

A SKETCH OF SAHO GRAMMAR

Giorgio Banti and Moreno Vergari¹

This paper is a short sketch of the basic grammatical features of Saho, a little-studied East Cushitic language spoken by ca. 5% of the Eritrean population. The variety that is described here is broadly the central and northern one now used in most of the Saho printed texts.

In the first part of the sketch the sound system of this language is described, together with the orthography that has been introduced in Eritrea for writing it. Each sound is characterized phonetically and by means of some examples.

The ten main parts of speech are depicted in the subsequent sections: verbs, nouns, personal pronouns, possessives, demonstratives, interrogatives, indefinites, numerals, postpositions, and particles. The last group includes interjections, adverbs and conjunctions. It is the same classification that has been used in Vergari & Vergari's *Basic Saho-English Italian Dictionary*, published in Asmara in 2003 and now used in all the Saho elementary schools.

On the basis of an established linguistic tradition, Saho verbs have been divided into four classes: those that are inflected by means of prefixes and suffixes (class I), those that only have inflectional suffixes (class II), the stative verbs (class III), and the compound verbs (class IV).

The last section deals with how nouns and verbs are formed through derivation and compounding, a topic that has been dealt with only cursorily till now for Saho and its closest linguistic relative, i.e., Afar.

Several publications have appeared in Saho during the recent years both for the Eritrean schools and a wider readership. Together with the linguists' fieldwork they provide a wide basis for studying and analysing this language and the rich cultural heritage that has been handed down till now by generations of Saho speakers.

1. Introduction

Saho is an East Cushitic language closely related to °Afar. Other well-known East Cushitic languages are Somali, Oromo, Sidamo, and Hadiyya. Saho-speaking communities live traditionally in the Northern Red Sea and Debub (South) regions of Eritrea, and now also in some areas of Gash-Barka. They are reported to be the 5-7% of the population of the country. The Saho-speaking Irob live also in the northeast part of the Ethiopian region of Tigray. Until very recently Saho has only been an oral language and did not develop a common written variety. As a consequence it is divided into several mutually intelligible dialects. Morin (1994, 1995) has shown that there are two main dialect areas, i.e., the Northern and Southern dialects, with an intermediate zone mainly represented by the Minifire. The Northern dialects have ejective consonants (*ch* [tʃʼ], *q* [kʼ], *qh* [xʼ], *th* [tʼ], and *ts* [sʼ]) and three fricatives that are not present in the Southern dialects, i.e., *kh* [x], *sh* [ʃ], and *z* [z].

Northern	Southern	Translation
<i>chaaqhut</i>	<i>saakut</i>	'chick'
<i>qafo</i>	<i>kafo</i>	'beehive'
<i>naqhca</i>	<i>nakca</i>	'dew'
<i>thuth</i>	<i>tut</i>	'cotton'
<i>tsafco</i>	<i>safco</i>	'slap'
<i>ibkhile</i>	<i>ibkile</i>	'to be stingy'
<i>shakke</i>	<i>sakke</i>	'suspicion, doubt'
<i>ashshiine</i>	<i>aysiine</i>	'to envy, to be jealous'
<i>zizzaale</i>	<i>diddaale</i>	'honeybee'

The Northern dialects are also characterized by having singulatives in *-tto* or *-tta* instead of *-yto* and respectively *-yta*, as well as postpositions with final vowels like *-lle* and *-dde* instead of *-l* and *-d*. Obviously, there are several differences in the lexicon, like Northern *cokka* 'ear', *tharbats* 'hurry (n.)', *ingo* 'grandmother' vs. Southern *ayti*, *afi*, *aboyya*, and many others.

2. Alphabet and Orthography

Some Saho intellectuals started to develop a Latin orthography for their language in the 80's, but it was only in the second half of the 90's that this orthography was established officially, together with the Latin orthographies of other Eritrean languages.

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It makes use of 36 signs: 26 letters and 10 digraphs. The signs *gn*, *p*, and *v* are used only in loan words.

The complete list of the Saho letters and digraphs is displayed below together with their IPA (International Phonetic Alphabet) equivalents, their phonetic descriptions and some examples.

SAHO ALPHABET	IPA	PHONETIC DESCRIPTION	EXAMPLES	
<i>A</i>	<i>a</i>	a	low central vowel	<i>anna</i> 'aunt'
<i>B</i>	<i>b</i>	b	voiced bilabial plosive (stop)	<i>baska</i> 'honey'
<i>C</i>	<i>c</i>	ʃ	voiced pharyngeal fricative	<i>caasa</i> 'fish'
<i>Ch</i>	<i>ch</i>	tʃʼ	voiceless alveolar ejective affricate	<i>chiqqa</i> 'mud'
<i>Ç</i>	<i>ç</i>	tʃ	voiceless palato-alveolar affricate	<i>kabuççi</i> 'savoy cabbage'
<i>D</i>	<i>d</i>	d	voiced dental/alveolar plosive (stop)	<i>dagar</i> 'hair'
<i>Dh</i>	<i>dh</i>	ɖ	voiced retroflex plosive (stop)	<i>dhaa</i> 'stone'
<i>E</i>	<i>e</i>	e	mid front vowel	<i>essero</i> 'question'
<i>F</i>	<i>f</i>	f	voiceless labiodental fricative	<i>faras</i> 'horse'
<i>G</i>	<i>g</i>	g	voiced velar plosive (stop)	<i>gaba</i> 'hand'
	<i>gn</i>	ɲ	voiced palatal nasal	<i>Tigrigna</i> 'Tigrinya'
<i>H</i>	<i>h</i>	h	voiceless glottal fricative	<i>hadaana</i> 'hunter'
<i>I</i>	<i>i</i>	i	high front vowel	<i>ibra</i> 'needle'
<i>J</i>	<i>j</i>	dʒ	voiced palato-alveolar affricate	<i>jabana</i> 'coffee pot'
<i>K</i>	<i>k</i>	k	voiceless velar plosive (stop)	<i>kare</i> 'dog'
<i>Kh</i>	<i>kh</i>	x	voiceless velar fricative	<i>khaatim</i> 'ring'
<i>L</i>	<i>l</i>	l	voiced dental/alveolar lateral	<i>lak</i> 'leg'
<i>M</i>	<i>m</i>	m	voiced bilabial nasal	<i>marca</i> 'wedding, marriage'
<i>N</i>	<i>n</i>	n	voiced dental/alveolar nasal	<i>numa</i> 'woman'
<i>O</i>	<i>o</i>	o	mid back rounded vowel	<i>okolo</i> 'donkey'
<i>P</i>	<i>p</i>	p	voiceless bilabial plosive (stop)	<i>poliis</i> 'police'
<i>Q</i>	<i>q</i>	kʼ	voiceless velar ejective plosive (stop)	<i>qabre</i> 'grave'
	<i>qh</i>	xʼ	voiceless velar ejective fricative	<i>laqhco</i> 'ear-ring'
<i>R</i>	<i>r</i>	r	voiced alveolar trill	<i>raba</i> 'death'
	<i>rh</i>	ɽ	voiced retroflex flap	<i>xarha</i> 'tree'
<i>S</i>	<i>s</i>	s	voiceless alveolar fricative	<i>san</i> 'nose'
<i>Sh</i>	<i>sh</i>	ʃ	voiceless palatal fricative	<i>mishar</i> 'hatchet, axe'
<i>T</i>	<i>t</i>	t	voiceless dental/alveolar plosive (stop)	<i>tika</i> 'smoke'
<i>Th</i>	<i>th</i>	tʼ	voiceless alveolar ejective stop	<i>thawla</i> 'table'
<i>Ts</i>	<i>ts</i>	sʼ	voiceless alveolar ejective fricative	<i>tsaxla</i> 'traditional pot made of clay'
<i>U</i>	<i>u</i>	u	high back rounded vowel	<i>usuk</i> 'he'
<i>V</i>	<i>v</i>	v	voiced labiodental fricative	<i>villa</i> 'villa'
<i>W</i>	<i>w</i>	w	voiced labio-velar glide	<i>wakari</i> 'fox'
<i>X</i>	<i>x</i>	ħ	voiceless pharyngeal fricative	<i>lax</i> 'she-goat'
<i>Y</i>	<i>y</i>	j	voiced palatal glide	<i>yangula</i> 'hyena'
<i>Z</i>	<i>z</i>	z	voiced alveolar fricative	<i>zizzaale</i> 'honeybee'

Notes:

- Another digraph, *kw*, is used for a labialised *k*: e.g., *ku anna* 'your aunt' is frequently pronounced as *kwanna* (*kw* = IPA [kʷ]).

- Saho has both long and short vowels and consonants. The long ones are written with double letters, like *caasa* 'fish', *anna* 'aunt', *cashsho* 'grass'.

- A hyphen (-) is used for separating two letters that would otherwise be misread as a digraph, and for representing a glottal stop (*hamza*), e.g., *dor-ho* [dorho] 'chicken', *qiraa-a* [k'iraaʔa]. Otherwise the hyphen is used in compound verbs of class III and in all verbs of class IV, as well as in a number of other multi-word expressions, e.g., *qarce-le* 'it is clean', *sik-erhxe* 'I kept silent', *aafati-nizaam* 'respiratory system', *macnad-ashishshe* 'she invested, she capitalized'.

