

## **Part II: Texts**



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## A Text in the Jibbali/Shehret Dialect of al-Ḥallānīya (Kuria Muria) with a Grammatical Commentary

**ABSTRACT** The present text and the additional comments that follow it provide examples of the characteristics which set the dialect of Kuria Muria apart from mainland dialects. The introduction consists of a brief literature review on Kuria Muria studies. Then follows a morpheme-to-morpheme glossed text recorded in 2017 from a prominent tribal leader of the Al Shaḥrī tribe branch native to al-Ḥallānīya. Each relevant item is then commented upon. It is argued that not only does Kuria Muria Jibbali/Shehret possess the much-debated shift of lateral sibilants to interdental fricatives but it also exhibits a few other features which cannot be found in mainland varieties.

**KEYWORDS** Modern South Arabian, Kuria Muria, Hallaniyat islands, Jibbali, Shehret, field research

The study of the Jibbali/Shehret dialect of al-Ḥallānīya, the only inhabited island in the Kuria Muria (KM) archipelago, officially called Ġuzur al-Ḥallānīyāt, is a recent endeavour within Modern South Arabian (MSAL) studies which, in turn, are relatively young in comparison with those concerned with other sub-branches of the Semitic language family.

Only a limited number of reports exist, widely scattered along the short line of MSAL studies. These studies shall be briefly reviewed here: the first report of the language of al-Ḥallānīya dates back to 1840, when the British naval officer J. G. Hulton published a description of the island and a word list containing 103 terms he had elicited personally from the islanders (Hulton 1840). He concluded that the language was essentially a form of ‘Shahree.’ Over a century later, Leslau analysed Hulton’s data in order to ascertain the reliability of Hulton’s assertion with regards to the

identification of the language, and concluded that the language is indeed a form of Jibbali/Shehret (Leslau 1947). T. M. Johnstone's *Jibbali Lexicon* (1981) introduces the epithet 'baby Jibbali,' by which Kuria Muria Jibbali/Shehret is still known by scholars and mainland speakers alike, as 'they pronounce the letters *ś* and *ž* as *t* and *d*, etc' (1981: xii). Johnstone's statements with regards to the above-mentioned sound shift became well known in MSAL study, but the first attempt at verifying it took place only a few decades later, in 2014. In 2002, an extremely valuable description of the flora, fauna and history of the island was published (Gallagher 2002). Regrettably, however, this description barely touches upon linguistic matters. Further analysis of Hulton's data was carried out by Rubin (2014a). In this paper concerned with Hulton's word list, Rubin draws a series of credible etymologies and parallels with other Modern South Arabian languages, and succeeds in making sense of some terms which are rendered obscure by Hulton's amateur transcription and a number of dialectal forms not found in mainland Jibbali/Shehret. The scholar also attempts at ascertaining whether the shift of lateral fricatives to interdental fricatives actually took place in the language spoken on al-Ḥallāniya in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, by searching for clues of it in Hulton's transcription. He concludes that 't was a free variant of ś at this time. It is just as likely, however, that th was another attempt to write the sound ś. So, if Johnstone's statement is true for the dialect as spoken in the 1970s, it was not true—at least not completely—in 1836' (2014a: 483).

One of the main points of the present author's doctoral thesis (Castagna 2018) is that this shift, along with a few other phonetic peculiarities, indeed takes place in Kuria Muria Jibbali/Shehret, as the following text, elicited from a native speaker of the dialect<sup>1</sup> shows. Given the inconsistent nature of Hulton's transcription, it is not surprising that its analysis may yield unreliable results, especially when one is looking for clues of a phonetic characteristic. Thanks to the analysis of recordings made in the 1980s<sup>2</sup> and new recordings made in 2017, it was possible to describe, to a certain extent, the peculiarities of this dwindling dialect of Jibbali/Shehret (Castagna 2018: 105–235). The present sketch aims at summarising some of the contents of the above-mentioned doctoral thesis. The text presented below is glossed morpheme-to-morpheme and translated into English. Each item of interest is then commented upon.

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1 The speaker, who is estimated to be about 70 years old, was born and raised in al-Ḥallāniya and is a retired fisherman. He has been living in Sadaḥ (eastern Dhofar) for about 15 years now.

2 I am sincerely grateful to Professor Janet C. E. Watson and Dr Miranda Morris for giving me the chance to analyse their unique audio materials without which this study would not have been possible.

