



Islamic Education in Syria: Undoing Secularism

Joshua M. Landis ^{*)}

^{*)} Penulis adalah Assistant Professor of History and School for International and Area Studies di University of Oklahoma, e-mail: landis@ou.edu. Artikel ini disajikan dalam Seminar "Constructs of Inclusion and Exclusion: Religion and Identity Formation in Middle Eastern School Curricula" di Watson Institute for International Studies Brown University, November 2003.

Abstrak: Pendidikan Islam di Syria adalah bagian dari strategi besar negara tersebut menuju *nation-building*. Sejalan dengan kebijakan pemerintah untuk mengeliminasi semua perbedaan di antara bangsa Syria, pengajaran Islam di sekolah menanamkan ajaran Islam Sunni kepada semua muslim Syria tanpa memandang suku. Namun, kurikulum agama ini berkebalikan dengan agenda pemerintah menuju sekularisme. Kurikulum agama Islam mengajarkan ketidaksetaraan di antara bangsa Syria yang beragama Islam dan non-Islam. Ketidaksetaraan ini, yang menyebabkan perlakuan yang berbeda terhadap non-muslim, menjadikan mereka merasa tidak nyaman, dan pada akhirnya gelombang imigrasi ke negara lain pun terus terjadi. **Kata Kunci:** Pendidikan Islam, sekularisme, non-muslim.

Islamic Education in Syria: Undoing Secularism¹

Islamic education in Syrian schools is traditional, rigid, and Sunni. The Ministry of Education makes no attempt to inculcate notions of tolerance or respect for religious traditions other than Sunni Islam. Christianity is the one exception to this rule. Indeed, all religious groups other than Christians are seen to be enemies of Islam, who must be converted or fought against. The Syrian government teaches school children that over half of the world's six billion inhabitants will go to hell and must be actively fought by Muslims. Jews have their own status. The Jewish religion – the Torah and the Jewish prophets – are considered divine – but the Jewish people, who, it is claimed, deny their prophets, are fated to go to hell and must be eliminated.

At first view, one might expect Syria to promote a liberal and tolerant view of religious difference in its religion curriculum. The reasons for this are many. Syria has been ruled by leaders belonging to a religious minority, the Muslim Alawi sect, for 40 years and is home to many religious minorities both Christian and Muslim. It plays a commanding role in the politics of Lebanon, a country in which no more than 20% of the population is Sunni Muslim. Most importantly, Syria has been good to its minorities, who enjoy greater security and opportunity than in any other Arab country. Nevertheless, Syria has chosen not to follow a path of religious liberalism. Instead, it has pursued an integralist policy of nation-building for the last 40 years under the Ba'ath Party. The Asads have struggled to be good Sunnis, not to make Sunnis into good liberals.

One can only wonder how long Syria's reputation for tolerance and willingness to protect religious minorities will survive its Alawite ascendancy. Once the Alawis lose power and are unable to protect minorities, the education Syrians acquire in school will not contribute to the continuation of policies of religious inclusion and tolerance. Since coming to power in 2000, Bashar al-Asad has made a number of promises to reform the Syrian education system, including curricular reform of religious education. So far, however, the Islamic textbooks used in the mandatory religion instruction in Syrian schools have been little changed.



History of the Syrian School System and the Religion Curriculum

Religious education in Syria is an integral aspect of the curriculum. Every student studies either Christianity or Islam for two to three hours a week from the first grade to the twelfth. Although religion classes are compulsory, the grade is not calculated in the students' main annual grade-point average. If a student fails religion class (*suff ad-diyana*), he is not prevented from passing into the next year, as he would be if he failed Arabic for example. If, however, the student fails two classes including religion, he or she is held back a year. When applying to university, a student's grade point average is calculated without the inclusion of his grade for religion class. Even sports classes and military training (*futuwwa*) are given more importance than religion class; their grades are factored into the students' average. Consequently, many smart students stop studying for religion by their senior year, knowing that a low or failing grade in religion will not prevent them getting into top university programs. Also, religion is usually taught as the last subject in the school day, when students are tired and have trouble concentrating – an indication of the subject's overall lack of importance within the curriculum. Although religion class is an essential part of the Syrian curriculum throughout the twelve years of elementary and secondary school training, many students consider it the least important of their classes and remember little of the actual content.

