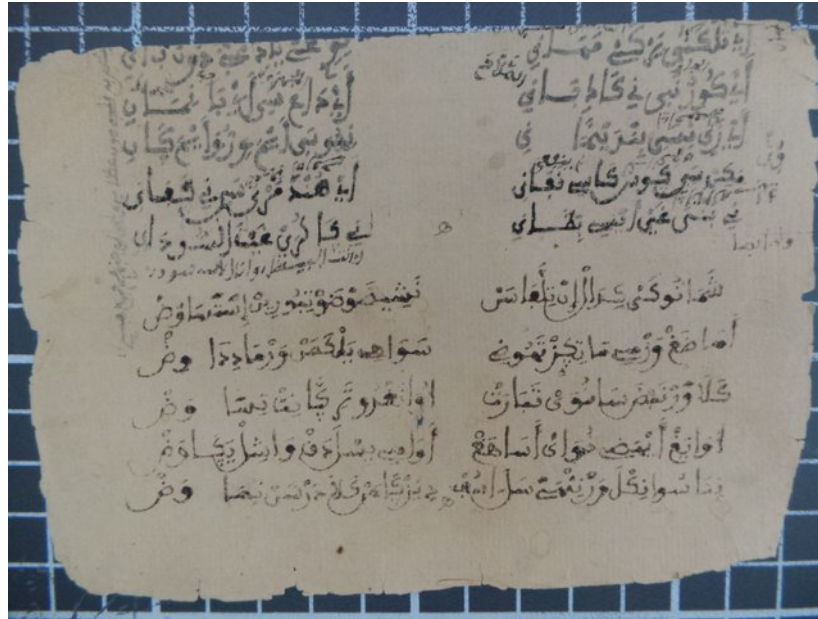


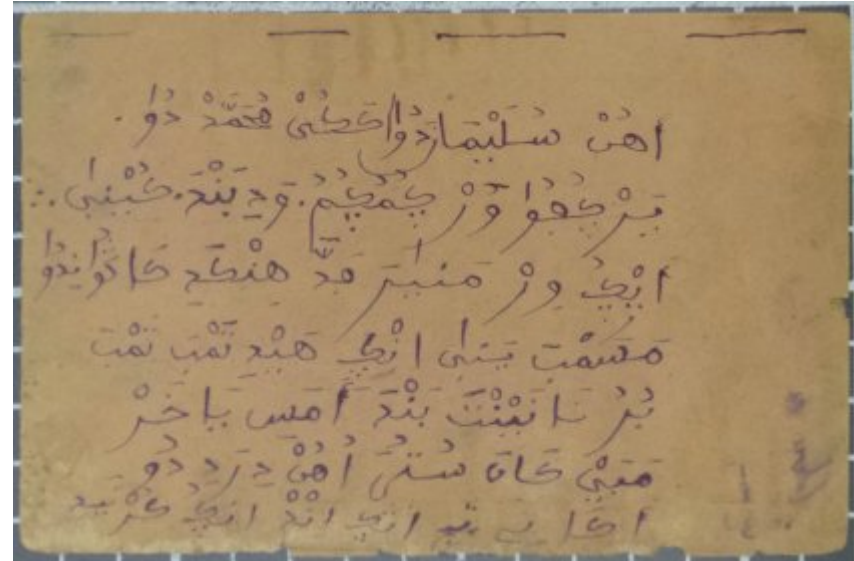
Preliminary notes on a page of premodern Songhay and Tamasheq poetry from Timbuktu



Lameen Souag

Background: Songhay Ajami

- Mostly: **religious poetry** in Songhay
 - cf. Ismaila Zangou Barazi, Seyni Moumouni
- Occasionally prose:
 - Traders' letters
 - Court records (colonial Niger)
- Songhay marginal/interlinear glosses of Arabic texts (esp. in Djenné)
- Songhay words embedded in Arabic texts:
 - Medical, historical texts
 - Tombstone inscriptions



IHERI-AB, AB_00007_5422

One poem for teaching Songhay...

In the name of God, the Merciful, the Compassionate, and blessings and praise be on the beloved Prophet.

O asker about the language of the Sudan [Songhay],

Hear the answer from one who will explain.

God is *Yerkoy*, *nga diya* the Messenger;

Prayer is *jingar*, fasting is *haw-mee*.