- The voiced retroflex stop *dh* [d̠] can occur only at the beginning of a word, and internally after *n* or when it is doubled. E.g., *dhaa* 'stone', *andhax* 'noise', *codhdho* 'crowd'. The allophone *rh* [ɾ] appears after its vowel or after *b*, *c*, *w* and *y*. E.g., *barha* 'son', *abrha* 'half', *icrhiye* 'to deviate', *dhawrho* 'defense, guard', *eyrheerhe* 'to lengthen'.

- The velar ejective fricative *qh* [xʷ] occurs both in indigenous Saho words, and in several loans from Arabic and Tigrinya. The Saho Panel in the Curriculum Development Center of the Ministry of Education is considering the possibility of spelling as *qh* all the ejective velars in loanwords when they are preceded by vowels, even when some people pronounce them as plosives. This would simplify the orthography by establishing a single rule, that would also include *waqhte* 'time' (from Arabic *q* [q]) and *shuqhle* 'work' (from Arabic *gh* [ɣ]). In any case, it is not possible to write *qh* at the beginning of a word. One thus has the verb *iqhliye* 'to be expensive' and its related noun *qaali* 'expensive'. Rules of this kind may be revised when the standardization process of the Saho language shall be further implemented.

- No groups of three consonants are allowed, unless two of them form a digraph.

- Double consonants cannot occur at the beginning or at the end of a word.

- Two different vowels cannot follow upon each other. Double vowel letters such as *aa* or *ii* represent single long vowels.

- *Kh* at the beginning of a word occurs in a few loanwords like *khaatim* 'ring' and *khadaama* 'work, activity', but there is always also a counterpart with plosive *k*-, i.e. *kaatim* and *kadaama*.

- A dieresis is used to distinguish some feminine nouns with a final pitch accent from their masculine counterparts that have penultimate pitch accent. For instance, *barhä* [baɾä] f. 'daughter' vs. *barha* [baɾa] m. 'son'.

3. Parts of speech

Ten classes of words (or parts of speech) may be distinguished in Saho: verbs, nouns, personal pronouns, possessives, demonstratives, interrogatives, indefinites, numerals, postpositions, particles. For some of these classes there are further subclasses. A brief introduction to each of these ten classes of words is provided here below.

4. Verbs

There are four classes of verbs in Saho. The differences are explained below. Classes I, II and IV are cited and entered in dictionaries in the first person singular of their perfect. This form has been chosen as citation form because it is closer to the bare verbal stem and is easily recognized. The imperative (which is sometimes even more similar to the verbal stem) has not been chosen, because it often undergoes changes that prevent identifying the stem easily. For instance there are irregular imperatives like *amo* (vs. perf. *emeete* 'to come') or *tik* (vs. perf. *ekke* 'to be, to become, to happen'), imperatives with shortened vowels like *emmeg* (vs. perf. *emmeege* 'to be filled'), and imperatives with final *-aa* like *ekettaa* (vs. perf. *ekette* 'to gather together, to meet (intr.)'). Even the imperfect is not convenient as a citation form, because in class I verbs it is often impossible to understand through it which are the vowels of the perfect; for instance, imp. *aarhige* vs. perf. *eerhege* 'to know, to realize, to recognize', imp. *able* vs. perf. *uble* 'to see', imp. *aafuwe* vs. perf. *oofowe* 'to blow, to breathe'.

For the verbs of class III the citation form is the third person singular of the present, which in these verbs is identical for the masculine and the feminine. The reason for not using the first person is that it is impossible to predict from it which final vowel occurs in the third person. For instance, 1s. *meciyo* vs. 3s. *mece* 'to be good, to be fine, to be nice'; 1s. *cusubiyo* vs. 3s. *cusuba* 'to be new'; 1s. *cadiyo* vs. 3s. *cado* 'to be white'.

It should be noted that, as in many other languages, the citation forms are sometimes merely convenient forms that are never used in ordinary spoken language. For instance, the first person form of the verb *eedece* 'to be pregnant (of animals)' will never be used, except in a folk tale in which it is the animal itself that speaks.

The inflectional system of the Saho verbs is extremely rich and it is not possible to describe it here in its entirety. The four inflectional classes will be briefly outlined by indicating for each of them five different sets of inflected forms:

- the paradigms of the perfect, the imperfect, the subjunctive, and the imperative;

- the invariable participle.

The different uses of these inflected forms as well as the other forms that are derived from them will be shown below in 4.5.

4.1 Class I verbs: verbs with prefixes and suffixes

Here below are the paradigms for the perfect, imperfect, subjunctive, and imperative, and the invariable participle of the verb *eerhege* 'to know, to be familiar with'. All the other forms of this verb are formed from the stems that occur in this five sets of forms. It should be noted that not all class I verbs have four different stems like *eerhege*, i.e. the perfect stem *-eerheg-*, the imperfect stem *-aarhig-*, the subjunctive stem *-aarhag-*, and the imperative stem *irhig-*. For instance, the verb *erhxe* 'to say' has only one stem for both the imperfect *arhxe* and the subjunctive *arhxo*, and uses 2s. *erhex*, 2p. *erhexa* for its imperative. A different pattern can be seen in *edebbe* 'to give back': perfect *-edebb-* (with the imperative 2s. *edebba*, 2p. *edebbanta* from the perfect stem), imperfect and subjunctive *-adabb-*.

Eerhege 'to know, to be familiar with'

	Perfect	Imperfect	Subjunctive	Imperative	Participle
	'I knew'	'I know'	'that I know'	'know!'	'knowing'
1s.	<i>eerhege</i>	<i>aarhige</i>	<i>aarhago</i>		<i>aarhigii</i>
2s.	<i>teerhege</i>	<i>taarhige</i>	<i>taarhago</i>	<i>irhig</i>	
3sm.	<i>yeerhege</i>	<i>yaarhige</i>	<i>yaarhago</i>		
3sf.	<i>teerhege</i>	<i>taarhige</i>	<i>taarhago</i>		
1p.	<i>neerhege</i>	<i>naarhige</i>	<i>naarhago</i>		
2p.	<i>teerhegin</i>	<i>taarhigin</i>	<i>taarhagoona</i>	<i>irhiga</i>	
3p.	<i>yeerhegin</i>	<i>yaarhigin</i>	<i>yaarhagoona</i>		

It appears that the perfect, imperfect and subjunctive mark subject concord by means of a combination of prefixes and suffixes, while the imperative and the participle have only suffixes. The participle uses the same stem as the imperfect. The difference between the perfect and the imperfect is marked only by the stem, e.g., *-eerheg-* vs. *-aarhig-*, *-erhx-* vs. *-arhx-*, *-edebb-* vs. *-adabb-*, while the endings are the same: *-e* and *-in*.

4.2 Class II verbs: verbs with suffixes

The paradigms for the perfect, imperfect, subjunctive, and imperative and the invariable participle of the class II verb *faake* 'to open' are listed below. Verbs of this class have a single stem for all their forms unless they have, like *faake*, a long vowel that is shortened when it occurs in a closed syllable, i.e., in a syllable that ends with a consonant. This happens whenever there is a suffix beginning with a consonant (2s., 3sf., 1p., 2p.), and in the imperative singular. Exceptionally, the stem with a short vowel also occurs in the 2p. of the imperative despite its not occurring in a closed syllable. In this way *faake* alternates the two stems *faak-* and *fak-*. It can be seen that class II verbs always mark subject concord only by means of suffixes, and that the perfect is distinguished from the imperfect by having final *-e* and *-in* instead of *-a* and *-an*. In addition to this the participle ends by *-aa* rather than *-ii*.

Faake 'to open'

	Perfect	Imperfect	Subjunctive	Imperative	Participle
	'I opened'	'I open'	'that I open'	'open!'	'opening'
1s.	<i>faake</i>	<i>faaka</i>	<i>faako</i>		<i>faakaa</i>
2s.	<i>fakte</i>	<i>fakta</i>	<i>fakto</i>	<i>fak</i>	
3sm.	<i>faake</i>	<i>faaka</i>	<i>faako</i>		
3sf.	<i>fakte</i>	<i>fakta</i>	<i>fakto</i>		
1p.	<i>fakne</i>	<i>fakna</i>	<i>fakno</i>		
2p.	<i>fakten</i>	<i>faktan</i>	<i>faktoona</i>	<i>faka</i>	
3p.	<i>faaken</i>	<i>faakan</i>	<i>faakoona</i>		

It should also be noted that certain sound changes may take place with endings that begin by *t* or *n*, if the stem ends with the dental stops *t* and *d*, with the fricatives *s*, *z*, and *sh*, with the affricate *j*, with the retroflex *rh* and with the glides *w* and *y*.