The Genesis of Arabist and Sunni Islamic Orthodoxy

The present school system was established in 1967, when Syria signed the Arab Cultural Unity Agreement with Jordan and Egypt. It introduced a uniform school ladder in the three countries – six years of primary, three years of lower secondary, and three years of higher secondary schooling. It also established norms for universal curricula, examination procedures, and teacher training requirements for each level.²

Many textbooks, printed in Egypt, were used for years in Jordanian and Syrian schools. They established an academic orthodoxy that guides textbook production today. The genesis of this Arab nationalist school system during the time of Nasser helps explain much of the pan-Arab and Sunni rigidity in the Syrian curriculum. In order to promote cultural and political unity among the Arab peoples, Nasser's academics hued to a narrow and integralist vision of Arabism just as they reduced Islam to the simple and rigid prescriptions of Sunni orthodoxy. They believed that to discuss the regional differences between Arabs and the sectarian differences between Muslims would open the door to internecine squabbling and discrimination, rather than promote tolerance and ultimate cohesion among Arabs. Perhaps they believed that to air one's differences would help the enemy to divide and conquer?

Whatever the reason, the pan-Arab nationalist and Sunni Islamic orthodoxy in Arab pedagogy was consolidated in 1967 and has remained a barrier to liberalism and the open discussion of religious and national diversity ever since. For Syria's Alawite leaders to back away from this orthodoxy is politically dangerous. To dismantle Nasser's curriculum and to attack Sunni orthodoxy in the school system would cast doubt on their nationalist and Islamic credentials. The Asads have sought to conform to majority Sunni notions of Islam, rather than to enforce secularism or western notions of separation between church and state. The religious conservatism of the regime became



pronounced following the Muslim Brother uprising in the early 1980s and is unlikely to change in the face of increased Israeli and US pressure.

Public and Private Schools

In the fall of 1967 following the Six Day War, over 300 Christian schools and some 75 private Muslim schools were nationalized.³ The nationalization of schools in Syria was a major blow to elite families and in particular to the Christian community. Private schools were largely based on a Western model and often provided by foreign missions. They were of a superior standard and their nationalization contributed to the near extinction of foreign language fluency among a generation of Syrian school children. Some argue that their nationalization contributed to the emigration of a great number of Christian families.⁴

Since then, education has been largely public, though middle and upper class Christians in the major cities managed to preserve or revive a number of excellent private parochial schools. In the last five or six years, wealthy Syrians of all confessions have been building private schools in major Syrian cities to accommodate the growing demand for superior and expensive education since the early 1990s. Some of these, such as the Shwayfat school of Damascus, funded by business men Rami Makhoul and Nadir Qala'i, have been extremely successful and attract children from wealthy families. Today, some 10% of secondary schools are privately funded.⁵ Whether a student goes to public or private school, however, does not make a difference to his religious education: all must follow the same national curriculum.⁶

Illiteracy rates have been falling steadily in Syria, a country with 17 million inhabitants. The government is among the best in the Arab World at providing basic education to its citizens. Today, most Syrians are literate and go to school for more years than they have at any time in their history. According to World Bank statistics, some 93% of Syrian children enroll in primary school, although only 38% continue on through secondary school.⁷ In 2002, the government extended mandatory school attendance from the sixth to the ninth grade. The government has also undertaken an ambitious plan, backed by UNESCO, to extend preschooling into the countryside. This will inevitably reduce the illiteracy rate of Syrians, which in 2002 stood at 24% for those over 15 years of age in the general population and at 37% among women. All school-going Syrians, except for the Christians, who make up between 10% and 14% of the population, receive formal training in Islam. This means that some 82% of Syrians receive some Islamic religious instruction, although a majority does not continue on to high school. Syria's Islamic minorities – Alawis (12%), Druze (3%), and Isma'ilis (1%) study from the same texts as other Muslims. Christians beginning in the first grade are divided into their own religion classes. The only recognized religions in the Syrian school system are Islam and Christianity.

