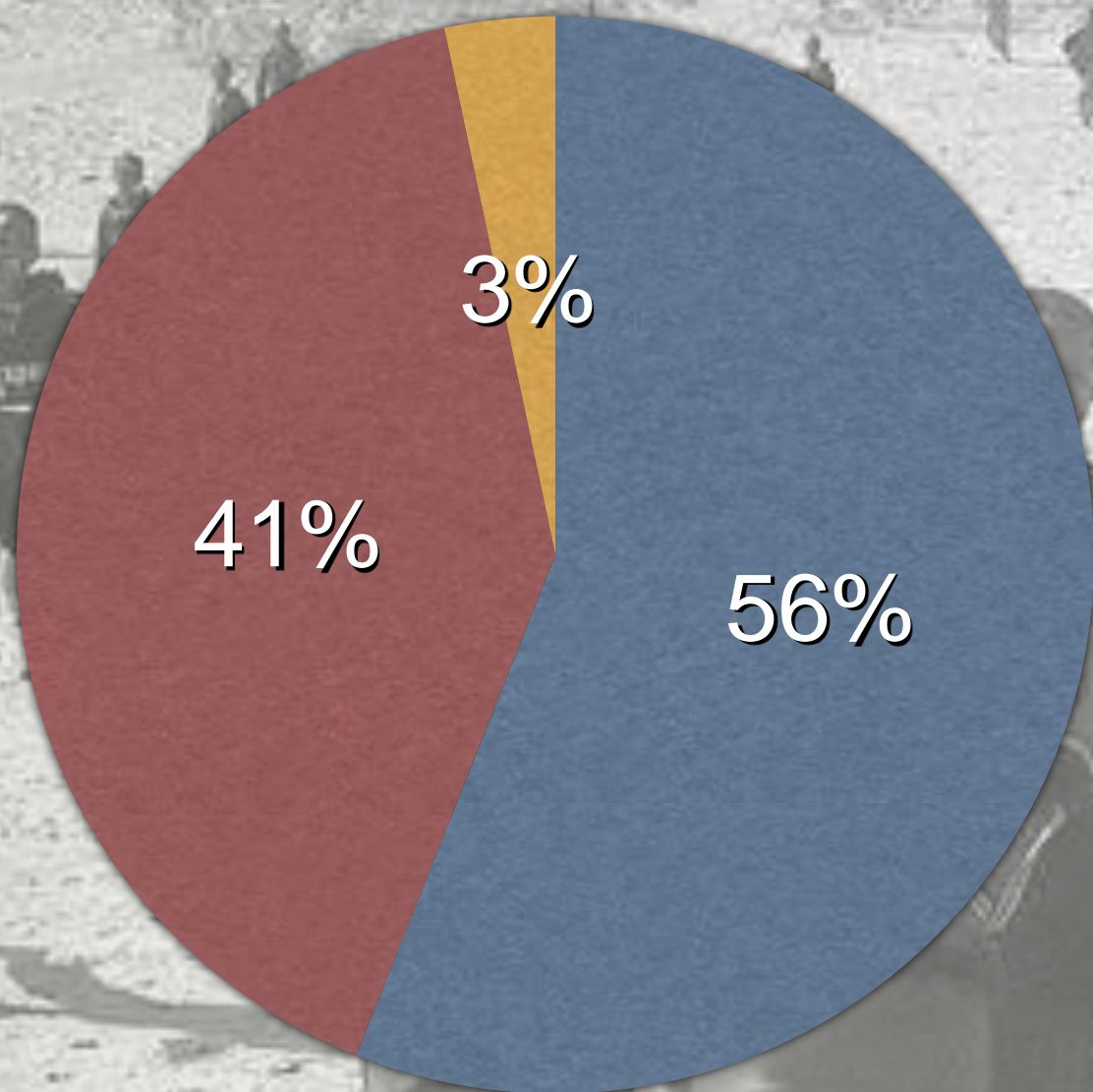
Religions of the Eritrean Saho



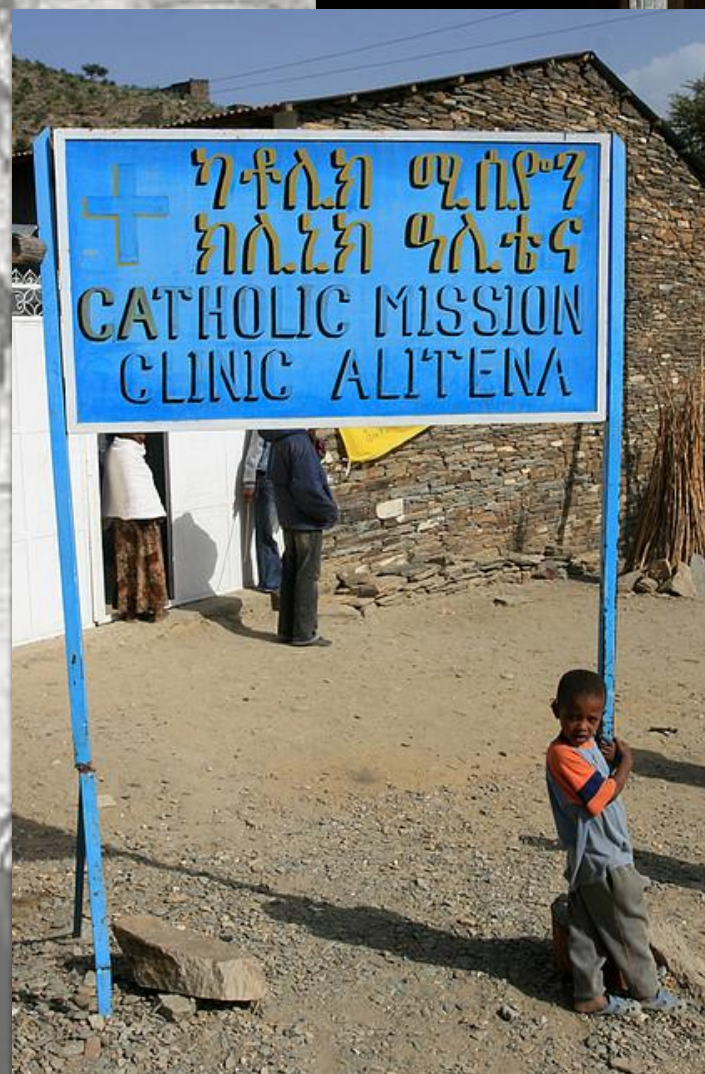
■ Orthodox Christians ■ Moslems



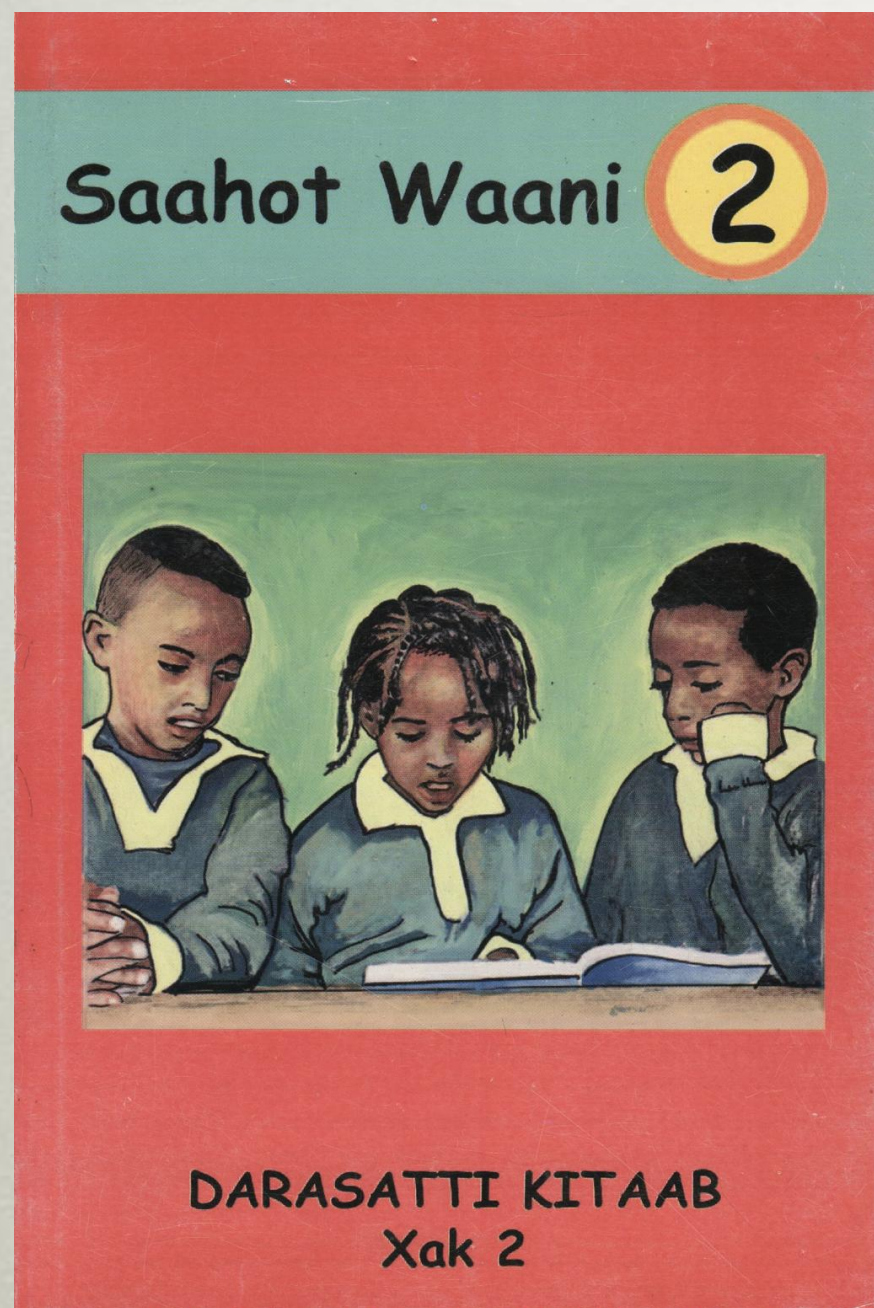
Religions of the Ethiopian Saho



■ Orthodox ■ Catholics ■ Moslems



The official Saho orthographies in Eritrea and Ethiopia



An Eritrean Saho school
book in Latin orthography

