

Erik John Anonby

Carleton University & Uppsala Universitet

erik_anonby@carleton.ca

Kumzari is an endangered language spoken by about 4000 people in Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Iran. Speakers of the main dialect are found on the Musandam Peninsula of Oman and in small groups in cities along the Gulf coast of the United Arab Emirates. Laraki, a closely related dialect of the language, is spoken across the Strait of Hormuz by a single community on Larak Island in Iran (Lewis 2011, Anonby & Yousefian in press).

The Kumzari language was identified by Jayakar (1902), and a brief sketch of its grammar and lexicon appeared in Thomas (1930). Although it is often referred to as a mixed language, its core vocabulary and verbal morphology support Skjærvø's (1989) classification of Kumzari within the Southwestern group of Iranian languages. Still, many of its basic structures, including elements of the phonological system, may be traced to influence from Arabic, including the neighbouring Shihhi dialect of Arabic (see Bayshak 2002).

The description in this Illustration is based on an analysis of 4500 lexical items and a number of longer texts collected from various Kumzari speakers (al-Kumzari 2009, Anonby & van der Wal Anonby 2011). Sound recordings have been provided by Noufal Mohammad Ahmed al-Kumzari and Malallah Sulaiman Muhammad al-Kumzari, both residents of Khasab, Oman.

Consonants

Characteristic phonetic realizations of all contrastive consonants are shown in the consonant table.

	Bilabial	Labiodental	Alveolar	Velarized alveolar	Retroflex	Postalveolar	Palatal	Velar	Labial-velar	Uvular	Pharyngeal	Glottal
Plosive	p b		t d	t ^v d ^v				k g		q		ʔ
Affricate						t͡ʃ d͡ʒ						
Nasal	m		n									
Fricative		f	s	s ^v z ^v		ʃ				χ ʁ	ħ	ʕ
Approximant					ɻ		j		w			
Lateral approximant			l									

One salient element of the Kumzari consonant inventory is a series of velarized (or possibly velaro-pharyngealized) alveolar obstruents. The secondary articulation in these consonants is simultaneous, not limited to the consonants' release. This series corresponds to the 'emphatic' consonants of neighbouring Arabic dialects, but is not limited to the vocabulary that Kumzari has adopted from these varieties.

Contrast

All consonants are found in initial position.¹

/p/	pa:k	پاك	'clean thing'
/b/	ba:ɬ	بار	'strength'
/t/	tɐk	تك	'date syrup basket'
/d/	da:ɬ	دار	'stick'
/tʰ/	tʰa:f	طاف	'gale'
/dʰ/	dʰɐʃf	ضيف	'guest'
/k/	ka:ɬ	كار	'work'
/g/	gɐ	چا	'bull'
/q/	qa:t	قات	'beetle species'
/ʔ/	ʔa:ʃ	آش	'stone mill'
/tʃ/	tʃa:zʰ	شاذ	'lunch'
/dʒ/	dʒa:m	جام	'hooked (fish)'
/m/	ma:ɬ	مار	'awake, alert'
/n/	na:m	نام	'name'
/f/	fa:ɬ	فار	'flying fish'
/s/	sa:	سا	'now'
/sʰ/	sʰa:m	صام	'handle'
/zʰ/	zʰa:m	ظام	'time, occasion, turn'
/ʃ/	ʃa:m	شام	'supper'
/x/	xa:ɬ	خار	'bone'
/ɣ/	ɣa:zʰ	غاز	'money'
/h/	ħa:l	حال	'situation'
/fi/	fi:	هی	'yes'
/ɬ/	ɬe:ʃ	ریش	'vomiting'
/j/	jɐ	یه	'this'
/w/	wa:l	وال	'slitting (a shark)'
/l/	le:	لی	'fishing net'

The glottal stop appears predictably before otherwise word-initial vowels (as in /ʔa:ʃ/ 'stone mill' above) and, in careful speech, between vowels at morpheme boundaries.