## Text

- (1) *her* *ḍaḥṣ̣t*<sup>3</sup>                      *ʕad*                      *b-gēdaḥ-ṣ̣t*  
 if      come.PRF.3.F.SG      sardines.COL      and-come.ashore.PRF-3.F.SG  
 ‘if the sardines come and are washed ashore’
- (2) *m-nə-ḥṣ̣l*<sup>4</sup>                      *b-ən-ḵṣ̣taʕ*<sup>5</sup>  
 and-1.PL-take.IND      and-1.PL-dry.IND  
 ‘and we take them, and we dry them’
- (3) *m-ən-ṣ̣om*<sup>6</sup>                      *bə*      *dirhém*  
 and-1.PL-sell.IND      for      money.M  
 ‘and we sell them for money’
- (4) *her*      *ḍaḥṣ̣t*                      *ʕad*  
 if      come.PRF.3.F.SG      sardines.COL  
 ‘if the sardines come’
- (5) *wolla*      *her*      *ḍaḥám*<sup>7</sup>                      *ʕoddə*      *mékən*  
 or      if      come.PRF.3.M.SG      fish.M      much  
 ‘or if a lot of fish comes’
- (6) *ḍaḥám*<sup>8</sup>                      *ʕoddə*      *mékən*  
 come.PRF.3.M.SG      fish.M      much  
 ‘a lot of fish comes’
- (7) *nə-ḥṣ̣l-ṣ̌ḥə*                      *m-ən-ḵṣ̣taʕ-ṣ̌*<sup>9</sup>  
 1.PL-take.IND-3.M.SG      and-1.PL-dry.IND-3.M.SG  
 ‘we take it and we dry it’

3 *ḍaḥṣ̣t* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *zaḥṣ̣t* < \**zaḥamot* ‘come.PRF.3.F.SG,’ Proto-MSAL \*vmv > Jibbali/Shehret *ṣ̣* (a nasalised long vowel), (Rubin 2014b: 30–33). In this case, an inherited voiced alveolar sibilant [z] shifts to its interdental counterpart [ḍ]. A few sparse occurrences of this phenomenon can be found in the analysed KM texts (Castagna 2018: 123–126).

4 *m-nə-ḥṣ̣l* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *b-nə-ḥṣ̣l* ‘and we take.’ The coordinating conjunction *b-* is very often, but not invariably, realised as [m] in the adjacency of [n] (Castagna 2018: 171).

5 *ḵṣ̣taʕ* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *ḵṣʕ* ‘dry’ (Johnstone 1981: 153). This is an example of lateral > interdental shift (Castagna 2018: 120–123).

6 *m-ən-ṣ̣om* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *b-ən-ṣ̣om* ‘and-1.PL-sell.IND’ (see above).

7 *ḍaḥám* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *zaḥám* ‘come.PRF.3.M.SG’ (see above).

8 Idem.

9 See (2).

- (8) *m-ən-ḳɔʔaʃ-š*  
and-1.PL-dry.IND-3.M.SG  
'and we dry it'
- (9) *i-ḳín*                    *xar*  
3.M.SG-be.IND        good.M  
'it is good'
- (10) *nə-ḥɔʔl-š*                    *m-ən-ḳɔʔaʃ-š*  
1.PL-take.IND-3.M.SG    and-1.PL-dry.IND-3.M.SG  
'we take it and we dry it'
- (11) *wolla her her ǵad-ən gedḥ-an*                    *ti*<sup>10</sup>        *ʃan<sup>ə</sup>mbér*  
or        if        if        go.PRF-1.PL    come.ashore.PRF.3.M.SG-1.PL    some    amber.M  
'or if we go and some amber comes ashore to us'
- (12) *gedḥ-an*                    *ʃan<sup>ə</sup>mbér*  
come.ashore.PRF.3.M.SG-1.PL    amber.M  
'amber comes ashore to us'
- (13) *i-sím*                    *i-sím*                    *i-sím-š<sup>ə</sup>*                    *bə*        *dirhém*  
3.M-sell.IND.PASS    3.M-sell.IND.PASS    3.M-sell.IND.PASS-3.M.SG    for    money.M  
'it is sold, it is sold, it is sold for money'
- (14) *ʃan<sup>ə</sup>mbér*  
amber.M  
'amber'
- (15) *ʔt-ʃarəʃ*                    *ʃambər*        *ənta?*<sup>A11</sup>  
2.SG-know.IMPV    amber        PRN.2.M.SG  
'do you know amber?'
- (16) *nə-ʔóm-š<sup>ə</sup>12*                    *bə*        *dirhém*  
1.PL-sell.IND-3.M.SG    for    money.M  
'we sell it for money'

10 *ti* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *sí* 'something,' 'some,' 'there is,' 'thing' (Johnstone 1981: 259; Rubin 2014b: 61–62).

