

FROM PRE-ISLAM TO MANDATE STATES: EXAMINING CULTURAL
IMPERIALISM AND CULTURAL BLEED IN THE LEVANT

by

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ABSTRACT

To a large degree, historical analyses of the Levantine region tend to focus primarily upon martial interaction and state formation. However, perhaps of equitable impact is the chronology of those interactions which are cultural in nature. The long-term formative effect of cultural imperialism and cultural bleed can easily be as influential as the direct alterations imposed by martial invasion. While this study does not attempt to establish comparative causal weight or catalytic impact between these types of interactions, it does contend that the cultural evolution of the Levant has been significantly influenced by external interaction for a period of time extending beyond the Levantine Islamic Expansion. This study presents a chronological examination of the region from the pre-Expansion Period through the Mandate Period, focused upon relevant cultural structures. Specifically, emphasis is placed upon religious, ethnic, and nationalistic identity development, sociolinguistic shifts, and institutional changes within the societal structure. The primary conclusion of this study is that significant evidence exists to support a long-term historical narrative of externally influenced Levantine cultural evolution, inclusive of both adaptive and reactive interactions.

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FORWORD

Terms such as “cultural imperialism” and “cultural bleed” are commonly used to describe the alteration of social concepts, societal constructions, and general cultural norms through interaction between cultures; however, the reader who strives for objectivity would do well to beware the connotation these terms may evoke. These instances of cultural alteration may be destructive to the status quo, however they also often function as the very impetus which spurs the continued evolution of human society. It is not the intention of this study (or the author) to imply either absolution or condemnation of any cultural interaction (past, present, or future), but rather to examine the past with the hope of informing and advocating a brighter future to come.

I. RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

(A) Thesis

Ethnic, economic, political, religious, and social instability is often seen as an intrinsic aspect of the modern Levant. Further, this perception tends to be reinforced by the assumption that this dynamic is simply a natural extension of inherently volatile environmental and social variables. Casual cultural observation would show the Levant to be an ostensibly “Arab” region, with fringe groups of ethnic minorities competing for cultural sustainability. To a certain extent, this analysis could be considered relatively accurate; nonetheless, it is also a very surface level temporal analysis, with many of the base assumptions involved remaining completely undefined and unqualified. One of the most noticeable suppositions being the idea of a broad “Arab” ethnicity; in actuality, even this basic concept is a relatively modern development for the region, and has significantly displaced, obfuscated, and overlaid many pre-existing ethno-cultural traditions. Further, this occurrence of cultural imperialism is simply a single period in an ongoing narrative of cultural evolution which has shaped the region for thousands of years. This study attempts to examine and expound upon the events which form the historical foundation of modern society and culture as it exists in the Levant and specifically hypothesizes the existence of a regional narrative of cultural evolution resultant from cultural imperialism and bleed stretching from the pre-Islamic period into the modern day.

In order to accurately appreciate the cultural dynamics currently at play within the Levant, it is vital that one understand the underlying complexity of the region's historical trajectory. Specifically, a simplified analysis of the evolution of the existing cultural landscape can be delineated into three chronological periods. It is initially critical that any assessment include a relatively comprehensive account of Levantine cultural development during the Islamic Expansion. Secondly, the impact of the Islamic imperial period, specifically the rise of the Umayyad Caliphate through the fall of Ottoman power, must be expanded upon. And lastly, the effects of the Mandate Period (including Western colonialism and population shifts) carry an obvious degree of relevance. Examining the region's cultural development in such a chronological manner is highly advantageous to any attempt at understanding the cultural dynamics present within the Levant currently or at any point in its modern history.

In delving into Levantine culture, beyond its apparently "Arab" nature, it is critical that one examine the actual origins of the existing cultural landscape. Specifically, it is of paramount importance that the difference between ethnicity and ethno-cultural identity be strongly defined. The delineation of ethnicity, while it also incorporates elements of shared socio-cultural ties, requires a degree of communal ancestral heritage to exist. In contrast, the definition of, and adherence to, an ethno-cultural identity structure is a relatively subjective process, dependent entirely upon self-perception. Throughout this study, reference will be made to the development, alteration, and spread of ethnic identities; it should be understood that these are shifts within ethno-cultural identity structures, rather

than ethnicities. In essence, interactions with external forces that may have supplanted, disrupted, overlaid, and shaped existing ethno-cultural identity structures throughout the history of the region. This ongoing historical narrative has resulted in the development of a state of ongoing cultural flux in Levantine nations, contributing to ethnic, racial, & religious diversity in the region and the, at times, violent intersection of divergent cultural perspectives.

(B) Significance of Subject Matter



Figure 1: Map of the Levant (as defined by modern state borders)¹

In discussing the present subject matter, it is important to define the term “Levant” as it will be used in this study. The area in question, while never home to a truly

homogenous cultural landscape, has long been considered (especially by outside observers) to be a contiguous and distinct region. Roman and Greek interaction with the area often delineated the general area as the region or governorate of Syria (or Greater Syria) and Phoenicia.² Under the Caliphates, roughly the same area was commonly known as Bilād al-Shām (بلاد الشام).³ In fact, the name used by modern Arabic speakers to refer to the region of Jordan, Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria remains Bilād al-Shām. Given the common influence of external sources in regional delineation and the general mutability of such definitions, it is often difficult to conduct “regionally” oriented studies. However, the near constant regional association of the area in at least the past one and a half millennia provides a relatively stable foundation for regionally oriented historical examination.

The historical significance of the Levant is strongly reflected in the geopolitical and religious influence which the region exerts. In consideration of this multispectral importance, as well as the degree of complexity often inherent to interactions with and within the region, any attempt to understand Levantine history must include a basic perusal of Levantine cultural history. An oft-overlooked variable in historical analysis is the fact that cultural imperialism and cultural bleed can be far more impactful, in the long-term, than the immediate instability or violence of a simple military invasion. As with much of the Middle Eastern region, exogenous factors have strongly shaped the ethnic and social development of the Levant from its earliest origins. Recorded external interactions with the region of Greater Syria dating back to the Persian Empire of the Achaemenians, the Macedonian period under Alexander III (known as Alexander The Great), and the Roman

integration under Gnaeus Pompeius Magnus (Pompey), clearly show direct interference in the cultural development of the region.⁴

Although the impact of these interactions and their predecessors cannot be denied, for the sake of brevity and material coherence, this study will seek to orient its analysis upon the modern period. By examining the relatively recent historical cultural superimpositions involved in the rise of Islam and the expansion of the *Ummah*, the succession of Caliphates up to the Ottoman Empire's eventual collapse, as well as the implementation and final abandonment of the recent Mandate system, this study will attempt to focus upon the modern evolution of Levantine culture via historical narratives. It is specifically important that the ethno-religious, sociolinguistic, and structural aspects of cultural interactions be analyzed in reference to shift of cultural evolution. In expanding upon the progressively interactive and multi-aspected progression of modern Levantine cultural history, this study will attempt to provide the reader with an enhanced understanding of the underlying historical dynamics at play within this highly influential region.

(C) Review of Existing Literature

One of the seminal works on the Levant in relation to cultural factors was published by Raphael Patai in his 1955 work, *The Dynamics of Westernization in the Middle East*, specifically drawing attention to the displacement of native cultures over the past 300 years. He especially emphasizes the impact of Western influence and its disruption of

existing norms.⁵ Charles Issawi carried this concept even further in 1965, in *The Arab World's Heavy Legacy*, when he incorporated the existing Arab culture and economy, as well as the reaction to Western political and economic values, into his evaluation.⁶ In 1979, Richard F. Nyrop divided the study of the Middle East into country specific case studies, notably that of Syria in his work *Syria, a Country Study*. This focus of study allowed a greater degree of detail to be integrated into the research parameters, giving area studies in the region a greater depth of information, including extensive analysis of the social, historic, and economic aspects of Syrian society.⁷ Following his work on Syria, Nyrop went on to publish other country studies, such as *Jordan, a Country Study*, in which he was able to utilize a variety of sources, including official reports from governments and international organizations, to greatly expand the existing work.⁸ In 1987, Thomas Collelo expanded and updated *Syria, a Country Study*, incorporating a detailed study of the sociopolitical structure and international interactions, which has great bearing upon the current study of cultural evolution via international interaction. Additionally, he analyzed the political and social dynamic between the The Syrian Communist Party and the Ba'ath party, as well as discussing the role played by the Soviet Union and its influence on Syrian politics (a subject only lightly touched upon in this work).⁹

During the same year that Nyrop was expanding the existing country specific literature, Matti Moosa published a fascinatingly informative book entitled *The Maronites in history* which provides an in-depth examination of the roles played in Greater Syria by the Maronite religious sect; thereby clarifying many of the reactionary cultural movements of

Maronite minority.¹⁰ The next year, Mary C. Wilson wrote an interesting study examining the historical origins of Jordan in *King Abdullah, Britain, and the Making of Jordan*, wherein she details the role played by Britain in the formation of Trans-Jordan. Specifically, her work raises the issue of the extent to which the foreign influences of the Hashemites and British has molded the current cultural dynamic.¹¹ In 1989, this specific topic was further delved by Linda L. Layne's article *The Dialogics of Tribal Self-Representation in Jordan*. Layne's writings heavily contribute to the existing literature by expanding upon the topics of cultural denigration and the intersection of rural and urban cultures.¹² While Layne's focus is relatively micro, both temporally and geographically, it does provide a strong case study of influenced cultural evolution. Simultaneous to Layne, Daniel Pipes published the work entitled *The Alawi Capture of Power in Syria* which sheds light upon the events surrounding the Alawi rise to ascendancy. While Pipes primarily addresses the assumption of power by the Assad family, he also examines the roles played by French interests in advancing and accentuating the Alawi social position, a topic highly relevant to the present study.¹³