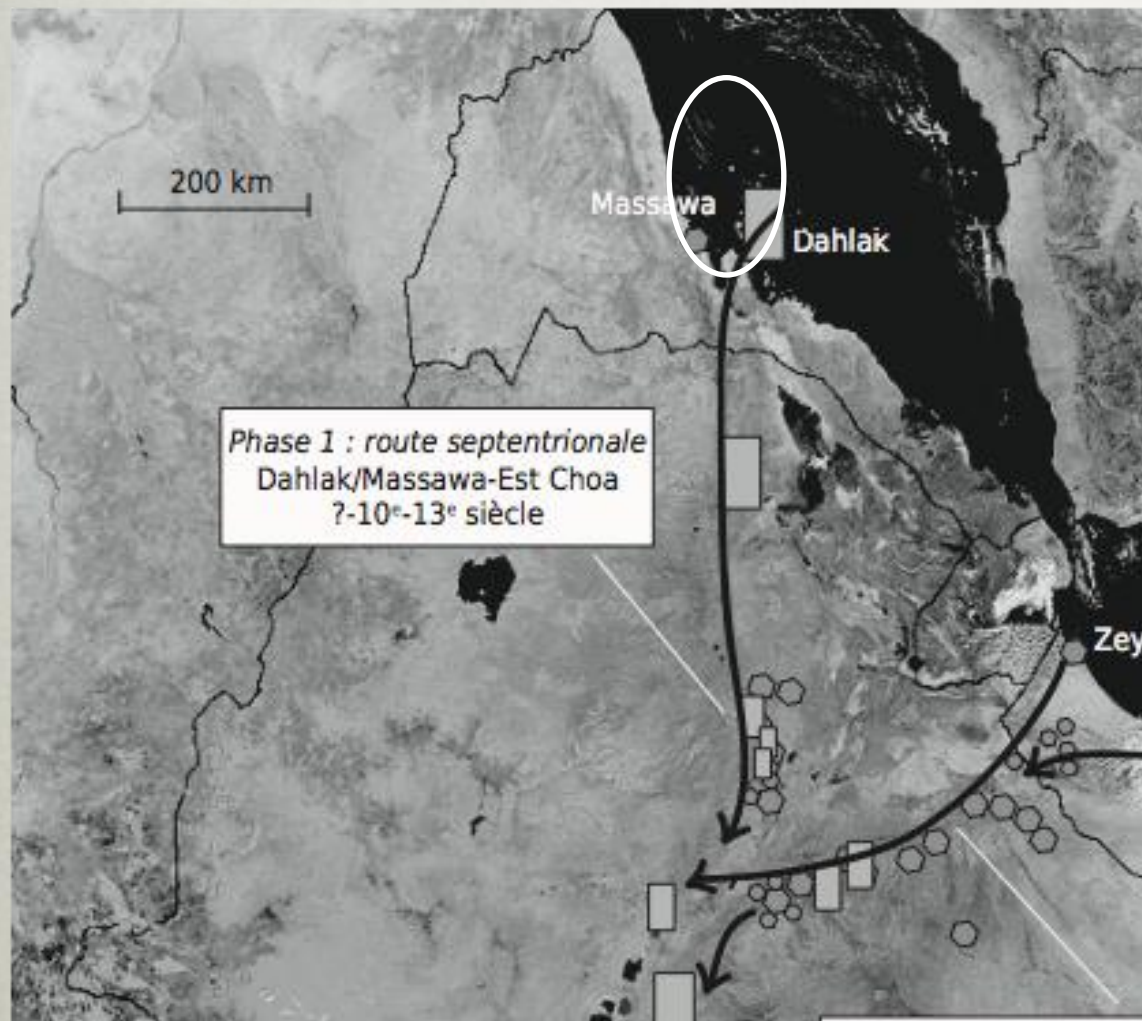


An Ethiopian Saho school
book in “Geez” orthography

The Muslim history in the Horn of Africa and Eritrea

20

F.-X. FAUVELLE-AYMAR, B. HIRSCH



Source: F-X. Fauvelle-Aymar, B. Hirsch (2011) "En guise d'introduction sur les traces de l'Islam ancien en Ethiopie et dans le Corne de l'Afrique", *Annales d'Ethiopie - Hors-Série n° 1*. Pag. 20.

