

# MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE REVIEW

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with the editorial assistance of  
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25 (2018)

Harrassowitz Verlag · Wiesbaden

The MEDITERRANEAN LANGUAGE REVIEW is an interdisciplinary peer-reviewed forum for the investigation of language and culture in the Mediterranean, South-Eastern Europe and the Black Sea region. The editors of this periodical welcome articles, reviews, review articles and bibliographical surveys in English, French, German, Italian and Spanish relating to the following aspects of Mediterranean languages, past and present:

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Printing and binding by Hubert & Co., Göttingen

Printed on permanent/durable paper

Printed in Germany

www.harrassowitz-verlag.de

ISSN 0724-7567

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# On the Path to Obsolescence: Children's Songs and Nursery Rhymes from the Galilean Muslim Village of Nah<sup>e</sup>f<sup>1</sup>

Fruma Zachs & Aharon Geva-Kleinberger (University of Haifa)

## Introduction

Children in Muslim and Arab societies have always been exposed to stories, nursery rhymes and lullabies, as in other cultures.<sup>2</sup> One well-known example is that of the wife of the beneficent poet Ḥātim aṭ-Ṭā'iyy (who died at the end of the sixth century) Māwiyah al-Ghassaniyyah who told her two children a story during a harsh drought year when they could not fall asleep because they were hungry. The text uses the genre of *ta'ālil*, meaning literary "distraction". Alliteration suggests a logical linguistic connection to the Palestinian lexeme *tahlīl* "lullaby", which has the local dialectological synonym of *tahmīm*, which is also onomatopoeic. On the other hand *tahmīm* means the act of humming, which can be connected to the act of "rocking cradles and bassinets".

In recent decades the number of endangered songs has raised, especially among the younger generation, as a result of media exposure, both Western and otherwise, globalization, modernization and easy access to popular recorded music. Thus long-term oral traditions risk lexical obsolescence and with them the disappearance of traditional local culture. These tendencies are even more apparent in Palestinian society, which is influenced by the Israeli Hebrew-speaking culture.

In general, lullabies are sung in emotional way to children from birth. Lullabies vary in style, rhythm and other linguistic components depending on their geographical distribution. However, their purpose is always the same: to develop an attachment between mothers and their children. Lullabies distract and send children off to sleep through their continuous repetition of soothing rhythms. Lullabies also introduce the infant to language, poetry and music and constitute one of the infant's first forms of verbal exchanges with caretaking adults and the social milieu (Leštarić 2006: 8). Lullabies and nursery rhymes in Arab cultures as well are a product of oral tradition and can be defined as a subgenre of oral literature and folklore (Leštarić 2006: 5). Though these songs probably dominated the world of Arab children, they are rarely preserved in written form.<sup>3</sup> They are traditionally thought of as reflecting mothers' love, and wishes for the child's prosperous future and peaceful sleep. They

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1 We dedicate this article to the Ismā'īl family in Nah<sup>e</sup>f, who opened their homes and hearts to us.

2 For more on children and childhood in Islam see Giladi 1992.

3 The missionary Henry Harris Jessup documented many Arab lullabies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Jessup 1882).

touch on pain and sorrow, language learning, as well as the socialization of the child and the teaching of values.<sup>4</sup> This goes beyond the functional transition from activity to slumber and in many cases it provides the child a sense of wellbeing and confidence. Most nursery rhymes and lullabies have repeatable lines with a rhythm, and abound with animal subjects and motifs (each region with its own).<sup>5</sup> More than that, the fear of the mother for her child is reflected in saddest melodies and most melancholy texts of the lullabies. Thus, these nursery rhymes also offered stress relief not only for children but also for their mothers. Lullabies sung live, can decrease the stress parents associate with premature infant care. The mother is singing as much to herself as to the baby. Lyrics to lullabies can indeed be interpreted as a reflection of the caregiver's emotions. When the mother sing to her child she is alone, nobody is listening, and she can express the feelings that are not acceptably expressed in society.<sup>6</sup>

Several lullabies, which are still sung by the Galilean Arab population, emphasize mothers' anxiety over losing their children. They express their fear of not being able to see the marriage of their children with their own eyes in their lifetime. Recent studies have attempted to map deeper levels of feelings, relationships and sensibilities that reveal subculture and emotional voices in the sphere of ideas and ideologies.<sup>7</sup> As Pernau-Reifeld noted, emotions are not anthropological constants but are partly historical and contextual (Pernau-Reifeld 2015: 13).

