



## RESHAPING DRUZE PARTICULARISM IN ISRAEL

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*In order to suppress Arab and Palestinian national sentiments among the Druzes, Israeli policymakers have systematically tried to reshape Druze traditional particularism since 1948 into a Druze identity that is part reconstruction, part invention. In so doing, Israeli government officials, with the help of a coopted Druze elite, are practicing a policy seeking to politicize Druze communal and sectarian dimensions while depoliticizing their noncommunal and national dimensions. This paper, based largely on Israeli archival material, documents some of the political, social, and economic factors that have led to the "success" of these policies.*

FOLLOWING THE WAR OF 1948, Palestine's Druzes became part of the State of Israel. Unlike their coreligionists in Lebanon and Syria, they were overwhelmingly rural and little influenced by the nationalist notions that held sway among Druze intellectuals in Beirut or Damascus. Instead, they sought to safeguard their community's age-old ethnic independence by holding on to their traditional ethnic-religious particularism to the extent possible. Ethnicity and ethnic issues, however, were ready tools for Zionists in pursuit of their policy aims vis-à-vis the Jewish state's Arab population. Chief among these aims was to drive a wedge between the Druzes and the other Arabs in the new state, creating "good" Arabs and "bad" Arabs and coopting the Druze elite. Such goals served Israel as a foil for its ongoing policy of dispossession and control.

### DIVIDE AND RULE

At the beginning of 1949, the Israeli government set up an Inter-Ministerial Committee to provide guidelines on political, judicial, economic, and educational policies that would "facilitate" the "integration" into the Jewish state of the Arab population that had not been expelled. Following the suggestions of Bekhor Shitrit, the minister of minorities affairs, the committee concluded that the main focus should be on one issue: preventing the Arab minorities from coalescing into one group that would "be Arab in its national identity and Muslim in its religion. . . . Since Israel could not impose cultural

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assimilation, the best way to deal with the minorities was 'to divide and sub-divide them.'<sup>1</sup>

This policy to "divide and sub-divide"—to divide and rule—was already in place and focused primarily on the Druzes. The policy aimed at weaning them away from the larger Palestinian Arab community by fostering "Druze particularism,"<sup>2</sup> the notion that Druze ethnicity and identity make them distinct from other Arabs.

As far back as the 1930s, Zionist activists such as Yitzhak Ben-Zvi (later to become Israel's second president) had sought to "acquire the friendship of this community" in the emerging struggle between Palestinian Arabs and Jews.<sup>3</sup> Despite such efforts, however, and apart from small groups who joined with other Palestinians, the majority of Palestinian Druzes remained aloof from the Zionist-Palestinian conflict throughout the Mandate period.

The 1948 war provided the Zionists with their first real opportunity to separate the Druzes from the other Arabs. On 13 June, at the beginning of what Benny Morris has called the "battle for the harvest," the Israeli chief of staff issued an order prohibiting the Arabs who had managed to remain in the areas conquered by the Israeli army from reaping their fields. On 19 June, the first day of the United Nations-imposed truce, the chief of staff ordered that "every enemy field in the area under our complete control we must harvest. Every field we are unable to reap must be destroyed."<sup>4</sup> But the Druzes were treated differently from other Arabs under this edict. According to experts at the Israeli Foreign Ministry at the time, "In many parts of the country the matter of collecting the harvest served as an important card in our hands. It certainly meant something that the Druzes in the north of the country were allowed to reap their crops."<sup>5</sup> A military report of the time was more explicit: "During [June] the local Druzes asked . . . for supplies and for the possibility to harvest their crops . . . their request was granted and the fact that from all the fields of the Jewish area only the Druze crops were harvested pushed them to the Jewish side."<sup>6</sup>

During this period, Zionist recruiters went around to Druze villages promising the villagers free access to their fields if their sons signed up for a newly created special force of the Israeli army, the "Minorities Unit." The creation of the unit had ramifications beyond Israel's relations with its own minorities: The first commander of the unit, Tuvia Lishansky, acknowledged that there had been a deliberate policy to recruit as many Syrian Druze deserters as possible from the Arab Liberation Army, a volunteer force organized by the Arab League that had tried to resist the Haganah forces but which began to fall apart under the impact of the Zionist victories in the 1948 war. The goal of this policy was to undermine the trust of the Arab countries in the Druzes.<sup>7</sup> Significantly, according to his letter of appointment (issued by the Israeli chief of staff), Lishansky was to be in constant touch with "the political section of the Foreign Ministry's Middle East Department."<sup>8</sup>