Early 7th century: first arrivals of followers of Mohammed at the Axum court.

Early 8th century: Moslems under the Umayyad Caliphate occupied the Dahlak Islands.

12th and 13th century: the Dahlak Islands became the seat of an independent sultanate.

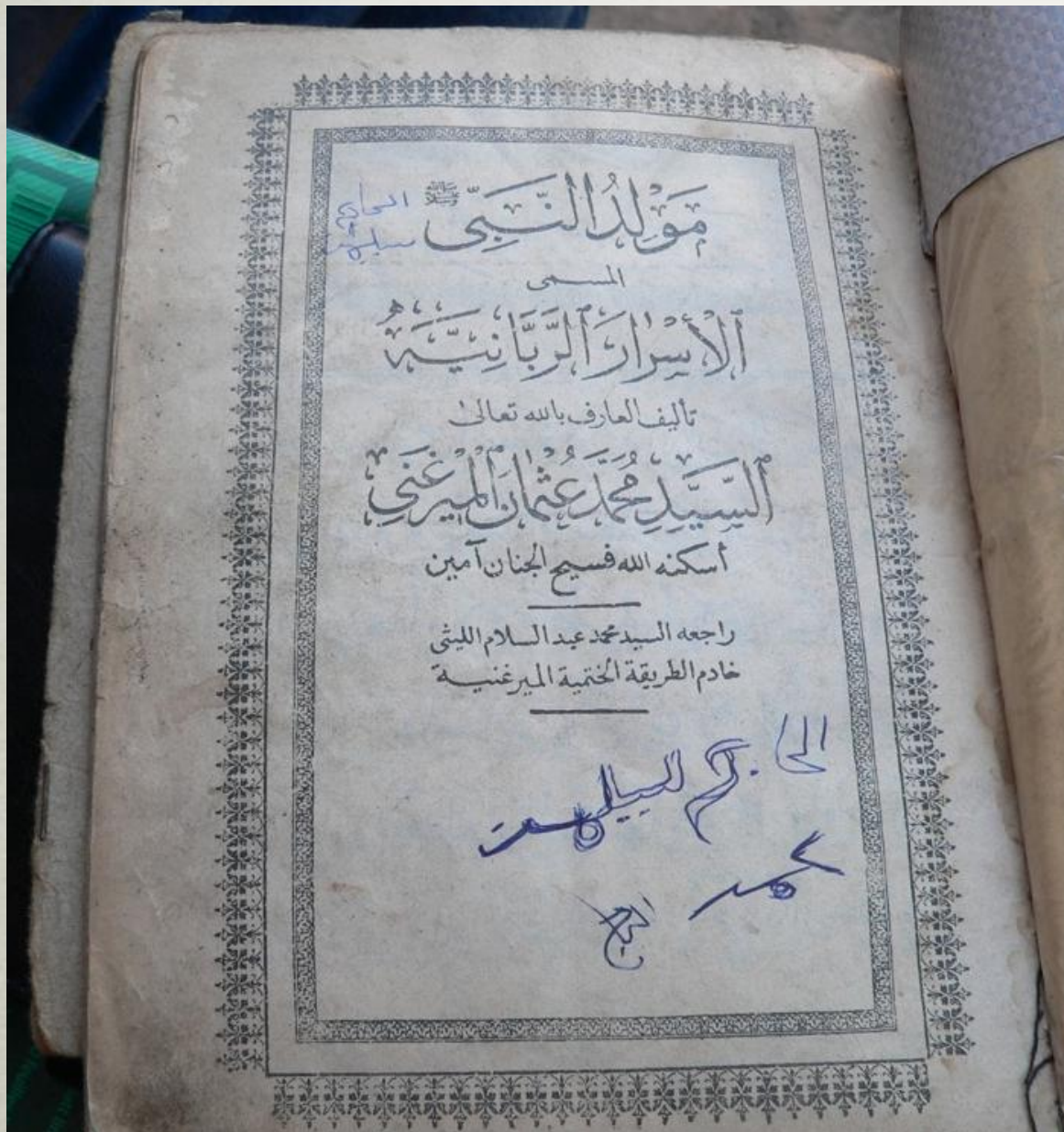
1557: Ottoman occupation of Massawa.