Islamic versus Arab Identity

This study is based on seven school texts prepared for the 2002-2003 school year by the Ministry of Education. All are entitled: Islamic Education. I have used the texts for the 4th, 5th, 7th, 9th, 10th, 11th, and 12th grades. The 4th grade text is 150 pages long and each successive text adds a few pages until reaching 240 pages in the 12th grade.



Syria as a nation is not mentioned in the six texts. Only Arab and Islamic identities are evoked in Syria's Islamic textbooks and they are closely linked. Ba'thism is often referred to as a secular movement and non-religious version of Arab nationalism, but this is not true. More precisely, the Ba'th was forced to back away from its initial secular assertions, due to pressure from the Sunni majority. This process began with the founders of Ba'thist thought, Michel 'Aflaq and Zaki al-Arsuzi, both of whom stressed that the essential values and mission of Ba'thism were identical to those of Islam. Both stressed the umma arabiyya, or Arab community, as the proper unit of analysis, both called for struggle against outsiders and alien influences, and both stressed that their message was the eternal message of the Arab nation no different in its values from that of Islam. It was to be a beacon of hope for the rest of humanity. The outlines of their nationalist philosophy followed those of Islam closely. The content was changed to center on the Arab rather than Islamic community, but the categories remained largely the same. The close identity between Arabism and Islam adumbrated by the founders of Ba'thism helps to explain why the two so easily coincide in the Syrian schoolbooks. In the school texts, Islam is given primacy over Arabism as the engine of Arab greatness and virtue.

Islam directed the Arabs along a more "positive, refined, and advanced" path (12:154). It also united them as a people and gave them a single objective, which was to carry the Islamic message to other peoples so they might be elevated by Islam as well. Today, it is the responsibility of "the Arabs to carry the Islamic message to the entire world," because it is the highest form of humanity. This mission is more important today than ever before, the twelfth grade text explains, because the world is now in a crisis of "complete materialism" and faces many "disasters, catastrophes and problems." Chief among them is the evil of nuclear destruction (12:156). These dangers threaten to destroy human values, but they can be turned back if people embrace the "spiritual and human values of Islam" (12:156). "It is the duty of the Arab World to save humanity and human values" (12:156). Although Arabs had certain virtues before the advent of Islam, their religion set them on the divine path of saving humanity. To be an Arab is good, but to be a Muslim is better, and being both is the best.

The Foundations of Islamic Government

The government is to be an Islamic State without separation of church and state. The student is constantly reminded that the Islamic state is a divine order whose wisdom, justice, and laws are imposed by God. The chapter of the twelfth grade text entitled, "The System of Government in Islam," concludes with the following sentences:

We can summarize everything in this chapter by explaining that this system is a divine system of independent laws and principles. It has its own characteristics and unique benefits because it is the imprint of God (12:173)

Although the texts make no mention of "democracy" or "republicanism," they do insist on consultation and popular participation in government. All the same, when faced with the ultimate question of who should rule – man or God – God naturally wins out. The Islamic ruler must confer with and be guided by a shura or advisory council as well as by the people (12:168-171; 9:130). We



are told that “the Islamic community implements its power to choose its leader by voting and the free expression of opinion,” but the consultative process is not described in detail (12:170). The ruler’s term of office is not limited to a defined period, but can be extended indefinitely so long as the people support the ruler. An Islamic ruler should take advice from his advisory council, which should be made up of “men of religion and fiqh and of people who have specialties in all different walks of life” (12:171). The primary duty of the ruler is to “follow the book of Allah and the Sunna of his Messenger by implementing Islamic life in all different fields, and he must protect Islam from its internal and external enemies” (12:171). Though the ruler must be a Muslim and must know “the aims and judgments of shari‘a law,” the texts do not explicitly state that he must have formally studied Islam or be an Imam (12:170-171). All the same, knowledge of Islam and its laws is the major qualification for all politicians and state employees.

