

# The study of Amharic ajäm texts

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Linguistisches Kolloquium  
4. Juni 2013

# Ajami in Africa

- ca. 80 African languages with Arabic based orthographies
- research on several African languages
  - Hausa
  - Fulfulde
  - Swahili
  - Wolof
  - a.o.
- need of documentation and cataloging
  - e.g. Timbuktu & S.A.
- TASIA initiative

# Ajäm in Ethiopia

- Harari (Ethiosemitic)
  - Cohen (1931), Cerulli (1936, 1961), Drewes (1976), Wagner (1983, 1988, 1997), Banti (2005)
- Amharic (Ethiosemitic)
  - ▶ Drewes (1976, 2007), Wetter (2012)
- other languages
  - Oromo (Cushitic)
  - Silt'e (Ethiosemitic)
  - Argobba (Ethiosemitic)
  - Alaaba (Cushitic)
  - a.o.

an Oromo ms from Wollo,  
written by Ahmäd Še Siraj,  
early 20<sup>th</sup> cent, 349 pages



# Sociolinguistic situation in Wollo

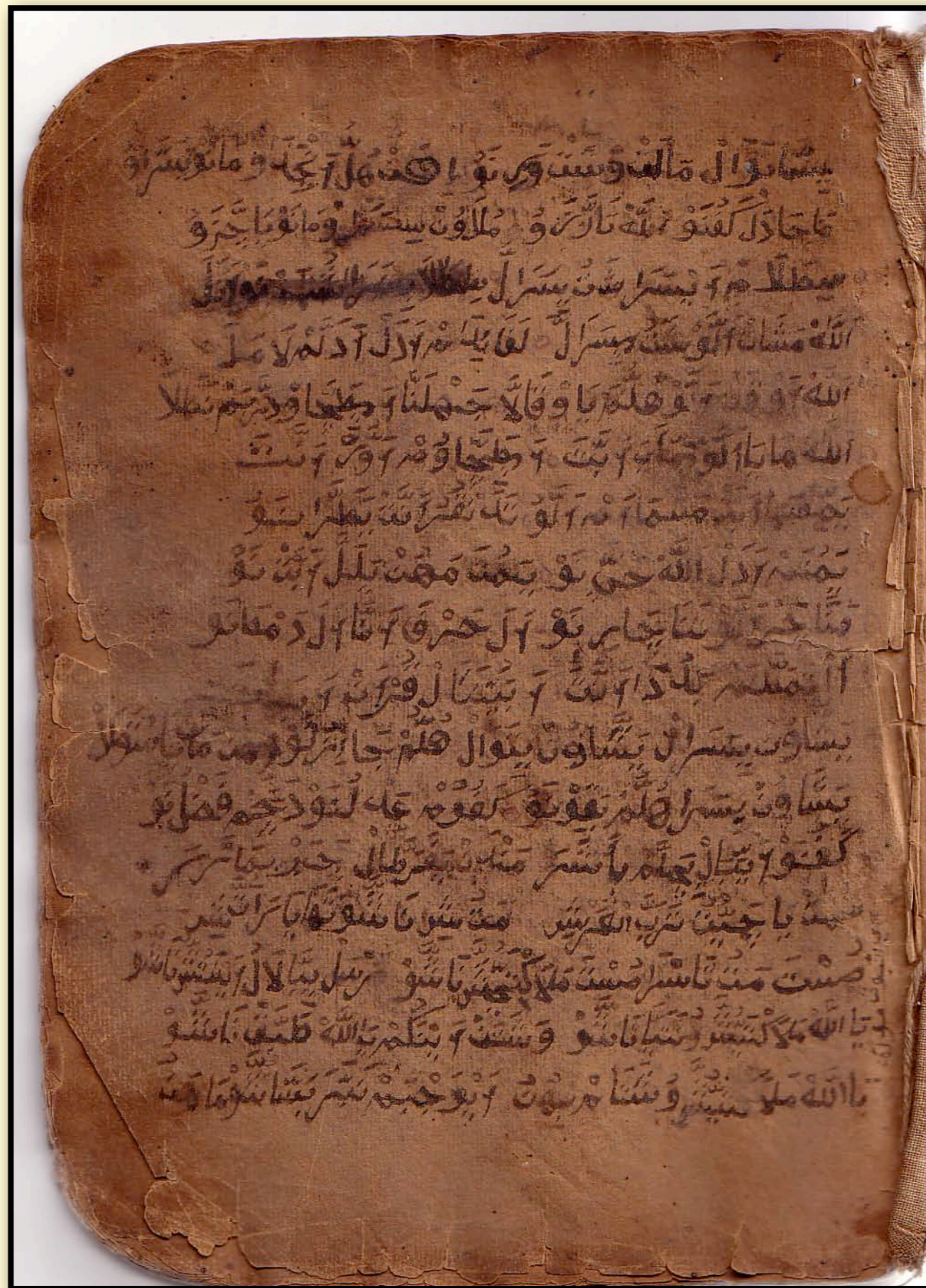
- Region: Eastern Wällo
- Rural area
- Network of Qādiriyya Sufi centers
- Multilingual society:
  - Amharic
  - Oromo
  - Argobba
  - Afar



