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The broken plural in Soqotri[1]

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To the memory of Robert Ratcliffe

Abstract
The article investigates the broken pural in the Modern South Arabian language Soqotri (island of Soqotra, Gulf of Aden, Yemen). It is based on extensive field research and rich collections of lexical evidence. Primarily synchronic in its approach, the article pays attention to historical problems of Modern South Arabian and Semitic phonology and morphology whenever appropriate.
Keywords: Semitic, Modern South Arabian, Soqotri, Nominal morphology, Plural formation

I. Introduction

Like many other aspects of Soqotri morphology, the present subject has practically no history of research: since Bittner's pioneering remarks (1918: 62–6), the Soqotri broken plural has not been discussed in the scholarly literature, even within the summary descriptions of Modern South Arabian as a group.[2] We are lucky, however, to have a clearly elaborated theoretical and comparative background for our study, namely, Robert Ratcliffe's groundbreaking studies on the broken plural in Semitic (1998a, 1998b). Of particular value for our investigation are Ratcliffe's instructive overviews of the comparable systems in Soqotri's sister tongues, Harsusi (1998a: 189–95; 1998b: 93–5) and especially Jibbali (1998a: 196–201; 1998b: 95–7).

This article is based on an exhaustive perusal of the glossaries of the two volumes of Kogan and Naumkin, *Corpus of Soqotri Oral Literature* (CSOL I, 2014, and CSOL II, 2018). For most patterns, exhaustive – or nearly exhaustive – lists of examples have been compiled, which makes these findings relevant also from a quantitative point of view: they show how frequent (or, for that

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2 Such as Johnstone 1975 and Simeone-Senelle 1997; 2011. Recent surveys on comparable phenomena in continental MSA can be found in Rubin 2010: 66–8, Watson 2012: 58–60 (Mehri) and Rubin 2014: 82–4 (Jibbali), none aiming at exhaustiveness. A more detailed – even if, in many respects, undoubtedly outdated – treatment of the continental evidence can be found in Bittner 1909: 50–76 (Mehri) and 1915: 47–56 (Jibbali). For Mehri see further Jahn 1905: 35–69.

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matter, regular or productive)[3] is this or that pattern (or, better, this or that singular/plural correlation).

The phonological system of Soqotri vowels, of crucial relevance for any study in the field of Soqotri morphology, follows Kogan and Naumkin 2014, where only five vocalic elements are considered phonemic: *a*, *e*, *o*, *i*, *u* (the latter of rather limited distinctive load). The distinction between *a* and *ɛ*, usually conditioned by the surrounding consonants and, therefore, essentially non-phonemic, will nevertheless be maintained in the transcription.

The main goal of this article is to produce an accurate description of the synchronic facts based on solid lexical evidence. No fully-fledged diachronic assessment of the Soqotri system of broken plural has been attempted. Still, a few basic historical observations will be given where appropriate, both in the main body of the article and its concluding section.

Before proceeding to the evidence, I would like to offer a word of gratitude to our beloved Soqotri informants, ʻIsa Gumʻan al-Daʻrhi and Ahmad ʻIsa al-Daʻrhi, whose extraordinary linguistic skills and exemplary devotion have made this study possible. The article is dedicated to the memory of Robert Ratcliffe, whose revolutionary ideas on the broken plural problem have influenced me so profoundly from my earliest student days up to now.

II. The evidence

a. Singular nouns with *e* or *i* in the last syllable (mostly, but not exclusively, quadriconsonantal) typically produce plurals with *a*-replacement[4] (*o* < **ā* or **ā́*)[5]

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *éʾteb*	*éʾtob*	"kind of tree (*Ficus caudata*)"[6]
[**2**] *áʿteb*	*áʿtob*	"raven"
[**3**] *aʿarhíyeb*	*aʿarhíyob*	"dragon blood tree (*Dracaena cinnabari*)"
[**4**] *édbeher*	*édbehor*	"bee"
[**5**] *él̓el̓*	*éɬhoɬ*	"female goat-kid"[7]
[**6**] *érkeṣ*	*érkaṣ*	"teat"[8]
[**7**] *ʿífef*	*ʿífof*	"goat kid"

3 For these notions as applied to our problem see Ratcliffe's important observations (1998a: 68).

4 This essential concept goes back to Greenberg's classic article (1955).

5 Bittner 1918: 66. For the time being, we will take for granted the widespread – and, in essence, undoubtedly correct – assumption that long **ā* and stressed short **a* yield *o* in Soqotri and MSA in general (Ratcliffe 1998a: 189, 196 and elsewhere). Further remarks on this shift will be made throughout this article, but a final assessment cannot be possible without an eventual comprehensive inquiry into the historical phonology of MSA.

6 Here and below, scientific names of plants are taken from Miller and Morris 2004.

7 On the two *l*-phonemes of Soqotri and their alternations see, provisionally, CSOL I, pp. 12–13, Naumkin et al. 2014: 29.

8 In this example, as well as in [**14**] and [**40**], *a* instead of *o* in the second syllable is due to the secondary influence of the neighbouring consonants.

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a. Continued

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[8] *ʿáreb*	*ʿárob*	"lower neck"
[9] *déftim*	*déftom*	"ant"
[10] *fẽ̂fẽ̂*	*fẽ̂fôfô*	"bank of a wadi"
[11] *ḥóuľeheľ*	*ḥóuḷehoḷ*	"fingering"
[12] *ḥáẑheľ*	*ḥáẑhoḷ*	"woollen mantle"
[13] *ḳánfer*	*ḳánfor*	"pedicle of a date"[9]
[14] *kérʾḥeľ*	*kérʾḥaḷ*	"testicle"
[15] *ḳáreb*	*ḳárob*	"wound"
[16] *ḳáśʿer*	*ḳáśʿor*	"skin vessel"[10]
[17] *ľáʿanhin*	*ľáʿanhon*	"gills"
[18] *ḷébḷeb*	*ḷébḷob*	"stem"
[19] *miʾírhir*	*miʾírhor*	"lamp"
[20] *máʿabher*	*máʿabhor*	"boulder"
[21] *máʿref*	*máʿrof*	"glass"[11]
[22] *mégeŝ*	*mégoŝ*	"grazing area"
[23] *máḥber*	*máḥbor*	"hundred"
[24] *máḥľes*	*máḥḷos*	"little stone"
[25] *máḥref*	*máḥrof*	"friend"
[26] *méḳreš*	*méḳroš*	"naked; indigent"
[27] *mɛ́ľyeṭ*	*mɛ́ľyoṭ*	"feather"
[28] *mérkhin*	*mérkhon*	"knot"
[29] *menaḥághin*	*menaḥághon*	"toy"
[30] *menfɛ́yreher*	*menfɛ́yrohor*	"placenta (of women)"
[31] $m^{e}šḥ^{a}ľib$	$m^{e}šḥ^{a}ḷob$	"skin vessel for milk"
[32] *méškeľ*	*méškoḷ*	"blanket"[12]
[33] *mešéḳheľ*	*mešéḳhoḷ*	"tree trunk filling the space between the large beams and the long sides of the house"
[34] *métrer*	*métror*	"a tree (*Croton socotranus*)"
[35] *métfeľ*	*métfoḷ*	"plastering"
[36] *métḷehem*	*métḷohom*	"beloved one"
[37] *méžred*	*méžrod*	"rib of a palm-branch"
[38] *náḥrer*	*náḥror*	"nose"
[39] *nésŷes*	*nésŷos*	"splinter"

Continued

9 Or rather "the hard disc at the flower end of a date". Here and elsewhere below, alternative definitions proposed by Miranda Morris are adduced in footnotes. For these friendly suggestions I am deeply grateful to Dr Morris, a brilliant expert on Soqotri *realia* (and a competent native speaker of English). The background of the – mostly subtle – discrepancies between these definitions and those I was able to obtain from my Soqotri informants remains to be investigated.

10 "A skin or hide which has had the skin removed but has not yet been tanned, cut and stitched to make a bag or a container."

11 "Scoop, ladle."

12 "Any piece of any material used by someone as a wrap or covering."

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a. Continued

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**40**] *ṣábḥeľ*	*ṣábʾḥaḷ*	"opening of a water-skin"
[**41**] *ṣáfrer*	*ṣáfror*	"flower"
[**42**] *záʿadhim*	*záʿadhom*	"mouse"
[**43**] *zédeg*	*zédog*	"evil spirit"

There are several groups of examples displaying more complex developments certainly or very probably along the same lines.

