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An Annotated Corpus of Three Hundred Proverbs, Sayings, and Idioms in Eastern Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t

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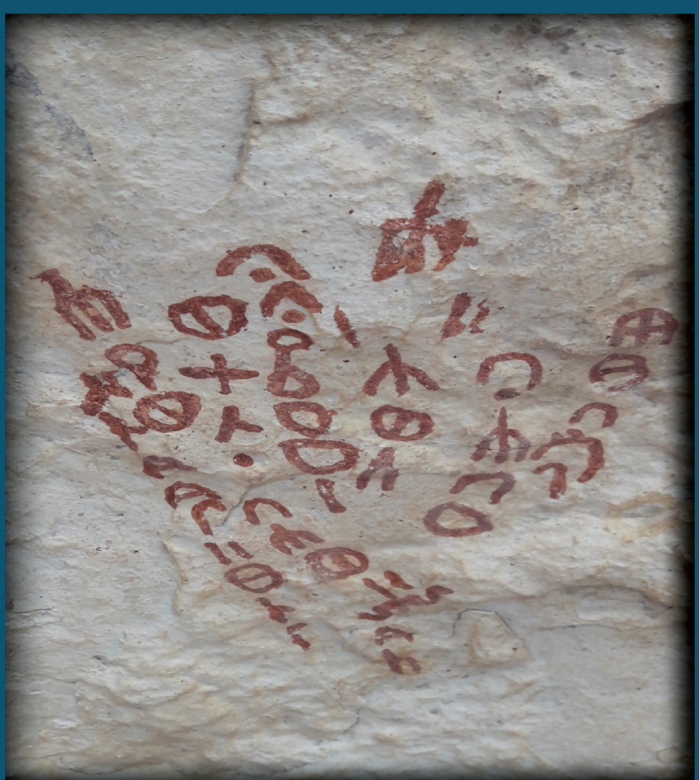
with a contribution by Suhail al-Amri



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1. INTRODUCTION

This book is the first scholarly work exclusively devoted to the study of proverbs (that is, *paremiology*) in the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t language, and the first monograph[1] to explore this aspect of lexicography in a Modern South Arabian language.

Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t proverbs bear witness to a thousand years of the history of Dhofar which scholars have little other means of analysing, due to the virtual non-existence of historical records.

Dhofar (Arabic ظفار *ḍufār*, Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t ضفول *ʔɔfɔ́l*), is historically one of the names by which the medieval settlement of al-Baleed and subsequently the whole area of Ṣalalah (the capital of the governorate of Dhofar, Oman) has been called (al-Shahri 1994, 23). In time, however, it came to designate a much larger square area in the south of the Sultanate of Oman, sharing borders with the Republic of Yemen and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The present-day governorate of Dhofar comprises the Indian Ocean coast from Ras Sharbithat in the north-east to Ras Darbat Ali in the south-west, as well as a big part of the Omani Negd, a gravel desert, and borders Saudi Arabia and the Rubʿ al-Khali (the empty quarter) to the north: according to al-Shahri (1994, 23–24), this area was traditionally called فيجير اعوفر *figír ʕɔfər* 'the red

[1] There exists a journal article about a collection of 101 proverbs in the Mehri language (Sima 2005). Specifically, this rather concise paper focuses on the presentation of proverbs, idioms, and expressions in the Hawf dialect, Yemen. See also below (p. 45).

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land'. The present work is concerned with the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t-speaking area, which is described below (pp. 6–7) and falls entirely within the borders of the Dhofar governorate. Since the beginning of Sultan Qaboos's reign in 1970 and the consequent modernisation, Dhofar has been an integral part of the Sultanate, thus ending centuries of colonial attitudes towards this land on the part of the sultans of Muscat and Oman. Before 1970, Dhofar (and Oman at large) was largely isolated from the rest of the world: items were produced with locally available materials through processes established since time immemorial. Agriculture, fishing, and livestock rearing represented the main sources of livelihood for the great majority of Dhofaris, and although the Maria Theresa dollar was used as a currency, barter was widely practised. Travel was hazardous, and the only means of transport available to the people of the land was the camel (or one's own feet); indeed, cars were an uncommon sight in Dhofar before Sultan Qaboos's modernisation, as reported by Watson (2013).

In light of the above facts and considering the pre-literate status of the old Dhofari society, it is no wonder that the intergenerational transmission of a substantial body of traditional knowledge would need to be ensured: this includes several oral poetic genres, lullabies, nursery rhymes, games, riddles, and proverbs.

A linguistic analysis of the rather vast proverb collection that constitutes one of the chapters of Ali Ahmad Mahash al-Shahri's seminal work *The Language of Aad*—لغة عاد (al-Shahri 2000) is the topic of a journal paper entitled 'A Collection of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t Proverbs from Ali al-Shahri's Publication *The Language of Aad*'

(Castagna 2022a). It was not until the end of the painstaking correction process of this article[2] that G. Castagna fully realised the importance of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t proverbs in terms of linguistic analysis: not only do proverbs preserve archaic linguistic features, understanding of which has the potential to enhance our knowledge of the Modern South Arabian languages greatly, but they also offer insights into the culture of pre-modernisation Dhofar. For example, the analysis of al-Shahri's collection yielded some personal names which had not been published in previous literature: personal names are of particular interest, as gradual assimilation into the mainstream Islamic society of Arabia means that Dhofaris forsook their native anthroponyms in favour of Arabic/Islamic names.

The case for this corpus therefore became compelling, and so too did the involvement of a native speaker of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t. Some of the sources from which this work draws are written, and do not come with audio recordings, so S. al-Amri got involved in the early stages of this project with the aim of providing audio recordings of the proverbs. However, it became clear from the outset that his linguistic insights, patience, and natural linguistic sensitivity would be greatly beneficial to the whole process. The two authors then proceeded to work together, mostly via video-conferencing and voice messages, almost every day in mid-2023, until the end of the write-up. S. al-Amri ensured that his contribution was faithful to the tradition: he often double-checked the

[2] G. Castagna can hardly find the right words to thank the anonymous reviewer, whose solid scholarship and unwavering patience in reviewing his article made possible the very existence of this study.

nominal and verbal forms reported in this work, as well as the overall meaning of the expressions, with linguistically authoritative elders, and his own friends and family. G. Castagna carried out the linguistic analysis of the lexical material found in the proverb collections and undertook the write-up. The result of this collaboration is this volume, with a total of 300 entries including proverbs, idioms, and formulaic expressions in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, which, despite being far from exhaustive and not taking into account the many dialectal and lexical variants that surely exist, offers an overview of different proverb genres and, through them, a peek into everyday life in pre-modern Dhofar. Furthermore, the pieces of linguistic information gleaned from the proverbs, which are described in the conclusion chapter, shed light, albeit in a limited fashion, on certain characteristics of the language.

1.0. Limitations of the Study

The main limitation of this study is its being based on two speakers only. This, coupled with the fact that they both speak an eastern variety of the language, means that the results and conclusions found in the final chapter must not be viewed as representative of the whole language. Similarly, the expressions collected here are likely to be but a fraction of the entire body of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t proverbs, sayings, idioms, and formulaic expressions. An extensive survey, encompassing the whole Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t-speaking area, would be the bare minimum action to be taken to obtain a comprehensive corpus. Hence, in documentary terms, this work is of some interest in the field of *eastern* Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t linguistics and lexicology, and any conclusions in regard to the whole

language should be carefully reflected upon and backed by a greater range of relevant data. It is, however, hoped that future research will enrich and expand the data presented here with new insights from other areas of Dhofar and a greater number of speakers.

2.0. The Modern South Arabian Languages

The so-called Modern South Arabian languages (henceforth optionally called MSA languages, MSA, or MSAL) are six currently unwritten Semitic languages, five of which are spoken in the southern part of the Arabian Peninsula, while the remaining one is spoken on the Island of Soqotra and a few islets that surround it.

