

Text Sample from Dērīk (al-Malikiyah)

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Dērīk is located on the Syrian-Turkish border, some fifteen kilometers west of the river Tigris. Dērīk is the name used by Christians who speak this Arabic dialect. The town's name on the Syrian national map is al-Malikiyah.¹ The so-called Azxēni speakers of Dērīk have their origin in Āzəx,² a town some 20 kilometers north of Dērīk across the border in modern Turkey. The modern Turkish name of Āzəx is Idil.

The persecution of Christians that began in the mid-nineteenth century in the Ottoman Empire and reached its peak with the massacres of 1915,³ forced the Azxēnis who survived to flee in order to stay alive. They escaped to neighboring countries such as Syria, Iraq, Iran, Russia, etc. In 1940 many Azxēni families left Āzəx accompanying French soldiers withdrawing from Āzəx to positions in Dērīk.⁴ This was natural since the Christians of Anatolia saw a salvation in these Christian French soldiers. It is difficult to know how many families or households came to Dērīk at that time, as it is difficult to estimate how many Christians were living in Āzəx and its surrounding area in those times. According to tales from the old people of Āzəx there were more than 1300 families living there before the massacres of 1915.⁵ In April 2002, when I visited Āzəx, there were less than 30 people left. Most of them were aged men and women. One of the striking things that drew my attention, beside the poignant sight of a forgotten, scattered community, was that I witnessed an unforgettable scene while tape-recording three old ladies. We were sitting outside the famous Virgin Mary church and the ladies were telling about how depressed they were to have survived all this aggression and now to witness how the Christians of Āzəx, one after one, feel the necessity of leaving Āzəx. All of a sudden a group of children 8–10 years old showed up and shouted, while pointing at us *gawer, gawer, gawer* “infidel” and run away. One of the ladies shouted in Kurdish at them to disappear and looked at me with tears in her eyes and said: do you see

¹ Other spellings of the name are possible, such as Mālkiye, al-Malikiye and al-Malkiyye. The variant spellings are due to the absence of a universal transcription system.

² Other spellings of the name are also found, such as Azakh, Hazakh or the old Syriac name Beth Zabdai.

³ Gaunt 2006, 387-392.

⁴ Wittrich, 2001, 3.

⁵ It is worth mentioning that as early as 1843, a large-scale Kurdish revolt broke out when Nur-Allah and Badr Khan invaded Christian territory. In July of that year, Badr Khan attacked the Nestorians living in and near the town of Jezire (Cizre or Gziro that is ca five kilometers east of Āzəx). Massacres continued over several years, and the number of Christians killed reached an estimated ten thousand, Minorsky 1981, 462.

now why $\bar{A}z\bar{a}x$ is not $\bar{A}z\bar{a}x$ any more?⁶ We are just few old people left here and we have to face this kind of harassment every single day. What do you know about this in Sweden? Does Europe know about us?

In $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$, on the other hand, the number of Christian, *Azxēni* speakers today is ca 1500 people. This number is nevertheless declining because of continuous migration. Harassment is not a rare occurrence in the everyday life of the Christians in $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$. Sometimes this harassment leads to fatalities as in October 2007, when two people were killed. History is seemingly repeating itself for this people. For the same reason that $\bar{A}z\bar{a}x$ is more or less empty of its Christian population $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$ seems to face the same destiny.

The number of Kurds in this region has grown very fast into an immense majority. The long-lasting PKK-struggle against the Turkish state drove many Kurds over the border to Syria. The national awareness among Kurds, no matter if they are in Turkey, Syria, or Iraq is strong. One of the ideas of Kurds is to create a homogeneous Kurdish region which makes it easier to make national demands.⁷ The process of homogenization always has victims, and in this instance the victims are the *Azxēnis* of $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$.

Since no other Arabic speaking community was living in this area when the *Azxēni* speakers came to $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$, the *Azxēni* dialect survived in the town until this very day. At the present time the Arabic of the Christians living in $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$ or in the Diaspora is still called *Azxēni*. There are in Sweden today more than 700 families from $\bar{A}z\bar{a}x$ and $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$. They all call themselves *Azxēnis* and speak the *Azxēni* dialect.

The dialect of $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$ is an *Azxēni* dialect and as a consequence belongs to the Mardin group of the Anatolian *qəltu*-dialects. Based on tape-recordings from *Azxēni* immigrants in Germany, Michaela Wittrich published in 2001 a complete description of the dialect. One of the differences between the two variants of this dialect is that in the case of $\bar{A}z\bar{a}x$ the dialect is influenced by Turkish, and in the case of $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$ the dialect is more influenced by North-eastern Syrian Arabic. In both cases there is influence from North Kurdish, Kurmanji.

The tape-recording of this text was conducted in situ in spring 2000 by Khali El-Ahmad and Gabi Lahdo. Julo, the informant of this text, is an illiterate 65-year-old woman. In the text she is telling about the “adventure” of traveling to Germany to visit her children and her sister. This material is genuine in the sense that Julo has not left $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$ for a long period of time. The purpose of this paper is, accordingly to present a genuine body of a textual material from the town of $\bar{D}\bar{e}r\bar{i}k$ and in footnotes comment on some particular features.

⁶ During the massacres the people of $\bar{A}z\bar{a}x$ showed great bravery in defending the town from the attacking regular Ottoman troops and Kurdish tribes, Gaunt 2006, 273.

