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nen Yusuf en Salman werden Abdu'l-Bahá en diens gevolg gastvrij opgenomen in het 'paleis' van de familie. Dat bood vanaf het balkon in westelijke richting een schitterend uitzicht. Daar beneden strekten de door de plaatselijke *fellahin* gebruikte 'village lands' van Abu Sinan zich uit tot aan die van het aan de kust gelegen al-Summayriyya. Abdu'l-Bahá werd door de Khayrs bejegend met alle respect: 'They loved Him, trusted Him, and honoured Him, with all their hearts, feeling and believing that His wisdom grasped the future as well as the present. Prayers were chanted at these meetings, the Druze friends joining with the Baha'is.'<sup>8</sup>

Habib Mu'ayyad herinnert zich de ruime binnenhof en de *divan*: 'the reception room, vast and comfortable, of the male portion of the family'. De dames bewoonden een eigen vleugel. Yusuf Khayr, de oudste zoon van Salih, fungeerde als 'shaykh of the Khalwa – the sacred House of Prayer – which is entered by none but the Druzes who are initiated.' Hij behoorde kortom tot de '*uqqāl*', de ingewijden in de leer. Met Ruha Khanum bezocht Sitarih Khanum (Sarah Louisa Blomfield) de Khayrs opnieuw in 1922, na het overlijden van Abdu'l-Bahá. Ook Sitarih Khanum heeft het huis van de familie beschreven, waar haar oog viel op de welvoorziene bibliotheek:

The view from these windows is glorious, and the whole atmosphere of the place full of calm and rest. Across one end of this room were book-cases filled with beautifully bound books. How I longed to know what they contained! Sacred writings naturally; but their religion is secret, none but the initiated are ever permitted to either enter their houses of worship (*khalwa*), or to read their holy books.

They are not Christians, although they reverence the Lord Christ. They are not Jews, but they reverence Moses and some of the other prophets: Nabi-Shu'ayb, the father-in-law of Moses, is one of the saints they esteem. (...) The Druzes wear a white amice, under the *zombaz*, a long, black coat, which, with a large snow-white turban, has a pleasing and dignified effect. Both men and women are extraordinarily fine, noble-looking, strong and healthy people. (...) Tilling the ground, growing corn, olive oil and fruit for their simple needs, spending most of their days in the fresh, pure, bracing air. (...) The ladies are amazingly lovely, with slight, graceful figures, regular features, wonderful eyes with long lashes (...).

What their beliefs are, and their mode of worship, no outside person is ever permitted to know. But their religion is deep and real, as shown in their lives. The Druzes are kind, courteous, and nobly hospitable. Strict, very strict, in their morality – the

<sup>8</sup> Idem, 191.

<sup>9</sup> 'Druze society is divided in those who have been initiated into the secrets of doctrine, the '*uqqal*', and those who have not, the '*juhhal*'. (...) They gather every Thursday in a meeting house (*al-khalwa*) to discuss the affairs of the village and to study the *Rasa'il al-hikma* (Druze epistles). The '*juhhal*' are allowed to attend only the first, secular session in the '*khalwa*', the spiritual part being reserved for the '*uqqal*.' Laila Parsons, *The Druze between Palestine and Israel 1947-49*, London/New York 2000, 12-14.