This article documents the ways in which lullabies and nursery rhymes capture the attitudes or standards that a society, or definable groups within a society (in our case the women of Naḥʿf), hold regarding basic emotions and their appropriate expression. This is different from examining emotions per se, which are the individual experiences of the emotions conveyed through lullabies and nursery rhymes (Stearns & Stearns 1985: 813). Specifically, it is argued that lullabies and nursery rhymes are socio-cultural and emotional repositories that can shed light on attitudes toward children and childhood. Morrison pointed out: "The experiences of children were sometimes closely linked to the experiences of women but were nonetheless different" (Morrison 2015: 97).<sup>8</sup>

This study is based on fieldwork in the Upper-Galilean Muslim village of Naḥʿf with three generations of women from one family.<sup>9</sup> Although our research relies on a corpus that includes 20 lullabies, we examine the structure, rhythm, content and language of five Galilean Arab lullabies and nursery rhymes, which are still preserved in some villages in the region. These are termed quintuple-chained lullabies

4 For more details on the universal characteristics of nursery rhymes, see Hilton, Styles & Watson 1997: 4–8.

5 For example, in Sudan some lullabies from the 1970s refer to dogs (AshShareef 1995: 110).

6 See for other examples <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/updates/many-lullabies-murder-ballads/>

7 See for example Olsen 2015; Laffan & Weiss 2012; Liliequist 2012.

8 See also Leštarić 2006: 1 and 9.

9 We interviewed three generations of the Ismāʿīl family: the grandmother Jamīla (aged 100), the mother Faṭme Hāmid ʿIsmāʿīl (aged 66), and the aunt Ḥadije (aged 79).

since they constitute a chain of five songs. They are taken from the same sources although each has its own *raison d'être* and its own title. We argue that these Galilean Arabic lullabies and nursery rhymes are cultural and linguistically reflections that can shed light on key emotions elicited by children and childhood that can also provide a better understanding of mother-child relationships. They reveal not only the private world of mothers and children, and thus the world that children live in, but also the way women sustain their language discourse and attitudes toward children. They disclose what Walter Andrews called “traces of the emotional lives of past people by examining and interpreting the many and varied artifacts of their cultures and their actions” (Andrews 2012: 21–47).

### The Quintuple-Chain Lullabies

In Palestinian dialects a lullaby is called *tahlīl* ~ *tihlīl* or *tahlīli* (plural *tihlīlāt* or *tahalīl*).<sup>10</sup> The verb form is in the second stem *hallal* but it is only used in the feminine form *hallalat* (perfect) and *thallil* (imperfect). In the masculine this verb takes on the slightly different meaning of “reading the first Sūra of the Qurʾān (*al-Fātiḥa*)”; and also the recitation of *tihlīli* for a deceased person, when this tradition is accompanied by the preparation of a meal especially for the poor who have attended the funeral or have come to offer their condolences.<sup>11</sup> This verb uses the same root in the tenth stem, where it means in Modern Standard Arabic “to begin” (استهلَّ). Additionally, the root ٠لل٠ means in Hebrew “to praise” (or “to praise God”<sup>12</sup>).

During the recordings of the women of the Ismāʿīl family we heard several lullabies on various themes. One is sung when the mother bathes her baby: it is entitled *Sālem rawwah* ‘*a-blādo* (Salem returned to his village); another lullaby sung during the bath is “Where were you bathed” (*wēn ḥammamūk*<sup>13</sup>); years later it is sung before the young man’s wedding, harking back to his childhood. The third lullaby, alluding to the child’s future, expresses the mother’s concern over losing contact with her children when they grow up: “Oh those who go on the pilgrimage of the Prophet” (*ya-zaʿirīn innabi*<sup>14</sup>). We also heard a lullaby sung to a child who is ill, including references from the last two Qurʾānic sūras (113, 114 *al-Muʿawwidatāni*), to protect him; finally, the fifth is a lullaby sung during the vegetable harvest (*il-ḥalīsi*) when the mother is hurrying home to suckle her baby.

10 *Tahlīli* is the Galilean feminine form; see Barghouthi 2001: 1294–1295. See also Serhan 1989: 49; Serhan calls the lullabies in Modern Standard Arabic “*agānī ssarīr*” (literally: “cradle songs”).

