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Druze Shaykhs, Arab Nationalists and Grain Merchants

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IN 1925, A LOCAL DRUZE LEADER led a major revolt against the French mandate in Syria. The revolt began in the rural Druze homeland of Jabal Hawran, but it soon spread to most of the area under French control, including parts of the new state of Greater Lebanon. The uprising was the most significant challenge to French rule during the two and a half decades of the mandate (1920-46). The Syrian participants in the revolt—and many, though not all, historians since then—have argued that the uprising was a forceful expression of Syrian Arab nationalist feeling and aspirations. The participants in the revolt called it *al-thawra al-Sūriyya al-waṭaniyya*. French scholars and colonial civil servants called it the Druze revolt and claimed that it was a reaction of backward Druze feudal lords against the enlightened reforms of French mandatory officials. The 1925 uprising was the largest anti-government revolt to emerge in the Druze region, but it was not the first.¹

There had been many uprisings against the previous Ottoman government in the Hawran. Earlier revolts mobilized varying segments among the Hawran Druze and sometimes other local inhabitants against Istanbul and its representatives. The 1925 uprising, however, was the first general 'Syrian' uprising and the first to utilize nationalist language. Among the many written accounts of the 1925 uprising, only those of the French emphasize the sectarian identity of the rebels. For the French, it was always the 'Druze Revolt.'² For the people who took part, Druze, Muslim and even Christian, it was the 'Syrian Nationalist Revolution.' Between 1917 and 1925, Syrian nationalism supplanted Druze particularism as the language of revolt in Jabal Hawran. This paper examines some of the ways in which this change came about.³

In 1925, the leader of the insurgency, Sultan al-Atrash, was 35 years old and had already been involved in 15 years of agitation against the Ottomans and the French in turn. His anti-government campaigns against

outside rule and colonial occupation were not universally popular in Jabal Hawran and, in 1925, as before, opposition to his efforts came from within his own family. The Atrash were the leading family of the region, but they were not united in their approach to outside authority. In 1918, on the eve of the Ottoman defeat in World War I, Sultan al-Atrash aligned himself and his followers with Emir Faysal ibn Husayn and, through him, with Great Britain. On this occasion, his stance also provoked influential opposition from his own family. I shall argue that, in 1918, both Sultan and his main rival, Salim al-Atrash, were principally preoccupied with the interests and preservation of their Druze community. Their rivalry was based upon differences in definition, not intent.

In unsettled and uncertain times, ideologies, identities and politics are changeable and fluid. People can and do hold widely differing positions simultaneously and with utter conviction. By insisting upon the changeable nature of political tactics, ideology and identity, I am not suggesting that the beliefs of Salim or Sultan al-Atrash—or their followers—were not sincerely held. I do not wish to argue, for example, that Sultan al-Atrash was not a genuine Syrian nationalist or to claim, as his Druze rivals did at the time, that he was unconcerned with the communal welfare of his coreligionists. What I would like to point out is that factional struggles among the Druze emerged not principally from ambition or personal rivalry, but from competing and rapidly-changing notions of community, identity and communal welfare. It is evident that, in 1918, both Sultan and Salim were concerned with the interests and welfare of their community, despite their bitter disagreements. It is likewise evident that, at some undefined point, Sultan expanded his notion of the community and its welfare to include much of the new Syrian nation beyond Jabal Hawran.

In 1925, mandate apologists argued that rebels fought to preserve Druze feudal privileges. Ottoman and Damascene opponents of an earlier generation of Druze rebels made similar arguments.⁴ Conversely, Druze critics and rivals claimed that rebel leaders, both in 1925 and before, were insufficiently concerned with Druze communal welfare. Others claimed that the Druze rebels pursued a strictly sectarian agenda and that those non-Druze who followed them had been tricked. Likewise, rebel leaders questioned the patriotism of their more cautious brethren, both among the Druze and, in 1925, among the larger Syrian population.

In September 1918, Emir Salim al-Atrash, titular head (*shaykh al-mashāykh*) of the Hawran Druze, wrote a letter to his cousin, Sultan al-Atrash. The letter was a sarcastic response to Sultan's agitation in the Jabal on behalf of Emir Faysal ibn Husayn's revolt against the Ottoman state.

25 September 1918

To the leader of the great Druze army, Sultan Pasha:

I was informed of your message to the villagers [of a list of villages] asking them to join you in Busra Eski Sham with the sharif. You must stop your endless revenge against the Ottoman state. Our noble ancestors were divided between the British and the [Ottoman] state. You must not divide the Druze again. The [people] have rejected and turned away from your furious excesses and outrages.