Christians and Jews as Protected Communities

Christian and Jewish citizens of the Islamic state enjoy certain rights as dhimma (a protected community) equal to those of Muslims. In a section entitled, “the rights of non-Muslim citizens,” the authors explain that non-Muslim minorities are called “ahl al-dhimma for whom Islam has organized many rights in addition to general human rights.” The most important of these are “equality between them and Muslims in terms of protection of life, money, and honor; freedom of religious belief, worship, and practice; and the freedom to apply personal law according to their beliefs.”

Equal political rights, as opposed to civil and religious rights, are not extended to dhimma, however, as Muslims are to rule. The executive and the judicial branches of government should be staffed by Muslims. The legislature is not forbidden to dhimma, for the shura is to be open to people of diverse qualifications in order to represent the needs and experience of the community. All the same, because the leading qualification for a deputy is knowledge of Islam and fiqh, non-Muslims are put at a distinct disadvantage. Quite clearly the notion of an Islamic state implies that non-Muslims are second class citizens, who participate only tangentially in directing and carrying out the affairs of state. Although protected, they cannot lead.

Heaven is accessible to Christians but denied to Jews. We are told that the first people to cross into heaven at the Day of Judgment are “Muhammad and his people.” They are succeeded by “the prophets and their followers (10: 153).” This means the followers of Moses and Jesus and indicates that all people of the book – Christians and Jews – can go to heaven. However, in an earlier section of the tenth grade text, we are told that the tribe of Israel “does not respect prophets for they killed some of them and maligned others, such as when they accused Moses of killing Aaron, committing adultery, and of having defects of the body.” Because of these sins, we are told, “the tribe of Israel deserves God’s tortures,” i.e. to go to hell (10: 82-83). Thus, Jews do not go to heaven even if their prophets do. We must conclude that heaven is open to Christians but closed to Jews.

The texts deal with religious sectarianism as every literalist must – by blaming bad blood and squabbling between the sects on the non-believers for failing to recognize the true faith. The Syrian texts decry sectarianism (ta’ifiyya) and the spirit of chauvinism it produces; yet they also insist that



Islam is the best and most complete religion. This contradiction is clearly expressed in the following passage of the ninth grade text:

Faith in all the prophets and divine books ends hateful religious and sectarian divisions. The reason for sending different prophets in different ages was to gradually prepare humanity to accept religion and to be able to discern the most complete religious message, which is Islam. The reason for this was not to spread the spirit of division between people, because God definitely did not intend that (9:110).

Clearly, the difference in the treatment between Christians and Jews is political. Because the Christian population of Syria has supported the state and is important in size (in 1947 it was estimated at 14 per cent of the total and today not less than 6.5 per cent) it is favored with entrance to heaven.⁸ The Jews are reviled and excluded from heaven in the Islamic textbooks because of Syria's bitter war with Israel. To Syria's credit, it must be stated, that no other Arab country, as far as I can tell, expressly states in its Islamic classes that Christians will go to heaven. Saudi Arabia, by contrast, condemns Christians to damnation and categorizes them as unbelievers (kuffar).⁹