11 Barthélemy (1935: 872) – “*halhal, yhálhel* «pleurer une mort (: Druse)». Compare also Denizeau (1960: 542) – “pousser des cris de joie, acclamer”.

12 Compare Hebrew *halehuyā*; Gesenius (1962: 182) also notes that the Arabic root  $\sqrt{h-l-l}$  has a semantic connection to the word هلال which means in this context “new moon”.

13 In this lullaby the child is called *ayyū* (< \*عبيوق) “handsome”.

14 See Serhan (1989: 49) – a lullaby entitled *قالت الغزالة للنبي* “A Gazelle said to the Prophet (Mohammad)”.

### *Structure and Rhythm*

In general, the lyrics and rhythms of lullabies are simple and repetitive. Many have musical humming. The iambic meter and trochaic meter, unrelated to classical poetry are used. The songs have a religious flavour and rhythm reminiscent of that of the *mu'adḏin*, and repeatable lines and words. Some with trills and rhythm, some are mystical. Yet the most interesting lullabies of all are a chain of five songs. All five lullabies are improvisations by the mother and most drawn on a similar content-related reservoir

All these quintuple lullabies have the same objective of sending the child off to sleep, protecting him/her from the Evil Eye, especially that of the relatives, which is the most harmful, and from disease. Sometimes the Evil Eye refers to strangers (*ḡarāyib*).<sup>15</sup> The use of this word “strangers” in the lullaby *ma-ḥla layāli lhana* (How nice are the nights of happiness!) creates a depressing mood.

There is no order in the singing of these five lullabies. The mother begins with one, and can switch at random to another, according to circumstances. The five lullabies are the following: “Oh eyes of the beloved” (*ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib*); “Oh bird” (*ya-ṭēr*); “How nice are the nights of happiness!” (*ma-ḥla layāli lhana*); “Sleep slowly-slowly, oh my love!” (*nām ninni ninni ya-ḥabībi*); and “I will sing you a lullaby” (*ʿAhallilak, ʿAhallilak*). Occasionally the lullabies contain inner rhyming:

- *ninni ya-‘asfūr ilzinni* (Fall asleep, oh bird of paradise!)

More frequently, in each lullaby, two verses rhyme:<sup>16</sup>

- *fi lhana nāmu w ʿAlḷa yhannīku* (Sleep in tranquillity and may God make you content)
- *baḥlub min ʿAlḷa ssa‘ādi tižtku* (I will pray to God for your happiness)

Even three sequential rhyming verses (AAA) are found.<sup>17</sup>

15 A core topic in traditional Arab lullabies is the belief in superstitions such as the Evil Eye, which is found in several songs and reflects the belief that some words have magical power to harm their children. Over the centuries certain Arab lullabies became magical poetic-musical creations, and were considered powerful means of defence against the Evil Eye and evil demons (e.g., the *ḡūl* or *ḡinn*, Nuṣṣ ʿNṣēs, are often mentioned), which were an important part of the traditional local culture. The popular motif of the role is repeated in many songs. There is also a female *ḡūl* – the *ḡūla*. If someone gets close to her she can turn him into a stone. She loves to devour children and she cannot control this lust. There is also a dwarf called Amsis. The last one is Divas, the manipulator, who likes to fight the *ḡūl*, which the child fears. Children can identify with him since they are small creatures that fight the *ḡūl*. Quotes from the Qurʿān are sometimes incorporated into the songs or use the name of ʿAllah or the prophet to protect the child from the Evil Eye or from these creatures. Sometimes the language is deliberately unclear (comparable to mystical or magic language). The mention of these creatures was also intended to teach or frighten children if they misbehaved.

16 See table *ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib*.

17 See table *ya-ṭēr*.

- *nāmu bi-lhana w rabbi yhannīku* (Sleep in tranquillity and may God make you content)  
*w baṭlub min ʿAlīa yiḥmīku* (And I will pray to God to protect you)  
*w baṭlub min ʿAlīa ssa ʿādi tiḏīku* (And I will pray to God that happiness will come upon you)

Less frequent are three rhyming verses in a four verses structure (AABA):<sup>18</sup>

- *fūl w fūl w ḥinda ʿʿa* (broad bean and another broad bean and sweet clover)  
*ša ʿro ʿiš ʿar w mna ʿʿa* (His hair is blond and free of lice)  
*w illi ḥabbo bi-būso* (Those who love him kiss him)  
*w ill(i) baḡdo šū bitla ʿʿa* (And those who hate him – what will they gain from it?)