⁷ Lahdo 2009, 2, 109-110.

The trip to Germany

1. *əl-abu yrōḥ əš-šām yaqta' əlna, yaqta' əlna⁸ 'al-Mālta. bayt abūk xərəb,⁹ ayš fī farq, kəlla ilattālāf arba' tālāf waraqa. e huw¹⁰ mə-yə' rəf. əyqūm yaqta' ūlu, tanrōḥ 'al-Mālta, nəqqat¹¹ sətt sā' āt fəl-mātār w nənṭər¹² ṭiyyārətna tənrafə' trōḥ l-almānya.*
2. *u 'Azīz fə-niyyitu kū-qaṭa' na fə-mātā... ē fə-mātār sūriyyīy¹³ taba' əl-almānya. fə wəčna tənṭīr w tənroḥ la-almānya mə-yə' rəf sətt sā' āt tənəbqa. əṣ-ṣabāḥ qāmu w ṭala' u w rāḥu qəddēmītna w nəḥne rəḥna qə' ..., 'a..., 'a..., gya¹⁴ q' ədna fə-mātār Mālta.*
3. *ē, walla ḡattəlki aqulki wəḥde mən, ē mən hawn mōza' qəltulki Məṣər, mō Məṣər-ye? ē, ḡatt wəḥde qə' dət 'əndi tqəlli ənti mən ayn? qəltu mən 'ən-Tərkiyya¹⁵ mən 'ənt əl-mayy lə-kbīr. ənbasaṭət.*
4. *ē, qālət 'əndki talaḥfōn? qəltu ē 'əndi talaḥfōn. qālət 'ṭawni raqəm talaḥfōnkən. hawwartu šā Ḥanna qəltu Ḥanna 'ṭiya raqəm talaḥfōnna w hiyye-s¹⁶ 'aṭatna lē laha.¹⁷ qālət iza¹⁸ nəzəltu ana taḥkī ma' kən.*
5. *w rəkəbna fəṭ-ṭiyyāra rəḥna l-almānya. rəḥna l-almānya baqat raḥḥa ma' na ıla sā' tayn as¹⁹ ḡuwwāt əl-mātār. wlādna ki-ydawrūn 'alayna w nəḥne kū-, w əḡā Ḥanna čāx yiftaḥ ıdayu w yifallət hāk əṣ-ṣawt tqūlīn yaqūn siyyāra əz' āf-iy.²⁰*
6. *aqullu whəš warak²¹ mafḡō', qālūlna kāmīrāt xafīyye fī. tənzalūn, nzalū sarbast²² lā ṭṭalūn²³ ḥawlkən, lā ykane..., yā Ḥanna bahdaltna. Bassām warak ayn la-nkūn hā-tənəṣal hā-təyiḡawn sawbna hā-təysalləm 'alayna. w huwe ḡann.*

⁸ *yaqta'* means literally “he cuts”. In context of buying or booking tickets the root has the meaning of “buy or book”.

⁹ The expression *bayt abūk xərəb* means literally “may your father’s house become ruins”. This is a way of condemning a statement or showing disapproval towards something. The expression is also common as *yəxrab baytək*.

¹⁰ Cf. *hūwe* in Wittrich 2001, 28. The form above, *huw*, is a short form of the independent personal pronoun.

¹¹ Cf. *nəq' ad* “we sit down”.

¹² It sounds as if the woman is saying *nūkar*, which has no meaning.

¹³ This is probably a mispronunciation.

¹⁴ Demonstrative adverb, *gya* < **gdā* < **kidā*. Cf. Wittrich 2001, 39.

¹⁵ 'ən < 'ənd “at, near, by”; mən 'ən-Tərkiyya “near Turkey, close to Turkey”.

¹⁶ Cf. the postposition *-ze* “also”, *hiyye-ze* “she also”. The postposition *-ze* “also” is common in the Anatolian *qəltu*-dialects, cf. Jastrow 1978, 301.

¹⁷ The genitive exponent, with suffixed pronouns, occurs three times in this text; in paragraph 4 above: *lē laha* “that belongs to her”, in paragraph 26 *lay ləna* “that belongs to us”, and *ley-lī* “that belongs to me” in paragraph 44. These forms correspond, to *lēlāha*, *lēlāna* and *lēlī* in Wittrich 2001, 47.

¹⁸ The conditional particle *iza* is transcribed as *īza* in Wittrich 2001, 135.

¹⁹ Probably *as* < *azyad* “more”.

²⁰ The copula of 3.f.sg in *Āzax* is *-ye* < **bənti-īye* < **bənti-hīye*, cf. Wittrich 2001, 32.

²¹ A filling word that means, “man, you, you there”, cf. Vocke and Waldner 1982, 456.

²² Cf. Turkish *serbest* “free, at ease, unrestricted”.

²³ Cf. *əṭṭal' ūn* “you (pl.) look”, where the /' / is assimilated.