In 1991, John Tomlinson's decisive book *Cultural Imperialism: a critical introduction*, introduced the topics of ideological transformation through external impetus, the balance cultural homogenization and cultural autonomy. Although Tomlinson's work is set within the context of critiquing modern culture, the book's approach to the examination of the origins and alteration of cultural identity provides a framework for the study of other periods.¹⁴ A few years later in 1996, Sue Wright published the paper *Language and the*

State Revitalization and Revival in Israel and Eire in which she discusses the topic of language as a cultural vehicle. Further, *Language and the State Revitalization* also raises the issues of constructed culture and guided cultural alteration. While both the topic and the concepts that Wright puts forward directly relate to this study, the case studies presented are, once again, temporally and geographically isolated.¹⁵

The next year saw the publication of another seminal work *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East*; one of the first books to apply elements of literary analysis, anthropology, socioeconomics, and normative psychology to a framework for the study of culture in the Middle East. *Rethinking Nationalism's* emphasis on alternative methods of cultural evaluation makes it one of the primary resources on Arab national studies.¹⁶ Similarly, Thomas Idinopulos published a relatively comprehensive historical evaluation called *Weathered by Miracles: A History of Palestine from Bonaparte and Muhammad Ali to Ben-Gurion and the Mufti*. While no historical examination can be considered truly comprehensive, Idinopulos's work covers a broad range of subject matter to a surprising degree of depth. The temporal range of *Weathered by Miracles* has contributed to it becoming one the best resources for the study of cultural history in Palestine and a major resource for the preliminary research of this study.¹⁷

Towards the end of the Twentieth Century, a number of relevant studies were published in the area of Middle Eastern cultural studies; one of the most influential of these being James Bill and Robert Springborg's 1999 updated version of *Politics in the Middle East*. With a renewed focus upon socio-cultural factors, especially in relation to external

cultural pressures, such as Western interaction, *Politics* provides a regionally based examination of cultural evolution.¹⁸ Additionally, Efraim and Inari Karsh's historical work *Empires of the Sand: The Struggle for Mastery in the Middle East, 1789-1923* was released in 1999, providing a very extensive perusal of Middle Eastern history and cultural shifts. One of the most relevant aspects of the Karsh's work is its focus on the influence of external elements such as the post-Ottoman division, as well as the power of internal regional factors.¹⁹

In the realm of cultural alteration and development, Samir Khalaf's 2001 work *Cultural Resistance: Global and Local Encounters in the Middle East* provides some relatively groundbreaking insights into Middle Eastern cultural evolution. Specifically Khalaf's accentuation of Lebanese civil society, the alteration of cultural heritage, and the internal issues of cultural continuation was extremely influential in the development of the hypothesis proposed in this study.²⁰ In 2002 Mohammad G. Alkadry carried the regionally based perspective further with *Reciting Colonial Scripts: Colonialism, Globalization and Democracy in the Decolonized Middle East*. By inspecting colonial and post-colonial Western interactions with the existing indigenous cultural and civil structures, Alkadry uses both social and historical variables in his analysis of the region. Further, he introduces aspects of industrialization to the equation and connects the clash of national economic interests with localized economies with the destruction of regional socioeconomic dynamics. Alkadry's work is one of the first to recognize all of these variables as inter-regionally significant,

making it extremely relevant to this study's examination of inter-regional cultural interaction.²¹

In the same year that Alkandry released his book, Randi Deguilhem published an interesting article named "Turning Syrians into Frenchmen: the cultural politics of a French non-governmental organization in Mandate Syria (1920-67)—the French Secular Mission schools" in the journal *Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations*, which specifically examines the impetus and cultural impact of the of the Frenchification process attempted in French Mandate Syria.²² Also in 2002, the journal *International Journal of Politics, Culture, and Society* released an article by Robert J. Lieber and Ruth E. Weisberg named "Globalization, Culture, and Identities in Crisis," which discusses the global, and specifically Middle Eastern, cultural reaction to the acceleration of globalization. In particular, their article raises the issue of internal cultural crises as resultant from increased cultural bleed and the potential for transference and scapegoating as a reaction to rapid cultural and social evolution.²³ Both of these articles provide evidence for additional instances of externally influenced cultural change, thereby contributing to the proposed narrative.

The year 2003 saw the publication of Timothy Paris's *Britain, the Hashemites, and Arab Rule, 1920-1925: The Sherifian Solution*, in which he analyzes the introduction of the Hashemite influence into Jordanian society and its subsequent impact upon the structure of the newly created state. Importantly, Paris's work discusses the role played by the existing cultural climate in legitimizing the emerging power structure, presenting yet another instance of cultural alteration.²⁴ Then in the spring of 2005, Mark Harrison wrote *Science*

and the British Empire, an interesting study which addresses issues of western science's role as an imperialist factor throughout the British Empire. While Harrison's work is not specifically devoted to examining the Levantine region, his analysis of introduced technology and science as factors contributing to cultural evolution is extremely relevant to any examination of the British interaction with the region before and during the Mandate Period.²⁵ And two years later, in 2007, Alice Conklin published a similarly relevant work, but dealing with French imperialism named "Histories of Colonialism: Recent Studies of the Modern French Empire."²⁶

In the late 2000s Salam Al-Mahadin released a work entitled *An economy of legitimating discourses: the invention of the Bedouin and Petra as national signifiers in Jordan*. Exploring the development of national identity in Jordan, Al-Mahadin focuses on the artificial creation of nationality and incorporates elements of historical cultural reconstruction, sociopolitical change, and economic development.²⁷ Lucas Russell went on to expand upon this with his 2008 work *Side Effects of Regime Building in Jordan: The State and the Nation*, in which he examines the historical sociopolitical origins of Jordanian national stability. Looking at the social underpinnings of Jordan's monarchial system and the political, economic, and cultural currents involved in the National Charter, Russell sets an interesting precedent through examining the legitimacy and stability of the Jordanian state by investigating the interactions of its integral parts and their origins. It should also be noted that, intrinsic to its examination, *Side Effects* proposes a strong interaction of external variables in cultural evolution.²⁸

Also in 2008 D. K. Fieldhouse published the book *Western Imperialism in the Middle East 1914-1958* which addresses the same issues, but on a regional level. By examining the institution of the Mandate system throughout the entire Levantine region, Fieldhouse provides a relatively comprehensive evaluation of regional historical developments and a strong explanation of the existing socio-cultural situation.²⁹ Alternately, in 2009 Christopher Houston chose to reject both the regional and state based perspectives in *An anti-history of a non-people: Kurds, colonialism, and nationalism in the history of anthropology* and instead chose to focus his research upon a single ethnic group. Utilizing this ethnocentric perspective, Houston examines the Kurds and other stateless people groups and their struggle to maintain a degree of cultural continuity in the face of the relatively new nation state system. Of special interest is Houston's account of the apparent strength with which such minority has been able to resist cultural influences which have heavily impacted the majority of the region.³⁰

(D) Relation to the Existing Body of Work

While a number of authors have investigated the general structural and political impact of exogenous factors upon Levantine society, comparatively few have done so from a cultural perspective. Further, those who have chosen to examine cultural dynamics in the region have, seemingly universally, restricted themselves to relatively narrow temporal lenses. In an apparent attempt to provide a greater depth of analysis, these studies have tended to focus upon a single cultural event, rather than tracking the overall intercultural dynamic of the region. In contrast, this analysis will seek to track the development of the

current state of Levantine culture by examining a progression of interactions dating back to the rise of Islam in the 7th Century CE.³¹

It is vital to understand the origins of this situation in order to grasp a full understanding of modern Levantine cultural dynamics. Beyond simply gaining a more profound appreciation of the interworking of past international and intercultural relations, the analysis of these events and their repercussions has significant bearing upon present day diplomatic policy. Bearing in mind the current revolutionary environment of the region, it strongly behooves all external elements to strenuously examine the reverberations of previous actions before directly interacting with the cultural development of the region. This study will analyze the extent and impact of cultural imperialism and bleed within the historical Levant; specifically, examining the relevance of historical cultural alterations to the current cultural atmosphere.

(E) Research Design

While historical records firmly establish the existence of ancient intercultural interactions, in the interest of relevance and brevity, this study will restrict its scope to relatively modern developments. In limiting the retrograde examination to the period immediately prior to the rise of Islam, a natural division of three distinct historical narratives is relatively easily achieved. The examination will therefore be divided into five sections; the first being introductory, the following three sections will focus upon a progression of temporal periods in Levantine cultural history, with the fifth chapter

providing an overall analysis and summary conclusion of the research. Of the three period chapters, the first will provide an overview of the Levant immediate prior to and during the Islamic Expansion, especially focusing upon ethnic diversity and distinction in the area and the interaction of existing cultural narratives. The next period section will introduce Islamic imperialism, with especial attention paid to the rise and fall of empires which exerted significant cultural influence in the region, such as the Ottomans. And finally, this study will examine evolution of cultural narratives generated during the rise of European influence and the implementation of the Mandate system.