¹ The orthographic representation shown in the third column employs the Kumzari writing system, which is based on Arabic script (al-Kumzari 2009, Anonby 2010).

mɤd̪ɔ̃mɤ	مجمه	'word'
mɤd̪ɔ̃'ma:o:	مجمائو	'the word' (normal or fast speech)
mɤd̪ɔ̃'ma:ʔo:	مجمائو	'the word' (careful speech)

The glottal stop's contrastive nature is, however, evident from its distribution in a wide variety of other positions, as the following words show:

ʔɤlʔʊl	ألل	'heron'
ʔme:d	أميد	'fish species'
bʔa:m	بنام	'thumb'
dɤʔ	دا	'ten'
'kɤʔnɤɤ	كانغ	'old (thing)'
pɤʔn	پان	'wide'
qa:ʔa:ʔɤ	قائشاه	'tipping over'
qɪʔʔ	قشئ	'deep-water fish habitat'

Realizations of /ɹ/

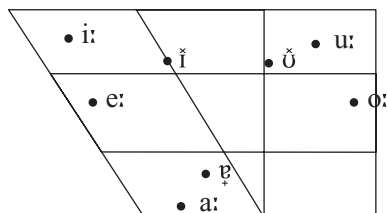
Although the phonetic realization of most consonants is stable, /ɹ/ exhibits several realizations, depending on its environment. In most positions, it is realized as a retroflex approximant [ɻ]. However, when it is found in an onset cluster after an alveolar consonant or before a semivowel, it is realized as an alveolar flap [r]; when it is found in an onset cluster after a non-coronal consonant, it is realized as a retroflex flap [ɻ̠]; and when it is geminated, it is realized as an alveolar trill [r̄]. Table 1 illustrates these possibilities.

Table 1 Realizations of /ɹ/.

Position	Realization	Example	Orthography	Gloss
Word-initial before a vowel/word-final after a vowel	ɻ	ɹo:ɻ	رور	'child'
Intervocalic		'te:ɹɤ	تيره	'way'
Word-internal, syllable-final		'bɤɹnʊs ^v	برنص	'blanket'
In an onset cluster after a postalveolar consonant		t̪ɹa:	بشرا	'traditional lamp'
In an onset cluster after an alveolar consonant		r	dra:z ^v	دراط
In an onset cluster before a semivowel	'rja:d ^v it		رياضت	'physical exercise'
In an onset cluster after a non-coronal consonant	ɻ̠	bɻ̠nz ^v	برنظ	'rice'
Geminate	r̄	'qɤrɤs ^v	قرص	'mosquito'

Vowels

Kumzari has an inventory of eight contrastive vowels. Five of these are long, and three are short.



Long vowels are shown in the following words:

/i:/	bi:s	بیس	‘twenty’
/e:/	be:ɬ	بیر	‘grind!’
/a:/	ba:m	بام	‘giant sea turtle’
/o:/	bo:g	بوچ	‘wallet’
/u:/	bu:t	بوت	‘small fish species’

Contrast between the three short vowels, and between short and long vowels, may be observed in the following words:

/ɨ/	gɨl	چل	‘dirt, mud’
/ɛ̃/	gɛ̃p	چپ	‘large’
/ʊ/	gʊɬ	چر	‘take!’

Stress

On morphologically simple words of more than one syllable, stress falls predictably on the penultimate syllable.

'qe:tʰʊb	قَیْطَب	‘walking stick’
'ɬʰtɛ̃ɬ	رَشْتَعِ	‘thread’

However, stress placement is contrastive for morphologically complex words. Some suffixes, such as the indefinite marker /-e:/, have no effect on the location of their host stem’s stress:

'qe:tʰʊbe:	قَیْطَبِی	‘a walking stick’
'ɬʰtɛ̃ɬe:	رَشْتَعِی	‘a thread’

Other segmentally analogous suffixes, such as the definite marker /-o:/, cause stress to shift to the penultimate syllable of the complex word. Frequently, depending on the structure of the stem, this shift is accompanied by vowel lengthening and, in some cases, also by harmonization (Anonby 2008):

qe:tʰʊbo:	قَیْطَبُو	‘the walking stick’
ɬʰto:ko:	رَشْتَوُغُو	‘the thread’