[If you do not reject revolt,] we will expel you from the community.

Do not be fooled by illusions. You have deceived the people by claiming that Nablus has fallen with 30,000 prisoners. We do not know this.

Before anyone understands what is really happening, you are trying to convince the ignorant Druze to join the 'snuffbox army' of the sharif.

You must know that, if you continue, both your village and your huge army will be destroyed.

We are not disloyal and our ancestors were not disloyal. They were firmly behind the throne of the state in the time of Sultan Salim [against the Mamluks] and during the time of Ibrahim Pasha al-Masri. This was the way of our ancestors: to fortify the besieged; not your way: the way of disloyalty for money and of subverting the feelings of the community. Division is not the way of our ancestors.

Salim al-Atrash

Sultan al-Atrash replied the following day.

26 September 1918

To the leader of the Turkish army, Salim Pasha al-Atrash:

Today I was informed of your fraudulent letter, which was dictated to you by the Turks. I wanted to answer every bit, but my time is too valuable to permit it, especially since you commemorate the dying Turkish state and describe it using words that even the [state's servants] do not themselves use, since they admit the state's impotence.

As for your charges, honoured cousin, it is not we who are disloyal. We have not dined at the Damascus Palace Hotel or entered the garden of the municipal *sarāy*. And we have not met any Turk, the murderers of our fathers, and those who disgraced our country.

Read the poems of your grandfather, Shibli, [that] great man of the Druze, who is calling you from his tomb and who told you that you must arm yourself against your enemy, [not against] your friend, and take caution with the treacherous and tyrannical Turks.

We declare a sacred war against the starving remnants of the Turkish army. We advise you to be wise enough to save your remorse. It will not help.

The news that we heard of the fall of Nablus and the victory in Tiberias is [that they came] at the hand of the state of the world, the master of the seas, Great Britain, our old friend.

As far as the destruction of our community (*tā'ifat al-Durūz*) is concerned, this news [from Nablus] is reality; it is not news manufactured in Germany or by Ottoman intelligence. It is accurate information.

If you desire the greatest air force in the world, we can deliver it to you. As for the wireless and the telephone, and all of the most advanced means of communication, they are at our disposal because ours is the faction of God. Praise God, the exalted master of all.

As for your debased Turks, '*Malta yok*,' in other words, everything they [offer] is lacking, even bread. In the name of our noble family, I will not depart from the way [of our ancestors].

As for the 'snuffbox army,' it is your army that is [a snuffbox army]. Now we are aligned with the great state [of Britain], which rules the *mutaşarrif* of Hawran.

God willing, we will be good heirs to our ancestors and we will protect the honour of the Druze and their future; and we will not allow them to be trampled upon, as you wish to put them under the boot of the most savage state on earth.

Your cousin,
Sultan al-Atrash⁵

The letters are intriguing for many reasons. While both are replete with references to Druze honour, they are illustrative, at a most basic level, of two divergent views for safeguarding the community's well-being. In most of the sources for 1925 and after, these sorts of concerns do not appear. Nationalist language and appeals predominate, at least in written sources. In 1918, however, the language of communal welfare predominated as each writer tried to colour the actions of his rival as inimical to Druze interests. Salim accused his cousin of being motivated by revenge against the state. In this way, he de-legitimized the opposition that Sultan represented. He further claimed that Sultan acted hastily and endangered the community by preparing to join the Faysali rebels without sufficient information. Sultan had thus abandoned, at least as far as Salim was concerned, the customary caution and reticence that characterized responsible leadership. As a sectarian minority perched, sometimes uncomfortably, at the edge of a larger Islamic society, noncommittal discretion was often a crucial Druze leadership trait. Finally, Salim accused Sultan of financially-motivated treason. This accusation is surely based on the extensive wartime contacts between Druze *shaykhs*, Damascene grain merchants and well-funded agents of the British government, about which more will be said shortly.

Sultan's reply vividly indicates that he had glimpsed a post-Ottoman political order not yet visible to his cousin. It also demonstrates that, for Sultan, the Ottoman state was defined ethnically; thus, although the ethnicity of the Syrian nation with which Sultan would soon associate the Druze went unmentioned, the negatively-defined opposition was already clear.⁶ Sultan rebutted Salim's charge of financial treachery by accusing Salim of dining in the Damascus Palace Hotel and strolling in the gardens of the government palace. Salim's unmentioned companion was presumably Jamal Pasha, the wartime Ottoman governor of Syria from November 1914 to December 1917, whom Sultan saw as an undifferentiated representative of the entire Turkish nation, "the murderers of our fathers." It is notable and certainly not coincidental that Jamal Pasha was also personally responsible for the execution of a number of alleged Arab nationalist leaders in Beirut and Damascus in 1915 and 1916. None of those executed were Druze, but many who escaped sought refuge in Jabal Hawran with Druze *shaykhs*, particularly Sultan al-Atrash.⁷ Those murdered were viewed as non-Druze national martyrs—non-Druze, so not among the "fathers" that Sultan mentions, but possibly 'brothers' in an extended national family.

