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ROMANO-ARABICA

XVII

Fictional Beings in Middle East Cultures



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Editors:

George Grigore (University of Bucharest, e-mail: gmgrigore@yahoo.com)

Laura Sitaru (University of Bucharest, e-mail: laura.sitaru@lils.unibuc.ro)

Associate Editors:

Gabriel Bițună (University of Bucharest, e-mail: gabrielbituna@gmail.com)

Ovidiu Pietrăreanu (University of Bucharest, e-mail: ovidiupietrareanu@yahoo.com)

Editor in charge of this issue

Gabriel Bițună (University of Bucharest, e-mail: gabrielbituna@gmail.com)

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Dennis Ioniță (Cover picture: *Shahmeran – Queen of the Serpents*)

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Șos. Panduri nr. 90-92, 050663 București, ROMÂNIA. Tel./Fax: +40214102384 E-mail:

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Contents

I. Notes

Gabriel Biṭună . <i>Shahmeran – Queen of the Serpents</i>	7
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II. Fictional beings in Middle East cultures

Nino Ejibadze . <i>Az-Zār Beings in Egyptian Folklore and Fiction</i>	11
Imar Koutchoukali . <i>The theophoric element <'I> in Ibn al-Nadīm's list of demons</i> ..	19
Leyla Moussaoui . <i>أصوات وضجيج الجان في الموروث العربي القديم: دراسة صوتية ودلالية</i>	29
Luminița Munteanu . <i>Une histoire sans fin: Sur l'alkarısı et les métamorphoses des démons en terres turques</i>	43
Katarzyna Pechcin . <i>A Tale of "The Lord of the Sea" in Qatari Folklore and Tradition</i> ...	73

III. Studia Varia

Ahmad Al-Jallad & Marijn van Putten . <i>The Case for Proto-Semitic and Proto-Arabic Case: A reply to Jonathan Owens</i>	87
Aharon Geva Kleinberger . <i>Linguistic and Folkloristic Remarks on Two Texts in the Druze Dialect of Abu-Snān on the Holy Site of the Prophet Zakariyya</i>	119
Igor Younes & Henri Bensaria . <i>Dialect Contact in the Beqaa Valley (Eastern Lebanon)</i> ...	131

IV. Book Reviews

Muhammad al-Sharkawi . <i>History and Development of the Arabic Language</i> . London and New York: Routledge. 2017. 274 p. ISBN 978-1-138-82152-1 (Gabriel Biṭună).....	143
Maḥmūd al-^cAṣīrī . 2014. <i>Aṣ-ṣīr sardan: dirāsa fī naṣṣ al-Mufaḍḍaliyyāt</i> ("Poetry as Narrative: a Study in the Text of the <i>Mufaḍḍaliyyāt</i> "). Beirut: Al-mu'assasa al- ^c arabiyya li-d-dirāsāt wa-n-naṣr. 364 p. ISBN: 978-614-419-401-0. (Ovidiu Pietrăreanu).....	145
Nadia Anghelescu . 2016. <i>Noi și Orientul arab</i> . Iași: Polirom. 334 p. ISBN: 978-973-46-6114-5. (Andrei A. Avram).....	155
Ioana Feodorov . 2016. <i>Tipar pentru creștinii arabi: Antim Ivireanul, Atanasie Dabbās și Silvestru al Antiohiei</i> . Brăila: Editura Istros a Muzeului Brăilei. 399 p. ISBN: 987-606-654-214-2. (Oana Ghica).....	159

- Catalina **Girbea**. *Le bon Sarrasin dans le roman médiéval (1100-1225)*. Paris: Classiques Garnier, « Bibliothèque d'histoire médiévale » 10. 2014. 678 p. ISBN 978-2-8124-2860-9. (Laura **Sitaru**)..... 163
- Robert **Gleave** & István T. **Kristó-Nagy** (edited by). *Violence in Islamic Thought from the Qur'ān to the Mongols*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. 2016. 278 p. ISBN: 9781474417938. (Laura **Sitaru**)..... 167

V. Conference Reports

- Louise **Gallorini**. *Insatiable Appetite: Food as a Cultural Signifier. AGYA Conference Report. Beirut – 12-14 May 2016* 173

LINGUISTIC AND FOLKLORISTIC REMARKS ON TWO TEXTS IN THE DRUZE DIALECT OF ABU-SNĀN ON THE HOLY SITE OF THE PROPHET ZAKARIYYA

AHARON GEVA KLEINBERGER

University of Haifa

Abstract: This article is vital folkloristically and linguistically since it gives us details on Druze dialects in Northern Israel. These dialects as a whole had not been well researched until now. The village of Abu-Snān is located some ten kilometers northeast of Acre. The holy site of the village is a *mazār*, and not a *maqām*. The prophet *Zakariyya* is vindictive by nature – a characteristic also manifested in the two texts presented in this article. Dialectologically, the Druze-Arabic dialect of Abu-Snān village shares common features with other Druze dialects in the Galilee region and in Lebanon, Syria and even in Jordan, yet it can be regarded as belonging to the sub-northern Palestinian coastal dialects in Israel which share also conjoint characteristics with some Moslem and Christian North-Palestinian dialects.