7. *baqîna fîq lə-ılatt sâ'ât arba' sâ'ât. daqqayna xude hāya²⁴ hāk əl-mara hakat ma' əwlādna haṭṭət maşārî, hakat ma' Fahîma, hakat ma' 'Azîz, hakat ma' kəllən. qālu yā-bu ṭə'²⁵ qəddēmūkən məs-sā' a təs' a ş-şəbəḥ.*
8. *nəḥne ku-şārət²⁶ arb' a əl-me., əl-'aşər-ze, nəḥne hēke fəl-mātār. yğər allā ıla amūt mō-nsa hāk əl-yawm. wallā qəmna, ana qə'ədtu ka-bkî w əç-çanṭāt mō-'rəf ayn-ən, lā saḥabtu çanṭāt w lā maddaytu çanṭāt w lā a' rəf ayn arōḥ w lā a' rəf ayn āğî²⁷ w kən- nəḥne hē-gya.*
9. *wallā ṭalla' tu hāk əl-mara w tquł çanṭātken ku-, ku-şaffaytuwən hawne. dîri bālki 'alayən fî sariqāt lā yəsrəquwən. ē, qəltu taba'na-ne? qālət ē. saḥabətən ğəbnāhən 'əndi w qə'ədtu 'ala hāk əd-dīwāne.*
10. *karra ṭalla' na ğā əbn əbni ku-dār mā xalla ğuwwāt hāk əl-mātārāt kəllətən ətrastaq²⁸ 'alayna. fāt 'a-ğəddu gya mā-'rəfu, məşî ki-yse ṭalla' k-ana kē-qē' de 'ad-dīwāne ğā hallaq rōḥu 'alay²⁹ mō-kān arawnî qabəl sane-ze.*
11. *ē, ē, w rāḥ hallaq rōḥu 'alay w bəki mayme, mayme! qəltu abū mayme təkəl rās mayme³⁰ w ğəddo w rōḥ kwāhā³¹ ğəddək, kwāhā ğəddək rōḥ ṭallə' kə-yənkələb, kāmira təlqətu kāmira təlqətu³² tiyxarrəb baytna rōḥ şawbu, rōḥ şawbu!*
12. *qāl hāda ğəddi-we? qəltu ē ğəddək-we. ē, wallā 'ədi layyu hād bəki, w hād bəki w ğaww. w karra əl-Milād pappūku³³ əğā ayn tiyṭaylə' na w ayn mə-yṭaylə' na. yā əmmi mātār əl., abūhu wāqəf ayn w nəḥne ayn.*
13. *w əyṭaylə' na yḥətna f-āk,³⁴ yḥəttən f-awk əl-qītār çanṭātna ma' na w nəḥne yəbrəmna yəbrəmna, yd., kama ydawwərna Dērəke³⁵ kəlla w ynazzəlna wēğə taḥt ṭabaqāt əl-arz kart laxx.³⁶*
14. *kart laxx mən hawnak nərkab fə-wēḥəd laxx kart laxx əyğərna yğərna yğərna nənzal fə-mōza' na ıla aqulki ğīna 'ən-səllam əl..tənəddalla w nərgə' 'ala mōza' əl..'Azîz təy., təyrīna. wəqə' na məl-əğrayn, wəqə' na məl-əğrayn w dəxna w qəlna wallā zə' na.*

²⁴ Cf. Kurdish *xude haya*. The expression means literally “God exists”, meaning that there still are good people in this world.

²⁵ Cf. *ṭələ'* “to go out”.

²⁶ *ku-*, *ki-* and *kwa-* + perfect reflects the meaning of “here, behold, obviously”.

²⁷ The literal meaning of *lā a' rəf ayn arōḥ w lā a' rəf ayn āğî* is “I don't know where to go or where to come”, which means “I am totally lost, confused, disoriented”.

²⁸ Cf. *rastaqa* “to arrange well, put in order”.

²⁹ The expression *ğā hallaq rōḥu 'alay* means literally “he came and threw himself on me”. This is a way of saying, that a meeting between, for example, two people is very dear.

³⁰ The expression *təkəl rās mayme* means literally “you eat grandmother's head”, meaning “may God reject grandmother”.

³¹ *kwā + hā < hāk* “there he is”.

³² Cf. *təlqətu* “catch him”.

³³ Kurdish expression meaning “poor, naive”.

³⁴ Relative pronouns remote deixis 3.m.sg. *hāk*, 3.f.sg. *hawk*, cf. Wittrich 2001, 38. With the preposition *f-*: *f-āk* “in that”, *f-awk* “in those”.

³⁵ Kurdish pronunciation of Dērîk.

³⁶ *kart laxx* or *katt laxx* “another time, once more”. Cf. *karra* “once” where the /r/ shifts to /t/ due to regressive assimilation.