- Examples where the emergence of *o* in the second syllable is simultaneous with a vocalic shift in the first syllable (most probably a kind of vocalic accommodation): ***míšher***, pl. ***máḳhor*** "goat pen", ***míʾšer***, pl. ***médkor*** "billy goat",[13] ***ḥímhim***, pl. ***ḥémhom*** "charcoal", ***ḷéḳham***, pl. ***ḷáḳhom*** "kind of tree (*Commiphora parvifolia*)"[14], ***móṣfin***, pl. ***méṣfon*** "something plaited", ***ṣéľheľ***, pl. ***ṣóḷhoḷ*** "a little wadi", ***kémbeb***, pl. ***kómbob*** "remains of dry leaves on a palm trunk", ***ḳeḥíľhin***, pl. ***ḳaḥéḷhon*** "egg". No clear-cut rules can be posited for this limited and rather heterogeneous evidence, but the main trend is clear: *e* and especially *i* tend to be avoided in the plural form, being replaced by *a*/*ɛ* or *o*.
- Examples where the vowel of the second syllable is *a*/*ɛ* rather than *o*: ***férhim***, pl. ***férhɛm*** "girl", ***míṯhɛn***, pl. ***máṯan*** "a shrub", ***ʿázgeheľ***, pl. ***ʿázgɛhɛḷ*** "penis". While the attribution of these examples to the present class appears tempting,[15] the unexpected behaviour of the vowel in the second syllable of the plural form is difficult to explain.
- Varia: ***kɛn***, pl. ***kóhon*** "colour, shape", ***méraḥt***, pl. ***méroḥt*** "eating mat", ***šɛm***, pl. ***šóhom*** "name", ***tɛ***, pl. ***tóho*** "meat", ***tɛyš***, pl. ***toš*** "he-goat used as a sire".[16]

The historical background of this type of broken plural formation has been discussed at some length in Kogan 2015: 476–7, where it is considered one of the hallmarks of the linguistic identity of MSA.[17] For the comparative evidence from continental MSA see Bittner 1909: 70–71, Rubin 2010: 66–7, Watson 2012: 58 (Mehri); Ratcliffe 1998a: 193 (Harsusi); Bittner 1915: 55–6, Ratcliffe 1998a: 200, Rubin 2014: 82–3 (Jibbali).[18]

13 For palatalizing alternations *k* > *š* and *ḳ* > *ṣ̌* in Soqotri nouns v. CSOL I, pp. 16–17.
14 Miller and Morris 2004: 468.
15 As seen already by Bittner (1918: 66) in connection with *férhim* "girl", pl. *férhɛm*.
16 Cf. Bittner 1918: 64.
17 See also Johnstone 1975: 21, Ratcliffe 1998a: 210 and, *in nuce*, Bittner 1918: 66.
18 In Mehri, the vowel of the second syllable is long in both singular and plural, but at least in some cases – such as *kəbkēb* "star", pl. *kəbkōb* (ML 201) – the length is obviously secondary (< PS **kabkab*-). It is, therefore, very difficult to say whether *o* in Soqotri goes back to a long or short *a* in this case. Total absence of "parasitic *h*" from the relevant examples would speak for a short vowel in the prototype, but this criterion seems to be less reliable than commonly believed (see Section **h** below).

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b. Plurals of quadriconsonantal nouns with *a*-insertion (the "*maktab-* > *makātib-*" type)[19]

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[1] *ʿánḵeher*	*ʿanóḵhir*	"anus"
[2] *ʿázgeheľ*	*ʿazóghiľ*	"penis"
[3] *degdége*	*dɛgódig*	"open field, flat plains area"
[4] *gemgémo*	*gamóghim*	"skull"
[5] *ḥánžeher*	*ḥanóžhir*	"neck opening of a skin vessel"
[6] *miʾmímo*	*moʾómhim*	"rope"
[7] *maʿmído*	*moʿómid*	"pillow"
[8] *maʿríḳo*	*moʿóriḳ*	"ring, something circular"
[9] *maʿrízo*	*moʿóriz*	"fold of garment"[20]
[10] *maʿṭíṭo*	*moʿóṭiṭ*	"cover, lid"
[11] *máʿẑad*	*moʿóẑid*	"door-post"
[12] *médrak*	*medórik*	"stars predicting rainfall"
[13] *máḥyeṭ*	*moḥóyiṭ*	"needle"
[14] *maḥžíľo*	*moḥóžhiľ*	"doorstep"
[15] *méḳṣe*	*meḳóṣhi*	"bottom of the precipice"
[16] *mihľóʿo*	*mɛyʰóľiʿ*	"shadow"
[17] *mehⁱḳéfo*	*meyʰóḳif*	"flat stones to roof a house"[21]
[18] *meṣrére*	*meṣórhir*	"carrying pole"
[19] *meskído*	*mesókid*	"a flat stone"
[20] *mešfíno*	*mešófin*	"a large, flat stone, whetstone"
[21] *meŝḥímo*	*meŝóḥim*	"scratch, abrasion"
[22] *meŝrígo*	*mɛŝórig*	"big needle, awl"
[23] *meŝróḥo*	*meŝóriḥ*	"young palm"
[24] *metníyo*	*metónhi*	"tooth"
[25] *mezdére*	*meṣódhir*	"woollen mantle"
[26] *meẑaḷóʿo*	*meẑóľiʿ*	"lateral incisor"[22]
[27] *sébro*	*sɛbórhi*	"a shrub (*Jatropha unicostata*)"
[28] *temtíľo*	*tamótiľ*	"story"
[29] *tentíro*	*tenótir*	"poem"
[30] *gírbag*	*gerébeg*	"cat"
[31] *ḳórẑiʿ*	*ḳeréẑaʿ*	"windpipe"
[32] *móndik*	*menédek*	"placenta (of animals)"
[33] *mónke*	*menéke*	"wound"
[34] *mórkit*	*merékeṭ*	"mat for trampling dates"
[35] *márḳaḥ*	*merékeḥ*	"stick"
[36] *méstaḥ*	*mesétaḥ*	"place for drying dates"
[37] *míškɛk*	*meŝékek*	"skewer, a wooden stick on which cuts of meat are strung"
[38] *móŝriḥ*	*meŝéreḥ*	"iron tool for extracting palm saplings"

Continued

19 Bittner 1918: 65.
20 "Pouch made by looping the material over and above the belt of the loincloth (used for carrying smaller items)."
21 "Roofing extended beyond the walls of a building to provide shelter."
22 This example is unique insofar as there is no consonantal cluster in the singular.

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b. Continued

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**39**] *ŝém**r**aḥ*	*ŝem**é**reḥ*	"little branches in a date cluster"
[**40**] *tér**b**ak*	*ter**é**bek*	"roofed pen"
[**41**] *ʒ̂áf**ʒ̄**af*	*ʒ̂af**é**ʒ̄ef*	"eyelid"
[**42**] *ig**l'**íso*	*eg**é**les*	"plateau"
[**43**] *ím**t**ɛ*	*ɛm**é**ti*	"a tree (*Euphorbia arbuscula*)"
[**44**] *é**k**še*	*ek**é**ši*	"a tree (*Commiphora parvifolia*)"
[**45**] *é**ṣb**e*ˁ	*eṣ**á**bi*ˁ	"finger"
[**46**] *é**l'b**eb*	*eḷ**é**beb*	"heart"
[**47**] ˁ*á**l'ḥ**el'*	ˁ*aḷ**á**ḥɛḷ*	"a tree (*Anisotes diversifolius*)"
[**48**] ˁ*á**ṭr**ehɛ*	ˁ*aṭ**á**rhi*	"a tree (*Cissus hamaderohensis*)"
[**49**] *ke**rʾḥ**il'*	*ke**rá**ʾḥiḷ'*	"testicle"
[**50**] *ḳá**mḥ**in*	*ḳam**á**ḥin*	"the bottle-tree (*Dendrosicyos socotrana*)"
[**51**] *ma*ˁ*ṭ**i**ro*	*má*ˁ*a**ṭh**ɛr*	"small of the back"
[**52**] *mó**ḥl'**ib*	*mɛḥ**é**ḷeb*	"milking place for large cattle"
[**53**] *mé**ḳṭ**af*	*meḳ**á**ṭiʃ*	"load-pack on a camel"
[**54**] *mó**l'ʾḥ**im*	*meḷ**á**ʾḥam*	"area near the pen"[23]
[**55**] *me**rḥ**íyo*	*ma**rá**ḥi*	"tethering rope"[24]
[**56**] *me**ṣḥ**íro*	*maṣ**á**ḥir*	"cauterization"
[**57**] *mé**rˁ**eb*	*me**rá**ˁab*	"central pillar of a house"
[**58**] *sé**ḳl'**heḷ'*	*seḳ**á**ḷheḷ*	"large stone"[25]
[**59**] *ṭá**l'ḥ**in*	*ṭaḷ**á**ḥan*	"spleen"

- The diachronically expected variety of this pattern (examples [**1**]–[**29**]) displays *o* (< **ā* or **ā́*) breaking the C_2C_3 consonantal cluster of the singular and has *i* in the last syllable. Many examples involve *m*V-prefixed nouns, particularly the *me*-$C_1C_2iC_3$-*o* type. Only 7 out of 30 examples from this subgroup do not display the feminine marker in the singular.
- Another prominent type is $C_1eC_1eC_2eC_3$ type (examples [**30**]–[**41**]), whose diachronical background remains to be established.[26] None of the twelve examples involved has the feminine marker.
- The remaining examples ([**42**]–[**59**]) do not easily lend themselves to a diachronic analysis. Most of them must belong to one of the two types discussed above, but the picture has been obscured by the influence of gutturals and emphatics.