Keywords: *Druze, fieldwork, folklore, holy saints, holy sites, Galilee, Palestinian dialects, Zakariyya.*

1. Background

I recorded these two texts in the village of Abu-Snān in September 1996, while collecting material for my planned PhD dissertation on the Druze Arabic dialects in northern Israel. During this period I collected numerous texts from various Druze villages on Mount Carmel, Upper Galilee, Lower Galilee and the northern coastal region. The aim was to collect new material on the Druze dialects after the publication of Haim Blanc's book in the early 1950s.¹ A year later I decided to change the subject of my dissertation after finding new material on the old Arabic dialects of the city of Haifa.² In my fieldwork in Abu-Snān, which the Druze of the village also call *Bu-Snān*, I was accompanied by my Druze friend Fāyiz ʿAzzām [فایز عزام] who helped me find linguistic informants among the Druze population in the Galilee region. The informant of the two texts in this article was Maḥāsīn ʿAbbās, a dweller of the village born in 1945.

After more than 19 years, late in November 2015 I returned to the holy site to see if things had changed. I met there the holy site keeper (*qiyyim*) Mr. Yūsif Xēr [يوسف خير]

¹ Haim Blanc, *Studies in North Palestinian Arabic: Linguistic Inquiries among the Druzes of Western Galilee and Mount Carmel* (Jerusalem: Israel Oriental Society, 1953).

² See Aharon Geva Kleinberger, *Die Stadtdialekte von Haifa in der ersten Hälfte des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2004).

from whom I heard old-new stories about the place, and I rechecked the two stories that I had recorded in 1996. This time there were some changes in the versions of the stories as related on that visit.³

The holy site in Abu-Snān⁴ is actually a *mazār*, and not a *maqām*, as it is called in the two texts by the linguistic informant. The difference lies in the nature of Druze holy sites. A *mazār* does not contain the tomb of a prophet or a sheikh. It derives from the root *zār* [to visit] and means that the holy prophet only visited the place during his religious activities; a *maqām* by contrast contains the tomb of a holy person. In Abu-Snān there is no tomb of the Prophet *Zakariyya*, so it cannot be called a *maqām*, as the local population call it, not distinguishing the two terms. Thus, the holy site keeper cannot actually be called a *qiyim* [Classical Arabic: قائم or قائمًا] with its connotation of a religious functionary. The holy site had been renovated and enlarged. Even a new hall for vows is now being built. As a whole the place is much cleaner than it was on my last visit 19 years ago and has been made attractive for tourism. Near the holy site there is a Druze praying chamber (*xilwi*⁵) which serves the religious Druze (*ʿuqqāl*).⁶ Before entering the holy site one must remove one's shoes and put a hat on one's head, and women have to be dressed decorously. For this purpose some items of clothing may be found on the left side of the entrance, under the candle niche. The holy site itself has a door leading to an inner room. This room is simply decorated with the Druze flag and some tiny pictures, one of which shows a scene of horses in different colors, as it appears in the Jewish version of the biblical book of *Zachariah* also.⁷ From this room steps lead down to a

³ Mr. Luʿāy Marzūq, who also works at the holy site, attended this meeting as well.

⁴ Compare Shimon Avivi, "Ha-Mekomot ha-Kdoshim la-Druzim be-Yisrael" ["The Holy Sites for the Druzes in Israel"] in *Ariel* 22 (142), 2000, pp. 86: In Greater Syria and the Holy Land there are at least six holy sites dedicated to the Prophet Zachariah, the most prominent being in Damascus and Jerusalem. Zevi Gilat mentions two graves of Tzaddikim in Israel that are attributed to righteous men with the name Zekhariah: one in Jerusalem, named for *Zekhariah Ben-Yehoyadah* [compare: the prophet Zachariah is called *Zachariah Ben-Berachiah Ben-Ido*] and one in *Kfar Hananya*, east of Acre, which is named for *Zekhariah ha-Katsav* [= "Zekhariah the Butcher"]; he does not mention the holy site in Abu-Snān, perhaps because it does not contain a tomb. See Zevi Gilat, *Kivrey Tzaddikim* [= *Graves of the Tzaddikim in Israel*]. (Tel-Aviv: Mapa, 2005), pp. 58-59 and 249-250. Nor does Zvi Ilan mention the tomb of the prophet Zachariah in Abu-Snān. Instead he locates his tomb in Jerusalem. See Zvi Ilan, *Kivrey Tzaddikim be-Erets Israel* [= *Tombs of the Righteous in the Land of Israel*] (Jerusalem: Kana, 1997), pp. 243-244.

Canaan, in his book *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries in Palestine* (Jerusalem: s.n., 1924), p. 50-52, calls these sites *maqāms without a tomb*. He also specifies several holy sites that have a tomb without a building. The holy site in Abu-Snān does not have a specific date for an annual visit (*ziyāra*); compare Canaan's Arabic version of his book which is more detailed: *al-ʿAwliyāʿ wa-lMazārāt al-ʿIslāmiyya fī Filasṭīn*. Translation: Nimr Sirḥān (Ramallah: Muʿassasat an-Nāshir, 1998), 191-198.

⁵ $\sqrt{x-l-w}$ =to be celibate.

⁶ The majority secular Druze are called *ḡuhhāl*, literally "ignorant."