The mother's feelings can be sensed through the repeating verses. Each of the five contains the same ideas and even comprises or quotes the same verses with minor changes. Thus the mother can return to *Ya-tēr* (Oh bird) from *Ma-ḥla layāli lhana!* (How nice are the nights of happiness!), since this lullaby also mentions a bird. During the recordings each participating woman tried to complete differently the verses of the woman who sang the songs.

*ʿAhallīlak, ʿAhallīlak!* (I will sing to you a lullaby! I will sing to you a lullaby!), is sung to an entirely different melody. The last syllable in most of the verses is prolonged, creating an overall altered intonation inconsistent Arabic: with intonation rules of Galilean dialects, and thus with the Naḥʿf dialect as well. The expected syllable stress of the lullaby's title, which is repeated in the lullaby itself, does not follow the rules of Palestinian dialect: it should be *ʿAhāllīlak* not *Ahallīlak*.<sup>19</sup> Most of the closing verses extend the final vowels, especially in verbs. Here are some examples:

- *fiḏḏa w bundu ʿ w fūl darbak ʿasirrá:k* (instead of *ʿasirrak*) (With a [cargo] of silver and hazelnuts and I will accompany you along your way)
- *yhannīkú* (instead of *yhannīku*) (Will make you content)
- *yxallīkú* (instead of *yxallīku*) ([May God] guard you!)
- *yinṭīkú* (instead of *yinṭīku*) (Will give you)
- *tiḏī:k* (instead of *tiḏīk*) (Will come to you)
- *ykatīrkū* (instead of *ykatīrku*) ([May God] make you many)
- *tiḥmīkū*: (instead of *tiḥmīku*) (Will guard you)

Prolongation in the closing verse occurs not only in the last syllable of verbs but also sporadically in words that belong to the semantic field of “sleep” as a noun or as a verb in various inflections:

<sup>18</sup> See table *ya-ʿēn ilḥabāyib*.

<sup>19</sup> Normally in Palestinian dialects the first syllable that contains a vcc (vowel-consonant-consonant) at the end of the word is stressed.

- *namú* (instead of *nāmu*) (fall asleep!)
- *w ma‘a laḡīd innō:m* (instead of *innōm*) (With a sweet dream)
- *w ‘ēn ilḤa’’ ma-naḡmā:t* (instead of *ma<sup>20</sup>-nāmat*) (Although the eyes of the Mighty never sleep<sup>21</sup>)
- *nāmu ya-ḡḡa nāmú:* (instead of *nāmu*) (Fall asleep, sweetly, fall asleep!)
- *ya-‘ēn il-ḡabāyib nā:m* (instead of *nām*) (Oh eyes of the beloved, fall asleep!)
- *w bi-lhanā namū:* (instead of *nāmu*) ([Fall asleep] with a happy dream)

This creates a soporific atmosphere *nāmat* ‘*ēnak w ‘ēni ma-‘ižāha nnō:m* (instead of *nnōm*) (Your eyes have already fallen asleep, but mine have not). The use of a different type of music to chant this lullaby can be seen as reminiscent of lamentation and wailing. The mother who recited this lullaby had indeed lost her son, and during the recordings she wept. ‘*Ahallīlak*, ‘*Ahallīlak!*, is the type of lullaby that reflects mothers’ fear of losing their children. This may account for the semantic field of the word *tahlīla*, which in addition to meaning “lullaby” in Palestinian dialects also means the reading of the first sūra (*al-Fātiḡa*) for the deceased and the traditional preparation of a meal for the poor who attended the funeral.<sup>22</sup>