11 Here the speaker addresses the interviewer in Arabic.

12 *nə-ʔóm-š<sup>ə</sup>* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *nə-šóm-šə* 'we sell it.' Cf. *š?m* 'to sell' (Johnstone 1981: 244).

- (17) *b-xer<sup>9</sup> xer iné? xer her betér-ək*  
 and-good.M good.M what good if catch.fish.PRF-2.M.SG  
 ‘and it is good, it is good what? it is good if you catch fish’
- (18) *her betēr-ək a-nkaš bə šodd<sup>9</sup> mékən*  
 if catch.fish.PRF-2.M.SG FUT-come.SUB with fish.M much  
 ‘if you catch fish, you will bring a lot of fish’
- (19) *nə-btór-ēn*  
 1.PL-catch.fish.IND.PL-DLSTEM  
 ‘we catch fish’
- (20) *<sup>A</sup>bašdīn<sup>A</sup> ən-šóm<sup>13</sup> bə dirhém*  
 afterwards 1.PL-sell.IND for money.COL  
 ‘afterwards we sell it for money’
- (21) *ya-ħšl-š bafl šóħor*  
 3.M-take.IND-3.M.SG people.COL Sohar  
 ‘people from Sohar take it’
- (22) *i-nukaš a-š<sup>9</sup>ró*  
 3.M-come.IND DEF-people.from.Sur.COL  
 ‘people from Sur come’
- (23) *i-nukaš bafl siḵ<sup>14</sup>*  
 3.M-come.IND people.COL Mirbat  
 ‘people from Mirbat come’
- (24) *i-nukaš bafl šalólt*  
 3.M-come.IND people.COL Salalah  
 ‘people from Salalah come’
- (25) *kel i-ttóm<sup>15</sup> mən kin-án<sup>16</sup>*  
 all 3.M-buy.IND.T1STEM from from-1.PL  
 ‘everyone buys from us’

13 *ən-šóm* with a lateral instead of the interdental, see (16). The shift of sibilants to interdental is not universal (see below).

14 *Siḵ* is the Jibbali/Shehret name of the town known as *Mirbat* in Arabic.

15 *i-ttóm* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *i-štóm* ‘3.M-buy.IND.T1STEM.’ The fact the shift of *š* > *t* occurs in the adjacency of a homorganic sound [t] is noteworthy from an articulatory viewpoint.

16 *mən kin-án*. This double preposition, whose two components both mean ‘from’ (Johnstone 1981: 132, 172), is previously unattested to the best of my knowledge.

- (26) *ya-ħǝl*      *kərəkəm*      *bə*      *dīrhém*  
 3.M-take.IND    turmeric.COL    for    money.COL  
 ‘they bring turmeric for money’
- (27) *h-ek*      *het*      *hen-i*      *he*      *b-hen*      *idón*<sup>17</sup>      *<sup>A</sup>kul-kum<sup>A</sup>*  
 for-2.M.SG    PRN.2.M.SG    for-1.SG    PRN.1.SG    and-for    DEM.DIST.PL    all-2.M.PL  
 ‘for you, for me, and for those. For you all’
- (28) *her*      *kereré*      *her*      *ǵad-ən*      *a-śná*      *mʃorə*<sup>18</sup>  
 if      tomorrow    if      go.PRF-1.PL    FUT-see.SUB    then  
 ‘if tomorrow we go, you will see then’
- (29) *her*      *ǵad-én*      *t-kəs*      *šodd<sup>ə</sup>*      *mékən*  
 if      go.PRF-1.PL    2.M.SG-find.IND    fish.M      much  
 ‘if we go, you will find a lot of fish’
- (30) *i-ttəm*<sup>19</sup>      *bə*      *dīrhém*  
 3.M-sell.IND.PL    for    money.COL  
 ‘they sell for money’

It is important to remark that the present text does not exemplify all the findings which arose from the analysis of 1980s and 2017 texts. For the sake of thoroughness, a few additional morpheme-glossed strings of text from the KM corpus follow which exhibit the peculiarities of KM Jibbali/Shehret and which were not encountered above, namely: the shift of /b/ > [f], prosodically motivated gemination, and the shift of /x/ > [h] ~ [ħ].

