

## INTRODUCTION

### *Ethnicity, Clientship, and Class: Their Changing Meaning*

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Albert Hourani, a prominent historian of the modern Middle East has stated that “Even were there no Syrian people, a Syrian problem would still exist.”<sup>1</sup> Syria’s geographical and strategic position at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea and near the convergence of three continents established its political importance long ago. Hourani pointed out that, historically, Syria has served as a focus of political and economic movements, “at times as a starting-point, at others as a terminus or a bridge.”<sup>2</sup> At a crossroads of world trade, it is not accidental that Syrian merchants, historically and today, play a prominent role in the economy and politics of the country. As a crossing ground for armies and caravans, at times a leading province in empires far larger than itself, it is remarkable that near the end of the twentieth century “the isolation of Syria” should appear so frequently as a theme in the writings of scholars and observers of the contemporary Syrian scene (see Cobban, this volume; and Sadowski 1987—n. 19).

The reaction of Syria’s people to the contrasting cultural, demographic, economic, and political currents from across the Mediterranean and Europe on the one hand and across the desert and Arabia on the other, has been absorption and accommodation, and often at the same time tension and conflict. Accommodation has taken place at the socio-cultural level in the development of a mosaic society well adapted to the geographical diversity of the country, in which a number of ethnic groups and sects (Sunni Muslims, Alawis, Druze, Greek Orthodox, Kurds, Circassians, Ismailis) find their niches in various regions of the country or in various ethnic divisions of labor in urban centers. Accommodation has taken place at the psychocultural level in “the art of rapid and superficial

assimilation and that of preserving, beneath new modes of behavior and in new forms, their old beliefs and ways of living.”<sup>3</sup> Flight to the peripheries, acculturation but not assimilation,<sup>4</sup> and dissimulation (*taqiyya*) have been alternative strategies pursued by Syrians for centuries.

The geographic diversity of Syria, and the existence of a sparse but ethnically diverse population divided by long distances and natural barriers (deserts and mountains), probably encouraged the development of specialization and trade (caravans) between separate centers. Coon sketched the lineaments of this mosaic model for the societies of the Middle East almost fifty years ago in his book *Caravan*.<sup>5</sup> For Coon, the pieces of the mosaic were ethnic groups, social types (e.g., villages, urban quarters, and nomad camps), communities specializing in regional products, and the “tame” (living in the plains under government control) and the “insolent” (tribesmen of the mountains and deserts). The basic units of the mosaic were large extended families and familylike groups (e.g., guilds and brotherhoods), which passed on scarce resources and rare skills endogamously within the ethnic group or social type. These skills were linked to a metal-age preindustrial level of hand-powered industry utilizing skilled hand-labor. The cement of the mosaic society was trade (and thus the high status of the merchant, bazaar, and caravan) integrating an ethnic division of labor, and Islam (prayer, fasting, pilgrimage, and Sufi orders) imposing a broad cultural-ritual uniformity on an otherwise diverse population characterized by differences in diet, dress, hairstyle, language, days of worship, and leisure activities.

In recent years infrastructural development, particularly in transportation, has linked all of Syria’s major cities with one another and with its new, growing ports.<sup>6</sup> Such national economic integration is certainly in line with the policy of a regime guided by nationalist and socialist principles. But Syria’s growing population (from 5.3 million in 1961 to 10.6 million in 1981) continues to reflect a pronounced and relatively stable regionalism: Damascus and Aleppo together comprised 42.9 percent of all Syrians in 1960 and 43.2 percent in 1981. Hama and Der’a, the provinces that grew the most in the interim, increased their share of the population by only one percent.<sup>7</sup> The seven largest cities in 1960 were still the seven largest in 1981. Moreover, Syria is not characterized by the typical Middle Eastern dominance of the single capital city (the primate pattern). Aleppo, though not as large as Damascus, is nearly as large, and Syria has several substantial medium-sized cities — Latakia, Homs, and Hama. Urbanization has proceeded apace in Syria as in the rest of the Middle East; Syrians living in cities increased from 37 percent in 1960 to 47 percent in 1981. However, the only provinces with an urban majority are Damascus, Aleppo, and Homs. The distribution of Syria’s popula-

tion, then, still indicates the relevance of the mosaic model for understanding Syrian society.