They say *teymam* for *tayammum*; wudu is *alwalaa*;

Takbir is *kabbar* for whoever prays;

Reading is *ay cow* and likewise calling;

Greeting is *sallam*, *gaara yo* is *dua*.

Breaking fast is *feer-mee*; likewise, suhoor

is *sohore*; dinner they say *hawre*;

then lunch for them is *ay cirkose*,

along with *ay cirkaare* for some people.

They say *fulan* for all the Fulanis;

Their names are *gaabibi*, and none other;

Arabs are *laarab* among them, and Tuareg

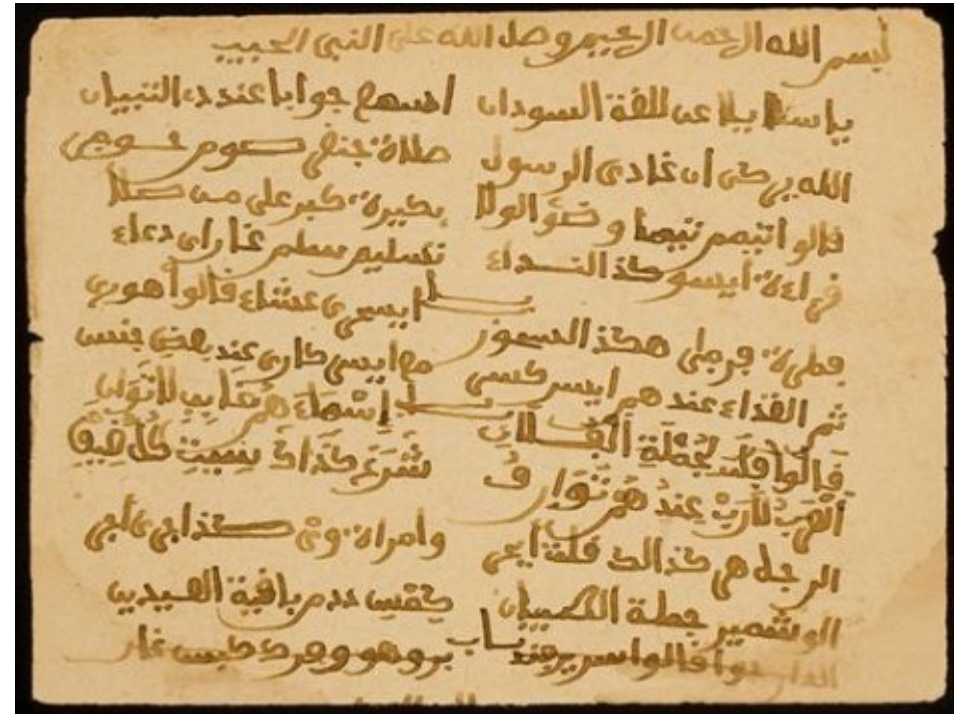
surgu, likewise *sete* is every guest.

A man is *har*, likewise I say is *ay har*;

A woman is *woy*, likewise he ran is *a jur*;

Alwaši-terey is all the youth;