⁷ Zachariah 6, 1-7: "I looked up again, and there before me were four chariots coming out from between two mountains—mountains of bronze. ²The first chariot had red horses, the second black, ³the third white, and the fourth dappled—all of them powerful. ⁴I asked the angel who was speaking to me, "What are these, my lord?" ⁵The angel answered me, "These are the four spirits of heaven, going out from standing in the presence of the Lord of the whole world. ⁶The one with the black horses is going toward the north country, the one with the white horses toward the west, and the one with the dappled horses toward the south."⁷ When the powerful horses went out, they were straining to go throughout the earth. And he said, "Go throughout the earth!" So they went throughout the earth."

lower cave.⁸ Over the entrance to the holy site an antique inscription describes the persons who built it, dated to the early eighteenth century; this shows that this place was at that time regarded as a holy site.⁹ Near the door to the site there is a hatch for lighting candles for the prophet *Zakariyya*. When entering one finds a niche to the left the threshold containing a closed box for donations for charity. In the wall of the compound opposite the holy site there is a room assigned to the holy site keeper.

2. Abu-Snān:

The village is located in Israel's northern coastal region some ten kilometers northeast of Acre. It has a mixed population of Muslims (about half the population), Druze (some 40 percent of the population) and a Christian minority. At the time of the recording the village had less than 10,000 inhabitants, while today the number exceeds 13,000.¹⁰ Abu Snān lies near a group of four more Druze villages in the northern coastal region of Galilee. The Abu-Snān dialect resembles the Druze-Arabic dialects of Yānūḥ and Ḥatt villages more than the dialects of the other two villages of the cluster, namely Yirka and Ḥūlis, which tend toward a different dialectal type.¹¹ In sum, in this part of Galilee three Druze dialectal sub-groups are found, because the dialect of the Druze inhabitants of the city of Šafaḥ [Hebrew; Šfāḥām] also belongs to the northern coastal Druze-Arabic dialectal group. Generally, these dialects differ also from the other Druze-Arabic dialects of the region, especially those on Mount Carmel (ʿIsifya and Dālyit ilKarmil) and a bigger group which contains all the other Upper Galilee Druze-Arabic dialects [Bēt Ḥann, Saḥūr, ʿEn ilAsad, Ḥurfēš, irRāmi, liBqēʿa, Kisra, Kufur Smēʿ], while the dialect of liMgār forms a separate sub-dialectal group. As a whole, all the Druze dialects in Galilee resemble each other since they all preserve the interdentalals and the ancient *q. All the Druze villages and urban settlements may therefore be distinguished as sub-groups and not as entirely different macro-groups.

⁸ Canaan found many holy sites that contain a cave as a basic element. See *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries*, pp. 42-46.

⁹ This inscription is Islamic in its spirit, verbalization and terminology; it is carved over the entrance as follows: "بِسْمِ اللَّهِ الرَّحْمَنِ الرَّحِيمِ لا اله الا الله ومحمد رسول الله عمر هذا المقام المبارك على اسم النبي زكريا عليه السلام سعا في عمارته احقر العبيد احمد ابو زلطة عمره المعلم كيوان وكان الفراغ نهار السبت في خمس عشر خلت من جمادي الاول في سنة الف ومائة وثلاثين للهجرة النبوية والله الموفق لمن عمل خيرا فيه"

"In the name of God the companionate and merciful; there is no God but Allah; the one who built this blessed [=holy] *Maqām* of the Prophet *Zakariyya*, may peace be on him and the person who initiated the idea of building of it is the most despicable slave Aḥmad Abū Zalaṭa and the person who [actually] built it was the architect Kīwān; the completion of construction was on Saturday, 15 days before the end of the [Islamic month of] Jumādā lʿawwal in the year 1130 (=April 16th, 1718); may God prosper the way for anyone who does good in it." Compare Shimon Avivi, "Ha-Mekomot ha-Kdoshim la-Druzim be-Yisrael", pp. 86, he calculates mistakenly the year 1744 AD.

¹⁰ The 1922 census shows that the village had only 518 inhabitants.

¹¹ In Yirka and Ḥūlis there are more pausal forms and also a wide tendency to monophthongation. In Yirka there is also a unique consonant inventory.

2. Local folkloristic traditions on the Prophet *Zakariyya*

The prophet *Zakariyya* is vindictive by nature¹² – a characteristic also manifested in the two texts presented in this article. According to the first of these, when somebody steals¹³ any objects from the holy site, soon enough the prophet takes his revenge, even if the items are marginal and insignificant.¹⁴ Also in this text we are told that the passer-by took only a negligible sum of money – just seven piasters from the money-tray that in the past was placed in the holy site for donations to charity.

As in numerous Palestinian holy sites, the prophet *Zakariyya* compound in Abu-Snān is guarded by an animal. The local animal here is an immense terrifying snake, who also guards the rooms and the cave as well as the garden at the entrance. Several contemporary tales are about this petrifying creature, since it was charged with defending the holy site and also protecting an alleged treasure supposedly buried under an olive tree¹⁵ in the garden. All these stories are confirmed by the site keeper, Mr. Yūsif Xēr.

The prophet's vindictive character is apparently a product of the ominous prophetic spirit of the biblical prophet Zachariah about the end of the days. Still, the prophet can also be beneficent to visitors who kiss the holy site's walls and offer sincere pleas and prayers.