Atheists and Pagans

At the very bottom of the hierarchy beneath the revealed religions of the "people of the book," are the belief systems of the rest of humanity, who are categorized as "Atheists and Pagans." Only one paragraph is devoted to them in the twelve years of Syrian schooling and it is tucked away in the ninth grade text under the subtitle, "Islam Fights Paganism and Atheism." It explains that "pagans are those who worship something other than God, and atheists are those who deny the existence of God." Islam must fight these two belief systems because they "are an assault to both instinct and truth." We are told that these belief systems "contradict the principle of freedom of belief." This is because "Islam gives freedom of belief only within the limits of the divine path," which "means a religion descended from heaven." Because pagan religions were not revealed by God, they are considered an "inferior" form of belief that reflects an "animal consciousness." How should Muslims deal with these peoples who comprise half of humanity? Students are instructed that "Islam accepts only two choices for Pagans: that they convert to Islam or be killed (9:128)." The Islam of Syrian texts does not have a happy formula for dealing with non-believers. Perhaps in recognition of this failing, the ministry of education has buried a mere six sentences on the subject into the middle of its ninth grade text.

Jihad and Israel

The notion of jihad and the struggle against Israel are closely linked in most of the Syrian texts. In the chapter entitled, "Jihad in the Name of God," in the ninth grade textbook, students are taught the difference between jihad when it is a fard kifayya (general duty) when only some Muslims from society are needed to fight the enemy (those serving in the military) and fard 'ayn, when every Muslim – soldier and civilian – must engage in the struggle, whether by offering money for the war effort or by actually engaging in battle personally. Students are taught that at the present time, jihad is a fard 'ayn and imposed on everyone. The text explains:

Our jihad duty today is a fard 'ayn because our countries have been exposed to enemy attack and because part of our land has been occupied by Zionist gangs which threaten our very existence. It is



therefore the duty of every Muslim to unite in one rank to take back his land and honor by every means possible (9:166).

They learn how the president and state reward the families of those who have given their lives to defend the homeland and compatriots. Even if Syria as a nation is not referred to, the president makes cameo appearances from time to time, as in the following paragraph in the ninth grade text.

The president-leader takes unlimited care of the families of martyrs in order to guarantee a life of freedom and honor for them, both financially and socially. The children of martyrs are provided with special care, education, and upbringing. The children of martyrs are given special schools with the most modern methods and ways of teaching. Last but not least, their residences are provided free (9:79).

Although Asadism is manifest in the Syrian religious texts, references to the president are infrequent and have no comparison with the Iraqi schoolbooks in which Saddam Hussein was featured even in the most mundane exercises.¹⁰

Peace would call into doubt emergency rule and notions of perpetual revolution and sacrifice that bolster Ba'athi rule, not to mention the many injunctions against trusting Jews and allowing them to continue their occupation of Islamic lands.¹¹ Many Arabs argue against this dire interpretation. Once the leaders decide they want peace and negotiate with Israel, they will rip up the textbooks and write new ones. We used to have the same anti-Semitism in our textbooks before peace. Did it stop us? No. It is up to the leaders. They will do what they want. Don't worry about the textbooks.¹²

Colonialism and the Backwardness of the Islamic World

Backwardness in the Islamic World, Syrian students are instructed, is due to the incorrect understanding of Islam caused by colonialists and their agents. The ninth grade text states:

“The primary reason for backwardness in our society is the incorrect understanding of Islam. This is because the colonialist and his agents have perverted some aspects of Islam and caused false understandings of the true path in order to distance Muslims from science and productive work in all fields of life” (9:161).

What are some of these perversions? The ninth grade text gives several examples of verses from the Quran that are widely misunderstood. All have to do with the notions of fate and free will. The texts claim that many Muslims believe that they don't have to work in this life because God will provide for them. Another misconception that leads to inactivity among Muslims is the belief that leading a pious life means renouncing the present world including hard work and study. Students are advised that hard work and study are forms of worship and a means to get into heaven (9:162).

