

***Almar'ī šuġl albanāt* ‘Grazings is the Work of the Girls’: Episodes on Girls and Cows in the Arabic *k*-dialects of Lower Yemen**

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Abstract

The episodes we present in this paper were recorded from four Jewish women, who hail from villages around the city of Ibb in Lower Yemen. They document personal experiences of the narrators as young girls, sent - daily - to graze the family cow. Different from other areas of Yemen, in Lower Yemen the Jews owned lands and practiced crop and livestock farming. Cows, specifically, were found in many households. They were conceived as a symbol of financial security for women, and their day-to-day management was the responsibility of mothers and their young unmarried daughters. Told from the personal point of view of the girls, these episodes reveal the unique relationship that developed between the cows and their caregivers, and - on a broader level - they also open a window on the cultural values associated with cows in Yemenite folklore.

The episodes were told in Lower-Yemeni Arabic, exhibiting the feature of *k*-perfect, i.e. a velar *k* in the perfect verbal paradigm, equivalent to Old Arabic *t*. The language of the four texts is, however, not entirely uniform, but rather demonstrates distinct varieties that are used in that area. In the closing section of the article we give the texts in transcription, along with a concise linguistic description, highlighting some of their distinctive features and idiosyncrasies.

Keywords: Yemen, Arabic, dialects, animal folklore

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1. The informants and data collection

The four episodes presented in this paper were gathered as part of our on-going efforts to document the Arabic varieties spoken by Yemeni Jews in Israel.¹ The interviews, carried out in the years 2016-2018, took place at the informants' private houses, occasionally also in elderly day-care centers where many of them

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spend their mornings.² We started with the Jewish community of the village of alGades, in the province of Ibb in Lower Yemen. This community, first described in Goitein 1955 and Goitein 1960, has settled mainly (but not exclusively) in Givat Yeʿarim west of Jerusalem. We then proceeded to interview other immigrants from the same province, who now live in different places in Israel. As a whole, for this part of the project we recorded around 70 hours of interviews and elicitation sessions with 24 informants (7 men and 17 women), from 8 villages surrounding Ibb, as well as from Gibleh (Jiblah) to its South.³ All of them left Yemen around 1950, in the famed operation “On the Wings of Eagles”.⁴ We also consulted materials from the Yemenite archives of Sh.D. Goitein, that include, inter alia, recordings of Jewish immigrants from Lower Yemen.⁵ The narrators of the texts that we eventually chose for this publication were born in the villages of alGades (hereafter Gd), Šiʿb asSuḥūl (hereafter Sh) and ʿUṭmah (hereafter Ut). Throughout the article we also refer to the dialect of the nearby village of alʿAḥbūš (hereafter Ah), in order to demonstrate certain linguistic features.

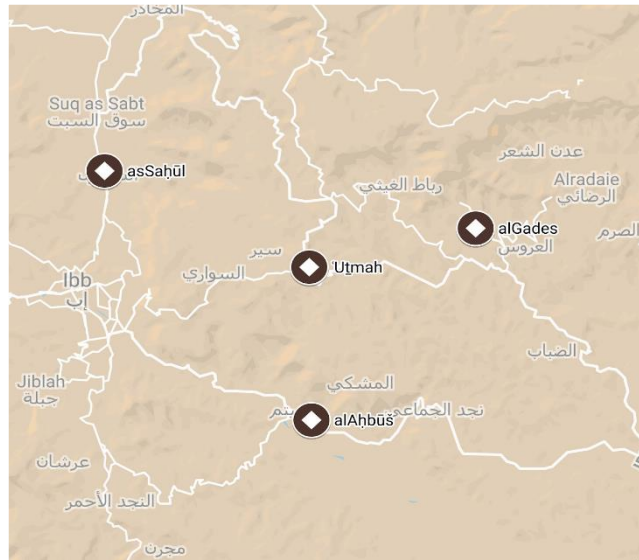
² We are grateful to our four narrators: Yona Ben-David, Geula Gibli, Yona Damti and Yemima Ḥazan, for opening their homes and hearts to us, and for welcoming us with kindness and goodwill. We thank them and their families for approving the publication of these texts.

Special thanks are due to our research assistant Ms. Naama Ben-David, the granddaughter of the speaker of text 1, for her indispensable assistance in arranging a number of meetings with her grandmother, as well as with other informants. Ms. Ben-David also carried out the interview with the speaker of text 4.

³ All interviews were recorded using the ZOOM H2 handy recorder, stored as WAV files, then analyzed at a later point. A few sessions were also video-filmed.

⁴ The immigration of about 50,000 Yemeni Jews to Israel between December 1948 and late 1951.

⁵ The Yemenite archives of Sh.D. Goitein, stored at the Ben-Zvi Institute in Jerusalem, are thoroughly described in Fogel 2019. Preliminary notes on the linguistic value of these materials were presented by the first author at the 13th Conference of AIDA (Kutaisi, June 2019) and by both authors at the 7th International conference on Jewish Languages (Jerusalem, June 2019).



Informants' villages of origin in the province of Ibb

We collected our texts in open-ended interviews, in which the informants were encouraged to tell stories and anecdotes of their choice, to recollect personal memories and tell firsthand experiences. This method was chosen with the intention of getting the most natural and unaffected speech possible under the circumstances of an interview.⁶ In the open flow of the interviews, we soon noticed that many of the female informants intuitively provide anecdotes dealing with their experiences with the family cow. We thus became aware of the close linkage between girls and cows in that rural area, and in the following sessions we intentionally asked about cows and encouraged the speakers to recall additional episodes and memories associated with raising, farming or grazing them.

2. Background: Agriculture and cattle farming among the Jews of Lower Yemen

Yemen is a by and large a pastoral country. The area between the Yemeni coast, or *Tihāma*, and the Western highlands, where Ibb and Ta'izz are located, is Yemen's most important agricultural area. Its rural economy is based on subsistence farming, which includes coffee, corn, sorghum, vegetables and *qāt*.

⁶ At the same time, note that the informants were specifically asked to speak Yemeni Arabic, i.e. not the language they use today in Israel for their daily communications. See further in §4 below.

In Lower Yemen, land holding and the ownership of livestock were a symbol of wealthy households. Subsistence farming depends heavily on domesticated animals such as sheep, goats and cattle, the latter being the most common in Lower Yemen and are owned by more families, although usually in rather small numbers (Wilson 2003: 29-30).⁷

As a protected religious minority, or *ḍimmis*, the Jews of Yemen had certain rights but also had to contend with a number of restrictions. One of these restrictions was that Jews were not allowed to own land. These *ḍimmi* rules, however, were not always enforced: various sources indicate that while the Jews of Ṣanʿāʾ mainly relied on crafts and trade for their livelihood, in the rural areas Jews were engaged with farming, and even owned agricultural lands (Brauer 1945: 75-76; Kafih 1961: 302; Tobi 1984: 209, 211; Eraqi-Klorman 2002: 43 and Anzi 2011: 124).