The Druze tradition on *Zakariyya* is based on the Qur'ānic verses on this prophet,¹⁶ on the Jewish traditions and on the biblical book of Zachariah. From the Qur'ān we understand that the prophet *Zakariyyā*¹⁷ begot a son, *Yihyā*, in his old age. More details about the prophet are found in al-Ashrafani's Druze book, which sets these stories in the time of King David, blending them with tales about the building of the temple in Jerusalem, *Israiliyyāt* and traditions about John the Baptist, who according to the Qur'ān was *Zakariyya*'s son.

¹² On the vindictive character of another Druze prophet, *Nabi Hazzūri*, see Aharon Geva-Kleinberger, 2010. "A text in the Arabic dialect of the Druze of Ayn Qinyi/ the Golan Heights." *Jerusalem Studies in Arabic and Islam (JSAI): Studies in Honour of Prof. Aryeh Levin*, pp. 47-58.

¹³ See also in the biblical book of Zachariah, chapter 5, 3: "And he said to me, "This is the curse that is going out over the whole land; for according to what it says on one side, every thief will be banished, and according to what it says on the other, everyone who swears falsely will be banished."

¹⁴ Mr. Xēr told me a story about the contractor who was building the holy site, who took a plain bucket from the holy site and could not therefore maneuver his car freely, but felt that a spirit was steering it.

¹⁵ Canaan found 16 olive trees growing near holy tombs in central parts of Palestine. See: Tawfiq Canaan, *Mohammedan Saints and Sanctuaries*, p. 31

¹⁶ The prophet *Zakariyyā* is referred to seven times in the Quran in chapters *al-ʿImrān*, *al-ʿAnʿām*, *Maryam* and *al-ʿAnbiyāʾ*. According to the Quran, as a gift from God, Zechariah was given a son by the name of John (*Yaḥyā*), a name specially chosen for this child alone. Muslim tradition narrates that Zechariah was 92 years old when he was told of John's birth.

¹⁷ In accordance with Zechariah's prayer, God made John renew the message of God, which had been corrupted by the Israelites and lost. As the Qur'an says: "O Zachariah," (it was said), "We give you good news of a son by the name of John. To none have we attributed that name before." "How can I have a son, O Lord," he said, "when my wife is barren and I am old and decrepit?" (The angel) answered: "Thus will it be. Your Lord said: 'This is easy for Me; for when I brought you into being you were nothing.'" (Zachariah) said: "O Lord, give me a Sign." "Your sign," He answered, "shall be that you shall speak to no man for three days, although you are not dumb."— *Qur'an, sūrat Maryam*, verses 7–10.

3. Major linguistic comments on the text

In the Druze tradition the folk-etymon of the village name Abu-Snān reaches back to the Sheikh who established the village in the 13th century who brandished a tooth-like sword. The Christian account is that Jesus Christ, who sojourned for a while in the village as a child, produced his first tooth there.

Phonological remarks: The Abu-Snān dialect preserves all interdental – as in all Druze dialects in Galilee. It also preserves the ancient *q. Normally the prevailing sound of the ancient *q is /z/ but some words, especially those containing the root √ جمع*¹⁸, evince inconsistency between ġ~ž, with an preponderant tendency to ġ. This feature can be explained on a religious basis: the root in Islam denoting “mosque” [جامع] and “Friday” [جمعة] might have been borrowed; thus the word for “week” is usually ġim^ʿa~ġum^ʿa [e.g. II, 10, 14], but also žim^ʿa~žum^ʿa [e.g. II, 7].

An interesting feature attested in the text is the pausal form *nabayy* [II, 11] for the *nabiyy* [prophet]. Although monophthongation is limited in Abu-Snān, this effect is widespread in Yirka and Žūlis, just a few kilometers south.

Morphological remarks: The keeper of the holy site is called *qiyyim* (<Classical Arabic: *qāʾim* [قائم]) in the Druze dialect of Abu-Snān, while in other Moslem dialects of the region the morpho-phonological form is usually *qāyim~qāyem* or a compounding morphological pattern *qaymaqām* (<قائمقائمًا) which goes back to قائم المقام [=the holy tomb~holy site-keeper]. Interesting is the local Druze feminine form *qiyyami* [<قائمة*], attested in the second text [II, 2, 20].

Expressions: Some temporal expressions in the text connect the plot to the time of occurrence. At first this time-anchoring seems accurate, but in terms of folklore these expressions have inaccurate time frames. In the two texts in this article the plot is set in the British Mandate period in Palestine (1918-1948), as several times the linguistic informant uses the expressions like *zamān ilʔintidāb* [I, 7, 11; II, 1: "During {the British} Mandate Period"]; this expression can occur also in other variants too, such as ^ʿ*a-zaman*¹⁸ -*ilʔintidāb*~^ʿ*a-zaman-ilʔInglīz* [=during the time of the {British} Mandate or during the English time]. These time indications can usually be found at the beginning of a text in order to set it temporally. In folklore apparently, to denote a remote period the linguistic informant names the period of the British, although historically the actual events related could be fluid, flexible and undefined. Other period expressions not found in the text below are also noteworthy; I collected them during my fieldwork among the Druze population of Galilee including Abu-Snān: ^ʿ*a-zaman-ilʔAtrāk* [in the Turkish time¹⁹] or ^ʿ*a-zaman-ʔIsraʔil* [since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948].

The second text contains another temporal expression *lēlit ilġimʿa*, which can be translated literally “the night of Friday.” But it refers to “Thursday evening” [II,2, 10] since in the Druze tradition, as in the Moslem rituals (and even traditionally in Judaism), the day begins with nightfall of the previous day.