Alawis, Druze, and Isma'ilis

Over 16% of Syrians are heterodox Muslims, yet no mention of the different sects of Islam is made in the textbooks. Not only are Alawites, Druze, and Isma'ilis not mentioned, but no mention is made of Shi'a Islam as a whole. Islam is presented as a monolithic religion and Sunni Islam is it. Sunni children are given no guidance on how they should relate to or think of Muslims whose ritual practices and interpretation of the Quran differ from their own. It is quite common in Syria to hear Sunnis claim that heterodox Muslims, whether Druze, Isma'ilis, or Alawis, are ghulat (theological extremists) or arfad (apostates) and not Muslims because they do not perform the five pillars of Islam



and because they are ‘abadat al-bashar or worshipers of humans. This is a reference to the Druze deification of al-Hakim, the Alawi deification of Ali, and the Isma’ili worship of the Agha Khan – all of whom are considered purely mortal by Sunnis, just as Christ is. The accusation that heterodox Muslims are polytheists and enemies of Islam is an old one, but not yet a wholly academic issue. The Muslim Brothers made these accusations a central justification for their uprising against the Asad regime in 1981-82, and such accusations remain potentially explosive should political instability return to Syria.

Druze in Syria define themselves as Muslims and are officially categorized as such, they are not viewed as Muslims by many Syrians. They are also set apart by having their own Druze religious courts (madhhabi), granted them under the French and officially recognized by the Syrian government in 1948 following the Druze uprising of 1947.¹³ Evidently, the Druze were also offered the opportunity to have their own religion classes taught in schools in the Druze Mountains, but refused because Druze shaykhs wished to preserve the traditional secrecy of their religion.¹⁴

All other Muslims, including the heterodox sects, were grouped together in the 1953 Law of Personal Status passed under President Shishakli. Based on Egyptian example, this law integrated all Muslims, except the Druze, into one synthetic court system based on Hanafi law and makes no distinction between them.¹⁵ Alawis, who insisted they belong to the Ja’afari Shi’a mathhab (Twelver Shi’a Islam) as early as 1920, despite French attempts to encourage them to define themselves as a separate religion, have persisted in their drive to be recognized as main-stream Muslims ever since.¹⁶

The Muslim identity of Alawites in Syria is practically impossible to define because open debate about sectarian questions is discouraged. Alawite scholars claim publicly that differences between their practices and those of Twelver Shi’ites are due to ignorance on the part of some Alawites due to long years of oppression.¹⁷ The attempt at religious conformism by Alawis raises the question of how the socialization process, of which the religious curriculum is a part, actually works.

To be Arab, in the end, you have to be Muslim; everything else is not that important. Ultimately, Islam is the measurement of ‘Aruba (Arabism). A big part of the rejection of the Christians as Arabs is their feeling of belonging (intima’), which is not Arab. Their blood isn’t Arab, their religion isn’t Arab. They feel connected to Europe and France. Why do they immigrate to Canada, America, and Europe? Muslims get rejected for immigration because they aren’t part of the West, but Christians are part of it. Ninety percent of the immigrants from Latakia that I know are Christians. It is their big ambition to go to America. And they are Easterners like us. Why? They live very well in Syria. They are better off than most of us. It’s not because of economic need.

The profound impact of religious education on identity is readily apparent when one considers the dramatic change in religious attitudes within the Asad family itself. Hafiz al-Asad’s father, Sulayman, did not believe that the Alawites would ever be accepted in Muslim Syria, consequently he signed, along with five other Alawite notables, a letter to the French asking that the Alawite territory be attached to Lebanon and not to Syria. The petition explained his view that:

The Alawites refuse to be annexed to Muslim Syria because, in Syria, the official religion of the state is Islam, and according to Islam, the Alawites are considered infidels.... The spirit of hatred and fanaticism imbedded in the hearts of the Arab Muslims against everything that is non Muslim has been perpetually nurtured by the Islamic religion. There is no hope that the situation will ever change. Therefore, the



abolition of the Mandate will expose the minorities in Syria to the dangers of death and annihilation, not to mention that it will annihilate the freedom of thought and belief.¹⁸