Referring to the village of alGades in Lower Yemen, Goitein reports that “agriculture among the Gadasis goes back many generations”, and that “the affluent Gadasi invested his money in farm land” (Goitein 1955: 13). Interestingly, in many cases the cultivation of the Jewish-owned land was entrusted to Muslim employees, and the crops were shared between the parties (Brauer 1945: 77; Yavnieli 1952:19; Hollander 2005: 121). And indeed, our informants from the villages of Lower Yemen describe their parents as land and house-owners, who employed Muslim farmhands and lived relatively in comfort.⁸ It seems, however, that even those who owned lands did not wish to associate themselves with farming exclusively, and many of them also practiced crafts.⁹

3. Practical and symbolic meanings of cow raising

The recurring mention of cows in the memories of our informants stems from the significant role that cows, specifically, played in their daily life in Yemen. In what

⁷ The Yemeni breed of cattle, known as the Yemen Shorthorn Zebu, is characterized by a thoracic hump, short horns, and various colors as white, sandy, red, brown, grey or black. It is raised for milk (used to make ghee, or *samn*), for meat, and for draught power (Briede 1991: 172-3; Wilson 2003: 29, 37-40)

⁸ This is of course not an overall assessment of Jewish life in Lower Yemen, but nevertheless this state of affairs is in contradistinction to many reports of severe poverty and famine experienced by Jews in other rural areas of Yemen (Yavnieli 1952:32; Shachmon 2017).

⁹ Farming was apparently associated with illiteracy and under-education. In *qiṣṣat albatūl* ‘the story of the farmer’, a polemical poem composed in Lower Yemen and attributed to Mōri Sālim ašŠabazi, the character of the Jew is portrayed in contrast to that of the uneducated Muslim (Ahroni 1981: 337; Halevi 2002: 261-266).

We note that some Jews from Ḥuḡariyyah stated that they deliberately avoided land ownership because of the perception that they were temporary residents of Yemen, a claim they justified by the verse לֹא תִּנְחֶלְךָ לָאֲרָצָה (in South-Yemeni reading: *ba'arṣōm lē tinḥōl*) “Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land” (Numbers: 18:20).

follows we relate to some practical implications of cow raising in Lower Yemen, as well as to the symbolic meanings and interpretations attributed to them.

3.1. Practical aspects

In the rural area of Lower Yemen, where the dwellers have no access to savings institutions, cattle also act as a store of wealth (Wilson 2003: 28; also compare Hollander 2005: 145). Goitein (1955: 14) mentions that cows were used by the Jews as a form of capital investment, so that those Jews “who could afford it [...] owned some livestock, one or two cows”. He reports that a cow’s yield could pay for the education of the boys of a Jewish family (Goitein 1983: 22). For women in particular, cows were taken to secure the independence of girls at marriage, or in the case of orphanage: a widowed or divorced woman would receive a cow for her maintenance, and so would a woman who nurses a child whose mother died while giving birth. Importantly, the cow was considered as the woman’s property, similar to her personal jewelry, and in the state of widowhood the cow became part of her dowry.

The day-to-day management of the livestock, often also its long-term management, was generally seen as the responsibility of women. As phrased by one of our informants, *almarʿī šuġl albanāt* “grazings is the work of the girls”. The texts we give in §4.2 below demonstrate how this responsibility rested on the shoulders of little girls, who, from a very young age, led the cows to graze in nearby fields.¹⁰ But the fact that little girls were in charge of these big animals also had unfortunate implications: on occasion, disobedient cows wandered into neighboring fields, damaging the crop and giving rise to quarrels and conflicts with the Muslim landowners, as demonstrated in texts 1 and 2 below. In other cases, the girls had to defend the cows from the aggressiveness of other animals, as depicted in a novel by Ezra Cohen, where a young Jewish girl from the area of Damt bravely defends her cow against a massive bull (Cohen 1980:10, our translation from Hebrew):

“[...] Yemima saw a terrible sight. A big bull was charging at their cow [...] the girl stood terrified at the corner of the yard watching her poor beloved cow [...] she loved the cow so much. The bull’s thrusts were like swords in her heart. Despite her great fear of the bull, she lifted a dry branch and waved it towards the massive bull”

The immediate physical proximity of the cow’s housing contributed to the emotional bond and personal commitment that the girls developed towards the family cow. As is common in Yemen (Rathjens 1957: 26), cows, along with other

¹⁰ Yaacov (2020: 142, 156). Briede (1991: 174) reports that in Yemen Highlands women are mostly responsible for feeding the cows, while herding is done mostly by children, otherwise by old men.

livestock, were kept on the ground floor of the house, only a few stairs below the family's living space. The girls fed the cows with *ḍurah* 'dry Sorghum canes' and *qaṣab* 'reed', in other cases also with clover (*Trifolium*) and alfalfa. The canes and leaves were wrapped together as *ḡuraz* 'fodder rolls', for the cows to be hand-foddered "like babies", as described by our narrator of text 3. Compare the following description in Cohen (1980: 14-15):

"[...] she took two wraps of *ḍurah* leaves that had been soaked in water since the day before [...] she broke the *ḍurah* canes to pieces of equal size, and then, one by one, wrapped them with hay and clover, and above she put the soaked *ḍurah* leaves [...] then she would stuff the wraps into the cow's mouths [...] she loved the cows and took great pleasure in feeding them [...]"



A Jewish woman wrapping the *ḍurah* canes for her cows (Arḥab, Yemen, 1987)

The sense of intimacy is also reflected by the practice of giving personal names to the cows (Yaacov 2020: 107-108).¹¹ These names were often indicative of a certain physical feature of the cow, or of an event associated with it, e.g. *tāniyah* 'born on Monday'; *rbū'ah* 'born on Wednesday'; or *ḥumayrah* 'reddish'. In text 4 below a cow raised in Israel was given the name *matana*, the Israeli Hebrew word for 'a gift'.

Cows were perceived as intelligent and communicative creatures. The informant of text 3 goes as far as claiming that *albaqara ḥisse aḥsan ḥiss min al'ādami* 'the cow's mind is better than that of a human being'. In Cohen (1980: 14) we read about a girl that "gathered hay and green grass and went out to the yard, walking and waving toward the cows [...] while calling, humming and whistling [...] the cows comprehended through their animal senses [...]".

¹¹ Cf. Muchavsky-Schnapper (2000:32), describing the intimacy involved in naming tools and objects among Yemeni Jews.

Similarly, an informant from Ḥugariyya told us that she could actually understand the cow’s nonverbal language: “*albaqara qā-hī marbūṭa, w-kāna tismaʿnī taqūl maaaa, qā-nī aʿraf mā hī tištī, w-hī tištī asīr aḥlubhā, w-qā barʿahā kabīr* ‘the cow is tied, and whenever she hears me she would say ‘maaaaa’, and I would already know what she wants: she wants me to go and milk her, [because] her udders are big [i.e. full of milk]’.