Like Salim, Sultan evoked history and the example of Druze heroes of the past. Unlike Salim, however, he mentioned a specific individual, Shibli

al-Atrash, the grandfather to both Salim and Sultan, as well as his personal traits, among which was caution in dealing with the Turks. Finally, Sultan indicated that he sought to attach communal fortunes to the new power of the age, Britain, and he enumerated the marvels that Britain possessed and emphasized that it had the favour of God. In contrast, the Turkish army lacked everything, including bread. This reminded Salim that the Druze had successfully resisted wartime Ottoman efforts to confiscate the Jabal Hawran wheat crop, while Druze *shaykhs*, including Sultan, had helped to supply the Faysali and British forces with Hawrani wheat. The Ottomans had to confiscate wheat when they could: the British paid in gold.

By 1918, contact between the Hawran Druze and the Ottoman state had long been close and often contentious. While such contact had been continuous, the state had never exercised unquestioned control. Druze migration to the Hawran increased dramatically after the 1860s and the Druze came to be the masters of an increasingly important and profitable grain trade. In 1860, on the eve of massive Druze migration, the Hawran was characterized by rural insecurity and most agricultural settlements were occupied only seasonably, if at all. The potentially rich, rain-fed farmland of the Hawran plain and most of Jabal Hawran were the preserve of the bedouin and were exploited only for pasture. But as Druze migrants settled and pacified Jabal Hawran and the plain, they began to take advantage of the agricultural export market. The migrants knew the importance of exports from their experience in the silk business in Mount Lebanon. Mulberry trees, silk worms and silk cocoon production were impossible to sustain in the relatively arid climate of Jabal Hawran, but the migrants were adaptable and they learned from their neighbours how to grow the hardy and drought-resistant wheat native to the Hawran. Damascus, Beirut and Haifa were ready outlets for their grain and the more enterprising *shaykhs* opened commercial relations on behalf of their villages with merchants from those cities, particularly Damascus.⁸ The Druze—and particularly members of the Atrash family—subsequently felt that they had earned the right to dominate Jabal Hawran and the Hawran and they resisted assertions of state control over their newly-prosperous region.

This tension led to major revolts and state incursions in 1879, 1881, 1884, 1889-90, 1895-96 and 1910. Usually the leading *shaykh* of the Atrash family led resistance against the state but, in 1889, a group of secondary chiefs and peasants formed a coalition to challenge the local rule of the Atrash chiefs in an uprising called the *‘Āmmiyya* or Popular Revolt. The conflict divided the community and the Atrash family itself was split into oppos-

ing camps. This conflict had been simmering for several years and, when it finally came into the open, the Ottoman state exploited the opportunity to impose some form of government rule on Jabal Hawran. The power of the great chiefs declined. Peasants earned secure title to their land—or at least their communal shares—and the chiefs gave up half of their shares, bringing the amount of land that they controlled in most villages to no more than an eighth. Involuntary evictions of peasants by chiefs stopped and Jabal Hawran was relatively peaceful for almost twenty years.⁹

The 1889 *‘Ammiyya* brought an enduring division within the leading Atrash family of the Jabal. Some members of the family, mostly centred around Suwayda’, moved into the Ottoman camp. They became Ottoman civil authorities in Jabal Hawran as the Ottoman state fitfully extended its revenue collecting and conscription authority beyond urban centres through local intermediaries or rural notables, employing a shifting array of enticements and threats. Other members of the family, centred in the southern Jabal, around the original Atrash stronghold in al-Qraya, opposed state control and the state-sponsored domination of the Jabal by their Suwayda’ cousins. These two villages, Suwayda’ and al-Qraya, were the birthplaces and the hereditary domains of the above correspondents, Salim and Sultan al-Atrash.¹⁰