Some euphemisms connect the texts to Druze society. These phrases can be understood semantically only in the local Druze environment and can be interpreted

¹⁸ In the Galilee dialects, including the Abu-Snān dialect, we find both *zaman* and *zamān* [=time].

¹⁹ Which lasted for almost four centuries in the Galilee region – until 1918.

differently by the Moslems. One such subtle expression is 'bi-ġa' 'inna'ar' [I, 4] which appears in text, for example, before mention of a Moslem person. A Moslem can understand it blandly – "by the way," but as for the Druze it denotes semantically another group, not them, yet does not offend someone of a different ethnicity who may be listening to the story. Generally, euphemistic expressions are widespread among the Druze of Galilee.²⁰

There is an interesting echo-word used in the second text (*tāl̄ti-ġāl̄ti*) [II, 9] [=the third time or the third try is the crucial one and the most important]. This expression is rare and hardly used, and is almost obsolete nowadays. More common today is the expression *tāl̄ti-tābt̄i* which is not constructed as an echo-word. The root √ġ-l-t̄ is rare in Classical Arabic, albeit attested. It has the meaning of "victorious in a war clash,"²¹ hence "the third attempt in a battle is the one which is most crucial and can be also victorious".

The two texts recorded in 1996 and on my visit in 2015 display some changes in the folklore aspect. One prominent change is in the second text, where the animal responsible for breaking the oil-lamps was not the badger, as in the earlier version, but another animal in the oral stories told by Mr. *Yūsif Xēr* in 2015: it was not a badger (*ġrēri*) [II, 16, 23], but a fox (*ħsēni*). In any event, both animals have the same morphological linguistic pattern of *f'zeli*, a linguistic feature that appears in the local dialect in diminutive.

Another change was that the lady who in the 1996 version was the holy site keeper, had 2015 version become the sister of Mr. *Xēr*, the current holy site keeper, *'Anīsi*. The story in the latter oral version is set "some years ago," while in the second text recorded in 1996 the plot takes place during the British rule of the region.

4. The Texts

I.

1. 'inna maqām 'ismu nNabi Zakariyya šalla Aļļa 'alē. 2. biqūlu innu hū 'abu l'anbiyā' ill 'ihna bin'āmin fihun. 3. 'issa nNabi Zakariyya būdukru qišštu [AGK: ilmakān mawżūd hōn?] - ilmakān mawżūd bi-lqurb min bēti, ya'ni mīt mitir ila l'žiha ššimaliyyi ġarbiyyi. 4. biqūlu fī...šaxš māriq min ilbalad, w hū lyōm min Dannūn²² ya'ni, ba'ariḡš 'iḡa kān ba'ado tayyib 'aw twaffa...muslim bi-ġa' 'inna'ar ya'ni, hāḡa miš ya'ni la-l... 5. 'issa hāḡa maraq min...bi-lqurb min ilmaqām, trayyah bi-žanbu, fī tāqa, min 'adat idDrūz ṭab'an yžūdu bi-ma ya'ni nafshin btismāhilhin, biħuṭtu fī-ha-ṭāqa hāy...kān mawżūd fīha sabi'

²⁰ For example, instead mentioning sexual organs, religious Druzes use the euphemism *maḡāšim* [محاشم] which is considered more delicate and modest.

²¹ "والغلت: الشديد القتال المُرَوِّ لمن طالب أو مارس"

Ibn Man'ūr, *Lisān al-'Arab* (Beirut: Dār Šādir and Dār Bayrūt, 1955-1956), v.2, pp. 171-172. This expression is actually obsolete, that is, no longer in use in Galilee (compare the negative meaning in Classical Arabic of the expression *الثالثة الأثافي*, in which the third time is always a bad omen; see *Lisān al-'Arab*, v. 14, p. 114:

قال أبو عبيدة: *ثالثة الأثافي* القطعة من الجبل يجعل إلى جانبها اثنتان --- وقال أبو سعيد: *ثالثة الأثافي* معني قولهم رماه الله بثالثة الأثافي أي رماه بالشر.

²² This village is also called *Šēx Dannūn*, near the city of Nahariyya, north of Abu-Snan.