Conclusion

Syria's Islamic education, which is mandatory in all grades of primary and secondary education, is part of the government's larger strategy of nation-building. Since the Ba'th Party came to power in the 1960s at the height of the region's pan-Arab nationalist ascendancy, its members have committed the government to a policy of eliminating all sub-national differences among Syrians, whether they spring from regionalism, economic class, tribalism, or religion. Islamic instruction in Syrian schools serves this integralist agenda by inculcating a narrow brand of Sunni Islam on all Syrian Muslims regardless of sect. Though many of the textbooks have been rewritten since the 1960s, and all have undergone revisions, the main thrust of Syria's educational project has changed little since it was first established in 1967.

It should be noted that Syria has not ceded the Ministry of Education to extremist clerics as have some other Middle Eastern countries. The textbooks espouse an Islam that is traditional and Sunni, but not "fundamentalist". The government killed close to 20,000 in its campaign against the Muslim Brotherhood in the 1980s and has since pursued an unwavering policy of stamping out fundamentalist opposition, at times, working closely with the United States. A clear sign that radical Islamists have not had a hand in defining the curriculum is that absence of notions of takfir, or declaring others to be unbelievers, as expressed by radicals, such as Sayyid Qutb or Bin Laden. Jihad, though widely discussed and advocated in the texts, is limited to Israel, Syria's national enemy. The West is not singled out for jihad or described as unbelieving.

The irony in Syria is that so long as minorities have the upper hand in politics, reform of the religious curriculum is unlikely. The political arrangement in Syria, as it now stands, is for the Alawi president to mollify the Sunni population and the ulema by allowing them a free hand in public instruction while curtailing their political influence. The insecurity of the Alawi community's own Islamic identity severely limits the President's ability to tinker with Islamic instruction. In fact, it creates a dynamic in which the ulema who cooperate with the government feel compelled to conservatism in order to preserve their dignity in front of a public which questions the Islamic status of the Alawis.

Due to the rise of political Islam in the Islamic World, liberalization seems a distant possibility. Other "secular" states in the region, such as Egypt, have ceded greater influence to conservative Muslims in education despite having Sunni rulers. The future likelihood in Syria is that non-Muslims will continue to immigrate to countries that offer them citizenship with equality as they are doing throughout the region.²⁰

Endnote

¹ I would like to thank my wife, Manar Kachour Landis, for explaining the Syrian education system to me and for assisting in the research for this article in numerous ways.

² Syria online.

³ Library of Congress Country Studies. "Syria Education."



⁴ Mouawad, "Syria and Iraq".

⁵ The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, *Jews, Zionism and Israel in Syrian Textbooks*, 2002.

⁶ Explained to me by Dima Kashour who taught at Shwayfat.

⁷ World Bank - "Syrian Republic Data Profile".

⁸ Fargues, "Les chrétiens arabes d'Orient: une perspective démographique," pp. 59-78.

⁹ The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, "The West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks."

¹⁰ Tierney, "Zionist Intruders".

¹¹ Wurmser, *The Schools of Ba'athism*, 54.

¹² Interview with Dr. Munthar Haddadin in Norman, Oklahoma, September 12, 2003.

¹³ Landis, "Shishakli and the Druzes."

¹⁴ Interview with Ihsan Janbay, Oklahoma City, April 15, 2003.

¹⁵ Anderson, "Syrian Law of Personal Status."

¹⁶ On the Alawis under the French see, Landis, *Nationalism*, Chap. 2. On the effort of Alawites to gain recognition as Twelver Shiites, see Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry*, and Kramer, "Syria's Alawis."