But there is another model,<sup>8</sup> quite different, that has been used to understand modern Syria: a medium-sized, neither rich nor poor, basically agricultural country subject to periodic drought. That model does not focus on geography, regionalism, ethnic diversity, or the enshrinement of such diversity in custom or ideology; rather, it focuses on class. This model assumes that modern Syrian society can be best understood by the assumption that deep-seated social dislocations have pitted one class against another: landlord vs. peasant, new, salaried middle class employed in army, bureaucracy, or schools vs. established urban merchants; and by the assumption that "capitalist" penetration erodes "clientelist" ties and sets off "proletarianization" of the peasantry. At a later stage the new elite becomes a shadowy state-formation and a spearhead of "embourgeoisement" (see Hinnebusch, this volume, for the argument). Political movements, then, rather than reflecting the ethnic and clientelist loyalties of a mosaic society, reflect the drive of an incipient elite (now a "class vanguard") propelled by a revolutionary doctrine to form a mass base, capture the state apparatus, and turn it to the ends of the dominant class (see Hinnebusch, this volume).

Is there any way of reconciling these models? Probably not, in their current formulations. But the refinement of either or both could lead to a better understanding of Syrian society. The remainder of this essay will explore some suggestions for refining competing frameworks. By exploring such frameworks it may be possible for scholars in the future to gain a better understanding of important institutions and processes of change in contemporary Syria: the changing Syrian family, political factionalism, the sedentarization of nomads, bureaucratic corruption, patron-client ties, the development/constriction of regionalism, the development of the Ba'th Party, rural-urban migration, religious resurgence, Syria's political isolation, and the continued importance of sects in contemporary Syrian life.

Before exploring the implications of such models for understanding Syria, I must sketch briefly a few of the significant stable contours of this society and recent changes in them. Syrian society since early Ottoman times has featured a military, land-holding elite that has managed affairs of state out of necessity by finding a partner in local urban notables, themselves composed of merchants on the one hand and religious (scholar) influentials on the other (see Khoury, this volume, for the argument). After the collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, this urban elite seized upon Arab nationalism as a means to solidify and legitimize power, and construct cross-regional, cross-class, and cross-

ethnic alliances against French mandatory control. These elites, dominantly Sunni Muslim, developed considerable skills as mediators and interhierarchical leaders, articulating separate regional interests while maintaining their own dominance (see Khoury, this volume).

As a student of human geography, Weulersse has pointed out that this articulation was quite different than that which had prevailed in Western Europe in the preindustrial period. There were no old bourgeois families tracing their roots to the countryside, maintaining their ties with it, and often returning to it for economic and cultural sustenance. Rather, for much of Syrian history, cities were foreign bodies, indeed, often established by foreigners and in any case dominated by them: Seljuks, Mongols, Mamluks, Turks. The relationship between these cities and their rural hinterlands was basically exploitive, with the city/state taking much and returning little.<sup>9</sup>

On the other side, that of the Syrian peasantry living in diverse villages adapted to diverse microecological niches in varied environments, there was no love of the land, per se, as has been attributed to peasants in parts of the Nile Valley or to the peasants of France till modern times as, for instance, portrayed in the novels of Zola. Admittedly, here we are dealing with stereotypes of the peasantry constructed by historians, orientalists, social scientists, journalists and, not least, by the peasants themselves. Hence all statements about "peasant society and culture," particularly in the rapidly changing decades at the end of the twentieth century, are something less than half-truths. With this caveat in mind, we can still observe that in Syria the peasant often worked for absentee landlords or their agents for low rewards in an arid climate that was in any case uncertain, and produced modest to low crop yields. In these circumstances the peasant was often little enamored of rural life, and migration to towns or cities was seldom viewed as a tragedy. Should economic opportunity allow, he readily moved, and moves away from the countryside now, as the growing urbanization of Syria indicates.

