AN OVERVİEW OF NUSAYRİ AND NUSAYRİ IDEOLOGY (SYRİAN CASE)[1]

NUSAYRILIĞE VE NUSAYRI IDEOLOJISINE GENEL BIR BAKIŞ (SURIYE ÖRNEĞI)

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ÖZ

ABSTRACT

The Middle East has a structure with a wide ethnic, cultural, religious variety. One of the elements of this structure is the Nusayris, a unique closed group. Nusayri name is often mentioned both in the media and in academic articles due to the Assad family in the Syrian state administration and the civil war in Syria. So, who are these Nusayris? Is their advancement in the Syrian state structure linked to their beliefs? Has Nusayri belief turned into an ideology in the historical process, or was it already an ideological structure in its emergence? There is no doubt that to answer these questions it is necessary to examine the history and anthropological development of Nusayris both religiously and culturally. In this study, we have tried to understand the formation of Nusayris, their belief systems, culture, the distribution of their settlements and how they have changed throughout history, respectively. We have evaluated the relationship between the political progress of the closed society of Nusayris with their belief, whether their belief has turned into a political ideology and how a belief with an ideological character reflects itself.

Keywords: Nusayries, İdeology, Religion, Syria

ÖZ

Ortadoğu etnik, kültürel, dini çeşitliliği çok olan bir yapıya sahiptir. Bu yapının unsurlarından biride kendine özgü kapalı bir grup olan Nusayrilerdir. Suriye Devlet yönetimindeki Esad ailesi ve Suriye'de gerçekleşen iç savaş nedeniyle gerek medyada gerekse akademik makalelerde Nusayri ismi sık sık zikredilmektedir. Peki, kimdir Nusayriler? Suriye devlet yapılanmasında ilerlemelerinin inançlarıyla bağlantısı var mıdır? Nusayrilik inancı tarihsel süreç içerisinde bir ideolojiye dönüşmüş müdür ya da çıkışı itibariyle zaten ideolojik bir yapıda mıdır? Şüphesiz ki bu sorulara cevap verebilmek için gerek dinsel, gerekse kültürel olarak Nusayrilerin tarihi ve antropolojik gelişimini incelememiz gerekmektedir. Bu çalışmada sırasıyla önce Nusayriliğin ilk oluşumunu, inanç sistemlerini, kültürlerini, yerleşim yerlerinin dağılımını ve tarih içinde nasıl değişim gösterdiklerini anlamaya çalıştık. Kapalı bir toplum olan Nusayrilerin siyasi anlamda ilerlemelerinin dini inançlarıyla olan bağlantısını, inançlarının siyasal bir ideolojiye dönüşüp dönüşmediğini ve ideolojik karakterde olan bir inancın kendini nasıl yansıttığı konularını değerlendirdik.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Nusayrilik, İdeoloji, İnanç, Suriye,

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1. INTRODUCTION

During the period of their emergence, the Nusayris were known as Namiris, Nusayris, or Ansaris; but since the 1920s, they have been known as Arab Alawis. In Turkey, they are colloquially referred to as "Fellah" (farmhand), and as "Arap uşağı" (Arab folk) to emphasize their ethnic origins (Üzüm.2000:s.173,174). As a result of their Islamic interpretations and beliefs, which are not accepted by other sects including Shia Islam itself, of which they are a sub-sect, the Nusayris are known as a batini (esoteric) sect of the Shia sect. A closed community with distinctive characteristics, secrecy is essential in the rituals of Nusayris. While their attitude within the sect is shaped by ta'wil, the principle of taqiyya shapes their attitude in their dealings with people outside their sect. *Ta'wil* refers to the symbolic or allegorical interpretation of holy texts and religious practices, while *taqiyya* refers to the dissimulation of religious belief or sect in the face of possible danger (Türk,2013:pp. 31,85). The Nusayris have managed to survive in this manner under the administration of numerous states. Even though there has been much scientific research about the Nusayris, who have been acting on these principles, there is still a lot of mystery surrounding their community.

In the present study, we will first offer an overview of the events that led to the division of Islam into sects and the emergence of Shia Islam, the origin of Nusayriyya; then we will discuss the divisions within the Shia sect into further sub-sects and offer insights into some of these sub-sects. We will consider claims regarding the origin of the name Nusayri and the ethnicity of the Nusayris, then we will explore the religious, political, sociological and cultural changes the Nusayris have gone through since their emergence until the present, as well as the causes of these changes. We will provide a short account of the states under whose rule the Nusayris lived from their emergence until the foundation of the Syrian State. We will offer information about the core beliefs of the Nusayris which have led to their identification as a *batini* (esoteric) sect: Belief in Ali (*hulul*) and metempsychosis (*tanasukh*). In this study, we have also assessed the role of the Nusayris in the creation and political history of the Syrian State. We have briefly mentioned the formation of the Baath Party and the Nusayri activities within the party. As a conclusion, we have tried to define the concepts of ideology and religion, and, based on the information revealed in this study, shared our findings as to whether or not the Nusayri sect has ideologically-shaped political sides.

2. METHODOLOGY

Published theses, articles, national and international books, magazines and opinion pieces on the Nusayri faith have been used in this study. Case study research has been conducted in the form of interviews with members of the Nusayri sect who asked to remain anonymous. Comparative research methods have been adopted to evaluate the information gathered from these individuals and from written sources on the Nusayri faith.

3. THE NUSAYRI FAITH AND THE HISTORY OF NUSAYRIS

3.1. The Division of Islam into Sects

Islam is a religion that was received by Muhammad (570-632) of the Banu Hashim Clan through divine revelation in the 7th century. Islam spread over a large area within a short span of time, and united those who believed in this religion within a single structure. However, after the death of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, disagreements arose about who would succeed him as the religious and political authority. The political events that resulted from this power struggle generally developed along two axes: the related Banu Hashim and Banu Umayya. As a result, madhabs (sects/schools of Islamic jurisprudence), literally meaning paths to follow, emerged. Islam is divided into three main sects: Sunnites, Shiites and Kharijites. Islamic scholars assert that the emergence of these sects was caused by the events of Saqifah and Karbala (Topaloğlu, 2001:pp. 2-10). In the course of history, numerous sub-sects with various names emerged out of these main sects. Among the reasons for these sub-divisions are the political turmoil of the period, the conquests that led to the spread of Islam over a large area, the Islamization of the peoples inhabiting these conquered lands and the emergence of distinct political views from the synthesis between Islam and the cultures of these peoples, their interpretations of Islam based on these views, and the struggle for power that took place in the Islamic context. From the Sunni branch emerged the four schools of fiqh (Islamic jurisprudence): Hanafi, Hanbali, Shafi'i, Maliki. The most well-known school to have emerged from the Khariji branch and survived until the present is the Ibadiyya. The Ja'fari School is the main school of jurisprudence to have emerged from Shia Islam. Deriving its name from Imam Ja'far al-Sadiq, the Ja'fari School is also known as *"Twelvers"*. Zaidiyyah, also known as *"Fivers,"* ranks the second. They derive their name from Zayd ibn Ali, whose imamate they support in place of his brother Muhammad al-Baqir, son of Zayn al-Abidin and the fifth imam. Another branch that emerged from Shia Islam is Isma'ilism, *also*

