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## **Agricultural Life as reflected in the Arabic Terminology of the Transjordanian Area of as-Salṭ at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century, Based on an Arab Christian Informant of Gustaf Dalman**

Farah Ḥabīb Tābri<sup>1</sup> wrote fifty-nine letters, numbering hundreds of pages, to the German famous scholar Gustaf Dalman (1855-1941)<sup>2</sup> who was a theologian and orientalist, over five years, from July 1900 (September 8, 1900<sup>3</sup>) until December 28, 1905. The letters were written mainly in German in the *Kurrent* cursive script that was common at the time, but also in Arabic. Most of Tābri's letters are answers to Dalman's questions in letters that were not found until

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<sup>1</sup> Hence Tābri as it is articulated in the colloquial dialect and not as a transcription for Classical Arabic.

<sup>2</sup> See Julia Männchen, *Gustaf Dalman als Palästinawissenschaftler in Jerusalem und Greifswald, 1902–1941*. (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz, 1993) and Julia Männchen, *Das Herz zieht nach Jerusalem: Gustaf Dalman zum 150. Geburtstag* Greifswald Univ. Presse- und Informationsstelle, 2005). Gustaf Dalman (June 9, 1855–August 19, 1941) was a German Lutheran theologian and orientalist. He is considered one of the most productive researchers of Palestinian dialects and culture based on extensive fieldwork before World War 1, collecting inscriptions, poetry and proverbs. His most prominent and enduring work is *Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina* (Gütersloh: Druck und Verlag von C. Bertelsmann, 1939). See Aharon Geva-Kleinberger and Jonathan Reich, “Tawfiq Canaans Briefe an Gustaf Dalman als linguistische Quelle für das Palästinensisch-Arabisches”, *Zeitschrift des Deutschen Palästina-Vereins* 133, 2 (2017), pp. 205-236.

<sup>3</sup> This is the first letter that we have, yet Tābri mentions a previous letter from July of the same year.

now, but some of the letters seem to be written at Tābri's initiative, due to historical events and from personal motives.<sup>4</sup>

Any information that is known of this person has been gleaned from the numerous letters that he wrote to the German scholar and that was recorded in a notebook by the latter.<sup>5</sup> Thus, we can understand that Tābri, a teacher, was a Christian from the Transjordanian city of as-Salt and was active in the local church. According to a letter dated January 7, 1901, Tābri had a wife named Mīryam and five children: a son named Salīm, born in 1886 and who studied at Zion-School in Jerusalem (therefore Farah Tābri was nicknamed Abû-Salīm, which is the reason that this son is mentioned before the daughter); the eldest child Luise, born in 1884 who studied at the Syrian Orphan House; another daughter Mathilde born in 1890; a third daughter named Farīde born in 1893, and the youngest son Farīd born in 1896.<sup>6</sup> Tābri also mentions a priest called Abû-Ḥâtūm.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> I have tried to find contemporary information on Farah Tābri without any success. The Tābri family is also found in the city of Nazareth.

<sup>5</sup> Dalman, *Palästänischer Diwan*, viii: "Grosse Verdienste um die Erklärung der Lieder sowohl wie um die Vollständigkeit meiner Sammlung hat sich der dortige Lehre Farah Tābri erworben, welcher noch nachträglich diesen ganzen Winter hindurch mit aufopfernder Hingabe bemüht gewesen ist, durch Nachfrage bei Bauern und Beduinen und eingehende Mitteilungen der mir aufgestoßenen Lücken meines Wissens abzufüllen. Er hat schliesslich auch eine Durchsicht einiger Aushängebogen dieses Buch vollzogen, deren Ergebnis am Schlusse des Werkes mitgeteilt wird. Diesen Werten Freunde auf dem Gebirge Gilead sei es wärmster Dank gesagt. See also George Farīd Ṭarīf Da'ūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġimarība 1864–1921* (Amman and Its Vicinity). (Amman: NP, 1994), pp. 221–227: there were three Christian communities in as-Salt: Roman Orthodox, Protestant and Latin. This book does not mention family Tābri as one of the most important Christian families in as-Salt during the last years of the nineteenth century (the Ottoman Period). Also, Hānī al-ʿAmad, *As-Salt: Malamiḥ min al-Ḥayātī Yawmiyya li-lMadīna min khalāl Siġġil il-Baladiyya li-lsana 1927m* (as-Salt: Daily Life of the City through the Municipality's Siġġil of 1927) (Amman: Ġamʿiyyat ʿUmmāl al-Maṭābiʿ al-Taʿāwuniyya, 2001) does not mention family Tābri in as-Salt at all.

<sup>6</sup> In a letter dated November 24, 1900, Tābri mentions the number of his children, placing the sons before the daughters: "...wir alle ich meine Frau u. Meine 5 Kinder 2 Knaben u. 3 Maedchen sind alle Gottlob u. Dank wohl u. Gesund u. Lassen Euch herzlich gruessen u. Wuenschen u. Hoffen dass ihr immer in guter Gesundheit bleiben moechtet?" (We all, I mean my wife and 5 children: 2 boys and 3 daughters, are thank God fine and healthy and we send you regards and wishes and we hope that you will always be in good health). On May 29, 1901, Tābri describes a journey (Schammat Haua هواسمة [sic]) his family takes to Wādi lʿAzrak (Wadin elazrag) near as-Salt to visit a friend named Dr. Ibrāhīm Ṣalībi. Tābri vividly describes how his children enjoyed bathing in the little river there.