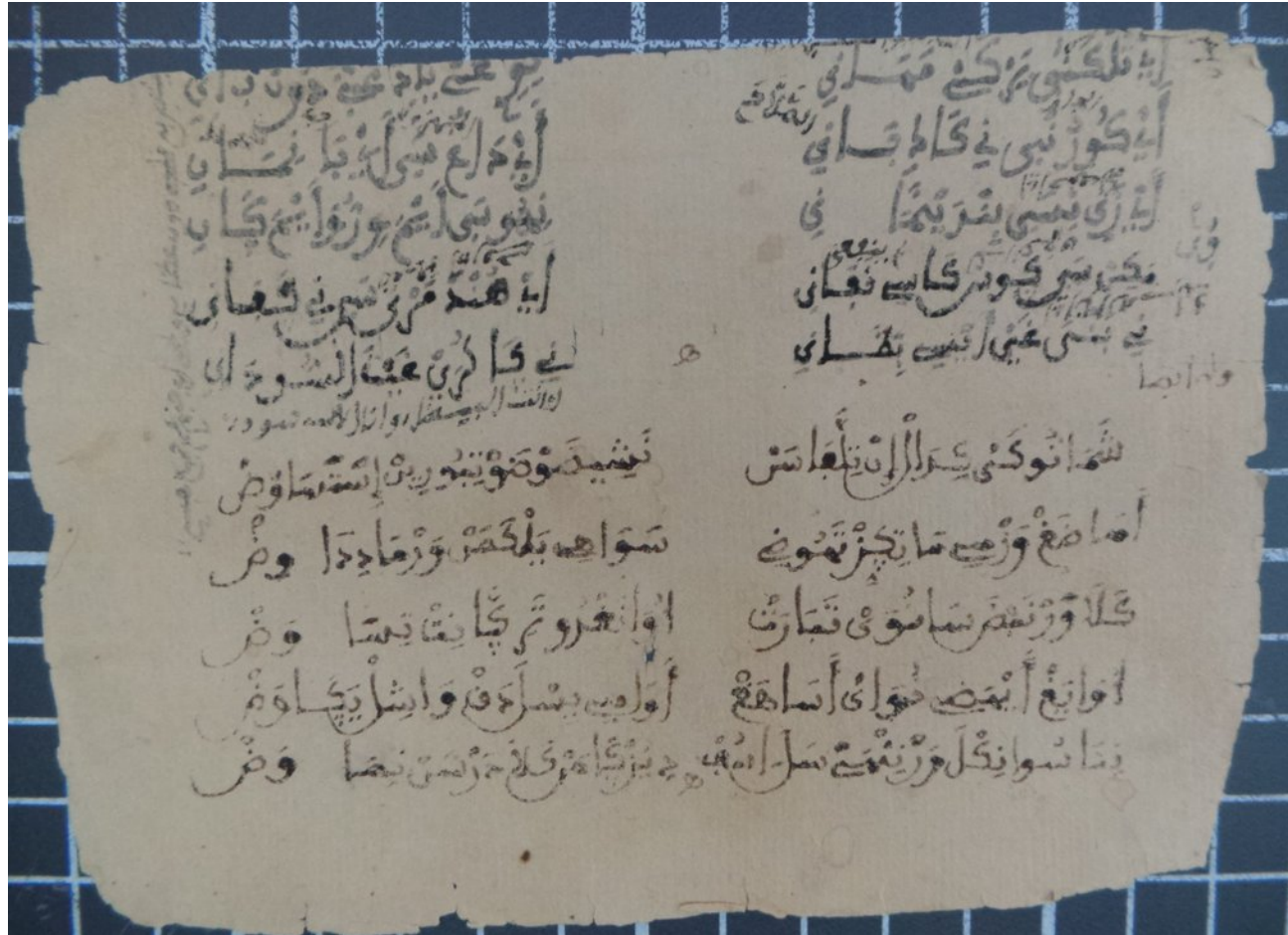
Kimsi, *dedem* are the rest of the holidays.



SAVAMA-DCI 123, via Aluka

AB_00003_4091 (Timbuctu 4093)

- At IHERI-AB
- Images courtesy of: Ismaila Zangou Barazi, Darya Ogorodnikova

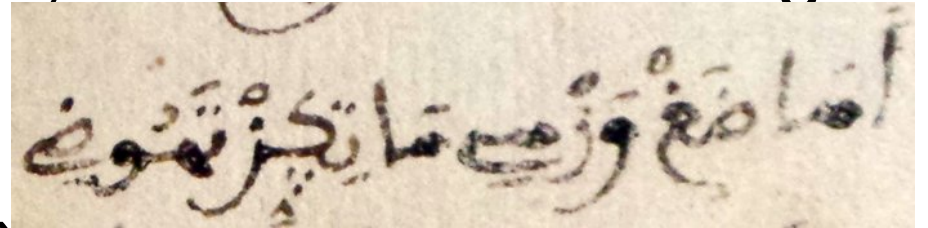


Physical characteristics

- A single sheet with writing on only one side, broken off (along a crease?) at the top
- Paper produced in Italy, **1810-1830** (Michaelle Biddle, p.c. via Dmitry Bondarev)

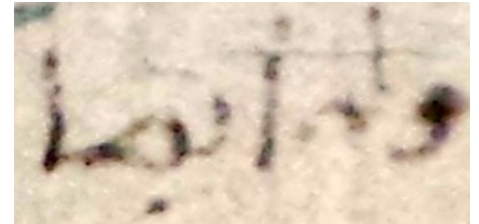
Orthography

- Maghribi letter forms, v-shaped shaddah
- Ajami text fully vocalised, with distinctive length
- <g> = گ
- <ee> = ع (sometimes); <oo> = <uu>