Against this background, the distinction between men and women, boys and girls, becomes apparent: while Jewish girls fed, grazed, milked the cows and cared for them, Jewish boys memorized *hilkōt šəḥīṭo* or ‘the Kosher slaughter laws and practice’. It also becomes clear why girls - unlike boys - reacted with great sorrow to the death of the family cow. Female informants from different localities in Lower Yemen testified that they cried and grieved when their husbands or sons slaughtered the family cow, and also that they never ate the meat of a cow they had nurtured, but rather sold it.

Thus, the role of cows in the life of young Jewish girls follows from the significant time that the girls and cows spent together, on a daily basis, and from the sense of responsibility and affection that the girls developed towards these animals. Moreover, the girls relied on the cows, at least to a certain extent, for their future financial security. Now in Israel, some 70 years later and in a totally different setting, these women evidently remember the family cows very well, and are still able to tell anecdotes about them in great detail, with considerable emotional involvement and with a sense of nostalgia.¹²

3.2. Symbolic meanings and interpretations

An array of folk beliefs concerning domesticated animals has been reported for rural Yemen. We note, for example, the mystic weather-related traits attributed to camels, or the sacred values associated with bulls (Gingrich 2012). The image of the cow in the narratives given below may thus be read against its broader symbolic meanings, that are plainly rooted in the local traditions.

Yemeni folklore often depicts the cow as a motherly symbol. For example, a folktale from the Northern province of Yemen deals with a young girl, taking loving care of her seven brothers, after a wicked stepmother turned them into calves, until they return to their human form (Shachmon 2017). In the story of *ḥunaynat ʿallāh*, the Yemenite ecotype of ‘Cinderella’, a cow performs as the guardian angel of the orphan protagonist, supplying all her needs. Later on, as the cow is slaughtered by the stepmother, the cow’s head and feet miraculously turn into golden crown and shoes, its skin turns into a marvelous dress, and other body parts transform into golden jewelry and eventually become the dead mother’s

¹² Salamon (2008: 417) found comparable intimacy and nostalgic memories towards the family cow in narratives collected from Ethiopian Jews of Beta Israel.

dowry for her daughter (Gamlieli 1977: 390; Alexander 1992: 130-132).¹³ Importantly, non-Jewish versions of *ḥunaynat ʿallāh*, as e.g. the one published by Boullata (2006: 117-119), evidence the motherly image of the cow in the general Yemeni folklore. The Jewish minority's folk-culture thus corresponds with the general popular culture in Yemen.

Also evident in Yemenite folklore is the correlation between the fate of young girls and that of cows. This idea is manifested, for example, in a wedding verse that was sung by women: being “sold” to her future husband, the girl cries: *bīʿū albaqar w-alḡanam, w-anā xallūnī* (or: *w-almāl yifdīnī*) ‘sell the cattle and sheep but leave me (or: and money will ransom me) (Gamlieli 1974:168). The unuttered meaning of this verse is that the cow is sold to slaughter, thus portraying the act of marrying the girl as even more horrifying.

4. Cow-episodes in the *k*-dialects of Lower Yemen

4.1. Linguistic sketch

The short episodes below were told, at our request, in Yemeni Arabic. This fact in itself requires clarification. As was (and still is) often the case with immigrants from Arab countries to Israel, their Arabic had been preserved up to a certain point in intimate communal and family contexts, yet it had not been passed on to the second and third generations (Talmon 2000: 209). We observe, that even within the household of couples who were both born in Yemen, and whose mother tongue is Yemeni Arabic, the primary language used is Hebrew. Clearly, this is not a recent phenomenon, as the second generation, born in Israel in the 1960s and 1970s, very often understands Yemeni Arabic only to a certain extent. In most cases, they do not speak it at all, or speak it very poorly, and can mainly repeat some fixed formulas in their parents’ dialect. Their own children (now, also grandchildren) have no knowledge of the dialect whatsoever. That said, in elderly daycare centers, especially in localities with a large Yemeni community, one may occasionally hear a conversation in a Yemeni dialect, or – more often – in a mixture of Hebrew and Arabic. Thus, our main challenge during the field-trips was to allow the necessary time and ambience for the informants to recollect their mother tongue, that in many cases had been dormant for years.

Due to the lasting and intimate contact with Israeli Hebrew, the texts we recorded contain a considerable number of Hebrew components. Some of these are genuine components that were part of the dialect already in Yemen (Shachmon 2013), e.g. *ghinnē ghēnnōm* (text 1) ‘the hell of all hells’ (Hebrew גֶּהֶנִּי גֶּהֶנִּים), *šōḡḡēn* (text 2) ‘neighbor’ (Hebrew שָׁכֵן); or *qēḏaš* (text 3) ‘community land’ (Hebrew

¹³ Other versions of *ḥunaynat ʿallāh* may be found in The Israel Folktale Archives (or IFA, available online), e.g. texts no. 1300, 5448, 21515 or 24005. The IFA offers comparable narratives, that also touch on the motherly image of the cow, e.g. texts no. 3645, 8775, 9813, 11602, and particularly 12075, where the cow manifests as a mother to the orphan children.

שָׁרָה). In most cases, this layer of the language may be determined on account of the pronunciation of the Hebrew consonants and vowels, that follow the Jewish-Yemenite tradition (thoroughly described in Morag 1963). In the texts below, genuine Hebrew components are marked with superscript “HbC”. In contrast, Hebrew words and phrases like *amarti lo* ‘I said to him’ or *be-otam ha-yamim* ‘in those days’ correspond to modern Israeli pronunciation, and clearly belong to a layer that evolved after the immigration. Such modern Israeli components are marked with superscript “IHb”. Note, however, that full long sentences in Israeli Hebrew, or distractions on the part of other people in the room, were generally omitted from the transcriptions.

The dialect that emerges from the texts is representative of what Goitein (1960: 358) labeled “Upper Lower Yemen”, specifically the villages in the rural area to the North, East and South of the city of Ibb. A general outline of this group of dialects is found in Diem (1973: 75ff), and a text from the nearby town of Giblih was published by Jastrow in 1986. More specifically, the Jewish dialect of the village of alGades was described in Goitein 1960, and in fact, the narrator of text 1 was born in that village. That said, we note that the texts published in Goitein 1960 were, in actuality, not recorded from natives of alGades itself, but from immigrants from villages in its vicinity, namely Miʿwal, Máqlūʿ and Garšab. This fact is of importance, since the various villages, despite their geographic proximity, exhibit inter-dialectal variation, as further explained in what follows.