known as "Seveners". They accept Ja'far al-Sadiq's older son Isma'il ibn Jafar al-Mubarak as the appointed seventh imam, and they are one of the Ghulat sects born out of Shia Islam. Ghulat is a term that means exceeders. Among the core beliefs of Ghulat sects is hulul (manifestation). Tanāsukh (metempsychosis) and ibaha are also among their core beliefs (Çağatay et al. Çubukçu, 1985:pp. 65-68).

3.2. Origin of the Name "Nusayri"

It is necessary to first dwell on the origin of the name "Nusayri" in order to have an idea about the period when the Nusayris emerged, the area they inhabited and the figures or places from where their beliefs developed. There are many different accounts regarding the emergence of the name "Nusayri". Among the most significant are the claims that the name was derived from "Nasrani" (Christian) which was taken from the name of a village called "Nasuraya" in Kufa, Iraq, which was named after an imaginary Shiite martyr (Uluçay, 2003:p. 4). Melikoff asserts that the name "Nusayri" is a traditional one, and that, inspired by the Alevis of Anatolia, the Nusayris were called "Alawites" (Melikof, 1994:pp. 26-34). Al-Tawil argues that the name was derived from "Nusayra," which is the diminutive of the word for "help". When the troops sent by Caliph Umar to conquer Syria faced difficulties and asked for help, an army of 450 people from Ansar came to their assistance. This small army that came to help is known as "Nusayra," meaning small help. The code of war of the period required that the conquered lands would be given to the conquering army. The lands conquered by the Nusayra group were called Nusayra. (Al-Tawil, 2000:p. 81) Hasan Reşit Tankut claims that the name "Nusayri" referred to a group of people who believed in a religion much older than Abrahamic religions, but that its followers failed to preserve the original characteristics of this Nusayri faith (Tankut, 1938:p. 25). The most probable one of all these claims is that the name is derived from the name of Muhammad ibn Nuṣayr al-Namiri, the founder of the sect.

3.3. Ethnic Origins of the Nusayris

Ethnicity is a concept that defines the identities of communities of a common origin who develop a culture, worldview and lifestyle based on their acceptance of a shared origin. At the same time, it characterizes a community and helps us understand its social and physical characteristics. Ethnicity is one of the core elements that brings a community together. Then what is the ethnic identity that characterizes the Nusayri community? The Nusayri faith emerged in the Iraqi city of Kufa, populated densely by Arabs. In the course of history, due to changing dynamics, groups belonging to the Nusayri sect migrated to different areas from their place of origin. These migrations resulted in their concentration in the area around the Nusayri mountains. The Arab Nusayris who settled in this area influenced the other ethnicities inhabiting the vicinity of the area. Al-Tawil argues that this situation results from the inflated sense of individualism, and the quick-tempered nature of Arabs who assimilated and Arabized numerous peoples thanks to their attachment to their language and to the customs of their people. In addition to Arab Nusayris, another populous ethnic group which settled in Syria and around the Nusayri mountains is the Turks. It is highly likely that the Nusayris had contacts with the Turks in this region where they settled and, due to the Arabic temperament which has been mentioned, Arabized and absorbed these ethnic groups. Al-Tawil's claim that the ancestors of the Nusayris are Ghassanids, Tanukhids, Phoenicians, Qahtanites, Mekharizas, Mudharis, Banu Rabiah of Adnamids, Circassians, and a branch of Turks, verifies this account. Another important aspect to consider here is the expansionist character of the Nusayri order at its emergence. During the period from its emergence until its conversion into a closed society, people or groups of other faiths and ethnicities would first be called to Islam and Shiism, then the ones who were found fitting would be admitted into the order (Al-Tavil, 2000:p. 274).

One of the essential goals of anthropology is to define the changes undergone by ethnic groups through religious, linguistic and geographical factors. It is for this reason that the physical and cultural interaction between the Nusayris and Turkmens has been studied by numerous Anthropologists in an effort to gain insight into the ethnic origin of the Nusayris. In his work *"Völker, Ressen, Sprachen,"* German anthropologist Felix Von Luschan finds similarities between the two ethnicities and emphasizes the possibility of a Turkish origin.

> *"... their [the Nusayris'] serious and calm attitude, and their somatologic attributes resemble completely the Takhtadjis of Lycia (the Lycian Hinterland). (The Takhtadjis are Turkmen Alevis). The Sunnis use the name "Alevi" to refer to both sides. I have measured their cephalic indexes and the average is 85 (Luschan, p. 204-cited by Tankut, 1938:p. 11)."*

Hasan Reşit Tankut, a professor of Turkology, claims in his book *Nusayrilik ve Nusayriler Hakkında* (On the Nusayri Faith and Nusayris) that their origin goes back to Turks. Tankut defines the average cephalic index of 85 as the ideal measurement for a Turkmen. He asserts that, since Arabs have a cephalic index of 72-75, especially the Nusayris living in Anatolia cannot be Arabs from an anthropological perspective. According to Tankut, because Nusayris are a closed group and do not intermarry, their cephalic index has not fallen under 85 and they have preserved their ethnic characteristics (see. Table. 1)

Table 1: Cephalic Indexes (Tankut,1938:pp. 11-12)

Elisef	Generally Turkish	84.40
Von Luschan	Western Turk	81
Von Luschan	Takhtadji-Alevi	86
Von Luschan	Nusayri	86
Chantre	Anatolian Qizilbash	86.11
Chantre	Cappadocian Turk	84.53
Hauschild and Wagen Seil	Anatolian Turk	84.19
Pittart	Anatolian Turk	84.78
Şevket Aziz Kansu	Anatolian Turk	85.01
Şevket Aziz Kansu	Anatolian Turk	84.19

Drawing on his own research as well as the sources he uses, Hasan Reşit Tankut traces the ethnic origin of the Nusayris to the Turks. It seems beneficial to us to have a look at other works of research which claim an Arabic ethnic origin for the Nusayris. According to Andrew, the language of the Nusayris stems from the Syriac/Lebanese dialect of Arabic which are part of Gabal and Ansari in Syria. Aringberg Laanatza argues that the origin of Syrian Alawites, including the Nusayris living in Turkey, goes back to a homogeneous Arabic clan. She emphasizes the importance of mother tongue in defining ethnic identity. She notes that, for this reason, the linguistic element must be the basis on which the ethnic identities of Alawite groups are established (Andrew, Arinberg-Laanatza; quoted in Türk, 2013: pp. 35-36). Sertel, on the other hand, notes that the Nusayri identity has both ethnic and religious components, and argues that the religious and ethnic components must be dealt with together (Sertel, 2005:p. 11).