Throughout this study, cultural elements such as religion, social structure, sociolinguistics, judicial implementation, and identity evolution will be accentuated as they become relevant. Specific attention will also be given to causal variables which result in shifts and/or branches in cultural trajectory. Additionally, evidence for and the effect of intentional cultural imperialism or cultural alteration via these variables will be discussed in depth. While other period and event specific cultural factors may also be introduced and examined as they become relevant, the majority of the anticipated subject matter will fall within one of these categories.

Chapter I. Endnotes

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II. THE ISLAMIC EXPANSION

(A) Introduction

i. Summary

The Levantine transition between the pre-Islamic Expansion and post-Islamic Expansion periods is a pivotal point of interest in understanding the modern cultural development of the region. The pre-Islamic Levant was characterized by a considerable diversity of ethnic and religious culture, while the post-Islamic Levant presented a much altered cultural landscape of increased homogeneity. Specifically, the advent of Islam as an ostensibly unifying regional force could be argued to have resulted in the permanent obfuscation, alteration, and/or supplantation of many existing ethno-linguistic and religious traditions. Therefore, if one assumes the validity of the above argument, the integration of Islam may be regarded as having been an external variable of cultural agency, which catalyzed extensive regional cultural evolution. In investigating the proposed relationship, this analysis will attempt to present a relatively comprehensive chronological account of the events involved and to evaluate potential evidence of cultural alteration.

ii. Research Framework

This study will first provide an overview of the Levantine cultural landscape as it stood previous to the Islamic Expansion of 634-638CE.¹ Specifically, the nature and role of

a number of the existing religious traditions will be examined, including those of the Christians, Jews, and *Ḥunafā'*.² Additionally, the existence of ethno-linguistic diversity within the regional population must be touched upon, especially in reference to the state cultural non-integration, as well as the existing socio-judicial institutions. Secondly, cultural developments of the post-expansion period will be investigated. In particular, the unifying influence of the movement will be examined relative to the influence of the newly incorporated Levantine diversity. And lastly, the immediate post-Expansion period will be discussed in reference to reactionary cultural identification and socio-judicial evolution. Attention will be expressly called to a few of the distinct cultural protectionist factions as well as to the introduction of a regionally integrated legal system. As in the following chapter, the relevant historical events will be related chronologically and coupled with an examination of the progression for evidence supporting or contradicting the proposed historical narrative.

(B) Pre-Expansion Cultural Heterogeneity

As previously mentioned, pre-Islamic Levantine culture was essentially a *mélange* of various ethnic, religious, and linguistic traditions. Long known as one of the great crossroad regions of the world, the Levant existed as a primary East-West cultural focal point, in addition to its obvious geopolitical and economic importance. As such, the region was no stranger to cultural imperialism and bleed (one need only cursorily examine early Hellenistic influences to establish the veracity of that dynamic).³ Due to the extremely varied cultural state of the temporal period under discussion, this study will touch upon a

few of the most prominent traditions; particularly, attention will be given to religious, linguistic, and societal divergences.

i. The Land of Permutations

As one of the oldest continuously inhabited regions in the world, the Levant has accumulated a well-deserved reputation for being the spiritual epicenter for a number of religious traditions as well as for their potentially myriad attendant sects. In addition to a number of polytheistic beliefs, multiple branches of Zoroastrian, Christian, Judaic, and *Ḥunafā'* faiths were active within the region during the period immediately previous to the Islamic Expansion.⁴ While some of these traditions generally associated with a specific ethnic or linguistic population, of especial interest is the seeming lack of comprehensive ethno-religious affiliation (or disaffiliation) between ethnically “Arab” tribes and any explicitly distinctive religious tradition. In fact, there is significant evidence of influential “Arab” tribes adhering to a number of these varied faiths (including Judaism and Christianity).⁵ This degree of partial disassociation between ethnicity and religion strongly contributed to the cultural diversity present within the region.

ii. The Languages of Expediency

The Levant had long been home to a number of linguistic traditions ranging from the ethno-religiously associated, such as Judeo-Hebrew, to the socio-politically associated, such as Greek and Aramaic.^{6,7} This state of linguistic variety was partially derived from a long-term pattern of cultural contamination and eventual adoption (usually with socio-

political impetuses), as can be seen in the Aramaic imprintation of the region.⁸ Given this pre-existing pattern of cultural adoption and the obviously “Arab” aspects of Islam’s spread into the Levant, the assumption is often made that the linguistic Arabization process was inextricably tied to increased Islamic influence.⁹ However, in the period leading up to the Islamic Expansion, Arabic was already present and, in fact, quite influential. The Ghassanid (الغساسنة) dynasty of Greater Syria was comprised of Christian Arabs descended from a Yemeni tribal group. As such, Arabic was one of the primary languages of the Ghassanid courts; in fact, some scholars consider Greater Syria under the Ghassanid dynasty to be one of the most important pre-Caliphate centers of Arabic poetry.¹⁰ These examples do not necessarily imply that linguistic substitution occurred wholesale or even that it occurred rapidly when actually present, they simply seem to demonstrate the presence of a practice of partial linguistic adoption based upon socio-political factors throughout a period extending at least into the Hellenistic age.

iii. The Sovereignty of Seclusion

The pre-expansion period is a rather interesting time in reference to the social structure of the Levant. While nominally under the authority of the Byzantine Imperium, much of the actual power in the area was delegated to client kings or *phylarchs* of various ethnic, religious, and tribal affiliations.¹¹ The Levant’s geographical (as well as ethnic) distance from the center of the Empire made the *phylarchs* of the region relatively independent. This dynamic of hereditary monarchial semi-sovereignty is perhaps best demonstrated in the example of the above mentioned Ghassanid Dynasty of Greater Syria. In

addition to being a prime example of the existing disassociation between ethnicity and religion, the Ghassanids rulers were also some of the most powerful *phylarchs* in the region, eventually being granted the title of *Archphylarch* and titular (if not actual) imperial power.¹² This elevation of the Ghassanids comprised a redistribution of the *phylarch* system, assigning the Ghassanid Dynasty paramount authority over the Levantine *phylarchs*, and thus creating a hereditary regional governorship. However, perhaps the most interesting aspect of the Ghassanid dynastic institution is that the family of Ghassan was, in fact, of foreign derivation, thereby reinforcing socio-cultural precedents of semi-autonomous regional governorship and imported potentates.¹³

It should also be mentioned that the regional legal system of this period was that of Byzantine imperial law. While the Levantine client states were ruled by delegated semi-sovereign potentates, the regional legal system functioned somewhat independently, regulated and administered by imperial Byzantine officials.¹⁴ Similar to the precedents set by the governmental structures mentioned above, this imposition of a general codified legal system by a foreign power adhered to and strengthened a pattern of systemic overlay and institutional acclimatization.

(C) Post-Expansion Ethno-Religious Identification

Islam's rise to power in the Levant, transmitted and advanced by the "Arab" forces of the Rashidun Caliphate, had a powerful impact upon the cultural landscape of the region. While the Christian Byzantine state was not particularly equitable in its treatment of religious minorities, nor did it promote a substantial linkage between ethno-linguistic and

religious identification. The shift toward Arabization via religious impetus vastly accelerated the pre-existing process begun by such groups as the Ghassanids. Further, the regional implementation of Islamic law set the tone for a legal system which has dramatically influenced the course of law in the modern Levant. Given these developments, this section will inspect religious, linguistic, and societal shifts, relative to the cultural background presented in the previous section.

i. The Spiritualities of Integration & Sectarianism

The ethnic traditions of the origins of Islam's rise strongly influenced the practical application of the *Surras* and directly prejudiced the development of early *Sharia*. This inclination toward integrating the "Arab" culture of the Hejaz with the religious culture of Islam helped to promote a superficial uniformity of "Arab" culture in much of the newly conquered/converted Levant. However, despite this apparent homogeneity, the underlying cultural diversity of the region inherently incorporated elements of these pre-existing cultural traditions into the *Ummah*. In combining political and ethnic identity with the religious vehicle of Islam, much of the groundwork was laid for ideological and interpretational divergences within the *Ummah*. These variations would lead to the eventual great Sunni/Shia schism; but a number of smaller sects were also created, often centered on a specific ethnic sub-grouping or geographic area.¹⁵ The existing ethnic diversity of the Levantine region was especially fertile soil for such development, ultimately allowing such sects as the Druze, Alawites, Ismailis, Twelvers, and various Sufi paths to take root alongside (or concurrent to) the dominant Sunni majority.¹⁶

Also of relevance, one of the corollary effects of the push for a united *Ummah* seems to have been an increase of insularity among non-Islamic minority groups. This is especially interesting given the general reduction of persecution towards religious minorities. Rather than fully subsuming the religious traditions of the area, the ethno-religious imperialism of the early spread of Islam created a sub-society of religious holdouts. Essentially, the end result seems to have been a classic case of Identity theory, in which the minority identities intensified even to the point of intermarriage prohibitions.¹⁷ Overall, the advent of early Islam in the Levant resulted both in an overlay of cultural uniformity and in a reactionary movement toward both overt and subvert identity divergence in the region.

ii. The Language of the State

During the earliest years of the Rashidun Caliphate's presence in the Levant, much of the internal function of the state continued to utilize Greek as a lingua franca. However, as Arabic began to shift from its ethno-cultural role under the Ghassanids to also include more of a religious and political position, the rate of linguistic adoption increased. Eventually functioning as the official tongue of the state within the Caliphate, Arabic quickly became the language of the affluent.¹⁸ As mentioned above, Arabic had already been introduced to the region, but with its newly dominant religious and governmental role, the language more easily circumvented ethnic and social barriers. The political aspect of the language necessitated its usage among the more influential tiers of society, while its religious importance promoted the language's popularity among the lower classes.

iii. The Conventions of Regulation

Perhaps one of the most culturally influential changes to post-expansion Levantine society was the introduction, development, and implementation of Islamic law. This event possibly constitutes the most dramatic long-term societal alteration of this period. The introduction of a religiously influenced legal system was not an entirely foreign concept to the Levant; in fact, many of the indigenous ethno-religious groups of the time adhered to some degree of religious judiciary procedure. Nor was the concept of a region-wide legal system beyond the bounds of previous precedent (as mentioned in the above section “The Sovereignty of Seclusion”). However, the combination of an overtly religious legal code, enforced on an extra-regional geographic level was a relatively unique alteration to the standing societal structure.