Beginning of the 19th cent.: renewed missionary activity by new Sufi orders, e.g., the Khatmiyya Mirghaniyya founded by Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Mīrghanī.

The *Mawlidu 'l-Nabī* – *al-Asrār al-rabbāniyya*

by Muḥammad ʿUthmān al-Mīrghanī al-Khātīm (1793-1852)

Founder of the Khatmiyya Mirghaniyya Sufi order



Used on the
Qohayto Plateau
during the *mawlid*
and other religious
ceremonies.

Known Ajami writing traditions in the Horn

LANGUAGES:

- Harari (Ethiosemitic);
- Amharic (Ethiosemitic);
- Argobba (Ethiosemitic);
- Tigrinya (Ethiosemitic);
- Gurage (Ethiosemitic).
- Somali (East Cushitic);
- Oromo (East Cushitic);
- ^cAfar (East Cushitic);
- Saho (East Cushitic);
- Alaaba (East Cushitic);
- Beja (East Cushitic).



When did Ajami Saho begin?

The oldest known mss. with Ajami texts in a language from the HoA and certain dates are in Harari, from the first years of the 18th century, But some Harari Ajami texts are likely to be at least from the 16th or 17th century.

It is not known when the Ajami Saho writing tradition began, because all the identified witnesses are not earlier than the last century.

Sources for Ajami Saho (I)

i.) Writings in Arabic with Saho names and words:

- Ibrāhīm al-Muḥtār (1909-1969), born in a south-central Saho speaking area, and former Mufti of Eritrea wrote among other things (Miran & O'Fahey 2003):
 - *al-Fatāwā al-Minifirāwiyya fī muhimāt aḥkām al-maḍāhib*, unpublished ms.
 - *al-Hādiya ilā mā fī al-luġa al-Sīhāwiyya min al-alfāẓ al-ʿarabiyya*, unpublished ms.
 - *al-Hāwi li-aḥbāral-šaʿb al-Sīhāwī*, unpublished ms.
- Muḥammad ʿUṭmān Abū Bakr (b. 1945):
 - *Ta'rīḥ Iritriyā al-muʿāšir arḍan wa šaʿban*, Cairo 1994.
- various authors:
 - Arabic pages in web site <www.allsaho.com>.

Sources for Ajami Saho (II)

ii.) Religious *nazme* poetry written in Ajami:

- e.g., *shekh* Soliiman Ismaaciil Maxammad in Irhaafalo (south-central Saho speaking area; met by these authors in 2010).

iii.) Songs by modern Saho singers written in Ajami, (whereas other contemporary Saho singer write their texts in *fidel* or Latin script):

- e.g., Cumar Hadbar (born in a southern Saho speaking area; data collected in London in 2014).

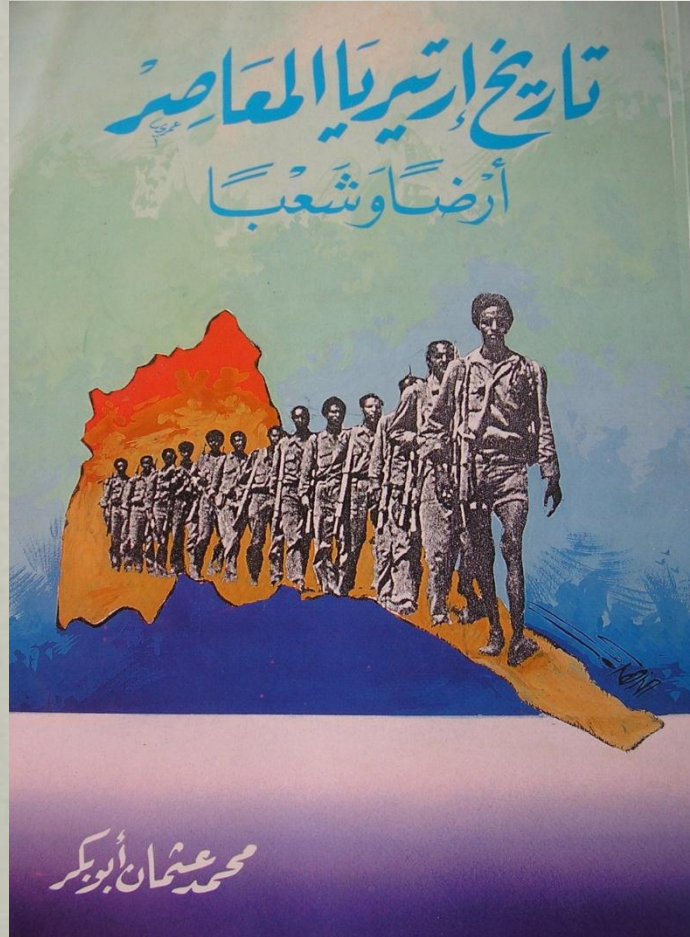
Saho words in Arabic texts (I)

فالاوّل جد لجميع قبائل قحس

والثاني جد لجميع قبائل رَس

The clan names *Gacaso* and *Dhasamo* from p. 2 of an unpublished typewritten ms. by Ibrāhīm al-Muḥtār (probably an early version of his *al-Fatāwā al-Minifirāwiyya*). The colophon on p. 5 states that it was finished in 1930 in the town of Addi Keih.

Saho words in Arabic texts (II)



التقسيم الإداري للمنفرى :

ينقسم المنفرى إلى ثلاثة فروع رئيسية :

- ١ - رسمو .
- ٢ - قعسو .
- ٣ - فقيه حرك (سليتو) .

The same clan names *Dhasamo* and *Gacaso* from a list of Saho Minifire clans published in Muḥammad 'Uṭmān's *Ta'rīḥ Iritriyā* (1994).