	'to eat'	'to run away'	'to add'	'to patch'	'to establish, to found'	'to invent'	'to want, to need'	'to count'	'to be hungry'
1s.	<i>beete</i>	<i>kude</i>	<i>ose</i>	<i>leeze</i>	<i>dhishe</i>	<i>cijaaje</i>	<i>farhe</i>	<i>lowe/loye</i>	<i>luwe</i>
2s./3sf.	<i>bette</i>	<i>kudde</i>	<i>osse</i>	<i>lezze</i>	<i>dhisshshe</i>	<i>cijajje</i>	<i>fadhhe</i>	<i>loyte</i>	<i>luute</i>
1p.	<i>benne</i>	<i>kudne</i>	<i>osne</i>	<i>lezne</i>	<i>dhisshne</i>	<i>cijajne</i>	<i>farhne/fandhe</i>	<i>loyne</i>	<i>luune</i>

4.3 Class III verbs: stative verbs

Most of these verbs indicate states or conditions, e.g., *mece* 'to be good, to be fine, to be nice', *kixina* 'to love, to like, to prefer', etc. Many of them correspond to adjectives in some other languages like English, Arabic or Tigrinya. In the present, these verbs all have a single form for the 3sm. and the 3sf. Some of them also have a special invariable relative (attributive) form, e.g., *cusub care* 'a house that is new, a new house', but *too careeko ta cari cusuba* 'this house is newer than that house' (from *cusuba* 'to be new').

It should be noted that these verbs properly have only the present and the participle. Like the other three classes of verbs, class III verbs also have a conjugated participle: 1s. *kixiniyuk*, 2s. *kixinituk*, 3sm. and 3sf. *kixinii*, 1p. *kixininuk*, 2p. *kixinitin*, 3p. *kixinii*. Yet it is mostly the northern Saho dialects that have these forms. Either of the participles is used together with the perfect of the verb *ine* 'to be (present), to exist, to survive' for the past tense of this class of verbs. For the subjunctive and the imperative, it is necessary to resort to the corresponding forms of a derivative verb of the I or II class, like the class I verb *ikxine* 'to fall in love, to like, to desire' from *kixina* 'to love, to like', or the class II verb *dattowe* 'to become black' from *data* 'to be black'.

	Present	Past	Subjunctive	Imperative	Participle
	'I love'	'I loved'	'that I love'	'love!'	'loving'
1s.	<i>kixiniyo</i>	<i>kixiniyuk/kixinii ine</i>	<i>(akxano)</i>		kixinii
2s.	<i>kixinito</i>	<i>kixinituk/kixinii tine</i>	<i>(takxano)</i>	<i>(ikxin)</i>	
3sm.		<i>kixinii yine</i>	<i>(yakxano)</i>		
3sf.	<i>kixina</i>	<i>kixinii tine</i>	<i>(takxano)</i>		
1p.	<i>kixinino</i>	<i>kixininuk/kixinii nine</i>	<i>(nakxano)</i>		
2p.	<i>kixinitin</i>	<i>kixinitin/kixinii tinin</i>	<i>(takxanoona)</i>	<i>(ikxina)</i>	
3p.	<i>kixinon</i>	<i>kixinii yinin</i>	<i>(yakxanoona)</i>		

The final vowel of the stem that occurs in the 3sm./f. of the present, is dropped before the initial *i* or *o* of the other endings. The inflectional endings of the 1s., 2s., 1p., 2p., and 3p. of this class of verbs are quite different from those of class II.

	<i>cado</i> 'to be white'	<i>cusuba</i> 'to be new'
1s.	<i>cadayo</i>	<i>cusubiyo</i>
2s.	<i>cadito</i>	<i>cusubito</i>
3sm.	<i>cado</i>	<i>cusuba</i>
3sf.		
1p.	<i>cadino</i>	<i>cusubino</i>
2p.	<i>caditin</i>	<i>cusubitin</i>
3p.	<i>cadon</i>	<i>cusubon</i>
participle	<i>cadii</i>	<i>cusubii</i>

When the stem ends with the pharyngeal consonant *c*, the stem vowel may be assimilated to the initial vowel of the ending, e.g., *mecito*>*micito*, *mecon*>*mocon* (from *mece* 'to be good, to be fine, to be nice')

4.4 Class IV verbs: compound verbs

This is the class of verbal constructions composed of an invariable ideophone indicating a movement, a sound, etc., or a noun followed by the verbs *erhxe* 'to say', *e* 'to say', or *ishe* (*ishishe*) 'to do' used as auxiliaries. The verbs *erhxe* and *e* belong to class I and are used for intransitive constructions, i.e., without a direct object, e.g., *sik-yerhxe* or *sik-ye* 'he kept silent'. The verb *ishe* belongs to class II and is used for transitive constructions, i.e., with a direct object, e.g., *kaa sik-ishshe* 'she silenced him'. As shown below, the verbs *erhxe*, *e*, and *ishe* (*ishishe*) are inflected according to their respective classes.

	<i>sik-erhxe</i> 'to keep silent, to be quiet'		<i>sik-ishe</i> 'to silence, to hush, to quiet'
	Perfect		Perfect
1s.	<i>sik-erhxe</i>	<i>sik-e</i>	<i>sik-ishe</i>
2s.	<i>sik-terhxe</i>	<i>sik-te</i>	<i>sik-ishshe</i>
3sm.	<i>sik-yerhxe</i>	<i>sik-ye</i>	<i>sik-ishe</i>
3sf.	<i>sik-terhxe</i>	<i>sik-te</i>	<i>sik-ishshe</i>
1p.	<i>sik-nerhxe</i>	<i>sik-ne</i>	<i>sik-ishne</i>
2p.	<i>sik-terhxin</i>	<i>sik-ten</i>	<i>sik-ishshen</i>
3p.	<i>sik-yerhxin</i>	<i>sik-yen</i>	<i>sik-ishen</i>

4.5 Inflectional system of verbs

Like many Cushitic languages the verbal forms used in affirmative clauses are often quite different from those used in negative clauses, as shown below.

The imperative, that has only the 2s. and the 2p., is used for issuing direct commands to one or more addressees, e.g., *amo!* 'come (you, singular)!', *amowa!* 'come (you, plural)!' (from *emeete* 'to come'). Class I verbs with stems in final geminate consonants like *oobbe* 'to hear, to listen' and *eskette* 'to gather, to collect' have final *-aa* or *-a* in the sg., *-anta* in the pl.: 2s. *oobba*, *esketta* or *eskettaa*, and 2p. *oobbanta*, *eskettanta*.

The negative imperative is preceded by *ma-* or *mi-* and has a quite different form:

maamaatin 2s., *maamaatina* 2p. 'don't come!'
maasalin 2s., *maasalina* 2p. 'don't laugh!'
mifaakin 2s., *mifaakina* 2p. 'don't open!'
sik-marhxin 2s., *sik-marhxina* 2p. 'don't be silent!'

The perfect, and the past of class III verbs, are used to express actions that occurred in the past or are in some way completed. The negative perfect is preceded by *ma-* or *mi-* and has two alternative sets of forms:

	<i>eerhege</i> 'to know, to be familiar with'	
1s.	<i>maarhaginniyo</i>	<i>maarhagiyo</i>
2s.	<i>maarhaginnito</i>	<i>maarhagito</i>
3sm.	<i>maarhaginna</i>	<i>maarhago</i>
3sf.	<i>maarhaginna</i>	<i>maarhago</i>
1p.	<i>maarhaginnino</i>	<i>maarhagino</i>
2p.	<i>maarhaginnitiini</i>	<i>maarhagitiini</i>
3p.	<i>maarhaginnooni</i>	

	<i>faake</i> 'to open'	
1s.	<i>mifaakinniyo</i>	<i>mifaakiyo</i>
2s.	<i>mifaakinnito</i>	<i>mifaakito</i>
3sm.	<i>mifaakinna</i>	<i>mifaako</i>
3sf.	<i>mifaakinna</i>	<i>mifaako</i>
1p.	<i>mifaakinnino</i>	<i>mifaakino</i>
2p.	<i>mifaakinnitiini</i>	<i>mifaakitiini</i>
3p.	<i>mifaakinnooni</i>	

	<i>kixina</i> 'to love'	
1s.	<i>kixinii miine</i>	<i>kixinii miiniyo</i>
2s.	<i>kixinii mitine</i>	<i>kixinii mitinito</i>
3sm.	<i>kixinii miyine</i>	
3sf.	<i>kixinii mitine</i>	
1p.	<i>kixinii minine</i>	<i>kixinii mininino</i>
2p.	<i>kixinii mitiniini</i>	<i>kixinii mitinitiini</i>
3p.	<i>kixinii miyiniini</i>	

	<i>sik-erhxe</i> 'to keep silent'	
1s.	<i>sik-marhxinniyo</i>	<i>sik-marhxiyo</i>
2s.	<i>sik-marhxinnito</i>	<i>sik-marhxito</i>
3sm.	<i>sik-marhxinna</i>	<i>sik-maarhxo</i>
3sf.	<i>sik-marhxinna</i>	<i>sik-maarhxo</i>
1p.	<i>sik-marhxinnino</i>	<i>sik-marhxino</i>
2p.	<i>sik-marhxinnitiini</i>	<i>sik-marhxitiini</i>
3p.	<i>sik-marhxinnooni</i>	

The imperfect is used to express actions that occur at the moment of the utterance or that are in some way not completed. It is used especially for habitual actions, while continuous actions are expressed by means of the participle plus the imperfect of *ine* 'to be (present)'. For instance, *ummangedda jawaab aktube* 'I always write a letter' vs. *kado jawaab aktubiyuk ane* 'now I am writing a letter'. Since class III verbs indicate states rather than actions, it is more appropriate to speak of present rather than of imperfect for them.

The negative imperfect is marked only by prefixing *ma-* or *mi-* to the affirmative imperfect. Several dialects also have a suffixal short vowel in the 2p. and 3p. The negative present of class III verbs is made in the same way.