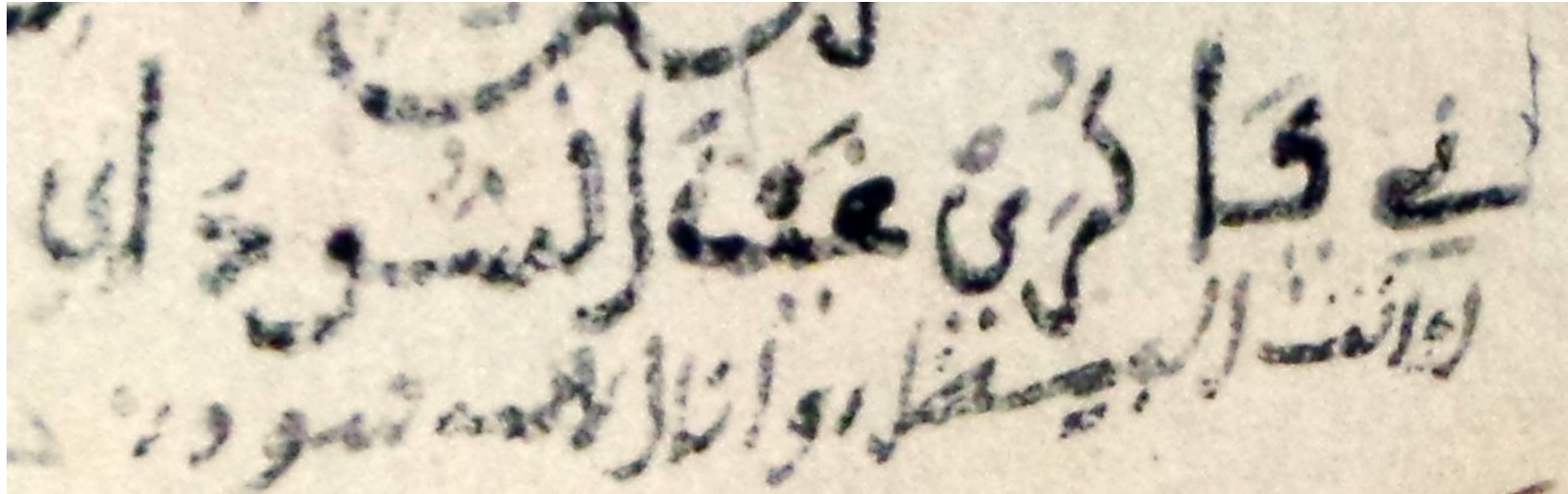


Contents

- 5 x 2 line poem in Koyra Chiini Songhay, written in a large “bold” script, rhyming in *-aani*, last line marked as such
 - Interlinear and marginal annotations in Arabic
 - A single-word marginal annotation in Songhay
- One line in Arabic: **وله أيضا** “and he also has:”
 - implying same author for both poems?
- 5 x 2 line poem in Tamasheq, written in a thinner script, rhyming in *-awăḍ*, last line marked as such
 - No annotations