These languages are endangered, three of them having far less than 1,000 speakers. In spite of having been in contact with Arabic for many centuries, probably since before the great Islamic conquests, all MSA languages were vital as recently as the 1930s (Thomas 1939), so the reasons for their gradual loss must be sought not only in the prestige, both political and religious, of Arabic (which is spoken by virtually every speaker of an MSA language), but also in the mass emigration towards oil-rich countries like Kuwait, Qatar, and Saudi Arabia that took place during the 1970s and the 1980s, triggering a need for social and linguistic adaptation within the expatriate communities. However, at present, this process seems not to be threatening these languages as much as it did in the past, since many individuals who had spent a number of years working in the oil industry in other Gulf countries came back to their ancestral abodes and resumed the

use of their ancestral languages when Oman began to exploit its oil reserves. In spite of this, MSA languages are now additionally being threatened by the interference of Arabic as a language of entertainment, education, and communication. This state of affairs greatly influences the younger generations, including the present-day child-bearing generation.

One of the features that sets Modern South Arabian apart from most other Semitic subgroups is the lack of historical records.

The documentation of these languages was initiated in the late 1970s by Miranda Morris, and the proceedings of these projects have been deposited in the Endangered Languages ARchive (ELAR) for Mehri (Watson and Morris 2016a), Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t (Watson and Morris 2016b), Ḥarsūsi (Eades and Morris 2016), Baṭḥari (Morris 2016a), and Hobyōt (Morris 2016b).

3.0. Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t

Recent estimates of the number of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t speakers are in the region of 30,000 ~ 50,000 (Rubin 2014, 3); these figures, however, might not take into account a considerable number of semi-competent users living in Ṣalalah who are normally not fond of being labelled as speakers of this language. The area in which Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t is spoken stretches from Dhalkut, near the Oman–Yemen border, to Hasik,[3] at the western end of the Kuria Muria bay, and includes the inland part of this region, whose mountain

[3] According to Suhail al-Amri, as well as other informants, most of the Dhofari inhabitants of Hasik are competent both in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t and Mehri.

ranges run roughly parallel to the coast, as well as the island of al-Hallānīyya, the only inhabited island of the Kuria Muria archipelago (officially called Ǧuzur al-Ḥallānīyāt). The oldest reliable attestation of the language is found in a divorce formula uttered, and duly recorded, in the presence of a Qadi at Zafar (modern-day Ṣalalah) in the sixteenth century (Serjeant and Wagner 1959). However, before that, travellers to the modern-day Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t-speaking area detected and recorded some anomalies in the local language: for example, Ibn al-Mujawir, a thirteenth-century Arab merchant and traveller, described the inhabitants of the mountains of Dhofar (as well as those of Soqotra and Masira) as "having their own language which none can understand but they" (Smith 2008, 269). The existence of the language was brought to the attention of western scholarship by Fulgence Fresnel, a French diplomat in Jeddah, in 1838. Although an increasingly growing number of scholarly works have been devoted to it since its discovery, only in 2014 was the first full-fledged grammatical description of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t published (Rubin 2014).

A Semitic language, Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t exhibits the typical traits of this language family:

- A comparatively large sound inventory;
- SVO ~ VSO word order;
- Two grammatical genders and three numbers;[4]

[4] The dual number is obsolescent in both the verbal and the nominal system.

- Cross-agreement in gender between a low numeral (3 to 10) and the counted noun;
- An extensive system of 'internal plural' patterns;
- A large number of verbal classes, derived from a basic class by means of prefixation, infixation, and vowel lengthening;
- A rich verbal morphology, employing suffix and prefix conjugation.

Furthermore, Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t exhibits the traits of the Modern South Arabian sub-branch of Semitic, namely:

- Its inventory includes a lateral fricative/affricate series, and glottalised stops and affricates;
- The presence of two prefix conjugations: the imperfective and the subjunctive, alongside the suffix conjugation of the perfective;
- The presence of a conditional mood;[5]
- The presence of a *–(v)n* suffix in the imperfective of some verbal classes, whose origin and development remain obscure to date;
- [n]-prefixed verbs have a strong tendency to occur with non-triliteral roots;[6]

[5] However, in the case of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, "Conditional forms are rare. They appear almost exclusively in the apodosis of unreal (counterfactual) conditional sentences" (Rubin 2014, 152).

[6] However, in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t this prefix is not found exclusively with quadriliteral roots, but also with reduplicated quinqueliterals of the patterns $C^1C^2C^3C^2C^3$ and $C^1C^2C^3C^4C^4$, as well as with triliteral roots with an infixed long vowel (Castagna and al-Amri forthcoming).

- Consonant gemination is only marginally phonemic;
- A rich vocabulary which features Semitic and Afro-Asiatic lexical items that are absent or obsolescent elsewhere, alongside a considerable number of items of uncertain or unknown origin (Kogan 2015).

Finally, some of the characteristics exhibited by this language are peculiar to the eastern MSA languages (that is, a subgroup of the MSA languages made up of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t and Soqotri), including:

- 'Internal' feminine for non-triliteral adjectives, e.g., *bərġɔ́l* 'obese (M.SG.)' vs *bərġél* 'obese (F.SG.)' (MLZ, 125), *raʕbɔ́b* 'tall and well-built (M.SG.)' vs *raʕbéb* 'tall and well-built (F.SG.)' (MLZ, 383), *ḥalḳlɔ́ḳ* 'matte (M.SG.)' vs *ḥalḳléḳ* 'matte (F.SG.)' (Castagna and al-Amri forthcoming);
- The loss of the *t-* prefix in the morphology of some verbal classes;
- Weak phonological load of vowel quantity;
- Presence of the nominal and verbal reduplicated quinqueliteral pattern $C^1C^2C^3C^2C^3$, e.g., *khanhanút* تُصنع الحزن 'pretence of sadness' (MLZ, 81), *ḥalḳlɔ́ḳ* 'matte' (Castagna and al-Amri forthcoming), *ənḥadəbdab* احدودب 'to become hunchback' (MLZ, 223).[7]

[7] This is a third person (that is, M.SG., M.PL., and F.PL., but not F.SG.) of an *n*-prefixed (N-stem) verbal form.

4.0. The Place of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t within Modern South Arabian

There is a growing consensus among Semitic scholars that MSAL should be divided into two branches: a western branch comprising Mehri, Ḥarsūsi, Baṭḥari, and Hobyōt, and an eastern branch comprising Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t and Soqotri (Dufour 2016; Kogan 2015; Lonnet 2006; 2008; 2009; Morris 2007; Rubin 2015). Simeone-Senelle (2011) considers Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t and Soqotri two separate subgroups, whilst arguing in favour of a subgroup containing the remaining four languages.

This subgrouping was first proposed by Bertram Thomas (1939, 11), who admittedly lacked formal training in linguistics. He stated that the languages could be classified into two groups: Mehri, Ḥarsūsi, and Baṭḥari in the first group, and Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t in the second one,[8] on the basis of the high degree of intercomprehensibility among speakers of the former three, and the lack thereof between them and speakers of the latter (1939, 5–6).

In time, as more evidence from fieldwork became available, this division of MSAL could be backed, above all, with morphological and lexical data. The following table illustrates some of the isoglosses relevant to MSA subgrouping:[9]

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[8] At Thomas's time, Hobyōt was not known, and although Soqotri was, it is not mentioned.

[9] Rubin (2015) describes these isoglosses in detail. See also Kogan (2015) for the lexical isoglosses.

Table 1: Modern South Arabian subgrouping isoglosses

	Mehri	Ḥarsūsi	Baṭḥari	Hobyōt	Jibbali/ Śḥərɛ̄́t	Soqotri
[h] ~ [ḥ] - broken plurals	X	X	X	X		
[h] ~ [ḥ] - article	X	X	X	[10]		
apophonic feminine in quadri-quinqueliteral adjectives					X	X
'future participle'	X	X	X			
loss of t- in some verbal classes					X	X
preservation of *w	X	X	X	X		
phonemic vowel length	X	X	X	X		
lexical isoglosses[11]	+	+	+	+	–	–

As can be observed, Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t shares a number of isoglosses with Soqotri, versus the rest of Modern South Arabian:

- Quadriliteral and quinqueliteral adjectives form the feminine by internal vowel modification, rather than by suffixation of the common Semitic feminine morpheme *-(v)t*;

[10] Hobyōt does not have a definite article.

[11] Although lexicon is not, *per se*, a reliable indicator of genetic relationship, it is taken into account here alongside more reliable evidence from other linguistic subdomains. Mehri, Ḥarsūsi, and Baṭḥari on the one hand, and Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t and Soqotri on the other hand, appear to share a significant number of core lexical items, whilst Hobyōt seems to be somewhere in between the two groups (Kogan 2015, 597; Rubin 2015, 328).