The dialects of the area studied exhibit the feature of *k*-perfect (Vanhove 2009; Watson 2018), i.e. a velar *k* in the perfect verbal paradigm, equivalent to Old Arabic /t/, e.g. *katabku* ‘I wrote’ for Old Arabic *katabtu*, or for Šanʿāni *katabt*. As noted in previous studies (cf. Diem 1973: 75ff; Prochazka 1974: 439; Behnstedt 2016, map 081), an array of distinct *k*-forms appear in various localities along the western mountain range of Yemen, and up to the northern province (Behnstedt 1987: 133; Watson et al. 2006a and 2006b). The forms documented in Lower Yemen may be classified into the following types, which we label here **type -ku**, **type -k^w** and **type -k**, in accordance with their distinctive 1SG subject suffix.

	type -ku	type -k ^w	type -k
<i>katab</i> ‘write’	<i>katabku</i>	<i>katabk^w</i>	<i>katubk</i>
<i>širib</i> ‘drink’	<i>širibku</i>	<i>širubk^w~šurubk^w</i>	<i>širubk~šurubk</i>
<i>nasi</i> ‘forget’	<i>nasēku</i>	<i>nasōk^w</i>	<i>nasōk</i>

Note, that the labialization of the consonant in type $-k^w$ may trigger colouring of the base vowel from i to u and from \bar{e} to \bar{o} . Importantly, the base vowel a cannot be coloured. a -bases may nevertheless exhibit u – as we documented in Sh – as a result of the generalization of the round quality of the vowel as a marker of the 1SG (Shachmon and Faust forthcoming):¹⁴

Since labialization characterizes the 1SG, colouring of the base is only documented in this person, and never in the 2MSG. Thus, the distinction between the 1st and 2nd person, that characterized Old Arabic but was lost in most modern varieties, is preserved in these varieties despite the loss of the final vowel, with pairs like *katabk^w* ‘I wrote’ vs. *katabk* ‘you MSG wrote’, and *širubk^w* ‘I drank’ vs. *širibk* ‘you MSG drank’ (Shachmon 2015; Behnstedt 2016: 193).

The 2FSG subject suffix is $-ki$ in Ah, Gd and Sh, but surfaces as \check{s} in Ut (cf. Behnstedt 2016: map 082). In pre-pausal position the $-ki$ suffix may exhibit palatalization, i.e. $[k^y]$ or even a full nasal insertion, i.e. $[ki\eta]$ (Shachmon and Faust forthcoming). The following tables summarize the verbal patterns that we recorded from our four speakers from Ah, Gd, Ut, and Sh:

		Ah type $-ku$	Gd type $-k^w$	Ut type $-k^w$	Sh type $-k$
<i>katab</i> ‘write’	1SG	<i>katabku</i>	<i>katabk^w</i>	<i>katabk^w</i>	<i>katubk</i>
	2MSG	<i>katabk</i>	<i>katabk</i>	<i>katabk</i>	<i>katabk</i>
	2FSG	<i>katabki~k^y#~ki\eta#</i>	<i>katabki~k^y#~ki\eta#</i>	<i>katabš</i>	<i>katabki</i>

<i>širib</i> ‘drink’	1SG	<i>širibku</i>	<i>širubk^w~šurubk^w</i>	<i>širubk^w~šurubk^w</i>	<i>širubk~šurubk</i>
	2MSG	<i>širibk</i>	<i>širibk</i>	<i>širibk</i>	<i>širibk</i>
	2FSG	<i>širibki~k^y#~ki\eta#</i>	<i>širibki~k^y#~ki\eta#</i>	<i>širibš</i>	<i>širibki</i>

¹⁴ u also occurs in the patterns *fa^lluk* and *fa^aaluk*, where it immediately precedes the subject suffix. Such forms were documented in Jabal Rāziḥ and around Ṣa^adah in the North of Yemen (Behnstedt 1987: 133; Watson et al. 2006b: 38; Behnstedt 2016: map 081), but not in the area under discussion. It is noteworthy that the feature of k -perfect has not been detected in the speech of the Jews of the northern province of Yemen, including those who hail from alGal^aah and anNaḍīr (Shachmon 2014: 146; Shachmon forthcoming).

<i>nasī</i> ‘forget’	1SG	<i>nasēku</i>	<i>nasōk^w</i>	<i>nasōk^w</i>	<i>nasawk~nasōk</i>
	2MSG	<i>nasēk</i>	<i>nasēk</i>	<i>nasēk</i>	<i>nasayk~nasēk</i>
	2FSG	<i>nasēki~kʰ#~kiŋ#</i>	<i>nasēki~kʰ#~kiŋ#</i>	<i>nasēs</i>	<i>nasayki</i>

The treatment of the old diphthongs in these dialects is rather puzzling. While, diphthongs are regularly subject to monophthongization in many *k*-dialects (Jastrow 1986: 26; Testen 1992: 81), e.g. OA *yawm*>*yōm* ‘day’ and OA *bayt*>*bēt* ‘house’, the dialects of the area under consideration are characterized by much fluidity and exhibit frequent alternation between diphthongs and monophthongs, even in the speech of the same speaker. Thus, the texts below demonstrate an inconsistent distribution of *ē* and *ay* (occasionally also *ey*), and similarly of *ō* and *aw* (occasionally also *ow*). Moreover, *ay* is oftentimes reduced to *a*, as in *harabayn~haraban* below. The phonetic instability that we observe in the speech of our informants accords with Goitein’s (1960: 359) description of Lower Yemeni Arabic as of “extremely fluid character”, in the sense that many vowels and consonants exhibit a number of phonetic variants.

An intriguing feature of all dialects of this area is gender distinction in the 1SG independent pronoun, with *anā* for the 1MSG and *anī* for the 1FSG (Behnstedt 2016, map 039). Since all four episodes were recorded from women, we see *anī* wherever the narrators refer to themselves. However, as the narrator of text 2 repeats the words of her male Muslim neighbor she uses the form *anā*.

And finally, note the use of the interrogative *mū* ‘what’, that occurs in all four texts. This form is a reflex of Old Arabic *mā* in combination with the 3MSG independent pronouns and is characteristic of the dialects of Lower Yemen (Piamenta 1991: 473; Behnstedt 2016: map 072).

4.2. Texts

The four episodes are given below in phonemic transcription, along with an English translation. We strived to remain as close as possible to the Arabic text, but at the same time to produce a coherent (though not literary) English version. We also provide some background information on the speaker and circumstances in which the narrative was recorded.

Text 1: *anfī yahūdyyih? anfī xinzīrih!* ‘you [call yourself] a Jew? You are a sow!’ : The dialect of alGades, type *-k^w*

The speaker of text 1, Yona Ben David, was born in 1937 in the village of alGades. Her mother died when she was 11, and she grew up with a stepmother that her father married shortly after. As other Jewish girls in this area, Yona studied Hebrew with her grandfather and could actually read, although she only started practicing writing when she went to school in Israel. In 1949, she and her brothers set out for Israel.

We recorded the text in November 2016 in the informant’s house in Givat Ye^sarim, west of Jerusalem. Present in the room at the time of the recording, besides both of us, was the speaker’s granddaughter Ms. Naama Ben-David, who is acquainted with the dialect but cannot use it actively. We asked the informant to tell us of her early childhood in Yemen, and it was her spontaneous choice to tell of an unpleasant event, that followed from the wandering of the family cow into Muslim neighbor’s field. As the plot thickens, the neighbor gets furious and insults the frightened girl with harsh words like *xinzīrih* ‘female pig, sow’.¹⁵ The scene continues until her grandfather intervenes and they reach an agreement. In this context it should be stated, that as harsh as the scene may have been in reality, this encounter is not necessarily representative of the relations between Muslims and Jews in the area under consideration, relations that Goitein (1955: 16) characterized as “the closest symbiosis”. Indeed, in other stories the informants tell of integration and cooperation between Jews and Muslims in this rural area.