If the stereotype of the sober, workmanlike peasant with "an intimate and reverent attitude toward the land" described by the anthropologist Redfield as the exemplar of the peasant ethos finds scant support in Syria, the fact remains that Syria has been and remains a fundamentally agricultural society.<sup>10</sup> As late as 1970 fifty percent of the Syrian labor force was employed in agriculture and seventy percent of all Syrian exports were agricultural products.<sup>11</sup> Although industry has grown substantially, most of it continues to be tied to agriculture; textiles and food processing. Farming of all kinds, including sheepraising, contributes a larger proportion of the GNP and supports more people than any other activity.<sup>12</sup> Of course, this agriculture has undergone substantial changes, chief among them the substantial control of much agricultural production by

the state, determining what, when, with which credits, at what price, and in what markets crops could be produced and sold. The post-1961 land reforms left many wealthy landlords and tribal leaders relatively powerless, and gave other enterprising and peripheral groups an opportunity to gain a greater stake in both the land and the new revolutionary regime. Khalaf's essay (this volume) provides a good example of this process.

In addition, the state considerably widened the public sector in agriculture and undertook a number of development schemes closely supervised by the government, such as the Ghab irrigation project. The remarkable fact is that more than twenty-five years after a socialist regime has come to power in Syria, a regime that is theoretically in total control of the public sector, considerable private initiative is still allowed — in fact, 75 percent of the country's lands are in private hands — and within the state-controlled system of agriculture peasants mobilize successful efforts to gain access to an open-market economy. Metral has described in detail numerous peasant strategies within the government-run Ghab irrigation project to increase their access to the means of production in violation of formal development scheme rules: renting land illegally from neighbors to produce catch crops; hooking up siphons or pumps to canals to get extra water; securing protection for illegalities in the local scheme administration, the party, or the army; forming informal irrigation units to create large enough land units to contract with large machinery owners; and investing the profits of private agricultural enterprise into tractor, truck, and other petty enterprises. Moreover, these strategies reflect and accelerate certain pronounced tendencies in Syrian not-just-rural society: the regrouping of extended families and village (sect) mates in local areas; the diversification of income sources to crosscut agricultural, industrial, and service economies; and the extension of family networks to penetrate systems of state-run activities (ministries, Ba'th Party, army, schools).<sup>13</sup>

The Ghab irrigation project emphasizes the continuity of Syrian social processes and structures across time and through regimes of diverse ideological and class orientation — Ottoman, Mandate, nationalist, socialist: the importance of the extended family as a solidary unit bridging social categories (such as class, village/city, rulers/ruled); the continued importance of patron-client relations (now labeled *sharik* or “partner” relations in the Ghab area) in a nationalist-socialist state; and the persistence of “peasant” strategies of shrewdness, pragmatism, manipulation, and opportunism, not for the love of the land but rather to maximize economic opportunities.

Metral's analysis of the Ghab irrigation project points to the continuities of Syrian culture and social process, and the diversification of occupations in extended family units to gain access to a wider range of re-

sources. Khalaf's essay (this volume), examining a quite different economic and social region of Syria, elaborates similar themes: the al-Meshrif family's diverse economic activities included sheep raising, dry cereal farming, rental of town property, and rental of land for cotton crops. Muhammad Meshrif himself became a *sharik* (here, moneylender) to the *fellahin* while at the same time gathering his own relatives to work the land. But Khalaf's analysis of land reform and class structure in the al-Raqqa region of northern Syria emphasizes other processes clearly related to the development of sharp social stratification, but not emphasized by Metral. The Meshrifs of al-Raqqa recruit other tribesmen (than their own) and nontribal *fellahin* as cultivators who begin to outnumber the kinsmen in their employ. A new rural elite, identified with city merchants and alienated from their own tribesmen, who come to be called "cotton sheikhs," emerge. These sheikhs cease to collect tribute from their tribal clients (gifts of lamb in the spring and grain at harvest). Afdala sheikhs drive Cadillacs and employ "slaves" as servants, build guest houses of cut stone with glass-paned windows. Stratification emerges between the *muzari*' (literally, "planter," but functionally, farmer-entrepreneur) and the peasants, and patron-client tribal ties lapse as the new rural bourgeois intensify marriage only among close kinsmen (and not distant) while buying more urban property and investing in the education of their children (see Khalaf, this volume). Lewis, a historian of modern Syria, has noted that client riverine tribes who take up irrigated agriculture along the Euphrates generally outstrip their patron Fid'an sheikhs in wealth, become politically active, and aspire to social equality.<sup>14</sup>