Saho words in Arabic texts (III)

13- مینیفری وهم :

• قَعَسُو (شوم عبدالله قَیشا – یوفیش قَیشا- شوم احمد قیشا – حسن قیشا , سیلیان قیشا – عسا اشمل – اونی مغل)

• دَسَمُو (عبدالله حرك – نافع حرك – موسه حرك – سوباکم عری – دیلی عری – کندس – اَلِیسی)

• سیلیتا (حقیتی عری – قُمی عری – زیئه عری – حلاتو – اباریور)

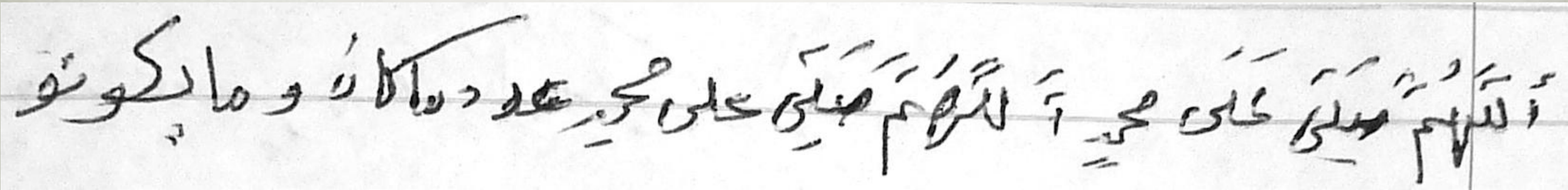
• فقیه حرك وهم : (فقیه ابوبکر – فقیه عمر – فقیه احمد)

The same Minifire clan names *Gacaso* and *Dhasamo* from a list of Saho clans and subclans recently published on www.allsaho.com.

(Notice that word-initial *dh* is represented as *dāl* with *tanwīn fathā*, rather than as plain *rā'* or *dāl*).



Arabic refrain



Transcription

*Allāhumma ṣallâ ʿalâ Muḥammadin
Allāhumma ṣallâ ʿalâ Muḥammadin
ʿAddada mā kāna wa-mā yakūnu.*

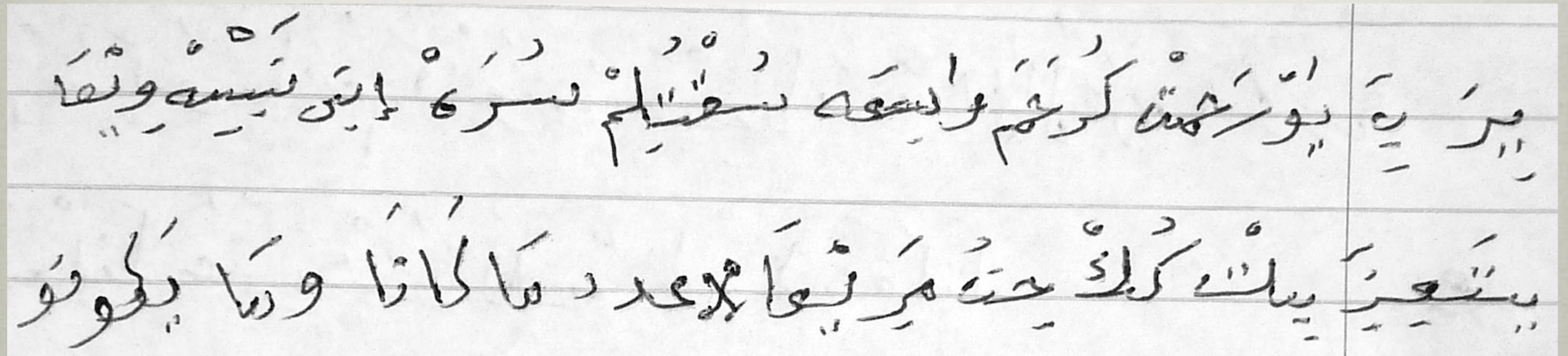
Translation

‘Oh God, may you bless Mohammed!
Oh God, may you bless Mohammed!
He told everything that has been and that will be’.



First stanza

Saho ajami + Arabic refrain



Transcription

*Yi Rabbi yol raxmat Ku raxma waasica Sugto lem
sorhah inni nabseh weeca / Yi tacizzibe ged Kok xino
marhiica * [Ar.] cAddada mā kāna wa-mā yakūnu*



First stanza



Transcription and translation

Yi Rabbi yol raxmat, Ku raxma waasica

‘My Lord, be merciful with me, Your mercy is huge’

Sugto lem sorhah, inni nabseh weeca

‘I don’t know what awaits me, and I cry for myself’

Yi tacizzibe ged, Kok xino marhiica

‘If You punish me, I can’t rebel against You’.



Second stanza

Saho ajami

Yi nabsi yiqhfile yimlike zunuube Ishe
mayaarhige mara yacizzibe / Yekkeleh mayane
kafan yinqirribe *

Transcription

* Yi nabsi yiqhfile yimlike zunuube Ishe
mayaarhige mara yacizzibe / Yekkeleh mayane
kafan yinqirribe *



Second stanza



Transcription and translation

Yi nabsi yiqhfile, yimlike zunuube

‘My soul was heedless, sin prevailed’

Ishe mayaarhige, mara yacizzibe

‘It ignores itself, it harms other people’

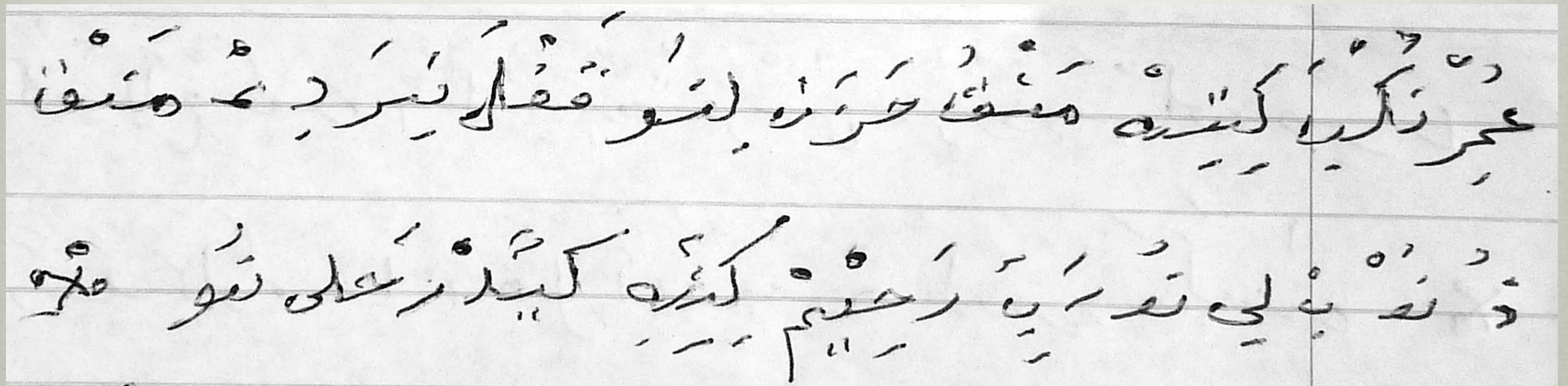
Yekkeleh mayane, kafan yinqirribe

‘It hasn’t realized that the grave is ready’.