For this type of plural formation as a prominent feature of the "South Semitic" area – comprising Arabic,[27] Ethiopian Semitic[28] and MSA (in all probability, also Epigraphic South Arabian)[29] – see Kogan 2015: 167 and 476; and

23 "Grazing reserve (especially for goats); wild area which only goats spend time in."
24 "Noose placed on the ground to catch the foot of an animal."
25 "Ledge on a mountainside under which is an inhabitable cave and above which are further caves; stepped terrace-like terrain."
26 Cf. Bittner 1909: 65: "Das *â* dieser formen erscheint im Soqoṭri als *â*, häufiger als *ô* … aber auch als *ê*".
27 Ratcliffe 1998a: 95–6.
28 Ratcliffe 1998a: 169–70 (Geez), 182–3 (Tigre).
29 Stein 2003: 78–9.

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Bulakh and Kogan 2011: 23–6. For parallel phenomena in continental MSA see Ratcliffe 1998a: 193, (Harsusi); Bittner 1909: 66–9, Jahn 1905: 45– 9 (Mehri); Bittner 1915: 53–5, Ratcliffe 1998a: 199–200, Rubin 2014: 83 (Jibbali).[30]

c. Plurals of the *nomen unitatis/nomen collectivum* type

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[1] *ebtíḳ-**o***	*ébteḳ*	"step"
[2] *edbíb-**o***	*édbeb*	"fly"
[3] *edmíʿ-**o***	*édmaʿ*	"tear"
[4] *igl̓ís-**o***	*égl̓es*	"plateau"
[5] *eḳẖíz-**o***	*éḳẖez*	"stones on the river-bed"
[6] *emʿír-**o***	*émʾḥar*	"the frankincense tree (*Boswellia ameero*)"
[7] *emṣél-**o***	*émṣahaḷ*	"gum of the dragon-blood tree"
[8] *enṭíf-**o***	*énṭaf*	"drop"
[9] *erbéb-**o***	*érbɛb*	"thigh"
[10] *erẑéf-**o***	*érẑef*	"skin on milk"
[11] *eṣfér-**o***	*éṣfɛr*	"sparrow"
[12] *eṣhíro*	*éṣher*	"bread"
[13] *eṣl̓íʿ-**o***	*éṣlaʿ*	"aloe leaf"
[14] *eṣṭíʿ-**o***	*éṣtaʿ*	"spark"
[15] *eṭl̓íf-**o***	*éṭḷef*	"skin on milk"
[16] *ʿaḷbéb-**o***	*ʿáḷbɛb*	"clot of blood"
[17] *fḥŏm-**o***	*fḥam*	"coal, glowing ember"
[18] *feḳrér-**o***	*féḳrɛhɛr*	"neck"
[19] *fs̃ᵉʿ-**e***	*fs̃aʿ*	"fork in a tree branch"[31]
[20] *gɛ̂siʾ-**o***	*gɛ́ŝi*	"kind of tree (*Ochradenus socotranus*)"
[21] *ḥaḷóḷ-**e***	*ḥáḷhoḷ*	"half-ripe date"
[22] *ḥéṣ-**e***	*ḥeṣ*	"palm leaf"
[23] *kebíb-**o***	*kᵉbɛb*	"foam"
[24] *kedér-**e***	*kᵉdɛr*	"rubbish heap"
[25] *l̓eskén-**o***	*l̓éskɛn*	"a plant"
[26] *maḥṣáṣ-**e***	*máḥṣaṣ*	"pebble"
[27] *miŝkél-**o***	*míŝkɛl̓*	"three stones supporting a cooking pot"
[28] *meŝíy-**o***	*méśŝi*	"leather bucket"
[29] *šebíʾ-**o***	*šᵉbɛ*	"gum"
[30] *ŝf-**e***	*ŝef*	"hair"
[31] *ŝkóʿ-**o***	*ŝkaʿ*	"thorn"
[32] *ŝkim-**o***	*ŝkim*	"grain"
[33] *ŝeríḥ-**o***	*ŝᵉraḥ*	"root"
[34] *ŝɛ́ŝíy-**o***	*ŝɛ́ŝi*	"fat on the stomach"
[35] *taʿál̓-**e***	*táʿhɛl̓*	"worm"
[36] *tf̃ér-**e***	*tfɛr*	"excrement of goats and sheep"
[37] *ẓ̂íẓ̂éʿ-**e***	*ẓ̂íẓ̂aʿ*	"a flat stony surface"

30 A characteristic feature of this pattern of pluralization in Jibbali is the very frequent appearance of *b* < **w* before the third consonant (Rubin 2014: 83). The historical background of this phenomenon, also attested in Mehri (Rubin 2010: 67), remains to be elucidated.

31 "New shoot on a branch; side stem, side branch."

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- The high percentage of examples with (presumably, prosthetic) initial vowel ([**1**]–[**15**]) is noteworthy.

As far as one can judge from Ratcliffe 1998a: 193 and 199, this pluralization strategy is uncommon in continental MSA,[32] or at least much less prominent than in Soqotri. In a broader "South Semitic" context, it is well attested in Arabic (Ratcliffe 1998a: 94; Fischer 1987: 49–50) and Tigre (Ratcliffe 1998a: 180–1; Bulakh and Kogan 2011: 8–9, 15–6).[33] However, in none of these languages has the singulative/collective opposition been grammaticalized into a fully-fledged means of pluralization: in both Arabic and Tigre, the collective forms exist side-by-side with "true" broken plurals, to which they can be opposed functionally/semantically.[34] In other words, the Soqotri situation at this point appears to be virtually unique in a comparative (South) Semitic perspective.

d. Patterns with prefixed *ʔV-[35]

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *dɛ́fɛ*	*édfof*	"side"
[**2**] *ṣ́ádher*	*éḳdᵉhor*	"cooking pot"
[**3**] *ḳóme*	*éḳmᵉhom*	"clay vessel"
[**4**] *l'im*	*éḷmhom*	"man-made rainwater catchment"
[**5**] *sɛk*	*éskok*	"roof"
[**6**] *šɛ*	*éštot*	"genitals"
[**7**] *ŝᵉḳa*	*éŝḳoḳ*	"cloak, mantle"
[**8**] *tɛr*	*étror*	"door"
[**9**] *bóyhen*	*ébhɛn*	"a tree (*Sterculia africana*)"
[**10**] *dɛrf*	*édrɛf*	"doorwing"
[**11**] *ḥor*	*áʾḥrɛr*	"goat pen"
[**12**] *ḥarf*	*áʾḥrɛf*	"mountain slope"
[**13**] *ḳarf*	*éḳrɛf*	"bracelet"
[**14**] *rɛ́ged*	*érgɛd*	"hollow in a mountain"[36]
[**15**] *naḥf*	*énḥef*	"potsherd"
[**16**] *ri*	*érʾeš*	"head"
[**17**] *ŝaks*	*éŝkes*	"rock, cliff"
[**18**] *taḥk*	*étḥek*	"coarse sand, gravel"
[**19**] *ẓ́áʾed*	*éẓ́ʾed*	"ziziphus tree (*Ziziphus spina-christi*)"
[**20**] *míl'ḥo*	*émḷaḥ*	"salt"
[**21**] *náḥar*	*énḥar*	"lineage"
[**22**] *ráḳad*	*érḳad*	"mountain ledge"

32 A few remarkable examples from Jibbali can be found in Bittner 1915: 49. Cf. also Ratcliffe 1998a: 193 for Harsusi.

33 But not in Geez (Ratcliffe 1998a: 169). As pointed out by Ratcliffe (1998a: 181), the actual number of clear-cut examples of the singulative/collective opposition in Tigre is quite low (only eight examples in Palmer 1962: 52). See further fn. 82.

34 Ratcliffe 1998a: 94 (Arabic) and 182 (Tigre).

35 For a penetrating early overview see Bittner 1918: 63.

36 "Overhang, shallow cave, often running along a ledge, not high in a mountainside but near flat ground."