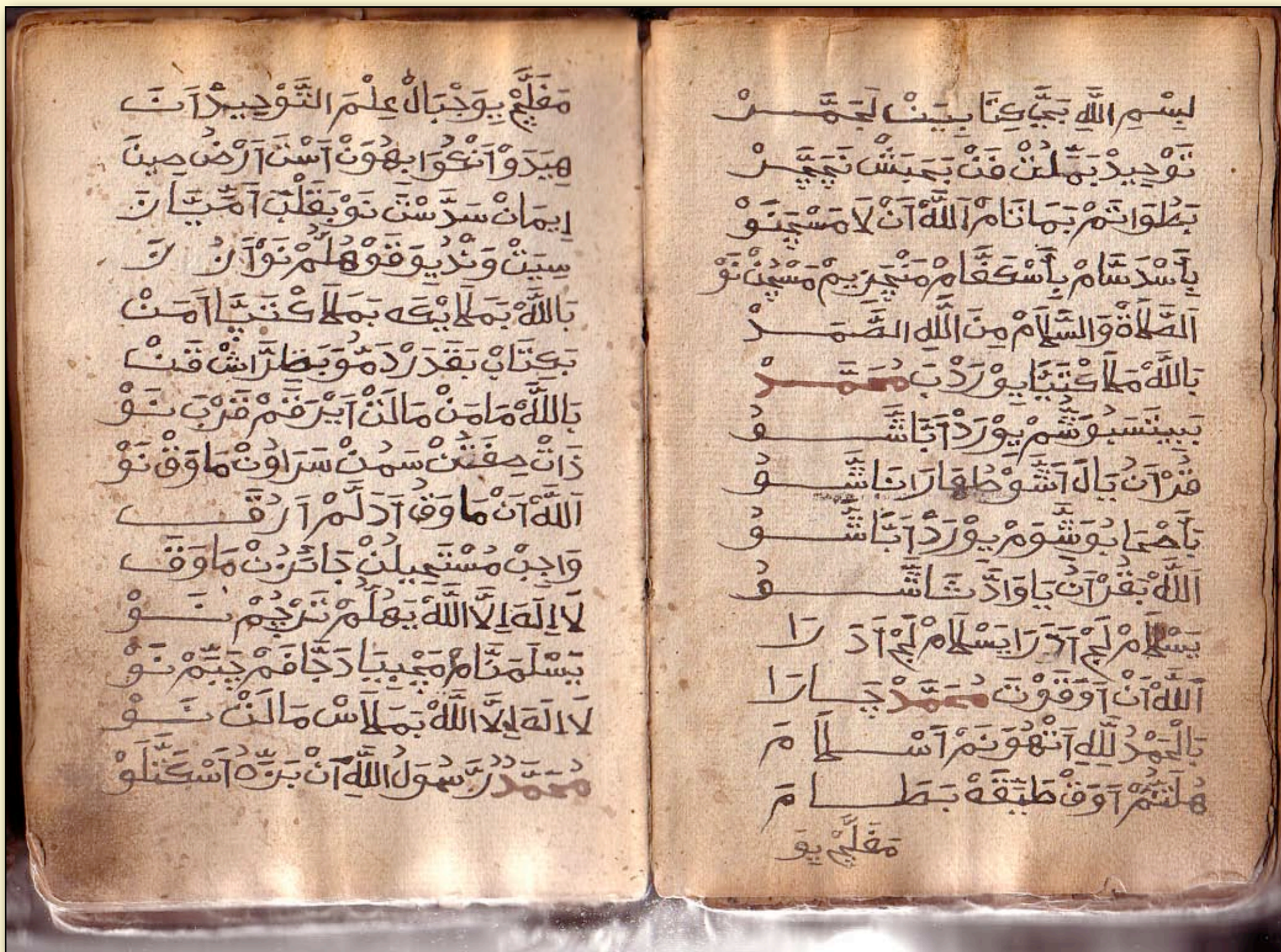
# Ajäm literature in the region

- ajäm literature in several languages
  - majority in Amharic, so far ca. 1000 pages scanned
  - Oromo, one ms
  - Argobba, some fragments
  - \*Arabic

Tawhīd by T'alha Ja'far,  
some text is missing in the  
beginning and at the end,  
36 pages



four tawhīd  
texts by T'alha  
Ja'far, 196  
pages



بِسْمِ اللَّهِ بَيِّنَاتٍ بَيْنَ لَحْمٍ سِرِّ  
تَوْحِيدِيَّةً لَنْ قَدْ بَعَثَتْ نَجِيحِي  
بَطْلُوا تَمَّ بِمَا تَامَ اللَّهُ أَنْ لَا مَسْجِنُو  
يَا سَدَسَامُ يَا سَكْفَامُ مَنِيحِي مَسْجِنُو  
الصلوة والسلام من الله الصلوة  
بِاللَّهِ مَلَا كَتَبِيَا يَوْمَ رَدَّبَ مَمَرٌ  
بِيئْتَسْبُو شَمِي يَوْمَ رَدَّبَ آتَا شَشُو  
قَدْ أَنْ يَالَ آشُو خَلَقَارِ آتَا شَشُو  
يَا حَمَا يَوْمَ شَمِي يَوْمَ رَدَّبَ آتَا شَشُو  
اللَّهُ بَقْرَانِ يَا وَادَّ شَا شَشُو  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ آدَرِ آدَرِ آدَرِ آدَرِ آدَرِ  
اللَّهُ أَنْ آوَقُوتِ مَعْدَرٌ جَارِ  
بِاللَّهِ اللَّهُ أَنْهُونَ مَ آسَلَامُ  
هَلْ تَمَّ آوَقُ طَبِيقَةُ بَطْلَامُ  
مَقْلَعِي يَوْمَ