The dialect of alGades exhibits *k*-perfect of the type *-k^w*, the release of the /k/ being clearly rounded. *i*-bases exhibit back-coloring from *i* to *u* and from *ē* to *ō*. Note, that the rounded *k^w* suffix surfaces with a full vowel before clitics, and thus *qul^w+lak* yields *qūlku-lak* ‘I said to you MSG’, in par. 3 of this text. Another example is found in text 4 below, with *rawwah^w+han* => *rawwahkuhan* ‘I brought them F home’.

The 2FSG post-consonantal pronominal suffix in Gd is *-ič*, as opposed to *-iš* in the other varieties (cf. Behnstedt 2016: map 051). This is demonstrated by *gaddič* ‘your FSG grandfather’ and *ašaddiqič* ‘I believe you FSG’ in par 2 below, vs. *aqūl-liš* ‘I say to you FSG’ in text 2, or *mā-liš* ‘what is [wrong] with you FSG’ in text 3.

¹⁵ Qanbar explicates that in the Yemeni society pigs are associated with impurity and uncleanness. She also states that Jews are associated with treachery and meanness, and that the word ‘Jew’, just like ‘pig’, is a “Context-specific Taboo”, in the sense that it may bear a neutral meaning in everyday speech, but then become taboo in certain contexts (Qanbar 2011: 92).

1

kāna tuhrub ^ʕaniyya la-^ʕind alqabīlī. alqabīlī kār, kār gānbanā lqabīlī, kār ma^ʕō ^{HHb}gam adama^{HHb}. alqabīlī ^{HHbC}maḥ šimó vezixró^{HHbC}. albaqarah daxala la ... alḥōl ḥaqq alqabīlī... ^{HHb}maze^{HHb} tkallam ^ʕaliyya! tkallam tkallam: kalbah, antī xinzīriḥ, antī antī antī antī yahūdīyyih? antī xinzīriḥ!

[The cow] used to run away from me to the tribesman’s [lot]. The tribesman was next to us, he also had land, the tribesman, may his name and memory be forgotten. The cow entered ... the lot of the tribesman ... he cursed me so much! He cursed and cursed: "(You) bitch! You are a sow! You are, you are, you are, you are... [You claim] you are a Jew? You are [nothing but] a sow!"

2

^{HHb}amarti lo^{HHb} hī hāraba hāraba hāraba ^ʕaliyya, hāraba. mā ṣaddiqiḥ, mā aṣaddiqiḥ, antī kādḍābah! kaḍḍābah! abūḥ w-abūḥ w-gaddik. anā ṣa-arūḥ ^ʕind gaddiḥ w-akkallam ^ʕalō. ^{HHb}amarti š-yelex yalla^{HHb} l-ghinnē-ghēnnōm^{HHbC}.

I said to him: ‘She ran away, ran away, ran away from me, she ran away’. [He said] ‘I do not believe you, I do not believe you! You are a liar! Liar! Your father and your father and your grandfather ... I will go to your grandfather and I will tell him’. I said [to myself]: ‘let him go, go ahead, to the hell of all hells’.¹⁶

3

rāḥ la-^ʕind abī, la-^ʕind gaddī. kār abī, kār gaddī, ^{HHb}az hu amar^{HHb}, qallo qallo, walla ḥāḍī lkalbah, daxala lbaqarah akala lmusme, akala assabūl. amar^{HHb} aḷḷa waḷḷa, maš b-raḍāḥ, maš b-raḍāḥ yā sīdī, maš b-raḍāḥ. ^{HHb}amar lo^{HHb} hī xinzīriḥ, xinzīriḥ. qūlku-lak hī xinzīriḥ.

He went to my father, to my grandfather. My father was there, my grandfather was [there], then he said, he said to him, he said to him: “By God, that bitch, the cow entered, ate the what’s-its-name, ate the ... the crops”. He said: “God, by God, [this was] not, not with my consent, not with my consent, mister, not with my consent”. He said to him: “She is a sow, a sow, I told you she was a sow”.

¹⁶ Comparable superlative constructions, based upon the reduplication of the noun in a genitive construction, are mentioned in Henshke 2007: 104.

Note, that Hebrew *ghēnnōm* surfaces here as [*ghēnnō*]. Final sonorants are often devoiced or elided in pause, particularly in final CvCC or CVC syllables (Watson 2007: 177, 181). When elided, glottalisation often follows, e.g. *sanīn*=[*sanī*] “years” and *ḥimār*=[*ḥimā*] “donkey”. Similar elision and glottalization may also be detected in Hebrew components, as heard here in [*ghinnō*] “hell, or, frequently, in the blessing *bōrux ḥaššēm* = [*bōrux ḥaššē*] “Thank God”.

4

atrawwaḥk^w albēt, bakōk^w bakōk^w. ^{IHb}aba! aba!^{IHb} w-gaddī, gaddī w-abī, ^{IHb}amarti ló: al^ʿarabī walla tkallam ^ʿaliyya, tkallam ^ʿaliyya walla qallī xinzīriḥ, qallī zē^{IHb} qallī ... amar^{IHb} abū abū. qāl qāl. besēder^{IHb}, qāl. ^{IHb}hevī zē^{IHb} ... musme, gāb gāb abī, gāb gaddī, yixāyi^ʿū almusme.

I went home, I cried and cried: “dad! dad”! and my grandfather, my grandfather and my father, I said to him: “the Arab, by God, cursed me, cursed me, by God, he called me ‘sow’, he said to me so and so, he said to me ...”. [My father] said: “[may] his father [be cursed!]”. So what? OK, so he said!” [The Arab] took this ... what’s-its-name, he took, he took my father, he took my grandfather to see the what’s-its-name.

5

kān alḥōl taba^ʿoh#, aḥsan aḥsan aḥsan m^{IHb}-^ʿarabī, mašū^{IHb}. qāl: rūḥ txāya bintak bintak mū sawwa mū sawwa. qāl: hī gāhlih aval^{IHb}, gāhlih gāhlih. qāl: lo^{IHb} hī xinzīriḥ, hī xinzīriḥ, māhēš ... māhēš gāhlih, hī xinzīreh. tir^ʿī albaqarah? baqarah sō^ʿ ... baqarah baqarah kāna biḥ ma^ʿe ^{IHb}ḥālav ḥālav^{IHb}.

His lot was the best, the best, the best [lot you could see] at an Arab, an [exceptional] thing. [The Arab] said: “go and see what your daughter, your daughter, has done, what she has done”. [My father] said: “but she is [only] a child, a child, a child”, he said: “No, she is a sow, she is a sow, she is not, she is not a child, she is a sow. She herds the cow [doesn’t she]?” [It was] a cow [as big] as ... a great cow [lit. cow cow], it had great milk [lit. milk milk].