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d. Continued

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**23**] *raḥ*	*érwaḥ*	"wind"
[**24**] *réṭḥe*	*érṭaḥ*	"cut of meat"
[**25**] *ṣeʿífo*	*éṣʿaf*	"dead fruit in a date cluster"
[**26**] *ṣífḥa*	*éṣfaḥ*	"rag"
[**27**] *ṣöḥlo*	*éṣḥaḷ*	"bone"
[**28**] *ṭáfḥa*	*étfaḥ*	"mountain slope"
[**29**] *fóter*	*eftɛ́ro*	"fruit stalk"
[**30**] *kaḷb*	*ekḷébo*	"dog"
[**31**] *nóy^{h}er*	*eny^{h}éro*	"bird"
[**32**] *rɛgf*	*ergɛ́fo*	"a small cave"
[**33**] *ŝéhɛr*	*eŝhɛ́ro*	"month; crescent"
[**34**] *ṭayf*	*eṭyɛ́fo*	"aloe (*Aloe perryi*)"
[**35**] *dénob*	*ednébe*	"tail"
[**36**] *gézhɛr*	*egzére*	"leather vessel"
[**37**] *ṣőbhor*	*eṣbére*	"tamarind (*Tamarindus indica*)"
[**38**] *ʿáṣab*	*aʿṣábo*	"small branch"
[**39**] *darṣ*	*edráṣo*	"abomasum"
[**40**] *gáḥi*	*egḥáyo*	"wadi"
[**41**] *nakf*	*enḳáfo*	"cloth"
[**42**] *naṣf*	*enṣáfo*	"side"
[**43**] *r^{e}ḥa*	*erḥáyo*	"handmill"
[**44**] *ráḳab*	*erḳábo*	"a good pasture ground"
[**45**] *fóti*	*eftóʾo*	"clay vessel"
[**46**] *góde*ʿ	*egdóʿo*	"tree trunk"
[**47**] *kóte*	*ektóʾo*	"inflammation"
[**48**] *nóse*	*ensóʾo*	"palm fibre"
[**49**] *sófe*	*esfóʾo*	"remains of palm fibre on the trunk"
[**50**] *ṣóde*	*eṣdóʾo*	"fish"
[**51**] *ṭaḥ*	*eṭyóḥo*	"seashore"
[**52**] *ẓarḥ*	*eẓróḥo*	"lower slopes of a mountain, shrubbed foothills"
[**53**] *ʿáni*	*áʿanhɛ*	"leather vessel"
[**54**] *kóde*	*ékdo*	"plateau with small elevations"[37]
[**55**] *ṣáre*	*éṣrɛhɛ*	"knife"
[**56**] *šélʾhi*	*éšḷo*	"Soqotra/Somali starling (*Onychognatus*)"[38]
[**57**] *ŝérhi*	*éŝre*	"skin"
[**58**] *tíyo*	*éṭhi*	"gorge"

- Examples [**1**]–[**8**] display the pattern *e*C_1C_2*o*C_3, which can be confidently traced back to *ʔV-$C_1C_2\bar{a}C_3$-, reliably attested in Arabic,[39] Ethiopian Semitic[40] and, within MSA, in Jibbali.[41] Nearly all of them represent

37 "Area of rolling hills, plain foothills which are bare of vegetation."
38 Wranik 2003: 506.
39 Ratcliffe 1998a: 77–81.
40 Ratcliffe 1998a: 166–9 (Geez), 1998a: 177 (Tigre). See further Bulakh and Kogan 2013: 78–9.
41 Ratcliffe 1998a: 196–7.

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geminated consonantal roots ($C_1C_2C_2$);[42] the only example from a geminated root that does not take this pattern is [**11**] *ḥor*, pl. *áʾḥrɛr* "goat pen".

- Examples [**9**]–[**14**] and [**15**]–[**19**] belong to the patterns *e*C_1C_2*ɛ*C_3 and *e*C_1C_2*e*C_3 respectively, both diachronically uncertain.[43]
- Examples [**20**]–[**28**] cannot be reliably attributed to any of the above groups because the vocalism of the second syllable is obscured by the influence of the gutturals and/or emphatics.
- Examples with the feminine ending (Bittner 1918: 64) comprise one group with *ɛ*-vocalism ([**29**]–[**34**]) and another with *e*-vocalism ([**35**]–[**37**]). In the former the feminine ending is *-o*, while in the latter it is *-e*.[44]
- In examples [**38**]–[**44**] the original vocalism is obscured by the neighbouring gutturals and emphatics; the feminine ending is uniformly *-o*.
- In examples [**45**]–[**52**] the vowel of the second syllable has become *o* because of the vocalic harmony around the last radical guttural.
- Examples [**53**]–[**58**] are derived from roots with the third weak radical and do not follow any systematic pattern.

As one learns from Ratcliffe 1998a: 196–7, the Soqotri inventory of *ʾV-prefixed broken plurals comes very close to the Jibbali system,[45] where the patterns $VC_1C_2ɔC_3$, $VC_1C_2ɛC_3$ and $VC_1C_2eC_3$-*t* are all common, and contrasts with the Harsusi system, where *ʾV-prefixed patterns do not seem to play any significant role (cf. the summary of the Harsusi system in Ratcliffe 1998a: 195). The same is true of the Mehri system as described in Rubin 2010: 66–8 (but note Bittner 1909: 63–4).

42 A few non-geminated Jibbali examples are listed in Ratcliffe 1998a: 196–7. However, the prominent position of geminated roots in the cognate Jibbali plural pattern has been noted by Ratcliffe (1998a: 233), who explains it by reduplication of the second root consonant in (originally) biconsonantal nouns. One is tempted to ascertain whether some true geminated roots are also involved, but, at least for Soqotri, etymology is of little help here, as nearly all relevant lexemes are diachronically opaque.

43 In a comparative perspective, *ʾV-$C_1C_2ā$$C_3$- and *ʾV-$C_1C_2u$$C_3$- are the only options available. Within the first possibility, one has to postulate a (hitherto unexplained) split of *ʾV-$C_1C_2ā$$C_3$- into *e*$C_1C_2o$$C_3$ vs. *e*$C_1C_2ɛC_3$/*e*$C_1C_2e$$C_3$, with a further, similarly unexplained, difference between *ɛ*- and *e*-examples. The second alternative implies that **u* can be reflected as *ɛ* and/or *e*, which remains to be co-ordinated with further data on the development of **u* in Soqotri.

44 The vocalic difference in the second syllable is perplexing, but the different nature of the feminine endings – a stressed *-*át* > *-o* and an unstressed *-*at* > *-e* – readily suggests itself as a possible solution, to be developed within a more comprehensive inquiry into the history of MSA vocalism. From the comparative point of view, there are only two plural patterns with prefixed *ʾ*a*- and a feminine ending, viz. *ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2i$$C_3$-*at*- and *ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2u$$C_3$-*at*-. As rightly seen by Ratcliffe (1998b: 90), the former option is scarcely feasible here: the Arabic pattern ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2i$$C_3$-*at*- is a minor feature strictly associated with bisyllabic singular bases with a long *ā* in the second syllable. We are thus left with *ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2u$$C_3$-*at*-, presumably underlying the ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2ɔC_3$-*t* in Ethiopian (Ratcliffe 1998a: 166–8; Bulakh and Kogan 2013: 78–9), which of necessity presupposes that **u* can yield *ɛ* and/or *e* in Soqotri (cf. fn. 85).

45 So already Bittner 1918: 63. A good collection of Jibbali examples can be found in Bittner 1915: 50–52.

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e. Plurals in *-ihin*, *-hin*, *-in*

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *égh̬on*	*égnihin*	"stone wall"
[**2**] *ʿádho*	*ʿádhin*	"mountain pass"
[**3**] *fédhon*	*fédnhin*	"mountain"
[**4**] *ḥábhoḷ*	*ḥábl̓ihin*	"straps for climbing palm trees"[46]
[**5**] *ḥfor*	*ḥ^{a}frin*	"burrow, hole"
[**6**] *só^{ʾ}hor*	*sí^{ʾ}irhin*	"a shrub (*Lycium sokotranum*)"[47]
[**7**] *šího*	*šíhin*	"lower back"
[**8**] *ško*	*škin*	"sword"
[**9**] *šérhom*	*šérmhin*	"tree"
[**10**] *tɛ́bhor*	*tébrehin*	"wall"
[**11**] *zéreg*	*zérghin*	"narrow path in the mountains"

As argued in Kogan 2015: 474–5, the traditional perception of such forms – both in Soqotri and throughout MSA – as reflecting the "sound masculine plural"[48] can scarcely be correct. There are two main reasons behind this conclusion.

On the one hand, nouns using this way of pluralization in MSA do not belong to morphological classes which normally use external masculine plural in languages where broken plurals are available – namely, "derived nouns such as participles and verbal nouns" (Ratcliffe 1998a: 219).[49] Indeed, as the chart above plainly shows, the relevant Soqotri lexemes belong to simple morphological structures (most of them can be reasonably qualified as "primary nouns") which, both formally and functionally, are totally different from participles of derived stems or *nomina agentis* of Arabic and Geez, typically pluralized with the external masculine markers *-ūna*/*-īna* and *-ān* respectively.