<sup>7</sup> In a letter dated September 8, 1900, Tābri also mentions another priest named Nicola and the family of Yūsif al-Kbāsi, who send Dalman their best regards. In a letter dated January 7, 1901, other families from as-Salt send Dalman their regards and from here we can understand that Dalman had apparently previously visited this Transjordanian city.

In many letters, Tābri answers Dalman's questions, first stating the question then providing the answer. Over time, Tābri becomes more creative and imaginative and writes at length, relating local customs and describing in detail various botanical species, especially fruits and vegetables, apparently in response to Dalman's questions which are later not always mentioned.

In three of Tābri's letters to Dalman (two from 1900 and one from 1902), we find data regarding agricultural life in Transjordan, mainly in the area of his home, as-Salt, which was populated by many Arab Christians. Some other letters indirectly contain some data on agricultural life, while describing local poetry. These three letters, on which I would like to focus in this article, are mainly answers to Dalman's questions in this field. It is interesting that Dalman inserts his question about agricultural life within questions about the political life of the area in the late Ottoman period of the region. It seems that he chose a strategic way to raise these sensitive questions as, aside from his work as a famous university scholar, he was also active in reading aerial photographs for the Prussian army.<sup>8</sup>

In this article, I would like to concentrate on Tābri's linguistic contribution, based on his local Arabic dialect.<sup>9</sup> This valuable information casts light also on the agricultural life of Transjordan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Tābri ascribes importance to dialectological differences between the local dialects. He often divides the dialects of Greater Syria into three main groups: the dialects of the Fellahin, the dialects of the Bedouin and the dialect of the city speakers. In the field of agriculture, he naturally focuses on the first two groups. It is noteworthy that Tābri's own dialects, although he was Christian, tend to be more Bedouin in nature, a phenomenon that can be still traced in Modern Jordan where we can still find Christian Bedouins, a rare phenomenon.

### *The Corpus*

#### *Letter, dated September 8, 1900*

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<sup>8</sup> Gustaf Dalman, *Hundert deutsche Fliegerbilder aus Palästina*. Schriften des Deutschen Palästina-Instituts; 2. Schriften des Deutschen Palästina-Instituts. (Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1925). This work was mainly written during the years 1917–1918 (see Vorwort).

<sup>9</sup> See more in Heikki Palva, "Negation in the dialect of as-Salt, Jordan", in Martine Haak, Rudolf de Jong & Kees Versteegh (ed.), *Approaches to Arabic Dialects: A Collection of Articles Presented to Manfred Woidich on the Occasion of His Sixtieth Birthday* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), pp. 221-236.

After asking Tābri questions regarding the administration of the city of as-Salt,<sup>10</sup> Dalman dedicates his next questions to the domain of agriculture. In his second question, Dalman concentrates on field crops, barley and fodder in the area of as-Salt.<sup>11</sup> Tābri begins his answer on this geographical area<sup>12</sup> by saying that “green fodder” is called *قصيلة* in the local dialect; he backs up this word also using phonetic transcription.<sup>13</sup> Tābri adds that the fodder is only sown from barley and very seldom also fed to the cows from a kind of pea called *جلبانة*.<sup>14</sup> He adds that this kind of pea is never sown in a small vegetable garden, which is called *حاكورة*.<sup>15</sup> Tābri explains this lexeme in a linguistic way, giving its singular and plural form *حواكير*, and clarifies that this vegetable garden is near the house and not in the field itself.<sup>16</sup> Tābri expands his information adding that in the area of Damascus there is another sort which is sown and called there *فصة*; it is believed there that it may increase the production of cow’s milk.<sup>17</sup>

Dalman’s third question is in the domain of raised-bed gardening. He asks which sorts of vegetables are grown there with water supply, and inquires about the local terminology for “furrow”.<sup>18</sup> Tābri answers that in such raised-bed gardening the local Fellahin sow the following vegetables: tomatoes (*Banadora بندورة*),<sup>19</sup> white turnip (*لفت* *weise Rueben*), carrots

<sup>10</sup> Die 1 Frage, wie ist die Verfassung einer Stadt wie Essalt? (sic), Den Frage wer leitet die Stadt? Dann die Frage wer waehlt die Staedtische Behoerde?

<sup>11</sup> Frage wie heist (sic) ein Feld Gerste dass man als Gruenfutter betimmt nicht um die koerner zu bekommen? U. was fuer Kraeuter saet man zu diesem Zweck?

<sup>12</sup> In *Salt* u. Umgegend. See more geographical details in Da’ūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, pp. 27–33. On meteorological data in the area of as-Salt see Da’ūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, pp. 80–90. The area of as-Salt receives an annual precipitation of more than 600 mm of rain and can thus do well agriculturally, especially for apples, as its altitude is 900–1090 mm above sea level. See Da’ūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, pp. 31–33.

<sup>13</sup> Kasiele. It seems that Dalman himself had given Tābri some lessons in transcription in order to help him in his research, yet Tābri is not fully accurate in writing it correctly. Cf. Adrien Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français, Dialects de Syrie: Alep, Damas, Liban, Jérusalem* (Paris: Librairie Orientaliste Paul Geuthner, 1935), p. 664: *qaṣīl* “orge fauché vert”. Tābri’s transcription is not always accurate. It appears in this article as it is.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. *djalbān*, Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 146: n. coll. “gesse cultivée, jarosse, vesce brune assez semblable à la lentille qu’on donne aux moutons et en hiver aux pigeons”.