6

walla gaddī qāl-lo xālle hī gāhlih, hī gāhlih, hī gāhlih, bas maxṭar tānī mā-tsawwiš. mā-tsawwiš. qāl walla hī kalbah hī xinzīriḥ. mā tir^ʿī albaqarah ḥāḍī hī xinzīriḥ!

By God, my grandfather said to him: “let [her] go, she is [just] a child, she is a child, she is a child, next time she will not do [that], she will not do [that]. [The Arab] said: by God, she is a bitch, she is a sow. As long as she herds this cow, she is [accounted for] a sow!

7

abī gāb-lo mašārī maḥšimō^{HCB} ^{IHb}ve-amar ló^{IHb} yaḷla xāllanā walla, xāllanā bas xāllanā ^{IHb}amar lo^{IHb} aḷla yisállimak - ^{IHb}šelo iyé-lo šalom^{IHb} l-^ʿölōm^{HbC}. qāl-lo walla aḷla yisállimak bas xallē musme, hī gāhlih mā tidrīš.

My father gave him [some] money, may his name [and memory] be forgotten, and said to him: “come on, leave us alone, leave us alone, just leave us alone”, he said to him, “may God protect you (from harm)” - may he never have any protection - [My father] said to him: “by God, may god protect you (from harm), just leave her alone, the what’s- its-name, she is a child, she does not understand”.

Text 2: *lamū tiħbis-lak bunayyāt suġayyirāt?* ‘Why should you send little girls to prison?’: The dialect of Šiʿb asSuħūl, type -k

The speaker of text 2, Geula Gibli, was born in 1940 in the village of asSuħūl (also: Šiʿb asSuħūl) North of Ibb. We recorded her in January 2017, in her house in Mashʿen, a small *moshav* near the city of Ashkelon in Southern Israel.

The text describes Geula’s challenging experience as a young girl leading the cows to pasture. Here again the helplessness of a little girl in front of the unruly cows becomes evident, and the event remains engraved in her memory most vividly. In this episode the situation escalates quickly as the Muslim neighbor threatens to imprison the girl, but her family intervenes and rescues her, and she is never again sent out with the cows.

The dialect may be classified as type -k, exhibiting no labialization of the 1SG subject suffix. Nevertheless, back-coloring is evident in *fīʿil* bases, e.g. *širubk*, but also in *faʿal* bases, e.g. *saruħk* ‘I went’, as a result of a later association of the base color u (or [o]) with the grammatical feature 1SG (Shachmon and Faust forthcoming). Note, that the speaker uses the 1SG independent pronoun *anā* when reporting the neighbor’s speech, as opposed to *anī* which is used in these dialects for the 1FSG (see examples in texts 3 and 4).

The fluidity in the treatment of the old diphthongs (see §4.1 above) may be observed here with, e.g., the alternation of *bēt* and *bayt*. The alternation of -*ayn~an* in the verbal suffixes (see §4.1) is also evident, examples include *harabayn~haraban* and *tiʿabayn~tiʿabán*.

The speaker uses several mixed Hebrew-Arabic forms, such as a combination of a Hebrew noun with the Arabic definite article, e.g. *aššóxēn* ‘the neighbor’, or a Hebrew verb conjugated with an Arabic suffix, e.g. *hiṭhílan* ‘they F began’ (Hebrew *hiṭhíl* ‘he began’). We documented dozens of comparable forms from other informants as well, the most ear-catching of which are where the Hebrew subject suffix is replaced by the Arabic -k, e.g. *lēš mā baki almoʿadōn^{IHb}* ‘why didn’t you FSG come to the [elderly day-care] club?’ (from Hebrew *bat* בַּת); or *antī hifsadki* ‘you FSG missed [all the fun]’ (Hebrew *hifsadt* הִפְסַדְתְּ). The mixed forms are hereafter marked with superscript “Mx”.

1

saruħk arʿī albaqár, w-han hárabayn. sáraħan la-ħaqq aššóxēn^{IHbC}, hiṭhílan^{Mx} lexól^{IHb}. qāl: mū tsarriħí banāt suġayyirāt yirʿan-liš albaqar. mū tsarriħíhan. han suġayyirāt. han hárabayn, han gālsāt yilʿabayn. ^{IHb}az ba ima šelí:^{IHb} lamá ntū ráqdāt, wayn antán w-tiʿabayn? ʿáyyinayn albaqar qa-háran, w-antan gālsāt!

I went to graze the cattle, and they [the cows] ran away. They went to the neighbor’s [land] and started eating. He [the neighbor] said [to my mother]: “You should not send little girls to graze the cattle for you. You should not send them. They are young. They [the cows] ran away. They [the girls] sit and play.” Then my mother came [yelling at us]: “why are you sleeping? where are you, where are you, playing? Look, the cattle has run away, while you were sitting!”.

2

baʿdan baʿdan. aḥarkax^{IHb} ... raʿayna albaqar, w-han daxalan ʿód-paʿam^{IHb}. (...) daxala l-sadé^{IHb}. ^{IHb}lama antan txallayn albaqar yihúrban w-ántan gálsāt tilʿabán. alʿáraví^{Mx} hādā qāl: anā aqūllīš ^{IHb}im-ló tiddīlī haqq al ... kull al ... misme, azzirāʿah, anā adáxxilhan la-lmaḥbas, aḥbīshan.

[We then kept walking] after them, after them. Later on we grazed the cattle, and they entered once again, it [the cow] entered the field. [My mom shouted]: why did you let the cows run away, while you sit and play? That Arab said: I am telling you, if you don't give me [recompense] for all of the what's-its-name, my crops, I will get them in prison, I will imprison them.

3

hā lamū tiḥbis-lak bunayyāt suḡayyarāt. mū yiʿmalán-lak. mū tiʿmal bahán? tidaxxilhan, tiḥbīshan. mū yiʿmalan-lak? qāl yā ... aval^{IHb} maxṭar tānī, anā abuzz-īlīš albaqar kulle. abuzz kull albaqarāt. ma-ʿās¹⁷ sarāḥniš nírʿī. ma-ʿās sarāḥnā nírʿī. gassēnā b-albayt.

[my mother said]: why would you prison little girls. What could they do to you? What would you do with them? [you want] to get them in prison, to prison them. What could they do to you? He said: oh ... but next time I will take all of the cattle from you. I'll take all of the cows. We did not take them anymore to pasture. We stayed at home.

Text 3: *ḥiss albaqara aḥsan min alʿádamī* ‘A cow’s mind is better than that of a human being’: The dialect of ʿUṭmah, type -k^w

The speaker of text 3, Yona Damti, was born in 1936 in the village of ʿUṭmah in Gabal Baʿdān, east of Ibb. We met her and two of her brothers in April 2017, then again in February 2018, in Aḥihud, a small *moshav* East of Acre. The Damti family was a relatively wealthy one, the father being a weaver and a draper, who owned lands that provided the family with a fine living. We were told that the family possessed three cows, and when mentioning this fact to other informants they commented: “Three?! wealthy people...”. Under these favorable circumstances, Yona was sent to study with the *mōri*, or Torah teacher, along with the boys of the family, and she could thus read Hebrew from an early age. At the same time, as other girls of her age, she was responsible for feeding and grazing the cows. This duty, however, was shared in this case with a Muslim house servant, or *xaddāmah*, a privilege that only very few Jewish families could afford.