15. *ē qāl xwa ġaddo w mayme wqafu hawne abūy w ana tanzal aqūl šā bāba* ‘Azīz ana ka-‘raf halla ayš ki-ysawī³⁷ ‘alay. *ē walla nəzəl, nəzəl rāh u ʔalla* ‘na walla ku-, ku-ġā. *be-ašqad*³⁸ *abūhu sabbu-ze, kā-tiyxabbər əl-pōlis-ze* ‘alayu. *yqūl ya* ‘ni əbni əl..., nkamaš.
16. *ē, walla nəzəlna w karra čāx əl-*‘Azīz *əš-šāfna w ġann. ē yā bāba ē mal-mīrāt nēs yəqta* ‘fə-ʔiyyārət *Mālta w yəq* ‘ad sətt sā ‘āt fə-Mālta w *znūka yəʔla* ‘yəġi. *kərmāl ayš, hal-arba* ‘tālāf waraqa arxas məl-lay *Sūriyya.*
17. *əl-muhəm bahdalū hawnak, sawawlu bahdale-ze u rəhna. rəhna* ‘al-bayt. *walla rəhna qəddēmūt bayt Šāmu əl-Baytār, ē qrayyb-we* ‘al-māʔtār, *bayt əxti.*
18. *walla kū-rabaʔ xārūf hal-qadd*³⁹ *u kū-qəddēmūtna kəllətən w fī almāniyye fōq əl-*‘ašš byūt *kə-yəʔfarraġūn* ‘alayən, *ya* ‘ni ayš, *ayš mnāsabe haš-šī, ē ayš mnāsabe ya* ‘ne mənə kū-ġālən *haš-šī ki-ysawawu. l-xārūf f-īd Šāmo, f-īd zawġ əxti.*
19. *walla rəhna w karra əxti halhalət u kū-məšyu mən hawn w ayn balgi*⁴⁰ *bayt qarībna Babbo b* ‘īd mən ‘al-bayt w *kī, kənt-qəddēmūtna. w karra waxt əš-šāfūna yādē*⁴¹ *ašš*⁴² *zahme*⁴³ *b-aʔla. hal-bəka w ha-lli kā.*
20. *w rəhna karra Šamo əl-Baytār zabaḥ əl-xārūf qəddā ġrayna w qām u ġaladu qaʔta* ‘u w *haʔtu* ‘an-nār. *haʔtu* ‘an-nār *kə-yəġlīyu w ykəbbu l-mayy kə-yəġlawu ykəbbu l-may.*
21. *warkən bayt abūkən xərəb qayy ašš wəhət ʔa* ‘mət laḥme? *qāl nəhne hawne gya nsē. qəltu ašš təhkaw?* *qāl ... xams sətt karrāt ġəli hāk əl-laḥəm w maššāhu,*⁴⁴ *ē, u maššāhu walla mbadālki yḥəʔtī maʔay məl-ḥanaʔiyye* ‘alayu w *tāni marra yḥəʔtu yəġli katt laxx əymaššiyu.*
22. *yqūl mō əs-, samne mə-yiṣlahəlna. qəltu abūy nəhne xallawu, xallaw samnətu fīyu. nəhne m* ‘allamīn *samne abūy, walla aʔ-ʔaraʔ gā nəkəlu.*
23. *əl-muhəm qəmna ʔabaxūlna tġaddayna w uw... w bayt* ‘Azīz *baqa šāru fōq əl-īlētīn siyyāra ḥawl əš-šəqqa taba* ‘ən. *b* ‘ād-ənn *ətlatt sā* ‘āt mən bayt *Xātūn.*
24. *u Šabāḥ martu təḥki, yā* ‘Azīz *əntammaytu, yā* ‘Azīz *əl-*‘ālam *ənqala* ‘ət mən *əṣ-šəbəḥ kənnən fə-byūtna qayy ə..., walla xāləti mā xallat nəġi.*
25. *walla tġaddayna w rəkəbna siyyārātna w yalla rəhna* ‘al-bayt. *rəhna* ‘al-bayt *yā əxti w karra* ‘abbatəlki *tašʔ rāḥa u karamella u mlabbas mā kū-šī ganē* ‘abbatəlki *hək lagan, nəhne nqullu lagan.*
26. *u karra mən* ‘al-baranda *ətrəšš* ‘alayna. *haw k l-almāniyye kəllən ʔal* ‘aw *sā xalaw...čāx əl-araw wəčči w arawnī qālu hāy..., hal-karamella* ‘ala *rās hāye kū-trəšša w araw lay ləna ġawfu gya w maxīru hal-qadd.*

³⁷ *ku-, ki- kwa-* + imperfect denotes the actual present.

³⁸ *be-* indirect question. The particle is often followed by an interrogative. This particle is also used in Tūrōyo, cf. Jastrow 2002, 43.

³⁹ When using the expression *hal-qadd* the speaker normally makes a gesture.

⁴⁰ Cf. Turkish *belki* “perhaps, maybe”.

⁴¹ Cf. Kurdish *yāde* “mother”. In a speech the expression may also mean “dear, oh dear, oh God”.

⁴² *ašš ~ ayš* < **ayšin* < ‘*ayyu šay*’ in. This interrogative is transcribed as *aš* in Wittrich 2001, 41.

⁴³ Cf. Turkish *zahmet* “difficult”.

⁴⁴ *mašša – ymašši* “to soak, absorb”.