qurūš fi-haḏāk ilwaqt lamma kān...6. ʔiḏan sabiʕ qruš biqūlu hāda iššax...bižūz ʕan qašid, bižūz ma-fakkar ʔinnu ššaqli fīha, ʔinnu mawžūd fi maqām maṭalan...7. ṭimiʕ, ʔaxaḏ issabʕ ʔqruš; bi-ma ʔinnu kānat ilḥayā faqīri wēn ma-kān; hāda lḥaki ʕa-zamān ilʔintidāb. 8. ʔaxaḏ issabʕ ʔqruš...w bi-lqurb min ilmaqām fi nušš qannīnit kāz. 9. ḥīmilha maʕā w rawwaḥ. 10. lamma wišil ʕala lbēt ṭabʕan ḡassal w ḡayyar ʔawaʕi, w qaʕad ʕala lfrāš; ma-ʕadš qām min haḏāk ittarīx illa biqūlu yimkin šahrēn ṭalātī ma-ʕadš qām min lifrāš, fi lʕarabi lʕammi biqūlu "karsaḥ", izzalami. 11. ma-xallūš dakātra, dakātra šaʕbiyyīn, wasfāt ʕarabiyyi šaʕbiyyi...fi lmanṭiqa, ʔaw yomkin dakātra kamān ʔInglīz, ʔilli kānu yištiḡlu fi lmustašfayāt ilʔIngliziyyi...ʕa-zaman-ilʔInglīz, naʕam. 12. maḥišš natīzi, ma-saʕadš ilʕamr. 13. fi lʕāxir ʔiža wāḥad qarīb ʔilu. 14. yā židd...yā sīdu, yā ʕammu, yā wāḥad mn-ilbalad qallu : "ʕammi, ʔinti biširš ʔilla ḡēr ʕāmil ʕamli. hāy lā tuḡtafar, rabbna miš-rah-ysāmḥak ʕalēh, baddak ʔtqulna²³ šū ʕāmil, ʔay kallalna²⁴ ddakātra. 15. hāy kilmit 'kallalna ddakātra' yaʕni... ʔʕabnāhin ʔkīr. 16. qallu: b(i)ddak ʔtqullna šū ʕmilt. 17. qallu: ʔana miš mitḏakkir ʕāmil ʔiši hāda, ʔamma ʔana batḏakkar ʕāxir innḥar illi ʔana ižīt fiyyu la-hōni w qaʕadit, maraqt ʕala nNabi Zakariyya...kān laqēt sabʕ ʔqruš fi ṭāqa, w nušš qannīnit kāz w ʔaxaḏthin maʕāy. 18. qalūlu: hōn bēt ilfaraž...ʔiḏan māxiḏ min inNabi Zakariyya, btiʕrafš ʔinnu hāda māl waqf w ḥarām, yaʕni nnak miš lāzim ʔtqaddim ʕalē? 19. qallhin: hāda ʔilli šār. 20. qāmu l...ʔahlu w ʔaqārbu... badal sabiʕ-qruš xamaštaʕšar qirš, yaʕnu²⁵ ʕaʕfūn²⁶, hēk hēk ʕala ḥaki irrāwi. 21. žamaʕu xamaštaʕšar qirš... w badal qannīnit ilkāz žābu galan²⁷ kāz. 22. wa... qālu la-wāḥad min qarāybīnu²⁸, ʔaxū, ʔibin ʕammu, ʔilli hū : "baddak twaššilni ʕala nNabi Zakariyya ʔilli fi ʔAbu-Snān, šalla lḷā ʕalē". 23. wišṭ...bass waššalhin ʕāla nNabi Zakariyya, izzalami qām min lifrāš. 24. qām min lifrāš...qalūlu : "ʔissa, baʕid ʔtqaddim ʕala māl waqf? 25. qallhin: ittōbi. 26. w hāy ilqušša lli badkurha ʔana...smiʕtha min ʔahad yaʕni ʔafrād ilbalad.

II.

1. ʔiḏan, hādi qušša ṭānyi ʕan-inNabi Zakariyya, šalla lḷā ʕalē, ʔilli smiʕtha min qarāyib illi kānu qayymīn ʕala lmaqām iššarīf. 2. būḏukru kamān fi zamān ilʔintidāb ʔinnu lqiyyami, illi kānat mitʕawwdi tinzal ʕala lmaqām, w tiʕwi nnabi lēlit ilimʕa...lēlit ilžimʕa...yimkin maʕrūf ʕind ilkaṭīr nnu hī lēli mḡaddsi ʕind iddrūz. 3. nizlit, ʕawat ilmaqām, w ṭāni yōm nizlit ʕala lmaqām minšān ʔtnaʕʕif ilqandīl, ʔaw issrāž hāda minqullu. 4. lāqat ilqazāzi maksūra, w il..qa...zzēt ʔilli kānu yiʕwu fiyyu ilqindīl³⁰, makbūb ʕala lmaštabi. 5. ṭabʕan ziʕlit... w ʔʔattarat. 6. rawwaḥat. wālat, yaʕni : ʔAlḷa yžāzi ʔilli kān issabab. 7. ṭāni ʔusbūʕ. ṭāni žumʕa kamān, nizlit, ka-lʕādi, ḥatta tiʕwi lmaqām, w ṭāni yōm, nizlit ta-tnaʕʕif ilqandīl ʔaw issrāž...laqatu kamān maksūr miṭl ilḡumʕa lli fātāt. 8. kamān ʔʔattarat w ziʕlit, qālat : ta-nšūf šū bišīr. 9. ṭālīṭ ḡumʕa...kamān hū maʕrūf ʕind ilʔinsān ʔinnu "ittālṭi-ḡālṭi" biqūlu.

²³ ʔtqūlna > ʔtqulna

²⁴ √k-l-l="to exhaust"; rarely used in the colloquial language.

²⁵ A variant of yaʕni.

²⁶ <ʕʕaf

²⁷ English loanword <gallon, borrowed with the consonant /g/.

²⁸ A variant of ʔaqārib.

²⁹ <wišil.

³⁰ A variant of qandīl.