On the other hand, practically all the Soqotri forms involved display *o* (presumably < **ā*) in the second syllable of the singular[50] – a feature known to be associated with the $C_1iC_2C_3ān$- pattern in Arabic (Ratcliffe 1998a: 86).[51]

46 "Plaited cow-leather support used when climbing date palms."
47 Miller and Morris 2003: 687.
48 Bittner 1909: 46–9, 1915: 41, Ratcliffe 1998a: 195, 203, Rubin 2010: 64, 2014: 79–80.
49 Cf. Bittner 1909: 46.
50 Exactly the same as in Mehri (Bittner 1909: 47, Rubin 2010: 64) and Jibbali (Bittner 1915: 41, Rubin 2014: 79–80).
51 Cf. *ɣazāl-* > *ɣizlān-* "gazelle", *ɣulām-* > *ɣilmān-* "boy" and many similar examples. One has to admit that the *i*-vowel in the Soqotri plural forms does not match, at first sight, the expected **ā* in the protoform. It should be kept in mind, however, that our knowledge of Soqotri historical phonology is too limited for such a negative conclusion. Compare, for example, such verbal nouns as *ʿaríbhin* "knowledge" or *nikírhin* "nostalgia", where *-hin* is very likely going back to **-ān*, or the primary noun *líšin* "tongue", almost inevitably traceable to **lišān-*.

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f. Plurals in -*y^{h}on*[52]

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *bέbɛ*	*bɛbéy^{h}on*	"father"
[**2**] *dédo*	*dedéy^{h}on*	"paternal uncle"
[**3**] *ḥaľéľe*	*ḥaḷeḷéy^{h}on*	"maternal uncle"
[**4**] *ḳáḳa*	*ḳaḳáy^{h}on*	"brother; sister"
[**5**] *móʿa*	*mɛmáʿy^{h}on*	"grand-father"
[**6**] *nínhi*	*nenéy^{h}on*	"elder brother"

This small group comprises exclusively kinship terms, probably brought together via semantic attraction.[53] It is difficult to say why these nouns opted for an *n*-extended broken plural. Since most of the singulars are (synchronically) biconsonantal, Arabic examples like *nār-* "fire", pl. *nīrān-*, extensively discussed in Ratcliffe 1998a: 85–6, readily come to mind as a possible analogy.[54]

g. The $C_1éC_2(h)oC_3$ pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *óben*	*ǒbhon*	"stone"[55]
[**2**] *bádaḷ*	*bédhoḷ*	"dung"
[**3**] *fóľhi*	*fέḷho*	"calf"
[**4**] *gádaḷ*	*gédhoḷ*	"plait of hair"
[**5**] *gášaḷ*	*géšhoḷ*	"cut, piece"
[**6**] *gózer*	*gézhor*	"small of the back"
[**7**] *kobŝ*	*kéboŝ*	"ram"
[**8**] *kónem*	*kénhom*	"louse"
[**9**] *kózi*	*kézho*	"shoulder"
[**10**] *ḳáber*	*ḳǒbhor*	"grave"
[**11**] *nóger*	*néghor*	"hole, pit"
[**12**] *ṣáṭar*	*ṣéṭhor*	"basket"
[**13**] *ŝenége*	*ŝénog*	"hooked stick, fodder hook"
[**14**] *tenéže*	*ténož*	"bitter orange (*Citrus aurantium*)"[56]

52 There remains, admittedly, a small group of plurals with the -*h*V*n* ending which cannot be attributed to any of the two classes **e** and **f**: *ḥánžɛhɛr* "knife" > *ḥanžérhon*, *ʿésrɛ* "thicket, grove" > *ʿisárhen*, *ʿábre* "generation" > *ʿibárhen*. Their historical background remains to be elucidated.

53 Note the reduplication in example **[5]**.

54 Cf. Ratcliffe 1998a: 240: "We choose to interpret them [the $C_1īC_2ān$- plurals] as innovations particular to Arabic, although the limited productivity of the forms would admittedly be more consistent with an interpretation of them as old developments". Mehri examples like *gōr* "slave", pl. *gīrōn* and *žayf* "guest", pl. *žīfōn* (Rubin 2010: 65) may also be relevant for comparison.

55 For the phone *ö* and its (almost completely) allophonic status with respect to *e*, see CSOL I, pp. 17–8.

56 Miller and Morris 2004: 671.

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h. The $C_1iC_2(h)oC_3$ pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *ʿáṣar*	*ʿíṣhor*	"time"
[**2**] *bíl'e*	*bíš(š)oḷ*	"thing"
[**3**] *bɛrk*	*bírok*	"knee"
[**4**] *ḥáber*	*ḥíbhor*	"mark, stain"
[**5**] *ḥádeb*	*ḥídob*	"land"
[**6**] *ḥáfen*	*ḥífon*	"lap"
[**7**] *ḥágeb*	*ḥíg(g)ob*	"palm sapling"
[**8**] *ḥalf*	*ḥíl'of*	"place"
[**9**] *ḥámer*	*ḥímhor*	"small elevation, hill"
[**10**] *ḥanḳ*	*ḥínoḳ*	"necklace"
[**11**] *ḥáṭar*	*ḥíṭhor*	"stripe"
[**12**] *fáḳam*	*fíḳhom*	"lower jaw"
[**13**] *fɛ́ne*	*fínho*	"face"
[**14**] *mɛr*	*mírhor*	"belly"
[**15**] *náṣar*	*níṣhor*	"cheek"
[**16**] *ṭél'fɛ*	*ṭíl'of*	"lower part of the leg of an animal"
[**17**] *ṭarb*	*ṭírob*	"piece of wood"

The patterns $C_1éC_2(h)oC_3$ and $C_1íC_2(h)oC_3$, dealt with in this and the preceding section, are almost certainly traceable to a common prototype.[57] Since *o* in the second syllable may go back to either long or stressed short **a*, both *$C_1iC_2áC_3$- and *$C_1iC_2āC_3$- are theoretically possible. There are two reasons to prefer the second solution, although neither of the two is truly compelling.

- The pattern *$C_1iC_2aC_3$- is likely behind $C_1i/eC_2(h)ɛC_3$ in group **l** below, where it is diachronically expected as it rather regularly corresponds to $C_1eC_2áC_3$-*e*/*ɛ* structures in the singular. It would be a priori unusual to see the same *$C_1iC_2aC_3$- prototype reflected as $C_1é/íC_2(h)oC_3$ when applied to nouns with no feminine ending and as $C_1i/eC_2ɛC_3$ when this ending is present: an Arabic-like distribution *$C_1VC_2C_3$- > *$C_1iC_2āC_3$- (Ratcliffe 1998a: 77–81) vs. *C_1i/uC_2C_3-*at*- > *C_1i/uC_2aC_3- (ibid. 88–91) would appear more natural.[58] This is not necessarily so, however, in view of the Geez correlations such as *ʾəgr* "foot", pl. *ʾəgar* (Ratcliffe 1998a: 166–8).[59]
- The "parasitic" *h*, often featuring before *o*, is usually considered a safe witness of the etymological length of the vowel following it (LS 22–3;

57 I am unable, at present, to explain the vocalic discrepancy in the first syllable. Different consonantal surrounding may have played an important role (thus, there are eight examples beginning with *ḥ* in **h**, but none in **g**, as against seven examples beginning with velars in **g**, and none in **h**), but no clear-cut distributional rules are in evidence.

58 Thus, it is not without significance that almost no examples in groups **g** and **h** display a feminine ending. The exceptions are **[2]** *bíl'e* and **[16]** *ṭél'fɛ* in group **h** and **[13]** *ŝenége* and **[14]** *tenéže* in group **g**. This is compatible with Ratcliffe's observation about $C_1iC_2āC_3$- as a "minor" option for $C_1aC_2C_3$-*at*- and $C_1aC_2aC_3$-*at*- singulars in Arabic (1998a: 90). Furthermore, as far as the latter two examples are concerned, an alternative attribution to group **c** (singulative/collective) is also to be considered.

59 Vestigially, also in Tigre (Ratcliffe 1998a: 177; Bulakh and Kogan 2013: 77–8).

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Rhodokanakis 1915: 16 and elsewhere). Now about two-thirds of the 31 plural forms recorded in groups **g** and **h** display a "parasitic" *h*. These rather indecisive statistics are further marred by the fact that about a half of the $C_1i/eC_2\varepsilon C_3$ plurals in group **l** also reflect this feature.