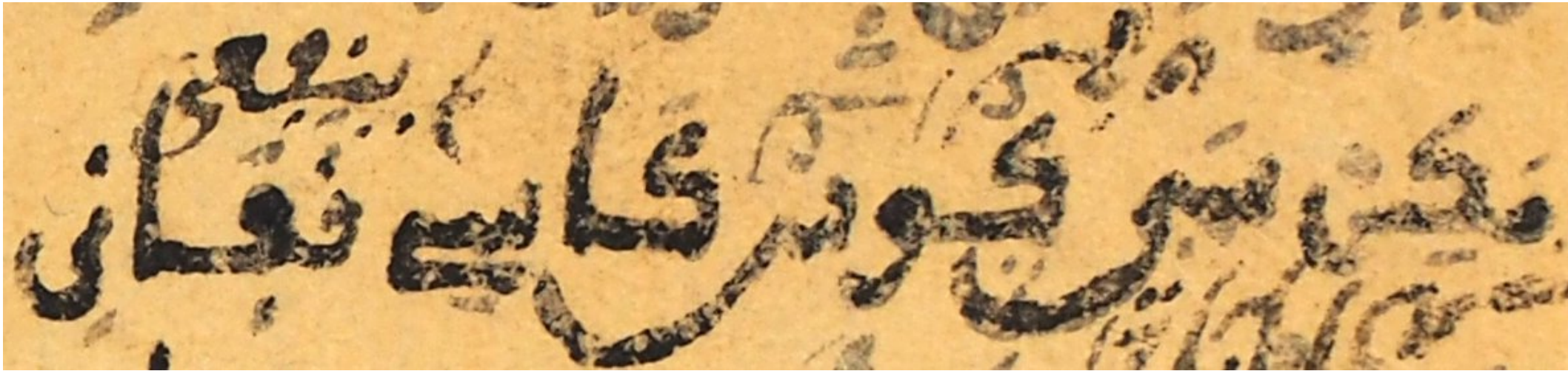


Examples of annotations: S5b



- <nii gaa-koray γay ta assuudaanii> (main text, in Songhay):
2Sg body-white 1SgIndep Top as-sūdānī
You are a white person, whereas I am black / Sudanic
- <'ay 'anta al-abyaḍ wa-'anā al-'aswad> (interlinear translation, in Arabic):
ie, you are the white and I am the black

Examples of annotations:



- makin see guusu kaa sii nafaa nii (main text, Songhay)
what? Dat pit Rel Neg benefit 2Sg
Why? A pit which does not benefit you
- <lam yanfa`nī> (interlinear translation, Arabic)
it has not helped me

Background: Koyra Chiini

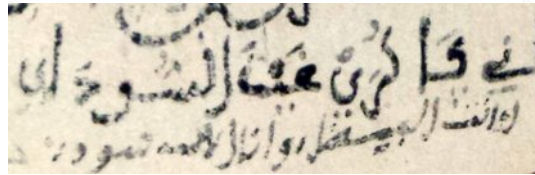
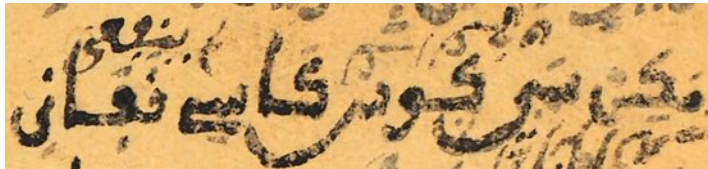
- Spoken in Timbuktu and to its west (Niafunké, Diré, etc.)
- Similar vocabulary, but striking differences:
 - SAuxVO (rather than other Songhay SAuxOV)
 - Definite clitic *di* (rather than definite suffix *-o/a*)
 - Sound shift **z > j* (except Araouane)
 - 1PI *yer* (rather than other Songhay *ir(i)*)
 - More Soninke/Bozo loans, eg *saaney* ‘star’
- Used in most Timbuktu Songhay Ajami material



The poem is clearly Koyra Chiini...

- VO order:
nafa ni
<nafaa ni>
“benefit you”
(S4a)

Language	Source	Topic particle	God	white	dig	become thin
ms		<ta> (S5b)	<yarkuy> (S1a)	<kuray> (S5b)	<faanii> (S4b)	<daayu> (S2b)
Koyra Chiini	(Heath 1998)	ta	yerkoy	korey	faani	daawo
- Djenne	(Heath 1998)	ta	yerkoy	koray	faani	daawo
Koyraboro Senni	(Heath 1998)	ta (rare)	irkoy	kaarey	fānsi	ñom
Humburi Senni	(Heath 2007)	kây	yórkòy	kà:rèy	fánsí	fà:bù
Kaado	(Ducroz & Charles 1978)	-	írkòy	kàarèy	fénsí	fàabù
Zarma	(Bernard & White-Kaba 1994)	-	írkòy	kwàarây	fánsí	fàabù



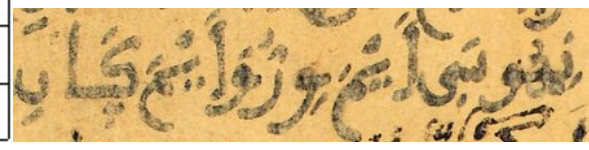
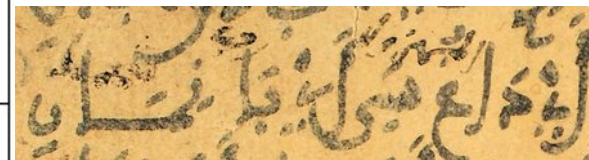
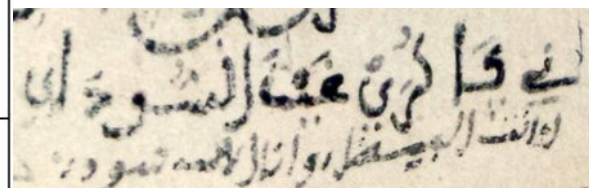
But not as spoken today!