Particularly of interest is the institution of the *Qadis*, essentially powerful judges of Islamic jurisprudence with geographically and religiously limited societal jurisdictions.¹⁹ Specifically, the *Qadis* were given judicatory authority over 1. Any conflict involving Muslims, whether it be between Muslims or between Muslims and non-Muslims and 2. Any conflict involving individuals of differing religions. In essence, the *Qadis* retained authority over all Muslim and interreligious disputes, at times superseding even the authority of the Caliph.²⁰ However, internal disputes involving individuals of the same religion remained within the jurisdiction of the relevant religious jurisprudence.²¹ This religiously selective separation of the legal code created an interesting social pattern of judicial non-

interference which significantly influenced societal institutions (specifically judiciary structure) for many years to come.

(D) Conclusion

The pre-Islamic Expansion Levantine cultural landscape presented a high level of ethnic and linguistic diversity, coupled with a relatively autonomous regional government. Specifically, the polity of the region seems to have been divided along both ethnic and religious lines, with relatively low association between the two identity structures. Similarly, the linguistic dynamic was composed of a myriad number of languages and dialects divided by ethnic and political, rather than religious, association. Additionally, the governmental structure of the area was divided among the leadership of ethnic or religious tribal affiliations, under a regional dynastical government, and eventually answerable to a foreign imperial power. Further, the legal system was region-wide, imperially dictated and administered, and relatively disassociated from direct religious codification (this is not to imply a lack of religious elements).

With the advent of the Islamic Expansion, much of the religious, linguistic, and judicial culture of the region was altered and (at least cosmetically) incorporated into the general Arab Islamic Identity. However the distinct cultural heritages present were expressed within the *Ummah* via the manifestation of internal ethnically concentrated sects. At the same time, the Arabization of Levantine linguistics was heavily accelerated by the addition of religious and political impetuses. And finally, this period also saw the

advent of Islamic jurisprudence as the primary legal code of the Levant, as well as the origins of a religiously selective jurisdictional system.

Overall, the pre and post-Expansion periods appear to show some degree of continuous cultural evolution, catalyzed by cultural imperialism and bleed, occurring throughout the Levant. Further, the majority of these instances appear to have transpired on a systemic level and to have resulted in both cultural superimposition and reactionary alteration.

Chapter II. Endnotes

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III. THE ISLAMIC IMPERIAL PERIOD

(A) Introduction

i. Summary

The time between the end the Rashidun Caliphate (661 CE) and the fall of the Ottoman Empire (1922 CE) is a highly important period of ongoing cultural evolution for the Levant. Much of the cultural alteration which occurred during this rather long section of Levantine history displays a large degree of progressive continuity between each successive regime. The Caliphates between the Rashidun and Ottoman (hereafter referred to as the Middle Caliphates) saw the earliest divisions within the *Ummah* and the appearance of the Crusader States. While the Ottoman Empire witnessed the development of ethnic nationalism in the Levant, progressive Arabization was present throughout the entire period, as well as the gradual institutionalization of religiously selective societal sectarianism. In general, the Islamic Imperial period presided over and often contributed to both gradual and rapid alterations of Levantine culture. Specifically, this study contests that external cultural variables present during this period, directly and indirectly influenced the cultural evolution of the Levantine region.

ii. Research Framework

This chapter will be divided chronological between the Middle Caliphates and the Ottoman Imperial periods. First, the entirety of the post-Rashidun Caliphate to the

beginning of the Ottoman period (661-1299 CE) will be addressed. Particular attention will be given to early elements of nationalism and European influence in the region, the relational dynamic between the dominant languages of Turkish, Persian, and Arabic, and minor linguistic groups (particularly Aramaic). And finally, the state structure and further institutionalization of a religiously selective judiciary system will be examined.

In the second half of this chapter, discussion will focus on the Ottoman Imperial period (1299-1922 CE), including the impact of its rise and fall on Levantine culture. Attention will be particularly applied to the manifestation of “Arab” nationalism (both in the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula), the culmination of Arabic’s role as a regional lingua franca, and the full institutionalization of a sectarian based judicial system (as well as the resultant creation of partially autonomous religious governing bodies). As in the previous chapter, the historical progressions will be related chronologically and coupled with examinations of the events for evidence supporting or contradicting the proposed historical narrative of continuous cultural evolution catalyzed by external variables.

(B) The Middle Caliphates and the Crusader States

The importance of the Middle Caliphates between the Rashidun and Ottoman periods cannot be overstated in its impact on Levantine cultural history. For the Levant, this period consisted of multiple Caliphate regimes, in addition to the creation and eventual destruction of a number of Crusader kingdoms. These diverse systems introduced a variety of linguistic traditions, including Turkish, Persian, and a number of European languages, as well as reinforcing the use of linguistic isolationist policy as a form of cultural

protectionism. However, one of the few traditions which carried through all of the Middle Caliphates is the strengthening of a religiously organized judicial system. As before, the primary cultural areas that this study will focus upon are ethno-religious, linguistic, and structural (especially judicial); it should also be recognized that, by virtue of their inherent relationships, these cultural elements often overlap, influencing each other as well as the rest of the cultural landscape.

i. Elements of Ethnic Identification

The Rashidun Caliphate had organically assimilated “Arabic” culture into the synthesis of the emerging Islamic structure and the Umayyad Caliphate, founded by the Syrian Governor Muawiya ibn Abi Sufyan, carried this formula to the extreme. The general preference conferred towards Muslims of “Arabic” ethnicity strongly encouraged an atmosphere of ethno-religious identification. The environment soon developed into one of ethno-political discrimination, eventually leading to revolt and internal division in the 740s, and culminating in the creation of the Abbasid Caliphate.¹ While these events by no means indicate a truly nationalist ideological presence, they do suggest a clash of somewhat developed ethno-political identities and the existence of the precursor stages to developing nationalism.

The foreign introduction of the Seljuk imperial power in the 11th Century (administered in most of the Levant by the Artuqid Dynasty) created an interesting cultural event.² While, Islamic, the Seljuks made no attempt to integrate with Arabic culture, thereby coalescing into the Levant’s first instance of ethno-Islamic cultural clash. Further,

the resultant renewed “Arabization” was soon challenged by additional ethnic invasion in the form of the Crusader States.³ The solidarity of the newly entrenched Levantine “Arab” ethnicity can easily be seen in contrast to the relatively minimal impact of the Seljuk and Crusader States upon the ethnic identity of the region.

ii. The Languages of Power & Protectionism

The linguistic Arabization process, as has already been mentioned, was greatly accelerated by the Islamic Expansion under the Rashidun Caliphate. This pattern continued to be present under the Umayyad, Abbasid, Fatimid, and Mamluk Caliphates.⁴ In fact, by the rise of the Seljuk Empire and later the Crusader States, the Arabic language had become so engrained in the local culture that neither the Turkish or European languages were able to supplant Arabic as the regional common language, despite political and economic impetus to learn the languages of government and military.⁵

At the same time, diligent study shows that linguistic Arabization was, by no means, a complete and uncontested process. Various ethno-religious groups strenuously objected to the overlay of “Arab” culture and utilized linguistics as a method to promote ethno-cultural isolation in support of cultural preservation. One of the most prominent and lasting of these preservationist movements was the Syriac Maronite Church of Antioch. By retaining the Aramaic language in their traditional liturgies, prayers, and ceremonies, the Maronites attempted to mitigate the cultural integration of the Church into the increasing dominant Arab-Islamic regional identity.⁶ While they further substantiated their isolationist policies with such measures as restrictions limiting interfaith marriages, one of

the longest lasting and most impactful measures was their attempt at linguistic isolation.⁷ This created an effective requirement that members of the Maronite Church pass on a unique linguistic heritage to future generations; meaning that even if those descendants also learned the common Arabic tongue, they would always have a separate ethno-linguistic and religious identity. Similar to the burgeoning “Arab” ethno-linguistic cultural identity mentioned above, some of the more tenacious ethno-religious minorities shifted to include their linguistic heritage as an integral element of their cultural identity.

iii. The Sanction of Autonomy

The Middle Caliphates were extremely formative years in the creation of Islamic jurisprudence in that, up until that point, no true system had been synthesized. While the basic tenets of judicial code and procedure had begun to collate, only the barest basics of the religious court structure were in place.⁸ The system originated as a combination of Quranic law and policy, coupled with traditional “Arab” judicatory procedure.⁹ One of the most interesting aspects of this formative period is the institution of the *dhimmī* system, which essentially defined the rights of non-Muslims within the Caliphate (this originally only applied to Christians, Jews, and a few other groups, but was later expanded to include most non-Muslim traditions). In general, the system allowed minority groups more rights and privileges than was the norm during that time period. Specifically, minorities were allowed full rights and privileges within their own communities and partial rights under Islamic law.¹⁰

It should also be noted that, with the Seljuk invasion, this period also included the first instance of the Caliphate not being a part of the governing Islamic state in the Levant (as the Caliphate remained within Abbasid control).¹¹ This dynamic is especially interesting considering that the Islamic courts system was, at least nominally, derived from the authority of the Caliphate rather than the current ruling system. This division between Caliphate and state government eventually led to the expansion of state run, secularly oriented courts existing concurrent to the religious judiciary. However, the partial autonomy of the Islamic judiciary and the limited recognition of non-Muslim internal governing privileges do not necessarily reflect actual autonomy within the minority structure. In fact there is significant evidence that the potentates of minority enclaves had to be appointed (or at least approved) by the state.¹² Overall, the institutional developments of this period seem to reveal a limited separation of the governing structure from the religiously oriented judicial system, as well as its attendant support structure.