The concept of language is a defining element of ethnic origin. Geographic and religious changes may cause changes in ethnicity. The most outstanding change in such situations is linguistic change. Changes in the religious structure may even cause changes in the way the masses think. In this connection, it is necessary to note that the Nusayri sect is a religious system, and that being of Arabic origin was not a prerequisite for its followers during its formation. However, in an effort to preserve the secrecy of their doctrine of mystery, coming from a Nusayri family became a prerequisite over time for those joining the Nusayri faith. It is noted in the abovementioned sources that it is possible that other ethnicities which converted to the Nusayri faith may have become part of this closed religious group, become absorbed by their numerous population through marriages, and become Arabized and lost touch with their native languages and cultures. Under these circumstances, we need to accept the self-identification of today's Nusayris as our basis. Even though there are those within these Nusayri communities who self-identify as Turkmen or eti-Turk, we must take the language of the Nusayris and their views on their identity as our basis and accept them as Arab Alawites.

3.4. The History of Nusayriyya and its Emergence

The Nusayri faith was founded in the Arabic city of Kufa by Abū Shuʿayb Muhammad ibn Nusayr al-Abdi al-Bakri al-Numayri in the 9th century. Muhammad ibn Nusayr was among the elites of Basra. Being a close associate of Ali ibn Muhammad al-Hadi and Hasan ibn Ali al-Askari , both of them Imams of Twelver Shia Islam, Muhammad ibn Nusayr declared himself to be the *Bab* (gate) of Hasan ibn Ali al-Askari. Afterwards he started spreading his particular esoteric doctrines and training disciples. The followers of Muhammad ibn Nusayr were called Nusayri. What sets Muhammad ibn Nusayr and other Ja'fari movements apart is his advocacy of esoteric beliefs which are otherwise not present in the Ja'fari faith; and, since he had declared himself to be the *bab* of Hasan ibn Ali al-Askari, he and his followers were called *ghulat* (extremist), *kafir* (infidel), *batini* (esoteric). Despite the ostracization by other sects, Muhammad ibn Nusayr managed to form around himself a small community who believed in him and followed him (Keser, 2014:pp. 14-15). After his death, Muhammad ibn Nusayr was succeeded by Muhammad ibn Jundab, who in turn was succeeded by Muhammad al-Jannan al-Junbulani.During the leadership of al-Junbulani, a new order named Junbulaniyya was founded.Al-Junbulani continued to spread the teachings of the order and to train

disciples. Junbulani met Hamdan al-Khasibi in Egypt, where he had gone to spread his teachings.Al-Khasibi entered the Junbulaniyya order after meeting al-Junbulani.Following al-Junbulani, al-Khasibi settled in Junbula and was taught here by Junbulani.Hamdan al-Khasibi assumed the leadership of the order after the death of al-Junbulani.Al-Khasibi is credited with being the second founder of the Nusayri sect. For it was during the leadership of al-Khasibi that the sect spread and gained recognition. After assuming leadership, al-Khasibi first moved to Baghdad and then to Aleppo, where he continued to teach his doctrine. In that period, Aleppo was ruled by Sayf al-Dawla, the founder of the Aleppo branch of the Hamdanis. Many of al-Khasibi's disciples became emirs of the Buwayhis, Hamdanis and Fatimids. *Kitab al-Hidaya al-Kubra* (Book of Greatest Guidance), written in Aleppo by al-Khasibi, was dedicated to Sayf al-Dawla. It can be observed that the Hamdanis were the biggest supporters of the Nusayris. He wrote the epistle *Rast Bash* (Persian, "Be Righteous") under the patronage of Buwayhis and dedicated it to Adud al-Dawla.Al-Khasibi and his disciples first called people of all religious beliefs and ethnicities to Islam and then admitted those they found fitting into their order. One of the most significant figures of his period, al-Khasibi was succeeded after his death by Sayyid Muhammad ibn Ali al-Jilli, who operated the center in Aleppo, while the other center in Basra was operated by Sayyid al-Jisri, and the Nusayris thus came to be administered from two centers. Following the death of Sayyid al-Jilli, the center in Aleppo was relocated to Latakia and the leadership of the order was assumed by Abu Said al-Maymun ibn Qasim al-Tarabani. The mountainous region surrounding Latakia became a Nusayri area in this period and came to be known since then as the Nusayri Mountains. The Nusayri presence in Baghdad, on the other hand, came to an end with the Mongolian invasion in 1258 (Keser, 2014:pp. 19-20; al-Tawil, 2000:pp. 153-212).

Al-Tarabani was the last religious leader of the whole Nusayri order, and after him there has not been anyone to lead the whole order. Under the administration of individual sheiks ruling their respective territories, Nusayri factions live in isolation from one another and under the authority of different administrations (Uluçay, 2003:p. 7). In this same period, the allied forces of Kurds and Ismailis were attacking the divided and isolated groups of Nusayris. Following these attacks, the Nusayris of Banyas of Latakia asked the Nusayri emir of the Sinjar region in Iraq, Hasan al-Makzun Sinjari, to come to their aid. In 1222, Sinjari and his troops conquered the area and united all the Nusayris under his authority. In addition to jihad al-zahir, the jihad that is fought openly, Sinjari made jihad al-batin, the fight against one's will and self, compulsory for the Nusayris.Following the death of al-Sinjari, the Nusayri union was lost once again and the Nusayris began to live again in divided groups (Keser, 2014:pp. 21-22). In the following periods, the areas inhabited by the Nusayris all came under Mamluk rule. The Mamluks were devoted proponents of the Sunni faith. They did not tolerate other sects. It is for this reason that they made the construction of mosques in Nusayri villages an obligation. They forbade entry into the Nusayri sect and forbade the Nusayris from drinking wine and using it in their rituals. They imposed heavy taxes on the Nusayris. The Mamluks were acting in an effort to eradicate the Nusayriyya. Unable to withstand religious and economic pressures, the Nusayris *started a messianic* uprising, but it was brutally crushed by the Mamluks (Friedman, 2010:pp. 52-58; Keser, 2014:pp. 21-23; Al-Tawil, 2000:pp. 225-230). Trying to handle intense pressures, the Nusayris were faced for the first time in this period fatwas that were issued against them. The first fatwa against the Nusayris was issued in 1317 by Taqi al-Din ibn Taymiyyah. In his fatwa, Taymiyyah declares that the Nusayris are deviants who harm the religion of Islam, and goes as far as to say that they are not Muslims. In addition to all this negative discourse, Taymiyya decrees that the Nusayris are not to be interred in Muslim cemeteries, that their food is not to be shared and their women are not to be married, and that they should not be admitted into the military. He even asserts in clear terms that Muslims should hunt down Nusayris, and that it is acceptable for a Muslim to confiscate Nusayri property and to enslave Nusayri women and children (Frieadman, 2010:pp. 62,189-192; Keser, 2014:pp. 23-24).