Khalaf's analysis raises the question posed above, about the refinement of class and mosaic models to better understand modern Syria. Longuenesse, in dealing with the Syrian working class today in a mainly industrial, urban context, Hinnebusch (this volume), in dealing with class in relation to the development of the Ba'thist state, and Lewis, in dealing with the settlement of the frontier in Greater Syria from 1800 to 1980, have stressed certain themes that make strict application of a class model problematic. Longuenesse, for instance, points to the frequency of "moonlighting" among industrial workers in Syria. Clearly related to low wages, moonlighting in both public and private sectors combines such diverse occupations as factory-worker, itinerant salesman, farmer, artisan, and transporter of goods in a Suzuki mini-van.<sup>15</sup> Lewis, describing the modernization of shepherding along the desert margin, has stressed the incongruous but flexible and complex adaptive practices that have become common. Some Syrian beduin herd sheep for most of the year but travel to Saudi Arabia to work in construction or the oil fields in the winter; their richer relatives become businessmen there. Flocks owned by



urban capitalists are cared for by shepherd families relying on vehicles for water and other supplies. Tribes living in huge handsome tents, specializing in the raising, running, and marketing of sheep, drive their own trucks, join cooperatives, and have social dealings with merchants in Palmyra, Aleppo, and Homs. Alongside them, poor beduin with meager flocks living in ragged goat hair tents and dressed in jeans commute in buses in order to work in phosphate mines.<sup>16</sup>

Hinnebusch (this volume) has pointed out that in modern Syria families operate as solidary social units bridging social categories (including class). Furthermore, the large informal sector with one foot in commerce and the other in white-collar government offices straddles other social categories, such as village and state. To add to the complicated and highly flexible and mobile character of contemporary Syrian social structure, which fact makes application of the usual categories of class analysis difficult, are the other attributes of the Syrian working class reported by Longuenesse: the high rate of turnover in both public and private sectors, and the resort not to labor organization and strikes as a form of worker resistance but rather to flight, migration (to the Arab Gulf) and self-employment.<sup>17</sup>

Battatu, in a preliminary fashion, tried to deal with some of the complexities, flexibilities, and mobilities of modern Syrian life; first, by distinguishing more precisely between categories of social analysis — that is, distinguishing between “family,” “tribe,” and “sect” in analyzing the power base of Syria’s ruling military group; and second, by merging categories — using the term “sect-class” to indicate the existence of groups with ethnic labels (e.g., “Alawis,” or in Iraq, “Takritis”) that follow basically class interests. He argues that the Alawis until the 1950s cultivated the soil for middle-class Christian and Sunni Muslim landlords (of Latakia) or large landlords (of Akkar or Hama) for one-quarter of the crop, and were subject to the treatment appropriate to their class — revilement and indenture.<sup>18</sup>

Sadowski has attempted to refine the sense in which Syria is at the same time patrimonial (rather than a class) and a mosaic society, first, by pointing out that the Alawis were never highly unified, with three cults and four tribes, in addition to division between factions, and between young and old, and second, by distinguishing between “sectarianism,” which is not characteristic of current Syrian society, and “confessionalism,” which is. He argues that “Alawis,” and by implication others with ethnic identities, invoke relations with other Alawis to advance personal and ideological ambitions rather than to promote the common interests of the sect, and that “fealty is a far more important criterion than religion for the distribution of power in Syria.” President Asad’s *jama’a* or “inner

circle” is composed of a number of Sunnis (Khaddam and Tlas), not to get “Sunni” support but rather because they are loyalists and intimate friends. Moreover, he argues that Asad does not promote Alawis in general but rather Alawis of his own tribe or more specifically, his own native village as well as his own close relatives (brothers, cousins, in-laws). Generally speaking he argues that patronage is a more important factor than ethnicity in analyzing contemporary Syrian political life, at least at the leadership level.<sup>19</sup>