	<i>eerhege</i> 'to know, to be familiar with'	<i>faake</i> 'to open'	<i>kixina</i> 'to love'	<i>sik-erhxe</i> 'to keep silent'
	'I don't know'	'I don't open'	'I don't love'	'I don't keep silent'
1s.	<i>maarhige</i>	<i>mifaaka</i>	<i>mikixiniyo</i>	<i>sik-maarhxe</i>
2s.	<i>mitaarhige</i>	<i>mifakta</i>	<i>mikixinito</i>	<i>sik-mitarhxe</i>
3sm.	<i>miyaarhige</i>	<i>mifaaka</i>	<i>mikixina</i>	<i>sik-miyarhxe</i>
3sf.	<i>mitaarhige</i>	<i>mifakta</i>	<i>mikixina</i>	<i>sik-mitarhxe</i>
1p.	<i>minaarhige</i>	<i>mifakna</i>	<i>mikixinino</i>	<i>sik-minarhxe</i>
2p.	<i>mitaarhigiini</i>	<i>mifaktaana</i>	<i>mikixinitiini</i>	<i>sik-mitarhxiini</i>
3p.	<i>miyaarhigiini</i>	<i>mifaakaana</i>	<i>mikixinooni</i>	<i>sik-miyarhxiini</i>

The class III verb *kinni* 'to be' has irregular forms in the negative 3s.: *makin* or *makii*.

The subjunctive is used in some subordinate clauses, e.g. in clausal complements of verbs like *dhiice* 'to be able', *farhe* 'to want', *xabe* 'to let, to leave', *essere* 'to ask', *emeete* 'to come', etc. For instance:

zabbito mirhiicinniyo 'I was not able to swim';
fakto fadhdha 'she wants to open it' (from *faake* 'to open');
gaxno ni xabe 'he let us come back';
innabba Saaganeyti adaw kaa essere, usuk aduu yok ye 'I asked my father whether I could go to Segeneyti, and he told me that I could go';
beetoona yemeetin 'they came to eat'.

The subjunctive is also used with *ine* 'to be (present)' in order to express a possibility, and with *alle* and the 3sf. of *ine* in order to express an obligation, as in the following examples:

yakko yane 'maybe it is so, perhaps';
kaa takxano tane 'maybe she loves him';
yamaato alle tane 'he has to come';
yamaato alle mitine (or *yamaato kaalle mitine*) 'he had not to come'.

With *kinni* 'to be' and *leya* 'to have', the subjunctive indicates a future action. In some dialects the use of *leya* entails a certain degree of uncertainty:

beera yamaatoona kinon (or *beera yamaatoona kinni*) 'they will come tomorrow';
beera gaxo liyo 'tomorrow I will be back' (or 'I may be back tomorrow').

The subjunctive is always stressed on the penultimate syllable, and should not be confused with the jussive, which is stressed on the final syllable and is used mainly for wishes and commands, e.g. *Yalli ku xato!* 'May God help you!' (from *xate* 'to help, to save'). In some dialects the final vowel of the jussive but not of the subjunctive is long, especially in questions; e.g., *beera yamaatoo!* 'he should come tomorrow', *orobnoo?* 'may we come in?'.

Negative wishes and commands are expressed either by means of the construction with *alle* and the 3sf. of *ine*, or by means of the infinitive in *-e* (see below for this infinitive) followed by the jussive of *waye*:

beera namaato nolle mitane 'tomorrow we must not come';
beera amiite wayno 'tomorrow we should not come'.

Relative clauses use the same affirmative tenses as main clauses, while negative relative clauses use a special negative tense in *-innexe* both with past and present time reference:

Ku yaarhige xiyawti, yi nangalo kinni ‘the man who knows you is my cousin’;
Atu taarhige xiyawti, yi nangalo kinni ‘the man whom you know is my cousin’;
Ku yeerhege xiyawti, yi nangalo kinni ‘the man who knew you is my cousin’;
Ku aarhiginnexe xiyawti, yi nangalo kinni ‘the man who doesn’t/didn’t know you is my cousin’;
Atu aarhiginnixito xiyawti, yi nangalo kinni ‘the man whom you don’t/didn’t know is my cousin’.

It has already be seen above that there are both simple tenses like *faaka* ‘I open’, *faake* ‘I opened’, *kixiniyo* ‘I love’, etc., and compound tenses like *kixiniyuk (kixinii) ine* ‘I loved’, *aktubiyuk ane* ‘I am writing’, *yamaatoona kinon* ‘they will come’, *amiite wayno* ‘we should not come’, etc. The latter are formed by an auxiliary like *ine* ‘to be (present)’, *kinni* ‘to be’, *waye* ‘to lack, to miss’, and others preceded by different verbal forms, e.g., the subjunctive, the invariable or the inflected participle, or the infinitive in *-e* that is an invariable form. In class I verbs this infinitive in *-e* is derived from the imperfect stem like the participles. Another form used in several compound tenses is the perfect with the suffix *-h* (cf. 13.3). For instance:

careeko temeeteh tine barha yuble ‘he saw the girl who had come from home’;
kaafa fanah soqholle inkim nubleh minane ‘we didn’t see anything in the market until today’.

Several other tenses used in subordinate clause, are formed by adding suffixes to the perfect, the imperfect, the present of class III verbs. For instance:

toocobemko folo koh bettimto kinni ‘if you drink, the food will be easy to eat for you’;
rabe ti rabek sarrah migaxa ‘who died will not come back after he died’;
teyalle xabtando, isheh abe dhadhdhe ‘if you leave it to her, she would do it by herself’;
gaxtak sarrah, kaa tablo kito ‘after you come back, you will see him’;
sagah xaraa akah dhayehanii, lakah xukuukutta ‘in spite of the fact that the foreleg is nearer for the cow, it scratches itself with its hindleg’;

Most main clauses with an inflected verbal form can be changed into headless relative clauses or into complement clauses by adding a final *-m* to their verb. For instance:

anu mecem abo farha ‘I want to do good things’;
amiitem kee amiite wayam tablo kinni ‘you will see whether I come or not’;
ishi beera tamaato malem yoh warishshe ‘she told me that she will not come tomorrow’.

5. Nouns

5.1 Number

On the basis of verbal and pronominal agreement, two grammatical numbers may be distinguished in Saho: singular and plural. For instance *ceela* ‘well’ pl. *ceelit* or *celwa*; *cokka* ‘ear’ pl. *cokkak*; *anrab* ‘tongue’ pl. *anrub*. It should be noted, however, that for many nouns the basic form has a plural or collective meaning, while the singular is expressed by singulative (sgtv.) forms with the endings *-to*, *-ta* or *-tto*, *-tta* (which become *-yto*, *-yta* in some dialects as seen above). For instance, *labha* ‘man’ or ‘men’, but sgtv. *labhatto (labhayto)* ‘man’; *gaala* ‘camel’ or ‘camels’, sgtv. *gaalatto (gaalayto)* ‘camel’, pl. *gaalit* ‘camels’. In several cases the *t* of the singulative suffix is assimilated to the final stem consonant, e.g.:

habubba from *habub* ‘big male baboon(s)’
marhxadhdho and *marhxadhdhō* from *marhxarha* ‘species of fig tree(s) (*Ficus ingens*)’
balasso and *balassō* from *balasa* ‘prickly pear(s), Indian fig(s) (*Opuntia ficus-indica*)’
muuzzo and *muuzzō* from *muuz* ‘banana(s)’
muxutstso from *muxuts* ‘piece(s) of wood for the roof of the *naxsa*’
maxbuushsha/maxbuushsho and *maxbuushshä/maxbuushshō* from *maxbuush* ‘prisoner(s)’

The citation form for nouns is the basic one (singular or collective).

5.2 Gender

There are two genders: masculine (m.) and feminine (f.). Some nouns distinguish the masculine from the feminine by means of pitch accent: on the penultimate syllable for the masculine and on the final syllable for the feminine. It has already been said in section 2. above that in these cases the feminine forms with the final accent are indicated by the dieresis (¨) over the final vowel, like *barhä* 'daughter' vs. *barha* 'son'.

It is important to point out that the plurals with *-a* are feminine in gender, with only few exceptions such as *abuusuma* sm. 'nephew, grandson', *abuusumā* sf. 'niece, granddaughter', but *abuusa* pl. m. 'nephews, nieces, grandchildren'. This means that for many words the gender of the plural form is the opposite of the singular. For instance; *dik* sm., *diika* pl. f. 'village, place of birth, country, nation, family'; *cokka* sf., *cokkak* pl. m. 'ear'; *cingiro* sf., *cingir* pl. m. 'bark (of plants)'.

The change in gender can also occur when a singulative is derived from a noun whose basic form has a plural or collective meaning. For instance, *kimbiro* f. 'bird/birds', but sgtv. *kimbirta* m. 'bird', *kimbirtä* f. 'bird'; *lubak* m. 'lion/lions', sgtv. *lubakto* f. 'lioness'.

5.3 Case

There are three distinct cases in Saho: the absolutive, the nominative, and the genitive.

The absolutive is the unmarked case, used for the direct object of a verb, as citation form, and when a noun is used as a predicate followed by the copula *kinni* 'to be', or by a verb like *ekke* 'to be, to become, to happen', etc.; e.g., *xiyawto uble* 'I saw a man', *yemeete tii xiyawto kinni* 'the one who came is a man'. Different postpositions may also be added to the absolutive (see below point 13.).