مَقْلَعِي يَوْمَ جَبَّالُ عِلْمِ التَّوْحِيدِ آتَتْ  
هَيْدُو أَنْعُو أَبْهُونَ آسَتْ آرْضُ صِينِ  
إِيمَانُ سَدَسَتْ نَوْبِ قَلْبِ آمْتِيَارِ  
سِينِ وَنَدِي وَقُوهُ لَمْ نَوَارِ  
بِاللَّهِ بِمَلَا يَكُهُ بِمَلَا كَتَبِيَا آمَنْ  
بِكِتَابِي بِقَدْرَادَةِ وَبِظَلْمِ آشَقْتِ  
بِاللَّهِ مَامَنْ مَالَنْ آيِرْفَمُ قَرَبِ نَو  
ذَانِ حِفْتِنِ سَمَنْ سَرَاوَنْ مَآوَقِ نَو  
اللَّهُ أَنْ مَآوَقِ آدَلَمْ آرْقُ  
وَاجِبِ مُسْتَعِيلِنِ جَاثِرِنِ مَآوَقِ  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ يَوْمَ تَرْجَمُ نَو  
بِسْمِ اللَّهِ مَامَ مَجِيْبِيَا دَجَا فَمَ جِيْمُ نَو  
لَا إِلَهَ إِلَّا اللَّهُ بِمَلَا سَ مَالَنْ نَو  
مَعْدَرٌ سَهْوَلُ اللَّهِ أَنْ بَرَّهَ اسْتَكْتَلَوْهُ