A geographer, Drysdale, on the other hand, in a little noted but valuable (1979) article, has described briefly several models for understanding ethnicity in the Syrian officer corps and proposed his own refinement. The two main competing models, according to Drysdale, are what one might term the “patrimonial” and the “modernizing.” The first describes the army in terms of a praetorian guard — that is, the army is a client to the patron (historically the emperor, but here the president of the republic), giving him its absolute loyalty and receiving appropriate largesse in return. Notions of autonomy, corporate identity, and professionalism are clearly inapplicable here. The second model describes the army in terms of universalistic norms applied to an autonomous, hierarchical, disciplined, professional, corporate group devoted to efficiency and capable of innovation. A third model largely associated with the work of the anthropologist Geertz is mentioned by Drysdale, but dismissed.<sup>20</sup> I term this model the “primordial.” Illustrating with a number of cases including Malaya, Lebanon, and Morocco, Geertz argues that in the post–World War II era the formation of new nations in Asia and Africa created new, wider, and richer arenas for the competition for scarce resources. Ethnic groups including sects, tribes, and minorities (and often at the beginning of the process they were more ethnic categories than sociological groups), mobilized themselves as never before to compete more effectively in the national arena for these new scarce resources: irrigation water, land, schools, roads, factories, sanitation facilities, college degrees. The proliferation of national states led to the mobilization of ethnicity.<sup>21</sup>

Drysdale’s own model might be termed the “submergence” model. He argues that professional socialization (in the army) for discipline, rationality, esprit de corps, the application of universalistic impersonal norms and reflexive (and not reflective) action only submerges primordial identities, which remain pertinent selectively in certain social fields. For instance, on the battlefield the tendency would be for these norms to hold — he cites as evidence that the Syrian army performed well in the 1973 war with Israel, whereas, for instance, in factional competition within the army, ethnicity might prevail. He argues that identities and roles are situ-



ationally specific, and the modernized roles and ethnic roles can be complementary and even mutually reinforcing: in a village or in the process of the contraction of marriage, sectarian norms might prevail, whereas in schools/barracks universalistic norms might prevail, and the disparate application of norms would be reinforced over time. Of course, all army officers are not just that but also fathers, villagers, tribesmen, sect-mates, kinsmen, and Ba'thists, and the combination of applied norms differs in quite different situations. Moreover, the blend and weight of the complementarity (of ethnic and modernized roles) can differ from person to person and through time (the awareness of ethnicity in the Ba'th party was not in 1950 what it was in 1963, and not in 1963 what it is in 1989). Finally, Drysdale argues that the modernized model becomes less applicable and the ethnic or patrimonial model more applicable when professionalism is eroded by uncertainty: by political purges, factionalization of the officer corps, repeated intervention from on high in the promotion process, or the rapid promotion of "politically dependable" officers.

Although the insights of Battatu, Drysdale, Hinnebusch, and Sadowski are helpful in refining descriptive terms for various aspects of Syrian society and in questioning the applicability of various models for the study of that society, it is Fuad Khuri's new book that provides the most detailed and comprehensive model for resolving many of the ambiguities and complexities alluded to above.<sup>22</sup> For Khuri, the description and analysis of Middle Eastern society is best approached at a multi-institutional civilizational level, taking into account interlocking demographic, geographic, spatial, economic, and political factors. These factors are viewed as constraining and shaping religion, culture, and social organization in a feedback loop that emphasizes the density of symbols and signs, and the importance of popular religious ideology. Differences of religion and worldview constrain the structure of religious advancement (e.g., in the career profiles of Sunni vs. Shi'a *Ithna 'Ashariyya* religious specialists), the mode of political competition between and within elites, and the relationship of religious to state elites. Khuri's key contrasting social forms are "sect," "state," and "minority." The sects include the Druze, 'Ibadis, Zaydis, *Ithna 'Ashariyya*, Maronites, Yazidis and, most important for our purposes, Alawis. The sects contrast with the minorities (Copts, Greek Orthodox, Jews, Ismailis) who are dispersed in the polity and generally live in cities under the protection of the government on the one hand, and the state and the established religion (Sunni Islam) on the other. The sects are identified by a whole range of distinctive attributes including peripheral location, historical rebellion or dissimulation, demographic clustering in a territorial "homeland," a totalistic, stratified

worldview, and exclusivity in culture and social organization including matters such as succession to office, spatial segregation, marriage, patron-client ties, law, personal names, and food.<sup>23</sup>