Within MSA, the $*C_1VC_2oC_3$ pattern is fairly common also in the continental languages, see Ratcliffe 1998a: 189–90 for Harsusi; Bittner 1909: 55–6, Rubin 2010: 67 for Mehri; Bittner 1915: 50, Ratcliffe 1998a: 196, Rubin 2014: 83 for Jibbali. Their diachronic evaluation is faced with the same difficulties as in Soqotri.[60]

i. The $C_1\acute{e}C_2oyC_3$ pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *ʿarébe*	*ʿároyb*	"wall"
[**2**] *ḥadíbo*	*ḥádoyb*	"fairy"[61]
[**3**] *ḥálḵɛ*	*ḥáḷoyḵ*	"ear-ring"[62]
[**4**] *mešífo*	*mɛ́šoyf*	"lintel"
[**5**] *sedáḵe*	*sédoyḵ*	"inaccessible rock"
[**6**] *ṣafɛ́ḵa*	*ṣáfoyḵ*	"nettle (*Tragia balfouriana*)"[63]
[**7**] *ṭirébe*	*ṭároyb*	"cave"
[**8**] *ʔ̂ayɛ́fɛ*	*ʔ̂áyoyf*	"feast"

The pattern $C_1\acute{a}C_2oyC_3$ is an exact formal parallel to the Arabic $C_1aC_2\bar{a}ʔiC_3$-pattern (Bittner 1918: 65),[64] and the nature of the singular/plural correlation is exactly the same in both languages: the pattern is favoured by nouns with a long vowel in the second syllable, followed by the feminine marker (Ratcliffe 1998a: 97–9). A comparable phenomenon in Geez is somewhat more remote insofar as the "default consonant" in the second syllable of the plural form is usually *w* rather than *y* (Ratcliffe 1998a: 170).[65] The Epigraphic South Arabian evidence, difficult to interpret precisely because of the purely consonantal script, is discussed in Ratcliffe 1998a: 174–5 and Stein 2003: 76–7. Within MSA, a few comparable examples have been registered in Harsusi (Ratcliffe 1998a: 194) and Mehri (Bittner 1909: 65), but, apparently, not in Jibbali.[66]

60 Bittner (1918: 63–4) opts for $*C_1iC_2\acute{a}C_3$- in Soqotri. Ratcliffe (1998a: 190) directly compares the Harsusi forms with Arabic $*C_1iC_2\bar{a}C_3$-, but is more cautious in his description of the Jibbali facts (ibid. 196), admitting a short stressed *a* as an alternative possibility.

61 "A 'Muslim' spirit that lives underground: harmless, and indeed often helpful and protective".

62 "Large hoop ear-ring worn in mid earlobe".

63 Miller and Morris 2004: 567.

64 The synchronic presence of ʔ (rather than *y*) in Arabic is secondary from the historical point of view (Diem 1980: 93).

65 As opposed to Tigre, which displays *-y-* as in Arabic and Soqotri (Ratcliffe 1998a: 184). See further Bulakh and Kogan 2013: 80–81.

66 As cautiously observed already by Bittner (1915: 53). In Ratcliffe 1998a: 236 this type is explicitly qualified as "lost" in Jibbali. Ratcliffe (1998b: 97) explains this by the loss of contrastive vowel length in Jibbali, but this argument would not work for Soqotri where

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j. The $C_1aC_2yoC_3$ pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[1] *ʿéšḳa*	*ʿášyoḳ*	"cluster of dates"
[2] *ʿáṣbe*	*ʿáṣyob*	"big branch"
[3] *ḳaľífo*	*ḳáľyof*	"bark"
[4] *ḳaríšo*	*ḳáryoš*	"peel"

This rather marginal pattern can be plausibly connected with the Mehri pattern $C_1eC_2y\bar{o}C_3$, extensively dealt with in Diem 1979: 64–75 (see also Bittner 1909: 57–58 and Kogan 2015: 469).

k. The $C_1éC_2eC_3$ pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[1] *alf*	*éḷaf*	"young female calf"
[2] *arḥ*	*éraḥ*	"grown-up heifer"
[3] *béšrɛ*	*béšer*	"fully ripe date"
[4] *farʿ*	*férеʿ*	"dry palm leaf"
[5] *kašḥ*	*kéšeḥ*	"cut-off part of a skin vessel"
[6] *nóṣeb*	*néṣab*	"heavy rain"
[7] *ribéʿe*	*rébeʿ*	"the breast segment of a slaughtered animal"[67]
[8] *ṣabḥ*	*ṣébeḥ*	"morning"
[9] *ŝars*	*ŝéres*	"scratch"
[10] *ŝorṭ*	*ŝéraṭ*	"street"
[11] *ŝaṭf*	*ŝéṭaf*	"halved dates for drying"
[12] *ẑarḥ*	*ẑéreḥ*	"lower slopes of a mountain, shrubbed foothills"

This rather prominent plural pattern is among the most difficult to evaluate diachronically.

Its main structural feature – breaking the C_2C_3 consonantal cluster of the singular – brings it close to the well-known *$C_1iC_2\bar{a}C_3$- and *$C_1iC_2aC_3$- structures repeatedly discussed throughout this article, but the origin of the *e*-vowel in both syllables is still difficult to explain. It is easy to observe that the $C_1éC_2eC_3$ structure of the plural pattern is exactly the same as that of the 3 sg. m. of the perfect of the inactive type in the basic stem. Now the latter can be safely traced to *$C_1iC_2aC_3$ in view of the corresponding feminine form $C_1iC_2\acute{\varepsilon}C_3$-*o* (Naumkin et al. 2014: 27–8). One could surmise that $C_1éC_2eC_3$ is indeed a regular outcome of *$C_1iC_2aC_3$, presumably stressed on the first syllable and leaving unstressed the *a*-vowel of the second syllable. Within this approach, the Soqotri $C_1eC_2eC_3$ and $C_1éC_2(h)oC_3$/$C_1iC_2(h)oC_3$ patterns could be safely traced back to *$C_1iC_2aC_3$- and *$C_1iC_2\bar{a}C_3$- respectively. We are left, however, with the C_1i/$eC_2(h)\varepsilon C_3$ pattern discussed in the following section **l**: for all practical

vocalic length is also non-phonemic. Also in Mehri the functional load of the vocalic length appears to be extremely low (J. Watson in Sima 2009: 22).

67 "Flesh of the upper ribs and flank (in a carcass)".

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purposes, *$C_1iC_2aC_3$ is the most expected and legitimate prototype of this sequence, and it is hard to see why it should have given two competing outcomes – $C_1éC_2eC_3$ and $C_1í/éC_2(h)\varepsilon C_3$ – within the system of the Soqotri broken plural.

l. The $C_1í/éC_2(h)\varepsilon C_3$ pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *órem*	*érhɛm*	"road"
[**2**] *ʿádɛl*	*ʿídhɛl*	"carrier, porter"
[**3**] *ḥiṣál'e*	*ḥéṣhɛl*	"a small piece of meat"
[**4**] *kérbe*	*kírɛb*	"lower part of a palm branch"
[**5**] *ḳâśre*	*ḳíśɛr*	"stones with sharp edges"
[**6**] *néḳbe*	*níḳab*	"niche in a mountain, hole in a tree-trunk"
[**7**] *ṣárfe*	*ṣírɛf*	"waterfall, deep ravine"
[**8**] *šébde*	*šíbɛd*	"liver"
[**9**] *ŝádaḳ*	*ŝídaḳ*	"corner of the mouth"
[**10**] *ŝégre*	*ŝíghɛr*	"mountain pass"
[**11**] *tódi*	*tídhɛ*	"breast"
[**12**] *témre*	*tímhɛr*	"date-palm"
[**13**] *zéfnɛ*	*zífɛn*	"screen made of palm ribs"
[**14**] *žél'bɛ*	*žíl'ɛb*	"hole dug for inserting a palm sapling"
[**15**] *žiréme*	*žírhɛm*	"fruit of ziziphus spina Christi"
[**16**] *ʒ̂aḷʿ*	*ʒ̂íl'aʿ*	"rib"

- In nine out of 16 examples, the correlation $C_1éC_2C_3$-*e*/*ɛ*[68] > $C_1í/éC_2(h)\varepsilon C_3$ is observed, clearly identical to Arabic C_1i/uC_2C_3-*at*- > C_1i/uC_2aC_3- (Ratcliffe 1998a: 88–90). This way of plural formation is well attested also in continental MSA: Harsusi (Ratcliffe 1998a: 191–2), Mehri (Bittner 1909: 52–3, Rubin 2010: 67–8), Jibbali (Bittner 1915: 47–9, Ratcliffe 1998a: 199, Rubin 2014: 83–4). Furthermore, in all continental languages a special "mixed" type of plural is common, consisting of the *a*-inserted base and the external feminine plural marker.[69] Outside Arabic and MSA, this correlation is very prominent in Tigre (Ratcliffe 1998a: 180–2), where, however, Arabic influence cannot be ruled out (Bulakh and Kogan 2011: 15–21, 2013: 83). For the limited, but relatively certain ESA evidence see Ratcliffe 1998a: 173–4, Stein 2003: 75.
- In two cases ([**3**] *ḥiṣál'e* and [**15**] *žiréme*), the singular displays a vowel after the second radical, which does not fit the above correlation, where *ɛ* in the plural breaks the C_2C_3 cluster in the singular. One wonders, therefore, whether these two examples might be alternatively ascribed to group **c** (the *nomen collectivum*/*nomen unitatis* type).
- The remaining five cases involve nouns with no feminine marker. Their presence in this group is, at present, difficult to explain.