- The *t-* prefix in the verbal system has been lost in certain verbal classes;
- Proto-Semitic *w has been lost in a number of environments, either by shifting to [b], especially in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, or disappearing altogether;
- Vowel length is only marginally phonemic;
- Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t and Soqotri share a great number of lexical items not found in the western sub-group.

Whether these isoglosses result from shared innovation or shared retention remains a matter of debate. Individually, the MSAL exhibit several innovations, as well as archaisms. The principal criterion that guides subgrouping in Semitic is, however, shared morphological innovation (Kogan 2015, 3). In this regard, the same author (2015, 389–95) identifies a number of characteristics that he describes as shared innovations of the MSAL, namely:

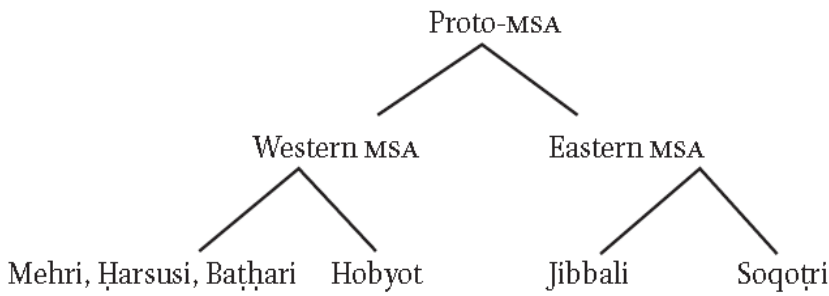
- The above-mentioned *-n* suffix in the imperfective of some verbal classes (see above p. 8);
- The conditional, similarly characterised by an *-n* suffix;
- The diachrony of the *š-* prefix in the so-called Š1 and Š2 verbal classes;
- The external feminine plural marker *-*Vtən*;
- The so-called *a*-replacement, whereby a substantial number of nominals are pluralised by replacing the vowel between the second and third root consonants in the singular with */a/.

To these, Dufour (2016, 404–6) adds the following features:

- The innovative nature of proto-MSAL accent;
- Glide- and guttural-triggered allomorphy;
- The so-called idle glottis effect (Bendjaballah and Ségéral 2014; see also below p. 35).

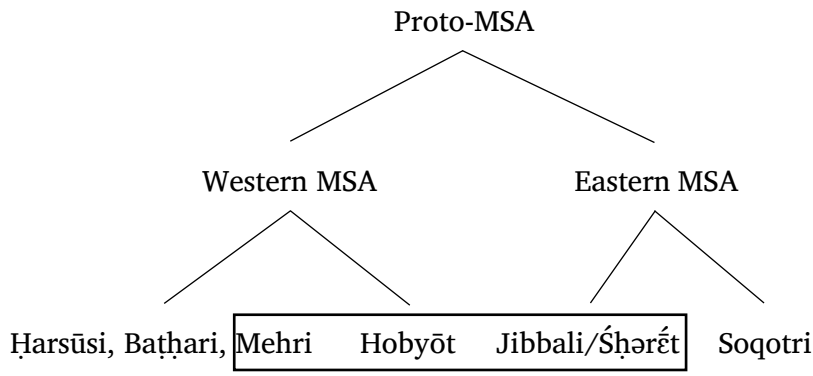
As for the internal subgrouping of the MSAL, most scholars agree on the following figure (Rubin 2015, 313).

Figure 1: Subgrouping of MSAL



However, in view of the areal phenomena in the MSAL-speaking area, that is, the wandering tribes coming into contact and then separating again, the figure should be slightly modified as follows, to reflect this state of affairs.

Figure 2: Subgrouping of MSAL with shared areal phenomena



5.0. Glottonymy

MSAL linguistics is a relatively new field, but intensive fieldwork and research in recent decades have made it possible to arrive at a satisfactory level of description of the languages, at least synchronically. That being said, many unknowns remain: the past phases of the languages are, at present, undocumented and, probably, undocumentable. The glottonyms too are far from straightforward, except (perhaps) for the languages with few speakers. For a start, Mehri is called by native speakers variously *Məhrəyyet*, *Mahriyōt*, or *Mehrīyət* according to the geographical area. Modern South Arabian itself is but a label contrasting with Ancient South Arabian: the total lack of historical records means that it is impossible to name this subgroup of Semitic according to a more accurate criterion, be it geographical (e.g., *Ṣayhadic*), or deriving from an endonym (e.g., *Akkadian*, *Hebrew*, *Arabic*). When it comes to the language at the core of the present work, things become considerably more complex: the ethnic groups whose members speak it natively are the *Ḥaklī* (alternatively known as *Qara* in Arabic), the *Śḥərí* (known as *Šaḥra* in Arabic), and also some sections of the *Kaṭīrī*, the *Mašāyix*, the *Barʕima*, the *Hikman* (Peterson 2004), and the *Baṭāḥira* (Gasparini 2018, 11). Historically, a number of glottonyms have been associated with this language: the native *Gəblɛ̄́t*, *Śḥərɛ̄́t*, and *Əḥkilyṓt*[12] on the one hand, and, on the other hand, their widely used Arabic counterparts

[12] *Aḥkilyṵ́t* is believed to be the ancient name of the Hobyōt language by its speakers (Morris 2017, 22).

Gibbālī ~ Ǧibbālī,[13] *Šaḥrī*, and *Ḥaklī ~ Qarāwī*. Another glottonym, *Šxawri ~ Šḥawri*, used for the first time in the *Südarabische Expedition* material concerned with this language (Bittner 1913), is a misnomer resulting either from a misinterpretation on the part of the scholars or, more probably, an attempt of their informant to mock the language.[14]

The native term *əḥkilyṓt*, its Arabic rendition *Ḥaklī*, and the Arabic alternative designation *Qarāwī* are the glottonyms used in the earliest accounts of the language (Fresnel 1838; Carter 1845). *Ḥaklī* is the name of the people who are traditionally held to have come to Dhofar from the west some time in the past, and seized the lands and wealth of the *Šaḥrī*, who were (and are, by many, still held to be) the original inhabitants of Dhofar. The *Ḥaklī* are said to have been speakers of Mehri who, in time, adopted the language of the *Šaḥra*. The latter became weak (Arabic *ḍaʕīf*) and were forbidden to bear arms or intermarry with the dominant tribal (Arabic *qabīlī*) people. Johnstone (1972, 17) states that this could shed light on the origin of the enigmatic poetic register of this language, as the invaders would have composed poetry in Mehri upon their arrival in Dhofar, and would then have gradually started to incorporate their newly acquired language into their poetry, giving rise to a mixed language. Today, the ethnonym

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[13] The realisation of */g/ as [g], [gʲ], or [d͡ʒ] is a dialectal feature.

[14] The person in question, Muḥammad bin Sālim al-Kaṯīrī, was an Arab, but he was perfectly bilingual in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t (Lonnet 2017, 278). Given his higher social standing, as an Arab, he might have attempted to mock the language by using a term derived from the root √*šxr*, with the general meaning of 'weakness'; cf. *šaxər* 'old man' (JL, 264).

Ḥaklī designates a Dhofari tribal confederation consisting of the following Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t-speaking tribes: *ʕAḳʕāḳ*, *ʕAmri, Gabúb, Kəšúb, Ḳitán, Maʕšni, Šammás, Ṭəbɔ́k* (personal fieldwork). The members of these tribes do not (any longer) use *Əḥkilyɔ́t/Ḥaklī* as a glottonym, and normally refer to the language as *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t*. However, they also use, and are in general comfortable with, *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t*.[15] Conversely, the *Šaḥrī* unsurprisingly favour the glottonym *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t*, and generally consider *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t* a disrespectful and derogatory term. Of course, reactions to the use of the *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t* glottonym do vary: milder reactions can be expected of the *Šaḥra* inhabiting al-Ḥallānīyah,[16] whilst passionate and sometimes fierce reactions are typical of the *Šaḥra* of the mainland, on the grounds of their claim of being the original speakers of the language, as well as the original inhabitants of Dhofar.

Hence, the glottonymic situation discussed above can be summarised as follows. Two glottonyms are currently in use: *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t* and *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t*. The non-*Šaḥra* tribes tend to favour *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t*, but do not consider *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t* offensive, whereas the *Šaḥra*-affiliated speakers tend to use *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t* and consider *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t* incorrect or outright offensive.