Transcription

This section presents a transcription of the fable of 'The North Wind and the Sun', as recounted in Kumzari by Malallah Sulaiman Muhammad al-Kumzari.

ta: 'ɔ:zʷ | 'he:mqʊ̃ .pɛŋgɛ 'gɪdɪn || na:ʃjo:w || w ɪn'ta:fo | ,kiyɛ ɛɪ .qəwi,tɛɪtʃɛ ||
 d̄gi:n 'mɛ nɛ te ,ʔa:dɪmɪ̃ ,d̄zi:ɪ̃n ,a:mɪ'se:: me:ʃ tʰkɛ:w || tʃot sa:fɛɪ | mʷɛ nɛtʰ
 'ʔɛnɛʷ ,amɛsʰ 'yɛkʰ | ,ko:tʊ̃ be j ,d̄za:kɪtɛ 'gɛp:m || ʔɛɪ ,ɪa:jɛ kʊ̃ 'd̄za:k te:lɛ
 'd̄za:kʰtʰ ɧo: ke:nɛʷ | jɪ̃ 'qəwi,tɛɪtʃɛ || ,ʔa:mɛd u:: 'd̄gin ,d̄zwa:ne | ,ɪa:tʷɪ̃ ,bu:ɪ̃n
 bɛ 'ɪntʃɛ || ,ʔa:mɛd na:ʃjo:w u: ,kɛwɪ̃ ,gɛp kɪn 'βa: ɧo || ,kɛwɪ̃ ,gɛp kɪn 'βa
 ɧo: bjɛ ,a:dɪmɪj ɛɪ | tʃot ,sa:fɛɪtʃɛ ʊ̃ʷ | 'ʔntʃʰ u ,d̄za:kʰtʰ ɧo lɛβjɛ tkɛ ba: ɧo:
 'ɧɛjtɛɪ || ʔɛbni:dɪʃ j 'ba: ɧʊ̃ ,ɧɛjtɛ 'lɛwɛɛ ɧo kɪ nɛdɛ ,d̄za:kʰtʰ ɧo 'ɧɛjtɛɪ || ,ba:ɪ
 ɧo 'da:ɪ̃ʃ | ,ba:ɪ ɧo 'da:ɪ̃ʃ | ,ʔa:n tʃɛ 'lɛwɛɛ ɧʊ̃ tkɛ 'd̄za:kʰtʰ ɧo || d̄gin 'ɧɛlasʷ
 | 'ma nɛ tĩ | ʔɪstɛsɪɛmɛ 'gɪdɪʃ || 'qɛɛɛ ʷɪdɪʃ go m ,ɪa:jʊ̃m nɛ || bjʊ̃ ɪn'ta:'fo:w
 u:: | ʔɪ̃ ɧ kʊ̃ 'ɧɛjtɛɪ | 'ʃɛb:ɛ ɧo kɪ || 'gɛɪm ɧo kɪ ,gɛɪm kɪ ,gɛɪm kɪ ,gɛɪm
 kɪ ʔa'n ,gɛɪmɛ wɑ'bʊ̃ɪ u 'bjɔ: u ,kət ɧo 'gɔpʊ̃ kɛn pe ɧo || ,kət ɧo 'gɔ'po kɛn
 pe' ɧo 'be:w: | bjʊ̃ naʃjo d̄go 'ɧɛlasʷ || ,ɪa:jəm nɛ | 'qɛɛɛɛ ,gɪdɪʃ | 'na ɧalɛsʷ
 ,ɪa:jɛ̃ | 'ʔɪ̃nɛɛ: | ʔn'ta:fɔɔ | 'qawɪ,tɛɪ̃ ,pej