<sup>15</sup> Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 168: “petit champ contigu à la maison d’habitation, courtil”.

<sup>16</sup> Ein neben das Haus liegendes freies Grundstueck gesaet u. nicht in weite Feldern (sic).

<sup>17</sup> Im Damacus (sic) u. an manchen Oertern (sic) wird in die *Hauakir حواكير* wird noch ein Kraut als Gruenfutter gesaet welches *Fassa فصة* genannt wird u. die Milch von Kuehen u. Schafen vermehren (sic) soll.

<sup>18</sup> 3. Frage was fuer Gemuesse (sic) saet man im Garten in viereckige Beeten auf welche das Wasser geleitet wird u. was in Furchen *تلم*?

<sup>19</sup> He even adds the name in English (*بندورة* tomato). Dialects in Greater Syria defer in the vowels of this lexeme, some articulating it *bandōra*.

(*dschasar* جزر gelbe Rubeen<sup>20</sup>), cabbage (*malfuf* oder *lachane*<sup>21</sup> ملفوف و لحنة Kohl), cauliflower (*Kornabit* Blumenkohl), eggplant (*Bazindschan*<sup>22</sup> باذنجان), okra (*Bamia* باميا), horseradish (*Fidschil* فجل rothe Rettich), green lettuce (gruensalat *Chass* خس), spinach (*Sabanich* سبانخ Spinat) and beetroot (*Silg*), which are called *مسكب* or *مشتل*.<sup>23</sup> Other vegetables such as squash, pumpkin, gourd, cucumber, *faggūs*,<sup>24</sup> *qita*,<sup>25</sup> watermelon and melon<sup>26</sup> are sown directly into furrows which are erected next to water canals *saki*<sup>27</sup> سقي, while the vineyards are grown in a system called *ba'il* بعل, which depends on rain only, a system which is called “dryland farming”.<sup>28</sup>

Letter dated November 24, 1900

This letter begins with Tābri's report about the mysterious disappearance of a postal sack containing a large sum of money from the local government, which was posted from as-Salt to the Transjordanian city of al-Karak. The postman returned with an empty sack crying hysterically that the money had disappeared. Tābri promises Dalman to give him further details the moment he hears. The letter continues with a very meticulous report in response to Dalman's questions in the field of local politics in as-Salt about local personalities, elections, leading families and important functionaries and officials.

The topic of agriculture is inserted only at the end of the letter and is actually a continuation of Tābri's previous answer from the letter dated September 8, 1900. Tābri answers Dalman's

<sup>20</sup> It is also called karrote (sing.) in German.

<sup>21</sup> Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 751: “chou”. || t. (Turkish, *lağana* ou du grec *λάχανα*).

<sup>22</sup> In Palestinian dialects, *baṭinṣān*.

<sup>23</sup> *Masakib* pl., *Maskab* sing. *مسكب* order; *Maschtal* sing., *Maschatil* pl. *مشتل* genannt warden (sic).

<sup>24</sup> Also *faqqūs*. Here Tābri uses a Bedouin phonetic characteristic. It sometimes referred to other Cucurbitaceaevegetables. Cf. Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 617: “petite pastèque qui n'a pas atteint tout son volume”.

<sup>25</sup> Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 638: “sorte de cornichon ou de concombre, ling, mince, et recourbé qui vient en automne”.

<sup>26</sup> Sammen (sic) von *kūsa* كوسى Engl. Squash (*qarāḥ*) قرع Engl. pumpkin (sic) (,) *Iaktin* يقطين Engl. gourd (,) *chjar* خيار Kurgen (sic) u. *Faggūs* فقوس od. *Kitta* (sic) قيتا u. *Battich* بطيخ gruene u. Gelbe Melone (.) diese alle warden ohne *masakib* gleich in Furchen.

<sup>27</sup> Tābri does not transcribe it here with [q].

<sup>28</sup> Dā'ūd, *as-Salt wa-Gimārība 1864–1921*, p. 494. The Canaanite god Ba'al and its worship in Canaan was connected to the regions' dependence on rainfall for its agriculture, unlike Egypt and Mesopotamia, which focused on irrigation from their major rivers.

questions: “Which kinds of vegetables are grown in raised-bed gardening or directly in furrows? Which kinds are left in the raised-bed gardening and not moved elsewhere? What is the [lexeme] name for “furrow” in the local dialect besides *ثلم*?”

Tābri begins his answers by noting that there is no additional word for “furrow” in the local as-Salt dialect except for *ثلم*.<sup>29</sup> He writes that eggplants are first sown in small raised beds and are intensively watered. Raised-bed gardening is always used for vegetables that are never allowed to dry out. Some vegetables are not removed from their locations until they produce seeds. This is the case for parsley (Petersilie *بقدونس bagdonis*<sup>30</sup>), spinach and beetroot, a sort of a long-leaf lettuce,<sup>31</sup> coriander (*كزبرة*)<sup>32</sup> *Kuzbara*. Chive is left until its upper column *قنار البصل*<sup>33</sup> *Kunnar elbasal* produces seeds. Tābri notes that chive seeds are sold in a measurement of weight called *صاع* and definitely not in the measurement of *رطل*.<sup>34</sup> Garlic and lettuce are grown in bigger raised beds and are also used for producing seeds.