### Content

The repeatedly similes of the image of the baby or a little child are described as tiny and precious things; e.g., a bird of Paradise (‘*aṡḡūr ilžinni*) or a broad bean (*ḡūl*); a sweet-clover (*ḡinda’’a*). Palestinian dialects have diminutive forms, but they are not found in all these quintuple chain lullabies, which use similes and not diminutive words. These five lullabies seem to refer both boys and girls since many verbs appear in the plural. The mothers sing, “May God will increase your numbers,” meaning “the number of children” which is understood as generalizing. The child in these lullabies is described as beautiful, normally with hair of the rare blond colour that clean and free of lice. Sleep itself is called *nōm*, which sometimes also stands for “dreams”. The child is always loved and beloved by his mother; other relatives can be loved, albeit sometimes harmful with their envious Evil Eye. Trees figure in the lullabies such as the mulberry (*tūt*) and fig (*tīn*).<sup>23</sup> This may suggest a direct influence from the Lebanese region.<sup>24</sup> The figure of the mother in the plot of the lullabies does everything she can for her child in a “One thousand and One nights” atmosphere, as she loads camels with silver and nuts for her child. The mother’s fear of possible misfortunes that may befall her child is often repeated: sadly, he or she will not reach maturity. Another possible interpretation is that some of the lullabies

20 See more details in Geva-Kleinberger 2004: 6061.

21 Compare Sūrat al-Baqara, verse 255 “Neither drowsiness overtakes Him nor sleep”.

22 Barghouthi 2001: 1295.

23 Compare to the lullaby *fēn ḡammamūk?* (“Where have you been bathed?”): *ḡammamūni taḡt issirrīs* (“I was bathed under the mastic tree [*Pistacia lentiscus*]”). This word rhymes with the word عريس (bridegroom) and plays a role in the Palestinian wedding tradition.

24 See for more details Geva-Kleinberger 2017: 31–47.

were sung to sick children to calm them. The atmosphere is purely Islamic, which corresponds to the religion of the singing mothers of Naḥḥf. This includes the pilgrimage toponyms of Wādi Muna, the repeated names of the prophet Muhammad and the reference to other prophets such as Jesus (who is mentioned here as an Islamic prophet) and Moses. The mother utters prayers in her lullabies, without using the word “prayer” (*ṣalā*) explicitly. This is accomplished by the repeated use of the word “may” (*rēt*) which is affixed to words meaning “health” (*ṣiḥḥa* and *‘awāfi*). Health is vouchsafed by sweet sleep (*laḡīd innōm*) and tranquillity (*nōmit faḏā ilbāl*). This calm atmosphere is shattered by horrific, disturbing descriptions by the mother, when she sings to her child, “I will slaughter a pigeon-chick for you” (*t-id-bahlak ṣūṣ ilḥamām*).<sup>25</sup>

### *Language*

In general, the lexicon used in the lullabies is very simple, and verses are repeated. The dialect of these women of Naḥḥf village was heard in both the conversations that were recorded and in the phonetics of the lullabies themselves. This rural Palestinian dialect, which during the twentieth century became semi-urban, is characterized by the penetration of the Hamza instead of the ancient \*q; but it firmly retains some *fellāḥi*-remnants such as the use of inter-dentals. Analysis of the lullabies suggested that the loss of the Hamza occurred first in the Naḥḥf dialect. The dialect of the women's circle was more urban than the dialect of the same family's men, although this has been documented in other Galilean villages, such as in ‘Arrābi and Saxnīn.

The use of the word *ninni* in the “quintuple lullabies” is quite interesting. Semantically it refers to the process of “falling asleep”, for example, *nāmu ninni* “Fall asleep!” This word also rhymes with *ḏinni*, meaning “paradise”. Sometimes it can be understood semantically as “a slow falling asleep” (*nāmu ninni ninni*). It is surprising that the Turkish lexeme denoting “lullaby” is also *ninni*, so one can reasonably assume that this word penetrated Galilean Arabic during the four centuries of Ottoman rule in the region and thus it can be a Turkish Ottoman loan word. Thus the word made a slightly semantic shift from “lullaby” to “gradual falling asleep”, an interpretation, which is reinforced by its repeated syllables, which create an onomatopoeic atmosphere. Note that in other languages as Italian the word denotes “a lullaby” (*ninna nanna*); and repeated syllables have the magical effect of “sending off to sleep”. These syllables are found in Greek (*Navόpισμα*) and Albanian *Ninulla* as well. Thus the same lexical use is found in several cultures around the Mediterranean Sea.

The interviews with the women we recorded suggested that the actual use of lullabies in the Galilee region is in decline. The younger generation does not know these lullabies by heart, and even the youngest children do not know them at all (young children were also present during the recordings). Today young mothers no

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25 Granqvist 1947.

longer sing lullabies to their children; on the one hand it is not fashionable, and on the other they do not know the words.