Regrettably, there are no safe options in terms of glottonymy: someone will be offended, or at the very least annoyed, by the use of either *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t* or *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t*.

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[15] However, there are exceptions. During one interview, the interviewee, a member of the *ʕAmri* tribe, became angered by the fact that I had used the glottonym *Śḥərɛ̄́t*.

[16] This conclusion was formed on the basis of personal communications.

This state of affairs has remained unchanged for a long time, and the existing literature offers little to no discussion (Hofstede 1998, 15; JL, xi; al-Maʕsanī 2003; Morris 2017, 20–21; Rubin 2014, 10–11). However, a commonality of many scholarly descriptions of this issue is the fact that the Arabic glottonym and ethnonym *Šaḥrī* is considered to be merely a rendition of the native term *Śḥərí*, a *nisbah* adjective derived from *Śḥɛ(ḥ)r* 'green area of the mountain, countryside' (JL, 250), 'monsoon-affected mountain' (Morris et al. 2019, 77), جبل 'mountain' (MLZ, 504), whilst *Jibbali* (M.SG.) and *Gəblɛ́t* (F.SG.) both mean 'of the mountains', respectively in Arabic and in the language under discussion.[17]

[17] Morris (2017, 21) states that the the Baṭāḥirah associate the glottonym *Śḥərɛ́t* with the Śḥarɔ "Incorrectly, as 'Śḥerēt' simply means '(language) of the śḥɛr', that is, the mountains affected by the annual monsoon. The belief that Śḥerēt is/was the language of the Śḥarɔ peoples is widespread and the cause of much social tension today, and is one reason that Gəblɛ̀t or Jibbāli (an arabisation of Śḥerēt) has come to be preferred as a less controversial name for this language." Whilst this might be the case, this statement makes one wonder why the Śḥarɔ themselves insist that the correct glottonym is *Śḥərɛ́t*, and why they consider *Šaḥrī*, which is their tribal *nisbah* is Arabic, an acceptable Arabic exoglottonym. If 'Śḥerēt' simply means '(language) of the śḥɛr', then why are the Śḥarɔ outraged by the use of *Ǧibbāli* '(language) of the mountains'? When questioned about glottonymy, ʕAli Aḥmad Mahāš al-Šaḥrī, the Dhofari author who wrote one of the sources from which the present study draws (al-Shahri 2000), and staunch advocate of the glottonym *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ́t*, usually affirms "mountains don't speak!" (personal communication).

That *Jibbali* and *Gəblɛ̄́t* are cognate can be observed on the basis of both the regular sound correspondences (Arabic √*ǧbl* regularly corresponds to MSAL √*gbl*) and the matching semantics. Whilst *Šaḥrī* and *Śḥərɛ̄́t* also exhibit regular sound correspondences (Arabic √*šḥr* corresponds to MSAL √*śḥr*), the same does not apply to semantics: the above-mentioned meaning of *Śḥɛ(h)r* does not precisely match its alleged Arabic etymological cognate root √*šḥr*, which has the general meaning of 'soot' (Wehr 1976, 457).

It must, however, be mentioned that some Dhofaris, not necessarily belonging to the *Šaḥra* tribes, state that *Šaḥrī/Śḥərɛ̄́t* is the correct glottonym, regardless of tribal loyalties, and *Jibbali/Gəblɛ̄́t* is but a recent invention.

In light of the above, the use of the compound glottonym Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t has presented itself as the most sensible choice. As strange and artificial as it may sound, especially in live speech, it nevertheless ensures a fair treatment of all the stakeholders, and bears witness to the rich and complex pre-history of this language.

6.0. Dialectal Areas

There exists a certain degree of consensus about the division of the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t-speaking area into three main dialectal areas, commonly referred to as east, centre, and west (JL, xii; al-Shahri 2007, 76-77; Rubin 2014, 11–13), which roughly correspond to the three mountain ranges running parallel to the coast of Dhofar: Jabal Samḥān, Jabal Qara, and Jabal Qamar. The *Muʕǧam lisān Ḍufār* goes into further detail, describing six dialectal areas: (1) the dialect of the Ḥallāniyāt islands (Kuria Muria); (2) the dialect of eastern Dhofar, comprising the region of Ṣalūt, the province of

Sadḥ, and the eastern part of the province of Mirbāṭ; (3) the dialect of the eastern part of Jabal Qara, comprising the entirety of Ṭawi Aʕtair territory and the eastern part of the province of Ṭāqa; (4) the central-eastern dialect, comprising Medinat al-ḥaqq and the rest of the province of Ṭāqa; (5) the central-western dialect, spoken in the western part of the province of Ṣalalah; and (6) the western dialect, spoken in the provinces of Raxyūt and Ḍalkūt (MLZ, 66). According to the author of MLZ (67), furthermore, a seventh dialect exists: the poetic language of Dhofar, which exhibits marked lexical differences from everyday speech.

Notwithstanding the existence of dialectal areas, the majority of scholars and speakers of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t agree that dialectal variation is not prominent enough to hinder communication. It is, however, felt to be revealing of a speaker's geographical origin (MLZ, 66).

As for the relationship between dialectal variation and tribal affiliation, it is not mentioned by any study to the best of the authors' knowledge. However, it is worth mentioning that the presence/absence of certain linguistic traits once thought to be a feature of the central dialects, e.g., the distinctiveness of alveopalatal sibilants, has been found in other geographical areas too (Bellem and Watson 2017). This, coupled with sporadic mentions of inter-tribal variation,[18] calls for further investigation in the field of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t dialectology.

[18] JL (29) records a verb *bɔsɔ́ṭ*, normally meaning 'to eat; to smooth out a pile of food', with the additional meaning of 'to drink milk' only for the Kathiri tribe.

7.0. Language Varieties at the Basis of This Study

The audio recordings of the proverbs which constitute the subject of this work come from two varieties of eastern Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, namely those spoken by Ali al-Shahri (a native of Ṭawi Aʕtair), and Suhail al-Amri (a native of Sadḥ). The common traits of these varieties include a clearly audible palatalisation of /g/, which is realised as [gʲ] in most environments, and an unsystematic assimilatory phenomenon which determines, within a word, the quality of an unstressed vowel on the basis of the quality of the stressed vowel, a trait that might lead one to postulate vowel harmony. However, a more comprehensive analysis of the relevant tokens in context would be needed in order to do so, and the fact that this phenomenon is far from predictable casts additional doubt on the viability of this hypothesis (Castagna 2022a, 82–83). Another trait that the two varieties share is the pausal realisation of /l/ as [ɾ̥] (Castagna 2022a, 84). However, more research is needed to determine the exact boundaries of this isogloss.

8.0. Paremiological Remarks

As this is a collection of proverbs, sayings, and idioms,[19] one must spend a few words on the paremiological aspect of this piece of research.

Proverbs can be semantically labelled as linguistic utterances which "summarize everyday experiences and common observations in a concise and figurative way. They have been created and used for thousands of years and passed as expressions

[19] In actuality, it is a *compendium* of four collections.

of wisdom and truth from generation to generation" (Hrisztova-Gotthardt and Varga 2015, 1). *Paremiology* (that is, the study of proverbs) is a relatively recent discipline that has gained a substantial following in the last few decades. However, "the history of compiling proverb dictionaries is probably as old as the first systems of writing that emerged in ancient Mesopotamia (Sumer, the Akkadian Empire, Assyria, Babylonia) and ancient Egypt more than five millennia ago" (Petrova 2015, 245).

Since the early days of paremiology, scholars have been trying to define *what* a proverb is, and what sets it apart from regular phraseology. The most famous definition, and the most controversial one, is the following: "An incommunicable quality tells us this sentence is proverbial and that one is not. Hence no definition will enable us to identify positively a sentence as proverbial" (Taylor 1962, 3). As the field acquired new insights and more scholars made their contributions to paremiology, the concept of *proverbial markers* became current in the works of many proverb scholars. In Mac Coinnigh's (2015, 112) words: "Scholars have identified a range of devices which operate in ensemble to effect the concept of proverbial style, amongst which the most important are parallelism, ellipsis, alliteration, rhyme, metaphor, personification, paradox, and hyperbole." Furthermore, there are a "set of optional syntactic devices that occur in proverbs, particularly synactic [*sic*] parallelism, parataxis, and inverted word order" (Mac Coinnigh 2015, 113).