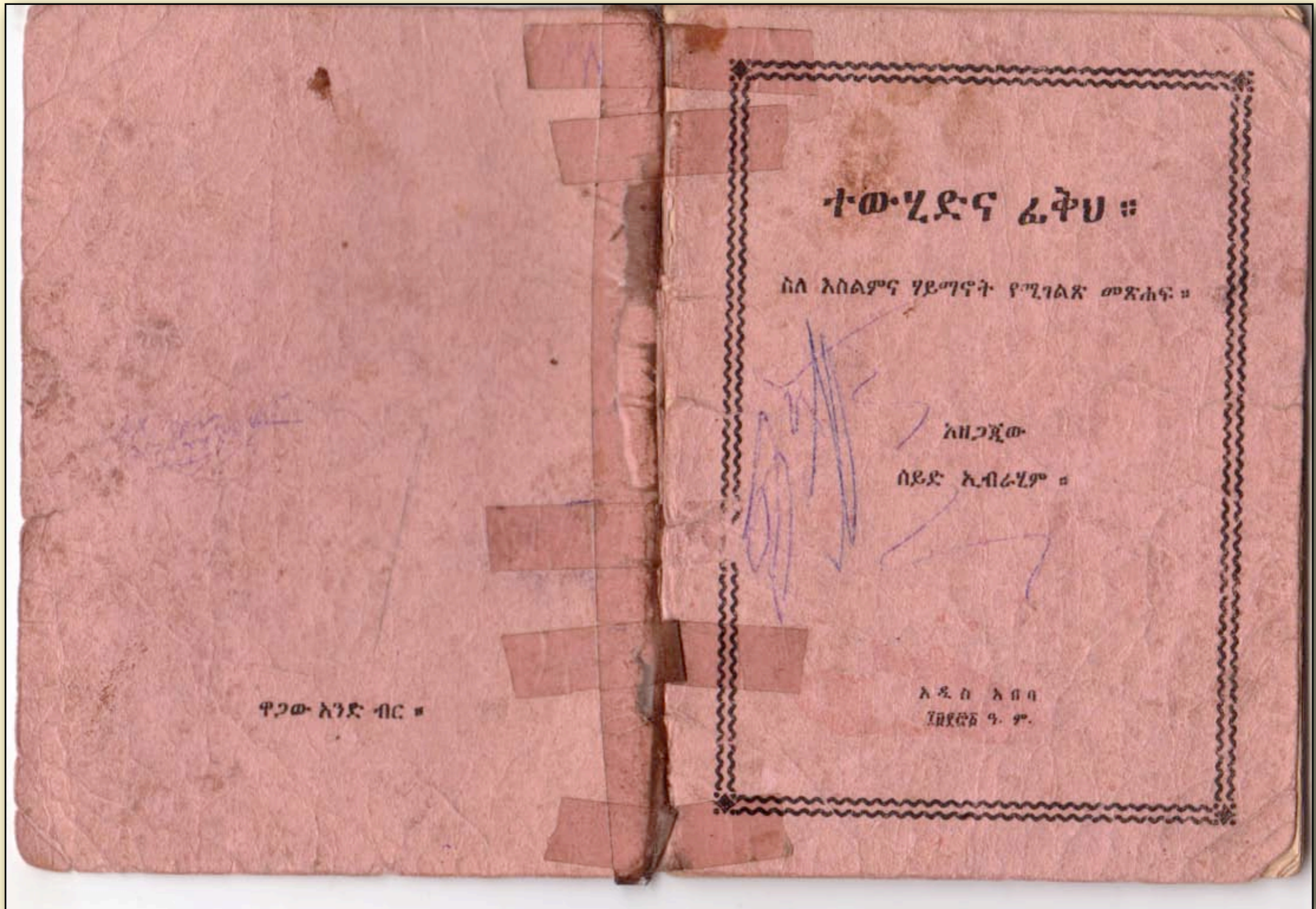
Tawhīd,  
T'alha Ja'far,  
68 pages

نَدَامًا لِنَجْدَةٍ وَنَادِي سَمَائِي  
لَبَّ بِلَاءِ أَدَمَ طَائِفًا تَهْوُونَ مَوِي  
تَهْلُ أَقْفَادَ تَوْتُو حِيَةَ مَالِمَا  
تَاللَّهُ يَمَّا جِنَائِي تَوِي مَادَادَا  
تَوَحِيَةَ يَمَّا يَا وَفَّ سَوْتُو تَوِي كَبَّ أَكَل  
كَتُورَةٌ قَدَّ أَتَلُولَ بِلَ هَوَا صَلَّ  
لَذَّةَ بَلُوشِي شَوْشَ أَجْمِ لَفُوتِ  
بَعْدِي بِعَجْمِ وَرَلَّ أَمَّ جِيوتُ  
لَشَفْلَانَتُ بَدْرَاتُ لَا لَسَابُ بَدْرَاتُ  
تَسْبَلُورَ لَمِيَانُ أَطْرَبَتُ وَقَدَّ

الْبِسْمِ لِلَّهِ بِي عِتَابِ كَمَرٍ  
أَلِ بِسْمِ اللَّهِ هَلْمَ أَيَامَسِ  
بِاللَّهِ سَمَّ جَمْرُ كَوْتُ بِلَلُوجِيَانِ  
إِيْمَانَتُ لَا بِيَّتُ تَسْلَمَانَا جَانِ  
الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ جِيَانَتُ لَا صِيَتُ  
بَطَانَتُهُ بَمَانَا هَلْدِي تَوَمِيَتُ  
صَلَاتُهُ سَلَامَتَا يَوْمَادِ بِنِي لَا ي  
وَدَاللَّهُ تَهْوُونَ بِلَا ي  
بِيَسْبُورَ شَوْشَا صَا يَوْشَمُ يَوْمَادُ  
أَدَمَقُورِيَا قِيُونَا يَا سَلَمَانَا مِيَا  
لَذَّةَ

Tawhīd, by T'alha Ja'far, copied  
by Hağğ Hamza Maruf, 145  
pages

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ بِي وَجْهِهِ وَجْهِهِ  
مَشْرِجِي نُو اللَّهِ اَحَد  
اللَّهُتْ لَ مَسِيحَتْ بَطَوَاتْمَ بِي مَا تَا  
تُطْفَانِ طِلْمَا يَا وَطَانَتْ چِي سَا  
رَحْمَةً دَهْنَتْ يورَد **مَحْمَل**  
بِحْدِ بِي شَو مَو طَمَا مَاسُو سَا يورَد  
بِي سَبُو شَو مَ بَا صَحَا بُو شَو يورَد  
اِفَا يَادِ رُجُوتْ بِي سَلْمَانَتْ مَانِجِد  
مَلِكْتْ يَا لَوْنُو يَا اللَّهُ چِي سَا  
فَرْدَانْتْ مَسْكُرُو اَل يَا اَحَد اَيَاتْ



Publication in Ethiopic script: *Tawhid-anna Fiqh*, by Seid Ibrahim, Addis Abeba, 1971, eth. cal. (1978/79)

መግቢያ

ቢሰሚላሂ : (፩) : ብዬ : ኪታቤን : (፪) : ልጅምር ፤  
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 የሻገለባትን : ተጀህል : ያውጣልኝ ።

- (፩) ቢሰሚላሂ : = በአላህ : ስም ።
- (፪) ኪታቤን : = መጽሐፈን ።
- (፫) በረካ : = የተባረከ ።
- (፬) ጀጋራ : = ሸረካ ።
- (፭) ላበይን : = ይፋ : ላድርግ ።

# Own research





Tawhīd by Bäšir Umar from  
Dälemäle, Wärrä Babbo,  
lowland Eastern Wällo  
28 pages

بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ  
يَا اللَّهُ سَمِّ جَمْرِي بِلَيْلٍ وَشَرِكَا بَشِيٍّ جَمْرِي يَهُونَا لِبَرَعَا  
لِخُودِ اللَّهِ كَيْتَايْنِ لَا مَسْكُنَ بِسَطْمِ بِنْسَامِ مَشُومِ مَسْكُنِ  
كَيْتَايْنِ أَنْدُ تَوِيصْفَتُمْ بَدَاتِ قَطْرَ أَيْدِي رَسْمِ يَنْعَمَتْ بِنَزَاتِ  
يَنْعَمَا وَأَيْتَا بِنْتَلَيْسَ مَا تَوِي كِتَابِ أَيْتَوْتَلْفُو إِيْمَانِ تَو  
رَحْمَتِ دَهْنَتِ مَرِيْتِي يَمُوَلَا بِنِي لَا يِي وَرَدِ جَمُومِ هَلَا  
يَمَشَا يَأِيْمَانِ سَلِمَاتِ نَكْرَ تَقْرَا وَتَكْنِي جَوَالِ بِنْيَا وَأَنْتَا تَكْر  
بَدْرَ صَنْفَلَتْ يَا اللَّهُ يَا رَابِي شِيرِ سَتَتُوْت يَا طَلْمُوَاهِنِ قَرْتُو أَنْدِ شِنِ  
أَهِي تَصْفَازَةَ وَرَبَا بُو بَطَامِ قَرَاوِي نَحْ شَلَا أَتْبِلَا بُو  
صَاحِبُو شِي أَدِي طَوَا زِي لِكْرَا شُهُ بَحْنَةُ أَنْدُ هُونِ يَا حَرَا بِنَا شُهُ  
تَوَحِيدِنِ قَرَاوِي نَحْ زَقْنِ أَنْزَقْنُو تَوَحِيدِنِ مَقْرَاتِ تَوِي سَلَامِ لِحْ زَقْنُو