Following the conquests of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt by Sultan Selim I, the Nusayris began to live under Ottoman authority. Faced with such pressure under Mamluk rule, the Nusayris endeavored for a long time to preserve their status as a congregation. However, after Selim I put an end to Mamluk rule, the same kind of pressure was inflicted on the Nusayris. The Nusayri presence in Aleppo almost came to an end in this period. Nuh al-Hanafi al-Dimashqi, mufti of Syria, issued a fatwa similar to that issued by Taymiyya against the Nusayris and other esoteric groups. The period saw once again heavy taxes inflicted on the Nusayris, who were under religious and economic pressure. Many Nusayris who were unable to stand these pressures left their homes and took refuge in the Nusayri mountains situated between Tripoli and Antioch (Al-Tawil, 2000:pp. 247-258; Keser, 2014:p. 24). By the middle of the 19th century, Ottoman policies toward the Nusayris reflected a considerable degree of relaxation. Every religion within the Ottoman State was

considered a *millet (nation).* Muslims were the real custodians of the state. Others were known as *dhimmi.* However, the Nusayris, Druze, Yazidis, Wahhabis, Ismailis and Hurufis were not considered *dhimmi* and were shown tolerance (Aksoy, 2010:p. 204; Uluçay, 2003:p. 8; Keser, 2014:p. 25).

The Ottoman State had weakened during the reign of Abdulhamit II. Imperial powers took advantage of this opportunity to pursue policies aimed at dividing communities of different religions, sects and ethnicities that inhabited the Ottoman State. Conscious of this situation, the Ottoman State took numerous measures to preserve social unity. There had been policies aimed at encouraging the conversion of the Druze, Yazidis, and Nusayris into Sunni Islam. Within the framework of these policies, *jizya* tax was not levied on these groups, mosques and schools were built in their villages, and they were admitted into the military (Uluçay, 2003:pp. 8-11; Türk, 2013:p. 47). In this period, very few Nusayris owned their own land. They generally worked at farms owned by Sunni and Christian landlords. Even though it was thought that some Nusayris had converted to the Hanefi school of Islam as a result of these policies of Sunnification, the landlords who employed Nusayris in their service claimed that they had never really converted but had only chosen to appear that way in an effort to gain land and power. This situation created constant tension between the Sunni population and the Nusayris. Conflict even arose between the two groups during shared religious rituals and were suppressed by the Ottoman administration. Further, not having much economic power, the Nusayris staged frequent uprisings against the Ottoman policies of conscription and taxation, which were crushed by the Ottoman State's harsh military actions. A new period dawned for the Nusayris when the First World War came to an end. The areas they inhabited for centuries under Ottoman rule had now come under the authority of new powers after the dissolution of the Ottoman State. While some Nusayris remained within the present borders of the Republic of Turkey, Syria and Lebanon came under French authority. This development largely destroyed the historical ties between the Nusayris of Turkey and Syria (Bilgili et al., 2010:p. 77; Al-Tawil, 2000:pp. 288-294; Keser, 2014:pp.25-29)

4. THE BELIEFS AND FUNDAMENTALS OF THE NUSAYRI FAITH

We have already mentioned that the Nusayris are known as a *batini* (esoteric) sect due to their beliefs. In the Nusayri faith, there is a *zahiri* (exoteric) and *batini* (esoteric) side to everything, and the universe, as well as all creation, is based on this relationship of duality. Nusayris use the name *al-Nur* (the Light) to express their belief that material conception is incapable of comprehending God, and *Ma'na* (Meaning) to describe God as the reason for all creation (Keser, 2014:p. 53). In the exoteric context, Ali is the imam, but in the esoteric context, he is the manifestation of *ma'na*. Ali is in fact the earthly manifestation of the Creator. Even though some Nusayris deny their belief in *hulul* for fear of social pressure, the section on *shahada* (profession of faith) in the 11th chapter of Hamdan al-Khasibi's sixteen-chapter work, *Kitab al-Majmu*, confirms the presence of *hulul* in the Nusayri faith.

> I testify that there is no god but Ali ibn Abi Talib, and no *hijab* but Muhammad Mahmud, and no *bab* but Salman al-Farisi (*Turan-Translation of Kitabu-l Mecmu*).

We have already mentioned that ma'na is one of the attributes of God. According to Nusayris, God reveals himself on earth in certain periods known as qubba. In each of these *revelations,* "*Ism*" and *"Bab"* accompany him. Ma'na is God himself, Ism the prophet, and Bab is the gate that assists them. God revealed himself on earth seven times before Abel and seven times after Abel. Before Abel*, he became manifested as al-Hannu, al-Yannu, Azdashir, Durettud, al-Barru, al-Rahim, Yussef al-Hakim* (Aristotle). Ma'na became manifested in human form seven times after Abel, and the last time was his hulul in Ali's body (see: table.2), (Keser, 2014:p. 54; Türk, 2013:p. 49).

Table 2: The forms in which God was manifested (hulul) after Abel (Türk, 2013:p. 49)

Ma'na	Ism	Bab
Abel	Adam	Gabriel
Seth	Noah	Yail Ibn Fatin
Joseph	Jacob	Ham Ibn Kush
Joshua	Moses	Dan Ibn Usbaud
Asaf	Solomon	Abd Allah Ibn Siman
Simon Peter	Jesus	Rawzaba Ibn al-Marzuban
Ali	Muhammad	Salman al-Farisi

Mystery is a key element in the Nusayri faith, since it is an esoteric belief system. This mystery has developed around three letters.