(C) The Rise and Fall of Ottoman Power

The Ottoman period is a very eventful time in the realm of cultural development for the Levant. These years saw a gradual increase in ethnic identification which eventually culminated in fully realized ethnic nationalism throughout the Empire. And, of especial interest to this study, this period witnessed the manifestation of politically active Arab nationalism (partially encouraged by European actors). Moreover, during the Ottoman period, the Arabization process reached a degree of near complete saturation on the linguistic stage. And finally, the Ottoman period presided over the complete

institutionalization of the religiously selective court structure under the formal Millet system of the Empire. This development, while formally empowering those religious minorities included within the system, also triggered the reintegration of some smaller sects and marginalized a number of uncategorized religious traditions.

i. *The Advent of Ethnic Nationalism*

Under the Ottoman Empire, the rise of Turkish ethnic nationalism spurred a reactionary growth of “Arab” unity throughout both the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. Further, the integration of the Caliphate into a non-“Arab” state structure contributed to the consolidation of “Arab” proto-nationalism.¹³ The introduction of nationalism to the Middle East from European contact dramatically altered the entire dynamic of the region. The growth of nationalist movements within the Empire, coupled with external pressures began to weaken the internal framework of the state. As the power of the Ottomans began to decline, “Arab” nationalism began to rise in the Levant.¹⁴ When Sayyid Hussein bin Ali, the Sharif of Mecca, and the Hashemites organized an “Arab” revolt during World War II, he garnered support from across the entire region, including the Levant.¹⁵ By the fall of the Ottoman Empire, the Arabization of the Levant had reached the point that the traditional tribal leadership was willing to accept the rule of the Hashemite family of Arabia. The rise of “Arab” nationalism created an atmosphere of ethno-cultural integration beyond any previous levels.

It should also be mentioned that much of the physical expression of “Arabic” nationalism through the Sharifian revolt occurred at the encouragement and with the

direct support of European powers. This situation is heavily indicative of the early foreign influences which eventually led to the creation of Mandate States (which will be discussed further in the next chapter). While the development and manifestation of nationalism among the “Arabs” does not necessarily imply direct cultural interference, it is important to note an obvious degree of cultural bleed by the relatively Western concept of nationalism.¹⁶

ii. The Language of the Land

Another aspect of Ottoman rule in the Levant was the linguistic Arabization process reaching near complete saturation levels.¹⁷ Although Turkish was the official language of the state and was heavily used throughout much of the Empire’s institutional structure, the language never made much headway as prominent Levantine tongue. Instead, most Levantine Ottoman Imperial functionaries, and indeed the bulk of the Empire’s “Arab” domain, utilized Arabic as a semi-official lingua franca.¹⁸ In doing so, the Ottoman structure promoted the regional dominance of the Arabic language. This situation increased the pressure on non-Arabic speaking minorities to, at the very least, learn Arabic as a secondary tongue. Even though the Ottoman language usage policies were little more than a continuation of existing Levantine practices, the general linguistic adoption seems to have culminated during the Ottoman Imperial era.

iii. The Institutionalization of Sectarianism

The Ottoman Empire presided over the official institutionalization and systemization of judicial division by religious affiliation via the *Millet* system. In essence the

majority of the civil code was left in the hands of the various recognized faiths, with inter-religious conflict mediated by Islamic law. However, in creating this system, the Ottomans kept the number of recognized *millet*s relatively small, resulting in powerful political shifts among the various religious traditions. It necessitated that a number of the minor groups partially integrate with the major religious entities, thereby accelerating the structural evolution among religious sects. Each recognized religious group was forced to develop not only their own set of functional laws, but also a full legal system and judiciary. One corollary of this in the Levant was that some relatively minor groups, such as the Maronite Church, developed even more firmly established traditional roles in the region, while others, such as the Alawites were further marginalized.¹⁹ This development heavily accentuated the rise of religiously selective societal division and encouraged the isolationist efforts of some minority groups.

(D) Conclusion

With the Middle Caliphates era spanning such an extended period, it is somewhat difficult to summarize a consistent narrative of cultural evolution for the entire time. However, there are a few elements of cultural development which offer a relatively steady progression throughout the entire era. The gradual definition and consolidation of the “Arab” ethnic identity is quite possibly the most culturally influential aspect of the Middle Caliphates impact. Nor would the modern understanding of “Arabism” be recognizable without the eventual Levantine linguistic Arabization which is heavily rooted in the cultural evolution of the years in question. And finally, the partial autonomy of religious

law from the state structure, which later became enshrined under Ottoman judicial code, directly derived from the development and interpretation of Islamic jurisprudence which occurred during the early years of Caliphate rule. While these alterations of regional cultural evolution were relatively gradual in their societal proliferation, they nonetheless constitute a dramatic shift in Levantine cultural dynamics.

While the expressed intent of the Ottoman Empire was the maintenance of the status quo and the promotion of stability, the Ottoman Period was witness to substantial developments in the cultural evolution of the Levant. Perhaps most topically influential, the development and spread of ethnic nationalism within the Empire resulted in the emergence of a powerful, unified “Arab” nationalist movement. While this may seem somewhat ordinary from a modern perspective conditioned by the present dominance of Nationalist oriented ideological theory, the cultural shift necessary for the Levant and Arabian Peninsula to produce a unified “Arab” nationalism is nearly astounding. This development of “Arab” nationalism partially overlapped with and drew upon the expansion of Arabic’s presence in the Levant. The Ottoman use of Arabic as a lingua franca strengthened the language’s dominant position in the region and increased uniformity within the language. And lastly, the Ottoman institution of the *Millet* system promoted a degree of autonomy and internal sovereignty among the most prominent non-Islamic traditions of the Levant. This official institutionalization forced greater artificial uniformity within the major religious camps, simultaneously reinforcing the structural authority and power of these religious institutions. This legitimization of select socio & ethno-religious

structures caused some religious minorities to seek integration, while spurring the growth of an isolationist mentality amongst others.

In general, the events listed above seem to demonstrate a consistent model of regional adaptation at the introduction of foreign cultural patterns. However, the sequence of adaptation and incorporation appears to demonstrate a degree of selectivity in reference to the patterns chosen for cultural integration. While not directly contradictory to the proposed historical narrative, this evidence does suggest that the process of the cultural evolution may possess a variable amount of inherent inertia which potentially limits and dictates the degree to which foreign elements are integrated into the existing evolutionary progression.

Chapter III. Endnotes

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IV. THE EUROPEAN MANDATES

(A) Introduction

i. Summary

The Mandate Period of Levantine history poses an entirely new series of developments in the cultural landscape of the region. With the defeat and collapse of the Ottoman Empire at the end of World War I, a number of Western powers took a direct hand in Middle Eastern governance. In the Levant, this translated into the artificial division of the region into (essentially) tributary states. Great Britain assumed functional control of Greater Palestine, although it was soon divided it into the states of Transjordan and Palestine. Under the British Mandate, much of the foreign control was exerted through structural changes and proxy potentates.¹ On the other hand, France took a more direct managerial role in their Mandate of Greater Syria (later Lebanon and Syria). Additionally, France often engaged in intentional cultural alteration and power politics, in an effort to maintain an unstable and exploitable power dynamic.² Each of these newly formed nation states was exposed to significantly differing forms of external interference, which resulted in unique cultural deviations. Considering the divergences of identity issues, language pressures, and institutional developments, this study will deal with each of the new Levantine states separately.

ii. Research Framework

This chapter will be divided first into sections relating to each of the various Mandate States, each section with then consist of an investigation of subject areas

correlating to identity and ethnicity development, linguistic adaption or introduction, and structural and institutional alteration. The first to be examined will be Transjordan, specifically looking at the Hashemite introduction, the indirect influence of English on class division, and the construction of new institutions. The next section will look at the Mandate of Palestine, focusing on ethnic clashes and identity reactions, the revival and spread of Hebrew, as well as introduced societal and geographic divisions. The final section will cover the state of Greater Syria, examining ethno-religious division, linguistic imperialism, and judicial overlay. Unlike the previous chapters, the necessary state level organization of this chapter has resulted in a topical, rather than directly chronological, presentation of the events in question; however, the same method of evaluation in reference to the proposed narrative will be utilized.