The nominative is used for the subject of the clause. It has a particular form in *-i* for masculine nouns ending with *-a*, *-e*, and *-o*: e.g., *xiyawti yi yuble* 'the man saw me' (from *xiyawto* 'man'). A few masculine nouns in *-a* have no separate nominative form like *abba* 'father'.

The genitive is used for the possessor in a possessor-possessed phrase such as 'Roble's house' *Roblet care* and, more generally, when a noun is governed by another noun. It is marked by means of different suffixes such as *-i*, *-t*, *-ti*, *-h*, or *-hi*. For instance, *kari xangal* 'the head of the dog' (from *kare* 'dog'); *Saahot luqha* 'language of the Saho' (from *Saaho*); *cindhamti dagar* 'the hair of the boys' (from *cindham* 'boys', lit. 'the small ones'); *kwabbah* (= *ku abbah*) *cumri ayidhdha?* 'what is your father's age?'; *Makka kee Madiinahi fan gufne* 'we reached the midpoint between Mecca and Medina' (from *Madiina* 'Medina, one of the holy cities of the Moslems'). There are also some nouns whose genitive is not different from the absolutive, e.g. *basal dhacam* 'the taste of onions' (from *basal* 'onion').

Different allocutive forms are used when addressing people. Some of them are formed by lengthening the final vowel as in *Siciidaa!* (from *Siciida*, a personal name), or by adding *-o* as in *Axmaado!* (from *Axmad*, a personal name), *cindhookawo!* (from *cindhooka* 'boy'). In other cases the demonstrative prefixes *ke-* or *ku-* m. and pl., and *te-* f. are added, as in *kecindaamo amaanta!* 'boys, come (here)!', *tenuma amo!* 'woman, come (here)!'.

6. Personal pronouns

Different forms of personal pronouns are used when they are the subject of the clause or constituents with other functions, e.g., the object, complements of postpositions, foci of contrast, i.e., one of two contrasted elements, etc. When the pronouns don't have subject functions, they may have short or long forms, the latter of which have been called emphatic or disjunctive forms by some scholars.

		personal pronouns (subject form)		personal pronouns (short non-subject form)	personal pronouns (long non-subject form)
1s.	I	<i>anu</i>	me	<i>yi</i>	<i>yoo/yowa/yoyya/yetta</i>
2s.	you	<i>atu</i>	you	<i>ku</i>	<i>kowa/koyya/kotta</i>
3sm.	he	<i>usuk</i>	him	<i>kaa</i>	<i>kaa/kayya</i>
3sf.	she	<i>ishi/ishe</i>	her	<i>tee</i>	<i>teya/teyya</i>
1p.	we	<i>nanu</i>	us	<i>ni</i>	<i>nowa/noyya/notta</i>

2p.	you	<i>atin</i>	you	<i>sin</i>	<i>sina</i>
3p.	they	<i>usun</i>	them	<i>ten</i>	<i>tena</i>

For instance: *anu Naasir kiyo* 'I am Naasir'; *yi yuble* 'he saw me'; *yoo kee yabba* 'me and my father', *yoyya kinni!* 'it's me!'.

6.1 Reflexive pronouns

When a pronoun used as the object or as another complement in the clause refers to the same person as the subject, it occurs in the reflexive form, e.g., *ninneh abna* 'we do it by ourselves'.

It should be noticed that the 2nd and 3rd person forms are identical, like the corresponding reflexive possessives (cf. 7.1).

reflexive personal pronouns		
1s.	myself	<i>inne</i>
2s./3s.	yourself/ himself/ herself	<i>ishe</i>
1p.	ourselves	<i>ninne</i>
2p./3p.	yourselves/ themselves	<i>sinne</i>

The repetition of these pronouns gives them a distributive value as in *ninne ninneh nengeece* 'we fought each other' (= each of us fought against the other).

6.2 Reciprocal pronouns

The reciprocal pronoun *sitta/sittiya* or *titta/tittiya* 'each other' is used when a pronominal complement refers to two or more subjects. For instance, *Cusbaan kee Axmad mangum sittiya kixinii yinin* 'Osman and Ahmed liked each other very much'.

7. Possessives

The short non-subject pronoun forms are also used as possessives and precede the noun they depend on, e.g. *ku migac* 'your name'.

possessives		
1s.	my	<i>yi</i>
2s.	your	<i>ku</i>
3sm.	his	<i>kaa</i>
3sf.	her	<i>tee</i>
1p.	our	<i>ni</i>
2p.	your	<i>sin</i>
3p.	their	<i>ten</i>

Followed by the nominalizing suffix *-m*, or by the indefinites *-tiya* m., *-tiyā* f., and *-mara* pl., they are used like free noun phrases, i.e., like possessive pronouns of other languages:

possessive pronouns					
		with <i>-tiya</i> (sm.)	with <i>-tiyā</i> (sf.)	with <i>-mara</i> (pl.) (for people)	with <i>-m</i> (pl.) (for things/animals)
1s.	mine	<i>yitiya</i>	<i>yitiyā</i>	<i>yimara</i>	<i>yim</i>
2s.	yours	<i>kutiya</i>	<i>kutiya</i>	<i>kumara</i>	<i>kum</i>
3sm.	his	<i>kaatiya</i>	<i>kaatiyā</i>	<i>kaamara</i>	<i>kaayim</i>
3sf.	hers	<i>teetiya</i>	<i>teetiya</i>	<i>teemara</i>	<i>teeyim</i>
1p.	ours	<i>nitiya</i>	<i>nitiya</i>	<i>nimara</i>	<i>nim</i>
2p.	yours	<i>sintiya</i>	<i>sintiya</i>	<i>sinmara</i>	<i>sinim</i>
3p.	theirs	<i>tentiya</i>	<i>tentiya</i>	<i>tenmara</i>	<i>tenim</i>

For instance, *ta laa kum kinni* 'this cattle is yours', *kuti yiggidile* 'yours is broken' (*kuti* is the nominative of *kutiya*).

7.1 Reflexive possessives

The reflexive possessives are used when they refer to the subject of the clause. They are used as free noun phrases with the nominalizing suffix *-m* or the indefinites *-tiya* m., *-tiyā* f., and *-mara* pl.

reflexive possessives		
1s.	my own	<i>inni</i>
2s./ 3s.	your own/ his own/ her own	<i>ishi</i>
1p.	our own	<i>ninni</i>
2p./ 3p.	your own/ their own	<i>sinni</i>

For instance, *inni abba Saaganeyti adaw essere* 'I asked my father to go to Segeneyti'; *kum maarhige, innim aarhige* 'I don't know yours, but I know my own'.

A distributive value is given by repeating a reflexive possessive, as in *umbuki sinni sinni zanta warishen* 'they all told each other's story'.

8. Demonstratives

Three deictic demonstratives are used in Saho with no gender or number distinctions: *ta* 'this', to indicate something near the speaker; *to* 'that', to indicate something near the addressee, and *too* 'that', to indicate something far from both the speaker and the hearer. On the other hand, the form *amaa* 'this/that', its variant *tamaa*, and *ay*, indicate something of which the speaker and the addressee are already aware, and are therefore anaphoric demonstratives. For instance, *ta laa* 'this cattle'; *dagum ni careeko mirixtih kooma tane, amaa kooma naba xorh kee cashsho leya* 'not far away from our home there is a hill, that hill has big trees and grass'; *tamaa ni dik hi xiyaw* 'those people of my family'.

These demonstratives must always appear in attributive position, i.e. preceding the noun they refer to, but they can become independent pronouns with the addition of the nominalizing suffix *-m* or the indefinites *-tiya* m., *-tiyā* f. and *-mara* pl.

They are as follows:

attributive	independent + <i>-m</i>	independent with <i>-tiya</i> , etc.		
		masculine	femminine	plural
<i>ta</i>	<i>tayim</i>	<i>tatiya</i>	<i>tatiyā</i>	<i>tamara</i>
<i>to</i>	<i>toyim</i>	<i>totiya</i>	<i>totiyā</i>	<i>tomara</i>
<i>too</i>	<i>tooyim</i>	<i>tootiya</i>	<i>tootiyā</i>	<i>toomara</i>
<i>amaa/ tamaa</i>	<i>amaayim</i>	<i>amaatiya</i>	<i>amaatiyā</i>	<i>amaamara</i>

Under contrastive focus *too* may be replaced by *woo* or *oo*, as in *too xiyawti aasulik, woo xiyawti weeca* 'while that man laughs, the other man cries'.

9. Interrogatives

The main interrogative words are listed below.

Miya and *iyya* 'who?', predominantly for living beings. It has the singulative forms *miyatto* m., *miyattō* f. (*iyayto* m., *iyaytō* f.). For instance, *miya kinni ku zoobit?* 'who are your friends?', *iyi yemeete?* 'who came?'

The genitive forms are *mii* and, respectively, *iyyin*, e.g., *iyyin faras yemeete?* 'whose horse came?' *ta faras iyyintiya?* 'whose is this horse?'. Note the repetition with distributive value in *miyaa miya sinak yaana?* 'how do they call you (pl.)?'