The letter proceeds with a new theme of crops. Tābri now introduces Dalman’s questions regarding groves and orchards: “Are pear, apple, peach<sup>35</sup> and quince trees grow in as-Salt? Are they grafted or not? Which sorts can one find there?”<sup>36</sup>

Tābri begins his answers by saying that these sorts of fruits are grown in as-Salt, but only by a limited number of farmers and not so intensively as one can find in the area of Damascus or in other places that are rich with water. Only quince trees are scarce in as-Salt since its farmers tend to fertilize the earth massively and, according to Tābri, this sort of fruit tree does not like heavy fertilizing. Still, he states, there are some quince trees in the area of as-Salt, but they do

<sup>29</sup> Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, 92: “sillon” (French). The use of the Classical Arabic [ʃ] instead of the Urban [ʃ] indicates a rural articulation. The word also appears in Hebrew *חלם*.

<sup>30</sup> Tābri writes it with the allophone /g/ and not /q/ or /ʔ/. This shows again the affinity and similarity of his dialect to Bedouin dialects, although he is Christian. Cf. Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 55; the etymon derives from the Greek *μαχεδωνις* which relates geographically to Macedonia.

<sup>31</sup> Eine art langblaetterige salatartige Gemuese *خس Chass* gruensalat.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. in Palestinian dialect with /s/ *كسيرة*. Tābri transcribes it without a *tāʾ marbūʿa*.

<sup>33</sup> *قنار البصل* is the general name; Tābri gives also the singular and plural forms *are* *قنائر* pl. *قنارة*.

<sup>34</sup> The *صاع* is an ancient measurement of volume from the Islamic world, with cultural and religious significance. The “Sāʾ of the Prophet” (*ṣāʾ an-nabi*) is exactly 4.2125 liters. The measurement of *رطل* differed from area to area. The *رطل* of Aleppo was the same as the *رطل* of Beirut and was 2 kilos and 566 grams. See Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français, Dialects de Syrie*, p. 284.

<sup>35</sup> See Peter Behnstedt and Aharon Geva-Kleinberger, *Atlas of the Arabic Dialects of Galilee (Israel) with Some Data for Adjacent Areas* (Brill: Leiden, 2019), p. 390, map. 182 “peaches”. The variant of the lexeme for “peaches” is in the Galilee region *xāx* and various phonetic reflexes of *دراق* as /*durrāg*/ or /*durrāq*/.

<sup>36</sup> Frage werden Birnen *انجاس Injas* oder *أجاص ajas* Äpfeln *تفاح Tuffa*ج, Pflaumen *خوخ Choch* u. Quitten *سفرجل safarjal* in Salt gezogen? U. werden sie gepfropft oder nicht? U. ihre Arten?

not give much fruit. Nevertheless, there is a sort of marmalade made from quince which is called *Tattli essafar* *تاتلي اسافار*.<sup>37</sup>

As for the pear trees,<sup>38</sup> Tābri notes that they are called *انجاص* in the local dialect of as-Salt, while in written Arabic they are called *اجاص* *اچاس*.<sup>39</sup> As with quince trees, young reeds that grow around an old tree are taken with their root and are then replanted; they flourish well, with or without botanical cutting. Farmers use botanical cuttings if they want to improve the quality of the fruits of all the four mentioned above. Tābri also mentions that there are three sorts of pears in as-Salt:

1. *انجاص ابو حصوه* *injas baladi*<sup>40</sup> is a local type which is also nicknamed *ابو حاسوه* *abu hasue* (= pear with peats). Tābri notes that this sort is the biggest in size, green and delicious,<sup>41</sup> and he even draws this pear in the letter.

<sup>37</sup> Sic. Tābri uses a very peculiar transcription (sometimes even with errors) which uses from time to time Arabic letters within the transliteration along his letter exchange, and I left it as it is. From Turkish “tatlı” (tat = sweet). This sort of quince marmalade is also made in Turkey and there is a dessert that is called *ayva tatlısı*: the quince is cooked by boiling in water or baked in the oven with cloves, sweet syrup and filled with apple or quince meal and raisins, and is topped with *kaymak*, a creamy dairy product similar to clotted cream. It is served in halves with the inside slightly carved out. The dish is eaten warm or cold throughout Turkey, particularly in wintertime. The area of as-Salt was specially known at the beginning of the twentieth century for its grapes and raisins. See Aaron Aaronsohn, *Agricultural and Botanical Explorations in Palestine* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1910), pp. 25 and 57. See also Daʿūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, pp. 518–529 and Maḥmūd Abū Tālib, Muḥammad Khrīsāt & Muṣṭafa al-Ḥiyāri, *Tārikh Madīnat as-Salt ʿabra l-ʿUṣūr* (The History of the City of as-Salt through History) (Amman: Dāʿirat al-Maktaba al-Waṭaniyya, 2000), p. 266. It is strange that Tābri does not indicate in his letters that grapes are the main agricultural product of as-Salt, or it could be that Dalman had not sent him questions in these letters about this agricultural domain. It is noteworthy that Aaronsohn, in his two books, does not refer to the fruit trees of Transjordan; see Aaron Aaronsohn & Hillel R. Oppenheimer, *I. Florula Transjordanica* (Genève: Imprimerie Jent S. A., 1930) and Aaron Aaronsohn & Hillel R. Oppenheimer, *II. Florula Cisjordanica* (Genève: Société Genevoise d’Editions et Impressions, 1941). See also Aharon Geva-Kleinberger, “Archeological Dialectology: Reconstructing the Etymological Derivation of the Various Lexemes Denoting the Obsolete Farm-implement “Threshing-board” in Palestinian Dialects”, *Zeitschrift der Deutschen Morgenländischen Gesellschaft* 168, 1 (2018), pp. 125–134. See also Peter Behnstedt, *Sprachatlas von Syrien* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2000), pp. 312–313.