In 1910, two years after the Unionist Revolution in Istanbul, Ottoman soldiers were back in the Hawran. This time they came in response to fighting between Druze and local bedouin. With 30 battalions of Ottoman troops, Sami Pasha al-Faruqi met insignificant resistance. While some Hawran Druze leaders were aggressive in defence of what they saw as their rights, none were suicidal. In the wake of the invasion, Sami al-Faruqi disarmed the Hawran Druze and took some of the Jabal’s young men as conscripts into the Ottoman army. Among them was a twenty-year-old named Sultan al-Atrash. He spent six months serving in the Balkans where, among other things, he learned to read and write. Whatever goodwill the experience may have fostered was destroyed when the young man returned to find that his father, Dhuqan al-Atrash, *shaykh* of al-Qraya, had been publicly hanged by the Ottoman authorities in Damascus, along with five other recalcitrant Druze *shaykhs*.¹¹ The executions were not soon forgotten in Jabal Hawran and they would be cited again and again as proof of Ottoman savagery and, anachronistically, as proof of Druze sacrifices for the Syrian Arab nation. For Sultan al-Atrash, the rulers of the Ottoman state had become “the murderers of our fathers.”¹²

Execution and exile freed the state from dealing with its most trenchant foes, but a new generation of leaders was emerging. The Ottoman author-

ities had hanged several leading *shaykhs*, including Sultan's father. The head of the Hawran Druze, the *shaykh al-mashyakha*, Yahya al-Atrash, the last son of the famous founder of the clan, Isma'il al-Atrash, had also been sentenced to death. Sami Pasha al-Faruqi overturned his sentence, however, fining him 3000 gold Ottoman pounds and exiling him to the island of Rhodes. When Rhodes was occupied by Italy in 1912, Yahya went to Egypt before finally returning to Syria, where he died in 1914.¹³

His successor, Emir Salim al-Atrash, was born in 1874 and elected governor of Jabal Hawran in 1914. Succession skipped a generation when the comparatively young Salim became *shaykh al-mashyakha*. As noted above, he came from the branch of the Atrash family based in Suwayda'. Many among the Hawran Druze apparently considered him unfit to be the principal leader, both because of his inexperience and because of his endorsement by the Ottoman authorities. His actions during the war, however, indicate that he was not an unquestioning partisan of the state, but rather a cautious advocate for Druze autonomy. His cousin Sultan, born in 1890 in the original Atrash village of al-Qraya on the southern frontier, opposed his election from the beginning.

The Ottoman state reluctantly entered World War I in October 1914. The Unionist government, in power since 1908, had already fought a series of devastating wars in Libya and the Balkans. By 1914, war and crisis had transformed the Unionist government into a dictatorship headed by a trio made up of two army officers and a civil servant. Secret alliances signed with Germany and Austria-Hungary obligated the Ottoman state to enter the war on the side of the Central Powers against Britain, France and Russia. One of the trio of Ottoman leaders, Ahmad Jamal Pasha, soon became wartime governor of the troublesome geographical Syria and commander of the Ottoman Fourth Army headquartered in Damascus. Shortly after his arrival in Damascus, the government issued a call for global *jihād* in defence of the besieged empire and its caliph.¹⁴

At the same time, Salim al-Atrash became *shaykh al-mashyakha* of Jabal Hawran. Salim assumed the mantle of Druze leadership on 10 November 1914 with a dramatic gesture; he led a procession of 500 Druze horsemen to Damascus, where they were reviewed by Jamal Pasha in front of the government palace in Marja Square. The spectacle of 500 heavily-armed horsemen must have impressed the newly-appointed governor, for he resolved to involve Druze fighters in the war effort. Amidst government calls for *jihād*, conscription and patriotic sacrifice, Salim demonstrated Druze military prowess and loyalty to the Ottoman state, while simultaneously resisting Ottoman demands for a Druze contribution to the army and the war

effort.¹⁵ In keeping with traditional aspirations, the Druze avoided conscription, taxation and seizure of their grain throughout the war.

Jamal Pasha did not give up easily in his efforts to harness the Druze to the Ottoman military. He suggested that Salim and Nasib al-Atrash take up residence in Damascus and offered to arrange lodging for them. Jamal Pasha wished both to gain their support and to keep them under surveillance. He further suggested that an élite Druze military force be formed and visited the Jabal several times to advance this idea. In the Jabal, he distributed stipends and government medals and titles. He gained the conditional support of some leaders and many accepted his gifts, but he failed to attract backing for a Druze military force. Among those who received his gifts but refused to support him was Sultan al-Atrash, who was granted the title of Pasha by the Ottoman state in 1917.¹⁶