- Dialectally: */g/ > [ɣ] / {a|o}_[-front], / r_a (Nicolai 1981:138-143):
 - in Northern Songhay
 - in Bamba, Gourma-Rharous
 - in Marensé (Burkina Faso)
 - **not recorded for Koyra Chiini**
- Distribution of <g> vs. <ɣ> in ms matches Bamba...
 - contrast Hacquard & Dupuis-Yacouba (1897), modern sources



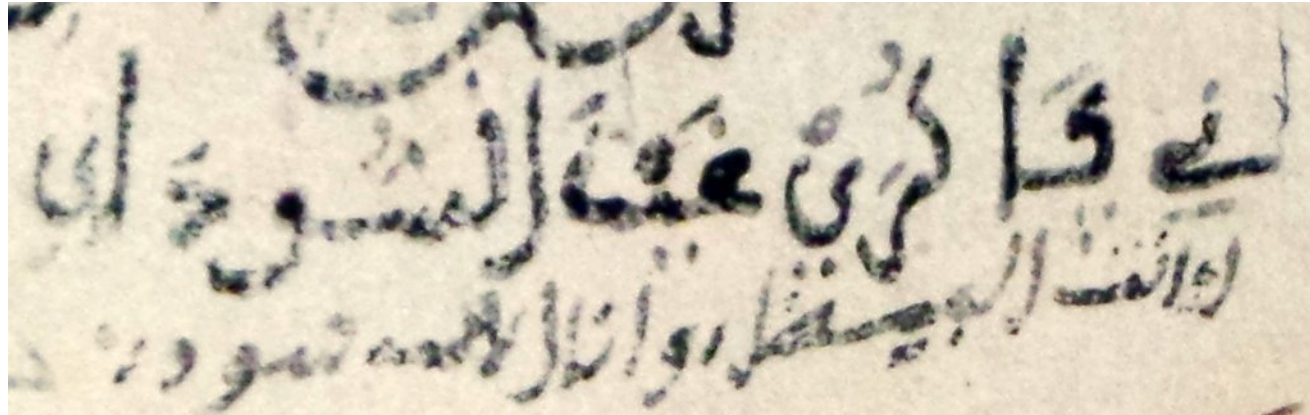
*/g/ in this ms

	ms	modern Koyra Chiini	Bamba (Koyraboro Senni)	Tadaksahak	Korandje
		(Heath 1998)	(Heath 1998; Heath 1999b:373–380)	(Christiansen-Bolli 2011)	(author's field data)
1Sg independent, postverbal object	<yay> (S5a, S5b...)	ay	ayey	ayáy	ayay (indep.) yay (postv.)
1Sg subject / possessor	<ay> (S3b, S4b, S5a...)	ay	ay	ay=	ʕa-
want	<baa> (S2b)	baa	baa (+3SgO: bay-aa)	báaya	bay (+3SgO: bay-a)
become thin, waste away	<daayu> (S2b)	daawo	-	-	-
body	<gaa> (S5b)	gaa	-(Gao: gaa)	gá “self”	-
dance	<gaani> (S3b)	gaani	gaan-i	-	gən
pit, hole	<guusu> (S4a)	guusu	guusu	gussú	guzu

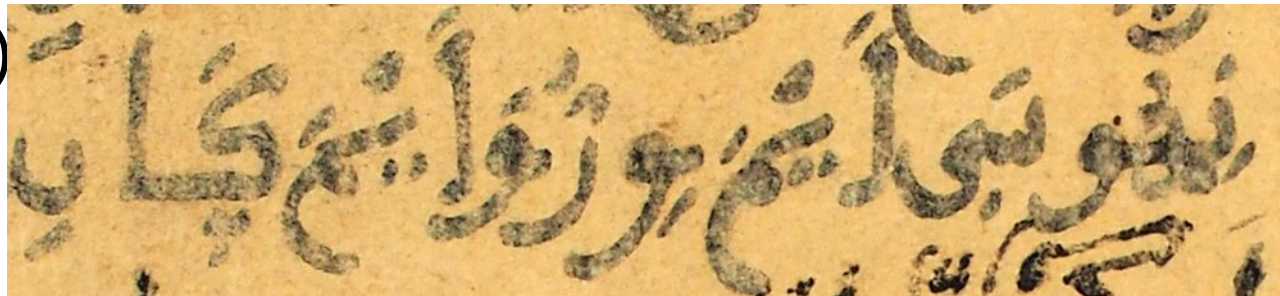


Unusual loanwords?