¹⁷ al 'Alawi writes in *Al 'Alawiyyun*, p. 12: "The Alawites are nothing but Twelver, Imami Shiites. If some heterodoxy has appeared among the uneducated members of the community, that is of no account, for the value of a people, their religion, and their culture cannot ultimately be based on the actions of the ignorant among them. The Alawites do not differ from Shiites except that some of them adhere to the *tariqa al Janblaniyya* which is a Sufi *tariqa* like all other Sufi *tariqas*.... in which some of the beliefs of the prophet's house have been added. Yes, the most that can be held against the Alawites is that some have constructed cultic shrines, but we believe that this would not have happened if the community had not suffered through an oppressive period of history during which the conditions of the community were terrible. The greatest proof of this can be found in the conditions existing today: they have built mosques, they pray, give alms, and go on pilgrimage to the holy city.... They have performed the duties of God ever since the mantle of oppression and injustice was lifted from their shoulders and began to enjoy a bit of freedom."

¹⁸ Matti Moosa, *Extremist Shiites: The Ghulat Sects* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 1988), pp. 287-88.

¹⁹ MEMRI, "Iraqi Press," September 5, 2003.

²⁰ Charles M. Sennott, *The Body and the Blood: The Middle East's Vanishing Christians and the Possibility for Peace*, Public Affairs, 2002.

Sources

al-'Alawi, 'Ali 'Aziz Ibrahim. 1972. *Al 'Alawiyyun, Fida'iyyu al Shi'a al Majhulun*. Lebanon: n.p.

Anderson, J.N.D. 1955. "The Syrian Law of Personal Status," *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*. London: Vol. 17, pp. 34-59.

Batatu, Hanna. 1999. *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Fargues, Philippe. 1997. "Les chrétiens arabes d'Orient: une perspective démographique," *Les communautés chrétiennes dans le monde musulman arabe*, ed. Andréa Pacini. Beirut: Proche-Orient Chrétien Ste. Anne- ISSR.

<http://www.edume.org/reports/6/toc.htm>

. "The West, Christians and Jews in Saudi Arabian Schoolbooks," <http://www.edume.org/reports/report1.htm>, 2002.

Kramer, Martin. 1987. "Syria's Alawis and Shi'ism," in *Shi'ism, Resistance, and Revolution*, ed. M. Kramer. Boulder: Westview; London: Mansell.

Landis, Joshua. 1997. *Nationalism and the Politics of Za'ama: the Collapse of Republican Syria, 1945-1949*. Ph.D. dissertation. Princeton University.



- . 1998. "Shishakli and the Druzes: Integration and Intransigence," in T. Philipp & B. Schäbler, eds., *The Syrian Land: Processes of Integration and Fragmentation in Bilad al-Sham from the 18th to the 20th Century*. Stuttgart.
- Library of Congress Country Studies, "Syria Education." Viewed on September 8, 2003.
[http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field\(DOCID+sy0054\)](http://lcweb2.loc.gov/cgi-bin/query/r?frd/cstdy:@field(DOCID+sy0054))
- Mouawad, Ray J. 2001. "Syria and Iraq – Repression," *Middle East Quarterly*, Winter, Volume VIII: Number 1. Syria online, Viewed on September 5, 2003. <http://www.syriaonline.com/education.htm>
- The Center for Monitoring the Impact of Peace, "Jews, Zionism and Israel in Syrian Textbooks," 2002.
- The Middle East Media Research Institute, "Editorials from the New Iraqi Press," *Special Dispatch Series* - No. 568, Dispatch (7), September 5, 2003, viewed October 3, 2003, <http://www.memri.org/bin/articles.cgi?Page=countries&Area=iraq&ID=SP56803>
- Tierney, John. 2003. "See Jane Run From the Zionist Intruders," New York Times, read on October 5, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/10/05/weekinreview/05WORD.html>
- World Bank - "Syrian Republic Data Profile," source, World Development Indicators Database, August 2003, viewed on Sept. 28, 2003, <http://devdata.worldbank.org/external/CPProfile.asp?CCODE=SYR&PTYPE=CP>
- Wurmser, Meyrav. 2000. *The Schools of Ba'athism: A Study of Syrian Textbooks*. Washington: Middle East Media Research Institute.