In addition to this, it is important to mention that there exist a number of proverbial genres that are encountered cross-

linguistically. Among those mentioned by Mac Coinnigh, the following are common in the present collection:

- Better X than Y[20]
- No X, no Y
- X is X
- The so-called Wellerism[21]

For linguists, proverbs are of particular interest and importance, as they "unite features of the lexeme, sentence, set phrase, collocation, text and quote. They illustrate interesting patterns of prosody, parallelism, syntax, lexis and imagery" (Norrick 2015, 8), and "often contain archaic and dialect words and structures" (Norrick 2015, 21). When dealing with a language like Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, whose prehistory is unknown due to the lack of written records, proverbs open a window on some features of the language which have become obsolete in the course of its history.[22] However, it is also important to point out that proverbs do change, grammatically speaking, and their form in not immutable. Nevertheless, recognisability does not require complete im-

[20] According to Mac Coinnigh, this formula is "one of the most widely dispersed" (2015, 117).

[21] An ironic proverbial statement possessing the following structure: "a statement (often a proverb) + a speaker + context (phrase or subclause)" (Mac Coinnigh 2015, 120).

[22] A good example of this is the contents of entries **(92)** and **(149)** of the al-Shahri collection, which feature a mixed Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t–Mehri language: this is likely a holdover from a time of widespread bilingualism (Johnstone 1972).

mutability of proverb form. Listeners continue to identify proverbs in spite of lexical and grammatical variation because proverbs are "strongly coded" (Norrick 2015, 12).

From a Euro-western point of view, proverbs often exhibit "folksy, rural, pre-industrial connotations" (Norrick 2015, 18). However, in the case of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t proverbs, this statement does not hold true, as the elements contained in them are often felt as vivid and real by its speakers, a good number of whom still practise traditional activities. By the same token, Mac Coinnigh's (2015, 130) statement that "there appears to be a clear preference for simple indicative statements over the majority of other forms in modern English-language proverbs" does not apply to the present collection.

It will be of value to trace definite boundaries to the scope of the present work: this is, for the most part, a presentation of proverbs and a linguistic analysis of them. Thus, the reader will encounter few cross-cultural comparisons with other linguistic areas[23] or remarks about the semiotic features of the token analysed. Instead, this work focuses on description of the linguistic features of the proverbs, that is, phonetics, phonology, morphology, and syntax.

Finally, the definition of "proverb collection" used here needs to be clarified. According to Kispál (2015, 229):

> On the one hand, there are proverb collections where proverbs can be interpreted within the framework of the prototype theory, i.e., they interpret proverbs in a broader sense,

[23] Although they are not completely absent: see the elicited proverbs collection below, pp. 204–13.

> and with this in mind, they include better examples of the proverb category (e.g. The apple doesn't fall far from the tree) and worse examples too, i.e., proverbial comparisons (e.g. as busy as a bee), wellerisms (e.g. "Everyone to his own taste," as the farmer said when he kissed the cow), weather proverbs and superstitions (e.g. When it rains and the sun shines, the devil is beating his grandmother), even idioms (e.g. kick the bucket). On the other hand, there are proverb dictionaries where proverbs can be interpreted within the framework of features (sentence, rhyme, alliteration, ellipsis, moral authority, didactic intent et al.), i.e., they interpret proverbs in a narrow sense and so they codify only proverbs that are generally sentential statements (e.g. Still waters run deep; The shoemaker's son always goes barefoot; Too many cooks spoil the broth).

In view of the above, the present work falls within the first category, in that it presents not only sentential statements, but also the other categories mentioned by Kispál, as well as a good number of idioms.

9.0. Sources

The data analysed in this study proceed from four sources:

9.1. *The Language of Aad*—لغة عاد (2000)

This publication is bilingual, the English part being the translation of the Arabic part. Its contents include pictures and drawings of the Dhofar cave paintings and inscriptions,[24] as well as information about Shahri tribal divisions, land management, folk

[24] These undeciphered inscriptions, which are likely to be revealing of the linguistic past of Dhofar and the other adjacent areas where they

games, calendar, measurements, and song genres in the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t-speaking area. The publication also contains an extensive collection of proverbs (210 items), which are analysed in the present work, further elaborating on the contents of Castagna (2022a). The book is (was)[25] sold with an accompanying audio cassette, containing, among other things, a recording of the proverbs made by Ali al-Shahri in person.

The proverbs and expressions are presented in the Arabic part of the book in the following format (al-Shahri 2000, 263):

أذيبلين أُنفاع بوشفاع

المعنى = فلان لا نفع منه ولا شفع

فلان لا يفيد ولا يتشفع لاحد, لا لنفسه ولا لغيره, فهو بدون فائدة. يطلق هذا المثل على الانسان الكسول الكثير النوم والجلوس, وعلى الانسان الذي لا يعمل اي عاطل عن العمل ولا يفيد احداً. فاذا احدهم سأل شخصاً عن هذا الشخص, قال المثل اعلاه والذي يفيد بان فلاناً بدون عمل لا لنفسه ولا لاهله اي ليس يه فائدة لنفسه او اهله.

The underlined portion of the text is proverb number **(72)** in the al-Shahri collection (see below p. 94), as presented in the text.[26] There follows its Arabic translation in the line immediately

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are found, can be found in great numbers in the caves of the monsoon hills in Dhofar, as well as in the contiguous Mahrah governorate in Yemen and Soqotra. A few specimens from Oman proper have been found in recent years (al-Jawhari 2018).

[25] This publication has regrettably been out of print for 10 years.

[26] The highly idiosyncratic transcription system devised by al-Shahri, based on colour-coded Arabic letters to represent the sounds of Jibbali/

below. The longer text at the bottom is a description of the proverb in Arabic, which has not been reproduced in the present work for the sake of brevity. The English-language section of the book contains a rendition of each proverb in English, which has been faithfully reproduced in the present study, despite an evident lack of accuracy in the translation process. Where, however, this inaccuracy may hinder comprehension, a literal translation of the original Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t item is provided. It is important to point out that the analysis of this collection yielded a considerable number of terms previously unattested in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, as well as unattested variants of attested terms. These are summarised in Castagna (2022a, 84–86), and described in the conclusions chapter (see below, pp. 220–27).

9.2. *Muʕğam Lisān Ḍufār* (MLZ)—معجم لسان ظفار (2014)

This privately published Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t–Arabic dictionary was compiled by a local amateur lexicographer.[27] It is structured according to the Arabic alphabetical order, and the roots are coherently presented throughout the book. Although its arbitrary use of Arabic diacritics to render the linguistic sounds unknown to Arabic make it slightly difficult to use, it is, nevertheless, a good

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Śḥərɛ̄́t not found in Arabic, has not been reproduced in each individual entry, for the sake of the reader's comprehension and to ensure consistency throughout the publication. However, see the transcription table below for a key to this and the transcription systems used by the other collections.

[27] The name of this work is abbreviated to MLZ in this publication. See below (p. 231).

consultation tool, especially as it often succeeds in filling the gaps found in western lexica. The fact that it was compiled by a native speaker is of particular interest in terms of the insights into the traditions, tales, and legends connected with some of the lexical items presented in the volume, and of the occasional descriptions of dialectal variation. The proverbs contained in this dictionary are presented as in-context examples of some of the terms entered. Here is reproduced one such entry (MLZ, 434):

> **سّحِقْ :** سُحق. أثار سخط غيره. وتأتي هذه الكلمة مرادفة لكلمة (محِقْ) أي الذي يتحرش بالناس لإثارتهم وإغاظتهم فيقال : أذيلين محِق بسَحقَ. فلان يتسبب في إثرة إغاظة الناس وسخطهم.

The underlined text is the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t text of proverb number **(11)** of the MLZ collection (see below, p. 178) as presented in this work.[28] The text that follows is its translation in Arabic. The present work analyses 44 proverbs and expressions contained in MLZ.