27. *ē, w araw taba' na-ze⁴⁵ wēḡa xətiyār u maxīru fiyu hal-qadd u, u kəšš hal-qadd. ē, hal-l-əlmāniyye hama⁴⁶ baqaw hēk, baqaw yətfarraḡū. walla daxalna ḡuwwa.*
28. *daxalna ḡuwwa qalna hal-karra-ze k-wəṣəlna b-salāme hama kayfən.⁴⁷ walla bəqīna ḡuwwa yā əxti. kəl-yawm ē yawm lā⁴⁸ tiy'abbawn əs-siyyārāt təyinzalūn 'a-qawf⁴⁹, hawnak əyqulūlu qawf.*
29. *nəḡne nqəllən dakəkīn hawne, hawnak əyqulūlu qawf. qālu mō tḡayn ma' na? qəltu lā yāde walla mō-ḡi ma' kən. qālu xwade bəntna ləz-zḡayre təbqa 'əndki w nəḡne tənrrōḡ.*
30. *qāmu xallawa 'əndi. xallawa 'əndi, ē, mō tə'rafni əl-bənt. azḡar-iyy mən Lahḡūd. tətəbki arōḡ sawba təbki. qāluli ḡbəxi. aṡallə' ḡāzən nār mā fiyu.*
31. *aṡtaḡ hal-mafetīḡ aṡtaḡ w mā aṡtaḡ⁵⁰ asey əl..., əl-qəddāḡa hēk asey əl-kabrīte hē..., qəddāḡəti taba' əs-saḡāyər asey w mā asey mā fi nār.*
32. *qəltu wī ḡaṡṡaytu w bəkītu. qəltu nār mā ləḡən u ku-qāluli ḡbəxi w halla təysīrūn 'as-siyyārāt qədde⁵¹ l-bāb ana ašš taṡa' 'əmən?*
33. *qəmtu mən ḡarīq qalbi,⁵² əngī kū-bəkītu qataltu hāk əl-bənt mən ṡarbān, qataltuwa mən ṡarba ša' altu əs-saḡāra, u maḡšūm mən wəčkī⁵³ kən-wassaxət, qəltūla tāni marra twasxīn fə-ḡālkī w awaddi əs-saḡāra sawba w yaaaa..., w awaddi əs-saḡāra sawba w yaaa..., ḡannantwa.*
34. *qəltu kama əl-ḡaraq qalbi taḡrəq qalbən. walla ṡalla' tu yā əmmi əs-sā' a tnaḡn ṡārət tlāte la le le 'Azīzna kū-ḡāb əbən Dā' ude Matto u bayt abū Nada u ṡārulki 'ašš ətna' š səyyāra, ta'aw əmmi ṡabəx Sūriyya kū-ṡabaxətəlna.*
35. *qāluli ḡaṡbəxi w ḡaṡbəxi yəḡawn əyṡal' ūn la kama l-ḡaṡṡaytu əṡ-ṡanāḡər, ḡaṡṡaytu l-may 'alayən kəde⁵⁴ knā⁵⁵ ḡamāde. qāl əmmi ayn uww əl-akəl? qəltu abūy ayn iyy nārəkən? qulūli! ma-rmāde fə-rāskən⁵⁶ w rās ḡayātkən. mō ḡāz əss⁵⁷ mālkən. warkī əmmi ayšlon mō kən-'ayyənāhu, ya' nē ša' alnaw. qəltu ašš qadd əl-ka-aṡṡallə' ganē nār mākū.*

⁴⁵ *taba'* is the genitive exponent used in Syrian Arabic. Cf. Lahdo 2000, 64.

⁴⁶ Cf. Turkish *hemen* “right now”.

⁴⁷ *hama kayfən* “here: the rest does not matter”. *kayfən* < *kayf* “state, condition, good mood” + *ən* which is the suffixed possessive pronoun for 3.c.pl.

⁴⁸ *yawm ē yawm lā* “every second day; literally: one day yes one day no”.

⁴⁹ Cf. German *kauf* “store”.

⁵⁰ A way of putting emphasis on something said is to repeat it with a *mā* in-between, *aṡtaḡ w mā aṡtaḡ* “I really try to open”; *asey w mā asey* “I really try to do”; *ayn tiyṡaylə'na w ayn mə-yṡaylə'na* “how is he really going to be able to take us out”.

⁵¹ A short form of *qəddām* “in front of”.

⁵² The expression *mən ḡarīq qalbi* or *mən ḡarqət qalbi* means literally “of the burning of my heart” meaning “because of what I have been through; because of the suffering I have gone through”. But *ḡaraq qalbi* ‘*alayu* means “I felt sorry for him”.

⁵³ The literal meaning of *maḡšūm mən wəčkī* is “may you be spared from witnessing or hearing this”. Cf. the root *ḡāš'a* “to exclude”. The expression is used when someone is mentioning something “dirty”, for example shoes, toilets, etc.

⁵⁴ Demonstrative adverb “thus, this way”. Cf. Mardin Arabic *kəde*, Vocke and Waldner 1982, 363. Cf. also Tillo Arabic *əke*, Lahdo 2009, 80.

⁵⁵ Demonstrative copula “here they are”. Cf. Wittrich 2001, 137.

⁵⁶ *rmāde fə-rāskən* means literally “ash(es) in your head”. The expression is a kind of chastisement. It is used to express dissatisfaction.

⁵⁷ Cf. *ləssa'* < *li-ḡāḡiḡi s-sā'a* “still, yet”.