KM recordings provide evidence for a non-systematic shift of /b/ (both etymological and < \*w) to [f] in certain phonological environments (Castagna 2018: 116–118). At present, little can be stated about the patterns according to which this phenomenon occurs. At any rate, it can be surmised that it affects /b/ in C<sub>3</sub> in trilateral roots, and /b/ < \*w in the broken plural pattern with /b/ infixation (al-Aghbari 2012: 230). Here are a few examples:

- her*      *rətɔf-ən*      *t-ɔš*  
 when    arrange.PRF-1.PL    OBJ-3.M.SG  
 ‘when we place it’

17 *idón* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret plural distal demonstrative *izšhun* (Rubin 2014b: 57–59).

18 *mʃorə* for mainland Jibbali/Shehret *mǵore* ‘afterwards,’ ‘later’ (Johnstone 1981: 92). KM Jibbali/Shehret exhibits a non-universal shift of the voiced velar fricative [ɣ] to a voiced pharyngeal fricative [ʕ] (Castagna 2018: 128–129).

19 *i-ttəm*, see (25).

The root in the above example is *rtf* < *rtb* (Johnstone 1981: 216–217):

<i>ərbaʃ-ɔt</i>	<i>kereʃsi</i>	<i>skɔʃ</i>	<i>ar</i>	<i>kereʃsi</i>
four.F	chair.M.PL	sit.PRF.3	on	chair.M.PL
‘four chairs, they sit on chairs’				

The conditions under which gemination, which is neither productive nor morphologically significant in Jibbali/Shehret, may occur in KM are basically the same as in mainland varieties, namely in geminate roots, because of the attachment of the definite article to certain consonants, in the conjugation of guttural-prefixed verbs, and because of the so-called ‘transfer of gemination’ (Dufour 2016: 26, 108, *passim*; Johnstone 1980; Rubin 2014b: 39–40). However, in KM it can occur also in other circumstances (Castagna 2018: 118–120):

<i>ərbaʃ-ɔt</i>	<i>ʃodí</i>	<i>kəlləb</i>	<i>i-tíw</i>
four-F	fish.M.PL	dog.M.PL	3.M-eat.IND.PL
‘four fish, the dogs eat’			

<i>gaḥāt</i>	<i>aḥ-ḥoggólt</i>
come.ashore.PRF.3.F.SG	DEF-ring.F.SG
‘it came to the ring’	

<i>nə-ḥáttal-ohom</i>	<i>ʃanún</i>	<i>ʃak</i>	<i>ked</i>
1.PL-wrap.IND-3.M.PL	so	in	rope.M.SG
‘we wrap them up with rope’			

The terms *kəlləb*, *ḥoggólt* and *ḥáttal* in the above examples are attested in mainland varieties respectively as *kəlb*, *ḥogúlət* and *hétəl* (Johnstone 1981: 130, 106, 119). The second root consonant in these tokens is perceptually longer than its non-geminate counterpart (Castagna 2018: 120).

The backing of the voiceless velar fricative [x] to a voiceless laryngeal or pharyngeal fricative [h] or [ħ], occurs sporadically throughout the corpora. It appears to be triggered by the adjacency of a low or mid vowel (Castagna 2018: 126–127):

<i>šahar</i>	<i>halí</i>
elderly.person.M.SG	empty.M.SG
‘the old man is empty (has nothing)’	

*ad-dəh*<sup>9</sup>      *bə*      *ħamzet*      *d-i-šənħ-an*<sup>20</sup>      *ħamzet*  
 DEF-duck.COL      and      turtle.F.S      CIRC-3.M-let.IND-ŠSTEM      turtle.F.S  
 ‘the (two) ducks and the turtle, they (two) let the turtle’

In conclusion, documentary evidence shows that not only does KM Jibbali/Shehret exhibit the long-discussed shift of laterals to interdentals but it also features a general tendency to articulate all sibilants as interdentals, although the occurrence of these phenomena is far from universal. The present results can then be reconciled with Rubin’s statement that laterals and interdentals could have occurred in free variation at the time of Hulton’s visit to Kuria Muria (2014a: 483). Additionally, it is intriguing to note that these shifts in the articulation of the sibilants have a striking parallel in the central dialects of Soqotri (Morris 2017: 17). Similarly, the backing of /x/ > [h] ~ [ħ] and /g/ > [ʕ] is a well-known feature of the eastern varieties of Soqotri (Simeone-Senelle 2003: 7). The presence of a prosodically motivated gemination raises questions with regards to the role of prosody in Jibbali/Shehret: specifically, there remains to be ascertained whether some of the lexical items that are subject to be found in a prosodically strong position within an utterance might have acquired gemination as a stable feature, thus giving rise to gemination-based minimal pairs.

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20 Cf. the roots *šxr* ‘elderly,’ *xlw* ‘empty’ and *šnx* ‘to let’ (Johnstone 1981: 263, 264, 301).

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