Third stanza

Saho Ajami



Transcription

*Cumri nok bakiteh mango xazan lino Qafla ni
raddeh mango / zunuub lino Rabbi raxiim kinnih
Kayyad raja lino **



Third stanza



Transcription and translation

Cumri nok bakiteh, mango xazan lino

‘Since our live has come to end, we have a great sorrow’

Qafla ni raddeh, mango zunuub lino

‘Since heedlessness has fallen upon us, we have many sins’

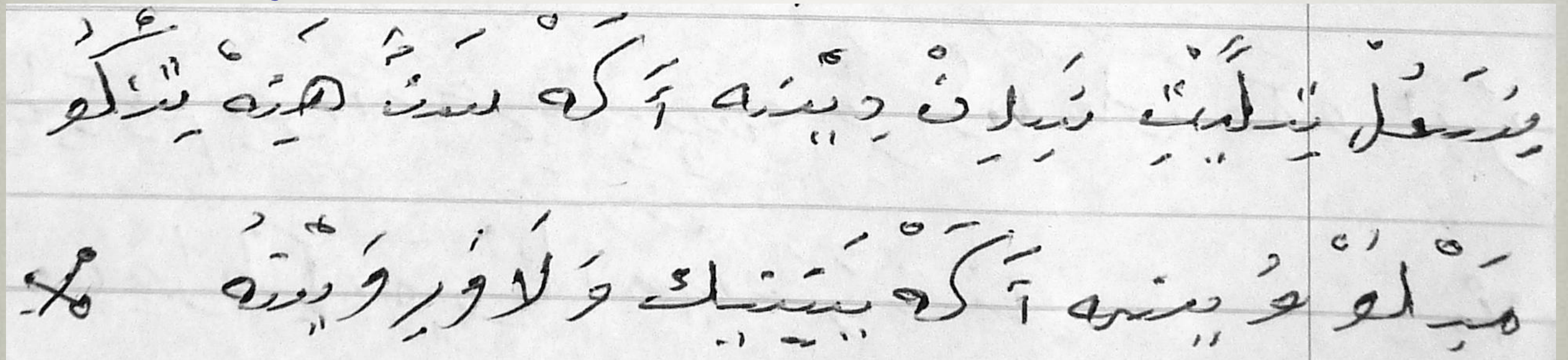
Rabbi raxiim kinnih, Kayyad raja lino

‘Since the Lord is merciful, in Him we have hope’.



Fourth stanza

Saho Ajami



Transcription

*Ni sacul tillayte naba dhin dhineeni Akah saana nane
tenko / mablo wayne Akah yaniinikka wala ware
wayne **



Fourth stanza



Transcription and translation

Ni sacul tillayte, naba dhin dhineeni

‘Our siblings have passed away, they have slept a great sleep’

Akah saana nane, tenko mablo wayne

‘We miss them, because we could not see them’

Akah yaniinikkah, wala ware wayne

‘We don’t even know, how they are doing’.



Cumar Axmad Cabdalla “Hadbar”

Interview: London, April 2014

Text of the song *Yi mara* ‘My people’, from his new album *A & S*

Yi mara.
يَمَارَا
عمر له بر = شايسته 3X6

1 = عورتو حه يشكرو دا مالول
أوعهيه أفتكعي فطرا
هتو لك دوا دينا برا
دييه يوه كليتم يمارا
و طالم

No 1

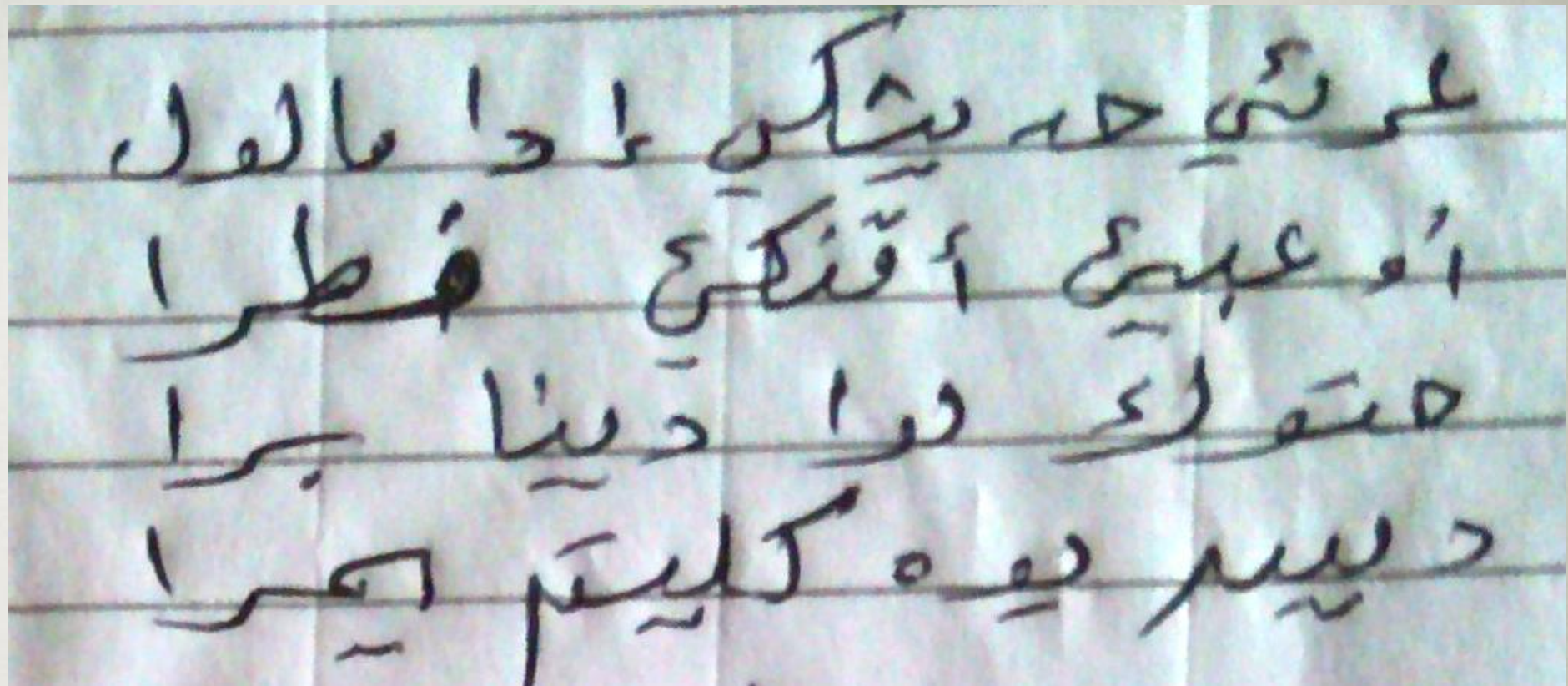
2 = مكيف عيدا هيسه مرا
نعيدا ويتسي أبا مرا
نيف هنييه ديعر مرا
يريشيف لليقم كن برا
و طالم