37. *qəmtu gā lə'əbtu fəl-mafētiḥ. ənṭafa ma'ī. w'alla mbadālki⁵⁸ baqaw bala akəl. w karra rāḥ ḡāb martu məl ma' am, ta'ama qatle-s, w qə'dət sawatəlna vēḡa⁵⁹ akəl əl-pappūke u hal-qadd d̄yūf kəllən 'ənna.*
38. *hāk əl-bənt yā əxti ənqaṭa'ət mā wassaxət. mā wassaxət, kəll yawm, kəll yawm, kəll yawm əbrās əwlādi⁶⁰ kartōnət əḥfāzāt ḥāzrīn ıla dēri yawm əs-şəbəḥ mā kān ... 'Azīz ḥass 'alay.*
39. *ḥass yawm yawmayn tlāte, qāl şabāḥ, qālət ayş, qāl tə'rafīn ḥaqq hal-əḥfāqāt⁶¹ lāzəm təḡma'iyən la-əmmi, hadōl tə'tayən la əmmi, təytəylə'ni mət-tahtēniyyāt, ya' nē tayşūf aşş sawaytūla.*
40. *qəltu lā, lā mənnətək w əl-xara, mō rīdən. lā txallawa 'ala eviyyati⁶² w mō rīdən. qāl mō kya kū-qaṭa'tiya məl-wasax əss. nəḥne mā baqa twassəx yā əmmi, layş təz'ali. yābū kəll yawm, kəll yawm ḥaqq hal-'əlbət əl-əḥfāzāt əlki, la-dəxxānki. hāy baxşış əlki alf mabrūk.*
41. *ē, tallatū kū-natḡadda kū-şərab lətər wīski-ye be-ayş kəl-ḥatṭa 'at-tāwle şərabə xallaşə ḥaşşu ḡā r-rāsu,⁶³ yqūl əmmi ta'ay qadi⁶⁴ hawn 'əndi. qə'ədtu 'əndu. qə'ədtu gya saḥabni bās rāsi ki-yqūl idi 'ala rāski, qulīli aşş sawayti la-Ḥanān?*
42. *qəltu aşş sawaytu la-Ḥanān abūy? hā?⁶⁵ mā ḡanaytūkən? kəl yawm 'əlbət əḥfāzāt mā ka-yrūḥəlkən? mən yawm əḡ-ḡītu hāy araytən əḥfāz? ḡəbtən əḥfāz?*
43. *wallā brāsək şī əḡ-ḡā mənnī fə-zarbāt mā, mā təqtu 'alaya. hama şa'altu əs-səḡāra awaddiya şawb īdaya, awaddiya şawb əḡraya, şawb tīza w hiyye 'ay, 'ay, 'ay.*
44. *qāl hama brāsī mō-'tiya fə-sab'ətən əwlādi,⁶⁶ bass ya'tiki əl-'āfyə bass yşība şī ḡayr əmmi Jūlo mō qəlla. wēḡa mō rāsa zḡayyər kān, kamā ley-lī kā-yqūl hāye əmmi-ye. bōş kā-yḥəbba. nəḥne kān fallatət nār fəl-bayt mā kā-yfəb...,*
45. *qāl əbrāsi əmmi yşībi şī ya'ni mō şfālki bass mən tərəf əl-wēḥəd əş..., wallā addabtiya. ē, wallāḥi şār arba' miyye u xamsīn mark ma'i ḥaqq əḥfāzāt fə-hāk əş-şahər ıla ḡītu, b-hal..., b-hāk əl-'adra.⁶⁷*
46. *ē, wallāḥi qəmna idā⁶⁸ bəqīna şahər hawnak w qəmna ḡīna katt laxx w ya'tiki əl-'āfyə.*

⁵⁸ The literal meaning of *'alla mbadālki* is “may it be God instead of you”, meaning I would say the same thing even if it was God sitting here with me instead of you, meaning I am telling the truth.

⁵⁹ Cf. Kurdish *vēca* “now”.

⁶⁰ The literal meaning of *əbrās əwlādi* is “on my children’s head”. By swearing on children’s head you assure someone that you are telling the absolute truth. One may also find *brāsi* (paragraph 44), *brāsək* (paragraph 43) “I swear on my head, your head”. Another expression using the “head” is *īdi 'ala rāski* (paragraph 41) “I put, rest my hand on your head” which means “I ask you to tell the truth”.

⁶¹ The forms *ḥfāqāt* and *ḥfāzāt* “napkins” occur in the same text. *ḥfāqāt* is the Syrian Arabic pronunciation.

⁶² Cf. Kurdish *hēvī* “hope, trust”.

⁶³ The literal meaning of *ḥaşşu ḡā r-rāsu* is “his sense came back to him” meaning he is calm and rational.

⁶⁴ Cf. *q'adi* “sit down”.

⁶⁵ *aşş sawaytu la-Ḥanān abūy? hā?* This is a common way of asking a question with emphasis. Instead of repeating the question twice, one adds a *hā?* “what” often in somewhat angry tone.

⁶⁶ This is a way of expressing “my seven children or the seven children of mine”. Another way of expressing the same is: *wlādi əs-sab'a* “my seven children”.

⁶⁷ The form *'azra* “the Virgin Mary” is expected here.

⁶⁸ *iza* is expected here. The different pronunciation is, most likely, caused by influence from Syrian Arabic.