<sup>38</sup> See also Daʿūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, p. 519.

<sup>39</sup> Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 816: “une poure”.

<sup>40</sup> The term *baladi* semantically meant at that time an agricultural product, normally vegetables and fruits, which have a good taste. Later, from the end of the twentieth century, the meaning expanded also to biological or organic agricultural products that do not use chemical spraying or chemical fertilizations.

<sup>41</sup> Waesserig im Mund.



According to Tābri, the two other types of pears are not as tasty, and are yellow and smaller than the first kind above:

2. *injas ifranجاء افرنجى* (= foreign pear), found also in Jerusalem, they are smaller and narrower than the first type.

3. *injas sağirجاء صغیر* (= small pear). This third sort of pear is, according to Tābri, at least “half larger” than the first two types, has no “neck”<sup>42</sup> and is round; it grows in as-Salt prolifically and is without botanical cuttings.

Apple trees: Tābri mentions that there are two main general types in as-Salt:

1. Sour apple (*تفاح حامض saure Aepfel*)

2. Sweet apple (*تفاح سكري tuffah suckar sic.*) (= sweet as sugar.)

New apple reeds are taken from young reeds around the trunk and they are with or without botanical cuttings. A sort of jam<sup>43</sup> is made from the apples.

Plum<sup>44</sup> trees (*خوخ Choch*): Tābri indicates that also here young reeds that grow around the tree trunk are used, with or without botanical cuttings. There are three kinds of plums<sup>45</sup> grown in as-Salt:

1. Yellow plum (*Choch asfar خوخ اصفر gelbe Pflaumen*). Larger in size and harder than sorts 2 and 3.

2. Red plum (*Choch aħmar خوخ أحمر*), which is also called *Barkuk*;<sup>46</sup> it is medium sized.

<sup>42</sup> Hat kein hals wie sie.

<sup>43</sup> *Tattli* *تطلي* (sic). See note 40.

<sup>44</sup> Die Pflaumen; it is noteworthy that in Greater Syria, including in Palestinian dialects, *خوخ* can sometimes denote a peach. See also Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 221.

<sup>45</sup> Behnstedt & Geva-Kleinberger, *Atlas of the Arabic Dialects of Galilee*, p. 392, map. 183. Strangely enough, in some Arab villages in Galilee plums are called *xāx*, which is normally also used for peaches; other variants are *brūmya*, *‘en il-bağara* *‘en il-bağara*, *baḡūq* *baḡūq*?

<sup>46</sup> Surprisingly, not */baḡūg/* with the Bedouin allophone */g/*. Tābri does not always write long vowels. See Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 38: “prune de la petite espèce”; Barthélemy also remarks that



3. Small plum (*elchoch elsa* <sup>47</sup>الخوخ الصغير), which is also called قارصيا *garasia*.<sup>48</sup>

Apricot trees (*Mischmisch* مشمش): grown in as-Salt directly from the kernels or new reeds taken from around the trunk, with botanical cuttings. According to Tābri, there are not many apricot trees in as-Salt and there are only two sorts of apricots:

1. *Mischmisch lozi*<sup>49</sup> (مشمش لوزي) (= almond-like apricot); this sort is sweeter than sort 2.
2. *Mischmisch kalbi* (مشمش كلي) (= doggish apricot): bitter in taste.<sup>50</sup>

Tābri states that in Damascus there are more kinds of apricots and more beautiful fruits in addition to the previously mentioned sorts that grow in as-Salt:<sup>51</sup> *mischm* حموي مشمش حموي (= apricot from the Syrian City of Hama; حماة *Ḥamah*) and also *mischm* مستكاوي مشمش مستكاوي (mastic apricot<sup>52</sup>), and also other sorts not specified by Tābri, although he remarks that in as-Salt *Nku* نقوع are made, which are dried apricots, similar to dried figs.<sup>53</sup> The dried apricots of as-Salt are eaten *ωρωω* raw or cooked. Another sort of dried apricot is called *Kamardin* قمردين,<sup>54</sup> which is prepared in as-Salt as a leather of apricots and placed shredded in water and is then used as a dip for bread.

As for peach trees (pfirsich <sup>55</sup>دراق od. دراق *durrag*): they grow in as-Salt from kernels and their reeds are used without botanical cuttings. In as-Salt, there are two kinds:

sometimes this name denotes an apricot (abricot); he also mentions the etymon, which is in Middle Syriac Syr. Moy.

<sup>47</sup> This form appears here in Classical Arabic and not in the colloquial dialect.

<sup>48</sup> Here, we can indicate the Bedouin dialect of Tābri, based on the allophone /g/, although he belongs to the Christian community of as-Salt; Cf. also Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 648: qarāʿye, n. coll. “prunes noires de la petite espèce, prunelles”.

<sup>49</sup> Here also Tābri does not write the long vowel /ū/. See also Daʿūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, p. 519.