Ajem

Blättern 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 11 12 13 14 15 16 17 18 19 20 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29

Layout: Layout #1

Manuskript

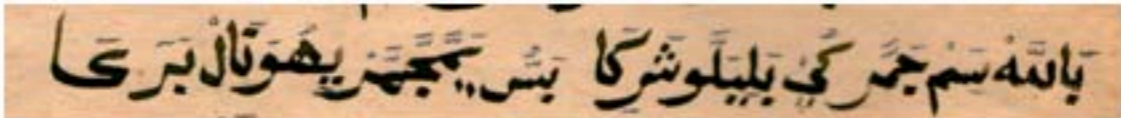
Sprache Amharisch  
Original

Datensatz: 2

Summe: 3017  
Unsortiert

ZU
Letztes

Nummer	2	Kürzel	wbt	Seitennummer	1	Erstellungsdatum	05.08.2003
Manuskript				Zeilennummer	2	Änderungsdatum	11.12.2012



arabisch بَا اللّٰهُ سِمْ جَمْرُكُنِّي بَا يِلْوُ شَرِكَا / بَسُّ يَمَجْمَرُّ يَهُونَال بَرَا

Transkription bāllah sim ḡammarkuñ baliyllaw šarikā / bassu yammaḡḡammar yihuwnāl barakā

Lesung Inf ballah sim ḡämmärkuñ bālällāw šārika / bāssu yāmmiḡämmär yəhonall bārāka

Fidel

Übersetzung I began with/in the name of God who has no company, it is the beginning with this/him that has blessing

Übersetzung Deutsch

Wörter	Bedeutung Amharisch	Bedeutung Wörter
ḡerika	gʷadεገገa	Freund d.h. Gott hat keinen gleichen (Freund) neben sich

# Linguistic aspects of Amharic ajäm

- Arabic loanwords
  - morphological incorporation
  - treatment of Arabic consonants
- features of local variety

# Arabic loans: verbs

Amharic	Amharic gloss	Arabic source	Arabic gloss
<i>kättäbä</i>	to write	<i>kitāb (n.)</i> <i>kataba (v.)</i>	book to write
<i>sonnäfä</i>	to compose, write	<i>ṣannafa (v.)</i>	to compose, write
<i>wäggäbä</i>	to be obligated	<i>wāğib (n.)</i> <i>wağaba (v.)</i>	obligation to be obligated
<i>qärra</i>	to read	<i>qaraʾa (v.)</i>	to read
<i>ḥälläqä</i>	to create	<i>ḥalq (n.)</i> <i>ḥalaqa (v.)</i>	creation to create
<i>(ʿ)allämä</i>	to teach	<i>ʿallama (v.)</i>	to teach
<i>zäyyärä</i>	to visit, go on pilgrimage	<i>ziyāra (n.)</i> <i>[zāra (v.)]</i>	visit [to visit]

# Amharic verb morphology

- perfective pattern:  $C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_2\ddot{a}C_3-$ 
  - *yä-ḥälläq-ä-n geta* „Lord who has created us“ [Ar. ḥalaqa]
- imperfective pattern:  $-C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_3$ 
  - *masawäq yə-wäḡb-all* „it is an obligation to inform“ [Ar. waḡaba]
- converb pattern:  $C_1\ddot{a}C_2C_3-$ 
  - *wäḡb-o-ll-ätt-all* „he has made it an obligation for him

# Derivation

derivational prefix	Amharic	Amharic gloss
tä-	<i>täkättäbä</i>	to be written
	<i>täsonnäfä</i>	to be composed, written
as-	<i>askättäbä</i>	to let s.o. write
	<i>aswäggäbä</i>	to make it an obligation

(1) läqärraw tākätb<sup>w</sup>all bāññaw annägagär

lä-qärra-ä-w                    tākätb-o-all                    bā-ñña-w                    annägagär  
for-read.PER-3SG:M-ART    **be.written.CV-3SG:M-AUX.3SG:M**    in-GEN-we-ART    speech

„It is written for the one who has learned (reading)“

(2) səmaččäwn mäktäb əndiyyaz dägğ näw

səm-aččäw-n                    mäktäb                    ənd-y-yyaz                    dägğ                    nä-w  
name-POSS.3PL-ACC    **write.VN**    COMP-3SG:M-be.taken.IPV    good    COP-3SG:M

„It is good to write their names so that they are remembered.“

(3) yəhän askättəbo yämmiyawta gälṭ

yəhän askättəb-o                    yämm-y-awta                    gälṭ  
DEM    **let.write.CV-3SG:M**    REL-3SG:M-bring.out.IPV    **mistake**