10. *tālīt ġim³¹ nizlit kamān ‘awatu kēkt ilġum³²a...w tāni yōm nizlit ta-tna* ‘if ilqazāzi, laqato³² maksūr. 11. *šū qālat? qālat : ‘ida ‘inti nabayy³³, miš ġādir ti³⁴mal ma³⁵ā ‘iši la-hāda ‘illi biksir ilqazāzi, ‘ay ‘ana šū biddi ‘a³⁶mal ma³⁵ā? 12. ya³⁷ni bižūz hī...‘an-ḥamaq ‘inti nabi miš ġādir ti³⁴mal ma³⁵ā, ‘ana šū baddi ‘aḡdar ‘a³⁶mal ma³⁵ā? fa-rawwaḥat. 13. ‘issa, hāda ba³⁷id-ma ḥakat w rawwaḥat. 14. ilġim³²a rrāb³²a, nizlit ‘awat, ṭab³²an lilmaqām, li-³²annu hēk ilwāžib ya³⁷ni biṭṭalab. 15. tāni yōm iṣṣubih, tannha ka-l’awāyid, biddha tīži tna ‘if ilqazāzi... 16. ‘illi kān yiksir ha-lqazāzi w ykubb izzitāt³⁴...ṭili³⁴...ḡrēri, yā ‘ustāz Fāyiz, ḡrēri, kān mistħiff ‘ala ha-lqandil illi fīyu zēt, kinnu ‘āhir bilḥas izzēt aaw būklu... 17. šū kān yi³⁶mal? ‘idan kān yīži yfūt w yiksir ilqazāzi. 18. ‘amma šū laqatu... fi ḥadāk innhār? 19. laqatu m³⁶allaq raqabtu bēn ilbāb w ilmalban taba³⁶ ilbāb, mašnūq w hū wāqif. 20. ta³⁶ni ṣall llaḥ³⁵‘āla sīdna Zakariyya, ‘istažāb la-kalāmha, la-hāy ilqiyyami w hāy il³⁶ažūz, 21. w ‘illi kān issabab fi kasr ilqazāzi māt ‘a-lmaḥall. 22. w hāy ilquṣṣa biḍkrūha fi³⁶lan, ya³⁷ni ṣārat. 23. fī ‘inna quṣṣa tālt... ma-hū kān yiftaḥu fi ‘ižru la-barra...bti³⁶raf fīyu marṛāt fi ttilfīzyōn minšūf ‘ašyā³⁶ min ha-ššikil... 24. badd yiftaḥu la-barra...‘issa mā fawwat rāsu qām... ilbāb, ‘aṣṣ... il...kitfu ma³⁶ raqabtu ‘iliq bēn ilbāb w ilmalban, ‘all³⁶ miyyit ‘a-lmaḥall. 25. qālatlu : ‘issa, ‘ā, ‘issa ya³⁷ṭik il³⁶āfyi! 26. ‘ay ‘i... hāda hēk lāzim yṣṣr min ‘awwal marṛa.*

Translation:

I.

1. We have a holy tomb which is called "Prophet Zakariyya [Zachariah]," may God pray over him. 2. Our ancestors used to say that he is the father of [all] prophets in whom we believe. 3. Now, Prophet Zakariyya, we would recall his story [AGK: Is the holy tomb here?] - The holy tomb is close to my house, I mean one hundred meters northwest of it. 4. They used to say... there was a person who was passing through this village, now he lives in *Dannūn*, I don't know if he is still alive or has died...he is Moslem by the way, it is not for... 5. Now, this...person was passing by... near the holy tomb, he wanted to relax; inside there is a tray [for money] at the side, since it is one of the customs of the Druze people to place a sum of money, as far as they are able to give, in this tray...and there were already seven piasters there when he...6. Well, these seven piasters...they say that this person...purposely or maybe he did not realize that there is in the holy tomb for example... 7. He made up his mind and took these seven piasters, since life used to be very poor everywhere; this story occurred during the (British) Mandate (period³⁷). 8. He took these seven piasters... and there was also nearby a small container of petrol. 9. He took them and went away. 10. When he arrived home, he washed himself and changed his clothes and went to sleep in bed; he did not get out of his bed from that time, as people

³¹ A variant of *ġum³²a*.

³² *qazāzi ~qazāz*; the first word is feminine, the second masculine. We might have expected *laqata* here.

³³ A pausal form from *nabi* [=prophet]; see linguistic remarks (3).

³⁴ Here as an undefined quantity of oil.

³⁵ Here deemphatic.

³⁶ ‘*all miyyit* is used here to mean "he was killed."

³⁷ 1918-1948.

say, for maybe two or three months: as we say in colloquial Arabic, "He became disabled." 11. He went to all the popular doctors, folk doctors and [they gave him] popular Arabic prescriptions ... [doctors] from the area or even English doctors, who worked in the English hospitals... I mean, during the British rule. 12. Yet, there was no [good] result, nothing helped. 13. Finally, one of his relatives came. 14. [He said to him:] "Oh my grandpa! Oh my uncle!³⁸ ...my uncle..." or one of the villagers said to him: "My uncle, you must have done a bad thing that cannot be forgiven and God will not forgive you for it; you have to tell us what you have done because we've tired the doctors out." 15. This expression "we have tired the doctors out" means that "we have really exhausted them."³⁹ 16. They said to him: "You must tell us what you've done." 17. He said: "I don't remember doing anything [bad], but I remember that at the end of that day I came here and became a cripple, I passed by the holy tomb of *Zakariyya*... I found seven piasters in the tray and also a container of petrol and I took them with me." 18. They answered him: "This must be the solution... Well, you took [something] from the Prophet *Zakariyya*; don't you know that this money is a charitable religious endowment and you shouldn't have taken it?" 19. He replied: "It happened just like that." 20. His family and his relatives began to...collect money, fifteen piasters instead of those seven piasters – so they doubled the sum of money, according to the prevailing version. 21. They collected fifteen piasters... and instead of the petrol container they brought a whole gallon of petrol. 22. They said to him – one of his relatives, his brother or the son of his paternal uncle, as follows: "You have to take me to the holy tomb of *Zakariyya*, may God pray over him, which is in *Abu-Snān*. 23. He took...as soon as he took them to the holy tomb of *Zakariyya* – this man became healthy again [literally: "he got out of his bed"]. 24. He became healthy again [literally: "he got out of his bed"]; they said to him: "Now, will you ever again dare to take a charitable religious endowment?" 25. He replied: "Now I have repented." 26. This is the story that I remember... I had heard it from someone, I mean from a dweller of the village.