Ya'acov Shim'oni, a Foreign Ministry official, freely admitted that the establishment of the Minorities Unit contributed little or nothing to the Israeli

army—its true purpose was to use the Druzes as “the sharp blade of a knife to stab in the back of Arab unity.”<sup>9</sup> Shim‘oni was also active in setting up the Arabic newspaper *al-Yawm* and the Israeli Arabic broadcasting channel (both in July 1948) as part of the Israeli propaganda machine. Shim‘oni actually toyed with the idea of using these services to try to destabilize the internal political situation in Syria through the Druzes: “We have been thinking a lot about [this issue] . . . we think that connections with possible rebellious forces in Syria headed, of course, by the Druzes, could create a lot of damage, stabbing a poisoned knife in the back of the Arab unity which remains intent on fighting us.”<sup>10</sup>

What is beyond doubt is that Israeli radio broadcasts in Arabic exploited every opportunity to praise the Minorities Unit as a symbol of “intercommunal fraternity.” In early August 1948, a Zionist report depicted this “fraternity” as being in sharp contrast to the “friction between Muslims and minorities in the Arab states.”<sup>11</sup> But the most serious implication for the Druzes of the creation of the Minorities Unit was summed up by Yehoshua Palmon, one of the organizers of the unit and the adviser to Israel’s prime minister for Arab affairs in 1949–54: “Of course this act has destroyed all ways of going back [for them].”<sup>12</sup>

By early 1949, the Minorities Unit consisted of 850 officers and men (400 Druzes, 200 bedouin, 100 Circassians, and 150 Jewish officers and professionals). In April 1949, the Israeli authorities decided to open the police force as well to members of the “minorities.” Recruiting for both the Minorities Unit and the police force was carried out by Israeli officers Amnon Yanai and Giora Zayd through Druzes who had contacts with the Zionists dating back to the 1930s. Still, between 1949 and 1953, the number of Druze recruits in the Minorities Unit rose only slightly, probably because Shaykh Amin Tarif, the religious leader of the community, had voiced reservations about the enterprise. As of 1954, however, the Tarif family kept silent on the subject of recruitment. Since the 1956 compulsory conscription law for the Druzes (see below), Druze enrollment in the army has opened the door for their veterans to find employment in other branches of the security forces. Today, some 40 percent of the Druze male labor force is employed in this sector.

### RELIGION AND “INVENTED TRADITIONS”

One of the recommendations of the 1949 Inter-Ministerial Committee set up to “facilitate Arab integration” was to organize “the non-Jewish population in a communal framework.”<sup>13</sup> With regard to the Druzes, one of the committee members, the director of the Muslim and Druze Section in the Ministry of Religions, wrote, “appointing a religious head to the Druzes is also important to us for its practical aspect,” i.e., its divide-and-rule aspect. Thus, “it is necessary to propose legislation in the Knesset which will grant the Druze community independent legal status in religious matters. . . . This will form the core for the establishment of the [newly] organized religious

community [as separate from the Muslims]."<sup>14</sup> While this suggestion did not reach fruition for some years, the policy of emphasizing religious separatism was already clear.

In August 1949, Israel's Ministry of Religions set out guidelines for an official policy vis-à-vis the Druzes that included a plan for cultivating, as a political instrument, a religious shrine.

When dealing with people who live in the Middle East, one should always take into account [that] there is no difference between religion and politics. . . . Take, for example, the shrine of Nabi Shu'ayb, which lies in Israel. . . . This gives Israel an extraordinary tool by which to prove, both religiously and politically, its attitude towards the Druze community, which makes it a primary instrument for propaganda to prepare ground for potential developments in the near future among the Druze. . . . During pilgrimage time next year, it should again provide facilities in order to celebrate the feast with even more honor and splendor (participation of the Minister of Religions and other dignitaries, military parade of the Druze IDF Units, etc.).<sup>15</sup>

In implementing this prescription, the Israeli army in 1949 decided to utilize the al-Nabi (Prophet) Shu'ayb shrine in Galilee as the site for its first swearing-in ceremony, when new Druze recruits were asked to solemnly pledge their allegiance to the Jewish state. The deliberate choice of al-Nabi Shu'ayb for the occasion was meant to consolidate Israeli policy vis-à-vis the Druzes, symbolizing (according to an Israeli report) a newly discovered "historical" connection between the sons of Shu'ayb (the Druzes) and the sons of Israel (the Jews).<sup>16</sup> The political use of the shrine also enabled Israel to co-opt the Tarif family, which had control of the shrine. As one of the paramount Druze religious families of Palestine, the Tarifs had hitherto resisted collaboration with Zionists.