68 With *e* > *a* in the neighbourhood of gutturals and emphatics. The apparently unmotivated distribution of *-e* and *-ɛ* as allomorphs of the feminine marker remains unexplained.

69 Less prominent, but also present in Soqotri (see Section **o** below).

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m. The C_1*íy*(*h*)*ɛ*C_3 pattern

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *ʿíṣe*	*ʿíyaḳ*	"pool"
[**2**] *díme*	*díyʰɛm*	"sheep pen"
[**3**] *ḥíše*	*ḥíyɛš*	"path between two steep mountain slopes"
[**4**] *kíme*	*kéyʰɛm*	"sweat"
[**5**] *ríḥo*	*ríyaḥ*	"palm of the hand"
[**6**] *sóʿo*	*síyaʿ*	"a group of palm-saplings"

This group is a transparent sub-type of the correlation described under **l**, with *-y-* featuring as the default second consonants for biconsonantal singulars with *i* < **ī*.[70] Similarly structured pairs are common elsewhere in languages where the *$C_1VC_2C_3$-*at*- > *$C_1VC_2aC_3$- correlation is attested (see Ratcliffe 1998a: 88 for Arabic, p. 180 for Tigre).

n. The C_1*íy*(*h*)*o*C_3 pattern[71]

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *ʿéno*	*ʿéyʰon*	"year"
[**2**] *bédo*	*bíyod*	"path between two steep mountain slopes"
[**3**] *ḳayd*	*ḳíyod*	"rope"
[**4**] *ŝeb*	*ŝíyob*	"sinew"
[**5**] *tébo*	*tíyob*	"portion, share"
[**6**] *žed*	*žéyod*	"tendon"

C_1*íy*(*h*)*o*C_3 is a subtype of the C_1*é*C_2(*h*)*o*C_3/C_1*í*C_2(*h*)*o*C_3 pattern (sections **g** and **h**), with *y* functioning as default second consonant for biconsonantal singulars. Comparison with the similarly structured correlation in the preceding section **m** (also six examples) is instructive: five out of six examples in **m** have an overt *i* in the singular, but none in **n**, where *e* predominates; all examples in **m**, but only a half in **n**, display the feminine marker.

o. The "mixed type"

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *ídhɛn*	*idhónten*	"ear"
[**2**] *ľíšin*	*ḷešónten*	"tongue"
[**3**] *ʿayn*	*ʿeyʰónten*	"eye"
[**4**] *ʿéno*	*ʿeyʰónten*	"year"

Soqotri does not productively use the "mixed" type of plural in which internal modifications of the stem are accompanied by the addition of the ending *-*t*V*n*,

70 The only exception where the *i*-vowel does not surface in the singular is **[6]** *sóʿo*.

71 The common word *ʿag*(*g*) "man, husband" (< **ʿayg*) belongs here with its plural *ʿeyyúg*, in spite of the atypical stress on the last syllable.

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otherwise characteristic of external feminine plural. This way of plural formation, very common in Jibbali (Bittner 1915: 52–3, Ratcliffe 1998a: 198–9),[72] is, however, not totally alien to Soqotri, as seen already by Bittner (1918: 64) and confirmed by modern research. Such examples, with the stem structure $C_1eC_2oC_3$-, are limited to a handful of – apparently archaic – examples listed above.[73]

p. A few unique, atypical broken plural formations are summarized here

Singular	Plural	Meaning
[**1**] *ŝáʿab*	*ŝ^{e}ʿeb*	"valley"
[**2**] *y^{h}éḥar*	*šḥer*[74]	"man"
[**3**] *šéreŝ*	*k^{e}rɛŝ*	"stomach"
[**4**] *ṣadáḳ*	*ṣadḳ*	"boat"
[**5**] *fáʿam*	*fiʿhim*	"upper part of the hind leg of an animal"
[**6**] *rénhem*	*rónhim*	"sea"[75]
[**7**] *ḥámer*	*ḥómhir*	"small elevation, hill"
[**8**] *fáʿhɛr*	*fáʿy^{h}or*	"bull"
[**9**] *ḳáʿar*	*ḳáʿy^{h}ɛr*	"house"
[**10**] *ʿőbhor*	*ʿáber*	"well"[76]
[**11**] *mébrehe*	*embórye*	"child"
[**12**] *ḥebéľe*	*ḥúbhɛl*	"tamarind fruit"
[**13**] *gemgémo*	*gámgɛhɛm*	"skull"
[**14**] *geḷʿémo*	*géḷʿhom*	"beer, fruit"
[**17**] *souʿído*	*suwáʿid*	"Egyptian vulture (*Neophron percnopterus*)"[77]
[**18**] *béḳľe*	*béḳľhi*	"sort of dates"
[**19**] *eḳníyo*	*éḳnhi*	"food"
[**20**] *ḥímhɛr*	*ḥamóhor*	"a tree (*Zygocarpum coeruleum*)"
[**21**] *ʿábher*	*ʿabóhor*	"tree trunk"
[**22**] *ẑaʿ*	*ẑeʿ*	"a goat two years old"
[**23**] *ŝɛyʿ*	*ŝɛʿ*	"the belly part of the slaughtered animal"[78]

III. The broken plural of Soqotri in a diachronic perspective

In his discussion of the relevance of the broken plural problem for genealogical classification of Semitic (Kogan 2015: 166–71), the present author has limited the scope of his analysis to Arabic and Geez, usually excluding the MSA

72 But, it seems, rare in Mehri (see Rubin's remarks in 2010: 65): *ʾayn* "eye", pl. *ʾāyēntən*, *ḥəyḏēn* "ear", pl. *ḥəyḏantən*, *kəwbēt* "bitch", pl. *kəlabtən*, *ŝəfīr* "plait of hair", pl. *ŝəfartən*. For more examples see Bittner 1909: 60–1.

73 Curiously enough, nouns with *n* as the last consonant are involved in each case. The *o* vowel in these examples is phonetically realized as semi-open [ɔ].

74 Probably belongs to $C_1eC_2eC_3$ (type **k**), the vowel of the first syllable being syncopated between two voiceless consonants.

75 Bittner 1918: 66 ("eigentümlich").

76 The peculiar nature of this example has been noted already by Bittner (1918: 62).

77 In essence, this is certainly a representative of type **b**. The presence of *ou* (= *u*) in the first syllable is very unusual for a primary noun in Soqotri, but an eventual *-w-* in the prototype is likely (**saw*ʿ*id-at-*). If so, the present example comes close to such correlations as Geez *kokab* "star", pl. *kawākəbt* (Ratcliffe 1998a: 170).

78 "The flesh of the lower ribs, the flap of flesh at the base of the ribcage (in a carcass)".

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facts from consideration because of the heavily understudied historical phonology and morphology of these languages. The Soqotri evidence analysed in this article, aiming to develop and supplement Ratcliffe's pioneering insights into the Harsusi and Jibbali systems of broken plural, allows a preliminary assessment of the place of the Soqotri system both within and outside MSA, thus bringing somewhat greater clarity into the thorny field of Modern South Arabian linguistic diachrony.

In Ratcliffe 1998a: 206, four fundamental features shared by most languages of the "South Semitic" area[79] in the domain of the broken plural formation are listed. Soqotri participates prominently in each of them.

- The *$C_1VC_2C_3$-*at*- > *$C_1VC_2aC_3$- correlation[80] = groups **l** and **m**.
- Plurals with *$^{\prime}a$- = group **d**.
- The pattern *$C_1aC_2\bar{a}C_3iC_4$- for quadriconsonantal nouns = group **b.**[81]
- The pattern *$C_1aC_2\bar{a}y/wiC_3$- for triconsonantal nouns with a long vowel in the second syllable = group **i**.

Further commonalities between Soqotri and the languages of the "South Semitic" area are in evidence.

- The singulative-collective opposition = group **c.**[82]

79 That is, Arabic, Epigraphic South Arabian, Ethiopian Semitic, and Modern South Arabian. The diachronic background of this unity – genealogical relationship or language contact – cannot be discussed in the framework of this contribution. For the time being, see Kogan 2015: 599.

80 Ratcliffe is correct to state that the importance of this feature goes beyond the "South Semitic" area and affects West Semitic as a whole. What he means are the North-West Semitic examples like Hebrew *malkā* "queen", pl. *məlākōt* (1998a: 154). He is also right to observe that this feature is missing from Geez (on p. 236 of his study he plausibly explains it as a secondary loss due to generalization of the feminine marker *-t* at the expense of *-at*). Its widespread presence in Tigre is, therefore, contradictory from a diachronic point of view (Bulakh and Kogan 2011: 15–21, 2013: 83): either a deeply rooted archaism, or a result of a very close and prolonged interaction with Arabic. For important remarks on this correlation see further Ratcliffe 1998a: 207–8.