The text begins with Yona (proudly) describing the family spacious house, taking us on a ‘guided tour’ of the floors and many rooms. While describing the first floor, where livestock was kept, she suddenly recollected the family cow, and from there the story focused on the merits and qualities of that animal.

The dialect of Uṭ is of type -k^w, similar to that of Gd, except for the 2FSG which features -š. Such forms, however, do not occur in the extract given here.

¹⁷ Assimilation of *d* to the first consonant of the following word, i.e. *ʿād sarāḥniš* > *ʿās sarāḥniš*. Compare *ʿād+boh* > *ʿāb-boh* in text 3 below.

1

ma^ʿ abī, kān boh arġ. kān boh arġ kaġīr. boh hunāk qēdaš^{HbC} w-boh, maṭraḥ tātī arġ mā boš qēdaš^{HbC}. anī atfákkar ʿala bēt abī. bēt abī kān ʿala talāt aṭbāq. almádxūl, awwal išī ḥatsér^{Hb} kabīrih.

My father had land. There were many lands. There was endowment property,¹⁸ and in another place there were lands with no endowment. I am thinking about my father's house. My father's house had three floors. The entrance ... first [there was] a big yard.

2

nídxul, w-ba^ʿdā nídxul albayt ... bi-lḥāl alayman boh mášna^ʿ, antum dārīn mū hāḍā mašna^ʿ? w-ba^ʿdā boh ... baqarah! ve^ʿod^{Hb} baqarah, ve^ʿod^{Hb} baqarah - báqar. talāt baqar. kān yiġarrizū laḥán. kānu yi ... yibuzzū alʿagūr, alʿagūr ḥaqq al ... sabūl. w-alʿálaf, kān yiġarrizū, yiġarrizū, yillaqimū.

We go in, and after that we enter the house. In the right room there was the workshop - do you know what a “workshop” means? and after that there was ... a cow! and another cow, and another cow. Cows, three cows. They used to feed them by hand. They used to take the stalk of the ... sorghum spike, and the leaves, they used to feed [the cows] by hand, feed by hand, thrust [the bundles] in the mouths [of the cows].

3

min albaqār daxalnā mádxal w-boh máṭṭan. almáṭṭan, kāna yiṭṭānin anniswān. tbakkir bi-ššubḥ qā-hī tiṭṭan w-tġānnī. mā-liš tġānnī? lā boh lā rādyo^{Hb} w-lā tlevizya^{Hb}, kāna tġānnī^ʿ#, mir-rāse, ʿala wag^ʿ qalbe. min aššugul, min arraggāl, min alguhāl, min ... mā ṭīlī^ʿ bi-rāse tġānnī. hāḍā alġunā?

From [the place where] the cows [were], we enter through a passage and there there was a millstone. The millstone, she used, the women used to grind. She gets up early in the morning, and [here she is] already grinding and singing. [I would wonder:] “Why are you singing”? There was no radio and no television, [so] she sang from [whatever came to] her mind, from the sorrows of her heart. [She would sing] about work, about the husband, about the children, about ... she would sing about whatever came to her mind. That's what singing was.

¹⁸ *qēdaš* (lit. ‘holiness’) is a Hebrew term used to describe assets or objects that belong to the synagogue or to the Jewish community, or that are set apart for religious purposes (Ratzaby 1978: 244; Piamenta 1991: 389). Here, the term refers to land that belongs to the community, i.e. not privately owned.

4

min almaṭḥán, ʿāb-boḥ mitbān, miṭbān. mū waṣṭ almitbān? tibn, tib 'ḥ. ḥāḍa attibn ... alǧāraz ḥāḍa qā-hū šupār^{JHb}. axarrig albaqār nir^{ʿt}, nir^{ʿt}. w-boḥ qēḍas^{HbC}, aḍmat-qēḍas^{HbC}, w-boḥ arḍ ḥaqqaṇā. mazrū^{ʿah} muhandamah. nir^{ʿt} bi-l^{ʿa}aḍmat-qēḍas^{HbC}.

[we proceed] from the millstone, and there is the straw-room, a straw-room. What's in the straw-room? Straw. Straw. This straw is the food of the cows, straw. The fodder roll is a [special] treat.¹⁹ I take the cows out, we lead them to pasture, to pasture. And there was an endowment, endowment land, and there was land which was ours, seeded, well-managed. We graze the cows in the endowment land.

5

nir^{ʿt} hunāk. nir^{ʿt} w-niṣrāḥ. w-boḥ ʿāṣwah. kān ngurr-lanā mā. boḥ kūzi, kūzi w-boḥ mā. kama^{Hb} tir^{ʿt}? ṭalaṭ arba^ʿ saʿāt? w-aṭrawwaḥk^w, nrawwiḥ. lā boḥ man yiḥlūb wilā man yir^{ʿt}. ḡāḥilīn.

We graze them there, graze and watch. And there was a watchman's hut. We would bring water with us. There was a jug, a jug with water in it. How long could one graze [the cows]?²⁰ Three, four hours, then I went back home. We would go home. There is no-one to milk [the cows] or to take [them] to graze. [We were just] kids!

6

albaqarah ḥisse ... aḥsan ḥiss min alʿādamī. xalq allāh! ḥisse, tšamšim, tšayyih fawqe: wēn tiwallī? wēn tiṣīrī, wēn tigī, alʿiṣē. albaqar mevinōt^{Hb}, dāriyat ... tigza^ʿ ḥāḍa ṭṭarīq w-lā ḥāḍa ṭṭarīq, tigza^ʿ aṭṭarīq dī anī awarrī ... dīh aṭṭarīq tigza^ʿ. ve-lō^{Hb} aṭṭarīq dī hī tiṣṭī. hī tiṣṭī – lā! bass irgaʿī ḥāḍa aṭṭarīq. kull wāḥad yiḡza^ʿ ṭarīqo. w-albaqarah dāriyih, dāriyih ṭarīqe.

A cow, its mind is better than that of a human. [It is] a creation of God! Its awareness [is such that] it sniffs, you may call after her: “where are you heading? where are you going? where are you coming to? [using] the stick. Cows understand. They know! It would walk this road and not that road, it takes the road that I show it, this is the road that it takes, and not the road that it wants. It wants, [but I say:] ‘no! you just go back to that road’. Everyone takes his road, and the cow knows, it knows [which is] the road for it.