Salim al-Atrash also played a complicated diplomatic game, all the while managing to prevent conscription, taxation, seizure of the Jabal grain crop and any practical extension of central control into Jabal Hawran. He refused a lavish gift of 1000 gold Ottoman pounds, intended to purchase his acquiescence to the formation of a Druze military force. Salim skilfully engaged the Ottoman authorities in endless cordial negotiations, first, with Jamal Pasha and, after December 1917, with his successor, Jamal Pasha "the lesser."¹⁷

Ahmad Jamal Pasha instituted a reign of terror in Damascus during the war years. He never extended his rule to Jabal Hawran, however, and he treated the Druze, as represented by Salim al-Atrash, with caution and respect. While Salim negotiated with the Ottoman authorities, Sultan, on the mountain's southern flank, negotiated with emissaries from Sharif Husayn. He also extended the customary Druze sanctuary and sustenance to virtually all of the fugitive Arab nationalists able to escape Jamal Pasha's dragnet. Dozens of prominent nationalists found refuge in Jabal Hawran with Sultan and 'Abd al-Ghaffar al-Atrash. Among them were Dr. 'Abd al-Rahman al-Shahbandar, Nasib al-Bakri, Ahmad Mudri, Rafiq al-Tamimi, Shaykh Sa'ad al-Bani, 'Abd al-Latif al-'Asali, Zaki al-Durubi, 'Izz al-Din al-Tanukhi, Nazih al-Mu'ayyad al-'Azm, Tahsin Qadri, Khalil al-Sakakini, Rustum Haydar and Khalil Saydah, as well as many others.¹⁸ One can only imagine the countless conversations that took place in the Atrash *madāfa* (guest house) in Sultan's village between Druze *shaykhs* and nationalist fugitives from the Ottoman government.¹⁹

Nasib al-Bakri was the first link between Emir Faysal and Sultan al-Atrash. Faysal had stayed in the Bakri family house in the village of al-Qabun early in 1916, before the beginning of the Arab Revolt.²⁰ The village

was just outside of Damascus, not far from the Druze village of Jaramana. The ties of Nasib and his brother, Fawzi al-Bakri, with Faysal dated from before the war and originated with their fathers, 'Atallah al-Bakri and al-Husayn ibn 'Ali, the sharif of Mecca. Husayn cemented the connection by appointing Fawzi al-Bakri to be his personal bodyguard. During Faysal's stay in 1916, Nasib al-Bakri organized a meeting of Druze *shaykhs*, including Sultan and Husayn al-Atrash, and some Damascene nationalist members of the secret society, *Al-Fatāt*, to try to gain support for a revolt against Ottoman rule.²¹ It was natural that Bakri would call upon the Hawran Druze for such a project since their antipathy and periodic armed resistance against the Ottoman state were widely known. Sultan and Husayn al-Atrash met Faysal and were impressed with him, but declined to lend more than their conditional support to the revolt.

The Arab Revolt began in the Hijaz in June 1916. The population of Syria remained quiet and contributed little to the revolt. Simple survival was more important than all else and, as the war progressed, a crushing famine gripped much of geographical Syria. Jabal Hawran, however, was spared the famine and contributed local surplus grain to the rebel forces. Grain merchant families, long and intimately associated with the Hawran Druze, served as emissaries between nationalist fugitives, revolt leaders and the Druze. Many Damascene grain merchants had summer houses in Druze villages and, as war and famine gripped Damascus, they moved their families to the relative safety of the Jabal.²² In Syrian and Lebanese usage, famine and military conscription are still collapsed in the Turkish word for land mobilization, *seferberlik*, which evokes all aspects of the horrible suffering of the war years. Linda Schilcher has shown that, while grain speculators bore some of the blame for the famine, the most devastating element was the effective British blockade of all Arab Mediterranean ports. At the time it was realized, though apparently not by the Ottoman high command, that the grain shortages in Arabia and starvation among the tribes were the principal reasons why the bedouin joined the revolt. While the British kept any grain from entering the country, the Ottoman command, with insufficient food for the army, cut supplies to the coast due to the suspicion that unscrupulous grain speculators would either hoard grain in Beirut or export it to obtain still higher prices. Meanwhile, with insufficient funds to buy grain on the open market, the Ottoman command resorted to a policy of price fixing for grain producers. When the command was unable to impose a stable grain price, the policy changed to one of more or less forced confiscation, with token payment, of grain stores from both producers and merchants. Only the

Hawran Druze had enough independence from the central government to resist confiscation.²³

British war policy led indirectly to the deaths by starvation of hundreds of thousands in the cities of geographical Syria and in the Ottoman Army. The Ottoman high command in Istanbul bore responsibility, too, and had evidently decided, by early 1918, that Syria was lost and that re-supply was futile. After the Armistice, the British and French flooded the cities of geographical Syria with embargoed and hoarded grain, reaping the good will of a grateful populace, who blamed the famine on the defeated Ottomans, rather than on their victorious liberators.²⁴