3 = نروي دادكي أفهرا
نقار بارو بدي كنفر
ليرتيف سنه آزرا
أنو فرق سنه سمارا
و طالم

- ديه يوك حلف انقرا

Maier	KIT	DRUM	DRUM	Te MPC
DXXE	46	329	407	116

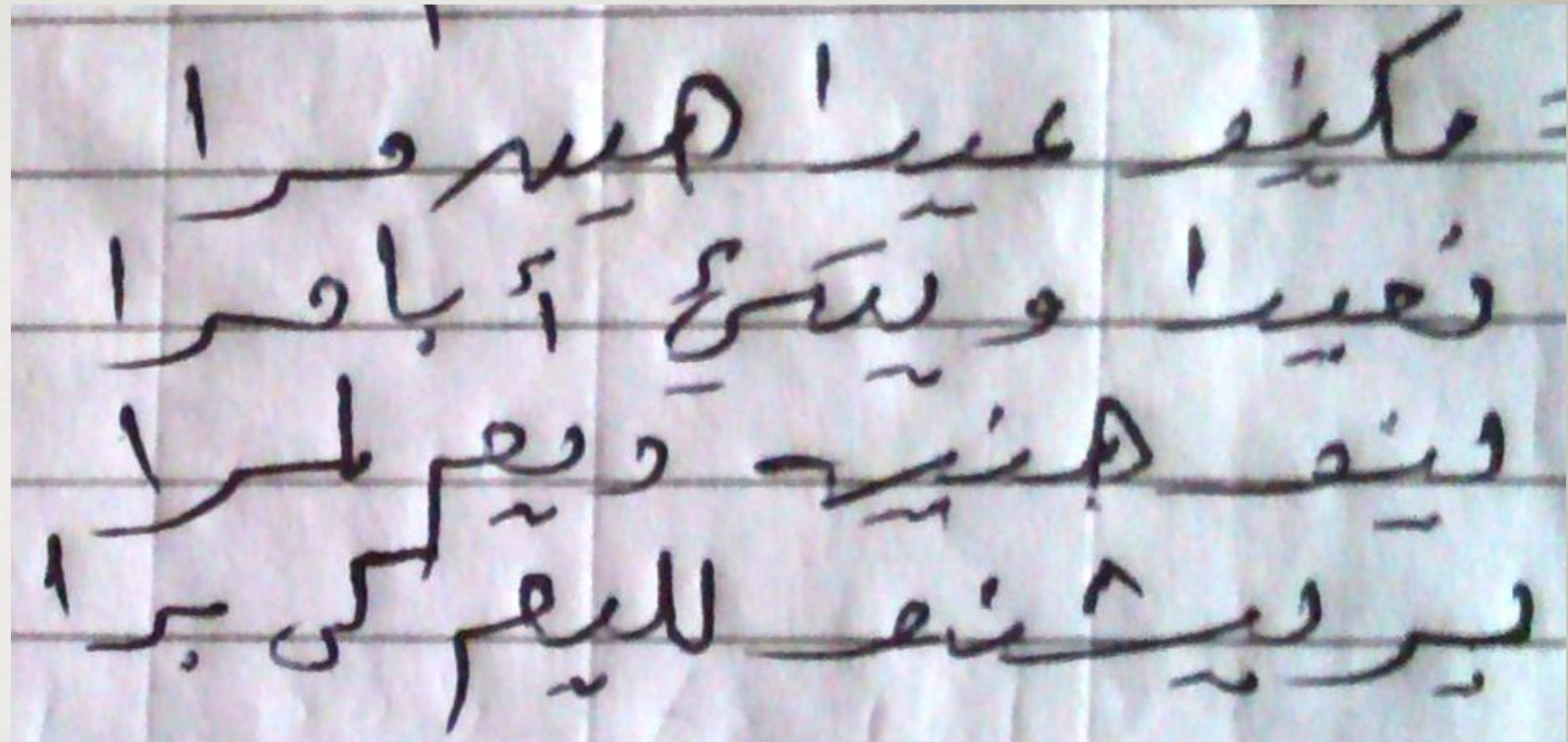
First stanza



*Careh Xadish kee Irhaafalol
Oocobe Argen kee Fathara
Xutuk lowaa dhiina bara
Dhin yoh kalittam yi mara*

‘Grown up in Xadish and
Irhaafalo
I drank (water) in Argen and
Fathar
I count stars during the
(whole) night
It is my people who make me
sleepless’