<sup>50</sup> See Aaronsohn, *Agricultural and Botanical Explorations in Palestine*, p. 56.

<sup>51</sup> There is not much dialectological material on the Arabic dialects of as-Salt; see, for example, Palva, “Negation in the Dialect of as-Salt, Jordan”, pp. 221-236.

<sup>52</sup> With a taste similar to the Mastic resin (Greek: Μαστιχα).

<sup>53</sup> قطين *Kotten* od. تين يابس *Tin jabes*.

<sup>54</sup> The absence of the Bedouin allophone /g/ (</q/) shows that this sort of sweet is not indigenous to as-Salt. It is actually more typical for Damascus and Aleppo. See Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 681: n. coll. “pâte d’abricots séchée qui se vend en feuilles très minces ou en larges rubans et au poids”. See also Aaronsohn, *Agricultural and Botanical Explorations in Palestine*, p. 17: “The ‘kelabi’ is used only for a manufacture of apricot paste. Spread in a thin layer and dried in the sun, it looks like a piece of leather. It is treated with a little oil, so as to prevent it becoming brittle. It can be rolled up and is very easy to carry”. See also Aaronsohn, *Agricultural and Botanical Explorations in Palestine*, p. 57.

<sup>55</sup> Sic. In some dialects in Greater Syria, it means a sort of plum. Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 236 notes that the etymon derives from Greek δωράχιον. See also Daʿūd, *as-Salt wa-Ġivāriha 1864–1921*, p. 519.

1. Pfirsich <sup>دُرّاق</sup> od. <sup>دراق</sup> *durrag*
  2. <sup>دراق بلدي</sup> *durrag Baladi*
- Jam is also made from this sort of peach.

*Letter dated March 24, 1902*

This letter contains three answers from Tābri to Dalman's questions (5-9). Question 5 is in the domain of politics. Question 7 is about agriculture and poetry,<sup>56</sup> while question 8 is in the field of anthropology;<sup>57</sup> questions 6 and 9 are dedicated to the fields of botany and agriculture.

In question 6, Tābri pseudo-cites Dalman: "Somebody states that the <sup>بعل</sup> (fields) is a term used also for fields that are slightly irrigated by using natural water which is found in the field. Is it true?"<sup>58</sup> Immediately thereafter, Tābri typographically writes "answer 6". He states that all crops that are irrigated by man are called <sup>سقي</sup> *Zarriʿat Saki*,<sup>59</sup> while all other crops that fully depend on natural sources of rain or dew are called <sup>بعل</sup> *Zarriʿat Baʿl*. Tābri concludes his answer by saying, ironically, that the "person who stated that an irrigated field can be also named <sup>بعل</sup> is totally wrong, based on the information in this domain that we have in as-Salt."<sup>61</sup>

In question 9, Dalman asks about the possibility of dividing terminology used by Fellahin on one hand, and by Bedouin on the other hand, to "manure" of different domestic animals such as "horses, camels, donkeys, cows and sheep", which is used for heating.<sup>62</sup> Dalman then asks about the meaning of the word <sup>لاتيغ</sup>?<sup>63</sup> Tābri gives a very detailed answer. First he states that all domestic animals' feces are generally called <sup>زبل</sup> *Zibl*, for example, "feces of horses, cows and donkeys".<sup>64</sup> Then he adds two further local Arabic lexemes which are used in as-Salt,

<sup>56</sup> "What are the songs that women sing when they collect olives?"

<sup>57</sup> A question about professional women weepers at funerals. See Lorraine Sa'eed, "Wailing Songs in Kafr-Yāsif and Abu-Snān: Authenticity, Sorrow and Faith," in Aharon Geva Kleinberger (ed.) *Palestinian Arabic and Its Folkloric Lingual Heritage* (Nazareth: The Arabic Language Academy, 2020), pp. 167-195 [in Arabic].

<sup>58</sup> Question 6: jemand behauptet <sup>بعل</sup> *Baʿal* beziehe auch bewässertes Feld wenn die Bewässerung sich leicht herstellen lasse mit Benutzung des Wassers welches sich von Natur bei dem Felde findet, ist das Wahr (sic)?

<sup>59</sup> And not with the allophone /g/. Tābri later also uses the form <sup>سقي</sup> *Zruʿ Saki* [sic.]. q>k is also found in some Palestinian dialects, for example, in the Triangle Area in Israel.

<sup>60</sup> See note 28.

<sup>61</sup> U der Jemand der Ihnen behauptet hat daß das bewässertes (sic!) Feld auch <sup>بعل</sup> *Baʿl* genannt wird hat nach unserer allgemeiner (sic!) Erfahrung in Essalt völlige unrichtige Behauptung in dieser Hinsicht.

<sup>62</sup> Wie nenen (sic!) Bauern u Beduinen Mist von Pferden Kamelen Eseln Rindern Schafen Dünger zum Brennen.

<sup>63</sup> Was ist <sup>لاتيغ</sup>?