- From Arabic:
 - *assuudaanii*
“Sudanic”
 - (*nafaa* “benefit”)



- From Tuareg:
 - *huusee* “beautiful” ?
(also *talka* “poor”)



Koyra Chiini: a first pass

I am poor here, may God come near;
you have killed me, ??????.

My skin is black, you who are cream;

I am wasting away for you, I want your fat.

I have grown in your heart, I did not approach them;

You are beautiful, I should shout and I should dance.

Why a pit that will not benefit you,

my soul, now for me have you dug?

I am your slave, I do not surpass you;

you are a white person, whereas I am Sudanic.

ay talkaa nee yer koy ma maanii

ni wi yay yaa d[V]yey doon[V] b[V]a nii

ay kuuru no bii nii kaa ki faani

ay daayo nii see ay baa ni maani

ay zey ni see bin ra [a]y na maan-ii

ni huusee ay ma wirruu ay ma gaani

makin see guusu kaa sii nafaa nii

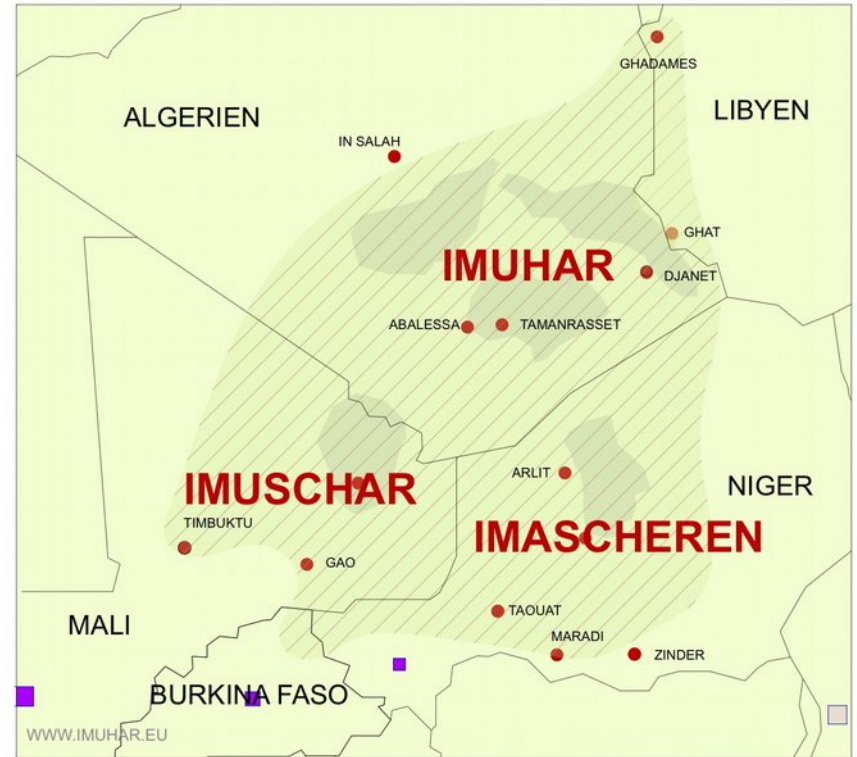
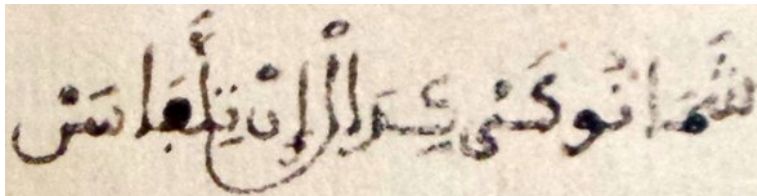
ay hunda merta ay see nii ta faanii