(B) Transjordan (Modern: The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan)

i. The Hashemite Variable

The creation of the Mandate state of Transjordan (now The Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan) was a nearly completely artificial geographic division of the region. The initial social, religious, cultural, political, and ethnic composition of the area very nearly exactly resembled that of the rest of the Levant.³ Under the direction of Great Britain, the region was split from Palestine and placed beneath the authority of ‘Abdullāh ibn al-Hussein, the son of Sayyid Hussein bin Ali of the Hashemites. Further, in an attempt secure ‘Abdullāh’s bid for the throne, the British directly altered the socio-ethnic dynamic of the state.⁴ By subjugating the Bedouin tribes and then integrating them into the military hierarchy, the internal ethno-cultural environment of the nation was dramatically altered.⁵ The increasing

prominence of Bedouin tribal influence gave rise to the development of a distinct Jordanian cultural perspective. Further, the Bedouin cultural similarity to the traditional Arabian culture of the Northern Hejaz, coupled with the Hashemite relation to the Prophet, gave promoted to an even greater emphasis on a universal “Arab” ethno-cultural identity.⁶ The basic end result of these factors seems to have been a strengthening of the “Arab” identity structure, coupled with a simultaneous creation of a purely nationalist Jordanian identity.

ii. The Language of Affluence

The British Mandate of Transjordan made little to no effort to directly institute an official policy promoting the English language. However the close association between the British and their Hashemite allies quickly led to a trend toward English education among the members of the new royal family.⁷ This dynamic, in addition to the presence of a relatively influential British military contingent, and a developing long-term relationship between Transjordan and Great Britain, indirectly promoted the perception of English being a necessity for the economically, politically, or socially affluent. In essence, the new power structure encouraged the adoption of English by the most influential elements of society, thereby guaranteeing its spread among the less affluent.

iii. The Synthesis of Structures

These identity and linguistic alterations also coincided with a simultaneous trend toward modernization and secularization of the state.⁸ The artificial creation of the Mandate State incorporated broad-scale dissolution of many structural institutions which had long existed under the Ottoman Empire and the Caliphates. In their place, the British established a new system operating under a societal structure more closely resembling a

Western state.⁹ The creation of a monarchy rooted in historical and religious authority, but founded on secular political and military power dramatically altered the social power structure. Further, the institution of a secular, state-operated judiciary based largely on Western legal code led to a delegitimization of the, now, traditional religious judicial structure. This relative secularization of the government and judiciary quickly became one of the most divisive aspects of the new state, with the population split between pro-Western and pro-traditionalist factions.¹⁰

(C) Palestine (Modern: The State of Israel & The State of Palestine)

i. The Clash of Ethnicities

As was intimated in the previous section, British colonialism under the Mandate system tended heavily toward the structural alteration, rather than direct cultural reconstruction. However, the Mandate of Palestine had already entered a state of cultural flux, previous to the British assumption of power.¹¹ The direct foreign introduction of a relatively large population of *Ashkenazi* Jews dramatically altered the cultural dynamic. The immigrant population retained a strongly developed ethno-cultural identity (in addition to myriad of cultural variations derived from various European states). As Jewish settlers flocked to Palestine, they brought with them a plethora of religious customs and linguistic traditions completely foreign to the indigenous population.¹²

Previous to this point, the population of Israel was predominately composed of Muslims, alongside sizable Christian and Jewish contingents. In the wake of the migration of European Jews, the Muslim population was still in the numerical majority, but the cultural influence of the new population soon overcast many of the existing traditions and

directly clashed with the dominant Arab Islamic identity. Further, the incoming ethnically Jewish population was not unified in their adherence to a specific Jewish tradition. Rather, they brought with them a number of unique sects of Judaism, ranging from strict Orthodoxy to amorphous Reformism, as well as a number of non-Judaic traditions, such as Humanism, Buddhism, and Atheism.¹³ The swift introduction of these religious and philosophical traditions resulted in extensive cultural upheaval and ethno-religious conflicts.

ii. The Language of Immigrants

Possibly the most unique event of the Mandate Period was the resurrection and modernization of the Hebrew language. Early in this period of upheaval, the various linguistic traditions of the Jewish immigrant groups caused great confusion within the linguistic cultural dynamic. The phenomena of various members of the same ethno-cultural group speaking an assortment of languages, predominantly unrelated to their own linguistic heritage, added to the severity of the cultural turmoil.¹⁴ At this point, the Hebrew language was reintroduced throughout the newly created state.¹⁵ This event may be the most successful modern instance of intentional cultural imperialism. Unfortunately, while the near complete adoption of the Hebrew language by the immigrant population cemented the cultural identity of the incoming Jews, it also accentuated their cultural divergence from the Arab population.¹⁶ In fact, the religious and linguistic division between those who adopted the new culture and those who resisted can still be seen in the Israeli/Palestinian division of the region.

iii. The Drawing of Lines

Mandate Palestine shows perhaps the most direct evidence of a non-linear relationship between structural alteration and cultural adaptation. Whether the UN division of the area into nominally separate states of Israel and Palestine is viewed as a cause or result of the culture defining animosity between the immigrant groups and the indigenous populations (not just the Muslim majority), the act can easily be seen as symbolic of the socio-structural division of the Mandate, resultant from the introduction of the immigrant ethnic population.¹⁷The dramatic shifts in the societal power structure were both derived from and led to drastic cultural evolution. The exponential growth of often violent social division between the two camps overshadowed the introduction of most other cultural variables, eventually coming to define most intercultural interactions in the state.

(D) Greater Syria (Modern: The Syrian Arab Republic & The Republic of Lebanon)

i. The Fractured Identities

In comparison to the dramatic cultural fluctuations of Palestine, cultural imperialism during the Mandate Period took a more subtle route in Greater Syria. This is not to imply that the resultant cultural alterations were less comprehensive or divisive; rather, that the methods employed by the French state tended to be more cultural and less structural. One of the main aspects of this interference was the promotion of ethno-religious divisions. French Mandate rule often utilized minority groups to administer policy, thereby creating social disruption and a devoted ally. However, this method can also result in emphatic societal fracturing along ethno-religious lines. One of the most obvious

of these arrangements was the delineation of the Alawite State within Greater Syria.¹⁸ Despite being an extreme minority, with little to no political power due to the internal divisions of the “Kalbiyya, Haddadin, Khayyatin, and Matawira/Numilatiyya” families, the French chose to place an entire sub-state under their administration.¹⁹ These practices accentuated the existing divergences of ethno-religious identity among the Syrian population and further strengthened the isolationist cultural trends already in place.

ii. The Language of Conformity

In an attempt to expand their control of the Mandate, the French actively utilized linguistic imperialism in their interactions with the region. For example, France had long maintained strong ties to the minority Maronite population concentrated in the coastal regions of Greater Syria and they were especially receptive to the new language.²⁰ This interaction with the French accentuated the existing economic and social affluence of the group and further divided them from the larger population.²¹ On a broader scale, French was instituted as the language of state, academia, and commerce. While this introduction did not completely replace the existing linguistic traditions of the region, it did have a significant effect upon the regional dialect. Especially apparent in the coastal areas and urban centers, the intermingling of French into the Arabic language has permanently influenced the linguistic evolution of the region.

iii. Similar Patterns and New Models

With the creation of the Mandate state, the judicial structure and legal codes of the region underwent a complete overhaul. Building off the model of the Ottoman Millet structure, the French instituted a split legal system. While some civil cases continued to be

under the purview of traditional ethno-religious hierarchies, the majority of legal matter fell under the sway of a modified version of the French penal code.²² Based upon European secular law, the new system was entirely foreign to the traditional legal dynamic. Even the Ottoman legal system was based upon a religious code of mores and directives derived mainly from *Sharia*, whereas the French system drew legitimacy from the state itself. This alteration of the foundational legitimacy of the internal actions of the state completely disrupted not only the existing judicial dynamic, but the entire basis of social power distribution within the region. By introducing the concept of purely secular power as a basis for legal authority, the French essentially altered the cultural framework for social influence.

It should also be mentioned that the French division of Greater Syria, towards the end of the Mandate Period, was the source of massive societal restructuring within both new states. The artificial division increased animosity toward the colonial powers and spurred the growth of such ideologies as Pan-Arabism and Syrian Ba'athism.²³ In fact, much of the violence which marked the French withdrawal was rooted in the societal restructuring which resulted from the division.

(E) Conclusion

The Mandate Period of Levantine history may incorporate the most diverse and dynamic era of cultural imperialism in history. Considering not only the extent of the cultural alteration and disruption, but also the variation of cultural origins and the rise of cultural traditionalism, it is impossible to measure the full extent of the deviation. Although the general intention of the colonial powers may have been the modernization and

stabilization of the Levant, the end result was a nearly universal disruption of the existing cultural dynamic. Further, the myriad elements of cultural imperialism which were introduced created a uniquely energetic environment of cultural flux which has resulted in ongoing cultural permutation.

The drastic cultural shifts resultant from the Mandate Period seem to agree with the proposed narrative of cultural evolution catalyzed by external influence. However, the strongly reactionary responses of the Levantine cultural landscape to the introduction of direct European alteration seems to support the conclusions reached in the previous chapter. Namely that Levantine cultural evolution retains a degree of intrinsic inertia, which regulates the adoption of foreign cultural patterns and, at times, results in reactionary protectionist patterns.

Chapter IV. Endnotes

¹ William L. Cleveland and Martin Bunton, *A History of the Modern Middle East*, (Westview Press, 2009), 213-215 & 244-248.

² Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 218-228

³ Abbas Kelidar, "States without Foundations: The Political Evolution of State and Society in the Arab East," *Journal of Contemporary History* 28 (1993): 315- 339.

⁴ Timothy J. Paris, *Britain, the Hashemites and Arab Rule, 1920-1925: the sherifian solution* (London: Frank Cass, 2003), 154-227.

⁵ Uriel Dann, "The Beginnings of the Arab Legion," *Middle Eastern Studies* 5 (1969): 181-191.

⁶ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 213.

⁷ Ma'n Abū Nūwār, *The Development of Trans-Jordan: 1929-1939; a History of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan*, (Reading: Garnet & Ithaca, 2006), 181.

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- ⁸ Ellen Lust, *The Middle East* (Washington DC: CQ Press, 2011), 496-501.
- ⁹ Richard F. Nyrop, *Jordan, a Country Study*, (Washington D.C.: American University: Foreign Area Studies, 1980), "Transjordan".
- ¹⁰ Joseph Nevo, and Ilan Pappè, *Jordan in the Middle East 1948- 1988: The Making of a Pivotal State*, (Portland: Frank Cass, 1994), 4-5.
- ¹¹ Dan Smith, *The State of the Middle East: An Atlas of Conflict and Resolution*, (Berkley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2006), 36-40.
- ¹² Thomas A. Idinopulos, *Weathered by Miracles: A History of Palestine from Bonaparte and Muhammad Ali to Ben-Gurion and the Mufti*, (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1998), 5-20.
- ¹³ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 239-240 & 256-261.
- ¹⁴ Sue Wright, *Language and the State Revitalization and Revival in Israel and Eire*, (Clevedon, UK: Multilingual Matters, 1996), 5-8 & 55-56.
- ¹⁵ Bernard Spolsky, and Elana Goldberg Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel: Policy, Ideology, and Practice*, (Clevedon, [UK]: Multilingual Matters, 1999), 9-24.
- ¹⁶ Spolsky and Shohamy, *The Languages of Israel*, 115-129.
- ¹⁷ Cleveland and Bunton, *A History*, 262-267.
- ¹⁸ Peter A. Shambrook, *French Imperialism in Syria, 1927-1936*, (Reading [England]: Ithaca Press, 1998), 104.
- ¹⁹ Ofra Bengio and Gabriel Ben-Dor, *Minorities and the State in the Arab World* (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1999): 129-148.
- ²⁰ Alice L. Conklin, "Histories of Colonialism: Recent Studies of the Modern French Empire," *French Historical Studies* – Vol. 30, no. 2, (2007): 305-332.
- ²¹ Randi Deguilhem, "Turning Syrians into Frenchmen: the cultural politics of a French non-governmental organization in Mandate Syria (1920-67)—the French Secular Mission schools," *Islam & Christian-Muslim Relations* – Vol. 13, no. 4, (2002): 449-460.
- ²² Monique C. Cardinal, "Women and the judiciary in Syria: appointments process, training and career paths," *International Journal of the Legal Profession*, (2008): 123-139.
- ²³ David Hirst, "The Syrian Dilemma," *Annual Editions: Developing World*, (2007): 199-201.

V. CONCLUSION

(A) Summary of Research

i. Reiteration of Thesis and Framework

The variables which influence cultural evolution can be as disparate and numerous as the cultural patterns they effect. This study has examined the cultural dynamic from a chronologic historical perspective, inspecting three consecutive culturally influential periods for evidence of cultural imperialism and cultural bleed as catalytic evolutionary forces. The events in question are examined for evidence of direct cultural alteration, in addition to reactionary cultural isolationism and traditionalism. This study attempts to examine and expound upon the events which form the historical foundation of modern society and culture as it exists in the Levant and specifically hypothesizes the existence of a regional narrative of cultural evolution resultant from cultural imperialism and bleed stretching from the pre-Islamic period into the Mandate Period.

In assessing the veracity of the proposed narrative, this study investigates a number of primary cultural variables; specifically it looks at the development, introduction, and deviation of identity structures, the alteration or establishment of socio-linguistic dynamics, and the progressive development and divergence of structural institutions. While other variables and factors of cultural imperialism and cultural bleed do exist, in the interest of brevity, the present investigation has been limited to the elements listed above. Similarly, the investigation is pursued along a limited chronological progression from the

Islamic Expansion, to the Islamic Imperial Period, and ending with the European Mandates. Each period throughout the investigation is individually examined for factors catalytic of cultural evolution, specifically in reference to supporting or contradicting the proposed narrative.

ii. Summary of Chapter II. The Islamic Expansion

The era of Islamic Expansion is most easily divided into the pre-Expansion and post-Expansion periods. The pre-Expansion Levant was marked by an extreme diversity of distinct ethno-cultural identities and religious traditions. However, no specific ethnic or religious identity held a fully dominant position within the region. Most interestingly, there was very little relationship between the various ethnic and religious identity structures. For example, the “Arabic” tribal groups of this period neither subscribed to nor disassociated from any single religious tradition. Similarly, the region was home to a variety of linguistic traditions, ranging from ethnic tongues, like Arabic, to politically important languages, like Greek. And finally, the region enjoyed a degree of governmental autonomy, both internally and regionally. Specifically, the power structure and degree of autonomy was reliant upon military power and loyalty to the Byzantine Empire, rather than upon religious or ethnic identity.

Alternately, the post-Expansion Levant was distinct in its dramatic increase of cultural homogeneity. The broad overlay of the developing “Arab” Islamic identity upon Levantine ethno-religious diversity stands as a major shift in the ethnic landscape of the region. However, while somewhat displaced and absorbed, the various cultural identities of

the newly integrated region expressed themselves through early divergences within the *Ummah*. Additionally, a number of the pre-existing ethno-religious traditions continued to survive and isolated themselves with protectionist policies. This was also expressed in the general adoption of Arabic as the dominant Levantine language, yet the simultaneous continuation of minority linguistic traditions. And finally, the Expansion witnessed the development and implementation of an extra-regional legal system based off of *Sharia* law, with partial religious jurisdictional selectivity.

iii. Summary of Chapter III. The Islamic Imperial Period

For the purposes of this study, the Islamic Imperial Period is most easily divided between the Middle Caliphates and the Ottoman Empire. The Middle Caliphates saw the beginnings of ethno-nationalist identity formation within the diverse “Arab” population, as well as dramatic cultural divergences within the *Ummah*, eventually resulting in events such as the *Abbasid* revolt. Additionally, the invasion of the Levant by both non-“Arab” Islamic powers and European Christian states seems to have left very little direct alteration of the cultural dynamic. On the other hand, the process of linguistic Arabization continued to accelerate throughout the entire period, resisting the influence of Turkish and European challengers. And finally, the functional implementations of the *dhimmī* system and Islamic Jurisprudence were possibly the most impactful developments of this time period. Allowing the various religious groups a degree of internal sovereignty and the creating a partially autonomous religious judiciary, the Middle Caliphates set the stage for further changes to come.

The Ottoman Imperial rule of the Levant was marked by a number of significant instances of cultural evolution. Perhaps the most influential event to occur under Ottoman rule, ethnic nationalism made its primary debut in the region. Partially as a reaction to the rise of Turkish nationalism, the Levant (and Arabian Peninsula) saw the advent of a relatively cohesive “Arab” identity. One of the most obvious evidences of and precursors to identity formation is the resistant spread of Arabic among the “Arab” population. Even before the manifestation of full-fledged “Arab” nationalism, the Levantine population displayed marked resistance to linguistic Turkification attempts and continued to use Arabic as a default lingua franca within the region. This is not to imply that the Ottoman Period saw the creation of a fully unified Levant; in fact, the implementation of such structures as the *Millet* system actually defined and accentuated the sectarian divides among the varied religious traditions of the region.

iv. Summary of Chapter IV. The Mandate Period

The European Mandate Period does not easily lend itself to chronological division on a regional scale. The simplest alternative method of organization is therefore to divide the examination by Mandate, followed by a subject division paralleling the previous investigations. Namely, the examination will focus on ethnic or religious identity altering events, shifts in the linguistic landscape, and institutional alterations of the societal structure.

The Mandate of Transjordan shows a number of cultural shifts over the course of its existence. The introduction of the Hashemite monarchy, coupled with the unification of the

Bedouin tribes under the new structure, seems to have strengthened the dominant “Arab” identity of the state, while also successfully creating a definitive Jordanian national identity. In terms of linguistics, the British Mandate implemented active methods of cultural imperialism; however, the prolonged presence of a politically, militarily, and economically powerful British population, as well as the close relationship between the royal family and Great Britain, resulted in partial adoption of English as a secondary linguistic tradition. As mentioned above, the Mandate oversaw a large-scale restructuring of the state, including the legal system. Under British auspices, the legal authority of the state shifted from the traditional religious law to a primarily secular Western foundation. This is not to say that religious considerations didn’t continue to shape the laws, but rather that the authority of the law was now secular instead of religious in its basis.

When examining the Mandate of Palestine, the number and impact of the cultural shifts can be somewhat daunting. The obvious cultural alteration is that of the Jewish identity permutation resultant from the introduction of large immigrant populations. Further, the explosive growth of the Jewish cultural identity resulted in aggressively protectionist reactions among the indigenous ethnic identity groups. This dynamic is easily seen in Arabic speaking groups’ resistance to the revitalization and spread of Hebrew throughout the state. The complexity and confusion of the cultural dynamic makes it somewhat difficult to differentiate a linear relationship between structural shifts and cultural adaptations. Nonetheless, it is clear that the alteration of the social power

hierarchy and plans for the division of the Mandate contributed to a polarization of the cultural landscape.