<i>ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib</i>	<b>Oh eyes of the beloved</b>
<i>nāmu ninni ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Fall asleep, oh eyes of the beloved, fall asleep
<i>ninni ya-‘aṣfūr ilzinni</i>	Fall asleep, oh bird of paradise!
<i>ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Sleep, oh eyes of the beloved
<i>t-idbaḥlak šuṣ ilḥamām</i>	I will slaughter a pigeon-chick for you
<i>ya-ḥamām la-tṣaddi’</i>	Oh pigeon, do not believe
<i>baḏḥak ‘alē ta-ynām</i>	I will laugh at him, so he will sleep
<i>fūl w fūl<sup>26</sup> w ḥinda’’a</i>	A broad bean and another broad bean and sweet clover
<i>ša‘ro ‘iš‘ar w mna’’a</i>	His hair is blond and free of lice
<i>w illi ḥabbo bi-būso</i>	Those who love him – kiss him
<i>w illi baḡdo sū bitla’’a</i>	And those who hate him – what gain will they derive from it
<i>ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Sleep, oh eyes of my beloved
<i>fī lḥana nāmu w ‘Alā yḥannīku</i>	Sleep in tranquillity and may God make you content
<i>baṭlub min ‘Alā ssa‘ādi tiṣṭiku</i>	I will pray to God for your happiness
<i>ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Oh eyes of my beloved, sleep
<i>bi-ḥfaḏt-‘Alā w bi-ḥmāyit ‘Alā w rasūlo</i>	In the shelter of God and his Prophet
<i>nāmu ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Sleep, oh eyes of my beloved, sleep well
<i>nāmat ‘yūnak w ‘ēn ilḤa’’ ma-nāmat</i>	Your eyes slept, but the eyes of the Mighty never sleep
<i>nām ya-‘ēn ilḥabāyib nām</i>	Sleep, oh eyes of my beloved, sleep well
<i>nām bi-lḥana w innōm</i>	Sleep in tranquillity and deep sleep
<i>rēt il‘awāfi tiṣṭiku ma‘a laḏīd innōm</i>	May health come to you accompanied by sweet sleep
<i>nāmu w ‘Alā yiḥmīku</i> (~ <i>nāmu w ‘Alā yḥannīku</i> )	Sleep and God will protect you (~ Sleep and Good will make you content)
<i>rēt iṣṣiḥḥa min ‘ind ‘Alā tiṣṭiku</i>	May wellbeing come to you from God

26 According to Faṭme Hāmid ‘Ismā‘īl.

<i>ya- 'ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Sleep, oh eyes of my beloved, sleep well
<i>w nōmit faḏā ilbāl</i>	In a sleep of peacefulness
<i>nōmit 'Īsa w Mūsa</i>	Sleep of Jesus and Moses
<i>bi-ḥifīḏ ižžbāl bi-žžbāl</i>	Like a mountain fortress
<i>nāmu nōmit ilḥužžāž bi-Wādi Muna nāmu</i>	Sleep as deep as the pilgrims to Wādi Muna sleep

<b>ya-tēr</b>	<b>Oh bird</b>
<i>ya-tēr, ya-tēr, sallem... 'aššiš bi-'ibāb ittūt</i>	Oh bird, oh bird, say farewell... nest amidst the branches of the mulberry tree
<i>w iḥbis 'ala dağn ilḥabāyib</i>	And please protect from the abhorrence of relatives
<i>la-txalli yfūt, ya- 'ēn ilḥabāyib</i>	Do not allow it enter you, the evil eye of relatives
<i>nāmu bi-lhana w rabbi yhannīku</i>	Sleep in tranquillity and may God make you happy
<i>w baṭlub min 'Alļa yihmīku</i>	And I will pray to God to protect you
<i>w baṭlub min 'Alļa issa 'āde tižīku</i>	And I will pray to God that happiness will come upon you
<i>ya- 'ēn elḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Oh eyes of my beloved, sleep well
<i>bi-ḥifīḏ 'Alļa nāmu</i>	Under the watchfulness of God, sleep well
<i>bi-ḥifīḏ Mḥammad rasūl 'Alļa</i>	And under the watchfulness of Muhammad, the prophet of Allah
<i>ya-tēr, ya-tēr, 'aššiš bi-'ibāb ittīt</i>	Oh bird, oh bird, say farewell... nest amidst the branches of the fig tree
<i>w iḥbis 'ala dağn ilḥabāyib</i>	May you be protected from the evil eye of relatives
<i>ma-txallī miskīn</i>	Do not make him destitute
<i>nāmu yaḥḥa nāmu bi-lhana w innōm</i>	Sleep, sweetly, sleep in happiness and deep sleep
<i>rēt il'awāfi tižīku ma 'a laḏīd innōm</i>	May happiness come to you with a sweet sleep
<i>ya- 'ēn ilḥabāyib nāmu</i>	Sleep, oh my beloved eyes, sleep well
<i>rēt 'Alļa yhannīku</i>	And may Allah make you happy