With the full support of the Tarifs, the *ziyara* (pilgrimage) to al-Nabi Shu'ayb began to be reshaped in earnest as of 1949. Prior to that time, the pilgrimage to the shrine had not differed from traditional visits to other shrines in Palestine and elsewhere in the Middle East. The *ziyara* usually took place from 20 to 27 April, but it was not an official feast and never attracted a mass participation. But now the Israeli state, through the agency of the army's Minorities Unit, officially invited Druze leaders to attend a special military parade and feast as part of the pilgrimage rites.<sup>17</sup> By the end of 1949, the government began to allocate money to erect new buildings around the shrine. This money went straight to Shaykh Amin Tarif as guardian.

These changes clearly were in tune with the needs of both the Tarifs and the Israelis. For the Tarifs, the importance the Israelis attached to the shrine's

new function was especially welcome at a time when Shaykh Amin Tarif was encountering opposition from a coalition of rivals backed by Israeli officials wanting to see a shift in the balance of power within the community. From 1949 until 1954, Palmon, Yanai, and other Israeli officials (who had been denouncing Shaykh Amin for his "hostile position" vis-à-vis Druze recruitment into the Israeli army) tried to widen the coalition that sought to delegitimize the Tarif paramountcy and to establish new leaders who had been collaborating with the Zionists prior to 1948. But with the backing of Abba Hushi, the mayor of Haifa and one of the most powerful men in deciding Israel's Arab affairs policies, Shaykh Amin continued, especially since 1954, to strengthen his legitimacy among the religious chiefs.<sup>18</sup> Pilgrimages to the shrine of Nabi Shu'ayb and others became Shaykh Amin's main tool for legitimizing his leadership in the new state. The Israelis, for their part, needed the pilgrimage to encourage Druze neoparticularism.

When we find that in the process both sides used "ancient materials to construct traditions of a novel type for quite novel purposes," we are, of course, in the realm of "invented traditions."<sup>19</sup> By 1954, the *ziyara* had become an official holiday, soon to be followed by similarly novel and officially recognized feasts such as Id al-Kadir, Id Sablan, and others. In the same year, Israeli officials stopped recognizing Id al-Fitr as a Druze feast.

### ISRAEL CREATES A NEW "NATION"

After 1948, the Israeli radio and press regularly used the terms "Druzes" and "Druze community" in order to emphasize the community's separate-ness from the country's other Arabs. But it was not until the mid-1950s that Israeli policymakers decided to "grant" them a "new formal status." In so doing, they finally enacted the 1949 recommendations of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on "integrating" the Arab minority, or at least part of it—the Druzes.

The first step was the passage of the obligatory conscription law of May 1956. Officially, the Defense Service Law of Israel has always imposed on every citizen and permanent resident of Israel, both male and female, the duty to serve in the armed forces upon reaching the age of eighteen. When exceptions are made, such as the blanket exception of the minorities, it is at the sole "discretion" of the minister of defense. While recruitment of the Druzes into the army had continued apace ever since the establishment of the Minorities Unit and had been stepped up as of 1954, they served on a "voluntary" basis until the "special arrangement" of 1956 came into effect.

Since most documents in the Israel State and IDF Archives on the events surrounding the application of conscription law remain classified, it is difficult to know the driving force behind the law. According to the version of events published in the *Government Yearbook*, "the law was applied to the Druzes at the request of part of the leaders of the community."<sup>20</sup> In all likelihood, the *Government Yearbook* is referring to a 15 December 1955 letter

from Shaykh Jaber Mu'addi to Prime Minister David Ben-Gurion, that read as follows:

One year ago I met with his Excellency, Chief-of-Staff General Moshe Dayan in the presence of the Commander of the Minorities Unit, and I urged them to carry out this law. All [*sic*] Druzes are in anticipation of the first day of 1956 on which your Excellency will declare this law to go into effect.<sup>21</sup>

It is clear from his last sentence that Shaykh Jaber knew in advance that the chief of staff intended on 1 January 1956 to declare conscription of the Druzes into the IDF obligatory. Equally significant, the letter's phrasing in good Hebrew made clear that it had been written by one of Jaber's "Jewish friends." That the letter and the meeting were prearranged is shown by a note in different handwriting at the top left-hand corner of the page, which reads, "To the meeting with the Defense Minister on Thursday, to invite the others concerned." Shaykh Jaber, of course, had been among the first willing to collaborate with the Zionists in 1948, mainly to advance his own political interests in the community.