„he has it written, the mistake he has brought out“

(4) səran askätabi bäqäbər roman [räwman] näw

səra-n                    askätabi                    bä-qäbər                    räwman                    nä-w  
work-ACC    **who.has.it.written**    in-grave                    räwman                    COP-3SG:M

„The one who has (it) written in the grave is Roman“

# Arabic loans: nouns

Amharic	Amharic gloss	Arabic source	Arabic gloss
<i>ʿadab</i>	punishment	<i>ʿadāb</i>	torture, punishment
<i>ǧaʾiz</i>	permitted	<i>ǧāʾiz</i>	permitted
<i>ǧännät</i>	paradise	<i>ǧanna</i>	paradise
<i>mäʿna</i>	meaning	<i>maʿnan</i>	meaning
<i>mustaḥil</i>	absurd	<i>mustaḥil</i>	absurd
<i>ṣaḥib, s<sup>w</sup>ahib</i>	friend	<i>sāḥib</i>	friend
<i>ḍämbäñña</i>	criminal	<i>ḍanb</i>	delinquency, offence
<i>ʿaqäläñña</i>	reasonable	<i>ʿaql</i>	mind, reason
<i>ḥaliq</i>	creator	<i>ḥāliq</i>	creator
<i>ḥäyr</i>	good, superb	<i>ḥair</i>	good, superb





# „Arabic“ consonants

IPA	ZDMG	transliteration	pronunciation	
ʕ	ʕ	ʕallämä	ʕallämä	to teach
ʔ	ğ	tägäddubä	?	to be angry
ð	ḍ	ʕadab	azab	punishment
θ	ṭ	aṭäbbätä	?	to steady, strengthen
x	ħ	ħälläqä	xälläk'ä	to create
s <sup>f</sup>	ş	täşännäfä	täsonnäfä	to be composed/written
		şahib	s <sup>w</sup> ahib	
ð <sup>f</sup>	ẓ	ẓälläm	?	to be unjust, to do harm
		ẓahir	z <sup>w</sup> ahir	meaning

# Orthography

- four consonants differ considerably from Arabic
  - č: ش, č': ظ, g: ك/كپ and ñ: پ
- ejectives are represented by closely „related“ signs
  - k': ق, t': ط

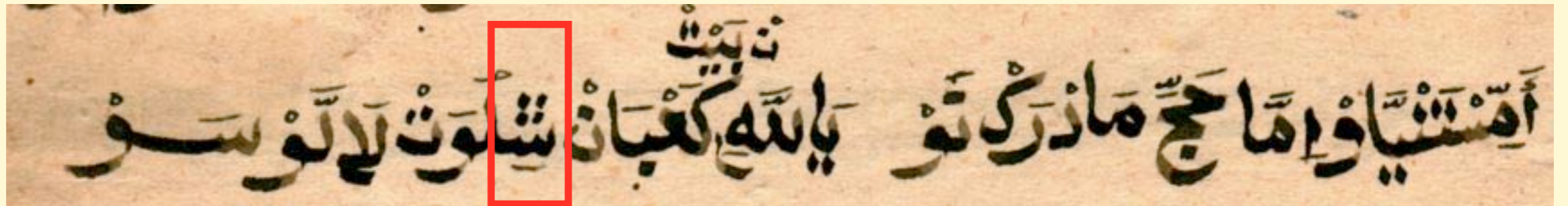
- Vowels
  - /a/ : alif
  - /ä/ : fathā
  - /e / : kasra followed by yā
  - /u/ : ḍamma or ḍamma followed by wāw
  - /o/ : ḍamma or ḍamma followed by wāw with fathā
  - /i/ : kasra or kasra followed by yā
  - [ə] : kasra or fathā

# Inconsistencies

- the modified consonants are written inconsistently
  - č: with four but also with three dots
  - č': three dots below or above
  - g: three dots below or above
- numeral three „sost“ is sometimes written with ṣād

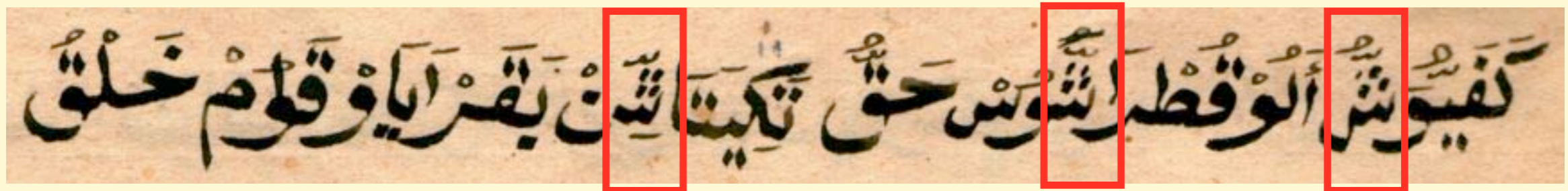
# Representation of č

9)