Sultan al-Atrash reported that the Jabal sheltered and fed 50,000 refugees from the Ottoman army and the famine. He mentioned this to deflect the periodic charge of Druze war profiteering owing to their refusal to sell Hawrani grain to Ottoman-held Damascus at fixed government prices and their preference for more profitable sales to the British-bankrolled Sharifian army, a trade which the British encouraged with every means available.²⁵ While the Druze sheltered and fed thousands of refugees on a daily basis, the grain trade continued in cooperation with Maydani merchants and local bedouin. Lines of transport, though, moved south towards the British line, rather than north towards Damascus or east towards Haifa, as they had before the war.²⁶

In September of 1918, as the Sharifian army entered the Hawran, it was joined by Sultan al-Atrash and a number of Druze horsemen from Jabal Hawran for the final advance on Damascus. As the above letters demonstrate, Salim opposed the Druze forces' efforts, while his cousin, Sultan, organized and led them. Before the Druze forces joined Faysal, however, they signed agreements with his representatives guaranteeing a high degree of regional autonomy in the state anticipated to emerge from the Ottoman withdrawal.²⁷ While he certainly flew his own standard, Sultan al-Atrash was the first to raise the Arab flag over the Jabal.²⁸

Emir Faysal kept his pledge to the Hawran Druze and stayed out of their affairs for the duration of his short rule, though he hardly had the power to interfere during those turbulent eighteen months.²⁹ Others did not keep their pledges and, when France insisted upon enforcing the division of geographical Syria secretly planned with the British and later validated by the League of Nations, Britain did not support Faysal's kingdom and stood aside as its European wartime ally brought an end to the government of its Arab wartime ally. French intelligence agents had already been circulating in Jabal Hawran to help smooth the way for French rule. When the agents arrived, they found the Hawran Druze

divided toward their mandate along much the same lines as they had been divided toward Ottoman rule. Salim al-Atrash supported the mandate, as he had supported Ottoman rule, while his cousin, Sultan al-Atrash, led the opposition.

Salim and Sultan represented rival factions and rival world-views among the Hawran Druze. Neither was undisputed leader: Salim was elected and received Ottoman and later French sanction as titular head of the Hawran Druze, symbolized by his state-bestowed title of *amir*; Sultan assumed the position of war leader among the Druze, first by virtue of his descent from a series of legendary fighters and martyrs, including his father, but finally by his own actions in 1918, 1921 and the revolt of 1925.³⁰ Their differences were significant and they continued until Salim's early death in 1923. Salim identified Druze communal interests with the state, which was the only institution seemingly powerful enough to insure stability in turbulent times. He sought to maintain his traditional role as leader, extending cooperation and nominal submission to the state, while carefully retaining as much autonomy as possible. Sultan, by contrast, had glimpsed a future in which the old Ottoman-dominated world would necessarily crumble. New identities would emerge and the possibility of a new and, perhaps, more just, post-war political order was within reach.

NOTES

¹ See my *The Great Syrian Revolt and the Rise of Arab Nationalism* (Austin, Texas, 2005) Philip Khoury's *Syria and the French Mandate: The Politics of Arab Nationalism, 1920-1945* (Princeton, 1987) has four chapters on the 1925-27 period.

² See, for example, General Charles Joseph Andréa. *La révolte druze et l'insurrection de Damas* (Paris, 1937); and Captain Gabriel Carbillet, *Au Djebel Druze: Choses vues et vécues* (Paris, 1929). Recently, a Druze emphasis has come to the fore in secondary sources, notably, in the excellent works of Hasan Amin al-Bu'ayni and Kais Firro. These works set out, of course, to tell a history of the Druze in the Arab nation, rather than the story of the Revolt. The two books were written during and just after the war in Lebanon.

³ For a short discussion of the events and more general views of the Hawran Druze, see Kais Firro's definitive work, *A History of the Druzes* (Leiden, 1992), 249-50. See, also, the contributions of Kamal Salibi and Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn in this volume.

⁴ Samir Seikaly, "Pacification of the Hawran (1910): The View from Within," unpublished paper presented at the XII Congress of the Comité International des Etudes Ottoman et Pre-Ottoman (CIEPO), n.d. This paper reviews the

Damascene press and shows Damascene hostility to the Druze in 1910. My thanks to the author for providing me with a copy.