81 In both Arabic and Geez, the "basic" *$C_1aC_2\bar{a}C_3iC_4$- shape of this pattern can be modified. In Arabic, the vocalic length attraction is at work: when the singular has a long vowel in the second syllable, the pattern of the plural is *$C_1aC_2\bar{a}C_3\bar{i}C_4$- (Ratcliffe 1998a: 95). In Geez we are faced with the polarity rule: "singulars without *-t* usually have a *-t* suffix in the plural; singulars with *-t* generally lose it in the plural" (Ratcliffe 1998a: 169, Bulakh and Kogan 2013: 80–81). A Geez-like opposition must have existed also in Epigraphic South Arabian (Ratcliffe 1998a: 174, Stein 2003: 78). Neither of the two phenomena is attested in Soqotri, but one may wonder whether the unexplainable difference between the two common allomorphs $C_1eC_2oC_3iC_4$ and $C_1eC_2eC_3eC_4$ may have something to do with the presence vs. absence of the feminine marker in the singular. One can surmise, for example, that the former pattern, primarily associated with tri-syllabic nouns with the feminine marker in the singular, goes back to a longer prototype *$C_1aC_2\bar{a}C_3\bar{i}C_4$-, whereas the latter, exclusively associated with bi-syllabic nouns with no feminine marker, goes back to a shorter prototype *$C_1aC_2\bar{a}C_3iC_4$-.

82 In Ratcliffe's view (1998a: 207), "the collective type with singulative formed by *-at* affixation derives from Proto-Semitic. It is attested in Arabic, possibly in the MSA languages, but also in Akkadian. In NW Semitic the singulative with *-at* has become a feminine singular and the collective acquires a pleonastic masculine plural suffix". Ratcliffe's claim for the original presence of this opposition in Hebrew and Aramaic

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- The *$C_1VC_2\bar{a}C_3$- > *$C_1iC_2C_3\bar{a}n$- correlation = group **e**. Ratcliffe, adhering to the traditional interpretation of the MSA *n*-plurals as external masculine, was unable to observe their similarity to the Arabic facts and listed the latter among "features of the Arabic system which do not find parallels in other southern languages" (1998a: 210). The new evaluation of the MSA correlation allows us to broaden seriously the diachronic importance of this feature, thus counterbalancing the rather indecisive Ethiopian evidence.[83]
- The pattern *$C_1iC_2\bar{a}C_3$- = groups **g, h, n**, is very prominent in Arabic (Ratcliffe 1998a: 77), but not attested in Geez. Its presence in Tigre may be attributed to Arabic influence (Bulakh and Kogan 2011: 21–3, 2013: 83–4).
- Soqotri shares with other MSA languages one of the two singular-plural correlations which Ratcliffe (1998a: 210) defines as specific innovations of this subgroup, namely the correlation in which "an (etymologically) long high vowel . . . in the last syllable of the singular alternates with a long non-high vowel . . . in the last syllable of the plural" = group **a**. It does not actively participate, however, in the second of these features, where essentially the same shift affects biconsonantal structures as well.[84]
- By far the most remarkable feature of broken plural formation which Soqotri does not obviously share with most other languages of the "South Semitic"

(see 1998a: 157–8 for more details) is quite sound. Of particular interest here are examples – not mentioned by Ratcliffe – such as Hebrew *boṭn-īm* "terebinths", *ṣāʾăl-īm* "lotuses", *šiḳm-īm* "sycamores", where the (obviously, pleonastic) external plural ending *-īm* is attached directly to the stem without *a*-intercalation normal for the plural forms of Hebrew *nomina segolata*. In most such cases the singulatives **boṭn-ā*, *ṣāʾăl-ā*, *šiḳm-ā* are, unfortunately, not preserved in the Bible, but note a directly attested opposition in *pišt-ā*, pl. *pišt-īm* "flax, linen" (BDB 833–4). For the problem see further Blau 1998: 191 and Steiner 2003: 63, neither of whom mention the singulative/collective opposition. The Akkadian evidence is much more opaque, however. On p. 153 of his study, Ratcliffe states that "Akkadian has, like Arabic . . . a singulative derived from a collective by attachment of *-t* suffix". He does not provide any Akkadian examples and refers to GAG § 60a, where we learn that "nomina unitatis . . . sind selten". Indeed, none of the examples provided by von Soden look particularly impressive. A special study pending, it seems wise to restrict this isogloss to West Semitic languages.

83 Geez has no means of broken plural formation for triconsonantal nouns with a long *ā* in the second syllable, which normally take the external feminine marker *-āt* (Ratcliffe 1998a: 171). At this point, it differs sharply from Tigre, which often uses an Arabic-like patter *ʾa-*C_1*ə*C_2C_3*-at* in such cases (Ratcliffe 1998b: 93). See further Bulakh and Kogan 2011: 11–5, 2013: 82–3, particularly on possible Arabic influence on Tigre in this case.

84 What is meant are examples such as Mehri *ḥə-dīd* "paternal uncle", pl. *ḥə-dōd* (Bittner 1909: 72, Rubin 2010: 67). Rubin restricts this plural formation to "several masculine kinship terms", but this is not quite so, cf. *ḥə-nīd*, pl. *ḥə-nōd* "water-skin" (ML 306). The Jibbali picture appears more complicated: while in some examples the **i* > **a* apophony is clear (*nid* > *nud* "water-skin"), other cases (such as *but* > *bɛt* "house" or *ḳud* > *ḳɛd* "rope", and more examples in Ratcliffe 1998a: 196) may involve quite different processes. As far as I can see, the only residual example of this type of plural formation in Soqotri is the, now obsolete, word *ḥel*'- (pl. *ḥoḷ-*) "maternal uncle" (LS 166, only remotely known to our informants). Bittner (1918: 66) may be correct to attribute to this type also *dídhe* (pl. *dódhi*) "demon(s)", presumably "my paternal uncle(s)" (LS 124).

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group is the *$u/\bar{u}$ insertion (Ratcliffe 1998a: 207), prominently attested in Arabic (ibid. 77, 105) and on good grounds reconstructible for Geez (ibid. 167–8) and Ethiopian Semitic in general. There is no need to stress that the validity of this observation is seriously relativized by our inability safely to establish the Soqotri reflexes of proto-Semitic *u*-vowels.[85] In such a context, a closer look at the continental MSA evidence is mandatory.

The clearest possible parallel to the Arabic $C_1uC_2\bar{u}C_3$- pattern is $C_1eC_2ewweC_3$ in Harsusi, which is quite a prominent means of plural formation in this language (Ratcliffe 1998a: 190). The possibility of Arabic influence, apparently hinted at by Ratcliffe (ibid.), can hardly be discarded in this case, particularly since there is no trace of such formation in Jibbali, by far the most conservative among the continental MSA, and even in Mehri.[86]

In Ratcliffe 1998a: 197, the author somewhat obliquely identifies the widespread Jibbali pattern $\varepsilon C_1C_2eC_3(V)t$ with *ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2uC_3$-*at*-, most probably underlying the *ʾ*a*$C_1C_23C_3$-*t* pattern in Geez. As we have seen above in connection with group **d**, this may well be the case also for similarly structured Soqotri pattern(s), but there can hardly be any positive proof for such a conclusion before the fate of **u* in both languages is elucidated.[87]

All in all, Ratcliffe's conclusion (1998a: 207), according to which "both MSA languages have plurals that could plausibly be interpreted as reflecting C*u*C*uu*C and ʾ*a*CC*uu*C" appears rather premature. This leaves enough room for an alternative hypothesis, according to which the *u*-isogloss has never reached the proto-MSA system of broken plural.

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85 The synchronically attested *u*-vowel in Soqotri is a rare phoneme whose attestations, apart from a few scattered nominal and adjectival lexemes, are mostly restricted to two morphological positions: the diminutive pattern $C_1uC_2aC_3$ and -$C_1uC_2aC_3$- as the base of the imperfect passive of the basic and causative stems (Kogan and Naumkin 2014: 70–71). In both cases, there are good reasons to consider *u* to be etymological (see, provisionally, Kogan 2015: 54–7 and 477–8 respectively), but this does not mean for certain that all etymolgical *u*-vowels are reflected as *u* in Soqotri.

86 Thus, practically all hypothetical *$C_1uC_2\bar{u}C_3$- examples listed in Bittner 1909: 54 involve transparent Arabic loanwords, evidently borrowed together with their plurals.

87 Note, furthermore, that on pp. 208 and 236 of his study Ratcliffe apparently identifies $\varepsilon C_1C_2eC_3(V)t$ with *ʾ*a*-$C_1C_2iC_3$-*at*- in Arabic and Tigre (cf. fn. 44).

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