9.3. *Jibbali Lexicon* (JL) (1981)

This work, alongside the Ḥarsūsi and Mehri lexica, represents the corollary of Johnstone's long periods of seminal fieldwork in the MSAL-speaking areas. The introduction contains a brief grammatical sketch of the language, which is considerably less extensive than the one in the Mehri Lexicon (Johnstone 1987; henceforth ML). The main body consists of the terms arranged by root in English alphabetical order. Philologically speaking, these

[28] The Arabic transcription system devised by the author of MLZ is given in the relevant section.

works often offer cognates in other MSA languages, but rarely do so with other Semitic languages outside Modern South Arabian. Similarly to MLZ, the proverbs and idioms found in JL are meant to provide an in-context example of the use of a given term (JL, 144):

> **ḳɔ́ttəl** to shrink: to feel dizzy after a knock on the head.
> *yəḳətél ḥask!* May your brain shrink! (a friendly curse)

The above-mentioned expression is analysed below (pp. 199–200) and presented as number **(16)** of the JL collection. The present work analyses 26 proverbs and expressions from JL.

9.4. Elicited Proverbs

Twenty entries have been obtained by elicitation. S. al-Amri came up with these proverbs, either on his own or with the aid of his acquaintances in his native Sadḥ and the nearby inland village of Gufa.

The text makes it clear when a Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t proverb or expression has a counterpart in English or Arabic.

10.0. Grammatical Features of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t

What follows is a very short sketch of the grammatical features encountered in this study. This is meant as a quick reference for the reader and is by no means exhaustive. For further reference, see the relevant literature (JL; Rubin 2014; Dufour 2016; al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, *inter alia*).

10.1. Sound Inventory and Transcription

Table 2: Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t consonants

	Labial	Labiodental	Interdental	Dental/Alveolar	Lateral	Alveo-palatal	Guttural	Laryngeal/ Pharyngeal
Stop	b			t d ṭ			k g ḳ	
Fricative		f	ṯ ḏ ṱ	s z ṣ	ś ź ṣ́	š š̃ ž ṣ̌	x ġ	h ḥ ʕ
Nasal	m			n				
Trill				r ɽ				
Approxi-mant	w				l	y		

Table 3: Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t vowels

	Back							**Front**
High	i							u
		e			ə		o	
				ɛ		ɔ		
Low					a			

Emphasis, that is, an umbrella term which describes certain phonologically distinct phenomena of secondary articulation in the Semitic languages, is said to be realised as ejectivity in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t. However, the extent to which ejectivity is actually perceived varies substantially according to the phoneme, speaker, and phonotactics (Rubin 2014, 27). On the whole, /ḳ/ seems to be the only phoneme which exhibits a consistently perceptible ejectivity, whilst in the other ‘emphatic’ sounds it is much weaker, and they can sometimes be partially voiced or pharyngealised.

Each of the sources from which the present study draws employs a different transcription system. In order to ensure consistency, it has been decided to use a single, largely phonetic, transcription system. The following tables summarise the above-mentioned systems (with regard to consonants and vowels, respectively), and how they relate to the one employed in this publication.

Table 4: Transcription systems across Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t studies—consonants

This study	***The Language of Aad***	**MLZ**	**JL**	**This study**	***The Language of Aad***	**MLZ**	**JL**
ʔ	ء ,أ	ء ,أ	ʾ	ṣ́	ض	ض	ẓ́
b	ب	ب	b	ṭ	ط	ط	ṭ
t	ت	ت	t	ṭ̣	ظ	ظ	ḍ̣
ṯ	ث	ث	ṯ	ʕ	ع	ع	ʿ
g ~ gʲ	ج	ج	g	ġ	غ	غ	ġ
ž	red ج	چ	ž	f	ف	ف	f
ḥ	ح	ح	ḥ	ḳ	red ق	ق	ḳ
x	خ	خ	x	ṣ̌	green ش	ڤ	ṣ̌
d	د	د	d	k	ك	ك	k
ḏ	ذ	ذ	ḏ	l	ل	ل	l
r	ر	ر	r	ź	yellow ش	لَ	ź
z	ز	ز	z	m	م	م	m
s	س	س	s	n	ن	ن	n
š	ش	ش	š	h	ه	ه	h
š̃	blue ش	ش̃	š̃	w	و	و	w
ś	red ش	ش́	ś	y	ي	ي	y
ṣ	red ص	ص	ṣ				

Table 5: Transcription systems across Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t studies—vowels

This study	*The Language of Aad*	MLZ	JL
a, ā	ا, اا, آ	ا, آ	a, ā
e, ē	ا, اا, آ	ا, آ	e, ē
ɛ, ɛ̄	ا, اا, آ	ا, آ	ɛ, ɛ̄
i, ī	اي, ي, يي	اي, ي	i, ī
o, ō	او, و, وو	او, و	o, ō
ɔ, ɔ̄	او, و, وو	او, و	ɔ, ɔ̄
u, ū	او, و, وو	او, و	u, ū
ə	/	/	ə
ᵊ	/	/	/

In addition to the above, al-Shahri's transcription employs a red غ to signify nasalisation of the preceding vowel, and a red ه for the devoicing/pre-aspiration of a sonorant in final position. In the transcription system employed in this work, these processes are indicated respectively by a tilde <~> above the nasalised vowel, and a circle under the sonorant in question (for example, [r̥]).

As for the sound inventory of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, it is worth clarifying the following:

- /g/ may be realised as [g] or [gʲ] both in al-Shahri's and S. al-Amri's dialects. However, the unmarked realisation seems to be [gʲ] in both dialects.
- The three sounds here transcribed as <s̃>, <z̃>, and <ṣ̃> make-up a cross-linguistically rare alveo-palatal labialised series (respectively voiceless, voiced, and 'emphatic'). These sibilants are articulated with a high degree

of contact between the tongue and the alveo-palatal region, and are accompanied by a protrusion of the lips (Bellem and Watson 2017). Only /s̃/ can be regarded as a full-status phoneme, besides being an allophone of /k/ in certain phonetic environments. [z̃] is an allophone of /g/. [ʂ̃] is mostly an allophone of /ḳ/, but it does have a phonemic load.

- Regarding emphasis, see under Table 3 above.
- The three sounds here transcribed as <ś>, <ź>, and <ʂ́> are a series of lateral sounds: a voiceless and a voiced fricative, and a partially glottalised/voiced affricate respectively. Whilst /ś/ and /ʂ́/ are phonemic,[29] <ź> = [ɮ] is an allophone of /l/ in certain phonetic environments.
- The phoneme /ṯ/ is an 'emphatic' interdental voiceless fricative/affricate. As is the case with all 'emphatic' phonemes except /ḳ/, the ejective trait is rather weak, and it may become at least partially voiced (Watson and al-Kathiri 2022).
- /r/ has a retroflex allophone [ɽ] before coronal consonants.
- All sonorants (/l/, /m/, /n/, /r/) in final position may undergo a process variously described as devoicing (Rubin 2014, 37–38; Dufour 2016, 24–26) and pre-aspiration (Watson et al. 2023b). This phenomenon seems to be sub-

[29] They are cognates of Arabic ش and ض respectively, and are often found in Arabic loans.

ject to a considerable degree of inter-speaker (and dialectal) variation, as shown by the *Muʕğam Lisān Ḍufār* (MLZ), which consistently points out that the speakers of the western dialect do not produce this phenomenon (MLZ *passim*). In this study, it was decided to use the devoicing diacritic (i.e., [n̥]) where relevant, while this phenomenon is being investigated from a dialectological perspective.

- The transcription system employed in this study uses <ᵊ> to describe an ultra-short transitional vowel which does not trigger any phonological processes and appears according to predictable patterns (Dufour 2016; Watson et al. 2023a).
- The neutral vowel /ə/ is prosodically lighter than the other vowels and cannot be stressed (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 182).
- Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t vowels, with the exception of /ə/, have long (/ā/, /ɛ̄/, /ē/, /ī/, /ɔ̄/, /ō/, /ū/) and long-nasalised counterparts (/ã/, /ɛ̃/, /ẽ/, /ĩ/, /ɔ̃/, /õ/, /ũ/). However, vowel length, *sensu stricto,* is marginally phonemic: long and long-nasalised vowels are chiefly the result of phonological processes such as the intervocalic deletion of labials (see below). Long vowels are found in diminutive patterns (Johnstone 1973). However, this can be explained diachronically by the presence of diphthongs in Mehri where Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t has long vowels (Johnstone 1973).

As for the rest of the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t sounds described above, they are phonetically akin to those of Arabic.

10.2. Phonological Processes

Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t is known for the complexity of its phonological and morphological processes in comparison to the other MSA languages and Semitic at large. The following is a rough sketch of the phonological processes commonly encountered in this study.