⁵ The letters are reproduced in Hanna Abi Rashid, *Jabal al-Durūz* (Cairo, 1925; reprinted Beirut, 1961). Copies of the 1925 edition are extant, but I refer to the more common 1961 edition; see pages 131-33. Dhuqan Qarqut also reproduces the letters, without attribution, in his *Taṭawwur al-Haraka al-Waṭaniyya fi Sūriyya, 1920-1939* (Damascus, 1989), 264-66. It is important to note that Sultan himself referred to and documented the authenticity of the "famous letters" in his dictated memoirs; see Sultan al-Atrash, "Mudhakkirāt Sultān," serialized in *Bayrūt al-masā'* (1975-76), 97-120. His memoirs show that, rhetorically at least, he apparently mellowed with age and came to regard his rivals more charitably with the passage of time.

⁶ Ranajit Guha shows that the idea of "negation" is a crucial element in subaltern insurgent consciousness; see Ranajit Guha, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* (Delhi, 1983), 18-77. See, also, Partha Chatterjee, *The Nation and Its Fragments: Colonial and Post-Colonial Histories* (Princeton, 1993), 161-62.

⁷ See Sultan's dictated memoirs in "Mudhakkirāt Sultān," part 98, 36. For Jamal Pasha's wartime policies, see Hasan Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks: Ottomanism, Arabism, and Islamism in the Ottoman Empire, 1908-1914* (Berkeley, 1997).

⁸ I have drawn on the work of Linda Schilcher for the importance of the grain trade. See Linda Schilcher, "The Grain Economy of Late Ottoman Syria and the Issue of Large-Scale Commercialization," in *Landholding and Commercial Agriculture in the Middle East*, edited by Çağlar Keyder and Faruk Tabak (New York, 1991), 173-95; Linda Schilcher, "The Hauran Conflicts of the 1860s: A Chapter in the Rural History of Modern Syria," *International Journal of Middle East Studies* 13 (1981): 159-79; and Linda Schilcher, "The Great Depression (1873-1896) and the Rise of Syrian Arab Nationalism," *New Perspectives on Turkey*, nos. 5-6 [Suraiya Faroqhi, guest editor] (1991): 167-89.

⁹ See 'Abdallah Hanna, *Al-Āmmiyya wa al-intifādat (1850-1918) fi Jabal Hawran* (Damascus, 1990), for the best treatment of this period.

¹⁰ Firro dates the split within the Atrash family from the death of Ibrahim al-Atrash in 1869; see Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 249.

¹¹ The events of 1910 have been recounted elsewhere. See for example, al-Atrash, "Mudhakkirāt Sultān," part 97, 36; and Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 243-44. See, also, the article by Engin Akarli, "Some Ottoman Documents on Jordan: Ottoman Criteria for the Choice of an Administrative Center in the Light of Documents on Hauran, 1909-1910," Publications of the University of Jordan (Amman, 1989). I thank Professor Akarli for kindly giving me a copy of this arti-

cle. Fandi Abu Fakhr owns a copy of the death warrant for Dhuqan al-Atrash and some other *shaykhs*, signed by the grand vizier, which is reproduced in his *Tārīkh liwā' Ḥawrān al-ijtimā'i: Al-Suwaydā'- Dar'ā- al-Qunaytra- 'Ajlūn, 1840-1918*, document 13, 344.

¹² Abi Rashid, *Jabal al-Durūz*, 125, 133.

¹³ Niqulaws al-Qadi, *Arb'ūn 'āman fī Ḥawrān wa Jabal al-Durūz* (Beirut, 1927), 46-47. Qadi, then Greek Catholic archbishop of the Hawran, claimed partial responsibility for convincing Sami Basha to spare Yahya's life. I thank Professor Abdul-Rahim Abu-Husayn for sharing this source. See, also, Hasan Amin al-Bu'ayni, *Jabal al-'Arab safahāt min tārikh al-Muwaḥḥidīn al-Durūz (1685-1927)* (Beirut, 1985), 245.

¹⁴ Kayali, *Arabs and Young Turks*, 187.

¹⁵ Bu'ayni, *Jabal al-'Arab*, 250-51.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 251. See Jurj al-Faris, *Man huwa fī Sūriyya, 1949* (Damascus, 1950), 32. According to this biographical dictionary, Sultan received the second- and third-degree Majidi medals and the title of *bāshā* in 1917. In the following year, Sharif al-Husayn ibn 'Ali offered him the title of *amīr*, which he refused. He never accepted employment or payment from any government in later years and he never used the title *bāshā*, though others referred to him by it.

¹⁷ Bu'ayni, *Jabal al-'Arab*, 251.