At all events, on 3 May 1956, the compulsory conscription act was passed. It would take another two months before the first Druze soldiers began their army duties, but already protests began spreading in the Druze villages against the "deal" the chiefs had allegedly made. Nonetheless, the law was enacted as planned, and the Druzes became the only "minority" subject to compulsory conscription.<sup>22</sup>

Less than a year later, the "integration" was taken a step further and applied to the religious sphere. On 15 April 1957, ten days before the *ziyara* to the shrine of al-Nabi Shu'ayb, Israel's minister of religions signed a regulation extending legal recognition to the Druzes as a religious community in accordance with the Religious Communities (Organization) Mandatory Ordinance of 1927, which dated back to the British Mandatory period but, as with so many other British rulings, was kept on by Israel for its own purposes. By this act, the Druze community became legally independent vis-à-vis the Muslim community. Not long after, the Interior Ministry began issuing identity cards to the Druzes on which "nationality: Arab" was replaced by "nationality: Druze." Druze protests against "this new invented nationality" failed to reverse the Interior Ministry's decision, and there was official harassment of intellectuals, students, and religious figures who refused to accept it.

Meanwhile, the practice of dividing the Druzes into the categories of "positive forces" and "negative forces" had become firmly entrenched. It was the Israeli officer Giora Zayd who used the term "positive forces" for the first time to designate those

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Druzes who willingly collaborated with the Israeli security services. The term soon achieved currency among other Israeli officials and subsequently even among the Druzes themselves. It actually became so firmly rooted that it is still used to this day, alongside the term “negative forces” for those Druzes who speak out or act in opposition to official Israeli policies. Strengthening the “positive forces” required that those leaders who refused to cooperate be deprived of any social standing or political role. Thus, whenever the state’s agents could manipulate the distribution of political and economic power within Druze villages, obviously the ones to benefit were the “positive forces” among the clan chiefs. Encouraging these “positive forces” brings us back to Bekhor Shitrit’s suggestions at the end of 1948: “I think that we must foster among the Druzes an awareness that they are a separate community vis-à-vis the Muslim community.”<sup>23</sup>

### **DRUZE NEOPARTICULARISM**

Israeli historiography on the Druzes and the state’s policy toward them are closely interrelated and mutually reinforcing. Israeli historiography has created an “image” of the Druzes as having a “cooperative attitude” toward the Jews throughout their history, and the policy has reinforced that attitude. The “common destinies” of the two peoples are emphasized. According to Aharon Layish, for example, “There is no tradition of persecution of the Druzes by the Jews, on the contrary, the destinies of these two persecuted minorities have a great deal in common.”<sup>24</sup> Yitzhak Ben-Zvi had already developed this theme in the 1950s, arguing that the “particularism” of the Druzes was a mirror image of the Jewish “nation/community/religion”:

[T]his nation—the Druzes—has special features and a special destiny that set it apart from other nations. In certain ways, it is similar to the Jewish nation because of a fundamental characteristic. Here, too, religion and nationalism are so united. . . . But there is another side which highlights the similarity between the Jews and the Druzes, and that is the destiny of the two nations—a destiny of minorities. The Druzes too suffered persecutions at the hands of [a] majority. . . . All these [factors] have brought the Druzes closer to the destiny of the Jewish minority and made it possible for them to understand the psychology of the persecuted Jewish minority.<sup>25</sup>

One of the first Israeli scholars to investigate the “unique [as he saw them] characteristics” of the Druzes—the purported attributes that undergirded official policy toward the community—was Haim Blanc, who in the early 1950s wrote two articles and a book on the community. Blanc’s work established a theory on the “behavioral pattern” of the Druzes, which, ac-

cording to him, facilitated their "assimilation" in Israel. With respect to the question of whether the Druzes are Arabs, Blanc concluded:

As it stands [this question is] unanswerable, since the term "Arabs" is used loosely to cover a multitude of meanings. . . . In a cultural sense, however, the Druzes are not only "Arabs" but, as it were, "Arabs with a vengeance". . . . The distinctiveness of the Druzes is nevertheless undoubted, and its origins must be sought in their religion. [The community] was born and grew in a hostile environment; it therefore adopted the principle of *taqiyya*, a sort of protective coloring with religious affiliations, to be "Christian with the Christians, and Muslim with Muslims". . . . The most recent instance of this outward assimilation may be seen in present-day Israel.<sup>26</sup>

Blanc was soon invited by the adviser to the prime minister for Arab affairs to write a book on the Druzes as a way of giving Israeli officials a better idea of who the Druzes were and how their ability to cooperate and adapt could be utilized. Ever since, Blanc's book has influenced Israeli scholars, journalists, and officials. In particular, his use of the Druze practice of *taqiyya*, usually translated into English as "dissimulation,"<sup>27</sup> to explain the "cooperative attitude" of the Druzes has taken firm hold. A not insignificant detail is that Blanc did not come up with the interpretation himself but had taken it from a book he had found by a Lebanese Christian, Jubra'il al-Halabi, whom he mistook to be a Druze.

Following Blanc, *taqiyya* became for Israeli scholars and politicians the "essence" of Druze existence. Layish, for example, explored the religious origins of *taqiyya* and its presumed implications for Druze history and socio-political life. Like other Israeli scholars, Layish was involved in government policy-making toward the Druzes, having worked for several years during the 1950s on the Druze affairs' staff within the office of the adviser to the prime minister for minority affairs. Layish attributed to the practice of *taqiyya* a whole range of meanings, including "flattery, smooth talk, protecting, deceit, falsehood, concealment of truth, religious duty, and ability of adaptation," all part of "the behavioral pattern" of the Druzes. Not surprisingly, Layish finds evidence of *taqiyya* virtually everywhere: in matrimonial law, betrothal ceremonies, inheritance customs, etc. Even when polygamy and temporary marriage show up among some Druzes, Layish sees these practices "as manifestations of *taqiyya*." Furthermore, historical events such as the Druze participation in the 1516 battle of Marj Dabiq that led to the Ottoman conquest of Greater Syria and "the participation of the Druzes in the Arab nationalist movement in Syria and the Druze claim to be ethnic Arabs" demonstrate for Layish the force of *taqiyya*. He even views the refusal of the



Syrian Druzes in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights to accept Israeli identity cards as *taqiyya* with regard to the Syrian regime.<sup>28</sup>

Nissim Dana, who for decades was responsible for the Druze section of the Ministry of Religions, used his "knowledge" to write two books on the Druzes. His most recent book relies on *taqiyya* to explain a Druze "ability" to "survive." Like almost all Israeli scholars on the Druzes, Dana cites Blanc's quotation from Jubra'il al-Halabi: "Our Lord has commended us to hide in the dominant religion, be it what it may; with Christians, Christian; with Muslims, Muslim, and so on."<sup>29</sup>

In sum, *taqiyya* has become a reliable tool not for gauging behavioral patterns of the Druzes, but for gaining an insight into the behavioral patterns Israeli officials have been displaying through the years vis-à-vis the Druzes.

### "ISRAELI-DRUZE CONSCIOUSNESS"

By the late 1950s, winds of protest were blowing within the community against the government's unequal treatment of the Druzes and its efforts to separate them from the other Arab communities, most recently with the legislation of a distinct Druze religious status. The protests came mainly from teachers and students and some former soldiers. Although these groups ultimately failed to undermine the domination of the traditional elite, by the mid-1960s the protests were of a magnitude to cause considerable concern within the Israeli political establishment.