How does this model help to illuminate contemporary Syrian society? It does so by placing social categories and groups like the Alawis in a much wider societal context. The terms "Alawi" or "Shi'a" or "Maronite" refer not simply to an ethnic identity or a religious ideology, but also to a territory, a politico-economic system, a wide-ranging cultural repertoire, and a history. Although each sect reflects common attributes vis-à-vis the established religion and the state, and in contradistinction to the minorities, each sect also represents a unique blend of ideological, social organizational, and ritual attributes. Khuri argues that the differences of religious ideology are reflected in the social organization of religious specialists. The Alawis, rather than believing that God can be known through regular worship and indirectly through formal ritual specialists, hold that God can be known mysteriously but directly through "gates" (the *abwab*), that every age has living channels to the concealed pure religion (see Khuri, this volume). These "gates" stand at the top of an informal hierarchy of "religious sheikhs" (*shaykh al-din*) who possess esoteric, sacramental, religious knowledge. It is these religious sheikhs, rather than the "law sheikhs" (*shaykh al-shari'a*), who preside in the state religious courts, who are the focus of Alawite religion, of spiritual power, and who shape religious social organization (religious clientage).

Khuri stresses that in the sects religion is a pervasive influence in daily interaction reflected in oaths, contracts, witnessing, visiting sheikhs' tombs, and recitation of the biographies and proverbs of the most pious believers. Sect members participate in society at large and work in everyday occupations widespread in the polity. But they dichotomize their lives, all members feeling they are living in a special (religious) world valuable in itself and distinguished from all others.<sup>24</sup>

Khuri points out that besides the density of religious signs, symbols, and expressions in everyday life, and the proliferation of religious specialists with multiplex<sup>25</sup> roles in society at large, "sectarian" social organization and culture is characterized by dual religious organization. This dual religious organization contrasts with the religious organization of established religion, that of the Sunni Muslims. The Sunnis, according to Khuri, were the one religious category able to develop an organization suitable to accommodating state organization since, historically, in most countries of the Arab world they were the ruling elite who developed a centralized state system in the context of societies whose populations were relatively dense and stable. Since they were the ruling elite and they shaped state organization in their societies, the two hierarchies, govern-

mental and religious, were merged with the category of religious scholars, *'ulema*, having second rank.

By contrast, the sects maintained a balanced, dual worldview and organization (as between state and religious leadership) with three subtypes: a relationship of antagonism and conflict (Zaydis and 'Ibadis); a blended dualism (Yazidis); and a relationship of complementary separation (Alawis, Druze, and Maronites). It is not possible to examine these subtypes in detail here, except to say that it is well known that there has been continuous conflict in both Yemen and Oman between leadership based on religious law (the rule of the imam), leadership based on tribal leaders (*shaykh*), and sporadically a tribal despot (sultan).

The Alawis, on the other hand, like the Druze and Maronites, ideologically define religion and polity as unitary but separate functionally. That is, the "religious sheikhs," the keepers and disseminators of esoteric religious knowledge, are separate from the mundane hierarchy of competing tribal, clan, and subsect coalitions (see Khuri, this volume). But there is a grafting and overlapping at the top level between mundane and religious leadership precisely because, ideologically, there is no separation of religious institution and state, and, as Khuri has astutely observed, the supreme leader of the sect takes on at once attributes of the imam and the hero. Khuri's conclusion is most important for all who wish to understand political life in contemporary Syrian society, and the role of religion and ethnicity within it: "Whoever emerges as a strong, unmatched leader defending Alawi rights, consolidating their power and unity, maintaining cohesion and solidarity, is given a religious meaning, and becomes a historic symbol" (Khuri, this volume).

There is one other clear implication of Khuri's analysis for the role of Alawis in contemporary Syrian life. It has often been repeated that the Alawis represent a small minority of the Syrian population, one that emerged as dominant in government and polity as a result of its control of the army. However, the key to Alawi power and influence may be more their organization as a sect with certain territorial, demographic, ideological, spatial, and historical attributes that both allow and constrain a sectarian unity even in the presence of intrasectarian tribal and factional divisions. It is the same "religious sheikhs" who achieve prominence by their progressive withdrawal from society, including political affairs, for the pursuit of religious knowledge, and who practice austerity and monasticism, who also serve as the points of unity in a factionalized ethnic group.

It is not the purpose of this brief interpretive essay to do justice to Battatu's, Drysdale's, Sadowski's, and particularly Khuri's analyses. However, if the essay has succeeded in awakening the reader to the im-

portance of exploring ethnicity, patrimonialism, and class in Syria, on the one hand in wider spatial and historical contexts, and on the other exploring them with a more detailed focus on religious ideology and culture, and their intimate ties to political structure and process, it will have served a secondary but nevertheless useful purpose.