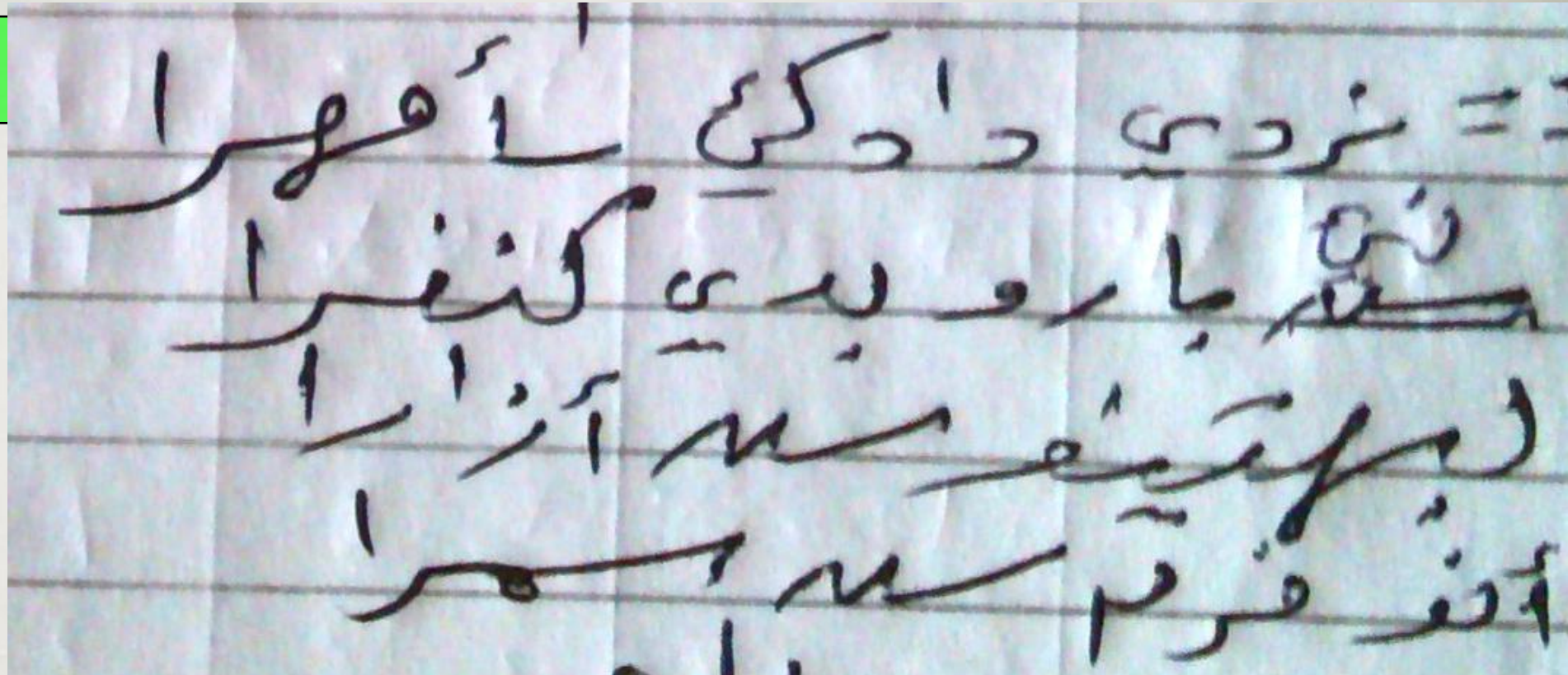
Second stanza



*Makino cayda hin mara
Ni cayda wayte aba mara
Lino hanih dhic le mara
Barhishno lellec kee bara*

‘We are not people with no
cultural heritage
Our culture has lost those
who look after it
Even though we have skilled
people.
We should distinguish
between day and night’.

Third stanza



*Ni ardi daada kee Samhara
Sin baarho baddi kamfara
Labhattiino sin azara
Anu farham sin samara*

‘Our land is Highland and
Samhar
Your country is the sea shore
Bravery is your heredity
What I want is your
harmony’.

Conclusion (I)

- The known Saho Ajami texts are by authors from the south-central and southern Saho speaking areas, and *also shekh* Ibrāhīm al-Muḥtār, author of the 1930 ms., was from one of those two areas. The major phonemic differences between their C inventories and written Arabic is the occurrence of *g* and retroflex *dh* [d] (that is realized as a retroflex flap, *rh* [ɾ] in some environments).
- These sounds are represented, respectively, as:
 - i.) *qāf* in all contexts, and
 - ii.) word initially as *rā'* by some authors (or as *dāl* by others), and word internally always as *rā'*. *Dāl* with *tanwīn fatḥa* in the website is probably an individual innovation.
- No evidence of how ejective [s'] is represented, nor of northern Saho sounds such as [č] and [č'].

Conclusion (II)

- The documents are both vocalized (*shekh* Soliiman's one) and not (Cumar Hadbar's).
- Word divisions are quite inconsistent even in the same author, e.g., Cumar Hadbar writes the conjunction *kee* 'and' certainly as a suffix twice and once as a separate word. And *shekh* Soliiman spells *lino* 'we have' in several different ways, both as a suffix and as a separate words.
- On the other hand, prefixed disyllabic possessives such as *sin* 'your (pl.)' and *inni* 'ones own' are always spelt as separate words, whereas monosyllabic possessives and object pronouns such as *yi* 'my, me', *ku* 'your (sg.), you (sg.)' and *ni* 'our, us' are generally spelt as prefixes.

Conclusion (II)

- There is some variation in the spelling of long and short vowels:
 - i.) long vowels are generally spelt *plene*;
 - ii.) short vowels are also sometimes written *plene*, but inconsistently; e.g., *lino* ‘we have’ is spelt by *shekh* Soliiman in the 3rd stanza twice as لِنُو and once as لِينُو , disregarding vowel diacritics;
 - iii.) final vowels are always spelt *plene* by Cumar Hadbar (-i and -e always as *yā*’); instead *shekh* Soliiman, who uses vowel diacritics, generally writes them *plene* only at the end of a half verse, but not elsewhere (-i and -e are represented both by *yā*’ or *hā*’ when written *plene*).

Thank you!

Gaab yoh ishoo!

قاب يه ايشو