There is no question that the unrest was fueled by the far-reaching economic and social changes that were affecting the community and, more particularly, by critical changes in the structure of the Druze labor force. These changes were set in motion by the progressive collapse of agriculture in Druze villages, largely as a result of the post-1949 intensification of Israel's policy of land confiscation. By 1962, the Druzes had lost more than two-thirds of their lands,<sup>30</sup> and the water allocation for agriculture in their villages was less than 0.05 percent of Israel's total water supply for agriculture. The decline in agriculture accelerated after 1967, and a Knesset committee set up in the early 1970s to "handle the Druze problem" acknowledged the impact of the dwindling agricultural sector.<sup>31</sup> By the late 1990s, when less than 1 percent of the Druze work force still cultivated family-owned land, agriculture among the Druzes had become "a thing of the past."<sup>32</sup>

Already by the mid-1950s, the Druzes, whose villages were in poor, mountainous areas, were abandoning agriculture at a faster rate than the other Arabs, equally hit by Israel's confiscation policies. In seeking employment in other sectors, the Druzes, not surprisingly, gravitated toward the security services. The other economic sector that replaced agriculture was construction. This restructuring during the 1950s and 1960s had negative consequences for Druze collective identity.

With Druze students and teachers forming organizations calling for the extension of full civic rights and establishing, in 1961, a Druze Youth Organi-

zation,<sup>33</sup> the government took action. A May 1962 top secret Israeli government report "on the political, communal and social organizations among the Arab minority" reserved a special section for the Druzes among Arab students, who were considered the future Israeli Arab elite, and noted the grievances that had emerged "among Druze youths, intellectuals, and ex-soldiers."<sup>34</sup> Another top secret report the same year bluntly advised the government to

exhaust every possibility offered us by the policy of sectarian [division], which in the past has yielded fruit and succeeded in creating barriers—though sometimes artificial—between certain parts of the Arab population, such as the breakdown of trust between the Druze community and other Arab communities. Since it was first introduced, this policy has allowed us to prevent the Arab minority from coalescing into one united body by causing the leaders of each community to be preoccupied largely by sectarian affairs and not by general Arab affairs.<sup>35</sup>

Politicization among Druze youth continued to intensify during the 1960s, alarming Israeli decision makers. Among them was Amnon Lynn, an "Arabist" within the circle of Israeli officials. In a series of articles that appeared in November 1966, Lynn attributed the Druze protests to the lack of "Israeli consciousness" among Druze youth: "The State of Israel has not learned how to exploit the progress and the changes that have been introduced among [the Druzes] following the application of obligatory conscription. By failing to exploit the process, we are creating dangerous consequences among the Druze youths." In order to counteract the process of "Arabization" that had "already emerged among the youth, the State of Israel should develop an Israeli-Druze consciousness."<sup>36</sup>

Trying to construct such an Israeli-Druze consciousness became urgent in 1972, when "Arabization" among the Druzes reached its climax with the establishment of the Druze Initiative Committee, a group whose members endeavored to reverse the process of separating the Druzes from the other Arabs. Israeli officials viewed the members of this committee and similar groups as a threat that would propel Druze youth toward supporting unity among all Arab minorities. Taking its cue from Lynn's ideas, the government set up two committees to "handle the Druze problem." While the economic recommendations of the two committees were quickly frozen, efforts to create an "Israeli-Druze consciousness" through education received full official encouragement.

Gabriel Ben-Dor, a political scientist at Haifa University, was chosen to head a governmental committee of Druze and Jewish members charged with drafting recommendations for dealing with the "Druze problem." In his re-

port, Ben-Dor gave his own view that the history of Druze-Jewish relations exhibits not conflict but mutual cooperation:

Many Jewish writers and Druze spokesmen and scholars in Israel emphasize the tendency of the Druzes to ally with other minorities as a primary motive for their good relations with the Jews throughout their history. . . . There is overwhelming evidence for mutual understanding between the Jews and the Druzes from the 12th century on. . . . This relationship of mutual understanding has endured (and is emphasized today more than ever, for obvious political reasons).<sup>37</sup>

Ben-Dor's committee made a number of suggestions for subjects to be taught in the schools. Not surprisingly, they included primarily history, folklore, religion, and literature. The committee recommended that Druze-Jewish relations of the Mandatory period should be emphasized, along with the sect's religious tenets, the law of the Druze religious court, the integration of the Druzes in Israel, compulsory military conscription, and "Israeli-Druze consciousness."<sup>38</sup> The dispute over the new educational curriculum that arose within the Druze community was dismissed by Israeli officials and their Druze allies as a polemic "between the negative and the positive forces."<sup>39</sup> By 1977, the Druze curriculum had been completely separated from the Arab one.