Translation

1. The father (of my children) goes to Damascus and buys flight tickets for us. He books a flight for us to Malta. Damn you, what is the difference (in price)? It is all three or four thousand pounds. He doesn't know (better), so they book it for him so that we travel via Malta. We will have to sit and wait six hours at the airport before our aircraft takes off and flies to Germany.
2. And Aziz (the son that lives in Germany) thinks that we have bought tickets for a trip from the airport in Syria to Germany, a direct flight. He doesn't know that we will have to wait six hours (on the way). So they left in the morning to meet us (at the airport in Germany) while we left (Damascus) to sit (and wait) in Malta.
3. So as I told you,⁶⁹ a lady from, from a place, Egypt, isn't it Egypt? She came to us. She came and sat next to me and asked me: Where are you from? I said: From near Turkey, from the shores of the big water.⁷⁰ She was happy to hear that.
4. She said: Do you have a telephone? I said: Yes, I have a telephone. She said: Give me your telephone number. I called upon Hanna and said: Hanna, give her our telephone number. She also gave us hers. She said: when I land I will talk to you.
5. And so we boarded the aircraft to Germany. We left for Germany and she stayed (as) a friend with us up to two hours at the airport. Our children (on the other hand) are searching for us while we are ... and when Hanna stretches his arms and lets out that sound you would surely say it is an ambulance.⁷¹
6. I tell him: be quiet you disreputable person! Didn't they tell us that there are hidden cameras (that register everything)? When getting off (the aircraft), do it casually! Do not look around and do not ... Oh Hanna you disgraced us. Bassam (Aziz's son), on the other hand, will find us no matter where we are. We should be there any moment. They should come to us any moment. He should be here any second and welcome us. But he (Hanna) got totally mad.
7. We remained more than three or four hours like that. We called, thank God, that lady phoned to our children. She put money (in the telephone booth) and talked to Fahima (Aziz's wife), Aziz and all of them. They said that they went out to meet us at nine o'clock in the morning.
8. And now it is four in the afternoon and we are still at the airport. By God, until the day I die I will not forget that day. And so they, I sat down and started crying. I do not know where our bags are. I didn't pick them up from anywhere. I am totally disoriented. And here we are in such a situation.
9. Then, all of a sudden that lady says: I have lined up your bags here; watch them so no one may steal them, since there is actually thievery here. I asked if the bags were ours and she said: yes. She had pulled them for us and we brought them close to me and I sat on a bench.

⁶⁹ The informant is referring to an earlier conversation.

⁷⁰ Referring to Tigris River.

⁷¹ The informant is referring to her husband's behavior when he gets angry.

- 10 From nowhere we saw my grandchild showing up. He had looked for us in every corner of those airports until he found us. He passed his grandfather without recognizing him. He passed him looking around and saw me sitting on the bench. He came and hugged me. They had seen me one year earlier.
11. So he came and hugged me and cried grandmother, grandmother. I said: may God reject grandmother, may God take grandmother and grandfather. Go to your grandfather, there he is, there he is. Take care of him! He is becoming a wild animal. I am just afraid that a camera may catch him and he will destroy everything for us. Go to him, go to him!
12. He said: is this my grandfather? I said: yes, he is your grandfather. So he runs to him and he cried and the other one cried too and so the others came. So poor Milad (another son of Aziz), he came and wanted to take us out of the airport. God it is a huge airport, his (Milad's) father is waiting somewhere and we are somewhere else.
13. He takes us out and puts us in that, in those trains. Our bags are with us and we walk around and around, as if he is making us go all around Derik, and after that he takes us down under the levels of earth again.⁷²
14. Once again from there we get on another one (train) that drives us on and on and on until we get off in another place until, as I tell you, we came close to the stairs where Aziz will meet us. We were so tired, totally finished, and thought that for sure we are lost.
15. So he said: grandfather and grandmother, you stay here while I go down to daddy Aziz. I know now what he thinks of me. He went down. He went down and then we saw that he came back. His father was obviously swearing at him and was about to notify the police about him, since the father must have thought "my son must have been taken by the police".⁷³
16. So we went down and imagine how mad Aziz became when he saw us. Oh father, have you ever seen anyone (on his way from Syria to Germany) fly via Malta and wait six hours in Malta and first after that continue? And what for, because it is four thousand pounds cheaper than Syrian airlines?
17. Nevertheless, they humiliated him there, they showed him up and we left. We went home. We arrived in front of Samo Baytar's house since it is near the airport. My sister's house, so to speak.
18. He (Samo) had obviously tied up a lamb this big in front of us all. There were also more than ten German families watching us. They were wondering what the purpose of this is, what the special occasion for this is. Who is arriving to do all this? Samo, my brother in law is holding the sheep.
19. So we came there and all of a sudden my sister let out a joyful sound.⁷⁴ They started walking from here to, maybe as far as to our relative Babbo,⁷⁵ and all of them walking in front of us. But imagine when they saw us, God how hard it is, imagine all the crying.

⁷² The woman is obviously, not familiar with the underground system at airports, train stations, etc.

⁷³ The informant probably means that the father must have thought his son had lost his way, since he was gone for a long time.

⁷⁴ *halhal* is a sound that normally women make. It is often used at weddings and on joyful occasions but sometimes also at funerals, especially when the deceased is a young person.

⁷⁵ This is a way to approximate a distance "from here all the way to ...".