ع Ayn, م Mim, س Sin

These three letters form the basis of the Nusayri faith. The initial letter of his name, ayn represents Ali. The initial letter of his name, mim, represents Muhammad. The initial letter of his name, sin represents Salman al-Farisi. According to the Nusayris, Ali is the ma'na himself. He *is "Samit,"* the silent. Muhammad is the *"Natiq,"* the speaker; he is the prophet responsible for propagating the Samit's will and orders. According to the Nusayris, from Ali's light Muhammad was created, and from Muhammad's light Salman al-Farisi, from Salman al-Farisi's light the five *aytam* (incomparables). The five aytam are, in order: Abu Dharr al-Ghifari (Israfil), symbolized by the sign of libra; Abd Allah Ibn Rawaha (Azrail), symbolized by Mars; Miqdad Ibn al-Aswad (Mikail), symbolized by Saturn; Uthman Ibn Madun (Allocates sustenance in universe, deals with diseases), symbolized by Venus; Qanbar Ibn Kadan al-Dawsi (Ruh al-Asad, the spirit of the lion). The five aytam created the whole universe from their light. The five aytam represent the five angels. According to Nusayri beliefs, angels are creatures of light who wear green bright clothes of pure silk. The members of Ali's family are also angels. They do not eat or drink and are above acts which are particular to human beings; for this reason, it is considered sacrilegious to call them Ali's wife and children (Üzüm, 2000:p. 184). It is also worth mentioning that, even though the phrase *Ahl al-Bayt* refers originally to the family of the Islamic prophet Muhammad, according to the Nusayris, it denotes the nine imams, and their luminous beings, who are descendants of Muhammad, Ali, Fatima, Hassan, and Hussein (Üzüm, 2000:p. 184).

Another key element of the Nusayri belief system is *tanasuh* (metempsychosis). Metempsychosis is witnessed in non-monotheistic religions such as Hinduism and Buddhism as well as in monotheistic Abrahamic religions. However, the main sects of monotheistic religion reject the concept of metempsychosis. *Tanasuh* is more commonly accepted by the sub-sects belonging to these religions, especially by the esoteric ones. An esoteric sub-sect of Shia Islam, the Nusayri belief system also includes *tanasuh*. According to the Nusayris, people will be reincarnated based on their good or bad deeds; they believe the world to be a place where people are tested, and that, for this test to be just, people need to be reincarnated to experience different statuses and situations. For instance, someone who was tested by poverty in a previous life will be reincarnated as a rich person and be tested as such. Someone who has been born with a disease or physical handicap will be tested as a healthy person in their future life. This is how they believe justice can be maintained. People who have committed grave sins will be reincarnated seven times in animal form. Nusayris believe that this cycle will continue until the day of judgment (Bulğen, 2005:p. 68-69; Keser, 2014:p. 68).

4.1. Nusayri Worship

The Nusayri doctrine of mystery and rituals only take place in an all-male context. Women are strictly forbidden from taking part in rituals, and the mystery is not revealed to them. Even though during our field research some members of the Nusayri sect claimed that this attitude toward women is the result of centuries of persecution and the subsequent wish to protect women, it is also claimed that the Nusayris believe that women do not possess souls and therefore they refer to Fatima as Fatir in an effort to avoid ascribing femininity to her. Nusayri rituals can be divided into two categories: individual and communal. Only Arabic is used as the language of ritual worship. Nusayris are required to clean themselves and perform the *wudhu* (ablution) before ritual acts. Individual rituals do not depend on set forms and movements. They can be performed while sitting, walking, or lying down. Communal rituals require the participation of at least seven people and, unlike individual rituals, include certain movements of the body. During communal acts of worship, Nusayris are required to wear clean and long-sleeved clothes, and to wear a cloth on their heads to cover their foreheads and napes during prayer. Communal prayers begin with the recitation of Surat al-Fatiha. In rituals, sections from the *Kitab al-Majmu*, as well as some particular prayers which are part of their doctrine of mystery, are recited. These prayers include the prayer of cleansing, the prayer of purification, the prayer of purple basil, the prayer of incense, prayer of type and prayer of ending. Only the prayers of purification and incense are taught as well to women because they are outside the doctrine of mystery (Türk, 2013:p. 117). When the prayer of purple basil is recited, members of the congregation are given leaves of the plant. Incense is brought in when the prayer of incense is recited. The Islamic call to prayer is recited after every prayer. The Surat al-Ishara is recited communally. While the Surat al-Ishara is being recited, the sheikh and members of the congregation move their thumbs toward their middle fingers, with the other four fingers kept pressed together, and keep the thumb pressed against the middle finger until the recitation of the Surat al-Sujud from the *Kitab al-Majmu* (Qamaris and Haidaris

use a different hand gesture).During rituals, a drink made of grape juice, called *nakfi,* is distributed as part of the ritual. People known as *naqeeb* and *najeeb* assist the sheikh during communal rituals. *Naqeeb* is the apprentice sheikh who comes from the same lineage as the sheikh. *Najeeb* is usually someone who is favored by the community and who, without having to come from the sheikh's lineage, assists the sheikh during rituals. Communal rituals are performed during feasts and offerings, as well as during initiation ceremonies (Keser, 2014:pp. 65,89-91; Türk, 2013:pp. 94-95).

4.2. Initiation into the Nusayri Sect

One of the most important rules for admission into the sect is to come from a Nusayri family. People who come from non-Nusayri families are not admitted into the sect. The second rule for admission into the sect is to be a male of sound mind. The continuity and transmission from generation to generation of Nusayri beliefs is carried out by the institution of religious unclehood. Any child (around ages 12-14) who meets the prerequisites and is thought to have matured enough for admission into the sect, first chooses someone as his religious uncle. The child's father and brothers cannot act as his religious uncle. Once the uncle has been chosen, the child's process of initiation into the sect lasts over a period of seven to nine months and includes three rituals. Nusayris believe that the day of initiation, whereby the person gains access to the mystery, is the true birth of a person; for this reason, the first ritual symbolizes insemination. An insignificant secret is revealed to the child during this first ritual, and the child is then observed by his family and other members of the community to find out whether or not he keeps the secret until the next ritual. The second ritual is performed for the children who manage to keep this secret. The second ritual represents the conception stage. The child memorizes the letter Ayn, Mim, Sin during this ritual and takes vows not to reveal the secrets. The third ritual represents the day of birth. The child, who has had his true birth as a Nusayri, pays a visit to the house of his religious uncle. He stays there for 30 or 40 days, and memorizes prayers and the sections of the *Kitab al-Majmu*. Having completed the training he received from the religious uncle, the child is now a Nusayri and returns home a true Nusayri (Türk, 2013:pp. 91-100; Keser, 2014:pp. 41-50).