The curriculum bolstered Druze particularism, but it did not raise educational standards. It is here that we come up against a crucial feature of Israeli Druze society. Given the structure of the Druze labor market, high levels of education or vocational skills are not required. For the security services, at least, what is required is discipline, identification with official policies, loyalty, and subordination. At the same time, Druze youth, attracted by the prospects of an immediate stable (if low) income and aware of the limited options before them, do not set their educational goals too high. The resulting vicious circle of inadequate education and low-level jobs creates an almost complete dependency on the Israeli authorities, which the latter then can easily exploit to inculcate in them their "Israeli-Druze consciousness." Which brings us back to the "self-image" of the Druzes, elites as well as ordinary people.

## CONCLUSION

As we have seen, the "self-image" of the Druzes in Israel is part reconstruction, part invention. Traditional features of Druze particularism have been transformed into a new kind of "particularism" made to fit the reality of the Jewish state. The occupational structure of the Druze community and the obligatory military service imposed upon it are very much part of this—it is

doubtful whether without them the Druze elite and the Israeli policymakers would have been so successful in getting the majority of the Druzes to adopt this “self-image.”

This also explains why the minority of Druzes that refuses to accept the new “self-image” or Druze collective identity (as interpreted in Israel) is being marginalized by the Israeli media. Similarly, open protests against the imposed collective identity are invariably interpreted as “temporary feelings of frustration,” though the authorities always make immediate efforts (involving renewed promises, etc.) to contain these “temporary feelings.”

But most have “accepted” the idea of their communal entity—a measure of the Israeli authorities’ success in bringing the Druzes to consider themselves as a separate community, even a “nation.” This is where the roles of the elite, the economy, and education come together. The Druze elite was decisive in creating the community’s dependency on security services as their main source of employment, in introducing a special “Druze” curriculum in the schools, and in preventing an alternative elite among the dissenting intellectuals from establishing itself.

Even after the Druzes became part of Israel in 1948, their “leaders” never integrated into the state’s political parties or other national frameworks, such as trade unions, popular movements, and so on. Rather, they see their role as restricted to the affairs and interests of the community. But even when it comes to Druze affairs proper, Druze “leaders” continue to deal primarily with minor problems of individuals, clients, and clan members, rather than with the wider problems facing the community as a whole. Directly or indirectly, visibly or invisibly, their role and activities have been and continue to be dictated by Israel’s ruling elite with the aim of ensuring that the Druze community remains passive with regard to such “delicate issues” as land expropriations and the absence of full equality for the Israeli Arab population.

While protests from Druze intellectuals and the Druze Initiative Committee continue to this day, Israeli policymakers have had little problem marginalizing these “negative forces.” In this sense, one may say that Israel’s Zionist policies have been “successful.” But when today the Druze community seeks answers for the future, an underlying feeling of *musiba* (tragedy) is undeniable.

## NOTES

1. Israel State Archives (ISA), Foreign Ministry (FM) 2402/28, Session of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, 6 May 1949.

2. My use of the term “particularism” differentiates between two collective identities, the nationalist and prenationalist. In my view, the Druzes in Palestine until the end of the Mandatory period and beyond constituted an ethnoreligious community that had not conceived the

notion of nationalism. Instead, they clung to their sectarian identity, or their particularism, which characterized many ethnoreligious communities in the premodern era.

3. Central Zionist Archives (CZA) S/25/6638, Report of Y. Ben-Zvi, “On Establishing Good Relations with the Druzes,” August 1930