Ay and *aye*, or *aha(a)* and *ahe(e)* 'what?', e.g., *ay taacabo fadhdha?* 'what do you want to drink?', *ahee tam?* 'what are you saying?'. The nominalizing suffix *-m* is often added to *ay*, e.g. *ayim abaa tanito?* 'what are you doing?', *aymi tayim?* or *tayim ayim kinni?* 'what are these things?'.
The postposition *-h* occurs in the forms *ayeh* and *aymih* 'why? how?', e.g., *ayeh temeete?* or *ayimih temeete?* 'why (or how) did you come?'.
Ayidhdha 'how much? how many?', with *idhdha* 'amount, manner, quantity' (cf. point 10.), e.g., *kwabbah* (= *ku abbah*) *cumri ayidhdha?* 'what is your father's age? (lit. 'how much is your father's age?')'. Note the partitive construction in *cindhamko ayidhdha lito?* 'how many children do you have?'.
Ayidhdha with the postposition *-h* is also used for asking the time, e.g., *saaca ayidhdhah tane?* 'what time is it?'.
Aa and *awlih* 'which? what?' are used only in attributive position, e.g., *aa baarho?* 'which country?'; *sari dokaakin aawaqhte* (*aa waqhte*) *fakkita?* 'at what time do (clothes) shops open?'; *aa cale yam?* 'what is he saying?'; *awlihtiya tube?* 'which one did you see?'. The forms *aaginah* 'in what manner? how?' and *aagedda* 'at what time? when?' are also derived from *aa*.
Awla or *alle* 'where?', e.g. *awla tooboke?* 'where were you born?', *alle taniini?* 'where are you?'. Also with postpositions: *awlaako amiitii taniini?* 'Where are you coming from?'.
Anda and *manda* 'when?', e.g., *manda temeete?* 'when did you arrive?'.
It should be noticed that the above interrogative words do not occur in yes/no-questions, which are marked by different particles, by a special interrogative pitch, or by adding a vowel to the last word in the sentence. For instance:
xan toocobeho? or *xan toocobee?* 'did you drink milk?'
xan toocobiiniho? or *xan toocobiini?* 'did you drink milk?'
xanaa toocobem? or *xan kinniho toocobem?* 'was it milk that you drank?'
Maxammadaa koh deecimeti? 'did Mohammed call you?', or 'was it Mohammed who called you?'
(Notice that in the above examples *toocobem* and *koh deecimeti* are relative clauses: 'what you drank', and 'who called you', where *-ti* is the nominative of *tiya*).
10. Indefinites
Among the indefinites, those that occur only in attributive position must be distinguished from those that also occur as independent indefinite pronouns.
Aki 'other' only occurs in attributive position, e.g., *aki barha* 'another son'. With the singulative or the nominalizing suffix *-m* it can be used independently, e.g., *akettö mabliyo* 'I did not see any other (girl)', *anu lamma kitaab liyo*, *akim laakin eebexe* 'I have two books, but I sold the other ones'.
Umman 'all, every', e.g., *umman Xamus* 'every Thursday'. It becomes an independent pronoun with *-tiya*, etc., e.g., *ummantiya* 'everybody'.
Inki, the attributive form of *inik* 'one', can also have an indefinite meaning, e.g., *inki lallec* 'a certain day'. It becomes an independent pronoun with the singulative suffix, the nominalizing suffix *-m* or with *tiya*, etc., e.g., *inkim* '(one thing) the same'; *cindhii dhalen dhala kee dhamxinii yedeyin arax inketta kinni* (proverb) 'children born when one is young and a way travelled on when it is cold, are the same thing (lit. 'one')'. *Walaa inkim* 'nothing' (cf. Arabic *walaa xaaja* 'nothing').
Wili, *wuli* or *uli* 'some, one, a, an', e.g., *wuli max* 'one day'. It becomes an independent pronoun with the nominalizing suffix *-m* or with *tiya*, etc., e.g., *wulim farhih ine* 'I wanted something'. The variant forms *wiliili*, *wuliili* or *uliili* are also used, e.g., *wuliili caralle* 'in some place' (from *cara* 'place').
Tiya m., *tiyā* f., *mara* pl. 'one that, some that' (the nominative of the masculine is written *-ti* or *tii*, of the feminine often *-tya*). It renders independent several words or phrases that otherwise occur only in attributive position, e.g.,

tatiya 'this one', *yemeete mara* 'those who came'. The genitive *marin* is used in phrases like *marin laa yurxude* 'he slaughtered other people's cattle'.

The reduplicated form *tittiya* 'one-by-one', frequently occurs adverbially with the postposition *-h*: *tittiyah akah uxuu!* 'give (it) to them one by one', *tittiyah tagdalo icikkin* 'try to break (them) one-by-one'.

Hebela and *hekela* 'someone, so-and-so', e.g., *hebeli dik kinon* 'they are of the family of so-and-so'.

Gar 'some, part', e.g., *gari yemeetin* 'some (of them) came'.

Umbuka or *ambuka* 'all', e.g., *kaa sacul ambuki alle yoosolin* 'all his brothers laughed at him', *ambuka ni dik hi xiyaw* 'all the people of our village', *umbuki sinni sinni zanta warishen* 'they all told each other's story'.

Inkoh or *unkoh* 'all', e.g., *kaa uray inkoh mecem kinni* 'all his work is good'.

Idhdha 'manner, quantity, amount', often used as a suffix, e.g., *wuliidhdha* 'some amount, a little bit'; *ayidhdha* 'how much?'. Cf. also the postpositional expression *idhdhah* 'instead of, substitute of'.

Finally, *-kke* 'place' is used only as a suffix, e.g., *amakkeeko umman Xamus barri ni dik oobaa iniyo* 'from there I used to go to our village in the countryside every Thursday'; *ummanikkelle* 'everywhere' with the postposition *-lle*; *akkinnanikkelle* 'everywhere' with the indefinite relative form of *ekke* 'to be, to become, to happen'.

The invariable indefinite relative verbal forms in *-innan*, should be also remembered here. They often express shades of meaning that are rendered in other languages by means of indefinites. For instance, *usun abinnan uray mece* 'any work they do is good' (from *abe* 'to make, to do'); *ishe akkinnan waqhte yoolih wagroyshitto fadhdha* 'she wants to chat with me at whatever time' (from *ekke* 'to be, to become, to happen'); *farhinnan xiyawto* 'whatever person' (from *farhe* 'to want, to need'), and the above seen *akkinnanikke* 'any place, whatever place'.

These forms also occur with the nominalizing suffix *-m*, e.g., *atu aabixinnannim rikhisam kinni* 'everything you sell is cheap' (from *eebexe* 'to sell'); *geyinnannim* 'everything, anything' (from *geye* 'to bring, etc.').

11. Numbers

Numbers are of two kinds: cardinals like *inik* 'one', *lamma* 'two', etc., and ordinals like *afiti* 'first', *malamma* 'second', etc. From 1 to 10 the counted noun occurs in the singular, e.g., *lamma kitaab* 'two books'. With higher numerals the counted noun occurs in different constructions, for instance, *lamaatanna kitaabiya*, *kitobti lamaatanna*, *kitobko lamaatanna*, or *lamaatanna kitobko* 'twenty books'; *gaali lamaatanna*, *lamaatanna gaaliya*, *gaalitti lamaatanna*, *gaalitko lamaatanna*, or *lamaatanna gaalitko* 'twenty camels'. The constructions with *-ko* 'from' added to plural nouns are partitive constructions, the other ones are genitive constructions with singular (*kitaabiya*, *gaali*, *gaaliya*) and plural (*kitobti*, *gaalitti*) counted nouns.

11.1 Cardinal Numbers

With the exception of *lamma* 'two', the cardinal numbers from 1 to 10 distinguish a bound form that is used to modify a head noun, and a free form that can be used as self-standing noun phrase. Bound forms can be changed into free forms by adding *-m*, etc.

	bound form	free form				
1	<i>inki</i>	<i>inik</i>	12	<i>lamman kee taman</i>	30	<i>sazzam</i> or <i>soddom</i>
2		<i>lamma</i>	13	<i>adooxan kee taman</i>	40	<i>marootom</i>
3	<i>adooxa</i>	<i>adox</i>	14	<i>affaran kee taman</i>	50	<i>kontom</i>
4	<i>affara</i>	<i>afar</i>	15	<i>koonan kee taman</i>	60	<i>laxtam</i>
5	<i>koona</i>	<i>koon</i>	16	<i>lixan kee taman</i>	70	<i>malxintomon</i>
6	<i>lixa</i>	<i>lix</i>	17	<i>malxinan kee taman</i>	80	<i>boxortomon</i>
7	<i>malxina</i>	<i>malxin</i>	18	<i>baxxaran kee taman</i>	90	<i>sagala taman</i> or <i>bool sagla</i>
8	<i>baxxara</i>	<i>baxar</i>	19	<i>saggalan kee taman</i>	100	<i>bool</i>
9	<i>saggala</i>	<i>sagal</i>	20	<i>lamaatanna</i>	123	<i>bool kee lamaatanna kee adox</i>
10	<i>tamana</i>	<i>taman</i>	21	<i>lamaatannaa kee inik</i>	200	<i>lamma bool</i>
11	<i>inikan kee taman</i>		22	<i>lamaatannaa kee lamma</i>	1000	<i>shiix</i>