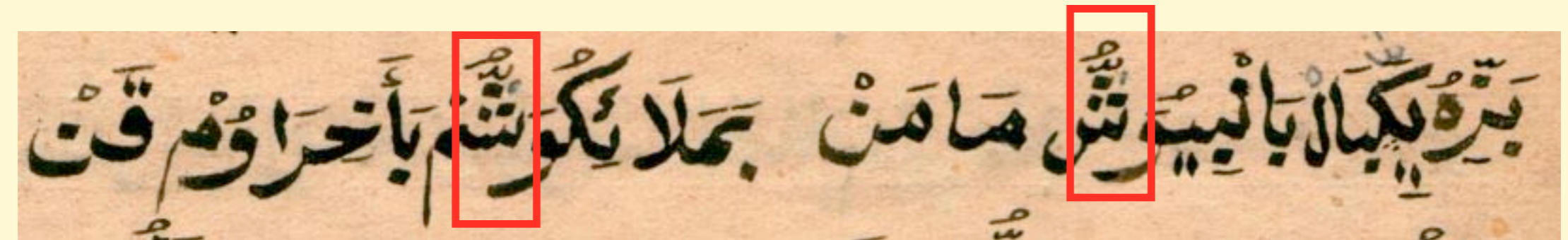
amməstāññaw əmma hağğ madräg näw / yallahən kəʔban čəlot lalläw säw

10)



kəfiyyuwočču ʔalu k'ut'raččäws haqu / tägetaččən bək'är ʔayawqäwəm xälk'u

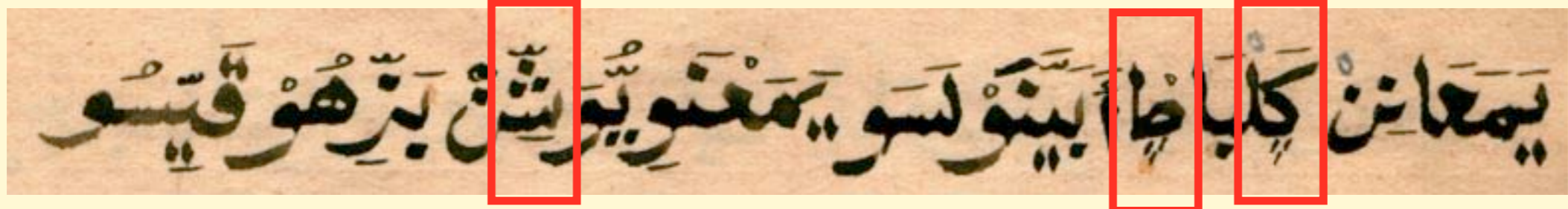
11)



bäzzihu yəgäbal bambiwočču mamän / bämälaʔikoččum bäʔaxirawm k'an

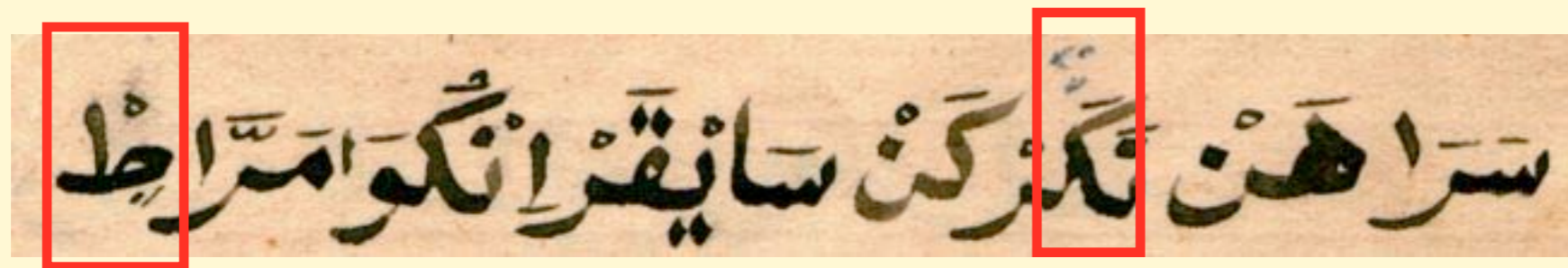
# Representation of g and č'

12)



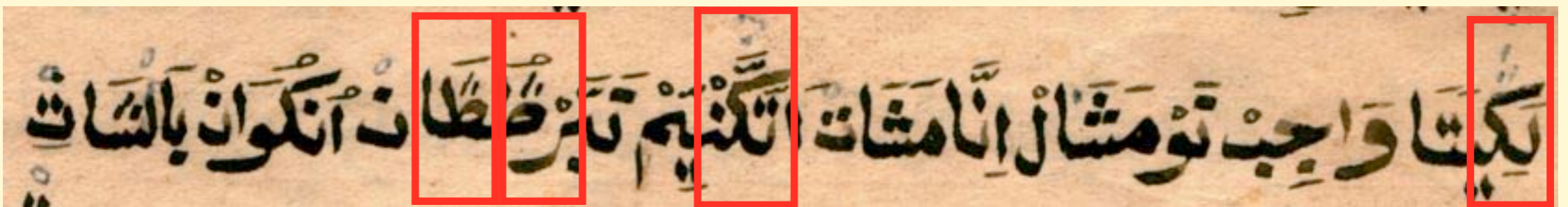
yämäfanən gälbač ʔabäyyänku läsaw / yämäfnawiyyoččun bāzzihu k'äyyəsaw

13)