4. Benny Morris, *1948 and After: Israel and the Palestinians* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1990), pp. 173–87.
5. Morris, *1948 and After*, pp. 173–87.
6. Israel Defense Forces Archives (IDFA) 957/52/13, Report, "The Druzes in the Palestine War," 1 August 1948.
7. See Yoav Gelber, "Druze and Jews in the War of 1948," *Middle Eastern Studies* 31, no. 2 (April 1995), p. 240.
8. ISA, FM 7249/49/219, 24 August 1948.
9. ISA, FM 2570/11, Shim'oni to E. Sasson, 16 August 1948.
10. ISA, FM 2570/11, Shim'oni to Sasson, 16 September 1948.
11. IDFA 957/52/12, Report, "The Druzes in the Palestine War," 1 August 1948.
12. ISA, FM 2565/8, Report of Palmon "Our Activities among the Druzes," August 1948.
13. ISA, FM/2402/28, Report of the Inter-Ministerial Committee, 9 June 1949.
14. ISA, FM 2402/28, Dr. H. Hirschberg to Palmon, 18 October 1949.
15. ISA, FM 2565/8, "Memorandum, Re: The Treatment of the Druze Community in Israel," T. Cohen to the Ministry of Religions, 10 August 1949.
16. ISA, Ministry of Minority Affairs C/302/78, and FM 2565/8, Shitrit to Ben-Gurion and Moshe Sharett, 30 November 1948.
17. ISA, FM 2565/8, "Invitation [to the *ziyara*]," T. Lishansky, 22 April 1949.
18. The correspondence as of 1954 between the Tarifs and other clan chiefs on the one hand and Abba Hushi on the other shows how the Druze chiefs increasingly began looking out for their personal and clan interests, which the authorities encouraged as rewards for their support of the official policy vis-à-vis the Druze community.
19. Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (1983; reprint, New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 6.
20. State of Israel, *Government Yearbook* (Jerusalem: Israeli Government Printing Office, 1957), p. 49.
21. IDFA 48/117/6700, Jaber Mu'addi to Ben-Gurion, 15 December 1955.
22. Prior to the enactment of the law, Sunni Muslims and Christians had also been called up via the Histadrut's branches in the Arab villages, and about 400 youth from Nazareth and the village of Rena appeared willing to join the IDF, but none were signed up. ISA C/2214/128, Report of the Minorities Department, March–April 1956.
23. ISA, FM 2565/8, Report of Shitrit, 30 November 1948.
24. Aharon Layish, "Taqiyya among the Druzes," *Asian and African Studies* 19, no. 3 (November 1985), p. 277.
25. Yitzhak Ben-Zvi, *Eretz Isra'el Yishuva Tahat ha-Shilton ha-'Uihmani* (Palestine and its population under Ottoman rule) (reprint, Jerusalem: n.p., 1956). Some of Ben-Zvi's writings on the Druze were translated into Arabic in 1954 under the title *al-Qura al-Durziyya fi Isra'il* (The Druze villages in Israel) (trans. Kamal al-Qasim [Rama, Israel: n.p., 1954]); but compare Qasim's translation on pages 6 and 12 with the Hebrew original (pp. 17–19, 41–42, 191–92). Qasim selects only the parts that refer to Druze villages using the term "community" instead of "nation," used by Ben-Zvi.
26. Haim Blanc, "Druze Particularism: Modern Aspects of an Old Problem," *Middle Eastern Affairs* 3 (November 1952), pp. 315–21.
27. In Arabic, the term *taqiyya* actually means prudence and carefulness. The practice of *taqiyya* is of Shi'i origin. It permits the adoption of outward forms of Sunni Islamic rituals in order to protect the inward faith. The Druze practice of *taqiyya* is nearly the same sense of the Isma'ili and 'Alawi principle.
28. See Layish, "Taqiyya," pp. 246–75.
29. See Nissim Dana, *Ha-Druzim* (The Druze) (Ramat Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University, 1998), p. 220.
30. As a result of expropriation, the land ownership in villages inhabited by Druzes decreased from 337,916 dunams in 1945 to 97,386 dunams in 1962. For a chart showing land ownership in Druze villages from 1939 to 1995, see Kais M. Firro, *The Druzes in the Jewish State: A Brief History* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1999), p. 141.
31. ISA, 13012/1352/CL, Report of the Committee, 20 May 1975, pp. 13–14.
32. In the 1990s Arabs, including Druzes, received between 1.36 to 3.4 percent of the total water allocated for agriculture. Sikkuy (Association of the Advancement of Equal Opportunity),

*Shivyon ve-Shiluv* (Equality and Integration) (Jerusalem: Author, 1995), p. 33.

33. The organization soon split into two factions, one that advocated joining the other Arab communities in the struggle against the Military Government and the confiscation of lands, and the other wanting to concentrate their struggle on real and not just formal equality for the Druzes in Israel.

34. ISA, FM 3413/3, Report, 7 May 1962.

35. Abba Hushi Archives, top secret report, no exact date but ca. 1962, pp. 14–15.

36. *Ha'Aretz*, 14 November 1966.

37. Gabriel Ben-Dor, *The Druzes in Israel, A Political Study* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1979), pp. 98–99.

38. *Ibid.*, 225–32.

39. ISA 13012/1352/2CL, Yusuf Nasr al-Din [the founder of the Zionist Druze Circle] to M. Begin, 6 September 1977.