nii banya yay ay sii bi[s?]aa ni

nii gaa-koray yay ta assuudaanii

Background: Tamasheq

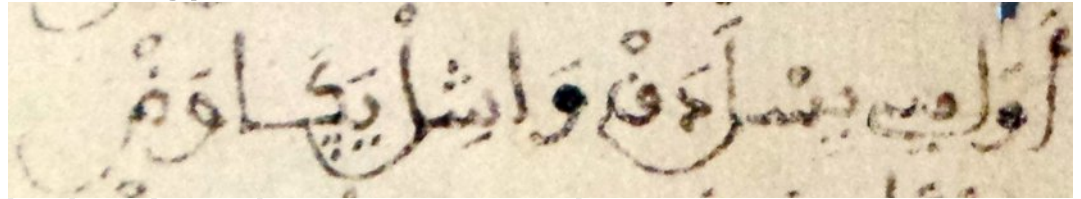
- Southwestern Tuareg (Mali, Burkina Faso)
- *z > š, as in ms:
 - šāma <šamā> “after” (T1a)
vs. Tamajeq zāma



SELBSTBEZEICHNUNGEN DER TUAREG

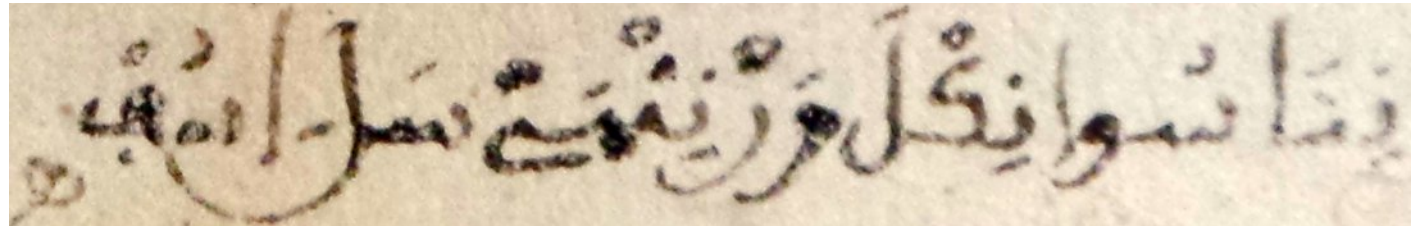
But not as spoken today!

- Two-term, marked-nominative case system
- Proto-Berber (and northern):
m.sg. abs. *a-, bound *wǎ- / *wa-
- Modern Tamasheq (and other Tuareg):
m.sg. abs. a-, bound ǎ- / a-
- This ms retains bound w:
 - *dǎy wašəl* <daq wāšil> (T4b) “in the day” < *a-zəl
- Cp. sporadic traces in Tamajeq poetry (Brugnatelli 1997)



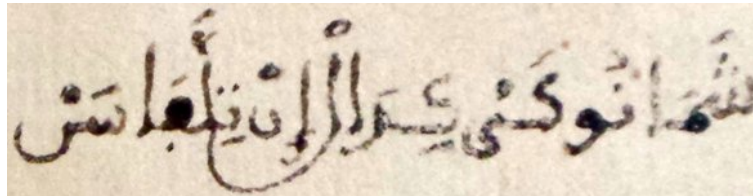
But not as spoken today!

- Imperfective of original glottal-final verbs:
 - Tamasheq: *i-nass* “he sleeps”
 - Tamajeq: *i-nassu* “he sleeps”
- Ms: Impfv. *yānas[s]u* <yanāsū’> “he sleeps” (T5a)



Geography

- One proper place name mentioned: **Kidal**
 - *šāma tukāy **kidal** in təllāf-asān*
 - After she passed that Kidal, she waved to them
- Other references vague:
 - *aḍāy* “mountain”
 - *tābarāt* “road”
 - *əsuḥ* “valley”
- Suggests an author from further east?



Synthesis

- Bilingual Songhay-Tuareg 18th c. poet
(from further east? archaizing register?)
 - love poetry? context unclear, but no immediately discernible religious, political, or scientific content
- Early 19th c. scribe(s) highly valuing this poet's work
 - careful, elegant transcription
 - detailed commentary

Questions for the future

- Why were these poems written down?
- Do these poems still survive in regional oral tradition?
- Are any other Ajami texts with Arabic commentary attested?
- Do any other Timbuktu texts exhibit the linguistic archaisms attested here?
- Does the relatively early date reflect an exceptional one-off, or a rare survival of a wider local tradition?