<b><i>ma-ḥla layāli lhana!</i></b>	<b>How nice are the nights of happiness!</b>
<i>ma-ḥla yaḡma layāli lhana</i>	How nice, sweetly, are the nights of happiness
<i>ma-ḥla layalīku</i>	How nice are your nights
<i>ma-ḥla layāli lhana</i>	How nice are the nights of happiness
<i>murr w waʔif fōʔ ḥalītna</i>	Fly and stay in our neighbourhood
<i>ʔūl ya-ṯēr la-ʔahli</i>	Please tell, oh bird, my family
<i>w ʔana kif ḥalītna</i>	How is our situation
<i>ḥalītna yaḡma w ḥalītna b-ḥālit ilḡarāyib</i>	Our situation, sweetly, is like the situation of strangers
<b><i>nām ninni ninni ya-ḥabībi</i></b>	<b>Sleep slowly-slowly, oh my love!</b>
<i>nām ninni ninni ya-ḥabībi</i>	Sleep slowly-slowly, oh my love!
<i>yaḷla taḡbḥlak šuš ilḡamām</i>	Go ahead, since I would like to slaughter a pigeon-chick for you
<i>ʔAlḷa ykabbrak w ynažžīk</i>	May God grow you and make you survive
<i>ya-yuḡma ʔAlḷa yiḡmīk</i>	Oh sweetly, may God protect you
<i>ʔAlḷa ykabbrak w ynažžīk</i>	May God grow you and make you survive
<i>w-yaḷla ynām, yaḷla ynām</i>	Please fall asleep, please fall asleep
<i>w ʔAlḷa yiḡmīk</i>	And may God protect you
<i>nām ninni ninni</i>	Fall asleep slowly-slowly
<i>w ʔAlḷa yiḡmīk, ya-yamḡma</i>	And may God protect you, oh sweetly!
<b><i>ʔAhallīlak, ʔAhallīlak!</i></b>	<b>I will sing you a lullaby!</b>
<i>ya-ʕēn ilḡabāyib yaḡma</i>	Oh eyes of my beloved, oh sweetly!
<i>ʔahallīlak, ʔahallīlak!</i>	I will sing you a lullaby, I will sing you a lullaby
<i>w sab ʕīzmāl ʔaḡammilá:k</i>	And I will load for you seven camels
<i>fīḡḡa w bunduʔ w ṯūl darbak ʔasirrá:k</i>	With a [cargo] of silver and hazelnuts and I will accompany you along your way
<i>ya-ʕēn ilḡabāyib nāmu bi-lhaná namú:</i>	Oh eyes of my beloved, fall asleep
<i>nōmi haniyyi w nōmit faḡāt ilbāl</i>	In a happy sleep and tranquillity
<i>nāmu yaḡma bi-lhanā nāmu</i>	Fall asleep in happiness
<i>bi-ri ʕāyit ʔAlḷa yḡannikú:</i>	Under the patronage of God; he will make you content