11.2 Ordinal Numbers

1st	<i>aftitiya</i> or <i>erherhtiya</i> or <i>erhedhdho</i>	12th	<i>lamman kee taman ya</i>	30th	<i>sazzam ya</i> or <i>soddom ya</i>
2nd	<i>malamma</i>	13th	<i>adooxan kee taman ya</i>	40th	<i>marootom ya</i>
3rd	<i>maddaxa</i>	14th	<i>affaran kee taman ya</i>	50th	<i>kontom ya</i>
4th	<i>mafarra</i>	15th	<i>koonan kee taman ya</i>	60th	<i>laxtam ya</i>
5th	<i>makawwanna</i>	16th	<i>lixan kee taman ya</i>	70th	<i>malxintomon ya</i>
6th	<i>lix ya</i>	17th	<i>malxinan kee taman ya</i>	80th	<i>boxortomon ya</i>
7th	<i>malxin ya</i> or <i>malaxxana</i>	18th	<i>baxxaran kee taman ya</i>	90th	<i>sagala taman ya</i> or <i>bool sagla</i>
8th	<i>baxar ya</i> or <i>mabaxxara</i>	19th	<i>saggalan kee taman ya</i>	100th	<i>bool ya</i>
9th	<i>sagal ya</i> or <i>masaggala</i>	20th	<i>lamaatanna ya</i>	123rd	<i>bool kee lamaatanna kee adox ya</i>
10th	<i>taman ya</i> or <i>matamma</i>	21st	<i>lamaatannaa kee inik ya</i>	200th	<i>lamma bool ya</i>
11th	<i>inikan kee taman ya</i>	22nd	<i>lamaatannaa kee lamma ya</i>	1000th	<i>shiix ya</i>

The above ordinals are used as independent words, not attributively. The feminine forms from 1st to 5th are distinguished through pitch accent, e.g., *aftitiya* m. vs. *aftitiyā* f., *erhedhdho* m. vs. *erhedhdhō* f., *mafarra* m. vs. *mafarrā* f. This pattern is also found with the internally derived ordinals from 7th to 10th, e.g., *matamma* m. vs. *matammanā* f. Otherwise the ordinals from 6th upwards are formed by adding *ya* m. and *ta* f. to the respective cardinal numbers, e.g. *taman ya* m. vs. *taman ta* f. When they are governed by another noun, instead, one finds forms like *afti care* or *erherh care* 'the first house', and genitive phrases like *malammit fasle* 'the second class', etc.

12. Postpositions

There are six clitic postpositions. They occur at the end of the group or phrase they govern. When they refer to an element that has already been mentioned, they frequently occur in a special free form with an understood third person pronoun, e.g., *anu iloh kaak ootoke* 'I hit him with a stick' or *anu iloh ak ootoke*, with the free postposition *ak* 'to' instead of *kaa+k* 'him+to'. The short forms of the personal pronouns when they are joined to postpositions are also listed below. In some varieties of Saho shorter forms like *-d*, *yol*, *nol*, etc., are preferred to the longer forms *-dde*, *yolle*, *nolle*, etc.

free form	meaning	bound form	with personal pronouns	
<i>adde/edde/ed</i>	on, in, among (locative)	<i>-dde/-d</i>	<i>yedde</i> or <i>yodde</i> <i>kodde</i> <i>kaadde</i> <i>teedde</i>	<i>nedde</i> or <i>nodde</i> <i>sinidde</i> or <i>shinidde</i> <i>tenadde</i>
<i>akah</i>	with, by, to (instrument, goal, adverbial)	<i>-h</i>	<i>yoh</i> <i>koh</i> <i>kaah</i> <i>teeh</i>	<i>noh</i> <i>sinah</i> or <i>sinih</i> <i>tenah</i>
<i>ak</i>	to, from (goal, source)	<i>-k</i>	<i>yok</i> <i>kok</i> <i>kaak</i> <i>teek</i>	<i>nok</i> <i>sinak</i> <i>tenak</i>
<i>akko</i>	from (source)	<i>-ko</i>	<i>yooko</i> <i>kooko</i> <i>kaako</i> <i>teeko</i>	<i>nooko</i> <i>sinko</i> or <i>sinaako</i> <i>tenko</i>
<i>alle/elle/el</i>	to (goal)	<i>-lle/-l</i>	<i>yelle</i> or <i>yolle</i> <i>kolle</i> <i>kaalle</i> <i>teelle</i>	<i>nelle</i> or <i>nolle</i> <i>sinalle</i> <i>tenalle</i>

<i>aalih</i>	with (comitative)	<i>-lih</i>	<i>yeelih</i> or <i>yoolih</i> <i>koolih</i> <i>kaalih</i> <i>teelih</i>	<i>neelih</i> or <i>noolih</i> <i>sinlih</i> or <i>sinaalih</i> <i>tenlih</i>
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In addition to the above, a variety of other postpositional words are also used, like *kibah* or *kiyah* 'except, but for', *balih* or *balik* 'like', etc. They are never attached to the preceding nouns, and several of them actually are inflected nouns that require the preceding noun to occur in the genitive case, e.g., *cari afadde* 'before the house', where *cari* is the genitive of *care* 'house' and *afadde* is *afa* 'opening' with the postposition *-dde*. Some of these are also used as subordinating conjunctions (cf. also 13.3), e.g., *yowa kibah aketti miyane* 'there is nobody but me'; *too zaban ta kaafit zaban balik kii miyine* 'that time was not like today's time'; *shigaara baaho inki waqhte ewce kibah, careeko mawcinniyo* 'except going out once for buying cigarettes, I didn't get out from home'.

13. Particles

13.1 Interjections

Among the interjections it is possible to mention *yoo* 'yes', *maale* 'no', *baso!* when offering food to somebody, and several Arabic expressions, like *marxaba!* 'welcome, all right', *alxamdu lillah!* 'praise be to God!' (in order to express joy).

Different words used to chase away animals can also be listed here, like *bas!* (for a cat), *xur!* (for a dog), *kut!* (for chickens), *car!* (for sheep).

13.2 Adverbs

Postpositional expressions, especially with *-h*, and nominal or verbal groups are frequently used for indicating place, time, manner, etc., e.g., *inkidde* 'together' lit. 'in one'; *rummah* 'indeed, truly' lit. 'in truth'; *ummangeddabalih* 'usually' lit. 'like every time'; *amaa waqhte* 'then, at that time' lit. 'that time'; *dagum* 'a little, few' a nominalized form with *-m* of the class III verb *dago* 'to be few, to be little'; *yakko yane* 'maybe' lit. 'it is that it can be' with the subjunctive of *ekke* 'to be, to become, to happen' governed by the imperfect of *ine* 'to be (present), to exist' (cf. 4.5).

There are also several adverbial expressions borrowed from Arabic, like *abadan* 'never', *laazim* 'of course, necessarily', *yaqin* 'certainly, of course'.

Unanalysable adverbs are quite few, like *kumal* 'yesterday', *thiraa* 'always', etc.

13.3 Conjunctions

Kee is used to coordinate two nouns, e.g.:

Cali kee Axmad 'Ali and Ahmed'.

Woole and *hido* are used as disjunctive conjunctions, e.g.:

ta guba tanemik zirab woole rumma erhex 'tell about what is below whether it is wrong or true';
lamma hido lammaako ziyaadah tarjama le kalimaat 'words that have two or more than two interpretations'.

A relationship translatable as 'also, even' or as 'but', is indicated by means of *lel*, after the first element of the second clause, e.g.:

Axmad kee Cali inkidde adii yinin. Waacinah lel wuli bahaayimto yublin. Axmad dat lax kinni akye. Cali lel lax makin akye 'Ahmed and Ali were walking together. They saw an animal in front of them. Ali told the other one that it was a black goat. But Ali told him that it was not a goat'.

The Arabic conjunction *laakin* is also used with the value of 'but'.

Clauses indicating actions that follow upon each other are joined by means of *-h*, that subordinates the preceding verb to the following one, e.g.:

usuk maczo faakeh saye 'he opened the door and entered', lit. 'having opened the door ...';
tamaa naba gombale ni sarralle laa kee alaalih orobaanah arhiggili yinin 'the big boys came back after us with the cows and the goats and milked them' lit. 'coming back after us with the cows and the goats...'

It has already been seen in 4.5 that *-h* is also used for forming compound tenses like *temeetih tine* 'who had come', or *nubleh minane* 'we didn't see'. As subordinating conjunctions, postpositions like *-ko* or *kibah*, nouns indicating time like *gedda* 'when' (lit. 'time') or *max* 'day', etc., or complex expressions like *-k sarralle* 'after' are used. They occur after the verb at the end of the subordinate clause. There also are a few conjunctions that are never used as postpositions with nouns, e.g., *-hanii* 'in spite of, although', or *-do* 'if, in-contrary-to-fact conditions':

toocobemko, ta folo koh bettimto kinni 'if you drink, this food will be easily eaten by you';
anu waanisha gedda, atu sik-erhex 'while I am speaking, shut up!';
anu emeete max, usuk yedee 'I came the day that he went away';
rabe tii rabek sarralle migaxa 'who died will not come back after he died';
atu taarhigehanii, yok mitarhxe? 'why don't you tell me in spite of the fact that you know?';
taacubeedo, beete dhadhdhe 'if you had drunk you would have eaten it'.