10.2.1. Intervocalic Deletion of Labials

When between two vowels, not including the ultra-short non-phonological vowel <ᵊ> (Dufour 2016), the voiced bilabial stop /b/ and the bilabial nasal /m/ are lost. In most cases, they are replaced by a long vowel and a long nasalised vowel respectively (Rubin 2014, 28, 30):

ḳ̣ɔ̄r ‘grave’ < *ḳ̣ebɔ́r
gũl ‘(male) camel’ < *gemúl

Occasionally, [i] may precede the resulting long (or long nasalised) vowel (Rubin 2014, 28, 30).

10.2.2. /n/, /l/, and /r/ in Unstressed Syllables

These three phonemes cannot be realised at the onset of an open unstressed syllable (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 183):

nbaʕ ‘chase away’ < *nibáʕ

Post-tonically, closed syllables also do not tolerate a sonorant at the onset:

yəšḳ̣ɔ̄ṭ̣ɔrn ‘they (M.PL) quarrel’ < * yəšḳ̣ɔ̄ṭ̣ərən

10.2.3. Nasals

When adjacent to a nasal, /n/ or /m/, /e/ is raised to [i] and /ɔ/ to [u] (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 183):

ḏunúb 'tail' < *ḏɔnɔ́b
axnít 'to take out' < *axnét

10.2.4. Gutturals

/ḥ/, /x/, /ġ/, and /ʕ/ have a lowering effect on the adjacent vowels (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 184), e.g., /ɛ/ is realised as [a]. Moreover, a full vowel becomes a short neutral vowel when it is part of an open syllable and precedes a guttural (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 184):

šəʕíl 'strength' < *šɛʕil

10.2.5. Plain Voiceless Consonants

Unstressed vowels cannot stand between two plain (i.e., not 'emphatic') voiceless consonants (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 185). This applies not only to Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́t, but also to the other MSA languages. This process has been labelled ©© or the 'idle glottis' effect in the literature (Bendjaballah and Ségéral 2014):

skɔf 'to sit' < *sɔkɔ́f[30]

10.2.6. Pre-consonantal /l/ and /r/ Deletion

These phonemes are lost in pre-consonantal position, especially in the core lexicon. In the case of /l/, the shift also occurs irregularly

[30] Compare *ḳɔdɔ́r* 'to be able'.

in the verbal system in stressed syllables (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 185):

kɔb 'dog, wolf' < *kɔlb

šḥak 'to pour' (perfective 1.C.SG and 2.M.SG.) < *šḥalk < √*šḥl*

As for /r/, the phenomenon seems to be limited to core lexicon:

ḳun 'horn' < *ḳurn

10.3. Definiteness

The Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t definite article is a prefix commonly encountered in its basic form *ɛ- ~ e-*. It is attached to nouns to express definiteness, and is required when a personal suffix is attached:

e-dɔ́fərš 'his badness'

The definite article is prone to allomorphy, as is the case with most parts of speech in this language. It can manifest in the form of several allomorphs, some of which are not entirely predictable.

When attached to a term with an initial guttural consonant, it takes on the quality of the vowel that follows said consonant:

a-ʕáśər 'the friend'

ɔ-hɔ̄t 'the snake'

o-xofɛ́t 'the window'

When attached to a word-initial vowel, the definite article emerges as a lengthening of this vowel:

īḏɛ́n 'the ear'

An initial semi-vowel /y/ normally geminates when the definite article is attached:

e-yyet ‘the she-camel’

The definite article triggers the intervocalic deletion of labials (see above):

ɔ̄b ‘the door’ < *e-bɔb
ĩźḥɔ́t ‘the salt’ < *e-miźḥɔ́t

The definite article can be omitted in some cases. This often happens before an initial sonorant. Despite the tendency of nouns beginning with a plain voiceless consonant not to take the definite article (Rubin 2014, 84), this study offers at least three counterexamples, respectively in entries **(96)** and **(162)** of the al-Shahri collection, and entry **(5)** of the MLZ collection:

e-ffudún ‘the stone’
e-kkəʕéb ‘crockery’
o-śúrəʕ ‘the sails’

See also the gemination of the first consonant of the syntactically definite noun *kelṯ* in entry number **(206)** of the al-Shahri collection.

10.4. *ɛ-* as a Relativiser and a Genitive Exponent

In Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t, the prefix *ɛ-* functions as a relativiser and a genitive exponent (in addition to *ḏ-*),[31] as well as being the basic

[31] The prefix *ḏ-* has been described as a Mehrism which can be used interchangeably with *ɛ-*. However, recent fieldwork points to a more

form of the definite article. As a relativiser and genitive exponent, it seems to behave morphophonologically like the definite article, at least in part:

> *ɔ ġɔlɔ́b l-õl-š ɔ l-eš miṯɔrᵊ lɔ* 'You cannot blame a person for keeping his own property' (entry **(83)** of the al-Shahri collection)

Here, the relativiser takes the form *ɔ-*, because of [ɔ] as the leftmost vowel in the following term *ġɔlɔ́b*, according to the same principle described above for the definite article. The same seems to apply to the genitive exponent:

> *ɛḏīlín əntəkték lhes e-ḳāḥáf o gʲūḏɛ́t* 'so-and-so boils like a pot full of corn' (entry **(1)** of the MLZ collection)

In the above expression, the segment *o gʲūḏɛ́t* means 'of corn'. It is noteworthy that the assimilation of vowel quality described above for terms beginning with a guttural consonant also applies to /g/, despite Johnstone's exclusion of this phoneme from this phenomenon (JL, xxix–xxx).

10.5. Negation

The unmarked negator for both verbal and nominal phrases is the circumfix *ɔ(l)… lɔ* (Rubin 2014, 330):

> *ɔ tékən lhes ɔ̄z ɛ nkśɔ́t lɛ-ɛnuf e-skinᵊ lɔ* 'don't be like a goat who found the knife' (entry **(7)** of the al-Shahri collection)

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complex situation, whereby the two prefixes have their own respective functions, and only seldom overlap.

fɛ́ḳər ɔl ʕīb lɔ ‘poverty is no sin’ (entry **(2)** of the elicited proverbs collection)

However, as described in the conclusions chapter, there exist several variants to this norm.

10.6. Independent Personal Pronouns and Personal Suffixes

Table 6: Jibbali/Śḥərɛ́ṯ independent personal pronouns

	Singular	**Dual**	**Plural**
1.C.	he	(ə)šši	nḥa(n)
2.M.	hɛt	(ə)ti	tum̥
2.F.	hit		tɛn̥
3.M.	šɛ	ši	šum̥
3.F.	sɛ		sɛn̥

Dual personal pronouns are now largely obsolete, and do not appear in the expressions analysed in this study.

Table 7: Personal suffixes (for singular / plural nouns)

	Singular	**Dual**	**Plural**
1.C.	-i	-(ə)šši / -ɛ́šši	-(ə)n / -ɛ́n
2.M.	-(ə)k / -ɛ́k	-(ə)šši / -ɛ́šši	-(ə)kum / -ɔ́kum
2.F.	-(ə)š̃ / -ɛ́š̃		-(ə)kən / -ɛ́kən
3.M.	-(ə)š / -ɛ́š	-(ə)ši / -ɛ́ši	-(ə)hum / -ɔ́hum
3.F.	-(ə)s / -ɛ́s		-(ə)sən / -ɛ́sən

These suffixes may express possession and the direct object of a verb (Rubin 2014, 48). The latter can also be expressed by

attaching these suffixes to the pseudo-preposition (or direct object marker) *t-* (Rubin 2014, 54). When this is the case, the following forms result:

Table 8: Direct object marker + personal suffixes

	Singular	**Dual**	**Plural**
1.C.	tɔ	tɔ̃ši	tun
2.M.	tɔk	tɔ̃ši	tókum
2.F.	tɔs̃		tókən
3.M.	tɔš	tɔ́ši	tóhum
3.F.	tɔs		tósən

This rule is not invariable, and some exceptions do exist, especially with regard to the vowels. For example, some speakers from the Kuria Muria archipelago whose speech was recorded in the 1980s use [ə] instead of [ɔ]:

her ṯōron təš b-e-rɛbˀreb i-núkaʕ 'when we break it into the sea, it comes' (Castagna 2018, 139)

10.7. Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t verbal classes

The following table (after al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 180) summarises the most productive verbal classes of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t.[32]

[32] The forms recorded correspond to the verbal morphology of a speaker of eastern Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t from Gufa.