4.3. Nusayri Belief in Holy Books

There are two holy books for the Nusayris; the first one is, without doubt, the *Quran al-Karim*, considered holy by Muslims. Nusayris believe that the *Quran al-Karim* has an exoteric meaning that is accessible to and can be comprehended by everyone, and an esoteric meaning which is not accessible to and cannot be comprehended by everyone. The esoteric rather than the exoteric side of the *Quran al-Karim* is much more important for the Nusayris. For instance, when an oath is taken in the Surat al-Tin of the *Quran al-Karim* "by the fig and the olive," while the exoteric meaning is that an oath is taken by two trees, the esoteric meaning is that these two represent Egypt and Syria. Nusayris also believe that the *Quran al-Karim* has been altered and therefore lost its true meaning. The other book considered holy by the Nusayris is the *Kitab al-Majmu*. Written by Hamdan al-Khasibi, this book is considered the foundation of the faith. *Kitab al-Majmu* is a book of religious and ritual training. There are claims that the first five *surat*s of the *Kitab al-Majmu* were written by Hamdan al-Khasibi, while the remaining 11 were written by different Nusayri sheiks and scholars over a period of more than a thousand years. *Kitab al-Majmu* was published for the first time in Tarsus by Süleyman Efendi, a Nusayri native of Adana who later converted to Christianity and was assassinated in Tarsus. It was later translated to English and French. It was translated into Turkish for the first time by Ahmet Turan (Turan, 1996:p. 6-7). Another book considered important by the Nusayris is the *Kitab al-Jafr*. Nusayris believe that this book was written by Ali himself. They describe the book as a kind of book of oracles which offers information about everything that takes place from the time of creation until the day of judgment. As a result of the pressure and restrictions inflicted on them, Nusayris have been transmitting ritual and religious knowledge only face to face from a sheikh to a new initiate. Only a portion of this knowledge has been written down and made subjective. Nusayris possess records of their religious knowledge that has been transmitted from generation to generation. The longer one of these begins with al-Jilli. The shorter one begins with al-Jisri. The shortest prayer to be taught is called "kitni" (Türk, 2013:pp.100-1004; Üzüm, 2000:pp. 173-187).

4.4. Nusayri Feasts and Holy Days

The Nusayri faith has hundreds of holy days and feasts to be celebrated. Some of these are Islamic feasts and holy days celebrated by all Muslims. In addition, numerous feasts originally belonging to other religions are celebrated by the Nusayris. Feasts of Christian origin are especially numerous; this is as much due to the fact that the Nusayris accept the prophets of every religion and consider every religion holy, as it

is to the fact that there has been interactions as a result of inhabiting the same area; or it can possibly be a remnant from those times when they would perform taqiyya. Nusayris also have traditional feasts belonging to their own culture which are celebrated depending on natural changes and historical events.There are also feasts known as "Leyli" (nocturnal). The most significant characteristic of Nusayri feasts is custodianship. Certain families act as custodians of certain feasts and these feasts are celebrated each year in their houses. Custodianship can be transmitted by way of a son inheriting it from his father. Nusayris celebrate these feasts and nights in a spirit of solidarity and cooperation. Feasts are celebrated at shrines if the custodian's house is not convenient. On feast days, men and women gather in solidarity to prepare a feast for the guests. A traditional dish called Khrisi, often made of meat and wheat, is prepared. Communal prayer is performed and zakat is offered to the ones in need (Türk, 2013:pp.120-126; Keser, 2014:p. 94).

5. A POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE SYRIAN STATE AND THE RISE OF NUSAYRIS ALONG WITH BAATH

After the First World War, the French invaded Syria and established a mandatory administration in the region. Implementing a strategy to divide and conquer, France divided the region into the State of Aleppo, the State of Damascus, Jabal al-Druze State, Alawite State, and the State of Greater Lebanon (Ataman, 2012:p. 7). It was for the first time in this period that the Nusayris were called Arab Alawites. The Latakia region of Syria was named an Alawite region for the first time during this process. In 1922, the Alawite State, one of the first artificial states in the Middle East, was established. In 1939, this state was reincorporated into Syria as a province within the country. It was for the first time during this period that the Nusayris gained official recognition and could live without restrictions. The French practice of providing arms and military training for minorities was in fact a turning point for the Nusayris. Nusayris accounted for half of the French "*Troupes spéciales du Levant*," a military corps organized into eight battalions (Pipes, 1990:pp. 158-175). Nusayris were trained in military arts within these corps and began to understand the military system. They were receiving education in French schools offering western style education, and some of them were being sent to Europe for their education. The idea of climbing the social ladder by means of education became widespread among the Nusayris, who were admitted also into military schools, and thus an educated Nusayri elite and middle class emerged (Keser, 2014:p. 32). In the year 1942, the Alawite State which had been established under French mandatory rule was incorporated into the Syrian State. However, the Nusayris, who had achieved political and administrative status for the first time, were split into two groups regarding their incorporation into the Syrian State. While Nusayri intellectuals favored the idea of incorporation into the Syrian State, tribal leaders and sheiks were not willing to be incorporated into any state structure. Despite this disagreement, they were incorporated into the Syrian State in 1942. During the period following their incorporation, Nusayris occupied many administrative positions within the Syrian State and played an active role in the formation of the Socialist Baath Party (Keser, 2014:p. 30).

By the year 1946, Syria had gained its independence from France. In the process up to its independence, Syria had been colonized, and impoverished due to the existence of landlord tribes. Bureaucracy was monopolized by a class of wealthy and aristocratic people, who had retained their wealth since the period of French mandate and were supported by the wealthy urban population. Having experienced enough poverty, Syria experienced divisions within itself in an already divided Arab World, and this resulted in a political vacuum. The Baath Party, meaning the Arab Renaissance Party, emerged in this period with Arab nationalism as its basis. Before Baath, Said al-Husri was without doubt the first name to come to mind in relation to Arab nationalism. Having a secular ideological basis, Said al-Husri argued that their shared culture was the foundation of the Arab Nation and that the Arab Nation had a history going back to pre-Islamic times, and he emphasized the fact that religions were a part of their culture. He had as his goal the unification of the divided Arabs into one nation with a shared culture. He sought to unite Arabs of different religions on the basis of shared historical and cultural values. In this connection, Said al-Husri influenced Michel Aflaq, who was himself an Arab but a Christian. Further developing al-Husri's nationalist ideology, Michel Aflaq emphasized the existence of a shared Arabic culture and history, as well as the insignificance of differences between Arabs (Çitil, 2013:p. 68). During the period from the year 1920 until the independence of Syria, the nationalists in Syria and in other Arabic countries were involved in an anti-imperialistic movement. In the post-independence period, they analyzed and dealt with both economic and social problems. Placing special emphasis on the colonial period, they believed the unification of Arabs to be their salvation if they wanted to avoid going back to that period. In light of these problems and conclusions, the principles of Baath were shaped, and the constitution of the party was in turn determined

by these principles. Even though the initial foundations of Baath were laid in 1943, its first congress took place in 1947 with the participation of Michel Aflaq (Christian), Salah al-Din al-Bitar (Sunni), and Zaki al-Arsuzi (Nusayri), and it was in this period that it become an active political party. The Baath Party in Syria was organized into cells, groups, sections, branches, regional command and national congress. Its organization into cells implies that Baath was in fact engaging in a secret organization as well (Şentürk, 2003:p. 58).