II.

1. Well, this is another story about the [holy tomb of] the Prophet *Zakariyya*, may God pray over him, which I heard from my relatives who once were keepers of the holy tomb. 2. It is said that it too happened during the period of the British rule, that a woman, who was a keeper of the holy tomb, who used to go to the holy tomb to light a candle for the prophet on Thursday evening⁴⁰ ... Thursday evening... it might be known to many that this is a holy evening among the Druze people. 3. She went down in order to light up the holy tomb and the next day she went to the holy tomb to clean up the [residue] of the candles, or the [residue] of the oil-lamp, as we call it. 4. She found the glass broken and

³⁸ Vocative forms to show close relationship.

³⁹ The informant hints sarcastically at a well known adage *فقد أعيت من يداويها* "Every disease has its own cure except stupidity, since it is already exhausted all the doctors who have tried to find a cure for it."

⁴⁰ See 3. Major linguistic comments on the text.

the... oil for lighting the lamp spilt onto the ramp. 5. Of course she became angry... and agitated. 6. She went home and said: "May God punish that person who did it!" [literally: who was the reason for it]. 7. The following week...also the following week, she went down as she usually did, in order to light up the holy tomb, and the next day she went to clean up the [residue] of the candles or the oil-lamp...and this time too she found it broken, like in the week before. 8. This time too she was agitated and angry and said [to herself]: "Let's see what happens now." 9. The third week – as we usually say "Number three is always critical." 10. The third week she also went down to light it up on Thursday evening...and the next day she went to clean up the oil-lamp [here: the glass fragments] and she found it broken. 11. What did she say? She said: "If you are really a prophet, can't you do something to this person who always breaks the glass? [If you cannot] what can I do with him?" 12. Well, maybe she...did it out of stupidity, [saying:] "You're a prophet and you can't do anything about him, so what can I do about him!?" and then she went home. 13. Now, this was after she had said it and had gone home. 14. The fourth week she went down to light it up – of course, the holy tomb, as usual, since it had to be done. 15. The next morning, as usual, she wanted to clean up the glass fragments... 16. The one who broke the glass and spilt the oil...happened to be...a badger...Mr. Fayez,⁴¹ like a badger, who crept around near the oil candle, as if it was licking or eating the oil... 17. What did he do? Well, he would go inside and break the glass. 18. So, what did she discover... that day? 19. She found him hanging by his neck between the door and the doorstep, hanging while upright. 20. This means that the holy *Zakariyya*, may God pray over him, accepted her words, the [words] of that holy tomb keeper, the old lady. 21. And the one who was responsible for breaking the glass – died on the spot.⁴² 22. I still remember this story vividly, since it really happened. 23. We have here a third⁴³ story... It [the badger] opened it with its legs as it was going outside, or with its arms... he opened the door as he was going outside... you know, sometimes we see such things on television... 24. It wanted to open it as it was going outside... well, when it stretched out its arm... the door crushed its... shoulder together with its neck and he was hanged between the door and the doorstep, and it died on the spot. 25. She said to him: "Now, indeed, good for you! [literally: be healthy!⁴⁴]" 26. Meaning it had to be like that from the beginning on.

5. Conclusion

The Druze-Arabic dialect of Abu-Snān village shares common features with other Druze dialects in Galilee, yet it can be regarded as belonging to the northern Arabic coastal dialects in Israel. In a wider sub-grouping it especially resembles a cluster of other Druze villages in that coastal area, especially the nearby villages of Kufr Yasīf, Yanūḥ and Ḥatt,

⁴¹ The informant refers to Mr. Fāyiz Azzām who came with me to the first visit; see 1. Background.

⁴² This expression has a double meaning: a locative and a temporal.

⁴³ The informant did not tell me the third story.

⁴⁴ A sarcastic expression here.

and in a still broader range also to the dialects of Yirka and Žūlis, which comprise other linguistic features.

The recorded texts of 1996 and the oral stories I heard from Mr. Yūsif Xēr in my visit in 2015 differ in some ways. These shifts strengthen the folklore and popular components, and add a touch of color touch and fortify the holiness of the site.

The folktales about the holy site of *Zakariyya* are syncretic in and they preserve old traditions and folk customs, but also some linguistic features which are obsolescent or risk being forgotten, especially in the field of expressions no longer in use. The holy site itself is a good example of traditions about holy places and holy tombs widespread among Palestinians until the middle of the twentieth century, and are preserved in Dalman's, Canaan's and Kahle's studies. These traditions would be condemned to the limbo of forgotten things were there not a holy site, which time and again revives old customs, at times traceable and datable to ancient times.

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