The French Mandate of Greater Syria contrasts somewhat with the British Mandates, specifically in the intentionality of the cultural alteration. One of the hallmarks of this period is the accentuation of minor ethno-religious divergences and the strengthening of minority identities. As a result, a number of minority groups became more insular in their traditions and isolationist in their inter-ethnic relationships. Furthermore, this period saw the introduction of the French linguistic tradition, especially among the Christian coastal populations and urban centers. And, perhaps most successfully, the Mandate Period saw the near complete overhaul of the state judicial system. Building on elements of Ottoman organization, the new system was based primarily on French legal code, with some civil matters remaining under the purview of religious courts.

(B) Summary of Findings

i. Variable Interaction

Over the course of this study, the examination of primary and secondary documents has resulted in a plethora of information relating to the assertion that cultural imperialism and bleed have been significant forces of cultural evolution in the Levantine region. The majority of these historical events can be divided into three categories relative to regional cultural evolution. The first categorization being those interactions which result in cultural adoption or integration (hereafter designated as positive variable interaction). The second

categorization being those interactions which yield little to no measurable cultural alteration (hereafter designated as null variable interaction). And the third categorization being those interactions which result in reactive cultural definition or isolation (hereafter referred to as negative variable interaction). The following sections will attempt to examine the presented data for evidence of these interactions.

ii. Narrative Compilation of The Islamic Expansion

The Islamic Expansion introduced a relatively imperialist form of Arabism into the Levantine ethnic environment. Given the spread of ethnic culture markedly similar to that of the Hejaz region, evidence seems to indicate a predominately positive variable interaction. Nevertheless, it should also be noted that the reactionary cultural protectionist practices of some minority groups simultaneously indicate significant negative variable interactions. Similarly, the introduction and spread of Arabic throughout the region is heavily indicative of dominant positive variable characteristics, with a correlating minor negative interaction evidenced by the presence of linguistic protectionism. The structural shifts of the Expansion Period stand as perhaps the most positive variable reactions of the three interactions. The general acceptance of the newly developing power structure and legal system seem to indicate a high incidence of positive interaction, while the lack of reactionary cultural traditionalism indicates a very low instance of negative interaction. This is not to imply that traditional power and judicial structures ceased to exist, simply that they were not developed or considerably strengthened as result of the examined cultural interactions.

iii. Narrative Compilation of The Islamic Imperial Period

Many of the cultural implications of the Islamic Imperial Period are primarily rooted in the development and manifestation of “Arab” nationalism throughout the Levant and the Arabian Peninsula. While, at first glance, this might appear to be a culturally adoptive interaction, the catalytic elements of the movement were, at their core, inherently reactive. The “Arab” nationalist identity coalesced in response to the advent of Turkish nationalism and initially manifested as an oppositionist identity. Therefore, for the purposes of this study, the interaction will be designated as negative in result. In reference to linguistic shifts, while the process of Arabization continued relatively unchecked, it remained an ongoing process catalyzed by earlier interactions. Similarly, the introduction of various foreign linguistic traditions resulted in little to no direct cultural evolution. Overall, the linguistic evidence seems to indicate a generally null variable interaction. Finally, the development of socio-structural shifts, mainly focused upon the integration of religious and judicial structures, appears to be a relatively mixed reaction. The religiously selective legal system seems to have been accepted on a broad scale, indicating a generally positive interaction. However, the limited recognition of religious minorities spurred reactive isolationist traditions among some marginalized groups, while formally recognized minorities developed more consolidated cultural structures. In general, the structural developments of the Islamic Imperialist Period can be described as relatively mixed in their result, yielding both positive and negative variable interactions.

iv. Narrative Compilation of The Mandate Period

Due to the necessary topical division of research focused on the Mandate Period, each state must be examined individually for evidence pertaining to culturally catalytic events.

The British Mandate of Transjordan very successfully introduced a discrete Jordanian national identity as an offshoot of the newly emergent “Arab” identity structure. While this alteration also comprised a concurrent bolstering of the pre-existing “Arab” ethnicity, this occurred naturally, rather than reactively, meaning that the basic interaction is positive in nature. As far as the linguistic dynamic is concerned, the Mandate had a relatively limited affect. With very minor shifts towards the use of English among certain social classes, the relationship is very nearly a null variable interaction, but a slight positive variation should be taken into account. In contrast, the synthesis of the new state structure resulted in a much more dynamic interaction. The basic secular foundation of the state’s newly formed institutions was generally accepted; however, it also yielded a religious traditionalist minority movement which attempted to revert the basic authority structure of the state. As a result, the structural shifts of the Transjordanian Mandate must be viewed predominately positive, with a definite element of negative interaction.

The British Mandate of Palestine was marked by massive ethno-religious identity shifts caused primarily by the influx of Jewish immigrants. This population infusion successfully consolidated into a relatively cohesive ethnic identity, thereby yielding a positive interaction. However, the same dynamic also resulted in aggressive isolationist

movements within both the new Jewish identity structure as well as the existing (primarily “Arab”) identity structures. Due to these divergent outcomes, the identity aspect must be assessed as a combination of both negative and positive variable interactions. Directly correlative, the revival of Hebrew resulted in widespread adoption among the immigrant population and near complete resistance by the indigenous linguistic traditions, resulting in a split positive/negative outcome. Alternately, while the systemic alterations of the state’s authority structure under Mandate rule had some impact on the development of ethnic polarities, the general outcome seems to have been influenced by other dynamics. It could be said that the polarized ethnic power structures which emerged during the British Mandate are the clearest expression of the period’s societal restructuring. Taking into account the reactive protectionist foundations of the societal structure, as well as the influence of the ongoing identity clash, it seems safe to designate this interaction as an externally influenced negative outcome.

The French Mandate of Greater Syria experienced a distinct accentuation of existing ethnic divisions and an increase in cultural isolationism. While evidence exists that this development was at least partially intentional, it is also a definite reactive interaction, firmly supporting a negative variable relationship. The linguistic interactions of the period are somewhat less clear. Specifically, the attempted Frenchification of the linguistic environment was quite successful in select areas, while it met little to no success in others. This dichotomy seems to imply a combination of both positive and null variable interaction. Alternately, the judicial restructuring instituted during this period appears to have met

relatively minor resistance, possibly due to the continued recognition of religious courts, thereby yielding a predominately positive interaction assessment.

(C) Conclusions

i. Resultant Narrative

The spread of Islam to the Levant brought with it the distinct ethno-cultural traditions of the “northern Arabs” of the Hejaz, specifically introducing religious, linguistic, and legal traditions. Conclusive evidence points to this cultural infusion as being extremely catalytic the regional progression of cultural evolution. The Middle Caliphates and the Ottoman Empire saw a dramatic increase in ethnic identity structure and eventual nationalism, the proliferation of the Arabic linguistic tradition, and the institutionalization of a partially autonomous judicial structure. And lastly, the artificial creation of the Mandate states (and their later subdivisions) heralded an era of unprecedented cultural shift for the region. The aspects of cultural upheaval resultant from this period run the full spectrum from alterations of the societal structure and the creation of Jordanian nationalism in Transjordan, to massive cultural infusion, linguistic integration, and ethnic polarization in Palestine, and direct intentional social overwriting and linguistic imperialism in Greater Syria.

Overall, each of these chronological periods displays some level of externally catalyzed cultural evolution, combining into a sustained historical narrative of externally motivated cultural development. Even reactionary efforts to maintain or reinstitute

“traditional” cultural elements are themselves triggered by the introduction of external forces and are often based upon previous cultural shifts, making them simply a variant category of cultural aberration. Each instance of cultural interaction seems to either build upon or conflict with previous cultural adaptations. These types of cultural interactions are often seen as routine in the increasingly globalized post-modern world, but the Levant’s history of cultural disruption has resulted in an inherently complex and (at times) unstable cultural dynamic. As external powers interact with the region and base decisions upon the apparent cultural volatility of Levant, it would seem imperative that those interactions occur with the full knowledge and understanding of the foundational cultural interactions upon which that environment was built.

iii. Unresolved and Ensuing Inquiries

In light of the evidence and resultant narrative, it would seem especially pertinent to perform parallel studies of areas with similar histories of cultural interaction. This would be particularly useful in determining the applicability of the proposed narrative’s use as a model for cultural evolution via external stimulus. Additionally, it would be highly beneficial to conduct more in-depth research into the existence of cultural inertia as a regulatory factor in external cultural alteration and the potential relationship between the inertia factor and previous evolutionary accelerative interactions.

From an academic perspective, the pursuit of these studies could have significant impacts upon the perception of indigenous culture and the process of cultural evolution. They especially have the potential to shift the perception of culture as a relatively static

variable to a more historically accurate fluid model. In real world application, these studies may afford the reader a greater depth of understanding when interacting with foreign cultures and a historical awareness of the impact which such interactions may translate to on a macro level.

iii. Final Word

It is the purpose of historians to bring the past to light; not only to examine the individual events, but also the grand patterns which they constitute. To see past events as wholly isolated, unrelated, and insubstantial is to negate all concept of temporal continuity. And even more important than the physical events are the interactions which comprise the threads of human history. Moreover, culture is the structure that most essentially bears the imprint of those interactions, carrying the living thread of human interaction on to future generations.

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