14. Word formation

14.1 Nouns

Abstract nouns indicating the action or state expressed by a verb can be derived in several ways. For class I verbs a frequently used formative is prefixal *m-* with the perfect stem or other stems and different kinds of suffixes. Several class I verbs also have derived nouns formed by means of internal vowel change with *a* in one or more syllables.

merdo 'running, run' from *erde* 'to run',
modobba 'giving back' from *edebbe* 'to give back'
mudduum 'going, walking' from *edee* 'to go, to walk'

aakam 'arriving first, arriving before, preceding, doing before' from *ookome* 'to arrive first, to precede'
arda 'race, running' from *erde* 'to run' (beside *merdo*)

andodobba 'turning upside-down, overturning' from *endedebbe* 'to turn upside-down', etc.

For verbs of class II the most frequent suffix is *-nan*, but the suffixes *-o*, *-um*, *-ina*, *-itto*, *-enta*, *-aan* are also used.

abnan 'the doing, making, act, action, reaction' from *abe* 'to make, to do' (beside *abina* and *abitto*)
alifnan 'closing' from *alife* 'to close, to cover' (beside *alfum* and *alfenta*)
xatnan 'help, support, salvation' from *xate* 'to help, to save' (beside *xato*)
xato 'help, support, salvation' from *xate* 'to help, to save' (beside *xatnan*)
alfum 'closing' from *alife* 'to close, to cover' (beside *alifnan*)
abina 'the doing, making, act, action, reaction' from *abe* 'to make, to do' (beside *abnan* and *abitto*)
abitto 'the doing, making, act, action, reaction' from *abe* 'to make, to do' (beside *abnan* and *abina*)
alfenta 'closing' from *alife* 'to close, to cover' (beside *alifnan*)

Class III verbs like *kafina* 'to be dry, to be solid', *data* 'to be black', *mece* 'to be good', etc., have *kafna* 'dryness, drought', *dite* 'blackness', *macaani* 'goodness', etc.

Agent and instrument nouns, i.e., nouns that indicate who or what performs a certain action, are derived from class II verbs by means of *-eena* m., *-eenä* f.

fateena 'mattock, hoe' from *fate* 'to dig'
xateena m. and *xateenä* f. 'helper' from *xate* 'to help, to save'

It has already been mentioned above (cf. 4.5, 7.-10.) that words which cannot occur independently like possessives, demonstratives, bound indefinites, and even entire clauses can be changed into independent noun phrases by means of the nominalizing suffix *-m*. Some of the examples are repeated here below:

tayim 'this one' from *ta* 'this'
kum 'yours, your one' from *ku* 'your'
wulim 'something' from *wuli* 'some, one'
kafinam 'dry things, what is dry' from *kafina* 'dry, which is dry'
amiite waytem mango 'those who didn't come are many' from *amiite wayte* 'that didn't come'
usuk cindham hinnim rabe 'he died without children' from *cindham hin* 'who has not children'
ishi tamiitem mece 'it's better that she comes' from *ishi tamiite* 'she comes'

14.2 Verbs

Verbs are derived from other verbs and from nouns in many different ways, and only the most frequent ones will be listed here.

Causatives make intransitive verbs transitive, derive verbs from nouns, etc. Class I verbs form causatives by means of the stem extensions *-s-*, *-sh-* or *-y-* in front of the stem; in some instances one even finds the double prefix *-ysh-*, or *-ts-* through assimilation of *-s-* to a following ejective. Class I causatives sometimes have stem vowels and double consonants that differ from their basic verbs. Class II verbs have causatives with *-ish-* or *-shish-* after the stem. For instance:

Class I verbs

isgidife 'cause to kill' from *igdife* 'to kill'
osxowwe and *osxoye* 'cause to give' from *oxowe* or *oxoye* 'to give'
ushshucube 'cause to drink' from *oocobe* 'to drink'
oyloole 'cause to graze, cause to pasture' from *oloole* 'to graze, to pasture'
iyshidhdhige 'to inform, to tell, to proclaim' from *eerhege* 'to know'
itsqhitsice 'to cause to punish' from *iqhtsice* 'to punish'

Class II verbs

dhamishe 'to melt, to dissolve' from *dhame* 'to be melted, to be dissolved'
bahshiishe 'cause to bring, cause to bring forth' from *baahe* 'to bring, to bring forth'
agaagishe 'to level, to balance; to put in order' from *agaaga* nm. 'level, equivalent, equal (in measurement)'

Middle verbs may have several meanings that range from autobenefactive, i.e., doing something for one's own benefit, to plain reflexive and even intransitive. The middle form of class I verbs is characterized by doubling of the first consonant of the stem or by *-tt-*. For class II verbs it is characterized by the stem extension *-it-* or *-t-*. For instance:

Class I verbs

iggidile 'to be broken, to break (intr.)' from *igdile* 'to break (tr.)'
ottoxowe or *ottoxoye* 'to give for one's benefit, to choose to give' from *oxowe* or *oxoye* 'to give'

Class II verbs

filite 'to comb (one's hair)', 'to dress (one's hair)' from *file* 'to comb'
ugute 'to get up, to stand up, to wake up' vs the causative *uguse* 'to wake smb up, to cause to get up' (here there is no basic verb but just the corresponding causative)

Passives are formed by prefixing *-m-* to the stem of class I verbs, but by suffixing it to class II verbs. Before velar consonants like *k* or *g*, dental *d* and retroflex *dh* this *m* is often changed into *n*. For instance:

Class I verbs

emseene 'to agree (intr.), to fit (intr.), to coincide' from *sinit nf* 'agreement'
omobbe 'to be heard' from *oobbe* 'to hear, to listen'
umcure 'to be hidden' from *oocore* 'to hide'
emdeewe and *endeewe* 'to be medicated, to be treated medically' from *diwa* 'medicine'
engele 'to unite, to come together' from *agle* 'mixture (of things, people or animals), union'

Class II verbs

cawatime 'to be praised' from *cawate* 'to praise'

betiime 'to be eaten' from *beete* 'to eat'

In a number of cases, a verb characterised by the stem extension *-m-* has an active rather than the predicted passive meaning:

dhaacime 'to beg, to appeal' from *dhaace* 'to beg'
farriime 'to send' from *fare* 'to send'

Inchoatives, i.e., verbs indicating 'getting a certain quality', 'becoming...' are derived from nouns and from verbs of the III class. They are characterized by the stem extension *-ow-* and inflected as class II verbs.

cillowe *vII* 'to become rusty' from *cillo nf* 'rust'
dattowe *vII* 'to become black' from *data* *vIII* 'to be black'

It should be pointed out, however, that several class III verbs form their inchoatives not by means of the stem extension *-ow-*, but in different ways, e.g., by changing their conjugational class, or even by means of the passive stem extension *-m-*.

emce *vI* 'to become good, to improve' from *mece* *vIII* 'to be good, to be fine, to be nice'
ikxine *vI* 'to fall in love, to like, to desire' from *kixina* *vIII* 'to love, to like'

kafe *vII* 'to become dry' from *kafina* *vIII* 'to be dry, to be solid'

endhewwe *vI* 'to approach, to go near, to get closer' from *dhaye* *vIII* 'to be near'

Intensives are formed by reduplicating one of the stem consonants, e.g. *endedeдебbe* 'to roll, to tumble' from *endedebbe* 'to turn upside-down, to overturn', *lalace* 'to bask (before the fire)' from *lace* 'to become hot, to feel hot'.

Multiple derivations are not infrequent, as in *cawwatoysHITE* 'to cause to praise for one's own benefit', a middle form derived from the causative *cawwatoyshe* 'to cause to praise' from *cawate* 'to praise'. A causative-intensive verb is *esgeegelle* 'to mix and stir, to mix thoroughly together' from the causative *esgelle* 'to mix', whose passive is *engele* 'to unite, to come together'.

14.3 Compounds

Several genitive phrases have come to be used as compound nouns, such as:

fanti-bacla 'mediator' lit. 'owner of the middle'
caraamo 'roof' from *cari-amo* 'top of the house'
ayrodhdhuma 'west; sunset' from *ayrot-dhuma* 'sun's setting'
abbassacal 'paternal uncle' from *abbat-sacal* 'father's brother'

Another kind of compound noun is formed by a class III verb modifying a noun as in:

dagolimo 'cheap thing' from *dago* 'little, small' and *limo* 'price'

Compound verbal nouns may include the object of the verb they derive from, as *naxargaxnan* 'vomiting' from *naxar* 'chest; vomit' and *gaxe* 'to return, to enter'. Compound verbal nouns are also obviously derived from compound verbs, as *carhumne* 'ugliness' from the compound class III verb *carhuma* 'to be ugly' (see below).

A few compound nouns are also formed in other ways, like *nagaadtanin* 'dialogue' from *nagaad*, a shortened form of *nagaadde* 'in peace', and *tanin* 'you are', i.e., 'are you in peace?', 'are you ok?', what people ask each other when they start a dialogue.

Compound verbs are formed by adding to a verb a noun which acts as an object or as a subject argument, as in:

gabalacishe 'to warm one's hands (in front of a fire)' from *gaba* 'hand' and *lacishe* 'to heat'
gabalace 'to do fast, to hurry (in a manual labour)' from *gaba* 'hand' and *lace* 'to become hot, to feel hot'

carhuma 'to be ugly' from *carha* 'appearance' and *uma* 'to be bad'

carha-mece 'to be pretty, to be handsome' from *carha* 'appearance' and *mece* 'to be good'.

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