<sup>64</sup> <sup>زبل خيل</sup> *Zibl Cheil* Pferdemit <sup>زبل بقر</sup> *Kuhmist* <sup>زبل حمير</sup> *Eselsmist*.

namely Roth u. Sōm روث u,<sup>65</sup> صوم by giving examples: (روث حمير u روث خيل Rath Hamir u. roth Chail u صوم حمير u sōm Hamir u صوم خيل sōm Cheil); yet when the feces tend to be more fluid in spring,<sup>66</sup> two different terms are used: Chrāk baḳar خراق بقر od Schṭāt baḳar شطاط البقر.<sup>67</sup> Sheep have a differentiating terminology for their feces: if it is thick, it is called بع العنم Baʿer elʿanam,<sup>68</sup> and in spring, when it is fluid, it is called by a metathesis form which denotes semantic proximity to the word “spring” (ربيع), then the sheep feces are called ربيعي ribʿi od ribʿi elʿanam.<sup>69</sup>

The terminology for camels’ feces is roth jmāl روث جمال u Baʿer gmāl بع جمال, yet this domestic animal also has a new, different term which is Haraz Gmāl حرز جمال.<sup>70</sup> Answering Dalman’s question, Tābri notes that the terminology لطح بقر<sup>71</sup> is used when the feces are thick, but when they are liquid it is called only by the term used for cows, شطاط البقر or خراق البقر.<sup>72</sup>

The feces of cows are also used for pottery. Fresh excrement of cows is placed on the walls in order to dry it. The Fellahin women also use the dried feces called جله Ḡalla<sup>73</sup> od. Krās Ḡalle قرص جله pl. قرص جله Kurṣ Ḡalle, sing. genannt diese Krās Ḡalle in order to fire pottery, while the Bedouin or Urban women (مدنية) make pottery only with their hands in order to manufacture kettles or other housewares.<sup>74</sup> Tābri adds that the Fellahin and Bedouin women use the dried excrement of horses, camels and sheep also for the fire of the صاج of the ṭābūn-oven for baking bread.<sup>75</sup> Tābri concludes by saying that the city women do not need these at all since they have ordinary ovens (فرن).

### Conclusions

A Christian living in the Christian area of as-Salt, Faraḥ Ḥabīb Tābri is Dalman’s most important informant from Transjordan at the beginning of the twentieth century. Most of

<sup>65</sup> This word is obsolete or hapax legomenon in this meaning or can be considered as a local word used in is-Salt at that time. Normally it indicates “fasting”.

<sup>66</sup> Since the cows eat a lot of grass.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, 392, the root شطط, which is used to indicate liquids.

<sup>68</sup> Sic. = *el-ḡanam*.

<sup>69</sup> Sic. = [*el-ḡanam*].

<sup>70</sup> Strange transcription. Probably a local word used in is-Salt. Cf., Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 198.

<sup>71</sup> Cf. Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, pp. 755-756, “tacher” (= to stain).

<sup>72</sup> Phonetically equivalent to the root خري (= to defecate) probably as a euphemism.

<sup>73</sup> Cf. to Hebrew גללים.

<sup>74</sup> جرة u ابريق نغار.

<sup>75</sup> Barthélemy, *Dictionnaire Arabe-Français*, p. 471: “four” (= oven), au Yaman, en Egypte, en Palestine.

Dalman's linguistic informants in Greater Syria were Christians and most of them also had a relatively good knowledge of the German language in which they wrote their letters to Dalman. It seems that sharing the same religion gave the German Christian theologian Dalman and many of his informants in the field a feeling of closeness. One assumes that these informants provided Dalman with valuable information in a wide range of areas and not just in the field of language as they also provided him with much administrative information which undoubtedly served as valuable information for German Intelligence.

Though relatively unknown, Tābri's information is valuable and unmatched in various fields, especially anthropologically, historically and linguistically, although the transcription he uses for the colloquial dialect is not always fully accurate. It is very difficult to positively determine that Tābri served as an intelligence agent operated by Dalman, whom we assume to have worked for Prussian intelligence alongside his scholarly job at the university. However, what we can accurately conclude is that Tābri was not aware of being such an agent since he does not report in such a style at all. It seems that Germany had a deep interest in the region as the Ottoman rule began to show signs of weakness, and wanted to establish a foothold before any other empire gained control in the area.<sup>76</sup>

As we have seen, it is noteworthy that in his books Aaron Aaronsohn referred mainly to the flora of the area of Transjordan and therefore the Tābri's letters play an even more important role. In this article, I have examined three letters out of approximately sixty from Tābri to Dalman. These three letters concentrate on the field of local agricultural life and terminology. Additionally, these three letters describe agricultural life in this area. The data provided in Tābri's letters cast light on almost unknown lacuna in the field of agricultural crops of the sub-region of Greater Syria to which the local Arabic dialect of as-Salt also belongs. Agriculturally, the area belongs to the Fertile Crescent. Tābri tends to divide this area dialectologically and anthropologically into three main groups: the Fellahin, the Bedouin and the Urban population, yet in the field of agriculture most of the data is focused mainly on the Fellahin and sometimes on the Bedouin.

Species of crops tend to change over time and Tābri documents the old names of species. With the modernization and urbanization missions of contemporary state societies, the persistence and vitality of autochthonous farming communities have been challenged, particularly in developed nations. Local Arabic dialects encode in the autochthonous folk taxonomies of species of plants. Arabic uses a form of binomial (two-term) or trinomial nomenclature for plants, similar to that developed by Linnaeus, except that second and third terms, instead of designating the species, identify some important characteristic of the plant.

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<sup>76</sup> Dalman interpreted aerial photographs of the German air force in Palestine; see Dalman, *Hundert deutsche Fliegerbilder aus Palästina*.