¹⁸ Al-Atrash, "Mudhakkirāt Sultān," part 98, 36.

¹⁹ See Kamal Salibi's contribution to this volume for a rare contemporary record of such a visit and of the conversations between Rustum Haydar and Sultan al-Atrash.

²⁰ Abi Rashid, *Jabal al-Durūz*, 126-27. Biographical information on Fawzi and Nasib al-Bakri appears in al-Faris, *Man huwa fī Sūriyya*, 67-68. See, also, Linda Schilcher, *Families in Politics: Damascene Factions and Estates of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries* (Stuttgart, 1985), 156.

²¹ George Antonius, *The Arab Awakening* (reprinted Beirut, 1969), 149-53; and James Gelvin, *Divided Loyalties: Nationalism and Mass Politics at the Close of Empire* (Berkeley, 1998), 57-58.

²² Muhammad Sa'id al-Qasimi, *Qāmus al-ṣinā'āt al-Shāmiyya* (reprinted Damascus, 1988), 55. Grain dealers were called *ba'ika*, plural *buwayki*, in Damascus. On grain merchants in Jabal Hawran, see al-Atrash, "Mudhakkirat Sultan," part 98, 25. The importance of these relationships did not end with the Great War or even the Revolt of 1925. Sultan al-Atrash's son, Mansur al-Atrash, married the daughter of his father's Christian Maydani grain merchant. The merchant, Yusuf Shuwayri, had a house in their village. Yusuf 'Aflaq, grain merchant and father of Ba'th party co-founder, Michel 'Aflaq, also had a house in the village of al-Qraya. Salah al-Din al-Bitar, the other founder of the party, was

also the son of a Maydani grain merchant who dealt with Jabal Hawran. See Hanna Batatu, *Syria's Peasantry, the Descendants of Its Lesser Rural Notables, and Their Politics* (Princeton, 1999), 134 and 142. Mansur al-Atrash joined the Ba'ath while a student at the American University of Beirut and followed the party's leaders to pursue advanced studies in Paris. He was minister of education in the first Ba'athist government in 1963.

²³ On the *seferberlik*, see Linda Schilcher, "The Famine of 1915-1918 in Greater Syria," in *Problems of the Middle East in Historical Perspective, Essays in Honour of Albert Hourani*, edited by J. P. Spagnola (Oxford, 1992), 229-58. See also, Najwa al-Qattan, "Safarbarlik: Ottoman Syria and the Great War," in *From the Syrian Lands to the States of Syria and Lebanon*, edited by Thomas Philipp and Christoph Schumann (Beirut, 2004), 163-73.

²⁴ In what might be considered a typical complaint of a front-line officer, Liman von Sanders, commander-in-chief of Turkish forces on the Arab front, wrote in his memoirs that Istanbul seemed not only uninterested in reinforcing his troops, but actively sought to divert men and equipment to other fronts. The unmistakable implication is that Enver, at least, sought to strengthen the more 'Turkish' regions. See Liman von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey* (Baltimore, 1928), 254 (for officer re-postings), 257-59 (for re-supply problems) and 265 (for British propaganda). See Kayali's *Arabs and Young Turks*, for a more nuanced view of Ottoman wartime policy.

²⁵ Schilcher, "The Famine of 1915-1918 in Greater Syria," 246.

²⁶ See al-Atrash, "Mudhakkirāt Sultān," part 98, 35; and von Sanders, *Five Years in Turkey*, 262. The latter reproduces an intelligence report dated 19 August 1918, from a Dr. Brode: "For about two months an organized caravan traffic has existed from Akaba across the Hauran, [sic] the Druze mountains. Sugar, coffee, and cotton goods are imported, and apricot paste is exported, together with great quantities of grain from the Hauran." Elsewhere (236), von Sanders writes, "Had the money been available, all requirements of the Army Group, and large additional supplies, could have been purchased from the Arabs. As the money was not forthcoming, a large part of the harvest of the Arabian grain lands and thousands of camel loads from Hauran, inhabited by Druses, went to the British, who paid in gold."

²⁷ The autonomy agreement is controversial. Abi Rashid reproduced it in his *Jabal al-Durūz*, 128-29, but Sultan al-Atrash disavowed it in his memoirs. See, also, Firro, *A History of the Druzes*, 250-51.

²⁸ Al-Atrash, "Mudhakkirāt Sultān," part 98, 36.

²⁹ Gelvin's *Divided Loyalties* covers this period in detail.

³⁰ Abi Rashid, *Jabal al-Durūz*, 122-25.