Shukri al-Quwatli was elected the first president of independent Syria. President Shukri al-Quwatli was toppled in a military coup in 1949. After Adib Shishakli, who had seized power through this military coup, was overthrown, Baath won 18 parliamentary seats in the election. Shukri al-Quwatli was once again elected president (1954). In this period, Baathism developed beyond Syria's borders, and the United Arab Republic was created as a result of an agreement to unite Syria and Egypt. However, in practice the union did not work as had been theorized. A group of military officers had formed a secret committee within the Syrian State Army. The objective of this committee was to introduce a series of reforms and to seize control. Among the leaders of this organization were Salah Jadid, Hafez al-Assad, Muhammad Umran and Humad Ubeid (Galvani, 1974:pp. 3-16). In the year 1961, the conservative Sunni officers of Damascus staged a coup under Abd al-Karim al-Nahlawi's leadership. After the coup d'état, Syria unilaterally seceded from the United Arab Republic (Ataman, 2012:pp. 8,9). The coup of 1961 was in fact a turning point for Baath. The failure of the United Arab Republic resulted in a pronounced factionalism within the Baath Party, which had supported the creation of the union. The party, which had previously sought to unite all Arabs, now switched to Arab nationalism within Syria's borders. Power struggles continued and military coups followed one another after this period. The Baathist military officers staged another coup in March 1963 and seized power. Himself a Nusayri, Hafez al-Assad became Commander of the Syrian Air Force. Another Nusayri, Salah Jadid became Chief of Staff of the Syrian Army. Muhammad Umran assumed the role of military commander. During this period, the Baath party organized its 6th Congress in Damascus and shifted more toward Marxism (Şen, 2010:p. 235). An uprising started in Hama led by the Muslim Brotherhood, who opposed this shift toward Marxism, but was crushed by the Syrian State. In 1964 Salah Bitar was elected prime minister and led a campaign against M. Aflaq. The word "Islam" was included in the new constitution to avoid aggravating the situation further. At the 8th National Congress, Michel Aflaq resigned from his position as the party's leader. A new coup d'état led by Hafez al-Assad was staged in 1966. M. Aflaq was sent into exile. Nureddin al-Atassi, a Sunni, was delegated to form a government. Hafez al-Assad was appointed defense minister and commander of the Syrian Air Force. Nusayris were now rising to power, and the period of Neo-Baathism had officially started. In the following period, Hafez al-Assad claimed that the Syrian defeat in the ongoing conflict against Israel had diminished trust in the government and seized power in a bloodless coup. Ahmad al-Khatib was appointed president. Hafez al-Assad was appointed with leading the government. He was elected president in the 1971 referendum (Ataman, 2012:p. 9). On 31 January 1973, he removed the word "Islam" from the constitution. After 1970, Hafez al-Assad took special care to install Nusayris in critical positions within the Syrian State. Nusayri factions emerged within the intelligence and military. It has been claimed that he installed members of the secular Sunni elite in his cabinet to avoid criticism from the Sunnis (Dam, 2000:pp. 134-136).

 Al-Assad always gave importance to his relations with the USSR, a superpower of the period. His aim was to use this strong ally to gain power and not be left alone in the Middle East. In 1973, he sided with Egypt in the Arab–Israeli War against Israel, which had expanded its territory after the Six-Day War, in an effort to take back the occupied territories; however, the war ended in defeat. Syria and Egypt parted ways after this war. Hafez al-Assad's administration supported the Palestine Liberation Organization against Israel. In 1975 the Lebanese Civil War started. In 1976, despite the objections other Arabic countries, Syria decided to enter Lebanon and supported the Palestine Liberation Organization. In 1982, an uprising against the government started in Hama, known as the stronghold of the Muslim Brotherhood. However, this uprising was crushed brutally. It estimated that 5000 to 25000 people lost their lives in Hama (Dam, 2000: 183-184). In 1984, Hafez al-Assad entered a power struggle with his brother, Rifaat al-Assad. Rifaat al-Assad attempted to stage a coup d'état but failed, and he was subsequently sent into exile. In 2000, the late Hafez al-Assad is succeeded by his son, Bashar al-Assad. Bashar al-Assad introduced a series of expected reforms and started the period known as *"Damascus Spring"*. The reforms were not found sufficient and instead mobilized the Syrian intellectuals who prepared a manifesto and presented it to the government. The manifesto called for free elections and new political parties, but these posed threats for the government. For

this reason, the process known as Damascus Spring came to an end, and the government took an anti-reformist stance (Ataman, 2012:p. 24; Çitil, 2013:pp. 97, 98).

In the aftermath of the September 11 attacks, Syria was mentioned by the USA among the countries which possessed nuclear weapons. America therefore imposed an embargo against Syria. Foreign pressure on Syria intensified (Dağ, 2013:p. 60; Arıkan, 2012:p. 26). In 2011, the Arab Spring, a movement which had started in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia, spread also to Syria. Anti-government protests calling for democracy and freedom erupted in the Syrian city of Daraa, and spread to other cities within a short span of time. Many people lost their lives as a result of the harsh military response to the protests. America condemned Bashar al-Assad for the atrocities and called for his resignation. Thus, the Syrian civil war which would claim the lives of thousands and turn thousands into refugees seeking asylum in other countries, began. Bashar al-Assad continued the foreign policy that had taken shape during his father's presidency. He strengthened his alliance with Iran and Russia against America and Israel. In May 2017, the plan for creating safe zones within Syria was signed with the participation of Russia, Iran and Turkey. After that the Syrian Civil War entered a period of virtual standstill (Arıkan, 2012:p.28; Dağ, 2013:pp. 86-87).

6. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN RELIGION AND IDEOLOGY

The concept of ideology was employed for the first time in the 18th century during the French Revolution by Antoine Destutt de Tracy and a group known as the society of ideologists, to refer to society's activity and system of ideas as well as the science of ideas (Bulut, 2011:p. 184). Numerous thinkers, social and political scientists have tried to define ideology in the periods after the ideologists. It is for this reason that ideology has a number of positive and negative definitions. David Mclellan argues that, among the terminology of social sciences, ideology is the most ambiguous and the most difficult to define (Mclellan,1999). In the broadest sense, ideology *refers to the totality of political, religious, legal, philosophical, scientific ideas which shape the behaviors of a society by shaping political and social teachings, or which may be accepted as a vision or an ideal (Turkish Language Association).* As can be seen, ideology is an index of ideals and goals. It seeks to find ways to actualize these ideals. Ideology is the sum total of ideas which aim to find the causes for the emergence of ideals, to define the problems, and to take action based on the solutions it finds to the problems. These ideas can be based as much on the sum total of economic, philosophical, ethical values as on dogmatic structures which, like religions and sects, claim to possess the absolute truth. Each ideology introduces a worldview. Karl Mannheim argues that an ideology covers the whole Weltanschauung (worldview) of a social class or society or even a historical period. Thus ideology and worldview have become two concepts which tend to be employed together. Ideologies require absolute submission, they do not accept other ideologies. Ideologies can be classified into main categories such as religion, nationalism, socialism. Primitive, polytheistic religions as well as Abrahamic religions such as Islam or Judaism are studied within the category of religious ideology. The proponents of the idea that there is no relation between religion and ideology claim that the most important difference between the two is that religions are for individuals and ideologies for societies. If we look at their emergence, we see that religions are in fact revolts against the existing order in their respective societies. In a general sense, there is no individual religion for a single person. Acts of worship are what is individual. Religions are aimed at societies. Émile Durkheim asserts that religion is an institution which offers a miniature version of society. According to Durkheim, religion is a social phenomenon. It is social, not individual (Mardin, 2017:pp. 45-46).

According to Alfred Brown, religion forms the skeleton of social structure and presents it in a way that people can understand; it also creates emotions in order to ensure the continuation of society (Mardin, 2017:pp. 47-49). Every religion seeks to keep society under control by means of its dogmas. It aims to solve social problems through these dogmas and to refine social structure. Social activity is kept under control through these dogmatic rules. It is even a mechanism that organizes societies into collective action. This side of religion offers an explanation of its relationship to ideology. To look at a more specific case, the division of Islam into sects is a political move. Each of these sects offers a distinct worldview. The fact that these sects generate political and social teachings to shape social activity, reveals the ideological side of sects. Jean-William Lapierre argues that ideologies are merciless, and adds that they do not allow the emergence of an opposing system of thought and want to destroy the existing ones (Ergil, 1983:p. 72). Sectarian conflicts that have been going on for centuries, especially between the Shiite and Sunnite sects, reveal the merciless side of ideologies. According to Philip E. Converse, people learn their systems of belief as wholes. These beliefs that they learn, they adopt from the societies they inhabit. According to Converse, the need to coexist in society is a coercive force. He argues that a belief system becomes

ideological inasmuch as it includes coercive forces (Mardin, 2017:p. 158). The fact that Nusayris are a closed society in which individuals grow up under the influence of indoctrination from a young age, reveals how coercive this society is. According to Karl Mannheim, ideologies are ideas which cannot completely reveal those things they offer which are at odds with the system. While utopias are idealized versions of the future which serve the interests of communities living under pressure. Ideology and Utopia are two inseparable concepts (Mardin, 2015:pp. 57-58). In a way, it can be argued that ideologies offer Utopias. In Shia Islam, a Mahdist utopia has emerged against other sects or the system (Bulduruç, 2013). It is necessary to note that, while ideologies may undergo revisions and change in accordance with new or different practices created by changes in social relations, they may also give birth to a distinct type of ideology. This is exemplified by the division of Shia Islam into numerous sects which were further divided into competing sub-sects over the course of history.

7. CONCLUSION

Societies, like individuals, are wholes which have their distinct characteristics and personalities, and which are subject to change. It is natural that societies which share the religious or racial basis of their social structure, or even only a shared culture, also have shared fears. It is for this reason that the most important needs of societies are safety and security. All other needs are secondary to these two important needs. Societies seek to preserve their social structures and take measures that will protect them against possible outside threats. The actions of different societies which inhabit the same geographical area are related to one another in this sense as well. Over the course of history, the sovereigns who ruled over them or the other societies of the region have tried to engage the Nusayris. Different religious and political ideologies which occupied the territories they inhabited saw them as a threat or as competition and caused them damage. Especially under Mamluk rule, the Nusayris were targeted by Sunni ideology, which represented them as non-Islamic and tried to eradicate them by means of heavy sanctions. The representation of heterodox sects and religious groups as non-Islamic by mainstream Islamic sects is in fact a result of their potential to found new states (Mardin, 2017:p. 69). Each sect, Sunni or Shia or their sub-sects, rejects one another because of this threat. This situation not only reveals the political and ideological side of belief systems, it also exemplifies how destructive ideologies are toward other ideologies. Above all else, ideologies seek to preserve their existence. As a result of the pressures inflicted on them, Nusayris became a closed society. They have managed to survive by means of hiding themselves, concealing their identity, and through sectarian teachings and indoctrination within the family.

We have already mentioned that the division of Islam into sects was a political move. Shia Islam, which emerged after this division, is an ideological sect from which have emerged other ideological sub-sects. Taking this as our point of departure, we can argue that, since the Nusayri faith is a sub-sect of Shia Islam, it has been an ideological sect since its emergence. It is highly probable that, even though it had an expansionist character when it first emerged, the Nusayri ideology has undergone revisions over time due to the pressure from other sectarian ideologies, and it has managed to survive by introducing certain inner dogmas and worldviews within the society in which it was practiced. According to Lévi-Strauss, primitive people endeavor to organize their knowledge in a process which he calls bricolage (Strauss, 1966:pp., 21-33). This is how Mardin explains the situation: bricolage, that is the endeavor to create a worldview, which emerges at the level of common people as the appearance of a mass society is gained, also has an effect on the elites. Over the course of modernization, minor cultures begin to gnaw on major cultures, and over time place themselves within the structures of major cultures (Mardin, 2017:p. 152). Over time, the Nusayris also wanted to place themselves within a larger structure, and installed themselves intellectually within the structure of Baath. Nationalism, socialism, and secularism, which were the cornerstones of Baath, not only reflected the shared fears of the Nusayri community, they also reflected the ideology of this community which had revised itself into a closed group.

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