20. When we arrived, Samo Baytar slaughtered the lamb before us. He flayed it, chopped it and put it on the stove. He put it on the stove and started boiling it. When the meat was boiling he poured out the water and changed it. He repeated this action a couple of times.
21. Damn it, you are destroying the taste of the meat! He said: we are used to doing it this way here. I said: what are you talking about? He said ... that meat was boiled five or six times and each time he was pouring out the water and again putting new water from the tap on it and letting it boil again and thereafter pouring out the water again.
22. He says: the fat is not good for us. I said: dear, let it be! Let its fat be! We are used to fat, dear. We eat everything.
23. Anyhow, they cooked for us and we had lunch. And now at Aziz's place there were more than thirty cars around their apartment (waiting for us). They live almost three hours driving from where Xatun (my sister) lives.
24. And Sabah, his wife says: oh Aziz, I am totally finished, oh Aziz all these people have been waiting here since the morning, why ... By God, he says: my aunt didn't let us leave (without lunch).
25. We had lunch and we got into the cars and left home (to Aziz). We came there and you should have seen (this scene), she had filled a whole washing bowl with Turkish delight and caramels and candies and lots of other sweets. She had filled such a washing bowl, we say washing bowl.
26. And then from the balcony she throws (the sweets) over us.⁷⁶ All those Germans were watching and when they saw my face and saw me, they said: this is it? You are throwing all these sweets on this one's head? They also saw my company (the husband) with his (big) stomach and his big nose.
27. So they saw my husband, old as he was and with a big nose and a big stomach. The Germans were shocked, they stared at us. So we went in (laughter).
28. We went in and said: (thank God) also this time we arrived in peace and the rest is not a big deal. We remained inside. Every second day they have to fill the car and leave for the Kauf, there they call it Kauf.
29. We say shops here but there they call them Kauf. They asked me: don't you want to come with us? I said: no dear, I won't come with you. They said: then could we leave our youngest daughter with you while we are gone?
30. So they left her with me. They left her with me but she doesn't know me. She is younger than Lahhud. She cries. Every time I come close to her she cries. They also told me to cook for them. I look at the stove and I see no fire in it.
31. I turn the knobs (of the stove) and no matter what I try (no use). I tried the lighter and the matches, my cigarette lighter, no fire whatsoever.
32. I felt bad and started crying. I thought: they don't have fire and they asked me to cook for them. Soon they will arrive with their cars in front of the door and what will I feed them?

⁷⁶ Throwing sweets on someone is a way to show a warm welcome.

33. Since I was so sad and since I cried a lot I slapped that (little) girl. I slapped her and I lit a cigarette; she had, sorry to say, done it. I said to her: if you dare do it again, and I point the cigarette at her and draw it closer while in the meantime she cries; I point the cigarette at her and draw it closer while in the meantime she cries. I drove her crazy.
34. I said to myself: the same way they made me sad I will make them sad. So, it became 2 o'clock, 3 o'clock, and Aziz shows up with Daoud Matto's son, and Abu the Nada's, and there were about ten to twelve cars. (Aziz must have) told them: come home with me, my mother has prepared Syrian food for us.
35. They had told me, come and cook for us, cook for us and when they came back they saw that the cooking pots were still exactly the same way I put them on the stove with cold water in them. They asked: mother, where is the food?
36. I answered: dear, where is your fire? Tell me! Damn you all and damn your life. You still don't have a stove! But mother, how? Haven't we preset (the stove), turned it on? I said: no matter how much I looked there was no fire.
37. Obviously when I turned the knobs I switched it off. I switched it off. God may be my witness, they remained without food. But then all of a sudden he (Aziz) brought his wife from the restaurant and beat her up. She prepared food for us, poor her, so many guests we had too.
38. That baby girl stopped doing it (in the diapers). She didn't do it (any more). Every day, every day, every day, I swear to God, a whole package of diapers was finished before the next morning. Aziz obviously knew what I had done.
39. He felt it after one day, two days, three days. He called: Sabah! She said: yes. He said: you will collect the money that these diapers cost and give it to my mother. These you will give to my mother. You will give it to her from the hidden (saved) money. Here he wanted to see if I would react and say what I had done to her (the little girl).
40. I said no, no. I don't want to have your shit money. I don't want it. Just don't leave her in my trust and I don't want it. He said: but you have helped to stop doing it in the diapers and she is not doing it anymore. Why do you get angry, oh mother? So (it is just fair) that whatever this package of diapers cost every day, every day should be yours, for your cigarettes. It is a gift for you, congratulations.
41. I noticed, while having lunch, he drank a liter of whisky or whatever it was, he had put it on the table and drank it all. After that he felt relaxed, he said: mother, come and sit here beside me. I sat beside him. When I sat down he pulled me and kissed my (fore)head saying, please tell me, what did you do to Hanan (the little girl)?
42. I said: dear, What did I do to Hanan? Tell me! Haven't I made you rich? Didn't you use a package of diapers every day? Have you seen a diaper since I came to you? Have you bought a diaper (since that day)?
43. I swear on your head, I slapped her as much as I could until it didn't help. After that I took the cigarette and drew it towards her hands, towards her feet, towards her butt and she cried ouch, ouch, ouch.

44. He said: I swear on my head, she is worth more to me than all my seven children. Thank you, but if anything happens to her I will just call her mother Julo. Since she had a small head just like mine, he used to say “this is my mother”. He loved her much. Even if she would have set the whole house on fire he wouldn’t have ...
45. He said: I swear on my head, mother, if anything (bad) happens to her I will never forgive you. But on the other hand you lectured her. So I had four hundred fifty marks, from the savings of the diapers that month until I came back. I swear on this, that Virgin Mary.⁷⁷
46. So we stayed about a month there and after that we came back once again and thank you.

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⁷⁷ The informant wanted obviously to point at an icon of Virgin Mary while talking.