Text 4: aḥqud Matána ‘I remember [our cow] Matana’: The dialect of ʿUṭmah, type -k^w

The speaker of text 4, Yemima Ḥazan, is also from the village of ʿUṭmah. Born in Yemen in 1946, Yemima came to Israel as an infant, and the family settled in Aḥihud, east of Acre, with other families from the same Yemeni village (including the Damti family mentioned above). Her family kept on speaking Yemeni Arabic for some time, and Yemima actually speaks the dialect very well. She later

¹⁹ The informant uses the term *šupār*, commonly pronounced *čupār*, a trendy modern Israeli word, denoting a special treat, or bonus.

²⁰ This is to explain why they only needed a jug of water, and not more than that.

married a man from alGades and moved to live with his family in Givat Yeʿarim, and by this she became aware of subtle differences between the dialects. Thus, during the interviews she frequently pointed to alternative forms she heard from her mother-in-law.

Between January and August 2018 we met with her several times in her house in Givat Yeʿarim. Having immigrated at a young age, Yemima doesn’t have childhood memories from Yemen, but she nevertheless shared with us some interesting experiences concerning cow farming in Israel during the 1950s. The text below thus demonstrates the extent to which the old practices of rural Yemen were imported to Israel, so that, at least in the first years after the immigration, very young girls were sent to lead the cows to pasture even under very different circumstances, far away from Yemen. Interestingly, the narrator refers to an Arab man she encountered in Israel using the term *qabīlī*, which in Yemen refers to a Muslim tribesman (see text 1 above). Thus, along with the practices, we find that social concepts and related terminology were also imported. Note, however, that the words cited from that local “*qabīlī*” are in Yemeni Arabic, the only variety of Arabic that Yemima knows.

1

kān maʿnā baqar. yōm wāḥid abī, aḷla yirḥamo, ákkal albaqár b-taʿróvet^{1Hb}. akkálhan b-taʿróvet^{1Hb}. kǎnū yiʿakklūhan taʿróvet^{1Hb}. yōm wāḥid ṭuluʿ^k min fōq rās albaqar [...] kǎn ṭāqah, kǎnin kam aṭwāq, w-bahán kǎnu yiskubū attaʿróvet^{1Hb}.

We had cows. One day my father, god bless his soul, fed the cows with industrial cow food. He fed them with it. They used to feed them with industrial food. One day I went up above the cows’ heads, there was a window, there were several windows, through which they used to pour the food.

2

ṭuluʿ^k fōq aṭṭāqah. [...] kunk^w aʿayyin albaqar w-affakkar, kēfahan yiʿukulēn²¹ ṭahīn. waḥadih min albaqar aṭṭaḡaʿa minni, bazza rāse awgaʿtani bi-nuxratī. assāki lī - maniš ḥāqdiḥ^{1Hb} tov tov - ulay^{1Hb} sbūʿēn gulus^{kw} b-albet. kull waghī kǎn manfūx.

I went up the window. I was watching the cows, wondering how it is that they eat flour. One of the cows was alarmed by my [presence], it lifted its head and hit me on my nose. I suppose - I don’t remember very well - it was around two weeks that I stayed at home. My face was all swollen.

²¹ Behnstedt 2016 map 101 gives *yiʿkul* and *yuʿkul* for the area under discussion. The vowel following the *hamza* in *yiʿukulēn* has been cross-checked with other informants and seems to be stable.

3

šugúl xérāt. [...] q-iḥnā nbúzzahan yir^ʿēn. [...] kān ummi ti^ʔakkilhan ba-boker^{HHb}, tiḥlubhan, w-ba^ʿdā nbuzzahan yir^ʿēn. wāḥid min alayyām anī surk^w ar^ʿī, ve^{HHb}-kunk^w al^ʿāb-lī, al^ʿāb-lī w-ahādir naḥsī, anī waḥdī w-albaqar.

[Raising cows was] a lot of work. We used to take them out to pasture. [...] My mother would feed them in the morning, milk them, and then we would take them grazing. One day I went grazing the cows and I was playing by myself, playing by myself, talking to myself. Just me and the cows.

4

qumk^w adawwirhan. wēnahan? mā-bōš baqār. qa-nī li-abkī. šáyyaḥk^w l-wāḥdih min albaqar. sammī²² Matana^{HHb}. ve^{HHb}-man kān yšayyih-le, kāna tigrī la-ʿind aššōt, [...] kull albaqar ba^ʿde. w-anī šayyáḥk^w šayyáḥk^w: Matána! Matána! garōk^w l-hāḍā alḥāl garōk^w la-hunā^{2#}, garōk^w ...

I got up searching for them. Where are they? No cows. I was already about to cry. I shouted to one of the cows. It was called Matana [Hebrew ‘present’], and whenever someone called it, it would run towards the voice [...] the other cows would all follow her. And I shouted and shouted: Matana! Matana! I ran to this side, I ran over there, I ran ...

5

pir^ʔom^{HHb}, gā qabīlī. alqabāyil kānū yigū la-bēt abī, aval^{HHb} b-almar^ʿī w-anī waḥdī aṭaga^{ʿk} meod-meod^{HHb}. qāl-lī mū biš yā-bint? lamū tibkī? bakōk^w w-qulku-lo albaqar ḥaqqaṇā, māniš dārī wēnahan. hārabin.

Suddenly, an Arab came. The Arabs used to come to my father’s house, but in pasture, as I was alone, I got very scared. He said to me: what is it, girl? Why are you crying? I cried and said to him: our cows, I don’t know where they are. They ran away.

6

qāl: lā tiṭṭāgi^ʿīš. anā ḥsarkuhan. hū sarāḥ la-ʿind albaqar, gamma^ʿhan, ʿāwannī nxallifhan a-kvīš^{HHb}. rawwaḥkuhan. w-hū gā ʿad^{HHb} bētanā, sallam ʿala abī w-hādarū bēnahum. la-min hāḍa alyōm wa-la wāḥdih min xawāti kānin ysīrēn la-lmar^ʿī waḥdahan. kān iḥnā nsīr tīntēn.

He said: don’t be afraid. I saw them. He went to the cows, gathered them and helped me get them across the road. I brought them back home. And he came as far as our house, greeted my father and they spoke. And from that day on, none of my sisters have gone out to pasture alone. We would go in pairs.

5. Conclusion

The episodes presented in this paper were chosen by virtue of both their content and language. They offer a glimpse into three varieties of Lower Yemeni Arabic,

²² *sammū+e>sammī* ‘they called her’. The interaction of final vowels with vowel-initial clitics is discussed in Shachmon and Faust forthcoming.

thus providing an opportunity to account for the feature of *k*-perfect – not in isolation but rather in a fully contextualized form.

As personal memories of women narrators, these episodes shed light on the daily reality of young girls in mid-20th century rural Yemen, and bring to the fore the sense of commitment and intimacy that the girls developed towards the family cows. Put into a broader context of folk-tales and popular practices, the stories open a window on the significant role of cows in the general Yemeni culture, and on the personal and social values associated with them in the local folklore. Furthermore, these narratives touch upon the issue of Jewish ownership of agricultural lands and livestock, and the nature of Jewish-Muslim relations in this regard.

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