Table 9: Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t verbal classes[i]

(For notes to Table 9, see p. 42.)

Verbal class	Gloss	Perfective Third person[ii]	Imperfective 3.M.SG.	Subjunctive 3.M.SG.
Ga	to be able	ḳɔdɔ́r	yəḳɔ́dər	yɔ́ḳdər
Gb	to shiver with fear	féḏ̲ər	yəfeḏ̲ɔ́r	yəfḏ̲ɔ́r
H1[iii]	to escape	əfflét	yəffelɔ́t	yɛ́flət
H2	to cut the limbs of (a slaughtered animal)	əgúdəl	yəgúdələn	yəgɔ́dəl
H3	to distract	əġɛ́́fəl	yəġɛ́́fələn	yəġɛ́́fəl
H4	to separate	əbdéd	yəbdédən	yəbdéd
H5	to guide	ədelél	yədelélən	yədelél
T1	to become poor	fɔ́ṭḳər	yəfteḳɔ́r	yəftéḳər
T2	to watch	əfterég	yəfterégən	yəfterɔ́g
Š1[iv]	to lack, miss	šəḳṣér	yəšḳeṣɔ́r	yəšɛ́ḳṣər
Š2	to bargain	šəḳɛ́́ṣər	yəšḳɛ́́ṣərən	yəšḳɛ́́ṣər
ᵠH1[v]	to hurl	ġəḏ̲fér	yəġɛḏ̲efɔ́r	yəġáḏ̲fər
ᵠN1	to fall down	əngərdéś	yəngērdɔ́ś	yəngɛ́rdəś
ᵠH2	to stare haggardly	əṣenīfər	yəṣenɪ́́fərən	yəṣenɛ́́fər
ᵠN2	(of a camel) to roll in the dust	ənbəʕɛ́́r	yənbəʕɛ́́rən	yənbəʕɛ́́r
ᵠY	to shriek	ṣəġirér	yəṣġirér	yəṣġír
ᵠNY	to go pale	ənʕifirér	yənʕifirér	yənʕáffər

Notes to Table 9

[i] For a thorough overview of the verbal paradigms, see Rubin (2014), Dufour (2016), and al-Kathiri and Dufour (2020).

[ii] 3.M.SG., 3.M.PL, and 3.F.PL forms of the perfective are identical.

[iii] Al-Kathiri and Dufour's transcription records the H-stems as Ȟ1, Ȟ2, Ȟ3, Ȟ4, and Ȟ5. The caron above the H means that the etymological /h/ of the prefixed morpheme of these verbal classes has disappeared in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t.

[iv] In al-Kathiri and Dufour's transcription, the S of this and the following verbal class have a tilde <~> instead of a caron above. This is because the Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t prefix is a voiceless alveo-palatal labialised sibilant /šˇ/ (Bellem and Watson 2017), rather than a plain voiceless palato-alveolar sibilant /š/.

[v] Q stands for quadriliteral. Hence these verbal classes apply to quadriliteral and quinqueliteral (true and reduplicated) roots.

According to al-Kathiri and Dufour (2020, 181), however, H4, H5, ^{Q}H2, and ^{Q}N2 stems are rare.

The above table does not take into account anisomorphic roots, that is (al-Kathiri and Dufour 2020, 186):

> When a root is used in a class where the number of slots in the patterns exceeds that of the consonants in the root, the last one or two consonants of the root are repeated to fill in the exceeding slots. But in such cases (i.e., when the root is 'too short' or anisomorphic), the pattern eventually selected will often differ from the default pattern for a given morphological cell.

Each of the above verbal classes tends to convey a certain nuance of meaning:[33]

- Ga- and Gb-stems represent the basic triliteral verb, with the Gb-stem comprising verbs of quality (Dufour 2016, 94).
- The H1-stem is primarily causative, but can also be purely lexical and not convey any causative meaning (Rubin 2014, 118).
- The H2-stem[34] comprises denominative verbs and is used to form the causative of intransitive verbs (Rubin 2014, 112).
- The H3-stem is similar in semantic value to the H2-stem (Dufour 2016, 94).
- The H4- and H5-stems are too rare to make generalisations as to their semantics.

[33] However, this principle is not universal.

[34] This verbal class is called D/L-stem in Johnstone's and Rubin's works.

- The Š1-stem conveys an array of semantic nuances, comprising causative-reflexive, causative-passive, reflexive, passive, and estimative, as well as a few lexical verbs (Rubin 2014, 122–23).
- The Š2-stem is mainly reciprocal, although this class also contains a few lexical verbs (Rubin 2014, 125–26).
- T1-stem verbs can be reciprocal, passive, intransitive, or reflexive. This class too includes a few lexical verbs (Rubin 2014, 128).
- The T2-stem seems to be in a derivational relationship with the H2-stem, whereby a T2-stem is often a passive, reflexive, or reciprocal of the corresponding H2-stem. This verbal class also contains many Arabic loans from forms V and VI (Rubin 2014, 131–32).
- Quadriliteral and quinqueliteral verbs usually describe complex, unusual, or extreme circumstances, events, and actions. The N-stems of quadriliterals and quinqueliterals are usually reflexives and intransitives.

11.0. Methodology and Presentation

Most of the proverbs, sayings and idiomatic expressions presented in this study have been extracted from the above-mentioned sources by means of careful perusal over a two-year period between 2021 and 2023. With regard to the al-Shahri collection, the tokens had already been analysed in Castagna (2022a), to which the present analysis owes much. However, new details regarding the al-Shahri collection emerged in the period between

2022 and 2023, thanks to S. al-Amri's work and invaluable insights. These have been implemented in the existing analysis. As for the other sources, which, unlike al-Shahri's, do not come with audio recordings, the selected tokens were recorded by S. al-Amri in the form of mobile phone voice notes, and subsequently analysed by both authors over the telephone or video-calls. When the written texts do not match S. al-Amri's rendition, this is made clear in the relevant entry.

Besides the paremiological interest of this study, nearly all the entries feature a brief grammatical commentary which describes the contents of the utterance in linguistic terms. Where relevant, the equivalent proverb in Mehri is provided: the Mehri proverbs are taken from Sima (2005) and the Mehri Lexicon (ML). The latter is Johnstone's Mehri lexicon. The former is a work of the late Austrian scholar Alexander Sima, who presents 101 proverbs in the Mehri dialect of Hawf, Yemen.[35] With regard to the transcription system used in this work, it resembles that of JL, except for the character <ä>, which is used to represent a front to central mid-high vowel.[36] In terms of presentation, each

[35] An interesting (and apparently inexplicable) feature of Sima's proverb collection *vis-à-vis* al-Shahri's is that in both collections the entries are presented in exactly the same order. Some sort of traditional citation order presented itself as the most intriguing (and not unlikely) explanation for such a coincidence. However, when contacted by S. al-Amri, Ali al-Shahri denied the existence of such a citation order and stated that the presentation order in his collection is totally random.

[36] See Sima (2009, 10–22) for a description of Sima's transcription system.

source is treated differently. Here follows a summary of the presentation styles used for each source:

- The Language of Aad

  (entry number)
  Proverb transcription in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t
  Original English translation (from the text)
  الترجمة باللغة العربية (Arabic translation)

- MLZ

  (entry number) reference
  Proverb transcription in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t
  المثل الجبالي\الشحري بالنسخ الاصلي (Proverb in the original Arabic transcription)
  الترجمة في اللغة العربية (Arabic translation)
  English translation

- JL

  (entry number) reference
  Proverb transcription in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t
  Original English translation

- Elicited proverbs

  (entry number)
  Proverb transcription in Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t
  المثل الجبالي\الشحري (Proverb in Arabic transcription)
  English translation

The MLZ and elicited entries have been translated into English by the authors, whereas those from al-Shahri and JL are pre-

sented with their original English translation. An Arabic translation for the JL and elicited entries is provided below (§4.0). The Mehri proverbs presented as equivalents of Jibbali/Śḥərɛ̄́t items are reported with Sima's German translation.

12.0. Glossing

1 = first person
2 = second person
3 = third person
M = masculine
F = feminine
C = common gender
SG = singular
PL = plural

As mentioned above, the 3.M.SG., 3.M.PL., and 3.F.PL. of the perfective are identical in all verbal forms. Therefore, when encountered, they are labelled as 'third person' in this wor