Orthographic version

تا روظ حيمقو آنچه چدن ناشيو و ايتافو، كي ار قويتريه. باري امني جيران امسي ميش تكا، شوت سافو. كوتى
 بىي، جاكتي چپ. ار رايه تيله ي جاك ت خو كينا، يي قويتري. آمدن و دچين جوانى. راطي بورن بانيشه. آمد
 ناشيو و كولى چپ كن با خو. كولى چپ كن با خو، بيو امنيو ار شوت سافره و ايشه و جاك ت خو لويه تكه با خو
 خيتر. ابيدش با خو خيتر، لويه خو كن اينده جاك ت خو خيتر. بار خو دارش بار خو دارش، آن امنيو ايشه لويه خو
 تكه جاك ت خو. دچين خلاص، استسلمه چدش، قره چدش، دچو مي رايه نه. بيو ايتافو و شبه خو كن. چرم خو
 كن، چرم كن چرم كن آن چرمغ واير و، بيو و كوت خو كن پي خو. كوت خو چروبو كن پي خو بيو، بيو
 ناشيو دچو خلاص. رايه نه. قره چدش. نه، خالص. رايه نه. و ايتافو قويتري پي بي.

Acknowledgments

I would like to thank the many people who have made this research possible. I would first of all like to thank Christina van der Wal Anonby and Tamara Jahani for encouragement and support during the writing of this article. In Oman, I have appreciated the supervision and input of Dr. Nafla al-Kharousi and Dr. Amel Salman at Sultan Qaboos University. Two referees have also strengthened this article significantly with their suggestions. Finally, I am grateful to all those among the Kumzari who have shown us kindness, in particular the local authorities and several people who shared many insights about their own language. For this article, the contributions of Noufal Mohammad Ahmed al-Kumzari, Malallah Sulaiman Muhammad al-Kumzari and Ali Hassan Ali al-Kumzari have been particularly valuable:

تاتم شكره قادر كمطار يه تكم، ايشنه ار قبيلي بورن وجوانن بمنا، املو مه چدن جوان. حس چم ان اينده خانغويم.
 شكره شه تكم خيكي. سادو مه چدن و وقفه بورن و ما و شجه مه چدن. و حبه تكم شكره قادر امني تكم، خاصت
 ريشدن و امني ار تيسكن دچينه، حافظو جس بنقاليد خو اولين. و حبه تكم شكره ايشنه ار سادو مه چدن اينده بحث
 مه ينا، خاصتن مائه پس سليمان و نوفل پس حمد و ايل حس ايلكو. قصرو چسي نه! بارك الله فيكم!

References

- Anonby, Erik J. 2008. Stress-induced vowel lengthening and harmonization in Kumzari. Presented at The 1st International Conference on Languages and Dialects in Iran, University of Sistan and Baluchestan, 28–31 October 2008.
- Anonby, Erik J. 2010. Kumzarī [Kumzari alphabet chart]. Ms., Leiden University.
- Anonby, Erik J. & Christina A. van der Wal Anonby. 2011. *Ktēb majma Kumzārī* [Kumzari Dictionary]. Ms., Leiden University.
- Anonby, Erik J. & Pakzad Yousefian. In press. *Adaptive multilinguals: A survey of language on Larak Island*. Uppsala: Uppsala University Press.
- Bayshak, Maryam S. 2002. Are there traces of Sassanian in the language of the Shihuh, and is Kumzari among the affected varieties? The Shihhi dialect in the light of linguistic science. *Al-Khaleej* (Arabic edition) 8541, 12, 17 October 2002.
- Jayakar, Atmaram S. G. 1902. The Shahee dialect of Arabic. *Journal of the Bombay Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society* 21, 246–277.
- al-Kumzari, Ali H. A. 2009. Kumzārī lexicon and grammar notes. Ms., Ḥāratu Kumzāryan.
- Lewis, Paul (ed.). 2011. *Ethnologue: Languages of the world*, 16th edn. Dallas, TX: SIL International. [<http://www.ethnologue.com>]
- Skjærvø, Prods Oktor. 1989. Languages of southeast Iran: Lārestānī, Kumzārī, Baškardī. In Rüdiger Schmitt (ed.), *Compendium linguarum iranicarum*, 363–369. Wiesbaden: Ludwig Reichart.
- Thomas, Bertram. 1930. The Kumzari dialect of the Shihuh tribe (Musandam), Arabia, and a vocabulary. *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* 62, 785–854.