Thus, we can see in Tābri's letters binominal nomenclatures given by the local farmers. It means that the second name, which is a sort of folkloristic attribute, of the species casts light on the first name. Some of these binary names of species have disappeared with the modernization and globalization of agriculture during the twentieth century, and also through the introduction of new species. Thus, we find in Tābri's letter remnants of binominal names of which some can still be traced today, while others cannot.

The local crops are always nicknamed *baladi* in Greater Syria [literally: of the country, of the country place]. The species that have the attribute *baladi* belong to traditional local crops. This term is also found in Tābri's letters: *inḥas baladi* (local pear), *Durrāq baladi* (local peach). Other binominal nomenclatures denote attributable names that show the origin of the fruit or that it is not a local fruit, e.g., *inḥas ifranḏie* (= foreign pear). Other nomenclatures denote the size of the fruit, e.g., if the fruit is small *elchoch elsaḡir* (small plum) or its color *Choch asfar* (= yellow plum) or its taste, e.g., *tuffaḥ suckari* (= sweet apple). In other cases, the second binominal name denotes an indirect quality or description of the fruit, e.g., *Mischmisch kalbi* (= doggyish apricot), when the fruit is bitter, as dogs symbolize impurity in Muslim culture. The information on traditional crops is valuable in our modernized life which aims to restore old species of the region that were not influenced genetically over the course of time.

While answering Dalman's questions, Tābri also documents a wide range of local terminology connected to agriculture, such as the various local names of feces and their traditional uses among the Fellahin. He also describes the fine differentiations between irrigated-land-agriculture and irrigated fields. This information is valuable not only for the region of the Fertile Crescent where as-Salt is located but also worldwide because of global warming and changes in rain patterns.

Anthropologically and linguistically, the data provided by Tābri is priceless since he documents endangered information or obsolete agricultural lexemes that can disappear or had already vanished in the course of the twentieth century. Some of the terminology can also be traced linguistically to other ancient civilizations that had existed in the Fertile Crescent, yet left their fingerprints, such as the name of the Canaanite god of weather Ba'al, which appears in the combination Ba'al agriculture which denotes agriculture that depends only on rain.

**Abstract:** This article is based on the discovery of a letter exchange between the Christian teacher Faraḥ Ḥabīb Tābrī ( فرح حبيب )

**Resumen:** Este trabajo se basa en el descubrimiento de un intercambio epistolar entre el maestro cristiano Faraḥ Ḥabīb Tābrī ( فرح حبيب )

تابري حبيب) and theologian and orientalist Gustaf Dalman (1855–1941), which was made by the writer of this article while rummaging in some dusty cardboards left in Dalman’s institute in Greifswald/Germany during my visit there in February 2014.<sup>77</sup> Although totally unknown to modern researchers, Tābri was Dalman’s most fluent and prominent informant. In the introduction to his book *Palästinischer Diwan*,<sup>78</sup> he thanks him, calling him “my friend from the Gilead Mountains”. He remarks that Tābri helped him considerably in correcting this book and by approaching farmers and Bedouin of the region in order to proof the data of his Dīwān, a collection of folk Palestinian songs.

**Keywords:** Dalman; Dialectology; Trans-Jordan; Agriculture; as-Salt; History

تابري)<sup>79</sup> y el teólogo y orientalista Gustaf Dalman (1855–1941), que fue realizado por el autor de este trabajo cuando revisaba algunas carpetas olvidadas en el Instituto Dalman en Greifswald (Alemania) durante mi visita en febrero de 2014.<sup>80</sup> Aunque es totalmente desconocido para los investigadores modernos, Tābri fue el más fluido y prominente informante de Dalman. En la introducción de su libro, *Palästinischer Diwan*,<sup>81</sup> él le muestra su agradecimiento, llamándolo “mi amigo de las montañas de Galaad”. Él destaca que Tābri lo ayudó considerablemente en la corrección de este libro en el acercamiento entre granjeros y beduinos de la región para probar la fecha de su Dīwān, una colección de canciones del folklore palestino.

**Palabras clave:** Dalman; Dialectología; Transjordania; Agricultura, as-Salt; Historia.

<sup>77</sup> I would like to first thank Prof. Dr. Stefan Beyerle, the head of Gustaf Dalman’s Institute at the Theological Faculty of Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University in Greifswald, Germany. Additionally, I would like to thank the following people from this institute who helped me during my visit there, without whom this article would not have seen the light of day: Dr. Karin Berkemann, Mr. Felix Degwitz and the late Prof. Julia Männchen. I am also grateful to Mr. Jonathan Reich, who helped me with the transcription.

<sup>78</sup> Gustaf Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan: Als Beitrag zur Volkskunde Palästinas* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1901).

<sup>79</sup> Hence Tābri as it is articulated in the colloquial dialect and not as a transcription for Classical Arabic.

<sup>80</sup> I would like to first thank Prof. Dr. Stefan Beyerle, the head of Gustaf Dalman’s Institute at the Theological Faculty of Ernst-Moritz-Arndt University in Greifswald, Germany. Additionally, I would like to thank the following people from this institute who helped me during my visit there, without whom this article would not have seen the light of day: Dr. Karin Berkemann, Mr. Felix Degwitz and the late Prof. Julia Männchen. I am also grateful to Mr. Jonathan Reich, who helped me with the transcription.

<sup>81</sup> Gustaf Dalman, *Palästinischer Diwan: Als Beitrag zur Volkskunde Palästinas* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs’sche Buchhandlung, 1901).