<i>nāmu bi-lhanā innōm</i>	Fall asleep in a sweet dream
<i>nāmu yaṇṇa nāmu</i>	Fall asleep, sweetie, fall asleep
<i>w 'ēni ma-'ižāha nnōm</i>	But my eyes did not sleep
<i>nāmu, nāmu, rē:t, rabbi yxallikū:</i>	Please fall asleep, may God watch over you!
<i>w baṭlub 'Allā, baṭlub, yaṇṇa</i>	I pray to God, sweetie, I pray
<i>issa 'ādi min 'Allā yinṭikū:</i>	That happiness will come to you from God
<i>nāmat 'ēnak w 'ē:ni ma-'ižā:ha nnō:m</i>	Your eyes have already slept, but mine have not
<i>rēt il'awāfi ya-ṇṇa tižī:k</i>	May health, sweetie, come to you
<i>w ma 'a laḏīd innō:m</i>	With a sweet dream
<i>nāmat 'ēnak yaṇṇa</i>	May your eyes see sleep, sweetie
<i>w 'ē:n ilḤa'' ma-namā:t</i>	Although the eyes of the Mighty never sleep
<i>nāmu ya-ṇṇa nāmū:</i>	Fall asleep, sweetie, fall asleep!
<i>w rabbi yxallikū: (sic)</i>	May God watch over you
<i>rēt min 'ind 'Allā, ya-yaṇṇa</i>	May it come from God, oh sweetie!
<i>issa 'ādi tižikū: (sic)</i>	And happiness will come to you
<i>ya-'ēn ilḥabāyib nā:m</i>	Oh eyes of my beloved, fall asleep
<i>w bi-lhanā namū: (sic)</i>	In a happy dream
<i>ya-'ēn ilḥabāyib rē:t</i>	Oh eyes of my beloved, may
<i>rabbi yihmikū: (sic)</i>	God protect you!
<i>ya-lla yaṇṇa rabb ya-'alī: (sic)</i>	Go ahead, sweetie, oh mighty God
<i>faḏāt ilbāl w iṣṣiḥḥa yi'tikū: (sic)</i>	May he give you tranquillity and health
<i>nā:m w nāmu rē:t</i>	Please fall asleep, fall asleep!
<i>'Allā ykattirkū: (sic)</i>	May God make you many
<i>w baṭlub min 'Allā yaṇṇa</i>	And I pray to God, oh sweetie
<i>b-žāhak w ma-y'allilkū: (sic)</i>	For your sake and may he not make you few
<i>nāmu w 'Allā yhannikū: (sic)</i>	Fall asleep and may God make you happy
<i>nāmu yalla, b-rē:t</i>	Fall asleep, go ahead, may
<i>issa 'ādi thūṭku w tiḥmikū: (sic)</i>	Happiness surround and guard you!

## Conclusion

This article set out to show that lullabies and nursery rhymes are an emotional and language repository whose content and meaning should be taken into account since they reveal emotional and linguistic attitudes to children and childhood. They also present the nature and habits of the private world of mothers and their children. Our fieldwork in the Muslim Upper-Galilean village of Naḥ'f shows that this chain of

five songs highlights the mothers' emotions and deep fear for their children. This is perhaps why the songs are reminiscent of a prayer or an emotional plea, as we saw in the mother's reaction to the song *'Ahallilak, 'Ahallilak!*, when recalling her departed son. Clearly, concern for children is the central issue in most of the lullabies and songs in Naḥ<sup>cf</sup>, whose content is similar to that of some 19<sup>th</sup>-century lullabies in this region. This anxiety was driven by illness and high infant mortality. It also explains the semantic field of the word *tahlīla*, which in addition to meaning "lullaby" in Palestinian dialects also means the reading of the first sūra (*al-Fāṭiḥa*) for the dead. Finally, a comparison of Naḥ<sup>cf</sup>'s present-day lullabies with those from the same region two centuries ago, a time when the sanitary conditions were worse (Zachs 2013: 113–128).<sup>27</sup> Koselleck noted that emotions are both indicators and factors of historical [but also language] change; they both reflect historical transformations and bring them about (Koselleck 2011: 36). This kind of research is needed for Arabic lullabies and nursery songs that may be lost forever if not documented in the near future.

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27 We have only few examples of written Arab lullabies from the 19<sup>th</sup> century, mostly in the English translation of American missionaries active in the Greater Syria region. We used these songs as a point of comparison to the 20<sup>th</sup>-century Palestinian songs of Naḥ<sup>cf</sup> (this Palestinian region was part of Greater Syria in the 19<sup>th</sup> century). The latter appear to have been influenced by the Lebanon region. On Lebanese and Syrian lullabies in the 19<sup>th</sup> century see Jessup 1872: 3–139 (especially the children chapter), 1874, 1882; Kiyani & Hashahi 2013: 91–114; Zachs (forthcoming).

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