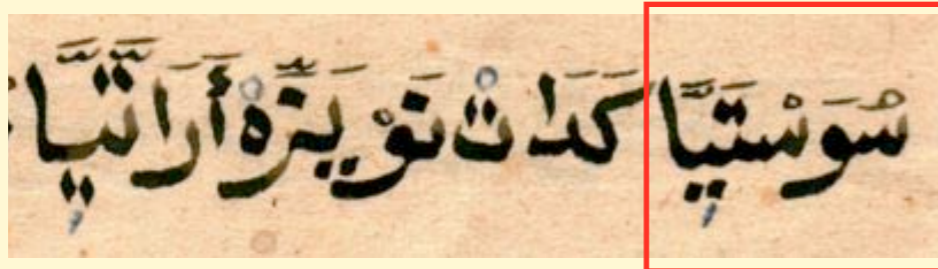
sərahən näggärkän sayk'ər ʔənk<sup>w</sup>an mərrač'

14)



lägeta wağib näw mäčalənnə mäšat / attəggäññəm näbbär č'uč<sup>w</sup>an ʔənk<sup>w</sup>an balšat

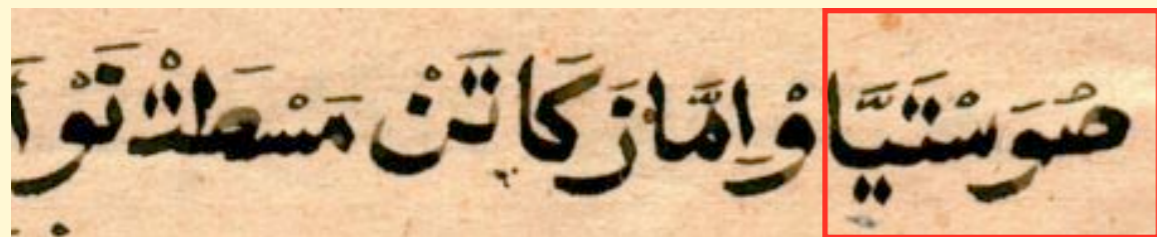
# Alternation in writing *sost* „three“



sost سُوْسَتْ

15)

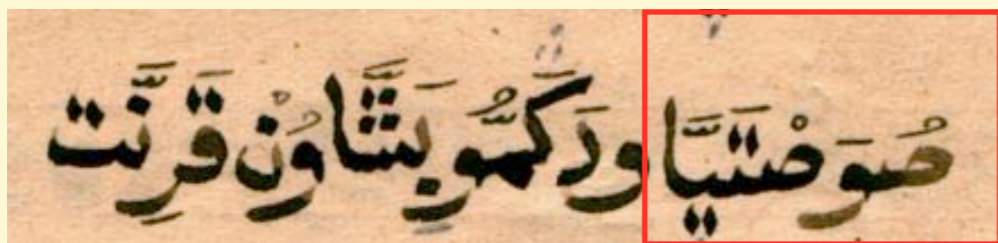
sostāññaw kədat nəw yəzzih arattāñña



ṣost صُوسَتْ

16)

sostāññaw əmma zəkātən məstāt nəw



ṣošt صُوصَتْ

17)

sostāññaw dägəmmo bəččawn k'ärinnät

# Regional variety

بِتْلُو مَالَتْ مَنْو هَاتَّقَرُوا / الْحَمْدُ لِلَّهِ سَاتَلْمُ أَتَّقَرُوا

18)

*bəttəlu malät mən näw hattəqäru / alhamdulillahi sattəlum ʾatqäru*

bə-ttə-l-u      malät    mən    nä-w      **ha**-ttə-qär-u /    alhamdulillahi    s-al-tə-l-u-m                      a-t-qär-u

if-2-say.IPV-PL    say.VN    what    COP-3SG:M    N-2-read.IPV-PL /    alhamdulillahi    when-N-2-say.IPV-PL-N    N-2-read.IMP-PL

“when you say ‘what is it?’ don’t you read. Don’t read without saying ‘*Alhamdullilah*’” (2,1)



نَبِيّ آدَمُ نَوْتُ مَجْمَرِيَّاشُو / يَنْبِيَّ نَبِيّ نَوْتُ مَطْرَشَاشُو

19)

*näbi ʾadäm näwot mäğämmäriyaččäw / yəñña näbi näwot mäčärräšaččäwu*

näbi adäm nä-wot mäğämmäri-aččäw / yä-əñña näbi nä-wot mäčärräš-aččäwu

prophet PN COP-3:HON first-POSS.3PL / GEN-we prophet COP-3:HON last-POSS.3PL

“Prophet Adam is the first of them, our prophet is the last of them.” (9,9)

# Register or sociolect?

- continuum between variety spoken by religious learned men on the one side and ordinary Muslim Amharic speakers on the other
- degree in:
  - use of Arabic loanwords
  - „correct“ pronunciation of Arabic consonants:
    - pharyngals [ʕ], [ħ]; velar [x], uvular [ʁ], pharyngalized [s<sup>ʕ</sup>] and [ð<sup>ʕ</sup>], interdental [ð] and [θ]
- differentiation from non-Muslim Amharic speakers who speak the „same“ local variety of the language

# What kind of literacy?

- social context of development of Amharic Ajäm literature
- function of texts:
  - didactic and panegyric
- many texts were written in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and **predate** introduction of modern education using Amharic in Ethiopic script
- use and reception of texts today
- knowledge of ajäm vs. illiteracy in official orthography?